



City of El Cerrito

Urban Greening Plan

Adopted
December 15, 2015

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Prepared by



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Acknowledgements

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Prepared by: MIG, Inc and the City of El Cerrito Community Development Department.

In collaboration with: the Public Works Department, Recreation Department, Environmental Quality Committee and Parks & Recreation Commission.

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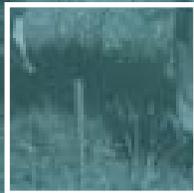
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executive
summary

CHAPTER 1

executive summary

SECTIONS
1.01 Purpose and Scope
1.02 Community Engagement
1.03 Vision Framework

The City of El Cerrito and its community members have a long history of investing in their parks and open spaces. Residents volunteer for creek and street clean-ups, City staff carry forward policy and projects that improve air and water quality and conserve resources, and committee members engage in lively discussions about native vegetation, urban forestry and environmental services. As the City begins to respond to a growing regional demand for increased infill development along transit corridors, identifying projects, policies and strategies to create an interconnected network of green places will help accommodate growth while promoting the community’s identity and preserving quality of life.

The Urban Greening Plan synthesizes previous and current planning efforts, builds on past projects, and institutionalizes existing practices to carry out a holistic strategy for urban sustainability. The City’s General Plan (1999), Strategic Plan (2013), Climate Action Plan (2013), and San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan (2014) highlight the importance of creating a complete community that preserves existing natural assets, public places and open spaces, while incentivizing increased, context-sensitive development that provides additional open space. The Plan builds on the City’s commitment to urban sustainability by identifying opportunities to increase the environmental benefits of public infrastructure, parks and natural areas, while addressing the community’s need for diverse, multiuse public places that support and grow community. The Plan outlines over-arching goals, objectives, policies and programs and highlights opportunity projects and focus areas that help implement these goals within the public realm.

The Plan envisions providing the public amenities to support community members as El Cerrito responds to changing regional demographics, economic conditions and funding and policy priorities.

1.01 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of the Plan is to define community priorities towards making a sustainable, vibrant urban environment in order to provide clear direction to City staff and community organizations by:

1. Inventorying existing assets and opportunities to better program parks and green spaces in a more environmentally and economically sustainable manner
2. Analyzing urban greening best practices and defining policy in light of the City's organizational and financial capacity, potential benefits and previously adopted policy direction
3. Defining urban greening goals, objectives and strategies based on early community engagement
4. Ensuring broad community participation to foster a strong, inclusive community vision
5. Developing a list of urban greening projects based on their ability to support and achieve the Plan's goals and objectives and provide multiple community benefits
6. Completing conceptual design of focus area projects that pilot urban greening interventions and provide the City with infrastructure and park design and construction projects primed for funding

1.02 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The City convened a Task Force of engaged stakeholders early on to help guide the planning process. The Task Force met often to review projects, strategies and the vision framework and to advise on community engagement. The City held four, well-attended community workshops and distributed a community survey throughout the planning process to capture community feedback and confirm Plan and project direction. Focus Groups were convened to better understand the needs of historically underrepresented focus populations, such as teens and members of the disabled community.

1.03 VISION FRAMEWORK

The Plan builds on the following overarching goals and objectives identified by the community to achieve a sustainable urban environment.

Overarching Goals



Objectives



SUPPORTING POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

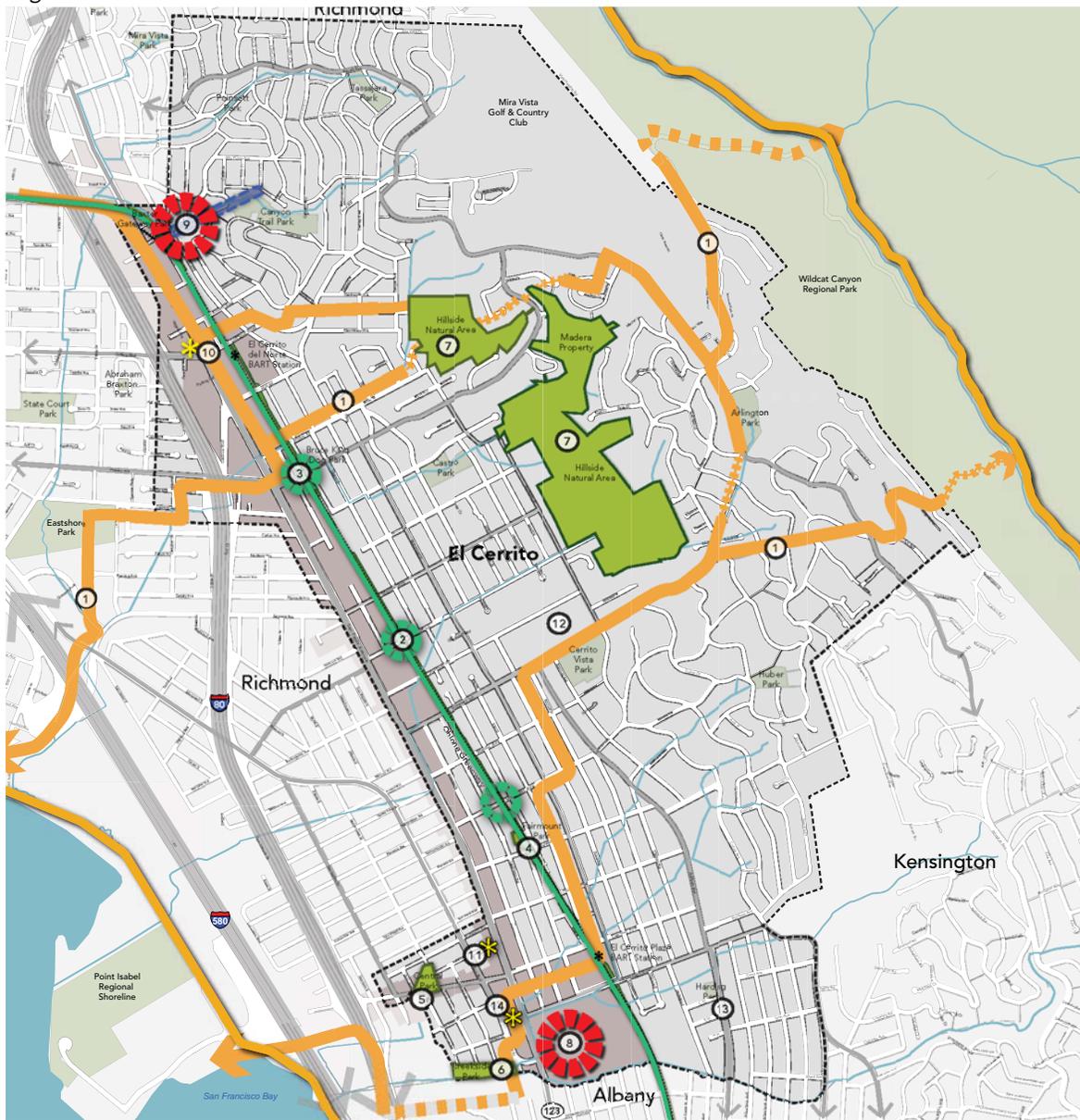
- Sustainable Landscapes and Maintenance
- Support Partnerships and Volunteerism

IMPLEMENTATION

This Plan is a long-range effort that identifies important opportunities, pilot projects and focus areas to be built over time. The Plan analyzed key issues in the community and developed the above objectives and 14 focus area projects illustrated on the following page to address them. The City will monitor implementation and will revise the policy and projects as needed.

This document is a long-range plan intended to set aspirational goals to be achieved incrementally, over time, and provides a framework and toolbox for Council, stakeholders and staff to use in ongoing work that moves towards achieving those goals.

Figure 01. Focus Areas



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introduction

CHAPTER 2

introduction

SECTIONS

- 2.01 What is Urban Greening?
- 2.02 Why Now?
- 2.03 Previous and Current Planning Efforts
- 2.04 Planning Process

2.01 WHAT IS URBAN GREENING?

The El Cerrito Urban Greening Plan is an effort by the City to improve quality of life for residents by identifying strategies to enhance El Cerrito’s public places and open spaces. The Plan identifies needs, opportunities and strategies for creating a greener, more environmentally sustainable and livable city. Strategies include increasing connectivity; creating day-to-day green places to gather, play and enjoy; improving existing parks and green spaces; and identifying new ways to meet the community’s need for different types of open spaces given limited resources. Urban Greening improves environmental sustainability, creates a stronger sense of place and builds community, while supporting and accommodating infill growth.

