

CITY OF WESTERVILLE
PARKS AND RECREATION
DEPARTMENT

GREENWAY PLAN

2012/Update 2015



National Gold Medal Dept.

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City of Westerville Parks and Recreation Greenway Plan

2015 Update

Introduction

The City of Westerville Greenways Plan is updated to remain current with the Westerville Parks and Recreation PROS 2020 Comprehensive Plan. The City and the Department have recognized the need for preservation of area greenways and maintain this plan to accomplish that goal.

Historically the City of Westerville as looked to incorporate recommendations from three regional greenway plans; Greenways: A Plan for Franklin County, Greenways: A Plan for Alum Creek and the Lower Alum Creek Watershed Action Plan. This update constitutes a specialized greenway plan for the City of Westerville while retaining the regional perspective.

The plan identifies existing greenways and natural resource areas setting forth guidelines for their management to ensure their function in the natural environment and provide public exposure to these critical areas.

The City of Westerville actively manages greenways as a linkage of park system components to form a continuous park environment, emphasize harmony with the natural environment, allow uninterrupted and safe pedestrian and other non motorized movement between parks throughout the community, provide citizens a natural resource base and enhance property values.

The City of Westerville also manages natural resource areas as land set aside for preservation of significant natural resources, remnant landscapes, open space and visual aesthetics and buffering.

The preservation of Westerville's greenways is regarded to benefit the community in a multitude of ways including:

- Protection of natural environmental systems; water quality, air quality and wildlife habitat. Greenways provide natural buffers that protect the riparian corridors serving to filter runoff of sediment and pollution. Air quality improvements are the result of preserving large plant communities that filter the air of pollutants during photosynthesis and a potential reduction in air pollution by providing an alternative to fossil fuel burning motorized transportation.
- Protection of developed facilities from flood damage by preserving as open space the naturally occurring floodplain. This preservation not only eliminates the risk of damage to facilities that may have been constructed in these areas but allows the watercourse to perform naturally reducing the risk of flood damage to facilities that may exist both upstream and downstream.
- Providing for a healthy active lifestyle through pedestrian and bicycle transportation activities supported by greenways. Path systems provided within established greenways provide the opportunity to bicycle, walk, jog, hike or skate to improve personal health.

- Encouraging economic development through the provision of greenspace which has been shown to increase property values in the surrounding area. The identity created by the establishment of greenways and parklands makes the community attractive to residents and businesses alike.
- Providing nature related educational opportunities that have become downplayed over time. Greenways provide the foundation of natural outdoor recreational opportunities through both programmed activities and self guided experiences enhanced with interpretive signage.
- Provide watercourse access for activities such as canoeing, kayaking and fishing. This allows for exposure to opportunities for these activities not likely to be readily available in the urban environment.

The plan identifies target areas for potential expansion of the Westerville greenway system and indicates other mid range and long range goals for development of infrastructure systems and programming.

City of Westerville Existing Greenways

The City of Westerville currently manages 112,311 acres of greenways and 80,547 acres of natural resource areas. There are 239,915 acres of developed parkland and facilities adjacent to listed greenways serving also as part of the larger greenway system in Westerville. The managed greenway acreage includes a total of 436,773 acres and 12.64 miles of bikeways, paths and boardwalks.

Greenway areas include:

