

**Council Meeting: April 28, 2009****SUBJECT: Open Space and Recreation Sub-Element Policy Regarding the Stevens Creek Trail – Resolution and General Plan Amendment****REPORT IN BRIEF**

At its January 27, 2009 meeting, the City Council considered a Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission-sponsored issue regarding policies to support regional bicycle facility connections. As part of the discussions, current General Plan Open Space and Recreation Sub-Element policy 2.2.C.5 regarding the Stevens Creek Trail was reviewed. This policy calls for the City to oppose trail construction within the Steven's Creek corridor on the Sunnyvale side of Stevens Creek, to seek alternative street alignments for a trail connection between Mountain View and Cupertino, and to consider connections to the Mountain View segment of the trail. Council directed staff to initiate a General Plan Amendment to strike policy 2.2.C.5 from the General Plan.

Staff recommends that a resolution (Attachment A) approving a General Plan Amendment be approved to strike policy 2.2.C.5 from the Open Space and Recreation Sub-Element of the General Plan.

BACKGROUND

The Stevens Creek Trail is a partially realized concept for a bicycle and pedestrian route along the Stevens Creek corridor. The trail corridor, originally proposed by County of Santa Clara trail planners in 1961, stretches from San Francisco Bay in Mountain View to the mountains around Stevens Creek Reservoir in Cupertino. Hiking trails around Stevens Creek Reservoir at the south end of the corridor are maintained by the County of Santa Clara and the Mid-Peninsula Regional Open Space District. The City of Mountain View has constructed a paved bicycle and pedestrian path at the northern end of the corridor, from Shoreline Park south, to El Camino Real.

Mountain View has completed detailed planning for extending the trail further south through their City to a terminus at Mountain View High School. Mountain View recently completed a trail extension to El Camino Real, and is midway through the design of an extension from El Camino Real to Sleeper Avenue.

Mountain View is currently constructing this trail segment. Mountain View is also funding the design of a further trail extension from Sleeper Avenue east across Highway 85, to Dale Avenue/Heatherstone Way. The City of Mountain

View anticipates design completion in 2009, however, construction of this project is not yet funded.

A final trail extension from Dale Avenue/Heatherstone south to Mountain View High School is planned, but not yet funded. The most recent timeframe estimate received from Mountain View staff for possible construction initiation is 2015, although this could change if the Mountain View City Council advances funding.

From Dale Avenue/Heatherstone south to Fremont Avenue, the Creek itself forms the border between Mountain View and Sunnyvale. South from Fremont Avenue, the city limits of Los Altos and Sunnyvale are at the Creek. Sunnyvale established policy on the Stevens Creek Trail in 1994. The City considered a trail alignment along the Creek within the Sunnyvale City limits. Due to resident opposition and physical and technical obstacles to trail construction, City Council determined that a trail alignment along the Creek in Sunnyvale was not feasible, and directed staff to coordinate with neighboring jurisdictions on determining potential surface street trail alignments between the City of Mountain View and the City of Cupertino to ensure a regional trail connection. Policy 2.2.C.5 was incorporated into the Open Space and Recreation Sub-Element of the General Plan. It states:

Determine that a regional trail connection within the Stevens Creek corridor in Sunnyvale is not feasible and should not be constructed along the Stevens Creek corridor on the Sunnyvale side (within City Limits). Coordinate with neighboring jurisdictions on determining potential surface street trail alignments between the City of Mountain View and the City of Cupertino to ensure a regional trail connection. (This does not preclude consideration of creating Sunnyvale access points to the Mountain View Stevens Creek Trail Segment 2, Reach 4, between Heatherstone and Fremont Avenues.)

Los Altos recently published a draft trail alignment feasibility study. This study examines five alignment alternatives utilizing City streets to connect Mountain View and Cupertino trail alignments. Four alternatives feature Mountain View city streets to reach Los Altos; one alternative proposes a trail extension within the City limits of Sunnyvale. This alternative would extend along Highway 85 from the planned Mountain View alignment to a Creek under-crossing of the Highway just north of Fremont Avenue. The trail would then bridge the Creek into Sunnyvale, utilize the Creek under-crossing to reach the west side of the Highway, and then extend along the southbound Highway 85 off-ramp to Fremont Avenue. Approximately 1,500 linear feet of the trail would be within the Sunnyvale City limits with this alternative.

Since establishment of the City's policy on the Trail in 1994, staff has met with Mountain View and Cupertino as appropriate to monitor progress on developing the trail, and most recently participated in coordination meetings with Los Altos on their trail planning study. Also, in response to a Sunnyvale Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission (BPAC) suggestion to consider a connection from Sunnyvale streets to Mountain View's planned trail corridor, the City Council included an unfunded future trail connection project in the Resource Allocation Plan. This project is proposed to be initiated in 2016, which coincides with Mountain View staff's estimated timing for construction of the last Mountain View trail segment.

While a specific access point has not been identified, one possible location that has been suggested is from Remington Court at the west end of Remington Drive.

Recently a group of policy and staff from the four cities along the creek corridor proposed to initiate a policy-level coordination committee to jointly plan and explore opportunities to unify or otherwise maximize regional benefits of a completed trail from the Bay to the Santa Cruz Mountains. Council appointed Vice-Mayor Moylan to this proposed Stevens Creek Trail Working Group at its January 27, 2009 meeting.

