

“IF TREES COULD SPEAK” - A MURAL FOR VIENNA, VIRGINIA

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

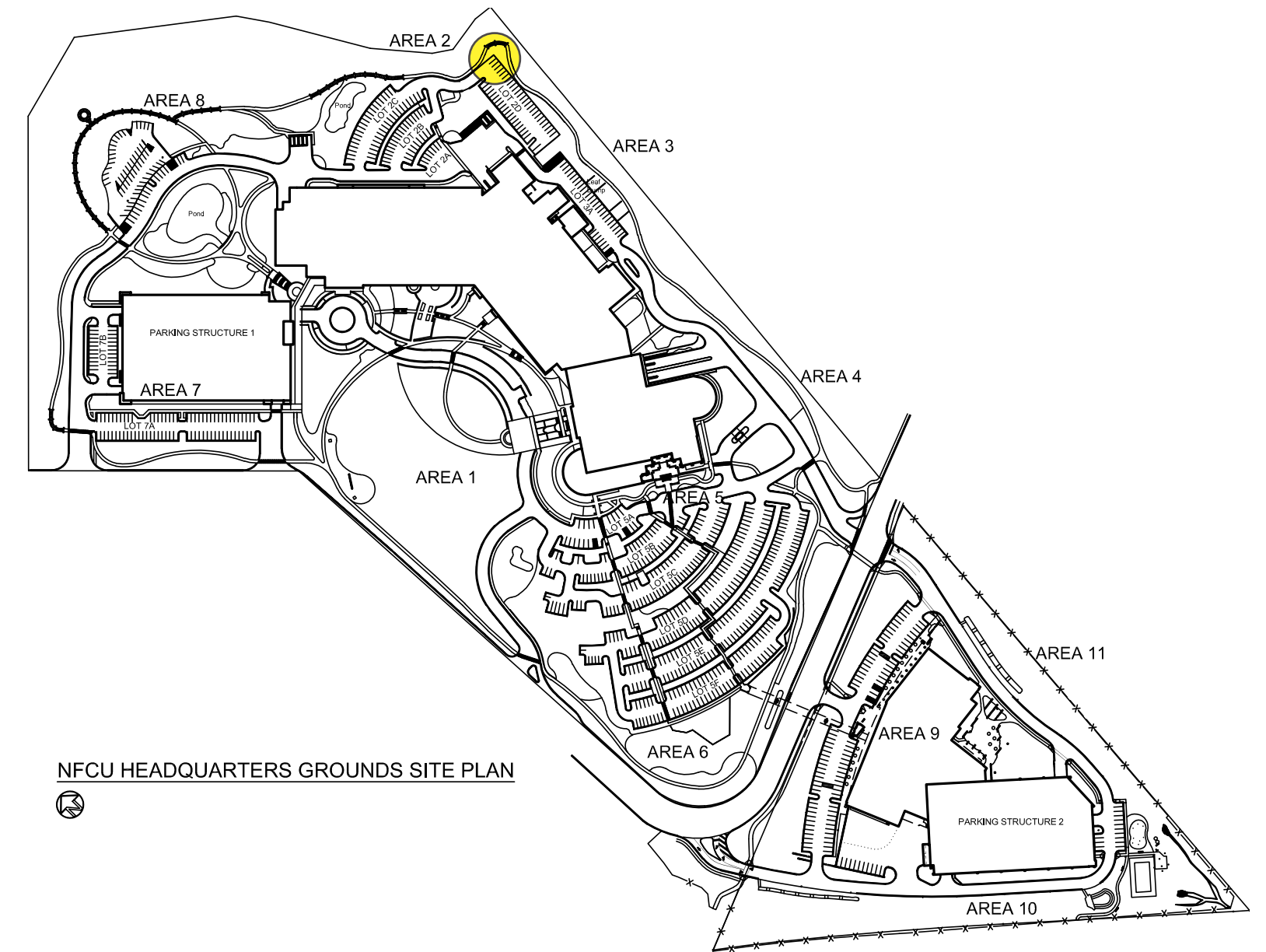
The Navy Federal Credit Union Headquarters Campus sits on roughly 70 acres within Vienna, VA. Even though NFCU has only resided in Vienna since 1975, some of the oaks on its campus have lived for hundreds of years.

