

The Herbert & Patricia Wagers Memorial Park (DEVIL'S BACKBONE)

MASTER PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Camden, Ohio

JUNE 11, 2024

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2 CONTEXT AND SITE ANALYSIS

3 ALTERNATIVE CONCEPT PLANS

4 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

5 FINAL MASTER PLAN

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Preble County Park District would like to thank all of those who participated in the creation of the Devil's Backbone Park Master Plan through public workshops, community events, stakeholder input and surveys. In addition, we would like to recognize and thank the Project Team, Board of Commissioners, and the Wagers family for their support, guidance and leadership throughout the planning process.

Preble County Park District Project Team

Herb Wagers
Mindy M. Davidson
Richard Hunter
Bev Holland
Jonathan Granville
Milo Simpson

Board of Commissioners

J. Stephen Simmons
Kaylee Jo Lebo
Jeffrey A. Sewart

Consultant Design Team

MKSK
Andy Knight
Jack McGlasson
Burgess & Niple
David Griffith
Steve Smith

Park Survey

S. A. Pope & Associates
Stephen A. Pope, P.S.

Biotic Inventory

Jon & Amy Costanzo



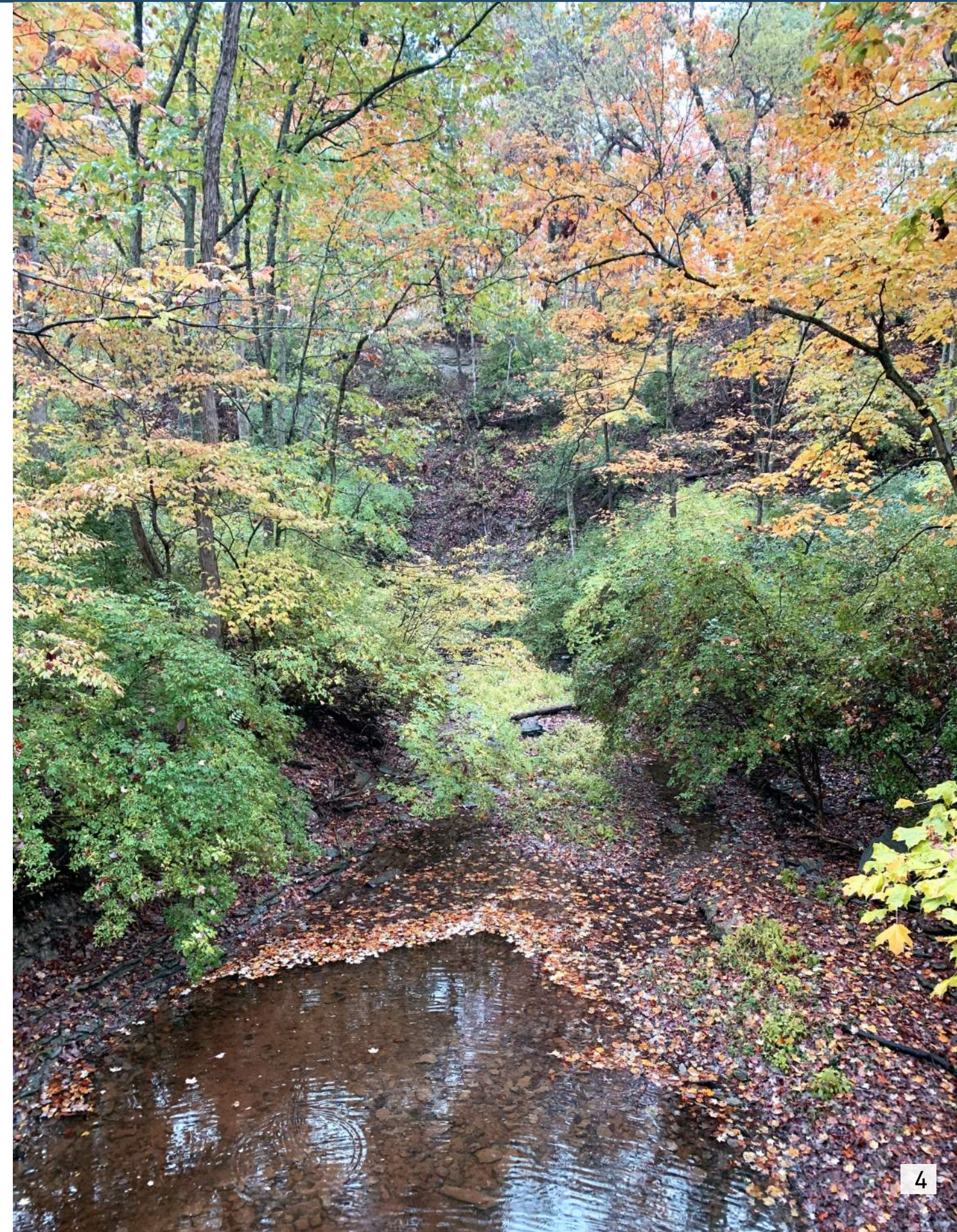
01

INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THIS PLAN

The Preble County Park District (PCPD) is undergoing development of a park master plan for the Herbert and Patricia Wagers' Devil's Backbone Memorial Park, which was donated to the PCPD in 2017. The Master Plan will set forth a plan of action for facilities, conservation efforts and potential improvements that first and foremost preserve the park's natural features while still accommodating the needs of visitors and desired experiences. The final Master Plan approved by PCPD will align with the existing Strategic Plan (2021) and all deed restrictions.

To develop the Master Plan, PCPD engaged the design consultant firm MKSK in Cincinnati, Ohio to provide Landscape Architecture and park master planning services. Civil Engineering support services were provided by Burgess & Niple, also out of Cincinnati. The design consultants worked closely under the direction of PCPD Staff to outline the appropriate tasks and schedule to inventory & analyze the park's existing conditions, understand the history and goals for proposed improvements, and developed draft alternatives for review and input by the public. The following report outlines the full breadth of work undertaken throughout the master planning process.



DEVIL'S BACKBONE VISION STATEMENT (from 2021 Strategic Plan)

- To create a sustainable Park for the people of Preble and surrounding counties where nature can be experienced in a relatively undisturbed state - a quiet contemplative place to enjoy beautiful natural surroundings.
- To maintain the property such that visitors will be inspired to preserve and protect (self-police) the property.
- Over time, PCPD will endeavor to acquire adjacent and nearby properties (predominantly forested and creek bottom areas of the Paint Creek) expanding the footprint of the Park in support of the PCPD Mission.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES (from 2021 Strategic Plan)

- The Devil's Backbone Park is to remain a primitive area where visitors can experience a creek, an old-growth forest, limestone cliffs, waterfalls, native trees, plants, and animals. The property will be protected by appropriate but non-imposing signage, fencing, friends of the park, and in subtle ways where possible.
- Native trees will only be removed where posing an immediate danger to the public, where necessary to keep the entrance and/or roadway open, or for limited approved development projects.
- Invasive species will be eradicated in an environmentally friendly manner to the extent possible.
- Natural materials will be preferred
- Deed restrictions will be honored, respected and protected.



PROJECT SCHEDULE

The Master Plan development process kicked off in the fall of 2023 and continued through the spring of 2024. Over the course of the work, the Project Team coordinated closely with PCPD Staff to review preliminary ideas, seek input from Park Commissioners and provide public engagement opportunities to create an ongoing, authentic process that was responsive to the community. The tasks and timeline shown at right provides an outline of the steps taken throughout the process to create the final master plan.

