PRIORITY PARK CASE STUDY:
REGIONAL PARK + RIVER VALLEY

Riverside Park

EXISTING CONDITIONS

» The majority of the park falls within the Grand River floodplain. Seasonally, many areas of the park are inaccessible due to flooding, including parking areas and path ways.

» Pedestrian and vehicular circulation within the park is not well defined or organized, and is often confusing for visitors.

» There is no existing sidewalk or path on the east edge (along Monroe) of the park.

» River edge pedestrian access is minimal and often unstable

TIER 1 (Park Interior)
1. North entry: parking, boat launch, crosswalk at Monore
2. Shared non-motorized path
3. Ball field entrance, crosswalk at Monroe
4. Band shelter, restrooms, parking
5. Parking at picnic shelter & playground
6. Picnic shelter, restrooms, playground
7. Parking, boat launch
8. Parking, event lawn
9. Guild St. entry: crosswalk at Monore
10. South entry: parking, boat launch, crosswalk at Monore

TIER 2 (Park Edge)
1. To White Pine Trail
2. Monroe Ave N: separated bike path, no bus line
3. To Grand River Edge Trail
4. Crosswalk at 3-Mile

TIER 3 (Park Community)
1. I-96 (no off ramp)
2. Grand River
3. US-131 (off ramp at Ann St.)
ECOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The largest park in the city, Riverside Park is defined by water. With 1.8 miles of riverfront promenade, the park is home to a diverse population of waterfowl and migratory birds. The park is prone to seasonal flooding, with the majority of its footprint within the 100-year flood zone. Existing wetlands are of poor quality due to stagnant water and stormwater discharge from the surrounding neighborhood. Within a drainage district of over 1,900 surface acres, over 24 million gallons of water is piped through Riverside Park, either emptying in the lagoon or the Grand River. There is potential to transition much of the Parks managed lawn areas into naturalized native plantings to restore habitat and improve water quality through the use of constructed wetlands, rain gardens, and bioswales.
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COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

As the city’s largest park, Riverside Park presents opportunities to meet community needs for active spaces, trails, river access and connection to nature. During a stakeholder focus group meeting, participants felt that many aspects of the park, including its varied amenities, should remain and that careful attention to wildlife habitat diversity should be considered.

The first session, held at a Food Truck Friday event in the park, introduced the planning process to residents and participants weighed in on needs and concerns surrounding improvements to the park through conversation and mapping exercises. River and lagoon interaction, dog parks, and restorative native plantings were common discussion topics with participants. 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**
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**
Events & Music / Connecting to Nature / Dog-Friendly

“Music festivals of all kinds”

“More community classes/events at the park. It would be nice if residents were notified via next door app, mailings, or emails”

“Teaching and learning opportunity garden”

“More native gardens”

“Community dog park”

**SAFETY**
Pedestrian & Bicycle Circulation / Ecological Health & Safety

“Lighted pathway at night on White Pine from Knapp to 3-Mile”

“More parking/better circulation, specifically for events. Point person and online info needed for events”

“Bicyclists don’t know how to use the traffic circles... rather than use the bike lane next to the sidewalk they will go into the traffic circle”

“Dredge the lagoon to improve water quality”

“More nature is always the right way to go”

**RECREATION**
Dog-Friendly / Multi-Age Play / Improved Trails

“Dog park at a certain section, maybe at south end at Knapp and Monroe”

“Hammock groves, specifically 4x4 posts. Hard to find trees. Ping pong tables”

“Playground for 2-10 year olds”

“Mile markers on trail for walkers. More places to sit along the trail”

“Bike on trails, prefer asphalt. Like to stop at brewery, ice cream”
Prioritize Park Case Study: Regional Park + River Valley

Riverside Park

**Existing**
- A - Restroom & Maintenance Building
- B - Boat Launch
- C - Soccer Field
- D - Little League Complex
- E - Restroom & Shelter
- F - Disc Golf
- G - Lagoon
- H - Parking
- I - Large Group Shelter
- J - Pump Station
- K - Pedestrian Bridge

