

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
FROM: JASON NUTT, DIRECTOR OF TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC
WORKS

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF PROPERTY ACQUISITION
OPPORTUNITY; 2810 FOURTH STREET

AGENDA ACTION: NONE

RECOMMENDATION

Council consider the opportunity to acquire property located at 2810 Fourth Street, presently vacant with an interested seller, and direct staff to further explore this unique opportunity and pursue further discussion on price and terms in closed session.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Council will be briefed on an opportunity to acquire property at 2810 Fourth Street, presently vacant with an interested seller, located on a major intersection at Farmers Lane and Fourth Street that has potential for future City uses. Council will provide direction as to whether it wishes staff to pursue this opportunity. If staff is directed to pursue this opportunity, a discussion of price and terms would take place in closed session.

BACKGROUND

Staff has discussed the possible acquisition of this property for some time, whether to eliminate an attractive nuisance, protect the health and quality of the creek, enhance public access to and recreation opportunities with the Santa Rosa Creek trail, protect a historical resource or provide for future roadway improvement opportunities.

This reach of Santa Rosa Creek is identified in the Creek Master Plan as follows:

Santa Rosa Creek Reach 3: Farmers Lane to E Street
Maps: Santa Rosa Creek Map 2
Type: Natural Creek Length: 8,625 linear feet

Existing Conditions and Recommendations:

PRIOR CITY COUNCIL REVIEW

None

ANALYSIS

Creek Master Plan Conformance

The overall concept for the creek trail system is to create a continuous system of access along the creeks where feasible, and connections from the creeks to major generators and destinations of bicycle and pedestrian traffic, such as schools, employment centers, community and government centers, parks, downtown and shopping districts, and residential neighborhoods. The creek trail system is much more than a recreational facility; it is intended to support walking and bicycling as viable alternative modes of transportation to the automobile. This will reduce roadway congestion, improve air quality, provide convenient and comfortable pedestrian and bicycle access, help conserve increasingly scarce and expensive fossil fuel resources, improve public health, increase social interaction, and impart a sense of community identity and pride. These benefits are especially valuable to children, seniors, and other populations with limited ability to drive.

Using creek corridors as a greenway and recreation amenity is a highly desirable concept that allows all citizens to enjoy nature and low-impact recreation close to their homes and workplaces. In statewide and national polling on recreation needs and desires, trails for walking and bicycling consistently rank as the highest overall public recreation activity and priority.

Santa Rosa Creek Reach 3 is recommended for preservation, due to its value as fish and wildlife habitat. Enhancements including removal of invasive species and replanting with natives is also recommended. Recreation, Access, and Transportation. Parcels are predominately privately-owned in this reach. The proposed paved trail on the south bank would cross under Farmers Lane and continue west to Shortt Road with access also possible from Gilbert Drive.

Intersections between trails and roadways are often the most critical locations in the design of shared use paths. Due to the potential conflicts at these junctions, careful design is of paramount importance to the safety of path users and motorists alike.

There are a number of other relevant objectives and policies from the Creek Master Plan:

Objective EC-2 Encourage healthy, clean, and safe creeks, thereby increasing economic value of areas adjacent to creeks.

The existing commercial building and portions of the parking lot are not in compliance with the City's current creek setback requirements, which would require a 30-foot setback from top of bank or in the case of an undefined bank, perhaps more setback. The existing building is legal and nonconforming and can continue to exist, be repaired and in some cases modified without requiring compliance with the setback ordinance. This property is not unusual as there are probably thousands of buildings along creeks in Santa Rosa in a similar situation.

WATER QUALITY (WQ) - Water quality of creeks is protected and enhanced.

The General Plan calls for protection of water quality through storm water management and preservation and restoration of riparian habitats. Protecting the water quality of Santa Rosa's creeks is a significant factor in determining the survivability of native plant, fish and animal species as well as the health and safety of citizens.

Objective HS-1. Provide for public health and safety.

