



# Waukesha County Department of Parks and Land Use

## Retzer Nature Center Discovery Trail Project (Renovation of former Adventure Trail)

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### Fast Facts about This Project

The original Adventure Trail at Retzer Nature Center was designed and constructed in 1993. The trail featured information on native Wisconsin plants, birds and animals at 30 interpretive stops along an 810' accessible paved trail. As part of the renovation plan, the deteriorated trail was reconstructed, ensuring full Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility.

Features and plantings along the trail will be designed to provide an extension of the educational programming that is offered at Retzer. Some of the features will include an interactive sensory station, climbing logs, a rain garden, and a habitat play area. A new asphalt addition to the ADA-accessible trail has been constructed to connect the original trail footprint to a new ADA-accessible boardwalk. This will increase ADA access by an additional approximately 400 feet, and it will connect to a 600-foot long boardwalk that has recently been constructed as a component of another ADA enhancement project.

The project goal is to provide barrier-free access to both nature and outdoor education elements/programs; therefore, the project will be designed with input from local experts and educators, to include teachers from area school districts who participate in programming at Retzer, and occupational therapists. This will provide inclusion and access for adults, students, and children with physical or mental impairments that substantially limit a major life activity.

#### Why is there a need for the project?

The goal is to improve access to nature and outdoor educational programs at Retzer Nature Center for persons of all abilities. Currently, approximately 20,000-plus residents visit Retzer annually, and it is anticipated that the number will grow in quantity and diversity due to this project. The accessible trail will be designed and constructed to provide access to nature and educational signage and interactive exhibits at Retzer Nature Center. The 810-foot trail will be 8-feet wide, barrier-free asphalt with maximum 5% slopes to comply with ADA requirements. The original trail led the way in providing universal access to nature education and since constructed it has served park visitors for nearly 30 years, but it is now in need of renovation. The original portion of the trail is in need of complete reconstruction and drainage improvements to reduce water and ice issues. New to the project is the addition of a paved trail that will connect to a new accessible boardwalk, furthering the opportunity for those with disabilities to access nature and extending access to educational programs at Retzer Nature Center. The new project was renamed the Discovery Trail to incorporate all components.

#### How much does this project cost and who is paying for it?

Waukesha County has joined forces with local organizations to assist with funding. The Waukesha Rotary Club has made a \$45,000 commitment over three years to support this project. The Friends of Retzer Nature Center provided a matching grant of \$45,000. The Department of Parks and Land Use applied for and received \$143,000 in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding to cover another portion of the project for accessibility. \$24,000 will be contributed by Waukesha County. Additional fundraising is in progress to complete future phases.

#### What is the timeline for this project?

The first phase was completed in 2021, which included reconstructing and repaving the asphalt trail, and a new trail connection to the boardwalk. Phase one also included harvesting trees for reuse in the design, laying large climbing boulders and restoring the area with native trees, shrubs and plants. Phase 2 construction will start in the summer of 2021, and it will include an entrance archway and signage, a stone outcrop seating wall, and insect and wood climbing exploration stations. A fundraising campaign will be launched in July 2021 to raise funds for additional educational elements.

**What types of improvements will be implemented?**

The project will include the development of new nature-based interactive educational components with enhanced accessibility. Educational pods will provide an extension for learning about programming already in place at the Retzer Learning Center. The trail and educational pods will promote and encourage intergenerational play and access. It will also provide an accessible connection to a new boardwalk for extended access to nature and programs.

**Will it cost anything to use?**

Retzer Nature Center is a free entrance facility, but programs or special events may have access or reservation fees.

**Will the trail be open during the renovation?**

Staff and /or contractors may periodically close off areas to keep people safe while working on tree trimming, grading, stonework or installation of the new features.

**Will any trees have to come down due to this process?**

It is anticipated that some of the trees in the project area will need to be removed to open up space for the new features. The resulting increased sunlight will allow for wood structural elements and playground chips to dry faster, which will increase longevity and reduce maintenance needs. Every effort will be made to retain healthy trees that were planted by the Retzer family. All removed trees will be considered for re-use on site in the construction of project structures/features.

**Where can I find out more information about this project?**

Information and updates will be posted on the Waukesha County Parks and Land Use website at [www.waukeshacounty.gov/currentparkprojects](http://www.waukeshacounty.gov/currentparkprojects). For questions or comments, you can call Waukesha County Park System at (262) 548-7803.