



**CITY OF SANTA BARBARA**  
**PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION REPORT**

**AGENDA DATE:** October 28, 2020  
**TO:** Parks and Recreation Commission  
**FROM:** Administration Division, Parks and Recreation Department  
**SUBJECT:** Thousand Steps Repair Project

**RECOMMENDATION:**

That the Commission receive a presentation on the Thousand Steps Repair Project and recommend to the Planning Commission that the project be submitted to the California Coastal Commission for permitting under a Consolidated Coastal Development Permit.

**DISCUSSION:**

On Thursday, November 5, 2020, the Planning Commission will consider the Parks and Recreation Department's (Department) development application for the repair and renovation of Thousand Steps (Camino al Mar) beach access stairway. The purpose of this project is to improve safety and access to the beach while preserving historic integrity and character. The project consists of the demolition of the bottom portion of the stairs and walls; construction of a new bottom portion of the stairway including sidewalls, columns, and footing; installation of new handrails; and drainage improvements to abate nuisance groundwater flows.

The beach access stairway provides important access to the beach for the Mesa neighborhood. The lowest section of the stairway has been in poor condition for many years and funding for construction has been difficult to secure. In addition to the repairs to the existing stair way, the project will add steps to ensure access to the beach throughout the year. Currently, when sand supply is low, the beach level can be as much as three feet below the lowest step making the climb up or down from the bottom step difficult and potentially unsafe. The proposed addition of steps below typical sand level is consistent with state and local policies promoting the preservation and enhancement of safe public access to the beach.

Background

Thousand Steps was first recorded as a "trail to the beach" coastal access trail in 1919. Four years later, the City Council dedicated the coastal access trail as a public thoroughfare named "Camino al Mar." In 1925, a lighted concrete stairway of 157 steps was constructed

in a style influenced by both Arts and Crafts and Spanish Colonial Revival vernaculars. Sconce lighting, a drinking fountain and redwood pergola were also constructed but no longer exist.

Despite the official adopted name “Camino al Mar” the public has exclusively referred to the coastal access stairway as Thousand Steps from their first opening. Repairs completed in the 1970s and in 1996 were careful to retain the architectural style and extend the useful life of the stairway. Most recently, a temporary repair of the lowest 12 steps was completed with semi-permeable concrete in February 2020.

### Proposed Project

Project construction will include the following:

1. Demolition of the bottom portion of the existing stairs and sidewalls, from the lowest landing down to the beach, and topping layer of the larger mid-level landing.
2. Construction of a new bottom portion of stairway, including sidewalls, columns, and footing.
3. Construction of a new mid-level landing finish surface, drainage improvements, and guard-rail.
4. Installation of new stainless steel handrails from the beach elevation to the street.

The attachment includes select pages from the project plans with the project site plan, areas for demolition, and the lowest section of steps to be replaced and the proposed new steps. Other features, not shown, include the reconstruction of the guard rail at the middle landing, handrails to be installed the entire length of the steps, and the drainage improvements.

### Coastal Resources

A Wave Uprush Study prepared in May 2020 analyzed the proposed project’s effect on sand supply and wave action. The study determined that because the stairs would descend to (and beneath) the beach sand, the stairs would not result in an artificial collection of beach sand as it moves longshore. Additionally, the report found while wave uprush of the stairway is expected to occur during storms and intensify with sea level rise, the project would not expose life or property to increased coastal hazard risk. The anticipated worst case storm surge would only affect the lower portion of the stairs and the public is not expected to use the stairs in such adverse conditions.

### Historic Preservation

Although not listed as a historic resource by the City, State, or Federal government, a Historic Site and Structure Report prepared for this project concluded that Thousand Steps is eligible for listing as a Structure of Merit. Similar to previous repair efforts, this project is designed to retain the character of the stairs by restoring worn and damaged details and reducing exposure to weathering from groundwater. The Historic Landmarks Commission reviewed and approved the report on July 11, 2018 and subsequently referred the project to Planning Commission on June 26, 2019.

### Next Steps

Planning Commission will consider a recommendation to the California Coastal Commission for issuance of a Consolidated Coastal Development Permit on November 5, 2020. Review by the California Coastal Commission is anticipated to take place in spring 2021. Construction is anticipated to occur in fall 2021 or spring 2022, depending on the time needed to secure permits.

### **BUDGET/FINANCIAL INFORMATION:**

In 2017 the City of Santa Barbara received \$2.5 million in settlement funds from Plains All American for impacts associated with the 2015 Refugio oil spill. City Council allocated \$950,000 of these funds for the Thousand Steps Repair Project. There is \$786,000 available for project construction which should fully fund the project.

**ATTACHMENT:** Project Plans – Select Pages

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**REVIEWED BY:** Jill E. Zachary, Parks and Recreation Director

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