



# BEAUTIFY LUNADA BAY PROJECT

## NEWSLETTER #10

December 2019

### Restoration Project Wins Garden Award



Left: Attendees at the award ceremony. Right: BLB Principals (from left: Megan Wolff, Cynthia Woo, Denise Donegan, Peter Bena, Bill Ailor, Barb Ailor, Marlene Breene).

In June 2019, the Silver Spur Garden Club (SSGC) awarded the Beautify Lunada Bay project their Community Garden Award. The award was presented by SSGC President Joan Friedman, and their press release acknowledging the award stated:

“On June 5, the Silver Spur Garden Club was pleased to present its annual *Community Landscaping Award* to the Lunada Bay Homeowners Association for the spectacular garden it created for the community along the Paseo Lunada corridor in Lunada Bay. Bill Ailor, team leader of the *Beautify Lunada Bay* project, coordinated the combined efforts of the Lunada Bay Homeowners Association, the PV Peninsula Land Conservancy and the City of PV Estates. Funding support was provided by the So Cal Chapter of the California Native Plant Society, the PV Homes Association, the Lunada Bay Elementary School PTA and local residents. Key team members included project leader Peter Bena and Marlene Breene, who designed the landscape plan. All of the planting and rock scaping has been done by devoted volunteers, including local students, and most of the drought-tolerant plants are native to our peninsula habitat. It is an impressive effort by caring members of the community to beautify the area and give pleasure to all.”

### Phase 2: Original Plan

In January 2019, the BLB Steering Committee presented the proposal for extending the restored area adjacent to Paseo Lunado on the north side of Lunada Canyon to the City’s Parklands Committee (see [Newsletter #9](#)). The proposal included extending the stone-line walking path on Phase 1a and using plants that would include mostly lower-growing ground cover as the project extended westward. Given the comments and concerns raised at that

meeting (see page 4), the BLB Planning Committee decided to discontinue consideration of moving forward on the north side of Lunada Canyon.

## Phase 2: Revised Plan

BLB is now proposing to expand the habitat restoration area on the school-side of Agua Amarga Canyon by 0.7 acre, down to the intersection of Via Alvarado with Paseo Del Mar (see illustration on next page). A primary benefit of work on the south side would be replacing another acre of invasive, non-native weeds with low-growing, drought-tolerant native plants. The project would also extend the stone-lined walking path on the school side about 400 feet into an area where no path currently exists. The figure illustrates the conceptual trail location.