BACKGROUND

The City of El Cerrito applied for and was awarded a Proposition 84 Grant to develop an Urban Greening Plan. Proposition 84—the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006—authorized funding for the purpose of creating urban greening plans to guide and coordinate urban greening projects in local jurisdictions across the state. Development and implementation of urban greening plans support the State’s environmental goals and planning policies; promote infill development and equity; protect the environment; and encourage efficient development patterns.

PURPOSE

- Inventory existing assets and opportunities to better program parks and green spaces in a more environmentally and economically sustainable manner
- Analyze urban greening best practices and define policy in light of the City's organizational and financial capacity, potential benefits and previously adopted policy direction
- Define urban greening goals, objectives and strategies based on early community engagement
- Ensure broad community participation to foster a strong, inclusive community vision
- Develop a list of urban greening projects based on their ability to support and achieve the Plan's goals and objectives and provide multiple community benefits
- Complete conceptual design of focus area projects that pilot urban greening interventions and provide the City with infrastructure and parks projects primed for funding

2.02 WHY NOW?

The City recently adopted long-range plans intended to more effectively and efficiently provide services to the El Cerrito community. The 2013 Strategic Plan outlines the City's priorities for the future, developing goals that improve government services by providing a roadmap for delivering services and allocating resources. The 2013 Climate Action Plan set an ambitious goal for greenhouse gas emissions reductions through strategies that reduce resource use and improve efficiency in the transportation, energy, waste and water sectors. The 2014 San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan adopted regulations to implement the Climate Action Plan by encouraging higher-density, transit-oriented and infill development, while increasing and enhancing urban greening and open space. The Urban Greening Plan continues this momentum through strategies, policies and projects that increase sustainability and improve quality of life.

The Urban Greening planning process was conducted concurrently with the El Cerrito Active Transportation Plan (in development) and the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan (2014) in order to ensure a cohesive approach to future design and development in the City of El Cerrito.



Figure 02. El Cerrito Parks and Creeks



Figure 03. El Cerrito City Hall

2.03 PREVIOUS AND CURRENT PLANNING EFFORTS

Recent and ongoing planning efforts by the City not only provide direction and establish a foundation for the Urban Greening Plan, but also codify a new vision for El Cerrito's future by emphasizing the City's commitment to environmental and community sustainability. See Appendix D for additional information about existing policies and programs as developed through these previous planning efforts.

HILLSIDE NATURAL AREA VEGETATION MANAGEMENT PLAN (1987) AND FIRE HAZARD REDUCTION PLAN (1994)

These plans look at fire hazards, view obstruction, erosion control, exotic species, management of the Memorial Grove, and native vegetation resources to better balance potentially competing environmental and community needs in the City's Hillside Natural Area. The El Cerrito Fire and Public Works Departments, as well as local community groups rely on these plans for maintenance guidance.

EL CERRITO GENERAL PLAN (1999/2011)

The El Cerrito General Plan prioritizes the preservation and enhancement of natural features by establishing Level of Service Standards, estimating capital improvement needs, and establishing goals and policies to enhance the quality of and access to public open spaces and gathering places and protect natural resources. In 2011, the City adopted a Growth Management Element to mitigate the impacts of new development on traffic and public service thresholds. In 2015, the City adopted its new Housing Element as required by law.

LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT PLAN (2003)

The Landscape Management Plan surveyed City properties to inventory trees, landscape plants and turf grass areas and assess existing site conditions. The Plan resulted in a cost estimate for management and maintenance of renovated landscape areas to address pest, disease and deferred maintenance risks and recommended the development of an Urban Forest Management Plan to plan for tree replacement and other environmental considerations as they effect the urban forest.

CERRITO CREEK BAY TRAIL CONNECTOR FEASIBILITY STUDY (2004)

The Cities of El Cerrito, Albany and Richmond analyzed the feasibility of overcoming the barriers presented by the I-80 and I-580 Freeways to creating a pedestrian and bicycle connection from existing neighborhoods and transit corridors, including San Pablo Avenue and the El Cerrito Plaza BART Station, to the San Francisco Bay Trail. The study resulted in inroute alignments and proposed projects to connect via a trail along Cerrito Creek.

URBAN FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN (2007)

The Urban Forest Management Plan described the social, economic and environmental benefits of a vital urban forest, the state of El Cerrito's urban forest as indicated by two tree inventories (1991 and 2005), and the goals and actions needed to protect and enhance this community resource. It included a list of 65 species, organized by six categories of planting site conditions.

OHLONE GREENWAY MASTER PLAN (2009)

The Ohlone Greenway Master Plan outlines goals and conceptual improvements to strengthen the Greenway, an important non-motorized transportation corridor and recreational amenity. The Plan recommends improvements to increase connectivity and provide activity nodes that lead to increased usage, environmental benefit and safety.



Figure 04. View from the El Cerrito Hills to the San Francisco Bay

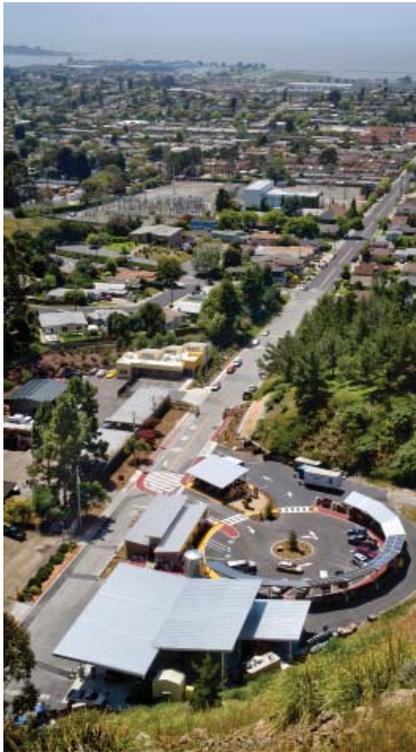


Figure 05. The City's LEED Platinum Recycling and Environmental Resource Center

NATIONAL POLLUTION DISCHARGE ELIMINATION SYSTEM (NPDES) MUNICIPAL REGIONAL PERMIT (2009)

El Cerrito is a co-permittee with 76 other public agencies under the Municipal Regional Stormwater Permit (MRP) issued by the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board, which requires specific measures to prohibit non-stormwater discharges and minimizes stormwater pollutants including pesticides, PCB's and trash. Among other things, the Permit resulted in the City's 2014 Long Term Trash Management Plan to reduce trash loads to the storm drain; among strategies identified, the Plan called for creek cleanups, new bioretention facilities on City streets and stormwater capture and treatment (C.3 requirements).

EL CERRITO STRATEGIC PLAN (2013)

The Strategic Plan identifies El Cerrito as an *environmentally-focused destination with vibrant neighborhoods, businesses and public places*. The Plan called for the development of a comprehensive Urban Greening Plan to guide the programming and maintenance of the City's public open spaces and green infrastructure, and to identify additional green spaces needed to support future urban infill development.

EL CERRITO CLIMATE ACTION PLAN (2013)

The Climate Action Plan outlines the most effective actions to reduce locally-produced greenhouse gas emissions and to create a safer and more sustainable El Cerrito. The plan outlines a series of Sustainable Community strategies (SC), which include encouraging higher-density infill development (SC-1), more pedestrian design elements (SC-3), green infrastructure and urban, green open spaces (SC-4).

SAN PABLO AVENUE SPECIFIC PLAN (2014)

The purpose of the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan is to articulate a vision for the future of San Pablo Avenue, identify improvements, and adopt context-sensitive regulations that encourage higher-density, high quality, transit-oriented development. The Plan created a framework for transforming the Avenue into a multimodal corridor that functions, not just as a thoroughfare, but as a place for living, working and community life. The Plan's key principles are to deepen a sense of place, attract private investment, strengthen partnerships, enhance the public realm, promote the everyday use of alternative transportation, and foster sustainability.

EL CERRITO ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN (IN DEVELOPMENT 2014)

The Active Transportation Plan revises the 2007 Circulation Plan for Bicyclists and Pedestrians to create a walkable, bikeable, and sustainable City through identification and prioritization of non-motorized transportation infrastructure improvements. These efforts complement the Urban Greening Plan by providing bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and amenities to help people move throughout the City and between urban green spaces.



Figure 06. View of Prototypical San Pablo Avenue Streetscape with a Cycle Track, Bus Bulbs and Pedestrian Amenities. These previous and concurrent planning efforts have allowed the City to balance a broad range of considerations in achieving a more complete, equitable and sustainable urban environment.



Figure 07. Community Workshops and Task Force Meetings

2.04 PLANNING PROCESS

The Urban Greening Plan integrates input from members of the community, City commissions and committees, and City staff. The following engagement activities were held at key points in the planning process to confirm the Urban Greening goals and direction. See **Appendix A** for a complete summary of the community engagement process and comments gathered.

COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

Two, well-attended community workshops were held in the Summer and Fall of 2013 to present information and updates on three concurrent and interrelated planning projects including the Urban Greening Plan, San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan and Active Transportation Plan. Participants provided feedback on the proposed Urban Greening vision framework, strategies and focus areas. In the Summer of 2014, the City hosted a community design workshop (or “charrette”) to garner community feedback on the conceptual design of four focus areas: Fairmont Park, Lower Fairmont Avenue, the Hillside Natural Area, and Blue-to-Green Connections.

TASK FORCE

The Urban Greening Task Force performed an advisory role throughout the planning process, guiding plan strategies and proposed enhancements. The Task Force included representatives from the following organizations and agencies: Parks & Recreation Commission, Environmental Quality Committee, Committee on Aging, Tree Committee, El Cerrito Trail Trekkers, Community Garden Network, Friends of Five Creeks, Community Development Department, Public Works Department, Recreation Department, and City Manager’s Office.

PROJECT WEBSITE - www.elcerritourbangreening.org

The Urban Greening Website, launched in May 2013, was available in a variety of languages and included: an overview of urban greening; workshop dates locations and materials; access to the online survey; and, an interactive mapping tool that enabled web-based community input.

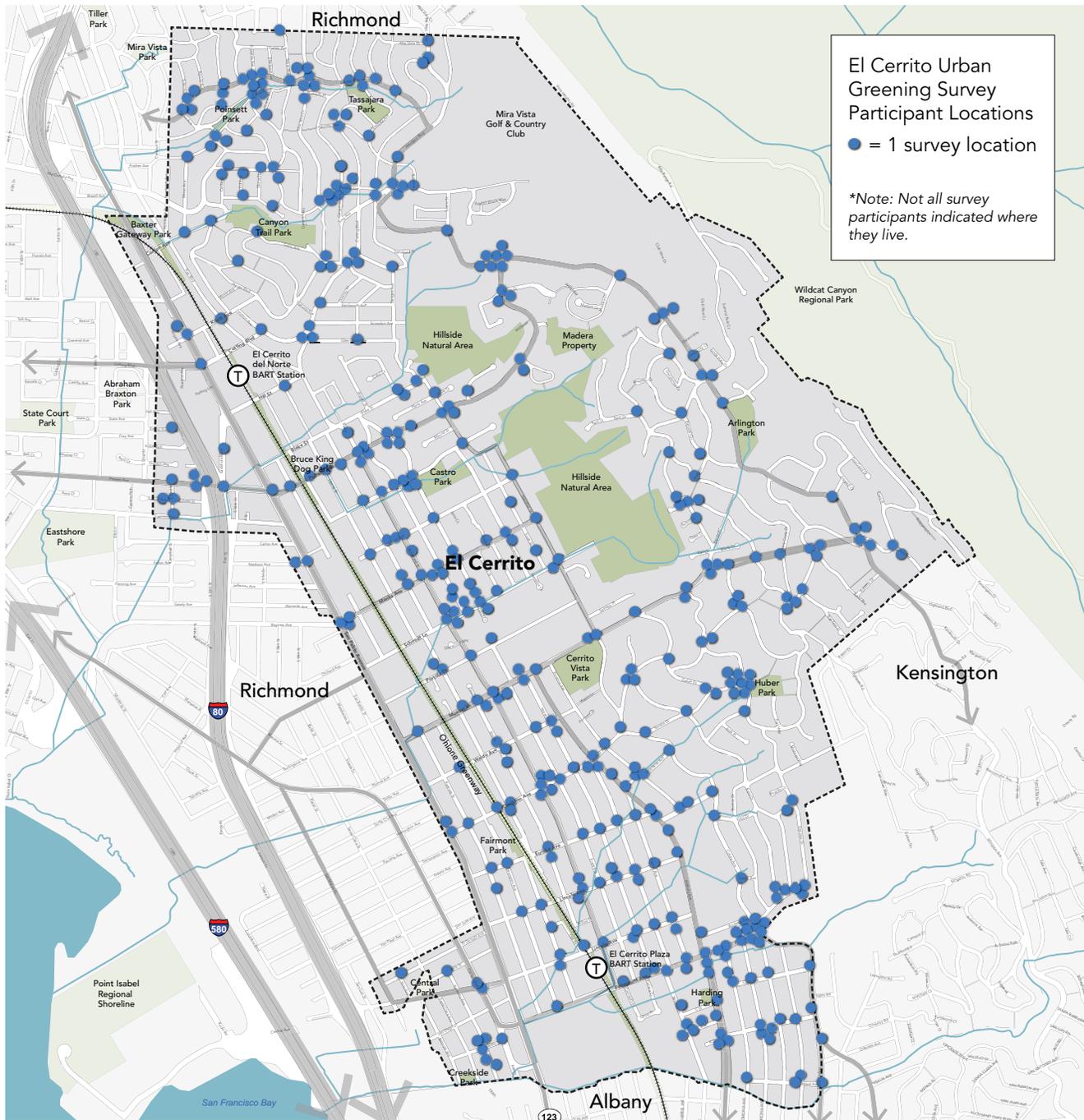


Figure 08. Map of Community Survey Participants

COMMUNITY SURVEY

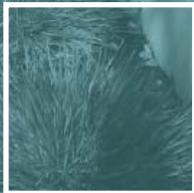
The project team developed an Urban Greening Community Survey to collect information on local priorities and needs. The questionnaire was administered online through the website, distributed at meetings and conducted through intercept surveys. In May 2013 community representatives were trained to administer the survey to their neighbors and constituent groups to ensure participation of typically underrepresented populations. Over the 6 week period, 848 community members participated in the survey. The map on the previous page illustrates the distribution of participants across the City; see Appendix A for detailed survey results.

FOCUS GROUPS

Two separate focus group meetings were held in the Summer of 2013 to engage members of historically underrepresented community groups in order to further understand the existing needs of the community. These focus group meetings served as an opportunity to conduct intercept, face-to-face surveys and engaged teens and disabled community members to better understand how they currently use open space and what potential projects would improve their experience.

STAFF ENGAGEMENT

MIG held an internal staff charrette with representatives of City departments to discuss priorities and direction. The session included a presentation of best practices related to parks and street right-of-way (ROW) improvements, creating diverse new open spaces, repurposing street ROW, integrating green infrastructure and building social infrastructure. The group discussed opportunities for each within El Cerrito and mapped potential opportunity sites. Staff then engaged in a discussion of the overall city goals and existing City policies that impact Urban Greening, including internal communication, maintenance protocol, and the need to institutionalize greening practices. Staff consultation on specific Urban Greening topics continued throughout development of the Plan.



existing
framework

CHAPTER 3

existing framework

SECTIONS
3.01 Assets
3.02 Analysis
3.03 Issues
3.04 Opportunities

***Mission Statement:** The City of El Cerrito serves, leads and supports our diverse community by providing exemplary and innovative services, public places and infrastructure, ensuring safety, and creating an economically and environmentally sustainable future.*

- El Cerrito Strategic Plan 2013

3.01 ASSETS

El Cerrito has a strong foundation of assets to build upon to create a sustainable and livable city. The City is situated between two major regional natural destinations: the Bay Trail and Wildcat Canyon Regional Park, which afford views of the surrounding natural environment. The City contains several urban parks of varying sizes and types, as well as a network of natural creeks running through its neighborhoods from the hills to the San Francisco Bay. In addition to these physical natural assets, local residents and community groups have engaged in extensive environmental stewardship efforts to improve the natural environment, increase awareness of sustainability issues and enhance quality of life. With community support, the City has begun to implement a series of initiatives and investments to achieve the environmentally-focused goals and objectives of recent planning efforts.

HISTORY OF EXISTING PARK SYSTEM AND INVESTMENT*

The City of El Cerrito has a rich history of investing in and expanding its park system. Previously an unincorporated agricultural town, El Cerrito became a city in 1917 in order to provide community services to a growing population. The City paved roads and raised funds for police, fire and City departments. Development started to occur and open spaces started to disappear.

As subdivision of land took place, landowners began to gift parkland to the City. *Huber Park* and *Poinsett Park* were given to the City in the 1920's and partially developed in the late 1930's by the federal Works Progress Administration.

The City purchased Cerrito Vista Park in 1944 and entered into an agreement in 1952 with the school district to share costs of construction and maintenance of the facilities. Later that year, the City passed a 10-cent levy for continued park improvements, including the swim center, community center and other recreational amenities.

