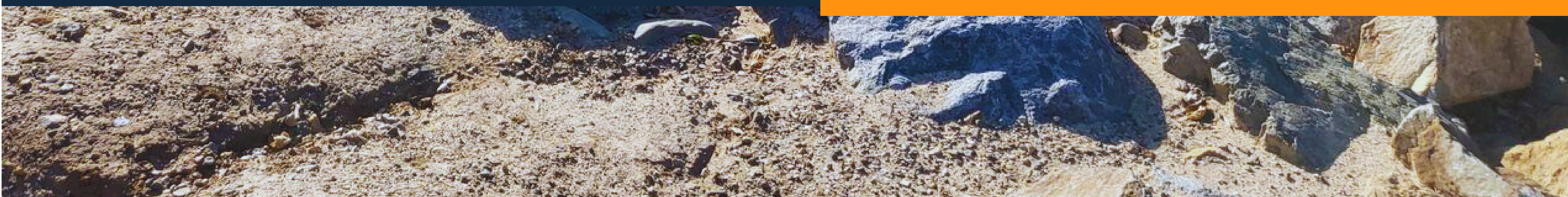




Santiago Creek Commission

Draft Santiago Creek Strategic Plan





Santiago Creek Commissioners

Brendon Moeller
Chair

Pamela Galera
Vice Chair

Addison Adams
Commissioner

Robert Baca
Commissioner

David Hillman
Commissioner

Michael Knight
Commissioner

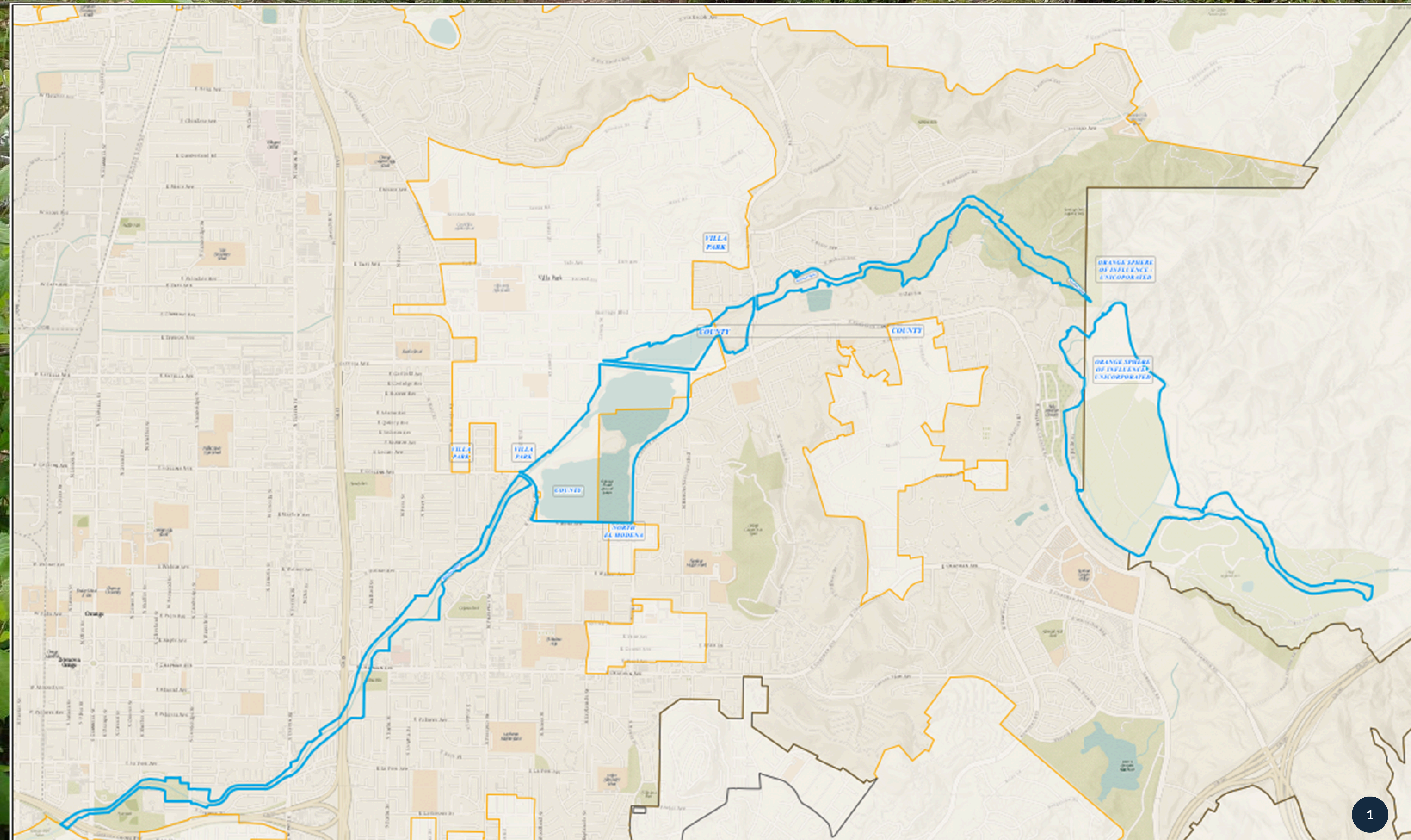
Susan Tillou
Commissioner

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The Santiago Creek in the City of Orange



Glossary of Terms

The following listing includes terms utilized throughout the Santiago Creek Strategic Plan. For reference, when these terms are mentioned, they mean the following:

Watershed:

Geographic area where all precipitation and surface water drains to a common outlet, such as a river, creek, bay, or ocean.

Greenway:

A linear park or open space established along a natural corridor or urban area.

Ground Water Recharge:

The process by which surface water percolates through soil into an underground water table.

Natural Vegetation:

Plants that are native or grow in a specific area without direct human intervention.

Restoration:

The process of removing non-natural vegetation and replacing them with vegetation natural to the area.

Creekbed:

The channel or depression in the ground where a creek flows or has flowed.

Trailhead:

The beginning of a trail.

Spur trail:

A short, often dead end trail often leading to a point of interest.

Pocket Park:

A park that covers less than one acre of land, often in urban areas.

Creek corridor:

The area around the creek that is vital for the Creek's natural function and ecological health.

Class I Bikeway:

Separated right-of-way for the exclusive use of bicycles and pedestrians.

Executive Summary

On October 10, 2023, the Orange City Council adopted Ordinance No. 13-23 creating the Santiago Creek Commission (SCC). Pursuant to Ordinance No. 13-23, seven members comprise the SCC, and have been tasked to advise and make recommendations to the Orange City Council on several matters regarding the Santiago Creek (Creek), including:

- The implementation of public projects in and along the Santiago Creek area.
- The implementation of Santiago Creek plans for the Santiago Creek area regarding public property.
- The preservation and enhancement of public open space within the Santiago Creek area.
- The acquisition of private property if, or when, it becomes available.

