

<https://www.cleveland.com/akron/2020/01/summit-metro-parks-completes-first-phase-of-restoring-former-valley-view-golf-course-to-connect-three-parks-on-akrons-north-side.html>

Summit Metro Parks completes first phase of restoring former Valley View golf course to connect three parks on Akron's North Side

Posted Jan 31, 2020



The Valley View Area will connect Cascade Valley, Gorge and Sand Run metro parks, for 1,900 acres of contiguous Summit Metro Park land.

Facebook Share

Twitter Share

371

shares

By [Robin Goist, cleveland.com](https://www.cleveland.com/robin-goist)

AKRON, Ohio – About 100 years after Summit Metro Parks first identified what is now the former Valley View Golf Course as land that should be preserved for its natural beauty, the 200-acre site on Akron's North Side is on track to welcome visitors this fall as part of Cascade Valley Metro Park.

The park district has completed the first phase of its plan to restore natural resources to the Valley View Area, which is located at 1212 Cuyahoga Street, directly across from Cascade Valley.

Since Summit Metro Parks [bought the former golf course for \\$4 million in 2016](#), crews have restored about 30 acres of wetland and 3,000 feet of headwater stream, and reseeded the rest of the site with native plants including walnut and oak trees.

“We went through a public process to listen and hear from the public as to what they wanted to see with the park,” Mike Johnson, chief of conservation for Summit Metro Parks, told cleveland.com Friday. “What they wanted was a natural area with trails and hiking and opportunities for natural recreation.”

That is expected to become a reality this fall, as the park plans to open a mowed, prototype trail on the east side of the Valley View Area, near Cuyahoga Street.



Plans for the Valley View Area at Cascade Valley Metro Park include a mile-and-a-half trail and a restored historic barn.

The mile-and-a-half trail will give visitors an opportunity to explore the area, which Johnson described as a “linchpin” because it will connect Cascade Valley, Gorge and Sand Run metro parks, for a total of 1,900 acres of connected park land.

“This area was identified in the park’s first master plan in the 1920s as something worth preserving,” said Summit Metro Parks spokeswoman Lindsay Smith. The area is near the confluence of the “Little” and “Big” Cuyahoga Rivers, and the Ohio and Erie Canal Towpath Trail.

“Phase Two is focused on the Cuyahoga River itself,” Johnson said of conservationists’ next steps. “That project is going to involve restoring about 5,000 linear feet of habitat to the river.”

Over the years, former golf course management “channelized” the river, and the area is nearly devoid of trees, Johnson said.

“We are going to restore the physical habitat to the river, we’re going to reforest it, and we’re also going to recreate and restore about 60,000 acres of floodplain, and we’re

going to do that by excavating fill material that was placed along the river banks over many years,” Johnson said.

Crews are also working on restoration of a historic barn on the property, which was Akron’s last dairy farm. The Himelright family [owned the farm from about 1887 to 1956](#), when it was sold to become a golf course.



Summit Metro Parks is renovating a historic barn on the Valley View Area of Cascade Valley Metro Park on Akron's North Side. (Courtesy of Summit Metro Parks)

“The barn was the clubhouse to the golf course,” Johnson said. “It was a barn to the original farm, and it was built in the mid-1800s, so it’s a historic structure... We’re taking it and we’re really restoring it to that historical time period. We want it to look like a barn again.”

Both the barn and nearby prototype trail are expected to open this fall.

The conservation and restoration efforts are almost entirely grant-funded, Smith said.

Phase One, which is the restoration of all the land except the Cuyahoga River, was paid for by a \$1.14 million grant from the Ohio Public Works’ Clean Ohio Conservation Fund.

The second phase is being paid for by [a \\$370,000 grant](#) from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. Summit Metro Parks is working with NOAA, the Great Lakes Commission, the Oho Lake Erie Commission and Cuyahoga AOC, Johnson said.

The renovations to the barn are being paid for with a \$185,000 grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. The grant requires the park to consider the needs of the

nearby refugee community in Akron's North Hill neighborhood, so that will influence how the park uses the space, Smith said.