

Site Planning Strategies

To align your program, site, and facilities

Tom Neppl, PLA | Campfire Collective Annual Conference
November 11, 2024



Tom Neppi | Owner/Principal
Neppi Landscape Architecture and Planning, LLC

Professional Landscape Architect (State of Iowa 439)
Base Camp since 1997 → Ames, Iowa.
100+ projects throughout the U.S.
American Camp Association volunteer.
ACA's National Service Award.
ACA Great Rivers Honor Award.
Iowa State University faculty member.
Husband to YMCA Camp Foster alum
Father to Iowa 4-H Center & Des Moines Y Camp alums.



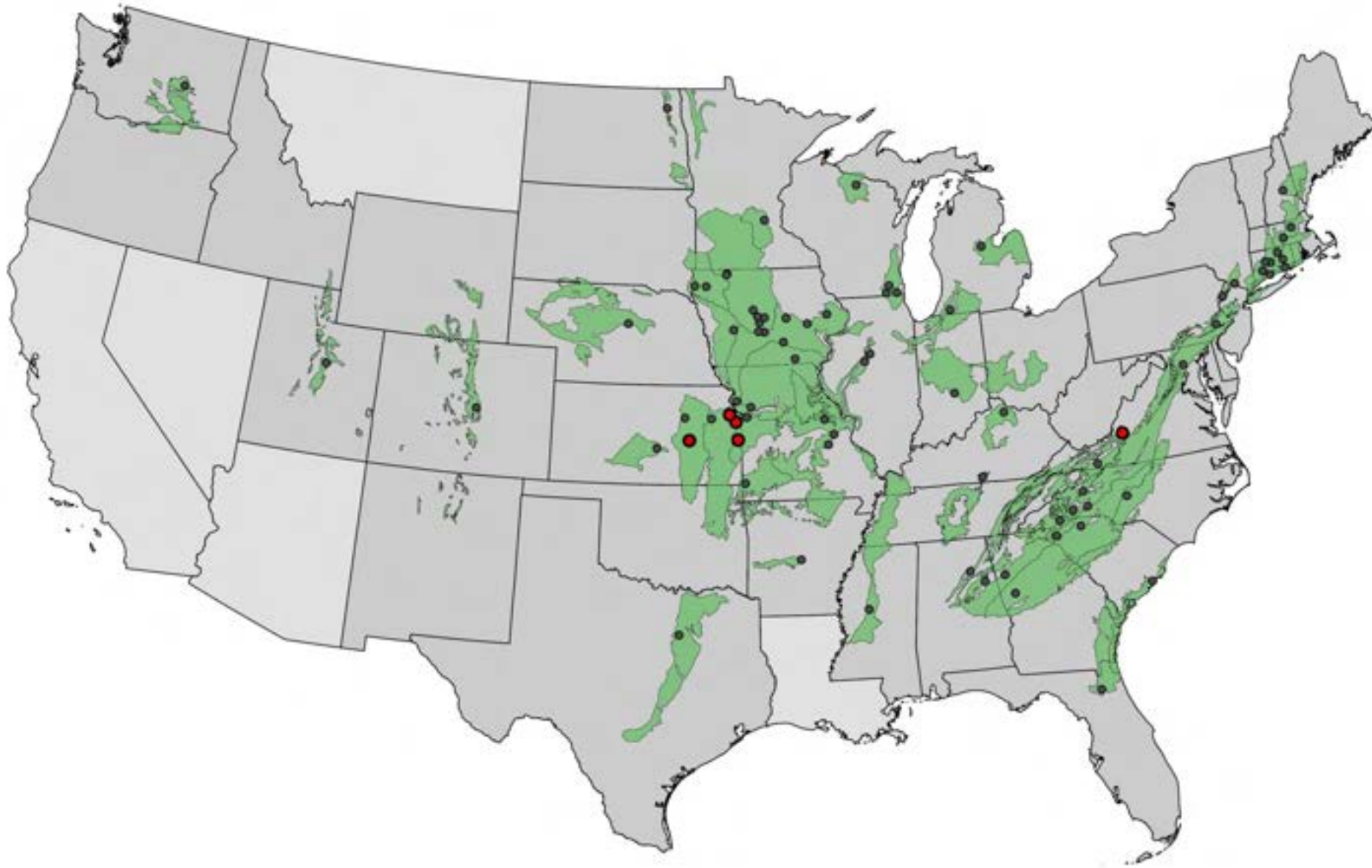


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Husband to YMCA Camp Foster alum
Father to Iowa 4-H Center & Des Moines Y Camp alums.

Strategic Partner with The Sherry Group.





Selected Projects

49 EPA ecoregions

Camps, Conference, and
Retreat Centers

Primarily not-for-profit

Will share 4-5 projects
today

Site Planning Strategies

OUTCOMES:

Share a few precedent camps' different approaches to implementing long-range plans.

Present the site, program, and facility considerations affecting these camps' long-range plans.

Offer site planning strategy to align program, site and facilities.

Engage in a discussion about how you might approach this process, along the way.



Site Planning Strategies

DIFFERENT CAMPS' APPROACHES:

To guide future land use development decisions | **Camp Bethel**

To expand and progress experiences | **TimberRidge Adventure Center**

To plant the flag for STEAM camp experiences | **Camp Tongawood**

To address site concerns and open funding channels | **Wildwood**

Outdoor Education Center

A photograph of three people standing on white stand-up paddleboards (SUPs) on a calm lake. The person in the foreground is wearing a green life vest and a tan hat. The person in the middle is wearing a red and black life vest. The person in the background is wearing a blue life vest and a blue shirt. They are all holding paddles. In the background, there is a wooden building and a line of trees.

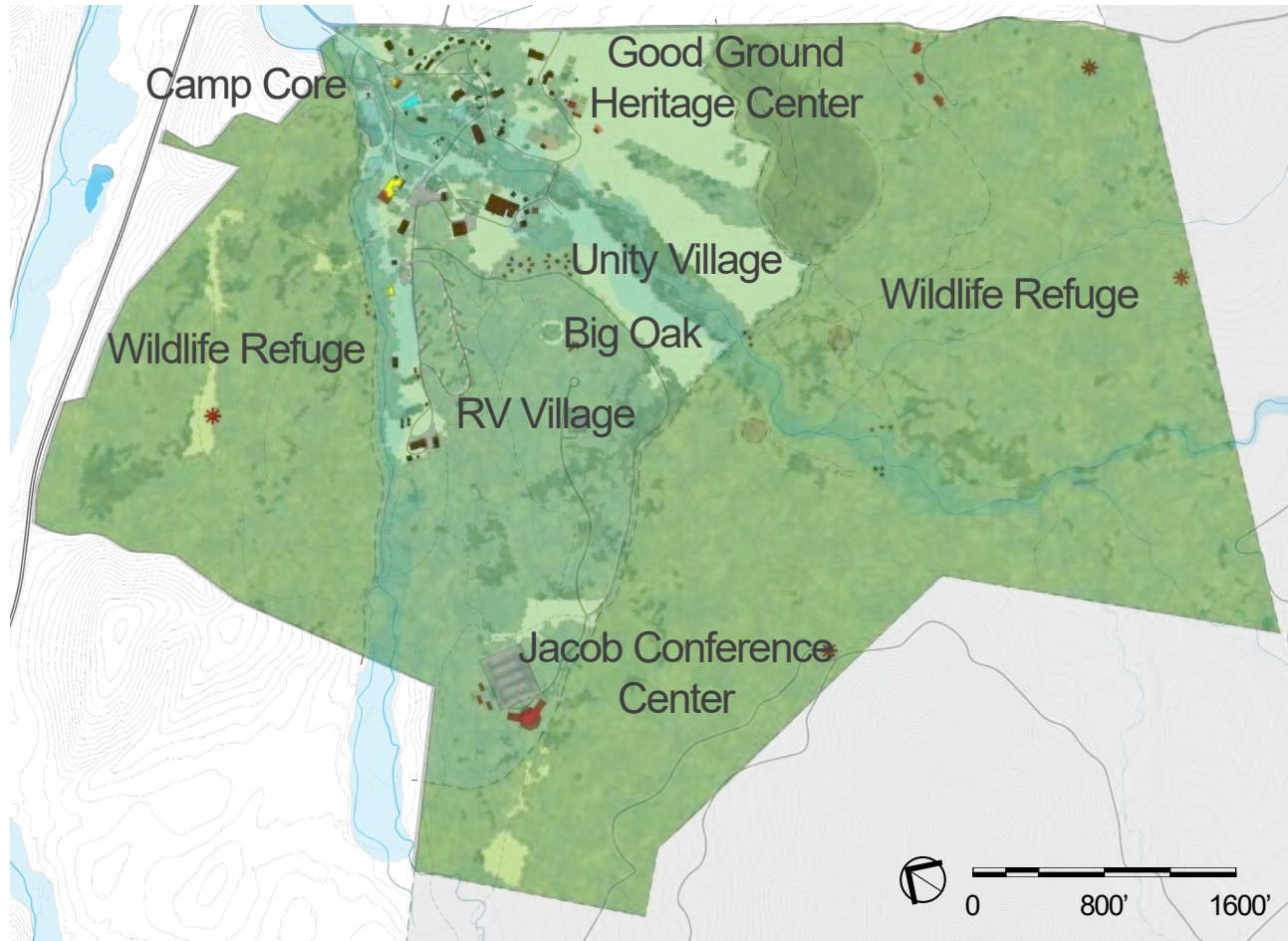
Camp Bethel

Fincastle, Virginia

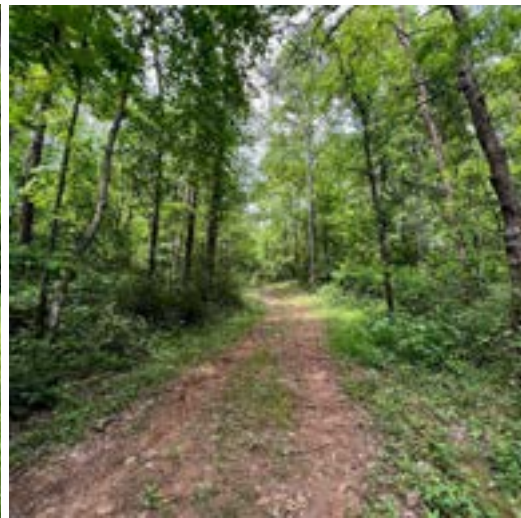
Using the master site plan to guide future land use decisions.

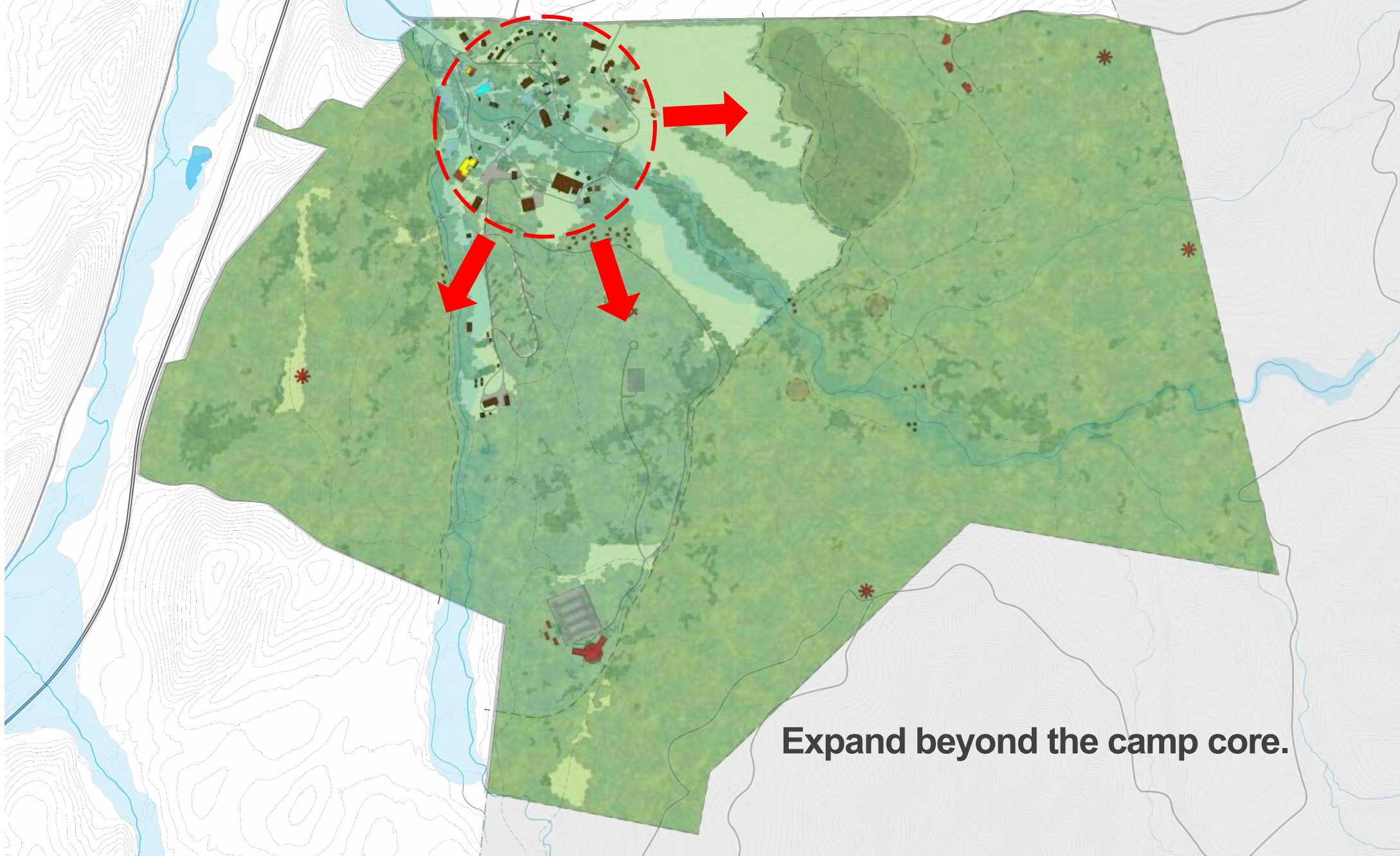
Camp Bethel

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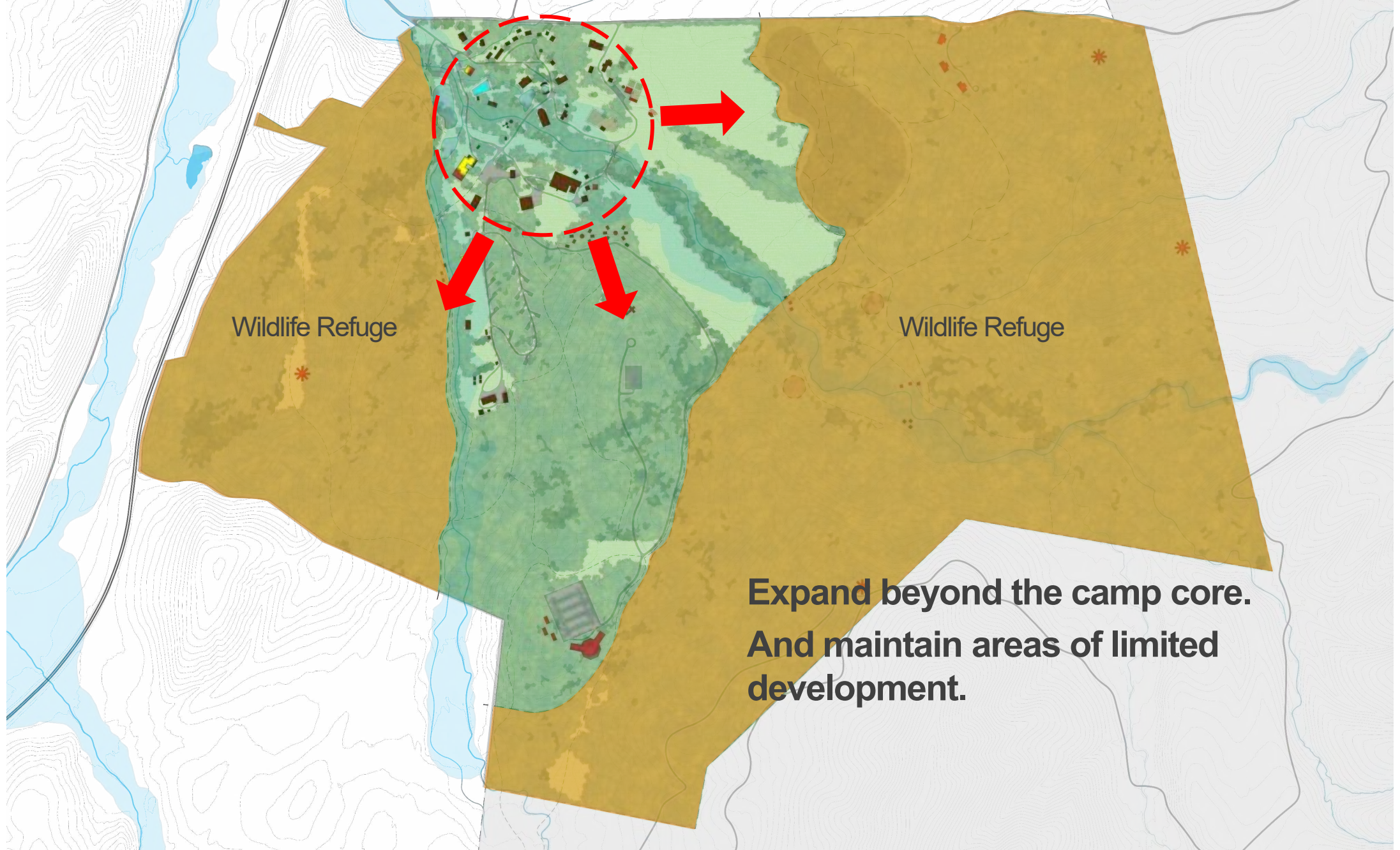


