

# EAST ALTON BAKER PARK PLAN

MARCH 1996



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



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## PREFACE

The plan you are about to read is different from most plans. Most plans are about humans having dominion over the land. They frequently identify an organizing theme and decide what the land is to be used for and what people will do there. Then they describe how the earth should be moved and reconfigured, what should grow there, and what man-made structures should be built so that people can do those things. Our plan is not like this.

We started with the direction from the people of Lane County, who passed the East Alton Baker Park Charter Amendment overwhelmingly in 1992. The Charter amendment states that this park is to be used for *passive* recreation. Passive means that we are acted upon; we are receiving the action. If we are passive, then the land is active. By approving this Charter Amendment, the people of Lane County have chosen the passive role. This doesn't mean that we sit back and do nothing. It means that we are here to serve this land, not the other way around. We recognize that the land has its own integrity, its own inherent design and organization, and we see ourselves as being here to learn from the land and let it shape us.

It is time to learn how to live in harmony with the land – to see ourselves, as Aldo Leopold once said, “*As members rather than rulers of the land community.*”

This plan was written – with a lot of help – by 15 volunteers who love this park. The Citizen Planning Committee recommended by the Eugene City Council and Willamalane Board approval of our plan unanimously (with the exception of strategy 14.1).

*We welcome your comments and suggestions for improving our plan.*

### EAST ALTON BAKER PARK CITIZEN PLANNING COMMITTEE

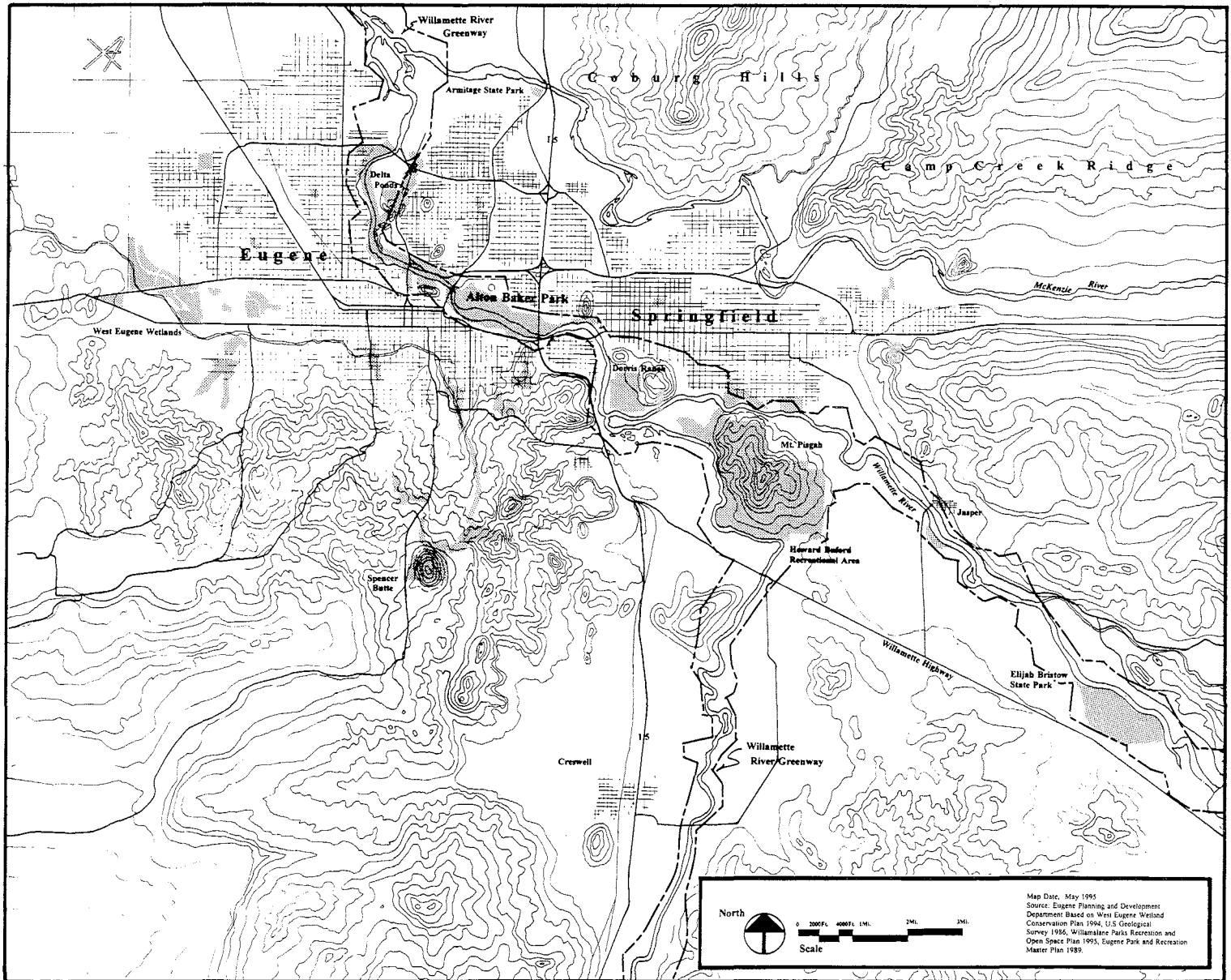
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*Special thanks to Sharon Teague for serving on the East Alton Baker Park Citizen Planning Committee since initially established in April 1993 through July 1995 and for Alan Dickman for serving from April 1993 through December 1994.*

# Alton Baker Park and Relationship to Natural Areas and Willamette Greenway

This map is a schematic representation of the area. The sizes of parks, open space, wetlands, city boundaries, and their locations are approximate.



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# Introduction

## **PURPOSE & SCOPE OF PLAN**

The *East Alton Baker Park Plan* presents key concepts and ideas to shape the park that visitors will explore in the coming decades. The plan provides a way to evaluate decisions affecting the park and progress made to achieve the vision in the plan. The plan encompasses the eastern 237 acres of Alton Baker Park as described in the conceptual plan.

## **PLAN ORGANIZATION & TERMS**

The Plan **vision**, **goals** and **design** principles are the most important statements in the plan. These statements are adopted by the elected officials and will guide both public and private actions affecting the park. They will provide direction concerning park improvements, restoration activities, and on-going maintenance. The **implementation strategies** provide a set of ideas on possible actions that could be taken to carry out the park vision. The strategies are not adopted but serve to illustrate how the park vision can be achieved.<sup>1</sup>

## **PARK HISTORY & PREVIOUS PARK PLANS**

### **The Early Park Movement - 1945 to 1970**

Most of Alton Baker Park was used for agricultural purposes through the late 19th and early 20th centuries.<sup>2</sup> It is this agricultural use that helped preserve the open space and the natural features along the riverbank, until the park movement of the 1950s identified the acreage as being desirable for metropolitan park use.

Howard Buford arrived in Eugene in 1945 and was the first planning consultant for the former Central Lane Planning Council. He received his degree in landscape architecture from Oregon State College in 1933. He came to Eugene after working for the National Park Service, the State of California and the Army Corps of Engineers. Sometime after his arrival he came to envision a “Central Park” for Eugene. Buford arrived at a propitious time because the community was badly in need of planning.

One of the areas that concerned Buford was the north bank of the Willamette River between the Ferry Street Bridge and Springfield. He considered the site perfect for a large metropolitan park and believed that the only way to save the land for park purposes was to remove it from private hands. To accomplish this he helped interest

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<sup>1</sup> Refer to the Plan Appendix for a definition of terms used in the plan.

<sup>2</sup> Refer to the Plan Appendix for more information about park history prior to 1945.

the State Highway Department in acquiring more than 100 acres of land as a source of gravel for construction of Interstate 5 during the late 1950s. At a later date the state agreed to sell 92 acres of the Patterson tract to the University of Oregon for part of its stadium site. In 1951 the *Eugene Park Study* identified the recreational potential of the site for the Central Lane Planning Council.

The 1950s was an era of massive highway, water supply, and power development projects. The metropolitan area had a strong economic base in lumber and wood products industries. A movement was established to also make the area a cultural and recreational center. The creation of a metropolitan park would be in keeping with the community's goals.

As new roads and subdivisions were built in the late 1950s, a concern developed that subdivisions would engulf the farm land on the north shore of the river if it was not put into public ownership. Tex Matsler, director of Eugene's Bureau of Parks and Recreation, stated that the site had long been envisioned as ideal for serving the entire Eugene-Springfield metropolitan area as the first "truly regional" park.

On April 22, 1959 key government officials, and others, organized a meeting to discuss the creation of the North Bank Park. The officials anticipated that the metropolitan population would grow to 250,000. At this meeting the University of Oregon announced its intention to build a new football stadium on the 92 acre Patterson tract.

