

# COUNCIL REPLACES TRAIL BAN WITH POLICY ALLOWING REGIONAL PATHWAY

## City looking at Stevens Creek

By TIFFANY CARNEY

Building a trail along Stevens Creek could be a real possibility in Sunnyvale following the council's decision to permanently end the city's trail ban. The city council unanimously agreed on Dec. 8 to amend the city's General Plan with a policy supportive of a new trails, ending a 15-year ban prohibiting the creation of pathways in the area.

The new policy means Sunnyvale could be part of a regional plan to build a pathway along Stevens Creek.

Although the council approved the amendment wording, to become an official amendment to the General Plan, it has to go through two public hearings and then has to be formally adopted.

The decision comes nine months after the council temporarily lifted the trail ban to collect community feedback on building a connector trail through the city. During that time, the city formed the Stevens Creek Trail Subcommittee, which includes Vice Mayor Chris Moylan and council members Melinda Hamilton and David Whittum, to decide whether to include a Stevens Creek Trail policy in the city's General Plan.

Under the new policy, the city will "support proliferation of multi-use trails within Sunnyvale, and their connection to regional trails, in order to provide enhanced access to open space, to promote alternative transportation options, and to increase recreational opportunities, while balancing those needs with

## Trails

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preservation of natural habitat, public safety, and the quality of life in residential neighborhoods."

The new policy appeared to garner much public support at the Dec. 8 public hearing.

"I think it's pretty clear that this is the kind of policy that Sunnyvale residents wish to have guiding your decisions as any future initiative is developed," said Kevin Jackson, chair of the Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Commission.

"From a situation that started, I think, on a bad foot in an inflamed manner, we have really gotten to a community building, constructive process, and I sincerely thank each of you for it," said Marianne Cali, who lives near the creek and was among neighbors who were concerned about protecting the natural creek habitat as well as rights of nearby property owners.

The Friends of the Stevens Creek Trail also supported the policy proposal.

After council heard testimony in favor of the recommendation by several community members, it voted unanimously to amend the General Plan.

The policy does not address neighborhood concerns about the

issue of eminent domain.

"Certainly there is no intention on anyone's part to take any private property for something like this trail or any other hypothetical trail," Moylan said after one resident brought up the issue.

Trail discussions have also crossed city borders in recent weeks. Sunnyvale is now an active participant in trail meetings with surrounding cities, including Mountain View, Cupertino, Los Altos and the Silicon Valley Water District, which are working to build a regional pathway along Stevens Creek. Mountain View is slated to complete the next portion of its trail in 2011, and Cupertino has opened portions of a trail.

Sunnyvale is the lead agency as the cities apply jointly for a grant to fund a feasibility study for the Sunnyvale portion of the trail. Sunnyvale would connect the dots between Cupertino and Mountain View.

A study could take a year and would identify possible trail routes. The cities are collaborating to increase the chances of receiving funding for a study.

"There is nothing imminently about to happen with the Stevens Creek Trail," Moylan said.

Staff will review the policy and the planning commission will hold a public hearing in addition to city council before the new policy is officially adopted.