

CITY OF MOUNTAIN VIEW  
MEMORANDUM

9.1

DATE: September 3, 2009

TO: City Council

FROM: Cathy R. Lazarus, Public Works Director

SUBJECT: SEPTEMBER 8, 2009 STUDY SESSION—PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION  
REGARDING FUTURE USES OF THE STEVENS CREEK TRAIL  
MEADOW AREA

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**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this Study Session is for the City Council to review the opportunities and constraints of the Stevens Creek Trail Meadow (Meadow) and to have a preliminary discussion regarding potential future uses.

**BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS**

In November 2007, the City Council was provided an initial assessment of the concept to convert the Meadow into a working farm (Attachment A). This concept was raised in 2007 during discussions regarding the then future development of the Grant-Levin property. Other ideas for the area have included: leaving the Meadow in open space; reestablishing the Sister City's cherry blossom trees from Iawata, Japan; creating a more formalized Meadow with picnic amenities and other design features; planting trees to create a "carbon sink" to reduce greenhouse gases; community gardens, trail interpretive features and a solar power installation.

After the November 2007 briefing memorandum, there were no City Council conversations about the Meadow due to the general view that it would be best to first complete the extension of the Stevens Creek Trail to the Sleeper Open Space. The Stevens Creek Trail connection is open, and it is now appropriate to discuss preliminary ideas about future uses.

The Meadow is irregularly shaped and encumbered by PG&E transmission towers and easements. Within the Meadow there are about four acres that may be suitable for more formalized uses. The largest segment is approximately 2.8 acres just south of El Camino Real. From there the Meadow narrows, opening to another approximately one-acre

area north of the Sleeper Open Space. The information included in Attachment A remains accurate with a few exceptions:

- The idea of an interpretive feature is no longer being pursued by the private citizen.
- The available land area in the Meadow was reduced approximately one acre with the construction of trail connection to the Sleeper Open Space and the installation of the "oak grove" in the area just south of the new trail connection.

Attachment B is a refined map of the Meadow incorporating the new trail and amenities.

As discussed in the 2007 briefing memorandum, there are a number of site conditions that constrain more formalized uses of the Meadow, and ideas regarding future uses will need to be framed around these limitations. The information below restates and updates the 2007 memorandum.

#### PG&E Easements

A 160' wide PG&E easement traverses the entire corridor with 12 electric transmission towers. Typically, PG&E will not allow structures or tall trees (over 25') in the easement areas that could conflict with the transmission towers and their maintenance. Agricultural crops or low plantings may be acceptable provided there are sufficient setbacks to allow PG&E crews and equipment unimpeded maintenance access.

#### Public Access and Parking

Public access to the Meadow other than from the trail is a significant challenge. El Camino Real along the Meadow frontage is the merge area to the Route 85 southbound on-ramp, and it is unlikely that Caltrans will allow vehicle access.

The 2001 maintenance agreement between Caltrans and the City stipulates that the City's rights to the access from El Camino Real are:

"...restricted to maintenance and operational duties and licensed passage over the path by bicyclists, pedestrians and other path users. No motor vehicles shall be permitted on the path except those directly operated by state or city or city's agents.... Any other use by city, will require a separate Encroachment Permit from the state.... City shall not, at any time, use or permit the public to use path in any manner that will

interfere with or impair the primary highway transportation use of the state's right-of-way...."

In the 2006 encroachment exception for construction of the trail extension from Yuba Drive under El Camino Real to the Meadow, Caltrans included a condition that requires the City to modify the trail and access if required by future improvements to El Camino Real, Route 85 and Route 237.

If access from El Camino Real is infeasible, then the closest pedestrian/bicycle access would be from the Yuba Drive or the Sleeper Open Space. Depending on use, this could have parking and other implications to those access points. It would also be difficult to carry equipment, plants or other materials from these access points to the Meadow.

As noted in Attachment A, Sleeper Open Space is designated as a neighborhood trail access point, meaning no parking or other trail amenities are provided. Modifying the character of this area would require traffic studies, neighborhood outreach and possibly amending the previously approved environmental documents for the trail.

