

STEWENS CREEK PARK CHAIN



COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA PLANNING DEPARTMENT

The streams draining the Santa Clara Valley trace an irregular course as they drop from the Coast Range to San Francisco Bay. Sometimes they spread out over wide gravelly beds, sometimes they cut deep, straight channels through the valley's soft loam. Always they give topographic interest to the flat, alluvial plain. Although, like most California streams, they carry little or no water much of the year, these streambanks are often lined with attractive native trees and are welcome reminders of nature in a man-made world. Preserved in their natural state and augmented by parks and other public open spaces, these creeks can be priceless possessions of the metropolitan area, emerald necklaces of parks and connecting trailways.

Park chains along our creeks offer a chance to keep human scale in the urban setting. Here there will be a bit of nature in the closely packed metropolis. Along these creek chains one can walk, cycle, or ride horse-back for long distances, protected from automobile traffic. One can take interest in the changing landscape of the streamside and enjoy the variety of activities and visual features of the successive parks along the way, each one different from the next.



Streamside park chains help give structure to a metropolitan area which can too easily become a formless sprawl. Park treatment gives emphasis to the creek, which in itself is a clearly discernible topographic feature. The streamside park chain serves to give definition to urban communities. It forms a beautiful natural boundary, helping to establish that sense of community identity so necessary to a well-ordered metropolitan area.

Parks tied together along a streamside park chain will be of maximum benefit to the crowded urban population expected to live on the valley floor in future years. They will be within close walking distance of many thousands of people. As a part of a continuous chain, their location will be more apparent than isolated parks located at random in obscure parts of communities.

STEVENS CREEK PARK CHAIN

As one of the three major streamside park chains, Stevens Creek offers many promising opportunities. From its source to the Bay it traverses 18½ miles of varied scenery. Trails from its headwaters would lead to the Skyline Parkway, to the county's future Duveneck Park, and other proposed mountain recreation areas.

Downstream nearer the valley floor, the county's Stevens Creek Park will be enlarged to include about 500 acres surrounding Stevens Creek Reservoir. This park will accommodate picnicking, camping, hiking, archery, boating, fishing, and many other outdoor activities.

In its central portion, the creek runs through what will be a highly populated area in the future. County and city general plans predict that 70,000 to 80,000 people will be living within a half mile walking distance of the creek by 1985.

It is in this highly urbanized portion of the creek that the park chain will most need sizable nodes of recreation-park land. By locating their city parks along the chain, the cities of Mountain View, Sunnyvale, Los Altos, and Cupertino will doubly serve their people, for parks along a chain will be twice as useful as separate parks unrelated to other recreation areas.

Downstream from Bayshore Freeway, the creek chain will have as its northern terminus the large marine parks proposed for the margin of the South Bay. Here there will be sailing, motor boating, fishing – all the colorful activities of the shoreline.

Soon-to-be-constructed Stevens Creek Freeway will parallel the creek for five and a half miles south from its beginning at Bayshore Freeway.

The Park Chain will therefore be an asset not only to those using it directly, but to those who pass along it on the freeway, enjoying its visual charms.

Anyone familiar with Rock Creek Park in Washington, D.C., or the Arroyo Seco Parks in Los Angeles will realize how much beauty and pleasure a streamside park chain can add to an urban area. Stevens Creek Park Chain can be this kind of an asset to metropolitan Santa Clara County.



BENEFITS OF THE STEVENS CREEK PARK CHAIN

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE:

Will enjoy driving along a freeway adjoining a beautiful park chain, with opportunities at regular interchanges to leave the freeway and to stop for rest or recreation.

Will profit by lower freeway development costs, since freeway roadsides will require less landscaping where a well-landscaped park abuts the roadway. Drainage provisions will be less costly along a streamside park than along a fully developed urban area.

Will have a demonstration of how a freeway can be integrated into an urban area gracefully, and without the aesthetic mayhem which has been done to some urban communities.

THE PEOPLE OF SANTA CLARA COUNTY:

Will enjoy the recreation opportunities afforded by the variety of parks in the chain.

Will enjoy the open space and the natural beauty of the Park Chain as a relief from asphalt and buildings.

Will be able to take pride in the Park Chain as a distinctive, identifiable feature of the metropolitan area.

THE PEOPLE IN CITIES ADJOINING THE CREEK:

Will enjoy close-at-hand parks, often within walking distance, at the edge of their communities.

Will appreciate the "greenbelt" benefit of the Park Chain as a divider of distinctive communities.

Will be able to walk long distances through a variety of natural areas, protected from traffic dangers.

ANYONE WHO LOVES THE OUTDOORS:

Will like to wander along the Park Chain trails and by-ways, surrendering his senses to the many delights of the natural world.

Will enjoy exercising in the open air, whether in strenuous or organized sports or casual informal pastimes.

Local governments can now get federal aid to set aside open spaces in metropolitan areas. A recent law authorizes the Housing and Home Finance Agency to share 30% of the cost of buying land or easements for parks and other permanent open space. The streamside park chains proposed in this report should be eligible for this aid.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE AND WHAT CAN BE DONE

THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA:

Has acquired whole parcels of land through the area traversed by Stevens Creek Freeway, instead of buying portions of parcels and paying the high cost of severance damages. A total of 106 acres will be purchased in excess of right-of-way requirements. Most of this land lies between the freeway and the creek and would be ideal for park chain use.

Can deed this surplus land to the County of Santa Clara to be used as a part of the Park Chain. The benefits to the people of the state would far outweigh the gain to be made from selling these hard-to-develop parcels on the open market.

THE COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA:

Has offered to match the cities along the creek on a 50-50 basis for acquisition of park land which would become a part of the Stevens Creek Park Chain.

Has acquired, and will continue to acquire, land to augment its present holdings in Stevens Creek Park.

Can insure continuity of the Park Chain by making its flood control rights-of-way available and attractive to hikers, cyclists, and horseback riders using the Park Chain trail system.

THE CITIES ALONG THE CREEK:

Can provide in their capital budgeting program for acquisition of park land along the creek chain to take advantage of the matching offer made by the county.

Can encourage developers of land along the creek to take advantage of the streamside situation with plans which are in harmony with Park Chain objectives and which do not interrupt the continuity of the chain.

Can enter into joint agreements with the county for maintenance of the Park Chain.

THE PRIVATE CITIZEN:

Can make his interest in the Stevens Creek Park Chain known to his city and county officials, assuring them of his support of programs to finance park acquisition and development along the creek.

Can tell others about the Park Chain and win their support for this state-county-city cooperative enterprise which promises wide-ranging benefits to present and future populations.

ACREAGE DATA

1700
106
311
421
250
6
40
53
509

STEVENS CREEK PARK CHAIN

Minimum acreage needed to establish the park chain.
Purchased or being acquired by State along route of Stevens Creek Freeway, exclusive-of-right of way requirements.
Owned by public or private utility agencies.
Owned by County of Santa Clara (Stevens Creek Park).
Sunayvale Mountain Park (open to city residents only).
Being considered as a park site by the City of Mountain View.
Blackberry Farm - commercial recreation area and golf course.
Deep Cliff Golf Course (privately owned, open to public).
Additional land which should be acquired for public park purposes or privately developed in compatible open space uses.