

# Swan Creek Park Master Plan



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*FINAL PLAN*  
July 2011





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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements

Executive Summary

I. Introduction ..... 1

Background

Site Context

Existing Conditions

Regulatory Considerations

Community Input

II. Master Plan ..... 23

Preferred Option Plan

Pioneer Way Portal

Swan Creek Canyon

Gathering Place

Lister Uplands

Douglas Fir Forest

Waller Road Uplands

Park Circulation

III. Guidelines and Recommendations ..... 39

Outdoor and Environmental Programming

Pedestrian and Bicyclist Access

Management of Upland Forests

Riparian and Stream Preservation and Enhancement

Edge Forest Management

Natural Resource Management

Partnerships  
Land Acquisition  
Interagency Coordination  
Implementation Approach

Appendix A: Existing Site Analysis Maps

Appendix B: Project List

List of Figures

Figure 1: Preferred Option Plan .....	25
Figure 2: Upland Forest Management.....	45

List of Tables

Table 1: Partnership Opportunities .....	51
Table 2: MPT High Priority Projects .....	56
Table 3: Estimated Costs for Priority Projects.....	59

List of Maps

Map A-1: Site Context .....	A-1
Map A-2: Circulation + Access .....	A-2
Map A-3: Site Zones + Uses .....	A-3
Map A-4: Topography .....	A-4
Map A-5: Hydrology .....	A-5
Map A-6: Vegetation .....	A-6
Map A-7: Opportunities + Constraints .....	A-7
Map A-8: Zoning .....	A-8

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Tacoma Housing Authority  
Tacoma Wheelmen's Club





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Swan Creek Park is a 383-acre greenspace on the eastern edge of the City of Tacoma, in Pierce County. With land owned by Metro Parks Tacoma and Pierce County, the park has many current volunteers and park users, a rich history, and a diverse and unique cultural context. However, until now, the park has not had an adopted master plan to guide its management, development, and conservation.

Metro Parks Tacoma (MPT) initiated a master planning effort for Swan Creek Park in January 2011, and many community members, service groups, organizations, and agencies were involved in the planning process. These participants helped create a long-term vision and plan for future site development, stewardship, and programming. The master plan will provide direction for community-supported site improvements, some of which have been made possible by an approved 2005 park improvement bond measure. It will also provide direction for further site enhancements, development, and ongoing projects.

## PROJECT VISION

The Master Plan reflects the community's vision of Swan Creek Park as a greenspace that protects the creek and the forests at the site, while supporting outdoor programs and activities such as environmental education, community gardening, urban camping, hiking, biking, and picnicking. This vision blends a desire for recreation and public access to nature with a need to steward and protect the wildlife habitat and natural resources found at the park. While the plan includes a strategy for site development, it also includes a management strategy to address the health of the forest, the removal of invasives, the protection of rare plants, the mitigation of fire hazards, and the protection of Swan Creek and its canyon corridor from encroachment.

The Swan Creek Park Master Plan provides direction for the acquisition, design, development, programming, restoration, and ongoing maintenance and stewardship of the park. These tasks are all collaborative efforts, which rely on other agencies, partners, volunteers, and jurisdictions for support. Implementing this plan will require continued coordination among each and all of these groups to achieve the vision set forth in this master plan.

## MASTER PLAN

Taking advantage of current site conditions and resources (described in Chapter 1), the Swan Creek Park Master Plan makes recommendations for the development and management of six distinct use areas:

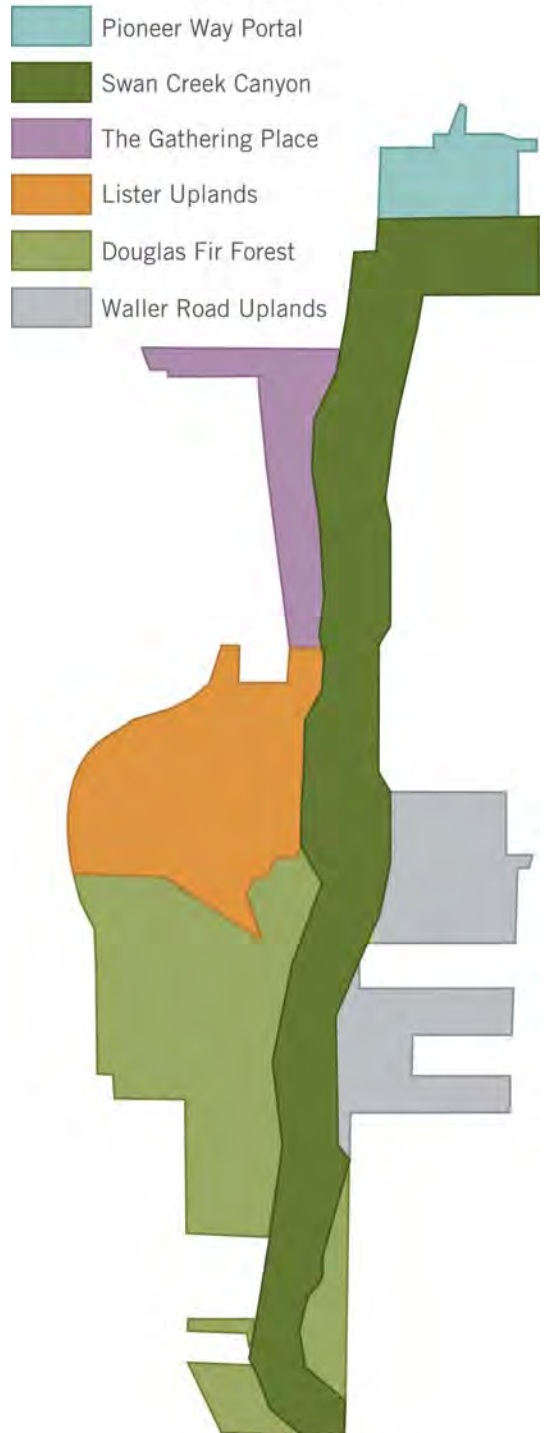
- Pioneer Way Portal
- Swan Creek Canyon
- The Gathering Place
- Lister Uplands
- Douglas Fir Forest
- Waller Road Uplands

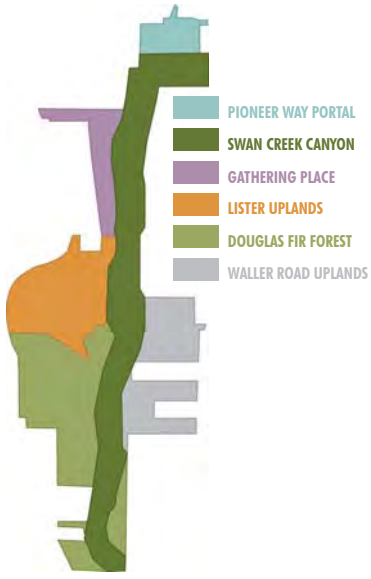
These areas are described briefly below and are shown on the site concept plan (Figure 1). Additional details are noted in Chapter 2 of this document.

The **Pioneer Way Portal** is located at the north end of Swan Creek Park, with an improved park entrance along Pioneer Way. This zone will include a small gravel parking lot, an environmental education/picnic shelter, information kiosk, and ADA-accessible trail with interpretive signage and viewpoints. The trail will loop around the sedimentation pond and continue to the footbridge over Swan Creek.

The focus in the **Swan Creek Canyon**, which runs the length of the park, is on ecological restoration and trail enhancements. Sedimentation management, erosion control, removal of a remnant dam, footbridge replacement, vegetation enhancements, and the addition of manmade features such as engineered log jams in the creek are proposed in this area to support salmon habitat.

Swan Creek Park Use Areas





### GATHERING PLACE

**ENTRY:** pedestrian/bicycle entries at 38th Street and 42nd Street, signage.

**COMMUNITY GARDEN:** expanded, fenced garden area, fruit orchard and berry shrubs, native plant propagation for park vegetation restoration projects, permaculture, connection to Salishan community.

**PROMENADE:** paved, multi-use promenade beginning at 38th Street and extending to the Lister Uplands, benches, bike racks, interpretive signage.

**GATHERING PLACE:** renovated structure for gardening classes and environmental education, additional small picnic shelter, tool shed.

### LISTER UPLANDS

**ENTRY:** gated entry near Lister Elementary School with paved parking (50 spaces), access along perimeter road to separate gated area (event parking described below).

**FLEXIBLE USE BUILDING:** multi-purpose building with indoor classroom, gathering and picnic space, restrooms and shower facilities for campers.

**DOG PARK:** fenced areas for large and small dogs, benches and trash collection, located near parking.

**URBAN CAMPING:** reservable tent camping, cleared seating area, picnic tables, fire rings, kiosk with power and running water, comfort station with composting toilet.

**ROPES CHALLENGE COURSE:** low ropes elements for individuals and groups to build agility, strength and balance and explore group interaction, problem-solving and leadership challenges.

**STREET NETWORK:** grid retained for ADA accessible pathways for walking, biking, fun run and other community activities, connection to promenade.

**PARK OFFICE & CARETAKER RESIDENCE:** building with up-front visitor space to provide information and house site manager, provides security presence within park.

**PERMACULTURE AREA:** initial demonstration plot near flexible-use building, productive trees and shrubs eventually interspersed throughout the zone.

**SPECIAL EVENT AREA + POLICE TRAINING:** fenced, gated, permeable asphalt parking area, suitable for event parking/staging and driver training, painted parking stalls, bike parking, coordinated event and training scheduling for use.

**PICNIC AREA:** group picnic shelter, barbecues, trash receptacles, open turf play area, seasonal restroom



### PIONEER WAY PORTAL

**ENTRY:** improved gravel parking lot (30 vehicles) with bus turnaround and loading/unloading zone, trail head, bike parking, signage.

**SHELTER:** small rustic shelter for picnic and programs, composting toilet.

**ADA LOOP TRAIL/OVERLOOK:** accessible path around sediment pond extending to footbridge, overlook for salmon viewing and education, interpretive signage.

### SWAN CREEK CANYON

**CREEK:** improved salmon habitat, sediment source evaluation and management, enhanced native riparian plantings, removal of dam remnants, footbridge replacement with longer bridge span, engineered log jams.

**TRAIL:** enhancements to existing trail, trail stabilization and erosion control, selective relocations further from creek.

**VEGETATED BUFFER:** managed native vegetation zone along top of canyon to protect watershed.

### WALLER ROAD UPLANDS

**BMX TRAILS:** potential race course or technical bicycle trails with separate entrance and parking (tbd).

**VEGETATED BUFFER:** managed native vegetation zone along top of canyon to protect watershed.

**FOREST MANAGEMENT:** sustainable forest management, invasives monitoring and removal, fire hazard mitigation.

### DOUGLAS FIR FOREST

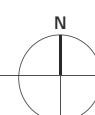
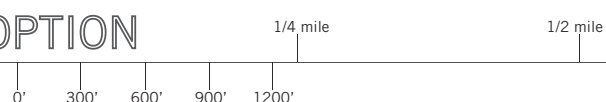
**ENTRY:** pedestrian/bicycle entries at 56th and 64th Streets, signage.

**MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAILS:** 4 to 5 miles of mountain bike cross-country trails to appeal to a variety of ages and skill levels, trails developed and operated by a mountain biking organization in consultation with a forester, no bike use in creek canyon.

**TRAILS:** Bicycle and walking trails through forest, separate from mountain bike trails.

**FOREST MANAGEMENT:** sustainable forest management, invasives monitoring and removal, fire hazard mitigation.

## SWAN CREEK MASTER PLAN - PREFERRED OPTION







The area known as **the Gathering Place** is located in the northwest section of the park, near the Salishan community. With improvements to the 38<sup>th</sup> and 42<sup>nd</sup> Street entrances, the Gathering Place will support community gardening, orchards, walking and biking, picnicking and environmental/agricultural education. The Gathering Place structure itself will be updated, and a Swan Creek Park Promenade will be added as a wide pedestrian and bicycle thoroughfare that connects to other developed areas of the park.



At the heart of the park, the **Lister Uplands** are envisioned as a centralized destination for the majority of park visitors. The area will include programmed activities such as picnicking (for large and small groups), a dog park, urban camping, a ropes course, a special event area to support local events and municipal vehicle training, and a flexible building for classroom activities. It will also support activities such as walking, biking, permaculture, environmental and agricultural education, and other types of group programs and events. This zone will be accessible via an improved entry near Lister Elementary School.

Restoration forestry and recreation will be important in the **Douglas Fir Forest**, located in the southern portion of the park. This area includes trails that will be accessible by foot from the 56<sup>th</sup> and 64<sup>th</sup> Street entrances. It also includes mountain bike trails that will be served by the special event area in the adjacent Lister Uplands.

On the eastern side of the creek, the **Waller Road Uplands**, owned by Pierce County, extends the native vegetative buffer along the top of the canyon area. This zone also includes the potential for a BMX course and/or technical trails for bicycles.

The Master Plan also defines an extensive, park-wide **circulation system** to support bike and pedestrian access in most areas of the park.

## IMPLEMENTATION

In Chapter 3, the plan presents recommendations relating to park programming, bike/pedestrian access, natural resource management, partnerships, land acquisition, and interagency

## Executive Summary

coordination. The chapter also identifies planning level costs for high priority projects.

As a multi-jurisdictional, partnership effort, the implementation of many projects recommended in this master plan will depend on the coordinated efforts of MPT and others. In some cases, MPT can carry out the recommended development. In others, it is anticipated that MPT may support the appropriate studies or infrastructure improvements that need to be undertaken before project development proceeds. Still in other cases, other agencies or partners are needed to play a leading role in project implementation.

