

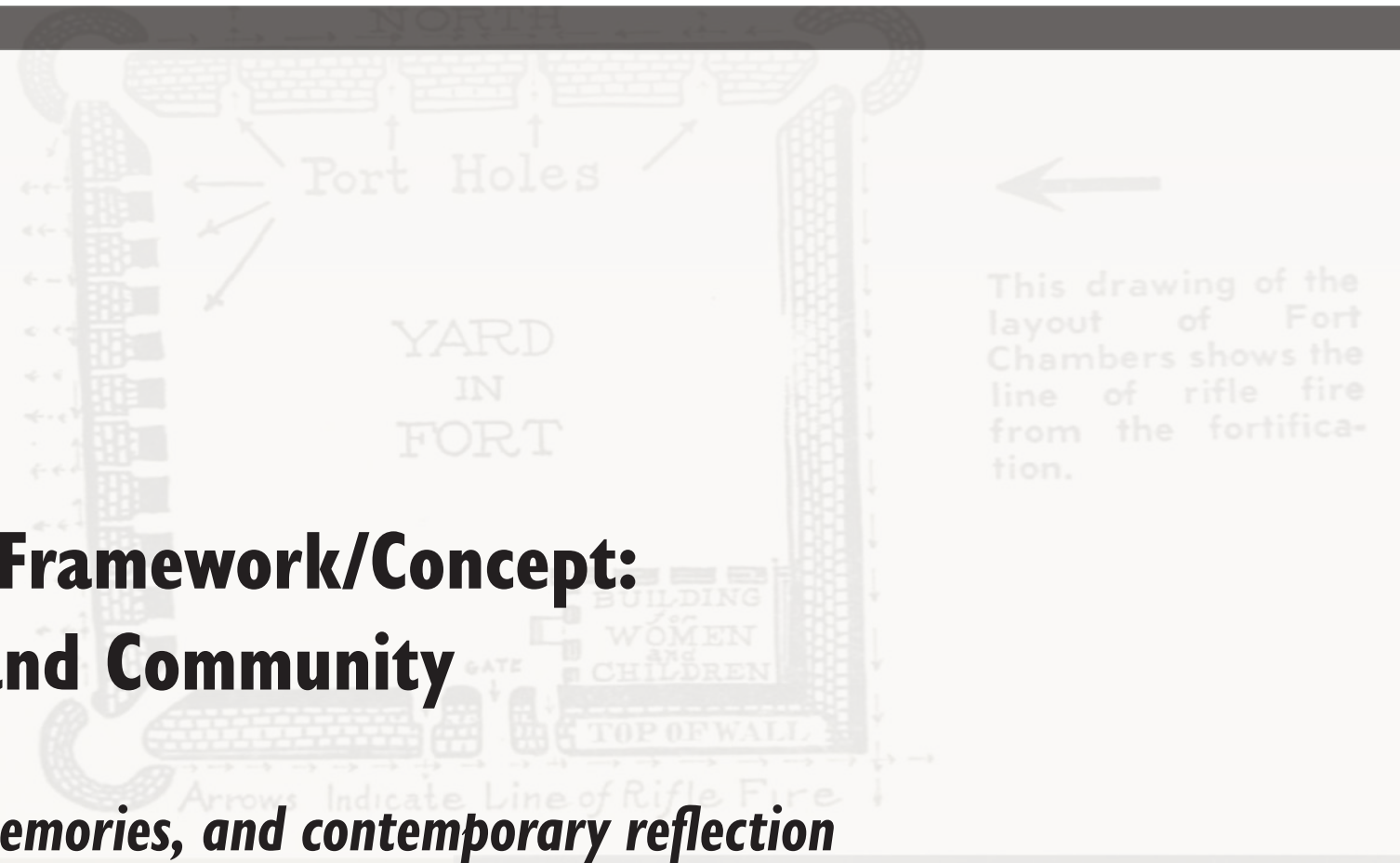
# Fort Chambers Interpretive Framework/Concept: A Landscape of Conscience and Community

*Engaging layered histories, contested memories, and contemporary reflection*

## Why Now? Rediscovery and Public Memory

For more than a century, Fort Chambers receded from public awareness. While fragments of its history remained among a small number of residents and historians, it was largely absent from civic memory. Without the City's acquisition of the land in 2018, it is likely that Fort Chambers would have remained unknown to most residents.

The acquisition of this land brought renewed attention to a site long overlooked. This interpretive effort reflects not only a reconsideration of nineteenth-century events, but also a contemporary moment in which communities across the country are reexamining how difficult histories are remembered—or forgotten. The relative unfamiliarity of this story presents both a challenge and an opportunity: to approach interpretation thoughtfully, adaptively, and with openness to learning.



Client:



Consultant:



City of Boulder, OSMP  
Fort Chambers/Poor Farm EW4  
Interpretive Framework/Concept  
April 2026

### Fort Chambers/Poor Farm Overall Interpretive ‘Big Idea’

In nearly sixty days, amid the distant thunder of the Civil War, white settlers in the Boulder Valley organized a militia and constructed an earthen fort at the edge of a settlement they hoped would endure. This work proceeded not in response to an immediate attack or direct threat, but from a shared and systemic fear—of an Indigenous presence already largely forced from homelands which sustained them and which they learned from, appreciated, and honored, yet still perceived to remain an existential danger. The settlement itself was experienced by its builders as uncertain, even as it was being made more durable through law, treaty-violating land claims, and force.

These preparations preceded a military campaign intended to suppress—and ultimately eliminate—what was described as the “Indian problem.” Days later, that fear led to in the massacre of peace-seeking Indigenous people who had been promised safety some 200 miles away at Sand Creek. Native people, in the face of violence and expulsion, have remained resilient and present in this landscape.

The fort has long since returned to the earth, but the beliefs that shaped its construction and the violence that followed did not disappear. They carried forward, influencing the community that inherited this place. Over the more than 160 years since Fort Chambers’ sod walls were raised, understanding of this site has continued to change. Today, it invites Boulderites to reflect on that legacy: to consider how fear and hatred became policy, how absence was created through force, and our contemporary responsibilities towards those who lived here before us. How this place will be understood in the future remains an open question—one shaped by what we choose to remember, acknowledge, and carry forward.

#### A Simplified, Short Big Idea

In the early 1860s, settlers in the Boulder Valley built Fort Chambers not in response to attack, but from fear and hatred of Indigenous presence on their ancestral lands. That fear—interwoven with political ambition, economic pressure, racial ideology, and the instability of wartime governance—became policy and violence, leading to the Sand Creek Massacre. Though the fort vanished, the beliefs that built it endured. This site invites reflection on how fear shaped action, memory, and responsibility.

#### Contextual Intent of this Big Idea (what’s the goal?)

This interpretive text was developed to situate Fort Chambers within its full historical and ethical context, in alignment with established interpretive standards for accuracy, transparency, and meaningful visitor engagement. The language intentionally centers documented actions and outcomes—militia organization, fort construction, military activity, and mass violence—while avoiding speculation, narrative inflation, or prescriptive moral framing.

The text differentiates between settler perceptions and historical assessment by acknowledging fear as a motivating force without treating it as an objective condition. Phrases such as “experienced by its builders as uncertain” and “imagined to remain an existential danger” reflect contemporary settler viewpoints while clarifying that these perceptions operated within broader systems of law, land appropriation, and organized force, including the violation of treaties. This interpretive approach aligns with public history best practices that emphasize contextualized, evidence-based interpretation rather than retrospective judgment alone.

References to the Sand Creek Massacre are included to establish temporal and ideological continuity between local actions and broader regional violence, while maintaining geographic specificity and factual restraint. The text avoids sensationalism, instead situating the massacre as an outcome of policies and beliefs already underway, consistent with current scholarship on settler colonialism and nineteenth-century U.S. military campaigns in the region.

The concluding reflection is intentionally open-ended. Rather than prescribing emotional responses or interpretive conclusions, it invites visitors to consider how collective memory is shaped over time and what responsibilities accompany the inheritance of contested landscapes. This structure supports multiple points of entry for diverse audiences, encourages critical engagement, and aligns with the site’s role as a space for learning, reflection, and civic dialogue rather than commemoration alone.

## What Is the Big Idea and How Will We Use It?

In interpreting a complex historic landscape, a **Big Idea** is the clear, organizing insight that gives a site its meaning. It is the central interpretive claim that explains why this place matters today—not only what happened here, but why those events continue to shape our community, values, and stewardship of the land.

Think of it as the statement that answers the enduring visitor question:  
“So what does this place mean for us now?”

### Why a Big Idea Matters

*At sites with layered and contested histories, a Big Idea ensures interpretation is purposeful, balanced, and relevant. It helps the site to:*

#### *Hold multiple narratives together*

Indigenous histories, settlement, institutional uses, and contemporary stewardship can be understood as interconnected rather than competing stories.

#### *Make civic values visible*

It highlights shared values such as stewardship, empathy, and responsibility for public lands.

#### *Move beyond a catalog of facts*

Instead of isolated dates and events, interpretation becomes a meaningful story visitors can understand and remember.

#### *Provide a reason to care*

By connecting past events to present-day community life, the Big Idea invites visitors to reflect on their own relationship to place and history.

### How We Will Use the Big Idea at Fort Chambers–Poor Farm

The Big Idea will guide decisions across design, interpretation, and programming to create a coherent visitor experience.

#### *Site Design*

- Shape circulation and viewpoints to reveal relationships among land, water, movement, and settlement.
- Ensure new elements support reflection and remain subordinate to the landscape.

#### *Interpretation*

- Present layered histories and multiple perspectives.
- Connect past events to present-day stewardship and community identity.
- Provide varied levels of information for diverse audiences.

#### *Programming and Engagement*

- Support dialogue, place-based learning, and community partnerships.
- Encourage visitors to consider their role in caring for shared landscapes.
- Create opportunities for reflection and continued learning.

### What a Big Idea Is Not

- Not a slogan or marketing phrase
- Not a single perspective or simplified narrative
- Not a directive telling visitors what to think

*Instead, it is a framework that invites inquiry, reflection, and shared understanding.*

## Interpreting Fort Chambers–Poor Farm as a Site of Conscience

The Fort Chambers–Poor Farm site is a layered cultural landscape within OSMP stewardship. Indigenous presence prior to the period of the fort, military occupation, resource extraction, agricultural use, institutional care, and ongoing conservation all shaped this place. These histories intersect with the land itself — its open grasslands, proximity to Boulder Creek, and views toward the foothills.

Because the site reflects complex and sometimes difficult chapters of local and regional history, it is well suited to a *site of conscience* framework.

A site of conscience is a place that interprets challenging or contested histories in a way that encourages reflection, dialogue, and connection between past events and present-day civic life. This approach does not prescribe conclusions. Instead, it supports informed understanding and respectful public engagement.

### Guiding Principles

#### *The Land as Primary Evidence*

The landscape itself is the central interpretive element. Open space, water, topography, and views reveal how geography shaped historical experience. Design should clarify these relationships rather than obscure them.

#### *Whole History, Not Fragmented History*

Indigenous lifeways, military occupation, agricultural use, the Poor Farm, and contemporary OSMP stewardship are presented as interconnected chapters. No single era stands alone.

#### *Clarity and Intellectual Honesty*

Interpretation should be grounded in research, primary sources, and collaboration with Tribal partners and historians. Difficult chapters are acknowledged directly and within context.

#### *Reflection Rather Than Monumentality*

Design interventions should primarily reinforce landscape continuity; however, key interpretive moments may thoughtfully use form, material, and artistic collaboration to generate meaning, reflection, and shared understanding.

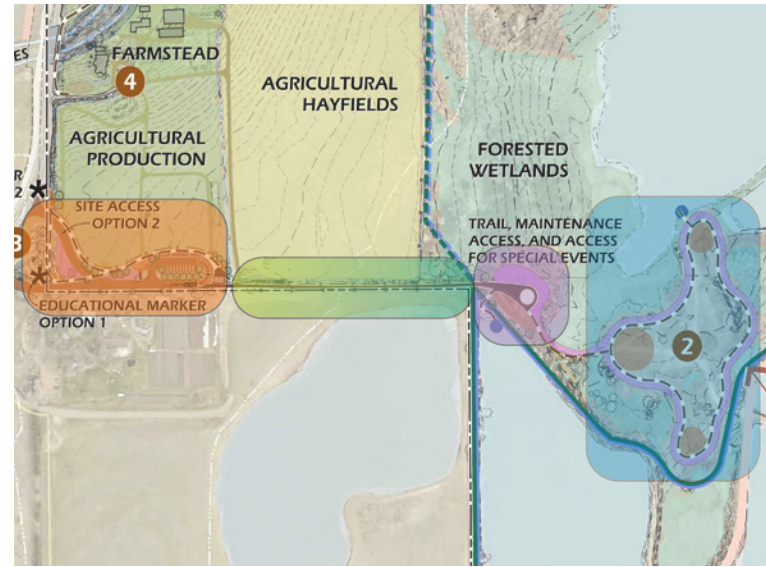
#### *Civic Relevance*

Historic land use, displacement, and settlement patterns continue to shape Boulder Valley today. Interpretation should make those connections visible.

#### *Public Dialogue in a Shared Landscape*

As OSMP land, the site belongs to the community. It should support thoughtful engagement, multiple perspectives, and shared responsibility for both history and stewardship.

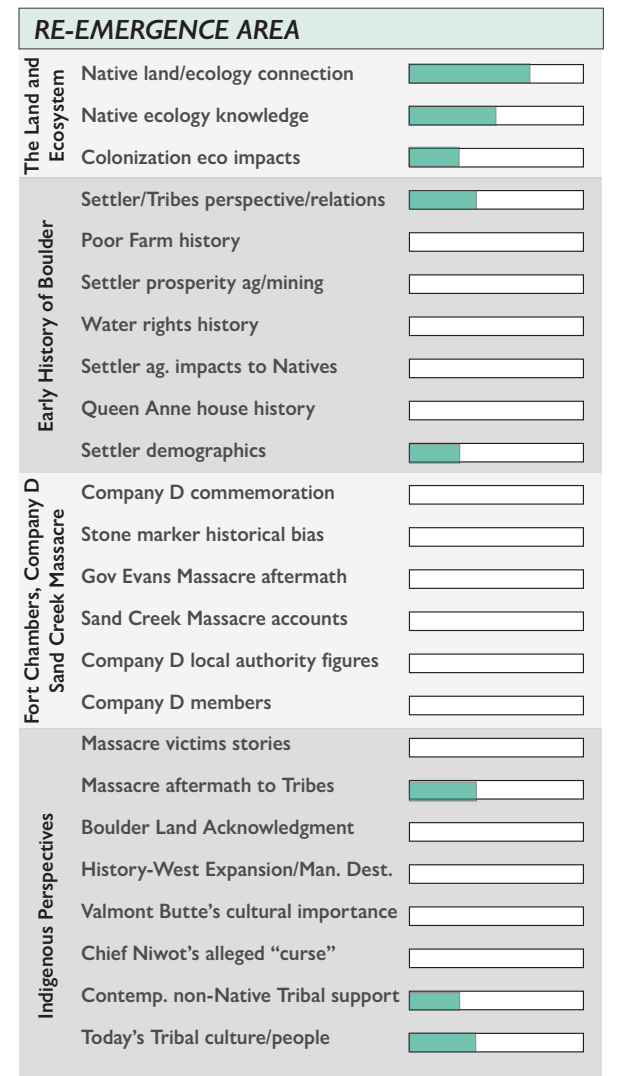
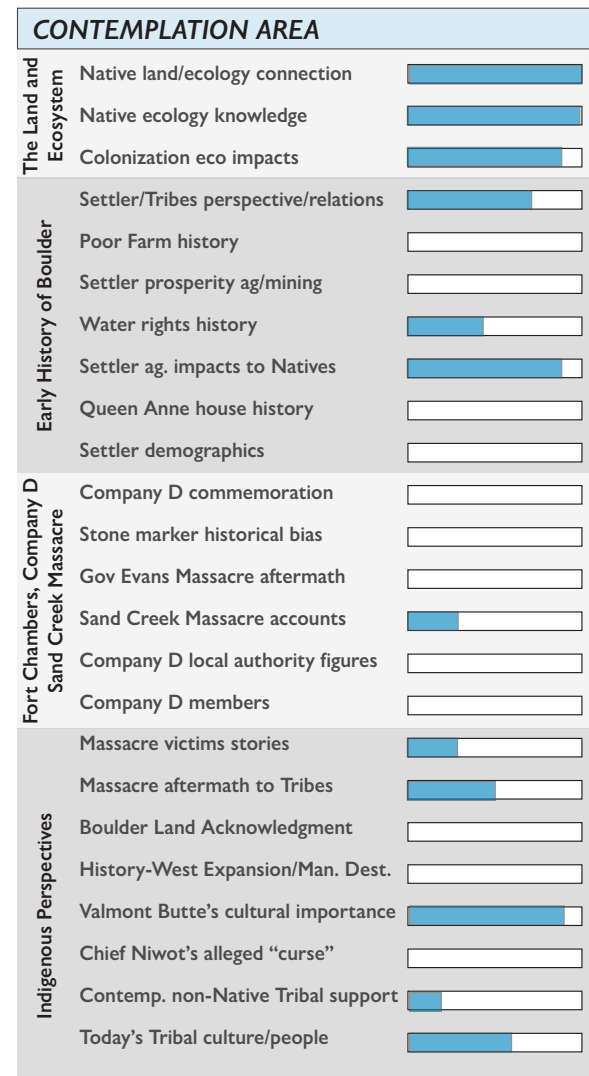
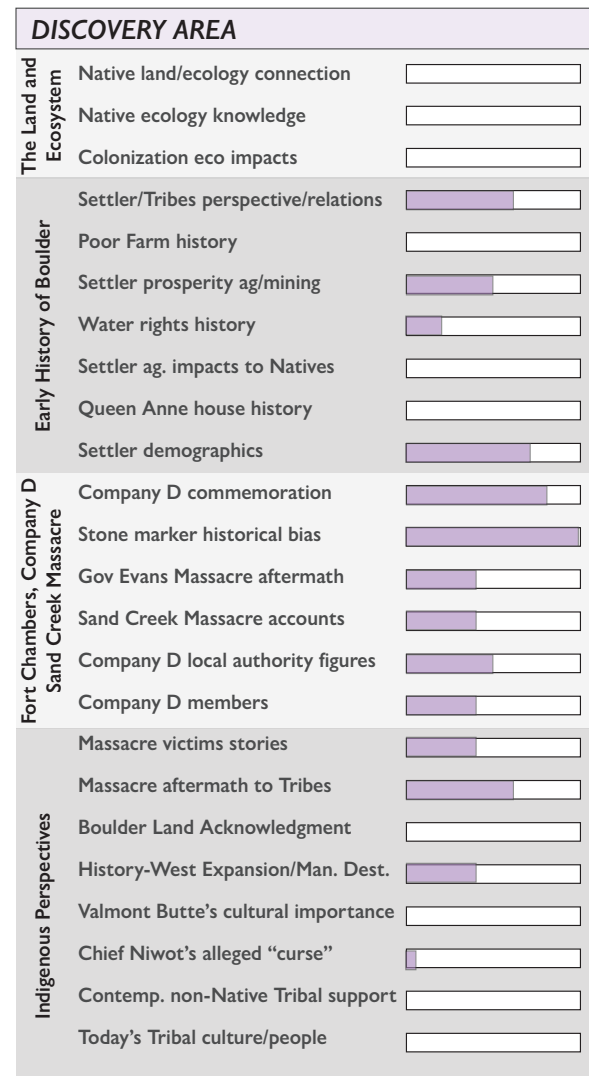
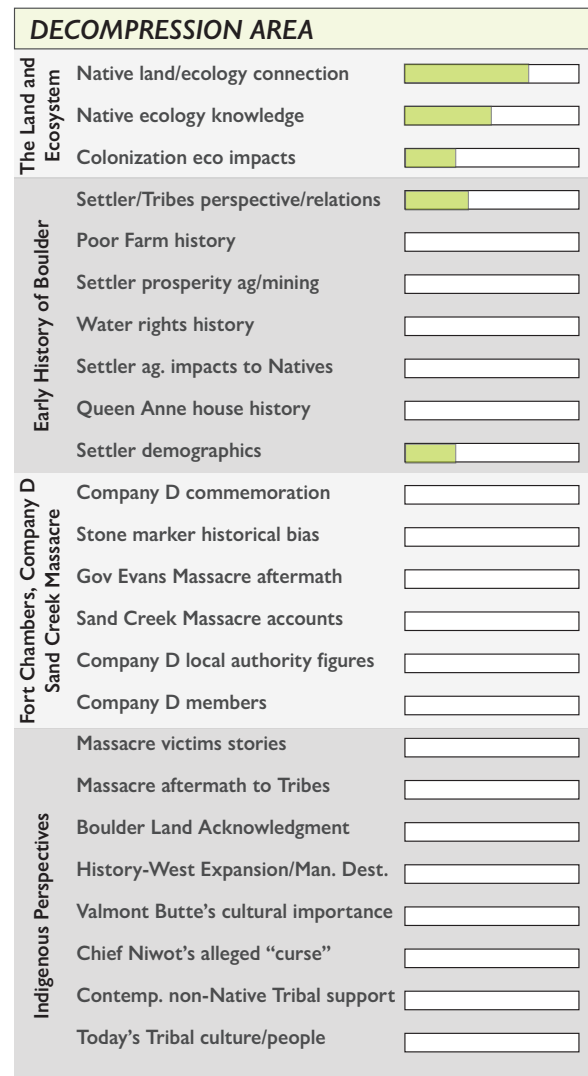
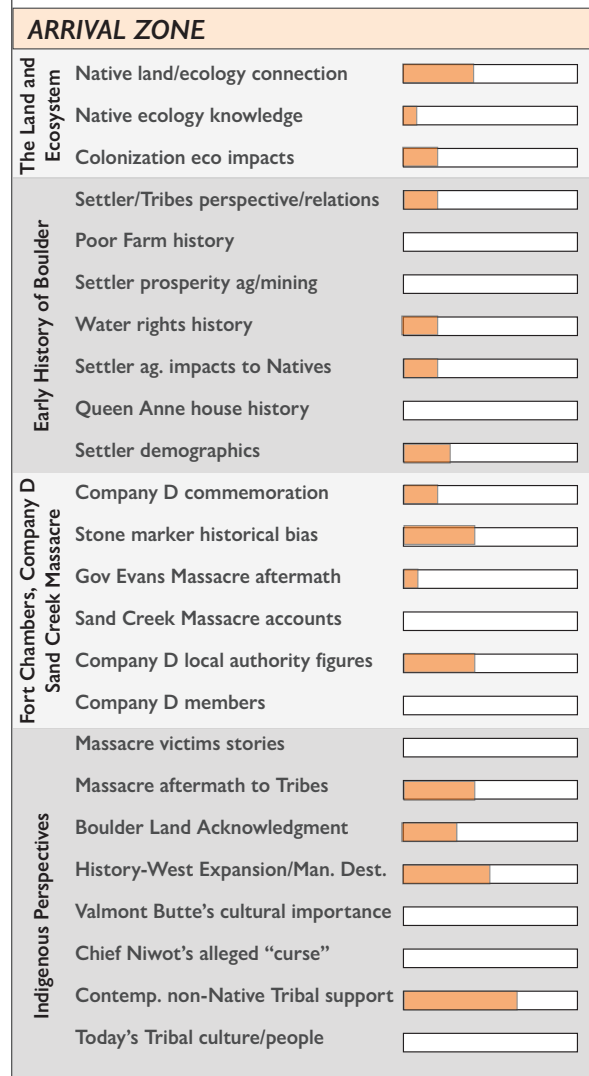
**Content Distribution Summary**

