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2.1 INTRODUCTION

The City of El Cerrito is located in Contra Costa County near the eastern shore of the San Francisco Bay. Incorporated in 1917, El Cerrito is surrounded by the cities of Albany, Richmond, Berkeley, and unincorporated areas of Contra Costa County including Kensington, and located along the Interstate 80 and 580 corridors. The City has two BART stations - El Cerrito Plaza and El Cerrito del Norte. Though El Cerrito is densely populated and largely built-out, the City has unique recreation amenities such as the Hillside Natural Area and the Ohlone Greenway. El Cerrito’s park and recreation system encompasses 16 City parks, one greenway, two special-use open spaces, and 15 recreation buildings. The City maintains and operates 175 acres of parkland, of which 102 acres remain dedicated open space. The City owns 155 acres of parkland and maintains 20 acres of parkland that is owned by the West Contra Costa Unified School District (WCCUSD) (6.5 acres), the City of Richmond (1.5 acres), and BART (12 acres). El Cerrito’s dense, and built-out nature requires thoughtful planning for efficient use of the City’s existing recreation amenities and the potential for recreation enhancements.

El Cerrito’s Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan results from collaboration with City staff, the El Cerrito community, and the Consultant. Initiated in July of 2017, the 14-month process identifies the community’s recreation needs, prioritizes projects, and develops a plan for long-term enhancement and maintenance of the City’s recreation network.

2.2 PLANNING PROCESS

The El Cerrito Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan integrates the input of the Master Plan’s Community Advisory Group, identified recreation Stakeholders, City staff, local community, and Consultant recommendations. The following process elements enabled the development of a community-oriented planning document customized to El Cerrito’s recreation needs.

COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUP

The Community Advisory Group (CAG) was established at the beginning of the planning process to serve as the public advisory board in planning key elements of community outreach and development of the Master Plan. Its role was to:

- Serve as the public voice in the Master Plan
- Represent the El Cerrito community
- Solicit input from the El Cerrito Community

The CAG served as a guiding body in the development of the Master Plan. Members of the group were selected through a public application process and with City staff and Consultant recommendations. Four CAG meetings were held throughout the planning process to review and collaborate on the Project’s progression. CAG members also attended community workshops and supported workshop facilitation. Members of the CAG include:

- Ben Chuaqui – Park and Recreation Commissioner, Design Review Board Member
- Tracy Giles – Former Economic Development Board Member and Financial Advisory Committee Member, Former President of Chamber of Commerce and Rotary Club
- Carl Groch – Chair, Design Review Board, former Planning Commissioner
- Sara Haller – Education
Steve Lipson – Committee on Aging Member, former Park and Recreation Commissioner
Andrea Lucas – Planning Commissioner
Mark Miner – Environmental Quality Commission, Committee Chair
Letitia Moore – Former Mayor of El Cerrito, former Planning Commissioner
Tiffany Redding – Public parks, recreation, and education planning
Patricia Trumbull – Former Planning Commissioner

For additional information regarding the CAG, please see Appendix A.

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Parks and recreation Stakeholders were representatives of the City's varying user groups. As members of established community groups or organizations, these Stakeholders represented their users’ interests and needs as they relate to parks, recreation, and open space in El Cerrito. The Consultant held a one-hour session with each Stakeholder group to understand their users’ satisfaction with the City’s recreation services and to gather additional information regarding specific needs or desires. Stakeholders were selected from environmental and organized sports organizations, City Management, and members of the El Cerrito Senior community.

• Environmental Organizations– Friends of 5 Creeks, Trail Trekkers, El Cerrito Urban Forest Committee, El Cerrito Environmental Quality Committee, El Cerrito Community Garden Network
• Organized Sports Groups– El Cerrito Tennis Clubs, El Cerrito Gymnastics, El Cerrito Youth Baseball, El Cerrito Senior Center Pickleball Program, Tottenham Hotspur East Bay, El Cerrito Mountain Bike and Cycling Coalition
• City Management – City Manager, City Clerk, Police Chief, Fire Chief, Community Development Director, Public Works Director, City Attorney, Recreation Director
• El Cerrito Seniors – various members of the City’s Senior recreation programming network

Recreation Stakeholders were selected through an invitation from the City’s Recreation Department. Please see Appendix A for additional information on Stakeholder groups.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Three community workshops, two public study sessions with the El Cerrito Parks and Recreation Commission, and a City-wide survey were components of the Master Plan’s community outreach process. Approximately 1,270 members of the public participated in the development of the Master Plan.

