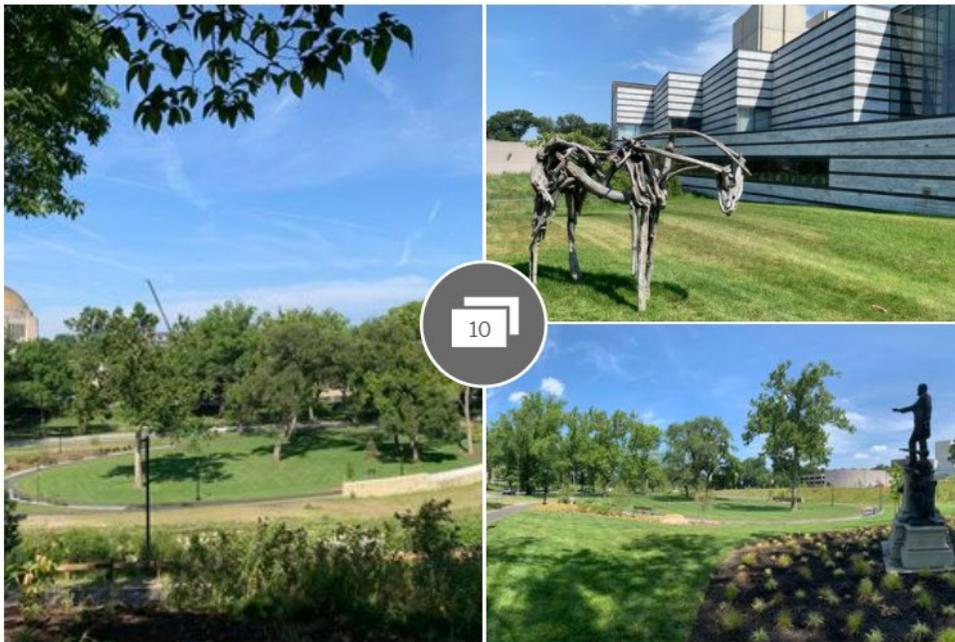


# Cleveland Museum of Art's new park along Doan Brook is a magnificent gift to city during coronavirus pandemic

Posted Aug 16, 2020



Cleveland Museum of Art's new Smith Family Gateway

By [Steven Litt, cleveland.com](#)

CLEVELAND, Ohio — The newest addition to the permanent collection of the [Cleveland Museum of Art](#) isn't a work of art. It's a landscape.

Called the Smith Family Gateway, it occupies a formerly neglected patch of parkland along Martin Luther King Jr. Drive that straddles Doan Brook west of the museum, in University Circle.

For years, you could zoom by it on MLK without giving it much thought. Now, it beckons.

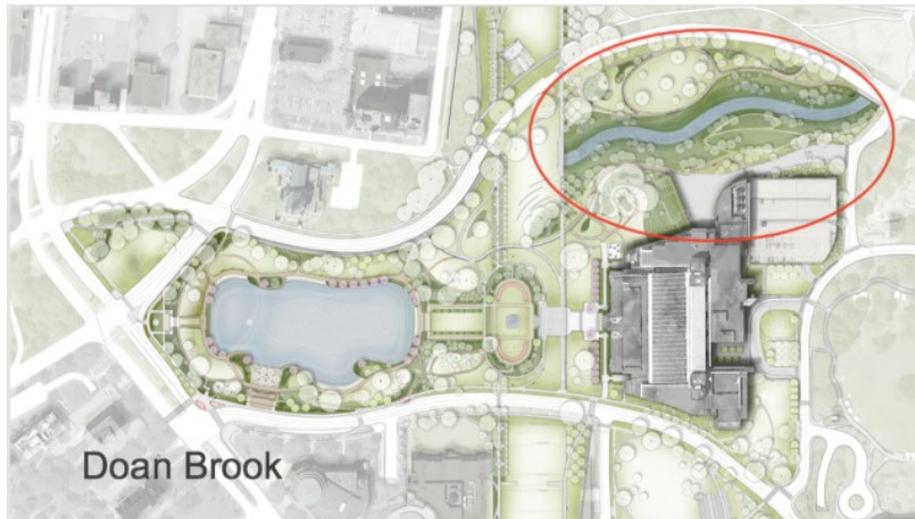
Filled with tree-shaded walkways and overlooks, and bisected by restored banks along the brook, it's one of the most outstanding new park spaces in the city.

