



*Senn's Dairy Park*

# Community Spaces and Access to Nature Report

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## Parkrose Community Plan

January 2022



THE BUREAU OF  
**PLANNING &  
SUSTAINABILITY**

# Community Spaces and Access to Nature

## Part 1: Existing Conditions

The purpose of this Existing Conditions section is to provide information on existing facilities in the Parkrose study area that provide recreation and community gathering opportunities and access to nature.

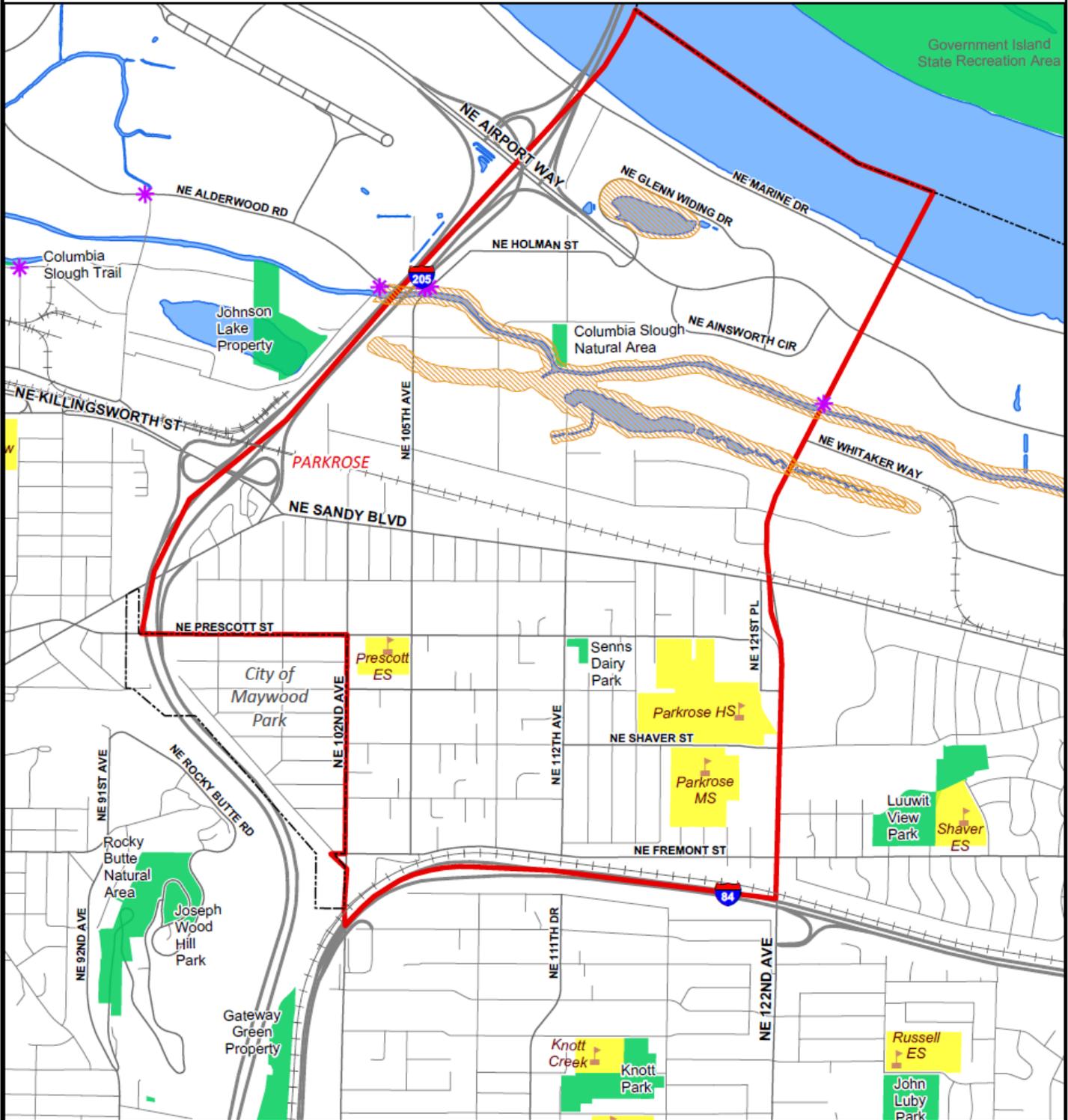
The Parkrose neighborhood is located in Northeast Portland. The neighborhood is bounded by Interstate 84 to the south and interstate 205 to the west. Marine drive runs along the Columbia River at the northern edge. NE 122nd Ave runs along the eastern border of the neighborhood. Sandy Boulevard bisects the neighborhood, which intersects NE 102nd Ave and NE 122nd Ave.



