

# 2

## Alternatives

This chapter describes alternatives for the leasing of the Philander Chase Knox (P.C. Knox) House and grounds. Alternatives for the proposed action are intended to meet the project purpose and need to preserve historic structures and provide managed public access. Each alternative includes a discussion of the following elements: treatment of the P.C. Knox House and other historic structures, treatment of the site and landscape, traffic and circulation, stormwater management, visitor use, and park operations. This EA/AOE examines two alternatives: a No-Action Alternative (Alternative A) and one action Alternative (Alternative B).

### **ALTERNATIVE A (NO ACTION)**

Alternative A, the No- Action Alternative, would maintain existing facilities and continue present management operations and visitor use at the P.C. Knox House and grounds. Consideration of a No-Action Alternative is required by NEPA and provides a baseline for comparing the environmental consequences of the action alternative. Should the No-Action Alternative be selected, the NPS would respond to future needs and conditions associated with facilities at the project site without major actions or changes to the present course (see Figure 4). This alternative includes the elements described below.

#### **Structures**

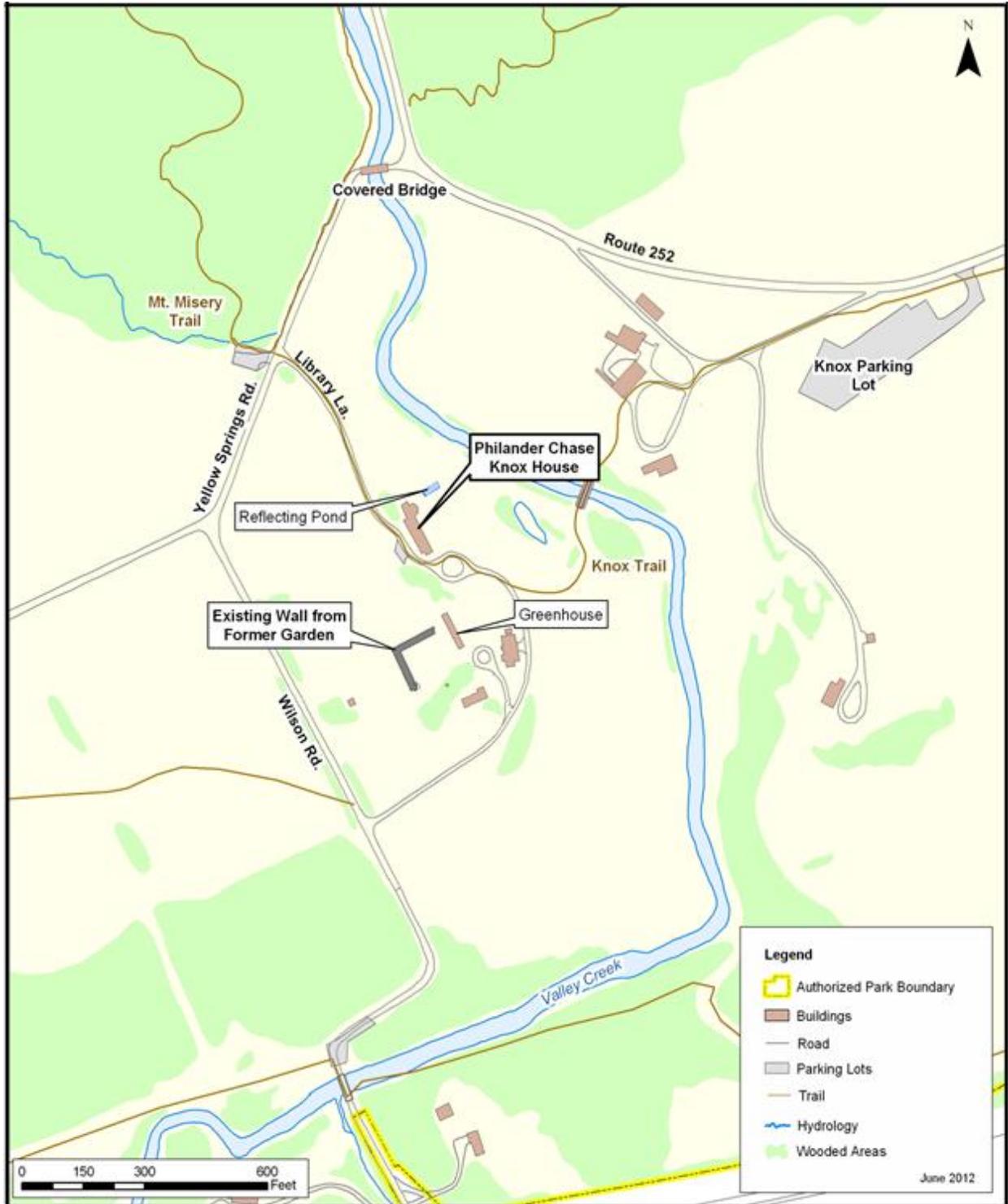
##### *Philander Chase Knox House*

Under the No-Action Alternative, no changes would be made to the house or its use. Sporadic ongoing maintenance and small repairs would continue. Use of three rooms for the park's Horace Wilcox Library would continue; this function, available by appointment, is the only visitor use of the house. Use of other rooms for museum storage, park-related meetings, and staging volunteer events would continue.

##### *Other Structures*

Photographs from the P. C. Knox period indicate that a mortared field-stone wall approximately 36" high was present on the east, north, and west sides of the walled garden. The wall remains, although in very poor condition, on the north and west sides only. There are no plans at this time to restore or stabilize the remaining wall. The adjacent greenhouse is in disrepair and while it will be stabilized, there are no plans to rehabilitate it.

Figure 4. Alternative A- Existing Conditions



## **Site**

### *P. C. Knox Grounds*

The grounds around the house would continue to be open to visitors during all daylight hours. The grounds would be preserved as is. Maintenance of the landscape would continue to occur intermittently.

### *Traffic and Circulation*

Library Lane would continue to be open to visitor vehicles during all daylight hours.

### *Site Lighting*

The P. C. Knox House and immediate grounds would continue to be unlit at night. No additional lighting would be added.

