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Parks and access to nature

Southwest Corridor Existing Conditions
Technical Report

October 2011

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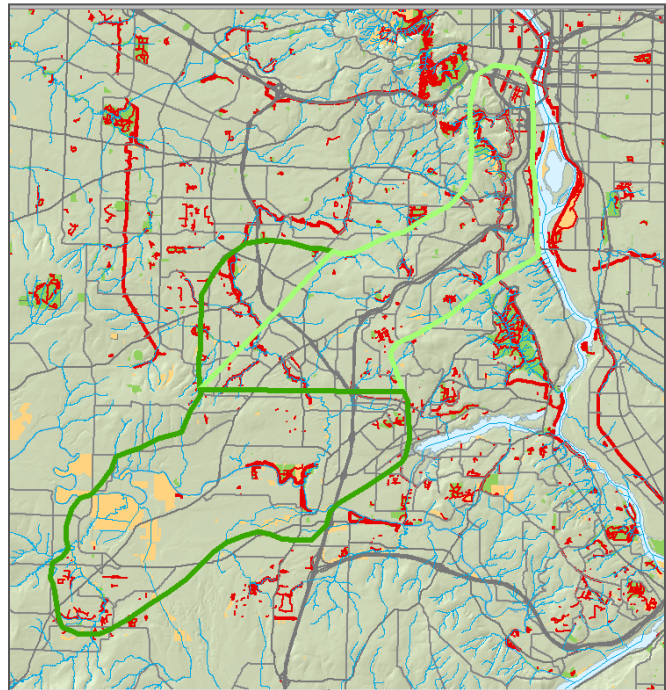
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INTRODUCTION

One of the fundamental attributes of human nature is the desire to be surrounded by the natural environment. This is more important to some people than others but generally people cite the many benefits of being near nature. It's good to get away from urban noise and experience the quiet of the woods; the color in spring and fall puts people in touch with the seasons; people get physical exercise and improve their health. Nature close to home is particularly desirable, influencing the perception of livability, housing prices and real estate transactions. Tree-lined streets, parks, and a trail with a nearby stream are all cherished experiences. Parks serve natural resource functions as well as providing the experience nature human desire, and this report addresses both aspects.

The typical National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process considers potential impacts of transportation facilities on parks and the necessary mitigation. The purpose here is not to cover the same territory as local jurisdictions or NEPA but rather to highlight the opportunities to invest in experiences of nature that cross jurisdictions, potentially work in combination with other investments, and result in neighborhood and corridor-wide livability. This broader view may lead to coordinating projects that complement transportation investments and support natural resources protection and community livability.



This analysis summarizes park system plans for the cities in the corridor, combining the topics of parks with regional trails and natural areas. For many people these places are not distinguished and simply provide an experience of nature. It's the experience of nature, rather than the sports aspect of parks that are the focus. Regionally we've named this network The Intertwine. Significant parks that stand out in the SW Corridor include:

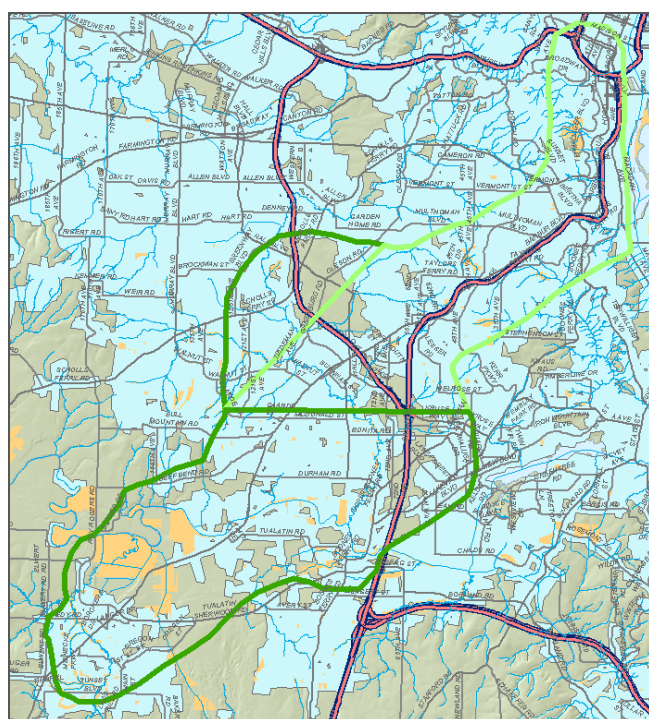
- Marquam Nature Park down to Keller Woods
- Gabriel Park
- the potential link through the SW Corridor to Tryon Creek State Natural Area
- Fanno Creek Greenway Trail and the associated string of parks and natural areas
- the contiguous parks at the Tualatin River that span three jurisdictions – Cook Park, Durham City Park and Community Park
- Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge.

