



**PORTLAND
BOTANICAL**
Gardens

A Botanical Garden by the River



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About PBG

Portland Botanical Gardens (PBG) formed in 2020 as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit with a mission to **bring plants and people together** and provide an immersive space for *knowledge, community, and collaboration*.

PBG hopes to purchase the **McCormick & Baxter Superfund Site** in the Portland Harbor, located on the Willamette River between Metro's Willamette Cove Natural Area and University of Portland's Franz River Campus.

Vision for the Garden

To create a preeminent botanical garden in Portland with Oregon's first conservatory, the state's largest collection of native plants, and its most comprehensive vocational & research program in climate resilience, plant habitats and responsible horticulture, all within a living laboratory.

Central to this vision is the curation of "biogeographic gardens." Unlike 19th ce botanical gardens that grouped plants taxonomically, PBG will organize its collections by plant community.

Image: McCormick & Baxter Madrones



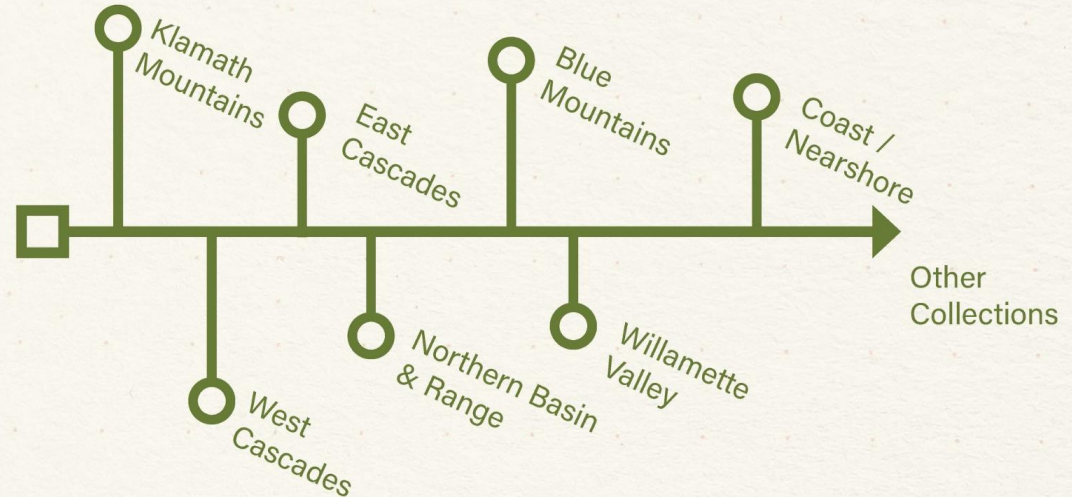
Traversing Oregon

**Representative plant
communities of every ecoregion
in the Pacific Northwest**

A primary focus will be the many, diverse ecosystems of the Willamette Valley, but visitors will also be able to *Traverse Oregon*, from the coastal redwoods to the Oregon Outback, the Columbia Gorge wildflower meadows to the Willowa Mountains.



BIOREGIONAL GARDEN SEQUENCE



Walking the World

Comparing PNW plant communities with analog ecosystems to showcase similar plant adaptations and relationships.

World collections will be assembled from the many plants already established to not be invasive, with a particular focus on climate-adapted and ethnobotanically-significant species. PBG will develop invasive screening criteria with stakeholders for the world collections.

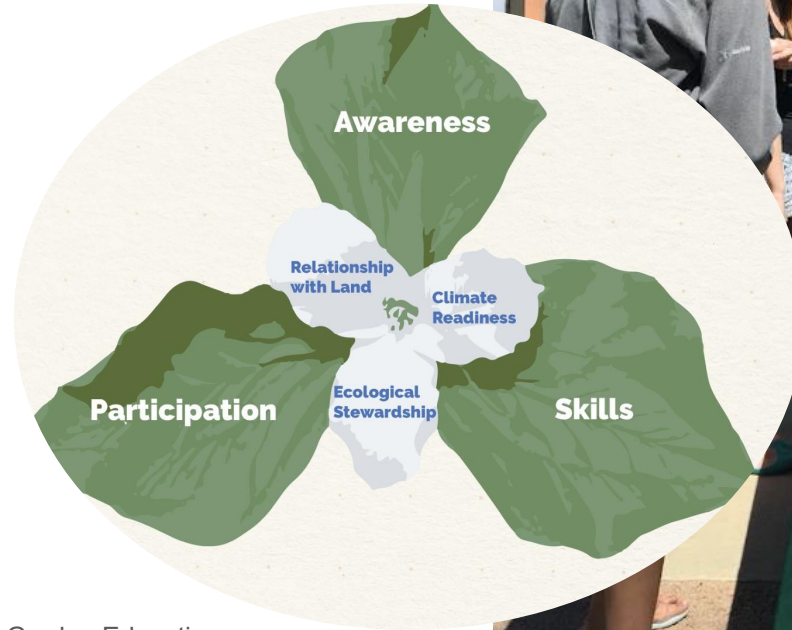
Image: Xeric Biome by Sean Hogan



Education

K-12 Field School, Community Workshops, and Green Workforce Development

Community participation will guide the creation of educational programs that address local interests and needs, promoting environmental awareness and horticultural knowledge

