



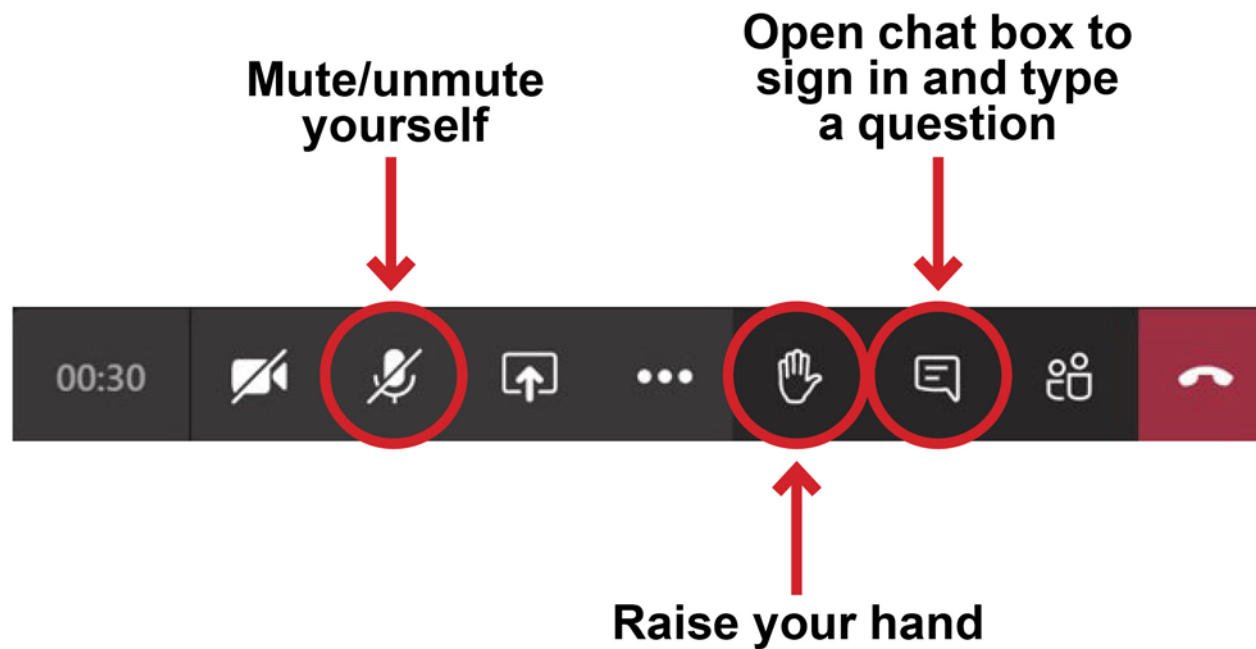
# Harmony Hall Development Concept Plan Public Meeting #1

March 22, 2021



# Meeting Housekeeping

Please sign in to the meeting using the website link posted in the chat box.





# Agenda

Welcome + Introductions

Meeting Purpose

Project Background + Timeline

Existing Conditions + Site History

Review of Initial Concepts

Comment Submissions

Discussion



# Meeting Purpose

The purpose of this meeting is to provide the public with an opportunity to:

- Share their vision for Harmony Hall
- Provide feedback on an initial range of concepts
- Identify any issues, concerns, and ideas

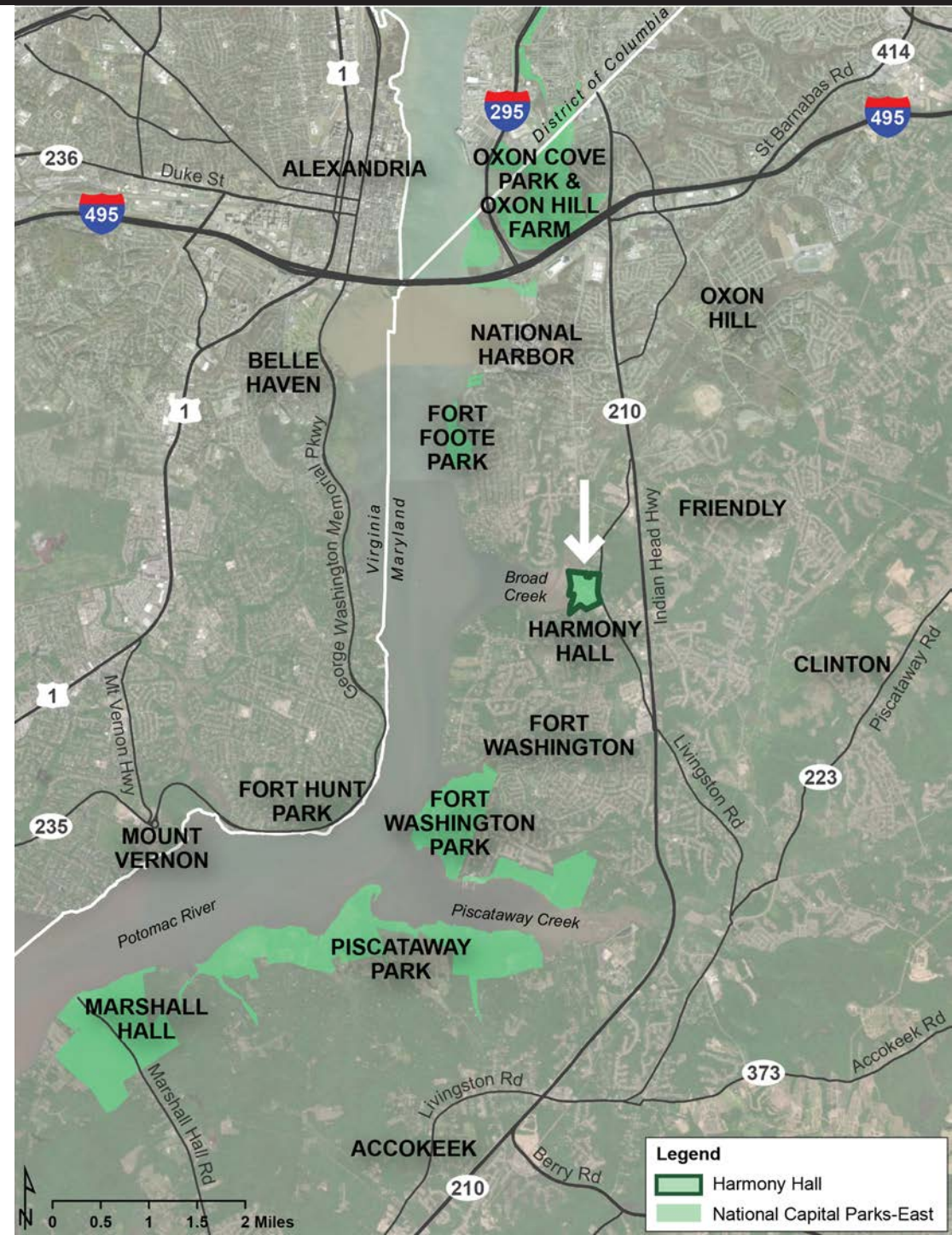
After hearing from stakeholders and the public, the National Park Service (NPS) will further refine the concepts.