Table 2 of this plan notes the high-priority projects that MPT should initiate when the required coordination is place. High priority projects were identified using several criteria. For example, a project was considered a high priority project if it:

- Improves park entry and access to facilitate current activities and future park development
- Takes advantage of current site resources that, with low-cost improvements, could dramatically improve site function and use (e.g., the Promenade)
- Improves or enhances existing resources that are highly-valued by the community (e.g., the community garden and the Gathering Place)
- Will help establish new core uses in the park (e.g., picnicking and urban camping)
- Provides starter money and/or infrastructure that will allow an identified partner to move forward with project development
- Supports critical goals for ecological restoration

Using these criteria, 25 high-priority projects were identified. Of these:

- Eight establish new core uses in the park
- Seven are joint projects between MPT and various partners
- Six support ecological restoration
- Five involve improvements to site entrances
- Five provide upgrades to existing facilities

(Some projects meet more than one criterion.)





## COST ESTIMATE

Planning-level cost estimates were identified for MPT for high-priority projects. Costs are summarized in the table below.

Table: Estimated Costs for Priority Projects

Improvements	Estimated Costs
Park Entrances	\$470,000
Core Activity Areas	\$5,055,000
Ecological Restoration	\$375,000
Total	\$5,900,000

Note: These include planning level costs in 2011 dollars for projects funded by MPT. The total does not include funds for land acquisition.

Approximately \$5.9 million in projects have been identified as priorities for site enhancement and development. The total exceeds the \$1 million in approved bond funds for site improvements. Some of these costs may be defrayed through the use of volunteers to implement improvements and restore habitat.

These projects represent an important first step in achieving the community’s vision for Swan Creek Park. As MPT coordinates with key partners and identifies funding sources for implementation, the District will be able to define a more specific timeline and phasing strategy for the implementation of high priority projects, along with the other capital projects noted in Appendix B of this plan.





## I. INTRODUCTION



IN JANUARY 2011, METRO PARKS TACOMA (MPT) began developing a site master plan for Swan Creek Park. Located at the boundary between the City of Tacoma and Pierce County, this 383-acre greenspace has never had an adopted Master Plan. The planning process represents a critical step toward the park’s future, bringing together many organizations, agencies and residents to create a vision and plan for Swan Creek Park. This master plan will guide site improvements that are supported by the community through a 2005 bond measure to enhance MPT’s park, recreation, and open space system. It will also provide direction for additional improvements and ongoing site management in the future.

### BACKGROUND

Since 1907, Metro Parks Tacoma has provided parks, facilities, programs and recreational activities for the City of Tacoma, Washington. Over the past ten years, MPT has proactively explored ways to meet the current and future needs of a changing community. The development of the Swan Creek Park Master Plan, and its future implementation, reflects MPT’s efforts to create a park and recreation system that is sustainable and integrated, fair and equitable, accessible and inclusive of all members of the community.

### Previous Planning Efforts

Metro Parks Tacoma is metropolitan parks district under the Revised Code of Washington, with an elected Board of Park Commissioners and its own taxing authority. In 2005, voters approved an \$84.3 million bond for park improvements within the District—a measure that included \$1,000,000 for Swan Creek Park. In 2006, MPT also adopted its first *Strategic Parks and Program Services Plan*. The plan helped focus the District’s resources efficiently and effectively on park and recreation services that would contribute to the livability of Tacoma and Pierce County. Within that plan, Swan Creek is classified as a greenspace, defined as a place that:



*. . . contains natural resources that are managed for recreation or natural resource conservation values, such as a desire to protect and support wildlife habitat and water quality. Greenspace also provides opportunities for nature-based, unstructured, low-impact recreational opportunities, such as walking and nature viewing.*

Swan Creek Park was one of seven greenspace areas identified in the Plan as a priority for capital improvements. Recommendations for this site included the Phase 1 implementation of a new park master plan that addressed fencing, gates, trail improvements, landscape upgrades and stream restoration.

The Swan Creek Park master planning effort looks far beyond these basic improvements to create a sustainable community resource that protects a special natural area while providing recreation opportunities for diverse neighbors, agencies, and the surrounding community. In addition to establishing a long term vision for Swan Creek Park, the Master Plan includes an implementation plan that informs how to use bond funds and identifies the long term capital needs at the park site.

Although there was a 1995 management planning effort that did not result in an adopted plan, Swan Creek Park has never had a comprehensive, community-supported site master plan. This plan represents an important step in the history of the park to develop it as one of MPT's signature attractions and to provide healthy opportunities to play, learn, and grow.

## SITE CONTEXT

Today, much of Swan Creek Park retains an undeveloped, forested character in contrast to the neighborhoods around it. As a large site with a linear configuration, Swan Creek Park is located next to many different land uses. Map A-1 (in Appendix A) illustrates this site context, which is described below.





## Salishan Hope VI Redevelopment

The Salishan Hope VI Redevelopment Community is a 1,200-unit housing development adjacent to the park. Managed by the Tacoma Housing Authority (THA), the site provides a combination of rental and owner-occupied structures. Salishan is one of the most ethnically diverse neighborhoods in Tacoma, and more children are present in the Salishan community than elsewhere in the city. Many languages are spoken there besides English, with Spanish, Cambodian and Vietnamese among the most prevalent.



The Salishan Community was originally built in 1942 as war-worker housing, with part of the development extending into what is now known as Swan Creek Park. After World War II, THA turned it into one of the region's first intentionally integrated communities. Since then, Salishan has become a gateway community for low-income, multi-ethnic immigrant families in Pierce County.

In 2000, THA received a federal grant that allowed the development to be demolished and replaced with a new mixed-income neighborhood, complete with on-site goods and services such as a grocery store, medical clinic, bank and library. The \$225 million Salishan Redevelopment is underway, with families already occupying completed sections of the development. Completion is expected in the next year.



## Tacoma School District

Two schools, managed by the Tacoma School District, are adjacent to Swan Creek Park. Lister Elementary School serves 450 students from the Salishan community. The school is extremely diverse, and one-third of students come from homes where a non-English language is spoken. Most students (83%) qualify for free/reduced price meals. The Lister school grounds include a multi-purpose field, a youth ball field with bleachers, two playground areas and non-programmed turf lawns. The school building itself is new, built in 1998. The school offers extended-day programs for its students.

First Creek Middle School is a new school, which consolidates the former Giardrone and McIlvaigh Middle Schools. Opened

in 2009, the school serves 830 students in grades 6-8. Similar to Lister Elementary, the school serves a diverse student population, and most students (84%) qualify for free/reduced price meals. The Middle School supports baseball and softball fields, a soccer/football field, a multi-purpose field, a track, computer labs and a new library.

### Puyallup Tribe and Reservation

A portion of Swan Creek Park is within the Puyallup Reservation, which abuts Puget Sound to the north and extends into seven urban communities in Pierce and King Counties. A majority of residents living on the reservation are Caucasian (72% in 2000 Census) with only 3.2% of solely Native American heritage. As noted on the map, the Puyallup Tribe of Indians operates a Child Care Center near the northern part of Swan Creek Park. The center is a tribally-sponsored daycare serving families with children ages 0 – 5 years.

### Pierce County

Two Pierce County agencies own lands in or adjacent to Swan Creek Park. These parcels are outside of Tacoma city limits and are subject to Pierce County land use regulations. Pierce County Parks & Recreation Services owns an undeveloped parcel near Waller Road. This site has not been identified for a future use within the Pierce County Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan, other than to be planned in coordination with Metro Parks Tacoma's Swan Creek Park. Pierce County Public Works & Utilities owns the Pioneer Way access to Swan Creek canyon. A water quality facility was constructed in that area associated with the Pioneer Way road improvements.

### Dickson Quarry

A 45-acre sand and rock quarry located on 48<sup>th</sup> Street East abuts the Swan Creek drainage area along its western edge. The quarry is divided into six parcels and owned by the W.M. Dickson Company. To the immediate north of the quarry is a storage area for large trucks and vehicles. Several residential streets abut the quarry's eastern boundaries. There have been concerns expressed over possible sediment migration from the quarry into the Swan Creek drainage way.



## EXISTING CONDITIONS

Swan Creek Park is a 373 acre site, of which 276 acres are owned by Metro Parks Tacoma and 97 acres are owned by Pierce County. The park is primarily forested, with few developed site features. Existing site conditions—including access and circulation, site uses, and natural systems—are described below. The site Analysis Maps referenced in this section are presented in Appendix A.

### Access and Circulation

Currently, Swan Creek Park does not have a main park entrance or internal circulation system (Map A-2).

#### *Site Entrances*

Although lacking a main entrance, Swan Creek Park has several places where people can enter the park. For example, there are two entrances at the north end of the property. One includes a small parking lot off Pioneer Way East that provides access to the Swan Creek trail. Another is located at the intersection of East Roosevelt Avenue and East 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, where the Gathering Place and community gardens were developed. (This access was closed during construction at Salishan, but has reopened.)

The central and southern portions of the park include three pedestrian access points: near Lister Elementary, at East 56<sup>th</sup> Street, and near the intersection of East Roosevelt Avenue and East 44<sup>th</sup> Street. Vehicle access is blocked at these sites by a gate, large tires (used as barriers), and fencing.

Currently, there is no access to the east side of the park, either from Pioneer Way East or Waller Road East.

#### *Transit Routes*

Pierce Transit provides bus service to one stop on the west side of Swan Creek Park, which is located at the 42<sup>nd</sup> Street entrance. This route passes through the Salishan Redevelopment and stops at First Creek Middle School. There are no bus stops near the park's other entrances.

### *Planned Trails*

A bicycle route is planned to enter the park at East 64<sup>th</sup> Street. In addition, the regional Cross-County Commuter Connector (Quad-C) trail is planned adjacent to Swan Creek Park.

## Existing Site Uses

Swan Creek Park is used today for activities such as hiking, dog walking, bird watching and salmon stewardship activities. There also are some unsanctioned uses such as dirt biking, camping and dumping. Beyond these activities, the park is not well used and is not well-integrated into the surrounding neighborhoods. Map A-3 illustrates current site uses in specific zones for the park. Major site uses are described below.

### *The Gathering Place*

Community gardening and urban agriculture areas are located at the East 42<sup>nd</sup> Street entrance, just off East Roosevelt Avenue. This area also includes the Gathering Place, an outdoor area with a small overhead structure and seating. These facilities take advantage of the Salishan remnant street network in this area. From the roadway along the edge of the topographic break, there is a view down into Swan Creek canyon. Running down the canyon wall from this area is an unsanctioned trail with a garden hose serving as a hand rail to allow scrambling up and down the steep slope. Before the recent Salishan construction, the community garden was an active and well-used feature, drawing many users from the neighborhood. Due to the construction, access to this area of the park was restricted for several years and the area has languished.



### *Use of the Site by Other Agencies for Training*

The largest network of remnant streets in Swan Creek Park (also known as “the driving range”) is located off East T Street, using the gated access adjacent to the Lister Elementary parking lot. The Tacoma Police Department uses the site for formal vehicle training, with at least six department-wide trainings held here throughout the year. Other agencies and City departments also use the site for training purposes. The street network is seen as a major asset by these agencies, as there are no other places in the region that offer a place for vehicle training that is safely removed from urban structures and activity. The southeastern corner of the driving range area





is the former location of the Crippled Children's School, open from 1953 to 1963.

#### *Storm Water Infrastructure*

The Swan Creek watershed receives drainage from surrounding residential, recreational and industrial land uses. The watershed runs south to north, toward Pioneer Way East, where sediment detention pond and wetland areas are located. This area is managed by Pierce County and is important to the creek's water quality.

#### *Volunteer Activities/Swan Creek Stewardship*

The natural resources at Swan Creek Park have drawn a number of volunteers interested in resource preservation and environmental education. Many groups support the park, including the chum salmon run located here. The Puyallup Tribe's stewardship activities resulted in the return of salmon to Swan Creek. The Friends of Swan Creek Watershed provide educational and volunteer opportunities, plus sponsor a Salmon Celebration each December.

#### *Casual Use*

The largely undeveloped park and trails support a variety of self-directed recreation activities, such as hiking, dog walking and exercise. While the park is not heavily used compared to other large MPT parks, many people regularly visit the park for these types of low-impact activities.

## Natural Systems

The majority of Swan Creek Park was never developed, leaving a relatively intact urban stream corridor and large urban forest. Maps A-4 and A-6 illustrate the topography, hydrology, and vegetation present in Swan Creek Park.

#### *Topography and Geology*

Swan Creek Park protects a steep-sided creek canyon, with slopes averaging over 30%, and a narrow floodplain bench along the stream. Influenced by stream dynamics, the bench has shifted over centuries. The steep canyon slopes have multiple slide areas and springs. The dynamic combination of stream-bank cutting and slope failure results in constant maintenance of the canyon trail. The uplands area is characterized by "bumpy" topography or flat to gently sloping terraces.

### *Soils*

The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) classifies soils into four hydrologic soil types based on the soil's runoff potential. Swan Creek Park soils are mapped as primarily as types A, C and D. Type A soils typically have a very high infiltrative capacity and generate the least amount of runoff. Conversely, type D soils have the lowest infiltrative capacity and generate the highest amount of runoff. Type D soils are typically associated with saturated soil conditions. Type D soils present less than optimal conditions for on-site sewer systems and stormwater infiltration systems.

