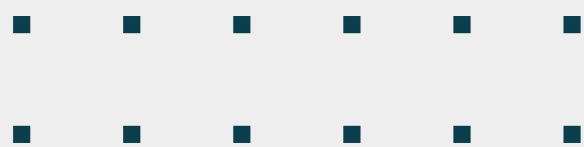




# Nature Center Design

# Process

City Council Retreat | February 2026



# TABLE OF CONTENTS



**Background**



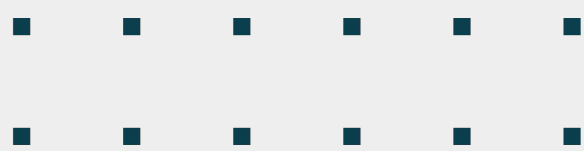
**RFQ Process**



**Three Concepts**



**Moving Forward**



# Background

- Lewisville 2025
  - Green Centerpiece and Extending the Green
  - LLELA Lease
- Green Centerpiece Master Strategy
  - Original version
    - Partnership approach – design charrette
    - LISD, Audubon, UNT struggles and COVID
    - LLELA Interpretive Plan
  - Version 2.0
    - updates in 2022 and 2025
- Healthy Infrastructure Plan
  - High Priority Need List: 2.3.2
  - Charrette and Business Plan



# Nature Center Basics

## 2023 Charrette

- Approximately 20,000 square feet
- Expandable multi-purpose spaces/classrooms
- Unique spaces for:
  - Interpretation and retail
  - Administration and storage
- Outstanding sense of welcoming, arrival and entry
- Design that “brings the outside in”



# Nature Center Basics

## Business Plan

- Market Analysis – 25 and 50 mile service radius, similar centers
- Operational Model – uses, staffing model
- Financial Pro Forma
  - Financial Support and Sustainability Strategy
  - Targeting a 50% recovery rate overall
  - Revenue Streams
    - programs, sales, rentals
    - fundraising, membership
- Confirmed site and design recommendations
  - North Kealy Street within City Lease for Utilities
    - updated USACE lease in 2024



# RFQ Process

- **Request for Qualifications**
  - Support from Purchasing & Legal
  - 15 Submissions
- **Review Committee**
  - Review Committee
    - PARD and Public Services
  - Attendance and input during selection
    - CMO and Purchasing
    - Partner representatives
      - UNT, LISD, Friends of LLELA



# Highlights of RFQ

- **Design Priorities**

- Flexible Space – Classrooms, Lectures, Events
- Interpretive Exhibits – Restoration, Biodiversity, History
- Sustainability – Rain catchments, Bioswales, Passive Solar
- Exceed ADA Standards – Parking, Accessibility
- USACE – Security protocol, vehicular access
- Other elements – Water feature/pond , Nature themed playground, 10MWP

- **Community Impact**

- Education – Learning, Curiosity, Programming
- Destination – Tourism, Local Economy
- Legacy for Lewisville – Strengthens Community Bond

- **Budgetary Expectations**

- \$11-13m including design, permitting and construction
- Bring solutions for design elements not within budget

Lewisville Parks & Recreation



# PSAs and Workshop

- Executed PSAs

- Allowed City to retain all design ideas and concepts
- Pull good ideas into final design

- Mandatory Workshop (3 finalists)

- City Presentation
  - Allowed City tell our story and set expectations
- LLELA partners to be part of process
- Opportunity for firms to conduct fact finding



# Finalist's Concepts



- **Presentation Day!**

- Filled with excitement from staff
- Held at Hedrick House

- **Firm concept presentations**

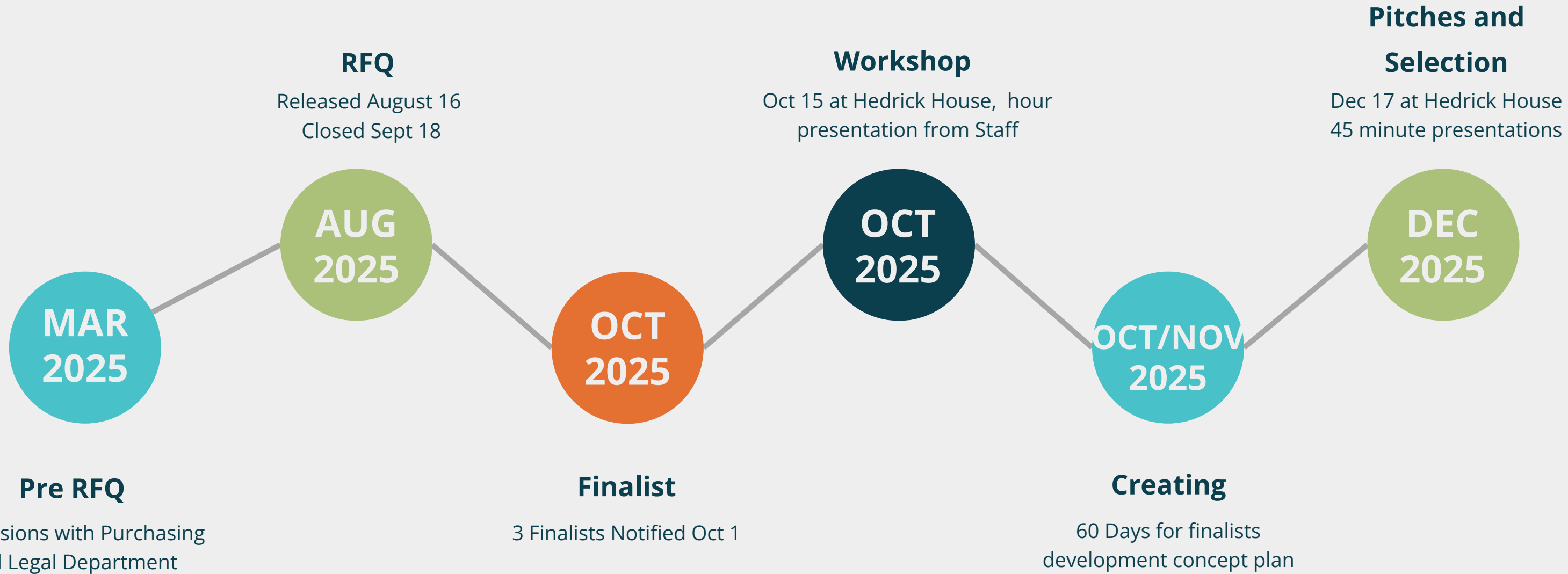
- 45 minute presentations
- 15 minutes for questions from review committee

- **Allowed City to see their concepts and processes**

- How firms listened, researched and embraced our vision
- Team chemistry – within teams and with City staff



# TIMELINE



# Concepts



## Gensler

Team: Gensler and Design Workshop  
Framework: Engage, Discover, Analyze and Recommend  
Verbal confirmation concept is within budget

## GFF

Team: GFF, MSR and Studio Outside  
Framework: Context, Process, Design  
Provided a detailed OPCC within budget

## GSBS

Team: GSBS  
Framework: Site, Analysis, Storytelling and Design  
Provided high level OPCC within budget



# GFF/MSR

## lewisville nature center

Design Competition Presentation  
December 17, 2025



Lewisville Parks & Recreation

**GFF**design + **MSR**Design + **studio****Outside**

# FRAMEWORK

**INTENT** To help communicate the project context as we currently understand it, our collaborative design process, and our design response.

## OUTLINE

### Context

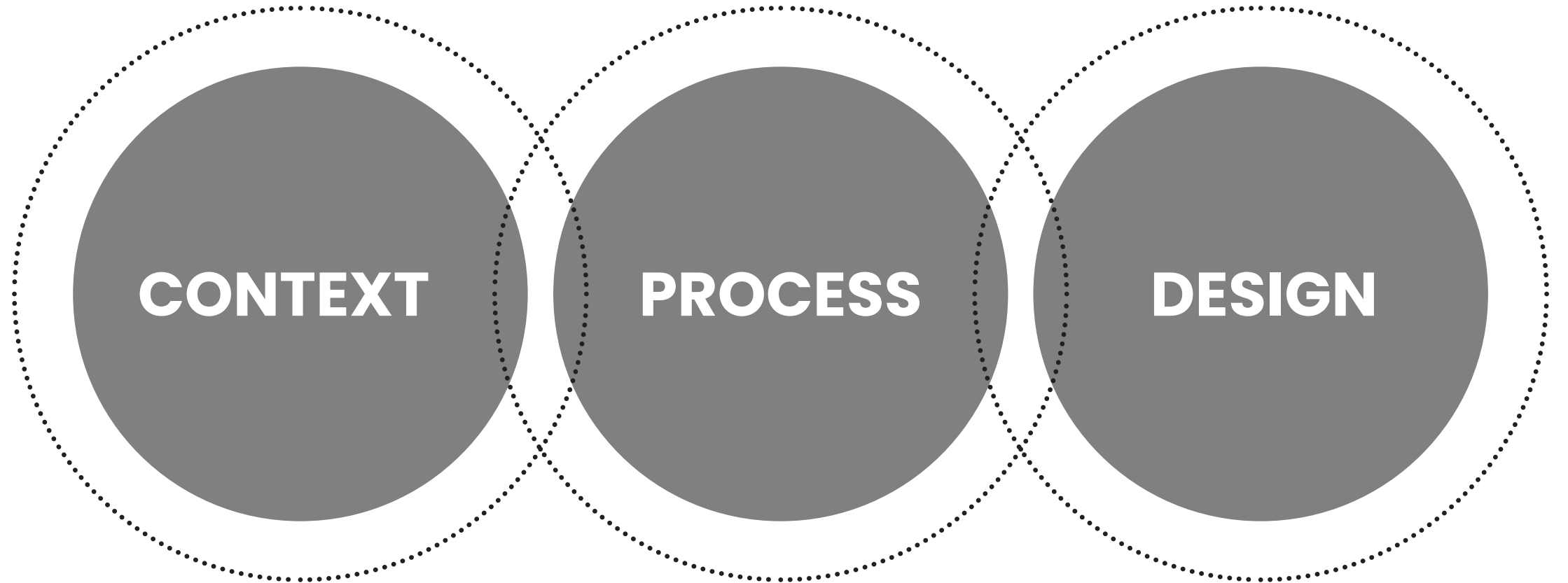
Ecosystems  
Human Habitation  
Restoration

### Process

Collaborative Design  
Budget

### Design

Site  
Architecture  
Exhibits



# CONTEXT

## ECOSYSTEMS

**ECOTONES** An ecotone is a transition zone where ecological systems meet and mingle, sometimes forming a new and different community richer in species than either system in isolation.

