



STICKNEY FARMSTEAD

Bull Valley, Illinois

Living **With the Land**



The Mission

The *Living with the Land Initiative* aims to attract new life to Stickney House and Farmstead, making it a center for community activity and education. By offering new opportunities to interact with the area's natural resources, the site will contribute to Bull Valley's philosophy of conservation and stewardship.

As a site for outdoor recreation, the *Stickney Farmstead and Cherry Valley Trail* will connect with existing and proposed trails included in the *McHenry County 2030 Comprehensive Plan*, contributing to the regional plan for land use. With new commercial uses, the Stickney House and Farmstead will become a self-sustaining hub for ecotourism and eco-education, deepening the harmony between life and land.

The Approach



Stickney House

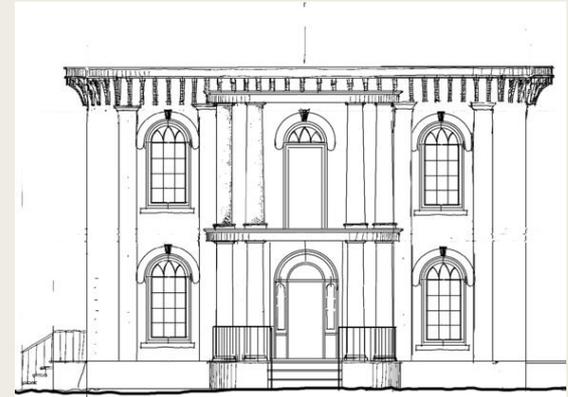
Stickney Farmstead

Stickney Trail

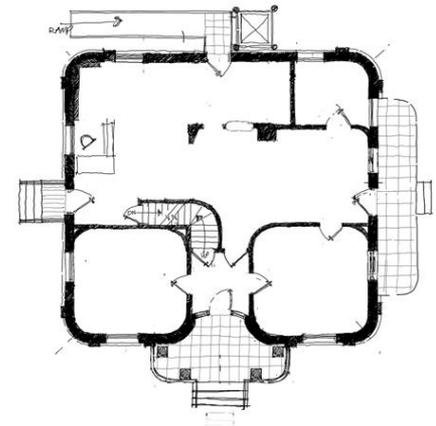


The long-range plan for Stickney House is to return the structure to a use more compatible with its history and aesthetics. Phase I involves activating the 2nd floor for interpretive gallery and office space. Phase II will involve restoration of the 1st floor, converting these rooms into warm, inviting spaces for celebrations of all sorts. Hosting of events will continue out onto the south lawn, where a seasonal tent will house receptions and outdoor activities. Phase III sees the 2nd floor fully activated as the *Living with the Land Center*. A glazed elevator tower with viewing platform will be added to the east façade, providing ADA access to the 2nd floor spaces.

"LIVING WITH THE LAND"



Stickney House

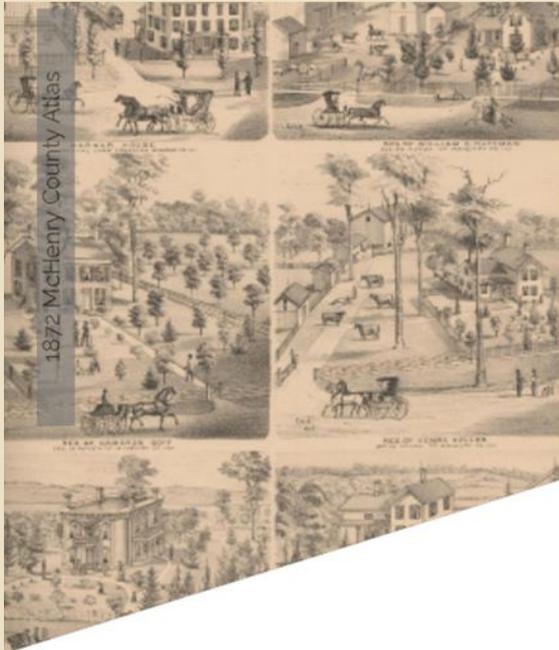




Timeline

- 1835 George Stickney (settler #1) arrives; builds log house on property occupied by Benjamin McOmbler (settler #2).
- 1836 Samuel Terwilliger (settler #3) builds house on farm
- 1839 First log schoolhouse built - Armenda McOmbler, head teacher
George Stickney marries Sylvia M. Beckley
- 1849-56 Stickney House construction
- 1860-70s Stickney family moves to a new home (in 1872 Stickney lived several miles southeast; farming grapes)
- 1872 J.S. Watrous purchases Stickney House, removes 2nd fl. porches
- 1874 J.S. Watrous builds "Crystal Spring Butter and Cheese Factory"
- 1877 J.S. Watrous wins gold medal at Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition for his butter
- 1897 George Stickney dies, buried at Holcombville Cemetery
- 1947 Atty. David R. Joslyn of Woodstock purchases Stickney Farmstead
Builds barn to house 50 milk cows and 30 head of young stock
- 1978 Donald Collins purchases Stickney Farmstead
Stickney House listed to National Register of Historic Places
- 1986 Stickney House is deeded to Village of Bull Valley
- 1991 Police Department makes Stickney House its headquarters

Stories



SETTLERS

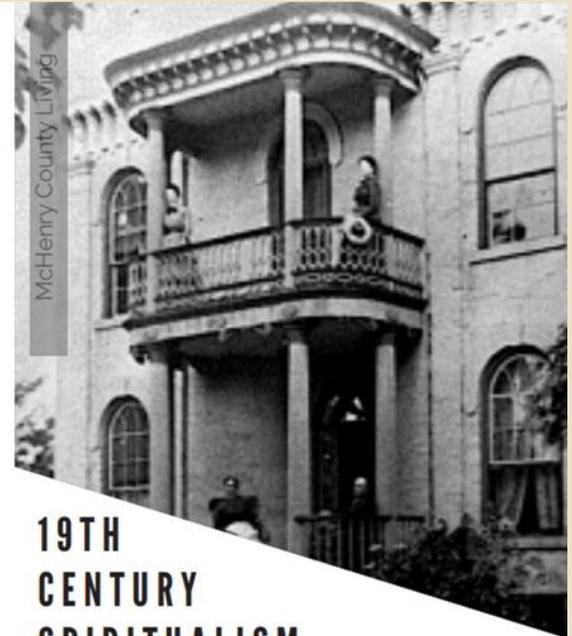
George Stickney settled in Nunda Township in 1835 and soon after erected a humble log cabin. Samuel Terwilliger, Benjamin McOmber, Cameron Goff and William Holcomb followed soon after and, along with other early pioneers, worked together to make the land hospitable for their families. Within a few years they had plowed the land, established the first cemetery, and built the first schoolhouse for the education of the township's five school-age children. Stickney built a formidable home for his family in 1849: the "House with Round Corners" that stands today.



STICKNEY HOUSE

ONE-ROOM SCHOOLHOUSES

The early settlers of Nunda Township were quick to build a one-room schoolhouse for the education of their children. In 1839 a log schoolhouse was erected just south of their homes, in Section 18. The first teacher, Armenda McOmber, was paid \$1.25 per week to teach her five pupils. In 1841 the log schoolhouse was moved west, and in 1858 a new brick schoolhouse was built to replace it. The school was in full operation until 1946 when, like many one-room country schools of the time, it was closed due to consolidation. The structure still remains as a reminder of the early days of this small community.