### *Storm Water Management*

An east-west swale formerly carried storm water from the field west of the former walled garden, through the garden area, and eastward to pavement associated with the Tenant House and the Garage and Chauffeur's House. The swale has largely silted in, however, and unmanaged run-off causes an unsafe situation for residents and visitors. Under this alternative, this problem would be corrected by re-establishing the swale and cleaning the inlet to which it runs.

## **Visitor Use**

Visitor use would continue as is. The P.C. Knox House is not open to the public, except for users of the park library, who must schedule visits in advance.

The immediate grounds around the house would remain open to the general public during daytime hours. Use of the Knox Trail by pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians would continue as is.

## **Park Operations**

Use of the Horace Willcox Memorial Library by staff would continue. Use of other rooms in the house for park meetings and for staging volunteer events would continue.

The P.C. Knox House underwent a major rehabilitation in 2009 that included re-glazing the windows, repainting woodwork, repairing or replacing shutters, redoing exterior stucco, and whitewashing the exterior. Maintenance of the house includes yearly washing of windows, minor repairs, periodic interior cleaning, biweekly mowing of the lawn immediately surrounding the house and annual mowing of the meadows. These actions would continue. Future unfunded projects include replacement of the heating system and rehabilitation of the reflecting pond.

## **ALTERNATIVE B- NPS PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE**

Under Alternative B, the NPS Preferred Alternative, the P.C. Knox House and certain associated grounds would be made available public access managed by a third party. The NPS would issue a Request for Proposals for leasing the facility for use as an event space. On review of proposals, NPS would select and

negotiate with a potential lessee. After the NPS and prospective lessee agreed on lease terms, NPS would award a lease for a period of up to five years.

The lease would enable the lessee to use certain portions of the house and certain grounds for events of up to 200 guests. The house and the grounds would be available during the warmer months for outdoor events, and the interior of the house would be available year round. During events, the relevant areas would be closed to use by the general public. The park's Horace Willcox Memorial Library would close three days for each event (set up day, event day, cleanup day), and reopen by appointment only, as is the current case, on week days.

Some trees would be removed and/or replaced, a gravel parking area would be constructed within the former walled garden, an access lane would be built off of Library Lane to the parking area, and temporary safety and accessibility structures would be installed inside the House and outside on the patio and back and side yards.

