

THE IMPACT OF THE BRUSH CREEK TRAIL
ON PROPERTY VALUES AND CRIME

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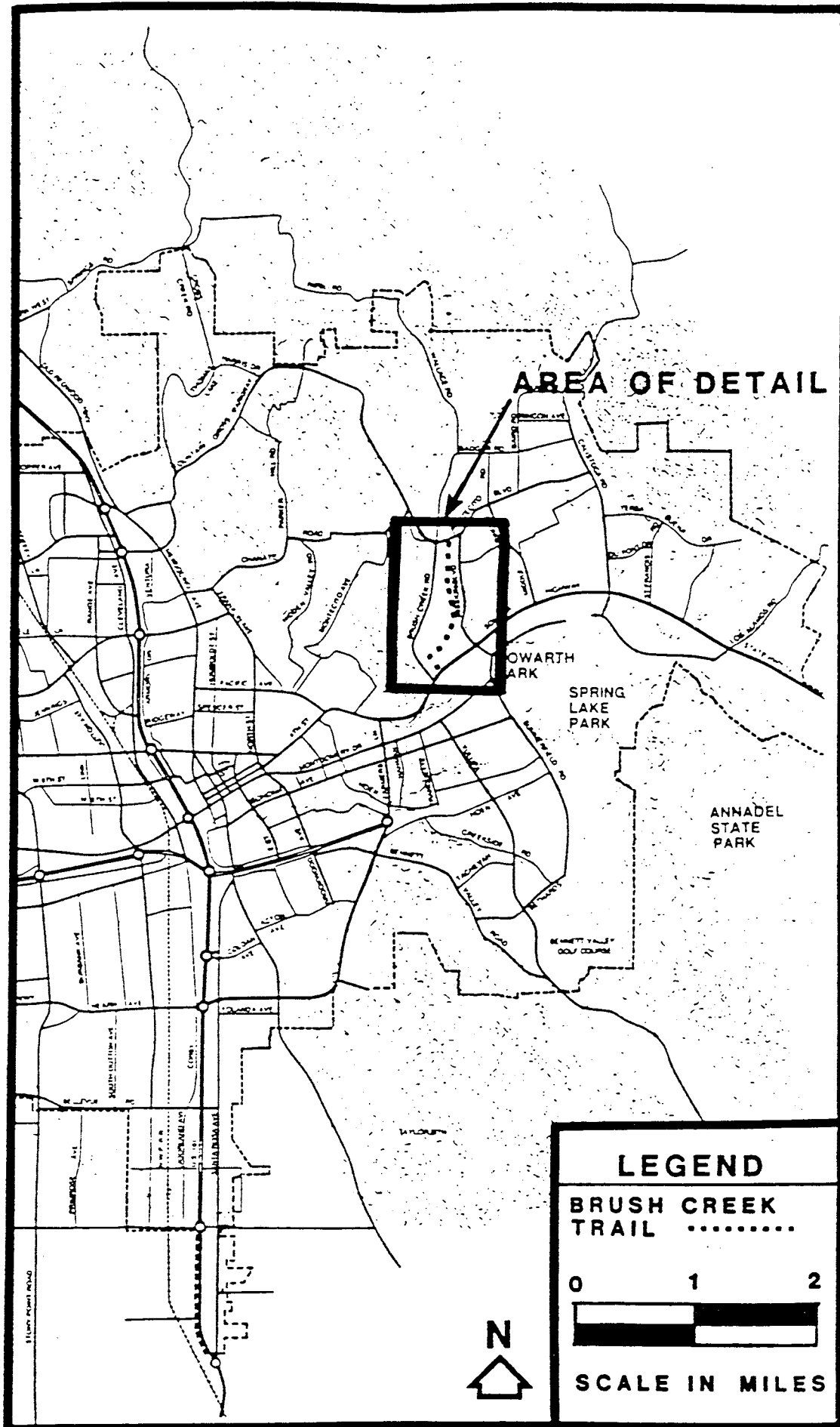


