

BEFORE THE METRO COUNCIL

FOR THE PURPOSE OF APPROVING THE	)	RESOLUTION NO. 24-5390
EAST COUNCIL CREEK NATURE PARK	)	
MASTER PLAN	)	Introduced by Councilor Juan Carlos González in concurrence with Council President Lynn Peterson

WHEREAS, in May 1995, area voters approved ballot Measure 26-26, authorizing Metro to issue \$135.6 million for bonds for Open Spaces, Parks, and Streams to purchase land in regional target areas; and

WHEREAS, in November 2006, area voters approved Metro's Natural Areas Bond Measure, authorizing Metro to issue \$227.4 million for bonds to purchase land in regional target areas; and

WHEREAS, using bond measure funds, Metro has protected over 1,300 acres of natural area in the Dairy, McKay and Rock Creeks area, including riparian and upland forest habitat that wildlife depend on; and

WHEREAS, in May 2013, area voters approved a five-year local option levy, which was renewed in 2018 and 2023, for the purpose of preserving water quality, fish and wildlife habitat and maintaining Metro's parks and natural areas for the public; and

WHEREAS, in February 2016, the Metro Council adopted the Parks and Nature System Plan, outlining Metro's roles and responsibilities in protecting and managing a regional system of parks, trails, and natural areas for the benefit of people and nature; and

WHEREAS, in June 2016, the Metro Council adopted its Strategic Plan to Advance Racial Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, which, guided by input from many regional partners and informed by research, identified racial equity as the approach to ensure that all people who live, work, and recreate in the Portland region have the opportunity to share in and help define a thriving, livable, and prosperous place; and

WHEREAS, as part of implementing the operating levy, Metro Parks and Nature's five-year work plan includes projects for natural area restoration and maintenance, opening natural areas for visitors, park maintenance, volunteer programs, conservation education, and community grants; and

WHEREAS, Dairy, McKay and Rock Creeks, which includes East Council Creek natural area, was identified as one of the 2013 levy access improvement projects in the five-year work plan; and

WHEREAS, the operating levy identifies increased opportunities for communities of color and children from low income families to experience the region's parks and natural areas as a desired outcome; and

WHEREAS, the Connect with Nature initiative, a partnership between Metro and a team of community organizations serving people of color, led outreach to create the Connect with Nature resource guide, and as part of that work collaborated on the outreach and design for the East Council Creek Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, the East Council Creek Nature Park Master Plan was developed with the oversight, input and review of Metro and City of Cornelius staff, project stakeholders, members of the community and Metro Council over 18 months of community outreach, including open houses, stakeholder meetings, Connect with Nature workshops, presentations, tours and surveys; and

WHEREAS, Metro is currently developing tribal consultation policy, and prior to design of the nature park, Metro will consult with tribes according to the tribal consultation policy; and

WHEREAS, the East Council Creek Nature Park Master Plan identifies improvements to protect and enhance the natural, scenic, and cultural resources while providing access for visitors to positively experience the natural area; and

WHEREAS, the Metro Council's approval of the East Council Creek Nature Park Master Plan does not establish final design improvements, is not a final land use decision, and is not binding on local governments, but rather provides recommendations to guide Metro staff and partner jurisdictions as they continue design work;

WHEREAS, Chapter 2.16 of the Metro Code sets forth Metro's policy regarding the naming of Metro facilities; and

WHEREAS, according to the policy, the primary purpose of the name of a facility, such as a nature park, should be to identify the facility's function and purpose, and may also reflect other matters, such as the facility's location; and

WHEREAS, the site will be referred to as the East Council Creek Natural Area until public access is developed; and

WHEREAS, once the site is developed and is open to the public, it will be referred to as the East Council Creek Nature Park; now therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED that the Metro Council approves the East Council Creek Nature Park Master Plan, attached hereto as Exhibit A.

ADOPTED by the Metro Council this 7th day of March 2024.



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Lynn Peterson, Council President

Approved as to Form:



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Carrie MacLaren, Metro Attorney



MASTER PLAN

# East Council Creek Nature Park

January 2024

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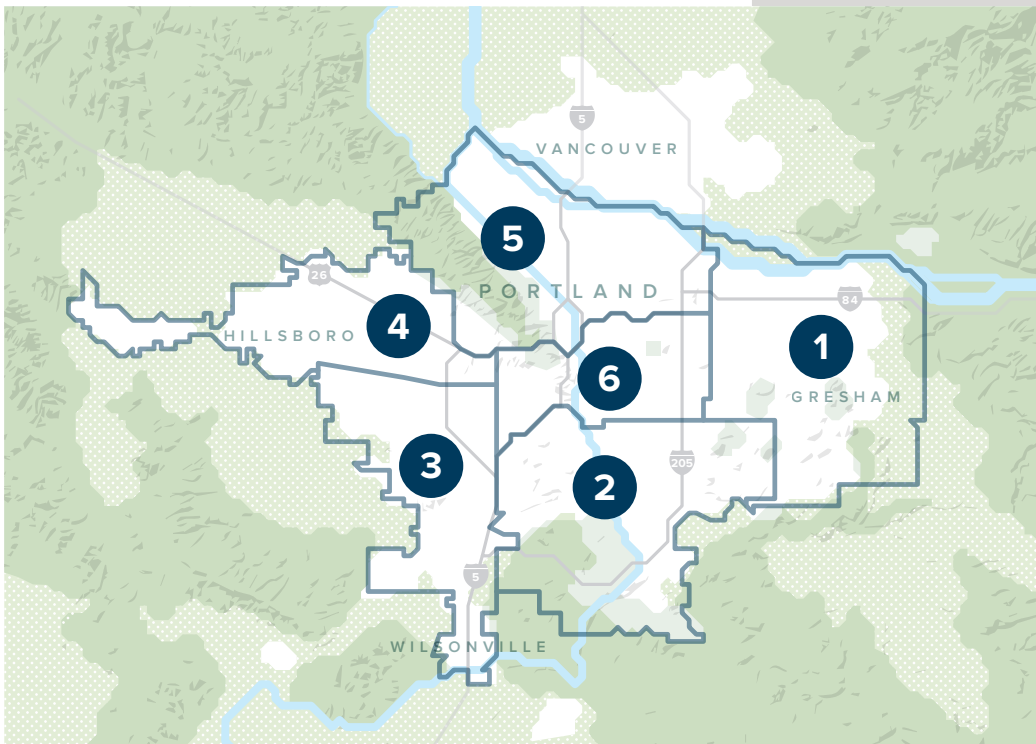
Lynn Peterson

**Metro Councilors**

- Ashton Simpson, District 1
- Christine Lewis, District 2
- Gerritt Rosenthal, District 3
- Juan Carlos González, District 4
- Mary Nolan, District 5
- Duncan Hwang, District 6

**Auditor**

Brian Evans



# East Council Creek nature park master plan



*The East Council Creek Nature Park Master Plan sets the stage for visitors to experience nature close to home, access water, listen to song birds, view native flowers and enjoy being outside with family and friends.*

## Executive summary

Council Creek flows from Forest Grove and nearby agricultural areas, meandering through wetland, floodplain and forest before joining Dairy Creek, which flows into the Tualatin River. The East Council Creek Natural Area protects 33 acres of wildlife habitat along the stream and adjacent to residential neighborhoods of northeast Cornelius.

Thanks to voters, Metro has been able to preserve habitat and water quality along Council Creek, and plan for future public access. East Council Creek Natural Area offers a unique opportunity to experience nature close to home in the City of Cornelius.

Planning for public access to the site will help protect water quality and wildlife habitat. A planned trail route will improve trail experience and direct public use in a way that highlights the property's unique qualities and provides visitors with safe and welcoming access to view wildlife and native flora. It will reduce impacts on Council Creek and adjacent habitat areas from trampling of plants, erosion and other negative effects of off-trail use.

The planned nature park would complement the future Council Creek Regional Trail, which will connect Cornelius to Forest Grove and Hillsboro just two blocks south of the site.

The plan lays the groundwork for a nature park that:

*Welcomes people of all cultures, communities and abilities.*

*Continues to protect water quality and wildlife habitat for future generations of plants, animals and Oregonians.*

*Provides welcoming, safe and meaningful experiences of nature.*

*Celebrates the unique qualities of East Council Creek and enhances neighborhood identity.*

*Develops a Nature Park that Metro can care for and operate on behalf of the public for years to come.*



## **Community engagement**

In early 2017, Metro and City of Cornelius staff began working with community members, stakeholders and regional partners to create a master plan to guide public access improvements at East Council Creek. The plan was shaped by extensive public outreach, open houses, multilingual workshops, presentations, tours and surveys. These efforts specifically engaged people of color, members of the local Latine community, nearby neighbors and regional stakeholders.

The Connect with Nature initiative centered communities of color through multilingual workshops and site visits focused on planning for East Council Creek. Outcomes of Connect with Nature helped shape the master plan and are also documented in the Connect with Nature Resource Guide.

## **Recommendation**

The master plan establishes project goals and objectives, describes site resources and conditions and summarizes the planning process. It outlines the site conservation strategy and identifies approximate access and trail locations.

Recommended improvements include a new trailhead, parking lot and entry area to welcome visitors and provide access for people of all ages and abilities. The plan identifies places for wildlife viewing, learning about nature, picnicking, walking or exploring nature. It also recommends a route for a soft surface trail along the south side of Council Creek, with bridges or boardwalks through wet areas, and clear wayfinding signs.

## **Implementation**

Currently, funding has not been identified to implement the master plan recommendations.

Prior to implementing any recommended improvements, a long-term management strategy would need to be developed by Metro or the City. In addition, historic and cultural resource investigations should be completed in consultation with tribal governments.

Once funding has been identified, it is recommended that improvements for the west parcel be prioritized. These include formalizing a natural surface trail, installing boardwalks, wayfinding and regulatory signs, and decommissioning demand trails to reduce erosion and improve visitor experience and safety. Additional funding could support implementing recommendations for a more formalized park entry on the east parcel with parking, restrooms, security elements, and an all ages and abilities nature trail.

East Council Creek offers visitors a unique opportunity to walk along a meandering stream. The East Council Creek Nature Park Master Plan sets the stage for visitors to access water, listen to song birds, view native flowers and enjoy being outside with family and friends.

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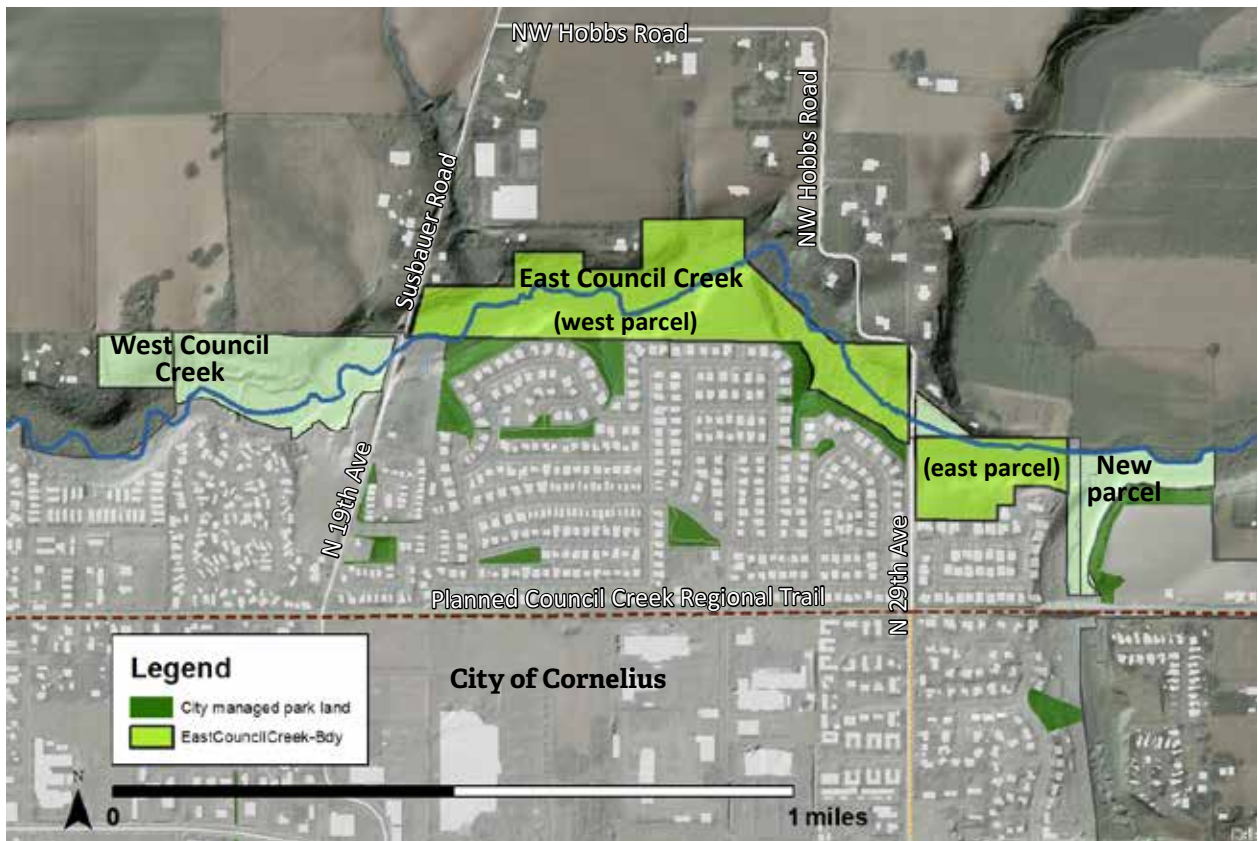
# 1. Introduction and plan overview

Council Creek flows from Forest Grove and nearby agricultural areas, meandering through wetland, floodplain and forest before joining Dairy Creek, which flows into the Tualatin River. The East Council Creek Natural Area protects 33 acres of wildlife habitat along the stream and adjacent to residential neighborhoods of northeast Cornelius.

Thanks to voters, Metro has been able to preserve habitat and water quality along Council Creek, and develop a plan for future public access to the site. East Council Creek Natural Area offers a unique opportunity to experience nature close to home in Cornelius.

This master plan outlines a vision and recommendations for developing public access to the site in a way that maintains water quality and wildlife habitat, and highlights experiences of the stream, wetlands, and floodplains and their connection to the Tualatin River watershed.

East Council Creek is one of two Metro natural areas along Council Creek. West Council Creek Natural Area was not included in the planning and was not considered for public access.