- Alum Creek Greenway 15,287 acres
 - Contiguous to the north and south of Ernest Cherrington Park acres currently serving as natural preservation for the Alum Creek watershed with limited bikeway inclusion.
- Chase Bank Greenway (Park Meadow) 5.93 acres
 - Contains two engineered retention ponds and bikeway providing connection to the bikeway system Managed by Franklin County Metro Parks serving the City of Columbus. The ponds are treated for algae and the space is maintained in a combination of mowed turf and no mow buffer.
- Chase Bank Greenway (Cooper Rd) 5.93 acres
 - Natural preservation area of the Alum Creek watershed containing portion of the Alum Creek Bikeway and connection to Cooper Rd.
- Bean/Alum Creek Greenway 14.07 acres
 - Currently undeveloped serving as natural preservation of the Alum Creek watershed north of Polaris Parkway.
- Brookstone Retention .4 acres
 - Contiguous to the northern boundary of Westerville City Schools McVay Elementary property. Contains road frontage with a bikeway in the planning stages of redevelopment.
- County Line Acres Bikeway 4.621 acres
 - Predominantly bikeway development sharing a right of way with overhead electrical transmission lines. Area along the bikeway is maintained as mowed turf.
- County Line Woods 2,309 acres
 - Undeveloped wooded area contiguous to the Westerville Bikeway and County Line Rd.
- Maughlin Greenway 2.45 acres
 - Undeveloped wooded parcel bordering the west bank of Alum Creek to the north of County line Rd serving currently as natural riparian protection of the Alum Creek Watershed.
- Otterbein (East of Cleveland Avenue) 2.69 acres
 - Undeveloped open space contiguous to park property bordering Alum Creek. Currently maintained by Otterbein University for various outdoor sports training area. Serving as floodplain and riparian protection for the Alum Creek Watershed. Site is maintained as a combination of mowed turf and no mow natural area.
- Polaris Parkway Greenway 18,378 acres
 - Predominantly maintained road right of way to the south of Polaris Parkway containing bikeway. Borders Alum Creek on the furthest western terminus of

the greenway. Area is predominately maintained as mowed turf with limited natural areas along the route.

- Spring Grove North Greenway 14,932 acres
 - Predominantly bikeway development sharing a right of way with overhead electrical transmission lines. Greenway encompasses the Spring Grove retention pond in the flow of the Spring Run waterway. This natural area provides riparian protection for the Spring Run watershed. The area along the bikeway is maintained as mowed turf. The retention pond banks are natural with intermittent invasive plant species control and native plant species installation.
- Spring Valley Greenway 5,107 acres
 - Renovated in 2015, area contains a tributary of Alum Creek. Bounded by residential properties the site contains pathway and is providing riparian protection for the Alum Creek watershed. The area is maintained in a combination of minimal mowed turf and wooded natural.
- Springborough Greenway 7,631 acres
 - Minimally developed area containing bikeway that is bounded by residential properties. Area along the bikeway is maintained as mowed turf.
- Westerville Bikeway 12,576 acres
 - Predominantly bikeway development providing a north – south transportation route through nearly the entirety of the community. Area along the bikeway is maintained as mowed turf in combination with very limited wooded fencerows.

Natural Resource Areas include:

- Boyer Nature Preserve 11.43 acres
 - Minimally developed wooded area featuring a two acre shallow water pond, several vernal pools and good wetland vegetation diversity. Located as part of a larger natural drainage system including the College Knolls Retention and County Line Acres Retention that are all portions of the Spring Run watershed to Alum Creek. The site is maintained as natural wooded surrounding the pond. Invasive plant species control and native species planting have occurred annually for several years.
- College Knolls Retention 14,674 acres
 - Minimally developed wetland area as part of the Spring Run watershed. Site is maintained as a natural wetland with mowed turf bordering the residential properties.
- Ernest Cherrington Preserve 18,209 acres
 - Minimally developed wooded area bordering the east bank of Alum Creek. Area serves as the location for the Community Garden program and contains both paved and grassed trails. Grassed trails and area surrounding the community gardens is maintained as mowed turf while the balance of the site is natural wooded.
- Heritage Estates Retention 5,494 acres
 - Minimally developed retention area with area surrounding the pond maintained as mowed turf. Pond outflows to the College Knolls Retention area.
- Heritage Wetlands 5.5 acres
 - Wetland site within a developed park consisting of mainly mitigated wetlands. The park site borders the west bank of Alum Creek. The wetland cells are

managed for control of invasive species and native species plantings and monitoring of water levels.

- Mariner's Cove Wetland 5.956 acres
 - Minimally developed wooded wetland containing a recycled lumber boardwalk. This area inputs to the Spring Run watershed. The site is maintained as natural wooded.
- Otterbein Lake 19.284 acres
 - Minimally developed area containing a man-made lake that was a former borrow pit. The site is in close proximity to the west bank of Alum Creek and contains bikeway and natural areas. Invasive plant species control and native species plantings have taken place annually for several years.

