



Executive Director's Recommendation

Commission Meeting: May 2, 2024

PROJECT Rock Creek Park Golf Course Rehabilitation 6100 16th Street, NW Washington, DC	NCPC FILE NUMBER 8428
	NCPC MAP FILE NUMBER 3.80(70.00)45808
SUBMITTED BY United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service	APPLICANT'S REQUEST Approval of preliminary and final site and building plans
REVIEW AUTHORITY Federal Projects in the District per 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1) and (d)	PROPOSED ACTION Approve preliminary and final site and building plans with comments
	ACTION ITEM TYPE Staff Presentation

PROJECT SUMMARY

The National Park Service (NPS), in cooperation with the National Links Trust (NLT), has submitted preliminary and final plans for the proposed rehabilitation of the Rock Creek Golf Course, located at 6100 16th Street, NW in Washington, DC. The purpose of the project is to address deferred maintenance, increase playability, broaden course appeal to the local community, and achieve financial stability for the operation of the Rock Creek Park Golf Course. The project will achieve those goals by prioritizing the historic significance and integrity of the original William Flynn-designed golf course, making the site more environmentally sustainable, diversifying the golf programming to appeal to a wider range of golfers, retaining the affordability and accessibility of the golf course facilities and making the property a more vibrant community resource.

The Commission supported the proposed golf course design and new clubhouse and provided comments related to tree preservation, trail connection improvement, the lighting approach, inclusion of bicycle facilities, and reduction of parking, fertilizer and pesticide use on the concept plan at the January 2023 meeting. The applicant initiated the Environmental Assessment (EA) process that included additional details regarding tree removal and replacement, trails, pesticide use, water and irrigation infrastructure and other environmental issues. During the public comment period in October 2023, the applicant extended the public comment period deadline based on public request. The applicant received significant public comments on the draft EA, with most comments focused on the proposed tree removal that is necessary to rehabilitate the golf course to usable condition. The applicant has addressed the relevant comments from the Commission and those received as part of the draft EA process.

In October of 2020, the NPS signed a 50-year lease with NLT to operate three historic public golf courses in Washington, DC, including the one in Rock Creek Park. The other courses include Langston Golf Course at Anacostia Park and East Potomac Golf Course at Hains Point. NLT is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, is dedicated to protecting and promoting accessible, affordable, and engaging public golf courses to positively impact local communities across the United States. Of the three municipal golf courses in the District, the Rock Creek Park Golf Course is the most challenging and the least played. Encroachment by the dense wooded areas of the course has dramatically narrowed the fairways on the already difficult holes of the back nine. The lack of sunlight has also caused issues, leading to weedy greens and bare fairways. Because of these challenges, the prior operator abandoned the holes in 2015.

KEY INFORMATION

- The Rock Creek Park Golf Course is located on the east side of Rock Creek Park at the intersection of 16th and Military Road, NW in Washington, DC. The site is approximately 100 acres and includes an 18-hole parkland-style golf course. It was initially built between 1921 and 1927.
- Golf course architect William S. Flynn was hired to design a nine-hole course, which was soon expanded to 18-holes, and further altered in the 1950s.
- Of the three municipal golf courses in the District, the Rock Creek Park Golf Course is the most challenging and the least played. Encroachment by the dense wooded areas of the course has dramatically narrowed the fairways on the already difficult holes of the back nine. The lack of sunlight has also caused issues, leading to weedy greens and bare fairways.
- The course currently suffers from deferred maintenance that has impacted golf course facilities as well as the playability of the course. The clubhouse, built in 1964, has limited capabilities, and supports only a snack bar and pro shop. The present building does not adequately support golf course operations and does not meet accessibility requirements.
- In October of 2020, the NPS signed a 50-year lease with National Links Trust (NLT) to operate three historic public golf courses in Washington, DC, including the one in Rock Creek Park. NLT is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, is dedicated to protecting and promoting accessible, affordable and engaging public golf courses to positively impact local communities across the United States.
- The purpose of the project is to address deferred maintenance, increase playability, broaden course appeal to the local community, and achieve financial stability for the operation of the Rock Creek Park Golf Course.
- The proposed project includes a nine-hole regulation course, a shorter nine-hole Par-3 course, and a driving range with new clubhouse and support facilities. The intention is to expand the appeal of the facility to both experienced and beginner golfers.

RECOMMENDATION

The Commission:

Approves the proposed preliminary and final site and buildings plans for the renovation of the Rock Creek Park Golf Course in Washington, DC with comments.

Supports the project goals to address deferred maintenance, broaden course appeal to the local community, and achieve financial stability for the operation of the golf course.

Notes this public golf course is in the worst condition and the least played of the three that are NPS-controlled and will be the first to be rehabilitated.

Notes that over 20 years of deferred maintenance and significant overgrowth on the course necessitates the removal of 6 acres of trees across the course to return it to a playable condition and accommodate the proposed design.

Finds the applicant has addressed the Commission's comments from the concept review including:

- Adding a 1.2-mile ecological trail that seeks to provide inclusive access to nature for improved health and well-being, expand the use of the property beyond golf users, and encourage recreational opportunities.
- Thoroughly evaluating the existing tree canopy and identifying specimen trees that support the historic character of the property for protection.
- Developing a plan to limit vegetation removal to invasive species and non-native species, some encroaching successional forest, and specific mature trees that directly impact the rehabilitation of the course and the establishment of the new par-3 course.
- Committing to a tree replacement plan that will add 7.1 acres of forest canopy as part of the project, in accordance with NCPC's tree replacement policies, which is more than the 6.2 acres being removed.
- Including a lighting plan that limits lighting to areas around the clubhouse and driving range, limits lighting to only operating hours, and ensures all lighting is Dark Skies compliant.
- Updating the plans to include bike and pedestrian paths and bike parking.

Requires NPS to return to the Commission prior to Phase 2 construction in 2025 (when more informed planting decisions can be made) with a briefing on the tree replacement strategy.

Supports the final siting, massing and design approach of the new clubhouse and driving range which has not significantly changed since the concept review. In particular, the building will be oriented to:

- Take advantage of panoramic views from the clubhouse to the golf course;
- Preserve the mature trees that surround the existing clubhouse;
- Minimize visual impacts of the structures on the landscape;
- The combination of traditional forms with both natural and modern materials are compatible with the historic context of Rock Creek Park, while reflecting the contemporary era.
- Include solar panels on the roof of the driving range to improve the sustainability of the clubhouse.

PROJECT REVIEW TIMELINE

Previous actions	– January 2023 Concept Review
Remaining actions (anticipated)	– None

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Executive Summary

The National Park Service signed a 50-year lease with the National Links Trust to rehabilitate the three golf courses in the District of Columbia. As noted by the applicant, this course is in the worst condition and least played, and therefore requires substantial rehabilitation. This is the first of the three NPS-controlled public golf courses that will be rehabilitated due to its current condition and straightforward approach to its long-term sustainability and management. Improvements to Langston and East Potomac Park will occur in the future. The project will achieve those goals by prioritizing the historic significance and integrity of the original William Flynn-designed golf course, making the site more environmentally sustainable, diversifying the golf programming to appeal to a wider range of golfers, retaining the affordability and accessibility of the golf course facilities and making the property a more vibrant community resource.

Overall, staff finds the project will enhance the site and increase accessibility to this underutilized community resource. The project also begins the broader effort to improve all three NPS-controlled public golf courses in the District of Columbia. In addition, the applicant has done extensive research and planning to minimize tree removal to the extent practicable and as such, staff recommends the **Commission approves the National Park Services proposed preliminary and final site and buildings plans for the renovation of the Rock Creek Park Golf Course in Washington, DC with comments.**

Analysis

Background

The Rock Creek Park Golf Course is located on the east side of Rock Creek Park at the intersection of 16th and Military Road, NW in Washington, DC. The site is approximately 100 acres and includes an 18-hole parkland-style golf course primarily and designed by golf course architect William S. Flynn. It was built between 1921 and 1927.

The course currently suffers from significant deferred maintenance that has impacted golf course facilities as well as the playability of the course. The Mission 66-era clubhouse, built in 1964 to replace a farmhouse that predated the golf course, has limited facilities, and supports only a snack bar and pro shop. The present building does not adequately support golf course operations and does not meet accessibility requirements. The maintenance building, built in the 1980s, is highly

visible due to its location along the entrance drive to the clubhouse and parking area. Woody vegetation encroaches on the fairways, greens, and tees. Over the years, vegetation was planted on the front nine without following any distinct golf course style. In other instances, invasive vegetation, especially vines, has covered original stands of trees which obscures views into forested areas. The course also suffers from poor turf conditions caused by traffic patterns, poor cart paths, poor drainage, tree root competition, a poor irrigation system, and shade from encroaching trees. As such, staff recommends the **Commission notes this public golf course is in the worst condition and the least played of the three that are NPS-controlled and will be the first to be rehabilitated.**

History of Golf Course

The Rock Creek Park Golf Course is currently listed in the National Register of Historic Places as a contributing resource to the Rock Creek Park Historic District. Rock Creek Park contains over 1,700 acres of natural forest growth and accommodates over 300 acres of intensive recreational facilities, roads, trails, structures, and sites. Established in 1890, Rock Creek Park consists of the creek itself and the picturesque scenery surrounding it, which represents the last major parcel of natural landscape in the District of Columbia.

Golf course architect William S. Flynn. was hired to lay out a nine-hole course. He created a layout that highlighted the topography and incorporated stands of mature trees. An existing nineteenth century farmhouse was renovated for use as a clubhouse. In 1923, President Warren G. Harding dedicated and opened the course. Within a year, plans were underway to expand the course to a full 18 holes. In 1924, Flynn returned to determine the new routing. The new design required radical changes to the existing holes to create a cohesive layout. The new 18-hole course opened to the public in the spring of 1926. Modifications occurred in the 1950s with the realignment of Military Road, NW. As a result, the location of six of the front nine holes were shifted, but the overall routing of the course was retained. Original elements, including tee boxes, fairways, and greens, were incorporated into the new design when possible.