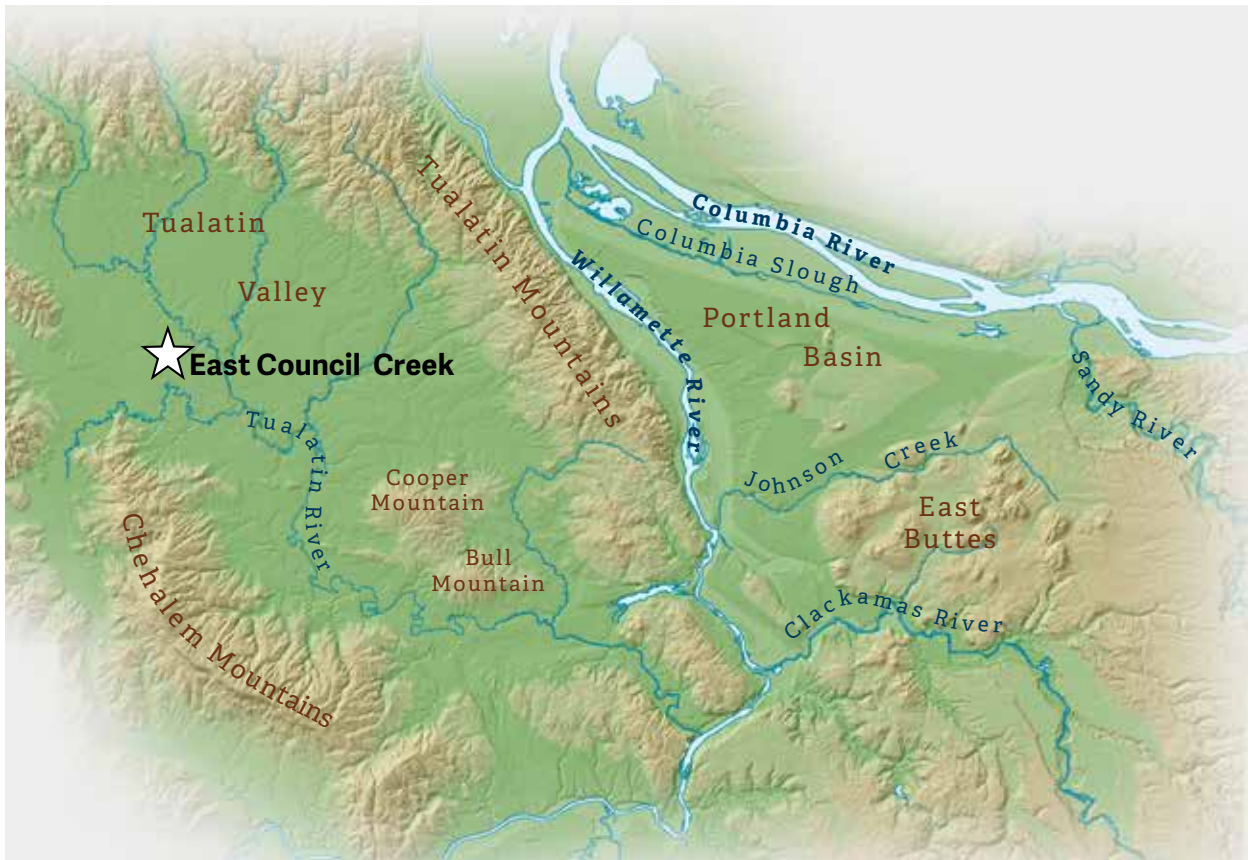


## Where in the region is East Council Creek?

The metropolitan region includes two broad valleys, separated by the Tualatin Mountains - the iconic forested backdrop west of downtown Portland. West of the Tualatin Mountains, the Tualatin River and its tributaries meander through a broad valley, bounded on three sides by the foothills of the Coast Range and the Chehalem Mountains. The Tualatin Valley includes the region's western suburbs and is primarily agricultural lands outside the urban growth boundary.

Council Creek flows through the Tualatin Valley along the northern edge of the cities of Cornelius and Forest Grove. Council Creek is one of many tributaries of the Tualatin River, flowing into Dairy Creek just upstream from the Dairy and McKay confluence. In contrast to the faster-flowing, gravel substrate rivers like the Sandy or Clackamas in other parts of the region, the Tualatin and its tributaries flow slowly due to low gradient, silty soils and broad floodplains.

The streams flowing into the Tualatin River, adjacent wetlands and floodplains, and connectivity between them are critical for the long-term health and diversity of species facing habitat loss and the effects of climate change. For people living nearby, these areas can also offer places of respite, to relax, walk, view wildlife and be in nature with family and friends.



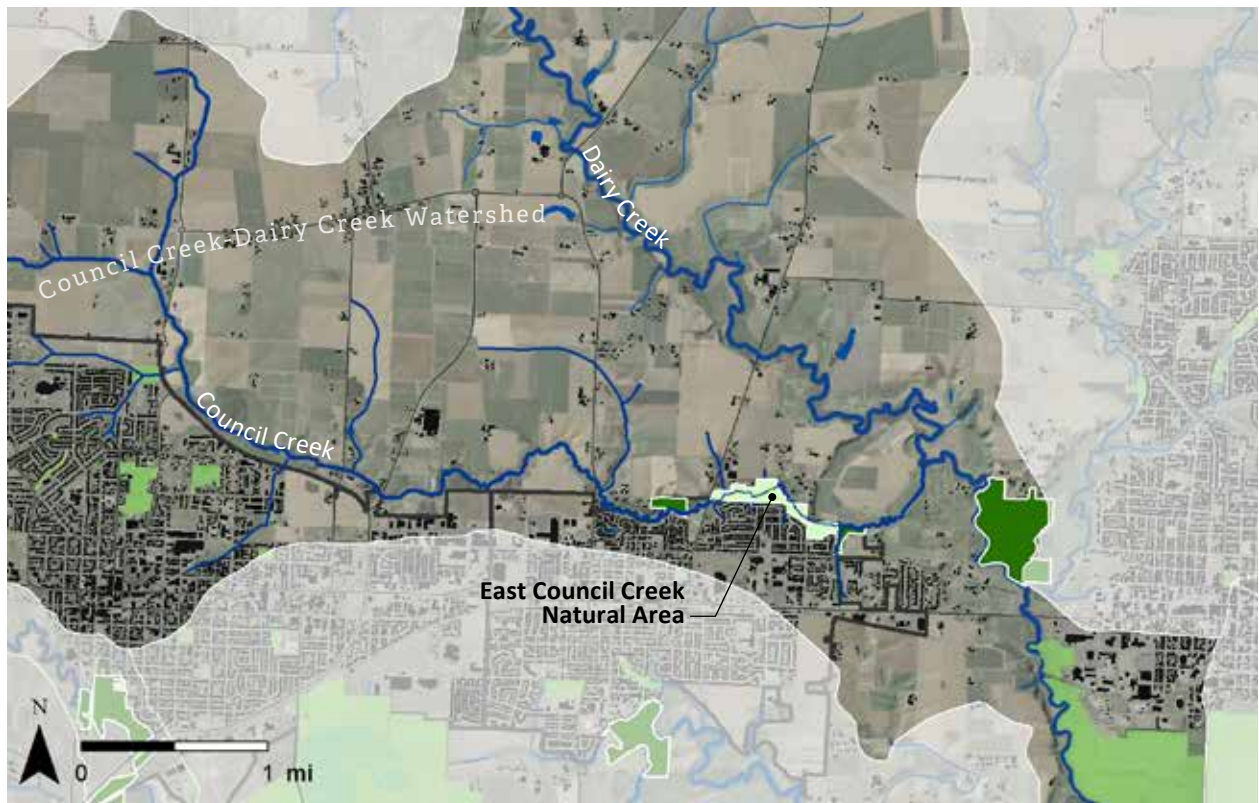
### East Council Creek Natural Area landscape

A visitor to East Council Creek might see Canada geese and red-tailed hawks soaring overhead, or Anna’s hummingbirds sipping nectar from native red flowering currants. Near the stream, western redcedar trees tower over large leaves of skunk cabbage growing in the floodplain.

Visitors can see firsthand the dynamic seasonal changes in water levels — inundated low-lying areas and wetlands after heavy rains, and a narrower slow-flowing stream during the dry season.

The natural area has two upland areas recently planted with native trees and shrubs. They have a distinctly different character from low-lying areas along the creek. While the trees in these areas are still young, they have the potential to evoke oak savanna and prairie habitats that were once common in the Tualatin Valley.

The natural area and stream support wildlife that contribute to the experiences of people visiting the site. From beavers chewing on alder trees and building dams in the stream, nesting waterfowl to red-legged frogs and willow fly-catchers, protecting habitat connectivity along Council Creek must continue to be a priority in order for these species and experiences to persist long-term at the site.



## Project vision

The master plan was developed in collaboration with the community and the City of Cornelius to guide the access improvements in the natural area. The plan envisions a nature park that:

- Welcomes people from all cultures, communities and abilities and complements the character of the neighborhood;
- Continues to protect water quality and wildlife habitat and provides safe, meaningful experiences of nature and fosters connection with the landscape;
- Celebrates the unique qualities of East Council Creek; and
- Plans for a nature park Metro can take care of and sustainably operate on behalf of the public for years to come.

## Plan goals and purpose

### **Why a master plan is needed**

Planning for public access to the site will help proactively protect water quality and wildlife habitat. The natural area is surrounded by residential neighborhoods, and there are existing pressures on the landscape to accommodate visitors.

Developing a formal trail and a clearly defined route and access points will reduce impacts on Council Creek and adjacent habitat areas by reducing trampling of plants, erosion and other negative effects of social trails and off-trail use. A planned trail route will improve trail experience and direct public use in a way that highlights the property's unique qualities and provides visitors with safe and welcoming access to view wildlife and native flora.



### What is included?

The map below shows the master plan area. Also shown below are West Council Creek Natural Area and a recently acquired parcel to the east, which are not included in the planning area. The East Council Creek master planning area includes two parcels, one to the east and one to the west of Northwest Hobbs Road. This master plan refers to these as the “east parcel” and “west parcel.”

The master plan includes recommendations for a new trailhead, parking lot and entry area to welcome visitors and provide access for people of all ages and abilities. The plan identifies places for wildlife viewing, learning about nature, picnicking, walking or exploring nature. It also recommends a route for a soft surface trail along the south side of Council Creek, with bridges or boardwalks through wet areas, and clear wayfinding signs.



## A new way to plan - Connect with Nature

This master plan was developed in collaboration with the Connect with Nature project, a partnership between Metro and a coalition of community organizations, intended to help Metro and its partners learn how to more effectively plan and design parks and natural areas so they better serve the needs of communities of color and welcome all people.

Community outreach efforts intentionally sought out engagement from communities of color who are often not at the table during park planning, who may feel unwelcome or think that their ideas and input won't be valued, and supported them in leading nature park planning conversations. The initiative sought to identify and remove barriers that can exclude people from being able to participate in civic dialogue. This master plan reflects the diversity of ideas we heard through this initiative. Lessons learned are being implemented throughout work in Metro's Parks and Nature department, and have been included in the Parks and Nature Racial Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan.



## 2. Cultural context

The greater Portland area is built upon the ancestral homelands, villages and traditional use areas of multiple Indigenous Tribes and bands who are the original caretakers and inhabitants of these lands.

There are many culturally significant sites in the upper Tualatin Valley landscapes surrounding East Council Creek, which is within the homelands of the Tualatin bands of the Kalapuya people. Wapato Lake near Gaston and the Chehalem Mountains are known sites of Tualatin winter villages, and are significant gathering places for Indigenous communities. The entire landscape of the Tualatin Valley is woven into Indigenous peoples' life and culture. Water flowing in Council Creek, and plants and animals living along these stream banks are part of Indigenous peoples' lives and cultures.

Europeans benefited from the traditional landscape management practices of the Indigenous people. Oak savanna and prairie landscapes in the Tualatin Valley were converted to pastures and farmland. Colonization changed the ways in which land is stewarded - bringing private land ownership and artificial boundaries, drained wetlands, plowed prairies, and channelized streams for planting crops and grazing livestock.



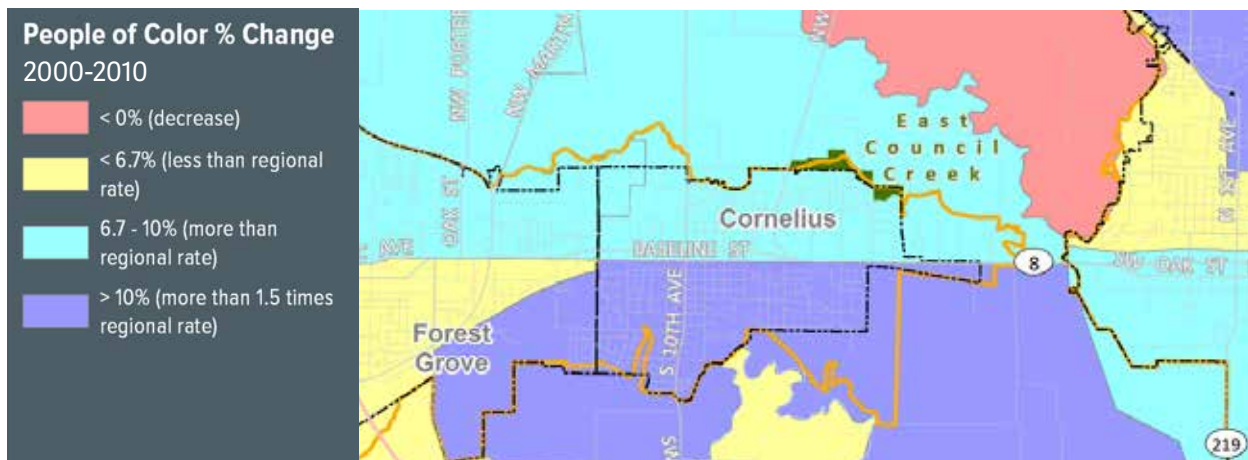
## Agriculture

Agriculture continues to be an economic and community driver in the rural areas outside Cornelius and Forest Grove. With the arrival of Europeans in the early and mid-1800's, the land became privately owned by families credited for today's farming economy and community. While these family names are seen all over the landscape today, on street and place names, business signs, and more, it is important to remember that the success of this agricultural economy and communities relied on labor from Indigenous people forced to live in nearby reservations, and later from immigrant labor.

Shifting labor laws and conditions brought the first waves of migrant Latine farm laborers to the area in the 1960s. Prior to that era, area youth were employed in the harvest of seasonal crops, but newly implemented federal labor laws restricted working hours for youth and prompted area growers to recruit from new labor pools. When area nurseries also struggled to find labor, they tapped into this pool of seasonal workers and provided year-round work for farm workers, whose communities have grown roots as a thriving Latine community in Washington County.

## Demographics

In 2018 (the time that outreach for this project was conducted), the population of Cornelius was about 12,200 residents, in 3,330 households. Fifty two percent of the population identified as Latine. In 2021, the population had grown to 12,900 residents in 4,160 households. As part of the Connect with Nature work, Metro completed a demographic analysis of areas within a three-mile radius of Cornelius, which included identifying long-term population trends showing increases in people of color, people living below the poverty line and people reporting limited English proficiency.





