CHATTAHOOCHEE RIVERLANDS CAMP AND PADDLE TRAIL PAVILIONS

Category: New Construction < $5M

Type: Parks & Recreation

Address: 8661 Campbellton Redwine Rd, Palmetto, GA 30268
3921 Cascade Palmetto Hwy, Atlanta, GA 30331

Substantial Completion: April 2025

ARCHITECT'S STATEMENT

From Overlooked River to Regional Resource

Completed in 2020 by SCAPE Landscape Architecture and the Trust for Public Land, the Chattahoochee RiverLands Master Plan established a vision for transforming 125 miles of the Chattahoochee River near Atlanta into a continuous multimodal network of public spaces and trails. Extending from Buford Dam north of Atlanta to Chattahoochee Bend State Park to the southwest, the plan repositions the river as a regional resource connected by greenways, blueways, parks, and other public destinations.

Since the plan's completion, the Trust for Public Land has partnered with municipalities, communities, and landowners along the river to acquire land, develop trails and green spaces, and return completed properties to local jurisdictions for long-term management and continued development within the RiverLands framework.

One of the first major implementations of this vision is the Camp + Paddle Trail, a 48-mile blueway designed as a multiday paddling experience. The route begins at Standing Peachtree Greenspace in northwest Atlanta and ends at McIntosh Reserve near Chattahoochee Bend State Park.

Along the way, paddlers encounter three primary stops: Buzzard Roost Island, Campbellton Park, and New RiverLands Park. Campbellton Park and New RiverLands Park serve as enhanced destinations with accessible kayak launches, campsites, trails, and pavilions that provide restrooms, showers, and gathering spaces.

Quiet Architecture, Rooted in Place

As the first architectural structures constructed within the RiverLands, the pavilions were designed to remain intentionally quiet, allowing the river, forest, and changing seasons to define the experience. Simple forms, durable materials, and an honest expression of structure create buildings that feel timeless and rooted in place.

Their design draws from the utilitarian language of historic covered bridges, industrial steel bridges, and agricultural structures long associated with the Chattahoochee, reinterpreted through a contemporary architectural lens.

Each pavilion is carefully sited to frame views of the river while remaining nestled within the surrounding landscape. Existing topography and tree canopies informed the placement of each structure, minimizing disruption and reinforcing a sense of immersion in the site.

A generous gathering porch welcomes visitors to meet, prepare for overnight stays, or pause within the landscape. A delicate steel-angle lattice screens the restroom areas for privacy, provides a place for paddlers to hang wet gear, and transforms the pavilion into a softly glowing lantern at night.

The architecture prioritizes openness and passive environmental performance. Deep roof overhangs provide shade and protection from Georgia's climate, while the standing-seam metal and wood-framed roof is separated from the enclosed restroom structure to encourage natural ventilation and improve thermal comfort.

Restroom and shower facilities are housed within a compact, economical volume constructed of insulated concrete masonry and clad in stained cedar siding. The exposed rhythm of steel and wood beneath the primary roof becomes the pavilion's defining architectural feature. Both durable and adaptable, the structural system establishes a repeatable kit of parts that can inform future structures as development continues along the Chattahoochee.

Civic Infrastructure for Stewardship

More than recreational amenities, the Camp + Paddle Pavilions serve as civic infrastructure. They create welcoming places for visitors of all backgrounds to gather, launch adventures, learn about the river's ecology, and build lasting connections with the Chattahoochee.

Through restrained architecture and purposeful design, the pavilions advance the broader mission of the Chattahoochee RiverLands: transforming the river from a hidden edge into a shared public landscape that inspires stewardship for generations to come.

SUSTAINABILITY STATEMENT

Durability as Environmental Stewardship

Sustainability is embedded in both the architecture and the project's guiding philosophy. Efficient building forms, resilient low-maintenance materials, passive environmental strategies, and thoughtful siting reduce long-term impacts while ensuring the facilities can withstand intensive public use and continued exposure to the elements.

The project demonstrates that environmental stewardship extends beyond energy performance to include durability, adaptability, and a deep respect for the ecological systems that make the RiverLands distinct.



A River Reclaimed

The 125-mile Chattahoochee RiverLands vision reconnects communities to a river long mistreated. The 48-mile Camp + Paddle Trail is one of its first major implementations, linking launches, campsites, parks, and gathering places into a continuous blueway. The two pavilions at Campbellton Park and New RiverLands Park establish the first architectural moments for this emerging regional network.

