

# CJP Community Forum: Parks, Nature, and Green Infrastructure Goal

Tuesday, December 2, 2025

## Meeting Notes

### Attendees - in person

- John Wasiutynski - Project Staff, Mult Co Office of Sustainability
- Jillian Hughes - Project Staff, Mult Co Office of Sustainability
- Monique Smiley - Project Staff, Mult Co Office of Sustainability
- Barbara Bernstein - Rumble on the River / Climate Activist
- Catherine Thomasson - OPSR, State Democrats Environmental Caucus
- Leslie Cochon - Extinction Rebellion

### Attendees - Online

- Jairaj Singh - Project Staff, Mult Co Environmental Health
- Nsilo Berry - Mult Co REACH
- Miranda James - 350 PDX
- David Beltran Barajas - Oregon Citizens Utility Board
- Noriko Yamaguchi - PSU/OHSU School of Public Health
- Whitney Bailey - East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District (EMSWCD)
- Theodora Tsongas - OPSR
- Kathy Shearin - East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District (EMSWCD)
- Diane Meisenhelter - Extinction Rebellion
- Maha Nusrat Guliani - City of Portland Parks and Recreation
- Juliae Riva - ACSI, PGE, Community Advocate
- Tim Morgan - Community member
- Lynn Handlin - Extinction Rebellion
- Jeremy O' Leary - Mult Co IT, Community Advocate
- Xitlali Torres - Verde

### **Intros**

### **Metrics**

- The metrics are specific to access to nature – add something around ecosystem services. Focus on the County's work and access to nature spaces and those services.
  - Quality of parks and natural areas
  - Eco systems services - managing fields different, reintroducing flowers and native plants, the storage of carbon on the landscape
- Nature areas are different from parks – for example, access could mean transportation to Oxbow Park. Access to transportation to parks and nature spaces
- The importance of trees and shrubs for flood control in neighborhoods – not just in parks but also in our streets and neighborhoods.
- Green infrastructure goes beyond trees - greenery that is essential for sequester carbon and heat (shrubs, depaving, native plants, shade structures, cooling corridors)

- Education and engagement programs about these spaces and stewardship (volunteer, youth education, heat mapping)
  - Impervious surface can most likely tracked by the city – depaving and shade structures are easy to measure
    - Support for depave surface area as a metric
      - East County used to have a ton of creeks and vibrant ecosystems before roads and pavement. How can we bring back these creeks and have a tribute for what was there? Having an understanding of what has historically been here can help us prioritize.
  - What would a metric for education look like? Number of students engaged in local field trips and able to access their nature space/parks
- Elementary schools are labeled as parks technically – engaging parents and afterschool programs
  - Riggler Elementary did a depaving project and planted shrubs
- Prioritize East County for more green space and sequestration carbon reduction
- Metrics of green space and food production on public lands. Demonstrate food forests – food production that communities can do like orchards and blueberry plants (measuring outputs)
  - Percentage of lands in the County
  - It is important to preserve trees on private lands - landowners should have a burden of proof before removing these important community assets.
- Highlight the importance of the design in green infrastructure (example - parks prioritize bike lanes, bringing back native species). On SE Powell, there are bike lanes that aren't being used due to flooding and lack of tree canopy.
- Daylighting the streams to irrigate fruit trees and native trees especially during the summertime.
- Defining green infrastructure as resiliency and solar panel shade structures
  - Metrics on trade and workforce programs that help make our communities more resilient - prioritizing people who work and live in those neighborhoods.
- Metrics to specifically measure biodiversity - developing a data system to look at bio diversity as a public health tool
- The city of Portland is figuring out areas to increase nature spaces that change the look and feel of a space that feels like you are escaping the city. Tracking the creation of nature spaces.
- City of Gresham - HOA responsible for maintaining the natural area and area where stormwater needed to be deposited from that development. Over time, it's been more difficult as homeownership changes and the City of Gresham decided to take over natural spaces at the edge of developments. This could be another metric to look at – supporting smaller jurisdictions like Wood Village, Troutdale, Fairview.

