



Wilkes Headwaters Property – Community Gathering #1 – January 2025

The first Community Gathering for the development of Wilkes Headwaters Property was held on Tuesday, January 14, 2025, at Parkrose Middle School’s cafeteria. Boards in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese sharing information about the technical investigation stage of the project were shared, and staff were available to answer questions. Community engagement liaisons provided interpretation in Spanish and Vietnamese at the event and helped community members complete surveys.

Outreach for the community gathering was done via a postcard mailing to over 3,000 households, two emails to the project list, posts on social media (Facebook, Nextdoor, and Instagram), info on the project webpage, yard signs in the park, flyers sent home to Margaret Scott Elementary families, and direct outreach done by the community engagement liaisons.

Paper and online surveys were available at the event in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese. The presentation materials were also posted on the project webpage, and the online survey was open for about two weeks. A total of 92 comments were received through the survey (35 on paper and 57 online), and the community gathering was attended by over 50 community members.

It should be noted that this report reflects the opinions of those who chose to participate. It is not necessarily representative of the broader community. This information, in addition to information provided by Parks staff, will be used to inform the planning and design process for Wilkes Headwaters. All input will be shared with the design team and Project Advisory Committee.

Summary of 92 comments received (combined results from paper and online surveys completed in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese):

1. Which neighborhood do you live in?

- Wilkes **44%**
- Parkrose **10%**
- Argay Terrace **7%**
- Hazelwood **4%**
- Russell **3%**
- None of these, I live in **32%:**
 - Centennial, Clatskanie, Creston-Kenilworth, Cully, Downtown, Errol Heights, Foster-Powell, Gateway, Glendoveer, Grant Park, Gresham, Holgate, Hosford-Abernethy, Kerns, King, North Tabor, Parkrose Heights, Piedmont, Powell Butte, Roseway, SE Portland, South Tabor, Sumner, West Linn, Woodlawn, Woodstock

2. What questions do you have about the park or this project we can help answer during our design process?

- **The highest number of questions focused on access:**
 - Where will entrances be? Will there be access at NE Rose Parkway?
 - What are the plans for creating accessible spaces for people with different levels of physical ability?
 - What will trails look like? Will there be a trail through the whole area?
 - Will we be able to access all areas or just the developed park?
 - Will there be bicycle access?
 - Will dogs be allowed? How will you address aggressive animals?
- **Next highest was habitat protection:**
 - How will development affect habitat and the existing diverse plant communities?
 - How will habitat, wildlife, mature trees, creek, and headwaters be protected?
 - Will new plantings focus on native plants?
 - What are plans to achieve both nature area restoration and reduce fire hazard as climate change continues?
 - How do you plan management for natural areas to both protect wildlife and create opportunities for people, especially kids, to connect with nature?
- **Some questions about park amenities were:**
 - Will there be bathrooms and other facilities/structures? Water fountain?
 - Will there be parking? I park on the street but some neighbors yell at me not to park in front of their house.
 - How will the space be split between park features (tables, picnic shelter, etc.) and more natural spaces?
- **Engagement of community:**
 - How will you integrate people in nearby neighborhoods into the design process?
 - How will you involve a diverse coalition and make it accessible?
 - Are Indigenous communities involved? How is tribal engagement going?
- **Other questions:**
 - How can I bring elementary students to the park for nature walks and activities?
 - Can the soundwall at I-84 be extended to block highway noise?
 - How will the design consider maintenance?
 - How will the design prevent unwanted behaviors like camping, illegal fireworks/fires, or drug use?
 - Will the fence between the park and private properties be improved?
 - When will the project be complete?