The community workshops were held throughout the Fall of 2017 and Winter/Spring of 2018 to present the Plan’s scope and goals and to collect feedback and community opinion, while presenting updates in the planning process. The first community workshop, held on November 18, 2017, introduced the Master Plan’s purpose, gave a brief review of the City’s existing recreation network, and collected initial community input on desired recreation enhancements. The second community workshop, held on January 18, 2018, provided information regarding recreation Stakeholders, presented the community’s demographic and recreational profile, outlined the 2017 results of the City-wide survey, and collected feedback on community priorities in recreation enhancements. The third community workshop, held April 26, 2018, presented draft goals and policies, and initial project recommendations and prioritization to the community. This final community workshop also collected additional feedback on prioritizing the initial project recommendations.

A community survey was open from September 9, 2017 through January 31, 2018. This survey, available online, on paper, and in several languages, collected information regarding the community’s satisfaction with current levels of recreation amenities and services as well as the desire for additional amenities, services, and recreation enhancements. A total of 1,114 members of the public participated.
Two public study sessions were held with the El Cerrito Park and Recreation Commission to review the draft Master Plan. These sessions were held on May 23, 2018, and July 25, 2018.

Notices regarding community workshops and updates to the planning process were posted regularly to the City website and at the City’s various recreation facilities, published in the Winter/Spring and Summer rECguides (Recreation Department program guide), and promoted monthly in rECnews (Recreation Department e-newsletter). See Appendix A for additional information regarding the community engagement process.

STAFF ENGAGEMENT

The Consultant worked in close collaboration with the City’s Recreation and Public Works Departments in developing the Master Plan. Prior to the Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan, City staff worked with the community to develop a variety of recreation planning efforts including the City of El Cerrito Urban Greening Plan (2015). City staff input provided clear guidance throughout the planning process, while the Consultant helped to assess, refine, and prioritize the City’s goals.

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**2.3 REVIEW OF RELEVANT PLANNING EFFORTS**

Recent and ongoing planning efforts by the City help direct and inform the Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan. A review of El Cerrito’s relevant planning effort was completed as a component of this Master Plan, ensuring that the Plan’s goals, and recommendations build upon and support previous work. Please see Appendix B for a detailed review of previous, relevant planning work. The following master planning documents directly guide the Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan.

**CITY OF EL CERRITO URBAN GREENING PLAN, 2015**

The City of El Cerrito Urban Greening Plan outlines goals, objectives, and policies to create a greener and more environmentally sustainable and livable El Cerrito. Intended to address a growing demand for increased infill development along the City’s transit corridors, the Urban Greening Plan outlines the preservation and enhancement of the City’s natural assets and green spaces. It highlights opportunity projects and focus areas that will help implement goals to create more green spaces in the public realm. Direction to create the El Cerrito Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan is initiated in the Urban Greening Plan, in order to more fully address the role of the El Cerrito’s parks and recreation network in the greening of urban spaces.

**OHLONE GREENWAY MASTER PLAN, 2009**

The Ohlone Greenway is a pedestrian and non-motorized vehicle path that runs through the cities of Berkeley, Albany, and El Cerrito to Richmond. Composed of open space and trail, the Greenway is a rails-to-trails site along a former railroad right-of-way that runs adjacent to elevated BART tracks. Nearly 3 miles of the Greenway, including two BART stations, run through central El Cerrito, providing a significant social, transportation, and recreational amenity in El Cerrito.