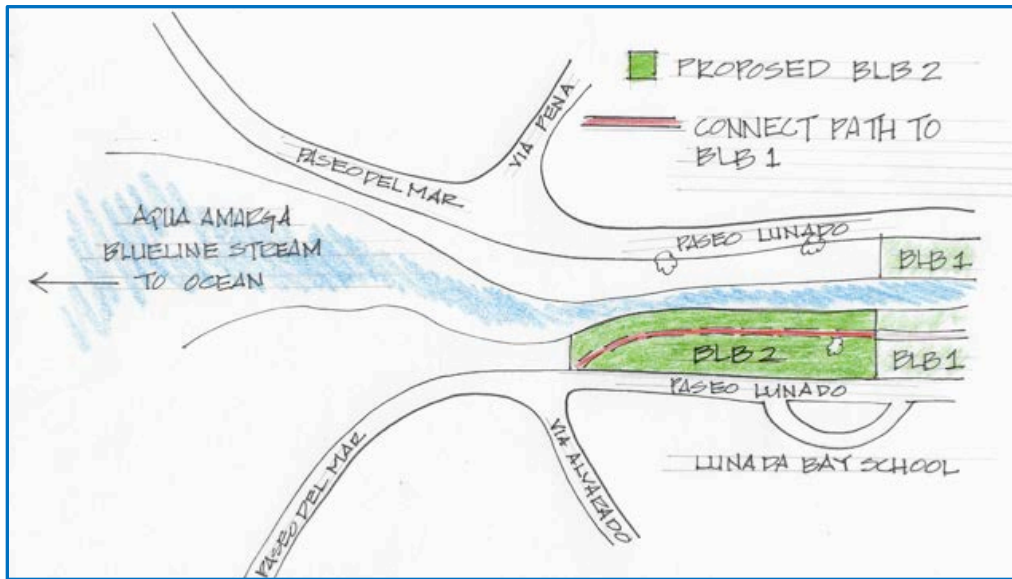


Illustration of BLB Phase 2 area showing the Phase 2 area and the notional depiction of the trail location.

Artemesia



Dudleya



Eschscholizia



Baccharis



Sisyrinchium



Ceanothus



Adenostemata



Epilobium



Plants proposed for Phase 2 area include those listed above.

With the City's permission, the project would remove a large Oleander bush that blocks views and has poisonous sap. The project would also remove Castor Bean plants (poisonous seeds) and Foxtail plants, whose seeds are a danger to dogs' paws and annoying to human feet.

We have submitted an application to the City's Parklands Committee providing details of the proposal. If approved by the Parklands Committee, a presentation to the City Council would be the next step. If approved by that body, we would begin fundraising for Phase 2. After laying out the trail location, a contractor would install the main water line with hose bibs (plants would be watered by hand until self-sustaining), and volunteers would begin lining the trail with stones provided by the City. After the trail lining is complete, a contractor would install and compact the decomposed granite trail bed. Planting would likely begin after the first rain in Fall 2020.

The complete application submitted to the City for Parklands Committee consideration is available on the BLB webpage <http://blb.lbhoa.org>.

The presentation to the Parklands Committee will be on March 12, 2020. We will send out a notice to all recipients of this newsletter confirming the date and time. We hope you will attend and give your opinion of the project to the committee at that time. An email to the city will also be an option.

## ----- **Background** -----

*The Lunada Bay Homeowners Association (LBHOA) initiated the Beautify Lunada Bay (BLB) Project in 2014 to restore the habitat and improve the appearance of open space areas in Lunada Bay. The project replaces seasonal weeds or bare dirt with drought-tolerant native plants that will remain attractive year-round and upgrades existing walking paths with stone borders and decomposed granite trail beds.*

*The City of Palos Verdes Estates (PVE), the Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy (PVPLC), the LBHOA and dozens of volunteers completed Phase 1 of the project in early 2018. Phase 1 includes a demonstration garden and outdoor classroom on a 1-acre site across from Lunada Bay Elementary School.*

*PVE provided boulders, stones to line the paths, mulch, and water for three years to assure the plants get a good start. Please see the LBHOA web page ([blb.lbhoa.org](http://blb.lbhoa.org)) for more information.*

## ----- **BLB Phase 2 Steering Committee** -----

*Bill Ailor, Project Leader; LBHOA*

*Barbara Ailor, Volunteer*

*Marlene Breene, LBHOA Board, Landscape Design*

*Ed Deason, LBHOA Board*

*Jeff Hu, LBHOA Board*

*Jim Roos, LBHOA Board*

*Kristin Sweet-Pekarek, President LBHOA*

*Megan Wolff, PVPLC*

*Cynthia Woo, Volunteer*

*Robert Wynne, LBHOA Board*

## Responses to comments raised at meeting of City's Parklands Committee

On January 10, 2019 the concept of restoring habitat and extending the stone-lined trail on the north side of Lunada Canyon was presented to the City's Parkland Committee. The concept is described in our last newsletter (*Newsletter #9*, January 2019). At that meeting, members of the local community provided a number of comments and concerns about the BLB project and the proposed plans. Below are responses and clarifications:

1. "The current open spaces and bluff tops are **natural**."

