

Date: March 24, 2026

To: Honorable Mayor and City Council

From: Councilmember Kristina Duggan

Subject: Presentation on the Open Channel at Colorado Lagoon

RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation to request the City Manager to provide a presentation to the City Council within 30 days on the Colorado Lagoon Open Channel Project, including an overview of the project, the causes of construction delays, the anticipated timeline for completion, and any lessons learned to help prevent similar delays in future City infrastructure projects.

DISCUSSION

The open channel at Colorado Lagoon will significantly improve the health of the lagoon, which previously had some of the worst water quality in the state, and will benefit surrounding neighborhoods and the city as a whole. However, the way this project has unfolded has left many residents understandably frustrated after years of construction, shifting timelines, and limited clarity about when the work will be finished.

After more than three years of disruption, residents deserve clear answers about the project's timeline, transparency about what caused the delays, and a clear understanding of how the City will prevent similar issues on future infrastructure projects.

While the decision to close both Colorado Street and Eliot Street at the same time was made before my time in office, I understand it was based on the expectation that doing so would allow the project to be completed within 18 months. Those closures have now been in place for 39 months, significantly affecting how residents move through the neighborhood. What was once a short trip across the lagoon now requires detours for many residents, including families and students traveling to nearby schools.

These extended road closures have also shaken the community's confidence that other infrastructure projects will be completed as proposed. Other construction in the immediate area has heightened community concern that it may further limit ingress and egress to their homes.

While these investments are important and necessary, maintaining public confidence that the City can deliver infrastructure projects as proposed, especially projects that limit access through neighborhoods, is critical as we continue to invest in our transportation network.

Several factors have contributed to the delays. During construction, crews discovered more than twenty unmarked utility lines that had not been identified during pre-construction due diligence, many of which were located in the critical path for reopening the roads. Addressing these conflicts required additional coordination and change orders. The project also encountered asbestos abatement requirements, and regulatory agencies required modifications to installation methods after construction had already started. Our field office is located directly adjacent to the construction site, and we have observed extended periods where little to no visible activity was occurring. These periods have raised understandable questions from residents about the pace of construction and overall project management.

At the same time, residents and the surrounding community have struggled to get clear and consistent information about the project's progress and timeline. The expected reopening of the roads has shifted several times, and the current estimate is simply "sometime this summer." After more than double the originally anticipated construction period, residents still do not have a clear and reliable understanding of when the work will be finished.

Major public infrastructure projects require clear timelines, transparency, and accountability. This presentation should also provide an opportunity to examine how this project was managed and what changes can be made to prevent similar delays on future City projects. That includes reviewing how contracts are structured, how timelines are enforced, and how the City holds contractors accountable when projects fall significantly behind schedule.

Residents deserve accountability for the delays, a credible timeline for completion, and confidence that the City is taking steps to ensure that future projects are delivered more reliably.

This recommendation has been reviewed by Budget Manager Rebecca Bernstorff on March 16, 2026.

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation requests staff to present to City Council within 30 days on the Colorado Lagoon Open Channel Project. The project is currently in construction and is budgeted as part of the City's Capital Improvement Plan. This recommendation is anticipated to have a minimal impact on staffing and is in alignment with existing City Council priorities. There is no known job impact to this recommendation.

SUGGESTED ACTION

Approve recommendation.

Honorable Mayor and City Council

March 24, 2026

Page 3

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kristina Duggan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Kristina Duggan, Councilmember, Third District