**INSPIRATION FROM JOHN MUIR** *“Most people are on the world, not in it – having no conscious sympathy or relationship to anything about them – undiffused, separate, and rigidly alone like marbles of polished stone, touching but separate.”*

*“When one tugs at the single thing in nature, he finds it attached to the rest of the world.”*



**EASTERN  
CROSS  
TIMBERS**



**ELM FORK  
OF THE  
TRINITY  
RIVER**



**BLACKLAND  
PRAIRIE**

# CONTEXT

## HUMAN HABITATION

### INDIGENOUS AMERICAN TRIBES OF THE REGION

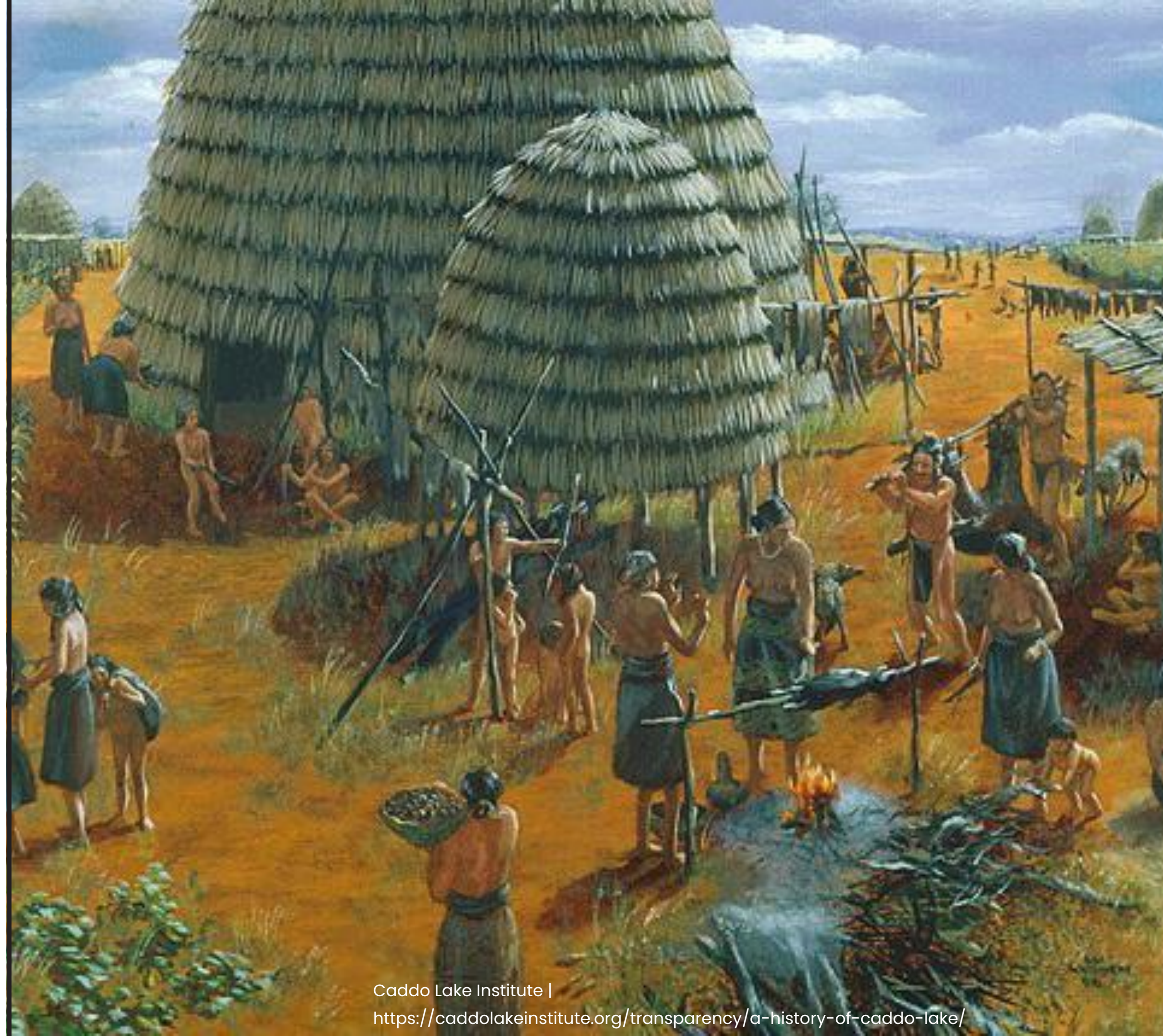
The Caddo people were a Native American tribe who thrived along the Trinity River and saw it as a vital source of sustenance and significant spiritual and cultural landmark.

By A.D. 900, Caddo groups were complex and socially ranked societies with civic-ceremonial centers, elaborate cultural rituals, and extensive interregional trade.

At the time of sustained European contact with the Caddo groups in the late 1600's, an economic symbiosis began as the two groups shared overlapping trade interests and infrastructure.

By the early 1840's all Caddo groups had moved to the Brazos River area to remove themselves from Anglo-American repressive measures and colonization efforts.

In 1855, the Caddo were forcefully placed on the Brazos Indian Reservation.



# CONTEXT

## HUMAN HABITATION

### EUROPEAN SETTLEMENT

Denton County was established in 1846, shortly after Texas abandoned its dream of being a Republic and joined the United States.

Early pioneers settled along the Trinity River and its tributaries and on the edge of the frontier as it moved westward. The first Angle settlements were in the region that would become Denton County. In 1890, the University of North Texas was established.

In 1920, the Elm Fork of the Trinity River was dammed to form Lake Dallas.

Lewisville was incorporated in 1925.

In 1948, construction of the current Lewisville Dam began. In 1957, the older Dallas Lake dam was breached to create the current Lewisville Lake. By the 1970s, Denton County was the fastest-growing county in the country.

Today, Lewisville is in the Dallas - Fort Worth Metroplex with a population of over 8.4 million.



# CONTEXT

## HUMAN HABITATION

### **LEWISVILLE LAKE ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING AREA**

The wilderness (within LLELA) is just a shadow of what once was. As Americans acted on the urge to expand westward, small towns were established and these settlements grew. Forests were cut. The rich prairie soil was plowed.

Curiously, the taming of the river led to the creation of our urban wilderness. In 1955, the Lewisville Lake Dam was completed, creating a reservoir to supply flood control, drinking water, and recreation. Over 2,000 acres below the dam were set aside for flood control.

In the early 1990s, LLELA was established. In 2014, The City of Lewisville, the University of North Texas, and the Lewisville Independent School District developed LLELA's current organizational structure.

LLELA's mission is to continue to improve the habitat quality of this precious land, day by day, making it richer, in hopes of giving all North Texans a place where they can connect with what once was, and still is, our natural heritage.

<https://www.llela.org/about/newsletter-sign-up/history>



# CONTEXT

## HUMAN HABITATION

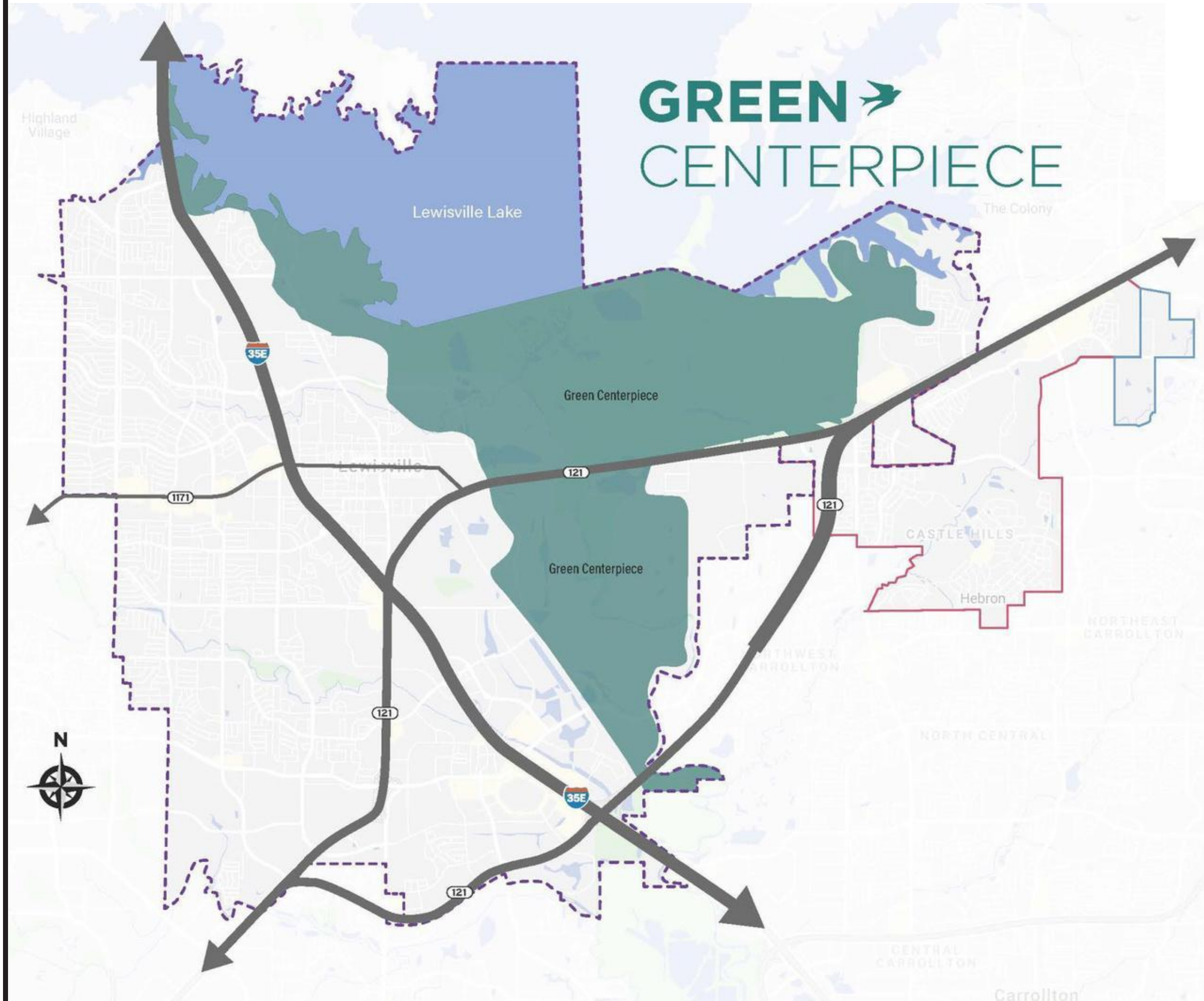
### THE GREEN CENTERPIECE

Identified as the first Big Move of the Lewisville 2025 strategic plan, its goal is to create a Green Centerpiece within the large natural area of the Elm Fork floodplain and around Lewisville Lake.

The Green Centerpiece brings focus to its unique natural areas as a central part of Lewisville's identity and one that differentiates it from the many growing communities in the region.

While the Green Centerpiece contains many recreational opportunities, it is also about sustainability, community identity, preservation, research, restoration, health, education, volunteerism, and connection with the natural environment.

This is an opportunity to enhance and enrich the diverse Lewisville community. It has the potential to be an important laboratory for learning and stewarding natural resources in the midst of a major urban area.



# CONTEXT

## RESTORATION

### RESTORATION

The rich Blackland Prairie ecosystem is largely gone now. Of the original 12 million acres, less than one tenth of one percent remains after more than 150 years of agriculture and improper grazing, followed by suburban sprawl.

A prairie can be plowed under in a few days work with the right equipment, but it takes years and years of dedicated effort to bring a prairie back once it's gone.

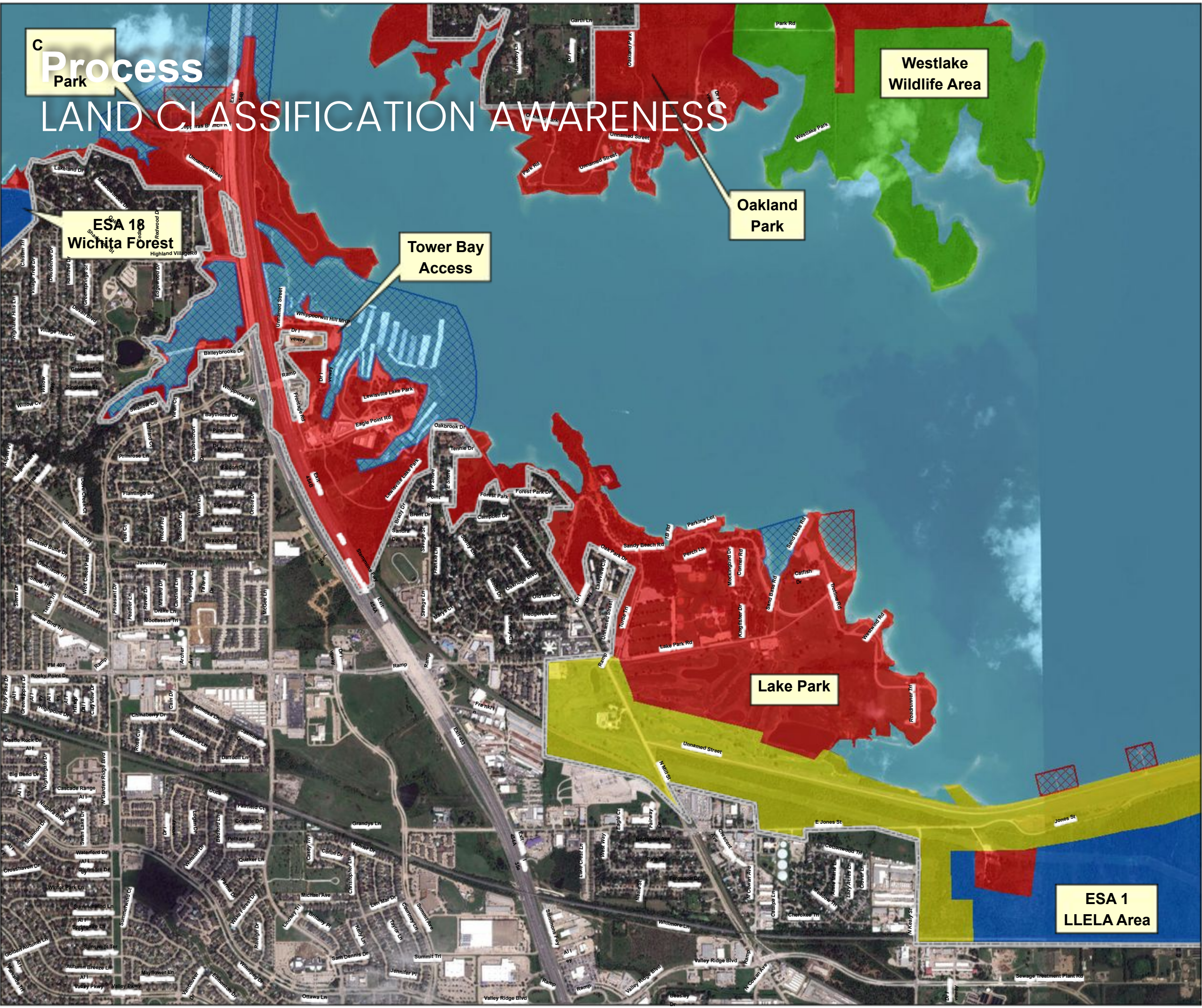
Much of LLELA contains Blackland soils, and we are working to restore this rare ecosystem.