The lessee would be prohibited from the following:

- Permanent changes to the house and grounds
- Access to any interior spaces not included in the lease
- Preventing use of the Knox Trail by park visitors
- Exceeding the noise level specified in the lease
- Using any parking lot aside from the proposed gravel lot and, when overflow parking is needed for a number of vehicles within the specified maximum, the Knox lot
- Using Wilson Road for parking
- Removal or alternation of the trees and shrubbery
- Permanent modifications to the interior and exterior of the house
- Lighting the proposed parking area and paths that lead to the area

## **Structures**

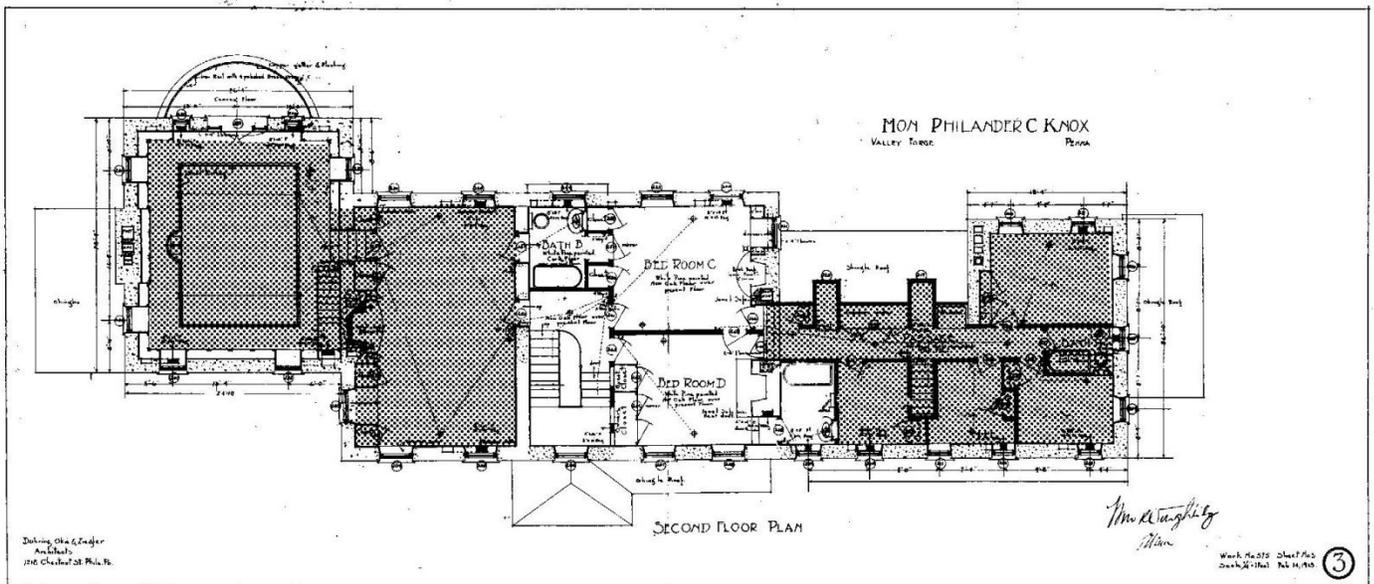
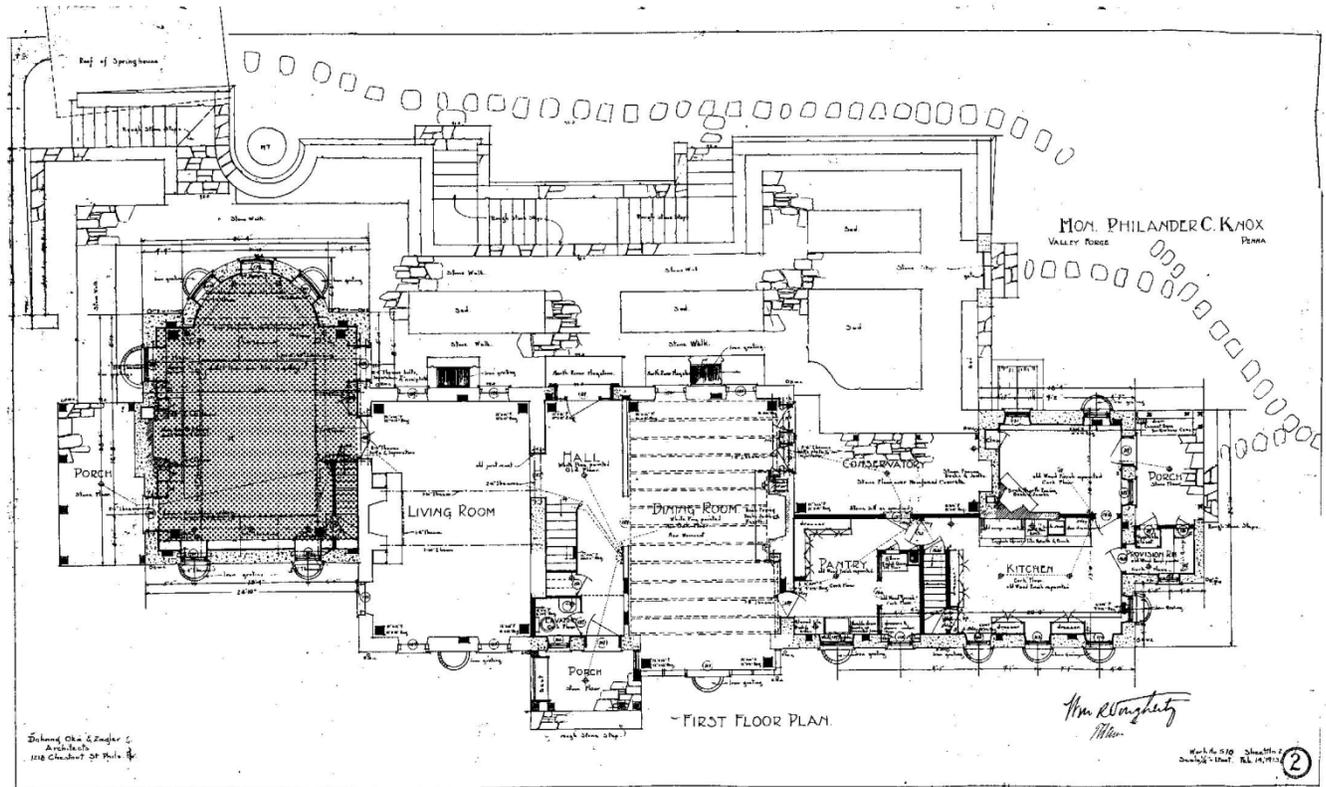
### *Philander Chase Knox House*

