

Narrows, VA: Mill Creek Nature Park Trailhead Conceptual Site Master Plan



Prepared for the Town of Narrows
March 2024

Narrows, VA:
Mill Creek Nature Park Trailhead Conceptual Site Master Plan

Project funding provided in part by the US Forest Service in cooperation with the Virginia Department of Forestry Urban and Community Forestry Program



22UCF04



PROJECT TEAM

Elizabeth Gilboy, Director

Hayley Harrington, Landscape Designer

The **Community Design Assistance Center** (CDAC) is an outreach center in the College of Architecture, Arts, and Design at Virginia Tech that assists communities, neighborhood groups, and non-profit organizations in improving the natural and built environments. Assistance is provided in the areas of landscape architecture, architecture, planning, and interior design. Working with communities, the conceptual planning and design provides communities with a graphic vision of their project that can then be used for grant applications and fundraising for the next steps toward implementation.

Community Design Assistance Center
101 South Main Street, Blacksburg, Virginia 24060
p: 540.231.5644
<https://cdac.aad.vt.edu>

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The CDAC team would like to acknowledge the following individuals for their contributions throughout the project:

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Town Manager, Town of Narrows

Ralph Robertson
Community Trail Expert

Roger Shepherd
Parks and Recreation Director, Town of Narrows

Tom Spangler
Mayor, Town of Narrows

John Davis
Public Works Director, Town of Narrows

and

Those who volunteered their time for the betterment of Narrows.

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Narrows, VA:
Mill Creek Nature Park Trailhead Conceptual Site Master Plan

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**PART 1:
INTRODUCTION AND
PROJECT LOCATION**

Narrows, VA:
Mill Creek Nature Park Trailhead Conceptual Site Master Plan

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INTRODUCTION AND PROJECT LOCATION

Introduction

Narrows, Virginia is a small community of about 2,000 people located in Giles County off of Route 460 and near the narrowing of the New River. Within the mountains of Narrows is Mill Creek Nature Park, a park of about 145-acres. The park, which adjoins Jefferson National Forest, includes several trails of varying lengths for hiking and mountain biking as well as two waterfalls. The park also offers the opportunity to fish for native trout.

The trailhead for the park is about 1-acre and includes two parking areas, one of which is bordered by boulders on one side to keep vehicles away from overhead power lines, a picnic shelter with 4 picnic tables, a kiosk, a porta potty, and a gate for maintenance vehicle access.

The town would like improve the trailhead to make it more visually appealing, plan for additional parking in the future, and make the trailhead more functional. Initial ideas for improvements included park entry signage, wayfinding signage and branding for trails, installing a new single stall restroom in a different location than the porta potty, creating a formal path from the parking areas to the trails and the new restroom, landscaping with native plant materials, expanded parking for in the future, and the ability for one or two buses to be able to park and turn around.

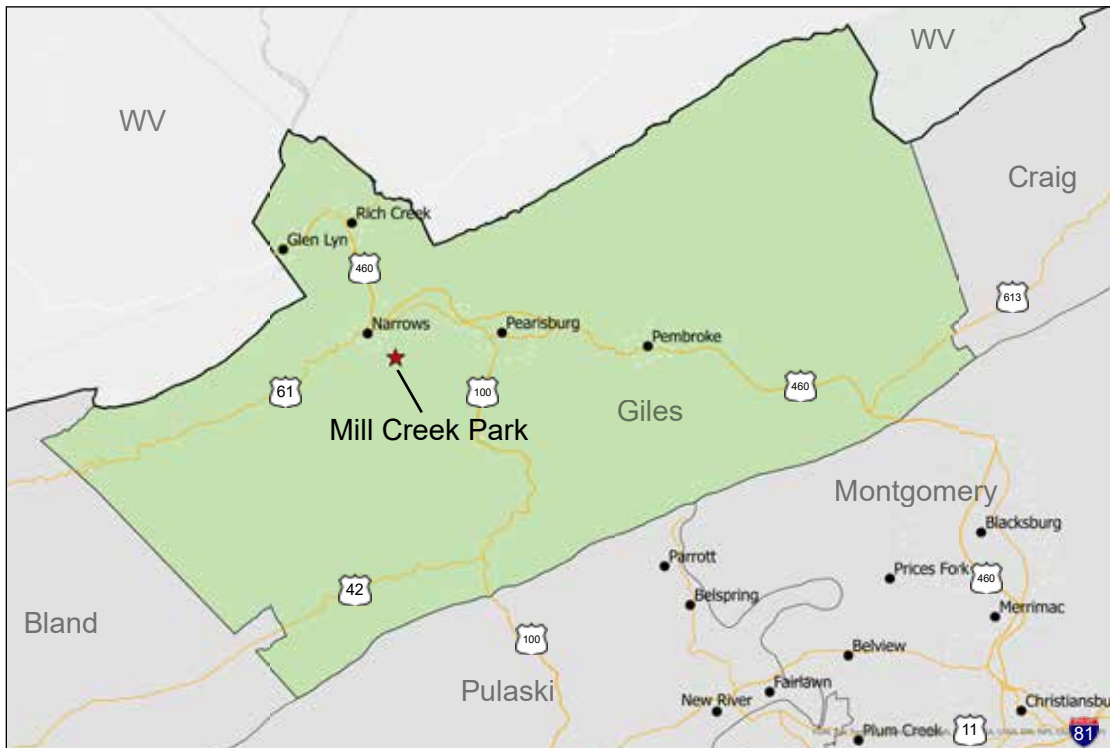
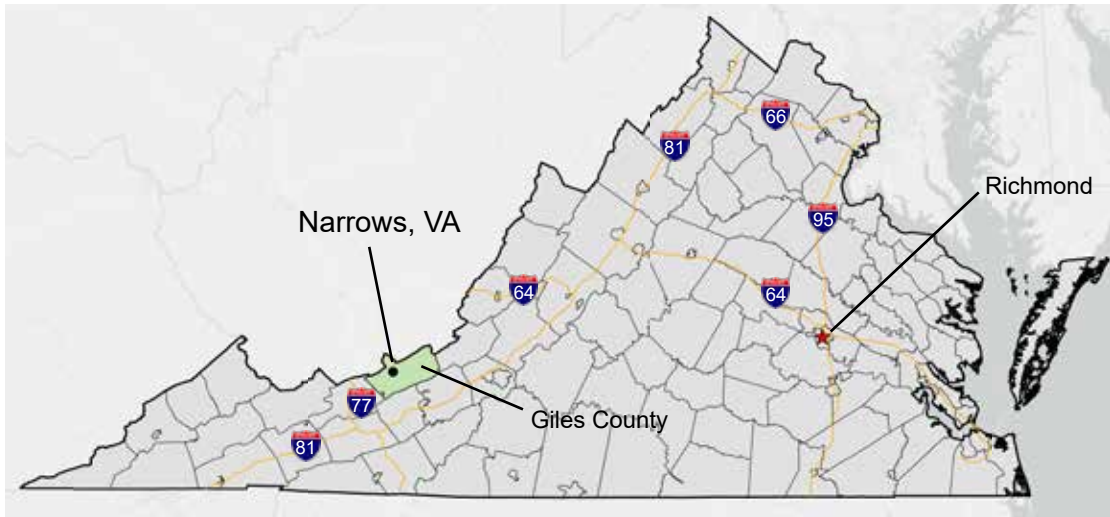
The design process began with a site visit on February 20th, 2024, where the project team met with stakeholders at Mill Creek Park and discussed their vision for the trailhead. The CDAC team had the opportunity to tour the trailhead area with stakeholders to further understand their vision. Input and site photos created a comprehensive foundation that the CDAC team used to develop two preliminary conceptual site master plans for the reimaged Mill Creek Nature Park Trailhead.