***In some cases, a bulldozer can be a tool for restoration rather than destruction.***

***-LLELA website, 2025***



# Process LAND CLASSIFICATION AWARENESS



- FEE BOUNDARY
- LAND CLASSIFICATION**
- ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE AREA
- HIGH DENSITY RECREATION LOW
- DENSITY RECREATION PROJECT
- OPERATIONS WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT
- ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE AREA
- WATER SURFACE**
- OPEN RECREATION
- NO WAKE
- RESTRICTED

**U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS**  
**FORT WORTH DISTRICT**

---

LEWISVILLE LAKE LEWISVILLE TRINITY RIVER, TEXAS

LAKE MASTER PLAN LAND

**1** CLASSIFICATION- SHEET 01

0

5001,00

2,00

3,00

4,00

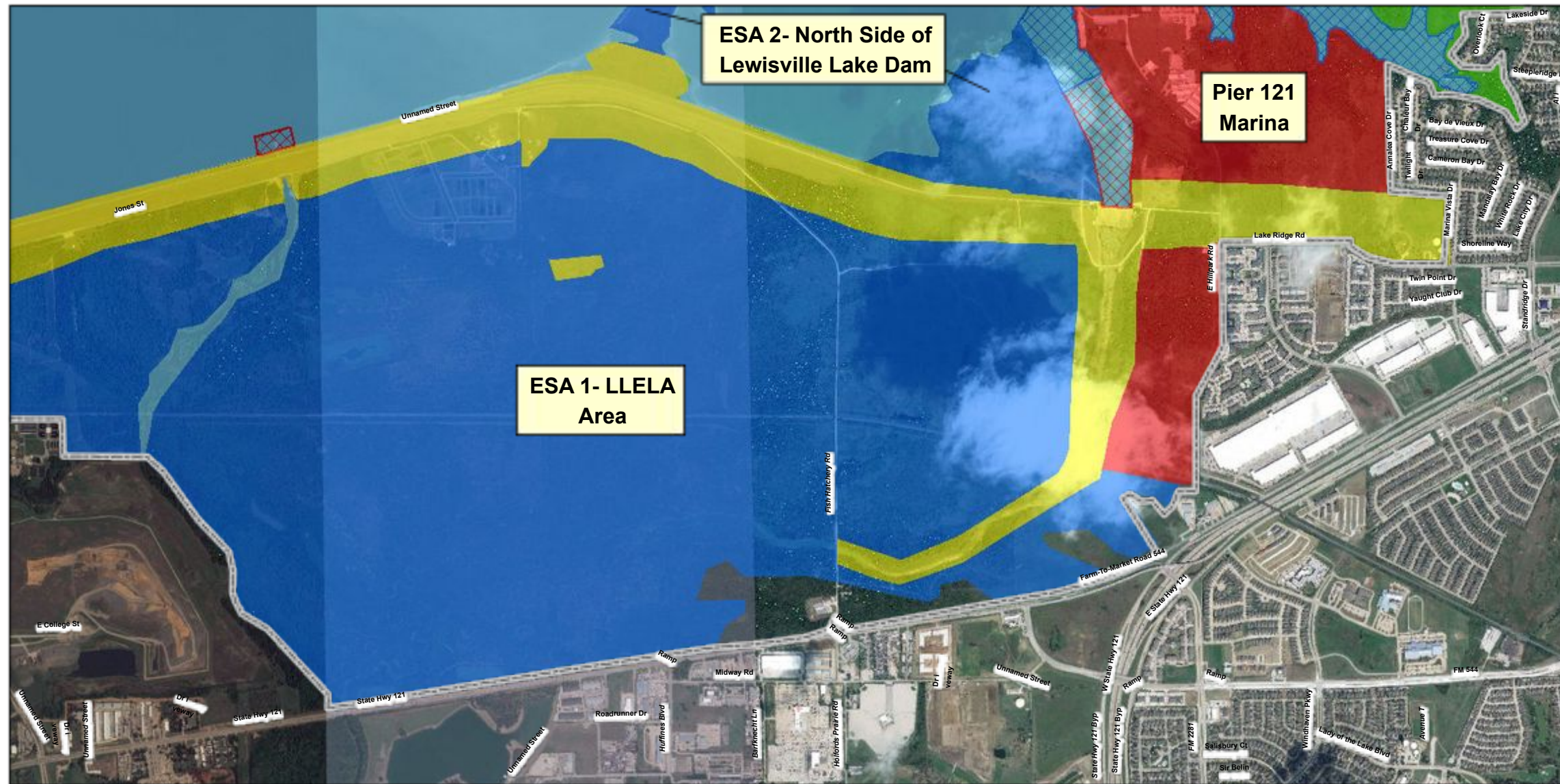
Fee

DATE:  
FEBRUARY 2020

MAP NO.  
LE20MP-OC-01

# PROCESS

## LAND CLASSIFICATION AWARENESS



- FEE BOUNDARY
- LAND CLASSIFICATION**
- ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE AREA
- HIGH DENSITY RECREATION LOW
- DENSITY RECREATION PROJECT
- OPERATIONS WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT
- 
- WATER SURFACE**
- OPEN RECREATION
- NO WAKE
- RESTRICTED



**U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS  
FORT WORTH DISTRICT**

---

LEWISVILLE LAKE LEWISVILLE  
LEWISVILLE LAKE LEWISVILLE

LAKE MASTER PLAN LAND

**1** CLASSIFICATION- SHEET 17

0 6251,250 2,50 3,75 5,00  
Fee

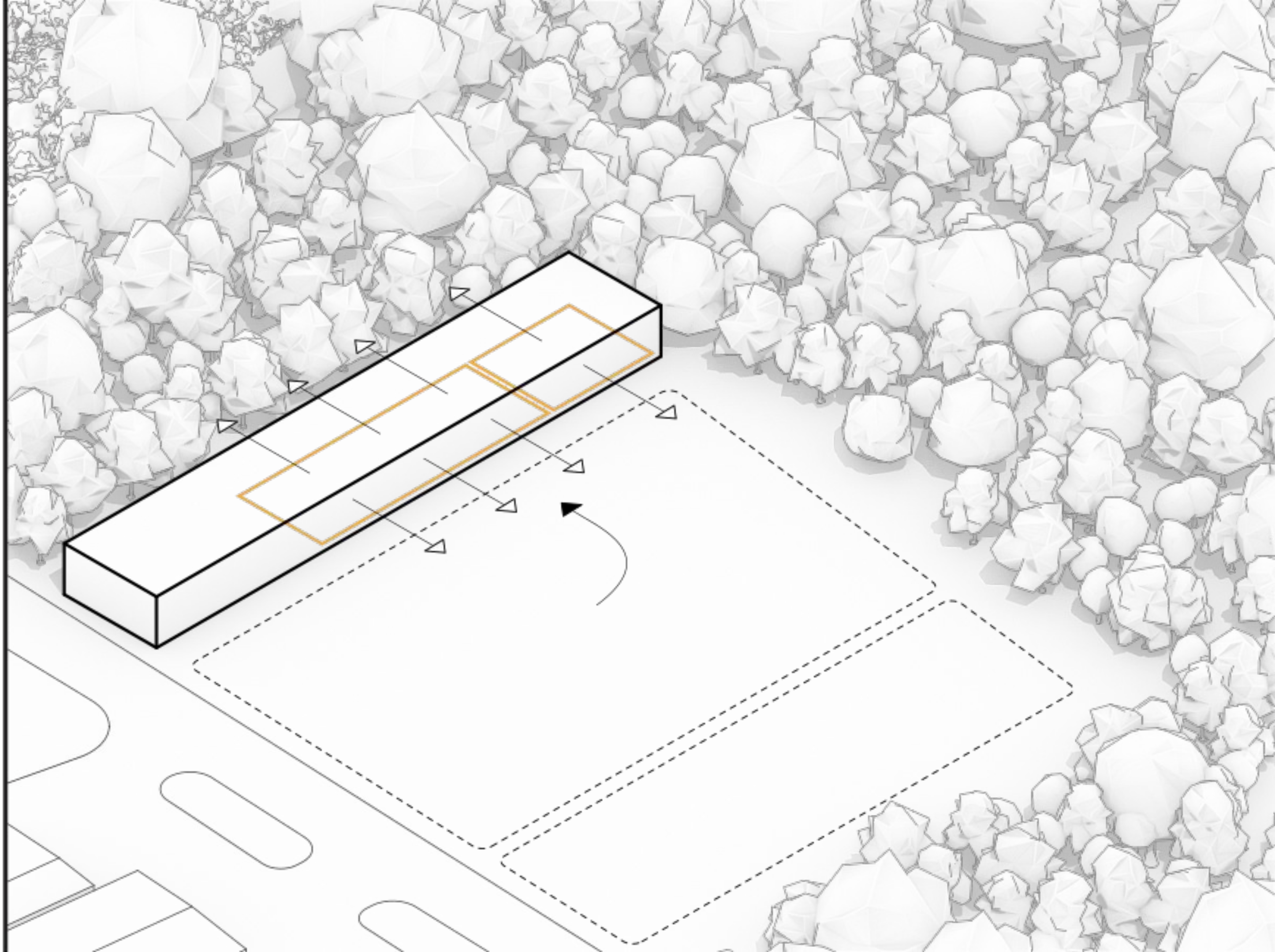
DATE: FEBRUARY 2020	MAP NO. LE20MP-OC-17
------------------------	-------------------------

# DESIGN

## DIAGRAMS

### 2 | ZERO-DEPTH ENTRY

Rotating the building mass against the existing forest maximizes the programmable site area and provides intimate views into LLELA's existing Crosstimbers and new site.

