



**TOWN OF LOS GATOS**  
**ARTS AND CULTURE**  
**COMMISSION**

MEETING DATE: 05/15/2024

ITEM NO.: XXXX

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DATE: May 15, 2024  
TO: Arts and Culture Commission  
FROM: Ryan Baker, Library Director  
SUBJECT: Highway 17 Bicycle/Pedestrian Overcrossing Project – Discussion of Architectural Themes, Thematic Element Locations, Thematic Elements, and Art Project Locations

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Receive a brief presentation from staff and provide input on themes, thematic element locations, and future art project locations.

**BACKGROUND:**

The Highway 17 Bicycle and Pedestrian Overcrossing Project is a high priority project in the Town's adopted Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan (Plan) most recently adopted by the Town Council in 2020. As identified in the Plan, the project will improve bicycle and pedestrian mobility, encourage active transportation, close a gap in the Town's bicycle network, and enhance safety for all modes of travel on Blossom Hill Road between Roberts Road West and Roberts Road East.

The project will include a new 20' wide bicycle/pedestrian bridge over Highway 17 on Blossom Hill Road just south of the existing bridge, and construct approximately ¼ mile of dedicated 20' wide approach paths on the west and east sides of the overcrossing. The approach paths will include new retaining walls on the outside and inside of the path throughout portions of the project limits.

The project's design scope of work includes an architectural component that is focused on the aesthetics and artistic elements of the structures that will be built with the project, including but not necessarily limited to the bridge, retaining walls, deck, railings, benches/resting areas, and trailheads. As the design heads from the concept to the final design phase, the design team is seeking input from the Arts and Culture Commission on the following items:

**PREPARED BY:** Sean Rose  
Special Projects Manager, Parks and Public Works Department

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1. The **architectural theme(s)** that could be implemented on the project to inform the architectural/artistic content at the thematic element locations. The thematic elements will be designed and constructed as part of the project. Potential themes for consideration are provided in Attachment 1. The design team is looking for no more than 2-3 themes for the project.
2. The **thematic element locations** within the project structure(s) that will be designed with thematic elements that support the themes selected in Item 1 above. Examples of thematic element locations are the inside and outside of the overcrossing barrier and surfaces of the retaining walls. Potential locations are shown in Attachment 2.
3. **Thematic elements** that could be presented in the thematic element locations. Examples of thematic elements on other similar projects are presented in Attachment 3.
4. **Future art project locations.** The thematic elements discussed above will be designed and constructed as part of this project. Future art project locations are locations within the project limits where art projects could be implemented after construction of the this project. The project team has included a 1% art budget in its project estimates for grant funding applications that may be utilized as part of a future art project(s) within the project area. Although the art project(s) would occur after the project construction is complete, we are seeking the Commission's input now on where those locations could be so that the design team can set aside areas for their implementation. For example, if the inner bridge barriers were identified for a future art project (similar to the existing ped/bike bridge to Los Gatos High School) then we could include insets in the barrier that could be used to mount art in the future. Examples of art could be murals, paintings, sculptures, statues, etc. Examples of public art on other similar projects is shown in Attachment 4.

At this meeting, staff will provide a brief presentation on the above topics, followed by a discussion between the Commission and the project team, and is seeking input at this meeting that will inform the project's final design phase that will commence in the coming months.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

The architectural design of the themes, thematic locations, and thematic elements is included in the design scope of work and budget previously approved by the Town Council. The additional funding for art project(s) would likely come from a combination of grants and/or Town funds.