Direct vehicle access to the Meadow would require construction of a vehicle bridge from one of the residential neighborhoods south of El Camino Real. Aside from cost and neighborhood considerations, a structure spanning the creek would need Water District and other permit agency approvals. A bridge landing area and parking in the Meadow will reduce the amount of Meadow area available for other uses.

#### Utilities

With the recent extension of the trail to Sleeper Open Space, temporary irrigation was installed to establish the native trees and plants. If future uses of the Meadow require irrigation, a permanent irrigation system could be constructed from an existing hydrant line on the trail near El Camino Real. There is no sewer, gas or electric infrastructure in the Meadow.

#### Other Considerations

Consideration of toxic/hazardous materials and agricultural waste will come into play if the Meadow is used for food production but not for most other uses.

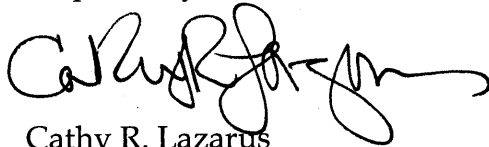
#### CONCLUSION

Based on this initial review, more passive uses of the Meadow compatible with the trail will be the easiest to accomplish. Uses that require public vehicle access, parking and

major utility infrastructure will be more challenging given easements, Caltrans controls, environmental, neighborhood and City maintenance cost considerations.

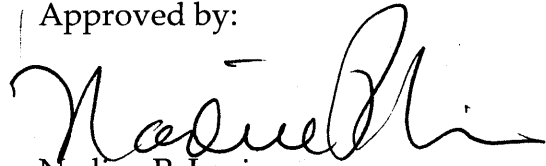
If the City Council is interested in initiating more formal review and analysis of potential uses for the Meadow, the appropriate next step is to establish a Capital Improvement Project as part of the Fiscal Year 2010-11 budget cycle. No potentially interested groups have been notified for this very preliminary discussion; but, once there is direction, community participation will be incorporated as part of the process.

Prepared by:



Cathy R. Lazarus  
Public Works Director

Approved by:



Nadine P. Levin  
Assistant City Manager

CRL/8/CAM  
950-09-08-09M-E^

- Attachments: A. Initial Site Assessment of the Feasibility of a Farm on the Stevens Creek Trail Meadow, November 16, 2007
- B. Updated Map of the Meadow

cc: CSD, DE, F/c

**CITY OF MOUNTAIN VIEW  
MEMORANDUM**

DATE: November 16, 2007

TO: Kevin C. Duggan, City Manager

FROM: Cathy R. Lazarus, Public Works Director

SUBJECT: INITIAL SITE ASSESSMENT OF THE FEASIBILITY OF A FARM ON  
THE STEVENS CREEK TRAIL MEADOW

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This memorandum is a preliminary assessment of the concept to establish a farm in the meadow area along Stevens Creek Trail, south of El Camino Real. This is a very high-level review as we do not know the operational requirements and associated impacts of a working farm and whether or not these would be compatible with the creek habitat, trail or adjacent neighborhoods.

It should also be noted that City staff has been working with a private citizen who wishes to fund and dedicate to the City an interpretive feature along the Stevens Creek Trail. Preliminary discussions to date have focused on the Yuba Drive trail head and to a lesser extent, the meadow area. Whether or not an interpretive feature, if built, is physically compatible with a farm would need to be evaluated.

Property Ownership

The area is owned by the City of Mountain View. There are also several parcels owned by the Santa Clara Valley Water District that may factor into a farm concept.

Property Characteristics and Size

Attached is an illustration of the area under consideration. It is irregularly shaped, encumbered by PG&E transmission towers and easements, and requires "top-of-bank" setbacks from the Stevens Creek riparian corridor and the Stevens Creek Trail right-of-way. The attached graphic illustrates areas that may be of sufficient size for agricultural use. The largest and most regularly shaped area is approximately three acres at the widest point in the meadow. There are two, noncontiguous one-acre areas that may also be suited for agricultural use.

