

CASE STUDY

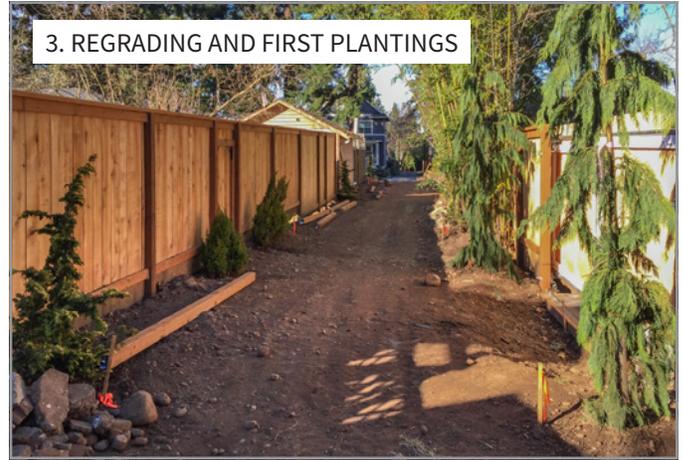
NE 28th/29th Alley

Between Killingsworth and Jarrett



BEFORE

Prior to the start of the project, the entire unpaved portion of the alley was overgrown and passable only through a narrow footpath.



3. REGRADING AND FIRST PLANTINGS

The northern portion of the alley after removing extra topsoil with a backhoe and planting donated plants.



1. CLEARING OVERGROWTH

The residents cleared out the alley by chopping down blackberries and pruning back trees. They used a neighbor's truck to haul away debris.



4. GRAVEL AND SECOND PLANTINGS

Recently residents have added plants and distinctive entrances from their properties into the alley. Next steps likely include lighting and murals.



2. ESTABLISHING A PLAN

PSU students led a discussion about the residents' shared goals for the project. Residents found they had many skills and resources to contribute.

COSTS

Step	Per Sq Ft	Full Alley*
Clearing overgrowth	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00
Regrading – Excavator rental	\$ 0.17	\$ 850.00
Regrading – Soil removal bins**	\$ 0.27	\$ 1,368.33
Barrier fabric to stop overgrowth	\$ 0.07	\$ 346.67
Gravel	\$ 0.40	\$ 2,000.00
All costs	\$ 0.91	\$ 4,565.00

* Assumes alley is 500 ft long and 10 ft wide. Alley length and width varies.

** For the NE 28th/29th Alley, the first bin was \$320 with each additional bin being \$185. This points to significant savings in doing larger areas at once as opposed to regrading section by section.

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THE DETAILS

Before the Project

This alley was a part of a clean up event in 2009 that involved Concordia University students with SOLVE providing drop boxes to haul away materials. The Concordia Neighborhood Association coordinated this event and has maintained an interest in improving its many alleys since that time.

Unfortunately, since that event, many of the alleys have filled in again with blackberries and other plants as well as garbage. The NE 28th/29th alley also filled back in too, but the clean up got the residents thinking and talking about making more permanent improvements to the alley. With these ideas in mind, the residents added gates to the alley as they repaired or replaced fences so that when they improved the alley, they would have easy access.

Step 1: Clearing Overgrowth

The arrival of a new neighbor with a strong desire to access his garage from the alley, led the residents at the northern end to organize and clear out the alley out again. Learning from the previous clean up, this time they decided to improve the surface to stop overgrowth from returning. Residents knocked down the vegetation and hauled it away one truckload at a time.

Step 2: Establishing a Plan

Over the 90 years since the unpaved alley was built, natural processes resulted in the alley being 1-2 feet higher than the residents' yards. This grade difference caused many problems. Some neighbors were thinking about building retaining walls to keep the alley from eroding into their yards.

The Portland Alley Project arranged for a group of PSU capstone students to facilitate a meeting where they could discuss the project as a group. The meeting was also an opportunity for residents on the southern portion of the alley to hear about progress to the north and express their interest in joining the project and improving their segment of the alley.

PROJECT DURATION: 3 MONTHS

Step 3: Regrading and First Plantings

The plan was to regrade the surface, put down a barrier to prevent vegetation from returning, and then add compressed gravel to create a central path. Narrow planting strips were created in front of each property for residents to use. At the meeting they realized they had many resources available to them and many were willing to chip in money to pay for the materials they couldn't get donated.

For a portion of the alley, they were able to arrange a backhoe and source plants for free, for another portion, a Bobcat excavator was rented for a day to move soil. Neighbors split the costs for the drop boxes needed to remove the soil, the fabric barrier to prevent the vegetation from returning, and the gravel that they would cover the surface with.

Step 4: Gravel and a Second Round of Plantings

The residents moved quickly to stabilize the surface material once the soil was exposed. They chose 3/4 minus crushed rock that was compacted to create a tough surface for cars and bikes that still allows rainwater to drain into the soil. Many of the residents are adding their own unique landscaping to their alley "front door" such as brickwork, steps, pea gravel and planters.

The next step is lighting and the residents are considering solar powered downward directed path lights as well as more festive overhead lights to create a sense of enclosure at night. The kids from the block play in the valley and residents find themselves wandering into the space to enjoy a drink together in the evenings. There is a sense of accomplishment. Together they've created a unique "place" to share as a community.

Total Costs

The costs on the other side of this sheet represent the per square foot costs from this project and an estimate the costs for a full block. At the time this document was prepared, the project does not cover an entire block. The full project costs for the approximately 375 ft length of improved alley (completed in two stages) are \$3,526.00.

Learn more about alley projects at www.AlleyAllies.com