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To both our friends and family, thank you for the love and support throughout our four years.

We are excited to share this project with you.

Ryan Anderson and Peyton Ratto
# Table of Contents

## 1 Project Overview
- Project Goals
- City Overview
- Existing Plans and Guidelines for SLO Creek
- Creek Conditions
- Study Area
- Goals and Objectives

## 2 Case Studies
- Chapter Overview
- Saw Mill River, New York
- Los Angeles River, California
- San Antonio River Walk, Texas
- Conceptual Images
- Key Takeaways

## 3 Stakeholder Input
- Chapter Overview
- Creamery Marketplace
- Downtown SLO
- The Promontory

## 4 Opportunities and Constraints
- Opportunities
- Constraints
- Other Considerations

## 5 Community Benefits
- Chapter Overview
- Economics
- Connectivity
- Public Art
- Education

## 6 Project Implementation and Phasing
- Project Outcomes
- Phase I
- Phase II
- Phase III
- Example Educational Signage
- Conclusion
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CHAPTER 1
Project Overview
**Project Goals**

The following project includes a detailed narrative of project components and conceptual designs for the proposed City of San Luis Obispo (SLO) Creek Walk Phase III. The “project area” includes San Luis Obispo Creek and adjacent land uses/parcels from the Nipomo Street Bridge to the Marsh Street Bridge. This project is relevant because the City has interest in developing Phase III as an extension from the current walkway that begins at Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa. In order to ensure consistency with City goals and policies, various City documents were reviewed, including the Downtown Concept Plan. Our progress was regularly evaluated through a close relationship with City and County staff. This proposal for the SLO Creek Walk Phase III aims to extend the Mission Plaza Walkway, improve the conditions of San Luis Obispo Creek, restore native habitats, and increase public interaction with the creek.
City Overview

San Luis Obispo (SLO) Creek Watershed is located in southern SLO County. SLO Creek flows into the Pacific Ocean and has six major tributary basins including Prefumo Creek and Stenner Creek. The community has expressed desires for a new and improved experience of SLO Creek that runs through the downtown. Areas of improvement include flood control, protection of riparian habitats, and a way to provide education, recreation, and relaxation along creek corridors.

Downtown San Luis Obispo is special to both residents and tourists who come to the town, which consists of a mixed-use district that embraces the historic and local elements the City has to offer. In 2017, the City of San Luis Obispo updated its 1993 Conceptual Physical Plan for the City’s Center. The plan consists of illustrative plans, as well as stories of how the plan’s vision will be executed. Like most projects led by local jurisdictions, community-based workshops were offered in order to gain insight on public opinions. During the Downtown Concept Plan engagement activities, participants emphasized their desire to have a greater ability to enjoy SLO Creek. One of the priority issues established by the community through this public outreach process included enhancing the public realm. The public realm includes access to nature, events, and creative expression.

One area of potential improvement for San Luis Obispo’s public realm is SLO Creek, which currently offers limited public access for a two-block area of downtown consisting of Phases I and II of the SLO Creek Walk. Improving access could take-shape in the form of an expanded pathway along the creek and pocket parks to provide for a variety of new outdoor public spaces. The residents of SLO want to embrace the natural surroundings the City has to offer. SLO Creek has continuously remained a priority location for improvements in the downtown by stakeholders. Phase III of the SLO Creek Walk will allow the City to achieve more of its sustainability principles. This project aims to improve walkability, encourage redevelopment of underutilized infill areas, and restore historically degraded, underappreciated environmental resources. This can be achieved through a remediation of the creek habitat, encompassing both the banks and the creek itself.
Additionally, this enhanced riparian corridor should be exposed to the public in available places along its run from Nipomo to Marsh Street. Lastly, merging these opportunities for connection with the creek is important to allow for improved circulation in and around downtown with multiple opportunities for pedestrian separation from the streetscape.

Existing Plans and Guidelines for San Luis Obispo Creek

**Mid-Higuera Street Enhancement Plan**

The City developed a Mid-Higuera Concept Plan to enhance the urban corridor along Higuera Street, running south of the downtown core. This plan identified the need to address the issues of flooding surrounding the creek at the intersection of Marsh and Higuera Street, which was identified by 85% of public responders as a key issue that should be addressed in the concept plan. This document also describes city goals of improving the ecological function of the creek through restoration and enhancement of public access via extending the Creek Walk, with the eventual goal of connecting it to the Bob Jones Trail, leading to Avila Beach. The Mid-Higuera Concept Plan calls for a twenty-foot setback from the banks of the creek, and that all businesses located alongside the creek should interact with it in the form of patios, gardens, dining, or retail, providing a strong model for how the city hopes future development will interact with SLO Creek. The City has also recently acquired land from Caltrans that lies between SLO and Highway 101 which it now plans to incorporate into future extensions of the Creek Walk.
Downtown Concept Plan
In the San Luis Obispo Downtown Concept Plan, which was last updated in 2017, the City outlined its goal of enhancing the creek as a biological, aesthetic, and recreational resource. Additionally, the plan outlines numerous city goals, including increasing mobility of all types in the Downtown, enhancing public spaces, and protecting and strengthening the ecological resources that are present in the downtown area. The project area surrounding the creek from Nipomo Street to Marsh Street is identified as the Southern Downtown Planning Subarea. The plan includes an extension of the creekside pathway that would extend through this area, and eventually connect to the Cerro San Luis Trailhead past Marsh Street. Additionally, a bridge connecting Dana Street to Higuera Street over the creek is included in the concept plan for this area. This project aligns with the goal of increased connectivity throughout downtown as well as enhancing opportunities to connect with the local environment. The Downtown Concept Plan also aims to increase building interaction with the creek by developing frontages that face towards the creek to improve vitality.

The City has already completed the first two phases of the SLO Creek Walk Project. Phase I comprises the Mission Plaza and several pathways leading to the creek itself, which then extends to Phase II, stretching from Broad to Nipomo Street. This section of the Creek Walk consists of a narrow pathway that follows the creek corridor with several benches and public art. Both sections of the Creek Walk include bridges that connect the pathways on the western edge of the creek to the plazas and buildings along Higuera Street. This project also included revegetation of portions of the creek bank, which were previously too eroded and steep to support native plants. The banks were stabilized with erosion-netting, rock retaining walls, and an alteration to the grading of the slope.
**San Luis Obispo Waterway Management Plan**

In addition to specific plans surrounding this stretch of the creek, the city has also established general guidelines for restoration projects for waterways in SLO. These guidelines outline the process of removing invasive vegetation and placing supporting structures such as erosion blankets and planted geogrids on the banks of the creek. Additionally, it identifies the need to mimic natural riparian habitat through the creation of overhangs and pools. These guidelines provide a general baseline for restoration efforts to create consistent habitats along the various stretches of SLO Creek.