# Voter investments in Dairy and McKay creek watersheds

## Regional conservation

As the region has grown, residents have recognized a need to protect habitat connectivity as well as the region's most unique and vulnerable ecosystems, plants and animals.

## Three natural area bonds

Thanks to regional voters, Metro has been able to make a significant contribution to this effort. In 1995, 2006 and 2019, voters in the tri-county region approved bond measures to protect water quality, wildlife habitat and opportunities to connect with nature across the region. As a result of this investment, Metro takes care of over 18,000 acres of parks and natural areas on behalf of the public.

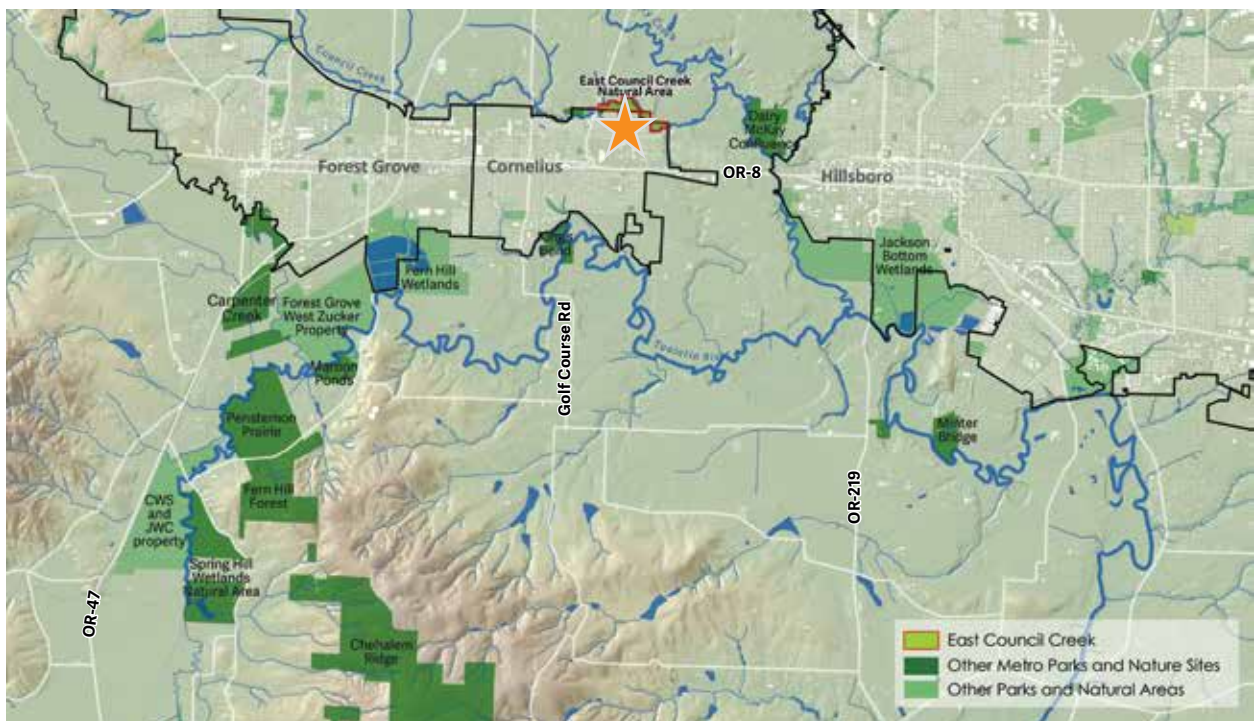
Metro's conservation efforts within the watersheds of Dairy and McKay creeks focus on these two significant tributaries to the Tualatin River and include the natural areas along Council Creek.

Early land protection focused on large wetland areas and later on protecting stream corridors. Natural areas bond funding expanded public land around Jackson Bottom, focused on greenway corridors along Dairy, McKay and Council creeks, and the wetland-floodplain complex at the confluence of Dairy and McKay creeks.

Protecting additional land along Council Creek must continue to be a priority in order to maintain connectivity between these larger wetlands, stream corridors and existing public lands along Council Creek. Voter investments increase opportunities for additional protection of these areas.

## Natural areas levy

The region's voters passed an operating levy in 2013 (renewed in 2016), which enables continued investments in taking care of and inviting the public to enjoy Metro-managed parks and natural areas throughout the region. The operating levy also supports local communities through partnerships and grants.



## 3. Landscape context

### Surrounding land uses

East Council Creek sits on the northern edge of the City of Cornelius, a city of about 13,000 residents. To the south of the site are residential neighborhoods built within the last 20-30 years. The residential areas include three homeowners' associations, Nature's Ridge east of Northwest Hobbs Road, Hobbs Farm Estates immediately west of Hobbs Road, and Council Creek Estates further to the west. New homes continue to be built nearby.

The land to the north of East Council Creek is outside of the urban growth boundary and is currently designated as rural reserve, with lands immediately to the north zoned for agriculture and forestry with minimum 5-acre lots. Some areas to the north have new residences at a density of 1- to 2-acre lots.



### Wildlife

Few formal wildlife surveys have been conducted, however Council Creek provides an important source of water and habitat connectivity for wildlife. A beaver dam has been observed on the site. Waterfowl and deer are common, and raptors are often seen flying overhead. A fledgling turkey vulture was observed during a site visit in summer of 2018.



The site provides suitable, albeit limited, habitat for state-sensitive Northern red-legged frogs, willow flycatchers and other rare or uncommon species. Spring surveys conducted in 2019 detected egg masses from red-legged frogs in wetlands in the natural area.

The Site Conservation Plan indicates that native turtles have been observed at East and/or West Council Creek for many years and most recently in 2013. Although formal surveys have not been completed, at least some of these turtles are believed to be western pond turtles – one of the ten most at-risk amphibians and reptiles in the United States (Center for Biological Diversity, September 2013).



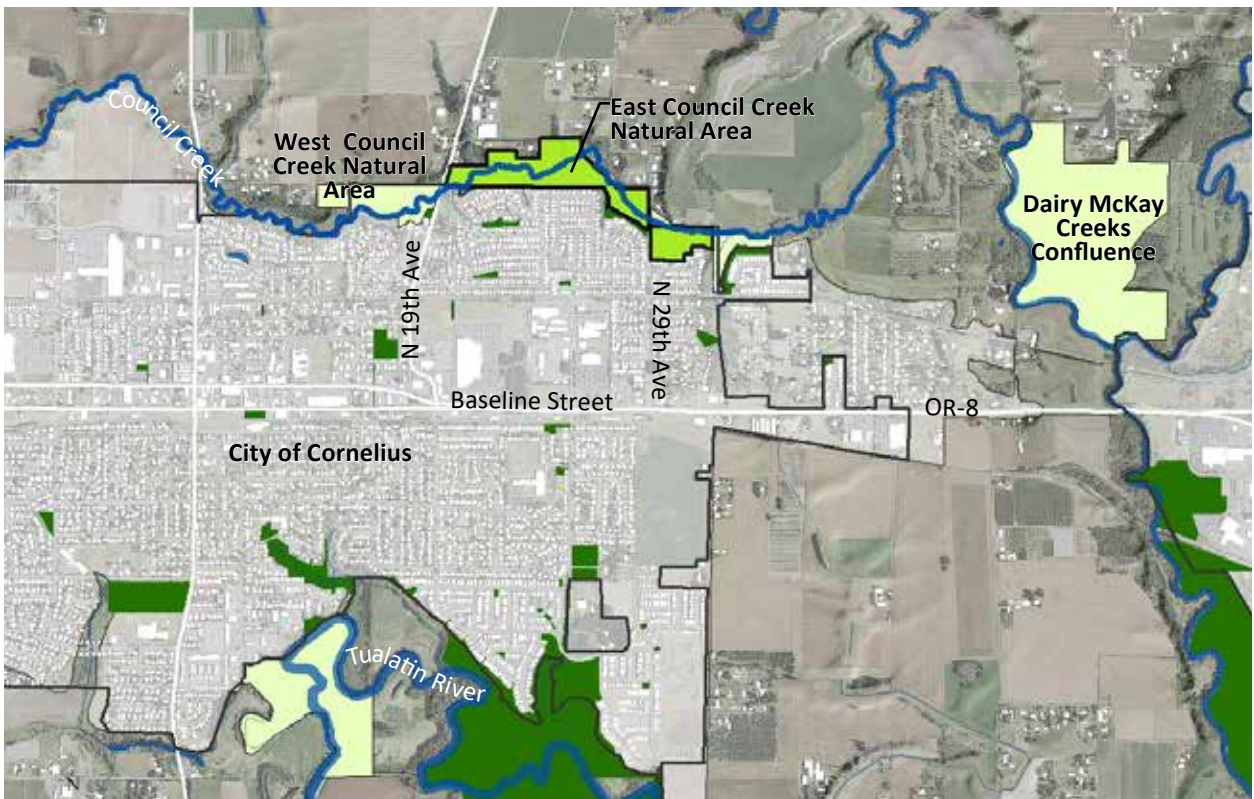
According to the 2009 Conservation Assessment of the Western Pond Turtle in Oregon led by Oregon State University, habitat loss is the primary cause of Western pond turtle decline across Washington, Oregon and California. Council Creek is one of a limited number of Metro sites where pond turtles are known to occur. In addition to habitat connectivity, the north side of the creek has been identified as most important for turtles because they need sunny places for basking. To protect this habitat, access should not be included on the north side of the creek, and care should be taken when planting vegetation north of the creek to maintain sunny areas.

## Habitat connectivity for long-term biodiversity

An important element of public access includes opportunities to see wildlife. Maintaining landscape and habitat connectivity is important to preserve species that currently exist on site. Loss of connectivity is a threat to wildlife throughout the region, and especially at East Council Creek, which is becoming increasingly isolated and is too small to support many native species on its own.

It is important to preserve an ecological corridor to the Tualatin River to ensure native wildlife continue to use the site in the future. Long-term persistence of these and other native biota seems uncertain unless the site is reconnected to other habitat patches via one or more wildlife corridors.

This plan recommends protecting land to functionally connect the site to the nearby Dairy McKay Confluence Natural Area. Preserving a functional habitat connection between East Council Creek and the Dairy McKay Confluence Natural Area would go a long way toward preserving native biota and long-term opportunities for people to see a diversity of wildlife at East Council Creek.



## Recreation and access to nature

Residents of Cornelius benefit from a variety of public parks and natural areas along with proximity to Council Creek and the Tualatin River. City parks provide more than 25 acres of public parkland and natural area sites. Additionally, a number of public and private open spaces, including East Council Creek, exist throughout Cornelius and add to the city's recreation opportunities. Neighborhood parks nearest East Council Creek and a natural area on the Tualatin River are described below.

- 12 **Natures Ridge Natural Area (0.9 acres)** is the nearest open space to East Council Creek. It is a vegetated ravine along the eastern edge of Holladay Drive. There is no access or recreation provided.
- 4 **Ryland Neighborhood Park (0.25 acres)** is the closest City-managed neighborhood park, north of Baseline Street and east of North 29th Avenue. This park is located on a steep slope adjacent to a natural area/wetland that provides habitat for wildlife. Park visitors report seeing small animals and various species of birds in the wetland and occasionally in the park. This park includes a playground, picnic tables and benches.

In addition, there are several homeowners association parcels in the neighborhoods directly to the south of East Council Creek, some with modest play structures.

- 9 **Steamboat Park Special Facility (0.75 acres)** is located next to the cul-de-sac at the end of South 15th Avenue at the south edge of the city next to the Tualatin River. This historic park got its name because of its location near the last stretch of navigable river on the Tualatin. The river is no longer accessible to steamboats but is used as a recreational amenity for Cornelius residents. This site is across the Tualatin River from Metro's King's Bend Natural Area.

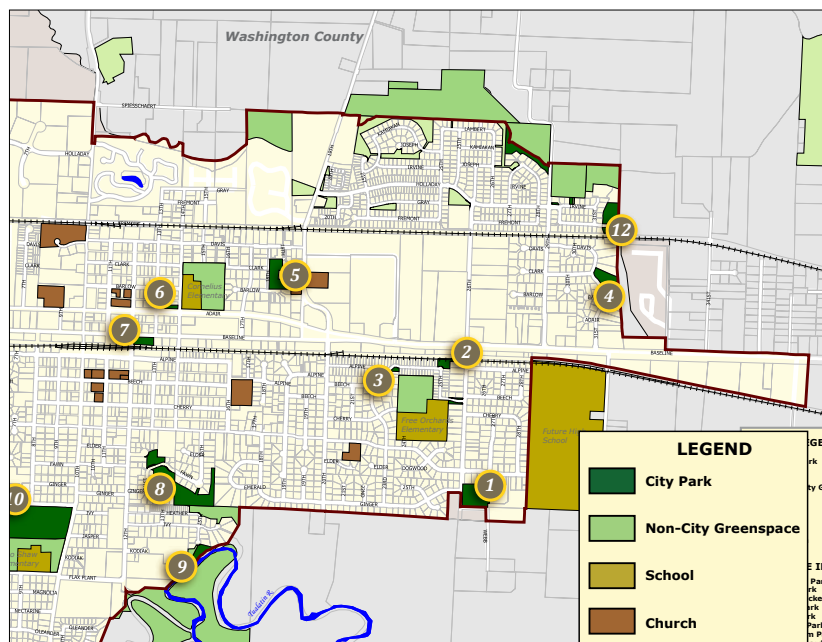


Image credit: City of Cornelius

# Transportation

## Streets

Northwest Hobbs Road is approximately 34 feet wide at the existing driveway curb cut where it enters the site, with one travel lane in each direction and standard bike lanes that extend south to North Davis Dr. It includes a sidewalk and landscape strip on the west side from Holladay Drive to the Council Creek roadway crossing. A curb tight sidewalk on the east side of Northwest Hobbs Road connects to the south lot line of the site. Northwest Hobbs Road is classified as a collector with a posted speed of 25 miles per hour at the driveway location.



