



# Agenda Item

## Santiago Creek Commission

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Item #: 3.3.

4/24/2024

File #: 24-0185

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**TO:** Members of the Santiago Creek Commission

**FROM:** Tom Kisela, City Manager

### 1. SUBJECT

Review the Santiago Creek Vision Plan, 2018 City Staff Memorandum, and Santiago Creek Commission Recommendation Planning Sheet.

### 2. SUMMARY

The City of Orange in collaboration with the Santiago Creek Greenway Alliance and National Park Service drafted the Santiago Creek Vision Plan, identifying potential projects to bolster the Santiago Creek's recreational amenities, restore the creek's natural vegetation, and improve existing flood protection. In referencing previous planning documents, the Santiago Creek Vision Plan, corresponding 2018 City Staff Memorandum, and draft Santiago Creek Commission Recommendation Planning Sheet may serve as an initial starting point for the Santiago Creek Commission.

### 3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. Receive and file a presentation on the Santiago Creek Vision Plan, 2018 City Staff Memorandum, and draft Santiago Creek Recommendation Planning Sheet.
2. Discuss potential projects along Santiago Creek.

### 4. FISCAL IMPACT

None.

### 5. STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

Goal 3: Enhance and Promote Quality of Life in the Community

- a. Renovate, maintain, develop, and/or expand public use places and spaces.

### 6. DISCUSSION AND BACKGROUND

The Santiago Creek Vision Plan (SCVP) is the product of collaboration among different entities that include the City of Orange, the Santiago Creek Greenway Alliance, and the National Park Service.

The SCVP states, "The idea of a trail system and greenway along Santiago Creek is not new. It was initially proposed through local planning documents in the 1950s and 60s. It was included in Orange County's Santa Ana River-Santiago Creek Corridor General Plan for Recreation and Open Space. Since that time the idea has been incorporated into several county and city studies and the activities of various citizens groups. The plan described in this document is a direct extension of these earlier plans as well as more recent efforts" (p.IX).

The SCVP goes on to list the documents that contributed to its development: Santa Ana River/Santiago Creek Greenbelt Plan (1971), Santiago Recreation & Open Space Study (1971), Sub Committee Final Report on Open Space (1972), Orange Park Acres Specific Plan (1973), East Orange General Plan (1975), and the Santa Ana River/Santiago Creek Greenbelt Implementation Plan (1976).

In Ordinance No. 13-23 (the Santiago Creek Commission's enabling legislation), the recitals note previous planning documents include (and collectively create) a "vision" for the Santiago Creek (Creek), and can therefore, guide the Commission. The SCVP draws from previous planning documents and can start the conversation of projects that may be considered and recommended by the Santiago Creek Commission (Commission).

### **The SCVP and the Commission's Duties**

The Commission and the SCVP have respective duties/objectives. Therefore, it is helpful to review both sets and determine if they complement one another. To begin, the SCVP's stated objectives include:

1. To construct a multi-purpose trail system along the Creek bank, connecting The Santa Ana River National Recreation Trail in Santa Ana to Santiago Oaks Regional Park in northeast Orange.
2. Create a greenway (where possible) along the Creek by restoring the creek bed and its adjacent uplands with native trees and shrubs.
3. Restore the Creek's natural contribution to groundwater recharge by removal of concrete parking lots from the Creek bed and replacing non-native plants with soft-stemmed natives.
4. Maintain or improve flood protection goals defined by county officials and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

For the Commission, per Ordinance No. 13-23, Section 2.62.020 states the Commission shall have the following duties:

- A. Advise and make recommendations to the City Council concerning the implementation of public projects in/along the Santiago Creek Area.
- B. Advise and make recommendations to the City Council concerning implementation of the Santiago Creek Plans for the Santiago Creek Area with regard to public property.
- C. Advise and make recommendations to the City Council regarding preservation/enhancements of public open space within the Santiago Creek Area.
- D. Advise and make recommendations to the City Council on the acquisition of private property if/when it becomes available.
- E. Perform such other duties, or refrain from performing duties as may be prescribed by the City Council by minute action, and without amending this Chapter.
- F. The Commission shall not advise or make recommendations, investigate, take public comment or input or act in any public capacity with regard to development of private property

in the City. The Commission will not have authority or jurisdiction over private property development including permitting, or legislative or adjudicatory decisions, quasi or otherwise.

G. This Chapter shall not apply to City public parks, private property, or waters of the Santiago Creek.

In comparing the stated SCVP objectives with the Commission's duties, there are certainly parallels. While improving flood protection and/or restoring the Creek's natural contribution to groundwater recharge could arguably delve into "water" matters (prohibited under Section G above), the SCVP identifies numerous potential projects that can help start the conversation of what the Commission would like to recommend to the City Council. While the SCVP is being reviewed at the April 24<sup>th</sup> meeting, it should not be construed as to limit the Commission.

### **Attachments and Discussion**

Five documents are attached to this report. The first document is the actual SCVP. This is the full plan that provides details on specific projects the Commission may want to consider. Each set of projects are described mile-by-mile starting from Hart Park all the way to Santiago Oaks Regional Park.

The second document is an analysis City staff submitted in April 2018 on the SCVP. The analysis confirms SCVP's overall conformance with the City's General Plan while categorizing each project into three levels of difficulty - Easier, More Difficult, and Most Difficult.

Placement into respective categories was based on factors that included cost and complexity. For example, restoring native vegetation on City property would generally be considered an easy project while projects that required private property acquisition would be categorized as Most Difficult. The categorization is a useful guide for SCVP project next steps; moreover, in detailing the steps necessary to complete projects, the analysis informs which projects are currently off limits since they necessitate private property acquisition.

The third document is a draft recommendation planning sheet. This document is intended to help organize the Commission's projects, descriptions, funding opportunities, and priorities when recommendations are presented to the City Council.

### **Future Meetings and Discussions**

Going forward, the Commission will be provided with and review Creek foundational documents to help identify and refine recommendations to the Council. These documents include, but are not limited to, the East Orange 1975 General Plan and Orange Park Acres Specific Plan which are attached to this report for reference.

## **7. ATTACHMENTS**

- Santiago Creek Vision Plan
- 2018 City Staff Memorandum
- Draft Santiago Creek Commission Recommendation Planning Sheet
- East Orange 1975 General Plan

- Orange Park Acres Specific Plan