

## **Wolf Creek Parkway Alignment Study and Conceptual Master Plan**

### **Acknowledgements**

The Wolf Creek Parkway Alignment Study and Conceptual Master Plan has been prepared in close coordination with the City of Grass Valley and the Wolf Creek Parkway Steering Committee. We wish to extend our heartfelt thanks to all of those who played a role in the formulation of the project, as well as to the people of Grass Valley who came forward to participate in the public outreach process that defined this community-based Alignment Study and Conceptual Master Plan

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## Executive Summary

The Wolf Creek Parkway Alignment Study and Conceptual Master Plan establishes potential routing for a multi-use non-motorized trail along the Wolf Creek Corridor, provides guidelines for design development, and outlines alternative strategies for implementation. The multi-use non-motorized trail is intended to promote alternative forms of transportation and provide new recreational opportunities consistent with the goals set forth in the City of Grass Valley's General Plan, Streetscape Master Plan, Downtown Strategic Plan, and Parks and Recreation Master Plan. In addition, the Wolf Creek Parkway will provide the City of Grass Valley with greater internal connectivity, enhanced access to the waterway, and improvements to the natural setting of the Wolf Creek corridor.

The trail corridor Study Area is located entirely within Grass Valley city limits, although Nevada Irrigation District retains conveyance rights through the creek channel to supply water for irrigation, municipal, domestic and industrial purposes. The planning effort for this Alignment Study has included data collection, key stakeholder interviews, direct mail newsletters, public workshops and agency review. The resulting Conceptual Master Plan shown on page 65 largely reflects the input and advice provided through this process. This plan will be an invaluable tool in future undertakings such as determining the specific location, design, and engineering of the proposed trail.

The proposed trail traverses approximately 2.2 miles: from the eastern area of Grass Valley at Sutton Way, through the Downtown area, and into the central area represented by Glenn Jones Park. Due to the complexity of the Parkway, it will take considerable time, effort and resources to construct. The project could cost up to an estimated \$14 million to fully implement each element of the Preferred Conceptual Plan. Given the high probability that a project of this size and expense could not be built all at one time, the conceptual plan has been broken up into segments and identifies alternatives so that the implementation process can proceed incrementally, for less cost, as opportunities and funding allows.

The Wolf Creek parkway, because of its central location, is envisioned as the key component of a regional multi-use trail system that provides both recreation and alternative transportation opportunities. Development of the Wolf Creek Parkway will also coordinate with and support various proposed City projects, such as the South Auburn Street Master Plan, Colfax Avenue Improvements, and East Main—Idaho-Maryland Interchange.

The improvements presented by the Conceptual Master Plan for Wolf Creek Parkway are intended to help Grass Valley achieve the following overarching goals:

- To promote development of a pedestrian and bicycle path system that will be safe, secure, and meet ADA accessibility requirements
- To protect and rehabilitate Wolf Creek's habitat value and water quality
- To capitalize on the natural attraction of Wolf Creek within an overall revitalization effort in Grass Valley's downtown core.

The Wolf Creek Parkway Alignment Study and Conceptual Master Plan provides support for a Wolf Creek Parkway Concept and its ability to be developed along a continuous route and constructed within a normal cost range. This document lays out the trail

implementation process in detail, including sections on permitting, environmental review, funding, and operations and maintenance, as well as a proposed phasing strategy. The City Council and other regulating authorities, upon adoption of this Alignment Study and Conceptual Master Plan, will have a comprehensive understanding of the particularities of Wolf Creek's corridor, a sense of the strong public interest involved, and a powerful springboard into implementation.

# Chapter One: Introduction

## Background

Serving as the economic and cultural center of Nevada County, the small City of Grass Valley provides a high quality of life to a growing population. Residents enjoy a foothill setting complete with fresh air, tall forests, and a historic downtown dating back to the days of the Gold Rush. These attractions, coupled with proximity to the larger communities of Auburn, Roseville, and Sacramento, have encouraged increasing numbers of retirees and young families alike to settle in the area. The City is looking for ways to accommodate this expansion while retaining Grass Valley's natural, small-town character and strengthening the vitality of the downtown commercial core.

Instituting a multi-use non-motorized trail along Wolf Creek, which runs through Grass Valley's downtown, is an important step toward meeting these goals. Many towns of similar size have had great success restoring neglected urban creek corridors into pleasant pedestrian environments. In the case of Wolf Creek, Grass Valley seeks an improved trail that combines the best aspects of a "park," used for rest and relaxation, and a "way," used to get from here to there. Development of such a commuter trail is consistent with the goals and objectives of previous planning documents.

Wolf Creek Parkway encompasses the following benefits to the community.

**The Wolf Creek Parkway promotes alternative transportation.** As Grass Valley continues to grow, vehicular pressures can be expected to intensify. Grass Valley's narrow, historic streets do not easily accommodate the size or volume of today's vehicles, and the steep, wooded surrounding topography does not allow much room for expansion. Consequently, traffic congestion is increasing and levels of service are declining. In addition, pedestrians and bicyclists do not have sufficient room to share streets with vehicles and there are often safety conflicts. A trail along the creek will provide an alternate way for people to travel between neighborhoods, schools, parks, employment centers, and downtown safely, without bringing their cars.

**The Wolf Creek Parkway enhances commerce in the Downtown Core.** As envisioned, the Parkway will draw locals and visitors alike to the downtown area then encourage them to stay with pleasant public spaces. General economic benefits to adjacent businesses include increased visibility, increased attractiveness, increased foot-traffic, and increased sales. Businesses that can capitalize on their proximity to the creek (offering outdoor dining or food to go, for instance) will thrive, allowing the City to enjoy increased sales tax revenues.

**The Wolf Creek Parkway provides environmental and cultural resource protection.** Reducing the number of cars on the road through alternative transportation improves air quality and cuts down on surface pollutant deposition. Well-designed trails further mitigate environmental damage by controlling public access and routing users through or around sensitive areas. In the case of the abused riparian habitat of Wolf Creek, the most obvious environmental benefits would be increased community awareness and the clean-up, restoration, and monitoring that would be part of the implementation process.

**The Wolf Creek Parkway improves community health.** Residents and visitors will use this trail for walking, jogging, and biking. Health benefits gained through regular exercise include reduced heart disease, hypertension and cholesterol, increased strength and stamina, and enriched rest and relaxation. Trails also contribute to social and volunteer activities that strengthen community fabric.

**The Wolf Creek Parkway offers recreational and educational opportunities.** Trails offer a place to exercise, observe wildlife, fish and sightsee. They are the ideal venue for education through observation, organized field trips, and interpretive exhibits. In turn, education often fosters an enhanced sense of stewardship.

**The Wolf Creek Parkway promotes environmental justice.** Transportation systems affect communities in terms of economic impacts (access to employment, job creation, economic development and property values), social impacts (community cohesion, transportation choice, aesthetics, safety) and environmental impacts (air pollution, noise, water resources). Public multi-use trails ensure that every member of the community, including minority, disabled, and low-income groups, receive an equal share in the benefits of alternative transportation and recreational opportunities.

## **Project Overview**

In January 2005, the City of Grass Valley hired consultant firm RRM Design Group to explore the proposed multi-use non-motorized trail more thoroughly. The resulting study involved analyzing the corridor's potential to support a multi-use non-motorized trail, extensive public outreach, and testing preliminary design alternatives. These efforts culminated in a Conceptual Master Plan for Wolf Creek Parkway that enjoys a high degree of public support. The follow-up to the development of the Conceptual Master Plan has been continued research on funding opportunities, design strategies, and implementation devices as evidenced by this document.

## **Purpose of this Study**

The Wolf Creek Parkway Alignment Study and Conceptual Master Plan is meant to function as a conceptual guide: a foundation for the City of Grass Valley to build upon during the funding, design, and implementation phases of the Wolf Creek Parkway project. Completion of this effort also provides the crucial first steps toward grant procurement and initiation of the CEQA process. The development of the Conceptual Master Plan has included key stakeholder interviews, field investigation, public workshops, interagency meetings, and review of Grass Valley's existing planning documents. The resulting alignment and design guidelines largely reflect the input and advice provided through the planning process.

## **The purpose of this document is to support the development of a continuous parkway along Wolf Creek through:**

- Expressing a trail concept sensitive to the several varied conditions along Wolf Creek
- Demonstration of community consensus and public support for the trail concept
- Identification of short, mid, and long-term priorities for the project

- Provision of phasing and funding strategies to facilitate implementation of the proposed improvements over time.

## **Document Structure**

This document encompasses both the Alignment Study and the Conceptual Master Plan. The text is divided into chapters based on different components of the Study. This first chapter explains the project's context and gives an overview of project components. The second chapter covers the actual physical and legal characteristics of Wolf Creek. In the third chapter, the public process and tested alternatives are laid out in detail. The fourth chapter presents the heart of the matter—the Conceptual Master Plan. The rest of this report deals with what it will take to actualize that plan: opinions on probable cost, implementation issues, and recommendations. Finally, the last section of the Study is made up of several appendices including interim Study reports and other referenced items.

## **Project Study Area**

The Wolf Creek Parkway project Study Area is located within the City of Grass Valley, between Sutton Way and Glenn Jones Park (at Freeman Lane), along the narrow Wolf Creek corridor. This corridor is comprised of public, private, and municipal property holdings in both residential and commercial areas. The Parkway is divided into six segments, referred to as “reaches,” at places where planning conditions and physical characteristics of the waterway change substantially. These reaches are generally named for the city street they parallel and will be described in detail in Chapter Two.

## **Jurisdictional Authority, Interested Parties, and Legal Requirements**

The trail corridor is located within the jurisdictional boundaries of the City of Grass Valley. Other agencies with jurisdiction in the project study area include Nevada County, Caltrans, the Nevada Irrigation District, the Nevada County Transportation Commission, the Army Corps of Engineers, the California Department of Fish & Game, and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. In addition to these agencies, there are several other entities with an active interest in the creek, including private owners of parcels in the creek corridor and the recently formed Wolf Creek Community Alliance (2003), a local group of active citizens who monitor the water quality in the creek and support habitat restoration as part of the implementation of Wolf Creek Parkway. Finally, any project affecting the Wolf Creek waterway will need to meet CEQA and NEPA requirements. This document discusses the convergent interests of these agencies and entities, and proposes strategies for working together in Chapter Five.

## **Planning Process**

The Wolf Creek Alignment Study and Conceptual Master Plan project has involved a comprehensive planning strategy. The components of this process are outlined below.

### *Data Collection:*

The working maps and corridor information used in this Study were formulated through review of existing information in the form of environmental and planning documents, parcel owner information and development proposals, corridor mapping and field visits. Specific Goals and objectives met by the Wolf Creek Parkway Alignment Study and

Conceptual Master Plan are noted at the end of this chapter in the section entitled Relationship to Other Documents. Data collected and reviewed include:

- Street System Master Plan 2004
- Downtown Strategic Plan (draft) May 12, 2003
- Parks and Recreation Master Plan February 2001
- 2020 General Plan November 1999
- Grass Valley Corridor Improvement Project: Collector-Distributor Road 12-09-04 Layout (sheets 1-3)
- Grass Valley Corridor Improvement Project 09-11-04 (sheets 1-4)
- Map 6A (partial) Bicycle Routes, Grass Valley & Nevada City
- Parks/Open Space Illustrative Plan and Creek Corridor Network from Loma Rica Plan
- Holiday Inn Planting Plan and fence detail along Tinloy Street
- Whispering Pines Comprehensive Plan, Design Theme, pp 3-13 & 3-14 of Specific Plan
- FEMA mapping of Idaho-Maryland area
- Awahnee Principles

#### Trail Corridor Site Visits:

City staff, steering committee members, and the design team walked the length of the Wolf Creek corridor to record site features, take photographs, and conduct a preliminary environmental assessment. These visits yielded critical information for the understanding of the existing conditions, alignment opportunities, and design challenges. The “Opportunities and Constraints Exhibit” developed as a result of these endeavors is included in this document as Figure 2.1a and b at the end of Chapter Two.

#### Key Stakeholder Interviews:

A series of personal discussions with property owners, interest group spokespersons, City staff, and agency representatives took place as an initial step for the development of the proposed alignment alternatives. Information gleaned at these meetings was an important foundation for understanding the history, social context, and improvement potential that Wolf Creek traverses. Speaking with local people who will be directly affected by Wolf Creek Parkway helped define the pertinent issues and establish rapport.

#### Public Workshops:

Three public workshops were held to determine issues and priorities, gather preferences, present preliminary trail ideas, collect input from participants on the alignment alternatives, and build consensus for the project. Park and Recreation Commissioners, property owners, local bike and trail enthusiasts, Grass Valley residents, environmental activists, and City staff attended these workshops. These workshops are described in detail in Chapter Three and the full text of the reports on workshop results is included as Appendix C.

#### Design Development:

Based on the review of all collected data, key stakeholder interviews, field tours, and results from the first workshop, three preliminary alignment concepts were developed and presented at the second public workshop. These concepts represented three separate approaches most clearly differentiated by cost, style, and intensity of development. Participants were invited to respond to a detailed “report card” which catalogued what they liked and didn’t like about each alternative in regards to each

reach. This feedback, which indicated a preference for a combination of cost and developmental intensity dependent on Reach conditions, was then incorporated into a preferred alignment schematic presented at the third public workshop. This preferred alignment generally received a high degree of support, and feedback from report cards collected at this workshop figured into development of the Wolf Creek Parkway Conceptual Master Plan presented in Chapter Four.

## **Public Priorities**

The Wolf Creek Parkway Alignment Study and Conceptual Master Plan is a framework for a phased implementation of a multi-use non-motorized trail through the heart of Grass Valley, with connections to an envisioned regional trail system. The vision for the Wolf Creek Master Plan, as expressed in the Executive Summary, is further defined by a set of goals created as a result of the planning process. In response to the data gathering, issue identification and priority setting exercises that occurred early in the planning process, the following project goals were established:

**Connections**—Ensure that the trail clearly links desirable destinations for non-vehicular travelers: schools, parks, employment centers, downtown, and residential areas.

**Environmental Sensitivity**—Access to Wolf Creek should be orchestrated with habitat restoration, improved water quality, and safety as principal priorities.

**Protect Property Owners**—Private citizens with holdings along Wolf Creek are concerned about increasing traffic through and access to what is, in some cases, literally their back yard. The trail should be located away from property lines whenever possible and designs should incorporate methods of limiting liability and disturbances.

**Minimum Widths**—Where feasible, a minimum of eight feet is desirable to accommodate multiple users and differing modes of travel. The Nevada County Non-motorized Transportation Master Plan standard for a Type 2 Trail is 5 feet minimum width, which may be appropriate as the trail gets farther away from the City center.

**Trailheads**—Establish trailheads at major trail access points. These access points can be developed to a greater or lesser degree, with signage, benches, and other amenities to serve trail users.

**Attractiveness**—Appeal to Grass Valley residents and visitors with a pleasant, comfortable “place to be,” by opening up views and access to the creek, providing places to sit and rest, and enhancing the riparian environment through cleanup, planting, and appropriate building materials.

**Public Safety**—Avoid conflicts with motorized vehicles by adhering to the creek corridor as much as possible and providing alternative street crossings in high-traffic areas. Also, consider street treatments to heighten awareness at crossings. Keep views from the Parkway and onto the Parkway open and clear.

## **Relationship to Other Documents**

The Wolf Creek Parkway Alignment Study and Conceptual Master Plan has extracted elements concerning Wolf Creek, alternative travel, and trail systems from previous Grass Valley planning documents: the Street System Master Plan (adopted October 2005), the Park and Recreation Master Plan (February 2001), the Downtown Strategic Plan (2003) and the 2020 General Plan (1999). Recommendations, guidelines and directives from these planning efforts have been incorporated into all phases of the Study process.

In addition, the creation of this document is consistent with specific goals, objectives, and policies of the General Plan, as listed in the next section.

Finally, this Study also serves as a bridge between past and future planning efforts.

Upon adoption, the Wolf Creek Alignment Study and Conceptual Master Plan will in turn support future planning efforts. The results and recommendations incorporated in this study will contribute to the following potential endeavors:

- Nevada County Bicycle Master Plan (1989 update)
- Nevada County Non-Motorized Trail Plan
- Wolf Creek Parkway Design & Construction
- Nevada County Regional Transportation Plan
- Western Nevada County Transit Plan
- City of Grass Valley General Plan Update
- City of Grass Valley Parks & Recreation Plan Update

## **Consistency with the 2020 General Plan**

A city's General Plan is a legally-required document that is meant to guide the city's growth and development over a substantial period of time. The document allocates specific uses to specific parcels of property (zoning) and establishes goals, objectives, and policies for different elements concerning the civic domain. Projects must be consistent with the General Plan in order to be implemented.

On its journey through Grass Valley's city limits, Wolf Creek (and therefore the proposed trail route) pass through several zoning designations defined by the General Plan. The upstream reaches pass through an M-I (Manufacturing/Industrial) zone, a BP (Business Park) zone, a small OS (Open Space) zone, and into a C (Commercial) zone, all before crossing under the Golden Center Highway (SR 20/49) at Idaho-Maryland Road. On the other side, the trail corridor travels through C, ULD (Urban Low Density), P (Public), and UHD (Urban High Density) zones before coming to rest in OS at Glenn Jones Park. The area along the freeway is zoned (P) public with access controlled by Caltrans. In order to support a multi-use non-motorized trail maintained by the city, the City Council may have to amend the General Plan (in order to change the zoning designations) before Wolf Creek Parkway can be implemented. Specific changes will be contingent on the specifications of the ultimate design alignment of the Parkway.

The City of Grass Valley has considered developing a trail along Wolf Creek for several years. A "Wolf Creek Parkway" or "Wolf Creek Trail" is mentioned in many policy documents including the 2020 General Plan, which was adopted in 1999. This following section shows how development of Wolf Creek Parkway will specifically support certain Goals, Objectives and Policies set forth in Grass Valley's 2020 General Plan.

### *Circulation Goals and Objectives*

**1-CG Provide a circulation system that utilizes a variety of transportation modes, including alternative means of transportation.**

1-CO Development of a viable pedestrian and bicycle transportation network (sidewalks, paths, lanes and trails) providing alternatives to motorized vehicular transportation.

