

Latta Place

Interpretive Master Planning | Mecklenburg County, NC



FINAL INTERPRETIVE MASTER PLAN

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PURPOSE OF PLANNING

Interpretation is how we connect visitors to a story.

The purpose of this plan is to establish a foundation for how Latta Place will connect every visitor to the deep, complex, and often emotional stories associated with this unique place. Due to a limited number of sites interpreting the experiences of the enslaved in Mecklenburg County, there is a real opportunity for the County to position itself as a leader in authentic and truthful interpretation. This Interpretive Master Plan provides a road map to utilize different interpretive media and programming for a cohesive, meaningful visitor experience. It also provides a framework to execute those ideas over the next five to seven years, including possible partners and sources of support. Stakeholders, community members, and existing and potential partners played key roles in developing this document. No interpretive plan can be successful without the support and buy-in of members of these key groups.

This Interpretive Master Plan is a living document—one that the County and Steering Committee stakeholders should update and revisit as it completes tasks and evaluates new opportunities and developments. But, most importantly, this plan is just one step in a journey of retrospection and healing for the Mecklenburg County community. This site can become a powerful tool on that journey by providing authentic and truthful telling of the past.

BEST PRACTICES OF INTERPRETATION

All interpretation and recommendations within this plan follow national standards of best practices in the field. Narratives in this part of the interpretive plan offer select resources and analysis of relevant standards at Latta Place. New trends in visitor behavior are noted throughout where applicable.

What is interpretation?

The National Association of Interpretation, the professional organization dedicated to advancing the profession of heritage interpretation, recently updated its definition of interpretation to reflect new changes in the field. They describe interpretation as “a purposeful approach to communication that facilitates meaningful, relevant, and inclusive experiences that deepen understanding, broaden perspectives, and inspire engagement with the world around us.” In essence, interpretation goes beyond simply sharing facts and information with visitors and instead seeks to make that information meaningful and relevant.

Incorporating First-Person Accounts

Long-range trends in interpretation have emphasized the necessity and power of sharing individual perspectives. Incorporating first-person accounts throughout exhibits and programming helps visitors who struggle to relate to third-person historic descriptions. They can allow visitors to form meaningful connections with the lives, struggles, and successes of people in the past. Latta Place has promising potential to interpret and present the stories of traditionally underrepresented groups in an impactful way. Allowing historical figures to “speak for themselves” can also mitigate accusations of “rewriting history.” Furthermore, the County’s MeckRoots initiative for gathering oral histories from County residents and descendants provides an essential resource for first-person accounts.

Inclusive Visitor Participation

In an age where individuals can contribute their ideas and perspectives on a topic with the tap of a button, visitors expect to have the opportunity to contribute to the narrative. It is also crucial for visitors to understand that they are becoming part of history by visiting a site and carrying its stories forward. Visitor participation should be considered during the development of interpretive media and subsequent programming. Engaging the local community allows historic sites and museums to tap into local resources and better understand the community’s perspective of the site and their lasting connections to it. .

Providing Multiple-Perspectives

People see the same things differently. Whether discussing professional sports teams, dining spots, or politicians—no person, place, thing, or topic receives unanimous support. Visitors do not expect to hear only one voice and often respond more positively when multiple views are shared. Multiple perspectives, especially expressed through direct quotes, resonate. For example, some years ago the National Park Service began quoting directly from the text of Secession Declarations in their Civil War interpretation. These quotes spelled out why states such as North Carolina left the Federal Union in the participants' own words.

Do Not Omit the Hard Stories

Visitors often perceive a controversial story going untold or unaddressed—or a perspective not shared—as purposeful avoidance, whether or not that is the case. Clear, honest, and accessible interpretation indicates that you acknowledge not only the story but also the perspective of the visitor. This recognition may come through any type of media—online, physical graphics, educational programming, and more—but it is most successful when visitors can easily access it. Multiple channels should work together, addressing the story with the same sensitivity, messaging, and tone.

Retaining Site Responsibility

Site managers are responsible for ensuring that all interpretive materials—waysides, educational programming, and any other narrative approach—are appropriate and factually accurate. Inappropriate viewpoints (defending slavery or down playing White supremacy) are unacceptable, despite the emphasis that best practice places on inclusion and multiple perspectives. Interpretation must remain sensitive to the fact that certain ideas and symbols are perceived as derogatory and hateful. Managers must consider, justify, and adhere to ethical and moral lines, regulatory and legal.

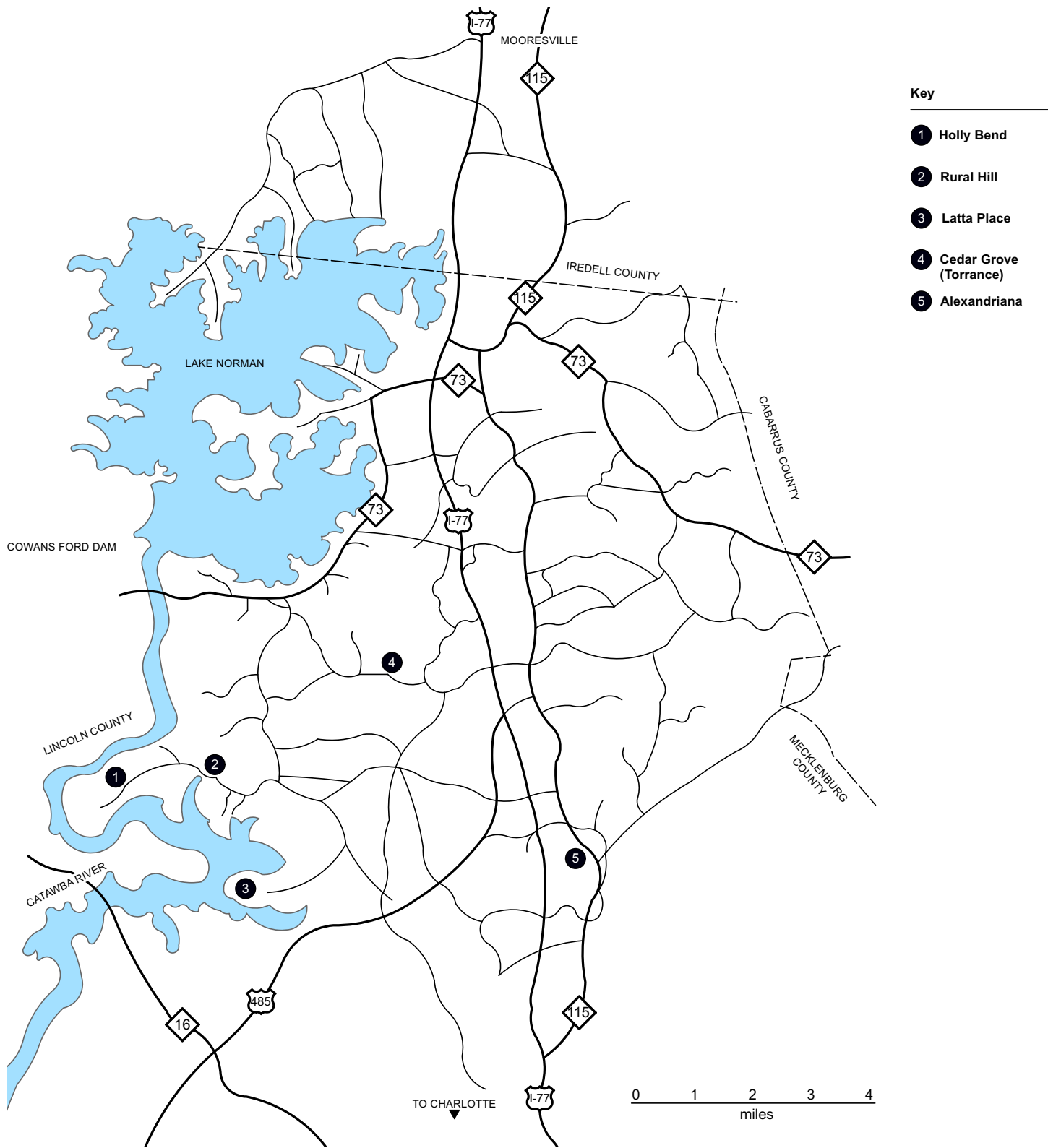
PROJECT HISTORY AND SCOPE

Latta Place is a historic and cultural resource site within the Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation system. For approximately 49 years, Latta Place was operated by an independent 501c(3) organization, Historic Latta, Inc. In June of 2021 the county severed its contract with the organization due to disagreements regarding inappropriate interpretive programming. County staff and community partners then drafted a three-phased (1-Discovery, 2-Development, 3-Delivery) project process to re-imagine the site. The Discovery phase involved the following elements:

- ▶ **Engagement With Key Partners**
- ▶ **Drafting Mission & Vision Statements**
- ▶ **Benchmark Research**
- ▶ **Public Surveys**

County staff determined that an interpretive master plan would be necessary for moving on to the Development phase. The Design Minds, Inc. was contracted to create an interpretive master plan to guide content, delivery methods, and site layout. After careful consideration, the scope of the project was broadened to include additional former plantation sites within Mecklenburg County to ensure that development across this group of sites reflects a cohesive design approach. The map on the following page outlines the 5 locations being considered. While developing the interpretive master plan, The Design Minds and their partners at Civility Localized continued to engage the Mecklenburg community on behalf of the County. The planning team met with community members and stakeholders in virtual and in-person meetings, as well as the development of an online survey.

While completing the interpretive master plan, the County continued with other items in the Discovery phase, including story and oral history collection, identifying key informants and community members, and conducting archival research to inform future interpretation at the site. The interpretive planning process will wrap up in the summer of 2023. From there, using this document as a blueprint, the County will look toward the Delivery phase and reopening the site to the public in 2024.



- Key**
- 1 Holly Bend
 - 2 Rural Hill
 - 3 Latta Place
 - 4 Cedar Grove (Torrance)
 - 5 Alexandriana

In addition to Latta Place (3), this interpretive plan will make recommendations for additional interpretation at Holly Bend (1), Rural Hill (2), Cedar Grove (4), and Alexandriana (5). Each of these sites are significant to the history of Mecklenburg and North Carolina.

SITE MISSION

Before engaging The Design Minds to develop an interpretive master plan, the County planning committee reevaluated the mission and name of the site to better guide future developments. The County has since rebranded the site as Latta Place and further refined the site's mission and goals to better align with those of the County, stakeholders, and local community members.

Latta Place

Truth – Transparency – Compassion – Transformation – Unity

We believe it is our duty to tell the truth. We resolve to practice transparency in all that we do.

We are dedicated to providing:

- A transformational and engaging experience featuring holistic storytelling filled with truth and empathy.
- An educational experience, giving voice to a multitude of historical perspectives.
- A bridge between the past and present through historical interpretation.
- An essential resource to the residents of the greater Charlotte/Mecklenburg community and beyond.
- A visit that inspires self-examination and application of knowledge.
- A hub for the promotion of historical research and peer-reviewed scholarship.
- A welcome to all visitors with the intent of fostering dignity, while respecting the natural environment in which Latta Place is located.

Visitors walking towards the historic structures at Latta Place.



CURRENT SITE LAYOUT



Key

- 1 Visitor Center
- 2 Well House
- 3 Carriage Barn
- 4 Latta house
- 5 Kitchen
- 6 Meat House
- 7 Office
- 8 Well House
- 9 Barn #2
- 10 Feed House
- 11 Barn #1
- 12 Enslaved Cabin
- 13 Yeoman's Cabin
- 14 Chicken Coop
- 15 Restroom
- 16 Well House
- 17 Storage Shed
- 18 Alexander Cabin
- 19 Miner Cabin
- 20 Beehives

PLANNING GOALS

During the interpretive planning process, County staff and the planning team identified what goals and hopes they would like to see realized for the site in the next 5 to 7 years. A summary of those goals are included below.

- ▶ The site should feel like it has been thoughtfully planned for a high-quality experience that reflects the importance of its history to the county and community.
- ▶ Latta Place should have a diverse and inclusive team in planning and design, as well as eventual management and interpretation.
- ▶ The site should attract a diverse group of visitors from around the region, state, and nation.
- ▶ The site should reflect a positive transformation from the previous period of ownership and set a standard for the County. It should be rooted in best practices of interpretation and preservation.
- ▶ This experience should be more than a one-visit experience, with programming that encourages return visitation.
- ▶ Latta Place should be a site where visitors are free to experience a wide range of emotions—not just sorrow or anger, but also dignity, pride, and hope. Historic Rosedale in Charlotte, NC was referenced as a good example.
- ▶ Provide educational opportunities that are historically accurate, inclusive, and provide multiple perspectives on historic events. Visitors should understand how sites like Latta Place have influenced Mecklenburg County’s development to today.
- ▶ Hopewell Presbyterian Church should be included in the planning as it is a connecting theme between Latta and the other potential plantation sites.



Main house and kitchen at Latta Place plantation.

NEEDS, CHALLENGES, + OPPORTUNITIES

As Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation looks to reopen Latta Place and associated sites with a new mission and interpretation, there are several basic needs as well as key challenges and opportunities to consider before future site improvements take place. A summary of those items is included below. Recommendations later in this document will address these items.

Needs

- ▶ A flexible space at Latta Place to provide a variety of programming and an education area
- ▶ Sufficient staff to meet the intended goals and demands of visitors
 - ▶ Interpreters/guides, historian, and maintenance staff
 - ▶ All staff members must provide excellent professional and customer service
- ▶ The interpretive master plan should address how needs may change or grow over time.
- ▶ The current sliding-scale program pricing that is in effect needs modification
- ▶ A decision on the Latta Place site name and overall look-and-feel
 - ▶ All signs across agencies and inside and outside of the preserve should be assessed for consistency in name and design
 - ▶ There is a standard used for the nature preserve signage, but the County is open to slight adjustments to customize it for this project
 - ▶ Consistent design should be reflected across all plantation district sites
- ▶ Transparency with the public during the planning process and continuing after

Challenges

- ▶ Most of the sites have buildings and structures that will require some level of restoration or new construction. Some examples include:
 - ▶ Latta House is currently undergoing exterior wood restoration work on the clapboard siding. While the house is equipped with an HVAC system the HVAC units are not operational.
 - ▶ The main Latta House also has structural issues related to the foundation. As of 2023, the County is in the process of hiring a structural engineer for assessment and remediation.
 - ▶ The visitor center at Latta Place will be demolished and a new building will need to be constructed that can also serve as a community and research center. The bathrooms on site also need to be replaced.
 - ▶ The Alexander Cabin's foundation is unfinished, with exposed cement blocking.