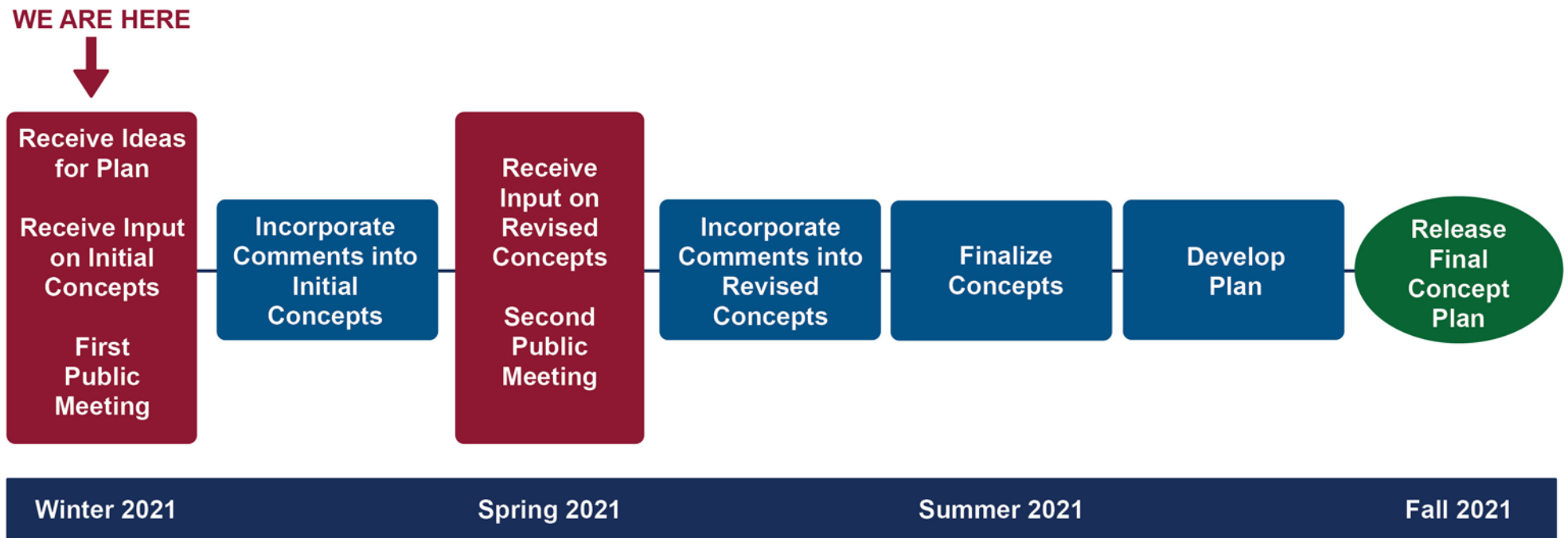
# Project Background

- The NPS is taking steps to improve opportunities for learning and recreation at Harmony Hall, a historic site in Fort Washington, MD.
- The NPS will evaluate the existing conditions at the site, encourage input from stakeholders and the public, and develop potential concepts for the future use and development of the area.
- A Development Concept Plan will summarize the research and planning efforts. The NPS will use the Plan, which will be available to the public, to implement improvements to the area.





# Project Timeline







# Existing Conditions

- Harmony Hall is a 65-acre property bordered by Broad Creek, the Harmony Hall Regional Center, the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission's treatment facility, private property owners, and Livingston Rd.
- The NPS acquired the property in the 1960s. The property has never had a development or interpretive plan.
- Key existing features include:
  - 18th century Harmony Hall manor house
  - Early 1930s ha-ha
  - Early 20th century bungalow
  - Late 20th century horse stable
  - Ruins of an 18th century dwelling known as Want Water
  - Slash Creek
  - Want Water Canal
  - Fields
  - Forested areas, including a pine stand





# Site Significance

**The National Capital Parks-East (NACE) Foundation Document (2016) identifies the following significance statements for Harmony Hall:**

- Harmony Hall is significant for its association with 18th century colonial settlement and its Georgian architecture, which is characteristic of early Potomac River masonry plantation houses.
- The site contains important historical remnants of the American colonial era and the early commercial use of the Potomac River, including the ruins of the Want Water house and canal.
- Robert Stein, a well-known explorer and linguist, purchased Harmony Hall in 1892 and encouraged emigration from his homeland of Silesia, Prussia, which has influenced the ethnographic make-up of the surrounding community, now known as Silesia, MD.
- In the early 20th century, Charles Collins purchased the property with the intention to create a romanticized southern plantation experience on the site. Collins was a segregationist and strategist for the Dixiecrat Party. His efforts to preserve and re-envision the property are a complex and often ignored component of American history that directly influenced the civil rights movement.
- Harmony Hall is the keystone property of the Broad Creek Historic District, the first historic district in Prince George's County, Maryland.