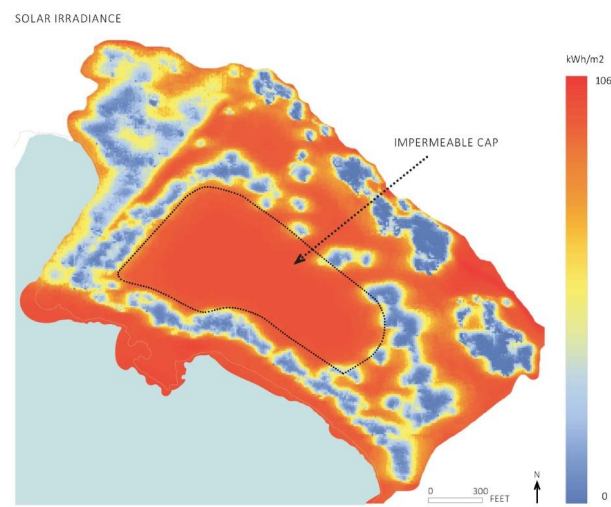


Research

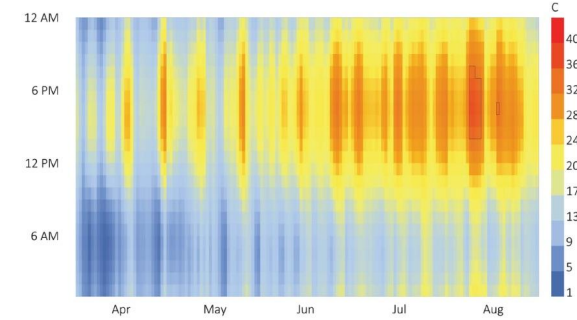
A Living Laboratory for Multi-Institutional Research Partnerships

PBG is partnering with academics, community groups and industry partners research the role of horticulture in climate change adaptation, urban ecology, and site remediation.

Diagram by Jen Ginn, UOLA 2025
Image: HJ Andrews Experimental Forest



HOURLY HEAT INDICES CHART, AVERAGED 2020 - 2039



Community Based Landcare

Citizen Science and Universal Access along the Riverfront Greenway

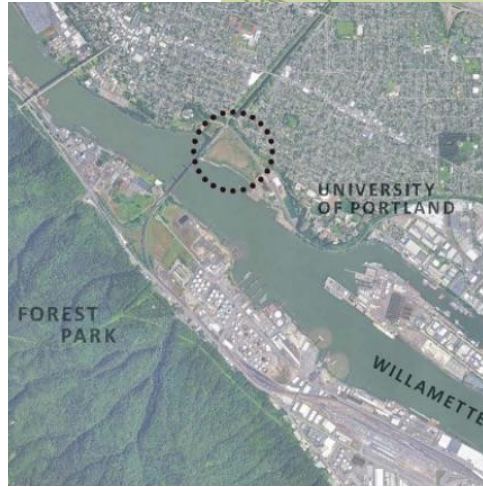
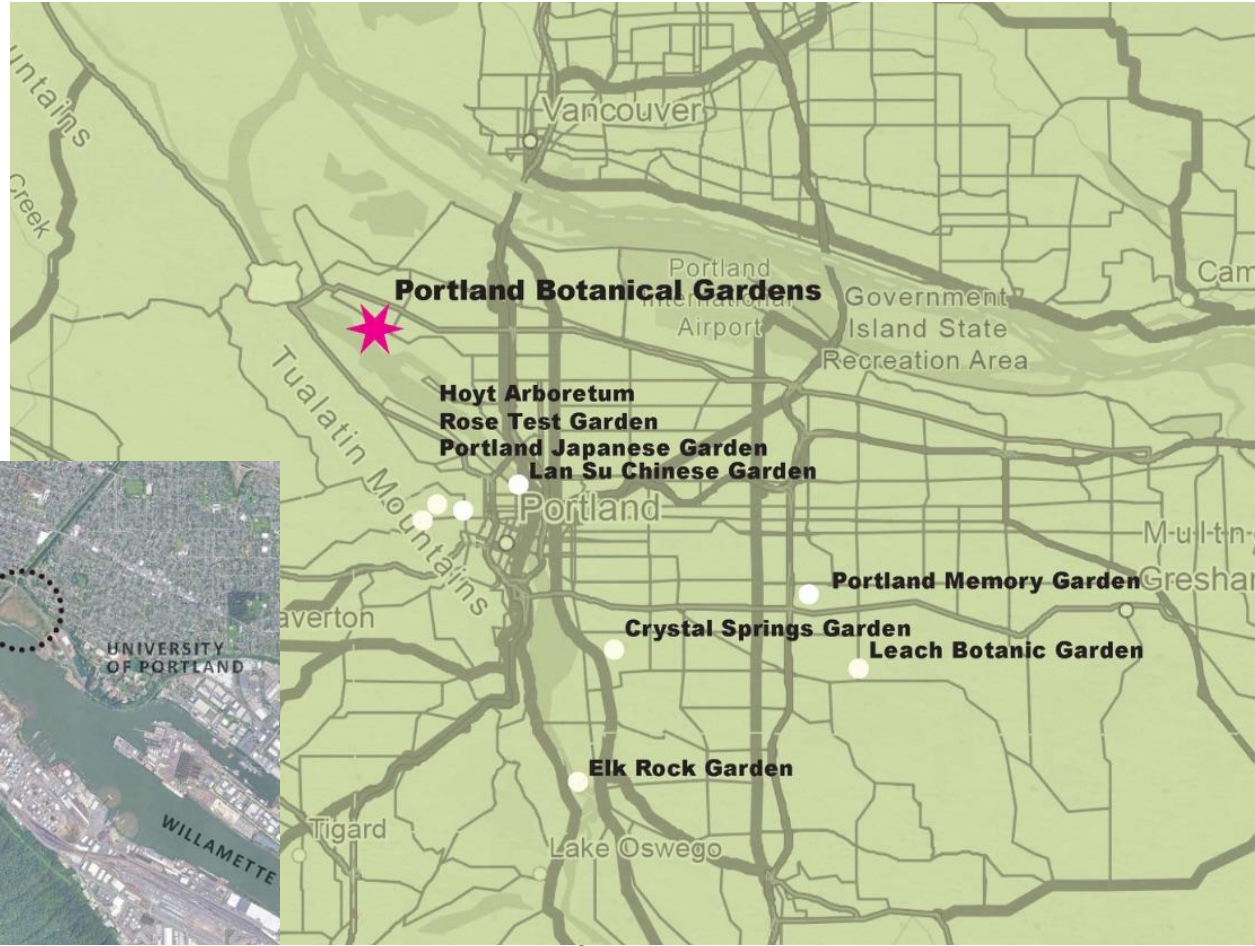
PBG will establish test plots with community partners to collaboratively restore, research, and interpret the greenway ecosystem. Riparian plantings will be 'site native,' with ongoing stakeholder dialog about what is appropriate given the hot, dry, existing conditions