Final determination of the approved plan by the Preble County Park Board will occur by June 30th of 2024. Upon approval of the Master Plan, PCPD will determine implementation priorities and seek potential funding sources including grants, donations or other means of financial support.

PROJECT TASKS

UNDERSTANDING

- Project Kick-off, vision & goals
- Site Visit & inventory
- Existing Conditions Analysis
- Preparation of base plans, review of prior studies and other relevant materials

ALTERNATIVE CONCEPT PLANS

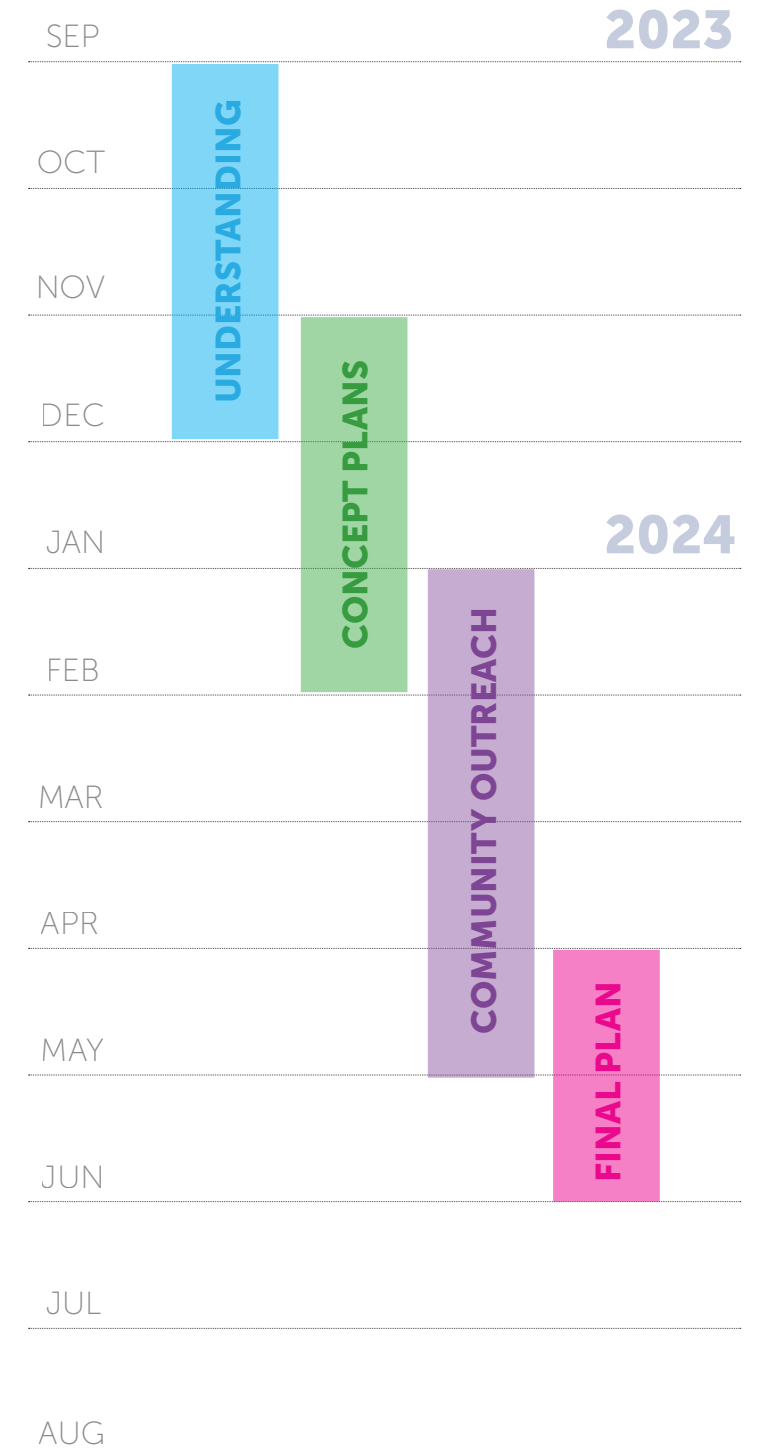
- Explore planning & design framework diagrams, programming priorities and potential park features
- Assemble compendium of relevant project precedents & imagery
- Preliminary design concepts
- Review with PCPD Staff & Team
- Amend preliminary design concepts based on project team feedback

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

- Hold Town Hall meeting for public input
- Post initial design alternatives on PCPD project website
- Gather additional public review comments via email/ PCPD staff
- Review engagement results with project team

FINAL PLAN

- Incorporate community feedback into preferred mast plan alternative
- Refine plan, produce illustrative site plans and conceptual sketches of major features
- Preliminary estimate of cost and phasing