FIGURE 1 SITE MAP

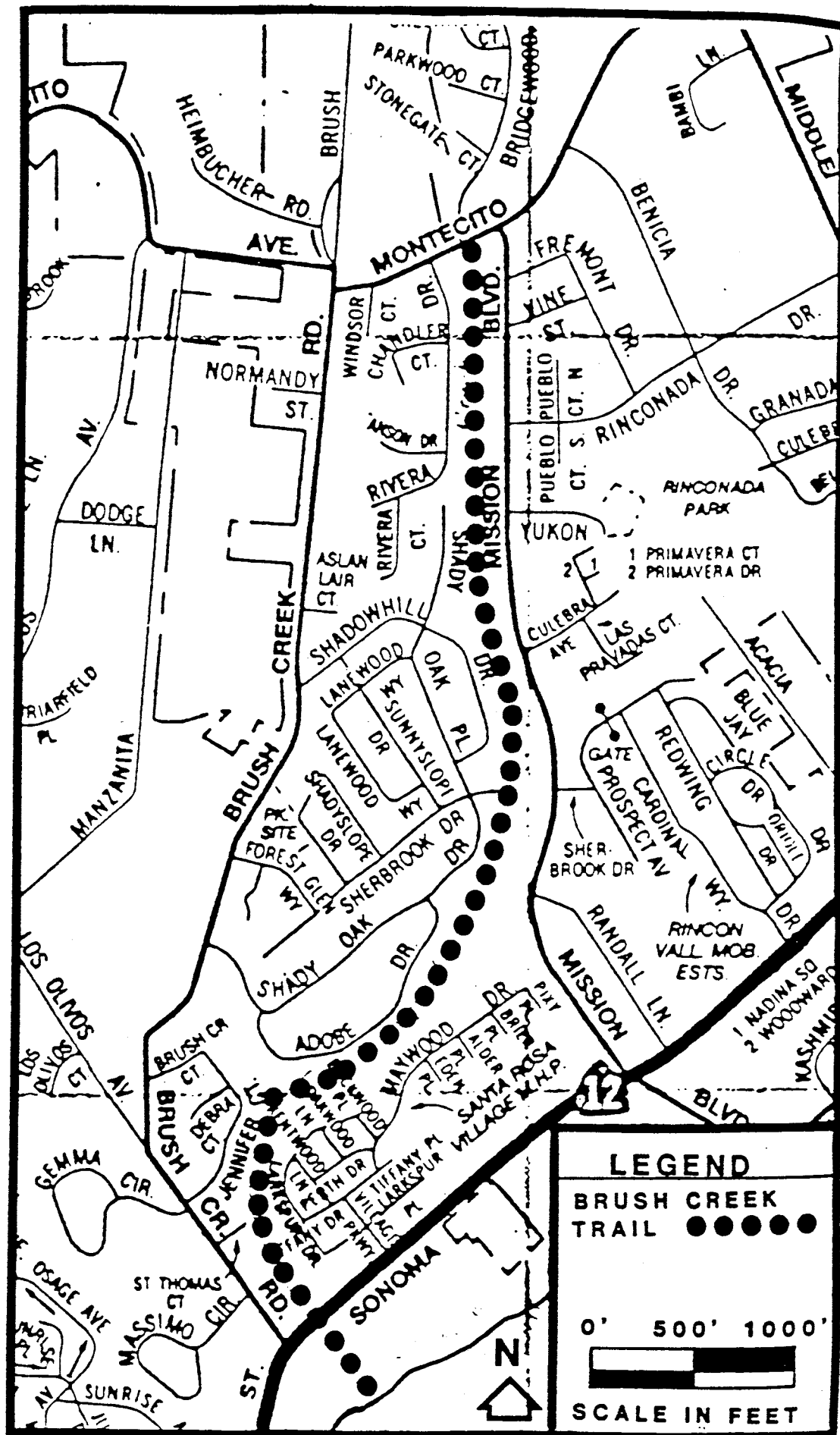


FIGURE 2 BRUSH CREEK TRAIL SURVEY AREA

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to determine what effect, if any, a bicycle/pedestrian trail has on property values and crime rates. Concerns by local property owners that proposed trails may negatively affect property values or increase crime prompted this survey. Due to its 9 year existence, the Brush Creek Trail, built along Brush Creek in Santa Rosa's Rincon Valley, was selected as the focus of this survey.

TRAIL PROFILE

In 1962, the Sonoma County Water Agency constructed a flood control reservoir in Rincon Valley and channelized Brush Creek, adding a gravel service access road along the length of the creek. In 1983, the City of Santa Rosa constructed a 1.25 mile, 10 foot wide asphalt bicycle path from Montecito Boulevard to Highway 12, along the former gravel access road. Approximately eighty-five homes are immediately adjacent to the trail with property lines as close as one foot to the trail. The trail is maintained by the City of Santa Rosa Public Works Department, whereas the creek is maintained by the Sonoma County Water Agency.

METHODOLOGY

In this survey, data was collected by door to door interviews with residents adjacent to the Brush Creek Trail. Seventy-five residents were surveyed on how long they had lived in the neighborhood; how often they use the trail;

how the trail has affected their overall quality of life; what effect the trail would have on selling their homes; what effect the trail had in their decision to buy their homes; what type of fence they had behind their homes; how the trail has affected their privacy; and what problems, if any, they have had with crime caused by trail users.

Additionally, three telephone interviews were conducted with apartment and mobile home park managers near the trail; thirty-one real estate agents with listings adjacent to trails/creeks; and four law enforcement agencies concerning crime statistics along trails/creeks.

