

Fox Canyon PARKS Subcommittee Report

Fox Canyon

And
[Chollas Creek]

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PARKS



THE ECOLOGY OF THE FOX CANYON NEIGHBORHOOD

A **five-finger** canyon shapes the topology of the Fox Canyon neighborhood. At the heart of this canyon stands the Auburn Creek, which traverses the eastern part of City Heights and extends from University Avenue to Euclid Avenue, and goes further to the South. Auburn Creek passes through Fox Canyon and links to the greater Chollas Creek. Together, the canyons and the creek constitute a natural wetland [*flood plain*] and drainage system that has been, until now, only partially disrupted by the intense pressures of urbanization.

The Fox Canyon section of the Auburn Creek is one of the few sections of Chollas Creek to have conserved, over most of its course, a soft bottom creek-bed. Because most of its channels have not been armored nor set in concrete, projects to restore the creek's natural state and to reinstate its capacities for water reclamation are significantly less costly and invasive than in any other part of the Chollas Creek System.

VISION

The vision of this Subcommittee of residents and members of the Fox Canyon Neighborhood Association is the creation of a **Fox Canyon System of Parks and dedicated green spaces**, in an effort to conserve and restore a threatened **ecological treasure**. This system of parks should coincide with the restoration of the wetlands and watersheds of the Auburn Creek in order to protect existing **habitat for wildlife and native vegetation**. In addition, this project will provide better **flood control**, and improve the **downstream water quality** discharged into the San Diego bay, via the greater Chollas Creek.

GOALS

The primary goal of this vision is to claim and integrate the vacant parcels [*abutting Auburn Creek*], to the Creek in order to turn them into nodal parks and/or protected open spaces.

For this purpose, lots have been identified in the Fox Canyon *inventory of available parkland* (see annex I.)

The creation of a system of parks will bring the following **benefits**:

- ☞ A system of parks will provide much needed recreation space to a densely populated neighborhood that entirely lacks access to green public space and parks.
- ☞ A system of parks will safeguard precious remaining natural topology and habitat from ongoing urban intrusion and mismanagement.

- ☛ A system of parks and open spaces will restore native habitat for indigenous fauna and flora.
- ☛ A system of parks will link existing open space through pedestrian and bicycle trails. This will dramatically increase mobility while reducing the reliance on cars in a neighborhood that is now severely traffic-ridden.
- ☛ A system of parks will have an important educational impact on a community that traditionally has had little political and economical means of transforming its physical surroundings. A park system will only increase the residents' sense of responsibility for, and stewardship of, the natural environment.

IMPROVEMENTS

This subcommittee report should be read as a continuation and complement of the **Chollas Creek Enhancement Program** that has been adopted by the City of San Diego on **May 14, 2002**. This report endorses the design and development guidelines established in the Program, and seeks their implementation by proposing the improvements detailed in this section.

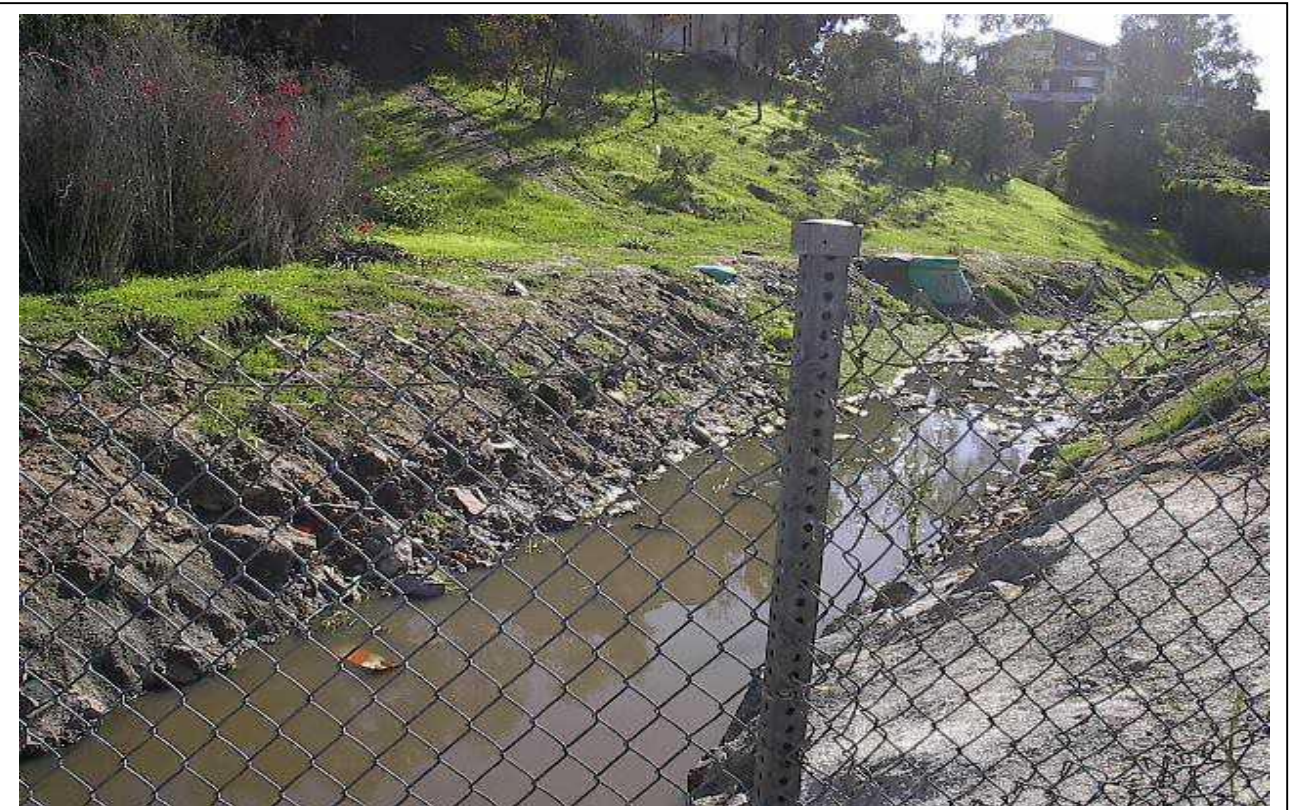
In addition, the Committee recommends that the following improvements be incorporated as an amendment to the **Chollas Creek Enhancement Program**:

1. **The Chollas Creek Visitor and Educational Center at University Avenue**
(**Lot 6** of the inventory, the southwest corner of University Avenue and 52nd Street)



This Center will mark the northernmost entrance to the Fox Canyon Park System and walking trails; and ultimately to the entire Chollas Creek System of tributaries. This visitor and educational center could include space for temporary exhibitions showcasing different aspects of the encounter between the natural and urban processes. The center could become a tourist attraction, charging a nominal fee for **tours**. The fees will be dedicated to facilities and creek maintenance.

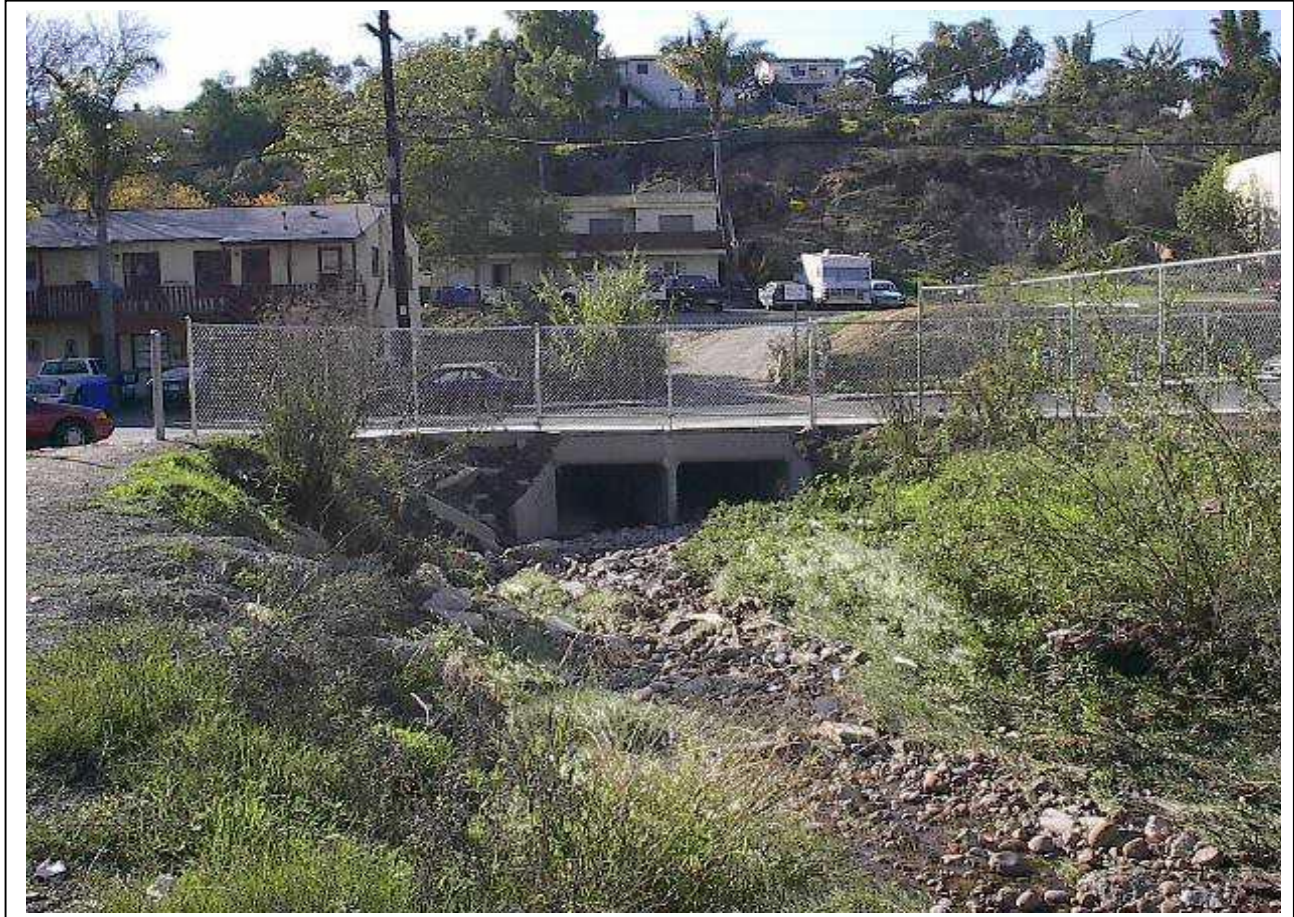
2) The Ontario Park
(Lot 5 on the inventory, Parcel # **471-810-29-00**)



