Aaittafama'

ARCHAEOLOGICAL PARK

CITY OF
FOREST HILLS

METRO
PARKS
NASHVILLE
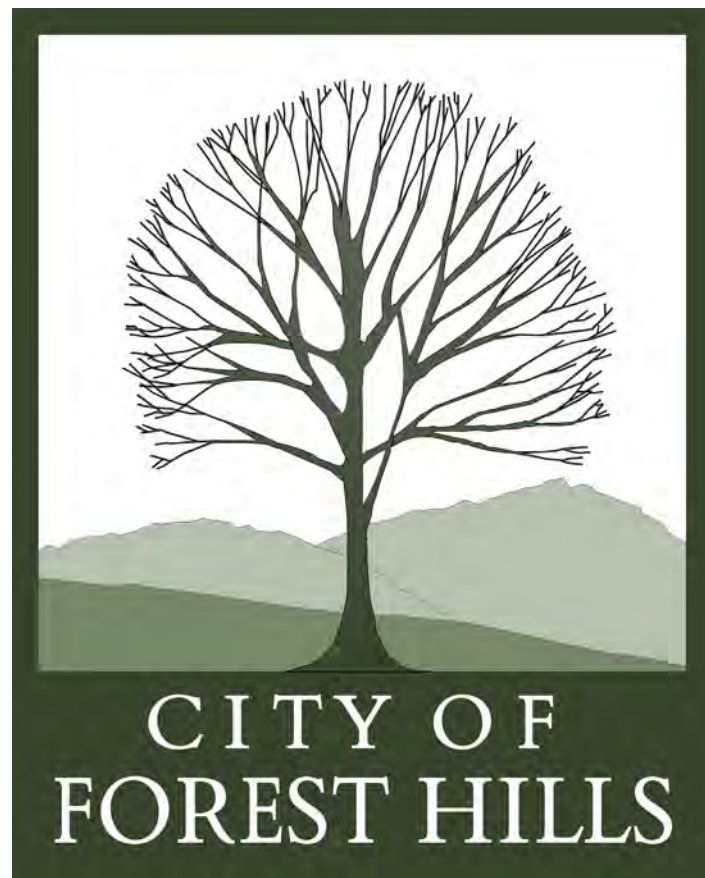
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INTRODUCTION

The Purpose of the Aaittafama' Archaeological Park is to:

- Recognize and preserve the non-renewable archaeological resources associated with prehistoric Mississippian culture in middle Tennessee
- Interpret these resources unimpaired for the enjoyment of present and future generations
- Facilitate research and learning activities associated with these resources
- Ensure the protection, preservation, maintenance, and administration of the Aaittafama' Archaeological Park

Aaittafama'

Aaittafama' is the site of a 15th century Mississippian Indian village, located on Old Hickory Boulevard in Forest Hills, Tennessee. The archaeological village site would have had a Native American name when last occupied in the 15th century but Native American descendants have no way of knowing what it was. It is generally believed that the Mississippian archaeological culture is ancestral to the Muskogean speaking Creek and Chickasaw tribes. The site is presently designated by the Tennessee Division of Archaeology by the number 40 WM 10 being the 10th site recorded in Williamson County. After archaeological testing was done, it was named Kellytown after the Kelly family, long time owners of the site. Kellytown is still the name for the entire archaeological site.

When it became apparent that a portion of the site would become part of the Nashville Metro Parks and Recreation system, Friends of Kellytown had several discussions on naming the park. The Friends asked State Archaeologist Mike Moore to contact the Creek and Chickasaw nations to see if they had suggestions for a park name. The Chickasaw have a long history of interacting with the local citizens that dates back to the 1830s when Chief Piomingo met with James Robertson in Franklin. More recently Chickasaw Deputy Governor, Jefferson Keel, negotiated with the City of Brentwood about the treatment of Mississippian period graves discovered during construction of Brentwood library.

Mike Moore corresponded with Kirk Perry, the Executive Officer, at the Division of Historic Preservation Culture & Humanities Department, about various possible names. Traditionally the Chickasaw name places after local natural features. He suggested Oshan Bok-oshi' which means Otter Creek. After discussion by the Friends group, we contacted Kirk Perry again and explained that one of the prime missions of the park would be as a gathering place to interpret Native American cultures. Mr. Perry then suggested the name Aaittafama'' which translates as "meeting place". The Friends group suggested that the park be named Aaittafama'' Archaeological Park. This name was accepted by the Metro Parks Commission in February 2016, and became the official park name.

Site History

Historical/Prehistoric Significance

In 1999, the Tennessee Department of Transportation archaeologists discovered evidence of a mid-15th century settlement along the banks of the Little Harpeth River in southwest Davidson County, Tennessee. Their archaeological survey revealed:

- Post holes and hearths from 12 pole construction structures
- Seven human graves
- Two palisade lines with bastions.
- Walls
- Remnants of food including corn, nuts, and beans
- Domestic artifacts such as animal effigy pottery bowls and other vessels

The archaeological testing revealed that the property contained intact evidence of a large prehistoric Indian village, although it was still unclear who lived here and why their story was important.

Native Peoples and the Cumberland River Valley

Middle Tennessee has been inhabited for more the 15,000 years by a succession of peoples. With no written records, archaeologists have given names to each culture period. The Paleo-Indian period was 12,000 to 8000 BCE, Archaic period 8000 to 1000 BCE, Woodland period, 1000 BCE to 1000 CE, and Mississippian, 1000 to 1500 CE. The Mississippian peoples are considered ancestral to the Creek and Chickasaw tribes of the historic period.

Top Right:
Ceramic duck head effigy that originally sat on rim of a bowl (side view)

Middle Right:
Top view of ceramic duck head

Bottom Right:
Reconstructed ceramic vessel found on floor of a burned house just below the surface.

Opposite Page:
Archaeological testing revealed a prepared clay hearth and house floor of a burned house. Orange pieces in the soil profile are burned "daub" the clay plaster used on the house walls. Deeper plowing would have destroyed these features.

People of the Area

The Mississippians

The Mississippian Indian civilization thrived in upper middle Tennessee for almost 600 years. After studying common cultural traits associated with this civilization, anthropologist William Henry Holmes designed the term "Mississippian" to refer to the people of this region. There were two distinctive physiographic regions related to Mississippian settlement in the area: the Nashville Basin and the surrounding Highland Rim. Evidence shows that the region was connected culturally to the lower Cumberland-Tennessee River line, creating a unified historic resource available for study today. Light to heavy scatterings of ceramic and other deposits, including structural remains in the form of houses, mounds, and burials, have been discovered along numerous rivers and other large streams in Middle Tennessee.

The Mississippians had no writing system or stone architecture. A unique characteristic evolved, however, in the manufacturing of pots and other vessels, which these items were tempered with crushed mussel shells. At the time, mussels were abundant in many of the region's major rivers including the Tennessee, Cumberland, Elk, Harpeth, and Duck rivers. The use of shells helped to date the era of significance to post 1100 CE. These items give us a window into understanding a complex pattern of social relations that formed in villages and other communities as distinctive features of Mississippian culture.

The first Europeans who came to East and Southwest Tennessee in the 16th and 17th, century witnessed what became the last dominant pre-Columbian civilization. Middle Tennessee was abandoned by the Indians around 1450 CE prior to European contact for unknown reasons.
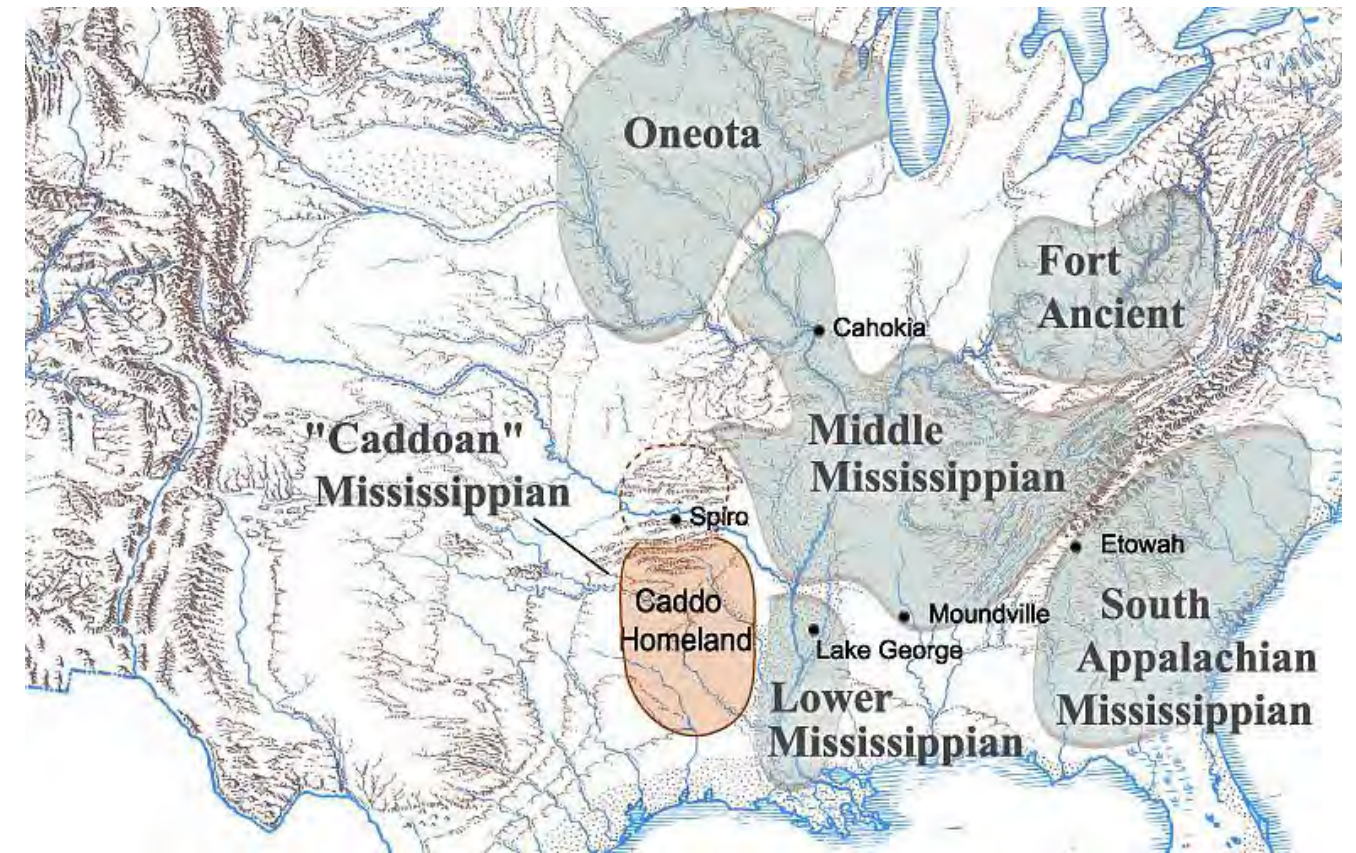
Top Right:
Map showing the location of ancient Native American settlements.

Bottom Right:
Archaeologists have discovered several caves across Tennessee containing Mississippian period art. This panel has stylized eagle dancer, a mace, and human head axe.

Mississippian Settlement and Subsistence

Mississippian settlements were characterized by five different patterns: mound complex, farming village, hamlet, farmstead, and limited activity loci. Along the Cumberland River and its tributaries, the major sites appeared to be separated by 20 to 40 miles. Smaller sites and farmsteads were clustered near the major mound complexes. A social network existed between these locations that offered both protection and trade. The Nashville area was one of the most heavily populated Mississippian settlements. One of the largest was the Sulphur Springs area, just north of Tennessee state capitol. This community specialized in producing salt from mineral rich spring water because it was a valuable trade commodity.