The CDAC team presented the preliminary design concepts to stakeholders at Narrows Town Hall on March 14th, 2024. Following the presentation, stakeholders provided feedback about what they liked and disliked about each design. The final design concept was presented on March 26th, 2024.

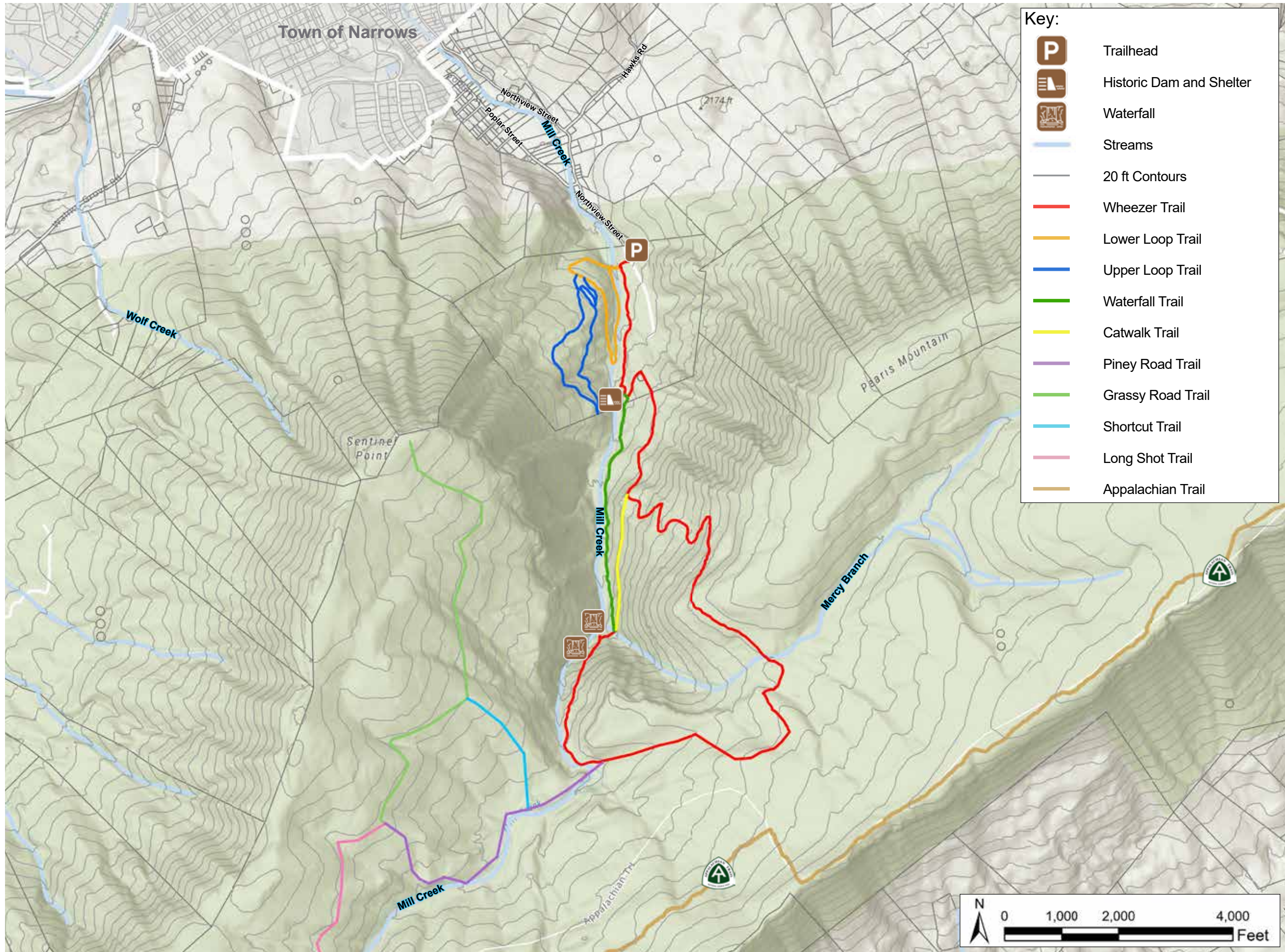
Meeting notes from the stakeholder input session and preliminary design presentation can be found in the appendix.

INTRODUCTION AND PROJECT LOCATION
















Project Location



The maps above show the location of the Town of Narrows within Giles County and Virginia and the location of Mill Creek Nature Park relative to the Town of Narrows. The following pages contain an approximate map of park trails, inventory maps for the trailhead area, and existing conditions images.



Key:

-  Trailhead
-  Historic Dam and Shelter
-  Waterfall
-  Streams
-  20 ft Contours
-  Wheezer Trail
-  Lower Loop Trail
-  Upper Loop Trail
-  Waterfall Trail
-  Catwalk Trail
-  Piney Road Trail
-  Grassy Road Trail
-  Shortcut Trail
-  Long Shot Trail
-  Appalachian Trail

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Narrows, VA:
Mill Creek Nature Park Trailhead Conceptual Site Master Plan

Site Inventory and Analysis
 Mill Creek Park Trails Map
 March 13th, 2024

Key:

- A Entry drive
- B Primary parking area
- C Secondary parking area
- D Materials storage area
- E Trailhead kiosk
- F Picnic shelter
- G Path to hiking trails
- H Future restroom building location



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Narrows, VA:
Mill Creek Nature Park Trailhead Conceptual Site Master Plan

Site Inventory and Analysis
Site Aerial with 2' Contours
March 13th, 2024

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Narrows, VA:
Mill Creek Nature Park Trailhead Conceptual Site Master Plan

Site Inventory and Analysis
Inventory and Analysis Summary
March 13th, 2024



Key:

- Mill Creek
- - - Existing Power Line
- - - Trail Connections
- 2ft Contours
- Inventory Item
- Analysis Information

<p>A Entry Drive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continues on from residential street, lacks clear signage • 10 mph speed limit 	<p>B Primary Parking Area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lacks clear parking spot markers; people often are not sure how to park • Boulders prevent vehicles from hitting overhead power lines 	<p>C Secondary Parking Area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently one entry/exit, could create another for buses • Slight uphill slope on east side 	<p>D Materials Storage Area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visible from aerial but not from site due to topography • Not considered part of design area 	<p>E Trailhead Kiosk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes helpful maps and paper copies of trail guides • Structure is in good condition 	<p>F Picnic Shelter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes four picnic tables and a trash can that is emptied weekly • Trash occasionally attracts animals
---	---	---	--	--	--

<p>G Path to trails</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Somewhat unclear where trail starts from trailhead • Needs clearer definition/signage

<p>H Future Restroom Location</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single-stall restroom building to be installed later this spring • Prefabricated sweet-smelling toilet design

<p>I Service Road</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service road to nearby water tower • Small sign and no additional indicators make this confusing
--

<p>J Pedestrian Bridge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Footbridge constructed by student volunteers to connect trails across Mill Creek • Fair condition
--



1: View looking south from site entrance showing the primary parking area and picnic shelter (right), the secondary parking area (left), and the service road to a nearby water tower.