In 1959, 350 acres of the proposed park site were privately owned with acquisition speculated to cost a half million dollars. Feeling that the land located between the Ferry Street Bridge and Judkins Point was a "now or never" opportunity, Lane County, Eugene, and Springfield public officials formed a park planning committee.

The mood is aptly described in a 1959 *Register Guard* editorial:

*"Like West Potomac Park in Washington, D.C., this park of ours will be stretched out along two miles or more of river frontage. But it will be on a more beautiful river, and it will be much less formal. It will retain the basic character of this sector's natural beauty. Future generations, especially, will applaud this fact. Due to the foresight of elected public officials and community leaders living today, those later residents will live in a major metropolitan area with almost a square mile of assorted park land, picnic grounds and native "wilderness" in its very center."*<sup>3</sup>

By the close of 1959 the populace and government officials were committed to acquiring the land that would be needed to create the North Bank Park. Buford

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<sup>3</sup> River Park Plan Moving Ahead," *Register Guard*, April 23, 1959, 10A.



would retire in 1973 as Planning Director of the Lane Council of Governments, after 28 years of service. Almost fifty years after his arrival in Eugene his vision for the metropolitan park is still appreciated by citizens of Eugene, Springfield and Lane County.

By 1963 over 500 acres had been acquired to create the North Bank Park, at a cost exceeding \$1.1 million. In the same year the federal government contributed \$167,341 to help with park land acquisition. By 1969 land ownership was distributed as follows:

Lane County	260 acres
Univ. of Oregon	87 acres
City of Eugene	109 acres
EWEB	17 acres
Private	17 acres
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>480 acres</b>

On Tuesday, August 29, 1967, the North Bank Park was renamed and dedicated in memory of the late Alton F. Baker, former editor and publisher of the Register-Guard newspaper. Baker was involved in park and recreation projects from the time he came to Eugene in 1927, until his death in 1961. He helped save Spencer Butte as a public park and prevent the cutting of its timber. He also encouraged the establishment of Amazon Park. Alton Baker helped acquire land for expanding Skinner Butte Park and reserving uninterrupted river frontage from Ferry Street Bridge to Sladden Park. He personally donated 10 acres to the project. He was the catalytic personality in setting the North Bank Park project in motion.<sup>4</sup>

### **Park Developments and Plans - 1970s to early 1990s**

In the spring of 1971 a \$230,000 beautification program began on a tract of land near the Ferry Street Bridge in the western section of Alton Baker Park. A citizen advisory committee recommended the development as a “showcase” example of what the park could be. Work included the construction of a small man-made lake controlled by a dam. The existing parking lots and rest rooms were not included in this phase of the project. There was a proposal to construct a new pioneer museum.

In March of 1972 properties owned by the City of Eugene, Lane County, the University of Oregon and the Eugene Water & Electric Board were consolidated under county ownership. On April 5, 1972 the Board of Lane County Commissioners established the Alton Baker Park Citizens’ Advisory Committee to prepare a master plan for the park, determine compatible park development, and seek both private and public funding for the park.

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<sup>4</sup> “Central Park in Lane County,” Register Guard, Sunday, August 27, 1993, 12A.

1972 marked a significant turning point for the park in terms of physical park development. Most of the land was acquired, the park received the official name of "Alton Baker," and the Ken Nielsen Garden was established and dedicated. County Commissioners Ralph Peterson and Kenneth Nielsen were instrumental in the promotion of the park scheme. The University of Oregon land eventually became the site of Autzen Stadium, and Lane County acquired the land owned by EWEB and the City of Eugene.

On December 19, 1973 the County Commissioners adopted the *1973 Alton Baker Park Land Use Plan* forwarded by the Alton Baker Park Citizens' Advisory Committee. Fred Cuthbert was the chair of the citizens' committee when the plan was prepared and helped to promote the theme of a "water-oriented" park.

The foreword of the, 1973 Alton Baker Park Land Use Plan stated:

*"Because of the river and the obvious opportunity for inland waterways made feasible by existing channels, an early criterion was adopted that the park be water-oriented. Also, the concept was developed that the dominant land usage be for passive recreation."*

The *1973 Alton Baker Park Land Use Plan* reserved a significant portion of the park for passive and informal recreation. Special park developments were also envisioned such as the Ken Nielsen Gardens, an aquatic center including a Boat Basin Recreation Center and a major swimming facility immediately east of the I-5 overpass, and a nine-hole public golf course. Ruth Bascom, City of Eugene Mayor while the East Alton Baker Park Plan was prepared, formerly served as chair of the Alton Baker Park Citizens' Advisory Committee. She emphasized that the park was always meant to be "water oriented," and that the dominant land use was to be for passive recreation with regional appeal.

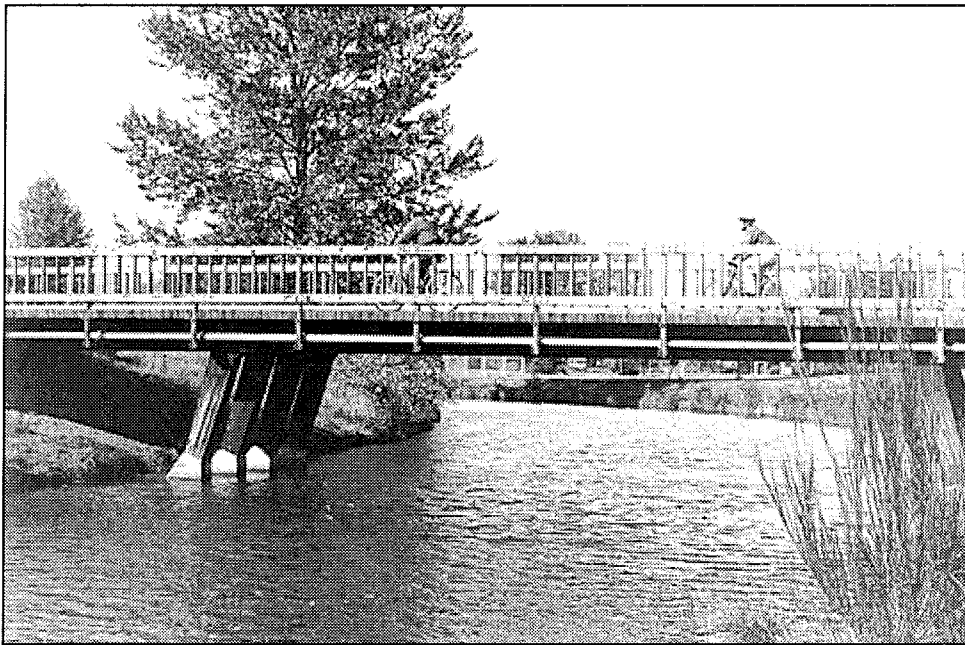
In 1973, Paul Beistel, Lane County Superintendent for the Parks and Recreation Division, helped acquire a Federal economic development grant and Lane County funds to construct the canoe canal and pond. The \$1 million public investment for the project was a significant boost to the park's development. The canoe canal and pond were constructed in 1975.

Additional park construction in the 1970s included the Autzen Footbridge (1970), the bike path system along the riverbank (1973), Eastgate Boat Landing (by 1975), the six mile loop of trails called the Prefontaine Running Trail (1975), and the Willie Knickerbocker Bike Bridge (1979). Development located in the western section of Alton Baker Park also included the Ken Nielsen Gardens, Cuthbert Amphitheater, WISTEC, and the picnic shelters. For many years there were 277 public garden plots in the park, but as interest waned the number of plots was reduced. In the central section of the park there was a large meadow bordered by clusters of oaks, maples, conifers, and other varieties of trees.

The park helped to create the vision for Oregon's Statewide Planning Goal 15-Willamette River Greenway: "To protect, conserve, enhance, and maintain the natural, scenic, historical, agricultural, economic and recreational qualities of lands along the Willamette River as the Willamette River Greenway." The goal was adopted in 1975.

Five years after the adoption of the *1973 Alton Baker Park Land Use Plan*, the document was revised. The 1978 plan retained the vision of a water-oriented regional park for passive recreation. The 1978 plan dropped the proposed golf course and the major swimming facility east of I-5. The area identified in the 1973 plan for a nine-hole golf course was changed in the 1978 plan to a lawn and meadow area. The area east of I-5 that was identified in the 1973 plan as a major swimming facility was shown in the 1978 plan as an "East Show Case" that would be similar to the Ken Neilsen Gardens in the western edge of the park.

In March 1986, the 1978 plan was updated and a new master plan was adopted by Lane County and the City of Eugene. The *1986 Alton Baker Park Master Plan* included an "opportunity area" in the central section of the park that was proposed for a golf course or an alternative land use that would meet certain criteria. Unlike the 1973 plan, neither the 1978 or 1986 park plans contained a conceptual plan for the park nor a general drawing showing proposed future park improvements. Instead, both planning documents contained a map that identified zones or areas for appropriate park uses without providing clear detail.



