

Voice News

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Council favors a passive approach to meadow

by **Daniel DeBolt**
Mountain View Voice Staff

Ever since it became clear that the Stevens Creek Trail was going to extend south of El Camino Real last year, Mountain View residents have been dreaming up uses for the large, previously closed-off meadow along Highway 85 just south of El Camino Real. It now appears that none of those ideas is likely to come to fruition.

After discussing several proposals in a study session Tuesday night, the City Council appeared to support simply putting native plants in the area, which could provide a "beautiful" example of what can be done with native plants without irrigation, said council member Ronit Bryant, who championed the idea.

In a report, staffers outlined several proposals for the meadow's most useable four acres, which sit adjacent to the Highway 85 southbound onramp. They include a solar panel installation, community gardens, a picnic area, a community farm, leaving the area as is, and resurrecting a decaying stand of cherry blossom trees on the site. City staff also suggested planting numerous trees to act as a "carbon sink" to help absorb the exhaust gases from the freeway.

Most council members supported the native plants idea so long as funding was available. Assistant public works director Mike Fuller said the city had \$200,000, left over from the recent trail extension project, that could be used.

Only council member Mike Kasperzak said he would consider supporting an option popular with users of the Voice's Town Square online forum: a BMX park to replace the one the city bulldozed last month along the trail at Central Avenue.

Other than that, "I say leave it the way it is," he said.

The only public speaker was Crossings resident Matt Raschke, who said that after the city bulldozed the BMX park, known as "Creek Trails," he came across the meadow and thought it was perfect for a new BMX park. He said he was looking forward to the day his 7-year-old son was old enough to try the jumps at Creek Trails on his BMX bike, and added that if universal health care passed, the city shouldn't be as threatened by a possible lawsuit from the parent of an injured kid.

Mayor Margaret Abe-Koga said the council would take up the BMX park issue after receiving a report from the Parks and Recreation Department.

After discussion with city staff, most council members agreed that "active uses" of the meadow, such as community gardens or a farm, would not be appropriate because the nearest parking is a quarter mile down the trail. Council members did not support making the meadow area accessible for parking, which would likely require a \$2 million auto bridge over the creek from Kentmere Court, said principal civil engineer Bob Kagiya.

Currently, only government vehicle access is allowed across the narrow Sleeper Avenue foot bridge and through the narrow gate at El Camino Real.

"I don't think we want people bringing in their hoes and rakes on the trail," Kasperzak said.

A few council members suggested putting a few picnic tables or benches in the meadow, but the idea did not sit well with Bryant.

"I can't see myself sitting on a picnic table there enjoying a view of the freeway," Bryant said.

The idea of a community farm on the site was popular when the farm and pumpkin patch on Grant Road closed to make way for housing in 2007. But the idea received little attention Tuesday.

Abe-Koga and council member Laura Macias expressed disapproval with the city's neglect of the Japanese cherry blossom trees, which were planted to honor Mountain View's sister city of Iwata, Japan. The trees have not weathered the last 18 years very well in the meadow, with only one remaining in good health.

"I think it's kind of a disrespectful thing," Abe-Koga said.

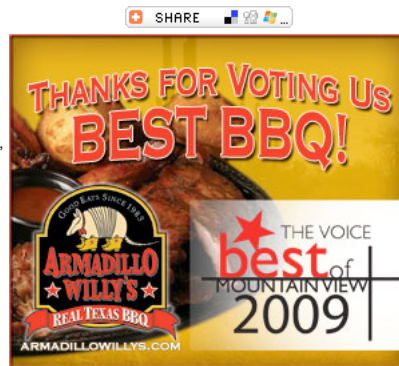
Council members joked throughout the night about what had happened to the trees, dozens of which were planted in neat rows according to an aerial photograph from 1991. There are about 15 now.

"We put it out there and it obviously didn't work," said council member Tom Means.

The council asked staff to look into relocating the cherry blossom trees to a more suitable location.

"I don't think it would be an impossible thing to do," said Parks and Rec director Dave Muela.

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Comments

Posted by Nick, a resident of another community, 9 hours ago

The BMX Park should be out near Crittenden Slope (the hill behind the Shoreline Amphitheater Parking Lot on Crittenden Lane).

[Web Link](#)

That location has a lot of benefits:

-It's still accessible via the Stevens Creek Trail so kids who used to ride to the demolished creekside BMX trails can still do so safely.

-It's located next to a major recreation area with easy parking and access for *all* BMX riders from throughout the city.

-Unlike a location directly on the banks of the creek, it wouldn't lead to construction that could damage sensitive riparian habitat or lead to erosion into the creek.

-It already has a lot of unique topography (as a sculpted former land fill) that could be manipulated to create a fun course.

-It's currently a highly underutilized space and there's plenty of land out there to keep as open grassland and still have a BMX course.

The council, I think, made the right decision with the meadow and just plussing it with native landscaping. Pursueing anything else here here would have cost a lot due to the access issues (as stated in the article) and it would have messed up what already is a nice natural buffer for the creek - one of the few places where you can see what Stevens Creek looked like before it was completely pinched by development on both sides. With the addition of more native plants and trees that block the freeway, this could be an even nicer piece of passive creekside open space (which we don't have much of in Mountain View)

There's no reason to make this a creekside open space versus BMX course debate. Everyone shold band together and work towards a BMX park out near Crittenden Slope.

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Posted by Jeff M, a resident of the Old Mountain View neighborhood, 7 hours ago

To Nick's comments: yes! Well reasoned and well said.

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Posted by phm, a resident of the The Crossings neighborhood, 7 hours ago

I also agree with Nick. The Crittenden Slope site would also be a healthier place for recreation since BMXers won't be breathing in freeway fumes.

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Posted by localmom, a resident of the Cuesta Park neighborhood, 2 hours ago

I think the city should pay for lots of trees to soak up the exhaust fumes and carbon monoxide from the traffic!!

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