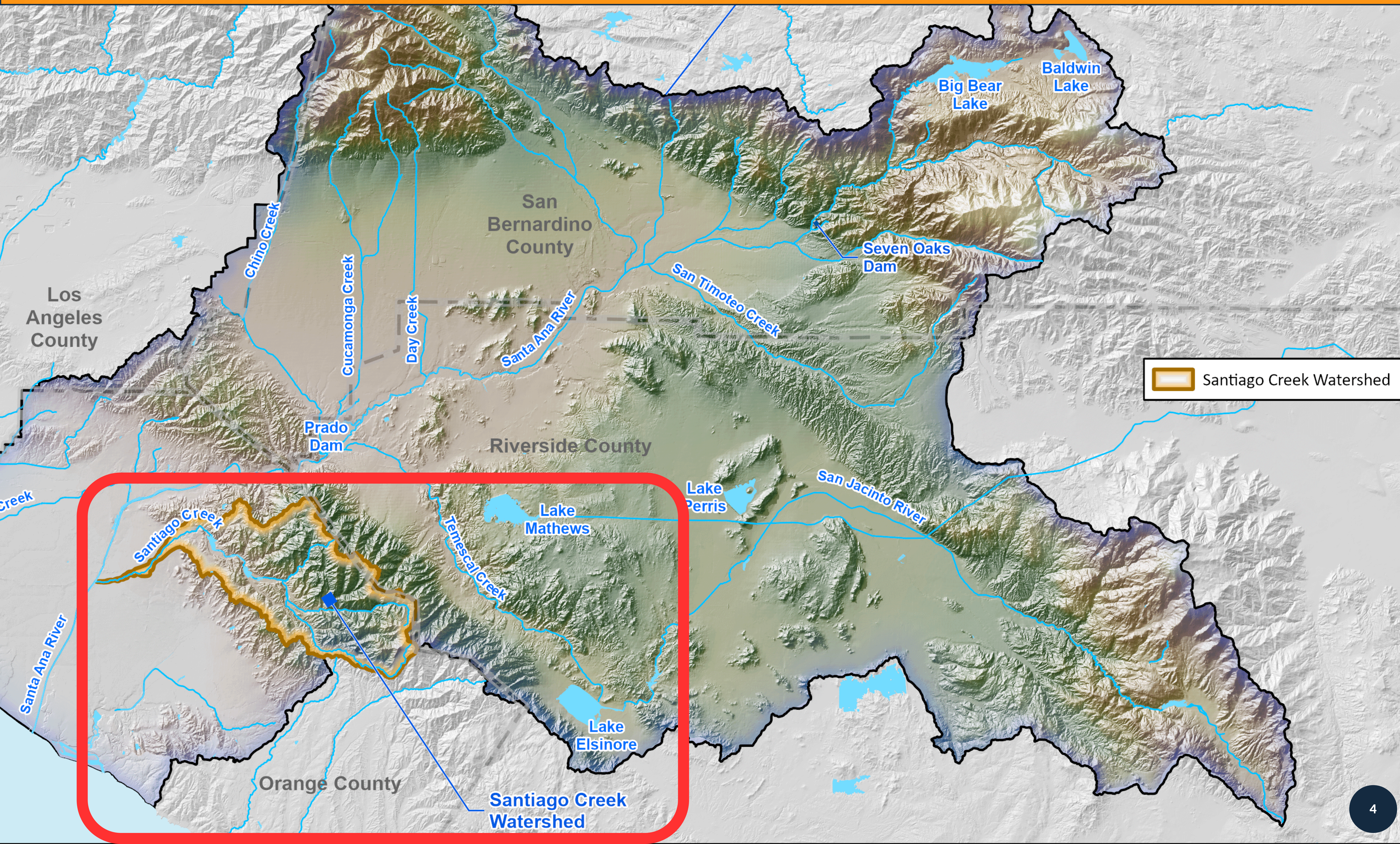
Since their appointments, SCC members have diligently worked with the public to separate the Santiago Creek into three segments for substantive discussions. Vision statements and recommended projects detailed in this document have all been reviewed by the public and SCC during regular SCC meetings. Overall, this document intends to achieve two functions. First, to coalesce the vision of several planning documents into one record; and two, to implement Ordinance No. 13-23's legislative intent via a holistic and comprehensive set of recommendations.

Recognizing the Creek's surroundings and circumstances change significantly from east to west Orange, the recommendations are organized by Creek segments which include:

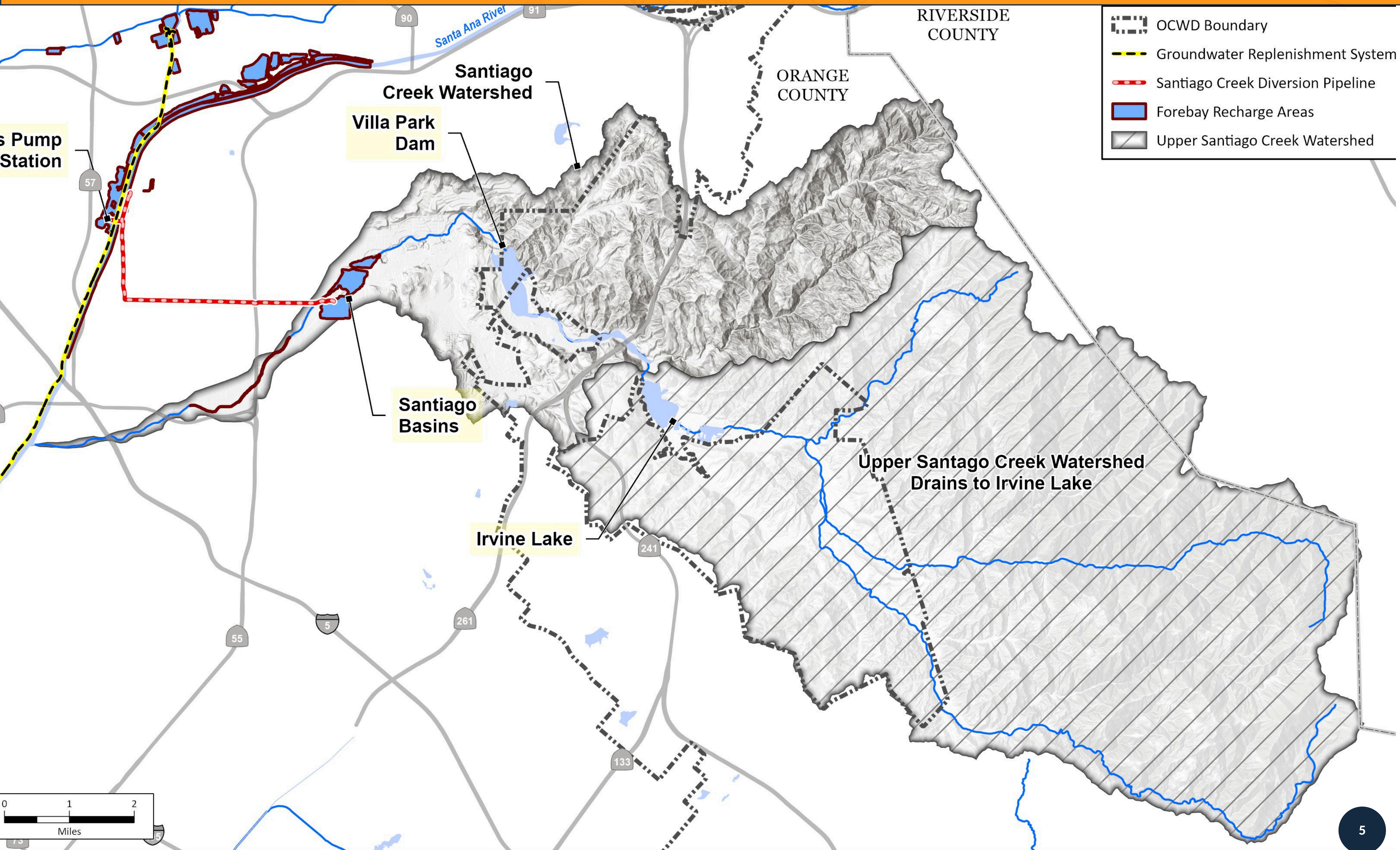
- Segment 1: East Orange Sphere of Influence to Villa Park Road.
- Segment 2: Villa Park Road to the 55 Freeway.
- Segment 3: 55 Freeway to Hart Park.

While the scope and purpose of the recommendations may vary, the general intent of all the recommendations is to preserve and enhance this critical asset while creating more recreational opportunities for all to enjoy.

