

Switzer Canyon Centennial Improvement Project

Summary

A proposal is submitted to improve the approximately one-quarter mile length walkway along 30th Street at Switzer Canyon using capital project funds. In the 100 years since a transportation corridor was first built across Switzer Canyon, the physical improvements to 30th Street have focused primarily on the vehicular roadway leaving the walkways sterile, bland and not pedestrian friendly.[Fig 2,3] The Switzer Canyon Centennial Improvement Project is intended to improve the pedestrian and bicycling experience along the walkway by bringing the native habitat of the canyon to the walkway along the bridge spanning the canyon to create an experience of walking along the canyon—not above it. Building on more than 10 years of experience in successful restoration of non-irrigated native plant communities on denuded sites in Switzer Canyon, the Friends of Switzer Canyon proposes design and installation of a landscaping project. Because of the scope of the project, the Friends recommends working with specialists in native plant habitat establishment (e.g. California's Own Native Landscape Design) for site assessment, and design, preparation of the areas to be improved, and installation and establishment of the plants and hardscaping.

Background

Since the truss bridge across Switzer Canyon was built in 1908, the 30th Street traffic corridor has become a major thoroughfare for vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians traveling between communities north and south of the canyon [Fig 2-4]. While improvements to the vehicular aspect of the roadway have kept pace with the needs of the community, the walkways built on the barren landfill bridge created in 1957 were never landscaped nor integrated into the canyon habitat which the bridge now divided. Because the bridge was initially created using landfill material transferred from Nile Street, the final site was barren of plant life. Currently the sides of the bridge are populated by a few plants, both native and non-native invasive, that have survived the poor soil conditions.

In the intervening years since the landfill bridge was built, the communities living on Switzer Canyon have organized at various times to protect the canyon and improve 30th Street [Fig 4,5]. The Burlingame Homeowner's Association, Friends of Switzer Canyon and San Diego Canyonlands all came into being with the goal of preserving Switzer Canyon, restoring native habitat to the Switzer Canyon Open Space Preserve, and increasing awareness of the value of San Diego canyon ecosystems. Restoration of Switzer Canyon by the Friends group began more than ten years ago on the west side of the canyon at the trailhead at Maple Street and 28th Street and has been extended now to include the east side of the canyon at the kiosk entrance on Burlingame Drive. [Fig 6]

The Friends of Switzer Canyon propose that the approximately \$35,000 in funds set aside for the 'Switzer Canyon project' be used to improve the walkways along 30th Street as it crosses Switzer Canyon.

Scope of the Project

1. Assess site to determine areas that can be planted.

2. Develop design for plantings and hardscaping.
 3. Submit for review to City of San Diego.
 4. Install plants and maintain for an establishment period.
- [Proposed landscape improvements can include addition of trees and plants, decorative features, benches, trash cans, and a water meter and irrigation system if significant plantings are installed.]

Proof of Concept, Design Goals and Recommendations [Fig 7-13]

The Friends of Switzer Canyon have more than ten years experience successfully restoring native vegetation to Switzer Canyon. Restoration began in 1999 on the west side of Switzer Canyon at the Maple Street trailhead using locally native plants [see Switzer Canyon Floristic list at www.sdnhm.org/] donated by Recon Native Plants Inc. of San Diego. This hillside had been graded, which destroyed the original plant community and allowed vigorous non-native invasive plants to take over, resulting in an unattractive area with substantially reduced wildlife value. With irrigation water for establishment supplied by a neighbor using garden hoses, volunteers from the neighborhood dug hole for the plants, irrigated at the time of planting, and continued to irrigate at monthly intervals for several months. The hillside now supports a self-sustaining Coastal Sage Scrub plant community that attracts the federally endangered California Gnat-catcher along with other animals.

