A black and tan dog, possibly a Rottweiler, is on a leash and looking at a public art bench. The bench is a light-colored, curved concrete structure with a colorful mural on top. The mural features a landscape with a river, trees, and a city skyline, with the text "Germanente Creek" and "Valle" visible. The bench is situated on a dirt path next to a wooden fence and a chain-link fence. The background shows a paved area and some trees.

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ADOPT-A-BENCH PUBLIC ART PROJECT WITH THE YOUTH COMMISSION



By: Youth Commissioner Tammy Cao, representative for District 6

I spend many of my mornings walking around Penitencia Creek. The cement benches along the creek trails are an integral part of my routine, allowing me to sit and admire the park's beauty. And so, imagine my excitement when the Youth Commission was presented the opportunity to renovate some of these Valley Water benches with updated artwork. Nearly 200 of these benches are in parks and along creek trails all around Santa Clara County. The benches were installed decades ago and have deteriorated as time has passed.



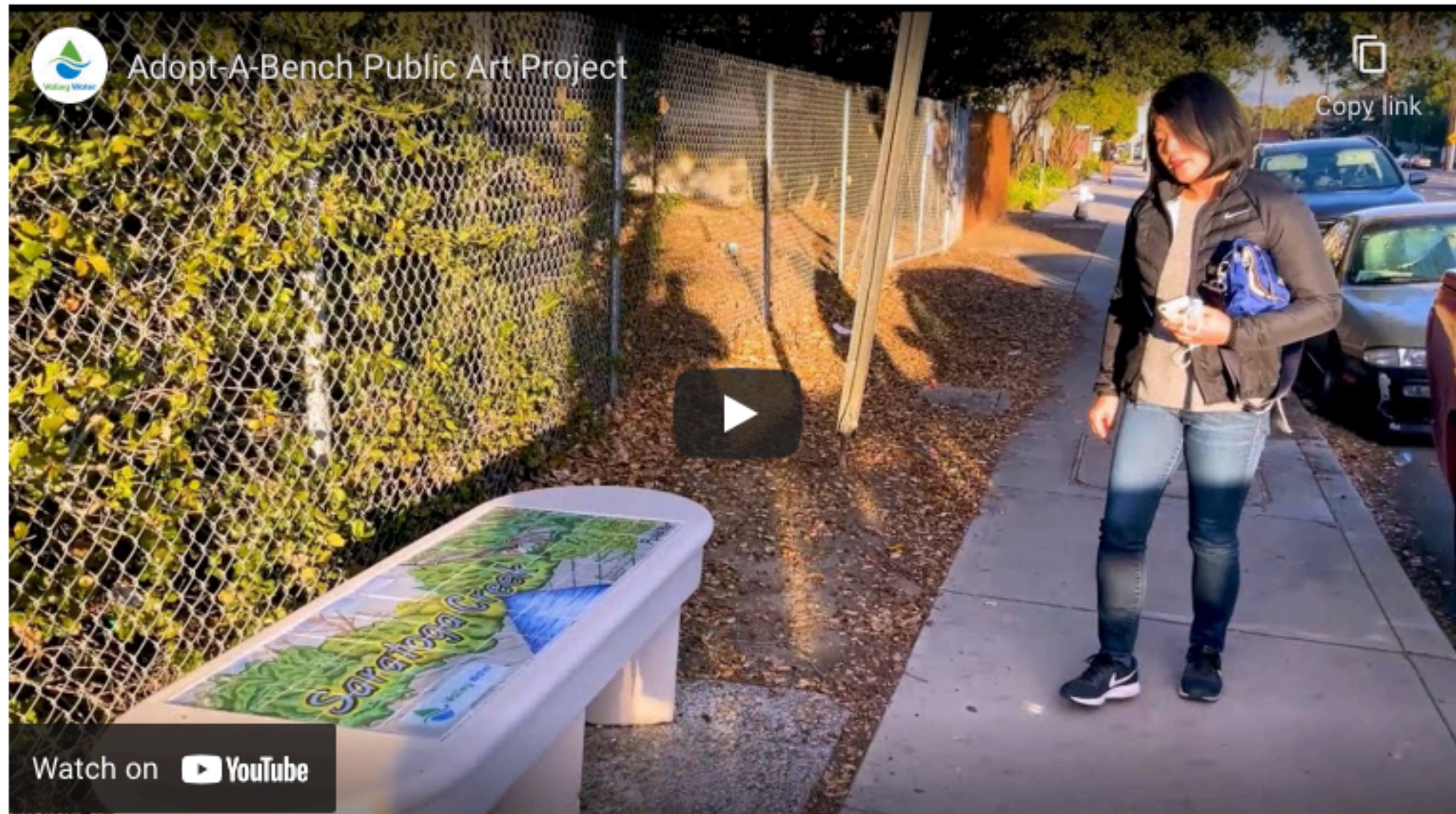
To kick off this public art project, also known as the Adopt-A-Bench project, my fellow Youth Commissioners and I picked seven benches along various creek trails around Santa Clara County. Former Youth Commissioner Chair Shloka Janapaty explained what we wanted the artwork to convey. "The goal is to communicate how interconnected our local creeks are with surrounding neighborhoods and why it's important to find a healthy coexistence," Shloka said.

Working with San José artist Paul J. Gonzalez on the design and elements of the artwork, which includes educational messages about Valley Water's creeks, was the key part of our project. Paul owns Paul J. Gonzalez Art Studios, which specializes in public artworks with a focus on mural painting. He has created nearly 200 public and private art pieces throughout the Bay Area. With our design ideas in mind, Paul visited each site and sketched the artwork to include the surroundings of the area, such as the nearby creek, plants and a native animal. "With the help of Paul and the biologists, we tried to share the stories of native species, as well as encourage responsible stewardship," Shloka said.

This project was a memorable, collaborative effort with other agencies during the unique time of the COVID-19 pandemic. Once Valley Water's Board of Directors approved the artwork, we virtually presented the designs to Santa Clara County cities' art commissions for feedback and guidance. It was a great experience to see and hear from other art advisories.

Valley Water and Paul also hosted a socially-distanced Paint Day event where my fellow Youth Commissioners and I painted the artwork tiles. "I thoroughly enjoyed every part of the unique planning, sketching, and execution process that I was involved in," Youth Commissioner Kalie Ching said.

The renovation of the bench designs is a beautiful addition to each of the seven areas surrounding these benches. It encourages people to delve deeper and be mindful of their surroundings, allowing people to notice the connection between the bench designs and the environment while also making the community's open space beautiful.



With the benches now revitalized with new artwork, Valley Water and the Youth Commission happily invites you to attend our upcoming virtual ribbon-cutting ceremony!

Adopt-A-Bench Virtual Ribbon Cutting Ceremony

Thursday, March 18, 2021, at 5 p.m.

Please join us on our Facebook Live page at facebook.com/scvwd

Learn more about the Adopt-A-Bench project and see a map of the seven benches.

If you have any questions about this project, please feel free to contact Peggy Lam, Community Benefits Analyst at 408-912-0088 or [**plam@valleywater.org**](mailto:plam@valleywater.org).