This park will be the central and most vital part of the entire **Auburn Creek sub-system**. It should contain a restored creek with water pools, picnic areas, vista/observation points, and educational/art trails. [A Street for vehicular access should be provided through the proposed Ontario Avenue connection \(future Fox Canyon Parkway\).](#) Culverts at Ontario/Auburn and Ontario/Winona should be made to appear as bridges, with semi-curved tops to provide speed control. The south part of Winona Avenue (now a paper street) should be developed into a skateboarding park and should include a trail linking **Marshall Elementary School** to the park system. Students from Marshall could use the restored creek for outdoor, first-hand, studies of ecology and of Southern California indigenous flora and fauna. The proximity of the creek and the park will also provide the

school with an opportunity to involve the students in the maintenance of the creek and park under the form of a community outreach program.

3) The Fox Canyon Visitor and Community Center
(Lots 3 & 4 of the inventory, Parcels # **471-781-43-00** and **471-800-11-00**)



Together, these two parcels are perfect for a linear park. Because of the immediate proximity of the creek, its connectivity, and because it offers one of the best vistas of the creek and the entire region, these parcels could host a permanent structure such as a Visitor and Community Center.

4) Leaders and Founders' Grove
(The creek facing back of 4932 Lantana Drive
[See picture on the following page])

This is the most pristine part of the old creek with large pepper trees lining the old creek's bed (now a concrete channel). A trail could border its west side. Along it, one can imagine finding art, seating, and resting-places among the statues of City Heights' leaders and benefactors placed here and there under the pepper trees. Figures and episodes that marked the history of City Heights could be represented here with sculptures or small educational panels.

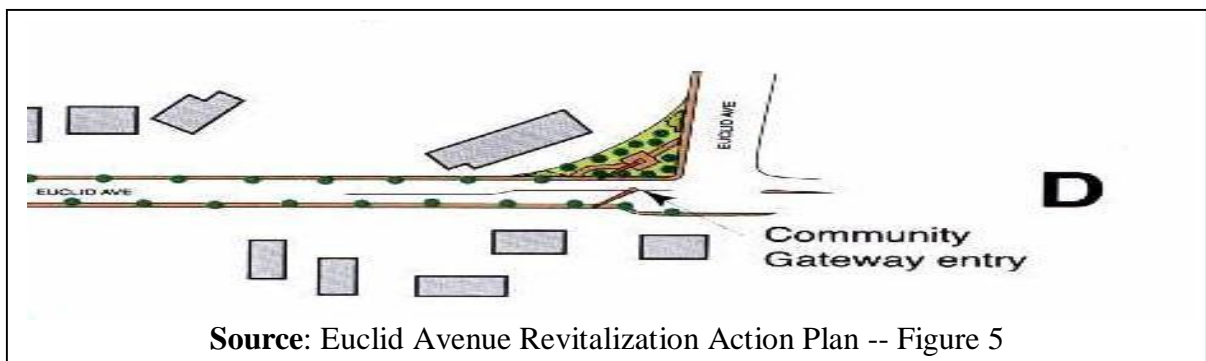


5) **The End of Lantana Park**
(Lot 1 of the inventory, Parcel # 476-081-11-00)

This parcel is an oasis in the middle of a concrete desert, and it is ready to be united to a restored creek. This nodal park can provide another entrance to the trail system, an amphitheater and a Learning Center for the children of **Rosa Parks Elementary School**.

6) **The Corner Mini-park at Home and Euclid/Euclid**

Under the auspices of the Euclid Avenue Revitalization Action Program (RAP), this corner mini-park will be soon built, as it is a funded project. This mini-park is only half a block away from the southernmost part of the **Fox Canyon Phase of the Auburn Creek Phase IVA** of the **Chollas Creek Enhancement Program** [*Auburn Creek Branch*], of **May 14, 2002**. It should contain information about the Chollas Creek System and provide a point of entry to the trail system, the street-walking urban trail, and the bike route.



7) A Restored Auburn Creek

(Although the Auburn Creek extends all the way to the MLK freeway [I-94], this report concerns only the Fox Canyon section between University and Euclid Avenues.)



Auburn Creek should be restored to its natural state, including re-energizing it with **water reclamation** projects in accordance with the Chollas Creek Enhancement Program and the Federal Clean Water Act guidelines.

8) A Trail System:

- ☞ **Walking trails** should meander all along the restored Auburn Creek.
- ☞ **Jogging trails** should meander alongside the walking trail, when possible.
- ☞ **Bike lanes/paths** and routes on side streets, near to, and following the restored creek should be developed.

This entire system of pedestrian and cyclist trails should unify the several sections of the park system and link it to the surrounding neighborhoods and the San Diego Bay.

9) A Joint Use Agreement (JUA)

- a) A **JUA** between Marshall Elementary School and the City should be created to take advantage of underutilized facilities, such as sharing of basketball and other courts at Marshall Elementary School, after school hours and

weekends, to provide **active** recreation. In exchange, Marshall Elementary students will use the park and open spaces as open-air classrooms.

