



PROGRESS REPORT
FALL 2013

Nature in Neighborhoods

Capital Grants

Funding is available to
help bring nature into
neighborhoods.

Is your project next?



Metro | *Making a great place*

Are you ready to make the next great neighborhood natural area?



Across the Portland metropolitan area, communities are finding innovative ways to help nature thrive. Salmon habitat was restored along Johnson Creek. An eco-friendly light rail station is taking shape in Oak Grove, and a degraded alley was reinvented as a green parkway in Cornelius. Trees are springing up in the unlikeliest of places, such as Interstate 205. These projects have one important thing in common: support from Metro's Nature in Neighborhoods capital grants.

Metro has awarded \$7.5 million to 27 projects using funds from the voter-approved 2006 natural areas bond measure. Successful projects get the community involved, foster diverse partnerships and innovate. They lead to bigger benefits, from jobs and economic development to livable neighborhoods and clean air.

PROJECTS AND CASE STUDIES

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Working with community partners, Metro's Nature in Neighborhoods capital grants have already transformed acres of land across the region.

While the grants fund only capital investments, a wide variety of projects can fit the bill.

- Would privately owned property in your community make the next great neighborhood natural area?
- Can a redevelopment project in your community go the extra step to integrate nature and habitat if more funding is available?
- Is there a degraded stream, wetland or other habitat that needs to be restored?
- Can schools, parks or other public land in your neighborhood become a place for people to interact with nature?

WHO QUALIFIES | Neighborhood and community groups, nonprofit organizations, schools, cities, counties and public park providers are invited to apply.

WHAT QUALIFIES | Projects must purchase land or make improvements to public property that result in a capital asset with a life of at least 20 years and a total value of at least \$50,000.

MATCH CRITERIA | Applicants must match grants with outside funding or in-kind services equivalent to twice the grant award.

APPLICATION PROCESS | Letters of inquiry are accepted anytime. Metro staff will evaluate letters, invite full applications from promising projects and conduct site visits. A grant review committee evaluates full applications at least once yearly and makes recommendations; the Metro Council awards grants.

NEXT STEPS | Contact Mary Rose Navarro at 503-797-1781 or maryrose.navarro@oregonmetro.gov to discuss your idea, get advice on project planning, connect with potential partners and hear lessons learned from successful projects.

Learn more or download forms:
www.oregonmetro.gov/capitalgrants



Land acquisition

By protecting special habitats, Nature in Neighborhoods capital grants give communities a place to connect with nature

From white oak savannas to urban creeks, land acquisition projects are preserving some of the region's most special places.

Communities have come together to protect local assets that aren't covered by Metro's regional efforts to buy natural areas. Preserving these small neighborhood jewels unites groups as diverse as local governments, neighborhood associations, churches, businesses and nonprofit organizations. Sometimes, land trusts help get the job done.

As a tried-and-true conservation tool, land acquisition provides a straightforward way to make a difference. But purchasing land isn't an ending point. It's often the first step in a community's mission to open a nature park, build trails or restore habitat.

Summer Creek, \$1 million At 43 acres, Summer Creek is Tigard's second largest park. Nestled along Summer and Fanno creeks, the mature forest, wetlands and open spaces are blossoming as a hub for environmental education. Nature lovers might spot turtles, frogs, salamanders, red-tailed hawks, owls and herons.

Nadaka Nature Park, \$220,000 and \$239,000 awards It's easier to find Gresham's Nadaka Nature Park these days, thanks to a two-acre expansion supported by a \$220,000 Nature in Neighborhoods grant. The park, which was tucked away in the East Wilkes Neighborhood, can now be reached from Northeast Glisan Street. Led by the Columbia Slough Watershed Council, neighborhood and community groups secured a second, \$239,000 grant to transform the natural area's gateway with gathering spaces, nature-based play and a community garden.

Lilly K. Johnson Park expansion, \$345,000 Nestled south of Farmington Road in Beaverton, Lilly K. Johnson Park serves as a neighborhood

destination and a potential wayside along the future Westside Trail. With a new addition, it will more than double in size and grow exponentially in wildlife habitat.