Alderwood-Everett soils are present at Swan Creek Park. Alderwood soils are underlain by glacial till, with seasonal high or perched groundwater tables, and can cause hydraulic overloads of poorly designed on-site sewer systems. Stormwater infiltration systems are generally not appropriate for areas with these soil characteristics. On the other hand, the excessively draining Everett soils provide for rapid drainage from on-site sewer systems and stormwater infiltration systems, but may not provide for adequate treatment of pollutants. This can potentially cause groundwater pollution if pretreatment is not provided.

### *Groundwater Recharge*

Recent extensive studies of groundwater hydrology in the Swan Creek area found that approximately 38% of the annual precipitation enters the groundwater system as recharge. One-third of that amount (or about 12% of the total rainfall) is withdrawn from wells in the basin. As a result, open spaces such as Swan Creek play an important role in aquifer recharge.

### *Drainage and Springs*

Along the Swan Creek canyon, an impermeable formation called the Salmon Springs Drift restricts the downward movement of water. Springs form where highly-permeable gravel deposits overlay this layer. Thirty-two natural springs have been counted from the mouth of the creek to Cushman Springs, which is 6,000 feet upstream. Swan Creek is a perennial stream below Cushman Springs, and intermittent above. Swan Creek discharges into Clear Creek just below the







park and Pioneer Way. Clear Creek flows a short distance from here before entering the Puyallup River.

The upper reaches of the Swan Creek sub-basin south of the park are considerably urbanized and contain many fabricated stormwater conveyance channels that carry stormwater from roads and developed areas to the creek, making the lower reaches within the park subject to high flows during periods of urban flooding.

The lower creek has been channeled around a wetland and into two sedimentation ponds at the north end of the park that are maintained by Pierce County. The lower sediment pond is dredged annually to prevent blockage of downstream culverts. The upper pond blew out in a flood and is now a reforestation wetland. A wide, level area adjacent to the stream floods most years. The level terrain and open landscape character of this area make it easy for park visitors to reach the pond and stream.



Despite hydrologic changes and local urbanization, Swan Creek is a spawning area for hundreds of chum salmon nearly every year, along with occasional steelhead, Chinook and Coho. Steelhead and Chinook salmon within the Puget Sound basin are federally listed as threatened species. High recent chum salmon numbers may be in part due to creek enhancement efforts of the Puyallup Tribe and others.

#### *Forested Areas*

Much of Swan Creek Park consists of second-growth forests, resulting from previous logging. The lower and middle canyon areas have mostly deciduous forest canopy, including red alder, big leaf maple and cottonwood, along with a few conifers. A forested wetland covers part of this area, near the footbridge across Swan Creek. The upper canyon is dominated by conifer trees, mostly Douglas fir, but also hemlock and cedar. Numerous large cedar and fir stumps provide evidence of the prior old growth conifer forest that occupied this area.

Despite its urban surroundings, the canyon is remarkably free of invasive weedy species. There are a few pockets of English ivy, a small amount of clematis, and a fair amount of fillary along the trail. A relatively innocuous weed (*Geranium*

*robertianum*) dominates portions of the emergent community within the moist lower reaches of the canyon. There appears to be no Japanese knotweed whatsoever, a fairly remarkable absence for urbanized Puget Sound streams. Pacific yew, a relatively rare tree, grows in the canyon, as does *Oxalis trillifolia*. A few Pacific madrones are found in the upper canyon, where slopes are fairly dry and light is available.

The upper terraces in the southwest part of the park include monocultures of young, dense Douglas fir trees. Salal dominates the understory. There are few large trees, no snags, and very little downed wood. These upland areas have more invasive species, including some large areas of heavy infestation.

A series of terraces in the west-central part of the park were formerly part of the Salishan community. Native trees are slowly reforesting these areas. Weedy non-native species are common here, including Scot's Broom, blackberry and knotweed.

#### *Animal Habitat*

Swan Creek Park provides significant habitat to support a variety of birds and other creatures. Several forest-dependent birds have been identified in Swan Creek Park, including Red-eyed vireo, White-crowned sparrows, Townsend's solitaire and other songbirds. Quail, pheasants, grouse, and raptors inhabit the more open areas. Common mammals including deer, raccoon and coyotes use the entire park. Frogs and amphibians are found along the stream and in wetlands. Beaver have been active. Red-legged frog, a sensitive species, may be present.



## **REGULATORY CONSIDERATIONS**

The management and development of Swan Creek Park should be consistent with the Environmental Policy and Open Space and Recreation Elements of the City of Tacoma's Comprehensive Plan as well as comply with specific city, county, state and federal land use and building requirements as applicable. When specific projects noted in the Master Plan are developed, a more specific and detailed review of



applicable regulations will be needed. An overview of these regulations is provided below.

## City of Tacoma

The City of Tacoma has adopted an environmental policy to “ensure the conservation, protection, enhancement and proper management of natural resources and shorelines, while provide for a balanced pattern of development and the needs of the citizens of the City.” All development actions proposed in the Master Plan should be reviewed to ensure that the goals of this policy are being met and that specific design and construction standards from the City’s code are utilized for appropriate growth and development. Relevant regulations include:

- Tacoma Municipal Code (TMC) 13.06 (Zoning) includes specific zoning districts and associated building, parking, transportation and landscaping design standards.
- TMC 13.11 (Critical Area Preservation) includes regulations on managing and developing critical areas and the administrative processes required prior to approving a regulated use or activity within a critical area. Critical areas, as defined by the City, include wetlands, streams, fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas including buffers, habitat zones, geologic hazardous areas, flood hazard areas and groundwater recharge areas.
- TMC 13.05 (Land Use Permit Procedures) outlines the City’s application requirements and process for land use permits.
- TMC 13.12 (Environmental Code) provides a more thorough understanding and review of the SEPA adoption process.
- Surface Water Management Manual notes specific design standards for treating and regulating surface water runoff.

## Pierce County

Pierce County owns and manages park land by the lower entrance to the park, from Pioneer Way East up to the footbridge crossing of Swan Creek. Planning and Land Services (PALS) would be tasked with reviewing and approving any land uses proposed under the Master Plan in those areas that fall within their jurisdiction.

- The County’s Development Regulations, Title 18 of the Pierce County Code (PCC), includes PCC 18A (Zoning), 18E (Critical Areas), 18H (Forest Practices and Tree Conservation), 18J (Design Standards and Guidelines) as well as the General Provisions (PCC 18.20 through 18.160).



## Washington State

Compliance with a number of environmental laws may be necessary to implement the Master Plan, including:

- The Department of Ecology (DOE) has jurisdiction over any proposed discharges to “waters of the United States” under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act (CWA) which also trigger compliance with the Coastal Zone Management Act and the Shoreline Management Act. This includes work within Swan Creek and the wetlands associated with the canyon area.
- The Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) has jurisdiction over any proposed construction activity that would use, divert, obstruct, or change the natural flow or bed of state waters including working in Swan Creek.
- The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) should be consulted for compliance with the state’s Forest Practices Rules (Washington Administrative Code 222) for any proposed management of merchantable timber resources associated with the park.

## Federal

Compliance with federal environmental laws may also be necessary to implement the Master Plan. Depending on proposed site uses, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) would need to review the project for compliance with several federal laws under their jurisdiction:

- Under Section 404 of the CWA, the USACE has jurisdiction over any discharges to “waters of the United States” including working in Swan Creek and associated wetlands. This compliance process is typically administered under the Nationwide Permit (NWP) system by the USACE Seattle District and includes compliance with other laws such as Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, the Magnuson-Stevens Act and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

## COMMUNITY INPUT



Although largely undeveloped, Swan Creek Park is not a blank slate wiped clean for the master planning and design process. The park has many current volunteers and park users, a rich history, and a diverse and unique cultural context that has influenced the planning process from the beginning—and will continue to influence park development and site use in the future. For this reason, a strong public involvement process was needed to create a master plan that reflects the park community and supports park experiences that will enhance the lives of residents and groups who will continue to use the park, participate in programs, and steward its natural assets in the future.

To create a master plan that reflects the needs and values of the local community, the master planning process included multiple forms of community outreach. In addition to four public workshops conducted in the Swan Creek neighborhood, numerous meetings with a variety of community groups were held to ensure that diverse perspectives were represented and incorporated. More than 1,400 people participated in the planning process.

## Overview of Activities

Residents of various cultural backgrounds, ages and interests were engaged in the planning process through many different outreach activities described below.

- **Steering Committee:** An MPT Capital Project Steering Committee was formed to oversee the development of the Swan Creek Park master plan and provide advice and feedback to staff and the Parks Board. Approximately 19 members have met four times during the planning process, on February 9, April 6, May 4, and June 8, 2011. Steering committee members represent a wide variety of interest groups associated with the park.
- **Agency Advisory Committee:** An advisory committee composed of key staff from 33 agencies also met four times during the planning process to discuss project direction and key findings. Approximately 40 people provided technical insight on this project.
- **Kids & Family Workshop:** More than 60 community members attended a workshop, held on March 2, 2011, from 5-7pm at the Family Investment Center. This workshop invited the surrounding community – families living near the park, children who attend the nearby schools, and members of the general public – to share their vision and ideas for Swan Creek Park.
- **Environmental Education & Programming Workshop:** Twenty-five people participated in a workshop on Wednesday, March 2, 2011, from 1-4 pm at the Family Investment Center to shape a vision for environmental programming at Swan Creek Park. Meeting participants included representatives from MPT ZEED and Recreation, the Greater Metro Parks Foundation, Tacoma 360, the Puyallup Tribe, Friends of Swan Creek Watershed, First Creek Neighbors, University of Washington Tacoma, Girl Scouts, Tahoma Audubon Society, Sustainable Tacoma-Pierce, permaculture advocates, and the City of Tacoma.
- **Community Open House:** A community open house was hosted on April 6, 2011, from 4-6 pm at the Family Investment Center. Approximately 15 people attended to review the Opportunities and Constraints Assessment and assess three conceptual park



alternatives created using comments from the March 2 agency and public workshops.

- **Community Open House:** A community open house was hosted on May 4, 2011, from 4-6 pm at the Family Investment Center. Approximately 15 people attended to share their vision for future site improvements and review the refined alternative park concepts created using comments from the April 6 agency and public meetings.
- **Environmental Restoration and Education Open House:** An open house was hosted on May 26, 2011 from 4-7pm at the Metro Parks Tacoma Headquarters. Approximately 20 people attended to assess the preferred development approach and to discuss current site use and the potential for future site in terms of environmental restoration and education.
- **Community Open House:** A community open house was hosted on June 8, 2011, from 4-6pm at the Family Investment Center. Approximately 15 people attended to hear an update on the preferred development approach and share their vision for future site improvements.
- **Swan Creek Park Website:** Since the beginning of major outreach efforts in January 2011, the Swan Creek Park website page has received over 3,000 hits. This website includes past reports on Swan Creek Park, ongoing outreach efforts, public participation opportunities, a survey and comment drop box, and slideshow of park pictures.
- **Online Survey:** An online survey was available on the Swan Creek Park page of the MPT website, with questions regarding park use and the most desired activities at the park. As of June 10, 2011, posted results indicated that approximately 265 had responded.



Additional Community Outreach: In addition to the activities listed above, Metro Parks Tacoma conducted multiple meetings with local groups to ensure that their ideas were represented in the planning process. These outreach activities are noted below.

- **Eastside Neighborhoods Advisory Council of Tacoma (ENACT):** Approximately 15 people attended this monthly meeting on January 18, to assess and critique the process for crafting Swan Creek’s Master Plan and expound on creating opportunities for participation.
- **Trail Assessment with Trail and Bike Clubs:** Metro Parks Tacoma, in conjunction with Tacoma Wheelmen’s Bicycle Club and long-standing stewards of Swan Creek Park, conducted a trail assessment for Swan Creek Park on January 19. Information on the stability of trails, spring flows, park users, and history of the park was collected on-site.
- **East Side Networking Meeting:** Several people attended this action-oriented monthly meeting on February 10, at Portland Avenue Community Center. Members of the East Side community discussed the best way to reach other East Side residents, existing site-use, and how Swan Creek could best meet the needs of the East Side community.
- **Vietnamese Meeting:** Forty-seven people attended this meeting on March 14, 2011, at the Indochinese Cultural & Services Center to participate in a survey and discuss their priorities for park activities and development. Translators were used to convey and gather information, for non-English-speaking participants.
- **Cambodian Meeting:** Seventy-five people attended this meeting on March 15, 2011, at the Indochinese Cultural & Services Center to participate in a survey and discuss their priorities for park activities and development. Translators were used to convey and gather information, for non-English-speaking participants.
- **Korean Meeting:** Fifty-three people attended a meeting on March 29, 2011, at International Place to participate in a survey and discuss their priorities for park activities and development. Translators were used to convey and gather information, for non-English-speaking participants.
- **Youth Groups:** Special meetings were held with the First Creek Middle School Environmental Science Club, the East Side Girl Scout Brownie and Junior Troops, members of the Boys & Girls Club, Global







Youth Service Day participants, Sacred Heart students, Eastside Clean Sweep participants, and Grandview Daycare youth on December 14, April 5, April 13, April 11, April 16, May 21, June 4, and June 2011, respectively. Approximately two hundred and ninety youth had an opportunity to discuss and draw their ideas for park activities and development.