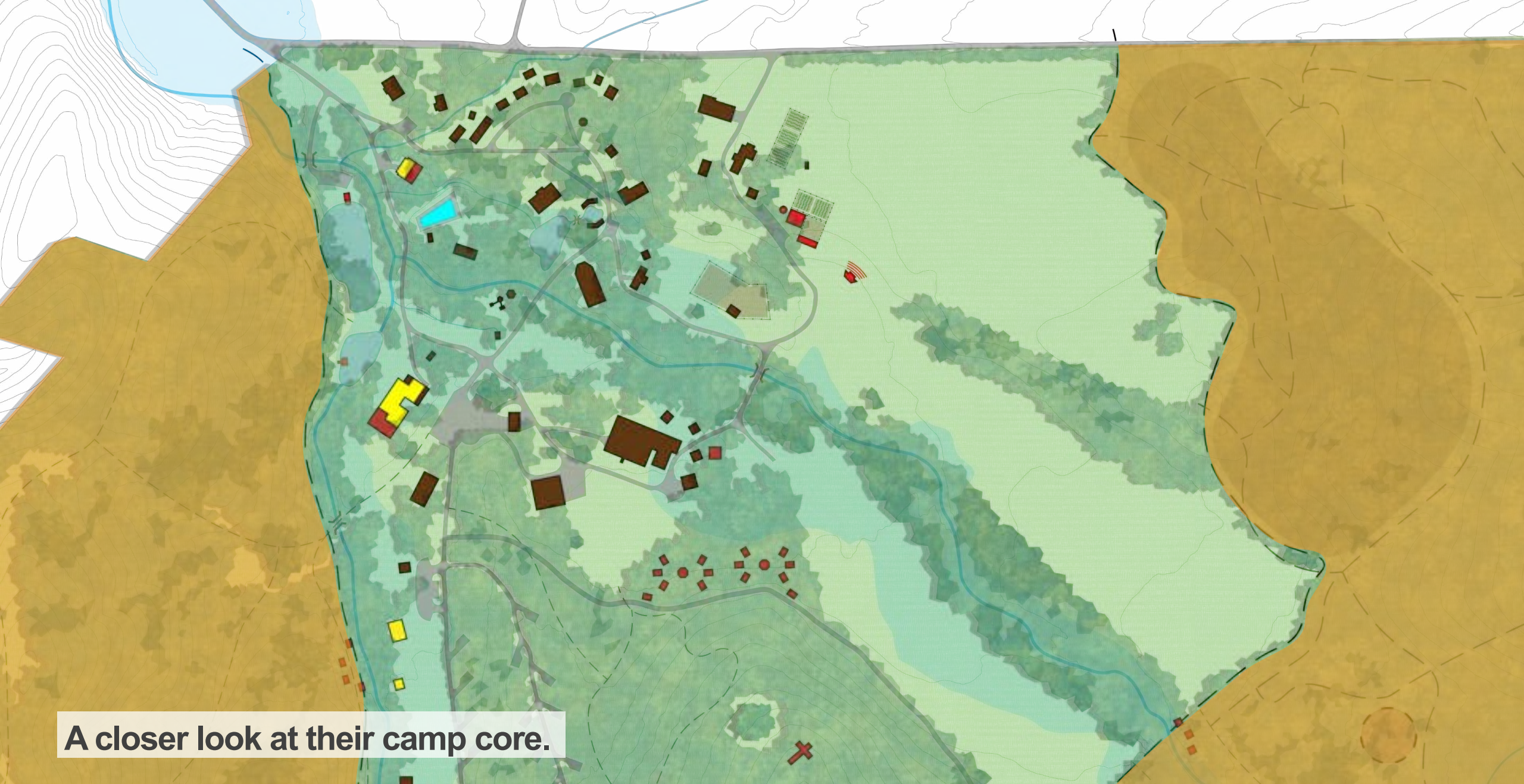
Big Oak



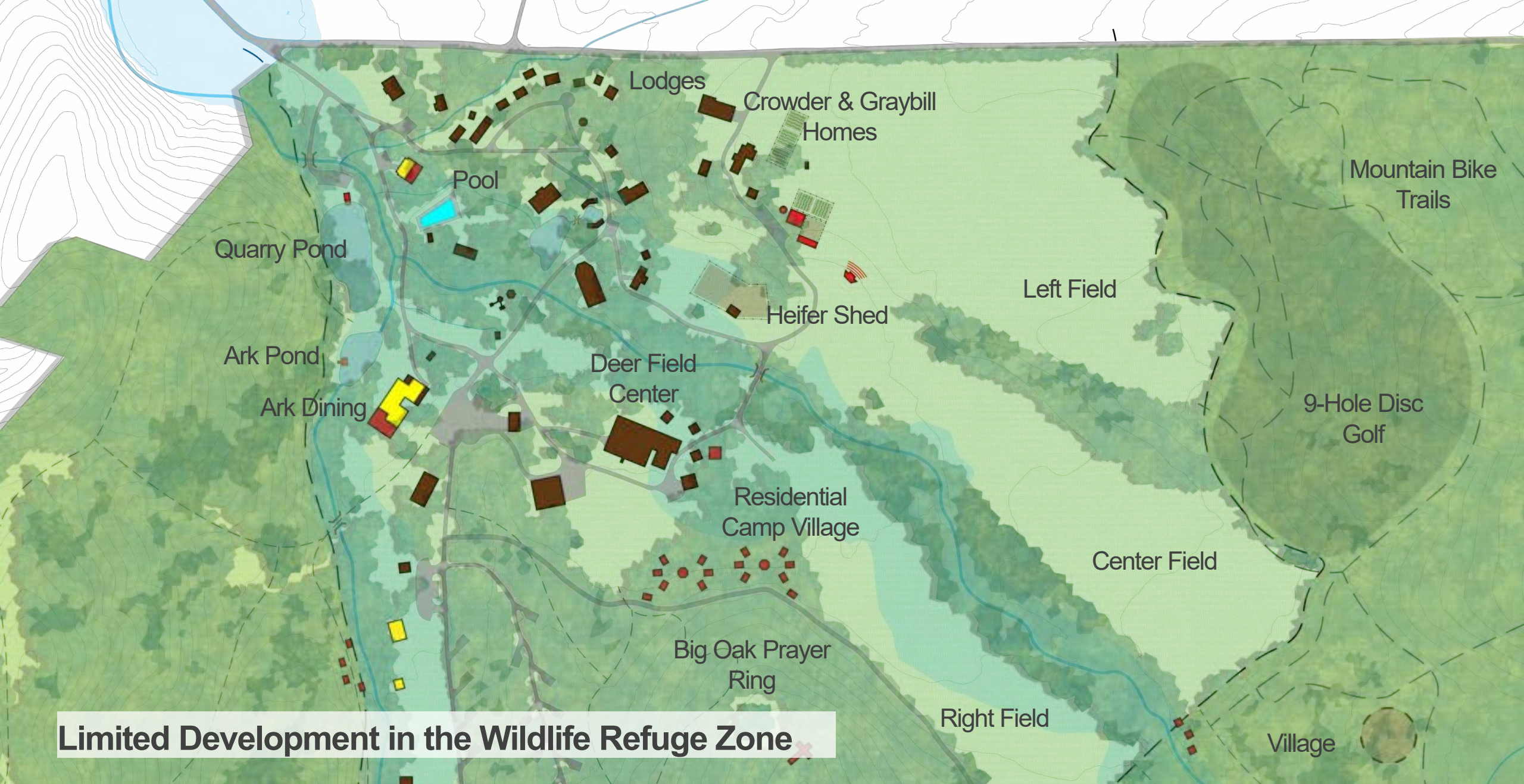


Expand beyond the camp core.





A closer look at their camp core.



Lodges

Crowder & Graybill
Homes

Pool

Quarry Pond

Ark Pond

Ark Dining

Deer Field
Center

Heifer Shed

Left Field

Mountain Bike
Trails

9-Hole Disc
Golf

Residential
Camp Village

Center Field

Big Oak Prayer
Ring

Right Field

Village

Limited Development in the Wildlife Refuge Zone



HIKING



GAMES




TRAIL REC.



Provides for experiences they want!



Restricts those they don't !

A photograph of three people on stand-up paddleboards (SUPs) on a calm body of water. The person in the foreground is wearing a green life vest and a yellow hat. The person in the middle is wearing a red and black life vest. The person in the background is wearing a blue life vest and a blue shirt. They are all holding paddles. In the background, there is a wooden building and a line of trees.

Camp Bethel's Master Plan has guided the camp's land use development, including implementing what was designed into the Plan and steering away from what wasn't.

Camp leadership refers to the Master Plan whenever land use development opportunities or ideas for a new program come up.

A photograph of three people on paddleboards on a calm lake. The person in the foreground is wearing a green life vest and a dark shirt. The person in the middle is wearing a red and black life vest. The person in the background is wearing a blue life vest and a blue shirt. They are all holding paddles. The background shows a wooden building and trees.

DISCUSSION BREAK

What's your decision-making process for new program ideas or development projects?

Camp Tongawood

Tonganoxie, Kansas

To plant the flag for camp experiences

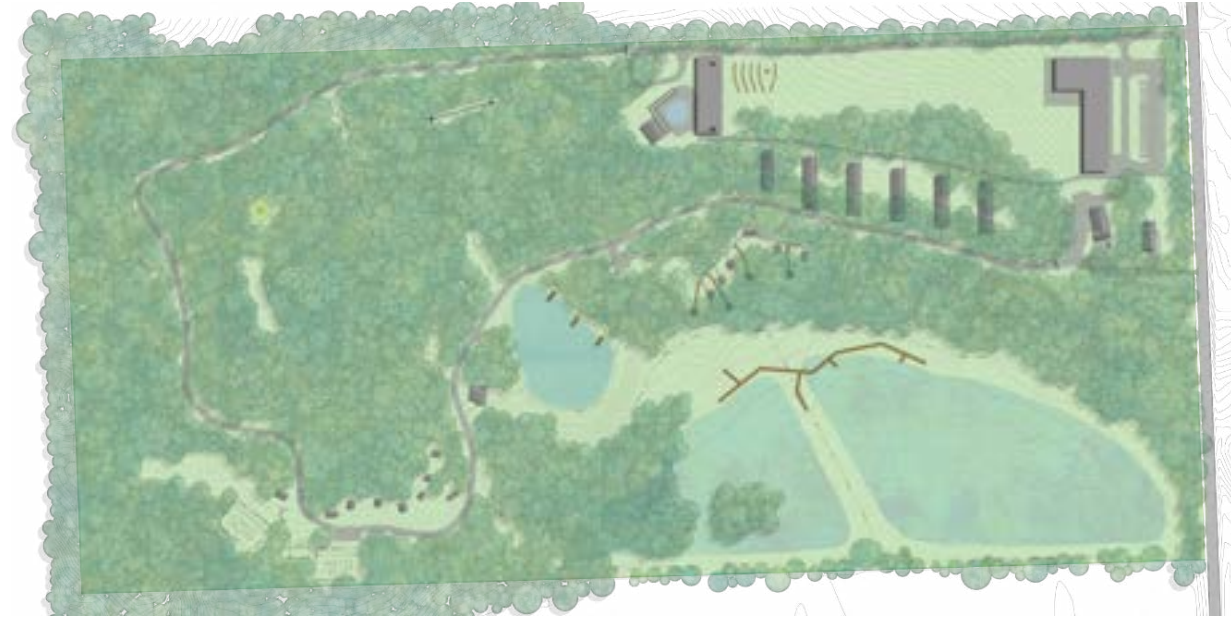




2016 MASTER PLAN

Identify programs and experiences Tongawood could support in coordination with the council's other properties.

Aimed to maintain Tongawood's identity as the STEM center while adding residential, aquatic, and recreational amenities.



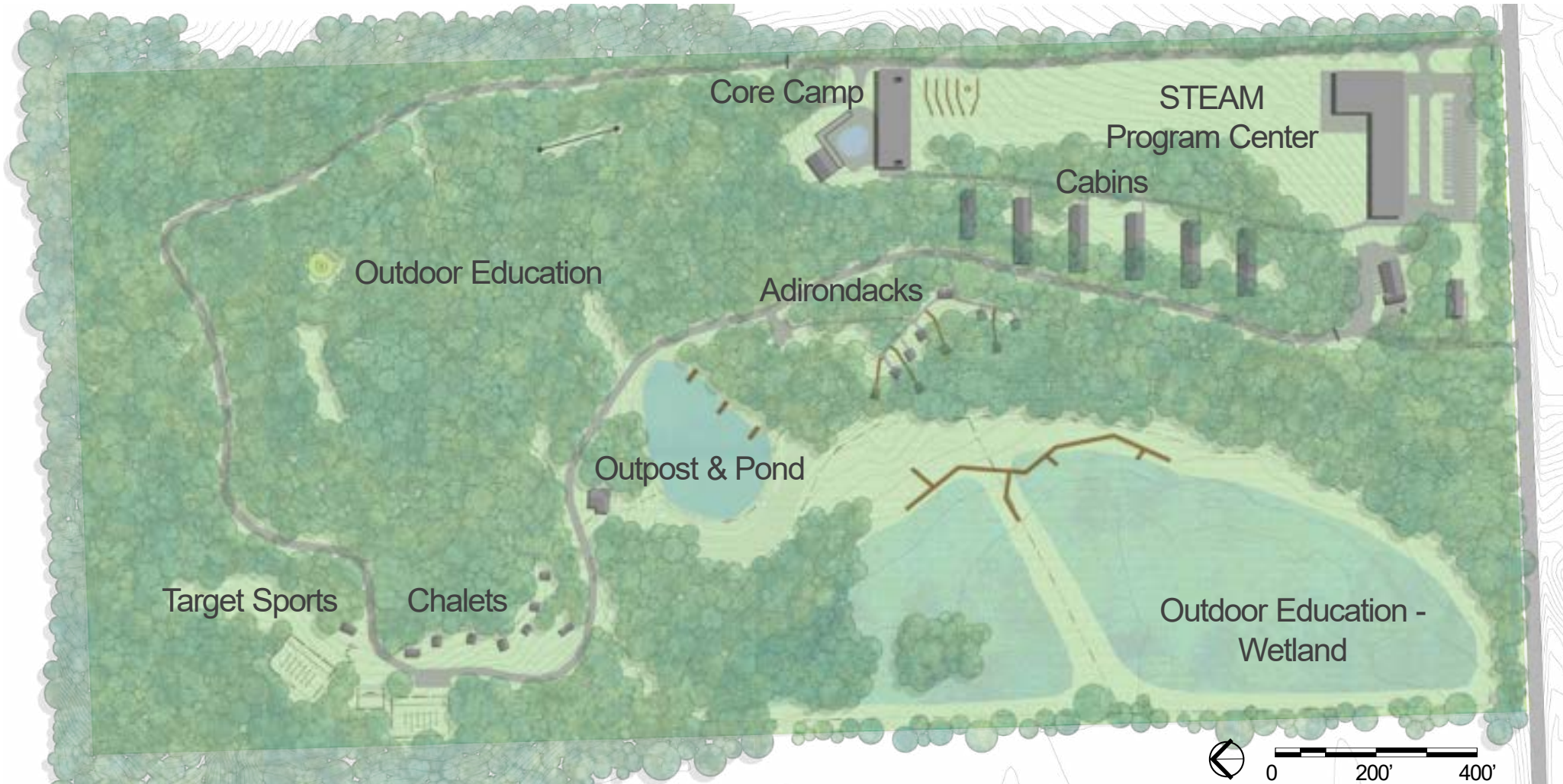
2022 MASTER PLAN UPDATE

Intends to plant the flag for STEAM experiences at Tongawood.

Builds on the 2016 Master Plan to add more amenities.