Photo Point by Jen Ginn, UOLA 2025
Image: Baldwin Hills Test Plot, Los Angeles



Where to Grow a Garden?

PBG began its search for a garden location in 2020. The McCormick & Baxter site, a 59-acre riverfront property, was identified as a prime location due to its size, cleanup history, and proximity to the metro center.

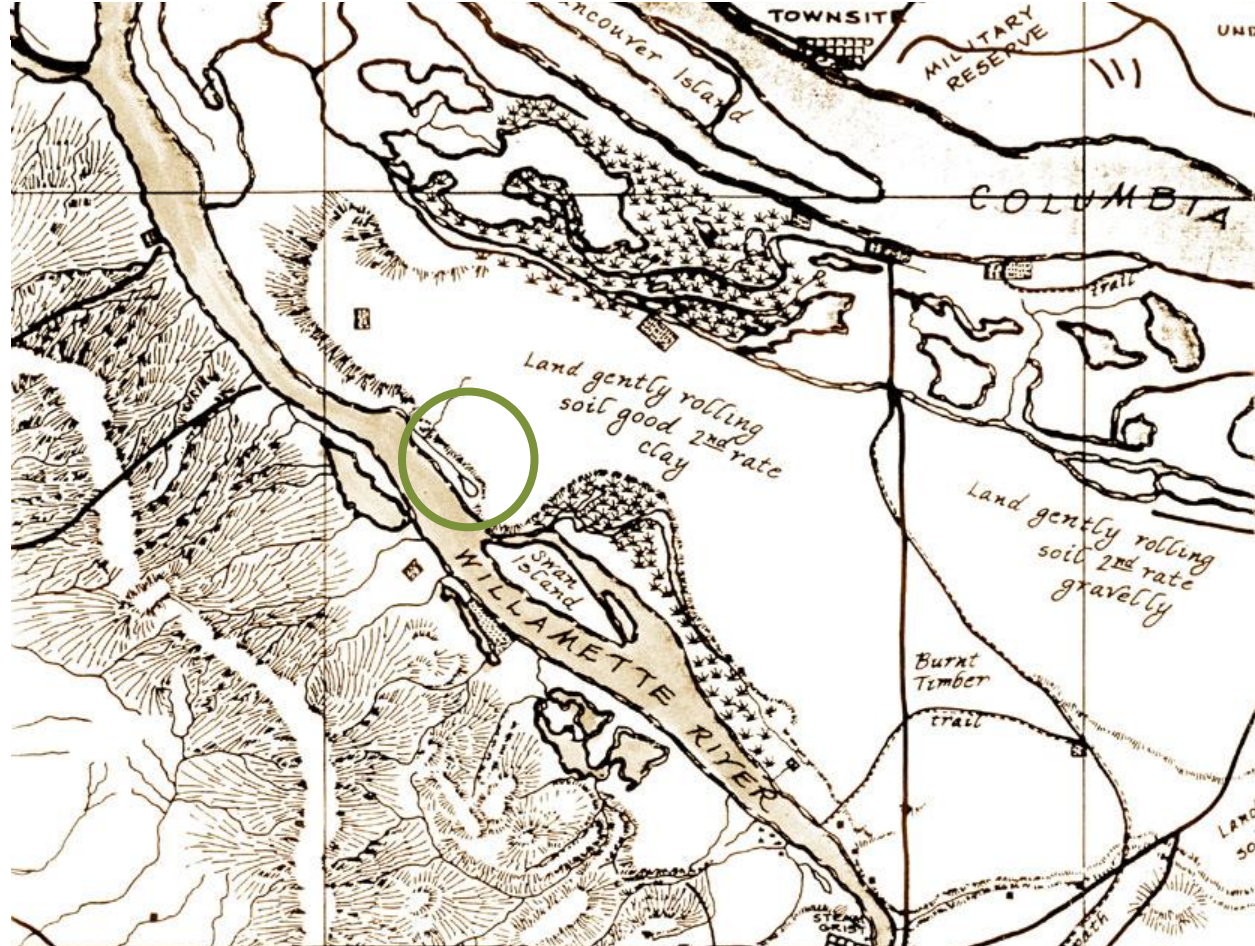


Tribal History and Contributions

This territory has been home to Chinookan people and visited by Tribes from across