- b) A paved trail/walkway should be constructed to unite Marshall Elementary School with the park system.

FUNDING STRATEGIES

The status of the Fox Canyon Neighborhood Association as a Public Benefit nonprofit organization [501(c)(3)] allows us to solicit grants and private donations in order to acquire land, develop and maintain the future Fox Canyon system of parks and green spaces. Grants will be sought to supplement the funding provided for implementation planning through the Chollas Creek Enhancement Program, under Phase IV-A -- Fox Canyon.

Fox Canyon residents constitute an important source for volunteer labor, during the planning phase as well as for future maintenance needs.

- a) **Grants:**

Grants at all levels of Government (City, County, State and Federal) will be explored and requested. Those include but are not limited to: Community Development Block Grant, Proposition 40 funding, Safe Routes to School, Rivers and Waterways, Clean Water Act, Commissions for Art and Culture, Restoration of Wetlands funding, etc.

- b) **Donations:**

Donations from public and private individuals, foundations, other nonprofit organizations, and in-kind donations will be actively pursued to fund our vision.

PARTNERS:

- a. **The Sierra Club, the National Wild Life Federation** and other environmental organizations with greater funding, knowledge, and experience could and will be invited to participate in building/guiding our vision.
- b. **The Environmental Protection Agency, The Department of Civil Works, The EPA Office of Water, the National Academy of Science, The Army Corps of Engineers,** and other State and Federal Offices will be invited to participate, either by providing grants, or regulatory guidelines to restore the wetlands of Auburn Creek and to maintain the Fox Canyon Park System.
- c. **The Kiwanis Club of City Heights** and their **K-Kids Clubs** will be invited to participate and to form an environmental branch of the club to enhance consciousness about maintenance and protection of disappearing wetlands and watersheds.

- d. **The Alpha Project, San Diego Urban Corps and Habitat for Humanity** will be invited to provide construction labor, tree plantings, and cleaning efforts to build and, thereafter, maintain the Creek and Park System.
- e. **Price Charities, Cox Communications, The San Diego Foundation** and other Charitable Organizations, in conjunction with local High Schools, Colleges, and Universities will be solicited to provide funding, and to give scholarships to those students participating in building and maintaining the Park System and restored creek.

BRIEF HISTORY of the FOX CANYON NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION (FCNA) *[See Appendix-A, for service area]*

The **FCNA** was founded on **October 23, 1997**, by a group of **forty-four** residents and guests under the leadership of Jose Lopez and Carol Sullinger. This group of residents pledged their commitment to work hard to fight neighborhood crime, noise, graffiti, and general **environmental decay**, and to improve the physical surroundings and the quality of life in what is now known as Fox Canyon, with the goal to make it the community of choice within City Heights.

From the beginning, the residents of Fox Canyon realized that the future of their neighborhood was intimately related to meeting its urgent need for parks. The residents pledged their support, and petitioned to convert all available vacant lots into neighborhood parks when possible, as well as, preserve the rest as open spaces.

On **December 07, 1997**, the Association gained recognition as the principal instrument for change in Fox Canyon, from the City Heights Area Planning Committee.

A collective letter containing a list of needed and wanted improvements in the Fox Canyon neighborhood was incorporated in the **MID-CITY COMMUNITIES PLAN**, approved by the City Council on **August 04, 1998** (Pages 15, 27, and 39 of the plan). Our entire **VISION** statement is on page **27** and our Natural Urban Preserve proposal is on page **39**, **“Friends of Mid-City Canyons”**.

On **March 18, 1998**, the Association released the following statement of policy in conformity with the DRAFT of the Mid-City Communities Plan.

“The canyons provide a unique home and habitat to indigenous species of birds, reptiles, and small mammals among which the following have been observed: Foxes, Coyotes, opossums, skunks, rats; Falcons, Hamming, woodpeckers, finches, jays and other birds; lizards and other animals. All these animals urgently need the protection of a recognized ecological preserve and open-

spaces. In addition, native botanical species and flora need the same extended protection, as well.”

“The State University and the City Heights area schools in conjunction with Park & Rec. Department, and the Fox Canyon Neighborhood Association could, would, and should use the preserve and the parks systems, as open-air classrooms. The environment of our five-finger canyon lends itself perfectly for botanical, local fauna, and flora studies with open unpaved trails for access, Art, Interpretive Centers and Educational Facilities placed along the creek.”

On **October 12, 1998**, the association issued the following statement of policy in conformity with the Euclid Avenue Revitalization Action Program.

NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

“Such landlocked and densely built neighborhood, as Fox Canyon is, needs a system of parks and open spaces for its inhabitants to take refuge from daily pressures and to enhance the beauty of our community's topography. Our children now play in open drain ditches and on the streets, putting in danger their lives and the security of drivers and pedestrians, as well. We are working hard to bring to fruition the following proposed system of Fox Canyon Parks: **1)** The End of Lantana Park, **2)** The Auburn/Lantana Linear Park [*containing three vacant lots*] and **3)** The Ontario Park.”

Late 1999, the association successfully petitions to incorporate at least **one** Park in the Euclid Avenue Revitalization Action Program.

