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# Implementation Priorities

For the recommendations described on the previous pages to become a reality, clear direction for the next step toward implementation is essential. The implementation strategies identify key steps to be taken early on, and must be flexible enough to accommodate an extended timeline to achieve the improvements. A phased approach will allow both flexibility and prioritization of implementation. This approach is intended to be conceptual, as many of the elements cannot be implemented until specific projects are further defined and approved.

## Phasing

Proposed implementation consists of two phases. Several factors influence and determine phasing, including relative importance, ability to proceed and current ownership of land.

Phase One identifies steps that may be taken immediately and builds upon existing momentum to create visible change within the river corridor. The reach-specific Short Term Recommendations identified earlier in this document provide further information on more immediate actions. It also identifies priority sites where action should be taken in the near term, due to development pressures, or the long lead time necessary to initiate change.

Phase Two addresses elements of the Park that are likely to require substantial funding and/or land acquisition to implement. Many of these projects may also require significant physical infrastructure improvements. It also includes elements that will require substantial study to confirm the feasibility of the recommended action.

### Phase One

Phase One includes some of the most immediate and identifiable actions toward developing the San Diego River Park and Trail. This effort focuses on developing specific projects on publicly owned land, initiating discussions toward acquisition of new lands, and establishing easements on key sites held in private ownership. Phase One projects are organized into the following categories: River Pattern and Water Quality Improvement, Habitat/Natural Area Enhancement, Park Development, Trail Development, and Land Acquisition. This phase also seeks to create a distinct, unique identity for the San Diego River Park and the San Diego River Park Trail.

### Water Quality and Hydrologic Improvement

Improving water quality and the hydraulics of the river are closely associated with the development of parks and open space. As land within the corridor redevelops, or is acquired for public use, specific river improvements can be designed and implemented.

#### *Incorporate Planning Principles in all future documents*

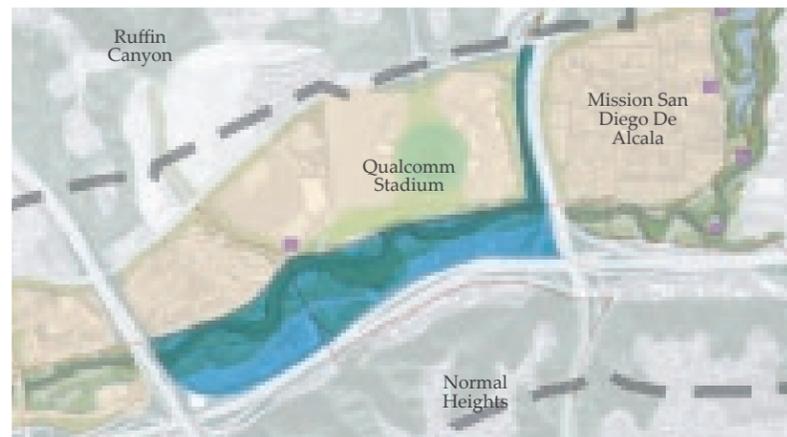
- Reduce/eliminate areas of impervious surfaces
- Enforce pollution elimination programs that have already been created such as the San Diego Watershed Urban Runoff Management Plan and the City's Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Service Program components
- New development planning should incorporate Best Management Practices for all aspects of impacts to hydrology and water quality

#### *Develop specific study within Mission Valley Preserve to improve river hydraulics.*

- Coordinate with Mission Valley Preserve to re-contour the river channel as a broad corridor to lengthen the river, reintroduce meander and braiding, and increase the riparian zone of the river.

#### *If Qualcomm Stadium redevelops, improve river channel through proposed park.*

- Coordinate with Qualcomm redevelopment and San Diego River Natural Resources Master Plan.
- Incorporate channel improvements in the park and open space design. Re-contour the river channel as a broad corridor to increase the river length, reintroduce meander, and increase the riparian zone of the river corridor.