![Diagram of issues present in SLO Creek](image.png)

*Figure 4: Diagram of issues present in SLO Creek*
Creek Conditions

As agricultural development began to occur in SLO, much of the natural riparian vegetation surrounding the creek was removed to allow easy access to the water. In the reaches that run through downtown, SLO Creek has gradually been channelized via concrete and brick structures used to minimize flood risk. SLO’s downtown was built directly over the creek, and continues to cover various reaches of the water flow. Many sections of the creek have been straightened, with steep, confined banks, thus degrading natural creek features including the riffles and pools that many local species depend on. This has contributed to sedimentation issues throughout the run of SLO Creek. During the construction of Highway 101, the creek was cut off from the natural floodplain that extends to the base of Cerro San Luis, further confining the creek corridor. Many of the problems facing the creek’s natural conditions have been aggravated as urban development in SLO intensifies.

The remaining creek banks have seen an increase in invasive species, such as common ivy (hedera helix) and Himalayan Blackberry (rubus armeniacus), due to habitat disturbance. SLO Creek is an important resource for many local species, both terrestrial and aquatic. The creek provides a riparian environment supporting a native canopy of alders (alnus rhombifolia), cottonwood (populus trichocarpa), and sycamores (platamus racemosa). It is home to several threatened and endangered species of fauna including: Southern Steelhead (Oncorhynchus mykiss), California Red-Legged Frogs (rana draytonii), Two-Striped Garter Snakes (thamnophis sirtalis), and the Western Pond Turtle (actinemys marmorata). The creek provides irreplaceable natural capital to the city. In addition to serving as natural habitat, SLO Creek benefits the community by recharging the local groundwater supply as well as providing aesthetic benefits and recreation opportunities within the downtown.
**Study Area**

Currently, the portion of the creek adjacent to Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa includes a pedestrian path filled with benches in addition to public art and various small open spaces. A bridge spanning across the creek connects to restaurants and stores in the downtown area. Restaurants such as Novo Restaurant and Lounge have the privilege to have their patio run along the creek, providing their patrons with a special experience of one SLO’s natural features.

The specific setting of Phase III of the Creek Walk Project focuses on the section of SLO Creek between Nipomo Street and Marsh Street. This area, identified as ‘Reach 19’ in the San Luis Obispo Watershed Management Plan, has been severely impacted by surrounding development. Reach 19 is especially prone to flooding; unable to accommodate 50-100 year storm events which occasionally cause water to overflow the intersection of Marsh and Higuera Street. Additionally, this section of the creek has sediment and willow management problems that affect the waterflow. Sediment buildup and unmanaged willow thickets can obstruct the natural water flow and lead to an accumulation of debris that would normally be washed downstream. Much of SLO Creek is subject to pollution from urban and agricultural runoff in addition to non-point source pollution which tends to be difficult to trace from the portions that run directly through downtown.
The development of the initial daylighting process for SLO Creek began with a feasibility study in 1963, which primarily aimed to assess the impact of a creekside plaza located at the Mission. This study highlighted SLO Creek as one of the unique features that distinguished SLO’s downtown character and helped the project gain public interest. The city began restoration of the creek in 1996, when the city’s Natural Resource Program was formed. This oversaw the removal of man made barriers, invasive species, erosion control, and the acquisition of open space adjacent to the creek.

Phase III of the Creek Walk Project encompasses SLO Creek and adjacent land uses from approximately Nipomo Street Bridge to the Marsh Street Bridge. As the creek continues, adjacent land uses include commercial to the south and residential to the north along Dana Street. This section of the creek is unique in that the residences’ backyard property lines run along the vegetation portion of the creek. Some of these homes have also utilized their riparian water rights and have pipes extending from their homes to remove water from the creek.

The Creamery Marketplace provides an opportune public space in the downtown core. The plaza consists of restaurants and retail stores and the foremost occupancies have the opportunity to take advantage of the creek that runs behind them, much like the restaurants upstream such as Novo or Sidecar. Continuing east down the creek corridor, the Downtown Terrace Apartments off Higuera Street pose another area of concern for the development project due to nuisances caused by construction to the residences. While in the field, it was observed that all of these apartments face away from the creek, providing residents little to no view or access to the creek. As the creek continues eastward, more single family homes and apartment complexes border the creek. SLO Creek continues to run eastward along Higuera Street, surrounded by commercial retail and office buildings. Concluding the project pathway is the intersection of Marsh Street and Higuera Street. Here, a bridge leads to the Pacific Gas & Electric office space and the Promontory office complex.
The bank of the creek nearest Dana Street is contained by structures placed by individual property owners including concrete slabs that now are fragmented and protrude partially into the creek. These structures vary in terms of materials and condition along this stretch of the creek corridor, meaning that the bank structure is very inconsistent throughout this reach. In some areas, brick and wooden bank stabilizing structures are degrading and spilling into the creek. In other sections, specifically at the convergence of Stenner Creek and SLO Creek, the banks are relatively natural with a gradual slope and ample space on either side. The banks widen significantly below this confluence, and the height of the surrounding bank increases dramatically as it lies further below street-level. These portions of the creek are rampant with invasive vegetation, but still retain some function as a floodplain due to the more gradual slope of the creek banks and wider breadth of the corridor.

Upstream of the confluence, the banks become more narrow and steep, with hanging vines such as ivy and non-native blackberry being the primary ground cover in areas with soil. Many portions of the bank, however, are fortified with sandbags, concrete, or dilapidated wooden structures. Several residential buildings (on the Dana Street side) and commercial developments (on the Higuera side) extend up to the edge or even hang over the banks of the creek in some cases, leaving little room for natural vegetation or floodwaters. This section has been identified as having a poor riffle-run ratio and significant bank erosion, leading to an overall degradation of the habitat quality. In the portion of the creek that runs directly adjacent to the sidewalk on Dana Street, the water is forced to make a sharp left turn by a stone wall that guides the water into an even more constricted portion of the creek corridor. This is in stark contrast to the reaches of the creek upstream which consist of Phase I and II of the San Luis Obispo Creek Walk Project, which have pools, runs, and a wide base-flow area. The creek corridor for the first two phases of the SLO Creek Walk is characterized by sparse and diverse patches of vegetation, as well as more gradual banks that create a transition between the street elevation and the creek.

