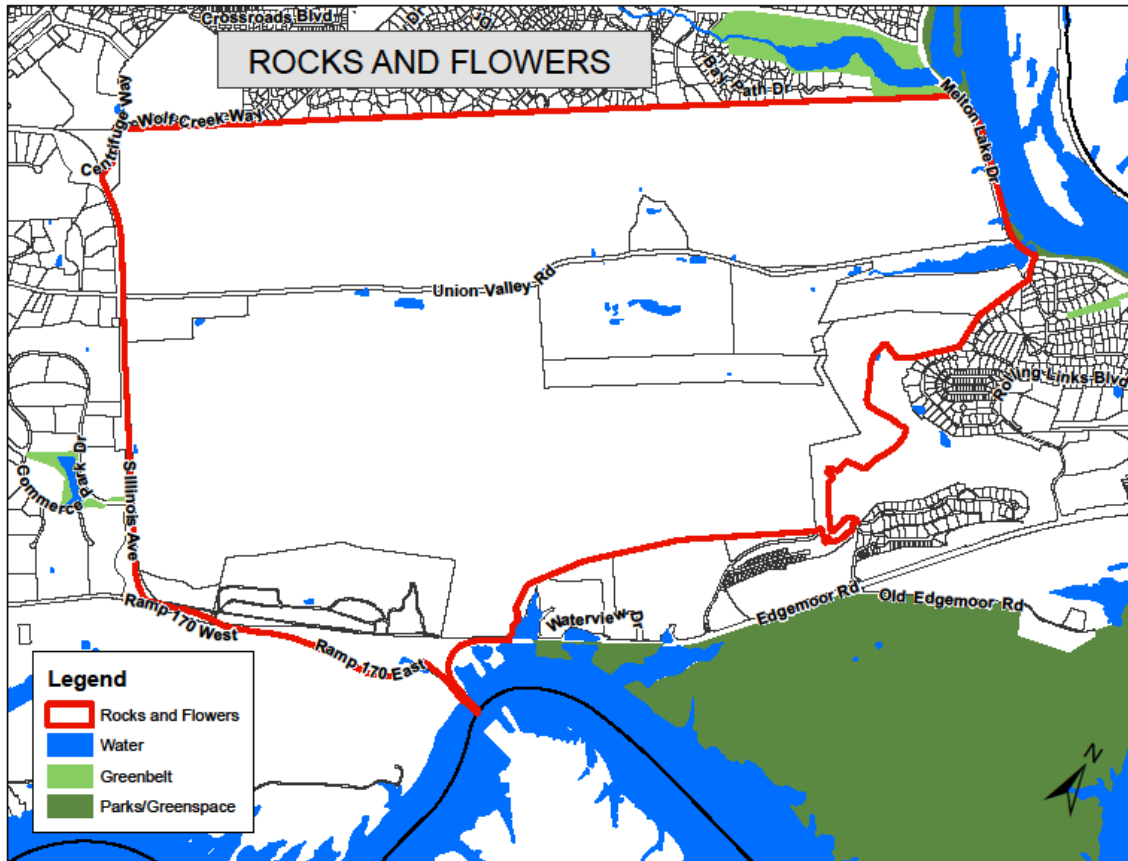


ROCKS AND FLOWERS SUB-AREA

This sub-area is a large, mostly undeveloped area in the southeast of the city. It is bounded on the west by South Illinois Avenue, on the north by the Woodland and Emory Valley residential neighborhoods, on the east by the Melton Lake Drive and Lake View residential neighborhoods, and on the south by Edgemoor Road and the Lake View residential neighborhood.

The area is significantly defined by its landform. Pine Ridge runs east-west across the top of the sub-area parallel to the northern border. Pine Ridge is characterized by forested steep slopes. Union Valley Road runs along the valley floor between Pine Ridge and Chestnut Ridge, the next ridge south of and parallel to Pine Ridge. Chestnut is not as high or rugged as Pine Ridge, but it presents development challenges.

For purposes of this study the most important feature of the study area is the pattern of land ownership. The majority of the land area of the study area is owned by the State of Tennessee as a research facility of the University of Tennessee, Institute of Agriculture.



Function, Character and Zoning

There are three developed areas in the sub-area that are described below. The remainder of the sub-area, about 2,400 acres, is land owned by the UT Institute of Agriculture (UTIA) and managed by the UT Forest Resources AgResearch and Education Center that reports administratively to UT AgResearch. In this capacity the land is host to a wide variety of research projects conducted by UTIA researchers and collaborators from many disciplines. It includes studies from fields as diverse as forestry, soil science, avian studies, wildlife studies, entomology and plant pathology, plant sciences, Biosystems engineering, and forensic studies. Some research projects are short range and some occur over decades. In these ways the land is at work, even though it might look like an ordinary forest to the casual observer. It is presently the intention of UTIA/AgResearch to retain this land with continuation of its use as a research facility. The focus of the research may change from time to time based on changes in faculty interest and societal needs, but the basic mission is expected to continue.