3. Have you ever been to Wilkes Headwaters Park?

- Yes **87%**
- No **13%**

4. What ways would you use to get to the park? Select all that apply.

- Car **57%**
- Walk **54%**
- Bicycle **24%**
- Other **3%**:
 - Run
 - I would take the bus and walk from Sandy Blvd, but I have to drive materials and equipment for programs in a car.
 - Personally, I'd ride a bike. If I were taking a school group, we'd need a bus.
- A gate in my fence (park neighbor) **7%**
- Bus **5%**
- Mobility device (wheelchair, etc.) **2%**

5. Do you feel there is a barrier to your access to the park?

- Yes **13%**
- No **58%**
- Don't know **10%**
- Other **17%**:
 - ADA
 - Pedestrian/bus/biking: no bus, lack of access from Rose Parkway and west side generally, lack of sidewalks, busy streets, NE 148th feels unsafe for walking/biking, have to drive to access to park, no trail system inside most of park
 - Street parking/existing entrance: don't always feel welcome parking on street, trash dumped at entrance, campers parked at entrance, increased popularity might impact parking, entrances to park aren't clear.
 - didn't know there was a park or could go there

6. How would you describe your route to the park? Select all that apply.

- Accessible **51%**
- Convenient **35%**
- Safe **32%**
- Other **23%**:
 - Hidden, long, inconvenient from west side especially by Rose Parkway, not safe to walk or bicycle especially near 148th, safe only using car, hard to find – no signage from main road
- Don't know **8%**
- None of these **7%**

7. Who would you typically visit the park with? Select all that apply.

- Family or friends **74%**
- Children **37%**
- Bird watching groups **34%**
- Educational or volunteer groups **28%**
- Dogs **24%**
- Elders **11%**
- Folks with invisible disabilities **8%**
- Folks with physical disabilities **7%**
- Teens **4%**
- Other **9%**: Self/alone, would like to go alone but don't feel safe, not sure, no dogs.

8. If you've been to the park, what do you notice most about the park? Select five.

- Birds **62%**
- Headwaters of the creek **61%**
- Native plants **51%**
- Creek crossing – bridge **48%**
- Mature forest **38%**
- Don't see many people **37%**
- Open areas **30%**
- Trails **30%**
- Shade **29%**
- Surrounding houses **27%**
- Tell us more: **10%**
 - coyotes
 - felt kind of creepy and didn't want to go back
 - overgrown shrubs/trees and piles of dead wood in south
 - love cedar trees and hazelnut groves, open space, quiet, change of temperature/coolness near spring, special spot for bird habitat especially during migration, value the space the way it is: lovely and wild.
- New plantings **25%**
- Wildlife **25%**
- Care and maintenance **19%**
- Sun **12%**
- Unauthorized camping/garbage **12%**
- I didn't know it was a park **7%**
- Not much to do here **7%**
- Dogs **4%**
- See other people in park **0%**

9. If you have visited the park, how do you feel? Select all that apply to you.

- I feel connected to nature **77%**
- I feel calm **57%**
- I feel grateful **50%**
- I feel inquisitive **40%**
- I feel respectful **34%**
- Other **16%**
 - love walking through nature but the train/highway are too noisy
 - found caddisflies in the creek and it was pretty special
 - camping/safety: surprised not to see campers, large encampments along Sandy Blvd and NE 158th, felt safe until I saw camping, would not visit solo but may be lack of familiarity, feel safer in group, big dog at north end, felt kind of creepy and that there was potential but a lot of work is needed to feel safe.
 - protective: want the nature area preserved for native species and wildlife,
- I feel safe **27%**
- I feel welcome **20%**
- I do not feel safe **15%**
- I do not feel welcome **1%**
- None of these **2%**

10. What areas in the park are you drawn to sit and linger? Select two.

- At the bridge or along the creek **59%**
- Mature forest, interior of the park **58%**
- Grassy trails on the north part **34%**

- Hazelnut grove in the south part **21%**
- Perimeter of the park **8%**
- Don't know **7%**
- I use different parts depending on the season. Explain **11%**:
 - If it's wet, I don't go in very far.
 - In the summer, prefer mature forest for shade.
 - In less hot seasons, prefer the north part/grass area and the hazelnut grove which is unique to explore.
 - Some areas are easier to walk through seasonally.
 - Like to look for birds so depends on season.
 - Don't go beyond mature forest, as sometimes people camp in hazelnut grove.
 - Open area with fruit trees attracts many birds.