Under Alternative B the lessee would be authorized to use certain rooms in the house and certain grounds to stage and hold events for customers of the lessee. Events could comprise meetings, parties, retreats, small conferences, and the like.

During events, the lessee would be authorized to have exclusive use of certain rooms within the house as listed below. In periods when events are not taking place, normal operations of the NPS would continue to take place in these areas, including library use, meetings and facilitation of volunteer projects. The following spaces would be used by the lessee (see Figure 5):

- Porch
- Hall
- Stairwell
- Dining Room
- Conservatory

Figure 5. Floorplan of P.C. Knox House. Shaded areas would be closed to visitors.



- Living Room
- Pantry and Kitchen, which could be used for final preparation and warming, but not for cooking
- Provision Room adjacent to Kitchen
- Kitchen Screened Porch
- Pantry Rest Room, for event staff
- Two second-floor Bedrooms and adjoining Rest Rooms

No permanent modifications by the lessee to the interior of the building would be required or permitted.

On the exterior, the front porch and rear terraces would be authorized to be used. No permanent modifications by the lessee to these features would be required or permitted. No changes or repairs would be made to the reflecting pond.

#### *Other Structures*

Photographs from the P. C. Knox period indicate that a mortared field-stone wall approximately 36" high was present on the east, north, and west sides of the walled garden. The wall remains, although in very poor condition, on the north and west sides only. The wall would be retained. There are no plans at this time to restore or stabilize the remaining wall. There is also a greenhouse located near the proposed parking area. The greenhouse is in disrepair and no plans are made in this EA/AOE to rehabilitate it.