The museum isn't holding a formal dedication for the 6.5-acre, \$3.1 million project because of the coronavirus pandemic. But the completion of the Smith gateway —named in honor an unspecified

lead gift from the Kelvin and Eleanor Smith Foundation, plus additional support from the Kent H. Smith Charitable Trust — couldn't have been better timed.

In the middle of a politically tense summer and a global public health crisis, the museum has delivered a beautiful outdoor space that provides fresh air, new vistas and a place to take a deep breath and unwind. We need it, for many reasons.

The Smith gateway opens up and beautifies the west side of the museum's 42.5-acre campus, once an unkempt mess that, intended or not, broadcast a nonverbal "keep out" message west toward the adjacent low-income, majority Black [Hough](#) neighborhood.



A map shows the location of the Smith Family Gateway at the Cleveland Museum of Art. Sasaki

The project is part of an effort, outlined in its [2018 master landscape plan](#), to treat its surroundings as a more [welcoming extension](#) of its artistic mission. The new focus follows the completion of the museum's [\\$320 million](#) expansion and renovation in 2013.

Most of the museum's property, [donated](#) by industrialist [Jephtha H. Wade](#) to the City of Cleveland in the 1880s, has been leased by the institution for decades, but not always maintained to the highest standards in every location.

### **Parks and public health**

The Smith gateway raises the bar aesthetically, while functioning as a reminder of the relationship between public health and the history of park design in America.

[Frederick Law Olmsted](#), who co-designed New York's [Central Park](#) before the Civil War with architect [Calvert Vaux](#), said it would function as the "[lungs of the city](#)."

He spoke at a time when experts believed that cholera, which ravaged the city in the 1830s and '40s, was communicated by "[miasmas](#)" in the air instead of waterborne bacteria, but his signature phrase takes on new meaning amid a pandemic communicated via airborne respiratory droplets.

Olmsted's legacy of using landscape as a way to improve public health lives on at the museum because it was his son, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., who designed the institution's 13-acre [Fine Arts Garden](#).

Completed in 1927 — eight years after the 1918-19 influenza pandemic — the garden echoes Central Park with its blend of formal vistas and meandering pathways around Wade Lagoon.

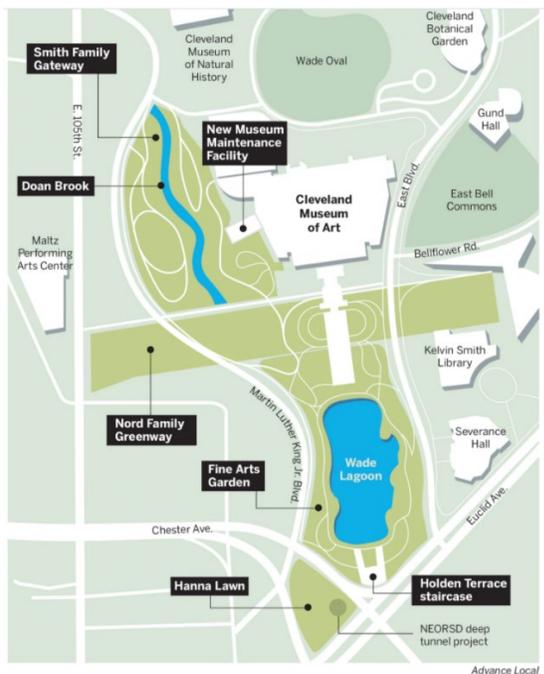
### Emulating Olmsted

Designed by the landscape firm of [Sasaki](#), based in Watertown, Mass., the new Smith Family Gateway was intended to emulate the Olmsted style, said Jeffrey Streat, the museum's former director of architecture and design, who now consults on its landscape projects.