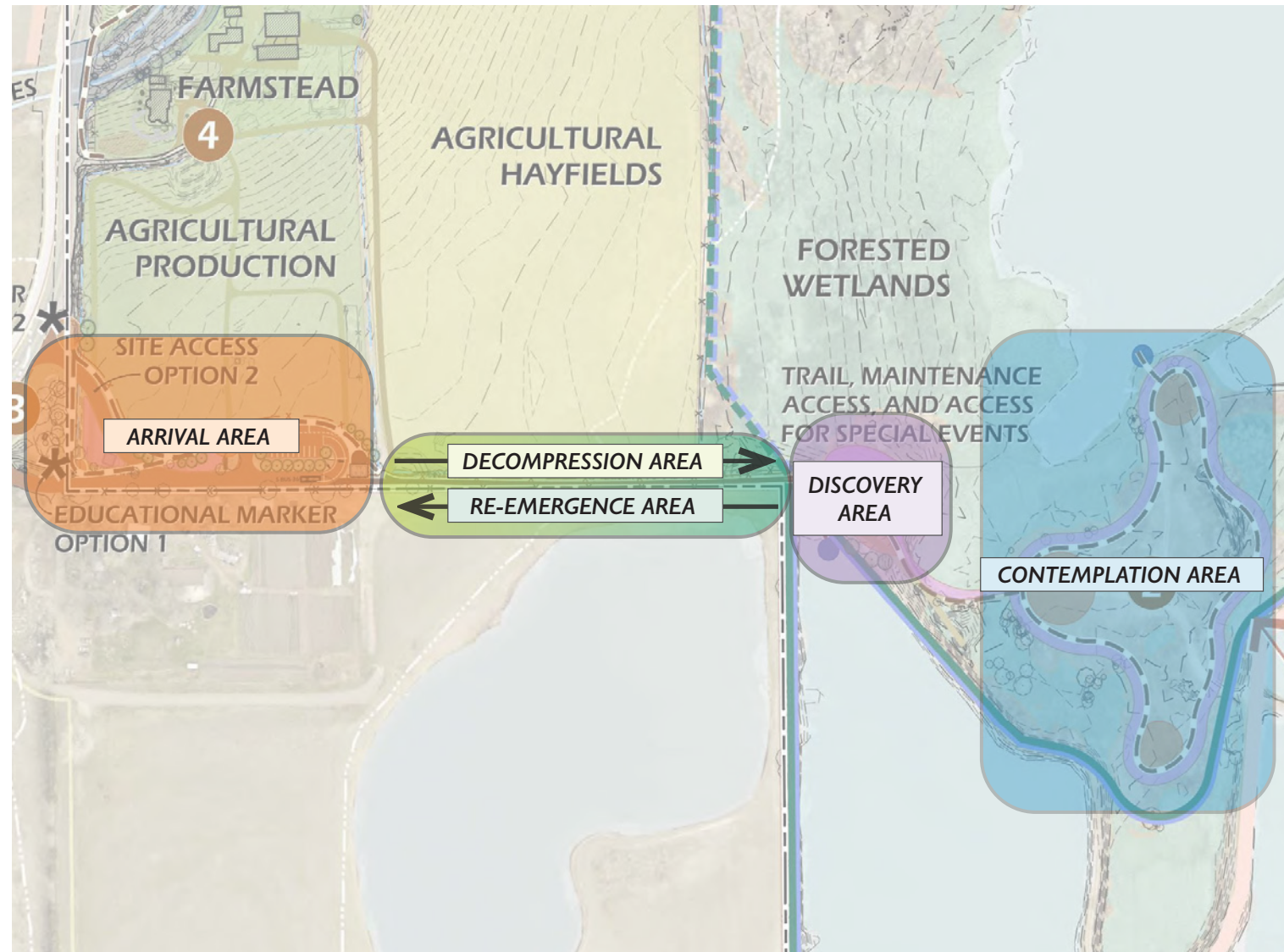


These bar graphs illustrate the relative concentration and emphasis of interpretive topics across each area of the Fort Chambers/Poor Farm site. These topics and overarching themes (e.g., The Land and Ecosystem) were identified during through the EW2/EW3 in-person engagement and online survey efforts.

The degree of fill in each bar indicates the relative level to which a topic is physically interpreted within each area. This is informed by topic rankings from EW2, public input from the EW3 workshop regarding preferred content by interpretive area, and ongoing conversations between Studio Tectonic, OSMP staff, and tribal representatives involved in the development of the Fort Chambers interpretation.

While these graphs reflect priorities for on-site physical interpretation, a broader range of topics, including those not physically represented on site, may be more deeply developed through future OSMP programming, events, and educational initiatives.





**“This site traces how fear transformed relationship into violence, how land and memory were reshaped through that choice, and how responsibility remains in what we carry forward.”**

**ARRIVAL AREA**

This place stands on Indigenous homelands that have never been empty. For immeasurable time, Indigenous nations were sustained by Boulder Valley through reciprocity and care. Westward expansion transformed these lands into settler territory, furthered by fear and local participation in Company D and Fort Chambers. As an arrival and departure space, this area orients visitors to Indigenous presence, historical distortion, and the responsibility to consider what they carry forward.

**DECOMPRESSION AREA**

This path traces a landscape shaped by long Indigenous relationships and rapid settler change. Indigenous nations lived with this land through seasonal movement and ecological knowledge. In the mid-1800s, mining, agriculture, and migration reshaped homelands into claimed property. Visitors are invited to slow down and notice how the valley holds memory—of continuity and disruption—before entering the site’s deeper histories of fear and consequence.

**DISCOVERY AREA**

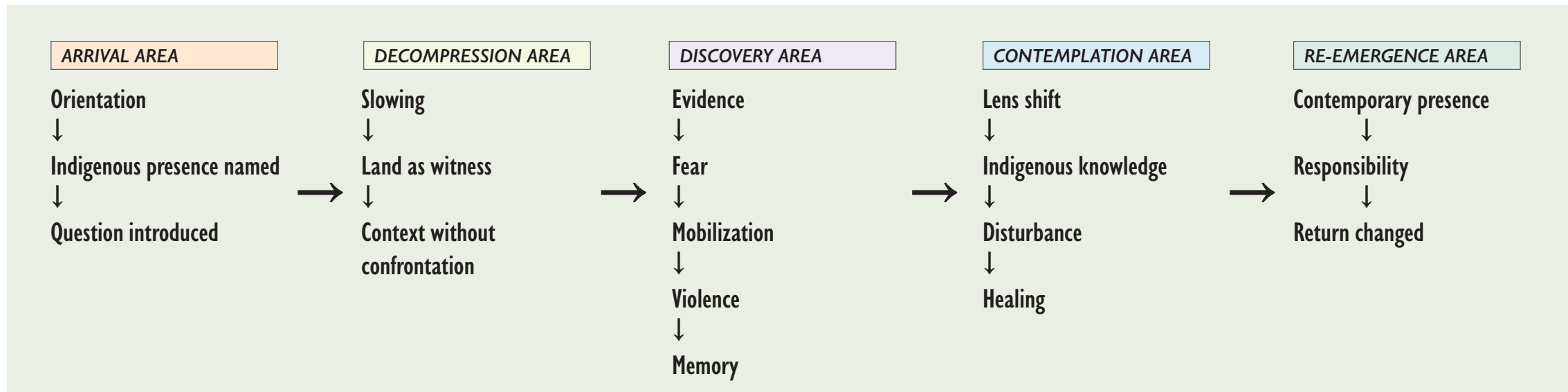
By the early 1860s, prosperity in the Boulder Valley brought fear alongside growth. Mining, migration, and political rhetoric cast Indigenous presence as a threat. Fort Chambers was built quickly by civilians, militia, and Company D, binding everyday life to military preparation. Men associated with the Fort later participated in the Sand Creek and Buffalo Springs Massacres. This area examines how fear became action—and how history has been remembered, distorted, and defended.

**CONTEMPLATION AREA**

For immeasurable time, the Boulder Valley and Valmont Butte were places of relationship, not property. This loop moves through a deeply disturbed landscape once shaped by gravel mining and now in healing. After the fort area, visitors are invited to listen—to land, water, plants, and Indigenous presence past and present. This space centers resilience and responsibility, asking what stewardship and accountability are called for now.

**RE-EMERGENCE AREA**

The story of Fort Chambers extends into the present. The Sand Creek Massacre devastated Cheyenne and Arapaho communities, leaving lasting trauma and reshaping Indigenous life across generations. As visitors return through the landscape, this path centers living Indigenous presence and resilience. Approaching the arrival space again, visitors are asked what they now inherit—and how knowledge carries responsibility forward.



Area	Area Interpretive Statement and Purpose	Themes, Storylines, Take-Aways, Messages (preliminary)
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**Area Topic Weightings/Priorities (from EW3 Direction)**

Contemp. non-Native Tribal support	<div style="width: 20%; background-color: #f4a460;"></div>
History-West Expansion/Man. Dest.	<div style="width: 25%; background-color: #f4a460;"></div>
Native land/ecology connection	<div style="width: 15%; background-color: #f4a460;"></div>
Stone marker historical bias	<div style="width: 20%; background-color: #f4a460;"></div>
Company D local authority figures	<div style="width: 25%; background-color: #f4a460;"></div>
Massacre aftermath to Tribes	<div style="width: 20%; background-color: #f4a460;"></div>
Boulder Land Acknowledgment	<div style="width: 15%; background-color: #f4a460;"></div>
Settler demographics	<div style="width: 10%; background-color: #f4a460;"></div>
Colonization eco impacts	<div style="width: 10%; background-color: #f4a460;"></div>
Settler/Tribes perspective/relations	<div style="width: 10%; background-color: #f4a460;"></div>
Water rights history	<div style="width: 10%; background-color: #f4a460;"></div>
Settler ag. impacts to Natives	<div style="width: 10%; background-color: #f4a460;"></div>
Company D commemoration	<div style="width: 10%; background-color: #f4a460;"></div>
Native ecology knowledge	<div style="width: 5%; background-color: #f4a460;"></div>
Gov Evans Massacre aftermath	<div style="width: 5%; background-color: #f4a460;"></div>

This place stands on homelands that sustained Indigenous life over immeasurable time through knowledge, relationship, and care. The City of Boulder’s Land Acknowledgment affirms that this land has never been empty, even when Indigenous presence was forcibly removed.

In the mid-nineteenth century, westward expansion and notions of Manifest Destiny transformed these homelands into settler territory. Fear of Indigenous people—amplified by political leaders and embraced locally—led to the formation of militias, the construction of Fort Chambers, and the prominent participation of Boulder men in Company D. These actions were not responses to immediate attack, but expressions of a belief that Indigenous presence itself was a threat. This belief led to the Sand Creek Massacre and the violent displacement of Cheyenne and Arapaho people, with consequences that continue today.

The fort quickly disappeared, but the stories told around it endured—often shaped by historical bias and false narratives that obscured local responsibilities in a broad history of violence. As both an arrival and departure space, this zone orients visitors to what they will encounter and asks what they will carry forward. It also offers pathways for continued learning and resources to support contemporary Indigenous communities and voices.

**Preliminary Message**  
This trail invites you to explore what happened here, how it has been remembered, and what responsibility we carry today

**Fort Chambers and Climate of 1860s**  
Westward expansion and political rhetoric fueled fear, leading to militias, the construction of Fort Chambers, and local participation in Company D.

**Orientation and Invitation**  
This arrival space prepares visitors for what they will encounter along the trail and offers pathways to continue learning beyond the site.

**Purpose of the Trail**  
The Fort Chambers interpretive trail is both a historical site and a reflective landscape, inviting visitors to consider misleading and biased retellings of the history of Fort Chambers, how the past becomes what we call history, and how the past shapes the present.

**City of Boulder’s Land Acknowledgment**  
Visitors can understand the City of Boulder’s process in crafting a land acknowledgment, and learn about the broad strokes of Indigenous history in Boulder through the Staff Acknowledgment provided.

- SIMPLIFIED LEARNING OBJECTIVES**
1. Acknowledge Indigenous homelands and living presence
  2. Identify historical bias in inherited narratives
  3. Prepare to carry responsibility, not neutrality

**References, Visuals, Resources**



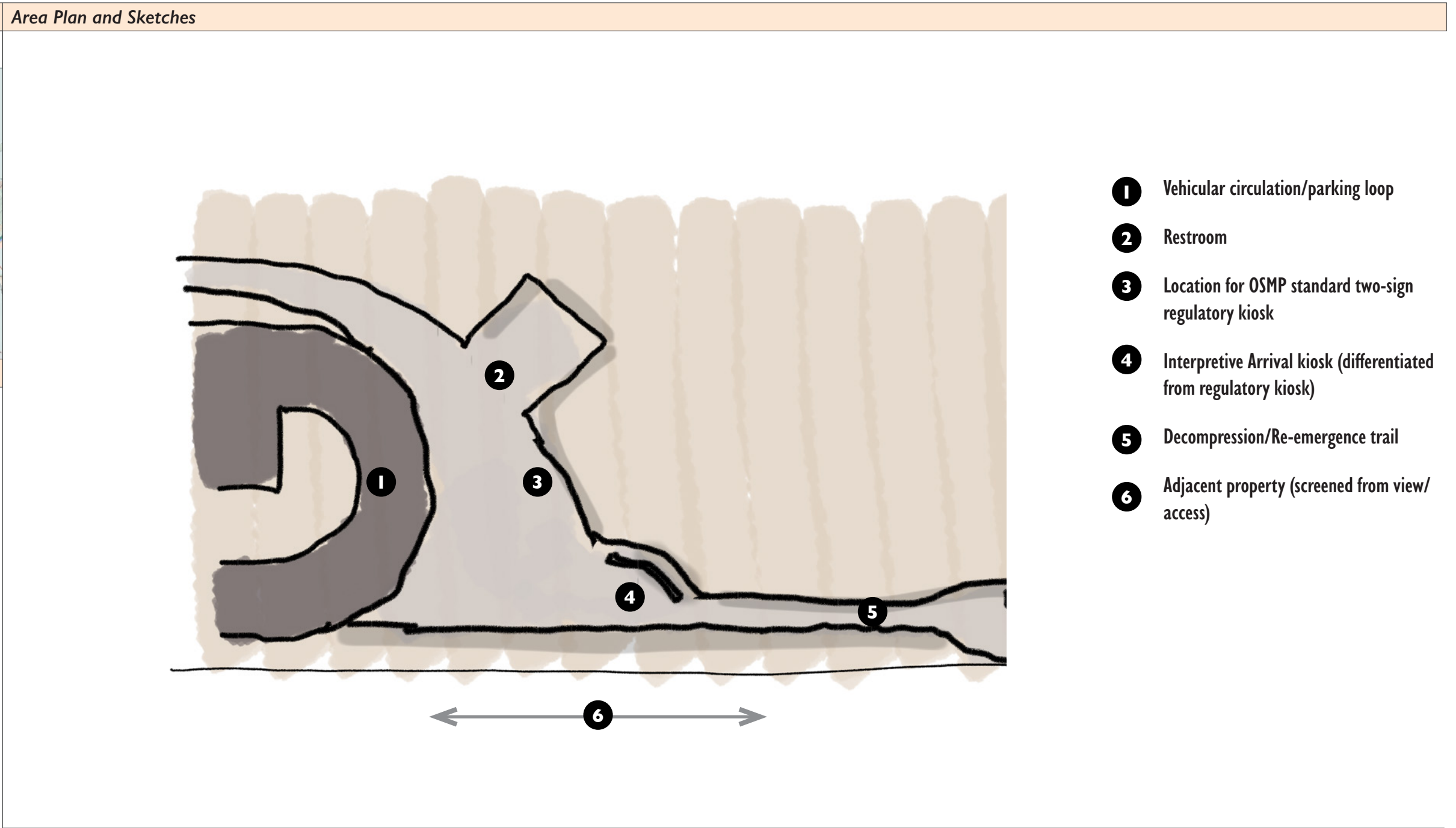
**Area** | **Area Plan and Sketches**



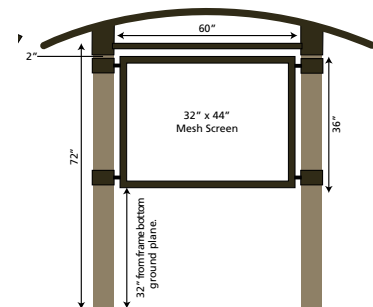
**Area Interpretive Experience**

Whether arriving by car, bus, or bicycle, visitors reach the Fort Chambers site at a shared entry point. Informal seating and nearby restrooms provide comfort and a brief opportunity to pause, gather, and orient before beginning the experience. Adjacent to the arrival area, a standard OSMP regulatory kiosk offers trail maps and required guidance, grounding visitors in the familiar framework of open space use.

As visitors move toward the trail, an interpretive kiosk signals that this place is different from other OSMP sites. It marks the landscape as one of deep conscience and reflection. A concise, accessible overview introduces the history in a single narrative moment—enough to establish context without resolving it. Most importantly, the kiosk extends an invitation: to enter with openness, to explore with care, and to recognize themselves as part of an ongoing historical process rather than detached observers of the past.