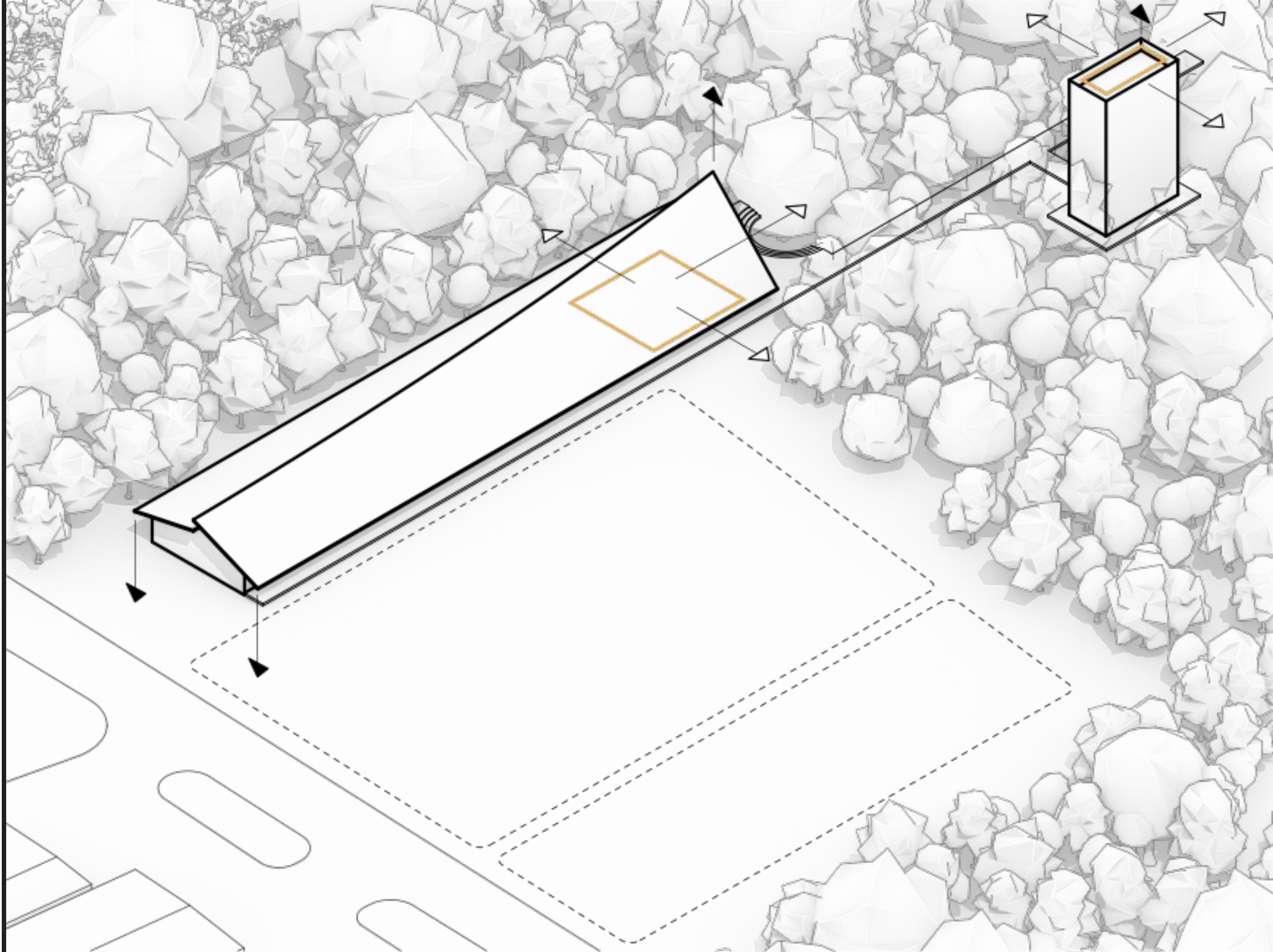


# DESIGN

## DIAGRAMS

### 4 | LOFTING THE LOG HOUSE

The architecture puts a modern twist on LLELA's gabled historic Minor-Porter Log House, lifting its curved ridge beam to culminate in dramatic views into and over the Crosstimbers canopy.

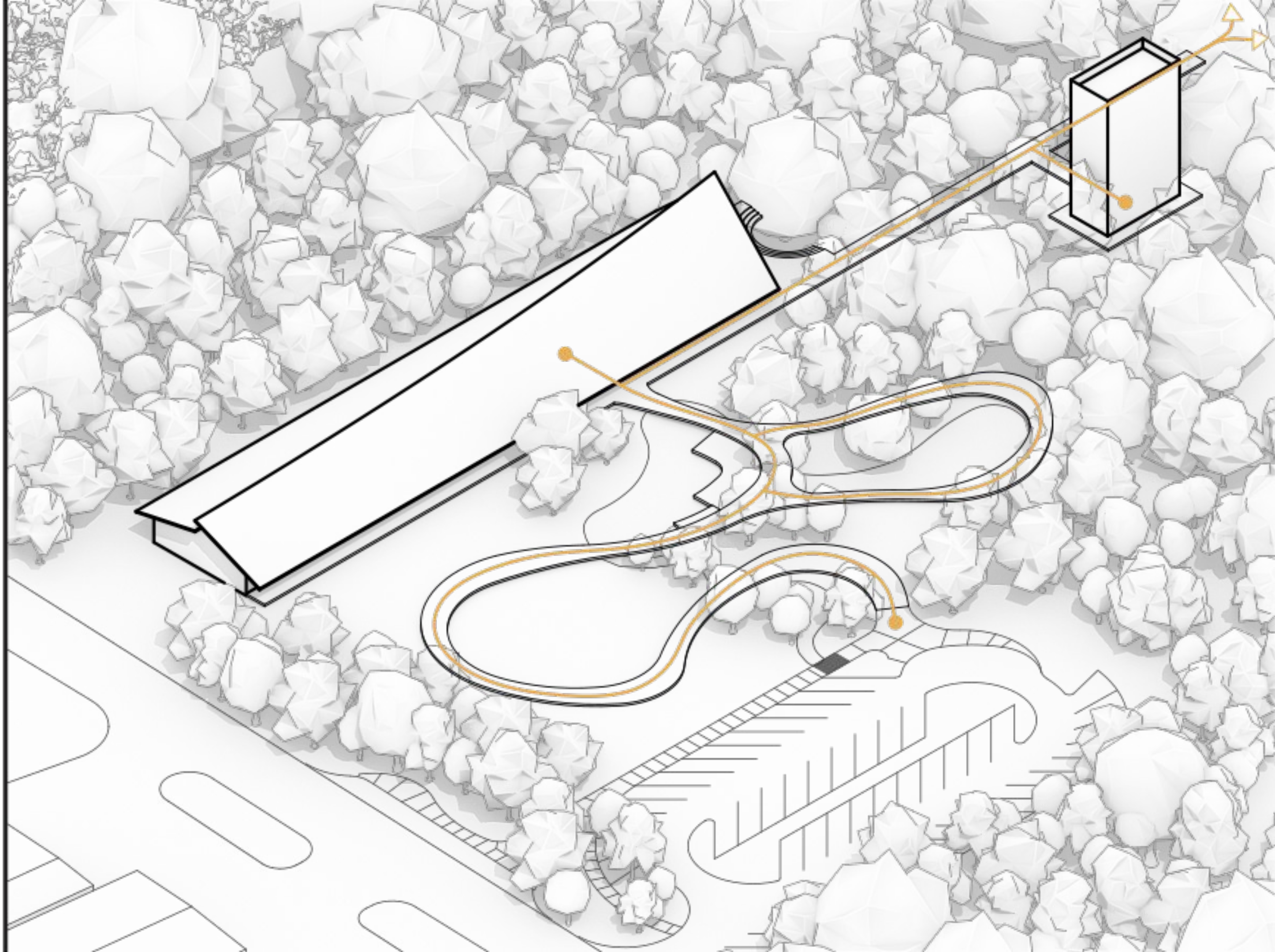


# DESIGN

## DIAGRAMS

### 5 | ECHO THE ECOTONES

The site reinterprets LLELA's ecosystems, creating an experiential and educational journey through the ecotones of the Crosstimbers, Bottomland Forest, and Blackland Prairie.