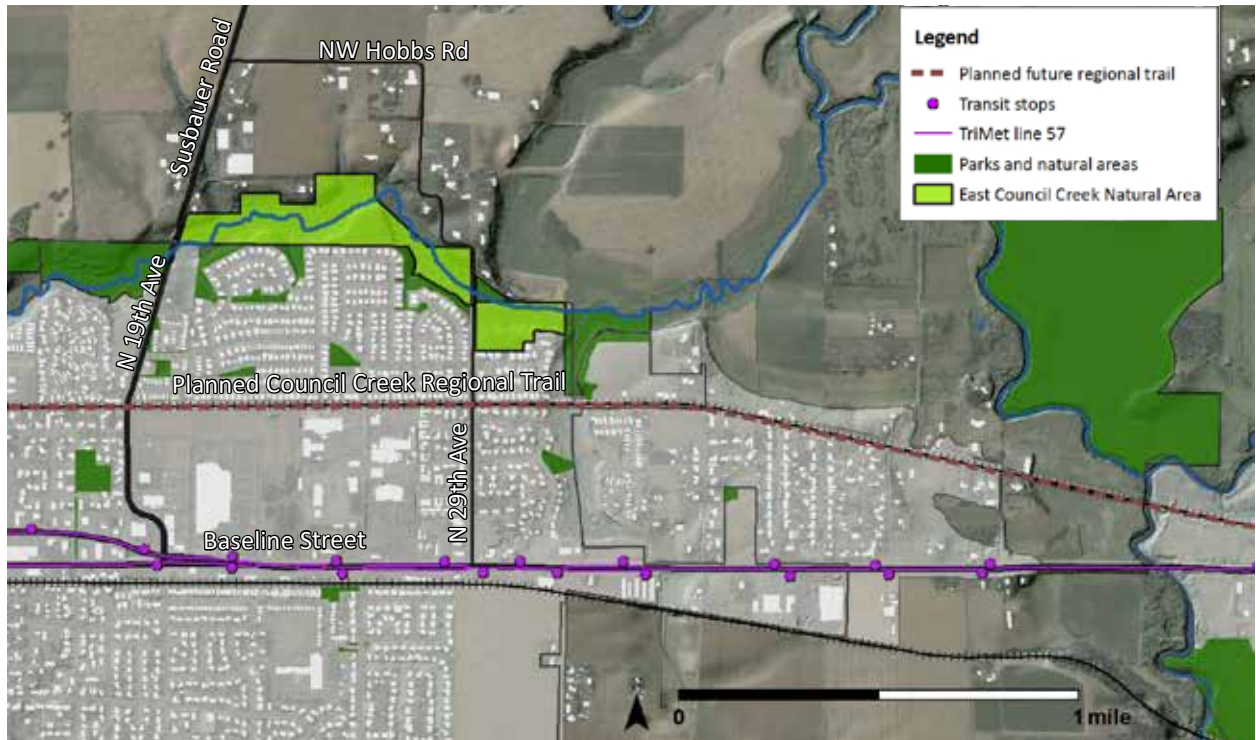
## Active transportation and transit

The nearest public transportation is ½-mile south of East Council Creek on Baseline Street. TriMet bus Line 57, which runs east west from Forest Grove to Beaverton Transit Center, serves a bus stop at Baseline Street and North 29th Ave. Line 57 runs every 15 minutes or better most of the day, every day of the week. There is also a long-term vision to extend the MAX Blue Line along the railroad right-of-way to the south of the site.



In addition, the Council Creek Regional Trail is planned along the railroad right-of-way, and would provide regional trail access to within a few blocks of the site. This nature park could provide a pleasant stopover for long distance riders. The Council Creek Regional Trail Master Plan was completed in 2015. Washington County and partner agencies have secured funding for design and construction of the entire six-mile trail. Construction is expected to begin in 2026.

Sidewalks exist in the neighborhoods south of the site and along the west side of Northwest Hobbs Road.



## 4. Existing conditions

### Geology

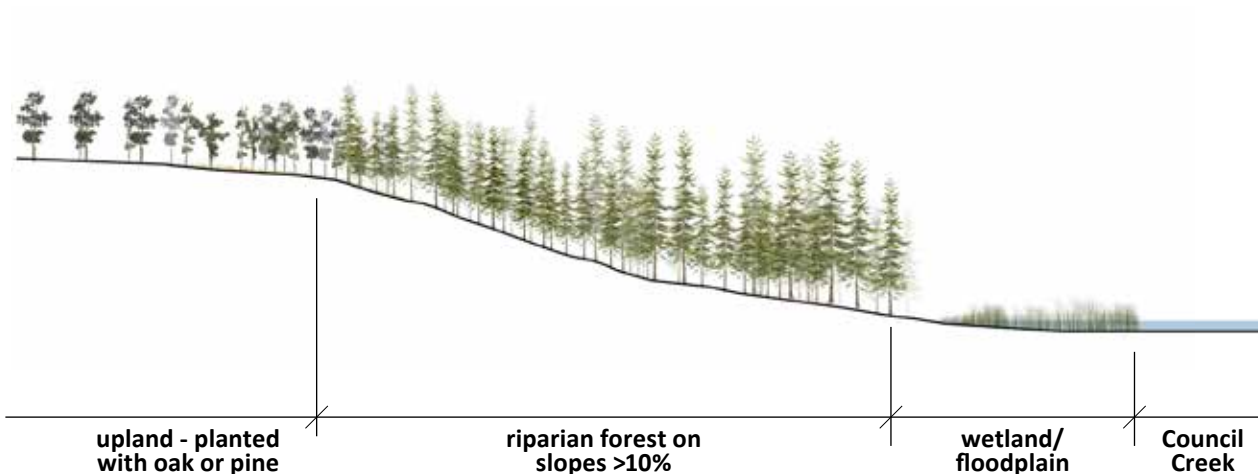
The Tualatin Valley is a western extension of the Willamette Valley and is enclosed by the Tualatin Mountains to the north and east, the Coast Range to the west and Chehalem Ridge to the southwest. Cooper Mountain and Bull Mountain lie within the southeastern part of the valley. Primary geologic layers forming the valley include deep sedimentary marine deposits, Columbia River Basalt Flows, the Hillsboro formation and Willamette Silt deposited by the Bretz Floods (aka Missoula Floods).

The Bretz floods had a significant influence on the character of the valley, and evidence of the Bretz Floods, which occurred 13,000-15,000 years ago, can be seen in features of the landscape. The sediments from these floods were left behind as the floodwaters slowed and spread into the valley and contribute to the rich soil in the valley.

Indigenous peoples' stories of the floods and their influence on the landscape date back long before western science. Recently, LiDAR data has allowed us to see patterns left by water moving through the landscape.

### Topography

East Council Creek's topography parallels the stream. The lowest areas are near the creek, with varying widths of floodplain and wetland to either side of the creek and steep slopes that connect with upland areas.



# Soils

Four soil types are found at East Council Creek. Information below is from the US Geological Survey Soil Survey.

## Cove silty clay

The Cove soil series are very deep, poorly and very poorly-drained soils that formed in mixed alluvium from sedimentary and basic igneous rocks. Cove soils are found on floodplains and have slopes of 0 to 3 percent, and are a hydric soil indicative of wetlands.

## Quatama series

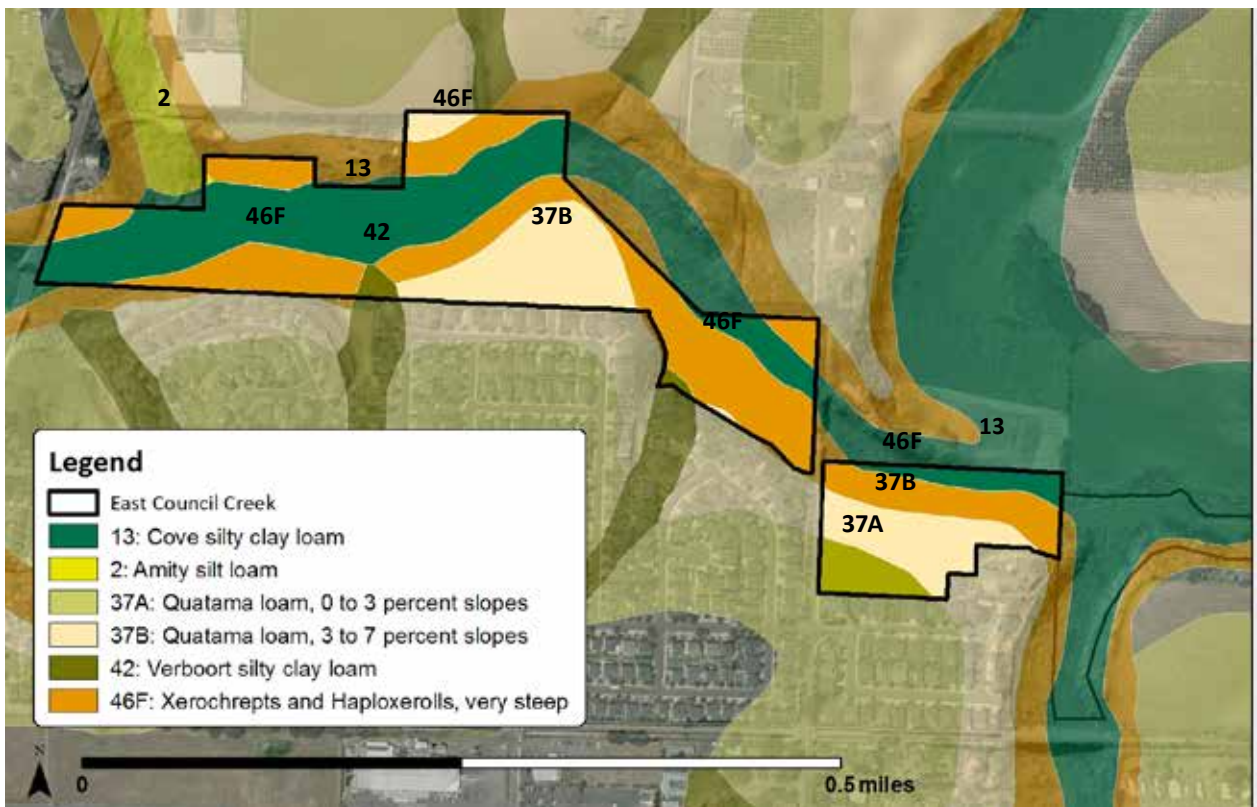
The Quatama series is a moderately well-drained soil that formed in mixed, loamy alluvium on old terraces. These soils developed on deposits from Bretz floods. At East Council Creek, they are found on the upland terraces. Typical vegetation is Douglas-fir, western redcedar, Oregon white oak, Oregon ash, Oregon grape, grasses and forbs.

## Xerochrepts and Haploxerolls

These soils occur as steep to very steep escarpments along the small streams that have cut deeply into the valley terraces and where the terraces meet the bottomlands and floodplains along streams and rivers. These are well-drained soils on rocky escarpments. They formed in a mixture of silt and sand.

## Verboort silty clay loam

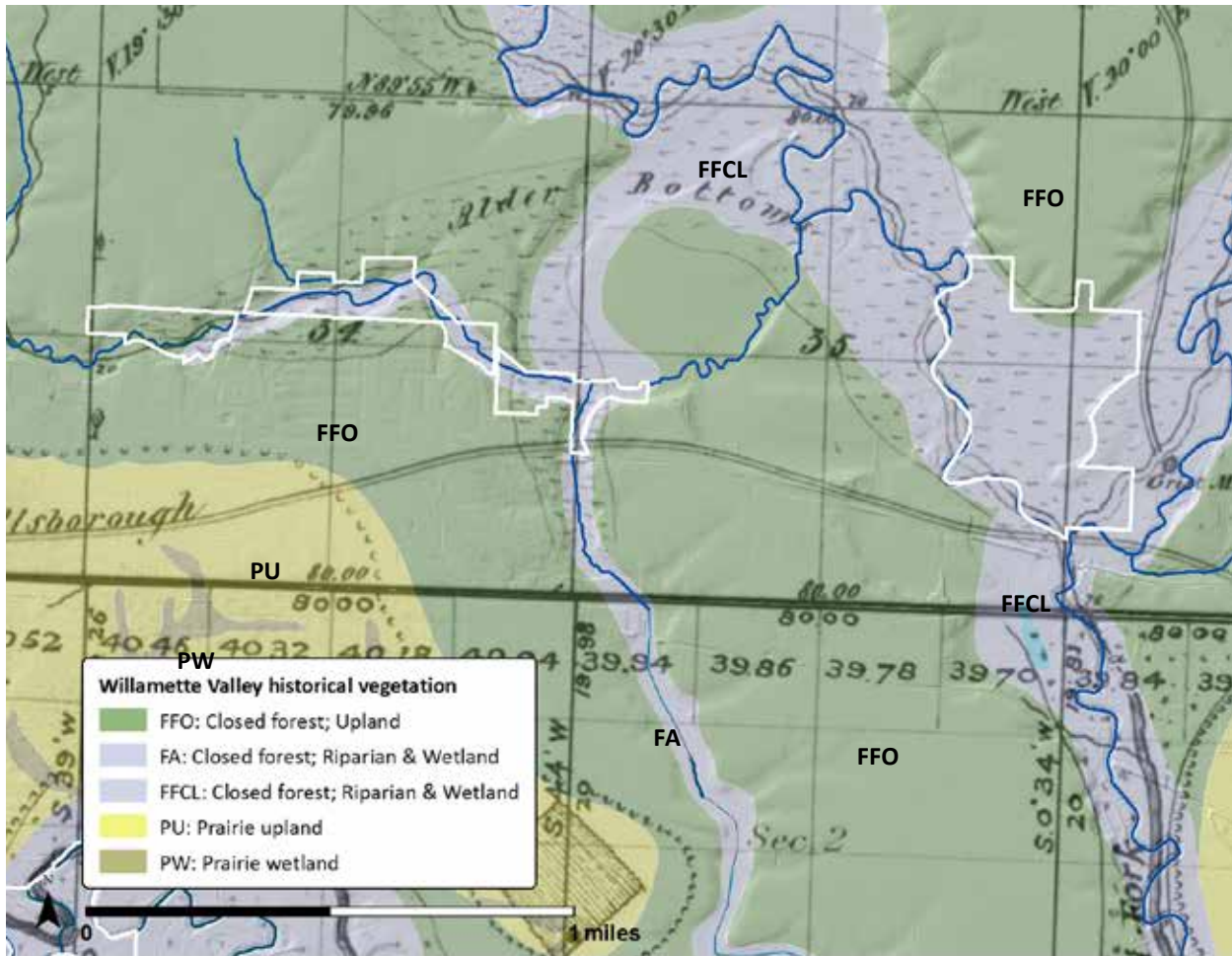
This nearly level soil is in narrow, irregularly shaped, concave areas along streams. At East Council Creek, these soils occur along the side channel drainages that flow intermittently into Council Creek.



## Hydrology, wetlands and water quality

Like wetlands and streams throughout the Tualatin Valley, Council Creek’s hydrology has been modified to accommodate agriculture and development patterns.

The Council Creek drainage once meandered through wetlands with defined stream channels only forming in some places. The water likely seeped through wetlands at the confluence with Dairy Creek.





## Vegetation

East Council Creek is dominated by emergent wetlands and a mosaic of shrub wetland and riparian forest. The wetlands through which the creek flows are degraded and dominated by reed canarygrass. The riparian forest is generally in good condition and includes mature western redcedar and Douglas-fir. As part of the stabilization efforts, Metro has worked to control invasive plants on the site, installed native plants in selected areas, and performed periodic maintenance.