CORRIDOR-SCALE EXISTING CONDITIONS

There are approximately 7,500 acres of parks and natural areas in the SW Corridor and 25 miles of regional trails constructed. Maps at the end of this document illustrate the parks and trails in the region.

Generally residents within the corridor are well-served by parks and natural areas, though there is room to improve access. At a community or neighborhood scale a 10-minute walk to a park or the network of greenspaces is generally considered reasonable and desirable for most people and most ages. Approximately 45 percent of residentially zoned land in the corridor is within a 10-minute walk of a publicly owned park, trail or natural area with access compared with 69 percent in the overall region. A 10-minute walk is typically between 1/3 mile and 1/2 mile.

Some areas within SW Corridor cannot meet the test of having access to some experience of nature within that 1/2 mile walking range. The tan areas shown in the map to the right indicate residential areas that are more than 1/2 mile from a park, trail or natural area with walking access. The largest service gap includes the Washington Square area and the Tigard triangle, between Hwy 217, I-5 and 99W. At the southern end of the SW Corridor, access to parks is limited at the western edge of Tualatin and northeast of Sherwood, again in industrial areas. These broad gaps are of interest for a few reasons. Workers could take advantage of trails to commute to work or to parks for breaks. If residential development increases nearby or within these areas, parks can serve as buffers to industrial uses. Finally, industrial and commercial areas can include low-impact development practices such as green streets that give people in these areas an experience of nature even despite the lack of publicly owned parklands.



The Intertwine concept of an interconnected system of parks, trails and natural areas has potential in the SW Corridor. As shown on a map at the end of this chapter, there are currently 25 miles of regional trails and 45 miles are planned. Key trails to be constructed that will help form the network include:

- Hillsdale to Lake Oswego walking trail
- Red Electric Trail that will connect Fanno Creek Trail to the Willamette Greenway
- Fanno Creek Trail north from the Tualatin River
- Westside Trail and
- Tonquin Trail, including Cedar Creek Trail

- Tualatin River Greenway
- Washington Square Loop Trail
- Surf to Turf trail connecting Tualatin River Greenway east to Lake Oswego

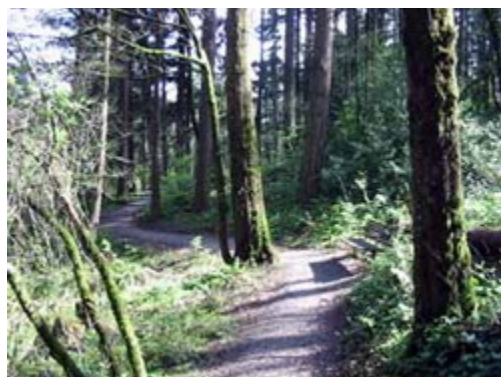
These trails will provide an experience of nature and connect to form a strong network in the SW Corridor. At this time there are no trails planned in the corridor northeast of the Fanno Creek Greenway Trail however, leaving a gap in the network. There may be future opportunities to consider either on-street or off-street biking and walking connections in this area.

Population growth in the corridor will bring with it the need for additional parks and trails. Metro's regional forecast projects growth in downtown Portland, along Hwy 217 north and west of King City and around Sherwood, as illustrated in map Population Growth and The Intertwine. Funding for additional parks typically come from system development charges (SDCs) and voter-approved bond measures. SDC funds fall short of funding needed for land acquisition and development. Bond measures require voter-approval, are time-consuming and costly to propose and not reliable as a funding source.



The following analysis of parks, trails and natural areas by jurisdiction provides more specific information on existing conditions.

The northern-most part of the corridor is characterized by the Willamette River, the West Hills, Terwilliger Boulevard and the associated parks, trails and natural areas. The area has steep, wooded slopes and many of the parks, like George Himes and Marquam Nature Park, have dense tree canopies and trails rather than recreation facilities. Red Electric is a key regional trail proposed through this area that would connect the Fanno Creek Greenway Trail with the Willamette River Greenway. This trail will cross Barbur Boulevard at George Himes Park. Further south and west, Gabriel Park is noteworthy. This is a walking trail that links Marshall Park and crosses Barbur Boulevard near Stephens Creek.



