



**NORTH VENTURA COORDINATED AREA PLAN  
WORKING GROUP  
And  
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION  
JOINT MEETING  
DRAFT MINUTES**

**Thursday, November 5, 2020  
Virtual Meeting  
6:00 PM to 7:30 PM**

Call to Order:

Roll Call and Housekeeping

**Present:** Angela Dellaporta, Kirsten Flynn, Terry Holzemer, Lund Smith, Yunan Song, Tim Steele, Lakiba Pittman, Alexander Lew, Commission Reckdahl, Doria Summa, Commissioner Greenfield, Commissioner Cribbs and Commissioner Olson. Commission Moss and Waldek Kaczmariski joined the meeting after roll call.

**Absent:** Gail Price, Heather Rosen, Siyi Zhang and Commissioner LaMere.

**Council Liaison:** Council Member Kou

**Staff:** Clare Campbell, Chitra Moitra, Catherine Bourquin

Welcome and Housekeeping:

Ms. Clare Campbell welcomed the participants to the meeting and introduced the presenters , Virginia Mahacek and Andrew Smith from Wetlands Research Associates, who would be providing an overview of the Matadero Creek Renaturalization Conceptual Alternative Analysis report, with a reminder that the this was the only item on the agenda for the special meeting and no action would be taken. Comments from the Working Group and the PRC would be limited to two minutes per person, with at least one round of comments per participant. Further comments/questions could be emailed to staff following the meeting. Public comment time would be opened following the presentation, limited to three minutes per speaker.

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## Staff Presentation

Ms. Mahacek shared her background as a geomorphologist in the role of environmental consultant. Ms. Mahacek is the principle in charge of the project. Andrew Smith, the restoration engineer was also present at the meeting to answer questions.

Mr. Andrew Smith shared his background working for The Army Corps of Engineers, Valley Water and WRA in role of lead engineer for the project.

Ms. Mahacek presented the purpose of the project – exploration of options for integrating a portion of Matadero Creek into the NVCAP Plan Area and as well as exploration of enhancing the connection to Boulware Park. WRA's work began in 2019. The feasibility assessment was submitted in September. The motivations behind the project included addressing inconsistencies of the current condition with City plans and goals; the limited habitat values and functions; the lack of public access; and the state of the aesthetic condition. The three categories of project objectives are: enhancing public access and recreation; beautifying the creek; and reestablishing and repairing habitat and geomorphic function. Other commitments and objectives include consistency with adjacent land uses and exploring mutual benefits for the project and Valley Water. Ms. Mahacek explained that stream corridor projects in urban settings are subject to constraints, including multiple ownerships; combinations of private parcels and public ownerships; public easements; and public and private infrastructure. Other constraints include a nearby groundwater contaminant plume; interaction needed to meet Valley Water jurisdiction requirements; and financing. Ms. Mahacek pointed out features of the current channel system, modifications for drainage, the flow of the channels, the pattern of natural and engineered pieces, and connecting pipes and drainage systems. The study reach is part of a complex urban drainage system. For the conceptual design, WRA adapted and modified a hydraulic model already developed for the system, ensuring the ground surfaces, concrete channel and other features were geo-referenced and that the elevations were correct. Hydrology developed by FEMA and by Schaaf & Wheeler for this system was reviewed and applied and coordinated with Valley Water. The model presented reflects the actual drainage network of the system and reflects the bridges that cross the boundaries. Ms. Mahacek

illustrated the existing channel and 100-year flood profiles for the area, pointing out sections that may not have adequate flood protection features, which must be included in the design elements, as well as others features to meet the vision for the project. Three tiers of re-naturalization were illustrated. One, enhancing the system; two, widening the system to an expanded 85-foot; and three, the maximum naturalization of expanding to 100 feet. The two project length variations are Park Boulevard to Lambert Avenue and Park Boulevard through Boulware Park. There are three options for the Lambert Avenue Bridge span: the existing (approximately 25 feet), widened (approximately 60 feet) and maximum (approximately 80 feet). All five concepts would demolish and remove the existing concrete channel while providing for maintenance access. All five could improve habitat, aesthetics and recreation activities. Only three of the concepts appear feasible from a flood management perspective. The first two shorter concepts presented are those which are unlikely to be hydraulically feasible. Ms. Mahacek highlighted the

