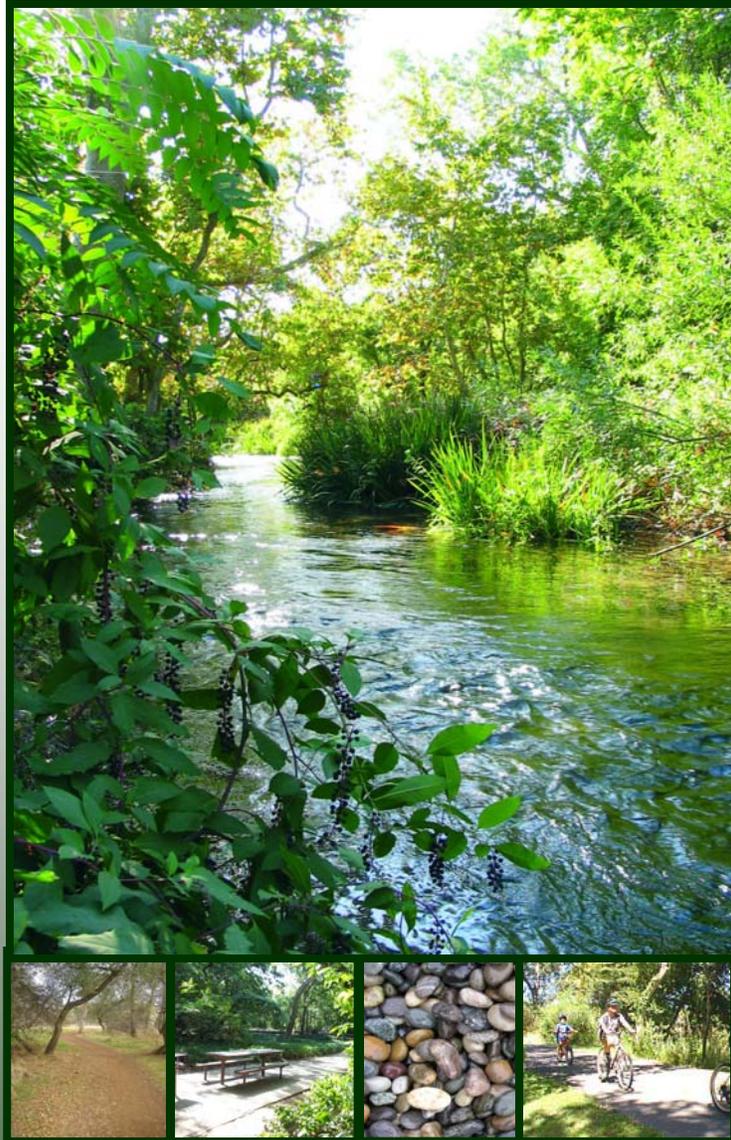


Comanche Creek Greenway IMPROVEMENT PROJECT



City of Chico 2012

INTRODUCTION

The City of Chico owns approximately 20 acres along Comanche Creek between Midway and the Union Pacific Railroad line, referred to herein as the Comanche Creek Greenway. Currently, the land is undeveloped, and public access to the site is restricted. The City intends to improve the site and create an amenity for the surrounding neighborhoods, employment centers, and the greater Chico community. The Comanche Creek Greenway Improvement Project will provide public access to the Greenway and expand bicycle and pedestrian circulation in southwest Chico.

This document includes a description of the site, overall goals for the Comanche Creek Greenway, a site improvement diagram, an explanation of the diagram's components, and guidance for implementation of the improvement project. The improvement diagram depicts the location and type of recreational features envisioned for the site. Ongoing maintenance and management of the site is covered in the Comanche Creek Greenway Management Plan, a complementary document. The City's General Plan indicates that a future study may call for a roadway connection to cross the site. This possibility does not, however, affect implementation of the Project, which simply addresses recreational site improvements. Likewise, implementation of this Project, does not preclude a roadway connection.