the northwest, who are still strongly connected to the river and serve as Portland Harbor Natural Resource Trustees.

PBG is proposing to DEQ to partner with tribal authorities, public agencies, and conservation groups to design and steward the native riparian landscape, and provide permanent public access to ~10 acres of greenway & shoreline.

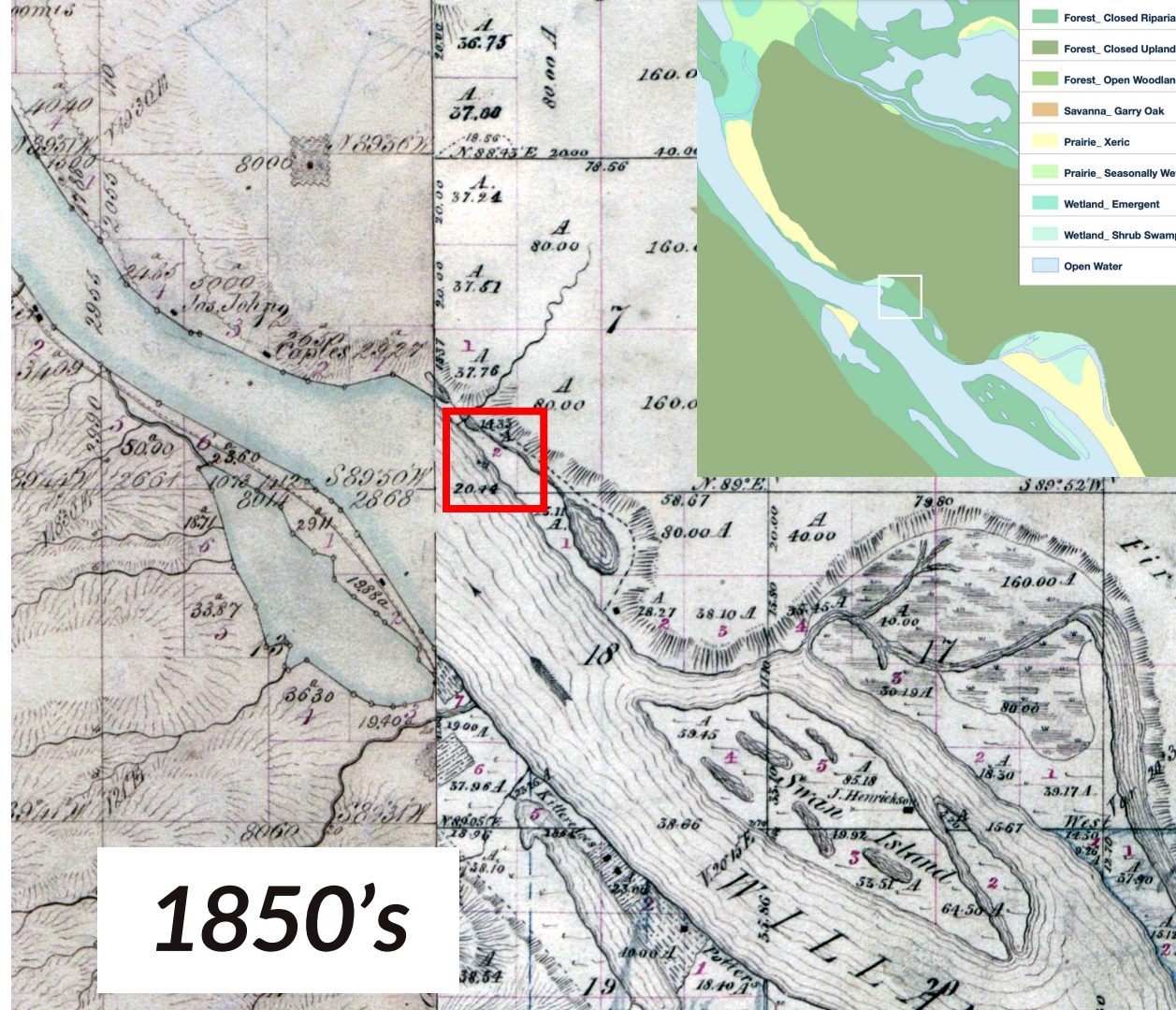
PBG met with three tribes on 4/30 to introduce this proposal. Tribal engagement is open-ended.