#### *Coordinate with Mission Bay and Landfill study to prepare feasibility study to investigate the relationship between Mission Bay and the River and identify opportunities to improve water quality and hydrologic function for both.*

- The San Diego River historically terminated at the Pacific Ocean with a tidal estuary delta that stretched from Mission Bay to San Diego Bay. The location of the main channel mouth varied as

conditions in the delta changed, with the river's mouth shifting between San Diego Bay, False Bay (now Mission Bay), and the Pacific Ocean itself. Today, the channelization of the San Diego River has restricted movement of the mouth and reduced the tidal estuary to only a fraction of its former size, severely limiting opportunities for continued renewal of the tidal estuary.

- This Master Plan recommends a feasibility study to evaluate the reconnection of the San Diego River and Mission Bay.

#### Potential benefits of reconnection:

- Increased water circulation within Mission Bay
- Increased opportunities to expand critical estuary habitat
- Increased opportunities to expand biodiversity and biomass
- Increased recreational opportunities via trails and interpretive areas

#### Potential impacts of reconnection:

- Increased sedimentation rates within Mission Bay
- Increased contribution of pollutants to Mission Bay from the river
- Lack of consistency with Mission Bay Park Master Plan

The feasibility study must address these key issues. The study should include a detailed hydrologic/hydraulic simulation of various connections as well as a simulation of anticipated sedimentation and water quality change. A hydrologic circulation model of Mission Bay should be constructed in order to evaluate inputs from a new connection. The study should also include estimates of habitat increases and suggested methodologies of restoration actions.



**Habitat/Natural Area Enhancement**

Expanding and enhancing wildlife habitat is closely associated with river pattern, water improvement, park development, open space and trail easements, and the removal of exotic plant species. A corridor-wide vegetation management approach will minimize weed seed sources and help to control expansion of non-natives. Increasing awareness of the impact of non-native species is critical to expanding support for implementation of vegetation management plans.

*Coordinate with ongoing development plans to integrate the San Diego River Park into these Plans.*

- Superior Mine
- Riverwalk Golf Club

*Incorporate vegetation management issues into interpretive programs throughout the corridor.*

- Coordinate with Mission Bay Park and Mission Trails Regional Park interpretive systems to include information regarding the impacts of invasive non-native species.

*Continue to remove exotic vegetation and replant with native species*

- Support implementation of the San Diego River Natural Resources Management Plan
- Coordinate resources to support the San Diego River Park Foundation efforts to implement vegetation management plans and removal of exotic vegetation and further research.

*Create a specific plan for Mission Valley Preserve to improve riparian and upland native plant environments.*

- Support existing actions already underway with Mission Valley Preserve
- Prepare detailed plan to coordinate San Diego River Park Trail alignment, wildlife habitat and expanded interpretation within the Mission Valley Preserve

*Coordinate development of vegetation management plans with private landowners.*

- Develop management plan that can be provided to private land owners throughout the corridor to be incorporated into their landscape maintenance programs
- Provide support to private land owners to implement vegetation management plans

*Establish a River Open Space Preserve in the river corridor on public lands between I-805 and I-15*

- Coordinate with Caltrans and other public agencies to aggregate land as protected open space.
- Initiate specific study to identify means and design