On **September 2001**, **Delfina Wooley** from the Chollas Creek Neighborhood Association [*see appendix-B, for service area*] circulated a petition to identify the parcel bounded by University Avenue and 52nd Street as a neighborhood park (*Inventory Parcel # 6*). The petition, signed by a majority of residents, was sent to Councilmember **JIM MADAFFER**, CD7, via **Ellen Agey**, his Council Rep.

Late 2001, Ms. **Marcia McClatchy**, Director of the Park and Recreation Department, an entourage of City officials, Council Rep **Ellen Agey** and **Jose Lopez** toured the Fox Canyon/Chollas Creek areas identified as ideal for neighborhood parks and cataloged vacant parcels as possible park sites and created the inventory attached as **Annex I**.

On **February 12, 2002**, The **FCNA** released the following statement of policy at the ***Third Annual President's Report***.

“We need to strongly pursuit the development and implementation of the Fox Canyon System of Parks. So one day, our children will play in set apart and well developed parks, with green grass, secure and protected. And not in

storm-drain ditches, bowls of mud, clouds of dust and seas of garbage and trash, risking their health and lives, as they do now.”

On **March 28, 2002**, the Fox Canyon community, local landowners, representatives from Elected Officials, City Department Directors, and local nonprofit organizations attended a Community Forum on the mission and work assigned to the **FCNA Parks Subcommittee**. Strong community support was established to continue the work of the Fox Canyon Parks System and the Chollas Creek Restoration Plan.

On **December 03, 2002**, City Engineer **Timothy Dewey** prepares a City of San Diego Preliminary Project Cost Estimate Summary Sheet/report regarding the “**Ontario Avenue Connector**” (**Fox Canyon Parkway**) that aims at providing a future park with much needed traffic control, service and security. The cost estimate (2002) was **\$760.000.00** for the entire project.



On **December 12, 2002**, the FCN.A receives a grant from the **American Society of Landscape Architects [A.S.L.A]** for a Community Parks Design Workshop, and appoints **Laurel Hunter** (Vice President, Community Outreach) to form a committee of chapter members to assist the Fox Canyon Parks Subcommittee in planning the workshop.

On **January 14, 2003**, The Fox Canyon Park is assigned a **CIP number 29-596.0**

On **Saturday, June 28, 2003**, The San Diego Society of Landscape Architects conducted the first conceptual Design Workshop at **Wrigley Hall, Christ Church Unity, 3770 Altadena Avenue** (see appendix-C).

THE FOX CANYON PARKS AND THE MUNICIPAL PLANS:

Our needs, vision and petition for an organized plan to develop our vacant lots into neighborhood parks [to set aside and dedicate our open spaces, to realize the Auburn Creek Restoration according to the Chollas Creek Enhancement Program], illustrates and implements the statements of policy contained on the following municipal plans and action programs.

- ☛ The **Mid-City Communities Plan of 1998**, page 96: "By current City of San Diego Progress Guide and General Plan standards, the Mid-City is **grossly deficient** in park acreage. The most conspicuous needs are in the older neighborhoods, generally west of 54th Street."
- ☛ The **Euclid Avenue Revitalization Action Program (RAP) of April 2000**, Prioritized Recommendations: "Develop a public park in the vicinity of Auburn Drive and Winona Avenue." Under Implementations: "Evaluate opportunities to develop a neighborhood park in conjunction with the Chollas Creek Preservation project and street improvements mitigation for development of a street linking Ontario and Winona Avenues."
- ☛ The **Chollas Creek Enhancement Program of May 14, 2002**, phase IV-A, Fox Canyon and Auburn Creek phase I, will restore that portion of Auburn Creek from University Avenue to I-94, the Martin Luther King Freeway, all along 50th Street, Auburn Drive and Home Avenue. This creek phase crosses through the neighborhoods of **Chollas Creek, Fox Canyon, Islenair (CD7)**, and **Ridge View (CD4)**. The Plan reads on the following pages: Phrase IV-A - Fox Canyon, Funding and phasing schedule, page 5. Auburn Creek Phrase 1 [*Maps on pages 17, 20 and 30*]. The legend describing the Auburn Creek Branch - Phase IV-A is on page 68.
- ☛ The **CROSSROADS Redevelopment Project, 2003**, calls for a Park on the north part of Chollas Creek within the redevelopment area.



ANNEX I

PARK LAND INVENTORY

(Available land for possible and potential parks)

In compliance with the vision and mission of all **four** Municipal Plans, the residents of Fox Canyon under the leadership of the neighborhood association have identified the following parcels (unimproved and vacant lots), as potential and suitable park sites:

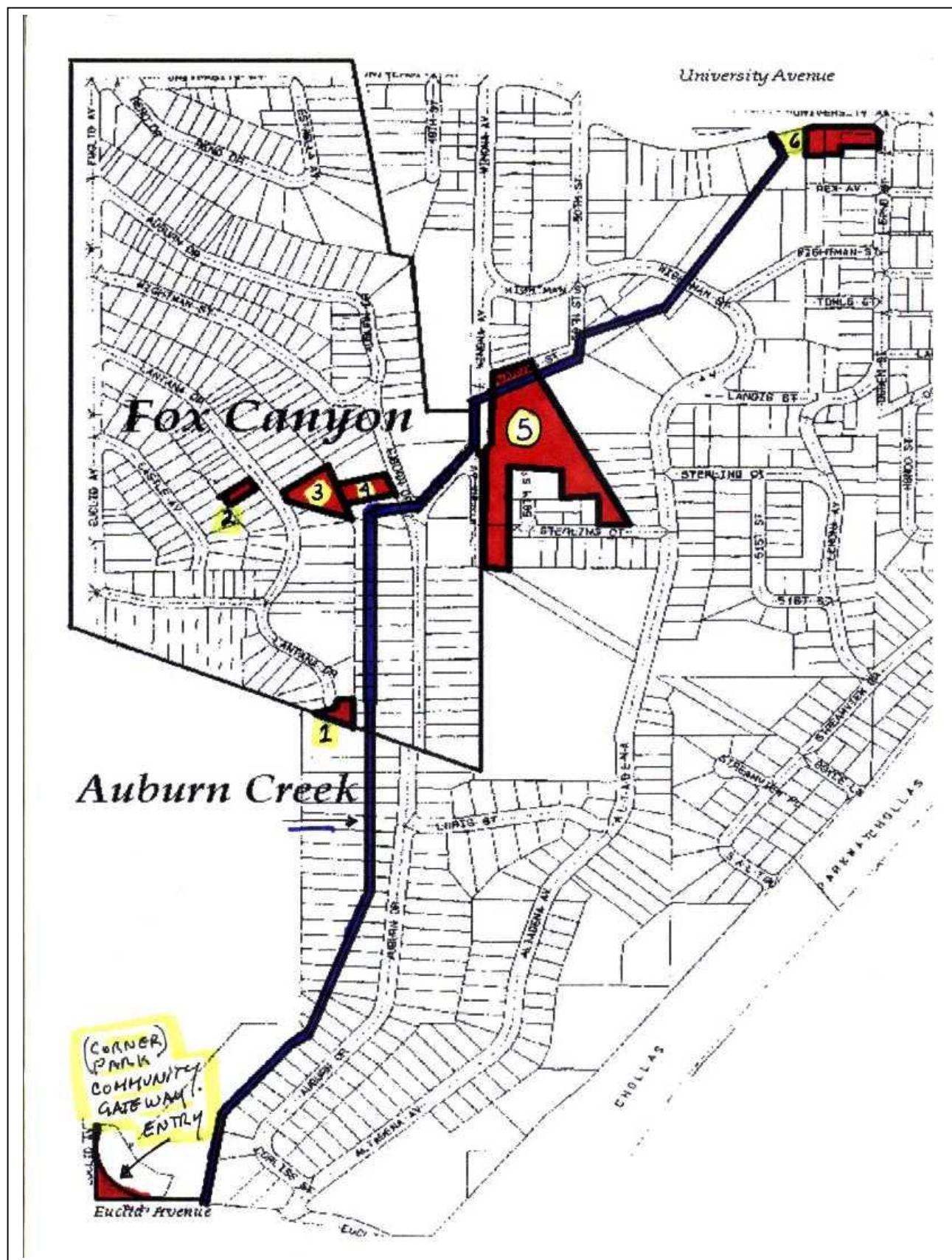
1. Parcel # **476-081-11-00**, The end of Lantana (between 4980 & 4997 Lantana)
2. Parcel # **471-781-43-00**, The west of Lantana (between 4863 & 4849 Lantana)
(Parcel # 2 is **NO** longer available for a park; it was lost to aggressive **URBANIZATION**)
3. Parcel # **471-800-21-00**, The east of Lantana (between 4880 & 4890 Lantana)
4. Parcel # **471-800-11-00**, The west of Auburn (between 4979 & 4991 Auburn)
5. Parcel # **471-810-29-00**, The Ontario Park (parcel **ONE**, next to 3621 Ontario)
6. The parcel to the **south** of University Avenue, corner with the **west** of 52nd Street

(See map following page)

OPEN SPACE

The five-finger canyons molding the Fox Canyon neighborhood must be dedicated and preserved for posterity in **OPEN SPACE EASEMENTS**, as follow:

1. The canyon between Estrella Avenue and 49th Street/Winona Avenue.
2. The canyon between Reno Drive and *[upper]* Auburn Drive.
3. The canyon between Wightman Street and Lantana Drive.
4. The canyon between Dwight Street and Isla Vista *[the south part of this canyon is on the **Islenair** neighborhood]*
5. The canyon between Lantana Drive and *[lower]* Auburn Drive *[forming the Auburn Creek bed, and running along the west of Auburn from University Avenue (north/south) to Euclid Avenue].*



ANNEX I

The End of Lantana Park

Inventory # 1 (Parcel # 476-081-11-00), between 4980 & 4997 Lantana



The West of Lantana Park
Inventory # 2 (Parcel # 471-781-43-00), between 4863 & 4849 Lantana



(The pictured parcel is now LOST to aggressive URBANIZATION)

The East of Lantana Park
Inventory # 3 (Parcel # 471-800-21-00), between 4880 & 4890 Lantana



