



## How should Gresham spend \$5.4M Metro parks funds?

👤 Teresa Carson 📅 April 08 2021

**Survey asks folks to rate 10 possible projects, buying Headwaters site is one option**



PMG PHOTO: TERESA CARSON - Barbara Kinzie Christman is one of the residents who objects to the Headwaters project in Southwest Gresham. The 30-home development would require removal of 250 mature fir trees, which abutt a undeveloped park and two wetland areas.

(<https://pamplinmedia.com/images/artimg/00003700723153-0788.jpg>)

The city of Gresham launched a survey on how to use its Metro parks funds, and depending on public input, could purchase the controversial proposed Headwaters housing development site for park land.

The survey opened Monday, April 5, and asks people's opinions on how to use the \$5.4 million that Gresham is getting from the 2019 Metro Parks and Nature bond measure.

There are 10 proposed parks projects totaling \$13 million. That's more than twice the funds available from the Metro bond. The survey asks folks to pick the three projects they see as most important.

"The mayor and City Council want to provide an opportunity for public input and want to hear how residents would like to see the city spend our "local share" of this money," said Elizabeth Coffey, Gresham's director of communications. The Headwaters property is included as one of 10 potential projects that could be purchased with these funds. "There are lots of competing needs for this \$5.4 million, which is why it is critical that residents tune in and let us know what their priorities are," she added.

The \$5.4 million can be used for parks or natural resources projects that boost access to nature, water quality, habitat and protect against climate change. The money cannot be spent on playgrounds, sports fields, recreation programs, pools or fountains.

City Council will hold a public hearing on Tuesday, May 4, to review the results of the public outreach and vote on disposition of the Metro funds, including potential purchase of the Headwaters property.

The proposed Headwaters development has stirred controversy in Gresham and beyond.

Development of the 7.82 acre tract would cut down a dense stand of more than 250 mature fir trees adjacent to a protected wetland area and park. The city approved the project and no appeal was filed.

Formerly owned by the late Helen Shaull, the wedge-shaped property is at 3535 W. Powell Blvd. It is about half-mile east of the Highland Fair shopping center.

The forested site is next to Fairview Creek headwaters, the undeveloped Southwest Community Park and near the Grant Butte Wetlands owned by the city of Gresham. The southwest portion of the site is a Habitat Conservation Area.

"The Shaull property would be a purchase, while all the other projects are for properties that the city already owns. If the Shaull property is not purchased by the city, it will be forever lost. The other parks projects may get money in the future," said Janet Unruh, who does not want to see the Headwaters development proceed.



COURTESY PHOTO: CITY OF GRESHAM - A project at Fujitsu Ponds is one of the 10 proposed uses for the \$5.4 million in Metro bond funds. The city of Gresham has opened a survey for residents to rank the 10 projects in importance.

(<https://pamplinmedia.com/images/artimg/00003700723196-0788.jpg>)

In addition to the proposed Headwaters purchase, the other nine projects included in the survey are:

- Columbia View Park, 1000 N.E. 169th Ave. The city's \$850,000 proposal calls for a nature play area, making trails accessible, a Columbia Gorge viewpoint and other improvements.
- Southeast Neighborhood Park, 3003 S.E. Barnes Road. Trails, picnic facilities, signs and a nature play area would be added to this 6.5 acre undeveloped park at a cost of \$600,000.
- Jenne Butte Neighborhood Park, 2358 S.W. Border Way, would get a wetland viewpoint, trails, picnic facilities and more, for \$1.2 million.
- East Gresham Neighborhood Park, 237 S.E. Williams Road, would get improvements such as signage, trails, picnic facilities and a nature play area at a cost of \$650,000.
- Southeast Community Park, 5600 S.E. Salquist Road, would see soft and paved trails, picnic facilities, a restroom, nature play area, off-leash dog area, and more, at a price of \$2 million.
- Southwest Community Park, 3333 West Powell Blvd., would get improvements that could include picnic areas, wetland viewing, trails community gardens, a restroom and more, at a cost of \$2.25 million.
- Hogan Butte Nature Education Center, would purchase the undeveloped forest land north of Hogan Butte Nature Park, 757 S.E. Gabbert Road. A home on the property would become the accessible Nature Education Center to engage students in a native plant nursery and other operations. This would cost \$700,000.
- Fujitsu Ponds, off Glisan Street near Salish ponds, would get improvements worth \$1.75 million. The upgrades would eliminate warm water from going into these ponds, benefiting wildlife and reducing flooding risk. A public natural area would be created.
- Forest health recovery. The proposal is to spend \$1 million on forest restoration and safety efforts all over Gresham.



COURTESY PHOTO: CITY OF GRESHAM - Another of the 10 proposals would spend \$2 million on upgrades at Southeast Community Park, a 6.5 acre undeveloped site on Southeast Barnes Road.

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SGS Development LLC, headquartered in Bend, bought the Shaull property for around \$1 million and plans to develop the lots and sell the property to a builder to construct the 30 homes.

Chet Antonsen, of SGS Development, said Metro and Gresham had first right of refusal on the property and declined to buy it.

SGS is asking \$2.5 million for the acreage now. The city would spend about \$500,000 for improvements for a total cost of \$3 million.

The proposed development unleashed a torrent of public comment and controversy. The city received many comments, all opposed to the Headwaters development, from local residents to the The Audubon Society of Portland.

John Bildsoe, vice president of the Coalition of Gresham Neighborhoods, wrote that arrowheads and other artifacts from Indigenous people have been found on the site.

After similar community pushback in 2014, SGS sold the Gantenbein Farm property at 2826 N.W. Division St. it planned to develop, to Metro, Gresham and the EMSWCD. That property is now the part of the Grant Butte Wetlands.

### Sidebar

#### Take the survey

Share your thoughts on how the city could use its portion of Metro parks funds by taking a survey at: [GreshamOregon.gov/Parks-Planning](https://GreshamOregon.gov/Parks-Planning)

For more information email: [ParkOptions@GreshamOregon.gov](mailto:ParkOptions@GreshamOregon.gov) (mailto:ParkOptions@GreshamOregon.gov) or leave a voicemail: 503-618-2145. Instructions will be in English and Spanish.

Paper surveys will be available upon request.

The survey is due by Monday, April 26.

Survey responses are limited to one per person. Duplicate submittals will be removed.



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