



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION AND CREEKS ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT

AGENDA DATE: February 17, 2016

TO: Parks and Recreation Commission and Creeks Advisory Committee

FROM: Engineering and Transportation Divisions, Public Works Department
Creeks and Parks Divisions, Parks and Recreation Department

SUBJECT: Transportation, Creek Restoration and Open Space Projects in the Las Positas Valley

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Commission and Committee:

- A. Receive an overview of the various transportation, creek restoration and open space projects in the Las Positas Valley; and
- B. Review and provide comments on the Las Positas/Modoc Road Multiuse Path Project and Las Positas Creek Restoration Project.

DISCUSSION:

Introduction

The City is actively pursuing a number of transportation, park, and creek restoration projects in the Las Positas Valley. Taken together, these projects will improve roadway circulation, provide multi-modal access, enhance recreation, preserve open space, restore creek habitats and improve water quality. The projects include the construction of a roundabout at the intersection of Cliff Drive and Las Positas Road, alternative transportation improvements along Las Positas and Modoc Roads, acquisition of a 15-acre vacant parcel for an open space park, restoration of lower Arroyo Burro on City-owned parcels, restoration of Las Positas Creek, and removal of invasive *Arundo donax* (Giant Reed) from the riparian corridor.

This report focuses on the Las Positas/Modoc Road Multiuse Path Project and Las Positas Creek Restoration Project. Since these two projects overlap, the Public Works and Parks and Recreation Departments are working together to design and implement them simultaneously. The Commission and the Committee will receive future presentations on the other Parks and Recreation projects as they develop over the next

few years. The roundabout at the intersection of Las Positas Road and Cliff Drive is scheduled for construction in summer/fall of 2016.

Las Positas/Modoc Road Multiuse Path Project

On September 27, 2014 the City was awarded \$1,372,000 in Active Transportation Program (ATP) funds for the environmental and final design phases of the Las Positas Road Multiuse Path Project (Path Project). The purpose of the ATP Program is to increase the proportion of trips accomplished by biking and walking, increase the safety of non-motorized users, achieve greenhouse gas reduction goals, enhance public health, and benefit disadvantaged (minority and low income) communities.

The Path Project includes the planning, environmental review, and design phases for a separated pathway for bicyclists, runners, and pedestrians of all ages and abilities along Las Positas and Modoc Roads. The Path Project begins on Modoc Road at the western City limits (Calle de los Amigos) and continues east for approximately one mile toward the intersection of Modoc and Las Positas Roads, then continues south for approximately 1.6 miles along Las Positas Road to Cliff Drive.

The Path Project will provide key connections among Santa Barbara's regional Cross-town and Coastal Bike Routes, the neighborhoods adjacent to the path, Elings Park, Arroyo Burro Beach County Park, and the Douglas Family Preserve. In addition to the multiuse path itself, the Path Project will include connection points to other bikeways and adjacent neighborhood sidewalks, which may include intersection improvements, as necessary, to enhance the multiuse path. The path will also tie into the roundabout at the intersection of Las Positas Road and Cliff Drive planned for construction in fall 2016.

The Path Project is adjacent to Las Positas and Arroyo Burro Creeks. The Path Project will be outside of the 100-year floodplain except for a small segment along Modoc Road. The Project's proposed land clearing, grubbing, excavation, paving, and cut and fill associated with retaining walls will be focused within and adjacent to the existing roadway and avoid natural habitat to the extent practicable. The project team's biologist, AMEC, is in the process of evaluating potential impacts and providing recommendations of avoidance and minimization measures to be incorporated into the Path Project's design and construction phase. Preliminary Path Project plans will be provided at the meeting and Commissioners and Committee members will have the opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback.

