Residents and Businesses Have More Clean Energy Choices

El Cerrito now has more energy choices. The City recently joined MCE, a not-for-profit, public power agency that partners with PG&E to provide electrical service.

MCE offers lower rates for cleaner energy and supports the development of local, renewable energy sources. MCE offers 50-100% renewable energy from solar, wind, bioenergy, geothermal and hydroelectricity sources, compared to PG&E’s 22%* renewable energy.

Aside from competitive rates and cleaner energy, not much will change for MCE customers. PG&E will continue to handle electric delivery services, including power line maintenance, meter reading, and monthly bills. If you choose MCE, your bill will include charges for PG&E’s continuing services, but will no longer include charges for electrical generation from PG&E. Those charges will be replaced by MCE’s lower electrical generation rates.

Based on present PG&E rates and MCE rates which will be effective at the time of El Cerrito enrollment, both residential and commercial customers will pay less for their electricity with MCE. For customers with solar, MCE offers one of the best Net Energy Metering programs in California. MCE pays premium rates (retail plus $0.01 per kWh) for any excess electricity produced by your solar panels. And MCE credits never zero out. MCE offers checks for the full amount of credits earned over $100. MCE bills solar customers differently than PG&E and at the time of MCE enrollment, PG&E bills customers for all electric charges incurred since their last ‘true-up’ statement. We encourage all solar customers to thoroughly read the material and call MCE to understand the changes.

If your home or business is located in the City of El Cerrito, your electric account(s) will automatically switch to MCE in May, 2015, unless you choose to opt out and stay with PG&E’s energy service, or if you have any questions. The call center is staffed 24 hours a day with representatives who can speak English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Mandarin, Cantonese, Tagalog, and Laotian to help process opt out requests.

Call MCE at 1(888) 632-3674, email info@mceCleanEnergy.org, or visit www.mceCleanEnergy.org/ElCerrito to opt out of MCE’s Light Green service and remain with PG&E’s energy supply portfolio. You can also go online for a list of upcoming community meetings to learn more about your options.

* Most recently reported by PG&E
UPCOMING EVENTS!

Saturday, April 18
EARTH DAY CELEBRATION
Volunteer for an Earth Day work party and enjoy a volunteer lunch at the Community Center. To pre-register, call 215-4350 or go online to www.ecenvironment.org.

When: Work parties, 9 a.m.–Noon; Lunch, Noon–1:30 p.m.
Where: Work party locations vary
On-the-day registration and lunch at the Community Center, 7007 Moeser Lane

Saturday, April 25th
DRAFT URBAN GREENING PLAN COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE
This Plan identifies needs, opportunities and strategies for creating a greener, more environmentally sustainable, and livable City. Come to a Community Workshop to share your thoughts on the Draft Urban Greening Plan, including proposed strategies for enhancing public places and open spaces. The Draft Plan provides detailed strategies for four key opportunity areas: Fairmont Park, the Hillside Natural Area, lower Fairmount Ave (Carlson to San Pablo Ave), and “Blue Belt to Green Belt” connections across the city. This planning effort is made possible by a grant financed by State Proposition 84. Read more at www.ElCerritoUrbanGreening.org.

When: 9 a.m.–1 p.m.
Where: City Hall
10890 San Pablo Avenue

Saturday, April 25
ANNUAL SPRING BOOK SALE
The Friends of the El Cerrito Library Spring Book Sale features a large selection of books on many subjects. All items only $0.40 each! Sales raise funds to purchase new library books and other materials and benefit activities of the Library, particularly children’s programs. For more information, go to www.ccclib.org (click on Friends, then click on El Cerrito).

When: 10 a.m.–4 p.m.
Where: El Cerrito Library
6510 Stockton Ave

Saturday, May 2
SUNDAY, MAY 3
NATIVE PLANT SALE EXTRAVAGANZA
Shop at native plant nurseries on one or both days. The Native Plant Sale Extravaganza is part of the Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour. But you do not have to register for the tour in order to shop the plant sale. For participating nurseries and other details go to www.bringingbackthenatives.net/plant-sale.

Sunday, May 3
BRINGING BACK THE NATIVES GARDEN TOUR
Free, self-guided tour showcases bird and butterfly friendly, pesticide free, water conserving, low maintenance gardens in Alameda and Contra Costa counties. More than 40 garden talks are scheduled. This annual event is sponsored by the City and County Clean Water Program. Space is limited and registration is required. Register or volunteer at www.bringingbackthenatives.net.

When: 10 a.m.–5 p.m.
Where: Locations vary

Thursday, May 7
THE BEAUTIFUL COUNTRY
Contra Costa County Library’s Big Read program presents a series of events related to Tim O’Brien’s “The Things They Carried”, a book of short stories about the experiences of an American platoon in Vietnam. As part of this series, the El Cerrito Library, the City of El Cerrito, and Rialto Cinemas will offer a free screening of The Beautiful Country, the story of Binh, a young man born to a Vietnamese mother and an American father during the Vietnam War. Rated R. Program details are online at www.el-cerrito.org/bigread.