**Park Development**

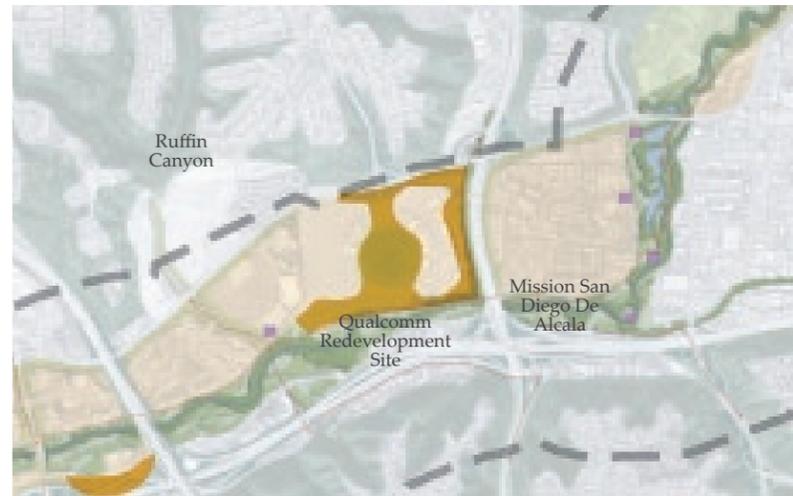
With the exception of Qualcomm Stadium, all land in preferred park locations and with high potential for park development is in private ownership. If the stadium redevelops, land for open space and park uses should be set aside adjacent to the river, adjacent to I-15 and internal to the site. The Lower Valley Reach Recommendations treat this topic in further detail.

*Develop conceptual plan for active/passive recreation and natural park at Qualcomm Stadium.*

- Coordinate with Qualcomm Stadium redevelopment plans to include active park uses (i.e. on the existing stadium site) with passive uses closer to the trolley alignment and primarily natural open space between the trolley and the river

*Begin dialogue with landowners to negotiate acquisition of land within the corridor.*

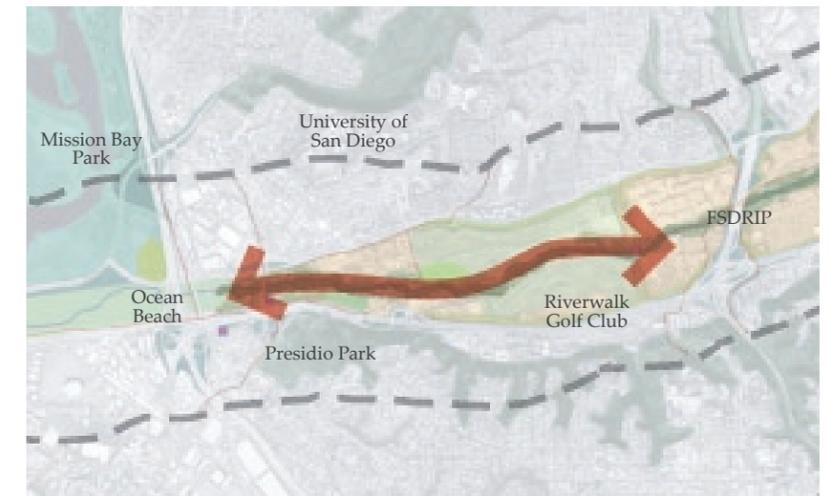
- Seek a 10 to 15-acre site within the proposed Riverwalk redevelopment of Riverwalk Golf Club for a neighborhood park serving the development and adjacent neighborhoods
- Seek a minimum twenty-acre site for passive/natural park use near Admiral Baker Golf Course and Superior Mine to serve adjacent neighborhoods and to be a major identity site for the San Diego River Park

**Trail Development**

Establishing a continuous trail within the river corridor from the ocean to the City of Santee is a critical component of the Plan. This trail is the best means for people to access and learn about the river, the wildlife habitat it provides and the vision of the San Diego River Park.

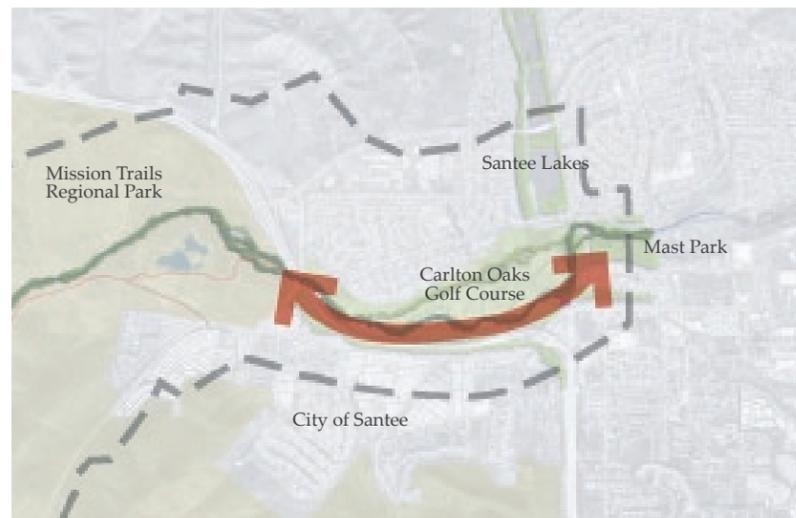
*Construct trail segment linking Ocean Beach Bicycle Path with existing First San Diego River Improvement Project (FSDRIP) Bicycle Path.*