NEEDS, CHALLENGES, + OPPORTUNITIES (CONTINUED)

- ▶ Holly Bend would require a paint analysis to restore the house to its original paint scheme.
- ▶ Several of the buildings and structures will require work to make them accessible. Some examples include:
 - ▶ The Visitors Center and offices at Rural Hill are not physically accessible to all visitors.
 - ▶ The upper stories of Latta House and Holly Bend that cannot be made accessible in the historic buildings will require alternative interpretation in accessible areas for visitors who cannot climb stairs.
 - ▶ Holly Bend lacks an accessible rest room.
- ▶ Gravel parking areas and pathways limit accessibility to visitors with mobility issues. Parking at some sites is limited in capacity or where it can be located.
- ▶ Confusion exists regarding the names and site overlap of the plantation, nature preserve, and past organizations.
- ▶ Although the site is only half an hour from downtown Charlotte, people often perceive it as being outside of an easy driving distance.
- ▶ Any audiovisual components would need to be robust, as there is concern regarding staff ability to upkeep AV components over time.

Opportunities

- ▶ Latta Place, Rural Hill, Holly Bend, Alexandriana, and Cedar Grove represent important histories of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, and the United States. Preserving these buildings and sharing the stories of those who lived and worked here can provide future generations with a greater understanding of their past and their communities today.
- ▶ Latta Place has the potential to become a site for healing and radical transformation, bringing communities and individuals together.
- ▶ There's no scholarly research center in this part of state, Latta Place could serve as one.
 - ▶ House academic conferences
 - ▶ Produce papers and journals
 - ▶ Have a resident historian/research librarian
 - ▶ Potential partnerships with UNC Charlotte, Mecklenburg County public library system, Southeastern Museums Conference, and other professional organizations

NEEDS, CHALLENGES, + OPPORTUNITIES (CONTINUED)

- ▶ When appropriate, there is a potential to partner with local businesses, entrepreneurs, students, teachers, and others to promote community efforts, businesses, and ideas.
- ▶ Partner with the major healthcare groups in the area
 - ▶ Medicinal, health and well-being, natural remedies, programming, etc.
- ▶ Quest
 - ▶ Intended as the orientation center for the entire preserve
 - ▶ Potential to bring Latta Place stories to Quest as a tease to the site
 - ▶ Infuse Quest into interpretation of nature at Latta Place
- ▶ Event space for programming, community events, family reunions, etc.
- ▶ Potential for shuttle system through partnerships with other recreation centers

SITE RESOURCES

Latta Place and the other associated historical sites in this plan contain many historical and natural resources which can be utilized in future interpretation. Interpretive storytelling should create a balance between the story's thematic elements and the available resources that will help communicate the story to visitors. In addition, these sites have the unique power to provide strong connections to Mecklenburg County's (and the nation's) formative years. Although there are limited artifacts to support the story, the historic structures and natural landscapes offer substantial opportunities to tell a complete and engaging story.

The goal of this section is to define both the tangible and intangible elements of communicating the story.

Tangible Resources:

Tangible resources are the aspects of the site that visitors can see, touch, and otherwise physically experience. These resources can be used as physical representations of the stories we would like to teach visitors and should be highlighted as a part of the visitor experience.

- ▶ Historic Structures (Latta House, Alexander Cabin, Holly Bend, Cedar Grove home, Rural Hill well house, column's of Davidson estate, etc.)
- ▶ Recreated Structures (Enslaved Cabins, Carriage Barn, Corn Crib, Yeoman's Cabin, etc.)
- ▶ Modern Structures (Latta Visitor Center, storage sheds, Rural Hill Community Center, etc.)
- ▶ Landscapes (open fields, forests with trails, views of the water, corn fields)
- ▶ Trees and Vegetation (holly tree, puttyroot orchid, Georgia's aster etc.)
- ▶ Wildlife (bald eagle, wild turkey, red fox, mink, red-spotted newt, gray fox, opossum, etc.)
- ▶ Furniture and items related to previous owners of the Rural Hill home
- ▶ Rural Hill library
- ▶ Significant archeological sites

Rural Hill includes a 4,000 sq. ft.. event space that is rented for conferences and events.



Intangible Resources:

Although intangible resources are not as obvious, they are equally important. These resources are comprised of the feelings we hope to invoke and the connections we hope visitors are able to make to their own lives. As a visitor, what might you feel as you explored the site?

- ▶ Sense of Place
- ▶ Pain and Struggle of Others
- ▶ Stepping into the Past
- ▶ Empowerment
- ▶ Awe of Historic Structures and Craftsmanship
- ▶ Sense of Belonging
- ▶ Connections Between Present and Past
- ▶ Pain and Grief
- ▶ Fear and Uncertainty
- ▶ Feeling of Discovery
- ▶ Connections to Ancestors and Those Before Us
- ▶ Hurt and Confusion
- ▶ Sense of Pride and Purpose

Recreated structures for enslaved living quarters and yeoman's quarters.



EMOTIONAL + INTELLECTUAL CONNECTIONS

Visitors forge meaningful connections to the story and develop lasting memories and impressions of the site through resources and interpretation. They forge intellectual and emotional connections to the meanings and significance of resources. Intellectual connections describe the information we hope visitors take away from their experience—What should visitors learn? Emotional connections tie visitors personally and memorably to the story’s meaning—What should visitors feel?

The following outlines possible intellectual and emotional connections with the site and its tangible and intangible resources.

Intellectual Outcomes

- ▶ Learn more about the history of slavery in the area, and its impact on the economy, politics, and society
 - Understand how deeply embedded slavery was in the local society, culture, and economy
 - Chattel nature of slavery of long-lasting effects of slavery through reconstruction to today
 - Urban vs. rural slavery
 - How politics perpetuated slavery and continue to perpetuate its legacy
 - Relationships between the enslaved and their enslavers
 - Slavery in this region was both similar and different than slavery in other regions and states
- ▶ African cultural origins of enslaved people
- ▶ Learn about the history, culture, and traditions of the Catawba and other Indigenous people who called this land home since time immemorial
- ▶ Make connections to human trafficking, understand the mechanisms of how enslaved people were moved to, through, and from not just Latta but the region
 - Domestic slave trade (leasing out, inheriting, exchanging enslaved peoples locally)
 - National (inter-state, ports, slave markets, etc)
 - International (Middle passage, Caribbean, etc)
- ▶ Force people to reflect on their own experience, and how they’ve been touched by slavery’s lasting effects for good or ill. Examine the unfinished promises and work of Reconstruction
- ▶ Understand the interplay between class, power, wealth, and family
- ▶ Consider the medical perspectives—What knowledge did enslaved people have and pass down? What are the connections to modern medicine today? How have these practices continued through oral traditions?

- ▶ Explore religion as a central social mechanism
 - Hopewell Presbyterian Church as a shared connection among planters but also where enslaved people were baptized and buried
 - How religion was used to both support and abolish slavery
 - Original African religions
 - Religion as a method of survival, healing, resistance
 - History of the early African American churches that formed post-Civil War
- ▶ Learn about enslaved craftsmen and women such as Lewis Phifer
- ▶ Landscape
 - How do people use the landscape then and now?
 - How have people changed the landscape?
 - Environmental awareness
 - What were environmental impacts of slavery
 - What did the landscape used to look like?
- ▶ Connections between the historic agriculture industry and practices to today's small farmers movement

Emotional Outcomes

- ▶ Empowerment
- ▶ Empathy
- ▶ Enlightenment
- ▶ Sense of walking in someone else's footsteps
- ▶ Confront trauma
- ▶ Reconciliation
- ▶ Frustration – How could this happen? How can things like this continue to happen? Why does it still affect our nation so deeply?
- ▶ Be motivated to affect change and act
- ▶ Pain and Grief
- ▶ Hope
- ▶ Fear
- ▶ Pride
- ▶ Dignity
- ▶ Celebratory
- ▶ Transformation
- ▶ Reclamation
- ▶ Resilience
- ▶ Release of the pain
- ▶ Spiritual moment

EDUCATION STANDARDS + CONNECTIONS

Identifying specific approaches for educational outreach using national and state standards is a goal for future site interpretation. Previous park visitors frequently included school groups, and interpretation should consist of appropriate and expanded programming for these groups. Studies show that school-aged visitors prefer authenticity at historical sites and are willing to engage more with tough, challenging stories if they are accurate.

The following standards are from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction Reference Guides and Unpacking Documents (2021). Park planning staff should review updated standards in future years to ensure continual relevance for young visitors and school groups. In North Carolina and around the nation, there are currently political debates about what content/history is appropriate to share with children and what is not. **Latta Place will remain committed to telling an authentic, truthful account of this site and its past, regardless of educational standard changes.** While future site interpreters should try to connect to what children are learning in the classroom, it should not be the sole driver of interpretive programming.

Behavioral Sciences

- ▶ Grade 3

- 3.B.1.1 - Explain how the values of, beliefs, and cultures of various indigenous, religious, racial and other groups contribute to the development of local communities and the state

- ▶ Grade 4

- 4.B.1.1 - Explain how traditions, social structure, and artistic expression have contributed to the unique identity of North Carolina

- ▶ **Civics + Government**

- ▶ Grade 6

- 6.C&G.1.3 - Compare the requirements for citizenship under various civilizations, empires, and societies

- 6.C&G.1.6 - Explain the reasons for the rise and falls of governments and authority in civilizations and empires of Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas

- ▶ Grade 8

- 8.C&G.1.5 - Compare access to democratic rights and freedoms of various indigenous, religious, racial, gender, ability and identity groups in North Carolina and the Nation

- ▶ **Economics:**

- ▶ Grade 3

- 3.E.1.2 - Explain how the natural resources of a region impact the production and consumption of goods

- ▶ Grade 4

- 4.E.1.2 - Explain factors that have led to economic growth and decline for North Carolina's major industries

EDUCATION STANDARDS + CONNECTIONS (CONTINUED)

▶ Geography

▶ Grade 4

4.G.1.3 - Summarize the reasons for forced and voluntary migration to, from, and within North Carolina

▶ Grade 5

5.G.1.2 - Explain ways in which voluntary and forced migration and slavery led to changes in the landscape of the United States

5.G.1.4 - Explain the reasons for forced and voluntary migration, to, from, and within the United States

▶ Grade 8

8.G.1.4 - Explain the reasons for forced and voluntary migration, to, from, and within the United States

▶ History

▶ Grade 3

3.H.1.2 - Explain the lasting impact historical events have had on local communities

▶ Grade 4

4.H.1.1 - Explain how the experiences and achievements of minorities, indigenous groups, and marginalized people have contributed to change and innovation in North Carolina

4.H.1.3 - Explain the ways in which revolution, reform, and resistance have shaped North Carolina

4.H.1.4 - Summarize the role North Carolina has played in major conflicts and events throughout the history of America

▶ Grade 5

5.H.1.2 - Summarize the changing roles of women, indigenous, racial, and other minority groups in the United States

5.H.1.3 - Explain the ways in which revolution, reform, and resistance have shaped the United States

5.H.1.4 - Explain the impact of major conflicts and events on the development of the United States

▶ Grade 7

7.H.1.4 - Explain how slavery, xenophobia, disenfranchisement, ethnocentrism and intolerance have affected individuals and groups in modern world history

▶ Grade 8

8.H.1.1 - Explain the causes and effects of conflict in North Carolina and the nation

8.H.1.3 - Explain how slavery, segregation, voter suppression, reconcentration, and other discriminatory practices have been used to suppress and exploit certain groups within North Carolina and the nation over time

THEMES, TOPICS, AND ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

Themes define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to the public about a cultural site. They draw on tangible and intangible resources, convey intellectual and emotional dynamics, and evoke universal concepts inherent in the site’s stories. These statements connect park resources to more extensive processes, systems, ideas, and values and are the building blocks of any future interpretation. Sound themes are also historically accurate and reflect current scholarship and science.

Presenting these themes as overarching open-ended questions creates a space for co-discovery. Essential questions provide opportunities for visitors to make personal connections with the themes. The Latta planning team developed the following theme statements, topics, story lines, and essential questions with input from the general public, community members, and stakeholders.

Theme: Perspectives of the Enslaved	
Enslaved Black workers, many of whom were trafficked from Africa or the Caribbean, lived, worked, and died at this site. They brought with them their own knowledge, skills, and beliefs that have impacted the social fabric of the region.	
TOPICS AND STORY LINES Examples or sample story lines within this theme	ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS Overarching, open-ended questions that give space for co-discovery with visitors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Enslaved persons brought their own knowledge, skill sets, and beliefs with them when they were enslaved and trafficked to North Carolina. They were valued by plantation owners for those skills and knowledge. ▶ Enslaved persons at Latta Place and other regional plantations faced daily threats of violence and harassment while enslaved. ▶ Despite the constraints and control of their bodies and actions that enslaved individuals faced, they found ways to resist and form connections. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ What barriers do people face because of their race, class, or gender? How might those experiences change from generation to generation? How were these barriers cultivated and nurtured during the period of interpretation to inform our understanding of the modern Black experience? ▶ What is the impact of daily, systematic oppression on the individual? How might it change their actions or beliefs? ▶ How did human trafficking help build counties like Mecklenburg County? How are those memories remembered today?

Theme: Inequality Reflected in the Built Environment

The built environment of Mecklenburg County reflects systemic inequality that has been established through decisions made over time and into the present. Despite living under violent conditions, enslaved Black and Indigenous people formed communities, worshipped together, and created families. The labor and craftsmanship of these enslaved workers are responsible for many structures that demonstrated the wealth and status of the ruling class during the 18th and 19th centuries. Descendants of these communities still call Mecklenburg County home and continue the cultural traditions and histories of their ancestors.

<p>TOPICS AND STORY LINES</p> <p>Examples or sample story lines within this theme</p>	<p>ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS</p> <p>Overarching, open-ended questions that give space for co-discovery with visitors</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Slavery was a geographically pervasive institution and occurred in cities as well as at plantations. ▶ The built environment of Mecklenburg County and its region reflect inequalities of the past. Certain communities have been preserved and prospered while others have been allowed to deteriorate, cut off from resources, or removed completely. ▶ The location of many burial grounds for enslaved people were not recorded and remain unknown today. ▶ Many of the ornate details in the county's historic structures were designed and built by enslaved craftsmen and artisans. ▶ Many historic Black neighborhoods in Mecklenburg County were destroyed by urban renewal and/or gentrification. Government and market forces have worked in tandem to establish and support these activities. ▶ Enslaved people resisted slavery and formed bonds that transcended plantation and property boundaries. ▶ The first dedicated Black neighborhood appeared in Charlotte around 1910 (Brooklyn/ Second Ward). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ What forces determine which structures/ communities are preserved and which are not? ▶ How might diverse groups come together to thoughtfully plan a growing city? ▶ How does the built environment reflect the labor of those who created it? ▶ Must economic success always depend on exploitative labor relations? ▶ How do communities form and sustain themselves?

Theme: Utilizing Natural Resources

Mecklenburg County's land has sustained generations of people, beginning with Indigenous groups such as the Catawba Nation. At Latta, later generations came to value the land for its potential to support commercial agriculture. Now, careful planning and management help to ensure the protection of this place in the future.