Unlike contemporary humans, Mississippian people spent much of their lives outdoors. The houses they built were used for shelter from inclement or cold weather months, and storage. These structures were primarily rectangular or circular pole structures. Individual holes or continuous trenches were excavated to set the poles. Walls were made by weaving saplings and river cane around the poles, and the outer surface of the walls was sometimes covered with sun-baked clay or daub. Roofs were thatch covered with a small hole cut in the middle to allow smoke to escape. A hearth dominated the center of the living space, and benches were used as beds. The interior was also used for storage, usually along the outer walls, while short partitions divided this outer area into separate spaces. The average Mississippian house was less than 400 square feet.

Mississippians were agriculturalists. They grew much of their foodstuffs in small gardens using simple tools such as stone axes, digging sticks, and fire. Corn, beans, squash, sunflowers, goosefoot, sumpweed, and other plants were cultivated throughout the year.

Intensive archaeological investigations in East and Middle Tennessee have yielded one of the most detailed records of prehistoric human-plant interaction in eastern North America. Ongoing paleoethnobotanical research has documented the presence of Cucurbita (the botanical genus containing the various squashes) in Middle Tennessee 7,000 years ago. This is one of the three earliest occurrences of Cucurbita in North America (all dating between 6,900 and 7,100 years ago).

Research into the ecology and expression of genetic change in plants under cultivation has documented the domestication of certain "weeds," and their maintenance as garden or field crops by at least 1000 BCE and perhaps as early as 2000 BCE. Examples include the common lambs quarter or goosefoot, sunflower, and sumpweed or marsh elder. Archaeological and botanical evidence also suggest that maygrass, a spring-maturing annual which today is not common in Tennessee, was being cultivated as early as 1800 BC. Although its use began in the Woodland Period, corn agriculture flourished in the Mississippian Period and became the basis of their economy.

Mississippians also consumed wild plants and animals. They gathered nuts and fruits and hunted deer, turkeys, and other small animals as well as collected and consumed fish, shellfish, and turtles from rivers, streams, and ponds. There were no bison in Middle Tennessee in Mississippian times, as they arrived around 1600 CE.

Top Right:
Artist depiction of a mound center around 1250 A.D.
Artist Greg Harlin Courtesy Frank H McClung Museum, Knoxville, Tn

Middle Right:
Modern version of Indian corn

Bottom Right:
Contemporary drawing of a Mississippian palisade village, Virginia, mid 1500s

The Mound Builders

Early historic travelers in the South East encountered old village sites with large earthen mounds. Contemporary Indians did not know who had built them. The erroneous idea emerged that they were created by an extinct race of Mound Builders. Archaeologists now know they were constructed by the Mississippian peoples. These mounds served both ceremonial and dwelling purposes and contain multiple layers. Not all villages contained mounds, one such example is the Aaittafama' site. At the end of the Mississippian period, the village had houses surrounded by a vertical log palisade, which was likely for protection from other groups. Frequently, the houses contained stone lined graves of children, and adults were buried in separate cemeteries. This distinctive mode of burial is limited to Middle Tennessee.

Above Image:
Artist rendering of salt production at Sulphur Springs Mississippian village site, Nashville, Tn
Painting by artist Carlyle Urello courtesy of the Tennessee State Museum.

Archaeology of the Site
Methodology And Findings

Archaeology is the way we learn about past peoples and the lives they led. It is a scientific discovery process in which the archaeologists collect physical evidence on various human activities. On a prehistoric site, the evidence includes artifacts, discolored soil from decayed posts, fire hearths, storage and refuse pits with discarded bones and plant remains, and sometimes human remains. All of the excavated evidence is used to reconstruct past activities.

In 1972, the archaeological site was first recorded in the Tennessee Division of Archaeology (TDOA) site records as number 40 WM 10. The numbering system shows the state (40), the county (WM) for Williamson, and the sequential number (10). The initial report was based on artifacts found in a garden plot with possible prehistoric graves. The site boundary was not determined but it was obvious that Hillsboro Road had crossed the site in the 19th century, and that the site also extended into Davidson County. The property was owned by the Kelly family who had lived there since the 1830s.

In 1999, Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) and TDOA archaeologists excavated the construction impact area associated with a proposed new turning lane on Hillsboro Road (Barker and Kline 2013). They uncovered and mapped the post patterns of 12 houses, fire hearths, and 7 child's graves in stone-lined rectangular pits. The graves were left intact pending further legal actions. They also found the post holes associated with two distinct inner and outer palisade lines, which represent different stages of expansion of the village. Radiocarbon dates established that the site was occupied from around 1240 CE to 1440 CE. The site was named Kellytown for owner Elizabeth Douglass Levine Kelly who gave permission to test the site.

The construction project was delayed for several years while the disposition of the affected graves went through lengthy court hearings. In the end, TDOT decided to leave the graves in place, protect them with concrete, and construct the turning lane over them.

The Kelly family sold seven acres of the north end of the site and Mr. Barker was retained to trace the eastern extent of the outer palisade. This palisade marks the northern boundary of the archaeological village.

In 2014, Metro Nashville Parks department acquired the seven acres with the support of Friends of Kellytown, a non-profit group. The Friends funded an additional

archaeological study as part of the preparation of a master plan for the park. In June and July 2015 Cultural Resources Associates (CRA) conducted remote sensing research using a sensitive magnetometer and ground penetrating radar (Bradbury 2015). They confirmed the outer palisade but did not indicate extensive features or occupation between the outer and inner palisades. This surprising result may have something to do with the late date of the outer palisade. A charred bean in one of the post holes was Carbon-14 dated at 1420 CE.

Future research at this site has the potential to answer some of the biggest questions in Tennessee archaeology, namely what caused the collapse of Mississippian culture around 1450 CE. Its preservation as a park will permit a long term approach to research.
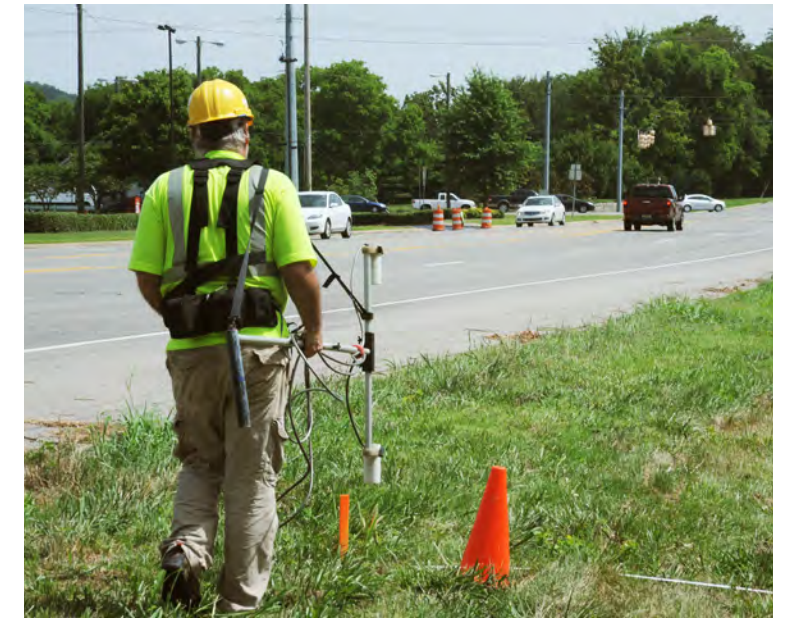
Top Right:
In 2002, archaeologist Gary Barker used a trench to locate and map the outer palisade. Each pink flag marks a soil stain from an individual post. (view to the west) Photograph courtesy Tennessee Department of Transportation

Middle Right:
CRA archaeologist using a Cesium vapor proton magnetomer to map small deviations in the gravity that indicate sub-surface archaeological features
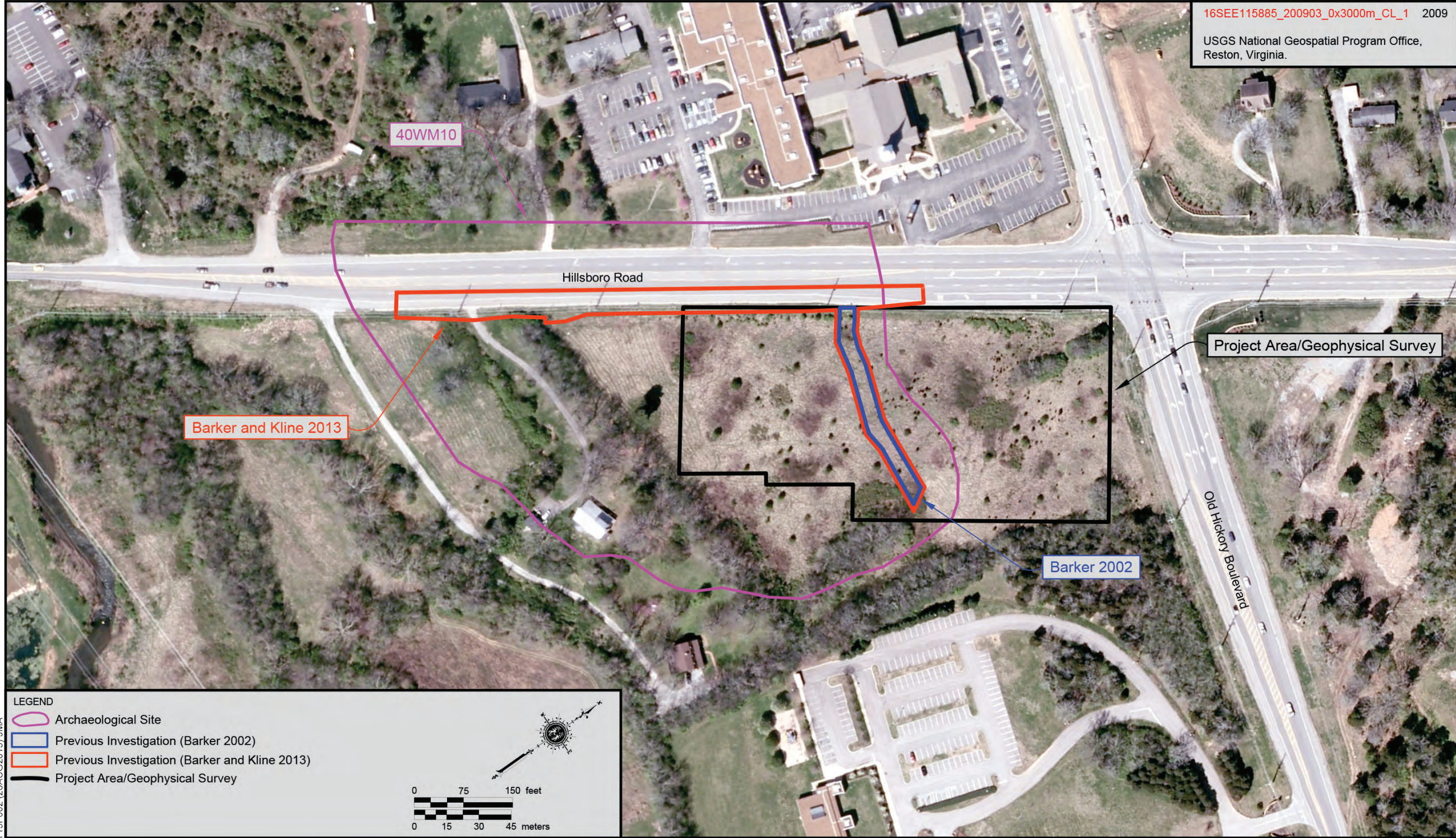
Bottom Right:
In 2015 CRA archaeologists tested locations indicated by the remote sensing.

