

An aerial photograph of a city street scene, featuring a large, multi-story building with a complex roofline and several trees. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent dark blue filter. The text is positioned in the upper left quadrant.

Transforming the
Sutter's Fort Experience

Public Workshop

03.14.26

Welcome

- **Introductions and Land Acknowledgment**
- **Purpose of Workshop**
- **Agenda**

Introductions

Project Team

- **John Fraser:** *District Superintendent, Capital District, California State Parks*
- **California State Parks Staff:**
 - **Emma Silverman,** *Capital District Cultural Resources Program Manager/Curator III*
 - **Alison Parks,** *Visitor Services and Program Operations/Interpreter III at Sutter's Fort*
 - **Jared Jones,** *Guide II Supervisor at Sutter's Fort*
 - **Kyle Floyd,** *Interpreter I at Sutter's Fort*
 - **Ileana Maestas,** *Tribal Liaison*
 - **Taylor Moore,** *Curator at California State Indian Museum*
- **PlaceWorks Staff**
 - **Isby Fleischmann:** *Associate Principal, PlaceWorks*
 - **Elizabeth Etienne:** *Associate II, PlaceWorks*

Introductions

- **Tribal Partners:**
 - Buena Vista Rancheria
 - Lone Band of Miwok Indians
 - Jackson Rancheria
 - Shingle Springs Band Of Miwok Indians
 - United Auburn Indian Community
 - Wilton Rancheria
 - Yoche Dehe Wintun Nation

An aerial photograph of a city street, showing buildings, trees, and a road with cars. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent dark teal rectangle in the center, which contains the text 'Land Acknowledgement' in white, bold, serif font.

Land Acknowledgement

Transforming the Sutter's Fort Experience

What is the purpose of today's workshop?

- Provide updates on ongoing efforts to implement the 2024 Interpretive Master Plan
- Share the Draft Concept Plan for guiding exhibit design and site improvements
- Gather input on preferences and priorities for the Sutter's Fort experience

Agenda

1. Presentation

- Background and Context
- Transforming Sutter's Fort – Project Overview
- Overview of Activity Stations
- Next Steps

2. Explore Sutter's Fort and Visit Activity Stations

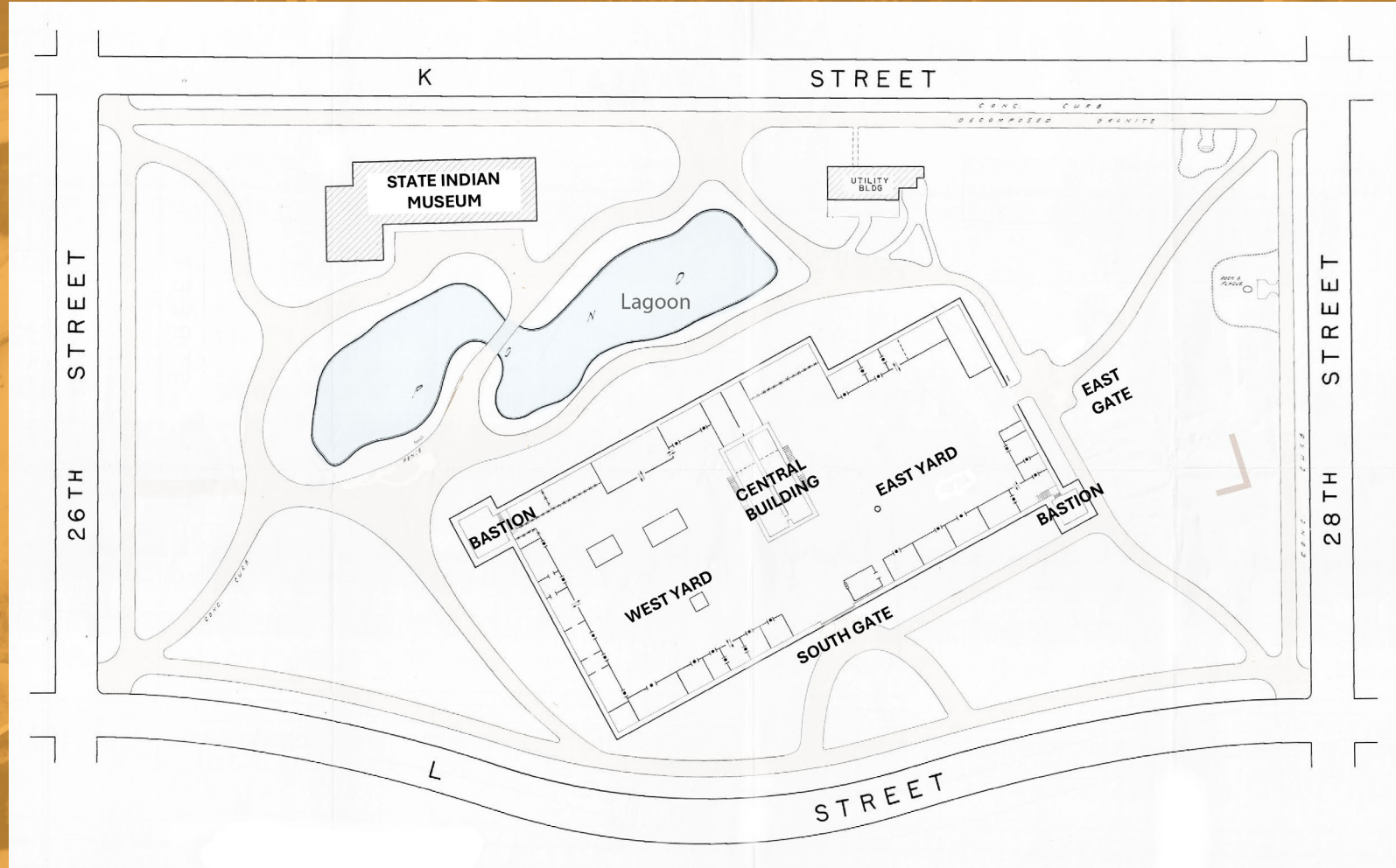
3. Public Comment Session (Optional)