*Bicyclists enjoy the many opportunities to recreate in the park as shown on the bike/pedestrian bridge across the canoe canal.*



*Bicyclists take advantage of a sunny winter day in East Alton Baker Park's many bike paths.*

### **East Alton Baker Park Planning Process**

In November 1992, the voters of Lane County passed Ballot Measure 20-01, a citizen initiative entitled the East Alton Baker Park Charter Amendment. The charter amendment prohibited development of a golf course in the eastern 237 acres of Alton Baker Park, in favor of passive recreation uses, and directed that Lane County establish a 15 member citizen planning committee to design a plan for passive uses for the park. The charter amendment also directed that the committee monitor and evaluate the plan's implementation.<sup>5</sup>

Prior to the ballot measure taking effect, the three local jurisdictions initiated a transfer of ownership. As of March 2, 1993 the Lane County Board of Commissioners completed transferring ownership of Alton Baker Park to the cities of Eugene and Springfield. Springfield, in turn, transferred ownership to the Willamalane Park and Recreation District. An intergovernmental agreement was signed authorizing the Willamalane Board and the Eugene City Council to appoint a 15 member citizen planning committee that would be charged with carrying out the provisions of Ballot Measure 20-01. The intergovernmental agreement honors the spirit and intent of Ballot Measure 20-01.

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<sup>5</sup> A copy of the intergovernmental agreement, including Ballot Measure 20-01, is in the Plan Appendix.

The East Alton Baker Park Citizen Planning Committee (CPC) was jointly appointed by the Willamalane Board and Eugene City Council in April 1993. A core staff team for the committee was formed including staff from Willamalane and Eugene. The CPC began meeting in June of 1993. The CPC saw the need to foster community excitement about the park's potential and strengthen the commitment to realize the vision for the park.

The East Alton Baker Park Citizen Planning Committee developed the May 1995 Draft East Alton Baker Park Plan through a series of major planning steps outlined below:

- **Work Program Adoption** – In July 1993 the CPC approved a work program for the project including a citizen involvement component.
- **Status Reports to Elected Officials & Planning Commissions** – Throughout the planning process the CPC provided status reports to the Willamalane Board of Directors, Eugene City Council and local Planning Commissions.
- **Citizen Survey** – In the fall of 1993, the CPC prepared a citizen survey designed to obtain public comments on a wide variety of park issues and possible future park uses and maintenance practices.<sup>6</sup>
- **Issues Identification** – In the fall of 1993, the CPC began to create a list of key park issues based on field tours and other information about the park.
- **Information Session & Public Workshop** – In October 1993, the CPC sponsored a public information session concerning the history of the park and existing park conditions. The information session provided citizens an opportunity to learn more about the park. Following the drop-in information session, the CPC sponsored a public workshop where participants discussed key park issues and opportunities.
- **Park Design Charette** – In November 1993, the CPC reviewed comments from the public workshop and citizen survey and conducted a design charette where specific ideas for park improvements were shown on a map and the creation of the park plan began to take shape.
- **Data Collection and Analysis** – Special reports were prepared for a number of park issues, such as the history and condition of the former Lane County landfill and the number of bicyclists traveling in the park. The CPC also prepared

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<sup>6</sup> Refer to the Plan Appendix for a copy of the East Alton Baker Park survey responses.

background information about existing park conditions and trends that could affect the park.

- **Plan Preparation** – The CPC spent several meetings discussing the key park issues and crafting a vision and set of goals for the park. Based on the draft park goals, the CPC created a set of design principles and implementation strategies to guide public and private decisions made affecting the park. The CPC also prepared a conceptual plan that graphically illustrated the types of park improvements that would help achieve the overall park goals.
- **Public Forum on Draft Plan** – On March 7, 1995 the CPC conducted a public forum on the February 1995 draft East Alton Baker Park Plan.
- **Plan Recommendation Forwarded** – The CPC spent several meetings discussing public comments submitted on the February 1995 draft Plan. In May 1995 the CPC completed preparation of a revised plan and it was forwarded to the Eugene City Council and Willamalane Board of Directors in the summer of 1995.

In September 1995, the Eugene City Council and Willamalane Board conducted a joint public hearing on the *May 1995 Draft East Alton Baker Park Plan*. After considering the public testimony, the elected officials referred the draft plan back to the East Alton Baker Park Citizen Planning Committee due to the objections from the University about the prohibition of motorized vehicles in the park. The University testified that due to parking shortages, they wanted to continue to use East Alton Baker Park for parking during Autzen Stadium events.

The committee met with University representatives in October and November to resolve this issue, but never reached consensus. Although the May 1995 draft plan was approved unanimously by the committee, the committee remained divided over the revised draft plan (8:6), which allows Autzen Stadium event parking in East Alton Baker Park at least until the year 2007 (see Strategy 14.1). The six dissenting members voted for a sunset clause to end University parking in East Alton Baker Park by the year 2002.

The Eugene City Council approved the CPC's revised draft plan in January 1996, and the Willamalane Board took the same action in March 1996.

## **RELATIONSHIP TO STATEWIDE GOALS & LOCAL PLANS**

Oregon Statewide Planning Goals provide the framework for local plans. Applicable goals include: Goal 5– Open Spaces, Scenic and Historic Areas, and Natural Resources; Goal 8– Recreational Needs; Goal 12– Transportation; and Goal 15– Willamette River Greenway. The *Eugene-Springfield Metropolitan Area General Plan* (Metro Plan) provides the broad public policy direction for the entire metropolitan area. It covers a range of topics such as land use, the economy, environmental resources, transportation, urban design, historic preservation and

citizen involvement. It focuses on issues that are important to address at the metropolitan level. The Land Conservation and Development Commission acknowledged that the Metro Plan is consistent with the Oregon Statewide Planning Goals.

There are also local planning documents that address a specific function such as the *Eugene Parks and Recreation Plan* or the *Willamalane Park, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) Plan*. Plans for specific parks in the community are often prepared by staff with the involvement of nearby residents and primarily contain a map or schematic park design showing the types of physical improvements desired for the park. In the case of Alton Baker Park, a plan was adopted by the elected officials in March of 1986 that contains policies governing the park use. The *1986 Alton Baker Park Master Plan* is a refinement of the *Metro Plan*. It provides a more detailed set of policies guiding public and private actions affecting the park.

The primary focus of the *East Alton Baker Park Plan* is to identify the appropriate mix of passive recreational uses for the eastern 237 acres of Alton Baker Park. It also provides direction concerning park improvements, restoration activities, and on-going maintenance. The *East Alton Baker Park Plan* triggers the need to initiate a set of amendments to the *1986 Alton Baker Park Master Plan*. Any amendments to 1986 Master Plan will need to occur prior to implementation of any elements in the *East Alton Baker Park Plan* that conflict with the *1986 Alton Baker Park Master Plan*.<sup>7</sup>

## **PLAN IMPLEMENTATION, REVIEW & UPDATES**

Implementation of the *East Alton Baker Park Plan* will require the energy, financial resources, and commitment of numerous individuals, community organizations, and groups. The City of Eugene and Willamalane Park and Recreation District will use the plan as a guide for allocating public funds and resources towards park improvements and maintenance.

The *East Alton Baker Park Plan* should be reviewed periodically to evaluate the implementation of the plan and to consider ways of achieving the overall vision for the park. The need to conduct a comprehensive update to the plan will be based on a number of factors such as changes in community trends, new information concerning park management and the protection of natural areas in cities, and the degree to which the plan is implemented. Updates to the plan should be reviewed publicly and approved by the Eugene City Council and the Willamalane Park and Recreation District Board of Directors. Upon adoption of the *East Alton Baker Park Plan* the Eugene City Council and Willamalane Board of Directors will identify future responsibilities and tasks of the East Alton Baker Park Citizen Planning Committee.

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<sup>7</sup> Further information about applicable plans is contained in the Plan Appendix.

# Park Profile & Trends

## BACKGROUND

This section of the plan contains findings or background information about existing park conditions and general trends that could affect the park. It presents information concerning park constraints and opportunities. It is also designed to help the reader understand park issues.

## PHYSICAL SETTING

### Geomorphology

Alton Baker Park contains about 375 acres along the north bank of the Willamette River. The eastern section of Alton Baker Park, which is the focus of this plan and is referred to as East Alton Baker Park, contains about 237 acres. All of Alton Baker Park is within the Willamette River Greenway and contains diverse habitats for numerous wildlife species. The park includes about 3 miles of frontage along the river and serves as part of a major greenway corridor.