Opposite Page:
Aerial photograph showing locations of previous archaeological research and estimated boundary of the intact part of the Aaittafama' archaeological site (pink line).
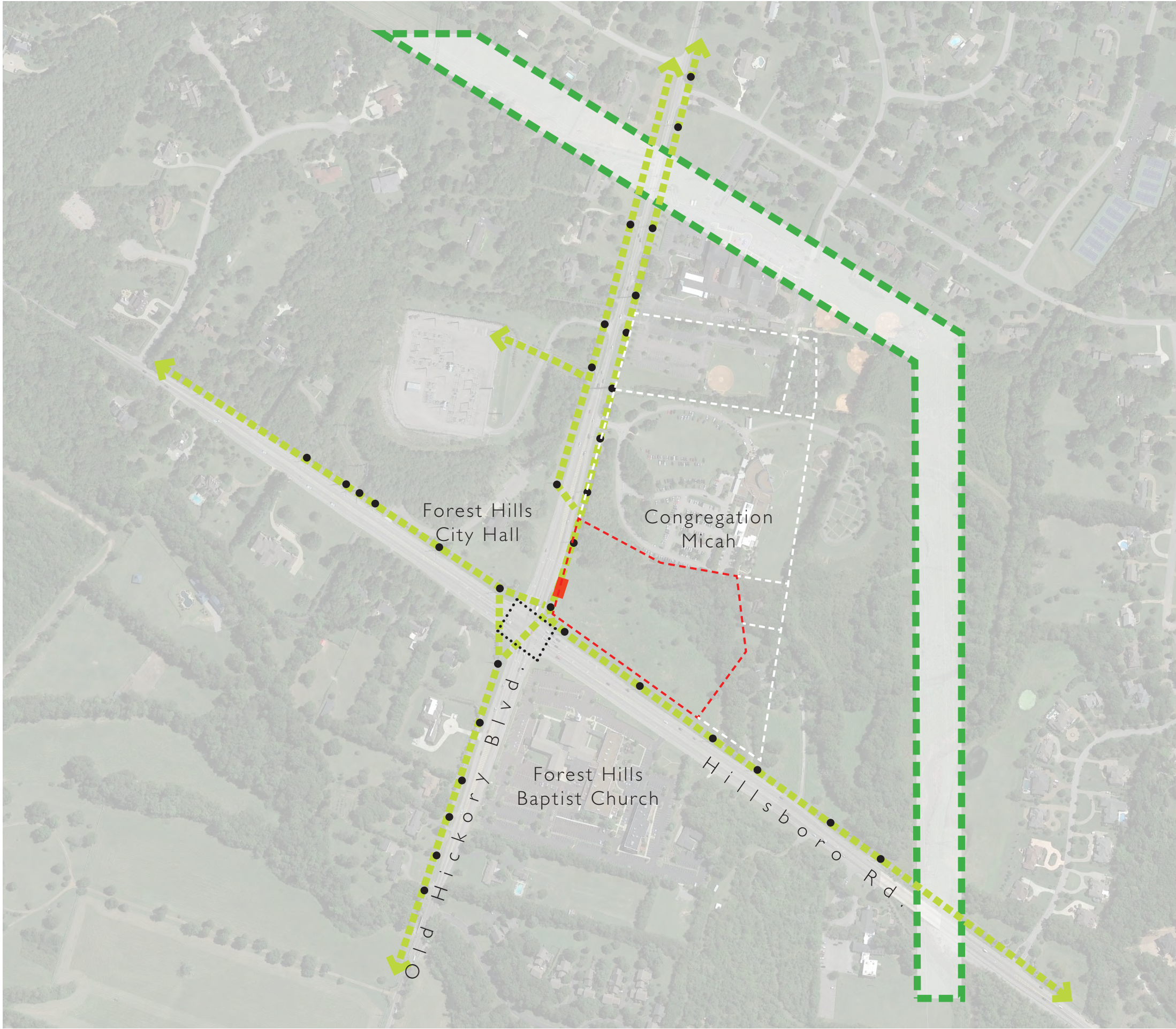Source: Cultural Resource Analysis

16SEE115885_200903_0x3000m_CL_1 2009

USGS National Geospatial Program Office,
Reston, Virginia.

40WM10

Hillsboro Road

Project Area/Geophysical Survey

Barker and Kline 2013

Barker 2002

Old Hickory Boulevard

LEGEND

Archaeological Site
Previous Investigation (Barker 2002)
Previous Investigation (Barker and Kline 2013)
Project Area/Geophysical Survey

0   75   150 feet

0   15   30   45 meters

T15F002 (26AUG2015) JMA

Similar Settlements

The Brentwood Site

During the construction of the Brentwood library numerous Mississippian period graves were discovered that stopped construction until they could be relocated out of the impact area. TDOA archaeologists excavated the associated village area finding housing patterns, hearths, refuse pits, and graves dating from 1250 CE. This village is similar to the Aaittafama' site.

Above:
Brentwood library salvage excavations showing one of the Mississippian house posthole patterns and hearth. Small brown circles are from decayed posts.

Right:
The Brentwood Library archaeological site (courtesy TDOA)

● Hearth

▨ Grave

not excavated

destroyed by construction

not excavated

Location and Proximity of Mississippian Settlements

This map shows the distribution of known Mississippian sites across Tennessee. Note that most sites occur along major rivers and streams and a heavy concentration in the Nashville area. Many of these sites have been destroyed by urban development and flooded by TVA and US Army Corps of Engineers dams.

Some of the major Mississippian mound complexes have been preserved as national, state, and local parks. Aaittafama' Archaeological Park continues that tradition. (map provided by TDOA)
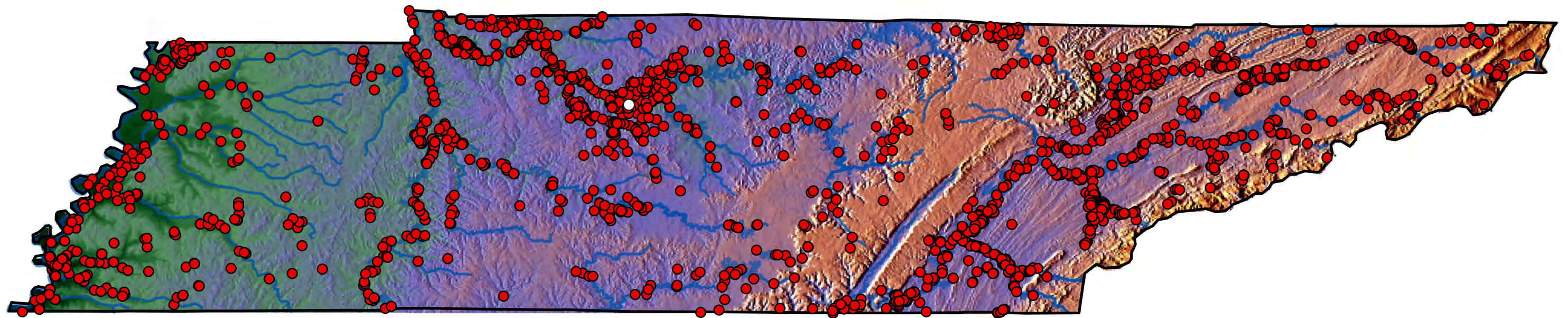
LEGEND

Mississippian Sites: ●

Aaittafama': ○

ANALYSIS

Access
and
Adjacencies

LEGEND

Primary Road:

Secondary Road:

Driveway:

Aaittafama'
Archaeological
Park Site:

Brentwood Swim
and Tennis Club

Forest Hills
City Hall

Congregation
Micah

Old Hickory Blvd.

Hillsboro Rd

Little Harpeth River

Kelly
Cemetery

Kelly
House

Forest Hills
Baptist Church

Harpeth
Presbyterian
Church

N

Key Views

Forest Hills
City Hall

Congregation
Micah

Old Hickory Blvd.

Forest Hills
Baptist Church
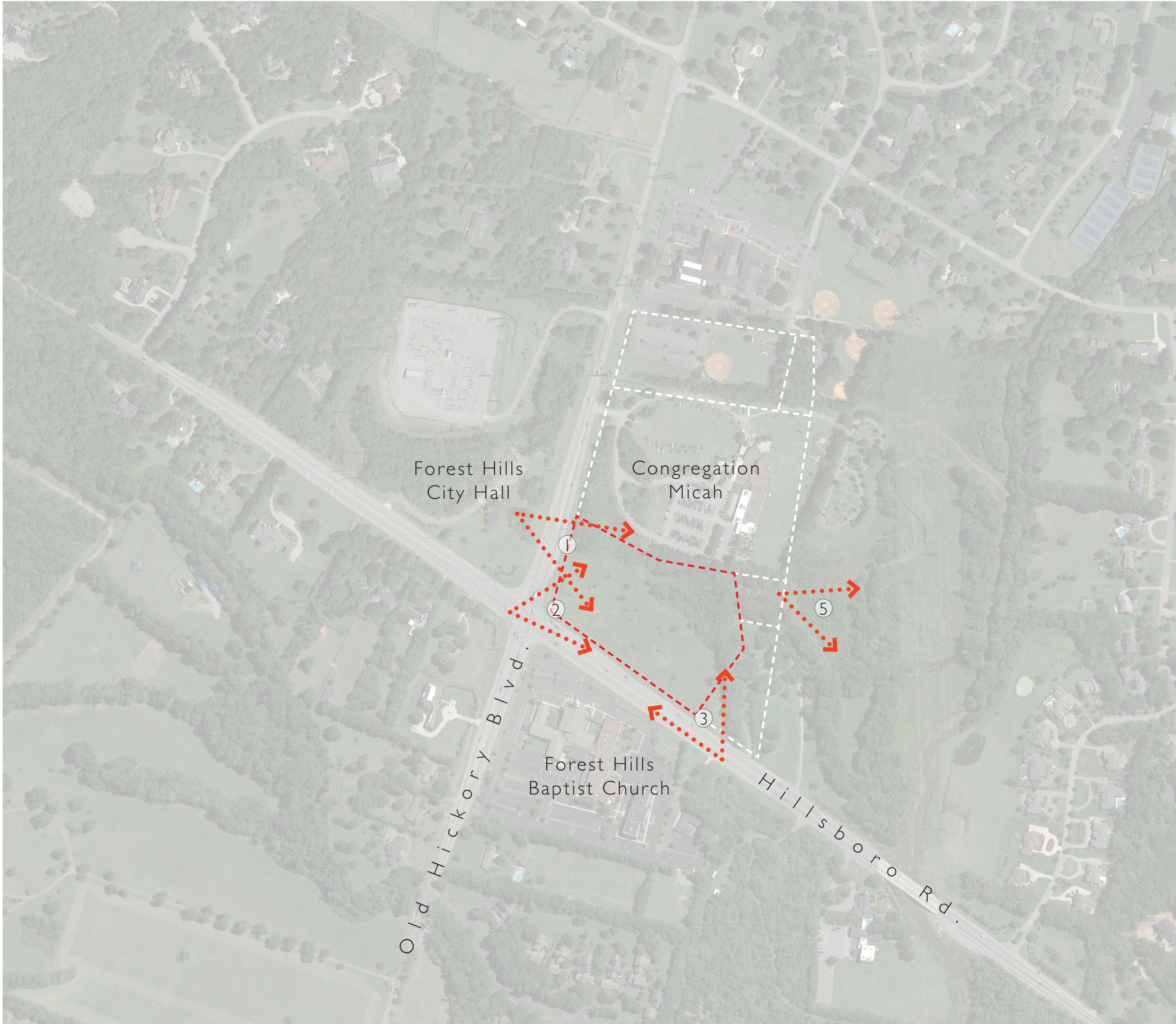
Hillsboro Rd.