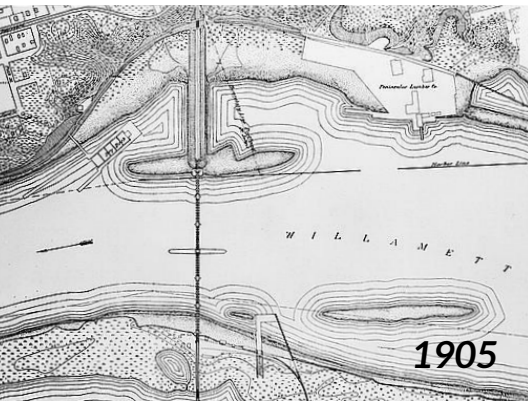
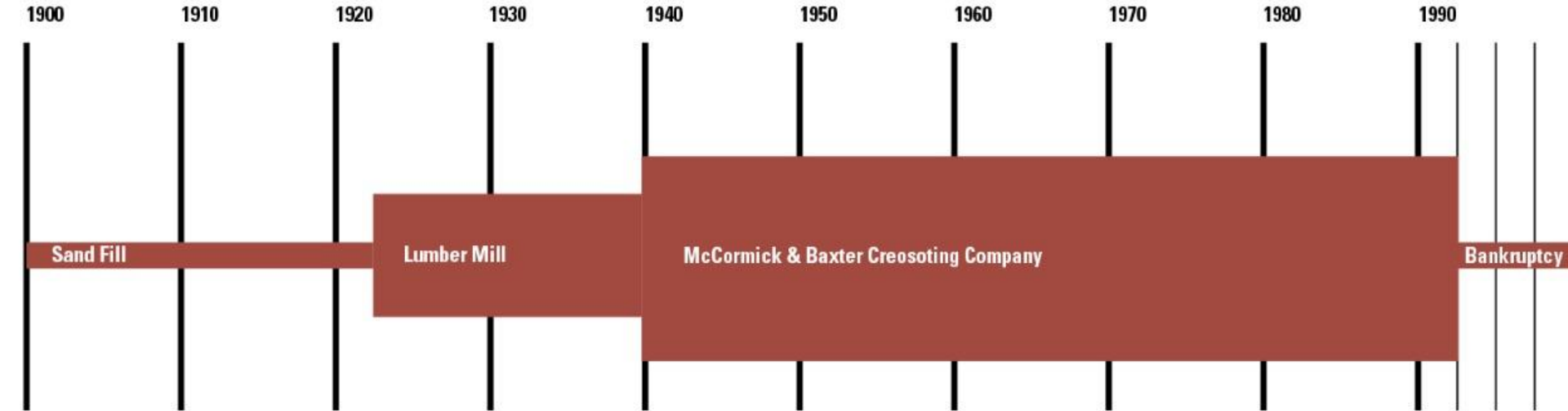
Site History

The General Land Office survey show a very different site condition than the present day. Much of the area is water and marsh, with a freshwater seep from the bluffs to the Northeast.

According to the 1850 vegetation map, the river terraces immediately up and down river were xeric prairie.



Industrial History



Living Laboratory

Superfund cleanup was completed in 2005 and the site has been “ready for reuse” since then. In that time, many of the 2006 restoration plantings have matured.

After 20 years of successful monitoring and maintenance, the site can provide critical insights for other restoration projects in the Portland Harbor, and presents a unique opportunity to establish a botanical garden that highlights environmental healing and enhances public access to the river.



Site Analysis

LND LAB conducted a multispectral analysis in October, 2024 to identify drought stress. The healthiest trees were primarily Oak, Pine, and Madrone (shown in dark green), even in the riparian planting.