TOPICS AND STORY LINES Examples or sample story lines within this theme	ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS Overarching, open-ended questions that give space for co-discovery with visitors
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Historic cultural perspectives on the use value of land, land ownership, and the treatment of natural resources varies significantly between indigenous cultures, African cultures and European cultures.▶ Logging and other extractive industries have altered the natural landscape across the region. Proactive land management practices can improve conditions.▶ Some Mecklenburg County communities, especially communities of color, have been disproportionately impacted by harmful human-environmental interactions. Today, ongoing environmental justice efforts by the county, state, and other organizations are seeking to right the wrongs of the past.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ How does access to water change the way communities develop?▶ How do the resources and environment around me affect daily life?▶ How do human interactions and decisions affect which natural resources are preserved and which are extracted?

Theme: Indigenous Perspectives and Experiences

Latta Place is located on the ancestral lands of the Catawba Nation, who have called this region home since time immemorial. Today, the Tribe maintains strong ties to the land and their ancestors.

TOPICS AND STORY LINES Examples or sample story lines within this theme	ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS Overarching, open-ended questions that give space for co-discovery with visitors
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Topics and story lines for Indigenous focused content should be developed in consultation with representatives and subject matter experts from the Catawba Nation. Potential topics include: Loss of land, traditional Catawba way of life, Catawba Nation today, Tribal politics, connections with the land and resources, medicinal practices, slavery, and violence with early settlers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Topics and story lines for Indigenous focused content should be developed in consultation with representatives and subject matter experts from the Catawba Nation.

Theme: Lasting Legacies

Systemic racism is a system in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms work in various, often reinforcing, ways to perpetuate racial group inequality. The preservation and interpretation of historic sites allow County residents to understand the past and work toward healing.

TOPICS AND STORY LINES

Examples or sample story lines within this theme

- ▶ White leaders in Mecklenburg County and across North Carolina and the nation have perpetuated white supremacy even after the end of slavery. The institutionalization of practices such as red-lining, the privatization of the prison industry and other political economic forces have worked to reinforce the inequities that were first established in the 1700s and 1800s through the transatlantic slave trade.
- ▶ We cannot face our current social inequity without a purposeful and truthful reconciliation of the past (trauma-informed perspective). The past, while it seems distant, is not so distant in our collective social psyche.
- ▶ The County invests in historic preservation and interpretation in order to learn from the past and better serve Mecklenburg area residents today and for generations to come.
- ▶ The first dedicated Black neighborhood appeared in Charlotte around 1910 (Brooklyn/ Second Ward).

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

Overarching, open-ended questions that give space for co-discovery with visitors

- ▶ If stories are not shared thoughtfully, they can be triggering and/or re-traumatizing. How might the ways we remember and share the past hurt communities today?
- ▶ How can certain decisions perpetuate problems and inequalities from the past?
- ▶ How do different groups experience the same place in different ways?
- ▶ How can acknowledging our past help us heal as a community today?

AUDIENCES

To develop a successful interpretive strategy planners must first consider who we are interpreting the story for. Pioneering interpreter Freeman Tilden once noted that *“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.”* In other words, we must understand who our visitors are to best determine how to interpret the story for them. Who will visit Latta Place? Who do we want to visit the site that isn’t already doing so? How can we best serve the interests of the local community, tourists, and school groups?

Planning a new interpretive experience requires aligning the wants and expectations of current and future audiences with the new interpretive media. The following outlines the typical visitors to the site prior to its closure and the desired future audiences at Latta Place.

Who was visiting Latta Place? (Prior to the 2021 closing of the site)

- ▶ **School Groups:** School groups were the largest group of attendees and primary income source. Typical field trips were 4th or 8th graders focused on American history. These trips stopped leading up to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ▶ **Out-of-Town Tourists:** These visitors ranged in age and gender but tended to be older, White visitors. They came because Latta Place was listed as a notable place to visit on travel websites.



Visitors touring Latta Place, ca. 2019.

Who else should be visiting Latta Place?

- ▶ **Researchers, Academics, Historians:** Latta Place, in addition to sharing its own unique history, should be a site for research, study, and education that attracts researchers and others seeking to learn more about the history of Mecklenburg County.
- ▶ **Local Residents:** Other than school groups, few locals visited the site. Many will now be aware of the site due to the controversies that occurred before the County took over operations at the site.
- ▶ **BIPOC Visitors:** Former sites of enslavement can be difficult for many BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) visitors. Improvements and recommendations at Latta Place *must* take this into consideration and ensure the site is welcoming and inclusive.
- ▶ **Families:** Latta Place should create a visitor experience that is appealing to audiences of different ages and genders. Parents should view the site as a worthwhile educational experience for their kids.
- ▶ **University Students:** Higher education students should find value in Latta Place. It should be a site that attracts students from a number of fields (archeology, history, museum studies, anthropology, etc.) for research, learning, professional development, and more.
- ▶ **County Professionals:** Museums and historic sites can be places to teach compassion and understanding and help professionals such as first responders learn more about how the traumas and inequities of the past influence communities today.
- ▶ **Young Visitors:** Outside of school groups, young adults should find value and interest in this site. There should be changing components or other experiences that not only attract young visitors but also encourage repeat visitation.

The Carriage Barn, while not historic, provides potential opportunities for programming, events, or interpretive exhibits to connect with visitors



POTENTIAL MARKETS

Primary Markets

- ▶ Mecklenburg County, North Carolina
- ▶ Concord, North Carolina
- ▶ Gaston, North Carolina
- ▶ Hickory, North Carolina
- ▶ Monroe, North Carolina
- ▶ Rock Hill, South Carolina
- ▶ Salisbury, North Carolina
- ▶ Statesville, North Carolina

Secondary Markets

- ▶ Asheville, North Carolina
- ▶ Augusta, Georgia
- ▶ Bristol, Tennessee
- ▶ Columbia, South Carolina
- ▶ Greenville, South Carolina
- ▶ Greensboro, North Carolina
- ▶ Raleigh, North Carolina
- ▶ Roanoke, Virginia

Engaging Schools

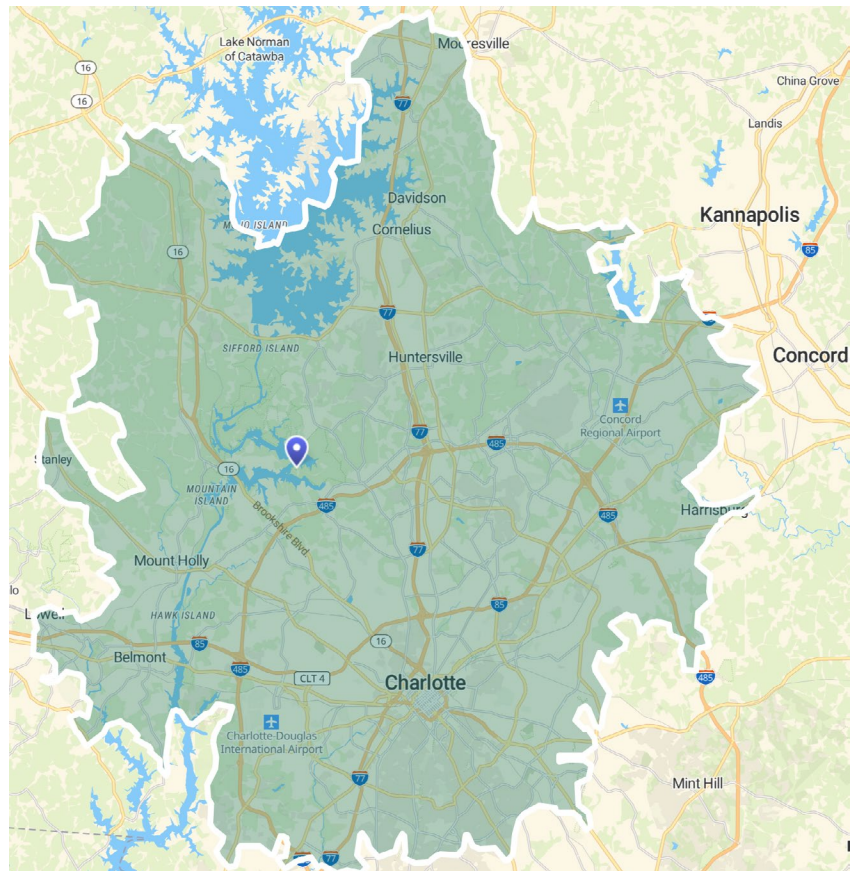
Regional Schools Served (PreK–12):
175 public | 63 private

Total Regional Students (K-12):
142,536

Potential Target Regional Students
Served (4th and 8th Grades):
21,842

Digital and online programming can expand the number of students served statewide.

Data from National Center for Education Statistics (2022), an institute of the US Department of Education.



Map depicts the area within a 30 minute drive of Latta Place. The site benefits from being located within a large metro area but is not currently connected via public transportation.

EVALUATION OF SIMILAR SITES

Visitation rates at museums and historic sites continue to fluctuate post-COVID. The American Alliance of Museums and the research firm Wilkening Consulting recently conducted a study between December 2021 and January 2022 to collect visitation data from over 700 sites nationwide. At the time of the survey, museums reported experiencing an average of 62% of their normal, pre-pandemic attendance. While many outdoor recreation sites experienced a visitation surge during the pandemic, data from the National Park Service and several state park systems shows a general pattern of visitation peaking in 2021 and decreasing 10-30% again in 2022. Pre-COVID numbers may provide a more stable benchmark for visitation goals.

A 2018 survey by Carolina Publishing and Associates, of North Carolina's most visited attractions included the visitation numbers of several historic sites. These are included in the table below:

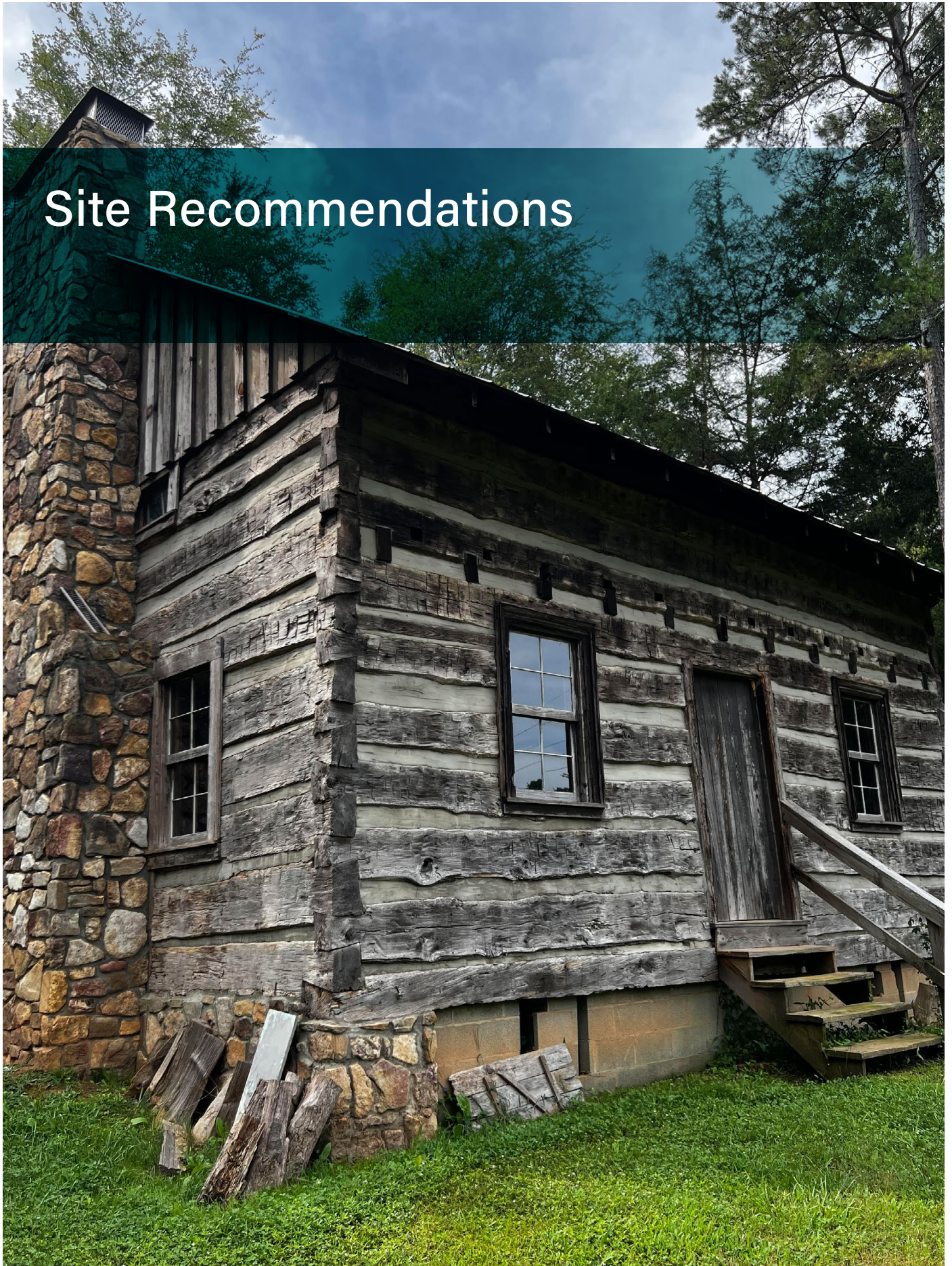
Popular North Carolina Historic Attractions	2018 Visitation
Fort Fisher State Historic Site, Kure Beach	903,254
Fort Macon State Park, Atlantic Beach	677,408
Wright Brothers National Memorial, Kill Devil Hills	374,088
Fort Raleigh National Historic Site, Manteo	256,821
Tryon Palace, New Bern	211,256
North Carolina Transportation Museum, Spencer	146,993

Further research of sites* similar in size and historic nature in the Mecklenburg region found similar operational procedures and programming methods. Listed below are some of the most common features found among these sites:

- ▶ **Seasonality:** State Historic Sites are open Tuesday through Saturday year-round (excepting state holidays), other sites tend to operate from March through early December.
- ▶ **Admission:** Free admission to grounds with a small fee (\$1-\$6) for guided tours, minority of sites offer admission ranging \$10-\$15.
- ▶ **Programming:** 45-minute guided tours available at set times, virtual programming, short orientation films, and off-site interpretive outreach were common options.
- ▶ **Groups:** Group tours or programming require registration 2 weeks beforehand; groups must have a minimum of 10 students or individuals.
- ▶ **Facilities:** Most sites included a visitor center, preservation of historic buildings, exhibits, picnic area, and rest rooms.

