

December 29th, 2023

DEI Committee – proposed agenda item brief

Prepared by: Environmental Specialist, Jim Cartan – Natural Resources

Wilsonville's Living Classroom

I would like to put forth for the DEI Committee's consideration an idea for a grant proposal focused on environmental education within a larger habitat restoration project at the Park at Merryfield Neighborhood Park.

Metro's Nature in Neighborhoods (NiN) Community Stewardship and Restoration grant provides dollars for habitat enhancement work within a framework of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion principals. In particular, the grant program seeks to support collaboration with communities of color and other historically marginalized groups to develop shared learning about environmental principals while connecting with and stewarding nature.

There is significant habitat restoration potential within the Park at Merryfield Neighborhood Park and with the proximity to Inza R. Wood Middle School, Boones Ferry Primary School, The Center for Research in Environmental Sciences and Technologies (CREST) and the regional nature park at Graham Oaks, staff thought a prudent way to address the environmental enhancement and education goals of the NiN grant would be to propose an outdoor, living classroom. This space would provide Wilsonville students a place to congregate and get their hands dirty all while engaging with place-based learning.

We have already recognized two potential partners for this project, Friends of Trees and the Backyard Habitat Certification Program, but collaborating with local educators and community groups could help create an inclusive space with interpretation, low impact infrastructure, and connection to existing assets within the city. This collaboration could also help shape curriculum associated with the living classroom and how the actual restoration work is carried out.

What staff is seeking from the DEI Committee is feedback on this proposal and potentially a vote or nod of support in developing a new outdoor education space particular to Wilsonville and its constituents. This grant proposal is not only a way to secure funding for habitat restoration work within the City's existing network of open space, but a means to illustrate a commitment to environmental education and engagement for the whole of community.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this NiN grant proposal idea.