2: View looking north towards the entry drive and primary parking lot. Boulders are used to keep vehicles away from power lines.



3: View looking northeast towards secondary parking area. This lot has a gentle uphill slope toward the back of the parking area.



4: An image of the trailhead kiosk, which has a recently updated map, message board, and copies of the trail guide available for visitors.



5: The picnic shelter is located behind the trailhead kiosk and includes four picnic tables and a trash can that is emptied weekly.



6: This view looking southeast shows the future location of a single stall restroom location, which will be located approximately near the boulder in the center of the image.



7: This view looking southwest shows the start of the trail and the future restroom location. The trail is not particularly well-defined.



8: This pedestrian bridge was built several years ago by a volunteer student group and connects the trails across Mill Creek. The picnic shelter is visible in the background (left).



Existing Conditions Image Locator Map

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PART 2:
FINAL DESIGN CONCEPT



FINAL DESIGN CONCEPT

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FINAL DESIGN CONCEPT

Site Master Plan Design Description

Overview

The final design concept for the Mill Creek Park Trailhead provides recommendations for relatively minor changes to the trailhead area that improve the overall visitor experience, including redesigned parking lots, newly created paths, a gateway arch, and added vegetation.

Proposed GPS route change

CDAC recommends that the Town of Narrows work with Giles County GIS to change the GPS route to the park so visitors are directed to take Poplar Street instead of Northview Drive, which is a narrow residential street. Redirecting visitors to take an alternate route would make the drive to the park feel safer while keeping Northview Drive clear for residents. Directional signage may be posted at the following intersections:

- Main Street (VA RT 100) & Northview Drive
- Northview Drive & College Street
- College Street & Poplar Street
- Poplar Street & Northview Drive

Parking and circulation changes

The trailhead kiosk is relocated to the other side of the existing boulders to allow for additional parking spaces. Lumber from the site could be used to create curb stops to make parking space locations clearer. The boulders lining the primary parking lot are pushed back under the existing power lines to allow for slightly more space. Additional small boulders might be used to signal where parking areas stop and end. In the secondary parking area, the existing tree is removed, the well is sealed, and a secondary exit is created. Lumber curb stops indicate parking spaces at the front of the lot, but the back is left as an open gravel lot to accommodate for buses or additional overflow parking.

Crusher run trail

A ~5' wide crusher run or stone dust trail would connect the gravel parking area to the start of the Wheezer trail and the pedestrian bridge that leads to the Lower Loop trail. This path would not have edging to make mowing and maintenance vehicle access easier.

Signage improvements

A new welcome sign is located at the primary parking area entrance and a marquee gateway or portal constructed from either wood or metal is proposed near the start of the trail to clearly point visitors in the correct direction. CDAC also recommends that trail rules be posted clearly next to the trailhead kiosk to alert and inform visitors. Additional signage is proposed at the trailhead and at intersections throughout the trails to make pathways and locations clear to hikers. Signs could be HPDE routed laminated plastic, similar to those used at Pandapas Pond and other nearby outdoor

FINAL DESIGN CONCEPT

recreation areas, but should maintain distinct branding from the Appalachian trail and US Forest Service. CDAC cannot officially recommend a vendor for these signs, but they can either be purchased routed from a sign company that does online business such as Wood Product Signs, Signature Streetscapes, or Vacker Sign, or the Town of Narrows could purchase the HDPE material and have signs carved locally.

Branding

Signs should include the park and town name to distinguish themselves from other nearby trails. Due to the nature of the HDPE material and the estimated size of trail signs, it would not be possible to add a graphic logo to each sign, but trail markers could retain a distinct brand identity through color and material choice. Each trail marker should include directional arrows at trail intersections and always include a directional arrow and the distance to the parking lot to the nearest tenth of a mile. Green and white or blue and white were selected as potential color choices based on the colors in the existing Town of Narrows logo. An example sign and HDPE material color suggestions are shown on page 16.

Additional site amenities

The new prefabricated restroom building is installed. Benches are added near the restroom building to give visitors a spot to rest.

12


Conceptual planting design

The final design concept suggests twelve different species that could be used to visually improve the site, though more or fewer species could also be used if desired. The goal of the planting design was to create an intentional transition area between the trails and parking area that feels more deliberately planted, creating a sense of place for visitors. Unused open space might be planted with overstory trees like Black Gums and Eastern Hop Hornbeams and a variety of colorful understory trees are proposed to be planted along the treeline. Native shrubs, grasses, and flowers are proposed around the restroom, in mulched beds around the picnic shelter, and on the median between the entry drive and secondary parking area.

It is recommended that the town contact a local DOF representative to discuss soil testing, phased implementation, and on the ground guidance for more exact locations and planting distances for the trees than the conceptual design can provide.

The following pages contain the final site master plan, perspective and precedent images, and conceptual planting plan.

Key:

- A New entry sign and existing gate
- B Planted area
- C Secondary parking lot (8 lined spaces; gravel lot with unmarked overflow/bus parking)
- D Native trees
- E Added exit drive
- F Primary parking lot (12 spaces)
- G Existing gate
- H Existing gate
- I Relocated trailhead kiosk
- J Picnic shelter with added plantings
- K Benches (2)
- L New single-stall restroom building
- M Planted area
- N Gateway
- O 5' wide crusher run trail
-  Perspective viewcone

