



FORT SISSETON HISTORIC STATE PARK MASTER PLAN

SEPTEMBER 20, 2023



CONFLUENCE

BANNER
engineering a better community

CO

WIGEN CONSULTING

Arch

OP

SOUTH DAKOTA GAME, FISH AND PARKS

MISSION

We serve and connect people and families to the outdoors through effective management of our state's parks, fisheries and wildlife resources.

VISION

Our vision is to conserve our state's outdoor heritage to enhance the quality of life for current and future generations.

PRIORITIES

HABITAT AND ACCESS

ASSET MANAGEMENT

CUSTOMER SERVICE

OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE





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An aerial photograph of a rural farmstead. In the foreground, a dirt road runs diagonally from the bottom left towards the center. The farm includes several buildings: a large, long barn on the right, a two-story house in the center, and several smaller outbuildings scattered around. A large, leafy tree stands near the house. In the background, a wide river flows through a flat landscape with scattered trees and fields.

FOREWORD & EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



FOREWORD AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FOREWORD

Between dense clusters of trees and shimmering lakes, waves of tall grass cascade across an undulating horizon of hills and prairies surrounding the historic area of Fort Sisseton Historic State Park. This idyllic landscape is punctuated by fifteen buildings and a boardwalk, all rich with history like the land they stand on. The abundance of resources—water, wildlife, trees, and clay—made this hilltop location a natural draw for several peoples throughout time, all of whom have a story to carry forward as part of our heritage. As its caretakers and curators, it is our responsibility to invest our time and resources to start the next chapter of Fort Sisseton Historic State Park: this plan provides a detailed approach to accomplishing that goal.

Today, visitors at Fort Sisseton Historic State Park can explore most of the three major segments of the area. The Fort proper includes eleven buildings from the 1864 military establishment, presently used as a visitor’s center, offices, museum display, classrooms, and artifact rooms. The Fort proper also includes the military parade grounds, a wedding site, and the Andrew Fisk Trail. Outside the Fort proper, the second section encompasses a historical cemetery, a picnic shelter, three buildings from the 1864 military establishment, and multiple foundations of buildings lost over the years. The third and final section is the campground, offering ten electrical sites, four non-electric sites, two full hookups, and four cabins. Thousands of people tour the site for its tangible connection to our past, and more still come for events

like weddings, the Boy Scout Jamboree, the Haunted Halloween Tour, and the annual Fort Sisseton Historical Festival. Attendance continues to grow each year, as do the needs for maintenance and upkeep.

Updating these sections offers the chance to preserve Fort Sisseton Historic State Park as the vital lens into our shared history it has become. From a holistic perspective, this Master Plan employs a pragmatic approach to preserving the area’s history with targeted reinforcement of structures and upgrades to infrastructure, vastly improving the Park experience for staff and visitors alike. Section 1 provides the background of the Park and other efforts leading to this Master Plan. Next, Section 2 discusses the need for change with a thorough investigation of the limitations preventing the Park from reaching its true potential. Finally, Section 3 lays out a carefully structured plan to preserve and enhance Fort Sisseton Historic State Park for generations to come, complete with timelines, estimated costs, and potential avenues for fundraising. The Appendices offer detailed reports on the Park’s structures and visitor feedback.

With its picturesque landscape views, cozy camping accommodations, entertaining events, and historic significance, it is no surprise that Fort Sisseton Historic State Park continues to draw tens of thousands of visitors every year. Dozens of caretakers throughout the Park’s storied history worked to preserve the site for future generations, and now it is our turn to do the same. Previous efforts have focused primarily on piece-meal changes and additions rather than a holistic approach. This Master Plan seeks to do otherwise.



WEDDING EVENT LAWN



FESTIVAL SET UP



HISTORY + INTERPRETATION



HISTORIC FESTIVAL

SECTION ONE

FROM PLAINS TO PARK: A BRIEF SITE HISTORY AND PROJECT BACKGROUND



SITE HISTORY

A BRIEF HISTORY OF FORT SISSETON STATE PARK

Visiting Fort Sisseton Historic State Park in 2023 provides a momentary glimpse into the past. Humble structures of stone, brick, and wood stand against sprawling pastures that undulate into lakes and hills before hitting the tree lines that obscure the rest of the world just beyond the horizon. Like the surrounding area, Native Americans settled the land of Fort Sisseton Historic State Park long before the first European colonists set foot into the area. Given the ample trees for timber and fuel, lakes for fresh water, and wildlife to fish and hunt for food, the land served as a resource for the Mdewakanton, Wahpekute, Wahpeton, and the eponymous Sisseton tribes, among others in the area. After tensions between colonists and Native Americans escalated to violence and war, the US Government responded by establishing a series of military camps and outposts. Established in 1864, Fort Wadsworth was renamed to Fort Sisseton in 1876, and later was officially decommissioned in 1889. Ownership of the land changed hands between government agencies and private citizens who used the land and buildings as hunting lodges, campgrounds, and host for social events like dances and weddings. Building restoration efforts began in the 1930s through the second World War; shortly after, ownership transferred to the

South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks to become an official state park. Since 1978, Fort Sisseton Historic State Park has hosted the annual Fort Sisseton Historical Festival, drawing tens of thousands of attendees every year. These traditions have carried into today, and the Park is now host to dozens of public and private events throughout the year.

One of the primary voices in the Park's ongoing preservation and enhancement efforts is the Fort Sisseton Commission. This volunteer-based group comprises no more than 15 members, each appointed by the Governor for a four-year term. Commission members are area locals, and they specialize in marketing, historical preservation, architectural restoration, interpretive projects, regional concerns, management, and more. The Commission's continued advice and recommendations will be paramount to the Park's continued success throughout the execution of the Master Plan.



FORT SISSETON AERIAL VIEW



INTERPRETIVE EXHIBIT AT THE FORT



SOUTH BARRACKS



FORT SISSETON FLAG

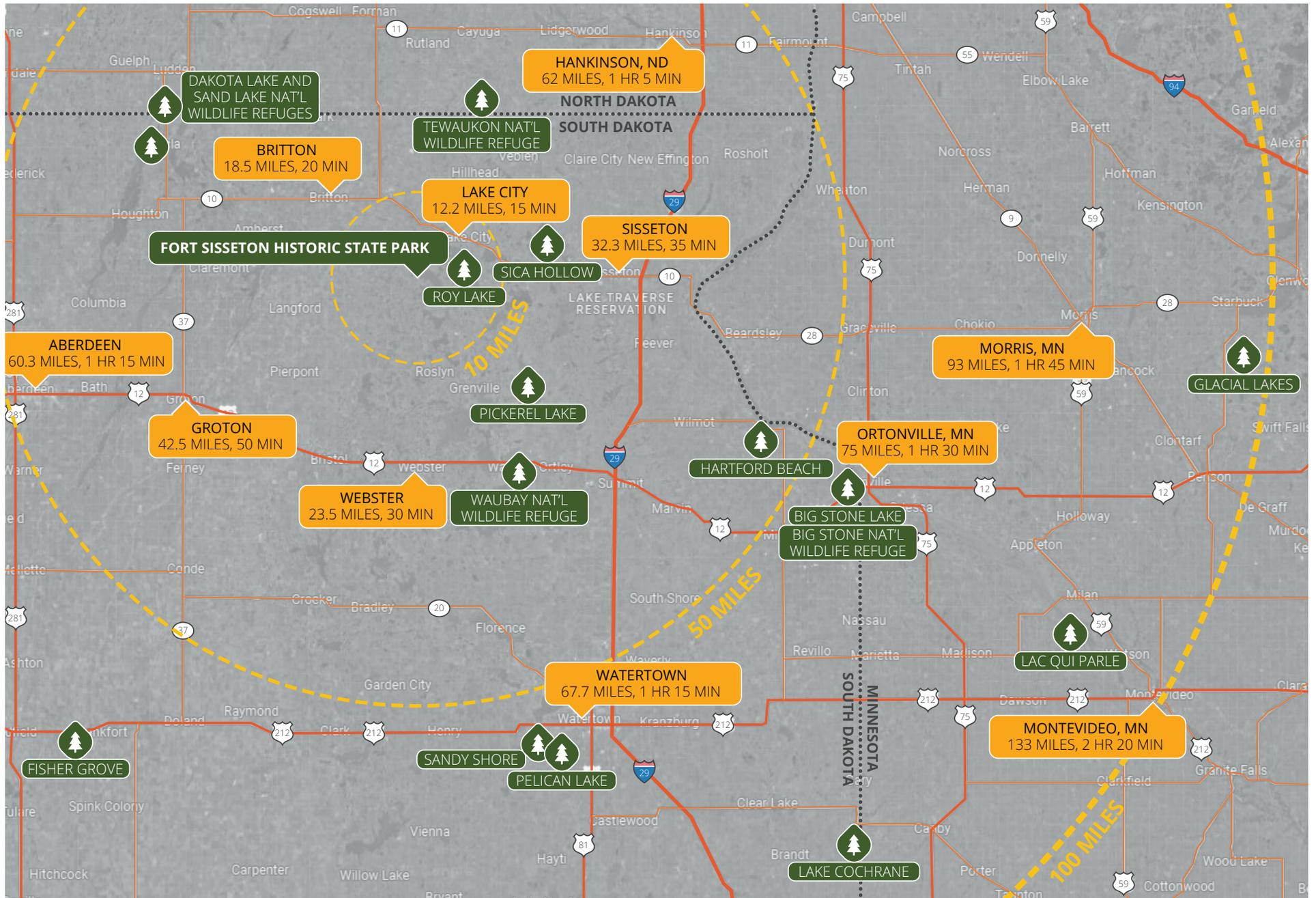
PROJECT BACKGROUND

PROJECT BACKGROUND

As the number of events and visitors has risen over the years, so too did the impact on the resources in Fort Sisseton Historic State Park. Park staff have worked tirelessly to perform repairs and a series of successful restoration projects. Unfortunately, the issues created by the Park's aging structures and infrastructure are accumulating faster than they can be addressed. Recognizing the Park's strong historic significance and massive potential as a recreational destination for visitors near and far, Park staff and owners began discussing a more holistic approach to improvement projects. After exploring a variety of options, they elected to create and formalize a strategic plan for the Park's improvements. This Master Plan is the result of those efforts, and the first step toward this historic Park's future.



