



**PUBLIC COMMENTS RECEIVED FOR
Thursday December 5, 2019
Working Group Meeting # 9a**

**From: David Hirsch
Sent: Fri 11/29/2019, 6:40 PM
To: North Ventura Coordinated Area Plan**

Subject: Comments on planning priorities

To the NVCAP Committee: Comments for consideration following the discussion at the meeting of 10/29/2019

Externalities: considerations beyond the boundary of the study established by the City Council:

The influence of the concentration of mostly tech companies in Palo Alto as the economic engine of development, the availability of a successful retail commercial downtown at California Avenue and the proximate location of the Caltrain station are the major factors determining the viability of the development of the Fry's site.

- A mixed-use development must recognize the economic logic of the commercial office component as the financial lever for a mixed income housing development with appropriate shared public amenities. Housing prototypes and planning concepts ought to be comprehensive, finding an equitable and economically feasible mix of housing, office and retail uses. Exclusively residential density studies without the office or retail component are of limited value. Whatever retail commercial uses proposed should not compete with California Street.

From Lambert Avenue to the neighborhood of downtown California Street is presently a mixture of housing and office usage, a very different pattern than the more concentrated residential nature of Ventura. While the Council has determined that there should be a cap on the expansion of office use, it has not determined that this limitation means that the Fry's site must be entirely housing or that a mix of housing and office is incompatible. As noted by Sobrato, the existing Fry's building can be successfully retrofitted to serve as office use, however this building is overwhelmingly large on the site, If retained in its entirety it will significantly restrict any reasonable new development. So to determine how to save a portion of the Fry's as a symbol of its storied history and to consider a plan that allows a separate new office structure(s) to

continue the present type of tenant found within the Fry's building must be a part of this planning exercise

- Boulware Park will become a shared facility between the Ventura community and the new, probably younger resident population of the Fry's site. Now that the site adjacent to the ATT building is city owned, Ash Street should be discontinued within the park area and an intense activity-type park considered. Park planning should consider a large number of future users, not just casual use open space. Consider volleyball, basketball, bocce a picnic grove as well as updating the early childhood playground activities. Provide for bike parking, lavatories to attract a larger neighborhood reach.
- (At a neighborhood meeting on November 9th, members of the community were invited by the Parks Department to Boulware to discuss and prioritize a program for the park. Many of these aforementioned ideas were already included in the Parks early plans, created to establish a budget. A final design will incorporate the community preferences determined at the meeting as well as further input when preliminary documents are developed. There was an active interest by the community participants in finding a way to connect the park to the Fry's site.)
- The only continuous street connection for bicyclists to the neighboring communities of Charleston Meadows or Monroe Park is Park Boulevard, a designated bikeway. The other larger immediate neighborhoods west of El Camino; Barron Park, Green Acres and the Research Park have no obvious or appropriate pedestrian or bicycle connection to the east side of El Camino. Not to consider this issue as primary to this planning study would be a mistake. Any transportation planning ought to include a study of the opportunities for a safe passage across El Camino, and this might occur through the Fry's project site, as it is the most direct route.
- Traffic flow at the El Camino intersection with Page Mill as well as the access to Oregon Expressway from Park Boulevard will likely be impacted by the increase in density of the project. Methods of mitigating traffic congestion in the vicinity of the project should be considered.

What if Park Boulevard was a one-way street for vehicles proceeding **south to Lambert** *beyond* the Page Mill access?

What if Lambert was one-way **west** to El Camino?

What if Ash Street north of Lambert was one-way **north** and connected through Olive to Page Mill?

What if Olive was one-way **east** between El Camino and Park?

Then rat traffic to Olive and left turns off Park to Page Mill are eliminated; two-way bicycle traffic on Park is safer and the various access routes to Page Mill are improved. Consideration of this kind of all-encompassing traffic study (without the constraint of present day property ownership issues) is critical to a proper comprehensive plan.

- Think outside of the box while planning for possible common-use open space. Consider a linear pedestrian and possible bicycle path or Greenway as a public amenity through the Fry's site between Boulware Park and Park Boulevard, a link to California Avenue and Caltrain from the

Ventura neighborhood. Ultimately this may be more useful, more easily accomplished and less expensive than naturalizing the creek.

- Study the need for parking based on the planned increase of rail service by Caltrain and the capacity and usage of the present designated parking areas adjacent to California Avenue, considering the minimal parking at the station. Perhaps additional parking on the project site would be reasonable for Caltrain users and could benefit on-site uses as well.

Respectfully submitted.

David L. Hirsch

From: Cedric de La Beaujardiere
Sent: Tue 12/3/2019, 3:41 AM
To: North Ventura Coordinated Area Plan

Subject: Matadero Creek Naturalization, Connection, and Integration Opportunities

Hello Elena and Ben and NVCAP people,

I am writing to you about the study being conducted for the naturalization of Matadero Creek to highlight some integration opportunities of which you may not be aware.