**References, Visuals, Resources**

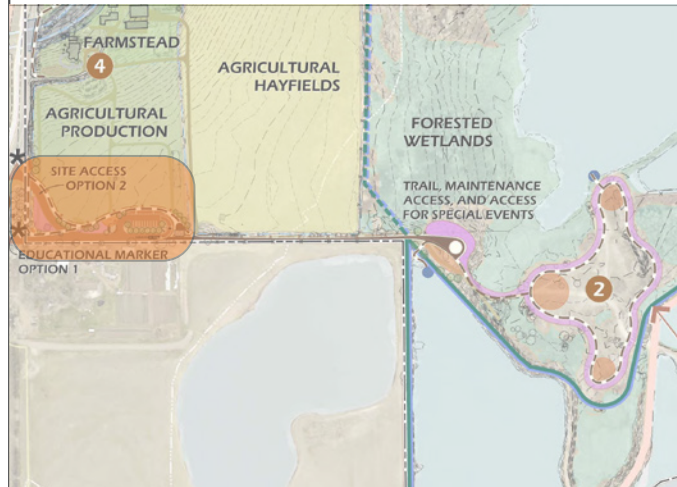
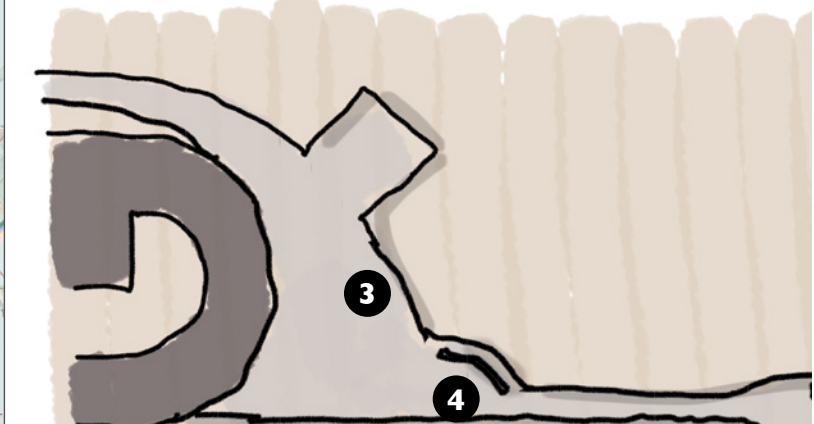


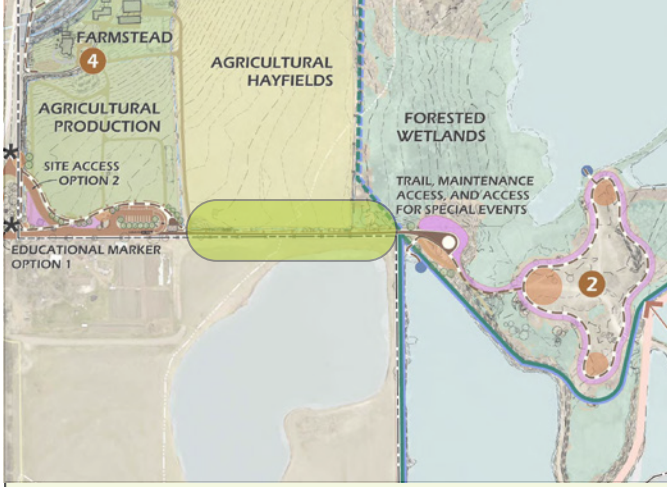
Standard OSMP kiosk



Example structure

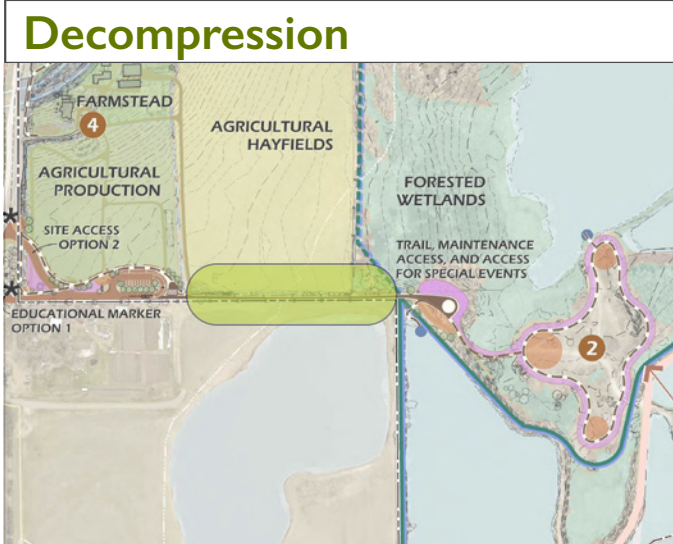
- 1 Vehicular circulation/parking loop
- 2 Restroom
- 3 Location for OSMP standard two-sign regulatory kiosk
- 4 Interpretive Arrival kiosk (differentiated from regulatory kiosk)
- 5 Decompression/Re-emergence trail
- 6 Adjacent property (screened from view/access)

Area	Potential Content Approach	
<p><b>Arrival</b></p> 		<p><b>3 Location for OSMP standard two-sign regulatory kiosk</b></p> <p>The Fort Chambers trailhead signage clearly identifies permitted uses, outlines trail guidelines, and provides essential orientation information. These signs establish visitor expectations while reinforcing stewardship, safety, and respect for the site and surrounding landscape.</p> <p><b>4 Interpretive Arrival kiosk</b></p> <p>An interpretive panel introduces the purpose of the trail and invites visitors to engage thoughtfully with the complex history of Fort Chambers. It prepares them for what they may encounter and suggests the time and attention a meaningful visit may require.</p> <p>The panels may present the City of Boulder’s 2023 Land Acknowledgment—either in full or excerpted form—and situate the site within a longer continuum of Indigenous presence, forced removal, and resilience.</p> <p>The orientation text frames the historical forces that shaped the establishment of Fort Chambers, the narratives that later concealed or simplified its history, and the ongoing work of reinterpretation. It prepares visitors not simply to learn, but to reflect—encouraging them to enter the site as participants in an evolving historical conversation rather than as detached observers.</p>
<p><b>Notes</b></p>	<p><b>References, Visuals, Resources</b></p>	

Area	Area Interpretive Statement and Purpose	Themes, Storylines, Take-Aways, Messages (preliminary)																						
<p><b>Decompression</b></p>  <p><b>Area Topic Weightings/Priorities (from EW3 Direction)</b></p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Native land/ecology connection</td> <td><div style="width: 25%; background-color: #92d050; border: 1px solid black;"></div></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Native ecology knowledge</td> <td><div style="width: 20%; background-color: #92d050; border: 1px solid black;"></div></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Colonization eco impacts</td> <td><div style="width: 15%; background-color: #92d050; border: 1px solid black;"></div></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Settler/Tribes perspective/relations</td> <td><div style="width: 10%; background-color: #92d050; border: 1px solid black;"></div></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Settler demographics</td> <td><div style="width: 10%; background-color: #92d050; border: 1px solid black;"></div></td> </tr> </table>	Native land/ecology connection	<div style="width: 25%; background-color: #92d050; border: 1px solid black;"></div>	Native ecology knowledge	<div style="width: 20%; background-color: #92d050; border: 1px solid black;"></div>	Colonization eco impacts	<div style="width: 15%; background-color: #92d050; border: 1px solid black;"></div>	Settler/Tribes perspective/relations	<div style="width: 10%; background-color: #92d050; border: 1px solid black;"></div>	Settler demographics	<div style="width: 10%; background-color: #92d050; border: 1px solid black;"></div>	<p>This path moves through a landscape shaped by long Indigenous relationships and by rapid, imposed change. For immeasurable time, Indigenous nations lived with this land through ecological knowledge, seasonal movement, and care that sustained the valley’s plants, water, and wildlife. These relationships shaped the land visitors walk through today.</p> <p>In the mid-nineteenth century, mining, agriculture, and westward migration transformed these homelands into claimed property and pursued agricultural productivity. Settlers brought new populations, new land uses, and new understandings of ownership that disrupted Indigenous life-ways and altered the valley’s ecology. Early settler perspectives often framed Indigenous presence as incompatible with progress, laying the groundwork for fear, conflict, and policy.</p> <p>As visitors walk this agricultural ground, they are invited to slow down and notice how land carries memory. Subtle interpretation offers glimpses across time—how the valley functioned before settlement, how it was reshaped in the 1850s and 60s, and how demographic change and land use continue to influence the environment today.</p> <p>This zone serves as a threshold rather than a destination. It prepares visitors to enter the deeper histories of Fort Chambers by grounding them in a living landscape marked by continuity and disruption—asking them to arrive attentively before encountering the site’s more explicit stories of fear, violence, and consequence.</p>	<p><b>Preliminary Message</b> This path is a threshold and an invitation to slow down before entering deeper histories. As you walk, hear the voice of the land and of the people of Boulder Valley.</p> <p><b>Landscape Takeaway</b> Visitors should leave this area with a heightened awareness that this landscape was actively lived in and shaped long before settlement, and an understanding that ecological and social change here was rapidly imposed and uncertain. Visitors should feel these changes as they pass through pairs of signs acting as gateways to the history of Fort Chambers.</p> <p><b>Potential Interpretive Perspective Pairings</b> This area may support brief, widely spaced settler and Indigenous perspectives. The settler/Indigenous perspectives here could be around topics such as:</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td><i>INDIGENOUS</i></td> <td><i>SETTLER</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>• Living with the Land</td> <td>Changing the Land</td> </tr> <tr> <td>• Movement and Belonging</td> <td>Arrival and Claim</td> </tr> <tr> <td>• Who Lives Here?</td> <td>Who Is Arriving?</td> </tr> <tr> <td>• Promises</td> <td>Betrayals</td> </tr> <tr> <td>• Seeing Change</td> <td>Feeling Change</td> </tr> </table> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p><b>SIMPLIFIED LEARNING OBJECTIVES</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Recognize land as a historical record</li> <li>2. Understand demographic and ecological change</li> <li>3. Shift from everyday pace to attentive presence</li> </ol> </div>	<i>INDIGENOUS</i>	<i>SETTLER</i>	• Living with the Land	Changing the Land	• Movement and Belonging	Arrival and Claim	• Who Lives Here?	Who Is Arriving?	• Promises	Betrayals	• Seeing Change	Feeling Change
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**Area** **Area Plan and Sketches**

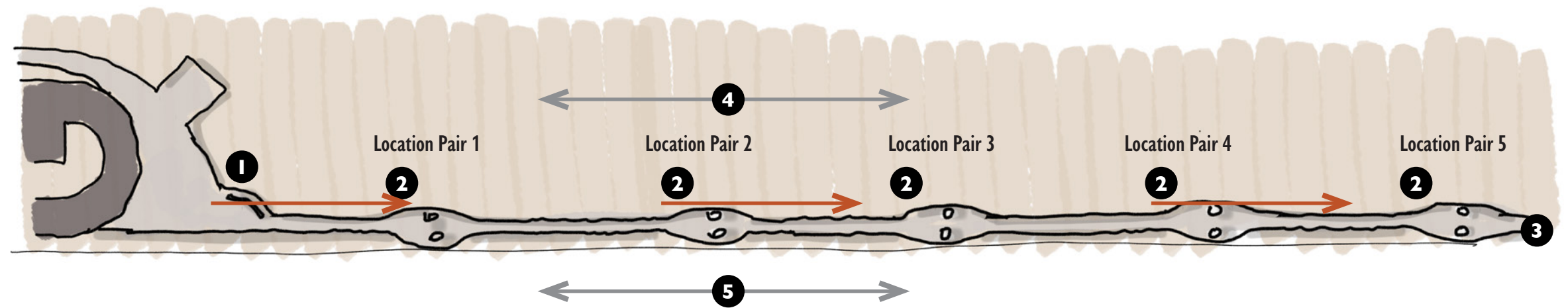


**Area Interpretive Experience**

Along the linear pathway, visitors encounter a sequence of five stops that unfold two parallel historical experiences—settler and Indigenous—presented side by side. Moving through these thresholds reveals the attitudes and assumptions of the time, shaped by fear, uncertainty, and differing relationships to land, community, and power.

Rather than offering a conventional history lesson, this section uses first-person voices to build a sense of growing tension in the years leading up to the summer of 1864. It asks visitors not for judgment, but for perspective—an opportunity to understand how events were perceived as they were unfolding.

The paired elements are intentionally subtle in their relationship. A rapidly constructed sod wall suggests the urgency of settler earthworks, while the equally swift disappearance of Native structures speaks to forced removal from homelands. As shared by Native partners today, Indigenous people were no longer present in this landscape by the time Fort Chambers was hastily built, and those stationed there were themselves quickly trained and mobilized to suppress what was framed as an “Indian uprising.”

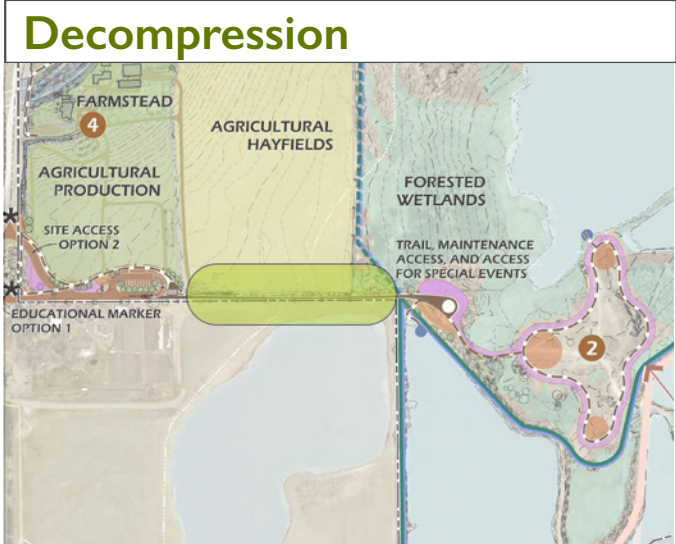


- 1** Arrival Area Transition
- 2** Interpretive Locations (1 through 5)
- 3** Discovery Area Transition
- 4** Adjacent OSMP-controlled farm
- 5** Neighbor (beyond vegetated screening and fence)

**References, Visuals, Resources**

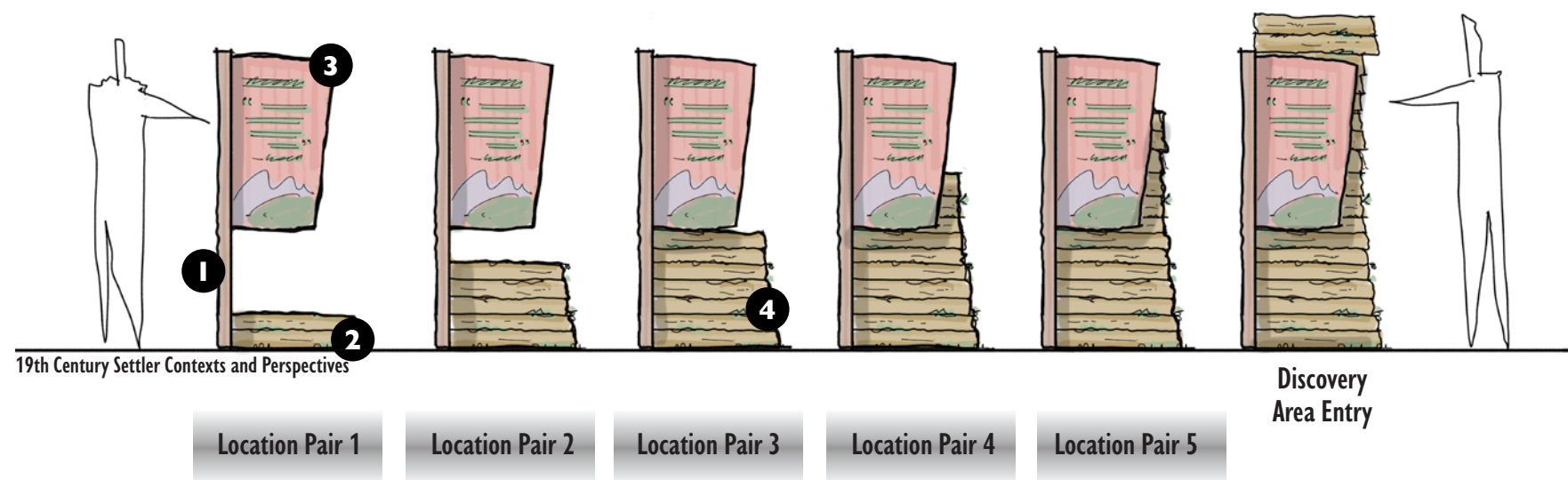
Area Plan and Sketches

Area



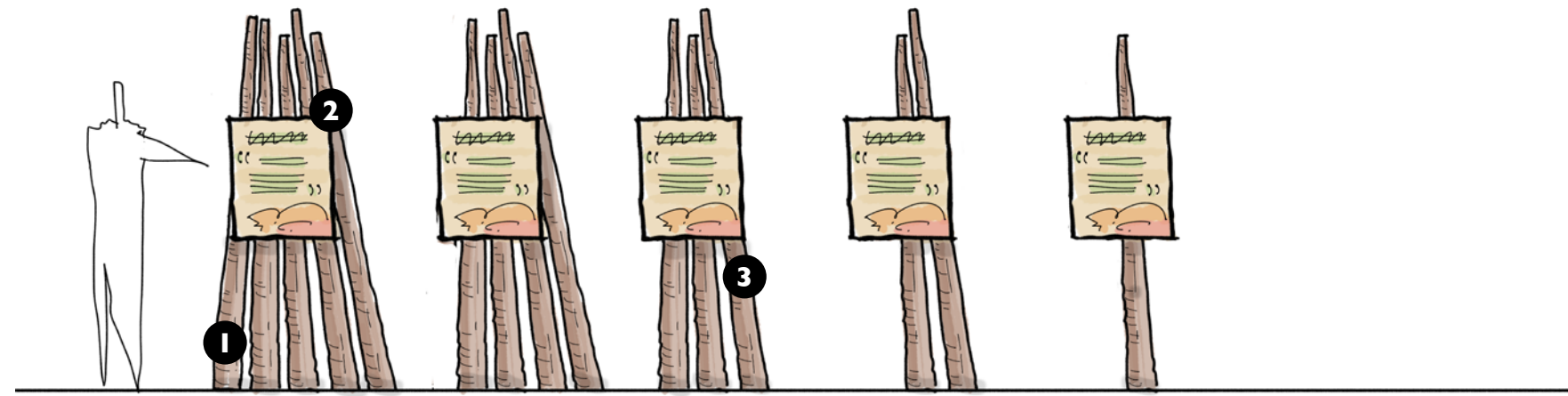
Area Interpretive Experience

19th Century Settler Contexts and Perspectives



- 1 'Door frame' post
- 2 Representative 'sod' layering goes from low to high, symbolically showing Settler increased factors leading to Fort Chambers (sod is possibly fashioned from rammed earth or cast concrete, inspired closely by sod wall construction)
- 3 Interpretive sign with quotes/supporting history and visual if appropriate
- 4 Growing layers of sod layers (re-creation)

19th Century Native American Contexts and Perspectives



- 1 Poles, refer to Native American structures and ingenuity
- 2 Interpretive sign with quotes/supporting history and visual if appropriate
- 3 Reducing quantity of poles, suggestive of reduced presence

Please note : These conceptual structures share a potential design that supports the experience and messaging. Design refinement, partner input, and practical/budgetary considerations will enable design system refinements.

References, Visuals, Resources



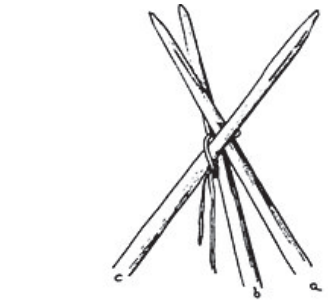
Rammed earth, referencing sod-like structures and earthen building



Cast concrete



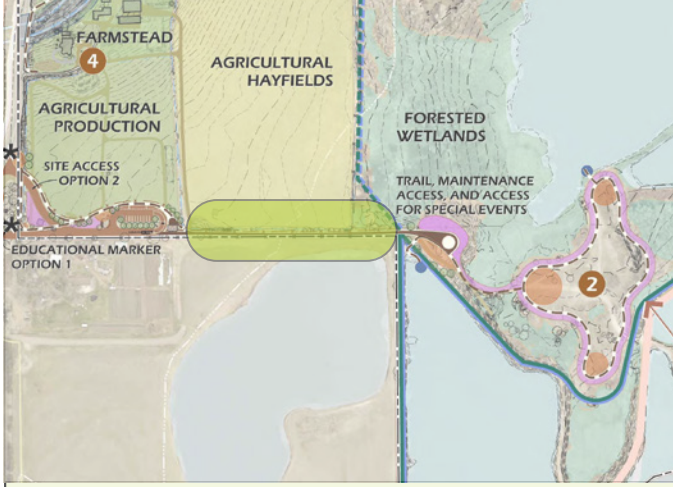
Sod wall fort construction

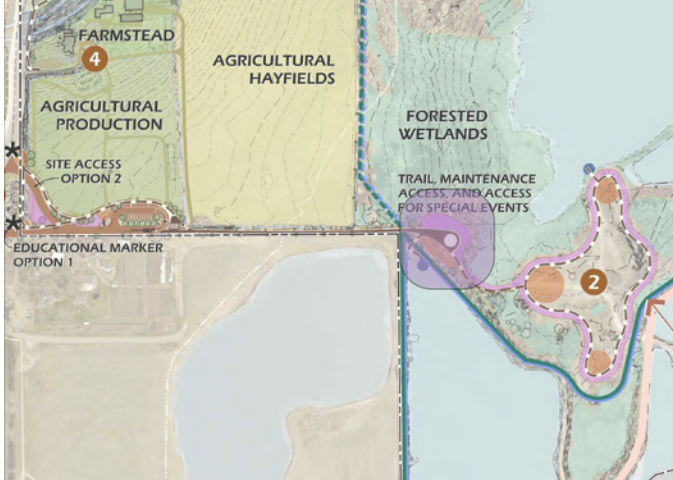



Possible pole elements

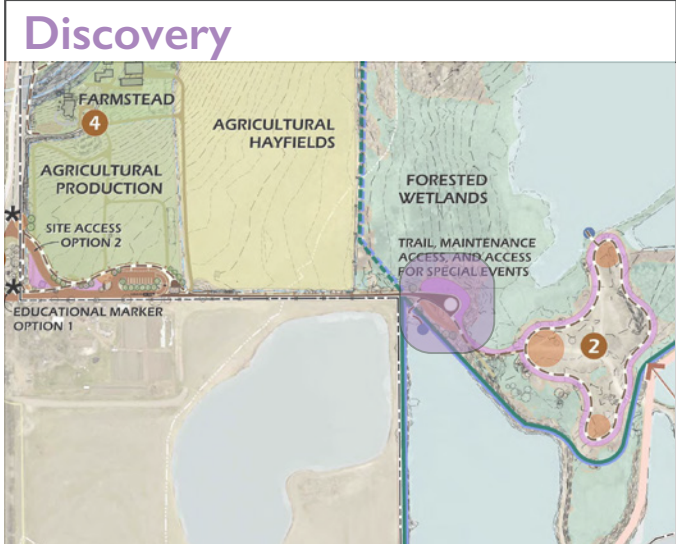


Connecting Indigenous structures and messaging

Area	Potential Content Approach	
<p><b>Decompression</b></p> 	<p><b>Interpretive Stop 1 — Living With the Land / Changing the Land</b></p> <p><i>Indigenous Perspective</i> For generations, Indigenous nations lived within Boulder Valley through reciprocal knowledge systems—seasonal movement, ecological fluency, and responsibilities to land and water. The valley was not owned; it was sustained through relationship.</p>	<p><i>Settler Perspective</i> Migrants arrived with ambitions shaped by expansion—economic opportunity, agricultural productivity, mineral extraction, reinvention. Land was valued for its potential to be claimed, improved, and made profitable.</p> <p><b>Example: “Go west, young man, and grow up with the country.” – John B. L. Soule, <i>Terre Haute Express</i> editorial, 1851</b></p>
<p><b>Notes</b></p> <p>Interpretation should rely on brief quotations or reflections where appropriate. Quotes may be historical or contemporary. Signage should remain concise, prompting momentary exploration along the walking path rather than extended reading. Visual elements may support the narrative but should not over-direct interpretation. Content unfolds in a linear progression as visitors approach the Discovery Area.</p>	<p><b>Interpretive Stop 2 — Movement and Belonging / Arrival and Claim</b></p> <p><i>Indigenous Perspective</i> Belonging was embedded in kinship, trade networks, and deep knowledge of terrain and seasons—connections that long predated American settlement.</p>	<p><i>Settler Perspective</i> Arrival carried assumptions of entitlement. Boulder Valley was framed as opportunity—open, available, underutilized. Settlement redefined belonging as legal claim and physical possession.</p> <p><b>Example: “No other land offers such opportunities for the vast accumulation of wealth.” – Territorial Governor John Evans</b></p>
<p><b>Interpretive Stop 3 — Who Lives Here? / Who Is Arriving?</b></p> <p><i>Indigenous Perspective</i> The influx of settlers was visible and overwhelming. Migration altered balance and scale in ways difficult to ignore.</p> <p><b>Example: “Whites as numerous as the stars that fell in the great meteor shower of 1830 came to Arapaho lands.” – Arapaho belief</b></p>	<p><i>Settler Perspective</i> Indigenous nations were increasingly described not as neighbors, but as obstacles—unpredictable, incompatible with progress. Fear began to take shape in rhetoric before it took shape in action.</p> <p><b>Example: “A few months of active extermination against the red devils will bring quiet, and nothing else will.” –William N. Byers, <i>Rocky Mountain News</i>, 1864</b></p>	
<p><b>Interpretive Stop 4 — Promises / Betrayals</b></p> <p><i>Indigenous Perspective</i> Treaties promised protection, food, land security. Violations followed swiftly. Agreements dissolved as pressure for land intensified.</p> <p><b>Example: “We want peace.” – Little Raven</b></p>	<p><i>Settler Perspective</i> Federal protections were perceived as limitations. Dissatisfaction grew among settlers whose expectations for access and control were unmet. The language of grievance began to replace the language of coexistence.</p> <p><b>Example: “The United States hereby binds itself to protect the aforesaid Indian nations...” – 1851 Treaty of Fort Laramie</b></p>	
<p><b>Interpretive Stop 5 — Seeing Change / Feeling Change</b></p> <p><i>Indigenous Perspective</i> After the 1858 gold discoveries and Pike’s Peak Gold Rush, displacement accelerated. Relocation to marginal lands followed.</p> <p><b>Example: “They expected us to live on the no-water land.” – Gus Yellowhair, Arapaho elder, 1976</b></p>	<p><i>Settler Perspective</i> Permanent settlement expanded rapidly. Agricultural growth, town formation, and political rhetoric hardened. Indigenous presence was increasingly framed as threat.</p>	

