

PROJECT NARRATIVE – PACES MILL/PALISADES REHABILITATION

INTRODUCTION

The Paces Mill/Palisades Unit is the southernmost unit of the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area (CRNRA), National Park Service (NPS) site located along the Chattahoochee River in Cobb County, Georgia, directly adjacent to Fulton County. The Paces Mill/Palisades Unit Rehabilitation project is a formal partnership between NPS and the Cumberland Community Improvement District (CCID) that includes agreements for Design, Construction, and Philanthropic Support.

SCOPE OF WORK AND PROJECT GOALS

The purpose of the Paces Mill/Palisades Unit Rehabilitation project is to rehabilitate the existing facilities at the park site, including the parking lot, trails, and structures, to update and better fit the needs of the National Park Service and park visitors. As the southernmost unit of the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area (CRNRA), the Paces Mill/Palisades Unit is immensely popular with 270,000 visitors annually. The park unit serves as a trailhead for multiple biking and walking trails, a popular picnic site, and a final take-out point for boats, kayaks, canoes, rafts, and floats along the Chattahoochee River. This unit can become extremely crowded, especially during the peak summer months. Improved circulation and upgraded facilities are important goals of this project.

Improvements to the Paces Mill/Palisades Unit are overdue. The park is heavily used and has seen little investment in recent years. The Paces Mill/Palisades Unit serves as the southern gateway to the CRNRA and CCID. The CRNRA is unique due to its proximity to one of the largest urban centers in the Southeast. While the more northern units of the park are located in more suburban areas, the Paces Mill/Palisades Unit is in an increasingly urban area. The Paces Mill/Palisades Unit's location makes it easily accessible to diverse populations and is often the first experience with a national park for many regional residents.

It is important that the Paces Mill/Palisades Unit offer a similar experience as other national parks. However, since the park unit was previously owned by the State of Georgia until 1978, the park unit has experienced minimal changes over the ensuing decades. The Paces Mill/Palisades Unit does not reflect a true National Park experience in its current configuration.

The CCID is a voluntary self-taxing district in northwest Atlanta and is the mechanism by which local commercial property owners advance needed public infrastructure projects. These projects enhance property values, as well as the greater community. The Paces Mill/Palisades Unit is an excellent location to improve awareness of and access to both the CCID and the CRNRA.

Barge Design Solutions (Barge) is a premier design firm selected to lead the preliminary engineering and design of the project. Barge has followed the process outlined in the Request for Qualifications and further outlined by the NPS's Denver Service Center in the Design-Bid-

Build (DBB) Workflow. Barge utilized an integrated and collaborative approach to problem-solving by working with multiple technical disciplines to identify key issues and challenges. Barge employed landscape architects and civil engineers to redesign the site.

During the Predesign phase, Barge created four initial site concept designs, and the SSOE team created four architectural concept designs. Barge and SSOE teams worked together, incorporating feedback from the NPS and the CCID, to determine the most efficient site design, circulation layout, and building design and configuration. The preferred alternative was chosen and modified through a value analysis workshop (conducted in July 2018) and then fully developed into the current design. Construction documents were completed in January 2023.

SITE NARRATIVE

The Paces Mill/Palisades Unit is a 24-acre park unit of the CRNRA. There are two entrances to the site, one at Cobb Parkway/US-41 northbound and one at Cobb Parkway/US-41 southbound. The entry road from Cobb Parkway/US-41 southbound will be improved with traffic calming speed tables and the addition of 30 parking spots. The existing multi-purpose trail that runs parallel to the entry road will remain. The entry road comes to a T-intersection. To the west of the intersection, the boat ramp parking lot will be altered to include 24 head-in parking spaces, 4 boat trailer parking spaces, and a turn-around area for boat trailer users to improve circulation. The existing boat ramp will remain as-is with a designated space for emergency vehicles at the top of the ramp.

The entrance road follows a similar alignment to the existing road under the bridge; however, the intersection at the Cobb Parkway/US-41 southbound entrance has been realigned as a new T-intersection. The existing stormwater facilities located in the area between Cobb Parkway/US-41 and the two entrance roads will be redesigned as bioswales and be more functional and aesthetically pleasing. Two new crosswalks will be installed at the T-intersection. A new grass swale will be located northwest of the T-intersection and will filter stormwater from the palisade.

