

STEVENS CREEK CORRIDOR

Master Plan

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS SUMMARY JUNE 2014

INTRODUCTION

In Spring 2014, the City of Cupertino began the process of developing a master plan for Stevens Creek Corridor (SCC). The SCC Master Plan will address how to best meet future park and open space needs for area residents by enhancing existing infrastructure along Stevens Creek Corridor. Though efforts have gone into restoring and improving various areas in the corridor during recent years, no master plan has looked at the site holistically since the planning work done in 2004-06. The site, which extends from Stevens Creek Boulevard on the north to McClellan Road on the south, is the largest open space in Cupertino and with community support will be able to meet many community needs now and into the future.

In June 2014, Laurie Matthews of MIG, a local public engagement, planning and landscape architecture firm, interviewed several key stakeholders identified by the City of Cupertino to discuss issues and opportunities they would like addressed in the planning process. Stakeholders were also asked to identify potential project partners and the needs of associated organizations that should be considered to help make this plan a success. The one-on-one and small group interviews took place in person or by telephone and lasted approximately 45-60 minutes each. Stakeholders included representatives from the following organizations:

- Santa Clara Valley Water District (SCVWD)
- McClellan Ranch Preserve and McClellan Ranch West (formerly known as the Simms Property)
- Monta Vista Neighborhood
- Stockmeir Task Force
- Cupertino Historical Society
- Friends of Stevens Creek Trail
- Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society
- Rolling Hills of Cupertino 4-H Club
- California Cricket Academy
- Blue Pheasant Restaurant
- golf enthusiasts and park neighbors

The City of Cupertino is committed to creating a plan that aligns with local needs, preferences and priorities. Community input is integral to developing each phase of the SCC Master Plan. The public engagement plan, of which these stakeholder interviews are one part, is designed to:

- increase community awareness of the project;
- provide access to project information and opportunities for participation;
- offer a range of communication and engagement tools to match interest and preferences;
- ensure the final SCC Master Plan reflects community preferences and values; and
- get community buy-in to support plan adoption and project implementation.

INTERVIEW FINDINGS SUMMARY

The Stakeholder Interview Summary is divided into three parts in the following order: Project Site Issues and Opportunities, Organization Needs, and Partnering Opportunities.

Project Site Issues and Opportunities

Stakeholders identified issues, opportunities, and past and current planning efforts for the collection of sites associated with the SCC Master Plan project. Below is a summary of information that was provided by the stakeholders who were interviewed. This summary is not meant to be a comprehensive list of all of the issues and opportunities associated with SCC, but a reflection of the issues and opportunities that were raised by those interviewed. The summary is organized by site area.

ALL AREAS

Identified Issues

- *Circulation:* Few people currently bike to the park. The trail is and will be challenging for bike commuters due to the topographical dip down and then back up. Many multi-use trails are typically 10 feet wide, but the trail through SCC is generally 8 to 9-1/2 feet, which in some cases leads to competition between modes (i.e., pedestrian and bikes). There is a need for more bike racks.
- *Community gardens:* The community gardens are not currently located near people who need them most, such as those living in high-density housing. The scale of the garden plots may be too big to meet the current need for community gardening opportunities (i.e., there is a waiting list for garden plots, and some of the plots are larger than is typical for community gardens so they could be reconfigured into smaller sizes to help meet demand).
- *Ecology:* The Audubon Society conducts a bird nesting project throughout corridor. It is important to discourage people from roaming off the trails in sensitive nesting areas. The established nature trail needs better wayfinding and educational signage. Vegetative restoration is ongoing, but invasive grasses are taking over. The general public lacks awareness of the success of restoration projects. It is important to recognize the difference between the nature preserve at McClellan Ranch, and conventional public park areas.
- *Hydrology:* The SCC project area is largely within the FEMA 100 year flood zone. Due to the current drought, Stevens Creek Reservoir is very low and water is not currently flowing through Stevens Creek as far downstream (northward) as is typical. There is potential to explore moving the SCVWD discharge infrastructure further upstream.
- *Neighborhood:* The park has experienced some neighbor issues. Some neighbors want SCC to be treated like a neighborhood park, not a regional draw. Moderation may be needed to overcome neighbor concerns—some past projects have not been easily embraced and there is a history of small broken promises. Though many of these issues have been addressed, they still linger in some community memories. There are some conflicts concerning property boundary issues, especially concerning boundaries of the public land that back up to residential property. For example, some fence lines may not align with property lines. Records of surveys for nearly all properties exist, and should be consulted. Streets within the Meadows housing development are privately owned, restricting public access.