Parklands serving as greenways include:

- Alum Creek North Park 11.93 acres
 - Developed adjacent to the east bank of Alum Creek containing bikeway, shelter, restroom, playground, amphitheater, baseball field, basketball and open space. Site is maintained as mowed turf.
- Alum Creek South Park 30.377 acres
 - Developed adjoining the east bank of Alum Creek to contain bikeway, skate park, BMX course and open space. Some area kept as no mow areas to aid in the function of riparian protection for Alum Creek.
- Astronaut Grove Park 2.09 acres
 - Developed as passive park space on the east bank of Alum Creek including walkways and a sculpture monument while the site is maintained as mowed turf.
- Brooksedge Park 3.954 acres
 - Developed as a dog park to the east of the Chase Bank Greenway in proximity to Alum Creek maintained as mowed turf
- First Responders Park 0.276 acres
 - Developed as a passive memorial park containing several monuments and bikeway. Park is contiguous to the Westerville Senior Center property.
- Heritage Park 52.278 acres
 - Park is located on the east bank of Alum Creek and contains the Heritage Wetlands. Remainder of site is a combination of wooded and open space containing bikeway, shelters, playground, and a renovated historical farm site used as a rental facility. Site also contains retention ponds that outlet to Alum Creek.
- Highlands Park 40.94 acres
 - Park site is developed to contain bikeway, an outdoor swimming pool complex, baseball diamonds and open space utilized as soccer fields. The site also contains a renovated wetlands area along the flow path of a tributary to Spring Run. The swimming pool development utilized bioswales, a rain garden and pervious pavement to control storm flow greatly reducing the amount of runoff entering the storm sewer; it is mostly filtered through the wetlands and returned to the Spring Run tributary.
- Huber Village Park 27.561 acres

- Developed site including bikeway, shelter, restroom, baseball fields, playground and open space. The site is near the northern terminus of the Springborough Greenway serving as a continuation of this greenway.
- Westerville Senior Center 2.0 acres
 - Site developed to contain bikeway and a 9,800 square foot senior recreational facility on the east bank of Alum Creek.
- Spring Grove North Park 6,459 acres
 - Developed to contain bikeway, shelter, restroom, playground and open space. The park serves as a portion of the Spring Grove North Greenway near the eastern terminus of the greenway also utilizing right of way space associated with large overhead electrical transmission lines.
- Towers Park 15.06 acres
 - Developed parkland containing bikeway, shelter, restroom, baseball fields and open space. This area serves as a connection between the Spring Grove North Greenway and the County Line Acres Bikeway. This site utilizes right of way space associated with large overhead electrical transmission lines.
- Westerville Sports Complex 51.0 acres
 - Site developed on the east bank of Alum Creek containing bikeway, shelter restroom, playground and open space used for soccer. Park serves as a large riparian buffer for Alum Creek.

Conservation Easements

Various types of conservation easements have been established throughout Westerville to protect the natural resources of the community as land is developed. Existing easements include:

- 34 Conservation Easements
- 24 Tree Preservation Easements
- 17 plats involving 513 lots contain Drainage, Watercourse and Conservation Easements
- 23 Tree Preservation, Conservation and Bikepath Easements

Records detailing these easements remain on file in the Parks and Recreation Department administrative office.

General Greenway Establishment and Management Guidelines

- Preserve and protect existing greenway corridors, ravines, wetlands, flood plains and woodlands in Westerville from development for future generations.
- All greenway corridors shall be a minimum width of fifty feet (50'). A two hundred foot (200') width corridor is required along waterways measured from top of bank. A three hundred foot (300') width corridor is preferred to protect water quality.
- Develop existing detention basins into bio-retention or wetland site where appropriate.
- Establish greenbelt buffer areas separating residential areas from surrounding non-residential development.
- Adopt and institute recommendations from the following documents:
 - Greenways: A Plan for Franklin County
 - Greenways: A Plan for Alum Creek
 - Lower Alum Creek Watershed Action Plan.
- Maintain Public Access along Alum Creek and Big Walnut Creek

- Continue to preserve quality natural areas (greenways, ravines, waterways, flood plain, wetlands and woodlands) in collaboration with adjoining cities, townships and other public or private agencies.
- Monitor and manage conservation easements and greenways and maintain public/private easement data matrix.
- Encourage use of native species and control of invasive species relative to the plant community.
- Develop Natural Resource Management Plans for all greenways and natural areas.
- Provide nature interpretive facilities and increase educational programming where appropriate.
- Partner with Central Ohio Greenways (COG) and integrate signage program along Alum Creek and Big Walnut Greenways.
- No net loss of currently designated flood plain.

