

Turkey Creek Concept Plan Report 2010



1.0 Introduction

1.1 PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Turkey Creek Corridor is a 10-mile segment of the Turkey Creek Streamway Trail and part of MetroGreen, an interconnected system of public and private natural areas, greenways and trails linking communities throughout the Kansas City metropolitan area. This 10-mile trail segment will span Johnson and Wyandotte counties in the state of Kansas and intersect four municipalities including Merriam, Overland Park, Mission and Kansas City, Kansas. A concept plan has been developed for this corridor as part of the initiatives set forth by the Turkey Creek Coalition.

The Turkey Creek Coalition, which began meeting in the fall of 2007, is composed of representatives from all levels of government (local, state and federal, elected officials), and local businesses and organizations. The coalition continues to meet quarterly to discuss progress and development opportunities along the corridor.

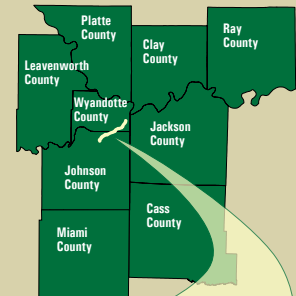
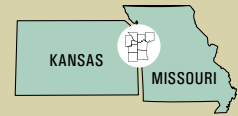
The trail development along this corridor will not only provide a recreational amenity for the community, but will encourage habitat conservation and watershed protection along Turkey Creek, provide alternative transportation to downtown Kansas City and spur economic development.

2.0 Corridor History

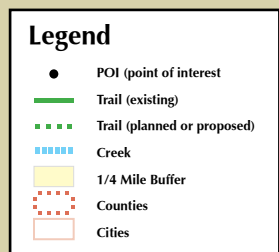
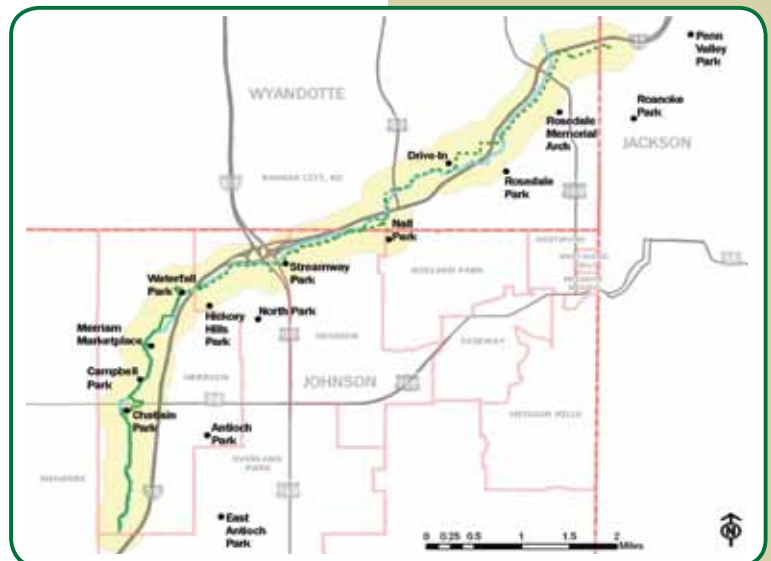
2.1 LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT

Named for the abundance of wild turkeys in the area, Turkey Creek is “a live, impetuous stream, [that] meanders at will through the place seemingly priding itself on its independence in designating its own path, regardless of the points on the compass, or the predominating requirements of this expeditious age in economizing time and space by taking air line courses.” (As described in the Wyandotte Herald Newspaper, January 26, 1882). The history of this corridor can be traced back nearly 12,000 years when Paleo-

KANSAS CITY REGION



AREA OF DETAIL



Indians inhabited the area adjacent to Turkey Creek. A survey made in 1823 by Joseph C. Brown to establish the state boundaries between Missouri and Indian Territory — later the state of Kansas — shows the creek emptying into the Missouri River about a mile down stream from its confluence with the Kaw River. West of the state line, the creek drained a watershed measuring about 20 miles.

Much of the creek's original floodplain has been developed for industrial, commercial, and residential urban uses. This area of the Kansas City region has been a target of transportation-related development since the 1800s. Railroad development played a major role in the settlement of the area with a route traveling from Kansas City, Mo., through the Turkey Creek basin into Olathe, Kan. The railroad line at this time was known as the "Kansas City, Fort Scott and Gulf." In 1870, the first station was built in Merriam, Kan.