During this time, City Council established a Parks & Recreation Commission in 1949 to help guide development of the park system. The Commission weighed in on project design, including improvements at the 5.5 acre neighborhood Arlington Park. The project provided a playfield, tot lot play area, twin tennis courts, a neighborhood clubhouse, turfed playfield and quiet landscaped area adjacent to the Camp Herms Boy Scout property. Tassajara Park was developed a few years later to provide a neighborhood clubhouse and deck, improved landscaping, group activity areas and twin tennis courts. Castro Park was developed in the same era through a joint use agreement with Castro School to share construction and maintenance costs.

The City was gifted approximately three acres of Canyon Trail Park early on and purchased the additional three acres through the 10-cent levy to preserve the Park's natural amenities.

In 1964, the City Council proposed an additional bond measure to continue such parks improvements, resulting in a Master Plan for Parks

to outline proposed improvements. The Bond resulted in the joint acquisition and development of Central Park with the City of Richmond and development of the concept for Creekside Park. The Bond enabled the City to acquire Fairmont Park as a joint-use playground, closing an important recreation gap, and to complete improvements at Harding Park, including a tot area, turfed play area, neighborhood clubhouse, paths, a patio, and construction of a tennis court.

As construction took place throughout the City, many creek segments were culverted or placed in channels to facilitate new construction, which resulted in significant impacts to the City's stormwater system. In 1969, the City constructed flood basins on the north side of Cerrito Creek at Creekside Park, essentially enlarging the creek channel to help address recurring flood issues. In 1998 and 1999, the Cities of Berkeley and Albany rebuilt their leaky, aging sewer line along the south bank, leading to many years of restoration effort. In 2003, with State grant funds, the City of El Cerrito re-contoured the creek along the south side of El Cerrito Plaza, planting native vegetation and constructing a creekside trail.

Much of the Hillside Natural Area was gifted to the City by various donors, including owners of the quarry located at the end of Schmidt Lane. The 1964 Park Bond proposed additional acquisition and construction of playgrounds and ball fields, but the area was later identified as a significant natural resource and has since been preserved as open space. In 2015, the City completed purchase of an additional eight acres of open space to connect the separate north and south properties.

In 1970, the Ohlone Greenway was developed alongside the Santa Fe railroad line and under BART's proposed tracks using federal funds. In 1979, the last Santa Fe train made its final run on the route. After lengthy negotiations, the Santa Fe agreed to donate its right-of-way to Richmond, El Cerrito, Albany and Berkeley. The Greenway has been updated several times, including BART's recent seismic retrofits and with individual projects identified by the Ohlone Greenway Master Plan (2009).

Together, these acquisitions and investments create the rich network of parks and green spaces that exist in El Cerrito today.



Figure 09. Three acres of Canyon Trail Park were gifted to the City



Figure 10. Arlington Park was developed soon after the Parks & Recreation Commission was established

** Written in collaboration with representatives from the El Cerrito Historical Society.*



Figure 11. For the El Cerrito Hillside Festival, Friends of Five Creeks led a nature walk as well as a volunteer work party to remove invasive, fire-prone French broom.

COMMUNITY EFFORTS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Residents of El Cerrito and local community groups are engaged in a range of volunteer activities to improve the City's natural environments and open spaces. Activities include community gardening, trail improvements, creek and greenway cleanups and restoration, invasive species removals, and outreach about the City's environmental programs. Each contribute to the City's overall goals and vision for the future.

El Cerrito Trail Trekkers

The El Cerrito Trail Trekkers (Trail Trekkers) are a City co-sponsored community organization which helps maintain and publicize paths and trails throughout the community. The Trail Trekkers recently inventoried the trail network, identifying existing public and private trails and their conditions. They host regular trail walks to build awareness and engage the community on the important issues surrounding these facilities and they partner with the City on trail maintenance projects and events. Opportunities to improve coordination on these projects exist and would support the joint goals of the Trail Trekkers and the City of El Cerrito.

<http://ectrailtrekkers.wordpress.com>

Friends of Five Creeks

Friends of Five Creeks is a volunteer organization that works throughout the East Bay on projects to ensure healthy watersheds and natural areas. In El Cerrito, Friends of Five Creeks works on advocacy projects, creek cleanups, invasive species removals, and wildlife protection activities along Cerrito Creek and in the Hillside Natural Area. They host and publicize community events to improve and maintain these areas, working closely with the City to grow and protect the community's natural resources. Continued coordination on joint efforts will support community priorities for these natural spaces. Friends of Five Creeks advocates for environmental resources in the face of other community pressures, such as development and fire safety concerns.

<http://www.fivecreeks.org>

Community Garden Network

The El Cerrito Community Garden Network is a City co-sponsored, non-profit organization interested in growing and supporting community garden efforts in El Cerrito. The Network developed a pilot community garden project at Fairmont Park during Earth Day 2013 and has since started a seed library at the Recycling + Environmental Resource Center and the El Cerrito Library, and a community garden project at the Senior Center. The City has worked closely with the Network to provide them space to grow their efforts. The City looks forward to working with the Network to create new, community supportive projects as developments occur. The pilot project has served as a good example for the level of effort required to establish a space and foster community buy-in.

<http://sites.google.com/site/elcerritocommunitygarden>

Green Teams

The El Cerrito Green Teams are a community volunteer effort sponsored by the City’s Environmental Quality Committee (EQC) that host regular cleanups and invasive species removals at identified priority sites. The City helps coordinate these events by publicizing, providing tools and resources, and tracking and reporting on event efficacy. The City hopes to grow the Green Teams to support other cleanup and maintenance projects. Expansion of the program depends on continued coordination and support to keep volunteers engaged.

Baxter Creek Cleanups

The City hosts monthly work parties at the Baxter Creek Gateway Park to remove invasive species and help restore natural habitat. The work parties are intended to maintain the naturalized creek completed as part of the Gateway Project in 2006. As other projects occur throughout the City, particularly those with specialized landscaping, the City will continue to work with its volunteers to help ensure that these environments thrive.



Figure 12. Students from the English Studies Institute helped Friends of Five Creeks Weed Warriors remove smothering morning glory on Cerrito Creek.



Figure 13. The community-led community garden at Fairmont Park was established on Earth Day in 2013



Figure 14. Educational signage to help residents understand the importance of keeping the water in Baxter Creek clean

Urban Forestry Partnerships

The City and the Tree Committee have partnered with CAL FIRE, the United State Forest Service and non-profit organizations on grant-funded urban forestry projects, including: the 2014 Tree Inventory; tree planting on Avila, Carlson and El Dorado; and, a survey and educational brochure for improving street tree care on commercial streets. The City and Tree Committee work with interested neighbors, whenever possible, to water and maintain newly planted trees.

Earth Day

The City hosts a citywide Earth Day event to connect community volunteers with work parties in City parks, natural areas and on City streets. The work parties help support the City's environmental initiatives and are a great opportunity to build community and ownership of City resources.

Arbor Day

The City and the El Cerrito Garden Club host tree planting events with local schools on Arbor Day. These plantings provide valuable urban forest resources and have targeted replacement of dying trees with more suitable local, native species.

Community Volunteers

El Cerrito is fortunate to have an active group of community volunteers who steward and develop individual projects throughout the city that provide environmental benefits and distinctive community amenities. The City supports these efforts whenever possible by providing tools and resources to lower costs and facilitate volunteer work. Community members contribute their invaluable insight into City projects by attending workshops and meetings, serving on the City's boards, committees and commissions, and providing public comment on plans, policies and design review.

San Francisco Estuary Partnership

The City has partnered with the San Francisco Estuary Partnership in the past to successfully construct low impact development projects along San Pablo Avenue to improve stormwater runoff quality and retention. The City is currently working with the Estuary Partnership to design an additional site on the Avenue and will explore opportunities for continued collaboration in the future.

<http://www.sfestuary.org>



Figure 15. The Wildflower Area along the Ohlone Greenway is planted and cared for by a local volunteer.