Alton Baker Park is located on the Willamette River terraces. Although the variation in topography is not extreme, the two areas that offer particular opportunities to view dominant landforms are in East Alton Baker Park. A portion of the former landfill area has an elevation of 442 feet above sea level. The highest natural elevation in the park is a remnant of the platform of sandstone bedrock located near the Autzen footbridge at an elevation of 443. These areas enhance the recreational potential of the site. The reflective pond is the lowest elevation at the west end of the park at 405 feet above sea level. There are a variety of soil types found within the park, some of which pose limitations for recreational facility development.<sup>8</sup>

### Vegetation and Wildlife

Compared with other local urban parks, East Alton Baker Park is a relatively natural landscape with high biodiversity. At least 35 mammal species, 117 bird species, 12 reptile species, nine amphibian species, eight fish species, 17 butterfly species, 46 other invertebrate species, 21 tree species, 24 shrub species, 172 species of wildflowers, 43 species of grasses, sedges, and rushes, two fern species and six mushroom species live in this park.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Further information about soils and floodplain is contained in the Plan Appendix.

<sup>9</sup> Additional information regarding plants and wildlife is contained in the Plan Appendix.





Illustration by Hal Gausman

*Willamette Valley Native Wildflower: Trillium ovatum Western Trillium*

Along the river is a riparian forest dominated by black cottonwoods, Oregon ash, white alder, and bigleaf maple. Fire and flood suppression in recent decades have allowed forest succession to continue without disruption, resulting in increasing understory growth of Douglas fir and incense cedar. In some places these conifers have overtopped and replaced the broadleaf trees. Invasive growth of English ivy has caused the death of native trees, shrubs, and wildflowers in these woods. For at least seven years, volunteers from the Eugene Natural History Society have been pulling ivy and planting native plants in the Nature Sanctuary, resulting in a great increase in plant diversity. From 1992-94, volunteers from Nearby Nature and members of the County Sheriff's Work Crew have succeeded in cutting the ivy off most of the trees in the Eastgate Woodlands, but extensive removal of ivy on the ground remains to be done.

Further inland, the park has large areas of meadow with a few Oregon white oaks and other scattered trees. The largest meadow is the site of a former landfill and the smaller meadows were probably former pastures. Many of the meadow plants are not native. Fire suppression is allowing succession to occur; many shrubs and small trees are filling in the meadows. Soil disruption in places has enabled non-native Himalaya blackberry and Scotch broom to invade some of the habitats at the expense of native plants.

The Lane County Board of Commissioners officially designated the woodland area north of the Autzen footbridge as a Nature Sanctuary. The Eastgate Woodlands has the highest habitat and wildlife rating of all Springfield natural resource areas and includes a high quality wetland and heron rookery. State-of-the-art open space management practices will be necessary to preserve the existing resource values in the park.

## **LAND USES**

### **Bike Bridges and Paths**

The bike path system along the riverbank was constructed in 1973 with the remaining sections of the bike path constructed along with the canoe canal and pond by 1975. The Prefontaine Running Trail was constructed in 1976.

The Autzen Footbridge was completed in 1970 after EWEB offered to make a conduit to carry steam across the river usable by bicyclists and pedestrians if the University of Oregon and Lane County assumed the extra costs. The three agencies reached agreement and Autzen Footbridge was built. In addition, an agreement was made to construct a bike path from Franklin Boulevard to Autzen Stadium with the County and University agreeing that this connection would always remain open. In November 1991, the University of Oregon entered an agreement with Lane County to install a lighting system adjacent to the bicycle/pedestrian path that links the Autzen Footbridge with Autzen Stadium. The UO continues to maintain the lights but is interested in transferring the responsibility of on-going maintenance to the City of Eugene.



Illustration by Hal Gausman

*Jogger along former road which will be converted to a 16 foot path.*

The Willie Knickerbocker bridge was constructed in 1979 under a similar arrangement when EWEB needed a new water main to cross the river a mile upstream from the Autzen Bridge. The dedication of the bridge was in honor of an early Eugene bicycle enthusiast. The City of Eugene and the State of Oregon joined EWEB and Lane County in providing funding for the project.

### **Former Landfill**

About 70 acres in East Alton Baker Park served as Lane County's Day Island Land fill from 1963 to 1974. This area, historically pasture land for livestock, was excavated for gravel mining beginning in the mid-1940s principally for material needed for the construction of I-5. Lane County purchased the site in the late 1950s and in August, 1963 the mining pits began to be filled with solid waste material. The landfill was closed in 1974 and was capped with about two feet of soil, although some areas received as little as six inches. The thin soil cap combined with release of methane gas from the decomposing garbage has prevented the growth of trees over the former landfill.

An accidental unearthing of some of the garbage in 1991 revealed that decomposition is far from complete. As the garbage decomposes, it settles, creating hollows on the surface which collect rainwater. As the rainwater drains down through the garbage, it produces leachate or garbage juice which mixes with the ground water, dispersing to the surrounding area, primarily towards the Willamette River. The most obvious component of the leachate looks like "orange rust", but it has only been tested once for pollutants. This landfill is on the secondary list of Superfund sites because of toxic materials it contains. An additional soil cap of about 18" is needed on the landfill to address the drainage and allow a wider variety of plants.<sup>10</sup>

### **Boat Landings on Willamette River**

Prior to July 1993, there were two unofficial boat landings in East Alton Baker Park and one in West Alton Baker Park by the picnic shelters. By 1975, the unimproved Eastgate boat landing and nearby gravel parking area was established. In 1994, as a result of sanitary sewer construction, improvements were made to minimize conflicts between users of the bike path and the Eastgate boat landing. The second unofficial boat landing in East Alton Baker Park was located a short distance upriver from the Autzen footbridge generally south of the former radio station site. This boat landing was not improved. North Walnut Road provided motor vehicle access to the boat landing until a gate was placed across the road in July 1993 to prevent off-road vehicles from damaging the park and dumping debris, especially in and around the former landfill. The gate also prevented conflicts between motor vehicles and park users.

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<sup>10</sup>Further information concerning the former landfill is included in the Plan Appendix.

### **Emerald Valley BMX Track**

In 1983, the Emerald Valley BMX, an Oregon non-profit organization, began leasing five acres in East Alton Baker Park for a bicycle motocross facility. Changes to the site include construction of small buildings, a drainage system, lighting system, landscaping and irrigation, picnic tables, improved access, portable rest rooms, pneumatic gate system for race start, and electronic burglary/vandalism detection equipment. The track area was expanded slightly in the summer of 1994.

### **Hammer Throw Area**

Based on an intergovernmental agreement signed in November 1986, the University of Oregon developed and used land in East Alton Baker Park for a hammer throw practice field.

### **Public Utilities/Easements**

Since a significant portion of East Alton Baker Park lacks water or sanitary sewers, there are no drinking fountains or rest rooms for park users and no fire hydrants for wildfire suppression. The lack of public utilities inhibits the ability to provide additional amenities for park users or to respond to fires.

In the early 1970s a steam line was installed linking the EWEB steam plant with the former Chase Gardens greenhouses north of Centennial across from Autzen Stadium. The steam line is now abandoned.

In July 1963, the City of Eugene granted a 30' wide easement to Northwest Pipeline Corporation running north-south on the west side of I-5 through the park. The corporation used the easement for a natural gas pipeline. In 1993, an extension of the natural gas pipeline and construction of a meter station was proposed by the Northwest Pipeline Corporation on behalf of the Springfield Utility Board (SUB). The East Alton Baker Park Citizens' Planning Committee reviewed preliminary proposals regarding the potential location of the pipeline and meter station and provided comments to SUB and the Northwest Pipeline Corporation. Based on comments from the CPC and further research regarding project costs and environmental impacts, the Northwest Pipeline Corporation and SUB changed the proposed location of the meter station to a site outside the park boundary. The project will still have an impact on the park and future review will be needed. There is a Metro Wastewater sewer line from the old Springfield sewer plant to the River Avenue plant. (Refer to the Plan Appendix for a map of utilities.)

### **PARK LIGHTING**

Lights were installed along all of Prefontaine's Trail in 1978. These lights have all been vandalized and no longer operate. In 1992, the City of Eugene installed new lights along Pre's Trail but only in West Alton Baker Park. The lights are on a timer which turns them off at 11:00 p.m. when the park is closed. The Eugene Park Maintenance Yard on the border of East Alton Baker Park has security lights which

stay on all night and shine into East Alton Baker Park. Other lights shining into East Alton Baker Park are located on Autzen Stadium, along Leo Harris Parkway, at the bike path railroad underpass, in the Riverfront Research Park, at EWEB, and on residential properties along the north side of the canoe canal. Nonfunctional lights along Pre's Trail have been removed by the Willamalane Park and Recreation District east of I-5.

Within East Alton Baker Park itself, lights are located on the private inholding owned by the radio station, on the park property leased by Emerald Valley BMX, and along the Autzen Footbridge and bike path. In 1991, the University of Oregon installed bright lights along the Autzen footbridge and bike path which remain on all night. These lights have been periodically vandalized. The University is seeking to turn over maintenance for these lights to the City of Eugene.

