

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation  
October 17, 2019

**SANTIAGO PARK PHASE II DESIGN**

Project No. 19-020-01  
Project Manager: Greg Gauthier

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Authorization to disburse up to \$250,000 to the City of Santa Ana to design Phase II of the Santiago Park improvements project in the City of Santa Ana in Orange County.

**LOCATION:** Santiago Park, City of Santa Ana, Orange County

**PROGRAM CATEGORY:** Santa Ana River Conservancy Program

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EXHIBITS

- Exhibit 1: [Project Location Maps](#)  
Exhibit 2: [Project Area Concept Map and Images](#)  
Exhibit 3: [Project Letters](#)
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**RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:**

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31170 et seq. of the Public Resources Code:

"The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes the disbursement of an amount not to exceed two hundred and fifty thousand dollars (\$250,000) to the City of Santa Ana ("the grantee") to design Phase II of the Santiago Park improvements in the City of Santa Ana in Orange County. "

Prior to commencement of the project, the grantee shall submit for the review and written approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy (Executive Officer) the following:

1. A detailed work program, schedule, and budget.
2. Names and qualifications of any contractors to be retained in carrying out the project.
3. A plan for acknowledgement of Conservancy funding.

Staff further recommends that the Conservancy adopt the following findings:

## SANTIAGO PARK PHASE I CONSTRUCTION

“Based on the accompanying staff report and attached exhibits, the State Coastal Conservancy hereby finds that:

1. The proposed authorization is consistent with Chapter 4.6 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding the Santa Ana River Conservancy Program and funding for public access to, enjoyment of, and enhancement of the recreational and educational experience on program lands in a manner consistent with the protection of land and natural resources and economic resources in the Santa Ana River area and its tributaries.
  2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines.”
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### **PROJECT SUMMARY:**

Staff recommends that the Conservancy authorize disbursement of \$250,000 to the City of Santa Ana to design Phase II of the Santiago Park improvements.

The proposed project includes design and engineering for improving the Main Street entrance to Santiago Park (See Exhibit 1). Plans will include the following elements: native riparian landscaping and irrigation; new and improved parking; viewing decks overlooking Santiago Creek; security lighting; separated pedestrian walkway, bicycle trail and roadway into the park; interpretive signage; and improved ADA accessibility (See Exhibit 2).

The existing Main Street park entrance has a single roadway that is shared by pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicular traffic. The proposed project will develop designs for separating the pedestrian walkway, bike trail, and vehicular road. The pedestrian walkway and decomposed granite jogging trail will connect to two viewing decks overlooking Santiago Creek. The viewing decks will include interpretive signage that will provide information about Santiago Creek, groundwater infiltration and water supply, native and drought tolerant plants along the creek and throughout Santiago Park, and wildlife that depend on the riparian habitat.

The proposed project will further include siting of new security lighting over the walkways and bike trail, providing a safer experience in the park.

The City of Santa Ana’s stated goals for the project are to increase public use of Santiago Park, create separate trails for pedestrians, bicyclists and vehicles to reduce user conflicts and improve safety, improve ADA accessibility to Santiago Park, and provide public information about Santiago Creek and its vegetation and wildlife. A final goal is to support recreational and educational opportunities for disadvantaged youth visiting the Discovery Cube Orange County who visit Santiago Park as part of the field trip experience.

**Site Description:** Santiago Park is a 35-acre park adjacent to Santiago Creek in the City of Santa Ana, Orange County. Santiago Creek is a tributary to the Santa Ana River. The park includes a regional bike trail that connects adjacent cities to the Santa Ana River Trail and Parkway. The park also includes the Santiago Creek Wildlife and Watershed Center, a log cabin, a playground

## SANTIAGO PARK PHASE I CONSTRUCTION

equipment area, two lawn bowling greens, the Lawn Bowling Center, an archery range, tennis courts, a ballfield, picnic areas, parking, and restroom facilities.