White Oak Savanna, \$334,000 and \$500,000 awards Protecting the 20-acre White Oak Savanna in West Linn preserves a rare habitat – and, for commuters who zoom by on Interstate 205, a spectacular view. A soft-surface trail will allow visitors to experience this unique habitat, showcasing remarkable vistas over the Willamette River to Canemah Bluff.



White Oak Savanna Photo by Roberta Schwartz

CASE STUDY

Grant connects neighbors with nature in St. Johns' Baltimore Woods corridor

Baltimore Woods was in limbo. While the recession kept developers at bay, the area gave rise to weeds, litter and neglect. But neighbors around the 30-acre corridor in North Portland's St. Johns neighborhood saw a community asset. And with the support of two Metro Nature in Neighborhoods capital grants, the woods were given a new lease on life.

Much of Baltimore Woods borders homes, garages and lawns north of Cathedral Park, stretching toward Pier Park. The trees, some crawling with ivy and blackberry, act as a buffer between the elevated residential area and industrial sites below, on the eastern banks of the Willamette River.

Friends of Baltimore Woods had been advocating for restoration for several years, but with development looming, it was time to act. They contacted Three Rivers Conservancy – which has since become part of the Columbia Land Trust – and met with Virginia Bowers, who specializes in helping acquire land for preservation. There must be an option for rescuing the woods, the group thought. After hearing their vision, Bowers said, "it seemed appropriate for Three Rivers to have a spot at the table."

Meanwhile, a study funded by the Port of Portland looked at ways to route two proposed regional trails through Baltimore Woods rather than on a nearby street. The report noted support for preserving the woods as a trail asset and buffer, improving storm water filtration, saving 30 Oregon white oaks and potentially creating an area for environmental education.



Baltimore Woods

Barbara Quinn, chair of Friends of Baltimore Woods, said the group hoped to purchase several lots, which peaked in value a few years earlier and were now less appealing to developers. But purchasing the land could be difficult, Bowers explained. Urban properties often don't meet the criteria for grants that protect wildlife habitat and endangered species.

Metro's Nature in Neighborhoods capital grants are a rare exception. The Baltimore Woods project was chosen in 2010, with commitments from the Portland Bureau of Environmental Services' Grey to Green program, the restoration volunteer group SOLV and the funding match of the City of Portland's Parks & Recreation department. Metro provided \$158,000 toward the \$475,000 price tag.

With financial backing, Bowers helped the group scoop up five vacant tax lots – including the site of proposed condos that were home to a large oak grove.

"The recession has had a silver lining because people were willing to sell," Quinn said. "Some saw that we were very interested in this project, and they wanted to do something good for the neighborhood as well."

SOLV organized volunteers to remove invasive species and plant new natives. A number of groups, representing both schools and businesses, have taken part.

Urban properties often don't meet the criteria for grants that protect wildlife habitat and endangered species. Metro's Nature in Neighborhoods capital grants are a rare exception.

Baltimore Woods corridor, \$539,000

(\$158,000 in 2010, \$381,000 in 2012)

Recipients: City of Portland Bureau of Environmental Services, Columbia Land Trust, Friends of Baltimore Woods

Partners: Portland Parks & Recreation, Friends of Baltimore Woods, Audubon Society of Portland, SOLV, Port of Portland, Cathedral Park Place LL

A second Nature in Neighborhoods grant, awarded in 2012, will help buy four more parcels for preservation. Bowers thanks Metro for turning a grassroots efforts into real progress for the St. Johns community.

"Without the grant from Metro, it wouldn't have happened," she said. "No way."

Urban transformation

Who says nature can't be at home along a freeway, at a light-rail station or outside a medical campus?

Often, urban transformations feel far removed from the natural world. Busy roads and big buildings evoke images of gray, not green.