Camp Tongawood

Tonganoxie, Kansas







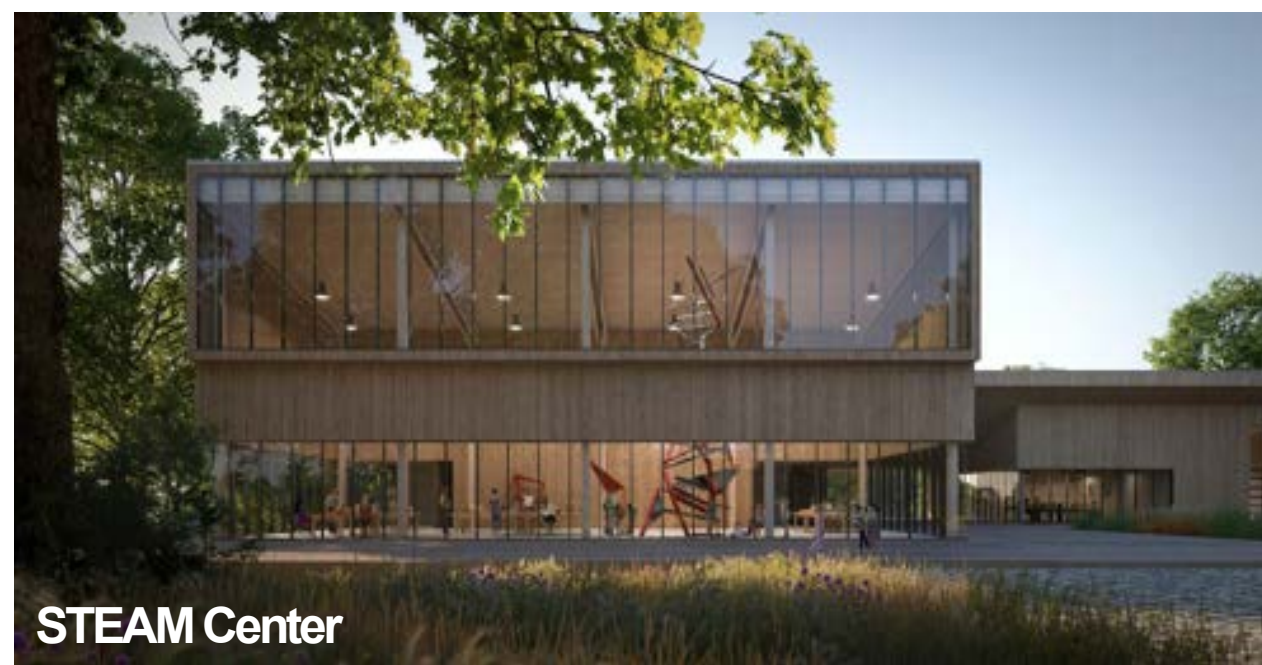
Manager's Residence

Cabins

Primitive Camping

Lodge

STEAM Center



STEAM Center



Cabin



STEAM Center



Lodge



Campfire
Collective



THE
SHERRY
GROUP

Neppi Landscape Architecture and Planning, LLC

DISCUSSION BREAK

Are there programs at your camp that you've 'planted the flag' for?

Did it require a shift or change in facilities?



Wildwood Outdoor Education Center

La Cygne, Kansas

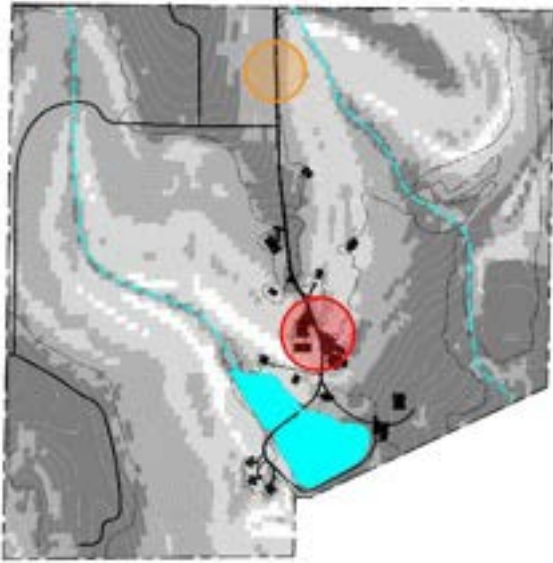
To address site concerns & open funding channels

The Wildwood Master Plan addressed three main aims:

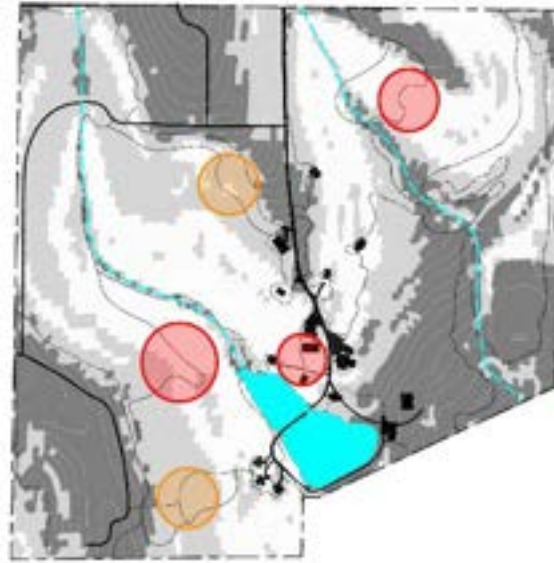
- To increase camping, retreating, and outdoor education capacity and to allow for concurrent activities
- To establish a progression of experience
- To identify an ecological strategy for site development and outdoor experiences in support of increased camp, retreat, and outdoor education capacity



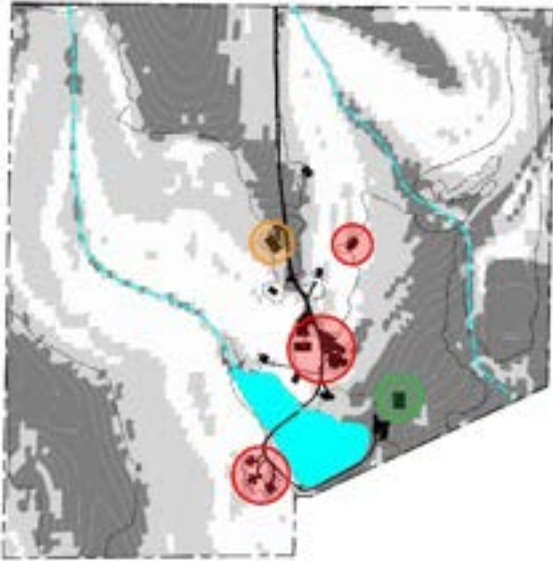




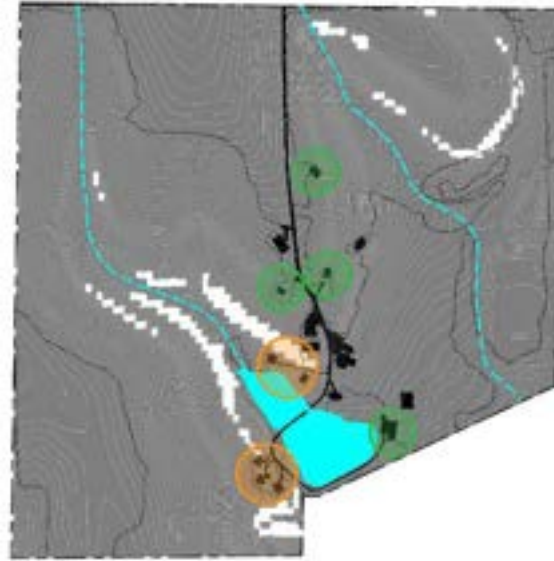
Primary Roads



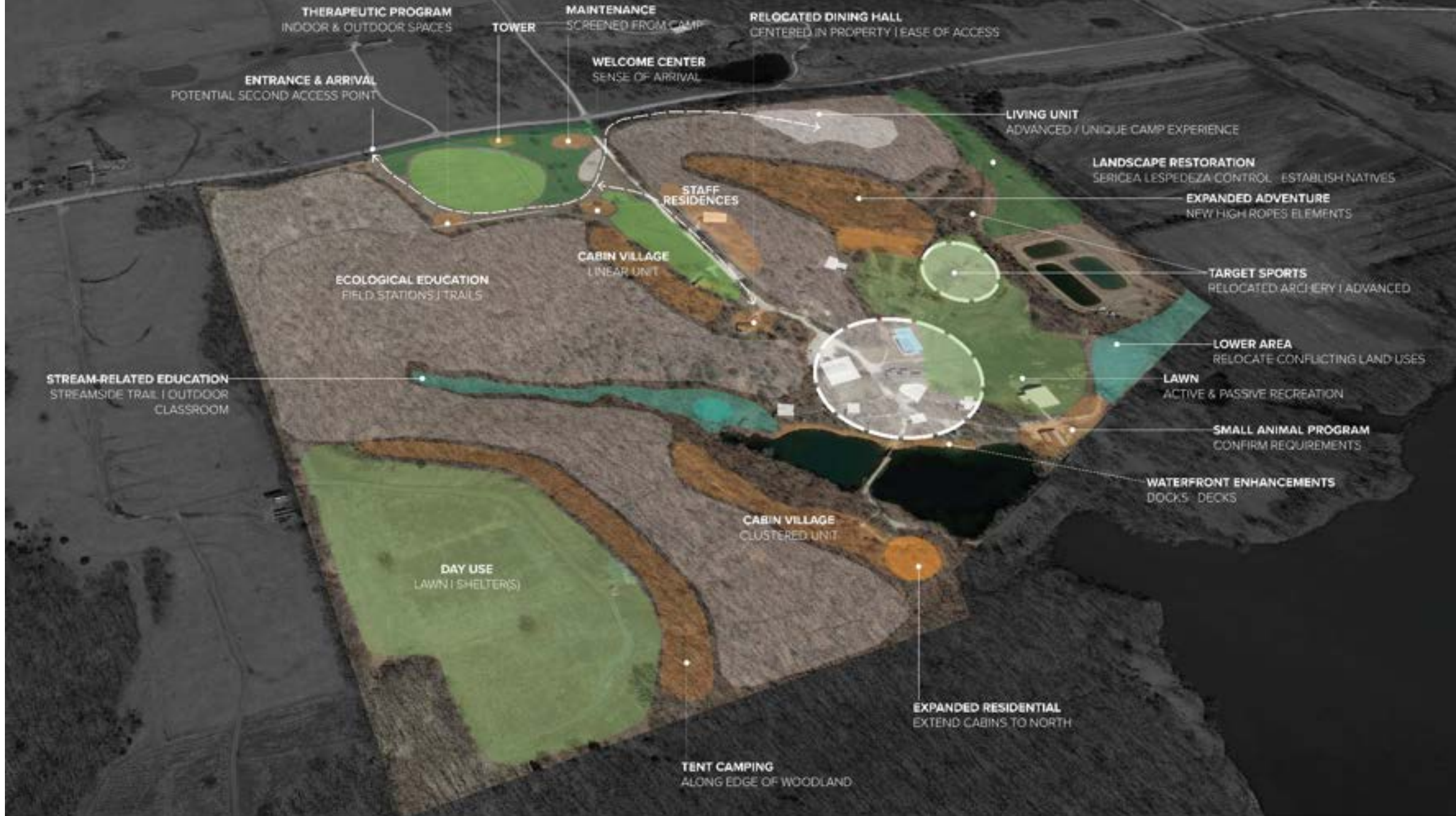
Accessible Trails



Large Buildings



Small Buildings







BUILT ENVIRONMENT | CURRENT

Built Environment - Current

As shown above, the pattern of land development is concentrated in the central part of the Wildwood property, following the ridgeline from open north meadow down to the lake, and along the lakeshore. Additionally, roads and lanes meander through the woodland to the meadow in the southwest corner, and across the lake to the Sugar Creek, Big Prairie, and Timber Hills Cabins. The wastewater lagoons and large gravel parking areas are also identified above.

One of the strategies of the master plan is to relocate impervious surfaces (including gravel roads, parking areas, building roofs, and other developments) from the central zone of the property where existing slopes are very steep to more suitable locations on the property. This allows those previously developed areas to be restored or reclaimed as open green space.




BUILT ENVIRONMENT | PROPOSED

Built Environment - Proposed

The image above illustrates the proposed, future pattern of land development as delineated in the master plan. Some areas of existing development will remain, including a number of existing buildings and the wastewater lagoons.

Areas of new development include the new entrance roadway and related parking, the service road to the eastern edge of the property, and the proposed Welcome Center and Dining Hall in the

higher elevations in the north central zone of the property. Where feasible, existing large gravel roads and parking areas have been reduced or relocated to minimize the amount of impervious surfaces, overall. Roads and trails are also relocated in a few areas to areas with more suitable slopes. In the central, steeper slopes of the property, large and wide existing roads are replaced with narrower trails that follow the contour.



Additional Benefits of the Master Plan:

- It opened up revenue channels for Wildwood with the county
- It fostered greater knowledge of the site with Wildwood staff
- It has served as a filter for ideas and provides reassurance that the future plan is set

TimberRidge Adventure Center

Olathe, Kansas

To expand & progress camp experiences.

TimberRidge Adventure Center

Olathe, Kansas



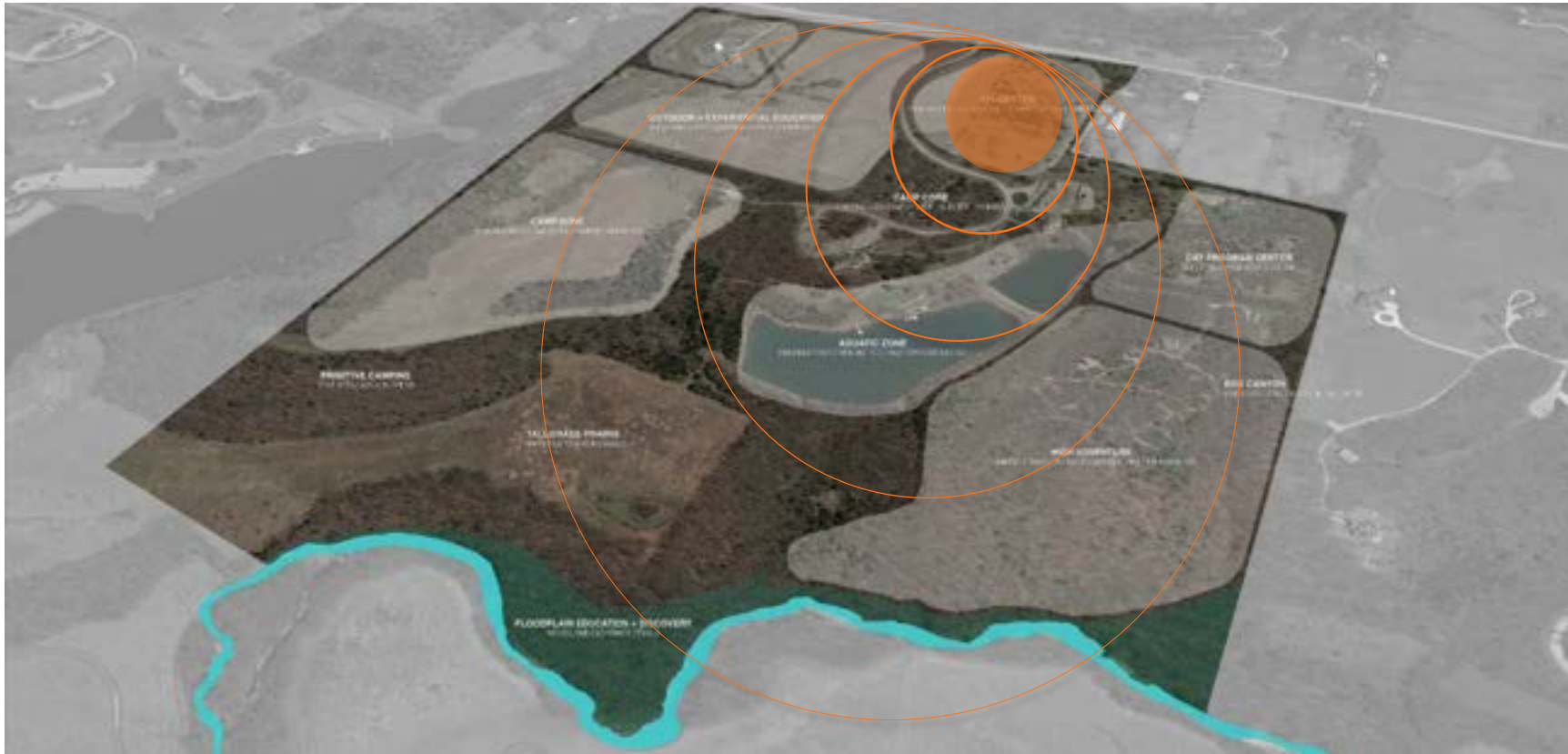


Aiming to expand camp experiences.



