



Friends of Stevens Creek Trail

2023 Annual Report

Message from the President

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2023 was the year the Friends could claim we are back to normal after nearly three years of pandemic. Our meetings are now in-person and the 29th Trailblazer Race exceeded 500 participants with over 100 volunteers supporting the effort. The pace and breadth of activities to extend and enhance the trail exceeds that of any time in recent memory. From Mountain View's Shoreline Park to beyond the Stevens Creek Reservoir there are groups planning future extensions and enhancements as well as other groups physically working to create new trails and improve the existing trail.

In Cupertino we have ongoing activities on both the north and south ends of the trail. At the northern end there is now an informal trail between Stevens Creek Blvd and Varian Park to include a bench and picnic table. This new section is the result of leadership of Board Member and Former Mayor Richard Lowenthal as well as the energy of numerous volunteers. At the southern end, there is an active study group that is evaluating routing alternatives to connect the trail

between Linda Vista Park and the Tony Look Trail.

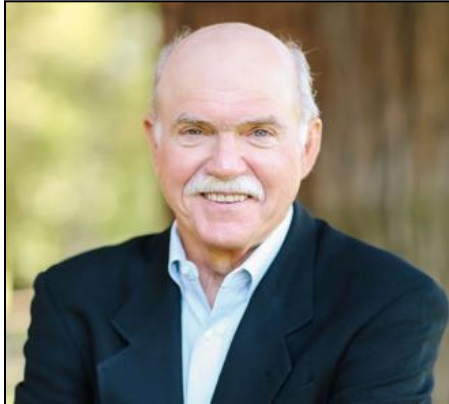
In Mountain View and Sunnyvale, city staffs are moving forward with preliminary and contract work to extend the trail about 1.25 miles from Dale/Heatherstone to Fremont Blvd. Sunnyvale is clearly in the lead on this endeavor with contract work in detailed design and has conducted a number of community meetings. Mountain View staff is working preliminary geotechnical and hydrological investigations and hopes to select a contractor by the end of 2024.

We now have Stevens Creek Trail Medallions installed in Cupertino and Mountain View. These cities join Mid-Pen and SC County in having common medallions installed. As new trail segments are completed, there are agreements in place to have medallions installed. This has been a multi-year effort to forge agreements with all parties along the trail to have common signage.

While the Fish Passage project at Deep Cliff Golf Course was completed in 2022, the Friends have an agreement to conduct 5 yearly monitoring tasks. We completed the first one in 2023 and thanks to the

volunteers who came forward to conduct this field exercise, we were able to hold the cost to a reasonable level. We are hoping that more volunteers come forward this year for a fun and satisfying day of getting wet and dirty.

And lastly this past year, we conducted the 29th Trailblazer 5K/10K Race starting and finishing at the Microsoft Campus on La Avenida St in Mountain View. We had over 500 participants and over 100 volunteers for a friendly and fun event. We hope to increase participation for the 30th running in 2024.



The sections and paragraphs that follow detail much of the activity the Friends were involved in during the past year and some of the plans for this year. All in all, 2023 was a good year and we look forward to new endeavors along the trail in 2024. With all the problems in the world, I am grateful for what we have here. The Stevens Creek Trail is a haven for cleansing the mind and body by immersing yourself in fresh air, exercise and nature. It is a gem that should be protected and enhanced.

- Greg Unangst, Board President

Trail Development

Extending the trail to close the gaps is central to the mission of the Friends. There has been significant progress to report with new trail segments open now and others in earnest planning & development.

Trail Extensions in Cupertino

As Stevens Creek winds through Cupertino, it passes through a chain of parks, recreation areas, and open space preserves where members of the public can enjoy the creek. However, there are gaps in the trail that prevent safe and convenient travel between these spaces and through the city. Connecting these segments to create a continuous trail is an imperative of the Friends.

In 2022, Friends of Stevens Creek Trail Board member Richard Lowenthal purchased a small property that lies along the creek from Varian Park to Stevens Creek Boulevard in Cupertino. Since then, several volunteers from the Friends, along with over 30 volunteers from HP, Inc., have cleared old vegetation, removed fencing, constructed a stairway, built a retaining wall, planted new trees, and removed other obstacles to create an open



pathway for trail users. An increasing number of people are now utilizing this new 0.25 mile trail segment.

