

Gabbert Butte Nature Park Master Plan



The Connect with Nature initiative led multilingual workshops and site visits focused on planning for Gabbert Butte while also engaging with communities of color to learn how parks and natural areas can meet the needs of people of color and be safe and welcoming places.

Executive summary

The East Buttes natural areas form large patches of upland forest from Gresham to Happy Valley. The natural areas span two counties and bridge the Johnson Creek and Clackamas River watersheds. They protect headwater streams that feed these rivers, including a significant part of Johnson Creek’s watershed. The region’s most urban stream, Johnson Creek is a focus of salmon and lamprey recovery and the forests in the East Buttes are critical to this effort. They shade upland streams that feed Johnson Creek and help keep water cool and clean for salmon, other wildlife and people living, working and playing in neighborhoods downstream.

Thanks to over 25 years of voter investments, the City of Gresham and Metro have been able to secure these open spaces. The earliest preservation dates back to the 1990 City of Gresham Open Space Bond Measure. Metro has been able to protect water quality, fish and wildlife habitat and will soon provide new opportunities for people to experience nature thanks to two voter approved Natural Areas Bond Measures in 1995 and 2006, and a 2013 local option operating levy, which was renewed in 2016.

There are currently about 1.5 miles of trails on Gabbert Butte. Big leaf maple, Western redcedar trees and song birds greet visitors, who will soon be able to enjoy walking and riding bicycles on improved trails, a more connected trail network and a new all abilities route to experience the forest setting.

Metro and the City both own land on Gabbert Butte and partnered to create the Gabbert Butte Nature Park Master Plan.

The Gabbert Butte 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 considers Gabbert Butte as part of a broader system of open space, trails, and neighborhoods and aims to protect a regional resource, provide opportunities to experience nature, and celebrate the Gabbert Butte landscape.

Community engagement

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

The Connect with Nature initiative engaged with communities of color through multilingual workshops and site visits focused on planning for Gabbert Butte. 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 gated parking lot, restrooms, picnic tables and shelters and an all abilities trail, proposed on a parcel owned by the City. A recommended network of unpaved trails for hikers and off-road cyclists traverses parcels owned by both agencies.

Metro will fund the design and construction of the Nature Park and lead these efforts in partnership with the City. Once the Nature Park is built and open to the public, Metro will manage and maintain the developed park facilities and natural resources.

Phasing

After design and permitting of the project, the first phase of construction will focus on enabling safe, code-compliant public access to Gabbert Butte. The first phase of trail construction will focus on connecting existing trails to the proposed parking area and improving and realigning existing trails to address safety concerns and long term trail sustainability. New trails will be professionally designed and built using the most current trail design and construction best practices so they are safe, long lasting and minimize impacts to habitat and wildlife.

The East Buttes provide scenic views and important wildlife habitat and are treasured natural landmarks. The Gabbert Butte Nature Park Master Plan sets the stage for visitors to walk or ride through the forest, listen to song birds, view native flowers and enjoy being outside with family and friends.

The plan lays the groundwork for a nature park that:

Welcome people of all cultures, communities, and abilities.

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

Provide welcoming, safe, and meaningful experiences of nature.

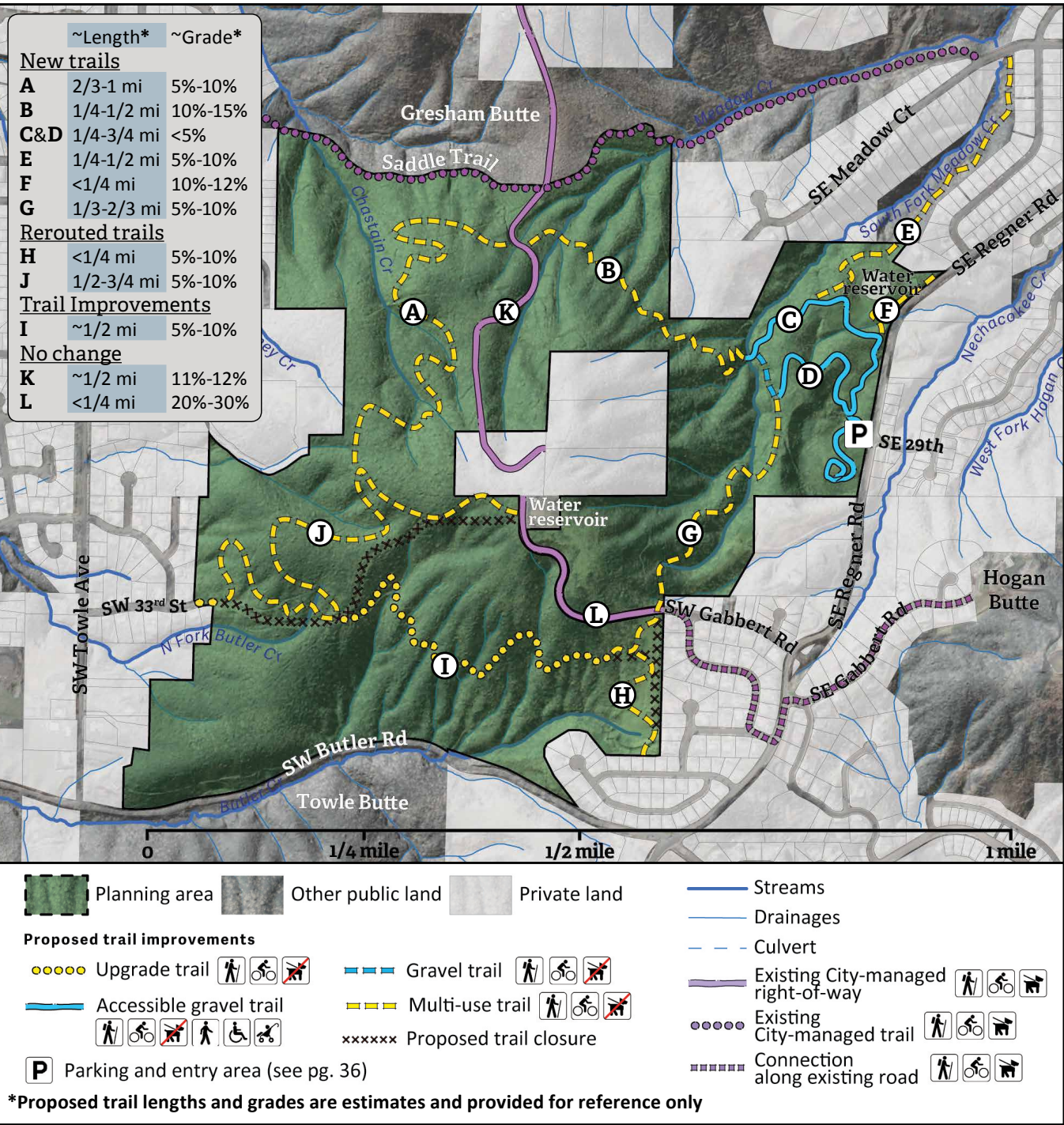
Celebrate the unique qualities of Gabbert Butte and enhance neighborhood identity.

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



Gabbert Butte Nature Park Master Plan

Proposed trail network



Phasing priorities

Entry area priorities: parking, restrooms, automatic gates and security elements, multi-lingual signs, accessible nature trail and potentially some picnic facilities. When additional funding becomes available, features such as additional site interpretation, remaining picnic facilities, gathering areas, and other amenities can be added.

Trails priorities:
First: Trails D, G, I and J
Second: Trails A, C and F
Third: B and E

Proposed nature park entrance