The Smith gateway also adds to a growing collection of new and revitalized public spaces around the museum and Case Western Reserve University, including the 15-acre [Nord Family Greenway](#), also designed by Sasaki, and completed in 2018.

### Art museum creates new park space along Doan Brook

The Cleveland Museum of Art and the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District (NEORS) have finished a multi-year, \$8 million project to improve a long-neglected 6.5-acre area along Doan Brook on the west side of the museum's 42.5-acre campus. Called Smith Family Gateway, the project included \$3.1 million in new landscaping by the museum, plus a new, \$2.5 million maintenance facility, and a \$2.4 million stream restoration by NEORS. The new gateway is just north of the Nord Family Greenway, completed in 2018. Additional projects around the museum include a restoration of the Holden Terrace staircase at Euclid Avenue, and an NEORS deep tunnel project on the Wade Park triangle, also known as the Hanna Lawn, just south of Martin Luther King Jr. Drive before it intersects with Chester Avenue.



The Cleveland Museum of Art's 2020 landscape projects. Christopher Morris, Advancelocal

The goal of the greenway, which extends across the north end of the Fine Arts Garden, was to link CWRU's core campus, east of the museum, to the university's West Campus, to Hough, and to the Cleveland Clinic, all located west of East 105th Street.

The greenway set the stage for the Smith gateway, located just to the north, where Doan Brook emerges from a nearly mile-long culvert east of Martin Luther King Jr. Drive.

### **The need for change**

For years, the area north of the culvert and west of the museum was a no-man's-land centered on a bunker-like, one-story city maintenance building.

The building served decades ago as a comfort station for a series of courts where residents played roque, an American version of croquet, Strean said.

The Smith gateway evolved out of necessity. Swollen by heavy storms, Doan Brook was cutting into the shale bank next to the museum, threatening its driveway and parking garage.



Status quo ante: A 2017 photo shows conditions along Doan Brook at the north end of a culvert where the new Smith Family Gateway park area now abuts the Nord Family Greenway. The Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District had just begun to clean out the messy area when this photo was taken, prior to a \$2.4 million stream restoration project that included rebuilding the north end of the culvert. Steven Litt, The Plain Dealer

Last year, the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District completed a \$2.4 million [restoration](#) of the brook that moved it away from the museum and widened its flood plain, enabling it to spread out more safely after heavy rains.

Leading up to that project, the museum agreed to collaborate with the sewer district. It signed a 100-year lease with the city on the future site of the Smith gateway. It also removed the maintenance building and built a new one for \$2.5 million, next to its West Wing, east of the brook.

### **Inviting refuge**

The now finished landscape along the brook is an inviting refuge where oaks, maples and sycamores cast pools of shade on asphalt walkways and manicured lawns edged by curved planting beds.

The museum may hold outdoor concerts and events west of the brook in the future, but has no immediate plans, because of the pandemic.

On the east side of the brook, where a hill rises to meet the museum's West Wing, a new loop trail in an area called the Oak Grove captures a panorama of Rockefeller Park and the golden-hued tile dome of the Temple-Tifereth Israel, now Case Western Reserve University's [Maltz Performing Arts Center](#).

Traditional statues honoring 19th-century Cleveland educator and Ohio state legislator [Harvey Rice](#), and Revolutionary War hero [Tadeusz Kosciuszko](#), provide additional focal points on both sides of the brook.

### **A place for art**

The museum conceived the new landscape as a potential location for contemporary outdoor sculpture. As a first move, it installed a work by American artist [Deborah Butterfield](#), donated by collectors [Joseph and Nancy Keithley](#).

Located in the lawn between the Oak Grove and Provenance Café, located in the museum's West Wing, the sculpture depicts a horse assembled out of chunks of driftwood, cast in bronze. The horse appears ready to graze, which makes perfect sense outside a restaurant.



