



WOODLANDS GARDEN

master plan

30 april 2014



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 WOODLANDS GARDEN

The Board of Directors of Woodlands Garden of Decatur, Inc. retained a team headed by planning, architecture, and landscape architecture firm TSW in collaboration with native plant expert Esther Stokes and specialized consulting engineers to undertake enhancement and further development of its master plan, with the goal to address specific needs to better accommodate Woodlands Garden's visitors. Targeted improvements include site access, parking, visitor restroom facilities, and installation of an open and sunlit lawn and garden amenity area on the site of the former Morse residence.

These improvements are deemed highly important in the mission of enhancing Woodlands Garden's goals for educating and engaging the community in the natural world, while preserving the Garden as an urban sanctuary showcasing plants native to the surrounding Georgia Piedmont.

Since its beginnings as a publicly accessible garden in 2002, Woodlands Garden has hosted many local events for the Decatur community. Its Board, staff and volunteers have worked diligently to preserve and enhance the native woodland environment and to manage the garden as envisioned by the Morse Family. Additional trails in the woods and an outdoor pavilion and amphitheater were built for small gatherings, and the Morse Family house was demolished to provide space for future gardens.



Visitors in the Fairy Garden



Woodlands Garden Amphitheatre



Eagle Scout Bench Project



Existing Information Sign

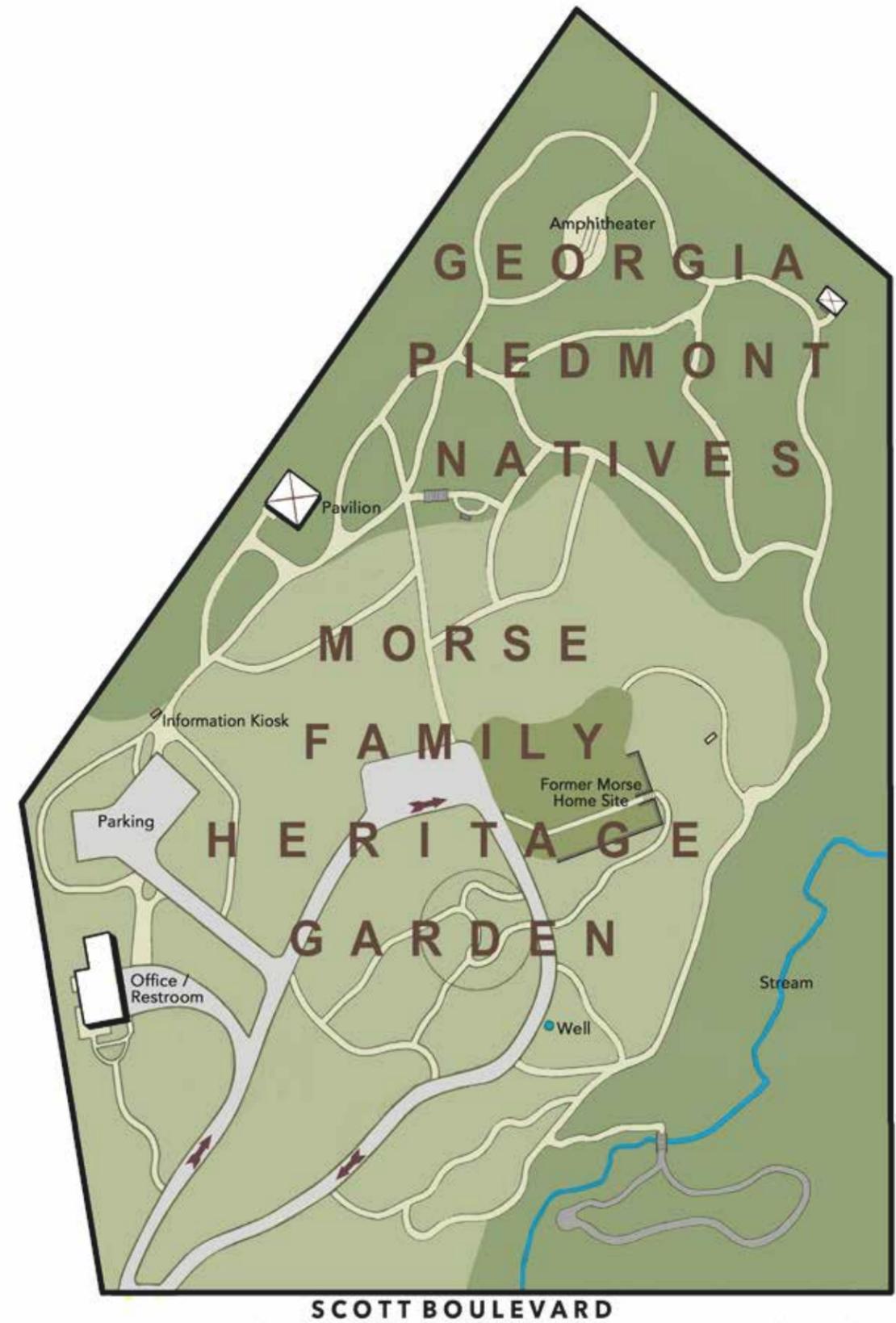
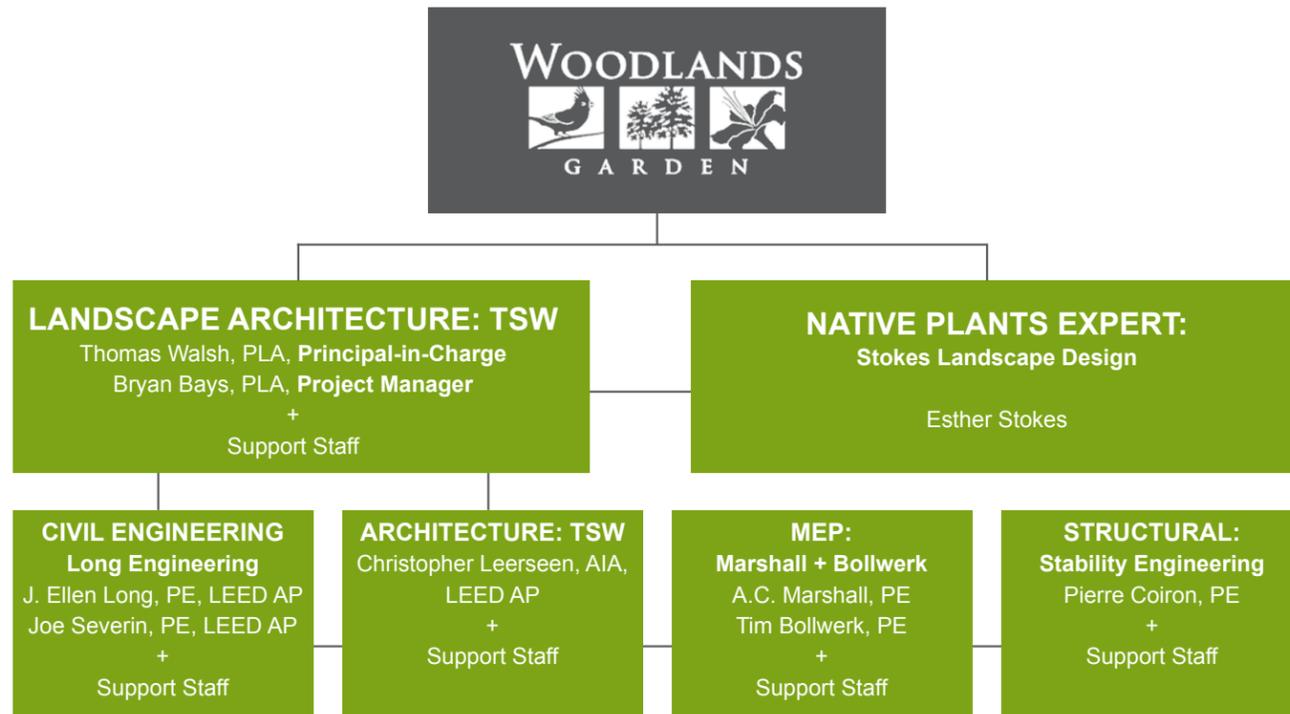


