

Freedom Riders National Monument Bus Burning Site Master Plan

Anniston, Alabama

National Park Service
US Department
of the Interior



Dear Friends:

We at the National Park Service (NPS) are seeking your feedback on ideas for developing and managing the bus burning site at Freedom Riders National Monument. The park is inviting public input on preliminary design concepts that will guide long-term management and development as part of a master plan for the bus burning site outside of Anniston. Please help us shape the development of the park's resources by participating in the planning process and providing your thoughts about what you would like to see on site. This newsletter provides background on the planning process to date, our upcoming public meetings, and shares information about when you can meet with the planning team in person and how you can provide your invaluable comments. We are truly grateful for your involvement in this process and look forward to your continued participation. Thank you!

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Rolando Herts Ph.D.

Superintendent, Freedom Riders & Birmingham Civil Rights
National Monuments

The National Park Service is seeking public feedback on this project during a 30-day public comment period. We encourage you to share your thoughts and ideas about the information presented in this newsletter at the public meeting, and online at the following website: https://parkplanning.nps.gov/FRRRI_Bus_Burning_Plan

After considering input received during this public engagement period, The National Park Service will refine the preliminary draft concepts and move forward with the formal environmental compliance process outlined in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Your input is key in helping us move forward.



Site Visit for the NPS Team and Freedom Rider Stakeholders - March 2024

INSIDE

02 Park Overview

03 Site Master Plan

04 Desired Conditions
for the Monument

05 Background on the
Planning Process

06 Preliminary Design Concepts

12 Planning Schedule

Get Involved

Attend a Public Open House Event

The 30-day public comment period on the design concepts starts on September 9, 2024, and ends on October 9, 2024. The National Park Service will hold two open house events in Anniston, Alabama, on September 24, 2024; there will be no formal presentation during the meeting. Attendees are welcome to arrive at any convenient time during the scheduled hours below. At the meetings the park will share information about the plan and planning process, gather input, and answer questions from the public.

Meeting Dates and Locations

- **September 24th, 11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.**
Greyhound Bus Depot
1031 Gurnee Avenue
Anniston, AL 36201
- **September 24th, 4:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.**
Anniston City Meeting Center, Room C
1615 Noble Street
Anniston, AL 36201

Learn More at the Project Website

Learn more about the Freedom Riders, Freedom Rides campaign, and the events in Anniston on May 14, 1961. You can explore the concepts presented in this newsletter in more detail at the [project website](#).

Share Your Comments

Please [visit the website](#) and share your thoughts on with the team during the comment period between September 9, 2024, and October 9, 2024.

Park Overview

Freedom Riders National Monument was designated on January 12, 2017, through Presidential Proclamation 9566. The purpose of the monument is to memorialize the Freedom Riders by preserving and protecting the historic objects associated with the former Greyhound bus depot in Anniston, Alabama, and the site of the bus burning outside Anniston in Calhoun County.

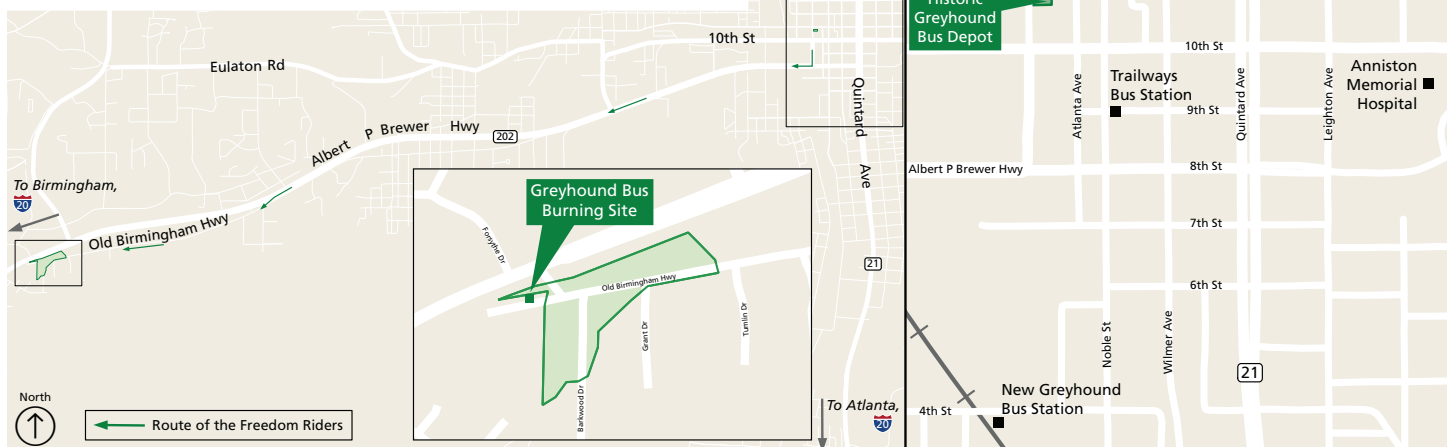
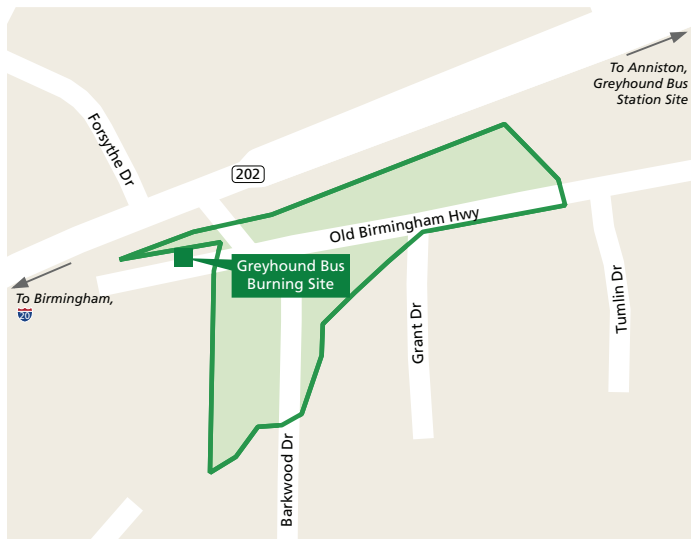
The day of violence associated with the Freedom Rides in Anniston and Birmingham on May 14, 1961, gave national exposure to the issue of segregation in the South, and many other rides maintained its visibility with the American public. In all, there were more than 400 Freedom Riders and many individual rides, which succeeded in pressing the federal government to act. On May 29, 1961, Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy petitioned the Interstate Commerce Commission to issue regulations banning segregation, and the commission subsequently decreed that by November 1, 1961, bus carriers and terminals serving interstate travel had to be integrated.