A 2017 Cultural Landscape Inventory for the Rock Creek Park Golf Course established that the golf course is individually eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The Rock Creek Park Golf Course represents a significant period in history of golf in the United States and the development of public recreation in Washington, DC. Additionally, it is an important local work of golf course architect William S. Flynn and a largely intact example of a course designed during the period referred to as the “Golden Age” of golf course architecture.

The existing 1964 clubhouse is listed as a contributing resource within the Rock Creek Park Historic District. However, after evaluation, it was determined that the building could not be reused due to its small size and lack of accessibility. The extensive use of masonry interior partitions would also make reconfiguration difficult. As such, the demolition and replacement of the clubhouse with a new facility are proposed to meet the needs of NLT, golf course patrons, and the community.

Proposed Course Rehabilitation

The purpose of the project is to develop a strategy to address deferred maintenance, increase playability, broaden course appeal to the local community, and achieve financial stability for the operation of the Rock Creek Park Golf Course. This plan will achieve those goals by prioritizing the historic significance and integrity of the original William Flynn-designed golf course, making the site more environmentally sustainable, diversifying the golf programming to appeal to a wider range of golfers, retaining the affordability and accessibility of the golf course facilities, and making the property a more vibrant community resource.

The plan is needed to address the following issues:

- The historic parkland-style course designed by William Flynn is currently not apparent in both the design and the presentation of the course to the public;
- The current 18-hole course does not lend itself to players of varying skill levels due to the truncated nature of the front 9 holes and the challenging topography and narrow fairways of the back 9 holes;
- The lack of a driving range impacts the usership and financial viability of the golf course;
- The limited facilities of the existing clubhouse do not adequately support golf course operations, golfers, and non-golfers;
- The dense overgrowth of the adjacent woodland and invasive vegetation have expanded beyond their original intended limits and have encroached on and narrowed the existing fairways, resulting in decreased playability;
- Turfgrass is deteriorated due to traffic patterns, poor cart paths, poor drainage, poor irrigation, tree root competition, and shade from trees;
- Trails and paths used by both pedestrians and golf carts are ill-defined and infringe on historic viewsheds and playing areas; and
- The maintenance facility is in a highly visible location, detracting from the cultural landscape, and does not meet the needs of golf course operations.

The proposed project includes a nine-hole regulation course and a shorter nine-hole Par-3 course. The intention is to expand the appeal of the facility to both experienced and beginner golfers. The nine-hole regulation course will use corridors from both Flynn's more open front nine and more wooded back nine. Taking advantage of the natural bowl-like topography, the proposed driving range stands on what is now the 9th and 10th holes, with the line of play up the hill to the north.

The nine-hole, par-3 course will start and finish just west of the current 9th green. This course is a place for beginners to transition from the driving range to the golf course and for more advanced players to sharpen their skills. The mix of playing options takes advantage of the site's natural setting and minimizes tree clearing, allows for healthy turf conditions which improves playability. The proposed project transforms the area on the northern edge of the golf course, which was historically the location of the 12th and 13th holes, into a maintained meadow. A proposed irrigation pond occupies a natural depression in the fairway of the 12th hole. Invasive species will be removed, with the goal of preserving specimen and mature trees, and the northern edge of the golf course will be established as a meadow and habitat area.

The course starts and ends at the clubhouse with a counterclockwise progression of play. The course has few sand bunkers; and the routing takes advantage of the natural topography of the site, including the long, expansive views. The order of play, or routing, of the proposed nine-hole regulation course allows golfers to continue to experience both the more open farmland that characterizes the front nine and the wooded, hilly parkland feel of the back nine as designed by Flynn.

The rehabilitation of the property includes programmatic elements focused on accessibility for golfers of different skill levels and abilities, including a driving range, short game practice areas, in addition to the 9-hole regulation course and the 9-hole par three course. Also included in the proposed rehabilitation of Rock Creek Golf Course is a dedicated space and headquarters for First Tee of Greater Washington, D.C., the local chapter of a nationwide youth sports and educational program that uses golf to teach kids and teens life lessons and leadership skills.

New Clubhouse and Driving Range

As noted previously, the applicant proposes to demolish the existing clubhouse and replace it with a new 10,400 square feet, fully accessible, two-level clubhouse, offering a food and beverage operation, restrooms, community room, indoor golf training areas, pro shop, and support areas. In addition, the clubhouse will house classrooms, program spaces, and the administrative headquarters of First Tee of Greater Washington, a golf-based youth development organization.

The proposed clubhouse will be located near the existing clubhouse. The building will be oriented to enhance and emphasize the panoramic views from the clubhouse to the golf course, sited to preserve the mature trees that surround the existing clubhouse, and nestled into the existing topography of the site. From the main approach (from the south), the clubhouse appears as a one-story structure. Aesthetically, the goal is to create a contemporary design which is compatible with the historical context of Rock Creek Park. The massing of the building draws from traditional forms, and the building features extensive use of natural stone, wood timber, horizontal siding, and slate shingles, but combined with large expanses of glass, steel elements, and other features.

A two-tier driving range structure will extend west from the main clubhouse building. The range itself will sit within an existing basin that is already cleared of trees, so little to no tree removal occurs with the construction of the range, and the natural topography, combined with the relatively transparent nature of the structure itself, minimizes its visual impact on the landscape. For operational efficiency, ease of food service, and to provide a continuous accessible route throughout the facility, the range structure is connected directly to the clubhouse on each level and will step down along its length following the grade of the range line. The range terminates on its east end with another two-story structure. The main floor includes a community and event space, restrooms, and support areas, in addition to a covered, open-air porch and hitting bays. The applicant is also proposing photovoltaic panels on the roof of the driving range.

The applicant has worked closely with the review agencies and consulting parties to create a clubhouse and driving range design that minimizes its visual impact on the landscape. As such, the design has evolved substantially. Therefore, staff recommends the **Commission supports the**

final siting, massing and design approach of the new clubhouse and driving range which has not significantly changed since the concept review. In particular, the building will be oriented to:

- **Take advantage of panoramic views from the clubhouse to the golf course;**
- **Preserve the mature trees that surround the existing clubhouse;**
- **Minimize visual impacts of the structures on the landscape;**
- **The combination of traditional forms with both natural and modern materials are compatible with the historic context of Rock Creek Park, while reflecting the contemporary era.**
- **Include solar panels on the roof of the driving range to improve the sustainability of the clubhouse.**

Accessibility and Circulation

A new cart path system will be implemented that eliminates redundancy, minimizes conflict between user groups (pedestrian, carts, and vehicles), prioritizes safety, provides maintenance vehicle access, reduces impacts to the course layout, and avoids impacts to sensitive natural areas. New trails and bike lanes are proposed to connect the clubhouse to 16th Street, NW. The intention is to promote multimodal access by providing pedestrians and bicyclists a way to enter the course safely. Currently there are no walkways along the entry drive. The goal is to make the course more accessible for the golfing and non-golfing community. Other pathways will connect the clubhouse to the driving range, golf cart barn, the community pavilion, the historic farm Allee, and the proposed pollinator meadow. The applicant has reduced the size of the parking area from 100 spaces at the concept design to 82 spaces. This is a reduction from around 125 spaces today. The parking includes permeable paving to decrease stormwater runoff, as well as trees for shade. Bicycle parking is proposed near the parking area.

Finally, golfers and non-golfers alike can utilize the proposed 1.2-mile ecological trail that loops through a multitude of areas in the northwestern portion of the site. The applicant notes that trail systems for the use of non-golfing patrons have historic precedent, and several recent course projects have successfully integrated trails. The goal is to promote inclusive access to nature for improved health and well-being, expand the use of the property beyond golf users, and encourage cross-pollination between recreational communities.

Environment and Sustainability

During the concept review, the Commission recommended the applicant provide additional information related to tree removal, preservation, and replacement. As part of the draft Environmental Assessment, NPS provided extensive detail on their process identifying which trees and other vegetation would need to be removed or modified to accommodate the project design. The five tree stands within the golf course are in varying health conditions and have a substantial amount of non-native growth in the understory. The average understory of the stands is made up of approximately 40% non-native and invasive plant material, which is inhibiting the growth of the next generation of native trees. The creation of the proposed course and relocation of the maintenance facility will require selective removal of specific areas of trees and focused removal

of non-native and invasive plant species, encroaching successional forest, and specific mature trees.

To accommodate the proposed design, the applicant is proposing to remove 1,139 trees for the rehabilitated course layout. This is necessary for the safety of visitors, for healthy growing conditions for the surrounding vegetation, and to accommodate relocation of the maintenance facility. Of these 1,139 trees, 591 trees (51%) are unsafe, in poor condition or dead, or are non-native or invasive species; 395 (35%) will be removed for the rehabilitation of the course; and 153 (14%) will be removed to allow for sustainable turf growing conditions (sunlight and air circulation). This tree removal will be selective, focusing on tree condition, non-native and invasive species, and sustainable tree management. Before identifying a tree for removal, consideration will be given to pruning, elevation of lower limbs, opening crowns and other measures that could achieve the same goals as removal. Certain trees that contribute to the historic integrity of the course will be maintained.

Following the initial removal described above, the applicant will field assess conditions to determine if any additional tree removal is necessary. An additional 225 trees will be subject to this assessment, and current estimates by the planning team are that at least half of these are likely to be retained. The applicant plans to mill 255 of the trees removed to create approximately 97,000 board feet of lumber that will be repurposed for furniture, bar tops, siding, trim, decking, and furniture for the golf course. The long-term management plan includes identifying, non-native and invasive plant species that have become established in many areas of the course will be targeted for recurring control and removal as part of regular management.