The Santa Ana River Watershed



The Santiago Creek Watershed



A Brief History

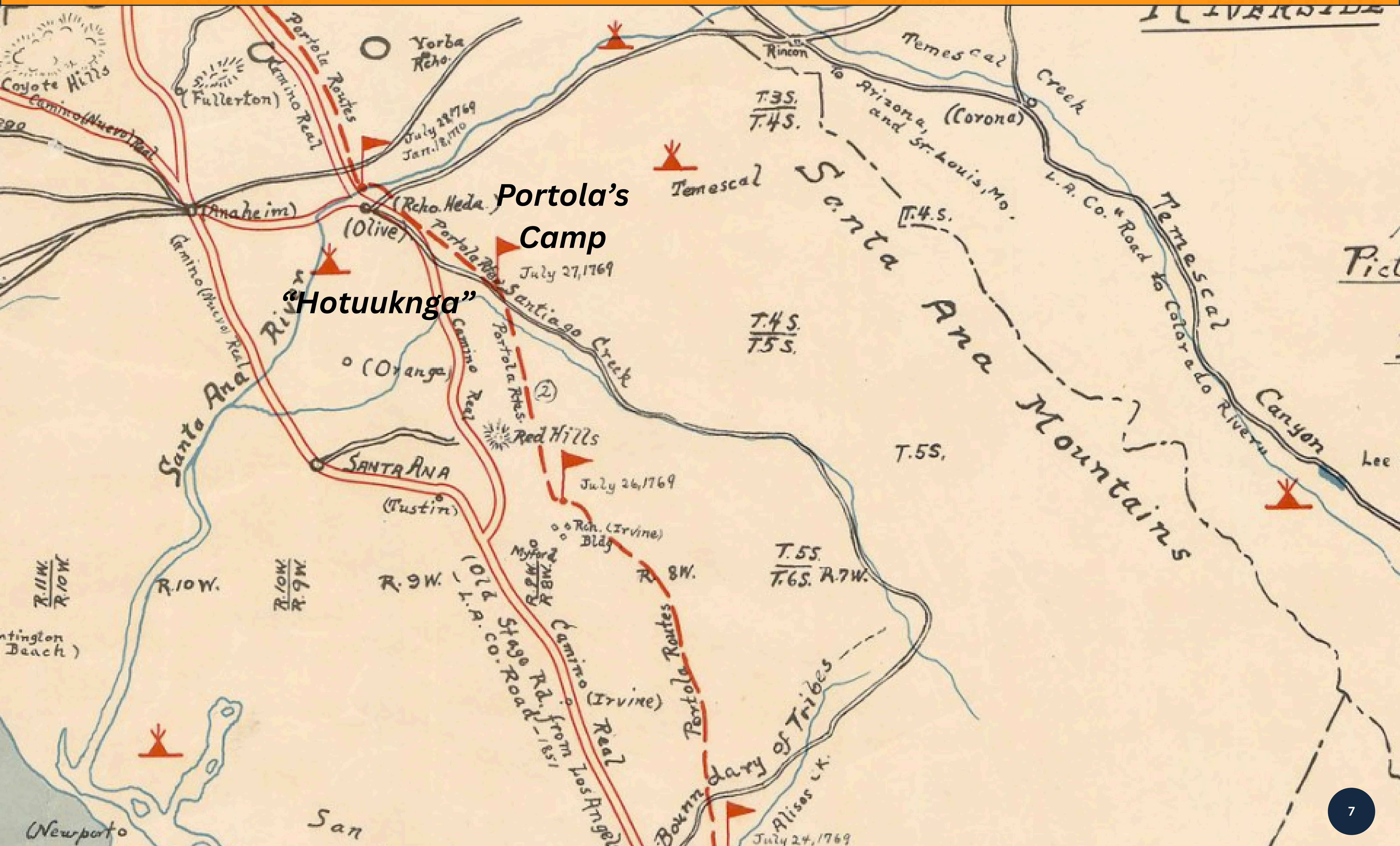
The Santiago Creek (Creek) is the largest tributary to the Santa Ana River. With headwaters in the Santa Ana Mountains, the Creek flows northwestward through Santiago Canyon and then southwestward through the City of Orange. The Creek is a historically significant site that provided water and resources to the Tongva, was chronicled in journals during the Portola Expedition, and supported Orange County's transformation from an agricultural to largely urbanized region.

As the population in central Orange County grew in the early 20th Century, critical infrastructure projects like the Santiago Dam (1931) intended to provide flood control, irrigation, and municipal water uses. However, the mid-20th century ushered in significant changes for the City and County of Orange. Suburban sprawl in the mid-20th century eventually eliminated nearly all agricultural uses and eventually made way for the downstream Villa Park Dam (1963) which continues to operate in conjunction with the Santiago Dam, holding back most of its flood releases to ensure the safety of downstream populations. Similarly, following the Orange County Flood Control Act of 1927, much of the lower Creek was channelized during the same time, solidifying central Orange County's continued transformation to an urbanized region, laying the foundation for continued growth in the City of Orange and surrounding areas.

In relying, in-part, on the Creek's waters to support a heavily agricultural economy in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Creek played a large role in shouldering Orange County's continuous and prosperous growth until it transitioned to the urbanized region seen today. Although the Creek's role has changed, its importance to the City of Orange and greater community remains. The Creek is a natural respite amid a heavily urbanized area that requires ongoing support and care to ensure its benefits are enjoyed and felt for generations to come.

Residents and community groups have long understood the Santiago Creek's importance, and in response, have committed significant time and resources to develop a series of comprehensive planning documents. These documents set a vision for the Creek – one where natural and historic resources are preserved while recreational amenities are developed, giving our community and posterity the opportunity to experience this defining feature in the City of Orange. The intent of this document is to coalesce this vision into one record, effectively organizing recommended projects for the Orange City Council's consideration.

Historical Map of the Santiago Creek





Mission

Advise the Orange City Council to ensure the preservation and enhancement of the Santiago Creek.

Vision

Preserve this natural resource for its history, archeological significance, and scenic beauty while incorporating recreational opportunities.

Values

Preservation

Maintaining the Santiago Creek's natural beauty and archeological significance.

Restoration

Replacing non-native plant species and remedy any dilapidated public areas.

Recreation

Identifying opportunities for recreational amenities appropriate for each segment.

The Santiago Creek Commission's mission, vision, and values set the foundation of the Segment Action Plan.