The Freedom Rides and Freedom Riders made substantial gains in the fight for equal access to public accommodations. Federal orders to remove Jim Crow signs on interstate facilities did not change social mores or political institutions overnight, but the Freedom Riders nonetheless struck a powerful blow to racial segregation.

Freedom Riders National Monument, located in Anniston, Alabama, is composed of two sites. The first is the former Greyhound bus terminal where, on Sunday, May 14, 1961, a group of segregationists attacked a bus carrying African American and White Freedom Riders. The second is the site almost six miles to the west of Anniston where the segregationist mob continued its attack on the bus as it drove out of town, setting it on fire. Photographs of the burning bus—which appeared in hundreds of newspapers on Monday morning—became some of the most iconic images of the civil rights movement.

Today, the National Park Service manages the Greyhound bus station in Anniston, Alabama, and the bus burning site in Calhoun County. These two properties make up the discontinuous units of Freedom Riders National Monument and, along with other resources across the South that are necessary to the understanding of the Freedom Rides, contribute to the significance of the national monument. The bus burning site has been severely altered since the time of the Freedom Rides, including the development of a state highway immediately adjacent and alteration of the original route that the bus traveled through the area. The National Park Service is focusing on the bus burning site during this master planning effort, which will enhance other ongoing efforts at the bus station in Anniston.

With the help of our partners and stakeholders, the National Park Service has drafted multiple preliminary design concepts for development of the bus burning site. A preliminary list of physical and interpretive infrastructure assets have been identified to support the visitor experience at the site, also known as a site development program. These initial ideas are described in this newsletter and include restrooms, automobile parking bus parking, walking trails, information on both the Freedom Riders and the Freedom Rides, park space, commemorative space, and signage. Other site program items include on-site utilities, stormwater detention/management, sound buffers, and universal accessibility.



Site Master Plan

The site master plan will provide a framework for resource protection, site development, access and safety concerns, stormwater management, and visitor capacities for the bus burning site. The plan will also present a design for a physical commemoration that will attract and inspire visitors to appreciate the contributions of the Freedom Riders to American civil rights history. It may also make recommendations for boundary adjustments at the bus burning site if they are necessary.



Photo Credit | Birmingham Civil Rights Institute.



Existing conditions at the Bus Burning Site showing adjacent Highway 202 (left) and Old Birmingham Highway (right).

The purpose of the plan is to:

- Develop desired conditions for resources, visitor experiences and opportunities, and facilities and services for the bus burning site.
- Develop designs, site plans, and management strategies for the bus burning site to achieve and maintain desired conditions.
- Identify visitor capacities to achieve and maintain desired conditions.
- Identify monitoring and adaptive management strategies to protect resources and maintain desired visitor experience.

The plan is needed because:

- There is a need to realize the site's potential to commemorate the Freedom Rides and Freedom Riders.
- There is a need to address visitor access, safety, circulation, and experience.
- There is a need to protect cultural resources and incorporate landscape treatment recommendations.
- There is a need for formal site landscape design, including stormwater management.

Desired Conditions for the Monument

Desired conditions are defined as statements of aspiration that describe resource conditions, visitor experiences and opportunities, and facilities and services that the National Park Service strives to achieve and maintain in the future for the national monument. Any future planning for the national monument should be done with these desired conditions in mind. The desired conditions of the Freedom Riders National Monument include the following elements:



Freedom Riders Historical Marker with Highway 202 in the background.



VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Visitors to the bus burning site encounter a solemn and contemplative environment and are provided an opportunity to reflect on the sacrifice and courage of the Freedom Riders and the relevance of the Freedom Rides to America's imperfect journey to equality and civil rights.

Photo Credit | National Archives



VISITOR ACCESS

Visitors can use shared means of conveyance or are able to independently access the bus burning site. All aspects and components of the landscape at the bus burning site are safely accessible to visitors of varying abilities.



CONNECTIVITY

Visitors to the Freedom Riders National Monument will understand the historical and physical connection between the bus burning site and the historic Anniston Greyhound Station, as well as the relationship of the 1961 events in Anniston to the Freedom Rides campaign and the wider civil rights movement (students, sit-in participants, etc.).



Background on the Planning Process

Planning for the Freedom Riders National Monument began with the development of a foundation document for the national monument, which was published in October of 2018. Since that time and before, many people have helped shape the vision of the national monument and the future of the bus burning site. We are especially grateful for the past planning and design work that was developed by the Freedom Riders Park Committee, Calhoun County, the City of Anniston, and others, which provided a starting point and inspiration for this planning process. The National Park Service does not take the importance of this previous work lightly, as it provided the foundation on which future planning is being built. The National Park Service published a cultural landscape report in 2023, which describes historically significant landscape assets that should be considered and highlighted as the site is developed. These previous efforts are the building blocks of our current efforts.