An aerial photograph of a city street intersection, overlaid with a dark green banner. The banner contains the text "Background and Context" in white, bold, sans-serif font. The background shows a multi-lane road with cars, trees, and buildings.

Background and Context

Transforming the Sutter's Fort Experience

Park Overview



Project Background:

- Previous interpretation often failed to provide accurate history.
- California State Parks launched the **Reexamining Our Past Initiative** in 2020.
- The **2024 Interpretation Master Plan (IMP)** was developed with Tribal partners, stakeholders and the public to guide more inclusive, complex, and accurate history.
- **Transforming Sutter's Fort Experience** is now creating a plan for the exhibit updates and site improvements needed to carry out the IMP.

What is the 2024 Interpretation Master Plan (IMP), and what did it accomplish?

- Planning process started in 2020 and included robust engagement with Tribal partners, stakeholders, and the public
- The IMP established a Mission, Vision, and themes to guide how history is told at the park
- Initial changes to Fort programs have already taken place
- Now we are ready to make site improvements to transform the exhibits and visitor experience

IMP Mission & Vision

Interpretive Mission

The mission of interpretation at Sutter's Fort State Historic Park is to create a laboratory of learning to empower all visitors to discover an inclusive, complex, and accurate history of Sutter's Fort and California in order to develop deeper understanding and personal meanings in the events of the past.

Interpretive Vision

High quality, engaging interpretive services will help visitors personally connect with the complex narratives, conflicts, and deeper meanings of Sutter's Fort that are relevant to a broader cultural context in California today.



Transforming Sutter's Fort- Project Overview

Transforming the Sutter's Fort Experience

Planning and Design Process:

1 Project Initiation

Engage Tribal partners

Initiate site-wide Interpretive Concept Plan

Late 2025

2 Open Engagement

Gather public feedback on the Interpretive Draft Concept Plan

Early 2026

3 Schematic Design

Revise Concept Plan

Co-create schematic exhibit designs for priority areas with Tribal partners

2026

4 Future Phases

Design and installation of exhibits and experiences

2027- Ongoing

What is the Interpretive Concept Plan?

A vision:

For where and how the stories and ideas from the IMP can be realized at the Fort, both inside and beyond the Fort walls.

A strategy:

For organizing exhibits and programs into distinct “zones” of experience, through which visitors can learn and explore the site.

A set of recommendations:

For improving the site and helping visitors engage more deeply.

Key Interpretive “Zones” of Experience:

1. Visitor Orientation & Services

2. Permanent Exhibits: Examining the Historical Legacy

3. Temporary Exhibits & Programs: Dynamic Learning

4. Experiential Rooms: Period Interpretation 1838-1849

Beyond the Fort Walls

**VISITOR ORIENTATION
AND SERVICES ZONE**

**PERMANENT
EXHIBITS ZONE**

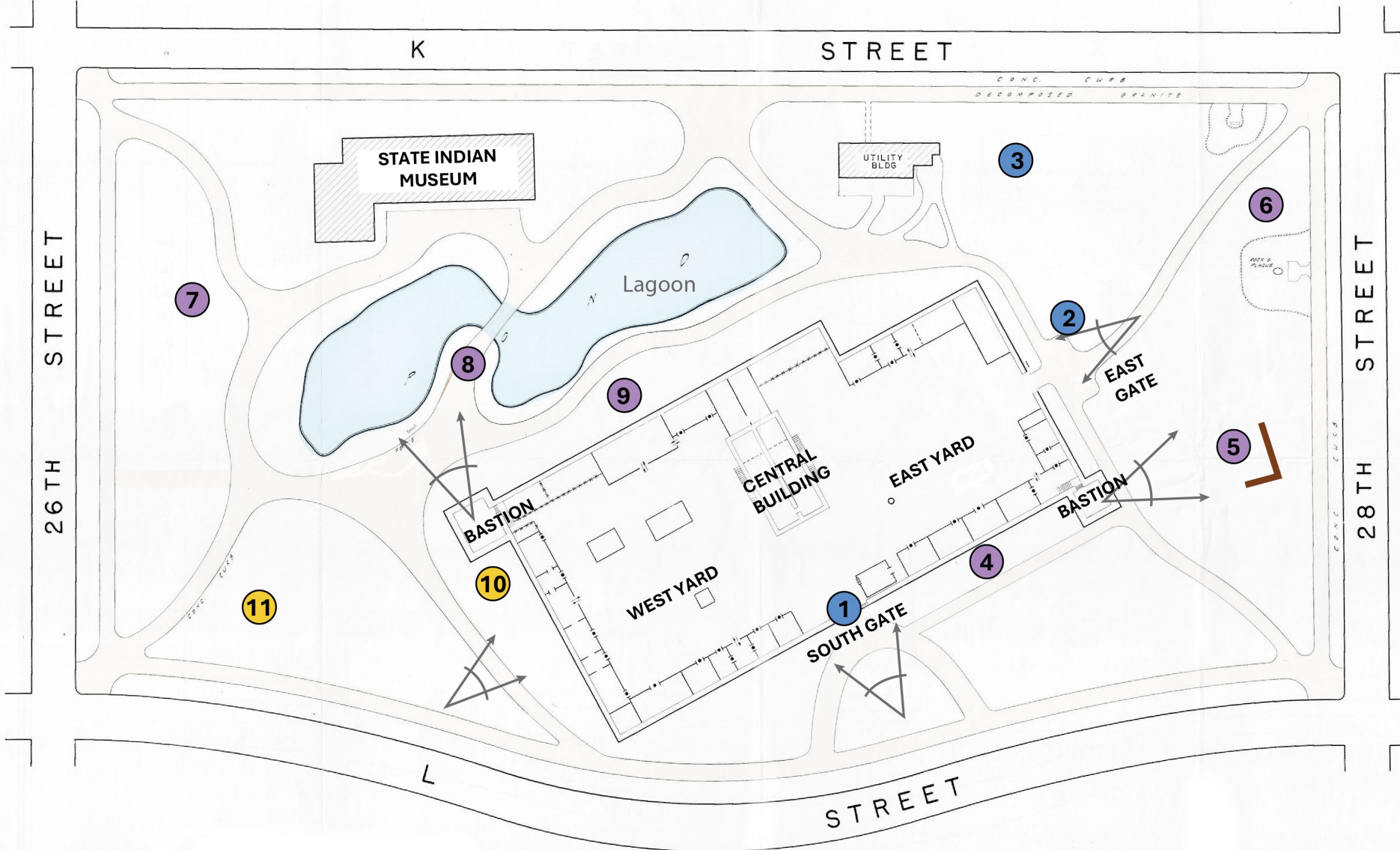
**TEMPORARY PROGRAMS
AND EXHIBITS ZONE**