Audubon Society on Trail



Existing Pavilion

1.2 DESIGN TEAM STRUCTURE



Woodlands Garden Existing Conditions

2.0 PLANNING PROCESS

2.1 HISTORY

In 1946, the Morse Family settled on a small plot of land near the intersection of Clairemont Avenue and Scott Boulevard, now known as Woodlands Garden. The Morses purchased more land, which brought their property to 7.1 acres. The Family preserved the majority of the land as natural wooded land, but created a garden near their home. As time passed, Decatur became the most densely populated city in Georgia, and the Morse Family also increased in number by adding four children and thirteen grandchildren. Under the pressures of an increasing city population, developers made large offers to purchase the Morse Family land with the intent to subdivide it into 50 residential lots, as allowed under zoning laws at the time. However, the Family envisioned a different future for their property. In 2002, the Family donated Woodlands to the Decatur Preservation Alliance (DPA) to become a permanently protected green space for future generations to enjoy. DPA managed Woodlands until 2011, when management responsibility was assumed by Woodlands Garden of Decatur, Inc.

In the Heritage Family Garden area, the Morse Family cultivated an intricate garden for over 50 years prior to donating the land for public use. Within this garden, more than 50 types of camellias offer large, colorful flowers that open during the winter, providing a pleasant contrast to the cold season. Mature shrubs and ornamental trees, such as Chinese snowball viburnums, gardenias, sweet-scented tea olive plants, and flowering quinces, serve as architectural elements of interest. Prominent trees are Japanese maples, a pagoda dogwood, a winter flowering apricot, and a grand bigleaf magnolia. Fern varieties, hostas, astilbe, hydrangeas, and Lenten roses make up much of the shade garden. In contrast, the sunny garden is home to many flowering plant varieties, including, crepe myrtle, forsythia, magenta four-o'clocks, and fall-blooming Confederate rose hibiscus.

Georgia Piedmont forest comprises the majority of the seven-acre site. Woodlands suggests how the area may have appeared prior to European settlement, and this important history is being preserved and restored with plantings indigenous to the Georgia Piedmont. Aged at over 100 years old, oak and poplar trees create the canopy, and the understory remains open as historically occurred before exotic plant were introduced. Native trees, such as muscledwood,

sourwood, and sassafras are starting to re-grow in the middle story, providing warm colorful interest during autumn. The spring season brings brilliant pink, orange, coral, and red blooms from native azaleas, and the forest floor becomes home to wild gingers, many fern varieties, mayapple leaves, and white ephemerals such as bloodroot and rue anemone lining the trails at various times during the year.

2.2 CRITICAL ISSUES

Through research, analysis, and extensive discussion amongst stakeholders, a number of critical physical and programmatic issues emerged relative to implementing the programmatic goals of Woodlands Garden. The Board aims to convey a historically accurate, natural Piedmont experience and to allow users to explore the Garden as envisioned by the Morse Family. The Board desires to cause minimal disruption to the existing landforms, but to allow additional visitors to enjoy this unique environment.

Physical Issues

**See Diagram of Issues on page 8*

1. Providing additional parking and enhancing accessibility, utilizing sensitive land grading manipulation targeting maximizing preservation of large canopy trees.
2. Enhancing the existing storm water detention system and providing additional non-intrusive capacity as may be required accommodate site improvements.
3. Enhancing handicap accessible pedestrian access to and within the Garden.
4. Providing new public restrooms and accommodating service and garden storage needs.
5. Reworking the existing loop driveway to function both for off-hours service vehicle access as well as pedestrian circulation.
6. Enhancing impact and usability of open site area created by previous removal of family home, while retaining key existing landscape specimens and stone site walls.
7. Buffering traffic noise intrusion from Scott Boulevard while maintaining a visual identity from the street.

Over the last seven years, Woodlands Garden has transformed from a private homestead to a studied Piedmont wooded and formal garden area. The Woodlands Garden Board has vigorously evaluated the desired and appropriate future programmatic opportunities for visitors. With the programmed physical enhancements to the property, Woodlands Garden will continue to attract the surrounding community and to educate visitors about the value of the natural woodlands and the gardens. The following list outlines the programmatic issues.