*Bennet Place, Duke Homestead, Fort Dobbs, Hampton Plantation, Historic Hope Plantation, Historic Rosedale, Historic Stagville, Horne Creek Living History Farm, House-in-the-Horseshoe, Mendenhall Homeplace, Poplar Grove Plantation, President James K. Polk Site, Somerset Place, Zebulon B. Vance Birthplace

Site Recommendations



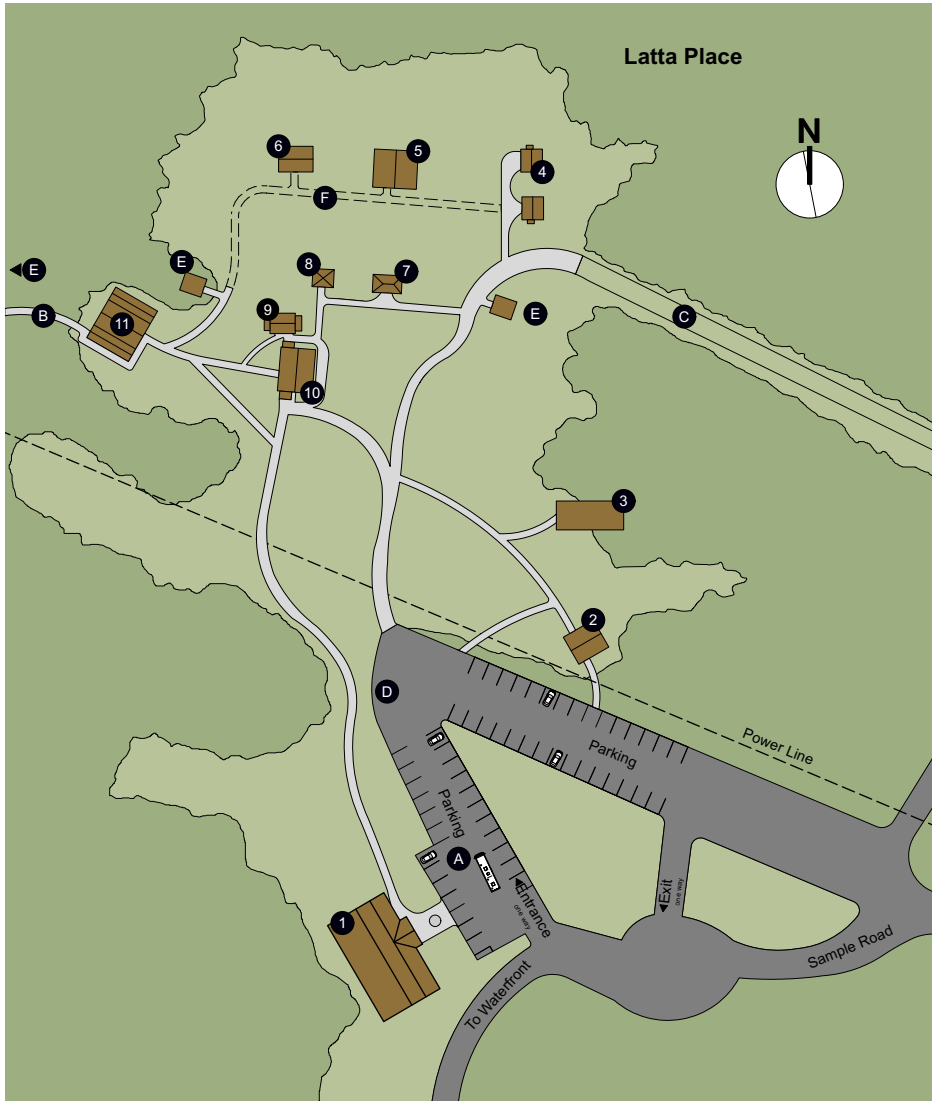
GUIDE TO RECOMMENDATIONS

This section includes a detailed overview of the recommendations for interpretation, programming, and the overall visitor experience at Latta Place and other associated county-owned properties. These recommendations focus on the delivery of interpretation at the sites (programming, exhibits, events, digital access, etc.) and connecting visitors with the themes, stories, and individuals. It also considers visitors' holistic experience and recommends other visitor-related components such as accessibility features, restrooms, and decompression areas.

Note that these recommendations outline a vision for how the site may look and be experienced 5-7 years in the future. Not all of these recommendations will occur at the site upon its first reopening. The suggested reopening date for Latta Place is June 2024, pending other County decisions and the anticipated time frame for needed improvements.

For more information on how the site may grow to this full vision, please refer to the Implementation Plan in the following section of this document.

SITE PLAN & OVERVIEW



Key

- 1 Visitor Center
New visitor center
- 2 Alexander Cabin
- 3 Picnic Shelter with restroom
New gazebo and picnic area
- 4 Enslaved Cabins
- 5 Barn 1
- 6 Barn 2
- 7 Well House
- 8 Meat House
- 9 Kitchen
- 10 Latta Main House
- 11 Carriage Barn

Note

- A Parking lot
fits 52 cars
- B Path to water access
- C Access route (staff only)
- D Extend side walk
- E Reflection space
Note: reflection space #3 is by the water access
- F Potential trail

1 Site Plan
00.05 Scale: 1:1400

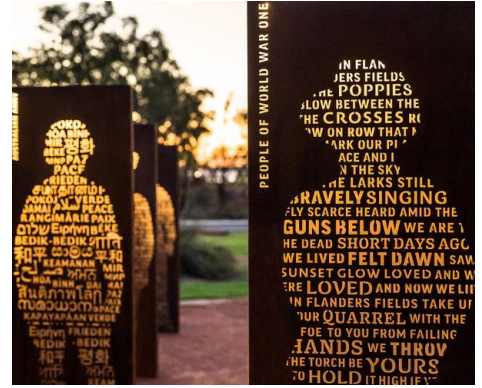
Overview:

Latta Place will be a key site in Mecklenburg County to understand and address the legacies of slavery and serve as a place for healing and retrospection. A new visitor center will house a changing community exhibit space, restrooms, a gift store, select staff offices, and a programming space. Visitors will have opportunities to take self-guided or docent-led tours of the grounds and historic buildings. Outdoor waysides with tactile and digital components (accessed via visitors’ cellphones) enhance the interpretive experience. New trails will make the historic and recreated structures physically accessible to all visitors. Reflection areas, some with public art installations, allow visitors time to reflect and decompress after experiencing what could be traumatic and triggering stories and perspectives. Outdoor gathering areas will allow school groups and others to utilize the site for field trips, special events, reunions, and more.

DESIGN & PROGRAMMING INSPIRATION



interactive, outdoor
waysides



public art,
reflective spaces



accessible historic
sites



guided site tours



WHAT COMMUNITIES DO YOU BELONG TO?
¿A QUÉ COMUNIDADES PERTENECES?

What COMMUNITIES do YOU belong to?

TAKE a card, TELL US, and ADD IT to the rail.
TOMA una tarjeta, DÍNSLO y PONLA en el tarjetero.

¿A qué COMUNIDADES PERTENECES?

JUNETEENTH

Everson Museum
Juneteenth Free Community Day

incorporating community
into the site

NAME
NOMBRE

2022

Spring Lecture Series

FREEDOM ON THE HORIZON

THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD IN NORTHWEST OHIO

VISITOR EXPERIENCE NARRATIVE (Latta Place)

The new visitor experience at Latta Place will change significantly from previous experiences. Whether visiting the site with family, as part of a school field trip, or to attend an event, visitors should expect truthful storytelling that addresses the key themes outlined in this document. A **new visitor center** will serve as a launching pad for the visitor experience and contains restrooms, retail areas, orientation components, and a community gallery with changing exhibits. Some visitors might take advantage of special programming or lectures in the multipurpose room.

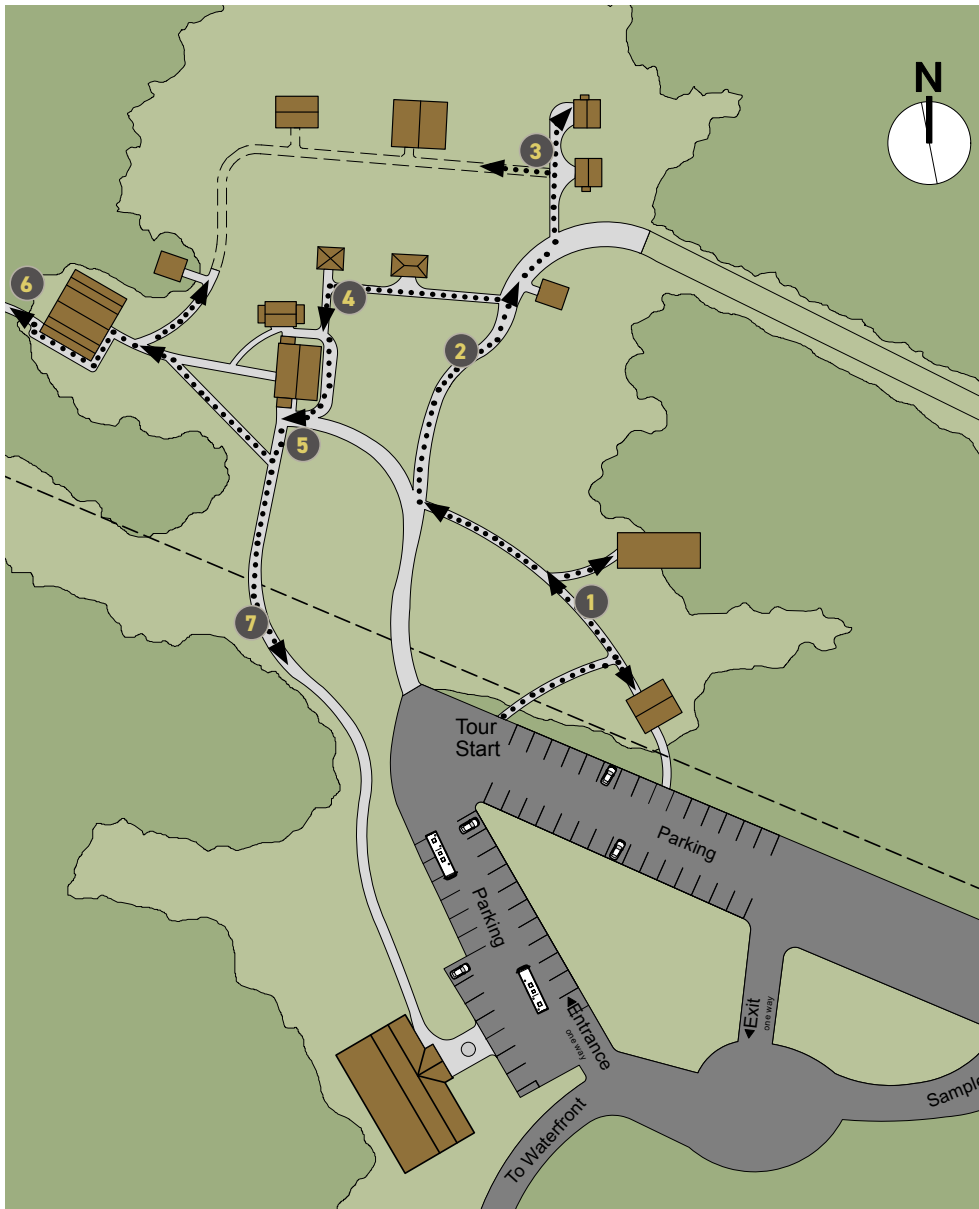
Not everyone will go to the visitor center. Visitors have the option to begin a **self-guided or docent-led tour** of the site and its historic properties at either the visitor center or the gates outside of the Alexander Cabin. Visitors will tour the site from the perspective of the enslaved workers who helped build and operate the site. What were their experiences living in Mecklenburg County as enslaved workers? What was daily life like, and how did they preserve and build community? Tours will take visitors around the property in a counter-clockwise direction, with interpretive waysides and public art augmenting the experience.

Starting at the **Alexander Cabin**, visitors will learn about the Indigenous groups who have called this region home since time immemorial and early American and European settlements in Mecklenburg County. From there, visitors will go to the **enslaved cabins** to learn more about enslaved persons' cultural and religious practices and the exploitation of their labor, skills, and knowledge. Interpretation on waysides and from tour guides will provide a truthful, accurate telling that addresses the impacts and legacies of slavery.

From the enslaved cabins, visitors can navigate to some of the other buildings on the campus. Interpretation on the tour and corresponding waysides will help visitors understand what daily life was like on a plantation in this region and how those experiences differed between different groups of people based on race, gender, and social status. Visitors can continue to the **main Latta house**, which will be closed to the public except for special programming and events. Rather than a "typical historic home visit," people are encouraged to consider what this house meant to different people and how it reinforced social and class structures of the time. They are further encouraged to consider the craftsmanship and knowledge required to construct this home and other structures around Mecklenburg County built by enslaved laborers and craftspeople.

At the conclusion of their experience, visitors are encouraged to take the trail to the water's edge for **reflection and decompression**. Additional interpretation at the Mountain Island Lake access area will link the importance of water access to what it meant to the various groups of people that lived here. Other reflection and decompression gardens will be included throughout the site's campus as noted on the main master plan.

VISITOR FLOW (Latta Place)



Visitor Flow

- 1 Visitor Center (*Orientation, Community exhibits*) or Alexander Cabin (*Wildlife and nature connections*)
- 2 Path Toward Enslaved Cabins (*Early Indigenous presence, Introduction of slavery, County founding*)
- 3 Enslaved Cabins/Reflection Area (*Lives & perspectives of enslaved, Cultural/religious practices, Indigenous Removal*)
- 4 Meat House/Kitchen/Barns (*Life at Latta Place, Lives and perspectives of enslaved and Latta/Sample families*)
- 5 Main House (*Latta/Sample families, Plantation architecture and construction*)
- 6 Waterfront/Reflection Areas (*Importance of water, Lasting legacies of slavery*)
- 7 Return to Visitor Center

Overview:

Typical visitors to the site will experience the stories and historic structures through a self-guided or docent-led tour. All tours would start at the visitor center and direct visitors around the site in a counter-clockwise direction before ending again at the visitor center. Note that some special tours and programs might use routes different than the typical site tour. An overview interpretive topics at each location is outlined above. See the Wayside Plan for a detailed finding of the stories and content at each location. Interpretation is delivered via docents (or audio/pamphlets if self-guided), interpretive waysides, and digital materials shared via QR codes.