- **Global Youth Service Day Outreach:** Thirty-seven students, parents, and educators participated in a survey and discussion of their priorities for park activities and development, on April 16, 2011.
- **Bike Swap Outreach:** Over 90 event attendees discussed their priorities for park activities and development at Swan Creek Park, on April 30, 2011. Bikes for Kids, an event participant, confirmed 15 bike donations for an educational bike ride through Swan Creek Park.
- **Joint Municipal Action Committee (JMAC):** A Swan Creek Park briefing was given to JMAC members at a meeting held on May 13, 2011.
- **Natural Resource Management, Fisheries, and Water Quality Meeting:** Staff and representatives from MPT, Puyallup Tribe, South Puget Sound Salmon Enhancement Group, Pierce County, and the City of Tacoma met on May 18, 2011, to discuss ways to improve fish habitat in Swan Creek.
- **Sacred Heart Catholic Church Meeting:** More than 180 members of the Spanish-speaking community attended this event on May 21, 2011 to discuss their priorities for park activities and development. Translators were used to convey and gather information, for non-English-speaking participants.
- **First Creek Neighbors Meeting:** Twenty neighbors attended their monthly meeting on June 1, 2011, for a discussion of potential park improvements.
- **Eastside Clean Sweep Outreach:** On June 4, 2011, more than 80 students, families, staff, and community members participated in a survey and discussed their priorities for park activities and development.
- **Permaculture Community Meeting:** An open meeting will be held on June 22, 2011, from 6-7:30 pm at the Tacoma Public Library (Moore Branch) to explore and discuss permaculture at Swan Creek Park.

- **Swan Creek Bike Ride:** Metro Parks Tacoma is partnering with Tacoma Wheelmen’s Bicycle Club and Bikes for Kids to donate 15 bikes to children at Sacred Heart who participated in the May 21 Swan Creek outreach event. The children and partnering organizations will gather for an educational bike ride through Swan Creek in July to learn about environmental protection and discuss opportunities for activities within the park.
- **Slavic Christian Center:** Information about the master planning of Swan Creek Park and participation opportunities will be advertised in the Slavic Christian Center’s newsletter, Voice of the Church.

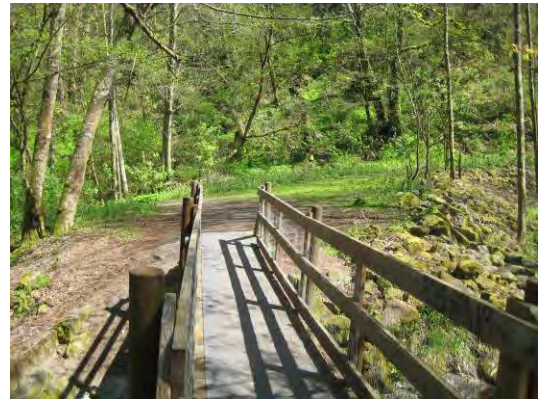
## Key Findings

While top priorities for Swan Creek Park varied by group, several key themes and consistent ideas emerged from the outreach activities. Significant findings are noted below, highlighting the community’s preferences and consolidated vision for Swan Creek Park.

### *Existing Site Characteristics/Functions to Maintain*

Swan Creek Park currently has several site characteristics and management or operating procedures that the community would like to see maintained or preserved. These include:

- **Natural Area:** Swan Creek Park represents a natural environment in the midst of a developed urban area. The park should continue to protect the creek, the forest, wildlife, salmon, the canyon, and water quality.
- **Outdoor Recreation:** As a natural area, the site currently supports a variety of outdoor recreation opportunities that should be maintained, such as hiking, biking, community gardening, nature activities, and wildlife observation/birding.
- **Volunteers/Partners:** The site is supported by many volunteers and used by key partners, who would like to continue their activities. These include activities such as police training, nature stewardship, youth activities, and school/educational programs.





### *Future Vision for Swan Creek Park*

The future vision for Swan Creek Park is based on the following ideas contributed by participants at the workshops and meetings.

- **Trails:** The community would like to see trails enhanced to support hiking, biking, mountain biking, ADA access, nature interpretation, and improved access to the creek and specific facilities.
- **Urban Agriculture:** Urban agriculture could be expanded at the site to include community gardening, orchards, permaculture, berries, farmer’s markets, composting, U-pick opportunities, and a variety of associated programs, such as gardening classes, kitchens, school programs, and harvest festivals.
- **Multi-purpose Outdoor Recreation:** The site vision includes facilities that support a variety of active and passive recreation opportunities, such as picnic shelters, dog park, ropes course, mountain biking course, campground, and nature play.
- **Community Gatherings:** Many participants noted a desire to expand opportunities for community gatherings at the site. This included suggestions to provide large-group picnic shelters, a plaza, promenade, nature center, more parking, open lawn area for events, and a visitor center.
- **Nature Programming:** In the future, many community members would like to see Swan Creek Park support more opportunities for environmental education and nature interpretation. This could include programs such as ranger programs, science/nature classes and camps, birding clubs, self-led interpretive programs, and group hikes. It may include facilities such as a nature center, nature camp, staging area for hikes/stewardship events, interpretive signage, shelter/classrooms, arboretum, or fish hatchery.
- **Nature Stewardship:** Many people recognized that the park is not in a pristine, natural or wild state. Increased resource management and ecological restoration is desired, including the development of a creek canyon buffers, support for fish/salmon habitat, tree canopy protection, forest health restoration, fire hazard

mitigation, invasive species management, and wildlife habitat enhancement.

### *Opportunities for Improvements*

Participants noted several concerns about the park, including a variety of improvements needed.

- **Access and Circulation:** Community members noted that park access and circulation should be addressed by adding ADA accessible pathways, improved entries at multiple points, support infrastructure throughout the park, eastside canyon trail improvements, driving range improvements, and better connections to schools, Salishan, and transit.
- **Safety:** Community members would like to see safety improvements in the park to address issues such as vandalism and graffiti, homeless encampments, fire risk, unauthorized dirt bike/ATV use, crime potential and the need for increased visibility. The following was suggested: volunteer patrols, park rangers, bike patrol, trail patrols, caretaker’s residence, safe transit to entry points, and the development of a safety/security plan.
- **Support Facilities:** Participants noted that the park will need more and/or improved support facilities, such as restrooms, parking, trash receptacles, and bike racks.
- **Natural Area & Riparian Management:** While nature stewardship was part of the overall vision for the park, there were specific comments about needs for increased natural resource management, such as dam removal, creek source evaluation, vegetative buffers, mitigation/elimination of damaging site uses, topsoil removal, study of creek hydrology and gravel sedimentation, protection of native *Lathyrus torreyi* (Torrey’s Pea), need for detailed habitat listing and forest management arborist, water quality training, dumping/encampment hazards, sustainable forestry, and forest thinning.



*Key Findings for Additional Community Outreach Meetings*

Feedback from the additional community outreach activities corroborated these findings. Top priorities included:

- Protect the creek and the forested character of the site.
- Support activities that do not exist in other MPT parks.
- Use the existing road system (historical Salishan roads) for recreation purposes.
- Support community gardening, camping, biking, and hiking.
- Provide picnic facilities for large families and groups.

These public involvement findings, along with conclusions drawn from the technical analysis of existing conditions, were used to create the Swan Creek Park concept plan presented in Chapter 2.



## II. MASTER PLAN

**THE COMMUNITY’S VISION FOR SWAN CREEK PARK** includes multi-purpose recreation and natural areas that improve pedestrian and bike connectivity, support sustainable programming, and enhance the ecological health of the park. This vision emerged through many conversations with diverse residents, advisory committee members, and stakeholder groups interested in this unique park site. Three development alternatives were created using this feedback, and the best elements of each alternative were refined and integrated into one plan. The Swan Creek Preferred Option Plan is presented in this chapter, along with description of the key elements of the plan.

### SWAN CREEK PREFERRED OPTION PLAN

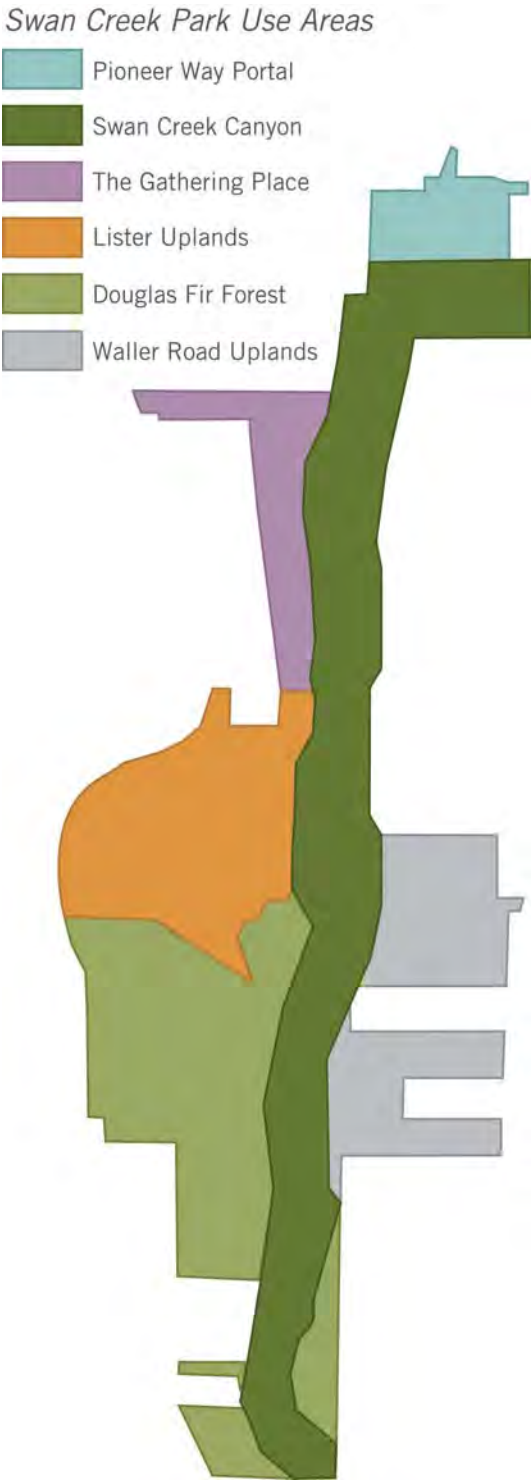
Public outreach indicated that stakeholders and community members wanted park development to support recreation opportunities, urban agriculture, and creek enhancements. A mix of these uses is represented in the Swan Creek Park Preferred Option Plan, presented in Figure 1.

#### Use Areas

The Preferred Option Plan identifies six separate use areas:

- Pioneer Way Portal
- Swan Creek Canyon
- The Gathering Place
- Lister Uplands
- Douglas Fir Forest
- Waller Road Uplands

Each use area, plus a proposed park circulation system, is described on the following pages.



## PIONEER WAY PORTAL

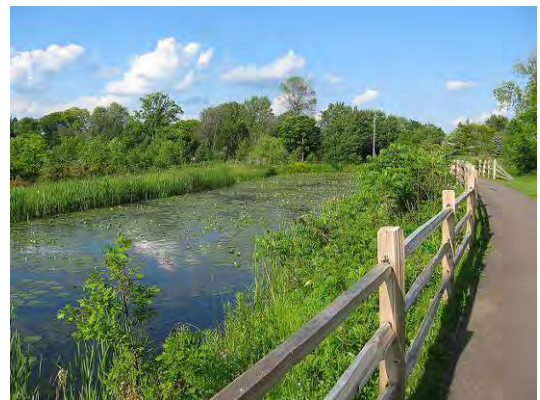
The Pioneer Way Portal is located at the north end of Swan Creek Park. It begins at an improved park entrance along Pioneer Way, which is the only eastside entrance to the park.

The entry drive will extend past the existing parking area and dead-end at a new, improved gravel parking lot that provides accessible parking and a total capacity of 30 vehicles. The entry will also include a park welcome sign, an informational kiosk and bike racks. The entry and parking area will be configured to include a bus turnaround area and loading/unloading zone near the informational kiosk. (See Pioneer Way Portal Zoom-In Plan.)

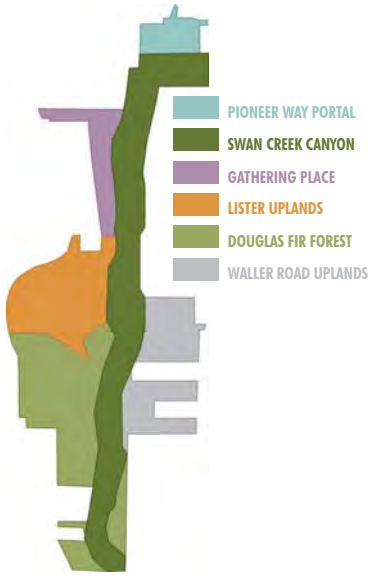
Beyond the parking and entry area, an accessible path will lead to a rustic, open air environmental education/picnic shelter. With 4-6 picnic tables, this shelter can be used by organized groups engaged in service projects in the canyon. It can also be used for nature programs, family picnics, and other group events. A composting toilet will be located nearby.

From the picnic shelter, an ADA-accessible trail continues around the existing sediment pond and along the creek, where interpretive signage will describe the natural and manmade features in the canyon. Viewpoints and creek overlooks will be added along this trail.

The sedimentation pond will remain at its current location, and will continue to be dredged on an “as needed” basis by Pierce County. Heavy vehicles will require access to various portions of the pond’s edge to pull out aggregate material carried by the creek. Dredged aggregate is currently temporarily stored at a location near the proposed picnic shelter. This aggregate material is then put out to bid, sold and moved off-site by the winning bidder. The location of aggregate storage area and routing of truck traffic associated with the dredging operation should be reviewed to ensure that the recreational use of the site is not adversely impacted in the future. The existing parking lot will be kept for this purpose. It will also be able to function as an overflow parking area for high capacity events at Pioneer Way Portal.







