The Trailhead: 
*Gateway to Biodiversity*

This is the “Grand Entry” to the Sanctuary, a visual invitation to all visitors to enter a world where the rhythm of wind, water and time has sculpted a landscape of ridges and swales. It invites visitors to walk mindfully down this trail and to learn how the collective wisdom and passion of the founders saved the Sanctuary for future generations.

Graphic panels along the trail will feature Ridges founders such as Olivia Traven, reminding visitors that people from varied backgrounds and careers—botanist, carpenter, innkeeper, librarian, homemaker, landscaper and lawyer—were united in their passionate commitment to this natural treasure.

Handicapped Accessible Boardwalk  
(pictured at right)

The 8-foot wide wooden boardwalk will be handicapped accessible, permitting groups and wheelchairs adequate room to pass each other on the trail. Winding invitingly into the cool cedar forest, it will connect with the existing trail system and provide a gateway to the original Range Light 40.

Family Discovery Trail  
(not pictured)

This self-guided trail on the west side of Hwy 57 will engage children and families in a voyage of discovery through a series of interactive stations. Along this pleasantly diverse, wooded trail, families will make a connection to the natural world, away from the demands of our fast-paced society. Families can choose to travel the trail on their own or use The Ridges Discovery Trail Guide.
A Gateway to The Ridges

The Cook-Albert Fuller Center will be a beacon to visitors—a welcoming public gateway into a “must see” Door County treasure, inviting them to explore The Ridges Sanctuary. It will provide a focal point for the entire learning campus and, through the new handicapped accessible boardwalk, connect visitors to the existing trail loop and the original 40 acres.

Visitors entering the Center pass under a latticed walkway lined with rustic benches carved with plant and animal scenes. Just outside the main entrance, bronze figures of Albert Fuller and Chester Cook tell the story of their remarkable mentor-student relationship—a relationship that illustrates the power of individuals to make a difference, as well as the importance of mentoring future generations.

Site Plan and Trailhead

Transition to the Trails

In this backyard area, visitors will learn that the landscape around the building has been restored from one that was previously contaminated and developed. This heightened awareness of the connection between the site, groundwater and Lake Michigan will encourage them to create their own backyard landscape in support of a healthy ecosystem.

Shelter Building

- Provides a place to organize groups for trails walks and small program presentations.
- Serves as picnic shelter or gathering area for family groups and visitors.
- Includes interpretive panels honoring the volunteers who have always formed the backbone of The Ridges and highlighting the role of Roy Lukes, first Manager of the Sanctuary.

Ridges Backyard Exhibits

- Increase visitor awareness of karst topography and its impact on groundwater.
- Demonstrate backyard practices that visitors can incorporate into their own yards.
The Indoor Experience

A variety of interpretive media throughout the center will prepare visitors for the Ridges adventure, document its natural and cultural history and encourage visitors to invest time to explore.

Discovery Room

• Acts as a launching pad to outdoor discovery

• Engages visitors in hands-on experiences with objects that relate to the history and ecology of The Ridges.

• Incorporates wildlife viewing stations that invite visitors to view and learn about the wildlife attracted to feeding stations in The Ridges “backyard.”

• Encourages visitors to attract and observe wildlife in their own backyards.

Indoor Interpretive Features Not Pictured

Legacy Wall – An exhibit just inside the main entrance will recognize donors whose support made the Cook-Albert Fuller Center possible.

Theater – A mini-theater within the lobby will provide a comprehensive video overview of The Ridges, telling its story through interviews, narration, film and still images.

Relief Map Exhibit – A relief map offers a tactile experience of the ridges and swales to the visitor and graphically interprets how they were formed.

Green Design Exhibit – This educational exhibit details the green design features and benefits of the site and building.

Bloomers and Migrators Exhibit – This exhibit is continually updated by Ridges staff and volunteers to show visitors what they can expect to see along the trails and to instruct them on plant and animal life cycles.

Reception Area

• Artistic composite mural or changeable pictures illustrate iconic people and features of the Sanctuary including orchids, ridge and swale views, range lights and founders.

• Prominent display of The Ridges logo and mission statement above the reception desk.

Portal to the Peninsula Exhibit

• Illustrates the importance of protecting the cultural and natural landscape of the peninsula.

• Identifies our key partners in conservation and highlights conservation areas and parks where visitors are welcome.

• Assists visitors in choosing natural and cultural sites to visit along the Door County Coastal Byway.
Wildlife Tree, Mural & Nature Store

- Large sandhill cranes suspended from the ceiling fly toward an arching white pine with birds, porcupines and other wildlife, bringing the outdoors inside.
- Mural over the Nature Store continues the nature theme with images of light blue sky and fluffy clouds providing backdrop for ceiling mounted sandhill cranes.
- Nature Store provides visitors with nature-themed educational items related to The Ridges mission, allowing them to take home a part of their experience.

Founders Exhibit

- Honors the work of the leaders and visionaries responsible for the creation and preservation of the ridge and swale complex at Baileys Harbor.
- Conveys the unique spirit of the sanctuary and its grassroots beginning in 1937.
- Provides inspiration through the words and works of the founders of The Ridges Sanctuary.
- Reinforces the message that each of us can make a difference.
- Recounts how Albert Fuller used The Ridges Sanctuary as the model to form the Wisconsin State Natural Areas Program.
- Founders’ stories will be highlighted along the trail.

Ridges and Swales Diorama

- Focuses attention on the unique ridge and swale complex that has created habitat for diverse plant and animal communities.
- Explains the formation of the ridge and swale complex over the past 1,400 years.
- Provides interactive visuals and stories along with dramatic reproductions of the rare plants and animals that live in the boreal forest.
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