2-CO Ongoing examination of transit opportunities and funding mechanisms.

3-CO Inclusion of alternative transportation in local and regional transportation plans, as appropriate.

**2-CG Ensure that street and roadway improvements complement and support land use goals, objectives, policies and plans.**

5-CO Convenient, safe and functional facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists and equestrians.

6-CO Flexible standards that respect existing neighborhoods.

**3-CG Provide for the safe and efficient movement of people and goods in a manner that respects existing neighborhoods and the natural environment.**

10-CO Protection of stream courses, riparian areas and other natural features.

11-CO Development and implementation of a comprehensive traffic safety program, including improvement of facilities serving pedestrian needs.

**4-CG Maintain, improve and expand the existing circulation and transportation system to provide reasonable ingress, egress and internal movement.**

13-CO Improvement of the transportation system to facilitate commerce and economic development.

Circulation Policies

1-CP Coordinate bikeway and trail system planning with Nevada County, linking the city network with similar facilities in unincorporated areas.

2-CP Plan for multi-purpose transportation/recreation bicycle and pedestrian facilities to optimize facility usage and enhance potential funding.

Conservation/Open Space Goals and Objectives

**2-COSG Protect, enhance and restore hydrologic features, including stream corridors, flood plains, wetlands, and riparian zones.**

7-COSO Development of an extensive trail network providing recreational and educational opportunities.

8-COSO Minimize interference with the natural functions of flood plains and naturally flood-prone areas.

Conservation/Open Space Policies

7-COSP Recognize and reinforce Grass Valley's public park system.

10-COSP Establish a city trail network program for friendly acquisition, development and administration of a natural trails system.

11-COSP Return to open space, areas within which flooding poses a clear danger to life and property.

Recreation Policies

1-RP Provide parks and open spaces of different sizes and types to respond to the needs of a diverse population, including trails for pedestrian and equestrian use, bicycle pathways, linear parkways and park-like natural areas.

5-RP Formalize and enhance walking trails in existing City parks.

6-RP Provide non-motorized linkages between parks and open spaces.

Community Design Policies

15-CDP Provide internal pedestrian and bicycle connections and connections to the broader planning area in all major new development.

## **Chapter Two: Existing & Future Conditions of the Study Area**

One of the first steps in assessing the feasibility of a trail's alignments and potential design character is careful review of the existing physical characteristics of the trail corridor. Topographical conditions, sensitive habitats, creek crossings, street and highway crossings, adjacent land use, and property ownership are just some of the factors that influence a trail's location and design. These physical constraints help determine the areas where the trail should be located, areas to avoid completely, and areas where a really creative solution is needed.

Members of the design team made several visits into and along the creek corridor, mapping and photographing site features. This data was then combined with existing documentation from the data review phase to create a diagrammatic map (Fig 2.1) of opportunities and constraints along the Wolf Creek Corridor to guide the subsequent planning process. This section will first describe the study area, then discuss the general condition of the creek and finally move into a reach-by-reach analysis of physical characteristics and ecology, including an analysis of how current planned projects will affect each of these reaches. The chapter will conclude with Figures 2.1a and 2.1b (adapted from the "Opportunities and Constraints" exhibit utilized at the second public workshop), and Table 2.2, which compares the significant environmental opportunities and constraints within each Reach and their implications for trail feasibility.

### **Study Area Description**

Wolf Creek is a tributary of the Sacramento River Watershed. Flowing down from Banner Mountain, the creek travels south and west through the City of Grass Valley. Smaller waterways, like Olympia, Matson, Peabody, Little Wolf, and South Wolf creeks join Wolf Creek until, after a total run of 15 miles, Wolf Creek empties into Bear River just above Camp Far West Reservoir. The initial study area for the Wolf Creek Parkway project includes a stretch approximately 2.2 miles long, beginning at Sutton Way, where Olympia Creek joins Wolf Creek, following Idaho-Maryland road and crossing the Golden Center Freeway (SR 20/49) through a tunnel, then along the freeway behind properties with East Main and Mill Street addresses, ending downstream at the Pelton Wheel Museum at Glenn Jones Park.

The City of Grass Valley currently has several improvement projects in various stages of implementation. Many of these are within or adjacent to the project study area and directly concern the development of the Wolf Creek Parkway. In some cases, these ventures will restrict options, but others will yield improved opportunities for cooperation and resource sharing as the Wolf Creek Parkway evolves.

The length of the project study area also encompasses several different physical expressions of the Wolf Creek, from a wooded riparian meander to an urban concrete channel. To reflect these differences, the creek was broken into six sections, called reaches. This is an important distinction for evaluation, discussion and design purposes, because as conditions change different solutions become appropriate.

### **General Conditions of the Study Area**

In the past, waterways were not seen as the social and ecological resources we recognize them for today. Consequently, Wolf Creek has been neglected, ignored and abused up to the present day. Even recently, its primary usefulness to the City of Grass Valley seems to be as a conveyance for water administered by the Nevada Irrigation District and a convenient location for a partially submerged sewer main between Safeway and the Swiss House Restaurant. It is, however, in pretty fair shape for an urban waterway and supports an array of wildlife that can withstand adverse conditions: birds, amphibians, and insects, deer and raccoons, and some fish. From design and restoration perspectives, the consistent backbone of mature trees is especially encouraging. The trees create a ready-made, colorful, seasonally-changing draw to the creek and a pleasant microclimate for both birds and people. In many places, roots serve as a well-established, perfect erosion control system, as well as provide habitat. Mature trees represent a valuable resource: the time it took them to grow and the history they encompass, which can not be replaced.

Obvious and immediate detriments to the health of the Wolf Creek ecology and its value as an attractive trail are proximity to roads, channelization, and the presence of non-native invasive plants.

#### Roads

Where the creek is adjacent to roadways, litter and trash dumping is ubiquitous. Trash is thrown from cars and dumped in turnouts. This material is unsightly, often harmful to animals and water quality, and usually not biodegradable. The effects of litter and trash can be mitigated by education, regular clean ups, and a sense of ownership on the part of the citizenry. Being near a road also means noise pollution, potentially contaminated storm water runoff, and potential danger for pedestrians and bicyclists at crossings.

#### Channelization

As Grass Valley has grown, buildings and roads have steadily worked their way up Wolf Creek, in the process either ignoring it altogether or attempting to contain it. Buildings and roads encroach on the stream corridor, especially in the urban areas, and in the downtown area, part of its length has been channelized to minimize flooding and buried under roads and parking lots. This “undergrounding” is also associated with the engineering of the major state highway (the Golden Center Freeway, SR-20/49) that runs immediately adjacent to the creek in the downtown area. In the residential areas, the creek might be open but run right along the freeway diking, restricted to a trapezoidal concrete channel just a few feet wide. Channelization moves a lot of water through a space, which is why the practice is used to control flooding. However, channelization eradicates habitat value. The bottom of the creek is barren and non-permeable; the water has no interaction with the earth: nutrients pass through the system without being utilized and aquifers are not recharged. In addition, without percolation, downstream flooding effects can actually be exacerbated. Several cities have undertaken creekway trail projects in recent years that have incorporated some degree of breaking up the concrete lining, interplanting trees, and adding baffles (in the form of boulders) to lessen the force of flows and oxygenate the water.

#### Non-native Invasive Plants

Many areas along the bank are inundated with Himalayan blackberry. While this substantial vine/shrub provides bank stabilization and cover for birds, it spreads aggressively and chokes out less-competitive native species. There is an area between the creek and Idaho-Maryland Road suffering the same effects from a rampant thicket of

periwinkle. Other invasive species sighted include Black Locust trees, Teasel and thistles.

Non-native invasive plant species displace delicately balanced native plant communities, thereby reducing biodiversity, habitat value, attractiveness and resiliency. However, creekways respond quickly to dedicated management and good planning. In the matter of a few seasons, non-native plants can be removed and fully replaced with natives and non-invasive ornamental species to create a more pleasant and natural ecological structure. Restoration of streamside plantings and naturalizing the banks and creek bottom (without disturbing the sewer line, of course) would significantly enhance this waterway's vitality.

It seems unlikely that developing a trail along the creek will infringe on any specialized habitats not already degraded by the encroaching town. Development has isolated the creek from larger wildlife corridors, and the creatures that continue to visit it today will probably not be deterred by a low-impact, non-vehicular trail along side it. In fact, implementing a successful trail could work toward lessening potentially negative effects of future development along the creek, by increasing ecological awareness, encouraging connections to, and extensions of, an enjoyable, low-impact recreational feature, and nurturing a sense of ownership for Wolf Creek. However, the Wolf Creek Parkway is required to comply with NEPA and CEQA, and further analysis by specialists will be needed to acquire the necessary permits.

## **Specific Conditions**

### **Idaho-Maryland Reach**

Wolf Creek converges with Olympia Creek directly upstream of the Sutton Way/Idaho-Maryland Road intersection. It flows under the intersection and reemerges on the south side of Idaho-Maryland Road. The slope and bottom are stabilized with rip rap to prevent erosion. Two large culverts at the foot of Olympia Creek have decayed and are no longer really functioning as such. Water flows very rapidly, but not very deeply, and on the day of the field tour was contaminated with an oily substance.

Mature mixed woodland, defined by Incense Cedar, borders the north end of the vacant corner "parking" area. There is a wide flat area that was once at least partially paved with asphalt, but is now a sort of ruderal grassland colonized by weeds of all varieties, including Yellow Star Thistle, a noxious weed. The creek edges are dominated by Willow, Red Twig Dogwood, Perennial Sweet Pea, and Himalayan Blackberry. There is a large stand of chaparral scrub dominated by Buckbrush at the western edge of this area, in which the large shrubs are acting as nurse plants for Incense Cedar saplings. If left alone, this area will likely be transitional woodland in less than a decade. The chaparral scrub shelters numerous birds and shows evidence (disturbed earth, gnawed Douglas fir cones) of a busy small animal population nesting and foraging among the roots. However, trash, litter, isolation, and proximity to a very busy intersection indicate generally poor habitat value at this site.

Emerging from under the bridge at Idaho-Maryland Road, Wolf Creek is wider and flows at a depth varying between 6 and 18 inches. After some initial rapids over exposed rock, the bottom is sandy. The northern bank drops off steeply from the shoulder of Idaho-Maryland Road but broadens into a shallow shelf for a short while. On the south side of the creek, the bank is a steep 4- to 5-foot drop generally covered in vegetation before

both banks become even more deeply constrained by historic bank reinforcement and road construction downstream. The Wolf Creek corridor is dark, cool, and mysterious here. For a portion of this stretch, where the shoulder of the road is very narrow and the creek bank steep and immediate, the stream is enclosed by chain link fencing. Periwinkle, Black Locust Trees, Himalayan Blackberry, and Poison Oak are predominant. Red Twig Dogwood, Willow and Alder are also present. This stretch of creek has been isolated from the surrounding landscape for several years, constricted between roads and industrial (milling, mining, manufacturing) activities on either side. Animals from other areas probably are not likely to visit Wolf Creek here, except for fish and birds.

Continuing from Centennial Road, the stream banks are vegetated and generally narrow and steep on the street side, with a shoulder of varying width. Much of the far bank is a large, wide, low terrace adjacent to the water, sheltered by trees and enclosed by a steeper shelf that recedes into tangled underbrush. Water flows rapidly, at depths estimated between 6 and 18 inches, in a channel usually between 5 and 8 feet wide. Foamy water collects where surface flow is arrested by debris. There is some old rockwork, probably bank reinforcement, on the south side, and a deeper pool has formed immediately under the gated bridge. Thickets of Himalayan Blackberry effectively exclude the pedestrian observer, except when dubious trails have been worn through to low spots near the water's edge. Alders, Cottonwoods, and Gray Pines line the banks. This stretch of creek, where there is a wide turnout, bears evidence of serious abuse. Piles of trash have been recently dumped by the side of the road and spill into the waterway. Discoloration on rocks both in the stream and along the bank points to high mineral content or another type of pollution, and the foamy water mentioned earlier is dubious. However, there is no road on the south side of the creek and thus there is a substantial interface with a more generous habitat. Both a Woodpecker's nest and a Great Blue Heron were observed in this reach. There is a sidewalk on the north/west side of this busy road that is used by joggers and pedestrians but ends abruptly, far from the intersection.

After the turnout, stream banks remain narrow and steep on the north side and wide and flat on the upstream south side, with a terrace of varying width immediately adjacent to the water. A gated access over the bridge, suitable for automobile traffic, crosses the creek to access land owned by the Emgold Mining Corporation. A little further down, there is a small amount of commercial development between the creek and the road. On the downstream south side, the alluvial terrace gives way to a steep bare slope understood to be an intended building pad. Like the previous stretches, water flows rapidly, at depths estimated between 6 and 18 inches, in a channel usually between 5 and 8 feet wide. "White water" is caused by larger and more prevalent rocks on the creek floor. There are mature Alders on the north side and a thicket of young Alders on the south side. Lots of Blackberry, and a new invasive: English Ivy. The bank immediately adjacent to the Alternative Building Center parking lot (which is separated by a concrete block wall) has been cleared of non-native invasives and planted with bulbs. This area is a hint at what the Wolf Creek Parkway might become, with careful planning. Across the creek, cattails in the un-shaded area beyond the bank indicate marshy soil. There is evidence of deer crossing the creek here. Views both upstream and downstream are exceptionally beautiful.

Wolf Creek continues behind several large buildings and a car dealership, narrowing into a deeper channel. On the street (north) side, the bank is steep, abrupt, and thickly

vegetated, separated from the business with chain link fencing. On the south side there is a less vertical, less vegetated, but much higher slope that eventually levels out into the intended building pad mentioned in the previous section. This pad is quite accessible from Railroad Avenue, although there is not much room between the creek bed and a chain-linked storage area filled with industrial equipment. There is concrete debris in the creek and evidence of high water flows (laid over grasses, litter suspended in low overhanging branches), in this stretch, but it is nevertheless very pretty. The water runs clean, over a rocky creek bed with small patches of settled silt. The vegetation is a mixture of juvenile to mature riparian species, including Alder, Maple, and Willow trees as well as Himalayan Blackberry, Plum trees, and Poison Oak. Birds flying and calling in the denser growth on an early spring visit indicate probable nesting sites.

At this point, Wolf Creek emerges from the riparian corridor and passes under Railroad Avenue through a concrete channel. The Railroad Avenue/Idaho-Maryland intersection is crossed by heavy trucks from a nearby concrete plant and is very close to a freeway off-ramp that intersects with Idaho-Maryland Road. The Street System Master Plan recommends installing signals to regulate traffic entering Idaho-Maryland Road at both Railroad Avenue and the freeway off-ramp.

#### *Loma Rica Special Development Area*

The Loma Rica Special Development Area is a proposed 450-acre residential and mixed-use development abutting the Wolf Creek Parkway at the Idaho-Maryland Road/Sutton Way intersection. If approved, annexation to the City is expected and building could commence in the next few years. Several hundred dwelling units are anticipated over a 20-year buildout period, and the plan also includes employment centers and public amenities. The potential development could have a definite impact on traffic patterns and efforts to increase viable alternative transportation connections to the Downtown core will be crucial to alleviate congestion.

Another aspect of the prospective project is the inclusion of 304 acres of public parkland and trails, a highly likely destination for potential Wolf Creek Parkway users. Current conceptual designs for Loma Rica call for up to 55 acres of greenway along Wolf Creek oriented around paths and trails in a 100-foot setback, as well as more formalized park/recreation areas, a connected greenway corridor along Olympia Creek and an interpretive, educational wetland area at their convergence. However, they do not yet have design standards for their trails. The Wolf Creek Parkway would connect Grass Valley's populous Downtown area to this recreational resource.

#### *Whispering Pines Corporate Community*

Whispering Pines is a Business/Industrial Park that was developed in the 1980's on the hill between Centennial and Brunswick Roads. Not all of the sub-areas have been built out. The specific plan for the project calls for setting aside the section of Wolf Creek within the specific plan boundaries for public use, providing scenic and functional amenities as part of a greater parkway/preservation project. At the time of writing, three Whispering Pines property owners had Wolf Creek frontage within the specific plan boundaries. The Whispering Pines Comprehensive Plan envisioned that these property owners would voluntarily dedicate open space easements.

#### *Mine Dewatering*

The Idaho-Maryland Mine, which has been closed since 1956, is proposed to be reopened by the Canadian firm Emgold Mining Corporation in 2007. The mine has 138

acres of surface rights, 2,800 underground acres of mineral rights, and owns a considerable length of the Wolf Creek Corridor along Idaho-Maryland Road.

Proposed operations would include mineral extraction and ceramic tile production. In order to gain working access to the mine's 70 miles of tunnels, millions of gallons of water will need to be pumped out and drained into South Fork Wolf Creek, which joins Wolf Creek proper underground in the Downtown Reach of the project study area.

Water quality and habitat advocates express serious doubts as to whether the highly toxic chemicals used and/or produced during these processes can be contained. The potential harm to aquatic habitat is great if these substances are accidentally released into the waterway, and there could be danger to people and liability issues if access to a polluted creek is provided by a City Parkway. However, the proposal submitted by the corporation states that the dewatering process should not be a problem or harmful to aquatic habitat. The water treatment system proposed for dewatering operations is "designed to treat the water to California drinking water standards."

Representatives from the mining concern have been very supportive of the Wolf Creek Parkway Project and express a willingness to cede a portion of their landholdings to the City for a Parkway. The project, which would be the only medium- to large-scale mining project in California and the state's only operating mine within a city's border, has yet to acquire local, state or federal approval and is subject to extensive environmental review.

#### Centennial Connector Road

The extension of Centennial Road (into a full connection road between Idaho-Maryland and Bennett Roads) proposed in the Street System Master Plan could alleviate some of the traffic on Idaho-Maryland Road but would increase traffic over the creek and potential Parkway when drivers take advantage of the bypass. Timing trail improvements to coincide with the Centennial Road improvements may be an opportunity to save time and money.

### **Railroad Avenue Reach**

This is the beginning of urbanization for Wolf Creek. On the downstream side of the Railroad Avenue crossing, the waterway takes on the wide, flattened V shape and engineered curves of typical urban canals. The embankment supporting the Golden Center Freeway creates the north/west bank of the creek and a chain link fence delineates Caltrans-controlled access about halfway up.

