

Ruffin Canyon Trail Project Update

*Agenda Item for Staff Update at Serra Mesa Planning Group January or February Meeting
& Mission Valley Planning Group February Meeting (tentative)*

Project Description: The project involves a new approximately half mile trail to connect the existing Ruffin Canyon Trail to Mission Valley via a safe route mostly out of the cobble filled creekbed, with the new trail mostly running along the toe of the eastern slope of the canyon. There is an existing public access easement through the Escala property at the southern end of the canyon to connect to a pedestrian tunnel under Friars Road, leading into Fenton Marketplace. The project has been sitting 3/4 complete and closed to the public for two years. Construction of the trail is limited by a couple factors. It's easier for construction (perhaps cost effective) to occur in the winter, when the soil is moister and construction probably can't occur during the bird nesting season, from Feb 15 to August 15, so there's the Feb 15 deadline each year.

Background:

- 2008-2009 - the Friends of Ruffin Canyon and Friends of Normal Heights Canyons assist the SD River Conservancy (SDRC- state agency, separate from River Park Foundation) and a consultant in the preparation of a feasibility report on connecting NH and SM to the river via safe trail routes.
- 2010-2013 - SDRC moves forward on a planning process for the Ruffin Canyon Trail connection, including circulating a CEQA Mitigated Negative Declaration for public review. SDRC does not move forward due to concerns from Escala at the time and staffing limitations
- 2014 - SMPG Subcommittee develops recommendations for use of the Developer Impact Fees (DIF) from the (now called) Olympus Corsair development at Aero and Sandrock. One of the recommendations was to devote \$100,000 of the DIF funding to city permitting costs for the Ruffin Trail connection. The SM PG and SM Rec Council both adopt this recommendation to the city.
- 2015 - After several coordination meetings with prior District 7 staff and other city staff, funding recommendation was applied to the permitting costs by having this use of the funding classified as **park equivalency**.
- 2020 - After a few years of delays, continued advocacy, meetings, etc., the permitting is finalized by the DPR team. Unfortunately, the city was not proactive during the 2015-2022 years, in completing the legal process associated with a needed moving of the Escala easement at the southern end of the canyon to conform with the permitted alignment.
- Winter 2022-2023 - 3/4 of the trail construction is completed within the city property. From February 2023 until now, the question was raised about what is going on with the contracting for the final construction.

- October 2023 - City Real Estate Management finalizes the easement change process on the Escala property.
- December 2023 - in response to another of many inquiries on the finalization of the construction contract for completion, as we get to the time when construction must start, the city indicates we have to wait on additional grant funding for the last of the construction and the project will be delayed another year (first notification that a grant was even needed)
- Early to mid-2024 - more questions on why we can't get the construction contracting finalized to make sure there are no delays this winter. We are told of the need to wait until the new fiscal year.
- August 2024 – Serra Mesa and Escala representatives meet with DPR staff and City Councilmember Raul Campillo’s representative. DPR notes they will be getting the contract finalized in October and everything is on track for completion this winter.
- 11/13/24 - In response to an email seeking confirmation that the construction contract is finalized, DPR notes they were told a completely different contracting process *might* be required this time, which could lead to another year of delay. City Councilmember Raul Campillo’s representative has been trying to get more information for the last month, but nothing yet.

Interested residents are encouraged to contact Councilman Campillo's office

(RaulCampillo@sandiego.gov) for an update, which can help ensure this remains a District 7 team priority to advocate for more transparency on the current delay, and completion of this funded park equivalency project this winter.