Upland vegetation on the edge of Council Creek Estates includes a mix of planted Oregon white oak and ponderosa pine trees. Metro planted a vegetated buffer along the south and west boundaries of the east parcel that consists of ponderosa pine, red-flowering currant, Pacific ninebark and Douglas spirea. A Boy Scout troop planted Oregon white oak and Douglas-fir trees on the east parcel. Trees and shrubs were planted about twenty years ago.



# Infrastructure

## Sanitary sewer

A 42-inch Clean Water Services sanitary sewer runs along Council Creek for the length of the site. There are 11 manholes which are monitored and maintained regularly by the Clean Water Services conveyance team. City sanitary sewer lines connect to the Clean Water Services collector from the Council Creek Estates and Hobbs Farm Estates neighborhoods.

On the east parcel where parking and restroom development is proposed, the closest city sewer connection is along the south property line, where the City parcel abuts the site.

## Stormwater

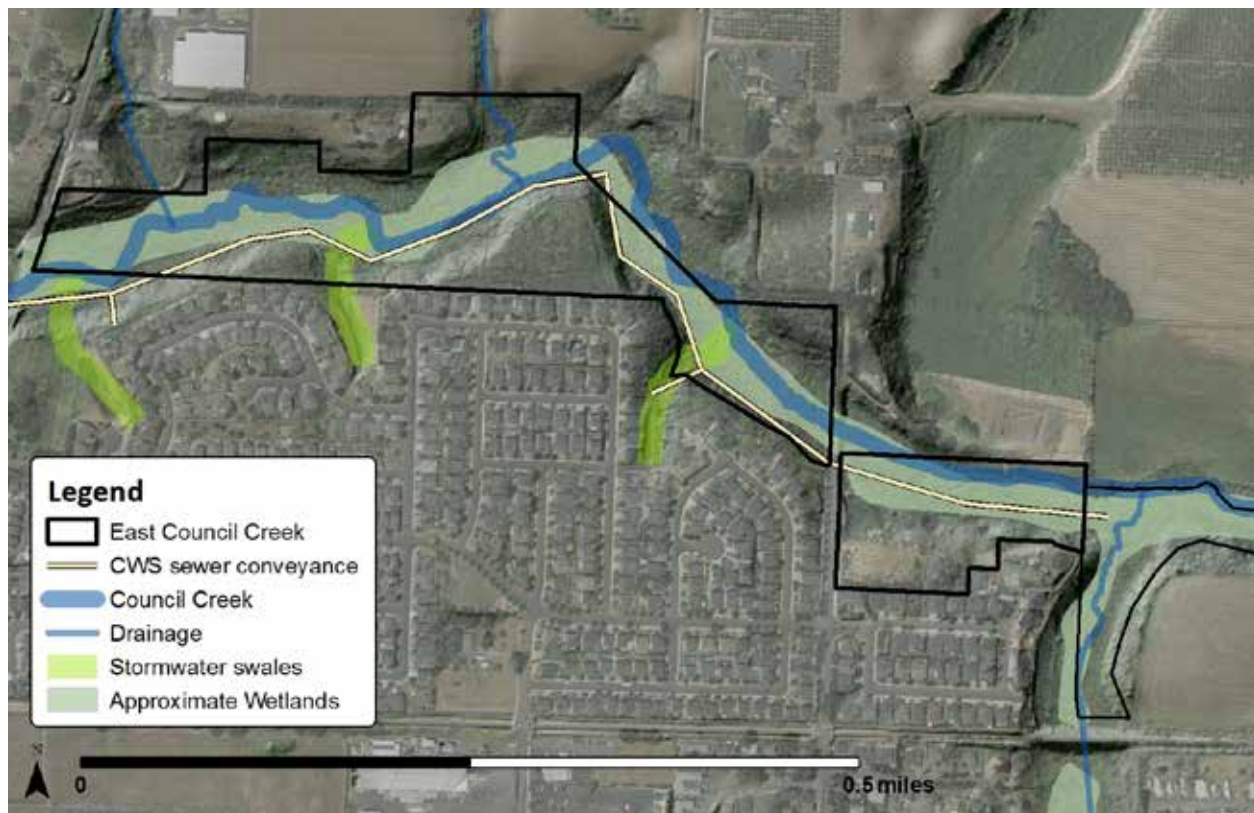
Stormwater from the neighborhoods to the south is collected in pipes through City stormwater infrastructure and conveyed through surface drainages into Council Creek. In some locations, the swales appear to have been reinforced with geotextile fabric, and vegetation growing on them is sparse.

## City water

A City water line runs along North 29th Avenue and supplies existing hydrants. There is a hydrant on the east parcel.

## Electrical service

Electrical service runs along North 29th Avenue (Northwest Hobbs Road). There are streetlights on both sides of Northwest Hobbs Road. One streetlight exists in the right-of-way of the eastern parcel near the driveway.



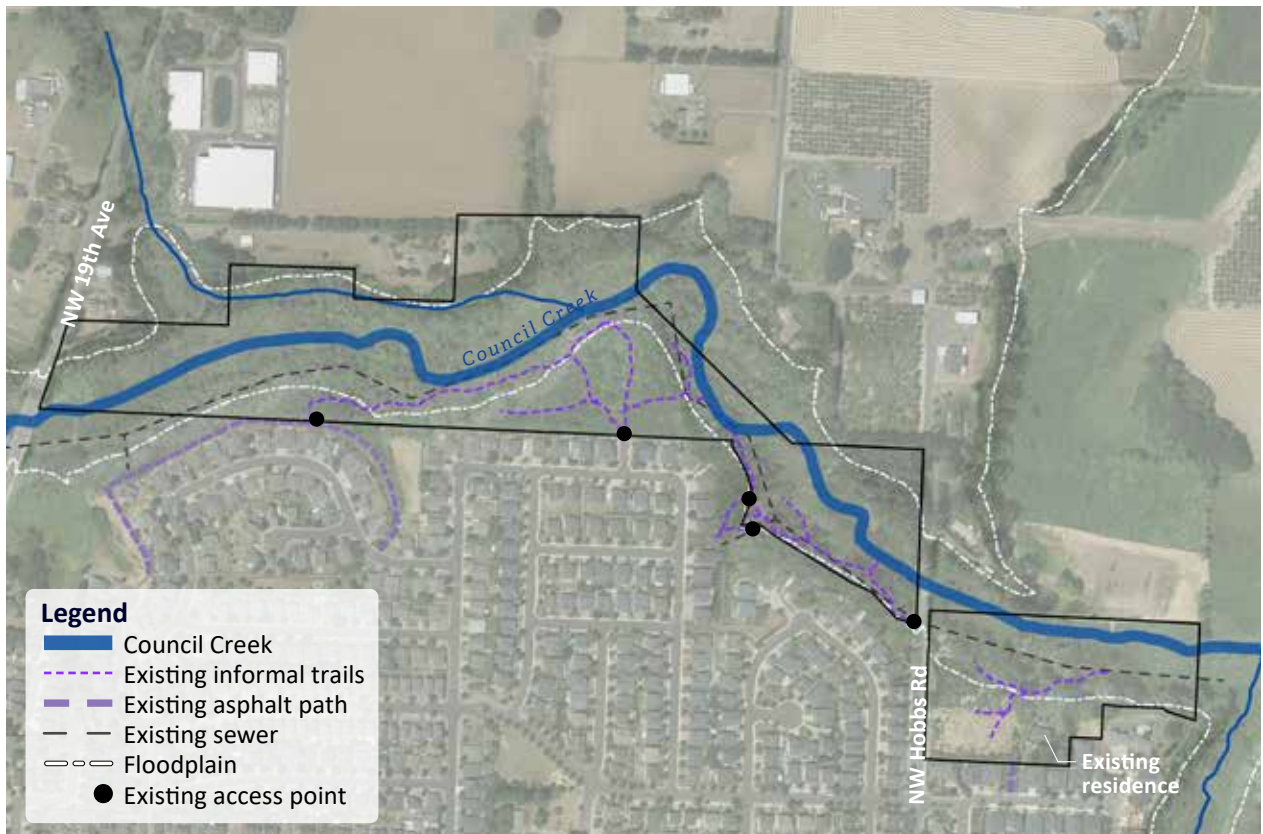
## Current access and use

On the south side of the creek, where neighborhoods are adjacent, incidental use of the area has developed over time. Social trails extend from the edge of the neighborhood down the slope to the creek. A trail along the creek appears to be used infrequently and has gaps and fallen trees that result in development of braided social trail and trampling of plants as people try to find their way around obstacles. Remnants of play have been found including natural material shelters and bike jumps.

Trails on the west parcel look inviting from Northwest Hobbs Road, but they quickly become braided and difficult to follow. Where the trails traverse wet areas, or where dense vegetation has blocked the way, several routes have developed over time, causing natural resource degradation and erosion.

Currently, access to the east parcel is limited. There is evidence that the west parcel is used more heavily to access the creek. Metro has not found evidence of the site being used for frequent illegal camping.

There is some encroachment into the natural area from neighboring properties using the site for storage, stacking firewood or dumping yard debris and holiday trees. In most cases the encroachment is onto adjacent City land rather than Metro managed land.



### Rental house

On the east parcel, there is an existing residence which Metro plans to continue to maintain as a rental for the foreseeable future. A vegetated buffer surrounding the residence delineates the private area for renters from the publicly accessible portion of the site.

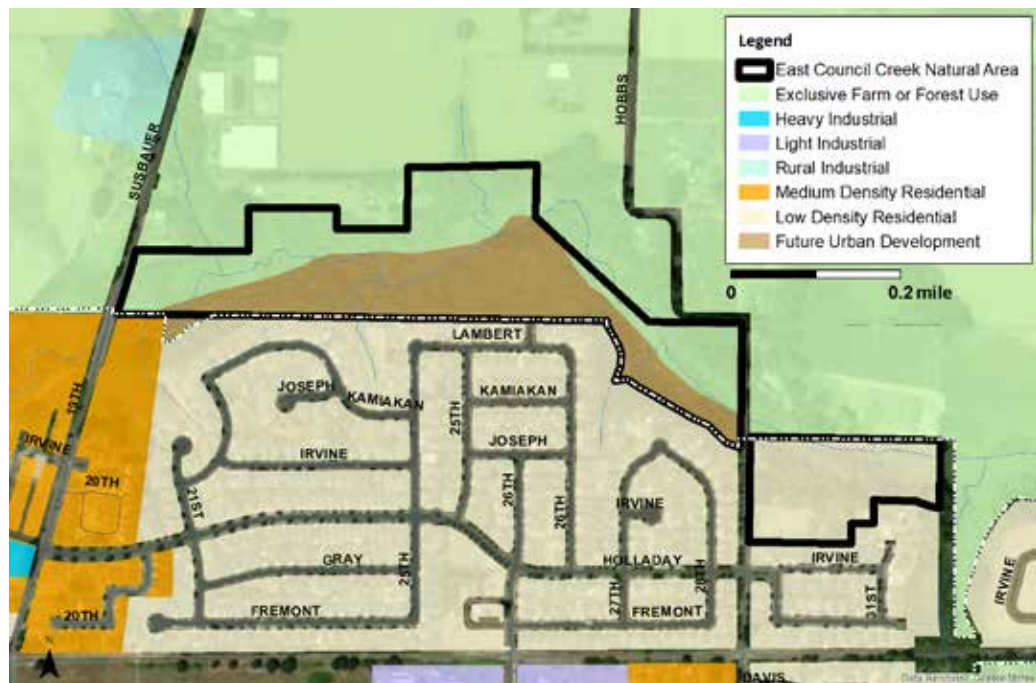
## Zoning

### Washington County

Areas of East Council Creek in Washington County jurisdiction are zoned FD-10 or FD-20(Future Development with minimum of 10- or 20-acre lots), and AF-5 (Agriculture and Forestry with minimum 5-acre lots).

### Cornelius

The portion of the site within the City of Cornelius is zoned R-7 (Low Density Residential) with 7,000 square foot minimum lot sizes). Maximum density of dwelling units is 5 per acre for detached single-unit dwellings, and 20 units per acre for middle housing.







## 5. Site analysis

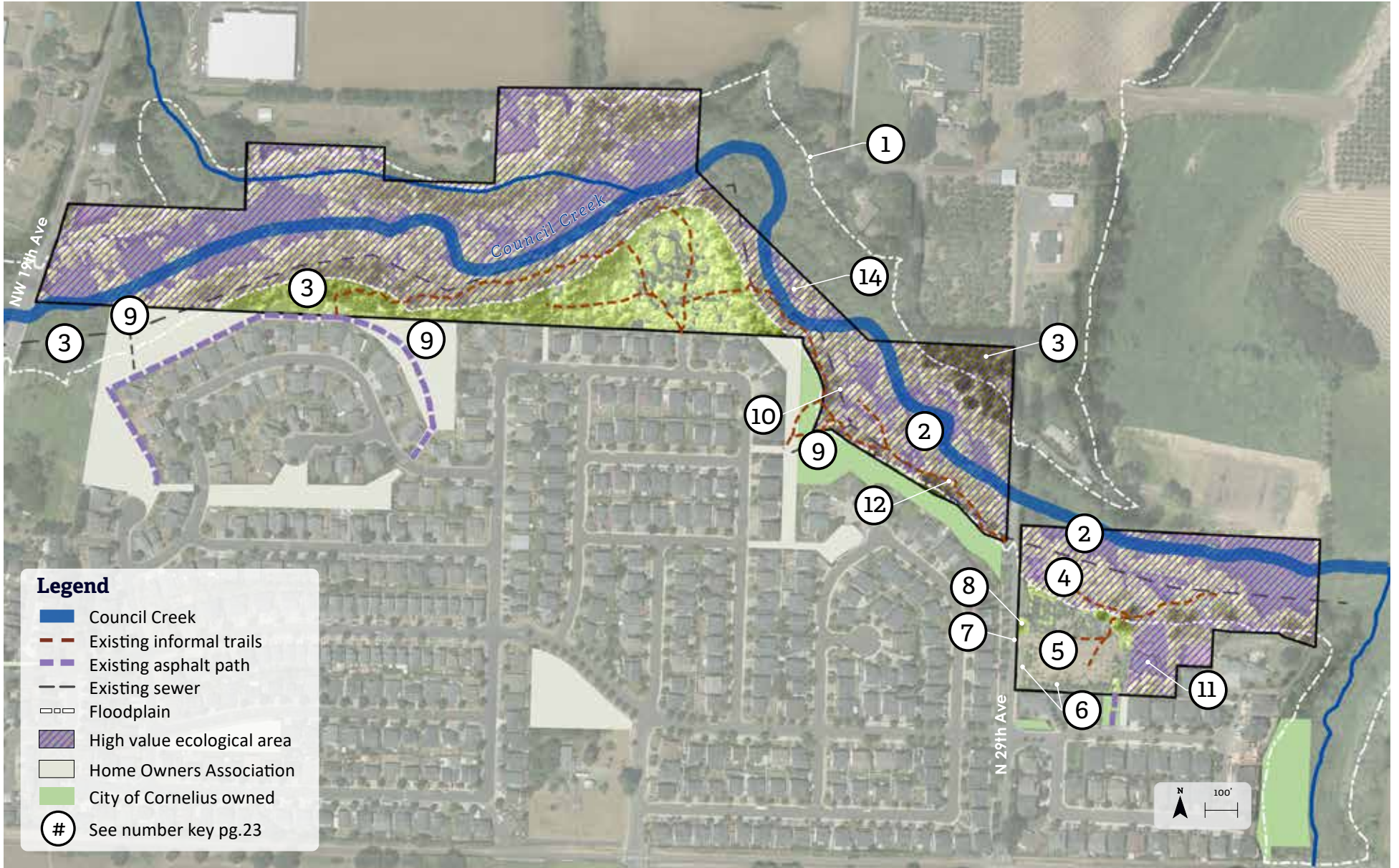
Large Douglas-fir and western redcedar trees create a sense of wildness right in Cornelius. Wetlands and floodplains provide an opportunity for respite, wildlife viewing and for telling the story of the wider Tualatin Valley beyond. Formalizing a soft surface hiking trail along the south side of the creek creates a way to access this pocket of nature in the community.

