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Introduction

This report was written in preparation of the Millersville at Fall Creek Valley Village and Corridor Plan. As part of the planning process, four work groups were established, each with its own topic. This report documents the findings of the Fall Creek Work Group.

The Fall Creek Work Group met # times from October 2010 to month 2011. The purpose of the work group was to study the many aspects of Fall Creek: stream, trail, and park. The work group also looked at issues of drainage within the study area. The group was expected to set goals and actions as they relate to trail, recreation and drainage improvements; and to prioritize those goals and actions.

Fall Creek
Fall Creek’s source is found south of Middletown in Henry County. It flows southwestwardly for 75 miles and empties into White River in downtown Indianapolis, draining 315 square miles.

Through the study area Fall Creek is lined along its northern bank by Fall Creek Parkway and the Fall Creek Greenway Trail. The trail is the third most popular trail in the Indianapolis Greenways system after the Monon Rail-Trail and the Indianapolis Water Company Canal.

History
In the 1800s Fall Creek was a mill stream. A sawmill was established in 1824 near where Emerson Way now crosses Fall Creek. At one time or another, at least four other mills were operated in that vicinity and the area became know as Millersville. Millersville was served by a post office, a general store and several other businesses and had a population of 86. By the late 1880s the mills and Millersville were on the decline.

The idea of a parkway along Fall Creek originated in the early days of park planning in Indianapolis. The first plan for a park system was developed in the late 1890s by John C. Olmstead. The plan was updated about ten years later by George Kessler. In his 1909 “Report of Landscape Architect to the Board of Park Commissioners,” Kessler called for a system of parks and parkways that “should bring within the easy reach of every portion of a community the pleasant enjoyment of open air spaces for rest and recreation, and form pleasant and attractive means of communication from one part of the community to another.”

Parkways along the White River and the city’s other major streams were a primary part of Kessler’s plan. He described his concept of parkways to the commissioners as follows:

Parkways of this nature do not primarily form merely driveways from one portion of the city to another, although their continuity for this purpose is important, but, at variance with the popular idea of the boulevard, they do from a chain of parks or a continuous park which is by
its nature brought to the doors of all sections of the community. By obtaining here and there open spaces of considerable extent in addition to the space required for roadways and walks, you will provide a continuous series of small parks and playgrounds which will become very valuable and pleasurable to the neighborhoods in their immediate vicinity. Where such parkways, as they will in your case, follow the lines of picturesque streams, an additional interest is presented, both in preserving the picturesque nature of the scenery and in the use of streams for boating and bathing purposes.

Kessler’s report detailed each of the proposed parkways. He envisioned the Fall Creek Parkway as “capable of most picturesque treatment, but is also to a large extent a utilitarian feature. Here again it is contemplated to border each side with a driveway, but the meanderings of the stream are such as to leave many park spaces of very considerable extent, as well as the possibility of introducing here and there water surfaces that are directly in the stream or to one side of it of sufficient area to add largely to the attractiveness of the improvement.”

Kessler proposed acquiring land along Fall Creek from the White River upstream to 38th Street and beyond as the city grew. By 1911 the City had acquired the entire north bank of the creek from the canal upstream beyond the City limits at 38th Street. The city also owned the south bank from Indiana Avenue downstream to the White River and from Central Avenue downstream to 23rd Street. The City’s holding along Fall Creek at that time totaled 143.3 acres.

Open spaces, curvilinear roadways defined the character of the parkway. Trees were planted to line the roadway and trees and shrubs were extensively used along the parkway to define open spaces, frame views and lead the eye along the route.

In 1909 a ravine-cut wooded parcel overlooking Fall Creek was offered to the City in a letter from William Watson Woollen. The letter enthusiastically described the site, “It is an ideal place. No other such beautiful and desirable place can be found within the same distance from the center of this city.” Although the parcel was well outside City limits, the City accepted Woolen’s offer.

Woollen conveyed the 44-acre property and his nature study library under several conditions, including:

The place is to be known and designated . . . as Woollens Garden of Birds and Botany. It is to be maintained and used as a place for nature study.

The wildwood of it is to be maintained a near as can be in its present wild state.

The wildlife upon it . . . is not to be interfered with or destroyed; it is to be a home and refuge for wild creatures which are found there or which may come to it.
At the time of the donation a barn with a crib, a gardener’s cottage and a seven-room double log cabin had been built on the site by Woollen. It was Woollen’s hope that the log cabin would be maintained as a type of pioneer museum. However, all the buildings on the site are now gone.