A study group has been exploring how to extend the trail further southwest from Linda Vista Park to Stevens Creek County Park for over two years. The all-volunteer group includes former Cupertino City Council members, former Cupertino Parks and Recreation Commission members, and representatives of Walk-Bike Cupertino and of the Friends of Stevens Creek Trail. Multiple routes are being considered. The connection would provide Cupertino residents direct access to Stevens Creek County Park and Fremont Older Preserve, part of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, without having to use the heavily traveled Stevens Canyon Road.

Trail Extensions in Mountain View and Sunnyvale

Planning and design work on the trail extension in Sunnyvale and Mountain View continued in 2023. The cities are coordinating plans to extend the trail to connect Fremont Ave in Sunnyvale to

Dale/Heatherstone Ave in Mountain View. See map alongside with the blue section indicating the existing trail, red to be built by Mountain View, and green to be built by Sunnyvale. This new trail segment would connect several schools and provide a bike and pedestrian-friendly route for families in the area.



Both cities are starting the design phase. Sunnyvale has retained a contractor to conduct environmental and detailed design work for extending the trail from Remington to Fremont Ave. They held several public meetings to collect community input. The most significant issue was how to terminate the trail at Fremont Avenue.

Mountain View is perhaps a bit behind. The project is on their approved list, but the project team is still being staffed. Hopefully soon, they will be issuing requests for proposals for extending the trail from Dale/Heatherstone to Remington.

FoSCT is actively engaged with the cities and other agencies, and will continue to publicize public meetings on these developments. We have participated in public comment forums and provided feedback to the cities and design consultants on our preference for the safest and most accessible options for this extension where there are multiple options for the trail's termination and/or passage to the south past Fremont Ave.

Signage - Medallions Projects Completed in Mountain View and Cupertino

Stevens Creek Trail medallion projects were completed in Mountain View and Cupertino in 2023. In Mountain View, medallions are found on the 5 miles of trails from the entrance in Shoreline to the trailhead at Dale - Heatherstone. In Cupertino, medallions are located from the north entrance at the Stockmeir House to the current trail end in Linda Vista Park. The Friends installed all of the medallions under the guidance of staff from both Cities. These join the medallions installed in Monte Bello Open

Space Preserve and Stevens Creek County Park in 2022. The medallion was developed in collaboration with a working group of public agencies in the region (Cities of Mountain View, Sunnyvale, Cupertino, and Los Altos, Santa Clara County Parks and Midpeninsula Open Space District) and other regional trail partners (Bay Area Ridge Trail and San Francisco Bay Trail). Sunnyvale will include the medallions in their trail as it is implemented in the coming years. Midpen and SCCP plan projects in 2024 to develop segments in the upper Stevens Creek watershed that will also include SCT medallions.



Medallion Installed at La Avenida Trail Entrance & Near Cupertino's Stockmeir House

Other Trail Improvements

If you walk on the trail between the Central Avenue and Middlefield entrances, you will notice at least three new bulletin boards. These have been constructed by Boy Scouts fulfilling their "Eagle Project" to achieve the Eagle scouting rank. The efforts have been coordinated with the city of Mountain View Parks and Open Space Dept. which has selflessly provided many hours of time to assist the aspirants and arrange the installation of the new bulletin boards.



A gorgeous new bench has been installed along the Stevens Creek bank in the new Varian Extension by volunteer and supporter Bill Erdman. It provides a restful place to sit and watch the creek flow past. Bill and Board member Richard Lowenthal also set up a picnic table along this extension under the shade of a large oak tree. It is

free for all to enjoy, so consider packing a picnic lunch and stopping by for a bit.

As part of our route survey for the Trailblazer Race, we noticed that the section of the Stevens Creek Trail called Reach 0 north of Crittenden Lane was in hazardous condition after the winter rains. We notified Mountain View Parks and tracked the status of its repair to good-standing condition.

In early 2023, Valley Water closed a section of the Permanente Creek Trail from north of US101 to Charleston Road. This was the final part in a project that started in 2016 to enhance flood protection along 10.6mi of the Permanente Creek from the Bay to Foothill Expressway in Los Altos. Trail improvements and refurbishment were completed as part of this project and the trail is fully open to provide access to west Mountain View.

Wildlife Corridor

Fish Passage Project

The fish passage barrier in Stevens Creek as it winds its way through the Deep Cliff Golf Course in Cupertino, was removed and the project was completed in October of 2022.

This will be one less barrier for Steelhead, a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act, and other fish species to navigate. With the completion of this, the most ambitious and expensive project that

we have directly managed, the focus shifted to monitoring the project site as required by the regulatory authorities. The first of five annual monitoring exercises was completed in October 2023.