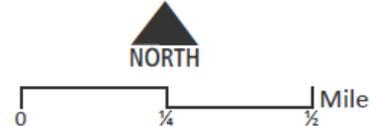
Map 1 – City of Portland, Bureau of Planning and Sustainability (ESRI)

Parkrose Study Area - Parks and Open Space

October, 25 2021



- Parkrose Neighborhood Study Area
- Protected Natural Resource Areas
- \* Columbia Slough Access Points
- Portland Parks
- 🏠 Schools
- School Sites



City of Portland | Bureau of Planning and Sustainability | Geographic Information Systems

The information on this map was derived from City of Portland GIS databases. Care was taken in the creation of this map but it is provided "as is". The City of Portland cannot accept any responsibility for error, omissions or positional accuracy.

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## Park Facilities

The Parkrose neighborhood has few public park facilities (see map on previous page). Senn's Dairy Park is the only developed City park in the Parkrose neighborhood. This small park is slightly over one acre in size and includes a play structure, lawn and picnic tables, and the community garden. See map on previous page.

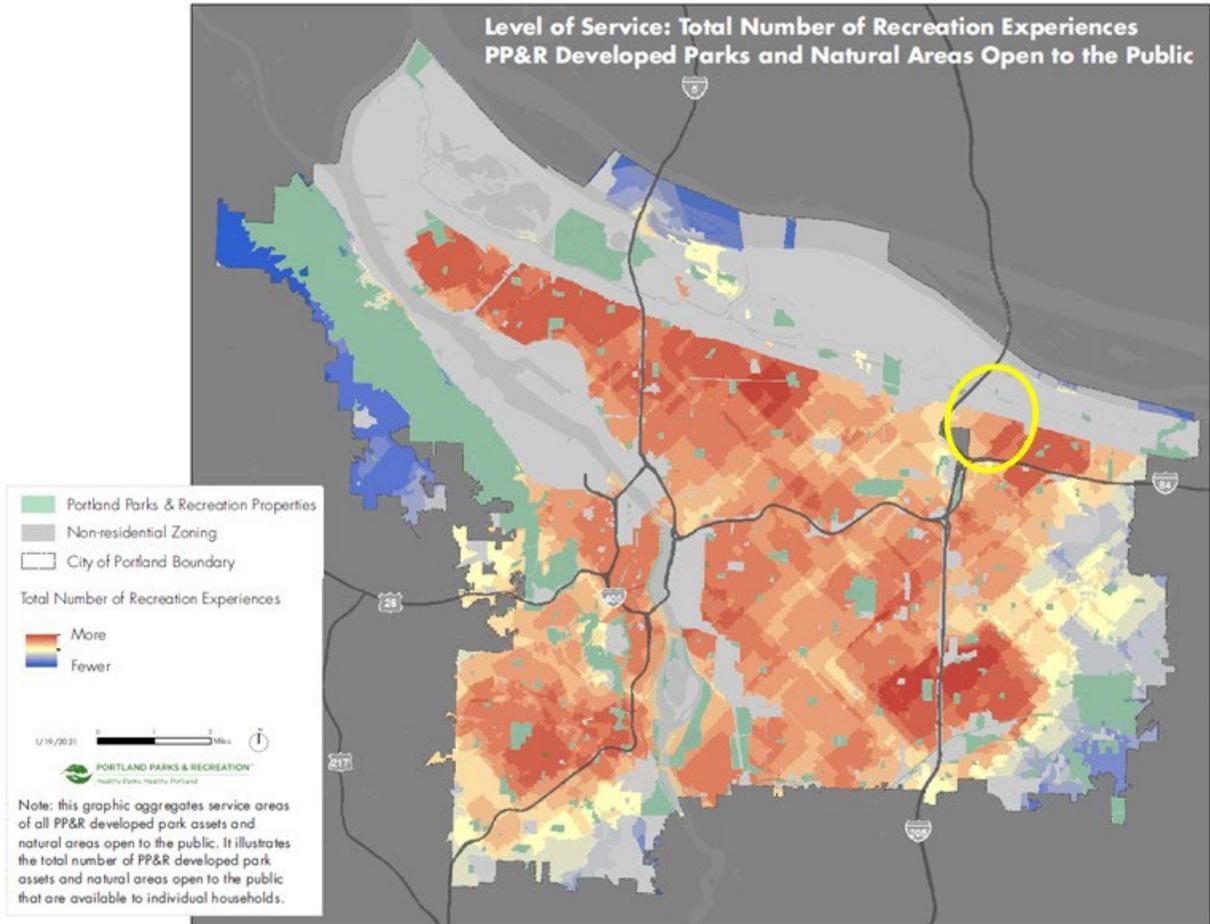
**Outside the Parkrose neighborhood.** The recently improved Luuwit View Park, whose 16 acres includes a sports field and basketball court, play equipment, plaza and covered shelter, picnic areas, skate park, community gardens, and a fenced off-leash dog area is located to the east of the Parkrose neighborhood, across NE 122<sup>nd</sup> Avenue. This park is popular with area residents but is more than a half-mile walk to most residents in the Parkrose neighborhood. Argay Park is located about a mile from the Parkrose neighborhood to the east. Knott Park and John Luby Park to the south are separated from Parkrose by freeways. Gateway Green Park, which opened in late 2020, is located to the south of Parkrose, and includes a bike pump track, biking and hiking trails, unpaved paths, picnic tables and public gathering spaces, and a play area. The closest community center is the East Portland Community Center, almost three miles away in Gateway.