Identified Opportunities

- *Circulation:* The park could be a great place to teach bike riding. Other neighborhoods may desire local connections to the trail. Stevens Creek Trail is planned to connect to the nearly 30 mile long Skyline-to-the-Sea Trail and create a Bay to Ocean trail. Substantial portions of

Stevens Creek Trail are complete. The trail is multi-use at the Bay side, and less so at the Ocean side. There is a known gap between Cupertino and Mountain View.

- *Cultural history:* Stevens Creek is named after Elijah Stephens. Before European settlement, American Indians collected acorns in the area. A mortar and pestle was found in the corridor. Juan Bautista de Anza camped at the “arroyo San Joseph of Cupertino” [Stevens Creek] and there is now a plaque near the high school. Reportedly the de Anza party viewed the Bay from a point near Cupertino. The Monta Vista Neighborhood was established in 1903. It started as a neighborhood of weekend homes for San Franciscans who wanted “country homes” in the 1950s. Today, about 2000 people live in the neighborhood, which is considered a dense area of Cupertino. Ten years ago, the neighborhood was annexed into the City. Prior to that, it was county land.
- *Ecology:* Acterra is implementing native vegetation restoration plantings. The creek has potential to provide great steelhead habitat. There is growing support for not channelizing the creek and maintaining more natural space. From the perspective of the SCVWD continuing restoration in the SCC could provide opportunities for mitigation plantings they are required to complete for other projects in their purview. The past creek clean-up (i.e. restoration project) was well done and deserves recognition.
- *Education:* Potential educational opportunities include insect studies, plant identification and history of human uses. There is desire for historical signage along the full length of the trail. Historical Society members as appropriate could provide content and may be able to lead site tours. Historic maps of the area could provide fodder for cohesive historic signage with layers information, including a map of the area around the winery. Foothill Community College has a strong environmental science program, and the new Environmental Education Center will provide opportunities for education as well.
- *Hydrology:* There is potential to move the SCVWD pipeline upstream to allow more even flow of water through the creek channel (may require outfalls in some areas).
- *Land use:* Passive uses are ok in SCVWD easement properties (for example, benches or bocce), but less so in the stream corridor.
- *Neighborhood:* Nearby facilities include a senior center, sports center, teen center, community center and Monta Vista Recreation Center.

BLACKBERRY FARM PARK

Identified Issues

- *Circulation:* Buses are not allowed at Blackberry Farm Park starting in May 2015, which is problematic for visiting school groups. Vehicular congestion in the area is compounded by traffic to and from Blackberry Farm, nearby schools and DeAnza College. San Fernando Avenue is not an adequate entrance.
- *Public access:* Blackberry Farm Park is currently open only 100 days of the year. The public has voiced a desire for it to be open year-round.

Identified Opportunities

- *Recreation:* The City’s acquisition of Blackberry Farm led to a re-think of the site, including a reduction in the intensity of use.

BLACKBERRY FARM GOLF COURSE

Identified Issues

- *Hydrology:* Water features associated with the golf course are no longer functioning as water features/hazards. Irrigation system needs replacement.
- *Noise:* Neighbors have expressed concern over late night noise associated with Blue Pheasant Restaurant, though some efforts have been made to address this.

- *Use:* Less people are using Blackberry Farm Golf Course than in years past.