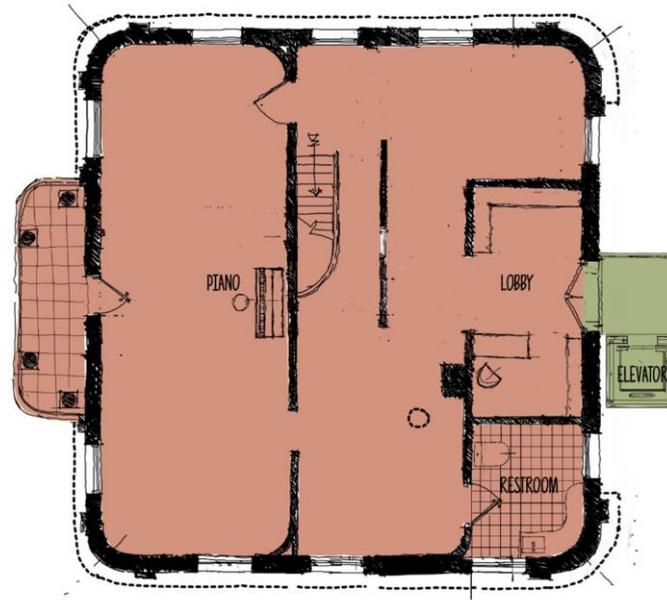
19TH CENTURY SPIRITUALISM

In the mid 19th century, Spiritualism was a widely popular ideology with as many as 11 million followers across North America. Followers believed in channeling voices of the dead as a means of connecting with the past, while imagining new futures in the spiritual and physical worlds. The Stickneys were among the most devout Spiritualists in the area. Their faith informed the design of their prominent home on Cherry Valley Road, built with no square corners to prevent spirits from being trapped within. The Stickney House endures as a valuable monument to what was once an important way of life for 19th century Americans.

PHASE

2nd Floor Renovation:

- Conversion of ballroom to interpretive gallery for historic displays and local artists
- Work and office spaces for Stickney House Administration Team



PHASE

1st Floor Restoration:

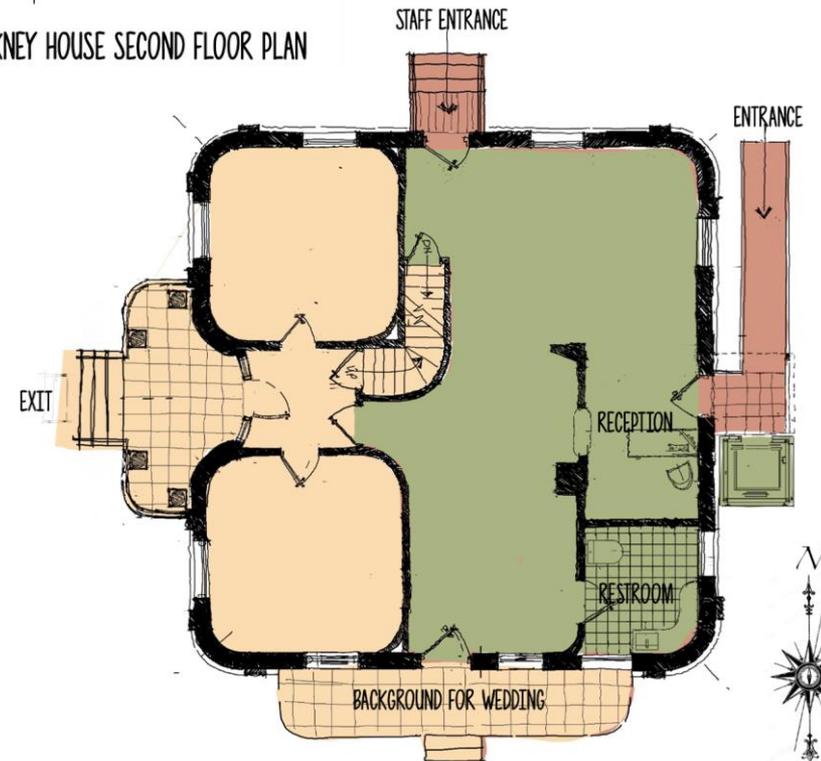
- Historic restoration of front parlors and dining room into event spaces ready for small receptions
- Continuation onto South Lawn including seasonal tent for receptions and outdoor celebrations

PHASE

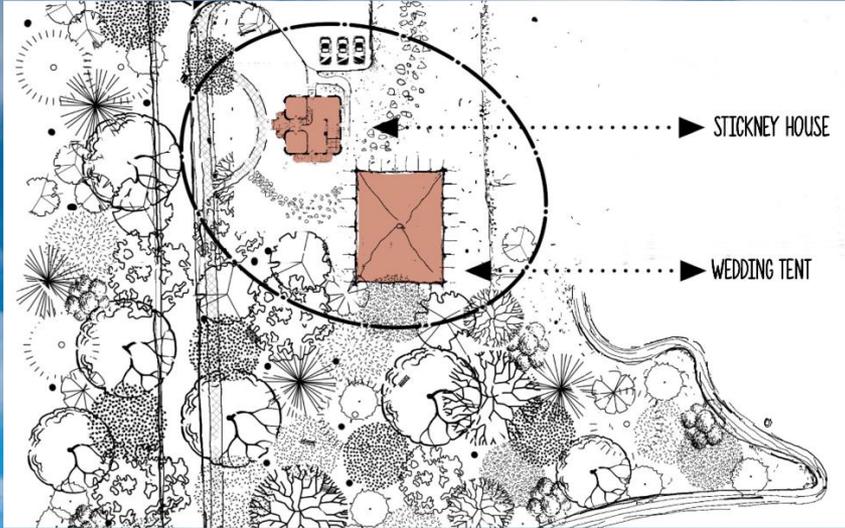
Full House Activation:

- Fully develop 'Living with the Land Center'
- Construction of 1st floor information center
- Design and Construction of exterior glazed two story elevator tower along east façade