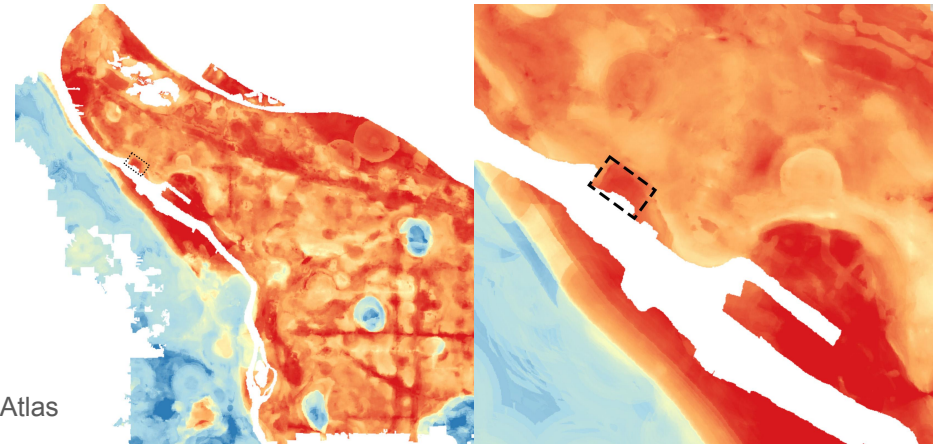


Hot and Dry

North Portland is drier than most of the metro area, with up to 25" less precipitation than the crest of the West Hills. The site is also an urban heat island with evening temperatures up to 12 degrees above the City average.

Extreme heat and low precipitation are compounded by the subsurface drainage and diversion of groundwater off the Impermeable Cap.

Mitigating the urban heat island effect is an important environmental justice concern, and botanical gardens have been found to be the coolest parts of a city.



A Garden for North Portland

In addition to heat, Portsmouth and St. Johns have been identified as “environmental justice census tracts due to a combination of socioeconomic and environmental risk factors. The garden will provide public river access in an area that had been given over entirely to industry.

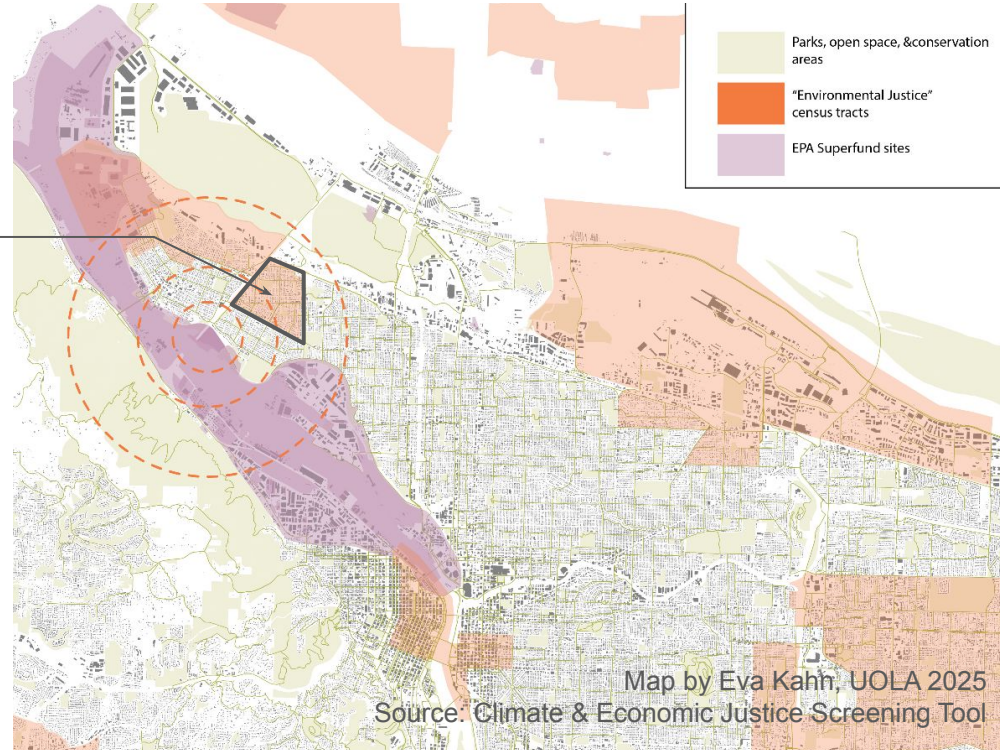
Portsmouth Demographics

White	51%
Black or African American	18%
Asian	2%
Two or more races	8%
Hispanic or Latino	18%

Socioeconomic Risk

Asthma (92nd Percentile)	Diesel Particulate Exposure (91st)
Low Income (84th)	Proximity to Superfund (96th)
Housing Cost (91st)	“ “ to Hazardous Waste (94th)

Environmental Risk



Conceptual Site Planning



Conceptual Programming



Based on site research and initial feedback, PBG developed a conceptual programming diagram, including:

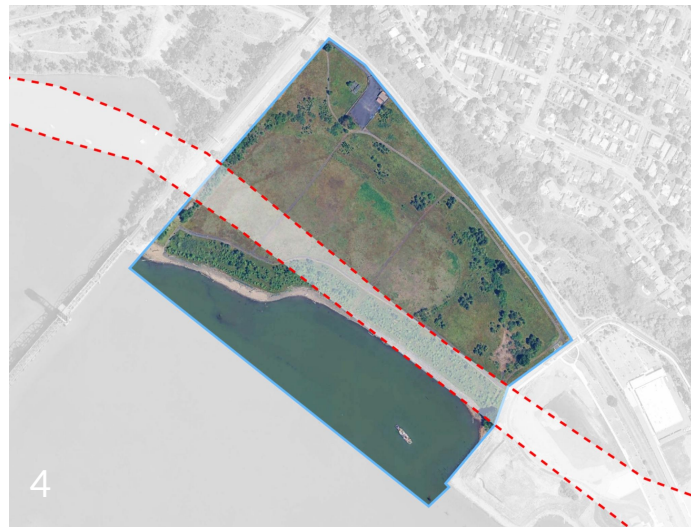
- 1) Main Garden Campus,
- 2) Open Gathering Space and Event Venue,
- 3) Public Native Plant Collections, and
- 4) Willamette Greenway and Public Riverfront.

NOTE: areas are not to scale.

Scale Comparisons

PBG compared the site with familiar Portland landscapes to evaluate the proposal, and develop a phasing concept.

- 1) City Block, 200' x 200'
- 2) Japanese Garden, 12 acres
- 3) Cathedral Park, 22 acres
- 4) McCall Waterfront Park, 200' deep setback



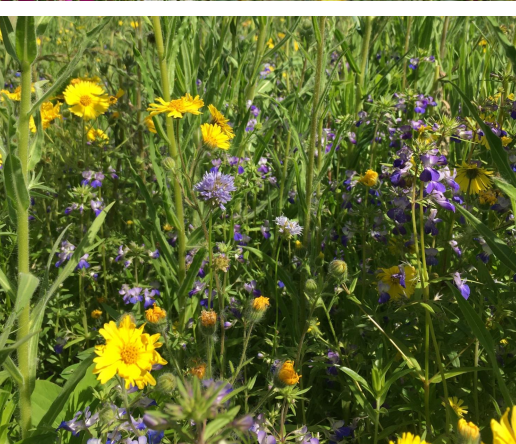
Phase 1

Conservation, Maintenance, Learning & Planning Period 2026-2028

How can we make this site
a community asset in the
first year?

- 1) Beach Safety Improvements
- 2) Riparian Restoration & Safety
- 3) Improve Greenway Trail
- 4) Plant Greenway Collections
- 5) Restore Stands of Sig. Trees
- 6) Plant Bioregional Collections
- 7) Temporary Parking Area
- 8) Establish Research, Education
and Operations Center
- 9) Add Test Plots and Monitoring
- 10) Add Gathering Space





Phase 2

The Foundational Garden, Greenway and Riverfront 2029-2032

How can we build the garden's
research and educational
capacity to become a resource
for the entire Metro area?

- 1) Add Event Area
- 2) Expand Research, Education
and Operations Center
- 3) Complete Greenway Trail
- 4) Create Interpretive Nodes
- 5) Create Riparian Trail Network
- 6) Expand Bioregional Collections
- 7) Improve Parking Area
- 8) Establish Wildflower Meadow





Phase 3

Full Build-Out & Destination for All 2032-

How can the Garden showcase
PNW bioregions and climate-
adapted plants to visitors
from around the globe?

- 1) Complete Display Collections
- 2) Construct Conservatory
- 3) Construct Greenway Pavilion
- 4) Enhance Meadow on Cap
- 5) Shoreline Improvements
- 6) Enhance Drainage Swale
- 7) Construct Public Dock
- 8) Improve Aquatic Habitat with Public Partners and Community Stakeholders



