

FALL CREEK GREENWAY

OVERVIEW

The Fall Creek corridor is located in the northeastern quadrant of Marion County and is the second largest corridor being studied (after White River). The corridor begins at the Geist Reservoir dam and ends by joining the White River north of downtown Indianapolis. The character of Fall Creek varies greatly between the areas west and east of I-465. Land uses surrounding the corridor west of I-465 are primarily residential with major commercial activities along main roadways; open space and residential uses predominate east of the expressway. In addition, two important sites—Fort Benjamin Harrison State Park and the Indiana State Fairgrounds are adjacent to this corridor. Fall Creek is well-known in Indianapolis for its recreational and natural resources. The importance of this corridor was established early on with the development of Fall Creek Parkway, which parallels a majority of the corridor length. Pristine forested areas exist along the creek outside the I-465 loop and have been identified as "unique resource areas" by Indy Parks. A variety of wildlife species inhabit the Fall Creek area and use the corridor as a nesting area and migration stopover. In addition, canoeists, hikers, bicyclists, wildlife observers, and anglers use the creek's resources.

In May of 1999 a comprehensive project report for the entire Fall Creek Greenway was completed. This detailed report identifies suggested trail routes, design issues and trail construction phasing costs. The historical development of Fall Creek Parkway and Greenway and the role of the renowned landscape architect, George Kessler, are also highlighted. This report provides the framework by which Indy Parks Greenways will seek funding opportunities for development of the greenway.

The first phase of development began in 1998 with the award of \$1.2 million in Transportation Enhancement Funds. This phase of development will start construction in 2001 and will include the section of greenway from the Monon Trail to the existing trailhead on Fall Creek Parkway (just east of Keystone Ave.). Major trailheads will be located at the Monon Trail connection, 39th Street (the access area to the Indiana State Fairgrounds), and at an overlook just west of Keystone Avenue. Bridge improvements will be made on the 38th Street bridge to accommodate trail uses along the south side of the bridge and a new pedestrian bridge spanning Fall Creek will be constructed just east of Keystone Avenue to connect to the existing parking, trail and trailhead. Major street crossings will be at the eastern end of the 38th Street Bridge and across Millersville Road. A pedestrian underpass will be utilized to cross Keystone Avenue.

Phase 2,3 & 4 of the Fall Creek Greenway has been approved for additional Transportation Enhancement Funds and will include the area beginning at the existing trailhead at Fall Creek Parkway and will continue north to a connection with Fort Harrison State Park for a total length of 5.91 miles. Major features of this section include the widening of the existing trail from Fall Creek Parkway to 56th Street to 12 feet and

improving the existing trail surface. Existing trailheads will be improved to match the standards of all Indy Parks Greenway trails and the boardwalk under 56th Street will be repaired. A new trail will be developed north of 56th Street with underpasses at I-465 and Shadeland Avenue. Improvements will be made to accommodate trail users on the Shafter Avenue Bridge over Fall Creek before the trail makes the connection with the trail system in Fort Harrison State Park.

Phase 5 of the overall plan is a .95mile trail from the northern edge of Fort Harrison State Park at 71st Street to the 79th Street loop trail. This phase is not funded for construction at this time. Work within this section will also include a trailhead and pedestrian crossing at 71st Street.

Phase 6 of the Fall Creek Greenway plan was completed in 1999 with Land and Water Conservation funding and includes a loop trail around the pond at the commercial development near 79th Street and Fall Creek Road. This section of trail was constructed for hiking and nature viewing and is constructed of compacted aggregate. A small parking access was developed along Fall Creek Road.