Santiago Park is heavily used by residents and visitors that enjoy the passive and active recreational elements in the park. The Santiago Park Nature Reserve, viewing areas, walking paths and riparian areas along Santiago Creek provide a feature for the public to enjoy bird watching and other wildlife that live in the park. The park includes large oak trees, eucalyptus trees, sycamore trees, poplar trees, and pine trees. The proposed project will complete design and engineering for improvements to the Main Street entrance to Santiago Park which serves as one of the major gateways into the park. The 2.5-acre project site is located immediately adjacent to Phase I Santiago Park improvements and constitutes the second and final phase of needed park improvements.

**Grantee Qualifications:** The City of Santa Ana Parks, Recreation and Community Services Agency has received and managed more than 50 million dollars in grant funding to construct new parks and renovate existing parks and recreation facilities. The agency works closely with the city's Public Works Department to ensure that projects are completed in a timely manner and on budget. The city's senior management analyst, administrative services manager, and senior accounting staff monitor project progress and expenditures, and manage project cash flow. Further, the city's competitive contractor selection and bid process ensures that they hire qualified contractors and require performance bonds to ensure that projects are completed on schedule and per plan specifications.

**Project History:** Santiago Park is one of the City of Santa Ana's oldest parks and many of the park amenities were built during the Work Projects Administration of the last half of the 1930s and early 1940s. Park areas immediately adjacent to the project area are heavily used and community members approached the city to encourage making improvements to the park a priority so that people can enjoy the park and native habitats in their entirety.

Several community meetings were held to obtain input on how to improve this Main Street entryway to the park. During the conceptual planning process, the Orange County Water District approached the city with plans to release water down Santiago Creek to provide water percolation into the groundwater aquifer. This further encouraged community members and the city to prioritize restoration of this portion of Santiago Park with the inclusion of expanded riparian native habitat.

### PROJECT FINANCING

<b>Coastal Conservancy</b>	<b>\$250,000</b>
<b>Project Total</b>	<b>\$250,000</b>

The anticipated source of Conservancy funding for this project is a \$5 million FY 2018/2019 appropriation from the General Fund specifically for the Santa Ana River Conservancy Program.

## SANTIAGO PARK PHASE I CONSTRUCTION

The Budget Act of 2018, Senate Bill No. 840, Chapter 29, Section 3760-101-0001 (e) states that \$5 million shall be available for the Santa Ana River Conservancy Program.

### **CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:**

The proposed project is consistent with the provisions of Chapter 4.6 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, Sections 31170 et seq. regarding the Santa Ana River Conservancy Program and funding for recreational opportunities and trails within the Santa Ana River region.

The Santa Ana River region includes lands on either side of the Santa Ana River or its tributaries (Section 31172(c)). The proposed project is located adjacent to Santiago Creek, which is a tributary of the Santa Ana River.

Section 31173 states that the Conservancy may undertake projects and award grants to public agencies to help achieve the goals of the Santa Ana River Conservancy Program, including recreational opportunities and trails, and wildlife habitat and species restoration, enhancement, and protection (Section 31173(a)). It further states that the Conservancy may undertake projects for public access to, enjoyment of, and enhancement of recreational and educational experience on program lands in a manner consistent with the protection of land and natural resources and economic resources in the area (Section 31173(b)).

Section 31174(b) requires the Conservancy to prepare the Santa Ana River Parkway and Open Space Plan (Plan), which was approved by the Conservancy in May 2018. The Plan is required to identify and prioritize low-impact recreational and open-space needs, including additional or upgraded facilities and parks that may be necessary or desirable within the Santa Ana River watershed. This project is identified as a priority project in the Plan that will assist in upgrading facilities and parks that are necessary or desirable within the Santa Ana River watershed. Further, the project is consistent with the Plan, as discussed below in the Consistency with Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria & Guidelines section.

Section 31174(c) states that the Conservancy shall "Give priority to river-related projects that create expanded opportunities for recreation, greening, aesthetic improvement, and wildlife habitat along the corridor of the river and in parts of the river channel that can be improved without infringing on water quality, water supply, and necessary flood control".

