

Cooper Mountain Community Plan Stakeholder Listening Session
Natural Resource and Parks Representatives
June 24, 2020, 10:00 to 11:30 a.m.

Staff Present:

Jenny Clark, JLA Public Involvement
Adrienne DeDona, JLA Public Involvement
Joe Dills, APG
Kyra Haggart, APG
Jena Hughes, City of Beaverton
Andrew Parish, APG
Cassera Phipps, City of Beaverton
Ethan Rosenthal, DEA

Attendees:

Jevra Brown, Department of State Lands
Chris Faulkner, Clean Water Services
Liana, Harden, Tualatin Hills Park & Recreation District
Ted Labbe, Urban Greenspaces Institute
Michelle Miller, Washington County Dept of Land Use & Transportation
Ashley Short, Tualatin Riverkeepers
Janelle St. Pierre, Clean Water Services
Karen Vitkay, Metro
Curt Zonick, Metro

Meeting Summary

Welcome and Introductions

Adrienne welcomed everyone to the meeting, reviewed the agenda and Zoom meeting protocols, and led group introductions.

Project Overview

Cassera provided a brief project background, including:

- This is a three-year planning effort that will include updated zoning designations and determining how to extend utilities to this area.
- The plan will build off the concept plan from South Cooper Mountain (SCM) and is an opportunity to revisit the vision and goals for the area.
- The project intent is to provide 3,760 new homes to the area, and the team is committed to determining how best to meet this objective.

- The area has a different landscape than South Cooper Mountain. Topography will play a role in how the team will balance development with natural resource protection. Work includes best practices research for hillside development.
- Stakeholder feedback and lessons learned from South Cooper Mountain will help inform this plan, along with related city planning efforts (e.g. the city's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan, Climate Action Plan and Active Transportation Plan).
- The project will apply a lens of racial equity. The city has partnered with Unite Oregon to help engage diverse, underrepresented communities on the project.
- The project aims to provide a variety of housing types for a range of incomes, including affordable housing.
- The project will seek to enhance/connect existing natural resources and integrate them into new neighborhoods.
- The project area is primarily agricultural and farmland, with some large-lot homes.
- This effort will need to determine how to bring infrastructure to the area, including water, sewer, stormwater and transportation improvements (bike/ped trails and transit). Public facility planning will include parks and schools.
- The Utility Planning effort will look at water, sewer, and stormwater infrastructure. Communication between the community plan and utility plan teams will be ongoing to ensure consistency in coordination. Agency partners and stakeholders will be engaged early on.
- The project is currently in phase one. Public outreach has shifted to online and phone engagement due to COVID-19. The team is hoping to shift to more traditional in-person open houses and workshops in the future and in the meantime will pivot to reach people however possible. Project wrap up is scheduled for early 2023, followed by project implementation.
- A funding assessment will look at different funding tools the city could use to provide "backbone" infrastructure that facilitates development.
- The team will share the draft inventory reports on the project website for review and comment as they are ready.

Ethan reviewed the SCM development map as well as the Riparian and Upland Habitats map. Highlights included:

- SCM was annexed into the city and is well on its way to being developed.
- These maps focus on the central area of Cooper Mountain: key features are it's relatively rural, has the Cooper Mountain Nature Park, Winkelman Park, ball fields, and natural areas.
- The wetland inventory and natural resources reports are currently under city review.
- The Riparian and Upland Habitats map shows the wetlands and streams in the area. The team did not have access to all properties to gather data, so it shows basic stream networks, riparian wildlife habitat, and steep slopes based upon Metro's title 13 mapping.

- The map includes a buffer distance of 300 feet and classifications of A, B, and C habitats, with A as the highest and C as the lowest designation for mapping (nature park is designated as class A).
- Class B includes some existing pasture or agricultural uses, and in general represents existing wildlife corridors.

Ted asked about white oak in areas identified as forested and whether they would be classified separate from other tree types.

Ethan answered they did not distinguish specific forest type (tree species), only Class A for forested area.

