

WAKE
FOREST

Ailey Young House and Northeast Gateway Park Vision Plan

March 2026



Table of Contents

01 Introduction

02 Community Engagement

03 Inventory & Analysis

04 Envisioning the Future

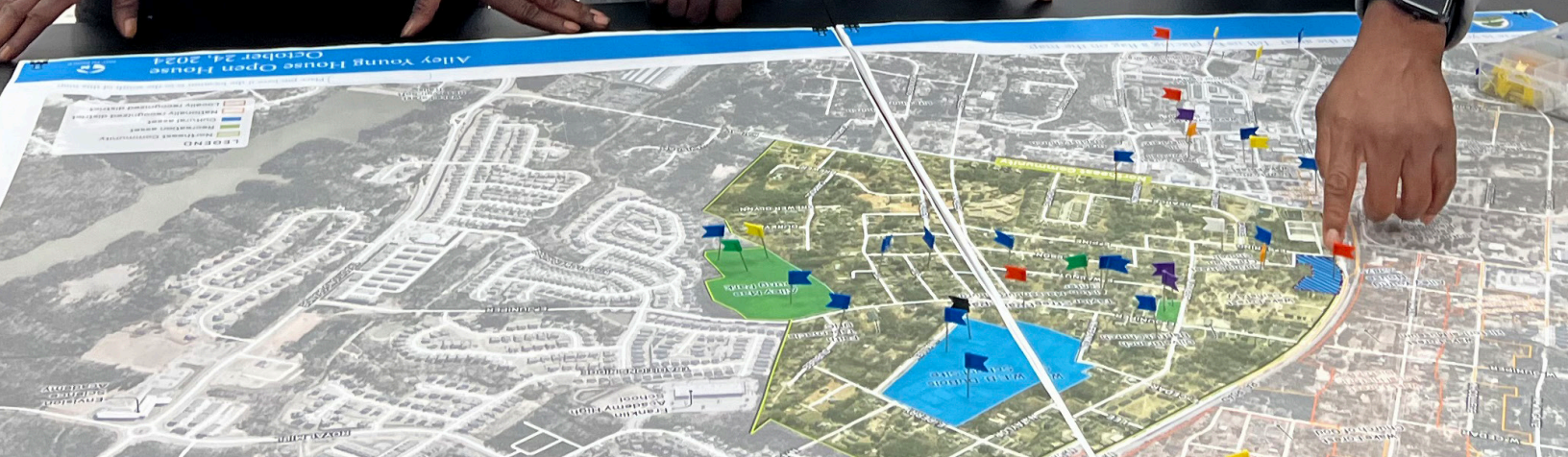


EXIT



Alley Young House Open House October 24, 2024

- 1. Residential development
- 2. Commercial development
- 3. Public space
- 4. Environmental features
- 5. Transportation



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Introduction

Introduction

The Ailey Young House, located at 320 North White Street in Wake Forest, North Carolina, is a historic house known for its historical and cultural significance as potentially being the oldest African American historic building in Wake Forest.¹ The house was constructed as rental housing by Wake Forest College Professor William G. Simmons in the late 1800s and was later the childhood home of Allen Young, a significant African American citizen and educator in Wake Forest. Since 2012, the Town has completed a variety of projects to rehabilitate the house and highlight its historical and cultural relevance to the Town. The 2021 Northeast Community Plan and Wake Forest Historic Preservation Plan (2022) recommended that the Town use the Ailey Young House as a heritage site to celebrate the history of the community and be part of a larger gateway park for the Northeast Community. The purpose of this Plan is to fulfill the recommendations from the Northeast Community Plan and Historic Preservation Plan to guide the Town in developing a distinctive gateway park that celebrates its legacy.

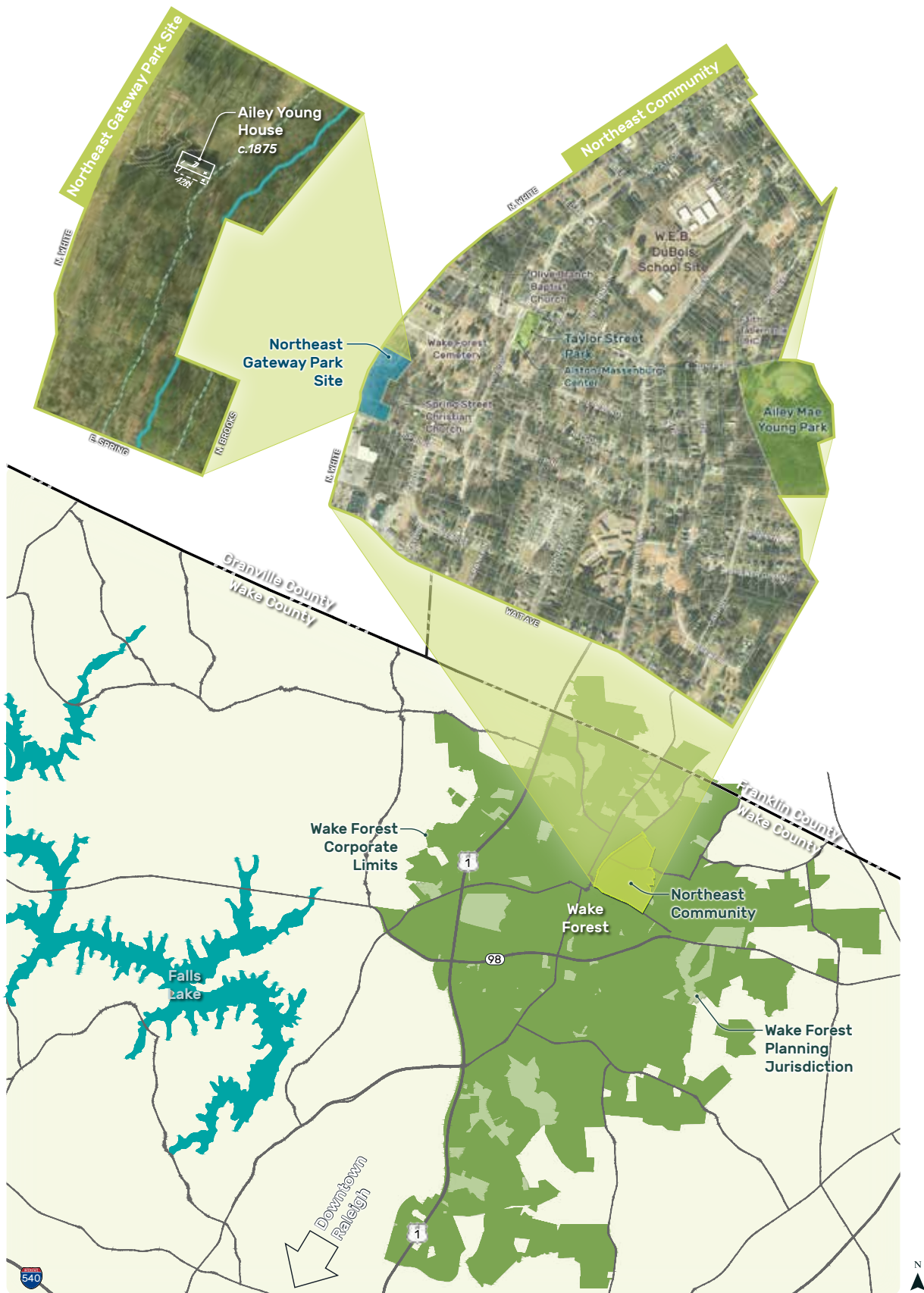
¹ "Ailey Young House," Town of Wake Forest, NC, February 1, 2024, www.wakeforestnc.gov/planning/long-range-planning/historic-preservation/



Wake Forest Historical Museum



Ailey Young House (before restoration)



Map 1.1: Northeast Community Map and Context (the green portion of the map indicates the Town of Wake Forest Corporate Limits - Town Limits GIS data from Dec. 2025)

Town Context

The Town of Wake Forest is located in the northeastern portion of Wake County, the most populous county in the state. As of 2024, the population of Wake Forest is estimated to be 56,764, about five percent of the county's population.²

Wake Forest is a town where history and progress meet, shaped by a rich and diverse heritage. Originally home to Wake Forest College, the town has preserved its historic character while embracing growth and innovation. The Black community has played a vital role in all aspects of Wake Forest's history. Beginning in the earliest days of the community to laying the foundation of Olive Branch Baptist Church to the legacy of the W.E.B. DuBois High School. The contributions of the local Black-owned businesses, churches, and leaders are significant to Wake Forest's history.

The Young family, in particular, has left a lasting impact on the town's political and social landscape. While Ailey and Henry Young's son Allen Young (1875-1957) was a well-known educator credited with starting the Spring Street Presbyterian Church and Mission School and founding the Wake Forest Normal and Industrial School, his daughter Ailey Mae Young (1903-1992) became Wake Forest's first Black commissioner in 1971, paving the way for greater representation and advocacy within the community. Her leadership, along with the continued contributions of other families in the Northeast Community, has helped shape policies and initiatives that foster inclusivity and progress.

Today, Wake Forest continues to honor its history while welcoming new residents, fostering a thriving arts scene, expanding parks and greenways, and promoting inclusive growth.

² <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/popest/2020s-total-cities-and-towns.html>



Wake Forest Historical Museum



Ailey Mae Young with Town Seal
(Ailey Young's Granddaughter)

Northeast Community

Located along the western edge of the Northeast Community north of the intersection of East Spring Street and North White Street, the Ailey Young House is the only extant building that stands as a reminder of a row of worker's housing dating from the late 1800s. The area was founded after the close of the Civil War and today is inhabited by many descendants of those early citizens. A map of the Northeast Community and context is seen in Map 1.1. The neighborhood was founded by formerly enslaved African Americans after the Civil War.

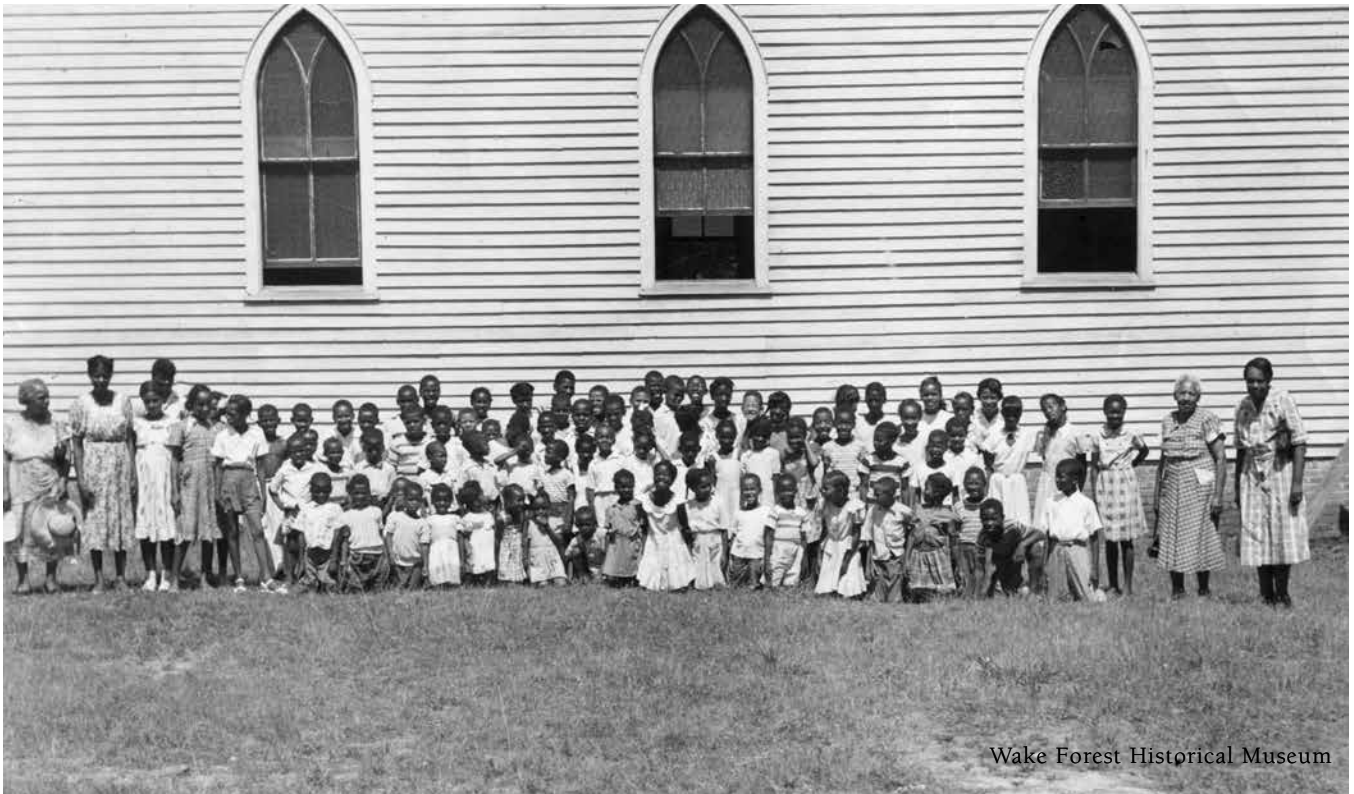
The Northeast Community, today, remains a center of African American culture. Olive Branch Baptist Church still stands as the cornerstone of the community. Two other churches, Spring Street Christian Church and Faith Tabernacle United Holy Church provide services to the community. Existing Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources facilities include the Alston Massenburg Recreation Center, Taylor Street Park and Spray Ground, and Ailey Mae Young Park. The neighborhood today is largely residential with properties owned and inhabited by descendants of the original families.



NCpedia.org



Allen Lawrence Young



Wake Forest Historical Museum



Olive Branch Baptist Church Sunday School children pose with teachers such as Ellen Powell (Right) and Lucy Harris (Left) (circa 1945)



Wake Forest Historical Museum



Students of the W.E.B. Dubois School (circa 1964-65)



Map 1.2: Northeast Community portrait

Planning Context

Town of Wake Forest Community Plan / 2022

In 2022, the Town of Wake Forest adopted the Community Plan, which established nine goals to guide decision-making and planning for the Town's future:

1. Balance the Mix of Uses
2. Encourage Growth & Activity in Downtown
3. Expand & Maintain Wake Forest's Green Spaces
4. Establish Safe & Connected Public Transit Options
5. Maintain the Historic, Small-Town Charm
6. Provide Diverse Housing Opportunities
7. Support Strategic Growth
8. Support a Pedestrian- / Bicycle-Friendly Community
9. Support Unique, Thriving Businesses

The two goals most applicable to a future Ailey Young House Park are to Expand & Maintain Wake Forest's Green Spaces and Maintain the Historic, Small-Town Charm.