Area	Area Interpretive Statement and Purpose	Themes, Storylines, Take-Aways, Messages (preliminary)																												
<p><b>Discovery</b></p>  <p><b>Area Topic Weightings/Priorities (from EW3 Direction)</b></p> <table border="1"> <tr><td>Stone marker historical bias</td><td><div style="width: 100%;"></div></td></tr> <tr><td>Company D commemoration</td><td><div style="width: 20%;"></div></td></tr> <tr><td>Settler demographics</td><td><div style="width: 30%;"></div></td></tr> <tr><td>Massacre aftermath to Tribes</td><td><div style="width: 15%;"></div></td></tr> <tr><td>Settler/Tribes perspective/relations</td><td><div style="width: 25%;"></div></td></tr> <tr><td>Settler prosperity ag/mining</td><td><div style="width: 15%;"></div></td></tr> <tr><td>Company D local authority figures</td><td><div style="width: 20%;"></div></td></tr> <tr><td>Gov Evans Massacre aftermath</td><td><div style="width: 15%;"></div></td></tr> <tr><td>Sand Creek Massacre accounts</td><td><div style="width: 15%;"></div></td></tr> <tr><td>Company D members</td><td><div style="width: 20%;"></div></td></tr> <tr><td>Massacre victims stories</td><td><div style="width: 15%;"></div></td></tr> <tr><td>History-West Expansion/Man. Dest.</td><td><div style="width: 15%;"></div></td></tr> <tr><td>Water rights history</td><td><div style="width: 10%;"></div></td></tr> <tr><td>Chief Niwot's alleged "curse"</td><td><div style="width: 10%;"></div></td></tr> </table>	Stone marker historical bias	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>	Company D commemoration	<div style="width: 20%;"></div>	Settler demographics	<div style="width: 30%;"></div>	Massacre aftermath to Tribes	<div style="width: 15%;"></div>	Settler/Tribes perspective/relations	<div style="width: 25%;"></div>	Settler prosperity ag/mining	<div style="width: 15%;"></div>	Company D local authority figures	<div style="width: 20%;"></div>	Gov Evans Massacre aftermath	<div style="width: 15%;"></div>	Sand Creek Massacre accounts	<div style="width: 15%;"></div>	Company D members	<div style="width: 20%;"></div>	Massacre victims stories	<div style="width: 15%;"></div>	History-West Expansion/Man. Dest.	<div style="width: 15%;"></div>	Water rights history	<div style="width: 10%;"></div>	Chief Niwot's alleged "curse"	<div style="width: 10%;"></div>	<p>By the early 1860s, the Boulder Valley was undergoing rapid settler expansion and economic growth. Mining speculation and agriculture drew people from across the United States and Europe, transforming Indigenous homelands into claimed property. As prosperity increased, anxieties about control and belonging grew. In June 1864, the murders of the Hungate family intensified these tensions, fueling rumors of a coordinated tribal threat that Governor John Evans amplified through proclamations framing Indigenous presence as an existential danger.</p> <p>Fear was not the only force shaping events in 1864. Economic ambition, racialized assumptions, political competition, and unstable territorial governance converged in a volatile wartime environment. Public rhetoric elevated fear within a broader climate of expansion and contested authority. While settler rhetoric centered on perceived threat, Indigenous communities faced immediate danger of military action and displacement.</p> <p>In this charged moment, local civilians, militia members, and soldiers from Company D constructed Fort Chambers—an earthen enclosure built in less than two months near the Valmont community. The fort served as refuge and training ground. Though never attacked and untended shortly after its construction, it reveals how rhetoric and perception mobilized settlers towards violence.</p> <p>Men associated with Fort Chambers, including members of Company D, participated in the territorial campaign that began with the Buffalo Springs Massacre on October 10, 1864, and led to the Sand Creek Massacre of Cheyenne and Arapaho people promised safety. The massacre devastated tribal communities and permanently altered Indigenous life across the region.</p> <p>This place is central not because the fort endured, but because the ideas that built it did. Here, visitors examine how Fort Chambers has been remembered and defended—through claims of uprising, selective storytelling, and the 1959 marker, now reinterpreted. This zone invites reflection on how expansion, fear, and power shaped violence—and how history is constructed through what communities choose to honor or omit.</p> <p><b>References, Visuals, Resources</b></p> 	<p><b>Themes, Storylines, Take-Aways, Messages (preliminary)</b></p> <p><b>Preliminary Message</b> Settler hardships in Boulder were accompanied by anxiety, rumors, and call for removal of tribes, leading to the hasty construction of Fort Chambers. The history of the fort is shaped not only by how it was used, but how it has been remembered and defended.</p> <p><b>Historical Inquiry</b> Original documents, maps, images, quotations, and reconstructions invite visitors to evaluate how narratives were and are formed.</p> <p><b>Memory, Myth, and the 1959 Marker</b> The fort's afterlife through the marker and local storytelling reveals how Boulder's community has constructed meaning and obscured responsibility. By reinterpreting the stone marker, we may tell a truer story about Fort Chambers as well as the stories told and retold about this site and the Sand Creek Massacre.</p> <p><b>Building Fort Chambers</b> Constructed rapidly by civilians and militia, the fort functioned as refuge, supply depot, and training ground, despite never being attacked. A portion of replica 'sod,' suggestive of the fort walls, might give visitors a sense of scale and rudimentary design.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p><b>SIMPLIFIED LEARNING OBJECTIVES</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Examine how fear became mobilization</li> <li>2. Understand Boulder's direct role in Company D and Sand Creek</li> <li>3. Question how history is remembered and misremembered (Marker)</li> </ol> </div>
Stone marker historical bias	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>																													
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Area	Area Plan and Sketches
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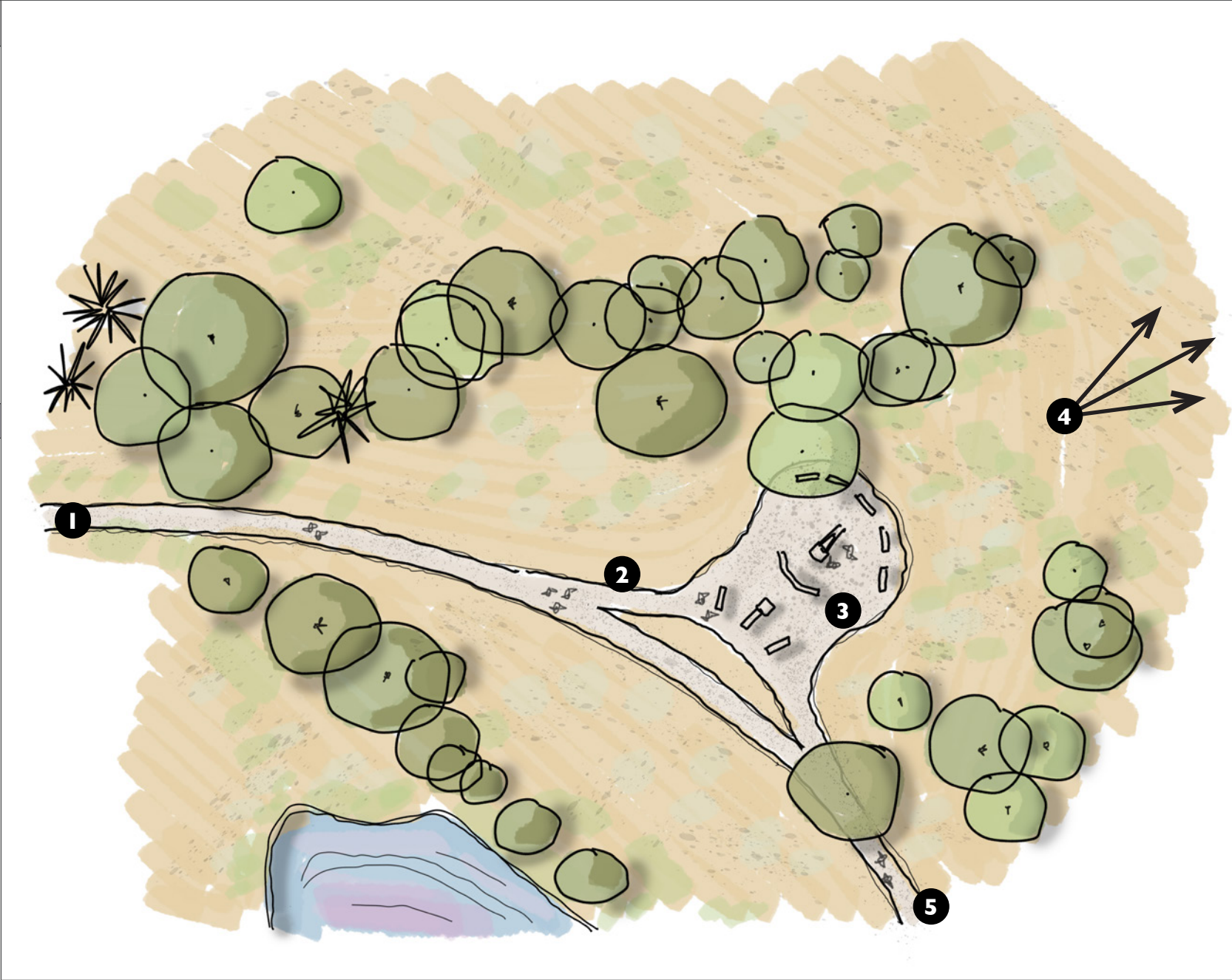
**Area Interpretive Experience**

As visitors enter the central portion of the site, they pass the final Decompression structure of the sod wall, now standing alone and intentionally without a Native voice. This moment marks arrival into the core of the Fort Chambers story—one shaped largely by records and perspectives that excluded Indigenous voices.

A series of double-sided interpretive panels guides visitors from life before the fort, to the fort itself, and into its aftermath. At the center of this location, a tactile site plan provides an accessible representation of Fort Chambers, grounded in the historical record. Together, these elements reveal both the fort’s function and the consequences it made possible for Cheyenne and Arapaho communities, including the violence at Sand Creek.

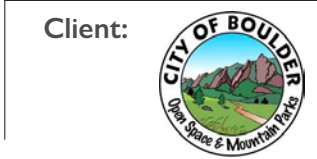
A three-panel divider partially conceals the site’s central artifact, representing the cultural beliefs of the time: the 1959 marker. Period quotes on the divider present perspectives of the time, slowing the encounter and inviting reflection on how this history was once framed.

Beyond it, the marker appears not upright, but lying in repose—an intentional shift in meaning. Whether realized through artistic collaboration or purposeful design, this presentation signals a more reflective, compassionate understanding. A community and Native-led time capsule supports this space, openly recording present-day voices and values and asking future generations to consider how this history continues to unfold.

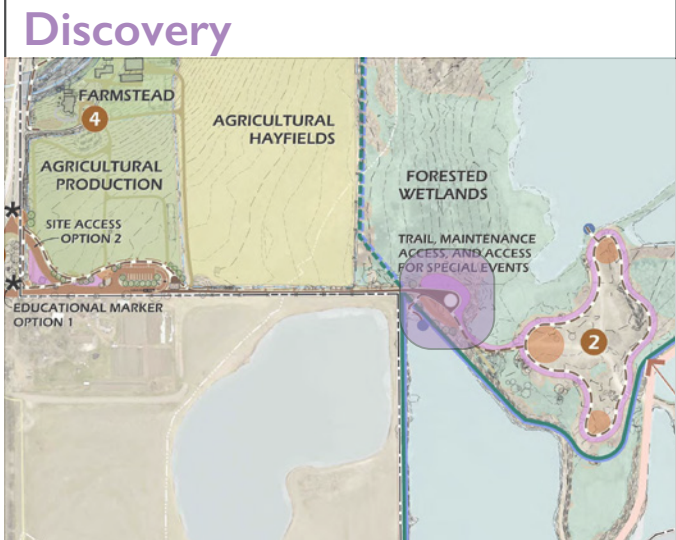


- 1** Trail from entrance
- 2** Discovery Area turnoff
- 3** Interpretive area
- 4** Views from Discovery Area over water towards Contemplation Area overlook
- 5** Trail to Contemplation Area

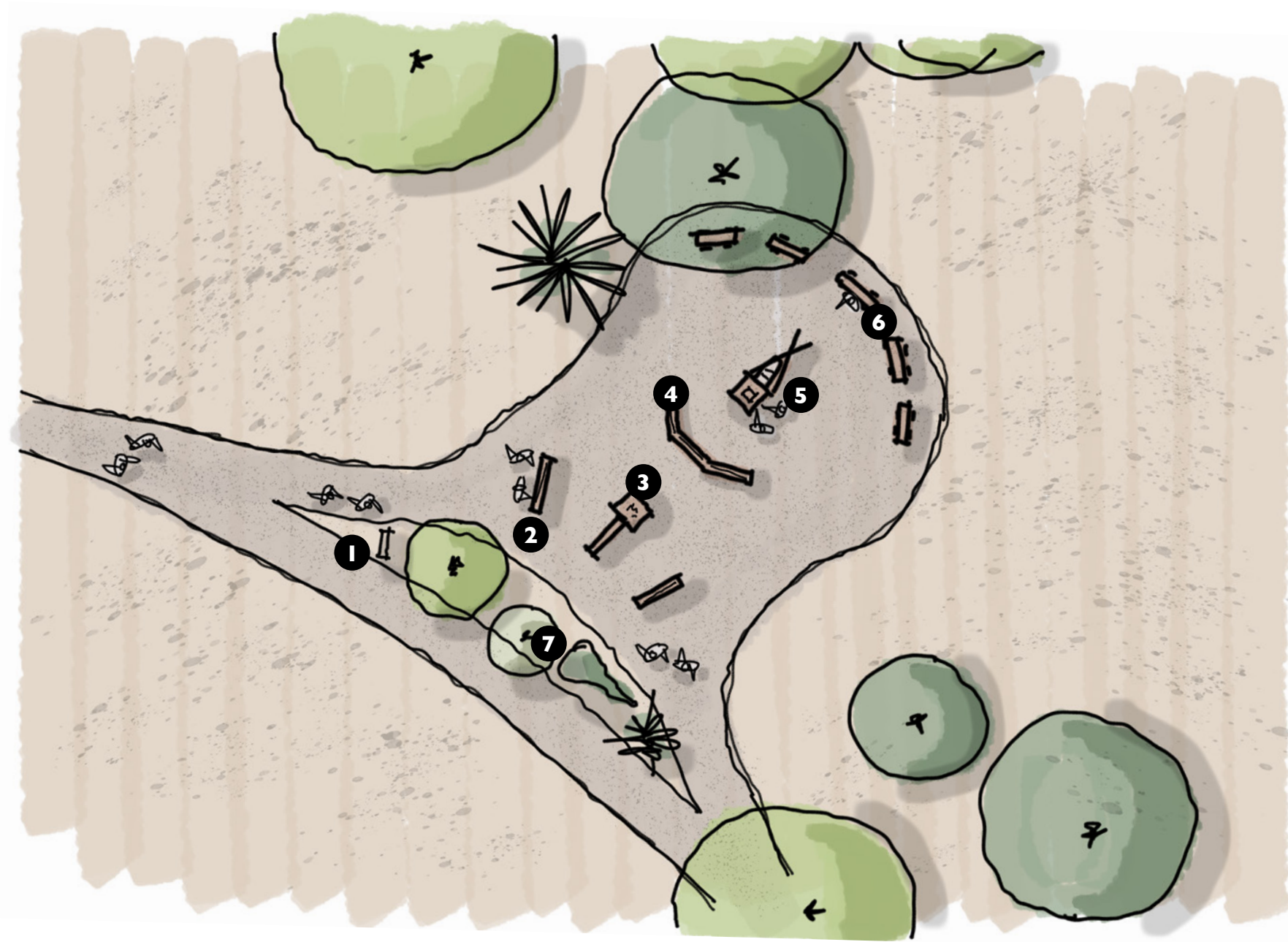
**References, Visuals, Resources**



**Area** | **Area Plan and Sketches**

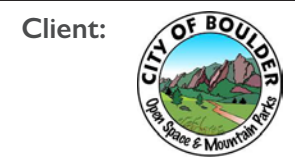


**Area Interpretive Experience**



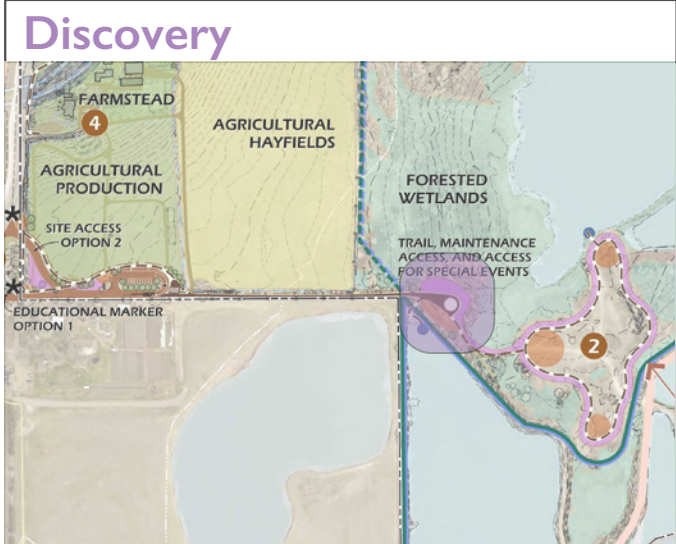
- 1** Arrival/directional signage at Discovery Area turnoff
- 2** Introductory and deep story two-sided interpretive kiosks (vertical)
- 3** Tactile Fort map/plan
- 4** Monument divider wall with interpretive quotes
- 5** Monument re-installation with “inside out time capsule and interpretive prompts
- 6** Area seating
- 7** Planted area (non-identified species as directed to Tribal partners for symbolic meaning related to healing, longevity, or other embedded importance to this site of awakening and understanding)

**References, Visuals, Resources**



City of Boulder, OSMP  
Fort Chambers/Poor Farm EW4  
Interpretive Framework/Concept  
April 2026

**Area** **Material Studies and Approaches for Discovery Area**



**Area Interpretive Experience**

The following material concepts are presented as a cohesive suite rather than competing alternatives. Each explores a different way the re-installation can frame the Fort and the 1959 marker—preserving it while shifting its authority and expanding its historical context. Together, they demonstrate how material choice can define the space, shape visitor experience, and communicate interpretive intent. Whether expressed through layered earth tones, refined civic concrete, weathered steel seams, timber references, or stone and bronze inserts, each language carries a distinct tone—grounded, reflective, experiential, or formally re-framing—while supporting the same core goal: contextualization without erasure.

