

Beautiful Wildflowers at Charles Ilsley Park (1479 East Predmore)

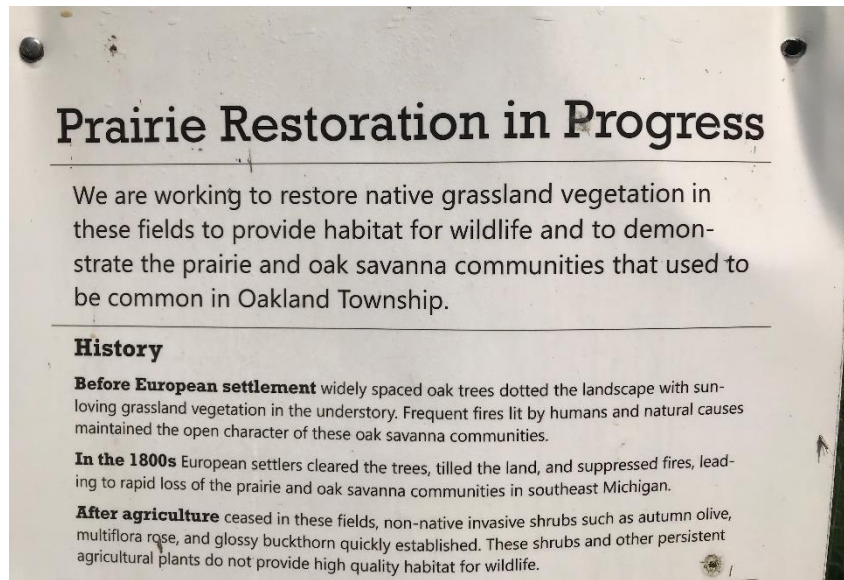
Some of your Land Preservation tax dollars supplemented by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service grants have gone to restore this 120 acre donated park to the Prairie / Savanna state that Native Americans kept it in, after that last ice age by the use of fire. According to Oakland Township Natural Areas Stewardship Manager Dr. Ben VanderWeide. "Fire was both cultural by the indigenous people for various reasons and natural by lightning." This maximized the availability to them of useful plants and animals that thrive in sunlight of prairie and oak savanna that would not be abundant if they let the forest progress to dense shade and large beech / maple as it would have over hundreds of years.

Under the direction of Oakland Township Land Stewardship Manager, Dr. Ben VanderWeide, the ugly invasive species jungle has been largely removed. Although Dr. VanderWeide cautions, "This is an ongoing process! But we make progress every year." Large parts of this park have been seeded with the prairie seeds of what was here in the early 1800's. According to VanderWeide, "The maps I have for our area show the likely plant communities in the early 1800's".

Controlled burns like the Native Americans did that encourage growth of desirable plants are done periodically. I attended one of these burns in April. Actually I had to leave for another commitment before the burn started. Photos are below – the day after the burn in April and in the first week of August.

The results, on one level, is beautiful place, full of wildflowers and other prairie plants with butterflies, bees and birds. You can take a walk of up to 2 miles. Many intersecting mowed paths allow you to tailor your distance to your desires. Take you walking group here for a treat. Insect repellent is recommended for a few mosquitos and pesky flies. Get some free at township hall as part of West Nile Virus program. Paths are mowed grass and may be wet with dew in the AM.

See photos below.



Park informational sign



August - Just over the hill on the entrance path. The picture does not capture the scene adequately.