The bank on south/east side of the creek is wide and gently sloped from the road to the rip rap. On either side, concrete gives way to soil about halfway up the channel. The creek floor and banks are stabilized with small boulders embedded in concrete. A small municipal shed houses a Caltrans irrigation pump. The water runs wide, shallow, and rapid over the uniform floor. A line of rusty discoloration along the concrete banks clearly demarcates the range of water levels and possible chemical pollution.

Young Alder saplings, grasses and weeds have begun to colonize cracks in the bank. Areas of soil higher on the bank and further downstream foster mature trees (Manzanita, Cottonwood, Gray Pine, and Coffeeberry) surrounded by swaths of Himalayan Blackberry and Perennial Sweet Pea. The channel is cut off from wild areas by the freeway and City on one side and Railroad Avenue with its businesses, fences, and

industrial operations on the other. The freeway is noisy, which detracts from the enjoyment of the place. The concrete floor is scoured clean of silt and sand. However, like the previous reach, birds are flying and calling in the denser growth, indicating probable nesting sites.

This is an area where there might be room for a small pocket park, or at least a wide spot in the trail to stop awhile and sit in the sun on the banks of Wolf Creek. Traffic along Railroad Avenue isn't heavy, but does include large trucks emanating from the concrete plant at the end of the road. There is a miniature golf course/arcade as well as an office park complex between Railroad Avenue and Kidder Cemetery, which is up on a hill and currently fenced to prevent access. Right before the concrete plant entrance, the creek channel narrows, becomes choked with riparian plants (willows, cattails) and goes under the freeway through a substantial tunnel.

### **East Main Reach**

While Wolf Creek traverses the Railroad Avenue Reach running parallel to the freeway and Railroad Avenue, the only way for pedestrian and vehicular traffic to get from Idaho-Maryland Road to Downtown is the stretch of Idaho-Maryland Road between Railroad Avenue and East Main Street. This is a very busy two-way street, with businesses on either side after the constrained Golden Center Freeway undercrossing. There is a sidewalk on the north side of the street and parked cars line either side. Businesses and residences front the street without substantial setbacks or ordered parking access. Idaho-Maryland ends at a confusing, multi-directional intersection with East Main Street which also serves as a freeway onramp/offramp junction. Stop signs control the traffic, and a crosswalk with pedestrian islands leads to the north side of East Main.

Urbanization of Wolf Creek increases as it crosses under the highway in a concrete channel, merges with a smaller (also channelized) Matson Creek and daylights in a narrow concrete trough just past the intersection described above. From here on, one side of the creek is dominated by the freeway, which rises on an embankment above. The other is comprised of backyards and parking lots behind houses and businesses fronting on East Main. The beginning of this constricted, straight channel is again stabilized with small boulders embedded in concrete, but the texture suggests that this is a somewhat older civic project than the Railroad Avenue section. Banks are steeper and slicker in the downstream section: basically rock or keystone retaining walls. The water is deeper and rushing, which residents credit (along with the trees) for masking freeway noise. Residential fencing suggests there may be trespassing issues from parking lots into backyards. Business owners are very vocal about access restrictions, parking space loss, and vandalism if the Wolf Creek Parkway is routed between their property and the freeway. In addition to liability and property damage, they are concerned about the City imposing eminent domain.

The creek is buffered from the freeway by tall cedars and alders on the upstream side. The plants peeking through the creek's concrete banks are garden escapees (Sedums and Violets), cedar saplings, and mosses enjoying shade. Along the more exposed areas towards the City center, Cattails, Willow and Redtwig Dogwood have a foothold on the steep banks. Throughout, Hypericum and annual grasses are established groundcover on the freeway embankment; Himalayan Blackberry and Periwinkle are prevalent in neglected areas.

Because there seems to be little occasion or access for human interference in this stretch of the creek, and there is shelter under overhanging plants, aquatic creatures might enjoy some privacy where debris can settle long enough for foraging purposes. Birds might inhabit the more tangled areas of vegetation, but it is unlikely that other creatures visit this part of Wolf Creek on a regular basis because of severely limited access.

The creekway is so constricted here that alternate trail routes were explored early on: primarily East Main Street itself but also adjacent streets on both sides of the freeway. Besides being horizontally and vertically separated from Wolf Creek, East Main Street is a narrow thoroughfare with a lot of traffic, no shoulder, and irregular sidewalks. It is definitely not recommended as a pedestrian or bicycle route in its present form. (However, should East Main Street be designated for redevelopment in the future, this possibility should be revisited.) Beyond East Main on this side of the freeway, the residential streets are also quite narrow and circuitous; therefore also less than satisfactory for urban trail routing. It may be more feasible to piece together a trail on the other side of the freeway, even though it's even more remote from the creek. In this case, the East Main segment could join to Railroad Avenue through a combination of residential streets, the abandoned railway right-of-way, and Kidder Cemetery.

#### *East Main/Idaho-Maryland Interchange*

The current Grass Valley Corridor Improvement Project was originally administered by the Nevada County Transportation Commission but has been taken over by the City Engineer's office. This project addresses traffic flow and safety on the Golden Center Freeway adjacent to the East Main reach. Proposed improvements include traffic signals to regulate the hazardous, multi-directional Idaho-Maryland/East Main/onramp/offramp intersection, roadway widening to accommodate a separation that extends the length of the dedicated merge lane, a concrete barrier wall dividing the reconstructed freeway from the creek corridor, and another signal regulating off-ramp traffic at Bennett Street.

These improvements are meant to alleviate congestion and hazards by offering a safe alternative to drivers who detour onto this stretch of the freeway to avoid East Main while on downtown trips. The design prolongs the period before drivers "weave" into dedicated freeway traffic traveling at higher speeds and shunts traffic onto the under-utilized Tinloy Street. It is likely that traffic at the Tinloy Street/Bennett Street intersection will increase if this plan is pursued.

#### *Narrow Gauge Trail*

Between 1876 and 1942, a narrow gauge railway linked several Nevada County Towns. In Grass Valley, remnants of a passenger stop can be seen in a vacant lot on today's Bennett Road. The train's route continued around the hill to the Idaho-Maryland Mine and presumably gave Railroad Avenue its name.

The Nevada County Land Trust is working on a long-term project to develop a trail (or series of trails) along this historic right-of-way. Their plan includes following the railbed as closely as possible and they have so far secured three trail easements along the former Narrow Gauge Railroad line. If rights-of-way are inaccessible or unavailable, they plan to align the trail on existing streets. The goals of the Wolf Creek Parkway and the goals of the Narrow Gauge Trail are closely meshed in this area and alignment feasibility may overlap.

## **Downtown Reach**

Grass Valley has a nice new intersection, with decorative crosswalks and attractive lighting, to announce the entrance to downtown as East Main crosses Richardson Street. The Post Office and other civic buildings are on this block. Richardson Street is also where Wolf Creek ducks under the road from the East Main Reach and emerges to form the edge of downtown Grass Valley. The creek flows in a dark, mostly straight, deep channel behind the Post Office and other buildings. Tinloy Street, including a wide walkway/shoulder, tops the opposite bank, although it is separated from the creek by a chain link fence and a strip of parallel parking. Tinloy Street carries traffic off of and onto the freeway, and the intersections are busy and not well regulated, especially where Colfax Avenue/Neal Street and South Auburn Street converge with Frontage. Due to skewed intersection alignments, poor signal timing, and multiple accidents, the Auburn-Neal-Colfax Intersection has earned the nickname "Devil's Triangle" Poor intersection design causes the frontage roads to be under-utilized.

In some places, bank retention is of historic cut blocks and boulders, probably dating from the town's earliest days. In other areas of more recent development, retention is by way of reinforced concrete walls. The creek bed is rocky, with some murky, mucky places. Debris and trash have collected in several places and the water is sluggish.

The east bank of the creek is choked with English ivy, climbing up the fence and large tree trunks and trailing in the water. Mature riparian trees are represented where the ivy is not covering every available surface. Where there is soil retained by tree roots, down near the water, grasses and violets proliferate. The walkway along Tinloy Street is planted with Hypericum, Cotoneaster and young street trees. It is easy for people to get behind the chain link fence at Bank Street. A worn pathway, beer cans, and food packaging suggests regular visitation. Other species are not evident, except for birds, insects, and aquatics.

Wolf Creek is "flumed" below Bank Street, flowing underground for two long blocks that consist mostly of two parking lots and City streets. The box culvert the creek is flowing through is part of the roadway support. There is a large-diameter storm drain opening into the creek just before it enters the culvert and this area is fenced with waist-high black safety fencing. The street crossing at Bank Street is quiet. There is a Park n' Ride lot located under the freeway near the Auburn-Neal-Colfax Intersection, and an elementary school just beyond that.

When the creek emerges, behind Safeway, it is wide, shallow, and rushing, with an unpleasant, gassy odor. The Golden Center Freeway's fenced embankment once again forms the southeast bank. The northwest bank is retained at first by sandbags and later not at all. The creek bed is lined with both native and imported rock. Hypericum, Cotoneaster, Himalayan Blackberry, Privet, Horsetail, Willow, rushes and grasses (including turf) line the banks. Larger trees dominate the creek behind residences. It can be assumed that there is no riparian habitat value within the flume.

### *Gold Miner's Inn*

The parcel where Wolf Creek enters the box culvert is soon to host a Holiday Inn Express. Plans call for a small plaza at the corner of Bank Street and Tinloy Street, where the creek travels underground. This plaza will incorporate benches, a historical marker and planters. Paving will connect it to a hotel entrance and a sidewalk along the

Tinloy Street (buffered from the hotel's parking lot by a planting strip and a simple pipe bollard-and-chain fence). Caltrans, which holds right-of-way along Tinloy Street, has granted a limited permit to the project. The Bank Street Bridge will also be improved as a result of this project.

#### *Auburn-Neal-Colfax Intersection*

Several strategies have been proposed to rectify the dangerous intersection where Neal Street, South Auburn Street, Tinloy Street, and Colfax Avenue meet. Current plans, included in the Grass Valley Corridor Improvement Project mentioned earlier, call for "T-ing" Neal Street into South Auburn Street, creating a parking lot where the road used to go through, synchronizing three very closely-spaced signals, and gaining 12 stalls in the Park n' Ride lot by reducing Colfax Avenue to one lane. Schematic drawings include new planters in the parking areas adjacent to the improvements. Final plans for this intersection should incorporate pedestrian and bicycle circulation considerations.

#### *Safeway Parking Lot*

The Safeway parking lot is currently under-landscaped and entirely devoid of shade. Much needed improvements to this unattractive and unpleasant area could be instigated by, and coordinated with, plans for the Wolf Creek Parkway.

#### *Colfax Avenue Improvements and South Auburn Street Master Plan*

Redevelopment planning efforts, including streetscape improvements and pedestrian access, are underway for both of these areas. Enhancements for pedestrians are an important component of revitalization and the Parkway should transition comfortably into these areas.

#### *Memorial Park-Empire Mine Trail*

Coordinated by the Nevada County Land Trust, the Memorial Park-Empire Mine Trail will someday stretch over six miles, connecting Memorial Park to the Brunswick Basin. Connections to the Wolf Creek Parkway and the Narrow Gauge Railroad Trail are a key component of this trail's routing, which is still being negotiated with private property owners. Over a mile of the trail, connecting Memorial Park and the mine headquarters on Empire Street, has already been completed. This project is the highest construction priority of the Nevada County Land Trust's Trails Committee.

#### *South Fork Wolf Creek Trail*

The South Fork of Wolf Creek meanders along Colfax Avenue and Bennett Road, and Nevada County Land Trust proposes to build along the waterway. A trail here would be feasible (in that the area has not been built up), useful (connecting outlying communities to Grass Valley through alternative transportation), and desirable (for recreation, stewardship, and trail extension). The Wolf Creek Parkway would provide a model for implementation and a central, organizing "hub" for potential "spokes" like this.

### **Mill Street Reach**

As Wolf Creek flows downstream from Safeway, between the freeway and established residential development, its edges are more relaxed and the flow more natural and meandering. The west bank slopes up gently behind homes, while the east bank varies from steeply sloped to wide and terraced. The bed is thickly covered in native and imported rock, with rivulets of coarse sand. The water tends to run swiftly, between one and two feet deep, as the grade steadily descends. A large, partially submerged sewer

pipe crosses the creek from bank to bank like a bridge, and then settles into it, mounted on concrete footings along the south/east bank. There is evidence of swift, high water in the 2005 season and locals report flooding in 1986 and 1997.

At the end of this reach, the creek spreads over a concrete ramp and into a bifurcated concrete channel, which is partially blocked with rubble. Highway 20 splits from the Golden Center Freeway here and passes overhead to the west while 49 continues south. There is an ample under-crossing for cars and pedestrians on Mill Street, and a pedestrian staircase connecting Mill Street to the Empire Street/Highway 20 overpass. There is another Caltrans irrigation pump here, some off-street parking, and a few businesses.

Large trees (Cottonwoods, Alders, Willow) line the stable banks, as usual. The accustomed invasive species (Periwinkle, Ivy, Blackberry) are present, with densities ranging from relatively sparse in the more attended areas (where people enjoy the creek environment as part of their back yard) to impenetrable thickets where the creek is ignored.

Birds' nests are visible in the tall Cottonwoods. It is probable that smaller rodents and reptiles also take advantage of the more secluded areas between the highway and the houses, and that fish would be comfortable in shady areas where pool depth is sufficient. Larger animals probably would not come here, where human habitation is close and the corridor is effectively sealed with tunnels on either end.

Again, because the channel is constricted and access to the creek is limited, Mill Street was explored as a possible alternative trail route for pedestrians and bicyclists. This is another narrow, busy street, with cars entering from odd angles and intermittent sidewalks. There is currently parallel parking on a portion of the street but many of the curbs are striped red.

#### Intersection Improvement

Grass Valley's recent Street System Master plan calls for intersection improvements at the convergence of Mill Street and McCourtney Road, funded by the Regional Impact Fee. Redesign of this intersection should accommodate pedestrians and bikes as well as cars.

### **Downstream Reach**

Wolf Creek emerges from the rubble-filled box culvert under Highway 20 and flows through a deep channel into Glenn Jones Park. The banks are steep and built up, supporting the roads and the mine buildings. Two bridges span the creek, connecting the mine museum to a picnic area and undeveloped walking trail. The edge of the creek is coated with an old pavement that has been chipped away over the years. The actual creek bed is several inches (up to a foot) below this paving now. There isn't any formalized access down to the water, but there is a worn trail under the north/west abutment of the upstream bridge. The interesting, historic mining equipment and beautiful Pelton Wheel Museum (housed in a former powerhouse) define this reach. There is a parking lot accessed by Allison Ranch Road, which is what Mill Street becomes on the south side of Highway 20. There is also a sidewalk leading along Freeman Lane that starts on Allison Ranch Road.

Crossing the many wide streets here, against fast-moving traffic, is dangerous for the pedestrian, although there are conceivably many places to go. Lights on Highway 20 facilitate crossing 49 to the eastern neighborhoods of Grass Valley, there are the Fairgrounds to the west, and Pine Creek shopping center to the south. In fact, there is a rough trail from the park, up a steep hill through the trees, to Freeman Lane, the road that leads to the Pine Creek shopping center. Just south of the park, the creek runs into the water treatment plant.

A stand of mixed coniferous woodland covers the south/east side of the park with some native plants (Manzanita, Elderberry, Ceanothus) and a thick naturalized planting of daffodils at the open edges. Along the creek: primarily Blackberry, and large Alders. There are grasses in the stream and an extensive area of turf on the slopes. Birds are present in the trees, and it is possible that larger animals come down to the creek here from the undeveloped areas to the north/west, although it's probably more likely that downstream opportunities are better.

#### South Wolf Creek Trail

The Nevada County Land Trust holds a mile-long trail easement between Allison Ranch Road and Wolf Creek that connects to Glenn Jones Park. The easement was purchased through the Forest Reserve Program, with grant funds from Nevada County. Organizers plan for volunteers to build the trail, utilizing remnants of an old logging road and abandoned water canal. Expansion through the Grass Valley Water Treatment facility site is anticipated, which would link it to Glenn Jones Park. This would be a key connection for the proposed Wolf Creek Parkway. The Nevada County Land Trust has begun building the trail with the help of volunteers.

#### North Star Special Development Area

The North Star project encompasses approximately 760 acres in the southern part of Grass Valley, south of McCourtney Road, east of Old Auburn Road, and west of Allison Ranch Road. The proposed Specific Plan calls for 2,140 housing units, retail and light industrial uses, a K-8 school, an amphitheater and a golf course. In addition, the project calls for numerous park areas, open space areas, and both active and passive recreation opportunities and would generate AB1600 fees. Trails, funded by the developer, are specified along both Allison Ranch Road and Old Auburn Road to connect to the park at the north end of the project. In addition, approximately twenty-five (25) acres of heavily wooded land lying between Wolf Creek and Allison Ranch Road would be offered for dedication to the Nevada County Land Trust or the City of Grass Valley.

The proposed Wolf Creek Parkway may provide a connection to this proposed trail network and Open Space.

#### North Star Historic District

Planning and construction for an approximately one mile long recreational loop trail at the North Star Historic District property was funded by the Nevada County Board of Supervisors (using Proposition 40 Per Capita Grant funding) in summer 2005. This is another piece of the trails network that may someday connect to the Wolf Creek Parkway.

**Figure 2.1a: Opportunities and Constraints Exhibit, Bennett to Sutton**

**Figure 2.1b: Opportunities and Constraints Exhibit, Glenn Jones Park to Bennett**

## Table 2.2: Implications Matrix

## **Chapter Three: Study Methodology and Public Involvement**

For a project of this sort, crossing so many properties and involving so many facets, it is imperative to involve local stakeholders and build consensus. Additionally, the complexities of the corridor itself necessitate the kind of creative approaches generated through collaboration with local experts: people who see and interact with Wolf Creek regularly. Luckily, the concept of a Wolf Creek Parkway has been well supported by many groups of people over the years and many people came forward to be part of the process. This chapter describes the extensive public outreach process undertaken during the Wolf Creek Alignment Study and how the input from Grass Valley's citizens guided the development of the Conceptual Master Plan. For the full text of the reports on results for each workshop, see Appendix A.

