

Calder Creek Restoration Project in Ives Park, Sebastopol

Planning Commission meeting January 13, 2026

Brief Description: The Calder Creek restoration in Ives Park will remove a failing eyesore trapezoidal channel and chain link fence which are reaching the end of their engineered life span. The project being removed was a single purpose flood control project constructed to reduce flooding. The engineered channel overflows its banks at a frequent one in ten year storm event into the park. The proposed project contains flood flows in a new channel-floodplain as established by hydraulic modeling and is designed at the correct length and width and depth dimensions so that erosion and sedimentation of the channel do not become maintenance issues. The design provides for gradual bank slopes to the creek to increase safety for the creek corridor. The current outdated rock grouted channel is designed to increase the velocity of flood flows and the chain link fencing can trap children in a unsafe environment with high velocity flows.

The multiple objectives of the project are to: increase public safety; create nature experiences within the park while maintaining space available for park events through multi-use floodplain restoration (including the Peace Town Concerts); create an environment in which families with their children can interact with the creek; and create educational opportunities for local schools to add to new native plantings , monitor water quality and aquatic life. Ultimately, river otters observed upstream and steel head trout from the downstream Laguna, could potentially occupy this site once it is restored.

The project length from High Street to Jewell-Willow is 1,030 feet and has been divided into two phases to increase the feasibility of funding, minimize disruption of park use from construction activities and solicit additional community involvement for the last phase. The upcoming phase one is 420 feet beginning downstream at High Street and concludes at the existing footbridge above the swimming weir. The next steps are the submittal of grant applications to the Sonoma County Agricultural and Open Space District and the California Department of Water Resources during January -February 2026. Final design and engineering and permitting will occur within 18 months after receipt of grants. Grants include administrative costs of the city. Once construction plans are finalized construction should occur within a window of June to October, not exceeding five months. The first phase implementation was approved by the city Council on April 15 , 2025 authorizing CUSP to submit full grant applications.

Chronology

- Initial project design and planning began during 2021 when local “Friends of Calder Creek” held a field trip of the creek involving the local non-profit Waterways Restoration Inst (WRI) which is head-quartered on Elphick Road. The WRI then used funding from the Switzer Foundation to work with Kari Svanstrom, Chief of City Planning, Kathy Ottinger and Evert Fernandez, at the time both members of the Planning Commission and Ives Park subcommittee of the Planning Commission, to develop criteria for a restoration plan. This city coordination achieved through Kari also involved the city engineer and maintenance staffs.

- Fall of 2021 WRI conducted outreach to the property owners along the creek and assisted the 6 upstream properties on the creek upstream of the park with developing management plans for the creek.
- Fall 2021 two public meetings were held through the Planning Commission to provide background on what other Bay Area communities have done to fund and implement restoration of urban creeks.
- December 2021 WRI completed a draft Basis of Design Report for the city and turned it over to GHD, an engineering firm under contract with the City, to evaluate the design and conduct a hydraulic engineering analysis. GHD findings were that the project proposal would stop flooding in the park up to the hundred year flood and reduce (not eliminate) deposition in the culverts under Main Street and Petaluma Blvd.
- January 2022 the Planning Commission reviewed several concept plans for restoring the creek through Ives Park and approved forwarding 3 concept plans to the City Council.
- Feb.1, 2022 The City Council approved one of the concept designs for implementation.
- July 2022 GHD released their final evaluation and engineering report
- September 2022 Kari received approval from the City Council for the California Urban Streams Partnership (A project of Earth Island Institute located in Sebastopol) to submit preliminary grant proposals to the Coastal Conservancy and Department of Water Resources to fund a Calder Creek restoration project.
- During 2022-2023 staff issues at the Coastal Conservancy delayed feedback on a full proposal submittal but by August 2023 the California Department of Water Resources invited a full grant proposal submittal.
- Submittal of a full proposal in 2023-2024 was delayed because the city planner moved and the city general manager retired. A Friends of Calder Creek began to formally organize with a current roster of 55 members.
- Two October 2024 meetings were held with Planning Commission members Oettinger and Fernandez, organized by John Jay of the Planning Department to resolve concerns about land use in Ives Park raised by Peace Town concert advocates
- Council members Sandra Mauer and Phill Carter took the lead to present the project to an April 15, 2025 Council meeting in order to accomplish the required city council resolutions for CUSP to submit full grant proposals to the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space (SCAPOS) District and California Department of Water Resources (DWR) for Phase One of the project. Each grant will be for \$1.8 million with the Sonoma County Agricultural and Open Space District grant will serve as the local share contribution for the DWR grant.
- CUSP is donating the labor to submit the grants on behalf of the city. The SCAPOS grant will be submitted in January and the DWR grant submitted shortly thereafter in 2026.