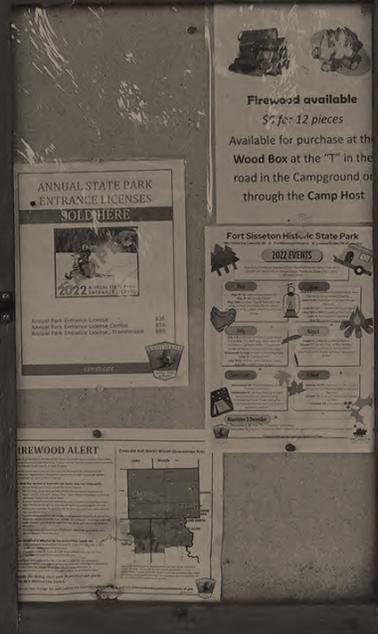
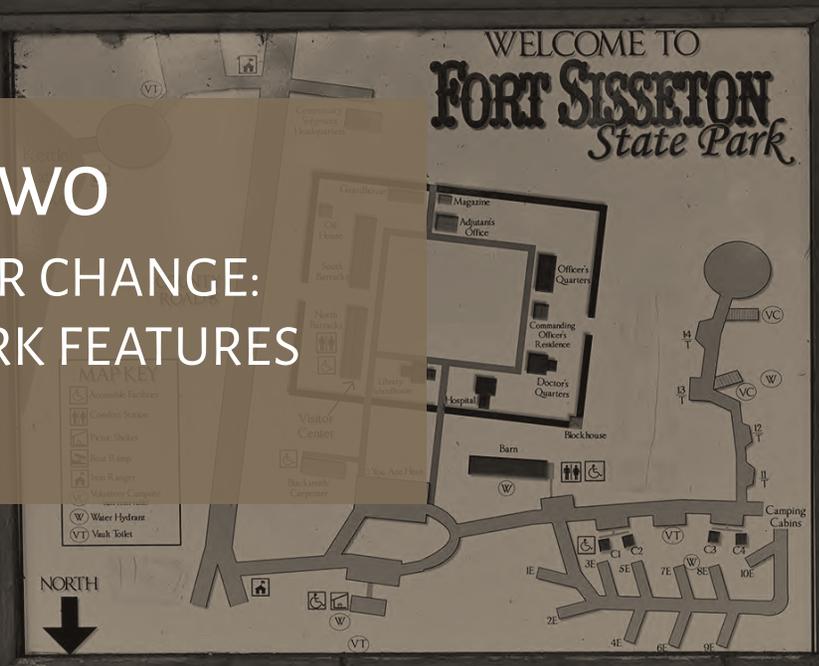
CONTEXT MAP: STATEWIDE



CONTEXT MAP: LOCAL

SECTION TWO

THE NEED FOR CHANGE: CURRENT PARK FEATURES AND ISSUES



VISITOR EXPERIENCE & EXPECTATIONS

VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Whether they come to see the historic structures in person, attend the festival, or simply enjoy a weekend camping getaway, visitors travel far and wide to experience Fort Sisseton Historic State Park's many attractions. More importantly, they come with varying interests, expectations, and knowledge of the Park itself. While this speaks to the Park's mass appeal to various interests, it presents several challenges for creating a consistent and coherent visitor experience.

Today, visitors park their vehicles and enter the Park from the north. The Park proper has some wayfinding and interpretive signs, though they are disparate and prone to being overlooked. Without a clear starting point and circulation route, the Park experience varies greatly from visitor to visitor: they may enter the current Visitor's Center and receive direction from the Park's staff, or they may start anywhere else and explore independently. The Park's interpretive content—most of which resides in the current Visitor's Center—focuses predominantly on the military era of the Park. Visitors interested in a self-guided tour of the Park's military era will undoubtedly find their visit enjoyable, but this represents only a fraction of Park visitors. Building from the already superlative customer service and the details in this Master Plan, the Park can offer a variety of carefully curated interpretive experiences, deepening the connections for regular visitors and attracting new audiences through a variety of interpretive experiences: site history, military history, Park history, and more.

Special events at the Park generate a wholly different visitor experience. At large special events like the annual Fort Sisseton Historic Festival, guests are directed to park and enter the site from the south, accessing the restrooms and visitor's center through different points of entry. Pop-up signage, tents, and other event infrastructure are required to help visitors experience the Park and locate programming.

Visitor experience is also impacted by the digital platforms that service the Park. Guests can find visitor information on the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish & Park official website, the Park's social media accounts, a dedicated Fort Sisseton mobile app, and a self-guided tour program. Some guests use these platforms, but not all. There are also inconsistencies between digital content. Some platforms only relay information about State-sponsored programs, whereas others promote events and fundraising efforts hosted by the Fort Sisseton Commission. Payments for park entry fees, rentals, events, and donations are processed on multiple point-of-sale platforms, each with its own interface and customer experience.



VIEW FROM FORT LOOKING SOUTH



NORTH SITE BOUNDARY LOOKING SOUTH



EXISTING CABINS & VAULT TOILETS



WETLANDS WEST OF FORT SITE

VISITOR EXPERIENCE & EXPECTATIONS

VISITOR EXPECTATIONS

Public engagement and the collection of stakeholder input was a key element in the development of this Plan; the project's future success and development of the site depend upon the public's wants and needs as it pertains to Park improvements.

Public engagement efforts consisted of a social pinpoint online website with a mapping exercise and survey questions, in-person outreach at the 2022 historic festival, and links to local newspapers and social media sites to encourage public and stakeholder engagement. For a full review of the results of these exercises, refer to Appendix B.

A majority of the respondents have visited Fort Sisseton before, with many visiting the Park a couple times each year. About half of the respondents have spent an overnight at the Park. The age range from 35-55 submitted a majority of the feedback, but the responses came from across South Dakota, Minnesota, and North Dakota as well as further locales in Florida, Utah and Wisconsin.

The key takeaways from the public engagement identified a need for a new Visitor's Center with added restrooms, classrooms, meeting room, and exhibit and storage spaces. The south berm entrance is the preferred entrance and should be the location of the new Visitor's Center and main entrance to the Park. Improve staff housing and park storage areas, in locations hidden from public viewing.

Feedback identified a need for more campsites, cabins, and improved camping amenities. Existing amenities need to be modernized and upgrade when possible. Improve signage throughout the park to mark trails, provide interpretation, and directional signage to improve access and circulation on the site. Add parking, especially for events, and connect to circulation pathways. Upgrade sidewalks and boardwalks to improve building access for ADA accessibility.

Improve water access, including the swim area and boat parking, and add a playground and additional hiking trails for additional recreational opportunities.

Public engagement for the Fort Sisseton Historic State Park Master Plan was gathered using a survey and mapping site designed for the project. In addition to attending the 2022 Historic Festival, the Confluence team reached out to many communities and their newspapers or social media contacts to ask if they would post the link to the survey website to boost engagement in surrounding communities.