LEGEND

Key Recommendations

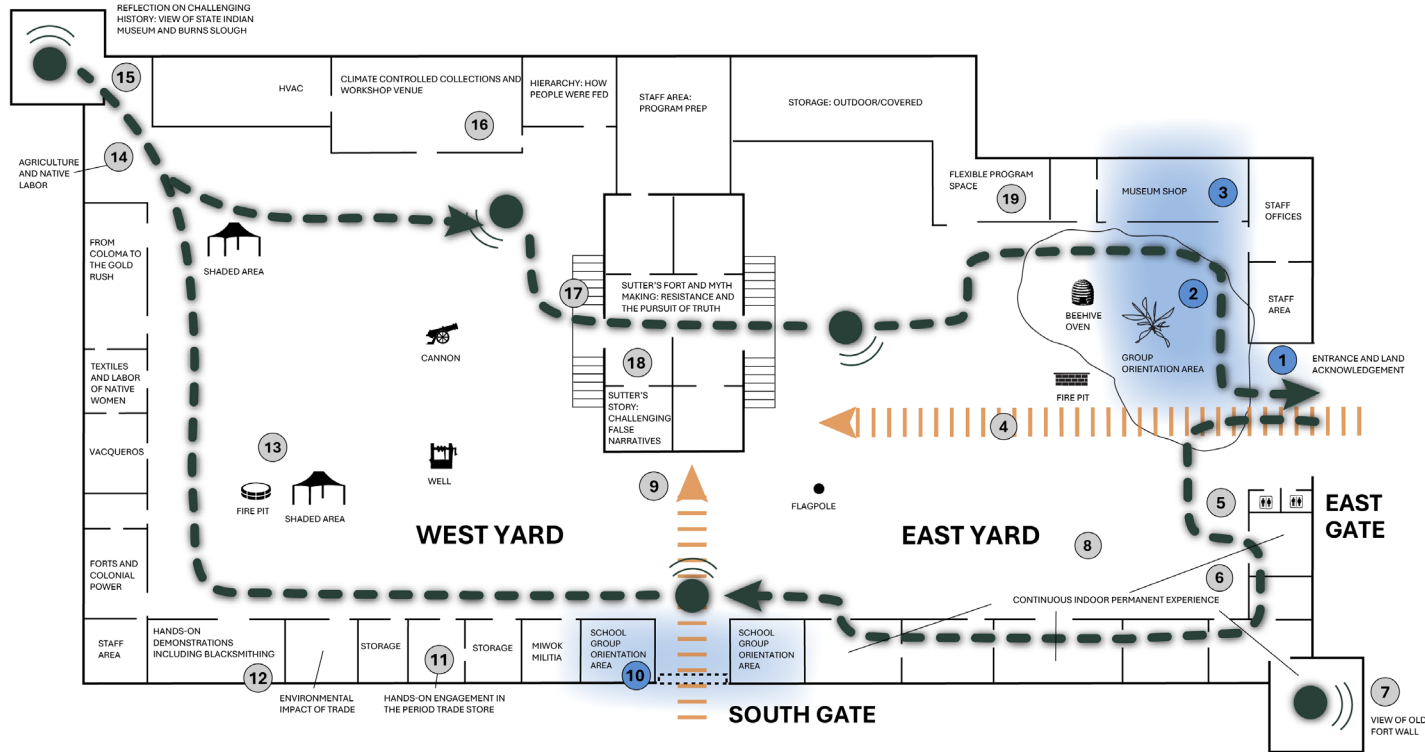
Key Views

N



- 1 VISUAL ACCESS INTO FORT FROM SOUTH GATE
- 2 PROMINENT ENTRY SIGNAGE
- 3 PROTECTED GATHERING AREAS
- 4 INTERPRETIVE EXPERIENCE CONNECTING SOUTH GATE TO EAST GATE
- 5 INSTALLATION TO MARK ORIGINAL WALLS
- 6 UPDATED SIGNAGE FOR MEMORIAL PLANTINGS
- 7 EXHIBITS TO COMMEMORATE OAK TREE AND HONOR CALIFORNIA NATIVE AMERICAN ELDERS
- 8 INTERPRETIVE EXHIBIT CREATING CONCEPTUAL BRIDGE BETWEEN STATE INDIAN MUSEUM AND SUTTER'S FORT
- 9 EXTERIOR EXHIBITS FOCUSED ON WATER AND LAND TO COMPLEMENT PERMANENT INTERIOR EXHIBITS
- 10 LIGHT SHOWS AND TEMPORARY INSTALLATIONS
- 11 PROTECTED GATHERING AND REFLECTION AREAS

Zone 1. Visitor Orientation & Services



Welcomes visitors to Sutter's Fort

- Signage
- Land acknowledgement

Provides basic visitor services

- Ticketing
- Wayfinding
- Museum shop
- Bathrooms

Gathering areas

- Public (near the entrance)
- School groups (near south gate)



Mounting Tribal Land Acknowledgement signage at Sue-meg State Park in Humboldt County.
Source: Marnin Robbins, California State Parks