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features of these two and pointed out how they may create possible inadequate flood management. The next three concepts match the cross section characteristics of the first two concepts, but they extend further upstream and involve changing or lengthening the Lambert Avenue Bridge in order to accommodate wider channel features. A couple of them would involve relocating the access ramp. They also include flood walls. Concept number 2A includes some laid back bank opportunities on the park side. The maximum concept has a broader footprint along the park reach, all the way through the project study zone. The hydraulic results create some changes, including raising of water surface, but those areas are in the project sections and could be addressed with flood wall mitigation. They are not creating an adverse change relative to present upstream and outside of the project area. Ms. Mahacek next presented a cost comparison, based on preliminary concept designs. The total cost column has the estimates as percentages of the final design, permitting, management and contingency would be. A variable in these guesses is the real estate cost. Alternatives which widen the right-of-way include estimate real estate costs. In summary, project has three concepts that are hydraulically feasible. There is awareness that as they are further developed, they will have to be closely coordinated with Valley Water regarding design criteria and maintenance needs. Potential costs of the options are sensitive to how the bridge changes are treated, what the flood protection solutions are, and the real estate components.

Ms. Campbell open the Public Comment period, allowing three minutes per speaker.

Mr. Jonathon Brown, Chair, Ventura Neighborhood Associations Parks Committee pointed out that concepts 2A and 3 take a lot of land away from the park. He advocates naturalizing the creek, but wants to expand the park, which is small relative to the population it serves. He requests that the NVCAP and the Commission address expanding the park. Mr. Brown mentioned the Magical Bridge and envisions doing something even better in Ventura. Mr. Brown encouraged looking around the city for other opportunities for naturalization and use of existing water district, utility and other easements to give pedestrians and bicyclists safe access to waterways and pathways.

Ms. Rebecca, creator of Ventura Neighborhood Associations, affirmed the Guadalupe work and also was very encouraged by Ms. Mahacek's presentation. She reiterated points she had made in an email to the group. The City Parks Master Plan specifies that new parkland must be added to maintain the standard of four acres per 1,000 residents. Since adding thousands of new residents is being considered, commensurate parkland acreage will be required. Her organization has asked the City for funds to provide these park opportunities, and asks that Parks and Rec help figure out how to acquire this parkland now. She is excited about the current project and suggests linking AT&T Park to Boulware with a pedestrian bridge and encourages partnership with Ventura to find a solution to the cost of this. She reminded the group of Park Boulevard, currently a bike boulevard whose traffic load exceeds appropriate limits, and asked for consideration of pathways for bikes and pedestrians.

Mr. Cedric La Beau Jardiere spoke in support of concept 3 and advocates integrating it into Boulware Park. Concept 3 has the highest ecological and recreational value and supports the City's goal of increasing

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parkland is this area. Although it's wider than the current easement, encroaching on private property, these properties would likely need to dedicate some land to public benefit and open space. This expansion could fulfill part of that requirement. He states that it could be argued that private property was previously stolen from the natural creek and the system suffered from this private gain, and it may be time to repay that ecological debt. His hope is that concept 3 would move forward.

Ms. Clare Elliot, resident of the Ventura neighborhood, Senior Ecologist with Grassroots Ecology, shared regarding the Portola Valley Town Center's Creek Daylighting project and Arastradero Preserve, a project of the Mayfly Creek tributary to Arastradero Creek which flows into Matadero. Numerous wildlife has been observed here. Portola Valley Town Center has enhanced the parkland around their library, so she advocates for laying the bank from the creek, as it would add to the park with access for closeness to nature. She pointed out there are fewer and fewer opportunities for children to experience this, and wonders if this will impact the future of environmental scientists. She would like to see kids be able to interact with nature in this area. She hopes funding can be discovered through DWR Urban Streams and Valley Water grants to supplement the City budget and would enjoy partnering in propagating native plants from their nursery to install in the area.