Favorite Place



Redevelop This Area



Idea



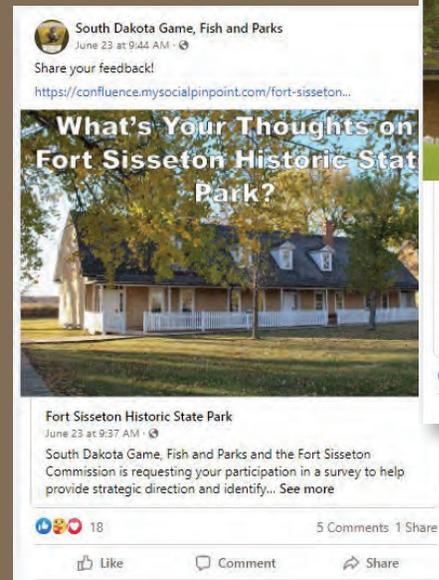
Trail Idea



More of This



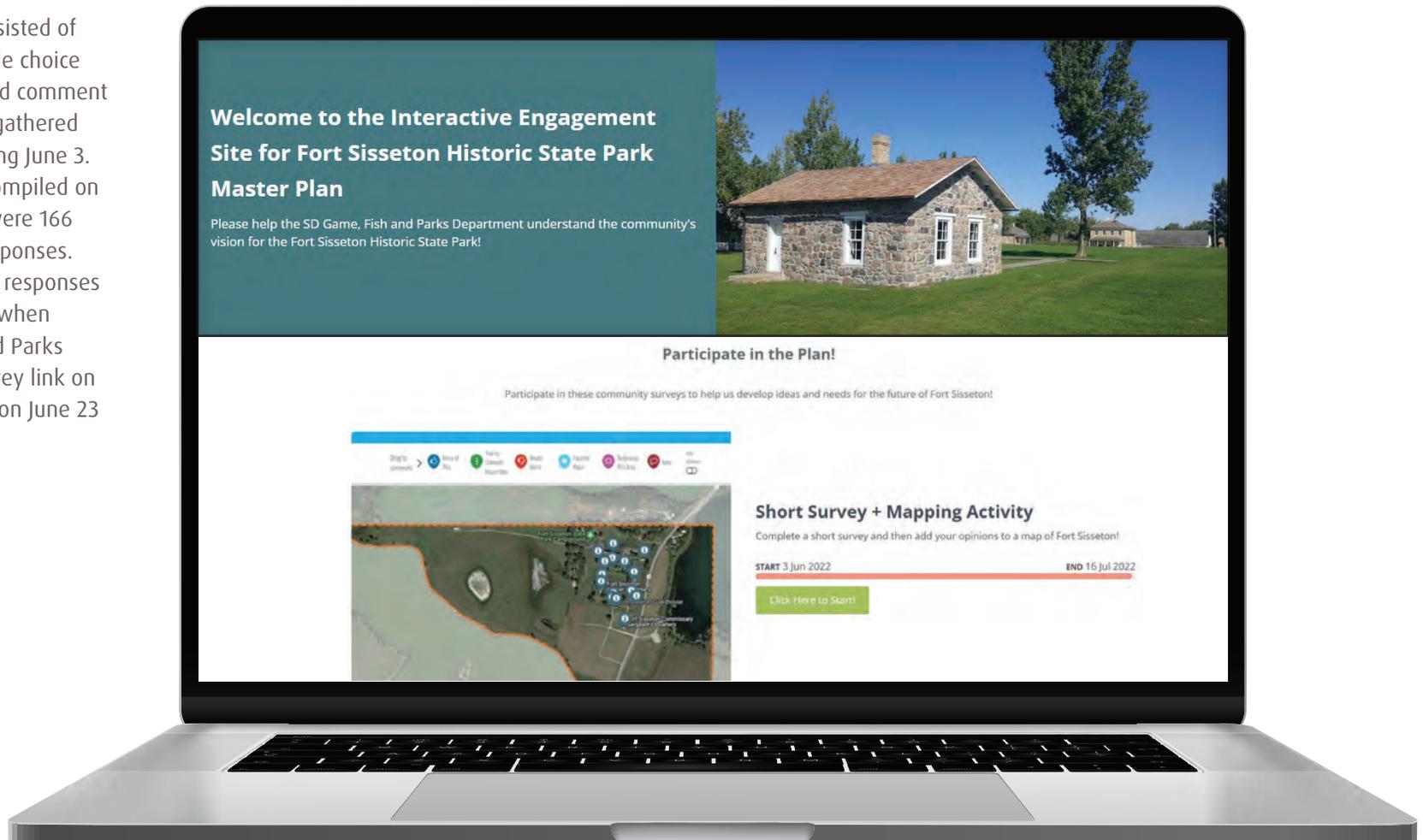
Needs Work



VISITOR EXPERIENCE & EXPECTATIONS

SURVEY WEBSITE

The survey consisted of up to 18 multiple choice and open-ended comment questions and gathered feedback starting June 3. Results were compiled on July 16. There were 166 total survey responses. The majority of responses were recorded when Game, Fish, and Parks posted the survey link on their Facebook on June 23 and July 13.



OVERVIEW OF SITE INVENTORY & ANALYSIS

SITE STRUCTURES OVERVIEW

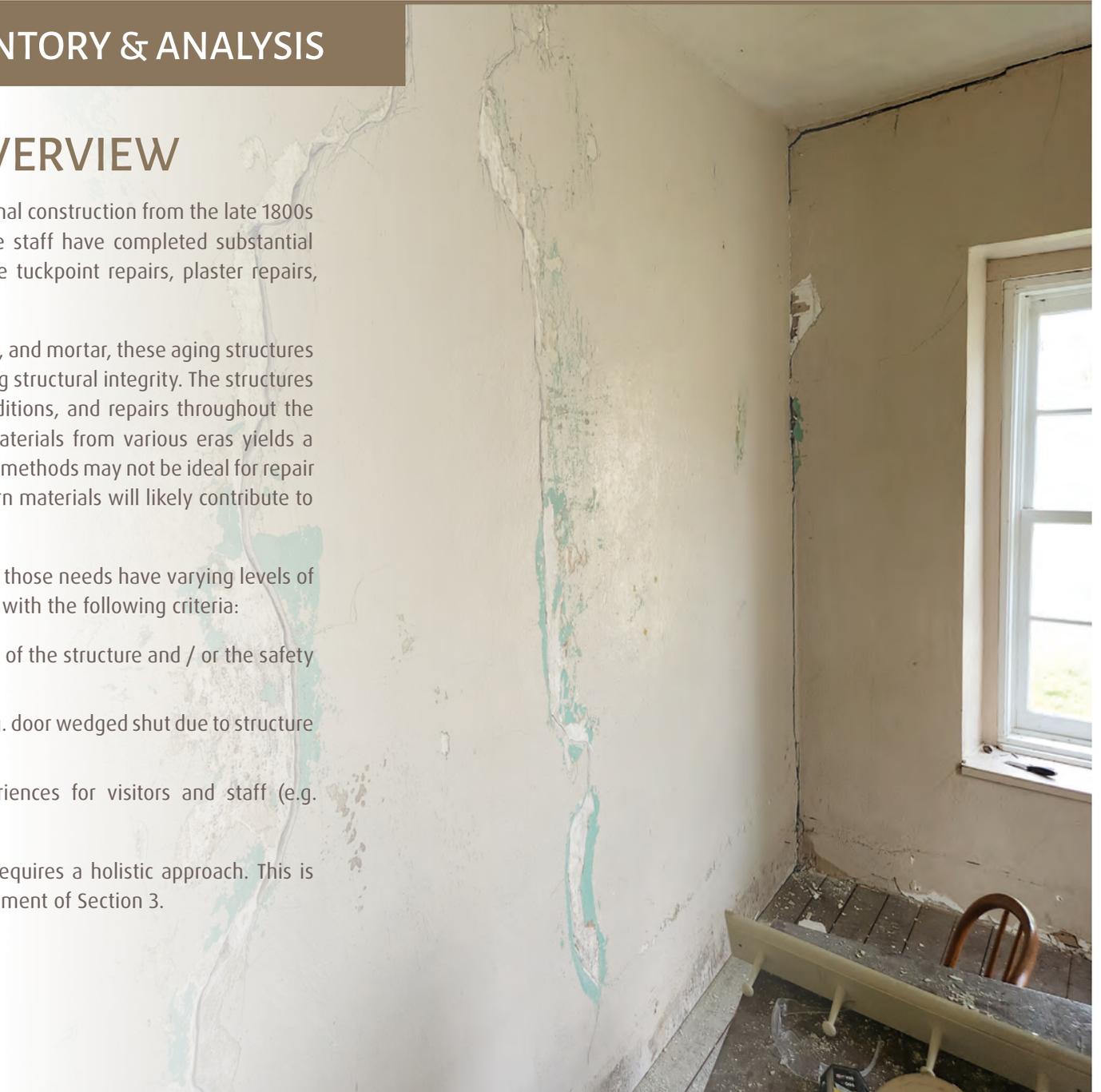
Of the fifteen on-site structures, twelve are original construction from the late 1800s during the military era of the Park. The on-site staff have completed substantial work in many of the structures, including some tuckpoint repairs, plaster repairs, and aesthetic restorations.

Primarily composed of hand-made bricks, stones, and mortar, these aging structures present myriad variables that affect their ongoing structural integrity. The structures each have a storied history of construction, additions, and repairs throughout the history of the Park. This mix of construction materials from various eras yields a unique issue: modern construction materials and methods may not be ideal for repair and restoration. The more dense, heavier modern materials will likely contribute to further complications with the structures.