Karen was curious if the high-quality upland habitat layer would get a buffer. The nature park is Class A; what about the edges that don't have overlay on them?

Ethan responded that Metro properties are being managed for habitat, so the team did not look at buffers. There may be recognition of that further south of the property; it's acknowledged as part of a larger area with natural resources. No fixed buffer.

Discussion

Adrienne guided the group through the following discussion questions. Responses are included beneath each question.

Discussion Question 1: *What is your vision for how natural resources and development interact in a way that promotes environmental health and community health?*

- **Ted** responded that this is an important technical exercise: getting an inventory of where natural resources are and prioritizing and integrating them within the planned development. Linking that with other planning is also important. His vision is to consider how natural resources get integrated into the other goals of the community plan so it becomes an anchor point for the human side of it: trail interaction, and how people experience natural resources to improve the community, educate the public, and protect the integrity of natural areas by restoring connectivity. This is a great start; he is interested in the next step.
- **Karen** commented she wanted the public to have access to and benefit from nature, and to balance this with protecting sensitive habitat and resource areas. There is need for an evaluation process so these two are integrated well.
- **Curt** mentioned Metro is looking at the level of public interface at Cooper Mountain Nature Park to protect unique biodiversity (wildlife and plants). It is possible they will reevaluate some trail segments, and climate change issues

factor into this decision. The goal is creating public experience while preserving the natural area for the long-term.

- **Jevra** mentioned she has a wetland focus and wants to promote protection of waterways. She is interested in the interdigitation potential for development and maintaining wildlife habitat corridors. This includes maintaining large, undisturbed natural areas. Some species need distance from humans; this area has potential for a good mix.
- **Janelle** suggested creating habitat and nature conservation through pollinator patches and stormwater facilities that benefits both nature and the community. It is possible to build both; people can integrate within it.
- **Chris** noted that a human system and natural system can coexist. He has an eye towards equity and underserved communities and would like to see a model for affordable housing that integrates access to natural resources. His vision is not having to pick between the two.
- **Michelle** responded she would like to evaluate the area holistically and look at all the different goals. What will draw people are the views and the natural areas. Need to be mindful about how people visiting these areas will be managed because lots of people will want access to natural areas (this is already happening).
- **Ashely** explained the city will need to take a landscape view and recognize which areas are more sensitive than others while still prioritizing equitable access. Make the process integrated (e.g. urban tree canopies) so it's not a steep transition.
- **Liana** said she would like the city to consider what needs to happen in natural resource areas in terms of design for local communities and how this intersects with what's been done before.

Discussion Question 2: *Where are the natural resource areas and connections on the mountain that should be prioritized for protection by the plan?*

- **Ted** expressed appreciation for the work from DEA on the natural resources inventory. Impressions are (re: goal 5) riparian and wetlands area are mostly accounted for. There is a process for protecting these, while there aren't protections for upland habitat. There is an oak habitat outside of the mapped Class A areas. He wants the city to begin thinking how we protect those patches and would like to see them included in the Class A designations, if possible. Research shows individual oaks are important for other wildlife. As development moves forward the city needs to think about connectivity of these natural areas from South Cooper Mountain to North Cooper Mountain.

- **Curt** said discussions have begun about possibly relocating the current picnic and play features at Cooper Mountain Nature Park to neighborhood and community parks. Cooper Mountain Nature Park should be a place where hiking and nature viewing is the focus. The key goal would be reducing parking congestion to support increased use by future hikers coming from the Cooper Mountain community.
- **Karen** shared her perspectives on connecting people to nature with trails. It's important to prioritize habitat connectivity and to see the value of areas outside the boundary. She supports putting systems in place to protect oak habitat and wants it to have value.
- **Curt** felt the DEA map undersells the buffer areas and noted the area was logged 20 years ago and could be reforested. The delta that was forested had oak trees, which is a key habitat area.
- **Jevra** commented on the importance of looking in all directions regarding connectivity. She mentioned the Tualatin Basin riparian and wetland buffers as important for maintaining water quality and preventing erosion.
- **Janelle** commented on lower McKernan Creek as a critical part of the corridor and the need to create enough space for the riparian area (can include crossings, etc).
- **Curt** felt that protecting a corridor along McKernan Creek will be a huge project that may take generations to complete. The key is to not create any gaps from Cooper Mountain Nature Park to the lower reach of McKernan Creek.
- **Michelle** said that preserving access to the Tualatin Basin would be an important connection; and reforesting this area is critical.
- **Ashley** explained how the drainage area is important for the river, as well as having a buffer to prevent erosion (e.g. streams in the King City area are experiencing this). She emphasized the importance of oak habitat as well as protecting upland habitat.
- **Joe** reported the city intends to provide the Local Wetland Inventory (LWI) for formal Department of State Lands (DSL) review in approximately January or February 2021, and, after DSL review, adopt a final document.