CHATTAHOOCHEE RIVERLANDS MASTER PLAN (125 MILES)

CAMP AND PADDLE LAUNCH AT STANDING PEACH TREE PARK

BUZZARD'S ROOST CAMP SITE

CAMP AND PADDLE TRAIL (48 MILES)

CAMPBELLTON PARK & PAVILION

NEW RIVERLANDS PARK & PAVILION

CAMP & PADDLE TAKE-OUT AT MCINTOSH RESERVE

CUMMING
LAKE LANIER
BUFORD
ALPHARETTA
SUGAR HILL
SUWANEE
ROSWELL
JOHNS CREEK
DULUTH
LAKE CORNERS
MARIETTA
BERKELEY LAKE
PEACHTREE CORNERS
NORCROSS
SANDY SPRINGS
DUNWOODY
SMYRNA
ATLANTA
DOUGLASVILLE
SOUTH FULTON
WHITESBURG
CHATTAHOOCHEE HILLS
YELLOW DIRT
CHATTAHOOCHEE BEND STATE PARK
I-75
I-285
GA-400
I-20
I-85

PROJECT AREA
ATLANTA
GEORGIA
ALABAMA
CHATTAHOOCHEE RIVER BASIN
FLORIDA
GULF OF MEXICO

Source: Master plan graphic provided by SCAPE Studio

Chattahoochee RiverLands



A Multi-Day Journey

The Camp + Paddle Trail transforms the Chattahoochee into an accessible, multi-day outdoor experience. Launches, trails, campsites, and shared gathering spaces support moments of adventure, rest, and community along the route. Together, these interventions invite people of varied ages, backgrounds, and abilities to form a lasting relationship with the river.