### PG&E Easements

A 160' wide PG&E easement traverses the entire corridor. As we understand it, any use that encroaches into the easement area requires the approval of the State Public Utilities Commission. While structures would likely not be approved, an agricultural use may be feasible. The 12 electric transmission towers in the meadow are located within the easement as illustrated in the attachment. PG&E has approached the City to install an underground line in the easement area to provide enhanced service to El Camino Hospital. The City is currently reviewing that proposal.

### Public Access and Parking

How the public would access a farm at this location is the most challenging consideration. Because this is the merge area to the Route 85 southbound on-ramp, an entrance-exit driveway on El Camino Real might not be feasible. Caltrans must approve traffic movements along this portion of El Camino Real, and from recent traffic studies we know Caltrans has concerns about the number of existing driveways and turning movements onto El Camino Real between Grant Road and the freeway on-ramp.

We do not know the public and employee parking requirements for the farm, so we cannot predict parking demand or traffic volumes. If public access through a driveway on El Camino Real is approved by Caltrans, then a portion of the site would have to be allocated to parking, reducing the area available for farming.

If ingress and egress from El Camino Real is not feasible, there are alternatives that could be studied. First would be to study whether or not the public could park at the Yuba Drive trail head and walk along the trail under El Camino Real into the farm area. Again, we do not know if sufficient parking on Yuba Drive could be achieved or whether it is too remote from the farm site.

Another, less desirable, possibility is for the public to access the farm over the future Sleeper Open Space pedestrian bridge. The public would drive through the existing single-family neighborhood to park either on the Sleeper Open Space or on the adjacent properties owned by the Santa Clara Valley Water District. The District owns part of the Sleeper Open Space site and several single-family parcels adjacent to the creek. We understand the District acquired those parcels in the past because of the extent of creek bank erosion in the back of the properties.

In the Stevens Creek Trail plan, Sleeper Open Space is designated as a neighborhood trail access, meaning no parking or other trail amenities are provided. Modifying the character of this area would require traffic studies, neighborhood outreach and may also require amending the previously approved environmental documents for the trail.

### Maintenance Vehicle Access

This poses similar challenges, although it may be feasible for farm-related equipment to use the same maintenance access route as City, Water District and PG&E vehicles.

### Utilities

There is no water or sewer infrastructure.

### Toxic/Hazardous Materials

It is unknown if there are pesticides from historical uses of the area or airborne lead related to proximity to the freeway. This would have to be studied.

### Agricultural Waste Adjacent to a Stream

This may or may not be a consideration and would depend on the nature of the farm use, whether there would be farm animals or pesticide applications.

### Trail Mitigation Planting Area

In master planning for the trail, a portion of the meadow area was to be set aside for mitigation planting to offset the loss of planting and habitat from trail construction. This will require some creative thinking but should not pose a major constraint.

### Conclusion

Based on our initial review, there are characteristics of the meadow that might be compatible with a farm if the use can be designed around constraints posed by the PG&E easement and towers. More challenging is whether safe, convenient access and parking can be provided to support a more intense public use in the meadow area without affecting future plans for the Yuba Drive trail head or impacting nearby neighborhoods.

If there is interest in pursuing this concept in spite of potentially significant access and site limitations, the next step would be to convene a meeting with the farm group to better understand operating requirements and projections regarding public attendance and use. Relevant questions would include:

- What would be the normal hours of operation?

- Will large community or group events occur on the property?
- Will noise or lights from the farm operation affect residents on the other side of the creek or streamside habitat?
- Are there potential odor considerations?
- Will farm produce be sold on the property?
- What type of farm equipment will be used?
- What type of structures on the property would be needed to support operations, including rest rooms, equipment storage and animals and could they be designed around the PG&E easement?
- Based on staffing levels and anticipated visitors, how much parking must be provided?
- What type of security is needed and how can that be achieved with site constraints posed by the trail and PG&E easement.

Please let me know if you require additional information on this topic and advise regarding appropriate next steps.