STICKNEY HOUSE SECOND FLOOR PLAN



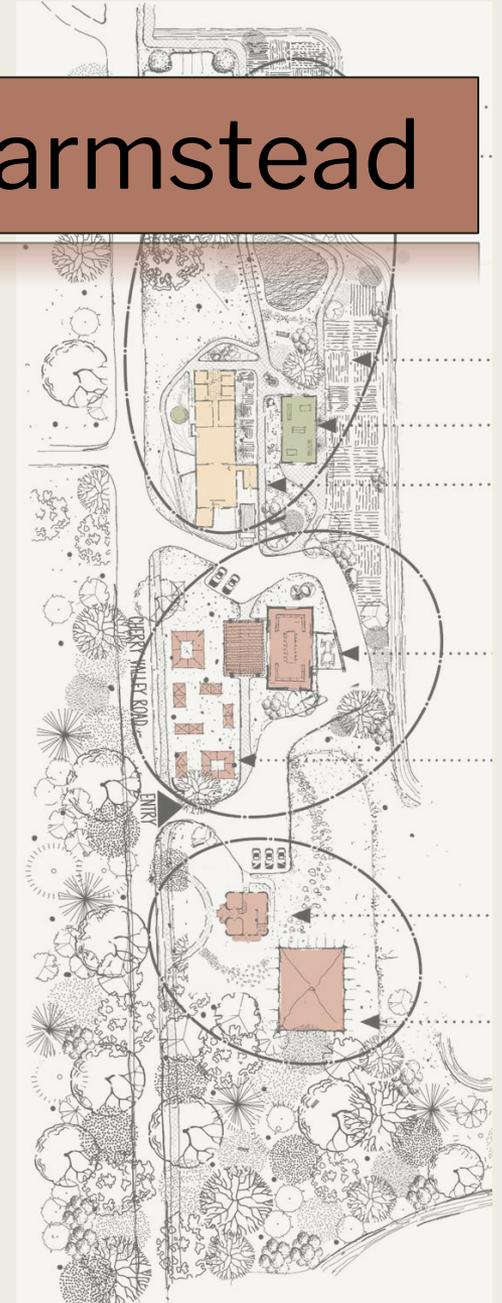
STICKNEY HOUSE FIRST FLOOR PLAN



Stickney Farmstead

The Stickney Farmstead occupies nearly six acres along Cherry Valley Road, including the historic Stickney House, an expansive dairy barn, and two sheds. This farmstead, with its three underused buildings and wealth of open space, has enormous potential for various public and private uses. The three-phased plan for Stickney Farmstead seeks to activate this land for commercial, recreational, and educational uses.

"LIVING WITH THE LAND"



Stories



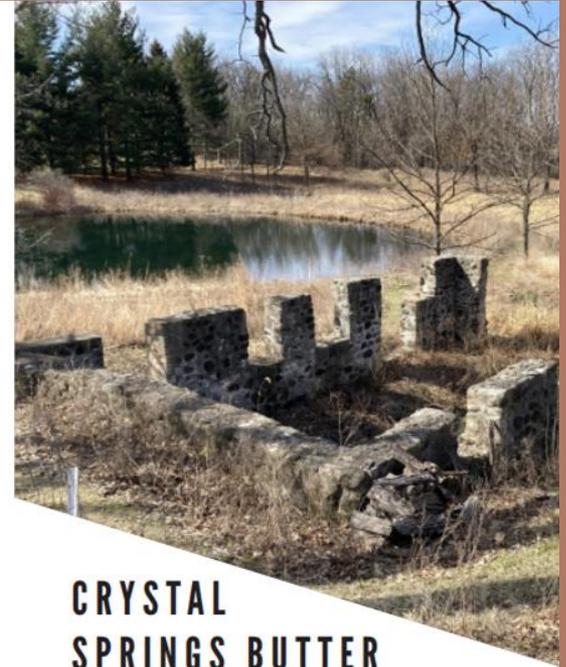
LIVING WITH THE LAND

McHenry County's diverse ecosystem includes glacial kames, kettles, oak savannas and tallgrass prairies. The unique terrain means inhabitants needed to find ways of living with the land rather than against it. A high water table and gravelly earth make traditional farming difficult. Both Native Peoples and European Settlers used the land more for livestock grazing than for crops. In the late 19th c. the Stickney farmstead and others supplied raw milk to nearby dairy processing centers like the Crystal Springs Butter and Cheese Factory (now a ruin).

STICKNEY FARMSTEAD

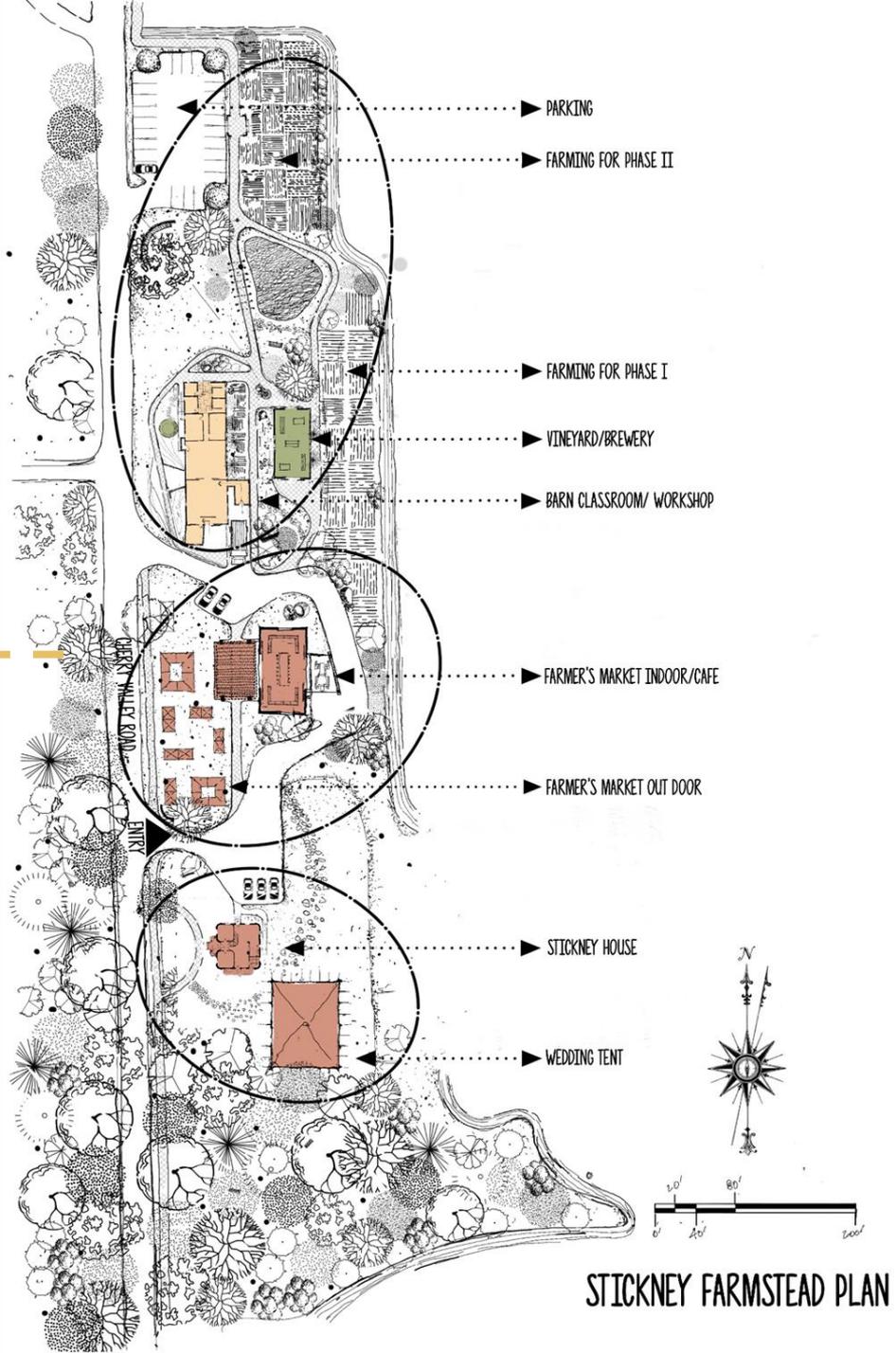
HOUSE AND STRUCTURE

Between 1849 and 1856 George Stickney constructed a prominent two-story brick house for his family on the property he settled in in 1835. The buff colored brick was reportedly acquired from Kenosha, Wisconsin, and transported to the site by ox cart. Of particular interest are the curved bricks used to construct the rounded corners of the building. The house originally sat on a fieldstone foundation faced with cobblestones set in sharply pointed mortar beds, a building technique found in early buildings from this region.