Apartment and mobile home park managers were asked to respond on the effects of the Brush Creek Trail on crime incidents on their properties.

Real estate agents were asked to respond if a natural creek, modified creek, or a public trail had any effect on the marketability and value of homes adjacent to trails/creeks.

Finally, fifteen cities were contacted by telephone in and outside of California, for information on surveys regarding the effect of trails on property values and crime. Five trail surveys were received and are included in the text of this survey.

SURVEY OF RESIDENTS WHO OWN HOMES ADJACENT TO THE BRUSH CREEK TRAIL

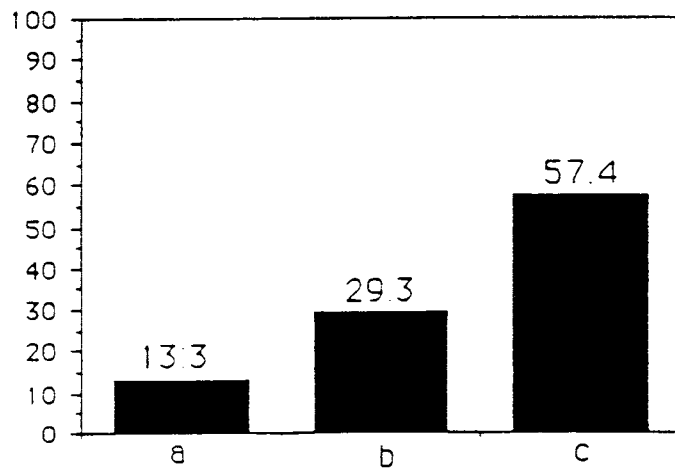
Methodology: (Questions 1 through 10) A door to door survey was conducted over two weekends in March, 1992, of homeowners immediately adjacent to the Brush Creek Trail. Seventy-five residents responded to the interview.

Objective: The objective of survey questions 1, 2, and 3 was to determine how long residents have lived in the neighborhood, how often they use the trail, and their perception of the quality of life living nearby the Brush Creek Trail.

Results: Questions 1, 2, and 3

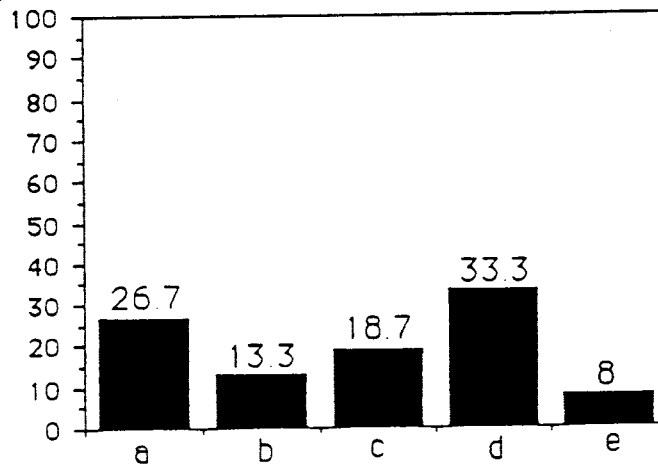
1. How long have you lived in this neighborhood?

- a. less than 1 year
- b. 1 to 5 years
- c. over 5 years



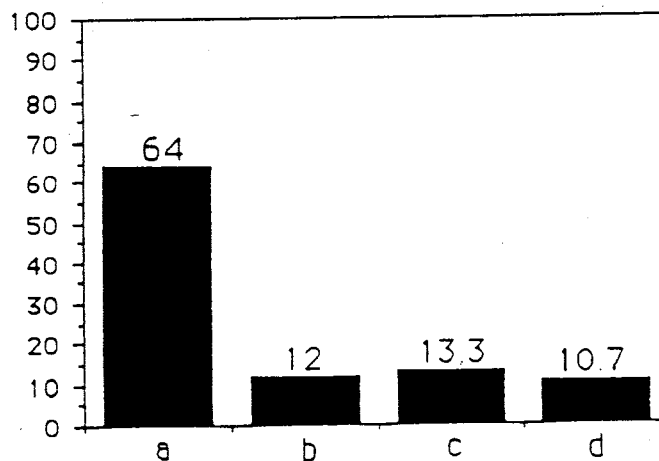
2. How many times a month do you use the Brush Creek Trail?