The proposed project will help achieve the goals of the Santa Ana River Conservancy Program by awarding a grant to the City of Santa Ana to complete design and engineering for recreational opportunities, trails and wildlife habitat restoration in Phase II of the Santiago Park improvements. The project further will plan for expanded opportunities for recreation within the park, and also plan for greening, aesthetic improvements, and wildlife habitat along Santiago Creek. The separation of trails for pedestrians and bicyclists and improved security lighting will expand and improve the recreational hiking and biking experience within the park. The installation of interpretive elements also will improve the educational experience and provide context for wildlife viewing and enjoyment.

## SANTIAGO PARK PHASE I CONSTRUCTION

### **CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S [2018-2022 STRATEGIC PLAN](#)**

#### **GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S):**

Consistent with **Goal 9, Objective C** of the Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will plan public access facilities along Santiago Creek, a tributary to the Santa Ana River and linked to the Santa Ana River Trail and Santa Ana River Parkway.

Consistent with **Goal 10, Objective B** of the Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will plan for the enhancement of natural habitats and connecting corridors of regional importance in the Santa Ana River watershed.

Consistent with **Goal 16, Objective A** of the Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will benefit disadvantaged communities by planning for park facilities that will support recreational and educational opportunities for disadvantaged youth visiting the Discovery Cube Orange County and utilizing Santiago Park as part of the field trip experience.

### **CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA & GUIDELINES:**

The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines, last updated on October 2, 2014, in the following respects:

#### **Required Criteria**

1. **Promotion of the Conservancy's statutory programs and purposes:** See the "Consistency with Conservancy's Enabling Legislation" section above.
2. **Consistency with purposes of the funding source:** See the "Project Financing" section above.
3. **Promotion and implementation of state plans and policies:** The project supports and is consistent with "Santa Ana River Parkway & Open Space Plan" (Coastal Conservancy, May 2018): The proposed project supports Goals 1 and 2 of the Habitat and Wildlife Goals of the Plan regarding protection, restoration and enhancement of high-quality habitat areas for multiple benefits. The project further supports Goals 2 through 7, and Goal 10, of the Education, Recreation and Access Goals of the Plan regarding connections between the river corridor and surrounding communities, river-related outdoor activities, opportunities to experience and learn about the natural environment and the river's resources, open space access, and protection of open space for future education, recreation and access opportunities. Finally, the project is listed as a priority project within the Plan.
4. **Support of the public:** See the "Project History" section above and Exhibit 3, Project Letters.
5. **Location:** The proposed project is in the City of Santa Ana, in Orange County, within Santiago Park. Santiago Creek runs through and along Santiago Park and is a tributary to the Santa Ana River. Lands within one-half mile of the Santa Ana River and its tributaries lie within program lands of the Santa Ana River Conservancy Program.

## SANTIAGO PARK PHASE I CONSTRUCTION

6. **Need:** The proposed project will not happen without Conservancy funding.
7. **Greater-than-local interest:** The Santa Ana River Trail and Parkway is a local, regional and state resource. The proposed project in Santiago Park is connected to the trail and parkway via a bike trail and will serve as an amenity and attraction for trail and parkway visitors.
8. **Sea level rise vulnerability:** The proposed project is located inland, beyond projected sea level rise scenarios for the years 2050 and 2100 as determined by the Ocean Protection Council's Sea-Level Rise Guidance.

### Additional Criteria

9. **Readiness:** The City of Santa Ana is ready to proceed immediately with the design and engineering of Phase II of the Santiago Park improvements.
10. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** "See "Consistency with Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan" section above."
11. **Cooperation:** See "Project History" section above.
12. **Vulnerability from climate change impacts other than sea level rise:** Restoration of riparian corridor vegetation along this section of Santiago Creek will potentially help mitigate urban heat index increases in the vicinity due to climate change.

### CEQA COMPLIANCE:

The proposed planning project is statutorily exempt pursuant to Title 14 California Code of Regulations Chapter 3 (CEQA Guidelines), Article 18, Statutory Exemptions, Section 15262, which states that a project involving only feasibility or planning studies for possible future actions that have not yet been approved does not require the preparation of an environmental document under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) but does require the consideration of environmental factors. The proposed planning project consists of planning and design, will consider environmental factors, and will be subject to CEQA review and analysis prior to implementation. No potential improvements will be approved without undergoing environmental review under CEQA.

Upon approval, staff will file a Notice of Exemption for the project.