CRYSTAL SPRINGS BUTTER & CHEESE FACTORY

In 1874 neighbors Samuel Terwilliger and J.S. Watrous (who had purchased the Stickney farmstead) constructed a cheese factory on land just south of Watrous' land, on Cherry Valley Road. The building was positioned directly over a natural fresh-water spring whose water was used for butter production in the winter and cheese during the summer months. Butter from Crystal Springs took the National Butter and Egg Association gold medal at the 1876 Centennial Exposition. The factory remained in operation for at least ten years, passing to William Minir who reportedly ran it with great success into the 1880s.





PHASE I - SHORT TERM
1- FARMERS MARKET: OPEN SHED
2- PARTIALLY OPEN FIRST FLOOR
OF BARN.

PHASE

Circulation Improvements- Farmers Market:

- Addition of walkways and an open-air farmers market, centrally located between the House and Barn
- Increasing the public functionality of the site without requiring modification to the Farmstead's built structures

PHASE

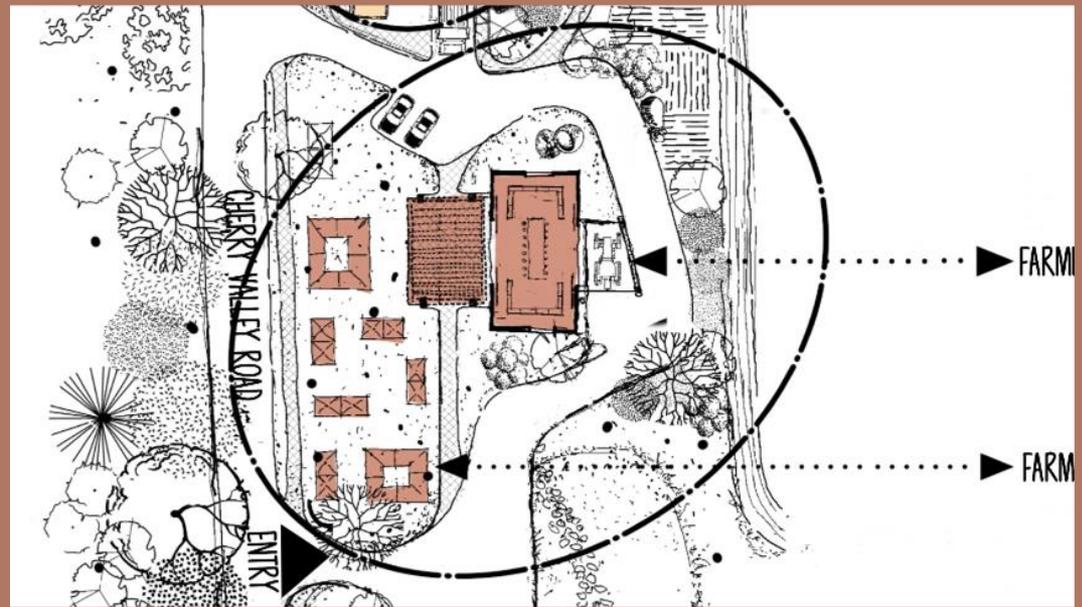
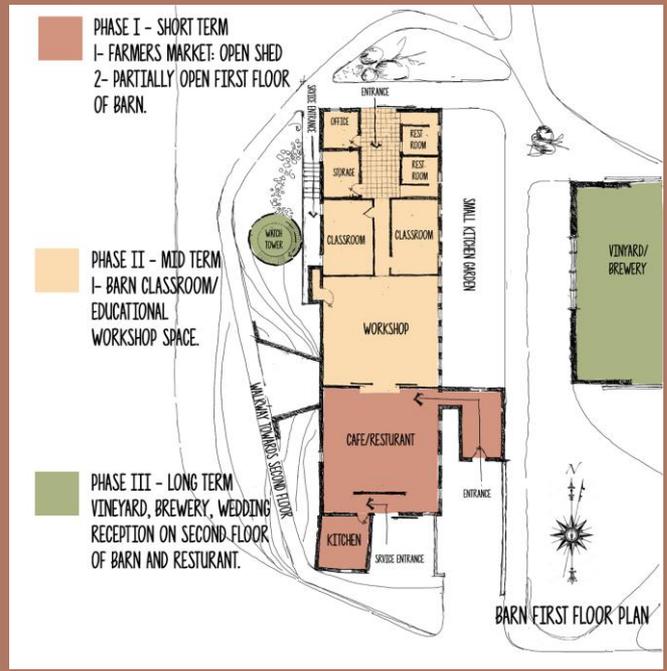
Central Shed & Ground Floor Barn Renovation:

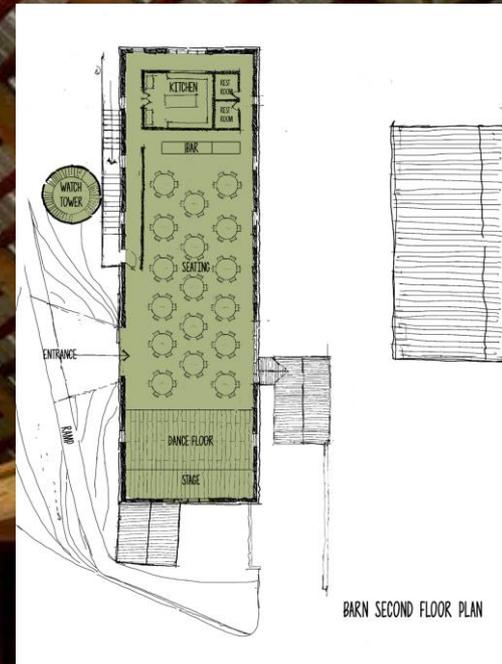
- Transformation of these two structures into flexible spaces
- Base of operations for Farmers Market and classroom/workshop spaces

PHASE

Upper Level Barn & North Shed Renovation:

- Transformation of the Barn's upper level into a commercially viable space
- Including dining/seating area, full-scale kitchen facilities,
- Potential for brewery, vineyard or "farm to table" restaurant use





PHASE III - LONG TERM
VINEYARD, BREWERY, WEDDING
RECEPTION ON SECOND-FLOOR
OF BARN AND RESTURANT.

I PHASE

Circulation Improvements- Farmers Market:

- Addition of walkways and an open-air farmers market, centrally located between the House and Barn
- Increasing the public functionality of the site without requiring modification to the Farmstead's built structures