The Southwest Neighborhood Creeks, Parks & Open Space Action Group worked closely with City staff in the development of the project. The Group's members represent diverse stakeholder perspectives including bicyclists, employees, environmentalists, business and landowners, and neighborhood residents. Their input was collected and incorporated over a two year period consisting of meetings, site visits, a workshop on possible uses and design of the site, and lastly, review of this document.

SETTING

The 20-acres of City-owned property in the Comanche Creek Greenway consists of two parcels with General Plan designations of Primary Open Space, immediately around the creek, and Secondary Open Space for the remaining area (see **Figure 1**). Approximately 3,500 lineal feet of the Comanche Creek channel lies within these two parcels. Public access to the property has been restricted since its acquisition by the City. Nevertheless, several dirt trails cross the site, and homeless camps are a recurring phenomenon.

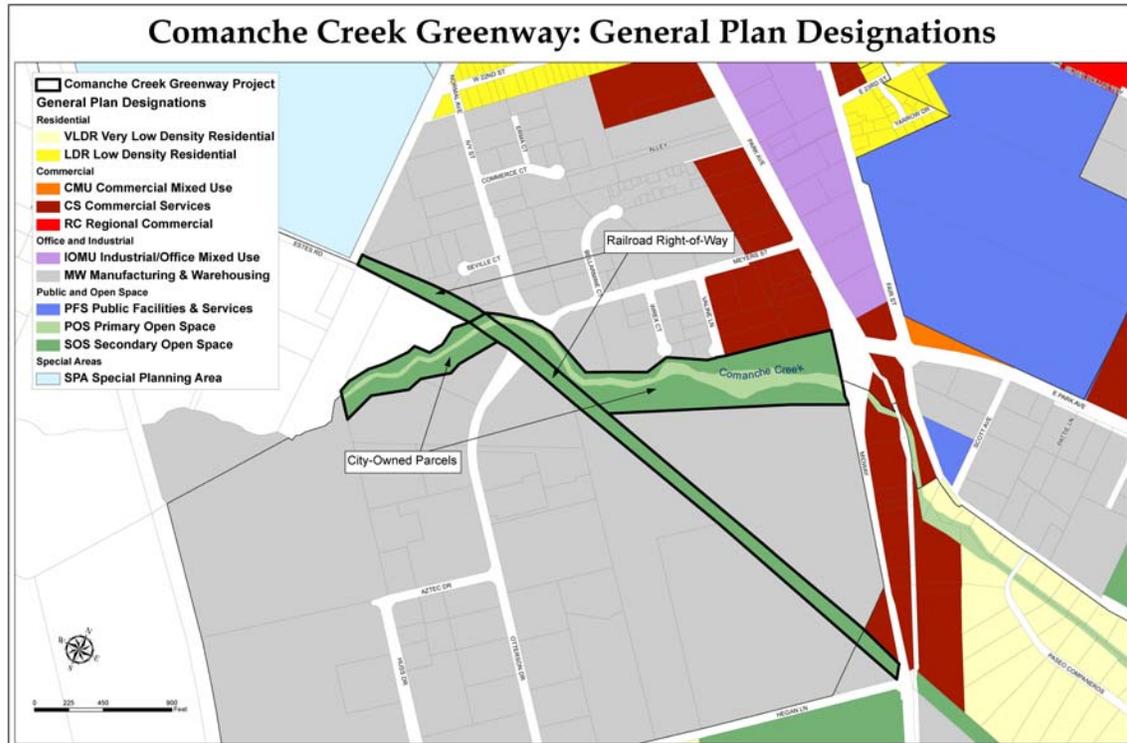


Figure 1

Comanche Creek drains the Doe Mill Ridge and is primarily fed by water from the Parrott-Phelan agricultural diversion from Butte Creek. Storm water run-off from the Chico urban area also feeds into Comanche Creek. Dense riparian woodland and scrub covers the Comanche Creek channel, which is bordered by areas of valley oak woodland and nonnative annual grassland. The aquatic and terrestrial habitats of the creek corridor and woodlands support numerous plant and animal species, providing important protective cover and serving as movement corridors for fish and wildlife. The habitat value of the site as a whole has been compromised, however, by soil compaction from human activity and by the spread of several highly invasive species, such as Himalayan blackberry and nonnative annual grasses.

