

PURPOSE AND BENEFITS

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the trail setting, discusses the feasibility study goals and planning process and details the significance and benefits of the trail to the community. The study areas reviewed in this feasibility report include the open space and parklands along Stevens Creek from Stevens Creek County Park to Stevens Creek Boulevard in Cupertino. It also includes the open space lands adjacent to Rancho San Antonio County Park. The North Fork of Permanente Creek flows through this parkland.

The trails proposed in this report could be constructed approximately parallel to the Stevens Creek for 3.30 miles and extend through open space lands near Rancho San Antonio County Park for 3.15 miles. These two trail areas would be connected using bicycle lanes and the associated sidewalks on city streets for 1.25 miles. These on-street segments link together the trail system to provide a total of 7.70 miles off-street and on-street routes.

Feasibility study goals were established to guide the trail planning process and selection of the trail alignments. The trails are intended to integrate with the natural environment and provided recreation and alternative transportation benefits to residents, schoolchildren and local employees. The development of the trail is also intended to provide an opportunity to enhance the creek corridor as habitat for wildlife and as a scenic open space for trail users. The trail alignment is to be located on public or quasi-public lands wherever possible and coordinated with all relevant jurisdictions.

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REGIONAL SETTING

Stevens Creek is a spring fed perennial stream that flows northeast from the Santa Cruz Mountains to San Francisco Bay through the cities of Cupertino, Sunnyvale, Los Altos and Mountain View. The area evaluated in this feasibility report includes the open space and parklands along Stevens Creek from Stevens Creek County Park to Stevens Creek Boulevard in Cupertino. It also includes the open space lands adjacent to Rancho San Antonio County Park in Cupertino (*See Map 1 - Regional Setting Map*).

Stevens Creek was first identified as a regional recreation asset more than 30 years ago and was included in the Regional Parks, Trails and Scenic Highways Element of the Santa Clara County General Plan. Today, the Stevens Creek corridor is identified as a sub-regional trail route (Route S-2) in the 1995 Santa Clara Countywide Trails Master Plan and significant portions of the trail have been developed by the City of Mountain View, Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation Department and Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District.

Conceptual plans for the Stevens Creek Trail were first defined in a 1980 report commissioned by the City of Mountain View, Santa Clara Valley Water District and Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District. The 1980 report, "Stevens Creek: A Plan of Opportunities," highlighted the corridor as a regional open space and recreation area and proposed that a bicycle and pedestrian trail be developed adjacent to the creek (The Planning Collaborative, 1980). This report stressed the importance of preserving the natural creek corridor while allowing recreational access to the open space land along the creek. Environmental restoration of the creek corridor, including the reintroduction of the steelhead fishery, was proposed in this original report. Only those recreational uses that would integrate with the natural environment of Stevens Creek were recommended. Walking, jogging, bicycling, fishing and nature exploration were defined as appropriate passive recreational uses of the creek corridor.

The inclusion of the creek corridor in the Santa Clara County General Plan and the preparation of subsequent planning documents encouraged the cities and park and open space districts to include the Stevens Creek corridor and trail in their planning documents. The 1964, 1972 and 1993 Cupertino General Plans have supported the acquisition of the lands adjacent to Stevens Creek to preserve the flood plain as open space and to develop a formal urban trail along the creek corridor. In keeping with this long-range vision the City of Cupertino purchased McClellan Ranch, Blackberry Farm and Golf Course,

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the Simms property and the Stocklmeir property between 1972 and 1999. As a further step toward developing the trail and restoring the creek corridor, the City of Cupertino commissioned this study to explore the feasibility of constructing a pedestrian and bicycle trail along Stevens Creek.

See Map 1 - Regional Setting Map

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PLANNING PROCESS

The trail feasibility study began in 2000 with technical evaluations of various site conditions. These feasibility investigations included assessments of the biological resources and the geotechnical and engineering constraints associated with the streambanks and roadway crossings. The results of these technical studies are applied throughout this report and the complete assessments are included in the appendix to this report.

In the fall of 2000, a Task Force was recruited to assist with the planning process. The Stevens Creek Trail Task Force was to provide input on the feasibility study, gather public comments on the trail alignment alternatives and review the draft of the trail feasibility report. The Task Force was comprised of residents living along the route, trail user groups, environmental organizations and elected and appointed officials.