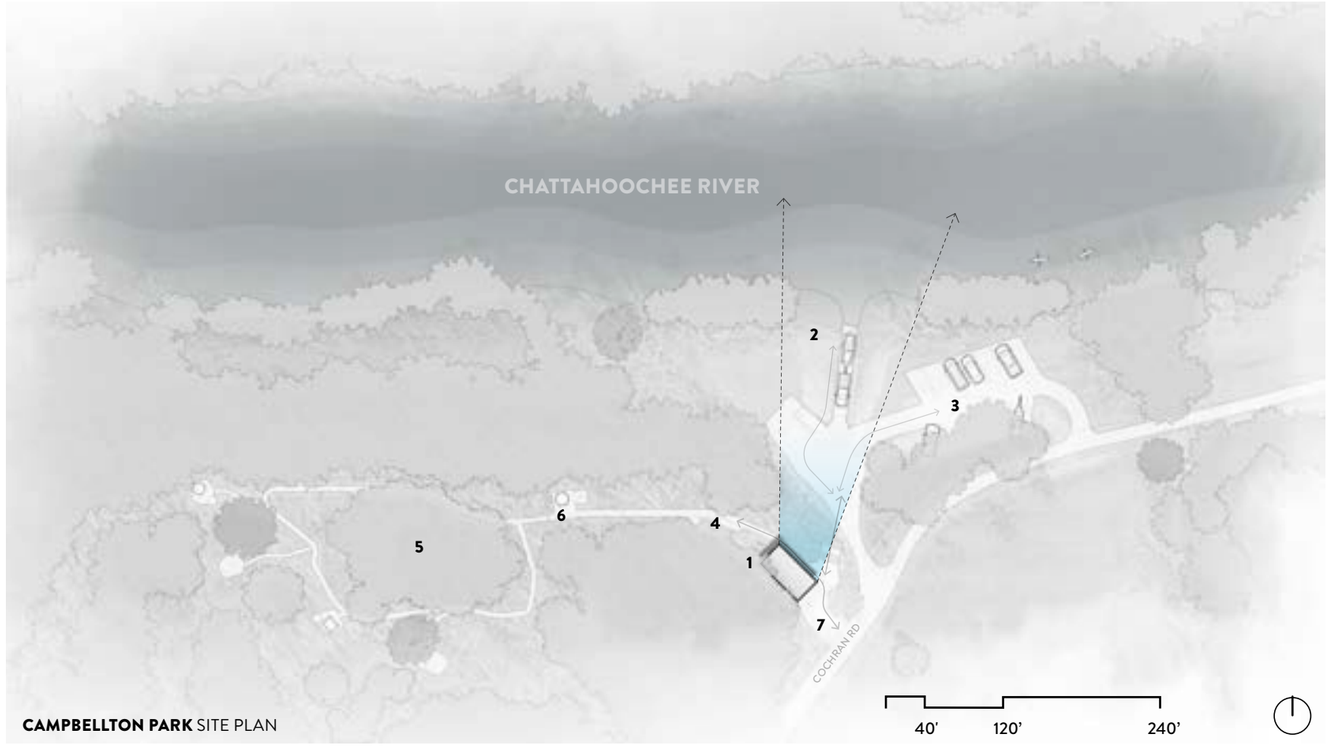


Nestled Within The Landscape

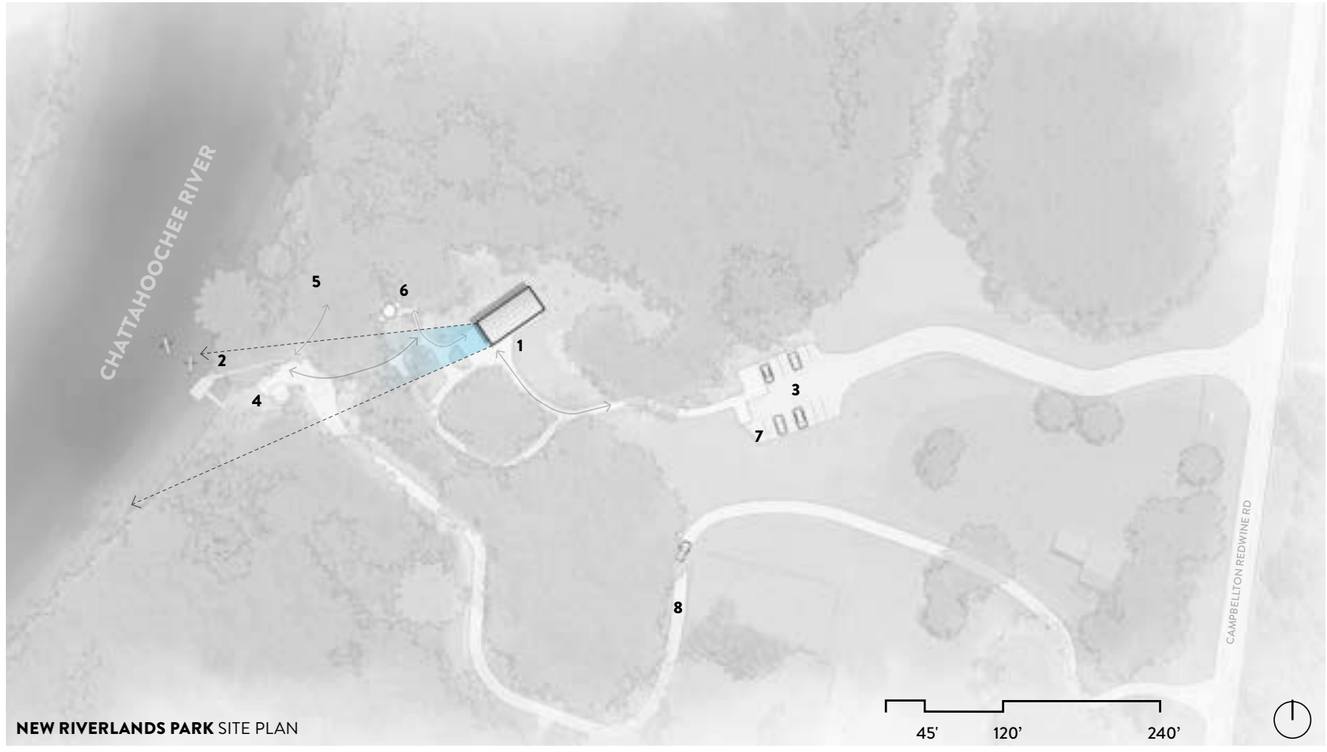
Each pavilion is positioned in response to the river, existing topography, drainage patterns, and mature tree canopy. Compact footprints limit disturbance while placing essential amenities near campsites, accessible parking, trails, and kayak launches. The buildings remain secondary to the landscape, framing views and strengthening visitors' connection to the water.

The Campbellton Park pavilion is sited on a natural bench carved into the sloping landscape, providing direct access from the primary vehicular entrance along Cochran Road while minimizing disturbance to the surrounding terrain. Positioned at the edge of the existing forest, the pavilion's long elevation opens toward the river, framing expansive views and creating a strong visual connection to the landscape. An accessible parking space is located immediately adjacent to the pavilion, ensuring convenient, equitable access from the roadway. Campsites are positioned beyond the ridge line, preserving privacy for overnight visitors while allowing the pavilion to serve as a distinct gathering place within the park.

The pavilion at New Riverlands Park is nestled at the edge of the existing forest, with level pedestrian access from a separate parking area via a paved walking trail. Sited at the end of a natural opening in the tree canopy, the pavilion frames views toward the river, allowing the landscape to become the focal point at the end of the structure. The parking lot is intentionally set approximately 200 feet away, allowing the pavilion to exist as a destination within the landscape rather than an extension of the parking area. A 30' grade change between the pavilion and the boat launch is addressed through an irregular stone stair that follows the natural opening in the trees, providing a direct pedestrian connection to the river. To ensure accessible access and simplify maintenance operations, a drive connects the entry road to the boat launch area. As at Campbellton Park, the campsites are intentionally located beyond a natural ridge line north of the pavilion, preserving privacy while allowing campsites to have views of the river.