Regional Partnership Connections

The establishment and maintenance of the greenway system in the City of Westerville will always remain part of a larger regional greenway effort involving coordination with other agencies. These collaborations may take many forms including planning, maintenance agreements, signage coordination and potentially property acquisition. Partners in the greenway conservation effort include:

- Central Ohio Greenways (COG)
 - Westerville contains two trails included within the Central Ohio Greenways system; The Alum Creek Trail and the Big Walnut Trail. These trails are not complete regionally but the trail portions within the City of Westerville jurisdiction are mostly complete.
- Columbus and Franklin County Metro Parks
 - The City of Westerville has one Franklin County Metro Park on its southwestern border, Sharon Woods, and another contained within city limits in the southeastern portion of the city, Inniswood Gardens.
- City of Columbus
 - Westerville is bounded on the east by Hoover Reservoir which is managed by the City of Columbus. The area on the west bank of the reservoir contains the City's Sunbury Bikeway that also serves as the COG Big Walnut Trail. Maintenance of the physical trail is performed by Westerville while the surrounding property remains under the purview of the City of Columbus.
- State of Ohio Department of Natural Resources Parks Division
 - The Alum Creek State Park is situated to the northwest of the Westerville in close proximity to the city. Alum Creek State park contains a reservoir on the Alum Creek flow path and thus controls the flow of Alum Creek through Westerville. This also results in a natural greenway connection between Westerville and Alum Creek State Park though this connection involves many private property owners.
- Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC)
 - This commission is to serve as the regional voice for development and economic prosperity. An integral part of the MORPC mission is environmental sustainability in all phases of development which includes the preservation of

the natural environment where possible including the establishment of greenways.

- Blendon Township
 - Blendon Township borders Westerville to the east. The Township and the City have agreements in place relative to economic development and services including medic and fire.
- Genoa Township
 - Genoa Township borders Westerville to the north and is highly developed in the southern portion near Westerville with residential and retail areas. There are currently two trail connections between the Township and the City, the Ohio to Erie Trail and the trail along Africa Rd.
- The Ohio to Erie Trail
 - The Ohio to Erie Trail passes through the heart of Westerville along its route from Cincinnati to Cleveland, the local portion being the Westerville Bikeway. Westerville is poised to play a significant role as a point of interest on this major route. Westerville has constructed a shelter and restroom combination facility near the Uptown District serving as a bicycle hub for the area.
- Friends of Alum creek and Tributaries (FACT)
 - A local not for profit volunteer based organization focused on the preservation and sustainable management of the Lower Alum Creek Watershed. Fact often participates and sometimes leads volunteer programs to assist in this endeavor, many times through the collection of litter and removal of invasive plant species.