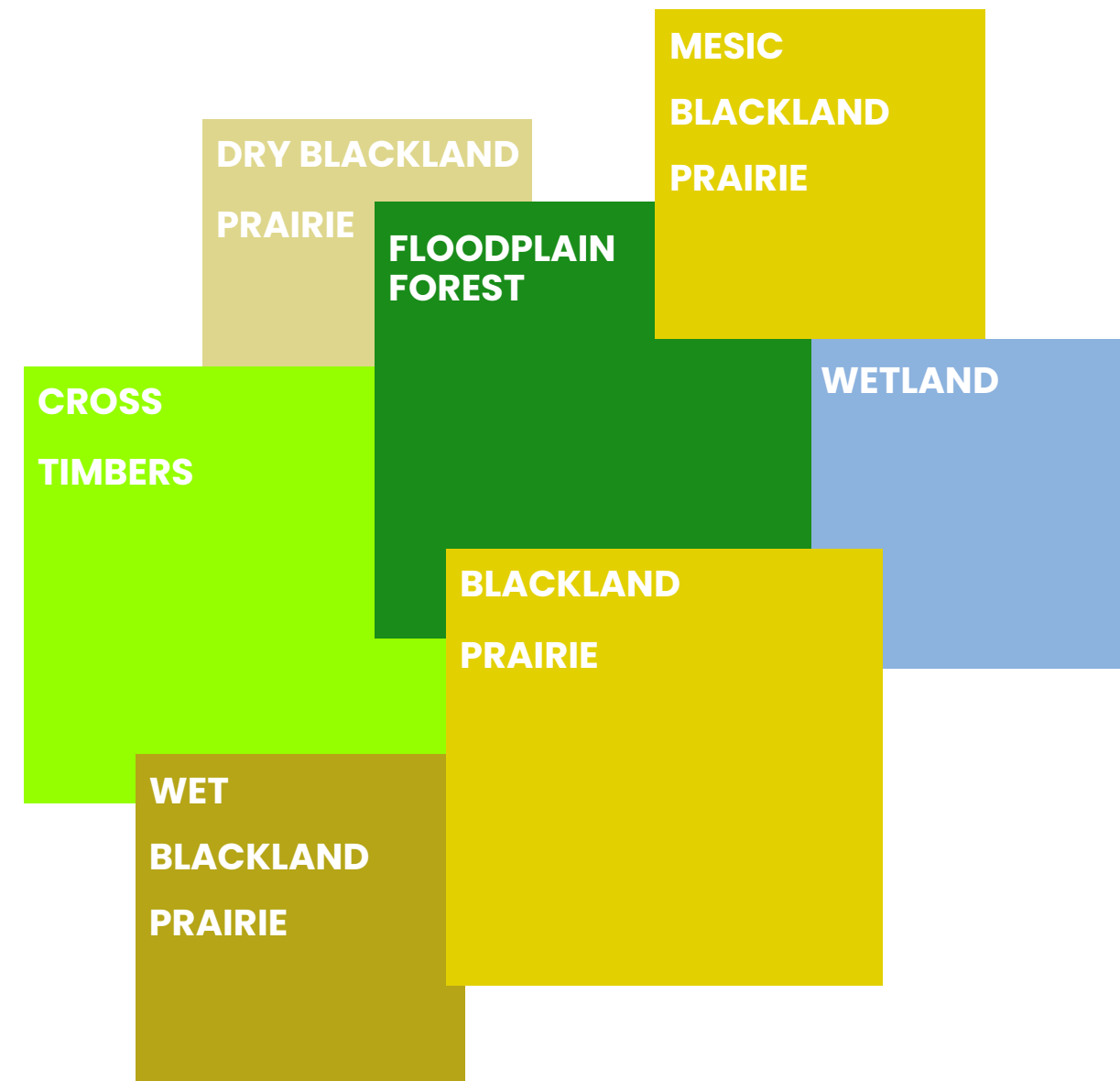
# DESIGN

## SITE

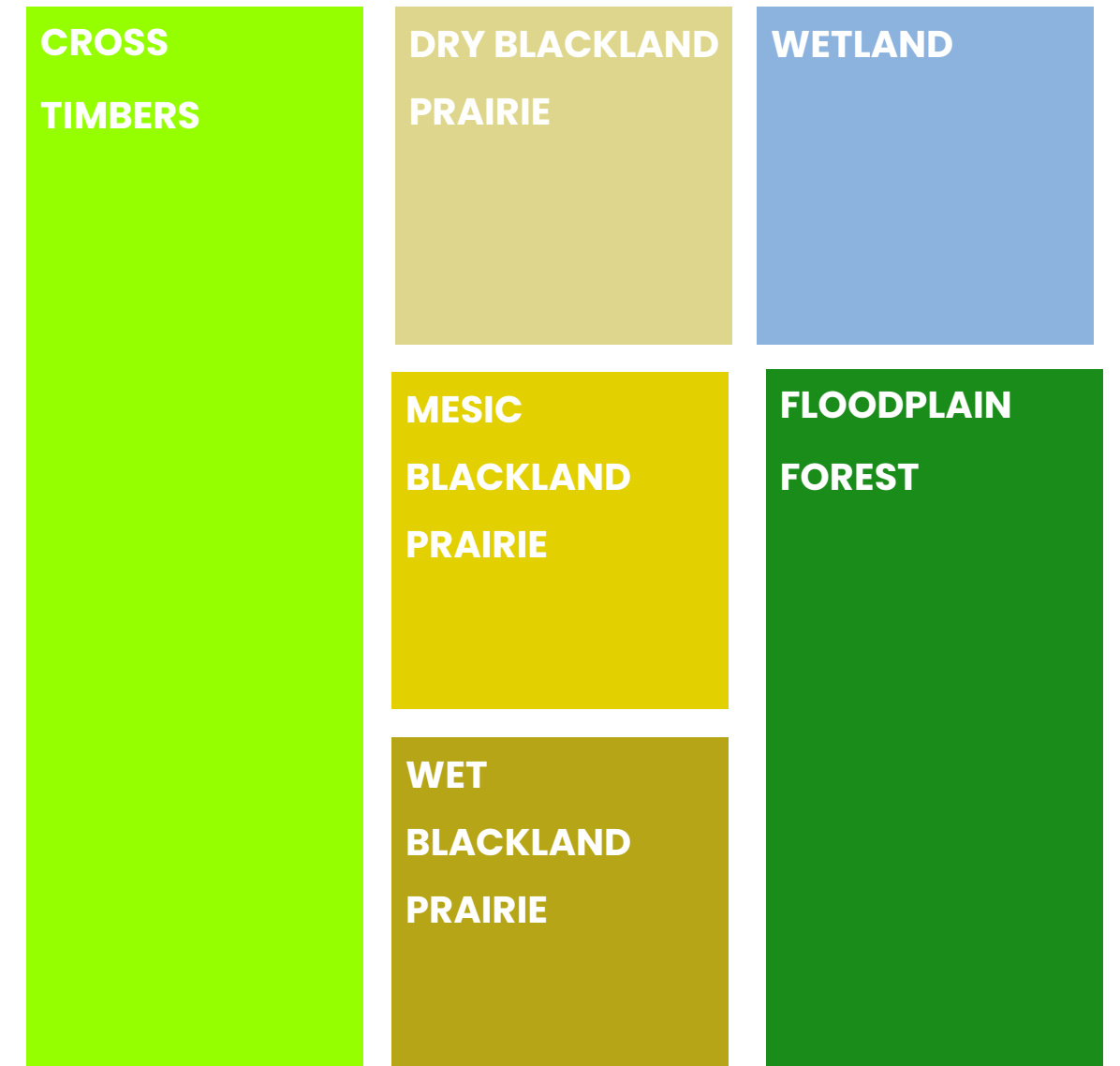
### DISTILLED ECOTONES

The landscape surrounding the new nature center at the Lewisville Lake Environmental Learning Area is conceived as a living microcosm of the site's blended ecosystems, translating their complexity into an experience that is intuitive and engaging.

## LLELA



## NATURE CENTER

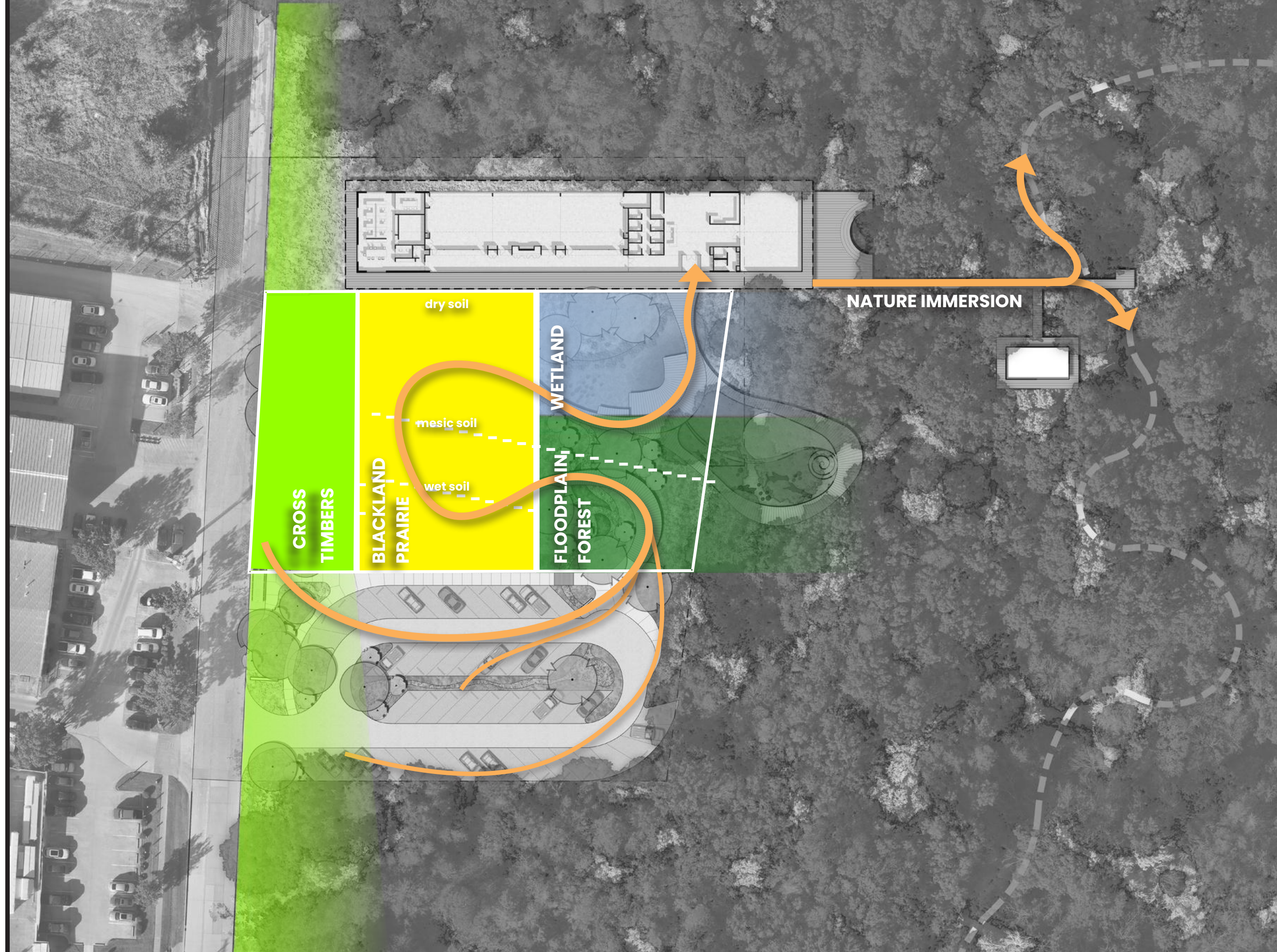


# DESIGN

## SITE

### JOURNEY THROUGH ECOTONES

Beginning at the road, a Crosstimbers forest zone forms a protective buffer, using layered woodland structure to ease the transition from the built environment into nature. From there, the landscape opens into a Blackland Prairie garden organized into three distinct areas that reveal how plant communities shift with changes in soil depth and microtopography. The journey continues into a bottomland forest setting that highlights the ecological services of floodplain systems, including water filtration, habitat creation, and seasonal inundation, expressed through a pond and a network of bioswales.



# DESIGN SITE



## SITE PLAN KEY

1. nature center
2. outdoor classroom
3. education boardwalk
4. pond
5. observation tower
6. nature play
7. bus parking
8. bioswale
9. entry sign
10. parking lot

# DESIGN SITE

## EDUCATIONAL ECOTONES

Each ecotone is interpreted on site as a distinct learning environment. The Crosstimbers focuses on the role of woodland edges and canopy structure. The Blackland Prairie reveals how soil depth and microtopography influence plant communities. In the bottomland ecotone, interpretive elements emphasize hydrology and ecosystem services. Together, these zones form an educational experience that makes ecological differences and connections apparent to the everyday visitor.

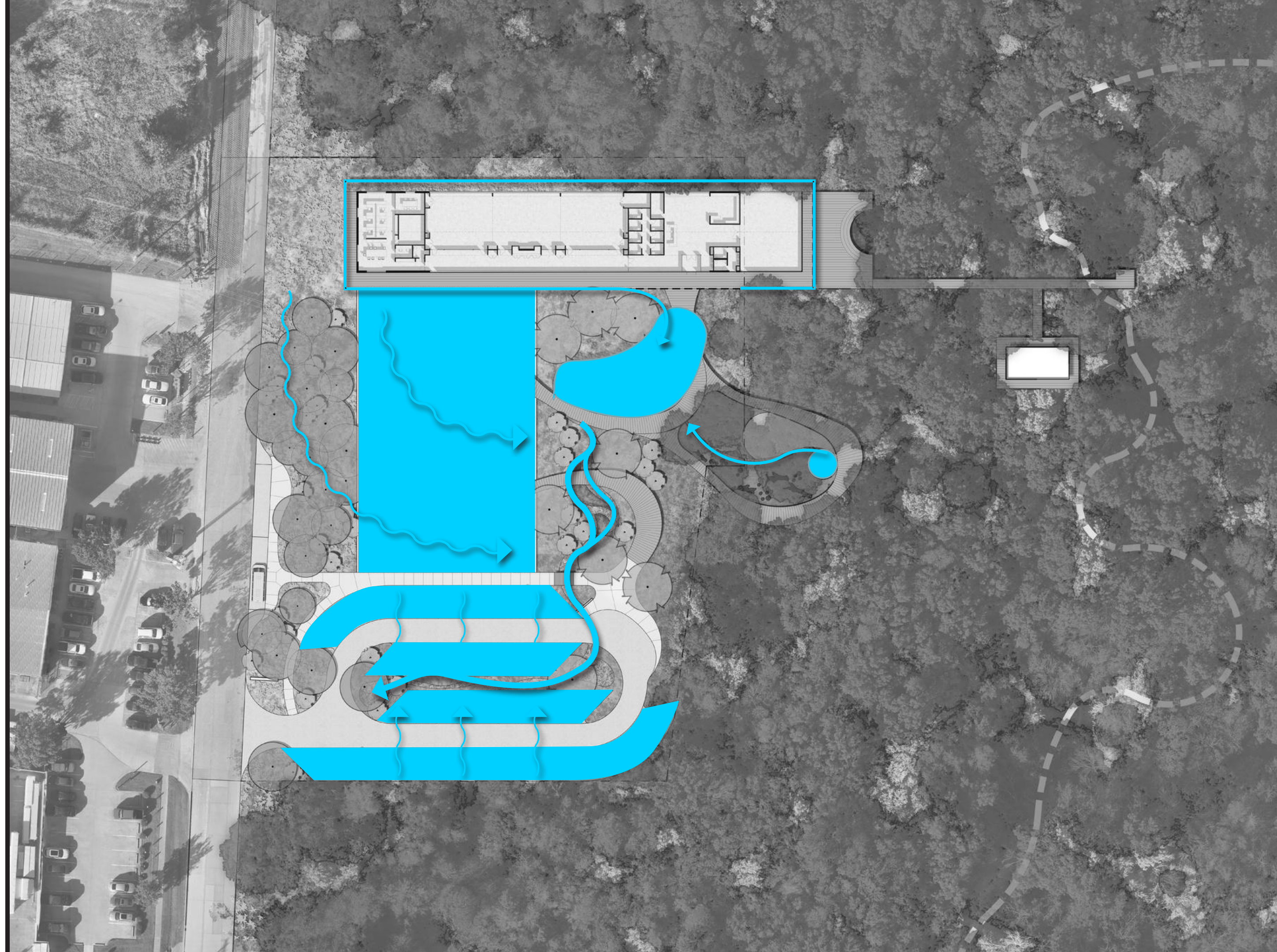


# DESIGN

## SITE

### STORY OF WATER

All water on site is managed as a visible and educational part of the landscape. Runoff from the structure, paths, and parking areas is directed into a system of bioswales, rain gardens, and permeable parking surfaces, where it slowly filters into the ground. This demonstrates how vegetation, soil, and landform work together to improve water quality, reduce runoff, and support habitat.