The study area for Phase III is significantly more narrow and the
vegetation surrounding the creek is overgrown and unmaintained. A variety of bank-stabilizing structures extend directly into the run of the creek behind the residential and commercial land-uses. The vegetation- or concrete-lined banks create a steep slope down into the water. This lack of breadth surrounding the creek poses a challenge in developing feasible pathways or pocket parks that offer interaction or viewsheds with the creek.
Goals and Objectives

Goal 1
Increase Walkability and Connectivity of Downtown

- 1.1 Establish a Class I bikeway that runs parallel to Higuera Street
- 1.2 Increase pedestrian activity south of Nipomo Street downtown by 25%
- 1.3 Provide a connection between the Cerro San Luis Trail to the Downtown Core

Goal 2
Create a friendly atmosphere that supports nearby businesses

- 2.1 Offer four unobstructed viewsheds of the creek
- 2.2 Provide educational signage and activities to connect the public with nature
- 2.3 Increase interaction between local businesses and public spaces

Goal 3
Implement flood management strategies and restore creek habitat

- 3.1 Provide structural support to damaged areas of creek bank
- 3.2 Replace all non-native vegetation with local riparian species along creek corridor
- 3.3 Divert runoff from Dana Street to reduce the peak flow during storm events
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CHAPTER 2
Case Studies
Chapter Overview

This chapter will examine various urban projects that have sought to enhance the conditions of creeks for both humans and the natural environment. These case studies will provide references for the challenges faced by urban waterway improvement projects and potential strategies for their design and implementation.

Saw Mill River, New York

In 2012, the City of Yonkers, New York completed its first major phase of the Saw Mill River daylighting project. The project took over an old parking lot and turned it into a new park in the city. This project not only provides the public with a new open space, it has also become home to several local species. As shown in Figure 8, a fish and eel ladder have also been built to allow species to migrate. Species now living there include snapping turtles and salamanders.

The next phase took place in 2016 which created elevated walkways and small public plazas above the river. A special aspect of this daylighting project is that the pathways include educational aspects such as signage explaining how the Saw Mill River was routed underground almost 100 years ago, as shown in Figure 9. Another aspect of educational purpose for the City includes a section of the River flowing through a public park with an outdoor classroom and stage.

Phase three of this project opened up the interior of a downtown block. When completed, an elevated walkway spanning across the river will allow visitors to enter a mid-block courtyard. A second walkway leads to a small amphitheater, similar to that of SLO’s in the Mission Plaza. As shown in Figure 10, to bring in public art, a large mural was completed here and provides the public with a quiet space.
to recreate. The courtyard has three entry points making it a popular place for pedestrians. Phase four of the Yonkers project is similar to SLO’s next phase. The plan is to daylight the river that is currently hidden behind warehouses, fences, and fallen trees, as shown in Figure 11. The project will follow the greenway design as used in other phases of the project.

The project of uncovering six blocks of downtown Yonkers has thus far cost $48 million. There have been a number of walkways installed over the river. Because of this new open space and greenway, real estate values have since increased in the area. Public art has been displayed as well as colored mosaics to decorate the ground displaying the wildlife of the river. This public space has provided for events, education, and recreation. A vital aspect for this project was building partnerships. As stated in a Groundwork USA article about the daylighting project, having a non-profit partner involved in the environmental details as well as community engagement was what made this project take off. Learning from this project, SLO should encourage partnerships with the public, legislators, and non-profit groups and continuously share the vision of the project with the community.
Los Angeles River, California

The vision for the Los Angeles River is to “become 51 miles of connected public open space that provides landmark opportunities to reduce flood risk and improve resiliency, support healthy and connected ecosystems, address potential adverse impacts to housing affordability and people experiencing homelessness, promote healthy, safe clean water, and create jobs while fostering opportunities for arts, culture, and community engagement” (County of Los Angeles) The project is proposed to create a network of parks and greenways to connect neighborhoods to the River. The greenways will provide educational features such as walks to view and study the multitude of bird species. Group hikes and cleanups will take place, as well as a bird walk the community can take part of every month.
San Antonio Riverwalk, Texas

The San Antonio Riverwalk highlights the range of opportunities that can be presented through urban waterways. The San Antonio River was channelized for much of its run throughout the city in the first half of the 20th century. The river saw significant habitat degradation as a result of the faster movement of water and loss of riparian vegetation. The restoration and improvement of the river conditions was spurred by the architect Robert H.H. Hugman, who advocated for making it a destination within the city and presented conceptual designs for paseos and bridges surrounding the creek. Local business owners supported the beautification, viewing the current river conditions as a detriment to the city.

This restoration project was comprehensive in that it sought to improve river conditions throughout the city. In the downtown, local businesses surrounding the project opened their basements to extend into creekside patios that connected to the walkway along the river. Although this walkway along the creek was located below the street level, the interaction of the surrounding buildings into the pathway created a vibrant public space surrounding the creek.

The river’s extensive reach means that restoration and development has been consistent, with projects continuing to this day. One recent development was the Mission Reach section of the river, which has emphasized the restoration of habitat for eight miles of the river. This project restored pools and riffles that had previously been degraded as well as replanting native vegetation along the banks. Additionally, this project has also created an extensive linear park embedded in the greenway. Trails link various parts of the city that were previously divided as well as connecting visitors with the creek environment through beaches, public art, and stopping points around the river. In total, the San Antonio River restoration project has enhanced 15 miles of previously degraded habitat and has created 2,000 acres of public parkland for residents to enjoy. It has additionally led to significant economic development and improved connectivity throughout the city.
Key Takeaways

- **Long-term urban restoration projects often require a phased approach that allows for flexibility over the period of development.**
- **Pocket parks in urbanized areas provide the opportunity for restored natural environment while also fostering public interaction with nature.**
- **Improved open spaces can create a unique interface between the public realm and private businesses.**

**Figure 15:** San Antonio River and its surrounding commercial activity as it passes through Downtown San Antonio

**Figure 16:** Restored upper reach of the San Antonio River

**Figure 17:** Paseo running along the San Antonio River
These case studies provide important insight in the implementation of river restoration and daylighting projects. The Saw Mill River project shows how not only is the creation of this walkway providing recreational opportunities to the public, its restoration has provided species with a safer habitat. SLO can take inspiration from this project in ways such as providing educational signage and adding public art in the recreational spaces. The Los Angeles River project is a much grander project than what SLO will take on, however, the project provides inspirational images for pocket park design as well as ecosystem revitalization. The San Antonio Riverwalk illustrates how the use of public space alongside a resource such as a river or creek can change depending on the surrounding land-uses and amount of available area. For example, the creation of a creekside paseo complete with outdoor dining and vendors when the creek passed through a downtown district. Alternatively, the creek was bordered by more sprawling recreation spaces such as beaches and trails where it ran through less-dense residential development. This project highlights the flexibility in projects that can be accommodated alongside restoration projects. Additionally, the Riverwalk’s longevity is an important takeaway as, although it began as a concentrated effort in the downtown core, the project has extended along further reaches of the creek over several decades.
Project Concept Inspiration