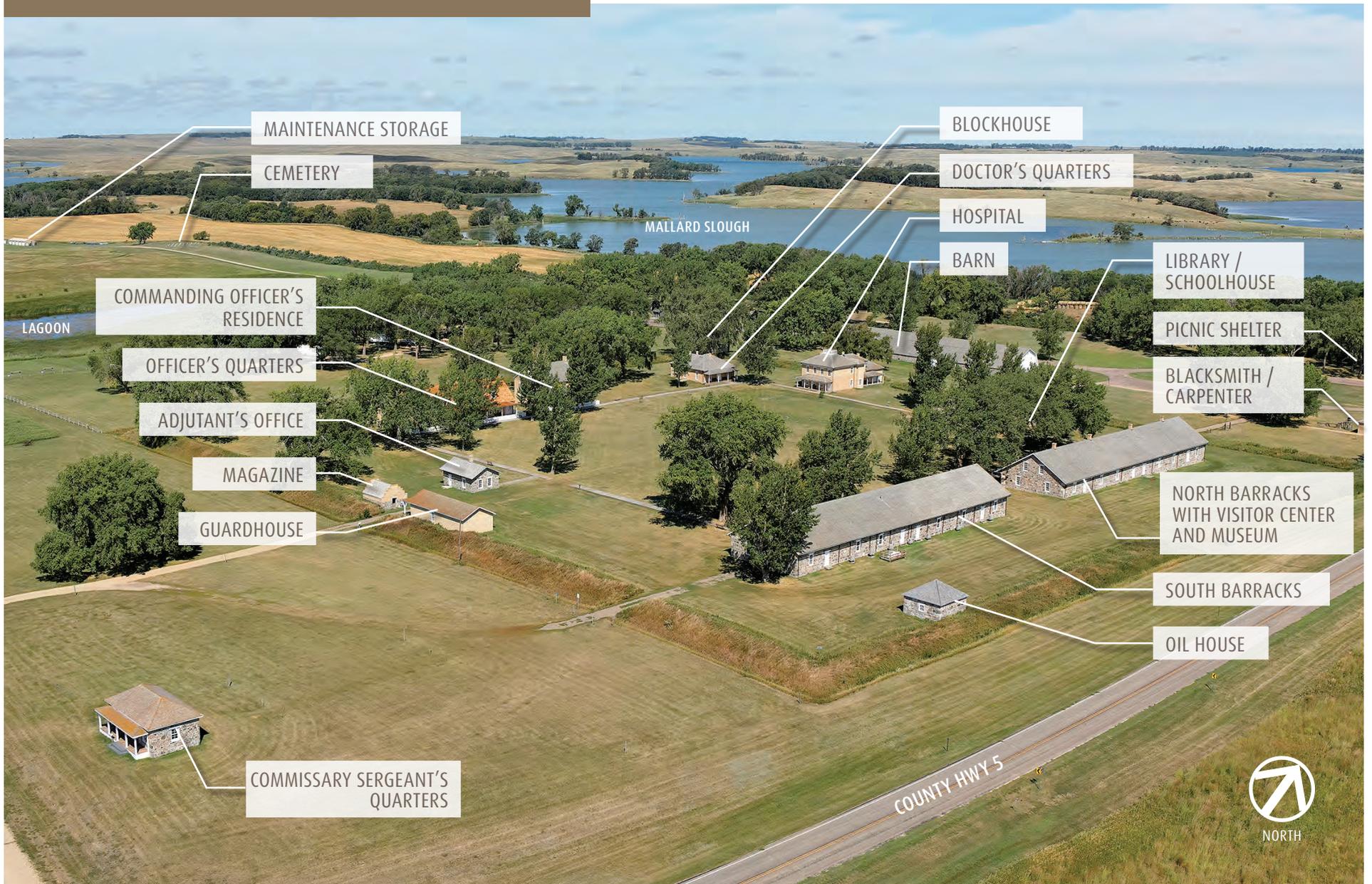
Each of the buildings has a variety of needs, and those needs have varying levels of urgency. These needs are prioritized in this Plan with the following criteria:

1. Conditions that pose direct risk to the integrity of the structure and / or the safety of people in the area (e.g. collapsing wall).
2. Conditions that reduce facility functionality (e.g. door wedged shut due to structure settling).
3. Conditions that disrupts positive Park experiences for visitors and staff (e.g. aesthetic updates).

The specialized nature and scope of the work requires a holistic approach. This is discussed further in the Preserve and Repair segment of Section 3.



OVERVIEW OF SITE INVENTORY & ANALYSIS



DRONE IMAGE OF SITE (2022)

OVERVIEW OF SITE INVENTORY & ANALYSIS



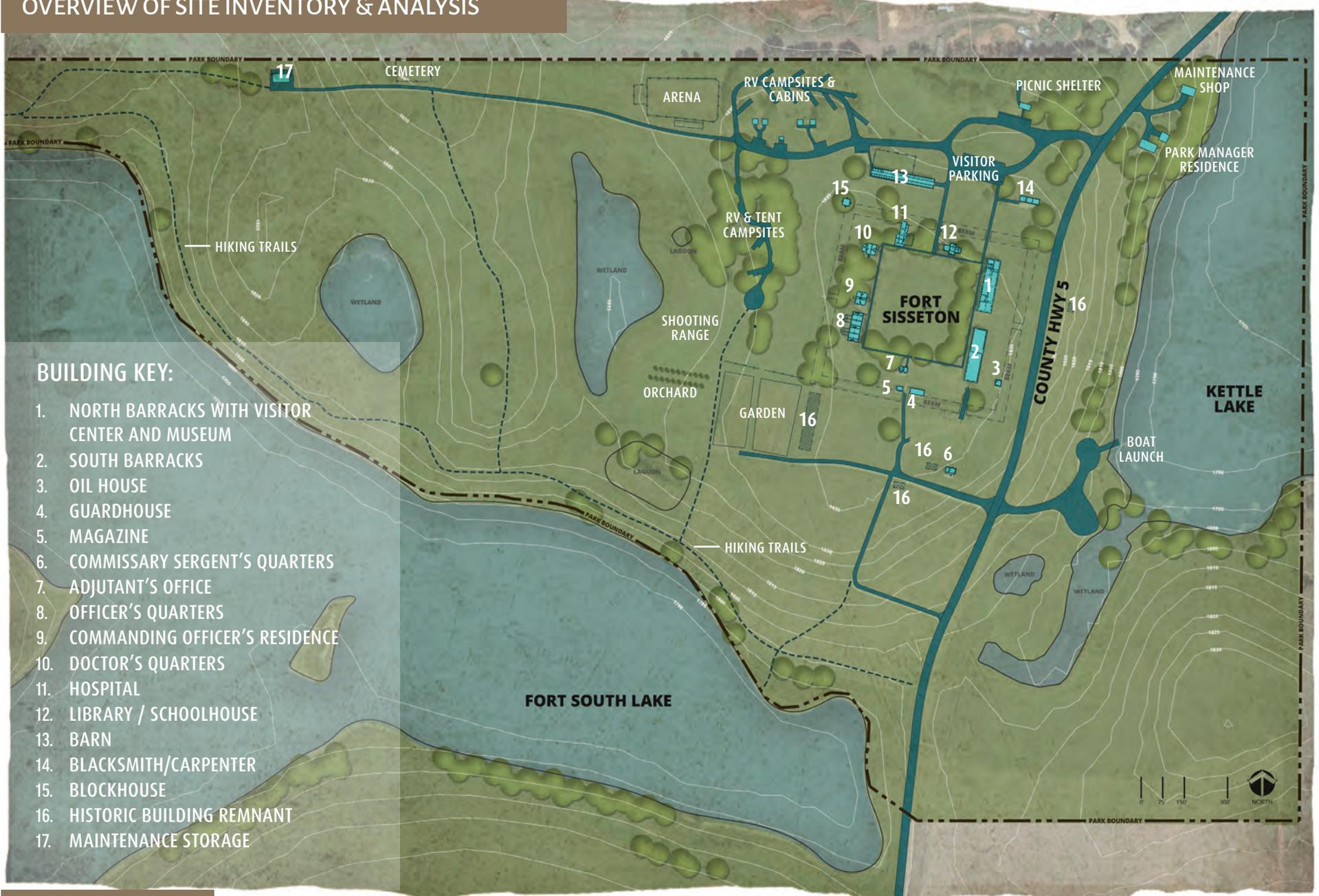
SITE PROPERTY MAP

OVERVIEW OF SITE INVENTORY & ANALYSIS



PROPERTY OWNERSHIP MAP

OVERVIEW OF SITE INVENTORY & ANALYSIS



EXISTING SITE PLAN

PROGRAMMING & RECREATION

SUMMARY PROGRAMMING & RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

Fort Sisseton Historic State Park offers a myriad of programs and recreational opportunities for visitors. Some, like site tours and the annual Fort Sisseton Historical Festival, are free to participate. Others, including campsite and canoe rentals, are provided to guests at a nominal rate. These programs strengthen the educational and recreational experience at the park and make Fort Sisseton a destination for local and regional visitors alike.