Policy HS-1-2. Enhance pedestrian activity and safety by designing streets, buildings, pathways, and trails to provide a visual connection with public spaces. The creation of more opportunities for legitimate use of public areas decreases illegitimate use of these areas.

CULTURAL RESOURCES (CR) - Cultural and archaeological resources are protected. The General Plan calls for protection of Native American heritage, and preservation of Santa Rosa's historic structures and neighborhoods. Since Native American archaeological sites tend to be located near waterways, projects proposed along creeks present an increased risk of impact to cultural resources.

Objective CR-1. Protect known and probable historic and prehistoric sites.

The City of Santa Rosa municipal water system started the construction of a municipal water system in 1893 to supply water to the residents within the corporate limits of Santa Rosa. A pumping plant was constructed on Sonoma Highway adjacent to the Santa Rosa Creek at Farmer's Lane. (in 1922 the Council granted a request from the Women's Auxiliary Park and Playground Committee of the Chamber of Commerce to use an unused portion of the City's "hill reservoir site" for a picnic area to "make Santa Rosa a city of Parks as well as roses" and named the road/water pipeline right of way from the pump station to the road to Sonoma: "Farmer Lane.") The massive rock foundation of that plant is now used as the foundation of a small commercial building and can be seen from the Farmer's Lane Bridge.

Water was collected from the creek through a perforated pipe laid beneath the gravel of the creek bed and was then pumped by steam driven pumps to a 902,000 gallon open concrete reservoir situated on Proctor Heights, approximately 1,000 feet northeasterly from the plant, above the current Flamingo Hotel. Several years later, a wooden super-structure was placed on the reservoir to help maintain the quality of the water. Due to the scarcity of water in the creek during the summer months, the creek plant was abandoned after a few years of operation.

Future Traffic Needs

The State of California has chosen to eliminate the State Route 12 (SR-12) extension from Farmers Lane to Melita Road. This has resulted in local interest in utilizing the former highway right-of-way as a lineal park and significant alternative transportation route called the Southeast Greenway. Without the SR-12 extension regional east-west traffic on SR-12 will be forced to continue utilizing Farmers lane to connect the freeway segment of SR-12 west of Farmers Lane at Hoen Avenue with the conventional highway segment east of Farmers Lane at Fourth Street.

Existing conditions on Farmers lane include a five lane road segment with two northbound and two southbound travel lanes separated by a two-way-left-turn-lane. Farmers Lane has fronting retail on both the west and east sides in addition to a regional shopping center known as Montgomery Village Shopping Center.

At the north end of the road segment, Farmers Lane, acting as SR-12, functionally reduces to a single lane between Montgomery Drive and Fourth Street with the number one lane splitting into a left-turn and shared left-turn/through lane. The number two lane continues as SR-12 with a dedicated right-turn lane. Numerous traffic studies have identified this condition as a significant bottleneck for regional eastbound traffic. Mitigation measures all identify widening of the Santa Rosa Creek bridge just south of the Farmers Lane / Fourth Street intersection to accommodate an additional northbound right-turn lane to sustain the traffic capacity for SR-12.

In 2011, staff conducted a feasibility analysis of various intersection treatments and roadway modifications to address this bottleneck and concluded that widening the existing bridge is the most cost effective and approach. Due to the proximity and physical location of the building at 2810 Fourth Street, several of the potential alternatives identified acquisition and removal of the building to accommodate the required intersection and bridge modifications.

Staff has not been given direction by Council to proceed with the Project Initiation Document or Project Alternative and Environmental Document with Caltrans, therefore, no CEQA process has been prepared at this time.

FISCAL IMPACT

Unknown at this time.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Acquisition of this property would not in itself present any environmental impact. Because staff is considering the property for many possible uses, none of which have been determined, there is no project to analyze pursuant to CEQA at this time. Prior to the City determining future use of the site, it will conduct an analysis as required by CEQA.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

None

NOTIFICATION

Not applicable

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 – Vicinity Map
- Attachment 2 – Site Map

CONTACT

Jason Nutt, Director of Transportation and Public Works, jnutt@srcity.org,
707-543-3810