When: 7:15 p.m.
Where: Rialto Cinemas Cerrito
10070 San Pablo Ave

Saturday, May 2
APPLY TO BE A 4TH OF JULY FESTIVAL VENDOR
Interested in a booth at the 4th of July Festival? Limited booth space is available on a first come-first-served basis. Application packet and payment for non-food booths are due on May 15th. The applications can be mailed to or dropped off at the Community Center. For online registration, go to: www.el-cerrito.org/july4 and click “Online Submittal”. For additional information, contact Bridget Cooney in the Recreation Department at 559-7015.

Sunday, May 17
HILLSIDE FESTIVAL
Attend El Cerrito’s second annual Hillside Festival in the city’s Hillside Natural Area. Wildflower and native plant hikes, a pop-up bike park, hands-on educational events for kids, and historical talks will take place throughout the day. All events are free. Learn how you can help preserve the Hillside and protect its habitat.

When: 10 a.m.–5 p.m.
Where: Enter at the Schmidt Lane trail head near the Recycling Center

Saturday, May 2
SPRING CITYWIDE GARAGE SALE
Keep waste out of landfills, shop for great deals, and get to know your El Cerrito community. Garage Sale listings will be available starting April 23. Go online to www.el-cerrito.org/garagesale or look for self-serve literature stands at the Community Center and Recycling Center.

When: 9 a.m.–3 p.m.
Where: Various locations around town
UPCOMING EVENTS!

Tuesday, May 12th
DRAFT ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN PUBLIC WORKSHOP
Learn about the City’s Transportation Plan, an update to the 2007 Circulation Plan for Bicyclists and Pedestrians. Come to a community workshop and give your feedback during the public comment period. Learn more at www.el-cerrito.org/ATP.
When: 7 p.m.
Where: City Hall
10890 San Pablo Avenue

Thursday, May 14
BIKE TO WORK DAY
Meet City staff and chat about bicycling and walking at the City’s Energizer Station. It doesn’t matter what you’re riding, where you go, or how often. To participate in Bike to Work Day, all you have to do is ride! Free goodies available.
When: 7–9 a.m.
Where: New Location! Ohlone Greenway @ Fairmount Ave. (near the new rain garden)

Monday, June 8
SUMMER CAMP
Congrats to all graduates! Last day of school for West Contra Costa Unified School District students is June 5. City Recreation Department summer camps are offered June 8 through August 21. See page 6 for details.

Sunday, June 14
BIKE THE BRIDGES
El Cerrito Police Department proudly supports Bike-the-Bridges, an annual bicycle ride to benefit the Special Olympics. After the ride, enjoy lunch at the Waterfront Park in Martinez, including a craft beer festival and live music. Pre-registration required. Call Sgt. Shawn Maples at 215-4435 or visit www.el-cerrito.org/bikethebridges for more details or to get involved.
When: 6:30 a.m.–4 p.m.
Where: Waterfront Park, Martinez

Thursday, June 18
CLEAN ENERGY CHOICE COMMUNITY MEETING
Electricity account holders in El Cerrito switch to energy provider MCE on May 1, unless they choose PG&E. The City hosts informational meetings on April 15 (Community Center, 7 p.m.), and June 18. See story on page 1.
When: 6–8 p.m.
Where: City Hall
10890 San Pablo Avenue

Friday, July 3
Saturday, July 4
CITY OF EL CERRITO & worldOne 4TH OF JULY FESTIVAL
Get warmed up for the 4th of July Festival by attending a free performance of the high school jazz band. Bring your own blanket or chair and picnic dinner.
When: 5–7 p.m.
Where: Cerrito Vista Park
950 Pomona Avenue

When: 10 a.m.–6 p.m.
Music until 7 p.m.
Where: Cerrito Vista Park
950 Pomona Avenue

Tuesday, August 4
NATIONAL NIGHT OUT
Host a block party to bring your neighborhood together on National Night Out. El Cerrito’s Night Out provides a unique opportunity for residents to connect with the Police Department and each other. Learn about safety and crime prevention. Call 215-4414, extension 30, to receive more information.
When: Evening
Where: Your neighborhood

Help with Home Improvement Projects

THINKING ABOUT SPENDING your tax refund on a home improvement project? If there is a renovation in your future, you should know that a building permit is required for improvements, conversions, and other work, including some electrical and plumbing projects.

You are encouraged to contact the Community Development Department for information on additions, remodels, alterations, and repairs of residential and commercial buildings, and the construction of new dwellings. Permits and inspections ensure your project meets the minimum building and zoning code requirements that protect your health and safety, and, when necessary for specialized work, that the contractor is licensed, bonded, and insured for the work being performed.