02 CONTEXT & SITE ANALYSIS

PROTECTED ENVIRONMENT
STAY OFF CLIFFS
PROTECTED ENVIRONMENT
STAY OUT OF THE WATER







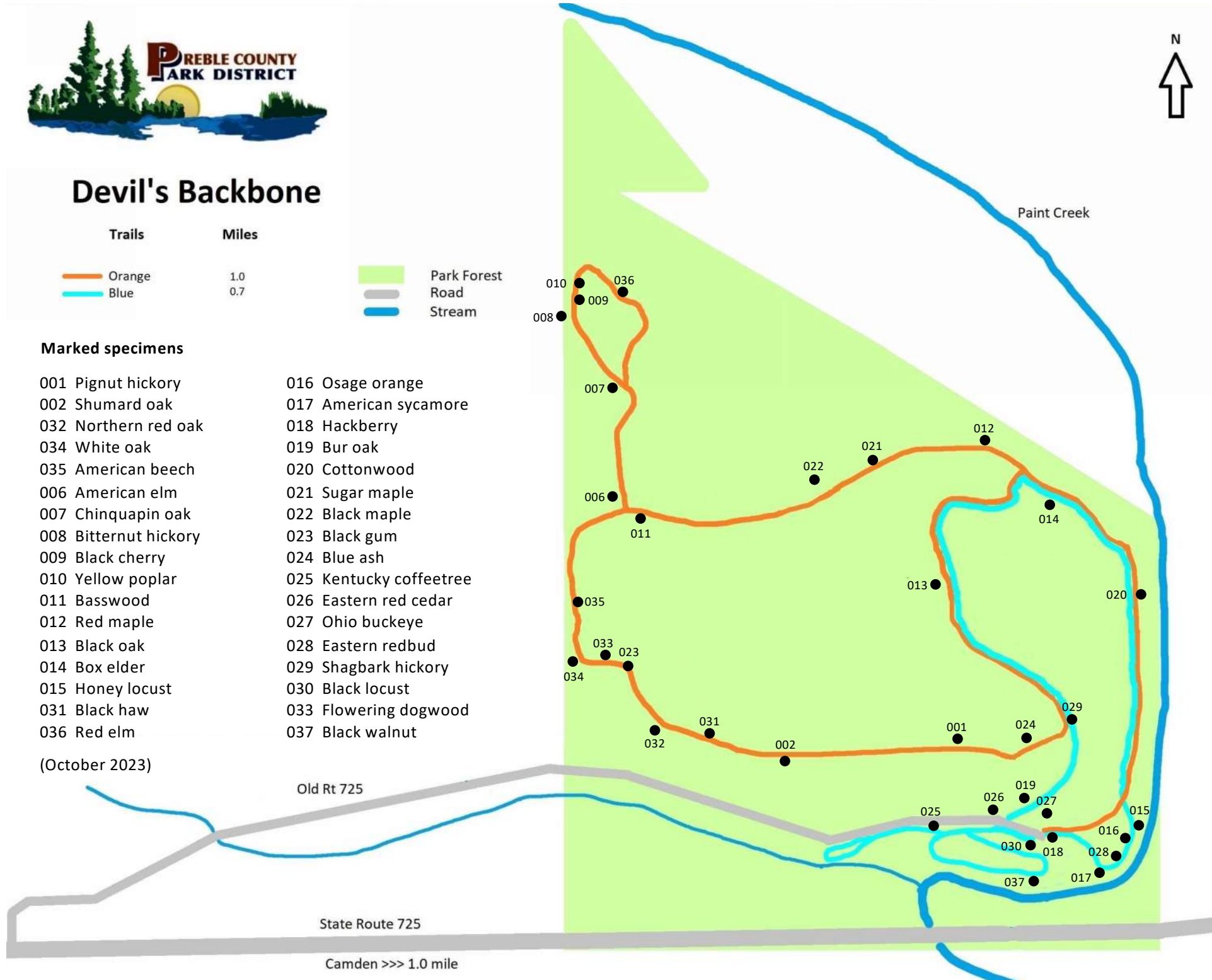


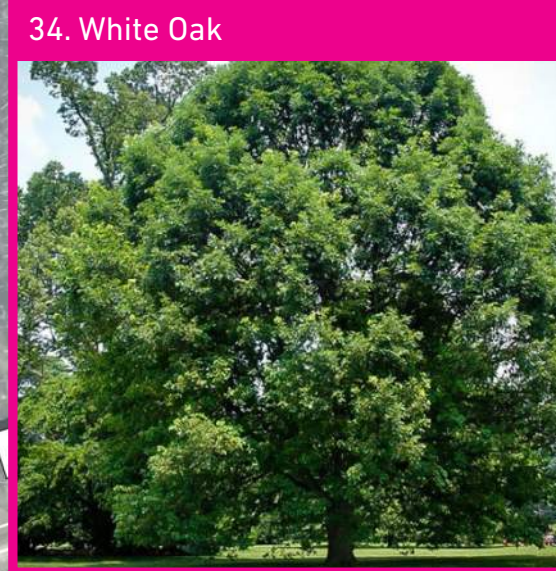
FLORA - 178 TAXA OF PLANTS

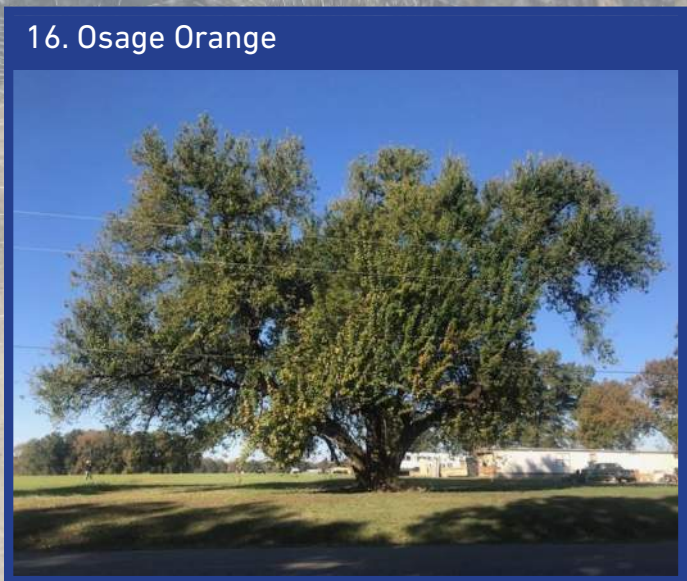
- FERNS & MOSSES (5)
- GRASSES & GRAMINOIDS (9)
- FORBS (100)
- VINES (6)
- BRAMBLES (4)
- SMALL TREES & SHRUBS (9)
- TREES (32)
- **INVASIVE PLANTS** (13)

FAUNA

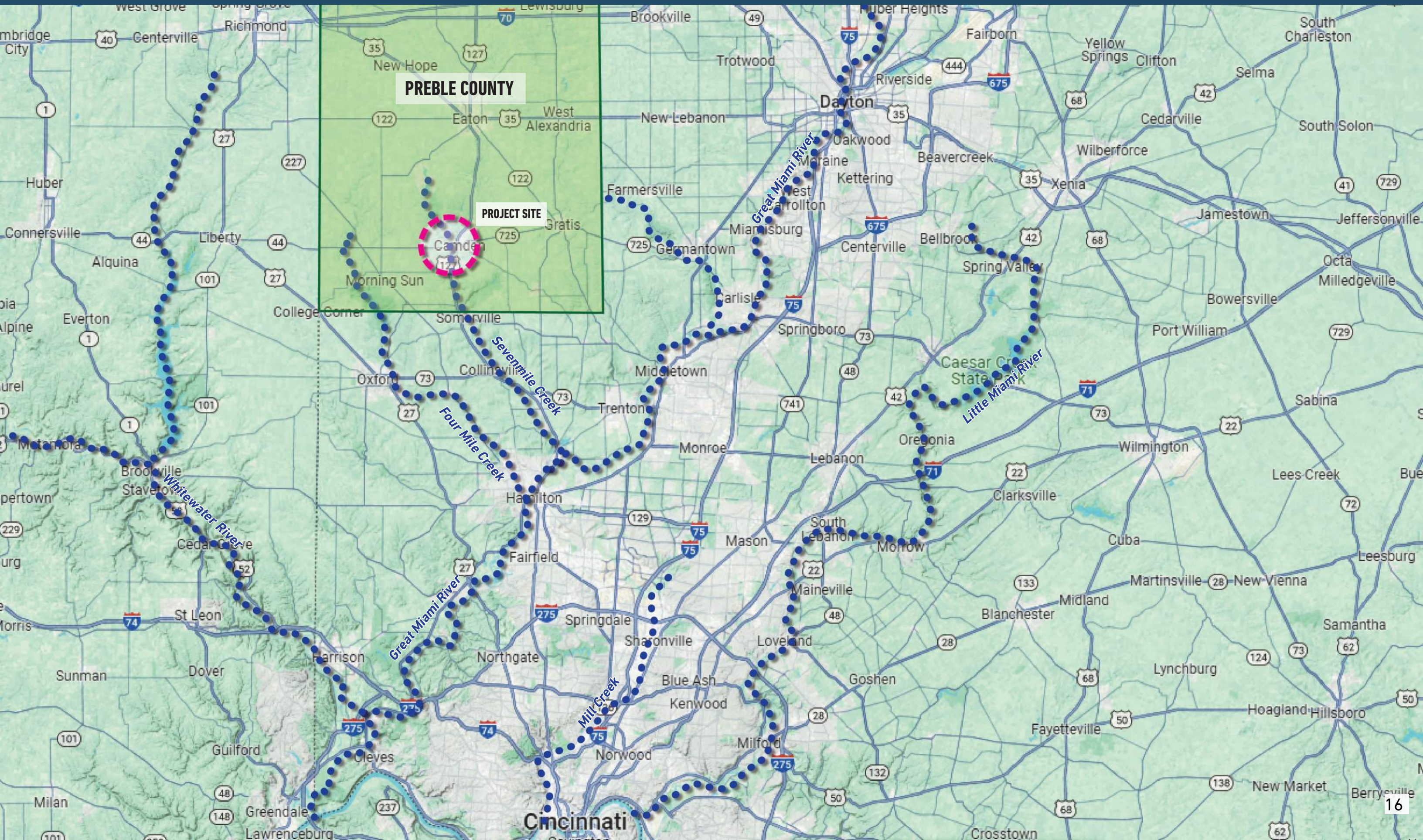
- AMPHIBIANS (4)
- REPTILES (1)
- BIRDS (76)
 - WATERFOWL
 - GROUSE, QUAIL & ALLIES
 - PIGEONS & DOVES
 - CUCKOOS
 - SWIFTS
 - MARTINS & SWALLOWS
 - NUTHATCHES
 - TREECREEPERS
 - GNATCATCHERS
 - WRENS
 - HUMMINGBIRDS
 - CRANES
 - SHOREBIRDS
 - JAYS AND CROWS
 - TITS, CHICKADEES & TITMICE
 - HERONS, IBIS & ALLIES
 - VULTURES, HAWKS & ALLIES
 - KINGFISHERS
 - WOODPECKERS
 - TYRANT FLYCATCHERS
 - VIEROS
 - MIMICS
 - THRUSHES
 - WAXWINGS
 - OLD WORLD SPARROWS
 - FINCHES, EUPHONIAS & ALLIES
 - NEW WORLD SPARROWS
 - BLACKBIRDS
 - WOOD-WARBLERS
 - CARDINALS, GROSBEAKS & ALLIES













