

# California State Senate

STATE CAPITOL  
SACRAMENTO, CA 95814  
(916) 651-4015

SENATOR  
JIM BEALL

FIFTEENTH SENATE DISTRICT



October 29, 2015

Ms. Marilee Jennings  
Executive Director  
Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose  
180 Woz Way  
San Jose, CA 95110

Re: ***Bridge to Nature: Bill's Backyard***

Dear Marilee:

Thank you for keeping me abreast of the development of Children's Discovery Museum's outdoor space and your exciting plans for *Bridge to Nature: Bill's Backyard*.

Having been a museum supporter from the earliest days of its inception and realizing that you have now celebrated 25 years of serving the South Bay community with interactive learning experiences in art, science and humanities, I am very pleased to see that you are undertaking such a large scale project to engage children and families in nature exploration.

As a trusted educational partner for families, Children's Discovery Museum is the natural choice to address the importance of unstructured play in nature for children as well as to role model stewardship for water as a natural resource for adult caregivers. The water catchment cisterns, drought-tolerant planting, and bio-swale and rain gardens are excellent examples of water conservation techniques that families can use at home.

I commend your vision for this new outdoor space and applaud your efforts to engage the community in learning how to enjoy and explore the world outside of our walls and to protect its resources for generations to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim Beall".

Senator, 15<sup>th</sup> District

Assembly  
California Legislature



**NORA CAMPOS**  
ASSISTANT DEMOCRATIC LEADER  
ASSEMBLYMEMBER, TWENTY-SEVENTH DISTRICT

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SAN JOSE, CA 95113  
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**E-MAIL**  
Assemblymember.Campos@assembly.ca.gov

October 26, 2015

Marilee Jennings  
Executive Director  
Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose  
180 Woz Way  
San Jose, CA 95110

Dear Marilee:

I was so excited to learn about your plans to create *Bridge to Nature: Bill's Backyard*, a new outdoor nature play space that will provide children and families with opportunities to explore the world beyond the Museum's walls and learn about the Guadalupe River and surrounding environment. Your concepts for activities and experiences clearly draw upon your expertise in early childhood education and awareness of the many benefits of unstructured play in natural environments on children's healthy cognitive, emotional and physical development.

That there are opportunities for adults as well as children to learn about the importance of water as a natural resource is an added benefit to this project. Showcasing drought-tolerant plants, creating rain gardens, and demonstrating how cisterns work will encourage families to use these strategies at home. I fully support your work on this project and look forward to enjoying the new space with my son when it opens next year.

In its 25 years of operations, Children's Discovery Museum has truly become a trusted partner to parents who strive to support their child's learning. Your decades-long efforts to reach and serve San Jose's ethnically- and socioeconomically-diverse community have resulted in an audience that mirrors San Jose's demographics, having achieved substantial increases in participation from Latino- and Vietnamese-descent families. I was so proud to have partnered with you again this year on the annual *Lantern Festival* to serve families who might not otherwise have the opportunity to visit and learn. Next year, the event can expand to include the new outdoor space and encourage these families to explore the natural world in safe and welcoming ways.

Through the experiences in *Bill's Backyard*, today's children will grow up with a deep understanding of the importance of the beautiful natural environment to our community.

Please keep us abreast of your plans and progress as the project unfolds.

Sincerely,

Nora Campos  
Assemblymember, District 27



October 30, 2015

Mr. Douglas Bosco  
Chairman, California Coastal Conservancy  
1330 Broadway, 13<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Oakland, CA 94612

Dear Chairman Bosco:

The Santa Clara County Open Space Authority (OSA) is an open space special district which serves the cities of San Jose (the 10th largest city in U.S.), Milpitas, Santa Clara, Campbell and Morgan Hill as well as unincorporated areas of Santa Clara County. Our mission is to conserve the natural environment, support agriculture, and connect people to nature. With passage of Measure Q in 2014, OSA has prioritized creation and funding of a new Urban Open Space program to connect people to nature in urban areas.