This page depicts a variety of images that we used as inspiration for the various elements of our design for the pocket parks and pathway for the Phase III Creek Walk.
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CHAPTER 3
Stakeholder Input
Chapter Overview

As the Phase III of the SLO Creek Walk Project will have stages of construction and direct impacts on surrounding businesses, stakeholders were established and contacted throughout the project duration. The first stakeholder presented is one of the developers of the Creamery Marketplace. This conversation was important for our project development as the proposed pocket park in this vicinity will be in direct relation to the marketplace. Secondly, a representative of Downtown SLO was interviewed to provide insight on how additional open space and access to downtown may benefit the aesthetic appeal of the city to visitors and residents. Finally, we spoke with a representative of the Promontory office complex. It was determined that residents, especially those located on Dana Street, would have opinions about the project that are of interest. Unfortunately, due to safety concerns during the pandemic, residents were not interviewed.

Creamery Marketplace

The Creamery Marketplace is an open-air public market located at the intersection of Higuera and Nipomo Street. Tenants here are leasing spaces for restaurants and bars, coffee and treats, artisan shops, and office space. The Creamery Marketplace was built in 1906 to serve the local dairy industry in San Luis Obispo County. In the 1970s, the Creamery was going to be destroyed to make way for new development. Two architects saved the creamery by creatively thinking to create a unique public space. In 2016, a local development company, Covelop, took over the project and finished in 2019. The completed project included the addition of the “Farmer’s Building” which sets the scene for the new courtyard, as well as other new
architectural features and public art installations. By still incorporating the history of the Creamery, the courtyard includes features such as public art and CowParade sculptures to highlight the landmark location.

As the Creamery Marketplace abuts San Luis Obispo Creek, we determined that Covelop was an important stakeholder to involve in our project. Goshi Japanese Restaurant took advantage of the small deck behind its main dining area for outdoor seating. Although it is a small deck currently serving about four tables, this deck has proven successful during COVID-19 allowing patrons to still dine at the restaurant. As there is already an existing deck, our thoughts were to expand from that or explore other areas for potential pocket parks. To gain insight on the process of developing near the creek, creating a deck, and other unique aspects of the site, we met with a representative from Covelop.

To start the conversation, we shared our ideas of creating open spaces and continuing the walkway along the creek. The representative was both enthusiastic and receptive to our ideas to enhance the public space. Key issues he brought up about the current deck extending from Goshi Japanese Restaurant were the complaints of noise from the residents on Dana Street. Due to COVID-19, the deck has been utilized more than ever. The representative emphasized that while there were a number of concerns from nearby residents during construction, the noise issues never reach the threshold of decibels that create a significant impact.

The houses on Dana Street face away from the creek, with their backyards abutting the creek. As we discussed our potential pocket park along this portion of the creek, the representative brought up various mitigation measures that could be taken in order to make the residents on Dana Street more accepting of the project. Ideas such as a noise-barrier fence were discussed as a potential element to our pocket park. Not only would this type of fencing block noise created from this public space from the residences, it will also ensure that the residents do not feel as though their privacy in the backyards is being infringed upon. We of course brought up the fact that we do not want to hide the creek from this pocket park, instead we want to ensure that the public is embracing the natural elements that this area provides. We determined that some sort of barrier must be in place to protect the residents’ privacy. Our goal is to create a natural barrier that still allows the public to appreciate the creek’s beauty, sound, and species.

Another interesting topic of conversation during our meeting with the Covelop representative was about a future development, The Hotel at the Creamery. The preliminary design places the hotel in the existing parking lot on Nipomo Street, which currently provides parking for the Creamery Marketplace. This project proposes a four story hotel
and retail building. In the plans, it is proposed that the paseo side of the parking lot will be enhanced with pedestrian friendly entries to the storefronts and hotel. As this is the area we plan to propose our pocket park, this new development works in favor of our designs. Additionally, our conversation with the representative brought the development of a new parking garage on the corner of Palm and Nipomo Street to our attention.

This is valuable information as it will lead to an increase in pedestrian traffic at the entrance of the Phase III section of Creekwalk. The development of this new satellite garage for downtown as well as the hotel provide significant new opportunities for a continuation of the greenway and could serve as a catalyst for its development downtown. The Covelop representative was enthusiastic about our ideas to enhance this area by providing a unique public space around the creek. Because there is already a new development planned to begin in the near future, this pocket park will be proposed as part of Phase I of our project.

**Downtown SLO**

Downtown SLO is a non-profit organization that aims to protect and enhance the vibrant character of San Luis Obispo’s Downtown through collaboration with residents, local businesses, and the City itself. Downtown SLO focuses on place management through the support of local economy, culture, and public safety. The many connections this organization has with the SLO community means it has valuable input on local projects that may affect the downtown core. Since Phase III of the Creek Walk Project would include improvements to the public realm in Downtown SLO and foster increased interaction between local businesses and pedestrians, we decided this was a valuable organization to get insight from regarding the scope and direction of the project moving forward. We had the opportunity to interview a representative of Downtown SLO. Our discussion was enlightening and helped us realize several project elements that we needed to address with the project.

The representative for Downtown SLO highlighted the importance of public art in a project that encompasses outdoor spaces such as this. Although we had previously seen this mentioned in the Downtown Concept Plan, the representative was careful to describe that a more detailed approach to the inclusion of public art in a project like this should be outlined in
area was on the fringe of SLO’s Downtown Core, she expected it to gain far more attraction in the coming years as the city’s downtown gradually expands. New projects, including the new hotel and parking garage mentioned by the representative of the Covelop group, will increase the pedestrian traffic in this portion of SLO. She also mentioned the immense value of creekside locations for local businesses, which served to reaffirm our idea for a pocket park adjacent to the businesses located in the Creamery Marketplace. Furthermore, the representative of Downtown SLO stated that she personally knew individuals who work in SLO’s Downtown and will walk or bike to the Cerro San Luis trailhead throughout the week. Although this is just anecdotal evidence, it illustrates that there is already an existing need for a safer connection to the trail from downtown.

our project report. She stated that the inclusion of art displays was a significant factor in gaining support for a public project. She also stressed the importance of including informational signage regarding historic resources, in addition to environmental ones.