The Stevens Creek Trail Task Force began meeting in 2001 and has worked directly with City staff and the consultant team. The Task Force has been responsible for gathering public comment on the trail routes through a series of community meetings. The information supplied by the consultants, reviewed by the Task Force and refined through comments made by community members provide the basis for the trail alignments described in this report. A total of 28 meetings have been held with the neighborhood associations, the Stevens Creek Trail Task Force, Cupertino Parks and Recreation Commission, County of Santa Clara Parks and Recreation Commission, Cupertino City Council and the County Board of Supervisors to gather feedback on the trail routes (*See Appendix A - Summary of Community Meetings*). In addition, numerous technical meetings were also held with regulatory agencies, adjacent landowners and individual stakeholders.

The feasibility study is the first step in the trail planning process. Study Area A, the open space land adjacent to Rancho San Antonio County Park, will be jointly developed under the direction by the City of Cupertino and the County of Santa Clara. In Study Area A, the next steps in trail planning will be the preparation of construction documents and search for construction funding. The development of the construction documents will provide opportunities for the public to comment on the design aspects of the equestrian, hiking and bicycle trails proposed for this area.

Study Area B, the privately owned closed quarry site, will proceed through the private development process at the initiation of the owner. Trail planning in this area must be coordinated with future development. Opportunities for

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public involvement will be provided through the review of the development proposal and environmental impact report.

The findings of the feasibility study for Study Areas C and D, the stream corridor, will be used in the forthcoming Blackberry Farm Master Plan. In the process of conducting the feasibility study, the City of Cupertino indicated the intent to prepare a master plan for all of the publicly owned open space lands along the Stevens Creek corridor. As a result, trail feasibility findings will provide significant background documentation for this comprehensive master plan. Two small phases of the master plan process have been undertaken. Cupertino held 8 focus workshops to gather community input in the subject matter to include in the master plan. A telephone survey of Cupertino residents has also been undertaken to gather community sentiment about the open space lands along the creek. This statistically significant survey will also help to guide the scope of work for the master plan. The entire master plan process will provide opportunities for public input. Ultimately, the Blackberry Farm Master Plan will be evaluated under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). All of these planning and environmental review efforts will provide ample opportunity for public involvement in shaping the future of the Stevens Creek corridor.

FEASIBILITY STUDY GOALS

The Stevens Creek Trail Task Force established feasibility study goals that guided the trail planning process and selection of the trail alignments. The Task Force desired to develop trail routes that integrated with the natural environment and provided recreational and alternative transportation benefits to residents, schoolchildren and local employees. The development of the trails is intended to proceed concurrently with the enhancement of the creek corridor as habitat for wildlife and as a scenic open space for trail users.

The feasibility study goals included coordination with all jurisdictions and encouraged public participation in the planning process. As a result, the trail alignments have been presented to many audiences and continue to be evaluated during the public review of the feasibility report and associated environmental documents (*See Figure 1 - Feasibility Study Goals*).

| FEASIBILITY STUDY GOALS | |
|-------------------------|---|
| ◆ | Preserve and restore the natural environment of the creek corridor for the enjoyment of trail users and as habitat for wildlife. |
| ◆ | Engage the community in as many ways as possible throughout the planning, design, construction and operation of the trail. |
| ◆ | Identify trail alignment alternatives, staging areas and access points that minimize encroachment on private property. |
| ◆ | Provide a trail route through Cupertino to help realize the vision of a San Francisco Bay to Pacific Ocean Trail. |
| ◆ | Provide a safe and secure trail that is easy to maintain. |
| ◆ | Provide a trail alignment along the to the creek corridor that provides opportunities for passive recreational use and alternative transportation. |
| ◆ | Plan, design, construct, operate and publicize the trail as a component of Cupertino's identity. |
| ◆ | Make the first reach of the trail a success. |
| ◆ | Design a trail alignment that integrates as many public facilities (schools, parks, transportation systems and open space preserves, etc.) as possible. |
| ◆ | Identify and preserve historical and cultural resources found along the creek. |
| ◆ | Maximize linkages to other trail systems and trail segments. |
| ◆ | Encourage educational uses of the creek corridor. |
| ◆ | Develop a trail alignment that coordinates the concerns and needs of all public agencies with jurisdiction along Stevens Creek. |
| ◆ | Identify a trail alignment that maximizes year-round use. |

Figure 1 - Feasibility Study Goals

METHODOLOGY

Background information pertinent to the study areas was reviewed in an effort to become familiar with the projects and processes that created the existing opportunities and constraints posed along Stevens Creek and the associated open space and park lands. Significant time was spent directly

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observing field conditions. Site visits were conducted to verify corridor feasibility and gather additional data needed to define study areas. During the fieldwork, information was gathered on opportunities including connectivity to the on-street bicycle and pedestrian system, adjacent points of interest and access the bus system. Constraints to trail development including land availability, roadway crossings, environmental factors and institutional issues were analyzed. Preliminary alignment alternatives were identified and presented to the agencies with jurisdiction along creek and over the adjacent lands. Engineering solutions to constrained areas of the corridor were further evaluated and brought forward for discussion with impacted agencies including Santa Clara Valley Water District, Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation Department, Santa Clara County Roads and Airports Department, Pacific Gas and Electric Company and Union Pacific Railroad.

