

Holbrook Hollows: Connecting Trails



- Trails for hiking & equestrian use (2.3 mi)
- **Cost:** \$100,000
- **Funding Sources:** Park District Land Improvement Fund, Geauga County Chapter Ohio Horseman's Council, Ohio Horseman's Council
- **Dates:** Spring 2017 – Fall 2018
- **Project Leaders:** Matthew McCue, Director of Planning; Daniel McConnaughy, Park Planner

County: Geauga
Gauga Park District

AECOM



Holbrook Hollows is a 131-acre park in Bainbridge Township, in southwest Geauga County, positioned to serve the residents of four counties – Geauga, Cuyahoga, Summit and Portage. It is within two miles of Downtown Chagrin Falls and within a five-mile radius of nearly 60,000 residents, 20,000 of them in Geauga. Among four trails totaling 2.8 miles, Holbrook Hollows provides access to Cleveland Metroparks' South Chagrin Reservation bridle trail, advancing connectivity between parks. Horseback riders here now can enjoy a consecutive 100 miles under saddle.

To offer something for everyone, per its mission, Geauga Park District focused on trails that serve multiple uses, great experiences with the natural world, and features sure to draw people in: a lodge, a Nature-based/themed playground, boardwalks and an overlook.

REQUIRED: Provide contact information in case we need to contact you about this project.

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The Good Stuff

- Connection to Cleveland Metroparks' South Chagrin Reservation bridle trail
- Features trailheads, bridges, restrooms, vehicular/horse trailer parking, lodge, Nature-based playground, tables, overlooks, firepit

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Holbrook Hollows' trails offer wheelchair accessibility along a half mile of asphalt, as well as aggregate and primitive surfaces for walking, hiking, cross country skiing and horseback riding. Along them are 425 linear feet of boardwalk, offering a large deck for birdwatching or education; a wooden overlook; 30-foot bridge; horse fords at most bridges and boardwalks; and informational signs. All non-asphalt trails and associated features were crafted by Gauga Park District's fine construction crew.

Entering from the parking lot (46 cars and six horse trailers) leads guests past a lush green lawn to Holbrook Hollows Lodge (1,644 square feet, capacity: 99). Visitors are charmed by soaring ceilings and large windows that create exceptional connections to this natural environment. During warmer weather, users make use of a giant, electronically controlled, garage-style glass door to extend parties and events onto a tiered back patio space.

Gauga Park District approached AECOM of Cleveland with concepts for the lodge and its surroundings. Resulting is a design that harks back to the last structure removed from the site, a large horse barn, but maintains clean lines, encouraging strong visual unity into and through the lodge. Outside, three picnic tables, a fire pit, a grill and plenty of community space are a stage set for many memorable gatherings, as well as five red bistro sets, all first come, first served.

Nearby, young guests explore and socialize on a Nature-based/themed playground featuring a hillside slide and tunnel, stone steps to the top of the hill, a wood ramp with rope pulls, climbing logs (sourced onsite) and freestanding agility ropes. Hillside totems, designed and painted by staff, represent 10 native species and their habitats. "I love the natural look of the playground," wrote one Facebook follower. "We have the most beautiful parks." Once again, Gauga Park District's construction crew assembled/built and installed it all.

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Unique!

- Horseback riders here now can enjoy a consecutive 100 miles under saddle
- Can be enjoyed on foot, horseback or cross country skis

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Mostly traversing mature beech-sugar maple forest, a walk here demonstrates how the park got its name: shallow ravines/valleys and scenic hillsides offer picturesque vistas of woodlands and stream. The Holbrooks owned much of the land as early as the 1850s, though the property was purchased by Geauga Park District from the Ellerins in 2002. Notable for location familiarity, the park's street, Country Lane, becomes Holbrook Road once it reaches Cuyahoga County.

Also found here are about 14,400 linear feet of tributaries to the Aurora Branch of the Chagrin River – Holbrook Hollows' most unique habitats. Home to waterfowl, mink, muskrat and river otter, many of these headwater streams and associated wetlands provide key buffers between human land use and the Chagrin River. Dark-eyed Juncos and Least Flycatchers, both Ohio Species of Special Interest, were documented in a 2011 survey, which confirmed Scarlet Tanagers and Wood Thrushes breeding onsite. All are good indicators of healthy/mature forest habitat, and notable because most populations are declining.

Low impact practices such as bioretention basins and infiltration trenches were utilized during development. Associated stormwater practices were considered holistically and integrated with the overall aesthetic. Contractor Cold Harbor built the lodge, parking lots, bio retention basins/swales and asphalt loop trail.

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Buzz on the Street

- “Fantastic new park for us. Was wonderful that the two park systems were able to be connected. Enjoyed ourselves in this one! Thank you!”
- Danielle Sprow of Mentor 7/18/20, in a program survey for “Horseback Trail Ride Connecting the Parks”

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With promotions in park publications, newspapers and online, numerous public programs have been held so far introducing Holbrook Hollows – experiences reaching area veterans, horseback riders, several groups of seniors including a local senior center, and preschoolers through the county library system. Wrote the administrator of Chagrin Falls Park Youth Camp, which visited in July: “Our students were able to enjoy an educational experience (most for the first time in their lives) in the beautiful ecosystems of HH and learned so much through the hands-on experience of a naturalist-led river hike! I am so grateful for the support of GPD in educating our youth about the wonder and importance of our natural world!”

As an ambassador for drawing people outdoors to explore, Geauga Park District is excited to submit this new park – proof that experiences in Nature continue to be a valued part of Geauga County life and its proud rural character. A sense of place, and peace, is created the moment you arrive.

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- “Visited last week – very impressive!”
- Candy Lawrence
on Facebook 5/7/19

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Surrounded by quickly developing landscapes, this preserved land provides a variety of habitats diverse in flora and fauna. Much of this property was cleared of trees throughout the early 20th century. Mature forest communities dominate (93.2 acres), estimated at 75 to 100 years old, followed by old fields (16.9 acres) and wetlands (10.8 acres) such as mixed emergent marshes, swamp forests and sedge-grass meadows.

Special thanks to the Geauga County Chapter of the Ohio Horseman’s Council, which contributed \$1,000 to the project and was successful in acquiring a matching grant from the Ohio Horseman’s Council for some of the trail construction.