City staff are available during regular City Hall business hours to answer any questions that may occur to you as you prepare your project. Go online to www.el-cerrito.org/building for helpful tips regarding building permits, including a submittal checklist. Or call 215-4360 to speak to someone in the department. If you’d prefer to speak to a department representative in person, visit City Hall from 8 a.m.–4 p.m. on Monday and Wednesday, or 8 a.m.–6 p.m. on Tuesday and Thursday. City Hall is also open on alternate Fridays from 8 a.m.–4 p.m. For details, refer to the calendar at www.el-cerrito.org/fridays.

Hiring a contractor

WHEN HIRING A contractor, be sure to check that those contractors are licensed. And get at least three bids on your project. For tips on selecting a licensed, qualified contractor, go online to the website www.cslb.ca.gov/Consumers.
4th of July Festival 2015

For the past 17 years, the City of El Cerrito and worldOne radio have hosted the 4th of July Festival in Cerrito Vista Park. This event is full of fun activities for the whole family including food, entertainment, carnival games, kids rides, an art show, vendor booths, and more.

This free Independence Day celebration is made possible by local businesses and individuals.

Individuals and groups interested in volunteering are encouraged to contact the Recreation Department at 559-7000 or email recreation@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us. Volunteers are needed to help with advance publicity and pre-event set-up, as well as on Saturday, July 4, the day of the event.

More information about volunteering is on the City of El Cerrito’s website at www.el-cerrito.org/july4festival.

City Opens New Rain Gardens

The new Ohlone Greenway rain gardens are examples of “green infrastructure” and another way that El Cerrito is working to build a more sustainable city.

When it rains, stormwater races through the street, picking up grease, grime, and grit before flowing into storm drains, creeks, and San Francisco Bay. Rain gardens provide a basin where plants and soil organisms can filter these pollutants before the water becomes groundwater or enters the storm drain system.

Plants native to California are used in the rain gardens. In addition to filtering pollutants, these plants provide food and shelter to birds, butterflies and beneficial insects.

The City’s existing rain gardens can be found at El Cerrito City Hall, along San Pablo Avenue, and at the city’s Recycling + Environmental Resource Center.

City Completes Improvements to Ohlone Greenway Natural Area

The City recently completed improvements along a segment of the Ohlone Greenway between the El Cerrito–Albany border and Fairmount Avenue behind the El Cerrito Plaza. These improvements were part of a project called the “Ohlone Greenway Natural Area and Rain Gardens,” designed to create a plaza area for informal exploration, nature play, and gatherings; improve walkability and accessibility; and improve urban storm water runoff treatment. The new landscaping supports riparian habitat and biodiversity. The project was funded by a competitive $903,721 State Proposition 84/2006 Parks Water Bond Sustainable Communities grant.

Temporary fencing protects the landscaping near the new rain garden at Fairmount Avenue. For details on improvements, go online to www.el-cerrito.org/ogrg.
Thank You, Open Space Supporters

IN 2014, THE El Cerrito Open Space Committee successfully reached their goal to raise $100,000 toward the City’s purchase of the Madera Open Space, approximately 8 acres located just below Madera Elementary School. This purchase will help to connect the existing Hillside Natural Area properties; improve access and connectivity; and promote walking in hillside neighborhoods and across the City. See page 2 for details about the upcoming Hillside Festival or visit www.el-cerrito.org/hillsidefest.

The view from the Madera Open Space upper meadow includes San Francisco Bay and Mt. Tamalpais. Directly below is the Motorcycle Hill Trail. PHOTO BY TOM GEHLING, 2013.

Can We Find You in an Emergency?

In case of an emergency, first responders need to find you quickly. If your house numbers are easily visible both day and night, emergency responders can reach you quickly when you need them.

Here’s a simple test to check if emergency responders can locate your home quickly:

- Are your house numbers 4-6” high, with a contrasting background, easily visible at night from any direction?
- Are your house numbers also shown on both sides of your mailbox in numbers 3-4” high?

A house that can’t be seen from the street should have numbers posted at the bottom of the driveway. If the driveway leads to more than one address, all of the house numbers should be posted at the bottom of the driveway—and on the houses as well.

Remember, fire, police, and medical units may arrive from either direction. Displaying clearly visible address numbers can be a vital link to your safety. A poorly-marked address can delay emergency response time, and sometimes every minute counts.

For information, contact the El Cerrito Fire Department at 215-4450.

Help Reduce the Risk of Wildfires

Some areas of El Cerrito are considered Very High Fire Hazard Severity (VHFHS) Zones, according to the California Department of Forestry (CDF) and the El Cerrito Fire Department. Under State law, property owners within these zones must take special precautions to reduce the risk of fire. An important responsibility of these property owners is vegetation management. A copy of the El Cerrito and Kensington Vegetation Management Standards is available at Fire Station 71, 10900 San Pablo Avenue. More information, including a map of VHFHS zones in El Cerrito, can be found online at www.el-cerrito.org/fire/prevention.