But, as Nature in Neighborhood grant recipients are showing, a little creativity and determination can go a long way toward weaving nature into the most urban development and infrastructure projects. Just ask cyclists and runners enjoying thousands of plantings along Interstate 205, or commuters who will experience the region's first green park-and-ride.

Urban transformations bring people together in unique ways, including organizations that don't typically collaborate. Although these projects tend to have the biggest price tags, they also have some of the biggest benefits for their communities.

Greening Interstate 205, \$410,000

Unlikely partners – Friends of Trees and the Oregon Department of Transportation – teamed up to plant native trees and shrubs in an unlikely place: along the I-205 pathway. While greening the 16-mile trail, they engage volunteers, establish a model for future roadside landscaping and generate jobs for diverse communities.



Interstate 205 tree planting with former Portland Trail Blazers center Marcus Camby (red shirt)

Photo by Tom Atiyeh, Friends of Trees

Hall Creek water quality

enhancement, \$354,000 When you think of nature, central Beaverton probably doesn't pop to mind – but that's about to change. The City of Beaverton is teaming up with local businesses, schools, civic organizations and governments to show that restoring a 650-foot section of Hall Creek can help the environment and attract redevelopment, too.

Park Avenue transit station,

\$350,000 When TriMet's newest MAX line pulls into Park Avenue Station in Oak Grove, riders will experience the region's first sustainable, habitat-friendly park-and-ride. Green features will include a recreated riparian forest and a natural stormwater treatment system.

The project will be highly visible, situated along Southeast McLoughlin Boulevard and the new Trolley Trail.

CASE STUDY

Metro grant helps concrete alley in Cornelius become a ribbon of green

On a sunny Saturday afternoon in Cornelius, lively conversation filled a once-gray alley behind the new Virginia Garcia Wellness Center.

A group of volunteers cut wood, drilled screws, weeded and transplanted grasses to create new garden boxes for the center's teaching space. Dozens of people passed by: Families laughing as they walked. Children riding bikes. An elderly man heading to the market. They greeted the volunteers with smiles, and questions about their work.

Wellness coordinator Ivy Wagner, who typically spends her days indoors, began to see the center through new eyes. It's not just doctors and nurses making people healthier, she realized – it's also the outdoor space, which was transformed with help from a Metro Nature in Neighborhoods capital grant.

"Even when the clinic isn't open, the community is walking through the Green Alley, learning, enjoying, connecting with others and nature," Wagner said. "And this is only the beginning of what the space will mean to the community, as we continue to explore ways to engage and educate those who visit."

The wellness center opened in 2012, replacing a converted home and garage where Virginia Garcia got its start. While allowing the center to see more patients, the new campus is also designed to more efficiently achieve the center's longstanding goal: providing healthcare and wellness education to uninsured and low-income families.

That vision was realized, in part, beyond the walls of the modern new building. Virginia Garcia transformed a crumbling alley, which ran east to west through the



Cornelius Wellness Center

lot. Devoid of green except for a pair of unhealthy trees, the blacktop path had been an eyesore and walking hazard for years.

Virginia Garcia's team wanted to invigorate the walkway, but they needed a concept and capital. Scott Edwards Architecture provided the vision, and the Metro grant provided part of the funding.

The block-long path was outfitted with permeable pavers, a dozen benches, 16 native trees and more than 2,000 new plants and shrubs. The architects also worked with Jackson Bottom Wetlands Preserve to create new interpretive signs, teaching passersby about bioswales and water-saving features on campus.

"We wanted to look at the bigger picture of how a building contributes to the water environment in the area, and how it can have a positive impact," said Michelle Horn, foundation relations officer for Virginia Garcia.

Benefits of the transformed alley transcend beyond Virginia Garcia's campus, said Dick Reynolds, community development director for the City of Cornelius – a partner in the Metro grant. The ADA-accessible outdoor space helps serve the 22 percent of Cornelius residents who have a disability, Reynolds said.

