



San Diego Canyonlands
3461 Euclid Avenue San Diego, CA 92104
619-284-9399

Canyon Enhancement Planning for Maple Canyon DRAFT ACTION PLAN November 13, 2017

I. INTRODUCTION

San Diego Canyonlands (SDCL) is a non-profit organization dedicated to restoration and preservation of San Diego's unique canyons and creeks. SDCL has established a Canyon/Creek Enhancement Planning (CEP) Committee to create a guide for community stakeholders that facilitates a systems approach for integrating our natural open spaces within the fabric of the urban environment. The steps of the CEP process include the following:

1. **Friends Group Creation:** Establish a knowledgeable Friends Group (stewardship group)
2. **Mapping and Analysis:** Create GIS maps of existing conditions for constraints analysis and opportunities assessment
3. **Community Engagement and Planning:** Assemble community stakeholders; conduct a series of stakeholder workshops for input; and create an Action Plan that summaries the enhancement opportunities, priorities, and solutions to identified issues/problems
4. **Plan Approval:** Build local support, including civic and planning groups; seek funding as needed, and obtain necessary permits and/or California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) compliance
5. **Plan Implementation:** Implement the plans where possible through volunteers, collaborations, and partnerships; for other major improvements, seek funding and implement when possible

This draft Maple Canyon Enhancement Action Plan (Action Plan) is the outcome of the third step in the CEP process —Community Engagement and Planning. Four Maple Canyon community stakeholder meetings have been held. Participants/stakeholders included Maple Canyon friends, neighbors, canyon users, City Rangers and other interested persons. The first stakeholder meeting was an indoor meeting at Merrill Gardens on October 28, 2015, where handouts and maps were distributed and stakeholders were oriented to the CEP process. The second two meetings (December 5, 2015 and January 30, 2016) were field visits on the west and the east sides of the canyon looking mainly at potential trail locations and improvements, viewpoints and mini-park sites. The fourth meeting was held on March 10, 2016 at Merrill Gardens and focused on hydrology problems and the severe erosion of the main stream channel. Tory Walker with TRW Engineering was a guest speaker. The meeting included a power point presentation by Eric Bowlby and Tory Walker.

Stakeholder priorities, concerns, enhancement ideas and other comments were gathered during all the stakeholder meetings. Meeting notes were distributed to the Maple Canyon Stakeholder e-mail list and posted on the SDCL website www.sdcanionlands.org/cep (scroll down to the Maple Canyon docs.). This draft Action Plan summarizes the information gathered during the stakeholder meetings and lays out the stakeholder-proposed enhancements and goals. This draft Action Plan will be reviewed for further input and refinement at the next scheduled meeting and will be considered for possible adoption.

The Maple Canyon stakeholders are an advisory group only. The goal of the CEP process is to come as close to stakeholder-consensus as possible. Ultimate decisions are not binding on individual participants. The Action Plan

will be presented to other community/civic groups for further input and possible support. The City of San Diego owns the land being considered for enhancement and has the ultimate authority on land use decisions.

II. EXISTING CONDITIONS

Maple Canyon, part of the City of San Diego's open space system, is located within the Bankers Hill Community. Maple canyon generally runs north-east to south-west. It is situated east of Interstate 5, west of Interstate 163, north of Laurel St. and south of Spruce St. The canyon is surrounded on all sides by residential development. The canyon is mainly used by hikers, joggers and dog walkers.

With the help of college interns, SDCL has mapped the existing socio-infrastructure conditions including official trails and social trails, land ownership, utilities, cul-de-sacs and City Right of Way (ROW). SDCL has also mapped the geo-topographical conditions including view-sheds, and the vegetation communities in the canyon. All CEP maps are available on the SDCL website www.sdcanyonlands.org/cep (scroll down to Maple Canyon docs.).