## Bureau of Parks & Recreation Assessment

The **Portland Parks Developed Parks and Natural Areas Level of Service** report on the Parkrose neighborhood includes the following regarding parks access in the Parkrose neighborhood:

- There are gaps in the Developed Parks and Natural Areas service in the neighborhood, especially in the following experiences: play areas, basketball, spray play, and specialty gardens. Parkrose is served with nearby community gardens, dog off-leash areas, picnic areas and natural areas; and by skateparks, plazas, and tennis courts in adjacent neighborhoods.
- The "Level of Service: Total Number of Recreation Experiences PP&R Developed Parks and Natural Areas Open to the Public" map (on next page) shows the relative number of 13 typical park assets that are provided in developed parks and natural areas throughout the city. Comparisons between the Parkrose neighborhood to other neighborhoods can be made by evaluating the amount of red on the map. Western portions of the study area, including areas around the Parkrose neighborhood center, are less well served by recreation opportunities than areas to the east toward the Argay neighborhood.
- There are two park facilities provided in the neighborhood located in Senn's Dairy Park at 116th & Prescott (1.06 acres), including Senn's community garden, and a playground and paths.

- The Parks System Development Charges Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) list includes acquisition and improvement of land to provide access to the Columbia Slough. There are also projects on the list to improve paths and trails within the slough on the CIP that are currently unfunded.



**Public School Facilities**

Parkrose School District facilities in the study area provide recreation opportunities for the Parkrose community, as described below. School buildings and grounds are also used for a wide variety of community events (typically through rental arrangements).

**Parkrose High School.** Outdoor recreation facilities open to the community outside of school hours include the sports field and track, baseball diamond, and tennis courts. There are no outdoor basketball courts. The school’s indoor swimming pool is open to the public year round, and hosts swimming lessons and water sports.

**Parkrose Middle School.** The school’s sports field and track are open to the community outside of school hours. The sports fields at the middle school and high school are used by youth soccer teams. There are no outdoor basketball courts.

**Prescott Elementary School.** The elementary school includes a large field, paved play areas, and play equipment. However, the school grounds are not generally available for use by the public (gates are locked after hours) due to problems with vandalism and other damage to school property, as well as concerns about houseless camping.

## Natural Areas

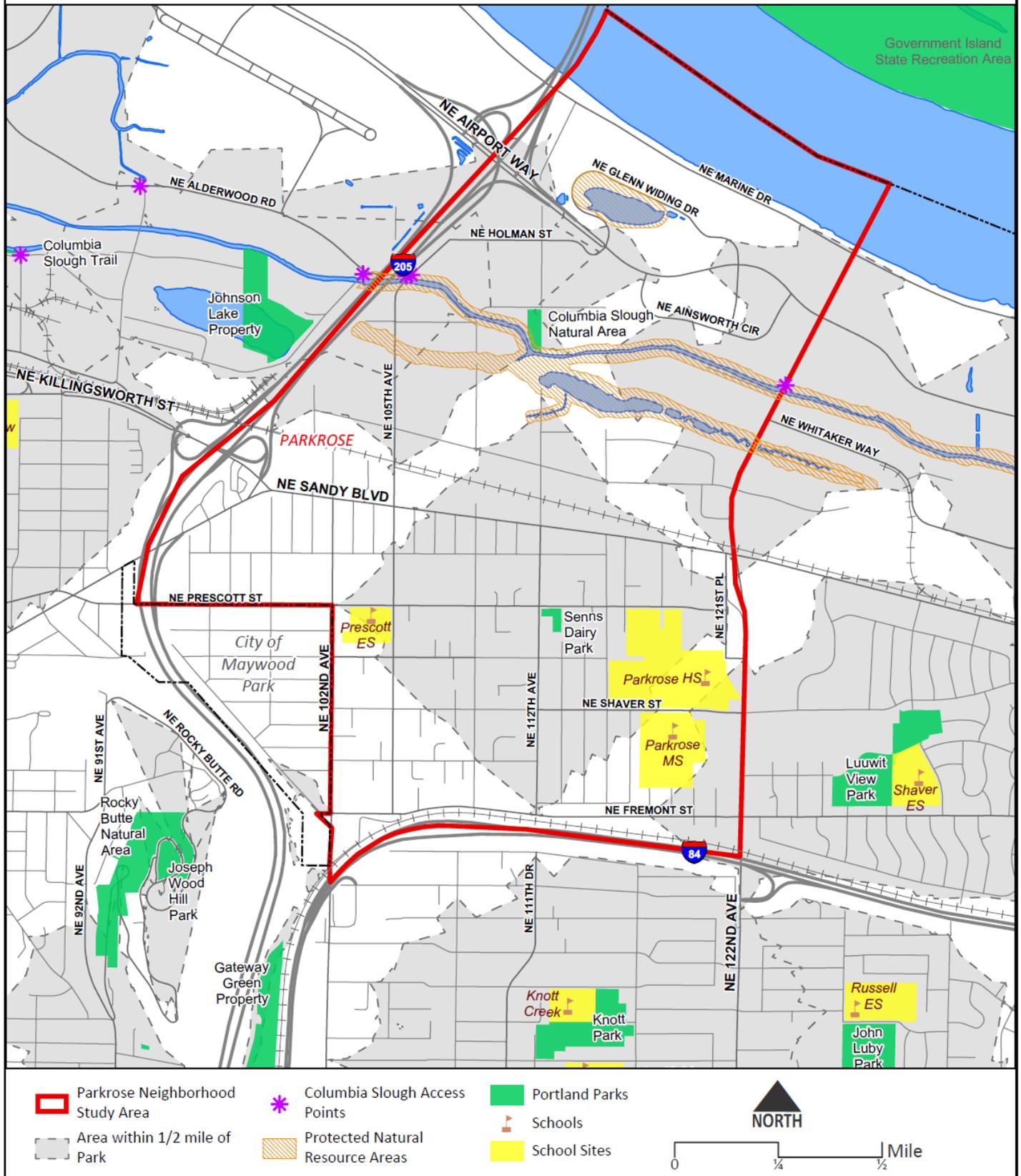
The primary natural areas with the Parkrose neighborhood are:

- The **Columbia Slough**, which includes the Columbia Slough Natural Area owned by the City of Portland. The slough includes a boat ramp and a public easement, but most of the land adjacent to the slough is in private ownership and access to the slough is currently fenced off due to concerns about homeless camping.
- The **Columbia River**. The I-205 multi-use path provides a connection to the Marine Drive bicycle path above the Columbia riverbank. There are no improved public facilities directly on the river within the study area.

Nearby publicly-owned natural areas separated from the Parkrose neighborhood by the I-205 freeway include the Rocky Butte Natural Area and the Johnson Lake property.



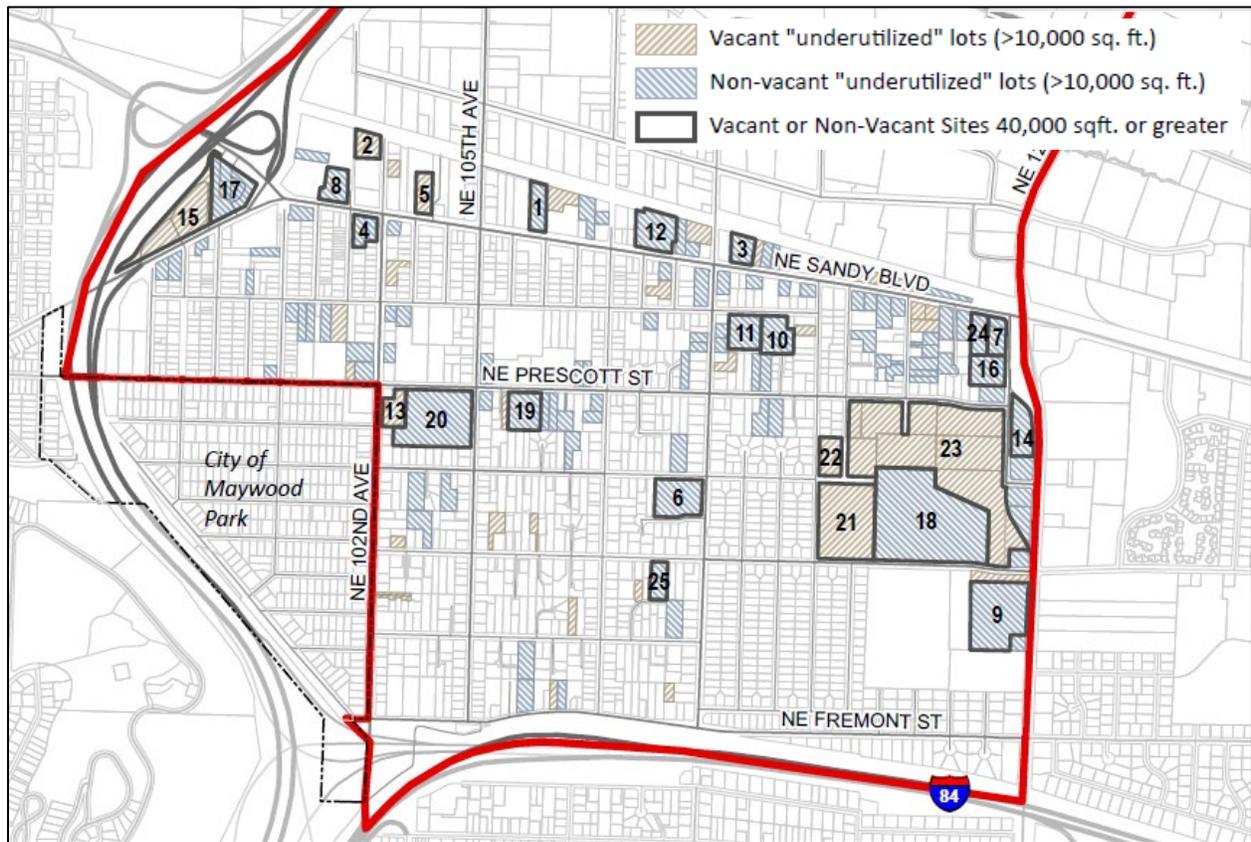
*Columbia Slough at  
NE 112<sup>th</sup> Avenue*