With a group of volunteers, we measured the contours of the creek bed and the positions of the logs that were installed to recreate natural habitat. It was gratifying to see that the logs remained in place, even through the heavy rains of 2023, and that two deep pools had formed behind them. Such pools provide important shelter for fish.

The project was made possible by generous financial contributions from numerous private and public entities: Santa Clara Valley Water District, Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, Cities of Mountain View, Cupertino, Sunnyvale and Los Altos, Santa Clara County, Deep Cliff Golf Course, Bonneville

Environmental Foundation, Google, Inc., Guadalupe Coyote Resources Conservation District, and Los Altos Community Foundation. We thank them as well as the Regional Water Quality Control Board and the California Department of Fish & Wildlife for the permits issued to us for the project.

Adopt-a-Creek Program

Friends of Stevens Creek Trail has recently been accepted to Valley Water's Adopt-A-Creek (AAC) Program. The Friends will be responsible for keeping the trail segment between Crittenden Lane and the South shores of Ponds A2 near the Bay (Stevens Creek) litter free. As an official Adopt-A-Creek partner, we are asked to conduct at least two cleanups per year at our adopted creek section. For comparison, the Friends conducted seven creek cleanups in 2023.

A sign designating that the trail segment is adopted by Friends of Stevens Creek Trail will be installed shortly at the Crittenden Lane entrance to the trail.

Trailblazer Race

This September the Friends of Stevens Creek Trail celebrated the 29th running of the Trailblazer Race with over 500 enthusiastic runners and walkers, representing almost a 50% increase over last year! The 10K and 5K runs and a 3-mile walk started and finished on the grounds of Microsoft's Silicon Valley Campus again this year, and we wholeheartedly appreciate their continued support of this hallmark event.



This year's event attracted participants of all ages, from near and far. The youngest participant was 2 years old, and several were over 83 years old. Many runners and walkers were likely already familiar with the Stevens Creek Trail, as the cities of Mountain View, Sunnyvale, and Los Altos were well represented. The popular event drew from across the wider Bay Area, and a few runners came from as far away as New York, Oregon, Texas, and Nevada.



Board members and other volunteers arranged logistical details, canvassed the trail and local area for outreach, and solicited sponsorships throughout the summer. The weekend of the race, nearly a hundred members of the community gave generously of their time to direct traffic, register participants, hand out cups of water, wave flags, and clean up after the event.

We were proud to have Mountain View Councilmember (now Mayor) Pat Showalter as our Grand Marshall and also had Sunnyvale Mayor Larry Klein run the race as he has done many times.

Events & Volunteer Engagement

Trail Cleanups

In May, the Friends worked with the City of Mountain View Parks and Open Space team to host a weed pulling event to remove Italian thistle (*Carduus pycnocephalus*), one of the nuisance species found in many natural spaces in the Bay Area. The group worked on Reach 0 nearest to the Bay. We anticipate hosting a similar event on the trail in late Spring 2024.

The Friends of Stevens Creek Trail organizes both public and private trail cleanups of the trail and creek bed. For many years, the Friends has coordinated with the City of Mountain View and Valley Water for two annual public creek cleanups. These are synchronized with Rails to Trails' Celebrate Trails Day initiative in April, and California Coastal Cleanup Day in September. In 2024, these cleanups will be on April 27th and September 21st, respectively, so mark your calendars.

In 2023 we formed a new partnership with the Google GBike team. During the COVID pandemic, this team shifted to environmental advocacy while ridership, bike maintenance needs, etc. were significantly reduced while everyone worked from home. We are overjoyed that they continued these efforts after everyone returned to the office because it resulted in three joint 'midday rides' where Googlers and the Friends joined forces to cleanup the trail and creek. The GBike team's efforts in 2023 resulted in over 1000 lbs of trash removed from the watershed around Shoreline, including the Stevens Creek.

Participation in Community Events

As part of our 30th anniversary celebration this year, we publicly displayed a Trailblazer quilt in all four cities in which the Stevens Creek Trail passes (Mountain View, Sunnyvale, Cupertino and Los Altos).

The quilt, approximately queen-sized, was the gift of Tom and Jan Frankum. Tom was an active board member for the Friends from 1997 to 2007 and served as President of the board in 2000-2001. An active runner, Tom accumulated many t-shirts from his years running the annual Trailblazer Race and the quilt is composed of panels made from from 15 different years. While Tom and Jan no longer live in the Bay Area, Tom continues to be an active supporter of the Friends organization.