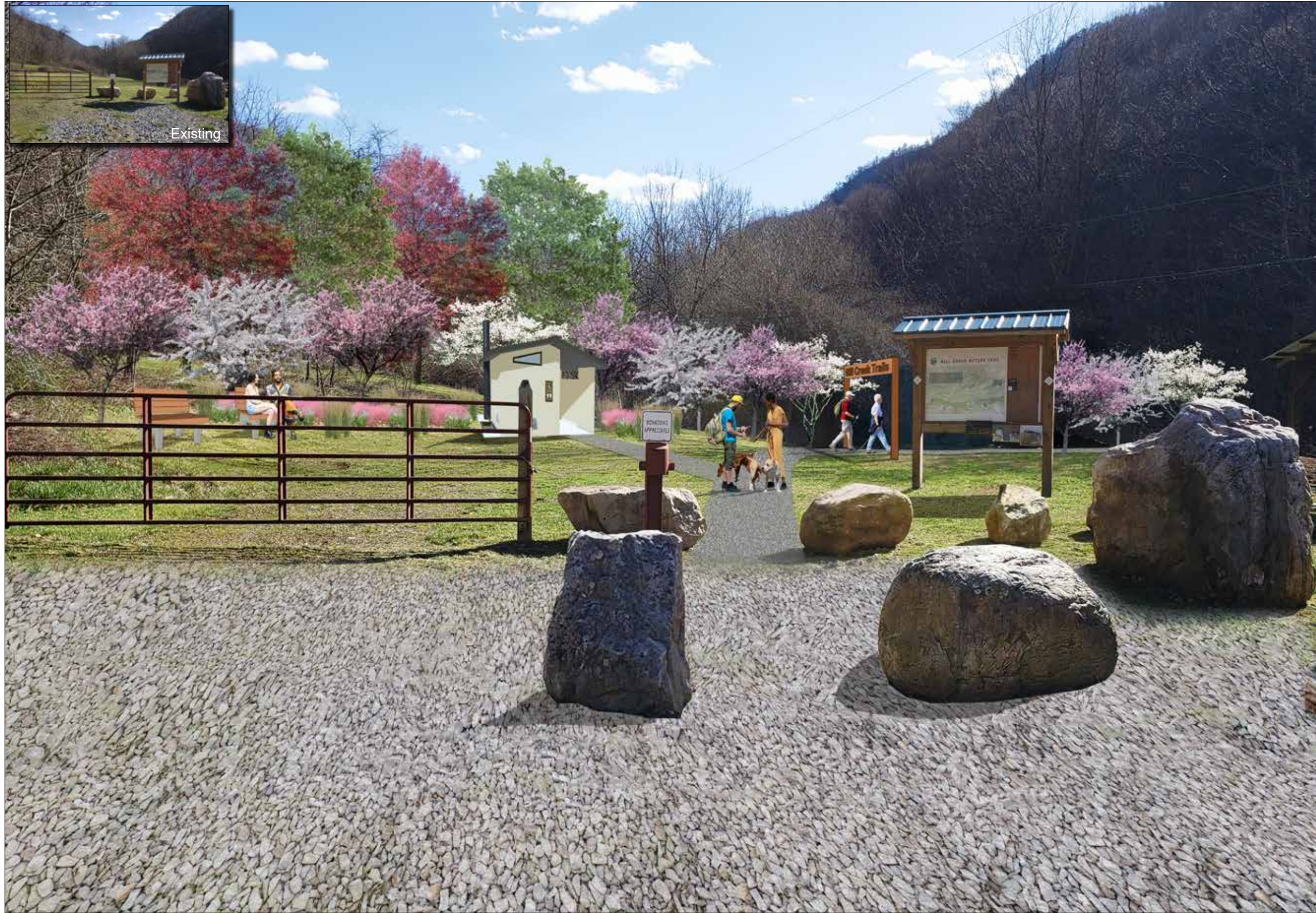


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Narrows, VA:
Mill Creek Nature Park Trailhead Conceptual Site Master Plan

Final Design Concept
 Site Master Plan
 March 26th, 2024

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Perspective 1: Trailhead

This perspective shows the redesigned trailhead area. The trailhead kiosk is moved to the other side of the rocks to allow for additional parking. Boulders serve as parking barriers. The existing access gate remains, but a ~5' wide crusher run trail connects the parking area to the start of the trails. The restroom building is installed, and a trailhead gateway and benches are added. Additional vegetation adds seasonal color to the area and provides a habitat for pollinator species.

Narrows, VA:
 Mill Creek Nature Park Trailhead Conceptual Site Master Plan

Final Design Concept
 Perspective 1: Trailhead
 March 26th, 2024

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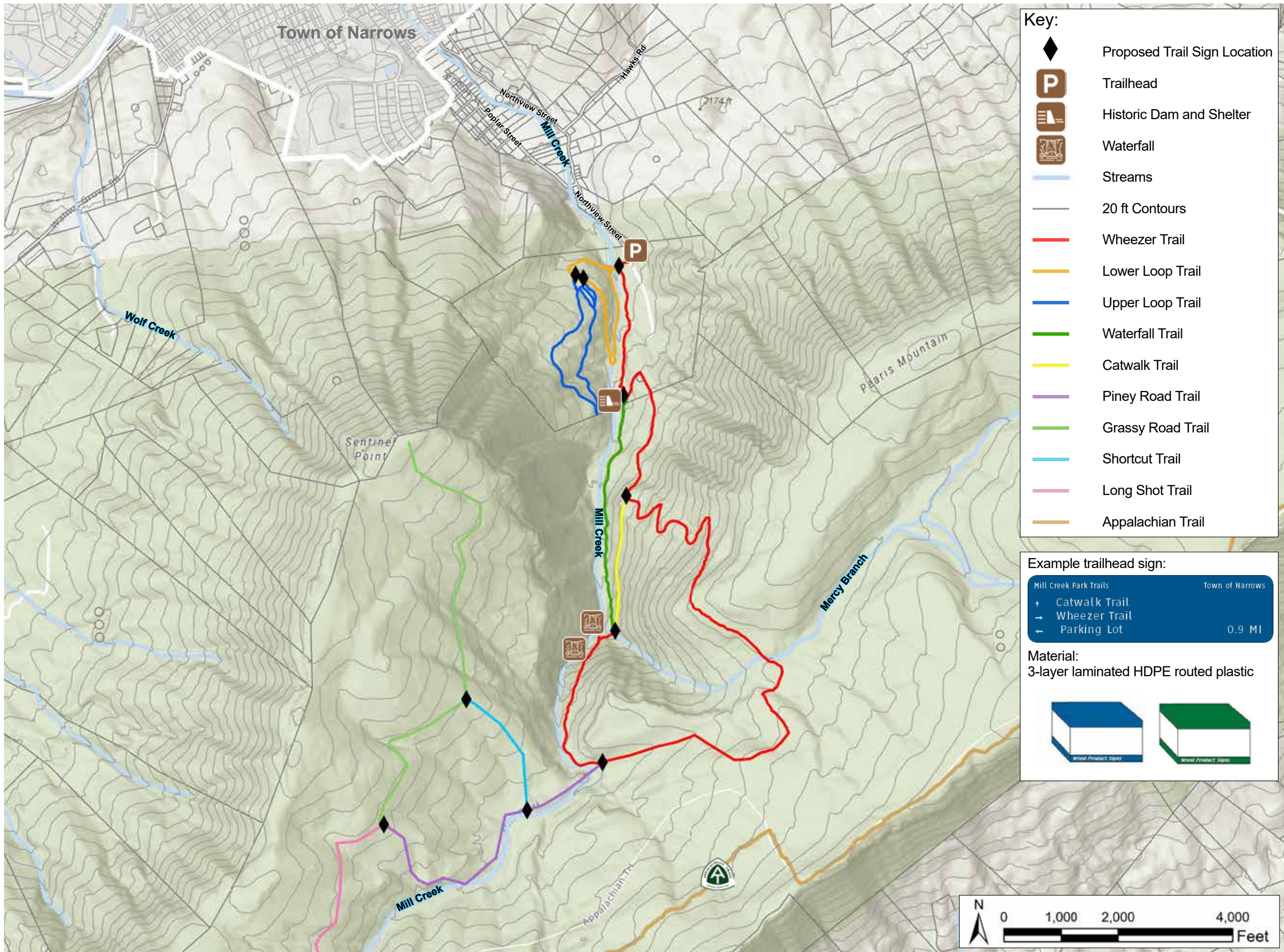