A path in the middle of the park







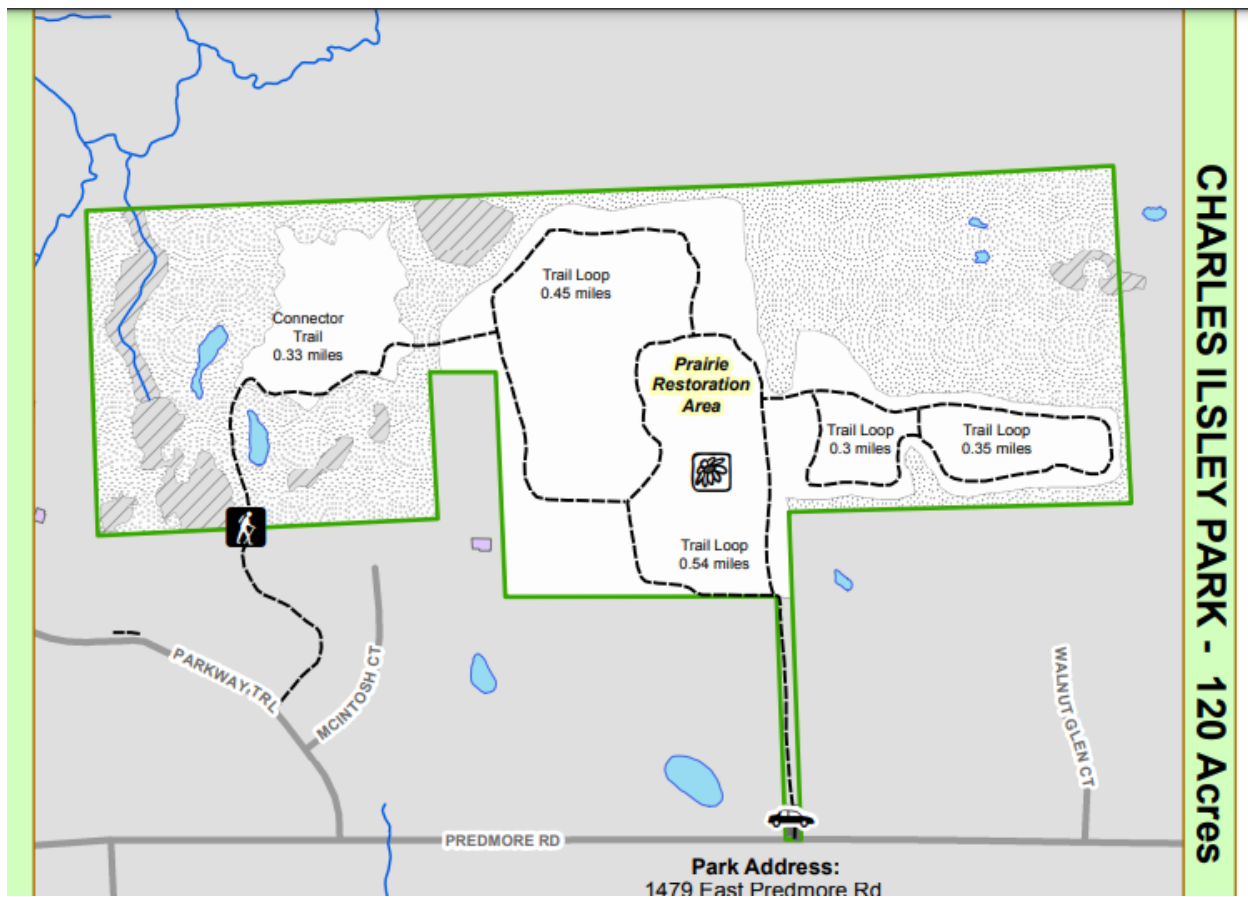


Park entrance is just past this mailbox on the left. There is no huge sign, just the sign below (sorry for the blurred photo).





Small parking lot at the entrance. Not too crowded today – just me.



The path network. Wyngate residents can gain access directly from their neighborhood.

Below are photos taken when Dr. VanderWeide and crew were preparing for the April 2021 controlled burn and the scene the next day.



Dr. Ben VanderWeide (center) giving two of his three seasonal land stewardship technicians instructions on the controlled burn at Charles Ilsley in April 2021.

“Dr. Ben”, as he is called, has been Natural Areas Stewardship Manager with Oakland Township since April 2014. His PhD work at Kansas State University was a study of the effect of drought and grazing on the Konza prairie.



Oakland Township 2021 seasonal land stewardship technicians ready for the controlled burn. Max Dunn, Katri Studtmann and Parker Maynard. All three have or are pursuing degrees in fields of biology / environmental science.



Mike Appel of Mike Appel Environmental Design instructs his crew on the burn. He was awarded a contract for several burns in Oakland Township. His instructions were mainly about keeping the fires under control.

**Next – some photos after the burn.
Scorched earth in April, beautiful
wildflowers in summer. I had hoped to do
an every two weeks photographic
progression- too busy – maybe next year**











