

SECTION 3.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

3.1 OVERVIEW OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT

The project includes the construction of a trail connection between Scenic Circle and Blackberry Farm Park via an existing pedestrian bridge over Stevens Creek. The trail alignment is located within the Stevens Creek Corridor public park and open space lands that have been developed and restored under a restoration and master plan approved in 2006 (refer to Section 3.1.1 *Background*, below). The project site is owned by the City of Cupertino.

On the west side of the creek, an approximately 270-foot long trail would meander north from the proposed access point at Scenic Circle to a new approach deck at the south end of the pedestrian bridge. The proposed trail would be approximately eight feet wide and would consist of crushed or decomposed granite or similar natural tread material. The trail alignment runs through the former Fallen Oak picnic area, which is now being planted with native vegetation under the Stevens Creek Corridor Park project. On the north side of the bridge (easterly side of the creek), the project includes the construction of a new accessible approach ramp and a stairway that would connect the pedestrian bridge to the existing creek trail that runs through Blackberry Farm Park. The proposed trail connection is intended to accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists.

The site is bounded by single-family residential uses on Scenic Circle to the south (west side of the creek) and Blackberry Farm Park to the north (east side of the creek). The riparian corridor of Stevens Creek traverses the site. McClellan Ranch Park is located south of the project site. Monta Vista High School, Kennedy Middle School, and Lincoln Elementary School are located east of the creek in the greater project vicinity.

3.1.1 Background

The southern portion of the project site (west side of Stevens Creek) was previously used as the Fallen Oak picnic area and was developed with park facilities including a service building. The picnic area was part of Blackberry Farm, which was a privately-owned and operated park that consisted of a golf course, swimming pools, and multiple picnic areas and related amenities. Blackberry Farm was acquired by the City of Cupertino in 1991, which is consistent with the General Plan goal to develop a trail/linear park along Stevens Creek. All picnic and park facilities were removed from the Fallen Oak site in 2008.

In 2006, the City of Cupertino approved the Stevens Creek Corridor Park Master Plan and Restoration Plan.² The publicly-owned lands along Stevens Creek addressed by the Plan are bounded by Steven Creek Boulevard to the north, McClellan Road to the south, and residential neighborhoods to the east and west. Among the primary elements of the Plan were:

- conversion of the fee-based Blackberry Farm complex to a community park;
- restoration of in-stream and riparian habitats within the floodplain including realignment and widening of portions of the creek;
- enhancement of upland oak woodland habitat;
- construction of an all weather trail along Stevens Creek between McClellan Road and Stevens Creek Boulevard;

² An Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) was prepared for the project by the City of Cupertino and adopted in June 2006. An addendum to the MND was adopted in October 2006.

- construction of new park and golf maintenance facilities; and
- development of an environmental education center at McClellan Ranch.

Phase I of the project, which included conversion of Blackberry Farm, construction of the trail to McClellan Road, and creek restoration, has been completed. The renovated Blackberry Farm Park was opened to the public in July 2009.³ Phase II of the project, which is currently in the design stage, includes completion of the remaining portions of the trail. The trail connection proposed by this project would link Scenic Circle to the existing creek trail through Blackberry Farm Park via an existing pedestrian bridge over Stevens Creek.

The existing pedestrian bridge is approximately 40 feet long and seven feet wide. This clear-span metal structure is accessed by wooden steps and not attached to permanent abutments. The bridge is currently used for maintenance access purposes only.

There are two existing gates in the fence along Scenic Circle, located opposite 10432 Scenic Circle and Scenic Court. The gates are currently closed and prevent public access to the pedestrian bridge and creek corridor. After the Blackberry Farm Park renovations were completed in 2009, some residents raised the issue of restoring public access from Scenic Circle to provide a route to walk and bike to the tri-school area east of the creek and to increase community access to the renovated public park.

In February 2010, the City Council directed the Department of Public Works to move forward with the design of the proposed project. This Initial Study analyzes the effects of constructing the access point, trail connection, and associated improvements.

Two neighborhood meetings were held in May and June 2010 to obtain input on the preferred location and design of the project.⁴ The proposed design and operational measures reflect the feedback and recommendations of the attendees, who were primarily residents of Scenic Circle and Scenic Court.