Identified Opportunities

- *Ecology:* There should be natural area enhancement along the stream corridor, to maintain wildlife function. Deer are prevalent and sleep in the park. Coyotes, foxes and raccoons are also common. There is hummingbird habitat present.
- *Recreation:* Blackberry Farm Golf Course serves beginners and seniors—those who practice their short game. The course is not too hilly, so it is easy to walk. Other nearby driving ranges include Pruneridge in Santa Clara and Sunken Gardens in Sunnyvale, but they do not tend to draw senior (50+) players. A new golf practice facility could be developed on the newly acquired property between Stockmeir Ranch and the parking lot. The project could combine Blackberry Farm Golf Course and the Deep Cliff executive course (owned by a private consortium) to make a full 18-hole course. The courses could connect through the property west of McClellan Ranch with a trail along the north edge of McClellan Road.
- *Use:* The neighborhood is not married to the golf course, but they like having the green space. If enough people use the golf course and it is managed environmentally, then maybe it should stay, but the area should be explored for potential new uses.

MCCLELLAN RANCH WEST/SIMMS PROPERTY

Identified Issues

- *Buildings and structures:* The house is currently rented through June 2015 and is in poor condition.
- *Ecology:* There are sometimes wildlife and car conflicts, including deer and mountain lion at Deep Cliff Golf Course that is located just south of McClellan Ranch West.
- *Land use:* McClellan West is currently zoned residential. No technical studies have been done on McClellan Ranch West including studies into any existing easements.
- *Neighborhood:* Neighbors located across from McClellan Ranch West don't like overflow parking occurring on their neighborhood streets.

Identified Opportunities

- *Circulation:* There is potential for a footbridge, but there may already be enough bridges.
- *Ecology:* Wildlife habitat is a high priority, as are opportunities for people to learn about the history and natural history of the site.
- *Parking:* This area provides parking when the parking lot at McClellan Ranch is filled, but is not well marked so requires a parking attendant.

MCCLELLAN RANCH PRESERVE

Identified Issues

- *Circulation:* The park's entrance at McClellan Road is not optimal, and may warrant a safety study. The Environmental Education facility is starting construction in June, which will increase use of the site. Pedestrian traffic will increase along the cross walk located at the entrance of McClellan Ranch Preserve. The bridge at McClellan Road is closed during floods, and open during low and normal flow.
- *Parking:* Currently there are parking conflicts in the McClellan Ranch Preserve parking lot between the organizations and visitors using the park. Parking users include visitors accessing trails and the nature preserve, 4-H participants, community gardeners, City program participants and Audubon event goers and Nature Store patrons. The main parking has capacity for 18 cars including 2 ADA, plus 6 more paved spaces beyond the milk barn, and the overflow lot on the McClellan Ranch West property has capacity for 50-60 cars, if drivers are carefully directed.

- *Public access:* The “peninsula” area (on the west bank between McClellan Ranch Preserve and Blackberry Farm Park, southeast of Scenic Circle) has no official public access.

Identified Opportunities

- *Buildings and structures:* The Environmental Education facility started construction in June 2014. It will be used during all times of day. The barn can be used for programming as well if it is rehabilitated.
- *Circulation:* Many bikers and walkers enter the park through McClellan Ranch.
- *Ecology:* McClellan Ranch is designated as a nature and rural preserve. Stream restoration is needed along this section of the creek. It doesn’t need a big engineering project, but restoration should involve removal of the concrete blocks from McClellan Ranch, removal of invasive vegetation and planting of native vegetation. Some improvements to the creek hydrology may be necessary to improve its potential for fish habitat.
- *Education:* McClellan Ranch has both history and environmental focus. It appeals to schools for education. Previous land uses include a vineyard and a working ranch. A map from 1800 shows which variety of grapes were growing in different areas. In the past, the historical society had not expressed much interest, but they are keen to explore future opportunities.
- *Precedent (design):* Trailside environmental education center in Union County, NJ.
<http://ucnj.org/community/parks-community-renewal/parks-facilities/trailside-beta/>

STOCKLMEIR RANCH

Identified Issues

- *Buildings and structures:* The house is in need of a new roof and sewer connection. Alternately, it could be preserved as it is, and visitors could be allowed to just look into the windows.
- *Ecology:* The old orchard was preferred by animals and bees. It is important to balance ecological benefits with the need to accommodate a variety of human uses, including developed hardscape elements.
- *Funding:* In the past, the historical society expressed interest in Stocklmeir Ranch and tried to raise a million dollars to fund their vision, but fell short.
- *Hydrology:* Past floods came up to the Stocklmeir house.
- *Neighborhood:* Compromise was necessary in terms of the the trail alignment near Stocklmeir Ranch—it could not be near the fence, as neighbors didn’t want it in proximity to private property.
- *Public access:* Access is a real issue, as well as connectivity to areas south of the site. No real area for providing parking on the Stocklmeir Ranch site.