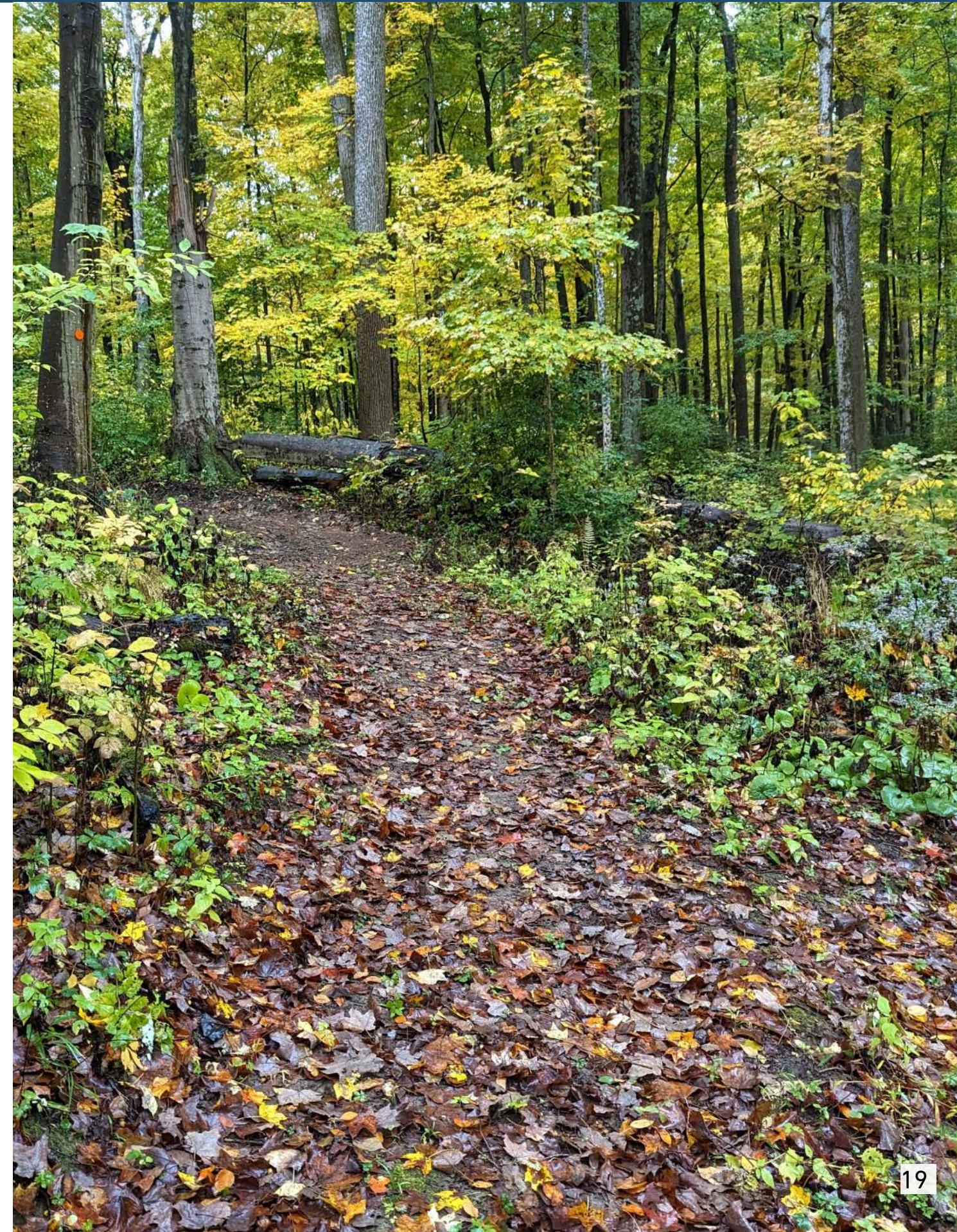
SITE OBSERVATIONS

- The existing driveway/ former roadway is in good shape. Clear debris from shoulders, add designated parking area(s), and study potential turn-around at terminus.
- Existing bridge was last inspected on 10/25/2018 and was rated a 4 (24 ton load capacity). PCPD to continue ongoing monitoring, maintenance and future inspections.
- Improve / add entry gate with automated shut/ lock controls. Potential to add security camera for remote monitoring.
- Confirm extent of existing electric line following entry drive, and proposed needs for lighting/ electric connections.
- Improve/ potentially add to trail network.
- Study possible locations for small seating areas/ open areas for outdoor classroom or informal gatherings.
- Study possible locations for small overlook atop ridge and viewing platform by creek.
- Study potential interpretive signage locations; consider content regarding environmental education, local history and native American/ other cultural history.



