PRIORITY PARK CASE STUDY: COMMUNITY PARK + UPLAND MORaine

Ball Perkins Park

EXISTING CONDITIONS

» The majority of the park is natural and not accessible. A single 0.65 mile crushed stone path connects the east and west sides of the park.
» The park landscape is defined by wetlands land and steep ravines.
» An expanded trail system could activate more areas of the park and diversify park user types.
» There is potential to improve arrival experience and signage.
» Better connections to neighborhood are needed.
» The majority of the park is bounded by residential or private property.

TIER 1 (Park Interior)
1. Accessible paved sidewalk into park
2. City right-of-way (no path)
3. Accessible crushed stone trail
4. Trailhead with park map
5. Crushed stone parking area (no barrier free spaces)
6. Consumer’s Energy right-of-way
7. Mowed paths in community garden
8. Steep terrain
9. City right-of-way (no sidewalk)

TIER 2 (Park Edge)
10. Park access point (no crosswalks, parking along arterials)
11. Private property edge (orange line)

TIER 3 (Park Community)
12. Rapid Bus routes 14 & 15 (Leonard St NE)
13. Designated bike lane (painted lanes)
14. Designated bike route (no separate lane)
15. No sidewalk on west side of Perkins Ave NE
16. I-96 1.2 miles to Perkins park entrance
17. Radio tower (lot not accessible)
ECOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Ball Perkins is a largely undeveloped green space with an east-to-west nature trail and community garden along Perkins Ave. The park is home to a diverse range of flora and fauna including deer, turtles, and migrating bird species, such as great egrets. The steep terrain divides the park into two unique sub-watersheds of the Lower Grand River Watershed. The south end of the park’s low wetland area drains directly to the Grand River, and the ravine to the north directs water to the Lamberton Creek sub-watershed. The ~40’ grade change within the ravine provides a scenic viewshed to the lower half of the park. In some areas along the ravine, banks have eroded and should be restored. The wetland and surrounding landscape seasonally floods to the southwest corner of the park.
PRIORITY PARK CASE STUDY: NEIGHBORHOOD PARK + UPLAND MORaine

Ball Perkins Park

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

The North East Citizens Action Association (NECAA) is an active community, deeply invested in the health and wellness of their fellow neighbors and green spaces. The project team initiated the Ball Perkins master planning process with a small group round table discussion with members of the neighborhood association. This conversation informed questions and ideas for the project team to discuss with the community at large at two public input sessions.

The first session, held at the annual NECAA meeting, introduced the planning process to residents and participants weighed in on needs and concerns surrounding improvements to the park through conversation and mapping exercises. Mountain biking trails, in particular, were thoroughly discussed, with varying participant support. Many folks were excited about a new trail amenity close to home, while others voiced concern for wildlife displacement. Additionally, participants selected and commented on imagery that resonated with them in terms of Basic Needs at Ball Perkins Park (see themes on following page).

At the second input session, the project team presented a conceptual design for residents to respond to, with a companion virtual survey for those who were not able to attend to weigh in on. A full engagement summary can be found in the appendix.

WHAT WE HEARD

“Exercise—love the idea of mountain bike trails so close to the neighborhood!”

“Police need to monitor traffic on Perkins. Too many speeders”

“A place to enjoy nature and quiet walk or sitting. Keep it natural and a home for wildlife”

“Education signage about the flora and fauna found there.”
BASIC NEEDS THEMES

**CONNECTION**

Nature / Dog-Friendly / Safe Pedestrian Access / Community Gathering

“A haven for dog walkers”

“Education signage about the flora and fauna found there. A classroom area with benches and stumps”

“When we walk the trail, we feel connected to nature, to a slower heart rate, and a letting go of the everyday world”

“Bring people together so all benefit”

“Natural spaces, clean water”

**BELONGING**

Neighborhood & Community / Gardening & Gathering / Welcoming / Peace

“A place to be at peace!”

“I feel such a connection to the community when I work in the community garden. I moved to GR 3 years ago and made friends immediately at the garden”

“A great place to see all kinds of activity—walkers, runners, birdwatchers, grandkids and grandparents, all ages! Love it!”

“Love the sounds of spring peepers and chorus frogs in early spring nights”

**SAFETY**

Vehicular & Pedestrian Safety / Parking / Ecological Health / Signage & Lighting

“Bicycles need a safe way to travel between Knapp and Leonard”

“Don’t expand access to pond in order for the wildlife to feel safe/stay there and use it”

“Loop trails—with signage to know they are official”

“Police need to monitor traffic on Perkins. Too many speeders”

“Defined parking—it always feels like I’m trespassing or parking illegally”

**RECREATION**

Active & Passive Activities / Pedestrian Trails / Ecological Education

“Exercise—love the idea of mountain bike trails so close to the neighborhood!”

“Wetland walking trail and trail to the ravine”

“Places for activity for families”

“An ideal space for ‘escaping to nature’ to pursue quiet and reconnect with wildlife, water and woods. And it’s blissfully quiet”

“Wider trails for walkers and bikers who aren’t looking for mountain bike trails”
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Ball Perkins Park

DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on community feedback, the project team developed a preferred master plan concept that merged active and passive recreational opportunities in an environmentally sensitive design strategy. With 75% of residents in the 49505 zip code supporting the mountain biking trail, the trail design balances bike and foot paths in an intentional route that reduces interaction between users groups. Additionally, native plantings and ravine restoration supports the existing wildlife with healthier habitat.

HILlTOP oVERLOOK

MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAILS

WILDLIFE VIEWING

WOODLAND MANAGEMENT & PRAIRIE RESTORATION

PICNIC SHELTER

RAVINE RESTORATION

RAVINE CREEK BED
STABILIZATION & RESTORATION

EROSION PROTECTION

PICNIC SHELTER & AMENITIES

MOUNTAIN BIKE SINGLE TRACK

PHOTO CREDITS

RAVINE RESTORATION

PHOTO CREDITS
COST ESTIMATES

New improvements to Ball Perkins Park have been grouped into implementation projects. Each project could be built as a stand alone project or combined with other site improvements for a larger package as funding becomes available:

» Nature Trail: $350,000
» Mt. Bike Trail: $123,000
» Native Prairie Restoration: $287,000
» South Parking/Trail Head: $261,000
» Perkins Garden Parking: $150,000
» Perkins Garden Fence: $33,000
» Perkins and Ball Access Improvements: $174,000

TOTAL PARK IMPROVEMENT COST: $1,378,000
TEST PROJECT

After an initial stakeholder discussion, the topic of wayfinding landed as a priority for Ball Perkins Park. Wayfinding and signage can serve multiple purposes. As a test project, the team offered six types of signage for participants to select. Below are the images and voting results. The top selection included signs that are playful, and less informational in their content. Participants also designed their own signs to help inform the project team.

Twelve unique signs were created for the wayfinding test projects. Half of the signs provide nature-related quotations by historical figures, along with nature imagery and reflection questions. Companion signs provide educational information about nature, including habitat, tree, leaf, fungi, cloud and bird identification. Several sets of the signs are printed in Spanish. Each sign is printed to metal and mounted within a steel frame. Signs can be moved and relocated within the park or to other parks, including 32nd Street Park.