**Access to parks.** Areas within a half-mile walking distance of public parks are shaded (school properties are not included in this analysis).

## Access to Parks

51 percent of the population of the Parkrose neighborhood live within a half-mile walking distance of a public park. If the small Senn's Dairy Park (which has very limited recreation facilities) is not included in this analysis, only 9 percent of people in the neighborhood live within a half-mile walking distance of a park. Areas furthest away from parks include areas with multi-dwelling zoning around the Parkrose neighborhood center and transit station on Sandy Boulevard, and residential areas in the southwestern portion of the neighborhood.



## Opportunity Sites

There are 25 properties that are vacant or underutilized that are at least an acre in size that are large enough to potentially serve as a park or gathering place (see map above). Of these properties, nine are more than two acres in size. Many of the larger properties are Parkrose School District land, but they also include ODOT property at the Parkrose Transit Station (not called out on the map is a large grassy field across I-205 from the transit station that is owned by ODOT, sometimes referred to as the "SAN lot") and the Rossi Farms properties at NE 122<sup>nd</sup> & Shaver.

## Potential Community Partners

Potential community partners for exploring future recreation space and community gathering space opportunities include:

- Parkrose School District - continuing their current role in contributing to recreation space
- Historic Parkrose – especially for gathering spaces for the Parkrose main street and spaces that could support outdoor markets
- Rossi Farms – for which there could be opportunities for including community gathering space as part of development of their property.
- TriMet and ODOT – for potential community space at the Parkrose transit center.
- City agencies, such as the bureaus of Parks and Recreation, Environmental Services, and Transportation, – for possibilities such as community uses or greening of street space, improvements to the Columbia Slough, and opportunities for parks.



*Rossi Farms,  
at NE 122<sup>nd</sup> and Shaver*

# Community Spaces and Access to Nature

## Part 2: Recommended Solutions

### **Community Spaces/Access to Nature Community Working Group Members:**

Andrew Campbell (Parkrose resident)

Harmonee Dashiell (Parkrose-Argay area resident)

Trenelle Doyle (Parkrose community member, HR director at JOIN)

Andre Goodlow (Assistant Principal at Parkrose High School)

Lee Maina (teacher at Russell Elementary)

Irene Niedo (Parkrose resident)

Maria Sipin (Community advocate, ODOT)

Seile Tekle (Historic Parkrose)

**City staff:** Bill Cunningham, Leslie Lum, Dwight Jefferson, Angie Martinez

## **INTRODUCTION**

This section presents the Community Spaces and Access to Nature Community Working Group's recommendations on solutions and actions to address issues and opportunities identified by the community, as revised by the Community Decision Team on December 13, 2021. This section also identifies issues related to implementation and identifies who may benefit or be burdened by these solutions in order to inform the CWG's consideration of the solutions.

## **COMMUNITY INPUT**

### **Community Working Group - Issues and Opportunities**

- Being within walking distance of parks, stores, and other essentials is part of what makes a healthy community.
- Strengthening community connections is important to community resilience and coming together to respond to crisis.
- Black people value open space and nature, but have often been displaced from places important to them.
- Some residents are going to parks far from the neighborhood in order to feel safe.
- Having parks and open spaces nearby is especially important for kids, even more so during the COVID pandemic.
- It's important to have open space and places where all people – including communities of color - can gather and create positive relationships.
- There are no places where kids and youth in Parkrose can go to play basketball, except the schools. Every park in inner Northeast Portland used to have a basketball court.
- Children often don't have places to play. Black and Brown youth often don't have places nearby where they can be and feel safe.