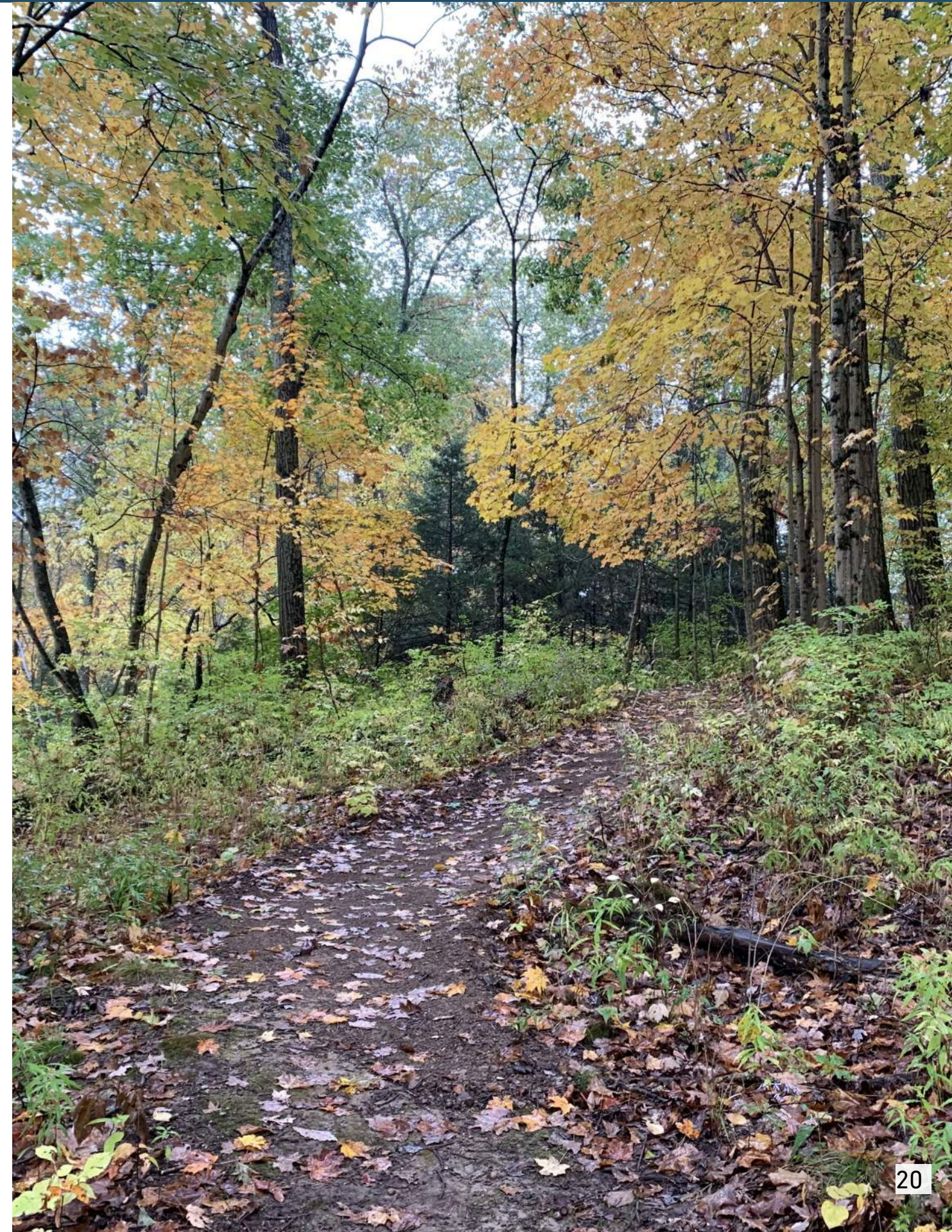
NATURAL RESOURCE OBSERVATIONS

- Excellent plant diversity, old-growth forest and impressive array of bird species noted in biological survey.
- Tree canopy and access to the creek likely support migratory bird stop-over habitat.
- Invasive species removal to target Amur honeysuckle, Tree of Heaven and Japanese stiltgrass.
- Paint Creek water levels can rise rapidly during flood events. Any proposed trails or site improvements within flood zone should take this into consideration.
- Major erosion noted along base of slope where Paint Creek makes sharp westward turn near OH 725. May not be on Park property but consider future impacts this may have.
- Study possible locations for small overlook atop ridge and viewing platform by creek.
- Study potential interpretive signage locations; consider content regarding environmental education, local history and native American/ other cultural history



PROGRAM ELEMENTS (from 2021 Strategic Plan)

- Park Right-of-Way
 - Secure right of way ensuring public access to the property
 - Build car turnaround before main gate
- Security
 - Install gate and entrance at the park entry/ right of way
- Infrastructure
 - Add parking, picnic areas, toilet, benches, trash & recycling
- Signage & Communication
 - Park entrance sign, rules & regulations, information kiosks
- Trails
 - Add side trails to sites of interest
- Preservation of natural habitat
 - Geological points of interest, plants & trees, birds & animals
- Historical and Native American Significance
 - Identify historical sites, points of interest
- Education & Programs
 - Nature-based and historical related topics
- Maintenance
 - Provide ongoing upkeep of existing and proposed park amenities



03

ALTERNATIVE CONCEPT PLANS

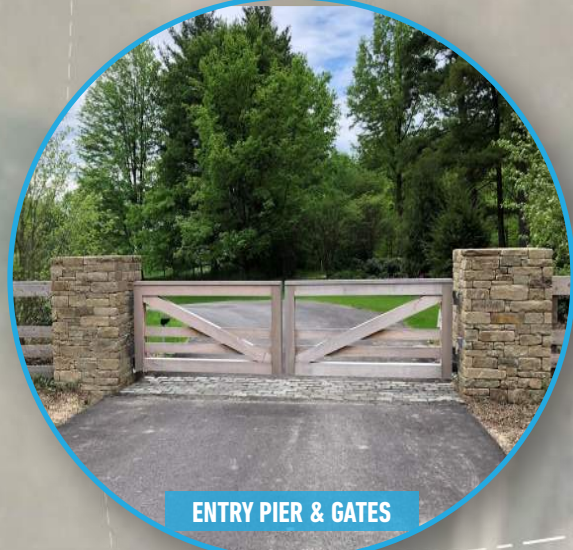




* NOTE: Any proposed improvements within the Right-of-Way will require ODOT review/ coordination and approval



MONUMENT SIGN



ENTRY PIER & GATES



INFO KIOSK & STONE SEATWALL

* NOTE: Any proposed improvements within the Right-of-Way will require ODOT review/ coordination and approval