The aim of expanding Wake Forest's green spaces is to provide ample open space within the Town and to maintain the tree canopy and other natural resources. Strategies at the Ailey Young House to align with this goal include the preservation of natural resources adjacent to the identified stream corridor, increasing planting areas around the site to increase biodiversity, and adding park amenities like seating, shelter, and restrooms to fully incorporate the Ailey Young House site into the Town's Parks system.

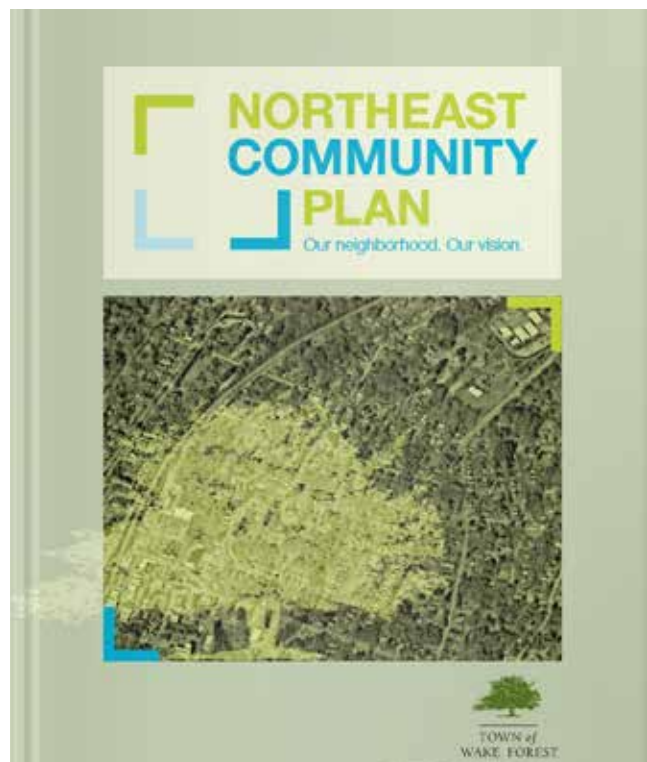
Maintaining Wake Forest's historic, small-town character means reinvesting in neighborhoods and preserving historic assets within the Town. By continuing the preservation of the Ailey Young House and building a park around it, the Town is both preserving the house and making it more visible within the Town and the neighborhood.

Northeast Community Plan / 2021

The Northeast Community Plan is a neighborhood plan that resulted from an intensive planning engagement process in 2021. Unlike the Community Plan, this neighborhood plan is focused exclusively on the Northeast Community and how the neighborhood can grow and evolve to continue being a high-quality neighborhood for the residents. This plan established four themes:

1. Preserve and Protect
2. Flourish
3. Connect
4. Partner

Creating a park around the Ailey Young House meets many goals within each theme area of the Plan such as expanding parks and green spaces, preserving and sharing the history of the Northeast Community, providing ongoing investment in the Northeast Community, and providing space to continue and enhance existing community celebrations and events.

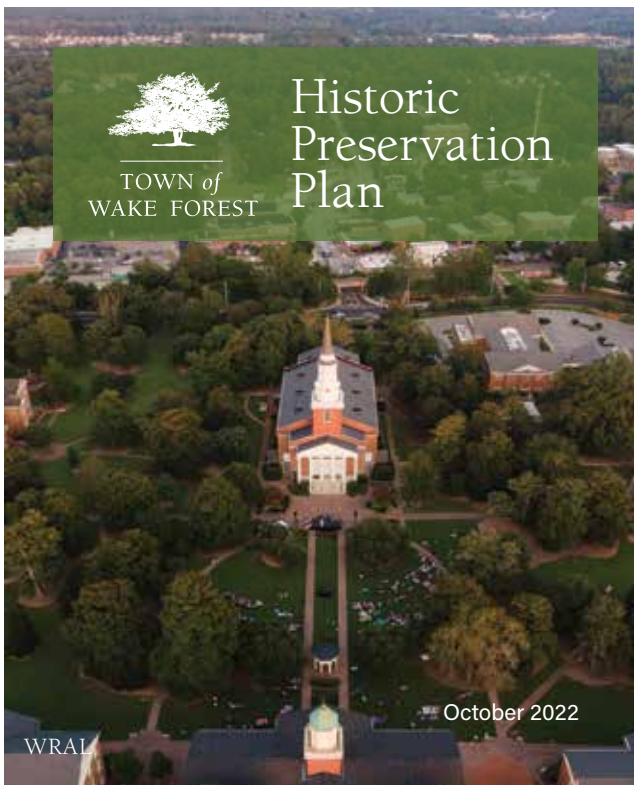


Historic Preservation Plan / 2022

In 2022, the Town adopted a Historic Preservation Plan that is intended to highlight preservation efforts and guide future efforts. As part of the planning process, an evaluation of the existing preservation program and comprehensive public engagement process was undertaken to understand the Town's goals for future Historic Preservation efforts. This plan established four goals for historic preservation in Wake Forest:

1. Strengthen Historic Preservation Program
2. Maintain Historic Character
3. Increase Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
4. Encourage Community Learning Opportunities

Investing in a park around the Ailey Young House aligns with goals two through four. This plan will protect the existing assets on-site while also developing a compatible concept for a park that enhances the existing site and assets. This project will also highlight the history of a significant community and lift the story of families that have contributed to its history. Finally, once developed this park will provide passive and active educational opportunities for the community and the region.



Historic Preservation Plan cover

Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources Comprehensive Master Plan / 2024

In 2024, the Town adopted its Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources Comprehensive Master Plan (PRCR Master Plan). The PRCR Master Plan is a visionary plan that is intended to guide the growth and operations of the Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources Department. This planning process included extensive community engagement, thorough analysis of the Parks and Recreation system, and development of Guiding Principles and action items to achieve the community's vision for parks and recreation in Wake Forest. The PRCR Master Plan established seven guiding principles:

1. Health and Wellness
2. Equitable Growth and Fair Access
3. Resiliency and Adaptability
4. Conservation and Natural Resource Protection
5. Historical Legacy and Traditions
6. Greenway Connectivity and Mobility
7. Innovation and Forward-Looking System

Creating a park around the Ailey Young House is a perfect example of the community's vision for honoring and celebrating Wake Forest's heritage and legacy by integrating it into park facilities. Leveraging history in the development of a new park has the dual benefit of building on historical significance to create a unique space and bringing new people to a place and showcasing its history to them.



Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources Comprehensive Master Plan cover

Park Context

Located 0.25 miles north of Downtown Wake Forest, the Ailey Young House is a Town-owned historic property located just south and contiguous with the Wake Forest Cemetery at 400 North White Street. The Town acquired two parcels south of the Ailey Young House for the future park. The Ailey Young House is accessible directly via North White Street. The site is approximately 2 miles east of US 1, and 1.5 miles north of NC-98. The future park's proximity to Downtown and the Northeast Community makes it a central destination in the Town and elevates the opportunity for a gateway park.

There is a continuous sidewalk on the east side of North White Street that connects the park site to the Downtown area to the south and Flaherty Park to the north. However, there is not a sidewalk on Spring Street, which is a main access point to the park site and Northeast Community.

The sidewalk along North White Street connects to the Northeast Community at East Juniper Avenue leading to Olive Branch Baptist Church, Taylor Street Park, and the Alston-Massenburg Center. A sidewalk on Spring Street would be ideal to connect the park more conveniently to the neighborhood. Park accessibility and connectivity are both critical priorities of the concept plan.

Access from the west is a challenge due to the presence of the railroad. The closest crossing is Roosevelt Avenue to the south and Brick Street to the north. Wake Forest High School is nearby, to the west, but is cut off from direct access along Pine Avenue by the railroad. The Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary is approximately half a mile to the southwest.

The Ailey Young House is adjacent to or near four Historic Districts:

- Local Historic District, created in 1979;
- Glen Royall Cotton Mill Village National Register Historic District, created in 1999;
- Downtown Wake Forest National Register Historic District, created in 2002, and;
- Wake Forest National Register Historic District, created in 2003.

The Ailey Young House is close to several other parks in Wake Forest's parks system. Within the Northeast Community neighborhood, is Taylor Street Park at the Alston-Massenburg Center at the southeast corner of East Juniper Avenue and North Taylor Street. At the easternmost edge of the Northeast Community on East Juniper Avenue is Ailey Mae Young Park, which is a separate park and program from the Ailey Young House and Northeast Gateway Park.

A mile and a half to the north is Flaherty Park (100 acres), which has numerous amenities including athletic fields, a community center, a dog park, and more. Looking south, Kiwanis Park (one acre) is just a mile to the south of Ailey Young House. Kiwanis Park includes a playground, picnic shelter, and paved greenway trail. Finally, Miller Park (two acres), which is currently under construction, will be a 10-minute walk south of the Ailey Young House once it reopens. This park will include numerous amenities including a play lawn, restrooms, shelters, and a stream restoration project.

Despite the proximity of a diverse array of parks and park types, the Northeast Gateway Park will be a unique addition to the Wake Forest parks system because it will focus on the history of the Ailey Young House and neighborhood history. This park will serve the Northeast Community by enhancing the connectivity to the Downtown area and providing a passive space for community gatherings.

Master Plan Framework

Introduction

This plan includes a comprehensive timeline of the Ailey Young House and park site. This provides important data to the planning and design team and informs the historical narrative as both a part of this plan and as an educational component for the Town and community.

Inventory & Analysis

This plan includes a thorough inventory and analysis of existing conditions to ensure the constraints and opportunities are accurately incorporated into the park's design. This process allows for the documentation of physical characteristics and design implications for future implementation.

Community Engagement

As part of the planning process, several engagement opportunities for community members, staff, and stakeholders were provided. A summary of all engagement events is included to contextualize the concept of the Northeast Gateway Park with the community's wants and needs.

Envisioning the Future

Finally, this plan includes a concept plan for the future park as well as detailed recommendations related to the implementation of the concept plan. This concept serves to capture all of the findings of the plan and translate that information into a physical design that can guide the successful development of a park project.



Figure 1.1: Project Process



Community Engagement

Introduction

The Town of Wake Forest has exhibited a continuous commitment to community engagement throughout the Ailey Young House and Northeast Gateway Park process. When drafting this site plan, the Town ensured that the engagement efforts were robust, inclusive, and varied. As a part of the planning process, multiple methods were employed to ensure adequate feedback was received from the community including focus groups, a community open house, and an online survey.

Focus Groups

- **Date:** October 1, 2024
- **Location:** Alston-Massenburg Center
- **Attendees:** 28 Community Members
- **Input Type:** Three Focus Groups

Overview

On Tuesday, October 1st, three focus groups were held at the Alston-Massenburg Center. Focus groups provide a way to receive input from groups with interests that complement the community. There were three sessions: one for Seniors, one for the Northeast Community Coalition (NECC), and a Youth session, though this session ended up being a mix of ages. These discussions created an opportunity for the Town, the community, and the project team to work toward a well-rounded vision for the site that embraces a set of community-established principles and values. Attendees of the sessions represented various age groups, all of which have unique and specific recreational needs. They responded from their distinctive positions, expressing their needs, wants, and concerns, as well as the needs of the people they represent. Each group added value to the overall community engagement effort and the mission to improve quality of life throughout the Northeast Community.

**“We want the site to tell the story.
OUR Story.”**

- Senior Listening Session Participant



Seniors Focus Group



NECC Focus Group



Youth Focus Group

Results/Key Takeaways

The Seniors focus group took place from 1:00 – 2:30 PM and was attended by 8 people. Staff invited senior members of the community who are familiar with and have a relationship with the Ailey Young House and Wake Forest.

The NECC focus group took place from 3:00 – 4:30 PM and was attended by 10 people. The Community Coalition includes community residents, Town personnel, the police department, and church and civic organizations.

The Youth focus group took place from 5:00 – 6:00 PM and was attended by 10 people. Staff initially intended for this group to be a mixture of representatives from elementary, middle, and high schools, as well as colleges. In the spirit of community, the actual session attendees were both senior adults and children aged 7 to about 15 years old, making this session intergenerational. Questions were revised to accommodate everyone and ensure that even the youngest of voices were heard.

From the focus groups, the project team learned the following:

- To the community, this project should not just be about sharing history but also **“sharing OUR story”**.
- The house is not only a testament to Black home ownership but also to **hope**.
- There was support from the attendees to **name the overall site something different** while the name of the house stays the same.
- This opportunity can also be used to highlight the history of **Black businesses** in Wake Forest **from the past and present**.
- The churches in the community and in Wake Forest have been gathering places for residents for generations and **many feel at peace and at home within the church grounds**.
- The community does not seem to want the space to be an “active” park but instead a **“passive”** area where they can gather and socialize.
- Benches, pathways, and seating areas were identified as important site elements for the park. There are few places **to just sit and enjoy** nature in the Northeast Community.
- The **lighting design** of the site is incredibly important.

Themes from the Seniors Listening Session

- Sharing the memory of the strength in neighborhood unity.
- Loss of community intimacy as Wake Forest grows.
- Loss of intergenerational connection and a desire to connect and support younger generations.
- A desire to feature the long history of success and joy in the neighborhood.

Themes from the NECC Session

- Shared memories of Ms. Ailey Mae Young as a champion for the community.
- Joyner Park as an example of a historic place with many different amenities.
- A desire to instill community pride through an understanding of history.

Themes from the Youth Session

- Discussing what makes a park welcoming, one participant said that knowing the people there made them feel more comfortable. Other participants added that how they are greeted and the attitudes of other people there set the atmosphere.
- History should be shared from the beginning to the end so that everyone can understand it.
- The park should be somewhere to hang out and have fun, while also allowing spaces for people to sit down and relax.

- The preservation of the mature trees was deemed very important while the clearing of understory trees was supported **as it increases visibility**.
- Through education, there is a hope to instill the youth **with a sense of pride** in how far the community has come and the work that has been done.

Open House

- **Date:** October 24, 2024
- **Location:** Alston-Massenburg Center
- **Attendees:** 34 Community Members
- **Input Type:** Open House Format

Overview

At the open house, community members were asked to participate in nine different engaging stations to gather more information about how they interact with parks and recreation, learn more about the history of the Northeast Community and Ailey Young, share their personal stories, and reflect on fond memories throughout the Northeast Community. The meeting format was open and casual, allowing attendees to move between input stations.



