

Blandford Nature Center Highland Entrance

Blandford Nature Center is advancing its mission of native ecosystem protection, restoration, and environmental education in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The Nature Center recently purchased the former 120-acre Highlands Golf Course adjacent to its historic holdings and has been undertaking an expansive rewilding to native biotic communities of the property. The Center hired Jones & Jones in early 2024 to plan and design a series of new visitor facilities and improvements to the entrance area of the former golf course.

Envisioned as a gateway to the larger landscape, careful attention was paid to key site elements to ignite curiosity, wonder, and appreciation for the natural setting immediately upon arrival to the property. These small scale interventions include an artistic grass-blade vehicle gate, a sculptural signage and seating kiosk, serpentine rockery walls, and natural patterns in the ground plane. Improvements include new entrance drive, parking area with raingardens, accessible paths, multi-use education and events pavilion, natural playscape area, information and way-finding signage, and other features, all of which will be wholly immersed in site's current and restored natural systems and qualities. Nature in its various manifestations will be the prevailing quality and feature of the Highlands area.