To create a more desirable National Park Service arrival experience, the parking lot will be moved to the northern end of the site. The existing parking lot will be replaced with a piedmont prairie meadow and the new entrance road and parallel multi-use trail will wrap around it. The entrance road will have a simple timber guardrail on either side to prevent vehicles from parking on the roadside. A random pattern of trees will be planted along both sides of the road to help reinforce the NPS experience. The entrance road will curve eastward and eventually terminate at the existing main/northern boat ramp. There will be a new multi-use trail running parallel on the southeastern side of the entrance road. The existing bike share station will be relocated to the northwestern corner of the entrance road and the west parking lot entrance, near its current location at the Bob Callan trailhead. A “jug handle” arrival and drop-off loop will be located to the south of the road, allowing spaces for vehicles to turn around and provide pull-through parking for vehicles with trailers. The entrances of the jug handle loop will align

with the entrances of the new parking lot. The new parking lot will be shaped like an elongated U and will have approximately 170 parking spaces. A multi-use trail will run parallel around the parking lot. A river overlook will be located on the eastern edge of the parking lot and connected by a paved trail to the multi-use trail around the parking lot. The outer edges of the parking lot will have a curb with curb cuts to allow stormwater to sheet flow into either the adjacent swale or the central bioswales. Stormwater will be naturally filtered through the two central bioswales before draining into the river. A curvilinear path will lead north from the visitor contact station, bisect the bioswales, and connect to the existing Bob Callan Trail. The curvilinear path will be tree-lined and will have bump-outs to accommodate benches along the path.

A dumpster pad and dumpsters will be located at the top of the boat ramp near the east parking lot entrance. A crosswalk will be installed across the boat ramp to connect the multi-use trails. Directly south of the boat ramp, the existing boardwalk will be enhanced and enlarged to incorporate a new shade structure and gathering area.

A new meadow will be installed to the south of the new main parking lot. The meadow will be planted with native grasses and wildflowers to create a Piedmont prairie. Piedmont prairies are grassland ecosystems that once covered a substantial portion of the Southeastern United States Piedmont region and have become almost non-existent due to agriculture and development. Piedmont prairies were once very prevalent in and around the Paces Mill/Palisades Unit.

A multi-use trail will run along the southeastern edge of the meadow, connecting the boat ramp to the southbound entrance road. The wooded area southeast of the multi-use trail will remain and additional picnic tables will be added to the existing picnic area. A soft surface/natural trail will meander through the woods and will include a short path to a river overlook. Minimal and selective tree removal will take place to accommodate the soft-surface trail and river overlook.

Site Grading and Storm Drainage

The primary site grading will occur in the new parking lot area and around the proposed visitor contact station, changing rooms, and restroom facilities. In general, the finished grade for the new parking lot will be at or slightly below the existing grade. The parking bays will be pitched to drain into the central bioswale. Additional grading will include the removal of the existing parking area for remediation into a planted Piedmont prairie meadow.

The storm drainage infrastructure for the site will include new storm piping to drain the proposed improvements to existing storm infrastructure and new bio-swales. The proposed parking area drains to a connected series of grass swales and bio ponds. The proposed storm pipes will have flared end structures at their outfalls. An outlet structure will be required in the bioswale to control drainage to the river. The existing storm drains in the southern bioswale areas, adjacent to the entry drive and Cobb Parkway/US-41, will be reworked to accommodate

the new bioswale design. A series of yard inlets and pipes are proposed to drain the re-routed entrance road to the existing southern bio-swales.

USE OF COMMUNITY PROJECT FUNDING (CPF)

The Paces Mill/Palisades Rehabilitation project is estimated to cost approximately \$5 million (see Budget Info – HUD CPF Package). These total costs were estimated by the A&E Contractor (Barge Design Solutions) and a construction cost estimating and scheduling consultant (Costing Services Group / Preferred Construction Management Company). The HUD CPF portion includes the River Overlook Decks, Site Furnishings, Hardscape, and Vehicular Paving. The Cumberland Community Improvement District is pursuing additional funding as well.

TIMELINE

Construction documents are complete, and all permits are expected to be in hand by August 2024. At this point, the earliest construction start date is estimated to be the third quarter of 2024, with a start date soon after Labor Day. Construction for the project is anticipated to require eight to nine months to complete with a goal of substantial completion by Memorial Day 2025.