



London N. Breed, Mayor  
Philip A. Ginsburg, General Manager

## McLaren Park Trails, Priority Projects

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### Virtual Community Meeting Notes

May 20, 2020, 4:00-5:30pm

#### Agenda

Welcome and Project Team Introductions  
Past Work and Approvals Summarized  
Four Priority Areas –Capital Improvement Scope Detailed  
Next Steps  
Questions & Answers

#### Project Team

Lauren Chavez – Project Manager – SF Rec & Park, [lauren.chavez@sfgov.org](mailto:lauren.chavez@sfgov.org), 415-581-2551  
Lisa Wayne – Natural Resources Manager – SF Rec & Park  
Anthony Copioli – Urban Trails Supervisor – SF Rec & Park  
Koa Pickering – Landscape Architect – SF Public Works

#### Past Work and Approvals Summarized

- Almost \$4M in funding, primarily from 2012 Clean and Safe Neighborhood Parks Bond
- The trail and natural features restoration work proposed in this capital project developed out of the goals of the 2017 Vision Plan Trails & Pathways group, and is consistent with the Natural Resource Management Plan.
- Goals generated from the Vision Plan Trails and Pathways group remain primary:
  - Ensure safe recreation and access
  - Maintain and build on natural character
  - Protect natural resources
  - Clarify circulation routes
- The proposed project scope adheres to the Recreation and Parks Commission-approved framework of organizing principles and hierarchy of trails, as well as a set of best management practices to guide future trail work:
  - Trail width standards: trails built at 3’ minimum for pedestrian only, 5’ minimum for multiuse trails with bike access
  - Trail realignment, decommissioning and habitat restoration for sustainability
  - Drainage and erosion fixes
  - Hazardous tree mitigation
  - Habitat restoration planting
  - Wayfinding and interpretive signage
- Community members have been involved throughout the Visioning and Conceptual Design process and community feedback has shaped and refined project design.



#### Four Priority Areas – Capital Improvement Scope Detailed

- Project Manager Lauren Chavez noted the intention to respond to community requests and that staff is using this community meeting to provide as much detail as is known at this time. She acknowledged that trail projects are design-build, which means that many design refinements are made in the field as vegetation is uncovered and soil conditions are closely examined. Proposed new trail alignments are shown in approximate locations.
- Landscape Architect Koa Pickering referenced the scope identified in the 2017 Vision Plan and then talked through the primary goals/ design intent and the specific proposed improvements in each priority area. *See Attachment A: Conceptual Design Key Map and Summary* for a list of proposed improvements (A – Z) in the following four areas:
  - Visitacion Avenue Corridor (A – E)
  - Upper Reservoir (F – L)
  - Shelley Loop Interior
    - Philosopher’s Hill (M – P’)
    - Core (P – R)
    - Primary Connectivity (S – T)
  - University Hill, Louis Sutter to Mansell Courts (W – Z)
- In addition to trail work as noted, major natural features restoration work was identified:
  - Removing invasive plants and establishing a seasonal wetland on the slope between the Upper Reservoir parking lot and John F Shelley Dr., near the Group Picnic Area. This work aims to enhance habitat and reduce stormwater surge into Yosemite Marsh. (L)
  - Removing the trail through Grey Fox Creek, and trails in the immediate creek zone, and enhancing riparian habitat. *Water and wetland habitats, are limited in San Francisco, yet are essential resources for wildlife. Providing protected habitat around waterways are one of the best ways to protect wildlife in the city.*(R)
  - Removing erosive switchback trails from the east side of University Hill and planting to promote diverse native grassland habitat. (X)
- Split rail fencing was called out to protect habitat in the following locations:
  - Framing Sidalcea Slope on the north side of Philosopher’s Hill (N)
  - Framing a new overlook on the south side of Grey Fox Creek, and possibly on the north side of the creek as well, to deter re-creation of a social trail through the creek (R)
  - Possibly *along University Hill trails above Louis Sutter to guide pedestrians and bicyclists to designated trails and deter* creation of social trails in the grassland area (X)
- The Project Team noted a few **possible** improvements, pending available budget:
  - Adding a multi-use trail connecting the north end of the Upper Reservoir with Philosopher’s Way, reinforcing a currently-used social trail through future seasonal wetland area. (L)
  - Formalizing a trail, including the addition of some box steps, from the lookout at Sidelcea Slope to the top of Philosopher’s Hill (P’)

- Adding a run of box steps at the eastern edge of University Hill, to connect the upper and lower portions of University Avenue and provide a more direct route between Mansell and Louis Sutter. (Z)

## **Next Steps**

- Project team committed to share presentation slides, Q&A, and notes and solicit additional community feedback.
- Detailed survey has been ordered for Upper Reservoir for ADA improvements (F – I), and access road (T) to ensure most accessible and sustainable realignment is achieved.
- The project team will refine conceptual design (to show pedestrian and multi-use trails and signage locations) and revise project cost estimate.
- Most of the project scope falls under previous environmental approvals, but staff will move forward with environmental review for the Visitacion Avenue Trail and crosswalk on Shelley at the Upper Reservoir.
- The project team is targeting presentation of the final conceptual design to the Recreation and Parks Commission in summer 2020.