Attachment 1 – Potential project themes

Attachment 2 – Thematic element locations

Attachment 3 – Examples of thematic elements

Attachment 4 – Public art installations on similar transportation projects

## **Attachment 1 – Potential project themes**

## BLOSSOM HILL/SR 17 BPOC – PUBLIC ART – THEMES & POSSIBILITIES – 2024

### I. PUBLIC ART THEME ALTERNATIVES (LONG LIST)

- **Theme 1 – “The Cats”**

- Description – Not just any “cats”, but the 2 cats Los Gatos is named after: Cougar (Mountain Lion), and Bobcat. Celebrates the name and ecology of Town’s location, the Alta California land grant *La Rinconada de Los Gatos*. Theme could focus on the 2 cats or expand to include natural ecology of the Town’s site and Santa Cruz Mountains.
- Theme Type – Nature, Natural History, Ecology

- **Theme 2 – “Cats”**

- Description – All things “cat”, not just Cougar and Bobcat. Celebrates the subfamily *Felinae* which includes cougars, bobcats and domestic cats. Broader than Theme 1, theme embraces cats culturally as well as naturally or ecologically – lots of possibilities with domestic cats in particular!
- Theme Type – Ecology, Human/Cat interaction, Culture – including “Pop Culture”

- **Theme 3 – “Native Americans”**

- Description – Celebrating the history, culture, present, and future of the Ohlone community. Theme is special opportunity to engage Ohlone community directly in development and/or management of arts program as well as creating the art.
- Theme Type – Cultural History, Community Self-Expression

- **Theme 4 – “Art about Art”**

- Description – Celebrates Town’s early/mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century role as an Arts Colony, including recognized artists, writers, musicians, actors, etc. with Los Gatos connections – examples include John Steinbeck, Neal Cassidy, Olivia de Havilland, Yehudi Menuhin, Marshal Merrit. Note: Similar theme could support Sports.
- Theme Type – Cultural History, Town History, Personal History

- **Theme 5 – “Trains and Trams”**

- Description – Town is at nexus of evolving railroad history, including passenger rail between South Bay and Santa Cruz, Bay Area tram and interurban services, historic narrow gage and steam trains, and - possibly? - future transit connections to VTA light rail. Theme could be general (South Bay/Monterey Bay rail) or element-specific.
- Theme Type – Cultural History, Town History, Railroad History, Railway Personalities

- **Theme 6 – “Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad”**

- Description – Key “specific” theme under “Trains and Trams”. Celebrates beloved miniature railroad in Vasona Park, near bridge. Theme could focus on life of Billy Jones,

## BLOSSOM HILL/SR 17 BPOC – PUBLIC ART – THEMES & POSSIBILITIES – 2024

evolution of Wildcat Railroad, miniature railroads in CA or beyond, features of the railroad, railroad's future.