### Conservation targets

The Site Conservation Plan identifies five conservation targets for Council Creek: emergent wetland, shrub wetland, riparian forest, upland closed forest and native turtles.

Conservation Target	Current and desired future condition	Desired future condition
Emergent wetland 	In poor condition due to dominance by reed canarygrass.	Will remain poor unless hydrology can be controlled to allow treatment and plantings.
Shrub wetland 	Mixed condition but some rehabilitation is under way.	Could be in good condition with plant installation and maintenance.
Riparian forest 	Mixed condition, generally good but damage from vandalism in some areas.	Good condition with healthy mix of species and sizes of trees and shrubs.
Upland forest 	Developing in two areas where plantings were done several years ago.	These areas should fill in nicely and provide connectivity and increased patch size for riparian forest.
Native turtles	At risk of extirpation. They continue to be seen every few years but have lost many essential habitat components.	Council Creek can provide all elements needed by turtles, but not without additional holdings. This can be an important link for recovery on a regional scale by providing a stepping stone to other groups and habitats.

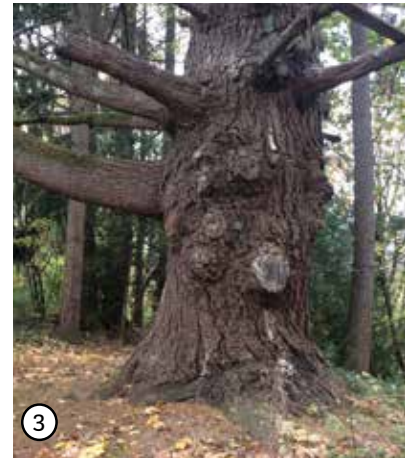




## Opportunities and constraints

This map shows opportunities and constraints of developing public access on the site.

- ① **Floodplain** – Much of the site is in the floodplain where soils are wet and wetlands are more likely.
- ② **Possible wetlands** – Trails should avoid wetlands, except to provide access to view them. Where wetlands are unavoidable, trails should use boardwalks or bridges.
- ③ **Large conifer trees** – The oldest conifer trees on site are estimated to be 75 years old. Trails should be designed and constructed to avoid impacting roots of these old trees, while providing opportunities for people to view them.
- ④ **Douglas-fir trees** – Planted on the slope about 20 years ago, some trees may be removed to accommodate an all-abilities trail.
- ⑤ **Oregon oak trees** – These slow growing native oaks are about 20 years old. This upland area is an opportunity to showcase shrubs and flowers that grow with oaks and highlight Oregon oak habitat. Several oaks will need to be removed to accommodate a potential parking lot.
- ⑥ Existing ponderosa pine trees and shrubs **buffer** the perimeter of the site. Some will need to be removed depending on the final parking lot configuration.
- ⑦ **Existing driveway entrance** could be used for parking lot access.
- ⑧ Existing Douglas-fir tree **blocks visibility** for cars pulling into and out of a potential parking lot — may need to be removed.
- ⑨ **Drainages** from neighborhood water quality facilities flow into Council Creek.
- ⑩ **Existing sewer line** - trails will accommodate maintenance access to the existing sewer line.
- ⑪ **Existing residence.**
- ⑫ **Existing informal trails** - Some portions are confusing and difficult to follow, and can be muddy and slippery.
- ⑬ Existing **neighborhood access** points.
- ⑭ **High value ecological area** - the site's high value ecological areas include floodplains and wetlands on both sides of the stream, and areas that support beaver, willow fly catchers, northern red-legged frog and Western pond turtles; as well as forest features like legacy trees and snags.



## 6. Community engagement

### Outreach

#### **Connect with Nature**

Connect with Nature brings a new model of planning and community engagement. This model aims to involve people of color from the earliest stages of planning. Through a series of community workshops, Connect with Nature focused East Council Creek planning and design on communities of color first, creating space for people of color to lead the conversation.

Workshop participants shared stories about their values and experiences with nature, parks, and the outdoors, and developed ideas for how East Council Creek Nature Park could serve the needs of their families and communities. In addition to focusing on planning for East Council Creek, Connect with Nature also broadly explored how to make parks and natural areas more welcoming and relevant for participants' communities throughout the region.

Local community leaders received stipends to learn about planning parks, recruit members of their communities for workshops, and help facilitate discussions. Design workshops captured input and solutions to include in the plan. The work of Connect with Nature is demonstrated in this master plan as well as in the Connect with Nature Resource Guide.

#### **Open houses**

Metro staff applied traditional methods of connecting with the broad community, including three open houses, social media outreach, mailings and email for individuals who signed up to receive updates on the East Council Creek Master plan project.





### **Site tours**

Metro partnered with Centro Cultural de Washington County to lead site tours for members of the Latine community as well as the general public. Centro staff participated in and led tours of the site.

### **Stakeholder meetings and public presentations**

Staff met one on one and provided site tours for a variety of stakeholders including neighbors, Clean Water Services staff, The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, Tualatin Soil and Water Conservation District, Tualatin Riverkeepers, Tualatin Watershed Council and others. Staff also provided public presentations at community participation organization meetings and for the City of Cornelius Parks Advisory Board.

## **Community ideas and feedback summary**

The summary below includes community feedback heard at four Connect with Nature workshops, three public open houses, two site tours, four online surveys and numerous conversations with stakeholders and neighbors. All events and information provided for the project were bilingual. Key themes are highlighted below.

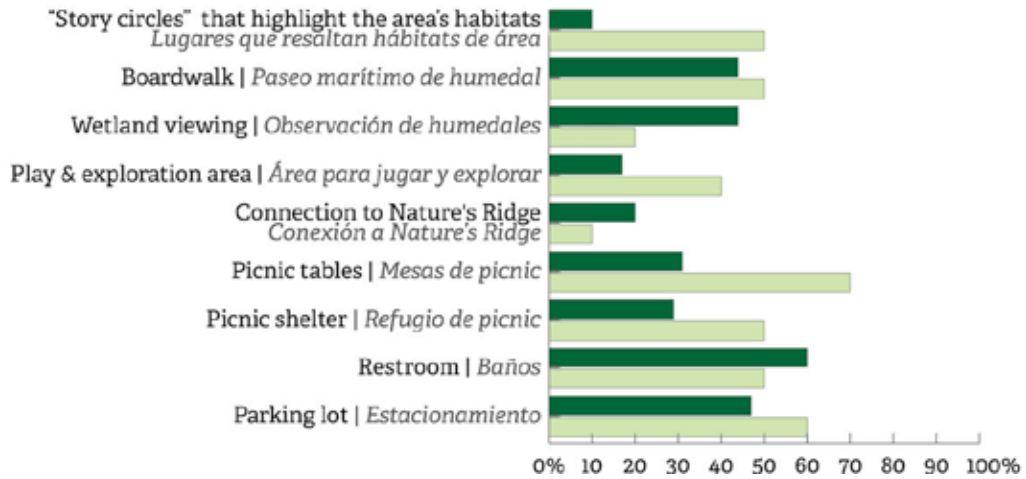
### **General feedback**

There is a mix of excitement about new opportunities to access East Council Creek as well as some concern about increased traffic and parking in the neighborhood. There is a call for more areas for kids to safely play, highlighting that there are lots of kids in the community that need safe, healthy and fun outdoor spaces. A few people don't want any development. People expressed concerns about safety and maintenance. Making sure the rules are clear is important. People shared their excitement for a new park to enjoy and being able to participate in the process.



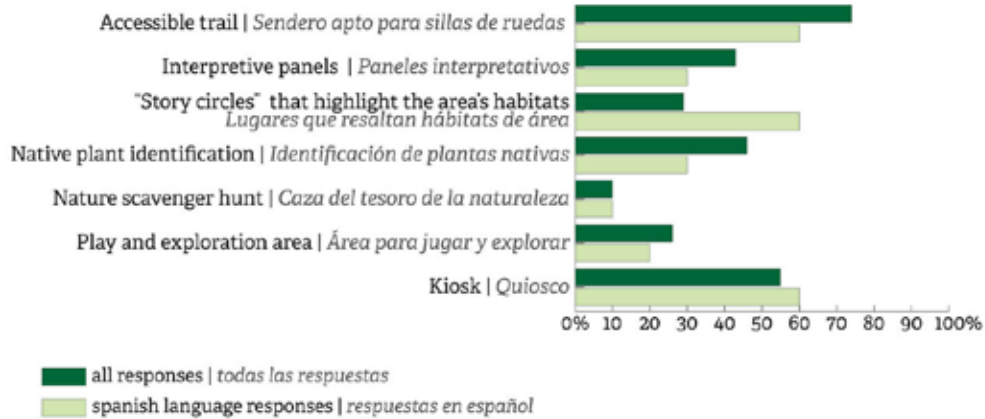
### Feeling welcome in parks and natural areas

People shared that generally places that are clean, well maintained, and cared for make them feel safer when visiting parks and natural areas. In addition clear, multi-lingual information about the site, and wayfinding and safety information at each park entrance help people feel comfortable and know what to expect when visiting. Resting places, places for kids to play, and comfortable, beautiful and graffiti-free places to be with family were also mentioned as providing for a positive experience. Welcome signs in many languages also contribute to a sense of welcome and belonging.



### Nature experiences

People talked about hiking, walking, learning about nature and taking guided tours of the site. Being able to spend time outside with family to celebrate and teach children about nature was important to participants. One respondent said “[I like to] play with my kids [outside], teach them about nature, go on nature walks, collect things we find, and have picnics.”



### What people told us about East Council Creek

People expressed their appreciation for the dynamic hydrology of the site and asked that it be highlighted through the design. Some people want there to be no parking or limited parking, while others stressed the need for a large enough parking lot, so that existing parking challenges in the neighborhood are not exacerbated. People highlighted the importance of accommodating people with limited mobility, elders and kids. People shared that new trails would be a benefit to the neighborhood and provide great places to walk. Some neighbors asked that we consider allowing dogs in the nature park because many neighbors need places to walk their dogs.

## Feedback about designs

Three alternatives were created to generate options to review and respond to. The overall design of alternative 3 was preferred. When asked what experiences helped people feel connected with nature, a boardwalk near the wetland, native plant identification, stories about the local landscape and habitat, and off-trail play and exploration areas ranked highly.

Providing a large enough parking lot was very important to most respondents. The one-way circulation parking lot shown in design 3 was generally preferred.

Providing an accessible route to the wetland was identified as important, and there was general agreement with the proposed trail alignment along the creek, and that a trail connection to North Irvine Street not be included in the recommendation.

Picnic facilities were desired with either individual tables or a mix of tables and a multi-use picnic shelter. People shared that a variety of options is preferred to providing one shelter.

## Feedback about parking

Parking on residential streets to the south is relatively limited, with parking only allowed on one side of the street in many places. The plan recommends a parking area that accommodates approximately eight cars for the following reasons:

- As a regional resource, it is important that the nature park accommodate parking for visitors who are not accessing the park from the immediate neighborhoods.
- The design proposes accessible trail access to view the stream and wetland, and it is important that visitors with limited mobility be able to access these features.
- There is also concern from neighbors that the park would draw visitors who would use limited parking available on residential streets to the south.
- Providing parallel or head-in parking on Northwest Hobbs Road was evaluated by a traffic engineer and the City and determined not to be a feasible solution.





## 7. Master Plan recommendations

### Overall concept plan

The proposed master plan includes parking on the east parcel of East Council Creek, off of Northwest Hobbs Road. An all ages and abilities trail provides access to a wetland overlook and interpretation on this parcel. The master plan identifies a place for community gathering and storytelling and a restroom. In addition, a trail is planned from the end of the sidewalk on the west side of Northwest Hobbs Road, along Council Creek to a connection at the City-managed trail at North 21st Avenue.