Mr. Kevin Ma resident of a Ventura neighborhood, asked the group to consider alternative 3, based on it's emphasis on bringing back the nature of the original creek. He acknowledged the expense required at a time when the City have many other expensive projects to consider. He pointed out alternative 3 is ambitious and that the City budget will have to contribute. He commented on the need to be careful about spending money, citing areas such as Adobe Creek. He acknowledges Ventura lacks parkland but considers how, with higher density, more open spaces might be found. Increased density also implies potential for more funding via impact fees. He recommends looking at more homes to increase the impact fees and more open space. He appreciates that this project interacts with Boulware Park and could create a more unified park space for the area. He also recommended ensuring the spaces created are bikeable, commenting on Park-Lambert turn, which is quite sharp. He looks forward to a welcoming spot for the entire community.

Mr. Jeff Levinsky, resident, commented that it seems that Ventura gets short-changed compared to other parts of Palo Alto, citing a lack of parks and shaded streets, apartment buildings overflowing with cars during the evening, retail locations illegally converted to offices not serving the community. He feels there has been unequal treatment and that NVCAP has not focused on bringing North Ventura up to the same quality as other communities in Palo Alto. He feels more high-rise offices will make Ventura less like the rest of Palo Alto. Mr. Levinsky, feels great neighborhoods require insistence that the parkland needed be planned and budgeted, and not something to go back to later. The four-acre per thousand residents standard should be upheld. He commented that North Ventura needs street trees and many other plantings. He is excited about naturalizing the creek and would like to see the size of the naturalized regions for each option and comparing the cost per acre to other ways of adding parkland. Mr. Levinsky,

remarked that the city is named after a tree, and would like to see many trees planted and new parkland created to make North Ventura as beautiful as other parts of Palo Alto.

Mr. Peter Drekmier, resident of downtown Palo Alto, shared that he formerly lived along Matadero and his driveway was a bridge over the creek, recalling that it was fabulous, with the natural creek and the wildlife. He finds this project exciting and recalls growing up about two blocks from the Matadero and loves the idea of providing access to a natural environment for children. He shared memories of watching toads in their ecosystem. In 1988, the water district put vertical walls along the creek which disrupted this system. He encourages enhancing habitat for toads as part of the project. Chorus frogs/Pacific tree frogs are upstream in the Barron Park neighborhood, and he believes these would colonize the area as well. He encourages improving habitat for small amphibians, which the children could enjoy.

Ms. Angie Evan shared being at Boulware Park with her children, enjoying the natural environment. Her children don't use the playground but love the creek and climbing trees. Her family moved to the area wanting to be able to enjoy the outdoors. She agreed with the previous speaker's promotion of habitat for amphibians. She urged the group to ensure that housing and park goals are complimentary, acknowledging that 2021 will be a huge year for the Planning Department and each Commission. She notes that often priorities are at odds. She would like to see reconsideration of height limits, building up in order to preserve parks. She stressed the importance of great spaces for future generations of all income levels and is optimistic that this is possible by building taller, maintaining great parks and providing equitably for the diverse population. She encourages consideration of the alternatives, both as Commission members and as neighbors.

Oral communications was concluded, with no other individuals desiring to speak.

Ms. Campbell moved to a round table with the entire group, with Ms. Moitra moderating and allowing for two minutes per individual to speak.

Ms. Angela Dellaporta expressed excitement at the prospect of restoring the creek, particularly positive in regard to options 2A and 3. She wants to make sure that no public park space would be replaced but that the four acres of park space per one thousand residents would be very key. She is excited to hear about possible grants as well as nearby creeks, such as Hale Creek in Los Altos and suggests finding out where the funds came from for the restoration. She questioned where pedestrians would access the creek.

Ms. Mahacek responded by showing options of a lower level above the creek in portions; an option along the multi-purpose path, along the shoulder of the creek. Each plan shows an access ramp designed for vehicles and conceptual paths. Details regarding public safety and vehicle access for Valley Water would need to be worked out, with the goal of providing both needs through a system with some access along

the high ground and some access going down and/or across the creek, depending upon the flow conditions.

