

# Save Our Trails!



Promoting trails in Santa Clara County for the benefit and enjoyment of all

Ms. Kim Walesh  
Director of Economic Development and Deputy City Manager  
San Jose City Hall  
200 E. Santa Clara Street; San Jose CA 95113

SUBJECT: Support for your vision of reclaiming land for public use along trails

July 6, 2017

Dear Ms. Walesh:

On your interview of June 27<sup>th</sup> by Queen Kim of KQED's Forum, in the response to a question about the effect of the Google Development on the parks in the area, you said (if I transcribed it correctly),

*"The Diridon Station vision includes a substantial increase in urban parks and public spaces, and really, opportunities to reclaim land for public use along the Guadalupe River Trail and the Coyote Creek Trail. It's definitely part of the vision."*

It's very gratifying to our organization, **Save Our Trails**, to hear the area's trails highlighted in this manner; especially the concept of reclaiming land for public use along the trail systems.

I suspect, though, that you probably misspoke when you mentioned the Coyote Creek Trail in your response. I believe that you meant to say the Los Gatos Creek Trail. It is the Los Gatos Creek that is closest to the area under development, essentially forming its eastern boundary. And concerns about the Los Gatos Creek Trail in that area are certainly well justified.

Historically, Bird Avenue and Park Avenue crossed the Creek on separate bridges. But in the early 1970's, Bird Avenue was widened from Coe Avenue north to the transition to Autumn and Montgomery Streets. At that time, the Los Gatos Creek was covered over and forced into a pair of 900-foot long box culverts that convey the flow under the intersection of the widened Bird Avenue with Park Avenue.

Because of the obstacle posed by the culverts, the City's plans show the "trail" to be nothing more than a dotted line on the sidewalk at that intersection, crossing Bird Avenue and Park Avenues at street level using cross-walks. Hardly what one thinks of when we talk of a "trail"!

That is why the idea of "reclaiming land for public use" along the Los Gatos Creek Trail is so significant.

The Diridon Area development for Google gives the city a unique opportunity to undo the mistake of the 1970's; to free the creek from its culvert and open it to the sky once again; to

allow the Trail to remain off the street and follow the Creek; and to build amenities along the trail, such as view points, coffee shops, or historical signage. (The lively, pedestrian-friendly Creekwalk in downtown San Luis Obispo can serve as a good model of what is possible in this regard.)

With that possibility in mind, when the Diridon Station Area Good Neighbor Committee convened to devise plans for the development of the area around Diridon Station, it recognized this opportunity. In its report of September 7, 2010, the Good Neighbor Committee explicitly called on the City to *“restore the natural setting of the waterways in the urban areas, including specifically that of the Los Gatos Creek as it passes under Montgomery Street and Park Avenue, and, to the extent possible, implement a river walk modeled on the one in San Antonio that balances nature and commercial vibrancy.”*

These recommendations were accepted by the City Council at its meeting of January 25, 2011.

**Save Our Trails** enthusiastically supports this recommendation of the Good Neighbor Committee, and your vision for the reclamation of land for public use along the City’s trails. We look forward, specifically, to the City making use of the opportunity afforded by the Google development to restore the Los Gatos Creek to an open-air environment, and to complete the Los Gatos Creek Trail along the borders of the newly freed Creek.

Sincerely yours,



Bill Rankin,  
President, **Save Our Trails**

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Notes

- 1) **Save Our Trails** is a citizen-supported California not-for-profit corporation based in San Jose whose mission it is *“to promote trails in Santa Clara County for the benefit and enjoyment of all”*. Web address: <http://www.saveourtrails-scc.org>.
- 2) The Master Plan for the downtown reach of the Los Gatos Creek Trail can be found at this address: <http://www.sanjoseca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/9360> ; see especially pages 61-65
- 3) An aerial photograph that shows the flow of the Los Gatos Creek in 1968 can be found in the first photograph (upper left) in the collection at this address: <https://www.google.com/search?q=aerial+photograph+san+jose+1968&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiT0cjptnUAhUqjlQKHU1ZD0IQ7AKIPg&biw=1332&bih=778#imgsrc=mrYOxOAUqGbdAM>
- 4) The recommendation of the Good Neighbor Committee to restore the natural setting of the Los Gatos Creek is Implementation Priority #10 of the Framework for Implementation for Parks and Trails”, on page 7 of the document found at this address: [http://www3.sanjoseca.gov/clerk/Agenda/20110125/20110125\\_0902.pdf](http://www3.sanjoseca.gov/clerk/Agenda/20110125/20110125_0902.pdf)
- 5) The minutes of the Council Meeting that accepted the recommendations of the Framework of Implementation can be seen at: <http://www3.sanjoseca.gov/clerk/Agenda/20110125/20110125min.pdf>; see Item 9.2.(a).
- 6) cc: SJ Mayor Sam Liccardo, SJ Council Members Dev Davis and Raul Peralez, SJ Director of PRNS Angel Rios, SJ Trails Coordinator Yves Zsuttu