



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
FROM: Councilmember Donald Rocha
SUBJECT: THREE CREEKS PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE PROJECT
DATE: May 18, 2015

Approved Don Rocha Date 5-18-15

YH

RECOMMENDATION

1. **On item 4.7:** Open the public hearing, but continue the Council’s consideration of designating the Trestle as a historic landmark until the Council receives additional information, as discussed in Recommendation 2 below.
2. **On item 4.5:**
 - a. Take no action at this time on the staff recommendations under item 4.5.
 - b. State the Council’s interest in exploring a retrofit project that would preserve the trestle, or a portion thereof, and direct staff to return to Council for any necessary approvals or direction to begin study of a retrofit project.

ANALYSIS

We have seen an outpouring of passionate, well-organized advocacy from our residents in the cause of saving the Willow Glen Trestle. For residents who care about this issue, the trestle isn’t just the sum of its parts—the “longitudinal beams” and “timber piles” analyzed by staff—it’s something more. It’s an expression of the pride they take in their neighborhood, the importance they place on their history, and their desire to preserve what is unique and special about the place where they live.

As an elected official, I see it as part of my job to support residents who take pride in San Jose and want to make it a special place. It’s for that reason that I offer Recommendation 2.b above, which proposes that we ask staff to begin exploring what it would take to preserve the Trestle. It would be up to staff to recommend how we should begin this exploration, but we may wish to pursue a “detailed exploratory field analysis,” which staff indicates is necessary to determine the true cost of the retrofit option (see page 9 of the May 12th staff report for item 4.5). If we choose to pursue a retrofit project the

Council will doubtless have further opportunity to discuss how it could potentially be designed, but my initial feedback would be that, if it turns out that preserving the entire Trestle is not feasible, we should also consider whether it may be possible to pursue designs that preserve only a portion of the Trestle.

My colleagues will notice that, in addition to recommending that we explore saving the Trestle, I also recommend that we take no action on the historic landmark designation or the new project EIR at this time. I have great respect for the work of the Historic Landmarks Commission and appreciate their recommendation on this topic, but by deferring our decision on the historic determination, we allow for more time to explore alternative options for the project before making a final decision. This is a reasonable compromise position that honors the wishes of our residents, honors the work of the Historic Landmarks Commission and keeps the Council's options open as more detailed information about a retrofit project becomes available.

I appreciate that it may have been preferable to begin exploring preservation of the Trestle years ago when the project first came before the Council—before we fought a lawsuit against our residents on the issue. I would simply point out that sometimes the Council's path to a decision is long and winding; just because it takes us time to get to the right choice doesn't mean that we shouldn't arrive at all.

I would like to conclude by thanking our residents, for their passionate advocacy, and City staff, for all of their hard work on this issue. I am sympathetic to staff's desire to deliver a bridge project that is as easy and low cost as possible, for the benefit of the public. Their perspective is important, but as an elected official I feel that it's sometimes my responsibility to stand up for values that can't be measured in dollars and cents—the value of pride, the value of the past, and the value of making our neighborhoods unique and special places.