Webster defines natural landscape as "Original landscape that exists before it is acted upon by human culture". PVE has been severely impacted by human activity. Mustard grass was brought by the Padres. The Rancho period contributed destructive grazing, invasive weeds and grasses. The Olmsted Master Plan for development utilizes our canyons for drainage of residential streets and properties. Nearly all of our open spaces have been degraded by invasive plants including Russian Thistle (Tumbleweed), Castor Bean, Mustard, Yellow Sweet Clover, Cheese Weed, Foxtail, Spurge and European Grasses. Each has its own hazard. Weed-mowing practices enable further erosion, propagation of weeds and disruption of the natural cycle of remaining native plants. The current conditions no longer support diverse and healthy flora and fauna. The concrete culvert installed by the county in Agua Amarga Canyon has caused the canyon floor to erode, creating steep drop-offs subject to further erosion and bluff failure. Our City does not have the resources to halt or reverse this destruction.

2. "The project is unnecessary. **Isn't it beautiful enough?**"

Beautification is not the primary objective of the BLB project. Responsible stewardship is. Habitat restoration makes a significant contribution to the ecological health and stability of our open spaces. Enhanced beauty is a secondary consequence. Restoration of habitat ends the cycle that degrades this beautiful community resource. The completed BLB Pilot will be supportive of native wildlife and could return endangered species such as the El Segundo Blue Butterfly to the area. Building a healthy environment, whether it be for education, fitness, peaceful enjoyment, or constructive community involvement supports all of us—and likely increases property values.

3. "The project constitutes a **development**."

The native plantings return the area to an environmentally-healthy state rather than a development. While the decomposed granite (DG) pathways could perhaps be construed as a "development," they are actually an improvement of existing paths that currently vacillate between dusty dirt and mud depending on the season. In the case of the new Phase 2 plan, the paths enable residents to walk in an area where no path currently exists at all. Stone borders were chosen rather than wood or synthetic bender board to eliminate long-term maintenance. A comparison with our PV Drive West median paths (also DG) with its deteriorated bender board makes the case. One lesson learned from the first phase of the Pilot Project is that future paths should be wider based on the public comment received, so paths on the south side of Phase 1 are ~8 ft wide, and 8 ft will be the path width for Phase 2.

4. "We are increasing **water usage** during a drought."

To date, water consumption has been far less than initially anticipated, and the total cost of watering the 1-acre site from February 2018 to November 2019 was \$3400.76, an average of \$171/month. Records show the average monthly cost of water for the period April to October 2019 was \$79.41. While three years of watering were allocated to ensure establishment of plants, we now expect very

little watering will be required. Note that the cost incurred for the water needed to establish the native plants will be repaid many times over as the several rounds of annual mowing time, labor, machine maintenance, and fossil fuel required to contend with the invasive weeds are eliminated.

5. “The City is providing assets and assistance that are an unapproved use of **tax dollars**.”

The City has an exemplary and long-standing practice of collaborating with community organizations for the benefit of the community. In the past 20 years alone, the City has collaborated with LBHOA and other community groups on over a dozen improvements and restorations in our open spaces. Examples are the PV Drive West median, Bluff Cove restoration, Lunada Bay Park, City entrance gateways, the stairway park descending from PV Middle School, and pocket parks in Lunada Bay and elsewhere. The City contributes no hard funding to the BLB projects. Instead they provide initial irrigation water and stones and mulch from their over-abundant stockpiles. Donations from over 100 residents combined with grants received from national and local non-profit entities have been the sole source of funding for the BLB project. Incorporating lessons learned from Phase 1, more than 75% of the on-site labor for Phase 2 will now be conducted by community volunteers, further decreasing project expense while reinforcing a sense of community among those who participate.

6. “The City will have a **long-term maintenance** obligation with associated expense.”