The quilt traveled to all four cities for display. In addition, each city awarded The Friends a proclamation honoring its 30 years of advocacy for the trail and creek. The quilt's first public unveiling was in Sunnyvale, where it was displayed prominently at the Senior Center for almost a month. It next traveled to Los Altos where it was displayed at the Community Center. It then moved to Cupertino where it was shown at the Cupertino Library for several weeks. The last stop was at Mountain View where it was showcased at the City Hall until the Trailblazer Race. It was featured during the race near the starting and ending point of the race. The quilt now resides at the Friends' office in Cupertino.

We sincerely thank Tom and Jan Frankum for their generous and unique gift to the Friends of Stevens Creek Trail!



In addition to these milestone events this year, the Friends maintained our annual appearances in Mountain View and Sunnyvale Art & Wine festivals and other tabling events in Cupertino and Los Altos. Through these activities, Friends is able to promote use of the Stevens Creek Trail, registration for the Trailblazer Race, and community involvement. We anticipate at least the same participation level in 2024.

We hosted an 'energizer station' along the trail on Bike to Work Day in May and look forward to an even larger turnout next year. And finally, we supported our partners at Walk-Bike Cupertino at the ribbon cutting of the new Regnart Trail.

Company Events - Team Building

The Friends coordinate with companies and civic organizations for "private" trail cleanup activities. These are excellent team building activities that help the sponsor, the creek and the community. In 2023, there were seven such cleanup mornings provided by groups as varied as Fortune 500 companies, an EV startup company, and a teen religious group. We even had an event in December organized by a high school student on her winter break.

We plan on a similar number of trail cleanups during 2024. It is heartening that many of these activities are initiated by the organizations, not the Friends. We are very happy to publicize, facilitate and coordinate the activities.

Volunteer Engagement

A couple of years ago we transitioned from a legacy platform to a modern contact management system called 'Airtable'. This makes for easier searches and can be viewed by different parameters. The work was largely done by our volunteers. The volunteers, including our Board members, continue to help with removing duplicates, identify persons with the same address thus avoiding multiple mailings, and general cleanup.

With over 100 persons helping out on race day, the Trailblazer Race continued as the largest volunteer engagement event for us. Various cleanups, trail development exercises and partner events also pulled in our Board members and volunteers. The annual monitoring for the fish passage project, discussed in detail above, also relied on volunteers and Board members. The Signage project was made possible entirely due to the untiring efforts of two of our Board members - Steve Garrity and Ross Heitkamp.

In 2024 we will host our 30th Trailblazer Race! We have seen participation steadily increase post-pandemic and are encouraged that our keystone event is once again bringing hundreds of trail enthusiasts together. As always, the Friends of Stevens Creek Trail are looking for volunteers before race day and during the race itself for a wide variety of roles. Volunteers under 18 are welcome with the consent of a guardian. Helping on race day is a great way for troops and teams and organizations to spend time together outside, and we encourage group participation

If you are interested in volunteering with us in any way, please visit [this site](#) to express your interest and someone will contact you with details.



Financial Performance

Fundraising in 2023 lagged behind our donors generous contributions in 2022. Sponsorships continued at the same level with Google, Star One and Visa returning as Platinum sponsors. Microsoft, who not only made their Silicon Valley Campus available for the race but also supported us in other ways, were also a Platinum sponsor. Recology, Honu Wealth, Tori Atwell Realty, Avery Construction and Valley Water were Silver sponsors. Hobee's as always gifted us multiple trays of their delicious coffee cakes. The gifts of coffee and tea from Starbucks went really well with the cakes!

In addition, our grant writing efforts were rewarded by a generous grant from Los Altos Mountain View - Community Foundation.

Plans for 2024

Trail Development

Phase 1 of the medallion signage project wrapped up in 2023 with completion of installations in Mountain View and Cupertino. We continue to support trail developments in the new Measure B segments for Sunnyvale and Mountain View and the Midpen/SCCP SCT projects in the upper Stevens Creek watershed as needed. In 2024 we will also begin planning for Phase 2 of signage which will expand to include additional wayfinding, interpretive additions, and maps.

The city of Sunnyvale began detailed design on the first trail segment through Sunnyvale following City Council approval in April, 2023. We will continue to team with Bike Sunnyvale and Walk Bike Cupertino in advising the city of Sunnyvale on proper routing of the proposed new trail segment in Sunnyvale. This includes participation in community outreach meetings and at city council meetings, and discussions with the Dept. of Public Works staff. We are eagerly awaiting the opening of this new trail segment within the next 1-2 years.