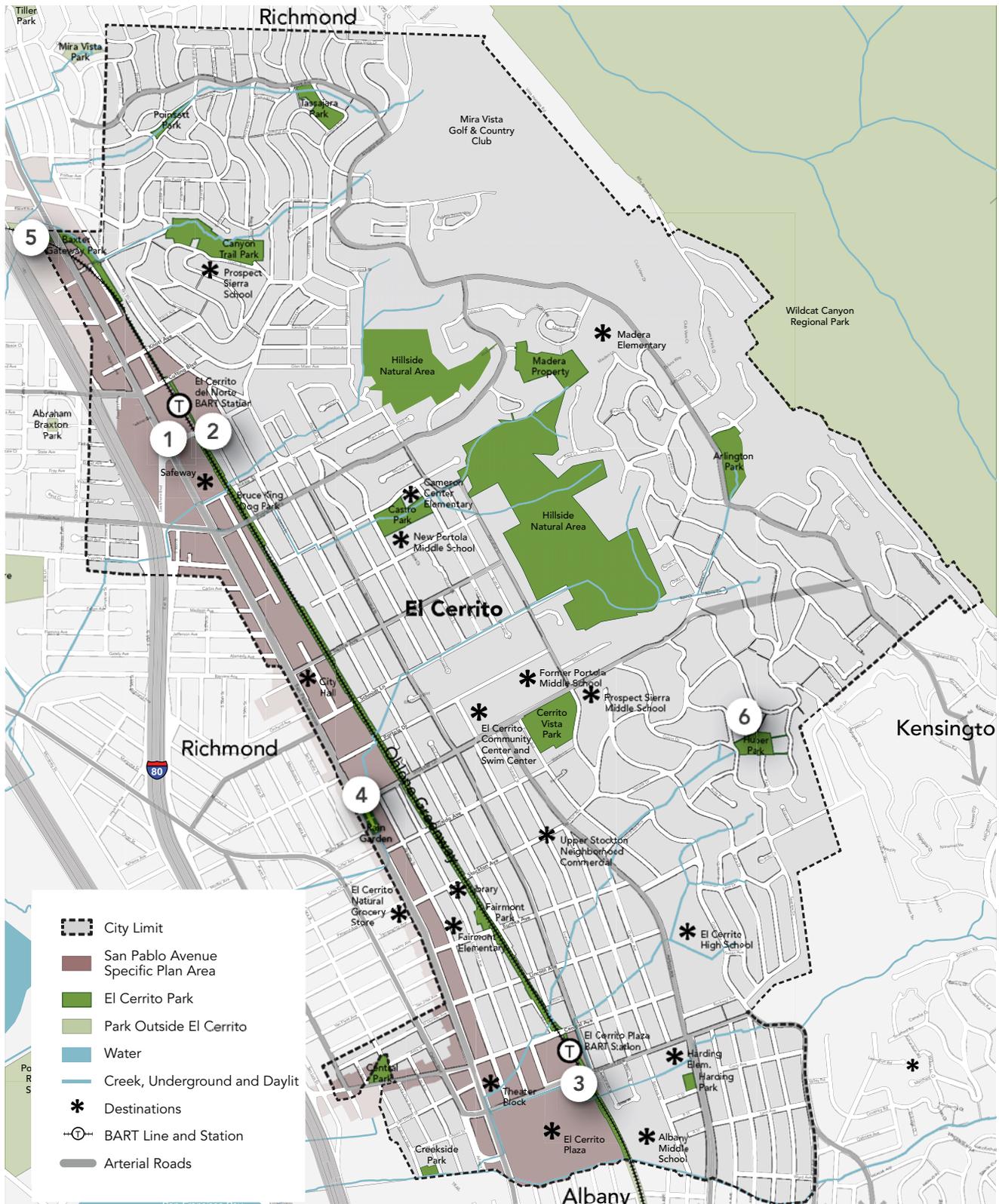


Figure 16. Planned and Underway Projects Map

PLANNED AND UNDERWAY PROJECTS

Several urban greening projects to expand the park system and improve the quality of public spaces are already planned and underway.

1. El Cerrito BART Station Modernization Improvements

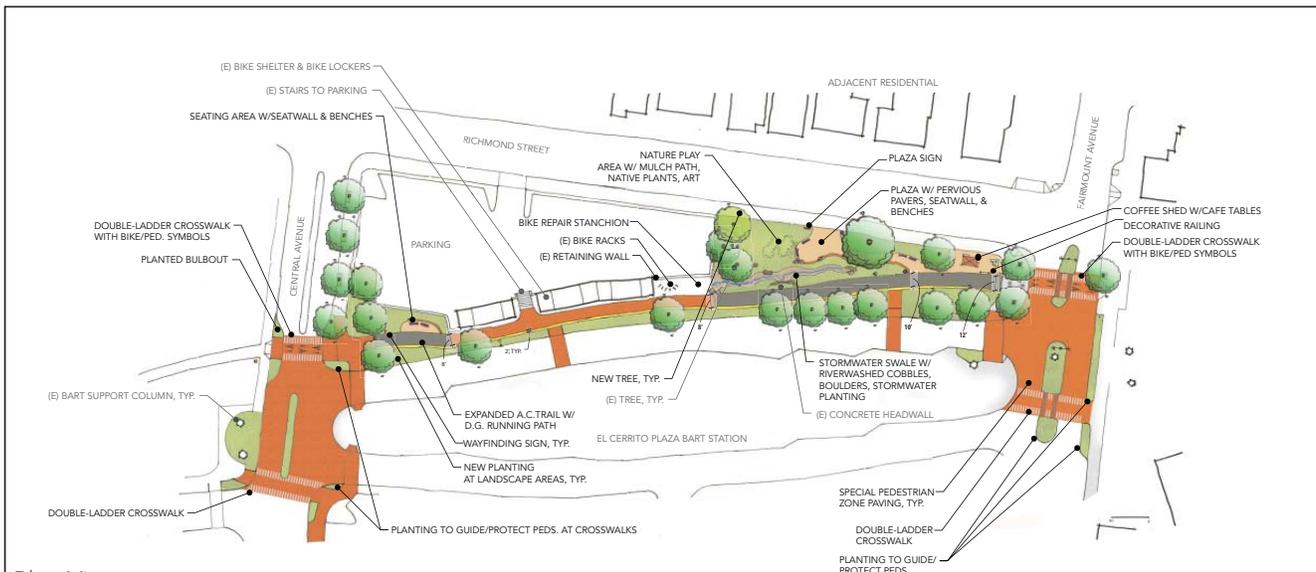
In 2014, BART studied opportunities to enhance the public’s experience at the del Norte and Plaza BART stations. The del Norte station was selected for station modernization improvements that will help activate the Ohlone Greenway and create a distinct public transportation gateway to the City intended to catalyze surrounding community improvements, spur local economic development, and increase transit use.

<http://www.bart.gov/about/planning/contracosta/elcerritodelnorte>

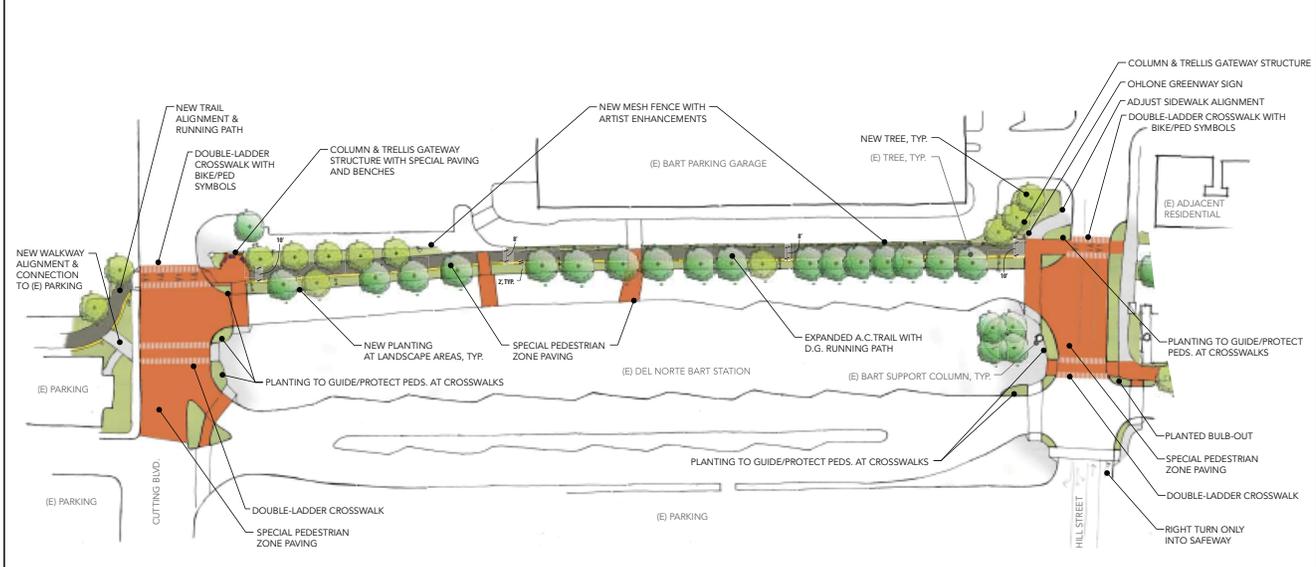


2&3. OBAG: Ohlone Greenway Improvements

The City secured \$3.4 million in funding through the One Bay Area Grant (OBAG) program to design and construct access, safety, and placemaking improvements along the Ohlone Greenway at the Plaza and del Norte BART stations. Per the grant requirements, final design of the project is slated for October 2015 with construction scheduled for Summer 2016.



