



# Memo

To Emy Carpenter, Moffatt & Nichol  
From Alex Dupey, AICP, Bill Estes, PLA, Claudia Sackett Hennum, MIG  
Re Chehalis Basin LAND Phase 2  
Task 2.1 China Creek Daylighting Alternatives  
Date June 5, 2025

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## Introduction

This memo summarizes potential alignments for daylighting the portion of China Creek through Downtown Centralia. Illustrations of potential alignments are included as **Attachment A**.

China Creek currently runs through Downtown Centralia in a pipe, including under City Hall and several other buildings. Regular flooding has been a significant issue for the City of Centralia for many years along this waterway, prompting the City to develop a phased flood reduction plan upstream of Downtown. This project aligns with the current phased projects the City is currently or will undertake in the future on China Creek and focuses on areas generally downstream of those projects to address continued flood issues along the stream.

In addition to flood damage reduction, daylighting China Creek also encourages adjacent water oriented development opportunities on vacant and underdeveloped properties. This project has the potential to create economic development opportunities both from recreation and natural based systems approaches.

## China Creek Daylighting Alternatives and Outcomes

The daylighting alternatives address the length of China Creek generally between Agnew Mill Pond Park and the railroad tracks where China creek is underground or daylighted and flows under or near buildings.<sup>1</sup> These alternatives are broken into sections, which can be combined based on future property availability and community priorities. Alternatives by section include (from north to south):

- **Segment C:**
  - Alternative C.1 would reroute China Creek around Downtwon Centralia, connecting Pearl Street Plaza to a linear floodable park area.

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<sup>1</sup> See map Creek Daylighting Alternative Routes in Attachment A

- Alternative C.2 would relocate China Creek to a new corridor east of N. Railroad Avenue and then turn west at approximately W. Main Street.
- Alternative C.3 would follow a similar route to C.2 but would be located further to the east of C.2 between turning west at W. Main Street, similar to C.2.
- **Segment B:**
  - Alternative B.1 would connect to Alternative C.1 and would include daylighting a corridor along the north side of W. Main Street before crossing under W. Main Street at approximately N. Oak Street. B.1 would also include acquiring additional parcels in the vicinity for flood storage and floodable park space.
  - Alternative B.2 would be located on the south side of W. Main Street and continue to the same endpoint at B.1 near N. Oak Street. This alternative would include daylighting through George Washington Park.
- **Segment A:**
  - Alternative A.1 would connect to both B.1 and B.2 near N. Oak and W. Main Streets daylighting this section of China Creek to approximately the railroad tracks.

While there are multiple options in combining the alternatives by segment, the following two combinations identified potential differences in outcomes:

- A combination of alternatives C.3, B.2, and A.1 would likely have the least impact on existing structures but also would likely provide the least space for storing additional stormwater. This combination of alternatives would also provide minimal new outdoor recreational facilities in the Downtown area.
- A combination of alternatives C.1, B.1, and A.1 would likely impact more existing structures, but would provide the greatest amount of stormwater area, could increase vegetated areas, and connection existing and new recreation areas while still maintaining the Downtown Historic District.

Alternatives consider projects identified in the Centralia Parks Recreation and Open Spaces Plan to identify possible connections to existing and proposed recreation in the vicinity of China Creek. For all alternatives, mid-block crossings were prioritized to simplify the creation of road underpass construction and minimize utility disturbance. Additional studies would be required to identify the extent of areas needed to reduce flooding in adjacent areas. In addition, this could also include an analysis of the potential for an additional underground bypass or reusing the existing China Creek pipe as an overflow option to prevent water from overtopping the banks of China Creek during major events. Analysis would include pump station, sizing and discharge location options.

# Opportunities and Issues

## ***Existing Land Uses<sup>2</sup>***

The project vicinity includes business, residential, municipal, religious and industrial uses verified using Google Streetview. There appear to be several vacancies along Main Street outside of the historic district and a significant amount of impervious space used as surface parking that appears to be underutilized. The area near the current China Creek alignment generally consists of six primary uses:

- Small businesses and municipal buildings in the historic Downtown
- Single family and some multi-family homes
- Centralia College and associated buildings
- Parking lots and hardscape areas
- Vehicle-oriented businesses along Main Street, many that are currently vacant
- Storage and industrial buildings on the East side of the railroad

The alternatives are focused on optimizing existing land uses to meet development needs and provide improved flood management options. This includes:

- Consolidating parking where possible to reduce the amount of impervious surfaces and resulting stormwater runoff
- Preserving historic and municipal buildings
- Preserving and expanding walkable areas with new parks, trails, and new development options
- Reducing land uses that could contribute pollutants into the stream system through stormwater runoff from impervious surfaces such as large parking and storage areas.

## ***Historic Structures<sup>3</sup>***

China Creek crosses historic Downtown. A review of the National and State Historic Registry Building list for Centralia did not identify potential impacts to historic structures, but Alternatives C.2 and C.3 could affect one building (separate structures, by alternative) in the

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<sup>2</sup> See map Land Use Zoning in Attachment A

<sup>3</sup> See map Significant Buildings and Trees in Attachment A

historic area. Those buildings are newer storage and retail uses and do not appear to be historic structures. Alternative C.1 would not impact any buildings in the historic area.

## ***Trees<sup>4</sup>***

Inventories of large trees were not available, but large, mature trees that appear in good health and overlapping with or near the proposed alternatives were mapped using Google Streetview. Any impact on trees would be evaluated as the alternatives are refined. All alternatives may require some large, mature trees to be removed in George Washington Park. Alternative C.1 could require removal of mature trees between N Silver and N Pearl Street.

## ***Trails and Open Spaces<sup>5</sup>***

The alternatives could incorporate several planned park and trails projects, including:

- The proposed Main Street Trail running between the Centralia and Seminary Hill Natural Area runs parallel to Alternative B.1.
- The proposed Pearl Street Trail running alongside of and crosses Alternative Segment C.1.
- The proposed N. Gold Street Trail runs alongside of the daylighted creek in Alternative C.3.

## ***Recreation Opportunities<sup>6</sup>***

Centralia College is located southeast of China Creek. The proposed alternatives would not affect existing buildings and could provide improved natural and recreational areas in the vicinity of the college. There could be several benefits to the community college, including outdoor education and recreation opportunities. Additionally, under Alternative C.1, the daylighted creek would be located near the south end of Pearl Street Plaza/Veteran's Community Park, providing opportunities for expanded STEAM curriculum, possible nature play, and expanded programmable areas during low flow conditions. This alternative would also create an area near City Hall that could be used for programming, education, and outdoor green space.

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<sup>4</sup> See map Significant Buildings and Trees in Attachment A

<sup>5</sup> See map Connections to Recreation and Street Level Connections in Attachment A

<sup>6</sup> See map Connections to Recreation in Attachment A

## ***Street Level Connections<sup>7</sup>***

All alternatives could include street level connections. Connections could include stairs and ramps to creek-level connections for study, interpretation, and reflection; ramps and stepped seating to areas suited for active recreation and programming, including floodable sport fields and a floodable stage/amphitheater; and street-level paths and bridges with views to the restored creek bed.

### ***Next Steps***

- Study water surface level elevation at inlet and outlet of daylighted area
- Study backflow of Chehalis into China Creek Levee and confirm Levee termination point
- Outreach to determine community support and public interest in daylighting strategy/alternative routes
- Coordinate with property owners to determine feasibility of land acquisition

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<sup>7</sup> See map Street Level Connections in Attachment A