Students gather in designated orientation areas.
Source: www.wkassociates.net

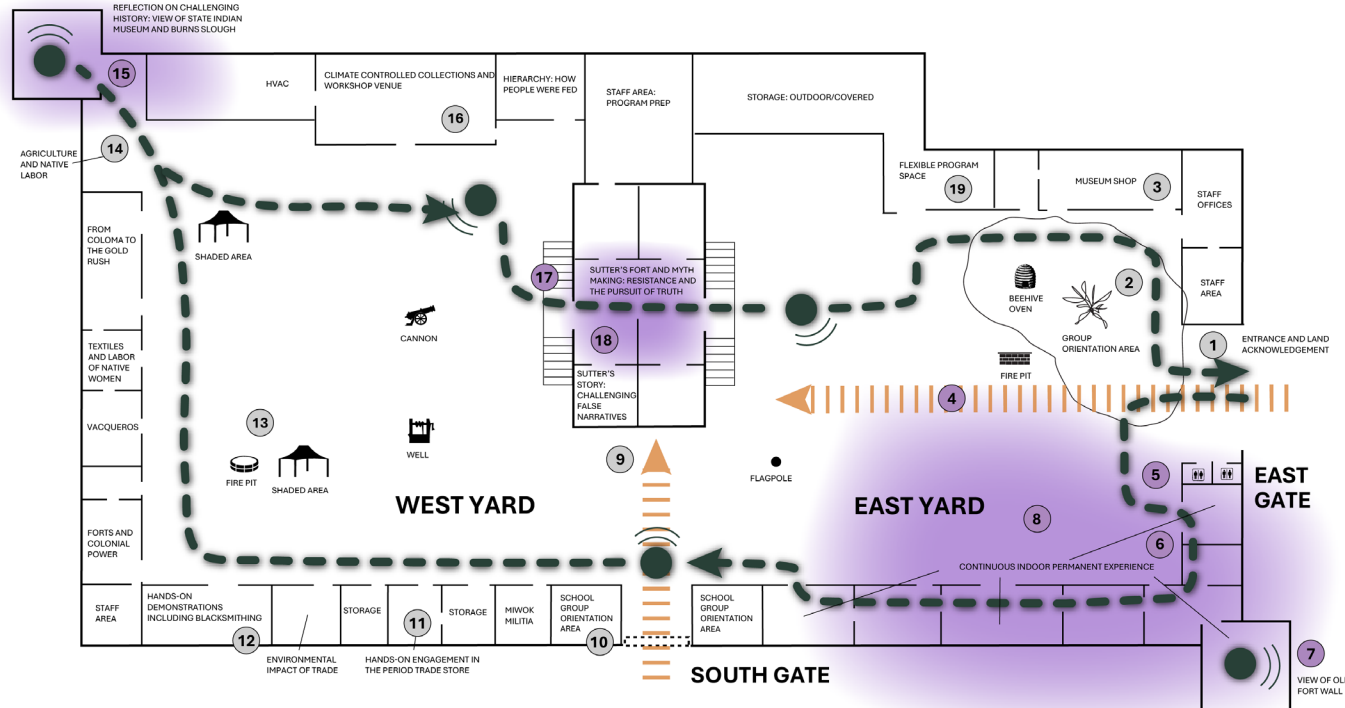
Spaces to Explore Challenging Topics

- Spaces for quiet reflection
- Opportunities for visitors to share their thoughts
- Places for small group gathering and conversation
- Shade, seating, and landscape plantings within the courtyard
- Research or resource rooms

Zone 2. Permanent Exhibits: Examining the Historical Legacy

A foundation for understanding the site's full history

- Continuous, indoor, multi-room permanent exhibit
- Topics from ancestral past to present day
- Exhibits outside of the Fort's walls connect to the State Indian Museum and honor California Native American elders
- Walkways and landscaping emphasize the Fort's only original architecture, the Central Building





The imagiNATIONS Activity Center at the National Museum of the American Indian.

Source: www.americanindian.si.edu

Potential Exhibits and Experiences

- Museum collections
- Digital exhibits
(audio recordings, videos, touch screens)
- Interactive and hands-on exhibits
- Visitor “talk-back” stations
(where visitors can share their thoughts)
- Self-guided tours
(including audio tours)
- Historical or contemporary art
- Character driven stories



Native New York exhibit

Source: www.americanindian.si.edu

Potential Stories to Explore

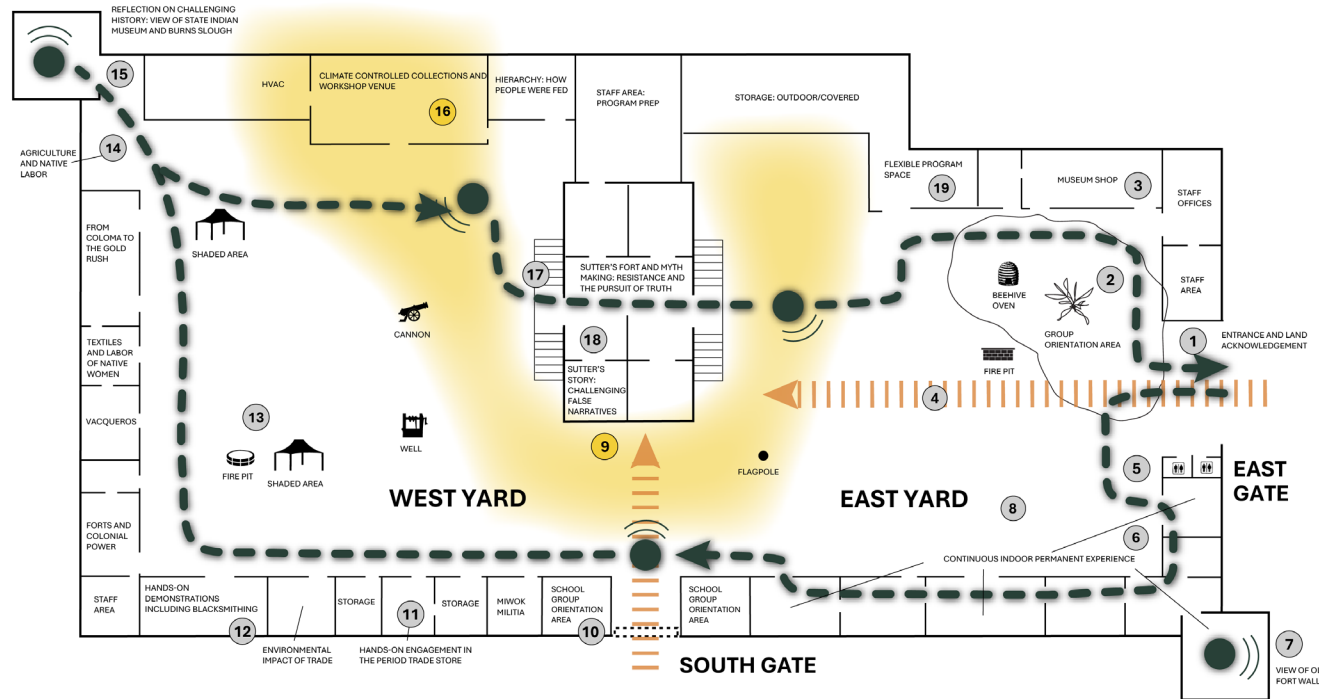
- On Native Land: Lifeways Before Disruption
- Opportunity and Conflict: Sutter's Vision
- Exploitation and a New Economy
- Struggles for Power in Alta California: Bear Flag Revolt and U.S. Military Occupation
- Westward Migration and a Changed Landscape
- Gold and California Statehood
- Restoring the Romanticized Pioneer Past
- Cultural Disruption and Genocide: Enduring Effects
- Reflections on State Indian Museum and Burns Slough
- Sutters Fort and Myth-Making: Resistance and the Pursuit of Truth