Figure 2 shows the site's location within the greater Chico area. The site is bound to the immediate north, east, and south by industrial development. An agricultural-residential settlement within Butte County lies to the west. The Southwest Chico Neighborhood lies further to the north, beyond the Meyers Street industrial area, and its residents consider Comanche Creek to be a neighborhood amenity as noted in the Southwest Chico Neighborhood Plan. The Greenway is well situated for recreational use by surrounding neighbors and employees in one of Chico's primary job centers, both of whom have expressed interest in gaining access to the site and improving conditions on the property. In addition to being a relaxing, recreational destination for adjacent neighborhoods, the site also has the potential to attract regional visitors and to provide improved connectivity in the City-wide circulation system. Future studies of circulation in the area of the Comanche Creek Greenway will include analysis of the major intersection at Midway

- Orient activity toward the creek to activate the creek edge
- Connect the area to a regional bicycle/pedestrian network

The Southwest Neighborhood Plan also includes the following recommendations specific to the Comanche Creek area:

- Natural materials, minimal intervention, and passive use should guide the design of open space and pathways.
- Encourage bicycle commuting, employee break/lunch areas, walking/bicycling paths, picnic tables, and a clean, sustainable natural habitat. Recreational uses along the creeks will serve to increase surveillance.
- Remove invasive species and replace with native plants to increase visual access while stabilizing the banks.
- Minimize impervious surfaces, driveways and parking area coverage.
- A Class I, multi-use pathway should be constructed along Comanche Creek, and connect to the envisioned regional rails-to-trails system. A pedestrian and bicycle bridge over Comanche creek accessed from Ivy Street should be considered along with the path alignment.

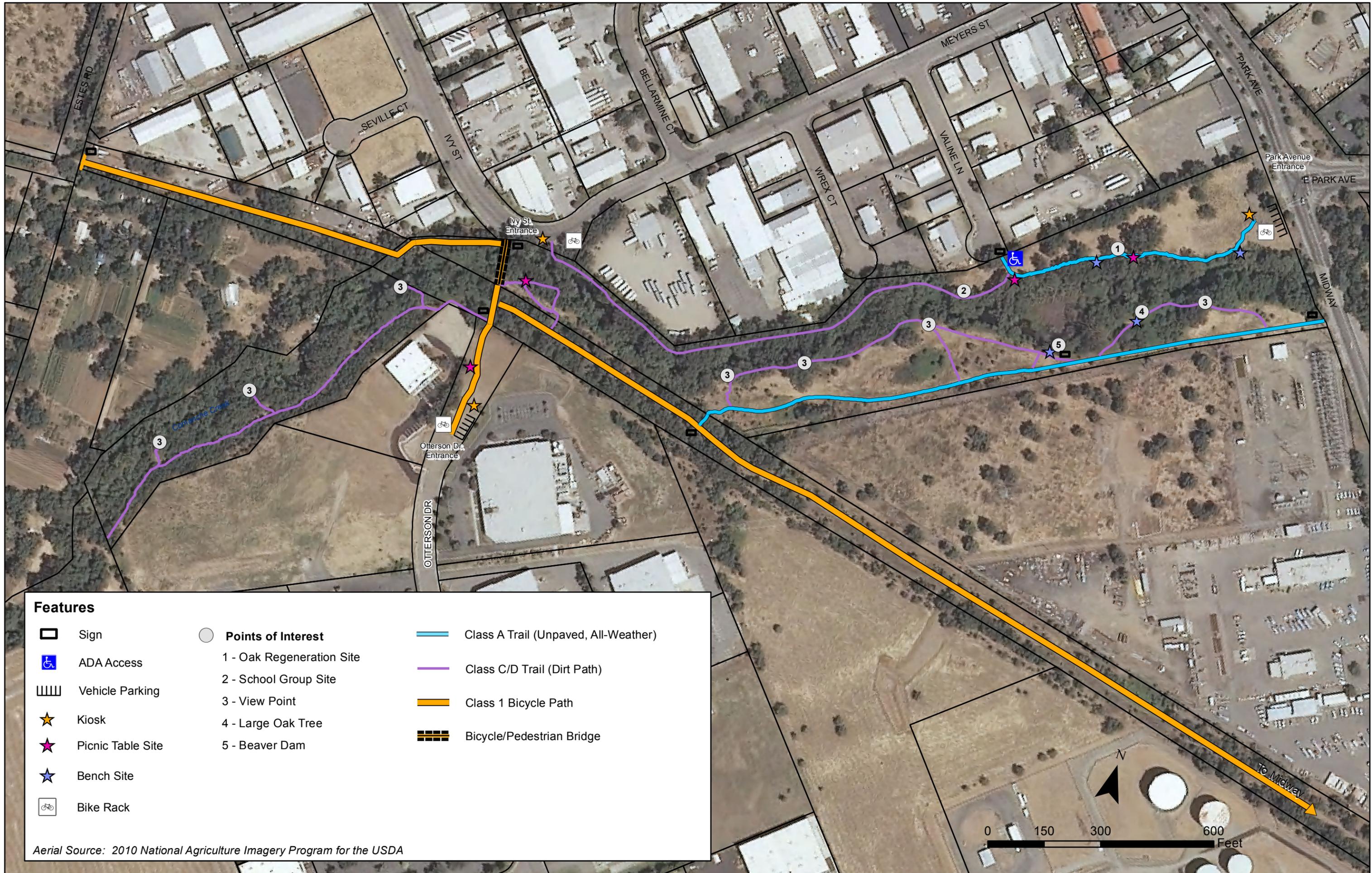
These goals and recommendations are reflected in the Improvement Diagram (**Figure 3**) which is described below.