RECOMMENDATIONS (Latta Place - Visitor Center)

- ▶ **Remove Current Visitor Center (L1):** Remove the current visitor center building which has sustained damage and does not meet site needs.
- ▶ **Construct a New Visitor Center (L2):** Construct a new visitor center at or near the location of the current building. This new visitor center will serve as the launching pad for the visitor experience. It should include: restrooms, lobby/reception area, retail, community exhibit gallery, multipurpose room for lectures, and offices for site staff and interpreters. This work will require additional archeological studies before construction can begin.
 - ▶ **Construct a Temporary Interpretive Structure (L3):** Consider constructing a smaller structure with limited interpretation until the visitor center can be constructed. This would provide those visiting the site in its initial opening years with an interpretive overview to enhance their experience. This structure could also include interpretation addressing the site's recent past and the current changes.
 - ▶ **Connecting Site to High-Speed Internet (L4):** Connect the new visitor center building with the high-speed internet currently available at Quest.
 - ▶ **Centering the Community (L5):** Dedicate an area in the new visitor center for a changing community gallery. Exhibits here should be co-curated with members of the community and local organizations to highlight the unique culture and history of Mecklenburg County. The current oral history project being completed by the County Park and Recreation Department—MeckRoots—could inform exhibits in this gallery.
 - ▶ **Guest Lectures and Research (L6):** A multipurpose room provides an area to host speakers on topics related to the site's interpretive themes. It could also be a programming space for school group visits and special events. Flexible work spaces in this area could be used by researchers, park staff, interpreters, and volunteers.
 - ▶ **Professional Development (L7):** Utilize the visitor center as a training area for professional development programs for county first responders, law enforcement officers, and other groups that could benefit from a better understanding of the County's past and how it informs residents' lives today. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum runs a similar program, noted in the Appendix of this document.
- ▶ **Outdoor Plaza (L8):** Construct a small plaza area outside the visitor center that includes a tactile site map and limited seating.
- ▶ **Modify Visitor Parking (L9):** Expand visitor parking to accommodate more vehicles and a bus drop-off area. Enhance parking with paved surfaces.
- ▶ **Enhance Sidewalk (L10):** Extend the current sidewalk to loop around the parking area and connect with paths to the Alexander Cabin and Gazebo. This is for accessibility access and visitor safety.

RECOMMENDATIONS (Latta Place - Visitor Center)

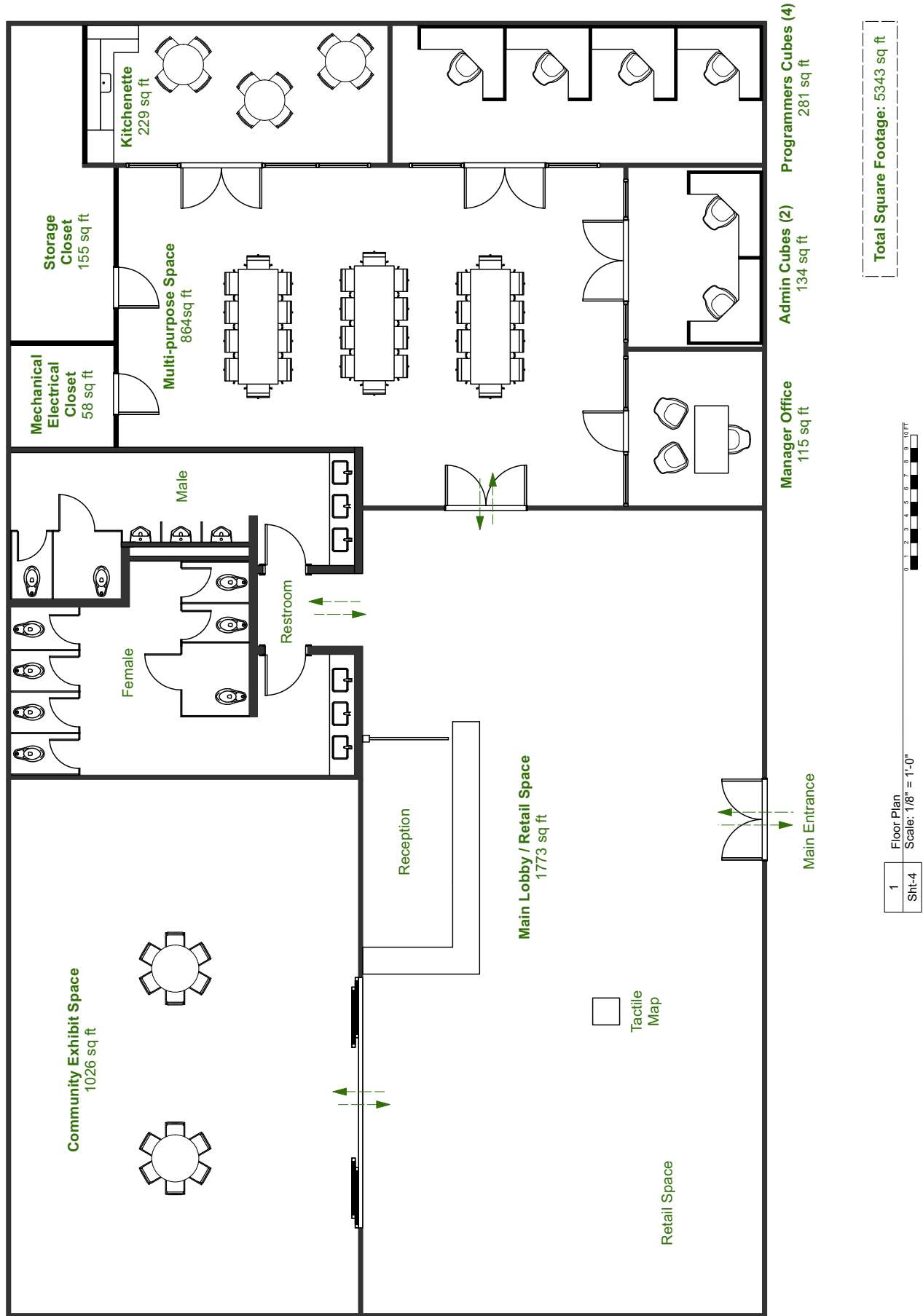


(Above) Potential interior of the new visitor center. Final design would be coordinated with an architect in a separate planning and design process. See following page for a potential visitor center floor plan.

(Right) Potential exterior elements of the new visitor center, including outdoor accessible restrooms, tactile site map, and seating. Final design would be coordinated with an architect and community stakeholders.



RECOMMENDATIONS (Latta Place - Visitor Center)



RECOMMENDATIONS (Latta Place - Campus)

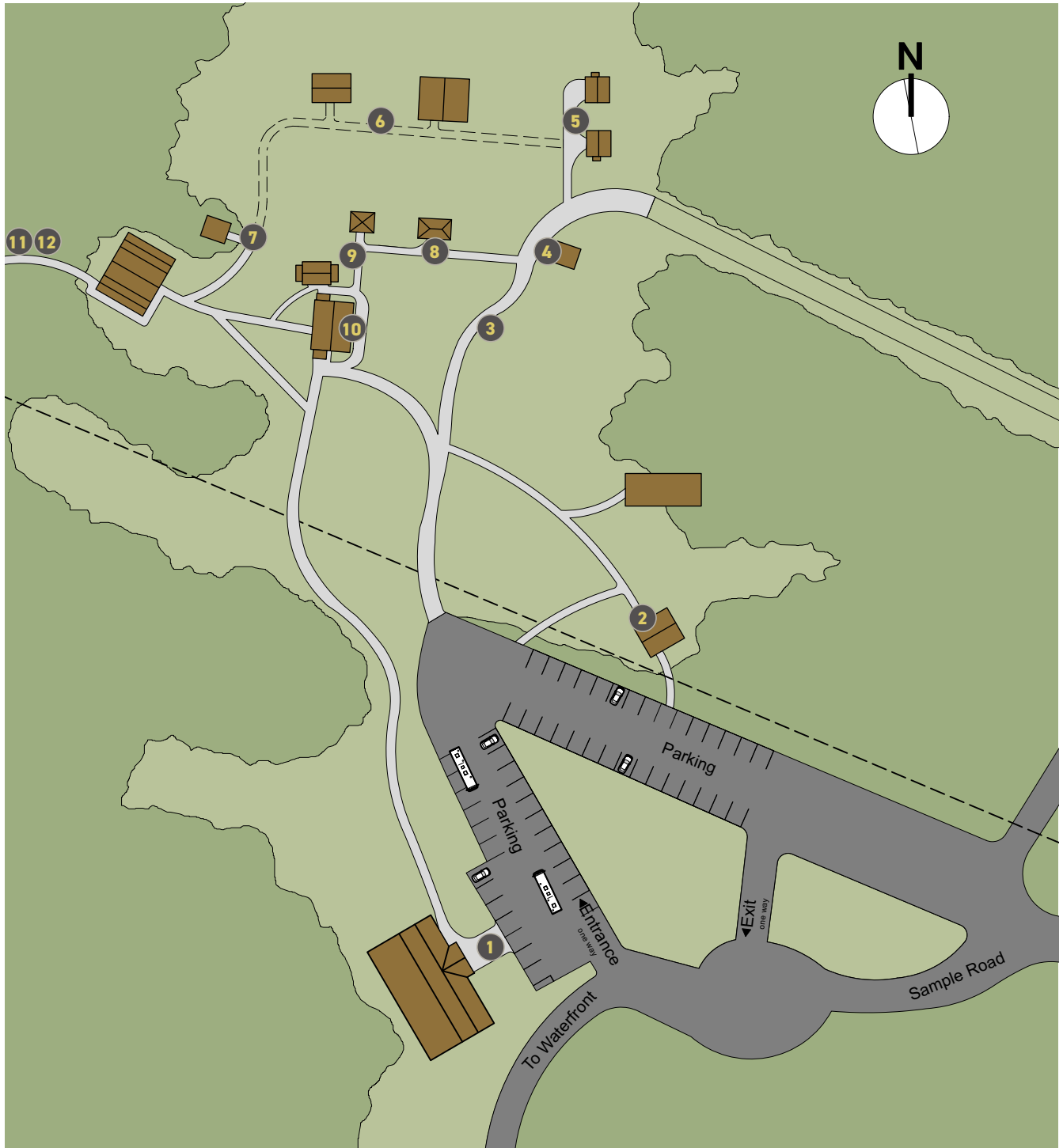
Interpretive and Visitor Experience Recommendations

- ▶ **Develop Interpretive Waysides (L11):** Develop a series of interpretive waysides at key building locations around the Latta Place campus. Where relevant to the story, waysides should include tactile components such as replicas of historic objects, raised line charts and maps, infographics, spinners, and flipbooks. These components will enhance the experience for all visitors. See the Wayside Plan later in this document for suggested placement and storylines.
 - ▶ **Community Videos/Oral Histories (L12):** Augment key waysides with QR codes linking to new videos that utilize subject matter experts, community members, and local businesses and organizations to help interpret the site's past. The Department's oral histories collected in the MeckRoots program could also support these short videos (1-2 minutes each). Examples may include a local chef creating traditional dishes while a historian describes the history of the food. In another video, a local midwife might talk about how contemporary birthing practices are informed by historic practices of descendant communities. These powerful videos can promote economic development, highlight key community members, and be shared in multiple ways online or in the main visitor center.
- ▶ **Develop a New Site Tour (L13):** Visitors to Latta Place will primarily experience the site through self-guided or docent-led tours. Regardless of which experience visitors choose, they should receive interpretation that follows best practices and gives a truthful, authentic telling of the site's past and main themes. These tours may be augmented by outdoor waysides with tactile components, oral histories/community videos, interpretive exhibits, and direct connections with nature.
 - ▶ **Accessible Tour Access (L14):** For self-guided tours, direct access to interpretation on visitors' cellphones is the preferred visitor experience and one that will allow visitors to continue learning even after leaving Latta Place. For equity and accessible access, consider offering printed copies and/or iPads that can be borrowed from the visitor center. Interpretation should be offered in Spanish when possible.



Tactile and interactive components increase accessibility and enhance the visitor experience.

PROPOSED WAYSIDE PLAN



PROPOSED WAYSIDE PLAN

1 Outside Visitor Center

- > Tactile site map with orientation wayfinding
- > Interpretive overview; option to start self-guided site tour

2 Alexander Cabin

- > Wayside identifying potential plants and wildlife visitors might encounter
- > Potential video(s): Preservationist discussing the building's move to this spot and ongoing preservation efforts
- > Potential tactile: Site Map

3 Miner Cabin

- > Wayside 1: Interpretation of Indigenous peoples in the region, European arrival and settlement
- > Wayside 2: Early Mecklenburg County founding, introduction of slave trade
- > Potential video(s): Catawba Nation member or other descendant discussing ancestry
- > Potential tactile: Key native plants and early crops

Reflection Area: Indigenous Peoples

- 4 > Wayside(s): Interpretation and acknowledgement of Indigenous removal and other atrocities committed against Indigenous peoples
- > Plaque honoring notable local indigenous heroes

Enslaved Cabins:

- 5 > Wayside(s): Interpreting perspectives and daily lives of the enslaved workers, cultural and religious practices of the enslaved
- > Potential video(s): Foodways, medicinal treatments and traditional other practices passed down from enslaved African and Caribbean workers
- > Potential tactile: Replicas of agricultural tools used or religious items if appropriate

Barns 1 and 2

- 6 > Wayside(s): Additional interpretation on daily live of enslaved workers
- > Potential video(s): Descendants of enslaved discussing their ancestors and any lasting oral histories, ongoing legacies of slavery
- > Potential tactile: Replicas of agricultural tools

Reflection Area: Enslaved People

- 7 > Wayside(s): Interpretation of ongoing legacies of slavery and racism
- > Potential public art installation/memorial to enslaved
- > Plaque honoring those known to be enslaved at Latta Place

8 Well House

- > Wayside(s): Function of the well house and importance, daily life of children (free and enslaved) at the site
- > Potential video(s): Explaining importance and function of well house, water access and availability in antebellum Mecklenburg County

9 Meat House and Kitchen

- > Wayside(s): Interpretation of site's agricultural past, labor and skill sets needed to operate a successful plantation, and perspectives of those who lived and worked at Latta Place
- > Potential video(s): Foodways and historic food practices from African/Caribbean enslaved workers
- > Potential tactile: Tools used, findings from archaeological work

10 Main House

- > Wayside 1: Life in the main house, who lived there, who built it, how did different people experience the house very differently
- > Wayside 2: Skill set and knowledge needed to build home, labor of hand made bricks, Louis Phiher (Stonecutter)
- > Potential video: Tour of building interior, comparison of architecture of plantation homes
- > Potential tactile: Tools used, replicas of key interior architectural designs, raised line map of building, bronze scale model of building

11 Water Access

- > Wayside(s): Importance of water connections for agriculture, development of site over time by Duke Power
- > Potential video(s): Fishing and hunting practices of Indigenous, enslaved, and others

12 Reflection Area: Tour Conclusion

- > Wayside(s): Encouraging visitors to further reflect on what they learned at Latta Place and to critically examine other areas in their community: What was preserved and what was not? What can the past tell me about my community today?
- > Potential Interactive: QR code or other data capture tool to gather visitor feedback (this may also occur inside the visitor center)
- > Potential video: Descendants of those who lived/worked at the site reflecting on their ancestors and what the site means to them today

RECOMMENDATIONS (Latta Place - Reflection Area)

- ▶ **Reflection Areas (L16):** Much of the interpretation at this site will contain content that is heavy and potentially triggering for some visitors. Similarly, the experience of visiting a plantation or other site of former enslavement can be a very emotional experience for Black Americans and others descendants of people who were enslaved or faced racism. Reflection Areas/Gardens can serve as a decompression place for visitors to sit and reflect on their experiences and the stories learned. In addition, these areas could include public art installations or plaques honoring the enslaved people of Latta Place and others from the greater Mecklenburg County region. This area should include seating, and any new plants or trees added should follow the County and State’s best practices for including only native flora. This work may require additional archeological studies before construction can begin.
- ▶ **Involve the Community (L17):** Descendants of those who lived and worked at this site should be involved in the planning of these spaces, as well as community members and key stakeholders. Any public art/memorial installation should provide dignity and respect to its subjects.