Segment Action Plan

Mission

Vision

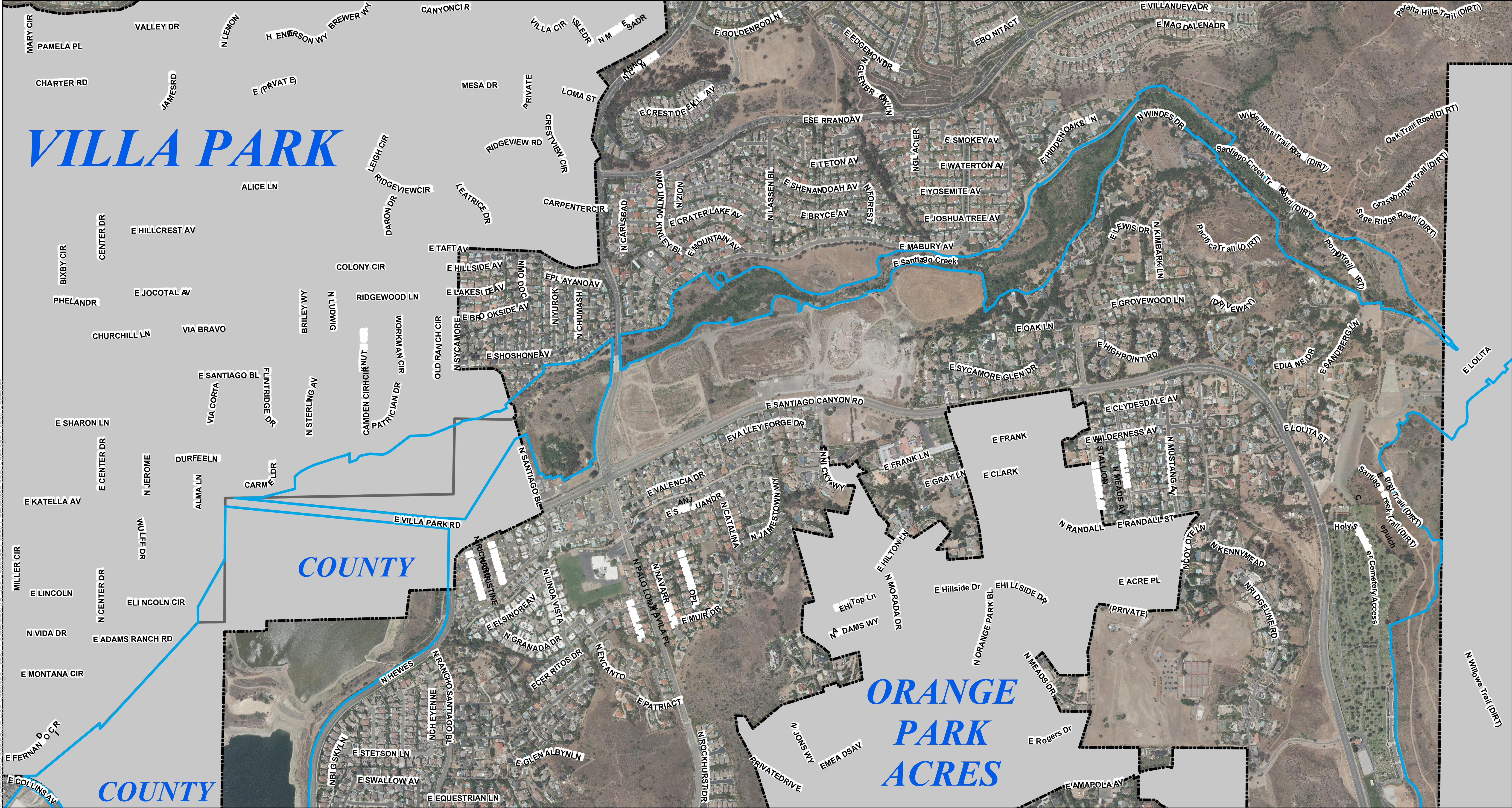
Values

Vision Statement for Segment 1

East Orange Sphere of Influence to Villa Park Road

Segment one extends from the East Orange Sphere of Influence near Holy Sepulcher Cemetery to Villa Park Road. This segment comprises entirely of east Orange and contains unique features making Segment One stand out as an asset for all of Orange County. As the creek flows from Villa Park Dam, it meanders through Santiago Oaks Regional Park and flows west between Orange Park Acres and Mabury Ranch. Much of the Creek within this segment remains wild with a riparian habitat abundant with history and wildlife.

The focus of the projects detailed within Segment One is to preserve this natural resource for its history, archeological significance, and scenic beauty while tactfully incorporating low impact recreational amenities that create connectivity and access, accentuating the Santiago Creek's value to the community



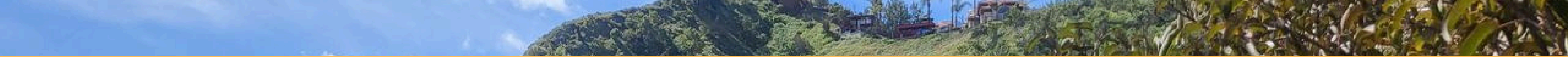
Legend

----- City Boundary

□ Santiago Creek Creek

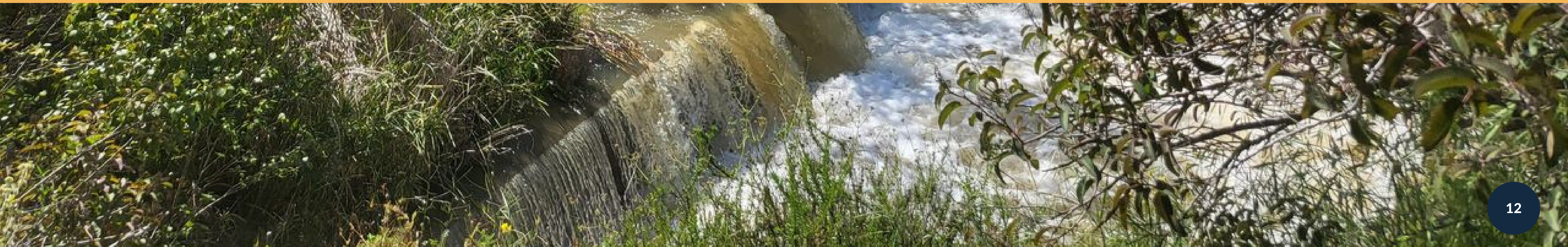
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Source: City of Orange (2024)

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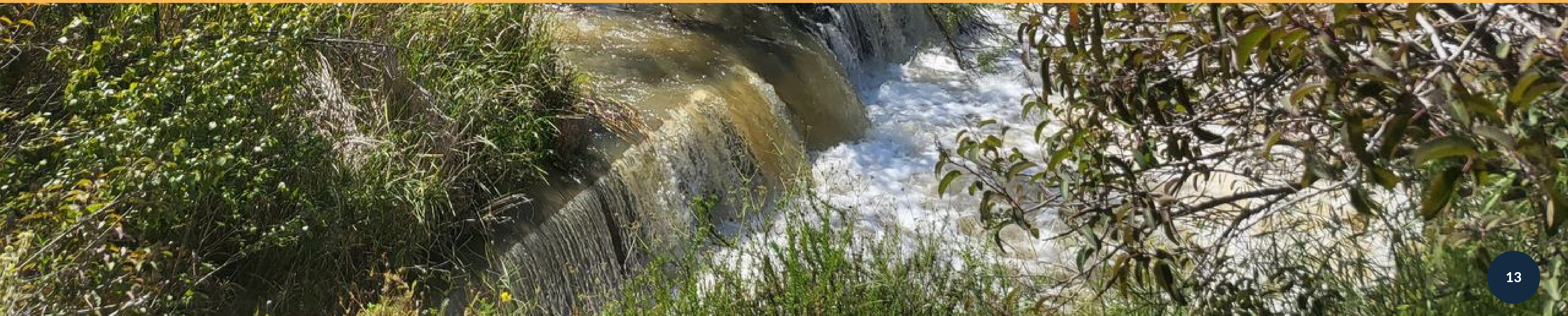
Segment 1: East Orange Sphere of Influence to Villa Park Road