- Coordinate with San Diego Bicycle Master Plan and Mission Valley Community Plan
- Key connection between Mission Bay Park and Mission Valley residences and businesses including hotels.
- Initiate specific study of alignment through Mission Valley Preserve following the trolley bridge alignment with connections to the existing trail head.
- Initiate dialogue with land owners and Mission Valley Transportation Development Board to negotiate trail easement following trolley alignment through Riverwalk Golf Club



Design and construct trail segment from Mission Trails Regional Park to Mast Park.

- Coordinate with San Diego Bicycle Master Plan and Navajo Community Plan.
- Negotiate with Carlton Oaks Golf Course to set aside adequate land area for development of multi-use path between golf course and the river on the existing berm.
- Initiate dialogue with landowners of Midwest Television property to identify potential easement or land acquisition to link with bicycle trail in Mission Trails Regional park.
- Coordinate with Mission Trails Regional Park to identify alignment connecting Father Junipero Serra Trail with proposed Carlton Oaks link.
- Prepare specific study to detail trail alignment and identify means of crossing SR-52 to establish connection to Mast Boulevard Trail head. Develop a hard surface Multi-Use Path adjacent to Carlton Oaks Golf Course, and a soft surface Secondary Recreation Trail within Mission Trails Regional Park.



If Qualcomm Stadium redevelops, construct trail from FSDRIP to I-15.

- Coordinate with San Diego Bicycle Master Plan and Mission Valley Community Plan
- Initiate specific study of alignment from FSDRIP to I-805 in the short term
- If Qualcomm redevelopment plans move forward, integrate trail design effort to identify specific alignments in coordination with park and open space development. Include link north to Friars Road and Murphy Canyon

Develop a signage system identifying the San Diego River Park Trail.

- Build upon existing trails. Where historically or locally important trail names exist, incorporate existing name as “part of the San Diego River Trail”
- Install signage at all trail intersections, access points and road crossings
- Graphics should be similar to, and incorporate design elements of, the San Diego River identification signs



### Land Acquisition

The majority of the land between Mission Bay Park and Mission Trails Regional Park is privately owned, making open space easements and land acquisition a priority throughout the river corridor. The intent of the Plan is to work with interested and willing land owners to establish the continuity and connectivity that is essential to the San Diego River Park. The Plan identifies several key sites for parks and open space, as well as a general alignment of trails and open space throughout the river corridor. Much of this land is in the floodway and offers limited development potential, such that an easement or purchase could benefit both parties. The Plan is also flexible enough to accommodate opportunities to acquire parcels beyond those identified as open space priorities.

### Phase Two

Phase Two identifies longer term actions necessary to develop the San Diego River Park and Trail. This section outlines actions that require further study, may be long term in development due to external factors or long lead times. The Long-Term Recommendations matrices contained in each reach section contains additional information and supporting actions.

Coordinate with implementation of development to integrate the San Diego River Park into these private development planning efforts.

### Superior Mine Site

While ongoing mining operations may continue for as long as twenty years, increased property values, possibly due to the amenity offered by an adjacent San Diego River Park, may encourage earlier redevelopment of this site. Preliminary planning efforts are studying the economic and physical potential of the site. Preliminary planning efforts have identified this location as a potential technology-oriented office/manufacturing site; this use would create a large number of jobs within the surrounding community, a benefit that has garnered public support for such redevelopment. Residential development has met with less favor, due in large part to concerns regarding increased vehicle traffic.