This rendering depicts a potential design and layout for a small reflective area. Final design of this site should be determined in conjunction with County staff, descendants, community members, and key stakeholders during the actual design process. Reflection areas should blend into their natural surroundings and not detract from the historic structures.

RECOMMENDATIONS (Latta Place - Main House)

- ▶ **Interpreting the Main House (L18):** The main Latta house is on the National Register of Historic Places and contains significant architectural details that can be interpreted for visitors. Currently, the County is still deciding the best method to interpret this structure and is considering a variety of options. One option is to make the home accessible and open with traditional interpretive exhibits. A second option is to keep the main house closed to the public except for select programming. Outdoor interpretive waysides and site tours could encourage visitors in either option to consider how this building might have been viewed and experienced very differently by different groups of people. When interpreting architectural components, content should focus on the individuals who provided the labor and knowledge to craft this structure and others.
 - ▶ **Programming on Plantation Architecture (L19):** Special tours or “open houses” focused on the architectural style of the home could be offered quarterly or twice a year depending on staff and visitor demand. These events could make strong connections between the work of the enslaved, their skill sets and knowledge, and the construction styles found at Latta Place and other homes of that era.
- ▶ **Freestanding Exhibits (L20):** Explore adding freestanding exhibits within the main home to aid interpreters. Rather than standard exhibits with heavy text, these exhibits could focus on sharing images, charts/statistics, tactile components, and first-person accounts that docents and others leading programming can refer to and enhance the visitor experience.
- ▶ **Building Preservation (L21):** The interior of the building was recently restored as of 2023, but the exterior will require some additional repair work. County Park and Recreation staff compiled an assessment in 2021/2022 of work needed to repair the building, notably exterior wood work and roof repairs.
- ▶ **Building Improvements (L22):** The main house is equipped with HVAC and an alarm system, however the HVAC systems are not working. The HVAC should be repaired before visitors access the building.
- ▶ **Making the Historic Structure Accessible (L23):** The building is not physically accessible for all visitors. A ramp should be installed at the building’s rear entrance. The second story of the building will not be accessed by visitors.
- ▶ **Make a Digital Tour Available (L24):** The main home will be closed to the public except for special events and tours and the second story of the home will not be physically accessible for some visitors. To maintain access to the historic structure, a digital tour or 3D model of the home should be made available online for visitors. Consider offering access to the same program in the eventual visitor center.

RECOMMENDATIONS (Latta Place - Main House)



This rendering depicts some light interpretive exhibits inside of the Main Latta House. Exhibits should provide visuals and tactile components that can be used by docents when providing tours of the home. This can enhance the visitor experience and make the stories “come to life” while also respecting the historic nature of the building.

RECOMMENDATIONS (Latta Place - Campus)

Accessibility and Site Improvements

- ▶ **New, Improved Pathways (SI1):** The current pathways around the Latta Place campus are not fully accessible for visitors with mobility impairments. The pathways should be replaced with tar-and-chip walkways (asphalt topped with an asphalt and crushed brick aggregate and finished with a thin layer of loose crushed brick) that ease movement for all visitors. See the site plans on the adjacent pages for the proposed paths. Some fencing will need to be removed to accommodate the new paths.
 - ▶ **Connection to the Water (SI2):** In addition, a pathway allowing visitors direct access to the water should be explored. Existing easements and environmental overlays/ concerns will need to be addressed to confirm path direction and final location.
- ▶ **Remove Storage Shed, Restrooms, and Other Unneeded Structures (SI3):** Several structures and piles of equipment currently located at the site do not support the interpretive goals and can create hazards for visitors. The following structures, identified in the County's 04/25/2023 walkthrough of the site, should be removed: sunken structures, old restrooms, storage shed, debris piles, chicken coops, fencing, middle barn, field office, and beehives.
- ▶ **Assess Landscaping (SI4):** Landscaping should be reassessed and plants and trees which are not historic and/or native to the region should be removed. This work will require consultation with a historic landscape architect.
- ▶ **Archeological Studies (SI5):** Archeological studies will be required before any new construction can take place at the site. Key historic locations such as enslaved burial grounds have not been identified yet and staff must ensure that new construction is not placed overtop of these locations. Several of the recommendations in this list will require an initial archeological survey.



Some of the debris and buildings that are recommended for removal. These items pose a risk to visitors and/or are not ADA compliant.

RECOMMENDATIONS (Latta Place - Campus)

Accessibility and Site Improvements

- ▶ **Update Signage Approaching Latta (SI6):** The difference between Latta Nature Preserve and Latta Place might be confusing for some first time visitors. Signage approaching Latta Place should be updated to clearly denote the different locations and let those arriving know that Latta Place is open and welcome to visitors.
- ▶ **Update Signage on Roads and Interstates (SI7):** Some of the county and state signage on the roads and interstates leading to Latta Place still contain the site's old name. These signs should be updated with the new site name. This will require coordination with local and state affiliates.
- ▶ **Improve Access Road (SI8):** Improve the side access road for staff and ensure it is clear for County vehicles to maintain access. This road could be a critical connection point when planning and hosting special events or gatherings.

Rethinking Best Use of Structures

- ▶ **Programming and Event Space in Carriage Barn (SI9):** The Carriage Barn building is not a historic structure and could be used for a semi-outdoor gathering area for school groups and other site programming. The space should be cleared of any debris, connected to the new pathways, and equipped with adequate lighting.
- ▶ **New Outdoor Shelter for Special Events (SI10):** An outdoor shelter should be constructed behind the Alexander Cabin for programming and rentals such as family reunions. Weddings should not be allowed to occur at this site.



This is a rendering of how the outdoor shelter might look. Restrooms, covered gathering space, and a fireplace create a flexible use space.

RECOMMENDATIONS (Latta Place - Operations/Staffing)

Operations/Staffing

- ▶ **Onboarding New Staff (OP1):** As part of Latta Place’s re-envisioning, permanent on-site staff will be needed to ensure the site reaches its intended goals and can best serve visitors. At a minimum, this plan suggests the following staff members to successfully operate Latta Place. Additional or reduced staffing needs should be reevaluated as the site continues to grow and evolve. Some of these roles might be completed by others already in the Department. All marketing should be closely coordinated with Public Information.
 - ▶ **Facility Manager:** A site director should be hired to guide the historic site’s development and day-to-day operations. In particular, this individual will guide the site’s reopening and build trust with the public and community members.
 - ▶ **Historian:** A historian/researcher should be hired to inform interpretive operations at the site, develop programming, and guide ongoing research and preservation of the site. This historian may also assist with interpretation at Rural Hill, Holly Bend, Cedar Grove, and other sites across the County.
 - ▶ **Interpreters:** A team of 2-3 interpreters will likely be needed to cover site operations, tours/programming, and other special events. This team may be augmented with volunteers who can help lead tours, staff events, and provide other visitor services.
 - ▶ **Admissions/Retail Team and Grounds keepers/Maintenance Team:** Depending on County staff availability and final operational decisions, these efforts might be performed by outside contractors and/or existing County employees.
- ▶ **Professionally Trained, Culturally Sensitive Staff (OP2):** All staff should receive training and professional development support to ensure they are providing content to visitors that is historically accurate, inclusive, and sensitive to potential traumatic content. A site with content related to slavery must have staff trained in how to share that information accurately and how to address moments when some visitors might disagree with interpretation. Under no circumstances should staff be sharing inaccurate histories or those which minimize the conditions of slavery and its impacts today.

RECOMMENDATIONS (Latta Place - Digital Components)

- ▶ **Create a Cohesive Website Experience (D1):** Many visitors will explore Latta Place’s website before visiting the site. The website should be clearly branded as a Mecklenburg County related website and have easily identifiable pages for site features and amenities, operating rules and hours, site significance, and accessibility. Having an accessibility page that lists in detail every accessible feature is becoming more common for historic sites.
 - ▶ **Marketing, Site Branding (D6):** As part of these online rebranding efforts, new marketing materials (including logo, physical pamphlets, etc.) should also be developed as needed. All marketing should be closely coordinated with Public Information to ensure it aligns with the County’s overall goals, branding, and materials.
- ▶ **Be Up-front and Direct In Digital Components (D2):** Latta Place preserves and interprets stories that can be difficult for many visitors but that are critical to remembering our nation’s past. All digital components should be clear that this is a place for authentic truth telling that will not give a romanticized view of the past.
- ▶ **Update Latta Place to County Website (D4):** Add Latta Place to the County’s website on the Park and Recreation identified facilities list under the newly created ‘Historic Sites’ category. Content on the website should make it clear what visitors can expect at the site, including a content warning about potentially triggering stories.
- ▶ **Develop Digital Series and Podcasts (D5):** Digital series, whether a video series or a podcast series, can be a great way to keep people engaged with the site and make it more accessible. As the County prepares to reopen, digital series can engage folks before they ever visit the physical site. It can also provide additional avenues for incorporating community members, businesses, and other groups into the site’s ongoing interpretation and remembrance. These videos can then be utilized in on-site interpretation and shared virtually to connect with more visitors, school groups, and others.

INCORPORATING OTHER SITES

Effective interpretive planning considers the holistic visitor experience and recognizes that visitors come to the site with different experiences, knowledge, and interests. Huntersville and the greater Mecklenburg Region are rich with opportunities for historic, cultural, and recreational experiences. Some visitors might stop at only Latta Place, while others will experience additional nearby sites as well. The following recommendations are for the other county properties included under this planning rubric and effort.

Rural Hill

- ▶ **Rental Venue :** Continue using Rural Hill as an event venue that people can rent and promote the space for conferences, civic gatherings, etc. Update site policies on what type of events are allowed for rentals. All weddings at this site should be halted as it is a former plantation where individuals were enslaved. All events should be consistent with both the site and Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Department's Historic and Cultural Resources Section mission/vision.
- ▶ **Seek Interpretive Connections for Site Events:** This site has strong community ties due to the cornfield/maze and event space. Consider how future events can also share the site's storied past. Well placed signage, programming, and land acknowledgements can all help bridge these connections.
- ▶ **Rebrand Online Experience:** The digital presence for this site should look similar to Latta Place and/or be recognizable as part of the same visitor experience. Interpretation on Rural Hill's website needs to be heavily vetted by subject matter experts. Current interpretation contains some problematic descriptions of the site's past.
- ▶ **Close Main House and Explore New Interpretation:** Consider closing the main house in its current form. The current interpretation inside does not follow best practices and offers little relevant, digestible content to visitors. It could be made accessible and reopened in the future, but may better serve as an office space. Artifacts and exhibit displays should be properly stored for potential use in future programming.
- ▶ **New Outdoor Interpretation:** Update outdoor waysides to match those at Latta Place, including new signs at the Rosenwald School located on the property.
 - ▶ **Historic Views:** Use creative outdoor interpretation to utilize the existing view shed and place the ruins and missing structures of the site back into context.
- ▶ **Connections to Holly Bend:** Until Holly Bend can open, Rural Hill should also provide interpretation related to that site. It could act as a staging ground for any programming/ events taking place at Holly Bend.



Themes/Stories Interpreted:

- ▶ Colonial + Early American Eras
- ▶ Revolutionary + Civil Wars
- ▶ Economics + Entrepreneurship
- ▶ Large scale plantation agriculture (Slavery, Cotton, etc)
- ▶ Landscape & Environment
- ▶ Segregation + Education

Educational Connections:

Explain how entrepreneurship develops local communities (3.E.1.1)

Explain how the natural resources of a region impact the production and consumption of goods in local communities (3.E.1.2)

Explain factors that have led to economic growth and decline for North Carolina’s major industries (4.E.1.2) and in the U.S. (5.E.1.1).

Explain the ways in which revolution, reform, and resistance have shaped North Carolina, (4.H.1.3) and the U.S. (5.H.1.3).

Summarize the role North Carolina has played in major conflicts and events through the history of America (4.H.1.4)

Explain how slavery, segregation, voter suppression, reconcentration, and other discriminatory practices have been used to suppress and exploit certain groups within North Carolina and the nation over time (8.H.1.3)

Holly Bend

- ▶ **Preservation/Archeology in Action:** Holly Bend is a great opportunity to demonstrate current preservation, restoration, and archaeological practices. It already serves as a recurring small-scale archaeological field school. On excavation days, an interpreter could be present to answer visitor questions. Similar interpretation could take place inside the building regarding processes like paint analysis, etc.
- ▶ **Update Holly Bend to County Website:** Add Holly Bend to the County’s website on the Park and Recreation identified facilities list under the newly created ‘Historic Sites’ category.
- ▶ **Digital Access:** Consider scanning and recreating the house in a virtual format online. A virtual tour of the house and grounds will make it more accessible, especially since the site has limited parking and may not be open to the public regularly.
- ▶ **Revert to Historic Landscaping:** Landscape work at the entrance should be undertaken to make the site more inviting. The original U-shaped driveway and carriage block could be utilized to allow visitors a “drive-up” experience with waysides that would allow them to visit briefly without getting out of their cars.
- ▶ **Accessible Space:** The later addition to the house may be converted to administrative or visitor services space with accessible public rest rooms. If the site is made fully accessible it may later be able to host limited programming and site tours. Any site modifications for accessibility must also respect the historic integrity of the building.
- ▶ **HVAC and Plumbing Repairs:** In addition to the needed preservation work, the HVAC and plumbing systems at Holly Bend need to be assessed, updated, and repaired.
- ▶ **Improve Road Signage:** Improve signage leading to Holly Bend and at the historic site itself so that visitors can easily navigate to the site and identify that it is a county owned and operated property.
- ▶ **On-Site Programming and Tours:** After the main building is improved for accessible purposes with functioning restrooms, it could be opened for special tours and programming. Themes/stories to highlight could include: Site history of ownership and construction; perspectives of the enslaved who lived and worked here; early Mecklenburg County history; lasting legacies of slavery/preservation; architectural history; agricultural history of the region.