The California Coastal Conservancy (CCC) has funded San Diego Canyonlands to conduct stakeholder workshops to develop canyon enhancement plans for twelve urban canyons including Maple Canyon. Funded planning includes conceptual designs for trails (as needed) and habitat restoration and other enhancements discussed by stakeholders such as viewpoints, signage, and other amenities.

TRAIL CONDITIONS The official canyon trails can be entered on the south-west end from the cul-de-sac of West Maple Street, or on the north end, from Third Avenue between Redwood Street and Quince Street. A maintained trail in the bottom of the canyon, between these two entry points, also serves in part, as a utility access road. Social trails, or unapproved trails, are on both sides of the canyon including footpaths near the First Street bridge off of West Palm St. and on the east side of the canyon off of the Palm Street Right of Way.

The stakeholders have discussed various ways to preserve and improve existing trails by minimizing erosion. Approaches to erosion control include keeping the Third Street entrance but using switchbacks to avoid erosion on steep slopes and planting native vegetation to help hold hillsides in place and keep people on the trail. Stakeholders expressed concern about losing the trail at the bottom of the canyon due to stream erosion south of the Third Street trail. The trail passes through a narrow pinch point between a steep slope and the canyon's main stream channel. City Rangers have responded by installing erosion control measures along the trail to redirect storm water runoff and to shore up the west embankment of the canyon stream with a wall of wooden planks. If these measures do not succeed to stabilize the narrow trail, and it erodes away, the City Ranger indicated a possible alignment of the trail further up the slope, or a footbridge to span the gap in the trail, may be considered.

III. KEY ISSUES, HYDROLOGY, OPPORTUNITIES & CONSTRAINTS

Hydrology is the core issue for restoring Maple Canyon.

- As a whole, the primary issue and concern raised by the stakeholders is the severe erosion of the main channel stream during rain storms and resulting sediment deposits into the downstream streets, residents and businesses. Stakeholders would like to see funding raised to address this problem. Friends group member Tershia d'Elgin, with the help of San Diego Canyonlands, has successfully raised partial funding for planning and permitting phases for rehabilitating the stream.
 - The creek rehabilitation would fill in the incised creek with soils to bring it back up at least part of the way to a more natural elevation and create a more natural, meandering creek.
 - Stakeholders are concerned about heavy storm water flows continuing to flow into West Maple Street. Engineer Tory Walker indicated that a drain pipe could be connected by the City to the storm drain at State Street and Maple Street.
- Another concern is erosion resulting from the storm drain pipes that are currently funneling storm water from the streets onto the Maple Canyon slopes creating erosion gullies. The City plans to replace 14 of the old storm drains with new drains that will extend nearly to the bottom of the slopes. Leaders of the Friends of Maple Canyon, (Roy McMakin, Tershia d'Elgin) and San Diego Canyonlands are engaged on this issue

and have met with the City to discuss the plan for revegetation of impacted areas from this storm drain replacement project.

- The Friends of Maple Canyon (Roy McMakin and Tersia d'Elgin) and San Diego Canyonlands have met with the City to discuss integration of the storm drain replacement project with the stream rehabilitation project.
- Conceptual trail alignment designs and conceptual habitat restoration plans hinge on these two projects successfully addressing the erosion and stabilizing the canyon streams.
- Stakeholders are concerned about homeless encampments expanding in the canyon.
- Trail and restoration projects/enhancement must not impact or constrain utility access.
- Stakeholders expressed that Maple Canyon is a beautiful open space and they want to make sure it stays natural and is not converted into an urban park like Balboa Park.

IV. ACTION PLAN

A. HABITAT RESTORATION

- Most stakeholders support habitat restoration/enhancement for wildlife and native vegetation preservation, as well as enhancing the aesthetics along the trails.
 - Includes control and/or removal of non-native plant species. Non-native species found in the canyon include: Jade, Ice plant, Russian Thistle, Chrysanthemum, Castor Bean, Mustard, Nasturtium, Peruvian & Brazilian pepper trees and Palm and Eucalyptus trees.
- San Diego Canyonlands has received communications from the Maple Canyon Friends group leadership indicating that the community would like to see some select palm trees and some groves of eucalyptus trees preserved.
- A stakeholder brought up concerns about taking out eucalyptus trees that provide sound and view buffers between the streets and buildings and the canyon.