The Superior Mine planning process should be closely monitored and coordinated with the goals of the San Diego River Park. Opportunities for acquisition of land in this area should be explored as part of this process.

### Riverwalk Golf Club Site

The Riverwalk Golf Club has been under consideration for redevelopment for many years. The Levi-Cushman Specific Plan was approved in 1987, and although some portions of the plan have been implemented, it is likely that changing economic and environmental conditions will require significant modifications to the plan prior to full implementation. The site is important to creating a continuous San Diego River Park Trail for protecting water quality and expanding habitat.

Coordination with the developers and land owners should begin in the short term, with the goal of finding a long-term solution to the challenge of protecting the river and adjacent habitat, improving water quality, providing recreational opportunities, and trail access.

Coordinate with Mission Trails Regional Park to implement trail segment connecting Father Junipero Serra Trail with new trail in Superior Mine redevelopment.

- Prepare specific design of soft surface Pedestrian Trail segment in MTRP.
- Coordinate construction with MTRP.

## Future Steps

### *Environmental Compliance Requirements*

The San Diego River Park Draft Master Plan proposes a planning framework that includes guidelines and principles for future planning efforts, as well as an enumeration of necessary studies. The Plan also identifies specific actions and projects that will ultimately lead to a recreation and habitat corridor paralleling the length of the river. These projects are both short and long-term, including immediately implementable actions as well as projects reaching into future decades.

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires that a lead agency, the City of San Diego in this case, comply with this Act when considering a discretionary action such as adopting this Plan and amending the City's General Plan. The basic purpose of CEQA is:

- To inform governmental decision makers and the public about the potential, significant environmental effects of proposed activities;
- Identify ways that environmental damage can be avoided or significantly reduced;
- Prevent significant, avoidable damage to the environment by requiring changes in projects through the use of alternatives or mitigation measures when the governmental agency finds that changes are feasible; and
- Disclose to the public the reasons why a governmental agency approved the project in the manner the agency chose if significant environmental effects are involved.

The implementation of the Plan must integrate the existing regulatory framework, and respond to the Clean Water Act and California Porter Cologne Water Quality Act, the primary federal and state water quality statutes. In the San Diego River Watershed, these statutes are administered by the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board. The San Diego Municipal Storm Water NPDES and Regional Water Quality Control Board Basin Plan must also be considered.

The majority of elements proposed in the Plan are presented at a conceptual level. The most appropriate CEQA document that could be prepared for the Plan is a Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (PEIR). The PEIR provides the City with the flexibility to analyze the potential impacts of Plan components that are conceptual and those that are ready to be implemented. The elements of the Plan that should be developed to a more specific level of detail include:

- Bike/multi-use trails, various locations
- Way stations, multiple park entry points
- Cultural interpretation stations/kiosks
- Redevelopment of Qualcomm
- Redevelopment of Superior Mine

### *Incorporate the San Diego River Park Master Plan into the City's Policies & Regulations*

An essential step is to determine the right strategy to implement the San Diego River Park within the City of San Diego. Several options are available for incorporating the River Park Master Plan into the City's policies and regulations. Unlike other City park master plans, the adoption and implementation of the master plan is complicated by the fact that most of the subject property is privately owned. The potential options identified to date, which can be combined, are to 1) adopt the master plan to be part of the Progress Guide and General Plan, 2) amend the affected community plans, park plans, and zoning code, and 3) apply an overlay zone. Further analysis is needed to determine the proper course of action, which includes working with affected community groups and public and regulatory agencies to resolve conflicts with community plans and other relevant documents. For this reason, this Master Plan does not advocate the initiation of any of the implementation steps in this document at this time.