"Even when the clinic isn't open, the community is walking through the Green Alley, learning, enjoying, connecting with others and nature"

Ivy Wagner

Wellness Coordinator

Green Alley, \$322,000

Recipient: Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center

Partners: City of Cornelius, Adelante Mujeres, Centro Cultural, Verde, Jackson Bottoms Wetlands Preserve

"Even more impressive is that this accessible route was built using pervious surfaces, native plants and bioswales that benefit local and regional water and air quality," he said. "It's a win-win!"

Habitat restoration

By improving habitat for fish and animals, restoration projects create better places for people, too

Conservation groups and local governments have no shortage of restoration projects on their wish lists. The challenge: finding funding to make them happen. With a boost from Nature in Neighborhoods grants, restoration efforts are improving the health of floodplains and watershed basins across the region – from the Jackson Bottom Wetlands Preserve to Mount Scott Creek and several places in between. Although these projects improve habitat for fish, amphibians and other animals, many are also designed to improve the park experience for human visitors.

Successful restoration projects are selected for their ecological value. Their benefits will unfold over many years, as native plants make a comeback, salmon return to streams and birds rediscover healthy wetlands.

Boardman Creek fish habitat, \$485,000 At Oak Grove’s Stringfield Park, habitat was restored along lower Boardman Creek. Two downstream culverts were replaced with bridges, providing innovative “wildlife crossings” for amphibians and land animals.

Crystal Springs, \$311,000 Crystal Springs is realizing its potential as an excellent salmon stream, thanks to the restoration of floodplain and riparian habitat and the removal of a culvert that blocked juvenile fish passage.



Johnson Creek restoration

Rock Creek confluence, \$209,000

When Happy Valley and Damascus grow, Rock Creek will be ready. Partners are improving stream complexity, reducing erosion, enhancing water quality and creating an environmental study site where the creek meets the Clackamas River.

Spring Park Natural Area, \$178,000

Partners are rerouting a trail out of a wetland, installing boardwalks and an overlook, restoring native planting and adding large, woody debris at this seven-acre natural area nestled along the Willamette River in Milwaukie.

Mount Scott Creek, \$150,000 With restored banks and riparian areas at North Clackamas Park, Mount Scott Creek is healthier than it has been in a long time. New overlooks reduce heavy

foot traffic that trampled native plants and eroded creek banks.

Wapato Marsh, \$129,000 When Hillsboro’s Jackson Bottom Wetlands Preserve serves as a destination for hiking and bird-watching – and a living example of restoration. Partners are transforming 120 acres of degraded wetlands into a healthy ecosystem.

Stone Bridge Fish Passage on Nettle Creek, \$47,000 At Tryon Creek State Park, erosion threatened a stone bridge across Nettle Creek – and, along with it, a regional trail connection. The Tryon Creek Watershed Council is replacing the bridge, stabilizing stream banks and enhancing habitat.

CASE STUDY

In Milwaukie, Metro helps a riverfront renewal come to life

Reinvigorating Milwaukie's waterfront has been a public priority for nearly half a century. And with help from Metro, both residents and salmon will have reason to come and stay a while.

Renderings of manmade water features, a floating dock and paved trails offer a promising future for Milwaukie Riverfront Park – long home to parking lots, a boat ramp and a smattering of trees.

The city envisions a walkable park with benches, event space and picnic areas for the 8.5 acres sandwiched between the Willamette River and McLoughlin Boulevard. A four-phase design plan stresses recreation, the environment and education.

Officials hope that completing phase one will feed interest – and funds – into the project. Thanks in part to a \$225,000 grant from Metro's Nature in Neighborhoods program, progress is under way.

The City of Milwaukie and the Johnson Creek Watershed Council saw the riverfront as an opportunity to collaborate. Both want to create recreation space while being sensitive to the location, bordered to the north by Johnson Creek and to the south by Kellogg Creek. The streams are hubs of activity for salmon seeking refuge from the warmer Willamette River.

Robin Jenkinson, restoration coordinator for the watershed council, uses the site for school field trips to talk about water conditions and the species that call Johnson and Kellogg creeks home.