No other structures would be included within the lease or affected by Alternative B.

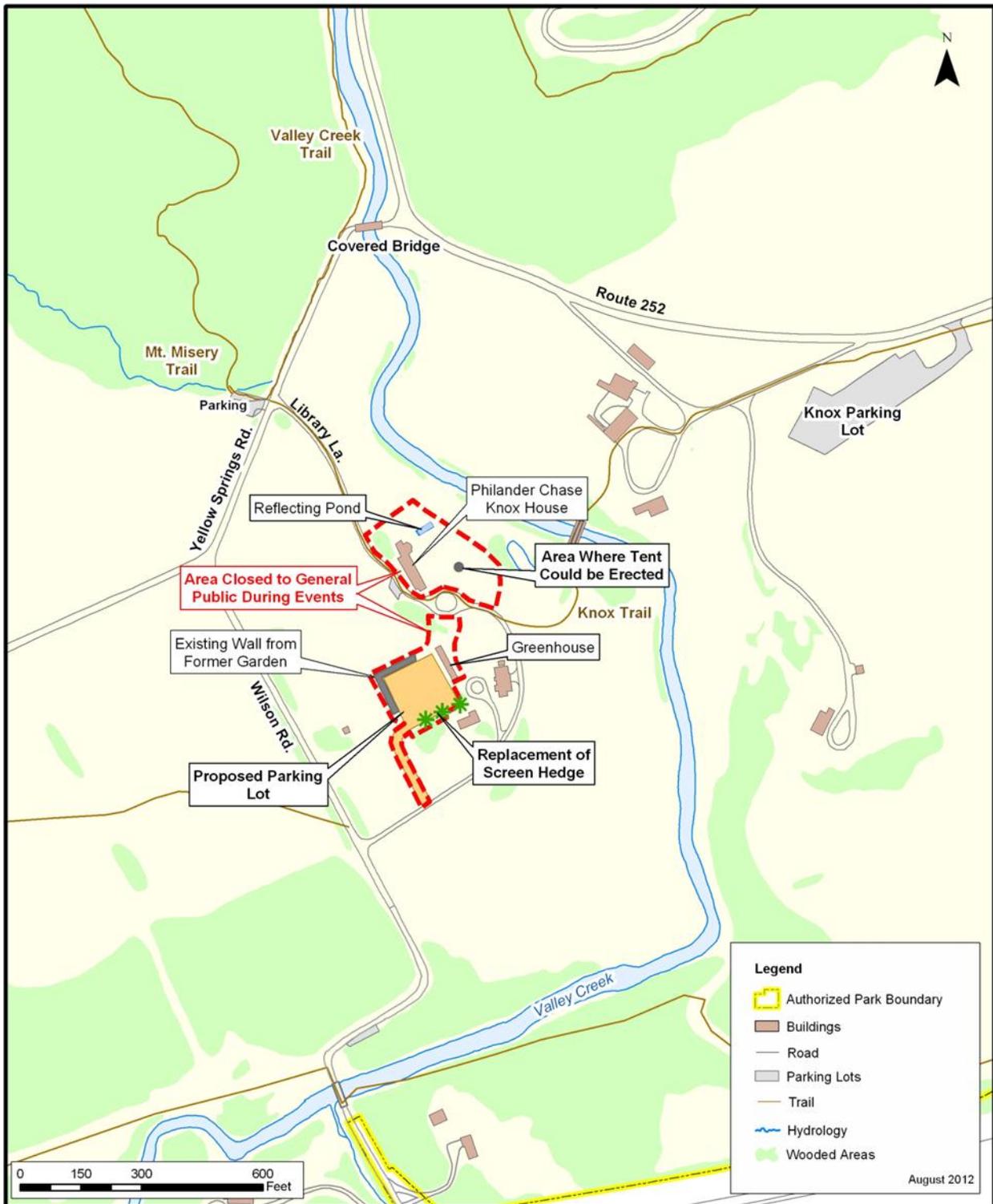
### **Site**

#### *P.C. Knox Grounds*

The lessee would be authorized to have exclusive use of the following grounds during events (see Figure 6). During events, these areas would not be open to the general public.