### GATHERING PLACE

**ENTRY:** pedestrian/bicycle entries at 38th Street and 42nd Street, signage.

**COMMUNITY GARDEN:** expanded, fenced garden area, fruit orchard and berry shrubs, native plant propagation for park vegetation restoration projects, permaculture, connection to Salishan community.

**PROMENADE:** paved, multi-use promenade beginning at 38th Street and extending to the Lister Uplands, benches, bike racks, interpretive signage.

**GATHERING PLACE:** renovated structure for gardening classes and environmental education, additional small picnic shelter, tool shed.

### LISTER UPLANDS

**ENTRY:** gated entry near Lister Elementary School with paved parking (50 spaces), access along perimeter road to separate gated area (event parking described below).

**FLEXIBLE USE BUILDING:** multi-purpose building with indoor classroom, gathering and picnic space, restrooms and shower facilities for campers.

**DOG PARK:** fenced areas for large and small dogs, benches and trash collection, located near parking.

**URBAN CAMPING:** reservable tent camping, cleared seating area, picnic tables, fire rings, kiosk with power and running water, comfort station with composting toilet.

**ROPES CHALLENGE COURSE:** low ropes elements for individuals and groups to build agility, strength and balance and explore group interaction, problem-solving and leadership challenges.

**STREET NETWORK:** grid retained for ADA accessible pathways for walking, biking, fun run and other community activities, connection to promenade.

**PARK OFFICE & CARETAKER RESIDENCE:** building with up-front visitor space to provide information and house site manager, provides security presence within park.

**PERMACULTURE AREA:** initial demonstration plot near flexible-use building, productive trees and shrubs eventually interspersed throughout the zone.

**SPECIAL EVENT AREA + POLICE TRAINING:** fenced, gated, permeable asphalt parking area, suitable for event parking/staging and driver training, painted parking stalls, bike parking, coordinated event and training scheduling for use.

**PICNIC AREA:** group picnic shelter, barbecues, trash receptacles, open turf play area, seasonal restroom



### PIONEER WAY PORTAL

**ENTRY:** improved gravel parking lot (30 vehicles) with bus turnaround and loading/unloading zone, trail head, bike parking, signage.

**SHELTER:** small rustic shelter for picnic and programs, composting toilet.

**ADA LOOP TRAIL/OVERLOOK:** accessible path around sediment pond extending to footbridge, overlook for salmon viewing and education, interpretive signage.

### SWAN CREEK CANYON

**CREEK:** improved salmon habitat, sediment source evaluation and management, enhanced native riparian plantings, removal of dam remnants, footbridge replacement with longer bridge span, engineered log jams.

**TRAIL:** enhancements to existing trail, trail stabilization and erosion control, selective relocations further from creek.

**VEGETATED BUFFER:** managed native vegetation zone along top of canyon to protect watershed.

### WALLER ROAD UPLANDS

**BMX TRAILS:** potential race course or technical bicycle trails with separate entrance and parking (tbd).

**VEGETATED BUFFER:** managed native vegetation zone along top of canyon to protect watershed.

**FOREST MANAGEMENT:** sustainable forest management, invasives monitoring and removal, fire hazard mitigation.

### DOUGLAS FIR FOREST

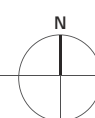
**ENTRY:** pedestrian/bicycle entries at 56th and 64th Streets, signage.

**MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAILS:** 4 to 5 miles of mountain bike cross-country trails to appeal to a variety of ages and skill levels, trails developed and operated by a mountain biking organization in consultation with a forester, no bike use in creek canyon.

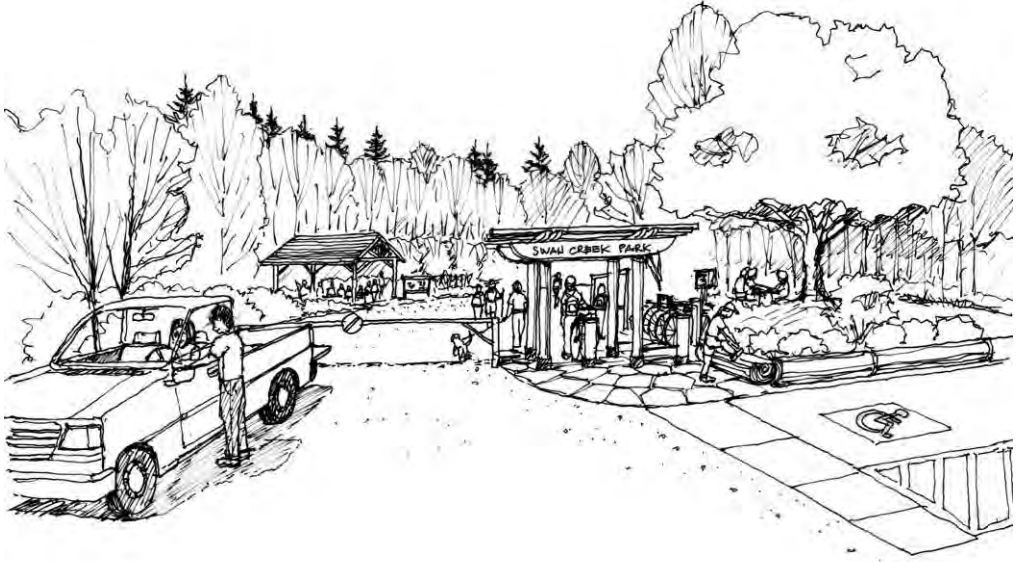
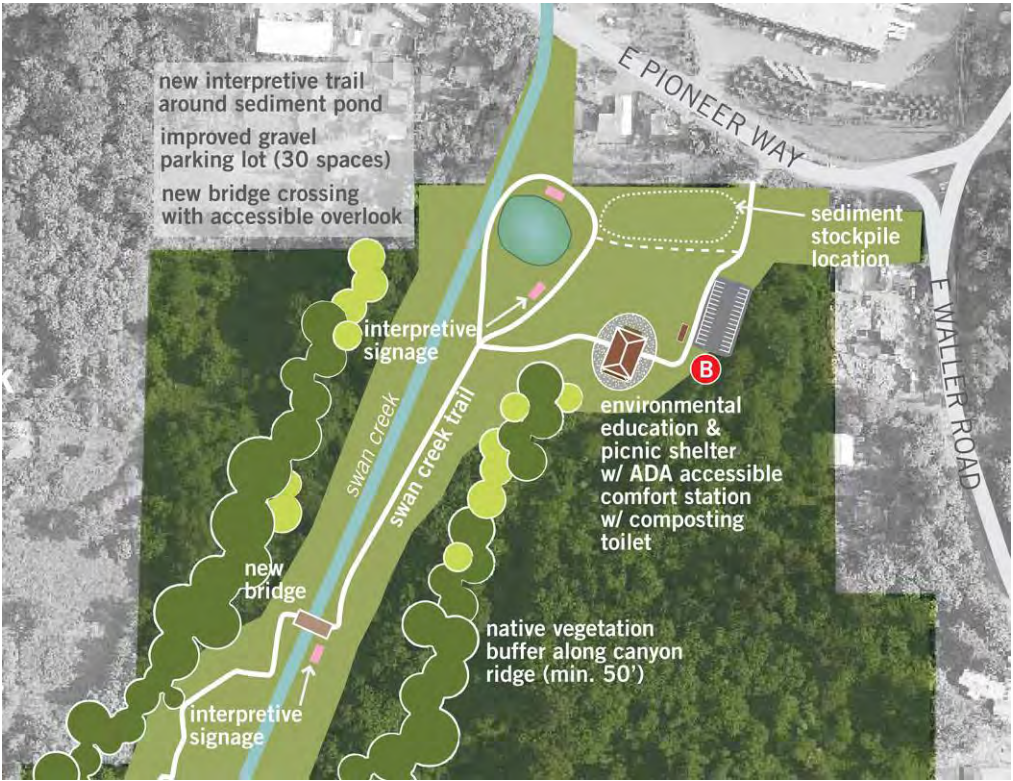
**TRAILS:** Bicycle and walking trails through forest, separate from mountain bike trails.

**FOREST MANAGEMENT:** sustainable forest management, invasives monitoring and removal, fire hazard mitigation.

## SWAN CREEK MASTER PLAN - PREFERRED OPTION







Above top: Zoom-in detail plan for the Pioneer Way Portal  
Above bottom: Perspective drawing of Pioneer Way Portal entrance

## SWAN CREEK CANYON

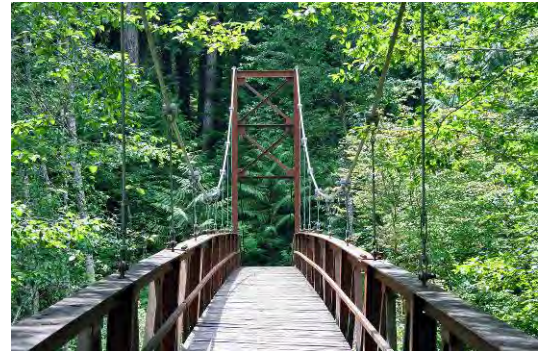
The Swan Creek Canyon is a nearly 2-mile length of high-quality creek habitat extending from the Pioneer Way Portal footbridge to the 64<sup>th</sup> Street entrance at the southern boundary of the park.

Erosion, sediment management and habitat protection are priorities in Swan Creek Canyon. Before proposals in this master plan can be undertaken, a scientific study should be commissioned to determine the source of creek sediment and provide an independent assessment of the current management approach of Swan Creek. The study will identify the appropriate scale and scope of proposed projects in Swan Creek Canyon.

In areas of the canyon where Swan Creek is not seasonal (north of Cushman Springs), habitat should be improved to support spawning salmon. This may include creekside vegetation enhancements and the addition of manmade features such as engineered log jams, creating riffles and sand bars for micro-habitats within the creek bed. These locations are excellent opportunities for interpretive signage elements to teach park visitors about the issues affecting the canyon. Stabilizing and reinforcing the existing creek trail will prevent slope degradation, especially where the trail approaches the creek bed. South of Cushman Springs, where Swan Creek is seasonal, the focus should be on invasive vegetation removal, erosion mitigation and trail stabilization.

At the north end of the canyon, the existing wooden footbridge sets upon remnant dam pieces that restrict the flow of the creek. Pending the results of the sediment study, these dam pieces should be removed from the creek bed. At that time, a new bridge will be needed. The proposed bridge should have a longer span that allows for a wider creek cross-section with habitat improvements around the base of the structure. The bridge will also act as an accessible creek overlook for trail users.

Large areas of Swan Creek Canyon are adjacent to private land. In these areas, long-term efforts should be made by MPT, the City of Tacoma and Pierce County to acquire property that increases the lineal buffer distance between the



creek and slope-side development. The Preferred Option Plan (See Figure 1) shows where efforts should be made to acquire such property. A high-priority area is along the west boundary of the Dickson quarry property, where high-intensity excavation activities occur. Other property acquisition should be considered between Roosevelt Avenue and the creek in the southern areas of Swan Creek Park, and properties along Waller Road between the County-owned parcels. As these properties come into public ownership, Swan Creek Park's spatial integrity will also improve by reconnecting wildlife corridors previously separated by private inholdings, fences and similar barriers.

Along the upland rim of the canyon, a native vegetation buffer should be established and maintained to discourage the migration of invasive vegetation into the canyon environment. The buffer should be comprised of native plants listed in the Washington Native Plant Society's Plant List of the Swan Creek Natural Area. The buffer should be 50' wide at a minimum, and may be wider at certain points, to enhance the separation of sensitive park areas.

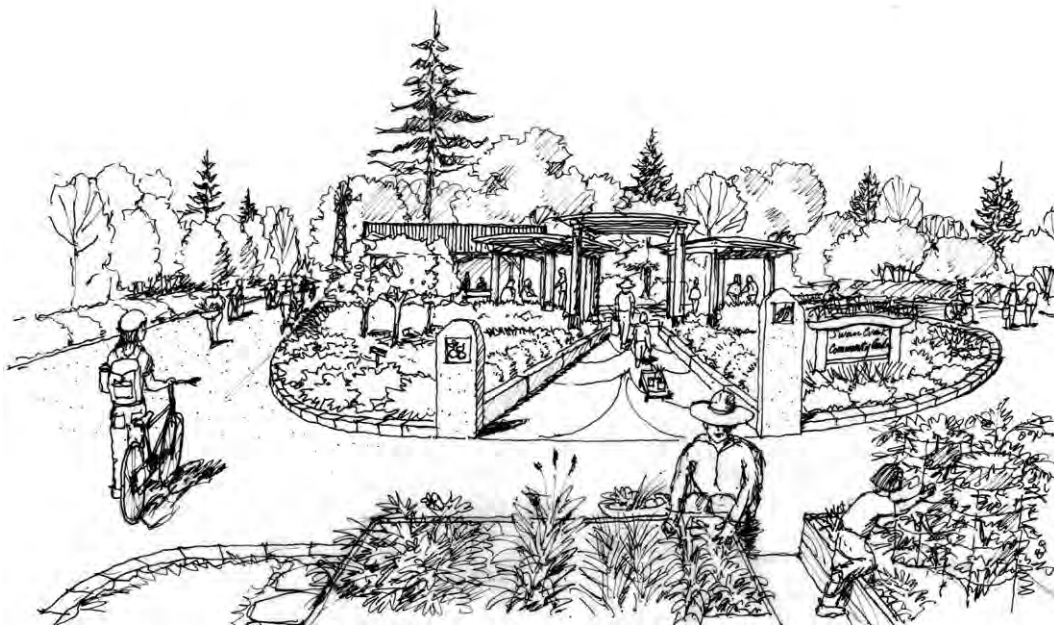


## THE GATHERING PLACE

Located near the 38<sup>th</sup> and 42<sup>nd</sup> Street entrances, the Gathering Place will support community gardening, walking and biking, picnicking and environmental/agricultural education.