Perspective 2: Trailhead Gateway

This perspective shows a closer view of the new trailhead gateway sign, which would clearly indicate the start of the trail system for visitors. The new restroom building is visible to the left. Additional vegetation adds seasonal color to the area and provides a habitat for pollinator species.

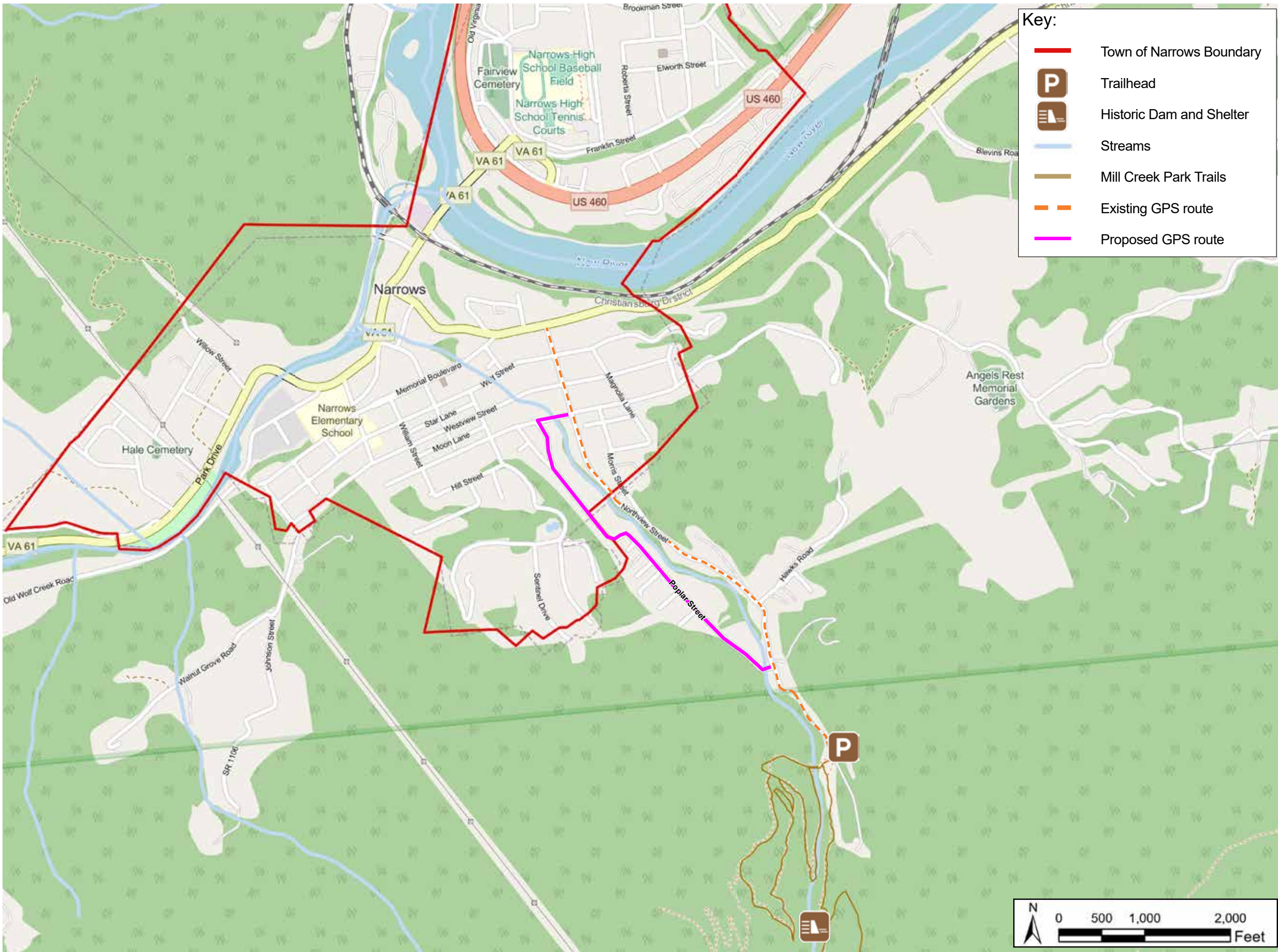
Narrows, VA:
 Mill Creek Nature Park Trailhead Conceptual Site Master Plan

Final Design Concept
 Perspective 2: Trailhead Gateway
 March 26th, 2024



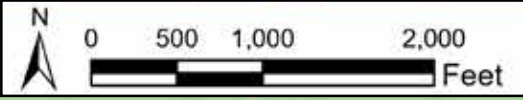
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Narrows, VA:
Mill Creek Nature Park Trailhead Conceptual Site Master Plan
 Final Design Concept
 Trails Map with Signage Locations
 March 26th, 2024



Key:

- Town of Narrows Boundary
- P Trailhead
- Historic Dam and Shelter
- Streams
- Mill Creek Park Trails
- Existing GPS route
- Proposed GPS route



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Narrows, VA:
Mill Creek Nature Park Trailhead Conceptual Site Master Plan

Final Design Concept
 Proposed Changes to GPS Route
 March 26th, 2024



Lumber curb stops could clearly delineate parking spaces in both parking lots.



Parking lots would remain paved with coarse gravel.



A finer crusher run could be used to create the path through the gateway to the Wheezer Trail and the bridge to the Lower Loop Trail.



A gateway like the one pictured here or in the perspective drawings could be used to clearly direct visitors from the parking area to the start of the trails.



A precast restroom building identical to the one pictured above was recently purchased and will be installed on the site soon.



Existing metal gates could be replaced with wood barricades like the ones pictured here.



A sign explaining trail rules to visitors should be placed near the trailhead kiosk or gateway.



Trail signs made from a routed plastic material are durable and could help visitors stay on the trails. See pages 12 and 16 for more information.



At difficult or confusing crossings where signage is not feasible, tree blazes could help visitors stay on the trails.