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VIEWING PLATFORM



CANOPY BRIDGE



NATURE PLAY



OUTDOOR CLASSROOM



NATURE PLAY & PICNIC AREA



INTERPRETIVE SIGNAGE



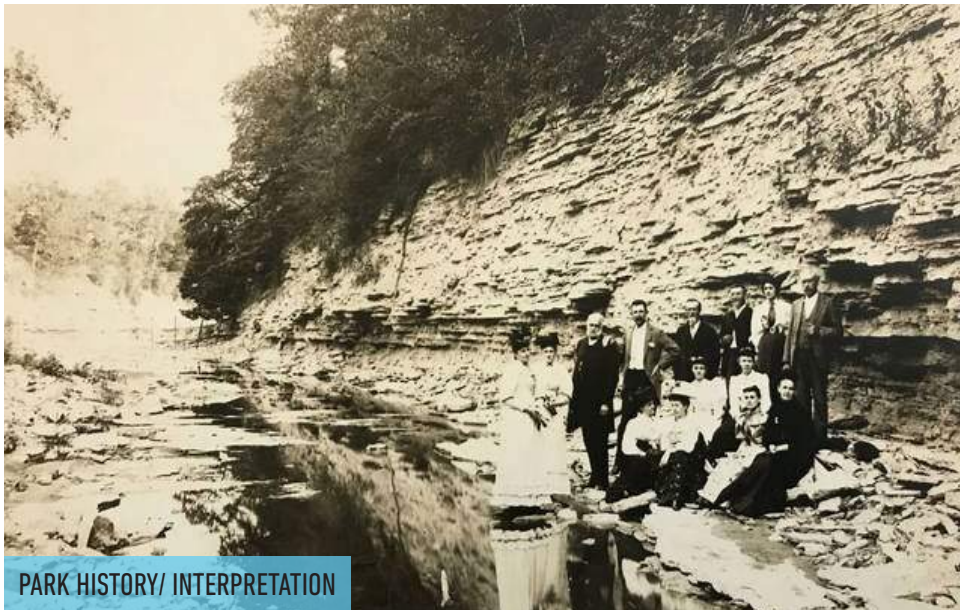
INFO KIOSK



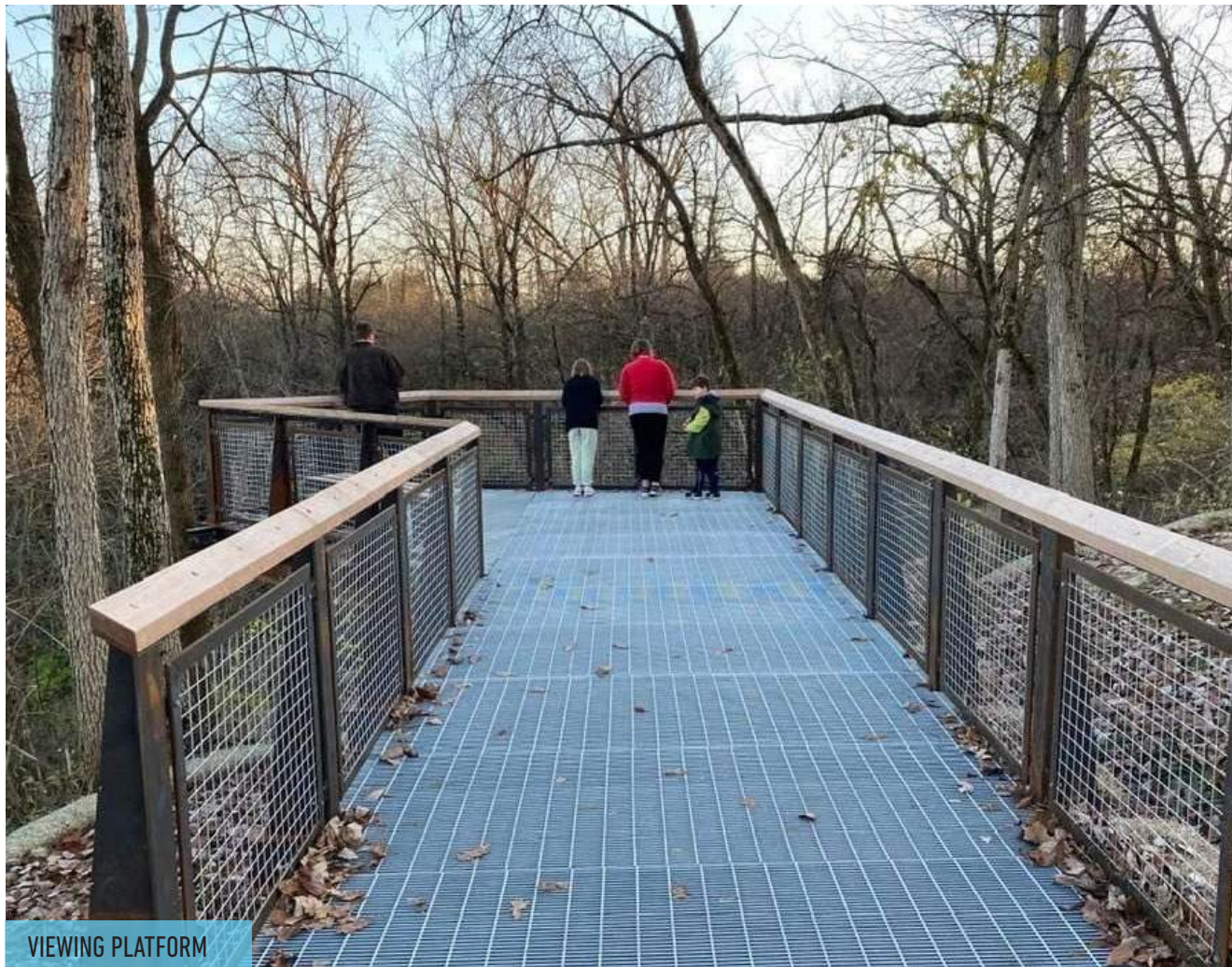
PARK ENTRY SIGNAGE



PARK HISTORY/ INTERPRETATION



PARK HISTORY/ INTERPRETATION



VIEWING PLATFORM



INTERPRETIVE SIGNAGE



OUTDOOR CLASSROOM

A community meeting is taking place in a wood-paneled room. A man in a blue suit stands at the front, presenting to a group of people seated at long wooden tables. Several large maps are displayed on easels around the room. The room features ornate chandeliers and a clock on the wall.

04 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

TOWN HALL MEETING (held 2/29/24 at Camden City Hall)

- Public forum held to review the Project Team's draft design concepts for a range of potential park improvements. The Park Commissioners provided an overview of the project history, goals and objectives of the master plan, and allowed MKSK (the project design consultant) to introduce the proposed designs for review and discussion.
- Site analysis of the existing park conditions was presented, followed by two alternative master plan concepts exploring a range of potential park improvements. Reference imagery accompanied the plans to give character and examples of what the proposed design improvements may look/ feel like.
- Attendees were invited to walk around the room to review the plans in-person, discuss any questions or feedback with the Project Team, and provide written comments directly on the presentation boards using sticky notes. Comment cards were also provided for any additional feedback attendees may have wished to submit following the meeting.
- Overall turnout was a success with approximately 30 attendees in total at the meeting.
- Feedback from attendees was overwhelmingly positive. The majority of comments were enthusiastic about proposed improvements, provided they preserve the natural beauty and character of the park without over-developing it.



ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK

- Project information including the proposed design plans was posted to the PCPD website for further review and download. Additional comments could be provided via email to Park District staff.
- Comments received focused on preserving the natural features of the park and limiting development to the essential features. Concern was expressed that some of the proposed park amenities could be too impactful to the existing natural environment and take away from the intent of the property to remain in a primitive undisturbed state.
- Proposed improvements should be prioritized with respect to community demand, appropriateness to retain the natural character of the park, and availability of similar amenities potentially found elsewhere within the local community (no need to replicate features here that may already be provided nearby).
- Honoring current deed restrictions and goals stated previously in the 2021 Strategic Plan should be maintained in considering future plans.

ABOUT THIS PLAN
The Herbert & Patricia Wagers' Devil's Backbone Memorial Park

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(from 2021 Strategic Plan)

- Create a sustainable Park for the people of Preble and surrounding counties where nature can be experienced in a relatively undisturbed state.
- Maintain the property such that visitors will be inspired to preserve and protect the property.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:
(from 2021 Strategic Plan)

- The Park is to remain a primitive area, where visitors can experience a creek, old-growth forest, limestone cliffs and waterfalls, native trees, plants & animals.
- Protect the property with non-imposing signage, fencing, friends of the park.
- Native trees only to be removed where necessary for safety or approved need.
- Invasive species controlled by environmentally friendly means, where possible.
- Natural materials will be preferred.
- Deed restrictions will be honored and protected.

ANTICIPATED TIMELINE

Master Plan development will continue through the spring of 2024, with final determination of the approved plan by the PCPD Board by June 30, 2024.

Upon approval of the Master Plan, PCPD will determine implementation priorities and seek potential funding sources including grants, donations or other means of financial support.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

You are invited to help develop the park. As someone who lives in or near the park, sharing your ideas and experiences will help us understand the needs of the community and shape a community-driven park.

- **GIVE YOUR FEEDBACK:** PCPD representatives will be leaving additional comment cards at the park. Please provide comments by March 31, 2024.
- **VISIT THE WEBSITE:** Visit preblecountyparks.org with the latest news and upcoming community events.

For more information visit preblecountyparks.org

THE HERBERT & PATRICIA WAGERS' DEVIL'S BACKBONE MEMORIAL PARK
1301 OH-725 WEST, CAMDEN OH

TOWN HALL MEETING
February 29, 2024

PREBLE COUNTY PARK DISTRICT
Catch a breath of fresh air!

