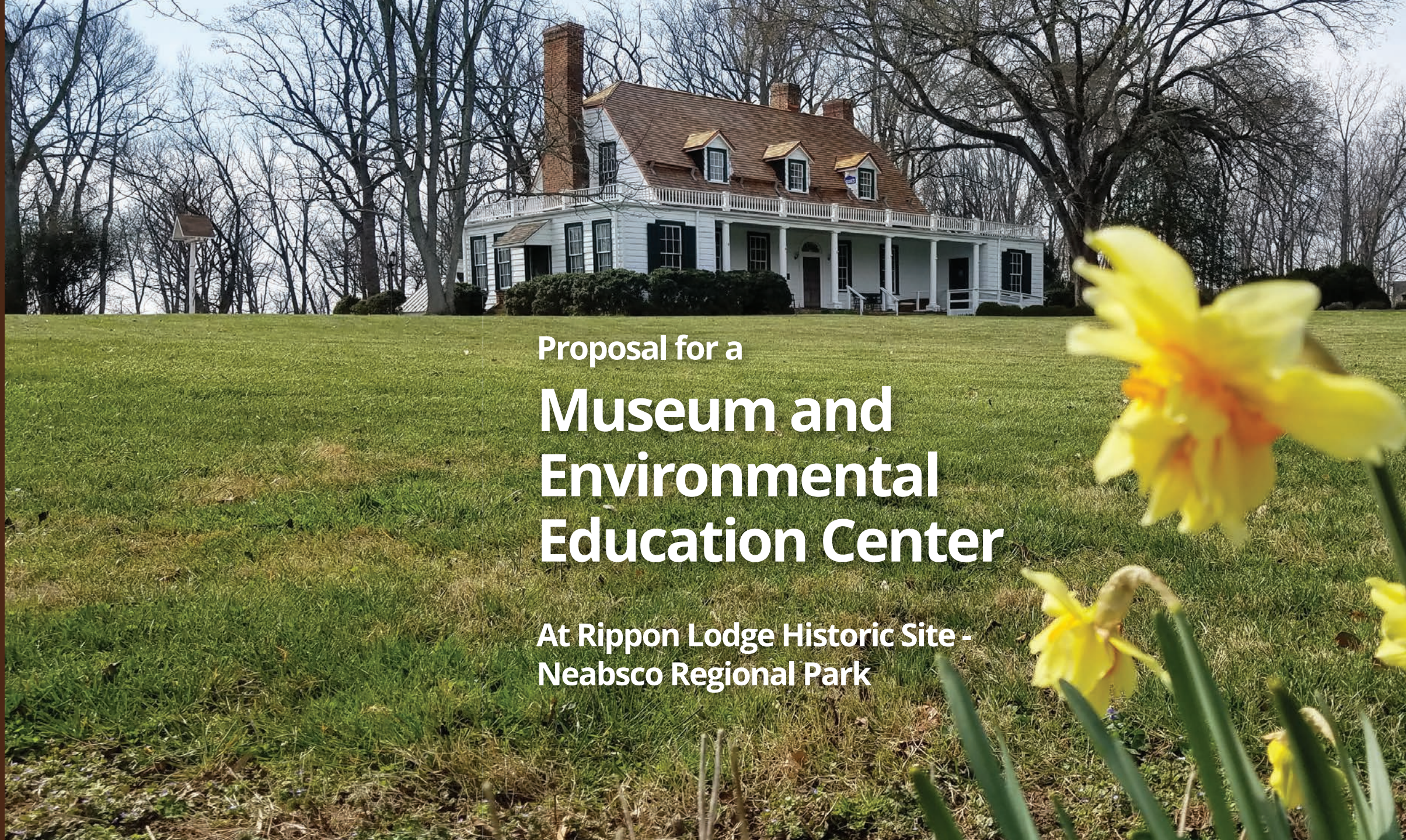


This proposal is presented by the Prince William County Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism, in partnership with the Prince William Historic Preservation Foundation and the Prince William County Parks Foundation.



Proposal for a
**Museum and
Environmental
Education Center**

At Rippon Lodge Historic Site -
Neabsco Regional Park

PRINCE WILLIAM
—Parks, Recreation & Tourism



A fully modern museum with a focus on the history and peoples of the Potomac River.

Prince William County Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism in partnership with the Prince William Historic Preservation Foundation and the Prince William County Parks Foundation seeks to design and construct a museum and environmental education center at the Neabsco Creek Regional Park/Rippon Lodge Historic Site located in Woodbridge, VA.