More recently the land adjacent to the stream has been identified for greenway development, which would protect existing natural areas and open space and provide recreation opportunities for neighboring communities. The Turkey Creek Corridor was designated in the 2002 MetroGreen Plan as one of over 75 corridors that would connect natural areas throughout the region with a system of trails.

2.2 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Many changes have occurred to the stream system over time, resulting in environmental degradation. The creek was originally about 15 miles long, but channelization and installation of stormwater control structures have since shortened the stream to 10 miles, altering the normal flow of the watershed, negatively impacting water quality and decreasing critical wildlife habitat. As the area became more developed and the stream was channelized, flooding became a recurring issue. Several major flood events have occurred over the last 50 years, with extreme events in 1993 and 1998.

2.3 CORPS OF ENGINEERS STUDIES AND PROJECTS

In response to the flooding, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE) initiated a study following the 1983 flood. Several more studies would follow, including the 2001 reconnaissance study, which evaluated federal interest in solutions to recurring flood damages, environmental degradation and related water and land resource needs and opportunities. The COE is currently in the process of completing a watershed plan for Turkey Creek that will encompass the entire creek from eastern Johnson County into Wyandotte County ending at the Kansas River. The COE's plan will address both stream conservation objectives and trail connectivity initiatives identified in the MetroGreen plan.

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Flooding on Southwest Boulevard in 1993



Rendering of Turkey Creek environmental enhancement project in Kansas City, Kan., facing downtown Kansas City, Mo.

One element of the watershed plan is an environmental enhancement project located on a section of the Turkey Creek Corridor project between 7th Street Trafficway and Southwest Boulevard. The project's primary goal is to restore the riparian stream corridor by using a mix of native grasses, wildflowers, trees and shrubs. This element of the plan — which also includes a bicycle and pedestrian trail — was completed in 2009.

3.0 MetroGreen

3.1 OVERVIEW

MetroGreen is a network of 1,144 miles of interconnected public and private open spaces, greenways and trails that currently links seven counties in the Kansas City metropolitan area and the neighborhoods within. The plan includes Cass, Clay, Jackson and Platte counties in Missouri and Johnson, Leavenworth and Wyandotte counties in Kansas. The purpose of MetroGreen is to protect natural resources, preserve high-value habitat, provide outdoor recreation opportunities and connect people to surrounding areas.

