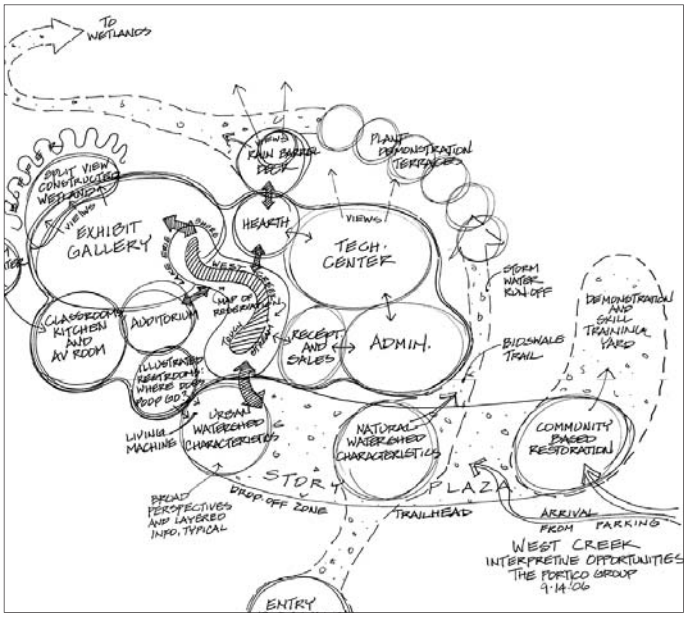
CLEVELAND METROPARKS

West Creek Stewardship Center

Parma, Ohio



In the mid 1990s, the last remaining large undeveloped area in Parma, Ohio near the headwaters of West Creek, was slated to become a shopping center and golf course. Thanks to the efforts of citizens who ultimately formed the West Creek Preservation Committee, the 360-acre swath of land became the West Creek Reservation, and one of the newest jewels in Cleveland Metroparks' famed "Emerald Necklace" of linked nature preserves.

The principles of landscape ecology and conservation biology will play an important role in the design and development of the West Creek Stewardship Center.

Because West Creek flows through densely populated and developed suburbs of Cleveland, it had suffered severe degradation of both water quality and natural beauty over the years. Signs of this degradation included erosion, stream channelization, infestations of invasive species, and illegal dumping. Recognizing the need to catalyze the restoration of West Creek and reinforce the community's strong connection to the site, Cleveland Metroparks and the West Creek Preservation Committee decided to develop a stewardship facility on the site. Envisioned as a community center, the facility will house naturalist programs, community gatherings, and restoration activities.

As a key member of the design team led by Portico Group, Biohabitats provided ecological planning, conservation biology, and landscape ecology services through master plan refinement, programming, and concept design. Biohabitats' ecologists, geomorphologists, and conservation biologists performed a site reconnaissance to gather information about the proposed site's ecological characteristics. The Biohabitats team also assessed land use and land cover maps to characterize the site's ecological connectivity and juxtaposition within its watershed. Biohabitats then collaborated with the Portico Group to lead two design charrettes that included stakeholders from the community. The charrettes explored a range of topics and formed an overall vision for the project.

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