Viewed side by side, these options illustrate how the history can be expressed within a contemporary interpretive structure that is stable yet dynamic. Heavier materials establish grounding and permanence; contrasting metals and reveals signal intervention and evolving understanding; textured surfaces and shifting light create depth and movement across the site. The result is not simply a telling of history and reinstalled marker, but a redefined civic landscape—one that acknowledges layered histories, invites reflection, and allows the space itself to embody the complexity of the story it tells.

Material choice considerations include safety, durability, maintenance, and compatibility with other OSMP material choices.

**1. Layered Earth / Stratified Memory**



**Concept:** Vertical elements read as abstracted sod or rammed-earth fort walls. Horizontal seams echo stacked turf blocks.

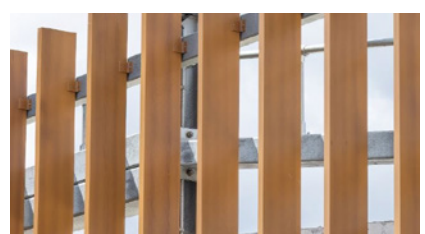
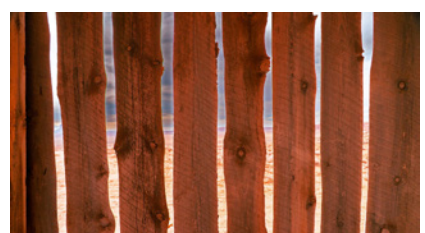
- Direct material reference to the sod fort.
- Feels grounded, literal, and historically anchored.
- Horizontal layering subtly suggests time, memory, sediment.

**Interpretive opportunity:**

- Text bands integrated into “layers.”
- Indigenous presence embedded low in the “soil line.”
- Settler narratives higher—visually showing imposed layering.

**Tone:** Material, restrained, historically rooted.

**2. Fragmented Palisade / Interrupted Defense**



**Concept:** Vertical slats referencing a fort wall—but broken, staggered, uneven. Not a solid defensive wall, but a fragmented one.

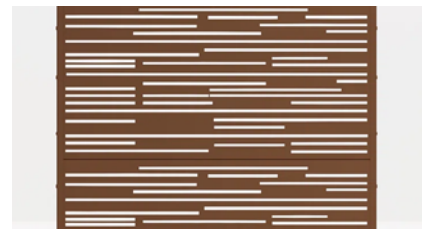
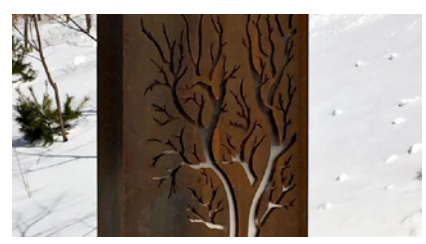
- Suggests defense without recreating it literally.
- Wind passes through—symbolically undermining the idea of total protection.
- Shadows create movement and unease.

**Interpretive opportunity:**

- Gaps become moments of cross-visibility.
- Paired Indigenous/settler voices placed on opposing slats.
- Visitors physically see “through” constructed fear.

**Tone:** Conceptual, spatially dynamic, less literal.

**3. Corten Steel Sentinels / Weathering Authority**



**Concept:** Tall weathering steel monoliths—solid, upright, slightly austere.

- Rusted surface references time and exposure.
- Feels institutional—law, authority, militarization.
- Steel contrasts with the original earthen impermanence.

**Interpretive opportunity:**

- Laser-cut language (fear-based rhetoric) literally cut into steel.
- Text shadows project onto the ground—ideas casting shadow.
- Could subtly lean or stagger to destabilize the “certainty” of defense.

**Tone:** Strong, confrontational, durable.

**4. Dual-Faced Planes / Two Histories**



**Concept:** Each vertical element has two faces—one facing inward, one outward—slightly offset or layered. Possible stone walls or fabricated metal.

- Perfect for parallel narratives.
- Windbreak form reinforces separation.
- Visitors must move around to understand perspectives.

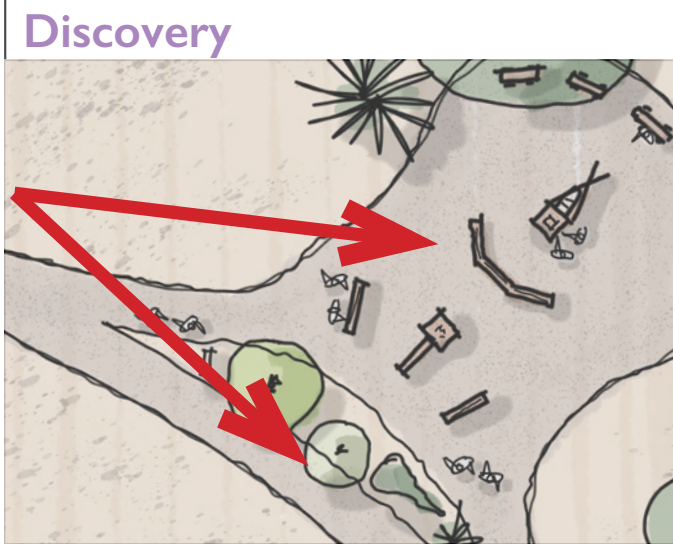
**Interpretive opportunity:**

- Settler voice on one side.
- Indigenous voice on the other.
- Transitional text at the edge seam where they meet.

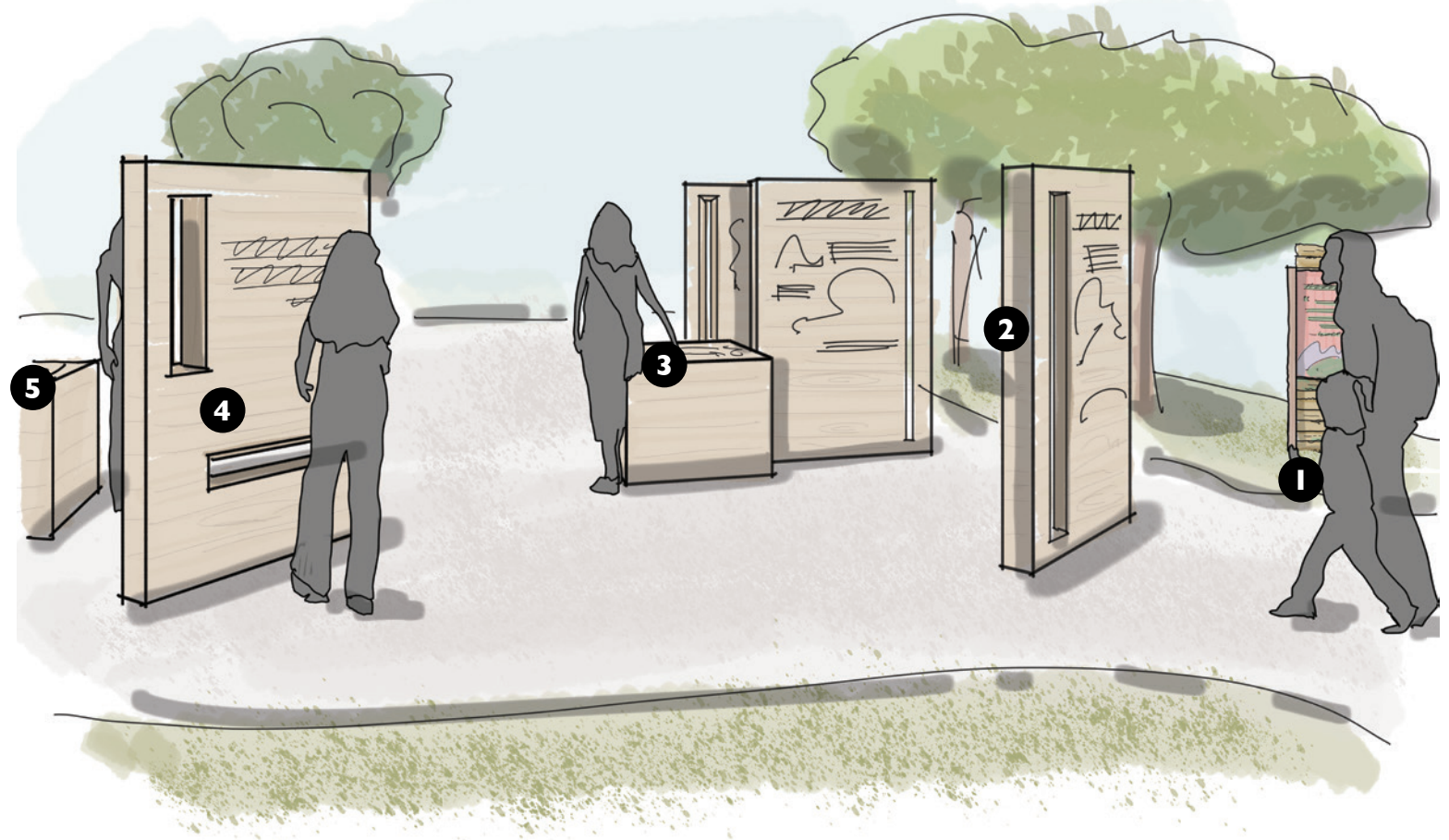
**Tone:** Reflective, dialogic, spatially intentional.

Area Plan and Sketches

Area



Area Interpretive Experience



- 1 Arrival/directional signage at Discovery Area turnoff
- 2 Introductory and deep story two-sided interpretive kiosks (vertical), shown here in rammed earth with “loop holes” suggestive of fort design and allowing visibility through structures
- 3 Tactile Fort map/plan
- 4 Monument divider wall with interpretive quotes
- 5 Marker re-installation area

Please note : These conceptual structures share a potential design that supports the experience and messaging. Design refinement, partner input, and practical/budgetary considerations will enable design system refinements.

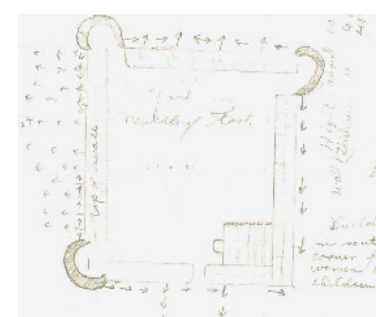
References, Visuals, Resources



Location, today

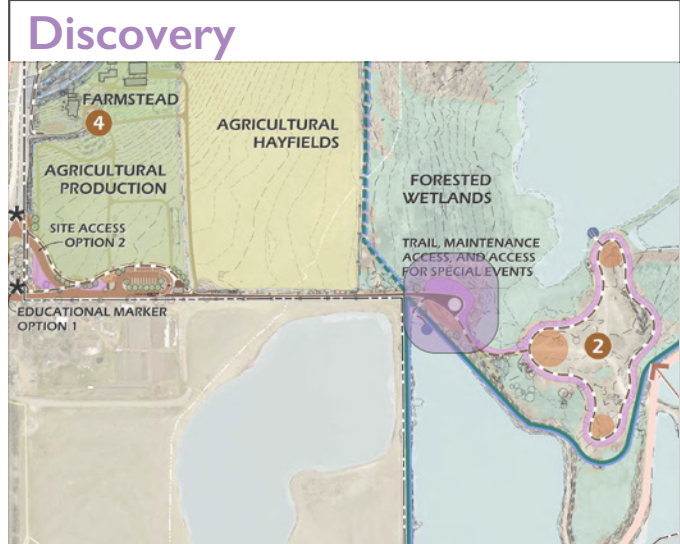


Rammed earth walls



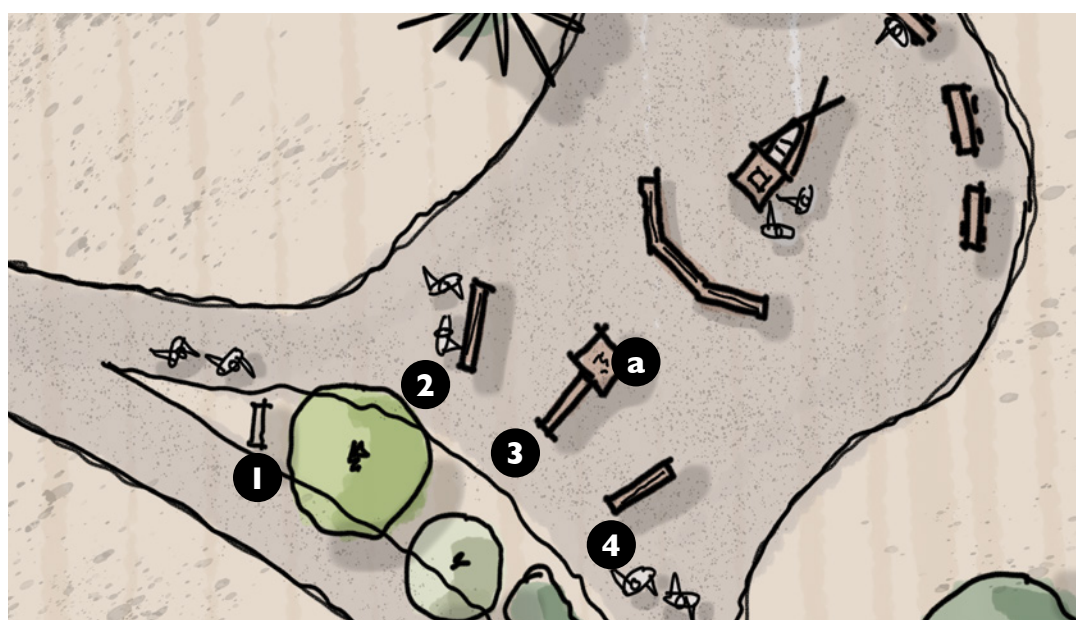
Tactile fort plan

**Area** | **Potential Content Approach**



**Notes**

The Discovery Area is the evidentiary core of the site. Through primary sources, spatial reconstruction, and reinterpretation of the 1959 marker, it presents the historical record of Fort Chambers and its consequences. The sequence moves from expansion and rhetoric to mobilization and violence, grounding interpretation in documentation rather than abstraction. The intent is clarity: to show how belief became action in 1864 and how memory later reshaped that history.



**1 Arrival/directional sign at Discovery Area turnoff**

This sign marks entry into the Discovery Area and signals a shift in tone. It may include brief quotations or newspaper clippings introduced along the Decompression path, reinforcing the building climate of fear. The sign should clearly indicate that visitors are entering a space where violence and contested memory are addressed. A brief content advisory may be appropriate.

Example (if not used elsewhere): “A few months of active extermination against the red devils will bring quiet, and nothing else will.” – William N. Byers, Rocky Mountain News, Aug. 10, 1864

The purpose of this element is not to shock, but to demonstrate how language normalized violence and prepared communities for action.

**2 First Kiosk – Context: Settlement and Escalation (1840s–1864)**

- This kiosk establishes the political, economic, and social conditions that reshaped Boulder Valley prior to the construction of Fort Chambers. It orients visitors to the forces that made mobilization possible.
- Content may address:
- Migrant motivations for westward movement and the transition from migration to permanent settlement
  - Expansion of agriculture and mineral extraction in Boulder Valley
  - Tribal–settler relationships in the 1840s and 1850s
  - The 1851 Treaty of Fort Laramie and the federal government’s failure to uphold its terms
  - The 1861 Treaty of Fort Wise and the contested cession of Cheyenne and Arapaho lands
  - The 1862 Homestead Act and its role in accelerating land transfer
  - The outbreak of the Civil War and the organization of territorial forces
  - Escalating political rhetoric that framed Indigenous presence as threat
  - The forced removal of Indigenous people from Boulder Valley and surrounding areas

This kiosk centers two guiding questions:

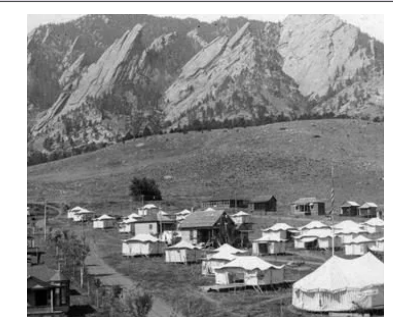
*Who were the settlers, and why were they here?*

*What forces reshaped Boulder Valley between the 1840s and 1864?*

Content should remain focused and evidence-based. Primary sources—newspaper excerpts, treaty language, government proclamations, and firsthand accounts—should anchor interpretation.

The goal is orientation, not conclusion. This panel prepares visitors to understand why Fort Chambers was built.

**References, Visuals, Resources**



Early Boulder settlements

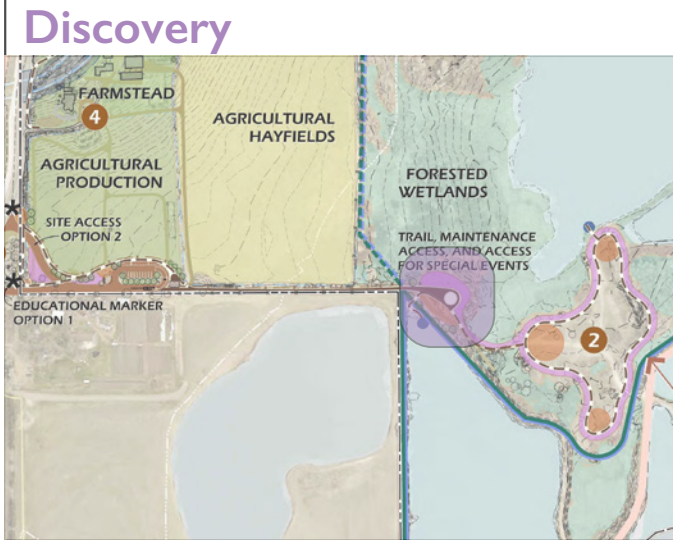


Mining town during Gold Rush



Propaganda art portraying Natives along the Colorado River, 1859

**Area** Potential Content Approach



**Notes**

**Potential Content Approach**



**3 Center Kiosk – Crisis: Fear and Fort Construction (1864)**

Paired with a tactile fort map, this kiosk interprets the immediate events and rhetoric that led to the construction of Fort Chambers in the summer of 1864.

Content should focus on how fear intensified, how it was amplified, and how it translated into mobilization.

Content may address:

- The June 1864 Hungate murders and their impact on public sentiment
- Proclamations issued by Territorial Governor John Evans
- Escalating newspaper rhetoric and local leadership responses
- The organization of local militia and Company D, including the blurred line between settler and soldier in Colorado Territory, where civilians joined volunteer companies with limited training amid unstable and contested territorial authority
- The rapid planning and construction of Fort Chambers
- The fort’s function as refuge, supply site, and training ground
- The absence of any direct attack on the fort

**a Tactile Fort Map / Plan**

A table-height tactile map accompanies the kiosk and provides an accessible representation of Fort Chambers based on available historical documentation.

The tactile element should:

- Show approximate dimensions and layout
- Indicate defensive features
- Provide a sense of scale relative to surrounding terrain
- Communicate the fort’s rapid construction and temporary nature

The purpose of the tactile element is not to dramatize the structure, but to make visible what no longer exists—and to reinforce how quickly it was built and how briefly it stood.

Interpretation should examine how language framed Indigenous presence as threat and how that framing justified military preparation.

The kiosk may contrast alarmist rhetoric with evidence of continued civic activity—such as public celebrations and commercial life—to complicate claims of imminent attack. This tension invites visitors to consider how communities interpret risk and how fear can become a unifying force.

This panel positions Fort Chambers not only as a physical structure, but as a material expression of belief.