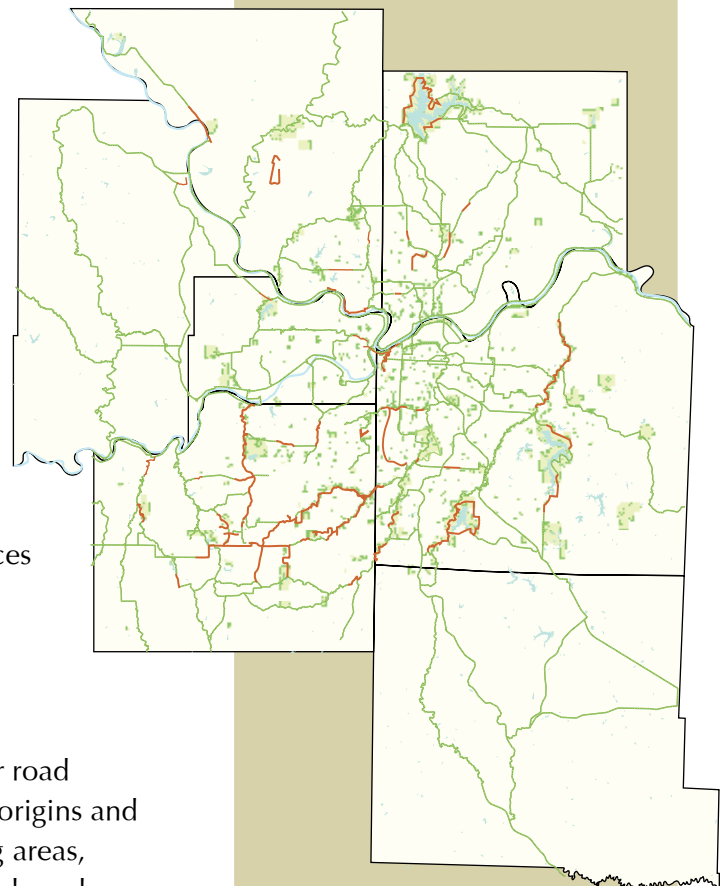
3.2 BENEFITS






The benefits of MetroGreen include cost-effective improvement of water and air quality; stabilization of streams; reduction of flood risks; protection of wildlife habitat; opportunities for biking, hiking and walking; and ultimately, the formation of a framework around which more sustainable urban development patterns can occur. MetroGreen is intended to link communities together and connect people to nature and to cultural and historic resources along its green corridors. These and other benefits of the MetroGreen network are described below:

Transportation Benefits

MetroGreen corridors are designed to serve as extensions for road networks, offering realistic and viable connections between origins and destinations such as work, schools, libraries, parks, shopping areas, historical and cultural sites and tourist attractions. Greenway-based bikeways and walkways are most effective for certain travel distances. National surveys by the Federal Highway Administration have shown that Americans are willing to walk as far as two miles to a destination and bike as far as five miles. Destinations can be linked to multiple origins throughout the Kansas City area with a combination of off-road trails and on-road bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

MetroGreen® is an interconnected system of public and private natural areas, greenways and trails linking communities throughout the Kansas City metropolitan area. The 1,100-mile greenway plan covers Leavenworth, Johnson and Wyandotte counties in Kansas and Cass, Clay, Jackson and Platte counties in Missouri. Nearly 200 miles of the planned system have been constructed.



-  Existing greenway corridors
-  Proposed greenways and trails
-  Priority greenways
-  Park areas
-  Bodies of water

0 2.5 5 10 15 20
Miles

Economic Benefits

MetroGreen offers numerous economic benefits, including higher real estate property values, increased tourism and recreation-related revenues, and cost savings for the public services.

Greenways have been shown to raise the value of adjacent properties by as much as 5 to 20 percent. Many home buyers and corporations are looking for real estate that provides direct access to public and private greenway systems. Greenways are viewed as amenities by residential, commercial and office park developers who realize higher rental values and profits when they locate next to greenways. Additionally, greenways can save local tax dollars by using resource-based strategies for hazard mitigation and managing community stormwater by productively using land that would not normally be considered for conventional development.

Greenways also enhance the role tourism plays in the economy. The state of Missouri, for example, spent \$6 million to create the 200-mile KATY Trail, which, in its first full year of operation generated travel and tourism expenditures of more than \$6 million.

Health and Recreation Benefits

Studies have shown that as little as 30 minutes a day of moderate to intense exercise (such as bicycling, walking or roller blading) can significantly improve mental and physical health and prevent certain diseases. Greenways contribute to public health by encouraging more people to walk or bike to short-distance destinations. Providing opportunities for these outdoor activities close to where people live and work is an important component of promoting healthy lifestyles.

In 1987, the President's Commission on American Outdoors released a report that profiled the modern pursuit of leisure and defined the quality of life for many Americans. Limited access to outdoor resources was cited as a growing problem throughout the nation. The commission recommended that a national system of greenways could provide all Americans with access to linear open-space resources.

The MetroGreen system will complement existing parks and open space throughout the region. MetroGreen will serve as a primary recreation and fitness resource and help meet the passive recreation needs for a growing population of older residents.

Cultural Benefits

Successful greenway projects across the United States serve as new "main streets" where neighbors meet, children play and community groups gather to celebrate. For cities and towns both large and small, greenways have become cultural assets and focal points for community activities. Various walking and running events are held on greenways to support charitable purposes or extend traditional sporting events. Many civic groups adopt segments of greenways for cleanup, litter removal, and environmental awareness programs.

The richness and diversity of historic areas and cultural resources are represented by local and nationally significant historic sites and districts. Highlighting historic and archaeological sites along greenways can increase awareness and appreciation of an area's rich history. Greenways can also serve as vehicles to provide controlled public access to important cultural sites in a manner that promotes preservation and enhances interpretive opportunities.

Security and Safety Benefits

Safe neighborhoods are of great concern and priority to metro area residents. Some of the most successful deterrents to criminal activity involve increasing citizen awareness in neighborhoods and participation in community watch programs. Greenways can be an effective tool to encourage local residents to participate in neighborhood programs. Some greenways have been developed as part of efforts to deter criminal activity in a neighborhood. Crime statistics and reports from law-enforcement officials have shown that parks and greenways are typically areas with the lowest incidence of reported criminal activity.