To mitigate the removal of the 395 healthy, native trees needed to rehabilitate the course, the applicant initially was planning to plant at least 200 trees including eastern redbud (*Cercis canadensis*), dogwood (*Cornus florida*), American holly (*Ilex opaca*), eastern red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*), several native oak species (*Quercus* spp.), and sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*). This number was limited given the level of design information during the EA process. As the design process progressed, the applicant and their partner NLT, in coordination with other partners transitioned to acreage of tree canopy as a better representation of replacement. The total tree canopy removal (6.2 acres), which amounts to less than 0.5 percent of the park's approximately 1,420 acres of forested canopy, will be replaced by 7.1 acres of tree canopy according to the applicant, in accordance with the *Federal Elements of the Comprehensive Plan Tree Preservation and Replacement Policy*. The applicant will continue to refine the design and identify other areas for additional tree plantings to ensure the tree replacement complies with the Tree Preservation and Replacement Policy. While implementation of the selected alternative requires the removal of trees, approximately seven-acres of trees (an estimated 1100 trees) clustered in the northeastern portion of the course will remain intact. The contiguous forest that currently surrounds the golf course will remain intact. The applicant has demonstrated a thorough process for evaluating which trees will be removed as part of the project, and staff is confident the applicant will comply with the *Tree Preservation and Replacement Policy*, but additional information may be necessary as the project moves through construction to ensure compliance and staff recommends the **Commission requires NPS to return to the Commission prior to Phase 2 construction in 2025**

(when more informed planting decisions can be made) with a briefing on the tree replacement strategy.

Landscape plantings will integrate pollinator and native plant species compatible with the historic William Flynn design to create a diversity of landscapes throughout the golf course. Additionally, the applicant will develop pollinator meadows, naturalized areas and riparian buffers, and native grass meadows. More than eleven acres of meadows will be scattered throughout the rehabilitated golf course, and the northern edge of the golf course will be repurposed as a large meadow habitat. Tree trimming and removal are key components of the golf course Integrated Pest Management Plan and allow for more sustainable golf course management. These actions will allow increased sunlight and air to reach the turf, improving the overall turf health. Better turf health will reduce turf diseases and pests, thereby reducing the use of fungicides, pesticides, and herbicides. To further increase the sustainability of the golf course, advanced varieties of warm season grasses such as Bermuda grass, which require less water, fertilizer, and plant protectants, will be planted during the rehabilitation.

A majority of the course is outside 100- and 500-year flood zones and no buildings are proposed in flood zones. The new clubhouse, driving range, parking lot and other improvements will introduce increased impervious area to the site and the applicant has been in coordination with the District Department of Energy and Environment on appropriate stormwater management devices. The approach includes the use of bioretention devices and bio-swales to catch and filter run off. According to the submission, the golf course itself will not require stormwater management devices as it will continue to be maintained with complete turf coverage, meadow areas, or existing woodlands. An irrigation pond is proposed along the northeast edge of the course. It is in a natural swale and construction will require minimal tree removal. The proposed pond has the capacity of storing over two million gallons of water.

Lighting Plan

Proposed exterior facility lighting is limited to the clubhouse (including driving range bays and cart storage), maintenance, and parking lot areas. Fixtures are DarkSky Approved (i.e., certified by the International Dark-Sky Association). Lighting will be timed appropriately so that areas are only lit when open for operation and when necessary for safety.

Golf course lighting is focused only on the driving range and the practice greens near the clubhouse. The driving range lighting is minimized to 50 yards to allow the ball tracing technology to function. This technology allows driving range users to see the trajectory of their drive using a digital interface, which requires a minimum of 50 yards of light to track the ball. Beyond this distance, little to no lighting would be used, unlike a typical driving range. If a ball is hit beyond this distance into unlit spaces at night, the screen at each hitting bay displays the ball's trajectory. Lighting consists of a combination of berm, pole-mounted, and roof-mounted lighting. All lighting will be timed appropriately so that areas are only lit at times when it is necessary for functionality of the course. When the course is closed, all golf course lighting will be off. While hours of operation for the rehabilitated course have not been set, the team anticipates the course closing by 10 pm, subject to ongoing coordination with NPS.

The lighting plan considers Institution of Lighting Professionals guidance for reduction of obtrusive light (GN01/21) and for bats and artificial lighting (GN08/18). Some specific mitigation measures incorporated include use of a color range (2,200K to 3,000K LED) to reduce sky glow and be less disruptive to any bats using the area, use of berm-mounted lighting, use of individual reflectors internally on every LED in each module to reduce spill light and tightly control where light is put in the environment, and use of an additional visor to help shield the face of the fitting from view and helping further control the light. Overall, the applicant has addressed all the previous comments from the Commission and staff recommends the **Commission finds the applicant has addressed the Commission's comments from the concept review including:**

- **Adding a 1.2-mile ecological trail that seeks to provide inclusive access to nature for improved health and well-being, expand the use of the property beyond golf users, and encourage recreational opportunities.**
- **Thoroughly evaluating the existing tree canopy and identifying specimen trees that support the historic character of the property for protection.**
- **Developing a plan to limit vegetation removal to invasive species and non-native species, some encroaching successional forest, and specific mature trees that directly impact the rehabilitation of the course and the establishment of the new par-3 course.**
- **Committing to a tree replacement plan that will add 7.1 acres of forest canopy as part of the project, in accordance with NCPC's tree replacement policies, which is more than the 6.2 acres being removed.**
- **Including a lighting plan that limits lighting to areas around the clubhouse and driving range, limits lighting to only operating hours, and ensures all lighting is Dark Skies compliant.**
- **Updating the plans to include bike and pedestrian paths and bike parking.**

CONFORMANCE TO EXISTING PLANS, POLICIES AND RELATED GUIDANCE

Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

As noted above, the planning and design comments are designed to ensure the proposal meets basic goals of the Comprehensive Plan. In particular, staff focused on policies related to historic preservation, visitor experience, and the environment. Specifically, the proposal *preserves and maintain cultural landscapes, including their natural and constructed elements and protects and maintains cultural landscapes as important architectural and landscape legacies of national and regional significance*. In addition, the proposal *protects the character of parks and open space with significant cultural or natural resources that contribute to the National Capital Region's setting*. In addition, the proposal aims to *preserve and protect existing trees, especially individual trees, stands, and forests of healthy, native or non-invasive species. Account for existing trees early in the planning and design processes when development occurs to maximize preservation and incorporate the natural landscape into the design to the extent practicable while still achieving the purpose of the project*. The applicant is complying with the Tree Preservation and Replacement Policy of the Federal Elements of the Comprehensive plan by planting 1 acre minimum for every

1 acre removed and consulting with federal and local stakeholders to determine the appropriate density, mixture, and size of replacement plantings.

National Historic Preservation Act

NCPC and NPS each have an independent responsibility to comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). The National Park Service initiated Section 106 with the DC Historic Preservation Office (DC SHPO) on July 22, 2022. A combined public scoping meeting and Section 106 consulting parties meeting was scheduled for January 2023, to introduce the project, identify historic properties, and present the Area of Potential Effect.

NPS held additional meetings to coordinate with consulting parties and based on this consultation, NPS determined that the proposed undertaking will have an adverse effect on historic properties, specifically the Rock Creek Park Golf Course Cultural Landscape and Rock Creek Park Historic District. NPS entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the DC SHPO, NCPC, and the consulting parties to resolve the adverse effect on March 28, 2024.

National Environmental Policy Act

NCPC and NPS will each have an independent responsibility to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The National Park Service prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) to consider the proposed project's impacts on environmental resources under the NEPA. A public scoping notice was sent to interested parties and a combined public scoping meeting and Section 106 consulting parties meeting was held in January 2023. On September 25, 2023, NPS released the EA for the rehabilitation of the Rock Creek Park Golf Course with a standard 30-day comment period. NPS extended the comment period by one week based on public request. The project draft EA received 3,212 pieces of correspondence and the applicants response to the substantive comments are summarized in the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). NPS determined the project will not have a significant impact on the quality of the human environment and issued a Finding of No Significant Impact are based on documentation and analysis provided in the EA and associated record. Based on the EA and the associated documents, NCPC also determined the project will not have a significant impact on the quality of the human environment and therefore an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared.

CONSULTATION

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the proposal at its April 10, 2024 meeting. Without objection, the Committee forwarded the project to the Commission with the statement that the proposal has been coordinated with all participating agencies. The participating agencies were: NCPC; the District of Columbia Office of Planning; the District Department of Transportation (DDOT); the District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Office (DC SHPO); the General Services Administration; the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority; and the District

Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE). DOEE requested additional coordination with NPS to continue discussing applicable requirements. An MOA was signed on March 28, 2024 to address adverse impacts to historic resources as part of the Section 106 process, in coordination with the DC SHPO.

U.S. Commission of Fine Arts

The U.S. Commission of Fine Arts reviewed the final plans for the project at their October 19, 2023 meeting. The Commission expressed appreciation to the applicant for their responsiveness to their prior comments. A copy of the comment letter is attached.