Themes/Stories Interpreted:

- ▶ Generational Wealth
- ▶ Great Depression
- ▶ Large scale plantation agriculture + Slavery
- ▶ Environment
- ▶ Archaeology, Preservation + Restoration

Educational Connections:

Explain factors that have led to economic growth and decline for North Carolina's major industries (4.E.1.2) and in the U.S. (5.E.1.1).

Explain the ways in which voluntary and forced migration and slavery led to changes in the landscape of the United States (5.G.1.2)

Explain how location and human geography have presented opportunities and challenges for the movement of people, goods, and ideas in North Carolina and the nation (8.G.1.3)

Alexandriana Historical Site

Recommendations

- ▶ **Remove Dated Signage:** Remove redundant signage currently located at the site.
- ▶ **New Site Interpretation:** Replace current interpretation with a new interpretive kiosk and graphic panels, potentially with tactile components. Interpretation should focus on the site's connections to the county's founding and Indigenous peoples presence in the region.
- ▶ **Enhance Landscaping:** Maintain a schedule of regular landscaping so that the site looks inviting to potential visitors and community members.
- ▶ **Improve Visitor Parking Spaces:** The current visitor parking area has some gravel but is mostly muddy and unsafe for visitors. Parking spaces should be clearly delineated and improved with a new gravel or paved lot.
- ▶ **Update Visitor Amenities:** Adding new picnic tables and benches could make the site more appealing for potential visitors. It could also allow the site to host small gatherings and special events, such as those outlined in the programming section of this document.

Themes/Stories Interpreted:

- ▶ Government + Democracy
- ▶ Colonial + Early American Eras

Educational Connections:

Summarize the democratic ideals outlined in the founding documents of the state and national government (8.C&G.1.1).

Critique the policies, laws and government structures of North Carolina and the nation in terms of conforming to or conflicting with American democratic ideals (8.C&G.1.3).

Compare different perspectives on the role of state, national, and tribal governments (8.C&G.1.4).

Compare access to democratic rights and freedoms of various indigenous, religious, racial, gender, ability and identity groups in North Carolina and the nation (8.C&G.1.5)

Cedar Grove Properties

Recommendations

- ▶ **Establish Connections and Planning Efforts with State and Local Partners:** The historic Cedar Grove properties are owned and operated by a number of entities, including the County, state, and private organizations such as Torrance Preserve, LLC. In addition, other organizations such as Preserve Mecklenburg, Inc. and various community led groups will be key stakeholders in future developments. Careful coordination will be required with these groups to ensure seamless interpretation and the best experiences for visitors.
- ▶ **New Site Interpretation:** Replace any existing signage on County owned properties with new interpretation that broadens the stories and includes diverse perspectives and histories from Indigenous peoples, enslaved workers, and descendants of the site. Coordinate with other stakeholders and partners to ensure a broad range of topics are covered. These should tie into any interpretation at McDowell Creek/Torrance Creek Park and other county owned properties and align with the themes in this document.
- ▶ **Seek Shared Programming:** Explore opportunities with public and private partners to sponsor events that support the mission and values of the Park and Recreation Department and align with the interpretive themes and goals outlined in this planning document.
- ▶ **Enhance Landscaping:** Maintain a schedule of regular landscaping so that the site looks inviting to potential visitors and community members. This work may also include adding or improving visitor amenities such as restrooms, benches, picnic tables, etc.

Themes/Stories Interpreted:

- ▶ Perspectives of the Enslaved
- ▶ Nature/Utilizing Natural Resources
- ▶ Lasting Legacies
- ▶ 20th Century County History

Educational Connections:

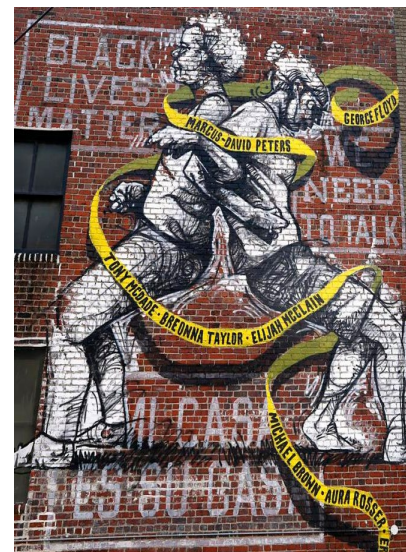
Compare access to democratic rights and freedoms of various indigenous, religious, racial, gender, ability and identity groups in North Carolina and the nation (8.C&G.1.5)

Explain how location and human geography have presented opportunities and challenges for the movement of people, goods, and ideas in North Carolina and the nation (8.G.1.3)

Explain how the natural resources of a region impact the production and consumption of goods in local communities (3.E.1.2)

PUBLIC ART

This plan suggests at minimum one public art installation at Latta Place. Public art can provide powerful, emotional connections and perspectives that help interpret the legacy of sites such as Latta Place. Public art is also a visible expression of a site's values and connections to the communities it serves. Below are some potential examples of the types of public art that could support the stories at Latta Place and provide more room for healing. Final design and placement of any art will be coordinated with the County, Arts and Sciences Council, descendants, and community stakeholders. See the following page for a guide to art placement and resources for soliciting art.



PUBLIC ART - Guidelines for Development and Integration

At Latta Place, public art will help interpret the site's complicated legacy, support stories, and provide avenues for healing. This section outlines recommendations and resources for integrating public art, following best practices. Any solicitation or request for public art should follow the already outlined county process that is ran in conjunction with the county's Arts and Sciences Council. The County and Steering Committee may determine that purchasing existing art for display is the preferred route.

Selecting a Site Location

Studying the environment and selecting a location on Latta Place's campus for any each public art location will help inform appropriate materials and alignment with the site's visitor flow. The council may want to consider:

- ▶ Is the location accessible to all visitors? –Can it be reached by an ADA compliant path?
- ▶ Is there space for seating? –Incorporating seating encourages visitors to spend more time interacting with and contemplating artworks and their message.
- ▶ Is the location outside and what elements would an exterior installation be exposed to?
 - > If the location is exposed to direct sunlight throughout the day, consider that dark and metallic materials may become hot to the touch.
 - > If there are trees nearby, consider that shedding leaves, sap, and bird droppings are more difficult to clean from textured surfaces.
 - > Installation should be robust enough to withstand standard weather patterns and visitor interactions
- ▶ Is the location within a historic viewshed? –If so, the council may want to consider prescribing preferred dimensions for installations to best preserve or enhance the viewshed.
- ▶ Are interior locations climate controlled? –Paper, textile, and organic mediums are especially susceptible to temperature and humidity fluctuations.

Soliciting for Public Art

- ▶ If the decision is to solicit for public art, the already existing County policies and procedures should be followed in conjunction with partners at the Arts and Sciences Council (ASC). More details, including the latest policies and procedures for soliciting public art, can be found on the Arts and Sciences Council website

Additional Resources

Arts and Science Council Website Resources: <https://artsandscience.org/>

Americans for the Arts, Call for Artists Resource Guide (2022)

Mecklenburg County Public Art Ordinance (2021)

North Carolina Arts Council, Public Art Commissions Handbook (2005)

PROGRAMMING + SPECIAL EVENTS

In addition to the everyday running of the site, there is great potential to host special events, community gatherings, programming and tours, and other types of events at Latta Place and Rural Hill. Below are some potential recommendations on specific events and programming at Latta Place. Where relevant, events and programming should integrate with other existing Park and Recreation Department and County events.

- ▶ Martin Luther King Day commemoration (Third Monday of January)
- ▶ Black History Month special programs and host lectures from subject matter experts (February)
- ▶ World Art Day art show for K-12 students (April 15th)
- ▶ Earth Day celebration and nature walks (April 22nd)
- ▶ Annual film festival highlighting community narrative and documentary films (May)
- ▶ At Alexandria, programming on the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence signing (May 20th)
- ▶ Annual acknowledgement of Latta Place's past and a reading of the names of those enslaved (June, should be coordinated with site Descendants)
 - ▶ These events are often called 'Blessing Ceremonies' and include faith based activities. Descendants of those enslaved should have shared authority on key decisions related to any remembrance type event.
- ▶ Juneteenth celebration with cultural and educational events (June 19th)
- ▶ Independence Day programming and educational events (July 4th)
- ▶ Outdoor concert series/festival featuring community artists and youth (September)
- ▶ Indigenous Peoples Day events (October 19th)
- ▶ Recognition of the end of slavery in North Carolina (December 4th)



Many Juneteenth programming at historic sites focus on sharing and celebrating Black history and culture. Any Juneteenth events at Latta Place must be historically accurate and inclusive to create community trust and bridge divides.

Images left to right: Cotton Club Museum (FL); Booker T. Washington National Monument (VA); Whitney Plantation (LA)

EVALUATING INTERPRETIVE PROGRAMMING

Evaluating the effectiveness of interpretive services is not always a straightforward process. Several organizations have identified different methods for applying a more scientific process to measuring effectiveness, but the individual needs and experiences of various visitors again limit these opportunities. The quickest check for interpretation at Latta Place can be done by comparing a program or event with the goals and themes outlined in this document. All interpretation at this site must relate to the core themes and mission of the site. In addition, basic operating statistics such as the number of visitors, number of school visits, revenue, etc., can help identify if programs are being utilized. Below are several methods for evaluating effective interpretation.

National Park Service Interpretive Analysis Model

- ▶ The Analysis Model – the model for assessment successfully used by the National Park Service –attempts to measure the potential effectiveness of interpretive programs/products by the use of a field-developed, professional definition of what “success” looks like.
- ▶ The Analysis Model allows sites to identify the potential interpretive effectiveness of any program or product. A program has the best chance to succeed by employing a focused, cohesive construct of tangible-intangible linkages, that are developed by one or more interpretive techniques, to facilitate opportunities for visitors to personally connect – both intellectually and emotionally – to the meanings of the resources being interpreted.
- ▶ Guide to the model: <https://www.nps.gov/idp/interp/analyzethis.pdf>
- ▶ Additional resources: https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/all_theses/1509

Value Analysis

- ▶ Value Analysis (VA) is a process of arriving at an optimal solution to a complex issue through a structured and reasoned analysis of the factors and functions related to the issue. Typically used in construction projects, the National Park Service, Smithsonian Institute, and other cultural organizations are increasingly using a value analysis process to compare potential interpretive elements.
- ▶ This method would require an expert to come in and host a 1-2 day workshop to evaluate each interpretive program at a site holistically in comparison with project/management goals and funding.
- ▶ Guide to process: https://www.nps.gov/dscw/design_vfiles.htm

Aiming for Excellence: California State Parks Guide

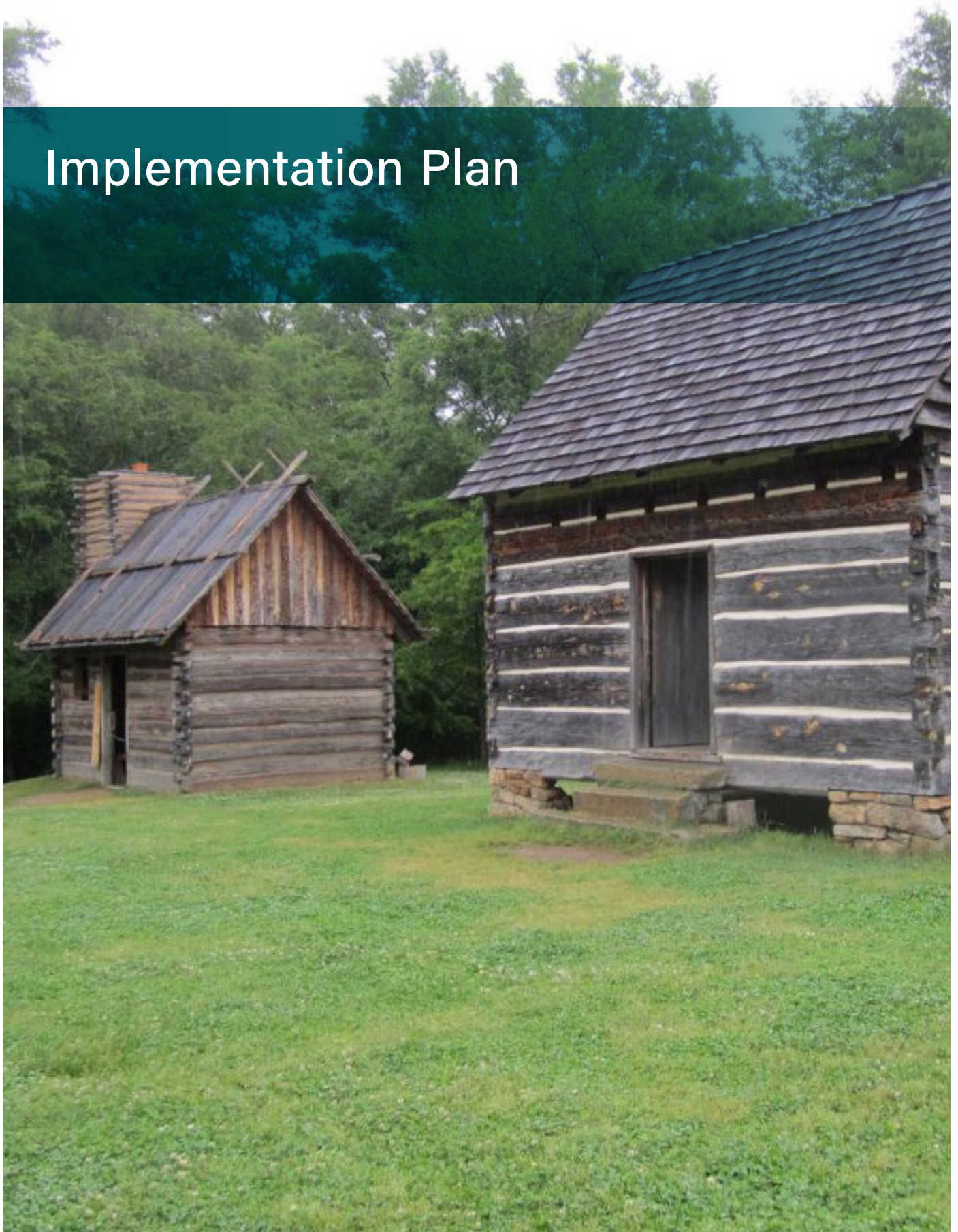
- ▶ Originally developed by the California Department of Parks and Recreation in 2002, this guide provides a series of questions that should be asked of any interpretive program to assess whether it fits with a site’s mission and is successfully reaching its stated goals. Based on industry best practices, the model is a quick check to new or existing interpretation.
- ▶ Guide for interpretive evaluation: <http://www.parks.ca.gov/pages/22374/files/interp.pdf>

PARTNERSHIPS

As part of the project goal to bridge the past and present and serve as an essential resource to all residents of the greater Mecklenburg/Charlotte area, Latta Place should seek strong connections with community partners. A list of potential partners is included below for reference. Any partners should also adhere to the same commitment for providing an authentic, historically accurate experience to visitors that is inclusive and culturally sensitive. This list does not represent all of the partners that the County may wish to work with.