Las Positas Creek Restoration Project

Las Positas Creek is one of the major tributaries to Arroyo Burro. It is 1.3 miles long and flows from the Santa Barbara Golf Club, under Earl Warren Showgrounds and Highway 101, then along the west side of Las Positas Road, where it eventually flows into Arroyo Burro near the intersection of Las Positas Road and Veronica Springs Road. Las Positas Creek has been significantly modified by urban development, resulting in roughly half of

the total length of natural waterway being converted to storm drain pipe or concrete drainage channel.

First identified in the City's 2000 Creek Inventory and Assessment Study, and subsequently included in the Creeks Division Capital Program, the Las Positas Creek Restoration Project (Creek Project) is focused on improving water quality, riparian habitat, and flood protection in the lower half of the creek, between Las Positas Place and Veronica Springs Road. The Creeks Division completed a feasibility analysis and conceptual restoration plan for the Creek Project in 2014. Detailed hydrological analysis and preliminary plans were complete in 2015.

The restoration plans include removing 30,000 square feet of concrete lining from the creek channel, grading to establish shallower creek banks, planting the banks with native plant and tree species, and installing large sandstone boulders to protect the creek banks from erosion. Native trees such as alders, sycamores, and oaks will be planted to help stabilize creek banks, provide shade, and improve habitat value. Native wetland plants will be planted to help improve water quality.

All the homes in the Las Positas Place and Veronica Place cul-de-sacs are currently in the FEMA 100-year floodplain, with 18 of those homes sited in the regulatory floodway. Therefore, another key aspect of the Creek Project includes widening the creek and installing additional culverts at the Las Positas Place and Veronica Springs Road crossings to increase flow capacity and improve flood protection. The Creek Project is currently in the final design phase and is awaiting FEMA approval for the proposed naturalized creek alignment and flood conveyance.

Project Overlap

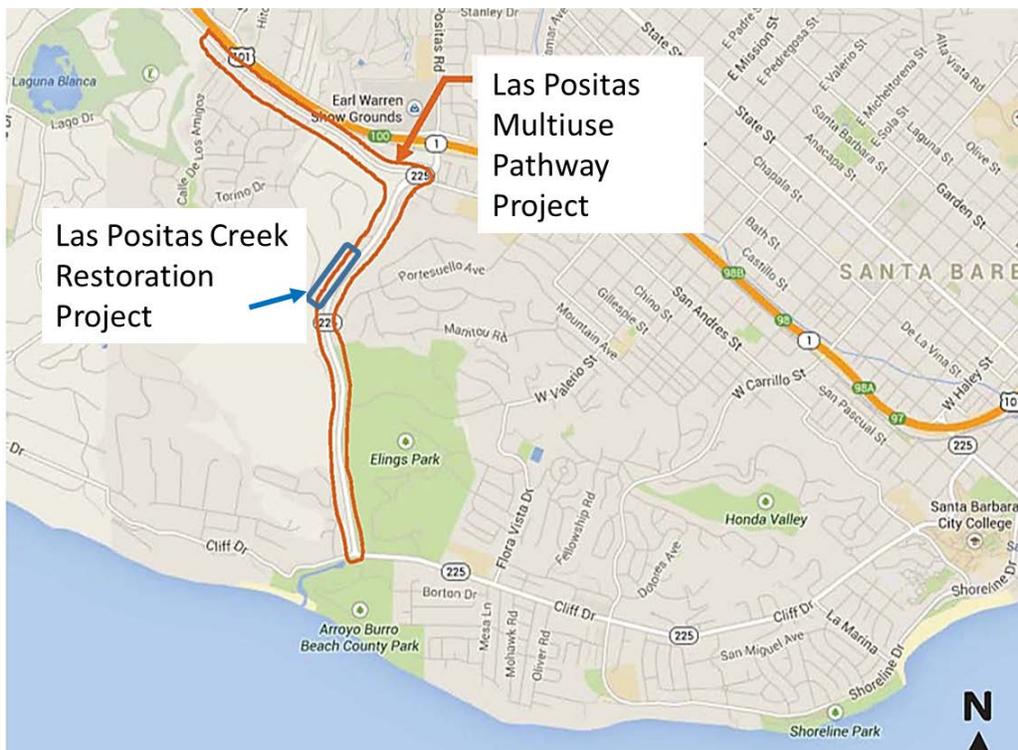
As shown in the map on the following page, a portion of the proposed multiuse path on Las Positas Road between Veronica Springs Road and Las Positas Place is immediately adjacent to the Las Positas Creek Restoration Project. Public Works and Parks and Recreation staff are coordinating to design compatible projects along this section. The Path Project is designed outside of the 100-year floodplain adjacent to the Creek Project.

