

With a Grand Vision for the River, Project Earns Support By Rob Hutsel, President and CEO

For many years, the Riverwalk Golf Course's future has been in discussion. At one point a plan for a dense development that significantly impacted the health of the River and its ecosystem was approved. Fortunately it was never built.

Today, a new exciting project with a grand vision for the San Diego River is moving forward, and I am encouraging its approval.

This expansive project embraces sound nature-based planning with an eye on celebrating our River.

From the early development of this project I met with the proponents and helped to shape their vision. I found that they listened and were open to an ongoing dialogue. The discussions focused on the following:

1. How could the project improve the health of the San Diego River?
2. How could an expansive area for wildlife be provided that supported a diverse riparian ecosystem?
3. How could the design embrace the River so that it wasn't relegated to the "back" of the project?
4. How could Fashion Valley Road be redesigned so that the River no longer was put into the current 6 concrete pipes or forced to flood over the roadway?
5. How could more public park land be provided that helped to meet the needs of this park deficient community while serving the region?
6. How could the project embrace a forward looking design which supported a walkable and bike riding community integrated with plans for the regional San Diego River Trail?
7. What commitments would be made to actually to create these improvements so San Diego would benefit?

Discussions continued over several years. We listened to each other. It soon became clear that they were committed to design a project that did respect the River and offer a grand vision which celebrated our region's namesake waterway. The outcome is something truly special.



Artist rendering of future Riverwalk River Park

Here are some of the results.

The design removes the largely monoculture of grass near the River and replaces it with a thriving diverse ecological area.

It addresses flooding by replacing the Fashion Valley Road crossing of the River with an elevated bridge. The bridge replaces pipes with a raised bridge. The River will be flowing over dirt not through concrete. That's good for the River's ecological health while providing a way to cross the River when it is running high.

The project provides housing where it is needed, reducing the demand to build in far off open space areas and creating all the associated problems. And it is designed to embrace the River and the adjacent parks.

The project does not create any new roads across the River. This has been one of our key points of concerns to improve the health of the San Diego River. The project allows for these roadways to be considered in the future if needed after a full environmental review and analysis.

It provides for the extension of the regional San Diego River Trail and a network of paths and trail which supports healthy mobility options. We are looking forward to the day when someone can travel west on the River Trail toward Dog Beach or east to Grant Park, SDSU Mission Valley and beyond.

The project offers a remarkable gem - 75+ acres of parks and open space along the River. An urban green oasis that will provide public benefits for generations to come. We have worked diligently with the owners and project designers to come to a place where we are excited about this vision.

The Riverwalk project is great for wildlife, people and the San Diego River. Let's all get behind it and support this exciting project.

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