EXISTING POLICY

Open Space and Recreation Sub-Element Policy 2.2.C.5

Determine that a regional trail connection within the Stevens Creek corridor in Sunnyvale is not feasible and should not be constructed along the Stevens Creek corridor on the Sunnyvale side (within City Limits). Coordinate with neighboring jurisdictions on determining potential surface street trail alignments between the City of Mountain View and the City of Cupertino to ensure a regional trail connection. (This does not preclude consideration of creating Sunnyvale access points to the Mountain View Stevens Creek Trail Segment 2, Reach 4, between Heatherstone and Fremont Avenues.)

Open Space and Recreation Sub-Element 2.2.C.4

Support a regional trail system by coordinating with adjacent jurisdictions to facilitate trail connections wherever possible.

Land Use and Transportation Element C3.5.4

Maximize the provision of bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

DISCUSSION

The Council-directed action is to strike policy 2.2.C.5 regarding the Stevens Creek Trail from the Open Space and Recreation Element of the General Plan. No replacement policy is proposed, and no other policy is proposed to be modified.

The policy proposed for striking states that the City believes trail construction along the Creek is infeasible and is not supported by the City, and that on-street alignments and connections to a Mountain View reach of the trail should be identified in coordination with adjacent jurisdictions. By striking this policy, the City is not directing that any alternate construction project be authorized. Any proposed modification to the environment that could have occurred under the policy to be struck simply goes away, and the City is silent on the issue of Stevens Creek. Subsequent action would be necessary by the City Council to lead to a project, and that project would then be subject to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). CEQA environmental review will take place at such time that the City identifies potential physical changes to the environment. Therefore, under the CEQA Guideline 15061, there is no potential for a significant effect on the environment by this action. Staff recommends that a General Plan Amendment be processed for approval by the Council, and that a Notice of Exemption be filed with the County.

By striking this policy, this will allow the City to engage in discussions of the Stevens Creek Trail Working Group on potential trail alignments within Sunnyvale.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with approval of the General Plan Amendment to strike Open Space and Recreation Sub-Element policy 2.2.C.5.

PUBLIC CONTACT

Public contact was made by posting the Council agenda on the City's official-notice bulletin board outside City Hall, in the Council Chambers lobby, in the Office of the City Clerk, at the Library, Senior Center, Community Center, and Department of Public Safety; posting the agenda and report on the City's Web site; and making the report available at the Library and the Office of the City Clerk. Notification of the City Council hearing was direct mailed to residents and property owners whose properties are adjacent to Stevens Creek in the area within and adjacent to the Sunnyvale city limit. Notification was also direct mailed to parties expressing an interest in this issue.

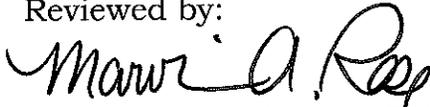
ALTERNATIVES

1. Approve the attached resolution (Attachment A) enacting a General Plan Amendment to strike policy 2.2.C.5 from the Open Space and Recreation Sub-Element of the General Plan.
2. Do not adopt the resolution and General Plan Amendment to strike policy 2.2.C.5.
3. Other action as directed by Council.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends Alternative No. 1: Approve the attached resolution (Attachment A) enacting a General Plan Amendment to strike policy 2.2.C.5 from the Open Space and Recreation Sub-Element of the General Plan

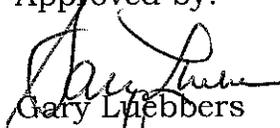
Reviewed by:



Marvin Rose, Director, Public Works

Prepared by: Jack Witthaus, Transportation and Traffic Manager

Approved by:



Gary Luebbers
City Manager

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Resolution – City of Sunnyvale Striking Plan Policy 2.2.C.5 from the Open Space and Recreation Sub-element of the General Plan Regarding the Stevens Creek Trail

RESOLUTION NO. _____

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SUNNYVALE STRIKING FROM THE OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION SUB-ELEMENT OF THE GENERAL PLAN POLICY 2.2.C.5 REGARDING THE STEVENS CREEK TRAIL

WHEREAS, the Department of Public Works has proposed an amendment to the General Plan of the City of Sunnyvale, as amended, by striking policy 2.2.C.5 regarding the Stevens Creek Trail; and

WHEREAS, this action has been determined to be exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970, as amended; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SUNNYVALE THAT:

1. The City Council hereby strikes policy 2.2.C.5 from the Open Space and Recreation Sub-Element of the Sunnyvale General Plan, as amended, and finds that it is a suitable and logical change of the General Plan for the development of the City of Sunnyvale, and that it is in the public interest.
2. The Mayor and City Clerk are authorized to remove policy 2.2.C.5 of the Open Space and Recreation Sub-Element of the Sunnyvale General Plan, as amended, and to show that the same has been adopted by the City Council.
3. The City Clerk is directed to file a certified copy of the update to the General Plan of the City of Sunnyvale, as amended, with the Board of Supervisors and the Planning Commission of the County of Santa Clara and the planning agency of each city within the County of Santa Clara. The City Clerk is directed further to file a certified copy of the update with the legislative body of each city, the land of which may be included in said plan.

Adopted by the City Council at a regular meeting held on _____, by the following vote:

AYES:
NOES:
ABSTAIN:
ABSENT:

ATTEST:

APPROVED:

City Clerk
(SEAL)

Mayor

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND LEGALITY:

David E. Kahn, City Attorney