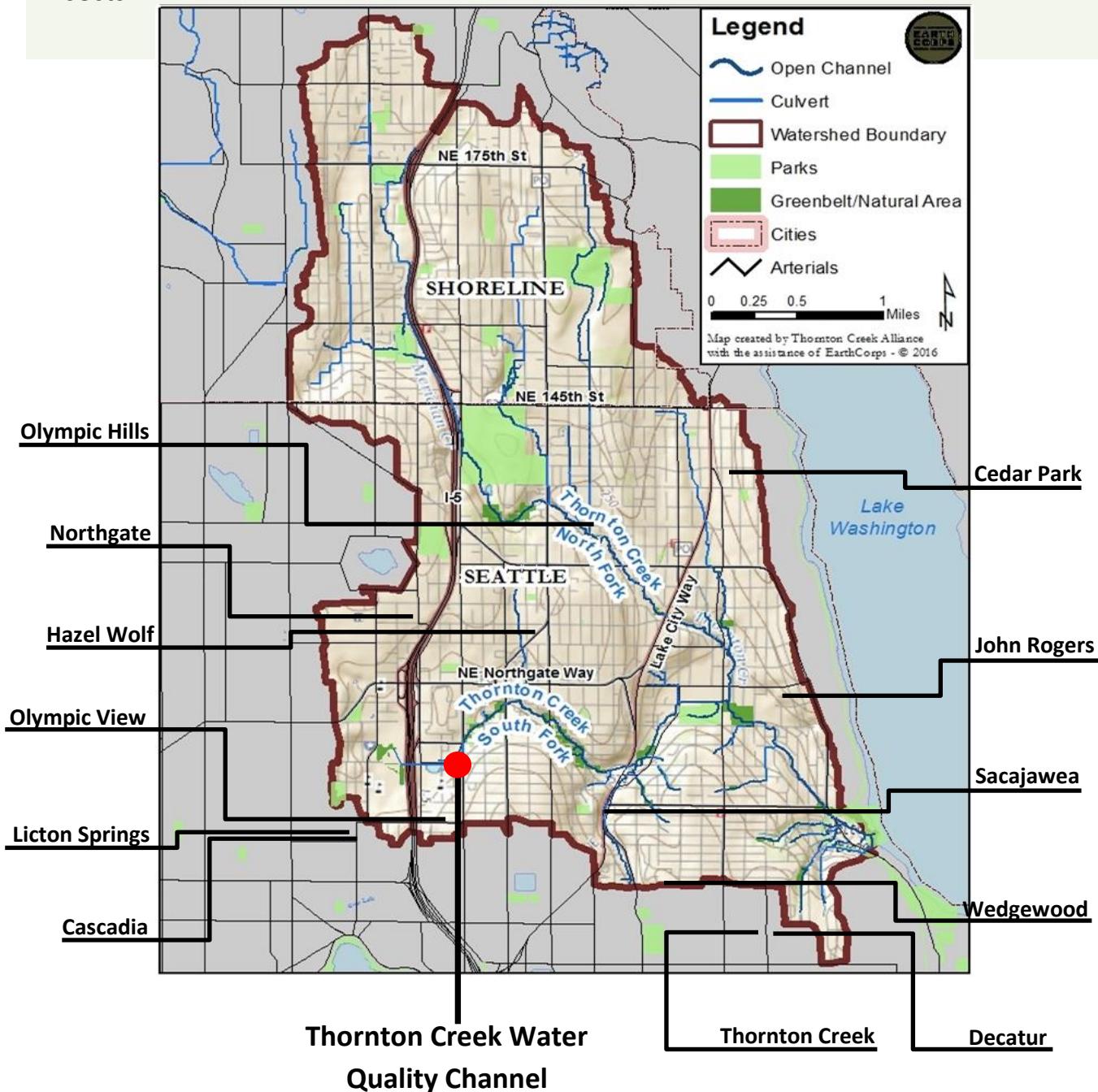


Thornton Creek Watershed

The Thornton Creek Watershed carries stormwater from over 11.6 miles of North Seattle and Shoreline. The creek's main channels extend more than 15 miles and run through over 700 backyards.

The creek has historically been home to five different species of salmon as well as coyotes, river otters, beavers, and birds such as eagles, owls, and herons. The creek also provides habitat for many smaller creatures like amphibians, reptiles, and insects.



Thornton Creek Water Quality Channel



The area along Thornton Creek has been stewarded since time immemorial by the Duwamish and other Puget Sound Salish peoples. At one point, the location of the Thornton Creek Water Quality Channel was known as “Bald Head” by the Duwamish Tribe, describing the bowl-shaped marshy swale that once filled the area around Northgate Mall and North Seattle College. Bald Head was a place to collect resources such as highbush cranberries and marsh tea indicating a much different, more effective water drainage system than seen today.

As the city grew, residents began to build homes and farms in the Northgate area. Over time much of Thornton Creek and its tributaries were diverted into pipes. Northgate Mall was built in 1950 and the south fork of Thornton Creek was diverted into a 5 foot wide pipe buried 20 feet below a parking lot.

In 2003, a group of diverse stakeholders (such as community, environmental, and business advocates) developed a plan to meet the needs of the growing community. The Thornton Creek Water Quality Channel was designed as a mixed-use property with apartments, businesses, and retirement housing. Completed in 2009, the pipe was removed and a replaced by a bioswale (built space designed to act like a natural swale or wetland) to filter stormwater runoff and slow the creek before it continues on its journey to Lake Washington.



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Sources:

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