3.1.2 Purpose of the Project

The purpose of the project is to provide a safe and convenient pedestrian/bicycle connection between the residential neighborhoods west of Stevens Creek and the renovated community park and trail east of the creek. The proposed trail connection would expand the network of pedestrian and bike facilities, providing additional opportunities for residents to walk and bike for both transportation and recreational purposes. The project would also allow a more direct and safer route to the tri-school area east of the creek (including Monta Vista, Kennedy, and Lincoln Schools) that avoids potential conflicts with vehicles on McClellan Road and Stevens Creek Boulevard. The proposed project is consistent with the City's goals to increase walkability and expand the bicycle network, as outlined in Cupertino's General Plan (2005), Pedestrian Transportation Plan (2002), and Bicycle Transportation Plan (1998).

³ City of Cupertino. "Stevens Creek Corridor Project." <<http://www.cupertino.org/index.aspx?page=314>>

⁴ The meetings were held on May 20 and June 8, 2010 at Monta Vista High School.

3.2 PROJECT COMPONENTS

The proposed trail connection plan is shown on Figure 4. All components of the project will be designed and constructed in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the City of Cupertino Municipal Code. The project is designed to accommodate non-motorized modes of travel, including biking, hiking, jogging, and walking.

3.2.1 Proposed Trail and Ramps

The project includes the construction of a 270-foot long, approximately eight-foot wide trail on the westerly side of Stevens Creek. The proposed ADA-compliant trail would connect the proposed access point at Scenic Circle (described further below) to the existing pedestrian bridge. The trail alignment includes two bends to minimize grading and avoid tree removal to the extent feasible. The trail surface would consist of crushed or decomposed granite (or similar material), which is appropriate for use in a creek corridor. The paving surface is proposed to include a stabilizer that will reduce erosion and provide an all-weather surface.

A new wooden approach deck would be constructed at the south end of the existing pedestrian bridge. At the base of the sloped area near Scenic Circle, the project proposes to construct a retaining wall (approximately 25 feet long) near the trail. The retaining wall is anticipated to be constructed with wood planks, although the final material may vary. The wall is intended to protect the existing grade at the base of a 24-inch diameter Chinese elm tree to be preserved. Boulders are also likely to be used in this area and near the bridge approach to provide additional slope stabilization.

On the east side of the creek, the project includes the construction of an accessible approach ramp extending northwest/downstream from the existing pedestrian bridge, and a four-step stairway extending southeast/upstream from the bridge. The proposed ramp and stairway would connect the bridge to the existing creek trail that runs through Blackberry Farm Park. The existing wooden stairs and portions of existing fencing would be removed to accommodate the new ramp and stairway.

3.2.2 Access Point

The at-grade access point to the proposed trail connection at Scenic Circle would be located approximately 150 feet east of the Scenic Circle/Scenic Court intersection. The proposed location avoids tree removal to the extent feasible, while locating the access point near the midpoint between the two homes across the street (at 10422 Scenic Circle and 10434 Scenic Court). The entrance to the access point, behind the curblin and adjacent to the roadway, would be approximately 20 feet wide to allow space for trail users.

A chain-link fence lines the north and east sides of Scenic Circle adjacent to the project site. A portion of this fence would be removed and relocated farther from the curb to accommodate the access point to the proposed trail connection.

3.2.3 Gates and Hours of Operation

There are two existing gates in the chain-link fence along Scenic Circle. One is used for maintenance access and is located just north of the Scenic Circle/Scenic Court intersection. The second one is opposite 10432 Scenic Circle. This latter gate would be removed as part of the project and replaced with fencing material that matches the existing fence.

A new gate would be installed at the proposed Scenic Circle access point. Under the proposed project, this gate will be open daily during park hours and will be locked at all other times. Park hours are currently from sunrise to ½ hour after sunset. The hours of operation may be modified by the City Council to accommodate school activities, consistent with the City Council’s direction at the meeting of October 5, 2010. The Stevens Creek Corridor Park Ranger will be responsible for locking and unlocking the gate.⁵ Given that the trail would be closed at night the project does not include lighting along the trail.

In the event of a significant flood event, the City would close the proposed trail connection and would post signage at the Scenic Circle access point alerting trail users of this closure.

3.2.4 Parking Control Measures

The creation of new parking for trail use is not part of the project. The project is intended to serve residents that bike or walk from home. Visitors to Stevens Creek Trail (including Blackberry Farm and McClellan Ranch Parks) and trail users that arrive by motor vehicle would continue to use the existing parking facilities on the east side of the creek. In response to neighborhood concerns and suggestions, the City proposes to implement control measures (listed below) to discourage visitors to Stevens Creek Trail and the associated park lands from parking their vehicles in the Scenic Circle neighborhood. The project includes implementation of Tier 1, while Tier 2 and 3 would be implemented in the future if the City determines that additional measures are necessary to control parking.