11. What do you see as the biggest challenge(s) for this project? Select three.

- Keeping undesirable activities out of the park **57%**
- Balancing nature with park activities **55%**
- Availability of park entrances **38%**
- Accessibility of the trails for all ability levels **28%**
- Right-sizing the popularity of the park **27%**
- Overall maintenance of the park **23%**
- Park/residential interface **23%**
- Safety **20%**
- Other: **9%**
 - Added traffic in quiet neighborhood, road access, parking
 - Ensure multimodal use of park, integrating areas for multiuse like picnic tables, seating along the paths, etc.
 - Keeping dogs leashed if allowed.
 - Have plenty of parks for play including 5 blocks north, might be nice to have something that embraces natural topography and restores land and plants to what they were prior to European settlers. Keep it a place to commune with nature and see native flora.
 - Maintaining natural habitat and preserving headwaters and Wilkes Creek. Protecting wildlife.

12. What concerns may you have about the existing park? Select all that apply.

- Protecting trees from new trails **37%**
- Appearance of natural areas regarding maintenance **30%**
- Wildfire risk **29%**
- I like the park the way it is now **26%**
- Density of trees in south part of the park **23%**
- Don't know **14%**

- Other:
 - Keeping it natural and protecting the creek/headwaters
 - Unwanted behaviors: camping, partying, litter, human debris, dogs, motorbikes
 - Accessibility for strollers, wheelchairs
 - Safety especially for elders, kids, small dogs – train passage, coyotes, ticks
 - Maintenance of new plantings
 - East access (existing) is not very welcoming as neighbors put up signs making you feel like you are trespassing when you are not.
 - Would like access to the south part of the park.
 - Didn't know there was a park
 - Connecting all parts of the park with natural outlets and loop trails, no dead ends
 - Long term maintenance, given PP&R's \$600M capital maintenance backlog

13. Tell us what you may notice about how the park changes through the day, week, or seasons.

- Very beautiful, attracted to the nature, constant changing and growing
- Light and birds singing during different times of day and seasons, seeing wildlife
- Diversity of habitats allows you experience how bird and plant life varies by season across habitats
- Rare to encounter others, sanctuary in the city
- Open upper meadow - grass grows higher, uncomfortably hot in summer but nice in winter
- Slash/prune piles
- When plants bloom
- Traffic noise (including air)
- Canopy and foliage color changes in fall/winter
- Dogs off leash in evenings
- How trees have matured around the bridge
- Vary in flow of creek, easier to hike and see creek in winter

14. Tell us about your goals and values for the outcomes of this project.



“East Portland has so much car-centric development and impermeable surfaces - it's pretty special to have native plant communities, the creek and its headwaters, shade, Western red cedars, trilliums, and all the cool macroinvertebrates that find a home in that super clear creek! I want those things to be valued! I want biodiversity to be a key goal of this park.”

“Provide nature at the doorstep for better health and environmental opportunities for nearby residents. That this is a first step in centering natural areas, the Columbia Slough, and the Columbia River. That we begin to change the narrative that this area is industrial and holds no interest for residents when at our doorstep is so much nature. That when Portlanders think of taking a hike, a paddle, a ride along the river they think out here as often as they think of Forest Park and the Willamette.”

“I want to see a park that integrates nature and park features. I want people to feel like they can come to this space to hang out with friends, go on a date, birdwatch, enjoy a sunset, walk a dog, and generally connect to nature.”