### **Key Stakeholder Interviews**

At the beginning of the Wolf Creek Parkway Alignment Study, RRM Design Group conducted a series of key stakeholder interviews to develop a feel for the immediate concerns of people directly associated with the project Study Area. These interviews also yielded many suggestions for approaching the project and resulted in a list of contacts that can be tapped when related issues come up in later project phases.

The City of Grass Valley compiled the list of stakeholders, scheduled the meetings, and hosted the two-day process at City Hall. Interviewees included business owners, property owners, and residents within the Study Area, developers, bike and trail enthusiasts, a teacher, and members of the Wolf Creek Community Alliance, as well as City Staff and Council Members, the Fire Chief, and representatives from the following associated agencies: Nevada County Resource Conservation District, Caltrans, Nevada County Transportation Commission, Nevada County Department of Transportation, Nevada County Irrigation District, Nevada County Land Trust, Parks and Recreation Commission. RRM Design Group used insights from the key stakeholder interviews to frame subsequent phases of the public outreach and design concept development processes. Notes from these sessions were used to help establish existing and future conditions of the proposed study area and are included in Appendix A of this document.

### **Public Workshop #1: Issue Identification, Priority Setting and Design Brainstorming**

For the first public workshop of the Wolf Creek Parkway Alignment Study, the City of Grass Valley notified residents and property owners in the Study Area of the workshop by direct mail. Over forty people came to participate. The first exercise was designed to bring out the concerns and desires the public has in regards to development of a multi-use non-motorized trail in the Wolf Creek corridor, and then prioritize them. The second exercise was meant to initiate creative thinking about the design of the trail. The result of these processes was a clear visual and verbal articulation of the issues and ideas participants care about most. These concerns were developed into goals for the Alignment Study and Conceptual Master Plan. A Report on Results, detailing the outcome of this workshop, is included as Appendix A of this document.

After facilitating this workshop, RRM Design Group analyzed the results and developed three contrasting conceptual directions meant to organize, incorporate, and expand on

the ideas and priorities brought forth at the workshop. These alternatives were presented at the next public meeting. A newsletter introducing the project, summarizing the events of the first workshop, and inviting the public to the second public meeting was produced and mailed out.

## **Public Workshop #2: Looking at the Successes of Others and Considering the Alternatives**

The second public workshop was instrumental in establishing the project goals, the desired product of the process and the public priorities. During the first half of the evening, a detailed PowerPoint presentation examined some of the ways other towns have found success with their creekways, spotlighting Arroyo Grande Creek in Arroyo Grande, Mission Plaza in San Luis Obispo, and the Prince Memorial Greenway in Santa Rosa. A lively question and answer period ensued, and residents were encouraged to keep these projects in mind as alternatives for Wolf Creek's parkway alignment were presented.

During the second half of the evening, participants were guided through three contrasting conceptual directions the Wolf Creek Conceptual Master Plan could take. First, the intent of the project was explained, as well as progress to date, including a brief visit of the previous workshop's outcomes. Next, the convention of examining the Study Area as six different reaches was introduced to the audience through a review of the general opportunities and constraints that each encompasses. Finally, the consultants presented three conceptual alternatives that had been developed from the priorities that the public had previously identified. It was explained that each of the alternatives would include Revegetation & Restoration, A Clean Up Plan, Phasing Over Time, and Flood Mitigation Strategies. Participants were asked to consider differences in terms of Intensity of Development, Parkway Amenities, Trailheads and Surfacing, Degree of Integration & Connection.

Comments and questions from the audience throughout the presentation extended into a long Q&A session afterwards. The alternatives were reviewed again by audience request, on a slide-by-slide basis in order to compare alternatives #1, 2 and 3 for each reach. A description of the conceptual alternatives follows, and the full text of the Report on Results for Workshop #2 can be found in Appendix A of this document.

### *Alternative 1- "Great Things for Grass Valley"*

The most ambitious of the concepts, the "Great Things for Grass Valley" alternative (Fig 3.1) envisions a future wherein Grass Valley continues to fulfill its potential as the commercial and service hub for Nevada County. The emphasis is on accessibility and aesthetics, allowing residents and visitors alike a promenade experience with prominent public areas and a new "face" for the downtown area. Based on the experience of other projects, this approach would draw business and tourism, activating the local economics and providing a foundation for cohesive design. Ample walkways and continuous linkage enhance community focus and provide an active travel corridor. This is a long-term vision, with changes phased over a long period of time to allow for the necessary funding development, City acquisitions, and consensus building a project of this scope would entail.

Participants preferred this concept 39% of the time, especially for the Downstream, Downtown, and Railroad Avenue reaches.

Alternative 2-“Connecting Neighborhoods”

This alternative (Fig 3.2) is a somewhat softer, more intimate approach to Wolf Creek. An important focus is ease of use: a continuous, integral trail that local residents can use to get into and out of the downtown area. Design priorities along the trail would be restoration of creek habitat for both animals and plants, conservation of the scenic, historic and natural values along the creek, and maintaining and enhancing a natural appearance. Private property values would be assiduously protected and enhanced, with fences, plantings and routing. Educational and interpretive opportunities would be fully utilized, perhaps with permanent signage and displays, but definitely with access.

Participants preferred this concept 36% of the time, especially for the Mill Street and Idaho-Maryland reaches.

Alternative 3- “Baby Steps”

A low-maintenance, low-profile concept, the “Baby Steps” alternative (Fig 3.3) features few changes to existing infrastructure, relying more on the imagination of citizens to make the connection to Wolf Creek. This is a plan that could be easily, quickly, and economically implemented, perhaps with the idea of expanding in the future. The alignment is often along public city streets, minimizing impacts to private property.

Participants preferred this concept 14% of the time, especially for the East Main reach.

At the end of the workshop, participants were encouraged to come forward, take a close look at the three plans, and fill out “report cards” for each alternative on a reach-by-reach basis. Their feedback helped define the design of the Preferred Alignment Concept presented at Workshop #3.

**Figure 3.1: Alternative 1- “Great Things for Grass Valley”**

**Figure 3.2: Alternative 2-“Connecting Neighborhoods”**

**Figure 3.3: Alternative 3- “Baby Steps”**

### **Public Workshop #3: Presenting the Preferred Conceptual Plan**

A month after the second workshop, RRM Design Group facilitated a third in order to present the Preferred Concept (Fig 3.4) and receive feedback on the plan. Once again, a slideshow illustrated the plan and participants responded through “report cards.”

In order to bring newcomers up to speed on the research that had been done, the issues, and the inspirations for the proposed solutions, the slideshow began with a review of project progress to date. Data from the two previous workshops refreshed the memories of those present as to how attendees responded to the issue identification and priority setting exercises/design brainstorming at Workshop 1 and how they received the three alternative conceptual alignments at Workshop 2. It was explained that the Preferred Concept was a result of participant feedback during these exercises.

Next, the presentation “zoomed in” on the six reaches of the study area, to show where each began and ended. A pie chart comparing participant preferences in regard to each alternative—as applied to that reach—accompanied the reach’s definition. The presentation then began to explore the Preferred Conceptual Plan, Reach by reach.

Definitions of technical or specialized terms were offered with a photographic representation. Photo simulations showed how a specific design solution might apply to a particular location. The presentation wrapped up by touching on how the reaches might be phased. What follows is a detailed explanation of the Preferred Conceptual Plan (Fig 3.4), which, with further refinement, evolved into the Conceptual Master Plan presented in Chapter Four.

#### **Preferred, Temporary and Alternate Alignments**

Generally, the Parkway follows Wolf Creek through the City limits of Grass Valley. However, physical, political, and fiscal conditions differ so drastically from Reach to Reach that the most efficient planning strategy allows for a flexible, phased implementation process. The result is a hierarchy of routes that the City of Grass Valley can advance piece by piece as conditions become favorable.

The Preferred Alignment represents the routing that received the most public support during the workshop phase. The Alternate Alignment marks a secondary route that was an acceptable alternative should implementation of the Preferred Alignment be prolonged or infeasible. The Temporary Alignment shows a route that, while unpopular, may be necessary to utilize on a temporary basis for the sake of connection, during early phases of implementation. Discussions at public workshops, steering committee meetings, and key stakeholder interviews indicated that a Temporary Alignment might be a first phase of implementation, the Alternate Alignment a second step, and the Preferred Alignment the final manifestation.

#### **Idaho-Maryland Reach**

The Preferred Concept for the Wolf Creek Parkway features a multi-use non-motorized trail on the south side of the creek, augmented by a developed trailhead at the northwest corner of Idaho-Maryland Road and Sutton Way (a stoplight is suggested at this busy intersection to facilitate safe crossing). Other highlights include a large area of dedicated public parkland (including vehicular access, parking, and a picnic area), as well as interpretive and educational elements highlighting history and ecology.

### Railroad Avenue Reach

Improvements to this Reach will only function as a trail if connected to downtown through the contentious East Main reach, whose form will probably change over time, so the approach to the Railroad Avenue Reach needs to have both self-contained and flexible components.

The central feature of this Reach is a pocket park with trailhead facilities. The trail itself would split into two branches at the Railroad Avenue/Idaho-Maryland Road intersection. The main route, tying into both the Preferred Alignment and Temporary Alignment for the East Main Reach, follows Idaho-Maryland Road under the highway overpass to the to-be-signalized intersection of East Main and Idaho-Maryland. The Alternate Alignment is shown traveling along the south side of the freeway, possibly on the Caltrans right-of-way, to rejoin the Wolf Creek Parkway proper by way of Bennett Street.

### East Main Reach

Due to both physical and political constraints, the East Main Reach is a very problematic area for the Wolf Creek Parkway. Several solutions were tested during Workshop 2, including:

- A boardwalk cantilevered off of the new westbound freeway offramp construction. Businesses could partner with the City to provide footbridges and plaza connections.
- A promenade through an extensively rehabilitated, rebuilt, and reconfigured East Main area, terminating in a bridge crossing the Golden Center freeway, an option which depends on planning foresight and bidding of time while property changes hands and rezoning East Main Street
- Reducing East Main Street to one lane with one-way traffic to allow for a roomy multi-use non-motorized trail.
- An alternate route down Bennett Street, through the residential area near Kidder Cemetery, and through to Railroad Avenue on the South side of the Freeway.

Response to these alternatives after Workshop 2 didn't indicate a clear favorite. Comments were all over the map, reflecting mixed feelings about the area, although the cantilevered boardwalk option technically had the most support. A Temporary Alignment along East Main is shown, with a cantilevered boardwalk shown as the Preferred Alignment and the Alternate Alignment, connecting Railroad Avenue to Bennett Street on the south side of the freeway, included for interim development. All versions of this Reach of the Wolf Creek Parkway segue into the Downtown Reach at Richardson Street.

### Downtown Reach

At the intersection of Tinloy Street and Richardson Street, the Parkway would again become truly park-like: the trail would widen into a promenade (with room for bicycles as well as slower, strolling traffic) as it continues past the post office and down to Bank Street. Shady plazas and at least one footbridge connecting to the downtown civic buildings, as well as closer access to the creek, would further enhance the visitor's experience and encourage alternate modes of travel.

Almost three-quarters of the participants at Workshop #2 preferred the "Great Things for Grass Valley" alternative for this Downtown reach, which called for daylighting the

culverted creek through the Safeway and Holiday Inn site parking lots, creating a promenade on both restored banks of Wolf Creek, and incorporating public plazas at the Auburn-Neal-Colfax Intersection area and at Bank Street that have a secondary function as gateways to the heart of downtown from the perspective of vehicular travelers. People were very appreciative of the revitalizing potential of a community showpiece here, both to enhance economic opportunities and to get people in touch with the creek. The Preferred Conceptual Plan retains and expands these ideas to accommodate a phased approach.

Daylighting the creek, while a popular possibility, must be investigated further before it can be considered a viable choice. First of all, the cost of this alternative seems prohibitive. Second, the structural attributes of the current configuration need detailed assessment. Finally, the success of this endeavor is politically dubious, given the large businesses which would have to sacrifice (or find alternate) parking spaces. Therefore, the Preferred Conceptual Plan shows daylighting as the Preferred Alignment, with a Temporary Alignment alluding to the creek below through a water feature, decorative paving, or a combination of design features. This “virtual creek” could be configured so that if the creek is daylighted in the future, the original solution would become part of the final product.

At the Auburn-Neal-Colfax Intersection area, where Neal, South Auburn, and Colfax Avenues converge at the Tinloy Street, the Preferred Conceptual Plan shows these roads reconfigured/realigned as in the Capital Improvements Project currently being studied for this area, but instead of parking lot expansion, this change will serve to create a gateway plaza.

#### Mill Street Reach

In this reach, the “Connecting Neighborhoods” alternative was by far the favorite, and owners of adjacent properties and bicyclists the most supportive stakeholders. Therefore the Preferred Alignment utilizes the box culvert behind Safeway as a ramp and bridge for Parkway users that feeds into a continuous, multi-use non-motorized trail along the Caltrans right-of-way on the freeway side of Wolf Creek. The Preferred Alignment also features a fenced linear park on the area that Caltrans currently uses for storage and staging as well as access to the Parkway by fenced easements (to protect private property) and the existing city lot at the foot of Mill Street. There are opportunities for plaza dining behind the Swiss House and a trailhead plaza at the Safeway parking lot. An area of the creekway that is very narrow will have to be bridged with a raised boardwalk for bicyclists to have full access without taking land from private owners.

Until the Preferred Alignment could be constructed, a Temporary Alignment would be utilized to connect the Downtown Reach to the Downstream Reach. The Temporary Alignment would entail bicycles and pedestrians accessing Mill Street by turning up Neal Street at the Auburn-Neal-Colfax Intersection, then turning again onto Mill Street. Bicyclists and pedestrians would have to share the roadway and/or sidewalks while following Mill Street to Glenn Jones Park until the Preferred Alignment improvements are implemented.

This Reach transitions to the Downstream Reach where Highway 20 crosses the creek perpendicularly. The Preferred Alignment shows the transition as a tunnel under the freeway, an idea which workshop participants loved. The Alternate Alignment would leave the creek at the Swiss House restaurant’s parking lot and follow Mill Street to

Glenn Jones Park, with the psychological connection to the creek sustained, as on the Railroad Avenue Reach, through the use of murals, specialized signage, lighting, and/or paving treatments.

### Downstream Reach

The Downstream Reach in the Preferred Concept is a combination of the “Great Things for Grass Valley” approach and the “Connecting Neighborhoods” approach. It features an expanded parking lot at the museum entrance with a plaza-style trailhead (signage, seating, bike racks, drinking fountain), a slightly realigned (straightened) Freeman Lane/Mill Street intersection, and formalized water access. A multi-use non-motorized trail connects the trailhead to the creek, picnic area, and Freeman Lane, as well as the Mill Street Reach, by way of a tunnel running under Freeman Lane and the Highway 20/49 interchange. This tunnel is envisioned as emulating the entrance to a mine tunnel (timbers and hewn stone) and would be well lit. The Alternate Alignment runs directly to the future southern extension of the Wolf Creek Parkway from Mill Street, under the Highway 20 overpass and behind the museum, avoiding the park entirely.

### Phasing Concept

Funding cycles, diversity of conditions, and hot button topics among the populace suggest that phasing the Wolf Creek Parkway over time will be a sensible strategy. That way the City can begin to make immediate progress on a large, long-term project that will eventually attain most, if not all, of the recommendations set forth in this document. The Preferred Conceptual Plan addressed project phasing in a preliminary way, with the following outline. After gathering public and agency responses, these steps were refined into Implementation strategies detailed in Chapter Five and recommendations in Chapter Six.

### Phasing Objectives

Short-term objectives: 1-3 years after adoption of the Conceptual Master Plan

- Mark Temporary Routes with signage and striping
- Downstream Reach recommendations
- North Downtown Reach recommendations
- Idaho-Maryland Reach recommendations

Mid-term objectives: 3-5 years after adoption of the Conceptual Master Plan

- East Main/Railroad Avenue Alternate Route recommendations
- South Downtown Reach recommendations
- Sutton Way Trailhead

Long-term objectives: 5-10+ years after adoption of the Conceptual Master Plan

- Mill Street Reach recommendations
- East Main Reach recommendations
- Extensions

### **Participant Feedback**

After the presentation of the Preferred Conceptual Plan, audience members were encouraged to ask questions, clarify details, and come forward to take a close look at a large printout of the Preferred Concept. They were asked to fill out report cards again in order to catalogue their commentary. The Preferred Conceptual Plan, the PowerPoint presentation, and report card results were later posted on the city's website in PDF form so other interested parties could evaluate the plan and submit feedback. The feedback

received at the workshop and in the report cards was reviewed and used in the process of refining the Preferred Conceptual Plan into the Conceptual Master Plan presented in Chapter Four.

Response to the public presentation of the Preferred Conceptual Plan was very favorable. Participants appreciated the incorporation of previous participant suggestions, the detailed explanations, and the creative solutions presented. Even those who had serious reservations after the previous workshop made a point of communicating that the Preferred Conceptual Plan was getting a lot closer to something they could live with.

### **Figure 3.4: The Preferred Concept**

## **Caltrans Review**

The City submitted the Preferred Concept Report to Caltrans for conceptual review and discussion in May 2005, since much of the feasibility of the Preferred Conceptual Plan relies on Caltrans controlled access areas and engineering. After several weeks of review, Caltrans responded to the Preferred Conceptual Plan in a letter to the City of Grass Valley that included both specific comments on the alignment plan and guidelines for navigating Caltrans' project requirements. The agency was very supportive of the project, commending the City's pursuit to develop alternative modes of transportation and stating a commitment to "working closely with the City to achieve this goal." As a response to the Preferred Concept Plan, the feedback received from Caltrans is not reflected in the Preferred Concept Plan in the previous section. However, the comments (paraphrased below) were incorporated into both the final phase of refinement of the Wolf Creek Conceptual Master Plan (presented in Chapter 4) and the implementation considerations of Chapter 6. This agency review enriched the final phase of conceptual refinement immensely.

### Idaho-Maryland Reach

No comment received.