The project area was divided into four study areas to facilitate the planning process and future trail development. The study areas vary by size, topography and ownership or jurisdiction (*See Map 2 - Stevens Creek Trail Study Areas Map*). The four study areas include Study Area A from Rancho San Antonio County Park to Stevens Creek Boulevard, Study Area B from Stevens Creek County Park to Linda Vista Park, Study Area C from Linda Vista Park through McClellan Ranch to Blackberry Farm and Study Area D from McClellan Ranch through Blackberry Farm to Stevens Creek Boulevard. Study Areas A and D are linked via bicycle lanes and sidewalks on Stevens Creek Boulevard.

SIGNIFICANCE AND BENEFITS

In May 2002, the City of Cupertino held a Community Congress to gather public input on potential policy directions and strategies to be evaluated in the update of the General Plan. The results of the Community Congress are an expression of the community's long-range vision for Cupertino. The Community Congress was attended by nearly 200 participants. "Walk-Ability, Bike-Ability & Trails" was a top issue for residents with 89% in strong agreement/agreement with creating trails along creeks to provide pedestrian and bicycle trail access. Residents voted 92% in strong agreement/agreement with balancing the mobility of the auto with the safe movement of pedestrians and bicyclists. Development of the Stevens Creek Trail provides one strategy for achieving these goals (*See Appendix B - Cupertino Community Congress Summary Report*).

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The Stevens Creek Trail will provide a local recreational amenity and will enhance walking and bicycling. The trail connects Cupertino neighborhoods to three city parks, two county parks, three schools and several bus routes. The trail will link Rancho San Antonio County Park to Stevens Creek County Park. The trail will provide an off-street location for bicycling, walking, jogging and horseback riding. The Stevens Creek Trail will also provide access to downtown Monta Vista via Stevens Creek Boulevard.

See Map 2 - Stevens Creek Trail Study Area

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INCLUSION IN REGIONAL PLANS

The Stevens Creek Trail is included in the Environmental Resources Element of the 1993 Cupertino General Plan. The trail also supports City Council goals for enhancing walkability throughout the community. The trail will implement elements of the 1998 Cupertino Bicycle Transportation Plan and 2001 Cupertino Pedestrian Transportation Plan.

The Stevens Creek Trail was first identified as a streamside corridor of regional significance more than 30 years ago and was included in the Parks, Trails and Scenic Highways Element of the Santa Clara County General Plan. This creek has more recently been considered a stream corridor of importance and is identified as a sub-regional trail in the 1995 Santa Clara Countywide Trails Master Plan. The entire length of the Stevens Creek Trail is considered a sub-regional trail (Route S-2).

The Stevens Creek Trail is recognized regionally by the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) as a connector trail to the San Francisco Bay Trail Plan (ABAG, 1989). The inclusion of the Stevens Creek Trail in many regional and local plans further points to its significance as a recreation and alternative transportation corridor and as an open space resource for Cupertino.

RECREATION BENEFITS

By far, the most significant contribution of the Stevens Creek Trail to the Cupertino community will be the recreation benefits afforded by the trail. The Stevens Creek Trail offers both regional and local recreation benefits. Cupertino residents will benefit from improved pedestrian and bicycle access to parks and open spaces and new opportunities to walk and bicycle to work and school along the creek corridor. The trail will provide a walkable and bikeable route to two Santa Clara County parks and two Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District preserves. The trail will provide a convenient location for fitness activities and for meeting neighbors. The open space land adjacent to the creek will offer opportunities for viewing the native riparian habitat and associated wildlife.

CONNECTIONS TO REGIONAL TRAILS AND PARKS

The Stevens Creek Trail is identified in the 1995 Santa Clara Countywide Trails Master Plan. The trail connects to the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail in Cupertino. The Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail

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was placed on the National Trail System Map in 1996. This federally recognized historic trail commemorates the 1775-1776 expedition led by Juan Bautista de Anza, which established an overland route for the Spanish. The route extends through two states and today includes both bicycling and hiking trails and an autoroute. Juan Bautista de Anza's expedition camped in Cupertino and first sighted San Francisco Bay from the prominent knoll adjacent to Rancho San Antonio County Park A (Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail Comprehensive Management and Use Plan, 1996).