A major feature of the Gathering Place is the Swan Creek Park Promenade. (See the Gathering Place Zoom-In Plan.) This bike and pedestrian thoroughfare is a wide, paved, multi-use trail that provides easy access to the park for Salishan residents and other nearby neighbors. The Promenade connects the 38<sup>th</sup> Street entrance to the 42<sup>nd</sup> Street entrance and continues southward into the Lister Uplands.

The community garden plots that were located in this area will be revived and improved to potentially include raised beds that will streamline maintenance and operations. The garden area will be fenced with 4' black vinyl chain link fence or a rustic fence suited to the agricultural character of this part of the park. For example, decorative split rail fencing could offset the chain link fence on one or all sides of the garden plots.



Top: Zoom-in detail plan of the Gathering Place  
Bottom: Perspective drawing of the Gathering Place, Swan Creek Park Promenade and renovated community gardens



Fruit tree orchards

Metro Parks Tacoma will partner with the Cascade Land Conservancy’s gardening coordinator, who will work with local residents to develop a management organization to allocate plots and deal with other day-to-day operational issues associated with the garden.

In addition to reservable community plots, the garden is anticipated to include landscape plants such as productive berry shrubs, a fruit orchard and perennial shrubs and native plant species. MPT should work with adjacent schools and organizations such as the Pierce County Conservation District and Sustainable Tacoma Pierce to develop several garden plots to grow plants that can be used for the restoration and revegetation of Swan Creek Park. These groups can also work with MPT on seasonal programming opportunities. Through partnerships with groups such as Sustainable Tacoma Pierce MPT will explore permaculture opportunities throughout this zone.

In the middle of the zone, a renovated Gathering Place structure will function as a community learning and garden workshop facility. Nearby, a small picnic shelter with an attached tool and supply shed will provide additional gathering space for families and groups, as well as storage for garden equipment. The two structures should be designed to support a variety of programs that are anticipated to take place here.

## LISTER UPLANDS

Located in the west-central section of the park, Lister Uplands is a flexible, outdoor recreation space that will be designed to support a variety of activities. The area will be accessible from Swan Creek Park’s main “T” Street entrance, adjacent to Lister Elementary. It incorporates the former Salishan roadway network, known as the “driving range.”



At the heart of the park, the Lister Uplands are envisioned as a centralized destination for the majority of park visitors. The area will include programmed activities such as picnicking (large and small groups), a dog park, urban camping, municipal vehicle training, classroom activities and a ropes challenge course. It will also support activities such as walking,

biking, permaculture, environmental and agricultural education, and other types of group programs and events.

Park users arriving by vehicle will drive south along East “T” Street, through an entry gate just past the school driveway. (See the Lister Uplands Zoom-In Plan.) Immediately past the entry gate, park visitors pull into a paved parking lot (50 spaces), providing access to a flexible-use building, a fenced dog-park, a ropes course, urban campground and the Swan Creek Park Promenade.

A flexible-use building welcomes users to this portion of the park and includes picnic tables, flush-toilet restrooms, showers, one indoor classroom and additional space for informal gatherings. Showers and the classroom will have controlled access with a numeric key code.

This area will offer a one-of-a-kind, walk-in urban campground a short distance from the parking lot. The purpose of the campground is to support camping programs for Tacoma youth and families, as well as organized groups such as Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and MPT summer camps. These types of organized programs give participants an opportunity to learn about the outdoors and develop an appreciation of nature. In the long term, this may help foster long-term connections to the park’s natural assets, as well as an increased interest in park stewardship. The campground is located along the Swan Creek Park Promenade and includes cleared areas for tent camping, a group fire pit, picnic tables, a seasonal comfort station (composting toilet) and a simple kiosk that provides running water and electricity. Showers and classroom space for campers will be provided at the flexible-use building, a short distance away. Groups arriving at Swan Creek Campground may be allowed vehicle access on the Promenade for loading and unloading.

Between the flexible-use building and the urban campground is a ropes challenge course. This “low” ropes challenge course should include elements to build agility, strength and balance, explore group interaction, problem-solving and leadership challenges. MPT will partner with a service organization or other sponsor to fund, construct and maintain the ropes course at Swan Creek Park.







Top: Zoom-in detail plan of the Lister Uplands  
Bottom: Perspective drawing of the urban campground and Swan Creek Park Promenade

The Lister Uplands area is also anticipated to serve as a venue for permaculture, the use of traditional and modern sustainable technologies to preserve or enhance living communities. The permaculture landscape may include food forest demonstrations, rain gardens, educational displays, and native plant display gardens. Through a land-use agreement with permaculture groups, MPT will begin working with dedicated groups to start small, visible projects in the park. These initial projects can help demonstrate planting choices, succession, landscape maintenance and other cultivation techniques. A small project start-up site has been identified near the flexible-use building. With the success of this arrangement, permaculture could extend into other parts within the Lister Uplands and Gathering Place as capacity and demand warrant.

An off-leash dog area will be situated just south of the parking area. The dog park is envisioned to have separate, fenced large and small dog areas, as well as signage and trash receptacles. From the parking area, visitors will also have access to the former Salishan roadway system (“driving range”) which will be restored as a walk/bike/roll pathway system. New wayfinding and informational signs will be incorporated, as well as mileage markers. Asphalt overlay may be added where necessary.

The wide variety of programmed activities available in the Lister Uplands area establishes a need for additional oversight in this portion of Swan Creek Park. A combination caretaker’s residence/park office is proposed northeast of the campground, along the Swan Creek Park Promenade. The caretaker could help to provide year-round, 24-hour surveillance in the park. Duties of the caretaker could include upkeep of the park’s buildings, signage and park-operated program space, opening and closing of the park gates, parking enforcement and other duties as needed. During the busier spring and summer months, the caretaker could provide support logistics and information to the various groups using the park as a learning and experience venue.





Beyond the initial parking lot and facilities at this entrance, a second gate will be installed to regulate access to a special event area. It is anticipated that this second gate would be opened during programmed events or when heavier park use is anticipated.

This purpose of this special event area is twofold. First, it will provide event parking (100 spaces) for the large group picnic shelter located here, as well as a staging area for special events occurring in the park, such as fun runs, races and mountain bike events. Second, the special event area will be designed to facilitate municipal vehicle training, which currently takes place in the “driving range” roads that will be incorporated into other uses. Fencing around the perimeter of the area will ensure safety of park visitors during training sessions, which will continue to occur 10 - 12 times each calendar year. The fencing will also help to delineate the area where temporary facilities for special events, such as porta-potties, event tents, and sign-in booths, should be located. MPT should work with the City of Tacoma to identify a source of funds to construct the vehicle training and event parking lot. Use of permeable paving (asphalt or concrete) materials is encouraged given the lot’s proximity to the First Creek and Swan Creek watersheds.

A reservable, group picnic area will be located at the east end of the event parking area. It will include a group shelter (open-air structure), additional grouped picnic tables, bike parking, barbeques and trash cans. The site will include a large, adjacent open lawn that can be used by groups for pick-up games, Frisbee, badminton or other picnic-type activities. Seasonal or other temporary restroom facilities may be located nearby, particularly for events.



## DOUGLAS FIR FOREST

The Douglas Fir Forest is located in the southwest portion of Swan Creek Park and will be accessible by from the Lister Uplands, 56<sup>th</sup> and 64<sup>th</sup> Street entrances and the future Quad-C Trail and First Creek bridge.

As noted in Chapter 1, the Douglas Fir Forest monoculture is not a vegetation pattern endemic to Swan Creek Park. The forest was cleared in the 1940s to provide construction materials for the old Salishan housing development. The existing fir trees were planted on cleared land over 60 years ago. In order to make the forest more fire-resistant, improve wildlife habitat, and provide a more diverse range of recreation opportunities, it will be necessary to actively manage this part of the park. Recommendations for restoration forestry are noted in Chapter 3 of this plan.

Natural vegetation in this area of Swan Creek Park should be noticeably more diverse and include hardwoods mixed with conifers of varying ages, heights and canopy sizes. This forest should also include a shrub and grass understory, gaps in the canopy, and downed wood that provides habitat for forest wildlife. Some restoration will also be needed to address erosion and other problems associated with the ongoing use of the area by dirt bikes and all terrain vehicles (ATVs). Vegetation management will also be done to reduce continuous fuel loads and lower the risk of urban forest fire in the park.

The forest will also provide recreation opportunities to those interested in hiking and mountain biking. Connecting to the Swan Creek Promenade, soft-surfaced bike and pedestrian trails will be added to provide a looped pathway through the Douglas Fir Forest. In addition, mountain bike cross country trails are envisioned for this area. The plan calls for an existing mountain biking organization, such as the Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance, to construct the course in consultation with an arborist to protect and enhance the forest canopy. As part of a partnership agreement, the partner organization would agree to maintain, operate, and police these trails. Providing new trails in the Douglas Fir Forest will help meet District-wide needs for mountain biking opportunities. Mountain bike groups desire 4-5 miles of trails to appeal to bikers of all ability and age ranges.



## WALLER ROAD UPLANDS

On the east side of Swan Creek, the Waller Road Uplands are Pierce County properties that support an important eastern section of the native vegetated buffer, extending along the top of the canyon to protect the creek watershed. The area is primarily forested, but a field inventory is needed to describe landscape condition, including major vegetation types, invasive species, erosion, fire issues, and other issues. Forest management will be a priority in this zone. However, the area also could potentially support BMX trails, such as a race course or technical trails. If developed, a separate entrance will be needed from Waller Road and should include a parking lot, bicycle parking, signage. Additional acquisitions in this area would support creek restoration and protection.



## PARK CIRCULATION

Improving park access and circulation is critical for Swan Creek Park to establish convenient site entrances, allow park users and neighbors to have easy access to park facilities and features, improve park safety, tie sites uses together, and better integrate the park within the existing community. Presently, large areas of the park are isolated from each other due to extreme terrain, obstructed entrances, unmanaged vegetation and inadequate signage and wayfinding features. Elements of the proposed circulation system address these and other shortcomings:

- New park entrances for vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians will be developed at Pioneer Way (at the north end of the park) and Lister Uplands (near the outdoor recreation zone). Improved/expanded parking will be added. These park entrances will include branded signage that directs park users to activity areas, trails, parking, event space and other facilities in Swan Creek Park. The signage will help with wayfinding and emergency service response, as well as help create a park identity.
- Beginning at the Pioneer Way entrance an ADA-accessible pathway will extend from the parking area to the creek bridge. The trail will include multiple creek

viewpoints to make the creek more accessible to all people, including those with mobility impairments or pushing baby strollers. At the bridge, the trail will continue as the soft-surfaced Swan Creek Trail, connecting to the southern park entrances at 56<sup>th</sup> and 64<sup>th</sup> Streets.

- The Swan Creek Park Promenade is envisioned as a paved, fully accessible, multi-use pathway that will park's upland areas. The promenade will extend from the 38<sup>th</sup> Street entrance to the Lister School entrance, with a loop around the Lister Uplands. The promenade's development will take advantage of existing asphalt roads. It will incorporate features such as benches, bicycle parking, mileage markers and interpretive signs. Pedestrian scale lighting may be included along the main thoroughfare.
- Connecting to the Promenade from the south, new soft-surfaced, looped pedestrian and bike paths will be provided through the Douglas Fir Forest. These trails will connect to trails that extend to the south and west of the park.
- A second trail connection to the creek canyon will be improved from the 56<sup>th</sup> Street entrance, which also connects to the south end of Swan Creek Park.
- The low-impact, soft surfaced Swan Creek Trail will continue to extend along the creek to connect the north and south park entrances. Improvements will be needed where trail erosion and drainage issues are present. As part of natural area enhancements and creek restoration efforts, the trail may be moved away from the creek in several places.



### III. GUIDELINES AND RECOMMENDATIONS



**THE CONCEPT PLAN FOR SWAN CREEK PARK** presents a vision for the park's future at build-out. This chapter provides details on how that vision will be achieved, addressing elements such as site programming, resource management, partnerships, land acquisition needs, interagency coordination, phasing and cost estimates.

#### OUTDOOR & ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMMING

As a greenspace, Swan Creek Park offers an unparalleled opportunity to expand outdoor and environmental programming beyond Metro Parks Tacoma's established environmental education centers at Tacoma Nature Center, the Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, and Northwest Trek Wildlife Park. The area of Tacoma around the park has very limited access to environmental education and outdoor programming. As noted in Chapter 1, a special workshop was convened with key recreation programming stakeholders and partners to discuss potential programming efforts. The purpose of this workshop was to shape an environmental programming vision for Swan Creek Park, develop innovative environmental education programs that make use of site opportunities, and identify potential design elements to support these programs.

##### *Vision for Programming*

Through the workshop, a vision for recreation programming at Swan Creek Park was defined: *Build a culture of stewardship one step at a time.*

This vision is based on incremental approaches that use the site, its ecosystems, and its development as the sources of ever-evolving programming opportunities. For example, over the course of a number of years, youth organizations could inventory plants, grow native species, and plant them. Over



time, the programming would evolve with the needs of the park.

