



# City of Santa Barbara California

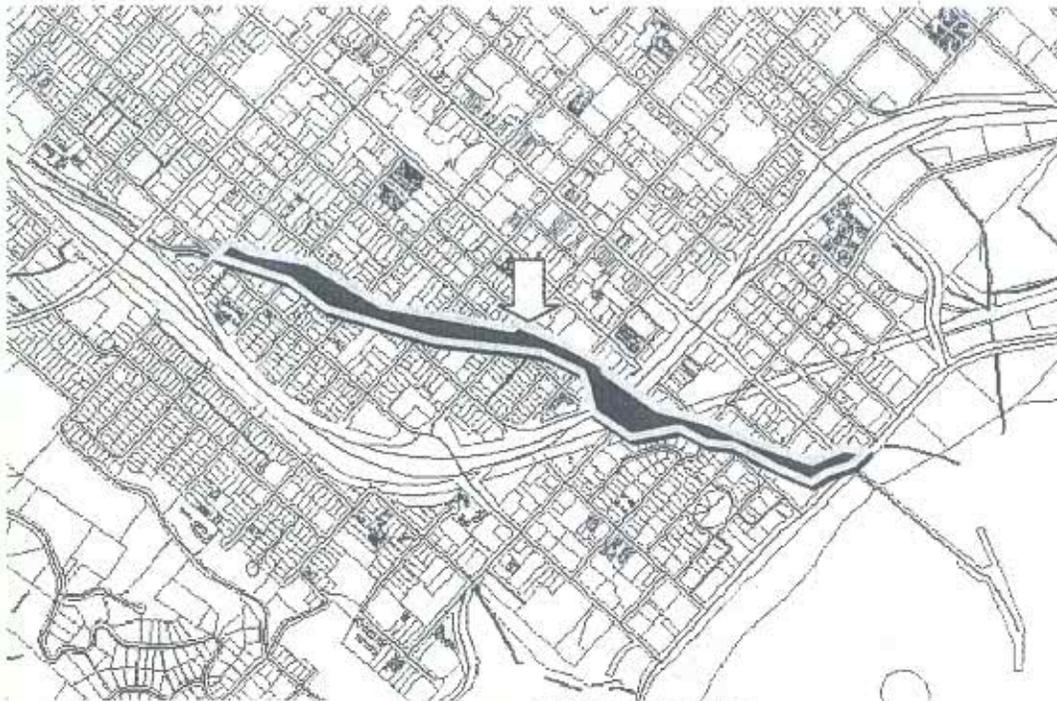
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## PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

**REPORT DATE:** May 10, 2012  
**AGENDA DATE:** May 17, 2012  
**PROJECT ADDRESS:** Mission Creek between Cabrillo Boulevard and Cannon Perdido (MST2008-00360/CDP2008-00012)  
 Lower Mission Creek Flood Control Project  
**TO:** Planning Commission  
**FROM:** Planning Division, (805) 564-5470  
 Danny Kato, Senior Planner *DK*  
 Michael Berman, Project Planner/Environmental Analyst *MB*

### I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The purpose of this discussion meeting is to provide the Planning Commission (PC) with an update on the status of the previously approved Lower Mission Creek Flood Control Project (LMCFCP). The update comes from Engineering Division of Public Works for the project which is currently under construction. The project consists of widening of the Mission Creek channel, construction of a bypass culvert in the vicinity of the Railroad Depot, and the replacement of five bridges with new, wider bridges to increase hydraulic capacity on Mission Creek from Canon Perdido to Cabrillo Boulevard.



VICINITY MAP

## II. BACKGROUND

City Council approved construction of the entire LMCFCP from Canon Perdido to State Street on December 5, 2001. The US Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) obtained a Federal Coastal Consistency Determination (Federal CCD) from the California Coastal Commission (Coastal Commission) that would have allowed them, as a Federal Agency, to construct the project. However, Corps funding never materialized so the Corps did not proceed with construction. The Federal CCD included conditions of approval that required studies that resulted in changes to or augmentation of the original project design.

The City and County decided to jointly implement the project (with Corps technical support). Because the City and County are subject to the California Coastal Act, unlike the federal government, the City and County were required to obtain a Coastal Development Permit (CDP) for the portion of the project that is south of Highway 101. Coastal jurisdiction of Mission Creek is split between the City (everything north of the estuary) and the Coastal Commission (the estuary); therefore, approvals by both the City and the Coastal Commission were required. As part of the Cabrillo Bridge replacement project, the PC recommended approval to the Coastal Commission for the segment of the creek between State Street and Cabrillo Boulevard on July 12, 2007. The Coastal Commission approved the CDP on April 9, 2009. The Planning Commission approved the portions of the Mission Creek project in the appealable jurisdiction on September 18, 2008. On April 9, 2009 the Coastal Commission approved a CDP for the creek channel segment from Highway 101 to State Street.