Budget for Project

Site Assessment and Identification of areas to be planted
Design of plant palette and hardscaping
Installation and establishment

Proposal Requesting Capital Project Funds for Improvement of the 30th Street Bridge

Presented by
Friends of Switzer Canyon
January 11, 2010

30th Street at Switzer Canyon (1908-1957)



Canyon view of the original steel and wood 30th Street trolley bridge.



The 1956 demolition of the original trolley bridge.



Original steel and wood trolley bridge before 1956 demolition.
Photo courtesy of the San Diego Historical Society.



Aerial view of the 30th St. replacement landfill bridge at Switzer Canyon.

30th Street at Switzer Canyon (1957-2010)



Aerial view of the 30th St. replacement landfill bridge at Switzer Canyon.



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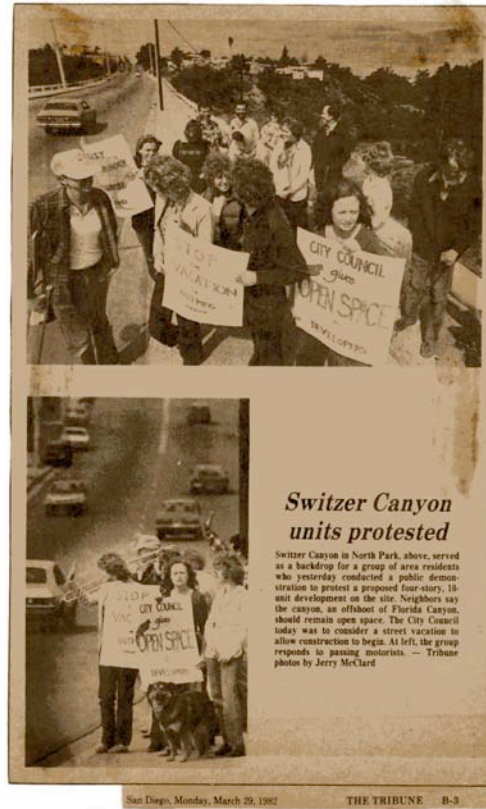
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30th Street at Switzer Canyon (1908-2010)

- 1908 Truss Bridge completed
- 1956 Truss Bridge demolished
- 1957 Overpass landfill bridge built
- 1979 Switzer Canyon development halted
- 1980 Burlingame Homeowners' Association formed; priority project to preserve canyon
- 1987 Switzer Canyon purchased as Open Space Preserve by city of San Diego

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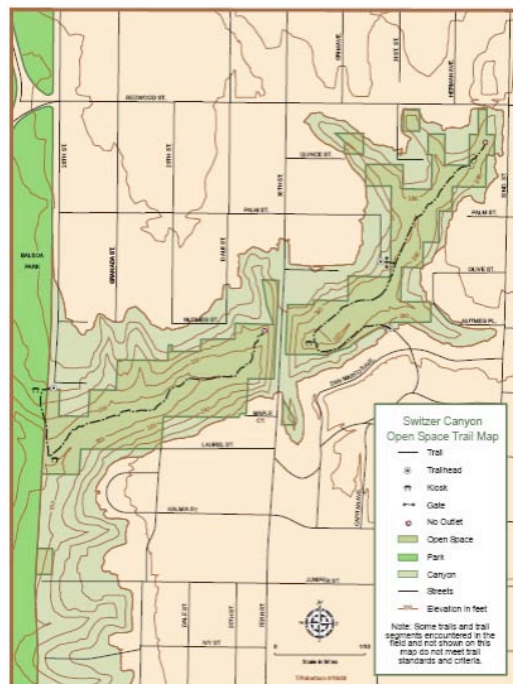
Residents of Burlingame Fierce Supporters of Switzer Canyon Preservation for More than 30 years.



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Switzer Canyon Open Space Preserve

- 1997 - Switzer Canyon Open Space included in San Diego's habitat preserve (MSCP)
- 1999 - Friends of Switzer Canyon begin projects to improve wildlife habitat
- 2003 - Friends group builds and installs kiosks
- 2000-5 - successful habitat project installed on west slope of 30th St. as mitigation for storm water damage



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Proof of Concept

- Restoration project in western Switzer Canyon



Proof of concept

BEFORE



Habitat development project on the west slope of 30th Street - looks good and provides home for wildlife, including globally endangered animals.