The donation of Woolens Garden was an impetus to extend the parkway another six miles. Federal work relief programs of the 1930s built the extension of the drive.

A 1928 update of Kessler’s plans by Louis Sheridan proposed the extension of Fall Creek Parkway to the northeast county limit.

Skiles Test Nature Park, located immediately outside the northeast corner of the study area, sits on the bluff of Fall Creek facing Woollens Garden to the south. The park was a bequest of successful Indianapolis businessperson Skiles Test. He left his northside estate to the City in 1964 to be used for the benefit of Indianapolis’s young people. The City took possession of the 81-acre site in 1974.

Skiles Test Nature Park, Woolens Garden and the Fall Creek Parkway formed a continuous swath of undeveloped parkland that in 1988 was the subject of a park master plan. The Plan recommended improvements for all three of the parks. Many of the improvements recommended in the plan were constructed, most notably the paved trail from Allisonville Road to 56th Street, a trailhead at Alllisonville Road, two canoe launches and small parallel parking areas along Fall Creek.

The plan called for opening views to the creek by selectively pruning the existing vegetation. It also recommended maintaining the vegetation along the parkway in a tiered manner with natural woody vegetation along the stream, maintained turf along the street and an intermediate area between the wooded stream bank and the turf for wildflower plantings.

The Woollens Garden portion of the master plan recommended installation of a canoe launch, minor picnic facilities, a footbridge over the creek, and nature trails.

A master plan for Indianapolis Greenways was first adopted in 1994. The plan was updated in 1999 and 2002. The Indianapolis Greenways Master Plan 2002 perpetuates the dream of park-lined rivers and streams envisioned by Kessler in the early part of the 20th century. This plan recommended extending the existing greenway trail northeast from the intersection of Fall Creek Parkway and Kessler Boulevard into Fort Benjamin Harrison State Park and up to 79th Street. Extension of the trail southwest from the trailhead at the intersection of Fall Creek Parkway, Binford Boulevard and Allisonville Road to the Monon Rail-Trail was also proposed. The extension northeast was made as far as Woollens Garden. The connection southwest to the Monon Rail-Trail was also completed.
The Greenways Master Plan is currently under revision. Completion of the plan is anticipated in April 2011.

Although outside the study area, Fort Harrison State Park is a destination for many users of the Fall Creek Greenway Trail. The state park was part of the conversion of a 25,000-acre active military base into a mix of public and private land uses. The State of Indiana was given 1,700 acres to form the park in 1995.

The Fall Creek Parkway and Woolens Garden were entered in the National Register of Historic Places on March 26, 2003 by the United States Department of Interior. They were part of a larger entry that encompassed the historic Indianapolis park and boulevard system.

The nomination of the Fall Creek Parkway and Woollens Garden list the following features as contributing to the historic character of the sites:

- The parkway drives, one on either side of the creek
- Parkway green space (site, design, materials)
- The spatial organization of the parkway
- Keystone Avenue Dam
- 56th Street bridge (1934, WPA built)
- Woollens Gardens (natural conservation area)
Current Conditions

Greenway
Water Quality
Drainage
Public Input

A series of interviews, focus group meetings and general meetings were held in spring and summer of 2010 with residents, businesspeople and representatives of institutions in the Millersville at Fall Creek Valley area, as well as with City staff. The purpose of these interactions was to gather information about the area’s assess and resources, and to hear and understand the participants’ issues, concerns and visions for the area. Following are the items that related to Fall Creek.

Fall Creek Greenway and associated recreation opportunities

Assets and Resources
- Fall Creek Trail
- Devon Country Club
- Hiking in Woollens Garden and Skiles Test parks
- Scenic qualities of the Fall Creek Valley
- Canoeing
- Fishing in both the creek and in nearby ponds and lakes
- Good bird habitat, over 100 species sighted
- In general the trail feels safe
- Low traffic on the parkway street
- Concerned neighbors

Issues and Concerns
- Thick vegetation collects trash
- Trees overgrow the 56th bridge and make pedestrian crossing difficult
- Broken lights
- Graffiti
- Thick vegetation blocks view of the stream
- Weedy around pond at the 56th Street trailhead
- Duck and geese manure fouls area
- Trail is frequently wet and muddy after heavy rains
- A lot of dead, damaged and hazardous trees
- Litter
- Downed trees in the stream hampers canoeing
- Invasive, exotic plants degrade natural vegetation areas
- Visibility along the trail is hampered by the prairie planting
- Lack of picnic facilities
- Lack of restrooms
- Streambank erosion is threatening Millersville Road