Not only did she provide suggestions for various project components, our interview also provided valuable insight from someone with a deep understanding of the community our project takes place in. The representative of Downtown SLO noted that while the project
The Promontory

The Promontory site was bought around the late 1970s and was built in the 80s. It is about a 45,000 square foot general office space located in Downtown San Luis Obispo. The Promontory is located off the 101 Freeway on Marsh Street, and can be accessed on Higuera Street. It is located along the steep slope between San Luis Obispo Creek and on the other side, the 101 Freeway. As we determined early in the project phases that a continuous pathway from Nipomo Street would not be feasible, we explored other areas that would allow a possible path with connections to downtown. We concluded that there was potential for a path along the rear of The Promontory facing the creek. The path would create a continuous walkway and bicycle path from the Cerro San Luis trail and continue on to Dana Street.

During our conversation with a representative of The Promontory, we discovered he was already eager about having a trail built along the property. However, he did express concern over who would then be in control of policing the property’s trail. He shared that there have been problems with people residing near the property and the creek, leaving trash and raising potential safety concerns. The representative stated that The Promontory itself has been policing the property to manage the people occupying open spaces near it. The concern brought about was that if a trail was put in place, would The Promontory no longer be responsible for managing the homeless and if the responsibility would then lie with the City. It seemed as though the representative preferred The Promontory themselves take care of the situations; it becomes a more difficult task when a trail is city owned.

Although concerns were brought about during the conversation, the representative of The Promontory emphasized that he has always been in favor of constructing a trail. Prior to explaining our designs,
he even mentioned the use of the cantilevered deck coming from the 101 Freeway where the hillside is very steep. Another similar design aspect to our proposal he mentioned was the pedestrian bridge extending from The Promontory to Dana Street. It was great to hear that these ideas have already crossed the representative’s mind as they follow in line with our project. Due to the possible difficulty of a cantilever deck along a portion of the path, he explained that the bridge leading to the property on Higuera Street is under CalTrans standards to hold a hanging bridge below it as another option for a continuous path. This is another great option and may be reviewed further when pursuing construction phases, however, this type of hanging bridge may be within the flood zone and cause other issues. Overall, our conversation with the representative of The Promontory was great. Hearing that the property owner already has plans and potential to work with the city on a trail, we were enlightened that we would be facilitating the process.
CHAPTER 4
Opportunities and Constraints
This site presents several unique opportunities due to its location at the end of the downtown corridor in San Luis Obispo. This includes a mix of land uses surrounding the creek, offering the opportunity of creating a valuable connection between residential and commercial areas. Additionally, the Mission Plaza Walkway Phases I and II are located directly upstream, meaning this corridor is a natural continuation for a project that has already been established and is successfully embraced by the community. The amount of traffic and interaction that businesses and pedestrians have with the creek in the initial two segments of the project will likely generate support for the extension of the walkway.

The Creek Walk Project is one of the iconic features of Downtown San Luis Obispo in conjunction with Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa, meaning that Phase III will provide an opportunity to strengthen one of the city’s most iconic assets. Additionally, the location of Cerro San Luis (A) downstream of this reach of the creek provides a valuable opportunity to connect the downtown to a popular open space. This connection is highlighted in the Downtown Concept Plan for San Luis Obispo in addition to several other goals outlining the city’s intentions to enhance the creek as a visual, recreational and ecological resource for the city. Despite these city goals, there are no existing plans or guidelines for Phase III of the Creekwalk, providing the perfect opportunity to create the plans and designs that support the city’s goals while not conflicting with any existing city documents.

- Multiple underutilized open spaces along creek corridors
- Existing land uses that generate activity surrounding the project area
- Array of local flora and fauna presenting educational opportunities
1. Although adjacent development surrounding this reach of the creek is a limiting factor in most circumstances, there are several valuable opportunities provided by surrounding projects. Notably, the Creamery Marketplace (B) offers commercial and semi-public space that could be significantly enhanced with more interaction with the creek and/or a pocket park. The future development of a hotel in the parking lot for this project can also act as a catalyst to initiate a project on the banks of the creek, and could potentially be part of the city’s conditions of approval for the development. The hotel’s development will lead to an increase in pedestrian traffic surrounding the Creamery Marketplace, which is where the entrance to Phase III of the Creek Walk will be located. Additionally, the city has approved the development of a satellite parking garage on the corner of Palm and Nipomo Street which will further increase the number of visitors passing through the entrance to the project.

2. Dana Street presents several unique areas of opportunity, most notably in an open space at the street’s terminus, which is currently undeveloped and overgrown. This offers space for a pocket park and a connection to the Promontory’s parking lot (C) across the street, which additionally has ample room for a pocket park adjacent to the creek. This provides an opportunity for connecting previously disjointed sections of Downtown San Luis Obispo. Additionally, a section of Dana Street directly borders the creek, providing an
opportunity for those passing on the sidewalk to have an unobstructed view of the water. This is in contrast to the rest of the street where residences separate the sidewalk from the SLO Creek. Dana Street in its entirety offers a quieter alternative for pedestrians walking along Higuera Street, which is far louder due to traffic and potential construction activities. By connecting the end of Dana Street to the Promontory office complex, the Phase III Creek Walk Project would offer a pleasant and safe class I bikeway for pedestrians and cyclists.

3. San Luis Obispo Creek provides several environmental opportunities as well. The wide banks directly upstream of Marsh Street offer substantial space for a trail as well as space to make bank improvements. The convergence of San Luis Obispo and Stenner Creek is another area of opportunity as it can act as an important viewpoint and offers more substantial creekside space than upstream sections of the waterway. Finally, local biology should be seen as an educational and aesthetic opportunity as it can add value to the creek and surrounding area. The presence of species such as Steelhead, Monarch Butterflies, and Pacific Lamprey allow education regarding habitat conservation and water quality. Additionally, amongst the plethora of invasive plants that have inhabited the creek banks, there are native trees and other valuable riparian flora that can act as the anchors for habitat restoration on the banks of the creek and provide shade and screening along the SLO Creekwalk.
Although there are many opportunities presented throughout the study area, there are also constraints that will need to be taken into consideration. During our field visits, we acknowledged the channel of the creek gets exceptionally narrow at certain segments. While we had the opportunity to walk in the creek, it became obvious that a continuous walkway bordering the creek is not feasible. The existing walkway ends at the Creamery Marketplace. Because private residences run alongside the creek, as well as other buildings, we are constrained to construct a walkway only where the width of the creek allows for a large enough walk path behind the existing buildings.

