

Communities collaborate to complete missing segment of Stevens Creek Trail



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Photo Ellie Van Houtte/Town Crier

More than 150 local residents gathered at Los Altos' Grant Park Center Thursday to generate viable options for creating a trail segment along Stevens Creek from the intersection of Dale Avenue and Heatherstone Way in Mountain View to Mountain View High School.

Residents from Los Altos, Mountain View, Sunnyvale and Cupertino review maps and sketch ideas for completion of the Stevens Creek Trail.

Participant LaNae Avra, who contributed to a trail study completed by Los Altos in 1997, said the number of attendees and the "civil, friendly and productive" atmosphere at the first public meeting on the subject impressed her. Residents of Los Altos, Mountain View, Cupertino and Sunnyvale attended the meeting.

"Based on the people I spoke with, I think there was a good mix of responses at the meeting," Avra wrote in an email to the Town Crier. She noted that residents proposed diverse ideas for creating a car-free connection between community destinations, including the idea of aligning the trail along the railroad tracks south of Interstate 280 in Cupertino because pedestrians already use it.

Santa Clara County planners in 1961 first envisioned a green corridor of contiguous trails along the 20-mile Stevens Creek, which stretches from the San Francisco Bay to the Santa Cruz Mountains. Small segments of the trail have been constructed, but other segments abruptly end, leaving some neighborhoods – including those in the current study area between Sunnyvale and Cupertino – disconnected from the trail.

“We’re trying to close the gap on the valley floor,” said Jana Sokale, a consultant advising the community through the study process.

If this segment is constructed, according to Sokale, the Stevens Creek Trail would connect the Bay Trail at Mountain View’s Shoreline Park to the Skyline-to-the-Sea Trail, a 29.5-mile hiking path that ends at Big Basin Redwoods State Park in Boulder Creek.

At last week’s community meeting and work session, members of a study team and citizens’ work group gathered community input and ideas for the trail. During the 14-month study, organizers expect to generate a final trail feasibility report for presentation by January 2014.

Although land availability, ownership issues – several public and private entities own portions of possible trail paths – and natural configurations of the landscape may pose challenges, strong public interest and support from all local governments affected may increase the project’s chances for success.

“We’re giving all four communities the opportunity to tell us what to do with the trail ... to look at the complete universe of alternatives,” said Jack Witthaus, transportation and traffic manager for the city of Sunnyvale and lead staff member for the Four Cities Coordinated Stevens Creek Trail Feasibility Study.

Attributing Sunnyvale’s lack of interest in the trail as the primary reason for past resistance to a joint project, Witthaus said the current multicity collaboration offers an opportunity to complete the trail corridor.

In addition to a financial commitment and in-kind staff support from the four cities involved, a citizens’ work group, a policy team and a consultant team are in place to shepherd the study. Los Altos representatives for the project include Transportation and Project Manager Cedric Novenario and Councilwoman Megan Satterlee serving on the policy team, and residents Avra and Mary Gordon on the citizens’ work group.

Five additional meetings are scheduled over the next 14 months to allow interested residents to participate in the study process.

For more information, visit StevensCreek.inSunnyvale.com.

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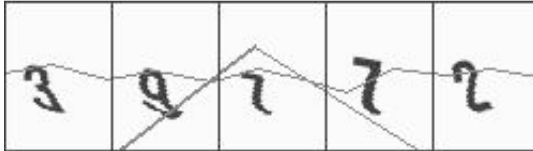
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