

# Opinion: Google can win San Jose's heart with parks, river walk, creek restoration



The Los Gatos Creek near Arena Green could be a natural channel if Google takes it on  
(Photo by Larry Ames)

By LARRY AMES, RANDI KINMAN and BILL RANKIN |  
PUBLISHED: August 26, 2017 at 9:05 am | UPDATED: August 26, 2017 at 2:24 pm

Welcome, Google! Your project at Diridon Station will affect the surrounding neighborhoods and shape our entire city for years to come. It will be truly transformative.

Diridon is an incredible multi-modal transit node – bus, light rail, trains, and soon BART and someday High-speed Rail – so it's been inevitable that the area would see major development. Nearby communities, having worked successfully on previous planning processes, were appointed by the city and Redevelopment Agency to the Diridon Station Area Good Neighbor Committee to create a developmental framework plan to assure a future project would be a welcome addition to the city.

The plan, adopted by the city in 2014, “integrates open space, transportation and land uses ... while respecting existing environments.” It has a number of points, including:

- Fit in with the “existing city fabric”. We look forward to Google weaving in and becoming part of the community. Build an open complex that invites everyone – Googlers, visitors, and residents alike – to a vibrant and exciting “Destination Diridon”!
- Create Open-space and Parkland. The fire-training facility there “is the proposed location for a new 8 acre community park, with a portion of Los Gatos Creek and creek side trail running through the south east side of the park. This community park is intended to give existing and future residents a new place for large community gatherings as well as a broad range of outdoor activities ...” The Plan also says to “Integrate ‘green fingers’ with the pedestrian and bicycle trail connections [which] not only represent an opportunity to provide green space but also an important connection for walking and bicycling”.
- And complete the Los Gatos Creek Trail. The trail runs adjacent to the Los Gatos Creek from the foothills of the Santa Cruz Mountains and through several cities before the creek vanishes into a concrete culvert in San Jose near Diridon. The Plan says to study the “rerouting of the Los Gatos Creek ... as a means to both daylight this creek segment and to provide an off-street trail connection” to Google and Diridon. While you are realigning the streets and undergrounding the infrastructure, you can also create a channel for a restored creek with room for the trail. (The old culvert can be left in place as a flood bypass.) The salmon swimming upstream to spawn will be happy, as will be the Googlers and other trail users!

Also, you can create San José’s version of a “River Walk” along the Los Gatos Creek:

“This trail and park system passes through the heart of the Diridon Station area and will provide improved recreational opportunities and enhance north-south pedestrian and bike connections to the whole of San José, including residents and visitors to the Diridon area.”

Keep the creek’s riparian habitat wild and natural, flanked by broad paths, with “small kiosks and cafés [that] can attract visitors and contribute to a park’s liveliness.”

Google, think big. You have the opportunity to create a truly vibrant, forward-thinking development, and you have the vision and wherewithal to make things happen.

We in the community look forward to working with you and the city to make your project a welcome addition. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to free the Los Gatos Creek, to create a Park and a River Walk, and to reshape the heart of an entire city.

*Larry Ames is a longtime Los Gatos Creek Trail advocate. Bill Rankin is president of Save Our Trails. Randi Kinman is a member of the Diridon Station Area Good Neighbor Committee. They wrote this for The Mercury News.*