**Constraints**

- Lack of uniformity in bank stabilization throughout the project area
- Abundance of invasive plant species
- Narrow creek corridor for much of the project area
1. Because of the steep slope between the Cerro San Luis trailhead and the Promontory office complex, a walkway would have to be cantilevered or significantly graded. While this is a feasible solution for this stretch of the study area, the lack of space and steep banks on the upstream portions of SLO Creek (upstream of the confluence with Stenner Creek) would not allow for a walkway of any type. A more dangerous flood hazard may be produced if the cantilever walkway would encroach onto the creek and the grading would possibly decrease the stability of the banks. After the walkway ends at the Creamery Marketplace, buildings continue to run right along the top of the creek bank. Because there have been various developers involved in buildings along the creek, there is no uniform method of bank stabilization along the creek corridor. This presents an issue as some stabilizing structures are already deteriorating, producing sediment that builds up in the creek. During our walk in the creek we saw stabilizing structures consisting of brick, wood, and concrete. A majority of these structures were dilapidated and served mainly to further constrict the amount of space that water could pass through.

2. Most developments, such as the various commercial spaces and residences along the creek, are built facing away from the flowing water. We see this as a missed opportunity as the creek is ignored in a majority of these places. For example, the Downtown Terrace...
Apartments were built right along the edge of the creek and only have one small window facing the creek. We noticed that very few residents on Dana Street took advantage of their location near the creek and set up their backyard deck to look over the natural feature. We also saw that some homes utilized their water rights and have stuck pipes in the creek leading to their homes to use for irrigation.

3. Following the creek west, after the Downtown Terrace Apartments, the creek curves sharply to the left and then directly after, sharply to the right. This presents hazards during storm events because it will cause an increase in velocity in the water flow. This section of the creek may be susceptible to erosion of the walls due to the high speed flow presented during storms. After being given such power in the turns, the creek continues to flow straight at a high velocity. This section of the creek presents the issue of water management and flood control.

Another major constraint to development of walkways and pocket parks is the abundance of invasive trees and plants that have taken over the creek. The creek is almost not visible in areas where vegetation has become overgrown. Because the trees and plants have not been maintained, it will become an expensive and time-consuming process to get rid of these invasive species. It will also be important to do a thorough examination of what will be cut down and what needs to be kept.

As these trees and plants have continuously grown, habitats may have been established or roots may have grown too large. When these plants are taken out, it will be extremely important to maintain and trim down vegetation to keep invasives out in order to prevent another overgrown barricade of the creek. This effort will require coordination with the property owners along the creek as the banks abut their residences and yards.

Wetlands are protected for various reasons and there are numerous state and federal laws to keep them healthy. For example, our development must follow the Rivers & Harbors Act, Clean Water Act, and any regulations the Army Corps of Engineers as well as California Fish and Game may place on the development. The City’s Zoning Regulations also bring about constraints to the project. It is stated that creek setbacks shall be measured from the top of the bank or
edge of the predominant pattern of riparian vegetation, whichever is farther from the creek flow line. Creek setbacks are put in place to protect habitats and water quality while also allowing for any natural changes that may occur within the creek corridor. Parking lots, paving, open flames, or mechanical equipment, may be able to be constructed within a creek setback because there is no proposed structure larger than 120 square feet.

Accessory structures and uses, described in the Zoning Regulation, that may be located within the required creek setback without obtaining a discretionary exception must not extend beyond the top of bank into the creek channel, not cause the removal of native riparian vegetation, not reduce any flooding capacity, not occupy more than one-half of the total required creek setback area, and are consistent with other property development standards of the Zoning Regulations.

Example items include patios and pervious walkways. If our project design consists of impervious pedestrian walkways and bicycle paths, a Director's Hearing will be required. Other allowed uses include decks and landings that are no more than 30 inches in height, as measured from adjacent existing grade, garden structures provided they are constructed using light-weight materials and designed with open-lattice, and picnic tables and benches.

Figure 25: Creek bank coated in invasive vegetation
Other Considerations

One important consideration for this project is the quality of the water for this stretch of the creek. Urban waterways often suffer from increased erosion, pollution from runoff, and unstable banks. These issues were made apparent in San Luis Obispo Creek during our site visit and from experience walking upstream in the creek corridor from Marsh Street to Nipomo Street. Debris and litter was present along much of the creek banks, and as previously mentioned, many of the various bank stabilizing structures established by property owners along the creek have fallen into disrepair. This highlights the need to designate consistent bank structures for the entirety of this stretch of the creek. The San Luis Obispo Waterway Management Plan outlines several potential bank stabilization measures that can be implemented while still supporting natural flora and fauna. Potential solutions for this stretch of the creek include planted geogrids or rip-rap that would allow for vegetation to grow while still providing a solid foundation to the banks. The steep and uneven banks are challenging in that they provide little riparian habitat and require hard-scape structures to support. On upper edges of the banks, erosion netting with live willow stakes can be used to prevent erosion and support native plant growth. Brush mattresses are another viable solution for partially eroded banks of the creek. In sections of the creek with enough breadth to support a secondary path for water, a bypass channel should be developed to divert floodwaters. The constricted nature of this stretch of creek provides another challenge as the surrounding development prevents any widening of the creek corridor to reestablish the floodplain or to create a bypass channel for any significant stretch of the waterway. However, one way that flood waters can be managed is through stormwater diversion for runoff from the hardscaping surrounding this creek. Many sections of the bank along Dana Street directly receive water from the street, which only serves to aggravate the existing flood water management issues. By diverting this runoff into stormwater retention swales or other portions of the creek, the damage caused by storm events can be minimized. An underground culvert that directs runoff from Dana Street into Stenner Creek rather than San Luis Obispo Creek is a potential solution, as Stenner is less constricted and has a lighter base flow. This runoff could enter...
Stenner Creek right before it merges into San Luis Obispo Creek, thus avoiding the especially constrained sections of the creek. Additional improvements that will have to occur as a part of this project is an improvement of the creeks structures; namely the consistency of depth and the presence of pools, riffles and runs. This can be worked into bank improvements as artificial habitats can be constructed using bank stabilization structures. Additionally, addressing the floodwater management issues in the creek should allow for a more regular workflow that will facilitate the creation of natural riffles and runs. This should also help manage the sedimentation for this reach of San Luis Obispo Creek, which was identified as a water quality issue in the Waterway Management Plan. Finally, a removal of invasive vegetation and management of willow thickets along sections of the creek will further assist in the capacity and water quality of the creek. Invasive vegetation should be replaced with native riparian species such as American Dogwood, California Blackberry, and native grasses and sedges.
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CHAPTER 5
Community Benefits
Chapter Overview

The proposed Phase III Creek Walk Project described in this report provides four primary benefits to the San Luis Obispo community:

- **Economics**
  - The existing Phase I and II of the Creek Walk have drawn visitors and residents to the beautiful restaurant patios, Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa, and creek corridors. As the walkway will continue through SLO’s downtown, people will be able to enjoy safe, designated areas to walk, bike, dine, and recreate. There are a multitude of establishments clustered together within walking distance of Mission Plaza. The Phase III Creek Walk Project extension will provide a higher amount of foot traffic which encourages visitors to stop inside shops and support the local businesses. The San Luis Obispo Chamber of Commerce has enhanced the economic prosperity of the County through their volunteer efforts. They have created a Visitor’s Guide that specifies where to go and what to see while visiting the area. The existing guide mentions San Luis Creek as a point of interest. The extension of the walkway and the proposed pocket parks will allow visitors to explore previously inaccessible areas. The path adjacent to the Promontory office complex will offer previously-hidden views of the creek, access to the Cerro San Luis Trail, and a unique passageway to the southern portion of Downtown.