LEGEND

① View From City Hall

② View From Intersection

③ View From Hillsboro Rd.

④ Views Onto Oxbow Lake

--- Aaittafama' Archaeological Park Site

Vegetation

LEGEND

Canopy And
Understory Buffer:

Open Space:

Aaittafama'
Archaeological Park
Site:

Forest Hills
City Hall

Congregation
Micah

Forest Hills
Baptist Church

Old Hickory Blvd.

Old Hickory Blvd.

Hillsboro

Hillsboro Rd.

N

Utilities

Forest Hills
City Hall

Congregation
Micah

Forest Hills
Baptist Church

Old Hickory Blvd.

Hillsboro Rd.

LEGEND

Overhead Electrical:

Overhead Utilities:

Poles:

Gas Meter:

Traffic Signals:

Aaittafama'
Archaeological Park
Site:

N

Development

LEGEND

Only Site Disturbance Requiring Fill:

Site Disturbance Area Requiring Cut Allowed:

Existing Palisade Line Location (shown conceptually for graphic purposes only - refer to Archaeology report for exact location

Aaittafama' Archaeological Park Site:

Forest Hills City Hall

Congregation Micah

Forest Hills Baptist Church

Old Hickory Blvd.

Hillsboro Rd.

N

Slope Analysis

Forest Hills
City Hall

Congregation
Micah

Forest Hills
Baptist Church

Old Hickory Blvd.

Hillsboro Rd.

LEGEND

0-10% Slope:

10-20% Slope:

20% + Slope:

Slope Direction:

Swale:

Aaittafama'
Archaeological Park
Site:

N

Parks and Greenspace Proximity

RADNOR LAKE
STATE NATURAL AREA

PERCY WARNER
PARK

AAITTAFAMA'
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
PARK

MARGARET HAYES
POWELL PARK

DEERWOOD
ARBORETUM

GRANNY
WHITE PARK

N
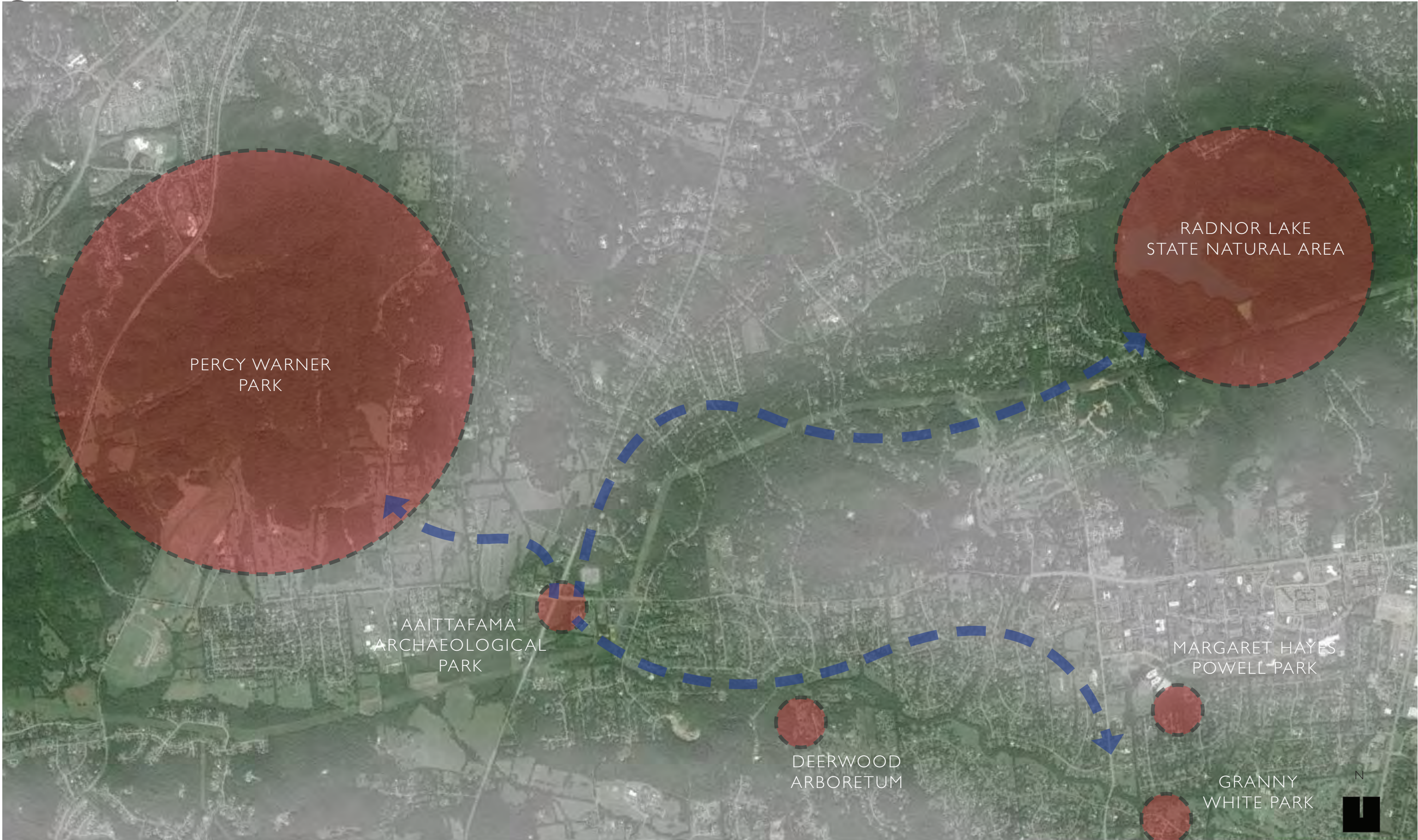
PRECEDENT IMAGERY

NATIVE MEADOW

BIO-SWALE

BRIDGE

LANDFORM

INTERPRETIVE ART

AGRICULTURE

PAVILION

MASTER PLAN

The Master Plan
Design and Inspiration

Aaittafama' is the site of a 15th century Mississippian Indian village located at the intersection of Old Hickory Boulevard and Hillsboro Road in Forest Hills, TN. The name Aaittafama' means 'meeting place', as the primary intention is for the site to be a gathering place where Native American culture is interpreted and experienced by all.

The site includes three major interpretive zones—the Pre-Mississippian, the Mississippian, and European cultures periods. The programming and planting in each zone is representative of the cultural and agricultural practices of each period. At the northern portion of the site, which is nested at the intersection of Hillsboro and Old Hickory, is a connection to the Forest Hills City Hall where artifacts from the Mississippian settlement, found during the Kellytown archaeological investigations, are housed. This corner of the site demonstrates the natural resources and plantings that dominated the Pre-Mississippian landscape, such as wildlife, wildflowers, and native meadow grasses. Adjacent to this zone is a small parking area that will be treated with a series of planted rain gardens and house an informational plaza that will alert visitors to the importance of the Mississippian culture in Middle Tennessee and the region. As the visitor walks south, they travel through the historic palisade That was unearthed during the archaeological investigation. Shortly thereafter, the visitor passes through a second palisade, recreated as an artistic intervention that represents the original boundary wall of the settlement which was meant to protect the inhabitants of the site.

At the heart of the site is the representation of the Mississippian Indian culture, which is dominated by a plaza reminiscent of the early inhabitant's communal space. This provides the main gathering space of the site, and also includes a set of interpretive panels describing this Mississippian site specifically and its importance in the region. Traveling south through the plaza, the representative European row plantings become visible in the Agricultural Display Gardens. Interpretive educational elements are positioned throughout the site, detailing the lives of the native cultures that once inhabited the landscape.

CULTURE OVERLAP

MISSISSIPPIAN
CULTURES

TIMELINE

PRE-MISSISSIPPIAN
CULTURE

EUROPEAN
SETTLEMENT

Interpretive Zones

Zones:

Timeline Path:

Native Resources

Pre-Mississippian Cultures

Mississippian Village

European Settlement

Old Hickory Blvd.

Hillsboro Rd.

N

Master Plan Design

Access and Circulation

LEGEND

Bus Parking:

Vehicular Parking:

Pedestrian Access: ··········

Node: ✳

Vehicular Access: ←------→

N

Forest Hills
Baptist Church

Old Hickory Blvd.

Hillsboro Rd.

Congregation
Micah

Rainwater

LEGEND

Surface Flow: -------▸

Weir Walls: ▬▬▬

Piped Flow: •••••••▸

Infiltration Area: ⬤

VIEW LOOKING SOUTH

PRE-MISSISSIPPIAN CULTURES WALK

VIEW LOOKING SOUTH OVER PARKING AND BIO-SWALE TOWARDS INTERPRETIVE PLAZA AND PALISADE

PALISADE INTERPRETIVE ART FEATURE
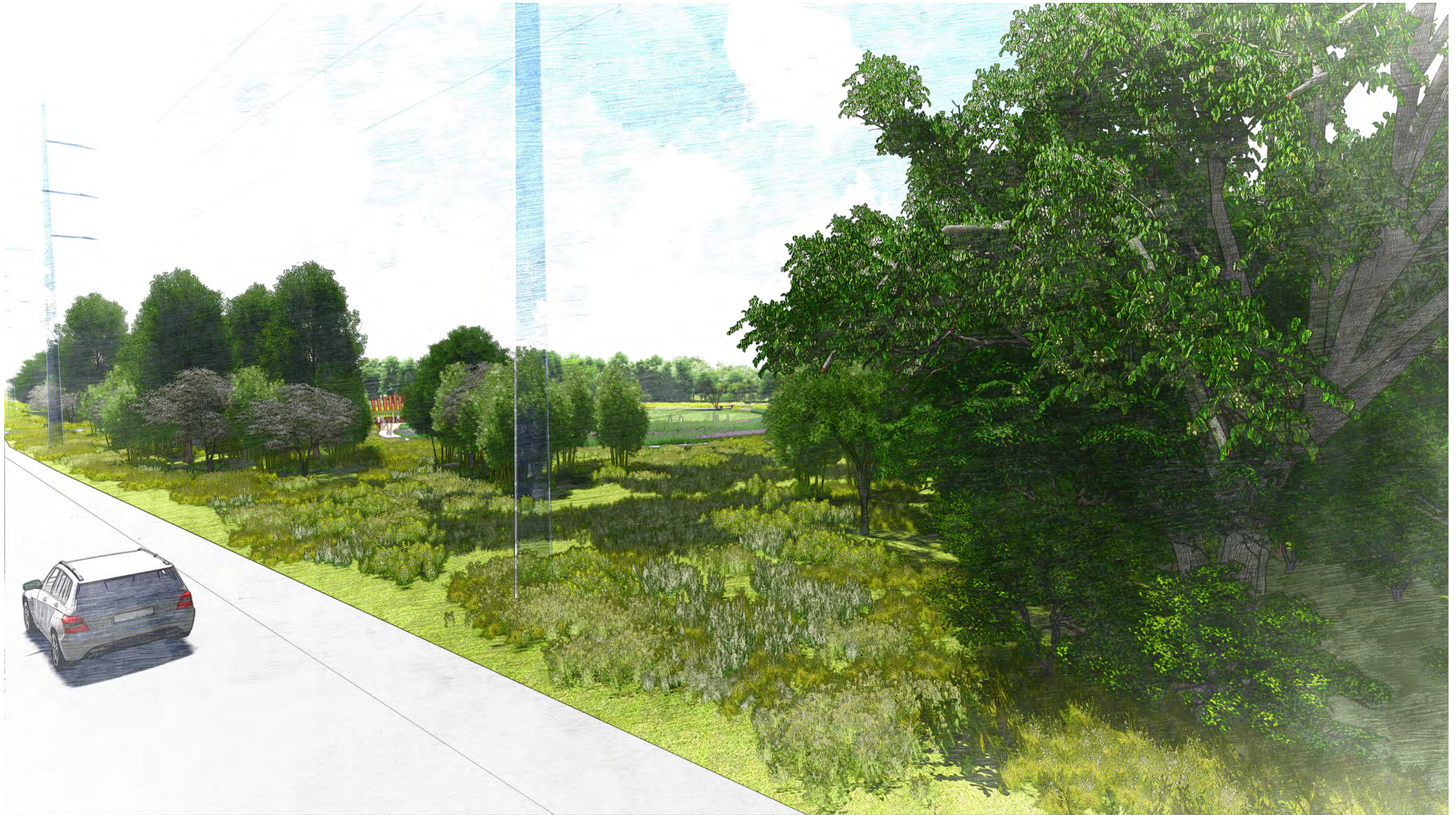
VIEW LOOKING NORTH FROM PAVILION ACROSS GATHERING "PLAZA"