*Please note that the sequence of the above statements does not reflect the level of significance.*





## Site History

- The current Harmony Hall property is composed of two historical land patents. Battersea, the historic name of the land on which the Harmony Hall manor house is located, was a 500-acre tract patented in 1662. Want Water was patented in 1706.
- The Want Water house was constructed in the early 1700s. Of the original one-and-a-half story building, only the two brick end walls and chimneys, and fieldstone foundation, remain.
- During the 1700s, Prince George's County became the leading tobacco producing county in Maryland. Want Water and Harmony Hall were both tobacco plantations.
- Planters were required by law to have tobacco inspected prior to shipment to ensure quality and integrity of Maryland tobacco. Planters, using the labor of enslaved Africans, brought their crop first to a tobacco warehouse for inspection and storage. In 1748, a tobacco inspection station and hand-dug canal were both constructed adjacent to the Want Water house. The canal provided planters direct access from the Potomac River to the inspection station. The canal was the first shipping canal in the Chesapeake region and one of the first in the 13 colonies.
- In the 1760s, the Harmony Hall and Want Water properties were combined into a single estate. The exact date of the Harmony Hall manor house's construction is not known, but it was likely built around 1769-1780.



## Site History

- Charles Wallace Collins purchased Harmony Hall in 1929 and Want Water in 1930. Collins restored the manor house at Harmony Hall, operated a farm, and planted a small formal garden. Shortly after he purchased the house, he constructed outbuildings along one of the house's entrance drives reminiscent of a Southern plantation. Although influential in his banking and law career, Collins is significant for his role within the Dixiecrat Party, organized in the summer of 1948 by conservative white Southern Democrats committed to states' rights and maintaining segregation and opposed to federal intervention into race and, to a lesser degree, labor relations.
- Harmony Hall came under the jurisdiction of the NPS in 1966, under the authority of the Public Law 71-284, the Capper-Cramton Act.
- The location of Harmony Hall, at the confluence of the mouth of Broad Creek and the Potomac River, has been a desirable location for human habitation for at least 10,000 years. Archeological evidence indicates that Native Americans camped, hunted, and resided here long before European colonization.



# Existing Conditions



*Harmony Hall (Livingston Road side)*



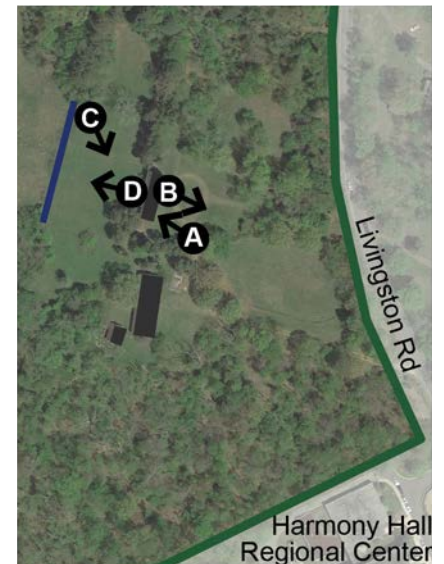
*View from Harmony Hall towards Livingston Rd*