Programmatic Issues

- Determining the type and number of events to accommodate per year.
- Deciding where in Garden to best hold different types of events (classes, musical performances, community events, etc.).
- Determining specifics of, and location for, a proposed structure for certain events.
- Determining the features of the open garden/lawn area.
- Addressing sequencing of implementation to allow Garden to remain open to the public during construction.
- Assessing the degree to which night lighting will be accommodated.



Existing Parking Lot



Existing Parking Lot



Existing Office Building



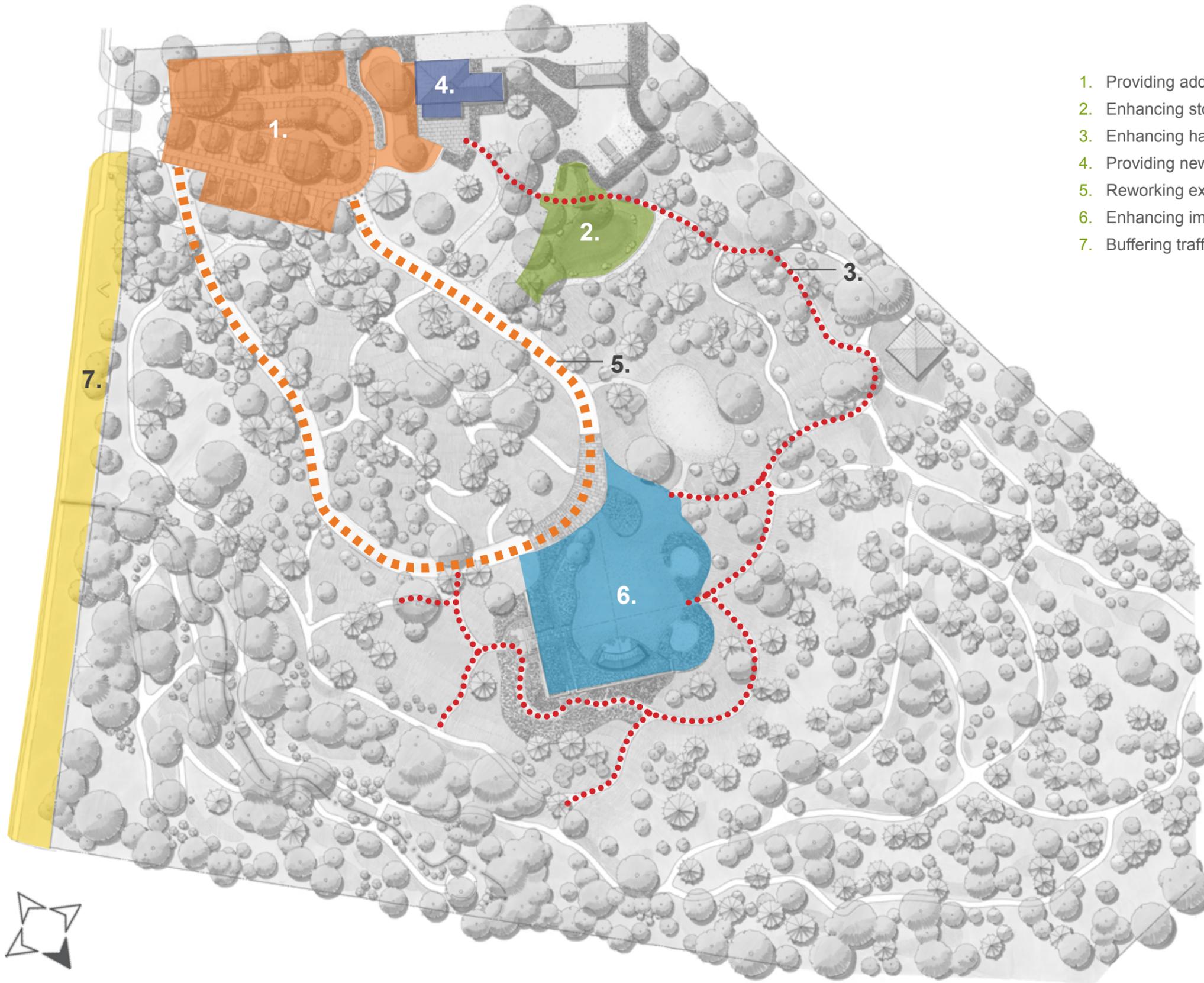
Georgia Piedmont Woods



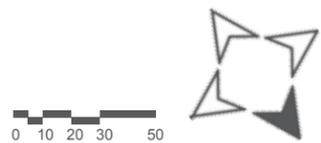
Former Morse Home Site



Existing Entrance Drive



1. Providing additional parking + enhancing accessibility
2. Enhancing storm water detention system
3. Enhancing handicap accessible pedestrian to and within Garden
4. Providing new public restrooms and additional garden storage
5. Reworking existing loop driveway
6. Enhancing impact and usability of open site area
7. Buffering traffic noise from Scott Boulevard



Physical Issues Diagram

2.3 VISION

TSW diligently researched and interviewed board members, Morse family members, and friends of the Garden in order to derive an overall vision for the Garden. The following components summarize the key programmatic and physical opportunities the committee discussed.

Programmatic Opportunities:

- Partner with the arts community to offer events such as music concerts, art exhibits, Decatur Book festival events, and dance performances for audiences of no more than 200.
- Accommodate a limited number of special celebratory events each year.
- Hold native plant sales.
- Preserve Woodlands as one of the 20 Master Gardener sites in DeKalb County.
- Include Woodlands Garden as a destination on the updated City of Decatur walking map.
- Partner with Wylde Center to host classes of limited size.
- Offer the setting for laboratory, experiential and hands-on learning opportunities for preschool, elementary, high school and college

Physical Opportunities:

- Provide a welcoming gateway that can also enhance security.
- Create colorful open sun-lit garden attracting bees and butterflies at the former homestead site.
- Increase accessibility.
- Include a welcome center within the existing office building to orient new visitors.
- Add outdoor structure at edge of the open garden/lawn space to accommodate intimately sized events.
- Locate new visitor restrooms in current office building (relocate storage and maintenance to a new facility).
- Provide up to 30 parking spaces on site