### Railroad Avenue Reach

The eastbound offramp intersection at Idaho-Maryland is slated to be signalized in the near future, thus, pedestrian crossings of Idaho-Maryland should happen here rather than at the Railroad Avenue intersection.

### East Main Reach

Where Bennett (Richardson) Street intersects Tinloy Street (the transition between the Downtown and East Main reaches) vehicular traffic is currently heavy and is expected to increase. This makes a surface crossing very dangerous and Caltrans suggests considering an under- or over-crossing for the Parkway to avoid conflict. For the Alternate Alignment, Caltrans recommends consideration of Bank Street and the southern Tinloy Street as a safer route to Bennett Street.

### Downtown Reach

The approved hotel project between Bank Street and Colfax Avenue includes a walkway within the Caltrans right of way, but it is limited to a standard sidewalk separated from the hotel parking lot by a small buffer strip of planting. Caltrans needs more detail about the physical configuration of the daylighting option and how it would fit between the hotel project and Tinloy Street.

While it is understood that the Auburn-Neal-Colfax Intersection area is to be reconfigured and reconstructed, until plans are approved by Caltrans, any additional pedestrian and traffic needs to be diverted to the north side of Colfax Avenue.

### Mill Street Reach

No comment received.

### Downstream Reach

A tunnel under Highway 20 may be impractical because it would have to be built without affecting the highway traffic above. The alternate alignment that utilizes the existing undercrossing at Mill Street is much more feasible.

## Chapter Four: The Wolf Creek Parkway Conceptual Master Plan

The Conceptual Master Plan presented in this chapter delineates general design guidelines, the Preferred, Alternate and Temporary Alignments of the Parkway (as supported by the community at public workshops), and a reach-by-reach description of special features the multi-use non-motorized trail should incorporate. The Preferred Conceptual Plan discussed in Chapter Three provides the basis for the Conceptual Master Plan, so much of this will sound familiar to careful readers of the previous chapter and workshop attendees. However, the ideas comprising the Preferred Conceptual Plan have been further developed and refined (through in-house testing, workshop feedback, and Caltrans review) and the Conceptual Master Plan is meant to stand alone as the framework for future design development of the Wolf Creek Parkway. This chapter should be used as the starting point for Landscape Architectural and Engineering design services as the Parkway project develops.

### General Features and Design Guidelines

Wolf Creek Parkway is envisioned as a multi-use non-motorized trail serving a range of user groups. Joggers, pedestrians, bicyclists, in-line skaters, and the disabled have differing requirements when it comes to ideal widths, surfacing, and amenities on a trail. These different needs, plus the variable terrain of the Wolf Creek corridor and the fact that the trail will most likely develop in segments over time, challenge the designer to develop a cohesive design theme and standards that are consistently convenient to all users. These solutions should be unified enough to present continuity, yet flexible enough to adapt to both changing physical conditions and implementation over time. This section discusses a generalized approach to meeting the needs of trail users and presents suggestions for developing a design theme and specifying materials.

### Meeting the Needs of Trail Users

In order to be a viable recreation/commuter trail, the Wolf Creek Parkway needs to accommodate many users, including able-bodied pedestrians of all ages, joggers, bicyclists of different skill levels, in-line skaters, parents with strollers, dog-walkers, and the disabled. Research into the specific needs of each of these groups has yielded a list of criteria that provides a baseline standard for Wolf Creek Parkway. The following design guidelines and trail amenities should be implemented throughout the trail's length:

**widths** will vary according to terrain and trail designations. Sections of trail defined as "multi-use" should measure 8-10 ft. wide for safety and comfort (users should be able to pass one another without having to leave the trail). One-way bike lanes, identified by striping on roadways, need to be 5 ft. wide. "Footpaths" can be 4-5 ft. wide. Sidewalks should be 4-ft wide at a minimum.

**slopes** should be less than 5% to accommodate small children on bikes, wheelchairs, and strollers.

**curves** should be ample, with a radius that meets Americans with Disability Act (ADA) recommendations.

**handrails** should be provided where drop-offs or steepness are a factor. They are required by ADA at specific height variations.

**overlooks** should be level and meet ADA specifications.

**surfacing** should be smooth, hard, and clean (to allow for wheeled travel) where trail is specified as “multi-use”. Permeable paving, to allow for rainwater percolation, is preferred, although other appropriate surfacing types may be considered. Footpaths should be unpaved.

**pull-outs** and wide recovery zones will allow for passing slower traffic.

**control joint** widths in paving should be minimal.

**horizontal clear zones** of at least 2 ft. should be provided at the shoulders of the trail.

**vertical clear zones** between 3 ft. and 6 ft. should be observed in plantings, walls, and fencing adjacent to the trail.

**private property** should be screened and protected with berms, fencing and plantings. Encourage the use of native plant species in private or commercial landscaping adjacent to Wolf Creek.

**commercial interests** should be encouraged to reorient themselves to Wolf Creek to promote customer and employee enjoyment of the Parkway. Encourage present and future creekside business to create passive use areas along their Wolf Creek frontage for public use.

**access** should be controlled and directed with removable bollards, bridges, signage and pavement markings.

**run-off** should be directed, by trail surface cross-sloping, to sheet off the outside edge rather than being concentrated on the surface or inside margin of the trail. Ground covers of plant material and mulch will reduce erosion and increase percolation.

**street crossings** associated with trail access should incorporate a reasonable amount of safety features such as striping, pavement texturing or color, in-ground warning lights, signage and traffic signals, as determined by a traffic engineer.

**undercrossing options** offered as an alternative to street crossings where space and bridge profiles allow, should allow 10 ft. from trail surface to the ceiling and a trail width of at least 6 ft. (including tunnels).

**channel profiles** should include improvement of the creek channel for habitat. If deemed feasible by future studies, provision of meandering, rock-lined, low-flow channels excavated into existing concrete channel would promote water cooling and allow for biodiversity without impairing flood control.

**creek bottom** should be naturalized wherever possible. Explore using “turf block,” a reinforced concrete unit system that promotes native groundcovers in selected portions of the channel.

**landscaping** along the top of the channel bank should create a greenway without negatively impacting the ability of the channel to quickly carry away flood water. Locate low-growing, low-friction species lower on the bank in areas of water access. Use plants native to riparian areas of the Sierra foothills in order to create habitat, promote biodiversity, contribute to a healthier ecology, and educate the community.

## **Trail Amenities**

**trailheads** should include signage, drinking fountains, trash and recycling receptacles, bike racks, and seating. In urban areas, they could also include decorative paving, plantings and public art alluding to Wolf Creek. Signage should conform to City design standards and any other regional signage systems approved for public trails. Trailheads should be close to parking and ideally would coincide with transit routes. The City may decide to include restroom facilities at trailheads if desirability offsets installation and maintenance costs.

**signage** should be clear, consistent, and incorporated throughout the project area. Regulatory signage includes hazard warnings as well as rules for the Parkway concerning pets, conduct, travel speeds and hours of access. Directional signage includes maps, mile markers, points of interest, and the like.

**interpretive signage** should be placed so as to be legible from the trail or overlook with ample room for the viewer to be out of the path of traffic. Placement must also meet ADA accessibility requirements and avoid obscuring views or the travel way. Affordable vandal-resistant design and materials should be utilized.

**seating** should be a regular feature of the Wolf Creek Parkway, especially in the downtown areas, overlooks, and at trailheads. If space allows, the linear parks could include picnic table facilities. Benches and/or low maintenance seatwalls are both appropriate.

**fencing** should be consistent, attractive and transparent, so that safety and privacy are maintained but views are not obscured. Fencing should also restrict access to sensitive areas or hazards. If metal or vinyl-coated fencing is used, it should be of a dark neutral color to blend in with the landscape and vines could be used to soften visual impact. Split rail fencing is a readily-available, attractive, and effective option in keeping with rustic surroundings.

**lighting** needs to be adequate for safe travel over the trail during twilight and nighttime hours, without being invasive to private residences, distracting to freeway drivers, or obscuring the night sky. A combination of non-glare overhead pedestrian lighting at access points and bollard or waist-level path lighting along the trail should be specified.

## **Design Themes & Materials Palette**

Developing a recognizable, unified design theme is an important component for the successful design of Wolf Creek Parkway. A strong design theme relates people to a place in a meaningful way. Motifs, materials, and standards are all parts of a theme, which can also extend into furniture choices and signage design. At best, design themes are both derived from, and influential on, aspects of a project's surroundings. Repetition of the design theme symbolizes continuity and connection, and a good one will likely be

incorporated into future extensions of Grass Valley's trail system. The materials palette for the Parkway should reflect considerations of experiential quality and ecological effect as well as budget considerations and physical practicality.

**Experiential Quality** The City of Grass Valley has a rich history and a well-defined visual character. It is important that the built aspects of Wolf Creek Parkway be part of this fabric—a continuation, an extension, and a celebration. Wolf Creek Parkway designers should choose materials, colors, and surfaces that reflect local heritage, complement existing environmental features, and don't detract from the inherent scenic qualities of Wolf Creek itself. Inspiration can be drawn from the Pelton Wheel Mining Museum and other historic buildings in town. Natural or mined stone, native plantings, and historic bricks should be used whenever practical. However, "a mindless consistency" should be avoided. As articulated during the public outreach process, the trail should express a spectrum from naturalistic at the rural edges to more formal and "fancy" in the heavily-trafficked, urban reaches. There should also be room for public art and modern, local appreciations of Wolf Creek and Grass Valley history. For example, sections of fencing could be locally made from reclaimed mine machinery. Authentic elements and local "flavor" are much preferable to washed-out, one-size fits-all historic "treatments."

**Ecological Effects** Wolf Creek Parkway is defined by a riparian zone. While urbanization and neglect have degraded the ecology of the waterway, respecting the current and potential habitat value of Wolf Creek is a vital part of the project. Therefore, Parkway designers will need to choose materials with sensitivity to ecological implications. Timbers, boulders, and metal structures should not be treated with toxic paints or chemicals. Plantings should not include invasive species.

Conversely, it is also important to build with materials that can withstand the effects of the environment on the trail. Some of the trail will be subject to flooding during rainy winters and spring snowmelts. Paving, furniture, and other installations should be specified with this in mind. In some cases, it may be more practical to occasionally replace materials lost to flooding rather than mandate a permanent solution. For instance, mulch on a temporary trail spur might be lost during a storm but makes more sense than paving part of the trail not meant to last. In other cases, the right location for the trail or amenity will be entirely above the historic 100-yr flood zone. Anything built or installed within the flood zone should be flood-resistant (heavy and/or secure), rot-resistant, and pressure-washable.

### **Preferred, Temporary and Alternate Alignments**

The Wolf Creek Parkway Conceptual Master Plan is the outcome of the public workshops and subsequent review process described in previous chapters, and is meant to illustrate the Preferred, Alternate, and Temporary Alignments as well as major features of the Parkway. The graphics and narrative are based on the Preferred Conceptual Plan offered at the final public workshop. Those ideas, with further refinements, modifications, and expanded discussion, are presented here as the Conceptual Master Plan.

In this section, the account of the Conceptual Master Plan returns to the reach-by-reach format. The verbal description of each Reach is accompanied by an extract from the Conceptual Master Plan illustration representing the part of the trail being discussed

(Figures 4.1a through 4.1f). The complete exhibit is presented in Figure 4.2 at the end of the chapter.

## **Idaho-Maryland Reach**

This Reach is the most straightforward section of the Wolf Creek Parkway and the most traditional in terms of a multi-use non-motorized trail. The banks are wide and unconstrained, the setting is park-like, and the property owners are generally friendly to the project. From a trailhead near the Olympic Creek confluence, the Preferred Alignment follows Wolf Creek along the southern bank to Railroad Avenue as a multi-use trail. Footpaths provide direct creek access for fishing and other pursuits. There doesn't need to be an Alternate or Temporary Alignment.

Interpretive and/or educational elements are incorporated into the trail design at intervals, highlighting local species, water stewardship, and regional history (an exhibit detailing the history of the Idaho-Maryland Mine has been suggested). There are plenty of places to sit and rest, and an informal linear park with a picnic area and vehicular access in the area near the existing bridge. This stretch will be an important transportation link to the proposed Loma Rica SDA as well as a destination for recreation, nature education, and wildlife observation.

## **Railroad Avenue Reach**

The Railroad Avenue Reach begins where Wolf Creek crosses under Railroad Avenue. The Conceptual Master Plan calls for a street crossing here as well as an undercrossing option that trail users could use (when water flows aren't prohibitive) in order to avoid vehicular traffic conflicts. The south bank of Wolf Creek along Wolf Creek is very amenable to a pocket park, which both the Preferred and Alternate Alignments include. The Preferred Alignment includes a trail along this stretch, if only to take advantage of the sunny, open bank. For the most part, however, the Preferred Alignment presented by the Conceptual Master Plan is a Class II bike trail, sharing the road and defined by signage and striping, on either side of Idaho-Maryland, between the signalized intersections where the Golden Center Freeway off-ramps intersect with Idaho-Maryland. Pedestrians would use the existing sidewalks. Paving treatments, signage, and/or murals would provide continuity. While not an ideal trail environment, this is the Preferred Alignment in the Railroad Avenue Reach because it continues the Preferred Alignment for East Main Reach and is a short, direct route to the downtown area.

The Alternate Alignment forsakes Idaho-Maryland entirely and continues the south bank stretch up into the Cemetery and/or Narrow Gauge right-of-way. While the Parkway would leave Wolf Creek at this point, the experience would be much more pleasant than riding along Idaho-Maryland. The Alternate Alignment would rejoin the Preferred Alignment in the Downtown Reach.

## **East Main Reach**

The Preferred Alignment in the East Main Reach is a constructed trail cantilevered off the East Main/Idaho-Maryland Interchange freeway expansion project between Bennett Street and Idaho-Maryland (see East Main Reach section of Chapter Two), to which property owners could connect by choice with bridges, plazas, and overlooks. Similar Projects exist in Mountain View (Highway 85/Stevens Creek) and Colorado (I-70 through Glenwood Canyon). Towns like San Luis Obispo, California and Ashland, Oregon

exemplify the advantages that businesses derive from connections to a pleasant pedestrian corridor that involves a creek.

The Alternate Alignment would diverge (as a Class II Bike Lane) from the Downtown Reach at Bank Street, pass Dow Alexander Park, cross Bennett Street, then use Kidder Street or the old Narrow Gauge station property to climb the hill, traversing the cemetery or Narrow Gauge right of way to join the Railroad Avenue Reach on the other side.

Both of the above alignments would entail considerable time and expense to bring to fruition, the Preferred more than the Alternate. Thus, a Temporary Alignment is offered for East Main along the existing roadway. This is partially satisfactory for pedestrians, although bicyclists are not well-served in this option by any measure, but the existing connection between the Downtown Reach and the Idaho-Maryland Reach is the most feasible temporary option. Psychological connection to Wolf Creek could be maintained through signage, art, and paving treatment.

## **Downtown Reach**

The Preferred, Alternate, and Temporary Alignments all follow the same route in the Downtown Reach. An undercrossing option is provided at the Bennett Street bridge, and the Parkway continues as a shady urban plaza along Tinloy Street, across Auburn-Neal-Colfax Intersection, to a trailhead associated with the Safeway parking lot, then through the parking lot to connect to the Mill Street reach. What is different about the options is the degree of expenditure, attention, and (re-)construction involved.

The Preferred Alignment, overwhelmingly supported at the Public Workshop #2, is a continuous pedestrian promenade along a day-lighted Wolf Creek, perhaps reflecting the current revitalization trend of uncovering and reconfiguring urban waterways, as a boost to both an ecological and economic health. This area is the heart of Grass Valley's downtown, completely open to freeway views, and it is easy to imagine the dramatic effect a welcoming, beautiful public space built around a revitalized waterway would have. The popularity of daylighting Wolf Creek suggests that the City of Grass Valley should investigate this possibility further. However, the potential financial expense seems prohibitive, there is a potentially inviolable structural component to the current subsurface engineering of this area, and daylighting the creek would seriously impinge on the property-owner's current plans.

In the near future, it may be more practical to adopt the Alternate Alignment, envisioned as a more-or-less-permanent "interim" solution of a widened, landscaped walkway incorporating a water feature that celebrates Wolf Creek and/or Grass Valley history. Several types of features have been suggested: wooden flumes based on miner's constructions, a recreated streambed at the existing grade with a re-circulating flow or redirected Wolf Creek water, a colorful sidewalk treatment that maps creek flow and is bounded by boulders and trees for seating. This would be a logical location for public art and interpretive exhibits celebrating the natural and cultural heritage of the region. For instance, a marker for Old Chinatown would be appropriate. Parkway efforts should dovetail with the East Main/Idaho-Maryland Interchange project, especially as to the reconfiguration of the Auburn-Neal-Colfax Intersection, which could become a pleasant gateway plaza.

The Temporary Alignment solution in the Downtown Reach would be to concentrate on developing the Parkway around the part of the creek that is currently exposed and use paving treatment, plantings and signage to connect reaches across the parking lot edges of the future Holiday Inn Express and Safeway, to “stake a claim,” as it were, and at least reinforce the psychological connection to the waterway.

This area is the nexus of several planning projects (the Grass Valley Corridor Improvement Plan, South Auburn Street Master Plan and Colfax Avenue Infill Study) as well as a critical juncture for commuters and the gateway from downtown to Hennessy Elementary School, Memorial Park, and Empire Mine State Park. This is also where South Fork Wolf Creek runs into Wolf Creek proper, underground. The City of Grass Valley should take full advantage of the opportunity Wolf Creek Parkway provides to bring all these elements together. Using art, local references, and social attractions, the Parkway could bring definition and a gateway perception to this central downtown experience.

### **Mill Street Reach**

The Preferred Alignment for Wolf Creek Parkway, after crossing Safeway’s parking lot, will return to Wolf Creek over the existing box culvert and continue along the east side, between the creek and the freeway, across a large area (over 3 acres) that Caltrans currently uses for storage and staging. Workshop participants expressed support for developing an informal park here as a place to get off the trail and relax. It would be important, if implemented, for the park to be open, well-lit, and easily-accessible.