Future Westerville Greenway Vision

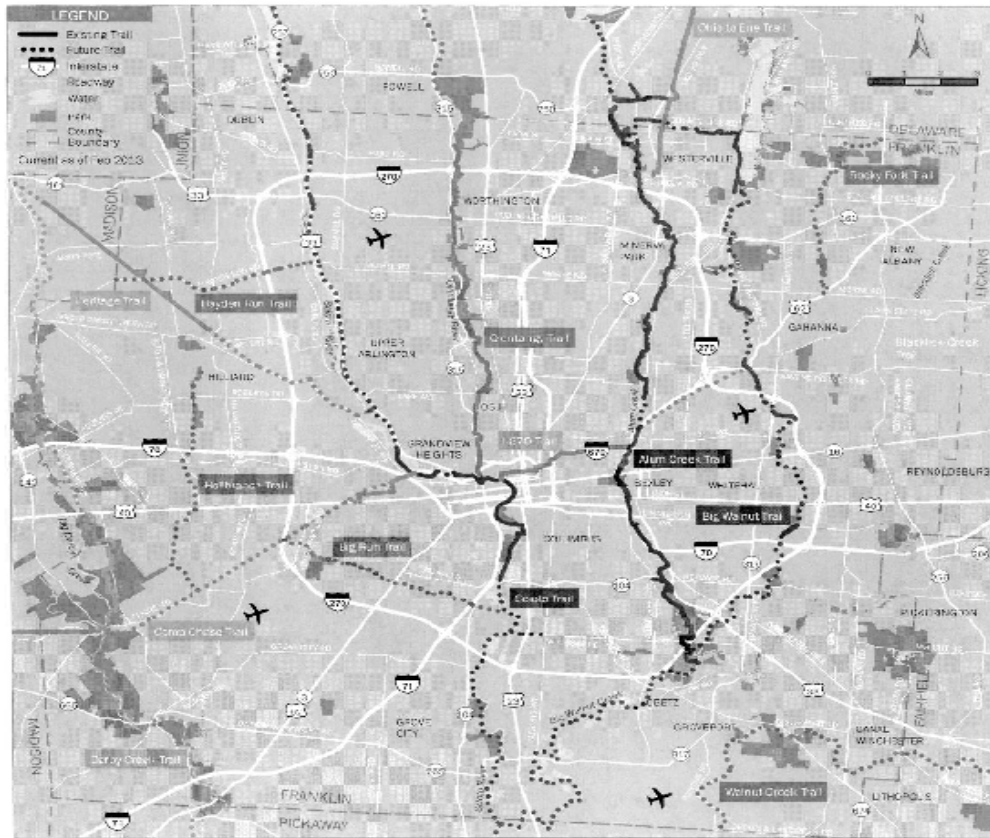
The City of Westerville as part of its ongoing quest to preserve the natural environment for the benefit of local residents, in part through the establishment and management of greenways, continually searches for improvements that can be made to the system. Items that are part of the vision of the future for the Westerville greenway system include:

- Exploring the potential of utilizing more natural areas along greenways, usually containing bikeway, to reduce the amount of mowed turf in the system. Westerville will maintain the standard of mowed turf along the edges of the bikeways to a minimum of two feet but there are large areas that could be explored for the installation of non mowed grasses or other native plantings. These areas of potential natural growth occur at many areas along the bikeway system.
- Natural water quality control in ponds that occur in Westerville greenways and other natural areas is an emerging possibility. There has been some success at other sites utilizing floating plant material for the purpose of phosphorus sequestration to reduce algae booms and reducing or eliminating the need for chemical control. Use of this technology in conjunction with other natural plantings in these pond areas should be explored.
- With Alum Creek providing a natural greenway from Westerville to the reservoir at Alum Creek State Park the City should not lose sight of future plans for a bikeway connection in the event private properties involved in this route were to become available. Communication with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and the Army Corps of Engineers who manage the dam and waterway is a key part of this vision becoming reality.