As recreation resources, alternative transportation corridors or areas where fitness activities take place, most greenways provide safer and more user-friendly experiences than other linear corridors, such as local roads. Greenways typically attract local residents who use the facilities frequently, creating an environment that is virtually self-policing. Additionally, greenways — whether publicly or privately owned — are dedicated for multiple uses and are normally designed to meet federal, state and local standards for public safety and use.

Water Quality and Water Quantity Benefits

Greenways preserve wooded open spaces along creeks and streams which absorb flood waters and filter pollutants from stormwater. Flooding has historically been a significant problem in the Kansas City area. In some cases, buildings and other land uses have been established in flood-prone areas. By designating floodplains as greenways, encroachments can be managed, and sometimes replaced with linear open space, an amenity to residents and businesses occupying adjacent property.

As a flood-control measure, MetroGreen corridors serve as primary storage zones during periods of heavy rainfall. The protected floodplain can also be used during non-flood periods for recreation and alternative transportation. In conjunction with existing stormwater management policies and programs in the region, greenway lands can be set aside as development occurs.

Greenways corridors also improve the surface water quality of local rivers and creeks. The flood plain forests and wetlands contained within greenway corridors filter pollutants from stormwater. These pollutants are not removed if stormwater is collected in pipes and discharged directly into local streams and rivers. Improving surface water quality in streams benefits both local residents and numerous forms of wildlife that depend on streams for their habitat.

Air Quality Benefits

Greenways serve as alternative transportation corridors that reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality. Since the majority of automobile trips are less than two miles in length, offering alternative transportation choices through greenways encourages people to bicycle or walk these short distances more often, thereby reducing traffic congestion and automobile emissions.



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Plant and Animal Habitat Benefits

MetroGreen corridors can serve as viable habitat for many species of plants and wildlife. Greenway corridors provide essential food sources and, most importantly, access to water that is required by all wildlife. Greenways in the Kansas City area could become primary migratory routes for terrestrial wildlife, serving to help maintain the integrity of many plant and animal gene pools. Some wildlife biologists have described greenways as future “gene-ways” because these migration routes are essential to maintaining healthy wildlife populations.

Greenways can also serve as “gene-ways” for plant species that migrate with changes in climate and habitat. These “gene-ways” often follow river and stream corridors that have long served as transportation routes for animals and humans.

MetroGreen promotes local programs to protect valuable existing forested and wetland areas and to reclaim and restore streams to support higher-quality habitat.

3.3 TURKEY CREEK CORRIDOR CONNECTION

The Turkey Creek Corridor connects to several other established greenways within the MetroGreen system. To the north, in Wyandotte County, it will connect to the Kaw Levee Trail, which follows the Kansas River and the 55th Street Corridor Greenway. To the west, in Johnson County, it will connect to the Midland Road Greenway and the Gary Haller Trail. The Turkey Creek Corridor will connect to community centers, historic sites and several parks. The corridor parallels Interstate 35, providing an off-road travel option to Merriam Lane for the entire 10-mile segment. Moreover, it provides direct access to residential properties and businesses west and south of the railroads, interstate and creek through Overland Park and Mission.

4.0 Turkey Creek Coalition

4.1 ORGANIZATION

The Turkey Creek Coalition is an informal association of public and private organizations and individuals dedicated to expanding the MetroGreen system and trail

development along the Turkey Creek corridor. Coalition members include: city of Merriam, city of Overland Park, city of Mission, city of Roeland Park, Johnson County, the Unified Government of Wyandotte County/Kansas City, Kan., former Kansas State Rep. Ronne Metsker, the office of Kansas U.S. Rep. Dennis Moore, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Kansas Department of Transportation, the Mid-America Regional Council, Rosedale Development Association and Patti Banks Associates. Several citizens also participate in the coalition independently.