INTERPRETIVE PANELS

VIEW LOOKING NORTH ON HILLSBORO ROAD

VIEW FROM INTERPRETIVE PLAZA LOOKING EAST TOWARDS PALISADE AND PAVILION

INTERPRETATION
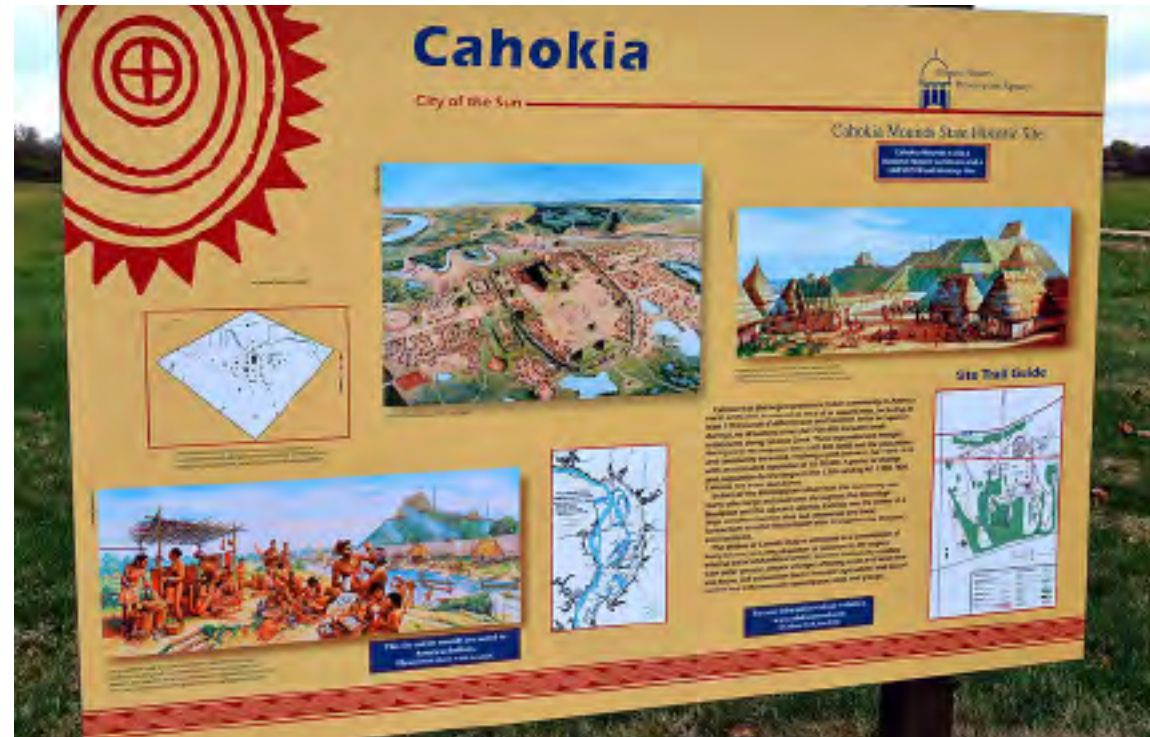
The Visitor Experience

Telling the Story

Is a unique archaeological resource. As a new edition to Nashville's park system, the site offers visitors the opportunity to experience Native American history in situ. Today, the once vibrant Mississippian village lies buried beneath centuries of environmental growth and decay, both natural and man-made. However, that does not hinder our ability to inform visitors about the world in which this lost civilization lived.

A goal of this Master Plan is to explore avenues for creating an enriching visitor experience at . People who venture to historic sites, museums, and cultural attractions seek fulfillment on multiple levels. They hope their visit will be entertaining, educational, recreational, thought-provoking, and meaningful. To be successful, interpretive resources must emotionally engage site audiences through a host of physical and digital assets, be they wayside exhibits, brochures, art, pathways, web applications, or education facilities.

Above:
A Mississippian period human-bird effigy bone pendant excavated at Gordontown site in Brentwood. Only one inch tall, It was carved from a deer toe bone.

Above:
Cahokia Mounds, across the Mississippi River from St. Louis in Illinois, interprets the remains of North America's largest extant Mississippian city.

Goals For Providing A Meaningful Visitor Experience

Visitor experience goals describe opportunities for the public to engage the historic and cultural resources in various ways. They can also determine how those that participate become stewards of the site. Understanding and responding to the diversity of audience needs and expectations is a challenge and calls on the creative energy of all those who seek to meet visitor expectations. One has to remember that every person brings with them their own unique story and set of expectations. There are several important constants, however: Visitors want services at historic sites to be readily available, easy to find, and interactive.

The concept of touchpoints helps us to understand the visitor experience as a multi-faceted whole comprised of a variety of contact areas. Each place or event where the visitor makes contact with the resource is a touchpoint and an opportunity to influence their overall experience. Wayfinding signage, exhibits, and digital materials are a few of the most extensive touchpoints that help to create the full richness of a visitor experience. Each and every engagement should be seen as an opportunity to create a positive outcome for visitors.

STAGES OF THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Desiring: The prospective visitor is aware of and wants to experience a community or its historic resources (like a museum), the opportunities available in the community, and the resulting experiences that may occur.

Planning: The prospective visitor is researching a destination that best meets their interest, needs, and expectations. The visitor must have access to information involving the potential visit, which can include information on its history, attractions, relevance, the weather, nearby accommodations, fees, and directions.

Traveling: The prospective visitor makes their way to the destination. Directions and signage to the site, or "wayfinding," needs to be straightforward and clear.

Arriving: The visitor enters the community. They receive orientation and informational materials about the interpretive resources or opportunities available.

Visiting: The visitor participates in, enjoys, and learns from the programs, services, and facilities they are exposed to. An important part of visiting the community is the opportunity for discovery: following the interpretive driving tour using a hand-held device that highlights information about the communities historic past, or visiting a temporary exhibit at the museum. These opportunities can help to create and reinforce a positive and memorable experience.

Leaving: The visitor had an enjoyable, meaningful, satisfying, safe, and entertaining visit. There is a distinct sense of personal fulfillment at departure.

Remembering: The visitor shares the details of their visit through pictures, stories, and materials they have collected with others. Their memories are filled with positive recollections of the community. Follow-up communication through websites, emails, and social media can lead to a return visit or financial support for the association and their efforts.

Audiences

Visitors to historic sites, museums, and interpretive centers come in all shapes and sizes. They also come with various expectations about the topics and stories they seek to understand.

Native American Groups
The park will provide a special venue for events for Native American groups to experience a historical meeting place. Groups will be able to have dances, drumming, religious ceremonies and other demonstrations of traditional crafts. It will foster an appreciation that Native Americans are living groups not a "lost" culture.

School Groups
There are two types of groups related to education and schools. The first are local teachers seeking to enliven their classroom experience by venturing on field trips. Through the use of heritage sites, they hope to enrich the subject matter for their students by visiting places associated with historic events or characters. The second and often overlooked crowd are youth organizations, such as scholastic organizations, bands, Boy and Girl Scouts, or sports teams outside the area. They often try to find secondary attractions to expend time while involved with their special extracurricular or school-related trips.

Locals
Activities for engaging local residents are a key ingredient in developing a sustainable heritage tourism market. Addressing this audience with special programming and getting them involved in planning activities generates enthusiastic supporters.

Heritage Travelers
This audience seeks history related sites and activities. They demand in-depth interpretation, much like history aficionados, but have a wider array of interests. Often they combine site visits with dining, shopping, and recreational activities. They also have a higher level of family travel. Tourists group may include tour buses, elder hostels and church groups. Their activities are often driven by cross-marketing with other trendy sites, or tailor-made vacation packages.

Drop-Ins
This is the most unpredictable group. They typically show up by chance, either off the main highway or are visiting someone in the area.

Recreational Visitors
This audience seeks recreation first, but looks for opportunities to visit nearby historic sites to add to the trip's overall experience. Walking, backpacking, and biking trails, along with camping and water-sport activities are seen as enhancements to these visitors. Because the Stones River Greenway runs through the property, this audience has great opportunities to make use of the site.

Internet Users
More than 148.3 million people use the Internet to make reservations for accommodations, tours and activities. Most online travel planners are somewhat or extremely satisfied with their experiences in using the Internet to plan their trips. The primary tools for travel planning are online travel agency websites, search engines, company websites and destination websites. Airline tickets, overnight lodging accommodations and car rentals are the dominant travel products and services purchased online by travel planners. Local information comprises 20% of Google searches. Visitors to destination websites may choose not to make a physical visit to the battlefield, but instead seek information about the story for various purposes. An undervalued and under-emphasized audience type, visitors who hit history-related websites can be the best repeat customers. They seek various types of multi-media experiences and can direct others to these opportunities.

Top Right:
Mississippian stone statue from Wilson County, Tennessee

Middle Right:
This group of Archaic period artifacts is a tattooing tool kit 4,800 years old. It was excavated from the Fernvale site in Williamson county. Courtesy Tennessee Division of Archaeology

Bottom Right:
Mississippian potters frequently incorporated animal effigies. This frog effigy pot was excavated from a site overlooking the Cumberland River in Montgomery county.