- Theme Type – Cultural History, Railroad History, Railway Personalities

- **Theme 7 – “Vasona Park”**

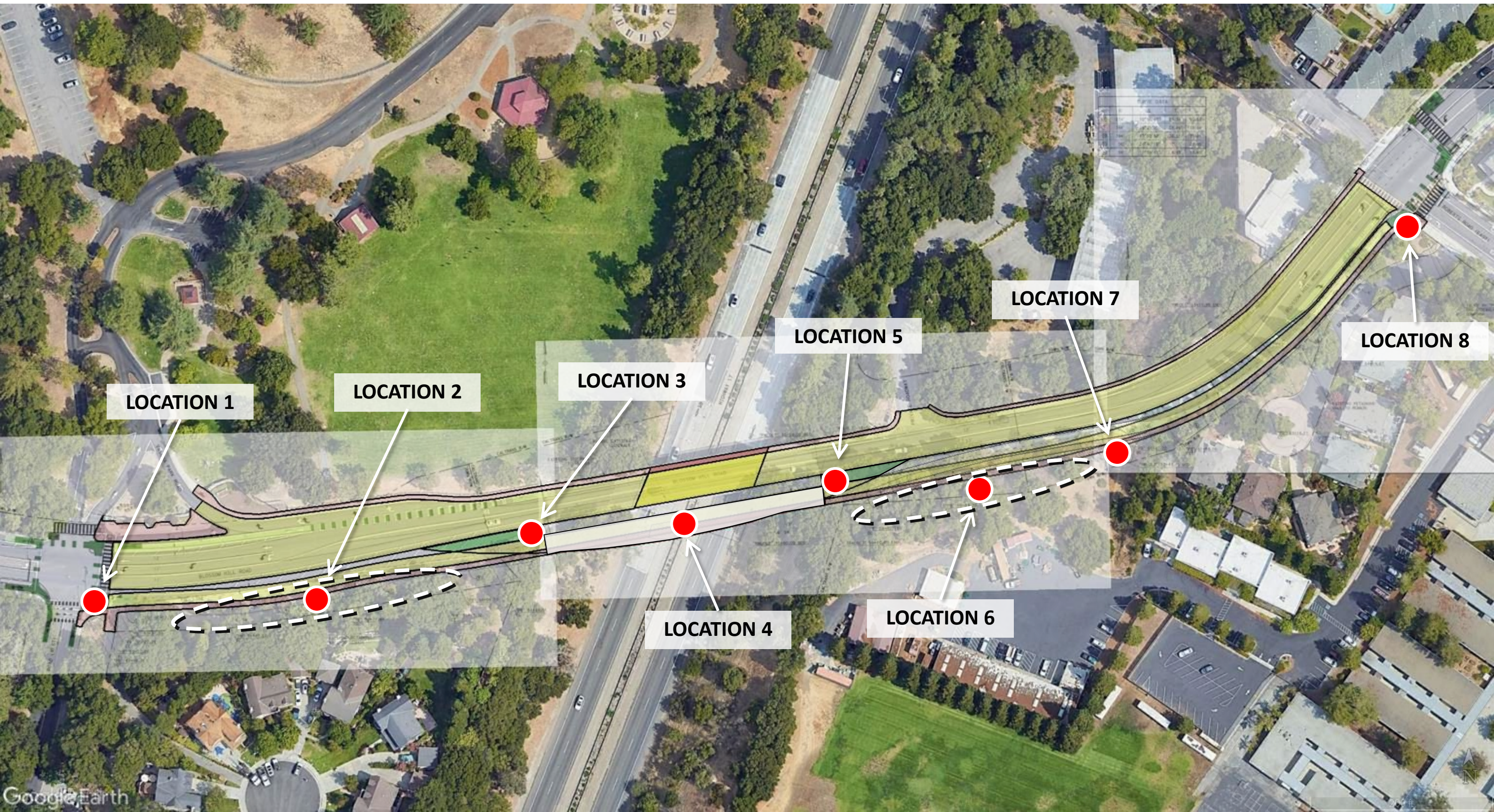
- Description – Theme celebrates Town's principal (county) park on Los Gatos Creek, adjacent to bridge. Theme could be historic (how park developed), cultural (park activities, how people use the park), ecological (nature, creek/lake ecology, natural vs. human intervention), planning (park future). Note: Could also be element of Theme 8.
- Theme Type – Cultural History, Town History, Natural History, Ecology

- **Theme 8 – “Los Gatos Creek”**

- Description – Creek is Town's key organizing geographic feature, embedded in Town's history and culture. Theme could focus on creek as natural and recreational resource, ecological history, human intervention (hydraulic engineering), creek within Town or greater watershed. Note: “Specific” themes could include LG Creek Trail, Vasona Park.
- Theme Type – Cultural History, Town History, Ecological History, Engineering History