The 2009 Ohlone Greenway Master Plan articulates a vision and goals for the Greenway to guide and inform future improvements and ensure...
consistent development of the site. The Plan guided the rebuilding of the Greenway after the BART seismic retrofit project from 2009 to 2014. Pursuant to this 2009 Master Plan, the City has begun to implement goals and projects along the Greenway as resources and funding sources, such as grants, are secured.

EL CERRITO STRUCTURAL FACILITIES MANAGEMENT PLAN, 2004

The 2004 Structural Facilities Management Plan is the precedent and guiding document for the current inventory and assessment of El Cerrito’s recreation facilities. The Recreation Facilities chapter of the Inventory and Deficiencies Assessment is the update to this 2004 document and was completed as a component of this Master Plan.

The 2004 El Cerrito Structural Facilities Management Plan is a comprehensive inventory and assessment of City-owned facility assets. The plan contains an inventory of assets, as well as their condition and deficiencies, for 20 City-owned buildings and 11 City-owned parks, excluding the Ohlone Greenway and parks added since that time such as Baxter Creek Gateway and Bruce King Memorial Dog Park. The Plan informs the City in developing priorities for maintenance, improvements, or replacement of the facilities.

The Management Plan also provides estimated costs for the replacement, maintenance, and deficiency improvement of the inventoried features throughout El Cerrito’s facility system. In 2004, the Management Plan estimated that the City should pay a minimum of $260,000 per year to maintain its buildings and pathways at their current condition. However, at that time the City spent roughly $50,000 on structures and $15,000 on hardscape, annually, for routine maintenance, creating a shortfall in maintenance budgeting. In addition to this, the Plan notes that as of 2004, the City had a $3.8 million backlog of repairs and improvements, concluding that without improving maintenance and addressing the backlog, the value of the City’s facility assets would decline.

CITY OF EL CERRITO LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT PLAN, 2003

The City of El Cerrito Landscape Management Plan provides a comprehensive inventory and assessment of the City’s landscaped facilities, including trees, landscape plants, and turf grass areas. It additionally provides an assessment of existing site conditions and a cost estimate for management and maintenance of renovated landscape areas in the City’s publicly owned properties.

Renovation, replacement, and maintenance costs were estimated for each public space and area assessed. These estimates incorporate costs associated with maintaining hardscape, landscape and natural areas, such as scheduled inspections, irrigation management and repair, mulching, mowing, and pest management. The 2003 maintenance and landscaping budget was $100,000, but the Landscape Management Plan estimated a complete and proactive maintenance plan to be $600,000, revealing a contrast in need and capacity. According to the Landscape Management Plan, the primary cause of declining health and loss of existing trees is a lack of consistent, high quality maintenance.

ADA TRANSITION PLAN, 2009

El Cerrito’s ADA Transition Plan addresses the changes necessary to implement program accessibility in the City’s buildings, parks, and public rights-of-way. The Transition Plan is a requirement of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and documents the physical changes necessary to achieve program accessibility throughout El Cerrito. The Transition Plan assesses physical barriers on the external sites and internal area of City facilities and major pedestrian routes within the public rights-of-way, estimates the cost of their mitigation, sets priorities for their elimination, and provides a schedule for their removal.

This Master Plan identifies accessibility deficiencies in the City’s parks and recreation facilities that have not yet been addressed since the 2009 Transition Plan as well as additional ADA deficiencies identified at the City’s recreation facilities.
EL CERRITO GENERAL PLAN, 1999

El Cerrito’s 1999 General Plan, an update to the City’s 1975 General Plan, was developed in accordance with California state law to adopt a general plan that includes the planning elements of land use, circulation, housing, safety, open space conservation, and noise. At the City’s discretion, the General Plan also adopts additional planning elements of economic development, community design, and parks and recreation. The Plan serves as a 20-year guide for the City to improve its quality of development and long-term fiscal health so that El Cerrito remains a vibrant community in which to live and work. Though the City is largely built out and defined by single-family housing, the General Plan identifies strategies for El Cerrito to encourage and attract future development that will increase tax revenues and better enable the City to provide its community with vital services in the future.

