

WILLIAM E. "BILL" HOWLEY

9 February 2026

City of Sebastopol Planning Commission – cc City Council
7120 Bodega Avenue
Sebastopol, CA 95473

Subject: Saving Ives Park Event Space & Prioritizing Accessibility of Calder Creek in the Railroad Forest

Dear Planning Commission Members,

Thank you for your dedicated service on behalf of our town! The purpose of this letter is to support the Rotary Club of Sebastopol intent to invest additional funds to improve Ives Park; to encourage the City of Sebastopol to maintain the multi-purpose event community gathering space at Ives; and to focus resources and enthusiasm on the already "naturalized" portion of Calder Creek in the "Railroad Forest" to make it park-like and accessible in keeping with the California Urban Stream Project's (CUSP's) worthy goals of accessible natural stretches of creeks in city parks.

I watched the Planning Commission session recently regarding the Rotary Ives Park proposals, and the tension between those proposals and the concept of rewilding Calder Creek in Ives Park. The Railroad Forest already has a very long stretch of Calder Creek aboveground, and while somewhere in the shared jurisdiction of the City and County parks, anyone can clearly see the overgrown brambles, blackberries and other invasive species, and resulting inaccessibility of the creek.

As you know, Calder Creek runs east at ground level along the north side of the Joe Rodota Trail, south of Park Village and Tomodachi Park, from the end of Barnes Avenue east towards the Laguna de Santa Rosa. It has great potential to be park-like and to achieve the vision of an accessible natural creek. Now, however, the ground level creek banks are impenetrably covered with brambles, poison oak, blackberries among other plants. Pretty clearly there is no opportunity for seating along the naturalized Calder Creek in the Railroad Forest as it has been for many years now.

The only individuals who now make use of the creek and the thickets on its banks along the trail are unhoused individuals – not the ideal scenario of children accessing the creek as espoused by CUSP. The creek is already naturalized between Barnes and the Laguna, and I recommend that CUSP, the City, and others interested in accessible creek access within Sebastopol park areas focus their attention and any additionally available resources on that much larger stretch of creek in the Railroad Forest, and not destroy the multi-purpose event space for community gatherings at Ives. The proponents of rewilding Calder Creek in Ives mentioned that there wouldn't be reduced event seating since the sides of the rewilded creek would afford space for seating. If the banks of the creek in Railroad Forest, already in a rewilded state, are anything like what the results would be for Ives Park, that vision is difficult to imagine. It likely would be non-controversial for those who want to have wild creeks in City parks to address their efforts and resources to make the already wilded portion of Calder Creek in Railroad Forest accessible and more park-like, rather than irreparably reducing the multipurpose utility of Ives by removing the event space. Here are a few pix of the creek along the Joe Rodota trail. (Note the Sebastopol City Parks sign in the thicket).

Many thanks and best wishes,



Pictures of Calder Creek in "Railroad Forest" along Joe Rodota Trail