Interpretation is a form of communication that attempts to provoke, relate, and reveal. It offers insight into what makes a place, person, object, or mood important. To tell Aaittafama''s story in an effective way, the interpretative assets made available to the public must engage visitors on a personal level, offer a safe and inviting space to learn about and experience the resource, and contribute to the surrounding environment. Visitors to historic sites make a multiplicity of choices about whether to engage an interpretive resource or not. Those choices are influenced by time, availability, functionality, safety, environment, cost, etc. The ultimate aim of interpretation is to effectively balance visitor needs and interests with the needs and interests of the overall preservation, development and use of the site.
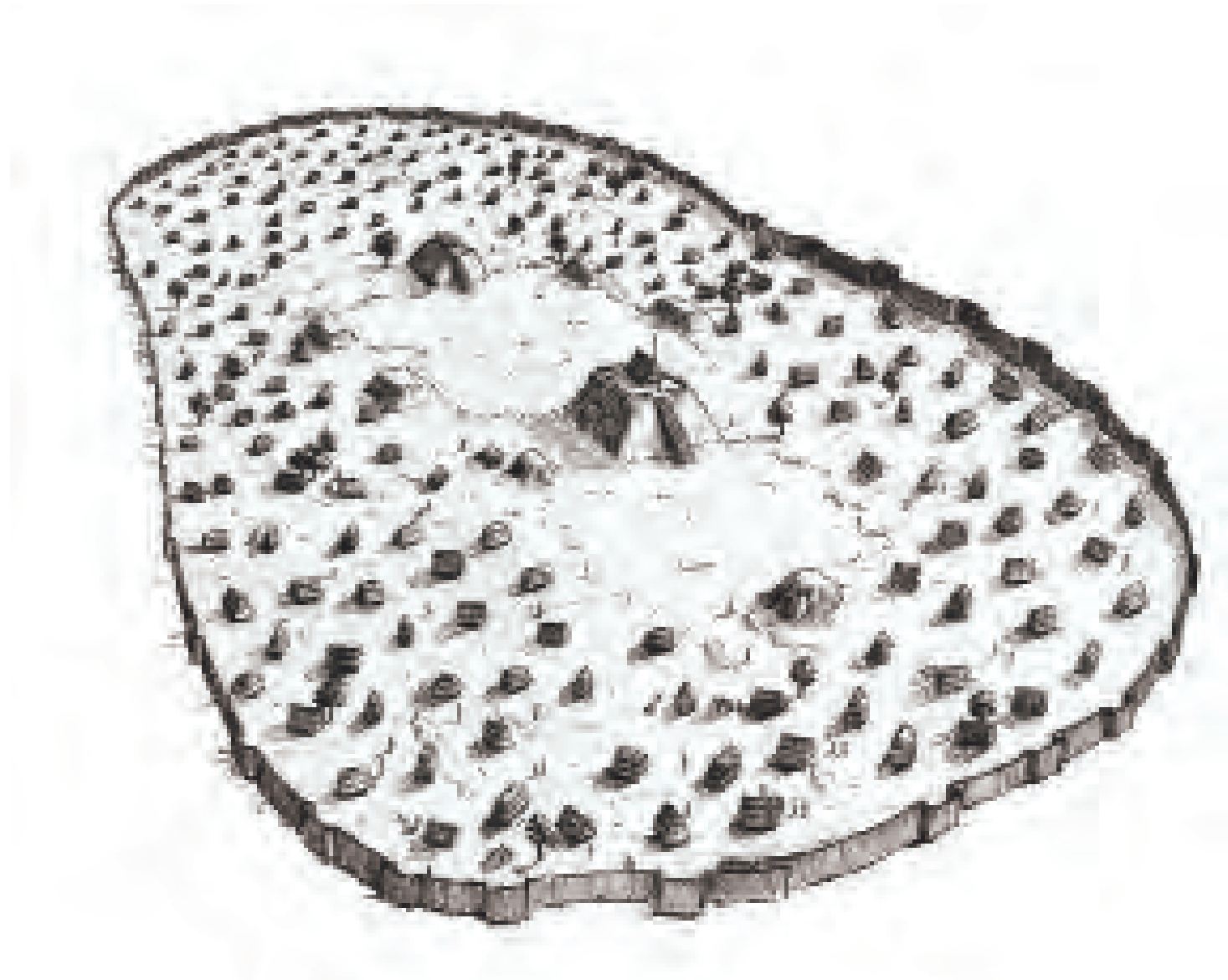
Above Image:
Mississippian settlements dominated the area's river systems for more than 500 years

The Basis of Interpretation

Freeman Tilden, the father of modern interpretation, described his six principles of interpretation in the late 1950s:

- Any interpretation that does not somehow relate what is being displayed or described to something within the personality or experience of the visitor will be sterile.

- Information, as such, is not Interpretation. Interpretation is revelation based on information, but they are entirely different things, however, all interpretation includes information.

- Interpretation is an art, which combines many arts, whether the materials presented are scientific, historical, or architectural. Any art is to some degree teachable.

- The chief aim of Interpretation is not instruction, but provocation.

- Interpretation should aim to present a whole rather than a part, and must address itself to the whole person rather than any phase.

- Interpretation addressed to children (say, up to the age of twelve) should not be a dilution of the presentation to adults, but should follow a fundamentally different approach. To be at its best it will require a separate program.

The minimum threshold to any engaging visitor experience is a captivating story. Today, there are a variety of tools available for sites such as Aaittafama' to use as mechanisms for storytelling. To determine the best course of action for developing these tools, a number of factors should be taken into consideration as part of the decision making process, including ease of use, cost, maintenance, staff capacity, durability, and practicality. Thus, when investing in permanent and semi-permanent fixtures, such as interpretive media, it is important to consider the overall experience that you want visitors to take away from their engagement. Being cognizant of each and every place you make contact with audiences – touchpoints - is important in achieving a positive and memorable experience for audiences.

TYPES OF INTERPRETIVE EXPERIENCES

Guided
The most expensive to maintain, guided interpretation is more personalized but labor intensive. When done in combination with self-guided materials, it can produce a rewarding experience for audiences.

Tours
Two of the most common types of tours are guided facility tours at historic sites or museums, and step-on guided tours for individuals or groups moving between locations. Both are labor-intensive enterprises. Itineraries and scripts have to be developed, docents or guides trained, and programs evaluated to be effective. These types of tours are personalized, and locals familiar with the area and the historic resources can be employed to help. However, training and availability can be a problem that will have to be overcome.

Living History
First-person dramatic performances, like those employed at Williamsburg or Plimouth Plantation in Massachusetts, are one of the most effective learning experiences for visitors. They can involve local actors or students, or can employ military and civilian re-enactors to educate audiences on battlefield maneuvers, camp life, or the use of weaponry. They can also demonstrate building methods and foodways.

Self-Guided
This type of audience interaction does not involve direct contact between staff, volunteers, or interpreters and audiences. It is less expensive and can reach a larger audience.

Digital
More and more people are engaging historic resources via the internet or through other digital media applications. These visitors may or may not ever directly experience the site, but still require a certain amount of content to capture their interest.

Above:
Guided tours offer in-depth interaction

Above:
Self-Guided exploration of sites can be group oriented or personal

Indoor Exhibits

Exhibits, whether permanent or traveling, can produce an excellent, self-directed experience for all audience types. They have the ability to convey an abundance of information, can be low-maintenance, and have the capability to replace the expense of human interpreters. Exhibits and kiosks can also be interactive, adding a supplement to passive displays and create an exciting pathway to learning.

Interactive Exhibits

Museums and historic sites are increasingly creating interactive exhibits as a way to heighten audience engagement. These exhibits can be used within static exhibits, as stand-alone assets, or on a mobile device. The interaction gives both the visitor and the site flexibility. Building interactive exhibits can be a powerful tool to enhance the visitor experience and their engagement with the resource or story.

Exterior Wayside Panels

Exhibits can be produced for outdoor experiences in the form of interpretive wayside panels. Located at specific places at the facility, these panels can direct, inform, and educate audiences who want to fully experience the visual and environmental elements of the site. At Two Rivers, wayside interpretive panels expand the opportunity for visitors to learn about plantation life or the Morgan Horse farm.

Dramatic Performance

Combining history and the arts is becoming more commonplace today than it has been in the past. Theater performances based on historic or historical events can attract audiences who seek both entertainment and information.

Publications

Printed materials are one of the most cost effective ways to promote and educate audiences on the historic resource. These materials are produced in many shapes, sizes and forms.

Brochures - a fold out interpretive piece that can be a combination of background information with a map of the estate and directions on how to access the site.

Rack Cards - typically a two sided brochure made available at welcome centers, contiguous sites, businesses, tourism offices, motels, etc. for background information and directions to the site.

Guidebooks - a comprehensive booklet that gives a detailed understanding of the events surrounding the historic events, complete with maps and images, to offer audiences more than just an overview of the resource.

Maps - similar to a brochure, however, the map drives the interpretation through a timeline of events and activities. This map can also be an accompaniment to a brochure or guidebook, but is also meant as a stand-alone piece.

Websites

Still the most cost effective means to reach a large audience who wants to experience the site or access information about the resource, websites can serve several purposes, from interpretation, to information, to programming (podcasts), to promotion. Effective websites address all of these objectives.

Website blogs are also a new phenomenon that historic sites can take advantage of. These types of sites are similar to online journals and allow others to interact through commentary or images with the material on the site. Websites are also an excellent opportunity to gather information about visitors or potential visitors to the site. Establishing an email database for further contact with this audience can enhance fundraising, programming, interpretive, or visitation opportunities for the site.

Podcasts

Podcasts offer a way for visitors to access a wide variety of information about the site without actually visiting. Podcasts are digital media files that can be accessed through the Internet. They can be easily recorded and quickly uploaded. Events like a symposium or audio tours can expose audiences to information and interpretation via their computer, smart phone, mp3 player, or other digital media players.

Social Media

The use of social media outlets, like Facebook, Twitter, Foursquare (location), YouTube (video sharing), and Flickr (photo sharing) have added a new and exciting layer of information and interpretation to historic sites. They have the ability to attract audiences that would be considered non-traditional, such as those under the age of 25 who visit historic sites in relatively few numbers. They do, however, enjoy making their observations, opinions, and criticisms known to the world through social media outlets.

Smart Phone Applications

Today smart phones carry applications that can perform all types of functions. One useful application is GPS-based location mapping. Museums and historic battlefields are now taking advantage of this hand-held technology to devise tours where audiences are their own tour guide. Social media is also accessible through smart phone applications. Two Rivers could create an app for touring the downtown area.

Documentary and Promotional Films

Films and videos have an emotional appeal few physical venues can compare to. If well done, they can convey a mood, recreate a setting, or interpret a relationship. Film and video projects, however, are expensive to produce. Other historic sites in Nashville, such as the Hermitage and Ft. Negley, use films as introductions to the site. These types of media can also be used on the Two Rivers website, or by uploading to social media outlets such as YouTube or Vimeo. Guest speakers or demonstrators are two ways to make use of an educational program that can then be broadcast over the internet.