This mural tells the story of Vienna, Virginia, as witnessed through the long, quiet watch of the nearby historic red and white oaks—majestic sentinels that once lined a community trail and shaded its memories. Reading from right to left, the mural unfolds like pages in a living book, each chapter rooted in the rings of the now-felled 200-year-old oaks that once stood as witnesses to the passing centuries.

Throughout the entire mural, the oaks span the foreground, their broad limbs and leafy silhouettes tying each moment together. They are the constant—observers, protectors, and quiet keepers of Vienna’s collective memory.

Though the original oaks have now been felled, their story lives on through this visual tribute—a reminder that even in loss, we find legacy. The mural becomes not only a celebration of Vienna’s rich past but also an invitation to reflect, gather, and grow under the canopy of our shared history.

PROJECT LOCATION



NFCU RECREATION TRAIL MURAL

SURROUNDING AREA



NFCU RECREATION TRAIL MURAL

ARTISTS' BIOS



PATRICK SARGENT

Pat@Sargent-Thamm.com

Artist Biography

Born in Detroit, Michigan, at age seven Patrick's family moved north to the small farming community of Saint Clair. The schools were typical of working class areas – few students, narrow minded counselors, and teachers focused on pushing them toward predetermined destinies. There was an emphasis on the skills one could learn in a shop class or training one would get in the local technical trade schools. While there was very little in the way of formal arts programs in my hometown's high school, those four years were, nevertheless, a relief and an escape. Patrick joined groups, participated in activities, and explored his environment. The passing of his father when he was 15, coupled with a collapsing local economy due to an ailing car industry, and no possibility of financial aid, made the future look bleak indeed. Patrick found his way out of Michigan with the U.S. Air Force (USAF). A month after high school, unemployed and without transportation because he had sold his car to go to the prom, he enlisted. During his tenure in the USAF, he was provided discipline, training, and most importantly, mentorship.

In 2002, after twenty years of service, Patrick prepared to retire from the military and earlier that year he completed his degree in political science. One of the entry level printmaking classes that was supposed round out and complete his educational experiences, instead, and rather amazingly, became the beginning of another journey. That course introduced Patrick to the centuries old traditions of printmaking. Subsequently, using the GI Bill, Patrick earned a BFA in Printmaking and MFA in Critical Arts Practice from George Mason University. Currently, Patrick based in Northern Virginia at the Torpedo Factory Art Center where he is continuing to explore papermaking and printmaking process, and, by extension, its emphasis on collaboration -- between artists, communities, and audiences.

Artist Statement

I work in collaborative environments that foster a sense of belonging -- sharing information, sharing techniques, exchanging and donating artwork, creating exhibitions and workshops, and hosting other kinds of community events. I work with local non-profit organizations that assist returning war veterans and families as they reintegrate into society. I also work with groups to creatively address issues in our community – hunger, communication, wellness and resiliency. My specific goals are to create collaborative arts experiences for these particular populations -- creating communication tools, artwork and organizing exhibitions centered on artistic expressions of healing and coping. Collaborative arts processes -- such as printmaking and papermaking -- are catalysts for communities to experiment with forms of expression and creativity, and are also opportunities to foster new ideas, advance critical thinking and form relationships. To leave the quiet and sanctity of the artist studio for art making in public spaces invites the kind of interchange that can connect disparate segments of a community. For those groups that express a sense of disenfranchisement, loss of connection with society, or suffering from alienation, art making not only results in a flow of creative expression, but also fosters dialogue that dispels misinformation, deepens understanding, and strengthens the foundation of the community.

