

STAFF REPORTS

CITY COUNCIL
May 27, 2003

To: Mayor and City Council

From: George J. Rodericks, City Manager

SUBJECT: TRAIL REALIGNMENT/REMOVAL – DISCUSSION ITEM

BACKGROUND

The City currently maintains surface rights to a trail easement that connects the Loma/Mesa trailhead to the Canyon Drive trail system. This easement and access cuts across approximately eight (8) properties and is the only connection between these two trail systems and is part of the City's Master Plan of Trails in the General Plan. Modification to the trail system and its connection points will require a modification to the City's General Plan.

On May 5th, the City received a request from the property owner at 9571 Loma Street to remove the trail easement along the property (**Attachment A**). The property owner discussed removal of the trail with neighboring property owners and all have requested that the City review the issue. The trail area in question is shown on the attached map (**Attachment B**).

The issue was reviewed by the City's Community Development Committee on May 20, 2003 and the Committee recommended that staff prepare a report on the alternatives return it to the full City Council for discussion.

FINDINGS

The trail easement is approximately forty (40) feet wide along its entire length from Loma/Mesa to Las Flores/Canyon. Use is intermittent and the trail is presently maintained in passable condition. To bring the trail into full compliance with the State standards for multi-use trail, it will require trail posts, fencing, ground cover, and an unrestricted width of fifteen (15) feet. Maintenance of the entire surface easement of forty (40) feet is unnecessary.

Removing the trail in its entirety from the City's Master Plan of Trails will result in a disconnection between the Cerro Villa trail system to the north and the Loma/Mesa trail system to the south. The City does not presently have trail easement along Mesa Drive connecting to Cerro Villa and acquisition of trail easement would be difficult and potentially cost prohibitive. Staff cannot support removal of the easement in its entirety. However, a reduction in the width of the easement and a potential realignment of the trail to accommodate the property owners may be beneficial and reasonable to all involved.

The Cannon Street trail system has been improved and the connection between Cannon Street and Mesa Drive was improved along Loma Street. This connection

routes trail users along two alternatives: Mesa Drive west/south to Lemon Street or Loma/Mesa trail connector to Canyon Drive to connect to the north section of trails along Canyon Drive, Cerro Villa, Valley Drive, and Rama Street. Correspondingly, the Loma/Mesa connector is the only connection point heading south on the City's trail system to exit at Loma Street and connect to the Cannon Street trail system. These issues are shown on the attached City Master Plan of Recreational Trails from the City's General Plan (**Attachment C**).

FISCAL IMPACT

Releasing the easement back to the properties increases the developable area of the properties and thereby increases their value. Elimination of the easement in its entirety is more valuable than reduction in the width of the easement.

In exchange for releasing a portion of the easement, consideration in the form of trail improvements along the easement would be appropriate. In exchange for releasing the entire easement, consideration in the form of trail improvements to reconnect the two trail systems along Mesa Drive would be appropriate.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee recommends that the City Council retain the easement but direct staff to explore options with the concerned property owners to address realignment of the trail easement.