EXISTING CONDITIONS

» The existing green space is undeveloped and not accessible.

» A 75’ wide grassland corridor links the remaining property to 32nd St. All other property edges are private residential or industrial.

» There are no traffic calming measures or traffic lights along 32nd St. between Kalamazoo and Burton, often leading to reckless driving patterns.

» There are no crosswalks across 32nd St.

» There is no parking on the site or street parking along 32nd St.

TIER 1 (Park Interior)
1. Park access point
2. Consumer’s Energy right-of-way (no path)
3. Stormwater bioswale (to Plaster Creek)

TIER 2 (Park Edge)
4. City of Kentwood boundary (red line)
5. Private property edge (orange line)
6. Residential edge
7. Industrial edge

TIER 3 (Park Community)
8. Knapp St: no bus route, no crosswalks; existing north and south side sidewalks; proposed bike lanes
9. 0.7 miles to Kalamazoo Ave
10. 0.3 miles to Breton Rd
ECOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The property at 2149 32nd Street SE is an green space owned by the City of Grand Rapids. The undeveloped site has evidence of former agricultural use with buried drainage tiles, a small, aged apple orchard, and a pine planting wind barrier. The site is divided by a surface drainage way—predominately low and wet at the south end and dry upland grasses to the north end. The drainage way carries stormwater runoff from the neighboring industrial park to the east, through the property, before making its way to Plaster Creek. As there are no programmed areas or formal entry points or trails, wildlife in this area is predominately undisturbed, home to many wildlife species including deer, foxes, and wild turkeys. With no existing site maintenance, invasive plant species have established and should be removed in the near future.
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

The green space along 32nd St. SE rides the border of the Grand Rapids/Kentwood city line. Outside of any formal neighborhood association boundary, the project team understood the importance of gathering a diverse range of perspectives from neighbors who are often disconnected from city projects. A focus group of residents was formed of nearby neighbors, church leaders, and community organizers to understand the needs and concerns of a potential park space at this location.

A series of public input sessions were held in the Samaritas parking lot, across the street from the city green space. The first session was met with both skepticism and excitement, with many participants concerned about personal safety, privacy, ecological health, and heavy traffic. Feedback from the first session relayed that neighbors were passionate about keeping the site in as natural of state as possible. The project team shared two concepts with participants, both with a focus on wildlife protection, habitat, enhancement, and low-impact programming such as walking nature trails and viewing platforms. While some neighbors remained opposed to opening the space as a public park, most were pleased that their concerns from the first session had been addressed.

In addition to the input sessions, the project team hosted a small group discussion with residents at Samaritas Senior and Assisted Living Facility. Residents participated in mapping and model building exercises and expressed their desire for a safe route across 32nd St. to a natural park space that offered inclusive, barrier-free activities that they could experience together with friends and family.

WHAT WE HEARD

“Minimal development. Unpaved trails and clear delineation of wetlands”

“We need a kids exploration area closer to this neighborhood. Already nature trails at Ken-O-Sha”

“No problem with a nice nature park”

“Is this pushing the deer out of their habitat?”

SHARED VISION FOR THE FUTURE: Priority Park Case Studies  
[Neighborhood Investments]
BASIC NEEDS THEMES

**CONNECTION**

Wildlife Preservation / Family-Friendly / Nature Trails

“Opportunities for children to connect with nature and be immersed in nature”

“Preserve natural areas with minimal or natural development. Tree loss and green space affects animal and plant ecology and sustainability”

“Connect with nature in an accessible way”

“Trails that take advantage of the unique environment”

“Families together”

**BELONGING**

Welcoming Spaces / Accessible & Inclusive / Nature & Peace

“Quiet place for reflection”

“Small pavilions scattered around for small groups, friends connecting”

“Wheelchair accessibility is my number one priority”

“Our children of color need to feel welcome in green spaces and be connected to nature’s serenity”

“Meditation garden with a few benches”

**SAFETY**

Vehicular & Pedestrian Safety / Illegal Activity / Ecological Health

“Need safe access for traffic. This is a dangerous street”

