

Initial Focus Areas

The progress to date of the Mill Creek Watershed Partnership has led to the identification of two areas of initial focus: The Randalwood Elementary and Warrensville High Schools areas in Warrensville Heights and the Elmwood Elementary and Garfield High Schools in Garfield Heights. Each of these areas has many opportunities for connections and collaborations.

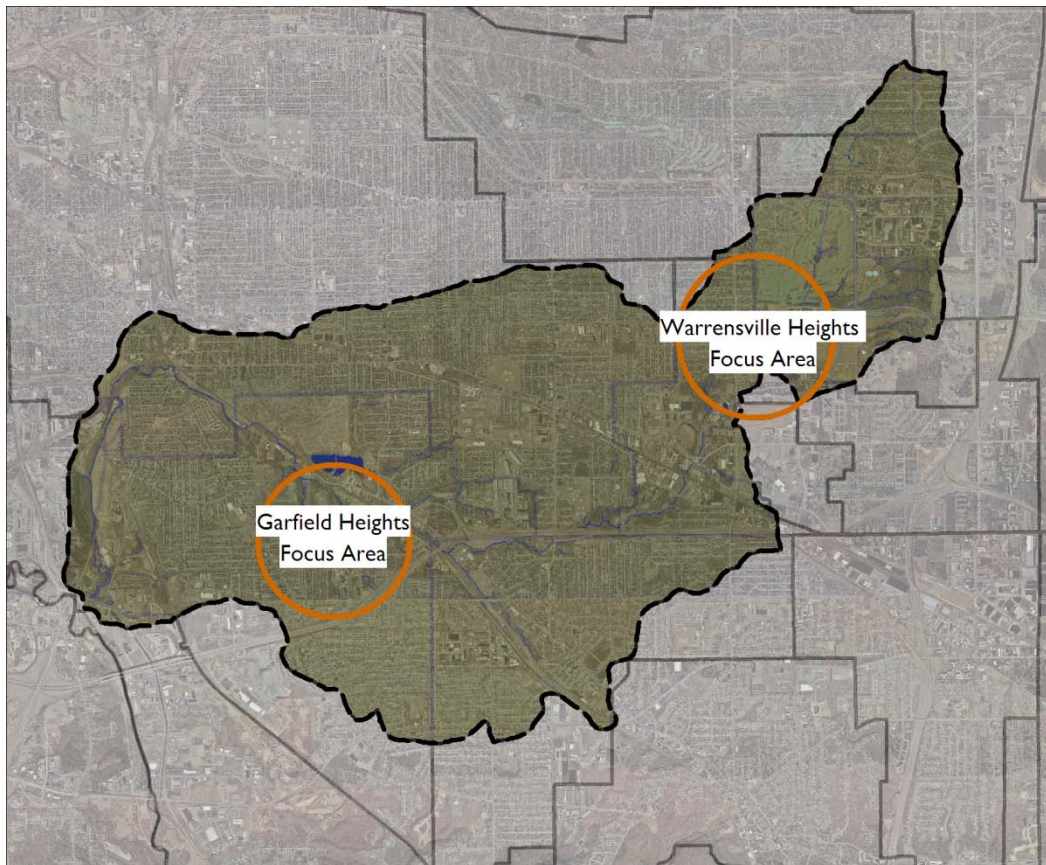


Figure 16: Watershed Focus Areas

Warrensville Heights

This focus area has many elements that have the potential for interconnections. Some of these elements include: a world-class hospital system, a county library, a series of schools of varying age levels, and connections to great natural elements and greenspace (e.g. a golf course, a cemetery, an important wetland complex, a nature preserve). Some of the actions that could take place include:

1. Development of a retail node as the Southwest Corner of Harvard and Warrensville Center that utilizes the Cleveland Clinic South Pointe Hospital as an anchor.
2. Make a connection to the greenspace at Highland Park Golf Course and the Cleveland Enterprise Park Nature Preserve and market to attract businesses and clients.
3. Connecting the elementary school education with Health and Wellness Programming through the Cleveland Clinic and the use of the Cleveland Memorial Gardens as a site for safe, outdoor walking and exercise.
4. Connecting elementary school science and high school biology education with outdoor learning in a wetland, or even a community garden (Warrensville Heights and Beachwood School Systems).
5. Protect the largest wetland complex in the watershed for its natural functions of storm water management, habitat and biodiversity, and pollutant removal.
6. Connecting watershed health and personal health to the general public through the Cuyahoga County Library Resources – Warrensville Branch.