### *Programming Recommendations*

- Use site features and natural resources to create experiential programs based on the following opportunities:
  - Outdoor activities, such as walking in the woods, investigating the stream, tracking wildlife, watching spawning salmon, identifying birds and plants, nature photography, geocaching, stargazing, orienteering, and other nature-based opportunities.
  - Stewardship activities, such as trail maintenance, invasive plant removal, restoration efforts, group work, park clean-up.
  - Extended outdoor immersion, such as camping and gardening.
- Support a variety of environmental education opportunities, including day and summer camps, formal classes, nature mapping, science clubs, ranger programs, school fieldtrips, family experiences, group activities, large group events, stewardship training, self-led or child-led learning opportunities (e.g., scavenger hunts, stamp programs, interpretive trail guides and coloring booklets). Specifically consider the following:
  - Add signage for understanding salmon life history and how restoration and enhancement activities benefit the ecology of the park.
  - Add educational material including a cross-section detail of a restored habitat and creek.
  - Increase education to recruit park stewards and create volunteer opportunities.
  - Increase awareness of programs and activities in the park.
- Provide programs related to urban agriculture, considering the following:
  - Support community gardening and associated programs and classes, such as composting, weed identification, and pest management.







- Re-invigorate the community garden with events such as potlucks and garden work parties.
- Encourage Tacoma residents to visit the gardens by offering harvest festivals, cooking demonstrations, and gardening and permaculture classes.
- Provide trail-related programs, such as mountain-biking events, hiking and backpacking classes, bird watching and nature interpretation classes, and mountain biking classes and events.
- Provide and/or support programs related to use of the remnant street network, such as youth bike safety rodeos and classes, walking classes and events such as Volksmarches, running programs and fun run events, and organized walks incorporating environmental topics such as native plants and birds.
- Support other types of place-based programming, such as camping, history of the site and cultural heritage.
- Provide programs for all ages, including multi-generational and multi-cultural programs and events.

#### *Implementation Approach*

- To build a culture of stewardship one step at a time, pursue an incremental and flexible approach to the site and programming to yield the best opportunities for meaningful community use and long-term stewardship.
- Designate a program coordinator for the site responsible for developing and evaluating programming needs and strategies.
- Establish and cultivate partnerships with the most capable and willing volunteer groups, local educators, non-profit groups, agencies and staff.
- Connect with nearby neighbors such as schools, neighborhood associations, child care centers, and churches to address programming needs and interests.
- Create a process to regularly check in with interested groups to assess changing programming needs and interests.

- Publicize Swan Creek opportunities so that schools, youth groups, and other youth programs use the site more frequently.
  - Utilize eblasts, website updates.
  - Announce activities in existing group newsletters.
  - Provide park information signs.
- Provide flexible facilities that can be used for multiple types of programming, and ensure that storage is designed in to the park to support programming and events.
- Consider providing transportation to get people to park programs (e.g., a shuttle, van, or school bus).

## PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLIST ACCESS

One of the key premises behind the development of Swan Creek Park is that this greenspace should emphasize on-site circulation for pedestrians, bicyclists, and users of other forms of non-motorized transportation. While vehicular access is provided at two key entrances, the majority of the park is not accessible to automotive uses. Park entries and parking areas are located at the perimeter of the park, so bike and pedestrian access is extremely important to reach facilities and different places within the large park site. Moving through the site while being away from the motorized vehicles prevalent in the urban environment is a defining feature of Swan Creek Park.

Chapter 2 described plans for a promenade, trails and wayfinding signage to support site circulation. Additional recommendations to support pedestrian and bicycle use are noted below.

- Provide plentiful appropriate support amenities and site furnishings for pedestrian and bike use, such as drinking fountains, benches, bike racks, covered bike parking, shoe mud-removers by restrooms and buildings, etc.
- Consider storage lockers for programming and gardening equipment, so that park users can leave equipment in a secure location when traveling to other areas of the park.





- Provide trail maps online or in print that visitors may take as they hike or bike through the park.
- Provide interpretive brochures (and numbered reference points) along trails for self-guided educational opportunities and navigation.
- Provide pet waste stations to encourage owners to clean up after leashed dogs on trails.
- Consider bike rental programs for park users to rent or borrow bicycles when visiting the park.
- Cultivate partnerships with bicycle clubs and associations to host bike safety and skills programs and events at the park.
- Provide informational bike signage at major park entrances to educate cyclists about hand-signals and etiquette (use of bells or an audible signal when approaching pedestrians from behind).
- In addition to wayfinding signage, provide mileage markers on trails for park visitors to be able to track walking and biking distances.
- Clearly mark appropriate trail uses to avoid trail-use conflicts, such as pedestrians on mountain biking trails.
- Consider painting a center line on multi-purpose paved trails to indicate two-directional pedestrian and bicycle traffic.
- Display “pack it in, pack it out” or “leave only footprints” signage for areas of the park that do not have trash receptacles.
- Mark or fence areas that are off-limits for pedestrian or bicycle use because of hazardous conditions or environmental considerations (e.g., restoration areas, wetlands, sensitive habitat.)
- Mark (using pavement markings) or sign areas where bicyclists should dismount and walk their bicycles to avoid user conflicts or unsafe conditions (e.g., steep slopes).
- Close or block informal trails, remnant ATV or motorbike trails, or other undesignated impact areas to allow restoration.
- Use bollards, gates, or other attractive elements to discourage vehicular access, while maintaining visibility and park character.

- Post information in community garden kiosks to inform site users of appropriate times, events, or circumstances when vehicles may access the orchard or garden areas.
- Work with the City of Tacoma, Tacoma Housing Authority and the County to ensure that crosswalks and roadways near park entries are pedestrian and bicycle-friendly.
- Work with the Pierce Transit to retain transit stops that serve the park.

## MANAGEMENT OF UPLAND FORESTS

Northwest conifer forests west of the Cascade Mountains, like the one at Swan Creek Park, have lost habitat diversity and structure primarily due to past clearcut logging. The forested upland terrace at Swan Creek Park is a natural Douglas fir forest that grew in place after logging many decades ago. This forest is fairly dense, uniform in age, and homogeneous in composition (lacking diversity). The forest is prone to fire because of its uniformity, the density of fire-susceptible trees, and presence of salal in the understory, which can be very fire-prone during the dry season. Given the park's surrounding residential uses, the potential fire hazard is also a risk for nearby neighbors.

To serve better as forest habitat, the Swan Creek forest ideally should have fewer, more irregularly-spaced trees, larger trees, dead trees both standing (snags) and on the ground (down woody debris) (Figure 2). There should be small, variable-sized gaps in the canopy, and a greater diversity of tree species that provide a more diverse habitat (food and shelter) for wildlife. Visual preference research indicates that people prefer a more mature, more visually-diverse forest. And forests like this are more fire resistant and resilient because the fuels are more dispersed both vertically and horizontally.

Young, simple forests like the existing one at Swan Creek may evolve very gradually towards structurally complex older forests like that described above, but without a nudge, young dense forests can also simply stagnate (stop growing) or burn up before they diversify.





Upland Forest - Existing

- uniform douglas fir
- dense
- no snags
- continuous fuels



Upland Forest - Proposed

- canopy gaps
- mixed species
- mixed ages
- snags and down wood
- discontinuous fuels

Figure 2: Upland Forest Management

Pro-active management of the upland forest can nudge it in the direction described above. Some trees should be removed periodically, perhaps once every 5-15 years. Removing trees selectively reduces competition and speeds the growth of remaining trees, opens niches for other trees to grow, and breaks up canopy fuels (so that if a fire occurs, it will skip around rather than burn through everything.)

Restoration forestry recommendations include developing a forest management strategy to:

- Remove individual trees and small gaps (clusters of trees) every 5-15 years or as needed.
- Plant maple, cedar, hemlock, and possibly a few other species to create habitat diversity and build fire resistance.
- Leave some dead trees standing and on the ground for habitat and soil formation.

## RIPARIAN & STREAM PRESERVATION AND ENHANCEMENT

Swan Creek is a relatively intact, dynamic urban stream that carries a large sediment load. The heavy sediment causes the channel to shift back and forth and has established a braided pattern. As described in Chapter 1, springs and seeps along the lower canyon create difficult conditions for trail maintenance. The existing trail along the creek is closer to the creek than is optimal (due to the steepness of the canyon) and requires continual maintenance. It is possible to re-locate portions of the trail away from the creek and to reduce maintenance by building more boardwalk or puncheon sections across wet areas. Because parts of the canyon are still recovering from past disturbances, there are some opportunities to enhance riparian vegetation, primarily in the lower canyon. In the Clear/Clarks Creek Basin Plan, May 2006, a variety of projects were proposed to improve the Swan Creek subbasin, including the creek and the area that drains to the creek. These projects were, and in many cases, are still needed to address flooding, erosion, and aquatic habitat problems.





On May 19, 2011, aquatic experts, natural resource management, water quality and park planning staff from the Puyallup Tribe, Pierce County, City of Tacoma and Metro Parks Tacoma met to discuss ways to improve the fish habitat of Swan Creek. This group outlined several “restoration alternatives” for creek enhancement. These included:

- **Dam Removal & Footbridge Upgrade:** Opening a wider channel at the old dam site would allow better upstream access for fish and help dissipate energy released downstream. This would require removing the remnant dam foundation and replacing the current footbridge at the site with a longer span.
- **Culvert Widening:** Opening the channel downstream by widening the culvert (north of the park) would allow sediment to be carried directly to the river, by-passing the existing sedimentation pond and reducing maintenance costs. This would help restore natural function to the entire creek system.
- **Riparian Habitat and Trail Enhancement:** Riparian enhancement should focus on the lower portion of creek, starting with removal of invasives species (knotweed, policeman’s helmet, herb Robert, and blackberry). Some tree planting, particularly western red cedar, can be done where weed removal includes ground disturbance. Establishment of red cedar and other conifers will create a long term source of large wood for aquatic habitat. Better access and visiting opportunities (viewpoints) can be developed adjacent to park entrance and sedimentation pond as well as along the creek. Interpretive signage should be employed to reduce inadvertent impacts due to visitation.
- **In-Stream Habitat Enhancement:** Strategically place engineered log jams could help reduce stream erosion, down-cutting and sediment transport downstream, which in turn would enhance fish refuge, spawning and migration habitat. These could also help protect some trail segments from stream undercutting.

Additional recommendations for creek enhancement include:

- Continue to work with the Puyallup Tribe, Pierce County and other agencies to protect and restore the salmon run in the creek.
- Conduct a sediment source evaluation to better understand the dynamics of the stream. This evaluation should precede replacement of the footbridge and removal of dam remnants. It should determine the source and volume of sediment, plus identify the impact of the sediment on fish.
- Evaluate the sediment pond maintenance process (including pond access, dredging, sediment removal and storage), noting its impacts on natural resources and the built environment.
- Restrict bicycles, dirt bikes and ATVs from accessing the canyon and creek.
- Encourage dog owners to keep pets out of the creek and to properly bag and dispose of pet waste.



## EDGE FOREST DESIGN & MANAGEMENT

The Swan Creek Park Master Plan includes a proposed buffer, or transition zone, between the canyon and more intensively used areas in the upper west part of the park. This buffer is envisioned as a semi-natural mixed woodland with widely spaced or clumped trees and a mostly open understory of native grasses and wildflowers. The buffer zone will provide:

- A shaded habitat that discourages the spread of invasive species from the upper park into the canyon.
- A fire resistant vegetation structure that helps prevent fires from spreading down into the canyon or up into residential areas from fires originating in the canyon.
- An aesthetic, naturalistic edge for the upper use area trails.
- Edge habitat, especially for songbirds.
- A visual and sensory transition from the more developed area to the natural area.





Recommendations for the design and management of the edge include:

- Flag existing trees to be retained and patches of invasive species to be removed.
- Replant with a mix of native trees, grasses and wildflowers.
- Once the edge is established, monitor it regularly to identify and remove invasive species.
- Complete a high mowing once or twice a year to help keep the area clear of brush and visually open.



## NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

### Invasive Species

Despite its urban surroundings, the Swan Creek canyon is remarkably free of invasive weedy species. English ivy, clematis, fillary, Himalayan blackberry, and herb Robert are all present in the canyon, but are mostly in small patches and isolated at the site. Upland areas have many more invasive species, as well as some large areas of heavy infestation. Surveys by Washington Native Plant Society members list dozens of invasive species at what they refer to as the Swan Creek Natural Area. Most of the species on this list are relatively harmless. They will occupy recently disturbed areas for a short time only. But others are long-lived and can out-compete native species unless they are controlled.

Most invasive species only grow in open, disturbed areas, but a few are shade-tolerant and can invade otherwise undisturbed forests. These are the species that pose risks to the canyon. They include ivy, holly, and periwinkle.

The suggested management approach includes:

- Employ an Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR) approach in the canyon and buffer area.
- Regularly monitor and aggressively remove high risk invasives in the canyon and buffer area as soon as possible after detection.
- Prevent entry of invasive species by providing informative signs at entry points to the canyon.

- In the upland area, prevent further spread of invasives.
- As resources are available, gradually reduce the footprint of the highest risk invasive species in the upland area.

## Rare Plants

Native plant *Lathyrus torreyi* (Torrey's Pea) is present in several locations within Swan Creek Park. This perennial is considered Threatened in Washington State, and has been identified by the USFWS as a Species of Concern. Pierce County is considered to be its northernmost range, but it is limited to the Puget Trough physiographic province. The species often appears in forest openings, especially along trail edges. It forms dense patches where competition from other species is low. To protect this species, the following is recommended:

- Map and inventory Torrey's Pea locations prior to any trail or site development in the southern portion of the park.
- Protect Torrey's Pea plants from potential damage that could be caused by trail and site development.
- In upland forest management, consider opportunities to enhance Torrey's Pea through tree thinning and the creation of small, variable gaps.



## PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships with local residents, groups, non-profits, agencies and other jurisdictions will continue to be important in the future development, maintenance and operations of Swan Creek Park. Many volunteers and groups have established a vested interest in this site, as illustrated by the number of people who participated in the master planning process. Table 1 notes many of these groups and future opportunities to work with them to support locally grown food, outdoor recreation, and natural resource stewardship and education.

Table 1: Partnership Opportunities

Potential Partners	Locally Grown Food	Outdoor Recreation	Natural Resource Stewardship & Education
Local Residents	✓	✓	✓
First Creek Middle School	✓	✓	✓
Lister Elementary School	✓	✓	✓
Puyallup Tribe Child Care Center		✓	✓
Salishan Hope IV Community	✓	✓	
Boys & Girls Club		✓	✓
Girl Scouts		✓	✓
Puyallup Tribe of Indians	✓	✓	✓
Tacoma Housing Authority*	✓		✓
City of Tacoma*	✓		✓
Pierce County*		✓	✓
AmeriCorps volunteers			✓
Sustainable Community All Over Puget Sound (SCALLOPS)	✓		
Grow-Local Tacoma-Pierce County	✓		
Puget Sound Fresh	✓		
Sustainable Tacoma Pierce (STP)	✓		
Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance		✓	
Pierce County Conservation District			✓
Cascade Land Conservancy	✓		✓
Friends of Swan Creek Watershed			✓
Tahoma Audubon Society			✓
Tacoma Wheelmen's Club		✓	
South Puget Sound Salmon Enhancement Group (SPSSEG)			✓
People for Puget Sound			✓
Local Universities and Colleges			✓
Local Outdoor Businesses such as REI and Bicycle Shops		✓	✓

\*See also *Interagency Coordination*

MPT will need to involve different types of partners in these three program areas to support a variety of projects, including:

- Capital development
- Maintenance
- Revegetation and resource restoration
- Programming and events
- Funding support
- Expertise and research
- Marketing and future outreach

Specific recommendations for partner involvement include:

- Work with Pierce County to develop the Pioneer Way entry to Swan Creek Park.
- Work with Pierce County, Puyallup Tribe and other fisheries organizations to conduct a sediment source study of Swan Creek and to make needed downstream and instream capital improvements to enhance fish habitat of the Creek.
- Work with Pierce County and a partner organization to develop a BMX or bicycle challenge course on the Pierce County gravel mine off Waller Road.
- Coordinate with the Cascade Land Conservancy's Grow Local Program on the re-establishment, expansion and management of the community garden.
- Partner with Sustainable Tacoma Pierce and other volunteers to establish permaculture at Swan Creek Park, including fruit trees and other edible plants. Begin with a test area and phase in future expansion after evaluation of the test area.
- Coordinate with the City of Tacoma and the Tacoma Housing Authority to develop a new footbridge over First Creek from Salishan, connecting to Swan Creek Park from 48th Street.
- Partner with the Pierce County, City of Tacoma and the School District to develop a new footbridge over First Creek from First Creek Middle School/Quad-C Trail connecting to Swan Creek Park.
- Find a partner to develop and operate a ropes course or challenge course.
- Partner with Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance to develop and maintain mountain bike trails.



## LAND ACQUISITION

The Swan Creek Park Master Plan envisions strategic land acquisition to consolidate inholdings and help protect the creek and canyon.

Both fee simple acquisition (buying the land outright) and conservation easements should be considered to protect the creek. For areas outside of Metro Parks Tacoma’s service boundary, Pierce County or other entity should initiate any land acquisition or conservation easement efforts. Specific recommendations for land acquisition include the following:

- Purchase park inholdings on a willing-seller basis. Consider other options (life estates, conservation easements) if needed to consolidate landholdings.
- In the long-term, Metro Parks Tacoma or its partners should seek to acquire key parcels as noted on the Preferred Option Plan (Figure 1).

## INTERAGENCY COORDINATION

As previously discussed, Swan Creek Park is situated both within the City of Tacoma and Pierce County. Only part of the park is located within Metro Parks Tacoma’s service boundary. In Pierce County, different parts of the park are managed by different departments, such as Pierce County Parks and Recreation, Pierce County Water Programs, and Pierce County Public Works & Utilities. By necessity, implementing this Master Plan will require coordination between multiple agencies and departments. In addition to MPT, Pierce County and the City of Tacoma, the agencies involved with Swan Creek Park include the Tacoma Housing Authority and Puyallup Tribe.

It is important to note that each of these agencies have different focuses and priorities. They also operate under different rules, restrictions, and other operating requirements. Logistically, involving the right person or people in activities and communication will require its own coordination—but this master planning effort has established a good foundation for future efforts in park development, programming, and management.



Interagency coordination will be particularly challenging for the environmental review of projects proposed for implementation. Since part of site is subject to City of Tacoma regulations, and the other part is subject to Pierce County regulations, MPT needs to be cognizant of the different requirements of each agency. Many of these environmental requirements were noted in Chapter 1.

Recommendations for interagency coordination include:

- Establish formal agreements or MOUs for projects requiring multiple-agency coordination.
- Coordinate with and support Pierce County as the environmental review and permitting agency for the Pioneer Entry way improvements and modifications to the bridge structure across Swan Creek.
- MPT should continue to be responsible for State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) review for the entire park.

## IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH

In keeping with the master plan itself, the approach to developing Swan Creek Park will be flexible and opportunity-based. Similar to the vision for programming at the site, the development of the park is envisioned as a community effort, where the building of the park also helps build the community itself.

While a key player, Metro Parks Tacoma is not the only entity involved with the evolution of Swan Creek Park. Many different agencies will be involved in both capital improvements and operations. Appendix B presents a full list of projects relating to the development and enhancement of Swan Creek Park, noting the agency (or agencies and partners) who will take lead responsibility for each project.

From this list, a set of high priority projects were identified. High priority projects are those that will create a stronger identity and sense of safety, establish the core activity areas in the park, and begin the needed ecological restoration. These projects are considered integral to later development at the park, which will take place as funding allows. A project is



considered a high priority project if it meets one or more of the following criteria:

- Improves park entry and access to facilitate current activities and future park development
- Takes advantage of current site resources that, with low-cost improvements, could dramatically improve site function and use (such as the Promenade)
- Improves or enhances existing resources that are highly-valued by the community (such as the community garden and Gathering Place)
- Will help establish new core uses in the park (such as picnicking and urban camping)
- Provides starter money and/or infrastructure that will allow an identified partner to move forward with project development
- Supports critical goals for ecological restoration

While some of the highest priority projects will be funded through the approved 2005 bond measure, additional funding will be needed to complete all of these projects.

### MPT Priority Projects

Table 2 presents the high priority projects for which Metro Parks Tacoma is the lead or is anticipated to play a primary role. The table organizes projects by theme and identifies their location and anticipated cost. Planning level costs are estimated in 2011 dollars, and do not take inflation into account. The estimated amounts are based on initial capital improvements only, not including future costs for maintenance, operations, or continued restoration and monitoring.

Table 2: MPT High Priority Projects

Park Location	Project	Description	MPT Role	Cost
<b>Park Entrances</b>				
Pioneer Way Portal	Pioneer Way entrance	Provide improved entry signs, an improved parking lot and secure bike parking.	Partner with Pierce County	\$100,000
Gathering Place	42 <sup>nd</sup> Street entrance	Develop a pedestrian and bike entrance at 42 <sup>nd</sup> Street, enhancing connections to Salishan.	Lead	\$65,000
Lister Uplands	Lister School/T Street entrance	Develop the entrance from T Street for autos, pedestrians and bicyclists. Includes gated entry, paved parking area (50 spaces) and signage.	Lead	\$175,000
Douglas Fir Forest	56 <sup>th</sup> Street entrance	Develop a pedestrian and bike entrance from 56 <sup>th</sup> Street. Includes elimination of the tire barriers and improved visibility into the park.	Lead	\$65,000
Douglas Fir Forest	64 <sup>th</sup> Street entrance	Develop a pedestrian and bike entrance from 64 <sup>th</sup> Street, with trails linking to the upland area as well as to the Swan Creek canyon.	Lead	\$65,000
<b>Total Park Entrances</b>				<b>\$470,000</b>
<b>Core Activity Areas</b>				
Parkwide	Signage package	Design a signage package for the park; fabrication and installation of signs.	Lead	\$250,000
Gathering Place	Rebuilding the community garden	Rebuild the community garden, and expand to include fruit trees and other edible plants.	Partner with City of Tacoma	\$100,000
Gathering Place	Renovation of the Gathering Place	Renovate the Gathering Place and enhance its features to support neighborhood use.	Lead	\$250,000



Park Location	Project	Description	MPT Role	Cost
<b>Core Activity Areas (continued)</b>				
Gathering Place, Lister Uplands	Development of the Promenade	Develop the Promenade. Define the route using paint and signage and provide site furnishings along the route.	Lead	\$100,000
Lister Uplands	Off-leash area/dog park	Develop a fenced off-leash area with large and small dog zones, signage and trash receptacle.	Lead	\$125,000
Lister Uplands	Flexible use building	Develop a flexible use building with a restroom and showers, classroom/meeting room, and picnic shelter.	Lead	\$2,500,000
Lister Uplands	Picnic area	Develop a large group picnic shelter (50 to 75 people) and dedicated picnic area with groupings of tables. Includes barbecues, trash receptacles, and open turf play area.	Lead	\$600,000
Lister Uplands	Special event/training area	Develop a fenced, gated, permeable asphalt event area, suitable for public safety training and event parking. Includes bike parking and painted stalls. Improve existing roadway to lot.	Partner with City of Tacoma (MPT improves roadway)	\$50,000
Lister Uplands	Pathway network	Restore the existing roadway network as walk/bike/roll pathway system. Incorporate new wayfinding and informational signs as well as mileage markers. Add asphalt overlay where necessary.	Lead	\$300,000
Lister Uplands	Urban campground	Develop tent area, picnic tables, fire rings, seating area, composting toilet and kiosk with electricity and running water.	Lead	\$500,000
Lister Uplands	Ropes Course	Install low ropes course or similar challenge features.	Partner with WSU	\$15,000

Chapter 3: Guidelines and Recommendations

Park Location	Project	Description	MPT Role	Cost
<b>Core Activity Areas (continued)</b>				
Douglas Fir Forest	Mountain bike park	Provide space for a mountain bike park, sufficient to develop 4-5 miles of cross-country, ecologically sensitive trails.	Provide location and seed money	\$15,000
Pioneer Way Portal	Accessible nature trail	Develop an accessible trail to bridge with interpretive signs and features.	Partner with Pierce County	\$100,000
Swan Creek Canyon, Pioneer Way Portal	Trail management	Retain canyon trail as a hiking trail, including selective relocations further from the creek or boardwalks where feasible.	Lead	\$150,000
<b>Total Core Activity Areas</b>				<b>\$5,055,000</b>
<b>Ecological Restoration</b>				
Douglas Fir Forest	Torrey's Pea inventory	Map and inventory Torrey's Pea locations; develop and implement protection strategies.	Lead	\$35,000
Parkwide	Native vegetation buffer	Establish a setback from the top of canyon and plant native vegetation to serve as a buffer between upland area and creek.	Lead	\$250,000
Parkwide	Invasive species removal	Identify and remove invasive species (random evaluation and initial treatment of 50 acres).	Lead	\$35,000
Lister Uplands	Permaculture, understory and plantings	Retain trees and develop an understory that integrates a food forest.	Provide location and seed money	\$15,000
Douglas Fir Forest	Forest management plan	Develop a sustainable forest management plan to improve the forest for ecological and recreational functions and reduce fire risk.	Lead	\$40,000
Douglas Fir Forest	Acquisition of inholdings	On a willing seller basis, purchase inholdings.	Lead	N/A
<b>Total Ecological Restoration</b>				<b>\$375,000</b>

## Cost Summary

Approximately \$5.9 million in projects have been identified as priorities for site enhancement and development. The majority of this funding is associated with establishing the six new core activity areas in the park (Table 3). The total exceeds the \$1 million in approved bond funds for site improvements. However, some of these costs may be defrayed through the use of volunteers to implement improvements and restore habitat.

Table 3: Estimated Costs for Priority Projects

<b>Improvements</b>	<b>Estimated Costs</b>
Park Entrances	\$470,000
Core Activity Areas	\$5,055,000
Ecological Restoration	\$375,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$5,900,000</b>

Note: These include planning level costs in 2011 dollars for projects funded by MPT. The total does not include funds for land acquisition.

These projects represent an important first step in achieving the community's vision for Swan Creek Park. As MPT coordinates with key partners and identifies funding sources for implementation, the District will be able to define a more specific timeline and phasing strategy for the implementation of high priority projects, along with the other capital projects noted in Appendix B of this plan.

## Priority Projects for Others

There are other projects of high importance to Swan Creek Park and its stakeholders, which are not within the jurisdiction of Metro Parks Tacoma.

Projects within Pierce County include:

- Source evaluation study for Swan Creek

### Chapter 3: Guidelines and Recommendations

- Recommended creek projects (dam removal, engineered log jams, etc.)
- Land protection on the east side of Swan Creek Park

Projects within the City of Tacoma include:

- On-street connections from Quad-C Trail
- 48th Street pedestrian bridge

Pierce County and the City of Tacoma should coordinate with Metro Parks Tacoma on the phasing of these projects.