- Library Lane. Vehicles belonging to general visitors would not be permitted on Library Lane during events. Visitors would continue to have access to Library Lane as pedestrians or while using bicycles, however, since Library Lane is part of the park's trail system.
- Small parking area on Library Lane. With the exception of four existing parking spaces on Library Lane opposite the house, no event parking would take place on Library Lane.
- Library Lane circle. The lessee would be authorized to bring a mobile generator, mobile rest room and a mobile kitchen to this area. These facilities would be removed from the site at the conclusion of each event.
- Side yards. North of the house, the side yard between the house and the iron fence would be considered to be part of the lease. The side yard south of the house would be used for operations of the Lessee, including access by staff.
- Main lawn. The lessee would be authorized to erect a large tent and leveling platform, which may remain on-site during the warmer months of each year of the lease. The lessee also would be authorized to change the size of the tent as needed. The tent may only be used with the permission of the lessee and would not be open to the general public on non-event days.

Figure 6. Alternative B.



### *Landscape*

Under Alternative B, to enable construction of the parking area, the six trees that have been planted or have sprouted within the former walled garden since the P.C. Knox period would be removed. Two trees would be removed in order to install the access lane. Along the south side of the walled garden, a row of hemlocks once served as a screen hedge. The trees, which are in poor condition, have lost all their lower branches and have no value as a screen. They would be removed and replaced with new shrubs, which would be managed as a screen hedge.

No shrubs or plant beds remain in the former walled garden from the P.C. Knox period. None would be added. The walled garden area has been managed as a rough lawn, mowed once a year. A border of lawn would be retained around all four sides of the new parking area within the walls.

### *Traffic and Circulation*

The house and parking area would be accessed by Library Lane via Yellow Springs Road. Library Lane is a one-way driveway, with a small drop-off circle southeast of the house. Guests would arrive at the house on Library Lane, at which point valets would take guests' vehicles to the proposed parking area in the former walled garden. When guests were ready to depart, valets would return vehicles to them using Wilson Road, Yellow Springs Road, and Library Lane. Guests would then depart using Library Lane and Wilson Road.

### *New Parking Area*

An approximately 18,000 square foot gravel parking area would be established within the former walled garden west of the greenhouse ruin (see Figures 7 and 8). Because of topography, existing structures, and existing and proposed vegetation, vehicles parked in this area would be somewhat screened from view. When no vehicles are parked here, the parking surface itself would not be visible from beyond the site. Since the area would only be used for valet-parking and travel lanes would not be necessary, the parking area would accommodate approximately 75 mid-size sedans (14.94' L X 5.78' W). The new parking area would be used only for events associated with the lease, and a chain gate would be placed at the entrance to the parking area to preclude parking at other times. When the number of vehicles expected for an event exceeded the capacity of this parking area, the overflow would be handled at the existing Knox parking lot, on Route 252 east of the Covered Bridge. The existing 6% slope across the site of the proposed parking area would be lessened to approximately 3% through minor cutting and filling. A new 10'-wide access lane would be added between Library Lane and the parking area. The existing paving stone path leading from the P.C. Knox House to this area would be rehabilitated for use of the valets.



Figure 7. Historic Walled Garden of P.C. Knox House



Figure 8. Existing Walled Garden of P.C. Knox House 2012

### *Site Lighting*

Because the parking area would be designated as valet parking only, no site lighting would be added to the area or the path used by the valets.

On evenings when events are held, existing exterior lighting on the front porch and rear terrace would be used. It could be augmented for safety reasons by temporary fixtures. The tent and paths leading to it would be lit by temporary fixtures.

### *Storm Water Management*

An east-west swale formerly carried storm water from the field west of the former walled garden, through the garden area, and eastward to pavement associated with the Tenant House and the Garage and Chauffeur's House. The swale has largely silted in, however, and unmanaged run-off causes an unsafe situation for residents and visitors. As in Alternative A, to address this, a former, now-filled swale would be re-cut around the Tenant House, diverting the run-off to an existing catch basin that will take the water under Library Lane, depositing it in the existing meadow for infiltration.

