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Public agencies join forces to purchase land for urban trail system

SAN JOSE, Calif. – Over ten years in the making, San José's Three Creeks Trail project took a great leap forward, thanks to combined funding from three public agencies to complete a critical land acquisition. The \$6 million land purchase for the developing Three Creeks Trail was made possible by the City of San José (the City), the Santa Clara County Open Space Authority (Open Space Authority) and the Parks and Recreation Department of Santa Clara County (the County). This land will add an additional mile to the City's interconnected trail network. The Three Creeks Trail is designed to expand recreation and transportation options within the urban core, and create linkages between the Los Gatos Creek, Guadalupe River and Coyote Creek regional trails.

"This project would not have been possible without the commitment and partnership of the Santa Clara County Open Space Authority and the County of Santa Clara," said Mayor Chuck Reed. "The Three Creeks Trail will serve as a crucial link in our existing urban trail network and bring us closer to achieving our Green Vision of creating 100 miles of trails within San José."

As lead negotiator and title holder for the land, the City finalized the land purchase from Union Pacific Railroad on December 23, 2011. The Open Space Authority contributed \$3.25 million, the County contributed \$2 million, and the City provided \$1 million to the project. The 1 mile land acquisition will bring closer to reality a proposed 2.8 mile trail corridor that will ultimately run east-west in the Willow Glen area of San José.

San José Councilmember Pierluigi Oliverio (District 6), whose council district includes this recently acquired land, noted, "This has been a long and difficult process and would not have been possible without the dedication and support of our City staff, partnering agencies, Save Our Trails and the community. The majority of our existing trail corridors extend north-south in the City. This east-west connection creates more opportunities for our residents to access facilities through walking and biking."

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The land purchase consists of five contiguous parcels comprising 7.5 acres that stretch west to east, from Lonus Street at the Los Gatos Creek Trail, to the 400 N. block of Minnesota Avenue located in Willow Glen. (See attached map.)

“The acquisition of this stretch of the Three Creeks Trail is a tremendous achievement,” remarked Julie Edmonds-Mares, Acting Director of Parks, Recreation & Neighborhood Services. “It is a critical component to the creation of a sustainable parks and recreation system within San Jose. Further acquisitions to the east will improve connectivity of our developing trail network.”

There are currently 53 miles of trails open in San José with a plan to develop 100 miles total, making it one of the nation’s largest jurisdictional networks.

“Three Creeks (trail) represents the most significant investment in an urban recreation project in the history of our program,” said Andrea Mackenzie, Open Space Authority General Manager, “Trails connect urban residents to nature and offer opportunities to walk and bike, both critical to public health and wellness in communities like San Jose.” The Open Space Authority provides a portion of its acquisition expenditures to support urban parks and open space projects within the cities of Campbell, Milpitas, Morgan Hill, San Jose, Santa Clara, and unincorporated Santa Clara County. The Open Space Authority and the County will jointly hold a conservation easement over the property to ensure that it is preserved as open space and open to the public in perpetuity.

“This is a project that I have been working on since I represented the area on the San Jose City Council. I am pleased that the completed purchase will protect the trail from developers,” said Santa Clara County Supervisor Ken Yeager, whose supervisorial district includes the area of the trail purchase. “Now we need to get it built.”

“The Three Creeks Trail will greatly enhance the regional trail opportunities in our county,” stated Santa Clara County Supervisor George Shirakawa who worked on the coordination of the purchase and whose district also includes the area of purchase. “The trail will effectively provide linkages to the Los Gatos Creek Trail, the Guadalupe Trail, and eventually the Coyote Creek Trail, from within downtown neighborhoods.”

The community organization, Save Our Trails, was instrumental in moving the Three Creeks Trail project forward, and advocating for a multi-use trail. Taisia McMahon, President, Save Our Trails states, “The Three Creeks Trail will not only be a wonderful recreational amenity but also the green commute route of the future whose value will continue to grow and show itself over time. The Three Creeks Trail is an accomplishment for which future generations will thank us. The community’s letters and meeting attendance revitalized Government support for the Trail. There is still more work to be done to acquire the rest of the Three Creeks Trail.”

The City worked with the former property owner, Union Pacific Railroad, and the California Department of Toxic Substance Control to ensure that chemicals remaining in the soil from past railway use were removed, and that the site is ready for future recreational development. The City has already received a grant from the Santa Clara Valley Water District to begin the rebuilding of the trestle bridge at the western edge of the trail. The City is currently pursuing funding for master planning the trail system and its future design and construction.

City of San José Parks, Recreation & Neighborhood Services Department

City of San Jose Parks, Recreation & Neighborhood Services Department vision and mission: To be a National leader of Parks and Recreation in cultivating healthy communities through quality programs and dynamic public spaces, and to build healthy communities through people, parks and programs. www.sanjoseca.gov/prns

Santa Clara County Open Space Authority

The Santa Clara County Open Space Authority (OSA) is an independent special district created in 1993 to help preserve, protect and manage urban and non-urban open space in the areas of Campbell, Milpitas, Santa Clara, San Jose, Morgan Hill, and southern Santa Clara County. The OSA has preserved over 15,000 acres of land through purchase or easement.

www.OpenSpaceAuthority.org

County of Santa Clara

The Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation Department has provided recreational opportunities, beautiful parks and precious natural resources for Santa Clara County residents for more than 50 years. This golden legacy has resulted in one of the largest regional park systems in the State of California. Visit www.parkhere.org for more information.

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