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Tell us what you think! Please leave any additional comments below:

Name (optional): _____

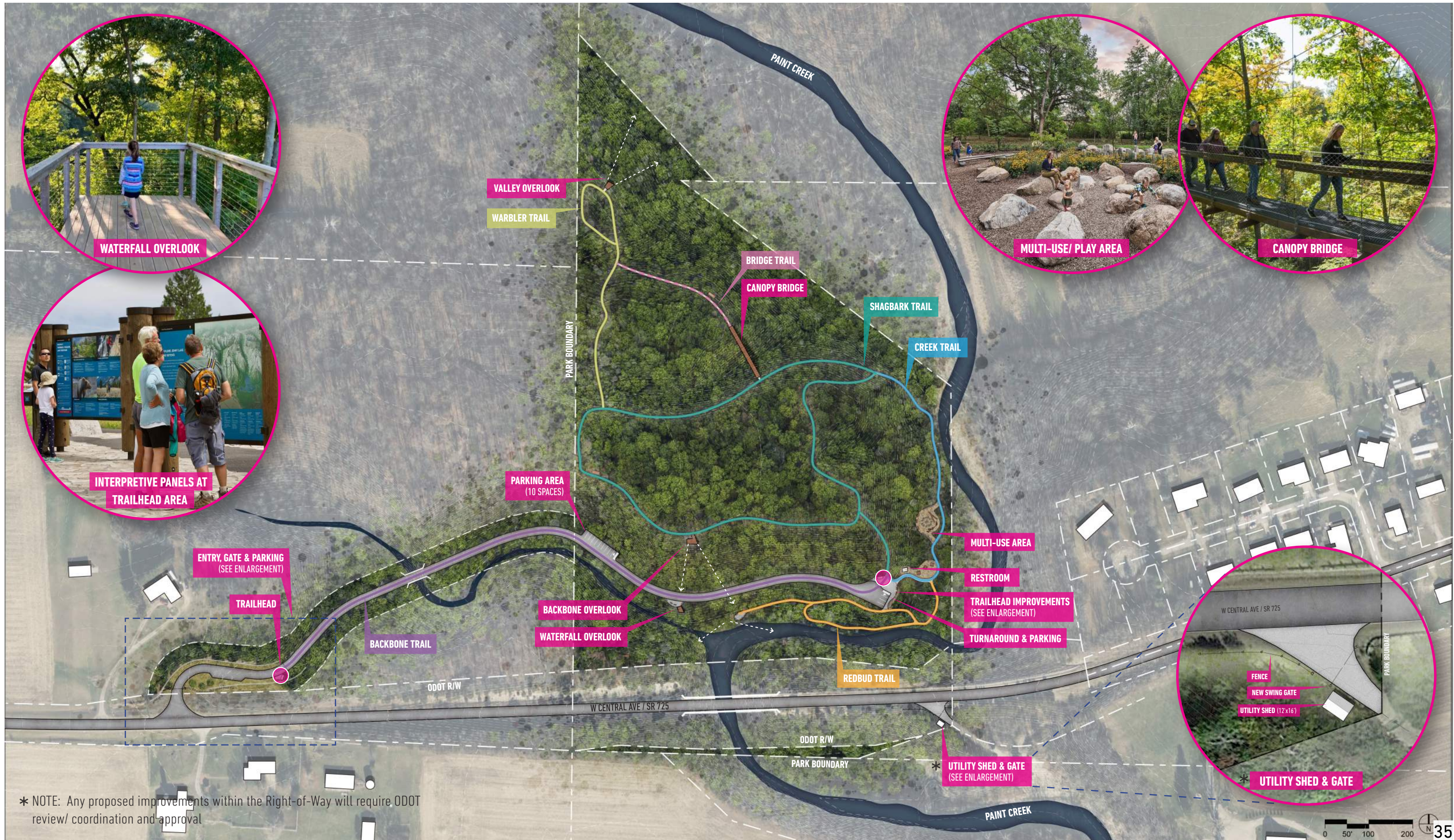
Email (optional): _____

For more information visit preblecountyparks.org



05

FINAL MASTER PLAN



* NOTE: Any proposed improvements within the Right-of-Way will require ODOT review/ coordination and approval



MONUMENT SIGN & STONE PIER



VEHICULAR GATE & STONE PIERS



EXISTING CONCRETE DITCH (TO REMAIN)

MAIN ENTRY GATE W/ AUTOMATED CONTROLS

ENTRY PIER & MONUMENT SIGN

APPROPRIATE SIGNAGE AT PARK BOUNDARIES

* WIDENED DRIVE APRON (FOR TURN-AROUND WHEN CLOSED)

PARKING/ TURN-AROUND (3 SPACES)

NEW SHADE/ ORNAMENTAL TREES

STONE SLABS/ BOULDERS (VEHICLE DETERRENT) *

PARK DISTRICT R/W EASEMENT

EXISTING VEHICLE GATE (TO REMAIN)

PAVING AT EX. KIOSK (COMPACTED AGGREGATE)

SIGNAGE AT PARK BOUNDARIES

NATIVE MEADOW PLANTINGS

ODOT R/W

W CENTRAL AVE / SR 725



NATIVE MEADOW PLANTING



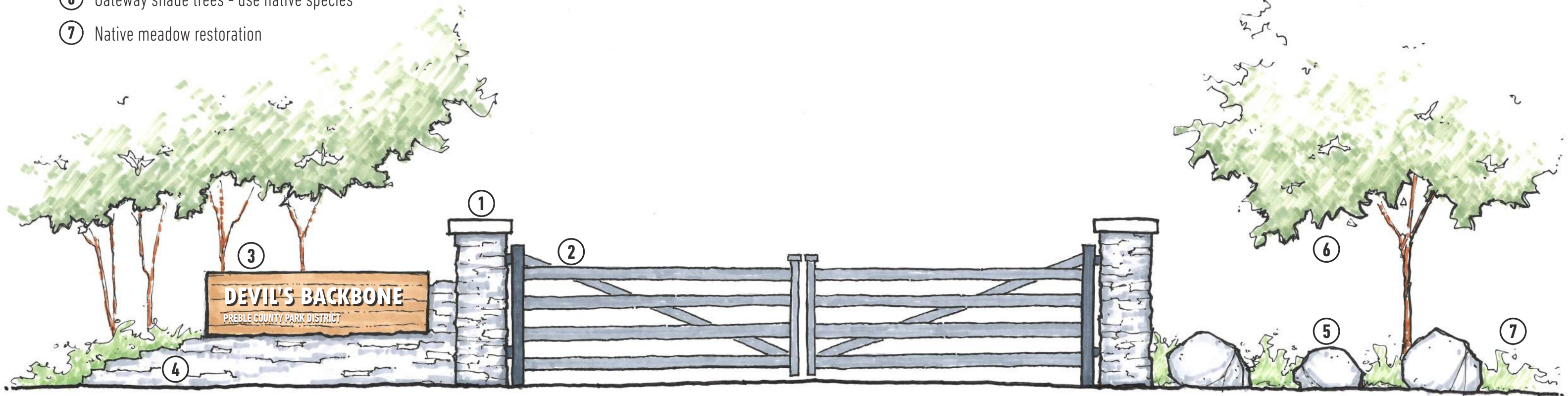
BOULDERS/ STONE SLABS

* NOTE: Any proposed improvements within the Right-of-Way will require ODOT review/ coordination and approval