East Alton Baker Park is one of the largest reserves of darkness left in the metropolitan area and as such provides habitat for many nocturnal wildlife species. But the glare from lights both within and surrounding the park is excessive and needs to be shielded for plants and wildlife to thrive. In addition, WISTEC and the Lane ESD Planetarium (located on the edge of East Alton Baker Park) often hold stargazing events in the area, which also require darkness. The glare from the lights also presents a safety hazard for park visitors.

## **TRENDS**

Integral to planning for East Alton Baker Park is consideration of the park's relationship to the Willamette River, its role in the Willamette River Greenway, and the long tradition of the greenways movement.

The greenways movement is indicative of trends that link natural systems and open spaces close to where people work and live, binding rural and urban spaces, and providing recreational opportunities that are in harmony with native and naturalized landscapes.

Planning for the future of East Alton Baker Park must respect changes in recreation and leisure. Generally, there is increased demand for simpler, closer-to-home recreational opportunities that reflect an aging society, time constraints, economic conditions, housing patterns, and energy supply and costs.<sup>11</sup> As the demand increases for places to walk, bike, sightsee, and participate in nature study, greenways become increasingly, as termed by the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors, the "recreation resources of the future."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Willamalane Park and Recreation District, Trends Report, June 1990, p. 46.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

Low impact exercise activities are increasingly becoming the leading forms of recreation. In 1988, exercise walking drew the most new participants among 44 activities nationally, and is now the second most popular sporting activity (behind swimming) in the country; third most popular is bicycling.<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile, participation in high-impact sports, such as racquetball, aerobics, and almost all team sports, has declined over the last decade.<sup>14</sup>

Low-impact recreational activities such as jogging and wildlife viewing are also increasing in popularity. In 1990, 8.8 million people nationally jogged at least twice a week throughout the year, an increase from 8.1 million in 1987.<sup>15</sup> Eugene is nationally renowned as “Track Town” and the establishment of Pre’s Trail is further evidence of local interest in jogging and running for fitness.

Wildlife viewing has been a rapidly growing activity throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Such activity is not without community economic benefit. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reports that over one fourth of the total national wildlife related expenditures (\$55.7 billion nationally in 1985) is related to bird watching and wildlife photography.<sup>16</sup>

Given these trends in recreation and leisure activities, East Alton Baker Park provides a forum for affordable and accessible recreational opportunities in the heart of the metropolitan area. A 1994 survey of Lane County households revealed that nearly one third were unable to afford recreational activities.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, the need to provide this forum for recreational opportunity is vitally important to the community’s social and physical health.

Trends in the fields of landscape ecology and psychology increasingly link the physical health of communities and individuals with the amount and quality of open and natural spaces.

Greenways, as significant open spaces themselves, have provided substantial economic, as well as aesthetic, value to communities and adjacent properties. Numerous studies across the nation have demonstrated the positive economic effect greenways and open spaces have on land and property values.

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<sup>13</sup> American Sports Data, Inc. and National Sporting Goods Association, as cited in Future Vision: The 189 Most Important Trends of the 1990s, by Eric Miller, Sourcebooks Trade, Naperville, IL, 1991, pp. 166, 178.

<sup>14</sup> National Sporting Goods Association, *ibid.*, p 178.

<sup>15</sup> U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program, Economic Impacts of Protecting Rivers, Trails and Greenway Corridors, 1992, p. 2-3.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2-7.

Throughout the nation, efforts to preserve significant open spaces have enhanced natural communities and systems within urban areas to provide educational opportunities for school children and the general population. The greenways movement has also allowed communities to meet growing recreational needs and to increase livability and the quality of life enjoyed by residents and visitors.

Based upon the existing park profile and trends analysis, the park vision and goals were developed for East Alton Baker Park.



Photo by Nearby Nature

# Park Vision & Goals

## **BROAD PARK VISION**

East Alton Baker Park will be a riverside haven at the center of the Eugene-Springfield metropolitan area, where urban dwellers can experience a variety of habitats for native plants and wildlife and enjoy nature. East Alton Baker Park will also provide opportunities for educational and passive recreational activities that require or are greatly enhanced by the park's natural setting. In addition, East Alton Baker Park is a natural connection between the Eugene and Springfield communities and will remain free of motorized vehicles.

## **SPECIFIC GOALS**

### **Natural Resources**

East Alton Baker Park will provide valuable habitats in which a diversity of native plant and wildlife species can prosper.

### **Recreation, Cultural and Environmental Education**

East Alton Baker Park will be a place for passive recreation<sup>18</sup> and nature study and a place within the urban area where people can find quiet and solitude in nature.

### **Access and Circulation**

East Alton Baker Park will link the Eugene and Springfield communities and the areas north and south of the Willamette River by providing safe, efficient and accessible corridors for non-motorized transportation.<sup>19</sup>

### **Park Stewardship and Public Safety**

The management of East Alton Baker Park will engage interested citizens and groups in successful park stewardship including planning, restoration, and maintenance.

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<sup>18</sup> Passive recreation is defined in this plan as those pastimes, diversions, or forms of exercise in which the relaxation and/or enjoyment experienced by the participant is dependent on or greatly enhanced by the surrounding natural landscape. Examples include, but are not limited to, hiking, boating, jogging, biking, plant study, picnicking, kite flying, frisbee throwing, bird watching, nature photography, swimming, nature classes, model boating, fishing, dog walking, feeding of water fowl, sun bathing, stargazing and astronomy, and those group activities that are respectful of the natural environment, including fun runs and competitive races for runners, walkers, and wheelchair participants on officially designated bike paths and trails. (Refer to the Plan Appendix for a copy of the definition of passive recreation in the Intergovernmental Agreement.)

<sup>19</sup> This is not meant to restrict access by authorized maintenance and emergency vehicles.



# Design Principles & Implementation Strategies

Design Principles are listed in bold following the related goal. Design principles are adopted by the elected officials but are not considered land use policies. The use of the term design principles is meant to provide a framework for public and private decisions affecting the park but is not meant to serve as a policy basis for refinements to the 1986 Alton Baker Park Master Plan. In many cases, ideas or suggested strategies for implementing the design principles are graphically shown on the Conceptual Plan. In some cases, suggested strategies are listed below a design principle.

## NATURAL RESOURCES

**GOAL:** East Alton Baker Park will provide valuable habitats in which a diversity of native plant and wildlife species can prosper.

**1.0 Identify, maintain, restore, create and protect a wide variety of natural habitats within the park, including meadows, wetlands, riparian areas, waterways and woodlands. (Refer to the Conceptual Plan for identification of existing and proposed natural areas.)**

**1.1** Simulate natural disturbances that set back biological succession, such as removing shrubs from a meadow or removing conifer trees from the riparian forest.

**2.0 Retain large tracts of land in which the cycles of nature can proceed and native plant and wildlife populations can flourish.**

**3.0 Establish East Alton Baker Park as an integral link in a natural resource corridor along the Willamette River Greenway.**

**3.1** Initiate a professional habitat evaluation study of East Alton Baker Park to determine: a) the identity of species currently inhabiting the park; b) the biological values of specific habitats in the park; and c) the potential and opportunities for restoring and enhancing the habitats for native species.

**3.2** Identify native plant and wildlife species, previously or currently native to the park, that need special encouragement for establishing, maintaining or increasing their populations.

## **RECREATION, CULTURAL & ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION**

**GOAL:** East Alton Baker Park will be a place for passive recreation and nature study, and a place within the urban area where people can find quiet and solitude in nature.

**4.0 Encourage environmental education by fostering structured group presentations and by providing opportunities for self-guided exploration.**

**5.0 Provide amenities and opportunities for low-impact passive recreation uses that are: a) dependent on or enhanced by the park's natural setting; b) compatible with other park activities and surrounding urban and natural areas; and c) do not conflict with other design principles of the park plan.**

**5.1** Appropriate group activities are those that are dispersed in character, minimize the negative impact on the park, and locate any support services related to the activities, including pre-staging, outside the boundaries of East Alton Baker Park. Group activities that involve large concentrations of people in one area are not an appropriate use of East Alton Baker Park.

**6.0 Locate any new support facilities that could disturb or detract from the park's natural environment, such as rest rooms, at the periphery of the park.**

**7.0 Recognize the river and its edge as important elements of the park design, providing opportunities for park visitors to pursue water-oriented passive recreational activities, including boating, fishing, swimming, and nature study.**

**7.1** Improve the Eastgate Boat Launch into the Willamette River and maintain its accessibility by motorized vehicles.

**7.2** Provide short benches at appropriate locations along the Willamette River to enable park visitors to sit down and rest or enjoy the scenery.