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Narrows, VA:
Mill Creek Nature Park Trailhead Conceptual Site Master Plan

Final Design Concept
Conceptual Planting Plan
March 26th, 2024



Eastern Redbud, *Cercis canadensis*



Canada Serviceberry, *Amelanchier canadensis*



Fringetree, *Chionanthus virginicus*



Carolina Silverbell, *Halesia carolina*




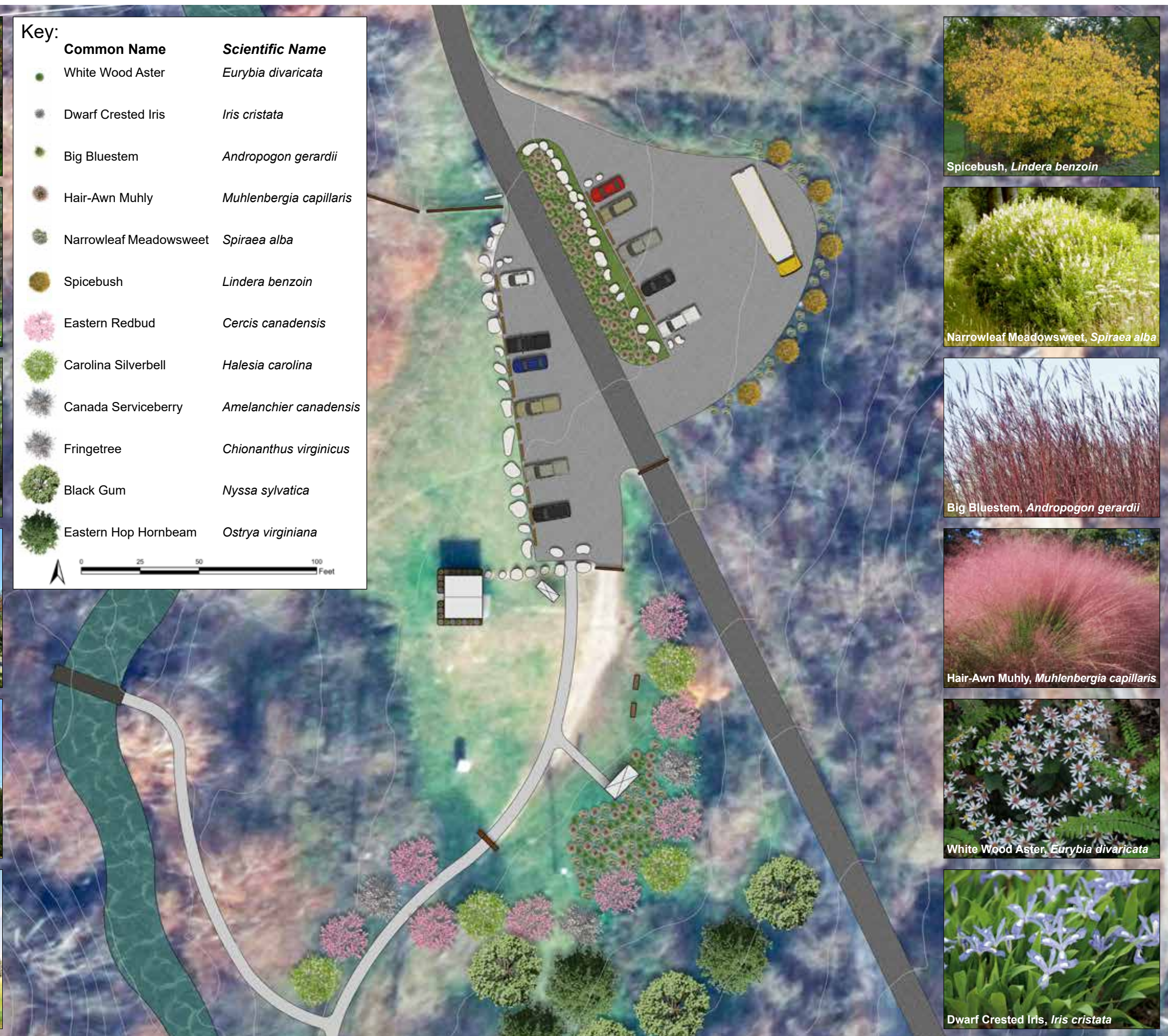
Black Gum, *Nyssa sylvatica*



Eastern Hop Hornbeam, *Ostrya virginiana*

Key:

Common Name	Scientific Name
White Wood Aster	<i>Eurybia divaricata</i>
Dwarf Crested Iris	<i>Iris cristata</i>
Big Bluestem	<i>Andropogon gerardii</i>
Hair-Awn Muhly	<i>Muhlenbergia capillaris</i>
Narrowleaf Meadowsweet	<i>Spiraea alba</i>
Spicebush	<i>Lindera benzoin</i>
Eastern Redbud	<i>Cercis canadensis</i>
Carolina Silverbell	<i>Halesia carolina</i>
Canada Serviceberry	<i>Amelanchier canadensis</i>
Fringetree	<i>Chionanthus virginicus</i>
Black Gum	<i>Nyssa sylvatica</i>
Eastern Hop Hornbeam	<i>Ostrya virginiana</i>

Spicebush, *Lindera benzoin*



Narrowleaf Meadowsweet, *Spiraea alba*



Big Bluestem, *Andropogon gerardii*



Hair-Awn Muhly, *Muhlenbergia capillaris*



White Wood Aster, *Eurybia divaricata*



Dwarf Crested Iris, *Iris cristata*

**PART 3:
PRELIMINARY
DESIGN CONCEPTS**



Narrows, VA:
Mill Creek Nature Park Trailhead Conceptual Site Master Plan

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PRELIMINARY DESIGN CONCEPTS

Overview

Two slightly different preliminary design concepts were created and presented on March 13th, 2024. The first concept utilized the existing parking lot footprint while the second concept proposed the parking lot footprint be expanded. The goal of the preliminary design concepts was to provide opportunities for conversations about stakeholders' likes and dislikes to inform the final design concept.

Preliminary Design Concept 1: Existing Parking

Design Description

Parking and circulation changes

The primary (west) parking lot would remain as-is, and the secondary (east) parking lot would be squared off and striped for parking using plastic gravel parking space markers. The combined parking lots offer 28 lined parking spaces. The metal gate located at the trailhead would be removed, and the metal gate to the water tower could be replaced with a more attractive wood barrier.

Gateway

A wood or metal gateway arch could be used to clearly mark the beginning of the trails. The gravel from the parking lot would continue on to the start of the gateway to provide clear wayfinding for visitors.

Trail Signs

This concept proposes routed wood trail signs and tree blazes as methods for marking trail crossings and difficult intersections.

The following pages contain the Concept 1 site master plan, perspective, and precedent images.

Narrows, VA:
Mill Creek Nature Park Trailhead Conceptual Site Master Plan

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Key:

- A Entry drive
- B Primary parking area (10 spaces)
- C Secondary parking area (18 spaces)
- D Water tower access gate
- E Trailhead kiosk
- F Picnic shelter
- G Gateway arch and pedestrian trail
- H Restroom building



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Narrows, VA:
Mill Creek Nature Park Trailhead Conceptual Site Master Plan

Preliminary Design Concept 1: Existing Parking
Site Master Plan
March 13th, 2024



Perspective: Trailhead Gateway

This perspective shows the new restroom building and gateway arch located at the trailhead. A gravel or crusher run trail would lead from the parking lot to the gateway, marking where the trails officially begin.



