2022 Gulch Greenway Survey Results Summary

Background on Survey
The online public survey was open from mid-January through mid-April 2022, with most responses occurring in March after the City issued a press release and mailed a postcard notice to property owners on/adjacent to the gulch greenways. The survey took an average of 7.5 minutes to complete.

General Information About Survey Respondents
The survey had 554 total respondents. 71% of the total respondents (393 people) indicated they live and/or own property within the City, and 41% of total respondents (225 people) indicated they live and/or own property on or adjacent to a gulch greenway within the City.

87% of total respondents (484 people) indicated they have visited a gulch/greenway within Eureka City limits. Question 13 of the survey asked, “If you have visited a gulch/greenway in the City, for what purpose?” 454 people responded to this open-ended question. Below is a Word Cloud showing words frequently used in the responses (with relative frequency illustrated by the size of the words):

- grow property adjacent gulch go walk Trail running clean natural beauty bird watching
- woods wildlife cleanups property family exercise dog Recreational Bike riding
- see Gulch greenway area friends walk dogs watching exploring
- bicycling enjoy Second Gulch Cooper Gulch exploration
- nature birdwatching Recreation removal
- Walking near Hiking outdoor trails work
- dog walking used birding edges gulch take disc golf
- Sequoia Park biking litter run curiosity enjoyment mushrooms lived plants look path park clean trash visit berry picking played enjoy nature
Gulch Greenway Benefits/Values
Question 1 asked about gulch/greenway benefits:

Figure 1. Survey Question 1. Below is a list of benefits provided by the City’s gulches and greenways. Please select or write in at least 3 of these you find to be the most valuable. (Total respondents = 549)

Gulch Greenway Neighbors:
Looking only at the answers of those who reported living and/or owning property on or adjacent to a gulch greenway (“gulch greenway neighbors”), the order of popularity of the responses was the same as the overall group. Although “recreational value” ranked the same (#6), only 34% of reporting gulch greenway neighbors (76 people) selected this choice versus 42% of overall respondents. In contrast 46% of those who reported not living/owning property on/adjacent to a gulch greenway selected “recreational value.”

Write-In Responses:
Question 1 included a space for people to write-in any other gulch greenway values not included in the answer choices, and 72 survey respondents contributed.

Protection theme: The most popular theme of the write-in responses was preservation of natural systems and native flora and fauna (~19 responses); this is consistent with “fish and wildlife habitat/passage value” being the most-selected answer choice. Many people also spoke of the mental health benefit of being around nature and experiencing nature within the City, and of how the gulch greenways contribute to our overall quality of life and unique community character (~13 responses). Five people simply wrote “open space,” “undeveloped space,” or “green space,” and five people spoke of the benefit of greenbelts as a buffer, dampening noise and providing space between neighbors. One person wrote, “With maintenance comes the implication that we care about our city & its natural beauty.”

Trail controversy theme: In the write-in responses to Question 1 (out of 72 write-in responses), 13 respondents specifically discussed the value of the gulch greenways for trails,
transportation, or general access to nature, while five respondents wrote in opposition to trails, and three discussed how trails/access are secondary to the other values.

**Concerns about people experiencing homelessness:** Even though Question 1 asked about gulch greenway benefits, six people (out of 72 write-in responses) focused on the harm done by encampments of people experiencing homelessness.

**Gulch Greenway Hazards/Risks/Concerns**

Question 2 inquired about gulch greenway concerns:

**Figure 2. Survey Question 2.** Below is a list of potential hazards or risks associated with the City’s gulches and greenways. Please select or write in at least 3 you find to be the most concerning. (Total respondents = 544)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hazard/Concern</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illegal dumping and encampments</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fragmentation and loss due to encroachment from development</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime and public safety</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water pollution</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invasive vegetation</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slope stability hazards for development</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flooding hazards for development</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire hazards for development</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By far the most widely-held concerns were: (1) illegal dumping and encampments (selected by 87% of respondents, 471 people); and fragmentation and loss due to encroachment from development (selected by 73% of respondents, 399 people).

**Gulch Greenway Neighbors:**

Looking just at the answers of those who reported living and/or owning property on or adjacent to a gulch greenway (“gulch greenway neighbors”; 224 respondents), the order of popularity of the responses was the same as for the overall group, except fire hazard was a more popular choice than flood hazard.

**Write-In Responses:**

Question 2 included a space for people to write-in a concern not included in the answer choices, and 56 survey respondents chose to contribute. Most of the write-in responses reiterated concerns included in the answer choices. Many people (~13) reiterated concerns about encampments, trash, and crime, indicating the City should focus more resources on the issue of homelessness. A few people (~3) explicitly expressed concerns for people experiencing homelessness and their potential displacement as a result of actions the City may take. Many people elaborated on the specific natural resources/functions/values which could be lost with further fragmentation and encroachment of development and people within the gulch greenways. In addition, a few people brought up new or more specific concerns, including loss...
of redwood trees (3 respondents), lack of maintenance (2 respondents), tree fall on adjacent
development (1 respondent), leaking sewer (1 respondent), flooding from sea level rise (1
respondent), fill in the floodplain (1 respondent), trails (4 respondents), and regulations
preventing growth where it is appropriate (1 respondent).