I am writing to advocate for the California Coastal Conservancy's support of a grant request from the Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose to advance their development of *Bridge to Nature: Bill's Backyard*. This innovative, 27,000 sf outdoor nature playspace along the Guadalupe River and Trail will nurture children's love of natural places and parents' understanding of the role of nature in shaping healthy children and communities.

Although research increasingly reveals the benefits of spending time in nature for children's physical and emotional health, studies indicate that urban families, and particularly families from diverse ethnic backgrounds, are often reluctant, nervous or frightened to take their children to outdoor settings. The Museum's planned outdoor exhibition will establish a "bridge" to the natural world and surrounding parks and open space for families – right in the heart of downtown San Jose's burgeoning urban environment.

OSA recently completed a study entitled *Community Assessment Project: Understanding Our Community* which provides an in-depth analysis of census data and CalEPA's CalEnviroScreen for the Bay Area's South Bay region. The study examines areas with cultural and environmental burdens that may limit families' access to and engagement with nature. From this, the report identifies the most under-reached and Disadvantaged Communities in our entire jurisdiction of 1.4 million residents. Children's Discovery Museum's downtown San Jose location positions it within the center of some of the most Disadvantaged Communities in the South Bay.

Because the Museum has established itself as a leader in the national museum field for its successful efforts to reach and serve ethnically diverse and socioeconomically disadvantaged families, OSA sees *Bridge to Nature: Bill's Backyard* as a significant new opportunity to impact those with the greatest barriers to engaging with nature. *Bridge to Nature: Bill's Backyard* and the comprehensive strategies the Museum intends to develop are highly consistent with our mission. OSA is very excited by the promise of this project as a new vibrant urban open space in itself, as well as its potential to encourage family use of our parks, trails and nature preserves in the region.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mike Potter". The signature is stylized and somewhat abstract.

Mike Potter  
Chair, Board of Directors

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San Jose, CA 95119  
408.224.7476 T  
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October 26, 2015

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Mr. Douglas Bosco  
Chairman  
California Coastal Conservancy  
1330 Broadway, 13<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Oakland, CA 94612

Dear Chairman Bosco:

On behalf of the Guadalupe River Park Conservancy, I am writing to advocate for California Coastal Conservancy's support for Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose's exciting new project, *Bridge to Nature: Bill's Backyard*.

- Devin Conway
- Teresa Davies
- Sheryl Hinshaw
- Marty Kopp
- Tony Le
- Marguerite Lee
- Jed Mettee
- Amelia Norris
- J.D. Norton
- Katherine Oven
- Michael Parrish
- Francois Rodigari
- Joann Zimmerman

Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose's site is a key entry point to the Guadalupe River Park and Trail, a three-mile ribbon of park land that runs along the banks of the Guadalupe River in the heart of downtown San Jose. Supported by California Coastal Conservancy funding, the trails, parks and plazas of the Guadalupe River Park and Gardens serve to preserve natural ecology and offer residents and visitors a multitude of ways to recreate, discover and enjoy in the dense urban environment of downtown San Jose.

We are very pleased that usage of the park and trails grows substantially each year, and believe that the museum's proposed nature play area will excite families about outdoor exploration and encourage them to venture to the trail just beyond the museum's front door. With activities designed to enable kids to explore in their own hands-on ways with real materials from the nature world, *Bridge to Nature: Bill's Backyard* will make a very real difference in helping parents become comfortable with young children in natural settings.

The opportunity to reach the Museum's remarkably diverse audience of more than 350,000 visitors each year with experiences connected to the Guadalupe River Park and Trail will benefit children and families in San Jose and beyond. We are excited about the opportunity to partner with the museum in developing and promoting this new outdoor environment and appreciate the opportunity to advocate for your support.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Leslee Hamilton  
Executive Director

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**Executive Director**

Leslee Hamilton