The Mill Street Reach is the area of the Wolf Creek Parkway that has the most potential to directly disturb private residences during the planning and building phases, as well as once it’s being used regularly. However, property owners’ fears of trespass, vandalism, and decrease in property values are for the most part proven exaggerated when it comes to public trails projects. In fact, increased public presence in trail corridors usually removes unsavory elements that enjoy the privacy of neglected areas.

The Preferred Alignment continues along the east bank. At the narrowest place, where the freeway embankment rises essentially vertically from the creek, the Parkway will need to be elevated with a bridge or boardwalk, or cross to the west bank. Safety officials in Grass Valley remind us that emergency access to the Parkway will have to be provided to facilitate an optimum response time to any place on the trail. Multiple access points will also enhance the usefulness of the Wolf Creek Parkway’s Mill Street Reach for trail users. For all three of these reasons, the City of Grass Valley should develop mutually satisfying easement relationships with property owners along Mill Street before implementation begins. The restaurant and other commercial properties currently fronting Mill Street (as it approaches Highway 20) will want to explore the advantages of incorporating the creek into their business plans, in the form of outdoor dining, bike rental, or other associated endeavors.

Given the physical limits of the Wolf Creek corridor and the way that city streets have been laid out, there is no Alternate Alignment provided for the Mill Street reach. In order to establish a continuous Wolf Creek Parkway right off the bat, a Temporary Alignment along Mill Street could be instituted (with the same rationalization and methodology as the Temporary Alignment option in the East Main reach) while resources are being gathered for the Preferred Alignment.

## **Downstream Reach**

In the Preferred Alignment, Parkway users will transition unimpeded from the Mill Street Reach to the Downstream Reach through a tunnel that passes under Highway 20. This tunnel would be built over the existing culvert and fashioned to emulate the entrance to a mine, with hewn rock, large timbers, and lighting.

The Temporary/Alternate Alignment would depart from the creek before the culvert, cross behind the Swiss House restaurant, and utilize the existing vehicular undercrossing to get to Glenn Jones Park. As in the case of the Railroad Avenue reach, the undercrossing could be treated with special paving, signage, or artwork to indicate that it has been incorporated into Wolf Creek Parkway. There is also the possibility that the east slope of the undercrossing, alongside the existing sidewalk, could be excavated to allow a wider passage than the existing sidewalk provides.

On the downside, Parkway users in this scenario would have to contend with vehicular traffic. The upside is that this piece of Wolf Creek Parkway would be cheap and instantaneous, while the tunnel will take years of permitting and fundraising to attain.

General consensus is that Glenn Jones Park is fine the way it is today, and that the Parkway should build on what is already there rather than make drastic changes. The parking lot that serves Glenn Jones Park and the Pelton Wheel Mining Museum can be modified to serve as the downstream trailhead for the Wolf Creek Parkway, which will fork within the park. Parkway users will have the choice to bypass the park and continue toward North Star, Freeman Lane, or the Fairgrounds. However, the Park is an attractive destination in itself and formalized access to the water would enhance the experience for both Parkway users and park visitors.

Figure 4.1, on the following page, illustrates the entirety of the Conceptual Master Plan.

## **Figure 4.1: The Conceptual Master Plan**

## **Chapter Five: Implementing Wolf Creek Parkway**

The Conceptual Master Plan for Wolf Creek Parkway has public support, agency approval, and successful precedents in several towns from which to learn. However, given the complexity of the project, the materialization of the Parkway in its entirety will require considerable effort, thorough planning, and efficient use of resources. This chapter will examine the implementation process sequentially and outline strategies the City of Grass Valley may consider during the Wolf Creek Parkway project. The first step will be to identify and assemble the management team, who will develop a project phasing plan, the foundation for all other efforts. Once initiated, the project will be subject to environmental review under CEQA and require several permits (listed below) to proceed. Tables 5.3a-5.3p present Opinions of Probable Construction Costs for the project. Although very few cities (if any) have a working budget that could accommodate an ambitious project like this one, the Wolf Creek Parkway encompasses so many benefits to the community and involves so many critical components that it will be eligible for many public and private grants. It will be important to identify as many of these as possible and keep abreast of new opportunities as they become available, as well as capitalize on resources already existing in the community—volunteers, interest group networks, and private donations. The City should also be prepared to make use of several land acquisition mechanisms, and work cooperatively with landowners who will be affected by this project. Throughout the entire process, agency coordination will be a vital concern. Many jurisdictions overlap in the Wolf Creek corridor, and there are many interested parties, each with different priorities. Forming an enterprise group and/or Joint Powers Authority will likely increase project efficiency and improve interagency communications.

### **Joint Powers Authority**

The City of Grass Valley may consider forming a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) with other jurisdictional entities for the duration of the Wolf Creek Parkway project.

The purpose of a JPA is to combine the forces and consolidate the resources of two or more public entities with common powers to acquire or construct a joint-use facility. Their bonding authority and taxing ability is the same as their powers as separate units, but the eligibility for grants can be compounded and duplication of efforts is avoided. In addition, participation in a JPA can streamline the permit application process and create more efficient interagency communication. The County of Nevada County, Nevada Irrigation District, Nevada County Transportation Commission, Caltrans and the Wolf Creek Community Alliance are among potential members of this team

Ideally, the Wolf Creek Parkway would be built all at once. Design and engineering for the entire 2.2-mile stretch would flow seamlessly into permitting and construction, and within a few short seasons, families could be out enjoying nature, recreation, and alternative transportation. This would be the most efficient scenario, the least invasive to the City's routines, and least costly in the long run.

However, the reality of a publicly funded project is that compiling the resources necessary will be time consuming. Furthermore, some parts of the Parkway may be easier to construct, fund, or permit than others. Given the time limits implicit in many grants and the need for the public to see real progress bought with their valuable tax dollars, a more realistic approach is to choose specific project components and develop

them to their fullest, while other pieces simmer in the background. In this way, the Parkway can get underway as soon as possible and count each partial success toward the larger goal. This is the main reason for developing a flexible Master Plan, broken into reaches. The implementation process can proceed incrementally, responding to new opportunities and changed conditions and yet remain part of a cohesive vision.

Many of the initial studies that are needed to implement the recommendations in this document should incorporate the entire Study Area, as should the permitting process and preliminary design. Early implementations, like developing signage themes and marking routes, would be best applied to the whole corridor. Funding, preparatory work and construction, however, could be viewed as pieces to address separately, Reach by reach.

## **Planning Phases**

### **Planning Phase I**

- Coordinate project management, establish steering committee or Joint Powers Authority
- Develop signage system compatible with city design standards and any other regional signage systems that are approved for public trails, but flexible enough for a variety of applications
- Facilitate the formation of an enterprise group, perhaps a non-profit organization, with the mission of raising funds and other resources to support implementation of Wolf Creek Parkway
- Mark temporary and future routes of the Wolf Creek Parkway with striping and signage
- Introduce publicity and educational campaigns to involve public
- Begin restoration efforts: clearing invasive species, litter clean-up, water quality monitoring
- Secure funding for schematic design
- Develop cooperative agreements between agencies
- Strategize easement acquisitions and incentives
- Support NCTC development/update of Nevada County Bicycle Transportation Plan and the Nevada County Non-Motorized Trail Plan.
- Develop Conditions for trail easement acquisition and development associated with the current approval process

### **Planning Phase II**

- Continue publicity, educational, and restoration efforts
- Distribute RFP for schematic design process and hire appropriate firm
- Adopt schematic designs
- Pursue funding opportunities for CEQA studies and construction documents
- Begin Permitting Process, coordinated with schematic plans
- Initiate CEQA process
- Begin acquisition process, coordinated with schematic plans
- Develop maintenance and operations program and budget

### **Planning Phase III (continuing through construction phases)**

- Continue publicity, educational, and restoration efforts
- Develop construction funding, Reach by Reach

- Complete construction documents, Reach by reach
- Complete permitting and acquisition, Reach by reach
- Maintain and operate built portions of Wolf Creek Parkway

## **Construction Phases**

It is anticipated that Parkway build-out will occur on an individual, reach-by-reach basis. The order each Reach gets completed may be dictated by the kinds of funding first available, or which Reach is the first to have the necessary easements in place. Other contingencies include the amount of mitigation involved, volunteer resources, new developments, and opportunities brought on by related construction projects. To reiterate, it will be important to plan for flexibility, simultaneity, and the long-term. However, it is not unreasonable to make an educated guess as to the relative feasibility of the different alignments in the different reaches, and since the phasing may just as legitimately be determined by agency effort, a potential project phasing scheme is offered below.

### **Construction Phase I:**

The goal of this phase is to establish a continuous, preliminary trail through Grass Valley, as soon as possible, with serious efforts concentrated where the most progress can be accomplished with the least disruption. Improvements in each Reach should match the description of the specified alignment in the Conceptual Master Plan. At the end of Phase I, Grass Valley will have a foundation for Wolf Creek Parkway, providing a sense of continuity and measurable progress for Grass Valley residents.

#### *Idaho-Maryland Reach: Preferred Alignment*

The Idaho-Maryland Reach is the least constrained stretch of the study area and has the most promise for genuine creek restoration. The proposed improvements will provide pedestrian access to downtown for many people who currently work in this industrial area, as well as the potential residents of the proposed Loma Rica housing development. Adjacent property owners (specifically Emgold Mining Corporation and others) have stated a willingness to cooperate with the city's development of the Wolf Creek Parkway in this area. For all of these reasons, it is anticipated that the Idaho-Maryland Reach of Wolf Creek Parkway will be the first entire Reach to go in to construction. Beginning with Idaho-Maryland also sets a precedent of success, builds momentum, and results in a recognizable trail which could stand on its own as a sizable civic improvement.

Phase I improvements will include:

- A continuous multi-use non-motorized trail on the south side of Wolf Creek between Sutton Way and Railroad Avenue
- A street crossing at Centennial Road
- A trailhead, picnic area, and parking area south west of the bridge
- An informal linear park
- Interpretive Signage
- Fishing access
- Seating Areas
- Removal of non-native invasive plant species and litter, revegetation
- Directional and regulatory signage

#### *Railroad Avenue: Preferred Alignment*

Improvements associated with the Preferred Alignment for Railroad Avenue coincide with improvements involved in the Temporary Alignments for the reaches discussed below.

Phase I improvements will include:

- A street crossing at Railroad Avenue
- An undercrossing option at Railroad Avenue
- A pocket park on the South Bank
- A street crossing at the freeway offramp
- Murals, signage and paving treatments under the freeway
- Signage and striping designating Class II Bike Lanes along Idaho – Maryland Road
- Removal of non-native invasives and litter, revegetation
- Directional and regulatory signage

*Mill Street, East Main and Downtown Reaches: Temporary Alignments*

These improvements will consist simply of signage and striping along the lengths of East Main Street, Tinloy Street, the Safeway parking lot, and Mill Street that are within the project area. Art, in the form of murals, may also be implemented to build interest in the downtown areas. Preliminary improvements of the undeveloped area along the north side of Tinloy Street could begin.

Construction Phase I improvements will include:

- Striping and signage to designate bike routes
- Street crossings
- Removal of non-native invasives and litter
- Revegetation
- Directional and regulatory signage
- Seating, formalized creek access and multi-use non-motorized trail in the undeveloped area along Tinloy Street
- Interpretive signs for China Town

*Downstream Reach: Alternate Alignment*

Connections to Freeman Lane and the North Star Trail should be developed, access to the water formalized, and the trailhead built. The Alternate Alignment approach from Mill Street should be highlighted through artwork and signage.

Phase I improvements will include:

- Striping and signage to designate bike routes
- Street crossings
- Removal of non-native invasives and litter, revegetation
- Directional and regulatory signage
- Widen sidewalk under freeway
- Murals, signage and paving treatments under the freeway
- Parking lot improvements/trailhead installation
- A paved walkway that accesses Wolf Creek

**Construction Phase II:**

This phase will build upon Phase I improvements and deepen Grass Valley's connection to Wolf Creek.

### Downtown Reach: Alternate Alignment

Phase II should concentrate on this highly visible linchpin of the entire Parkway and then leverage the enthusiasm generated into support for the more problematic reaches in the next phase.

Construction Phase II improvements will include:

- Widen walkway
- Installation of public art and water feature
- Landscaping and seating
- Parking lot improvements/trailhead installation
- Consideration of transit stop with Regional Transportation Authorities

### **Construction Phase III:**

#### Mill Street Reach and East Main/Railroad Avenue Reaches: Alternate Alignment

The third phase of the Wolf Creek Parkway Project should complete the off-street portions of the trail. Which Reach is built first or whether they should be undertaken simultaneously will depend on public support, right-of-way acquisition, and resource allocation.

### **Construction Phase IV:**

#### East Main, Downtown and Downstream Reaches: Preferred Alignment

These project components are contingent, primarily, on changes to Grass Valley's freeway system. The Preferred Alignment for the East Main Reach would ideally piggy-back onto the East Main/Idaho-Maryland Interchange—involving the Golden Center Freeway (SR 20/49)—that is currently in the engineering stages. In the Downtown reach, day-lighting the creek involves re-engineering of the freeway structure and reconfiguring substantial surface areas. The tunnel at the Downstream involves an area of Highway 20 where there are currently no plans to change the configuration.

## **Environmental Review**

### California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) compliance

In California, any project undertaken, funded, or permitted by a state, local or regional government agency that may result in physical change to the environment and any action requiring a public agency's discretionary decision is subject to CEQA regulation Public Resource Code (PRC) §21000-21001.1 Any federal agency funding or permit approval will make the project subject to NEPA, which is the federal legislation upon which CEQA was based and has slightly stricter rules.

The intents of CEQA and NEPA are as follows:

- inform governmental decision makers and the public about the potential significant environmental effects of proposed activities
- identify ways that environmental damage can be avoided or significantly reduced
- require changes in projects through the use of alternatives or mitigation measures when feasible
- disclose to the public the reasons why a project was approved if significant environmental effects are involved
- allow a period of public review and comment on the impacts of the project

In order to comply with CEQA and NEPA, public projects must undergo an environmental study process proportional to the project undertaking. The **lead agency** shall determine whether the environmental review process will culminate in an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) under CEQA, an Environmental Impact Study (EIS) under NEPA, a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND), or a Negative Declaration (ND) PRC §21080.1. The lead agency usually initiates an Initial Study (IS) to determine which further studies (if any) need to be undertaken. However, this step can be skipped if it is obvious that the project will require an EIR or an EIS. Large projects with many potential effects on the environment usually do. The local government agency with jurisdiction over general land uses usually serves as the lead agency, but the lead agency might also be the public agency that has the principal responsibility for carrying out or approving the permits required for the project.

A **responsible agency** is a public agency with discretionary approval authority over a portion of a CEQA or NEPA project. The lead agency will consult with responsible agencies to determine the required content of the EIR/EIS, applicable rules and regulations, and analytical methodologies.

A **trustee agency** is a public agency with "jurisdiction by law" (citation) over a particular natural resource, in trust for the people of the state. The Department of Fish and Game, the State Lands Commission, the State Department of Parks and Recreation, and the University of California are trustee agencies which review and comment on analysis provided through environmental documents.

It is anticipated that the permit applicant for the Wolf Creek Parkway project will be the City of Grass Valley, the lead agency will be the Public Works Department, and the project will require preparation of an EIR, so the following outline focuses on the EIR process. Again, if there is Federal funding or permitting involved, the project will become subject to NEPA regulation as well.

The environmental review process is set in motion once project permit applications are submitted. The optimum time to begin environmental review for Wolf Creek Parkway will be after the schematic designs have been worked out but before construction documents begin. This accommodates the development of adequate base information for assessment (for instance, clearly-defined project limits) and determination of which environmental documents will best fulfill the requirements of the project. Additionally, this timing enables the findings of the EIR/EIS to determine the final project design. For an interactive, detailed look at the CEQA process, please visit <http://ceres.ca.gov/CEQA>. Figure 5.1 is a flow chart from this website illustrating CEQA compliance procedures. In all cases, CEQA documents should be prepared before the project is approved by the permitting agency.

## **Environmental Review Process**

It is recommended that the environmental review process be initiated as early as possible, as there are many components to coordinate and the public review period is lengthy. There are special types of environmental documents that accommodate multi-phase projects like the Wolf Creek Parkway.

A **Negative Declaration** is a statement that a lead agency prepares to announce that the agency will not prepare an EIR because the initial study has determined that the

project will not cause a significant effect on the environment. This document must be written, must include a brief discussion of the reasoning leading to the conclusion that no significant environmental effects will result from the project, and must be submitted to public review and the applicable decision-making body. This approach applies only to projects which are not exempt from CEQA.

The initial study may conclude that the project could potentially incur significant effects on the environment, but that the project may be granted a **Mitigated Negative Declaration**. In order for a project to merit a Mitigated Negative Declaration, the applicant must amend the project proposal (or agree to make such amendments) so that either significant effects are either avoided altogether or mitigated to the point where clearly no significant effect on the environment would occur. Mitigation may require one or more of the following: (a) avoiding the impact altogether by not taking a certain action or parts of an action, (b) minimizing impacts by limiting the degree or magnitude of the action and its implementation, (c) rectifying the impact by repairing, rehabilitating, or restoring the impacted environment, (d) reducing or eliminating the impact over time by preservation and maintenance operations during the life of the action, (e) compensating for the impact by replacing or providing substitute resources or environments.

This condition must be met before the proposed Negative Declaration and Initial Study are released for public review. Additionally, there must be no substantial evidence in light of the whole record before the public agency that the project, as revised, could have a significant effect on the environment.

The **Staged EIR** is useful when a large capital project requires several discretionary approvals from different governmental agencies and at least one of the approvals will occur more than two years before construction begins. The staged EIR evaluates the proposal in light of current and future plans, producing an informed estimate of the environmental consequences of the project's entirety. A supplement EIR is prepared when later approvals are necessary.

The **Program EIR** may be prepared on a series of actions that can be characterized as one large project but are related geographically, sequentially, through continuous regulations, or through similar environmental effects which can be mitigated in similar ways.

The **Joint EIR/EIS** satisfies both CEQA and NEPA regulations.

If it is determined that an **EIR** is necessary, the first step in the process will be to determine the proper scope of the project. The lead agency must consult with responsible agencies, trustee agencies, and any federal agency whose approval or funding the proposed project will need (such as the Army Corps of Engineers). Public involvement would also be required. This process brings together and resolves the concerns of federal, state, and local agencies, the project proponents, and other interested people.