ONLINE REFERENCE

The following supporting documents for this project are available online at www.ncpc.gov:

- Submission Package
- Project Synopsis
- Commission of Fine Arts Letter

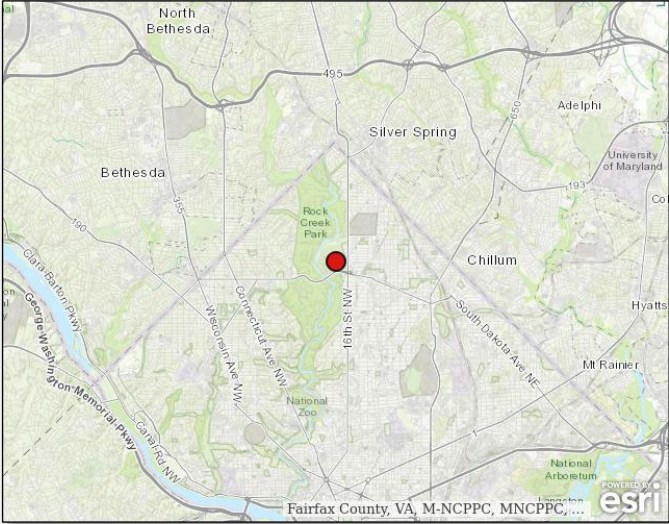
Rock Creek Park Golf Course Rehabilitation

6100 16th Street, NW, Washington DC

Approval of Preliminary and Final Site and Building Plans

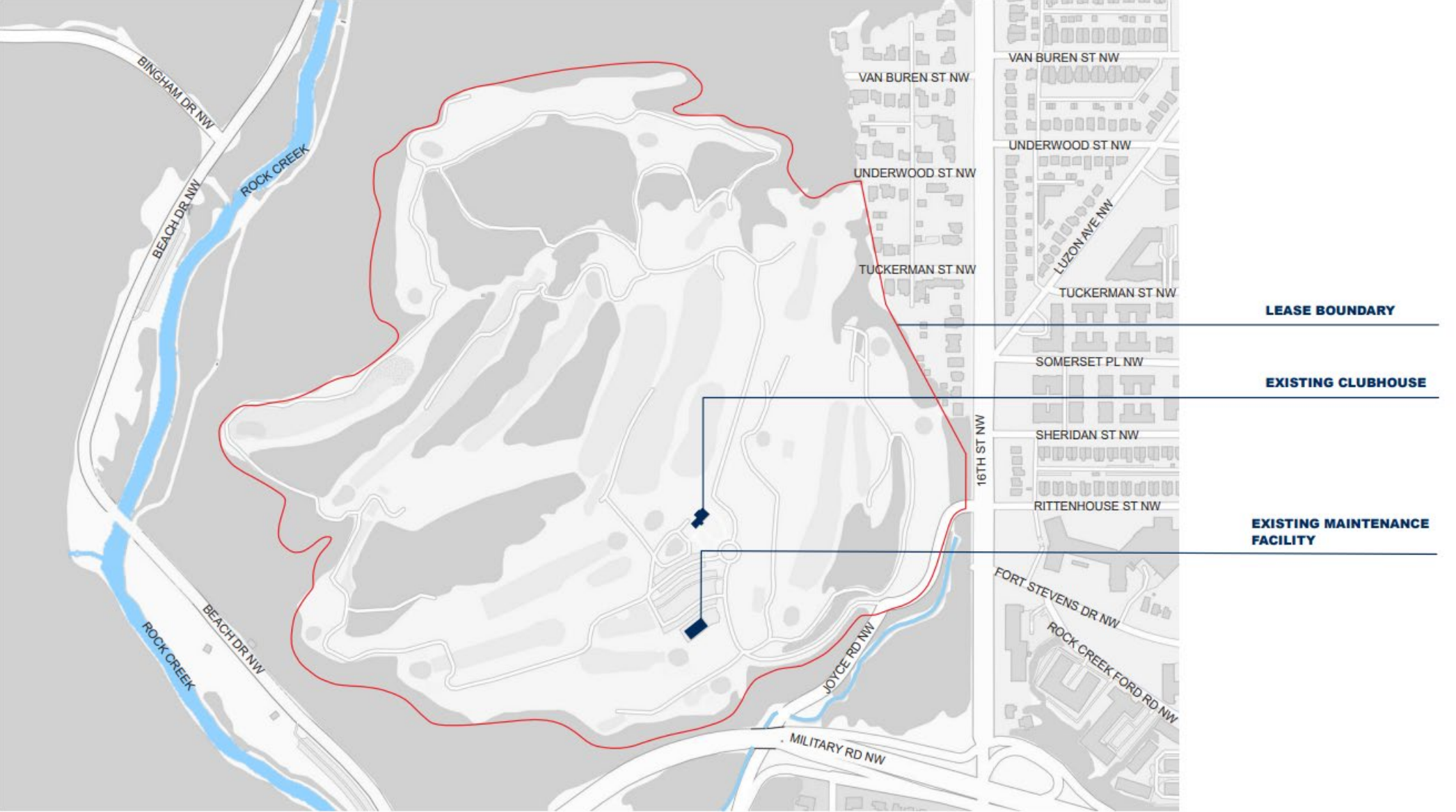
United States Department of the Interior

Site Location



Location Map

Rock Creek Park Golf Course - Location



Rock Creek Park Golf Course – Original Course



WILLIAM FLYNN'S GOLF COURSE

The course was designed by renowned course designer William Flynn between 1921 and 1927 and included two 9-hole courses that could be combined into an 18-hole course.

LEGEND

1 Standard Course



0 300 600

SCALE: 1" = 300'-0"

Rock Creek Park Golf Course – Current Condition



TODAY'S GOLF COURSE

- The current golf course was modified in the 1950's for the redesign of Military Road, NW impacting the southern portion of the course.
- The current clubhouse was built in 1964 and has limited facilities and is not accessible to people with disabilities.
- Over time, vegetation has encroached on the fairways, greens, and tees, resulting in the closure of four holes in the northwest corner of the course.

LEGEND

--- 2022 Lease Boundary

■ Building

▬ Road

— Pedestrian Path

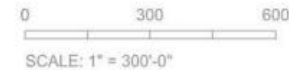
--- On Grade Golf Course Route

↔ Directional Vehicular Circulation

— Directional Pedestrian Circulation

● Active Holes

● Holes Not in Service Due to Deteriorating Circumstances



Rock Creek Park Golf Course - Evolution



GOLF COURSE EVOLUTION

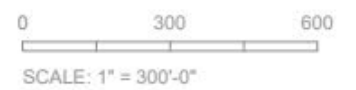
In the late 1950s, Military Road was widened and built over parts of holes 3, 4 and 5 of Flynn's design. Consequently, golf course architect William Gordon shifted the location of six of the front nine holes, but maintained the overall 18-hole routing. Additional changes occurred in 1964 when the

maintenance on the back nine, eliminated one hole, and rerouted several others. In 1984, a new course operator reopened the back nine and brought back Flynn's original progression of play. However, by 2015 tree encroachment and other conditions caused the concessionaire to close

LEGEND

- 1 Standard Course
- 1 Par 3 Course
- 1 Holes Not In Use

Course Overlay of Built 1927 Course



Existing Condition Images

A



B



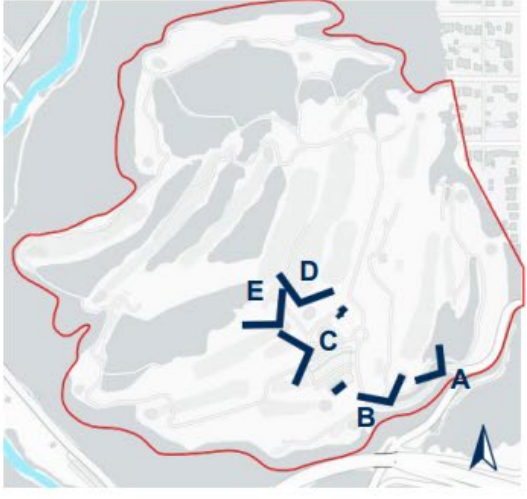
C



D



E



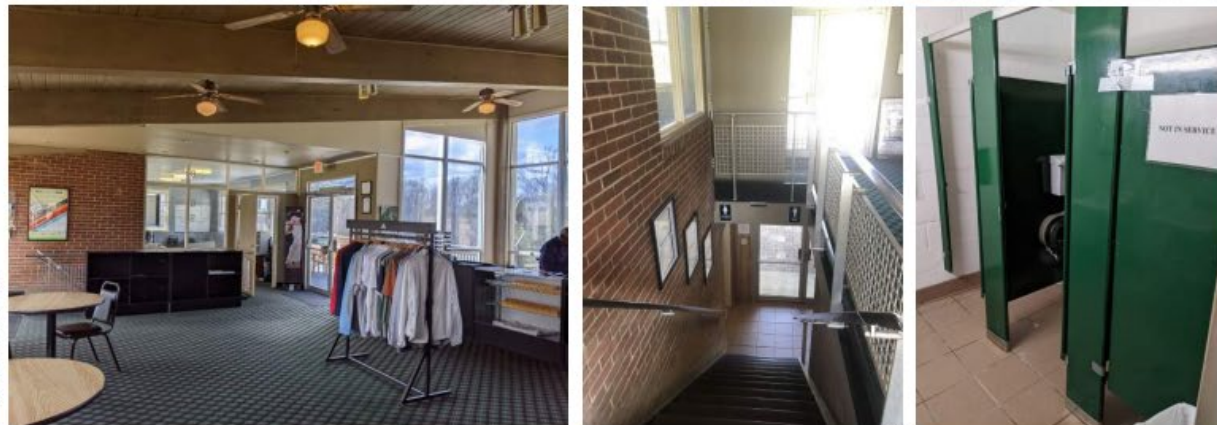
Existing Condition Images



Existing Clubhouse Conditions

TODAY'S CLUBHOUSE

- The 1964 clubhouse is a contributing resource of the Rock Creek Park Historic District.
- Evaluation of the existing clubhouse determined that it could not be reused or integrated into a larger and accessible facility.



Clockwise starting from the top left: Exterior view of existing clubhouse; Exterior view of existing clubhouse non-accessible entry; Rear view of large clubhouse windows; Women's bathroom conditions; Stairs down to restrooms from main clubhouse area; View of the main room of the clubhouse with a makeshift pro-shop setup; Side ramp and deck. Middle: Rear view of exterior of existing clubhouse.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Proposed Golf Course Design

The proposed design modifies the existing layout to a 9-hole regulation course and a shorter 9-hole Par-3 course, which will broaden the appeal and accessibility of the course to a variety of users.

The proposed driving range takes advantage of the existing topography.

The proposed mix of playing options and their design takes advantage of the site's natural setting to minimize tree clearing and allow for healthy turf conditions.

The area at the northwest that was historically holes 12 and 13 has been transformed into a pollinator meadow with an adjacent irrigation pond.

The project will remove invasive species that overrun the existing forested areas with the goal of preserving specimen and mature trees, where possible.