There are three specific goals of the vegetation management planning:
- Maintain all fires small.
- Limit the speed with which any fire will grow.
- Make it more difficult for fires to ignite and spread.

These goals can be met by increasing distances between combustible fuels. This significantly reduces the potential of a small fire growing into a catastrophic event involving one or more homes.

As in previous years, the El Cerrito Fire Department will begin inspecting all properties for compliance with the City’s Vegetation Management Standards in May. For guidance in reducing fire hazards on your property, go online to www.el-cerrito.org/fire/prevention or contact Captain Chris Renshaw at 215-4457. Now is the time of year to take action to keep our community fire-safe.
Recreation Department Summer Camps

The Recreation Department offers over 60 unique choices of Summer Camps for children from 4.75 to 17 years old.

Camp choices include:
- Adventures (ages 4.75-7)
- Explorers (ages 7-9)
- Junior Explorers (ages 9.5-14)
- Swimming
- Basketball
- Tennis
- Gymnastics
- Visual Art
- Performing Arts
- Engineering & Science
- Leadership
- And more!

Full, half-day, and drop-in options are available to suit your schedule. Sign up today for a summer filled with excitement, fun, new friends, life skills, and great activities. Transportation between morning and afternoon camps is provided free of charge.

For details, visit [www.el-cerrito.org/recreation](http://www.el-cerrito.org/recreation). You can register for the camps in person at the El Cerrito Community Center, 7007 Moeser Lane, or online by selecting “Online Activity & Camp Registration” at [www.el-cerrito.org/recreation](http://www.el-cerrito.org/recreation). For answers to Summer Camp questions, call 559-7000 or email recreation@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us.
The City of El Cerrito serves, leads and supports our diverse community by providing exemplary and innovative services, public places and infrastructure, ensuring public safety and creating an economically and environmentally sustainable future.

The City recently installed five solar-powered radar speed signs on three arterial streets. The signs are intended to reduce speed by providing drivers with real-time feedback about their vehicle’s speed compared to the speed limit on the street.

The new signs were installed at the following five locations:
- Westbound Barrett Avenue, west of Sonoma Street
- Westbound Barrett Avenue, west of Tassajara Avenue
- Northbound Arlington Boulevard, south of Potrero Avenue
- Northbound Arlington Boulevard, north of Dylans Way
- Eastbound Central Avenue, east of Belmont Avenue

City staff from the Public Works and Police Departments collaborated to identify locations where speeding is a problem, as part of a traffic safety coordination effort. These speed feedback signs are intended to address safety concerns while at the same time accommodating the travel requirements of automobiles, buses, emergency vehicles, bicyclists and pedestrians using arterial streets.

EL CERRITO CITY COUNCIL
Mark Friedman, Mayor
Greg Lyman, Mayor Pro Tem
Janet Abelson
Jan Bridges
Gabriel Quinto

CITY HALL (All area codes 510)
10890 San Pablo Ave.
City Management
City Clerk 215-4305
City Council 215-4305
City Manager 215-4300
Human Resources 215-4315

Community Development Department
Building 215-4360
Code Enforcement 215-4374
Planning 215-4330
Economic Development 215-4385
Housing 215-4358
Finance 215-4310

Public Works
After-Hours Emergency 237-3233
Corporation Yard 215-4369
Engineering 215-4382
Maintenance 215-4369
Recycling & Waste Management 215-4350
Recycling + Environmental Resource Center 7501 Schmidt Lane

Community Center
7007 Moeser Lane
Recreation Department 559-7000
Park/Facility Rentals 559-7004
Swim Center 559-7011

The Open House Senior Center
6500 Stockton Ave.
Senior Services 559-7677

Public Safety Building
10900 San Pablo Ave.
Emergency 911
Police/Fire/Medical Dispatch 237-3233
Fire Administration 215-4450
Police Administration 215-4400

CITY WEBSITE www.el-cerrito.org
TWITTER @cityofelcerrito
@ElCerritoREC
@ElCerritoPD

City Hall Holidays (office closed):
Memorial Day—May 25

City Council winter/spring meetings:
April 21
May 5 and 19
February 3 and 17
June 2 and 16

Regular Council meetings are held on the first and third Tuesdays of each month at City Hall, 10890 San Pablo Ave. Schedules are subject to change; check the website for updates. Regular Council meetings are broadcast live on Comcast Cable channel 28 and KECG, 88.1 FM radio.

To watch meetings online, go online to www.el-cerrito.org and click on the “Streaming Media” link.

The City Council meeting agenda packet is available at least three days prior to each City Council meeting at: http://www.el-cerrito.org/archive.