A map of the Willamette River area, showing the Red Electric Trail (dashed red line) and additional parks (orange outline). The map includes labels for various roads and landmarks. A callout box points to the Red Electric Trail, and another callout box points to the area around the Willamette River, indicating general areas for additional parks.

Red Electric Trail connecting to the Willamette River

General areas additional parks

4

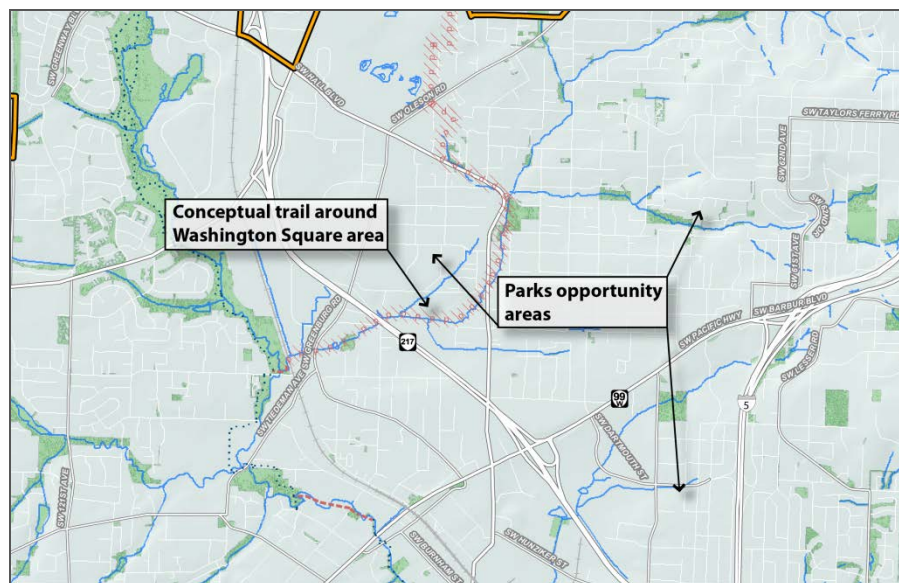
City of Tigard

Access to nature in Tigard is characterized by the Fanno Creek Greenway Trail and Woodard Park. The trail makes connections between neighborhoods, the town center, and the library and goes under 99W. Woodard Park is connected to the trail and is known for its large oak trees and ponderosa pines. This area includes the slopes and drainage to Fanno Creek north of where it enters the Tualatin River. According to Tigard's 2009 Park System Master Plan, Tigard has a total of 462 acres of dedicated parks, open space, and undeveloped parkland. In addition to the Fanno Creek Greenway Trail, there are many local trails in Tigard that provide important connections between neighborhoods, to parks and schools, or simply an off-street place to walk or bicycle for exercise. The importance of the trails is highlighted in the recently adopted Tigard Greenways Trail System Master Plan (August 2011).

The 2009 Park System Master Plan also evaluated the acreage of parks and open space needed to serve current and future populations and identified a need for 327 additional acres to serve the community in 2028. Several of the opportunity areas identified for additional parks in Tigard's Park System Master Plan are located within the Southwest Corridor.

The area known as the Tigard Triangle (inside I-5, 99W and Hwy. 217) is void of parks, trails and natural areas. In an industrial setting, the needs may be different – focused more on giving employees choices for getting to work and relaxing or exercising during lunch and breaks.

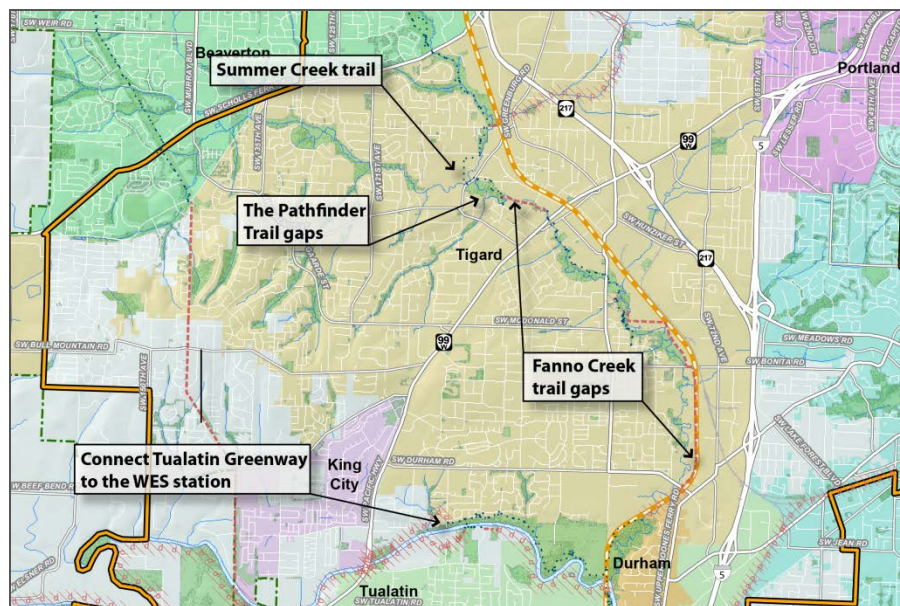
Tigard's recently adopted Trail System Master Plan identifies and prioritizes