*Harmony Hall (Broad Creek side)*



*View from Harmony Hall towards Broad Creek*







# Existing Conditions



*Early 1930s ha-ha*



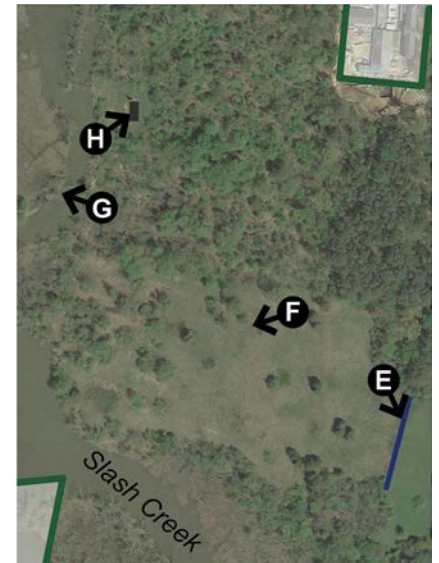
*View towards Broad Creek*



*Want Water Canal*



*Want Water*







# Existing Conditions



*Late 20th century horse stables*



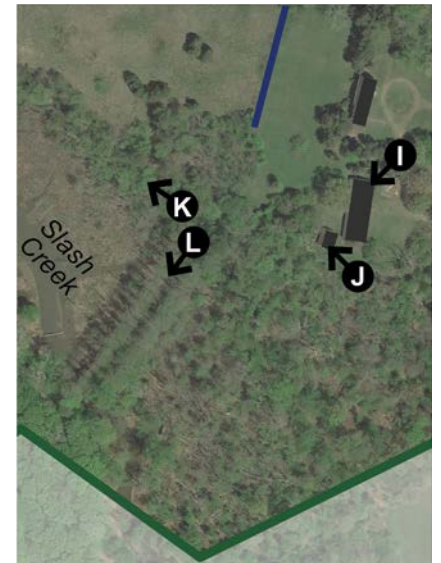
*Early 20th century bungalow*



*View towards Broad Creek between  
cypress allée and Harmony Hall*



*Cypress allée*







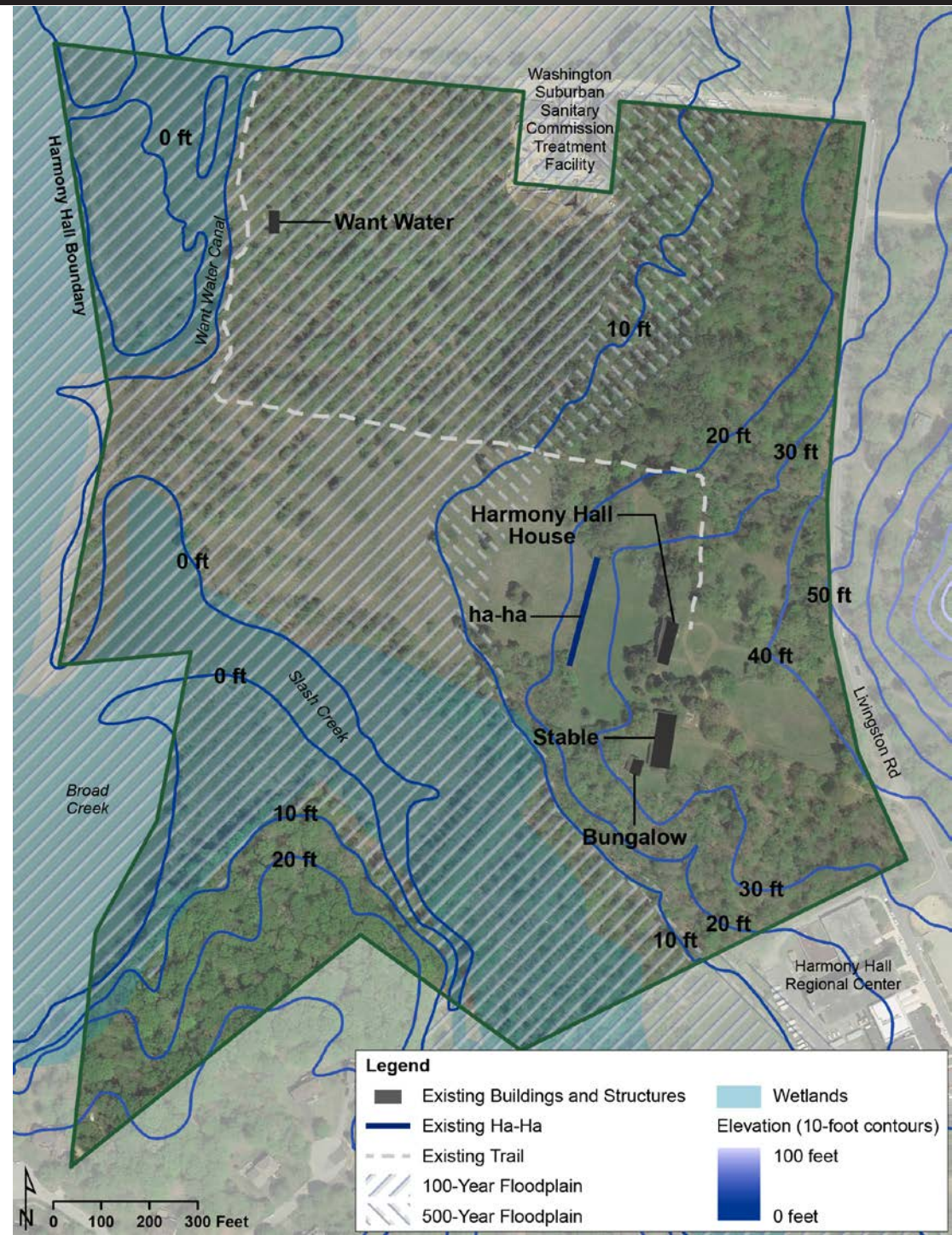
# Existing Considerations and Constraints

## Natural Systems:

- Floodplains
- Wetlands
- Topography

## Cultural Resources:

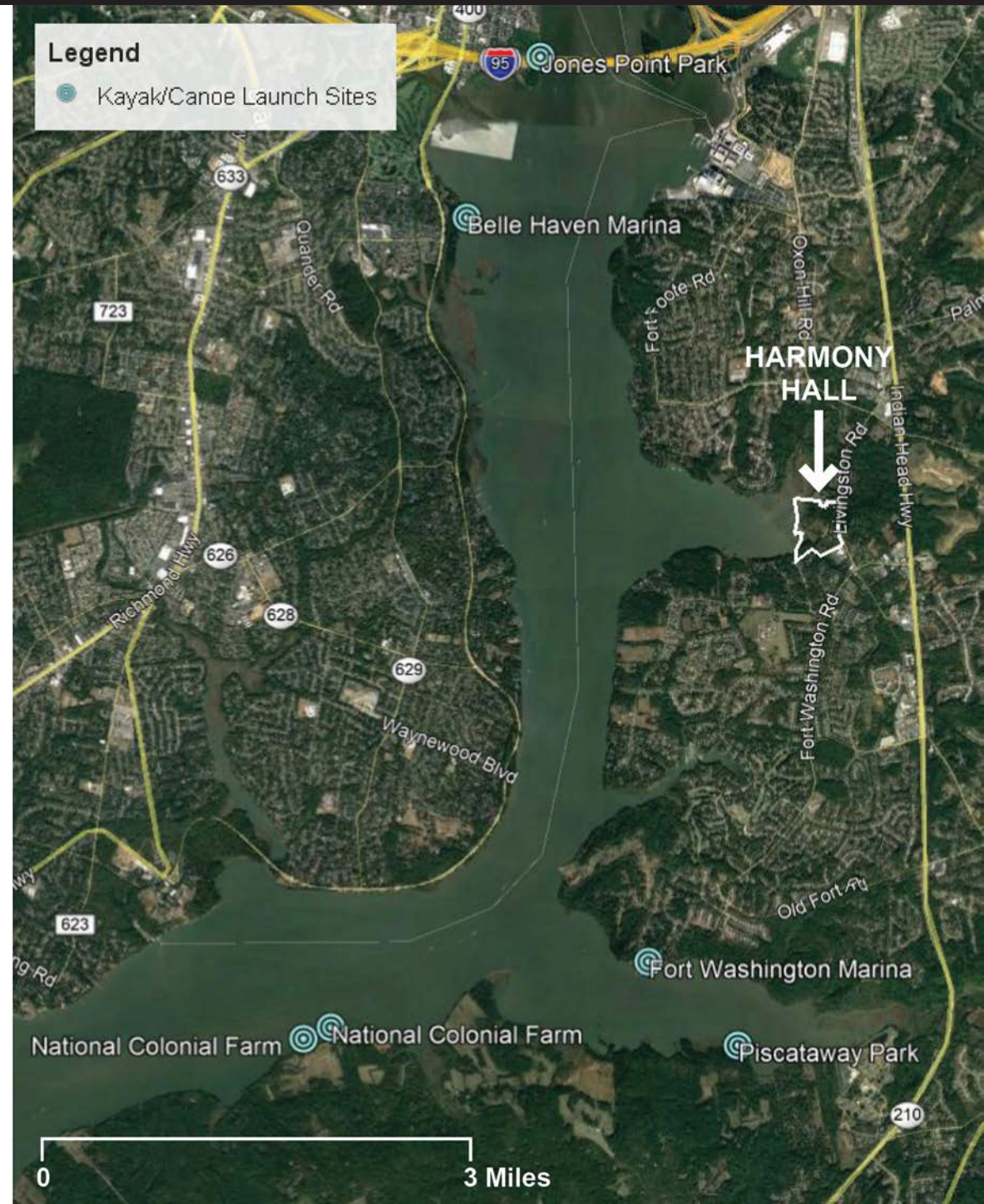
- Archeological sites
- Harmony Hall cultural landscape
- National Register of Historic Places-listed:
  - Harmony Hall
  - Broad Creek Historic District (includes Harmony Hall and Want Water ruins)