Plan, restore and enhance native habitat throughout the canyon.

- Leave larger non-native trees in place until native trees can provide a canopy;
- Remove small, non-native eucalyptus, and palm trees (seedlings, saplings) and plant or allow native trees to grow and replace them;
 - Some species of native trees currently being suggested are Live Oak and Sycamore.
 - Maple Friends group leadership is in discussion with the City on which species of street trees will be considered to replace those lost as part of the storm drain replacement project;
 - Survey trees for nesting birds prior to removal;
- Restore native vegetation in areas adjacent to trails and other degraded habitats within the canyon;
- Revegetate/restore habitat to close unapproved, social trails, suggestion to use native cactus to accomplish this;
- Correct erosion issues where runoff is causing unnatural erosion of the slopes including stabilization using deep-rooted native vegetation;
- Stabilize, restore natural contours and vegetation, and otherwise rehabilitate the main, Maple Canyon stream to reduce erosion and deposits of sediment into residential and business areas, and increase infiltration of storm water and reduce flooding.

B. TRAILS

Plan sustainable, convenient trails to provide safe canyon access to all ages and provide pedestrian and bike connectivity through the canyon to urban destinations such as Little Italy.

- **The attached Draft Action Plan Map indicates the six trail improvement locations considered by the stakeholders. Of the six trails discussed by the stakeholders, three achieved consensus or near-consensus including:**

- **Improve the Third Avenue and Quince St. trail. (Full consensus)** Stakeholders suggested the trail needs more switchbacks for gentle slopes, or steps, and suggested installation of hand rails.
- **Curlew Street Cul-de-sac (Full consensus)** A new trail is proposed at the Curlew Street cul-de-sac on the west side in the south end of the canyon. Boulders with flat tops were suggested for resting and viewing from the top of this trail.
- **Maple Street Park (Near-consensus) Stakeholders** had near-consensus (one stakeholder said “maybe”) for a new trail entering the canyon from the Maple Street Park (location of Waldo Waterman monument). This trail would provide the only trailhead on the east side of the canyon however, the Quince Street Footbridge provides pedestrian access to the Third Avenue trailhead on the west side of the canyon.
 - Ranger Jason indicated a trail here would be doable.
- **Suggestion to provide stroller and wheel chair access** from the West Maple St. entrance.

C. OTHER SUGGESTED ENHANCEMENTS FOR CONSIDERATION

- When storm drains are replaced, could the outlets not include chain link fences? Could the cement be tinted to match natural rock or soils in the canyon?
- In addition to regulatory signs, inviting and friendly signs and/or kiosks at canyon entrances are suggested.
- Sign/kiosk maintenance issues were discussed. Use of QR Code “virtual kiosks” was suggested.
- Signage and information regarding the need to keep dogs on leashes was suggested including information about off-leash dog parks.
- Benches at some viewpoints or trailheads were discussed.
 - Hang out, maintenance and trash issues were raised;
 - Use of benches that would prevent anyone from lying down were suggested.
- **Address Maintenance Issues**
 - Stakeholders expressed the need for a maintenance plan for the canyon.
 - One suggestion was to request more Open Space Ranger staff for care of the canyons during the City budget process.
- **First Avenue Bridge**
 - A kiosk or sign highlighting the historical First Avenue Bridge as well as the natural features of the canyon was suggested.
 - This is a great viewpoint with views of the canyon, San Diego Bay and Pt. Loma.
 - Replacing the chain link fence, where it heads west down Palm Street, with an antique-like fence to compliment the bridge railings was suggested. This fence should close the current gap to head off foot traffic onto the eroding slopes below the bridge.
 - Suggestion that Streets Division should trim the bougainvillea at this location so that it does not obstruct the views from the bridge.
 - Installing signage on First Avenue pointing to trailhead locations at Third Avenue and Quince Street and indicating the location of the proposed entrance at Curlew Street cul-de-sac was suggested.
 - As opposed to additional signage or a kiosk, a QR Code for a “virtual kiosk” was suggested.