**PASSIVE EXPERIENCES
LOWER DENSITY**

ACCOMMODATIONS
HOBBIES



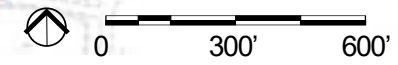


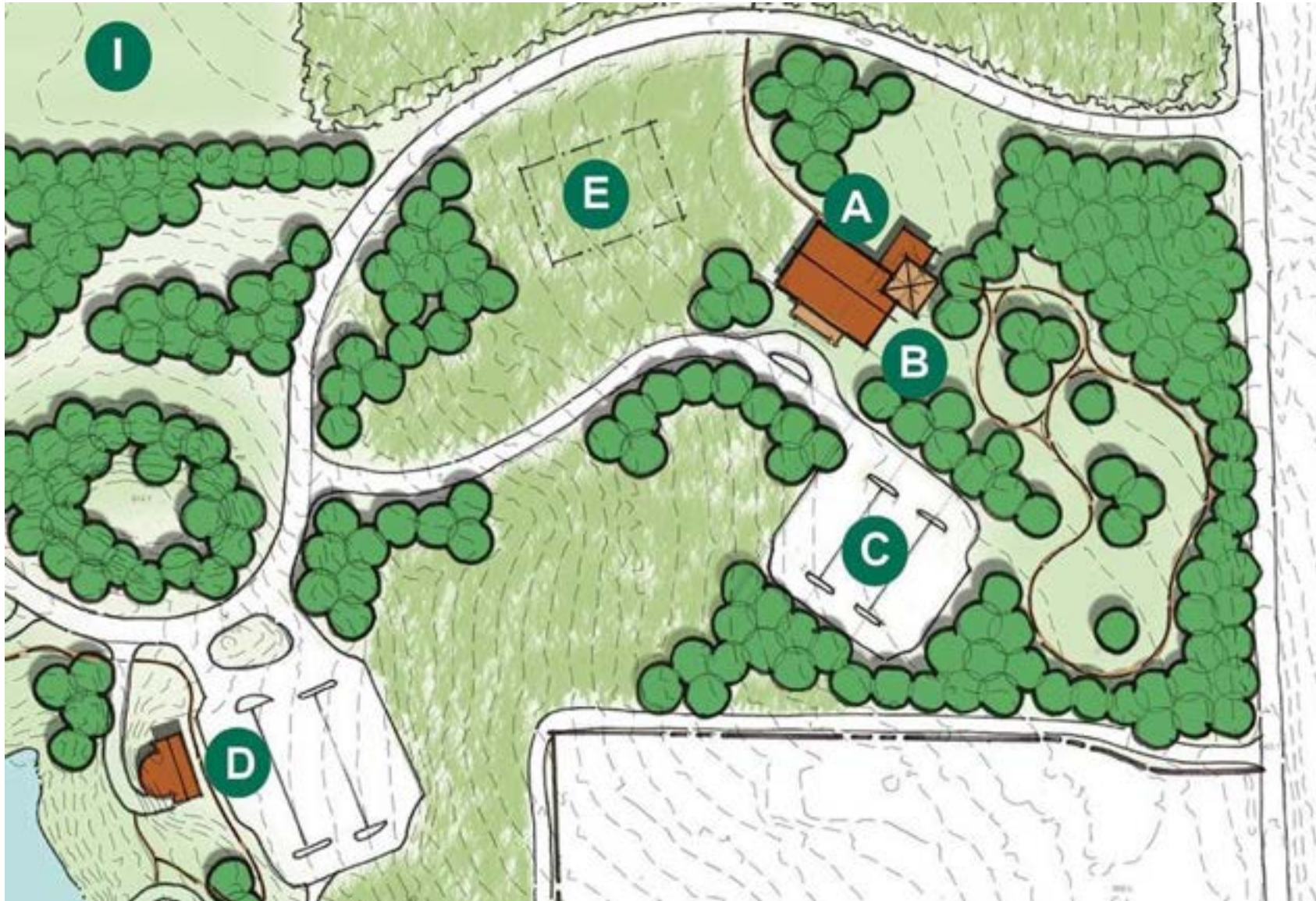
Zoning diagram shows how all of the property is engaged for outdoor experience.



LEGEND

- EpiCenter**
 - A) EpiCenter
 - B) Fire Garden
 - C) Parking
 - D) Existing Welcome Center & Parking
 - E) Existing Sanitary Wellfield
- Outdoor Education**
 - F) Shooting Sports & Parking
 - G) Amphitheater & Pavilion
 - H) Trails & Outdoor Classrooms
 - I) Turf Game Field
 - J) Tower Easement
- Camp Zone**
 - K) Showerhouse / Restroom / Safe Room
 - L) Shelter 1 & Campfire Circle
 - M) Shelter 2 & Parking
 - N) Cart Kiosk
- Aquatic Zone**
 - O) Whispering Pines Shelter & Parking
 - P) Additional Fishing Dock
 - Q) Waterfront Improvements
- Adventure Zone**
 - R) Existing Shelters to Remain
 - S) New Challenge Course
 - T) Box Canyon
 - U) Existing Challenge Course / Zipline
 - V) Adventure Course
 - W) Canopy Tour
 - X) Storage Shed
- Creekside Zone**
 - Y) Kill Creek
 - Z) Outdoor Classrooms
 - ZZ) Creek Trails
- Other**
 - AA) Prairie / Hiking Trails
 - BB) Manager's Residence
 - CC) Existing Maintenance Buildings

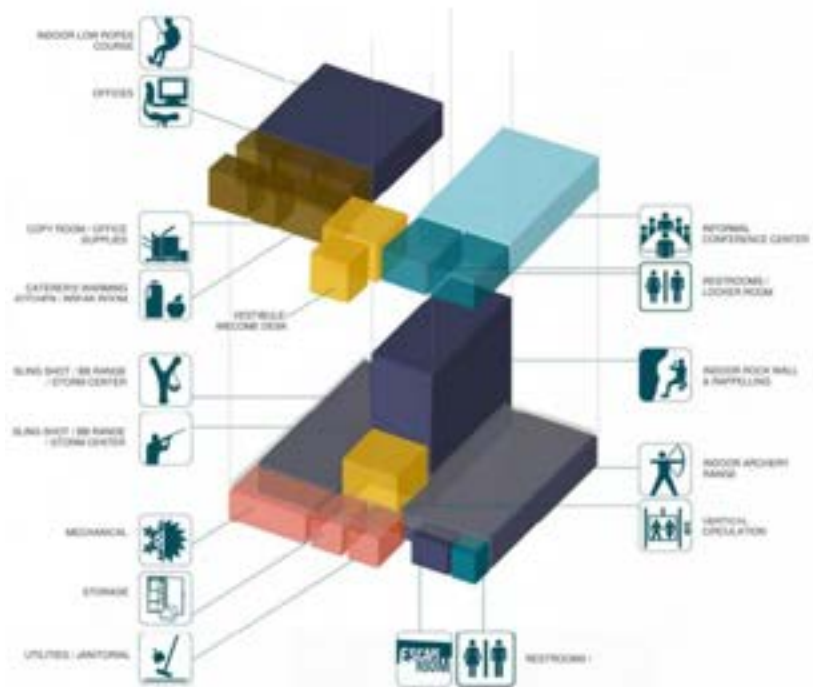
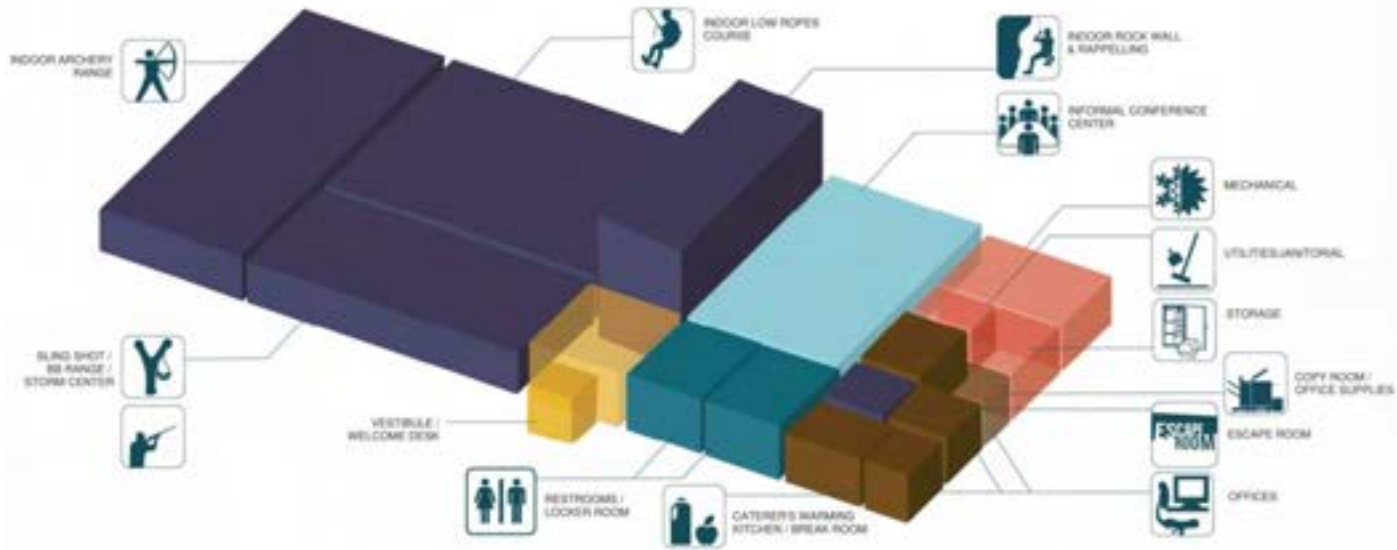




LEGEND

EpiCenter

- A) EpiCenter
- B) Fire Garden
- C) Parking
- D) Existing Welcome Center & Parking
- E) Existing Sanitary Wellfield



vireo



STRATA ARCHITECTS

Share your thoughts with us!



Most Memorable: If you could TAKE A PHOTO of the most memorable thing at TimberRidge Adventure Center today, what would it be?

Vision: In the future, what should the TimberRidge Adventure Center be known for?

Key Fixes: If you could FIX ONE THING at TimberRidge Adventure Center, what would it be?

Absolutes: What are the "TWO THINGS" that absolutely need to appear in the TRAC master plan?

Vision, Fixes, & Absolutes

Rank from 1 (most important) to 7 (least important) for TRAC's future

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> Sports/Games</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Softball • Basketball courts • Baseball courts • Golf course • Equestrian program • Equestrian park garage • Equestrian activity range • Horse arena • Football • Pathways for Play • Volleyball courts • Multi-use space (see website/finance page 46) • Natural playgrounds • Destination playgrounds • Log cabin • Other? <p><small>Recreation center (see website/finance page 46)</small></p> | <p><input type="checkbox"/> Camping</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabins • Tents • Shelter/shedding • Large • Shelters • Chapel • Laundry facility • Restrooms • Meeting rooms • Office • Storage • Furniture • Lighting for safety <p><small>Special events programming Special events storage or other multipurpose building (page 46/47)</small></p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> Adventures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Archery (also canoe) • Rock bridge • Equestrian challenge course • Hiking • Indoor challenge course • Challenge trails • Multi-use space (between two sides and up/down) • Equestrian low space • Mountain biking • Obstacle course • Climbing • Mountain-climbing area • Rafting • Kayaking • Canoeing • Team building (canoe/kayak) • Other as space for challenge course • Continuing gathering space for team challenge course • Zip line • Adventure playground • Other? <p><small>Workshop 50</small></p> | <p><input type="checkbox"/> Environmental</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpretation • Landmarks • Pathways for Play • Community gardens (working with local garden centers) • Other? <p><small>Nature programs Rehabilitated nature trail ES/Trail programs</small></p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> Water Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heated pool (kiosk) • Indoor pool • Pool house • Open air • Spa/Hot tub expansion • Zero entry pool • Aquatics/PA • Other? | <p><input type="checkbox"/> Arts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amphitheater • Arts & crafts center • Other? |

Tell us more about the top 2 for TimberRidge Adventure Center:
Why are they important to your group?
What should be added to the list? Removed?



Activities & Programs

Community engagement was an initial step in the process. The design team met with key stakeholders to discuss their ideas and visions for the future of TimberRidge Adventure Center.



DISCUSSION BREAK

**Who in your organization
and community would you
invite to the planning table?**

**What questions would you
ask?**

Camp Wood YMCA

Elmdale, Kansas

CLOUD WATERSHED
2013

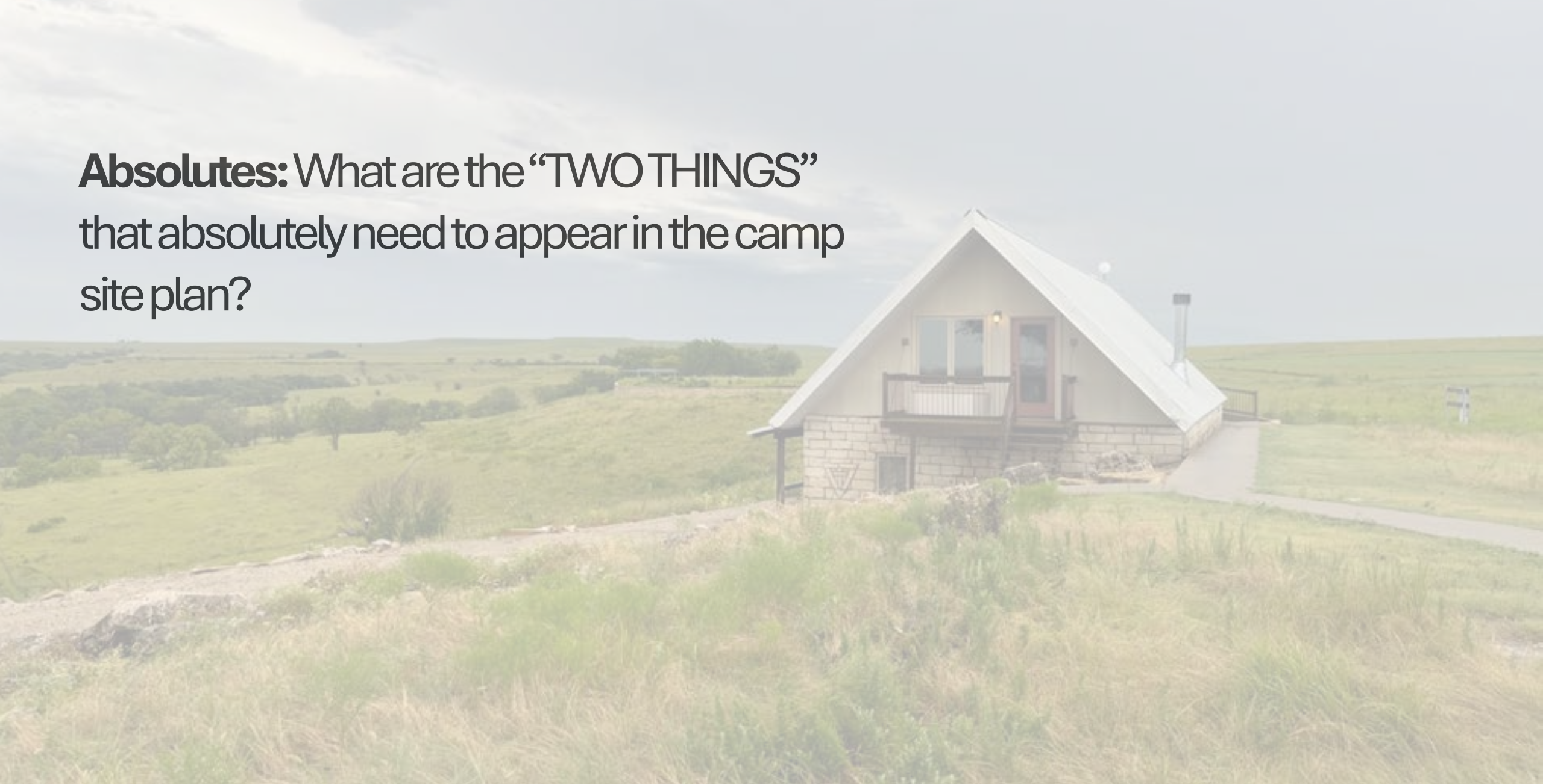
Current Study

Most Memorable: If you could TAKE A PHOTO of the most memorable thing at your camp or center, what would it be?

CLOUD WATERSHED
2013

Key Fixes: If you could FIX ONE THING at your camp or center, what would it be?

Absolutes: What are the “TWO THINGS”
that absolutely need to appear in the camp
site plan?



Vision: In the future, what should your center or camp be known for?



KEY QUESTIONS

Most Memorable

Vision

Key Fixes

Absolutes

Others – *untouchables,*
tangibles and intangibles,
'pinch points'...

KEY QUESTIONS

Most Memorable

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Absolutes

Others – *untouchables,*
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'pinch points'...

MAP IT

Inventory the
responses.

Identify suitability
characteristics for each
activity or program.

Run a suitability
analysis.



KEY QUESTIONS

Most Memorable

Vision

Key Fixes

Absolutes

Others – *untouchables,*
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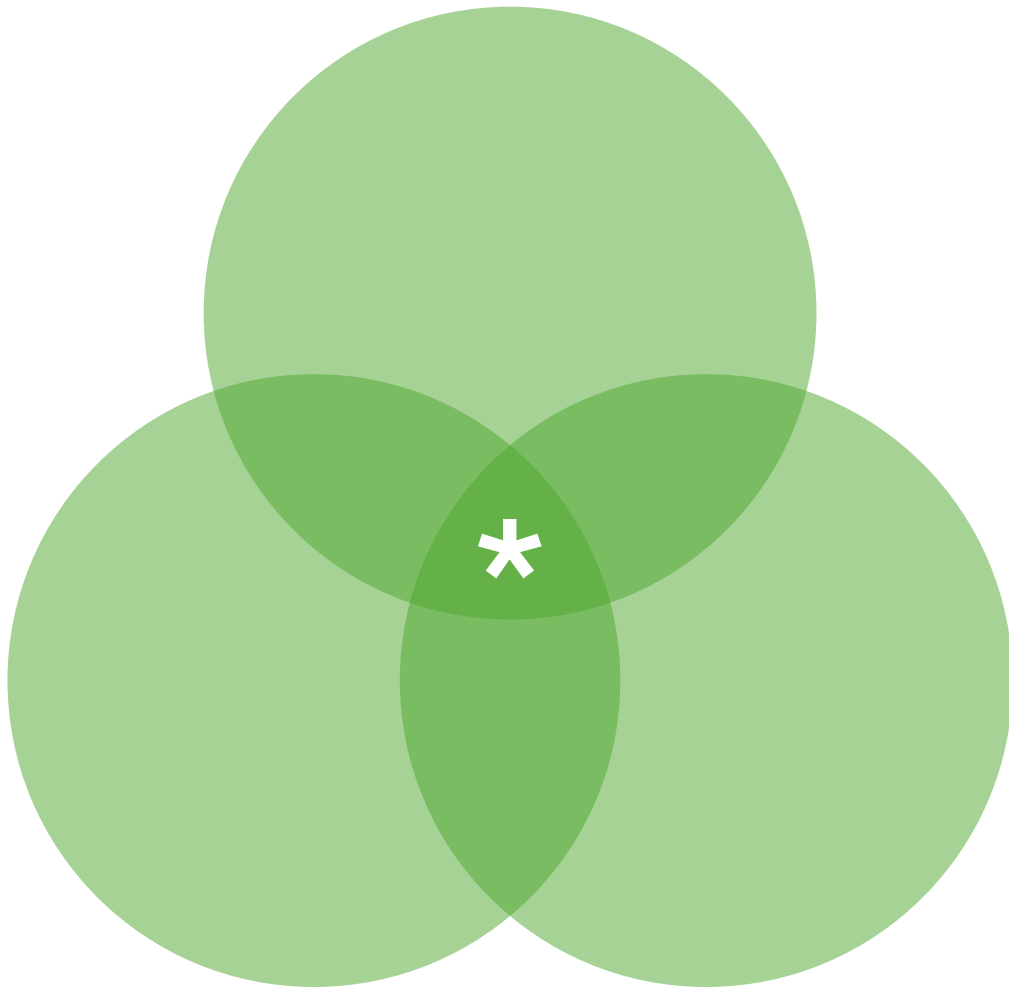
Run a suitability
analysis.