- **Connectivity**

- **Public Art**

- **Education**
Connectivity

The project will join previously-disconnected parts of San Luis Obispo and provide a safer and more pleasant route of travel along SLO’s downtown corridor. Although Higuera Street currently provides a sidewalk running along the length of the project area, this pathway sees little pedestrian activity in comparison to the rest of SLO’s downtown due to the lack of storefront interaction with the street and the patchwork of varying land uses. The Phase III Creek Walk Project will provide a pathway removed from busy streets that pedestrians and cyclists can use to travel along the city’s southernmost downtown blocks. The portion of the project adjacent to the Promontory office complex will serve as a link between Cerro San Luis (as well as the Southern Higuera portion of San Luis Obispo) and Downtown San Luis Obispo via the connection to Dana Street. This project will improve the walkability through connecting a variety of land uses. The pocket park at the Creamery Marketplace will further improve connectivity in Downtown San Luis Obispo by creating a viable pathway for pedestrians downtown to enter the marketplace around the Hotel. Each of the pocket parks will have gradual ramps to ensure that all of the open spaces are ADA accessible.

Public Art

Our project will bring about more attractive recreational, outdoor spaces for pedestrians in Downtown San Luis Obispo, as well as access to previously less trafficked areas on the outskirts of the downtown core. San Luis Obispo is a town with charming and unique character. As the new pocket parks and trails are established, it will be important to utilize public art in these spaces. Public art is an opportunity to display community identity and enhance public spaces. The City of San Luis Obispo has a Public Art Program that is managed by the Parks and Recreation Department. Current art projects in the city include murals, sculptures, and utility box art. Downtown SLO launched The May Flower Initiative during the first COVID-19 shutdown in May 2020 and has occurred again in May 2021. This initiative brought life to the downtown when most businesses were forced to be closed. To promote the economic vitality of these businesses during the pandemic, painted flowers along the storefronts encouraged people to take their walks along these streets to experience the art displays. As our project will promote even greater walkability through the downtown, public art will be a critical aspect in engaging visitors and residents in the local community. Open space in the proposed pocket parks as well any walls bordering the Phase III Creekwalk (possibly the side of the proposed Hotel at the Creamery) should be utilized for public art installations.
Education

San Luis Obispo is home to many unique species such as the Coast Live Oak and Steelhead fish. Many of SLO’s existing trails have interpretive signs or exhibits that present stories to trail visitors. The signage allows visitors to understand the history and environment of their surroundings. The Phase III Creek Walk Project will include exhibits that will engage visitors in learning about SLO’s native plant species that will be planted along the creek banks. History of the creek will be provided about the restoration process, such as how a multitude of non-native plant species took over the creek banks and how the City will re-establish native life. The pathway may have signage as shown in Figure 28, in order to let visitors know of the native plants residing near the creek. Steelhead fish are an important feature of San Luis Creek. As seen in Figure 29, Steelhead species signs are already posted on City trails. There have been occurrences where spawning of these fish may be seen from the pathway. With the addition of such educational signs, visitors may pay more attention to the beauty of the creek and catch a glimpse of the fish too.

Figure 28: Example plant signage

Figure 29: Steelhead fish sign on Bob Jones Trail in San Luis Obispo
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**Project Outcomes**

Due to the numerous components of the Phase III Creek Walk Project, a phased approach is necessary to create a path for development. This chapter will explain the three phases that are required for successful implementation of this project. These phases include the creation of three pocket parks (right) and a trail system shown in the illustrative site plan (below).
Phase I

We recommend that this project should be implemented by the City of San Luis Obispo in coordination with local developers, contractors, and consultants. The first phase of the project should take advantage of the proposed placement of the Hotel at the Creamery Marketplace adjacent to the creek. The construction of the hotel may act as a catalyst for the creation of the first pocket park located along the creek to be developed. This open space provides an opportunity to serve as one of the project gateways and should include educational signage for those using the space for both passing through and leisure. This open space is proposed to run between the Creamery Marketplace and SLO Creek. In addition to providing outdoor seating, the pocket park may act as an interface between the businesses within the marketplace and public open space. A portion of this space is recommended to be bordered by a green wall, approximately 6’ tall, which can act as a screen both visually and auditorily between the open space and the residences across the creek while also allowing for limited views of the creek itself. Additionally, the pocket park will include planters with native species, as well as incorporate existing native trees, which will further act as screening between the open space and the residences on the other side of the creek. Additionally, the first phase of this project should include a removal of the invasive vegetation along the creek banks in the project area. This mainly entails the removal of non-native blackberry and ivy in addition to any stray debris and degraded structures on the banks of
the creek. This will allow for new plantings and the implementation of bank stabilizing interventions in future phases. Existing habitat features and native vegetation in the creek corridor will have to be carefully preserved during this phase. The removal of this could utilize volunteers from both Cal Poly and the local community.
Before and After rendering of the proposed pocket park at the Creamery Marketplace. The render depicts the proposed Hotel at the Creamery Marketplace as well as educational signage, and a planted green wall separating the open space from the residences across the creek.
The second phase of this project is recommended to consist of the creation of the main pathway connecting Dana Street to the Promontory office complex. This will require placement of a prefab tressle bridge across Stenner Creek at the end of Dana Street, connecting to the open space at the north edge of the Promontory parking lot. This is proposed to provide an initial path of travel parallel to Higuera Street. Open space at either end of the bridge should be developed to accommodate outdoor recreation and seating as well as provide space for educational signage and public art. These pocket parks will serve to draw visitors into the space and offer opportunities for relaxation while also helping to continue the creekside pathway.