**References, Visuals, Resources**



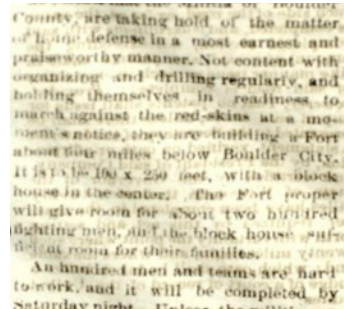
Arapaho and Cheyenne leaders at 1864 Camp Weld Peace Conference



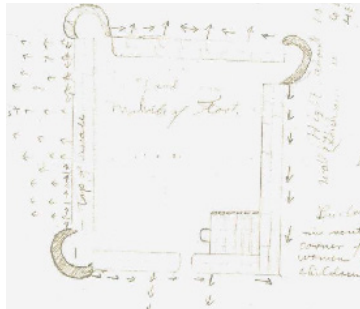
US Governmental leaders and Tribal Leaders at 1868 Fort Laramie



Recruiting poster for Chivington's 100-day men



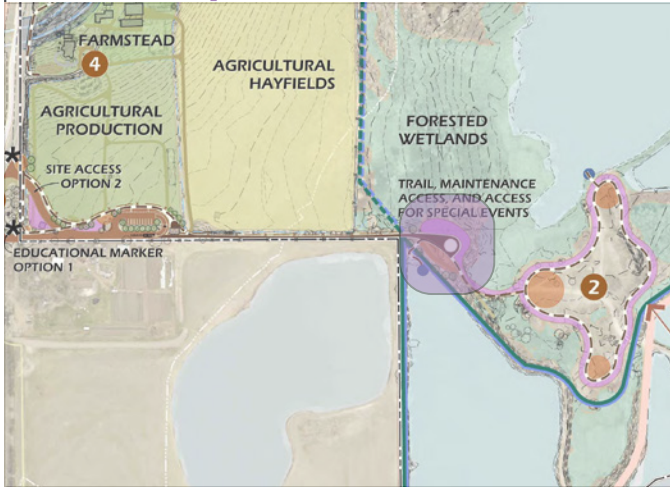
Newspaper clipping describing the construction of Fort Chambers, 1864



Tactile fort plan

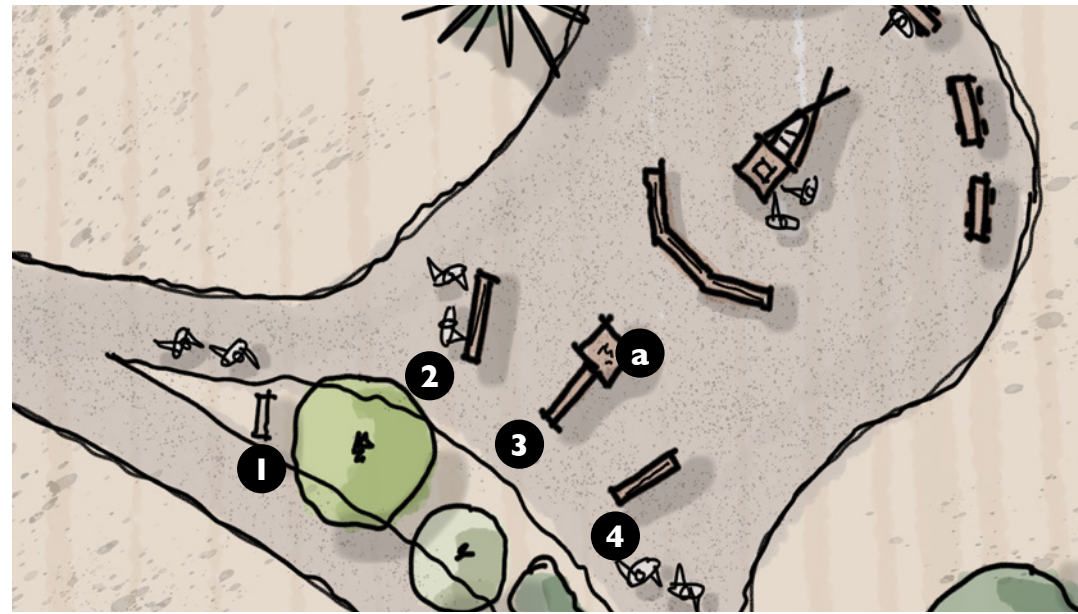
**Area** Potential Content Approach

**Discovery**



**Notes**

Potential Content Approach



**4 Final Kiosk – Consequence: Violence and Memory**

This kiosk addresses the regional military campaign that followed the mobilization of 1864 and Boulder’s connection to it.

Content should clearly establish that men associated with Fort Chambers and Company D participated in actions that extended beyond Boulder Valley, including the attack at Buffalo Springs and Big Sandy Creek (known as the Sand Creek Massacre).

Topics may include:

- The massacre of Cheyenne and Arapaho people who had been promised protection
- The involvement of Company D and local Boulder men
- Initial public celebration of the attack as military victory
- Subsequent federal investigations and testimony
- The broader 1865–1866 Colorado War
- The instability and contested authority of territorial governance, including limited accountability among political and military leaders
- Continued displacement of Indigenous nations

Interpretation must remain direct and evidence-based. It should neither soften the violence nor sensationalize it. The emphasis is on connection: how Boulder residents participated in, supported, or benefited from events that devastated Indigenous communities.

Primary sources—letters, testimony, military records, maps, and newspaper accounts—should anchor the narrative.

**References, Visuals, Resources**



Silas Soule



Oglala Lakota ghost dance, 1894



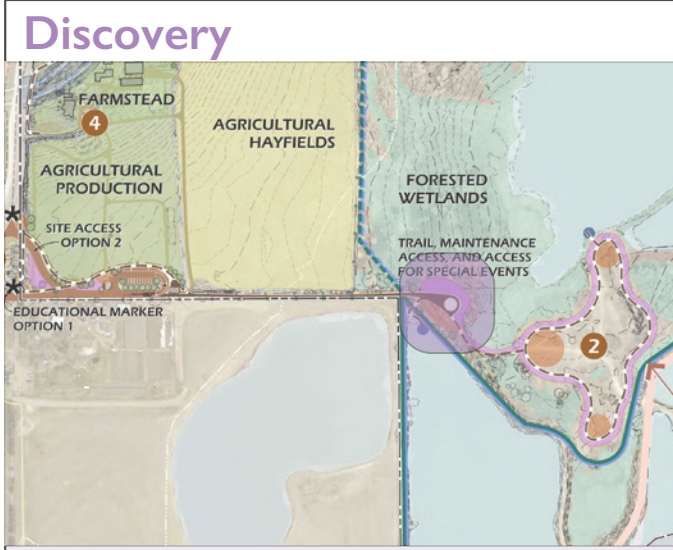
George Bent’s hand-drawn map of the Sand Creek Massacre



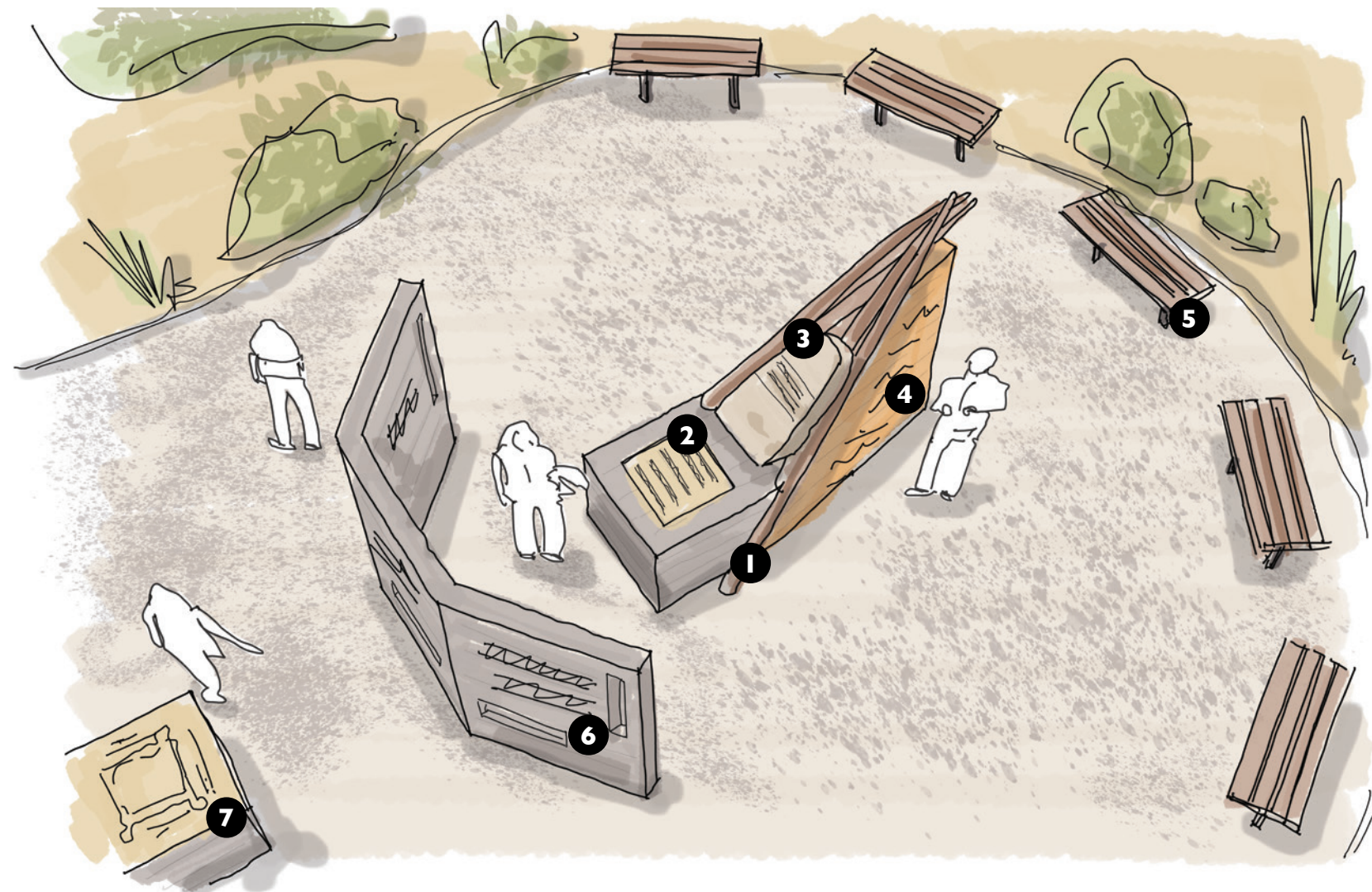
“American Progress” painting by John Gast, 1872

**Area**

**Area Plan and Sketches**



**Area Interpretive Experience**



- 1 Referencing the sod foundations and pole elements introduced in the Decompression area, this design brings those forms together through an artistic expression—potentially realized as a collaborative sculptural work developed with Indigenous and settler-descendant partners.
- 2 Reflection plaque sharing contemporary perspectives on this complex history from 1959 to today.
- 3 1959 marker, positioned at angle resting on structure, suggesting a change in perspective while holding history in memory.
- 4 Reflection walls incorporate quotations, drawings, and embedded objects to surface diverse perspectives on the legacy of Fort Chambers.
- 5 Seating
- 6 The “Fort” wall acts as a partition, partially concealing the marker and reflection elements. Narrow slits offer glimpses beyond, adding depth and echoing the loopholes found in historic fortifications.
- 7 Tactile plan of Fort Chamber.

**Aerial view of Marker reinstatement, contemporary reflection and reflections wall**

*Please note : These conceptual structures share a potential design that supports the experience and messaging. Design refinement, partner input, and practical/budgetary considerations will enable design system refinements.*

**References, Visuals, Resources**



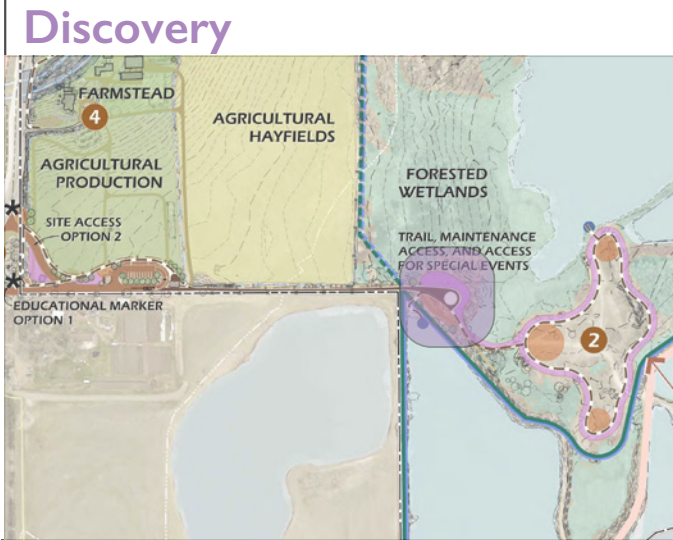
Marker for installation



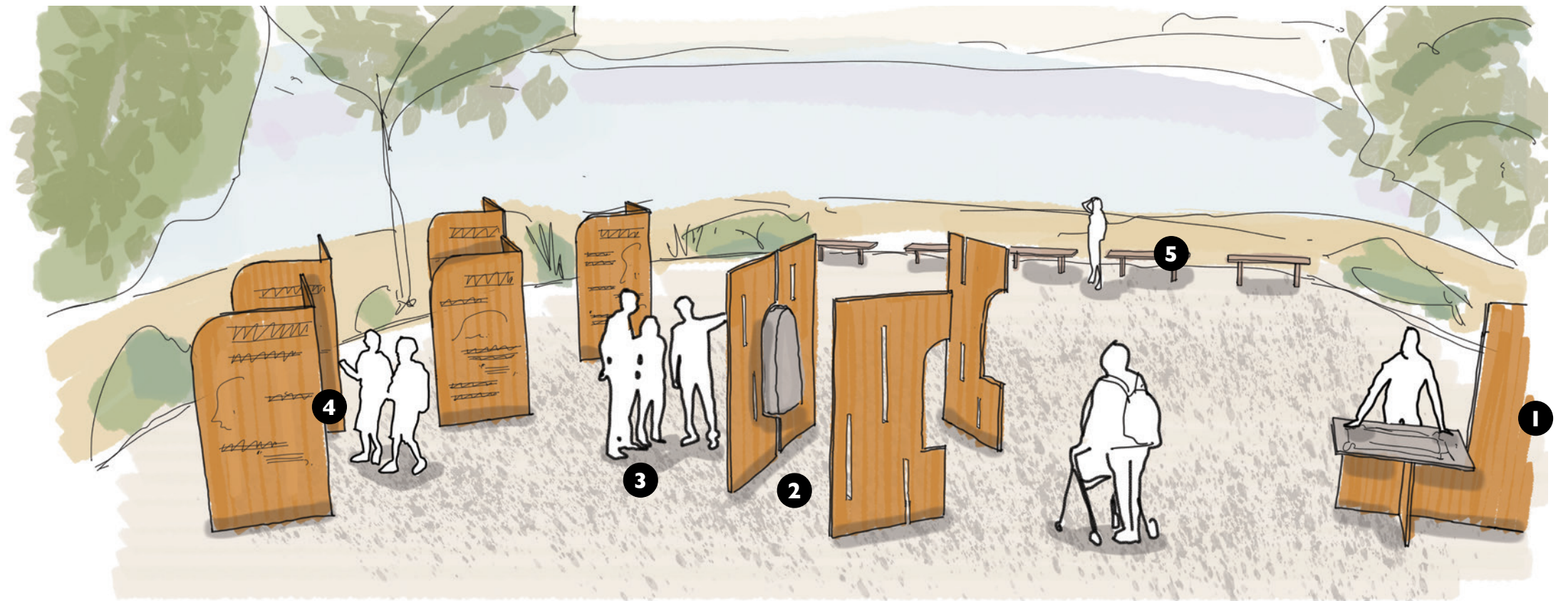
Rammed earth walls



Reflection wall installations, contain text, visuals, and dimensional expressions



Area Interpretive Experience



Discovery Area – Design Exploration Alternate – Framed Marker

This Discovery Area design exploration uses large aged metal panels or painted surfaces. The 1959 marker is held between two split panels, with only its back visible upon entry. As visitors move around the space, the inscribed face is gradually revealed—inviting reflection on what has been hidden, what has been remembered, and how we respond when difficult histories come into view.

*Please note : These conceptual structures share a potential design that supports the experience and messaging. Design refinement, partner input, and practical/budgetary considerations will enable design system refinements.*

- 1 Interpretive area at Discovery Area entry location.
- 2 The reverse side of the marker is framed between two panels, suggesting tension and the layered holding of history from multiple perspectives.
- 3 The opposite side reveals the marker’s inscription, inviting visitors to consider how Fort Chambers is part of Boulder and Valmont’s past—and how that past is only revealed through intention.
- 4 Contemporary Reflections area introduces present-day perspectives.
- 5 Seating and gathering, to edge (views beyond).

References, Visuals, Resources

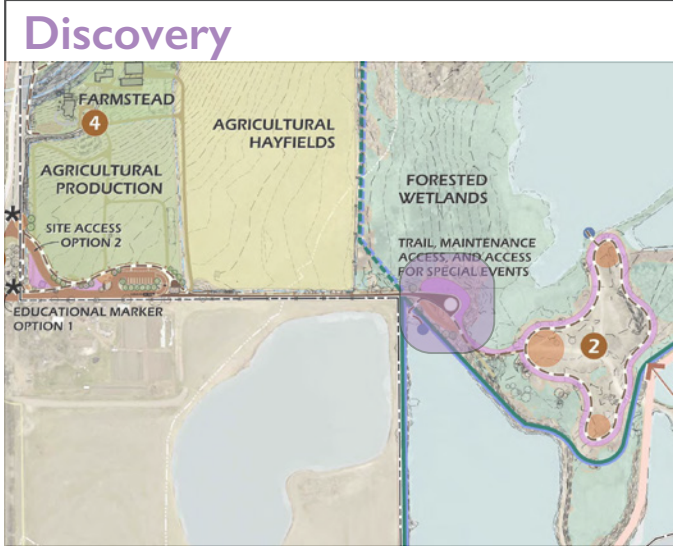


Marker is partially concealed from front, with message side visible only upon moving around the space



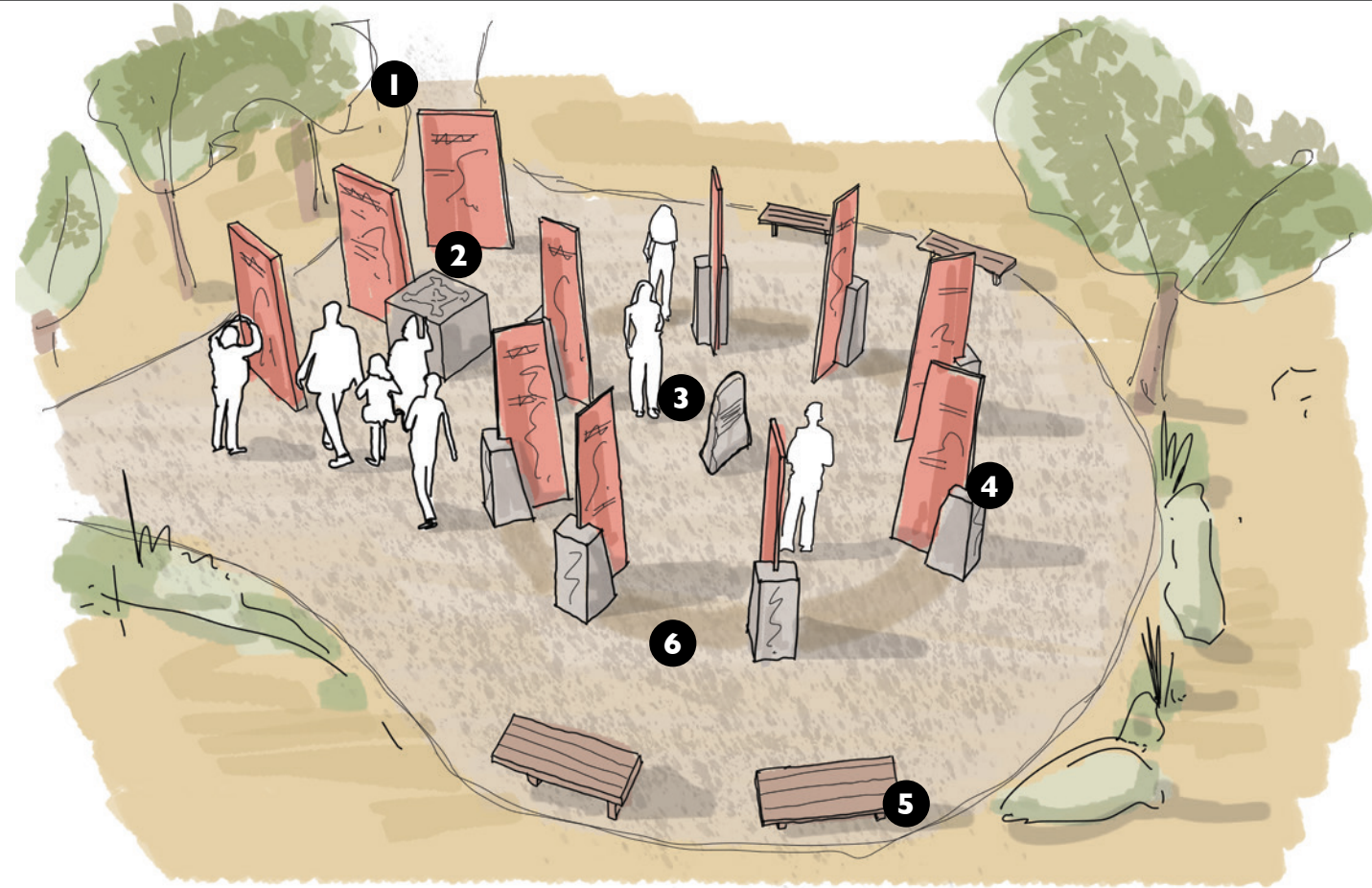
Corten metal panels, act as screen and surface for messaging and form

**Area**



**Area Interpretive Experience**

**Area Plan and Sketches**



**Discovery Area – Design Exploration Alternate – Cardinal Directions**

A series of interpretive panels at the area’s entry builds understanding of the period before, during, and after the fort’s brief presence. The reinstalled 1959 marker anchors a central, encircled space, with vertical reflection elements oriented toward the cardinal directions. Visitors meander through these contemporary voices and prompts, encountering multiple perspectives on this complex history.

*Please note : These conceptual structures share a potential design that supports the experience and messaging. Design refinement, partner input, and practical/budgetary considerations will enable design system refinements.*

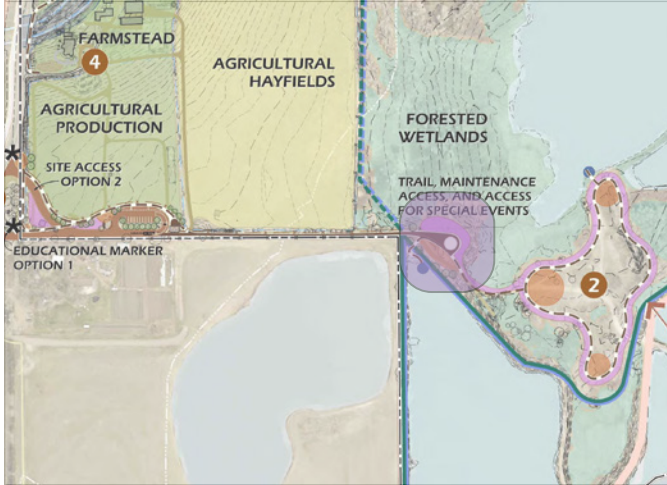
- 1** As visitors arrive at the Discovery Area from the site’s entrance, they enter the evidentiary core of the experience.
- 2** Interpretive elements—paired with a tactile site plan of Fort Chambers—present the essential “before, during, and after” of the fort’s brief moment in Boulder’s history in 1864.
- 3** The reinstalled 1959 marker, oriented away from the entry, serves as a key anchoring artifact; visitors move around it to read its inscription.
- 4** A series of eight stone-based vertical pillars introduces multiple present-day perspectives on this difficult history. Cut-stone bases ground each element, while the vertical forms—geometric or more organic—rise as contemporary monoliths in metal or cast material.
- 5** Informal, small-group seating lines the area’s edge, while a more formal gathering space remains closer to the Discovery Area’s center—preserving the marker zone for personal exploration and reflection.
- 6** Ground plane design may take cues from a sundial, suggesting the passage of time.

