

Turner Creek Park

in Hillsboro at 31st and Maple



AFTER

Rock wall with native plantings redirects access and improves erosion problems

The project entailed planning, designing and implementing a restoration project on the 1.5-acre wooded hillside at Turner Creek Park. This wooded hillside had been significantly degraded over the years through development of homemade trails, dumping of yard debris, illegal spraying and vegetation removal. Frequent use of bicycles in the woodland had led to erosion and compacted soils, exacerbating runoff problems and indirectly killing at least five mature trees. Thick stands of Himalayan blackberry vines had invaded portions of the woodland.

The woodland area is a part of the 12.5-acre Turner Creek Park. It connects to the back side of W.H. Henry Elementary School, and is separated from the rest of the park by Turner Creek. A pedestrian trail bridge provides access to the woodland area from the developed portion of the park, and a woodchip trail provided some connection through the woodland area to the school yard.

Because the degraded conditions were primarily the result of inappropriate activities, it was clear that human use patterns would have to be channeled more appropriately before restoration work could begin. The project design was to address the following concerns:



BEFORE

Unauthorized trails create erosion problems

- consolidate multiple trails and shortcuts into a single trail
- work with primary users of the park to educate and instill a sense of stewardship
- restore the woodland so that it is more attractive to both humans and wildlife
- provide barriers to discourage shortcuts

Benefits

- Restoration of a woodland and riparian habitat with diverse native species that are attractive to wildlife and humans

- A well-defined pedestrian trail corridor through the woodland that accommodates year-round use and provides a variety of views.
- A sense of ownership and participation among youth and park neighbors.
- An enhanced trail experience for visitors to Turner Creek Park.
- An attractive connection between elementary school and city park.

Overall, the project has enriched Turner Creek Park by enhancing the natural area of the park and providing a new and interesting trail experience. More wildlife has already been attracted to the park's natural area and this should increase as the vegetation matures. Planting along the creek and pond will help stabilize the banks and provide shade for the stream, enhancing habitat for fish and wildlife.

Budget

Proposed – \$14,850

Actual – \$23,135

Metro/US Fish and Wildlife grant award – \$7,050

Helpful hints – what worked, what didn't

- Involve young people in planning and preparation for the project. They enjoyed the direct experiences of spreading woodchips, planting, building birdhouses, and brainstorming planning how to prevent people taking shortcuts and creating private zones for wildlife.
- Coming up with meaningful projects for school groups is time-consuming and took more running around than anticipated, but was well worth the effort to create a sense of buy in and education.
- Wood duck houses were used the first year but not the second year. Increased pedestrian traffic possibly deterred the use. As plantings mature, the hope is wood ducks will use the houses again.
- Permanent and temporary fencing and barriers were successful tools for changing inappropriate use patterns in a natural area. Temporary fencing was a quick and inexpensive way to alert conscientious park

users that trails were not official and to not use them. Long-term, permanent fencing is most effective.

- Rock wall barriers also were used. The lower one had a smooth top to sit on. The upper one had an irregular top to discourage use. Fallen logs and nettles provided more natural barriers that were somewhat effective.
- Coordinating volunteer efforts is a time-consuming process. Breaking portions of the project into bite-sized “Eagle Scout projects” was an effective approach because the Scouts and leaders were motivated to do a very good job and fulfill their commitments.
- Working with elementary-age children is more problematic because they are less skilled, yet more eager to participate. Extensive adult participation is required; a one-to-one ratio is ideal.
- Even adults need careful instructions on how to plant. We prepared laminated cards with planting diagrams and instructed each person coming on site.
- We placed plants the day of the planting and had a hard time staying ahead of fast-working volunteers. Have several roving supervisors check quality of planting. Volunteers are not interested in a detailed explanation, so this was accomplished by informal chats.
- Large group planting events were scheduled with staggered times to create a manageable work crew.
- Security for materials was a problem. We developed a relationship with neighbor who allowed us to store wheelbarrows and tools. Plant materials were delivered late Friday afternoon in winter to take advantage of waning daylight to limit risk of theft.
- Signs had limited success and were frequently removed or stolen. We had better success with passive signs such as “Wildlife area – enter by permission only” than with “Please stay on trail” signs.
- Watering plants throughout the dry season was a challenge. Small groups provided help with handwatering. Hoses were connected to the city's irrigation; moving hoses throughout the woodland without damaging other plants was difficult.

Timeline and tasks

August 1992	Contact with school officials
January-April 1993	Work with schools classes, field trips, build bird houses, in-class presentations, etc.
January-May 1993	Improvements to temporary trail
March-April 1993	Layout permanent trail alignment
April-May 1993	Clear permanent trail alignment
July-August 1993	Construct permanent trail
July 1993	Construct rock walls
October-November 1993	Planting plan
January 1994	Phase 1 planting
January-February 1994	Install permanent barrier fence
March 1994	Phase 2 planting
May 1994	Phase 3 planting
Ongoing	Plant maintenance – mulch, watering, etc.; trail maintenance

Partners

City of Hillsboro Park and Recreation
Jackson Bottom Wetland staff
Community service crew (corrections department)
W.H. Henry School
Poynter Jr. High School
Hillsboro High School
Boy Scouts
Girl Scouts
Church youth groups

Contact

Mary Ordal, city of Hillsboro Parks and Recreation, 681-6225