- In the Parkrose neighborhood, people use the high school track, but often go further away to access parks, such as to Luuwit View and Wilkes parks.
- Would be more interested in accessing the Columbia Slough if there were clearer and safer ways to get there.
- Youth and others might be more interested in the Columbia Slough if they could kayak or canoe on it – a community paddle event would be good.
- The Sandy Boulevard commercial area would be a nicer place to go and spend time if it had things such as:
  - More benches and trees.
  - Cleaner and safer feeling.
  - Newer buildings, although developers should give back to the community.
  - Family-friendly destinations, such as cafes and restaurants.
  - Street vendors and food pods, but with shade or shelter, to sit and spend time; also event spaces for rent.
  - Pop-up shops, makers spaces, indoor marketplace.
  - Trees/plantings to screen the railroad tracks where they are adjacent to Sandy.
  - Murals
- Other ideas for the types of places it would be nice to have in the area are a plaza with a water feature (such as Jamison Square) and other activity spots for children/youth, like a skating rink or indoor play areas. How to provide these improvements without causing displacement and preserving the community make up?
- Would be good for something positive to happen at the former K-Mart site.

### **Youth Workshops – Issues and Needs**

- In some areas, youth live in housing where there are no parks or shops nearby, with few opportunities for kids to go outside and socialize. Need more places where kids can go and feel safe and free from harassment.
- Need a gym or community center to provide places for youth to be active in a safe place, build relationships with other youth and elderly people, find job postings, and provide a place for teen instructors and sports tournaments.
- Would be good to have an affordable café where youth could get out of the house, socialize, study with, have access to Wi-Fi, and find employment.
- Would like a youth center that is an after school hang-out place where youth can be together, seek help, study, learn about finding jobs, play sports and have other activities.

## **Adult Workshops – Issues and Needs**

- Having community places to recreate, socialize, see nature, be active, and picnic/barbecue are important, but not always available nearby.
- Concerns about public spaces include the amount of garbage, homeless camping, and safety for children. Would like to have better lighting.
- Most were not aware of the Columbia Slough being nearby, or find it difficult to access.
- Used to use the I-205 bicycle path, but not anymore because of obstructions from homeless camping and concerns about safety.
- Some primarily go to parks outside the Parkrose neighborhood, such as to Luuwit View and to Glendoveer for walking. Concerns that Luuwit View Park is feeling less safe, with not enough patrols.
- Would like to have more community events, such as movies in the park and culturally-represented events (to address social isolation).
- Would like more parks with greenery. Needs identified include places for picnics and barbecues, places for special needs kids, and places where kids can go to play basketball.
- Would like to have a community center nearby, a place that provides swimming lessons.
- Other community destinations people would like to have nearby are a major grocery store, large retailer, ice cream shop, restaurants, food cart pods, a place for African hair braiding, and family-oriented entertainment such as a bowling alley or movie theater.

## **Community Open House Survey - Input on Needs**

- Most frequently identified need was for a community center, with some also calling for a community pool
- Safer parks and walking paths, addressing crime and homeless camping
- Community gardens
- More local community events like the Parkrose Marketplace, Parkrose Pedal, block parties, festivals
- Park/open space that can support events like a neighborhood fair, concerts
- Walking/biking routes through the neighborhood and through natural areas
- Fountain, splash pad
- Open up school property to serve needs for community space
- Green spaces, including places with native plants
- Places to hang out, like a good bar or music venue
- Ideas for specific places for new community spaces or parks include: the old K-Mart property, Rossi farms property on 122<sup>nd</sup>, east side of Rocky Butte, Johnson Lake (across I-205), the SAN property along I-205, reuse of the former Oak Furniture space as a community center, and community garden possibilities on the St. Ritas property and locations on Shaver at NE 109<sup>th</sup> and NE 112<sup>th</sup>.

## RECOMMENDED IMPLEMENTATION SOLUTIONS

The following are solutions and actions the Community Spaces and Access to Nature CWG recommended to be included in the Parkrose Community Plan, as revised by the Community Decision Team on December 13, 2021.

### 1. Support more community events in Parkrose

**Action:** Work with community partners to hold more community events, such as neighborhood fairs, public markets, multicultural events, community concerts and movies, walking and biking events, and block parties.

**Issue(s) addressed:** Strengthening community and social connections, supporting and celebrating Parkrose's diversity, promoting active living.

**Feasibility/Barriers:** Requires capacity building and organizing involving multiple organizations and individuals. Fundraising for events can be a challenge, given the relatively low incomes of area households. However, the area has the benefit of a strong school community, which has organized events such as the Parkrose Pedal and other school-based events, and outdoor markets have taken place.

**Benefits and Burdens:** Benefits Parkrose residents. However, if community events become high-profile and attract interest from outside the community, this could contribute to the popularity of the area, increasing property values, and potentially displacing lower-income residents of color.