“Huge need for crosswalk on 32nd”

“Regular police oversight, including after park closure and night time”

“Protecting green space in an urban area”

“Help protect the watershed. Use native plants to help with run off of surrounding areas”

**RECREATION**

Barrier-Free Nature Trails / Ecological Education / Play

“Access to water/serenity”

“Label the trees, plants, etc. for environmental education”

“Families hiking, exploring”

“Walking trails for all ages/abilities. A quiet environment for appreciating nature. A few benches for sitting. A labyrinth for”

“We need a playground in this neighborhood. There are very few—we just moved here in November and have struggled to find parks with playgrounds and sports activities”
PRIORITY PARK CASE STUDY:  
NEIGHBORHOOD PARK + TRIBUTARY  
**32ND Street SE**

DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

A preferred concept design was developed based off feedback residents provided on the initial concepts. Embracing the property’s natural state, the design provides neighbors with a way to discover, play, and exercise in an ecologically sensitive, low-impact way. Through native prairie and wetland restoration, habitat will be improved that will help diversify species within the park and manage and filter stormwater before reaching Plaster Creek.

SECTION 1 - TERRAIN PARK

- Nature-Based Play
- Nature Trail
- Log Bench Amenity

SECTION 2 - ELEVATED BOARDWALK

- Wetland Restoration
- Wetland Overlook
- Stormwater Filter (Rain Garden)
EXISTING
A OVERHEAD ELECTRIC
B RESIDENTIAL AREA
C INDUSTRIAL AREA

PROPOSED
A TERRAIN PARK & NATURE TRAIL
B UPLAND PRAIRIE RESTORATION
C ELEVATED BOARDWALK
D WETLAND RESTORATION & STORMWATER FILTER (RAIN GARDEN)
E WETLAND PAVILION
F PAVED ACCESSIBLE TRAIL
G NATURE-PLAY AREA
H OPEN LAWN AREA
I PICNIC SHELTER
J LANDSCAPE BUFFER
K ENTRY DRIVE & PARKING, 10 SPACES, 1 ADA
L ENHANCED CROSSWALK
M SEATING AREA
N WILDLIFE OBSERVATION BLIND
O GATE
P PEDESTRIAN-SCALE LIGHTING
COST ESTIMATES

The 17-acre site is divided into three project areas with associated costs:

South Redevelopment Area: $975,000
» Parking lot & lighting
» Paved loop trail
» Path lighting
» Picnic shelter
» Nature-based play area
» Open lawn area
» Small seating area
» Landscape buffers
» Native prairie restoration

Middle Redevelopment Area (Wetland): $341,000
» Paved loop trail
» Path lighting
» Picnic shelter
» Nature-based play area
» Open lawn area
» Small seating area
» Landscape buffers
» Native prairie restoration

North Redevelopment Area: $272,000
» Nature trail
» Native prairie restoration
» Terrain earthwork
» Landscape buffer
» Wildlife viewing blind
» Small seating area

TOTAL PARK IMPROVEMENT COST: $1,588,000
TEST PROJECT

To test out an improvement to the potential park space, and given that the space is relatively hidden and unknown, except for immediate neighbors who use the informal trails, the idea of wayfinding was presented as a test project. Some participants were reluctant to select any signs, as they desire no changes to the site. Others welcomed the idea of sharing natures’ beauty with others, and having places for children and dogs to run. Signs that identify the space, while also offering passive enjoyment were generally supported by those wishing for this land to remain undeveloped.

Of note, during the initial stakeholder meeting, participants shared a desire for bringing cultural awareness to the park, celebrating the diversity of the neighborhood. Signs to educate about world view and cultures were not prioritized during the voting process at the open house. Instead, interpretive signs were selected, with mindful signs a close second. Mindful signs would include quotations or passages to encourage quiet reflection and contemplation in the potential park space.

In Spring 2022, the project team will mow informal trails, place folding chairs, and provide interpretive and mindfulness signs within the park to demonstrate the potential trail alignment and reinforce the passive use of the space.