

Thoughts and comments on the Guadalupe River Walk proposal.
L.Ames 11/13/17

Pros:

- * Interesting to see new ideas proposed for the site.
- * Glad to see that the river's riparian habitat appears to be respected.
- * It is appropriate for high density development so close to major rail transportation hub.
- * Interesting arrangement of bridges and paths: a nice break from rectangular grid.
- * Nice to see a vision for entertainment and the making of a vibrant civic attraction.

Cons:

- * High-rises directly in line with the airport? The towers are closer to the end of the runway than the runway's taxiway! (The runway is 2 miles long; the northern towers are 1.4 miles from end of the western runway.) Will this affect operations at SJC, with the various airlines differing policies on emergency preparedness for One Engine Inoperative (OEI) contingency planning? Will this hobble the airport by limiting long-distance carriers (due to the heavy fuel loads)?
- * The northwest towers seem to constrain Autumn Street to its existing alignment, precluding the long-planned realignment to Autumn Parkway. What are the traffic impacts of retaining the "Autumn zigzag"?
- * The tall towers near the creek will cast extensive shadows: what are the impacts of this much shade on the riparian habitat?
- * What are impacts to bird flyways? Birds like to follow river alignments, and the tall towers may channel or confuse them. How does this complex interface with the planned project to the south: this project appears to "channel" birds directly into the glass façade of the project directly across the street, boxing them in and forcing them into the windows. Will the buildings be "bird-safe", or will the towering glass windows kill countless birds?
- * Will the Los Gatos and Guadalupe River Trails be continuous thru trails? Will they be wide enough to accommodate the anticipated usage? The trails are used for non-motorized transportation and commuting, and would lose effectiveness if they are entangled in the bridge/trail complex. Will there be adequate trail connections under Julian and Santa Clara Streets? Will there be connections to the bridge/trail network for those biking to this complex?
- * The "Rec River" appears to be at the same place as the existing flood bypass culverts: how could they coexist? Would water in the Rec River be recirculating? What is the power consumption for pumping the water? How is water quality maintained -- with filters and/or chemicals? If the channel is to double as a flood-bypass, how is the area cleaned out after an overflow event? (removal of silt, cleaning and treating of the water, etc.)
- * How will birds deal with the Rec River? Will ducks and geese contaminate the play water? Will treatments (e.g., chlorine) in the water affect the health of birds? Will birds be discouraged from using the water? (How?)
- * "Little Italy" is an existing neighborhood of historic homes. Would they be preserved in their current locations? Would it be overpowered by the adjacent development? What happens to Henry's Hi-Life? Would the existing houses be restored and maintained?
- * The Guadalupe River Park Chain has been envisioned as "the" (or at the very least, "one of the") "Grand Park(s) of San José", with the Heritage Rose Garden, Rotary Play Garden, Arena Green, Confluence Point, Discovery Meadows, and Children's Museum. Carving out a portion of the parkland and filling with towering buildings seems like constructing a chokehold at the middle of the Grand Park.

They may be exciting buildings with interesting amenities and rooftop gardens, but they still are not “park”.

I’m sure I’ll have additional questions and concerns once I get an opportunity to review the more detailed plans.

~Larry Ames