Visions
- Extend trail upstream from Woollens Garden to Fort Harrison State Park.
- Provide connecting trails into surrounding neighborhoods and beyond.
• Footbridges in various locations along Fall Creek to connect the south side of the creek to the greenway trail.
• Create better access to Woollens Garden
• Clear stream to allow for better canoeing and kayaking
• Build a canoe take-out at Emerson Way
• Improve fishing
• Add benches, picnic tables and shelters in appropriate locations
• Add a picnic area in proximity to the retail area at 56th Street and Emerson Way
• Add a playground
• Add interpretive panels
• Add emergency phones
• Create a park along the south bank of Fall Creek, west of Emerson.

Water Quality
   Assets and Resources
   Issues and concerns
   Visions

Drainage
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Plan Recommendations

Greenway

Vegetation management

A thick, nearly impenetrable wall of woody shrubs was grown up along the Fall Creek and in many places crowds the trail. Most of the shrubs in this wall are invasive, exotic species that, with few natural controls, out-compete the native vegetation. Amur honeysuckle is by far the most common invasive plant responsible for these issues. European white mulberry, common buckthorn, oriental bittersweet, Siberian elm, European highbush cranberry, callery pear, and jetbead are other common, woody exotics found along the corridor.

Since 2004 Indy Parks has conducted several projects along the corridor to manage invasive, exotic vegetation. These projects are ongoing and must be maintained annually to prevent re-infestation. After a reorganization of duties, vegetation management in the parks and greenways is now the responsibility of the Department of Public Works.

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• Prioritization of sites for invasive, exotic removal. |
| Cooperation between the City and volunteer organizations to remove invasive, exotic vegetation and replant native vegetation. | | • Prioritize sites for invasive, exotic vegetation removal and revegetation with native plants.  
• Conduct volunteer events to remove invasive, exotic vegetation and replant native species* |
| Reestablishment of native vegetation at the 56th Street trailhead and pond | | • Conduct volunteer events to remove invasive, exotic vegetation and replant native species* |

* Volunteer events require significant advance planning of both the project and the event and may include site design, approvals and permits, professional supervision and assistance, and donations of funds, materials and supplies.

As trees decline due to age, insects or disease, they require maintenance or removal. Vegetation growing too close to streets and intersections can blocks views and impede safe driving, walking and bicycling. Vegetation maintenance in City parks and rights-of-way is the responsibility of the City; however ongoing budget restraints have led to a
backlog of service requests. The extent of the work is likely to rapidly expand as the infestation of Emerald Ash Borer will result in the death of nearly all ash trees in the region.

The Department of Public Works has recently put in place a system that should expedite the maintenance of vegetation in the parks and rights-of-way. The system is largely complaint-driven, so neighbors are encouraged to notify the Mayor’s Action Center with vegetation problems they observe. This will start the maintenance process.

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A 14-acre prairie planting has been installed within the Fall Creek parkway downstream of the Emerson Way bridge. The prairie covers an area that was formerly turf grass. This area was a maintenance problem because it is low and was frequently damp, causing difficulties with mowing. By creating a no-mow area the City saves approximately $9000 per year.

However the tall grasses and wildflowers in the prairie cause some trail users to feel threatened because of a perceived lack of visual surveillance from street.

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<td>• Add a mid-summer mowing to the prairie’s management schedule to reduce vegetation heights.</td>
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The Fall Creek Greenway trail runs five miles through the study area. Within this segment, the trail has 12 access points. Eleven of these access points provide parking. Despite the number of access points, the trail is not well tied into the surrounding street system.

A notable destination for trail users lies just beyond the reach of the Fall Creek trail. Only two-thirds of a mile beyond the eastern end of the trail is Fort Harrison State Park and its paved trail. Linking the State Park to the Fall Creek trail is a recommendation of the Indianapolis Greenways Master Plan and the Fall Creek, Woollens Garden and Skiles Test Park Master Plan.