**8.0 Establish the park as an oasis of darkness at night, where park visitors can engage in passive recreational activities, such as star gazing and astronomy. In selected areas of the park, provide limited, lowintensity lighting for public safety that is shielded to eliminate glare and that has minimal impact on wildlife.**

**8.1** Negotiate with property owners within and outside the boundaries of the park to reduce glare problems.

**8.2** Limit lighting in the park to the Autzen bike path, and to the kiosks at park entrances at North Walnut and Leo Harris Parkway, the Eastgate Woodlands, and the north end of the Autzen Footbridge. Lighting fixtures should be shielded to eliminate glare and have minimal or no impact on wildlife.

**8.3** Determine what hours lights should be turned on and regulate them to meet the needs of both park users and wildlife.

**9.0 Protect, maintain, and enhance the pond and canoe canal.**

**9.1** Provide opportunities for water-oriented recreational activities that have a low negative impact on the pond and canal.

**9.2** In selected locations, enhance the native riparian vegetation along the edges of the canoe canal to improve wildlife habitat, water quality, nature appreciation and the aesthetic qualities of the canal.

**9.3** Maintain the canoe canal for navigability.

**9.4** Cultivate recreational uses of the northeast and east pond bank that are compatible with the improvement of a riparian buffer and wildlife habitat.

**10.0 Maintain and enhance Prefontaine's Trail (Pre's Trail).**

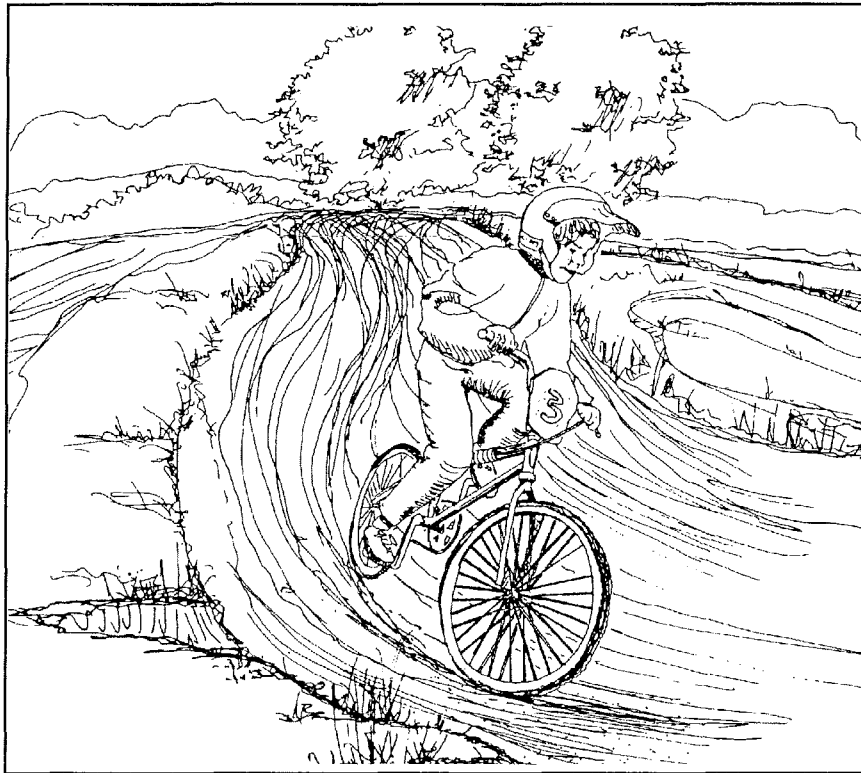
**10.1** Continue to involve volunteer groups in the maintenance of Pre's Trail, such as the work currently being done by the Oregon Track Club Masters.

**11.0 Recognize the hammer throw area as a land use that is not compatible with the vision and goals for East Alton Baker Park and the hammer throw activity as not consistent with the definition of passive recreation, but allow the existing agreement between the City of Eugene and the University to be extended until the year 2005. If a good faith effort by the University has not succeeded in finding a suitable location for a hammer throw area outside the park, extend the existing agreement until 2010.**

**11.1** If the agreement for the hammer throw area is extended, negotiate some concessions from the University that are compatible with the vision and goals for the park.

**12.0** Recognize that while bicycling uses at the BMX facility are not consistent with the plan's definition of passive recreation, it is an existing use that provides beneficial youth recreation. To minimize the negative impacts of the facility on the passive recreational and natural qualities of East Alton Baker Park, expansion of the facility should be limited to the developed portion (as of November 1994) of the site. Also, methods of buffering the facility from the park and mitigating negative impacts, such as noise, lighting, and off-trail usage, should be implemented.

**12.1** Define a park boundary south of the BMX facility with signs and landscaping to clarify for BMX users where facility-related path use is prohibited.



## **ACCESS & CIRCULATION**

**GOAL:** East Alton Baker Park will link the Eugene and Springfield communities and the areas north and south of the Willamette River by providing safe, efficient and accessible corridors for non-motorized transportation.

**13.0** Recognize the bike path between the Autzen Footbridge and Autzen

**stadium as an essential traffic corridor for non-motorized transportation, to be lighted at night.**

**13.1** Provide down-lighting on the Autzen bike path that lights up the surface of the bike path only.

**14.0** With the exception of the I-5 overpass, establish an environment free of motorized vehicles that will enhance the use of pedestrian and bicycle corridors and serve the needs of park users. Locate any driveways, parking areas, rest rooms, or any other facilities requiring access by motorized vehicles at the periphery of or outside the boundaries of East Alton Baker Park.

**14.1** Recognize the University of Oregon parking south of Leo Harris Parkway as a land use that is not compatible with the vision and goals for East Alton Baker Park, but allow the University to park in the existing two parking areas on Autzen Stadium event days through at least January 2007, provided that the 1992 Intergovernmental Agreement between the County and the University of Oregon is revised as follows.

- A.** The University agrees to the items below in exchange for the use of two unpaved parking areas in East Alton Baker Park, which border Leo Harris Parkway, for Autzen Stadium event parking:
- 1.** The University will allow the City of Eugene to use Autzen Stadium parking spaces for events in Alton Baker Park, except on Autzen Stadium event days, provided a 14 day notice is given to the University.
  - 2.** The University will modify the two parking areas south of Leo Harris Parkway by January 1997 to:
    - a.** Limit ingress and egress to and from lots at constructed driveways;
    - b.** Keep motor vehicles in designated parking areas; and
    - c.** Create a 50 foot buffer between the canoe canal and west parking lot, consisting of a low berm landscaped with native plants commonly found in the park, to keep motor vehicles and trash away from the canoe canal.
  - 3.** The University will clean up the parking lots and a 50 foot wide strip of land around the parking lots following Autzen Stadium events.
  - 4.** The University will encourage Autzen Stadium users to use transit, bicycles, or other alternative modes of transportation.
  - 5.** The University will make a good faith effort to find parking areas outside of the park to reduce or eliminate the need for parking in East Alton Baker Park.

- 6. The University will pay the City of Eugene \$300 for each day of use of the parking areas south of Leo Harris Parkway after January 1997.
- 7. The University will limit litter and the erosion of East Alton Baker Park by reserving the parking lots for staff and media personnel associated with Autzen Stadium events. Six parking spaces will be reserved for park visitors with limited mobility at no charge to the visitors.
- B. The City of Eugene will maintain the two parking areas and their landscaped buffers except on Autzen Stadium event days when the lots are used by the University.
- C. Before January 2007, the University and City of Eugene will evaluate the above agreements for their effectiveness, and revise, extend, or discontinue the revised 1992 Intergovernmental Agreement.

**14.2** Install bike racks at appropriate sites throughout the park.

**14.3** Improve the surface and the design of the bike paths to enhance their safety and accessibility.<sup>21</sup>

**15.0 Minimize conflicts between different forms of non-motorized transportation both within and traveling through the park.**

**15.1** Redesign the existing path system and create new trail portions to reduce conflicts between varied uses of paths.

- A. Recognize areas of conflict in the mixed use of paths in any path system redesign.
- B. Use planned amenities to encourage differentiated use where appropriate and the blending of uses elsewhere.
- C. Define incorporated roads as true paths by narrowing or removing portions of existing roadbed, and creating better links to the rest of the path system.

**15.2** Create a new trail that connects the Autzen Stadium area with the Autzen Footbridge so that pedestrians and bicyclists can avoid potential traffic conflicts.

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<sup>21</sup> Refer to a list and map of bike path problems and solutions in the Plan Appendix.



*The lack of a landscape buffer between the canoe canal and nearby parking can result in motor vehicles being parked close to the canal.*

**15.3** Install signs to identify bike paths designed for high-speed bike traffic and bike paths designed for walking and low-speed pleasure cycling.