## **Attachment 2 – Thematic element locations**





1 – BLOSSOM HILL / SR-17 BPOC – PUBLIC ART LOCATION PLAN





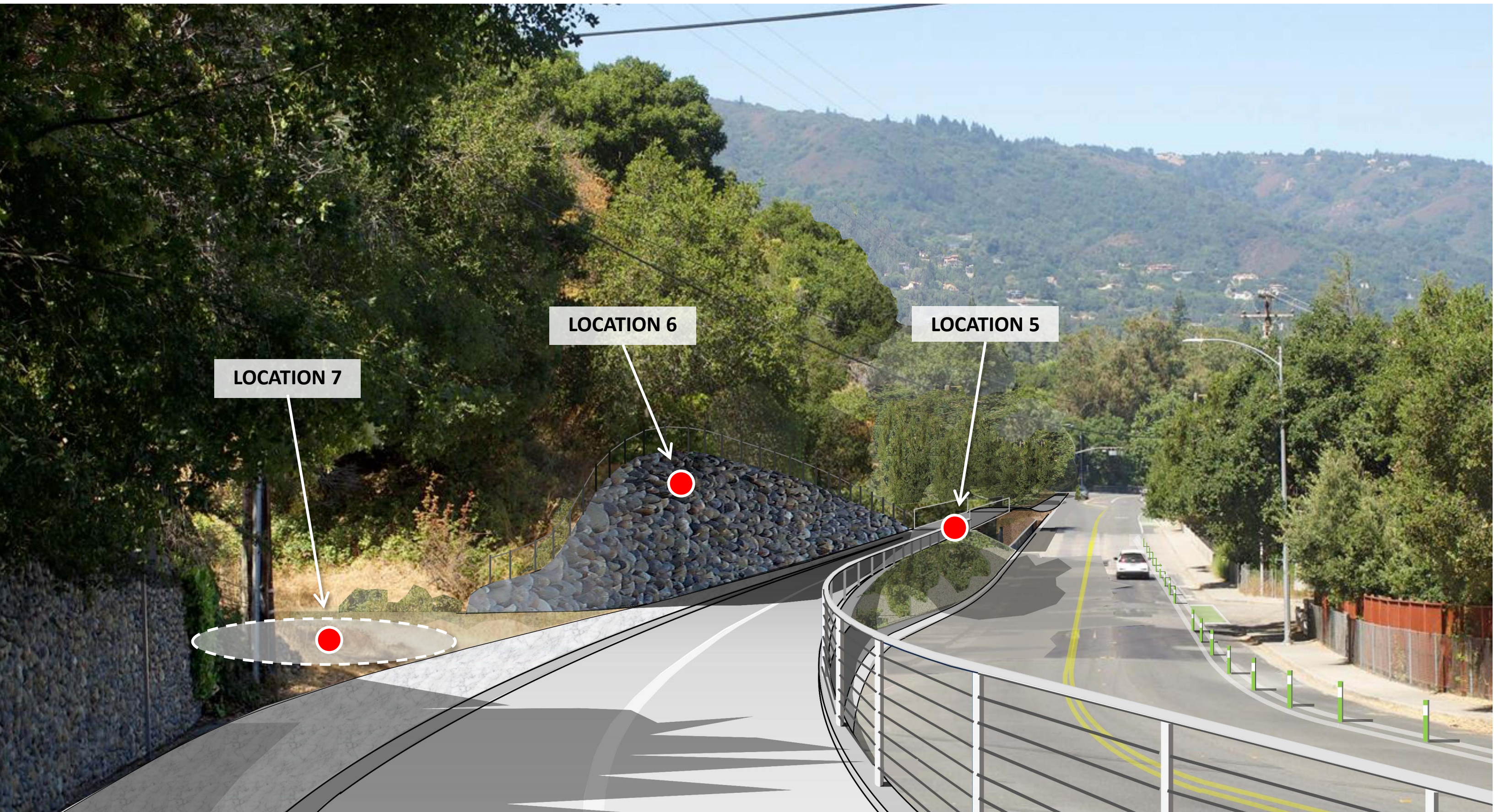
2 – BLOSSOM HILL / SR-17 BPOC – PUBLIC ART LOCATIONS – EAST-FACING VISUAL SIMULATION





3 – BLOSSOM HILL / SR-17 BPOC – PUBLIC ART LOCATIONS – NORTH-FACING VISUAL SIMULATION





4 – BLOSSOM HILL / SR-17 BPOC – PUBLIC ART LOCATIONS – WEST-FACING VISUAL SIMULATION



### **Attachment 3 – Examples of thematic elements**





Google















## **Attachment 4 – Public art installations on similar transportation projects**



