Augmented/Virtual Reality

Museums and historic sites are embracing augmented and virtual reality digital media that will let visitors stand at a specific location with a mobile devise or VR Viewer and reconstruct a virtual walk-through using the superposition of computer generated content onto real-time views and 3D modeling, graphics and animation. Internet-based AR can make use of QR coding if necessary. You can even use geolocated photographs.
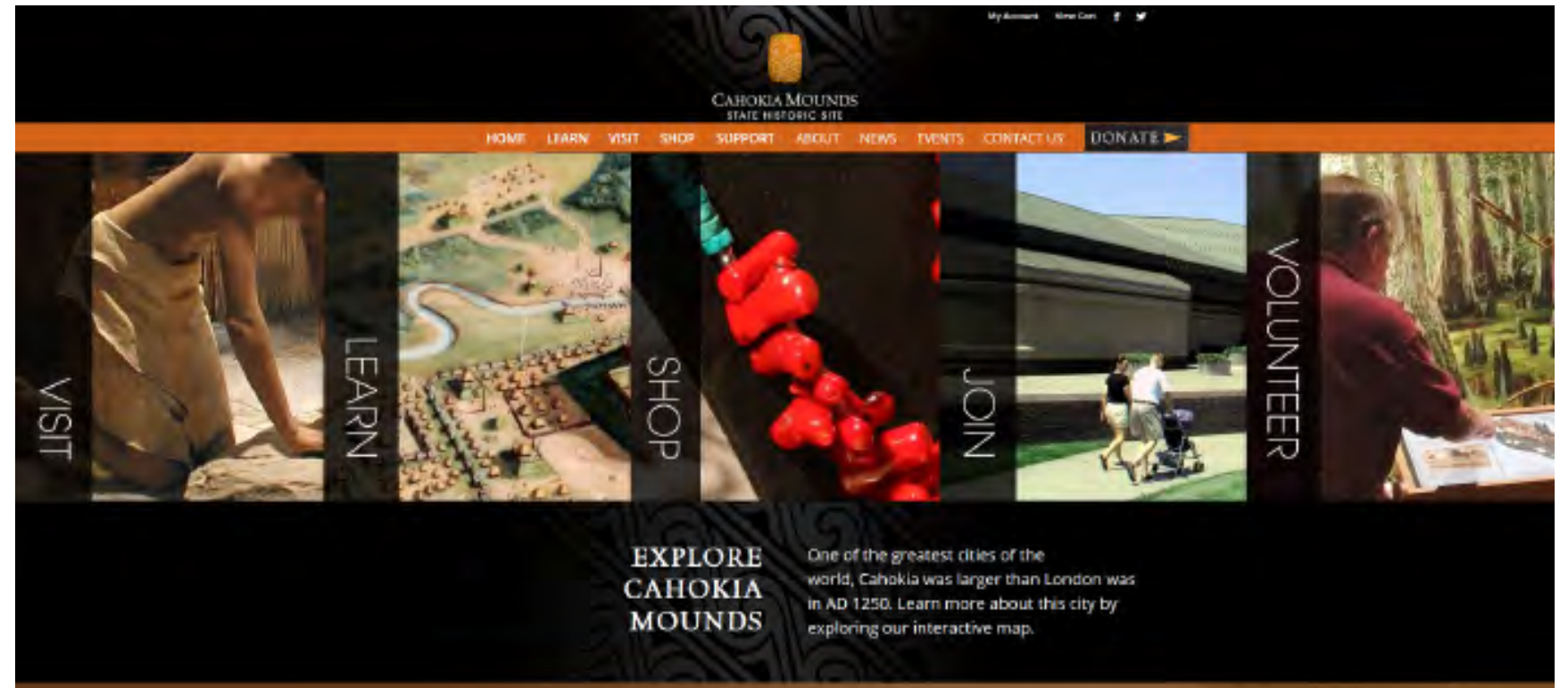
KELLYTOWN MASTER PLAN

LEGEND

INTERPRETIVE MEDIA

- ⬤ ORIENTATION
- ⬤ TRAIL WAYSIDE EXHIBITS
- ⬭ MAIN ORIENTATION INTERPRETIVE PLAZA
- ⬤ PALISADE
- ⬭ WALKWAY WAYSIDE EXHIBITS
- ⬤ EDUCATION PLAZA
- ⬤ VILLAGE INTERPRETIVE PLAZA
- • EFFIGY MONUMENTS
- ⌇ WALKING PATH

Old Hickory Blvd.

Forest Hills Baptist Church

Hillsboro Rd.

WOODLANDS CULTURE

MISSISSIPPIAN CULTURE

EUROAMERICAN CULTURE

Congregation Micah

An interpretive theme is the central concept or key idea of any interpretive experience, exhibit or presentation. Not only do interpretive themes provide organizational structure and clarity of purpose for understanding the entire resource, it also has a dramatic effect on all the individual parts of the visitor experience that make up the whole. Some basic themes to explore the history of Kellytown include:

PREHISTORIC ART AND ARCHITECTURE
The prehistory of middle Tennessee was dominated by several distinctive civilizations that saw the area as a sacred place.

- Archaic and Woodlands Indians
- Clovis
- Transitions to Mississippian Culture
- Ornamentation and Decorative Arts

EXPLORING BOTANICAL REMAINS
Agriculture was the primary source of sustainability as made evident by the remains of plants and animals unearthed through archaeological research.

- Mississippian Agriculture - The Three Sisters
- Flora and Fauna
- The Science of Archaeological Investigation

BELIEF AND MEANING IN MISSISSIPPIAN CULTURE
The interaction between rulers and ruled was a defining social and religious structure of the Mississippian civilization.

- Elites and Commoners
- The Supernatural World
- Chiefdoms

THE POWER OF PLACE: COMMUNITY LIFE
Mississippians created a system of living arrangements and community patterns that are distinctive to the civilization.

- Towns and Villages
- Networks of Trade
- Late Mississippian Settlement
- Rivers and Tributaries
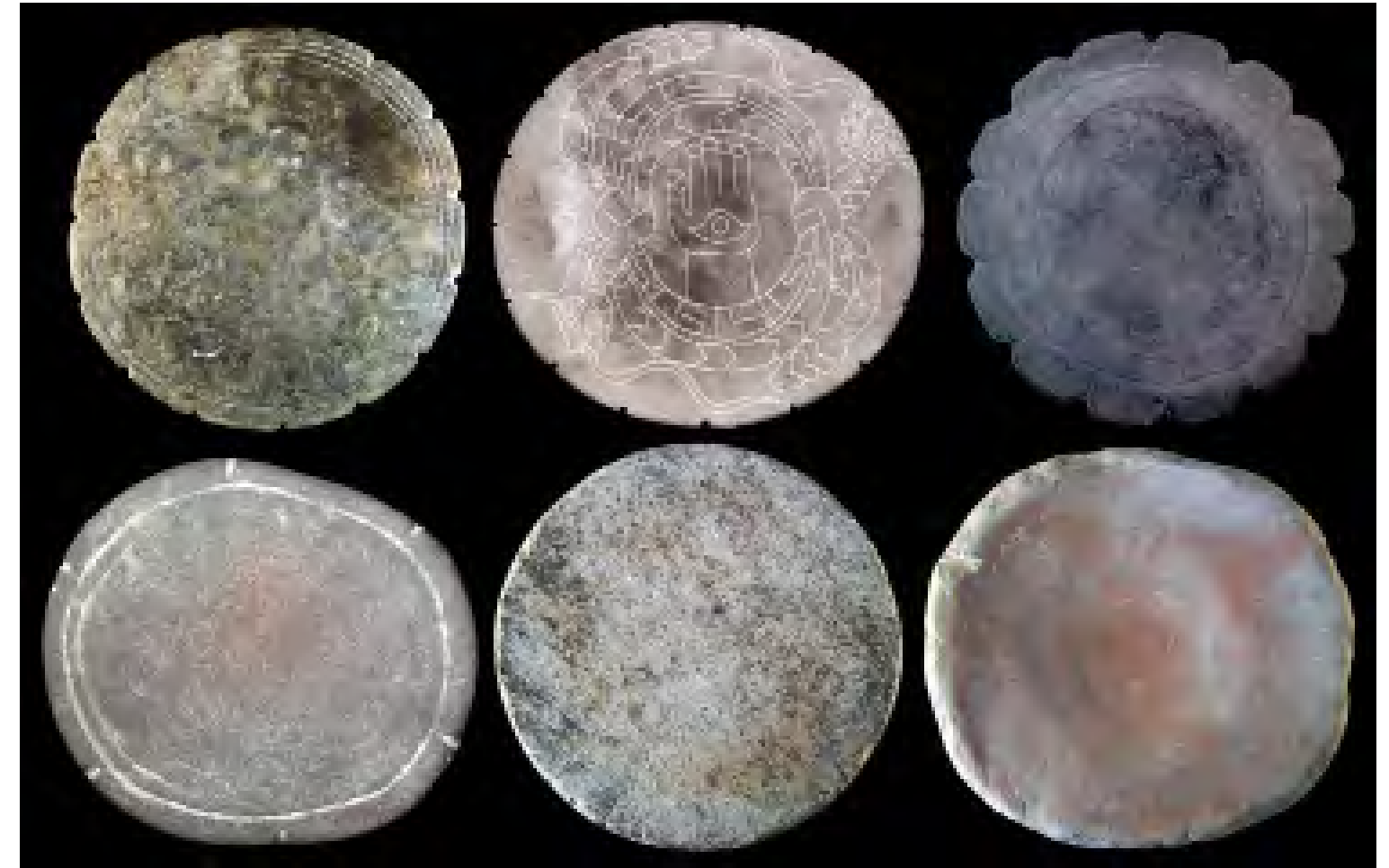
A CULTURE IN DECLINE
Drastic changes to climate, overpopulation, disease and other significant calamities led to the decline of the Mississippian civilization.

- Threats from Within
- Threats from Without
- The Palisade

A LOST WORLD
Europeans glimpsed the end of Mississippian civilization and created a New World on the remains of this lost civilization.

- The Known and the Unknown
- European Exploration

Interpretive Media

A combination of upright and table wayside exhibits can offer visitors an engaging opportunity to learn about Mississippian culture.

Wayside Exhibit

36"

24"

30"

Upright Exhibit

36"

48"
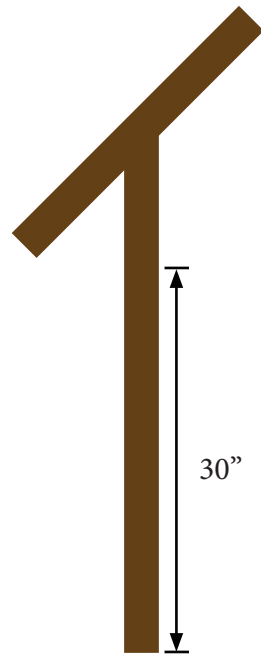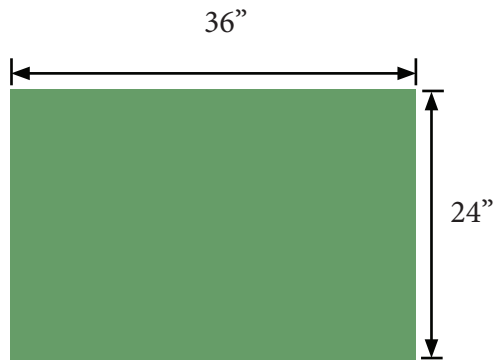
Rail Mount Wayside

Mini Wayside

8"

15"
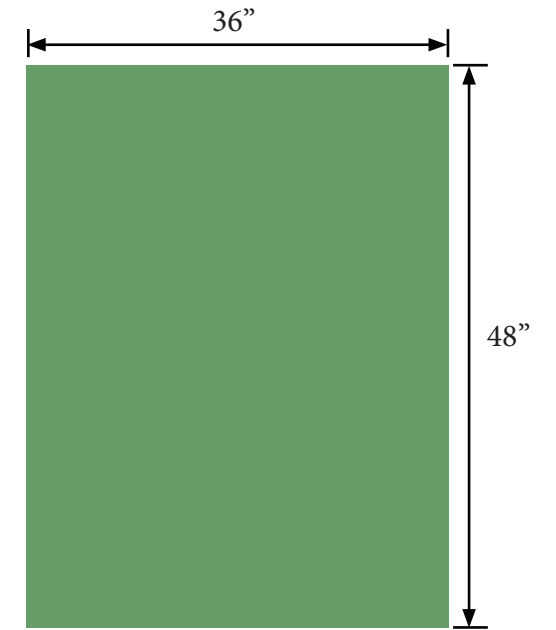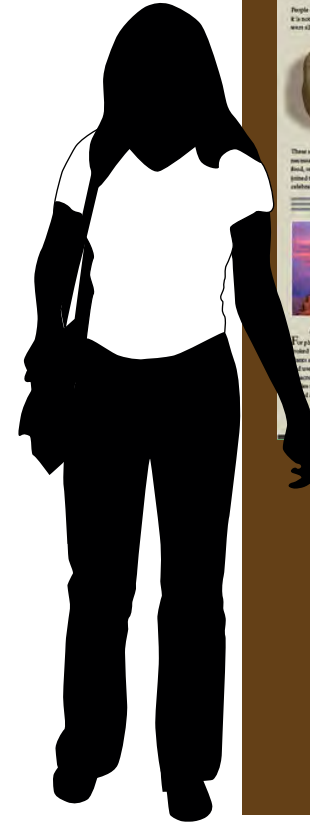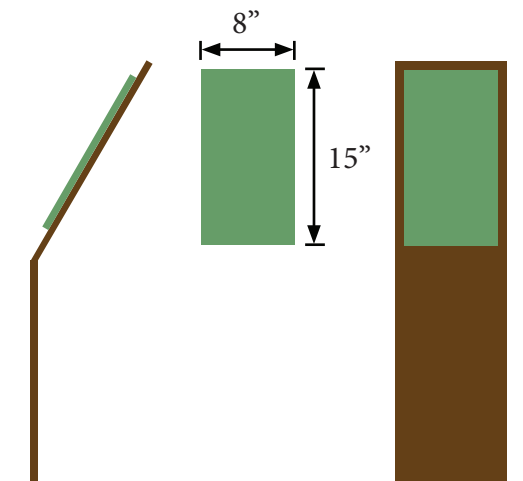
Interpretive Elements

Below:
Gorget pavers give opportunities for wayfinding and offer a unique
Mississippian visual art source for interpretation and learning.