II PHASE

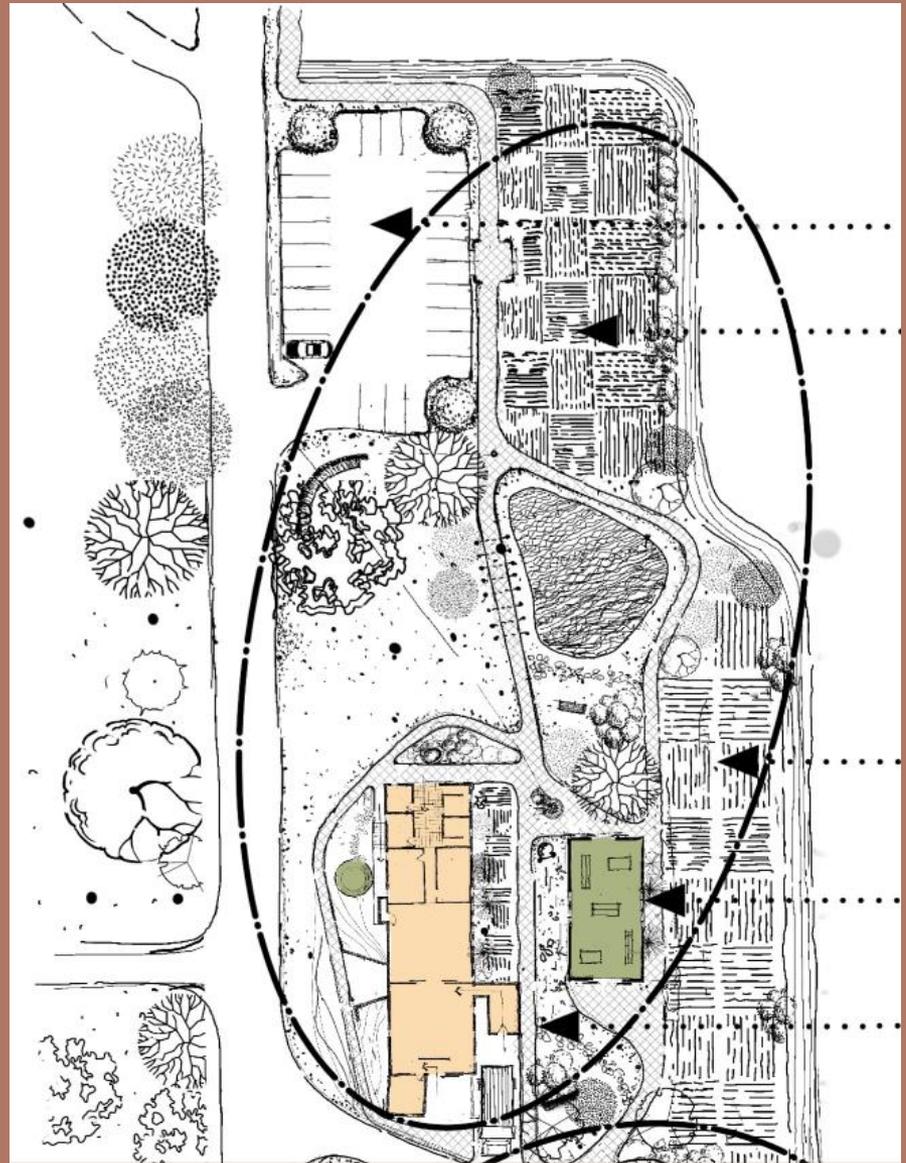
Central Shed & Ground Floor Barn Renovation:

- Transformation of these two structures into flexible spaces
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III PHASE

Upper Level Barn & North Shed Renovation:

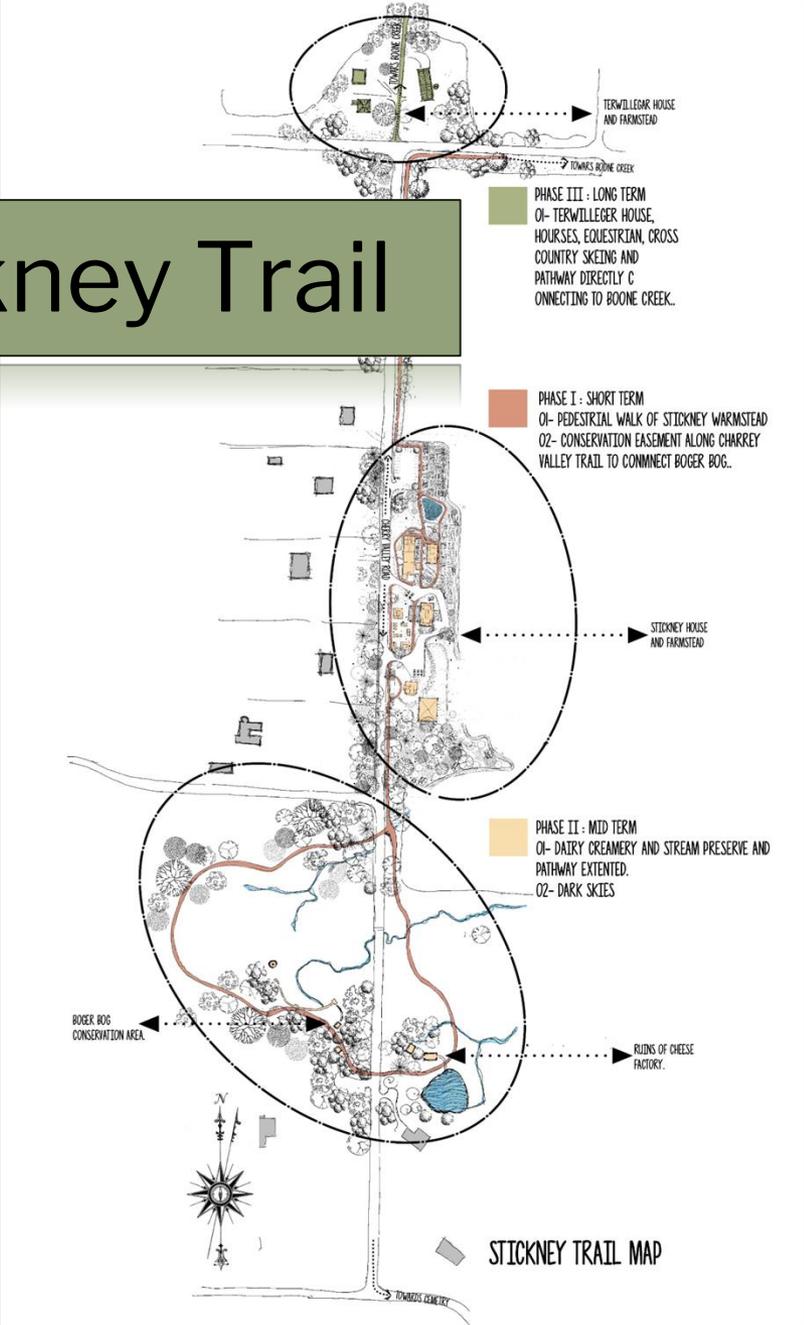
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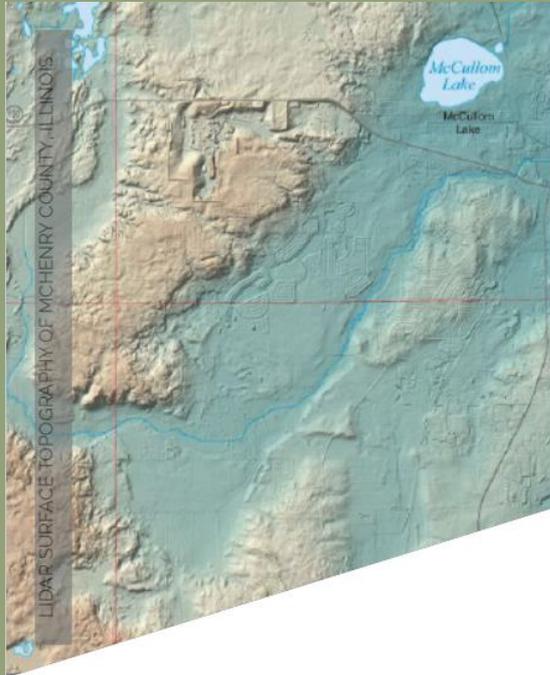
Located in the heart of Bull Valley, the Trail will extend along Cherry Valley Road with the goal of connecting important historic and natural landmarks. Pedestrian, bicycle, and eventually equestrian trails set within the conservation easement areas flanking Cherry Valley Road will center on Stickney House & Farmstead. The proposed Stickney Trail will be fully integrated into the McHenry County trails proposed by the Regional Planning Commission in the 2030 Plan Future Land Use Map. The three-phase plan will support local, state, and regional goals in agritourism and ecotourism, while enhancing the principle interests of the McHenry County Green Infrastructure Plan.