Demonstrates that local native plants can be used to landscape the 30th St edges.



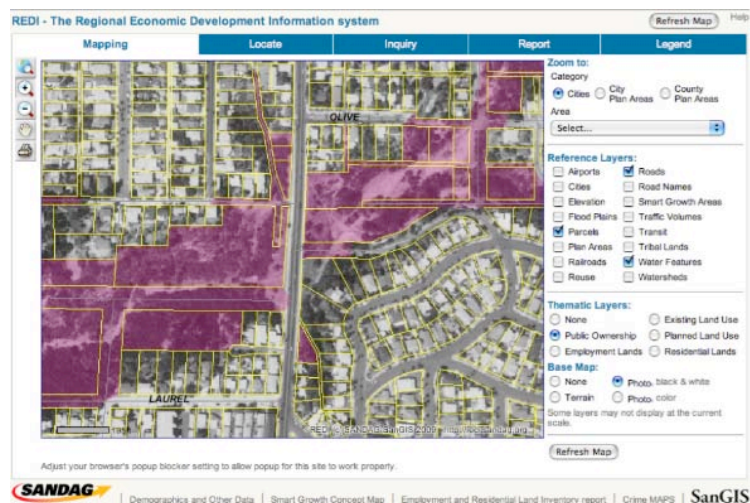
Considerations

- Budget
 - site assessment, installation [& maintenance]
- Fire Management Zone
 - appropriate plants for zone, geography when within 100 feet of homes
- Low water use plants once established
- Installation of trash cans (one on each side) to reduce litter on slopes

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Project Boundaries

- 30th Street Public ownership (purple) and parcel map
- Target only public parcels adjacent to 30th Street and managed by City of San Diego Parks & Recreation Department or Streets Department



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Design Goals

- Use locally native plants
- Use a mix of small trees and ground-covering plants
- Avoid the use of substantial irrigation after establishment period
- Add cobblestone mulch as a local design element
- Group small trees and "prune up" to allow view from street

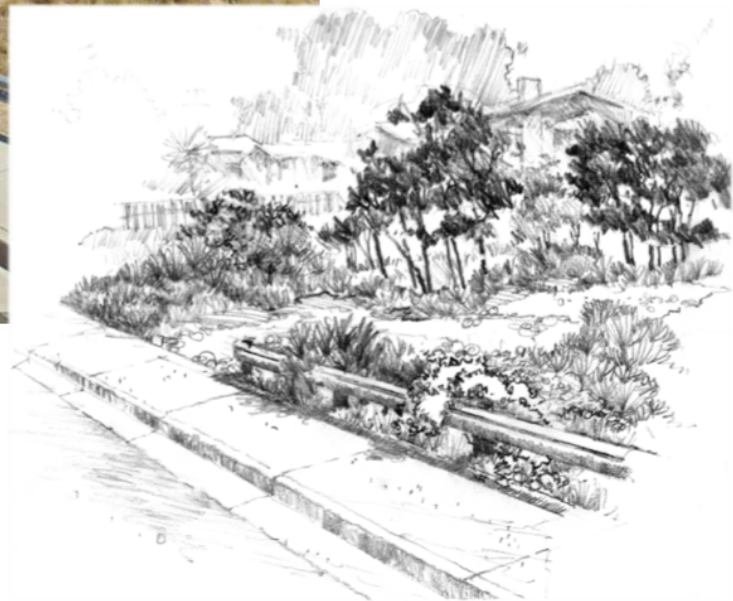


Toyon



Buckwheat

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Recommendations

- Employ a contractor for design and installation with demonstrated performance in installing native plant landscaping
- The availability of occasional deep irrigation will broaden the choice of plant species
- Friends of Switzer Canyon help with installation

Questions