 Recording Station activity




 Spin the Wheel activity




 Legacy Tree activity



 Community Engagement boards



 Interactive mapping activity

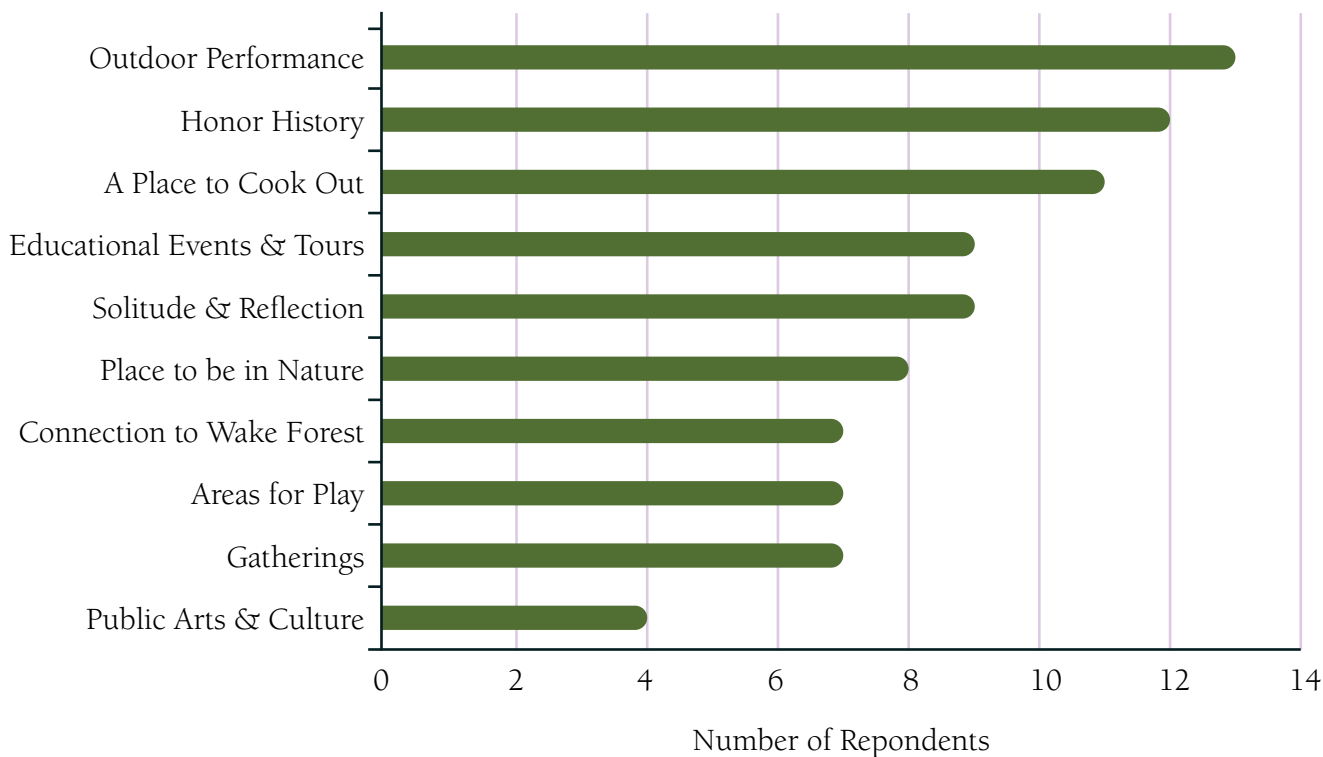


Figure 2.1: What experiences would you like to see at the Ailey Young House and Northeast Gateway Park?

Open House Results

Key results from the Open House focused on the community's specific desire for how the space should be programmed and therefore designed. Some of those key stations and questions were:

Which of these places is most welcoming to you?

One station asked residents what image felt the most welcoming to them. Of the six images shown, the most favored images showed casual spaces with varied seating types under trees. This was consistent with what the feedback heard at the focus groups: a desire for more passive recreational spaces over an active recreational space.

What do you like to do when you're outside?

Unfortunately, there was minimal youth attendance at the open house event. However, the project team was able to speak with several parents about how their kids would engage in the outdoors if given the opportunity to pick or curate their own experience. From this exercise with parents in the community, the project team learned that the most popular ways that kids interact with the outdoors are by **meeting new friends, exploring nature, and playing**.

One of the most popular stations was the **Community Legacy** station. This station highlighted the rich history of not just the Young family but also of the Northeast Community. Many community members found this station informational and confirming of all of the great things that had been accomplished by Black Wake Forest residents, especially during times of discrimination and racism. Driven by the feedback from the community, the project team identified guiding design principles to keep in mind as the design phase for the site began. During the open house, the project team consulted the community to ensure that these principles were representative of their thoughts and feelings about the Ailey Young House and its legacy. The team asked **Did we get it right?**

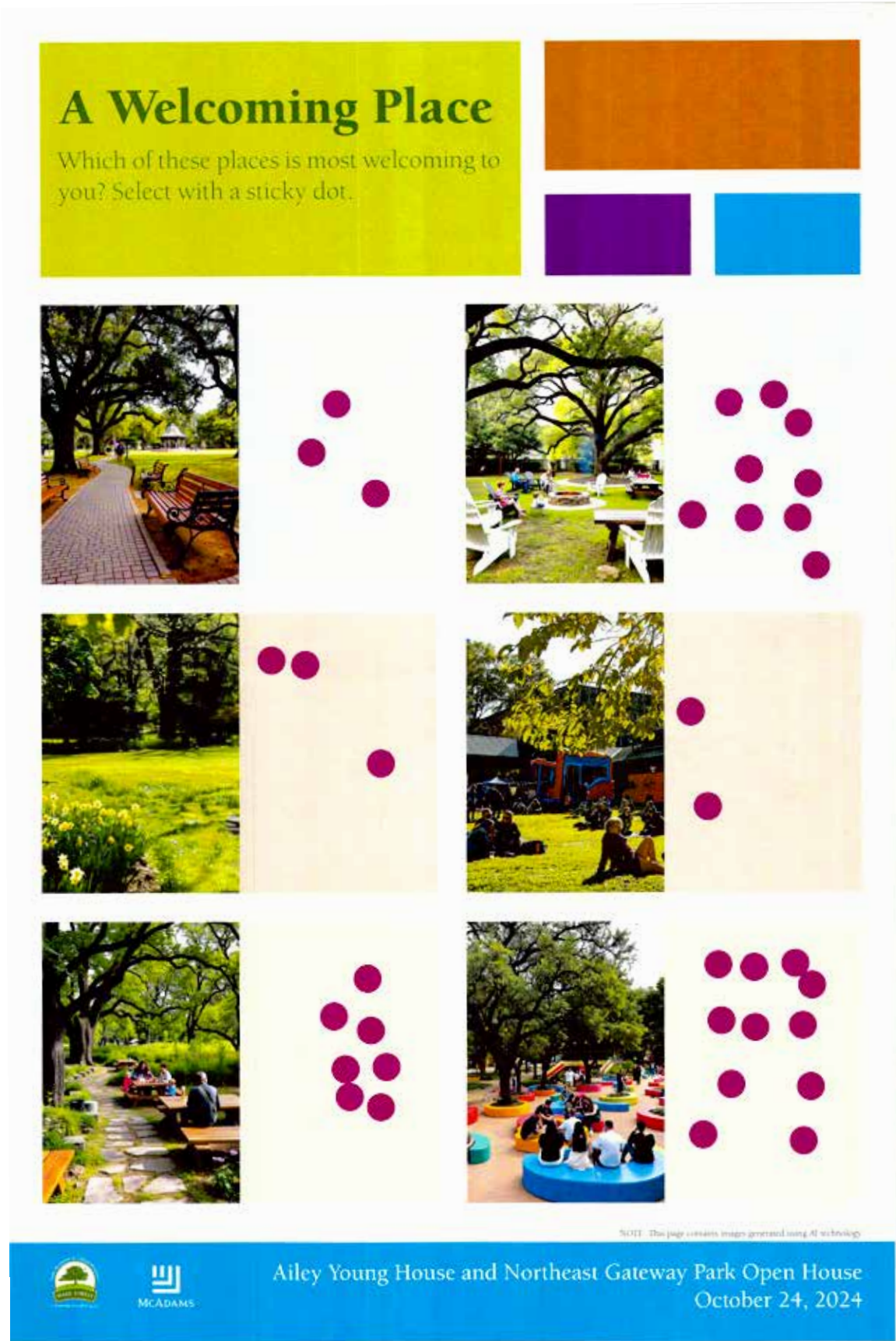


Figure 2.2: Scan of A Welcoming Place Engagement board responses





The final station of the evening was a legacy tree activity where residents shared their biggest hope for the park. After writing down their hope, residents were asked to hang their hopes and dreams onto the “Legacy Tree”. From this station, the project team aimed to fill in any further gaps of what residents thought were the most important design features of the site for their families, community, and future generations to come.



 **Figure 2.4: What is Your Biggest Hope for this Park responses**

Three common themes that arose during the open house included:



Passive recreational spaces are most supported by residents for the park project.



There is a strong interest in **learning and sharing the history** of the Northeast Community and the Ailey Young Family.



Participants desire the park to be a place of **community pride**.

Online Survey

- **Date:** Open October 28 – November 18, 2024
- **Responses:** 103 Online Responses, Three Manually Inputted
- **Demographics:** 22% of respondents are currently or were previously a resident of the Northeast Community
- **Input Type:** Online Survey (Survey Monkey) with a paper option available at local places of worship and the Community Center

Overview

A digital survey was made available for people to give detailed, virtual input on what they would like to see at Northeast Gateway Park in the future. The questions within the survey were comprised of the stations that were available at the Open House event. In addition to the survey being available online, physical copies were also available at the Alston-Massenburg Center, as well as at various places of worship throughout the Northeast Community.

The survey was open to all, but the outreach efforts were focused on ensuring that members of the Northeast Community were able to provide their insight. Current and previous residents of the Northeast Community and many shared memories, stories, and valuable insight into the rich history of the community. The survey also served to continue to understand the design desires of the community as the park is developed.

Online Survey Results

Question #1

Referencing the map [on the following page], please use the comment box to share a memory of being outdoors in the Northeast Community.

“My kids like to walk across the train tracks and explore in the cemetery.”

“I visit friends and loved ones buried in the WF cemetery.”

“My family history is along this area, and I have been living here for over 30 years watching the community transition hoping to preserve known and unknown historical sites as well as continue growth.”

“I remember trees, friendly people on front porches, kids crossing the railroad tracks.”

“I enjoy walking from Ailey young house through the cemetery to the Taylor Street Park. I wish there was a safe route to walk to Flaherty Park from there.”

“My husband and I regularly walk through the area, and we have enjoyed the Juneteenth celebrations.”

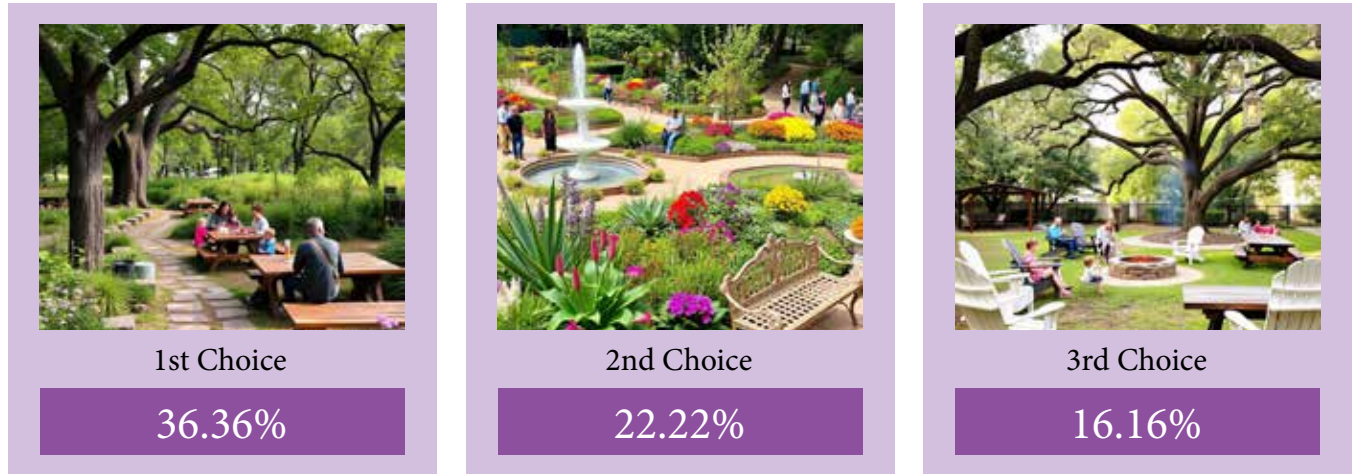
“I remember playing, swimming, school and going to church.”