Identified Opportunities

- *Circulation:* Parking and circulation are limited at Blackberry Farm. Golf carts could facilitate access.
- *Cultural history:* There is potential to restore and protect the historic house and property, but it is currently in poor condition. There is also potential to interpret the history of Louis Stocklmeir, a visionary and community leader who valued education and conceived of the idea for a legacy farm. He also engineered a realignment of the creek. The Historical Society has expressed interest in the site. Their private events are held at the Quinlan Center now. Stocklmeir Ranch could also be used as a place to interpret the Monta Vista neighborhood and Elijah Stephens history. Cupertino was named after Arroyo San José de Cupertino (now Stevens Creek). The creek had been named by Spanish explorer Juan Bautista de Anza's cartographer, who named it after Saint Joseph of Cupertino. The name Cupertino first became widely used when John Doyle named his winery the Cupertino Wine Company.

- John Doyle first imported the Barbera grape into California and produced his first Barbera vintage in 1884 from vines planted in Cupertino. He established viticulture at UC Davis.
- *Ecology*: A generous buffer from the creek would protect flora and fauna.
 - *Education*: People could learn through a project-based learning garden. Lessons could be applied to science and math concepts. Cupertino High School currently has a garden. A local teacher has developed a proposal for use of Stocklmeir Ranch. Education programs could encourage healthy eating and show community ties to agricultural history. The Traveling Trunk program provides schools with artifacts and presentations about local history, which could have tie-in with Stocklmeir. Vocational training would be valuable, as it has been decreasing in the curriculum at public schools.
 - *Partnerships*: The Rotary Club and Historical Society have shown interest in Stocklmeir Ranch. The Rotary Club has also expressed interest in the property next to Stocklmeir Ranch that was newly acquired.
 - *Precedents (design) for agriculture/ education*:
 - Hidden Villa in Los Altos (50 acres), dates to 1940s
 - Environmentally conscious family
 - Row crops, animal, nature trails, demo gardens (CSA)
 - Surplus goes to Second Harvest
 - Staff of 20-30—learn and operate
 - Budget of \$3.5 million per year
 - Non-profit
 - Full Circle Farm in Sunnyvale, CA
 - 11 acres near school—connected to school for education
 - Subscription farm
 - Financial issues
 - Valley Verde
 - Corporate subscription to low income families
 - Teach bilingual
 - Boxes of food to families
 - Cupertino Middle School
 - Fence in for garden boxes
 - Added garden
 - Get space back in August
 - Working with teachers to do lay out with 70 beds
 - Education—Life Lab—education syllabus

Organization Needs

Stakeholders were given the opportunity to describe the needs and defined roles of organizations currently or potentially associated with sites within SCC. Though issues and opportunities associated with these organizations are captured in the previous section of the summary when they pertain to a particular area of the site, it's important to capture the needs and roles these organizations have or could have in the SCC.

Blue Pheasant Restaurant

The Blue Pheasant is located at the north end of the Blackberry Farm Golf Course. It tends to attract a 50 and older crowd for lunch, dinner, drinks and dancing, and holds a nostalgic place in the hearts of its patrons. It just completed the first year in a 5-year lease. The surrounding residential area has posed challenges with conflicting uses and business promotion. Past noise complaints led to reduced hours of operation, which now stand at Tues-Sun 11am-3pm and 5pm-11pm, with a DJ playing music evenings between 7pm and 11pm. The manager reports that revenue went down by 40% after

the reduction in opening hours. The management would like more opportunities to increase business in correlation with park improvements. Recent improvements have been made to the infrastructure and surface of the parking lot. Trees in front of the Blue Pheasant have died from lack of irrigation.