**Priority (High/Low):** High

### 2. Improve the Columbia Slough as a natural area that is nurtured and experienced by the community

**Actions:**

- A. Convene local and regional institutions, community based groups, and neighbors to create an action plan on how to access the slough and prevent damage and pollution to the watershed.
- B. Engage youth in plantings of native species to help restore natural functions of the slough and connect area youth to nature, with a focus on youth from communities of color and other marginalized groups that have historically not benefited from such connections.
- C. Increase community awareness and develop educational curriculum about the slough. Use signage and art to increase community awareness of the slough.
- D. Organize opportunities for the community to visit the slough. Hold free public events, such as slough paddles, that strengthen the community's awareness and connections to the slough.
- E. Improve bicycle and pedestrian connections from Parkrose residential areas to the slough, such as by creating connections to NE 112<sup>th</sup> where it reaches the slough.
- F. Use habitat restoration as an opportunity to develop employment opportunities for youth of color and lower-income residents.

- G. Develop an educational and fundraising campaign to secure public support, champions, and elected officials who can prioritize community access to the slough.
- H. Work with community organizations, companies, foundations, and the Columbia Slough Watershed Council and other governmental partners to fund programs, slough improvements and maintenance.
- I. Ensure that the slough is kept maintained and safe.
- J. Create a park at the slough entrance.
- K. Work with houseless neighbors to access housing so that they have options beyond camping near the slough and other outdoor areas.

**Issue(s) addressed:** Provide access to a local natural area in a neighborhood that otherwise has very little access to nature. Utilize the slough as an educational opportunity for youth and nurture a sense of stewardship of nature. Increase opportunities for active living and bring the benefits that experience of nature brings to people, addressing the lack of such opportunities that communities of color and lower-income residents have often faced.

**Feasibility/Barriers:** Complicated issues regarding property ownership, maintenance/upkeep, easements, houseless camping, have made achieving public access to the slough challenging.

**Benefits and Burdens:** Benefits community members, especially lower-income residents who may otherwise have limited opportunities for accessing nature, as would opportunities to link habitat restoration to jobs development. Increasing public access to the slough could burden adjacent property owners.

**Priority (High/Low):** High

### 3. Advocate for a new park to serve the Parkrose community

**Action:** Advocate for a new public park for the Parkrose neighborhood to increase access to recreation and active living in an area with only a single small public park. A new park should provide recreation facilities that the area does not currently have, such as an outdoor basketball court and spray pad/water feature.

**Issue(s) addressed:** Addresses community open space, healthy living and recreation needs in an area where 90 percent of the population has only a single one-acre park within a half-mile walking distance, and that has a large amount of multi-dwelling zoning where future development will provide limited opportunities for private outdoor space.

**Feasibility/Barriers:** Limited funds for public park acquisition and development. Limited vacant or underutilized sites that are large enough to accommodate a park with a variety of recreational facilities. A less costly approach could include working with the Parkrose School District to expand recreational facilities on school grounds, such as adding outdoor basketball courts to the high school or middle school that are accessible to the community.

**Benefits and Burdens:** A new public park would benefit Parkrose residents, but could make the area more attractive to potential homebuyers and renters, increasing property values and potentially displacing lower-income residents of color.

**Priority (High/Low):** High

#### 4. Create a new community center for the Parkrose community

**Action:** Advocate for a community center to help meet the recreational and community gathering needs of the area. Consider opportunities for a full-service community center, or a smaller community center with programming determined by the community, potentially with an emphasis on serving the needs of the area's youth. A community center should be located to be easily accessible to the community, especially for youth.

**Issue(s) addressed:** A desire for a community center was the most frequently-expressed community space/recreation need identified by community members. In particular, youth workshop participants called for a safe place to socialize, recreate, do homework, and get connected to job opportunities and other assistance.

**Feasibility/Barriers:** Substantial barriers in terms of obtaining City or other funding for site acquisition, development and management of a community center. Could be more feasible if this is a smaller community center that repurposes an existing building, or that involves a multi-purpose, shared facility (could involve multiple organizations in supporting costs and programming, such as the Parks Bureau, the school district, community groups, etc.).

**Benefits and Burdens:** A new community center would benefit Parkrose residents, but a full-service community center would likely make the area more attractive to potential homebuyers and renters, increasing property values and potentially displacing lower-income residents. A smaller, lower-profile community center that is less of an attraction could have less displacement impacts.

**Priority (High/Low):** High

#### 5. Create community gathering places as part of the Sandy Boulevard business district

**Actions:**

- A. Work with community and governmental partners to create gathering places and amenities that make it enjoyable for Parkrose residents to spend time in the Sandy Boulevard business district and make it a hub for the community. Possibilities identified by community members include a plaza with fountain/splashpad, community space that could accommodate an outdoor market and community events, benches and trees, and murals.
- B. Advocate with TriMet and ODOT for including community space as part of the Parkrose Transit Center and in association with the I-205 pathway.
- C. Encourage business establishments that support family- and youth-friendly activities and gatherings, such as play spaces, youth-friendly cafes, food cart pods, or a bowling alley or movie theater.