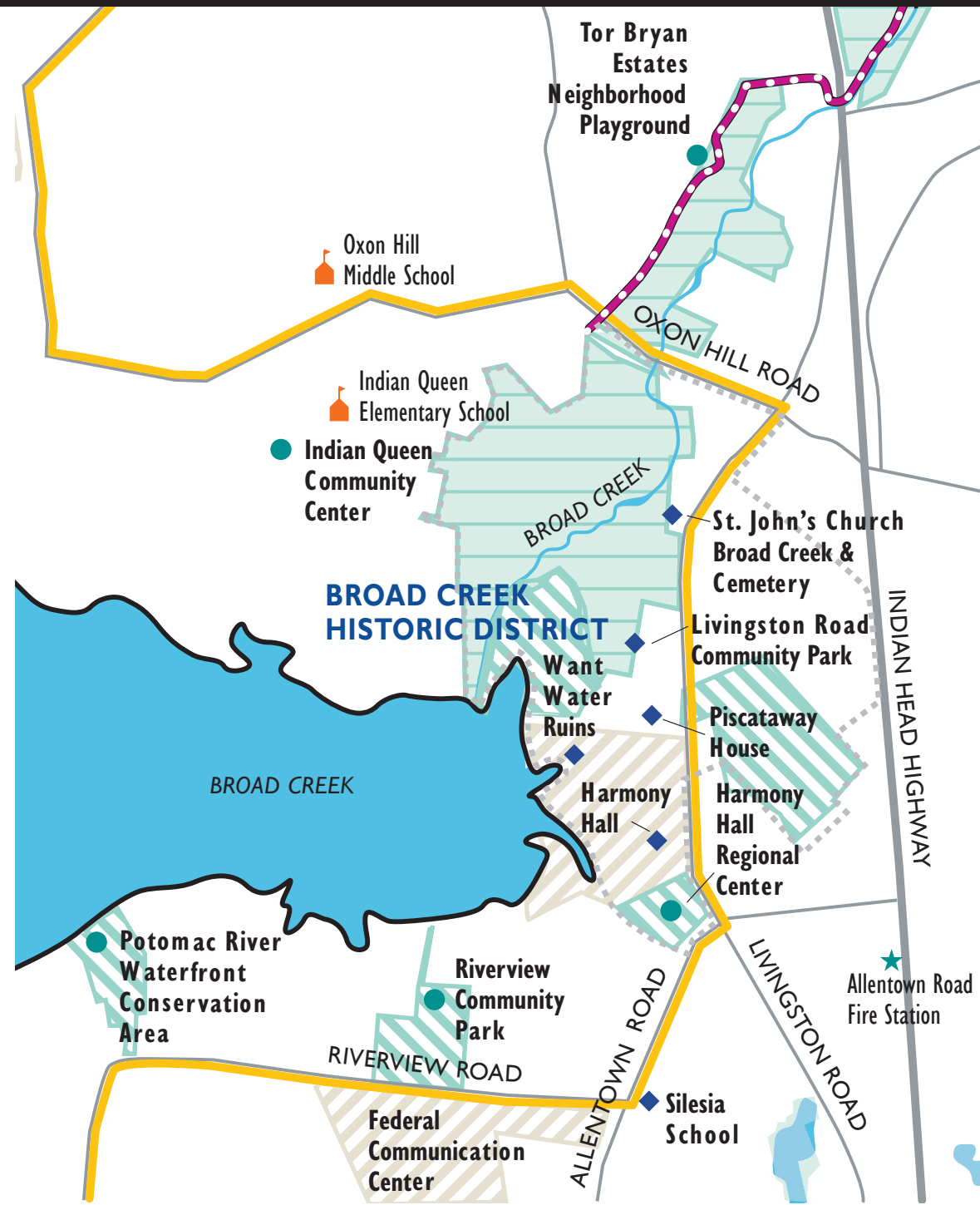
## Nearby Kayak/Canoe Launch Sites





# Nearby Parks, Trails, Historic Sites, and Other Community Amenities

- Henson Creek Hiker/Biker/Equestrian Trail
- Potomac Heritage Trail & On-road Bicycle Route
- Henson Creek SVP
- M-NCPPC Properties
- Federal Lands
- Ponds/Lakes/Rivers
- Park Site
- Historic Site
- School
- Police & Fire Stations