## Strategies

- Visualizing wetlands bringing back into the landscape – the County used to have large wetland areas.
- Maintenance of tree canopies - there can be reluctance for new infrastructure due to maintenance needed (this has been a goal for Urban Forestry Plan). Taking away the maintenance from residents.
  - As water is introduced back into the natural spaces, we need to think about vector control.
  - Maintenance on swales - we see them neglected in parking lots
- County as a catalyst for helping all jurisdictions in Mult Co implement these programs
- County needs to be more vocal on why this is critical for public health and play a large role in advocacy – going beyond a research capacity
- A strategy that intersects with another goal is having a youth climate corp in getting experience in contributing to parks, nature, and green infrastructure
- Engage with small businesses in outer-SE Portland (some businesses are reluctant to have more trees due to parking issues). Having more trees, means more shade, means more walking, more people coming into the business.
- Looking for opportunities for stormwater management which is green infrastructure (this can be woven into the depaving strategy for trees/nature).
- Mapping green spaces - connecting those spaces and having the route be a green space (creating a connected canopy).
- Leveraging the education sector – students outside of PPS do not have the climate curriculum or activities. Developing a climate resilient workforce especially in high school. Younger students having exposure to environment 101 then having more around the workforce for older students.
- Green Street Stewards Program - City of Portland Program where you can adopt bio swales and it's a way to participate in your local infrastructure. It's also a way to report swales needing maintenance - it's volunteer however.
- Strategy with the orchards – County help map out where the fruit trees and people can purchase from them. Making fruit trees more valued and connecting folks to local fruit trees.
- More language for accessibility when we talk about parks and nature spaces - universal design principles. Strategy - safe routes to parks mentality (how are we promoting access beyond active transportation). The County is developing an accessibility analysis.

## Zoom Chat Comments

- **Kathy (metrics):** I guess my comment was more about the affects/services that nature provides and how that differs (in terms of goals) from access metrics. Both are important, but can be different. For example, a rain garden doesn't necessarily provide "access", but provides ecosystem services that are beneficial for climate resilience.
- **Lynn (metrics):** depave surface area as a metric sounds great.
- **Whitney (metrics):** Given the myriad of environmental benefits that pervious pavement on roadways has (cleaning stormwater of toxic tire dust, reducing the urban heat island effect, improving road safety during rain and snow events (reducing noise, ponding, spray, glare, and

ice buildup), it would be worth including it as a strategy. The technology has significantly improved over the last several decades, and it's quite durable when properly installed.

- **Julia (metrics):** The way that I think about green infrastructure to Kathy's point (partially) is in two parts: 1) green infrastructure and shade projects in heat vulnerable and low-canopy areas, with metrics such as surface temperature reduction and canopy expansion and 2) Climate adaptive accessibility improvements to ensure people with disabilities, elders, frontline communities can safely access cooling, refuge, an outdoor spaces during climate-related events. Embedded within all of this is community stewardship and education programs to build long-term care, volunteer engagement, and advocacy.
- **Kathy (metrics):** Disappearing Streams image: <https://sl.bing.net/NAE9rTYrn2>
- **Noriko (metrics):** To Diane's point, Portland is the US study site for the UK-based GreenME initiative to understand the mental health benefits of green space in cities. The US-portion of the study is based out of School of Public Health and is targeting North Portland and outer SE Portland. <https://greenme-project.eu/>. This is the link to the survey. It's open until 12/5. [https://ohsu.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_3NI6QQI12hpR9LU](https://ohsu.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3NI6QQI12hpR9LU)
- **Tim (metrics):** Strongly agree wetlands are super important. What about metrics to specifically measure biodiversity.
- **Lynn (metrics):** Errol heights park - beavers made a wetland! super cool place, sequestering a whole lot of carbon and a delightful place to be.
- **Jeremy (strategies):** The "improvements" on Division went in and shortly there after we lost the local 1) urgent care 2) pharmacy and 3) movie theater.
- **Whitney (strategies):** <https://www.portland.gov/bes/green-street-stewards>
- **Jeremy (strategies):** [https://nationalcleaningproject.org/gleaning-map/states/oregon/?fwp\\_state=or](https://nationalcleaningproject.org/gleaning-map/states/oregon/?fwp_state=or)
- **Theodora:** again, add in the impact on public health.