LEGEND

- 1 Standard Course
- 1 Par 3 Course
- Course Overlay of Built 1927 Course



Proposed Golf Course Design Details



The proposed golf course design includes several new features including a new multiuse path along Joyce Road, NW and into the course, a new parking area that reduces the size of the parking, a new clubhouse, driving range, golf cart barn, and community pavilion.

LEGEND





- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| ① Proposed Clubhouse | Proposed Gravel paths |
| ② Golf Cart Barn | Proposed Paved Paths |
| ③ Proposed Maintenance Building | Proposed Mowed Lawn Path |
| ④ Community Pavilion | Lease Boundary |
| ⑤ 9 Hole Regulation Golf Course | |
| ⑥ 9 Hole Par 3 Golf Course | |
| ⑦ Practice Green | |
| ⑧ Driving Range | |
| ⑨ Pollinator Meadow | |
| ⑩ Potential Irrigation Pond Location | |
| ⑪ Naturalized Area & Riparian Buffer Area | |
| ⑫ Native Meadow | |
| ⑬ Proposed Rock Creek Park Golf Course Welcome Signage | |
| ⑭ Reestablishment of Historic Farm Road Cedar Allee | |

Proposed Planting Zones

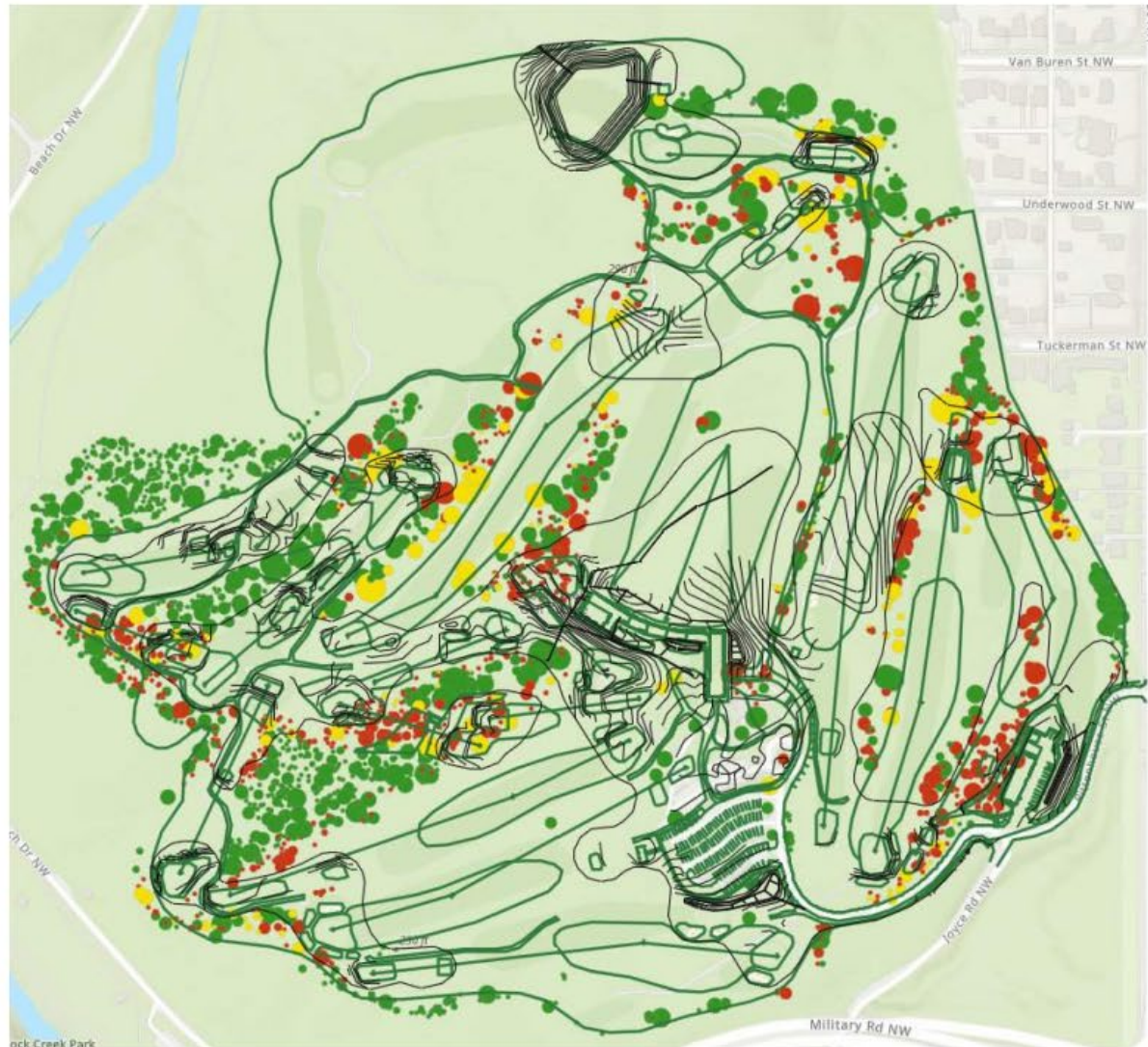


PLANTING ZONES

The proposed plan includes targeted riparian plantings at stream crossings, significant native meadow habitats totaling 19 acres across the site, with a 5-acre pollinator meadow at the northwest corner.

-  Pollinator Meadow - 5.16 Acres

-  Naturalized Area & Riparian Buffer Area - 5.75 Acres

-  Native Grass Meadow - 8.36 Acres


Proposed Tree Removal Plan



2,500+ Trees surveyed
Trees with a Diameter of 4" or larger

TREE REMOVAL PLAN

The proposed design will require existing forest stands to be removed. This removal will focus on non-native and invasive species, some encroaching successional forest, and a limited number of mature trees.

The applicant has developed a plan to selectively remove trees that encroach on playing corridors and those that affect playability. Specimen trees that support the historic character were identified and will be preserved. The plan calls for pruning, removal of lower limbs, opening crowns and other measures before removal of some trees.

The following criteria were used to evaluate trees for removal:

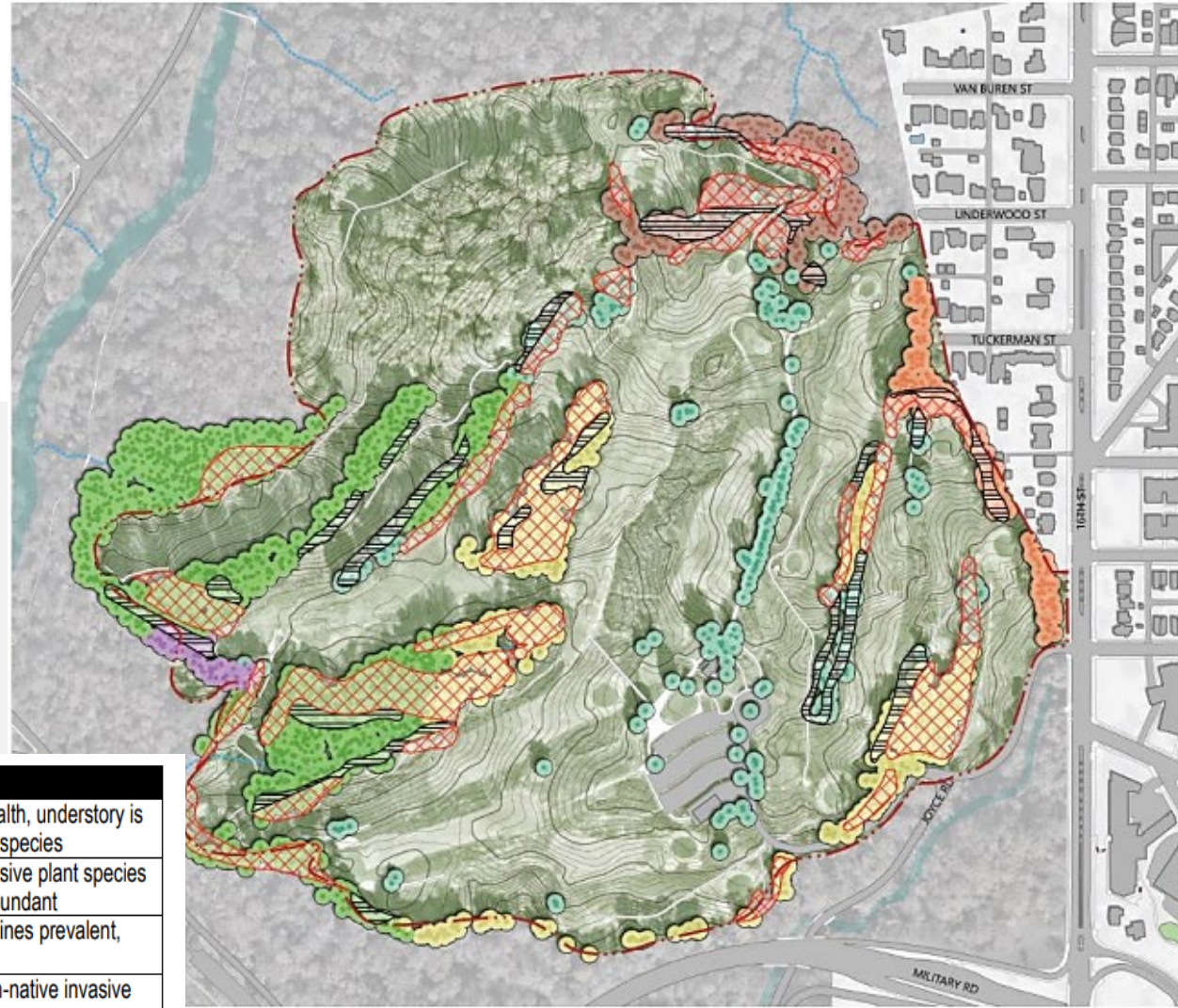
- Overall condition of the tree
- Adverse shade impacts to turf and desired vegetation
- Adverse impacts from roots to turf conditions, cart paths, etc.
- Trees changing original design intent from the period of significance, where forest stands are encroaching on original design
- High risk of dead limbs or entire tree causing injury or other safety concerns
- Defects due to poor tree health from insects or disease

LEGEND

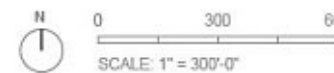
- TREE TO REMAIN
- PHASE 1 TREE REMOVAL (1,040 TREES)
- PHASE 2 TREE REASSESSMENT (222 TREES)

Forest Stand Clearing Plan

The forest vegetation of Rock Creek Park Golf Course can be classified into five tree stands, each unique in the tree species makeup and overall stand health. The understory of these stands is made up of approximately 40% non-native invasive plant material. The northwestern portion of the site that would be maintained in a natural state (not subject to forest clearing) was not included in the tree survey.