**References, Visuals, Resources**

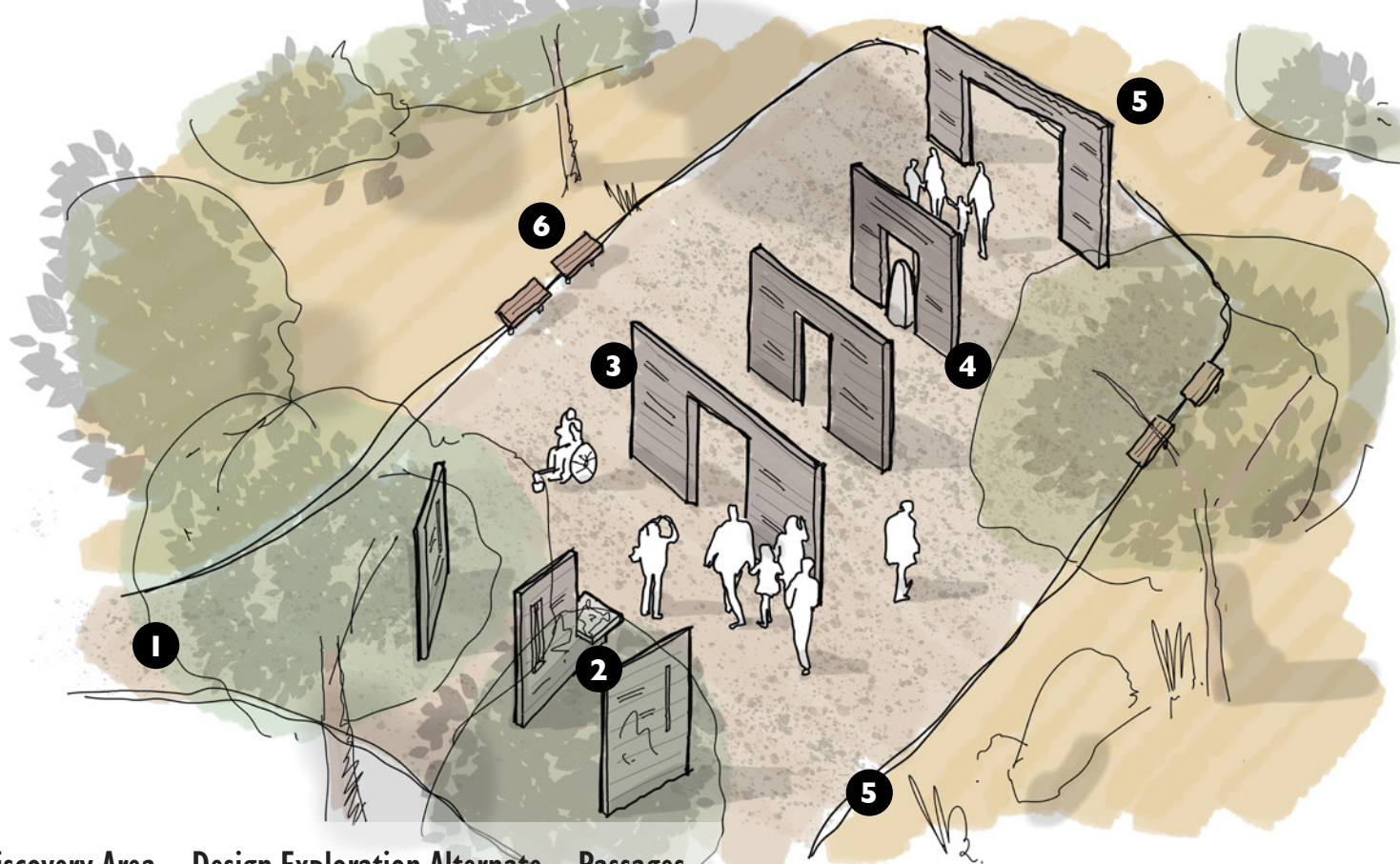


Marker is partially concealed from front, with message side visible only upon moving around the space

Discovery



Area Interpretive Experience



Discovery Area – Design Exploration Alternate – Passages

A series of walled passages guides visitors through the Discovery Area. Suggestive of fort construction yet contemporary in expression, these openings lead from the interpretive kiosks and tactile fort map toward the reinstalled 1959 marker.

Contemporary voices are embedded within the wall system—short quotations and prompts that invite visitors to reflect on how history is remembered, how it shapes the present, and what responsibility we carry forward.

*Please note : These conceptual structures share a potential design that supports the experience and messaging. Design refinement, partner input, and practical/budgetary considerations will enable design system refinements.*

- 1 Arrival at the Discovery Area from the site entrance.
- 2 Interpretive elements, including a tactile site plan of Fort Chambers, present core content describing the period before, during, and after the fort’s brief presence in Boulder in 1864.
- 3 A continuation of the rammed earth wall structures, open at their centers, reveals a pathway leading toward the marker. The structures contain embedded quotations and perspectives.
- 4 The reinstalled 1959 marker, oriented away from the entry area, serves as an important anchor within the site’s historical narrative. Visitors move around the marker to read its inscription.
- 5 The final wall-like structure opens the sequence to a framed view over the water, inviting reflection on the experience. Visible from the Water Overlook in the Contemplation Loop, it creates a visual connection between the two spaces.
- 6 Informal and gathering seating, placed throughout area.

References, Visuals, Resources



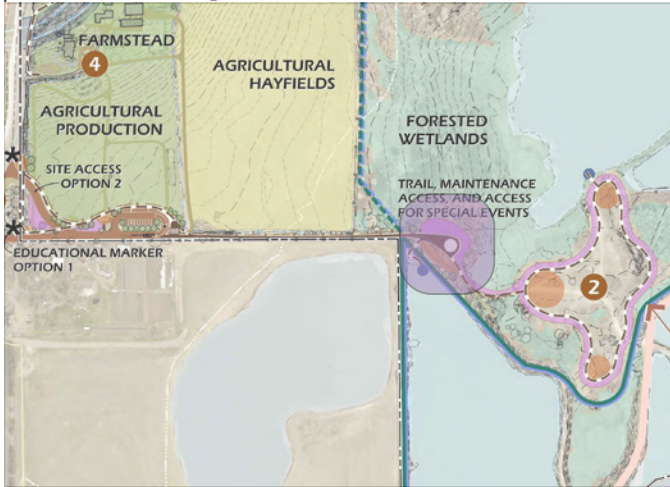
Marker is concealed upon viewing, with message side visible only upon moving around the space



Rammed earth walls

**Area** | **Area Plan and Sketches**

**Discovery**



**Notes**

While most design interventions should remain modest and subordinate to the open landscape, the reinstallation and reinterpretation of the 1959 marker interpretive area serves as a deliberate focal point within the site.

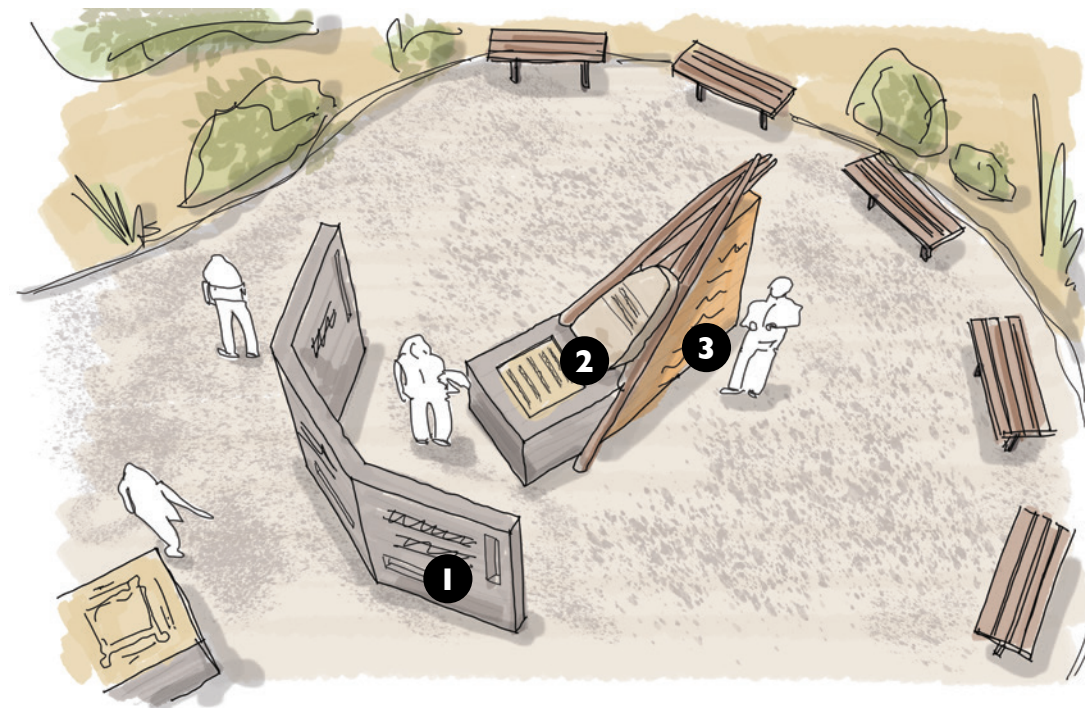
Rather than restoring the marker as an isolated object, this location offers an opportunity for careful artistic and interpretive collaboration — including partnership with Tribal representatives and descendant communities. Integrated artistic expression can help contextualize the marker, broaden its narrative, and invite contemporary reflection.

Here, design functions as metaphor. Materials, form, and spatial relationships can reveal layered meanings — continuity and rupture, permanence and removal, memory and reinterpretation. The goal is not monumentality, but a structured setting where visitors encounter the marker within a broader, more inclusive story.

Similarly, the decompression and re-emergence areas use subtle spatial and material cues to signal transition and create space for reflection and dialogue.

In this way, art, structure, and space extend beyond information-sharing to foster meaning, exchange, and civic connection.

**Area Plan and Sketches**



**1 “Fort” wall partition**

A three-paneled wall partially obscures the marker from initial view. Visitors encounter this partition before seeing the stone.

The divider wall:

- Creates a pause before the marker is revealed
- Frames the encounter spatially and emotionally
- May include brief contemporary quotations related to reinterpretation and accountability

This design choice reinforces the shift from monument to artifact. Visitors must move around the wall to see the marker fully, physically engaging the act of reconsideration.

**2 Reflection plaque and 1959 stone marker**

The 1959 stone marker is reinstalled within a defined interpretive setting at the heart of the Discovery Area. Rather than standing as an unquestioned monument, it is presented as a historical artifact—evidence of how Fort Chambers was understood and publicly framed in the mid-twentieth century.

The marker is positioned within a contemporary structure that shifts its authority. It may rest at a slight angle or within a supportive frame, signaling that its language reflects a particular historical moment rather than a definitive account.

An accompanying reflection plaque, developed in collaboration with the City of Boulder and Tribal partners, provides context. It may address:

- The language used on the 1959 marker
- The historical conditions under which it was installed
- How it reinforced a one-sided narrative of “Indian uprising”
- The decision to retain and reinterpret the marker rather than remove it

This plaque does not attempt to correct the marker line by line. Instead, it situates it within a broader conversation about memory, commemoration, and responsibility.

**3 Reflections wall**

The structure supporting the marker also functions as a contemporary reflection surface. This wall may incorporate:

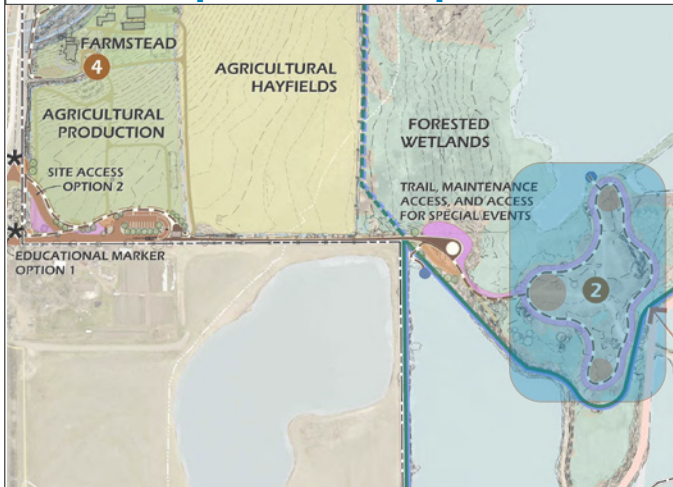
- Quotations from Indigenous voices
- Archival excerpts
- Contemporary community reflections
- Embedded objects or inscriptions

The wall makes visible the ongoing process of reckoning. It distinguishes present-day interpretation from past commemoration while allowing both to remain visible in the same space.

**References, Visuals, Resources**



Newspaper describing the 1959 stone marker

Area	Area Interpretive Statement and Purpose	Themes, Storylines, Take-Aways, Messages (preliminary)																								
<p><b>Contemplation Loop</b></p>  <p><b>Area Topic Weightings/Priorities (from EW3 Direction)</b></p> <table border="1"> <tr><td>Native land/ecology connection</td><td><div style="width: 100%;"></div></td></tr> <tr><td>Native ecology knowledge</td><td><div style="width: 100%;"></div></td></tr> <tr><td>Colonization eco impacts</td><td><div style="width: 75%;"></div></td></tr> <tr><td>Settler ag. impacts to Natives</td><td><div style="width: 75%;"></div></td></tr> <tr><td>Valmont Butte's cultural importance</td><td><div style="width: 75%;"></div></td></tr> <tr><td>Settler/Tribes perspective/relations</td><td><div style="width: 75%;"></div></td></tr> <tr><td>Today's Tribal culture/people</td><td><div style="width: 50%;"></div></td></tr> <tr><td>Massacre aftermath to Tribes</td><td><div style="width: 50%;"></div></td></tr> <tr><td>Water rights history</td><td><div style="width: 50%;"></div></td></tr> <tr><td>Sand Creek Massacre accounts</td><td><div style="width: 50%;"></div></td></tr> <tr><td>Massacre victims stories</td><td><div style="width: 50%;"></div></td></tr> <tr><td>Contemp. non-Native Tribal support</td><td><div style="width: 25%;"></div></td></tr> </table>	Native land/ecology connection	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>	Native ecology knowledge	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>	Colonization eco impacts	<div style="width: 75%;"></div>	Settler ag. impacts to Natives	<div style="width: 75%;"></div>	Valmont Butte's cultural importance	<div style="width: 75%;"></div>	Settler/Tribes perspective/relations	<div style="width: 75%;"></div>	Today's Tribal culture/people	<div style="width: 50%;"></div>	Massacre aftermath to Tribes	<div style="width: 50%;"></div>	Water rights history	<div style="width: 50%;"></div>	Sand Creek Massacre accounts	<div style="width: 50%;"></div>	Massacre victims stories	<div style="width: 50%;"></div>	Contemp. non-Native Tribal support	<div style="width: 25%;"></div>	<p>For immeasurable time, the Boulder Valley, its waters, and Valmont Butte have been places of sustenance, where land was not property but a living network of responsibility, memory, and knowledge. Indigenous nations, including the Cheyenne and Arapaho, lived with these places through ecological care, seasonal movement, and stories that oriented people within the land rather than above it. These relationships did not disappear with colonization, even as they were disrupted, denied, and silenced.</p> <p>The landscape visitors move through here is not untouched. It is a deeply disturbed place—once a gravel mining operation that cut, removed, and rearranged the land in the name of extraction and growth. What appears natural today reflects both damage and deliberate restoration. This ground is in healing, carrying marks of loss alongside signs of renewal.</p> <p>After passing through the histories of expansion, fear, and violence centered at Fort Chambers, this loop invites a pause. Here, the emphasis shifts away from settler action and toward Indigenous presence. Overlooks of water, views of Valmont Butte, and encounters with sky, plants, and soil offer moments to listen rather than analyze, and to notice endurance as well as change.</p> <p>This zone widens historical perspective. The same beliefs that turned land into property and fear into policy also enabled extraction, ecological harm, and attempted erasure of Indigenous ways of knowing. Yet what endures is not only damage, but resilience: knowledge carried forward, relationships renewed, and contemporary Indigenous voices reclaiming connection to land.</p> <p>This loop asks visitors to consider responsibility in the present: What does it mean to stand on land shaped by care, by violence, by extraction, and now by healing? What forms of listening, stewardship, and accountability does this place call for?</p> <p><b>References, Visuals, Resources</b></p>	<p><b>Orientation and Sky</b></p> <p>At this first stop along the contemplation loop, visitors are oriented and invited to reflect and ponder. This is a contemplative learning space, and this stop should frame the walk as an opportunity to listen rather than analyze.</p> <p>“How have people oriented themselves within this land and sky for generations?”</p> <p><b>Valmont Butte View</b></p> <p>At the second stop, visitors are invited to reflect on deep time and their sense of place. They may think about Valmont Butte as a landmark of memory, destructive change, and endurance.</p> <p>“What does it mean to encounter a place that has held meaning long before and long after settlement?”</p> <p><b>Enclosed Vegetation Area</b></p> <p>At the third stop along the loop, visitors are sheltered from views of the rest of the site and landscape and may reflect and ponder more seriously. They may read contemporary Indigenous reflections, engage in dialogue, facilitated programs, or personal response.</p> <p>“What stories are still being told and what does it mean to listen?”</p> <p><b>Waterfront View</b></p> <p>At the final stop, visitors observe a changed but valuable landscape, and can consider disturbance, extraction, and healing. Storylines may include gravel mining and ecological restoration, water as life, healing as a process.</p> <p>“What traces of harm, care, and healing can you notice here?”</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin-top: 20px;"> <p><b>SIMPLIFIED LEARNING OBJECTIVES</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Experience Indigenous knowledge as alive and current</li> <li>2. Understand disturbance, extraction, and healing</li> <li>3. Reflect on responsibility beyond information</li> </ol> </div>
Native land/ecology connection	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>																									
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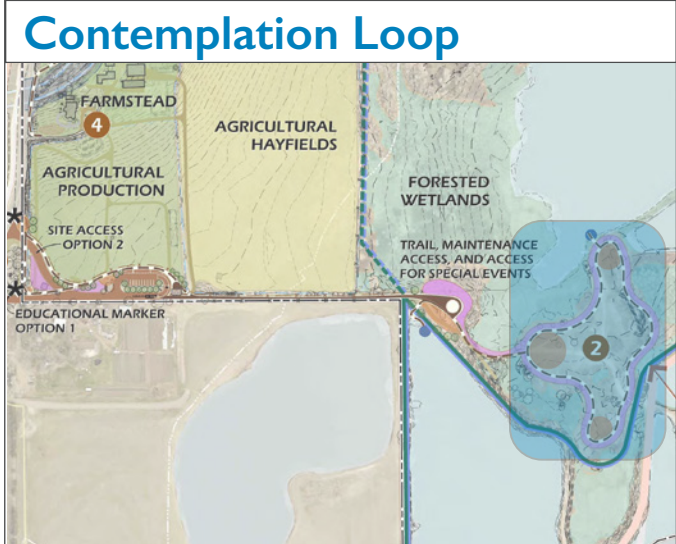
Client:



Consultant:



**Area** **Area Plan and Sketches**



**Area Interpretive Experience**

As visitors enter the deepest portion of the site, they encounter a “trailhead” which marks the beginning of the Contemplation Loop. This loop is guided by Native voices and prompts reflection on responsibility and relationship.

Visitors are oriented and encouraged to find some space from the immediately preceding events of Fort Chambers. A star map encourages connection with the landscape and widens perspectives beyond this site. As visitors move counter-clockwise along the path, they encounter interpretive quotations and questions, which prompt reflection and opportunities for conversation.

A view of Valmont Butte and the Flatirons at the Southern-most location of the loop reminds visitors of the broader context of the Fort Chambers site, and widens the scope of settler impact on the landscape.

Visitors enter a wooded and enclosed area, with interpretive quotations and questions and are offered the opportunity for dialogue with others or with themselves. This location offers shelter from the rest of the site, inviting moments of rest and reflection.

Finally, visitors make their way towards a water overlook, which gazes back to the Discovery overlook, reflecting on the legacy of Fort Chambers at a distance, accompanied by contemporary Native reflections.