Stickney Trail



Stories



GLACIAL TOPOGRAPHY

The topography of McHenry County was heavily impacted by glacial activity during the last ice age. The retreat of the glaciers between 10,000-16,000 years ago left hills formed by glacial deposits (kames) and depressions where glacial lakes once existed (kettles). Boger Bog, just south and west of the Stickney Farmstead, is an example of one of these kettles. Water drainage from glacial melt carved out a vast network of streams and waterways, including nearby Boone Creek, approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ mile due north of the Stickney site. Numerous fresh water springs dot the landscape near the farmstead.

STICKNEY TRAIL

ARCHAEOLOGY

In 1989 an archaeological survey identified the location of the historic Norton Homestead, just northeast of the Stickney Farmstead. Some 277 artifacts were identified at the site including ceramics, container glass, tableware and personal items. One prehistoric artifact was found, but is considered an isolated find. These findings confirmed that the site was occupied by early settlers from the mid-19th through early 20th century - first by the Norton Family from 1846-1866 and later by the Jacobs family who occupied the site until approximately 1908. By 1927 the homestead was razed and the lands converted to agricultural fields.



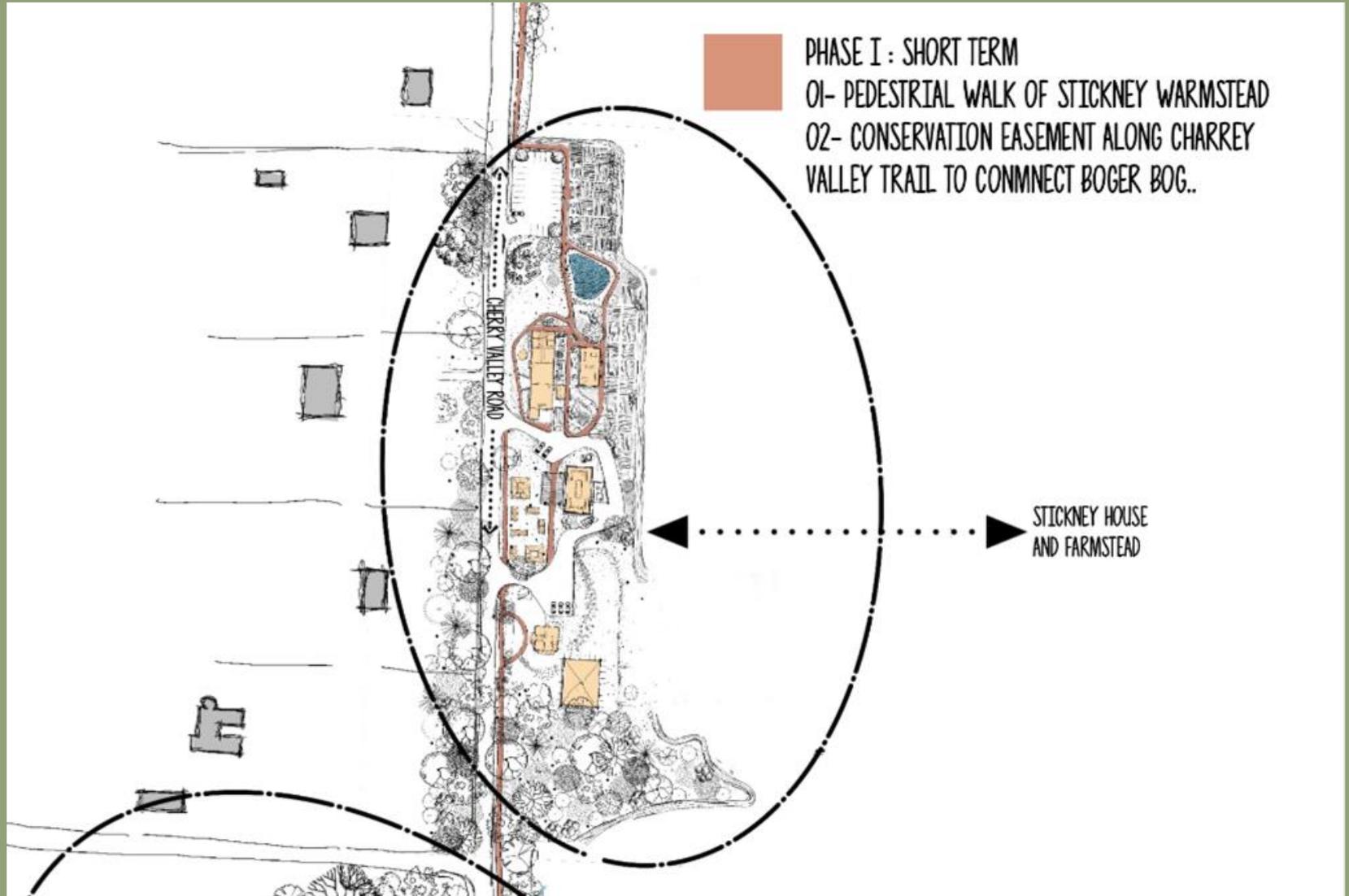
BOGER BOG

Boger Bog Conservation Area is just south and across Cherry Valley Road from the Stickney Farmstead. The 38 acre site offers 300 feet of boardwalk through natural wetlands, and incorporates interpretive signage that further describes the natural setting. Technically not a bog, the alkaline fen and adjacent oak woodland provide sanctuary for regional wildlife. The entrance is from 211 Cherry Valley Road.