The LMCFCP was approved at the concept project level, as it is large and complex, and all of the project details were not yet finalized. As can be expected with any complex project, the project has been evolving as more information is available and more design details are developed. Changes have been made to the original project in response to agency approval (particularly the Coastal Commission), permit requirements from various State and Federal Agencies, and engineering cost analyses. Funding sources originally contemplated have not materialized, and alternative funding strategies have been developed that have required portions of the project to be pursued as funding becomes available, and out of the sequence originally contemplated when the project was approved.

Engineering staff in the Public Works Department has been working to describe the resulting changes in the project to City decision makers. Engineering staff has submitted a memorandum that describes the changes that have occurred in the project. The memorandum is attached to this staff report.

## III. PROJECT CHANGES

### a. Sequence of Construction

The original Corps funded project was to begin at the ocean and work upstream. Since the Corps funding never materialized, the City and County in partnership, using alternative funding sources, have constructed the channel segment between State Street and the pedestrian bridge at the Harbor View Inn, bypass culvert segment beneath the railroad tracks, Haley/De la Vina bridge and Ortega Street bridge. These project elements were constructed as funding became available from County Flood Control (for the channel) and CALTRANS (for the bridges). Since

the replacement bridges and new channel were wider than the adjacent channel a transition between these elements is necessary. Where bridge replacement occurs the creek bottom elevation sometimes could not be changed to the planned elevation, for hydrological reasons, until the adjacent channel improvements are constructed. Temporary adjustment in the creek width and creek bottom configuration and transitions to the existing creek banks were therefore required.

b. Distance Between Creek Banks

The Corps determined, based on modeling at the time the Final EIS/EIR was prepared, that the channel widths then proposed could accommodate flows of 3,400 cubic feet per second (cfs). Subsequently, a more recent hydrology study determined that the 3,400 cfs could be accommodated in a narrower channel. Since the narrower channel would be less expensive to construct, reaches of the creek were reduced in width when compared to the creek width described in the LMCFCP Final EIS/EIR.

c. Fish Facilities/Creek Bottom Configuration

A Coastal Commission condition of approval required convening a group of experts to review the proposed channel design north of Highway 101 and make recommendations about features of the project designed to accommodate fish. These recommendations were incorporated into the project. Instead of grading the creek bottom to have a low flow channel as originally proposed, rock weirs would be constructed periodically on the creek bottom. These weirs would control erosion, create fish pools, and allow the creek to make its own low flow path naturally.

The Tidewater Goby Management Plan was also required by the Coastal Commission. That plan provided that the fish features (fish ledges, fish refuges, and fish baffles) proposed in the Final EIS/EIR for the Mission Creek estuary to be installed. Cobble on the creek bottom would be replaced with sand that is suitable for goby reproduction. Dewatering and fish rescue plans were refined. These recommendations were also incorporated into the project.

The Coastal Commission also required a restoration plan for the lagoon south of Cabrillo Boulevard and landscape plans for private land located adjacent to Mission Creek. These plans were prepared and reviewed by the Coastal Commission and included in the project.

Other recommendations incorporated into the project include:

- Relocating fish baffles toward the center of the creek instead of on the edge, using boulder clusters between fish pools.
- Not using the fish ledges north of Highway 101.
- Reducing the area of rock energy dissipaters at De La Guerra and Gutierrez Bridges.
- Implementing an adaptive management plan for proposed creek improvements.

d. Creek Bank Configuration North of Highway 101

The original project had proposed a vertical wall at the base of the creek bank with a vegetated rock protected slope above, in the area north of Highway 101. The project now includes construction of creek banks that have a vertical wall at the top of the creek bank with a rock protected vegetated slope below at the edge of the creek bottom.

e. West Downtown Historic Study

The Final EIS/EIR included a mitigation measure that required a study of a portion of the West Downtown area to see if the area qualifies as a potential historic district. The study identified two potential historic districts. The study has been prepared and is being incorporated into the city historic resources data base and is in the process of being evaluated. Due to workload issues the evaluation of these historic districts will take some time.

**IV. Conclusion**

As this project progresses through the design review and construction process staff will continue to monitor it for consistency with the CDP and EIR/EIS. A comprehensive Mitigation Monitoring Program has also been developed that should be used to coordinate responsibilities of the various agencies under taking the project. Staff will continue to keep the Planning Commission informed of the progress of this important community project with periodic status reports.

Exhibit A: Public Works Memorandum, dated May 2, 2012

(Memorandum attachments can be viewed online in the electronic version of this Staff Report at [www.SantaBarbaraCA.gov/PC](http://www.SantaBarbaraCA.gov/PC). Printed copies are available upon request.