



COMMITTEE FOR GREEN FOOTHILLS

February 26, 2018

Re: Bridge Housing Community Site in District 2

Dear Mayor Liccardo and San Jose City Councilmembers,

The Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society (SCVAS), Keep Coyote Creek Beautiful (KCCB), the California Native Plant Society Santa Clara Valley Chapter (CNPS), the Committee for Green Foothills (CGF) and the Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter (SCLP) urge the City of San Jose to remove the site along Coyote Creek in District 2 (APN 678-08-033, site) from the list of candidate sites for Bridge Housing Communities (BHC). Our organizations are greatly concerned with the tragic human and environmental consequences of the homelessness crisis in San Jose and we support the concept of transitional housing. However, we believe that the construction of bridge housing should avoid natural landscapes near creeks due to the critical importance of these landscapes as wildlife habitat and wildlife movement linkages. We ask that the City drop the site from further consideration. Instead, the City should expedite the permitting process for the site in District 3 for BHC.

We recently visited the three sites proposed for BHC communities, including the site in District 2. We made the following observations:

1. The site provides natural habitat for birds and wildlife

The site is an extension of the Coyote Creek corridor and is virtually undisturbed by human activity. According to the Bay Area Greenprint, the site is a priority conservation area in need of protection due to pressure from urban development.

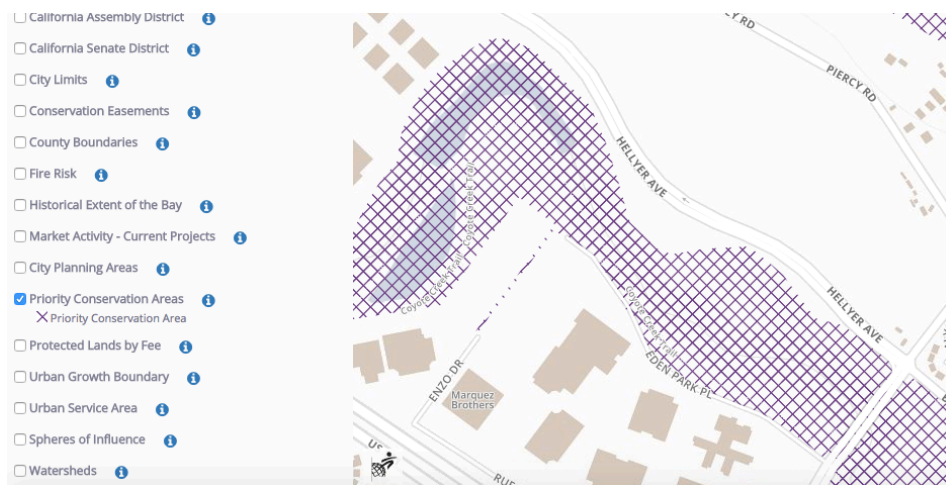


Figure 1: the site is a priority conservation area (<https://www.bayareagreenprint.org/report/#Sidebar-MapLayers>)