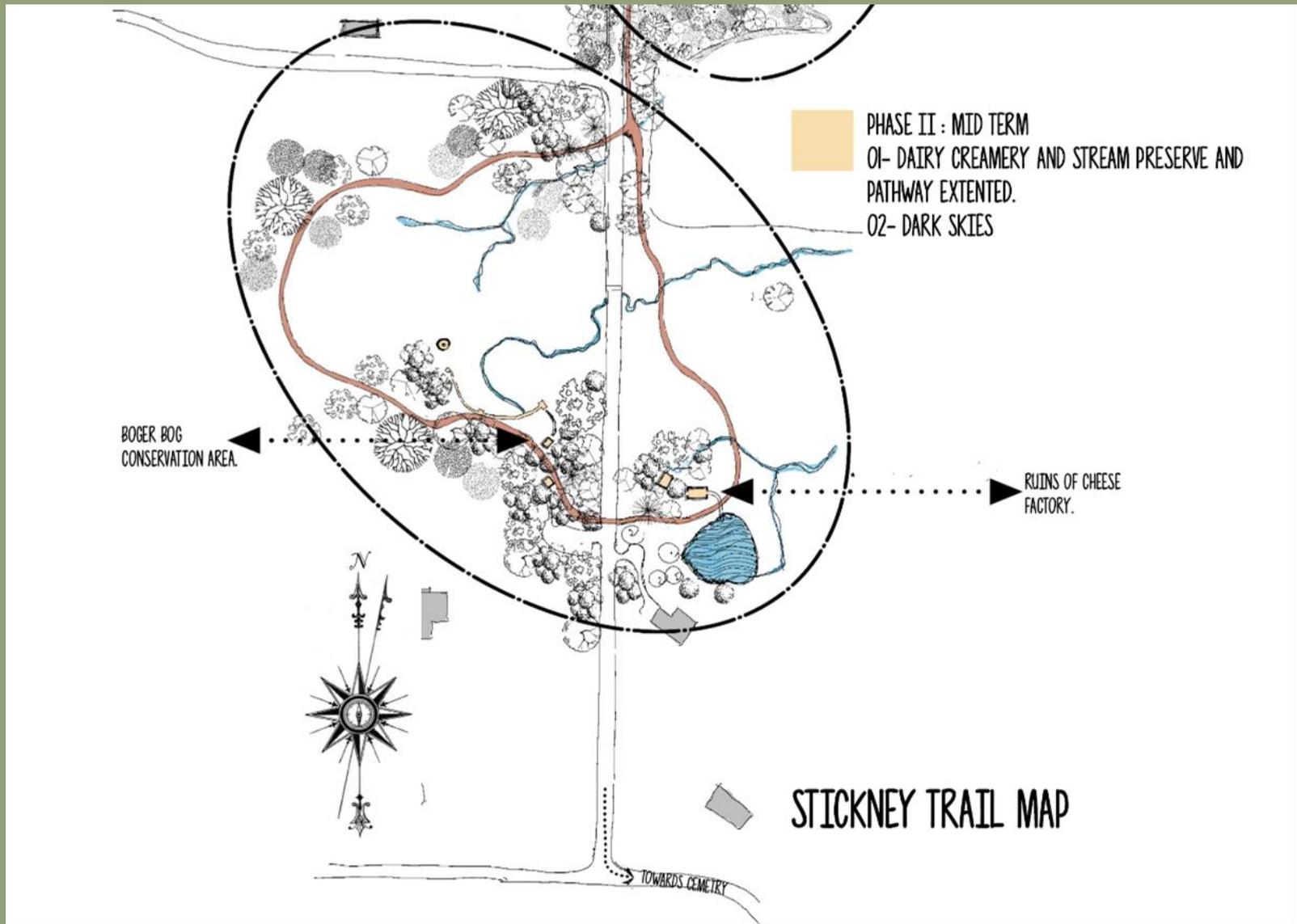


Left: Pedestrian Survey of the Field Containing the Erastus and Fanny Norton Homestead (11Mh351)