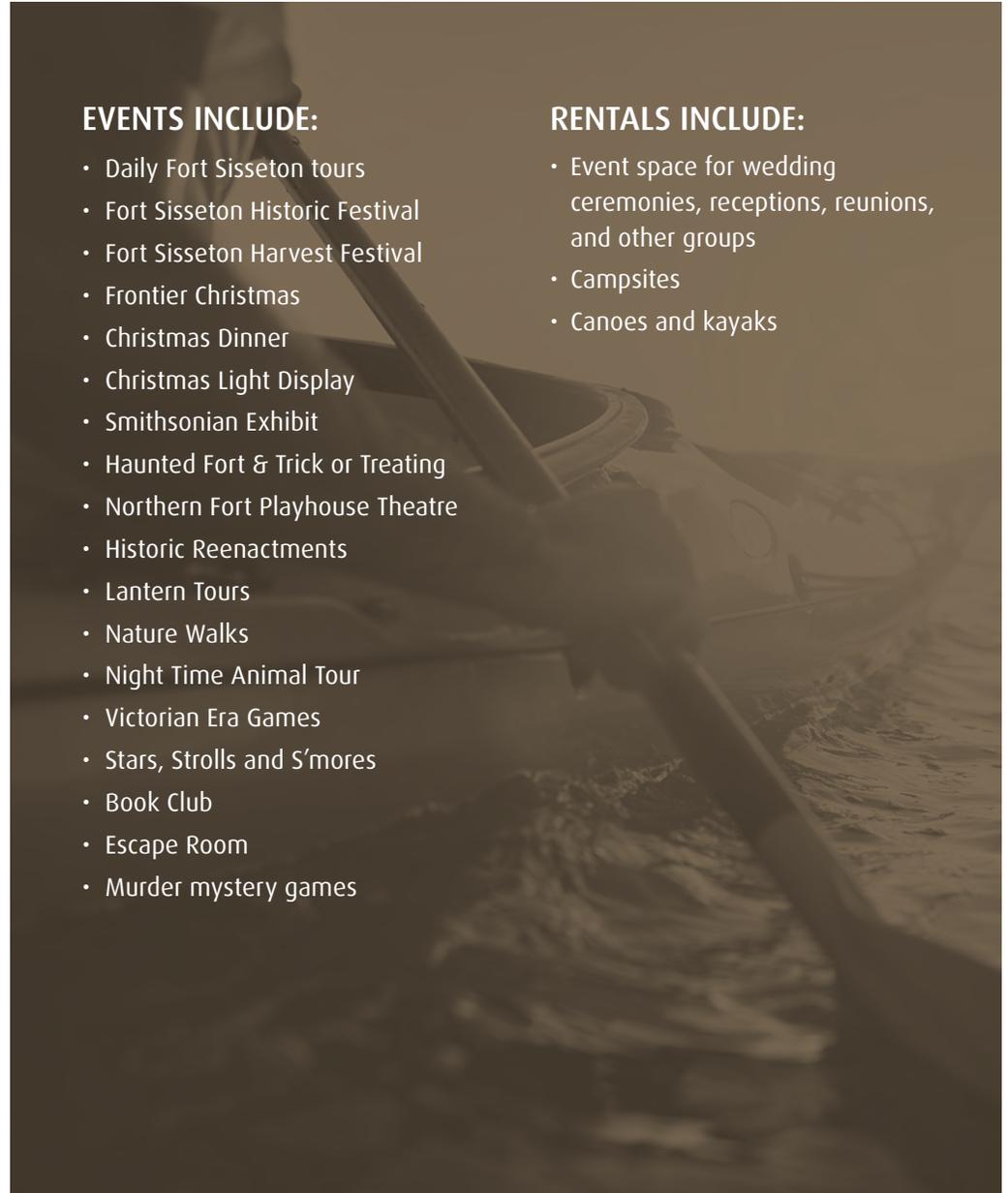
The Fort Sisseton Commission also hosts events on site, which typically require a reservation and fee to participate. Revenue from these activities is donated to the South Dakota Parks & Wildlife Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit that supports the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks. Programs typically generate enough revenue to offset their costs, though they seldom produce surplus sufficient to support day-to-day operations of the Park or capital projects.

EVENTS INCLUDE:

- Daily Fort Sisseton tours
- Fort Sisseton Historic Festival
- Fort Sisseton Harvest Festival
- Frontier Christmas
- Christmas Dinner
- Christmas Light Display
- Smithsonian Exhibit
- Haunted Fort & Trick or Treating
- Northern Fort Playhouse Theatre
- Historic Reenactments
- Lantern Tours
- Nature Walks
- Night Time Animal Tour
- Victorian Era Games
- Stars, Strolls and S'mores
- Book Club
- Escape Room
- Murder mystery games

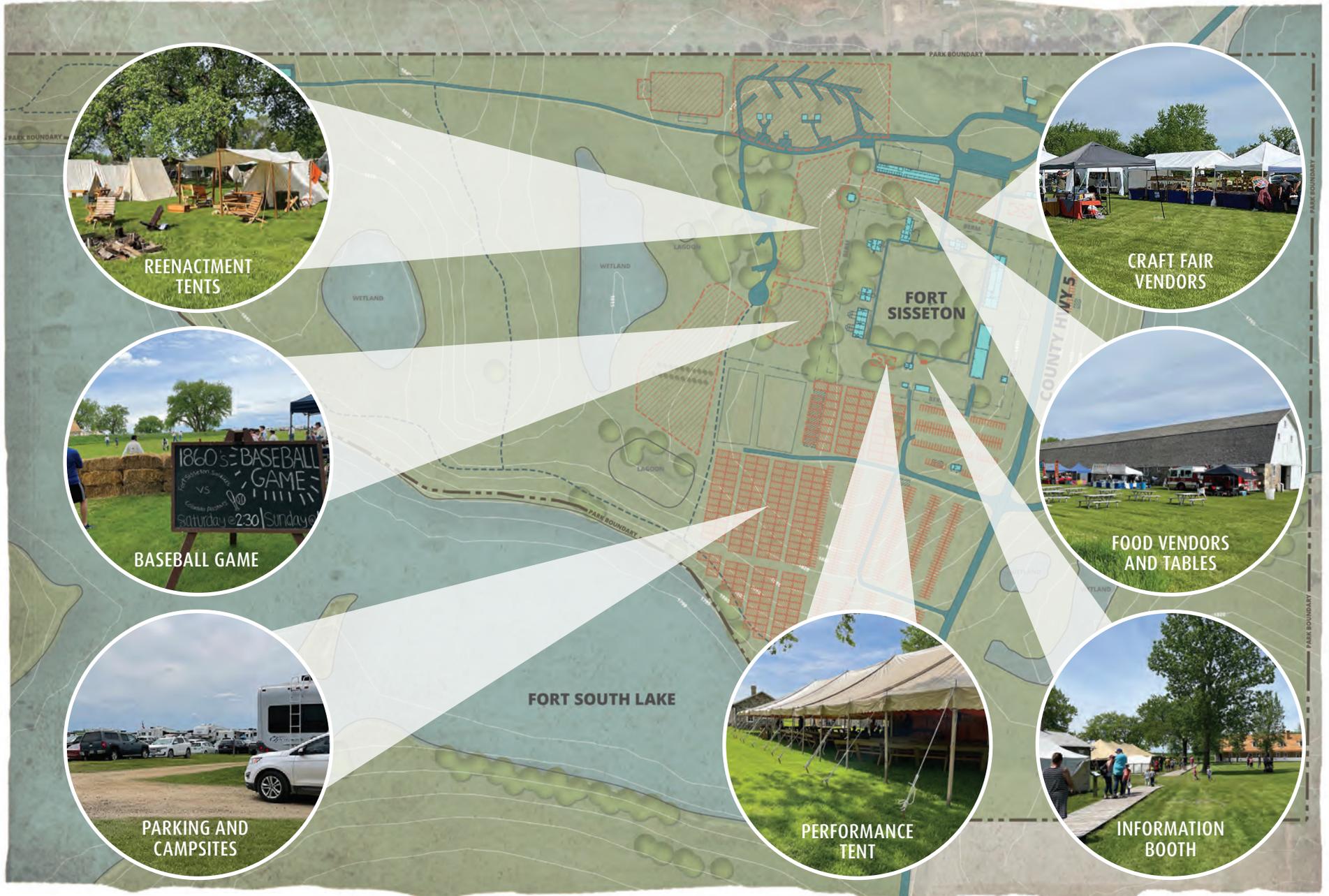
RENTALS INCLUDE:

- Event space for wedding ceremonies, receptions, reunions, and other groups
- Campsites
- Canoes and kayaks





EXISTING SITE PLAN - FESTIVAL USE



EXISTING SITE PLAN - FESTIVAL USE

FORT SISSETON HISTORIC FESTIVAL:

The Fort Sisseton Historic Festival is a 3-day event attracting over 15,000 visitors. The beloved annual event features historical reenactments, music, arts and crafts, and other period-inspired events. The success of the Festival each year is weather-dependent, yet the event continues to grow and demand will soon surpass the current capacity for parking, campsites, and activities over the 3-day timeframe. Many visitors attend year after year, camping on-site and meeting large groups of friends and family.

The annual Fort Sisseton Historical Festival regularly draws massive crowds.

Some items for consideration:

1. Horse Camp And Trails
2. Alternative Camping Cabins or Glamping
 - a. Replica "Old House" Structures
 - b. Tent Platforms
 - c. Yurts
 - d. Tepees
 - e. Hospital
3. Communal Camping Kitchen
4. Hammocking
5. Yoga / Group Fitness
6. Hiking Trail Expansion
7. Mountain Biking
8. Nature Play Or Playground
9. Festivals / Cook-Offs / Car Shows
10. Mud Run
11. Art Incorporation
12. Labyrinth
13. Beekeeping
14. Edible Landscapes (Maple Syrup, Jam Making, Wine / Beer Making)
15. Outdoor Movies
16. Disc Golf
17. Bocce Ball
18. Outlooks



ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

The existing environment contains both natural and historic environmental resources. For the projects outlined in this Master Plan, an Environmental Review would be completed to identify resources present within the project area and the potential impacts to these resources. Some natural resources include lakes, wetlands, upland habitat, and threatened/endangered wildlife species. Historic resources include features originating from the US military occupation era, with 14 buildings included on the National Register. The environmental review would also include modern facilities already in the Park (e.g. utilities, sewage lagoons, a campground, park maintenance shop, and park residence) and other historical features (e.g. remnants of an old trail to Fort Rice, a cemetery, and non-existent buildings that were removed). The Environmental Review would identify other resources that may be present including floodplains, air quality, hazardous materials, and groundwater resources. With multiple projects across the Park under consideration, we recommend treating the entirety of Fort Sisseton Historic State Park—including State Park boundaries and part of an adjacent Game Production Area—as one project area.

Impacts due to alternatives and mitigation measures for the resources in the Project Area would be assessed and create a list of commitments that need to be considered during the final design and construction. Resources not present or not requiring further consideration are also noted.