California Cricket Academy

The California Cricket Academy, which is based in Cupertino, is the only youth sports league for cricket in the region. Over the past ten years, participation has averaged 25 people per year, ranging between 20-40 residents and non-residents per season (spring and fall). They need access to local fields and facilities appropriately sized for youth cricket practice and play, including batting cages, fitness training facilities, practice fields and tournament fields.

Current facilities include:

- One batting cage in Fremont (which they are losing access)
- One batting cage with two bays at Collins Elementary
- One field behind the library for youth under 13
- One center pitch at Delaware Elementary for youth under 15
- Renting fields elsewhere for youth 15-17

Fields are regulation sized using international field standards (12'x100' pitch and 200' radius). All fields are currently shared, which leads to scheduling conflicts. New facilities planned are not appropriately sized for youth play. The open space south of Cupertino City Hall does not allow leagues to book reservations on Sundays, saying the fields need to rest; CCA would like an exception to this rule for tournaments (4-5 weekends per year). As a precedent, there is a complex in southern California that has five fields in one complex.

Possible candidates for future site facilities:

- Creekside
- Calabazas Park?
- DeAnza College
- Kennedy Middle School
- Peterson Middle School

Cupertino Historical Society

The Cupertino Historical Society is a small organization that has expressed an interest in the buildings and structures on Stockmeir Ranch in terms of assisting with interpretation, holding events, and/or serving as an office for their group. Due to the strong historic integrity at Stockmeir Ranch and in other areas of the SCC, the historical society is interested in a stronger role to support activities and programs in the corridor. They have also begun to express an interest in interpreting history at McClellan Ranch.

Rolling Hills of Cupertino 4-H Club

The local Cupertino 4-H club was formed in 1972 when they decided to become a separate club independent from the Sunnyvale chapter. At that time, their only facility was a little house and little barn with three stalls on the McClellan Ranch property. Since then, 4-H has been given the area from the McClellan barn to the current 80' 4-H barn. In the past, there were trailers for caretakers, and goat pens located between the barn and McClellan Ranch. They currently provide agriculturally based classes and programs for local youth.

Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society (SCVAS)

The Audubon Society maintains a local office, meeting space and Nature Shop on the McClellan Ranch site. The site offers bird watching and opportunities for outdoor education. The organization

hosts a summer camp, events and tours on the site, but they are limited in their efforts due to use of the site for City programs.

Main site uses, needs and conflicts include:

- Classes and workshops for SCVAS members (and friends): At least one class every month for up to 20 people at a time. Both classroom (in conference room) and field trip (outdoors) components using the bird feeders, creek trail, and other areas of the Preserve. They would love to have a new classroom. The conference room is too small for school class sized groups. They might be able to use the Environmental Education center when it is complete.
- Meetings for committees and auxiliary organizations: 6-8 active committees and a network of several other collaborative committees, each with between 5-15 people attending regular meetings.
- Events: 10-12 large events per year for SCVAS members and the community. Past examples include Saturday art fairs, weekend festivals, used-book sales, author-signing evenings, fundraising parties, annual membership potluck and board elections. With the exception of the annual festival (which attracts anywhere between 450-700 people), these events usually bring in between 50-150 participants.
- Cavity Nesters Recovery Program (CNRP) training and support: Twice a year training meetings for new and returning participants. Also store all of the equipment and logistical material (1000 nesting boxes, tools, wood, and other support equipment) for the program on site, mostly in the old barn. When the barn is restored, they will lose this storage space. This program would not be possible without ample storage.
- CNRP trails: SCVAS maintains and monitors nest boxes along three trails established in 1997 (along the creek and in the meadow in the main preserve area; in McClellan Ranch West; and in the old orchard) throughout the breeding season. Nesting boxes across the thistle field become inaccessible after April 15. They would like for this to change. The trails component of the CNRP project helps support native cavity nesting species, provides training for new monitors and allows for educational programs. This program also includes the nesting Barn Owls on the property. They would like to implement a live-stream video feed with remote cameras to monitor the owls.
- Native Plant Garden (with bird feeders): The garden is used as a teaching tool to educate community members about wildlife-friendly gardening practices and native plants, and as a conservation tool to support native bird populations.
- Bird and nature walks for adults, schools and scout troops: Small groups (no more than 30 participants) to come on a bird walk along the preserve. They hope to make this a more regular program in the future (i.e. possible once-a-week during the breeding season). They haven't been doing this as much because of schedule conflicts with the City of Cupertino's programs. Biggest issue is competition for parking, but also competition for use of site and trails. The existing capacity for overflow parking at McClellan Ranch West is imperative to SCVAS' function. The regular parking area is limited, and overflow can hold 50-60 cars if drivers are carefully directed. Drivers find it confusing to navigate to and within the overflow parking area.
- Birdathon Bird Viewing: McClellan Ranch is used as part of the annual Birdathon (aka spring fundraiser). Teams of birders throughout March and April come to count as many different bird species as they can to help raise money for SCVAS.
- Small group events: Birding presentations/programs/activities for birthday parties, homeschool groups, etc. This usual takes place outside at the picnic tables or small outdoor "amphitheater" (i.e. the logs set up in a half-circle under the trees by the creek), and can be a science program, nest box building, or bird feeder activity. They would use the meadow more if it was mowed more often, and had movable facilities/tables between Audubon and the museum. They would like an outdoor pavilion, amphitheater or meeting space.