I think there is a possibility of increased synergy between past and future projects to greatly increase the health of Matadero Creek, naturalizing first from the tracks to beyond Boulware; to increase resident access and engagement to the creek, with a creek trail from 101 to ECR; and increase connectivity and safety for bikes and pedestrians to cross the tracks and Alma at Matadero.

Context

Given that as part of the North Ventura Coordinated Area Plan (NVCAP) planning process, WRA is studying the possibility of naturalizing the creek and will be presenting on Dec 5th a few options ranging from doing nothing to fully naturalize the creek. At the last NVCAP meeting Mr. Ben Snyder said he hoped that the creek could be naturalized and integrated with the neighboring Boulware Park as well as the extension of that park planned for the city's recent purchase of an adjacent empty lot on Ash at Chestnut.

Dimensions

In the baylands, Matadero Creek is essentially natural (though not its original meandering dissipation into a moist meadow). It is then channelized 8,400' (1.6 miles) to and under the Caltrain tracks. West of and parallel to the tracks it is channelized 400', then 1,000' through the NVCAP area, and 540' from the edge of the NVCAP area to the end of Boulware Park. From Boulware Park, the creek is channelized

about 200', then goes into a tunnel about 300' under a parcel and under El Camino Real (ECR). Upstream of ECR the creek is essentially natural to its source(s).

NVCAP through Boulware to ECR opportunity

So, the 200' section upstream of Boulware is just 10% of the ~2000' length from the tracks through Boulware, and if we were to naturalize the approximately 2140' from Caltrain to the ECR tunnel, we would be healing 20% of the creek channelization injury. (I would be keen to learn of any thoughts on how the creek ecology could be improved through the long 300' tunnel under ECR.) Together this section naturalized would essentially extend the creek's natural condition about a half mile, which would be worthy endeavor on its own.

Currently, it looks dangerous and illegal to get down into the creek, a symptom of a drastically imbalanced and unhealthy society when people are criminalized for seeking to access sacred water. If the creek is integrated with the park and NVCAP area and allows for people to enter and interact with the creek, we would be creating a great opportunity for people to connect with the natural world, increasing their connection to place and helping to instill an ethos of wonder and care for the planet and each other, and help show that we can heal and restore and be good stewards of the land.

Plans for a Caltrain & Alma Crossing at the Creek

You may not be aware of this, but in the City's Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plans, since at least 2003 there has been a proposed long-term project to add a bike/ped crossing of the tracks and Alma at or near Matadero Creek. This potential crossing was also referenced in the proposed Matadero Creek Trail (discussed below).

From page 5-5 of the 2012 plan (<https://cityofpaloalto.org/civicax/filebank/documents/31928>):

Matadero Creek Caltrain/Alma Barrier Connection

The 1.3-mile distance between the existing Caltrain undercrossing at California Avenue and the surface crossing at Meadow Drive represents the longest stretch of track barrier in Palo Alto. The lack of eastwest connectivity is a major issue for the Cal-Ventura area, a mixed-use neighborhood with potential for new residential and mixed-use development near the Fry's Electronics site and along El Camino Real. To the east of Caltrain lies the Matadero Creek maintenance road and proposed creek trail that extends through Midtown and eventually to the Baylands. This Plan recommends the City undertake a feasibility study to determine the specific alignment and phasing opportunities for the Matadero Creek Trail. The study's scope should include an alternatives analysis of the potential undercrossing options near the creek (or overcrossing compatibility pending Caltrain/High Speed Rail plans).

From page 3-10 of the 2003 plan (<https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/civicax/filebank/documents/7293>):

Caltrain crossings - The Comprehensive Plan supports one or more bikeway tunnels under Alma Street/Caltrain tracks:

- ...
- New tunnels at Everett or Lytton, Homer, Churchill, **Matadero Creek**, East Meadow, Charleston Road and San Antonio Road.

The City is currently studying and considering grade separation alternatives of how to separate the train tracks from the roads at Charleston, Meadow, Churchill, and Palo Alto Ave. One ridiculously expensive option is to lower the train into a trench or tunnel, which would bisect Matadero Creek (And Adobe Creek) causing great and pretty much irreversible further injury to the health of the creeks. Apparently the only way to get the creeks around the tracks would be an "inverse funnel": a sort of siphon and pump: think noise, pumps, and still water starved of oxygen. Another option (still pricey but which saves us 1 billion dollars of fool's gold) is to raise the train onto an elevated viaduct and go over Charleston and Meadow. This option is currently shown as returning to grade about 700' before Matadero Creek. This option would not damage any of the creeks as the tracks would be above the creeks or return to grade before the creeks.

(It's kind of a long shot, but if the viaduct were lengthened about 65%, the bottom of the structure could be about 12' above grade at Matadero creek, allowing a ground-level bike-ped crossing of the tracks at Matadero Creek. The cost breakdowns are not clear enough to indicate how much such an extension would cost, but it could be 5-10 times the cost of a smaller bike/ped undercrossing of the tracks and alma at the creek, so that's not likely to happen, at least not for that reason alone.)