PLAN SCENARIOS

Show different
options for the long-
range plan.

Each option responds
to the key questions.
Each option is fit to
the site.





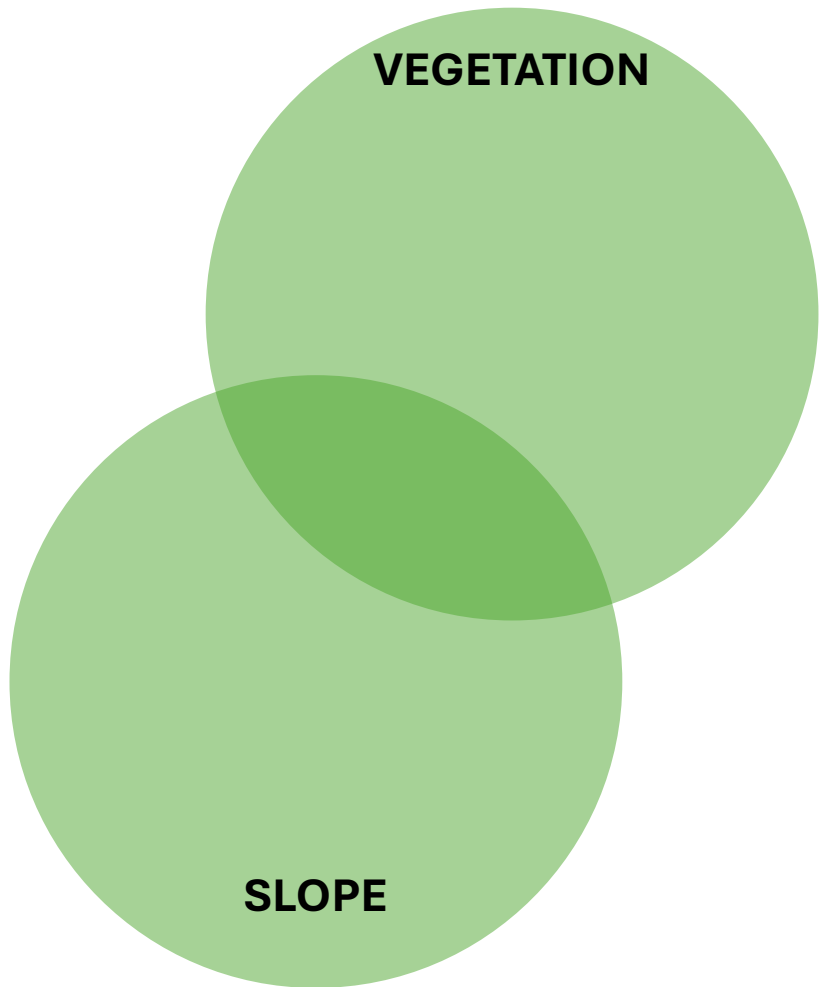
Suitability Analysis:

- We're looking for areas on the site that are in the best fit for the program, activity, structure, etc.
- We're aiming to find the 'sweet spot'

VEGETATION

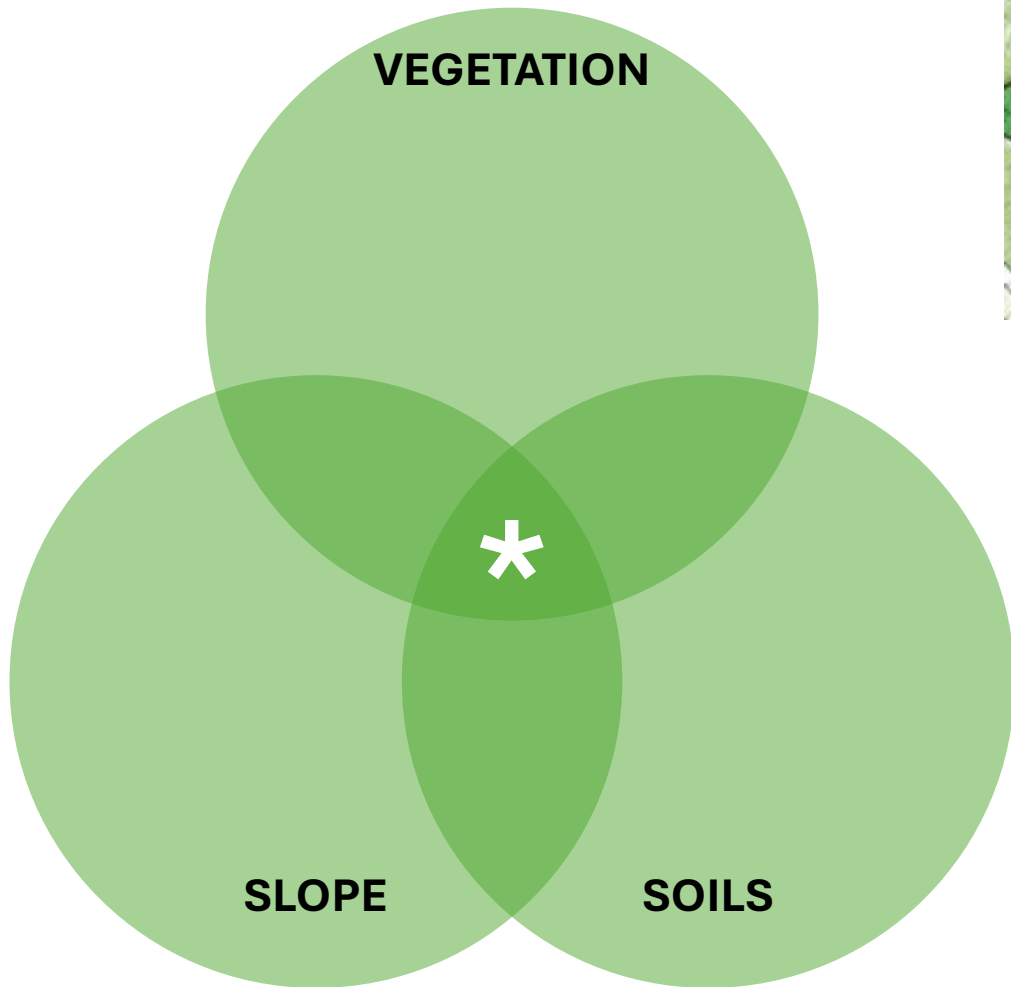


- Suitability Analysis for 3D archery:
- Vegetation – open woodland



Suitability Analysis for 3D archery:

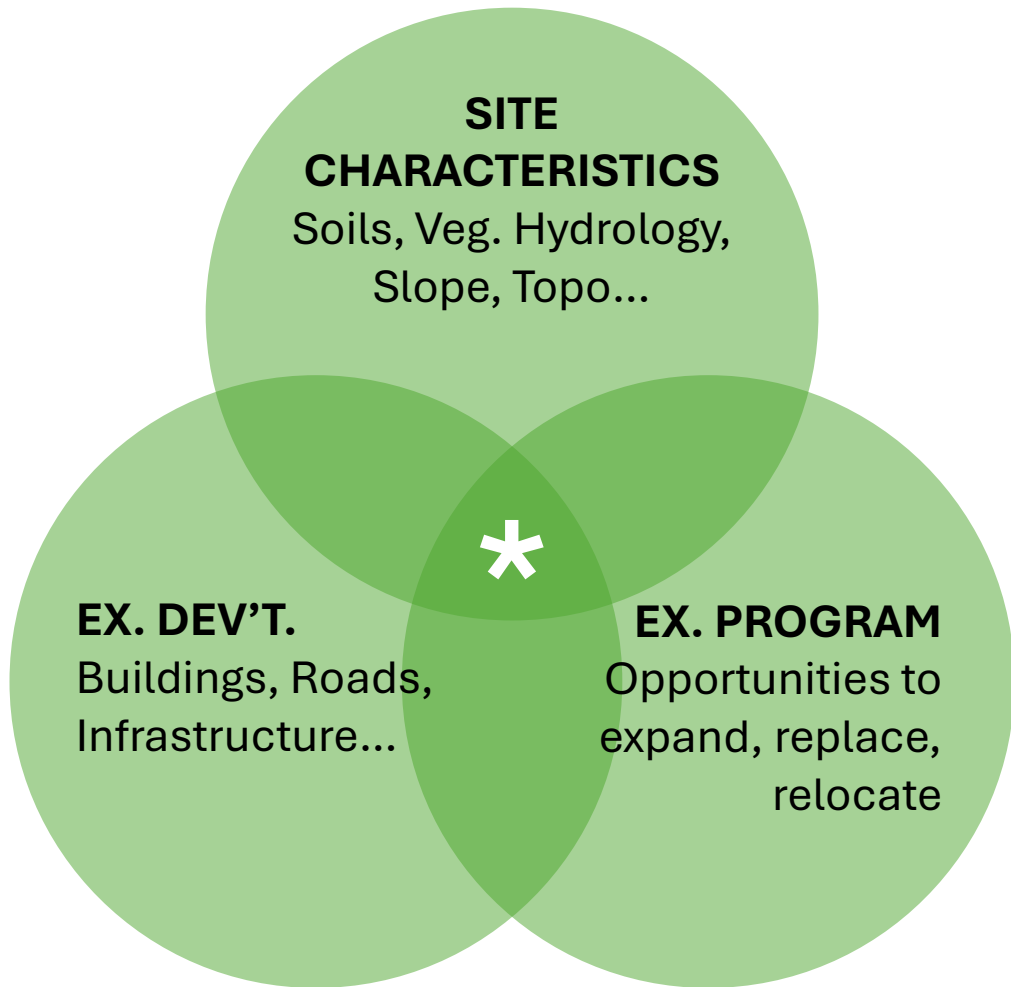
- Vegetation – open woodland
- Slope – up to 10%



Suitability Analysis for 3D archery:

- Vegetation – open woodland
- Slope – up to 10%
- Soils – well-drained

*** Marks the spot**



REPEAT THE PROCESS:

| | |
|-------------------|------------|
| Cabins | Dining |
| Outdoor Education | Retreats |
| Adventure | Equestrian |
| Maintenance | Lodges |
| Administration | Aquatic |

*** Marks the spot**



YMCA Camp Wood

Elmdale, Kansas

800+ acres

Flint Hills Ecosystem

Tallgrass prairie is critical

Views/viewshed/horizon are critical

Aiming to expand program and activities responsibly



YMCA Camp Wood

Elmdale, Kansas

Views are critical.
The horizon is critical.
The tallgrass prairie is
treasured.
The camp controls most of
its watershed.



YMCA Camp Wood

Elmdale, Kansas

The camp's program is organized by its:

Topography

History

Access to Infrastructure



YMCA Camp Wood

Elmdale, Kansas

The camp's program is organized by its:

Topography

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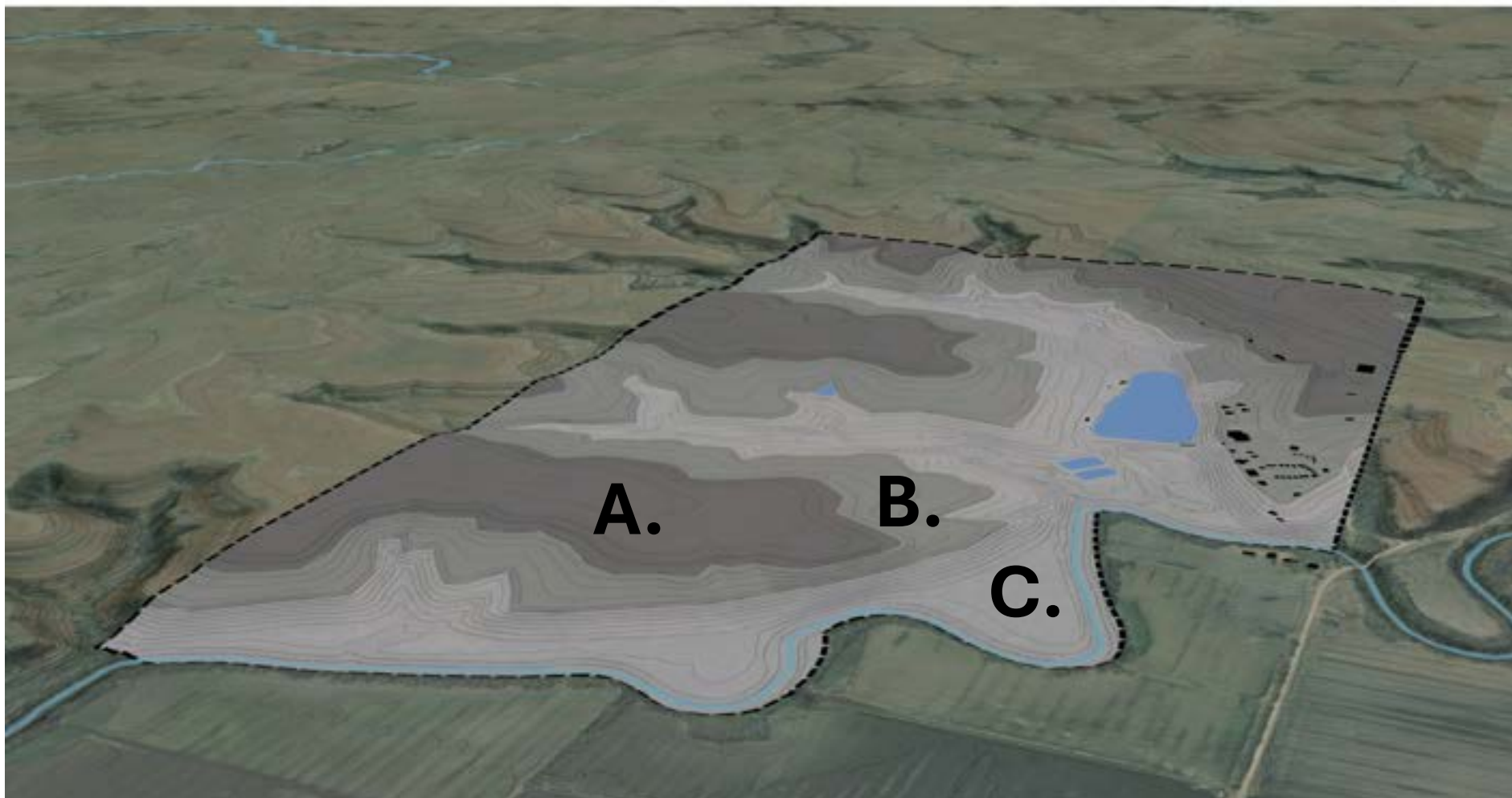


YMCA Camp Wood

Elmdale, Kansas

The camp's program is organized by its:

Topography
History
Access to Infrastructure

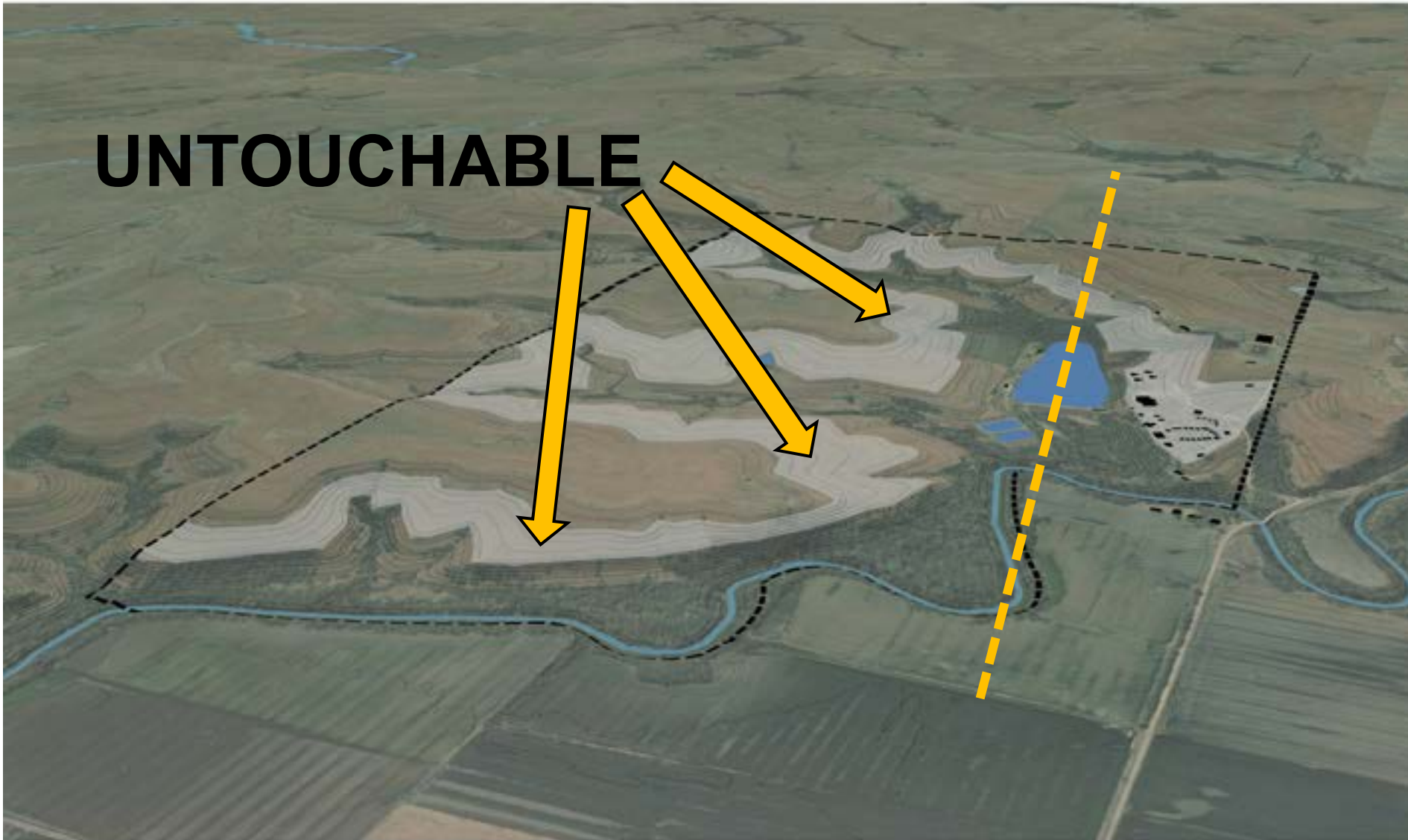


- A. Highest Elevation – limited/no development.
- B. Middle Elevation – continue as home base.
- C. Lowest Elevation – high use/high activity zone.

UNTOUCHABLE



UNTOUCHABLE



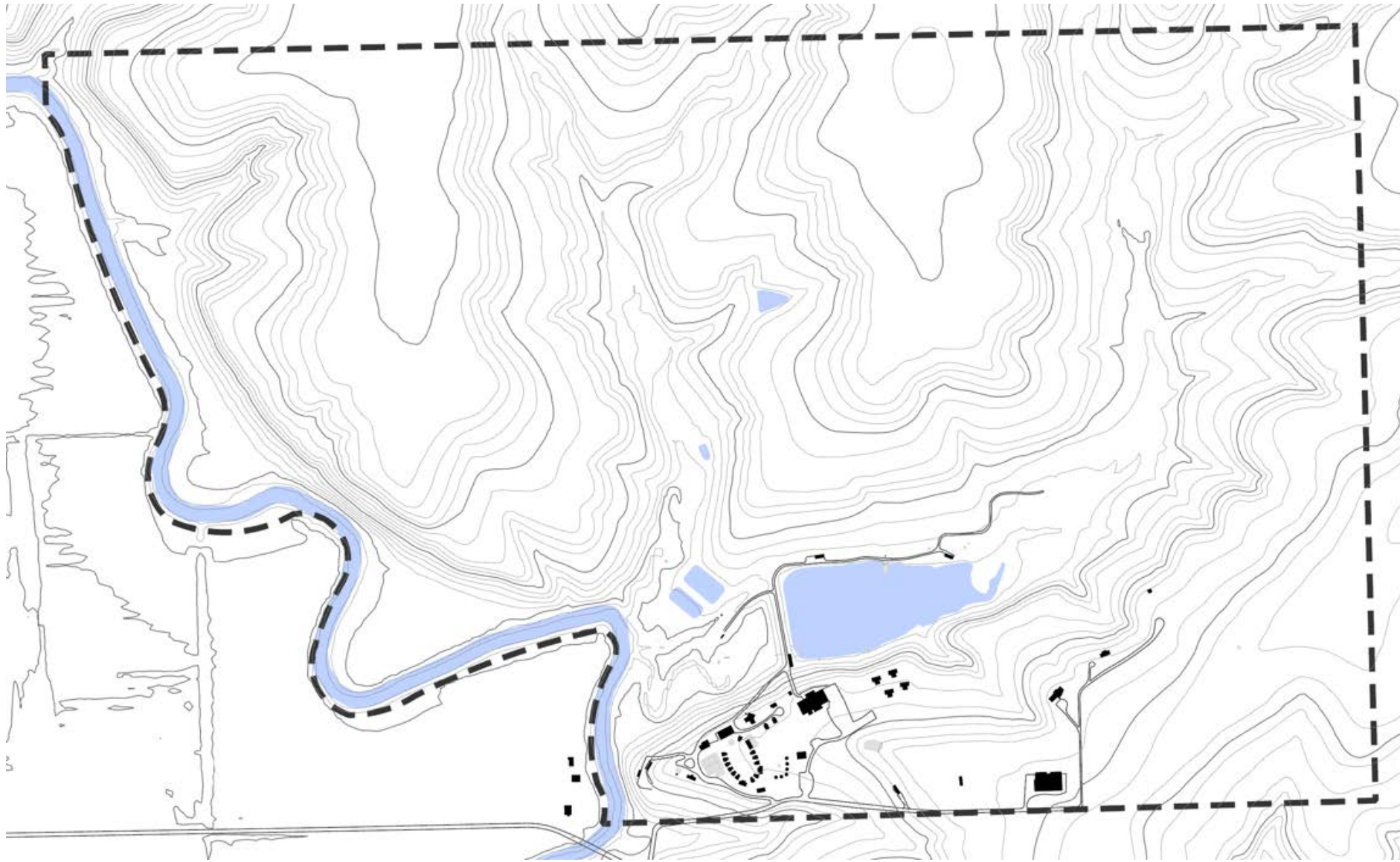
YMCA Camp Wood Elmdale, Kansas

The camp's program is
organized by its:

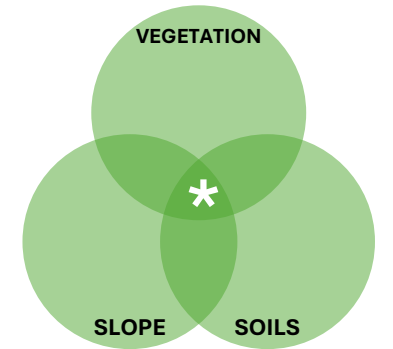
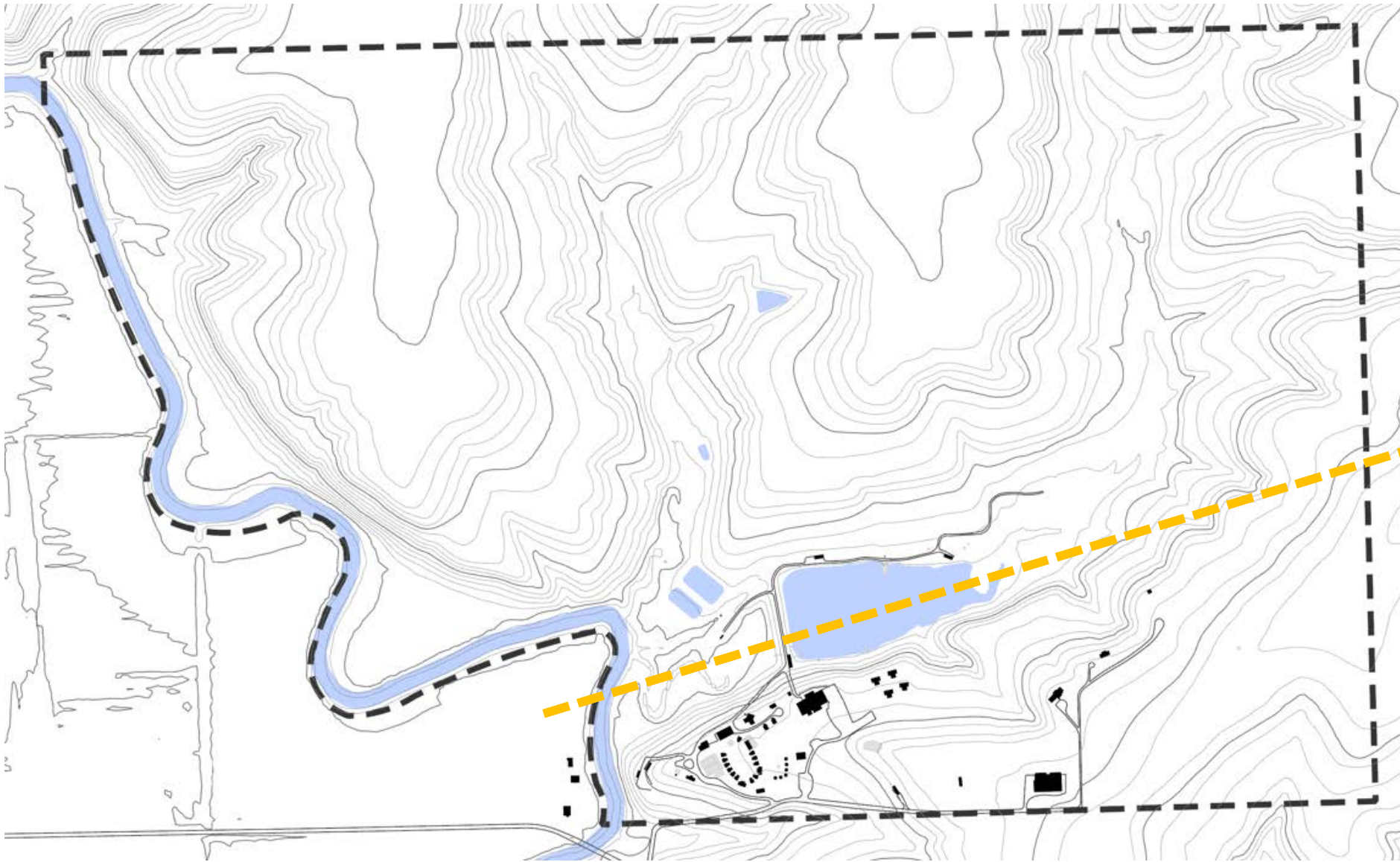
Topography