CAMPBELLTON PARK SITE PLAN



NEW RIVERLANDS PARK SITE PLAN

1 PAVILION
2 KAYAK LAUNCH / DOCK
3 SURFACE PARKING
4 FIRE PIT / GATHERING AREA
5 CAMPSITES / TRAILS
6 ADA CAMPSITE
7 ADA PARKING SPACE
8 ACCESS / SERVICE ROAD



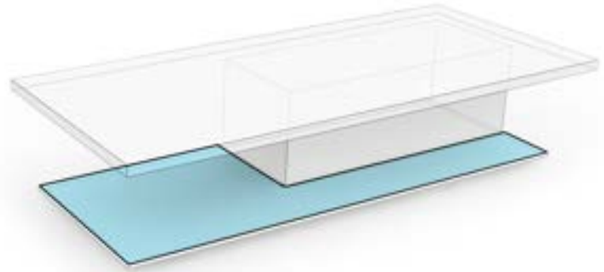
Quietly Rooted

Set beneath the existing canopy, the pavilion recedes into the forest rather than competing with it. Its low profile, restrained form, and natural material palette allow the river, trees, and changing seasons to remain the primary experience. At dusk, the structure becomes a warm point of orientation within the landscape.

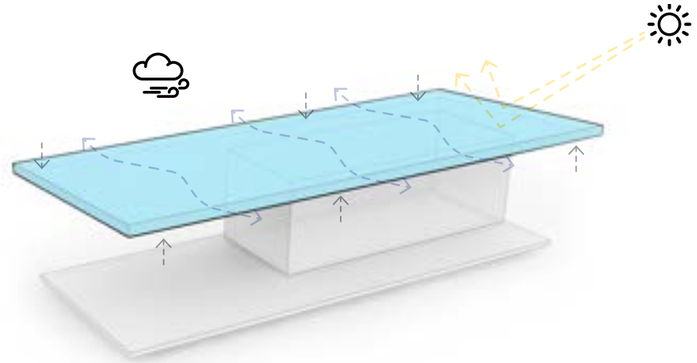

FIELD & STREAM



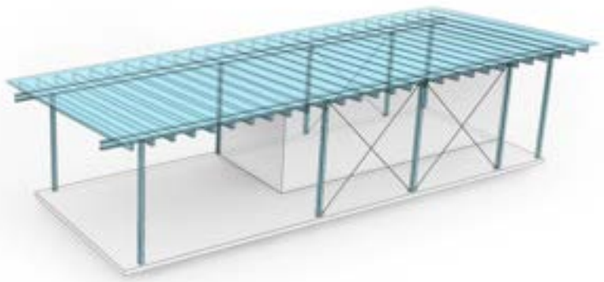
Efficient + Functional Core



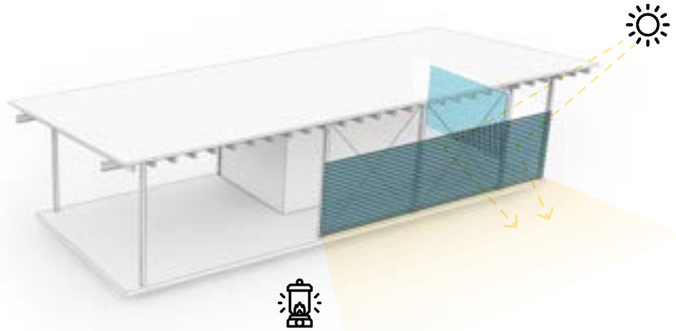
Cover + Organize Porches



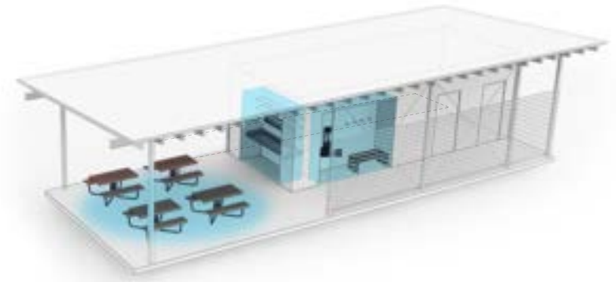
Lift for Passive Strategies



Express Structure



Screen + Protect



Incorporate Utility

Utilitarian Features Become Architectural Identity

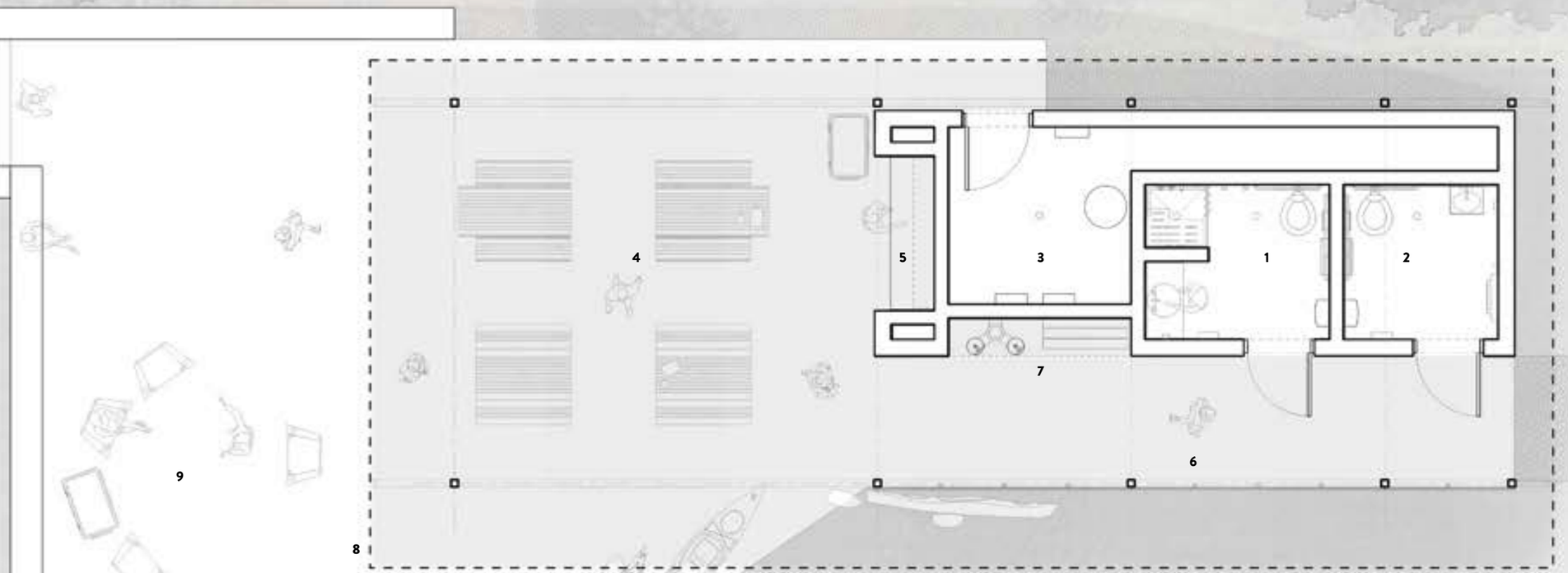
The pavilion begins with a compact, functional service core wrapped by a generous gathering porch. A lifted canopy provides shade and ventilation; an expressed steel-and-wood structure creates rhythm and durability; and a permeable screen adds privacy, filters light, and supports the practical needs of paddlers. These straightforward moves form a repeatable kit of parts for future RiverLands structures.



Conceptual Massing + Materiality

FLOOR PLAN

NEW RIVERLANDS PARK PAVILION



1 ADA SHOWER / RESTROOM
2 ADA RESTROOM
3 MECHANICAL & STORAGE
4 COVERED OUTDOOR PATIO
5 UTILITY COUNTER & SHELVING
6 SCREEN WALL
7 DRINKING FOUNTAIN & BENCH
8 CANOPY ABOVE
9 GATHERING TERRACE

2' 6' 14'