There are 14 National Register Listed Structures that now make up a historic district for consideration under Section 106. Section 106 requires federal agencies to consider the effect to historic structures or buildings if federal funding is used for preservation or improvements. Environmental reviews require coordination with state, federal, and tribal governments. This coordination is typically documented with letters to request comments and concerns regarding the project.



NATIONAL REGISTER BUILDING



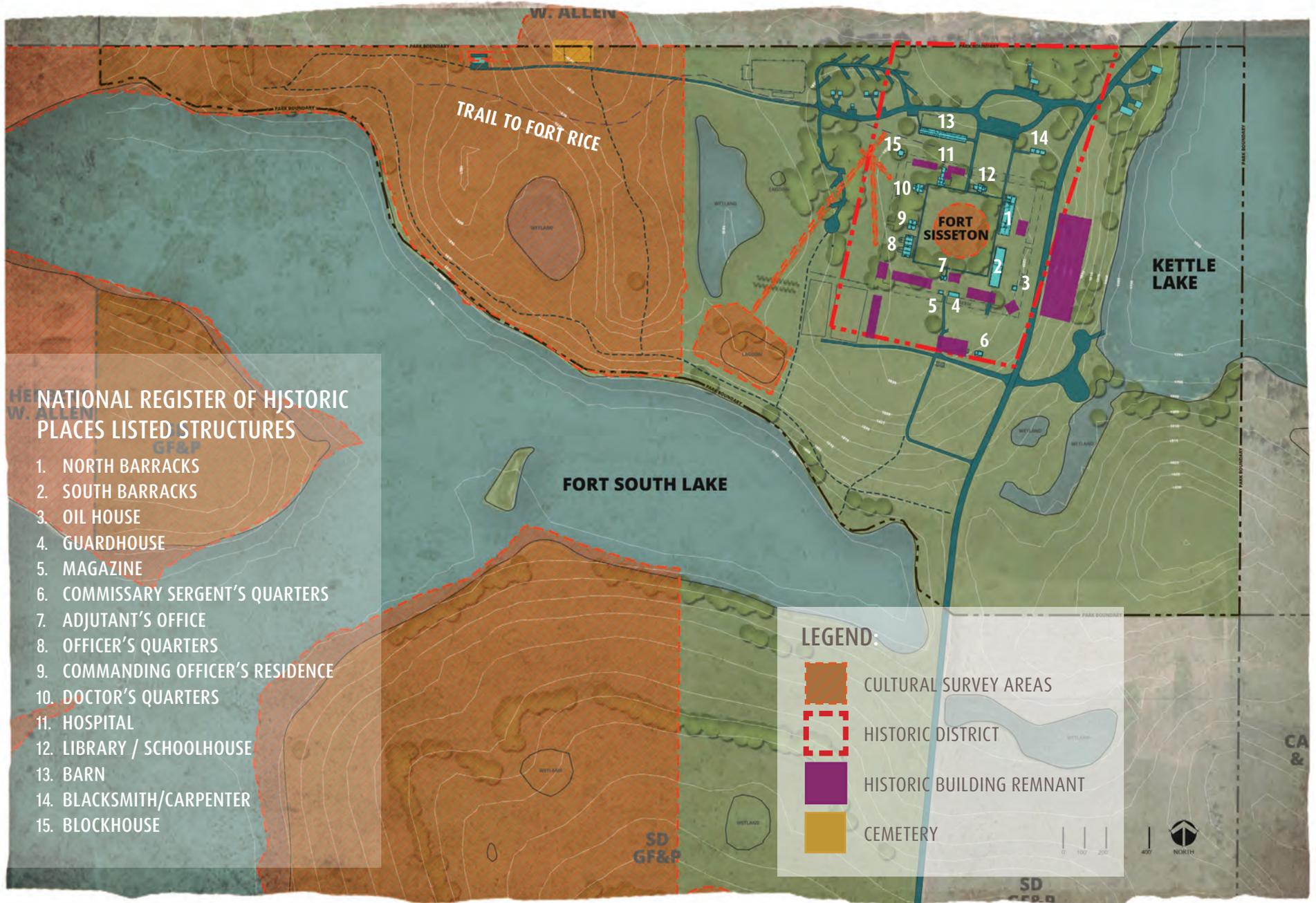
CEMETERY



NATIONAL REGISTER BUILDING



NATURAL RESOURCES





SECTION THREE
THE PLAN: REALIZING OUR
FUTURE BY PRESERVING
OUR PAST



MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

MASTER PLAN
RECOMMENDATIONS

Fort Sisseton Historic State Park has several great attractions and amenities today, rivaled in scale perhaps only by the Park's overall potential. This Master Plan provides multiple options and recommendations to preserve site history, enhance visitor experience, and bolster operations. These recommendations are outlined in detail in the following pages.

MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

MASTER PLAN OVERVIEW

The Master Plan identifies preservation projects and site improvements that will protect and enhance Fort Sisseton Historic State Park. The Plan details strategies for implementing these projects and securing additional revenue in Short Term (0-5 years), Intermediate (5-10 years), and Long Term (10-20+ years) stages. These time frames are merely guidelines; projects should be pursued as funding allows. The Plan also specifies if additional planning, staffing, maintenance, or programming are required to implement each project, uphold a positive visitor experience, and achieve a high standard of care.

Members of SDGFP and the Fort Sisseton Commission participated in developing the Master Plan. In the process, the stakeholders took time to align priorities and understand the financial commitments required to implement each preservation project and site improvement. Philanthropic gifts and earned revenue, in addition to the budget allocated by GFP, will be required to accommodate large scale changes to the Park.

The partnership between SDGFP and the Fort Sisseton Commission provides a strong foundation to successfully implement the Master Plan; securing adequate funding and developing a sustainable operating model for the Park is a critical first step.



The Master Plan details strategies for implementing these projects and securing additional revenue in stages.

- Short Term (0-5 years)
- Intermediate (5-10 years)
- Long Term (10-20+ years)

MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

STRUCTURE STATUS OVERVIEW

This section provides a brief, holistic overview of the structures as a segment part of the Park: refer to Appendix A for detailed, individual reports of each structure.

Masonry and stonework make up the majority of the fifteen on-site structures. Some structures, such as both the Barracks and the Hospital, are walk-through exhibits for Park visitors, faithfully restored with contemporary artifacts of the military occupation. Visitors are not allowed in certain areas of the structures (often storage/staging areas), nor can they enter structures undergoing repairs.

Overall, the structures have been maintained to the best of the capabilities of the caretakers, with a recent uptick in repairs and restorations over the last few years. In structures like the Officer's Quarters, the Doctor's Quarters, and the Library, the masonry shows substantial signs of wear and age that will likely lead to structural failure if not addressed. Other structures like the Magazine and Blacksmith / Carpenter shop have bricks that are broken due to water intrusion that later expands when frozen (spalled brick faces): severe breaks can affect neighboring masonry and spread the issue. The Hospital roof needs to be replaced, and the Barn will likely need roof repairs soon to address woodpecker holes. Both the North and South Barracks had no observed structural issues, though other aspects of this Master Plan (e.g. interpretive and recreational opportunities) may influence the needs of these structures.



STRUCTURAL EVALUATION



STRUCTURAL EVALUATION



STRUCTURAL EVALUATION



STRUCTURAL EVALUATION

The approach for the Structure Repair and Restore project could be as follows:

1. Source one or more specialists in historical masonry to perform an in-depth evaluation for the repair/restoration services. This Master Plan provides cost estimates based on other projects of similar nature: specialist costs may vary.
2. With total estimated costs in hand, secure funding in the SDGFP budget or through private donations.
3. Begin repair and restoration for all structures, starting with the most severe structural issues.

STRUCTURE REPAIR PRIORITIES:

Based on findings in the October 2022 inspection, the following is a prioritized list of structures with the most urgent repair and restore needs. The structures are prioritized by the severity of degradation and its impact on structural integrity. Refer to Appendix A for more details on the conditions of all structures.

1. Officer's Quarters
2. Doctor's Quarters
3. Commanding Officer's Quarters
4. Library / Schoolhouse
5. Hospital
6. Barn
7. Blacksmith and Carpenter Shops

The remaining structures also require repair and restoration, though these needs are less urgent in terms of structural integrity.



MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

SHORT TERM IMPROVEMENTS **0-5 YEARS**

Maintaining realistic expectations for improvement project progress starts with generating attainable goals. The first five years of the Park Improvement Projects establish a crucial foundation for the subsequent projects. These projects include:

- Creation of the new event lawn and stage
- Remove existing storage building
- Modified, expanded parking with drop off at the existing Visitor’s Center
- New parking lot and improved walk/entry to the Park from the south entrance
- New themed playground near camping
- Expanded hiking trails + interpretation
- New maintenance building and yard
- New park manager house and garage
- Renovate existing house for summer staff

ANTICIPATED COSTS



Construction Costs	\$ 4,000,000 - \$ 6,500,000
Increased Annual Revenue	\$ 22,000 - \$ 74,000
Annual Operational Impacts GFP	\$ 46,000 - \$ 242,000

PRECEDENT IMAGES



OUTDOOR EVENT LAWN - MOVIE NIGHT



THEMED PLAYGROUND



INTERPRETIVE TRAILS + SIGNAGE

MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

SHORT TERM IMPROVEMENTS 0-5 YEARS (CONT'D)

IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES:

- 1) Specify roles and responsibilities of SDGFP staff and Commission members implementing the Master Plan.
 - Determine which entity will plan, fund, and implement each Master Plan project.
 - Pursue a memorandum of understanding (MOU) or operating agreement specifying the roles and responsibilities assumed by SDGFP and the Commission related to the Master Plan.
- 2) Strengthen existing small- to medium-sized programs and target new audiences. Examples of small programs: Park tours, nature walks. Examples of medium programs: Theater performances, food and beer festivals, holiday events.
 - Add a dedicated staff member to focus on program development, event management, and interpretation.
 - Prioritize programs for new and untapped audiences (e.g. genealogy, hunting and fishing, naturalists and youth).
 - Market tours and programs to businesses and bus tour groups; offer unique experiences like a Dutch Oven lunch.
 - Develop an interpretive plan and wayfinding applicable to the Short-, Intermediate-, and Long-Term development stages.
 - Develop co-brand guidelines for the Park proper (i.e. all things managed by GFP and the State) and the Commission.
 - Launch a dedicated website promoting the full range of “things to do” (daily programs, events, interpretation, rentals, equipment rentals) and consolidating access to GFP and Commission POS systems.

- Upgrade WiFi service throughout the Park to enhance visitor experience and ensure reliable infrastructure for digital exhibits and future programing.
- 3) Conduct a fundraising feasibility study for Intermediate improvements and build relationships with donors.
 - Purpose: Assess philanthropic interest and identify prospective donors **before** launching a capital fundraising campaign. The study allows us to “right-size” the project and set a budget for Intermediate improvements, rather than designing a project at \$X cost and setting out to raise \$X dollars.
 - Conduct prospective donor research. Identify grant opportunities and individual donors’ capacity to give and propensity to give.
 - Conduct prospective donor interviews. Test messaging and understand what aspects of the improvements resonate most in the local, regional, and national philanthropic community. Understand if there is donor support for an operating reserve or endowment.
 - Develop a “gift pyramid”, identifying how many fundraising asks should be expected and how much money the campaign can reasonably expect to raise.
 - Build strategic relationships with prospective donors. Commissioners can meet with individuals and grant managers one-on-one, invite them to tours of the Park,

Prospects / Number of Asks	Donors	Amount	Total
4	1	\$450,000	\$450,000
12	3	\$50,000	\$150,000
40	10	\$10,000	\$100,000
70	20	\$5,000	\$100,000
150	50	\$2k	\$100,000
300	100	\$1k	\$100,000
576	184		\$1,000,000

EXAMPLE GIFT PYRAMID

and share early announcements of upcoming events. These “friend-raising” tactics allow the organization to build trust and generate interest with donors before requesting a gift.

- Identify potential lead donors to contact when launching the capital campaign.

REVENUE & FUNDING STRATEGIES:

- Pursue grant funding to support development of an Interpretive Plan; identify donors with an interest in particular narratives, such as historic Native American communities or natural history
 - Possible funders: Federal and state grants including Preserve America Grants (Advisory Council on Historic Preservation), historic preservation non-profits, historical societies, family foundations, Tribal communities
- Restructure event rental fees and offer event planning services
 - Increase event rental rates annually
 - Charge an additional fee for use of the entire Park property, such as a wedding that uses the South Barracks and all available campsites
 - Offer event planning services, including coordination with caterers, rental companies, musicians, lodging, and shuttle services
- Request sponsorships and in-kind donations from playground manufacturers, insurance foundations, and construction companies
 - Possible funders: KaBOOM!, Landscape Structures, Midwest Playscapes, The Home Depot Foundation, CNA Foundation, Allstate Foundation, Safeco Foundation
- Present visitors with more frequent opportunities to make small-scale donations
 - Verbally request donations at end of every tour
 - Add turnkey donation stations in the visitor center and at event information tables using DipJar, Venmo or other platforms
- Seek partnerships that generate interest in private events and community events
 - Partner with business associations to promote programs as corporate outings
 - Charge nominal fees for field trips and private tours
 - Advertise birthday parties with childcare institutions
 - Approach breweries, food truck associations and art associations to co-host food, beer, or craft festivals; waive venue fees in favor of a per person fee
- Commission secures liquor licenses to distribute alcohol at additional events, with requested donations

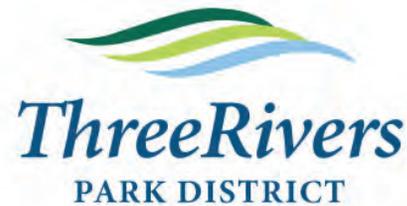
MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS



CASE STUDY 1: Three Rivers Park District Public-Private Partnership, Joint Marketing

Three Rivers Park District is a regional park system in Minnesota comprised of over 27,000 acres of parks and trails. The Three Rivers Park District Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that provides financial support for educational programs and initiatives offered by Three Rivers Park District, above and beyond what existing park district funding can provide.

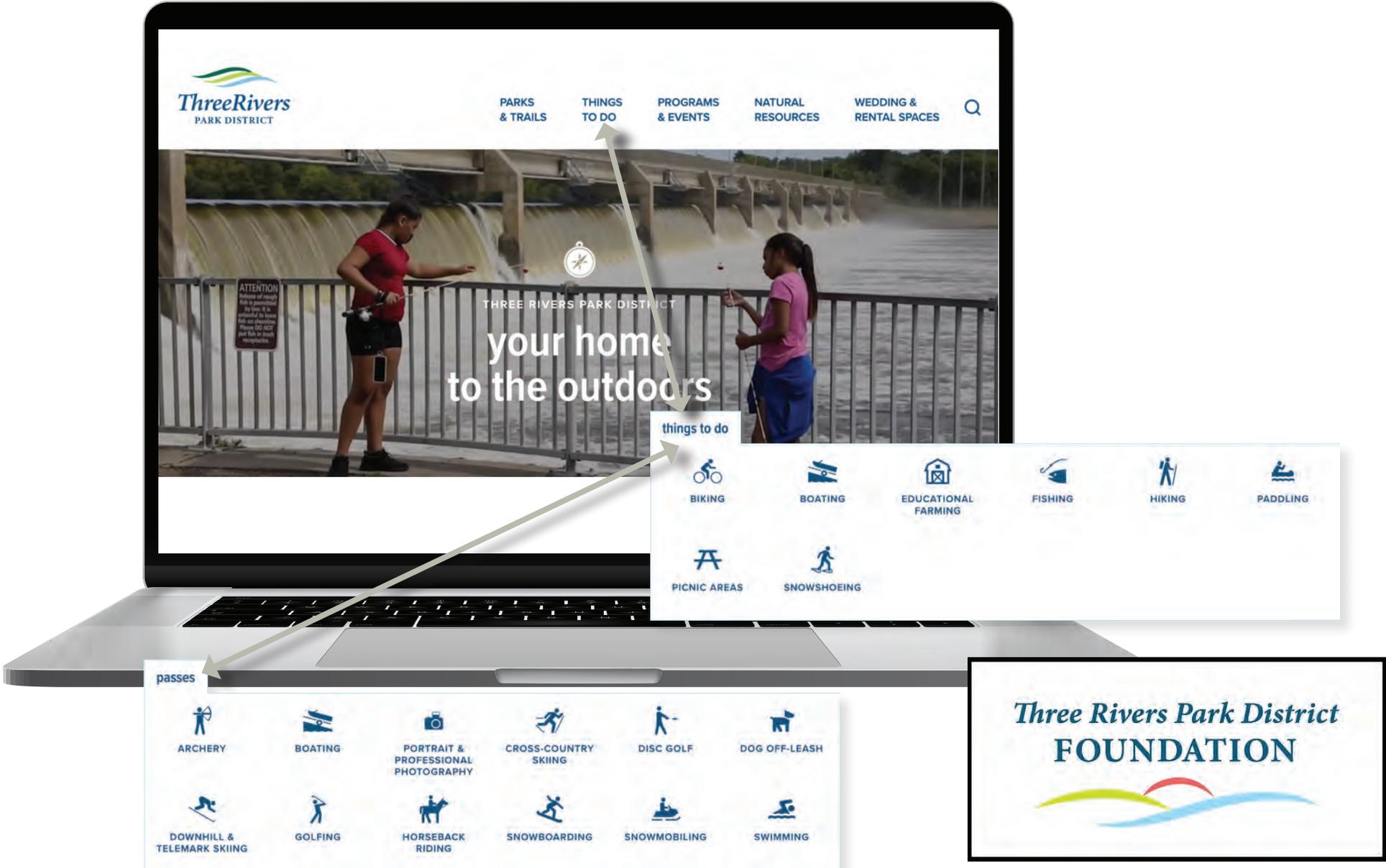
The Foundation operates as a “friends” organization. It was founded by a group of dedicated volunteers, and over time, has developed its own capacity separate from the park district. The Foundation employs its own executive director, solicits and accepts private donations, and engages volunteers for fundraising purposes. The Foundation holds an MOU with the park district, but it does not have operating responsibility in parks and does not implement its own programs. Besides its own overhead costs, the Foundation conveys all revenue to the park district.