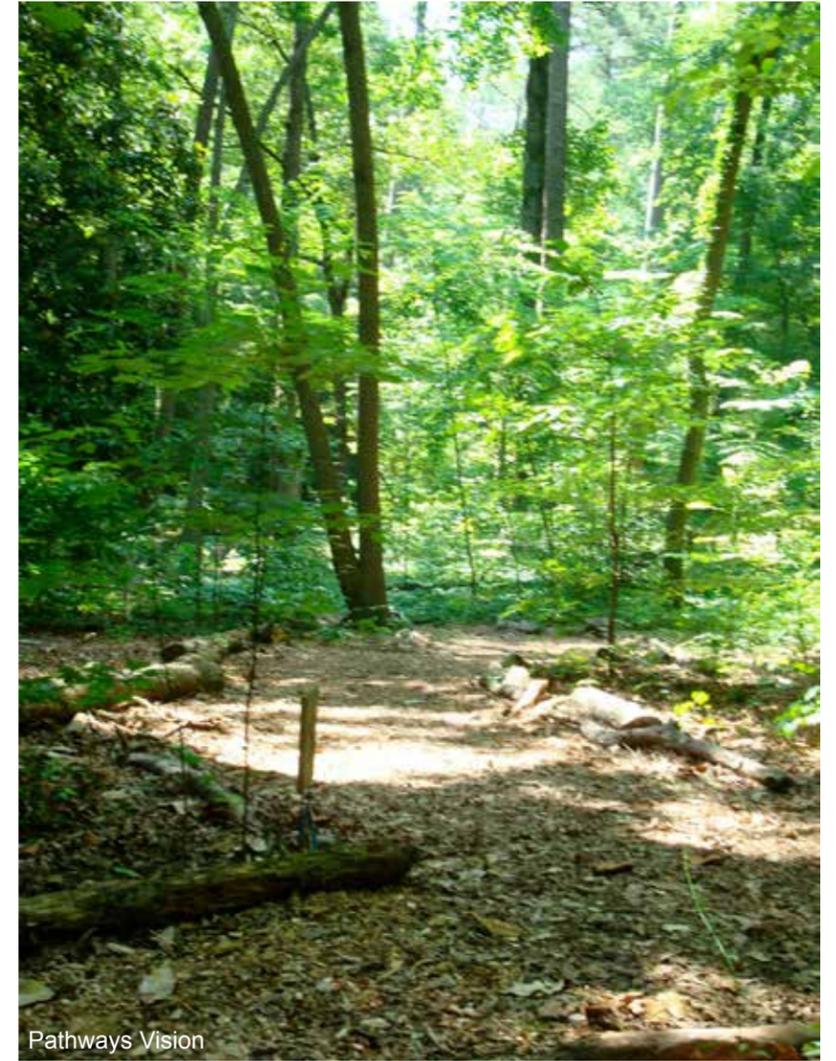
The photographs to the right illustrate a vision for different site elements, such as the entrance, parking lot, and garden.



Gateway Elements Vision



Parking Lot Vision



Pathways Vision



Lawn + Garden Space

Source: (thecommunityword.com)



Lawn Event Space Vision

2.3 SPATIAL ORGANIZATION

The Woodlands program specifies the following four major enhancements. The proposed location of each is illustrated on the Spatial Organization Diagram to the right:

- Entrance from Scott Boulevard
- Parking lot for up to 30 vehicles
- New visitor restrooms
- Open Garden / lawn area at the former Morse homestead site

Entrance

Woodlands intends to create a welcoming and logical access from the street, both for vehicles and for pedestrians. The visitor should have an immediate understanding as they enter the site as to where the parking is located and an immediate sense of where they are supposed to go.

Parking Area

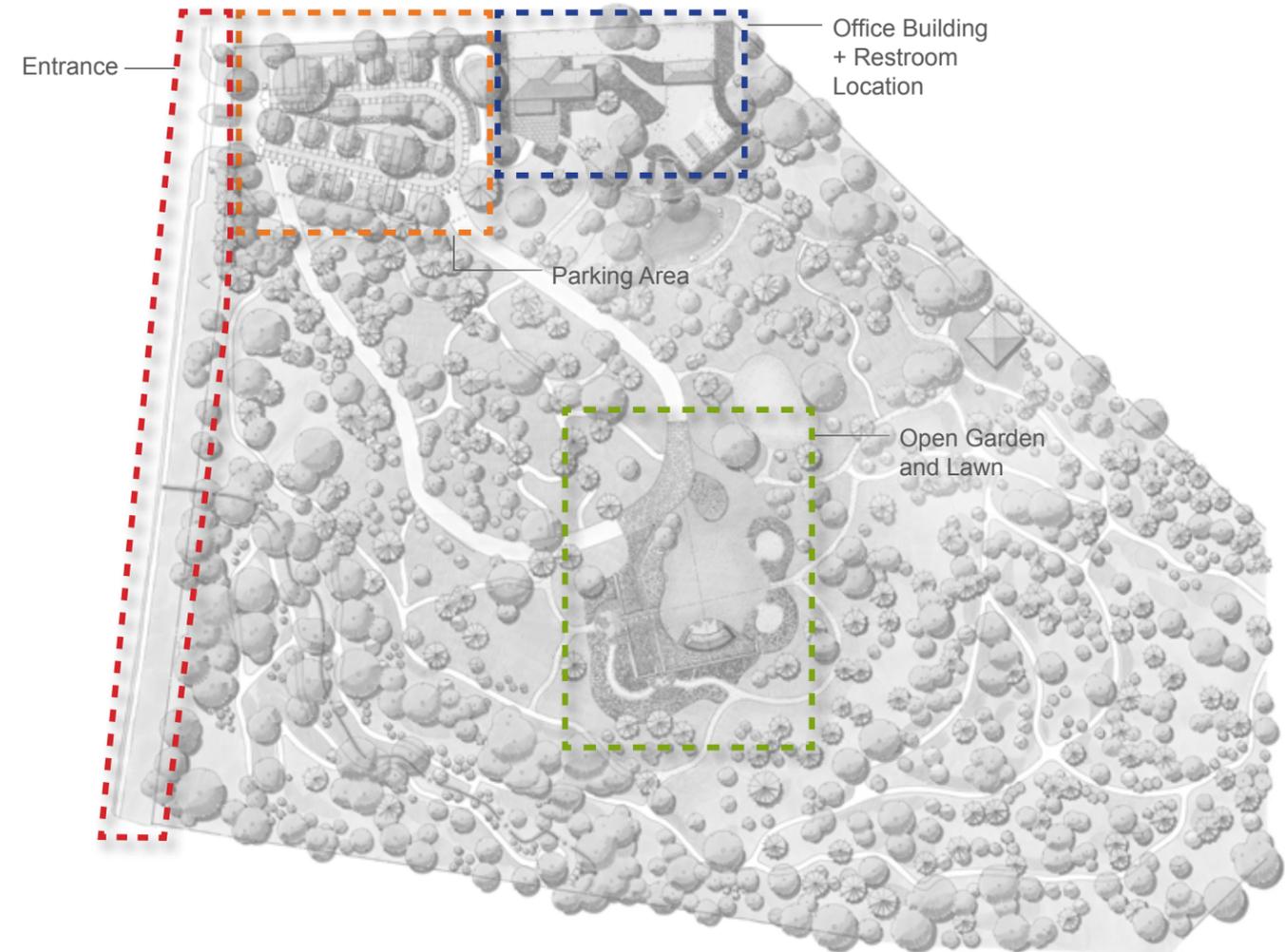
The integration of vehicular parking within the site is one of the most important elements of the design. The concept for the parking lot design is to create an experience for visitors that they arrived at a special destination. As well, the intent is to limit the parking area's intrusion into the Garden. During the interview process, many Board members stated the need for 25 to 30 parking spaces on-site. To accomplish this goal, some sacrifice to the existing landscape will need to occur, particularly during the initial phases of construction and plant growth. Over a five to ten year period, as new trees mature, the parking lot, featuring open grid paving, grass drive lanes, and gravel parking spaces, will become visually nestled within a wooded area.