Beginning in 2003, Prince William County Board of County Supervisors identified Rippon Lodge Historic Site as a location for a future County history museum. The Prince William Historic Preservation Foundation (a 501c3 nonprofit partner) was formed to raise funds and awareness for the museum. In 2015, the Foundation began to seek General Assembly

support for funding the Developmental Phase of the project (schematic design, development design, construction documents). The Prince William County Board of County Supervisors annually endorses the Foundation's efforts to raise funds/awareness of the proposal.

In 2018, County staff revised the scope of the project to include an environmental science/nature center component. There are currently no public accessible nature centers with in Prince William County (or Stafford County and eastern Fairfax County). The revised project will be a center focused on the history of the Potomac River. Themes in the center will include Native American history, European exploration/settlement, development of the area into an economy

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based on enslavement and the role the Potomac played in creating a diverse culture. The rich environmental and natural sciences of the Potomac River will also be fully integrated into this center. The revised project was proposed but not accepted to be including in the County's Park Bond proposal.





A state-of-the-art nature center with an emphasis on the importance of our ecosystem.

The staff believes the “Potomac History and Environmental Education Center” would be not only a draw to Rippon Lodge Historic Site and Neabsco Regional Park, but also a draw for the region and our neighboring partners and networks. This facility will address a critical need for the County to offer environmental education and field trip opportunities for local school children as well as an opportunity to attract out of town and day tourists to Prince William County and Woodbridge.

A fully modern nature center will allow visitors and students to learn about our important

ecosystems and be able to encounter plant and animal life. The facility will also address critical need in telling the early history of the region, with a focus on Native American and Colonial experiences and how these impacted the development of our area today.

Showing the important link of history to the natural environment is key to educating people today the important role we play in taking care of our ecosystems. The center will serve as a gateway not just to Prince William County but also the Potomac River and all of the Washington DC metropolitan area.

Showing the important link of history to the natural environment is key to educating people today about the significant role we play in taking care of our ecosystems.





A catalyst for the County's growing heritage, agritourism and eco-based tourism inventory.

According to the Virginia Tourism Corporation in 2019, prior to the impacts created by the COVID-19 pandemic, tourism in Prince William is a \$643M economy supporting 6,782 careers as well as provides over \$37.8M in local and state tax revenue.

The addition of this new tourism asset will serve as a launching point to attract additional leisure, group, and other types of visitations that can cross-pollinate the economy afterwards with shopping, dining, and hotel stays in one of the many area hotel rooms.

The proposed facility at Rippon Lodge Historic Site is designated by the County as a focus area for this type of facility. Rippon Lodge Historic Site now attracts nearly 45,000 visitors annually with planned growth via programming and site development to approximately 75,000 annually. The master plan for Rippon Lodge Historic Site

calls for an active early 20th century farm, with livestock and living history demonstrations. Recently Rippon Lodge Historic Site became part of a new Neabsco Creek Regional Park, which includes the world class Neabsco Creek Boardwalk. This boardwalk, built in 2019, already sees an annual visitation of 240,000+. The boardwalk serves as a link along the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail over Neabsco Creek, as well as a link between Rippon Lodge Historic Site and Leesylvania State Park (one of the top visited State Parks in the Virginia Commonwealth).

The boardwalk also boasts science and environmental education programming that is quickly becoming popular with local schools. The combined history and environmental focus of this facility provides a great expansion of both the County's vision of education via