Map 2.1: Northeast Community portrait

Question #2

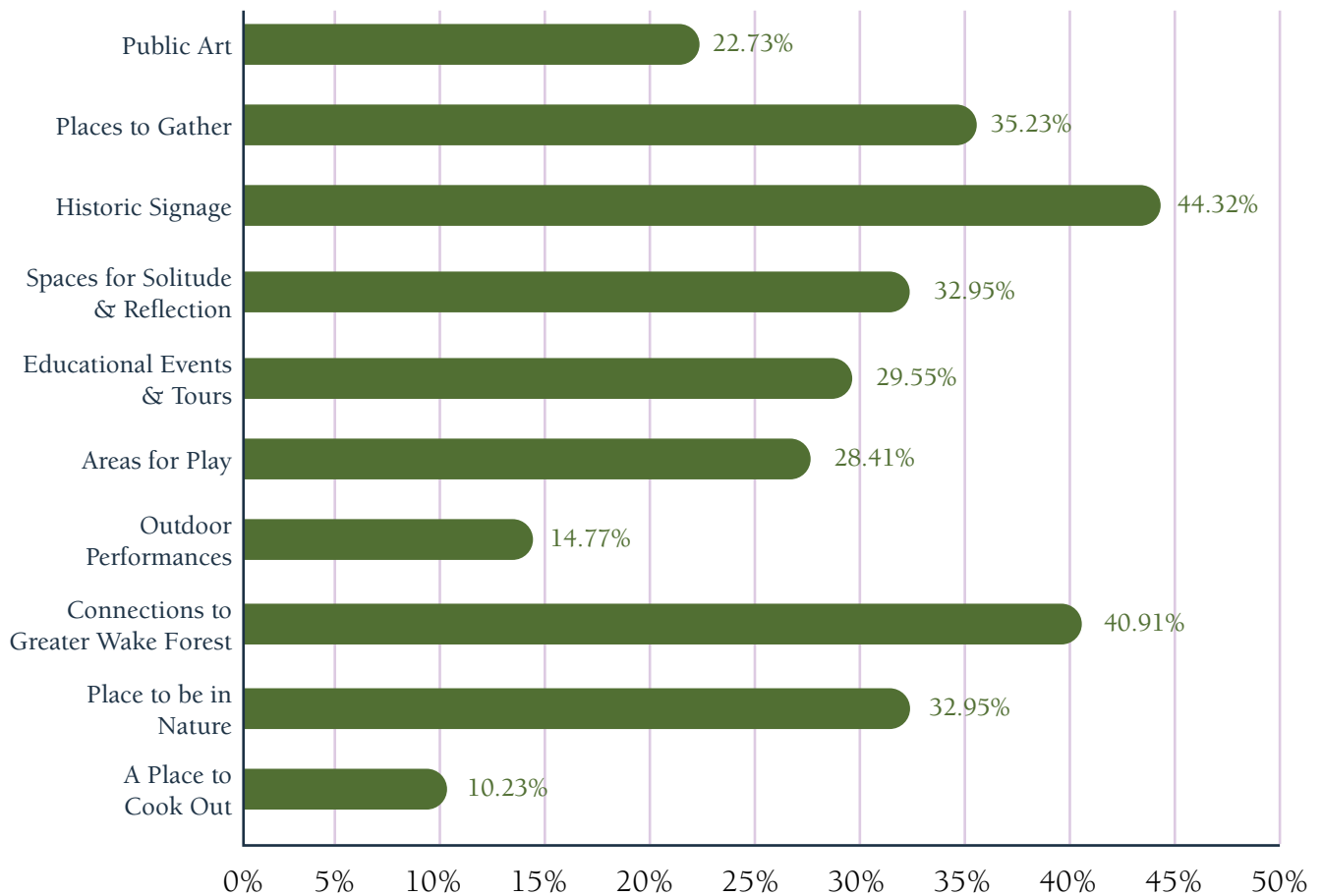
Which of these places feels most welcoming to you?*



*Only top 3 Choices are shown. There were a total of 6 options presented on the survey. All images were generated using AI.

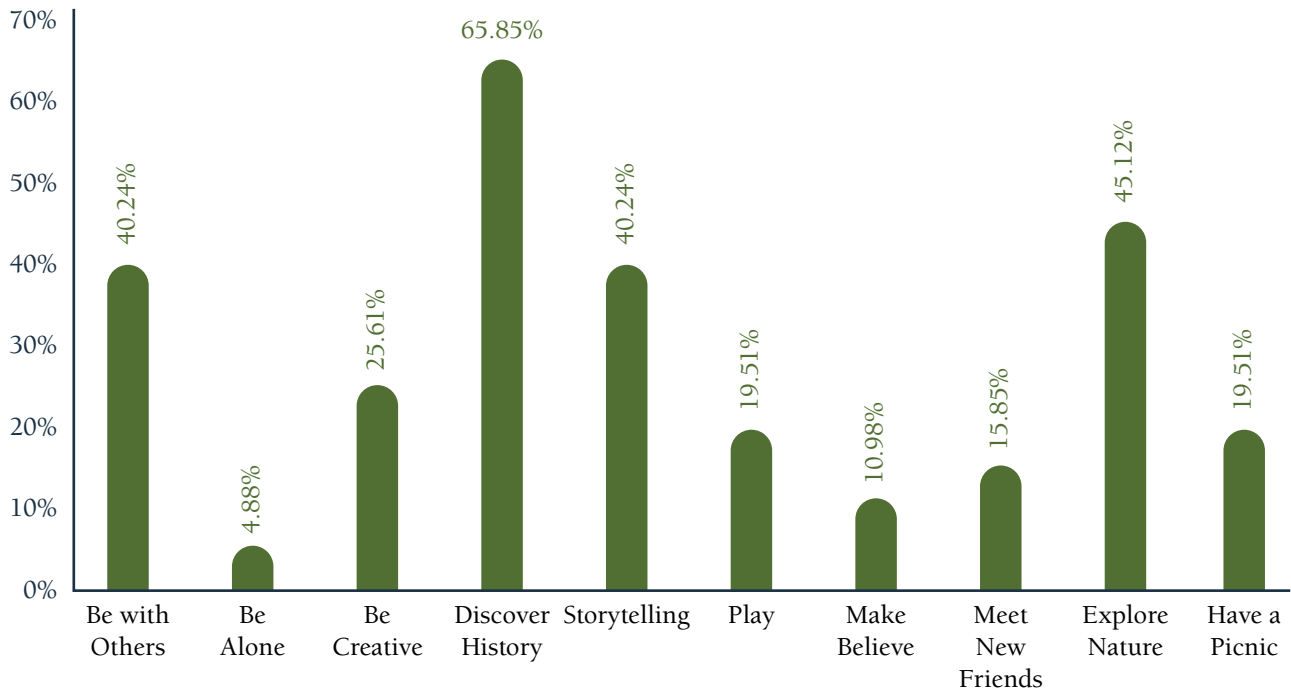
Question #3

Select up to three (3) images which resonate with you as possible elements to be included at Ailey Young House and Northeast Gateway Park.



Question #4

do you want to see for kids? Select up to three (3) images which resonate with you as possible elements to be included at Ailey Young House and Northeast Gateway Park especially for children.



Question #5

What did you do outdoors as a child with your loved ones?

“Rode bikes and explored the neighborhood and wooded trails.”

“We had a creek to play in.”

“Explored, learned plants & animals, and was taught to appreciate nature, knowing we must take care of it.”

“Climbed trees, played kick the can, baseball, soccer, basketball, street hockey, rode bikes, walked all around town. Rode ATV’s, had a bonfire, cookouts, played in creeks. Swimming, fishing, danced, listened to live bands play around town, trespassed to pet the cows & horses around town.”

“Ride horses, fish, adventure walks, play on playground, swim at local swimming pool.”

“Growing up we spent most of our days and free time outside playing with neighbor kids. We did things like playing hide and seek, riding our bikes, playing jump rope and hopscotch, and playing with the water hose.”

“I played alone in the yard, played make believe, played with nature, and enjoyed being at playgrounds with my mom. I also enjoyed kicking a soccer ball with my dad, and playing tennis. I also enjoyed gardening.”

“Fly kites.”

“Play and use my imagination.”

“We played outside in the yard or in the street with our neighbors. The east side was mostly dirt roads when I grew up.”

Question #6

What does the Ailey Young House mean to you?

"It means community and families having a place to go that is safe and clean for all people to enjoy."

"History Reconstruction Era post-Civil War housing for the African American working class."

"It means potential! We could have some great trails through the woods there and further connect the downtown corridor."

"Significant historic structure that needs to be recognized as part of the town's history to educate all of us on what the NE community brings to WFNC."

"Preserving, sharing and educating the historical experiences of the Black Wake Forest ancestral residence."

"An important part of our town's history that must be maintained and taught about."

"The Young family were significant members of the town and positively influenced generations of African Americans in Wake Forest. Having the house preserved and open to the public would be amazing, as it will ensure that their legacy will be remembered. The house is and will continue to be a landmark in the community."

"It's amazing that it has been preserved & is a real treasure for our town."

"Reminds me of the love and cohesion of family that was promoted in the NE community before all the changes started. Everyone knew and supported each other."

Question #7

What other families or events do you think are significant to the history of the Northeast Community?

"Gill. Massenburg. Alston. Pope. Haywood."

"I believe Olive Branch Baptist Church provides a historical marker in the community."

"Allen Family, McCullers Family, 4 church founders, founders/leaders who brought the WEB DuBois school to the area."

"DuBois Campus and Alumni. Esther Shackelford had a small business in the community. Cole store was another small business in the community."

"The Alston and Massenburg families as well as the members of the black fire brigade. Al Merritt, member of the planning board for years and a town commissioner."

"The Alstons, Massenburgs, possibly Roysters (now Feggins Funeral Home)."

"There were so many families who all contributed to the sense of community. Given the historical circumstances, the contributions of these families are easily overlooked or downplayed because their impact was so direct and personal to the black community in Wake Forest. The Educators at DuBois should be recognized along with the connection so many of them had to Shaw University. Education. The importance and value of education was handed down."

"History of Olive Branch, Annie Elizabeth Cooke Weeks, Massenburg family, Jones family."

"Evelyn Alston Jones has contributed so much to the town of WF"

Question #8

How would you describe the legacy of the Ailey Young House to someone who has never seen or heard of it?

"I had to look it up, the information is limited."

"This is one of the few houses still here that might provide insight into what living as free black people was all about in this area of the south."

"An example of hard work, saving, and trying to maintain a home in racially difficult times."

"An unconventional beginning of female home ownership. A place that represents opportunity, perseverance, upward mobility, and stability."

"It tells a story, and is representative of, our history during the 1800 and 1900's that is often underserved. It is also a testament to the resilience and hope that the Young family had and how that ultimately had such a great impact on the community."

"Oldest black residence in WF with historical significance to the NE community and the whole town."

"I would say that an African American woman was able to purchase property in a small community and birthed a pioneer who traveled the country raising funds to fulfill the family's dream of educational institutions for colored children. Her son raised a family that continued the legacy of educations and public service to achieve goals that Mrs. Young would not see in her lifetime."

"It's the only house/building in WF that was originally/ always owned by black people."

"Some of us know nothing about it. Need to hear the history of it."

Question #9

What is your biggest hope for this park?

"That it will remain a respected and inclusive place to the history of the NE Community."

"That it is peaceful, brings up nature and water, brings history, and brings connection to the other parks."

"That it will be a colorful, peaceful, retreat for adults and children to explore, to just be outside for free play and imagination."

"That it will bring people outside of their homes into a community park where citizens can be in nature, get to know one another, and learn more about our shared history."

"To increase knowledge and memorialize the significance of the Northeast Community and its families as a part of the history of Wake Forest as a whole."

"A tree shaded park with plenty of seating and tables that people can use year-round to enjoy getting outside to do multiple activities."

"Celebrates and uplifts a part of town that is overlooked. A place where family and friends can get together under shelters and in events as community. Make the place beautiful and with practical facilities. Have historic craft events reflective of the area. Have a facility where food is cooked and shared from the historic time period to present."

"My biggest hope is for the park to be utilized by all residents; for all residents to feel a sense of belonging the space."

"Due to the fact that the Young family were educators, I think it is fitting that the house and surrounding areas be used to gather younger generations and teach them of the significance of this historic place."

Question #10

What other feelings or emotions should the new park evoke for visitors that reflects the spirit of the Northeast Community?

**Question #11**

Any final thoughts to share?



Summary

The robust community engagement process yielded several key findings:

- The community hopes this park will be a passive recreation opportunity, with a focus on providing facilities that encourage relaxation and fellowship.
- Sharing the community's rich history should be a driving design principle.
 - » The story of the Northeast Community spans many generations, families, businesses, and churches, and they each deserve an opportunity to be memorialized.
- Participants showed a strong desire that the park design should reflect community pride.
- The following changes were suggested to be made to the site in the planning process:
 - » The addition of seating areas for people to just enjoy an afternoon in the park.
 - » Appropriate lighting and landscaping can breathe activity into the park by increasing its visibility.
- Additional educational opportunities, for both the youth and visitors.
- An enhanced site entrance.
- Sidewalk and paths to connect the community to the site and the site to the greater Wake Forest.



Passive recreational spaces are most supported by residents.



There is a strong interest in **learning and sharing the history** of the Northeast Community and the Ailey Young Family.



Participants desire the park to be a place of **community pride**.

Internal Stakeholders Design Charrette

- Date: January 10, 2025
- Location: Town Hall
- Departments represented: Communications, Downtown Development, Engineering, Facilities, Inspections, Parks, Recreation & Cultural Resources, Planning, Public Works, Renaissance Centre, and Strategic Performance.
- Input Type: Interactive Design Charrette

Overview

McAdams' team conducted a two-hour interactive design charrette with staff from the Town departments mentioned above. The project team divided participants into multiple groups and provided a large site map along with a menu of programming activities. After a brief project overview, the groups discussed site opportunities and constraints, Town regulations, and ordinance requirements to develop multiple site diagrams or sketches. At the end, each group presented its design sketch, and participants collectively provided feedback on each.

Results

- Programming elements: Greenway or multi-use trail through the site; parking; restroom; picnic shelter; boardwalk to cross the stream and connect to North Brooks Street; gathering area.
- Staff view this park as both a connector and a critical destination linking Downtown Wake Forest to the Northeast Community.
- There was consensus on using public art for storytelling and interpretive elements to celebrate the park's history. Park names were also briefly discussed.
- Staff provided feedback on ordinance requirements, including stormwater management and coordination with the City of Raleigh regarding sewer adjacency for the multi-use path.
- The need for low-maintenance design and special attention to site safety was emphasized by the park's maintenance staff.



Internal stakeholders design charrette



Internal stakeholders design charrette

Concept Design Open House

- Date: June 26, 2025
- Location: Alston-Massenburg Center
- Attendees: 36 Community Members
- Input Type: Open House Format

Overview

The Ailey Young House and Northeast Gateway Park Concept Design Open House was held at the Alston-Massenburg Center. Community members participated in two engaging stations to gather more information about which conceptual design they prefer, as well as to poll the community about any specific names they would suggest for the park. The design team provided several boards showcasing precedent images that inspired the design of the park. At the end of the station, community members were asked to vote on which concept they preferred more and provide some insight into their decision.

Results

Key results from the Concept Design Open House helped the design team to determine which features of the site should be proposed in the final design concept. Feedback from the community included:

- Concept A was chosen by 38.2% of community members, 32.4% of community members noted that they liked both designs, and Concept B was chosen by 29.4% of community members.
- Concept A is further away from North White Street, allowing for a buffer between the busy road and a feeling of being more engrossed in nature.
- Many liked the fact that the public art was visible from North White Street in Concept B, offering a landmark for people to know where the park is located.
- Regardless of design, many requested that the Story Cubes be included in the park.
- Several expressed concerns with the location of the gathering space in Concept B as it appears closer to the road and North White Street is a busy road.
- Concept A offered a larger gathering space and was noted by many community members to “feel more natural”.

