

The Montecito Community Trails Partnership

Overview

The Santa Barbara County Public Works Department collaborated with the non-profit Bucket Brigade to build a network of pedestrian facilities in Montecito.

Challenge

In January 2018, a disaster struck the Montecito community. A debris flow destroyed hundreds of homes and left massive amounts of infrastructure buried and damaged. Uncovering and rebuilding back damaged infrastructure consumed extraordinary resources. Opportunity to build improvements simultaneously, like installing a new network of community pedestrian paths, was limited due to already stretched staff and funding. But the community lacked safe, ADA-compliant paths on almost every road in this semi-rural area, and previous efforts to remove encroachments and clear frontage for these projects met strong resistance from adjacent owners and associations resistant to change.

Solution

The Montecito Neighborhood Trails Partnership paired the unique assets of the Bucket Brigade, a local non-profit, with those of the Santa Barbara County Public Works Department to develop and build over 2.2 miles of pedestrian paths along high-volume travel routes throughout the community. This work was completed in less than two years, costing approximately 1/5 the cost of similar public works projects. The community support for the projects, including most adjacent owners and associations, was overwhelming.

Innovation

This program takes community partnerships to the next level using organizations set up specifically to create these types of improvements from a community-driven impetus. The Bucket Brigade provides volunteers from the community to do the outreach and construction of some features. They also fundraised to provide these services, requiring no County funding for their work. When opposition arose, it was not the County explaining why the project was needed and beneficial; it was members of their community. The County provided the technical expertise

for the projects, and funded the hard infrastructure (asphalt work, ADA ramps, drainage work, etc.). The Bucket Brigade did the rest, and they fundraised for future path maintenance work.

Results

Over 2.2 miles of pedestrian paths and trails have been built. The Bucket Brigade is well on its way to complete fundraising for an 8.5-mile trail network at \$2.5 million. This partnership reduced the average design and construction cost by 60-80%. The Montecito Neighborhood Trail Network includes ADA-friendly decomposed granite pathways along main thoroughfares, informal compacted shale trails along side roads, and nature trails through open spaces and parks.

Replicability

Local agencies can replicate this project with the critical components of organization, teamwork, and dedication. The Bucket Brigade was formed immediately following the 1/9 Debris Flow in 2018. What started as a grassroots response to the debris flow has grown into an organization that organizes, trains, and deploys community members to work on disaster preparedness projects. The County and the Bucket Brigade are currently working on similar models in two other locations. By working together and developing a long-term plan, the Santa Barbara County Public Works Department and The Bucket Brigade leverage each other's strengths to improve public safety in Montecito.

Project or Program Contact

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Additional Materials

- Walk Montecito Brochure - <https://sbbucketbrigade.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/sm-CURRENT-walkmontecito-8pg-brochure.pdf>
- Walk Montecito Website - <https://sbbucketbrigade.org/walk-montecito/>