



Bexar County Commissioners Court

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San Pedro Creek Improvement Project visualizes lush waterway with sense of place

Bexar County Commissioners Court on Tuesday unveiled the conceptual designs for the San Pedro Creek Improvement Project, the result of a County-commissioned study on the feasibility of restoring the creek. The goals of the study included containing the 100-year floodplain within the banks of the creek, creating an urban linear park with recreational space and enhancing economic development opportunities in the urban core.

County Judge Nelson Wolff announced Commissioners Court would vote on authorizing the San Antonio River Authority to release a request for qualifications to complete the engineering and design documents. The estimated cost of the project is \$175 million to improve the creek from the tunnel inlet near Fox Tech High School 1.5 miles downstream to the confluence with the San Antonio River on the Mission Reach.

“San Pedro Creek is the birthplace of our community and is one of the most historic and culturally sensitive waterways in North America,” Commissioner Paul Elizondo said. “Yet, look at this historic waterway today. This cement channel — a ditch, really — in no way reflects the importance of this creek to the history of our city, state and nation.”

The San Pedro Creek bypass tunnel that was completed in 1996 reduced the risk of flooding by diverting upstream storm flow through a tunnel under Downtown, but flooding still occurs along the creek as a result of drainage throughout the downtown area. The engineering analysis found that containing floodwater within the creek's banks would take 41 acres and 38 adjacent structures out of the 100-year floodplain.

“What we've seen with the results of the Museum Reach of the San Antonio River is property values increasing 400 to 500 percent in some cases,” Commissioner Sergio “Chico” Rodriguez said. “Additionally, turning what is now a drainage ditch into a linear park and destination will result in increased economic development potential along the creek and surrounding blocks.”

Improvements to the creek would provide a better connection for people to what is considered the birthplace of San Antonio's civic settlement. Hike and bike paths would connect the northwest quadrant of Downtown to the Mission Reach of the San Antonio River. The San Pedro Creek linear creekway trail alignment, which is funded by the City of San Antonio, will begin at the confluence of San Pedro Creek with the San Antonio River and extend 1.83 miles north to the confluence of the San Pedro and Apache creeks, connecting to the proposed improvements project.

The San Pedro Creek for nearly two centuries sustained the civil settlement and growth of San Antonio. Arroyo de San Pedro was named by Isidro Felix de Espinosa when his expedition came upon the spring-fed creek on the Feast Day of Saint Peter. The first civil and religious settlements — the Presidio de Bexar and Mission San Antonio — were founded next to the springs and creek. And the acequias from the creek that fed the farms and homes near the creek eventually created the foundation of our current urban landscape.

“This project will serve the Bexar County community well in that it will protect our future through flood control and preserve San Pedro Creek's place in our history,” Commissioner Tommy Adkisson said.