- a. 4 times or less
- b. 4 to 10 times
- c. 10 to 20 times
- d. over 20
- e. never



3. In general, do you feel that the presence of the Brush Creek Trail has

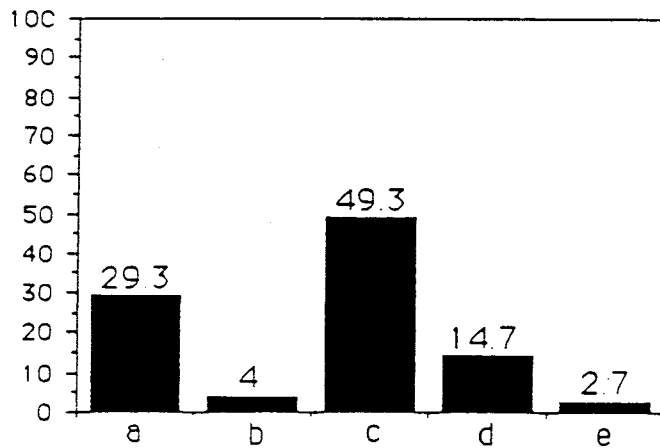
- a. increased the quality of life in the neighborhood
- b. decreased the quality of life in the neighborhood
- c. had no effect on the quality of life in the neighborhood
- d. do not know



Objective: The objective of survey questions 4, 5, and 6 was to determine if the Brush Creek Trail had any effect on the perceived marketability and value of homes adjacent to the Brush Creek Trail.

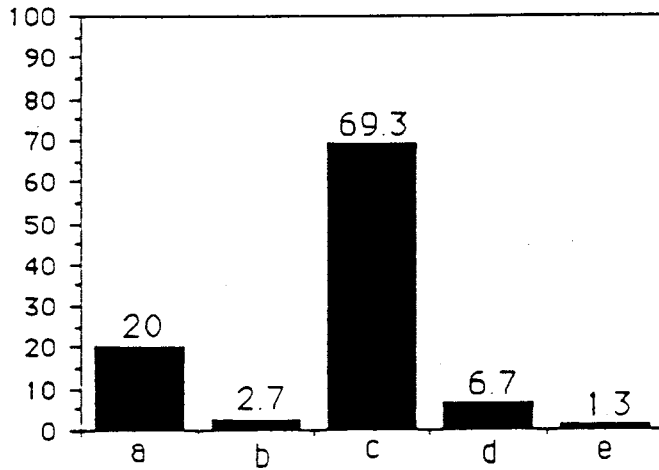
Results: Questions 4, 5, and 6

4. If you were to sell your home today, do you think the Brush Creek Trail would
- a. make the home slightly easier to sell
 - b. make the home significantly easier to sell
 - c. have no effect on selling the home
 - d. make the home slightly more difficult to sell
 - e. make the home significantly more difficult to sell



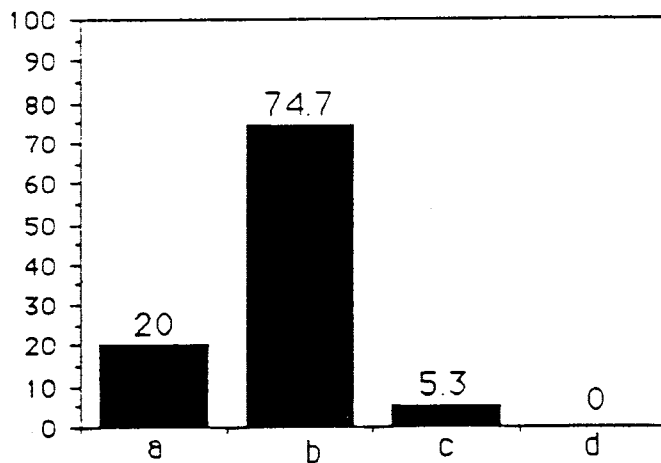
5. If you were to sell your home today, do you think the Brush Creek Trail would

- a. make the home sell for slightly more
- b. make the home sell for significantly more
- c. have no effect on the selling price of the home
- d. make the home sell for slightly less
- e. make the home sell for significantly less



6. When you bought your home, did the Brush Creek Trail

- a. slightly influence your decision
- b. have no effect in your decision
- c. cause slight misgivings
- d. cause significant misgivings

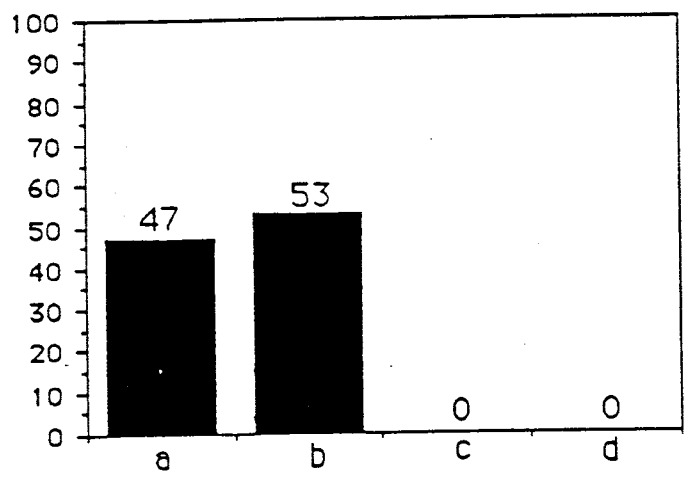


Objective: The objectives of survey questions 7 and 8, were to determine what type of fence homeowners had behind their house and how the trail affected their privacy.