A sample list of agencies or entities to include in a potential scoping process for the Wolf Creek Parkway project could include:

- Caltrans
- Army Corps of Engineers
- City of Grass Valley Public Works

- City of Grass Valley Planning
- City of Grass Valley City Council
- City of Grass Valley Engineering
- City of Grass Valley Parks & Recreation Commission
- Nevada County Land trust
- Nevada County Transportation Commission
- Nevada County Planning Department
- Nevada Irrigation District
- Wolf Creek Community Alliance
- Regional Water Quality Control Board
- California Department of Fish and Game
- California Department of Parks & Recreation
- United States Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Nevada County Resource Conservation District

In addition, the scope of an EIR prepared for the Wolf Creek Parkway project would likely include specific studies on the following:

- Land Use
- Safety/Nuisance Impacts
- Biological Resources
- Geological Constraints
- Drainage and Water Quality
- Air Quality
- Cultural Resources
- Traffic and Circulation
- CEQA Statutory Requirements

Once a project is scoped, the lead agency may proceed with preparation of a Draft EIR. This document must be prepared by the lead agency, either directly (by agency staff), through contract (with public or private specialists), or by adoption, if the Draft EIR is written by a consultant.

As soon as the Draft EIR is completed, the lead agency files a Notice of Completion (NOC) with the Office of Planning and Research (OPR). The NOC includes a brief description of the project and its location as well as an address where copies of the Draft EIR are available and a statement of the period during which comments will be received. However, if the Draft EIR will be reviewed through the state review process handled by the OPR's State Clearinghouse, the Draft EIR's cover form suffices as notice and no NOC needs to be filed.

Copies of the Draft EIR may be distributed to state agencies through the State Clearinghouse and to regional and local agencies through areawide clearinghouses. The following entities need to be invited to review and comment on the Draft EIR:

- Every public agency which has jurisdiction by law with respect to the project.
- Every city or county which borders on a city or county within which the project is located.
- All state, federal, and local agencies which exercise authority over resources which may be affected by the project.
- Any organizations or individuals who have previously requested notification.

The lead agency must also notify the public that the Draft EIR is available for review, where to obtain a copy, and how long comments will be taken. In addition to a 30-day posting in the office of the County Clerk, at least one of the following notification methods must be used: newspaper publication, posting on- or off-site, direct mail. Any public hearings or meetings on the project must also be noticed.

The public review period must be no less than 30 days, or 45 days if the State Clearinghouse is used. Copies of the Draft EIR should be located in public libraries as well as the lead agency's office in order to ensure public access. A reasonable fee (not to exceed reproduction costs) may be charged to furnish copies. Public hearings discussing Draft EIRs are recommended, but not required, by CEQA; agencies can limit public comment to written submissions if desired. Reviewers must return their comments to the lead agency as soon as possible. The lead agency is responsible for responding to comments received and incorporating them into the Final EIR.

The Final EIR is the Draft EIR plus the comments received and the lead agency's resolution of these comments. The lead agency must "certify" the Final EIR before the project can be approved. This certification happens when, first, the lead agency's decision-making body declares that the EIR has been completed in compliance with CEQA, and, second, that the body has reviewed and considered the EIR prior to approving the project. A second review period of 14 days may ensue. Once the lead agency certifies the Final EIR, they file it with the appropriate planning agency of any city and county where significant effects on the environment may occur. CEQA guidelines § 15095.NEPA

If the lead agency decides to approve the project despite significant adverse environmental impacts, the agency must issue at least two sets of findings, the first of which specifically states how the lead agency has responded to the significant effects identified in the EIR, and the second of which is a statement of overriding considerations. After the lead agency has certified the Final EIR and issued the proper findings, the project can be approved. However, discretionary approval by governmental agencies, based on these documents, will be necessary before work can begin.

## Figure 5.1: CEQA Process Flow Chart

### Required Permits

The Wolf Creek Parkway, like any project involving waterways in California, will need to be permitted by an array of agencies. It is recommended that the permitting process be initiated as early as possible—up to a year before the desired project start date. The California Association of Resource Conservation Districts recommends contacting all the applicable agencies simultaneously and inviting them all to the project site at one time to address all their concerns at once. Many permit applications have fees linked to them. Most often, these permits will be contingent on satisfactory compliance with CEQA and review of the final EIR. This section discusses some of the regulatory agencies and the permits they might require for the Wolf Creek Parkway project.

#### California Department of Fish and Game

A **Stream Alteration Agreement** with the California Department of Fish and Game will be required for the Wolf Creek Parkway Project. This permit is required for any work that occurs in, on, over, or under a waterway (from the bed of a stream to the top of the bank), any work that will divert or obstruct the natural flow of water, change the bed, channel, or bank of any stream, or use any material from the streambed, and any activity involving the removal of non-native invasives from a riparian area

California Department of Fish and Game  
(916) 653-7664  
[www.dfg.ca.gov](http://www.dfg.ca.gov)  
Region 2 (Sacramento Valley & Central Sierra Region)  
1701 Nimbus Road, Suite A  
Rancho Cordova, CA 95670  
(916) 358-2900

#### Regional Water Control Board

A Federal Clean Water Act (CWA) **Section 401 Water Quality Certification** is required for every federal permit or license for any activity which may result in a discharge into any waters in the United States. Activities include flood control, channelization, channel clearing, and placement of fill. Every applicant for a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers CWA Section 404 permit, or Rivers and Harbors Act Section 10 permit, must request this state certification from the Regional Board. Certification indicates that the proposed activity will not violate State and Federal water quality standards. The Regional Board reviews the request for certification and may waive certification, or may recommend either certification or denial of certification to the State Board Executive Director.

State Water Resources Control Board  
1001 "I" Street, Sacramento, CA 95814  
(916) 341-5250  
[www.swrcb.ca.gov](http://www.swrcb.ca.gov)  
Central Valley Region [5S]  
Sacramento, CA  
(916) 255-3000

#### Army Corps of Engineers

Any work in a river, stream, or wetland may require a Corps permit. The regulatory authority of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for riparian projects is based on Section 404 of the Clean Water Act and Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act. A **Section 404 permit** is required when work involves placement of fill or discharge of dredged

materials into any "waters of the United States," including sedimentation caused by erosion. A **Section 10 permit** is required when working or erecting structures in or affecting "navigable waters." Corps jurisdiction extends up to the ordinary high water line for non-tidal waters like Wolf Creek.

Before applying, a meeting with the Army Corps of Engineers should be arranged in order to discuss the Wolf Creek Parkway project, the type of permit that may be required, and the information that will be necessary to complete the standard Corps permit application form. The application will include:

- Location, purpose, and need for the project
- Necessary drawings sufficient for the public notice
- Scheduling of the activity
- Names and addresses of adjacent landowners
- Locations and dimensions of adjacent structures
- Authorizations required by other federal, state, or local agencies for the work, including all approvals or denials already made

All activities the applicant plans to undertake that are reasonably related to the proposed project for which the permit is required should be included in the same application.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
Sacramento District –  
(916) 557-525  
[www.usace.army.mil](http://www.usace.army.mil)

#### US Fish and Wildlife Service

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is the principal Federal agency for conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats, pursuant to fulfillment of the Endangered Species Act and the National Environmental Policy Act, and therefore reviews and comments on all water resource projects. If the Wolf Creek Parkway project may result in "incidental take" of a listed species, the USFWS requires an **incidental take permit**, which allows an activity that is legal in all other respects, but that results in "incidental taking" of a listed species, to proceed, although the incidental take permit authorizes the take, not the activity that results in take and the activity itself must comply with other applicable laws and regulations.

A **Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP)**, the purpose of which is to ensure that the effects of the permitted action on listed species are adequately minimized and mitigated, must accompany an application for an incidental take permit. USFWS Field Offices will assist applicants in preparing a Habitat Conservation Plan, ensuring that the HCP and associated documents are complete and coordinating with the appropriate Regional Office throughout HCP development, approval and implementation.

U.S Fish and Wildlife Service  
2800 Cottage Way, Room W-2606  
Sacramento, CA 95825-1846  
(916) 414-6464  
[www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov)

#### Caltrans

Any work in the State right of way requires an **encroachment permit** from Caltrans. The application is available on the Caltrans website, but the City of Grass Valley should coordinate with Caltrans Right Of Way Engineering as each phase of the project

develops. The City of Grass Valley will need to provide Right Of Way Engineering with a Right Of Way Record Map to show where the Parkway is within any state right of way.

Caltrans, District 3  
703 B Street  
P.O. Box 911  
Marysville, CA 95901  
(530) 741-4211  
<http://www.dot.ca.gov/>  
Right of Way, District 3  
723 D Street  
Marysville, CA 95901  
(530) 741-4226

#### Nevada Irrigation District (NID)

The Nevada Irrigation District holds rights to Wolf Creek as a conveyance for the water that flows through it, which, by law, it owns. If projects involve buildings, bridges, culverts, fences, pipelines, underground or overhead wires, roads, and/or landscaping, that either cross, lie within, or otherwise interfere with NID rights of ways, the project proponent needs an encroachment permit authorized by the General Manager of NID before beginning construction. Permit authorization is contingent upon NID review and approval of plans and specifications for the proposed projects. After permit authorization, NID reserves the right to inspect the installation or construction at any time. Details and permit applications can be found in the Nevada Irrigation District Water Service Regulations.

Nevada Irrigation District  
1036 W Main Street  
Grass Valley, CA 95945  
(530) 273-6185  
<http://www.nid.dst.ca.us/>

#### Other Studies

The City of Grass Valley will need to commission a detailed **Topographic Survey** of the Wolf Creek corridor, from Top-of-Bank to Top-of-Bank, within the project Study Area. This base information will be necessary for all subsequent study and design phases.

In the course of the design phase of this project, a civil engineering firm will prepare a **Grading and Improvement Plan** for the Wolf Creek Parkway. This plan will show areas of cut and fill, cross-sectional widths of the water-conveyance channel, and procedures to increase the roughness quotient within the channel. When this component phase is approximately 50% completed—at which point, it will be clear what areas will be impacted and what the extent of those impacts are likely to be—it will be time to implement a **Hydrologic Survey and Report** to analyze erosive flows. This study will measure projected changes in flow (gallons of water per minute) through altered areas of Wolf Creek, determine acceptable risk quotients, and make recommendations if the plans need adjustment for safety reasons.

### **Community Resources**

The Wolf Creek Parkway is a project that brings together several interest groups: restoration enthusiasts, educators, bicycle and trail advocates, and business interests, to just skim the surface. During the course of the Wolf Creek Parkway Alignment Study,

representatives of several groups came forward to offer assistance and advice. The City of Grass Valley should plan to tap into the considerable power, passion, and networking prowess of local grassroots organizations who are interested in being a part of the Wolf Creek Parkway project. Coordinated efforts will build confidence and satisfaction to volunteers and build a positive feedback-loop of support within the community as a whole. The following table represents a preliminary list of contacts available to the City of Grass Valley.

## **Table 5.2: Community Resources**

## **Opinions of Probable Construction Costs**

For the purpose of formulating budgetary and funding targets, the following spreadsheets present an opinion of probable costs associated with the implementation of Wolf Creek Parkway. In order to facilitate future implementation strategies, the information has been included in four different hierarchical formats. These formats are:

- A summary of the total probable costs of implementation per the proposed phasing schedule presented in Fig. 5.3a–p.
  - A breakdown of construction costs per phase
    - A breakdown of construction costs by Reach within this phased approach
- A projected cost based on implementing only the preferred alignment for each Reach (no phasing)

Please note that estimated unit prices are based on elements shown on the conceptual plan, not on detailed design plans or construction documents, and these opinions of probable costs do not account for demolition costs, grading and retention, or unforeseen site conditions such as drainage structures, utilities, miscellaneous subsurface, annual escalation, and the like. In addition, these opinions of probable cost do not include the cost of acquiring easements, additional studies, permitting, or design and engineering. Furthermore, although the City of Grass Valley usually specifies a 25% contingency allowance, the consultants prefer to budget a 35% contingency allowance.

**Tables 5.3a-5.3p: Opinions of Probable Construction Costs**

## **Funding Resources**

The Wolf Creek Parkway project would also benefit from the development of an enterprise group solely dedicated to financial strategizing. In this context, an enterprise group is a selection of people uniting temporarily to accomplish a specific goal or task that demands a concerted and/or creative approach. This group would focus on procurement of public, private and government grants to fund the capital improvements involved in the Wolf Creek Parkway project as well as other viable economic opportunities. An enterprise group could be structured along a number of different models, including a formalized non-profit organization if there are no legal conflicts.

The development of project phasing funding is a one to two year commitment before initial resources become available. Although Wolf Creek Parkway has many facets attractive to grantors, its function as an alternative travel corridor should be emphasized. The most lucrative public grants are often made by transportation agencies to encourage bicycle commuting. Funding for preliminary environmental documentation is rarely made available through agency grants, so funding for the preliminary work will need to be provided by the regulating agencies and joint venture options.

Funding for the proposed trail is anticipated from two primary sources: (1) by way of exactions placed on private development, and (2) through public funding programs. Exactions on private development for the construction of trails and obtaining trail easements can be applied through design review of private projects and dedication through the project approval process. A standard condition can be applied to new projects containing the potential route, requiring an irrevocable offer of dedication for a trail easement. The trail route would be reviewed as part of the overall project, helping to produce a well-integrated design. Environmental review and any outside permitting for the trail, such as wildlife agency permits, would be obtained as part of the overall project. The project developer would bear the cost of constructing the trail.

When completion of the trail necessitates construction of trail segments across some publicly-owned properties and privately-owned open space parcels, the City may need to bear the cost of construction of the trail, as well as the environmental analysis and any necessary permitting.

There are a variety of potential funding sources available to the City including local, state, regional, federal, foundation and corporate funding programs. In the same way that Wolf Creek Parkway draws together several interest groups, a stunning variety of granting agencies will consider funding some part of the project. Project proponents should prepare to “package” the project by capitalizing on each facet the Wolf Creek Parkway presents: bicycle route, restoration, water quality, alternative transportation, environmental justice, etc. Additional trail funding information can be found in the Guide to Bicycle Project and Program Funding in California, available on the internet at <http://www.calbike.org/pdfs/Funding-Guide.pdf> . The guide outlines additional program funding sources and identifies key bicycle-related contacts to help obtain federal, state, local and private monies.

Grants should be sought throughout, for both hard costs and soft costs. Hard costs are typified by design and engineering fees, contracted payments to consultants for the preparation of studies and environmental review documentation and expenditures for materials and labor during construction. A series of projected opinions of some of the

hard costs associated with construction is presented in Tables 5.6a-5.6p. Examples of soft costs include administration, review, and consumables. An organized approach to the application process will make a large difference in the relative success of grant procurement. Proper timing, preparation of the right planning documents, and having the proper paperwork in place will be critical. Grant administrators will need to keep careful track of grant cycles, eligibility requirements, informational meeting dates, pre-application and application deadlines.

The City of Grass Valley should keep in mind that obtaining grants is only part of the process: fulfilling the terms of the grant stipulations within the stated time frame is critical to actually getting the money. In addition, with public funding there is often a requirement that recipients are able to match at least part of the grant with funds from another source. This is another reason that grant applications should be carefully monitored and coordinated with project phasing.

Table 5.4 is offered as a functional model to be adopted and adapted by the grant-writer(s) involved in the Wolf Creek Parkway funding endeavor. Several potential grants are listed in this table, in a few different categories, but this is by no means an exhaustive list. There is a substantial amount of further research to do into both public and private granting entities.

## Table 5.4: Funding Opportunities

## **Ownership**

The Conceptual Master Plan laid out in this document shows a hierarchy of preference as far as the ultimate alignment of the Wolf Creek Parkway. Although the consultants have been careful to avoid private property whenever possible, in several places safety standards and minimum widths of the Parkway mean that the trail will unavoidably affect landowners. Consistent with the City of Grass Valley's General Plan, the City should pursue ownership and/or entitlement procurement for the most feasible trail route. The ownership and/or entitlement process may include land use permit approval, easement acquisition with a public entity, and offer of dedication for easement with a private entity. Identification of actual properties to be affected by the trail and the exact ownership and/or entitlement procurement process may not occur until the final trail routing is identified in the schematic design phase.

There are several mutually-beneficial ways that the City of Grass Valley can work with residential and commercial property in order to facilitate a continuous Wolf Creek Parkway. Over the long term, changes in zoning and ownership have the potential to create even more opportunities for negotiation, and successful implementation of early construction phases will be an additional impetus.

The design phase of the project should commence regardless of whether the necessary acquisitions, easements or dedications have been finalized, with the designers building flexibility into their plans to the extent possible and assisting in the pursuit of creative solutions at chronic trouble spots. The City should work with designers to identify the location, type, size and extent of desired acquisitions or easements. The City may also consider hiring a Right of Way Agent, who specializes in securing the deeds, easements and assignments necessary for procuring land needed for construction projects.

It would be beneficial to develop a relationship with the titleholders of properties adjacent to Wolf Creek Parkway, informing them periodically as to developments in the Wolf Creek Parkway project and the advantages of working with the City's easement/acquisition process. Landowners should also be informed of California's Recreational Use Statute Section 846 (Appendix C of this document) which affords them a level of protection from potential injury claims by trail users who might enter their property.

Table 5.5 in this section compares a wide variety of different legal mechanisms that governmental entities can utilize to acquire easements or portions of private properties. The City of Grass Valley may explore several of these while negotiating with landowners in the Wolf Creek corridor in the pursuit of a contiguous Wolf Creek Parkway.

## Table 5.5 Acquisition Strategies

## **Operations and Maintenance**

### **Authority**

Administration of Wolf Creek Parkway will primarily involve the City of Grass Valley. Coordination with other agencies and entities will be required.

- Nevada County
- Nevada County Transportation Commission
- Nevada Irrigation District
- Caltrans
- Nevada County Land Trust

### **Operations & Maintenance**

It is recommended that the City commission the development of a comprehensive Operations and Maintenance Plan for the proposed Wolf Creek Parkway. The Plan should be established prior to construction of the trail and should identify a recommended management approach to be adopted by the City of Grass Valley.