Discussion Question 3: *What natural resources are not protected under today's policies and regulations but should be? What ideas do you have for how to approach new policies and regulations during the planning process?*

- **Ted** replied how oak habitat needs to be safeguarded in areas outside Class A designations so additional oak habitat isn't lost. He mentioned goal 5 inventory

mapping and capturing them as individual trees. The team can innovate how this is done, maybe by classifying smaller patches. Another way is through the urban forestry code: call oak a high priority species. He commented on habitat connectivity (summary of results on page 8 of the packet), and the assumption about small streams not supporting fish. Small streams do have a native, resident population of fish and can be fish bearing. These are opportunities for aquatic conservation and can be important for fish habitat. CWS looked at fish passage and has some data on this (it may need to be updated). It's important to integrate connectivity for fish and wildlife with transportation improvements. There is a need to know where restrictions are for animals and for an updated assessment on fish data.

- **Karen** mentioned a concern for unprotected resources such as prairies. Cooper Mountain has some rare plant species and places where pollinator corridors could be incorporated.
- **Curt** mentioned current regulations protect the footprints of things but not as much with wildlife corridors. Large natural areas will involve both creating and protecting the corridors by keeping them undisturbed by trails. This is usually not covered by regulations.
- **Jevra** commented how small streams support downstream fish and other aquatic species and are important to protect.
- **Janelle** encouraged the city to not create additional barriers wildlife by fencing or adding walls around new housing developments. These types of barriers are unnecessary, and neighborhoods can make good habitat for some smaller wildlife.
- **Chris** encouraged new approaches to policy be considered to design intentional and integrated community layout that interacts well with the natural system.
- **Ted** commented how the footprints of mapped natural resources get protected but often the natural processes are not protected (e.g. protecting the opportunity to manage Cooper Mountain Nature Park with managed fire regimes). Consider other natural processes like flooding, drought resilience, etc.
- **Michelle** noted that the city's plan may be difficult to implement since the area has not been annexed yet. Protecting resources during this transition time will need to be considered.
- **Ashley** offered examples of upland habitat protection: tree protection codes in Tigard, Sherwood, and Lake Oswego.

Discussion Question 4: *To date, there has been strong support expressed for co-locating some combination of parks, schools, storm water facilities, and open space. What precedents do you know where that has been successfully implemented? What was done to achieve the goal?*