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<td>• Increased access to the Fall Creek Greenway Trail</td>
<td>Connect the sidewalks on the 46th Street, Emerson Way and 56th Street bridges to the Fall Creek Greenway Trail. Provide access points (trail connection, no parking) at Delmar Road and Drexel Avenue.*</td>
<td>• Design, fund and construct connections. • Design, fund and construct access points.</td>
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<td>• Extension of the Fall Creek Greenway Trail</td>
<td>Extend the Fall Creek Greenway Trail upstream to connect with the paved trail within Fort Harrison State Park.</td>
<td>• Design, fund and construct trail extension. • Negotiate with intervening property owners to provide for the best trail alignment. • Work with the City of Lawrence and the State Park to appropriately site and build a bicycle and foot bridge over Fall Creek.</td>
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* Delmar Road provides a connection to neighborhoods west of Binford Boulevard. Drexel Avenue provides access to the Kessler View neighborhood and other neighborhoods to the north.

Recreation amenities
Recreation amenities provided in the Fall Creek Parkway include the Greenway Trail, canoe launches and fishing access. Other amenities requested by participants in the planning process are picnic and playground facilities.
• **Locations for picnicking along the Fall Creek Greenway Trail.**
  - Provide for picnic facilities at existing trailhead immediately upstream of 46th Street. (see map)
  - Provide for picnic facilities at the intersection of Fall Creek Parkway, North Drive and Kessler Boulevard. (see map)*
  - Design picnic facilities compatible with occasional flooding.
  - Acquire property.
  - Design picnic facilities compatible with occasional flooding.
  - Fund and construct picnic facilities.
  - Acquire property.
  - Design picnic facilities compatible with occasional flooding.
  - Fund and construct picnic facilities.

• **Locations for play equipment along the Fall Creek Greenway Trail**
  - Locate play equipment in proximity to the picnic facilities
  - Design playgrounds that are compatible with occasional flooding.
  - Fund and construct playgrounds.

* Picnic facilities in proximity to the retail center at Millersville would provide trail users with the opportunity to buy food in the village and then eat it on the parkway. Better linking the village and the trail would be beneficial to both.

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**Interpretation**

Interpretive panels are a feature on many Indianapolis Greenways. Interpretive panels provide an opportunity for learning. They also help build community by contributing to the common base of knowledge. **Two or Three** interpretive panels can already be found along the Fall Creek Trail within the study area. The existing panels provide information on nature and on the greenways system.

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<td>• Enhance greenways trail users’ experience.</td>
<td>Working together, the City and local community organizations install additional interpretive panels to trailheads along the Fall Creek Greenways Trail. Potential topics include the history of Millersville, history of the parkway system, profiles of Millersville area artists, locations of the historic mills.</td>
<td>• Decide on locations and text.</td>
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<td>• Build a common base of community knowledge on topics of local interest.</td>
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<td>• Fund and install panels.</td>
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Water Quality
Drainage
Priorities
Greenway
Water Quality
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Lower Fall Creek Watershed Management Plan
Summary

Prepared for: Marion County Soil & Water Conservation District,
Lower Fall Creek Watershed Alliance
Prepared by: Christopher B. Burke Engineering, Ltd.
Completed: May 2009
Purpose: Study water quality and identify sustainable and local solutions
Study area: The portion of the Fall Creek Watershed downstream of the Geist dam.
This includes the Indian Creek, Mud Creek and Devon Creek watersheds as these streams
enter Fall Creek downstream of the Geist dam. The watershed drains 57,800 acres and
spreads over four counties.

The plan identifies Critical Areas which are locations or activities that particularly
contribute to, or are particularly sensitive to, the degradation of water quality in Fall
Creek:

Critical Areas for sediment:
- Lack of adequate erosion and sediment control during construction
- Conventional tillage practices
- Indian Lake (in addition to the two items above, the lake is too small for the area
  that feeds into it)
- Eroded streambanks

Critical Areas for nutrients:
- Golf courses
- Residential lakes over 50 acres (this includes Lake Kesslerwood east and west)

Critical areas for pathogens:
- Non-sewered development
- Livestock and manure management
- Wellfield protection areas (Approximately 25% of the land area within the
  watershed is in a wellfield protection area.)
- Waterfowl
- Combined sewer overflows
## Management Measures specific to the Millersville @ Fall Creek Valley Study Area