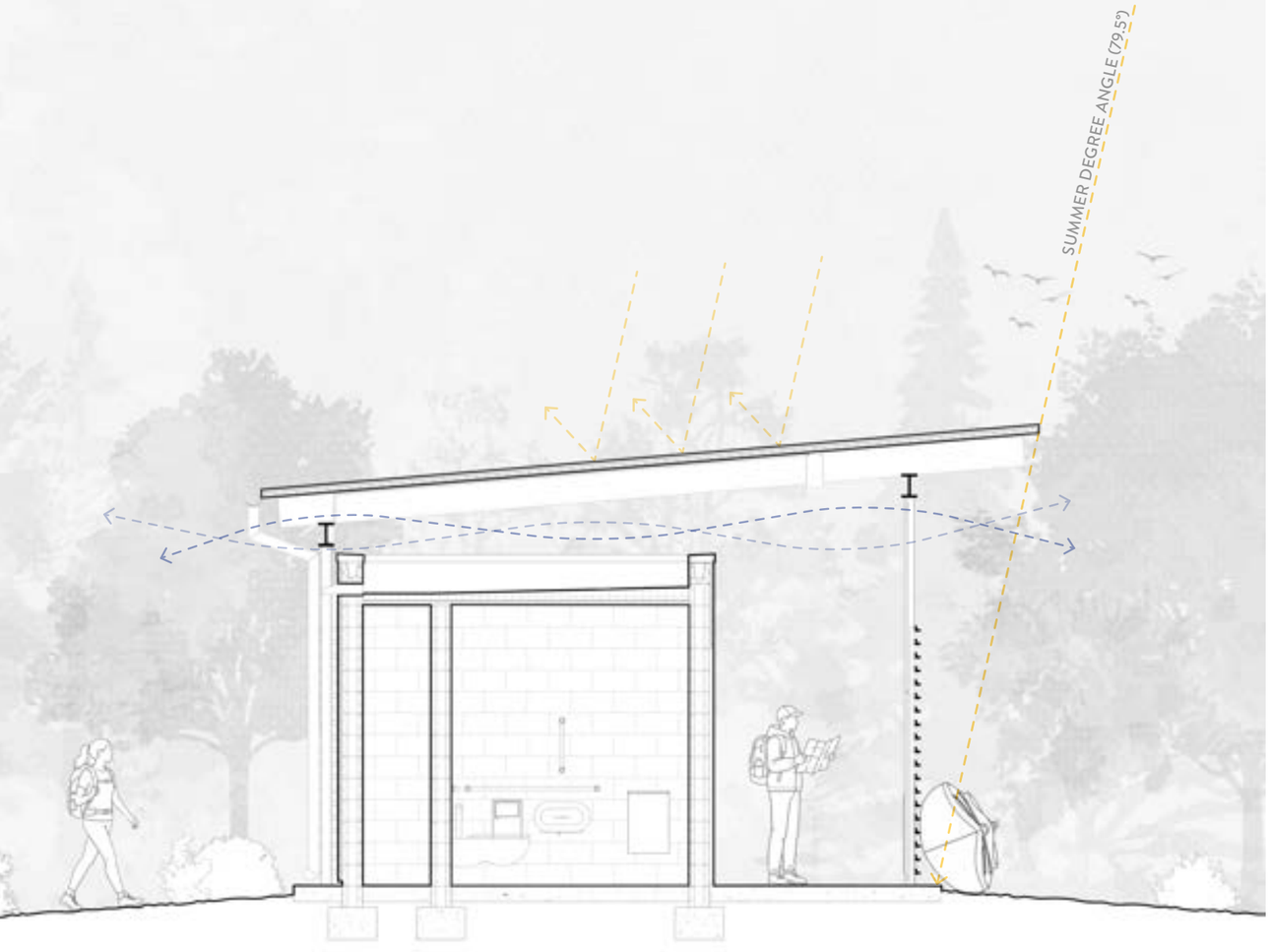


EAST - WEST BUILDING SECTION

2' 5' 10'

A Canopy that Shades, Shelters + Breathes

The primary roof is lifted above the enclosed restroom and shower volume, allowing air to move freely through the pavilion. Deep overhangs protect visitors from sun and rain while creating a comfortable outdoor room for gathering and preparation. Passive strategies reduce reliance on mechanical conditioning and make the architecture responsive to Georgia's climate.



NORTH-SOUTH BUILDING SECTION

2' 5' 10'

FRAMEWORK FOR DESIGN EXCELLENCE

Design for Integration

Pavilion locations were developed to create structures that are nestled within the landscape without being detrimental to existing site topography, drainage, and tree canopy. Special consideration went into locating each pavilion to allow views and connection to the Chattahoochee River.

Design for Equitable Communities

Pavilions and site elements were designed with universal strategies in mind to create a common ground for all. Pavilions were sited adjacent to accessible parking areas with companion ADA camp sites to make amenities and access to nature accessible to all. ADA kayak launches were also incorporated at all major stops along the Camp and Paddle Trail.

Design for Ecosystems

Pavilions were designed focusing on creating structures that were both resilient with low maintenance costs to minimize future impacts on the sites through the use of concrete block, steel and standing seam roofing. Wood elements were incorporated into protected components (restroom siding, structural wood deck and rafters) to create warmth and a connection to the natural environment.

Design for Water

Existing site topography and drainage was studied, and stormwater drainage focused on on-site infiltration that worked with the existing drainage. Metered shower and faucets were utilized within the restrooms to limit and minimize the amount of water usage within the pavilions.

Design for Economy

The architectural kit-of-parts for the pavilions created a simple, honest, and cost-effective aesthetic that allows for the aesthetic to be applied to a variety of scales, sites and forms for future projects along the Chattahoochee RiverLands. The cost per SF for both pavilions was completed under initial budgeting at $160/SF.

Design for Energy

With the focus on passive design strategies of creating shade with the primary roof canopy, inviting breezes into the structure, and siting the pavilions within adjacent tree canopies, the pavilions create comfortable spaces for gathering, food prepping, and within the restroom/shower facilities.

Design for Well-Being

The pavilions create an architectural language that respects the existing architecture found along the river, while also fostering the overall RiverLands missions of creating a safe, connective corridor and creating a living legacy for future generations.

Design for Resources

Natural and non-contaminating materials were used throughout the architecture including concrete block, steel framing, standing seam roofing, cedar and southern yellow pine wood, and water based low-VOC stains. Light fixture selections and the steel screen wall work to minimize light pollution to the surrounding site and night sky, while providing artificial light only where it is needed around the pavilion.

Design for Change

Material choices of wood and steel, vernacular building forms, and using structure as an architectural element creating an architecture that honors the past agrarian and historic bridge architecture along the river, while also creating an adaptable palette for future structures of types and scales for RiverLands.

Design for Discovery

Various design options were explored with the Trust for Public Land (Client) and various community stakeholders through the Chattahoochee Working Group to create a vision and project that was rooted in community. At the end of the project the design team and Trust for Public Land facilitated a lessons learned workshop with all disciplines and the general contractor to create a list of items for improvement on future phases of the RiverLands Master Plan.