The site master plan and design concept effort officially commenced in 2023 with internal National Park Service coordination and planning. In March 2024, in-person and virtual meetings engaged a wide variety of stakeholders such as Freedom Riders and their descendants, Freedom Riders Park committee members, civil rights historians and activists, local government organizations, and others. The National Park Service asked these stakeholders which elements and features they would like to see at the bus burning site, and the group brainstormed ideas regarding the national monument's future. The stakeholders put pen to paper and started to envision the future of the bus burning site. The stakeholder ideas were recorded and influenced the preliminary national monument design concepts presented here.

Freedom Riders stakeholder workshop members developing key concept and design elements for the future of the monument to help guide preliminary design concepts - March 2024.



Preliminary Design Concepts

The following pages include preliminary design concepts A, B, and C for the bus burning site. These design concepts are based on past planning for the site and stakeholder feedback. The National Park Service owns four parcels at the bus burning site. The design concepts vary in how the parcels are utilized, how transportation network alterations are made (or not made), and how site connectivity would be achieved via road realignments, crosswalks, and other modifications. Three design concept options are described in this newsletter that highlight the events that happened at the bus burning site and offer visitors additional opportunities to learn about the Freedom Riders and the Freedom Rides campaign, including important civil rights legislation. Preliminary concepts that include modification to transportation infrastructure, which is not directly managed by the National Park Service, would need to be coordinated with the Alabama Department of Transportation and Calhoun County should they be carried forward.

Each of the preliminary design concepts includes three main focal areas laid out across the four parcels owned by the National Park Service. These three focal areas are generally consistent throughout each of the concepts with slight variations. The first focal area is the actual bus burning site, which sits on the smallest parcel adjacent to Highway 202 on the west side of the property. The second focal area is a “Freedom Plaza” that would feature commemorative space focused on the Freedom Riders on the northeast side of the property. The third focal area is a comfort station with visitor services and parking on the south side of Old Birmingham Highway around the intersection of Barkwood Drive. A proposed concrete walkway, “The Freedom Walk,” would run parallel to Old Birmingham Highway on the north side, linking visitor access between the bus burning site and the plaza area. The comfort station in each concept would include restrooms and overhangs to provide a shaded gathering place.

Photo Credit | Alabama Historical Commission

In coordination with Calhoun County and the Alabama Department of Transportation, the National Park Service would address concerns related to visitor safety and stormwater management by incorporating the following measures, which would be common to all concepts.

SAFETY: Design elements such as guard rails, fencing, and bollards would be installed between the site and Highway 202 to prevent visitor parking and pedestrian conflicts with highway traffic.

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT: Enhancement to the existing stormwater culvert with additional site drainage and retention design elements would be implemented per state and local standards, as applicable to each concept.



Concept A

Concept A retains the existing footprint of the four distinct parcels, with little alteration or connection of these pieces of property. Activities that would occur in the focal areas are listed below. The number in the parentheses corresponds to the features number on the preliminary design concept:

- **FREEDOM PLAZA:** This area would include educational elements to provide more information on the Freedom Riders. The plaza would include two circular areas to provide visitor experiences, including a flagpole and other informational features (1) and a wall with additional interpretive material (2). This area would be connected to the bus burning site by the “Freedom Walk,” which would be inlaid with dates and names of key federal legislation important to the civil rights movement (3). A landscaped berm would provide shielding from the highway, and also a limited sound barrier (8). The

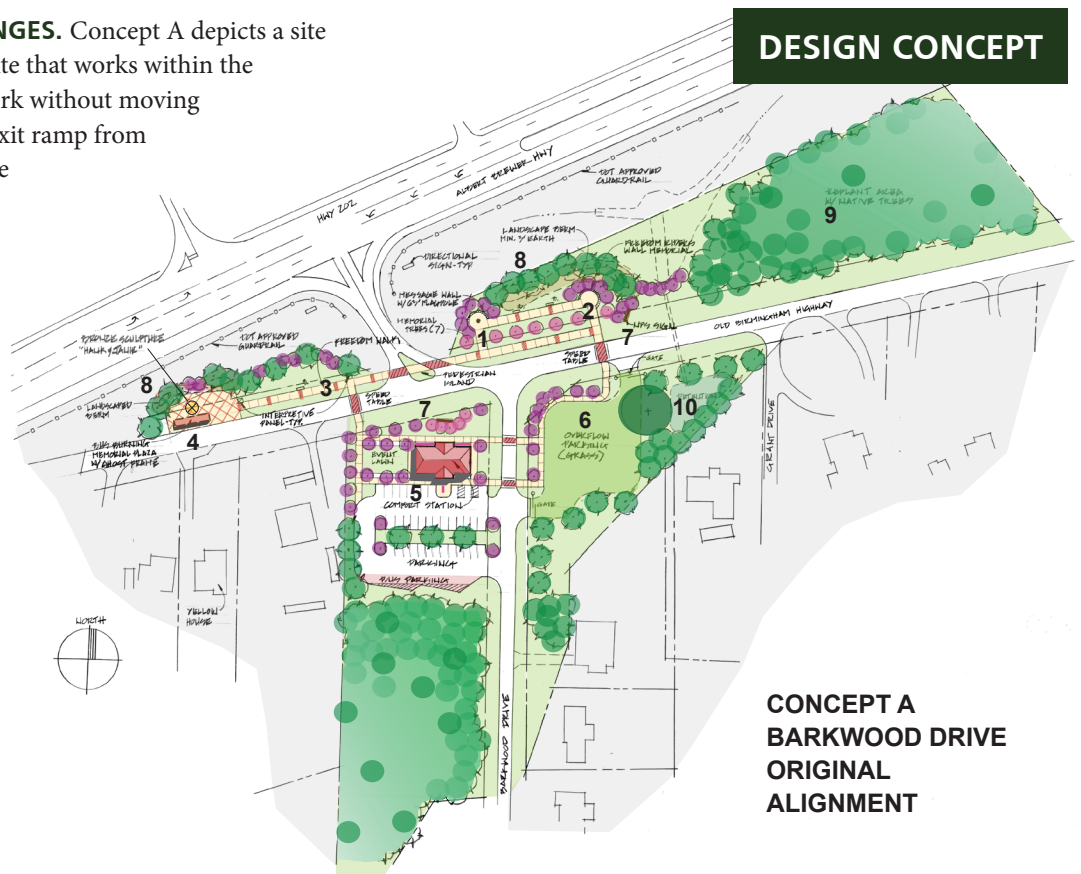
remainder of the property would be planted with native vegetation to further the park-like setting (9).