capital trail projects including regional, community, and neighborhood trails. The trail system is designed to provide linkages throughout the community into nearby communities and to other regional designations. Priority trails within the Southwest Corridor include:

- Fanno Creek Greenway Trail, several segments
- Westside Trail (currently being planned)
- Tigard Street linking Fanno Creek Greenway Trail to the Tigard Transit Center
- Krueger Creek Trail
- Pathfinder-Genesis Trail gaps
- Summer Creek Trail

An additional connection illustrated here is the potential for a trail to loop around Washington Square, connecting Tigard to this commercial area and across Hwy. 217 to points north and east. South of Hwy. 217, a trail along 99W has potential to link Tigard with the Tualatin National Wildlife Refuge, the Westside Trail and Tonquin regional trails.



On November 2, 2010, Tigard voters approved a \$17 million parks bond. Most of the bond proceeds will be used to buy park land and open space.

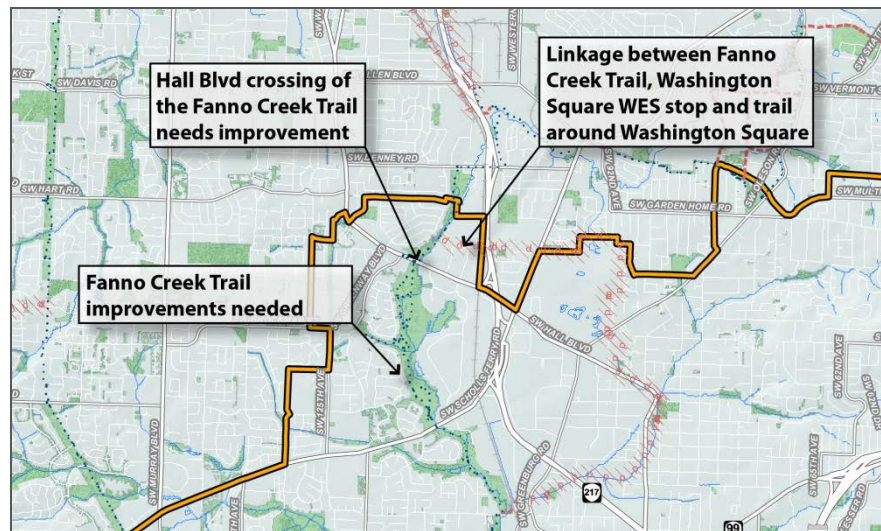
- Connections: Potential for connected network includes completely Fanno Creek Greenway Trail gaps, especially connecting to Tualatin, and the Westside Trail along with local connections.
- Habitat: Parks that contribute to habitat (over 30 acres) include: Summer Creek, Fanno Creek Park, Cook Park
- Water quality: Greater use of vegetated storm water facilities in the industrial areas could significantly improve water quality and add to people's experience of nature in these areas without the expense of acquiring additional park land.

Washington Square area, Beaverton

The Washington Square area in Beaverton is located north of Hwy. 99W and is an important commercial area within the SW Corridor impact area. Access to nature within this area is the responsibility of Tualatin Hills Parks and Recreation District (THPRD). Trail linkages again are the

primary projects aimed at supporting access to nature. The following projects are potential focus areas for THPRD.

The Fanno Creek Greenway Trail goes through Greenway Park north of Scholls Ferry Road. The trail is a regional route but its width within the park is substandard at eight feet where it should be at least 10 feet and at least one bridge needs an upgrade. Where the trail goes under Scholls Ferry Road it is subject to flooding by Fanno Creek, and needs additional drainage or flood storage solutions.