Results: Questions 7 and 8

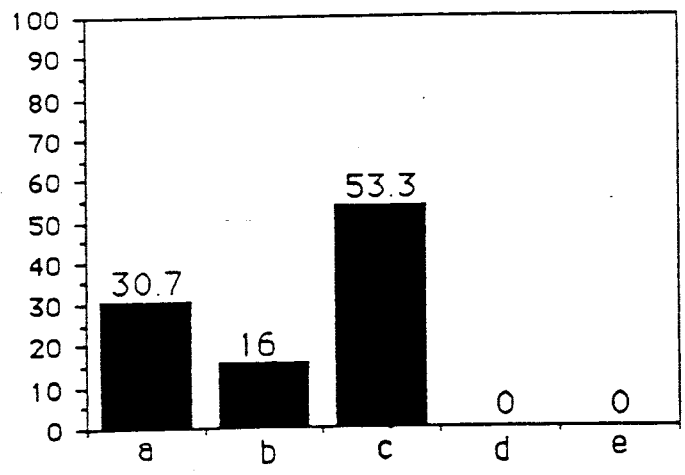
7. What type of fence, if any, do you have behind your house?

- a. solid fence
- b. see through fence
- c. landscaping
- d. no fence



8. How do you feel the Brush Creek Trail affects your sense of privacy?

- a. decreases privacy slightly
- b. decreases privacy significantly
- c. has no effect on privacy
- d. increases privacy slightly
- e. increases privacy significantly



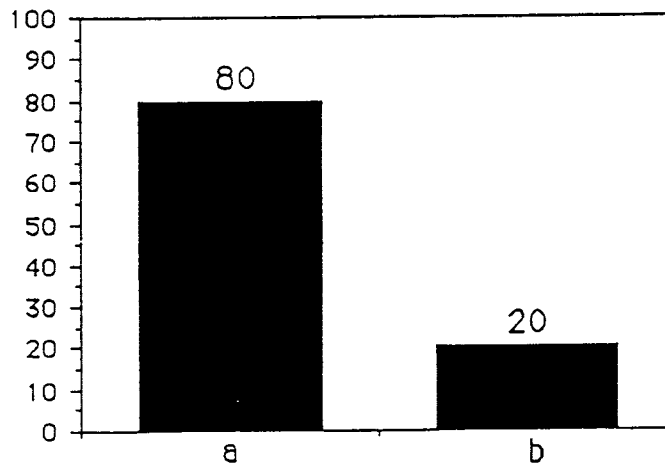
Objective: The objective of survey question 9, was to determine if the trail had any effect on crime as experienced by homeowners.

Results: In question 9(b), twenty percent of the residents who answered yes to this question had directly experienced crime from a trail user. Twelve residents had experienced vandalism (see additional comments below graph for types of vandalism experienced), with two incidents of arson involving adolescents playing with matches, and one burglary.

9. Have you directly experienced any crime where someone using the Brush Creek Trail was involved?

- a. no
- b. yes

If yes, what type of crime? (See additional comments below)



ADDITIONAL COMMENTS TO QUESTION 9(b)

Types of vandalism:

Response	Number of responses
• "Kids threw mud at house."	1
• "Kids threw rocks in pool."	1
• "Kid threw rock, broke tile on roof."	1
• "Kids broke window."	2
• "Kids threw eggs."	3
• "Kids broke fence."	3
• "Kids shot paint balls on fence/house."	1

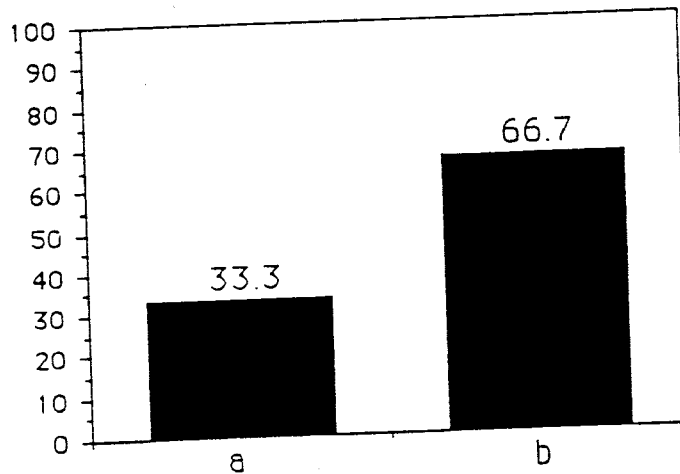
Objective: The objective of question 10, was to determine if residents had any additional comments not mentioned in the survey regarding the Brush Creek Trail.