The Open Garden and Lawn

Removal of the family home created the largest open area on the heavily wooded seven-acre property, providing an opportunity for exciting collections of shrubs and perennials around a large gathering area. A pollinator garden across the sunny area northwest of the lawn will include plants that attract bees, birds and butterflies. Selections will change to shade-loving plants on the southeast side of the lawn, and going down the steps to lower garden areas that lead back into the woods. A modest but elegant water feature near the bottom of the steps will attract both human and avian visitors. Toward the edge of the lawn area an intimately sized structure will accommodate small gatherings of guests.

Office Building Renovations + Location of Visitor Restrooms

The new visitor restrooms will be located within the existing office building, replacing the current storage and maintenance garages.



Spatial Organization Diagram

2.4 CONCEPT PLANNING

TSW has collaborated with the Board throughout the design process. A special event was held at Woodlands Garden in June 2013 to raise awareness for the upcoming master planning process and the potential improvements that were being envisioned. In October 2013, TSW met with the Woodlands Garden Board to determine a schedule that would culminate with a master plan document. The process has included reviewing previous master plan documents and survey data provided by Woodlands, as well as conducting a site meeting and project strategy meeting with the Woodlands Garden Board. The team conducted extensive interviews with stakeholders, including volunteers, neighbors, Board members and Morse family members to explore potential new programs and directions for the Garden. Additionally, TSW held internal design work sessions with the Board to review alternative master plan concepts.

TSW developed two initial concept master plans for presentation to Woodland Garden's staff and board of directors. Based on review and discussion, the design team integrated preferred components and concepts into this final approved master plan document.



June 2013 Event



June 2013 Event

3.0 MASTER PLAN

3.1 OVERALL MASTER PLAN

The following pages describe and illustrate the Woodlands Garden Master Plan, based on the needs found through the initial programming and planning process, including meetings with the Woodlands Garden Board, work sessions, and interviews. The Master Plan on the adjacent page includes number labels that correspond with the Master Plan Key and also with numbers noted within the text on subsequent pages.

The following planning recommendations are represented in the final Master Plan.

Recommendations:

- Utilize native Piedmont plantings.
- Install signage, and a gate system that can be closed when desired, at the new entrance at Scott Boulevard.
- Add up to 30 parking spaces with two accessible parking spaces.
- Install an ADA-compliant ramp to the second floor of the office building/visitor's center and facilitate access into the main floor of the building.
- Create a new covered entrance plaza at the lower level access to the office building and public rest rooms.
- Locate guest restrooms in the existing office building, lower level, with direct access to the exterior for the public's convenience.
- Add a new 3-bay storage building and an open-air maintenance staging area with capacity for some staff/volunteer parking.
- Create a colorful pollinator garden at the open lawn area.
- Provide special paving at the north end of the loop to designate it as a pedestrian drop-off for special events requiring cart or mini-bus use.
- Add an intimately-scaled covered garden structure within the open garden / lawn area.
- Add a natural children's play area adjacent to and west of the open garden / lawn area.

Master Plan Key

1. Pedestrian Entry / Exit
2. One-way Entry
3. One-way Exit
4. Monument Columns
5. Access Control Gates
6. Access Control Bollards / Bollard Sleeves
7. Permeable Gravel Parking with Stone Dividers
8. ADA Parking
9. Dry Stack Field Stone Rubble Wall
10. Stone Retaining Wall
11. One-way Drive with Stone Edge and Grass Pavers
12. ADA Access to Lower Level
13. ADA Access to Second Level
14. Existing Office Building (with new restrooms)
15. Stone Plaza and Roofed Entrance Porch
16. 12' x 30' Storage Building
17. Gravel Service Area
18. Wetland Garden
19. Resurfaced Service / Access Drive and Pedestrian Path
20. Lawn
21. Big Leaf Magnolia
22. Natural Children's Play Area
23. Separate Seating Area
24. Garden Structure with Roof
25. Water Element
26. Lower Patio
27. Existing and New Stone Site Walls w/ Max 30" High Terraced Planting Beds
28. Native Plants and Meadow Grass
29. Existing Pavilion
30. ADA Accessible Path
31. Existing Trails
32. New Trails
33. Maple and Cherry Trees to be Saved
34. Staging and Storage Area
35. New Permanent Sign Location
36. Temporary Sign Location
37. Existing Fence and Well





3.2 ENTRY DRIVE + PARKING AREA

Woodlands Garden has always been somewhat hidden from view on Scott Boulevard. For new visitors, the existing entrance is difficult to find, and for all, is hard to negotiate. The journey from the entry into the site is counterintuitive. The master plan addresses the entry sequence by moving the entrance slightly southeast (2) of the existing entrance, allowing visitors to logically enter directly from Scott Boulevard onto a one-way drive (11) leading immediately to the parking area. The 25 proposed parking spaces will have permeable paving and a porous drive lane (11), and the area will require a series of stepped site walls (9 and 10) to save existing trees. The parking lot will also include two sets of operable gates (5). A Woodlands Garden identity sign (35) will be added between the entrance and exit lanes adjacent to the street to clearly designate the entrance.