### *Adopt the Master Plan to be part of the Progress Guide and General Plan*

The Master Plan could be adopted as part of the Progress Guide and General Plan, just as the Bicycle Master Plan was recently adopted. The potential problem with this course is that there are some conflicts with the applicable community plans, park master plans, and zoning. The fact that the San Diego River Park Master Plan acknowledges that amendments to those plans are necessary to align these policy documents before some recommendations can be implemented may resolve these issues, particularly for long range projects for which there is time to amend the relevant community and park plans. In other cases where there is more detail in the Master Plan than in community or park plans, such as recommendations on the design or location of a pathway, this detail could be considered a further refinement of existing plan recommendations rather than a conflict.

### *Amend affected Community Plan, Park Plans, and Zoning Codes*

In spite of the potential conflicts, adopting the Master Plan as a whole to be part of the General Plan has benefits. The various affected community plans, park plans, and zoning can then be amended as needed. Adopting the document as a whole ensures that it does not lose its continuity or otherwise become diluted in only writing relevant sections into the various documents, and it ensures the immediate implementation of the bulk of the document. Affected community plans include Linda Vista, Mission Valley, Navajo, Tierrasanta, and East Elliott; affected park master plans include Mission Bay Park Master Plan and Mission Trails Regional Park Master Plan; the Mission Valley Planned District zoning may also be affected.

### *Apply an Overlay Zone*

An additional tool that could be considered to implement the master plan is an overlay zone, as used in the Mission Trails Design District surrounding Mission Trails Regional Park. In this case the master plan could be adopted as guidelines for an overlay zone. An overlay zone can require some projects to obtain a discretionary permit and would require that the projects conform to the River Park Master Plan. The boundaries of the overlay zone would need to be determined in conjunction with the affected communities.

### *Economic Analysis*

It is essential that the existing and potential economic value of properties within the valley be understood. Analysis of the San Diego River Park economic issues should study the project on several levels, including the cost to acquire land and the cost to develop the park itself. In particular, analysis should identify parcels that are undervalued, assess their true economic value and determine their highest and best use. The study should also project how the San Diego River Park may potentially affect property values and return value to the city.

The analysis should address the following:

- direct costs of developing the San Diego River Park and Trail
- direct return benefit to the City
- anticipated benefit of private reinvestment

The analysis should further estimate the secondary economic benefits of developing the San Diego River Park. This study should examine the additional activity the Park will generate, the number of people who will use the Park, and how those users will contribute to the economy the river valley.

### *Scientific Based Master Plan*

The San Diego River Park presents the opportunity for the river and the river corridor to serve as a study area for local and regional science institutions. Scientific undertakings often depend upon shared infrastructure and shared knowledge to develop new fields of study, and the river presents the potential for ongoing, multi-institutional programs.

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The Scripps Institution of Oceanography, with the assistance of the Regional Workbench Consortium and the support of the San Diego River Park Foundation may be the right organization to lead a multi-institutional science task force. This task force would be charged with developing a framework plan for a science-based decision support system for the San Diego River. The framework plan would structure a multi-disciplinary study program and the basic infrastructure necessary to initiate it. Potential areas of study might include hydrology (water quality, seasonal flow patterns, identify sources of flow, modeling of potential changes to the river course), biology (vegetative and wildlife correlations, wildlife movement, modeling of how these patterns change with the implementation of the San Diego River Park) and climate (wind and temperature patterns and correlation with changes within the valley).

The scientific infrastructure might include monitoring instruments and wireless transmission equipment for real time and off-site access to information. Real-time information could also be made available to San Diego River Park users, so that visitors could understand and interpret conditions as they experience them.

Such joint study programs create the opportunity to engage the wealth of scientific knowledge in the San Diego area in the rejuvenation of the river corridor and to explore the relationship of the river to the Pacific Ocean. These cooperative efforts combine resources toward a whole that is greater than what individual institutions might achieve on their own. A broad scientific program can create a record of the existing condition of the river corridor, and track water quality and habitat improvements as the San Diego River Park becomes reality.

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