Plan View
Ohlone Greenway, Fairmount Avenue to Central Avenue



Plan View
Ohlone Greenway, Del Norte BART, Hill Street to Cutting Boulevard

4. San Pablo Ave Green Stormwater Spine

The San Pablo Avenue Green Stormwater Spine is a pilot project and model for Bay Area municipalities implementing green infrastructure projects as part of their stormwater management efforts. The project is managed by the San Francisco Estuary Partnership and will result in design and construction of improvements on San Pablo Avenue at Moeser Lane that will not only provide an additional rain garden along San Pablo Avenue, but will also pilot the City's first buffered bike lane. Final designs will be completed in the spring of 2015, with construction slated for the fall. This project will build upon the City's San Pablo Avenue Streetscape Project (2011), which constructed two demonstration rain gardens south of Madison Avenue and south of Eureka Avenue.



5. Richmond - Ohlone Greenway Gap Closure Project

The Richmond-Ohlone Greenway Gap Closure Project will connect the Richmond Greenway and San Francisco Bay Trail to the Ohlone Greenway in El Cerrito, closing an important bicycle infrastructure gap and connecting the Bay Trail to the del Norte BART station. The project will include naturalization of Baxter Creek west of San Pablo Avenue, building on the Baxter Creek Gateway Project. Construction is anticipated for 2016.



6. Huber Park Improvements

The City received Measure WW funds to make improvements to Huber Park in 2015 while still maintaining the historic and ecological nature of the park.



3.02 ANALYSIS

Though El Cerrito has a variety of parks and open spaces, many activities and place types do not exist in close proximity to every neighborhood. The following analyses aim to identify these gaps to better understand community needs and create a more complete urban green network.

ACTIVITY ANALYSIS

The activity analysis identifies where priority activities currently take place in El Cerrito’s parks and open spaces to better identify opportunities for new park programs and additional park projects. Input received from the community through workshops and the online survey helped build the list of desired activities and further identify needs and gaps in service. Limited provision of recreational activities can greatly limit the community’s participation in those activities. Identifying community priorities that are either not being met or have limited availability helps highlight additional recreational needs and identify potential projects and opportunities.



Figure 17. Playground at Castro Park



Figure 18. Tennis Courts at Arlington Park



Figure 19. Trails through the Hillside Natural Area Memorial Grove

Activities: Existing Open Spaces

Activities	Definition and Examples	Existing Parks													
		Cerrito Vista Park	Huber Park	Canyon Trail Park	Poinsett Park	Fairmont Park	Castro Park	Arlington Park	Tassajara Park	Central Park	Creekside Park	Harding Park	Baxter Creek Gateway Park	Bruce King Memorial Dog Park	
Play (for all ages)	Unprogrammed play supported by a safe environment with features designed for play in parks and on sidewalks. Can happen not just at playgrounds, but could also include interactive art, climbing boulder, etc.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Organized/Team Sports	Organized sports played as a team, providing both exercise and social interaction. Examples include soccer, baseball, football, basketball, lacrosse, etc.	✓		✓			✓			✓		✓			
Pick-up Sports	Sports and games that provide opportunity for casual social interaction and exercise. These activities can be competitive or informal but typically are less organized and played in smaller groups. Facilities that support pick-up sports include courts such as tennis (including walls), volleyball courts, Bocce ball, Horseshoe and skateboarding/bmx features or parks.	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			
Exercise and Fitness	Includes both individual focused activities such as running, or fitness stations and group activities, such as tai chi, or yoga.	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓			✓			
Recreation with Dogs	Places for dogs to play and exercise. This activity is valued as much for the interaction amongst owners as amongst dogs.														✓
Gardening/Urban Agriculture	Planting, maintaining, harvesting edibles or flowers.					✓									
Special Events	Local or regional scale events that happen periodically such as a concert or street fair. Can happen at large park areas, closed streets or parking lots.	✓													
Picnics/Gatherings	Eating alone or with a small group; gathering for a celebration.	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Rest and Relaxation	Opportunities for respite or taking a "break" and having a peaceful place to do so. Examples could include seating areas in pleasant natural or urban/commercial environments, plazas, small and large parks.		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
Enjoying Nature, Views and Scenery	Observing, photographing or simply appreciating the environment at viewpoints or along walkways or trails. Examples include both small opportunities integrated into the residential or commercial environment (such as Cerrito Creek and Baxter Creek Gateway) and large natural environments (such as Hillside Natural Area).		✓	✓				✓	✓		✓		✓		
Walking, Jogging, Bicycling	These activities primarily happen on streets, sidewalks and trails for exercise or transportation. Pathways and trails that are separated from the street are more inviting and safer for users. Continuous or linked pathways and trails that connect neighborhoods and other destinations also improve the user experience.	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓			✓		✓		
Strolling	This activity is specific to the more vibrant, mixed-use corridors that offer a variety of activities in close proximity including browsing, shopping, socializing and people watching.														
Commerce	The making and selling of goods including food, crafts, etc. This can be formal vending (associated with an adjoining storefront) and informal vending (not associated with a storefront). Happens primarily along commercial corridors.														
Environmental Stewardship	Actively working to maintain the environmental quality of a place, including pulling weeds, planting native species and otherwise nurturing habitats.			✓		✓					✓		✓		

Check marks indicate which parks/sites currently support each activity. They do not indicate the quality or extent to which an activity is supported. Particularly for schools: access to facilities such as picnic tables, tracks and sport fields might be limited due to locked gates.

Activities	Other City-Managed Properties										Natural Areas		Trails							Public Schools								
	Streets	El Cerrito City Hall	Open House Senior Center	Madera Clubhouse/ Childcare Center	Casa Cerrito Clubhouse/ Childcare Center	Recycling + Enviro Resource Center	Library	El Cerrito Swim Center	Contra Costa Civic Theater	El Cerrito Community Center	Hillside Natural Area	Ohlone Greenway	Cerrito Creek Connector Trail	Cameron Preschool	El Cerrito High School	Fairmont Elementary School	Harding Elementary School	Madera Elementary School	Fred T. Korematsu Middle School)*	Albany Middle School**	Pre-School Cooperative	Fairmount Childcare	Tehiyah School	St. Jerome's School	St. John's School	Summit K2 Charter School	Prospect Sierra Middle School	Prospect Sierra Elementary School
Play (for all ages)				✓	✓		✓			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Organized/Team Sports							✓						✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓			✓	
Pick-up Sports													✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Exercise and Fitness			✓				✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓			
Recreation with Dogs										✓	✓											✓						
Gardening/Urban Agriculture						✓	✓				✓				✓										✓			
Special Events	✓	✓						✓	✓	✓				✓														
Picnics/Gatherings										✓	✓						✓					✓				✓		✓
Rest and Relaxation		✓					✓			✓	✓	✓																
Enjoying Nature, Views and Scenery										✓	✓	✓													✓	✓	✓	
Walking, Jogging, Bicycling	✓									✓	✓	✓		✓		✓			✓									
Strolling	✓								✓		✓	✓																
Commerce	✓										✓																	
Environmental Stewardship	✓					✓				✓	✓	✓																

* Castro Elementary was closed and Portola Middle School is being relocated to that site
 ** Albany Middle School recreation facilities are used by El Cerrito residents, thus being included in this list

CONNECTIVITY ANALYSIS

The connectivity analysis evaluates access to green spaces based on how easy it is for people to get to parks, paths, open spaces and natural areas by walking, hiking or biking. The following maps illustrate the service areas of recreational activities based on established distance standards. Service areas vary depending on the intensity of the activity, underscoring that community members will only participate in certain recreation if it is close by. The maps highlight access gaps where urban greening and recreation projects may address community needs.

El Cerrito community members are generally well-served by their parks and green spaces, but places to play, learn, exercise and build community are still a community-identified need, underscored by the Urban Greening survey. Taken together with this connectivity analysis, the results of the activity analysis and community survey began to define project selection and design criteria.