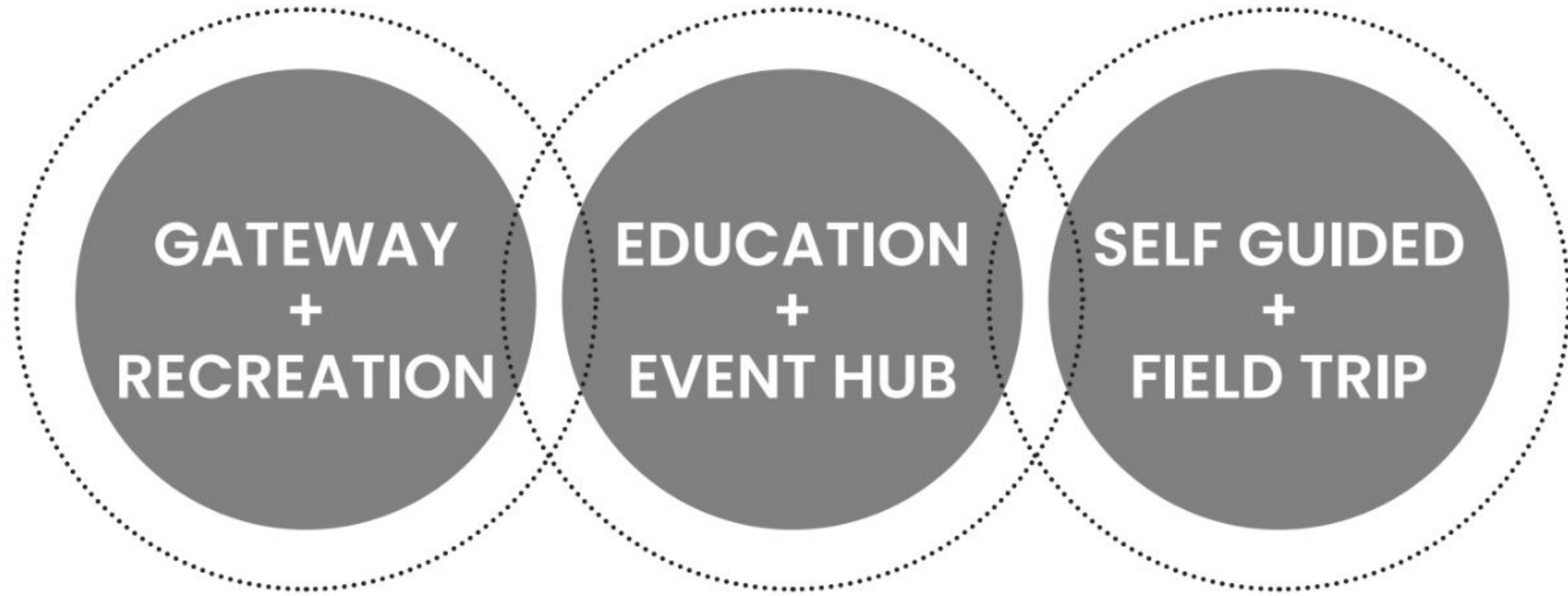
**DESIGN**  
**SITE**



**DESIGN**  
SITE

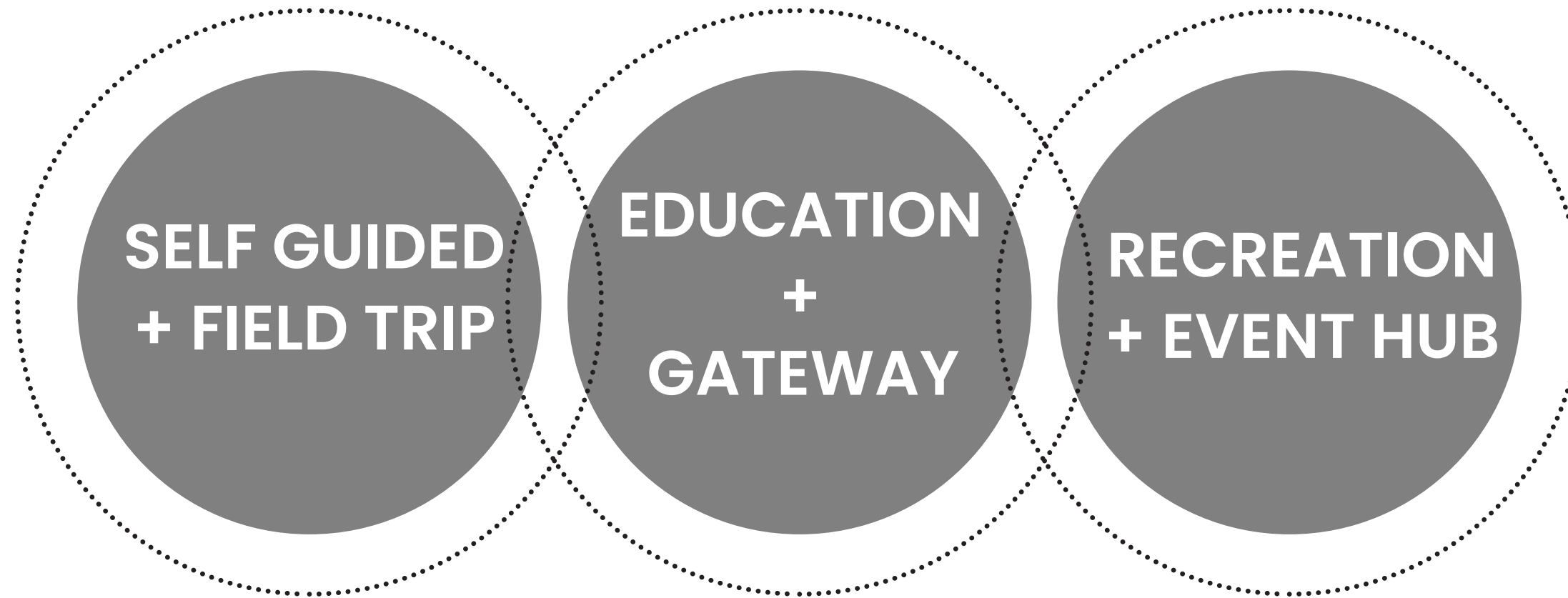


**DESIGN**  
NATURE CENTER



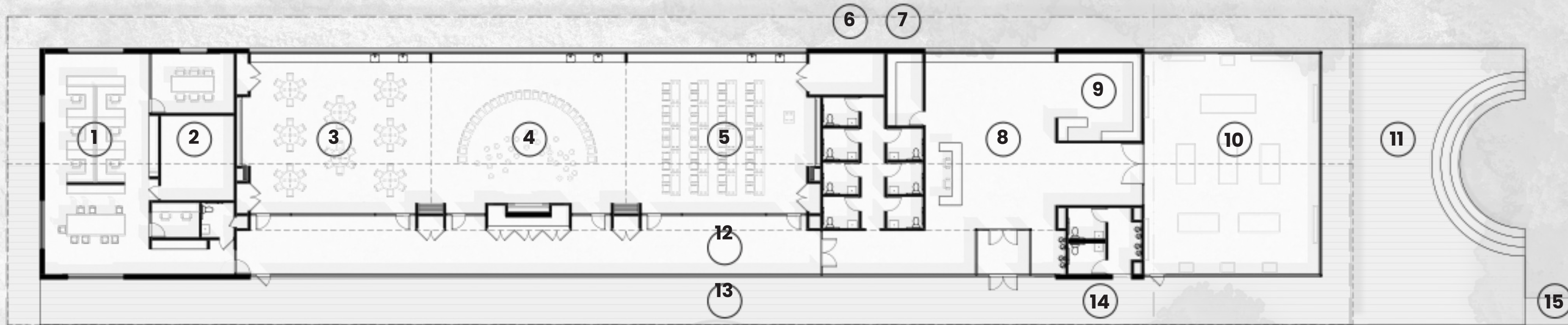
# DESIGN

## NATURE CENTER



# DESIGN

## NATURE CENTER



### NATURE CENTER AS EDUCATIONAL GATEWAY

The Lewisville Nature Center is designed as a zero-depth entry into the Lewisville Lake Environmental Learning Area that provides an invitation to learn, explore, and partake in the site's incredible story of environmental stewardship and restoration. Comprised of an exhibit hall, lobby, flexible classrooms, and staff space, the Lewisville Nature Center is LLELA's new front door to catalyze its next chapter as a center for research, education, recreation, and community identity.

### FLOOR PLAN KEY

1. staff office
2. mechanical
3. classroom 1
4. classroom 2
5. classroom 3
6. furniture storage
7. trailhead equipment and rental storage
8. entry lobby
9. gift shop
10. exhibit hall
11. outdoor classroom
12. circulation
13. exterior deck
14. exterior restrooms
15. exterior boardwalk to observation tower and blackjack trail

