

Thompson Creek  
San Jose, Ca

Trail Feasibility Study  
Final

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prepared for  
**The City of San Jose**

by  
**CATALYST**

Thompson Creek Trail Feasibility Study

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## Executive Summary

The purpose of this investigation is to analyze the feasibility of constructing a Class I bicycle and pedestrian trail along the Thompson Creek riparian corridor. The study criterion examines land availability, habitat and geologic considerations and street and highway crossings. The report uses these criteria as well as relevant trail aesthetic and design guidelines to identify a trail alignment with enough available public land to enable the development of a public trail.

Thompson Creek drains from its headwaters in the southeastern San Felipe foothills, flows along the base of the eastern foothills and eventually merges with Silver Creek at Lake Cunningham in San Jose. Lower Silver Creek is a tributary to Coyote Creek and eventually joins the San Francisco Bay.

The proposed alignment for the Thompson Creek Trail begins at Lake Cunningham Park, follows the levees north along the creek to Aborn Road. At this point, land availability and geotechnical considerations preclude a creek side trail and the route follows a street side alignment to Yerba Buena Road. As the setting becomes more rural, the creek meanders amidst the open space and low-density housing developments. If land availability, geotechnical and biotic concerns can be met, a class I trail can again be placed along the creek. This creek side alignment continues to Larkspur Canyon Drive. From this point to Heartland Way, a country lane trail currently exists along the creek corridor. The report recommends upgrades to this existing trail, such as grade protection barriers, trail widening where possible and drainage improvements.

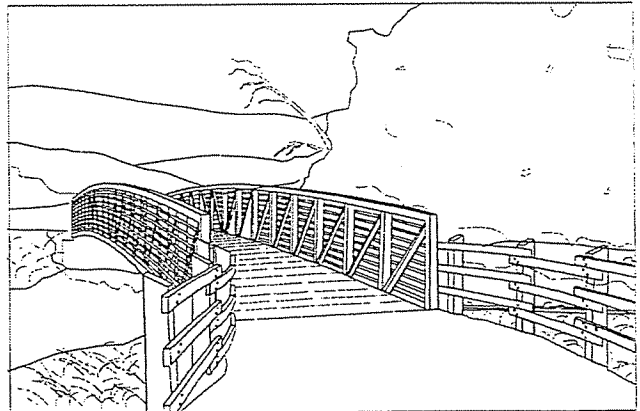
The proposed trail alignment will afford significant recreational, business, transportation and environmental benefits to residents and employment centers throughout the area. The trail creates new intermodal transportation opportunities for pedestrians and bicyclists to connect to bus lines and proposed transportation corridors. By providing convenient, safe and attractive opportunities for people to use alternative transportation methods, the trail has the potential to significantly benefit air quality. One of the primary objectives of the Thompson Creek trail project is to enhance riparian values along the creek corridor concurrently with the development of the trail. The trail project offers people an opportunity to reconnect with the natural environment and participate in volunteer efforts to restore riparian systems along the creek corridor. The geotechnical analysis and the biotics assessment, however, identify constraints that will require further study during the Master Plan phase.

Funding is available through a variety of local, state and federal sources. The total cost of constructing the trail will be approximately twelve million dollars. This includes the cost of replacing bridges to meet Class I standards and building a retaining wall along a trail section that is prone to landslides. If biotic, land acquisition and geotechnical constraints can be successfully mitigated, the trail will provide significant benefits to the users in this urban section of San Jose.



Chapter 1

# Purpose and Benefits



## **Introduction**

This chapter provides an overview of the Thompson Creek Trail Corridor and discusses the planning process, study goals, methods for determining feasibility and the potential significance and benefits of the trail to the community. The study area begins at Lake Cunningham Park in San Jose and extends to San Felipe Road and Heartland Way (Fig. 1: Regional Map).

The proposed alignment for the Thompson Creek Trail begins at Lake Cunningham Park, follows the levees along the creek to Aborn Road. At this point land availability precludes a creek side trail and the route follows a street side alignment to Yerba Buena Road. As the setting becomes more rural, the creek meanders amidst open space and low-density housing developments. The proposed trail is again placed along the creek. This creek side alignment continues to Larkspur Canyon Drive. The trail then continues along a Class II trail alignment to Heartland Way (Fig. 2 Location Map).

## **Mission Statement**

The City of San Jose will determine the feasibility of constructing a continuous trail along Thompson Creek that is safe to use, integrates with the natural environment and provides a public benefit to schools, businesses and the surrounding community.