CONNECTIONS TO CITY PARKS, RECREATION FACILITIES AND ATTRACTIONS

Locally, the Stevens Creek Trail will provide children and families with direct access to three city parks, two golf courses and the Cupertino Swim and Racquet Club (private membership facility) located along the creek corridor. Currently, these sites are accessed primarily by automobile. The trail will provide access to McClellan Ranch and the community garden, environmental education, Rolling Hills 4-H and other programs offered at this historic ranch. The family picnic and pool facilities provided at Blackberry Farm will be easily reached from the trail. Residents will be able to walk to Deep Cliff Golf Course and Blackberry Farm Golf Course. Members of the Cupertino Swim and Racquet Club may use the trail as an extension of the recreational amenities offered by this private recreation center.

TRANSPORTATION BENEFITS

The Stevens Creek Trail will enhance walkability and expand the alternative transportation opportunities for residents. Intermodal commute opportunities will be created through connections to the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) bus routes. All VTA buses are now equipped with bicycle racks. This will facilitate bus-bike trips to and from work and school. The Stevens Creek Trail will connect to two VTA bus routes. The bus lines that connect with the Stevens Creek Trail in Cupertino include routes 23 and 53 located on Stevens Creek Boulevard.

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

The environmental conditions along Stevens Creek will be enhanced by the development of the trail. The trail project provides an opportunity to restore habitat resources and decrease the dependency on the automobile as a

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primary form of local transportation. The construction of the trail will include the installation of native plants to increase the habitat available for wildlife and to create an inviting place in which to recreate and commute on foot and by bicycle.

ENHANCEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

The riparian and wetland habitat along Stevens Creek can be enhanced for wildlife and human visitors. Specific suggestions for habitat enhancement are included in Appendix B - Biological Assessment Report and Appendix F - Ecological Restoration and Enhancement Report. The trail project may also inspire residents, local employees and government staff to work together to build a trail and install native shrubs and trees on all lands that lie directly adjacent to the creek. The addition of indigenous flora would enhance the integrity of the creek corridor and support the riparian habitat. All trail construction projects will include a habitat enhancement component that includes native plant landscaping, irrigation, maintenance and monitoring to ensure that the goal of enhancing the creek corridor is being achieved simultaneously with the development of the trail.

IMPROVED AIR QUALITY

Motor vehicles are responsible for the roughly 75% of the in the Bay Area. Walking and bicycling transportation trips eliminate auto tailpipe and evaporative emissions, gasoline pumping or oil refining releases and produce zero carbon dioxide or other greenhouse gases that contribute to the global warming problem. The development of the trail may encourage more individuals to walk and bicycle to work sites, schools and shops. The creekside section of the Stevens Creek Trail extends approximately 1.75 miles from Linda Vista Park to Stevens Creek Boulevard. Even this short section of trail may eliminate auto trips. According to the 1990 National Personal Transportation Survey, 40% of all trips are two miles or less, and two-thirds are five miles or less. Bicycles are a convenient means of transportation for these short and medium distance trips. Short motor vehicle trips are a significant source of emissions due to the "cold start" problem. There is a higher rate of emissions during the first few miles of driving because the catalytic converter does not function well when first started.

Even the short creekside section of the Stevens Creek Trail will help to eliminate auto trips by providing a convenient route for students traveling to

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Monta Vista High School, Kennedy Junior High and Lincoln Elementary School. It will also provide a scenic route for accessing the bus lines that run along Stevens Creek Boulevard and provide service to DeAnza College, employment centers and retail districts. The connection to the bus lines will facilitate intermodal commuting to those sites located a greater distance from the creek corridor. Elimination of even short auto trips (dropping the children at school, picking up the mail, getting milk at the local grocery store) through the use of the trail and/or bus system will help to improve air quality.

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) suggests that the construction of an efficient bicycle and pedestrian circulation system can decrease the dependence on the automobile by 2%. The development of bicycle and pedestrian facilities is often recommended as one strategy to mitigate the air quality impacts of large-scale development projects (BAAQMD, 1996). An efficient bicycle and pedestrian system includes sidewalks and Class I, II and III routes. The system also includes bicycle sensors to active traffic signals, shade trees and amenities to increase the efficiency and appeal of bicycling and walking. The Stevens Creek Trail will provide these capital improvements.

An effective alternative transportation system must also be supported by on-site facilities for commuters that include bicycle racks or lockers, shower facilities, route maps and repair equipment. These on-site support facilities must be constructed in conjunction with private developments and should be required by Cupertino through the building permit process. Development of a trail network, on-street bicycle system with on-site support facilities and pedestrian oriented developments will enhance walkability and sustainability in Cupertino.