- **BUS BURNING SITE:** At the site where the bus burning occurred, commemoration of the event would include an installation of a metal frame depicting the Greyhound bus, with seats for each passenger that was on the bus (4).
- **COMFORT STATION:** Across the street from the plaza and bus burning site would be a comfort station with restrooms and places with shade for gathering (5).

Outside of this process, a bronze sculpture of “Hank and Janie” is being developed by partners. Under all concepts, this statue would be placed at the Bus Burning Site. This statue will portray young Janie Forsyth McKinney giving injured Freedom Rider Hank Thomas a glass of water on the side of the road.

- **OTHER:** On the fourth parcel of NPS land, space would be provided for overflow parking (6) and stormwater detention (10). NPS educational signage would be placed throughout the bus burning site (7).

CIRCULATION NETWORK CHANGES. Concept A depicts a site development for the bus burning site that works within the current circulation and road network without moving any of the existing roadways. The exit ramp from Highway 202 would remain, but the intersection with Old Birmingham Highway would be slightly reconfigured to create a pedestrian refuge island. In general, this concept preserves the small bus burning site for visitor experience but links it to the larger site adjacent to the Highway 202 with an educational trail. The parcel adjacent to Highway 202 was selected for the Freedom Plaza, while the parcels south of Old Birmingham Highway are proposed for NPS facilities such as parking and a comfort station. This area would serve as the focal point for visitor orientation and include restrooms and exterior wall mounted panels with educational messaging.

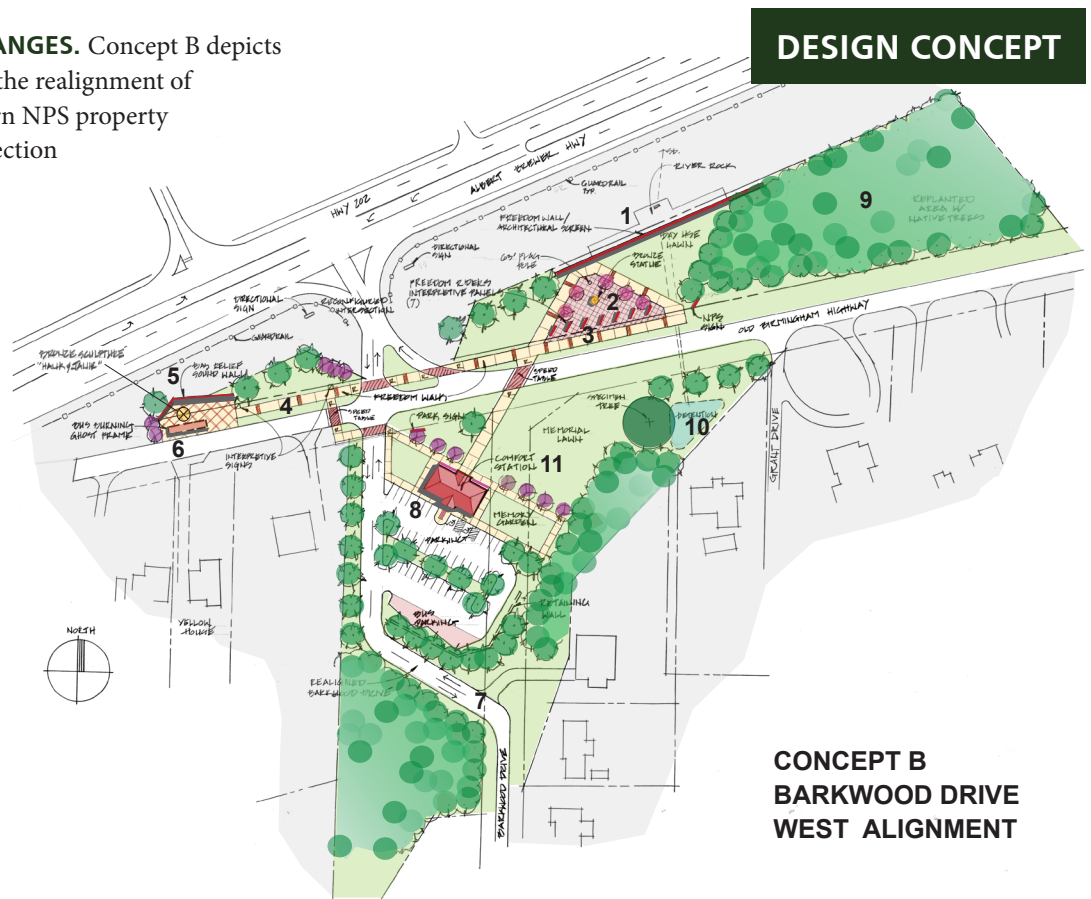


Concept B

Concept B would start with a realignment of Barkwood Drive to the west of its current orientation, which would allow two of the four parcels owned by National Park Service to be connected, providing a visitor flow that would reduce the number of times pedestrians would need to cross roadways. Activities that would occur in the focal areas are listed below. The number in the parentheses corresponds to the features number on the preliminary design concept:

- FREEDOM PLAZA:** Like Concept A, this area would include educational elements to provide more information on the Freedom Riders but would have a different configuration that would provide a larger gathering space. Within this space there would be panels to provide information on the seven Freedom Riders (3) that were on the bus, as well as a flagpole and other educational messaging (2). Instead of the berm, a large “Freedom Wall” would be constructed that could provide messaging on both sides of the wall regarding the Freedom Rides while providing a visual and sound barrier to the highway (1). Similar to Concept A, this area would be connected to the bus burning site by the “Freedom Walk,” which could provide information such as the key dates for federal legislation important to the civil rights movement (4). The remainder of the property would be planted with native vegetation to further the park-like setting (9).
- BUS BURNING SITE:** At the site where the bus burning occurred, memorialization of the event would include an installation such as a metal frame depicting the Greyhound bus, with seats for each passenger that was on the bus (6). Under Concept B this area would feature a sound-mitigating wall that would visually convey the role of the Forsyth & Son Grocery and dampen highway sound (5).
- COMFORT STATION:** Across the street from the plaza and bus burning site would be a comfort station with restrooms and places with shade for gathering (8). While similar to Concept A, under Concept B the orientation of this building would differ and provide a direct connection to the Freedom Plaza area.
- OTHER:** The parcel of land that is connected to the Comfort Station would be used as a commemorative lawn for additional gathering and contemplative space (11) and a stormwater detention pond (10). NPS informational signage would be placed throughout the bus burning site.

CIRCULATION NETWORK CHANGES. Concept B depicts development that would include the realignment of Barkwood Drive along the western NPS property boundary, creating a direct connection to Old Birmingham Highway at the intersection with the Highway 202 exit ramp. The result is the merging of the two parcels south of Old Birmingham Highway into a single parcel, allowing for safer pedestrian connection and less segmentation of the monument grounds. The orientation of the comfort station in Concept B allows for the creation of a quadrangle lawn panel in the foreground and adjacent to Old Birmingham Highway. educational messaging.



Concept C

Concept C better connects the park's four parcels through two main actions: the realignment of Barkwood Drive to the east and moving the Highway 202 off-ramp to the east. Similar to Concept B, by consolidating these parcels, the visitor flow around the national monument would be improved and the number of pedestrian road crossings would be reduced. Activities that would occur in the focal areas are listed below. The number in the parentheses corresponds to the features number on the design concept:

- **FREEDOM PLAZA:** This area would include elements to provide more information on the Freedom Riders and also expand further on the overall Freedom Rides campaign. The plaza would include one circular area to provide visitor experiences, as well as a flagpole. Similar to Concept B a large "Freedom Wall" would be constructed that could provide messaging on both sides of the wall, while providing a visual and sound barrier to the highway (1). Next to the Freedom Wall, a Freedom Grove of approximately 60 native trees would be planted and provide a symbolic representation of the approximately 60 Freedom Rides that occurred (2). This area would also include an additional wall for educational messaging (3).

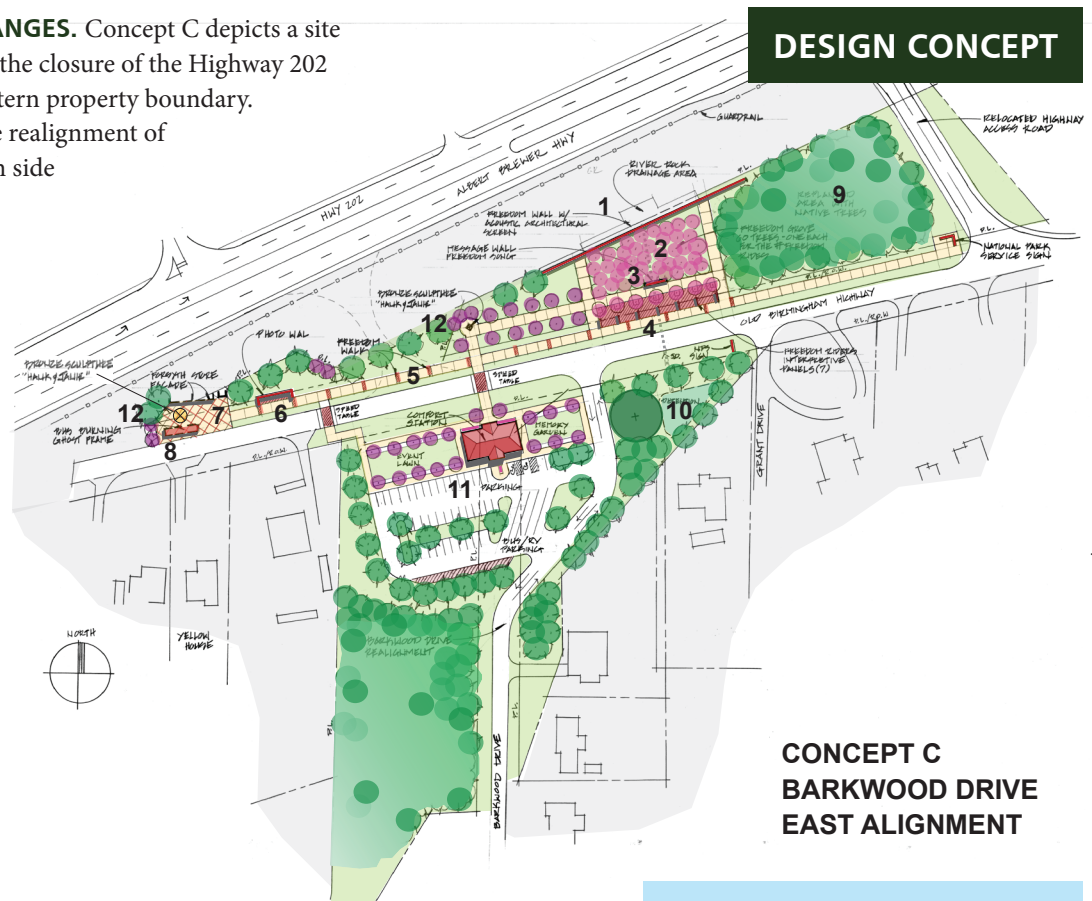
Visitors in this area could also experience informational panels about each of the Freedom Riders involved in the bus burning (4). Similar to Concept A, this area would be connected to the bus burning site by the "Freedom Walk" which could provide information such as the key dates for federal legislation important to the Freedom Riders movement (5). The remainder of the property would be planted with native vegetation to further the park-like setting (9).