### Nature trail west of Hobbs Road

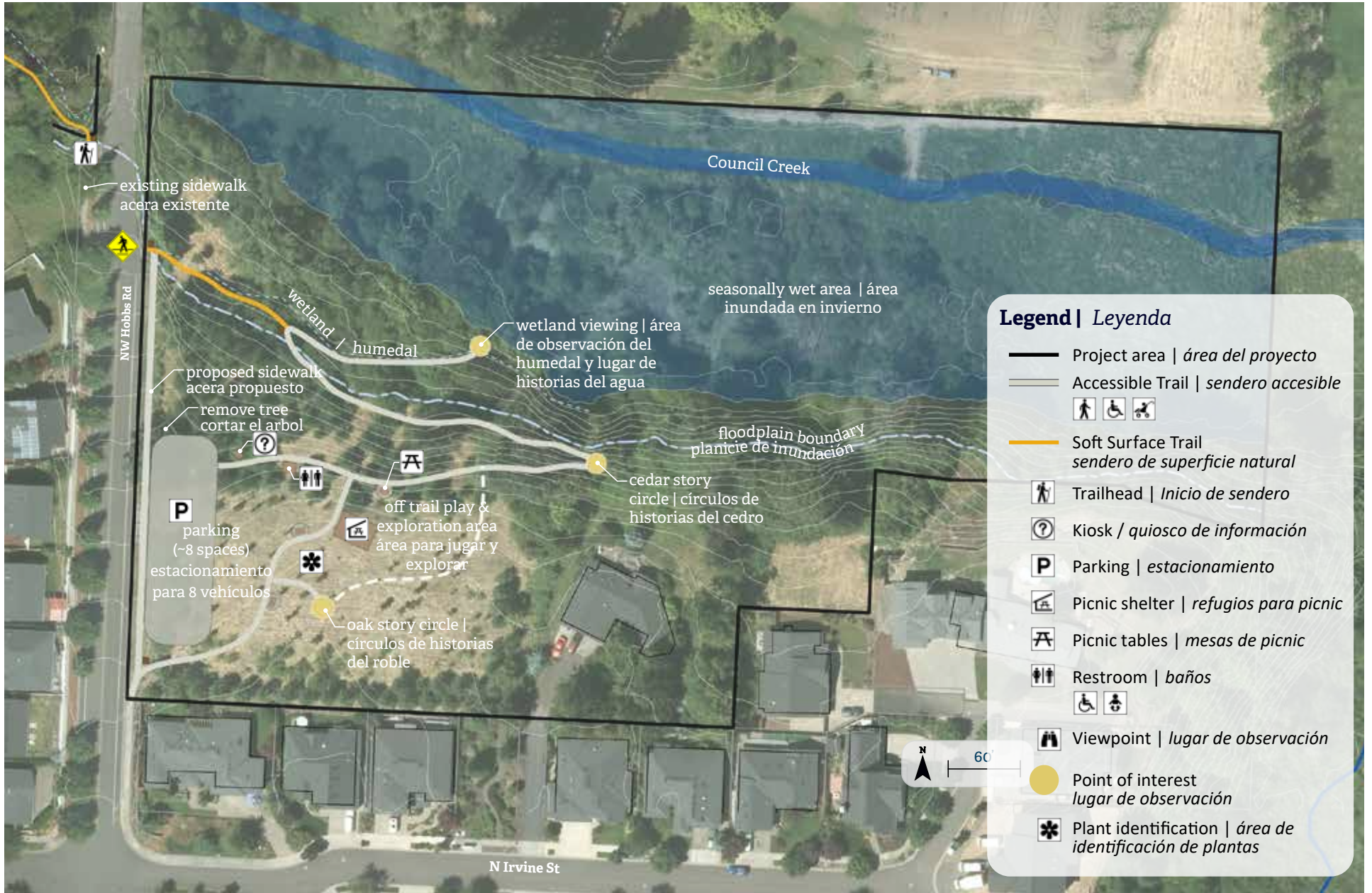
A soft surface nature trail is recommended along Council Creek to connect Northwest Hobbs Road to North 21st Avenue. The recommended alignment avoids steep slopes and wetlands to the extent possible, and provides strategic access points for people to experience the stream. The alignment avoids views of residences on the north side of Council Creek. Where wetland or wet areas are unavoidable, boardwalk is recommended. In several places a boardwalk or bridge may be needed where the trail route crosses water quality facility drainages. The trail route should consider Clean Water Services manhole locations and the need for maintenance access. The final proposed alignment should be reviewed with Clean Water Services conveyance staff prior to construction.

### Neighborhood trailheads

Three neighborhood trailheads are proposed at Northwest Hobbs Road, at North 21st Avenue, and at North Lambert Street. In these locations trailhead kiosks should be provided. Kiosks should be bilingual and include a trail map, safety information and rules.

### Neighborhood access points

Several places exist where a City or homeowners association owned connection provides access to the site from the neighborhood. This plan recommends not developing formal access in those places. These areas should be monitored, and if social trails develop at a particular location, Metro will coordinate with the neighbors to evaluate whether an access trail should be formalized.



## Entry area

### **Parking lot**

The master plan includes a parking lot to accommodate approximately eight cars. As is standard for Metro developed facilities, an automatic gate will allow for controlled entry/exit from the nature park from dawn to dusk. A large Douglas-fir tree located within the sight triangle may need to be removed to provide adequate sight distance. Wood from the tree could be used to enhance habitat or as a feature in the nature park.

### **All ages and abilities nature trail**

A nature trail is recommended to provide all ages and abilities access to view the wetland. The trail should be built to Architectural Barriers Act standards for outdoor recreation, including accessible grades and surfacing to provide a firm and stable surface. Interpretive themes along the nature trail should highlight the three habitat types characteristic of the site. An out and back trail is recommended. It will likely need to switchback in order to navigate the slope. Switchbacks should be designed to minimize cross-cutting by people walking, and the design should consider including a direct route, such as stairs, to reduce the temptation to cut across the switchbacks.

### **Neighborhood access from Northwest Hobbs Road**

Pedestrians from the neighborhood will be able to access the nature park from Northwest Hobbs Road. A trail is not recommended to connect from the east parcel to North Irvine Street to the south. A shrub buffer should be planted in the southeast corner of the east parcel to discourage people from using this access point. During public outreach the project team heard from the neighbors that they preferred accessing the site from Northwest Hobbs Road rather than from a trail to the south.

### **Connection to trails across Northwest Hobbs Road**

The project is also proposing a trail crossing of Northwest Hobbs Road. Two possible locations for the crossing are north of the proposed driveway(s) and near the north end of the existing sidewalk on the west side of Northwest Hobbs Road. Both locations have adequate sight distance. A sidewalk should be constructed along the east side of Northwest Hobbs Road to the proposed crossing location. The future trail crossing requires a detailed assessment to determine the appropriate treatments such as signing, pavement markings and curb extensions, based on vehicle speeds and volumes, roadway cross-section and estimated crossing demand.

**Picnic area**

A single picnic shelter, with additional picnic tables is recommended. Shelter and tables should be distributed along a gravel path and each should have a clear access path to avoid compacted, muddy areas in the grass. Picnic tables and shelters will be accessible and conform to Parks and Nature standards. They should also provide ways to cook or heat up food and provide a source of water.

**Restrooms**

The master plan recommends a double stall gender inclusive, accessible restroom near the parking lot. The restroom design should be based on Metro furnishing standards. A standard for Metro nature parks, the restroom should automatically lock at night. The restroom should be plumbed with running water and connected to the city sewer.

**Story circles**

Three story circles are proposed along the accessible nature trail. They are intended to be spots to pause, rest, contemplate or gather with a small group. These places are opportunities to provide interpretation and stories about the three habitat types of the site – the cultural and ecological importance of oak, the importance of riparian habitats, even for small streams like Council Creek, and a place to observe wetlands, plants and wildlife.

**Kiosks and wayfinding signs****Trailhead at parking lot**

The main trailhead at the parking lot should include a standard kiosk with a nature park map, rules, safety information and information about the nature park. The kiosk should use international symbols and provide information in multiple languages to the extent possible, especially English and Spanish.

**Acknowledging Indigenous people**

A nature park welcome sign or kiosk signs should acknowledge that the land at East Council Creek Nature Park and the broader landscapes we inhabit in the Tualatin Valley are part of homelands Indigenous peoples have lived in relationship with since time immemorial.

**Neighborhood trailheads**

Neighborhood trailheads are recommended at several locations. Each trailhead should include a trailhead kiosk with a multilingual trail map, safety and rule information.

**Wayfinding signs**

Wayfinding signs should be installed at all trail intersections.



## Habitat protection and restoration

### Habitat connectivity

In order to protect species diversity, the master plan recommends prioritizing the protection of habitat connectivity between East Council Creek and other nearby natural areas especially the Dairy McKay Confluence Natural Area. Loss of habitat connectivity is the biggest threat to turtles and other wildlife that have been observed on the site. Protecting habitat connectivity is critical to maintaining wildlife diversity on the site, and for people to have opportunities to see the wildlife.



### Forest health and understory restoration

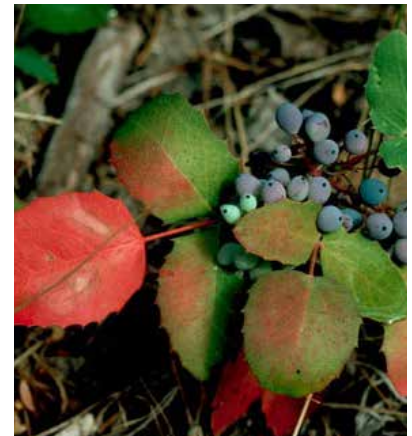
It is recommended that restoration activities take place on the site consistent with the Site Conservation Plan recommendations. Recommended restoration activities include the following:

- Identify and remove of blackberry, ivy and other invasive plants, prioritizing areas with planned trails.
- Regrade, restore and revegetate areas where significant digging and soil moving have occurred.
- Evaluate and continue to restore upland area with young stands of Douglas-fir and ponderosa pine, thinning trees and planting understory as appropriate.
- Evaluate mature trees and remove non-native trees or trees that are potential hazards in vicinity of proposed trail.



### Stormwater swales

The master plan recommends coordinating with Clean Water Services and the City of Cornelius to improve the habitat and water quality stormwater outfalls flowing into Council Creek. Consider partnership and grant funding opportunities.



### Turtle habitat on site

In order to protect potential turtle habitat, development of the nature park avoids all areas north of Council Creek to protect preferred habitat and potential basking areas.

### Pollinator habitat

Throughout the site, opportunities to enhance pollinator habitat should be identified, for example trailheads and parking lot areas, and near oaks on the east parcel.

## Interpretive themes

In addition to the themes associated with the site's habitat, several other themes emerged as opportunities to share stories and experiences that help visitors connect with the site.

### **Plant identification**

The plan recommends plant identification for plants that can be seen along the trails. People reported that learning about plants helps them feel connected to a place. In conversations with people who had moved to Oregon, we heard that plants can remind them of home, and as a result make Oregon feel more like home. People were interested in the ecological role that plants play as well as medicinal, edible and other uses of plants.

### **Hydrology**

The site's dynamic relationship with water was a theme throughout community conversations about the site. The degree to which the water fluctuates is something that visitors to the site can experience firsthand by visiting during different seasons. In winter, following heavy rains, the narrow meandering stream turns into a lake-like wetland. In addition to the dynamics visible on the site, there is an opportunity to share maps that help people connect to the broader landscape and how Dairy Creek and the Tualatin River shape the place we live.

### **Wildlife habitat, connectivity and climate change**

Council Creek is an opportunity to share stories about how animals like turtles, beaver, frogs and other wildlife rely on connections to the broader landscape for both their own individual survival and species survival.

## Art

As part of the Parks and Nature percent for art program, art should be considered at this site. There is an opportunity to work with local community partners like Centro Cultural to highlight local Latine culture of the area. There is also an opportunity to work with Indigenous community members and Tribes to create art for the site. These opportunities should be explored further during design refinement.



## 8. Implementation, operation and maintenance

### Implementation and phasing priorities

Currently funding has not been identified for implementation of the master plan recommendations.

Once funding for project implementation and operations has been identified, it is recommended that improvements for the west parcel be prioritized, including formalizing a natural surface trail, installing boardwalks, wayfinding and regulatory signs, and decommissioning demand trails to reduce erosion and improve visitor experience and safety. Additional funding could support implementing recommendations for a more formalized park entry on the east parcel with parking, restrooms, security elements, and an all ages and abilities nature trail and wayfinding and regulatory signs. With still further resources, additional amenities like site interpretation, gathering areas, and off trail play can be added.

### Parking lot design

Two potential parking lot configurations are recommended for further evaluation during design and engineering. Both options accommodate approximately eight cars. Final designs will incorporate secure bicycle parking as well.

**Parking Design A** includes a single two-way driveway and drive aisle with a hammerhead turnaround. The primary advantage of Design A is the lower impact and cost of developing a single driveway. Disadvantages are that the development footprint is less flexible, requires more grading and extends deeper into the site. It would require removing more oak trees, but fewer trees overall.

**Parking Design B** has a one-way drive aisle parallel to Northwest Hobbs Road. Advantages are that it doesn't extend as far into the site, and more easily fits into existing contours of the site. Design B requires removing fewer oak trees, but more trees overall. The pull through design is better for day to day circulation, emergency access and as a drop off location. Disadvantages are the cost of building and maintaining two driveways and gates.

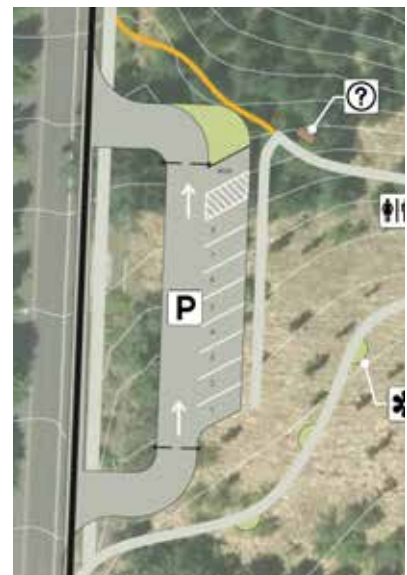
Overall Parking Design B is preferred based on current available information about topography. Once survey and detailed engineering are available, the final design should be adapted to be cost effective and accommodate efficient circulation for vehicles and pedestrians. Both parking lot configuration options comply with the city minimum standard for driveway spacing

### Permitting

Because the Cornelius city boundary divides the site, some improvements will need to be permitted through the City of Cornelius, and some improvements will need Washington County development and land use permits. In addition, the site will need permits from Clean Water Services.



**Parking design A**



**Parking design B**

## Right-of-way improvements

A transportation study was conducted and recommended the following right-of-way improvements. Northwest Hobbs Road should retain the 34-foot cross section with one travel lane in each direction and bike lanes.

It is recommended that a six-foot sidewalk with a six-foot landscape strip be constructed along the frontage from the south lot line to the proposed trail crossing location. These half street improvements require a total of 30 feet of right-of-way from the street centerline. There is currently 20 feet available. To meet these standards, ten feet of right-of-way dedication is required along the length of the frontage.

## Anticipated construction cost

A conceptual level cost range estimate was prepared based on elements shown in the draft master plan for the park entry area of the site. If issues are identified, Metro may adjust its approach to managing the site and trail uses. Possible responses include activities such as removing unauthorized trails, implementing seasonal trail closures, or adapting allowed uses.