A Lantern at the Forest Edge

Warm, focused lighting reveals the pavilion's wood structure while preserving the darkness of the surrounding landscape. At night, the pavilion provides a welcoming point of orientation without overpowering the forest or sky.



Generous Gathering Space

The pavilion and adjoining terrace create common ground for orientation, conversation, education, and rest. A generous roof extends the building's usefulness beyond its enclosed program, while integrated seating and accessible routes support both planned events and informal gathering. More than a park amenity, the pavilion functions as small-scale civic infrastructure.







Utility, Elevated

The steel-angle screen provides privacy while maintaining airflow, filtering daylight, and offering a place to hang wet gear. Durable masonry walls and protected wood elements create a resilient yet warm material palette and structure. Integrated shelving, charging outlets, and accessible shower facilities respond directly to the needs of multi-day paddlers. The roof structure also utilizes sistered traditional dimensional lumber with a discrete knife plate connection to the steel beams in lieu of glulam beams, preserving the visual richness of exposed wood while delivering a more economical solution. The utility and practical elements are incorporated as defining architectural features rather than treated as secondary applications to the architecture.

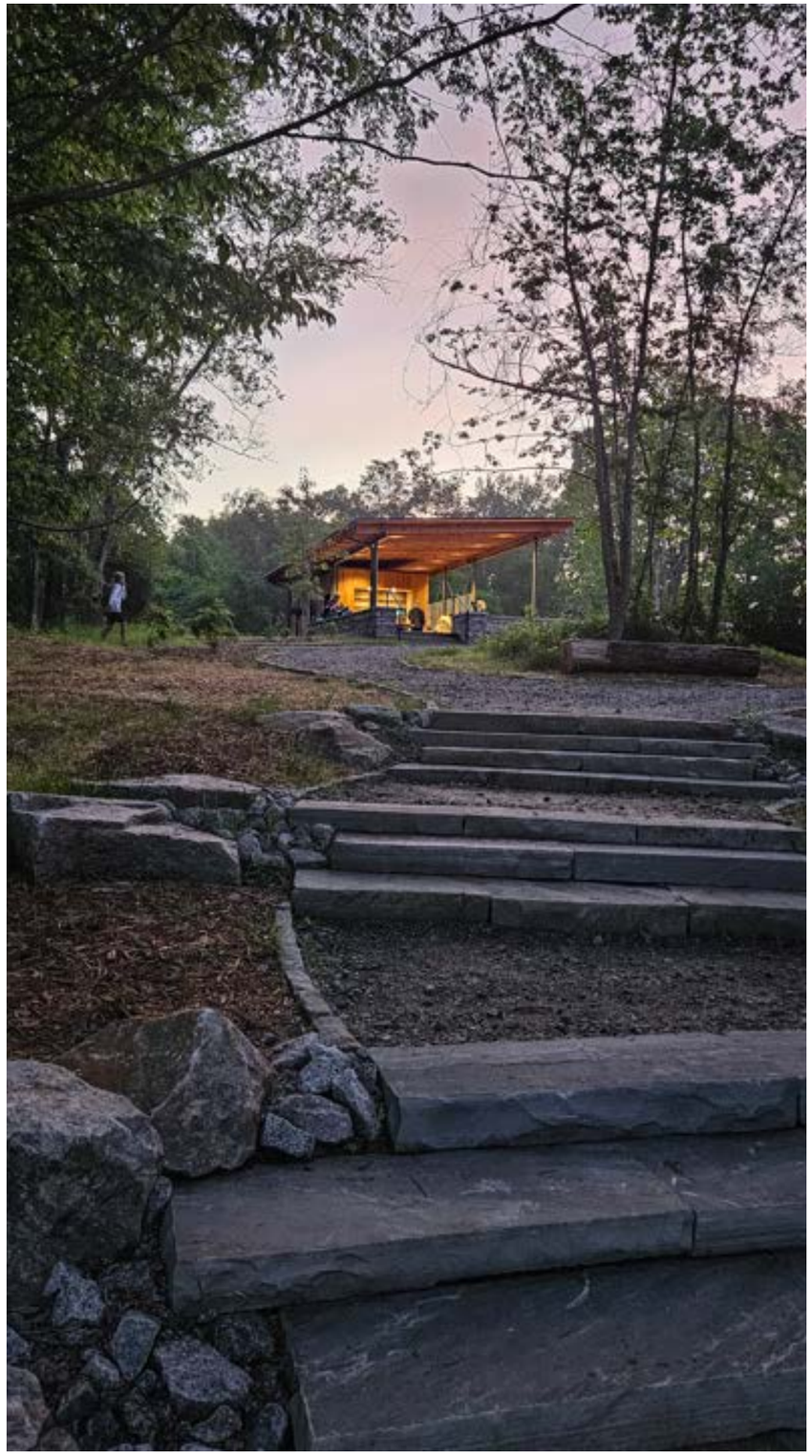


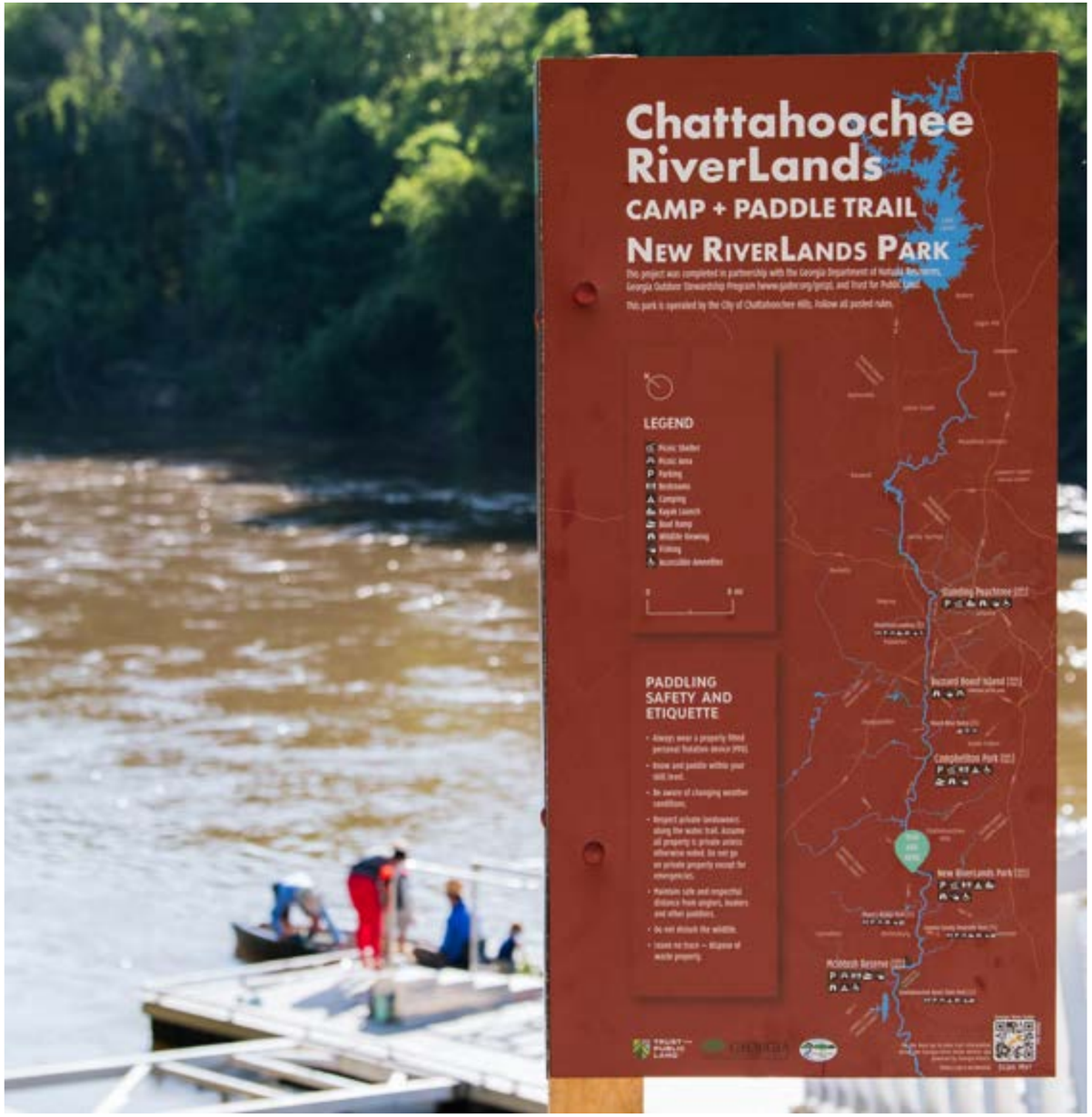




Designed as a Continuous Journey

Paths and terraces navigate the wooded slope between pavilion and river, making movement through the site part of the experience. Stone steps and gathering areas follow the existing terrain, creating places to pause while minimizing disruption to natural drainage and vegetation. The pavilion becomes one element within a larger sequence of forest, camp, and water.







Wayfinding + Accessibility for All

Clear wayfinding, accessible routes, companion campsites, and adaptive kayak launches make the RiverLands experience available to a broader public. The project treats universal access as an essential part of connecting people to nature—not as an added accommodation. Each pavilion and boat launch are ADA accessible through the use of dedicated parking areas adjacent to the pavilions, BoardSafe docks and kayak launches, and stabilized ADA compliant gravel paths. Both pavilions are designed with one adjacent dedicated ADA campsite with easy access to facilities. All of this allows for architecture, landscape, and infrastructure to work together to create a shared point of entry to the Chattahoochee.