IMPROVEMENT DIAGRAM

The Improvement Diagram (**Figure 3**) on the following page depicts the site improvements envisioned for the Comanche Creek Greenway. While the Diagram is generally self-explanatory, more detailed descriptions of its features are provided below for clarification. The Diagram and the descriptions below will guide the design of detailed engineering and building plans for construction of the site improvements.

Features shown on the diagram include:

- I. Trails – The Diagram provides a general indication of trail locations, but exact alignments will be determined through site specific engineering. The City of Chico Bidwell Park Trails Manual includes descriptions of trail classifications that are appropriate for trails on the Comanche Creek Greenway. The Trails Manual will be used in development and maintenance of the Comanche Creek trails. The Comanche Creek Greenway Management Plan also provides guidance on maintaining the site’s trails. Two classifications of trails will be developed and maintained on the site:
 - i. *Class A Trails* – These paths are intended to be unpaved, all-weather paths that could accommodate both pedestrian and bicycle activity. The Class A trails will be at least 3 feet wide and have a surface material of granular stone or other durable and permeable material.



Aerial Source: 2010 National Agriculture Imagery Program for the USDA

Figure 3

- ii. *Class C/D Trails* – The Class C/D trails will remain dirt paths that are cleared of vegetation, but otherwise unimproved. They will allow visitor access to the creek, but will not negatively encroach into the sensitive high water area of the creek. As specified in the Bidwell Park Trails Manual, sections of Class C trails may be assigned a Class D designation in areas with scenic values or particular trail qualities that necessitate exemption from specific Class C standards.
- II. Paved Bicycle Path – A paved Class I bicycle path will cross the Greenway, connecting Ivy Street to Otterson Drive. This bicycle path will continue east to the Midway and west to Estes Road, following the former railroad right-of-way properties to which access must be acquired. The path will provide a bicycle and pedestrian connection that will improve regional bicycle and pedestrian circulation. This bicycle path is identified as a planned facility in the 2008 Chico Urban Area Bike Plan, which is a part of the 2030 General Plan.

The Class I bicycle path will have a 12-foot right-of-way (8 feet paved and 2 feet of graded shoulder on each side). The bicycle path on the former railroad right-of-way will include a reference to the historic railroad that once ran across the properties for the Diamond Match Company connecting Stirling City to Chico. This reference could be made through artwork, signs, a bench, or other trailside amenity. To maintain safety along this bicycle path, vegetation will be cleared from the path area, and some lighting will be installed along the path. Lighting would be in the form of full cutoff LED fixtures to minimize light pollution and reduce energy demands.