	Cost range (2019)*	
	low	high
Staging/Erosion Control	\$14,850	\$19,800
Demolition	\$22,275	\$29,700
Salvage And Recycling	\$900	\$1,200
Earthwork	\$65,495	\$87,326
Parking Lot Paving	\$36,000	\$48,000
Entry Area Paths And Paving	\$36,072	\$48,096
Masonry & Rock Walls, Fences And Gates	\$3,420	\$4,560
Planting	\$36,192	\$48,256
Structures	\$157,500	\$210,000
Site Furnishings - Entry And Day Use Area	\$76,185	\$101,580
Entry Area Signs	\$18,900	\$25,200
Utilities	\$112,050	\$149,400
ROW/Street Frontage Improvements	\$78,750	\$91,875
Entry Area Trails	\$75,195	\$87,728
Nature trail and boardwalk along Council Creek	\$233,730	\$272,685
Trail Decommission	\$2,376	\$2,772
Trail Signs And Furnishings	\$14,603	\$17,036
Direct construction costs	\$984,492	\$1,245,213
Overhead	\$147,674	\$186,782
3.5% inflation for 3 years	\$123,087	\$155,683
Contingency (50%)	\$627,626	\$793,839
Subtotal	\$1,882,878	\$2,381,518
Soft Costs (30%)	\$753,151	\$952,607
Total Costs	\$2,636,029	\$3,334,126

*\*Note: Costs were originally estimated in 2019 dollars. Real construction cost is likely to be substantially higher in future years.*

## Historic and cultural resource protection

A historic and cultural resource survey should be completed prior to proceeding with design of the nature park. Metro should engage Tribal governments in this effort in accordance with the agency's Tribal Policy guidelines. If resources are found to be present, the plans should be revised as needed to ensure resource protection prior to continuing with design and engineering.

## Management responsibility

Currently, Metro manages land within the project area as an undeveloped natural area and the City manages several adjacent parcels. Prior to implementing any recommended improvements, a long-term management strategy would need to be developed by Metro or the City.

## Park regulations

Park rules at East Council Creek would be consistent with Metro's Title 10 Parks and Nature Regulations, which govern the use of Metro's parks, cemeteries and natural areas by members of the public.

### **Pet policy**

Metro's pets policy should be enforced consistent with Metro's Title 10 Parks and Nature Regulations..

### **Signs**

For public security and safety, hours of operation and regulatory signs will be installed at each access point. An orientation map of the natural area will be installed at the parking area to assist visitors and emergency and police response teams with wayfinding. Neighborhood trailheads will be clearly marked with a map and natural area rules and regulations. Regulatory signs will include public use restrictions on pets, fires, camping, motorized vehicles, hunting, smoking, intrusive noise, plant collecting and other uses outlined in Metro's Title 10 rules.

## Safety and security

### **Access control**

Vehicle access to the parking area will be controlled with automatic gates which will lock after hours. Automatic locks will be included on restrooms and will also be locked at night. In areas where the site is adjacent to private property, boundary markers will be installed to clearly delineate the public/private edge. Trails that are not part of the adopted trail network will be decommissioned.

### **Emergency management**

Emergency management at the site will be coordinated with local emergency response services. Additionally, an Incident Action Plan will be developed in coordination with local agencies, to assist cooperating agencies responding to a fire or an emergency at the site.

## Monitoring and maintenance

### **Park facilities and amenities**

Routine maintenance of the park should include cleaning the restrooms, litter pick-up, walking the nature trail and accessible nature trail and general monitoring. Seasonal maintenance of the park facilities should include upkeep of the restroom building, benches, picnic tables and signs, and maintaining or mowing meadow areas.

### **Trail maintenance**

Routine trail maintenance on a year-round basis will improve trail safety, and prolong the longevity of the trails. The trails should be monitored on a regular schedule to identify trail problems early, and to catch and decommission “social” or “demand” trails. The trails will be walked routinely to remove litter and identify potential areas of erosion and/or trail surface failure.

During the first year following construction of the trails, more frequent inspections should be completed to review the trail, drainage features and the potential for erosion. These inspections should occur following the first heavy rainfall events, and especially during the late winter months when the ground is saturated. Ongoing trail maintenance activities will typically include clearing the trail surface and trailside vegetation to keep passages and selected views open, maintaining drainage features, bridge and culvert clearing and upkeep, litter and illegal dumping clean up, sign replacement, and closing “social trails” through the use of natural barriers and vegetation.

### **Natural area management**

After initial site restoration, ongoing natural area management is expected to include invasive plant control, especially near trails and along the perimeter of the property, monitoring for hazard trees and hazard tree removal, monitoring for and removing illegal trails, and trail network maintenance.

## **Adaptive management**

Once the project is built, nature park and trail use should be monitored for appropriate use, and to make sure that they function as intended. The trails and site features should be modified in the future to adapt to new information, new site conditions and a better understanding of how people and wildlife use the site. If issues are identified, they may require adjustments to managing the site and trail uses. Possible responses could include removing unauthorized trails, implementing seasonal trail closures or adapting allowed uses.



## 9. Partnership opportunities

From education and research to restoration, there are many opportunities for partnerships to enhance the public benefit and community relationship with East Council Creek. Potential partnerships could be centered on turtle conservation efforts like monitoring, habitat improvement and connectivity protection. Partnerships like the following could be also be centered on site restoration or experiencing nature.

### Partner agencies

The City of Cornelius owns several parcels of land adjacent to the site. Metro and City staff should continue to coordinate to ensure parcels under different management complement each other and serve the public as a whole.

Clean Water Services manages the storm and sanitary sewer system in Washington County. There is an opportunity to partner with Clean Water Services to coordinate restoration and long-term maintenance of riparian habitat along Council Creek. If a partnership with Clean Water Services is established, managing for western pond turtle habitat, especially on the north side of the creek, should be explicitly agreed upon, specifically providing sunny areas without trees or dense shrubs for turtle basking.

Tualatin Soil and Water Conservation District is another potential partner for collaboration on enhancing resources at East Council Creek.

### Tribal governments

Tribal consultation and engagement should be an ongoing part of this project in coordination with Metro's Tribal Affairs program and Tribal Policy guidelines. Tribes should be consulted with respect to all historic and cultural resource work and informed of project next steps before they begin to assess where they see opportunities for collaboration.

### Indigenous communities

Partnerships with local Indigenous community organizations or Tribes should be explored. Long-term development of an Indigenous environmental education curriculum or coordination on developing art could both be explored.

### Community-based organizations

East Council Creek is about 1-½ miles from downtown Cornelius, where several community organizations are based. Once the nature park has been developed, it will be a great opportunity for hosting outdoor programs and nature walks. If there is interest, there are also opportunities to explore partnerships to work together on parts of implementation, ongoing restoration and nature exploration.

### Volunteers

There is an opportunity to continue working with community organizations and leaders to be liaisons, tour guides and nature park ambassadors to welcome members of their community.

IN CONSIDERATION OF RESOLUTION NO. 24-5390, FOR THE PURPOSE OF  
APPROVING THE EAST COUNCIL CREEK NATURE PARK MASTER PLAN

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Date: February 19, 2024

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Department: Parks and Nature

Presenters: Jon Blasher; Olena Turula

Meeting Date: March 7, 2024

Length: 30 minutes

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### **ISSUE STATEMENT**

This matter involves Metro Council consideration of the East Council Creek Nature Park Master Plan. Council Creek flows from Forest Grove and nearby agricultural areas, meandering through wetland, floodplain, and forest before joining Dairy Creek, which flows into the Tualatin River. The East Council Creek Natural Area offers a unique opportunity to experience nature close to home in Cornelius. It protects 33 acres of wildlife habitat along the stream and adjacent to residential neighborhoods of northeast Cornelius.

This master plan outlines a vision and recommendations for developing public access in a way that maintains water quality and wildlife habitat and highlights experiences of the stream, wetlands, and floodplains and their connection to the Tualatin River watershed.

The master plan was developed in collaboration with the City of Cornelius and the Connect with Nature initiative, a partnership between Metro and a coalition of community organizations serving people of color. The Connect with Nature Resource Guide documents the initiative's engagement model and is available as a resource for other agencies to advance meaningful engagement with communities of color and historically marginalized groups.

East Council Creek is one of two Metro natural areas along Council Creek. West Council Creek Natural Area was not included in the planning and was not considered for public access.

### **ACTION REQUESTED**

Metro Council is asked to approve the East Council Creek Nature Park Master Plan.

### **IDENTIFIED POLICY OUTCOMES**

The East Council Creek Nature Park Master Plan will guide potential future development of access and trail improvements at East Council Creek, a key natural area for forest habitat and connectivity in the Dairy Creek watershed.



Following the adoption of the East Council Creek Nature Park Master Plan, Metro will continue to coordinate with the City of Cornelius to identify long-term operations and management responsibilities for the future nature park and identify development funding. When funding has been identified for construction and operation of the nature park, staff will proceed with project development.

## **POLICY OPTIONS FOR COUNCIL TO CONSIDER**

There are three options for Council to consider:

1. Adopt the master plan as presented. If Council approves the resolution and adopts the master plan, Metro will continue to coordinate with the City of Cornelius to identify long-term operations and management responsibilities for the future nature park. When funding has been identified for construction and operation of the nature park, staff will proceed with project development.
2. Reject the master plan. If Council rejects the master plan, staff will take no additional actions toward further development of this project.
3. Direct staff to evaluate additional considerations. If Council directs staff to evaluate additional alternatives, staff will undergo that effort and bring back an amended master plan for future Council consideration.

## **STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS**

Staff recommends the Metro Council adopt Resolution No. 24-5390 and the East Council Creek Nature Park Master Plan.

## **STRATEGIC CONTEXT & FRAMING COUNCIL DISCUSSION**

### *Parks and nature system plan*

The East Council Creek Nature Park Master Plan supports Parks and Nature's mission to protect water quality and fish and wildlife habitat, and provide opportunities for people to enjoy nature close to home through a connected system of parks, trails and natural areas.

### *Racial equity goals*

The master plan was developed in collaboration with the Connect with Nature initiative, a partnership between Metro and a team of community organizations serving people of color. Connect with Nature engaged with communities of color to learn how to more inclusively plan and design parks and natural areas so they serve the needs of communities of color.

Connect with Nature included multilingual workshops and site visits focused on planning for East Council Creek. The workshops were also designed to inform work throughout Metro's system of parks and natural areas. Outcomes of Connect with Nature are documented in the Connect with Nature Resource Guide and helped shape the master plan

for East Council Creek Nature Park. Lessons from Connect with Nature workshops also influenced and are reflected in Parks and Nature's Racial Equity Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan. The guide is intended to be a resource for agencies and organizations to lead with equity and center people of color in park planning and community engagement.

*Tribal government engagement and historic and cultural resource protection*

A historic and cultural resource survey will be completed prior to proceeding with design of the nature park. Metro will engage tribal governments in this effort in accordance with the agency's Tribal Policy guidelines. If historic or cultural resources are found to be present, the plans will be revised as needed prior to continuing with design and engineering. Adoption of Resolution 25-5390 will name the park "East Council Creek Nature Park", however during future tribal consultation for the project, the nature park name should be reviewed, and if recommended a new name may be adopted in the future before the nature park is opened to the public.

*Known Opposition*

There is no known opposition to the plan. Some individuals have raised concerns about the plan due to Metro's pet policy and their desire to walk dogs throughout the natural area. Metro's Title 10 pet policy will continue to be enforced consistent with all other Metro-managed nature parks and natural areas.

In November 2017, Metro's Title 10 Pet Policy was unanimously supported by a community stakeholder table composed of advocates for wildlife, dog walking, and recreation, as well as representatives from communities of color.

*Known Support*

The City of Cornelius Parks Advisory Board expressed their support for moving forward with the Master Plan at their July 11, 2023 meeting.

*Legal Antecedents*

Council Creek is identified in the 2013 Parks and Natural Areas Levy as potential site improvement for the benefit of people visiting natural areas. Completion of this project is an effort to complete the obligation of the levy.

*Anticipated Effects*

Following adoption of the East Council Creek Nature Park Master Plan, Metro will continue to coordinate with the City of Cornelius to identify project development funding and long-term operations and management responsibilities for the future nature park.

*Financial Implications (current year and ongoing)*

The 2013 Parks and Natural Areas Levy funded this master plan. Funding has not been identified for park development or long-term operations and maintenance of the park.

Preliminary cost exercises estimate that construction of all elements in this master plan will cost approximately \$2.5 to \$3.5 million (in 2019 dollars). Given the inflationary environment of the past several years, costs are likely to be higher than the preliminary

estimated range. Long-term operations and maintenance costs also need to be taken into consideration. Prior to implementing any recommended improvements, a long-term management strategy and funding would need to be developed by Metro or the City.

## **BACKGROUND**

The East Council Creek Natural Area sits on the northern edge of the City of Cornelius and protects 33 acres of wildlife habitat along Council Creek and adjacent to residential neighborhoods of northeast Cornelius. East Council Creek Natural Area offers a unique opportunity to experience nature close to home in Cornelius.

Council Creek is one of many tributaries of the Tualatin River. It flows from Forest Grove and nearby agricultural areas, meandering through wetland, floodplain, and forest before joining Dairy Creek, which flows into the Tualatin River. In contrast to the faster-flowing, gravel substrate rivers like the Sandy or Clackamas in other parts of the region, the Tualatin and its tributaries flow slowly due low gradient, silty soils, and broad floodplains. East Council Creek is one of two Metro natural areas along Council Creek.

Natural areas like East Council Creek protect important forest habitat. The streams flowing into the Tualatin River, adjacent wetlands and floodplains, and connectivity between them are critical for the long-term health and diversity of species facing habitat loss and the effects of climate change. For people living nearby, these areas can also offer places of respite, to relax, walk, view wildlife, and be in nature with family and friends.

The lands to the south of East Council Creek are residential neighborhoods built within the last 20-30 years; new homes continue to be built nearby. The land to the north of the site is outside of the urban growth boundary and is currently designated as rural reserve.

The East Council Creek Nature Park Master Plan is critical to guide increased public access to the site and to proactively protect water quality and wildlife habitat. The master plan looks at East Council Creek as part of a broader system of open space, trails, and neighborhoods and aims to protect a regional resource, provide opportunities to experience nature close to home, and celebrate the East Council Creek landscape.

In 2017, Metro and City of Cornelius staff began working with community members, stakeholders, and regional partners to create a master plan to guide public access improvements at East Council Creek. The plan was shaped by extensive public outreach, open houses, stakeholder meetings, Connect with Nature workshops, presentations, tours, and surveys. These outreach efforts specifically engaged people of color, members of the community and regional stakeholders.

This master plan outlines a vision and recommendations for developing public access to the site in a way that maintains water quality and wildlife habitat, and highlights experiences of the stream, wetlands, and floodplains and their connection to Tualatin River watershed. The plan includes recommendations for a new trailhead, parking lot, and entry area to welcome visitors and provide access for people of all ages and abilities. The plan

identifies places for wildlife viewing, learning about nature, picnicking, walking, or exploring nature, and recommends a route for a soft surface trail along the south side of Council Creek, with bridges or boardwalks through wet areas, and clear way-finding signs.

East Council Creek provides important wildlife habitat that contribute to the experiences of people visiting the site. Wildlife viewing opportunities are abundant: from beavers chewing on alder trees and building dams in the stream, nesting waterfowl, to red-legged frogs and willow flycatchers. The East Council Creek Nature Park Master Plan is the next step in inviting visitors to walk through the forest, listen to songbirds, view native flowers, and enjoy being outside with family and friends.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Exhibit A