**Issue(s) addressed:** Addresses desires for creating more gathering places in a location that is intended to be a neighborhood center that is a hub for the community. Provide opportunities for socializing and strengthening community, accommodating community events and markets, while providing opportunities to create public places that reflect the community's diverse cultures.

**Feasibility/Barriers:** Public spaces dependent on willing community and governmental partners, and resources for improvements and amenities. An opportunity is that the Parkrose Transit Center has space that could be repurposed, or parking areas that could be periodically used for community events or markets. Also, the business district has parking lots that could also be repurposed periodically or for the long term. Attracting businesses that serve as gathering places is dependent on willing business owners.

**Benefits and Burdens:** Benefits Parkrose residents and the business district. However, if gathering places and amenities attract much interest from outside the community, this could contribute to the popularity of the area, increasing property values, and potentially displacing lower-income residents of color.

**Priority (High/Low):** High

## 6. Include a community gathering place as part of the Rossi Farms development

**Action:** Advocate for development of the Rossi Farms property to include a community gathering place that can be used by the broader Parkrose community.

**Issue(s) addressed:** Addresses the need for community gathering places in the Parkrose community.

**Feasibility/Barriers:** Dependent on the willingness of the Rossi Farms developer. This location is far from the Sandy Boulevard commercial district, limiting the ability for it to contribute to the community hub function of the Sandy main street.

**Benefits and Burdens:** Would benefit the Parkrose community. However, if including the gathering place as part of the Rossi Farms development helps make Parkrose more attractive to potential future residents, this could contribute to increasing property values and rents, potentially displacing lower-income residents of color.

**Priority (High/Low):** High

## 7. Incorporate more trees and green elements in urban public spaces

**Actions:** Work with community and governmental partners and property owners in planting trees and vegetation in and adjacent to public spaces. Besides tree plantings along sidewalks and other public spaces, this could include planting trees to screen Sandy Boulevard from nearby railroad tracks. Link tree plantings to creating job opportunities for youth.

**Issue(s) addressed:** Would address community desires for more greenery, while reducing urban heat island impacts and helping to manage stormwater.

**Feasibility/Barriers:** This could be funded by existing programs and community partnerships, such as Friends of Trees, the Bureau of Environmental Services' Neighborhood to the River program, and Urban Forestry. Often dependent on willing property owners. Business owners are sometimes concerned about trees obscuring visibility of businesses, which can be addressed by appropriate tree species choices and placement, and about ongoing maintenance needs.

**Benefits and Burdens:** Benefits the Parkrose community, and connecting tree plantings to job opportunities could directly benefit youth of color and other lower-income residents. There is some risk that over time trees can contribute to the attractiveness of Parkrose to potential future residents, which could contribute to increasing property values and rents, potentially displacing lower-income residents.

**Priority (High/Low):** High

## 8. Organize community cleanups in and around public spaces

### **Actions:**

- A. Work with community partners, local businesses, and volunteers to undertake periodic cleanups in public spaces and along streets and other transportation facilities. Inform community members on the current resources available for addressing sanitation issues and advocate for expanding these resources for Parkrose.
- B. Clean up the I-205 pathway and increase community awareness of the opportunities the pathway provides for family activities such as bicycling, walking, running, and rolling.

**Issue(s) addressed:** Addresses community concerns about trash making it less attractive to spend time in public spaces and to use bicycle and pedestrian pathways.

**Feasibility/Barriers:** Relatively low cost, but dependent on willing community partners and volunteers, as well as organizational capacity.

**Benefits and Burdens:** Benefits the Parkrose community. Proper waste disposal and regular/frequent cleanups can prevent serious drainage issues on the street, physical hazards for people walking, biking, and driving, and encourage better maintenance and upkeep by the community. Not a significant displacement risk, unless the cleanups involve removal and displacement of houseless people and their belongings.

**Priority (High/Low):** High

## 9. Expand community use of Prescott Elementary School grounds

**Action:** Work with the Parkrose School District on possibilities for expanding community use of Prescott Elementary School grounds. Explore ways of addressing vandalism and other security concerns.

**Issue(s) addressed:** The Parkrose neighborhood has few park facilities, with only one small public park with play structures. Making Prescott Elementary School grounds and play areas accessible to the community would significantly expand recreation options for children in the Parkrose neighborhood.

**Feasibility/Barriers:** Need to address school district concerns about damage to school property and other risks associated with allowing more community access to school grounds.

**Benefits and Burdens:** This would benefit Parkrose children and their families, but could place some burden on the school district. Not a significant displacement risk.

**Priority (High/Low):** Medium