History

Access to Infrastructure

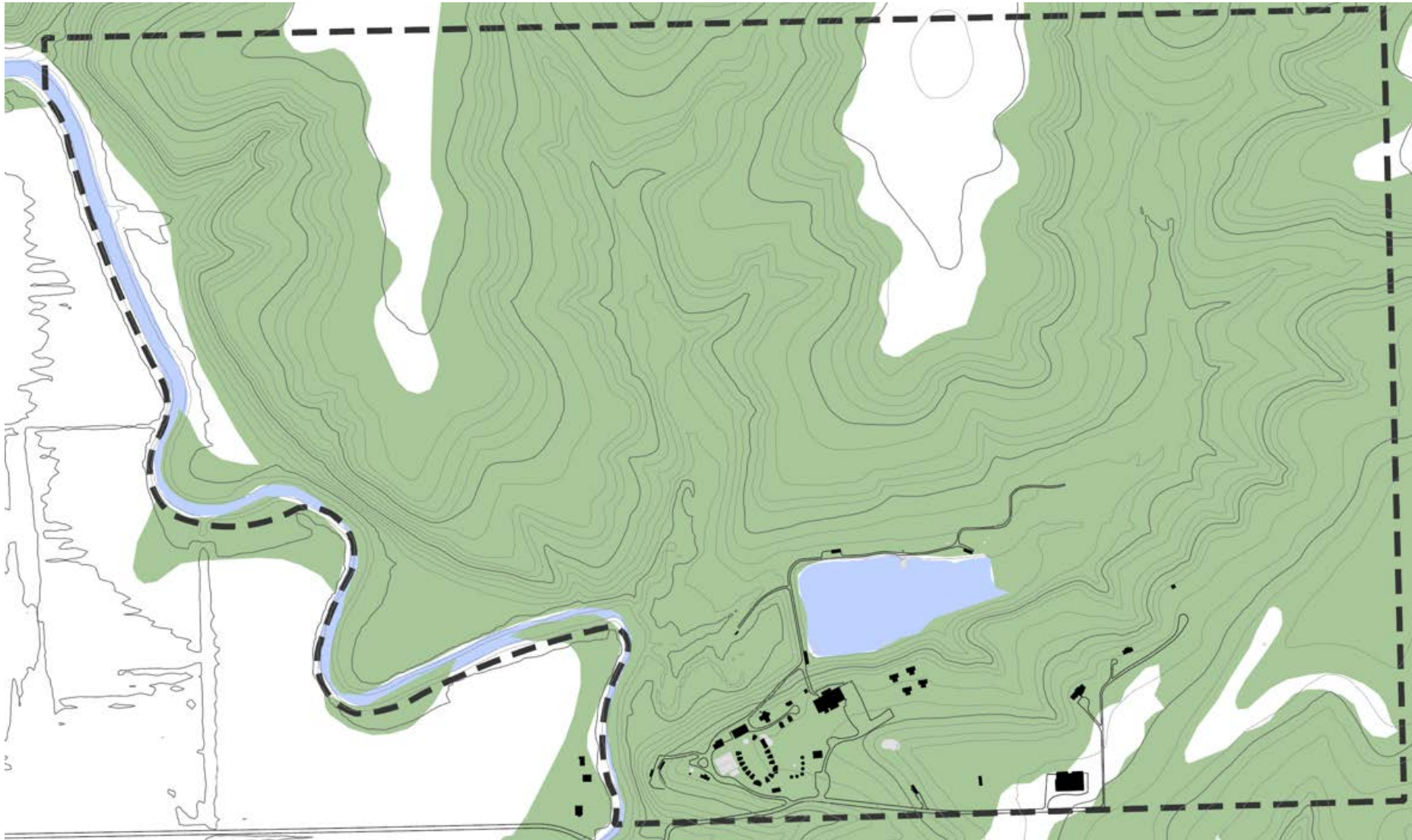


BASE MAP

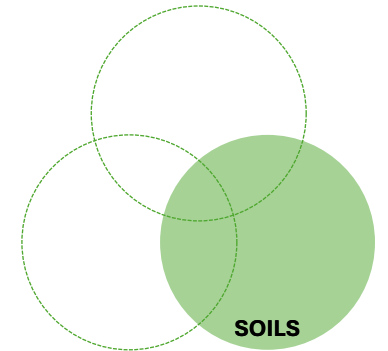


*** Marks the spot**

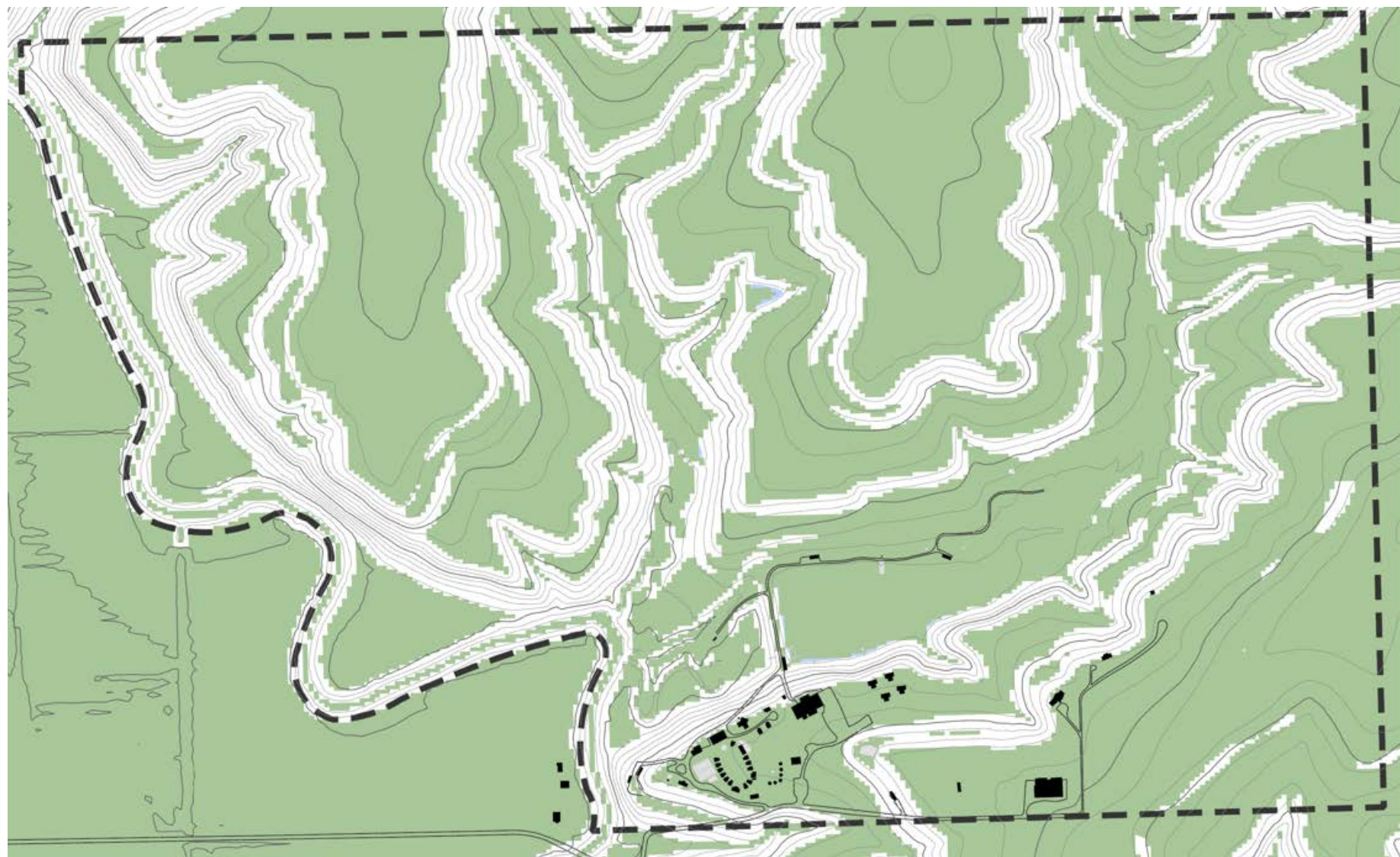
BASE MAP



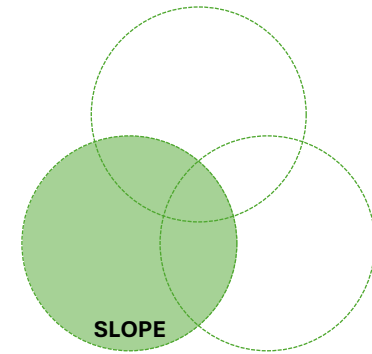
*** Suitable for
new cabins**



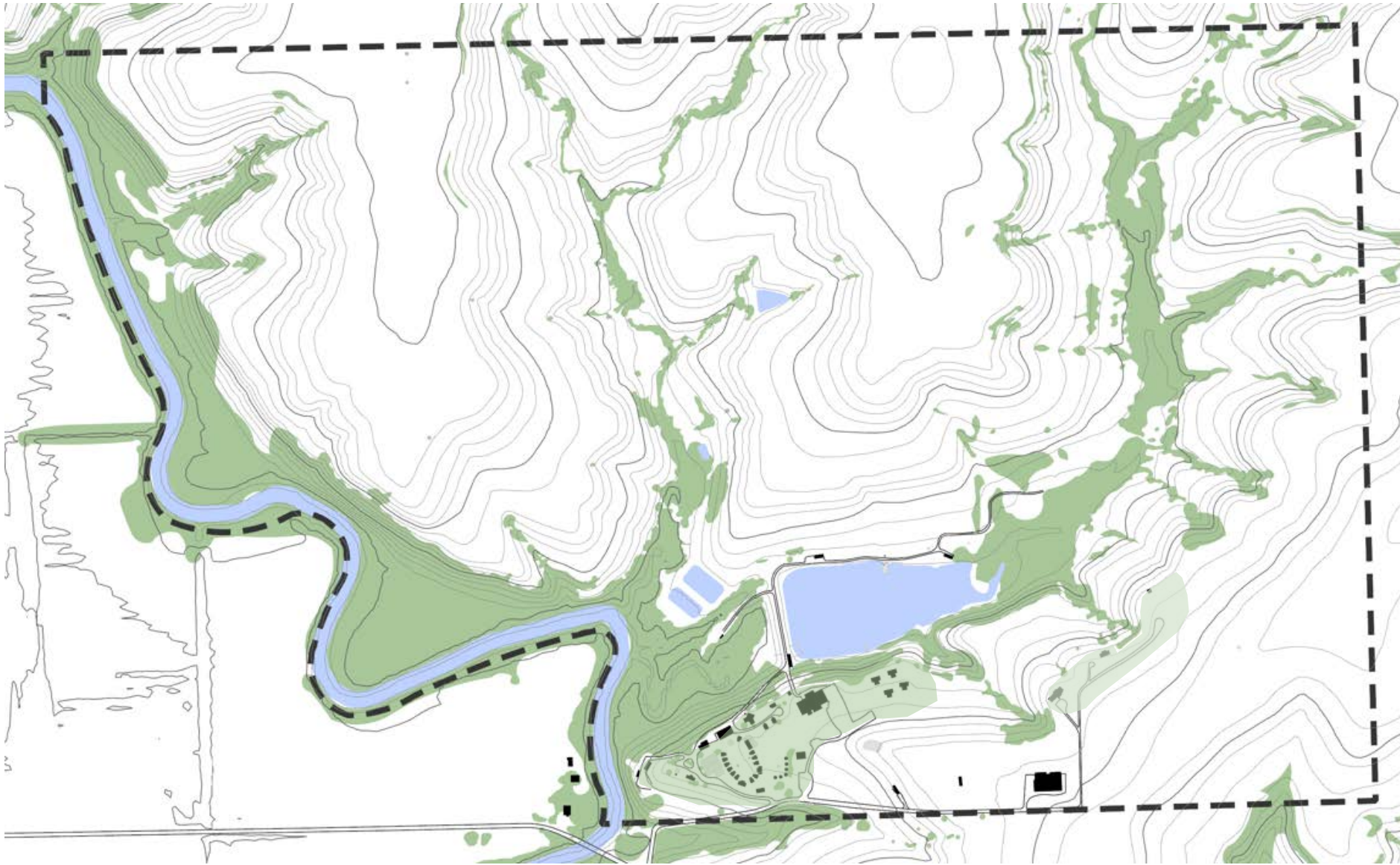
WELL-DRAINED SOILS



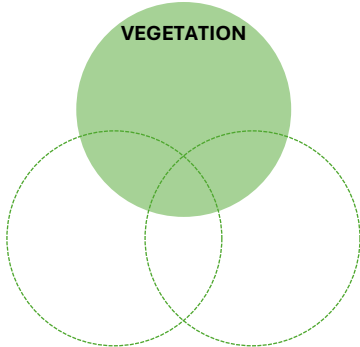
*** Suitable for new cabins**



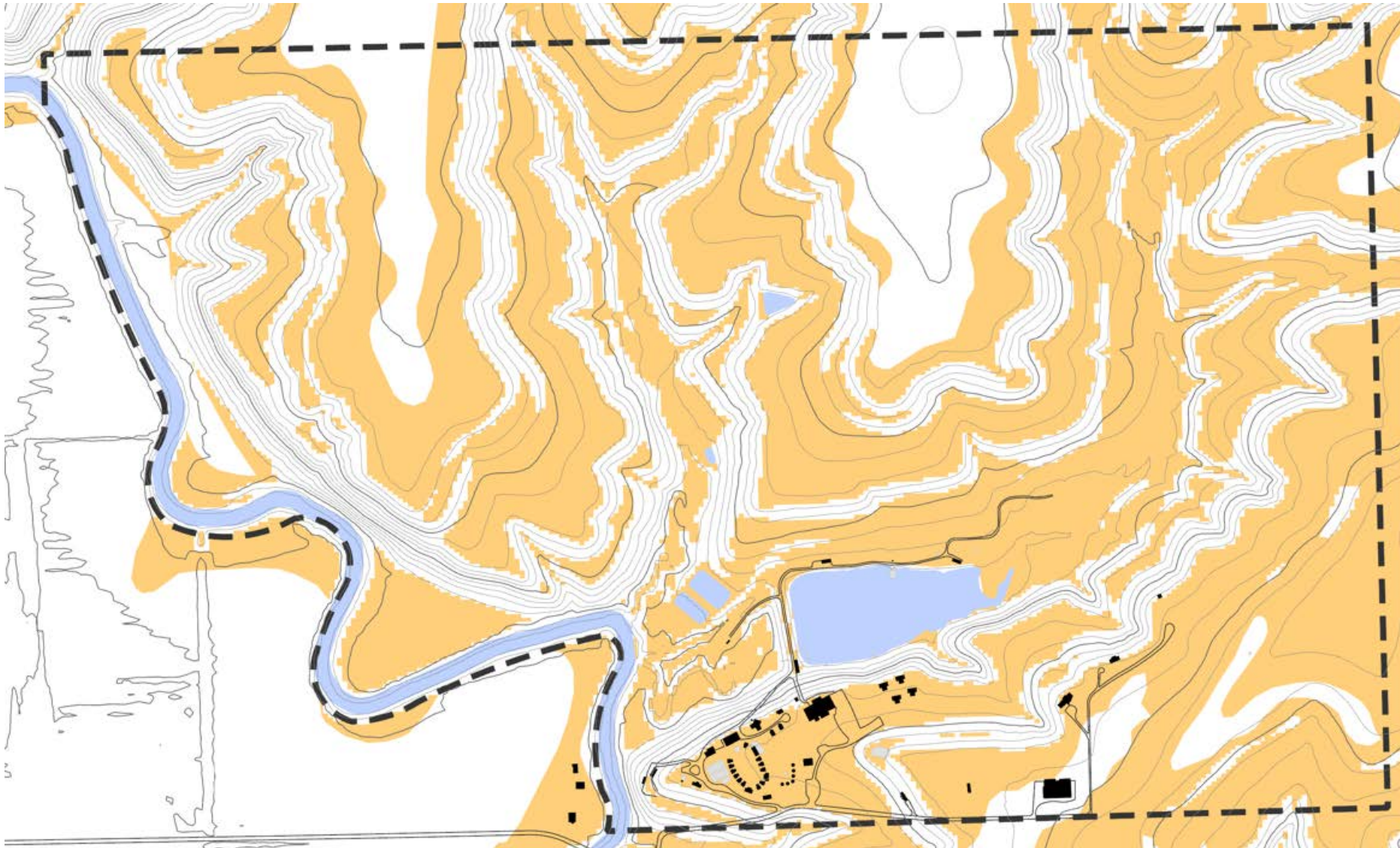
SLOPES < 10%



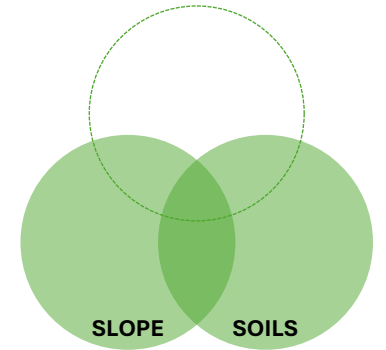
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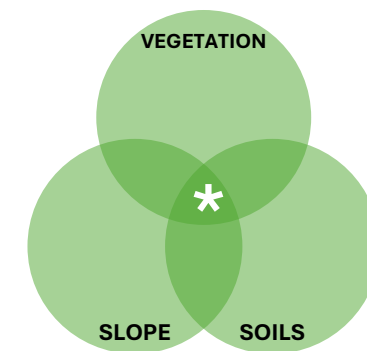
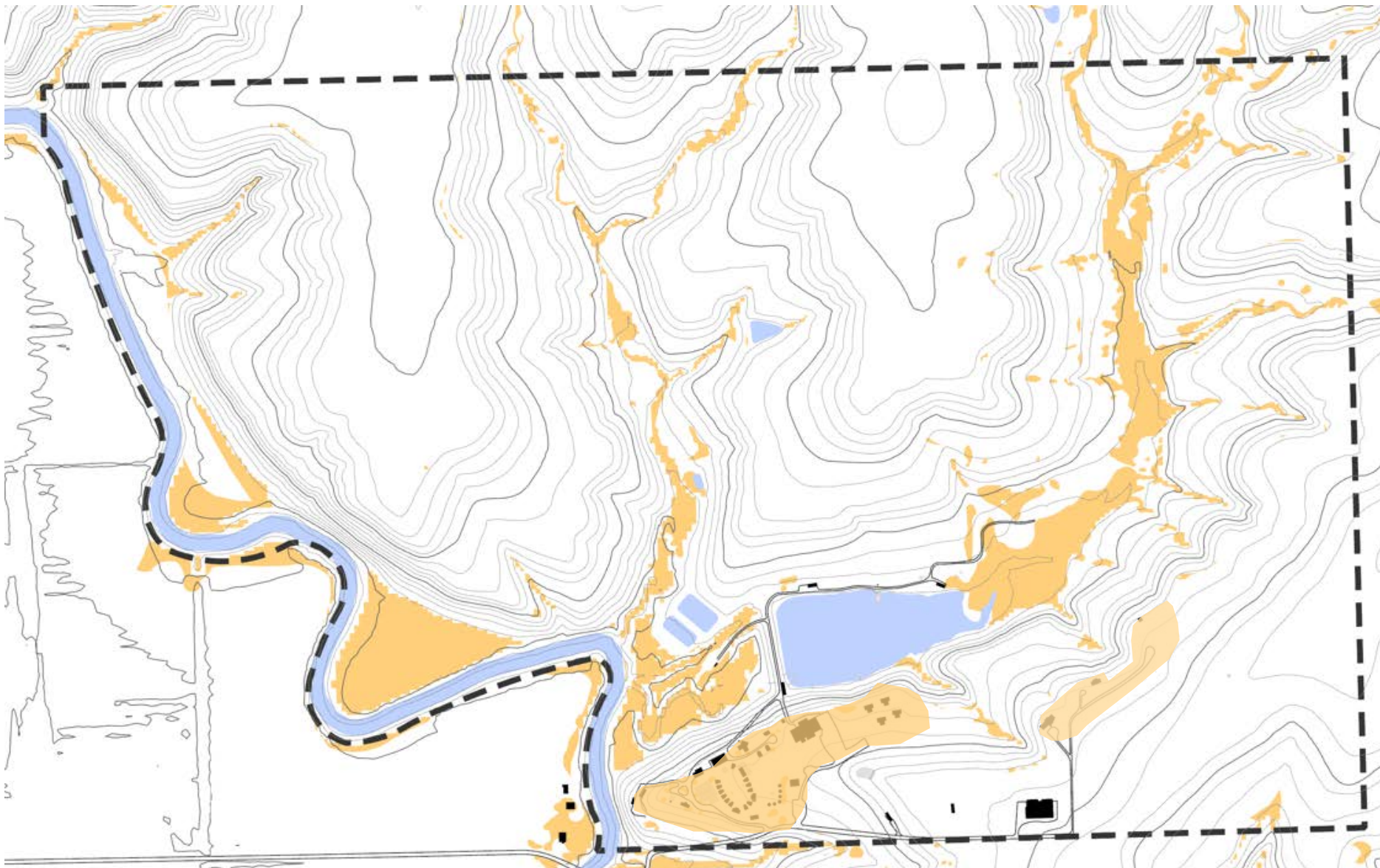
NON-PRAIRIE VEGETATION



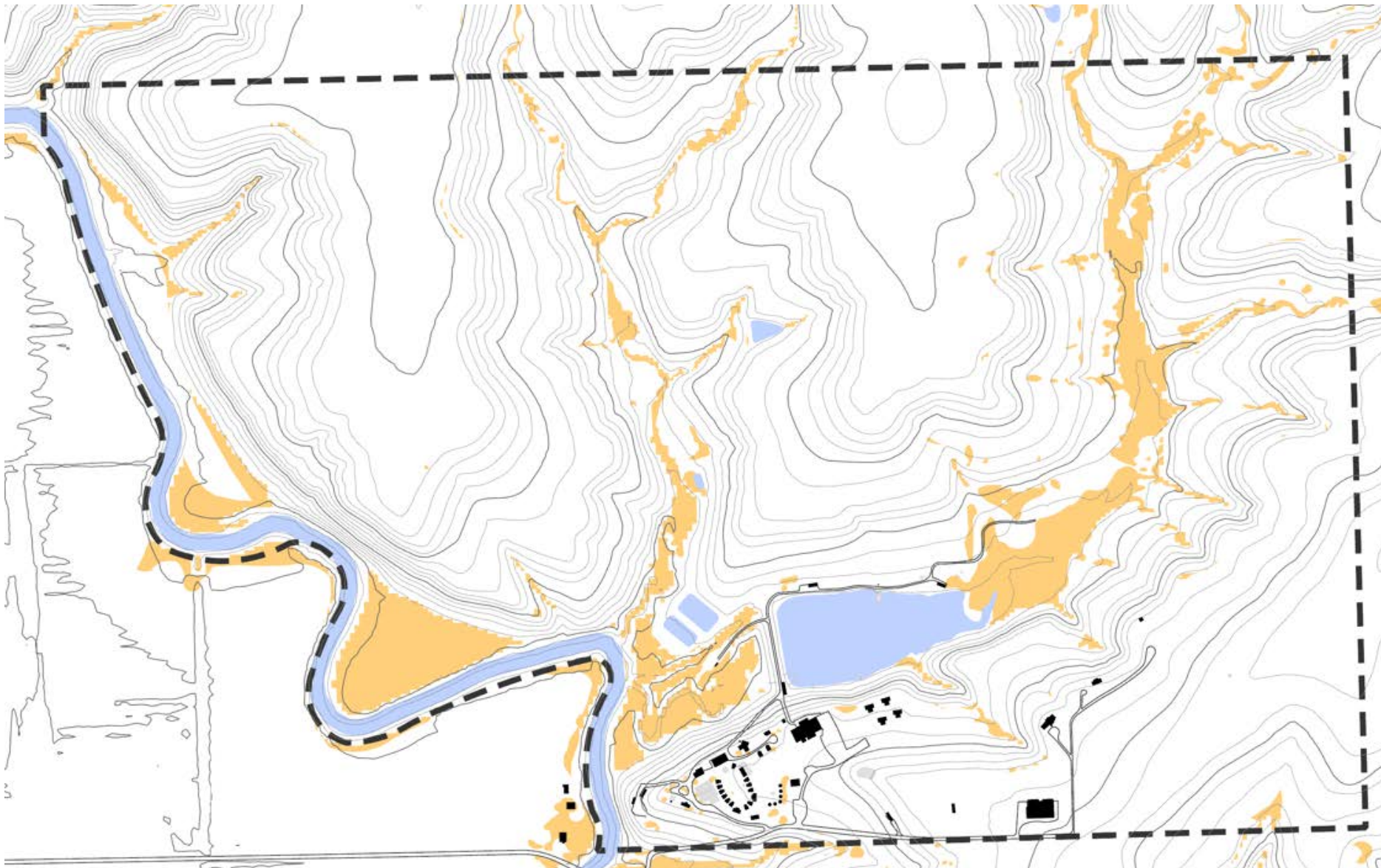
*** Suitable for
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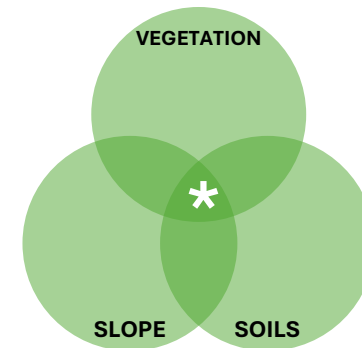
SUITABLE SLOPES + SOILS