Initially, the new parking area will be sunny, but shadiness will become more prevalent as new trees mature, so planting needs will change over time from sun to shade-tolerant plants. Trees that would be effective here include white oaks for the long-term investment and American hornbeams, which will grow rapidly and can be pruned to create canopy. Surrounding areas (where car doors would not be impacted) can include an array of native Piedmont shrubs and small trees with attractive features creating interest throughout the different seasons. The following list notes the plants appropriate for each season in this area:

Winter:

- Witch hazel
- Winterberry holly

Spring:

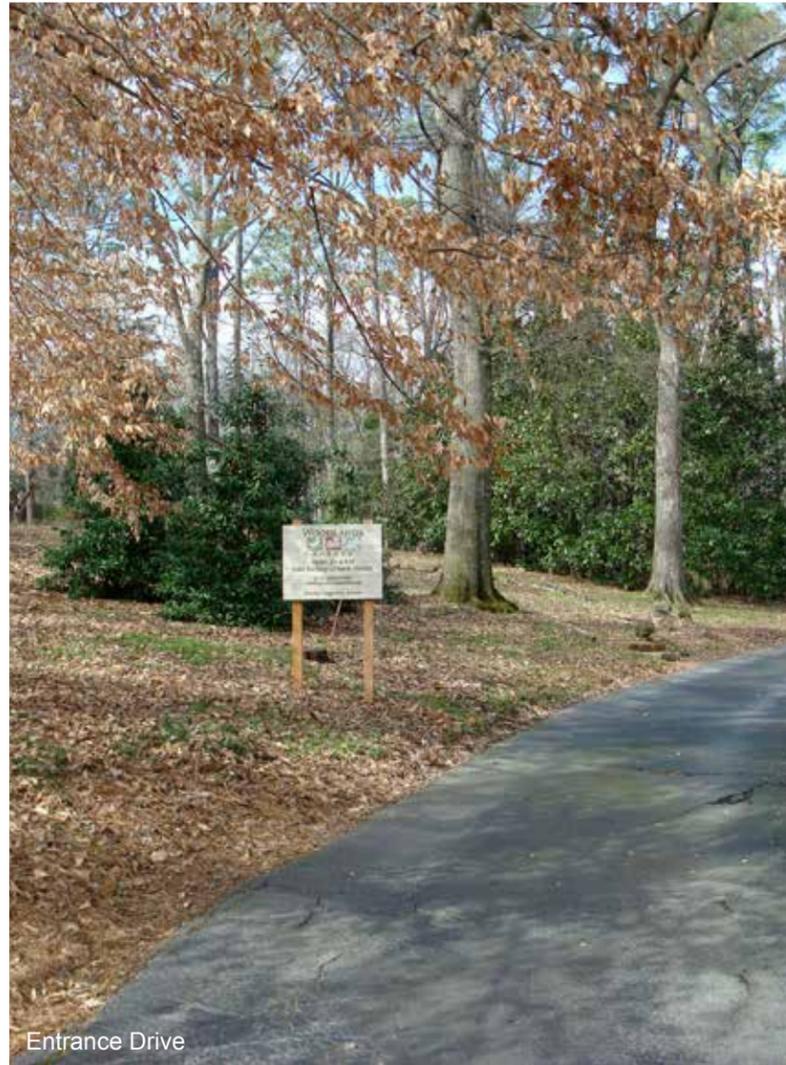
- Serviceberry
- Native azaleas (Piedmont, Oconee, Flame)
- Piedmont rhododendron
- Red buckeye
- Sweetspire

Summer:

- Shrubby St. John's wort
- Highbush blueberry
- Bottlebrush buckeye
- Sweetbay magnolia
- Summersweet clethra

Fall:

- Red chokeberry
- Hearts a-bustin'
- Sourwood
- Fothergilla



Entrance Drive



Exit Drive



Entrance Drive



Scott Boulevard



- Plan Key**
- 1. Pedestrian Entry / Exit
 - 2. One-way Entry
 - 3. One-way Exit
 - 4. Monument Columns
 - 5. Access Control Gates
 - 6. Access Control Bollards / Bollard Sleeves
 - 7. Permeable Gravel Parking w/Stone Dividers
 - 8. ADA Parking
 - 9. Dry Stack Field Stone Rubble Wall
 - 10. Stone Retaining Wall
 - 11. One-way Drive w/Stone Edge + Grass Pavers
 - 12. ADA Access to Lower Level
 - 13. ADA Access to Second Level
 - 14. Existing Office Building (with new restrooms)
 - 15. Stone Plaza and Roofed Entrance Porch
 - 32. New Trails
 - 35. New Permanent Sign Location
 - 36. Temporary Sign Location

Plan Enlargement: Entrance + Parking Area

0 5 10 20 Scale: 1" = 10'