Additionally, once non-native vegetation is removed, the remediation of the creek banks can begin. This stage may consist of flood and erosion control measures on damaged areas of the bank. A planted geo-grid solution can be implemented in areas of steep erosion along the bank to support vegetation and soil stabilization along the creek. In smaller concave sections of creek, a planted riprap could be used to assist in the creation of a more gradual sloping bank. In areas of the creek that are wide enough and have a somewhat level surface, a bypass channel could be implemented to allow floodwaters to be diverted. On the higher-up sections of the creek bank, erosion netting and planted live-stakes can be used to ensure the earth remains stable and support the new and existing vegetation. To restore the natural habitat along the creek, native riparian species including
American Dogwood, California Blackberry, Mugwort, and native grasses are recommended for planting.

Another aspect of flood control that will be implemented in this phase is the diversion of runoff from Dana Street into Stenner Creek. Currently, runoff from Dana Street runs directly into SLO Creek, contributing to the high water flow and further straining the capacity of the creek. By ensuring runoff from Dana Street flows into Stenner Creek, which is less constrained before its confluence with SLO Creek, the peak flow of SLO Creek can be minimized. Water will be diverted via a culvert that will run beneath Dana Street into Stenner at the end of the cul-de-sac. A bioswale located along Dana Street, specifically where the creek runs directly adjacent to the sidewalk, can be used to provide a demonstration of floodwater management. This portion of the sidewalk is currently underutilized, and is the only section that does not abut a residence, making it the ideal spot for a bioswale. This swale can collect water which can then be moved into the culvert.

Figure 30: Bioswale example

Figure 31 & 32: Examples of bank stabilization and restoration strategies
Before and After rendering of the proposed pocket park at the Promontory office Complex.
Before and After rendering of the proposed pocket park at the terminus of Dana Street.
The final phase of the project is proposed to connect the Phase III Creek Walk to the Cerro San Luis Trail extension, which passes under Highway 101 and runs along Marsh Street. This will consist of developing the trail running between the creek and the Promontory office complex. A pocket park that overlooks the confluence of Stenner and SLO Creek is proposed to be included with additional educational signage and seating. This pathway presents a continuation beneath the bridge that connects Higuera to the Promontory office complex, which will provide an actual opportunity for the trail to interact with the creek itself. This section of walkway will allow those using the pathway to interact with the edge of the creek, similar to portions of the pathway in Phase I of the Creek Walk that allow access to the creek itself. In the Phase III Creekwalk, this interaction will occur as the pathway travels under the bridge connecting the Promontory parking lot to Higuera Street. The wall on the underside of the bridge offers another opportunity for public art in the form of a mural.

The final stretch of the pathway is proposed to continue behind the south end of the Promontory office complex until meeting the on-ramp for HWY 101. This connection may be more time consuming due to the steep rocky bank of the creek, and may require cantilever supports to allow for a stable pathway. Upon the completion of this section, the Phase III Creek Walk presents a connection to the Cerro San Luis Trailhead via a pathway running along Marsh Street beneath
HWY 101. This will connect the Cerro San Luis hiking opportunities to San Luis Obispo’s downtown via Dana Street. This phase is also recommended to include a monitoring program of the implementation of the bank-stabilizing structures and revegetation that is proposed to occur in the second phase.
Before and after rendering of the proposed trail and pocket park behind the Promontory. This pathway would include a pocket park overlooking the confluence of SLO Creek and Stenner Creek.
Before and after rendering of the walkway running along the final section of the Phase III Creek Walk. This depicts the cantelievered pathway connecting to the Cerro San Luis trail.
Example Educational Signage

**INVASIVE SPECIES**

Much of San Luis Obispo Creek is bordered with exotic vegetation, such as Cape Ivy and non-native blackberry. These species thrive in disturbed habitats due to their quick productivity and ability to outcompete native species. These plants suppress local biodiversity by carpeting the creek banks and disrupting soil quality, degrading the habitat quality for non-native plants, but insect, bird, and fish species too.

**How’s it Growing?**

The diagrams shown above and below illustrate the creek restoration solutions that can help stabilize the bank of San Luis Obispo Creek in areas of erosion and damage. These can help establish native plant communities, which will further help prevent erosion.

**NATIVE RIPARIAN SPECIES**

Native plants provide an array of benefits to the local habitat. Vegetation buffers surrounding creeks offer numerous ecosystem services, including filtration of pollutants from runoff before it enters the creek. These buffers also strengthen the stability of the banks of the creek due to their deep roots, which help prevent erosion during storm events. Native species such as California mugwort (left) and Sycamore (right) pictured above can help establish habitat for other local flora and fauna and attract pollinator species into urban areas.
Example Educational Signage

**CONFLUENCE**

Here you are viewing the convergence of two of the four tributaries in the San Luis Obispo Creek Watershed. Steiner Creek and San Luis Obispo Creek flow south and west out of the Santa Lucia mountain range and meet within the City. The Santa Lucia Mountain Range provides scenic hiking trails and stretches for about 140 miles along the coast of California. The mountain range starts in the city of Carmel-by-the-Sea and ends near the Cuyama River located in southern San Luis Obispo County.

Because this is where two creek flows meet this convergence is of high importance to the city. The tributary has experienced significant problems that involve damaging floods and bank instability, such as the disastrous flood in 1995. Since then, active channel management has occurred. “Management actions for the waterways throughout the tributaries include channel sediment removal, vegetation control, stream restoration and enhancement, repair of existing failing bank protection structures, and construction of new bank protection and flood control channel modifications.”

**Our Watershed:** It's all downhill from here

[Map of the San Luis Obispo Creek watershed]

**WHY IT'S IMPORTANT**

The city has prepared a Creek Stormwater Resource Plan in 2019 that describes strategies to best manage stormwater runoff. This plan follows the guidance of the State Water Board in ensuring San Luis Obispo’s overall watershed health. This particular spot is noted in the plan. Both Steiner Creek and San Luis Obispo Creek maintain perennial flow upstream of this confluence you are standing at, located near Marsh Street and US 101. This perennial flow is important to the threatened California steelhead (shown above). Other channels within the watershed provide insufficient flows during the spring and summer. It is important to provide all species a healthy habitat, so be respectful as you view their homes! San Luis Obispo Creek is considered a "critical habitat" for steelhead. Work is being done to address the threats to the eggs and young steelhead.
Conclusion

We hope that this project provides ample framework for the city of SLO to pursue efforts in the development of Phase III of the Creek Walk. This document can serve as a conceptual plan of the implementation of open space development and creek restoration efforts in the identified study area. Phase I and II of the Creek Walk have become iconic features of SLO, and we hope to further enhance the creek as a vital local resource and support the City’s unique character through the extension of this public amenity into Phase III. This project has taught us the numerous environmental, social, and economic considerations that go into a large-scale public project such as this, and the importance of capitalizing on natural resources in urban settings.
Sources


San Luis Obispo Community Development Department (2001). *San Luis Obispo Mid Higuera Enhancement Plan*