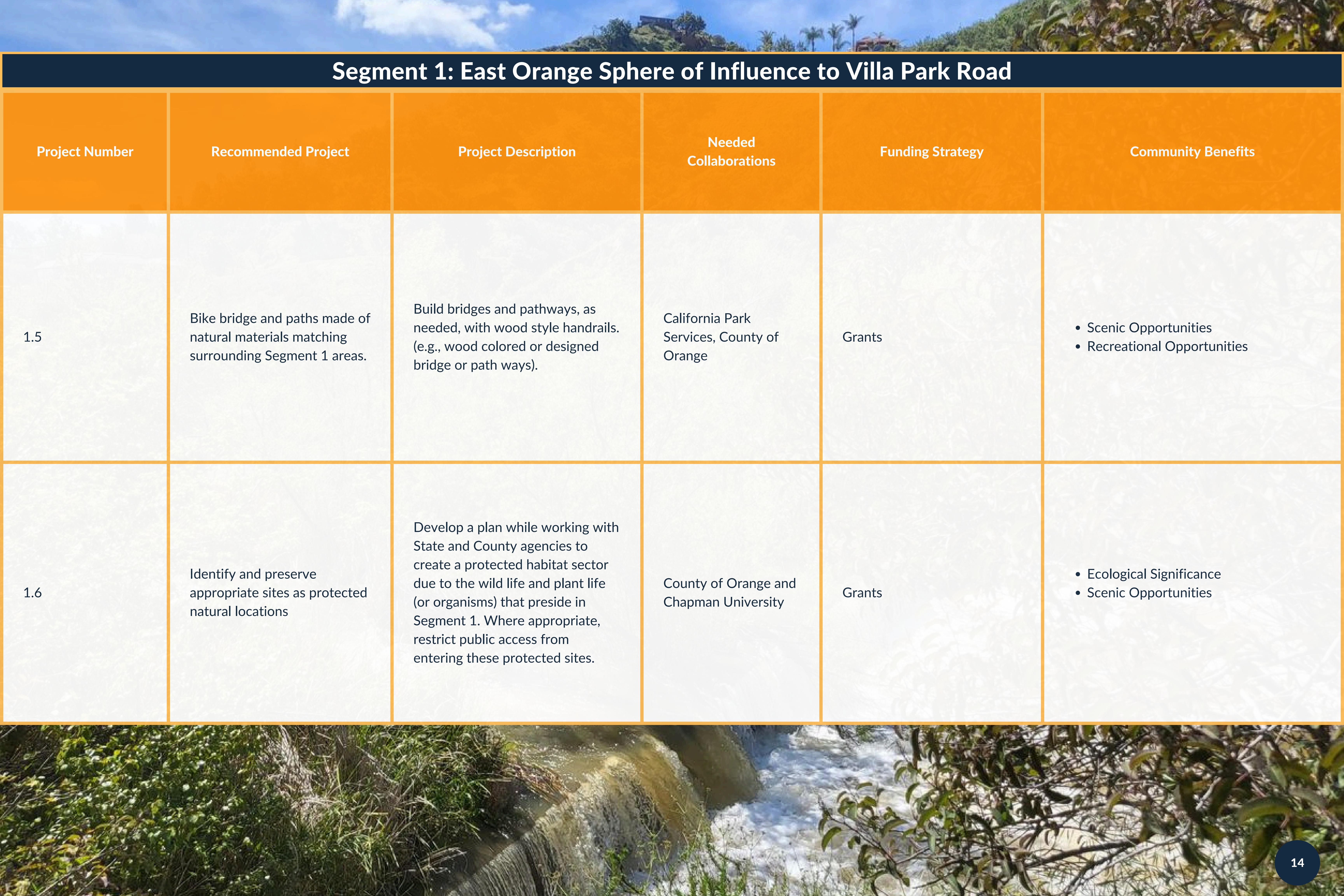
Project Number	Recommended Project	Project Description	Needed Collaborations	Funding Strategy	Community Benefits
1.1	Community of Orange Loop Trail (COLT)	Loop trail that connects four regional parks within Orange. It is envisioned this will be unpaved with horse trails with a bridge extending over Chapman Avenue.	Mabury Ranch Community, County of Orange, and Orange Park Acres.	Grants	• Ecological Significance • Scenic Opportunities • Recreational Opportunities
1.2	Santiago Creek Gap Trail Closure	Support projects that promote the General Plan Circulation Element while encouraging the current City project to close the last 1.5-mile gap in the Santiago Creek Trail.	Mabury Ranch Community	Grants	• Scenic Opportunities • Recreational Opportunities



Segment 1: East Orange Sphere of Influence to Villa Park Road

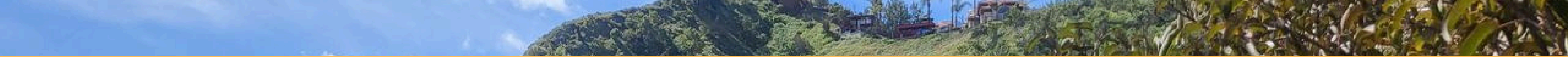
Project Number	Recommended Project	Project Description	Needed Collaborations	Funding Strategy	Community Benefits
1.3	General Portola and Fray Juan Crespi digital history showcasing travels through and stay along the Santiago Creek.	Develop another section on the City website next to the Orange Barrio site to showcase another important element in Mexican & Spanish history within Orange.	Orange County Historical Society, Orange Library History Center, Diocese Catholic Church and Cemetery/ local historians, National Museum of the American Latino, Bowers Museum (California Legacies Virtual Highlight), OPA, California State Horsemen Association, California State Parks, Orange County Parks.	Grant Funding and Ongoing City Operations	• Historical/Archeological Significance
1.4	Create a trail that connects Segment 1 to OPA trails without using Orange County Park trails.	Develop a plan to create a merge point of trails that belong to the City giving hikers and horse riders an unpaved route.	OPA, California State Horsemen Association, California State Parks, Orange County Parks.	Grant Funding	• Recreational Opportunities





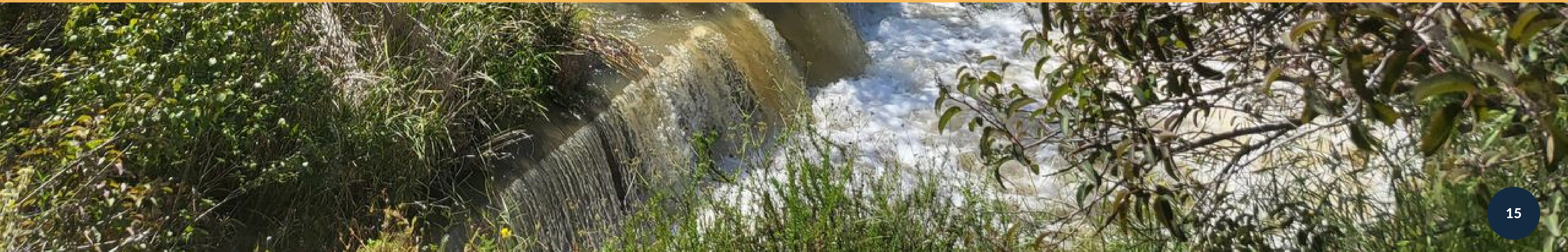
Segment 1: East Orange Sphere of Influence to Villa Park Road

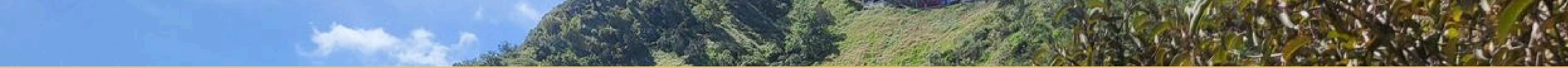
Project Number	Recommended Project	Project Description	Needed Collaborations	Funding Strategy	Community Benefits
1.5	Bike bridge and paths made of natural materials matching surrounding Segment 1 areas.	Build bridges and pathways, as needed, with wood style handrails. (e.g., wood colored or designed bridge or path ways).	California Park Services, County of Orange	Grants	• Scenic Opportunities • Recreational Opportunities
1.6	Identify and preserve appropriate sites as protected natural locations	Develop a plan while working with State and County agencies to create a protected habitat sector due to the wild life and plant life (or organisms) that preside in Segment 1. Where appropriate, restrict public access from entering these protected sites.	County of Orange and Chapman University	Grants	• Ecological Significance • Scenic Opportunities



Segment 1: East Orange Sphere of Influence to Villa Park Road

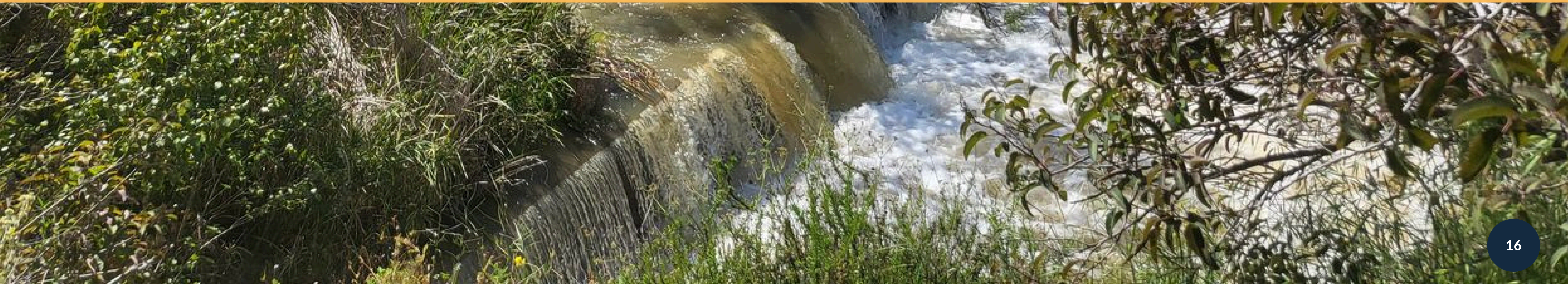
Project Number	Recommended Project	Project Description	Needed Collaborations	Funding Strategy	Community Benefits
1.7	Protect and document archeological items already known or identified within this Segment.	Document known items visible or known of by local historians, residents or noted on EIRs. Protect these items and or remove them from the site then relocate to the History Center at the Main Library to prevent flood damage, theft, or vandalism. Keep these items within the City's archives.	County of Orange, AIA Orange County Society, Pacific Coast Archeological Society, OC Parks, American Museum of Natural History, Chapman University Archeology Department	Private sector, donations, and volunteers.	• Historical/Archeological Significance
1.8	Highlight Sully - Miller Construction Company's contributions to Southern California.	Digital documentation of Sully-Miller as a company that provided jobs and careers for the El Modena and Cypress Street barrio communities during times of segregation.	Orange Barrio Historical Society and community groups.	Private donations, volunteers, and grants	• Historical/Archeological Significance