Zone 3. Temporary Programs & Exhibits: Dynamic Learning

Keeps the Fort experience
fresh and diverse

Provides space for temporary
exhibits, contemporary art,
reflection, and current
commentary

Enlivens the park outside of
the Fort walls





Professional development workshop at the Tenement Museum, New York.

Source: www.Tenement.org



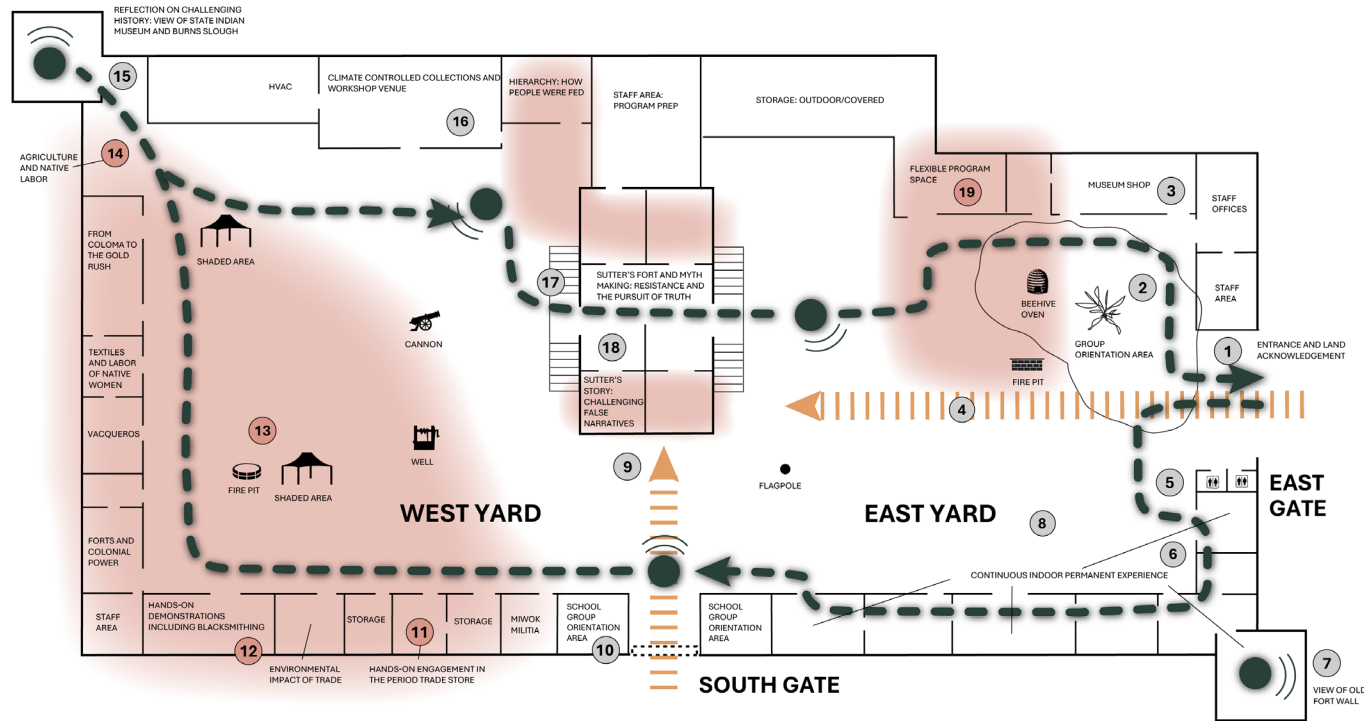
The Life of Sally Hemings, at Thomas Jefferson's home.