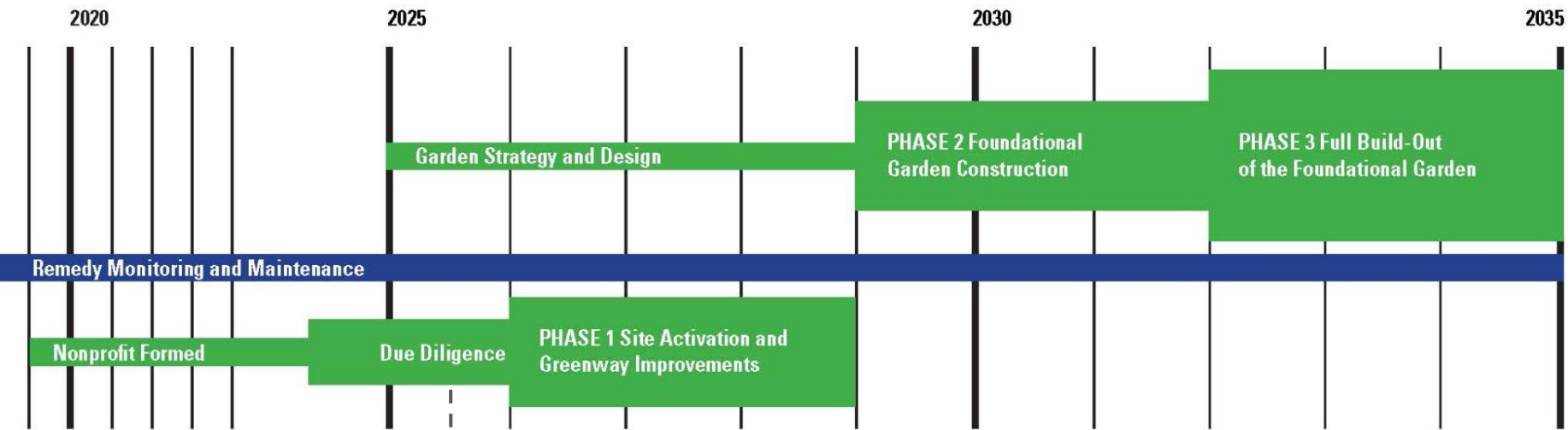


Botanical Gardens Greenway

- Create ~10 acres of public greenway and riverfront
- Ensure a clean and healthy river for fish, wildlife and people
- Enhance livability
- Provide a harmonious relationship between people and the natural functions of the river
- Restore the river's fish and wildlife habitat
- Provide sustaining quality, beauty and safety



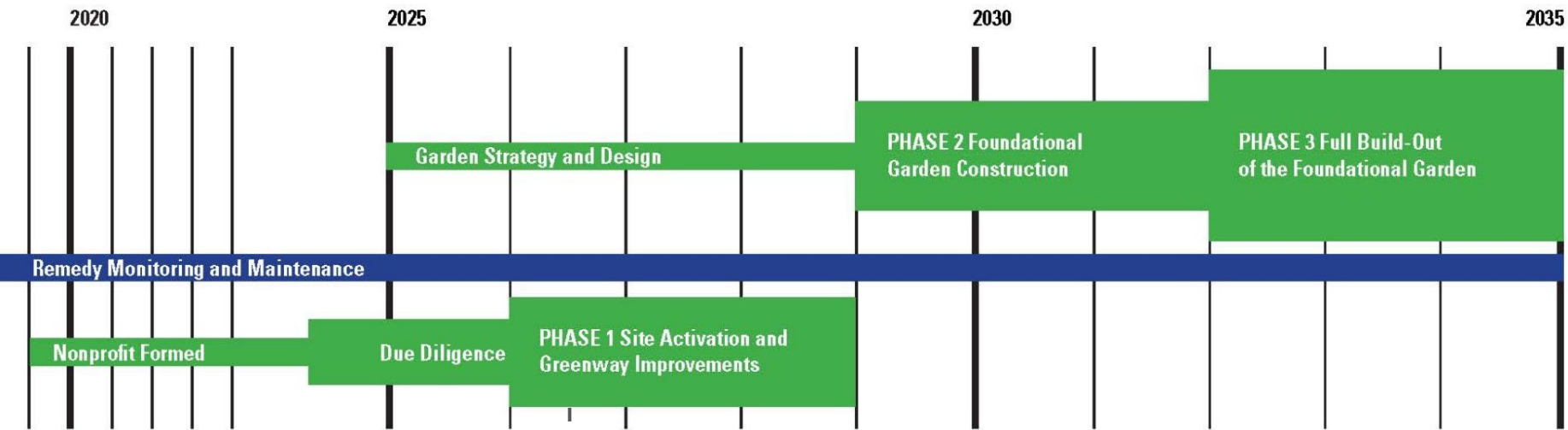
Community Engagement Timeline



Prior to acquisition, PBG receives feedback based on its proposal.

- DEQ Community Survey (Open)
- May 8th: DEQ Community Engagement Webinar
- PBG Incorporates Feedback and Schedules Follow-Up Meetings
- Formal Comment Period if DEQ issues a draft Prospective Purchaser Agreement (TBD)

Community Engagement Timeline



After acquisition, PBG’s community engagement will continue and be integral to garden development.

- Conduct surveys and input forms
- Organize plant strolls, presentations, and open houses
- Lead site tours with stakeholder groups
- Publish quarterly newsletters with project updates

Botanical Garden Benefits

In addition to creating public open space and a beautiful garden destination, the Portland Botanical Gardens will provide significant environmental, economic, and community benefits:

1. **Preserve and adaptively manage habitat and showcase environmental healing and restoration.**
2. **Increase green jobs, workforce development, and local economic activity.**
3. **Provide environmental education and research, with a focus on endangered plant conservation and climate resilience.**

Community engagement will continue beyond the possible acquisition, and PBG looks forward to hearing and integrating your feedback to create a ***Portland Botanical Gardens for All***.