Right:
Effigy Monuments - Monuments based on effigy bowls welcome visitors to the
site, mark specific areas of interpretation and offer the opportunity to learn
about a unique Mississippian art form.

Creating a history education program for children is all about Hands-On-History. Kids like to touch and feel, not just watch and listen.

- Assess the unique qualities of the site.
- Determine the core curriculum links to your program. (Everything that is taught in a Tennessee school classroom must meet a set of guidelines.)
- Create a postcard or flyer to advertise to your target audience. (If in Metro Nashville, send one to each school and address to the "SOCIAL STUDIES COORDINATOR.")
- A good education program should provide an Educator's Guide to assist teachers with everything they need to know about their visit.
- Create stations (4) at the site so groups can be broken up into individual classrooms.
- Have hands-on activities at each station. (Reproduce an artifact, draw a map, scavenger hunt, participate in a dance)
- Follow up the visit with an evaluation form.

Virtual reality is a digital reconstruction that provides a walkthroughs of the site to enhance the visitor experience.

Google Cardboard headsets are constructed from low-cost components and require a compatible app to split an iPhone's display into two to create a stereoscopic 3D image. As an open platform, Google Cardboard has been used by multiple companies to build apps with 3D experiences and games. Other features include a photography app for taking 360 degree photos and an educational component for sending students on virtual field trips.

Educational programs are the backbone of historic sites. They give both teachers and students the opportunity to directly experience the material culture associated with an historic place, people, or period. The resources at Aaittafama' tell a broad story of Mississippian settlement, their system of beliefs, art and architecture, and the nature of their disappearance. Certain guiding principles, however, are the foundation for creating and administering these learning experiences.

To design a successful school program, look around your site and see what is unique. What histories do you tell well and what can you introduce to students? Then take that knowledge and create a themed-based educational program around your period and scope. Set a target audience, i.e. K-12th, Scouts, Home School, Parochial, etc. Ideally, the program should be divided into approximately four activities/stations, as this number seems to work well with all group sizes.

Next up – and very important - is determining the core curriculum links to your program. Everything that is taught in a Tennessee school classroom must meet a set of guidelines. What aspects of your program satisfy these guidelines? History? Geography? Mathematics? Sociology? Science? The more guidelines that are satisfied, the more school administrators and teachers will sign off on the trip. All of the links for every grade level and every discipline can be found at tncurriculumcenter.org. It is important to have these early on because educators sometimes need these to get approval for the trip based upon your program's ability to satisfy these requirements. (If a school can only take one or two trips per year, they want to make sure they get the most bang for their buck.)

After creating a solid program, a postcard or flyer should be developed to advertise to your target audience. If in Metro Nashville, send one to each school and address to the "SOCIAL STUDIES COORDINATOR." These may be mailed free of charge at the Metro Schools Print Shop on Bransford Ave. A copy should also be sent to the coordinator at each school in every surrounding county.

You should also speak to the Girl Scout Council to find out their current printing schedule. Scout-based badge programs can be appealing to leaders looking for new projects and programs.

In the calm before the storm, clear up the details, make sure you have a money policy. Which schools will be charged a fee per student – private, home schoolers, parochial? Also make sure you have a chaperone policy (How many

are allowed? What are they charged?), a bus policy (Where do they drop off, park, and pick up?), are they allowed to bring lunches (Where are they being stored?). Think through every possible detail, and you still will forget something, but that's okay, just go with the flow.

A good education program should provide an Educator's Guide to assist teachers with everything they need to know about their visit. It answers any questions they may have, the details of the program, and additionally it provides activities for pre-visit, on-site, and post-visit projects. Especially important, the guide includes evaluation materials not only for the teachers to fill out, but also for the students to complete. These guides can range from just a few pages to a small booklet. It is especially helpful to send them out on CD or have them available online.

Now is the time to coordinate the curriculum-based activities mentioned earlier into an actual program with students. The logistics of your program are very important. When your teacher arrives they will let you know their time frame and everyone on staff should be working with stop watches. Classrooms like to be kept intact and no one wants to miss anything.

When schools arrive, after money is settled with the lead teacher, groups are broken down into the number of stations. The lead educator for the site will introduce the interpreters and explain the day's activities to the school. Each group proceeds with an interpreter to their starting station and then rotates approximately every 20 minutes. This occurs until every group has visited all stations and allows, with rotation time and four stations, a program of approximately one and a half hours. At the end of the last station everyone is to meet at an agreed upon point on-site where the lead educator thanks the group for coming and waves goodbye to the bus or cars.

Following up with teachers to make sure evaluation forms are returned is essential to the long-term success of the program. Evaluations can be returned through the mail or online.

PROJECT PHASING / COST ANALYSIS

Proposed Site Phasing

Phasing Boundaries And Pricing

Phase 1:
  Palisade / Art / Interpretation

Phase 2:
  Vehicular Parking
  Rain Garden
  Bus Parking
  Gateway / Signage
  Pedestrian Circulation
  Sculpture / Art
  Interpretive Elements
  Plaza
  Landscape

Phase 2A (Architecture Phase):
  Structure / Pavilion

Future Phase:
  Future Expansion / Greenway
  Connection

Phase 1	Qty	Unit	Unit Cost	Subtotal
Palisade Interpretive Element	1	LS	$	150,000.00
Interpretive VR View Finder	1	LS	$	75,000.00

Phase 2	Qty	Unit	Unit Cost	Subtotal
Interpretive Elements: Website ED Programs Pavers Wayside exhibits Additional interpretive signage		LS	$	125,000.00
Rough Grading		LS	$	40,000.00
Utilities: Water line, electrical, transformer		LS	$	20,000.00
Parking Lot: cross drain, gravel, asphalt, stripping, bus parking, drainage at Micah		LS	$	55,000.00
Drainage: piping, bio detention/raingarden		LS	$	30,000.00
Concrete Walks		LS	$	97,000.00
Special Plaza Paving		LS	$	96,000.00
Stone Walls/Seat Walls		LS	$	20,000.00
Wood Decking		LS	$	25,000.00
Sculpture		LS	$	55,000.00
Bike Rack		LS	$	3,000.00
Corner Entry Feature		LS	$	50,000.00
Topsoil / fine grading / soil amendments		LS	$	20,000.00
Planting		LS	$	150,000.00
Irrigation		LS	$	50,000.00

Phase 2A	Qty	Unit	Unit Cost	Subtotal
Pavillion				$ 250,000.00

Phase 1:

Palisade / Art / Interpretation
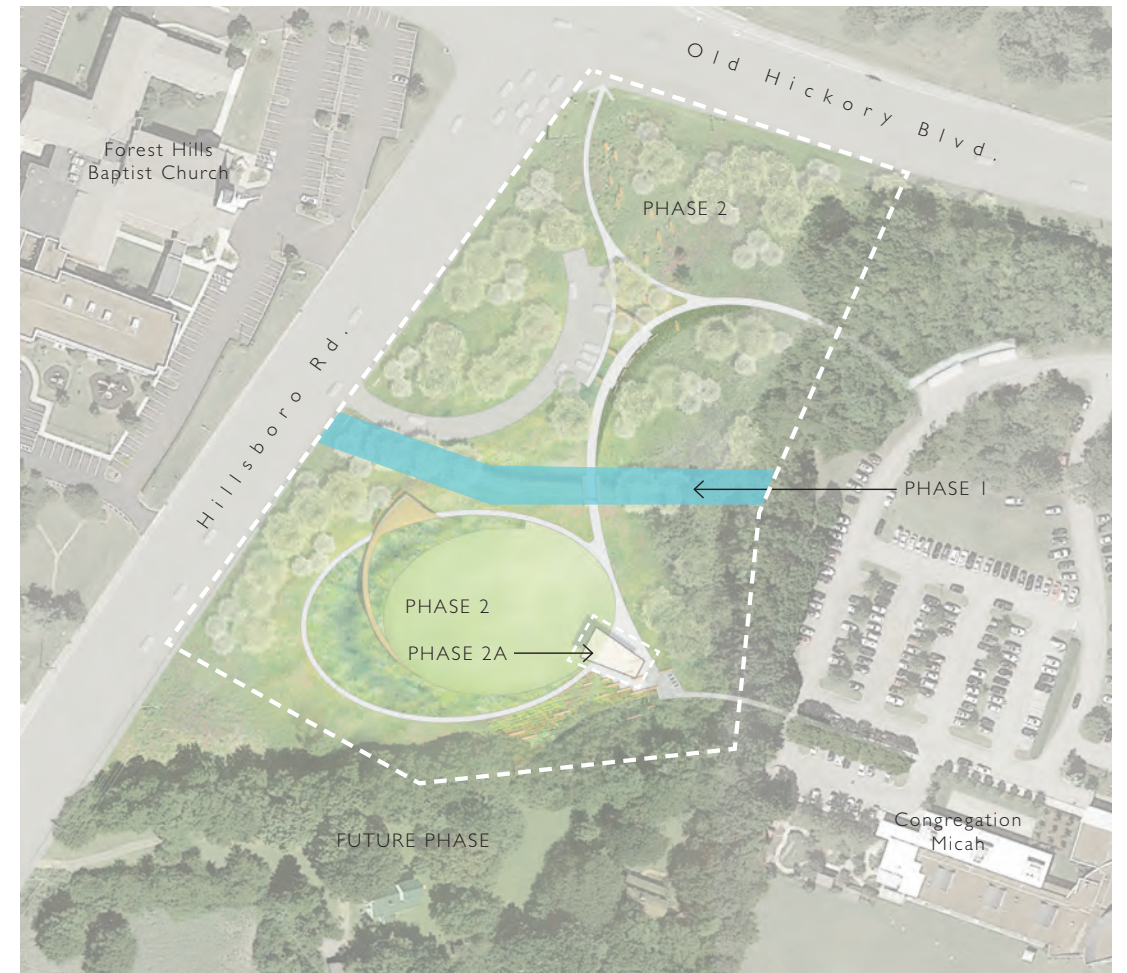
Phase 2:

Vehicular Parking

Rain Garden

Bus Parking

Gateway / Signage

Pedestrian Circulation

Sculpture / Art

Interpretive Elements

Plaza

Landscape

Phase 2A (Architecture Phase):

Structure / Pavilion

Future Phase:

Future Expansion / Greenway
Connection

Old Hickory Blvd.

Forest Hills
Baptist Church

Hillsboro Rd.

PHASE 2

PHASE 2

PHASE 1

PHASE 2A

FUTURE PHASE

Congregation
Micah

Grand Total		
TOTAL	$	1,311,000.00
15% Contingency	$	196,650.00
GRAND TOTAL	**$**	**1,507,650.00**