Concept Design Online Survey

- Date: June 26 – July 29, 2025
- Responses: 75 Responses
- Input Type: Online Survey (Survey Monkey) with a Paper Option Available at local places of worship and the Community Center

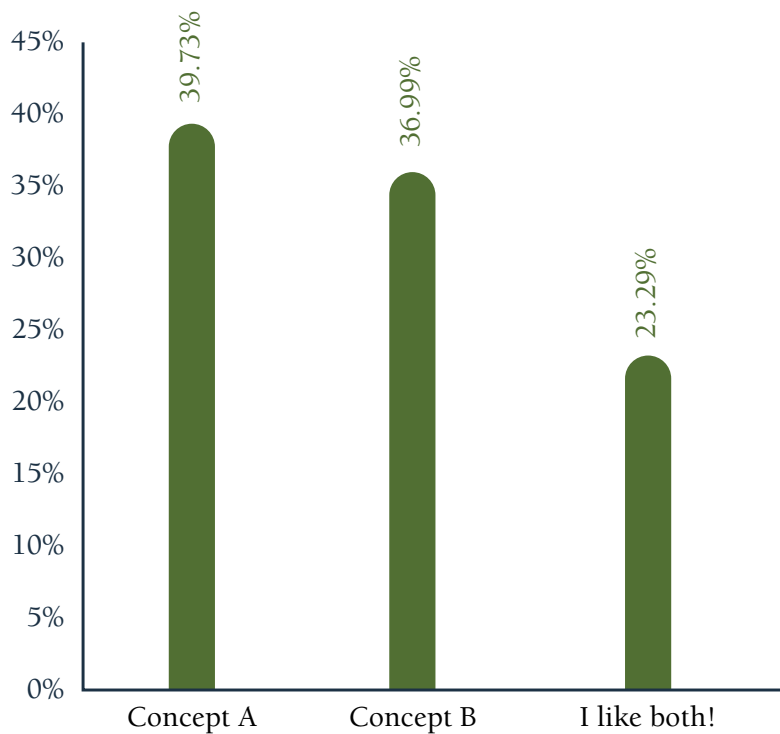
Overview

A digital survey was made available for people to give detailed, virtual input on which design they preferred for the Northeast Gateway Park. The questions within the survey were comprised of the same stations that were available at the Concept Design Open House event. In addition to the survey being available online, physical copies were also available at the Alston-Massenburg Center, as well as at various places of worship throughout the Northeast Community.

Results

Question #1

Which of the design concepts do you like?





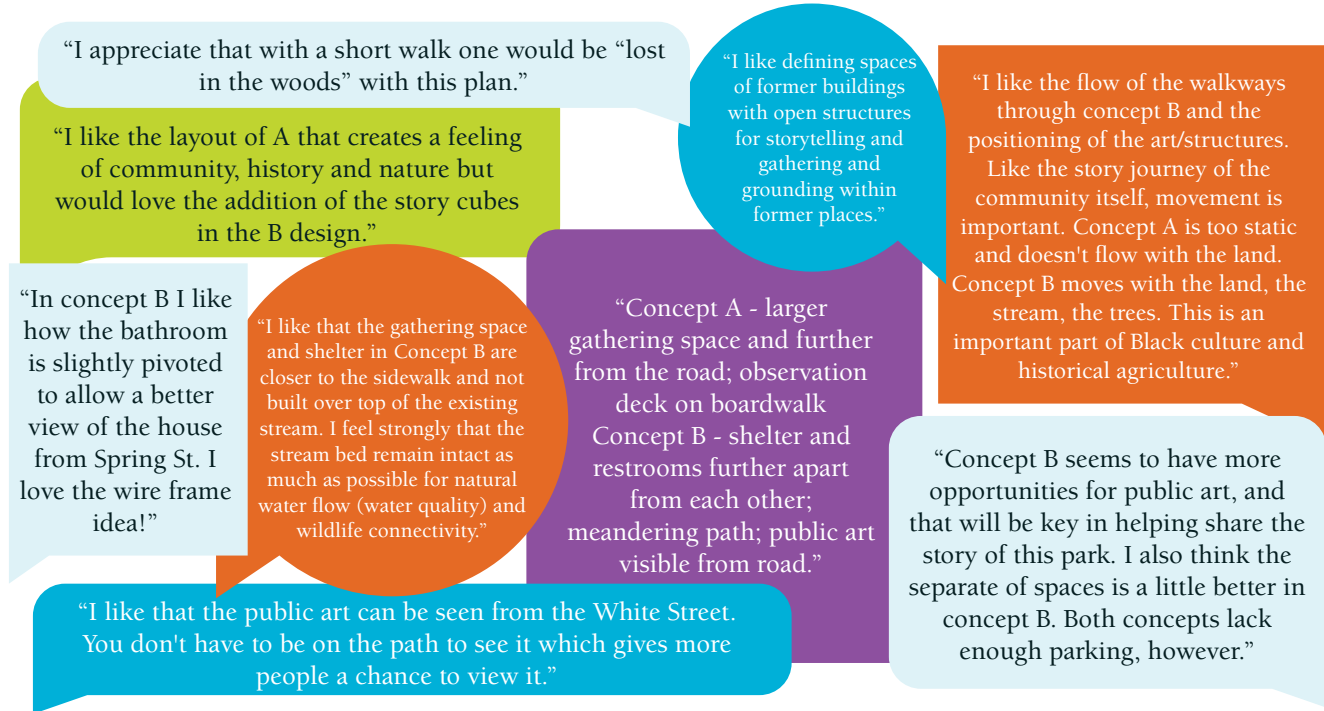
Concept A



Concept B

Question #2

In your own words, why did you choose that design? And if you selected “I like both!”, what elements from Concept A and Concept B do you like?



Naming Suggestions

At the Concept Design Open House as well as in the online survey, the community was asked if they had any naming suggestions for the park. Some of those suggestions are noted below:

- Northeast Gateway Park
- Celebration Park - A Sharing of Our Story
- Gateway Park
- Jubilee Park
- The Park for All People
- White Street Park
- Legacy Park
- Freedom Park
- Unity Park
- Storyteller's Park
- Legacy Grove: “Legacy” honors the deep-rooted history, and “Grove” gives it a natural, welcoming, forward-looking tone. It's both peaceful and powerful.
- “Rising Oak Park”: The oak tree is a symbol of strength, resilience, and roots — “Rising” points to growth, hope, and new life.
- East End Park
- Forest Cove Park
- Liberty Park
- Keystone Park
- Northeast Community Park



Inventory & Analysis

Introduction

The Ailey Young House is located approximately 0.25 miles north of Downtown Wake Forest, North Carolina. The project site is bordered by North White Street to the west, East Spring Street to the south, and partially bound by North Brooks Street to the east, and the Wake Forest Cemetery to the north. The project site is located in the Northeast Community, a historically African American neighborhood in Wake Forest.

The project team, composed of specialized professionals ranging from landscape architects to architects, archaeologists and historians, biologists, and park planners, inventoried a variety

of physical and cultural components of the project site to ensure that the proposed concept plan was rooted in the realities of the site and its context. The inventories are divided into the following sections:

- Site Assessment
- Historical Assessment
- Architectural Assessment



Map 3.1: Existing Conditions Map

Site Assessment

Topography

The property generally slopes downward from its western edge away from North White Street toward the stream feature near the eastern edge of the site. The highest point in the project site is the northwest corner. Generally, slopes range from two percent to ten percent, with the steepest slopes located in the northwest portion of the site towards the Ailey Young House. The wooded areas to the south and southwest are more gently sloped. The portions of the site most suitable for additional park development is the area to the south and east of the house.

Hydrology


Drainage to the site flows towards the east and into the stream. A previous vegetation clearing effort resulted in fast-moving stormwater, causing topsoil erosion. This caused mounting concern for the foundation piers of the house. In response, the Town implemented mitigation measures, including an addition of topsoil to replenish lost soil in the lawn area surrounding the house. A berm about 24" above the surrounding grade was also installed to divert stormwater north and around the house. These measures, along with well-established turf, have visibly reduced erosion around the house.

Along the eastern edge of the site, there is an unnamed USGS Blue Line Stream. The stream, historically known as Brickyard Branch, joins Spring Branch in H.L. Miller Park, continues to Smith Creek, and ultimately flows into the Neuse River. At the northern edge of the project site, the stream is buried as it flows under the cemetery. A 50-foot buffer offset from the stream has been established per regulation limiting disturbance. The stream's quality appears to be degraded with a sand and silt bottom and undercut banks. Along the stream corridor, some areas appear to have stable banks with a clear density of roots and plant material. Other portions appear to have little stabilization and are generally devoid of rooting plants that could provide stabilization. A lack of natural sinuosity indicates that the stream was likely straightened artificially in the past. The northern extent of the stream lacks an appropriate vegetated buffer, with turf from the Wake Forest Cemetery extending to the edge of the stream bank. The bank seems to have been stabilized by riprap stone. Within the cemetery, extensive algae observed in the stream bounds suggests excess nitrogen from lawn fertilizer is entering the stream.



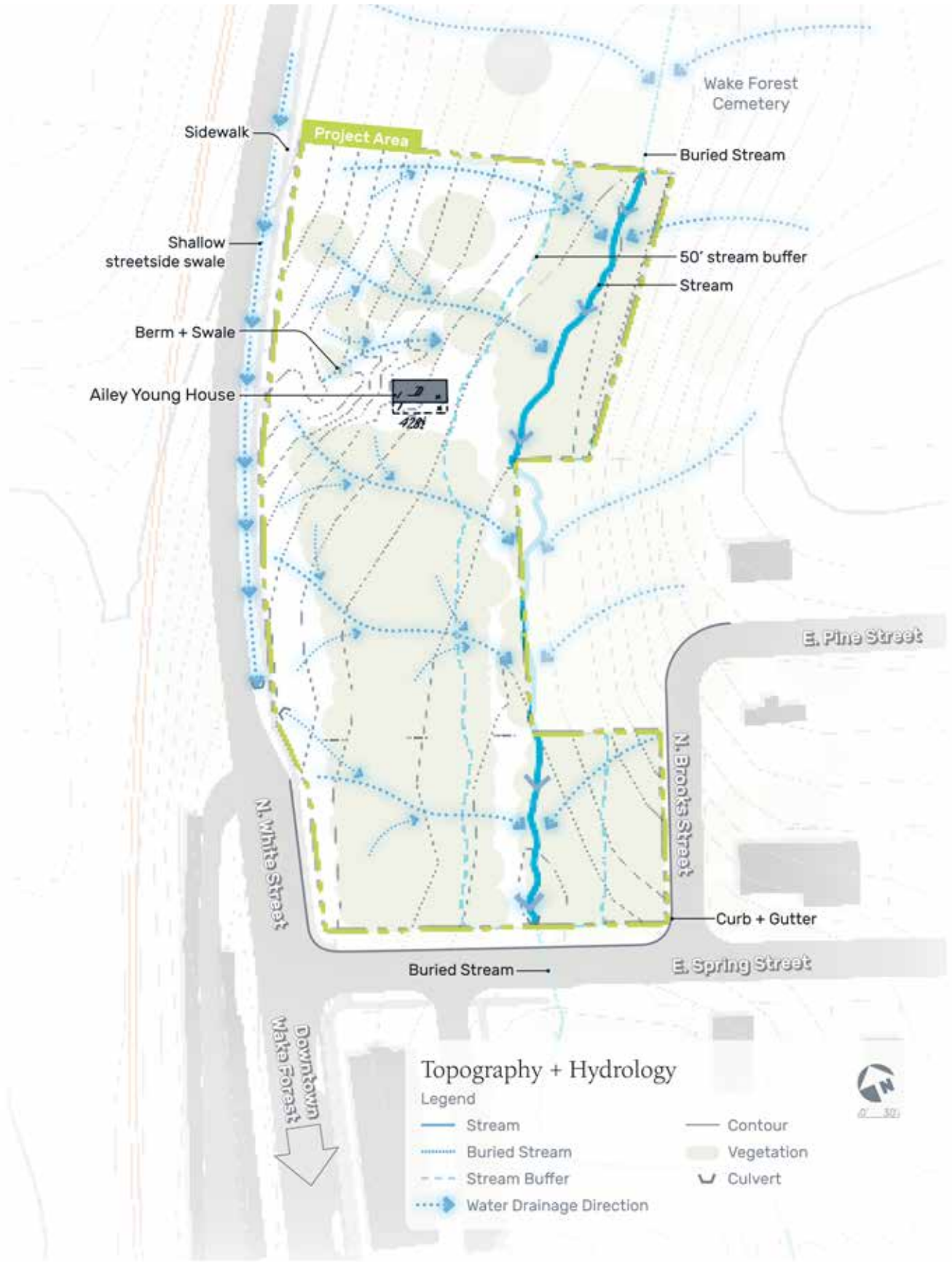
 Tree grove



 Slope of the site



 Stream feature near the site



Map 3.2: Site Hydrology

Soils

The primary soil type is Cecil-Urban land complex (CfC). This soil type is well-drained with deep soils accessible to roots. The top 7-8" is typically sandy loam with clay below, allowing rainwater to quickly permeate the top sandy soils and then slowly infiltrate the clay layer. During heavy rain events, water likely vertically infiltrates the sandy soil layer and, stopped by the dense clay, turns to flow downhill. This drainage pattern encourages erosion of the sandy loam topsoil. At approximately 4' of depth, clay transitions into loam. Bedrock is not expected to be encountered during normal construction activity. The shrink-swell action of this soil profile is low and contributes to a relatively stable structural foundation.

Vegetation

Generally, the northwestern portion of the site and a portion of the site immediately adjacent to North White Street are covered by lawn. A small pecan grove is located to the north of the house, and a historic Canna Lily planting bed is located just to the west of the house.

A majority of the site is covered by a mixture of deciduous and evergreen canopies, radiating outward from the stream. Throughout the wooded area, invasive species were observed, a common occurrence in unmanaged stream corridors. A map showing a general vegetation inventory can be found on the following page, and a table of observed species can be found afterward.

The Canna Lilies are historic plantings near the Simmons Row houses just west of the house. They were planted by the residents and are, therefore, significant to the historic landscape of the site. It is the Town's preference to keep, maintain, and interpret them in their current (original) location.