D. SUGGESTED ENHANCEMENTS AT CITY RIGHT OF WAYS & CANYON CUL-DE-SACS

On the east side of Maple Canyon, recommendations were made for:

- West side of 4th Avenue between Redwood and Palm Streets (at footbridge)
 - Encourage the City to build a sidewalk on 4th Avenue to provide safe access to the footbridge,
 - Enhance views, Discourage social trails, Add signage

- Palm Street Right of Way west of 4th Avenue: Enhance views, Discourage social trails
- 3rd Avenue north of Olive Street: Enhance views, Discourage social trails
- Olive Street Park, (Olive Street Right of Way): Viewpoint opportunity, Add signage, Discourage social trails
- 2nd Street north of Nutmeg: Enhance views, Discourage social trails
- Front Street north of Maple Street: Enhance views, Discourage social trails
- Maple Street Park, (Home of Waldo Waterman Monument):
 - Build a new trail to the bottom,
 - Enhance views, Discourage social trails, Add signage
- Brant Street north of Laurel Street: Enhance views, Discourage social trails
- Curlew Street north of Laurel Street: Enhance views, Discourage social trails
- Union Street ROW north of Laurel Street (Truax House location): Enhance views, Discourage social trails

On the west side of Maple Canyon, recommendations were made for:

- West Maple Street Entrance: Add signage, Planting enhancements,
 - Wheelchair and stroller access is recommended
- Curlew Street south of Nutmeg Street:
 - Build an official trail to bottom of canyon,
 - Enhance views, Add signage, Discourage trail short-cutting by planting native vegetation
- Brandt Street at Nutmeg Street: Enhance views, Discourage social trails
- Olive Street at Albatross Street: Enhance views, Add signage, discourage renegade trails
 - A potential canyon viewing location is located on City Right of Way at the corner of Albatross and Olive. **Existing fencing and plantings may obstruct visual access.** The new Maple Street Park can be seen from this viewpoint.
- Palm Street and First Avenue: Discourage social trails, Enhance views or create viewpoint, Add signage
- 2nd Avenue south of Quince Street: Enhance views, Discourage social trails
- Quince Street at 3rd (at footbridge): Add signage
- 3rd Avenue at existing trailhead: Add signage, trail improvements e.g. steps, handrails, switchbacks, discourage social trails