Source: www.monticello.org

Potential Exhibits and Experiences

- Contemporary, outdoor art installations
- Memorials and reflective spaces
- Short-term, indoor exhibits on contemporary topics
- Presentations or lectures
- Special events, cultural programs, or workshops
- Hands-on experiences and demonstrations
- Rotating exhibits by California Native American Tribes
- Visitor “talk-back” stations
(where visitors can share their thoughts)
- Self-guided tours (including audio tours)
- Presentations or lectures

Zone 4. Experiential Rooms: Period Interpretation 1838-1849



Engages visitors in mid-1800's history

- Hands-on exploration and programs
- Historically accurate period rooms
- Accurate stories from multiple perspectives

Immerses visitors in Fort life



Period room education signage at Thomas Jefferson's historic home.
Source: www.monticello.org

Exhibits and Experiences could include:

- Interactive or hands-on exhibits
- Presentations and demonstrations
- Educational signage in the courtyard
- Educational signage in the rooms
- Digital exhibits (audio recordings, videos, touch screens)
- Character driven stories
- Visitor “talk-back” stations (where visitors can share their thoughts)
- Self-guided tours (including audio tours)
- Special events



Reading true stories during the “Shared Journeys” program at the Tenement Museum in New York.

Source: www.tenement.org

Potential Stories to Explore:

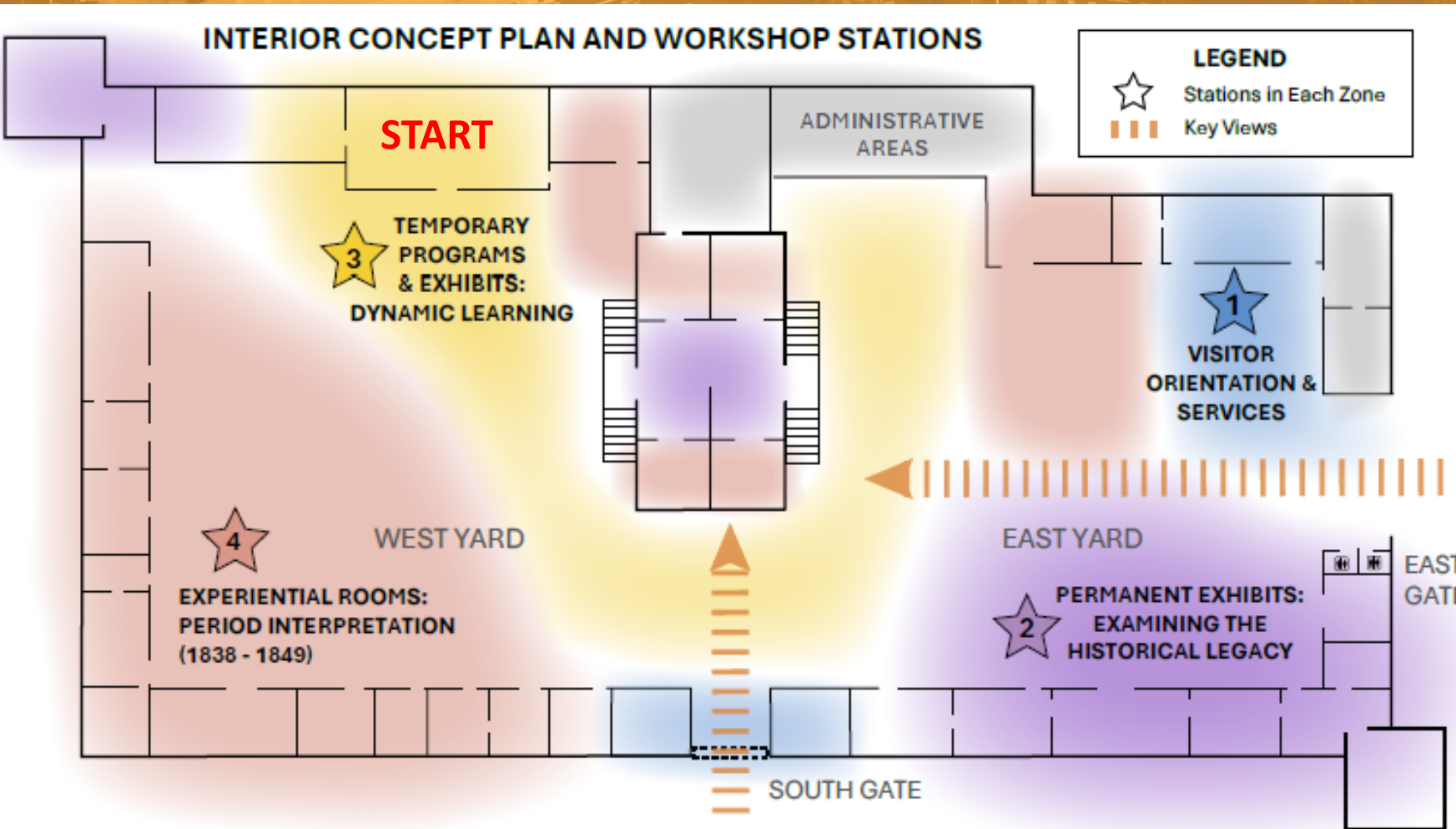
- The Miwok Militia
- The Fort as a Center of Trade and Commerce
- The Environmental Impact of Trade
- The Skilled Labor of Blacksmithing
- Forts and Colonial Power
- Firearms and Coercion
- Vaqueros
- Textiles and Labor of Native Women
- Gold Discovery in Coloma
- Agriculture and Native Labor
- Hierarchy: How People Were Fed
- Sutter’s Story: Challenging False Narratives