4.2 COORDINATION

The coalition began meeting in the fall of 2007 to discuss trail development along Turkey Creek. The Mid-America Regional Council (MARC) became involved in the project in 2008, as coalition members expressed a need to combine efforts in order to develop a plan for the entire corridor. MARC convened a corridor walk in April 2008 to determine the alignment of the trail, which was the basis for the concept plan. Several versions of the concept plan map were reviewed and revised by the coalition before its completion in July 2009. The coalition will continue to meet on a quarterly basis to review the concept plan as it evolves and to keep dialogue open between jurisdictions about trail development along the corridor.

5.0 Turkey Creek Corridor

5.1 PROJECT LOCATION

The Turkey Creek Corridor runs west to east from Johnson County through Wyandotte County, Kansas, and terminates at the Kansas River. The corridor intersects several different local jurisdictions, including Merriam, Shawnee, Overland Park, Mission and Kansas City, Kan. Although the corridor does not pass through Roeland Park, there is a proposed connection to Nall Park. This corridor follows the creek through suburbs, commercial areas and industrial zones

finally ending in downtown Kansas City, Mo. It also transects several heavily traveled local roadways and interstate highways including: I-35, I-635, I-70, Antioch, Merriam Lane, Lamar Avenue and Southwest Boulevard.

5.2 TRAIL INVENTORY

The city of Merriam has completed approximately 3.8 miles of trail from 75th Street to Waterfall Park and has approximately .5 miles remaining in its jurisdiction. Merriam currently plans to continue the trail from Waterfall Park to the Overland Park boundary. Efforts would include building a 6-foot sidewalk along the east side of Merriam Drive to connect the existing Turkey Creek Trail with the existing sidewalk along the east side of Antioch Rd in Overland Park.

The city of Overland Park's jurisdiction begins approximately halfway under the I-35/Antioch Rd. bridges; this area will require a pedestrian bridge to transition from the north to the south side of Turkey Creek. Overland Park's remaining mile of the trail will follow the south side of the creek along the bluff until reaching the Metcalf Ave. bridges which may require a retaining wall due to the steep terrain and creek bank.

The city of Mission's jurisdiction begins under the northbound Metcalf Ave. bridge. It continues up the bluff to an abandoned road bed at the top of the cliff where the path then connects to Fox Ridge Road and continues until it intersects with Lamar Avenue.

The Kansas City, Kan., jurisdiction begins about .5 miles east of Lamar Avenue. From Lamar Ave. the trail will continue east along Fox Ridge Road to Merriam Lane and in the future may run adjacent to the creek. From Merriam Lane the path continues through a series of on- and off-road applications for 3.5 miles until intersecting Southwest Boulevard.

5.3 CONCEPT PLAN

The concept plan for the Turkey Creek Corridor was completed in July 2009 after an extensive review process. The plan illustrates the preferred alignment for the proposed trail and identifies the various types of trails that exist or are planned and proposed. This corridor will consist of both off-road and on-road trails and require some special design in areas with steep elevation, waterway, railroad, or interstate crossings. There are five locations where pedestrian bridges are recommended. The plan also indicates points of interest, which includes parks, community centers, historic sites and local venues.



Waterfall Park, Merriam, Kan.



Turkey Creek under the 18th Street Bridge, Mission, Kan.



Turkey Creek near Merriam Lane, Kansas City, Kan.

5.4 EXISTING CONDITIONS

The trail alignment for the entire 10-mile corridor has been defined and each municipality is in different stages of development. Of the 6.5 miles of trail in Johnson County, 3.8 miles have been constructed in the city of Merriam and design drawings have been completed for a 1-mile segment in the city of Overland Park. None of the 3.5 miles in Wyandotte County have been constructed, but design drawings have been completed for a 1-mile segment that is part of the Army Corps of Engineers watershed restoration project.

6.0 Project Development

6.1 CURRENT STATUS

The corridor is currently divided into five jurisdictions: Merriam, Overland Park, Mission, Unified Government of Wyandotte County/Kansas City, Kan. and Johnson County. Although the corridor does not transect Roeland Park, officials in that city have been supportive of the trail and have proposed a connection at Nall Park. In terms of development, sections along the trail range from the conceptual design phase to actual completion.

7.0 Funding

7.1 FUNDING SOURCES

Funding continues to be a challenge in developing the Turkey Creek Corridor. The estimated cost to complete the remaining 6.5 miles is approximately \$5.5 million. To this end, the Turkey Creek Coalition has identified potential federal, state and local, and private funding sources for trail design, development and construction.



metrogreen

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