## **Questions & Answers**

*With the virtual meeting format, all questions and comments were submitted via a Q&A chat feature. Live chat was disabled for security reasons and to avoid distractions during the presentation. Staff responded to clarifying questions as the presentation progressed and published questions while delivering verbal responses after the presentation was completed. Not all questions were published during the presentation; all questions and comments are summarized and responded to here.*

### General Questions

- There was a question about funding and staff clarified that the project complies with the 2012 Bond Ordinance, with various pieces of work allocated to trails or natural features enhancement funding, as well as the two grants.
- Staff acknowledged that the key maps are approximate and clarified that the intention is to decommission all social trails within the shown hatched areas.
- Some questions arose around trail widths, with several comments specifically requesting narrower multi-use trails. Staff confirmed that the project complies with previous approvals for 3' minimum width pedestrian trails and 5' minimum width multi-use trails.
- Several participants noted a desire for steeper, more challenging trails, and a critique that the plan called for the creation of gentle trails and removal of many steep trails. Staff reiterated that the project follows best management practices for construction of sustainable trails and designed to accommodate the greatest number of recreational users as possible.
- Many commented in support of the proposed habitat enhancement and restoration work, removing trails through and adjacent to sensitive habitat, and planting native plants.
- Many commented in opposition of trail closures, noting many social trails will be removed through the inner core (P and R) and University Hill (X).
- There were several comments expressing concern for tree removals. Once concept-level design is approved, staff will conduct hazardous tree surveys along approximate trail

alignments. Final trail routing will preserve healthy trees to the extent possible, while removing trees that are hazardous. For every tree that is removed, at least two trees will be planted, per department policy.

- There were several comments with suggestions for interpretive sign content and locations, use of anti-graffiti coatings, and suggestion that sign maintenance will be needed. As well, there were a similar number of comments noting a preference for no or minimal signage.
- A question came up about split rail fences and potential impact on habitat. Staff noted that the largely spaced wooden members do not deter wildlife passage.
- The project is not proposing changes to the off-leash dog area within Shelley Loop.
- Someone asked how many people attended the meeting. The virtual meeting format did not require sign in, but event presenters were able to see the number of participants who were connected in real time. The number of participants was steady around 38 for most of the meeting.

#### Area-Specific Questions

- The only comment on Visitacion Avenue corridor was noting that it was a great addition to the project.
- The only comment for Upper Reservoir area was a request for a narrower trail through the new seasonal wetland area (L). If this trail is constructed (pending budget availability), the trail would be part of a multi-use loop and therefore, consistent with the Commission- adopted trail standards, the trail would be constructed at a 5' minimum width.
- The vast majority of the comments and questions submitted were related to the proposed work in the Shelly Loop Interior (M – T), with a roughly even number of comments in support of and opposed to the proposed trail decommissions and habitat protection.
- There was a question on the restoration plantings that have occurred in recent years at Grey Fox Creek. Staff and volunteers have removed invasive species and planted Buckeye, Silk tassel, Thimbleberry, Elderberry, Honeysuckle, Giant chain fern, Oso berry, Bee plant, Creek dogwood, Sword fern, Seep monkey flower, Coffee berry, California blackberry, Islais creek cherry, Pink flowering current, Spreading rush, Yerba Buena, Columbine, and Fringe cups
- There was a question and suggestion about trail connectivity upslope of the amphitheater. Staff has clarified in Attachment A: Conceptual Design Key Map and Summary that there will likely be a trail around the amphitheater and connecting the top of the amphitheater zone with the scrub habitat (P).
- On University Hill, several people expressed concern at the reduction in variety of trail character if switchbacks through grassland are removed (X), although as was noted, the majority of participants in the March site walk were in favor of consolidating the two trails that connect Louis Sutter with the picnic area on Mansell. Note that the new stabilized natural surface trail will weave through the trees and pop out into the grassland, providing diverse experience along a sustainable trail.
- There were several comments suggesting that people will cut social trails between the switchbacks of the primary trail on University Hill (W), and out across the grassland. Staff noted the intent for the trail to be well-molded to the landscape so that the trail itself is the desired path of travel. While it's unlikely that split rail fence will be needed, staff is

still reserving this option if deemed necessary to protect the grassland resources from new social trails being developed.

- Several comments were made in support of the possibility to add a run of box steps at the east edge of the grassland (Z).