The West of Auburn Park

Inventory # 4 (Parcel # **471-800-11-00**), between 4979 & 4991 Auburn Dr



The Ontario Park

Inventory # 5 (Parcel # **471-810-29-00**), parcel **ONE**, next to 3621 Ontario



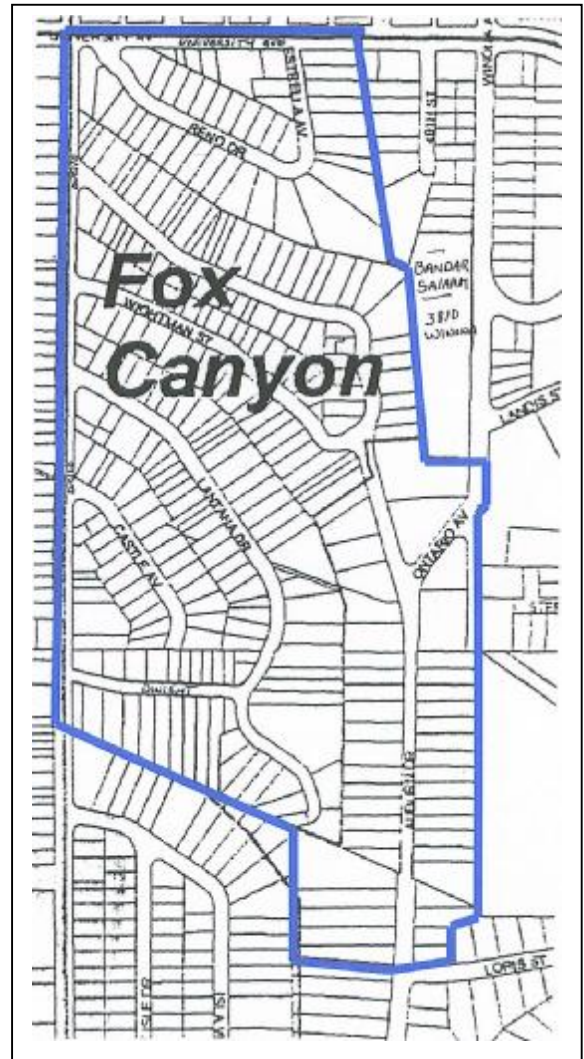
The CHOLLAS CREEK Visitor and Educational Center
Inventory # 6, the parcel to the south of University Avenue, corner with
the west of 52nd Street



FOX CANYON NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION SERVICE AREA

The FCNA's service area is bound by University Avenue to the North, by the property lines of Dwight Street to the South, by Euclid Avenue to the West and by the property lines of Estrella and Auburn Drive to the East.

The area encompasses the following streets: All of Lantana, Reno and Auburn (4758-5160) Drives; all of Ontario and Castle Avenues; the South side of University Avenue between 4749-4849; the East side of Euclid Avenue between 3611-3889; Estrella Avenue between 3803-3857; Dwight Street between 4759-4792; and Wightman Street between 4750-4871.