THPRD is now working with Beaverton, Metro and ODOT to study the Fanno Creek Greenway Trail crossing of Hall Boulevard. Once a preferred option is selected funding will be needed for construction.

The Fanno Creek Greenway Trail has the potential to connect to a number of transit stops including the Washington Square WES stop and northwest to the Beaverton Transit Center as part of the Crescent Connection.

Finally, gaps in the regional Westside Trail in THPRD south of the Tualatin Hills Nature Park are in the process of being completed. The trail route south of Barrows Road across Bull Mountain is being given further consideration as part of the Westside Trail master planning project. Funding to build the trail in this area is needed.

- **Connections:** Potential for connected network include Fanno Creek Greenway Trail, Hall Boulevard crossing and the Washington Square Loop.
- **Habitat:** Greenway Park (87 acres). Portland Park and Recreation's Redtail Golf Course and the privately-owned Portland Golf Club provide habitat "patches" for wildlife in the area. Golf course management that incorporates integrated pest management and other habitat friendly practices can provide significant benefits to wildlife. Protecting and enhancing wildlife corridors that connect these golf courses to other protected natural areas in the area will also increase their function as habitat for wildlife.
- **Water quality:** Although portions of Greenway Park allow for active recreation opportunities, much of the park is undeveloped. THPRD has, in cooperation with the City of Beaverton and Clean Water Services, converted many lawn areas back to marshland, allow for filtration of

stormwater before it reaches Fanno Creek. Greater use of vegetated storm water facilities in the Washington Town Square area could benefit water quality in this area.

Lake Oswego

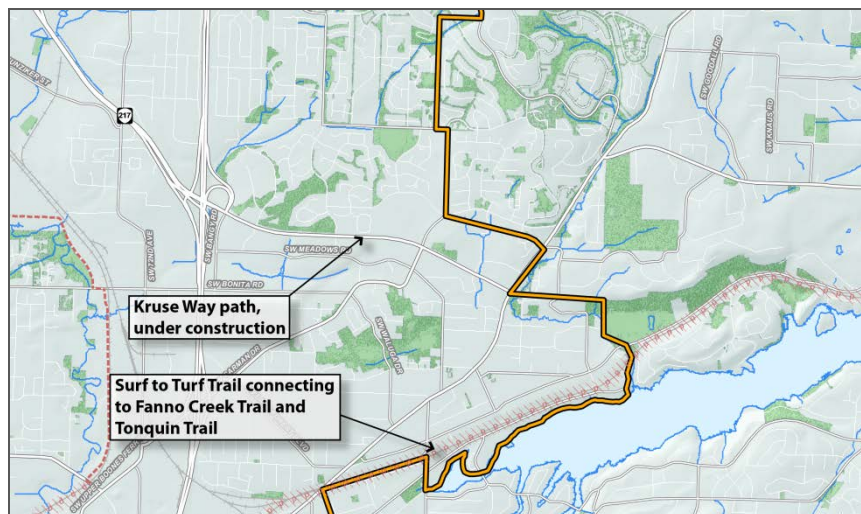
The City of Lake Oswego owns over 600 acres of land that is included in the parks system. Some of the parks preserve native habitat and retain a natural character, such as Cooks Butte Park and Springbrook Park. Others are developed with more urban and formal character such as Millennium Plaza. Over the past year Lake Oswego has developed a new system plan (completion spring 2012). This plan does not anticipate any new acquisition but envisions both public use and preservation of existing land.



Three key themes emerged from the public process. Personal exercise and team sport opportunities are needed. There is a deficit of places for children to play and nature play needs to be included throughout the system. Finally, being close to nature is a key priority for residents. Of the three priorities, places for children to play is the most pervasive need, due to the number of Lake Oswego parks that are undeveloped. The natural character of many parks are opportunities for the development of nature play throughout the city's system.



Lake Oswego also has an extensive trail plan that includes regional, community and neighborhood trails. Two trails in the Southwest Corridor are the Kruse Way path, currently under construction and the Turf to Surf Trail that runs north of Lake Oswego. This trail is aligned to connect with the Tonquin Trail and Fanno Creek Greenway Trail.



- Connections: Potential for connected network includes the Kruse Way path and the Surf to Turf Trail.