CITY OF EL CERRITO ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN, 2016

The City of El Cerrito Active Transportation Plan is a combined bicycle and pedestrian master plan, and an update to the City’s 2007 Circulation Plan for Bicyclists and Pedestrians. The Transportation Plan contains elements that guide improvements to the City’s existing recreation network, directly informing the Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan. To understand the City’s existing methods in supporting cycling and walking, the Active Transportation Plan conducts a policies, programs, and practices benchmarking assessment to compare El Cerrito’s efforts against national best practices and thereby provide recommendations for network improvement. The assessment finds that El Cerrito’s adoption of open space requirements, as part of new development, is a leading strength of the City. Specifically, the Active Transportation Plan acknowledges that the City’s 2015 Urban Greening Plan encourages connectivity through creating a greener and more sustainable community.

CITY OF EL CERRITO CLIMATE ACTION PLAN, 2013

The City of El Cerrito Climate Action Plan is a document guiding the City in pursuing community-wide and municipal reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, with reduction targets of 15% below 2005 levels by the year 2020 and 30% below 2005 levels by 2035. The Climate Action Plan explores the potential of reducing local GHG emissions from transportation, energy consumption, water use, and waste generation at the local level.

CITY OF EL CERRITO STRATEGIC PLAN 2015 TO 2020, 2015

The City of El Cerrito Strategic Plan 2015 to 2020 provides a framework to link the City’s identified priorities with El Cerrito’s budget process, capital improvement program, important policy considerations, economic development initiatives, and the City’s desire for continuous improvement. Collecting input from City staff, community stakeholders, and the El Cerrito community at large on current and desired perceptions of the City, the Strategic Plan identifies a vision, mission, values, and goals and strategies that will guide the City’s annual priority-setting and resource decision-making processes. This strategic plan is intended to guide the City in providing, and improving, a desirable quality of life for its community members.

CITY OF EL CERRITO URBAN FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN, 2007

The 2007 Urban Forest Management Plan outlines the social, environmental, and economic benefits that a healthy urban forest provides while establishing the standards of performance for El Cerrito’s urban forest. To meet these standards, the Urban Forest Management Plan defines the elements necessary for a healthy urban forest as well as goals and strategies to attain success.
In 2007, the Urban Forest Management Plan assessed El Cerrito’s urban forest to be in poor health. The City had a net loss of 443 street trees since 1991 with 6% of street trees dead or declining, and 12% of street trees non-growing. Older street trees within the City’s urban forest were typically inappropriately located, had reached maturity, and were declining. Younger street trees suffered from stress and lack of irrigation. According to the Landscape Management Plan the primary cause of loss of trees and declining health in existing trees, is a lack of consistent, high-quality maintenance.

SAN PABLO AVENUE SPECIFIC PLAN, 2014

The 2014 San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan articulates a vision for the future development of San Pablo Avenue as a multimodal corridor that provides opportunities for living, working, and community life. Divided into three portions, the Specific Plan Area in El Cerrito identifies San Pablo Avenue through its downtown, midtown, and uptown sites and aims to create a vibrant, walkable, sustainable, and transit-oriented corridor. The Specific Plan is comprised of three elements; Form-Based Code, Complete Streets, and an infrastructure analysis.

CITY OF EL CERRITO HVAC EQUIPMENT INVENTORY REPORT, 2012

In 2012, a survey was conducted to assess major mechanical equipment (HVAC) at a variety of City facilities. Overall the 2012 HVAC Equipment Report finds the City’s major mechanical equipment (HVAC) to be operational but recommends the replacement of systems to improve efficiency and additionally provides guidance on system safety and sustainability. The El Cerrito Parks and Recreation Master Plan incorporates this assessment into the inventory of the City’s recreation facilities.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATIVE MASTER PLANS

The following master plans also relate to the Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan:

- El Cerrito Hillside Natural Area Vegetation Management Plan, 1987
- El Cerrito Hillside Natural Area Fire Hazard Reduction Plan, 1994
- Housing Element 2015-2023, 2015