Intersections at trails could be marked with routed wood signs like those pictured here.



Tree blazes could be used to help visitors stay on the trails, particularly in rocky areas where paths are unclear.



A movable gate should block the drive up to the water tower to avoid driver confusion.



Markers designed specifically to identify parking spaces in gravel lots could be used to delineate parking.



The trailhead could use a simple gateway like the one pictured here to signify the start of the trail. Additional signage including trail use guidelines may be included nearby.



A precast single-stall ADA restroom has been purchased and will be installed onsite.

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PRELIMINARY DESIGN CONCEPTS

Preliminary Design Concept 2: Expanded Parking

Design Description

Parking and circulation changes

The trailhead kiosk is proposed as relocated on the other side of the parking area to allow for a few additional parking spaces in the primary (west) parking lot, which now includes 14 parking spots. The secondary (east) lot would be expanded to create two rows of parking with 14 spots, pull-through space for buses, and a secondary exit. The gate located at the end of the west parking lot would be removed and the gravel paths could continue to the start of the trails.

Trail signs

Trail signs for this concept could be printed metal, and wood, metal, or fiberglass mile marker posts could be installed throughout to help visitors find their way around the trails.

The following pages contain the Concept 2 site master plan, perspective, and precedent images.

Narrows, VA:
Mill Creek Nature Park Trailhead Conceptual Site Master Plan

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Key:

- A Entry drive
- B Primary parking area (14 spaces)
- C Secondary parking area (14 spaces)
- D Flexible/bus parking
- E Trailhead kiosk
- F Picnic shelter
- G Crusher run pedestrian trail
- H Restroom building



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Narrows, VA:
Mill Creek Nature Park Trailhead Conceptual Site Master Plan

Preliminary Design Concept 2: Expanded Parking
Site Master Plan
March 13th, 2024



Perspective: Trailhead Gateway

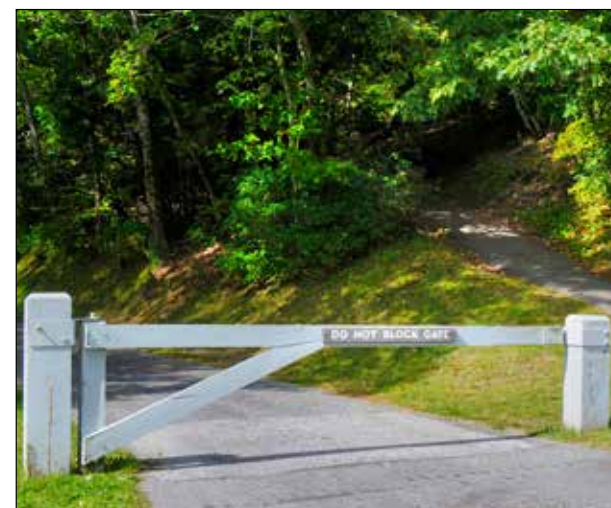
This perspective shows the new restroom building and gateway arch located at the trailhead. A gravel or crusher run trail would lead from the parking lot to the gateway, marking where the trails officially begin. In this concept, the trailhead kiosk would also be moved away from the parking lot to make space for additional parking.



Metal trail signs provide an option for keeping visitors on the trail and can be more durable and easier to replace than routed wood signs.



Mileposts with trail signs could be made from wood, metal, or fiberglass and can help with wayfinding and preventing confusion.



A movable gate should block the drive up to the water tower to avoid driver confusion.



Lumber or concrete curb stops could be used to delineate parking spaces.



The trailhead could use a simple gateway like the one pictured here to signify the start of the trail. Additional signage including trail use guidelines may be included nearby.



A precast single-stall ADA restroom has been purchased and will be installed onsite.

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PRELIMINARY DESIGN CONCEPTS

Preliminary Design Concepts: Suggested Plantings

Design Description

Both preliminary design concepts propose a variety of native ornamental perennial flowers and grasses with seasonal color; deer, strong pest, and disease resistance; and that provide habitats for pollinator species. Vegetation was identified and selected using guides created by the Plant Southwest Virginia Natives campaign, which offers additional resources and information on planting, purchasing, and maintaining Southwest Virginia native plants through their website, <https://plantvirginianatives.org/plantswvanatives>.

The following page contains the suggested plantings for the preliminary design concepts.

Narrows, VA:
Mill Creek Nature Park Trailhead Conceptual Site Master Plan

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Wild Columbine, *Aquilegia canadensis*
Easily grown in average, medium, well-drained soil in full sun to part shade. Wide range of soil tolerance as long as drainage is good. Attractive to hummingbirds; very good resistance to leaf miner. Deer resistant.

Height: 2 to 3 feet
Spread: 1 to 1.5 feet
Bloom Time: February to July
Bloom Description: Yellow/Red
Sun: Full sun to part shade
Water: Low to medium moisture
Maintenance: Low



Tufted Hairgrass, *Deschampsia cespitosa*
Easily grown in average, medium, well-drained soils in part shade. Prefers moist, organically rich soils. Semi-evergreen foliage may retain some green color in mild winters. No serious insect or disease problems. Mostly deer resistant.

Height: 2 to 3 feet
Spread: 1.5 to 2 feet
Bloom Time: May to July
Bloom Description: Purple/green
Sun: Full sun to part shade
Water: Low to medium moisture
Maintenance: Low



Dwarf Crested Iris, *Iris cristata*
Best grown in organically rich, medium moisture, well-drained soils in part shade. Will tolerate close to full shade. If grown in full sun, the soil must be kept consistently moist. Grows well on well-drained slopes. Deer resistant.

Height: 1.5 to 2 feet
Spread: 1 foot
Bloom Time: March to May
Bloom Description: Purple
Sun: Part shade to full shade
Water: Medium moisture
Maintenance: Low



Green-and-Gold, *Chrysogonum virginianum*
Easily grown in average, medium moisture, well-drained soils in part shade to full shade. Spreads by rhizomes to form an attractive ground cover, but is easily controlled. No serious insect or disease problems. Deer resistant.

Height: 1 foot
Spread: 1 to 1.5 feet
Bloom Time: April to October
Bloom Description: Yellow
Sun: Part shade to full shade
Water: Medium moisture
Maintenance: Low



Scarlet Beebalm, *Monarda didyma*
Best grown in rich, medium to wet, moisture-retentive soils in full sun to part shade. Common name in reference to indigenous use of plant resins to soothe bee stings. Deer-resistant but susceptible to powdery mildew.