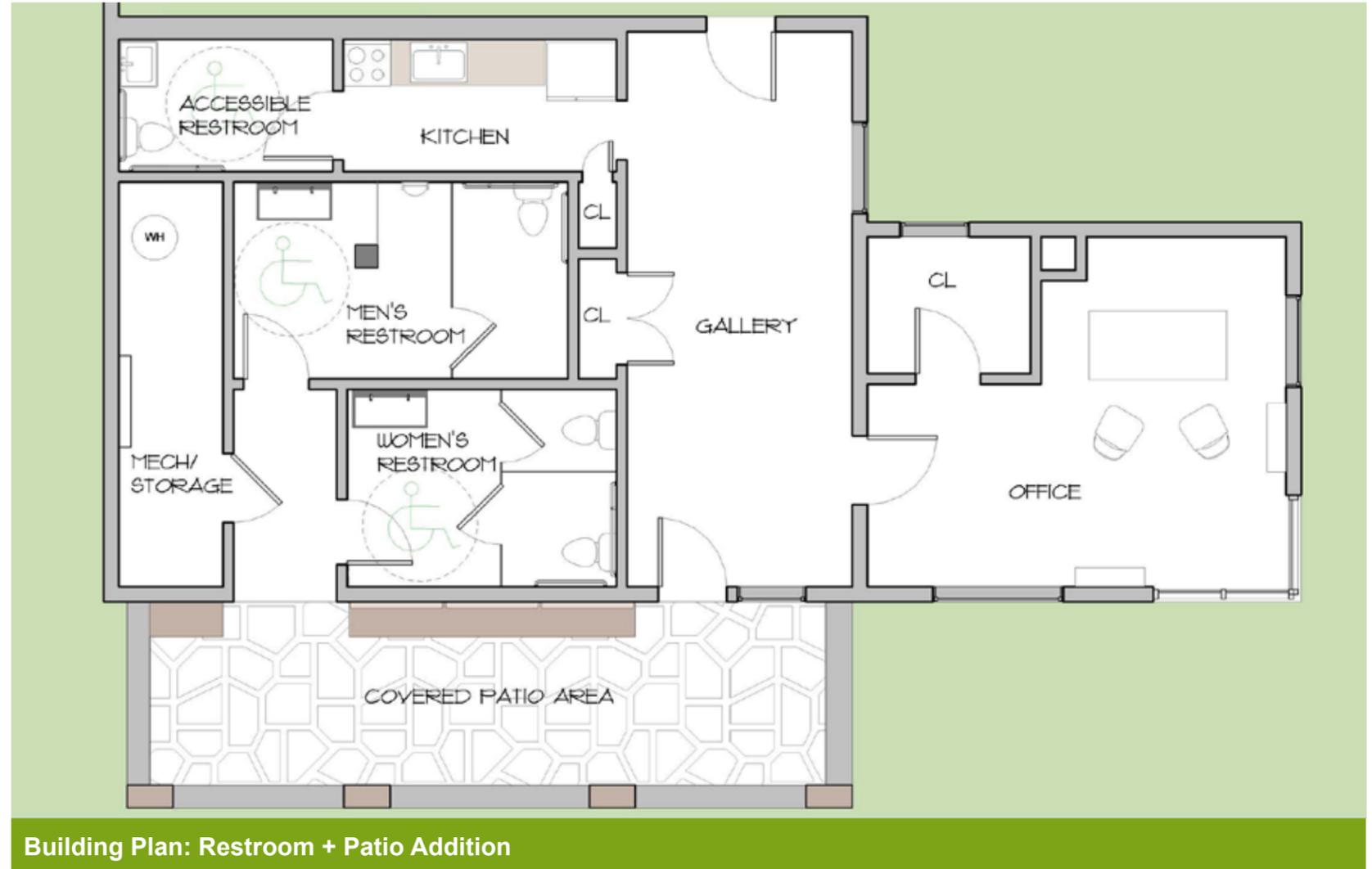


Vision for the Entrance and Parking Area

3.3 OFFICE BUILDING + PATH

During the planning process, the future of the existing building (14) was discussed. The first floor will be used as office space and a new information center for visitors. The second floor of the office building can be used for small community meetings. Finally, the most important result of the evaluation was the plan to convert the existing storage area into visitor restrooms, shown in the adjacent floor plan. The renovations around the office building would also include a new front plaza (15) and ADA-compliant ramp (13) leading to the second floor. Due to the planned loss of interior storage, a new freestanding storage building (16) and outdoor staging area (17), will be located beyond the existing office building in the area of the existing parking area.

Once visitors enter the Garden from the plaza area, they have many options for exploring. Most of the options include travel via existing paths, but the master plan proposes an additional accessible path to the north. Users can take the accessible path (having an ADA-compliant slope, surface and width (30), leading to the small pedestrian bridge and proposed wetlands garden (18) that also serves as retention for the site. The path will lead visitors through the woodland area to the existing pavilion and terminate at the central open garden and lawn area (20).





Plan Key

- 12. ADA Access to Lower Level
- 13. ADA Access to Second Level
- 14. Existing Office Building (with new restrooms)
- 15. Stone Plaza and Roofed Entrance Porch
- 16. 12' x 30' Storage Area
- 17. Gravel Service Area
- 18. Wetlands Garden
- 30. ADA Accessible Path
- 31. Existing Trails
- 32. New Trails
- RR Restroom Location (on ground level)

Plan Enlargement: Office Building + Accessible Path

0 5 10 20 Scale: 1" = 10'



Vision for the Office Building Renovation and Front Plaza

3.4 THE GARDEN + OPEN LAWN

Visitors can choose the trail (30) running north to the existing asphalt drive from the proposed parking lot or the plaza. Shady native woodlands to the east and the gardens to the west flank this path, and multiple paths intersect the asphalt path to offer alternative routes to other parts of the site.

A special and different paving pattern indicates a change in environment and directs visitors toward the open lawn on the former home site. The existing maple and cherry trees (33) adjacent to the paved path are preserved to provide a focal point as the garden plantings mature, and an axial alignment points visitors to a garden structure located in the back of the new gardens. The lawn (20) will be used for formal gatherings during small community events and informal meetings on a daily basis. Intimately sized garden niches (23) adjoin the lawn, and a set of stone steps connects the lawn to a lower garden containing a small water element (25). Each path exiting the open garden and lawn area leads into the woodlands.

Some removal of shade producing trees, particularly pines, is encouraged to maximize the opportunities for high-impact plantings in the open garden and lawn area where the new garden structure (24) will be built and the new water element (25) will be installed.

The garden niches (23) and native plants and meadow grasses (28) areas adjacent to the lawn will feature sunny and shady Piedmont native plantings. Emphasis is placed on plants with maximum visual impact, the ability to attract birds, bees and butterflies, and a broad range of flowering times.