"As an urban watershed council, at least half of our projects include an education and outreach component," she said. "It's an important place for people to connect and learn about our streams."



Milwaukie Riverfront Park

Using funds from Metro, along with various matches, the groups oversaw the meticulous construction of log jams at the mouth of Johnson Creek, as well as a stone riffle over an exposed sewer pipe. Crews secured 150 massive logs to provide fish habitat, and the riffle eases their migration upstream.

Jenkinson said the features have been on the organization's wish list for years and may improve fish counts, which are increasing but still very low. Last year, three Coho salmon were found about 15 miles upstream in Johnson Creek – the farthest they've been spotted in more than a decade.

The final piece of phase one is a curving concrete path that ends in an overlook of the mouth of Johnson Creek. It will be partially shaded by a 200-year-old Oregon white oak tree, and interpretive signs will explain the vital role Johnson Creek plays for salmon.

Herrigel called the riverfront project her biggest task at the city. She is one of many in the community counting on the redesign to revive the waterfront and reflect the city's vibrancy.

Klein Point overlook and habitat enhancement, \$225,000

Recipients: Johnson Creek Watershed Council, City of Milwaukie

Partners: Willamette Riverkeeper, Milwaukie Rotary, Oregon Dental Services, Gary and Sharon Klein, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, PGE Salmon Fund, FishAmerica Foundation, City of Portland

"What we're creating is a recreational endpoint so that people can walk, bike or drive. Once they're here, they can actually interact with music and performances, enjoy the play area and picnic grounds, sit on benches and read interpretive signs," she said.

It's a tall order for a site that started as a blank slate – or empty parking lot. But Herrigel is optimistic, promising "We're going to turn passive recreation into active recreation."

Neighborhood livability

Metro's capital grants transform neighborhood natural areas, showing that nature can be close to home

Tourist guidebooks hail big regional parks, but for locals, neighborhood natural areas are a big draw. They give people a place to walk, reflect and connect with nature.

Nature in Neighborhoods grants are helping communities create and transform outdoor destinations close to homes and schools. Thanks to voters' support, kids will enjoy a new nature play area at Westmoreland Park. In North Portland, two urban gardens provide a learning laboratory for nature lovers of all ages. And students at Pleasant Valley School will explore their favorite natural area on a network of trails and boardwalks.

Unlike big regional natural areas, neighborhood projects typically don't protect large blocks of threatened wildlife habitat. But, by preserving the nature down the street, they forge a connection between people and the natural world.

Cully Park, \$577,000 Once a closed and gated former landfill, Cully Park is being transformed with walking trails, play and picnic areas, and a community garden. The nonprofit Verde is taking the lead in the transformation, engaging diverse community groups and neighbors to reclaim this 25-acre site in Northeast Portland.



Conservation Corner

Westmoreland Park, \$150,000 A popular Southeast Portland park gets an upgrade with the restoration of Crystal Springs Creek. A concrete channel and playground equipment were removed from the floodplain, and banks replanted with native trees and shrubs. A new play area helps children discover the natural environment.

Pleasant Valley School boardwalk, \$112,000 Restoring the Wildside natural area has been a learning experience for students at Centennial's Pleasant Valley Elementary School – and the lessons will multiply with a new network of trails and boardwalks. This project allows students to explore the seven-and-a-half-acre natural area more easily.

Conservation Corner, \$99,000

A historic property in North Portland's Humboldt neighborhood has been transformed into an outdoor classroom and living laboratory. The demonstration garden, housed at the East Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District office, gives visitors ideas to try at home.

April Hill Park, \$83,000 A durable trail, a boardwalk with a nature-viewing platform and bridges at creek crossings will protect sensitive habitat at April Hill Park in Southwest Portland, while catering to the people who enjoy it. Visitors are treated to chorus frogs, long-toed salamanders, rough-skinned newts and dozens of bird species.

Humboldt Learning Garden, \$34,000

A long-vacant lot next to Humboldt School is now a learning garden for students and residents of Humbolt Garden, a low-income housing development across the street. Metro's funding helps collect and reuse the school's stormwater and incorporate native plants throughout the garden.