Figure 20. Exercise and Fitness

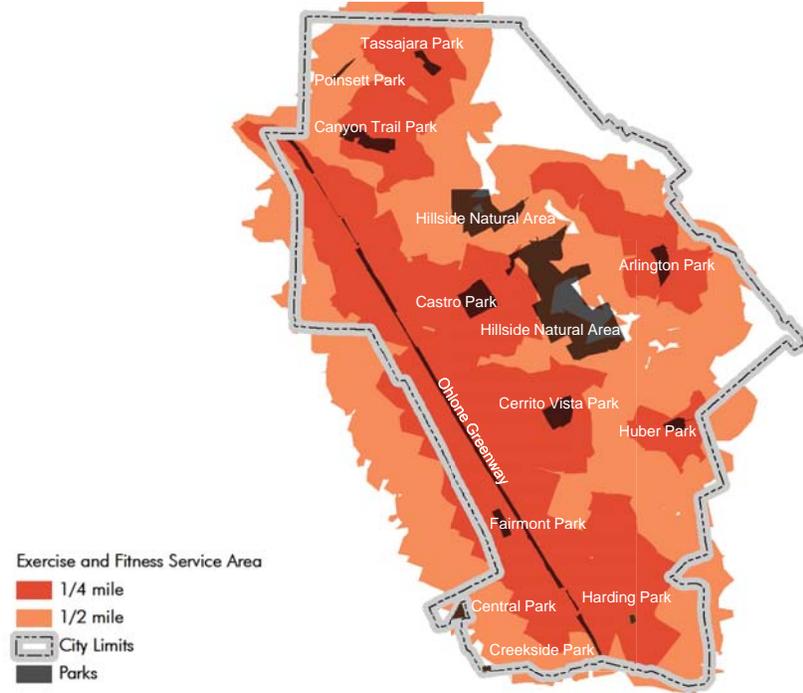


Figure 21. Nature, Views and Scenery

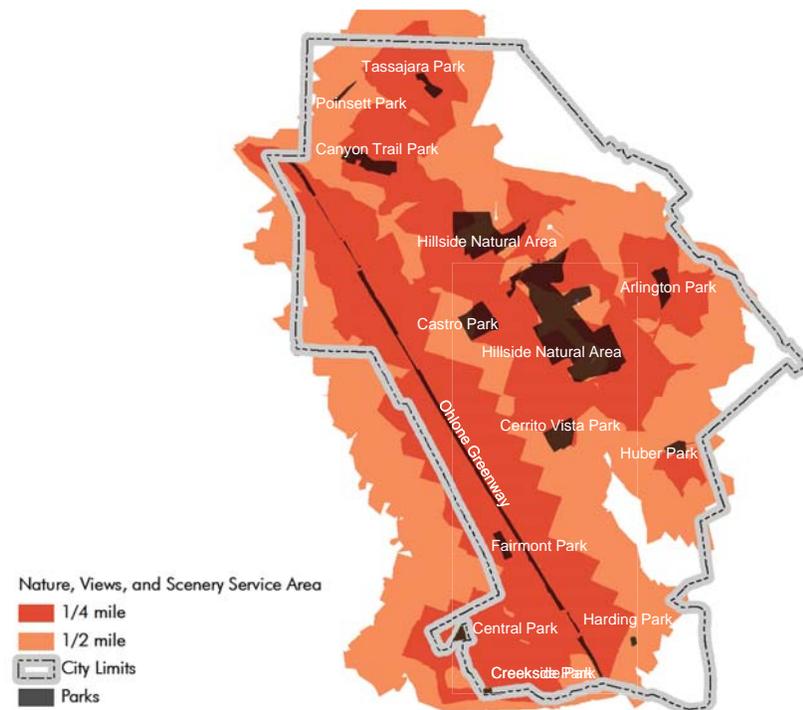


Figure 22. Pick-Up Sports

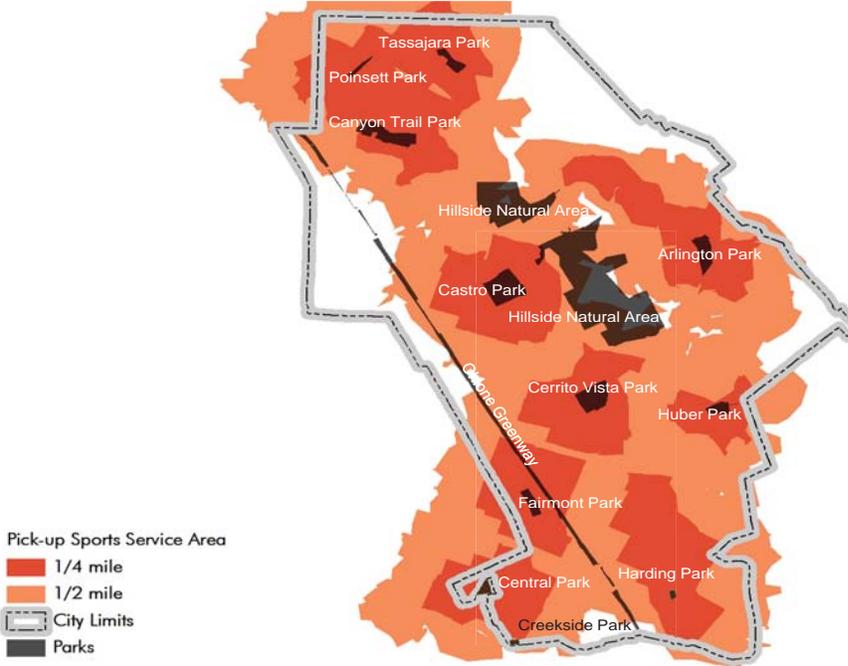


Figure 23. Play

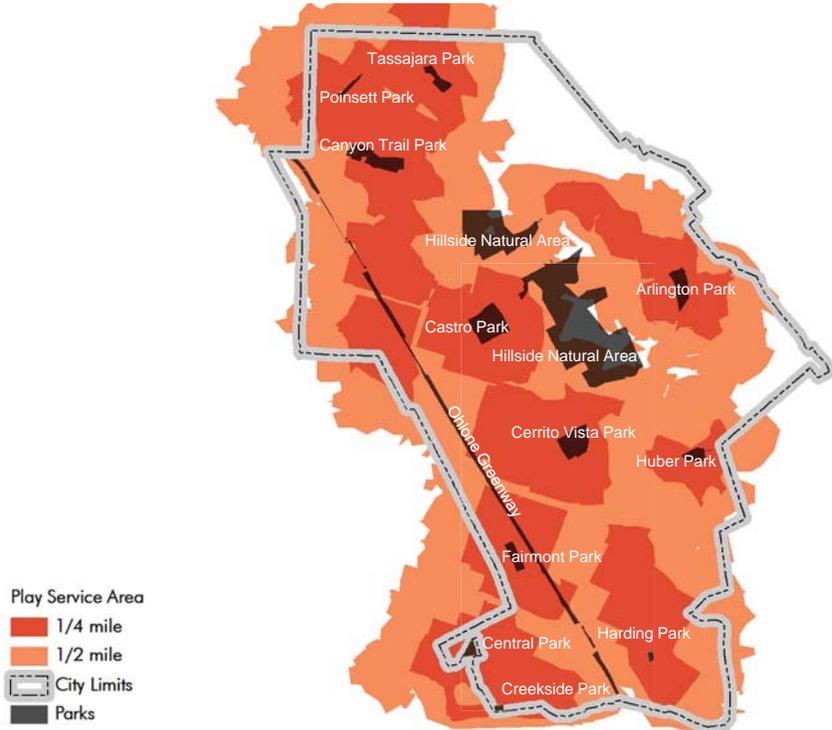


Figure 24. Organized Sports

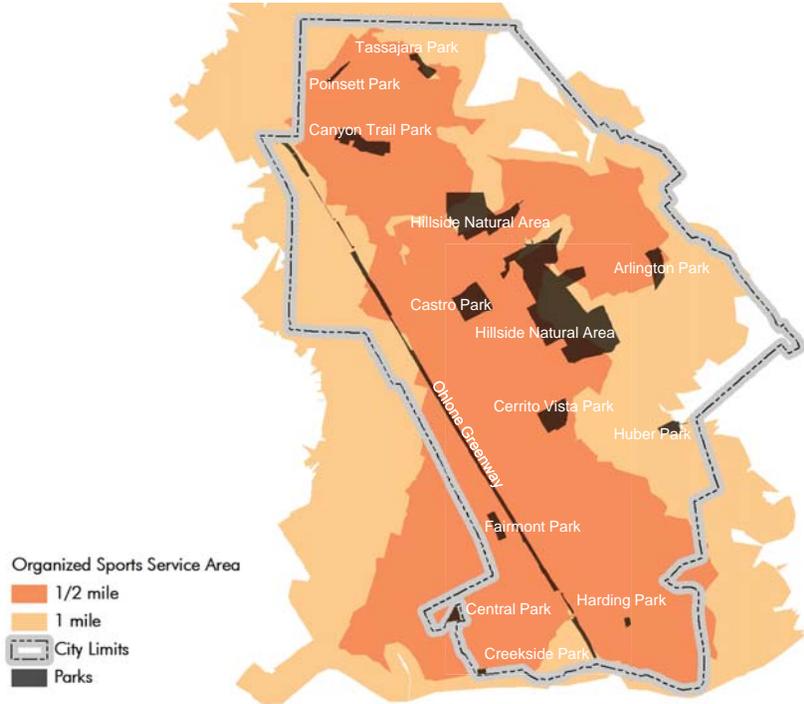


Figure 25. Urban Agriculture

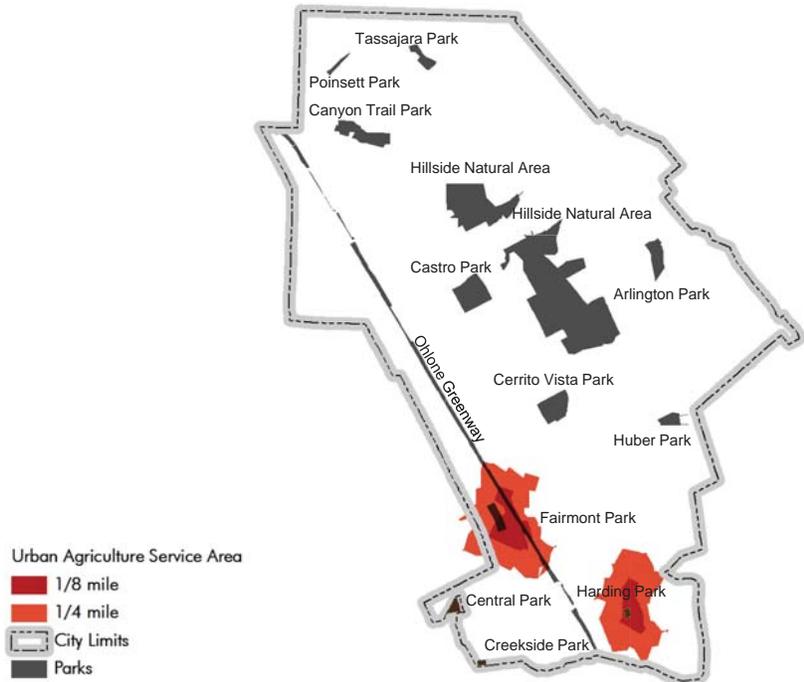


Figure 26. Walkable Corridors

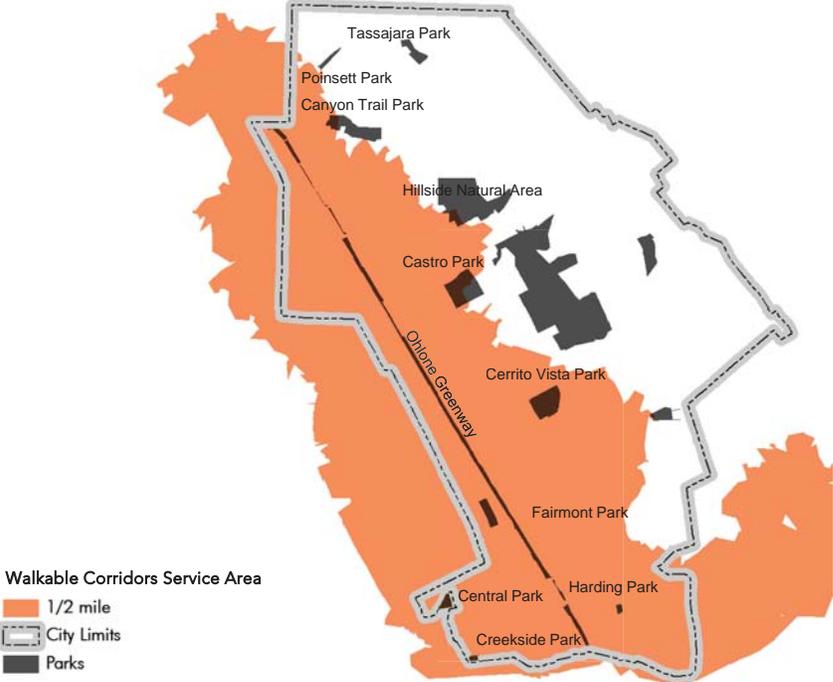
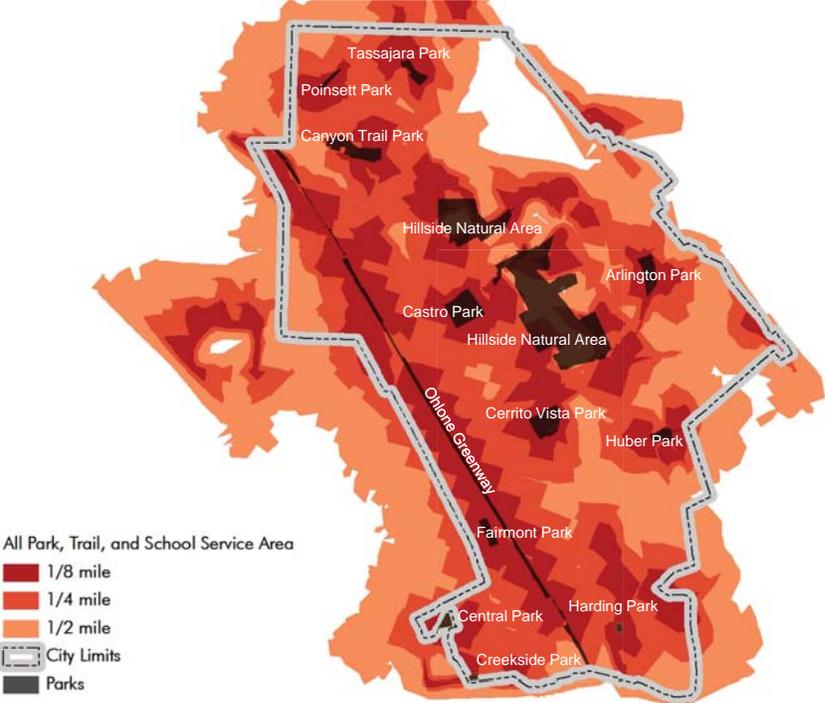


Figure 27. All Parks, Trails and Schools



3.03 ISSUES

Based on community input, internal conversations and activity, connectivity, organizational and financial capacity analyses, the following urban greening related issues have been identified:

Communication and Project Coordination

Given limited staff capacity, interdepartmental communication and coordination with community organizations on urban greening related projects can be limited. As a result, opportunities to achieve additional co-benefits within proposed projects may be overlooked.

Operations and Maintenance

The policies and projects outlined in this Plan depend on specialized and continued maintenance. With limited existing general and Lighting and Landscape Assessment District (LLAD) funds and maintenance resources, this additional demand for maintenance could hinder urban greening efforts.

Historically it has been difficult to establish accurate maintenance costs early on in project design and development, so adequate resources have not been identified or allocated to the project. One year maintenance costs are included in most contracts, but long term maintenance projections are not identified as they may increase up front project costs. A better understanding of the life cycle of new materials, equipment and furnishings and the long term maintenance protocol for specialized landscapes could help address some of these issues. In addition, quantifying the cost of deferred maintenance would help prioritize maintenance projects along with new City investments, which are included in the same budget.