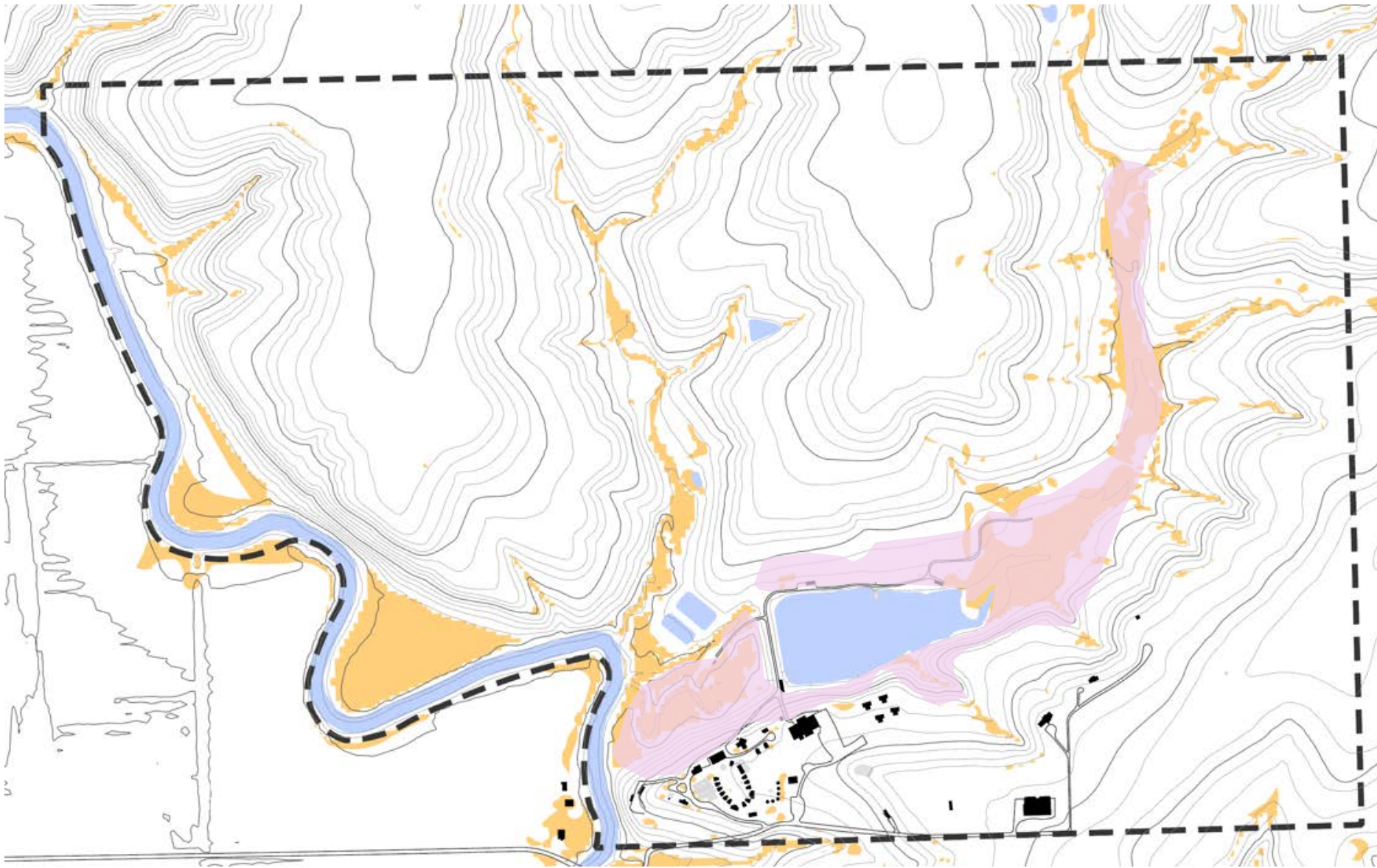


SUITABLE SLOPES + SOILS + VEGETATION

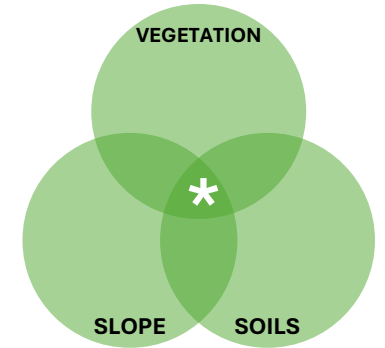


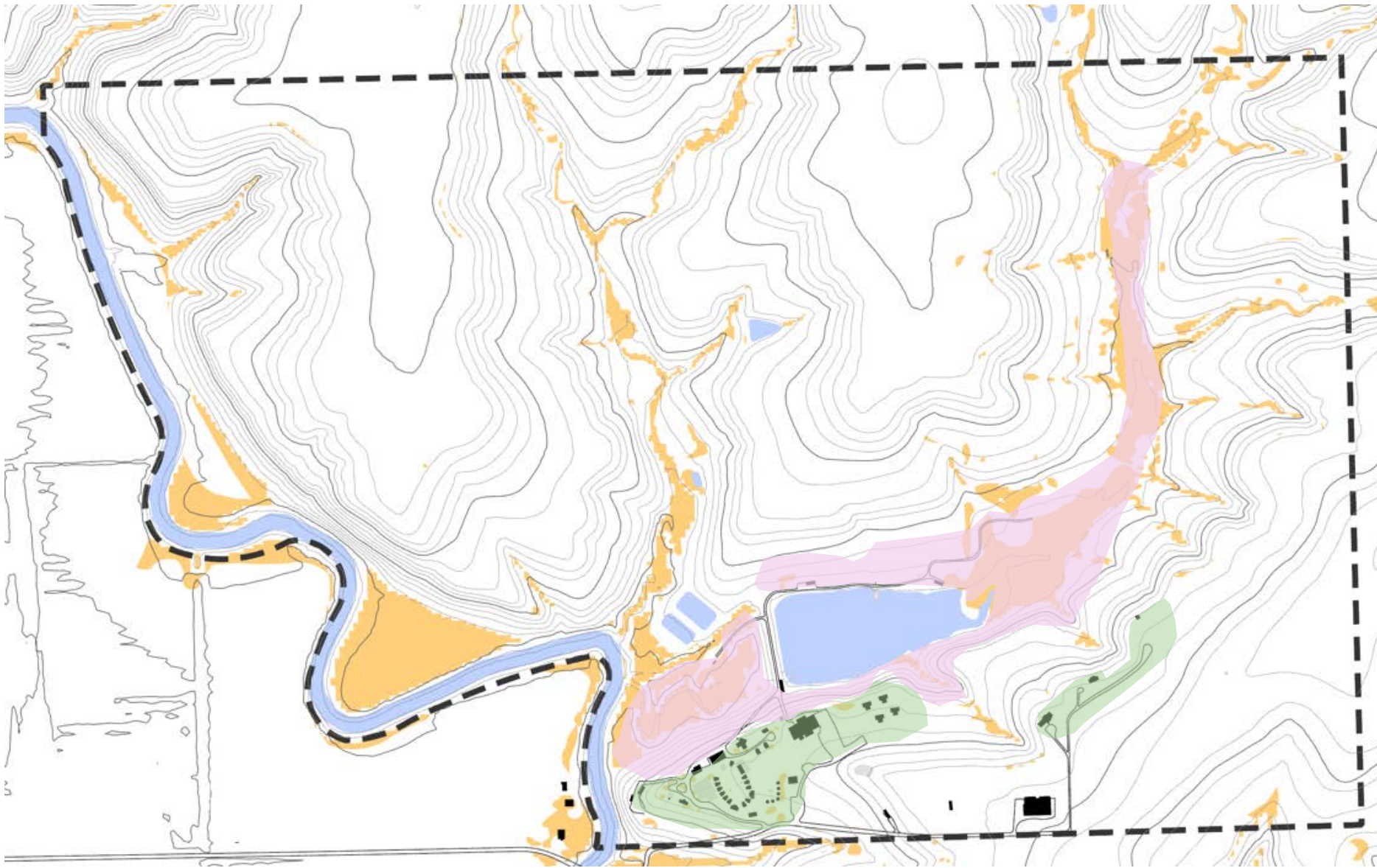
REPEAT THE PROCESS



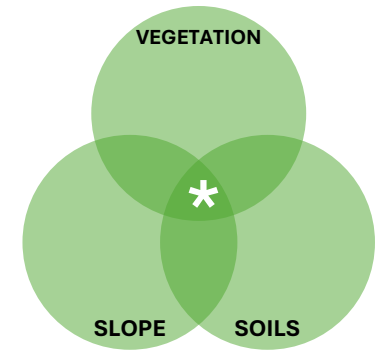


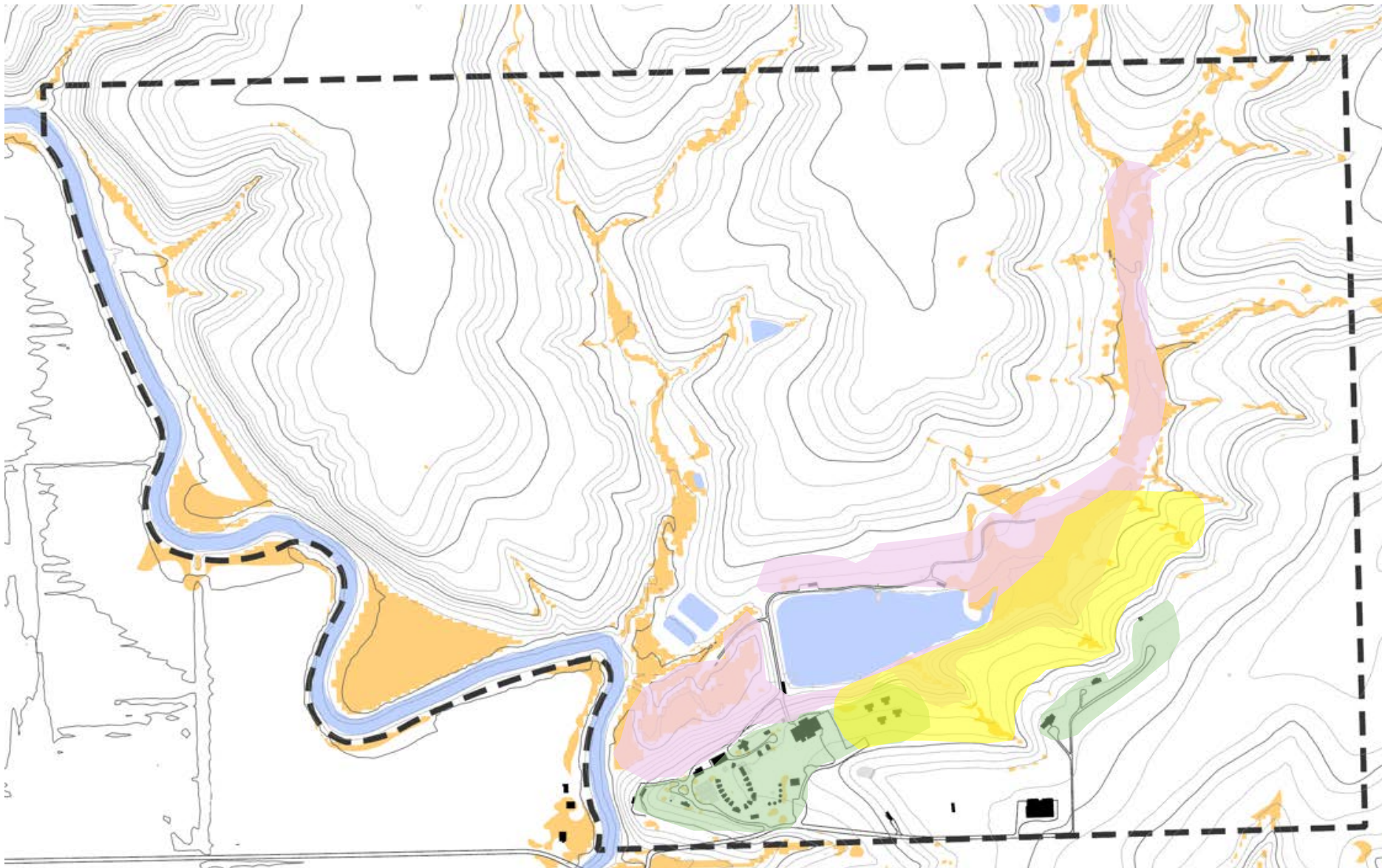
REPEAT THE PROCESS



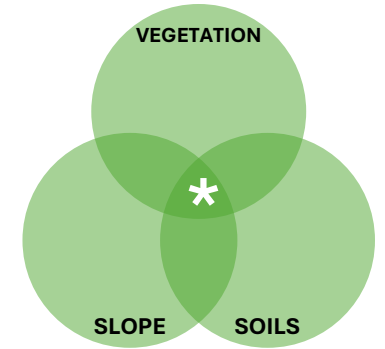


REPEAT THE PROCESS





**REPEAT THE
PROCESS**





YMCA Camp Wood

Elmdale, Kansas

THE PLAN BEGINS TO TAKE SHAPE.

AREAS AND ZONES BECOME APPARENT.



YMCA Camp Wood Elmdale, Kansas

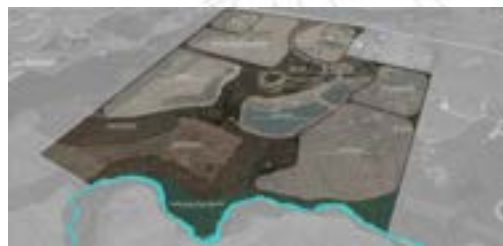
**THE PLAN BEGINS TO
TAKE SHAPE.**

**AREAS AND ZONES
BECOME APPARENT.**

**ZONES ARE BASED ON
CLIENT'S PROGRAM +
SUITABILITY FOR
DEVELOPMENT.**

**THE PROGRAM IS FITTED
TO THE SITE AND THE
EXISTING FACILITIES.**

Example of TimberRidge Adventure Center



LEGEND

- EpiCenter**
 - A) EpiCenter
 - B) Fire Garden
 - C) Parking
 - D) Existing Welcome Center & Parking
 - E) Existing Sanitary Wellfield
- Outdoor Education**
 - F) Shooting Sports & Parking
 - G) Amphitheater & Pavilion
 - H) Trails & Outdoor Classrooms
 - I) Turf Game Field
 - J) Tower Easement
- Camp Zone**
 - K) Showerhouse / Restroom / Safe Room
 - L) Shelter 1 & Campfire Circle
 - M) Shelter 2 & Parking
 - N) Cart Kiosk
- Aquatic Zone**
 - O) Whispering Pines Shelter & Parking
 - P) Additional Fishing Dock
 - Q) Waterfront Improvements
- Adventure Zone**
 - R) Existing Shelters to Remain
 - S) New Challenge Course
 - T) Box Canyon
 - U) Existing Challenge Course / Zipline
 - V) Adventure Course
 - W) Canopy Tour
 - X) Storage Shed
- Creekside Zone**
 - Y) Kill Creek
 - Z) Outdoor Classrooms
 - ZZ) Creek Trails
- Other**
 - AA) Prairie / Hiking Trails
 - BB) Manager's Residence
 - CC) Existing Maintenance Buildings

Thank you!

Site Planning Strategies to align your program, site, and facilities

Tom Neppi, PLA | Campfire Collective Annual Conference
November 11, 2024