- **BUS BURNING SITE:** At the site where the bus burning occurred, memorialization of the event would include an installation of a metal frame depicting the Greyhound bus, with seats for each passenger that was on

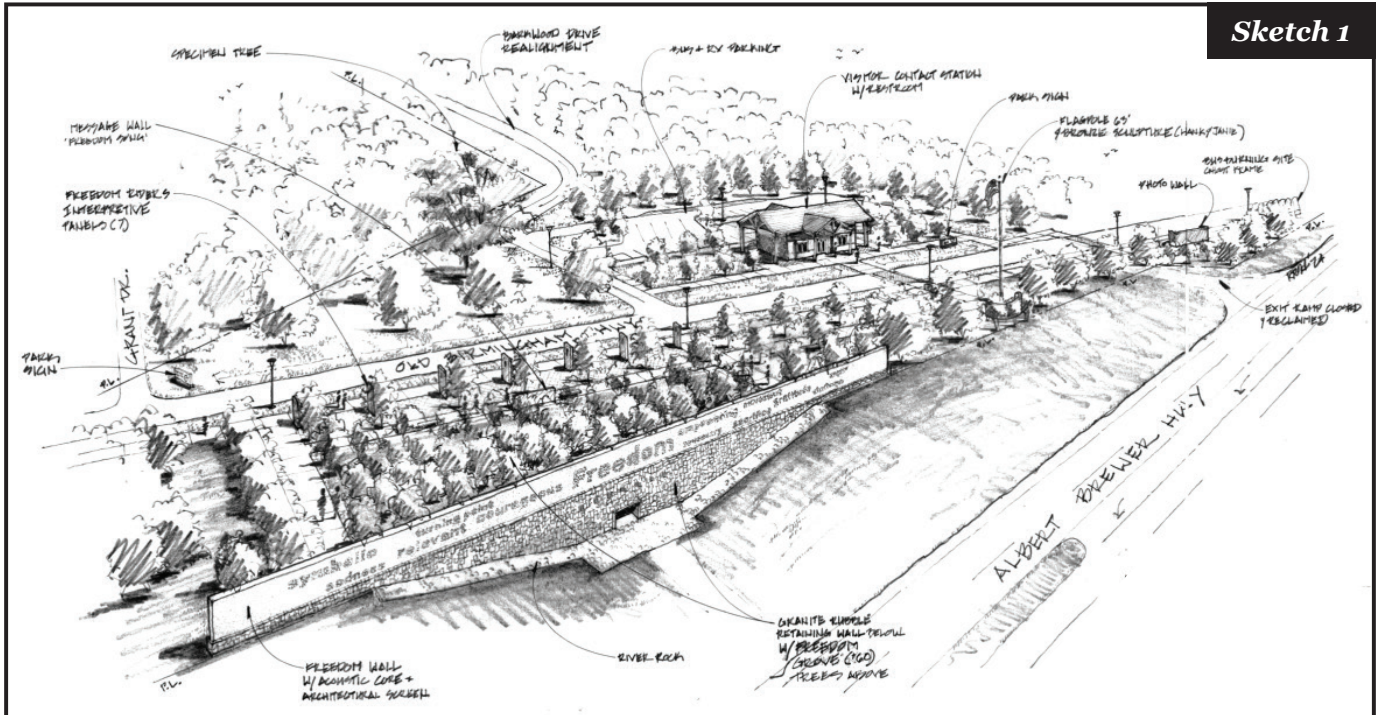
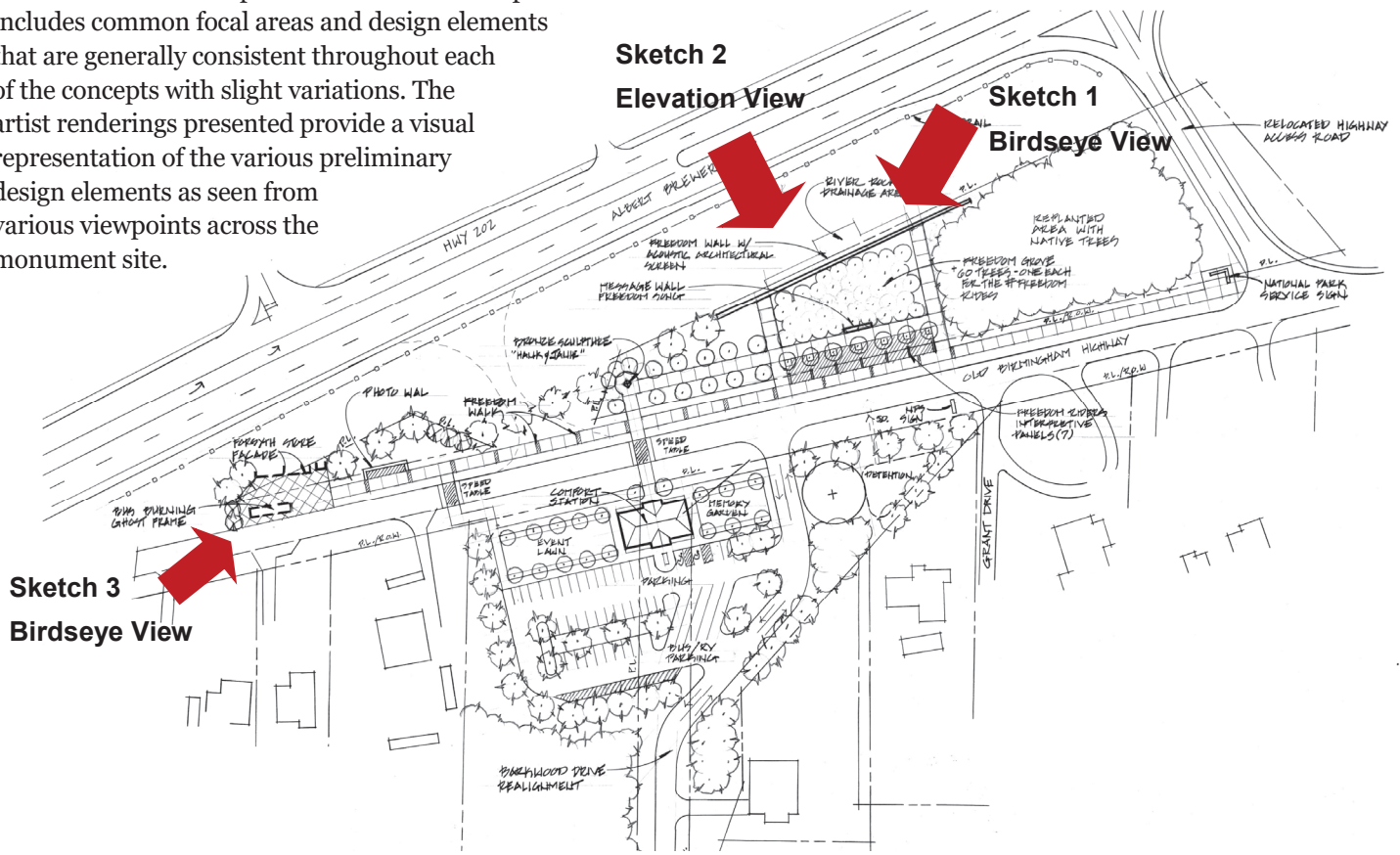
the bus (8). The role of the Forsyth & Son Grocery would be heightened with a screen and metal frame depicting the store (7), and a photo wall would display images captured by Joseph Postiglione of the event (6).