- Management of the Hoover Reservoir site along Sunbury Bikeway remains with the City of Columbus but the exploration of a partnership regarding the management of this area should be a high priority for Westerville. The area is often perceived as a part of Westerville because of its proximity to the eastern city boundary, major north south traffic route and the inclusion of a Westerville maintained bikeway. There have been recent improvement to the site through the addition of several rain gardens but the overall management and maintenance of the area is not at a high level. The site appears to be underutilized and a combined development and maintenance effort would realize a large benefit to the community.
- Westerville has a significant bikeway system but continues to lack a continuous east – west route that is not on the extreme northern portions of the city. Establishment of a southern route that traverses the city from east to west would assist in the transportation of pedestrians and bicyclists and create a greenway in this area of Westerville. Plans for development of portions of an existing path to meet the standards of the Westerville bikeway system along Walnut Street in the eastern portion of the city are underway. This would aid in the completion of this goal but there are many private properties involved in the completion of this route to the western edge of the city.
- It has been identified that rerouting of the Ohio to Erie Trail in the southern area of Westerville would be a benefit to the trail users and meet the preference of both the trail organizers and the City of Westerville. Rerouting this trail would separate the path from a major surface street, Schrock Rd, where a striped bike lane is currently serving as portion of this major bikeway. Other potential routes have been identified some of which would bring City greenway management to areas that are not fully developed but under private ownership.
- Continued invasive plant species control and native plantings at all natural sites remain a priority for Westerville and should appear in all greenway planning. This effort is able to be accomplished portions at a time annually with relatively little expense normally in conjunction with volunteer events.
- Increased outdoor education programming is a need that should be explored. The nearby Franklin County Metro Parks have typically had a more natural slant to their development and programming than the Westerville situation which is more urban in nature. This has helped to fill the need for the community regionally and will continue, so any efforts by Westerville in this area need to be coordinated in a manner to be aware of service duplication. Westerville however has the potential to expose a segment of the population to this type of experience through the use of the greenway system that may not access to the other locations.
- Watercourse programming is also an areas to be explored with Alum Creek and Hoover reservoir both easily accessible. Westerville has begun this type of programming with the acquisition of a grant purchase canoes for recreation programming purposes. Westerville should not limit the extent this program could be expanded potentially bringing this activity into the mainstream locally.
- Use of the greenway system and water resources available to increase exposure to fishing through programming efforts, specifically targeting the area youth, should be explored. Continued development of the fishing derby concept that has begun within the Parks and Recreation Department recently would be beneficial in this effort. There is a very established youth fishing club associated with the Westerville City Schools that could be targeted as a potential partner to assist in providing this exposure.

- Westerville has much room for improvement relative to greenway signage.
 - Interpretive signage has been installed at several natural sites in the system but there are other opportunities that should be indentified to expand this educational effort.
 - The wayfaring signage on the system bikeways has been in the planning stages for many years. There are several players involved in this issue that has slowed the implementation process. This obstacle needs to be overcome to put an end to the delays and realize completion of this goal.
 - Coordination with COG needs to be considered relative to signage that has been established for some time in their system outside the bounds of Westerville and how it should be implemented on trails in Westerville that are part of the COG system.
 - Coordination also needs to take place relative to the Ohio to Erie Trail in Westerville and how the local signage will be implemented to serve both as the locality of Westerville and as part of the statewide trail identification.
- With two identified Metro Parks in close proximity greenway and bikeway connections to these sites need to be completed. There is an eastern connection to Inniswood Gardens and current plans for the development of an existing substandard path along Hemptead Rd will make a western connection upon completion. There are tentative development plans that could provide for bikeway access to Sharon Woods Metro Park that currently has no connectivity. Westerville needs to make every effort to ensure that this connection is completed when development in the area takes place.
- Westerville should continue to be involved in the planning of the recently approved development in the northwest portion of the city. The development is to contain dedicated parkland and other easements. This area contains direct tributaries to Alum Creek and needs to be treated with great care. Park and other development on the site needs to be closely monitored to ensure proper treatment of the area with respect to the protection of water quality and natural resource preservation.
- Westerville should continue to pursue the final connection of the greenway and associated bikeway extending north from the Westerville Sports Complex to Polaris Parkway. This encompasses approximately 1300 feet along the east bank of Alum Creek and would make a connection to the Polaris Greenway. The original intent was to have this bikeway completed as part of a development scheduled for that area that has been at best delayed indefinitely. Westerville needs to explore the means necessary to make this connection exclusive of the timeline of the development.
- Current plans should continue to be developed for installation of a bikeway connection on the west side of Alum Creek north of County Line Road in the Maughlin Greenway. This bikeway would serve to link the existing bikeway along Hanawalt Road to the planned mixed use development scheduled for the northwest area of Westerville.
- There are several properties that have been identified as high, medium and low priorities for acquisition to enhance the greenway and park system in Westerville. These properties should continue to remain on the City's watch list for availability and first right of refusal agreements should be explored for any of these properties where none already exists. These properties are detailed in the PROS 2020 Comprehensive Plan.

APPENDIX A



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Central Ohio Greenway Map