Community Outreach

Community outreach is an important component in the planning and design for both projects. The Path Project has been in various City planning documents since 1974, primarily as a Class I Bike Path. The Path Project is identified in the City's Six Year Capital Improvement Program Fiscal Year 2014-2019, Bicycle Master Plan, and Pedestrian Master Plan. The Program and Plans have gone through extensive community-based participation. Since 2012, City staff have attended three neighborhood meetings regarding traffic conditions on Cliff Drive and Las Positas Roads. The community has expressed a strong desire for the City to move forward with this Project to improve commuting conditions and recreational opportunities.

On January 20, 2016, the Public Works Department held a community open house to review the Path Project's concept design. The open house was well attended with about 40 active participants. The majority of the comments cards received at the open house were positive. In addition, the public can review additional information and provide feedback at <http://santabarbaraca.gov/bikepath>.

The Creek Project was first identified in the Creek Inventory and Assessment Study (2000). It has been part of the City's Capital Improvement Program since 2006, and is identified in the City's General Plan as a "priority" creek restoration project. The Creeks Division conducted door-to-door outreach in the adjacent neighborhood, hosted a community meeting, and toured the Creek Project site with the Creeks Advisory Committee. Key neighborhood considerations to be further evaluated in the final design include safety, aesthetics, public access, and maintaining flood capacity.



NEXT STEPS:

Final design for both projects is scheduled to be complete in late 2016 or early 2017. The projects will require design review and approval from the City, as well as environmental review in compliance with state and federal laws. A portion of the Path Project is located in the City's Coastal Zone and will require a Coastal Development Permit from the Planning Commission. Design review and approval is required from the Architectural Board of Review. The public will be invited to participate throughout the entire design and permitting process for both projects.

Due to the size and scale of the Path Project, it may have to be constructed in phases. Assuming grant funding, the City's Bicycle Master Plan anticipates the project to be completed between 2020 and 2025.

Construction of the Creek Project is expected to occur in two phases. Phase I includes the construction of additional culvert capacity at Veronica Springs Road and restoration of the downstream half of the creek reach during summer 2017. Phase II, the culvert replacement at Las Positas Place and restoration of the upstream half of the creek, will be constructed during the summer of 2018.

BUDGET FINANCIAL INFORMATION:

Construction costs for the Path Project are estimated to be \$10 – 15 million. Construction funding for the Path Project has not been identified. City staff plans to apply for construction funding through the next ATP grant cycle in mid-2016.

The total Creek Project cost, including design and construction, is estimated to be \$2.8 million. The existing capital appropriation for the project is \$1,161,920. The Creeks Division's Capital Improvement Program for Fiscal Year 2017 proposes an additional \$300,000 for a total of \$1,461,920. The Creeks Division was awarded a \$1,000,000 grant from the Urban Streams Restoration Program for Creek Project construction. The Creeks Division also has a pending grant application for \$500,000 with the California River Parkways Grant Program. With a successful award of this grant, a total of \$2,961,920 will be available for Creek Project design and construction.

PREPARED BY: Ashleigh Shue, Supervising Civil Engineer
Jessica W. Grant, Project Planner
Cameron Benson, Creeks Division Manager

SUBMITTED BY: Cameron Benson, Creeks Manager

APPROVED BY: Jill E. Zachary, Parks and Recreation Director