Note: Map adapted from Henson Creek Trail Map, Prince George's County Department of Parks and Recreation



# Interpretive Themes

**The NACE Foundation Document (2016) identifies the following interpretive themes for Harmony Hall:**

- Harmony Hall tells the story of a changing landscape that provides exceptional insight into commercial uses along the Potomac River, the role of the estate as a catalyst for growth and development in the surrounding community, and the evolution of historic preservation practice.
- The Harmony Hall property represents an opportunity to further investigate the archeology and history of human settlement along the Potomac River.
- The Harmony Hall property represents an opportunity to further investigate the cultural and societal history of enslaved workers on a Maryland tobacco plantation.
- The grounds at Harmony Hall protect a variety of natural habitats that support flora and fauna and provide opportunities for visitors to connect with nature and experience outdoor recreation near a densely developed urban area, including the historic loblolly pine trees.
- Harmony Hall was established as a corridor of forest and natural scenery as part of a comprehensive system of parks for recreation, preservation of substantial tracts of forests, and protection of source water in and around the nation's capital.





# Concept Overview

- The NPS is committed to telling a complete history of the Harmony Hall site.
- The social and physical history of the site will inform the direction and recommendations for the future use and development of the site. The NPS is not planning for the site to be a wedding/party venue.
- All potential concepts and expanded opportunities for public use will:
  - Be balanced against the carrying capacity of the park's facilities, infrastructure, and fiscal capacities
  - Provide recommendations to minimize impacts to cultural and natural resources
- The Harmony Hall site represents a complex history that is associated with Native American occupation, enslaved people, and the civil rights movement. The social and physical history of the site will inform the direction and recommendations for the future use and development of the site.



# Review of Initial Concepts

Concept ideas provide:

- Range of property access:
  - Grounds
  - Buildings
  - Grounds and buildings
- Base concept for entire site
- Mix and match options for area near Harmony Hall house, stable, and bungalow
- Partnership opportunities

# Landscape Treatment

- Common to all concepts
- Ground improvements:
  - Vegetation treatment
  - Shoreline stabilization
- Treatment consistent with the Harmony Hall Cultural Landscape Inventory (2018) and NPS policies and best management practices





# Expanded Trail Network

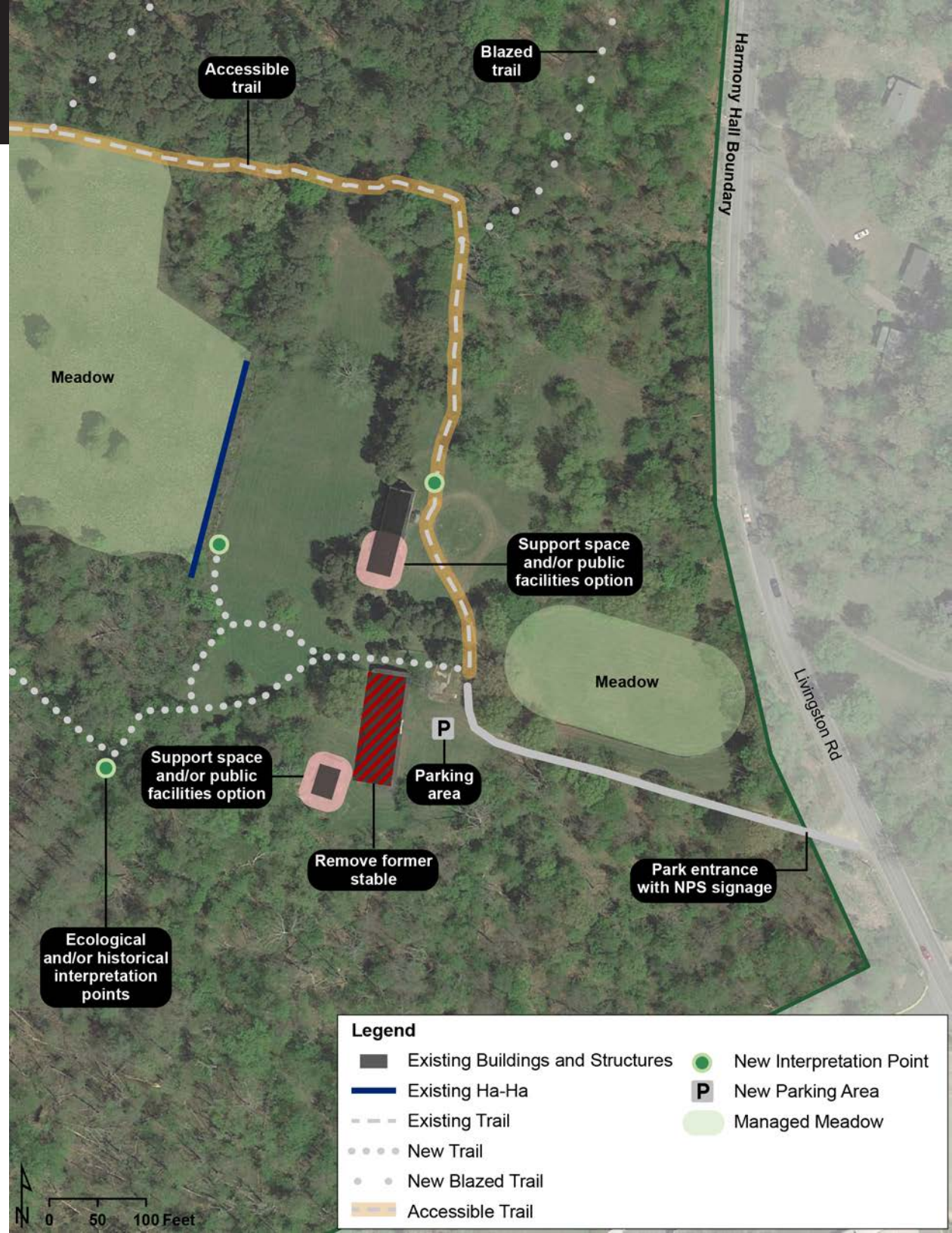
- Common to all concepts
- Ground improvements:
  - Hiking loops of various lengths
  - Access to water with a potential canoe/kayak launch area
  - Multiple ecological and/or historical interpretation points, which tell a complete history of the site
  - Multiple habitat types available for interpretation (woods, pine stand, marsh/wetlands, pasture)
  - Future potential trail connection to Henson Creek Stream Valley Park trail