Phases 7-9 are not currently funded. They represent the greenway phases from the south terminus at the new Beurt Servaas Bridge (a cable- stay pedestrian bridge over Fall Creek near 10th Street) to the Phase 1 section beginning at the Monon Trail. This section includes linkages to downtown Indianapolis, the White River Promenade Trail, the White River Greenway Trail and the Canal Walk. Preliminary plans for the trail include an underpass at Stadium Drive and street crossings at 16th Street, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, Senate Avenue, Capitol Avenue, Illinois Street, Meridian Street, Pennsylvania Street, Talbot Street, Delaware Street, Washington Boulevard and Central Avenue. Street crossings are proposed at existing stop light locations where pedestrian activated signals can be incorporated. Trailheads are planned at College Avenue, Fall Creek and 16th Street Park and at Watkins Park. A connection to the Children's Museum is also proposed.

MASTER PLAN UPDATE RECOMMENDATIONS

2001 to 2006

1. Complete the Fall Creek Greenway Trail phases 1-4 (Broadway Avenue to Fort Harrison State Park).
2. Use more native plantings and flowering trees along the trail.
3. Provide additional drinking fountains.
4. Assist in preparation and implementation of a community access plan to identify bike routes and alternative means of access from neighborhoods to community facilities and greenways.
5. Continue to provide upgrades to existing trail and amenities.

2007 to 2012

1. Work with the Indianapolis Water Company to study the potential for making the canal aqueduct accessible to trail users as an educational resource area.
2. Complete phase 2,3 &4 of trail development from 10th Street to the Monon Trail.
3. Make linkages to Skiles Test Nature Park and consider a linkage to Woollen's Gardens Nature Preserve.
4. Complete Phase 5 of the Fall Creek Greenway development plan (the 71st Street to 79th Street trail section).

Public Vision Statements

The Fall Creek corridor is appropriate for many uses including development of biking and hiking trails, conservation, and, in some locations, park and water-related uses. The intent of this vision is to create a multipurpose greenway corridor that can be enjoyed by the citizens of Indianapolis, particularly the residents in the surrounding neighborhoods.

To create a multipurpose greenway corridor, facilities for fishing, canoeing, hiking, and biking should be constructed, and existing facilities should be improved, as necessary. Some facilities identified as needing repair or enhancement include the underpass under Fall Creek Parkway and the bridges at College Avenue, Central Avenue, Meridian Street, Illinois Street, and Capitol Avenue. Additional amenities such as footbridges over drainage ditches, comfort stations, emergency phones, lighting fixtures, bridges over Fall Creek to link trails on both sides of the waterway, and directional signage should be constructed or installed to provide a safe environment for greenway users. Barton Park was identified as requiring a clean-up program and regular maintenance, and, among other considerations, construction of a fishing pier.

The existing trail along the northern part of Fall Creek should be extended first to I-465 and then north to Fort Benjamin Harrison through the proposed state park and possibly to Geist Reservoir. Skiles Test Nature Park could be linked to the trail in the future.

New trails developed on the Fall Creek corridor should be linked with other trails in the Greenways System. There are links with the Monon Rail corridor, and to the IWC Canal, that could provide a link to the White River corridor, Pogues Run corridor, and downtown. Access to the greenway corridor should be provided to surrounding neighborhoods by constructing sidewalks that lead to the greenway corridor and by creating and improving parking facilities. In particular, the parking areas south of Kessler Boulevard and west of Emerson Avenue should be improved, and the rocky road connecting Fall Creek Parkway and the Fall Creek trail should also be improved. The large island between 30th and 38th streets should be developed to include a canoe/row boat/bicycle rental facility. Access to the facility would be connected to trails on both sides of the creek by footbridges.

Several places have been identified as having potential for development of wildlife habitat or nature preserves. A small corner of land north of 71st Street at Fall Creek Road and Briarcliff Road could be used for a small natural area. Another potential location is a parcel of land between Millersville Road and the north side of Fall Creek Road.

The CSO problem on Fall Creek is enormous. This problem prohibits human contact with the water. It is vitally important that the situation be resolved before the public's vision of activities is allowed.

In addition to improvements to existing facilities, this greenway corridor should receive a general clean-up. In particular, some of the existing vegetation should be cleared from the roadways to the creek. Removing existing vegetation such as shrubs and low-canopy trees will increase the security of the greenway corridor, as well as eliminate the propensity for illegal dumping.