Ms. Dellaporta asked if the vehicle access and the pedestrian access would be shared.

Ms. Mahacek answered that this would be the case only for a portion, the ramps, where the vehicles would come down. Other parts would be more customized path surfaces. .

Ms. Dellaporta questioned about the possibility for kids access to play in the creek.

Ms. Mahacek believes there is that possibility, which would be considered under the public safety portion of future planning – awareness, education, signage, etc. – so that people are aware of how to stay safe during high flow events.

Ms. Kirsten Flynn advocated for whichever option is feasible, reemphasizing adamantly that Ventura has been traditionally neglected and has more economically diverse population than the rest of Palo Alto, and they deserve to be served better by park acreage than in the past. In regard to renaturalization of the creek, she supports this and believes you don't save, preserve, fight for what you don't love, and you don't love what you cannot see. Access for people to fall in love with nature is needed. Channelizing the creeks misses an opportunity for children and adults to experience nature. Ms. Flynn feels at least a certain portion of the bank would count as parkland if accessible year-round, but areas that are not accessible should not be counted as part of acreage for parkland.

Mr. Lund Smith agreed with most of the previous comments and public comments from the day before, and a with much of the content of a letter from Silicon Valley At Home. He also agreed with Ms. Dellaporta's comments. He feels there is tradeoff between density, the amount of affordable housing allowed, and what can be accomplished with open space. The more generous with densities, the more that can be done with the creek and with some of the surrounding areas. He also reiterated comments regarding feasibility, stating that all of the options presented are great ideas but come mostly down to feasibility – what tradeoffs are we willing to make in order to get the beautification of the creek and more open space? Silicon Valley at Home pointed out the tradeoffs between alternatives 1, 2 and 3 and how much open space that translates into for all the options. Mr. Smith agreed that those are realistic, and the content of Silicon Valley's letter accurately presents the feasibility of any of the options.

Ms. Song agreed with most of the previous comments. She felt that all three plans look very good and appreciates the work and effort there. She points out that this is a chance to rebuild the creek and the open space around it, which will work for our generation and future generations, and we should push to make it more feasible. As plan 3 suggested, make it great for the kids, residents and neighbors in the residential area.

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Mr. Tim Steele, pointed out that land is in finite supply and suggested the NVCAP appreciate how many new acres would be consumed for each scenario, to understand how many residential units could have potentially have been built on that, or could trade if the creek was desired instead of the residential units. He pointed out the need to understand how many units are lost and what their potential would have been under the Park Ordinance to have to provide parkland for those units that are lost. In the WRA report, he thinks the cost estimates are underestimated, because they were using older tax assessment off of the assessor's role. He suggested using numbers that the park fee uses, based on more recent comps, suggesting the land value might be upwards of \$15 million per acre of new land consumed, and this number or something close should be used in the model. He would like to see that information brought back to the NVCAP for better understanding of the tradeoffs with prioritizing the creek expansion over residential or parkland.

Ms. Pittman was not available for comment.

Mr. Lew's suggestion was to try to use some before/after examples of other creeks, which would be useful for Council to visualize the aesthetic improvements along with the cost. He is very supportive of the project, sharing that he lives near a creek and trail, uses it regularly and thinks it something every neighborhood should have.

Commissioner Reckdahl agreed with Angela and Becky that open space and parks is not just important in North Palo Alto but is important for everyone and that North Ventura has not been well served, although a small amount has been added to Boulware Park. He pointed out that if there is consideration of putting 3,000 people here, that would be 12 acres of park, so the Commission and the City really must decide where to do that and how to pay for it. The founders of the City spent a lot of money to have parks, and the tradition needs to be maintained. The housing is coming, so the planning needs to start now. He questioned about the freeboard slide what the limiting factor was.

Ms. Mahacek answered that it is a complicated question, and the models help deal with time, volume, rate and other constrictions.