NFCU RECREATION TRAIL MURAL

ARTISTS' BIO



BRANDON SMALLWOOD, ASLA

Brandon_Smallwood@navyfederal.org

ASSISTANT SUPERVISOR GROUNDS MANAGEMENT

NAVY FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

Arist Biography

Brandon Smallwood is a dedicated landscape designer with a keen focus on sustainability and functionality. Growing up in West Virginia, Brandon developed an early love for the outdoors while also immersing himself in various styles of art and creativity. He carried his love for the outdoors into college, where he discovered landscape architecture-a field that allowed him to unite his passion for nature with his artistic creativity into a single profession. Upon graduation in 2009, he and his wife moved to Texas where he refined his creative techniques and expertise in designing landscapes for both residential and commercial properties. As the landscape designer for the Navy Federal Credit Union Headquarters Campus, Brandon attempts to seamlessly merge the art and science of designing functional, sustainable, and aesthetically pleasing outdoor spaces. With a commitment to growth and innovation, Brandon aims to stay ahead in his profession by continuously learning and applying new technologies.

Degrees:

BS LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE, WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY

NFCU RECREATION TRAIL MURAL

FIRST CONCEPT SKETCHES



The first sketches explored the idea of using the red oak, that used to sit at the corner of the wall, as the central figure to tell the history of Vienna. We asked “what did that oak experience over the last couple hundred years?”



We also looked at various art styles in which to render the oak.



NFCU RECREATION TRAIL MURAL

CONCEPT AND DEVELOPMENT



We then expanded out to the bigger picture, still using the oak as the main focus. We looked at how transportation has changed over the years and what did those changes look like in terms of design, trying to incorporate the W&OD railway/trail into the narration.



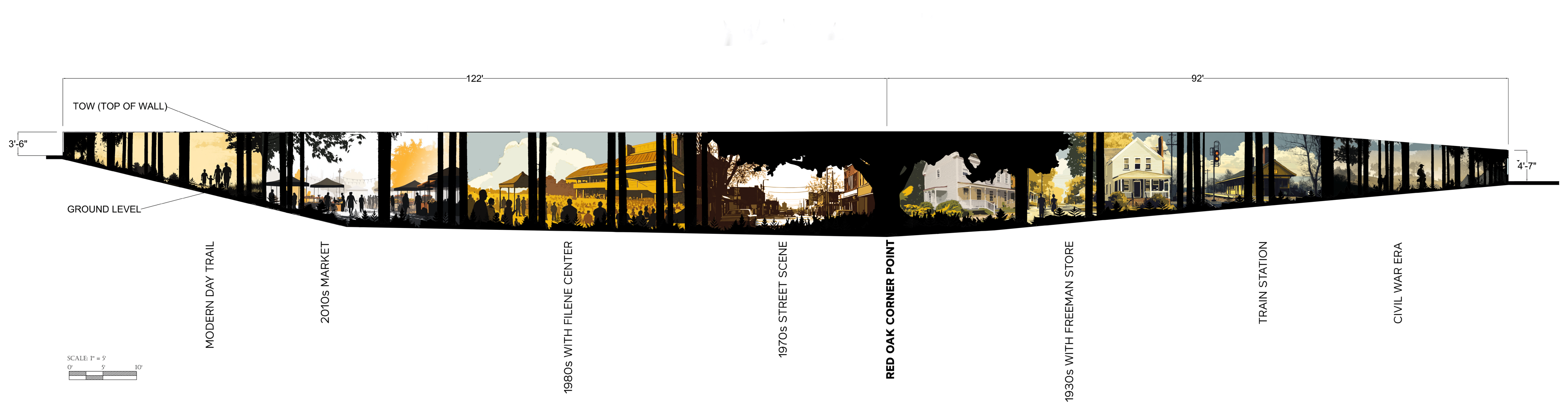
NFCU RECREATION TRAIL MURAL

FIRST CONCEPT WITH MOCKUP RENDERING



NFCU RECREATION TRAIL MURAL

FINAL DESIGN WITH MEASUREMENTS



Beginning on the right, the mural opens with a vignette of the Civil War era, where soldiers have set up camp among the trees. Tent lines stretch under the canopy, lantern light flickers, and figures pause in their routines. The red oaks, already mature and towering, provide both shade and shelter—silent observers of a nation at war with itself. The Vienna Train Depot signifies the healing of the nation and the forward progress beyond that great conflict. The red oaks gnarled roots entwine with the story of the land, anchoring this moment in time.