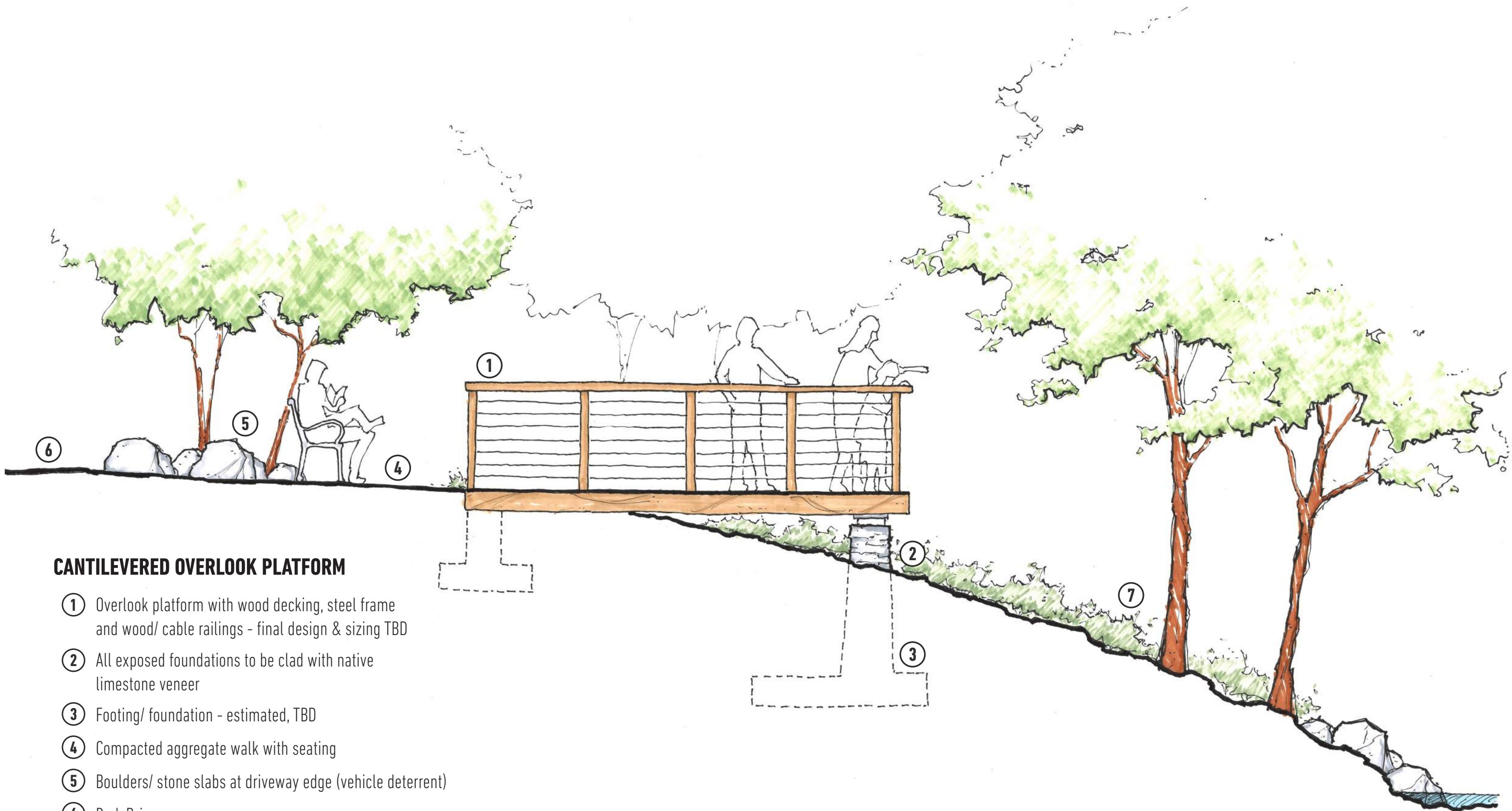


PARK ENTRY GATEWAY & SIGNAGE

- ① Limestone entry piers
- ② Heavy-duty steel/ aluminum vehicular swing gates, with automated controls and lock
- ③ Park Monumnet Signage - final design & sizing TBD (wood frame with pin-mounted metal lettering)
- ④ Limestone wall - use native (local) stone
- ⑤ Glacial boulders/ limestone slabs (vehicle deterrent)
- ⑥ Gateway shade trees - use native species
- ⑦ Native meadow restoration



NOTE: Conceptual design sketch for style reference only. Final design, sizing, materials and phasing to be determined by Preble County Park District



CANTILEVERED OVERLOOK PLATFORM

- ① Overlook platform with wood decking, steel frame and wood/ cable railings - final design & sizing TBD
- ② All exposed foundations to be clad with native limestone veneer
- ③ Footing/ foundation - estimated, TBD
- ④ Compacted aggregate walk with seating
- ⑤ Boulders/ stone slabs at driveway edge (vehicle deterrent)
- ⑥ Park Driveway
- ⑦ Existing vegetation (undisturbed)

NOTE: Conceptual design sketch for style reference only. Final design, sizing, materials and phasing to be determined by Preble County Park District



06

BUDGETARY ESTIMATES & PHASING

SITE WORK BUDGETARY ESTIMATES

The below is a summary of estimated budgets for all site improvements, amenities, structures, park features and utilities as detailed in the master planning section.

Note: *Unit price values derived from recent bid pricing and MKSK assumption of work effort required. MKSK has no control over the cost of labor, materials, or the contractors methods of determining bid prices, or over competitive bidding or market conditions. Therefore, MKSK cannot guarantee that bids or construction cost will not vary from any estimates of probable construction cost prepared by them.*

| Site Improvements | Cost |
|--|---------------------------|
| Demolition & Clearing | \$45,316 |
| Pavements & Surfacing (drives, parking, walks, trails) | \$196,062 |
| Site Amenities (signage, entry gate, natural play area, benches) | \$136,200 |
| Restrooms, Overlooks & Trailhead Kiosk | \$222,000 |
| Elevated Canopy Suspension Bridge | \$455,000 |
| Landscape Restoration | \$36,203 |
| | Total: \$1,090,781 |

| Utilities & Infrastructure | Cost |
|---|-------------------------|
| Miscellaneous Utility/ Infrastructure Upgrades (culverts, bridge repairs, etc.) | (allowance) \$100,000 |
| Utility Shed (12'x16' prefab metal building), paving, fence & gates (south of OH 725) | \$64,361 |
| | Total: \$164,361 |

| Cost Summary | |
|---|---------------------------|
| Site & Utilities/ Infrastructure Subtotal | \$1,255,142 |
| Design Contingency (20%) | \$251,028 |
| <i>Assume 4-5% yearly inflation for future budget forecasting</i> | Total: \$1,506,171 |

PROJECT PHASING

Implementation of the Master Plan will be accomplished by dividing the project into multiple phases to accommodate improvement priorities and available funding sources.

The potential phases outlined herein are for discussion purposes only, and will need further confirmation by the PCPD and community needs. Completion of these phases and amenities will be determined through observed park usage and funding availability.

| Phase 1 | Anticipated Schedule |
|--|----------------------|
| Basic repairs to vehicular drives, addition of parking areas, entry gates and signage, waterfall overlook, installation of basic utility infrastructure to support future park improvements, landscape restoration at park entry | 2025 (TBD) |
| Phase 2 | Anticipated Schedule |
| Park restroom, new trailhead kiosk, Backbone overlook, automated gate controls, stone slabs/ boulders at park entry, minor trail improvements | TBD |
| Phase 3 | Anticipated Schedule |
| Multi-use/ natural play area, interpretive signage, picnic tables & benches, utility/ maintenance shed on south side of OH 725 | TBD |
| Phase 4 | Anticipated Schedule |
| Elevated canopy walk/ Suspension Bridge, expanded trail network connecting to bridge. <i>Note: Completion of Phase 4 amenities will be determined through observed park usage and funding availability.</i> | TBD |

PREBLE COUNTY PARK DISTRICT

2024

MKSK

B&N
burgessniple.com