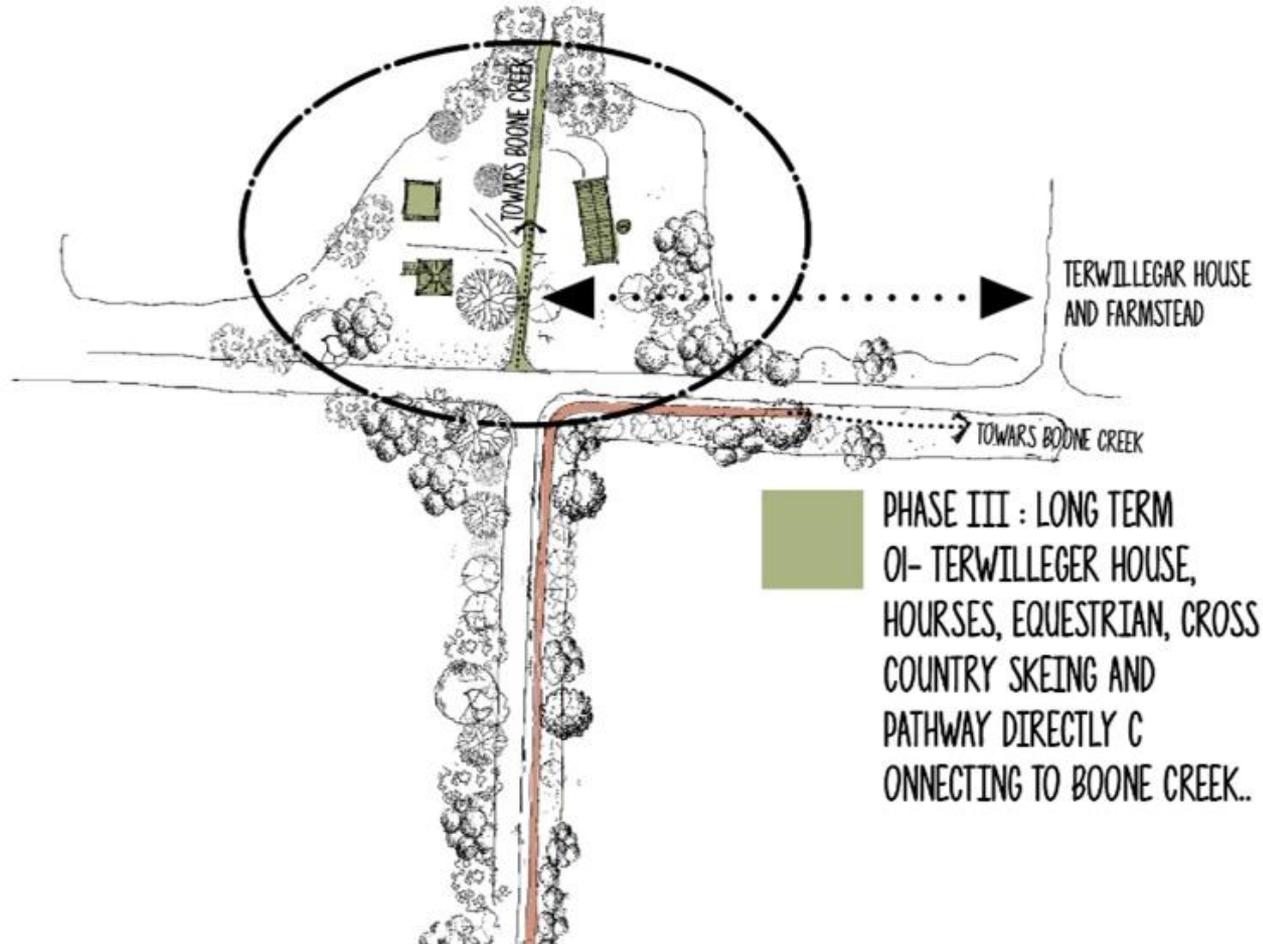
Stickney Trail Phase I



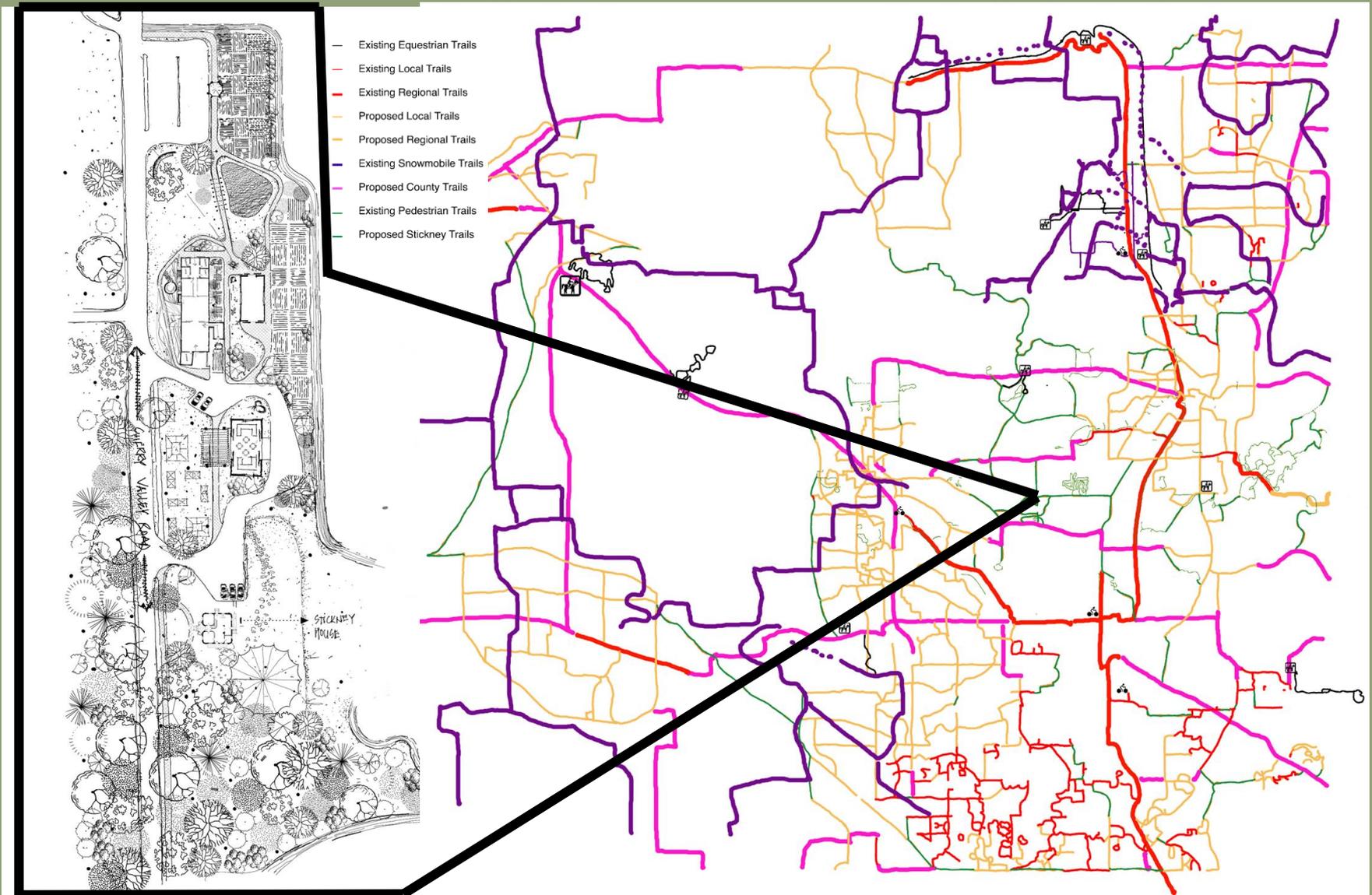
Stickney Trail Phase II



Stickney Trail Phase III

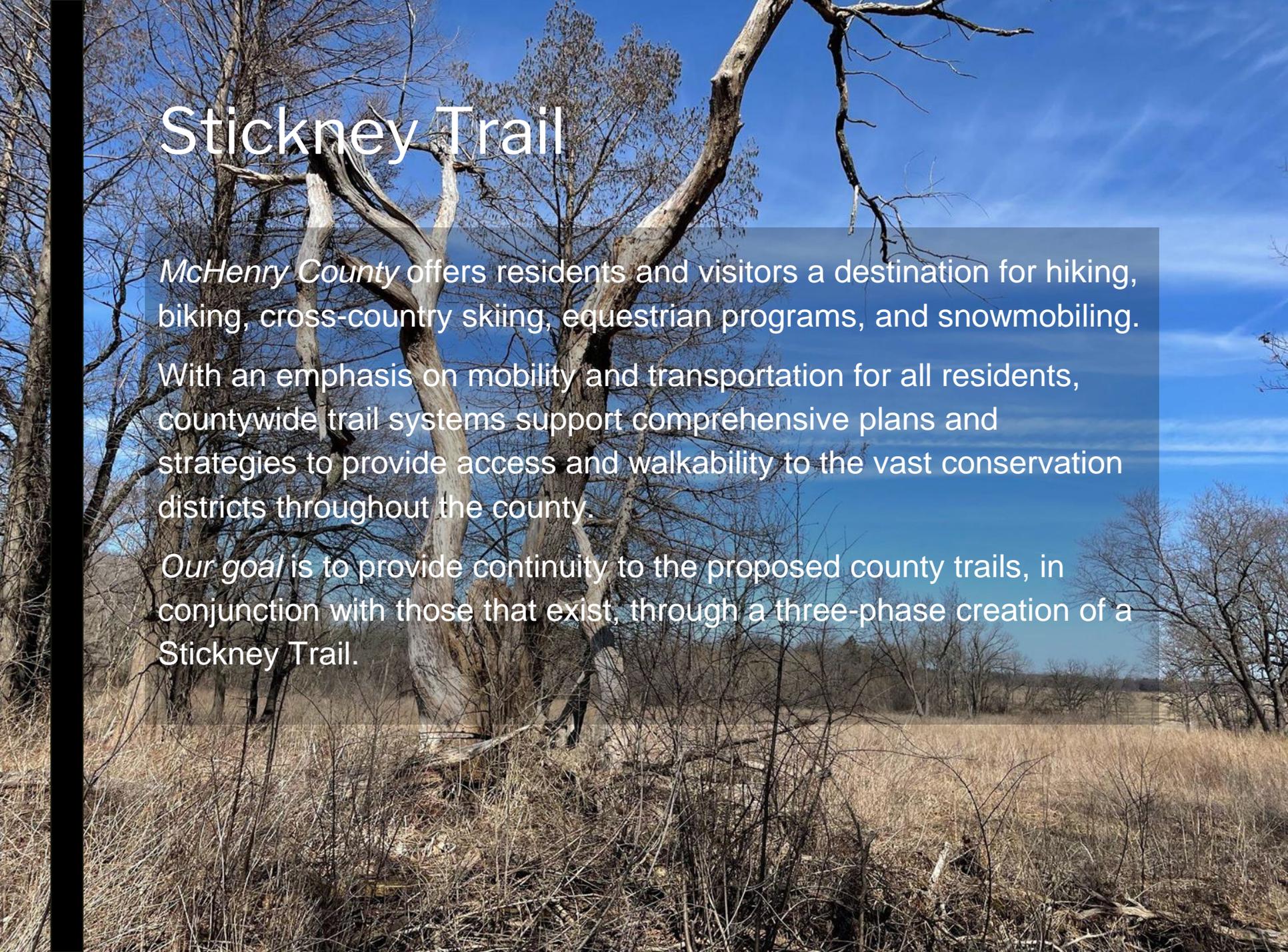


County Trail System





Stickney Trail



McHenry County offers residents and visitors a destination for hiking, biking, cross-country skiing, equestrian programs, and snowmobiling.

With an emphasis on mobility and transportation for all residents, countywide trail systems support comprehensive plans and strategies to provide access and walkability to the vast conservation districts throughout the county.

Our goal is to provide continuity to the proposed county trails, in conjunction with those that exist, through a three-phase creation of a Stickney Trail.

TEAM

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Mark Newton, Parks and Grounds and Stickney House Liaison

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Under the guidance of: Assoc. Prof. Anne T. Sullivan