**16.0**

**Provide directions and information about the park by installing descriptive signs at appropriate locations.**

**16.1** Install signs at major park entrances to inform park visitors about the various features of the park, including the location of the bike paths and trails, the diversity of plant and wildlife species, and the location of the pond and canoe canal system.

**16.2** Create park brochures for self-guided tours and make them available at major park entrances.

**16.3** Make brochures and major park signs legible to people with visual impairments (i.e., sharp contrasts and large lettering). Indicate that brochures in braille and cassette tapes are available at the Willamalane Park and Recreation District and City of Eugene for people who are blind.

**17.0** **If need arises, determine if existing easements could improve access to the park, such as the easement at the east end of Bardell Avenue (on property owned by the Northwest Pipeline Corporation) to the park and the easement extending south of Anderson Lane to the park.**

**18.0** **Design park improvements to provide accessibility. (Refer to 16.3 for sign requirements.)**

**18.1** Eliminate side-to-side tilt on bike paths.

**18.2** Provide benches at appropriate distances for people with limited walking ability between the parking lot south of Leo Harris Parkway and the pond along North Walnut, and between the Eastgate parking lot and the central meadow along the Riverside Trail.

**18.3** Install accessible drinking fountains at park entrances.

**18.4** Provide accessible rest rooms at both the Eastgate and the Leo Harris parking lots.

**18.5** Provide accessible telephones at both the Eastgate and Leo Harris parking lots.

**18.6** Use the official wheelchair logo to indicate that trails and bike paths are wheelchair accessible.

**18.7** Establish a door-to-park van service on summer weekends for people with severe physical disabilities, including a door-to-park service for special events.



**18.8** Acquire scooters (three wheeled electric carts, which are easy to operate and maintain) for people with limited walking ability, to be available at the Leo Harris parking lot on summer weekends.

## **PARK STEWARDSHIP & PUBLIC SAFETY**

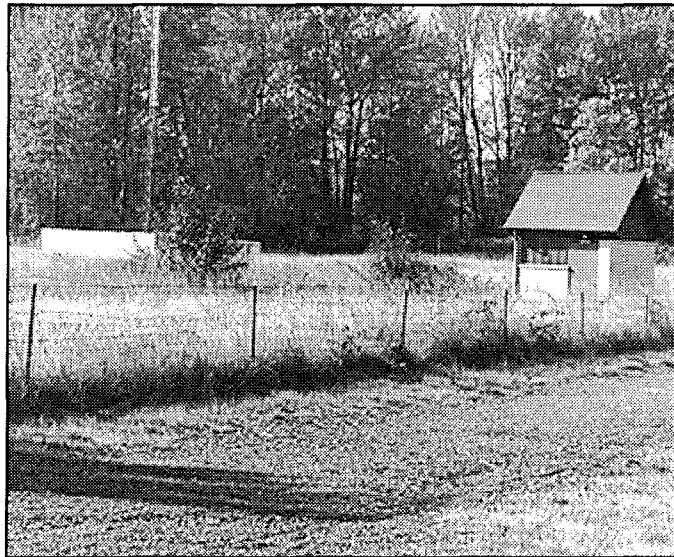
**GOAL:** The management of East Alton Baker Park will engage interested citizens and groups in successful park stewardship, including maintenance, planning and restoration.

**19.0** Help coordinate efforts and assist groups that make efforts to further the goals of the park plan.

**19.1** Provide ways to recognize the importance of volunteers in maintenance, planning and restoration of the park.<sup>22</sup>

**20.0** Recognize the radio transmitter building and radio tower structures as land uses that are not compatible with the vision and goals of the park.

**20.1** Continue to pursue ways for the City of Eugene to acquire the five acre parcel of private property at the interior of the park.  
(Site of radio transmitter building and radio towers.)



*Site of Radio Transmitter Building and Tower, acquired by the City of Eugene-January 1996.*

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<sup>22</sup>A list of the different groups actively working in the park is in the Plan Appendix.



*Blowing leaves off the bike trail in East Alton Baker Park-Eugene Public Works Parks Maintenance employee.*

**21.0 Promote the use of ecologically sustainable park management practices.**

**21.1** Use integrated pest management strategies to minimize the use of pesticides and herbicides.

**21.2** Restore native plant species by selectively removing invasive non-native species, such as Himalaya blackberry, English ivy and Scotch broom, while leaving native plant species intact or planting native species if not present.

**21.3** Keep mowing to a minimum and only mow at times when it is least harmful to native plants and wildlife.

**21.4** Consider prescribed burns for ecological purposes.

**22.0 Consider public safety factors when determining park uses and designing park facilities, and examine ways to increase the park visitors' adherence to park rules.**

**22.1** Determine the design of and location for geocode markers along bike paths to enable park visitors to identify their location in the park in case of accidents or public safety violations.

**22.2** Make water readily available, particularly around the perimeter of the park, for fighting or controlling fires. Examine how landscaping may impact the start or spread of fires.

**23.0 Prepare and implement specific site plans for different areas of the park. (For example, a site plan could include greater detail on habitat restoration areas or the exact location of a nature trail.)**

**24.0 Monitor and attempt to remedy environmental hazards resulting from the former landfill.**

**24.1** Institute periodic chemical testing of groundwater around the landfill and of leachate going into the river

**24.2** Undertake a risk assessment of the site that includes an assessment of health risks to humans and wildlife.

**24.3** Pursue acquisition of Superfund or other funds to contain or clean-up toxic materials in the landfill.

**24.4** Develop a plan for adding clean fill to the soil cap as it becomes available.

**25.0 Investigate and experiment with methods to reduce vandalism.**

**25.1** Quickly remove or repair structures that are vandalized.

**25.2** Get young people involved in park stewardship through schools and community groups.

**25.3** Organize a volunteer park patrol.



Photo by Nearby Nature

*Energetic volunteers work hard to control invasive, non-native plants, such as this English Ivy, and restore native vegetation to East Alton Baker Park.*

**26.0 Identify suitable locations for recycling and trash cans.**

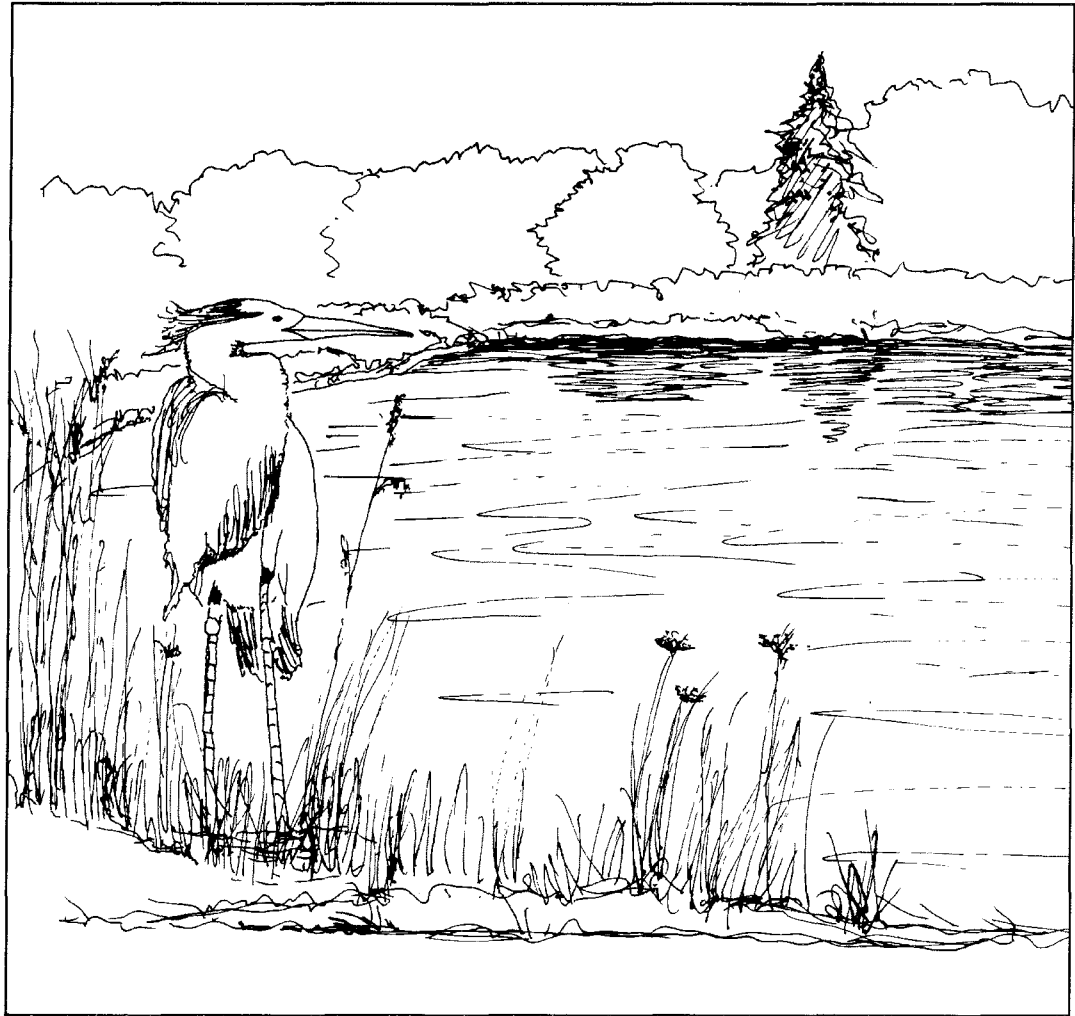


Illustration by Hal Gausman

# Conceptual Plan

## BACKGROUND

The Conceptual Plan identifies recommended improvements to help achieve the overall vision for East Alton Baker Park. These improvements are consistent with the design principles of the park plan. As funding and community resources become available, many of the recommended improvements will require further investigation concerning specific construction details, impacts on the natural landscape, and other factors. Listed below are brief descriptions of the numbers on the legend of the Conceptual Plan.