City of Tualatin

The parks in Tualatin, approximately 392 acres, are well developed, well distributed and much appreciated. The Tualatin Greenway Trail and Tualatin Community Park with connections across the river to Durham and Tigard's Cook Park are characteristic of the city and deservedly sources of civic pride. There is easy access to the Tualatin River with boat launch facilities at Tualatin Community Park and Brown's Ferry Park. Parks are reasonably well distributed and deficiencies are not a focus of concern at this time. There are several opportunities in developed areas to make trail connections and restore wetlands.

Recent planning work on the regional Tonquin Trail will link Wilsonville and Sherwood with Tualatin and also make connections north to the Fanno Creek Greenway Trail and Tigard. The potential to provide the Fanno Creek Greenway Trail connection between Hwy. 99W and Tualatin town center is of strong interest.

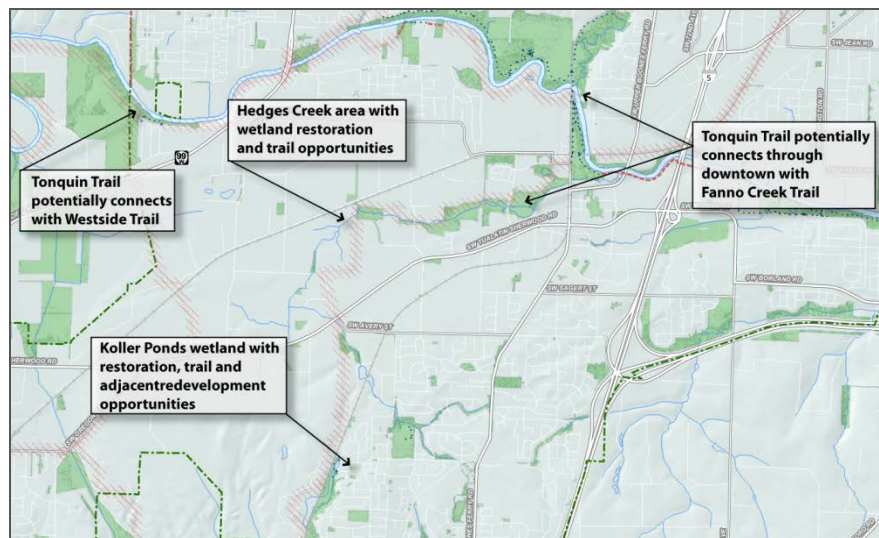
Flowing into the Tualatin River, Hedges Creek and the associated wetlands have a master plan that addresses natural resources as well as the potential for a trail system that connects with the Tonquin Trail. The Wetland Conservancy is coordinating a project at Hedges Creek Wetland to recover and improve habitat functions affected by urbanization. This is a potential project area where additional investment may be needed.



The Koller Wetland Pond is a second area with wetlands restoration adjacent to a redevelopment area. Similar to the Hedges Creek Wetland, additional funding is needed to restore this area, link to redevelopment and provide trails.

Nearby there is an old town area that could offer redevelopment opportunities.

As Tualatin continues to develop, there is an interest in highlighting Tualatin's history from the Ice Age Floods. These floods ebbed and flowed through the area beginning about 110,000 years ago. More recently, mastodon bones from 14,000 years ago



found in Tualatin in 1962 are on display at the public library. The trails through Tualatin are an opportunity to tell this story and connect with the National Park Service Ice Age Trail.

The Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge is a significant resource for Tualatin. Potential bicycle and pedestrian connections along 99W that link Tualatin and the refuge are of interest. The Metro-owned property near the refuge, generally referred to as the Morand property, may be the point where the Tonquin Trail and the Westwide Trail link north and south of the river. This connection is further enhanced by the potential of connecting to the east and west along the Tualatin River Greenway. This may be an opportunity for restoration as well as recreation.

- Connections: Potential for connected network includes the Tonquin Trail.