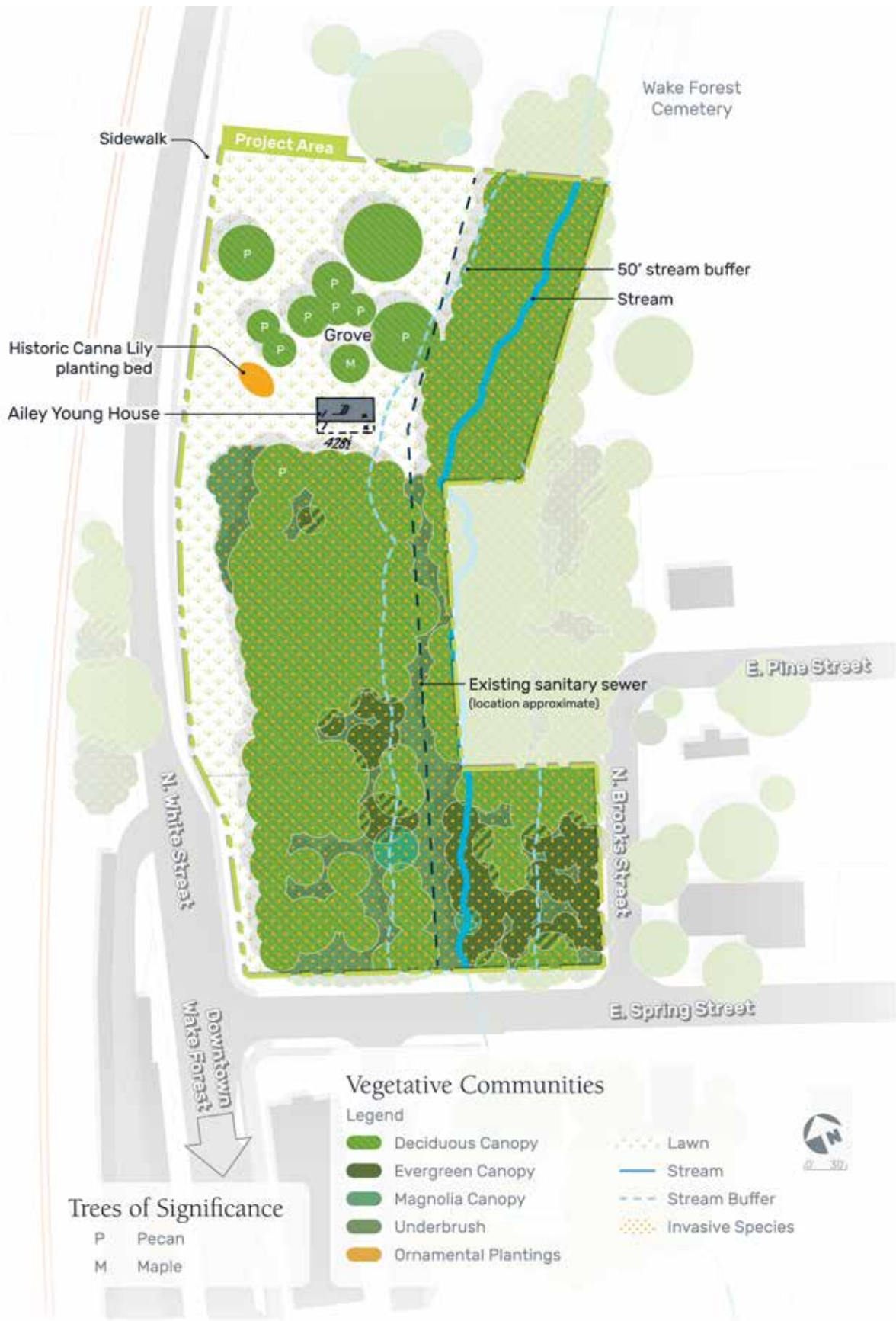
Evidence of site erosion



Vegetation on site



Existing sewer easement



Map 3.3: Vegetative Communities Map

Mature Tree Species Observed on the Property	
Common Name	Scientific Name
Red Maple	<i>Acer rubrum</i>
Pignut Hickory	<i>Carya glabra</i>
Pecan	<i>Carya illinoensis</i>
Common Fig	<i>Ficus carica</i>
Green Ash	<i>Fraxinus pennsylvanica</i>
Black Walnut	<i>Juglans nigra</i>
Sweetgum	<i>Liquidambar styraciflua</i>
Tulip Poplar	<i>Liriodendron tulipifera</i>
Southern Magnolia	<i>Magnolia grandiflora</i>
Willow Oak	<i>Quercus phellos</i>
Water Oak	<i>Quercus nigra</i>
American Elm	<i>Ulmus americana</i>

Invasive Species Observed on the Property	
Common Name	Scientific Name
Chinese Privet	<i>Ligustrum sinense</i>
Japanese Privet	<i>Ligustrum japonicum</i>
Kudzu	<i>Pueraria montana</i>
Chinese Wisteria	Chinese wisteria
Japanese Stillgrass	<i>Microstegium vimineum</i>
Mimosa	<i>Albizia julbrissin</i>

Wildlife

The property was assessed for the presence of threatened and endangered wildlife and was determined to provide suitable habitat for an endangered bat species, the tricolored bat (*Perimyotis sublavus*). The tricolored bat's fur is dark at the base, lighter in the middle and dark at the tip and is among the smallest native bat species. In the spring, summer, and fall, these bats primarily roost in deciduous hardwood trees in forested areas. A once common and widespread species, tricolored bat colonies have been severely impacted by the fungal pathogen, white-nose syndrome. The US Fish and Wildlife Service guidance recommends tree removal be limited to winter months when bats are most likely hibernating in more protected locations.

The natural resources present on the site benefit the larger ecological community by providing a habitat for a variety of insects, birds, mammals, fish, and reptiles. The stream and established forest present on the property are valuable links in an interconnected network of plants and animals that extend well beyond the property boundaries.



Historic Context

As part of the inventory and analysis process, the planning team reviewed available historical documentation and resources to construct a high-level timeline of both the house and Young family as well as the Northeast Community. The timeline spans from 1865 until the present day and can be seen in Figure 3.1.

The house, built c. 1875, is the only remaining house from the row of rental houses built by Wake Forest College professor William G. Simmons for African Americans. All of the houses fronted North White Street except for the Ailey Young House which faced south and was located east and downhill from the others. The house was originally constructed as a duplex to house two families. The other houses on “Simmons Row” are thought to be both single family and duplex houses.

Following the death of William G. Simmons, ownership of the house passed to his widow, Mary Elizabeth Simmons, who sold the property to Ailey Young in 1895. It is believed that Ailey converted the house from a duplex to a single-family home at this time. Ailey and Henry had twelve children, the oldest Allen (1875-1957) was a prominent local educator in the Northeast Community. His daughter Ailey Mae Young (1903-1992) became the first Black commissioner for the Town of Wake Forest. Ailey Mae Young Park is named for her and is located on the eastern boundary of the Northeast Community.


The house and property remained in the Young family until the late 20th century as the Northeast Community continued to grow and flourish. Today, the house is recognized as a Wake Forest Local Historic Landmark and is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. It stands as a symbol of the resilience and contributions of the African American community in Wake Forest, with a legacy that continues to shape the Town’s history.

Historic aerial photographs provide insight into the site’s evolution over time. In a 1938 aerial photograph, the Ailey Young House, three Simmons Row houses, and the single-family Willis Johnson home are visible, surrounded by a mix of cleared areas and canopy trees. The open space at the center of the property was likely cultivated, given the topography and the effort involved in maintaining it as lawn. By 1959, one of the Simmons Row houses had been removed, and by 1971, the Ailey Young House was the only remaining structure. Gradually, the cleared areas were filled with woody vegetation, and by the early 2000s, the site had become largely wooded.

“This is one of the few houses still here that might provide insight into what living as free black people was all about in this area of the South.”

- Public Survey Response



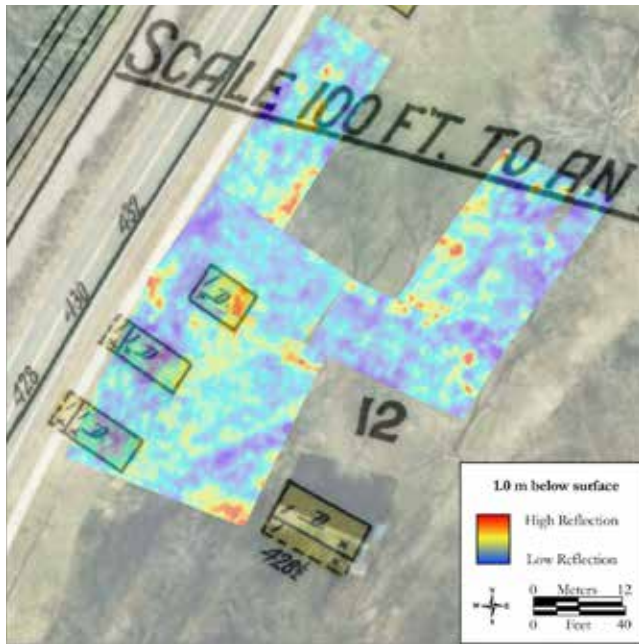
 **Ailey Mae Young (left) and Maude Young (right)**



 **Map 3.4: House Property Map - 1938**

A ground penetrating radar (GPR) survey conducted as part of this project confirmed previous studies and identified locations for additional archeological investigation. Supplementing findings from previous studies, this radar image shows likely accumulation of materials downhill of the locations of three non-extant houses.

Based on the artifacts recovered from the site, the GPR report recommends that any ground disturbance in the GPR area or around the house (for porch reconstruction or additional entrance to the house) should be closely monitored.



Map 3.6: Ground Penetrating Radar Survey (RGA)

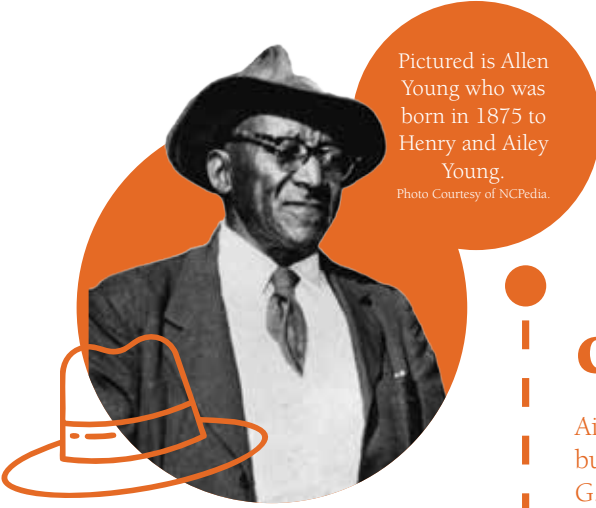
Map 3.5: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1915 (Current Town property with Ailey Young House identified in pink)



Members of the Young Family standing with the Ailey Young House

TIMELINE

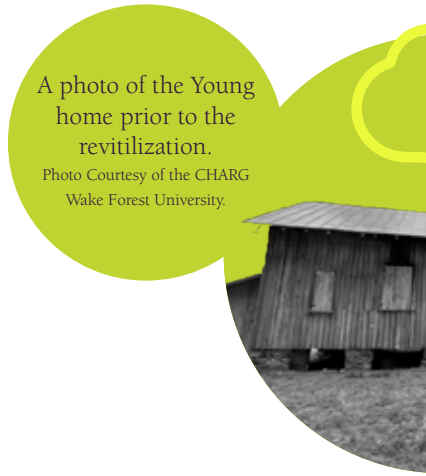
1865-1939



Pictured is Allen Young who was born in 1875 to Henry and Ailey Young.
Photo Courtesy of NCPedia.

c. 1875

Ailey Young home was built by Professor William G. Simmons as a part of a group of rental properties for African Americans known as "Simmons Row."



A photo of the Young home prior to the revitalization.
Photo Courtesy of the CHARG Wake Forest University.

1890

Ailey Young purchased property. Mary Elizabeth Young was one of the Black women who owned houses.

1865

Olive Branch Baptist Church is established and remains the cornerstone of the Northeast Community today.

1869

The Trustees of Olive Branch Baptist Church purchase land for a school at the site of their church building. This is the first public school in the Northeast Community.



A group of Sunday School students of the Olive Branch Baptist Church.
Photo Courtesy of the Wake Forest Historical Museum.



Olive Branch Baptist Church
Photo Courtesy of the Olive Branch Baptist Church.

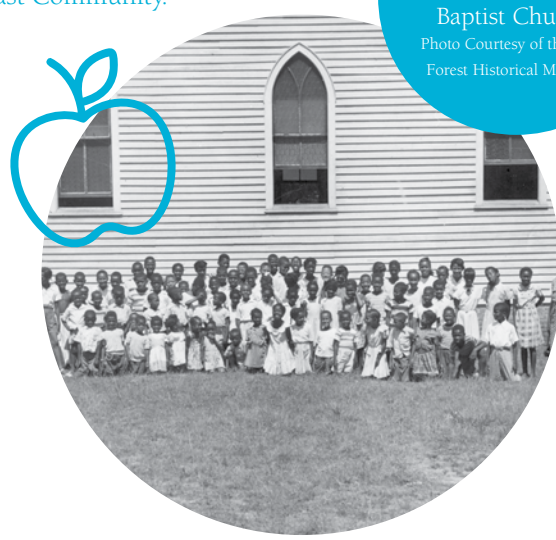


Figure 3.1: Timeline



Ailey Mae Young pictured with the Town of Wake Forest Seal. Photo Courtesy of the Wake Forest Historical Museum.

1905

Ailey Mae Young bought the house from Elizabeth Simmons. She was amongst the first Black women to own their own home.

1903

Ailey Mae Young is born to Allen and Louzania Young.

1939

A high school building was constructed and named the W.E.B. DuBois High School.

1905

Allen Young, Nathaniel Mitchell and others form the Spring Street Presbyterian Church and Mission School for Black children. The school became the Wake Forest Normal and Industrial Institute, the first private school for Black children in Wake Forest.

1920

Allen Young was a delegate-at-large to the Republican National Convention in Chicago (he later changed his political affiliation to Democrat).