- **COMFORT STATION:** Across the street from the plaza and bus burning site would be a comfort station with restrooms and places with shade for gathering (11). The realignment of Barkwood Drive would allow for ample parking behind the comfort station.
- **OTHER:** On the small remaining parcel of land to the east of the comfort station there would be a stormwater detention pond (10). NPS informational signage would be placed throughout the bus burning site.

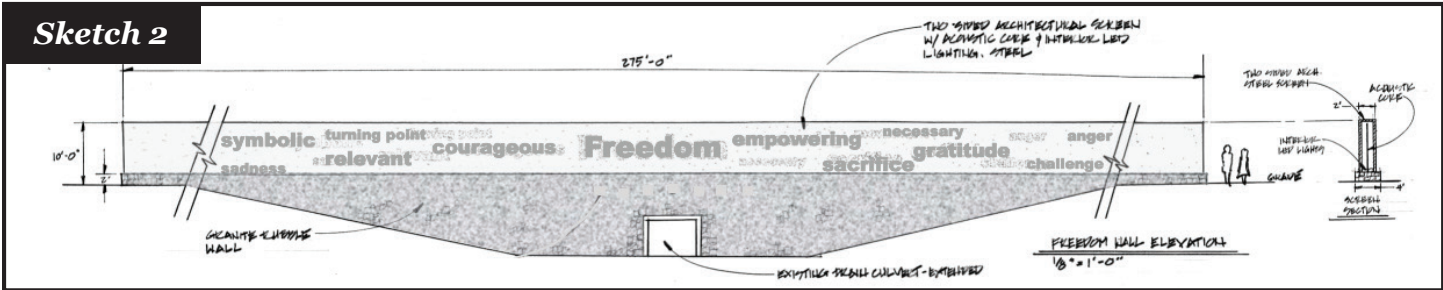
CIRCULATION NETWORK CHANGES. Concept C depicts a site development that would propose the closure of the Highway 202 ramp and its relocation to the eastern property boundary. Concept C would also include the realignment of Barkwood Drive along the eastern side of the park property boundary creating a direct connection to Old Birmingham Highway. The orientation of the comfort station would be parallel with Old Birmingham Highway with the entrance located along the east side of the property. Relocating the exit ramp and realignment of Barkwood Drive allows for safe pedestrian connection between the comfort station and the Freedom Walk components, reducing the number of pedestrian crosswalks.