While the City will continue to provide mulch for the site, there are no plans to involve the City in site maintenance now or the foreseeable future. By agreement, LBHOA and the Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy (PVPLC) are responsible for coordinating maintenance, not the City. PVPLC has a successful track record for maintaining habitat restoration on the peninsula and has trained a group of LBHOA volunteers as leaders in site maintenance. Using LBHOA, PVHS, PVIS, and PVPLC volunteer lists and on-line volunteering resources, we have had numerous on-site volunteer events and fostered a rewarding community-building experience. Expense has been nominal and is paid via tax-deductible donations managed by the PVPLC.

7. “The **paths** are too narrow.”

We heard that, too. In response, path widths were increased from six feet on the 1A site to 8 feet on the 1B site. The paths for subsequent phases will be designed to be an eight-foot minimum width.

8. “Resident **views** will be negatively impacted.”

Plantings in view-sensitive areas will be lower than those for Phase 1. Horizontally-spreading plants with maximum heights of one to two feet will be selected for view impact areas. The current invasive weeds grow as high as 3 to 8 feet prior to mowing, if they are in fact mowed. As a matter of policy, the City requires that all landscape projects include a note stating that "any planting that becomes a view obstruction will be required to be trimmed or removed." BLB has and will fully abide by that policy.

9. “**Chemicals** were used that are affecting my allergies.”

Our goal is to use no herbicides, soil conditioners, fertilizers, weed suppressants, or pesticides on the site. This would be contrary to the values and objectives for this BLB initiative and would surely affect the birds, butterflies and other wildlife we're trying to attract.

10. “The project will pose a greater **wildfire risk**.”

We asked that the PVE fire department review the BLB Phase 1 site and comment. Here's what they said:

The new native vegetation has been planted in a way that reduces the risk of fire growth. Each planting area is divided by decomposed granite walkways. There is ample space between the new shrubs. Spacing of plants and planting beds slows the rate of fire growth.

There are wide streets on three sides of the proposed park. These streets provide a fire break between the park and surrounding homes.

It appears that many of the native plants are either dormant or dead. This dead fuel will promote fire growth. These plants should be evaluated to determine if they should be removed or require more water or pruning.

We do plan to follow the recommendation above and will prune or remove plants that are assessed to be a hazard.

11. “The project will provide more opportunity for **crime**.”

The suggestion has been made that the native landscape materials and stones could compromise the ability of residents, Neighborhood Watch, or our PVE Police Department to detect suspicious activity and potentially lead to an increase in crime. We have requested that City Staff consult with our PVE Police Department to determine if they have similar concern.

12. “The project may provide an opportunity for increased **liability** to the City.”

The LBHOA has followed all application, noticing, and vetting protocol in processing the plans and applications for this project. The Phase 1 project was approved unanimously by the Parklands Committee and City Council. That aside, we have asked City Staff to reach out to the City Attorney for an opinion and guidance to determine if this possibility exists, and how to best mitigate that potential consequence. Our preliminary research indicates that this project does not increase liability to the City.

13. “Rehabilitating open spaces makes them **less usable** for residents and **more attractive** to outsiders.”

Should residents deliberately allow a degraded landscape for fear that restoring native habitat may make the area more desirable to visitors? The primary reason visitors come to the area is our magnificent ocean views, not our open spaces. Healthier open spaces are a source of community pride, are treated with greater respect, and are better enjoyed by residents. Restored open spaces also show visitors that we recognize the open space gift the Olmsteads left us and want to restore the habitat value to ourselves and to local wildlife it once provided.

14. “The project intends to **extend** its habitat restoration and trail building activities **to the bluff-top overlooking Lunada Bay**.”

While some early materials showed other open space areas in Lunada Bay that could be considered for habitat restoration activities, community reaction to this concept has not been positive. There are no plans to consider the Lunada Bay blufftop as part of restoration activities.

15. “The project is opposed by a **majority** of Lunada Bay residents.”

This assertion is contrary to the vast majority of comments received from LBHOA members, resident volunteers, and on-site resident visitors. We receive significant encouragement and support with an occasional question or suggestion. Many of the concerns are a result of misinformation and misunderstandings that we hope we have addressed here.