V. REQUIRED PERMITS AND AGREEMENTS

Permit Requirements

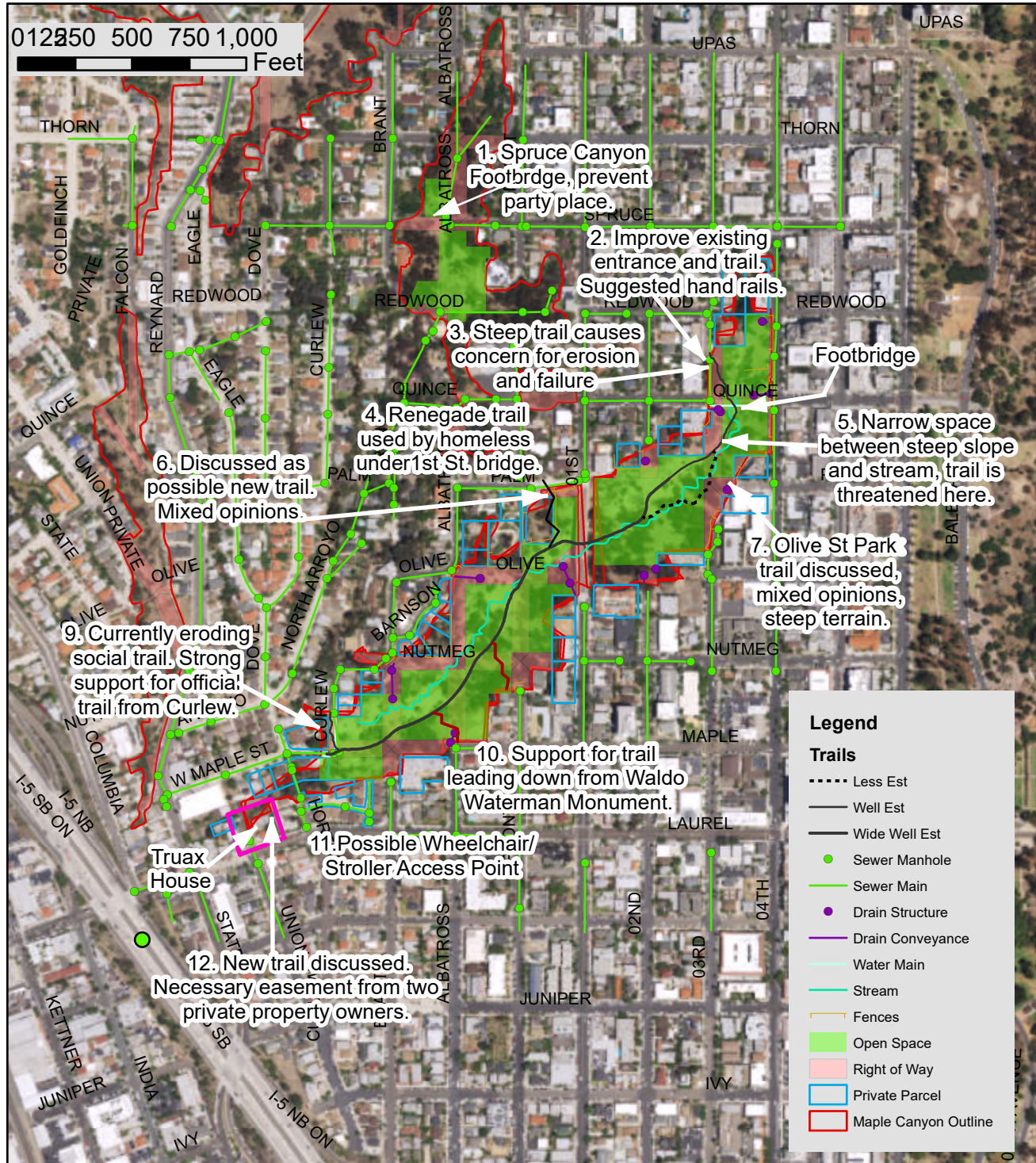
The land in San Diego’s canyons, including Maple Canyon, is designated as “Environmentally Sensitive Land” per the City of San Diego Land Development Code and all applicable permits must be obtained.

Implementation of the trails plan will require certification of a California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) document, a Site Development Permit from the City of San Diego Development Services Department, and a Grading Permit (unless the City funds and builds the trails). Removal of mature trees also requires CEQA review.

Resource agencies including the United States (U.S.) Fish and Wildlife Service, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, California Regional Water Quality Control Board, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have applicable regulations where wetlands and sensitive habitats are involved, and Resource Agency permits may be required for proposed stream rehabilitation, trails and enhancement projects.

In any case, habitat restoration/enhancement projects, trails and other enhancements require approval and close coordination with a number of departments within the City of San Diego. A Right of Entry from the City for implementation of any project may be required.

Maple Canyon Draft Action Plan



Map Date: 7/25/2017
 More Info: sdcanyonlands.org
 Contact: Eric Bowlby, eric@sdcanyonlands.org

1 inch = 667 feet