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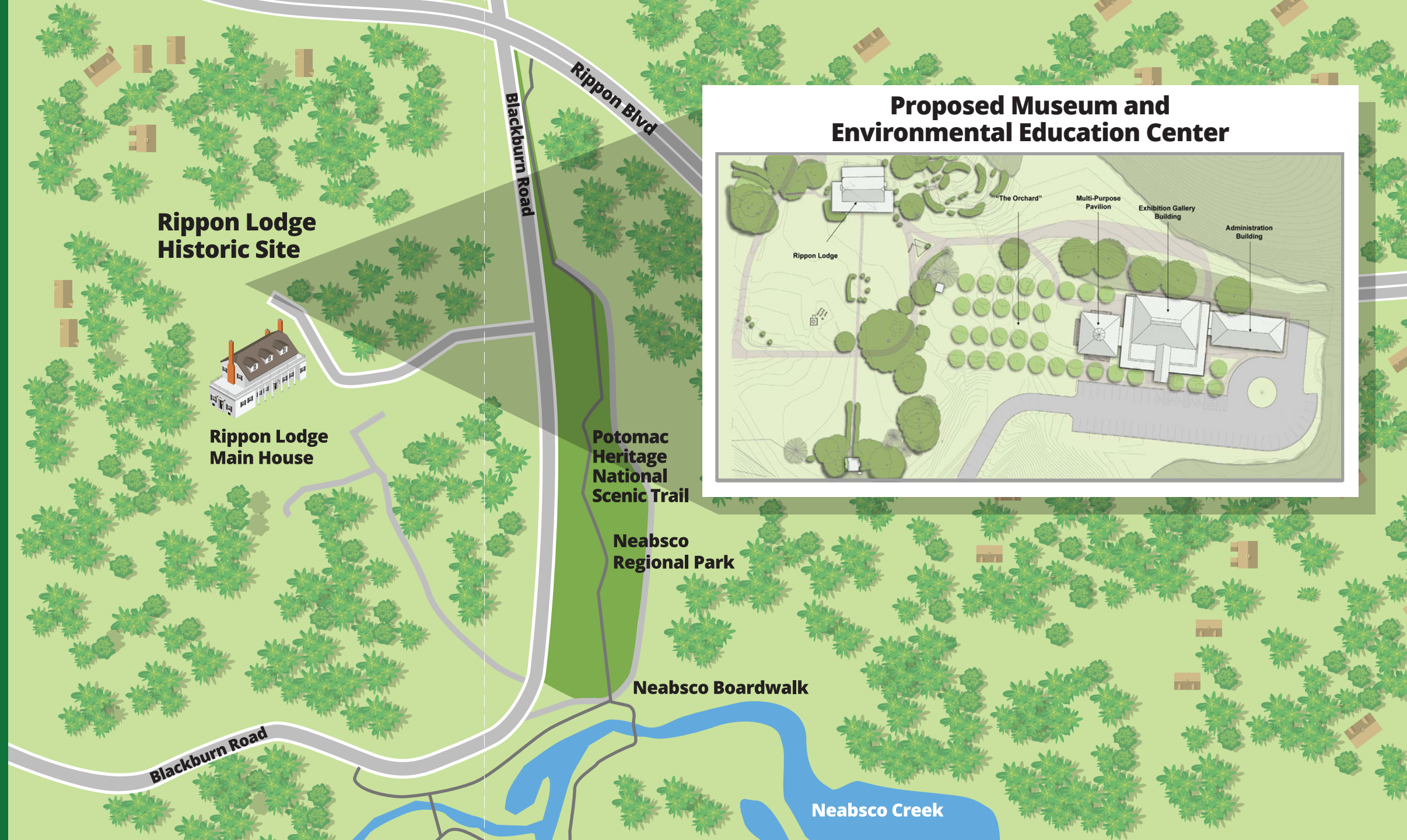
our history and natural world. The combined offerings of this site will provide a somewhat unique environment for learning on different levels and through classical and state of the art media.

Prince William County is rich in historical and natural resources and needs and deserves the focus this site will bring.



Selecting this site for this facility will allow the County to coordinate with several local, state, and Federal programs and partners including:

- Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail (Neabsco Regional Park and Rippon Lodge Historic Site are both on this Federal scenic trail administered by the National Park Service).
- National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom (Rippon Lodge Historic Site is part of this Federal historic program administered by the National Park Service).
- Washington Rochambeau National Historic Trail (Rippon Lodge Historic Site and nearby King's Highway Historic Site are both on this Federal historic trail administered by the National Park Service).
- Star Spangled Banner National Historic Trail (Neabsco Regional Park is part of this Federal historic trail administered by the National Park Service).
- Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail (Neabsco Creek Regional Park is eligible for inclusion on this Federal historic trail administered by the National Park Service).
- Road to Revolution Heritage Trail (Rippon Lodge Historic Site is undergoing application process to be included in this Virginia heritage trail).
- Adjacent to the site is Leesylvania State Park and Julie J. Metz Wetlands (part of Neabsco Regional Park).
- Within ten miles of the site is Prince William Forest Park (National Park Service), Featherstone National Wildlife Refuge and Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge.
- Neighboring museums including National Museum of the Marine Corps, Future National Americans at Wartime Museum, National Museum of the United States Army, George Mason's Gunston Hall and George Washington's Mount Vernon.





Museum and Environmental Education Center at Rippon Lodge Historic Site - Neabsco Regional Park

Other benefits of this location include:

- Easy access to Interstate 95 (one mile via Rippon Boulevard) and historic Route 1 (.75 miles via Rippon Boulevard)
- Nearly one million residents live in a combined area of Prince William County, Stafford County and eastern Fairfax County
- Close proximity to dining, entertainment and shopping opportunities at Stone Bridge at Potomac Town Center (one mile away via Rippon Boulevard) and Potomac Mills Mall (3 miles away)
- Proximity to educational facilities such as Northern Virginia Community College (Woodbridge Campus), Potomac Science Center (George Mason University)
- Proximity to the Virginia Railway Express (Rippon Station)

Estimated cost of the Developmental/Design Phase is \$300,000. Estimated total cost of project at completion is \$9,000,000.

