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## **Open Space Authority Awards Inaugural Measure Q Funds To Connect Children to Nature**

**San Jose, CA – March 3, 2016:** The Open Space Authority Board of Directors has authorized the first Measure Q investment, which was awarded to Children’s Discovery Museum of San Jose, through the Authority’s Urban Open Space program. The investment will help support the Museum’s project: *Bridge to Nature: Bill’s Backyard*, which is designed to provide urban children with a safe and welcoming introduction to the natural world. *Bridge to Nature* will be located on the Museum’s campus, adjacent to the Guadalupe River and bordered by low-income, inner city neighborhoods.

“The Open Space Authority recognizes a great need within urban areas for the many health, educational and other benefits of nature and open space,” said Matt Freeman, the Authority’s Assistant General Manager, “Remarkably, the *Bridge to Nature* project will provide a rich nature experience for urban families with children to enjoy, within downtown San Jose. The project makes excellent use of the Guadalupe River to create a vibrant, interactive outdoor classroom.”

The purpose of the Authority’s Urban Open Space program is to create healthy and safe open space and park areas through multiple means, including developing environmental education programs. In addition, the program is intended to promote conservation investments in underserved, disadvantaged, and park-poor neighborhoods and to more equitably distribute the benefits of nature throughout diverse communities and neighborhoods. These goals mirror those of *Bridge to Nature: Bill’s Backyard*, which are to create a bridge to nature for the South Bay’s ethnically and socioeconomically diverse families, nurture a love of natural places, habitats and creatures, and to inspire environmental stewards of the future.

“The project embodies several important goals of the Open Space Authority, which are to inspire children’s love of nature and to help develop the next generation of environmental stewards,” said Authority Board Member Virginia Holtz. “In *Bridge to Nature*, children will explore all aspects of nature and being outdoors and experience the joys of building, climbing, rolling, digging and getting dirty.” The 27,500 square foot *Bridge to Nature* exploration space will promote interactive nature experiences, and include a dry creek bed, raised and vertical growing beds, native and drought-tolerant plantings,



water catchment systems and areas to observe birds and insects. A trailhead-style information kiosk, a recognizable feature at state and national nature preserves, will inform families about local natural places, parks and open spaces, where they can explore together.

Board Member Sequoia Hall said, “*Bridge to Nature* will become an ideal exploratory outdoor environment for hundreds of thousands of children who live in the densely populated and diverse heart of urban Silicon Valley. Many of these children would not otherwise have the opportunity to play in a safe outdoor space. *Bridge to Nature* will give countless kids their first experiences with nature.”

The amount of the Authority’s Urban Open Space investment is \$308,765 toward the total project budget of \$1,959,213. The construction period for *Bridge to Nature: Bill’s Backyard* will commence in March 2016 with an opening tentatively planned for April 2017.

Marilee Jennings, Children’s Discovery Museum Executive Director, said, “Children’s Discovery Museum is a recognized leader in the national museum field based on its successful efforts to serve ethnically diverse and socioeconomically disadvantaged families. Exhibit, programmatic, and operational strategies implemented since the Museum opened 25 years ago have ensured that Latino, Vietnamese and South Asian audiences are now visiting regularly. The impact of these commitments is far reaching: the Museum’s visitors closely mirror San Jose’s demographics as a minority majority community with Latino, Asian, and Caucasian members. We are thrilled with this major investment by the Open Space Authority and honored to be the first recipient of Measure Q funding for an urban project.”

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***The Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority conserves the natural environment, supports agriculture, and connects people to nature by protecting open spaces, natural areas, and working farms and ranches for future generations. Since 1993, the Open Space Authority has protected nearly 20,000 acres of open space, preserving the region’s scenic beauty, protecting water and wildlife resources, and providing outdoor recreation opportunities. Visit [openspaceauthority.org](http://openspaceauthority.org) or call 408-224-7476.***