## Option: Focused Rehabilitation

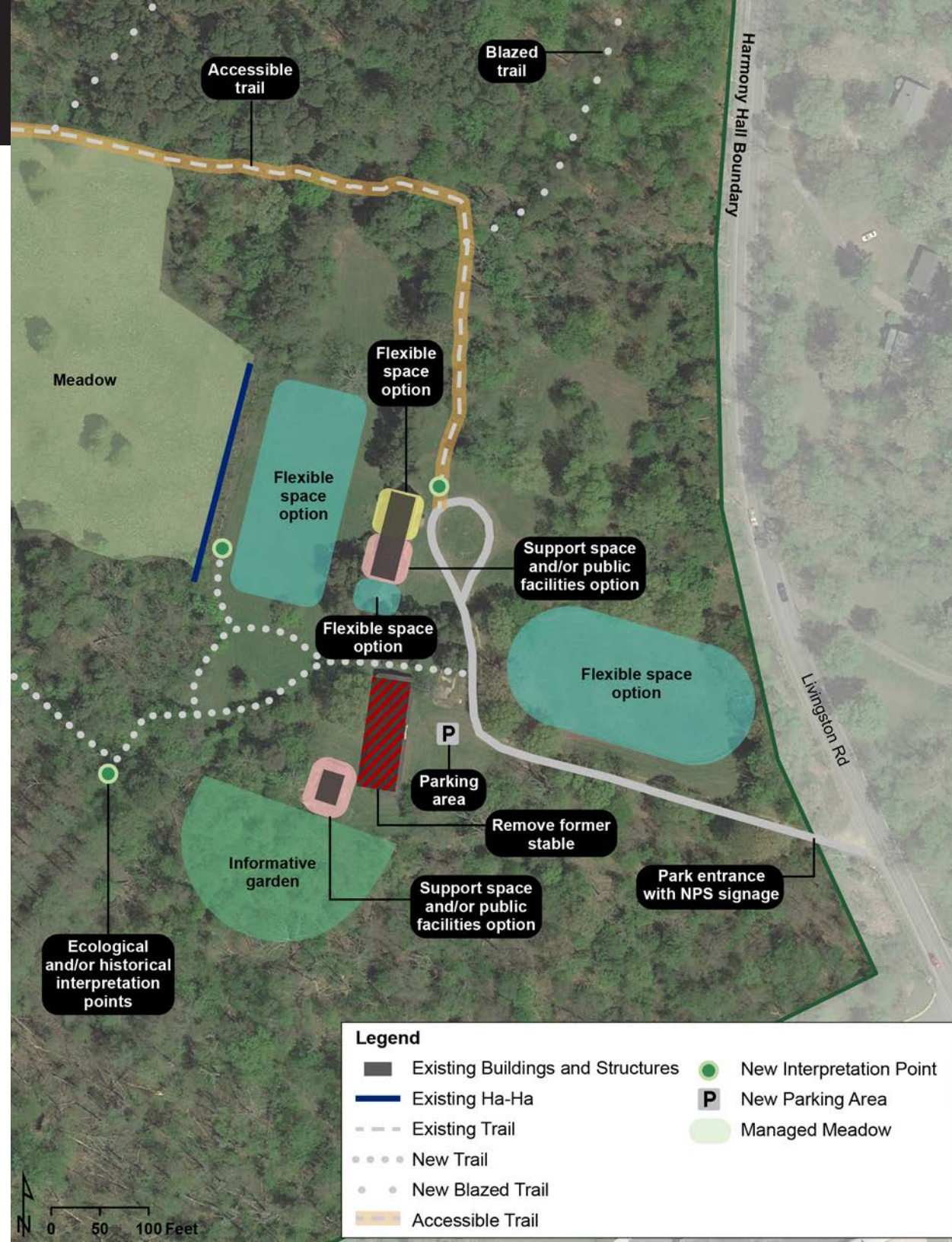
- Building improvements:
  - Rehabilitate bungalow and/or portion of Harmony Hall house to provide support space and/or public facilities
  - Remove former horse stable
- Ground improvements:
  - Maintain meadow at the former ring pasture
- Partnership or lease opportunity





## Option: Flexible Space

- Building improvements:
  - Rehabilitate portion of Harmony Hall house to provide flexible space option
  - Rehabilitate bungalow and/or portion of Harmony Hall house to provide support space and/or public facilities
  - Remove former horse stable
- Ground improvements:
  - Provide flexible space options in existing open space
  - Adapt former terrace to informative garden
- Partnership opportunity
- Flexible space will not be used for weddings and parties