The gravel parking area would help mitigate stormwater runoff by acting as porous pavement, allowing water to infiltrate into the ground. Remaining stormwater runoff from the gravel lot also would be directed to the re-cut swale that would divert into an existing catch basin that would take the water under Library Lane, depositing in the existing meadow for infiltration.

### **Visitor Use**

Use by the general public would be restricted in certain ways during events. The duration of a given event would comprise one set-up day, the day of the event, and one clean-up day.

The P.C. Knox House is not open to the public, except for users of the park library, who must schedule visits in advance. Library use would continue on non-event days.

The immediate grounds around the house would not be open to general visitors during events (Figure 6). Use of the Knox Trail by pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians would continue, even on event days. The grounds would remain open to the general public on all non-event days.

## **Park Operations**

Currently, the P.C. Knox House contains the Horace Willcox Memorial Library, available to park visitors by appointment only. The library would not be in use by staff during an event.

The P.C. Knox House underwent a major rehabilitation in 2009 that included re-glazing the windows, repainting woodwork, repairing or replacing shutters, redoing exterior stucco, and whitewashing the exterior. Maintenance of the house includes yearly washing of windows, minor repairs, periodic interior cleaning, bi-weekly mowing of the lawn immediately surrounding the house and annual mowing of the meadows. The lessee would be responsible for some of the maintenance within the project site. Park staff would manage the lease, approve facility and landscape maintenance by the lessee, and manage future rehabilitation when funded.

## **SUMMARY OF HOW ALTERNATIVES MEET THE PURPOSE AND NEED**

The purpose and need for this project is to ensure preservation of historic P.C. Knox House and grounds and to allow the community to have responsible and managed access to a historic structure. Under Alternative A, no changes would be made to the house or grounds, and their use. This Alternative does not allow for further preservation of the house and grounds aside from regular maintenance, and the community would not have additional access to the interior of the house.

Under Alternative B, preservation of the house and grounds would be supplemented by the maintenance required of the third party lessee and the dollars generated by the lease that would be used for additional rehabilitation of the house and grounds. The community would have managed access to the house and grounds during an event.

## **ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE**

In accordance with the DO-12 Handbook, the NPS identifies the environmentally preferred alternative in its NEPA documents for public review and comment (Sect. 4.5 E [9]). The environmentally preferred alternative is the alternative that causes the least damage to the biological and physical environment and best protects, preserves, and enhances historical, cultural, and natural resources. The environmentally preferred alternative is identified upon consideration and weighing by the Responsible Official of long-term environmental impacts against short-term impacts in evaluating what is the best protection of these resources. In some situations, such as when different alternatives impact different resources to different degrees, there may be more than one environmentally preferred alternative (43 CFR 46.30).

1. *Fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations.* The goal of the NPS at all units is to serve as a trustee of the environment for future generations. Under the No-Action Alternative, the NPS has difficulty fulfilling this role, since the project site receives minimal maintenance and additional rehabilitation of historic buildings and landscape is unfunded. Under Alternative B, the site would be partially maintained by the lessee and funds from the lease could be used for future rehabilitation projects.

2. *Ensure for all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings.* Under the No-Action Alternative, the P. C. Knox House would remain closed to the general public, except for appointment-only library access. Alternative B would better meet this criterion since the house would be open to many more visitors.
3. *Attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk of health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences.* Under the No-Action Alternative, the project site would continue to be used as the park's library, accessible by appointment only, with other sections of the house not open to the public. Alternative B would open the P. C. Knox House to wider visitor use, and address health and safety risks in order to avoid and minimize potential impacts to the extent possible.
4. *Preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage and maintain, whenever possible, an environment that supports diversity and variety of individual choice.* Under the No-Action Alternative, historic resources would continue to receive minimal care. Alternative B would generate funds to preserve historic resources and preserve the aesthetic values of the site.
5. *Achieve a balance between population and resource use that will permit high standards of living and wide sharing of life's amenities.* Under the No-Action alternative, only the library would be available to the public, by appointment. Under the action alternative, the house would be more widely available to visitors.
6. *Enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources.* The No-Action Alternative does not contribute to this criterion. Under the action alternative, the P. C. Knox House and grounds would be used in a manner that uses best management practices for sustainable operation.