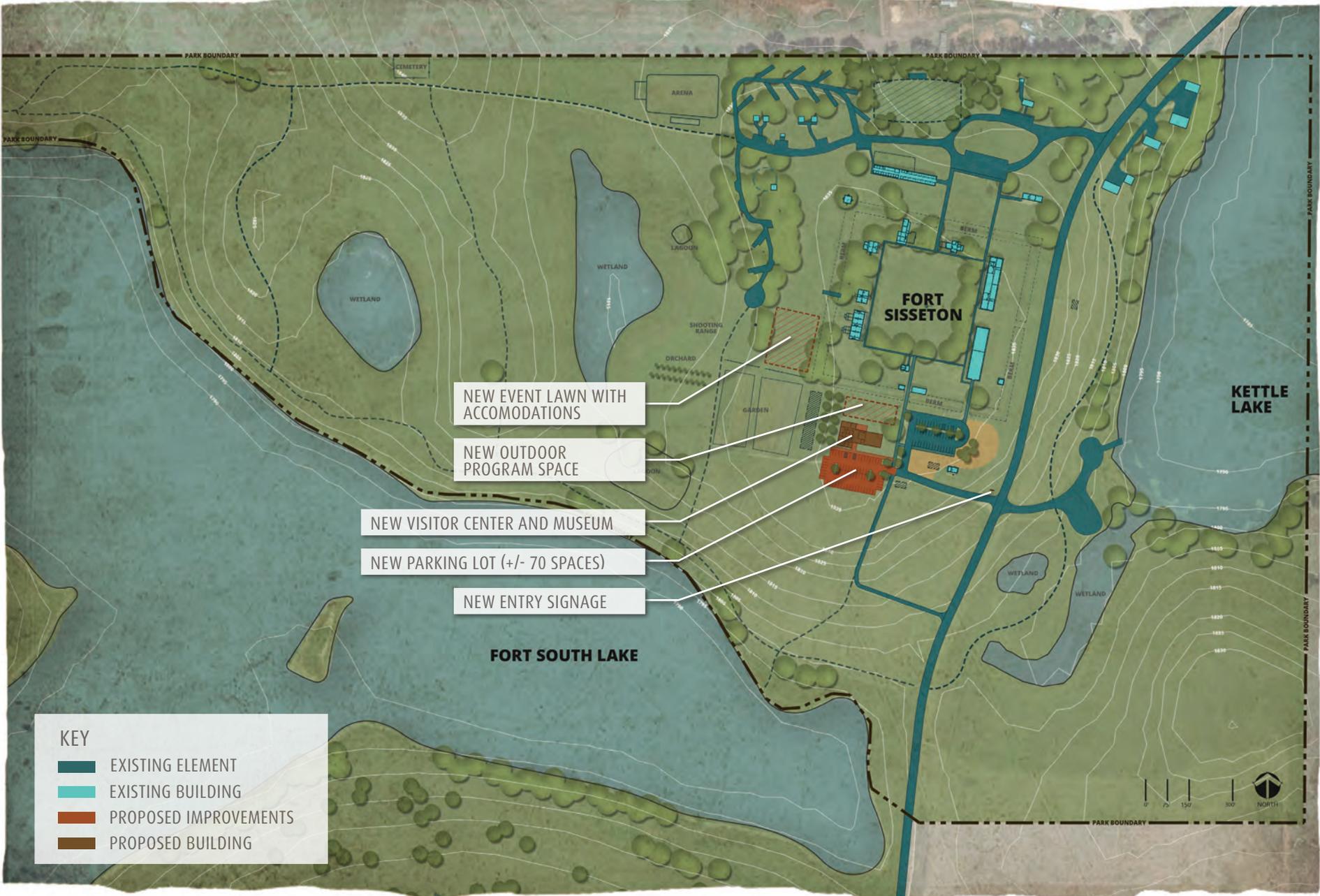
- LESSONS

- Org increased the capacity of volunteer board members and staff over time
- Uses simple language to describe its role:
 - “We are the fundraising arm of the park district.”
 - “We raise funds for programs within the park district.”
- Foundation and District jointly identify programs and initiatives for fundraising
- Foundation and District developed co-branding (affiliated logos, color scheme, style guide)
- District marketing staff offers pro bono services to the Foundation
- Foundation and District host separate websites
 - Both sites prompt visitors to donate
 - Only the District website promotes ‘things to do’ in the parks
- Foundation seeks stock gifts, estate gifts, and sponsors

Source: Interview with Chris Boyer, Executive Director, Three Rivers Park District Foundation, January 2023.



Images provided by Three Rivers Park District and Three Rivers Park District Foundation



INTERMEDIATE TERM IMPROVEMENTS

MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

INTERMEDIATE TERM IMPROVEMENTS **5 - 10 YEARS**

Intermediate term improvements will require additional funding, engineering, design, and State Historic Preservation Office coordination. These improvements are planned within the next five years to ten years.

Intermediate term improvement projects include:

- Constructing a new Visitor’s Center and Museum
- New parking lot

ANTICIPATED COSTS



Construction Costs	\$ 4,500,000 - \$ 5,900,000
Increased Annual Revenue	\$ 42,000 - \$ 132,000
Annual Operational Impacts GFP	\$ 84,000 - \$ 255,000

PRECEDENT IMAGES



VISITOR’S CENTER



HISTORY MUSEUM



PARKING LOT & NATURE INTEGRATION



MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS



INTERMEDIATE TERM IMPROVEMENTS 5 - 10 YEARS (CONT'D)

IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES:

- 1) Conduct capital campaign to secure private donations for visitor center
 - Prepare to launch a capital campaign with a reasonable fundraising goal and timeline, based on a fundraising feasibility study (see Short Term Implementation Priorities, page 32).
 - Consider structuring the campaign to include an operating reserve, supporting the cost of annual operations and maintenance.
 - Approach lead donor prospects identified during the feasibility study during a “quiet phase”, prior to formally announcing the start of the capital campaign.
 - Secure a lead gift of at least 20% of your overall fundraising goal to kick-start your campaign and convey donor confidence to the rest of the philanthropic community.
 - Do not launch the capital campaign unless you know it will be successful. Announcing a large campaign goal that cannot be achieved or continuing to fundraise over many years weakens donor confidence and generates high overhead costs.
 - Solicit donations from volunteers, program partners, and previous event rental clients, in addition to recurring visitors, charitable individuals, and family foundations.
- 2) Establish the Park’s identity as a research center; launch membership program
 - Create a user-friendly archive in the visitor center
 - Offer library/check-out services
 - Digitize archives and create an accessible web interface
 - Establish relationship with national archives, expanding the reach of your research network
 - Develop and launch genealogy and research programs

- Refresh educational content and school curriculum
 - Hire a part-time archivist to manage data, write historical features, and manage membership program
- 3) Enhance and differentiate experiences for first time and recurring guests
 - Hire a dedicated receptionist or clerk to welcome guests and serve as the first point of contact for visitors
 - Create “how-to” stations to promote self-guided experiences (i.e. mobile app, museum displays)
 - Create additional video tours of Fort structures; film historical reenactments
 - Promote off-site learning with accessible content on the website and mobile app
 - Develop virtual reality and immersive exhibits

REVENUE & FUNDING STRATEGIES:

- Conduct capital campaign to secure private donations for visitor center; offer naming rights for research center, theater, and other spaces in the building
- Pursue grant funding to digitize records and research materials
 - Possible funders: Federal and state grants including Preserve America Grants (Advisory Council on Historic Preservation), historic preservation non-profits, historical societies, family foundations, military associations
- Pursue grant funding, sponsorship, or in-kind donations to support development of virtual reality or immersive exhibits; demonstrate your audience’s interest in tech by promoting success of the mobile app
 - Possible funders: Games+Learning+Society, VR for Good, IMAX, Oculus, Meta, Amazon, Samsung NEXT, MIT, EDSiM, 343 Industries, UNICEF
- Develop a paid membership program providing access to archives, printing quota and document reproduction, quarterly publication, affinity group, Fort events

MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS



CASE STUDY 2: Ramsey County Historical Society Research as Earned Revenue | Membership Program

The Ramsey County Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) non-profit that presents, preserves, and publishes the history of Ramsey County, Minnesota. Core programs include operating the Gibbs Farm historic site; publishing a historical magazine, podcast, and other related media; managing a research center on behalf of Ramsey County and the City of St. Paul; and hosting historical exhibits. Each core program is intended to be financially self-sustaining.

At Gibbs Farm, students and adults learn about pioneer and Dakota life through hands-on programs, tours, and immersive day camps. Programs are strengthened through partnerships with Dakota Wicohan (a non-profit working to revitalize the Dakota language) and the Bell Museum of natural history. Gibbs Farm also offers augmented reality experiences, 3D tours, and event rentals.

The Mary Livingston Griggs & Mary Griggs Burke Research Center contains non-circulating books, periodicals, city directories, maps, photographs, architectural information, and other materials. Its most frequent users are homeowners and realtors seeking copies of archived building permits, and it is also visited by journalists, researchers, businesses, and individuals interested in learning more about the history of Ramsey County.



- LESSONS

- The Society employs a research associate, magazine editor, membership coordinator, and curator/archivist in addition to Farm employees. Most roles are part time.
- There is increasing demand for digitized content; users will pay for a subscription and online access.
- Charges \$5-20 for copying materials or securing licensing fees for photographs from research center.
- Research center is accessible by appointment during limited hours.
- Quarterly magazine is a valued membership benefit.
- Membership program is a good way to secure recurring gifts from donors and pave the way to request estate/legacy gifts.

Source: Interview with Rich Arpi, research associate, Ramsey County Historical Society, January 2023