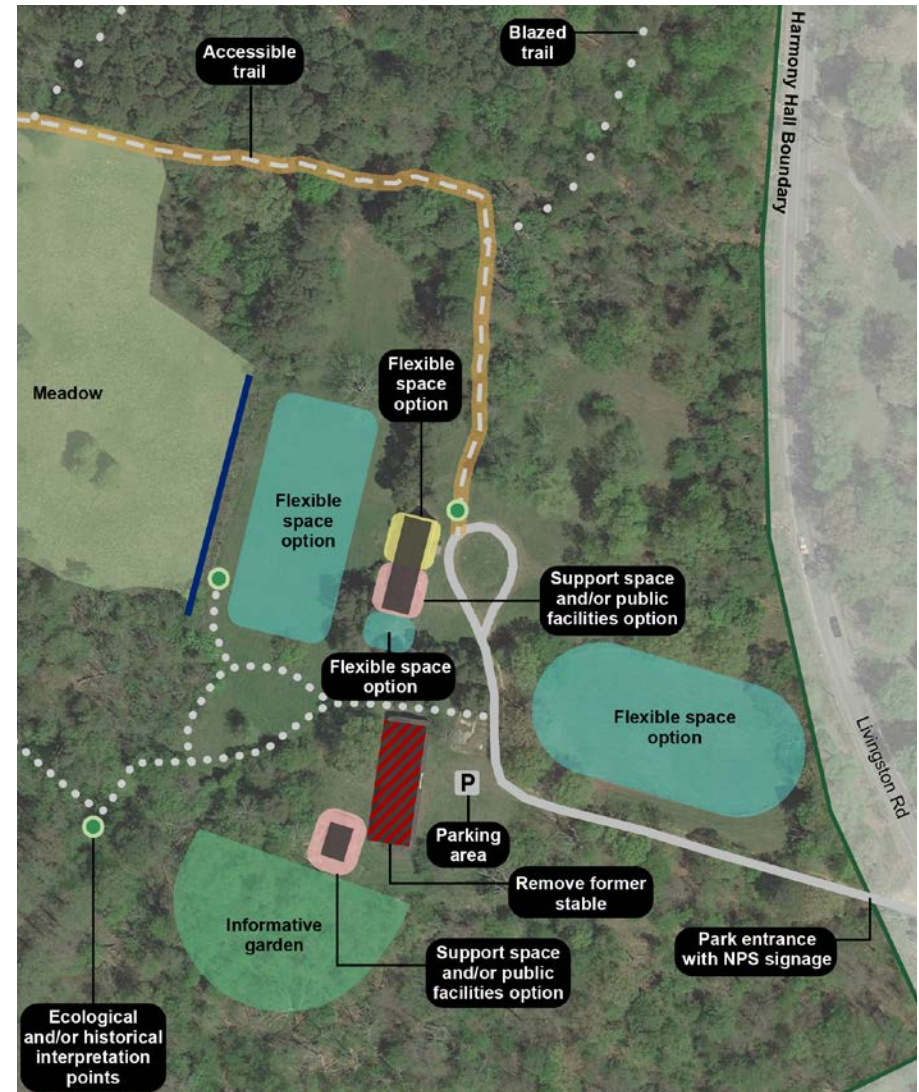




## Focused Rehabilitation Option



## Flexible Space Option



### Legend

- Existing Buildings and Structures
- Existing Ha-Ha
- Existing Trail

- New Trail
- New Blazed Trail
- Accessible Trail

- New Interpretation Point
- New Parking Area
- Managed Meadow



# How Can You Submit Comments?

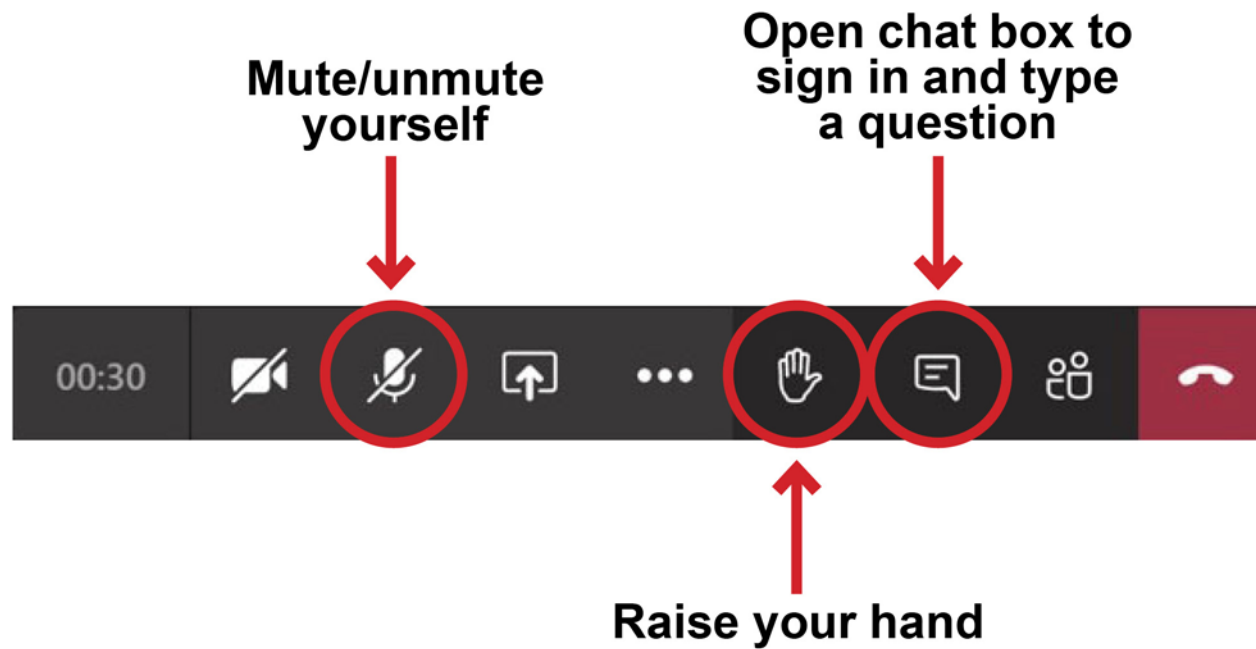
Please provide feedback on the concepts and identify any issues, concerns, or ideas you may have regarding the proposed project.

**Starting March 22, 2021**

- **Online:** Submit comments online by **April 22, 2021** at <https://go.nps.gov/HarmonyHall>
- **Written comments can be mailed to:**
  - Michael Commisso
  - Superintendent (acting)
  - Attn: Harmony Hall Concept Plan
  - National Park Service
  - Piscataway Parks
  - 1900 Anacostia Drive SE
  - Washington, DC 20020
- **Mailed comments** must be postmarked by April 22, 2021 to receive consideration



# Questions?







**Thank You!**