- **Ted** commented he agreed with the concept of co-locating some facilities, but he is concerned with how places get built out and trails get built through natural areas after the fact. It's good for people to be out in nature, but we don't need additional impacts on the wildlife corridors. There are right ways and wrong ways to do this.
- **Curt** replied the public/nature interface needs to be peripheral to support biodiversity.
- **Jevra** expressed concern with co-locating schools with stormwater facilities and cautioned against creating safety hazards.
- **Janelle** noted the importance of not putting a trail along a primary creek corridor as it needs a significant buffer. Access points are certainly possible. North Bethany and River Terrace are good examples of good co-location approaches. It's possible to have multiple purpose facilities and stormwater can be integrated into other systems. Washington County is working on this.
- **Chris** mentioned he has examples on co-location practices from Georgia. He provided the following information via email following the listening session and offered to give more detail as needed:
 - [Marsh Creek Park](#) – Sandy Springs GA: They call it a rain garden, but it's far more than that. This is a retention pond and bio-retention facility that provides regional water quality and quantity management. They sell stormwater credits from this project to offset O&M costs.
 - [Pinnacle Park](#) – Norcross GA: Much the same concept as Marsh Creek above except the lease stormwater credits which must be renewed every few years to fund O&M on the project.
 - [Historic 4th Ward Park](#) – Atlanta GA: This is a massive project that served as one of the catalysts for \$500 million+ in adjacent economic development. This facility is a mix of low impact development and volume detention (up to the 500-yr event) that used to be just an industrial parking lot. Also...I really want to do something like this somewhere in Washington County (Beaverton Urban Renewal???) Just being aspirational!).
 - [Green Infrastructure Story Map](#) – Atlanta GA: This highlights many of the low impact stormwater projects the City of Atlanta has done over the years. There is a lot of co-location here so it could be worth just browsing to see what might inspire Cooper Mountain.

- **Cassera** mentioned the city is considering a master plan approach (more similar to North Bethany). As we move forward, one of the key policy decisions we need to make is whether the code will focus on standards or guidelines, or a combination. Or as Joe put it, what “personality” will the code have?
- **Michelle** commented on Graham Oaks in Wilsonville that has an elementary school near the park.
- **Ashley** mentioned this needs to be done on a landscape scale and take flooding into consideration.
- **Curt** suggested that a park like Killin Wetlands Nature Park could create a small trail loop along a large wetland ecosystem while leaving most of the wetland undisturbed.
- **Karen** replied Killin Wetlands protects the natural resources by consolidating the public access improvements in a small portion of the park.
- **Liana** said THPRD has experience with school properties co-use of and stacked functions between schools and parks. There are opportunities for outdoor classrooms or nature play/exploration.
- **Ted** commented he is concerned with the current Figure 9 Concept Plan Bike and Ped Framework that shows a Proposed Regional Trail alignment that closely follows McKernan Creek. These proposed regional trails are conceptual, so showing their exact location on a map like this can create expectations within the community and harm efforts to thoughtfully align a trail so that it does not impact a high-value riparian corridor.
- **Karen** mentioned Graham Oaks Nature Park is next to a school and has a regional trail going through it as well as a dense neighborhood next door.
- **Janelle** said it's possible to take some of the pressure off sensitive natural areas by creating neighborhood parks and nature patches. Gabriel Park is a good example.
- **Curt** encouraged strategic thinking for creating connections for native wildlife such as the small northern red-legged frog to newly enhanced/created wetlands and consider opportunities to expand the metapopulation.
- **Jevra** replied wetlands that are used for education are another optional significant tie in.
- **Janelle** mentioned the City of Portland has nature patch examples in urban areas.

- **Karen** replied the nature patch examples are excellent. Alberta Park is one specific place that has one implemented by staff with almost no budget.

Discussion Question 5: *What other opportunities do you see that will make the Cooper Mountain Community Plan a success?*

- Attendees were not able to answer Question 5 during the meeting but were encouraged to follow up with their answers or any additional comments.
- **Ashley** shared via email how the Tualatin Riverkeepers think there is a great opportunity to build in small scale LID into neighborhoods throughout the development. However, to do this well would require two things: 1) experienced engineers to properly size and place LID facilities that would work well and 2) an institutional overlay to help homeowners keep the LID facilities properly working after development. We suggest the City of Portland as a model of how to do the institutional overlay.

Next Steps

Cassera explained that moving forward, the project will determine how best to integrate natural resources with new development and communities. This will be ongoing over the next year and will include opportunities for engagement with the public around values and the tradeoffs that exist with increased density and natural resource protection. The city will come up with tools to implement a preferred scenario. Cassera encouraged attendees to participate in the future and mentioned the online open house coming soon. A link to the online open house will be sent to everyone with the meeting summary.

Adrienne and Cassera thanked everyone for their participation, reiterated project next steps, and adjourned the meeting.