Results: In question 10(b), sixty-seven percent of property owners had additional comments. (See additional comments below graph)

10. Do you have any additional comments not mentioned in this survey regarding the Brush Creek Trail?

- a. no
- b. yes

If yes, what additional comments (See additional comments below)



ADDITIONAL COMMENTS TO QUESTION 10(b)

Listed in order of most common response. Some respondents had more than one comment to the following question, "Do you have any additional comments not mentioned in this survey regarding the Brush Creek Trail?"

Response	Number of Responses
• "Like it, glad it's there."	11
• "Use it for exercise and walking the dog."	9
• "Like to watch the wild life."	6
• "Glad no home is behind mine."	5
• "Good for the community, an asset."	4
• "Needs to be lighted at night."	3
• "Too many kids loitering."	3

- "Like to see it continued to Montgomery Village." 3
- "Enjoy watching people walk by." 3
- "Didn't want it at first, like it now." 2
- "People need to clean up after their dogs." 2
- "Safe place to see neighbors." 1
- "Remove it." 1
- "Close it at night." 1
- "Afraid to go into tunnel under Highway 12." 1
- "Too much noise." 1
- "Concerned about spraying." 1
- "Like to see more trees along trail." 1
- "Don't take out blackberries." 1

SURVEY OF APARTMENT AND MOBILE HOME MANAGERS NEAR THE TRAIL

Objective: The objective of this survey was to determine if the residents in apartments and the mobile home park near the Brush Creek Trail had experienced any crime related to users of the trail.

Methodology: A telephone survey was conducted of managers in two apartment complexes and one mobile home park. Managers were asked if complaints were made by residents regarding Brush Creek Trail.

Results: One apartment manager revealed that one apartment had been burglarized last summer by a trail user. The other apartment manager revealed that residents never complain nor has any crime occurred due to the Brush Creek Trail. The same results were expressed by the mobile home park assistant manager, who commented that the adult mobile home park residents love the trail.

SURVEY OF REAL ESTATE AGENTS

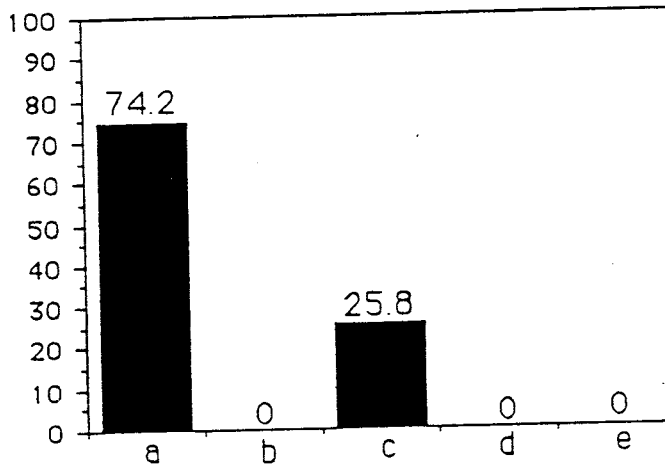
Objective: The objective of this survey was to determine if a natural creek, modified creek, or a public trail had any effect on the marketability and selling price of homes adjacent to a natural creek, modified creek, or public trail.

Methodology: Due to the limited number of real estate agents having recent sales along the Brush Creek Trail, additional real estate agents were surveyed in and around Santa Rosa having experience with similar trail/creek properties. These properties were located along the Santa Rosa Creek, Copeland Creek in Rohnert Park and Lynch Creek in Petaluma. A total of thirty-one real estate agents were contacted to participate in this telephone survey.

Results: Questions 1, 2, 3, and 4

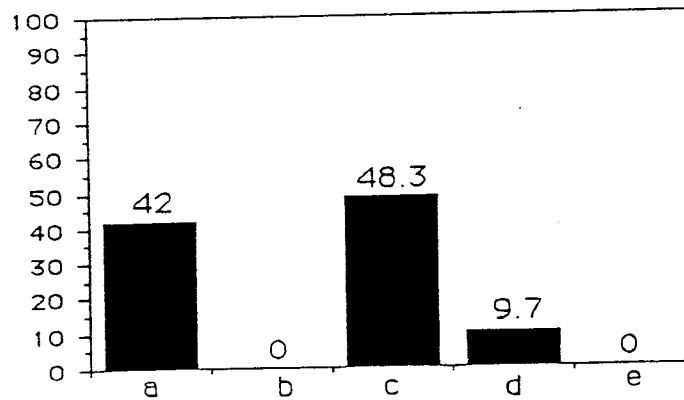
1. In your experience with home sales immediately adjacent to a natural creek, the creek will

- a. make the home sell for slightly more
- b. make the home sell for significantly more
- c. have no effect on the selling price of the home
- d. make the home sell for slightly less
- e. make the home sell for significantly less