- Summer Camp: Each year, they host a week-long summer nature camp at the Ranch for 20-40 children. They are trying to expand this program, but scheduling conflicts with the City's summer camp programs have been limiting.
- Nature Shop: SCVAS operates a small store on the premises, selling field guides, bird seed and other bird and nature-related items. There is a small but steady flow of customers throughout the week. Closed on Sundays.
- Office use: SCVAS has office space on site. This includes offices for 4 full-time and 2 part-time staff members and volunteers, and a lending library for members. They also heavily utilize the basement for storage. Access to the Nature Shop is problematic when there are big events. They would like to reserve at least one parking space for Audubon or Nature Shop use only.

Stevens Creek Corridor Water District (SCVWD)

SCVWD retains water from Stevens Creek to manage ground water recharge in the watershed by retaining water in the Stevens Creek Reservoir during the winter and releasing it for recharge in the springtime onward through the dry months. To this end, they have hydrology infrastructure in Stevens Creek, including a valve and a 30" discharge pipeline. The pipeline runs between private houses and the sidewalk in SCVWD easements. The rights include a 60' wide ownership on the east side of the creek in McClellan Ranch Preserve, an easement over part of the McClellan Ranch meadow, and ownership of the parcel immediately downstream of McClellan Ranch. SCVWD needs access to those areas so they can maintain infrastructure, remove vegetation and manage channel conveyance as needed for safety. The City maintains the public right of way in other capacities. To effectively manage water, SCVWD needs to know how surface water in the Stevens Creek Corridor is used, and they also require restoration lands for mitigation plantings.

Partnering Opportunities

Stakeholders identified several organizations and entities that could provide opportunities for partnership in the Stevens Creek Corridor master planning process. Below are names, brief descriptions, and website or contact information for each of these potential partners.

Acterra

The organization that absorbed Stevens and Permanente Creek watershed councils. A strong volunteer organization, they are doing plant restoration associated with the creek corridor.
<http://www.acterra.org/index.html>

California Native Plant Society, Santa Clara Valley

Local chapter of statewide conservation and horticulture organization.
<http://www.cnps-scv.org/>

Cupertino Community Garden

Rentable community garden plots, located in McClellan Ranch
Telephone number: (408) 777-3120

Rolling Hills of Cupertino 4-H Club

Cupertino's chapter of the national agricultural education youth organization maintains facilities and holds classes and events on the McClellan Ranch site.
<http://rh4h.com/index.htm>

Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

The national conservation organization's local chapter maintains an office, meeting space and a Nature Shop on the McClellan Ranch site. They host a summer camp, events, and tours, maintain bird boxes on the surrounding site and conduct an annual bird survey.

<http://www.scvas.org/index.php>

Santa Clara Valley Water District (SCVWD)

SCVWD, the valley's water management and flood protection body, stores water and operates the reservoir which supplies Stevens Creek during dry times of year.

<http://www.valleywater.org/>