City of Sherwood

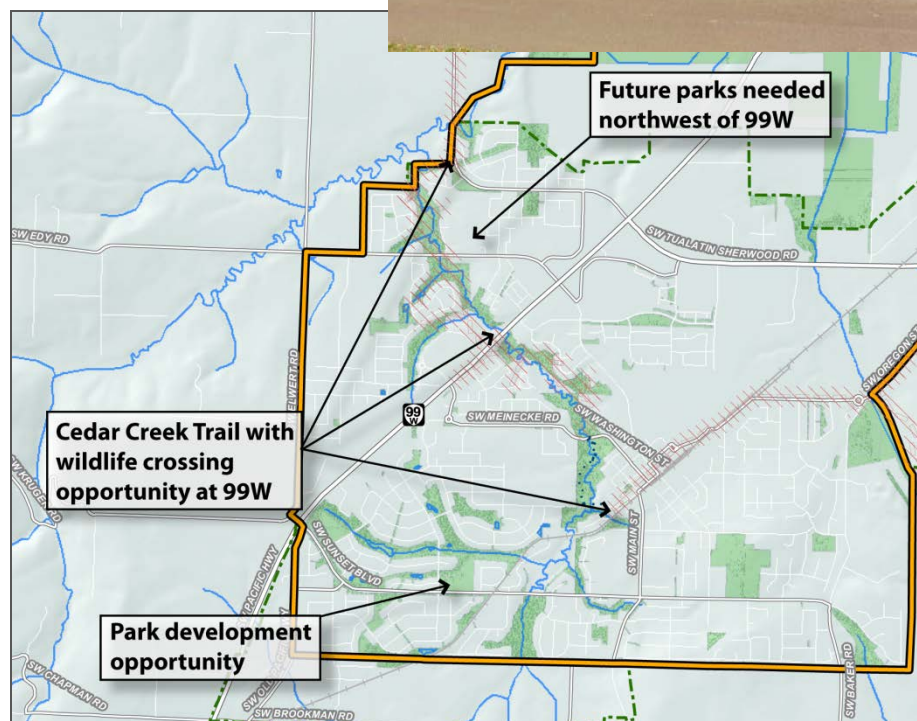
The City of Sherwood has approximately 338 acres of parks, trails and natural areas. Characteristic parks in Sherwood include Stella Olsen Park, which provides great space for community gatherings, Snyder Park, with commanding views and active recreation facilities, and the Woodhaven Trail. Generally the parks in Sherwood are south and east of Hwy. 99W and more parks are needed north of the highway. As Sherwood continues to grow, there is a requirement in the zoning code for open space and Planned Unit Developments often include parks as a way to show public benefit.



This year Sherwood is a candidate to receive MTIP funds for the design and construction of the Cedar Creek Trail. This trail would connect southeast and northwest Sherwood across 99W, linking neighborhoods, the town center, shopping and parks. Currently the project will include sidewalk connections across 99W. Ultimately, this trail is an opportunity to fund a wildlife crossing and a trail connection under 99W, as well as an opportunity to restore the banks of Cedar Creek improving water quality and wildlife habitat.



Cedar Creek Trail is regionally significant as part of the proposed Tonquin Trail system. This trail system will



connect the cities of Wilsonville, Sherwood and Tualatin with many parks including the Tualatin National Wildlife Refuge, Graham Oaks Nature Park and the Willamette Scenic Bikeway. The Refuge is physically close to Sherwood but accessible primarily by car and bus at this time.

In the near-term, Sherwood's priority within the Southwest Corridor include the Cedar Creek Trail, development of Woodhaven Park, and park development in the Brookman Road area. A new, regional sports complex is needed somewhere in the city and a dog park is in the concept stage.

Note that areas adjacent to Sherwood include urban reserves and unincorporated areas without a park service provider.

- Potential for connected network: Cedar Creek Trail, Tonquin Trail
- Parks that contribute to habitat (over 30 acres) include: the Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge and Metro natural areas.

CONCLUSION

In the 1930s, New York City Parks Commissioner Robert Moses said, “There is no such thing as a fixed percentage of park area to population.... Sensible, practical people know that (it) depends upon the actual problems of the city in question.”¹ Parks and trails are part of the urban fabric that can contribute in many ways. The need for housing in areas where the market is slow may be sparked by public investment in a park. A new trail connection that connects businesses and homes to transit or nearby shopping may spur redevelopment of underutilized properties. Areas with high percentages of pavement can benefit from parks that allow ground water re-charge as well as on-site filtration of street runoff. Parks and tree-lined trails with native shrubs serve a wildlife habitat function. With this potential in mind, the existing conditions of parks in the Southwest Corridor present opportunities for coordinated investment in relationship to new transit opportunities.

Key findings

The Southwest Corridor has approximately 45 percent of residentially zoned land within 10-minute walk of a park, trail or natural area. This compares with approximately 69 percent for the region as a whole.

The corridor does not have a strong, interconnected network but the potential is there. There are 25 miles of regional trails constructed in the corridor and 45 miles planned either formally or in the concept stage.

The Tigard Triangle and the areas to the north and north east have little to no parks or natural areas and offer very limited access to the experience of nature for people.

Within the Southwest Corridor there is a need for approximately 400 acres of parkland and approximately 75 miles of regional trails based on parks system plans from each city.