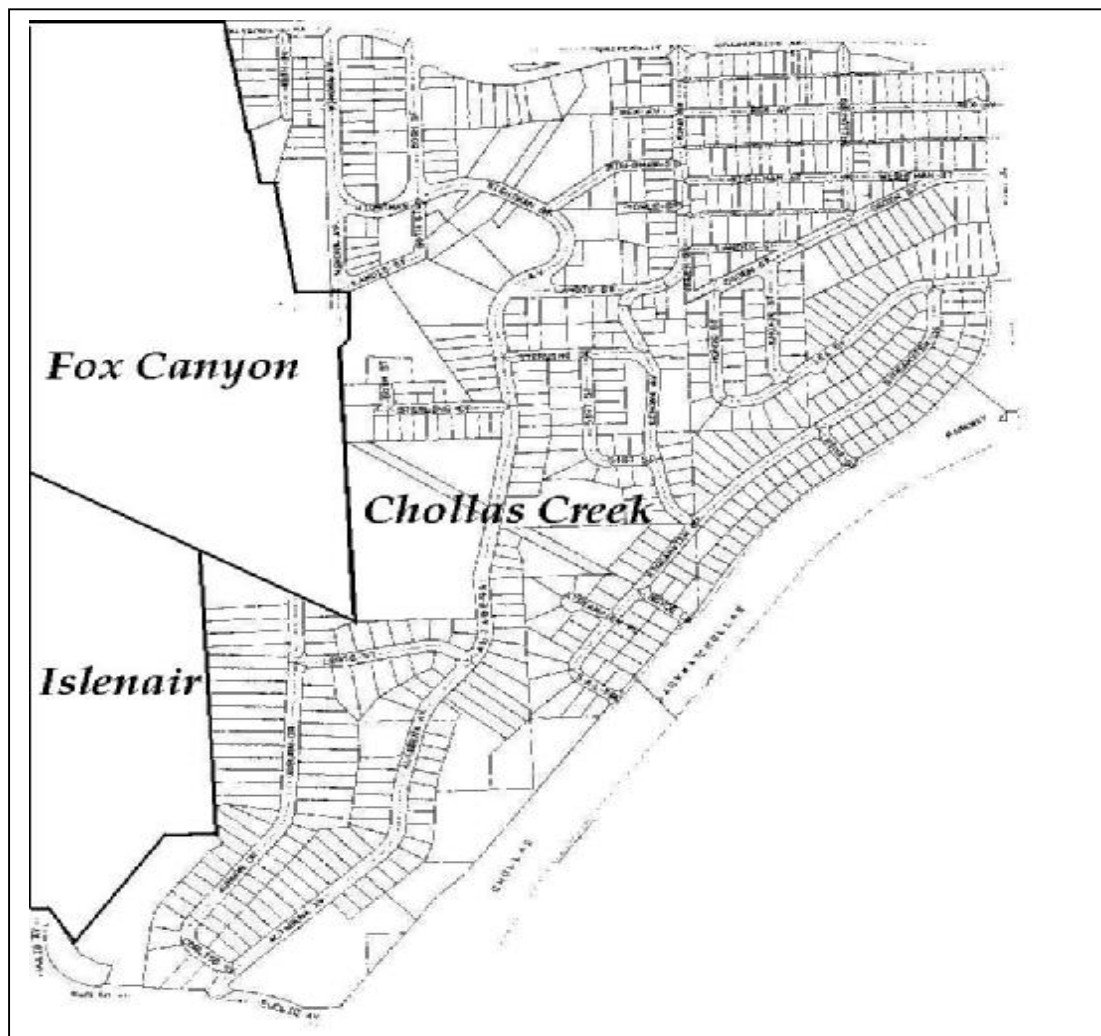


APPENDIX B:

CHOLLAS CREEK NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION HISTORY AND SERVICE AREA

The Chollas Creek Neighborhood Association (CCNA) was founded on **December 14, 2001**, when a group of Somali, Hispanic, Sudanese and Vietnamese residents gathered at the **Bandar Salaam** Community Room, under the leadership of **Shukri Adams, Delfina Wooley**, the **Police Solving meetings** and the **FCNA**.

The CCNA's Service area encompasses the following boundaries: The South of University Avenue from 49th to 54th Streets to the North; the west of 54th Street from University Avenue to Chollas Parkway; to the East; the southwest of Chollas Parkway from 54th Street to Euclid Avenue to the Southwest; the north of Euclid Avenue from Chollas Parkway to Euclid Avenue to the South; to that point which borders the Islenair and the Fox Canyon Neighborhoods.



Appendix B

2003 SDASIA COMMUNITY DESIGN WORKSHOP
FOX CANYON NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

PARICIPATE! PARICIPATE!



PARTICIPE! PARTICIPE!



NESECITAMOS EL APOLLO DE SU PARTICIPACIÓN!

WE NEED THE SUPPORT OF YOUR PARTICIPATION!

CONTACTS: BETTY PHARRIS: (619) 283-8818 -- Jose Lopez: (619) 282-2788 -- LAUREL HUNTER: lhunter@cd-p.com
www.neighborhoodlink.com/sandiego/foxcan



Fox Canyon Neighborhood Association, Inc.

Happiness is a Park for the Neighborhood!

SDASLA Community Design Workshop
Fox Canyon Neighborhood Parks

Saturday, June 28, 2003

8:30 AM to 2:00 PM.

Christ Church Unity

Wrigley Hall

3770 Altadena Avenue

(Our voting place)

The Fox Canyon Neighborhood Association and the San Diego Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects are honored to cordially invite you to participate in a community workshop to develop and design a network of parks in Fox Canyon.

Come and Join Us! Be a part of the design process and influence the future of **YOUR** neighborhood. Attend we need your support.

ASOCIACION DE VECINOS
LA BARRANGA DEL
 **Fox Canyon ZORRO**

Con un parque en el vecindario se Vive Mejor!

Su presencia es requerida y esta usted cordialmente Invitado a asistir al
Taller Comunitario para diseñar un parque en Fox Canyon.

Dia Sabado, 28 de Junio del 2003,

8:30 de la mañana a 2:00 de la tarde.

3770 Altadena Avenue

Directions: (como llegar)

From the **South** -- Euclid (Loris) to Altadena (north), pass Marshall, Church on your left.

From the **North** -- Euclid to ® on University, right on Winona, left on Wightman (up hill), Church on your right.

Por el Sur -- Horno, Euclid (Loris) a la Altadena (tome hacia el Norte), pase la escuela Marshall, Iglesia a su izquierda. Por el Norte -- Euclid (derecha en) University, derecha en Winona, izquierda en Wightman.

La Iglesia esta a su derecha.

PARKING -- There's sufficient parking across the street on **LANDIS** Street.

ESTACIONAMIENTO -- Al cruzar la calle de la Iglesia, sobre la **LANDIS**.

**The ECOLOGY, PARKS, FOX CANYON, and the
MUNI-PLANS**

***FOX CANYON OPEN SPACE,
ECOLOGICAL, and NATURAL URBAN
PRESERVE***

The preservation and conservation of the finger-canyons that shape the communities of Fox Canyon and Chollas Creek neighborhood are of primordial importance and of great need to the inhabitants of communities, humans included. Thus, it is our quest and intent to restore, protect, and preserve the finger-canyons and canyon slopes in their natural state for the benefit of the indigenous species and native wildlife that inhabit the area. In addition, to STOP the URBAN Sprawl encroachment on this habitat, such great concern mirrors in the naming of our neighborhood and association, FOX CANYON.

A natural habitat and ecological preserve shall be establish to restore, preserve, maintain and protect, in their natural state, the finger-canyon slopes that surround the community and which are part of the Auburn Creek, a tributary to the greater Chollas Creek.

WILDLIFE INVENTORY

The inhabitants of Fox Canyon should participate, from time-to-time, in a wildlife count [*census*] to help keep a list of the Canyons' wildlife. The Fox Canyon Neighborhood Association should be the depository of this census.