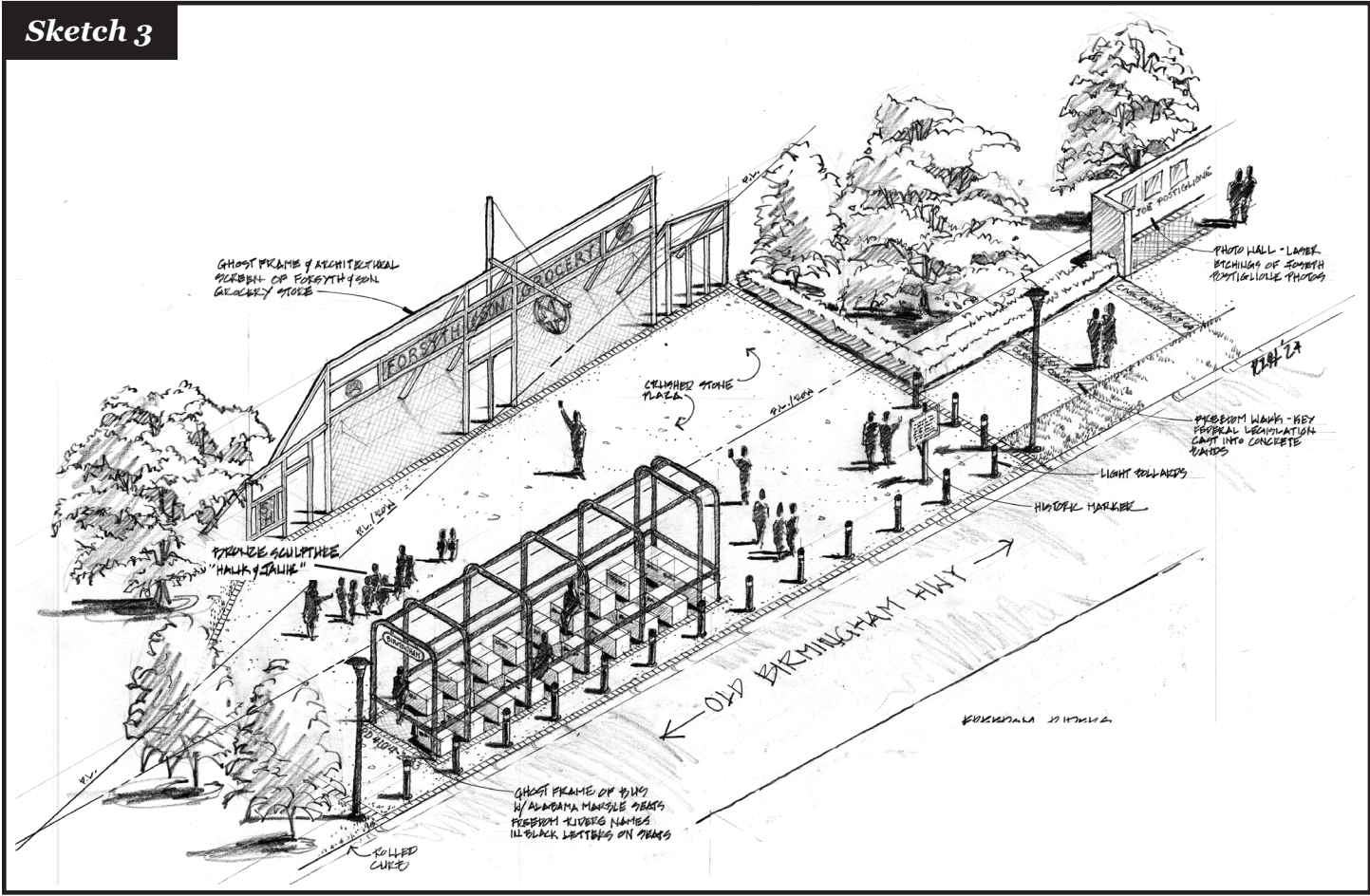
The overall site development under each concept includes common focal areas and design elements that are generally consistent throughout each of the concepts with slight variations. The artist renderings presented provide a visual representation of the various preliminary design elements as seen from various viewpoints across the monument site.



Sketch 1: Birdseye view from Highway 202 looking southwest. The Freedom Wall is shown in the foreground. There is a Freedom Grove for planting 60 small flowering trees, with each tree representing one of the Freedom Rides (Concept C only). The Freedom Plaza includes interpretive panels about each of the seven Freedom Riders that made it to Anniston. Parallel to Old Birmingham Highway is the Freedom Walk path, linking the bus burning site and the Freedom Plaza. The Freedom Walk would include embedded notations featuring key legislation in the fight for civil rights.



Sketch 2: The elevation of the Freedom Wall is depicted as it would be seen from Highway 202. The dramatic 275-foot-long wall would present many words or alternative images to capture visitors’ emotions and reflections of the events on May 14, 1961 (the words indicated in the drawing are placeholders).



Sketch 3: Birdseye view of the bus burning site looking northeast. In the foreground is a metal frame depicting a Greyhound bus placed at the actual bus burning site depicting the size and scale of the actual bus. The metal frame represents the charred remains of the bus. Within the bus there are seats, each engraved with the names for the seat occupants. Beyond the bus is an additional metal frame depicting the façade of the Forsyth and Son Grocery (Concept C only). To the upper right in the sketch is a wall of laser-etched photos taken by Joe Postiglione at the time of the bus burning.

Planning Schedule

The current engagement period provides an initial opportunity for the public to be involved in the planning process. Once the National Park Service has gathered input on the preliminary draft concepts, the agency will develop refined concepts and initiate the NEPA environmental compliance process. Opportunities for further public review and comment on the refined designs and strategies will occur as a part of the continuing planning process. Important milestones in the site master plan's schedule and their anticipated timelines for completion are outlined below.*

<p>SEPTEMBER 24, 2024</p>	<p>Public Open House: 11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. Greyhound Bus Depot 1031 Gurnee Avenue Anniston, AL 36201</p> <p>Public Open House: 4:00 p.m. - 7 p.m. Anniston City Meeting Center, Room C 1615 Noble Street Anniston, AL 36201</p>
<p>OCTOBER 10, 2024</p>	<p>Public comment period concludes</p>
<p>WINTER 2024</p>	<p>Refine draft concepts and initiate NEPA process</p>
<p>SPRING 2025</p>	<p>Prepare the draft site master plan and environmental compliance documents</p>
<p>EARLY SUMMER 2025</p>	<p>Public review of draft site master plan and environmental compliance documents</p>

*Please note the project schedule is subject to change.

WE WANT YOUR
FEEDBACK



How to Comment



By mail: National Park Service
Denver Service Center
Attn: Freedom Riders NM Plan / Charles Lawson
1 Denver Federal Center, Building 50
Denver CO 80225



On the web (preferred method) at:
https://parkplanning.nps.gov/FRR1_Bus_Burning_Plan



In person at the September 24, 2024, meetings in Anniston, Alabama.

NOTE: The National Park Service will not accept comments via fax or any method other than those specified above. Please also note that your entire comment—including personal identifying information such as your address, phone number, and email address—may be made publicly available at any time. While you can request in your comment that we withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. The National Park Service will not accept comments submitted by individuals or organizations on behalf of other individuals or organizations.

