

From: [Jodi Starbird](#)
To: [Hill, Shannon](#)
Cc: [Jason Su](#); [Sheryl Ehrman](#); [Erica Carr](#); [Marguerite Lee](#)
Subject: GRPC Google NOP Letter
Date: Friday, November 22, 2019 9:26:53 AM
Attachments: [GRPC Google NOP Letter 11-22-19.pdf](#)

[External Email]

Hi Shannon-

Please find the attached letter prepared by the Guadalupe River Park Conservancy (GRPC) regarding the NOP for the Downtown West Mixed-Use Plan (Google Project) Draft EIR. Thank you.

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November 22, 2019

Via email to: Shannon.hill@sanjoseca.gov

Shannon Hill, Environmental Project Manager
San Jose Department of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement
200 East Santa Clara Street, 3rd Floor Tower
San Jose, CA 95113-1905

Re: **Comments on Notice of Preparation (NOP) of Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for Downtown West Mixed-Use Plan (Google Project)**

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Jason Su

Dear Ms. Hill,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Guadalupe River Park Conservancy, GRPC, I would like to submit this letter which included comments on what GRPC believes should be included in the DEIR analysis.

We are the City's non-profit partner and governing body of the Guadalupe River Park (GRP) and Guadalupe Gardens. Our mission is to support activation of all of the parks within our purview. We are appreciative that Google has engaged us in their planning process and we applaud their desire to both enhance and maintain existing parks, while creating new recreational opportunities and connections for community enjoyment and use.

We have also been participating in the Station Area Advisory Group (SAAG) process and applaud the City's efforts to make the process as inclusive as possible. We have expressed in those meetings that the Guadalupe River Park Master Plan should be reflected in the documentation and analysis going forward. Due to our park's proximity to the Google project site and the fact that future employees and residents will utilize our parks and trails daily, we believe including the Master Plan as a regulatory document during the process is imperative.

Pertaining to the NOP, we want to correct Figure 1. The area north of Coleman Avenue depicted is actually the Guadalupe Gardens, which is within the Guadalupe River Park, just like Arena Green, Discovery Meadow, and McEnery Park farther to the south within Downtown proper. The Gardens is the home of the Rotary Children's Playgarden, Historic Orchard, Heritage Rosegarden, Community Garden, and our visitor and education center.

The project description in the NOP states that the project includes 16.8 acres of "open space and setbacks", which includes "all parks, plazas, green spaces, mid-block passages, and riparian setbacks." We wonder if that is a 100-foot riparian setback or a reduced



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setback as is allowed Downtown by the City's Riparian Corridor Setback Policy with a biologist's concurrence.

We also wonder how much of the 16.8 acres is expected to be used for riparian corridor purposes. The City's policy allows trails within the setback as well as other passive recreational uses such sitting and picnic areas, interpretive features, etc. In fact, the policy states that "Multi-use trails should be located 10 feet from the riparian edge if feasible." We support these types of uses along the Guadalupe River and are hopeful that Google will include them in the 16.8 acres they are planning, especially since the Guadalupe River Trail is such an important commute route and recreational opportunity. We also agree with allowing trails within 10 Feet of the riparian edge – we find that the trails closest to the river are much less affected by homeless encampments compared to trails that are farther from the river.

GRPC is hopeful that the plazas, green spaces, and mid-block passages that lead to both the Los Gatos Creek and Guadalupe River are truly green rather than tunnel like streets and sidewalks between two tall buildings. These east-west corridors for pedestrians and bicyclists are imperative to connectivity and activation of the park and trails. To development them as inviting and comfortable corridors will increase use and activation – our mission for the Park.

We also support the creation of a new publicly-accessible north-south axis/Los Gatos Creek trail in the area. Los Gatos Creek flows into the Guadalupe River north of Santa Clara Street. We encourage Google and the City to consider connections of this new trail to the Guadalupe River Trail which is located on both sides of the river and travels north to Alviso and south to Virginia Street, with planned extensions through Willow Glen and the Almaden Valley. Commuters and recreational users will want to travel both north and south of this extension and luckily the Guadalupe River can provide connections to these far-reaching areas.

For this reason, we support the installation of the pedestrian bridge south of Santa Clara Street as shown on the project plans as long as all appropriate permits from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Army Corps of Engineers, and Regional Water Quality Control Board are acquired. Other connection opportunities should also be explored, especially if the trail is being considered one of the multi-modal measures to reduce traffic and parking requirements.

We do not see the proposed location for "an expansion and widening of the northern side of the existing pedestrian-bicycle bridge over Los Gatos Creek south of West Santa Clara Street" depicted on page 11. If the NOP is referring to the bridge within Arena Green, west of Confluence Park, this bridge does not traverse all the way to the Guadalupe River. We are supportive of such an extension of this bridge, which is included in our current Master Plan, but was never constructed due to funding constraints.

We are pleased to see that the DEIR will examine potential impacts of the proposed development to Los Gatos Creek and the Guadalupe River. Protecting these valuable resources and being stewards and advocates for the Guadalupe River are also part of our mission. We encourage that any trees to be replanted in proximity to either waterway be species that have

been propagated from existing tree species within the corridors. Additional native/appropriate plantings (with maintenance) within the corridors in areas devoid of vegetation or areas of non-native invasive species are also encouraged.

Page 20 of the NOP described under Section 14 states that the DEIR will evaluate whether the project would increase the use of existing parks or recreational facilities or its proposed similar facilities would result in adverse physical effects on the environment. This is important section of the DEIR and there should be a robust discussion of such impacts and feasible mitigation measures should be included. We anticipate and welcome a significant increase in use of the trail and our parks facilities as a result of the proposed project.

Mitigation measures for such impacts should include, but not be limited to, additional physical connections to the trail and our parks, directional signage, improvements to existing facilities including benches, trash enclosures, picnic facilities, landscaping, and innovative/implementable ways to reduce trash impacts to the facilities. Additional pedestrian and bicycle activity on streets that lead to the waterways would benefit from streetscape improvements that promote safe travel. New facilities should be constructed according to the requirements of the City and the Guadalupe River Park and Los Gatos Creek Master Plans.

In conclusion, we appreciate Google's inclusive process thus far and we look forward to future interactions throughout the environmental documentation phase and beyond. There has been talk of allowing the public to review the final DEIR project description prior to circulation. We support such an action which could lead to comments that focus on the vitally environmental issues rather than the project description.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J. Starbird". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

Jodi Starbird, Board President