Segment 1: East Orange Sphere of Influence to Villa Park Road

Project Number	Recommended Project	Project Description	Needed Collaborations	Recommended Funding Strategy	Community Benefits
1.9	Biological survey and cultural resource assessment for the Hurwitz site.	A biological and cultural resource assessment should be done to develop a baseline of endangered species on site and needed habitat restoration at the 14-acre Hurwitz site. The surveys could run from March to June with the analysis and report in October. Subsequent to this analysis, a habitat restoration plan can be determined.	East Orange Community and Chapman University	Grants and Volunteer Efforts	• Ecological Significance
1.10	Preserve, acknowledge, and provide educational opportunities for historic sites along the Santiago Creek.	Preserve and include markers at historical locations along this segment including, but not limited to, the Hoyt House (near the Santiago Creek Recharge Basin), Boy Scouts Camp Jotham Bixby, Old County Park Road, submerged dam at Santiago Oaks Regional Park, and dropped vehicles for flood overflow.	County of Orange	Grants	• Historical/Archeological Significance



Vision Statement for Segment 2: Villa Park Road to the 55 Freeway

Segment Two extends from Villa Park Road near the Santiago Creek Recharge Basin to the 55 Freeway. This segment comprises a small portion of east Orange but quickly pivots to central Orange's more urbanized areas. Segment 2 transitions from a natural creek bed to a concrete channel that begins at East Collins Avenue, and shifts back to a wider and more natural setting near Grijalva Park which continues to the 55 Freeway.

Segment Two projects promote this highly traveled Segment while bolstering its recreational amenities through an eclectic series of projects that when combined, will thoroughly improve Segment 2. Projects within Segment 2 celebrate and educate the public about Segment 2's historical significance while fostering an active, multi-modal, yet safe recreational environment surrounded by natural vegetation. Finally, the projects recommended for Segment 2 recognize this is a highly accessible trail that should be publicized to attract Orange and non-Orange residents alike, underscoring collective efforts to make the Creek an inclusive asset for all to enjoy.

Segment 2: Villa Park Road to the 55 Freeway

Project Number	Recommended Project	Project Description	Needed Collaborations	Funding Strategy	Community Benefits
2.1	Santiago Creek Habitat Restoration	Remove trash and invasive plants. Install native plants to beautify the Creek, improve ecology, and where appropriate, emphasize shade trees, including California Sycamore and Oak Trees.	Santiago Creek Greenway Alliance, neighbors, community groups, Orange Community, and Irvine Ranch Conservancy	Private Donations, Grants, and Volunteer Efforts.	• Ecological Significance • Scenic Opportunities • Recreational Opportunities
2.2	Implement trailhead and new pocket park at Walnut Avenue.	Install amenities such as drinking fountain, benches, playground, shade, and native landscape at the intersection of the Wanda trail extension and Walnut Avenue.	Community Services Foundation and neighbors	Grants	• Ecological Significance • Scenic Opportunities • Recreational Opportunities
2.3	Improvements on the Wanda trail extension as well as a pocket park	Install amenities such as monument signage, drinking fountains, benches, signage, and native landscape at the Wanda trail extension.	Community Services Foundation	Private Donations and grants	• Ecological Significance • Scenic Opportunities • Recreational Opportunities

Segment 2: Villa Park Road to the 55 Freeway

Project Number	Recommended Project	Project Description	Needed Collaborations	Recommended Funding Strategy	Community Benefits
2.4	Preserve, acknowledge, and provide educational opportunities for historic sites along the Santiago Creek.	Install interpretive signage and digital information celebrating and acknowledging historical sites along the Santiago Creek including the Portola expedition, the site of the first Orange orchard, Yorba Park plaque replacement, and opportunities for the Historic El Camino Real bells which highlight the California Mission Trail.	Grants and Non-Profit Organizations.	Grants or private donations	• Ecological Significance • Scenic Opportunities • Recreational Opportunities
2.5	Implement a trail node next to the Santiago Creek	Install amenities such as benches and native landscape overlooking the Santiago Creek	Community Services Foundation	Grants and Private Dontations	• Recreational Opportunities • Scenic Opportunities
2.6	Implement riding and hiking trails on the south side of the Santiago Creek between Yorba and Grijalva Parks	This multipurpose trail will complement the Class I bike path on the north side of the creek and give more access to the creek corridor and help reduce reduce crime	County of Orange and Equestrian Community	Grants and private donations	• Scenic Opportunities • Recreational Opportunities
2.7	Ensure the ongoing safety of Santiago Creek visitors.	Maintain and secure the creek corridor through trash pick-up, crime prevention, and environmental design, particularly in the more secluded areas (e.g., near the 55 Freeway).	Orange Community Emergency Response Team, Santiago Creek Greenway Alliance, The HEART Team	Ongoing City Operatoins and Volunteer Efforts	• Ecological Significance • Scenic Opportunities • Recreational Opportunities

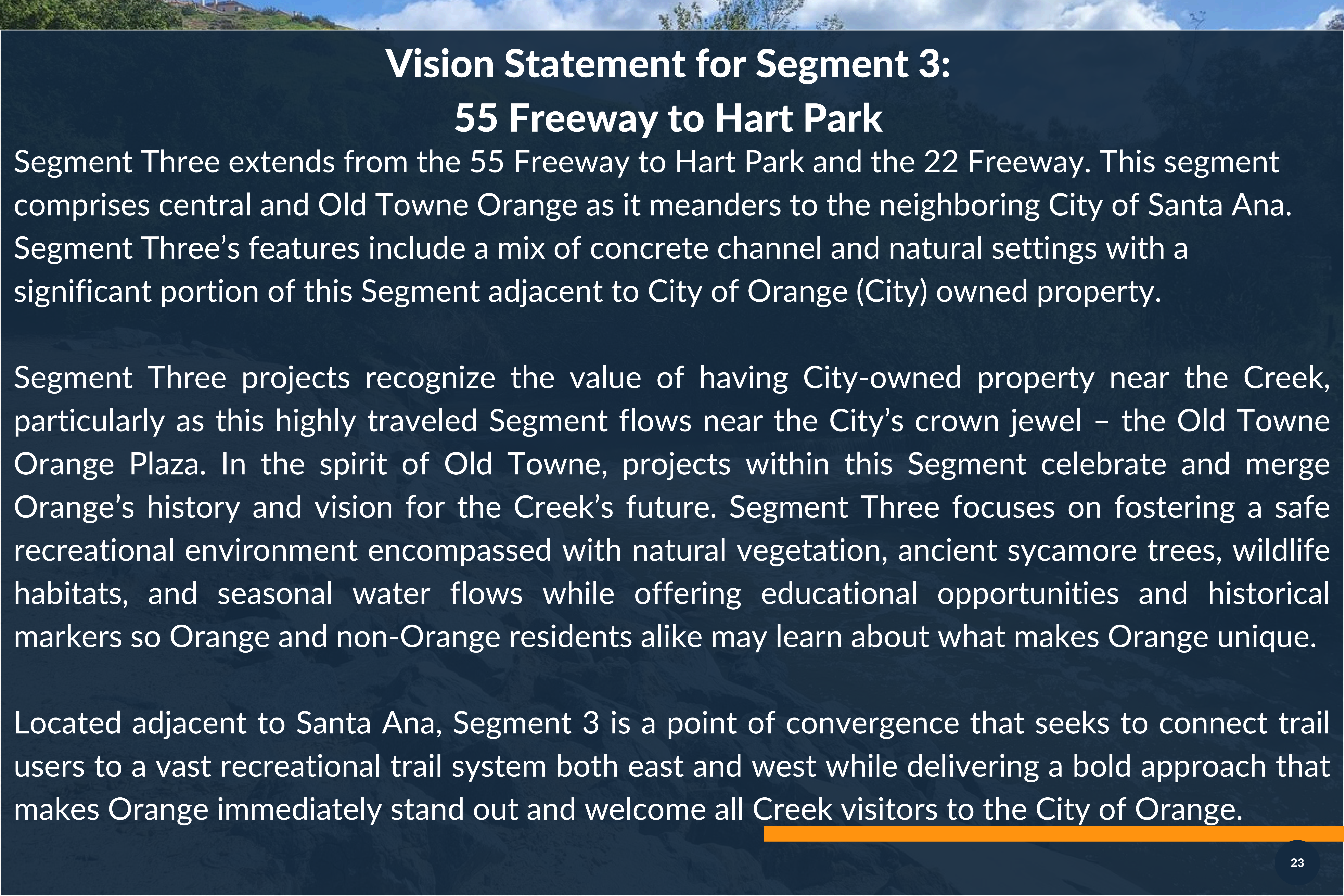
Segment 2: Villa Park Road to the 55 Freeway

