



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION REPORT

AGENDA DATE: March 22, 2017

TO: Parks and Recreation Commission

FROM: Creeks Division, Parks and Recreation Department

SUBJECT: Arroyo Burro Open Space

RECOMMENDATION: That the Commission:

- A. Receive an update on the Arroyo Burro Open Space;
- B. Recommend to City Council that the Arroyo Burro Open Space be rezoned from SP-9 (Veronica Meadows Specific Plan), SP-9/S-D-3 (Veronica Meadows Specific Plan/Coastal Overlay Zone), and E-3/S-D-3 (One Family Residence/Coastal Overlay Zone) to P-R (Parks and Recreation) and P-R/CZ (Parks and Recreation/Coastal Overlay); and
- C. Recommend to City Council that the Park be designated Open Space as defined in the Santa Barbara Municipal Code.

DISCUSSION:

Background

The proposed open space park located in the lower Arroyo Burro watershed at the end of Alan Road was acquired by the City on March 7, 2016. The Trust for Public Land (TPL), a non-profit land conservation organization, worked with the City's Creeks Division to acquire 14.74 acres of undeveloped land which was the site of the former "Veronica Meadows" development project.

The proposed park is one of several large open spaces in the Arroyo Burro watershed. The property, which includes approximately 1,600 linear feet of creek frontage on lower Arroyo Burro, provides a significant opportunity for creek restoration and water quality improvement as well as public open space. Future creek restoration efforts would further improve conditions in the watershed, building upon several other restoration and water quality improvement projects undertaken in the watershed by the Creeks Division, including the restoration of Mesa Creek and the Arroyo Burro Estuary, Restoration of Upper Las Positas Creek at the Municipal Golf Course, the recently completed Upper Arroyo Burro Restoration Project at Barger Canyon, and the planned removal and restoration of a 0.3 mile long concrete channel on Las Positas Creek.

The \$4 million acquisition was funded with \$2.7 million from the Creeks Division, and \$1.3 million in grant funding secured by TPL. As a requirement of these grant funds, a conservation easement over the property was granted in perpetuity to the County of Santa Barbara, the Coastal Conservancy, and the California Natural Resources Agency. The conservation easement prohibits any use that would impair or interfere with public access or the conservation values of the property including its natural conditions, scenery, open space, and fish, plant, and wildlife habitat. The conservation easement prohibits the construction of any new paved roads or paving of any existing dirt roads and any alteration or manipulation of the watercourse located on property except for creek restoration and water quality improvement purposes.

Restoration Project Update

In September 2016, as part of the annual Creek Week festivities, the Urban Creeks Council and Friends of Arroyo Burro held an event at the open space park with informal talks on the watershed and a vision for a future restoration project at the site. In October the Creeks Division hosted community meetings with a variety of stakeholder groups and neighboring property owners to discuss restoration opportunities and future park maintenance activities.

General goals of the restoration project include improved stream function, wildlife habitat and water quality. Restoration opportunities include the removal of obsolete structures in the creek channel, regrading of steep and incised creek banks, removal of non-native invasive plants, increasing diversity and cover of native trees and plants, and improving wildlife access and habitat within the creek corridor.

The Creeks Division is currently working with Waterways Consulting (Waterways) to prepare technical studies and develop conceptual restoration designs for the property's riparian corridor. Waterways has completed intensive creek surveys and hydrologic modeling and analysis for the site. Draft concept designs will be completed in 2017. At that time, the draft concept designs will be presented to the Creeks Advisory Committee and focused outreach to stakeholder groups will occur. Input from the various stakeholders will be incorporated into the final concept design plans prior to initiating environmental analysis and permitting. Grant applications will be submitted during 2017 to obtain additional project funding, and project permitting and approvals will be completed. Final design plans, bidding and construction are estimated to occur in 2018.

Proposed Rezone and Park Category Designation

The proposed project involves the creation of new parkland by rezoning the three City-owned parcels (APNs 047-010-065, 047-010-064, and 047-061-026) from SP-9 (Veronica Meadows Specific Plan), SP-9/S-D-3 (Veronica Meadows Specific Plan/Coastal Overlay Zone), and E-3/S-D-3 (Single Residential Unit/Coastal Overlay

Zone) to PR (Parks and Recreation Zone) and PR/S-D-3 (Parks and Recreation/Coastal Overlay Zone).

The City of Santa Barbara is currently updating its Zoning Ordinance (Title 28 of the City's Municipal Code) that establishes the zone classifications, permitted uses, development standards, and the development review process for different zones. The comprehensive update has been undertaken to bring the City's Zoning Ordinance up to date to reflect current uses and practices.

The New Zoning Ordinance proposes changes to the zoning designations names from PR to P-R and S-D-3 to CZ (Coastal Overlay Zone). Therefore the proposed ultimate zoning designations for the three City-owned parcels would be P-R (Parks and Recreation) and P-R/CZ (Parks and Recreation/Coastal Overlay Zone).

Santa Barbara Municipal Code (SBMC) Section 28.37.101 A. establishes that both the Parks and Recreation Commission and the Planning Commission shall make a recommendation on the designation of any new park facility, or the assignment of an existing facility to a new category. The new park is proposed to have a park category of Open Space. SBMC Section 28.37.030 establishes park uses by category. An Open Space is defined as land that is intended to be protected and managed as a natural environment with passive recreation usage and minimal development. The park's current use and future improvements will be consistent with the allowed uses for an open space park. Examples of other open space parks include Parma Park, the Douglas Family Preserve, Skofield Park, and Rattlesnake Canyon. Allowed uses for each park category under SBMC 28.37.030 are outlined in Attachment 2.

Recommendation

Parks and Recreation staff recommends that the Commission recommend to City Council the adoption of the proposed rezone and designation of the park as Open Space. The Planning Commission reviewed the NZO on March 2 and 9, and will consider the Open Space designation on April 6, 2017. It is anticipated that City Council will consider the NZO in late April, 2017.

ATTACHMENTS: 1. Location Map
2. Allowed Park Uses

PREPARED BY: Erin Markey, Creek Restoration Planner

SUBMITTED BY: Cameron Benson, Creek Restoration/Clean Water Manager

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