

## Mountain View welcomes new additions to Stevens Creek Trail

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Billy Symons and his family of avid bikers, hikers and runners used to ride a mile and a half from their [Mountain View](#) home to reach a trail head to the popular urban oasis, the [Stevens Creek Trail](#).

That changed four weeks ago when a new trail access opened on Sleeper Avenue, a block and half from the Symons home. It is the entrance to a new half-mile section of the well-used trail that city officials will inaugurate in ceremonies this morning.

"It is such a blessing," said Symons, who was on the trail Friday morning with his children, Samantha, 7, and Will, 4, who were both on their bikes.

Samantha had drawn a map of the trail and marked their destinations: The bakery in downtown [Mountain View](#). Then the bookstore. Then back to a small meadow, the walkways freshly packed with macadam, and to a small grove of live oak saplings.

"It really connects the community from one end to the other," Mayor Margaret Abe-Koga said. "The trail to me is one of the jewels in the Mountain View crown."

In addition to the new portion of the trail, officials today also will dedicate a bridge over Moffett Boulevard. It's the only place on the trail where users previously had to cross a heavily trafficked

street to continue their trip.

The opening of the latest segment of the 4.8-mile [Stevens Creek Trail](#) and the highway overcrossing mark a milestone for the city and its continuing work to develop land along the creek as an urban park and trail. For the first time, it opens the trail to the southern part of the city where Symons lives.

The entire trail is heavily used by families. Billy Symons has even organized a weekly bike safety class at the trail for neighborhood children.

On weekday mornings and evenings, commuters on bicycles buzz the paved corridor. Because it is patrolled by city and volunteer park rangers, students walk to school on it.

Any time of day, there are also senior citizens walking and biking.

"It's very gratifying to see how people have embraced the trail," said Cathy Lazarus, the city's director of public works.

When Mountain View first proposed building an urban trail along Stevens Creek 17 years ago, many residents opposed it, worried about crime, trash and traffic. Residents of neighboring Sunnyvale, Los Altos and Cupertino expressed similar worries.

So the group Friends of Stevens Creek Trail was born. The members of the nonprofit championed the idea, meeting residents to address their fears and lobbying council members. Over time, as the trail expanded, so did their role. They raised money, volunteered to patrol the area and also cleaned it up.

In addition, the city faced engineering challenges: building access across, under, over and around highways and roads that crisscrossed the creek.

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But segment by segment, bridge by bridge, the city continued with trail development, drawing more support from neighbors.

"I think what happened over time is those people who had concerns noticed there were a lot of happy trail users," said Roy Verley, president of Friends. "I use it to run errands. It's wonderful. I leave the van parked in the driveway and hit the trail."

The park and trail area near Sleeper Avenue used to be a trash-littered homeless encampment, Symons said. Before the building of the new trail segment began last year, neighbors would organize litter pickup in the area, a right of way for PG&E electric towers.

"The trail has a way of opening and casting light on previously hidden areas," Verley said. "Now there's people."

What's more, the neighboring cities that once worried about the Stevens Creek trail are now in discussions with Mountain View about building connecting trails.

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#### **Trail ceremony**

The El Camino Real-to-Sleeper Avenue segment of Stevens Creek Trail will be dedicated from 11:30 to noon today at the corner of Sleeper and Franklin avenues. The public can park at the Yuba Drive or Landels School trail heads.

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