**Proposed**
- A - Renovated Restroom & New Maintenance Building
- B - Improved Boat Launch and Reconfigured Parking
- C - Fenced Off-Leash Area - 5 Acres, Adjacent Parking
- D - Non-Motorized Boat Launch, Barrier Free
- E - Renovated Restrooms & Shelter
- F - Improved Large Event Area
- G - New Nature-Based Play Area
- H - Stormwater Daylighting
- I - Island Nature Preserve - No Boat Access
- J - New Restroom & Shelter (2022 Improvements)
- K - Boating Center Rental & Large Event Shelter
  - Non-Motorized
  - Floating Docks
  - Terraced Overlook
  - 7,000 SF, +/-, 300 Capacity (4,500 SF)
  - Restrooms & Concessions
- L - Parking Improvements
- M - River Amphitheater
- N - Additional Crosswalks
- O - General Note:
  - Remove Invasive & Scrub Shrub Around Lagoon Edges.
  - Phase in Wetland Edge/Wet Meadow Filter Strip Within 2FT of Summer Low Water
- P - General Note:
  - Selectively Clear Overgrown Trees & Brush Along Trail to Allow Greater Visibility to Water
- Q - Separate, Fenced Small Dog Area
IMPROVED SHARED-USE TRAIL, 12' WIDE
NEW SHARED-USE TRAIL, 8' WIDE
STORMWATER DAYLIGHTING
DISC GOLF
100-YEAR FLOODPLAIN LINE
FLOODWAY LINE
RIVER ACCESS SEATING AREA
GRASS TURF
WET MEADOW & WETLAND/OPEN WATER
UPLAND PRAIRIE RESTORATION
EVENT AREA DELINEATION

POTENTIAL DREDGING TO OPEN UP CHANNEL (IMPROVE WATER FLOW)
REMOVE PARKING
ALL NEW ROADS TO BE 20' WIDE W/ CURB & GUTTER
CONTOUR INTERVAL = 2FT
Community members overwhelming supported a transition of park character from maintained expanses of lawn to native floodplain planting ecologies that support wildlife while treating and reducing stormwater from the surrounding neighborhood. The design provides unique experiences to Grand Rapids residents and regional guests through improved water access, pet-friendly and off-leash areas, intentional and safe pedestrian and vehicular circulation, and inclusive, multi-generational activities, all while remaining conscious of environmentally sensitive ecologies. Multi-user trail improvements, wayfinding and interpretive signage, and accessible park amenities will reinstate Riverside as a destination within regional trail systems.
SECTION THROUGH BOATING CENTER

- OVERLOOK
- TERRACED SLOPE, BEYOND
- HUMAN-POWERED WATERCRAFT
- FIXED DOCK (SEASONAL FLOATING DOCKS ATTACHED)
- OPEN-AIR EVENT SPACE, 4500sf WITH GREEN ROOF & FIREPLACE
- CONDITIONED CONCESSIONS SPACE, 2500sf WITH RESTROOMS, CAFES, RENTALS

SECTION THROUGH STORMWATER DAYLIGHTING

- STORMWATER FILTER (RAIN GARDEN)
- RESILIENT NATIVE PLANTINGS
- STORMWATER OUTLET NATURAL BIOSWALE
## PRIORITY PARK CASE STUDY: REGIONAL PARK + RIVER VALLEY

### Riverside Park

### COST ESTIMATES

New improvements to Riverside 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:

- **Dog Park**: $1,400,000
- **Waterfront Center**: $3,600,000
- **Existing Trail Improvements (12’ wide)**: $500,000 (with lighting add $400,000)
- **New Trails (8’ wide)**: $600,000 (with lighting add $500,000)
- **Stormwater Daylighting + Green Infrastructure (North of Guild)**: $3,500,000
- **Stormwater Daylighting + Green Infrastructure (South of Guild)**: $3,800,000
- **River Access Points Along Trail**: $300,000
- **Lagoon Restoration**: $2,900,000
- **Restoration of Ex Roads and Parking**: $1,800,000
- **North Boat Launch Renovation w/ New Restroom**: $1,400,000
- **Large Event Area w/ New Multi-Purpose Pavilion/Restroom**: $1,600,000
- **General Park Native Seeding**: $220,000
- **Playgrounds (2)**: $1,500,000
- **Disc Golf Improvements**: $45,000
- **South Launch Improvements**: $550,000
- **Intersection Access Improvements**: 100,000

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### TOTAL PARK IMPROVEMENT COST: $24,715,000
As the city's largest park, Riverside Park presents opportunities to meet community needs for active spaces, trails, river access and connection to nature. During stakeholder meetings, participants felt that habitats for wildlife and ensuring safe spaces for the various (and increasing) diversity of species was a priority.

From the initial input, the consultant team asked participants at the community open house to select test projects that supported or created new habitats, created new events or activated the varied resources, and increased signage. The priorities for the test project included pollinator gardens, which add habitat and also color within the park.

As a way to create habitat and bring color and interest to the park, residents were asked to sign up to paint a habitat house. Types of houses included: bird, bat and pollinator. Once complete, residents hung their bird houses within the park. For the bat boxes and pollinator houses, the team will work with department staff to hang in appropriate locations. The team will provide the artists with a report showing the work of their colleagues as a way to share in the artistic expression and feel a greater sense of belonging at the park and within the neighborhood.