Garfield Heights

This focus area also has many elements that have the potential for interconnections. Some of these elements include: a world-class hospital system, a municipal complex with a county library and a senior activity center, a series of schools of varying age levels, and connections to a distinguished local park system. Some of the actions that could take place include:

1. Consider greening up corridors of Turney Road and Garfield Boulevard with native trees and shrubs – green natural connections.
2. Develop a series of connected greenspaces between Mill Creek Falls, the trail at Bacci Park, and the Towpath Trail via Garfield Boulevard.
3. Promote access to Cleveland Metroparks Garfield Reservation and Mill Creek Falls as an employee asset.
4. Enhance remaining wetlands within Cleveland Metroparks Garfield Reservation.
5. Cleveland Metroparks Garfield Reservation provides services for the watershed community including storm water management, habitat protection, etc. and it is important to ensure the park system's integrity in the long-term.
6. Connecting the elementary school education with Health and Wellness Programming through the Cleveland Clinic and the use of the Cleveland Metroparks Garfield Reservation as a site for safe, outdoor walking and exercise.

7. Connecting elementary school science and high school biology education with outdoor learning in a stream (Wolf or Mill Creek), or even a community garden.
8. Connecting watershed health and personal health to the senior center activities and to the general public through the Cuyahoga County Library Resources – Garfield Heights Branch.

Each step works to support these locations in Warrensville Heights and Garfield Heights as an asset to the watershed and the community. With these initial focus areas we are able to advance all four core concepts of economic development; health, nutrition and wellness; education; and storm water and water quality. These activities can be completed either separately or concurrently; however, they build upon one other and provide connections from multiple disciplines toward multiple objectives and one goal of watershed health.

Using these examples, each community can review their assets and find connections between the core concepts, their individual community priorities, and the larger goal of watershed health.

Implementation

The Mill Creek Watershed is a dynamic geography within which natural and manmade systems influence each other. Natural systems, small streams, tree-canopy cover, and wetlands, contribute to the quality-of-life in the watershed and support Mill Creek's biological function and integrity. Manmade systems that support human life and commerce include buildings, roadways, parking lots, sewers and other utilities. Improving how these systems interact with each other while providing a venue for social interaction, education and health and well-being of residents will create a healthier Mill Creek community.

The Mill Creek Watershed Initiative is a collaborative effort of a diverse group including municipalities, private sector organizations, government and non-profit agencies that are committed to developing a strategy for improving the overall health of the watershed community. The framework proposed focuses on economic development, health and wellness, education, and storm water management. A broad range of opportunities have been identified from each of these categories.

In order to advance the recommendations set forth in this plan, the Mill Creek Watershed Partnership must:

- Create a greater awareness of Mill Creek and all of its watershed assets to people who live and work in the watershed; and
- Engage key stakeholders who are willing to advance the recommendations in this report by incorporating them into existing programs.

Collaboration and support by all members of the Partnership will ensure not only the advancement of the projects listed, but also help to foster relationships that drive change.

Due to the complexities of this Watershed, there is an inherent need for the development of an organizational structure which has the ability to think holistically about the watershed as well as support and drive projects locally. Determining the appropriate organizational structure will be beneficial to future success in Mill Creek. Some options for further consideration are a:

- Watershed Council
- Council of Governments
- Informal Network of Partners

A Watershed Council is typically set up with representation from both public and private stakeholders. The Watershed Council is a voting body with by-laws that govern how they function. Some councils also have a non-voting advisory group that provides technical support to the voting members. A Council of Governments is similar to the Watershed Council in that they are also a voting body; however, the local

jurisdictions involved typically pass a governing agreement, which legally allows the council to contract services and develop cooperative agreements. An Informal Network of project partners is an option in which project partners come together as projects arise. The Network communicates informally and meets as need to advance projects. Sometimes, a Memorandum of Understanding is established for specific projects between project partners. Several examples of all three structures already exist and can be used as a template for crafting an organizational structure for Mill Creek.

Whatever organizational form coalesces, projects should be prioritized and selected for implementation. To help facilitate this process Appendix G identifies various activities that can be implemented to reach a particular goal, resources that can be used, and targets that can be set to assess progress.