Moving left, the mural transitions into the 1930s and 1940s, capturing Vienna's emergence as a growing urban hub. At the center of this section stands the iconic Freeman Store and Museum, its porch always a draw for townspeople and activity. The backdrop shows a quiet urban street, hinting at progress. The oaks now stretch their branches over shopfronts and sidewalks, steady and unchanged, as the town blossoms beneath them.

Next comes a vibrant 1970s street scene, filled with bold car designs and energy. Imagine children on banana-seat bikes cruising past bell-bottomed pedestrians. There's a sense of casual joy—a slice of daily life in a town growing into itself. The red oaks continue to frame the image, their leaves casting shifting shadows on the pavement, unchanged as generations pass below.

As the mural moves further left, it crescendos into a vision of Vienna today. This final section is filled with the joys of community and culture:

- A lively performance at Wolf Trap's Filene Center, with music drifting into a summer sky.
- A bustling open-air street market, with neighbors greeting one another between stalls of flowers and produce.
- A family, hand in hand, wandering the tranquil paths of Meadowlark Botanical Gardens, possibly pausing beneath a red oak's dappled light.

NFCU RECREATION TRAIL MURAL

FINAL DESIGN WITH MOCKUP RENDERINGS



NFCU RECREATION TRAIL MURAL

FINAL DESIGN WITH MOCKUP RENDERINGS



NFCU RECREATION TRAIL MURAL

CLOSE UPS



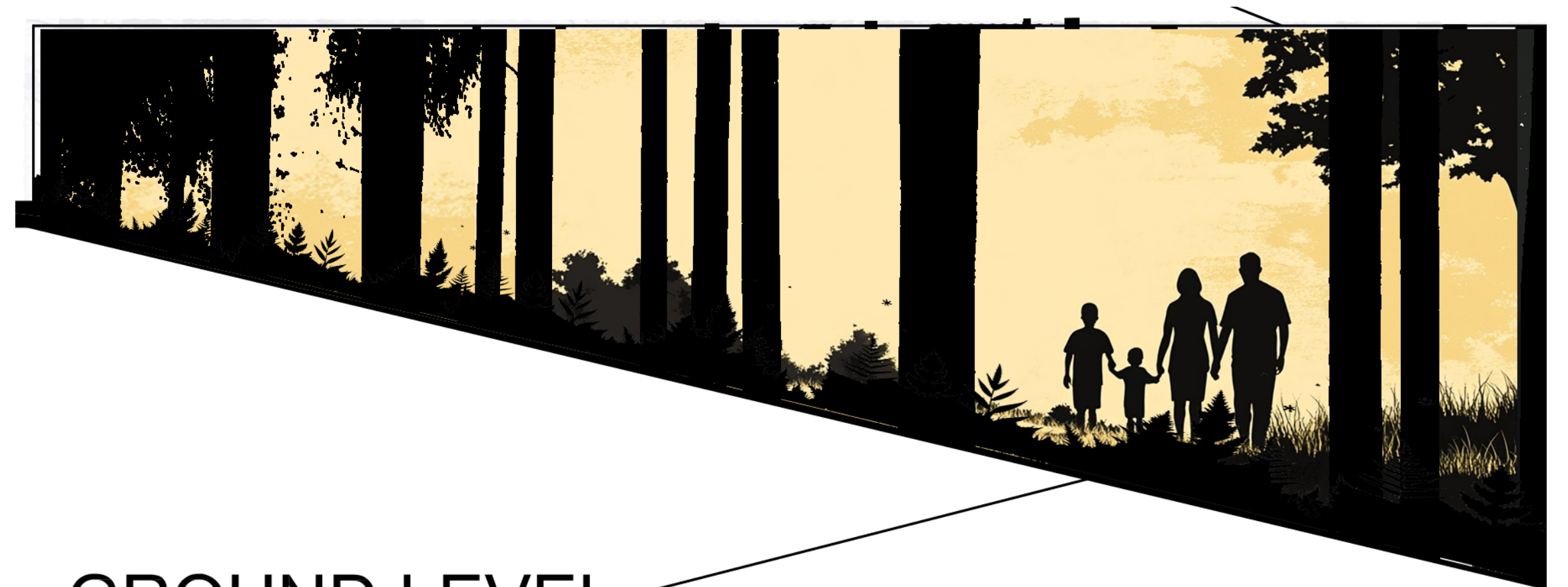
NFCU RECREATION TRAIL MURAL

CLOSE UPS



NFCU RECREATION TRAIL MURAL

CLOSE UPS



GROUND LEVEL

NFCU RECREATION TRAIL MURAL

COLOR PALETTE



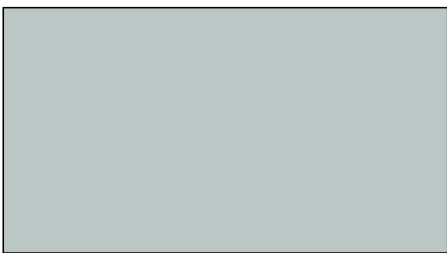
#000000



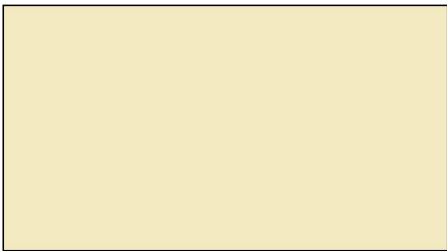
#ffffff



#7b8988



#bac7c5



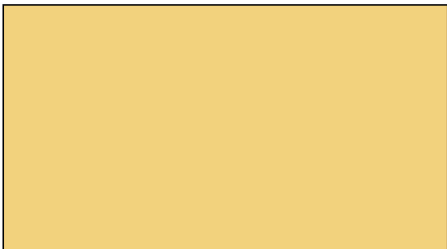
#f3e9c1



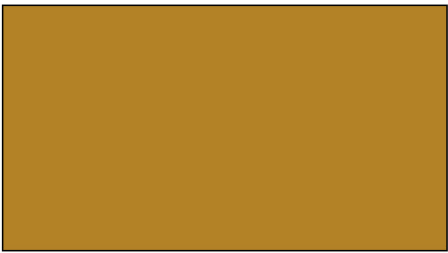
#bab095



#eeb426



#f3d27e



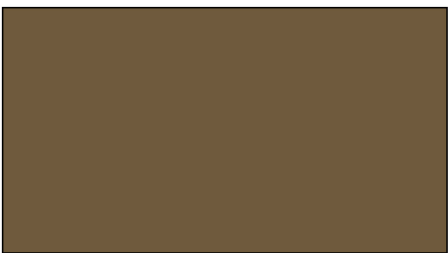
#b38227



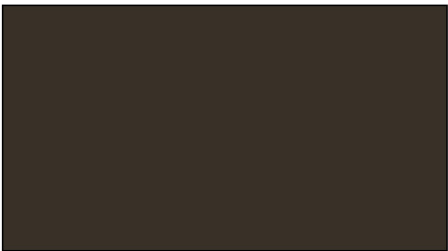
#a89572



#e2d5be



#6f5a3c



#383127



#0b0a0a



#f8f8f8

NFCU RECREATION TRAIL MURAL

SUPPLIES LIST

TBD