



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 0432-2020, **Version:** 1

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This ordinance is to authorize the Director of the Recreation and Parks Department to apply for grant funding to acquire properties along three watercourses--Hayden Run, Big Walnut Creek, and Blacklick Creek; and to provide the necessary match funds. The Clean Ohio Conservation Fund is accepting applications for funding to preserve natural areas and greenway corridors. If awarded funding, a separate piece of legislation will be submitted to enter into a grant agreement and allocate the local match funds.

**Background:** This grant application would provide funding towards fee simple acquisition of three sites in Columbus, along Hayden Run in the far northwest, Big Walnut Creek on the far-east side, and Blacklick Creek on the city's southeast side.

### **Blacklick Creek-Brice Road Parklands**

Blacklick Creek and its tributaries is one of the region's most important waterways. The purpose of the project is to acquire a significant 28.5 acre tract of natural area along Brice Road, adjacent to the Blacklick Creek Greenway. The proposed property is family owned, and is listed for sale as development land. Acquiring the land provides significant long term preservation for water quality, forest preservation, and protection of habitat. The site is easily accessible, with an estimated 2,700 people living within a 10 minute walk. The natural terrain of site is upland meadow, planted in tall grass prairie, with over 0.25 mile of tributary, approximately 1 acre of wetland, and an average of 100' width of forested buffer along the stream.

### **Big Walnut-West Broad Street Preserve**

Big Walnut Creek is considered one of the highest water quality major water courses in Central Ohio. For several years, the central section of the stream has been a focus of Recreation and Parks to acquire and preserve valuable riparian corridor. The purpose of the project is to acquire a significant 36.4 acre tract of natural land along the east bank of Big Walnut Creek on the south side of East Broad Street. Over 3,000 l.f. of Big Walnut Creek flows past the site. Acquiring the land provides substantial long term preservation for water quality, forest preservation, protection of habitat, and public access. In 2019, Recreation and Parks acquired an adjacent 22 acres of mature forest, ravine, and wetlands on the east boundary of this project.

### **Old Schools -- New Parks Project**

The project would apply for grant assistance towards acquiring 3 former Columbus City School sites for repurposing into neighborhood parks. The closed school sites proposed for acquisition are:

Clearbrook Middle School	31 North 17 <sup>th</sup> Street
Douglas Alternative Elementary	51 Douglas Street
Stockbridge Elementary	3350 South Champion Avenue

Each of the properties are being offered for sale, and all three sites offer a significant opportunity to acquire greenspace in the high need areas of the Near East and South Side. A 2019 Land Plan completed by the Department shows that school sites are uniquely located in older built-out neighborhoods where open space is scarce. As these sites are acquired, the former school buildings and hardscape will be demolished to provide new park space and natural area.

**Principal Parties:**

Ohio Public Works Commission  
65 East State Street, Suite 312  
Columbus, OH 43215  
Clean Ohio Conservation Fund-District 3

**Emergency Justification:** An emergency is being requested for this authorization as it is required as part of the grant application, which is due March 20, 2020.

**Benefits to the Public:** Protection of the city's high quality waterways, greenway corridors, ravines, and urban forests. Both projects are within rapidly urbanizing areas of the city, and preservation of key natural sites is one of the main missions of Recreation and Parks. Conservation of these sites proposed in this Clean Ohio project relies heavily upon outside funding assistance to achieve these benefits.

**Community Input/Issues:** During the past decade, residents in these communities, and the city at large, has expressed strong priority for more protected stream corridors, headwater tributaries, access to nature, walking paths, and urban forest conservation.

**Area(s) Affected:**

Far East (58)  
South East (65)  
Near East (56)  
South Side (63)

**Master Plan Relation:** Protecting the environmental health and resilience of the city's waterways; providing long term protection corridors for walking and biking and outdoor experiences. Improved and equitable access to trails and greenways.

**Fiscal Impact:** No fiscal action is requested. A separate ordinance will be prepared to accept the grants if the projects are funded.

To authorize the Director of Recreation and Parks to apply for grant funding from the Ohio Public Works Commission for the Big Walnut Trail-Elk Run Park to acquire properties along three watercourses--Hayden Run, Big Walnut Creek, and Blacklick Creek; and to declare an emergency. (\$0.00)

**WHEREAS**, the Ohio Public Works Commission, Clean Ohio Conservation Fund is accepting applications for funding to preserve natural areas and greenway corridors; and

**WHEREAS**, the Recreation and Parks Department wishes to apply for grant funding for the projects listed above; and

**WHEREAS**, this ordinance shows the City's support required by the state for all application submittals; and

**WHEREAS**, an emergency exists in the usual daily operations of the Recreation and Parks Department in that it is immediately necessary to authorize the Director to apply for the grant and show support so the grant may be submitted by March 20, 2020, for the preservation of the public health, safety and welfare; **NOW, THEREFORE**

**BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COLUMBUS:**

**SECTION 1.** That the Director of Recreation and Parks is hereby authorized and directed to apply for grant funding from the Ohio Public Works Commission, Clean Ohio Conservation Fund for funding to preserve natural areas and

greenway corridors. This Council hereby supports this action.

**SECTION 2.** That this ordinance authorizes an application for the grant funds only and is not a commitment to expend City funds.

**SECTION 3.** That future legislation will follow to authorize acceptance, appropriation and expenditure of funds.

**SECTION 4.** That the City of Columbus does agree to obligate the funds required to satisfactorily complete the proposed project and become eligible for reimbursement under the terms and conditions of the Ohio Public Works Commission, Clean Ohio Conservation Fund.

**SECTION 5.** That for the reasons stated in the preamble hereto, which is hereby made a part hereof, this ordinance is hereby declared to be an emergency measure and shall take effect and be in force from and after its passage and approval by the Mayor, or ten days after passage if the Mayor neither approves nor vetoes the same.