The Republican National Convention in Chicago. Photo Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

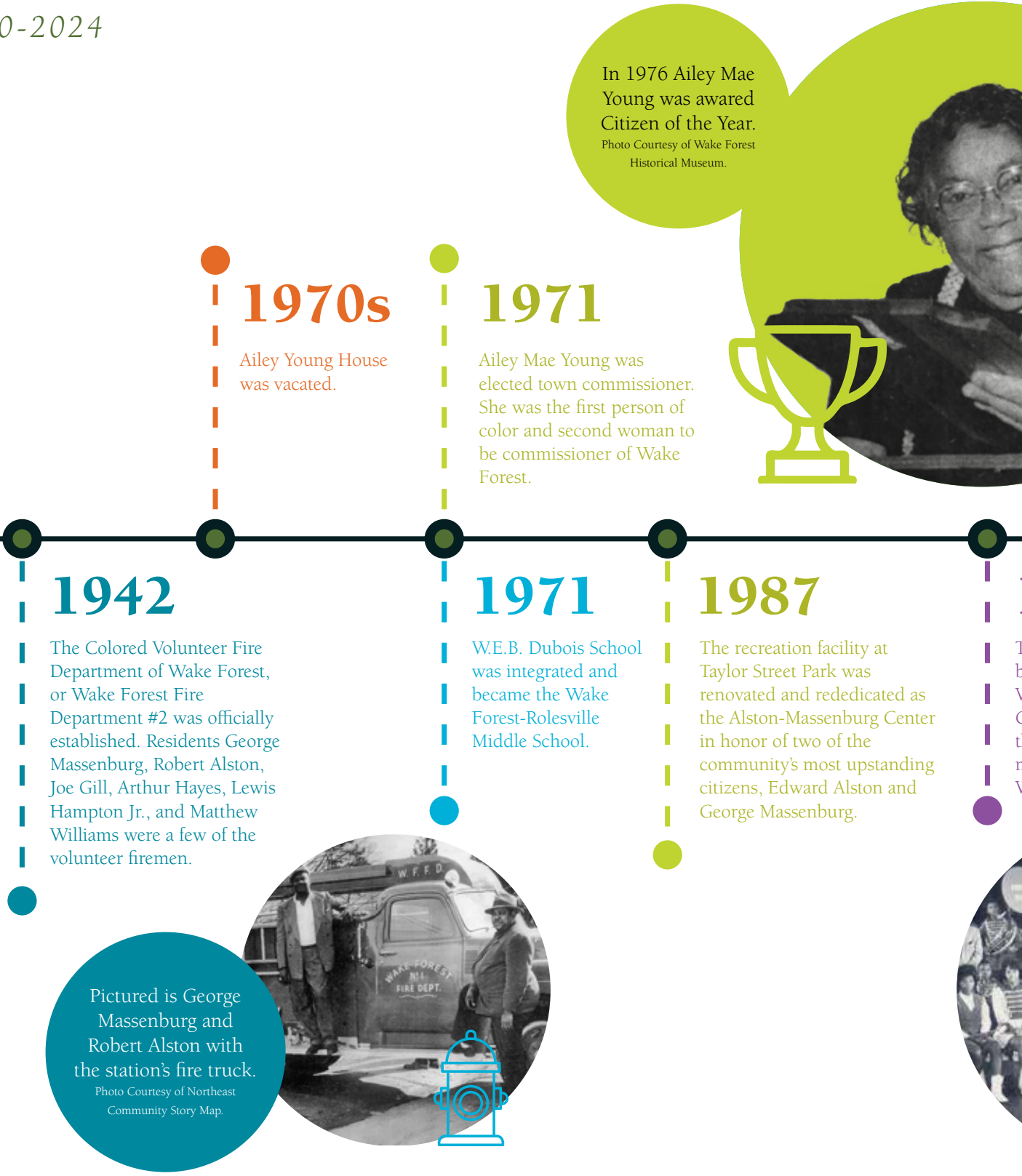


1926

Olive Branch Baptist Church partnered with the community and the Rosenwald Foundation to build a new public graded school for Black children on N. Franklin Street.


TIMELINE

1970-2024



Pictured is George Massenburg and Robert Alston with the station's fire truck.
Photo Courtesy of Northeast Community Story Map.



 **Figure 3.1: Timeline**



The Young Family standing with the Historical Landmark sign on the property.
Photo Courtesy of the Town of Wake Forest.

2008

The Ailey Young House is identified as historically significant during a study of the Town's historic resources.

2012

The Ailey Young House was designated a Local Historic Landmark, and a restoration campaign began on the house.

2022

The Ailey Young House is painted, marking the completion of the house's restoration.

1989

Last school building on the W.E. DuBois campus closed after opening of a new middle school in Wake Forest.



The W.E.B. DuBois High School Band.
Photo Courtesy of National Alumni Foundation DuBois School.

2019

The Northeast Community Coalition held a Freedom Walk that ended at the Ailey Young House in celebration of Juneteenth.

2021

The Wake Forest Northeast Community Plan is adopted.

An Open House was held after the Project Kickoff to engage the community.
Photo Courtesy of McAdams.



2024

Kickoff for Ailey Young House and Northeast Gateway Park vision plan.

Architectural Context

The house is a rare example of Reconstruction-era housing for African Americans. It is especially notable for its saddle-bag form, where two separate units share a central chimney. Originally unpainted, the house likely received its first coat of paint in 1895 when Ailey Young purchased the property. Other modifications made by Ailey Young and her family included converting it from a duplex to a single-family house, adding an interior passage between the two sides, installing beadboard and flush sheathing on the interior, and adding an interior kitchen.

Circulation patterns at the site, visible in historic photographs from 1959, show a driveway from North White Street forming a circular turnaround in front of the house. A second cleared path extended north to the cemetery and south to East Spring Street, roughly aligning with the current sewer easement. The cleared yard north of the house likely served as a shared space for outdoor chores and food preparation, while the three non-extant Simmons Row houses appeared to lack individual driveway access, likely due to their proximity to North White Street.

To the south of the house, the single-family home of Willis Johnson once stood at the corner of North White Street and East Spring Street. Johnson, recognized as an accomplished mason, was a respected figure within the community. His house, removed in the 1960s, was among the significant structures that defined the neighborhood's character during the early 20th century.

The architectural significance of the Ailey Young House lies in its unique architectural form and its connection to the African American community's history. As a rare example of 19th-century rental housing adapted into a single-family residence, it serves as a valuable cultural asset and a tangible link to the legacy of the Northeast Community.



Map 3.7: House Property Map - 1938




 **Map 3.8: House Property Map - 1959**




 **Map 3.9: House Property Map - 1971**



 **Map 3.10: House Property Map - 2002**



 **Map 3.11: House Property Map - 2021**

Design Considerations

Key challenges mentioned in the Ailey Young House Preservation Manual (2023-2029) and the relevant design considerations to this vision plan are included below:

Damp, Low Site and Soil Erosion

The house was built on lowland adjacent to a creek, making the site damp most of the time. Maintaining the site and any lawn is challenging, especially when heavy equipment damages the ground during wet conditions. Long-term mitigation measures are needed to protect the house, site, and collection.

Design Considerations – Consider implementing green infrastructure solutions, like rain gardens or bioswales, to help manage stormwater while preserving the historic character. Native, deep-rooted plants could also help stabilize the soil without requiring heavy equipment.

Historic Plantings

Historic plantings, including the canna lilies and daffodils, are character-defining features of the historic landscape and should be preserved as part of the site. Exploring the landscape features of African American communities offers opportunities for education and interpretation.

Design considerations - Preserving the canna lilies and daffodils is a great opportunity to connect the landscape to its cultural heritage. Interpretive signage or guided tours could highlight the significance of these plantings in the context of African American history.

Archaeology

The archaeology of the house site and Simmons Row properties presents both challenges and opportunities. Because the site is archaeologically rich, care must be taken during any ground-disturbing activities to ensure proper monitoring and protection.

Design considerations – Design elements should encourage cultural and historical education and programming to raise awareness. A management plan should be considered to protect artifacts in place during construction.

Safe Site Access

Site development plans must take a gentle approach to protect the house's fragile and significant setting, allowing for future interpretation and study. Public outreach is essential to understand traditional access points and the community's needs.

Design considerations - Balancing public access with site preservation will be crucial. Creating boardwalks or permeable paths that minimize soil disturbance could offer controlled access without damaging the landscape.

“As plans for the house and site are developed, it is imperative to remember that this is a fragile resource that must be treated with a light touch.”

- Ailey Young House Preservation Manual





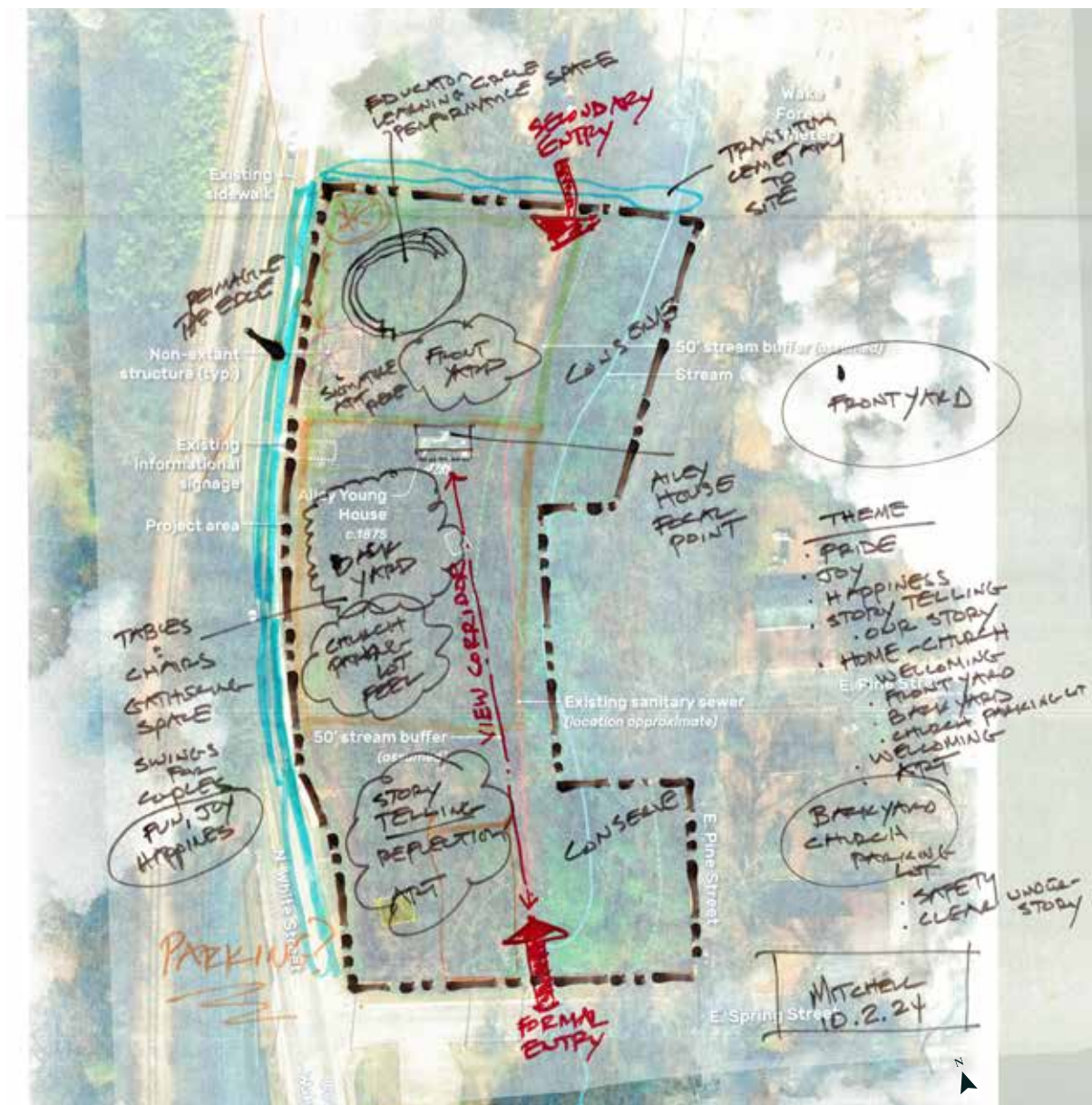
Envisioning the Future

Introduction

The design of the park is rooted in a thoughtful and inclusive process that began with robust public engagement. The project team analyzed the community feedback and integrated it with the site's historic context and current site conditions. This approach ensured that the resulting site design honors both the legacy of the park and the aspirations of its future users.

Design Framework

In response to the community's heartfelt aspirations, this design framework envisions a space that connects visitors to the past, immerses them in the present, and creates an excitement for the future. Rooted in community pride and shaped by collective memory, the park will serve as a tranquil space for reflection, a living classroom of legacy, and a vibrant symbol of unity. These guiding principles aim to translate those values into a meaningful place for all visitors.





Guiding Principles

1. Foster Passive Recreation & Contemplation

- » Design spaces that invite quiet enjoyment, reflection, and relaxation.
- » Incorporate natural elements such as shaded seating, walking paths, gardens, and public art to encourage low-impact use.
- » Ensure accessibility and comfort for all ages and abilities, promoting ease of use.

2. Celebrate History & Legacy

- » Integrate interpretive elements and public art that tell the story of the Northeast Community's past generations and their contributions to the success of Wake Forest.
- » Use these installations to educate visitors about local heritage in engaging ways.
- » Collaborate with local historians, cultural groups, and schools to ensure the community ownership of historical narratives.

3. Cultivate Community Pride & Identity

- » Create a space that reflects the Town's unique character, values, and aspirations.
- » Use materials, symbols, and design motifs to reinforce a sense of place.
- » Encourage community involvement in the design, stewardship, and programming of the space to build lasting pride and connection.

These guiding principles have informed the design elements and project goals as summarized below:

Project Goals

- » Ensure low impact on the ground to protect the archaeological assets buried on site.
- » Preserve as much of the mature tree canopy as possible.
- » Provide a greenway through the site and continue it across East Spring Street.
- » Provide sidewalks around the site boundary to improve connectivity from the surrounding residential area.
- » Preserve and celebrate the history of the Ailey Young House and the other houses of Simmons Row.
- » Pay homage to the historic Willis Johnson House.
- » Suggest public art locations and interpretive signage to tell the site story in an engaging way.
- » Provide a gathering area suitable for educational tours, community events, and casual picnicking.
- » Maintain universal access for individuals with disabilities as the site topography permits.

Archaeological Area

The Ailey Young House property serves as a vital cultural landscape, offering tangible connections to the history of Wake Forest. Archaeological investigations have identified significant historic resources on site, including artifacts from the Ailey Young House and remnants of brick foundations associated with the original Simmons Row dwellings. These elements represent an important chapter in the Town’s legacy and warrant both protection and interpretation.