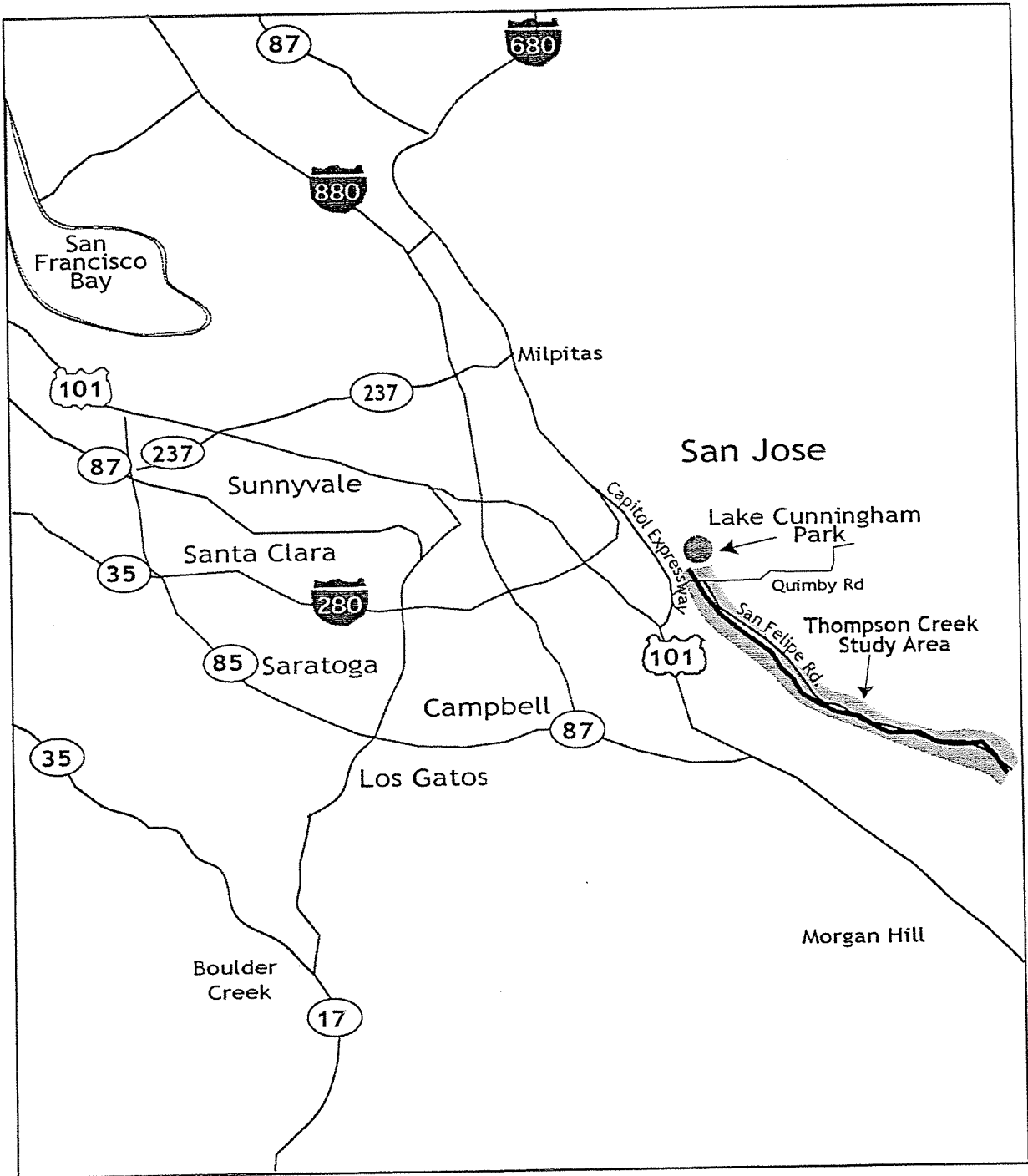


Fig. 1. Area Map

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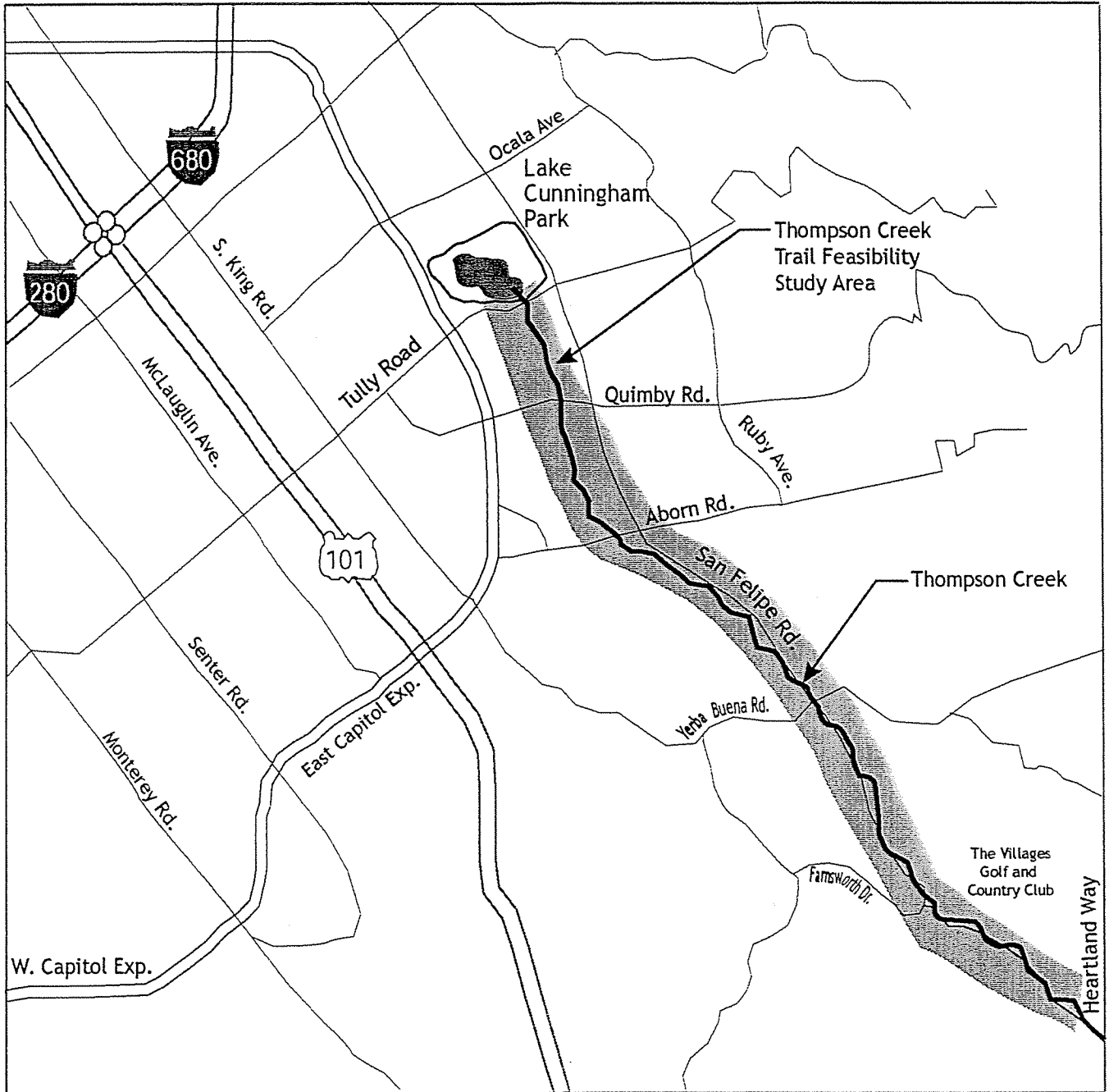


Fig. 2. Location Map





## Regional Setting

Thompson Creek drains from its headwaters in the southeastern San Felipe foothills, flows along the base of the eastern foothills and eventually merges with Lower Silver Creek at Lake Cunningham in San Jose. Lower Silver Creek is a tributary to Coyote Creek and eventually joins the San Francisco Bay.

According to the Riparian Corridor Policy Study (City of San Jose, 1999), seven miles of potential riparian corridor trail exist in the Thompson Creek study area. Six of the seven miles of trail remain undeveloped and the existing trail segments along San Felipe are substandard. The Thompson Creek Trail Feasibility study area begins at Lake Cunningham Park and extends to San Felipe Road and Heartland Way.

The trail connects residential areas with major shopping centers, regional and local parks, a community college and employment centers located along Capitol Expressway and San Felipe Road. The trail also links residential neighborhoods and recreation areas with existing and proposed public transportation corridors. These connections provide alternative transportation routes for residents and employees that want to bicycle or walk to work and alternative transportation (Figure 3. Land Uses and the Bicycle Trail Network) (Figure 4. Transportation Diagram - Public Transit).

## Alignment with Regional Plans

The *Greenprint for Parks and Community Facilities and Programs* (City of San Jose, 2000) identifies the need for a Citywide trail network that facilitates intermodal transportation and connects with regional trail systems within the City's sphere of influence. The *Greenprint* strategy outlines the need to develop trails in the Thompson Creek and other trail corridors in Council District 8. These trail systems will provide alternative transportation and recreational alternatives to the 23,000 new residents expected to reside in this district by the year 2020.

In 1995 San Jose's Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department prepared a *Park Acreage Deficiencies Report* that identified the residential neighborhoods along the study area as the most park deficient neighborhoods in Council District 8. The report went on to recommend that a comprehensive study be performed to determine the potential for acquisition and development of portions of the Thompson Creek Corridor for recreational uses.