- **Enhance and protect the natural features**
 - Can update park but keep the wild nature – birds, trees, native plants
 - This area represents some of the best spring birding of any Portland city park – especially brushy northern and mature center. Southern has less value in that respect so would want to see more development there.
 - Preserve this rare natural spring/headwaters and open air creek, keep fresh water flowing to the Columbia Slough
 - Preserve natural habitat to greatest possible extent and even expand – especially on slopes and around the creek.
 - Leave habitat that’s a “little messy” and not overdeveloped
 - Tending hazelnut area in a natural way to educate public about healthy ecosystems
 - Thin Doug Firs in south area
 - Manage to be safer from wildfires
 - Nervous about more use scaring away birds and wildlife
- **Increase community access to nature:**
 - Expose community, especially kids, to nature in the city. Kids like to play here, climbing trees, hide and seek, etc.
 - Make people feel happy and welcome, safe
 - Some natural areas need limited human access as they are wildlife corridors – this one is not as connected as others so provides opportunity for human access for bird watching, nature walks, environmental education, etc.
 - Community education, interpretive/trail signage
 - Native/Indigenous community engagement
 - Create a space that people of color feel welcome and involved in
- **Improve access:**
 - Create an entry on the southern end from Rose Parkway – unite east and west sides of the neighborhood
 - Keep it local
 - Design easy access for law enforcement and emergency services
 - ADA accessible, multimodal use
 - Consider parking without too much impact to neighbors

- **Some park amenities in northern end but don't overdevelop natural portion**
 - More public park type features at north end, accessible nature trail, but keep majority undeveloped
 - Clean, safe park with restrooms and play area for kids
 - Concern that picnic area will create trash
 - Areas for sitting and contemplation, quiet
 - Different amenities from Wilkes Park

Please tell us about yourself. These questions are voluntary but tell us who is participating.

Age?

- Age 24 and under **0%**
- Age 25-44 **39%**
- Age 45-64 **30%**
- Age 64 and up **30%**

I identify as:

- Man **29%**
- Woman **62%**
- Gender expansive **2%**
- Transgender **7%**
- Two spirit **0%**
- I am undecided or questioning **0%**
- Prefer not to answer **2%**
- Prefer to describe: genderqueer, he/they, why does this matter

I identify as: (check all that apply)

- American Indian or Alaskan Native **5%**
- Asian **10%**
- Black or African American **2%**
- Hispanic or Latino/a/x/e **15%**
- Middle Eastern/North African **0%**
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander **0%**
- Slavic/Eastern European **1%**
- White **70%**
- Unknown/don't know **0%**
- Prefer not to answer **5%**

Regarding residence, I

- Own **76%**
- Rent **23%**
- Live with my parents **0%**
- Other **1%**

Do you or a family member live with a disability or identify as a disabled person?

- Yes **21%**
- No **79%**

If yes, please describe the nature of you and/or your family member's disability.

Please check all that apply.

- Mobility or other physical disabilities **55%**
- Mental health **32%**
- Neurodivergence **27%**
- Invisible **14%**
- Hearing **9%**
- Intellectual, developmental, cognitive **0%**
- Speech or communication **0%**
- Visual **0%**
- Prefer not to answer **0%**
- Something else: We are in our 80s and not as physically fit as we once were. Need to be careful walking on uneven surfaces, need to sit and rest more frequently. Also more likely to need restroom when visiting park.

How many children under age 18 live with you?

- 0 **78%**
- 1-2 **17%**
- 3-4 **5%**
- 5 or more **0%**

What are their ages? (check all that apply):

- 0-2 years **21%**
- 3-6 years **26%**
- 7-10 years **37%**
- 11-14 years **21%**
- 15-18 years **26%**

How far do you live from the Wilkes Headwaters Property? (pick one)

- Five blocks or less **34%**
- Less than one mile **14%**
- More than one mile **52%**

How often do you currently visit the Wilkes Headwaters Property? (pick one)

- Every day or every other day **0%**
- Once or twice a week **9%**
- Once or twice a month **15%**
- A few times a year **65%**
- Never **12%**

How did you hear about this event? (check all that apply)

- Email **44%**
- Family/friend/neighbor **21%**
- Neighborhood Association **18%**
- Flyer **11%**
- Nextdoor.com **6%**
- Postcard **3%**
- Instagram **2%**
- Yard sign in park **2%**
- Facebook **0%**
- Other: work, Columbia Slough Watershed Council, Bird Alliance of Oregon, on PAC, colleagues, Friends of Trees, school, park advocate