- ▶ The Catawba Nation
- ▶ NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources
- ▶ UNC Charlotte, Johnson C. Smith University, and other institutions of higher learning
- ▶ Town of Huntersville
- ▶ Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF; could also be a potential funding source)
- ▶ Local Industry Leaders (Duke Power, Honeywell, Bank of America, Nucor, Atrium Health, etc.)
- ▶ Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina (Visit NC, Project 543)
- ▶ Metropolitan Native American Association (MNAA)
- ▶ National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) - Charlotte Chapter
- ▶ Levine Museum
- ▶ Mint Museum
- ▶ Historic Polk Site
- ▶ North Carolina Museums Council
- ▶ American Association for State and Local History (AASLH)
- ▶ Regional K-12 schools
- ▶ Public Art Commission
- ▶ Arts & Science Council
- ▶ The Brooklyn Collective
- ▶ National Genealogical Society
- ▶ North Carolina State Parks (Lake Norman State Park, Crowders Mountain State Park)
- ▶ Charlotte Hawkins Brown Museum
- ▶ Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts + Culture
- ▶ Contemporary anti human trafficking organizations (A21 Campaign, CAST, DeliverFund, Global Centurion, Polaris Project, etc.)
- ▶ Other Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation sites (Latta Nature Preserve, Quest, Carolina Raptor Center, Gar Hill Nature Preserve, Rural Hill Nature Preserve, etc.)
- ▶ Internal County Partners (Office of Equity and Inclusion, Public Information, Historic Landmarks Commission, etc.)

Implementation Plan



PHASED APPROACH

Community and stakeholder engagement has shown a strong desire by many community members for this site to reopen as soon as possible. Therefore, this plan recommends reopening the site to the public in June 2024, with further development of the site over the next 5-10 years in a phased approach. Feedback from County staff, community members, stakeholders, and partners will continue to inform this proposed approach.

Phase 1 (Short Term)

Site Improvements:

- ▶ Site reopens
- ▶ Accessible pathways created to key buildings
- ▶ Plan/construct outdoor shelter and restrooms
- ▶ Remove unneeded buildings and debris
- ▶ Begin planning for new visitor center
- ▶ Begin building improvements, repairs (ongoing)

Interpretive Improvements:

- ▶ Self-guided site tours offered (digital and physical)
- ▶ Limited interpretive waysides
- ▶ Interpretive station provides site overview history, orientation
- ▶ Select events/programming

Phase 2 (Medium Term)

Site Improvements:

- ▶ Connect site to the water
- ▶ Construct memorial area/reflection gardens (may include public art)
- ▶ Continue planning and prep for visitor center
- ▶ Building improvements, repairs (ongoing)

Interpretive Improvements:

- ▶ Docent led tours start/Self-guided tours in other languages and formats
- ▶ Additional interpretive waysides
- ▶ Additional programming/special events, including school programming

Phase 3 (Long Term)

Site Improvements:

- ▶ New visitor center is constructed and opens, including outdoor plaza, changing exhibit spaces, retail, and offices
- ▶ Parking area/sidewalks enhanced for larger events

Interpretive Improvements:

- ▶ Visitor center with changing community gallery, programming space
- ▶ Professional development for first responders, teachers, county staff
- ▶ Tours of main home with supplemental exhibits

Phase 1

ACTION	KEY GOALS SUPPORTED	KEY THEMES EXPLORED
Reopen Latta Place in 2024 with a special ceremony; Develop new logo and marketing materials as needed (D6)	Positive transformation; Emotional experience; Educational opportunities	—
Create a cohesive website experience; Be upfront in digital components; Update and claim Google listing; Update Latta to county website (D1, D2, D3, D4)	High-quality experience; Positive transformation	—
Conduct archaeological studies targeting the proposed location of new buildings and features (S15)	Ongoing research; Positive transformation	—
Historical Landscape Survey; begin efforts to plant native species that are historically accurate (S14)	High-quality experience; Positive transformation	Utilizing Natural Resources
Continue the needed building improvements to the main Latta house to ensure its continued preservation (L21,L22,L23)	Positive transformation	—
Construct an outdoor shelter area that can be used for programming and special events (S10)	High-quality experience; Positive transformation; Repeat visitation; Attract diverse audiences	—
New Improved Paths (S1); prioritize paths to outdoor shelter, Alexander Cabin, enslaved cabins, and Main House; Add interpretive waysides outside of structures (L11)	High-quality experience; Positive transformation; Educational opportunities; Emotional experience	All themes
Remove storage shed, restrooms, debris, and other unneeded structures (S13)	High-quality experience; Positive transformation	—
Construct temporary interpretive structure (L3)	Educational opportunities; Positive transformation; Emotional experience	Perspectives of Enslaved; Reflected in Built Environment; Lasting Legacies; Indigenous Perspectives & Experiences
Hire Site Director (OP1); Begin planning and community engagement for new visitor center and reflection areas/gardens (L16,L17, L2)	High-quality experience; Positive transformation; Diverse team and staff	—
Develop self-guided site tour focused on the site's storied past, including the histories of Indigenous peoples in the region and the enslaved people who lived and worked at Latta (L13)	Educational opportunities; Positive transformation; Emotional experience; Attract diverse audiences	Indigenous Perspectives & Experiences; Perspectives of Enslaved
Update signage on main highways to note the site's new name (S16,S17); If possible, explore connecting Latta Place with regional public transportation	Positive transformation; Attract diverse audiences	—
Continue gathering oral histories through the MeckRoots program (L5)	High-quality experience; Emotional experience; Ongoing research; Educational opportunities	Lasting Legacies; Reflected in the Built Environment

Phase 2

ACTION	KEY GOALS SUPPORTED	KEY THEMES EXPLORED
Continue constructing improved, accessible pathways (S1, S12); Prioritize paths to water access, carriage barn, and return path to visitor center/parking area; Add interpretive signage as appropriate (L11)	High-quality experience; Positive transformation	Utilizing the Natural Resources; Perspectives of Enslaved
Hire additional interpretive staff (ST1); Ensure all staff are properly trained to be culturally sensitive and provide historically accurate interpretation (ST2)	High-quality experience; Positive transformation; Diverse team and staff	—
Begin offering select site tours led by interpreters (L13)	Educational opportunities; High-quality experience; Positive transformation; Emotional experience; Attract diverse audiences	All themes
Improve Access Road for county staff (S18)	—	—
Make main house physically accessible for all visitors with a ramp on the backside (L23); Continue ongoing preservation efforts for the home as needed (L21)	High-quality experience; Positive transformation; Attract diverse audiences	—
Construct reflection area gardens (L16); involve community in the process and consider public art components (L17)	Emotional experience; High-quality experience; Positive transformation; Educational opportunities; Attract diverse audiences	Perspectives of the Enslaved; Lasting Legacies
Begin removal of current visitor center structure (L1);	Positive transformation	—
Continue planning construction for the new visitor center (L2)	Positive transformation; High-quality experience; Educational opportunities	—
Add digital tours of main house (interior) and the full Latta Place campus (L14, L24)	Educational opportunities; Attract diverse audiences	Reflected in the Built Environment; Perspectives of Enslaved
Translate self-guided site tours into Spanish; Develop an audio description tour of the site (L14)	Attract diverse audiences; High-quality experience; Educational opportunities	—
Continue offering special programming and hosting events; School programming in particular should be a priority (L19)	Educational opportunities; High-quality experience; Positive transformation; Emotional experience; Attract diverse audiences	All themes
Utilize the carriage barn as a programmatic space, this may require some building improvements (S19)	Educational opportunities	—

Phase 3

ACTION	KEY GOALS SUPPORTED	KEY THEMES EXPLORED
Construct new visitor center (ongoing from mid term); ensure community is involved in the process (L2, L5)	Positive transformation; High-quality experience; Educational opportunities; Connections to Hopewell Church	All themes (Also a changing community gallery; connections to other regional sites; more detailed site history/ownership history)
Hire additional site staff as needed (potentially event coordinator) (S11)	Diverse team and staff; High-quality experience	—
Modify visitor parking and enhance sidewalk (L8, L9, L10)	High-quality experience	—
Add freestanding exhibits to the main house interior on the 1st floor; Exhibits should be developed as a tool for docents to use on site tours, utilizing images, infographics, maps, and tactile components (L20, L19)	Educational opportunities	Perspectives of Enslaved; Reflected in Built Environment; Lasting Legacies (Also architectural history; more detailed site history/ownership history)
Develop a professional development program that can support county first responders, teachers, and other county staff (L7)	Attract diverse audiences; Educational opportunities	All themes

Appendix



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

During the development of this interpretive plan, the contract team (The Design Minds, Inc. and Civility Localized) and Mecklenburg County engaged the public, descendants of the site, and key stakeholders in multiple formats. A detailed report of the feedback received during these engagement sessions will be submitted under a separate cover. In addition, the contractors worked with Public Information to develop a digital public survey to allow even more County residents to provide their feedback and input. The results of that survey are being recorded by Public Information and will inform final County decisions and priorities at Latta Place.

An overview of the engagement sessions conducted by the contractor is outlined below. The County conducted additional engagement sessions without the contractor involved.

Stakeholder Engagement Session

August 23, 2022

Studio 229 on Brevard

229 South Brevard Street

Charlotte, NC 28202

– Engaged stakeholders and media to provide updates on the interpretive planning process, how to stay involved, and next steps.

Meck Roots Thanksgiving Forum

November 20, 2022

David B. Waymer Recreation Center

14008 Holbrooks Road

Huntersville, NC 28078

– Engaged stakeholders, community members, and general public to inform them of the MeckRoots oral history program and how they can become involved in efforts at Latta Place.
– Community members shared feedback on what is important to them to remember and preserve in the community.

Latta Place Reimagined - Public Listening Session #1

February 23, 2023

Quest at Latta Nature Preserve

6345 Sample Road

Huntersville, NC 28078

– Open forum for the general public to provide feedback and perspectives on the reimagining of Latta Place and its ties to the community.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (CONTINUED)

Latta Place Reimagined - Public Listening Session #2

March 9, 2023

Little Rock Cultural Center

401 N. Myers

Charlotte, NC 28202

– Open forum for the general public to provide feedback and perspectives on the reimagining of Latta Place and its ties to the community.

Latta Place Reimagined - Public Listening Session #3

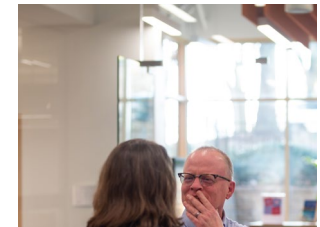
March 23, 2023

South County Regional Library

5801 Rea Road

Charlotte, NC 28277

– Open forum for the general public to provide feedback and perspectives on the reimagining of Latta Place and its ties to the community.



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In addition to our planning efforts, The Design Minds team has conducted our own research and literature review to better inform our understanding of the exhibit themes, topics, and stories. Using initial recommendations provided by Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation staff as a base, TDM has identified the following primary and secondary resources to inform future interpretation at the sites.

General Histories of North Carolina and the Mecklenburg Area

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- ▶ Gail W. O'Brien, *Power and Influence in Mecklenburg County, 1850-1880*, North Carolina Historical Review 54: 119-144 (1995)
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- ▶ Eds. Larry E. Tise and Jeffrey J. Crow, *New Voyages to Carolina: Reinterpreting North Carolina History*, (2017)
- ▶ Eric Hinderaker. *At The Edge of Empire: The Backcountry in British North America* (2003)
- ▶ W. Stitt Robison. *The Southern Colonial Frontier, 1607-1763* (1979)

Catawba Tribe and Other Indigenous Peoples

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- ▶ Steven "Pony" Hill, *A Wandering Tribe: Dispersal of the Catawba Nation 1800 to 1900* (2018)
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- ▶ Laurie A. Wilke, *Magic and Empowerment on the Plantation: An Archaeological Consideration of African-American World View*, Southwestern Archaeology 14: 136-148 (1995)

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- ▶ Stephen Payseur, *The North Carolina Slave Narratives, Volumes 1&2*, (2013)

Slavery

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- ▶ Edward E. Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (2016)
- ▶ Walter Johnson, *Soul By Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (1999)

Latta Place

- ▶ Jack O. Boyte, *The James Latta Plantation: A Living Historical Farm* (1973)
- ▶ Janet E. Levy, *Preliminary Report on the 1996 Archaeological Excavations at the Latta Cabin Site, Mecklenburg County, NC* (1997)

Rural Hill

- ▶ Janet E. Levy, *Second Report on Archaeological Excavations at 31MK768, Rural Hill Plantation, Mecklenburg County, NC* (1995)
- ▶ Jim and Ann Williams, *The Davidson Family of Rural Hill, North Carolina* (2020)

Alexandriana

- ▶ William H. Hoyt, *The Alleged Early Declaration of Independence by Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, on May 20th is Spurious* (1907)

Connected People Biographies etc.

- ▶ J.B. Alexander, *Biographical Sketches of the Early Settlers of the Hopewell Section* (1897)
- ▶ Kathleen Marler, *Residents of Mecklenburg County North Carolina 1762-1790* (2009)

Other

- ▶ Charles W. Sommerville, *The History of Hopewell Presbyterian Church: for 175 Years from the Assigned Date of its Organization, 1762* (1939)
- ▶ A.A. Ellis, *History of Eno Presbyterian Church, Cedar Grove, North Carolina 1755-1980* (2017)
- ▶ James G. Leyburn, *The Scotch-Irish: A Social History*. (1962)
- ▶ Timothy Silver, *The New Face On The Countryside: Indians, Colonists, and Slaves in South Atlantic Forests, 1500-1800* (1990)

REFERENCE MATERIALS/PROGRAMS

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (Professional Development Resources)

- ▶ Law Enforcement Outreach Program: <https://www.ushmm.org/outreach-programs/law-enforcement>
- ▶ Military Outreach Program: <https://www.ushmm.org/outreach-programs/military>
- ▶ Professional Development for Educators: <https://www.ushmm.org/teach/opportunities-for-educators>

Mecklenburg County / City of Charlotte

- ▶ MeckPlaybook, Park & Recreation Master Plan 2021: <https://www.mecknc.gov/ParkandRec/CapitalProjects/Pages/Master-Planning.aspx>
- ▶ Cultural and Historic Resources ADA Audit Assessment Report, Latta Place – Formerly Historic Latta Plantation (July 15, 2022)
- ▶ State of Culture Report: Arts + Culture, Charlotte Arts and Culture Plan (February 2023)

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- ▶ Kristin L. Gallas and James DeWolf Perry, Ed., *Interpreting Slavery at Museums and Historic Sites* (2015)
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