Alternative B is the NPS preferred Alternative and best meets criteria for the environmentally preferred alternative.

## Summary of Environmental Consequences

**Table 1: Summary of Environmental Consequences**  
**For a complete description of impacts, see "Chapter 4: Environmental Consequences"**

|             | <b>Alternative A (No Action Alternative)</b>                                       | <b>Alternative B (NPS Preferred Alternative)</b>                                                                                                                         |
|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Soil</b> | <p><i>Overall Impact:</i> No impact</p> <p><i>Cumulative Impact:</i> No impact</p> | <p><i>Overall Impact:</i> Long term, negligible and adverse</p> <p><i>Cumulative Impact:</i> Will contribute an short-term, negligible and adverse cumulative impact</p> |

|                            |                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Topography</b>          | <p><i>Overall Impact:</i> No impact</p> <p><i>Cumulative Impact:</i> No impact</p>                                | <p><i>Overall Impact:</i> Long term, negligible and adverse</p> <p><i>Cumulative Impact:</i> Will contribute a long-term, negligible and adverse increment to the cumulative impact</p>                          |
| <b>Soundscape</b>          | <p><i>Overall Impact:</i> No impact</p> <p><i>Cumulative Impact :</i>No impact</p>                                | <p><i>Overall Impact:</i> Short term, moderate and adverse</p> <p><i>Cumulative Impact:</i> Will contribute an long-term, major, and adverse increment to a long-term, major, and adverse cumulative impact</p>  |
| <b>Lightscape</b>          | <p><i>Overall Impact:</i> No impact</p> <p><i>Cumulative Impact:</i> No impact</p>                                | <p><i>Overall Impact:</i> Short term, moderate and adverse</p> <p><i>Cumulative Impact:</i> Will contribute a long-term, moderate, and adverse increment to a long-term, major and adverse cumulative impact</p> |
| <b>Historic Structures</b> | <p><i>Overall Impact:</i> Long term, moderate to major and adverse</p> <p><i>Cumulative Impact:</i> No impact</p> | <p><i>Overall Impact:</i> Long term, moderate and beneficial</p> <p><i>Cumulative Impact:</i> No cumulative impact</p>                                                                                           |

|                                          |                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Cultural Landscapes</b></p>        | <p><i>Overall Impact:</i> Long term, minor, and adverse</p> <p><i>Cumulative Impact:</i> Long term, minor and adverse</p> | <p><i>Overall Impact:</i> long-term, minor, and adverse; long-term, minor and beneficial</p> <p><i>Cumulative Impact:</i> Will contribute an long term, minor, and adverse increment to a long term, minor, and adverse cumulative impact</p>              |
| <p><b>Visual Resources</b></p>           | <p><i>Overall Impact:</i> Long term, minor, and adverse</p> <p><i>Cumulative Impact:</i> long term, minor and adverse</p> | <p><i>Overall Impact:</i> Short term, minor and adverse</p> <p><i>Cumulative Impact:</i> Will contribute a long term, minor and adverse increment to a long term, minor, and adverse cumulative impact</p>                                                 |
| <p><b>Visitor Use and Experience</b></p> | <p><i>Overall Impact:</i> No impact</p> <p><i>Cumulative Impact:</i> No impact</p>                                        | <p><i>Overall Impact:</i> Short term, moderate and adverse; short-term, moderate, and beneficial</p> <p><i>Cumulative Impact:</i> Will contribute a short term, moderate and adverse increment to a long-term, major, and beneficial cumulative impact</p> |
| <p><b>Traffic and Circulation</b></p>    | <p><i>Overall Impact:</i> No impact</p> <p><i>Cumulative Impact:</i> No impact</p>                                        | <p><i>Overall Impact:</i> Short-term, minor and adverse</p> <p><i>Cumulative Impact:</i> Will contribute a minor adverse increment to the cumulative impact</p>                                                                                            |

**Park Operations**

*Overall Impact:* No impact

*Overall Impact:* Long term, minor and beneficial, short term , negligible and adverse, and long term, minor and adverse

*Cumulative Impact:* No impact

*Cumulative Impact:* No impact

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