CASE STUDY

For park-deprived neighborhood in Clackamas County, neighborhood natural area was a selling point

When Jill and Adam Brittle want to take their toddler to the park, they barely have to leave the front door of their Clackamas County home.

Less than a minute away, at Hawthorne Park, they can enjoy native trees and shrubs, a walking path, picnic tables, a stormwater pond and bridge – and, most importantly for little Ella, a play area that borrows from nature with logs and climbing boulders. The promise of this park, funded in part by a Metro Nature in Neighborhoods grant, helped attract the Brittles to the neighborhood a few years ago.

“It’s not a private park, but it’s right across the street,” said Adam Brittle, president of the Hawthorne Park Condominiums Association. “That was one of the real selling points.”

Until their namesake park opened in 2012, residents of the Hawthorne Park development had to walk a mile to the nearest playground. West of 82nd Avenue near Southeast King Road, the new neighborhood offered easy access to shopping and transportation – but no park. The development falls in an urban renewal district intended to revitalize part of northern Clackamas County, which allowed Portland-based HP Development to enhance the project by teaming up with the Clackamas County Development Agency. They guaranteed that 10 units in the 29-home development will always be affordable. Plus, the county purchased an acre of land for a neighborhood park and secured a Nature in Neighborhoods grant to help create it, along with a \$50,000 grant from Oregon State Parks.

“Initially, our interest was piqued with the housing part of the project,” said Ken Itel, project manager for the development agency. “When we realized there was going to be this leftover open space, we



Hawthorne Park

recognized that was an opportunity to provide some additional park space for the community. The entire neighborhood is really deficient in parks and open space.”

Leftover land was no accident, said Kirby Gibson, HP Development’s real estate agent. Rather than build a traditional neighborhood with large yards, she said, the developer decided to squeeze lots and make room for a communal outdoor area. This approach paid off, with the promise of a future park attracting home buyers with dogs and children. Residents paid \$185,000 to \$235,000 for the three-and-four bedroom homes, trickling into the new neighborhood in 2010 and 2011.

The Brittles were among the first to move in, getting settled just a few days before their daughter was born. Their new addition heightened their interest in park space, Adam said, because “we wanted somewhere for her to play.” He served on a committee that helped design the park. Participants said Metro’s involvement helped steer the park toward a greener future. They chose a nature-based play area instead of traditional slides and jungle gyms, and opted for native plantings. Natural materials take fewer resources to maintain – a bonus for the homeowners

**Hawthorne Grove Park,
\$140,000**

Recipient: Clackamas County

Development Agency

Partners: HP Development, Clackamas County Land Trust, North Clackamas Parks and Recreation District, Clackamas County Soil and Water Conservation District

association, which is responsible for park upkeep. They also make the park more appealing, participants said.

“Metro’s grant was great because it adds to the greenness of the community.”

Kirby Gibson,

Real estate agent for
HP Development



Summer Creek natural area



Whether you're in the mood for a short hike or a weekend camping trip, a boat ride or a picnic, Metro has a destination for you.

You'll share the landscape with salmon swimming in restored streams, birds streaking across the sky and giant old oak trees towering overhead.

Thanks to voters, you can explore 16,000 acres of regional parks, trails and natural areas across the Portland metropolitan region. You also have opportunities to take nature classes and volunteer at these special places.

To get involved, visit www.oregonmetro.gov/naturalareas.

ABOUT METRO

Clean air and clean water do not stop at city limits or county lines. Neither does the need for jobs, a thriving economy, and sustainable transportation and living choices for people and businesses in the region. Voters have asked Metro to help with the challenges and opportunities that affect the 25 cities and three counties in the Portland metropolitan area.

A regional approach simply makes sense when it comes to providing services, operating venues and making decisions about how the region grows. Metro works with communities to support a resilient economy, keep nature close by and respond to a changing climate. Together we're making a great place, now and for generations to come.

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