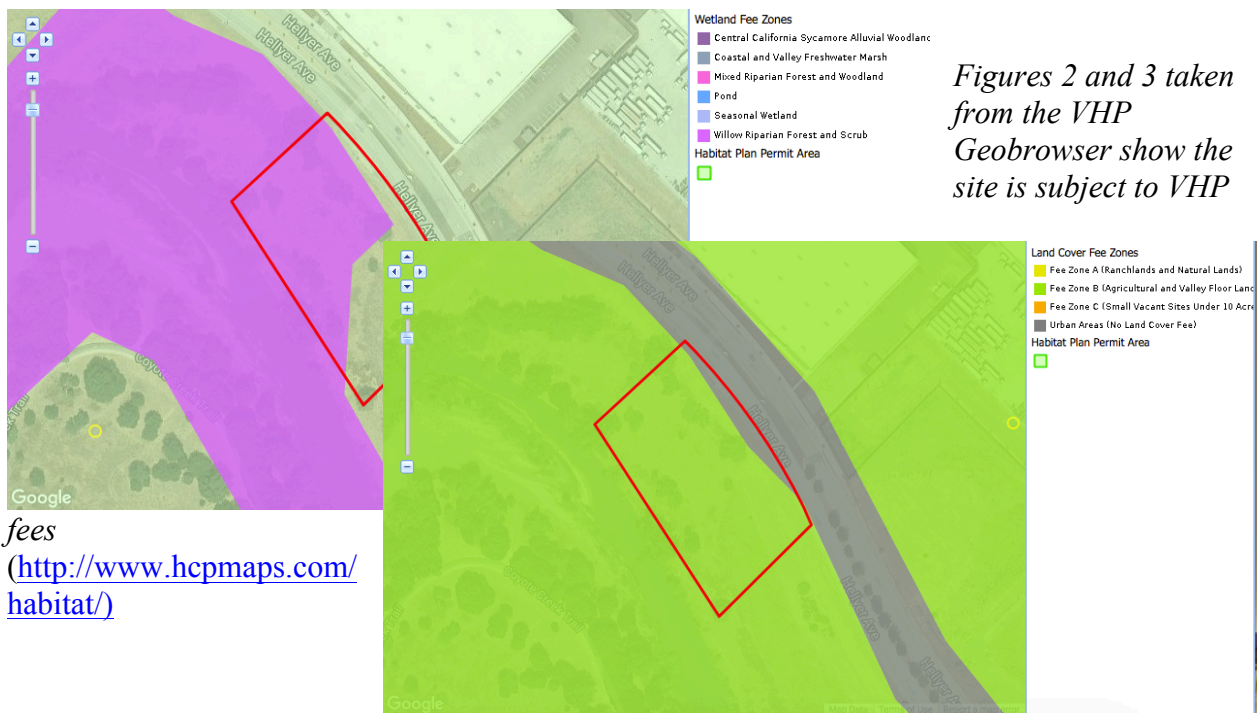
Development of a BHC here would require the removal of native shrubs and trees, grading, paving, and construction that would alter the natural state of the site and impact the birds and wildlife that rely on this habitat. Furthermore, the Urban Wildlife Research Project has identified this area as a corridor wildlife uses to travel along Coyote Creek (Greg Kerekes, Personal Communication). District 2 residents report observations of deer, wild boar, bobcat, coyote, gray fox, ground squirrel, pacific tree frogs, and rabbits. Safe passages and corridors for wildlife are crucial to maintain biological and genetic diversity in our region’s wildlife. Birdwatchers have observed a rich avifauna in the immediate area. eBird checklists include several species of raptors that forage along the creek: red-tailed hawk, merlin, red-shouldered hawk, Cooper’s hawk, white-tailed kite, turkey vulture and golden eagle. Given the important biological function of the site as habitat, we believe it is not appropriate for BHC and should be maintained as a natural open space.

2. The site will be subject to a 100-ft setback

San Jose’s Riparian Corridor Protection and Bird-safe Design Policy aims to protect, preserve, and restore riparian habitat and limit the creation of new impervious surfaces within riparian corridors. For new residential development, the policy requires a 100-ft setback measured from the outside drip-line of the riparian corridor vegetation or top-of-bank, whichever is greater. The Santa Clara Valley Habitat Plan (VHP) also requires a 100-ft setback for riparian projects. The amount of developable space on the site will be limited by the required riparian setbacks, and may not allow the development of 40 units and associated infrastructure.

3. The site will be subject to Habitat Agency fees

The VHP Geobrowser shows the site is subject to Fee Zone B, Agriculture and Valley Floor Lands (\$11,806/acre) as well as Wetland Fee Zone, Willow Riparian Forest and Scrub (\$142,838/acre), presenting a financial cost to developing the site.



Considering the urgent need of homeless people for shelter, and the opportunity that AB 2176 creates to help some people recover, we believe that the Housing Department should proceed with planning and evaluating sites that are less costly both in dollars and in environmental impacts. Instead of committing time and resources into further evaluations for the District 2 site, we urge the City to focus on the site in District 3, as we believe it is in an appropriate location for a successful BHC.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

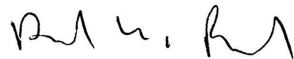
Sincerely,



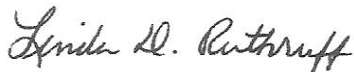
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