Commissioner Reckdahl asked, if 1 and 2 aren't feasible, he wondered what, if anything, would make those more feasible .

Andrew replied that he would have to model that scenario to give an answer. Typically, in regard to streams in urban areas, the bridges are always the issue. He added there are different grants for bridges and grants for streams. Sometimes the right combination can allow a great project, but focusing on bridges is a good strategy.

Ms. Mahacek cautioned that moving one piece of the plan may propagate other consequences. For instance, downstream of Alma and the changes down there, if you removed Park and are releasing too much water at inappropriate times, it could contribute to bad peak flow conditions there.

Mr. Reckdahl acknowledged this. He indicated a preference for especially the third option, but states the \$16 million is not affordable. He felt the only way to approach the project is to step into it, starting with option one, get it up and running and then move into 1A perhaps ten years down the road, and build up.

Ms. Mahacek indicated this is a tricky question. In terms of land use planning, anything involving widening, if counting on other phases in the future, it's important to anticipate bringing those into the project, both at a design level and in the financial planning side.

Going from option 1 or 2 to 1A or 2A, because those have that real estate increase, but going along a creek is a very normal way to build projects in phases, in a sequence that accommodate hydraulic impacts at each step.

Ms. Summa observed, at a high level, that this project is creating a new and better residential neighborhood, with all agreeing on the need for parks. She observed that it is also creating a plan, which should be very aspirational, consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, and as opportunities arise, it is important to make the plans work. Ms. Summa indicated opposition to such growth in the area, which is already lacking in parks. She tentatively would vote for option 3, although would like to study the technical aspects, and not worry about the money now, because of the aspirational nature of planning for such things. She stressed the need to start planning for these areas now, or the opportunity will be lost. She prefers not to mix the contemplation of aspirational goals for the park with the totally separate idea of housing.

Mr. Kaczmariski expressed that there's pressure on this project, with many different goals on the area that everyone is looking to address on this one project. He advised being careful about this. Also, because of providing this super density above anywhere else in Palo Alto, he feels appropriate amount of parks must be addressed. For residents who have an acre of land already, additional parkland down the road is a luxury, but for people who have a flat on the fifth floor, it is a necessity. Regarding the creek itself, he does not have a preference, but does think if the creek is integrated with the park, it could count as a park, but if just for fishing or frogs – which he has no problem with – he does not consider it a recreational area for the neighbors. If every square foot is accessible to play on with children he would consider it a park. If not, then it should be a different budget than the Parks budget. He also suggested selling some parks in the more privileged areas of Palo Alto and buying more here.

Mr. Holzemer asked about the two 90-degree turns in the channel and how it affects the park, and how naturalization can affect those turns. He also asked if the estimated costs include not only the price of project piecemeal, because properties have different owners. Finally, he asked about comparison of



naturalizing the creek versus having surface level park space added. He suggests it is important to know the cost benefits of both and understanding how one might be more beneficial than another.

Chair Greenfield affirmed the importance of ensuring park space based on the number of residents and restoring the natural environment, pointing out restoring riparian habitat is an exciting and rare opportunity. He reflected back to Shoup Park in Los Altos and the potential to create something like that, reemphasizing making sure there is an appropriate amount of parkland in an area anticipated to be redeveloped with many more residents added, and also an area that has gotten short shrift historically. Cost is a major factor and he hopes the economy will be in a different place when the time for this project to move forward occurs. He was curious to know how cost estimates have changed since the presentation to the Parks and Rec Commission 10 months ago and also about the guidelines for how the restored creek area would be classified with respect to open space or park and how it would apply to the housing/park ratio. Finally, he feels the opportunity for linkage to Boulware Park is very exciting and a great opportunity for the parks, something the Parks Commission would be interested in following up on.

Vice Chair Cribbs was excited about the opportunity, as well, and pointed out that no one wants to miss this opportunity and wants to make sure there is more than adequate parkland for the area and the ability to restore the creek and waterways. She feels the price should not scare people because there are many people who are interested in the environment and could help. She recalls at the meeting ten months ago, that many were excited about option 3, and thinks this should be the aspiration, making sure that priorities are in order as well. She asked for a reminder of the timeline and the things which need to happen before going to the Council.