Project Number	Recommended Project	Project Description	Needed Collaborations	Recommended Funding Strategy	Community Benefits
2.8	Trail Signage	Install branding, directional, and trailhead monument signs at: • E. Collins & Prospect St. • E. Collins & Wanda Rd. • E. Walnut Ave. • E. Palm Ave. • S. Chapman at the 55 Freeway near Yorba St. Additionally, include signage to increase visibility and public engagement. These signs can also direct to Santiago Oaks Regional Park, Grijalva Park, Yorba Park, Hart Park, Santiago Park, and the OC Loop. Lastly, install safety signage that includes information like the Orange 24/7 Application and Orange Police Department contact information.	County of Orange	General Fund	• Recreational Opportunities
2.9	E-bike & BMX bike opportunities and other trail uses.	Separate e-bikes from dog walkers, equestrian, and recreational bikes, to avoid dangerous conflicts.	Neighbors, parents, and community groups	Grants and Private Donations	• Recreational Opportunities



Segment 2: Villa Park Road to the 55 Freeway

Project Number	Recommended Project	Project Description	Needed Collaborations	Funding Strategy	Community Benefits
2.10	If approved by the appropriate government agencies, perform Creekbed restoration southwest of recharge basin	Subject to approval, recommend to remove concrete lining and restore Creek bed to beautify the Creek and improve ecology.	County of Orange	Grants or volunteer organizations	• Ecological Significance • Scenic Opportunities
2.11	Evaluate opportunities for a Community Garden near Grijalva Park.	Work with non-profit groups and neighborhoods to develop a community garden that includes an education and composting component.	Surrounding Neighborhoods and Non-Profit Groups	Grants and Private Donations	• Recreational Opportunities

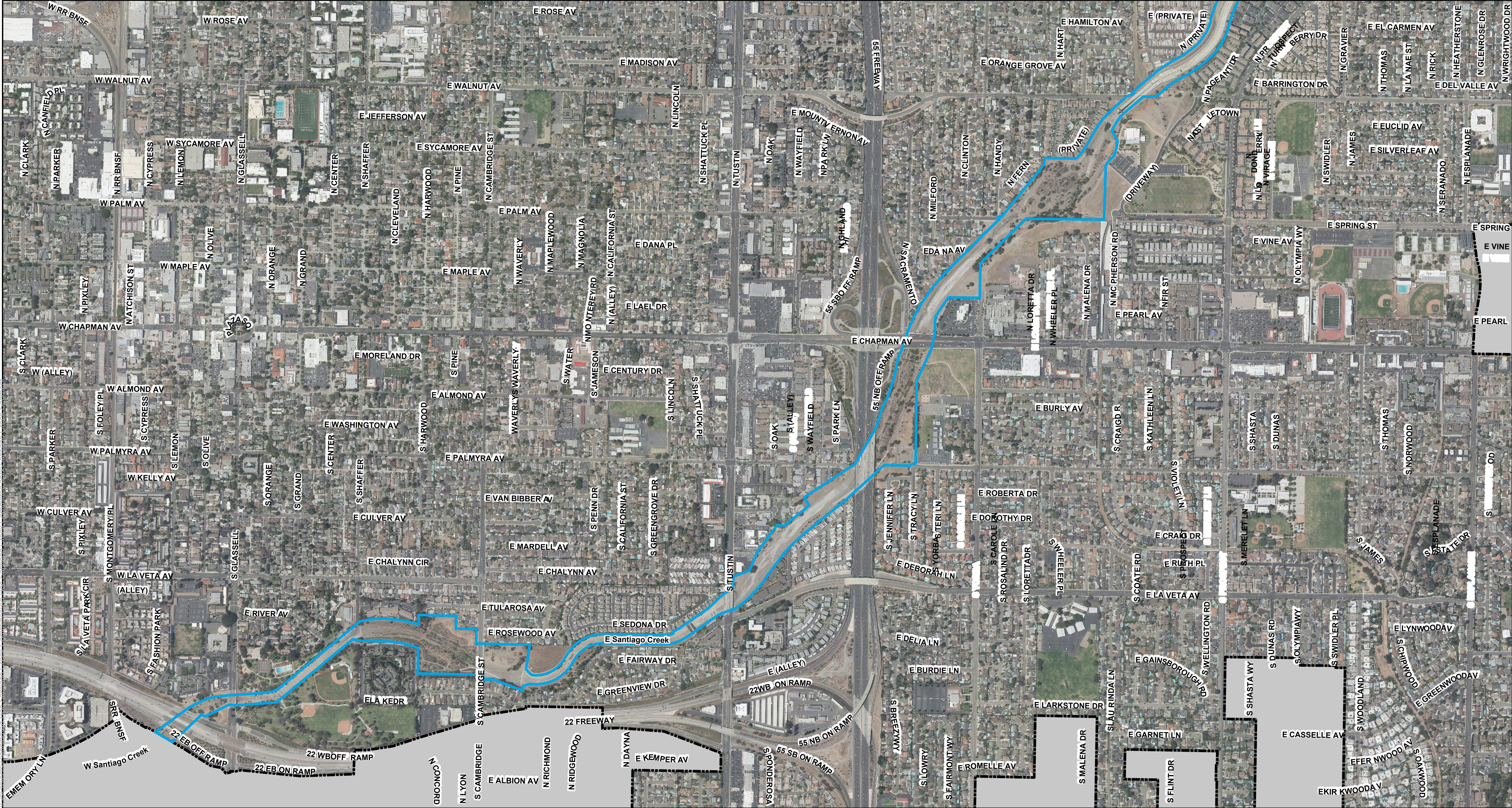


Vision Statement for Segment 3: 55 Freeway to Hart Park

Segment Three extends from the 55 Freeway to Hart Park and the 22 Freeway. This segment comprises central and Old Towne Orange as it meanders to the neighboring City of Santa Ana. Segment Three's features include a mix of concrete channel and natural settings with a significant portion of this Segment adjacent to City of Orange (City) owned property.

Segment Three projects recognize the value of having City-owned property near the Creek, particularly as this highly traveled Segment flows near the City's crown jewel – the Old Towne Orange Plaza. In the spirit of Old Towne, projects within this Segment celebrate and merge Orange's history and vision for the Creek's future. Segment Three focuses on fostering a safe recreational environment encompassed with natural vegetation, ancient sycamore trees, wildlife habitats, and seasonal water flows while offering educational opportunities and historical markers so Orange and non-Orange residents alike may learn about what makes Orange unique.