Focus of Gulch Greenway Standards
Question 3 asked what should be included in gulch greenway standards:

**Figure 3. Survey Question 3. What do you think should be included in the City’s Gulches and Greenways
guide or regulations? (Select all that apply) (Total respondents = 532)**

The top three choices above are consistent with the top three gulch greenway benefit choices
in Question 1: the most popular choice is focused on fish and wildlife habitat/movement,
followed by choices focused on scenic character and natural vegetation. All choices received
votes from at least a third of respondents except for one: only 6% of respondents (30 out of
532 respondents) agreed with allowing exceptions to standards for housing development.

Gulch Greenway Neighbors:
Filtering the results to only show responses from people who reported living and/or owning
property on or adjacent to a gulch greenway (“gulch greenway neighbors”; 223 respondents),
the order of popularity of the choices was the same as for the overall group, except the choice
about minimizing the alteration of natural topography and waterways was more popular than
the choices about allowing for trails and establishing appropriate buffers between habitat and
development (minimizing the alteration of natural topography and waterways was #4 most popular for gulch greenway neighbors vs. #6 most popular overall). Providing exceptions to standards for the development of housing was just as unpopular a choice for gulch greenway neighbors as it was for the overall group with only 6% of gulch greenway neighbors (13 respondents) in support of this option.

Write-In Responses:
Question 2 included a space for people to write-in another goal for the guide/regulations, and 81 survey respondents chose to contribute. Many of these responses talked about the need to completely avoid housing and other development in our gulches and keep these areas wild, natural, and undeveloped (~39 responses); a common theme was focusing development in already urbanized areas (infill) and protecting the City’s last remnants of open space. Nine respondents talked about how trails were acceptable if developed in a manner protective of adjacent property owners and/or natural resources, while four respondents specifically stated trails should not be allowed. Approximately nine respondents mentioned affirmative actions to enhance the gulch greenways, such as remediation of trash, daylighting of stream segments, acquisition of parkland and open space easements, management of invasive species, planting of natives, and financial assistance to property owners for these efforts. Approximately a dozen respondents focused on the issue of encampments, such as the need to enforce no camping laws, maintain a police presence in the gulch greenways, or find a place for the homeless to live. A few respondents focused on respecting private property owners’ rights and not adding regulations (~3 responses).

Buffers:
58% of respondents to Question 3 (308 out of 532 respondents) believed gulch greenway standards should include appropriate buffers between sensitive habitat and adjacent urban uses. Question 4 asked how many feet would be an appropriate buffer between sensitive habitat and adjacent urban uses, providing four numeric options (20, 30, 50, or 100 feet), as well as a write-in option and a “I don’t know” option.

Out of 528 responses, over one third (197 responses, 37%) selected the most conservative (i.e., protective) option of 100 feet. The next
most popular answer was “I don’t know” (119 responses, 23%), followed by “other” (100 responses, 19%). The respondents who chose “other” were asked to specify, and many people gave conservative answers, stating a number greater than 100 feet (39 responses), or at least 100 feet (7 responses), or as large as possible (4 responses). A few people said no buffer (5 responses) or the buffer existing now (2 responses). Ten people indicated it depends on site-specific circumstances, and fifteen people stated buffer width should be determined by a subject expert.

**Slopes:**
33% of respondents to Question 3 (174 people) believed gulch greenway standards should include avoidance of development on steep slopes. Question 5 asked specifically what slope is too steep for new buildings, providing three numerical options (20, 25, or 30% slopes), as well as a write-in option and a “I don’t know” option.

![Pie chart showing survey results for Question 5](image)

**Figure 5. Survey Question 5.** What slope is too steep for new buildings? (Total respondents = 527)

“I don’t know” was the most popular answer at 44% (selected by 232 of the 527 respondents to this question). The next most popular response was 20% or greater slope at 27% (143 respondents). This was the most risk-adverse option of the three numeric options. The third most popular response was “other slope” at 13% (71 responses). The respondents who chose “other slope” were asked to specify, and the results were similar to the buffer question with more answers protective of the gulch resources than permissive of development. Thirteen respondents selected an even more risk-adverse slope percentage compared to the option choices (5-16% slopes), and 30 people discussed avoiding the gulches entirely, regardless of slope. In contrast, four people stated any slope can be developed if the structure was designed properly, and one person indicated anything under 40% slopes is acceptable for development. Similar to the open-ended responses to the buffer question, a number of respondents stated the answer depends on site-specific characteristics (6 respondents) and/or should be determined by a professional/expert (12 respondents).
Allowed/Prohibited Uses in Gulch Greenways

Question 6 asked respondents to select from a list of development/uses which would be appropriate within gulch greenways:

**Figure 6. Survey Question 6.** Which of the following types of development and uses, if any, should be allowed in gulches and greenways? (Select all that apply) (Total respondents = 510)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Development/Use</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fish and wildlife habitat enhancement and restoration projects</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetation removal or trimming, for invasive plant removal</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public bicycle and pedestrian trails</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetation removal or trimming, for disease control</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetation removal or trimming, for protecting life or property from hazards</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank stabilization/protection</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance, alteration, or replacement of existing legally-established development and uses</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other public recreational uses</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community gardens</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New fences or walls that do not restrict wildlife access</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flood control structures</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timber management and harvest activities</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor additions to existing development or uses</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utility crossings</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roadway/driveway crossings</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hydroelectric uses</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural uses</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary uses</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private recreational facilities</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The top responses included fish and wildlife habitat enhancement and restoration projects (83%, 425 respondents), and vegetation removal and trimming to remove invasive species,
control disease, and protect life and property (78%, 66%, and 52% of respondents, respectively). The least popular responses (under 10% of respondents) included private recreational facilities, temporary uses, agricultural uses, and hydroelectric uses.

**Minor Expansion of Existing Uses:**
While 33% of respondents to Question 6 (168 of 510 people) agreed with allowing maintenance, alteration, or replacement of existing development/uses within their existing footprint in gulch greenways, only 10% (50 people) agreed with allowing minor additions to existing development or uses that slightly expand the footprint.

Question 7 asked: “If you agree that minor expansions of development/uses into gulches and greenways should be allowed, how much of an expansion should be allowed?” 140 responded to this question and 414 skipped the question. In terms of % increase in the footprint, 54 people wrote 0% (i.e., no expansion of building footprints should be allowed in gulch greenways), 21 people wrote a number greater than zero up to 10%, 9 people wrote 15 or 20%, 8 people wrote 25%, and 9 people wrote a percentage of 30 or greater, included 3 people who wrote 100%.

Question 7 included a space to answer with a square foot increase. Again, the most popular answer was 0, with 36 people indicating no building footprint increase should be allowed within a gulch greenway. 10 people indicated a minor increase in square footage should be allowed with numbers between 100 and 500 square feet. Three people wrote numbers of 1,000 square feet or larger.

**Other Uses to Allow:**
Question 8 asked, “Can you think of any other uses or developments that should be allowed in the City’s gulches and greenways?” (i.e., uses/development types not covered under the 19 options in Question 6). 177 people responded to this question and 377 skipped the question. 55 respondents (31% of those who responded) indicated no other uses should be allowed in gulch greenways; this was the most popular response. Many people took the opportunity to specify the type of restoration/cleanup/preservation work (~26 responses), trail development (~22 responses), or public recreational facilities/uses (~52 responses) they would like to see in the gulch greenways. The most often-mentioned recreational facilities included picnic areas (7 responses), informational/interpretive signage (9 responses), and benches (7 responses). 18 respondents discussed allowing for educational opportunities and/or scientific studies in gulch greenways, such as field trips for children.

**Uses to Prohibit:**
Question 9 of the survey asked, “Can you think of any other uses or developments that should NOT be allowed in the City’s gulches or greenways?” 231 people responded to this question and 323 skipped the question. Similar to Question 8, the most popular response called for no development in the City’s gulch greenways (~53 respondents; 23%). Other popular responses included prohibiting: camping/encampments (~44 responses), housing/residential development (~29 responses), buildings (~15 responses), private development (~9 responses), commercial development (~8), timber cutting and other resource extraction (~7 responses), and fences (~6 responses). Approximately 10 respondents were opposed to trails/public access in general in
gulch greenways, while others (~ 8 respondents) mentioned not allowing for motorized access such as motorized bikes or off-road vehicles. There were a number of responses calling for a limitation/prohibition on impervious surfaces (e.g., pavement, cement, asphalt; ~9 responses), roadways (~7), and driveways/vehicles/parking lots (~6). There were also responses indicating new public recreational facilities like playgrounds and playing fields should be prohibited to avoid further habitat degradation/loss (~5). Other topics mentioned by more than one respondent included limiting/prohibiting loud noises, large events, non-native/invasive plants, water diversions, guns, unsafe/illicit activities, and degradation from pets.

General Themes
After reviewing the results of the survey, three major themes stood out:

- **Trail Debate:** There is definitely controversy over allowing for public trails in the greenways with many responses focused on trails – in opposition, in support, or desiring specific standards/limitations around trails to ensure environmental protection and/or protection of private property.
- **Encampments:** There is a lot of concern about encampments and associated trash and illicit activities in the gulch greenways.
- **Protection of Gulch Greenways:** A large contingency of survey respondents are opposed to any further encroachment of development into the City’s gulch greenways. Even when filtering results for people who live/own property on or adjacent to gulch greenways, the vast majority of respondents were focused on protecting the areas from further loss/degradation (as opposed to focusing on private property rights).