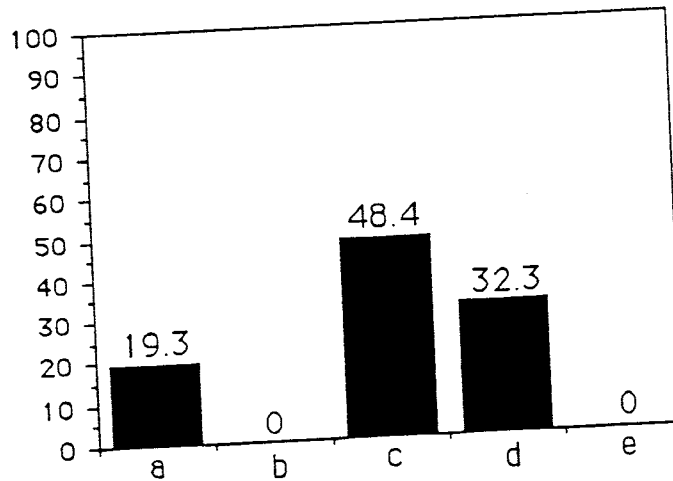
2. In your experience with home sales immediately adjacent to a modified creek, (channelized with rock rip rap) the creek will

- a. make the home sell for slightly more
- b. make the home sell for significantly more
- c. have no effect on the selling price of the home
- d. make the home sell for slightly less
- e. make the home sell for significantly less



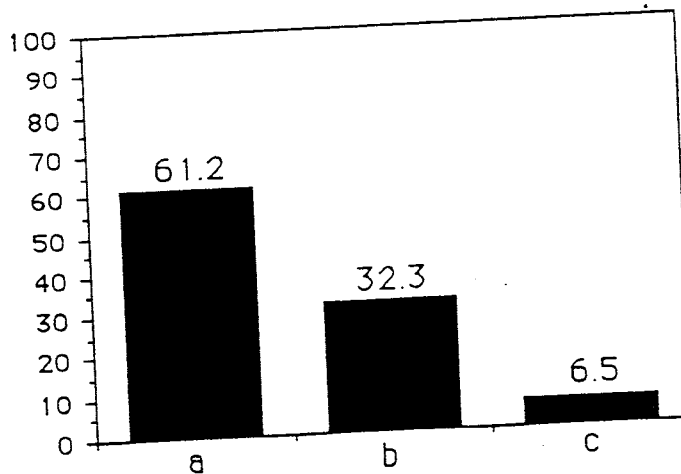
3. In your experience with home sales immediately adjacent to a public trail, the trail will

- a. make the home sell for slightly more
- b. make the home sell for significantly more
- c. have no effect on the selling price of the home
- d. make the home sell for slightly less
- e. make the home sell for significantly less



4. When you are trying to sell a home adjacent to a trail and creek, do you use the trail and creek as selling points?

- a. yes
- b. no
- c. sometimes



SURVEY OF LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

Objective: The objective of this survey was to determine whether the presence of a trail/creek affects the crime rate in the area.

Methodology: Telephone interviews were conducted with the following law enforcement agencies with their respective neighborhood trails/creeks.

1. Santa Rosa - Brush Creek Trail
2. Rohnert Park - Copeland Creek Trail
3. Petaluma - Lynch Creek Trail

Results: All the agencies compile their crime data by districts. For each district, a number is assigned that indicates the total number of specific crimes in a given year. The crime data is not street specific. Therefore, by using this method, there is no way to determine if the Brush Creek Trail, Copeland Creek Trail, or the Lynch Creek Trail was used to commit crimes.

SURVEY OF PROPERTY VALUES IN OTHER CITIES

Objective: The objective of this survey was to determine if trails/creeks in other cities had any effects on the marketability and selling price of homes adjacent to a trail.

Methodology: Fifteen cities were contacted by telephone in and outside of California, for information on surveys regarding the effect of trails on property value. There were five respondents.

Results: The five trail surveys received were from Dubuque, Iowa; Tallahassee, Florida; Lafayette, California; Seattle, Washington; and Plymouth, Minnesota. The following results grouped under "other" were not specified in the surveys.

In surveys along the 26 mile, 9 year old, Heritage Trail in Iowa, seventy-three percent of the residents reported that the trail had no effect on their property values. Fourteen percent felt the trail would increase the value of their homes and thirteen percent stated other. Eighty-two percent of the real estate agents concluded the trail would have no effect on property values, twelve percent reported increased property values and six percent reported other.

Along the 16 mile, 3 year old, St. Marks Trail in Florida, seventy-four percent of the homeowners surveyed felt the trail had no effect on their property values, whereas sixteen percent felt their property values had increased with ten percent reporting other. Eighty percent of the real estate

agents surveyed concluded property values were not effected, whereas twenty percent felt the value of the home increased with the trail.