Located adjacent to Santa Ana, Segment 3 is a point of convergence that seeks to connect trail users to a vast recreational trail system both east and west while delivering a bold approach that makes Orange immediately stand out and welcome all Creek visitors to the City of Orange.



Legend

City Boundary

Santiago Creek Creek

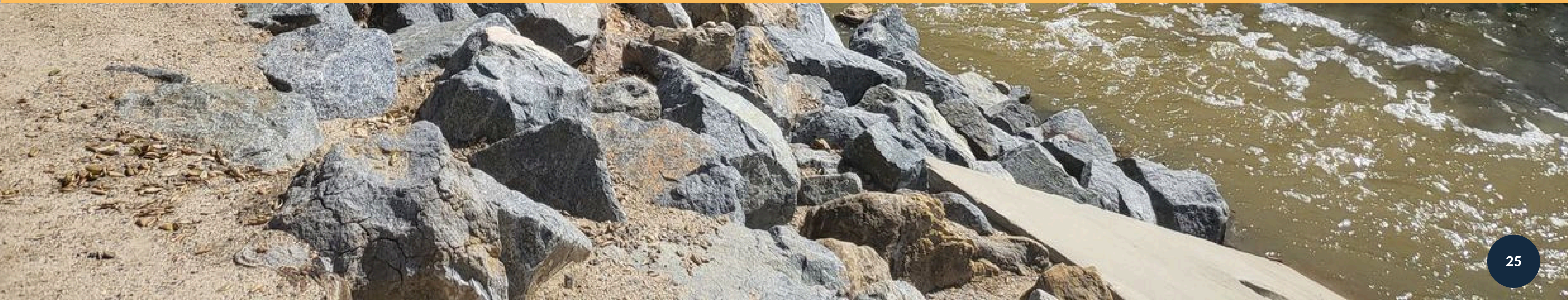
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Source: City of Orange (2024)

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Segment 3: 55 Freeway to Hart Park

Project Number	Recommended Project	Project Description	Needed Collaborations	Recommended Funding Strategy	Community Benefits
3.1	Santiago Creek Habitat Restoration	Remove trash and invasive plants. Install native plants with an emphasis on shade trees.	Santiago Creek Greenway Alliance, neighbors, and community groups	Grants and Private Donations	• Ecological Significance • Scenic Opportunities • Recreational Opportunities
3.2	Research and develop opportunities for pocket parks and trailheads along the Creek	Where appropriate, install amenities such as drinking fountains, benches, playground, shade, and native landscape.	Community Services Foundation and surrounding neighbors	Operating expenditures and Grants	• Ecological Significance • Scenic Opportunities • Recreational Opportunities



Segment 3: 55 Freeway to Hart Park

Project Number	Recommended Project	Project Description	Needed Collaborations	Recommended Funding Strategy	Community Benefits
3.3	Increase Accessibility to the Creek	Create new Creek trail access to surrounding neighborhoods.	County of Orange and Community Groups	Grants and Private Donations	• Recreational Opportunities
3.4	Implement a recreational trail on the north side of the Creek between Yorba and Hart Parks	This multipurpose trail will complement the Class I bike path on the south side of the Creek and give more access to the Creek corridor. Recommend that this separate any potentially dangerous conflicts (e.g., dog walkers vs. bicycles or e-bikes).	County of Orange and neighborhoods	Grants	• Scenic Opportunities • Recreational Opportunities
3.5	Active Recreation for young families	Identify areas and uses along this segment of the Creek that may be used for active recreation purposes that are specifically geared for young families and children.	Community Services Foundation, neighbors, and community groups	Private donations and grants	• Recreational Opportunities



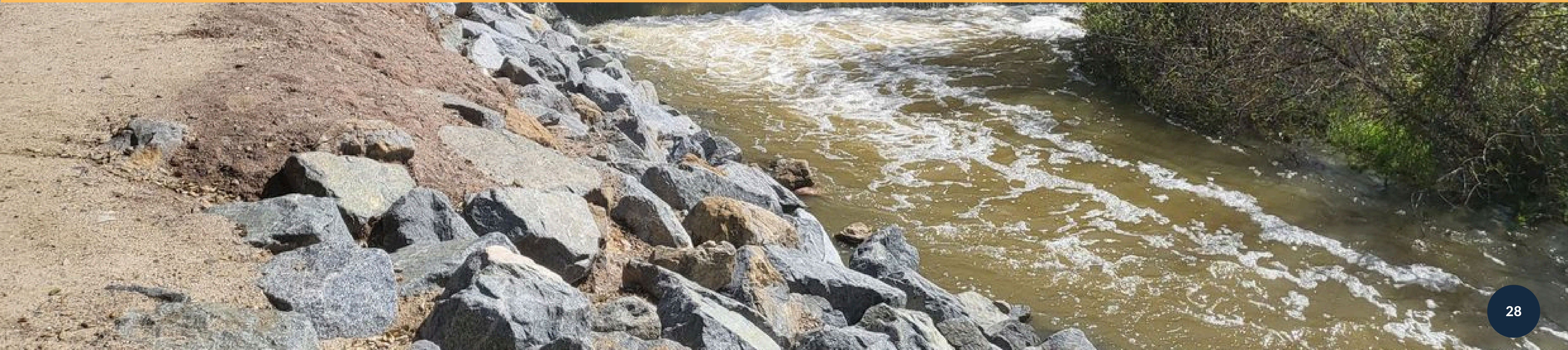
Segment 3: 55 Freeway to Hart Park

Project Number	Recommended Project	Project Description	Needed Collaborations	Recommended Funding Strategy	Community Benefits
3.6	Historic Markers and Preservation	Install interpretive signage and digital information to highlight the history of the Creek in this segment, including the historic China Town area and Native American history.	County of Orange and Historic Preservation Groups	Grants or Private Donations	• Historic/Archeological Significance.
3.7	Ongoing Crime Prevention and Maintenance	Maintain the Creek corridor with crime prevention through environmental design (e.g., improved lighting in the underpasses), neighborhood watch programs, and homeless outreach. This will prompt further use of the corridor while reducing crime and any fire danger in the area.	Santiago Creek Greenway Alliance, CERT, and continued support from the Orange Police Department	Ongoing City Operations and Grants	• Ecological Significance • Scenic Opportunities • Recreational Opportunities



Segment 3: 55 Freeway to Hart Park

Project Number	Recommended Project	Project Description	Needed Collaborations	Recommended Funding Strategy	Community Benefits
3.8	Improve the creek corridor between Glassell St. and the 22 Freeway	Install amenities such as drinking fountain, benches, playground, shade, and native landscape.	Santiago Creek Greenway Alliance and other non-profit organizations	Grants or private donations	• Ecological Significance • Scenic Opportunities • Recreational Opportunities
3.9	Creek trail adoption/naming program	Develop a specific trail adoption and asset naming program for the Santiago Creek trail. This will allow individuals and groups to have a specific section of the trail named after them in exchange for ongoing maintenance and clean up of that respective trail section.	Community Services Department	Non-profit organizations and community groups.	• Ecological Significance • Scenic Opportunities • Recreational Opportunities



Segment 3: 55 Freeway to Hart Park

Project Number	Recommended Project	Project Description	Needed Collaborations	Recommended Funding Strategy	Community Benefits
3.10	Evaluate opportunities for community gardens	Identify City-owned parcels that may be utilized for a community garden.	Non-profit organizations and community groups	Grants and Private Donations	• Recreational Opportunities
3.11	Regional Water Network Maps along the Santiago Creek	Identify areas along this segment where maps and exhibits of the Santiago Creek water network may be displayed.	County of Orange and Orange County Water District	Grants and Private Donations	• Ecological Significance • Recreational Opportunities
3.12	Install Trail Signage	Include signage to increase visibility and public engagement. These signs can also direct to Santiago Oaks Regional Park, Grijalva Park, Yorba Park, Hart Park, Santiago Park, and the OC Loop. Additionally, install safety signage that includes information like the Orange 24/7 Application and Orange Police Department contact information.	Public Works Department	General Fund	• Recreational Opportunities