- LEGEND**
- 2022 Lease Boundary
 - Rock Creek Golf Course
 - Forest Stand A
 - Forest Stand B
 - Forest Stand C
 - Forest Stand D
 - Forest Stand E
 - Scattered Trees
 - Rock Creek Tributary
 - Complete Clearing
 - Selective Clearing



Stand	Size (acres)	Condition*	Detailed Condition*
Stand A	11.88	Good	High species diversity, trees in good health, understory is dominated by non-native invasive plant species
Stand B	6.93	Fair	Some species diversity, non-native invasive plant species in all forest levels, climbing vines are abundant
Stand C	0.54	Fair to Poor	Non-native invasive plant species and vines prevalent, trees appear stressed overall
Stand D	1.66	Fair	Large trees, low diversity, abundant non-native invasive plant species and climbing vines
Stand E	3.09	Fair	Stand lacks diversity, abundant climbing vines and non-native invasive plant species along forest edge

*Source: Coastal Resources Inc 2022

Proposed Planting Zones




PLANTING ZONES

The rehabilitation plan incorporates various types of native meadow habitats throughout the site, including pollinator, native grass, mid-successional, and riparian plantings. In total, more than 11 acres of meadows are scattered throughout the rehabilitated golf course. Approximately 4.5 acres, mostly on the northern edge of the golf course (historically used for holes 12 and 13), are repurposed as native pollinator meadow habitat.

The plants to be seeded in these areas consist of a pollinator meadow mix (those species native to the mid-Atlantic area). This area will be mown (at approximately 8 inches) in spring and fall in conjunction with spot treatments for non-native invasive plant species. Approximately 3.4 acres scattered throughout the golf course is maintained as a native grass meadow, with a similar maintenance regimen to the pollinator meadow (limited mowing and non-native invasive species spot treatments) but with a focus on grass species.


Mid-successional and riparian buffer areas (close to 3.8 acres) are in primarily out-of-play areas that are allowed to grow unimpeded during the growing season. These may comprise a variety of native species and will require some spot treatments for invasive plants. This area also includes the seasonally occurring pond on the western side of the course.

 POLLINATOR MEADOW ADDED - 4.5 ACRES



 RIPARIAN ADDED - 0.4 ACRES




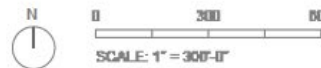
 MID SUCCESSIONAL NATIVE PLANT MEADOW ADDED - 3.2 ACRES