The Operations and Maintenance Plan should identify specific responsibilities, tasks, procedures, and other aspects related to the management of the proposed trail to help ensure it is operated in an efficient and safe manner. At a minimum, the Plan should include:

- Specific rules and regulations for trail use.
- Methods for documenting and monitoring trail accidents.
- Security measures aimed at reducing negative activities.
- Access plan for emergency response vehicles.
- Regular maintenance activities and inspection schedules with responsible departments and agencies.
- Proposed operating budget.

Since the entirety of the proposed trail lies within the City of Grass Valley's jurisdiction, Grass Valley will be the primary agency responsible for the operation and maintenance of the majority of the trail. However, a Trail Manager should be appointed from each of the jurisdictional agencies involved to respond to general public inquiries, certain repair circumstances, and for emergency purposes. Duties of the Trail Manager may include:

- Creating a database of the parcels known to contain the final trail route.
- Monitoring development requests to ensure trail exactions are placed on those parcels known to contain the final trial route.
- Coordinating the funding, construction, operation and maintenance of the trail with the other jurisdictional agencies.
- Developing and implementing a trail Operations and Maintenance Plan in conjunction with the other jurisdictional agencies.
- Acquiring adequate public funding sources for trail construction and maintenance.
- Establishing a work program and assigning a responsible entity for the periodic maintenance and improvement of the trail.
- Monitoring and recording security and safety of the trial.
- Coordinating with adjacent landowners, the general public, and other interested parties.

The duties suggested above may help ensure the efficient and safe maintenance and operation of the trail, and may also help limit liability.

Actual operation activities on the Wolf Creek Parkway will consist primarily of maintenance, monitoring, and security. Currently, the City of Grass Valley employs a Park Ranger whose duties include patrolling public parks, enforcing park rules, performing maintenance, and supervising facilities and events. It is expected that the additional responsibilities of the Wolf Creek Parkway will necessitate hiring an additional ranger once it is open. Monitoring accidents, including identifying the primary cause and rectifying any physical deficiencies, will also be within the province of the expanded Park Ranger program. The local police department typically has the responsibility for collecting accident information and identifying fault while the public works department has the responsibility for identifying and improving physical or operational conditions that have contributed to the accident. The public works department typically also has the responsibility for making the determination to warn trail users of problems and to close the trail when conditions warrant.

### **Maintenance Needs**

Maintenance of the Wolf Creek Parkway will include the following regular activities:

<b>Maintenance Task</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Sign replacement/repair	Every 1–3 years
Pavement marking replacement	Every 1–3 years
Tree, Shrubs, & grass trimming/fertilization	at 5 month–1 year intervals
Pavement sealing/potholes	Every 5–15 years
Pavement sweeping	Monthly–annually as needed
Shoulder and grass mowing	As needed, several times per week
Trash disposal	As needed, several times per week
Graffiti removal	Weekly–monthly as needed
Maintain furniture	Annually
Pruning	Every 1–4 years
Bridge/tunnel inspection	Annually
Remove fallen trees	As needed
Weed control	Monthly–as needed
Irrigate/water plants	Weekly–monthly as needed

Many of these maintenance items are dependent on the type and amount of landscaping and supporting infrastructure that is developed along the trail. As noted above, it is

recommended that a consistent maintenance procedure be developed for the Wolf Creek Parkway to ensure, at a minimum that the facility is safe for trail users. Each jurisdiction should have a mechanism to identify, record, and respond to maintenance problems, and to keep written records of such actions.

Typical maintenance vehicles for the trail will be light pick up trucks or an ATV. Grass Valley's Park Maintenance program will presumably need to expand to accommodate the extra maintenance concerns imparted by the Parkway. Care should be taken when operating heavier equipment in the Parkway corridor to warn trail users and to avoid breaking the edge of the trail surface.

### **Liability**

The proposed trail should be constructed using generally accepted design standards. Any non-standard areas will be the result of physical constraints that cannot be avoided.

The proposed trail presents liability issues for both the trail managing/owning entity(ies) and private land owners. Through Recreational Use Statutes and the California Tort Claims Act, the state has greatly limited the liability and burden of responsibility placed on private landowners and public land managers. This section provides recommendations aimed at limiting liability.

#### Private Landowners

Private landowners affected by the proposed trail may include those who have provided an easement for a trail over their land and those who own land adjacent to a trail corridor. People owning land adjacent to a trail are generally concerned that trail users may be endangered by a condition on their land. However, private landowners are afforded a level of protection from potential injury claims by trail users who might enter their property under California's Recreational Use Statute Section 846 (See Appendix C). In conjunction with the provisions contained in Section 846, the landowner may reduce their liability by taking the following actions.

- Disclosing known hazards and working with trail designers to have the trail located away from hazards that cannot be corrected.
- Making it clear that trail users are not invited onto the adjoining land through the use of signs, vegetative screening, and/or fencing.
- If a hazardous condition does exist near the trail, signs should be developed to warn trail users of the hazard if it cannot be mitigated.

Private property located directly adjacent to the trail also presents concerns about increased crime, vandalism, noise, and fire. A well planned, designed, operated, maintained, and used trail will decrease the likelihood of such a crime occurring. Wherever possible, the path should be located as far away as possible to protect the privacy of adjacent property owners.

When a private landowner provides an easement for a public-use trail over their land, the easement contract should specify that the managing agency will carry liability insurance, will design the trail to recognized standards, and will develop and carryout a maintenance plan.

#### Trail Managing & Owning Entities

Careful compliance to applicable laws, regulations and design standards should greatly reduce the risk of injury and provide strong evidence that the trail managing and/or

owning agency used reasonable care. Showing that an agency had been acting in a responsible manner can help to limit liability and serve as an excellent defense in the event that a lawsuit develops. The following is a list of suggested precautions a jurisdiction can take to help minimize liability:

- **Use of Accepted Design Standards**—Adhere to widely accepted standards governing the design and construction of the trail.
- **Traffic Signals & Warning Devices**—Adhere to California law requiring the installation and maintenance of traffic signals and warning devices required under certain circumstances.
- **Develop Operations and Maintenance Plan**—Develop a plan identifying specific responsibilities, tasks, and procedures, as well as rules and regulations for the management and use of the trail.
- **Enforce Trail Regulations**—Enforce and post the rules and regulations for trail use established in the Operations and Maintenance Plan.
- **Adhere to Maintenance Standards**—Adhere to the recognized maintenance standards and procedures established in the Operations and Maintenance Plan.
- **Monitor & Record Conditions**—Designate a Trail Manager responsible for monitoring the condition of the trail, ensuring on-going maintenance, keeping accurate maintenance records, and recording field observations and incidents.
- **Inspect, Warn of, and Correct Hazards**—Inspect for and correct known hazards in a timely fashion and post signs warning of hazards on and around the trail.
- **Insurance**—Obtain proper and adequate insurance coverage to cover potential liability.
- **Understand the Limits of the Liability**—California has legislation related to civil lawsuits that establish the limits of government liability for injuries to persons or damage to property resulting from the acts or omissions of government officials.

While certain measures can be taken to limit liability, these measures cannot prevent accidents from occurring nor can they prevent anyone from filing a suit against the City in the event of an injury.

## Chapter Six: Closing Recommendations

The Wolf Creek Parkway Alignment Study and Conceptual Master Plan is the underpinning for the concept of a continuous Wolf Creek Parkway and its ability to be constructed as a single project with several phases. The project is a worthy one, with benefits that will continue for generations to come. The following recommendations should be undertaken in the near term to further facilitate that endeavor.

1. City Council is advised to adopt the Conceptual Master Plan for Wolf Creek Parkway contained herein in order to ensure that the Parkway is implemented true to vision.
2. City Council should work with NCTC to develop a Regional Bicycle Transportation Plan (BTP) to identify and implement a comprehensive bicycle network providing alternative transportation. The BTP is the base documentation requested by granting agencies and usually is required when applying for transportation funding.
3. City Council should authorize preparation of updates to the General Plan, as well as Zoning Ordinances. This will provide consistency in the planning process and create an opportunity for public participation. Timing for the General Plan update should be reviewed with City staff.
4. City Council should consider forming a Joint Powers Authority for the Wolf Creek Parkway project with other agencies who share jurisdiction in the project area.
5. City Council should consider commissioning an enterprise committee to begin organizing funding strategies, public awareness campaigns, and state legislative support.
6. City Council should consider hiring a Right of Way agent to develop and implement an acquisition plan for easements and dedications necessary to procure the rights of way necessary to implement Construction Phase I.
7. City staff should begin to coordinate with the various permitting agencies in order to procure permits as quickly and efficiently as possible.
8. City staff should consider requesting that City Council establish a budget line item in the Capital Improvement Plan to set aside matching funds for grant opportunities. A cash commitment and in-kind services of staff and consultants will make the project competitive.
9. City Council should authorize an initial study to begin the EIR process.
10. City Council should authorize the creation of Requests for Proposals for the following:
  - Topographic and Boundary Survey
    - Hydrologic Analysis
    - Schematic Design
    - Biological Survey

## Appendix A: References

## **Planning Documents Provided by the City of Grass Valley**

Street System Master Plan 2004  
Downtown Strategic Plan (draft) May 12, 2003  
Community Design Guidelines (adopted) Feb 26, 2002  
Parks and Recreation Master Plan February 2001  
General Plan 2020 1999

## **Figures Provided by the City of Grass Valley**

Grass Valley Corridor Improvement Project: Collector-Distributor Road 12-09-04 Layout (sheets 1-3)  
Grass Valley Corridor Improvement Project: Layout 09-11-04 (sheets 1-4)  
Map 6A (partial) Bicycle Routes, Grass Valley & Nevada City  
Creek Corridor Network from Loma Rica (?) Plan (opticos)  
Parks and Open Space Illustrative Plan from Loma Rica Plan  
Holiday Inn Planting Plan & Legend, Irrigation Plan and fence detail along Tinloy Street  
Whispering Pines Comprehensive Plan, Design Theme, pp 3-13 & 3-14 of Specific Plan  
FEMA mapping of Idaho-Maryland area  
Misc.  
Awahnee Principles

## **Publications**

Ballona Creek and Trail Strategic Plan (RRM 2003)  
Bob Jones City to Sea Trail and Railroad Safety Trail (RRM 2001)  
Arroyo-Simi Trail Feasibility Study (RRM 2003)  
Economic Impacts of Protecting Rivers, Trails, and Greenway Corridors (NPS 1995)  
Guide to the California Environmental Quality Act (Remy, Thomas and Moose 1992)  
Successful CEQA Compliance: A step-by-Step Approach (Bass and Herson 1992)  
California Land-Use and Planning Law (Curtin 1991)  
The NEPA Book (Bass, Herson, and Bogdan 2001)  
Environmental Justice in Transportation Planning and Investments (CA DOT 2003)  
Nevada Irrigation District Water Regulations (NID 2005)

## **Websites**

### **Chapter 1**

City of Grass Valley  
<http://www.cityof.grass-valley.ca.us/>  
County of Nevada County  
<http://new.mynevadacounty.com>  
Nevada Irrigation District  
<http://www.nid.dst.ca.us/>  
Nevada County Transportation Commission  
<http://www.nctc.ca.gov/>  
Caltrans  
<http://www.dot.ca.gov/>  
Wolf Creek Community Alliance  
<http://www.wolfcreekalliance.org/>

### **Chapter 2**

Sacramento River Watershed Program  
<http://www.sacrriver.org/>  
Welcome to Loma Rica Ranch  
<http://www.lomaricaranch.com/>

Special Report: Golden Gamble in Grass Valley

<http://www.yubanet.com/specialreport.shtml>

Nevada County Natural Resources Report

<http://yubanet.com/nrr/>

FEMA mapping of Idaho-Maryland area

<http://www.fema.gov/maps.shtm>

Narrow Gauge Railroad

<http://www.snowcrest.net/marnells/ncng.htm>

Nevada County Land Trust

<http://www.nccn.net/>

North Star Specific Plan (Draft 2003)

<http://www.nevadacityengineering.com/northstar>

### **Chapter 3**

Arroyo Grande Creek

<http://www.arroyograndevillage.org/index.asp>

Prince Memorial Greenway

<http://www.cacities.org/index.jsp?zone=wcm&previewStory=23025>

Mission Plaza

<http://www.ci.san-luis-obispo.ca.us/missionplaza.asp>

Daylighting

<http://www.fivecreeks.org/>

Cantilevered Boardwalk

<http://www.stevenscreektrail.org/>

### **Chapter 4**

CEQA

<http://ceres.ca.gov/ceqa/>

California Native Plant Society, Redbud Chapter

<http://www.nccn.net/~cnps/>

Nevada County Resource Conservation District

<http://www.ncrcd.org>

Grass Valley Chamber of Commerce

<http://www.grassvalleychamber.com/>

Grass Valley Downtown Association

<http://www.downtowngrassvalley.com/qvda.html>

International Mountain Biking Association

<http://www.imba.com/>

American Trails

<http://www.americantrails.org/>

California Bicycle Coalition

<http://www.calbike.org/>

Bikes Belong Coalition

<http://bikesbelong.org/site>

RRM Design Group

<http://www.biketraildesign.com/>

California Watershed Funding Database

<http://www.calwatershedfunds.org/>

California Watershed Portal

<http://cwp.resources.ca.gov>

### **Chapter 5**

Army Corps of Engineers

<http://www.usace.army.mil/>

State Water Quality Board

<http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/>

California Department of Fish and Game

<http://www.dfg.ca.gov/>

United States Department of Fish and Wildlife  
<http://www.fws.gov/>

**Appendices**

FindLaw Website (Recreational Use Statute)

<http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/cacpdes/civ/840-848.html>

## **Appendix B: Recreational Use Statute**

**State of California  
Recreational Use Statute  
California Civil Code Section 846**

846. An owner of any estate or any other interest in real property, whether possessory or nonpossessory, owes no duty of care to keep the premises safe for entry or use by others for any recreational purpose or to give any warning of hazardous conditions, uses of, structures, or activities on such premises to persons entering for such purpose, except as provided in this section.

A "recreational purpose," as used in this section, includes such activities as fishing, hunting, camping, water sports, hiking, spelunking, sport parachuting, riding, including animal riding, snowmobiling, and all other types of vehicular riding, rock collecting, sightseeing, picnicking, nature study, nature contacting, recreational gardening, gleaning, hang gliding, winter sports, and viewing or enjoying historical, archaeological, scenic, natural, or scientific sites.

An owner of any estate or any other interest in real property, whether possessory or nonpossessory, who gives permission to another for entry or use for the above purpose upon the premises does not thereby (a) extend any assurance that the premises are safe for such purpose, or (b) constitute the person to whom permission has been granted the legal status of an invitee or licensee to whom a duty of care is owed, or (c) assume responsibility for or incur liability for any injury to person or property caused by any act of such person to whom permission has been granted except as provided in this section.

This section does not limit the liability which otherwise exists (a) for willful or malicious failure to guard or warn against a dangerous condition, use, structure or activity; or (b) for injury suffered in any case where permission to enter for the above purpose was granted for a consideration other than the consideration, if any, paid to said landowner by the state, or where consideration has been received from others for the same purpose; or (c) to any persons who are expressly invited rather than merely permitted to come upon the premises by the landowner.

Nothing in this section creates a duty of care or ground of liability for injury to person or property.

846.1. (a) Except as provided in subdivision (c), an owner of any estate or interest in real property, whether possessory or nonpossessory, who gives permission to the public for entry on or use of the real property pursuant to an agreement with a public or nonprofit agency for purposes of recreational trail use, and is a defendant in a civil action brought by, or on behalf of, a person who is allegedly injured or allegedly suffers damages on the real property, may present a claim to the State Board of Control for reasonable attorney's fees incurred in this civil action if any of the following occurs:

(1) The court has dismissed the civil action upon a demurrer or motion for summary judgment made by the owner or upon its own motion for lack of prosecution.

(2) The action was dismissed by the plaintiff without any payment from the owner.

(3) The owner prevails in the civil action.

(b) Except as provided in subdivision (c), a public entity, as defined in Section 831.5 of the Government Code, that gives permission to the public for entry on or use of real property for a recreational purpose, as defined in Section 846, and is a defendant in a civil action brought by, or on behalf of, a person who is allegedly injured or allegedly suffers damages on the real property, may present a claim to the State Board of Control for reasonable attorney's fees incurred in this civil action if any of the following occurs:

(1) The court has dismissed the civil action upon a demurrer or motion for summary judgment made by this public entity or upon its own motion for lack of prosecution.

(2) The action was dismissed by the plaintiff without any payment from the public entity.

(3) The public entity prevails in the civil action.

(c) An owner of any estate or interest in real property, whether possessory or nonpossessory, or a public entity, as defined in Section 831.5 of the Government Code, that gives permission to the public for entry on, or use of, the real property for a recreational purpose, as defined in Section 846, pursuant to an agreement with a public or nonprofit agency, and is a defendant in a civil action brought by, or on behalf of, a person who seeks to restrict, prevent, or delay public use of that property, may present a claim to the State Board of Control for reasonable attorney's fees incurred in the civil action if any of the following occurs:

(1) The court has dismissed the civil action upon a demurrer or motion for summary judgment made by the owner or public entity or upon its own motion for lack of prosecution.

(2) The action was dismissed by the plaintiff without any payment from the owner or public entity.

(3) The owner or public entity prevails in the civil action.

(d) The State Board of Control shall allow the claim if the requirements of this section are met. The claim shall be paid from an appropriation to be made for that purpose. Reasonable attorneys' fees, for purposes of this section, may not exceed an hourly rate greater than the rate charged by the Attorney General at the time the award is made, and may not exceed an aggregate amount of twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000). This subdivision shall not apply if a public entity has provided for the defense of this civil action pursuant to Section 995 of the Government Code. This subdivision shall also not apply if an owner or public entity has been provided a legal defense by the state pursuant to any contract or other legal obligation.

(e) The total of claims allowed by the board pursuant to this section shall not exceed two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000) per fiscal year.

## **Appendix C: Public Outreach Process**

**Key Stakeholder Interview Notes**

**Workshop 1: Report on Results**

**Workshop 2: Report on Results**

**Workshop 3: Report on Results**

**Newsletter**