Problems, opportunities and constraints

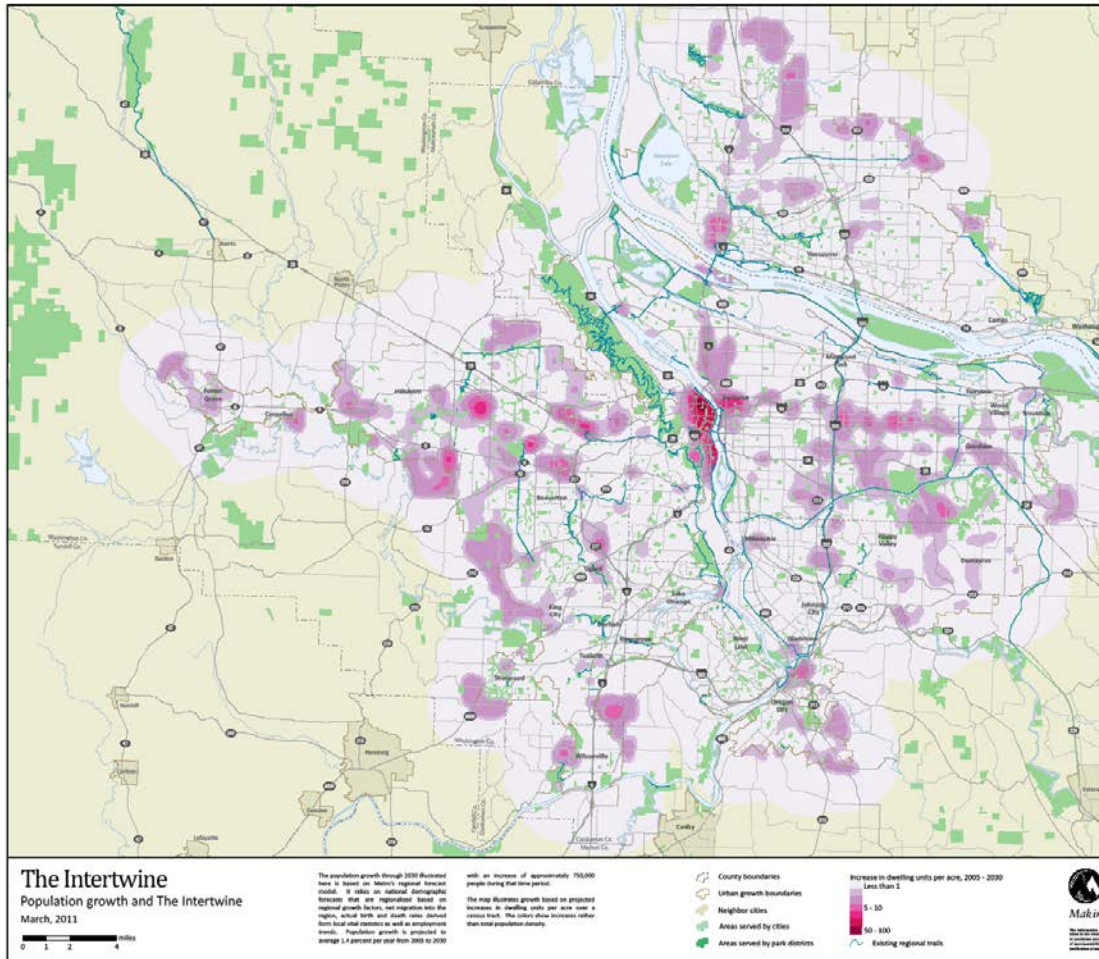
Generally the northern portion of the corridor is built out with few obvious opportunities for additional park land acquisition. Brownfields and other redevelopment opportunities may offer possibilities for adding parks and/or trails in these areas.

Trail right-of-way and trail easements are difficult to piece together and funding sources for trails are limited to federal programs, competitive state grants and local bond measures. Construction of planned trails will provide more access to nature both along the trails and by connecting parks and natural areas as envisioned by The Intertwine.

Areas with future housing growth potential include Southwest Portland, Tigard and Washington Square, King City and Bull Mountain, Tualatin and Sherwood. These may be areas where parks and trail investments can support higher density housing and provide links to transit and neighborhood services.

Funding for parks in areas of deficiencies or growth areas is lacking.

Land assembly for parks is difficult and generally parks greater than 5 acres are desirable.



¹ Urban Green, Peter Harnick, page 15.