 NATIVE GRASS MEADOW ADDED - 3.4 ACRES



 LEASE BOUNDARY



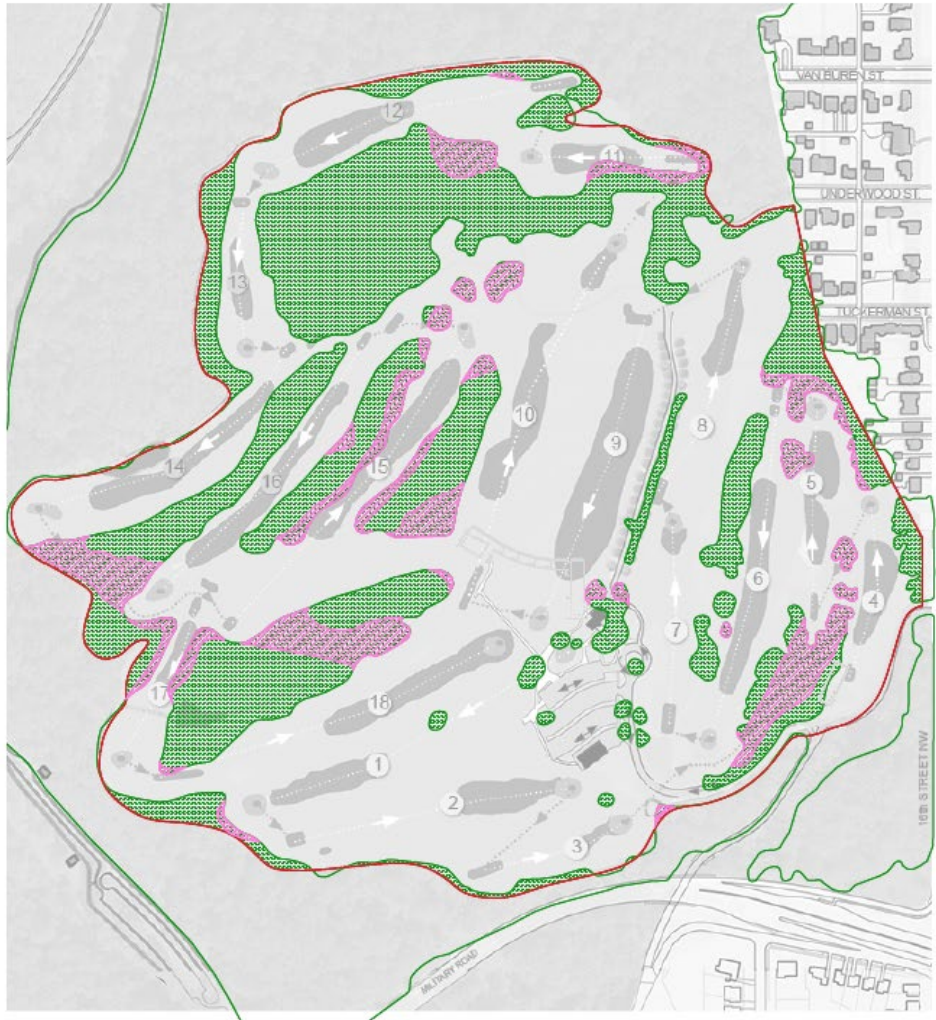
PLANTING ZONES

Existing Tree Canopy



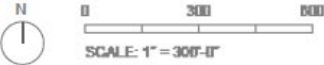
TREE CANOPY | EXISTING

Proposed Tree Removal Areas



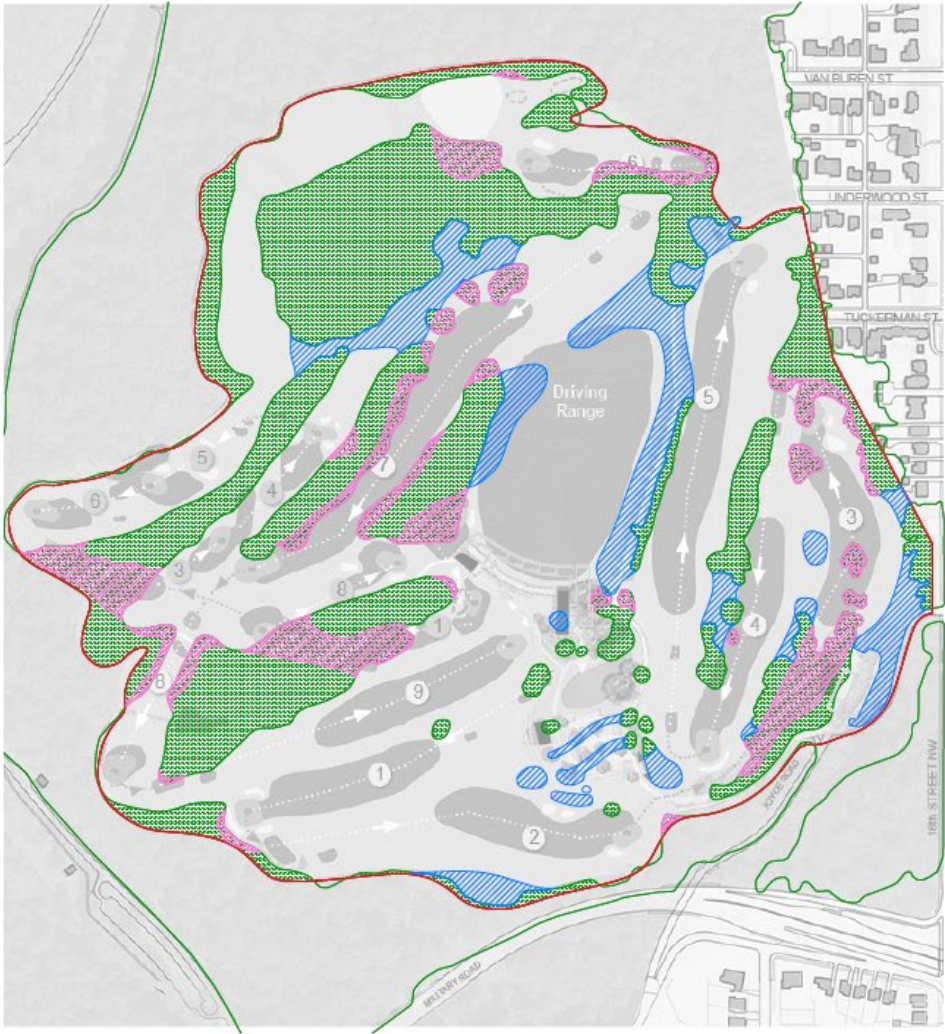
6.2 ACRES REMOVED

- PROPOSED TREE CANOPY REMOVAL
- EXISTING TREE CANOPY
- LEASE BOUNDARY



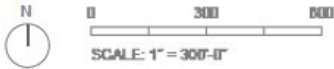
TREE CANOPY | PROPOSED REMOVAL

Proposed Tree Canopy Additions



7.1 ACRES ADDED

- PROPOSED TREE CANOPY ADDITION
- PROPOSED TREE CANOPY REMOVAL
- EXISTING TREE CANOPY
- LEASE BOUNDARY



TREE CANOPY | PROPOSED ADDITION

Proposed Final Tree Canopy



TREE CANOPY | PROPOSED FINAL

Proposed Tree Canopy Replacement

NPS NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION GOLF COURSES MASTER LEASE
 ROCK CREEK PARK GOLF COURSE

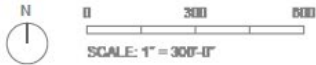


EXISTING TREE CANOPY



PROPOSED FINAL TREE CANOPY

BY THE NUMBERS
6.2 ACRES OF CANOPY REMOVED
7.1 ACRES OF CANOPY ADDED



TREE CANOPY

Proposed Ecological Trail



- Proposed Gravel paths
- Proposed Paved Paths
- Proposed Mowed Lawn Path

The proposed action includes an ecological trail through the golf course for nongolfers to experience the site on foot, separately from the cart path. This pedestrian trail would be an approximately 1-mile loop trail, with the trailhead at the clubhouse and offering a loop to the north and west. Approximately one-half mile of the trail, extending north from the clubhouse along the historic farm road, would be approximately 6 feet wide and use a crushed stone/gravel or paved with asphalt along the farm road and crushed stone/gravel along the remainder of the first half-mile. The remaining half-mile of trail would be approximately 5 feet wide and mowed as it loops back to the clubhouse. While some portions of the trail would be relatively steep with slopes of greater than 1:20 to follow the course's rolling topography, all materials for paved paths would be ABAAS compliant.



Proposed Planting Palette



The proposed planting design focuses on scenic views into the site coming from 16th street by utilizing a mix of low growing perennials, and grasses while framing views with native canopy and understory trees. The planting design then builds on the sense of enclosure and protection from the elements as patrons progress up Joyce road towards the future clubhouse. This is created through an addition of canopy trees, evergreen trees, shrubs, perennials and grasses. The planting strategy of this location also provides naturalistic screening from the maintenance building and yard. As patrons progress up the hill they will experience a grand opening to views across the hilly landscape.

Proposed Tree Planting Palette

The planting at the clubhouse and parking lot will build on the collection of existing canopy trees to remain with a proposed palette of canopy trees and a more refined lower perennial, grass and shrub zone that provide long views across the site from the clubhouse, driving range, and cart barn. The planting plan celebrates the agricultural history of the site with the introduction of meadows in the high rough through the course, pollinator planting zones, naturalized riparian areas, and refined native planting zones directly around the proposed clubhouse, driving range, and cart barn. The historic Allee road will be acknowledged with the proposal of cedars on the west side of the road to bring back the double row of cedars along both sides of the road.



PLANTINGS | TREES

Proposed Landscape Hardscape Materials



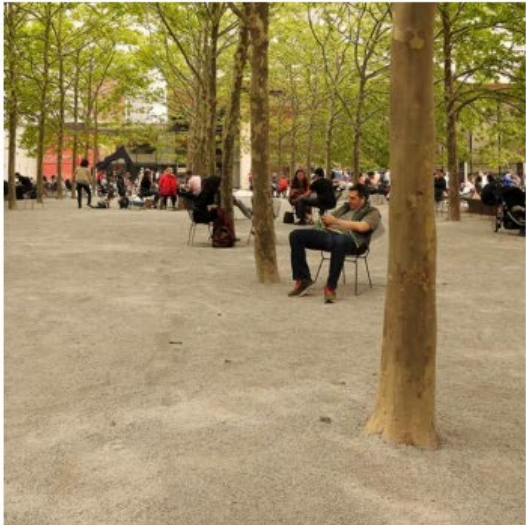
Crushed Stone Paving



Bound Gravel Path



Mown Path



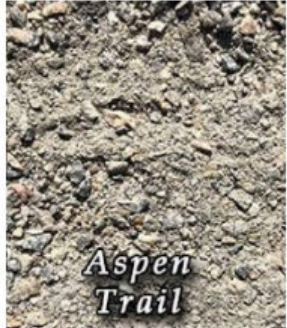
Crushed Stone Patio



Loose Crushed Stone



Exposed Aggregate Concrete

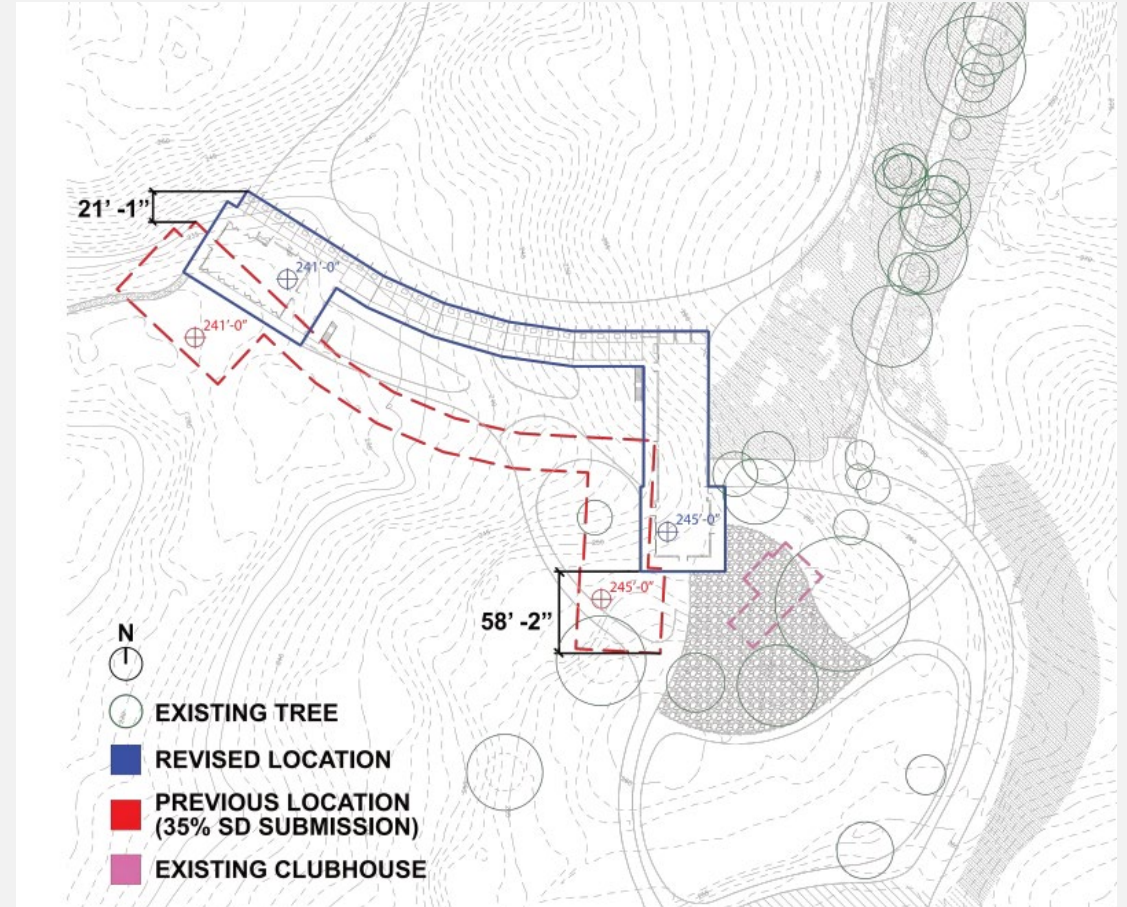
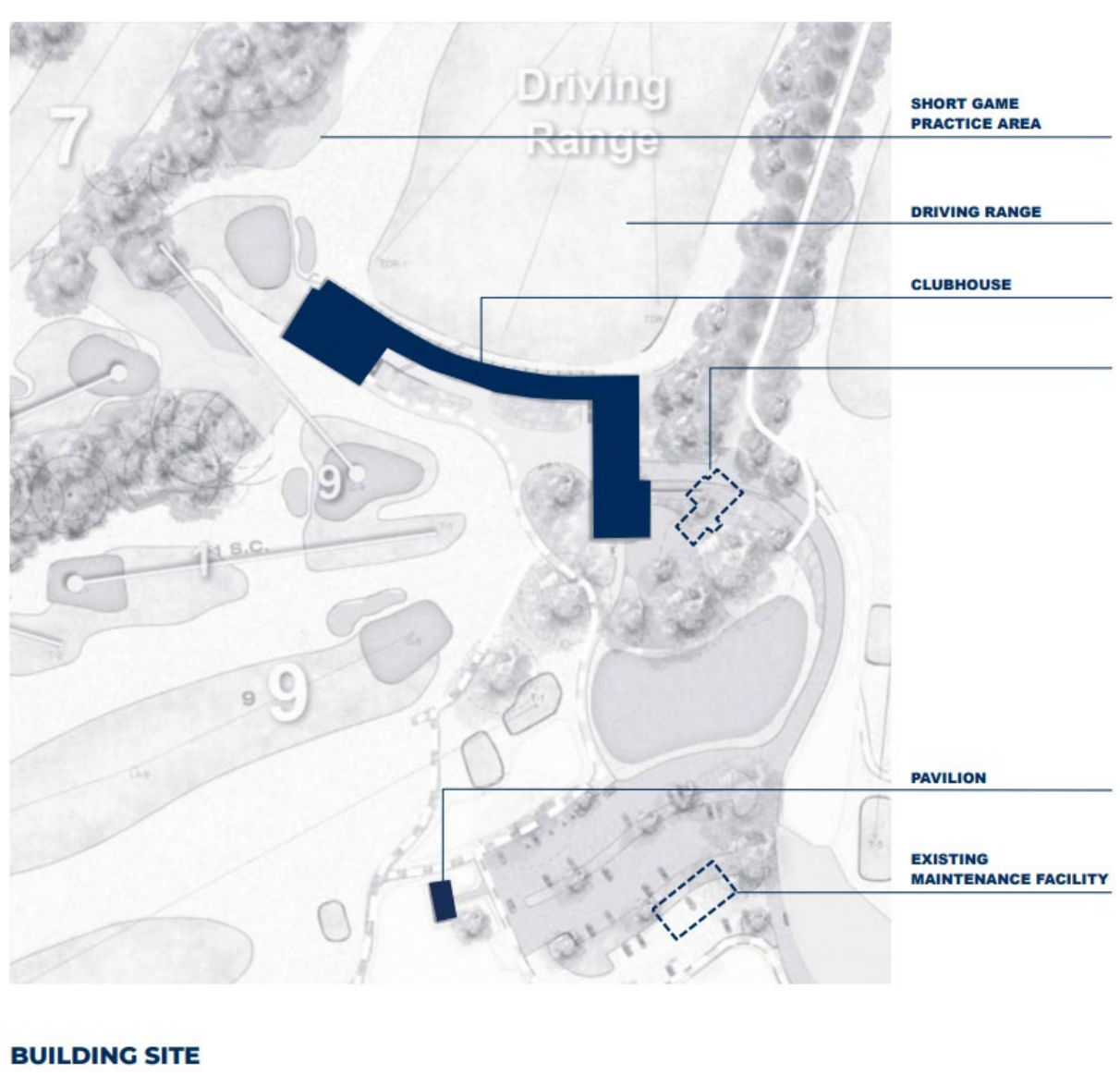