Along the 7.6 mile, 15 year old, Lafayette/Moraga Trail, forty-four percent of the residents stated the trail had no effect, fifty-three percent stated their homes would increase in value, whereas three percent stated other. Fifty-two percent of the realtors surveyed concluded the trail would have no effect on property values, twenty-four percent felt the value of the home increased with the trail and twenty-four percent reported other.

In a survey of homeowners along the 12 mile, 14 year old, Burke-Gilman Trail in Seattle, Washington, forty percent of the residents reported the trail had no effect, twenty-two percent reported a positive effect, eight percent felt their property value increased, whereas thirty percent had no opinion. Forty-three percent of the realtors concluded the trail had no effect, thirty-two percent stated a positive effect and twenty-five percent concluded the trail would have a negative impact on property values.

In a survey of homeowners along the mile, 18 year old, Luce Line trail in Minnesota, thirty-two percent felt the trail had no effect, fifty-eight percent reported a positive effect, nine percent reported a negative effect and one percent reported other.

(See Appendix A for chart)

SURVEY OF CRIME STATISTICS IN OTHER CITIES

Objective: The objective of this survey was to determine if trails/creeks in other cities had any effects on the crime rates to adjacent homeowners.

Methodology: Fifteen cities were contacted by telephone in and outside of California, for information on surveys regarding the effect of trails on crime.

Results: The five trail surveys received were from Dubuque, Iowa; Tallahassee, Florida; Lafayette, California; Seattle, Washington; and Plymouth, Minnesota. The following results grouped under "other" were not specified in the surveys.

The most commonly reported problems by homeowners along the 26 mile Heritage Trail in Iowa included illegal motor vehicle use, thirty-nine percent; cars parked near or on property, twenty-four percent; litter, twenty-one percent; with sixteen percent reporting other.

Along the 16 mile St. Marks Trail, thirty-nine percent of the homeowners reported illegal motor use; twenty-nine percent, litter; twenty percent

reported loitering near or on property; with twelve percent reporting other.

Along the 7.6 mile Lafayette/Moraga Trail, forty-three percent of the homeowners reported problems from unleashed pets; twenty-seven percent, noise from the trail; twenty-seven percent, litter; with three reporting other.

The existence of the Burke-Gilman Trail has had little, if any, effect on crime and vandalism to homeowners. Law enforcement officers who patrol the trail stated that there is not a greater incidence of burglaries or vandalism of homes along the trail.

Eighty-five percent of the Luce-Line rail-trail homeowners have not experienced major problems with the trail. Of the fifteen percent experiencing problems, complaints encountered have been litter; loss of privacy and trespassing.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this survey was to determine what effect, if any, a bicycle/pedestrian trail has on property values and crime to adjacent properties. This survey does not support claims that trails adjacent to residences cause an increase in crime. Most of these crimes that can be directly attributed to the Brush Creek Trail involved vandalism by adolescents. Considering the trail has been open for 9 years, the number and types of crime polled in this survey are minor in nature. This survey finds that the Brush Creek Trail does not cause an increase in crime. These results are additionally supported by other trail surveys out of the area, as mentioned in the text of this survey.

Additionally, this survey does not support claims that trails adjacent to residences cause a negative impact on property values. To the contrary, the overriding opinion in this survey by residents is that property values were not effected at all, or if anything, increased due to the Brush Creek Trail. The surveys from other areas further support this finding.

Perhaps the most overwhelming opinion by residents along the Brush Creek Trail is that the trail/creek has a positive effect on the quality of life in the neighborhood.

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APPENDIX A

SURVEY OF ADJACENT HOMEOWNERS: EFFECT OF TRAIL ON PROPERTY VALUES

CITY	TRAIL	POSITIVE EFFECT	NO EFFECT	INCREASE VALUE	NEGATIVE EFFECT	NO OPINION	OTHERS NOT SPECIFIED
Dubuque, Iowa	Heritage	73%		14%			13%
Tallahassee, Florida	St. Marks	74%		16%			10%
Lafayette, California	Lafayette/Moraga	44%		53%			3%
Seattle, Washington	Burke-Gilman	22%	40%	8%		30%	
Plymouth, Minnesota	Luce Line	58%	32%		9%		1%

SURVEY OF REALTORS: EFFECT OF TRAIL ON PROPERTY VALUES

CITY	TRAIL	POSITIVE EFFECT	NO EFFECT	INCREASE VALUE	NEGATIVE EFFECT	NO OPINION	OTHERS NOT SPECIFIED
Dubuque, Iowa	Heritage		82%	12%		6%	
Tallahassee, Florida	St. Marks		80%	20%			
Lafayette, California	Lafayette/Moraga		52%	24%		24%	
Seattle, Washington	Burke-Gilman	32%	43%		25%		
Plymouth, Minnesota	Luce Line						