Tier 1: Additional signage will be installed at the location of the existing “No Outlet” sign on Scenic Boulevard at the entrance to the neighborhood. The sign would read: “RESIDENTIAL ZONE, NO PARK PARKING BEYOND THIS POINT” or similar.

Tier 2: If the Tier 1 solution does not adequately address the issue of park users parking in the Scenic Circle Neighborhood, additional “Residential Zone – No Park Parking” signs will be installed along Scenic Circle. The number of signs to be installed will be sufficient to meet criteria for enforcement by the County Sheriff.

For any holiday or large special event at Blackberry Farm Park where a high attendance is expected (such as 500 or more), the City will put out portable “No Park Event Parking” signs, or similar, in the Scenic Circle Neighborhood.⁶ The existing overflow parking lot at Monta Vista High School for the park will be maintained for high attendance events as needed.

Tier 3: If the Tier 1 and Tier 2 solutions do not adequately address the issue of park users parking in the Scenic Circle Neighborhood, then the residents will consider a Residential Permit Parking program, to be developed in coordination with the City.

3.2.5 Litter Control Measures and Trail Amenities

To minimize the potential for littering, the City proposes to install wildlife-resistant trash and recycling receptacles inside Blackberry Farm Park near the proposed access point on Scenic Circle, beyond the gate. Receptacles are to be located where they are out of sight from nearby residences

⁵ Stevens Creek Corridor Park is staffed seven days a week by park rangers.

⁶ This measure is currently in place for the Byrne/San Fernando Avenue area, located on the east side of Blackberry Farm Park.

and/or screened. Park rangers would be responsible for daily pick up of trash/recyclables in vicinity of the gate.

The project does not include the provision of night lighting, interpretative signage, benches, or similar trail amenities. The provision of trash receptacles is intended to encourage proper trail use and proper disposal of waste.

3.2.6 Vegetation Removal and Mitigation

The proposed trail alignment primarily consists of oak woodland, riparian habitat, and upland vegetation. The project includes the removal of two coast live oak trees (seven and three inches in diameter) and approximately three saplings. Minor tree trimming and removal of low-lying vegetation may also be required to accommodate the proposed trail connection. As described in Section 4.4 *Biological Resources*, impacts to biotic habitats resulting from project construction activities will be mitigated by providing replacement trees and additional native plantings, and replanting disturbed areas with native vegetation or reseeding. Standard construction measures will be implemented to minimize temporary impacts to trees, wildlife, and water quality.

3.2.7 Grading, Drainage, and Utilities

Substantial grading would not be required to construct the proposed project. It is expected that a moderate amount of imported fill (approximately 75 cubic yards) would be required for construction of the approach ramp to the existing pedestrian bridge and to the access point at Scenic Circle. As previously described, the project includes a retaining wall at one location along the trail connection. Any cut or fill slopes adjacent to the trail not supported with retaining walls will be reseeded or replanted following construction.⁷

As described in Section 4.8 *Hydrology and Water Quality* of this Initial Study, the proposed 270-foot trail connection is not expected to generate a significant amount of stormwater runoff. In accordance with Santa Clara Valley Water District (SCVWD) guidelines, surface water would generally be diverted from the trail away from the creek where feasible by cross-sloping the trail surface up to two percent. However, cross slope direction may vary to achieve safety, constructability, or other goals.

3.2.8 Construction Information

The footprint of the proposed trail and associated ramps would be approximately 2,500 square feet, while project construction would affect approximately 22,000 square feet (about half an acre) of land. All construction work and equipment staging would occur on City-owned property. On the easterly side of the creek, construction access and staging would occur within Blackberry Farm Park. For work on the westerly side of the creek, access would occur from Scenic Circle. Equipment would be staged on previously disturbed land to the extent feasible. No work would be required within the active stream (low-flow channel) of Stevens Creek. Construction of the approach ramps would require work at the top of bank.

It is anticipated that the trail construction would start in late winter/early spring of 2011. The total duration of project construction is estimated to be approximately four months.

⁷ Santa Clara Valley Water District, Santa Clara Valley Water Resources Protection Collaborative. "Guidance for Trail Design" in *Guidelines and Standards for Land Use Near Streams*. August 2005 (revised July 2006).

3.3 PERMITS REQUIRED

The project would require a Streamside Permit from the City of Cupertino.

No other permits, approvals, or easements are anticipated for construction of the proposed project.

3.4 USES OF THE INITIAL STUDY

This Initial Study will be used to obtain a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) for the project, which determines that with the implementation of mitigation measures identified, the project would not have a significant effect on the environment.