Height: 2 to 3 feet
Spread: 2 to 3 feet
Bloom Time: May to October
Bloom Description: Red
Sun: Part shade to full shade
Water: Medium moisture
Maintenance: Medium



Hair-Awn Muhly, *Muhlenbergia capillaris*
Best grown in sandy or rocky, dry to medium moisture, well-drained soils in full sun to light shade. Best in full sun. Tolerates heat and poor soils. Noted for attractive foliage; no serious insect or disease problems. Generally deer resistant.

Height: 2 to 3 feet
Spread: 2 to 3 feet
Bloom Time: September to November
Bloom Description: Pink/red
Sun: Full sun
Water: Low to medium moisture
Maintenance: Low



Smooth Blue Aster, *Symphyotrichum laeve*
Easily grown in average, dry to medium, well-drained soil in full sun. Easily self-seeds and attractive to butterflies. Flowers through autumn. No serious insect or disease problems; may need staking. Generally deer resistant.

Height: 2 to 3 feet
Spread: 1.5 to 2 feet
Bloom Time: August to October
Bloom Description: Purple
Sun: Full sun to part shade
Water: Low moisture
Maintenance: Low



White Wood Aster, *Eurybia divaricata*
Easily grown in average, dry to medium, well-drained soil in part shade to full shade. Thrives in shade and tolerates dry conditions. Good air circulation and some morning sun help reduce incidence of foliar diseases. Deer resistant.

Height: 2 to 3 feet
Spread: 2 to 3 feet
Bloom Time: August to November
Bloom Description: White/yellow
Sun: Full sun to part shade
Water: Low to medium moisture
Maintenance: Low

Disclaimer: This drawing is conceptual and was prepared to show approximate location and arrangement of site features. It is subject to change and is not intended to replace the use of construction documents. The client should consult appropriate professionals before any construction or site work is undertaken. The Community Design Assistance Center is not responsible for the inappropriate use of this drawing.

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Meeting Notes

Initial Site Visit and Stakeholder Input Meeting - February 20th, 2024

Present:

- Town of Narrows: Terry Nicholson, Town Manager; Ralph Robertson, (created trails and signage in the park), Roger Shepherd, Parks and Recreation Director
- CDAC: Elizabeth Gilboy, Hayley Harrington

Absent:

- John Davis, Public Works Director

Information about site:

- There is an Adirondack shelter about 3/10 mile up the trail; shelter is marked for camping but not commonly used; occasionally, campers will use site as drop off point for camping in the national forest.
- The Great Eastern Trail will eventually link up with this trail
- Can access the AT from this trail
- The site occasionally sees damage from vandals; biggest issues include missing/stolen trail signs and spray painting rocks.
- Waterfalls are on the backside
- Old dam at Adirondack shelter area
- In the past, the chlorination building treated water
- Hoping to acquire 100+ acres of private adjacent property to develop into additional trails; worked with New River Land Trust to apply for TNC grants this year; funding was not awarded, but they were encouraged to apply again.
- No historical signage currently located by dam, but it's one of the oldest structures in the county; was built for an old mill, then there was a tannery on the hill in 1895, and in 1939 the town took it over. The dam itself continued to be built taller and wider and it holds water up about 200'.
- Trails are used for mountain biking and hiking mostly, can connect 40+ miles on existing trails. Look for motel between Bastian and Bland on I-77; Ralph has stayed there and biked out and back.

Information about design:

- Need the parking layout formalized since people don't know how to park (parallel, angled, perpendicular, etc). Material needs to remain natural such as crushed gravel and not be asphalt. Perhaps curb stops would help.
- School groups visit the site, so 1-2 buses need to be able to park and be able to either turn around or loop around in a one way direction to exit.
- A slight parking expansion might be needed in the future.
- A path is needed to show people the route from the parking areas to the trail. Something like crushed gravel, but no raised sides on either side of the trail so mowers can run over it. The main maintenance is mowing,

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weed whacking, and emptying the trash. The proposed designs should be appropriately low-maintenance.

- Main design goal other than parking is to create a clear connection between the parking areas, new restroom building, and hiking trails
- Branding is needed for the signage. There is a town logo. It would be good if it could be an inspiration for the Mill Creek Nature Park logo, which could be used on the entry sign and all the directional trail signs. Most of the signage at trail intersections is gone.
- Ralph made a sign years ago and is supposedly being stored at the town shop. An entry sign to the park is needed.
- Add benches around the trailhead
- Add historical information signs
- Include native shrubs and perennials for aesthetic value

Preliminary Design Presentation - March 13th, 2024

Present:

- Town of Narrows: Terry Nicholson, Town Manager; Ralph Robertson, (created trails and signage in the park), Tom Spangler, Mayor; John Davis, Public Works Director
- CDAC: Elizabeth Gilboy, Hayley Harrington

Absent:

- Roger Shepherd, Parks and Recreation Director

Notes/Comments:

Secondary Parking Area:

- They do not need to keep the old well. It can be capped off. If there is a fire, they can get water from the creek.
- Look at the cascades parking for reference
- For the secondary parking lot, even though the tree is in good health, it can be taken down. They can remove trees in this parking lot area, but not anywhere else.
- There is a spring in the area of the secondary parking lot, so it would be best not to change the drainage that runs around the parking lot. The spring causes the parking lot to be a bit wet.
- They have seen over 30 cars packed into the two parking lots (when Cascades was closed)
- For the secondary parking lot, designate spaces along Northview/the line of rocks, but leave the back of the parking area without lines so it can be flexible for cars or buses.
- Add an exit
- Add plant materials in the wet area that are tolerant of being wet and along little slope by the secondary parking lot between Northview and the line of boulders.

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Path Area:

- Keep the gate that is near the current kiosk location
- Love the gateway arch
- Have crusher run paths that lead people through the arch, then head off into the two directions (left to the dam and falls) and right (to the bridge).
- Make the path and parking gravel different (finer on path, coarser for parking)
- Like the arch closer to G on Concept 2
- Add signage like at Pandapas: plastic, but looks like routed wood with wood color sign and white lettering. Or have wood that is coated?
- Move the kiosk to just outside the boulders
- Add benches around the trailhead

Entrance Area:

- Add bus parking spot at the beginning on right?
- Add a main entry sign
- Create a basic map that will go in the report that recommends the public be directed to the trailhead via the College St>Poplar>Northview route. Change their on-street signage to reflect this. Follow example of the Cascades and have a sign something like “All Mill Creek Nature Park Traffic Turn Here”

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Plant Materials:

- Add bare root understory trees such as swamp oak, spicewood/spicebush (Lindera), redbud, grasses in sweeping areas to mow around. Put behind the restroom. Are the grasses native or invasive? Transition from planted look/feel to natural look/feel.

Branding:

- Develop branding to distinguish it from the AT
- Branding is needed for the signage. There is a town logo. It would be good if it could be an inspiration for the Mill Creek Nature Park logo, which could be used on the entry sign and all the directional trail signs. Most of the signage at trail intersections is gone.
- Ralph made a sign years ago and is supposedly being store at the town shop. An entry sign to the park is needed.
- Add historical information signs
- Preferred sign material is composite similar to signage at Pandapas Pond