To preserve the integrity of these cultural assets, the site design emphasizes passive programming and low-impact interventions. More intensive construction, such as the proposed shelter and restroom facilities, has been carefully sited in areas with lower archaeological sensitivity, minimizing disturbance while enhancing public access and appreciation. This approach ensures that the site remains a respectful and educational space, honoring its historical significance while serving contemporary community needs.

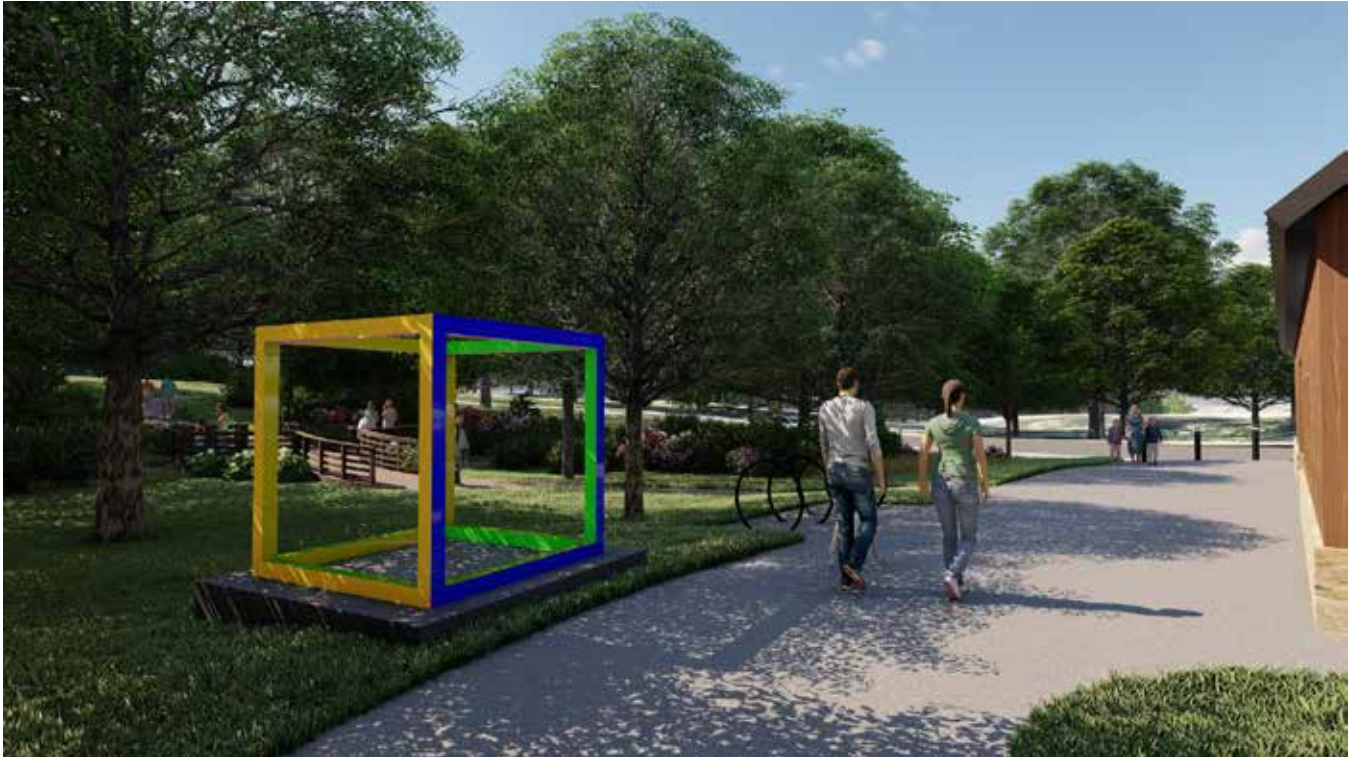


 Archaeology Workshop at the Ailey Young House



Site Organization & Circulation

The park's primary organizing feature is a multi-use path that meanders through the site, beginning at East Spring Street and extending through the Ailey Young House property. This asphalt multi-use path, ultimately connects to the Wake Forest Cemetery, North White Street, and East Spring Street, establishing a continuous and accessible corridor. The alignment of the multi-use path is intentionally curvilinear, offering views of the Ailey Young House from the park entry, accommodating the site's complex topography, and preserving as many mature trees as possible.



Proposed Multi-Use path

Park Access

The main entrance is located on East Spring Street, where an improved street section provides parallel parking spaces, including two accessible spaces. The entrance is designed to be wide and welcoming, with bollards installed to restrict vehicular access and prioritize pedestrians and cyclists. The restroom facility is strategically placed at the East Spring Street entrance, angled to guide sightlines into the park and toward the Ailey Young House, enhancing both wayfinding and the visitor experience.

Two secondary access points are located in the center of the site from North White Street. These entrances provide access from proposed parallel parking and lead directly into the central gathering space, offering convenient entry for visitors attending events or educational tours. Another secondary access point connects the park to the cemetery.

A secondary access point is also provided at North Brooks Street, featuring additional parallel parking. This entrance is intentionally more informal, with a naturalized trail that transitions to a boardwalk as it crosses the stream. Look-out points along this route offer opportunities for visitors to pause and enjoy views of the stream and the surrounding landscape.



 Proposed Park Access from East Spring Street



Gathering Spaces

The gathering spaces are strategically located along the axis from the primary East Spring Street entrance to the Ailey Young House. This area features a picnic shelter and interpretive signage that tells the story of the property. The picnic shelter overlooks a wooded area, where existing trees will be preserved, and selective removal of understory and invasive plants will provide clear sightlines to both the stream below and the Ailey Young House. Informal, naturalized pathways wind through the wooded area, beginning at the picnic shelter and encouraging exploration. Adjacent to the picnic shelter is an opportunity for public art. The public art piece is intended to be visible from the road, drawing attention to the park and complementing the historic narrative being shared throughout the site.

The proposed restroom building is strategically located near East Spring Street, establishing a prominent anchor point for site access from Downtown Wake Forest. This entrance is designed to function as the primary gateway to the site, offering a convenient and organized arrival area for school groups and other visitors. The layout accommodates group gathering and circulation, supporting safe and efficient drop-off and pick-up activities while reinforcing the site's connection to the broader community.




Primary gathering space with picnic shelter


New Architecture

The pavilion and restroom designs draw inspiration from the historic Ailey Young House, one of the oldest remaining African American structures in Wake Forest. As the home of Ailey and Henry Young, and the childhood home of educator Allen Young, it stands as a testament to resilience, education, and community-building during a transformative period in local history. The new structures honor this legacy through a shared architectural language rooted in craftsmanship and material honesty. Both feature traditional pitched roofs reminiscent of the era’s “Simmons Row” and stone bases that echo the home’s original hand-laid foundations, creating continuity across the site. Artificial wood slats serve as a unifying design element, integrated vertically to introduce texture, rhythm, and gentle illumination at night. The pavilion’s double post stone columns and raised wood detailing recall the masonry and siding techniques of the Ailey Young House, while the restroom incorporates storytelling panels and built-in seating to encourage reflection and engagement. Together, these spaces create a welcoming environment where school groups, historians, and community members can gather, learn, and connect through the layered stories of the site. The architecture celebrates the spirit of Ailey and Allen Young, honoring the past while cultivating a space for collective memory, education, and belonging.



 **Proposed restroom building**



 **Proposed picnic shelter**



Park Elements

Multi-Use Path

The multi-use path serves as the park's spine, connecting key destinations and providing a universally accessible route through varied terrain. It is designed as an asphalt multi-use path to accommodate diverse users.

Ailey Young House

The historic Ailey Young House is preserved and celebrated as a focal point, with interpretive signage and viewsheds maintained from the main entrance. The house surroundings will be a gravel surface to allow ease in circulation for larger groups as well as maintain a solid surface during rain events. A new planting bed is added between the house and the berm that will showcase a few selected plants from the historic era.

Mature Trees

The preservation of mature trees is prioritized, providing shade, habitat, and a sense of continuity with the site's past. The southern part of the site is impacted by invasives and non-native underbrush. The project team suggests that these areas be cleared and supplemented with native woodland plants of North Carolina.

Gathering Area

A flexible space is provided for educational tours, community gatherings, and interpretive programming. This area, while new construction, will reflect the site character through materiality, landscape, and hardscape. The elements include restroom building, bike racks, seating areas, picnic shelter, interpretive signage, wooded open space, and naturalized trails.

Story Cubes

Throughout the site, story cubes are incorporated as landscape features that provide opportunities for learning, interaction, and storytelling, enriching the visitor experience and deepening connections to the site's history. These installations will be part of the public art program and may include elements such as swings, sand play, or an audio recording booth.

Legacy Tree

The legacy tree concept allows community members to honor those from the past who have contributed to the growth of the community. Leaves bearing the names of community members can be added over time, symbolizing the ongoing growth and collective memory of the community.



Wire Frame Houses

To honor the history of the Simmons Row homes, which are no longer standing, wire frames can be erected around the old foundations. These artful structures give physical form to the houses, allowing visitors to feel their presence. At night, low-voltage lighting can light up these structures to become part of the streetscape and nighttime experience from downtown Wake Forest.

Historic Willis Johnson House

The historic Willis Johnson House is commemorated through the construction of symbolic low brick walls that outline the historic house footprint. The use of masonry is intentional, paying tribute to the Johnson family’s legacy and the craft of masonry, which was central to their contribution to the community.

Furnishings

Benches are strategically placed at regular intervals along the multi-use path to provide convenient rest spots for visitors. These benches, including ADA-compliant seating, are designed to offer comfort and enhance the user experience. Additionally, bike racks are located near the main East Spring Street entrance to encourage cycling and provide secure storage for bicycles while visiting the park.



Legacy Tree



Wire Frame Houses



Masonry work at Willis Johnson House



Wayfinding Signs

Wayfinding signs will be incorporated throughout the park, designed to align with Town standards. This integration ensures consistency with other multi-use path signs across the broader multi-use path system, facilitating seamless navigation for visitors and reinforcing a cohesive identity for the park within the community's recreational network.

Next Steps

As the master plan advances toward implementation and construction, several important next steps will ensure the park's design intent is fully realized. The precise alignment of the multi-use path, as well as the placement of structures and site furnishings, may require adjustment following the completion of a topographic and tree survey. This survey will provide essential data to inform final design refinement and help maximize the preservation of mature trees throughout the site.

To further support the preservation of the park's natural character, detailed grading plans and tree protection measures will be developed and incorporated into the construction drawings. These measures will be critical in safeguarding existing trees and ensuring that new improvements are integrated sensitively within the landscape.

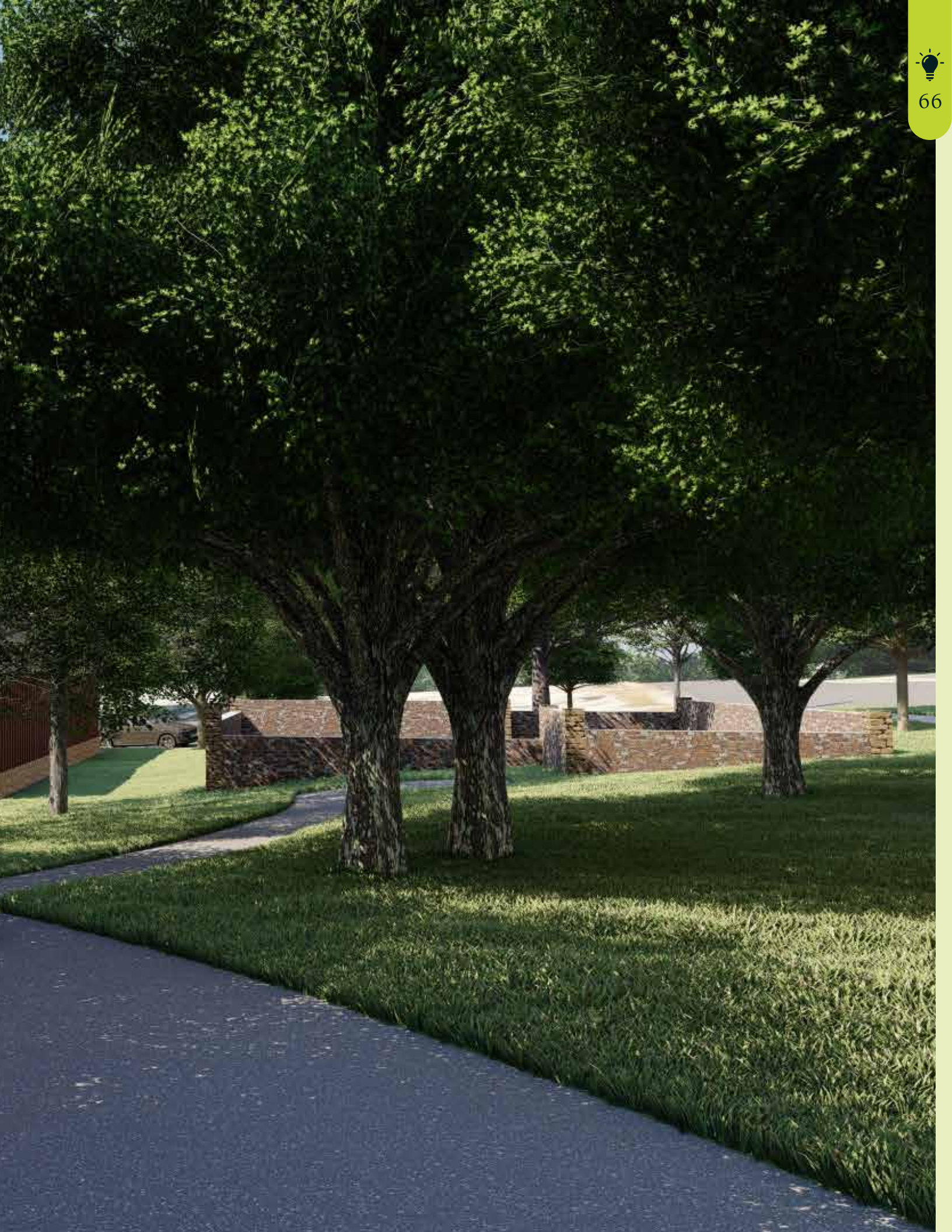
Additionally, consultation with archaeologists during the construction process will ensure that all historic elements are properly respected and protected.





Aerial of project site











Multi-Use Path through the park