The entire southwest corner of the sub-area is occupied by two uses. The University of Tennessee Arboretum occupies a triangular site of 250 acres. The research and educational facility attracts over 30,000 annual visitors. The facility has a visitor's center with on-site staff and parking, an outside program shelter, and a new auditorium. There are over 800 species of plants on the grounds. There is an extensive trail system and a published schedule of special purpose tours: for wildflowers, birds, interpretive hikes, etc. The new auditorium is used for arboretum educational events and can be rented out for private events. The other use in this area is the Oak Ridge Memorial Park, a 120 acre non-profit perpetual care cemetery. Founded by Dr. Robert Ball, an Oak Ridge physician, the sixty plus year old park was founded during the Manhattan Project to provide a place for workers who died while working on the project. Special attention has been given to landscaping of the grounds. Over 10,000 people have been laid to rest in the park. The cemetery is located between the arboretum and Bethel Valley Road.



The University of Tennessee Arboretum



The Oak Ridge Memorial Park cemetery

The other privately developed part of the sub-area is along the eastern end of Union Valley Road where The Rogers Group operates a quarry producing crushed stone and gravel. The Rogers Group is a one hundred plus year old company of national scope providing stone products, sand and gravel, asphalt paving and road construction. The present quarry site has been in operation since 1956. The Harrison Construction Company, a supplier of ready-mix concrete, is located across Union Valley Road from the Rogers operation.



The Rogers Group quarry operation

Almost all of the sub-area is zoned Residential, Open Space and Reserved District. The arboretum, research forest and quarry operations fit within that designation.

Conditions

Almost all the structures in the sub-area are appropriate to their special purposes. Cemeteries, arboretums, rock quarries and concrete mixing plants generate the need for highly specialized structures. The only generic buildings in the sub-area are offices, storage structures and other support structures. The structures in this sub-area are generally in good to excellent condition. No special problems were observed.

There is one small exception. There is a small site at the intersection of South Illinois Avenue and Union Valley Road owned by the city. It has been a saw mill operation, a city landfill, and a golf driving range in earlier years. There are now two small buildings remaining from the years as a golf driving range. Both are in poor condition. The larger of the two is a log structure that may be structurally sound. The small building would not be missed. This site also has drainage issues that are being addressed by the city.



City owned property

Transportation

The significant streets related to this sub-area are all on its borders: South Illinois Avenue, Edgemoor Road, and Melton Lake Drive. All of them are major thoroughfares. The only internal street is Union Valley Drive which provides access to the quarry and ready-mix concrete operations. It appears that Union Valley Road is a private road belonging to the Rogers Group. The complete legal status of that facility is still being investigated as this report is being written.

Safety

Current uses present virtually no issues related to safety with the possible exception of the potential for on the job accidents. It is beyond the scope of this study to investigate the safety of operations of specific private companies.

Findings, Recommendations and Place Making

The dominant use of land in terms of land area coverage is the UTIA/AgResearch-Oak Ridge Forest. Here, land which looks unused and available for development to the uninformed, is actually in use, much of it intensive research, demonstration, outreach and operations that support the land-grant mission of The University of Tennessee (<https://ag.tennessee.edu/Pages/aboutus.aspx>). It serves UTIA faculty and students as an outdoor field research and demonstration laboratory which, in turn, serves the citizens of Tennessee as a source of educational outreach and community engagement.

The sub-area has a small number of large-scale, long-term uses. The UT Arboretum, the Rogers Group, Harrison Construction, and the Oak Ridge Memorial Park, are very different from each other, but they all make important contributions to the city and region. All of them occupy locations that are appropriate to their mission.

There is a small issue in the study area related to access of city personnel and equipment to a water tank located in the eastern end of the study area near the River Run Subdivision.

The East Tennessee Community Design Center has prepared a design for new landscaping and structures that would enhance the entrance into the city along South Illinois Avenue as a gateway. The study was prepared at the request of the noon Oak Ridge Rotary Club. It would provide new installations in the open space between South Illinois Avenue and Bethel Valley Road, at the entrance to the Arboretum, and on the face of the bridge where Centrifuge Way crosses South Illinois. The improvements have not been funded.

This sub-area presents virtually no challenges or development decisions for the city of Oak Ridge to make. The entities which occupy the various sites are by nature long term stewards of land and natural resources. The City of Oak Ridge can be glad for the contributions they make to the city and leave well enough alone.