An aerial photograph of a city street, showing buildings, trees, and a road with cars. A dark green banner is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing the title text in white. The background image is tinted with a warm, golden-brown color.

Overview of Activity Stations

Transforming the Sutter's Fort Experience

Activity Stations



How can I share my thoughts?

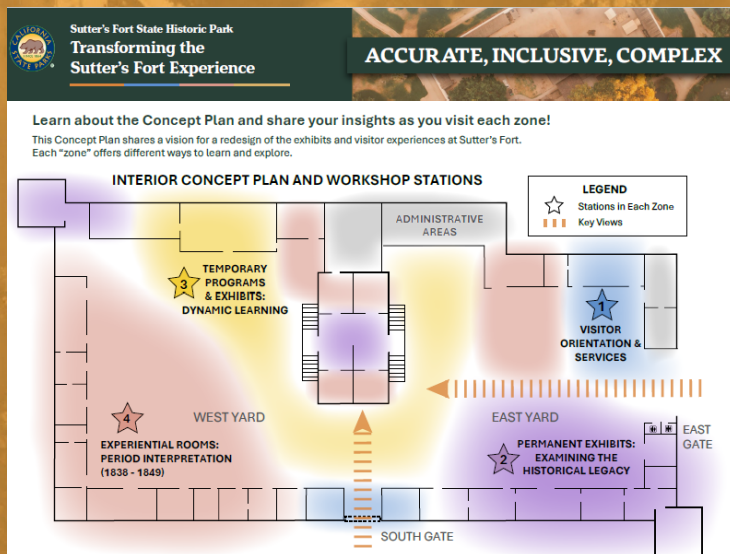
- Post your preferences and ideas on posters at each station
- Complete a comment card and drop it in a Comment Box.
- Submit a speaker card for the 3:30 Public Comment Session.

1. Grab a handout and visit the stations in any order

2. Share feedback at stations or on comment card!

3. Return for the Public Comment Session at 3:30 p.m. (optional)

Submit a Speaker Card if you'd like to speak



Sutter's Fort State Historic Park
Transforming the Sutter's Fort Experience

Additional thoughts? Share your feedback on proposed exhibits and site improvements INSIDE and/or BEYOND the Fort walls!

Have you been to another museum, cultural center, or historic site that helped you connect deeply with challenging histories? Tell us about it!

Sutter's Fort State Historic Park
Transforming the Sutter's Fort Experience

SPEAKER CARD

Name: _____

Organization/Affiliation (if any): _____

- Each speaker will have two minutes to comment.
- Speakers will be called in the order in which they return their cards.

An aerial photograph of a city street, likely in San Francisco, showing a multi-lane road with cars, sidewalks, trees, and buildings. A large, semi-transparent green overlay covers the top half of the image. A dark blue banner is positioned horizontally across the middle of the image, containing the text "Next Steps" in white. The bottom of the image is a solid dark blue bar containing the text "Transforming the Sutter's Fort Experience" in white.

Next Steps

Transforming the Sutter's Fort Experience

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Opportunities to share your thoughts:

- Virtual Workshop **Wednesday, March 25, 6-8 p.m.**
- Online survey open through **April 10**
- Updates can be found on the Parks website.
- Thank you to Tribal partners and all attendees!



www.parks.ca.gov/SuttersFort



Capital.District@parks.ca.gov



Public Comment

Transforming the Sutter's Fort Experience

Public Comment Session:

- Clarifications
- Comments from Public – two minutes each
- Closing

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- Thank you to Tribal partners and all attendees!



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An aerial photograph of a university campus, featuring a large central building, several green spaces with trees, and a road with cars. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The text "Thank you!" is centered in a bold, orange, serif font.

Thank you!