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Officials open to trail through Sunnyvale

By Cody Kraatz
Sunnyvale Sun
Posted: 02/03/2009 07:47:32 PM PST

Sunnyvale has taken an initial big step toward eliminating a policy against routing the Stevens Creek Trail through its territory. The trail has been envisioned since the early 1990s to stretch from the San Francisco Bay through Shoreline at Mountain View Park to the Cupertino foothills.

Sunnyvale's policy is not opposed to the trail itself, but prohibits its being built on the Sunnyvale side of Stevens Creek near Fremont Avenue. The policy was put in place originally because Sunnyvale residents feared that the trail would hurt their quality of life.

The Sunnyvale City Council unanimously voted on Jan. 27 to gather public input about the policy, with an eye toward deleting it from the city's General Plan.

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"We're thrilled," said Aaron Grossman, a Mountain View resident and executive director of the Friends of Stevens Creek Trail, after the council vote. "Sunnyvale has been kind of the missing link between Mountain View in the north and Los Altos and Cupertino in the south."

Grossman noted that the trail is still a long way from reality and faces hurdles such as planning, financing and the opposition of some neighbors who would be very close to it.

It also depends on close cooperation between Mountain View, Sunnyvale, Los Altos and Cupertino. Each city will have a part of the trail within its boundaries and will participate in upcoming four-city talks.

Sunnyvale named Vice Mayor Chris Moylan and transportation and traffic manager Jack Witthaus as its representatives in the talks. Cupertino has yet to name its representatives, and no meeting dates have been set.

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The other cities were waiting for Sunnyvale to allow the preferred route for the trail to run through less than a quarter-mile of Sunnyvale territory in the area of Highway 85 and Fremont Avenue.

Los Altos has proposed that the trail cross the creek into Sunnyvale just north of that intersection, pass under 85 and follow the southbound 85 off-ramp to Fremont.

From there, a multi-use path separated from traffic by a buffer planting strip would continue along Fremont, Grant Road and Foothill Expressway into Cupertino, which is planning to build a multi-use trail through Blackberry Farm.

Despite Sunnyvale's official enthusiasm, some of its residents remain opposed. "The area now is a really quiet neighborhood," said Ray Murakami, a resident of Ashcroft Way near Stevens Creek.

He is unconvinced by assurances that the trail would bring little noise or nuisance. Mostly, he said, he's worried that the access routes to the trail would cause problems in the neighborhoods they pass through.

He warned that the city would see an uprising of angry residents as it moves forward with planning the project.

Sunnyvale resident Patrick Grant posted this video on YouTube to illustrate the area that could be accessed by a Stevens Creek Trail if it were allowed to pass through a small section of Sunnyvale: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2_aFzOwBVJc

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