In Cupertino we will continue to develop the newly-cleared section of the trail from Blackberry Farm to Varian Park. While it is currently accessible, there are improvements to be completed. We have mapped out a possible route and obtained the landowner's permission for an easement to build a new trail segment from Linda Vista Park to Stevens Creek County Park. Trail development with the help of the HP Sustainability Team will begin in April, 2024. Finally, we are working with the City of Cupertino for a bridge underpass from the Linda Vista Trail to McClellan Ranch for improved bike and pedestrian safety. When these segments are done, the Stevens Creek Trail in Cupertino will be continuous from Stevens Creek Elementary School all the way past the Stevens Creek Reservoir.

The City of Mountain View has recognized the threat to the trail following the rain and washout of the creek in early 2023. The banks of the creek significantly encroached on the trail at the Whisman Park entrance, to the extent that the trail was closed out of caution in March. The city has approved \$400k in the FY 23-24 capital improvement plan for Erosion Repair / Rehabilitation along both the Stevens and Permanente Creeks, and also indicated that they have signed on a contractor for the Whisman portion. In addition, the Sleeper Ave. overpass to CA85 is being evaluated for improvement in the summer when it is less likely to impact student commuters to Sunnyvale Middle School and Mountain View High School.

Events

Trailblazer Race participation grew from 350 in 2022 to over 500 in 2023. We want to keep that trend up this year with another 100+ increase in participation. We are also seeking to expand our offerings for community businesses partners to participate in the festival area.

In addition to holding our 30th run along the trail, clearly a long-standing tradition, we have also initiated planning in partnership with Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition to hold the first [and hopefully annual] bike ride along the Stevens Creek Trail, Shoreline Park, and Permanente Creek Trail. We seek to provide a family-friendly event for riders of all ages and skill levels to engage a broader segment of trail users.

At present, there are two planned public trail cleanups in 2024: on April 27th and September 21st. We have already partnered with Google's GBike team and completed a cleanup in January 2024 that yielded over 160 lbs of garbage removed from the creek & trail north of the Crittenden entrance. There are already multiple requests for private trail cleanups in 2024. We expect 5-10 such activities during the year.

We are reviewing the year's event calendar and plan our usual participation in local Arts & Wine Festivals as well as other tabling events associated with community organizations.



Looking even beyond 2024, we have started planning for a "State of the Creek" summit to be scheduled in Spring 2025. This summit will assemble community partners, Government agencies, and nonprofits with a vested interest in the Stevens Creek and Trail to set the stage for our continued work on expansion of the trail and enhancement of the wildlife corridor for future generations.

Board

We continue seeking to expand our Board of Directors to better balance our workload and have an even greater impact in our community. A great way for a prospective Board member to see whether Board membership is a good fit for them is to engage in regular volunteer projects with Friends of Stevens Creek Trail, and attend our Board meetings as a guest to gain greater insight into our operations.

Our all-volunteer Board members bring a diversity of backgrounds, interests and profiles to the organization. They give their time in several ways - trail development, signage, outreach through communications, website and social media, engagement with cities and jurisdictions, strategy direction and planning, events, use of technology and fundraising. They love the trail and are a mix of avid bikers, walkers and runners.

How You Can Help

Do these projects matter to you, or do you have something you wanted added to our list? If so, get involved! We are a community organization and our work is done primarily by community-conscious citizens like you. Reach out to us through any of the means listed below.

Donate

We welcome contributions by check, credit card or through PayPal (accessible by the QR code here). We accept stock transfer donations and you can transfer required disbursements from retirement accounts to avoid income tax implications. For additional information, please send an email to exec-dir@stevenscreektrail.org.



Our sincere thanks to our donors! Many of them went the extra mile to secure matching contributions from their employers. Our FEIN is 77-0334262 for tax-deductible contributions.

We do not share donor personal information without consent, and are proud to hold a Platinum rating with [Candid](#).



Volunteer

Those who are passionate about the trails or the wildlife corridors and would like to volunteer please contact us at volunteer@stevenscreektrail.org. Corporate / Company teams are also welcome.

Sponsor

Sponsorships have been an integral part of the fundraising efforts at Friends of Stevens Creek Trail. There's more information on sponsorship at [our website](#) including a [prospectus](#) of opportunities.

Social Media

Please visit and subscribe to our social media pages for more information about FoSCT and interesting content for trail enthusiasts of all types:



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We encourage your feedback on social media. If you have content suggestions or information you would like us to share, please email comms@stevenscreektrail.org.

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