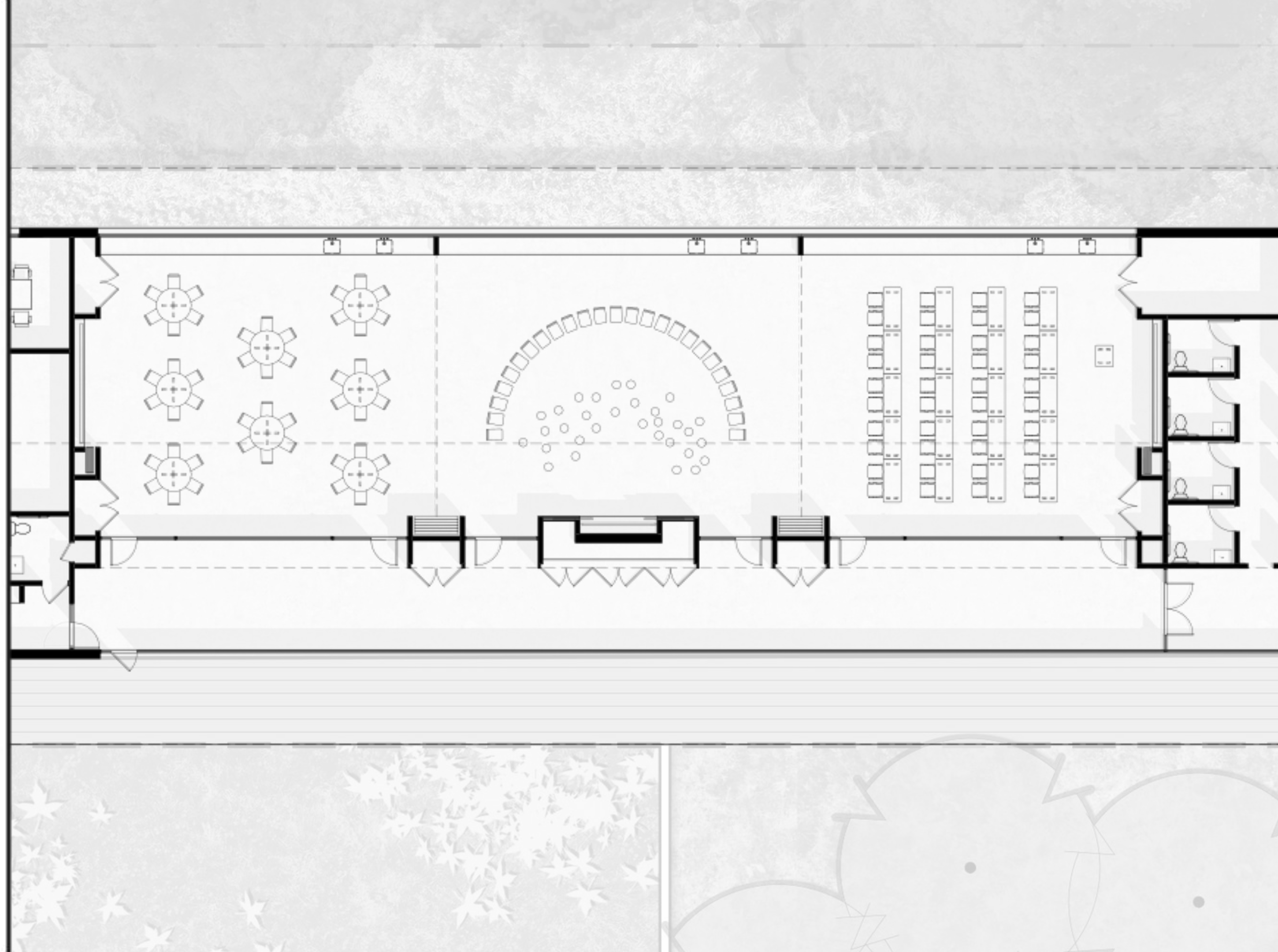


# DESIGN

## CLASSROOMS

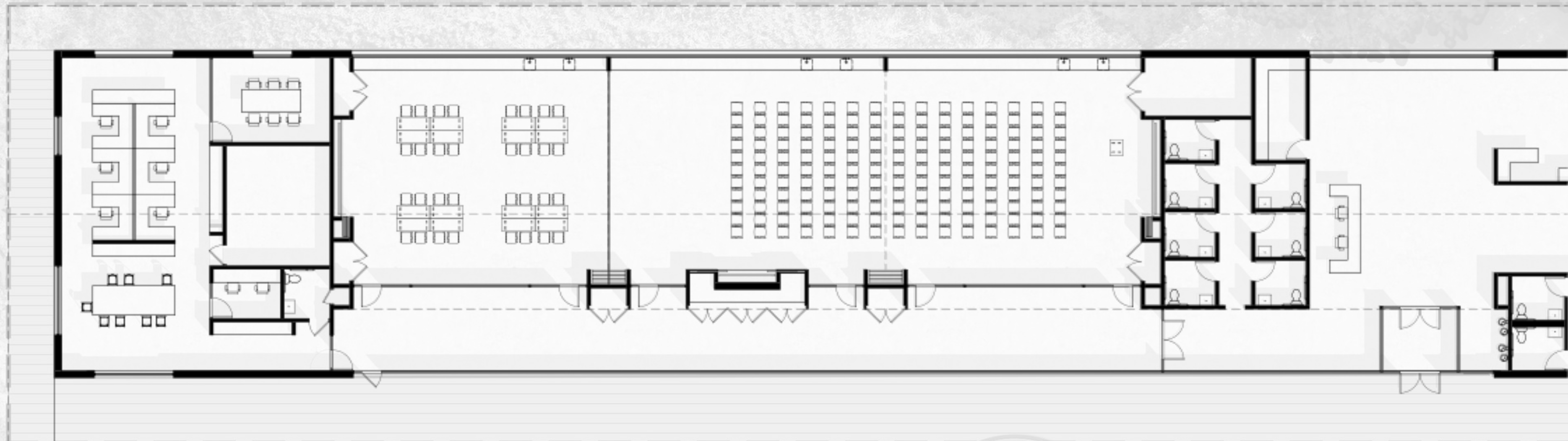
### PROGRAMMATIC FLEXIBILITY

Three flexible classrooms support a broad array of educational programming. Separated by operable partitions, each classroom can be used individually or opened to its neighbors to accommodate larger events. The classrooms face north to provide controlled daylight and compelling views into the Crosstimbers. A continuous bar of storage, countertop, and sinks are integrated below the window sill. Each classroom has its own presentation area with the ability to tuck screens behind wooden doors when a sleeker atmosphere is desired for a rental opportunity.



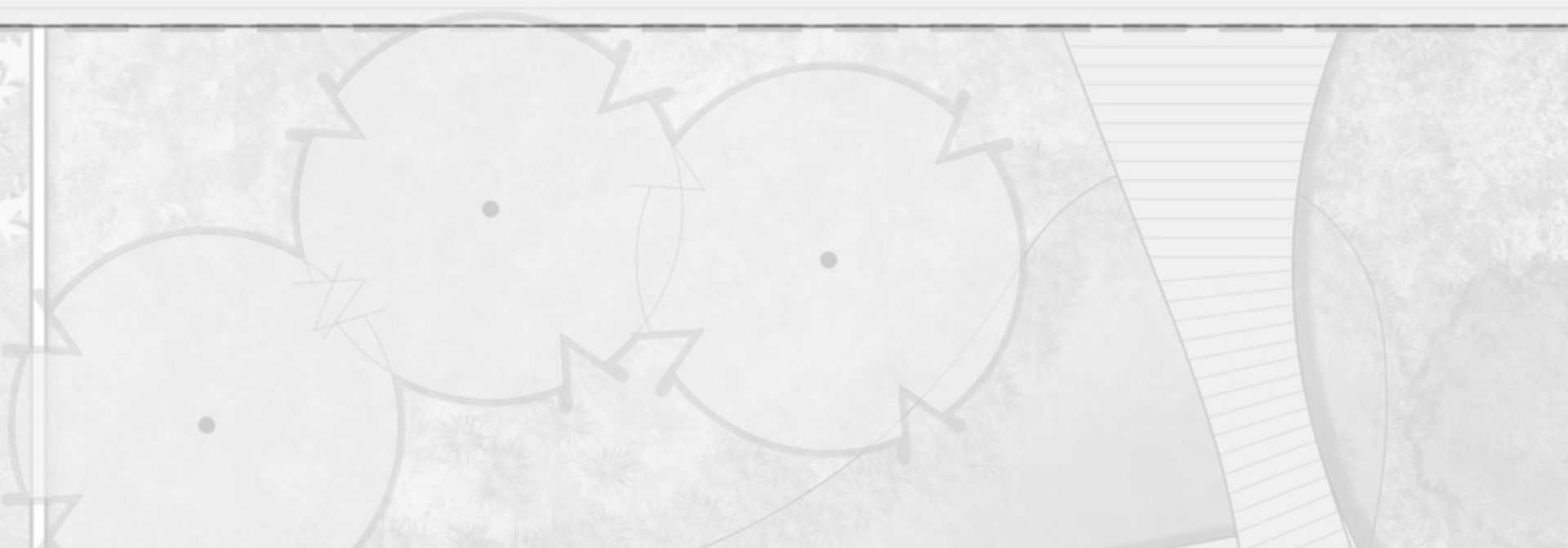
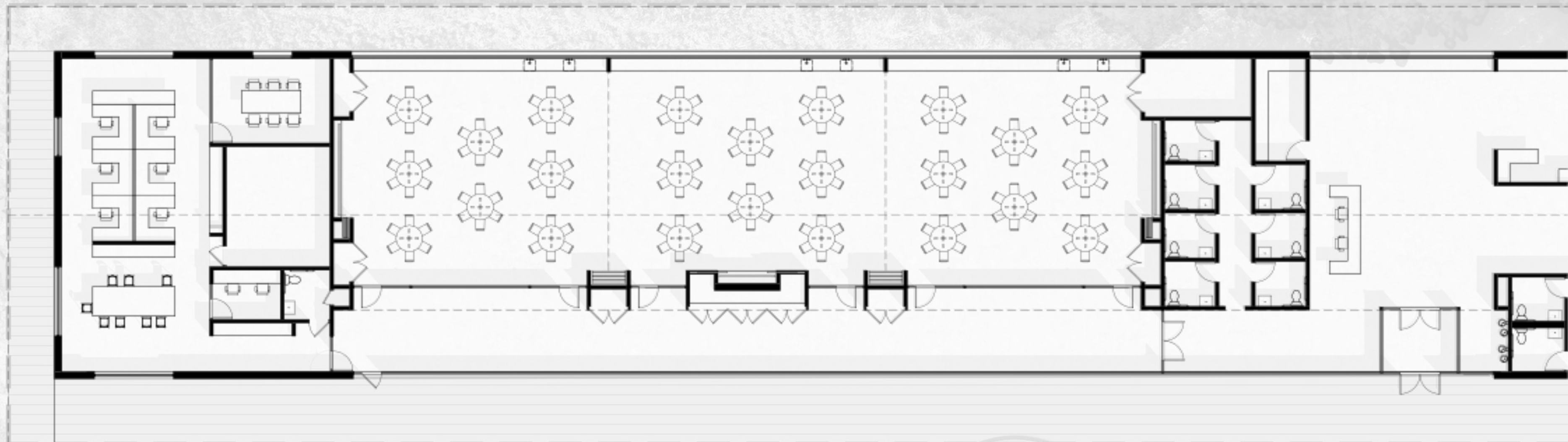
# DESIGN

## CLASSROOMS



# DESIGN

## CLASSROOMS



**DESIGN**  
CLASSROOMS



**DESIGN**  
CLASSROOMS



# DESIGN

## LOBBY

### YOUR NEW TRAILHEAD

A dramatic framed view of the Crosstimbers greets visitors immediately upon entry. Staff at the information desk are ready to provide orientation, trail recommendations, and even rent recreational equipment to help you start your journey. The lobby's location between exhibit hall and classrooms allows staff to open or close these areas independently while keeping the main entry open for programmatic flexibility. And when busloads of students arrive for field trips, the building is designed to help staff orchestrate large group rotations through the exhibit hall, classrooms, and site.