- 1** Start of contemplation loop
- 2** Secondary interpretive prompt
- 3** Valmont Butte gathering area (interpretive with informal seating)
- 4** Enclosed wooded gathering area (interpretive with informal seating)
- 5** Water overlook, final reflection area (with informal seating, views back to Discovery Area)
- 6** Discovery Area

**References, Visuals, Resources**



**1** Trail turning location



**3** Valmont Butte gathering view area

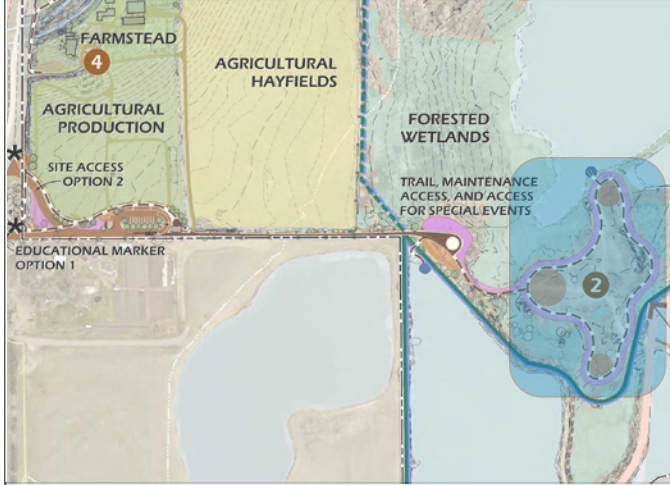


**4** Wooded gathering area



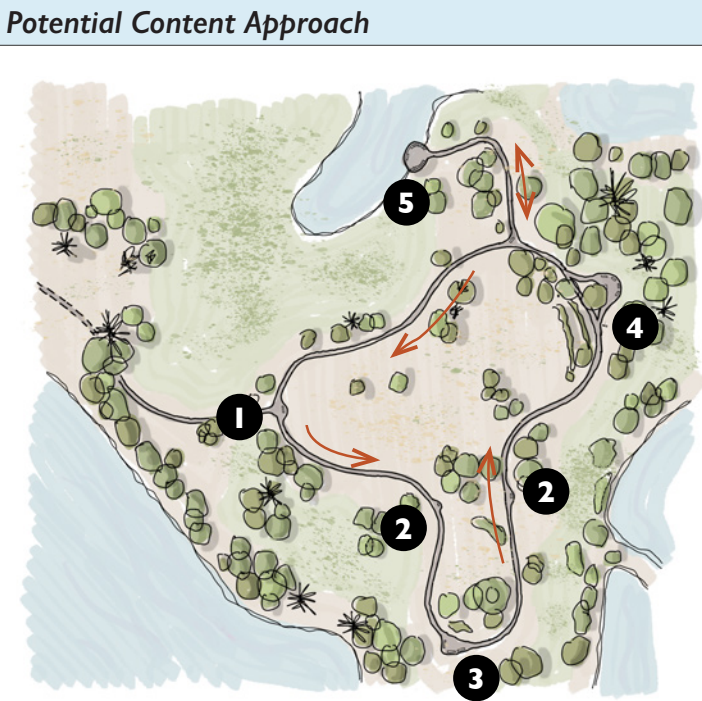
**5** Water overlook, sitting area

**Contemplation Loop**



**Notes**

The Contemplation Loop moves from documented history to lived responsibility. Using quiet prompts and Indigenous perspectives, it connects fear, land, extraction, and endurance without extended explanation. The goal is not further instruction, but space—for listening, reflection, and consideration of what understanding requires now.



**1 Start of loop and celestial map**

At the entrance to the Contemplation Loop, a trail map provides orientation, length, and estimated visit time. This location marks a shift in tone—from historical analysis to reflection.

Interpretation here introduces Indigenous perspectives that guide the loop. A celestial or sky map may widen the visitor's frame of reference, emphasizing long-standing relationships between land, sky, and seasonal knowledge systems.

The purpose of this element is to prepare visitors to listen rather than analyze. It signals that this portion of the site prioritizes reflection over historical chronology.

**2 Secondary interpretive prompts**

Small, low-footprint signs along the path offer brief quotations or reflective questions. These elements are designed for 20–30 second engagement and should not interrupt the rhythm of walking.

Possible prompts may:

- Invite visitors to notice ecological changes resulting from colonization
- Ask where extraction, alteration, or restoration are visible in the landscape
- Encourage reflection on what has been gained and lost through settlement
- Introduce Indigenous voices that frame land as relationship rather than property

These prompts should remain concise and non-intrusive, woven into the landscape rather than dominating it.

Encourages visitors to consider what they have lost and gained as a result of the hopes and fears which brought about the creation of Fort Chambers.

**3 Valmont Butte gathering area**

An interpretive sign identifies Valmont Butte, the Flatirons, and other visible landmarks, and explores their complex connection to Boulder's social history. This is a small gathering area with informal seating along the pathway, with minimal interpretive/inspirational signage. Valmont Butte, with spiritual connections to tribes and home to a graveyard of early settlers, was subject to mineral extraction and is now contaminated with toxic waste.

Interpretation should highlight the connection between the Fort Chambers site and the site of Valmont Butte. In interrogating what a relationship to place means, visitors are also encouraged to consider what responsibility for a place looks like.

**References, Visuals, Resources**



Integrated low-footprint signs



Tactile trail map



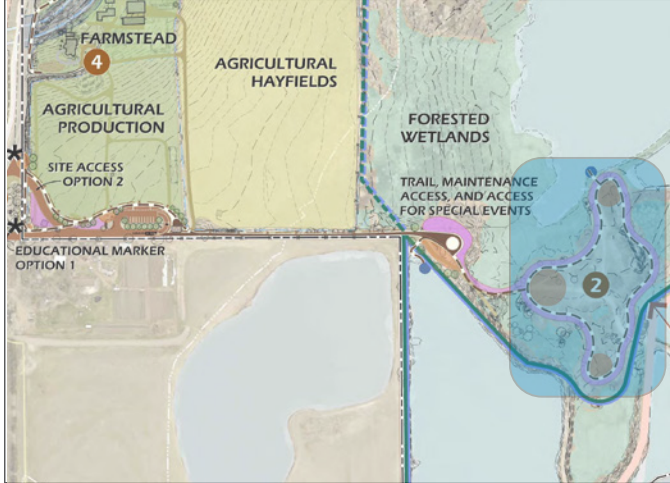
Valmont Butte, 1890-1899



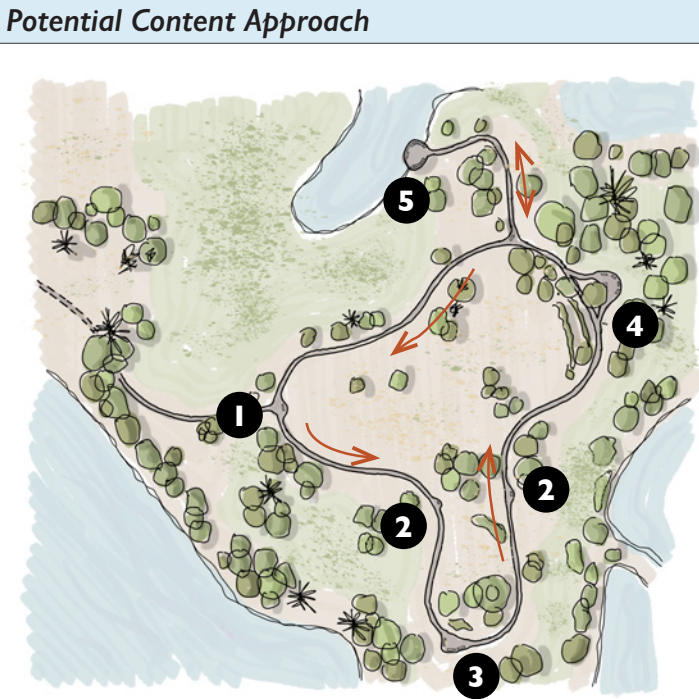
Valmont Butte, today

**Area** **Potential Content Approach**

**Contemplation Loop**



**Notes**



**4 Enclosed wooded gathering area**

This sheltered space offers distance from the central exhibit area. Seating allows for pause, conversation, or solitude.

Signage here is minimal. Brief quotations from Indigenous voices and short reflective prompts invite stillness rather than analysis.

Themes may include:

- Land as relationship
- Memory carried forward
- Continuity despite removal

Language should not explain history. It should open space.

Possible prompts:

- What does this land remember?
- What does it mean to belong to a place?
- What does listening require?

This location supports facilitated dialogue but stands on its own as a place of quiet reckoning.

**5 Water overlook, final reflection area**

At the water's edge, visitors encounter a landscape shaped by disturbance and renewal. The ponds reflect both extraction and restoration.

Signage here remains restrained. It may briefly acknowledge:

- The land's transformation through mining
- The endurance of Indigenous presence
- The distance between past events and present responsibility

Visitors look back toward the Discovery Area from afar. The fort area is no longer visible, but its consequences remain.

Possible prompts:

- What traces of fear shaped this land?
- What endures?
- What responsibility do we carry forward?

This stop does not resolve the story. It widens it.

**References, Visuals, Resources**



Enclosed gathering and conversation space



Gather/interpretation at water overlook



Fort Chambers site water overlook in former gravel mining pit

Client:

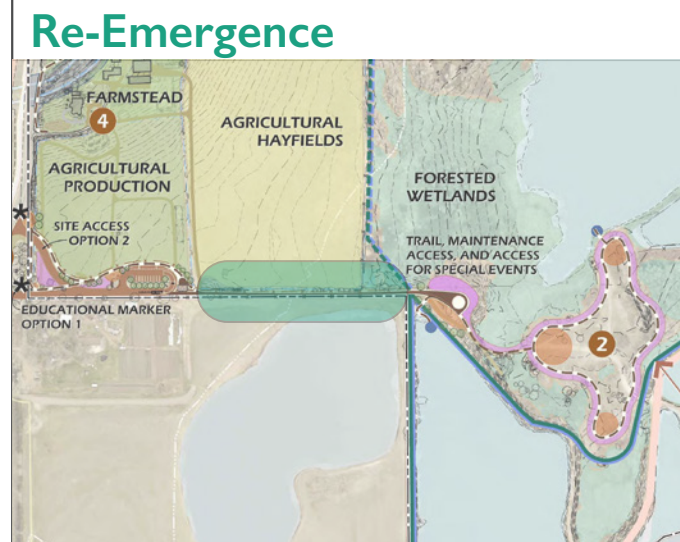


Consultant:



City of Boulder, OSMP  
Fort Chambers/Poor Farm EW4  
Interpretive Framework/Concept  
April 2026

Area	Area Interpretive Statement and Purpose	Themes, Storylines, Take-Aways, Messages (preliminary)
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**Area Topic Weightings/Priorities (from EW3 Direction)**

Native land/ecology connection	<div style="width: 20%; background-color: #2e8b57;"></div>
Native ecology knowledge	<div style="width: 15%; background-color: #2e8b57;"></div>
Massacre aftermath to Tribes	<div style="width: 10%; background-color: #2e8b57;"></div>
Today's Tribal culture/people	<div style="width: 10%; background-color: #2e8b57;"></div>
Settler/Tribes perspective/relations	<div style="width: 10%; background-color: #2e8b57;"></div>
Contemp. non-Native Tribal support	<div style="width: 10%; background-color: #2e8b57;"></div>
Colonization eco impacts	<div style="width: 10%; background-color: #2e8b57;"></div>
Settler demographics	<div style="width: 10%; background-color: #2e8b57;"></div>

The story of Fort Chambers does not end at the fort, nor in 1864. The Sand Creek Massacre devastated Cheyenne and Arapaho communities, severing lives, families, and homelands and leaving trauma that continues across generations. Its consequences reshaped Indigenous life throughout the region and remain part of the present, not the past.

The events of 1864 also shaped the trajectory of non-Native communities in Colorado. Civic identity, land ownership patterns, and public memory in Boulder developed in the shadow of these events. Land transfers, political authority, civic identity, and inherited narratives were influenced by the outcomes of this period. For many contemporary residents—whether descendants of settlers, later arrivals unaware of the site's history, or visitors encountering it for the first time—the relationship to Fort Chambers is indirect yet real. Understanding this shared inheritance invites reflection not rooted in guilt, but in awareness: how have these events shaped the community we inhabit today?

As visitors move back through the landscape, this path shifts the lens forward. It affirms contemporary Indigenous presence and living culture—people who continue to sustain relationships to land, language, and community despite histories of violence, removal, and erasure. Resilience here is not symbolic; it is ongoing and active.

This re-emergence invites visitors to carry what they have learned back into the present. The land around them mirrors the unfinished nature of this history. What we inherit is not only the trace of a vanished fort, but the responsibility to acknowledge harm, to question inherited stories, and to consider how listening, respect, and action can shape what comes next.

As visitors return to the place where they began, this path asks a final question: now that you know more, what will you carry forward?

**Preliminary Messages**  
What we inherit includes responsibility. Now that you know more, what will you carry forward?

**Contemporary Indigenous Presence**  
Indigenous nations remain active and resilient, sustaining land relationships, culture, language, and community.

**Closing Role**  
The re-emergence path may be a transition space where visitors integrate what they have encountered.

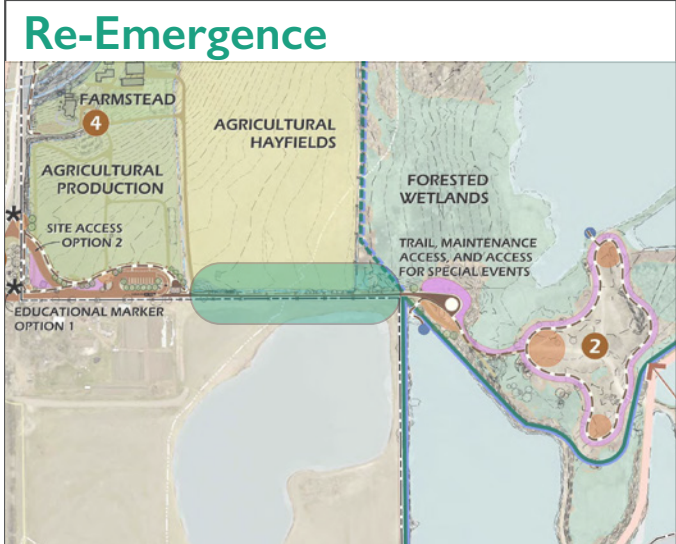
**SIMPLIFIED LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

1. Recognize contemporary Indigenous presence
2. Understand trauma as ongoing, not historical
3. Consider personal responsibility after learning

**References, Visuals, Resources**



**Area** | **Area Plan and Sketches**



**Area Interpretive Experience**

After completing the Contemplation Loop and moving beyond the Discovery Area, visitors encounter the interpretive elements again—this time from the opposite side. What first appeared fixed now feels altered. With greater context, the sod walls recede, while Native voices come forward more clearly through the design and messaging of the structures.

In this return passage, interpretation balances hope with responsibility. Messages acknowledge endurance and continuity while asking visitors to consider their own relationship to this ongoing story.

As the experience concludes, prompts point outward—toward continued learning and engagement through OSMP and partner organizations. QR-linked resources invite deeper exploration and participation in community efforts that carry these histories forward.

Visitors are asked to consider how history moves across generations—not only through ancestry, but through civic culture, public memory, and inherited landscapes. Responsibility may take many forms: learning, partnership, dialogue, or simply a willingness to hold complexity rather than turn away.

**Location Pair 5**

**Location Pair 4**

**Location Pair 3**

**Location Pair 2**

**Location Pair 1**

**Contemporary Boulder Contexts and Perspectives**

**Contemporary Native American Contexts and Perspectives**

**1**

**2**

*Please note : These conceptual structures share a potential design that supports the experience and messaging. Design refinement, partner input, and practical/budgetary considerations will enable design system refinements.*

**1** Reverse side of Decompression sequence

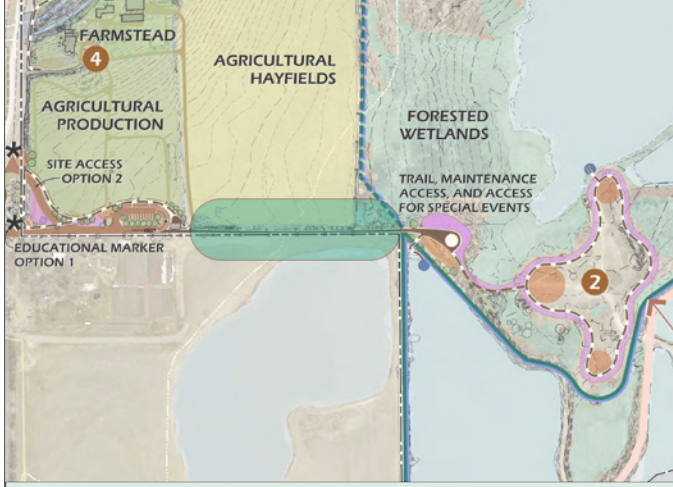
Decreasing sod Fort wall construction represents passage of time, disappearance of Fort Chambers structure and shifting/growing attitudes of today’s Boulderites seeking a future, informed by the past yet of compassion and understanding.

**2** Reverse side of Decompression sequence

Increasing poles represents an increase of Native American voice and sharing of expectations/desires for a changed and improving world.

Final sign carries forth overall site messaging and “call to action.”

**References, Visuals, Resources**

Area	Potential Content Approach	
<p><b>Re-Emergence</b></p> 	<p><b>Interpretive Stop 5 (1st encountered departing the site) — We Are Still Here</b></p> <p><i>Indigenous Perspective Side</i> Continuity. Our presence did not end in 1864, and culture, language, ceremony, and relationship to the land endure.</p> <p><i>Core Message</i> History is not over. The human conditions which made Fort Chambers possible have not disappeared and still shape our world.</p>	<p><i>Descendant / Boulderite Perspective Side</i> We still live on land shaped by hope and fear. Our community continues to evolve.</p>
<p><b>Notes</b></p> <p>Interpretation should rely on brief quotations or reflections where appropriate. Re-emergence signage may be written from the first person perspective, bringing the site's interpretation into the present. Signage should remain concise, prompting momentary explorations along the walking path. Visual elements may support the narrative but should not over-direct interpretation. Content unfolds in a linear progression as visitors approach the Arrival Area.</p>	<p><b>Interpretive Stop 4 — Living With Inheritance</b></p> <p><i>Indigenous Perspective Side</i> Land remembers removal and resilience. Stewardship is relationship, not ownership.</p> <p><i>Core Message</i> Inheritance carries responsibility, not blame. This reframes the emotional tone from accusation to agency.</p>	<p><i>Descendant / Boulderite Perspective Side</i> We inherit institutions, infrastructure, and narratives — whether we created them or not. History is constructed through what we choose to honor or omit.</p>
	<p><b>Interpretive Stop 3 — Our Stewardship</b></p> <p><i>Indigenous Perspective Side</i> We share a close relationship to the land. Stewardship is reciprocal.</p> <p><i>Core Message</i> This land now thrives on.</p>	<p><i>Descendant / Boulderite Perspective Side</i> Open Space reflects community values: conservation, access, restoration.</p>

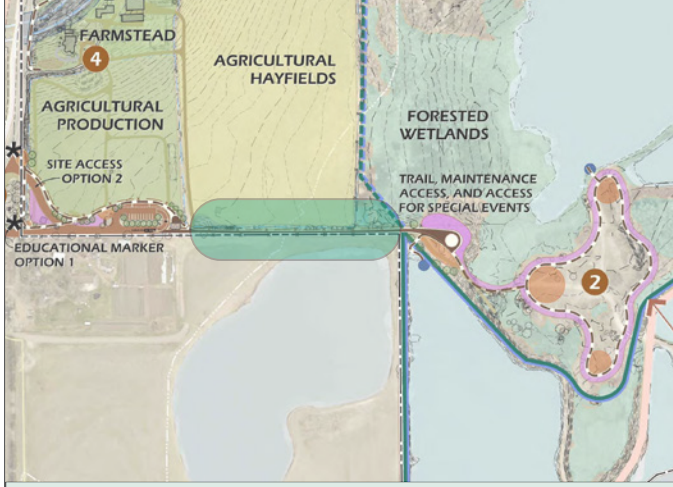
Client:



Consultant:



City of Boulder, OSMP  
Fort Chambers/Poor Farm EW4  
Interpretive Framework/Concept  
April 2026

Area	Potential Content Approach	
<p><b>Re-Emergence</b></p> 	<p><b>Interpretive Stop 2 — Listening Forward</b></p> <p><i>Indigenous Perspective Side</i> Consultation, collaboration, cultural respect.</p> <p><i>Core Message</i> Dialogue is an active practice, not a completed task.</p>	<p><i>Descendant / Boulderite Perspective Side</i> Learning is ongoing. Understanding evolves.</p> <p><i>This stop could include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rotating community reflections</li> <li>• Quotes from Tribal partners</li> <li>• Contemporary youth voices</li> <li>• A quiet prompt rather than a didactic message</li> </ul>
<p><b>Notes</b></p> <p>Interpretation should rely on brief quotations or reflections where appropriate. Re-emergence signage may be written from the first person perspective, bringing the site's interpretation into the present. Signage should remain concise, prompting momentary explorations along the walking path. Visual elements may support the narrative but should not over-direct interpretation. Content unfolds in a linear progression as visitors approach the Arrival Area.</p>	<p><b>Interpretive Stop 1 (the last interpretive location) — Shared Landscape, Shared Future</b></p> <p><i>Indigenous Perspective Side</i> Relationship to land is expressed through care.</p> <p><b>This ties:</b> <b>History → to landscape → to civic responsibility → to personal agency</b></p>	<p><i>Descendant / Boulderite Perspective Side</i> Civic life is built through participation. How we relate to our past shapes our present and future.</p> <p><i>Possible visitor prompt language:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will you care for the land you walk on?</li> <li>• What stories will you carry forward?</li> <li>• What does stewardship mean in your own life?</li> </ul>

Client:



Consultant:

