

City of El Cerrito

# Urban Greening Plan Initial Study Checklist

Public Review Draft  
October 2015



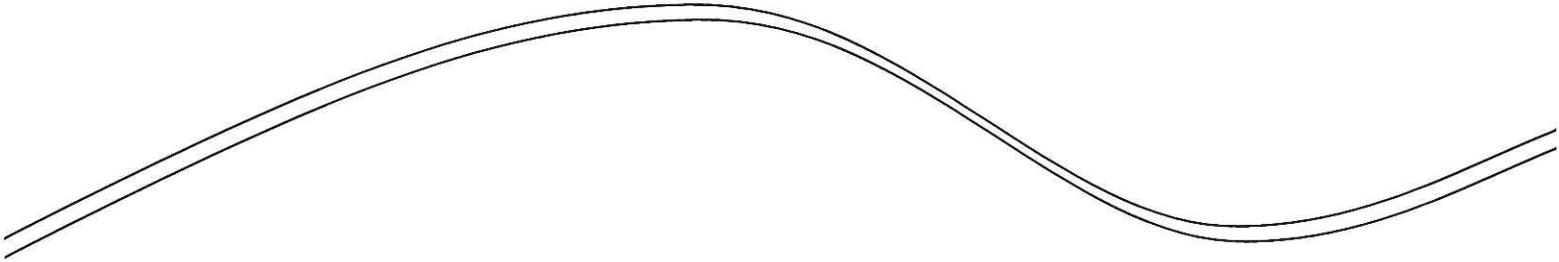
PLANNING



**Lead Agency:**  
City of El Cerrito  
10890 San Pablo Avenue  
El Cerrito, CA 94530

City of El Cerrito

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## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

### **Project Title**

Urban Greening Plan

### **Lead Agency Name and Address**

City of El Cerrito  
10890 San Pablo Avenue  
El Cerrito, CA 94530

### **Contact Person and Phone Number**

Melanie Mintz, Community Development Director  
510-215-4339, mmintz@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us

### **Project Location**

The Planning Area encompasses the entire 3.7-square mile City of El Cerrito. The City and project boundaries are shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: City of El Cerrito in the Context of California and Alameda County**



### **Project Sponsor's Name and Address**

City of El Cerrito  
10890 San Pablo Avenue  
El Cerrito, CA 94530

## **General Plan Designation**

Varies

## **Zoning**

Varies

## **Project Purpose and Overview**

The Urban Greening Plan (Plan) seeks to improve quality of life for community members by identifying strategies to enhance El Cerrito's public places and open spaces in order to create a greener, more environmentally sustainable and livable city. The Plan seeks to advance environmental sustainability and stewardship, community identity, active living/transportation, economic vitality, and urban livability.

## **Project Objectives**

The objectives of the Urban Greening Plan are as follows:

1. Improved trails and paths
2. Greener gateways
3. Strengthened Ohlone Greenway
4. Enhanced existing parks
5. Active commercial corridors
6. Resilient higher density neighborhoods
7. Enriched natural areas
8. Enhanced creeks
9. Green streets
10. Vibrant schoolyards
11. Urban agriculture

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) necessitates evaluation of any project that requires discretionary approval by a government agency which may cause an indirect or direct physical change in the environment. These Urban Greening Plan objectives set the framework for the policies and programs that represent the key components of the Urban Greening Plan evaluated under CEQA.

### **Key Components**

While many of the Urban Greening Plan policies and programs are conceptual and may be implemented citywide as appropriate and as funding allows, other improvements are specific to certain locations. Moreover, many of the policies and programs in the Urban Greening Plan are existing City policies, having already been adopted as part of the General Plan, Climate Action Plan, San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan, Ohlone Greenway Master Plan, or other citywide or area plans. The Plan cross-references and encourages implementation of policies and programs from these other plans.

The environmental analysis conducted in this Initial Study evaluates project components to varying degrees, depending on the specificity of the improvement and its potential to create an adverse physical impact. As a result, there are some project components which may require additional analysis in the future once the improvement measure is further designed/engineered or detailed. These instances are highlighted within the individual environmental topics of the Environmental Checklist section of this Initial Study.

Key components of the Urban Greening Plan are summarized as follows, in the categories of: Goals, Key Policies, and Focus Areas and Pilot Projects.

#### ***Goals***

- 1. Environmental Sustainability:** Improve air and water quality and protect natural resources through green infrastructure, preserved biodiversity, context-sensitive infill development and alternative transportation opportunities. The Project does not designate or propose infill development.
- 2. Environmental Stewardship:** Support volunteer efforts to restore and enhance the City's natural resources and continue to provide opportunities for community members to engage with and learn from the natural environment.

3. **Community Identity:** Design projects and events that demonstrate and celebrate the City's commitment to an environmentally sustainable future, catalyzing investment that supports the community's vision.
4. **Active Living/Transportation:** Enhance pedestrian and bicycle connectivity, and encourage walking, hiking, biking and active recreation to reduce reliance on fossil fuels and enhance community quality of life.
5. **Economic Vitality:** Support economic activity through temporary and permanent open spaces and landscaping that create a sense of place and attract residents and visitors.
6. **Urban Livability:** Create an urban environment that is sustainable, resilient and livable by providing places that not only improve the natural environment, but are designed for interaction, recreation and reprieve.

### ***Key Policies***

Chapter 4 of the Plan includes a range of policies and actions that address education, signage, volunteerism, project improvements, and programs designed to meet the goals and objectives outlined above. Key policies that could affect the physical environment are summarized below and evaluated in the environmental topic sections that follow. Note that the first number in the policies below correspond to the numbered Objectives on page 2 of this Initial Study.

- 1.3: Develop a Master Plan for Trails which would identify trail improvement projects, including gap closure priorities, and pedestrian and bike connections to Wildcat Canyon Park and the Bay Trail (see Focus Area #1). The plan would incorporate maintenance strategies.
- 4.3: Evaluate opportunities to enhance, expand, and maintain existing fields, parks, trails and open spaces (including their trees and landscapes) and improve maintainability.
- 6.1: Consider amending the Municipal Code to include the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan open space requirements for other high density neighborhoods.
- 7.1: Restore natural areas of existing open spaces to restore their natural function, wildlife habitat, biodiversity and ensure ecological resilience, as appropriate. Consider strategic land acquisition to preserve environmental benefits.
- 7.2: Establish a dark sky threshold to reduce light pollution and its effects on wildlife and livability for community members.

- 8.2: Consider a Creek Daylighting Incentives Program to encourage private developments to daylight or naturalize creeks in culverts and channels.
- 8.3: Develop a Watershed Management Plan to establish performance metrics to improve water quality and monitoring. The plan would include riparian management guidelines to reduce erosion, prepare for floods, and support wildlife habitat.
- 8.4: Develop Creek Maintenance Plans for locations where the City's Public Works Department currently maintains creek banks and vegetation to ensure compliance with Regional Water Quality Control Board regulations and environmental objectives. These plans would identify regular maintenance projects including those that do not require permits and planting of vegetation.
- 9.1: Adopt a Green Streets policy for developing green infrastructure (i.e., projects that reduce impervious surfaces) within pedestrian, bicycle, and public transportation projects in the public right-of-way. This policy would include development of a Municipal Green Infrastructure Ordinance to achieve this objective in City-funded streetscape, building, and open space projects.
- 9.2: Work with Contra Costa Clean Water Program to require a high level of stormwater capture and treatment and consider a Designated Green Infrastructure Standard to ensure that sufficient land area has protected vegetated surfaces to reduce urban heat island effects, manage stormwater, and provide recreation opportunities.
- 9.3: Require new developments to plant trees along the public right-of-way.
- 9.4: Adopt a Bay-Friendly Landscaping Policy to establish guidelines for new landscaping and retrofit existing public landscapes. Bay-Friendly Landscaping policies generally seek to reduce waste and pollution, conserve natural resources, and create vibrant landscapes and gardens.

Chapter 4 also identifies supporting policies and programs related to maintenance practices and volunteers, adding a realistic approach for how existing and future property and improvements can be implemented over time. This includes:

- Development of a Drought Response and Management Plan
- Establishing pollinator-friendly guidelines to encourage bees and natural pollination, through no disturbance areas for nesting bees, bird-friendly plantings, and bans on neonicotinoids (an insecticide) on City property.

- Develop and coordinate a Trail Maintenance Volunteer Program and expand the Green Teams' program to leverage existing community efforts and partners and provide additional resources for clean-ups and invasive species removal.

### ***Focus Areas and Pilot Projects***

The following projects represent focus areas—and in some cases pilot projects—for implementing the Urban Greening Plan policies and fulfilling its objectives. Some of the projects include improvements on or affecting private properties. As indicated in the Plan, full implementation of these projects would be dependent on the interest and consent of the private property owner, and final decision by the City Council authorizing the project. As a result, focus area projects may be partially or fully implemented over time.

- 1. Blue Green Connections:** This improvement is intended to enhance pedestrian and bicycle connections between major natural assets including the Bay Trail and Wildcat Canyon Trail. This pilot project could include street tree plantings, traffic calming, upgrades to staircase routes, new trailheads and multi-use trails, and green infrastructure (i.e., facilities constructed with natural materials that maintain air and water quality). Many of these project components could be implemented in the short-term. However, a subsequent design and community outreach process to finalize routes and key project components, such as signage, landscaping and pavement conditions, potential removal of a limited number of on-street parking spaces, will be required as part of full implementation of the Project. Additionally, full implementation of the project would require collaboration and coordination with the cities of Albany and Richmond on portions of the project that extend through these adjacent jurisdictions.
- 2. Ohlone Greenway – Portola to Schmidt:** This project would include restoration of the existing creek channel in the Fluvius Innominatus watershed to improve habitat and water quality, while also treating stormwater runoff. Conceptual design for this improvement was completed in 2008 and is documented in a memo prepared by Restoration Design Group, as referenced in *Section I.c*.
- 3. Ohlone Greenway – Gladys to Blake:** This component of the project includes repurposing portions of the landscaped areas of the Greenway and adjacent public space for stormwater management, water quality and enhanced recreation and aesthetics. For stormwater related projects, the Plan recommends focusing on areas adjacent to the existing inlets to minimize disturbance.

4. **Fairmont Park:** This project seeks to improve an existing neighborhood park with new, more accessible paths, improved playground and gathering spaces, and a formalized community garden. This pilot project would improve access by creating defined entries and designing ADA-accessible paths. The project could be implemented incrementally.
5. **Central Park and Adjacent Parcel at Central and Belmont:** This improvement could include realigning and naturalizing the existing concrete channel south of Central Avenue to improve habitat and water quality, create a riparian edge, and treat stormwater runoff.<sup>1</sup> The project would also create a pedestrian and bicycle pathway to better connect Central Park to Creekside Park and improvements to play structures, gathering spaces, and the baseball field. Since this site lies at the Richmond/El Cerrito border, full project implementation would require collaboration and coordination with the City of Richmond.
6. **Creekside Park:** This project would consider repurposing the existing shallow concrete pools to create wetlands or other stormwater treatment facilities, continue the planting and maintenance of appropriate riparian plantings to improve the health of the creek, support wildlife habitat, and enhance the play and gathering spaces to maximize opportunities for this site as a community amenity. This project would also build on the pedestrian and bicycle pathway described in Focus Area #5 to connect Creekside Park to Central Park, the Ohlone Greenway, Pierce Street, and the Bay Trail. Full implementation of this project component would require collaboration and coordination with the City of Albany since this portion of the creek delineates the boundary between the two cities.
7. **Hillside Natural Area:** This project seeks to enhance and improve this natural open space, including its paths, trails, native vegetation, and wildlife habitat. This pilot project includes development of a Master Plan for this site to manage vegetation in order to decrease fire hazards and protect native-plant and wildlife communities, while limiting invasive species and facilitating use of the site by a diversity of user groups.
8. **El Cerrito Plaza:** This project includes improving connections to the Ohlone Greenway, the new apartments, and Albany Middle School, which would include development of a mid-block crossing at San Pablo Avenue to connect the east and west segments of the Cerrito Creek pedestrian trail. The project would also repurpose portions of the street into

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<sup>1</sup> Any opportunities on a private parcel will be dependent on property owner's interest and consent and a final decision by the City Council to authorize a specific project. Private developments are subject to additional City regulations.

biofiltration gardens to treat stormwater.<sup>1</sup> Full implementation of this project component would require collaboration and coordination with the City of Albany.

9. **Conlon Avenue and Key Boulevard:** This project seeks to utilize excess right-of-way at this intersection to create a pocket park, and to consider acquiring adjacent property or partnering with adjacent landowners to develop active play spaces and a “pollinator pathway” to encourage bees and pollination.<sup>1</sup>
10. **Cutting and San Pablo Avenue:** This project would support integrating public open space within private property to increase activity and open space along an active commercial corridor and major City entrance adjacent to BART. The project could also include repurposing portions of the street right-of-way as landscaped areas to treat stormwater runoff.<sup>1</sup>
11. **Avila Street and San Pablo Avenue:** This improvement seeks to renovate an underused cul-de-sac to create a pocket park with street furniture, landscaping, and space for social gatherings. This project would also have the benefit of improving an existing pedestrian and bicycle connection from Avila Street to San Pablo Avenue.<sup>1</sup>
12. **Former Portola Middle School Site:** This closed school site, owned by the West Contra Costa Unified School District, provides an opportunity for community facilities, recreation, and urban greening. Specific improvements have not yet been identified and therefore additional environmental analysis may be required once the project is determined.
13. **Ashbury Avenue – Brighton to Lynn:** This project includes renovating and repurposing existing turn medians to reduce water usage and enhance utilization of the space by creating urban agriculture opportunities (including an edible orchard) and biofiltration gardens to manage stormwater runoff.
14. **Lower Fairmount Avenue:** This pilot project seeks to improve the pedestrian-orientation of this corridor and add civic spaces mostly within the Public Right of Way. Improvements would provide opportunity for green infrastructure, such as street and shade trees, landscaping, and stormwater management measures. Two alternative project designs are presented. One alternative removes the wide central median and shifts travel lanes to create a downtown plaza on the south side of the street. A second alternative would vacate the street (i.e., prohibit vehicle access) to develop a larger plaza. This design would require rerouting vehicle traffic, removal of some existing on-street parking stalls, but could

continue to allow pedestrian and bicycle connections. The final design for this proposal would be subject to evaluation under the San Pablo Specific Plan Multi-Modal Level of Service standards and a community engagement process, in addition to State and local requirements.

This Initial Study analyzes the Urban Greening Plan's potential environmental impacts at a program level, and at a project level where sufficient information about the improvement is known and available. The Initial Study also identifies those projects where additional information is needed prior to project approval. These projects may be subject to supplemental environmental review if potentially adverse project specific impacts could occur that would not be mitigated to a less-than-significant level through the mitigation measures contained in this Initial Study, and/or where additional site specific/project-specific measures are needed.

### **Construction**

Construction would be fairly limited in scale and duration for individual projects, though the Project as a whole would continue to be implemented through 2040. Construction activities would include limited grading related to park and trail projects; excavation to approximately 4-foot depth for curb and median reconfiguration; underground utility and storm drain connections; and removal, relocation, and the planting of trees.

The Urban Greening Plan does not include construction of substantial above-ground structures and therefore no pile driving is proposed. Above-ground construction would include installation of posts for signage, benches, and related park or streetscape improvements. No substantial buildings would be constructed as a result of the Project. Construction activities would primarily be within the public right-of-way and publicly-owned property including streets, curbs, sidewalks, parks, and hillside stairs.

The number of travel lanes may be temporarily reduced at intersections for a period of approximately two to four weeks, while curb extensions and/or medians are installed, modified or relocated at various locations. Partial street closures (primarily parking lanes) and detours may be required for one to two-week periods during construction of pedestrian and bicycle facilities (i.e., sidewalks and curb reconstruction) and utility connections into the public right-of-way. Improvements to stairs and handrails would likely require temporary or intermittent closure of staircases for a two to four-week periods.

**Surrounding Land Uses and Setting**

The City of El Cerrito is located in the East Bay region of the San Francisco Bay Area. It is the southernmost jurisdiction in Contra Costa County, surrounded by the City of Richmond to the west, unincorporated Contra Costa County to the north and east, and the City of Albany (in Alameda County) to the south. I-80 runs north-south near the western edge of the city. The East Bay Regional Park District’s Wildcat Canyon Regional Park is located east of the city.

Several other agencies have jurisdiction and/or operations that coincide with the Urban Greening Plan and implementation of its policies and programs. San Pablo Avenue, which runs parallel to I-80, is the main north-south route along the western edge of the city. Also known as State Route 123, San Pablo Avenue is operated and maintained by Caltrans. The Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District (AC Transit) provides local, express, and transbay regional bus service throughout the city and offers connections to points in the East Bay and greater region. The Bay Area Rapid Transit District (BART) provides regional train service throughout the East Bay and the region, and has two stations in El Cerrito—the Plaza and Del Norte stations.

**Requested Applications and Other Participating Agencies**

<b>Lead Agency</b>	
City of El Cerrito	City Council would be responsible for adoption of the Urban Greening Plan, and funding approval through the capital improvements program process and grant programs
<b>Responsible Agencies</b>	
Caltrans	Would be a responsible party for any projects that necessitate an encroachment permit for work on San Pablo Avenue within the State Route 123 section.

Other public agencies whose approval may be required (e.g., permits, financing approval, or participation agreement):

- City of Albany
- City of Richmond
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife
- San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

**ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS POTENTIALLY AFFECTED**

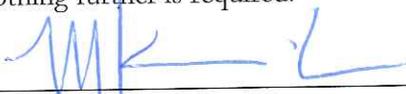
The environmental factors checked below would be potentially affected by this project, involving at least one impact that is a "Potentially Significant Impact" as indicated by the checklist on the following pages.

- Aesthetics
- Agriculture and Forestry
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Geology/Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards & Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology/Water Quality
- Land Use/Planning
- Mineral Resources
- Noise
- Population/Housing
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Transportation/Traffic
- Utilities/Service Systems
- Mandatory Findings

**Determination.** (To be completed by the Lead Agency.)

On the basis of this initial evaluation:

- I find that the proposed project COULD NOT have a significant effect on the environment, and a NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.
- I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, there will not be a significant effect in this case because revisions in the project have been made by or agreed to by the project proponent. A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.
- I find that the proposed project MAY have a significant effect on the environment, and an ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required.
- I find that the proposed project MAY have a "potentially significant impact" or "potentially significant unless mitigated" impact on the environment, but at least one effect 1) has been adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and 2) has been addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis as described on attached sheets. An ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required, but it must analyze only the effects that remain to be addressed.
- I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, because all potentially significant effects (a) have been analyzed adequately in an earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION pursuant to applicable standards, and (b) have been avoided or mitigated pursuant to that earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION, including revisions or mitigation measures that are imposed upon the proposed project, nothing further is required.

  
Signature

10-5-15  
Date

**ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST**

	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>A. AESTHETICS</b>				
Would the project:				
a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Affected Environment**

The Project would be primarily implemented on public rights-of-way and other public locations, including BART station areas, trails, and parks that are already surrounded with urban uses—primarily residential neighborhoods and commercial retail development. Development of private property as private or publicly accessible open space or connections could result with implementation of the Project with the consent of the property owner.

**Discussion**

a) *Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?*

**Less Than Significant.** The El Cerrito General Plan identifies the following scenic resources in the city: views to the west—of San Francisco and San Pablo Bays, Marin County, San Francisco, and Albany Hill; and views to the east—of the East Bay Hills and ridgelines of Wildcat Canyon Park.<sup>2</sup> The following General Plan policy addresses vistas:

Policy CD1.7: Views and Vistas. Preserve and enhance major views and vistas along major streets and open spaces, providing areas to stroll and benches to rest and enjoy views.

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<sup>2</sup> City of El Cerrito, 1999. *General Plan Community Development and Design Element*: 4-28.

The Project helps to implement this policy by calling for improvements to existing parks, including Fairmont Park, Central Park, Creekside Park, and the Hillside Natural Area, which could expand the use of these facilities. New or improved walking and biking routes and stairways would expand locations where views can be seen. New trail connections within and along public parks, including Arlington Park, Canyon Trail Park, and Hillside Natural Area would provide beneficial impacts by adding public viewpoints of scenic vistas.

The Project does not include substantial constructed features (e.g., buildings or towers) that would affect existing views, but street trees, and creek and park landscaping would be installed as part of streetscape improvements and other pedestrian network improvements. These improvements are identified as pedestrian-scaled and therefore are not anticipated to be tall enough to obstruct views or to create an adverse effect on scenic vistas such as views of the Bay or of the hillsides. As a result, the potential for the Project to have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista is less than significant.

b) *Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a State Scenic Highway?*

**No Impact.** The portions of I-80 visible from the Planning Area are not designated as Scenic Highways, according to California Scenic Highway mapping system. As a result, the Project would not substantially damage scenic resources within a State Scenic Highway and no impact would occur.

c) *Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?*

**Less Than Significant.** The Project would change the appearance of parks, open spaces, creeks, public rights-of-way, and potentially private developments (i.e., increasing the provision of open spaces) in the city with: new landscaping, signage, pedestrian paths and trails, and daylighting of creek areas. The General Plan includes the following policies regarding visual character and quality related to public rights-of-way and parks and open spaces. The Project would contribute to implementation of these policies:

- Policy CD1.8: Edges. Preserve and enhance El Cerrito's well-defined edges along the hillside open spaces, the eastern border along the regional park, and the I-80 freeway.
- Policy CD2.3: Streetscape Improvements. Maintain an active program of street tree planting and improved roadway landscaping through both public and private means. Design guidelines shall describe appropriate types of trees for commercial areas – to enhance the shopping experience rather than detract from it.

- Policy CD3.5: Creek Preservation. Where possible, preserve and restore natural drainage ways as parts of the storm drainage system, coordinating with recreational and trail use.
- Policy CD3.6: Cerrito Creek. Where possible, open the Cerrito Creek channel, providing access and recreational opportunities along the creek in conjunction with its flood control function.
- PR3.2: Open Space Improvements. Design any improvements in open space areas to minimize adverse impacts to habitats, view, and other open space resources.<sup>3</sup>

Additionally, the General Plan identifies and seeks to protect “sacred places” including the large rock outcropping at the top of Cutting Boulevard, Cerrito Creek, landmark businesses and historic resources.<sup>4</sup> The Project may enhance access to some of these “sacred places,” but is not expected to adversely impact these resources.

Project improvements described above would change the character of streets and open spaces by reducing the amount of paved area, adding bicycle facilities, increasing the amount of landscaping and green infrastructure related to stormwater management, and enhancing creeks through daylighting, restoration and riparian landscape improvements. As a result, the Project would change the existing visual character, but would not substantially degrade it, or the quality of the city. Therefore, the impact would be less than significant.

d) *Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?*

**Less Than Significant.** As part of implementation of the Project, the City would establish a dark sky threshold to reduce light pollution and its impacts on people and wildlife. While, the Project does not specifically propose to add new lighting, new trails and connections proposed by the Project could include new street lighting, consistent with existing street standards. Whenever possible, lighting will be directed down onto the facility itself and would not spill over onto adjacent land uses. New street and path lighting is not expected to create new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area and therefore would have a less-than-significant impact.

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<sup>3</sup> City of El Cerrito, 1999. *General Plan Public Facilities and Services Element*: 6-17.

<sup>4</sup> City of El Cerrito, 1999. *General Plan Community Development and Design Element*: 4-28.

	Potentially Significant	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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**B. AGRICULTURAL AND FOREST RESOURCES**

In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997) prepared by the California Dept. of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland. In determining whether impacts to forest resources, including timberland, are significantly environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to information compiled by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection regarding the state's inventory of forest land, including the Forest and Range Assessment project and the Forest Legacy Assessment project; and forest carbon measurement methodology provided in forest protocols adopted by the California Air Resources Board. Would the project:

a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to a non-agricultural use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Governmental Code section 51104(g))?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
e) Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**No Impact.** The Project is located in an urbanized area and is not shown as agricultural land on the State of California Department of Conservation, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program Map 2010.<sup>5</sup> There is no land under Williamson Act contract or forest zoned land in the City of El Cerrito. The Project would not cause or induce the conversion of forest land and agricultural land because the City is already urbanized. Large open space areas, namely the Hillside Natural Area, is not proposed to undergo any substantial change in use. Therefore, the Project would have no impact on agricultural and forest resources.

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<sup>5</sup> State of California Department of Conservation, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program Map 2010  
<ftp://ftp.consrv.ca.gov/pub/dlrp/FMMP/pdf/2010/ala10.pdf>

	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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**C. AIR QUALITY**

Where available, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management or air pollution control district may be relied upon to make the following determinations. Would the project:

a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Violate any air quality standard or contribute substantially to an existing or projected air quality violation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard (including releasing emissions which exceed quantitative thresholds for ozone precursors)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Create objectionable odors affecting a substantial number of people?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Affected Environment**

The Project is located in the San Francisco Bay Area Air Basin, which is regulated by the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) and the Bay Area 2010 Clean Air Plan—the most recent clean air plan adopted by BAAQMD in September 2010.

**Discussion**

a) *Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?*

**Less Than Significant.** The Project would not affect population or employment growth. As a result, it would not result in growth that exceeds growth estimates of the Bay Area 2010 Clean Air Plan<sup>6</sup> and would not generate emissions beyond what have been accounted for in the Clean Air Plan. Rather, the Project would contribute to fulfillment of the objectives of the

<sup>6</sup> Bay Area Air Quality Management District, 2010. *Bay Area 2010 Clean Air Plan*.

Clean Air Plan by encouraging urban heat island reduction measures, shade tree planting, and biking and walking trips.

The Project would potentially reduce vehicle trips and therefore have a beneficial impact by helping to reduce emissions of greenhouse gas, particulate matter, and other pollutants. Additionally, implementation of the Plan would include consideration of a Green Infrastructure Standard to ensure that sufficient land area has protected vegetated surfaces to reduce urban heat island effects. As a result, the Project's potential to conflict with or obstruct implementation of the Clean Air Plan would be less than significant.

b) *Violate any air quality standard or contribute substantially to an existing or projected air quality violation?*

**Less Than Significant.** Ambient air quality standards have been established at both the State and federal level. The Bay Area Air Basin is considered a non-attainment area for ground-level ozone and fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) under both the Federal Clean Air Act and the California Clean Air Act. The area is also considered non-attainment for respirable particulate matter (PM<sub>10</sub>) under California standards, but not national standards.<sup>7</sup>

The BAAQMD Air Quality Guidelines do not have quantified thresholds related to direct and indirect criteria pollutant emissions resulting from plan implementation (as opposed to project implementation). Instead, proposed plans must show consistency with current air quality control measures and show that the plan's projected vehicle miles traveled increase would be less than or equal to its projected population increase.

Implementation of the Project is not anticipated to have a substantial effect on vehicle miles and associated greenhouse gas emissions, in particular air pollutants associated with motor vehicle use (ground level ozone and PM<sub>10</sub>). It would not generate additional population or jobs following construction of the Project. The proposed park and open space improvements would not generate substantial vehicle trips and the increase in pedestrian and bicycle facilities could reduce vehicle trips. Gap closures and trail improvements would potentially increase walking and biking trips. Planting of additional trees and landscaping would help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through carbon capture. Therefore, the Project would not exceed BAAQMD thresholds.

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<sup>7</sup> Bay Area Air Quality Management District, 2015. "Air Quality Standards and Attainment Status." <http://www.baaqmd.gov/research-and-data/air-quality-standards-and-attainment-status>. Accessed September 4, 2015.

Substantive effects on air quality would be limited to temporary construction impacts. Air pollutants would be generated from construction equipment operations and fugitive dust caused by ground disturbance during project construction (e.g., grading and construction of sidewalks, paths, parks, etc.). However, these impacts would not be of such quantity or duration to exceed BAAQMD thresholds. Therefore, implementation of the Project would have would result in a less-than-significant impact on violation of air quality standards.

- c) *Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard (including releasing emissions which exceed quantitative thresholds for ozone precursors)?*

**Less Than Significant.** As described in the response in *Section C.b*, above, the Project would not have a measurable impact on air quality compared to existing conditions and therefore would not result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant with non-attainment status (i.e., ozone, PM2.5, and PM10).

- d) *Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?*

**Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporation.** Sensitive receptors in the Planning Area include children, students, and seniors in such locations as local schools, day cares, and the Open House Senior Center. Potential impacts during construction and operation phases on the Project are analyzed below.

During operation of the Project, pedestrians and bicyclists in close proximity to locations where truck traffic is plentiful—namely, I-80 and to a lesser extent San Pablo Avenue—would be temporarily exposed to outdoor toxic air contaminants, particularly fine particulate matter from diesel truck exhaust. Focus Area Project #1: Blue to Green Connections creates pedestrian facilities under the I-80 freeway in order to connect to destinations, including the Bay Trail. (While only a small portion of the City's boundary extends across and along I-80, the Urban Greening Plan connects the Project's improvements to the City of Richmond's planned improvements which lie closer to the I-80.)

Cancer risk and PM2.5 exposure are based on chronic or long-term exposures. Since bicyclists and pedestrians would be short-term users through affected areas, these impacts do not apply; they would not be exposed to these emissions long enough to be adversely exposed. For example, the cancer risk impacts are based on nearly continuous lifetime exposures (i.e., 70 years), while PM2.5 impacts are based on annual exposures.

However, construction activities could temporarily expose nearby sensitive receptors to pollutant concentrations, principally PM10 and PM2.5, from fugitive dust sources. The relatively short construction period and limited scale of construction for the project components is not expected to result in any health risks to residents or sensitive receptors. The greatest impact from construction activities are those related to the emissions of diesel particulate matter from construction equipment and truck traffic. This is a potentially significant impact. However, implementation of Mitigation Measure AQ-1 would ensure compliance with BAAQMD best management practices for fugitive dust control, and would reduce the impact to a less-than-significant level.

Mitigation Measure AQ-1 – Air Quality Best Management Practices: The construction contractor shall institute a dust control program, which shall be submitted to the City’s Community Development Department and approved prior to any construction activity. Elements of the dust and emissions control program shall include, but not be limited to, the following measures:

- During construction, all exposed surfaces (e.g. parking areas, staging areas, soil piles, graded areas, and unpaved access roads) shall be watered at least two times per day to control dust particulates.
- Cover all hauling trucks or maintain at least two feet of freeboard.
- Pave, apply water at least twice daily, or apply (non-toxic) soil stabilizers on all unpaved access roads, parking areas, and staging areas.
- Sweep daily (with water sweepers) all paved access roads, parking areas, and staging areas and sweep streets daily (with water sweepers) if visible soil material is deposited onto the adjacent roads.
- Hydroseed or apply (non-toxic) soil stabilizers to inactive construction areas (i.e., previously graded areas that are inactive for 10 days or more).
- Enclose, cover, water twice daily, or apply (non-toxic) soil binders to exposed stockpiles.
- Limit traffic speeds on any unpaved roads to 15 mph.
- Replant vegetation in disturbed areas as quickly as possible.
- Suspend construction activities that cause visible dust plumes to extend beyond the construction site.
- Post a publically visible sign(s) with the telephone number and person to contact at the Lead Agency regarding dust complaints. This person shall respond and take corrective action within 48 hours. The Air District’s phone number shall also be visible to ensure compliance with applicable regulations.

- The contractor shall provide a plan for approval by the Community Development Department or BAAQMD demonstrating that the heavy-duty (>50 horsepower) off-road vehicles to be used in the construction project, including owned, leased and subcontractor vehicles, will achieve a project wide fleet-average 20 percent NOX reduction and 45 percent particulate reduction compared to the most recent CARB fleet average.
- Clear signage at all construction sites shall be posted indicating that diesel equipment standing idle for more than five minutes shall be turned off. This would include trucks waiting to deliver or receive soil, aggregate, or other bulk materials. Rotating drum concrete trucks could keep their engines running continuously as long as they were on-site or adjacent to the construction site.
- The contractor shall install temporary electrical service whenever possible to avoid the need for independently powered equipment (e.g., compressors).
- Properly tune and maintain equipment for low emissions.

Implementation of Mitigation Measure AQ-1 would represent Best Management Practices recommended by BAAQMD, and therefore, reduce construction period emissions and the potential impact of construction period fugitive dust to a less-than-significant level.

e) *Create objectionable odors affecting a substantial number of people?*

**Less Than Significant.** No odors are anticipated during operation of the Project. Odors resulting from the combustion of diesel fuel during construction activities could create localized objectionable odors. The odors would be temporary and localized to the construction site. Therefore, the Project would not create objectionable odors that would affect a substantial number of people and the impact would be less than significant.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>D. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES</b>				
Would the project:				
a) Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Game or US Fish and Wildlife Service?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**Affected Environment**

The Planning Area is a highly developed urban area. Scattered trees, such as eucalyptus, redwood junipers, palms, cypress, coast live oak, and planted pines and redwoods, and shrubs

exist in the city, most of which are introduced species planted as urban landscaping, providing some minor value to wildlife. There are several above-ground creek segments running through the city and in City parks, such as within Baxter Creek Gateway Park, the Ohlone Greenway, Canyon Trail, Poinsett, Creekside, and Huber Parks, Hillside Natural Area and along El Cerrito Plaza.

## Discussion

- a) *Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?*

**Less Than Significant.** A recent review of the California Natural Diversity Database, as part of the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan environmental analysis, identified one special-status species that has the potential to occur in the Urban Greening Plan Planning Area: the Alameda whipsnake (*Masticophis lateralis emryxanthus*), a federal and State threatened species. However, based on the urban conditions in the Planning Area, suitable habitat for the Alameda whipsnake does not currently exist in the urban portions of the city where the majority of project improvements would take place. Trail improvements in open spaces and parks, including the Hillside Natural Areas would not substantially increase paved areas and effects are not anticipated beyond noise and ground disturbance impacts during construction which would be temporary. Moreover, the General Plan requires replacement of any lost habitat through the following policies:<sup>8</sup>

Policy R1.1: Habitat Protection. Preserve oak/woodland, riparian vegetation, creeks, native grasslands, wildlife corridors and other important wildlife habitats. Loss of these habitats should be fully offset through creation of habitat of equal value. Compensation rate for habitat re-creation shall be determined by a qualified biologist.

Policy R1.2: Rare and Endangered Species. Limit development in areas that support rare and endangered species. If development of these areas must occur, any loss of habitat should be fully compensated on-site. If off-site mitigation is necessary, it should occur within the El Cerrito planning area whenever possible, and must be accompanied by plans and a monitoring program prepared by a qualified biologist.

Given the scope of the Project and existing regulations, the Project is not anticipated to have a substantial adverse effect on the Alameda whipsnake's habitat. As a result, the Project would

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<sup>8</sup> City of El Cerrito, 1999. *General Plan Resources and Hazards Element*: 7-5.

have a less-than-significant impact on plant or animal species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special-status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

- b) *Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Game or US Fish and Wildlife Service?*

**Less Than Significant.** As described in the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan EIR, the only known and identified riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community in the City of El Cerrito is the riparian habitat adjacent to Cerrito Creek and Baxter Creek, including a grove of willows along Baxter Creek which is under the regulatory jurisdiction of the CDFW under section 1601 of the California Fish and Game Code. Any improvements to open water channels (e.g., Cerrito Creek, Ohlone Greenway-Schmidt to Portola, Creekside Park) as part of the Urban Greening Plan would be subject to the Joint Aquatic Resource Permit Application (JARPA) process, which consolidates individual applications for state, federal and some regional agencies to make the permitting process more clear and consistent. The Urban Greening Plan proposes landscaping, daylighting, trails, and riparian improvements at creek locations and therefore would be subject to these regulations.

Additionally, the Project includes policy measures, including Policy 8.3 to develop a Watershed Management Plan, to support wildlife habitat through creek channel and riparian management measures that would reduce erosion and degradation.

Lastly, Municipal Code Chapter 19.12 (Creek Protection Overlay District), which applies city-wide, specifies permitted uses and development standards for improvements adjacent to the creek to control flood and erosion damages and preserve natural watercourses as an important public asset. Project improvements would improve opportunities for riparian habitat and sensitive natural communities to thrive. As a result of the Project's policies and programs, and existing City and State regulations described above, the Project's impact is anticipated to be less than significant.

- c) *Have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?*

**No Impact.** Focus Area #6: Creekside Park proposes to consider creation of functional wetlands, but the City of El Cerrito does not contain any federally protected wetlands. Therefore, the Project would have no impact on protected wetlands.

- d) *Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites*

**Less Than Significant.** The primary wildlife corridors in El Cerrito are within the city's Hillside Natural Area and to a lesser extent along open reaches of the creeks. As analyzed in the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan EIR, the City of El Cerrito does not contain native resident or migratory fish. Creek maintenance measures proposed by the Project would remove invasive plants and potentially improve the condition of creek areas to support wildlife habitat. Restoring natural areas in existing open spaces, such as transitioning channelized creeks into daylight creek areas may restore their natural function while potentially increasing wildlife habitat and biodiversity. As described in *Section D.b*, any improvements within creek areas would be subject to State and local regulations to protect these resources.

Trail improvements in open spaces and parks are not anticipated to have impacts during operation of the Project since improvements are limited to unpaved trail development and improved water quality. Noise impacts during construction would be temporary and therefore are not anticipated to interfere substantially with the movement of wildlife spaces. Pollinator pathways along the Greenway, on Conlon Avenue, within the Ashbury Avenue median and in other locations in the public right-of way would provide pollinator species with access to pollen and nectar. In sum, the Project would have a less-than-significant impact on fish or wildlife species.

- e) *Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?*

**Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporation.** Construction of focus area projects and build out of pedestrian and park improvements may result in the trimming or removal of trees, shrubs or weedy vegetation, which could provide habitat for nesting birds. The City is in the process of preparing a Tree Preservation Ordinance, but it is not yet completed or adopted. Therefore, while the project would not conflict with local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, there are mitigation measures that can be implemented to reduce potential impacts on these resources. Implementation of Mitigation Measures BIO-1, BIO-2 BIO-3, and BIO-4 would reduce the potential impacts to a less-than-significant level:

Mitigation Measure BIO-1 – Nesting Birds: The removal of trees, shrubs, or weedy vegetation shall be avoided during the February 1 through August 31 bird nesting period to the extent possible, except for in the case of an emergency. If no vegetation or tree

removal is proposed during the nesting period, no further action is required. If it is not feasible to avoid the nesting period, the project applicant shall conduct a survey for nesting birds no sooner than 14 days prior to the start of removal of trees, shrubs, grassland vegetation, buildings, grading, or other construction activity. Survey results shall be valid for 21 days following the survey; therefore, if vegetation or building removal is not started within 21 days of the survey, another survey shall be required. The area surveyed shall include all construction sites, access roads, and staging areas, as well as areas within 150 feet outside the boundaries of the areas to be cleared or as otherwise determined by the biologist.

In the event that an active nest is discovered in the areas to be cleared, or in other habitats within 150 feet of construction boundaries, clearing and construction shall be postponed for at least two weeks or until a wildlife biologist has determined that the young have fledged (left the nest), the nest is vacated, and there is no evidence of second nesting attempts.

Mitigation Measure BIO-2 – Pre-Construction Survey for Bats: A qualified biologist shall conduct pre-construction surveys for bats and suitable bat roosting habitat at work sites where culverts, structures and/or trees would be removed prior to the initiation of construction. If bats or suitable bat roosting habitat is detected, CDFW shall be notified immediately for consultation and possible on-site monitoring.

Mitigation Measure BIO-3 – Tree Replacement: A certified arborist approved by the Public Works Department shall perform fieldwork that includes detailing the number of trees to be removed or affected and preserved within each project site. The results of this fieldwork shall form the basis for the appropriate tree replacement ratio. The findings of the field work and associated recommendations shall be reviewed by the Public Works Director for approval and implementation.

Mitigation Measure BIO-4 – Tree Roots: If trimming of roots greater than two inches in diameter is necessary during construction of the Project, a certified arborist approved by the Public Works Department shall be required to review and approve excavation plans and, if determined to be necessary by the arborist, shall be on site during construction to ensure that trimming does not cause an adverse impact to the trees.

Implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-1, BIO-2, BIO-3, and BIO-4 would reduce and/or avoid potential impacts on nesting birds, bats, and trees, and therefore, reduce the potential impact of construction of the Project to a less-than-significant level.

- f) *Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?*

**No Impact.** There are no habitat conservation plans, natural community conservation plans, or other approved local, regional, or State habitat conservation plans that apply in the Planning Area. Therefore, the Project does not conflict with any adopted habitat conservation plan and would have no impact.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>E. CULTURAL RESOURCES</b>				
Would the project:				
a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource as defined in §15064.5?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to §15064.5?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Affected Environment**

As described in the General Plan, prehistoric archaeological sites in Western Contra Costa County are typically located near historical marsh margins, on terraces along watercourses, and at the base of hills near watercourses. Common prehistoric archaeological resources found at such sites include shell middens and bedrock milling stations. The City of El Cerrito is situated to the east of the general zone where shellmounds have been found. Further from the shoreline and upslope, the likelihood of encountering a classic deposit diminishes. Still, there are five recorded prehistoric archaeological sites within El Cerrito’s boundaries.<sup>9</sup>

**Discussion**

- a) *Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource as defined in §15064.5?*

**Less Than Significant.** Focus area projects and the landscaping and stormwater improvements consistent with the Urban Greening Plan policies would take place along existing streets, creek beds and primarily within disturbed and developed right-of-ways and paths, and would not affect existing structures. However, historic resources can also come in

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid: 7-2.

the form of sites. Two historic sites have been identified in publicly-accessible locations in the Contra Costa County Historic Resources Inventory:<sup>10</sup>

- Joaquin Murietta Rock, near Arlington and Cutting Boulevards: An outcropping of rock covering about an acre. Legend has it that it was a hiding place for bandits who robbed the stagecoaches on the flat lands below. The rock outcropping is of the Franciscan type, and is over 150 million years old.
- Victor Castro Adobe at 1 El Cerrito Plaza: Don Victor Ramon Castro, one of thirteen children of Don Francisco Castro, chose the edge of his father's 17,938 acre Rancho San Pablo for his adobe hacienda in 1839. The adobe extended into a U-shape Spanish style home with two wings and a patio. The adobe was destroyed by fire in 1956. The adobe site is a California Historical Landmark #356 and is now identified by a sign on-site.

The Project does not propose improvements at the Murietta Rock site. However, the Project does propose to create a mid-block crossing in El Cerrito Plaza (now occupied by a shopping center) to connect the east and west segments of the Cerrito Creek pedestrian trail and provide opportunities for improved trails and an enhanced creek experience at Creekside Park. These project improvements would not constitute a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historic resource and the potential impact would be less than significant.

b) *Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to §15064.5?*

**Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporation.** In areas where improvements are proposed along existing streets and within disturbed and developed right-of-ways, there would be no impact on historical or archaeological resources. Improvement projects along creeks or that involve park and open space expansions would require grading or ground disturbance that may have an impact on unknown, but potentially present archaeological resources. Further, it is noted that Creekside Park is in close proximity to Albany Hill, which is identified as a resource in the California Archaeological Inventory. The Project would not directly affect Albany Hill and therefore would not cause a substantial adverse change.

No impact is anticipated during operation of the Project. In order to reduce potential impacts to archaeological resources during construction to a less-than-significant level, Mitigation Measure CUL-1 shall be implemented.

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<sup>10</sup> Contra Costa County, 2010. *Historic Resources Inventory*: 19.

Mitigation Measure CUL-1 – Archaeological Resources: If a previously unknown, but potentially significant cultural resource is encountered during clearing, grading and subsurface earthwork activities for any project component, all construction activities within a 100-foot radius of the find shall cease until a qualified archaeologist determines whether the uncovered resource requires further study. The project proponent shall immediately notify the City of El Cerrito Community Development Director. The project applicant shall include a standard “Inadvertent Discovery Clause” in every construction contract to inform contractors of this requirement. Any previously undiscovered resources found during construction shall be recorded on appropriate California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) forms and evaluated for significance in terms of CEQA criteria by a qualified archaeologist. Potentially significant cultural resources consist of but are not limited to stone, bone, glass, ceramic, wood, or shell artifacts; fossils; or features including hearths, structural remains, or historic dumpsites.

If the resource is determined significant under CEQA, the qualified archaeologist shall prepare and implement a research design and archaeological data recovery plan that will capture those categories of data for which the site is significant. The archaeologist shall also perform appropriate technical analyses, prepare a comprehensive report and file it with the appropriate Information Center (Sonoma State University), and provide for the permanent curation of the recovered materials.

Implementation of Mitigation Measure CUL-1 would reduce and/or avoid potential impacts on archeological resources, and therefore, reduce the potential impact of construction to a less-than-significant level.

c) *Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?*

**Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporation.** The Project does not involve construction which would impact known unique paleontological resources or sites or unique geological features. Although unlikely, in some areas, the proposed trail, park, channel/creek, and open space improvement projects would require grading or ground disturbance and therefore may have an impact on paleontological resources. No impact is anticipated during operation of the Project. The following mitigation measure shall be applied to the Project to reduce the potential impact during construction:

Mitigation Measure CUL-2 – Paleontological Resources: In the event a fossil is discovered during any earthwork activities for the project components (including those occurring at depths of less than 10 feet), all excavations within 100 feet of the find shall be temporarily

halted or delayed until the discovery is examined by a qualified paleontologist, in accordance with Society of Vertebrate Paleontology standards. The project applicant shall include a standard “Inadvertent Discovery Clause” in every construction contract to inform contractors of this requirement. The paleontologist shall notify the City of El Cerrito Community Development Director or designee to determine procedures to be followed before construction is allowed to resume at the location of the find. If the find is determined to be significant and the City determines that avoidance is not feasible, the paleontologist shall design and carry out a data recovery plan consistent with the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology standards. The plan shall be submitted to the City for review and approval. Upon approval, the plan shall be incorporated into the project.

Implementation of Mitigation Measure CUL-2 would reduce and/or avoid potential impacts on paleontological resources, and therefore, reduce the potential impact of construction of the Project to a less-than-significant level.

d) *Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?*

**Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporation.** The potential to uncover Native American human remains exists in locations throughout California. Although not anticipated, in some areas improvement projects that involve grading or ground disturbance could disturb human remains. The following mitigation measure shall be applied to the Project to reduce the potential impact:

Mitigation Measure CUL-3 – Human Remains: If human remains are encountered during earth-disturbing activities for the Project, all work in the adjacent area shall stop immediately and the Alameda County Coroner’s office shall be notified immediately. This requirement shall be included in all project construction documents. If the remains are determined to be Native American in origin, the Native American Heritage Commission shall be notified and will identify the Most Likely Descendent, who will be consulted for recommendations for treatment of the discovered remains.

Implementation of Mitigation Measure CUL-3 would reduce and/or avoid potential impacts on paleontological resources, and therefore, reduce potential adverse impacts to human remains during construction to a less-than-significant level.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>F. GEOLOGY AND SOILS</b>				
Would the project:				
a) Expose people or structures to potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ii. Strong seismic ground shaking?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
iii. Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
iv. Landslides?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial risks to life or property?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative waste water disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of waste water?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**Affected Environment**

The City of El Cerrito is in the northern portion of the Coast Range geomorphic province of California, which is characterized by northwest-trending mountain ranges and valleys that generally parallel the major geologic structures, such as the San Andreas and Hayward faults. The Hayward fault is the active fault nearest to the city limits. It is a northwest-trending zone, about 51 miles long, which extends from southeastern San Jose through the East Bay communities into San Pablo Bay.

## Discussion

- a) *Expose people or structures to potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:*
- i. *Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42.*

**Less Than Significant.** According to the Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone Maps published by the California Department of Conservation, Division of Mines and Geology (1982), most of the city is not located within the Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone for the Hayward fault. The project improvements do not involve substantial structures that could be damaged or could injure people directly from fault off-set during a strong earthquake.

- ii. *Strong seismic ground shaking?*

**Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporation** The entire San Francisco Bay Area is subject to periodic earthquake ground shaking. The potential for strong seismic shaking at the project site is high. Due to their close proximity and historical seismic activity, the Hayward, San Andreas, and Concord/Green Valley faults present the highest potential for severe ground shaking. For example, the Working Group on California Earthquake Probabilities in conjunction with the United States Geological Survey estimates that there is a 14 percent probability that a magnitude 6.7 or greater earthquake will occur on the Hayward fault system in the next 30 years, a 6 percent probability that a magnitude 6.7 or greater earthquake will occur on the San Andreas fault, but a cumulative 72 percent probability that a magnitude 6.7 or greater earthquake will occur in the San Francisco Region in the next 30 years.<sup>11</sup>

Unless structures are specifically designed to withstand strong ground motion, proposed facilities stairs and trails in hillside areas, daylighting of creeks out of existing culverts, and other creek and creek bank improvements could be damaged. In order to reduce these impacts to a less than significant level, Mitigation Measure GEO-1 shall be implemented:

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<sup>11</sup> U.S. Geological Survey, 2015. "UCERF3: A New Earthquake Forecast for California's Complex Fault System" Fact Sheet 2015-3009.

Mitigation Measure GEO-1 – Geotechnical Investigation: Prior to final design of improvements that involve significant ground disturbance, and substantial structures such as retaining walls, the City shall complete a geotechnical investigation, consistent with City of El Cerrito requirements, to identify design measures to mitigate impacts associated with poor soil conditions, unstable slopes, landslides, and earthquake related events such as groundshaking and ground failure, and implement those measures in the respective park, open space, and pedestrian improvements.

*iii. Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?*

**Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporation.** Liquefaction occurs when loose sand and silt that is saturated with water behaves like a liquid when shaken by a seismic event, potentially resulting in a loss of soil strength and settling or subsidence. In some instances, lateral movements of the ground surface can also occur as a result of liquefaction through a phenomenon known as lateral spreading. Liquefaction and lateral spreading can constitute a significant geologic hazard, causing damage to pedestrian bridges or walkways and other site improvements. In order to reduce these impacts to a less than significant level, Mitigation Measures GEO-1 shall be implemented.

*iv. Landslides?*

**Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporated.** The hillsides in the north and east of El Cerrito are prone to landslides. The City's General Plan discourages development from these areas and the Urban Greening Plan does not propose any development in these areas. However, grading related to new pedestrian infrastructure (i.e., trails and stairs) could contribute to the risk of landslides. Implementation of Mitigation Measure GEO-1 would reduce potential landslide impacts on the site to a less-than-significant level.

*b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?*

**Less Than Significant.** Exposed soils, particularly on steep portions of project sites could be subject to erosion during construction and grading activities. The potential for soil erosion exists during the period of earthwork activities and between the time when earthwork is completed and new vegetation is established or hardscape is installed. Once projects are operational and landscaping and trails have been installed, the Project is anticipated to have a beneficial impact on reducing and avoiding erosion.

As described further in Section I: Hydrology and Water Quality, the City of El Cerrito requires preparation of a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) for projects of a certain scale that would generate stormwater impacts in order to prevent erosion and sedimentation during and following construction. The requirements include implementation of Best Management Practices (BMPs) during construction and the use of Integrated Management Practices (IMPs) for permanent, post-construction controls to reduce erosion (and pollutants discharged from the sites). Implementation of existing regulations would reduce erosion impacts to a less-than-significant level.

- c) *Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse?*

**Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporation.** Subsidence or collapse can result from the removal of subsurface water resulting in either catastrophic or gradual depression of the surface elevation of the project site. The Project would have a beneficial impact on groundwater recharge by increasing the amount of stormwater captured. For example, as described in Appendix F of the Urban Greening Plan, the additional trees planted as part of the project would reduce surface water runoff by over 30,000 gallons per year (133 gallons annually per tree planted). Therefore, subsidence or collapse of site soils is not likely. However, soils may be subject to liquefaction following an earthquake and landslides, as described above. In order to reduce these potential impacts to a less-than-significant level, Mitigation Measure GEO-1 shall be implemented.

- d) *Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial risks to life or property?*

**Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporation.** In areas underlain by expansive soils and compacted, engineered fill high shrink-swell soil activity can disrupt or damage paved surfaces as well as the foundations of public access facility structures. In order to reduce these potential impacts to a less-than-significant level, Mitigation Measure GEO-1 shall be implemented.

- e) *Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative waste water disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of waste water?*

**No Impact.** No septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems would be utilized as part of the Project. The City uses a municipal sewer system.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>G. GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS</b>				
Would the project:				
a) Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Affected Environment**

The City of El Cerrito adopted a Climate Action Plan in 2013 to provide guidance for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The Climate Action Plan identifies an emissions reduction target of 15 percent below 2005 levels by 2020 and 30 percent below 2005 emissions’ levels by 2035. The transportation sector (i.e., vehicle emissions) represents just over half (51%) of all emissions in the city according to the 2005 baseline inventory, followed by residential energy use (28%) and commercial energy use (15%). Water consumption has a minimal contribution to greenhouse gas emissions, at 0.3%.

**Discussion**

- a) *Would the project generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?*

**Less Than Significant.** Construction activities (i.e., the use of vehicles and other equipment) related to the project improvements would increase greenhouse gas emissions (e.g., carbon dioxide) temporarily during construction. This impact is not considered to be significant given the limited scope and duration of construction for each project component.

During operation, the Project would encourage additional pedestrian and bicycle trips, as the Project proposes to add and improve pedestrian and bicycle connections and enhance neighborhood parks that are easily reached on foot. The Project could potentially result in fewer vehicle trips compared to existing conditions which would potentially reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Additionally planting shade trees and landscaping, could help

reduce urban heat island effects and sequester carbon. Therefore, the Project would have a less-than-significant impact on directly or indirectly generating greenhouse gas emissions.

- b) *Would the project conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?*

**Less Than Significant.** The Project helps to implement the following key goals and objectives in the City's Climate Action Plan related to urban greening improvements such as stormwater management and landscaping, and pedestrian and bicycle facilities:

Goal SC-3: Continue to invest in infrastructure that invites people to walk, bike, and take transit more in El Cerrito.

Objective SC-3.1: Create design standards for developments in commercial areas to require pedestrian-friendly improvements.

Objective SC-3.2: Maintain and expand an active program of streetscape improvements that enhance the pedestrian environment, character and continuity of residential and commercial districts and greater connectivity between residential and commercial districts.

Objective SC-3.3: Continue implementation of the *Oblone Greenway Master Plan* and create greater connections between the Greenway, San Pablo Avenue and other regional trail networks.

Goal SC-4: Increase and enhance urban green and open spaces to protect biodiversity, conserve natural resources, conserve water, foster walking and bicycling, and improve the health and quality of life for residents and people who work in El Cerrito.

Objective SC-4.1: Develop a comprehensive *Urban Greening Plan* to guide the development, programming, and maintenance of the City's public open spaces and green infrastructure and to identify additional or different types of green spaces needed to support urban infill development.

Objective SC-4.2: Promote Bay-Friendly tree planting and landscaping, and the creation of green and open space that is attractive and helps restore natural processes, sequester carbon, clean storm water, conserve resources, and connect citizens to El Cerrito's natural environment.

Goal EW-4: Partner with local, regional, and State agencies to encourage water conservation and efficiency.<sup>12</sup>

The Project would help to implement these Climate Action Plan objectives by calling for mid-block pedestrian connections; encouraging open space requirements in private development projects; sequestering carbon dioxide and mitigating urban heat islands by increasing street

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<sup>12</sup> City of El Cerrito, 2013. *Climate Action Plan*.

trees and plantings and reducing the amount of impervious surfaces; providing more opportunities for local food production through community gardens and pollinator gardens; mitigating the impacts of heavy rain events and flooding by reducing impervious paving and adding biofiltration gardens, open space, and other planted areas. The Project would also encourage Bay-Friendly landscaping and enhance biodiversity by protecting habitats and wildlife corridors to increase the likelihood that native ecosystems will be able to adapt to the impacts of climate change. It would also expand signage, trails, sidewalks, and bicycle facilities that encourage bicycle and pedestrian circulation.

As a result, the Project would have a beneficial impact on the City's greenhouse gas emissions' reduction goals. Therefore, the potential to conflict with applicable emissions reductions plans and policies would be less than significant.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>H. HAZARDS</b>				
Would the project:				
a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within 2 miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
f) For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
g) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h) Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires, including where wildlands are adjacent to urbanized areas or where residences are intermixed with wildlands?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Affected Environment**

There are a number of automobile service stations and other commercial uses (e.g., dry cleaners) within the Planning Area that store, use and dispose of hazardous materials. The majority of hazardous materials sites within the city are leaking underground storage tank

(LUST) cleanup sites associated with gasoline stations and automobile service uses, as well as activities that use onsite underground storage tanks, based on information from the Department of Toxic Substance's (DTSC) EnviroStor database<sup>13</sup> and the State Water Resources Control Board's (SWRCB) Geotracker database.<sup>14</sup> A review of the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) CERCLIS database indicated no active sites in the city.

## Discussion

- a) *Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?*

**Less Than Significant.** Implementation of the Project would include development of a Sustainable Landscape Program to educate residents on sustainable landscape and maintenance practices, including but not limited to programs related to pesticide-free and integrated pest management gardening, Bay Friendly Landscaping, street tree protection and proper maintenance, and water conservation practices. The City would continue to implement the City's Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Policy, which specifies the use of low risk pesticides only after City thresholds have been crossed and alternative strategies exhausted. Additionally, routine use of hazardous materials as part of the Project would be limited to small amounts of maintenance and custodial supplies to clean infrastructure in parks and other public facilities. These normal activities would be subject to applicable local, State, and federal regulations. No additional mitigation is required.

Depending on the scale of the project improvement, preparation and implementation of a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP), discussed further in Section I: Hydrology and Water Quality, may be required. The SWPPP is designed to reduce the risk of spills or leaks from the reaching the environment, including procedures to address minor spills of hazardous materials.

The proposed improvements would not involve the routine transport, use, storage, or disposal of hazardous materials to the extent that a significant public or environmental hazard would occur. Therefore, development and operation of the Project would therefore have a less-than-significant impact.

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<sup>13</sup> Department of Toxic Substances, 2015. Envirostor Mapping Tool. Accessed September 4, 2015.

<sup>14</sup> State Water Resources Control Board, 2015. GeoTracker Mapping Tool. Accessed September 4, 2015.

- b) *Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?*

**Less Than Significant.** The Project's proposed streetscape improvements would likely require minimal groundbreaking and the amount of soil excavation for street and open space areas is not expected to be substantial. The Project does not propose to demolish or renovate any buildings, which could contain hazardous materials. As described in *Section H.a* above, the Project does not involve or affect significant hazardous materials and would not create conditions which could lead to the accidental release of hazardous substances. Therefore, the potential impact is less than significant.

- c) *Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?*

**Less Than Significant.** Although the Project would be implemented within one-quarter mile of several schools, as described above, it would not emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous materials, substances, or waste. Therefore, the potential impact of the Project would be less than significant.

- d) *Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?*

**Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporation.** According to databases maintained by the California Department of Toxic Substances Control and the California State Water Resources Control Board, there are several sites in the City of El Cerrito that are on the Cortese list of hazardous materials sites. Most of these sites are gas stations and commercial uses that use and dispose of hazardous materials, and are located along San Pablo Avenue. These uses would not be affected by the surface construction of streetscape and landscaping facilities and improvements to parks and open spaces. Improvements that involve the disturbance of soil at or near these hazardous materials could potentially expose people and the environment to hazardous substances.

Mitigation Measure HAZ-1 - Phase I and II Investigations. Prior to construction of any improvements that require ground disturbance, lists of hazardous materials sites maintained by the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) and the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) shall be consulted. Where a proposed facility is located on an identified site, follow up Phase I and as appropriate Phase II hazardous waste site investigations shall be completed if not already available. No

disturbance of contaminated soil shall be permitted unless an approved site cleanup and remediation plan has been implemented for the identified hazardous waste site(s).

The Project proposes formalizing the existing community garden in Fairmont Park, developing an edible orchard in the Ashbury Avenue median, and encouraging community gardens on public and private property. Implementation of the Project would include development of a Community Garden Program that develops maintenance and partnership regulations and programs for establishing and running community gardens. To ensure that soil in community gardens is safe for gardeners and consumers, the following mitigation measure shall be implemented.

Mitigation Measure HAZ-2 – Community Garden Soil Evaluation. Prior to approval of a permanent community garden on public property, the applicant shall prepare and provide documentation of the following U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recommendations<sup>15</sup> for developing community gardens, to the satisfaction of the Community Development and Public Works Director:

- Research and submit the history of the property, which may include consultation of resources from the Department of Toxic Substances, State Water Resources Control Board resources, Sanborn or fire insurance maps, and City directories, in order to identify potential risks and contaminants for testing.
- Test soil at a laboratory to consider likely environmental contaminants, as well as macronutrients (nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium), micronutrients (magnesium, calcium, manganese, iron, etc.), Soil pH, and organic matter needed for healthy plant growth.
- If contaminants are at a level that need cleanup, applicant shall discuss with the City to determine whether an alternative site should be pursued, whether cleanup funds are available or can be attained, or whether above-ground rather than in-ground gardening should be pursued to reduce exposure to unsafe soils. In the latter instance, a water permeable fabric cover or geotextile may be utilized, or topsoil or clean fill added from certified soil sources (i.e., clean of any hazardous materials and safe for food production) to reduce exposures to soils of concern.

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<sup>15</sup> U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2015. “Steps to Create a Community Garden or Expand Urban Agriculture.” <http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/urbanag/steps.htm>. Accessed September 23, 2015.

In order to mitigate potential impacts to a less-than-significant level, Mitigation Measure HAZ-1 and HAZ-2 shall be implemented.

- e) *For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within 2 miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?*

**No Impact.** The Project is not located within an airport land use plan nor within 2 miles of a public or public use airport.

- f) *For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?*

**No Impact.** The Project is not located within the vicinity of a private airstrip.

- g) *Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?*

**Less Than Significant.** The project improvements are located in a predominantly urban setting mostly along existing rights-of-way (primarily along sidewalks and landscape strips) and public parks and open spaces, including the more rural Hillside Natural Areas. The Project is not expected to affect the roadway area where emergency vehicles and evacuation routes are located.

Any on-street improvements that would affect the roadway area, such as the Blue to Green Connections and Lower Fairmount Avenue improvements would undergo review by the Police and Fire departments to ensure the necessary road widths, turning radii, emergency vehicle apparatus, and clearance distances are maintained for all emergency vehicles. In particular, if the Lower Fairmount Avenue proposal to vacate the street to some or all vehicle modes is pursued, further analysis would be required to determine the effect on emergency response. Based on known project implementation, the Project would not physically interfere with an adopted emergency response or evacuation plan and the Project's impact is expected to be less than significant.

- h) *Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires, including where wildlands are adjacent to urbanized areas or where residences are intermixed with wildlands?*

**Less Than Significant.** The potential for grassland or woodland fires is found in the El Cerrito hills. Existing water lines and access for emergency vehicles in this area are considered adequate for fire protection; no additional mitigation is required. Moreover, as part of

implementation of the Project, the Hillsdale Open Space pilot project includes policies for vegetation management to decrease fire hazards in this open space area. Therefore, the potential impact of the Project on wildland fires is considered less than significant.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>I. HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY</b>				
Would the project:				
a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Substantially deplete groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that there would be a net deficit in aquifer volume or a lowering of the local groundwater table level (e.g., the production rate of pre-existing nearby wells would drop to a level which would not support existing land uses or planned uses for which permits have been granted)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, in a manner which would result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, or substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or off-site?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Otherwise substantially degrade water quality?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) Place housing within a 100-year flood hazard area as mapped on a federal Flood Hazard Boundary or Flood Insurance Rate Map or other flood hazard delineation map?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
h) Place within a 100-year flood hazard area structures which would impede or redirect flood flows?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i) Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving flooding, including flooding of as a result of the failure of a levee or dam?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
j) Inundation by seiche, tsunami, or mudflow?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

## **Affected Environment**

The City of El Cerrito is located in the San Francisco Bay Hydrologic Region, in the East Bay Plain Subbasin of the Santa Clara Valley Groundwater Basin. This subbasin is a northwest trending alluvial plain bounded on the north by San Pablo Bay, on the east by the contact with Franciscan Basement rock, and on the south by the Niles Cone Groundwater Basin. The East Bay Plain Subbasin extends beneath San Francisco Bay to the west. Several creek reaches pass through El Cerrito.

The State Water Resources Control Board and nine Regional Water Boards regulate water quality of surface water and groundwater bodies throughout California. In the Bay Area, including the project site, the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Board is responsible for implementation the Water Quality Control Plan (Basin Plan). The Basin Plan establishes beneficial water uses for waterways and water bodies within the region. Runoff water quality is regulated by the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Program, established through the federal Clean Water Act. Compliance with NPDES permits is mandated by State and federal statutes and regulations. The Contra Costa Countywide Clean Water Program assists cities, towns, and unincorporated areas with coordination and consistency of approaches across the County in implementing the Regional Water Board requirements.

## **Discussion**

a) *Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements?*

**Less Than Significant.** Potential stormwater impacts in improvements associated with the Project may occur during construction phases, while operation of the Project is expected to improve water quality and benefit waste discharge by improving and expanding stormwater management infrastructure.

Pursuant to Section 402 of the Clean Water Act and the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act, municipal stormwater discharges in the City of El Cerrito are regulated under the San Francisco Bay Region Municipal Regional Stormwater NPDES Permit, Order No. R2-2009-0074, NPDES Permit No. CAS612008, adopted October 14, 2009 (MRP). MRP Provision C.3 addresses post-construction stormwater management requirements and requires the City to incorporate site design, source control, and stormwater treatment measures into development projects, to minimize the discharge of pollutants in stormwater runoff and non-stormwater discharges. Under provision C.3.b.ii.(4)(d), sidewalks and trails that are not

hydraulically connected to other impervious surface or the stormwater conveyance system and drain to vegetated areas are exempt from water quality treatment requirements. As a result, most project components would be exempt from C.3 requirements.

Still, compliance with State and federal standards to maintain water quality is required, consistent with the following General Plan policy:

Policy R1.6: Runoff Water Quality. Maintain, at a minimum, the water quality levels established by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), implement Clean Water Program and NPDES requirements, and achieve the highest possible level of water quality reasonable for an urban environment in City creeks.

The regional NPDES permit requires that the City and permit applicants address storm water pollution issues in development of private and public projects. Any construction activities, including grading, that would result in the disturbance of one acre or more would be required to comply with the General Permit for Storm Water Discharges Associated with Construction and Land Disturbance Activity (Construction General Permit). Under the Construction General Permit, preparation of a SWPPP for a site would be required to address construction-related impacts.

As part of its standard practice, the City would review improvement projects prior to construction and determine if the project component requires preparation of a SWPPP. Based on this review, the City or applicant would prepare a project SWPPP that includes Best Management Practices (BMPs) to prevent, or minimize stormwater pollution during construction activities. All projects proposed along creek channels would require the preparation of an Erosion Control and Revegetation Plan, and a Spill Control and Counter Measures Plan, regardless of whether a SWPPP is technically required or not, as well as a Joint Aquatic Resource Permit (JARPA).

Therefore, existing regulations would mitigate any potential impacts of construction of the Project and operation of the Project is anticipated to have beneficial impacts on water quality. Potential impacts of the Project on water quality would be less than significant.

- b) *Substantially deplete groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that there would be a net deficit in aquifer volume or a lowering of the local groundwater table level (e.g., the production rate of pre-existing nearby wells would drop to a level which would not support existing land uses or planned uses for which permits have been granted)?*

**Less Than Significant.** The Project is anticipated to increase groundwater recharge by reducing the amount of impervious surfaces as a result of removing pavement along sidewalks

and streets, and increasing the area devoted to stormwater capture and treatment. Implementation of the Project would include installation of biofiltration gardens, constructed wetlands, and new street trees and landscaping that would contribute to increasing groundwater supplies. As a result, the Project's impact on groundwater supplies would be less than significant.

- c) *Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, in a manner which would result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site?*

**Less Than Significant.** The Project includes naturalizing and daylighting former creeks that are currently channelized along portions of the Ohlone Greenway (Portola Drive to Schmidt Lane), Cerrito Creek near El Cerrito Plaza, and the under construction Creekside Apartments project. (Notably, the Creekside Apartments' project includes daylighting and restoring approximately 180 feet of Cerrito Creek; environmental impacts of this project component—which has been approved and was under construction in 2015—were previously evaluated in a 2005 Subsequent Environmental Impact Report and are not analyzed further in this Initial Study.) As a result of these improvements, the sinuosity (or curves) of the creek bed would be restored along the Ohlone Greenway. Daylit and restored creeks would be engineered consistent with federal, State, and local regulations to reduce erosion and siltation, as they return creek areas to a more natural state. These regulations include compliance with the JARPA requirements discussed in *Section D.b*. Additionally, the Project would follow the recommendations of the conceptual site planning completed for daylighting the creek segment along the Ohlone Greenway from Portola to Schmidt (Focus Area #2).<sup>16</sup>

Existing storm drainage systems would be retained, but impervious areas are expected to be reduced as a result of the Project. Grading of project sites and installation of green infrastructure for stormwater management would affect local drainage patterns in terms of the amount of flow and areas for drainage. As part of implementation of the Project, the City would develop Creek Maintenance Plans and a Watershed Management Plan, which would include riparian management guidelines to manage plantings, and reduce erosion in advance of development of creek restoration and watershed enhancement projects. As described in *Section I.a* above, BMPs and preparation of SWPPP would be required on larger projects to address erosion and sedimentation.

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<sup>16</sup> Restoration Design Group, 2008. "Fluvius Innominatus Restoration Channel Design" Memorandum to Melanie Mintz, City of El Cerrito: March 8.

While ground disturbance for projects outside existing paved rights-of-way associated could cause erosion and sedimentation into waterways, Urban Greening Plan policies and existing local and regional regulations described above would reduce potential impacts on existing draining patterns that would result in erosion to less-than-significant levels.

- d) *Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, or substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or off-site?*

**Less Than Significant.** As described in *Section I.d* above, as part of implementation of the Project, green infrastructure, stormwater management measures, and riparian management guidelines would be implemented to reduce flood impacts. Impervious surfaces would be reduced as a result of the Project, thereby further reducing potential flood impacts. As described in Appendix F of the Urban Greening Plan, the additional trees planted as part of the Project would reduce surface water runoff by over 30,000 gallons per year. Therefore, the Project would reduce the rate and amount of surface runoff which would have a beneficial impact on flooding and the potential impact would be less-than-significant.

- e) *Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff?*

**Less than Significant.** The Project is anticipated to reduce stormwater runoff by reducing the amount of impervious surfaces (removing portions of paved areas along sidewalks and streets) and increasing the area devoted to stormwater capture and treatment. Implementation of the Project would include installation of biofiltration gardens, constructed wetlands, and new street trees and landscaping that would contribute to reducing runoff and removing pollutants from the water. For example, the biofiltration garden at Ashbury Avenue (Focus Area 13) is estimated to treat approximately 177,800 gallons of runoff per year, while the constructed wetland at Creekside would treat over 8.4 million gallons of runoff per year. (See Appendix F of the Urban Greening Plan for additional details.)

The Project would not significantly alter the existing stormwater drainage system (some drains may be rebuilt as a result of street improvement projects), but it is expected to reduce reliance on the storm drain system and therefore increase its capacity. As a result, the Project would have a less-than-significant impact on runoff and the capacity of drainage systems.

f) *Otherwise substantially degrade water quality?*

**Less Than Significant.** As described in Appendix F of the Urban Greening Plan, the Project would expand the amount of runoff treated and remove pollutants—namely, total suspended solids (TSS), total phosphorus (TP), Nitrate and Nitrite, Lead, total Kjeldahl nitrogen (TKN), Copper and Zinc—from stormwater runoff resulting in a beneficial impact on water quality. Furthermore, as part of implementation of the Project, the City would develop a Watershed Management Plan to establish performance metrics to improve water quality and monitoring. Erosion and sedimentation from construction related disturbance of pedestrian facilities and trails could impact water quality temporarily. Where required, for larger projects, a SWPPP would be required to mitigate the impacts of erosion and sedimentation associated with construction-related disturbance. Therefore, the potential impact on water quality would be less than significant.

g) *Place housing within a 100-year flood hazard area as mapped on a federal Flood Hazard Boundary or Flood Insurance Rate Map or other flood hazard delineation map?*

**No Impact.** The Project does not place housing within a 100-year floodplain; therefore the Project would have no impact with respect to this criterion.

h) *Place within a 100-year flood hazard area structures which would impede or redirect flood flows?*

**Less than Significant.** The Project does not propose to add significant structures within a 100-year floodplain. Therefore, the Project would have a less-than-significant impact on flood flows.

i) *Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving flooding, including flooding of as a result of the failure of a levee or dam?*

**No Impact.** None of the proposed project components are located in the vicinity of a levee or dam that could fail and cause loss, injury or death. Therefore, the Project would have no impact with regard to flooding as a result of a levee or dam failure.

j) *Inundation by seiche, tsunami, or mudflow?*

**No Impact.** None of the proposed projects are located in the vicinity of areas subject to seiche, tsunami, or mudflow. Therefore, the Project would have no impact with regard to inundation.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>J. LAND USE AND PLANNING</b>				
Would the project:				
a) Physically divide an established community?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the project (including, but not limited to the general plan, specific plan, local coastal program, or zoning ordinance) adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**Affected Environment**

The Project would be implemented in various locations within the City of El Cerrito, primarily in urban areas, but also including the Hillside Natural Area. While the Project would primarily be constructed in public rights-of way, parks, and open spaces, it would include project components developed adjacent to a range of land uses, including residential, commercial, and community facility uses.

**Discussion**

a) *Physically divide an established community?*

**Less Than Significant.** The Project does not propose to add structures, walls, or reduce connections that would physically divide an established community. Project improvements such as new stairs, trails, mid-block crossings, and pedestrian connections would have a beneficial impact by improving connections between destinations within the community.

Focus Area 14: Lower Fairmount Avenue includes one alternative option that would vacate the street, closing it off completely to vehicular traffic, though bicycle and pedestrian traffic could potentially remain. This would require permanent rerouting of the northbound left turn lane and would reduce the need for ongoing Caltrans permits for food truck gatherings and other events. With San Diego Street running east-west 400 feet to the north and Carlson Street 600 feet to the south, there are reasonable alternative options for circulation. As a result, the

Project would have a less than significant impact on physically dividing an established community.

- b) *Conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the project (including, but not limited to the general plan, specific plan, local coastal program, or zoning ordinance) adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?*

**Less Than Significant.** The Project would not conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy or regulation. Private property identified for potential open space development as part of the improvements to Central Park, El Cerrito Plaza, and the Hillside Natural Area would be dependent on the private property owner's interest and consent, and subsequently the City Council's determination if a land use change were necessary.

As identified in the environmental topics throughout this Initial Study, the Urban Greening Plan would facilitate implementation of policies and programs in El Cerrito's General Plan and Climate Action Plan, in particular those related to expanding parks and open spaces, improving the pedestrian and bicycle network, and managing stormwater runoff to improve water quality and reduce flood impacts. The implementation of mitigation measures in this environmental document and adherence to the requirements in the City's General Plan and Municipal Code would ensure conformance with plans, policies and regulations to avoid or mitigate potential environmental effects.

- c) *Conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan?*

**No Impact.** There are no habitat conservation plans or natural community conservation plans that apply in the Planning Area. Therefore, the Project does not conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan and would have no impact.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>K. MINERAL RESOURCES</b>				
Would the project:				
a) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Result in the loss of availability of a locally-important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**No Impact.** The El Cerrito General Plan does not identify any mineral resources within the city. The proposed Urban Greening Plan improvements would be located primarily in an already urbanized area and would not result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource or in the loss of a locally important mineral resource recovery site. Improvements within the Hillside Natural Area, Creekside Park, and other open space areas are proposed to maintain and enhance the historic natural setting of these resources by removing invasive plants, daylighting creek sections, planting native vegetation, and installing trails to manage erosion. Therefore, implementation of the Project would not have an impact on mineral resources.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>L. NOISE</b>				
Would the project:				
a) Exposure of persons to or generation of noise levels in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Exposure of persons to or generation of excessive ground borne vibration or ground borne noise levels?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) A substantial permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) A substantial temporary or periodic increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within 2 miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
f) For a project within the vicinity of a private airstrip, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**Affected Environment**

The Project is located within an already urbanized environment. According to the City’s General Plan, the predominant noise sources in the city are from vehicle and rail traffic, specifically vehicles on I-80 and San Pablo Avenue, and along the BART rail line. Long-term measurements that were taken over a 24-hour period in March 2014 to analyze another project—the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan—corroborate the General Plan’s findings regarding existing noise levels at these locations.

## Discussion

- a) *Exposure of persons to or generation of noise levels in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?*

**Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporation.** Operation of the Project would not create substantial new noise sources since the primary new noise sources would be additional human voices as a result of increased visitors to parks and open spaces. Additional trees and landscaping may have some noise reduction benefits. However, construction of the Project would temporarily increase noise sources due to the use of construction vehicles and equipment. Noise-generating activities would include removal of existing pavement, grading, excavation, and trail building. Although construction noise would be localized to specific project site locations, businesses and residences would be intermittently exposed to noise throughout the plan horizon as individual projects are constructed.

The City's General Plan and Zoning Ordinance include standards and regulations to analyze and reduce potential noise impacts, respectively. Additionally, Mitigation Measure NS-1 is included to further reduce potential impacts. Given the temporary and intermittent nature of the construction activities, and with implementation of these regulations and mitigations, the Project is not anticipated to have a significant impact on noise exposure in excess of established standards.

### ***Performance Standards***

El Cerrito's General Plan identifies standards for maximum outdoor noise levels and encourages noise reducing technology in the development of infrastructure:

Policy H3.2: Outdoor Noise Levels. The goal for maximum outdoor noise levels in residential areas is an Ldn [Day-Night Level] of 60 dB [decibels]. This level is a requirement to guide the design and location of future development and is a goal for the reduction of noise in existing development. However, 60 Ldn is a goal that cannot necessarily be reached in all residential areas within the realm of economic or aesthetic feasibility. This goal will be applied where outdoor use is a major consideration (e.g., backyards in single-family housing developments and recreation areas in multi-family housing projects). The outdoor standard will not normally be applied to the small decks associated with apartments and condominiums but these will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Where the city determines that providing an Ldn of 60 dB or lower outdoors is not feasible, the outdoor goal may be increased to an Ldn of 65 dB at the discretion of the Planning Commission.

Policy H3.5: Impacts of BART Noise. If the noise source is BART, then the outdoor noise exposure criterion should be 70 Ldn for future development, recognizing that BART noise is characterized by relatively few loud events.

Chapter 19.21.050 of the Zoning Ordinance requires preparation of a noise study if uses would produce outdoor noise levels in the conditionally permitted range or above. As described above, the Project is not anticipated to increase noise levels substantially and therefore would not trigger a noise study.

The Zoning Ordinance also describes performance standards to manage and reduce potential noise impacts. Normally acceptable noise levels are up to 60 dB in residential, commercial, and public facilities, and up to 65 dB in parks and open space areas; conditionally acceptable levels generally range from 75 to 80 dB in these use locations. The Zoning Ordinance requires evaluation of mitigation measures for projects in residential areas under the following circumstances:

- The project would cause the Ldn to increase 3 dBA or more.
- Any increase would result in an Ldn greater than 60 dBA.
- The Ldn already exceeds 60 dBA.
- The project has the potential to generate significant adverse community response.

### ***Existing Noise Reduction Regulations***

The General Plan includes the following policy to reduce potential noise impacts:

Policy H3.12: New Noise Reducing Technologies. Support and employ new noise reducing technologies in the development and maintenance of local and regional infrastructure.

Additionally, Chapter 16.03.060 of the Zoning Ordinance regulates construction hours to 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, and 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Saturday. It requires that construction work be controlled to prevent causing a public nuisance such as noise and vibration.

While the Project is not anticipated to cause an increase in dBA or generate significant adverse community response, it would be implemented in locations where the Ldn already exceeds 60 dBA, according to the measurements conducted for the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan Draft EIR in March 2014. As a result, in addition to the regulations described above, mitigation measures were evaluated and one mitigation measure is applied to the Project to reduce noise levels during construction.

### ***Mitigation Measure***

Implementation of Mitigation Measure NS-1 would further reduce potential noise impacts:

Mitigation Measure NS-1 – Noise Control Best Management Practices: The construction contractor shall institute a noise control program, which shall be submitted to the Community Development Department and approved prior to any construction activity. Construction equipment shall be well-maintained and used judiciously to be as quiet as practical. The following measures, when applicable, are recommended as part of the noise control program to reduce noise from construction activities:

- Equip all internal combustion engine-driven equipment with mufflers that are in good condition and appropriate for the equipment.
- Utilize “quiet” models of air compressors and other stationary noise sources where technology exists.
- Locate stationary noise-generating equipment as far as feasible from sensitive receptors when sensitive receptors adjoin or are near a construction area.
- Prohibit unnecessary idling of internal combustion engines.
- A temporary noise control blanket barrier could be erected, if necessary, along building facades facing construction sites. This mitigation would only be necessary if conflicts occurred which were irresolvable by proper scheduling.
- Route construction-related traffic along major roadways and as far as feasible from sensitive receptors.
- Ensure that construction activities (including the loading and unloading of materials and truck movements) are limited to the hours specified in the Zoning Ordinance or determined in consultation with the Community Development Director.
- Businesses, residences, or noise-sensitive land uses adjacent to construction sites shall be notified of the construction schedule in writing. Designate a “construction liaison” who would be responsible for responding to any local complaints about construction noise. The liaison would determine the cause of the noise complaints (e.g., starting too early, bad muffler, etc.) and institute reasonable measures to correct the problem. Conspicuously post a telephone number for the liaison at the construction site.

Compliance with existing policies and regulations, and implementation of Mitigation Measure NS-1 would reduce the exposure of persons to or generation of noise levels in excess of established standards and result in a less-than-significant impact.

b) *Exposure of persons to or generation of excessive ground borne vibration or ground borne noise levels?*

**Less Than Significant.** Community members would be exposed to additional noise and vibration sources temporarily during construction. The City of El Cerrito does not have quantifiable vibration limits that can be used to evaluate the compatibility of land uses with respect to ground-borne vibration, but given the limited nature of construction—no pile driving, or substantial excavation or grading is proposed—vibration impacts are expected to be limited and not substantial. Noise impacts would be regulated by the policies and regulations described in *Section L.a* above.

Parks and open space visitors would be temporarily exposed to existing noise and vibration sources in certain locations adjacent to BART and near vehicles on roadways, as a result of the Project. These impacts would affect users of the Blue to Green Connections in locations that cross under I-80, Ohlone Greenway improvements under the BART line, and pedestrian improvements at Lower Fairmount Avenue and Avila Street/San Pablo Avenue, adjacent to vehicle traffic on San Pablo Avenue.

Since proposed improvements near I-80 and San Pablo Avenue are pedestrian improvements—as opposed to park and open space improvements that might invite community members to linger—pedestrians would only be temporarily exposed to noise and vibration sources while passing under I-80 or San Pablo Avenue. Improvements to the Ohlone Greenway may increase the number of visitors to this linear park and likewise temporarily expose community members to noise and vibration intermittently as a BART train passes overhead. In conclusion, the potential impact of exposure of persons to or generation of excessive ground borne vibration or noise levels would be less than significant.

c) *A substantial permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project?*

**Less Than Significant.** As described in *Section L.a* and *Section L.b* above, the Project would not generate increased noise levels during operation of the Project. Therefore, the Project would not result in a substantial permanent increase in ambient noise levels and the potential impact would be less than significant.

d) *A substantial temporary or periodic increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project?*

**Less Than Significant.** As described in *Section L.a* and *Section L.b* above, the Project would temporarily generate construction noise impacts. Construction would include demolition,

grading, and excavation, so the highest noise levels would be generated when heavy equipment is used. Following common noise impact assessment practice, a substantial permanent noise increase would occur if the noise level increase resulting from the Project is 3 dBA Ldn or greater. A substantial temporary noise level increase would occur where noise from construction activities exceeds 60 dBA Leq and the ambient noise environment by at least 5 dBA Leq at noise-sensitive uses in the project vicinity for a period greater than one year. A substantial permanent cumulative noise increase would occur if the project contributed a minimum noise increase of 1 dBA Ldn where cumulative noise levels are anticipated to increase by 3 dBA Ldn or more.

Hourly average noise levels generated by the highest noise-producing construction activities could range from 75 dBA to 85 dBA Leq measured at a distance of 50 feet from the center of the active construction area. Construction-generated noise levels drop off at a rate of about 6 dBA per doubling of distance between the source and receptor. According to the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan Draft EIR, typical existing noise levels around San Pablo Avenue (one of the noisiest parts of the Planning Area) range from 63 to 79 dBA Leq during the day. Although at times the construction of the Project may exceed the dBA Leq threshold, since construction related to individual project components would occur for a duration of less than one year, the potential impact would be less than significant. Moreover, potential impacts would be mitigated through the regulations, mitigation measure, and policies described in *Section L.a*. As a result, the Project would not result in a substantial temporary or periodic increase in ambient noise levels and the potential impact would be less than significant.

- e) *For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within 2 miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?*

**No Impact.** The Project is not located within an airport land use plan nor is it located within 2 miles of a public airport or public use airport. As a result, there would be no impact regarding this significance criterion.

- f) *For a project within the vicinity of a private airstrip, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?*

**No Impact.** The Project is not located within the vicinity of a private airstrip. As a result, there would be no impact regarding this significance criterion.

	<b>Potentially Significant</b>	<b>Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporation</b>	<b>Less Than Significant Impact</b>	<b>No Impact</b>
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**M. POPULATION AND HOUSING**

Would the project:

- |   |                          |                          |                          |                                     |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a) Induce substantial population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Displace substantial numbers of existing housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| c) Displace substantial numbers of people, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

**No Impact.** The Project does not involve the construction of any new vehicular roads, sewer and water lines or other utilities which could induce population growth in the City. The proposed streetscape, park, and open space improvements would serve the existing population and would not directly add housing or jobs to the City that could have a growth inducing effect. It would not displace any existing housing units or substantial numbers of people, requiring replacement housing elsewhere.

	<b>Potentially Significant</b>		
<b>Potentially Significant Impact</b>	<b>Unless Mitigation Incorporation</b>	<b>Less Than Significant Impact</b>	<b>No Impact</b>

**N. PUBLIC SERVICES**

Would the project:

- a) Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for any of the public services:

Fire protection?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Police protection?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Schools?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Parks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other public facilities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**Affected Environment**

The Project is located within an urban area which is currently served by existing public fire, police, schools, parks, and related public services.

**Discussion**

- a) *Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for any of the public services: fire protection, police protection, schools, parks, or other public facilities?*

**Fire Protection - Less Than Significant.** Fire protection for the Project would be provided by the El Cerrito Fire Department. As of 2015, the Fire Department had 37 authorized personnel, including 19 paramedics who provide advanced life support services during emergency medical responses. The El Cerrito General Plan states a goal to maintain an average

emergency response time for the first fire engine of less than 6 minutes for 95 percent of all emergency calls for service, provided adequate financial resources are available.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, the El Cerrito Fire Department has automatic aid response agreements with the City of Richmond Fire Department, City of Albany Fire Department, City of Berkeley Fire Department, and Contra Costa County Fire Protection District.

The Project is not anticipated to affect fire protection services substantially, since it would not increase the population of residents or employees nor the amount of development. Fuel reduction policy measures in the Hillside Natural Areas could reduce calls for service related to wildfire. As a result, implementation of the Project would not necessitate new Fire Department facilities and therefore would not create substantial adverse physical impacts related to the provision of new or altered Fire facilities and the resulting impact is less than significant.

**Police Protection - Less Than Significant.** Police protection for the Project would be provided by the El Cerrito Police Department. The Police Department has a response time standard of 5 minutes for Priority 1 and 2 calls (these are calls for service considered emergencies, with the potential for serious injury and/or death) and a staffing service level standard of 1.26 officers per 1,000 residents, according to the General Plan.<sup>18</sup>

The Project would not increase the population of residents or employees nor the amount of development and therefore is not anticipated to have a substantial effect on police protection. As a result, implementation of the Project would not necessitate new Police Department facilities and therefore would not create substantial adverse physical impacts related to the provision of new or altered Police facilities. The resulting impact is less than significant.

**Schools – No Impact.** The Project would not generate new students. As a result, the Project would not have an effect on the need for new or physically altered governmental facilities to maintain acceptable service ratios.

**Parks – Less Than Significant.** Service ratios, maintenance, construction and operation impacts related to parks and open space are analyzed below.

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<sup>17</sup> City of El Cerrito, 1999. *General Plan Public Facilities and Services Element*. 6-29.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid: 6-25.

### ***Service Ratios***

The City contains approximately 142 acres of park, open space, and recreation area (not including Ohlone Greenway) in the city. The General Plan states a minimum level of service standard of 5 acres of publicly-owned park land per 1,000 residents.<sup>19</sup> Based on a population estimate of 24,316 in 2013, the current service level is 5.85 acres per 1,000 residents. Therefore, the City is currently meeting and exceeding the General Plan standard. The Project would enhance and/or increase the amount or accessibility of recreation areas through amenities to existing facilities and potentially expanded facilities through private land acquisition, which would collectively result in an increase in the overall service ratio.

### ***Maintenance***

The Urban Greening Plan supports a range of policies and programs to support maintenance of existing and planned improvements through plant selection (i.e., removal of invasive species and planting appropriate species), volunteerism, and support for a citywide maintenance and management plan to create dedicated revenue streams for maintenance. As a result, although the Project would increase the provision of recreation facilities and the use of existing facilities, policies, volunteerism, and potential new funding streams would prevent the physical deterioration of these facilities.

Although the City does not currently have a parks impact fee, the Active Transportation Plan, a parallel planning effort, recommends preparation of a nexus study in order to analyze the opportunity for a funding mechanism (such as impact fees) to pay for acquisition and maintenance of open space. The San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan also provides incentives for public open space and recommends establishment of an in-lieu fee for projects which will not add common, private or public open space. These policies and programs would further reduce the potential impact of increased usage and the provision of new facilities.

### ***Conclusion***

In summary, the Project would have a beneficial impact on the provision of recreation facilities in the city and would also provide for the maintenance of both existing and new facilities to avoid any potential deterioration due to increased use. The Project would not be expected to result in substantial adverse physical impacts due to temporary construction activities or operation of the Project. As a result, construction of the Project would result in a less-than-significant environmental impact.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid: 6-13.

**Other Public Facilities – No Impact.** The Project would have no impact on the provision of or need for other new public facilities, such as City Hall, the El Cerrito Library, or Open House Senior Center.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>O. RECREATION</b>				
Would the project:				
a) Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Does the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Affected Environment**

The City of El Cerrito Recreation and Public Works departments manage facilities and activities in the City’s parks, recreational facilities, and open spaces. The West Contra Costa Unified School District operates parks and recreation facilities on school sites. The East Bay Regional Parks District manages the 2,427-acre Wildcat Canyon Regional Park adjacent to the city’s eastern border. The Bay Trail, which runs along the waterfront west of the city, is operated by various cities, counties, park districts and other agencies.

**Discussion**

- a) *Would the project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?*

**Less Than Significant.** The Project would enhance facilities, plantings, and accessibility of existing neighborhood and regional parks and therefore could increase usage of these facilities. The Urban Greening Plan, and the Active Transportation Plan prepared in parallel, identify measures to prevent deterioration of these facilities, including funding for both capital improvements and maintenance, formalization of volunteer efforts, and removal of invasive species. As described in *Section N.a (Parks)* above, implementation of the Project would not be expected to increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks and recreation facilities to such extent that these facilities would be physically degraded or that substantial physical deterioration would be accelerated. Therefore, the Project would have a less-than-significant impact on the deterioration of existing facilities.

- b) *Does the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?*

**Less Than Significant.** As described in *Section N.a (Parks)* and *Section O.a* above, the Project would create new recreation opportunities in the form of enhanced facilities, such as new trails, landscaping, and park features. Construction of these facilities would include development of new paths, removal of some existing impervious surfaces in order to install plantings and stormwater infrastructure. As part of implementation of the Project, the City would develop a Master Plan for Trails to identify trail improvement projects and maintenance strategies. The Project could include expansion of parks and open spaces through the acquisition of private property and revisions to the Zoning Ordinance, requiring new development projects to provide open space.

These facilities would help implement the goals of the General Plan and the Climate Action Plan by providing pedestrian facilities and improving access to parks and open space areas. It is not anticipated that these new and improved facilities would have an adverse physical effect on the environment; therefore the potential impact is less than significant.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>P. TRANSPORTATION/TRAFFIC</b>				
Would the project:				
a) Conflict with an applicable plan, ordinance or policy establishing measures of effectiveness for the performance of the circulation system, taking into account all modes of transportation including mass transit and non-motorized travel and relevant components of the circulation system, including but not limited to intersections, streets, highways and freeways, pedestrian and bicycle paths, and mass transit?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Conflict with an applicable congestion management program, including, but not limited to level of service standards and travel demand measures, or other standards established by the county congestion management agency for designated roads or highways?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Result in a change in air traffic patterns, including either an increase in traffic levels or a change in location that results in substantial safety risks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) Substantially increase hazards due to a design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Result in inadequate emergency access?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Conflict with adopted polices, plans, or programs regarding public transit, bicycle, or pedestrian facilities, or otherwise decrease the performance or safety of such facilities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Affected Environment**

The Project would affect public rights-of-way throughout the city with projects that would reconfigure sidewalks to replace portions of existing impervious surfaces with landscape strips and with upgrades to the Ohlone Greenway multi-use path. The Project would not affect travel on highways and freeways; therefore such travel is not discussed further except as it relates to local street intersections with freeway on- and off-ramps. Although not currently

included in the CEQA Guidelines' Appendix G Checklist as a significance criterion, parking capacity is evaluated at the end of this section for informational purposes.

## Discussion

- a) *Conflict with an applicable plan, ordinance or policy establishing measures of effectiveness for the performance of the circulation system, taking into account all modes of transportation including mass transit and non-motorized travel and relevant components of the circulation system, including but not limited to intersections, streets, highways and freeways, pedestrian and bicycle paths, and mass transit?*

**Less Than Significant.** The Project would have a less-than-significant impact on vehicles/streets, transit, bicycle and pedestrian performance standards, and applicable plans and policies as described below.

### *Streets/Vehicles*

Vehicle level of service (LOS) is defined in terms of a letter grade ranging from A to F. LOS A is the best level of operation, representing free flowing conditions, and LOS F is the worst level of operation, representing excessive delays, long vehicle queues, and generally intolerable conditions. The City of El Cerrito's policy calls for achievement of LOS D or better.<sup>20</sup> The Project would not increase vehicle trips on city streets compared to existing conditions, but would potentially reduce vehicle travel by encouraging use of alternate modes by improving pedestrian and bicycle facilities and connections to transit and other key destination.

### *Transit*

The City of El Cerrito has taken a step toward making AC Transit more efficient by adopting a Transit First Policy. According to the General Plan, it is the official policy of the City of El Cerrito to encourage public transit among El Cerrito residents and visitors, and expedite the movement of transit vehicles.<sup>21</sup> The Project does not proposed to directly affect transit performance or operations.

### *Bicycles/Pedestrians*

While the City does not have adopted standards for bicycle and pedestrian facility performance citywide, it does express support for bicycle and pedestrian facilities through the goals and policies of the General Plan and Climate Action Plan. Improvements to paths, including

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<sup>20</sup> City of El Cerrito, 1999. *General Plan Transportation Element*: 5-4.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid: 5-10.

within linear parks such as Creekside Park and Baxter Gateway Park, and adding bicycle and pedestrian connections, such as at Avila Street and San Pablo Avenue, would enhance pedestrian and bicycle mobility by expanding connections between destinations.

### ***Construction Impacts***

Construction of on-street pedestrian improvements related to the Blue to Green Connections and green infrastructure may involve sidewalk and curb replacement that could result in temporary partial street closures, primarily to parking lanes, but potentially to travel lanes as well. Stair and trail improvements within off-street open space areas may also create short-term closures to park trails and staircases. Additionally, the number of travel lanes may be reduced while curb extensions and/or medians are installed at various locations. As these impacts would be temporary, they are not expected to create significant impacts.

As a result, the potential impact of the Project to conflict with an applicable plan, ordinance or policy establishing measures of effectiveness for the performance of the circulation system would be less than significant.

- b) *Conflict with an applicable congestion management program, including, but not limited to level of service standards and travel demand measures, or other standards established by the county congestion management agency for designated roads or highways?*

**Less Than Significant.** The Contra Costa Transportation Authority (CCTA) serves as the Congestion Management Agency for the County, responsible for preparing the County's Congestion Management Program (CMP), most recently in 2013. Within the city, the CMP analyzes conditions on I-80 and San Pablo Avenue, and sets specific intersection LOS standards for both of these facilities: LOS F for I-80 between Cutting Boulevard and the Alameda County line; and LOS E for the portion of San Pablo Avenue within El Cerrito.<sup>22</sup>

According to the CMP and the Measure J Contra Costa Growth Management Program, only projects that expect to generate more than 100 peak hour vehicle trips are required to prepare a traffic impact analysis that assesses impacts of the proposed development on the regional transportation system. As described in *Section P.a* above, the Project would not increase vehicle trips on city streets compared to existing conditions and would not generate more than 100 peak hour trips. Therefore, an impact analysis does not need to be prepared. Additionally, the Project would not have a direct impact on vehicle trips on I-80. Therefore, the Project is not

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<sup>22</sup> Contra Costa County Transit Authority, 2013. *Contra Costa Congestion Management Program*: D-2, D-4.

expected to conflict with the CCTA's CMP and the resulting impact on the CMP and related travel demand measures and standards would be less than significant.

- c) *Result in a change in air traffic patterns, including either an increase in traffic levels or a change in location that results in substantial safety risks?*

**No Impact.** No airports are located in the vicinity of the Planning Area. Therefore, the Project would have no impact on air traffic patterns.

- d) *Substantially increase hazards due to a design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?*

**Less Than Significant.** While the majority of project improvements do not substantially alter street design, the Project includes several pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure projects that are intended to make intersections safer for pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers. Specifically, reconfiguring the intersection at Conlon Avenue and Key Boulevard is intended to improve sightlines and clarify movements. Alternative proposals for Lower Fairmount Avenue would either restripe travel lanes or vacate the street altogether; although these proposal will be considered in further detail, neither alternative would substantially increase hazards. As a result, the potential impact on increasing hazards or incompatible uses would be less than significant.

- e) *Result in inadequate emergency access?*

**Less Than Significant.** As described in *Section P.d*, certain project components would alter street design, specifically reducing intersection widths (at Conlon Avenue and Key Boulevard), potentially some restriping related to the Blue to Green Connections, and restriping or vacation of Lower Fairmount Avenue. While the street vacation alternative would eliminate one route through this portion of the city, several other existing routes would remain. As part of the City's standard project review process, the Fire and Police departments would review street redesign proposals for emergency access considerations. Additionally, any street vacation proposal must go through a review process as per California Streets and Highway Code requirements (Section 8300: Public Streets, Highways, and Service Easements Vacation Law). As a result, these street design enhancements would be consistent with the City's emergency access standards and would not be expected to adversely affect emergency response. Therefore, the Project's impact to emergency access is expected to be less than significant.

- f) *Conflict with adopted policies, plans, or programs regarding public transit, bicycle, or pedestrian facilities, or otherwise decrease the performance or safety of such facilities?*

**Less Than Significant.** Implementation of the Project would include the City adopting a Green Streets policy for developing green infrastructure within pedestrian, bicycle, and transit projects in the public right-of-way. This policy would include preparation of a Municipal Green Infrastructure Ordinance to achieve this objective in City-funded streetscape, building, and open space projects.

Additionally, the Project supports the following transportation policies in the General Plan:

T1.1: Balanced Transportation System. Create and maintain a balanced transportation system with choice of transit, bicycle, pedestrian, and private automobile modes.

T1.4: Pedestrian Circulation. Provide a safe, convenient, continuous and interconnected pedestrian circulation system throughout the City. Ensure safe pedestrian access to local schools.

The Project also helps to implement the following Climate Action Plan alternative transportation policies:

Goal SC-3: Continue to invest in infrastructure that invites people to walk, bike, and take transit more in El Cerrito.

Objective SC-3.2: Maintain and expand an active program of streetscape improvements that enhance the pedestrian environment, character and continuity of residential and commercial districts and create greater connectivity between residential and commercial districts.

Objective SC-3.3: Continue implementation of the *Oblone Greenway Master Plan* and create greater connections between the Greenway, San Pablo Avenue and other regional trail networks.

Therefore, the Project would have a beneficial impact on policies, plans and programs regarding public transit, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities, and would not affect the performance of these facilities, resulting in a less-than-significant impact.

#### **Other Non-CEQA Topic: Parking**

For informational purposes, the anticipated parking demand and changes in supply for the Project were considered. In the City's Municipal Code, parking requirements are not specified for Park and Recreation Facilities; rather they are determined by the Zoning Administrator, who may require parking demand analysis. In this case, the Project does not propose to add or remove a significant number of parking spaces. There may be removal of a limited number of on-street parking spaces as a result of the reconfiguration of certain streets, such Lower

Fairmount Avenue and streets where bike facilities are proposed. Parking spaces proposed for removal would be determined during the design phase and would include a community engagement process.

While the enhancement of existing parks and open spaces and the provision of new open space amenities could generate additional visitors, these improvements are not anticipated to generate a substantial increase in parking demand. Many of these improvements would be made to neighborhood parks that draw users from walking distance. Moreover, the pedestrian and bicycle improvements proposed by the Project may result in a reduction in driving and parking demand. In summary, the Project would not generate substantial parking demand nor significantly alter parking supply.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>Q. UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS</b>				
Would the project:				
a) Exceed wastewater treatment requirements of the applicable Regional Water Quality Control Board?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Require or result in the construction of new water or wastewater treatment facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Require or result in the construction of new storm water drainage facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project from existing entitlements and resources, or are new or expanded entitlements needed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Be served by a landfill with sufficient permitted capacity to accommodate the project's solid waste disposal needs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) Comply with federal, State, and local statutes and regulations related to solid waste?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Affected Environment**

The following sub-sections provide an overview of existing conditions related to wastewater, water supply, stormwater runoff, and solid waste and the potential impacts of the Project on these utility and service systems.

**Discussion**

- a) *Would the project exceed wastewater treatment requirements of the applicable Regional Water Quality Control Board?*

**Less Than Significant.** The City of El Cerrito is located within the jurisdiction boundaries of the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board. The Regional Water Board

provides groundwater protection, wastewater discharge regulation, stormwater basin planning, water quality information, and enforcement. Under the Regional Water Board NPDES permit system, all existing and future municipal and industrial discharges to surface waters within the city would be subject to regulation. The Project would not generate substantial additional wastewater and therefore would have a less-than-significant impact on wastewater treatment requirements of the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board.

- b) *Would the project require or result in the construction of new water or wastewater treatment facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects?*

**Less Than Significant.** The Project would not directly generate new residents or employees. Therefore, the Project would not have a substantial effect on wastewater demand and would have a less-than-significant impact on water or wastewater treatment facilities or the need for expansion.

- c) *Would the project require or result in the construction of new storm water drainage facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects?*

**Less Than Significant.** One of the primary improvements of the Urban Greening Plan is the installation of green infrastructure—stormwater drainage facilities—to manage and treat stormwater before it enters the groundwater or San Francisco Bay. All of these proposed stormwater drainage facilities are natural systems, which utilize bioretention gardens and facilities comprised of plants, dirt, rocks or similar natural materials. These improvements would include removal of some impervious surfaces and the addition of trees, landscaping strips, and other plant material to reduce stormwater runoff flows during wet weather into the storm drainage system and into the Bay. Implementation of the Project includes consideration of a Designated Green Infrastructure Standard to ensure that sufficient land area has protected vegetated surfaces to reduce urban heat island effects, manage stormwater, and provide recreation opportunities. The Project does not propose to expand the existing storm drainage infrastructure and does not propose substantial excavation, which could result in erosion or other environmental effects.

Although the Project would not substantially increase stormwater or lead to the need for storm drain facilities, it is possible that during construction of improvements to sidewalks, storm drains would be altered. The City would review and inspect all plans for any alterations to existing storm drains. The Project would not require or result in the construction of new or expansion of existing stormwater drainage facilities and the impact on stormwater drainage would be beneficial and less than significant.

- d) *Would the project have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project from existing entitlements and resources, or are new or expanded entitlements needed?*

**Less Than Significant.** The East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD) owns, operates and maintains the water distribution system in the City. Both supply and demand vary seasonally and become critical during drought periods which can last several years. EBMUD has water rights and contracts for up to 325 million gallons a day from the Mokelumne River watershed, which provides 90 percent of the water used by EBMUD.<sup>23</sup> For planning purposes and looking to the year 2040, EBMUD's current water supply is sufficient to meet customer needs during normal years, but insufficient to meet demand during single- and multi-year droughts. EBMUD is pursuing a range of strategies to reduce demand and increase supply, including through public outreach, leak fixes, water storage, infrastructure improvements and water conservation measures.

The Project is not anticipated to substantially increase demand for water supplies. Proposed new landscaping may generate a small increase in irrigation temporarily as plants are installed and to help them establish. However, since the Project supports drought-tolerant, native, and Bay Friendly plant selection, primarily low-water use plantings are anticipated as part of implementation of the Urban Greening Plan. As a result, no new water delivery would be required to serve the Project and therefore the impact would be less than significant.

- e) *Would the project result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?*

**Less Than Significant.** Since the Project would not directly generate new residents or employees, it would not have a substantial effect on wastewater demand. Therefore, the Project would have a less-than-significant impact on water or wastewater treatment facilities or the need for expansion.

- f) *Would the project be served by a landfill with sufficient permitted capacity to accommodate the project's solid waste disposal needs?*

**Less Than Significant.** El Cerrito's solid waste is disposed of at Keller Canyon Landfill in Contra Costa County which has adequate capacity through a scheduled closing date of 2050.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> East Bay Municipal Utility District, 2011. *Urban Water Management Plan 2010*: 1-6.

<sup>24</sup> California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery, 2009. Keller Canyon Landfill Solid Waste Facility Permit.

The Project would only generate solid waste temporarily during demolition and construction. There would be no solid waste associated with operation of the Project. As a result, the solid waste associated with the Project's construction would be minimal and would not substantially affect the projected life of the landfill and the potential impact regarding solid waste would be less than significant.

g) *Would the project comply with federal, State, and local statutes and regulations related to solid waste?*

**Less Than Significant.** The Project would be required to meet federal, state and local solid waste regulations. Therefore, the potential impact is less than significant.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>R. MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE</b>				
a) Does the project have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal, or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (“Cumulatively considerable” means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Discussion**

a) *Does the project have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal, or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?*

**Less Than Significant.** The above analysis identifies potentially significant impacts to Air Quality, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Geology and Soils, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, and Noise which could degrade the quality of the natural environment. However, each potential impact would be mitigated to a less-than-significant level through implementation of mitigation measures identified within each section.

As described in Section B: Biological Resources, the Project is not anticipated to have an impact on special status plant or wildlife species. Mitigation Measures BIO-1 and BIO-2

reduce the potential impacts to wildlife species to a less-than-significant level by avoiding and/or surveying for any nesting birds and bats before and/or during construction and responding accordingly.

As described in Section E: Cultural Resources, the Project would not have a substantive impact on historic resources. Therefore, the Project would not eliminate important examples of major periods of California history or prehistory.

- b) *Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (“Cumulatively considerable” means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects.)*

**Less Than Significant.** The Project would result in a physical change to the Planning Area by expanding parks, open spaces, the pedestrian and bicycle network, and green infrastructure. The Project would be consistent with the City’s General Plan and Zoning Ordinance, which include goals, policies and standards for preservation of these resources and development of these amenities.

Cumulatively, the Project combined with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects, as projected in the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan, Urban Greening Plan, Climate Action Plan, and General Plan, would have an incremental impact on the environment. Specifically, the Project could result in an incremental increase in the use of parks and recreation facilities. However, the Project proposes to increase the overall amount of parks, open space, and trails, but does not directly increase the residential or employee population of park users. Moreover, existing policy measures in adopted plans and mitigation measures in this Initial Study reduce potential cumulative impacts through design and maintenance measures to less-than-significant levels. Although the Project may incrementally contribute to potential cumulative impacts, the Project would not result in significant cumulative impacts.

- c) *Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?*

**Less Than Significant.** The Project would be generally consistent with local land use and zoning requirements, as well as State and federal requirements, as described in the preceding sections. The Project would not create adverse neighborhood impacts, as the majority of the Project’s potential impacts described in the preceding sections would only be present temporarily and intermittently during construction. Operation of the project is not anticipated to create adverse impacts.

Furthermore, the following mitigation measures have been incorporated into the Project to reduce direct and indirect adverse effects on human beings:

- Mitigation Measure AQ-1 reduces air quality impacts through dust abatement measures and construction exhaust.
- Mitigation Measure CULT-3 provides a process to follow in the event that human remains were to be discovered during construction of the Project.
- Mitigation Measure GEO-1 requires a geotechnical assessment to protect users of structural facilities during seismic events or due to other geotechnical hazards.
- Mitigation Measure HAZ-1 requires site investigations to determine the presence of hazardous materials and the actions for remediation or avoidance.
- Mitigation Measure HAZ-2 provides procedures for developing community gardens in order to protect humans from soil contamination.
- Mitigation Measure NS-1 requires implementation of noise control best management practices to reduce noise impacts during construction.

As a result, the Project would not cause substantial adverse effects on human beings and the potential impact is less than significant.

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