**DESIGN**  
LOBBY



**DESIGN**  
EXHIBIT HALL



**DESIGN**

OUTDOOR CLASSROOM



**DESIGN**

LOOKOUT TOWER



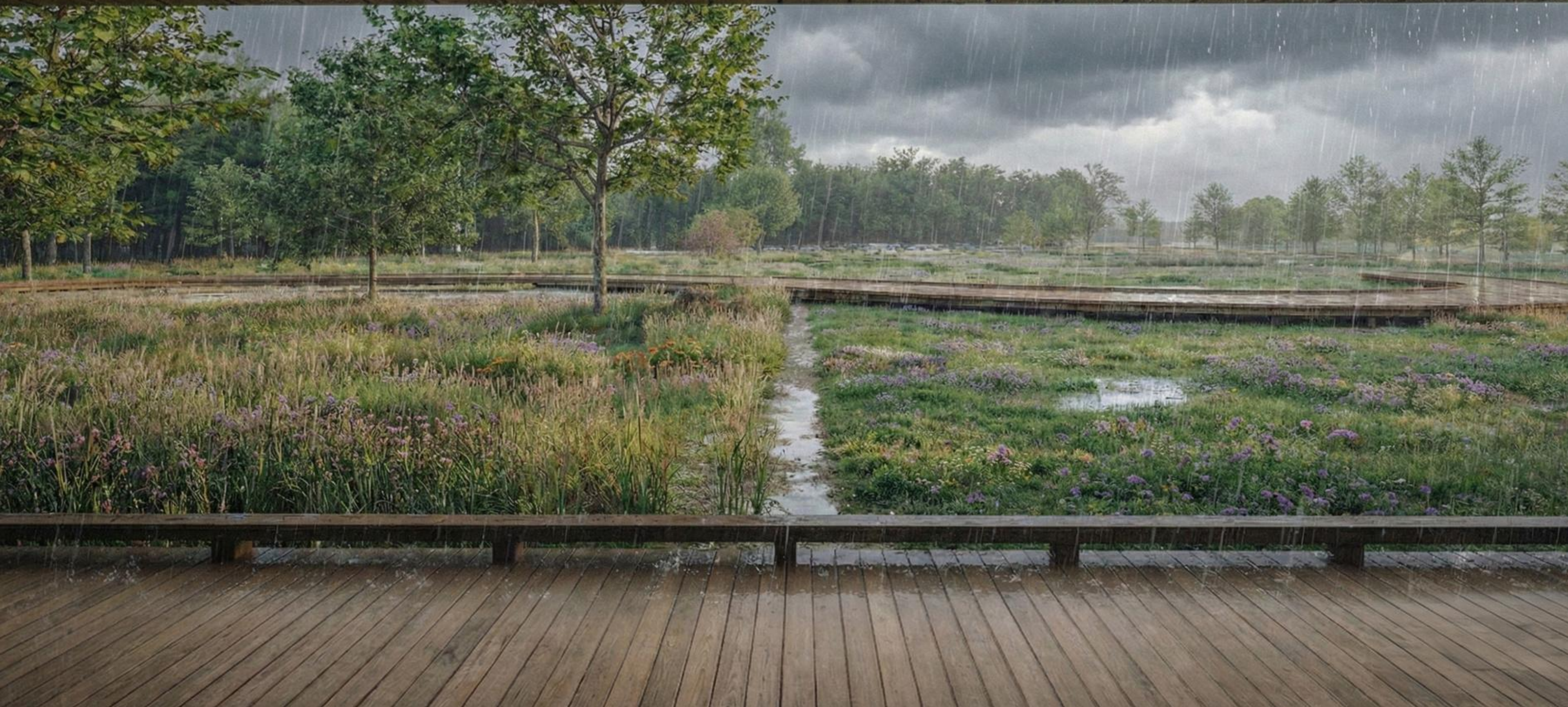
**DESIGN**  
FRONT PORCH



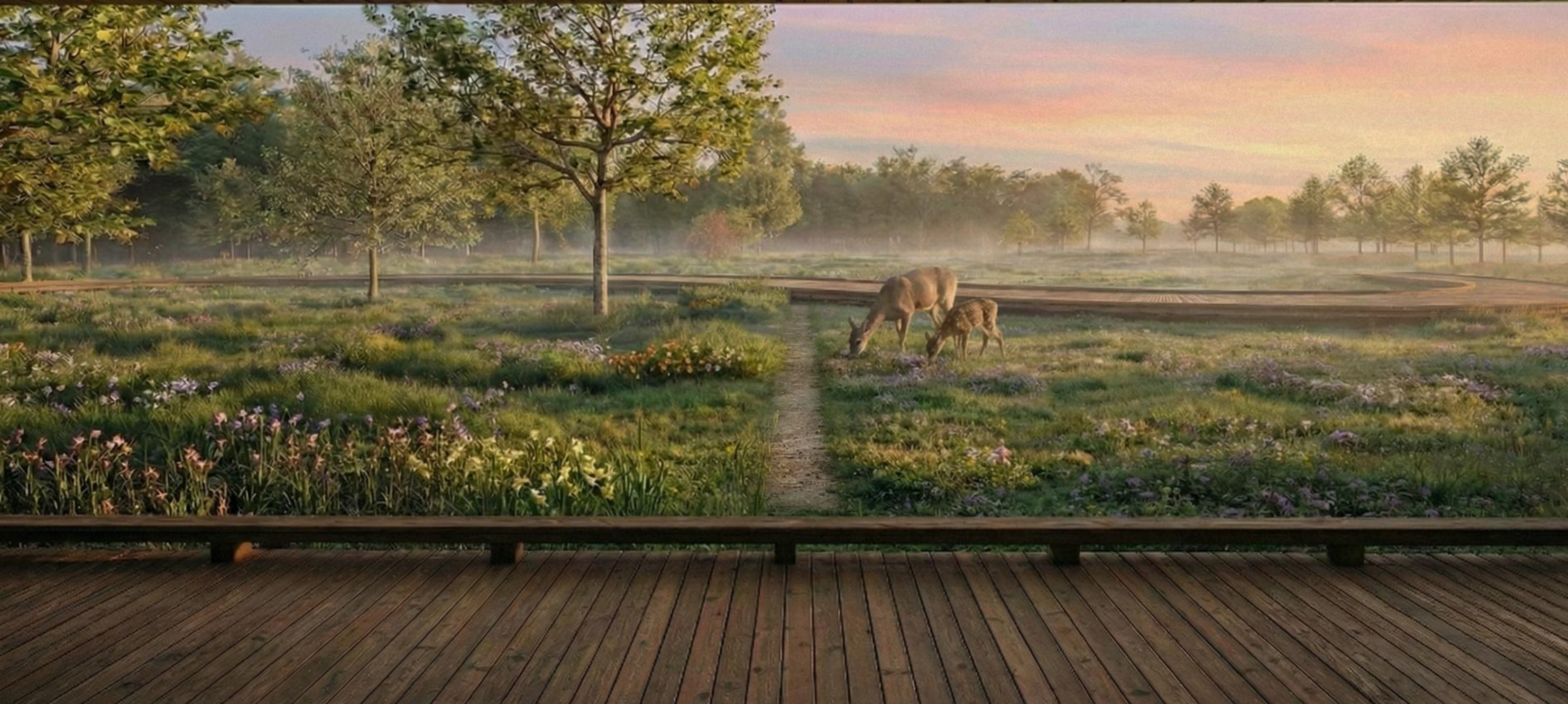
**DESIGN**  
FRONT PORCH



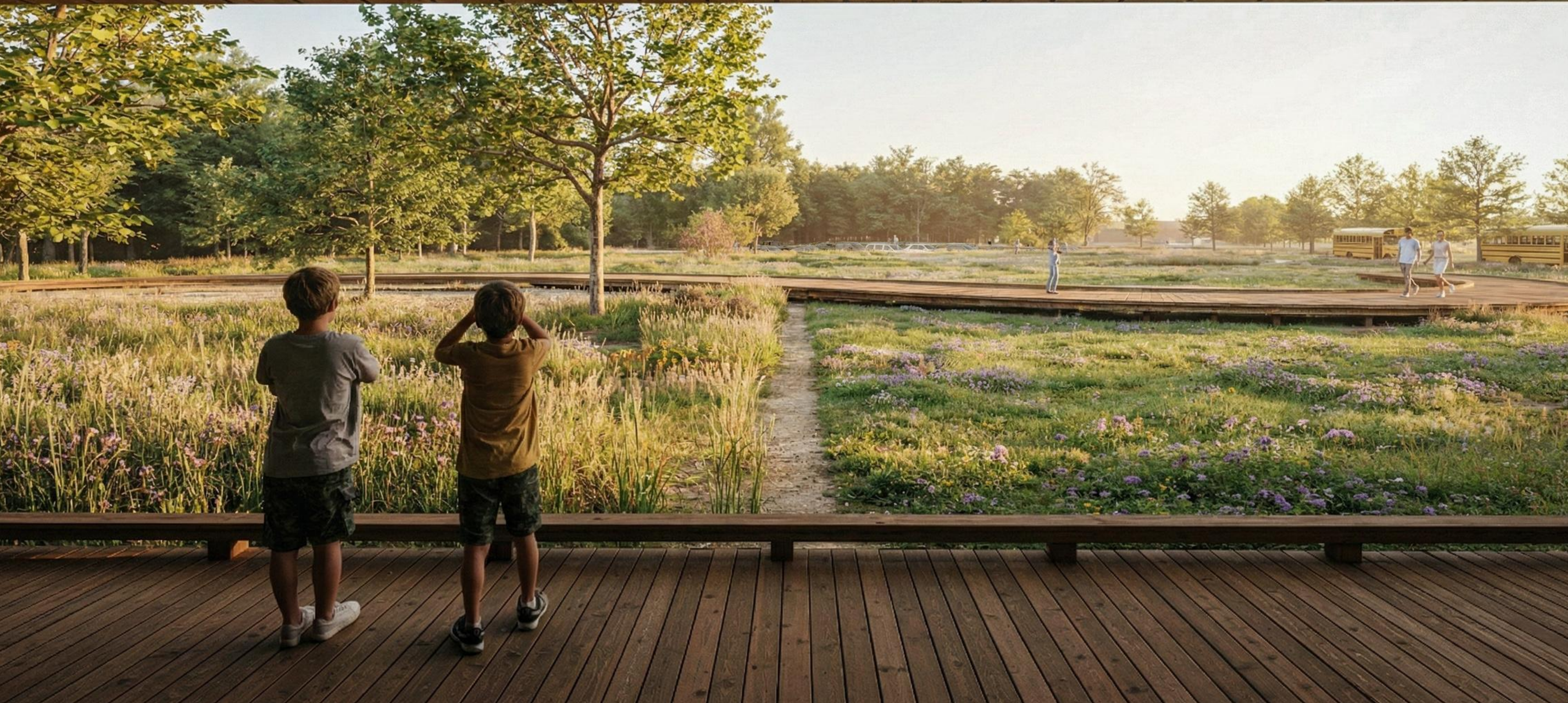
**DESIGN**  
FRONT PORCH



**DESIGN**  
FRONT PORCH

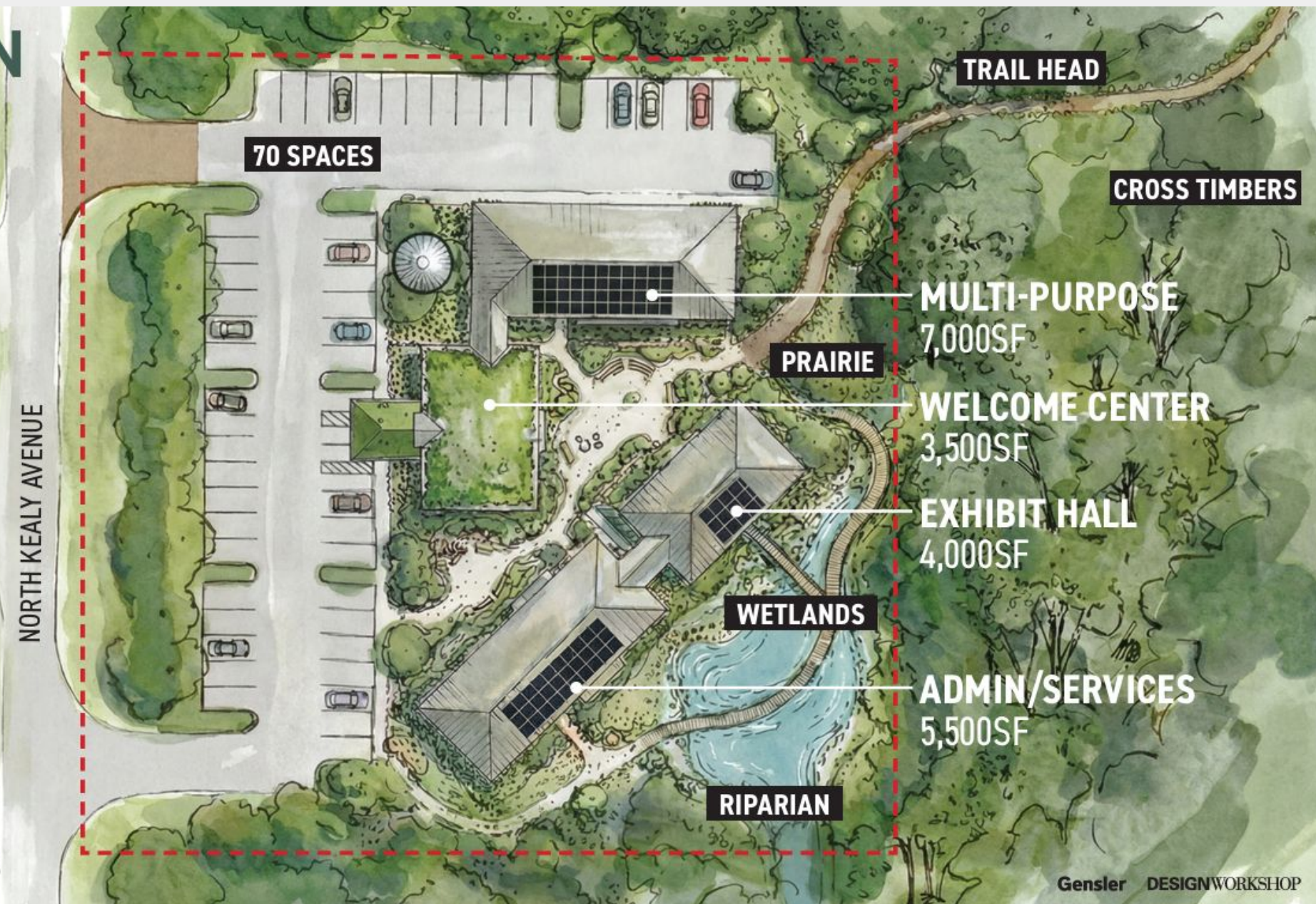


**DESIGN**  
FRONT PORCH



# Gensler Concept

## SITE PLAN



### Cons:

- Lack of OPCC
- Multiple buildings
- Traffic flow – cars and peds
- Constructability
- Team dynamics

### Concepts to borrow:

- Courtyard and fire pit
- Access to service bay and offices
- Cistern system/pervious parking
- Digital immersion display

# Gensler Concept

DIGITAL IMMERSION (1850 AD)



Gensler DESIGNWORKSHOP

Lewisville Parks & Recreation

# GSBS Concept

## Cons:

Main building

OPCC not as detailed, no design

Team dynamics

## Concepts to borrow:

Interpretive outpost

Covered patio and pond

Drive to service bays

Outside play design



Lewisville Parks & Recreation

# GSBS Concept



Lewisville Parks & Recreation

# Moving

- Finalize the AIA contract with GFF
  - Schedule, scope and cost
  - Target April 2 City Council Meeting
- Identify Project Partners
  - Project Controls Manager
    - Target April City Council Meeting
  - Construction Manager at Risk
    - After Concept Design is complete...Fall-ish
- Refining Concept and Community Engagement
- Funding – 4B Cash and Bonds





# QUESTIONS