### 1. Meadow Areas

The open areas in East Alton Baker Park were created by previous floods and fires. They are to be retained and managed as meadow areas, offering critical habitat for native plants and wildlife that need this type of environment. Maintenance of the meadow areas may include tree and shrub removal in order to retain their open character. These areas should remain as informal natural landscapes.

### 2. Woodland Areas

These areas are to be retained and managed as woodlands, offering critical habitat for native plants and wildlife that need this type of environment.

### 3. Switchback Walking Trail

Create a new trail for pedestrians that connects the Autzen Stadium area with the Autzen Footbridge. This trail will control soil erosion and enable pedestrians and bicyclists to avoid potential traffic conflicts.

### 4. Bike Path Improvement Near North End of Autzen Footbridge

This section of the bike path is one of the major entrances to East Alton Baker Park. Reconstruct the bike paths to improve their safety, visibility, and wheelchair accessibility. Install signs at the entrance that identify the park features and the location of destinations along the bike path system, such as Autzen Stadium, WISTEC, the Ken Nielsen Gardens, Valley River Center, and the Willamalane Senior Center.

### 5. Riverside Area

Protect and manage the riparian forest along the Willamette River. Maintain the native broadleaf trees and prevent the take over by conifer trees. Wherever appropriate, increase the width of the riparian area, and maintain the scenic views of the river at selected spots along the Riverside Trail. Restore river access points to the river, similar to those created by local high school students in 1973.

**6. Improve Canoe Canal Access**

The canoe canal is difficult to get to in many places. Improved access will increase the use of the canoe canal and foster greater appreciation for the waterway and natural habitats in the area.

**7. Landscaped Park Entrances and Parking Lots**

These entrances to East Alton Baker Park need to be clearly identified with signs. Information displays or kiosks will inform visitors about park regulations, plants and wildlife commonly found in the park, and ways for visitors to contribute to the care of the park. Small paved parking lot(s) will be built south of Leo Harris Parkway. These lots will be appropriately landscaped and marked. Additional Autzen Stadium event parking will be permitted for the University beyond these paved lots on unimproved surfaces according to Implementation Strategy 14.1.

**8. Convert Former Road to 16' Bike Path**

Prior to acquisition as a public park, East Alton Baker Park was the site for non-park uses such as the Day Island Landfill, accessed by North Walnut and Day Island Road. Motorized vehicles are now prohibited in the park with the exception of authorized maintenance and emergency vehicles. Narrowing Day Island Road to 16' will create a bike path more in scale with the bike traffic that needs to be accommodated.

**9. Old Filbert Orchards**

The old filbert orchards serve as a reminder of the former agricultural uses of the area. The orchards do not produce revenue for the park and would be costly to maintain. As the filbert trees die, allow the orchard to revert to native woodland, but retain the canopy effect along Prefontaine's Trail.

**10. Canoe Canal**

The canoe canal provides habitat for a variety of plants and wildlife. Enhance this habitat, foster greater appreciation for this unique feature of the park, and maintain its navigability.

**11. Rest Rooms**

There are no public rest rooms in East Alton Baker Park. Portable rest rooms on the BMX site are maintained by the Emerald Valley Bicycle Moto Cross organization. Construct accessible rest rooms that will serve both the BMX track and East Alton Baker Park. Remove the portable rest rooms.

**12. BMX Track**

Since 1983, the Emerald Valley Bicycle Moto Cross has had a lease agreement first with Lane County, then with the City of Eugene to use about five acres of East Alton Baker Park for their BMX facility. Allow the BMX organization to continue using the present site, but limit further expansion of the facility to the portion of the

site that is already developed (as of November 1994) and reduce the negative impacts of the BMX activity – noise and lighting – on nearby private properties and East Alton Baker Park.

**13. Create New Bike Path Connections**

East Alton Baker Park has an extensive system of official bike paths and former roads that serve as bike paths. Connections are needed to: a) facilitate east–west bike traffic along Day Island Road (east of the radio station property); b) facilitate bike traffic along the west side of I–5 traveling to and from the Willie Knickerbocker Footbridge; c) connect Anderson Lane with the bike path that enters East Alton Baker Park at North Walnut; and d) improve access to the pond by those going south on North Walnut.

**14. Wetland Area**

Enhance the wetland habitat and enable park visitors to experience and learn about wetlands, the pond, and river. Improve the wetland north of the pond by restoring native vegetation and prohibiting mountain bikes.

**15. Existing Hammerthrow Area**

Allow the existing agreement between the City of Eugene and University to be extended. Once the hammerthrow area is relocated, this area may be suited as an extension of nearby meadows or woodlands, or as a recreational area that does not have an adverse impact on nearby natural areas.

**16. Central Pond**

The central pond provides a unique habitat for wildlife. For example, western pond turtles were seen for a number of years both in and around the pond. Enhance the natural qualities of the pond and maintain the surrounding wetlands in ways that improve the habitat for the turtles and other wildlife that depend on the pond, wetland, and river ecosystem. If the City of Eugene acquires the private land south of the pond for park purposes, relocate Pre's Trail farther south from the pond, thus increasing the width of the riparian edge on the south side of the pond. If Pre's Trail is relocated, the underground French drain which was installed immediately south of the trail to control run–off will probably need to be moved.

**17. Potential Park Expansion**

The five acre parcel of private property, currently used as the site for a radio transmitter building and radio towers, is the only land in private ownership in East Alton Baker Park. Continue to pursue ways for the City of Eugene to acquire the five acre site and incorporate the acreage into the park design.

**18. Central Meadow Area**

The Central Meadow, previously the Day Island Landfill, is the largest area of open space in East Alton Baker Park. The meadow is currently the home of numerous plants and wildlife, including the western meadowlark – Oregon's state bird.

Enhance the habitat for plants and wildlife that need large, open meadows, and increase the soil cap over the old landfill as leaves, clean soils, and other appropriate material become available. Establish native wildflowers and other native plants in the meadow, including small clusters of trees in selected spots along the edge.

**19. Riverside Trail**

The existing Riverside Trail has dips, curves and cracks in the asphalt surface which make it unsafe and inaccessible to wheelchairs. Redesign the trail to make it safe and accessible, and establish direct access points to the river so that park visitors can get down to the water. Limit the use of the trail to low-speed pleasure cycling and pedestrians. Direct high-speed bike traffic to the North Walnut commuter bike path.

**20. East Meadow**

Access to this area is currently very limited. Create a bike path to improve access to this area. The area is suitable for picnicking, letting dogs-off leash, and throwing frisbees. Discontinue sheep grazing. Note: Dogs are prohibited off-leash except in designated areas.

**21. Eastgate Woodlands**

The Eastgate Woodlands are considered to be one of the most ecologically significant sites in the metropolitan area. Continue to remove the English ivy to restore and enhance the natural habitat. Prohibit the use of mountain bikes off paved paths in the wetland area.

**22. Eastgate Boat Launch**

Following the construction of the Glenwood sewer line in the fall of 1994, the Eastgate Boat Launch was redesigned to address problems identified by the Willamalane staff, the East Alton Baker Park Citizen Planning Committee, and the Springfield Bicycle Committee.

**23. Remove Sections of Former Roads**

There are sections of former roads that are not needed to provide access for authorized maintenance and emergency vehicles. Remove these sections and restore the land.

**24. Possible Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Disability Access Point**

Consider possible access point for pedestrians, bicyclists, and people with physical disabilities along the easement south of Anderson Lane. (Refer also to item 25.)

**25. Possible Canoe Canal Access Point**

Following a habitat evaluation study, consider a new access point for pedestrians, bicyclists, and people with physical disabilities from Bardell Avenue. Consider use of an easement across property owned by the Northwest Pipeline Corporation on the south side of Bardell Avenue.



## **STAFF ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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