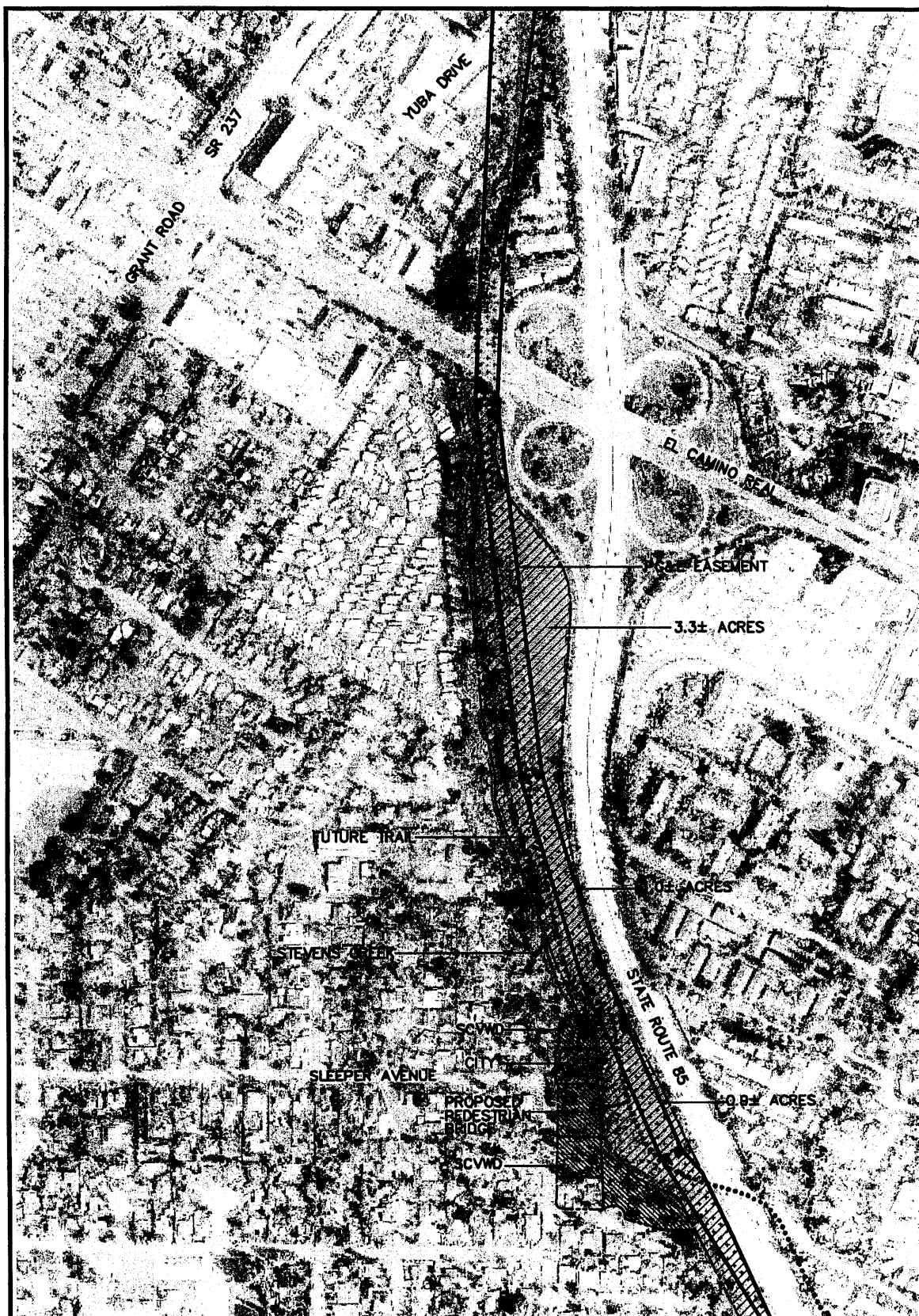
Cathy R. Lazarus  
Public Works Director

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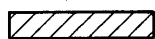
Attachment

cc: APWD—Fuller, DE, RPA, TPM, CSD





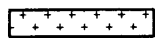
LEGEND:



CITY OF MOUNTAIN VIEW  
PROPERTIES



POTENTIAL AREA  
FOR FARM



PGE&E EASEMENT



PGE&E TRANSMISSION TOWERS



EXISTING SLEEPERS  
OPEN SPACE PARK