Crushed Stone Paving
Aspen Trail

NPS NATION

LANDSCAPE MATERIALITY

Proposed Clubhouse Site Plan



The proposed clubhouse is in the vicinity of the existing clubhouse and original nineteenth-century clubhouse that preceded it, at the start and end of both the 9-hole regulation course and par-3 course. It is oriented to enhance and emphasize the panoramic views from the clubhouse to the golf course, sited to preserve the mature trees that surround the existing clubhouse, and nestled into the existing topography of the site.

Proposed Clubhouse



WEST ELEVATION



EAST ELEVATION

ROOF



Slate Shingle Roof
Vermont Black



Standing Seam
Metal Roof
Shake Gray

WALLS



Stone Veneer
Carderock



Wood Cladding
Thermally Modified
Oak

METAL



Structure, Window
& Door Trim
Bronze



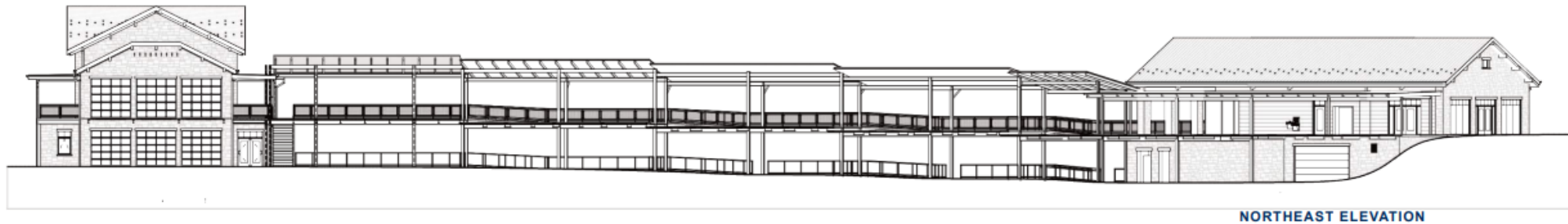
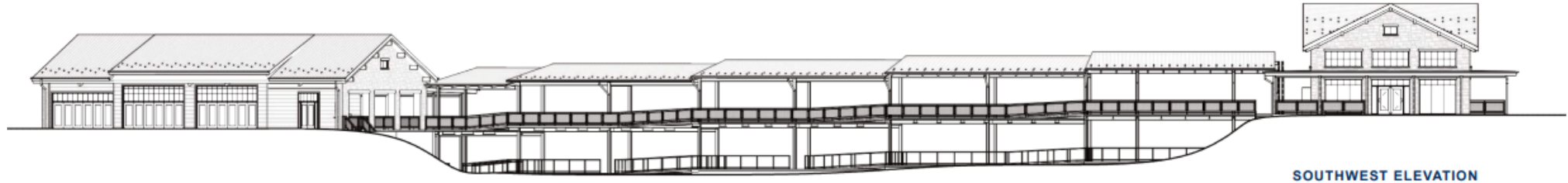
Railing Infill
Oxidized Black

To serve the needs of both golfers and non-golfing visitors to the park, the proposed project demolishes the existing clubhouse and replaces it with a new 21,354 sf (39,938 sf with the covered driving range), fully accessible, two-level clubhouse. The new clubhouse will offer indoor/outdoor food and beverage operation, restrooms, a community room, indoor golf training areas, a pro shop, and support areas, as well as, classrooms, program spaces, and the administrative headquarters of First Tee of Greater Washington, a golf-based youth development organization.

CLUBHOUSE ELEVATIONS

Proposed Clubhouse with Driving Range

From the main approach, the proposed clubhouse presents as a one-story structure, with the ground level revealing itself as the grade drops away from the entrance. The proposed two-tier driving range sits within an existing basin that is already cleared of trees, so little to no tree removal occurs with the construction of the range, and the natural topography, combined with the relatively transparent nature of the structure itself, minimizes its visual impact on the landscape. For operational efficiency and to provide a continuous accessible route throughout the facility, the range structure is connected directly to the clubhouse on each level and will step down along its length following the grade of the range line.



Proposed Cart Barn



WEST ELEVATION



SOUTH ELEVATION



EAST ELEVATION



NORTH ELEVATION

ROOF



Standing Seam
Metal Roof
Shake Gray

WALLS



Stone Veneer
Carderock



Wood Cladding
Thermally Modified
Oak

METAL



Structure, Window
& Door Trim
Bronze



Railing Infill
Oxidized Black

CART BARN ELEVATIONS

The range terminates on its east end with another two-story structure, graded similarly to the clubhouse to present as a one-story structure around most of its perimeter. The main floor includes an indoor putting green/community and event space, restrooms, and support areas, in addition to a covered, open-air porch and hitting bays. The ground floor includes storage for golf carts, the range picker cart, general storage, restrooms, and open-air hitting bays.

Proposed Maintenance Facility and Community Pavilion



MAINTENANCE BUILDING



PAVILION

ROOF



Standing Seam
Metal Roof
Shake Gray

WALLS



Fiber Cement Siding
Timber Bark



Painted Stucco
(Side Walls)

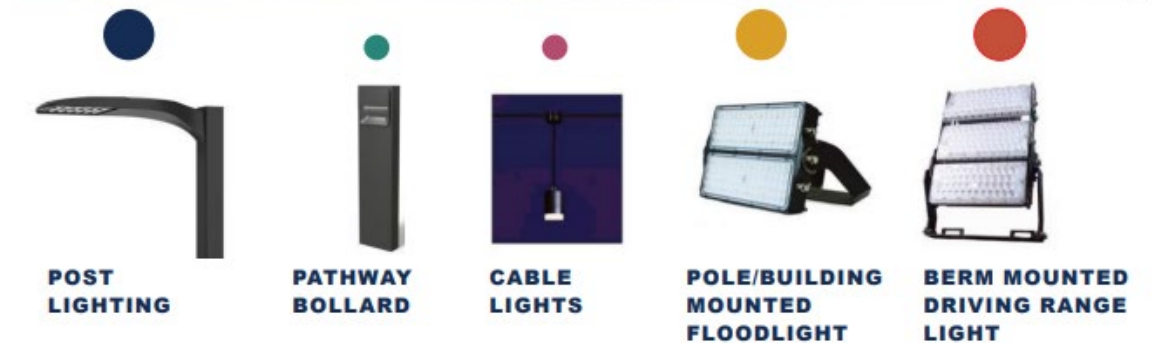
METAL



Structure, Window & Door Trim
Bronze

Proposed Lighting Plan

Exterior facility lighting will be limited to the clubhouse (including driving range bays and cart storage), maintenance, and parking lot areas. Fixtures are DarkSky approved. Lighting will be timed appropriately so that areas are only lit when open for operation and when necessary for safety. Golf course lighting is focused only on the driving range and the practice greens near the clubhouse. The driving range lighting is minimized to 50 yards to allow the ball tracing technology to function. This technology allows driving range users to see the trajectory of their drive using a digital interface, which requires a minimum of 50 yards of light to track the ball. Beyond this distance, little to no lighting would be used, unlike a typical driving range. If a ball is hit beyond this distance into unlit spaces at night, the screen at each hitting bay displays the ball's trajectory. Lighting consists of a combination of berm, pole-mounted, and roof-mounted lighting. All lighting will be timed appropriately so that areas are only lit at times when it is necessary for functionality of the course. When the course is closed, all golf course lighting will be off. While hours of operation for the rehabilitated course have not been set, the team anticipates the course closing by 10 pm, subject to ongoing coordination with the NPS. The lighting plan considers Institution of Lighting Professionals guidance for reduction of obtrusive light and for bats and artificial lighting. Some specific mitigation measures incorporated include use of a color range (2,200K to 3,000K LED) to reduce sky glow and be less disruptive to any bats using the area, use of berm-mounted lighting, use of individual reflectors internally on every LED in each module to reduce spill light and tightly control where light is put in the environment, and use of an additional visor to help shield the face of the fitting from view and helping further control the light.



SITE LIGHTING

Proposed Clubhouse Renderings



VIEW LOOKING SOUTHWEST FROM TOP OF DRIVING RANGE



VIEW LOOKING NORTHEAST FROM 9TH HOLE GREEN

Proposed Clubhouse Entry Rendering



CLUBHOUSE APPROACH FROM SOUTH

Proposed Driving Range Rendering



DRIVING RANGE

Proposed Practice Green Rendering



[No Title]

PUTTING GREEN