- III. Bicycle/Pedestrian Bridge – Critical to implementation of the paved bicycle/pedestrian path is the installation of a bridge for bicyclists and pedestrians to cross Comanche Creek between Ivy Street and Otterson Drive. This bridge will allow pedestrians and bicyclists from the Southwest Chico Neighborhood and the Myers Street industrial area to connect with the Hegan Lane industrial area to the south. This bridge is a key component in achieving the goals of improving public access and circulation on the site, as well as improving multi-modal connectivity within the City. The bridge will not accommodate vehicles, other than those used for maintenance or emergency response.
- IV. Vehicle Parking – Vehicle parking will be available at the two main entrances to the site: at the north end of Otterson Drive and at the west end of East Park Avenue. Because the area will be used primarily for bicycle circulation and by the local neighbors for non-intensive recreation, few vehicle spaces (three to ten per parking area) will be needed. One accessible parking space will be provided in each vehicle parking area. The vehicle parking areas will also include associated features such as informative signs and waste/recycling collection bins. Some landscaping will be added to the parking areas to soften the transition between parking areas and open space.

- V. Bicycle Parking – While many bicyclists will traverse the Greenway without stopping, others will want to park their bicycles and explore the site on foot. Bicycle parking will, therefore, be provided in the vehicular parking areas. In addition, the Ivy Street entrance to the site will also include a bicycle parking rack for visitors arriving at the Greenway from the north.

- VI. Picnic Tables, Benches, Kiosks and Points of Interest – The locations for picnic tables and benches shown on the Diagram were selected for their scenic qualities. Most of these sites are located along the Class C/D trails on the north and south sides of the creek. These areas will provide restful destinations for visitors to enjoy the site. Accepting donated benches or picnic tables can be considered at the time of implementation. A maintenance program to “adopt a table or bench” could also be considered to help maintain the features over time. Site maintenance is covered further in the Comanche Creek Greenway Management Plan.

Also shown on the Diagram are kiosks to be installed at the three main entrances to the Greenway. The kiosks will be large signs that introduce the site, include maps and educational information, and provide space for posting notices related to the site. Other Points of Interest indicated on the Diagram will highlight scenic viewpoints along the creek or noteworthy natural features. No improvements are intended for these locations.

- VII. Signs – Signs will be installed in several locations throughout the site to identify the Greenway, explain its allowed uses, help visitors navigate the site, or highlight unique, scenic features. The signs will be constructed in a simple style in keeping with the use of the site for open space and non-intensive recreation.

- VIII. ADA Access – An accessible entrance (compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act) to the site will be created at the end of Valine Lane. The sidewalk on the Valine Lane cul-de-sac will be modified and connected to an accessible path that leads to a site near the creek that includes an accessible picnic table.

IMPROVEMENT PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

The Improvement Diagram (**Figure 3**) depicts the general location and types of features to be installed in the Greenway. It does not include detailed materials selections or engineering designs. For example, the general location for a picnic table may be shown on the Diagram, but the type of table and its exact location will not be determined until detailed engineering designs are prepared.

Project implementation may occur in stages, as funding permits. Full implementation of this Improvement Project would include all six of the following suggested sub-projects:

- 1) Vehicle parking areas and kiosks
- 2) Trail improvements
- 3) Bicycle/pedestrian bridge
- 4) Benches and picnic tables
- 5) ADA accessible entrance
- 6) Class I bicycle path on former railroad right-of-way

The associated environmental review for this Improvement Project addresses complete implementation of the above six sub-projects. Additional environmental review would need to be considered for future additions or changes to the site. Successful implementation of these projects depends not only on securing funding for design and construction, but for maintenance costs as well. A funding mechanism to support ongoing maintenance of the improvement features will be identified. The complementary Comanche Creek Greenway Management Plan explains the site's operations, maintenance, allowed uses, and vegetation management. Over time, the Management Plan may be modified as necessary to respond to changing site conditions.