Ms. Campbell answered that the plan will be taken to the Planning Commission in December, packaged with the rest of the NVCAP plan alternatives. They will review it and have some recommendations and comments, which will be forwarded on to the City Council in the spring. Council will be reviewing all of the components of this very large, complex project and giving some direction to staff on how to proceed. Once that direction is received, decisions will be made regarding developing the details with regard to the all of the components of the NVCAP.

Commissioner Olson remarked that the priorities and goals are all very sound and all of the designs are beautiful, a huge upgrade from the current state. She feels the current state with the concrete walls was simply for the purpose of moving water from one point to another. She agreed with earlier speakers about being as ambitious as possible and adding beauty to the space, recognizing the confines of the budget and the ability to accomplish things, and not shooting so high that it will never happen. She agreed that connecting to Boulware Park would be a great thing to do, if possible.

Commissioner Moss expressed excitement about the project as well. He commented he would support any of the five options. He loves number three, but would be happy with one. He noted the difference in price between 1 and 1A is \$5 million, some of which is land. Adding one to three thousand people, the

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buildings will be built to house them and he feels some of the development money should go to help pay for the parks. He wonders if there is some way to reduce the price between 1 and 1A, he would love to know how to do that. He wondered about instead of going wide, going higher and if that would reduce the price from 1 to 1A. Regarding access to the area, if going up and over, a higher wall, were possible, and would it make 1A cheaper and more feasible?

Mr. Reckdahl questioned Ms. Mahacek about funding, asking for guidance about funding and whether there are other sources and if the City is usually the one who funds it or someone else?

Ms. Mahacek responded that most projects like this are a “coat of many colors” and that people patchwork together many different sources. She has not specifically investigated for this project, but the general categories already mentioned are two sources For the current footprint, she suggested the Urban Streams programs and looking to Valley Water itself, and that if other efforts went closer to the Bay shore and other reaches of the stream, there may be different parts of some of the Resilience programs that might be tapped.

Mr. Andrew Smith offered the example of Upper Guadalupe, with a cost share project between the Army Corps of Engineers and Valley Water.

Ms. Mahacek added that, although this would be a big project for the neighborhood, it is a small segment of the system.

Commissioner Reckdahl asked what percent grants might be expected.

Ms. Mahacek advised that more research would have to be done on the likely programs and then to address some of the legitimate ways to better represent the real estate costs. Estimating the unit costs of materials and labor, etc., is fairly standard, but in regard to real estate costs, it might require sensitivity testing. If combining sources, there may be rules that apply to that. Ms. Mahacek suggested finding out if fee monies, mitigation monies from Valley Water or in-kind money, and then grants can be combined according to any grant program rules. In short, the process is not simple.

Ms. Campbell commented, regarding financing, that staff will be exploring ways to potentially fund the improvements and will share that as more information is available from hearings, etc. She expressed appreciation for all of the comments and assured that they will be documented as part of the staff report prepared for the Planning Commission and the City Council. She invited the group to feel free to send any further comments to staff, and they will be incorporated into the comments from this meeting. Feedback on the concepts presented in the plan would be helpful.

Ms. Dellaporta asked about the Commissioner Moss’s comment regarding building walls higher. She wondered if there is a possibility of digging deeper.

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Mr. Andrew Smith indicated that, unfortunately, this doesn't work, having to do with the energy gradient and the hydraulic gradient, which is the surface of the water, and not the bottom of the channel.

Ms. Flynn offered a final comment that the social equity issues are bubbling up for her. She shared that she volunteered for the North Ventura Coordinated Plan because she feels the neighborhood has had an uncoordinated plan for 25 years, and it would be unconscionable not to bring the parkland ratios for the projected populations up to at least what is experienced in the rest of Palo Alto, especially if the neighborhood will be bearing the effects of the coming density needed to address the housing needs.

Ms. Campbell wrapped up the meeting.

### Adjournment