

GREETINGS AGAIN FROM THE SITE OF OUR NEW HOME!

Beth El has now completed the work of restoring the stretch of Codornices Creek on our property to vibrant health after years of neglect. Our contractors have developed a new creek channel to halt erosion and landslides, and they have planted the banks with native vegetation.

This restoration is one of the unique aspects of our building project. Codornices Creek is one of a series of creeks that run through Berkeley east to west from the Berkeley hills to the bay. This “reach” or creek portion lies within the larger than 1/2 square mile Codornices Creek Watershed that stretches to Tilden Park. The creek has a fairly torturous path through town where it alternates between open areas, including the section in Live Oak Park, and underground culverted portions, before finally emptying into the Bay near Golden Gate Fields.

At the time Beth El purchased the site, the open portion of the creek was in dangerous disrepair, with eroded gashes along its banks and extremely overgrown non-native vegetation strangling the stream. There was virtually no place from which to see the actual creek, and just about the only way to have a “creek experience” was by rappelling by rope down the 27 foot high sheer banks.

Beth El volunteered early in its planning process to create a restoration program for the open portion of the creek that is reflective of the Congregation’s desire for Tikkun Olam or healing of the Earth and its spirit.

A great design team was put together with Clearwater Hydrology and H2O Science developing the channel reconstruction design and documents while Tito Patri, the Project Landscape Architect, created a native riparian plant palette for the revegetation of the reconstructed slopes.

The professional team was augmented by a committee of incredibly patient congregation volunteers including Mark Aaronson, Linda Gerson, Sue Austin and Michael Lamb, who worked through many meetings with the neighborhood creek group. The Congregation’s Creek Committee has now increased their vocabulary with terms like “thalwegs”, “weir crests” and “revetments”.

More significantly, the Committee worked with our consultants to secure required approvals from:

- California Department of Fish & Game
- RWQCB (Regional Water Quality Control Board)
- Army Corps of Engineers
- City of Berkeley Public Works Commission

Through these discussions and design sessions a restoration program was developed to achieve four principal objectives:

1. Stabilize the open, on-site portion of the creek, including its steep, upper banks, by constructing a natural channel that is armored by native rock boulders to convey water without excessive erosion or sediment deposits.
2. Accommodate the required structural improvements to the south bank for the driveway, required Fire Department access, and city mandated parking for the new building.
3. Provide for future fish passage through this reach in the event that severe downstream barriers are some day removed.
4. To the extent possible, re-establish a healthy riparian corridor and aquatic habitat that is also aesthetically and spiritually enriching for both Congregation Beth El and its neighborhood.

The work to improve the creek is now complete, and the new channel and improved banks will stop the erosion and landslides that occurred in the past. The banks have been planted and covered with straw to protect the new plantings. We can all feel proud that we have made a



– Greetings article continues on the next page.