### Management measures for sediment

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<th>Financial/Technical Assistance Needed</th>
<th>Milestones for Implementation</th>
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| Stabilize streambanks within the watershed with native vegetation; removing invasive species if present | • GIS for mapping and prioritization  
• Detailed topography for design  
• Engineer to model stream and design stabilization alternatives  
• Invasive species field guide and hand tools  
• Volunteers  
• Contractors and equipment  
• Permits and permit fees  
• Stabilization materials (plants, stone, fabric)  
• $200 - $1000 per linear foot stabilized | 1. Start with public-owned open space and golf courses, conduct a comprehensive streambank inventory  
2. Prioritize areas for stabilization  
3. Develop design alternatives  
4. Obtain materials and permits  
5. Schedule construction, coordinate laborers  
6. Stabilize streambank according to selected design |
| Develop Lake Management Plans for lakes over 50 acres | • Model Lake Management Plan  
• Coordinator (paid or volunteer)  
• GIS for analysis and exhibits  
• Existing physical, chemical and biological data  
• $5000 to $30,000 depending on size of lake and watershed | 1. Identify pollutants, sources, and causes  
2. Work with HOA to develop Lake Management Plan  
3. Adopt Lake Management Plan by HOA |
| Create a Highly Erodible Land (HEL) Overlay Zone for planning and zoning purposes | • GIS for mapping and analysis  
• Soil data  
• Model HEL ordinance  
• Legal expertise to review Ordinance  
• HEL literature | 1. Draft language for HEL Overlay Zone  
2. Create HEL maps  
3. Build support with decision-makes  
4. Adopt HEL Overlay Zone into Development Ordinance |
| Establish signage program to identify active construction sites or developments that are in compliance with IDEM’s Rule 5 program | • Examples elsewhere  
• Inspectors  
• Yard signs  
• GIS for tracking  
• $300 per sign | 1. Establish criteria  
2. Build support among decision-makers and contractors  
3. Develop signs, inspection forms, tracking  
4. Train inspectors  
5. Inspect sites, install yard signs |
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| Evaluate Development Ordinances based on the Center for Watershed Protection’s “Code and Ordinance Worksheet Tool.” | • Code and Ordinance Worksheet Tool  
• Local ordinances  
• Planning students  
• Legal expertise to review amended language  
• Support of decision-makers to adopt changes | 1. Secure assistance of planning students  
2. Review Code and Ordinance Worksheet  
3. Modify Worksheet is needed  
4. Review ordinances, meet with local planning for clarification  
5. Draft recommendations  
6. Amend ordinances |
| Encourage golf course along Fall Creek and lakes larger than 50 acres to participate in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program, Groundwater Guardian Green Sites, National Wildlife Federation, or a similar conservation program. | • Program information  
• GIS for targeting and tracking  
• Educational materials  
• Expertise to assist with program requirements and annual reporting | 1. Review program materials  
2. Identify target areas within focus group  
3. Develop educational materials if needed  
4. Conduct meetings with target golf course managers, HOAs and neighborhood associations  
5. Assist with program requirements and annual reporting if needed |
| Integrate Low Impact Development (LID) practices into new or re-development projects | • LID factsheets and guidance  
• Specific on Best Management Practices (BMP): infiltration rates, sizing, design details, etc.  
• Model ordinance  
• Legal expertise to review ordinance language  
• Incentives programs  
• LID training | 1. Research LID practices  
2. Identify BMPs suitable for soils, climate, etc.  
3. Develop design/technical standards  
4. Integrate language from model ordinance into local ordinance  
5. Establish incentives  
6. Build support of decision-makers, developers and contractors  
7. Train plan reviewers and inspectors  
8. Amend ordinance |
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| Establish or enhance shoreline and streambank riparian buffers to reduce potential increases in bacteriological impacts from wildlife and domestic pets throughout the Lower Fall Creek Watershed | • Educational materials  
• GIS to map and track progress  
• Model Ordinance language  
• Educational signage  
• Trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants for buffer | 1. Identify and prioritize target areas  
2. Review Model Ordinance and other resources  
3. Draft ordinance language for maintenance adjacent to waterbodies  
4. Build support of decision-makers, HOAs  
5. Enhance shoreline/streambank  
6. Install educational signage |
| Support the Septic Tank Elimination Program (STEP) especially within wellfield protections areas and floodplains | • STEP literature  
• Septic maintenance information  
• GIS to map individual septic systems  
• Water quality data  
• Grant writer and administration | 1. Identify septic systems in wellfield protection areas  
2. Target these areas for connection to sewers  
3. Distribute literature to HOA  
4. Prepare grants to assist homeowners with connection fees |
Plan Recommendations

Greenway
*Vegetation management*

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