- "Horse," 2006, a sculpture by contemporary American artist Deborah Butterfield, has been installed outside the Cleveland Museum of Art as part of a landscape project related to the new park space the museum created on land along nearby Doan Brook. The sculpture was donated to the museum recently by Joseph and Nancy Keithley. Steven Litt, Cleveland.com

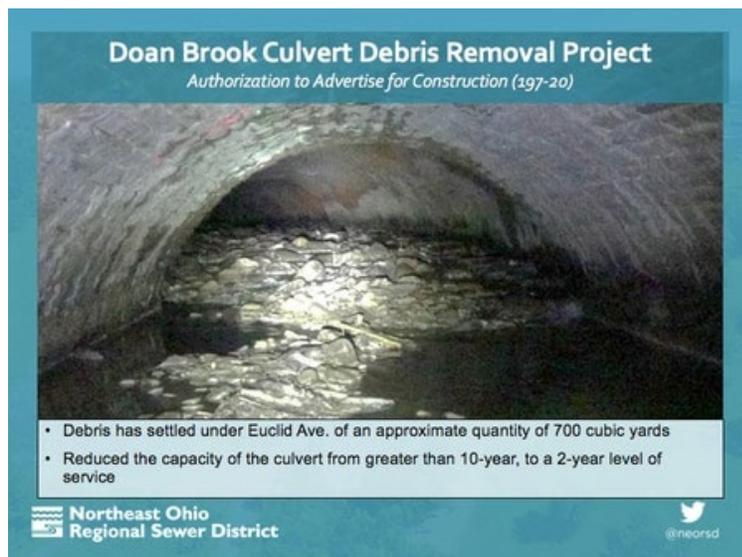
Other work under way nearby includes the museum's rehab of the Holden Terrace staircase at the south end of Wade Lagoon along Euclid Avenue. Future projects in the Fine Arts Garden will include adding wheelchair accessible walkways, and rebuilding the retaining walls that edge the lagoon, Streen said.

Additionally, the museum plans to re-landscape a triangular parcel on the south side of Euclid Avenue, opposite Holden Terrace, that was also part of Wade's gift.

The sewer district is using that site now for an access shaft to deep tunnels it's digging as part of a \$155 million project aimed at reducing combined sewer overflows in Doan Brook (part of its larger [Project Clean Lake](#)). Work is scheduled for completion next year.

### Temporary glitch

If there's a glitch amid the new landscaping at the museum, it's that the sewer district has discovered that heavy downpours have lodged a huge pileup of rocks and boulders 1,500 feet inside the Doan Brook culvert.



The Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District will use the culvert at the southern edge of the Smith Family Gateway and the north side of the Nord Family Greenway to clean out debris that has accumulated inside the culvert, 1,500 feet south, in a spot near Euclid Avenue  
Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District

The blockage, caused by storm runoff from suburban development upstream in the brook's 11.7-square mile watershed, could cause flooding in University Circle, said Frank Greenland, the sewer district's director of watershed programs.

The district will spend roughly \$1 million this winter to have a contractor extract 700 cubic yards of rocks from the culvert, weighing 700 to 1,050 tons, enough to fill six semi-trailers, district officials said.



A Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District map shows the location of debris clogging the Doan Brook culvert under a spot near Euclid Avenue (bottom circle). The clean-out will occur from the north end of the culvert at the Smith Family Gateway (top circle). Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District

That means hauling the rocks across part of the Smith Family Gateway, just north of the culvert. The work should start this winter and last into the spring, the district said.

It's unfortunate a newly finished landscape needs to be disturbed temporarily. But the work will underscore that the museum's piece of Doan Brook is a place where art, nature, and the impact of regional development on stream hydrology intersect.

Most important, now and in the future, the Smith Family Gateway is simply beautiful. In a summer marred by a pandemic that highlights the importance of parks, that's no small thing.