Plants for sunnier areas can include:

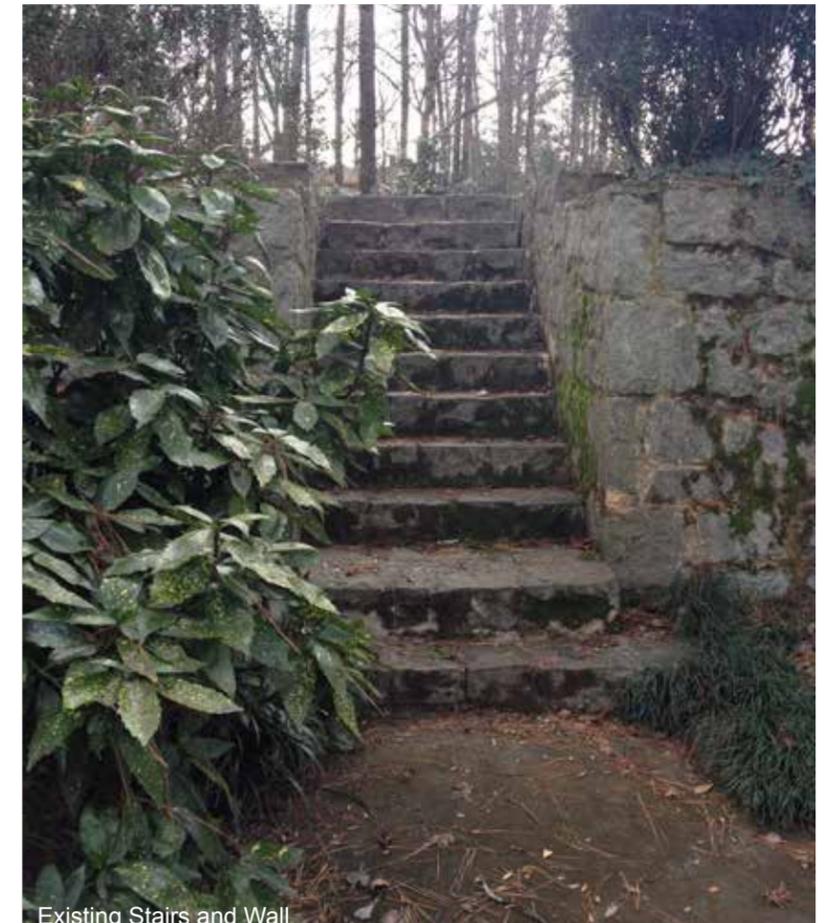
- Goldenrod
- Asters
- Joe pye weed
- White wild indigo
- Purple coneflower
- Mountain mint
- Bee balm
- Boneset
- Butterfly weed
- Rudbeckias
- Phlox Carolina
- Dogtooth daisy
- Little bluestem
- Big bluestem
- Pink muhly
- Ironweed
- Sundrops

In the areas with greater shade below the terraced stone walls of the former homestead, visitors will see a variety of shade-loving plants, including:

- Trout lily
- Bloodroot
- Wild geranium
- Toothwort
- Green and gold
- Christmas fern
- Yellow wood poppy
- Fire pink
- Solomon's Seal
- Mayapple
- Heartleaf ginger
- White turtlehead
- Jack in the pulpit
- Barbara's buttons
- Black cohosh
- Eastern columbine
- Royal fern
- Dixie wood fern
- Fancy fern
- Marginal wood fern
- Thimbleweed
- Goatsbeard



Open Lawn Area



Existing Stairs and Wall



Plan Key

- 20. Lawn
- 21. Big Leaf Magnolia
- 22. Natural Children's Play Area
- 23. Separate Seating Area
- 24. Garden Structure with Roof
- 25. Water Element
- 26. Lower Patio
- 27. Existing and New Stone Site Walls w/ max 30"
High Terraced Planting Beds
- 28. Native Plants and Meadow Grass
- 30. ADA Accessible Path
- 31. Existing Trails
- 32. New Trails
- 33. Maple and Cherry Trees to be Saved
- 37. Existing Fence and Well

Plan Enlargement: Gardens + Open Lawn Area





Vision for the Open Lawn and Garden Area

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4.0 IMPLEMENTATION

4.1 CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS + COST ESTIMATE

The project implementation plan weighs three factors - Constructability, Cost, and Priority - to outline a phased framework for construction. TSW has divided the plan into project groups based on constructability and assigned a rough order of magnitude cost to each group, as shown in the Construction Projects Diagram on the adjacent page.

Project groups A through E were identified based on the following criteria for constructability:

- Providing capacity required to service future stages of work (ie: parking and storm water attenuation)
- Access
- Construction staging
- Minimize disturbance to previous work
- Minimize disturbance to garden areas
- Minimize disturbance to garden operations (i.e.: areas can be open during construction)
- Types of work (hardscape vs. softscape)

Estimating cost for Woodlands Garden is cannot be precise at this early conceptual stage in the design process. The sensitive nature of the gardens and the need to minimize impacts are also factors affecting cost. Where practical, TSW has provided additional cost allowances for work that may have higher risk factors, such as connecting to aged infrastructure, unknown conditions, or potential access issues. The cost estimate is organized by project groups A through E, corresponding with the Construction Projects Diagram.

Project prioritization is based on discussions with the Woodlands Garden Board. TSW presented the Master Plan, Construction Projects Diagram, and projected costs to the Board for input on project priorities. The Board considered factors including project need, cost, constructability, operations, and timing in order to comment on the implementation priority of each component project. The Implementation Plan shows each project component’s general location on the site, and the Key indicates a projected order of magnitude cost and a suggested sequencing of installation for each component of the work.

PROJECT ORDER OF MAGNITUDE COST

	A1.	Entrance + Parking Area	\$220K - \$280K
	A2.	ADA Building Access + Entrance Plaza	\$50K - \$60K
	A3.	Detention System Enhancements	\$45K - \$50K
	B1.	Service + Storage Area	\$65K - \$72K
	B2.	Visitor Restrooms	\$30K - \$36K
	C1.	ADA-Compliant Path	\$20K - \$30K
	C2.	Upper Open Garden / Lawn Area	\$135K - \$150K
	C3.	Lower Open Garden / Lawn Area	\$22K - 28K
	D.	Loop Driveway	\$30K - \$36K
	E.	Natural Children’s Play Area	\$32K - \$38K

TOTAL		\$650.5K - \$784K
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4.2 CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS DIAGRAM