Matadero Creek Trail Proposal

The last thing to bring to your attention is that, around 2013-2014 there was an effort to create a bike/ped path along Matadero Creek from the Baylands to the Caltrain. This path had a lot of promise but was killed by vocal NIMBYs and timid staff (I encourage you to be bold!), despite evidence that other creeks that have been opened to the public have reduced rather than increased crime.

<http://www.midtownresidents.org/Matadero/Matadero.htm>

More information on this trail proposal is at the end of this email. It could soon be time to bring this proposed trail back into planning, as it is yet another opportunity to bring people in connection with our creek and to create opportunities to restore the creek in its entirety, finally undoing the damage of our civic forebearers.

Summary

If the creek is naturalized as part of the NVCAP plan, a 10% longer project brings that naturalization from the tracks to ECR, with just the undercrossing left channelized (and ideally addressed to maximize ecological health of the creek). Then if a crossing of Caltrain and Alma were implemented at the creek and a path along the levee were implemented from Alma to 101, we would have a complete bike/ped/creek/nature connection from 101 to El Camino, and maybe we could get the salmon to once again spawn in our creeks. We'd bring people in contact with an important natural feature, and create a new way for bikes and peds to safely and efficiently cross the tracks and Alma. My hope is that

naturalization of the creek in the NVCAP area and bringing people in contact with it will inspire residents to restore more of the creek and other creeks in Palo Alto. I also hope our small kin, the native frogs and fish and myriad water creatures will one day soon be able to access, live, thrive and breed in the creeks again.

Thank you for your attention and your work to make Palo Alto happier, healthier, whole.

Let's go out there, be bold, be loving, be visionary, and make good things happen!

Cedric

Images of Matadero Creek and some others

Matadero Creek in Bol Park:



Matadero Creek just upstream of ECR:



Matadero Creek at Park Ave looking upstream:



Matadero Creek at Ross looking upstream:



Channel name unknown (to me) at 1400 Page Mill, looking north west:



San Mateo Creek at Norfolk Street, looking upstream:



Guadalupe River at trail at 237 looking upriver (What our creeks should look like):



More information on the proposed Matadero Creek Trail:

<http://web.archive.org/web/20170321014437/http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/news/displaynews.asp?NewsID=2233&TargetID=287>

<https://web.archive.org/web/20170502145600/http://midtownresidents.org/Matadero/MataderoKickoff.pdf>

<http://web.archive.org/web/20161109042411/http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/civica/filebank/documents/34476>

<https://web.archive.org/web/20191125155338/http://www.midtownresidents.org/Matadero/SCVWD Meet.doc>

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Excerpts from summary of discussion between Midtown Residents and Santa Clara Valley Water District (SCVWD):

SCVWD feels they have a responsibility to facilitate use of public property.

...

SCVWD reaffirmed their general policy that roads and trails adjacent to stream channels cannot be lighted and must be closed from sunset to sunrise.

SCVWD felt their channel maintenance costs would increase only slightly if the trail is developed along their access road.

...

NEIGHBORS expressed concerns for the safety of trail users, but as mentioned above, SCVWD feels all safety issues rest with the City of Palo Alto, so discussion regarding safety was limited.

SCVWD mentioned that a study of conditions along a trail in the County indicated that crime went down following the development of a trail. We have since asked for a copy of the report associated with that study.

NEIGHBORS wanted to know if SCVWD would continue to **spray herbicide** to limit vegetation growth along the service road and channel if the trail is developed. SCVWD said that if the trail were developed they would most likely continue to spray, but that they would close off sections of the road during spraying.

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From: Cedric de La Beaujardiere
Sent: Tue 12/3/2019, 4:16 AM
To: North Ventura Coordinated Area Plan

Subject: Fwd: creek images for NVCAP matadero naturalization

From: Cedric de La Beaujardiere
Sent: Tue 12/3/2019, 12:13 AM
To: North Ventura Coordinated Area Plan

Subject: NVCAP Concept: Vertical Forest Apartments

Hi, please forward this email for the consideration of the NVCAP committee, a short article about Vertical Forest Apartments:

Architect creates gorgeous "Vertical Forest" tree-lined high-rises that absorb 30 tons of CO2 a year

<https://www.dailykos.com/stories/2019/12/2/1903081/-Architect-creates-gorgeous-Vertical-Forest-high-rises-lined-with-215-000-Sq-Ft-of-forest-greenery>

Obviously these are taller than allowed in Palo Alto, but the concept can be applied to smaller buildings as well. I think and hope this kind of building will become the norm rather than the exception as we shift from a carbon emitting to a carbon sink society, recognizing not just the imperative for but the multiple net benefits of CO2 Drawdown. Benefits such as passive cooling in warming climate, carbon sequestration, fresh oxygen, filtration of air and noise pollution, attractive and calming private and public spaces, habitat for local birds and butterflies.



More designs here:

<https://www.stefano-boeri-architetti.net/en/>

<https://www.dezeen.com/tag/vertical-forests/>

<https://www.dezeen.com/2014/05/15/stefano-boeri-bosco-verticale-vertical-forest-milan-skyscrapers/>



Happy Visioning,

Cedric