



TO: Chair and Members of the Parks and Recreation Commission

FROM: JoAnne Plummer, Neighborhood Services Director

CONTACT: George Thomson, Parks and Open Space Manager

SUBJECT: Parks and Open Space Division Report

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive and file a report regarding recent activities and initiatives in the Parks and Open Space Division.

DISCUSSION:

Arbor Week 2026

The City celebrated Arbor Week during March 7–14 with new tree installations, community engagement, and an official City Council proclamation. Arbor Week is recognized annually across the nation and highlights the many positive contributions trees make to our community. At City parks and open spaces, trees provide numerous environmental benefits by improving air and water quality, reducing urban heat, providing wildlife habitat, and enhancing the beauty and livability of our community. This year's Arbor Week celebration was highlighted with another successful tree planting at the Goleta Butterfly Grove on March 14. Approximately 50 volunteers helped install over 100 native trees along a seasonal wetland that flows into Devereux Creek. Parks and Open Space Division staff also collaborated with the Streets Maintenance Division to plant 11 new street trees along Berkeley Road.

Since 2023, the City has planted more than 1,000 trees, including 779 at the Goleta Butterfly Grove, 100 at Stow Grove, and seven at Stow House. Completed capital projects also contributed significantly to improving our urban forest, with dozens of new tree plantings at Jonny D. Wallis Neighborhood Park, Armitos Park, and the Community Center field renovation, and various Public Works transportation projects.

Heritage Tree Nominations

On February 11, the Public Tree Advisory Commission (PTAC) reviewed five trees nominated for Heritage Tree status. The City's Urban Forest Management Plan provides for the "Heritage Trees" designation because of their size, form, age, color, rarity, genetic constitution and/or shape. They can also be a distinctive landmark to a community; a

specimen associated with a historic person, place, event or period; a representative of a crop grown by ancestors and their successors that is at risk of disappearing from cultivation; a specimen recognized by members of a community as deserving heritage recognition. PTAC Vice Chair Ken Knight nominated the five trees, which include several species that are the largest known specimen of their kind in the nation. The nominated trees include the Australian willow at the Goleta Community Center, the western sycamore at San Jose Creek along Jonny D. Wallis Neighborhood Park, and the Spanish fir, Moreton Bay chestnut, and brush cherry at the Stow House.

Following the PTAC's review of the Heritage Tree nominations, the consulting City Arborist is undertaking a condition assessment of the trees. The item will return to the PTAC at their June meeting, at which time they will consider moving the nominations forward to City Council for official Heritage Tree designation. This process highlights the unique individual trees we are fortunate to have in our parks system.

Phelps Road Right of Way Trail Beautification Project

UC Santa Barbara recently submitted a coastal development permit application to the California Coastal Commission for a trail improvement project located on City property at the western terminus of Phelps Road. This is one of the main public coastal access points on the eastern edge of the Ellwood Mesa. A map of the site can be viewed here:

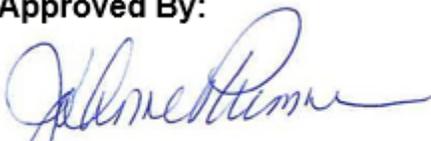
<https://maps.app.goo.gl/mvg52MxvzWHSRBXX7>

The proposed trail would be ten feet wide and 1,281 feet long, tapering to match the existing trail width where it joins an existing trail coming from the end of Ellwood Beach Drive at the western side of the project area. The new trail would be constructed with compacted gravel and transition to native soil at the connection to the existing trail system. Non-native, invasive plants will be removed and the site will be planted with site-appropriate native plants. Stormwater management is coordinated with the adjacent University faculty-housing landscape to create a series of wetlands that will benefit wildlife, improve aesthetics, and allow for better trail access after winter storms. Pending permit approval, construction can be expected to start later this year. The University's public notice about the project can be viewed here:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1aOVspbxVTv9zWkd_F7F8rHYBVID7sw_V/view

UC Santa Barbara is obligated to construct the trail as part of a 2006 Memorandum of Understanding between the University, City of Goleta, and County of Santa Barbara to cooperatively achieve protection and development of the Ellwood-Devereux coastal lands. The City's Parks and Open Division will maintain the site once the project is constructed.

Approved By:



JoAnne Plummer,
Neighborhood Services Director