Developing a long-range, citywide maintenance and management plan that establishes fees to recoup costs from existing and future public investments, such as street tree plantings, new parks projects and safety improvements, and explores new assessment districts to create dedicated revenue streams may help address these issues.

Special Events

Special events may require permits for use of City parks and open spaces, sidewalks or streets. This process creates obstacles to community members who may not be able to cover costs, find relevant information, or engage other necessary outside agencies. In the past, community-sponsored events such as the Stockton Art Stroll, Holy Ghost Parade and street play events have received great community support and enthusiasm. Providing community members with help through the permitting and outreach process would likely increase these special events. The weekly Farmer's Market at the El Cerrito Plaza is a local institution and should be supported, celebrated and perhaps expanded.

Sidewalks

The Urban Greening Plan encourages policies and programs to activate the sidewalk, particularly in commercial districts. Encroachment and administrative use permits are needed to use sidewalks due to ADA clearance requirements. Food truck and other on-street pop-up use policies are still relatively unclear and require significant staff administration and stakeholder engagement to be effective.

Growing Food

El Cerrito community members have expressed a strong desire to grow food both on public and private property, but there are concerns about attracting wildlife, creating safety hazards on sidewalks and in City streets, and increasing street sweeping needs. Opportunities to build discreet projects with careful maintenance and management plans may address some of these concerns, particularly if projects can be supported by volunteer efforts.



Figure 28. City Staff Policy and Practice Meeting

3.04 OPPORTUNITIES

The purpose of the opportunity analysis is to develop an inventory of land with urban greening potential within El Cerrito. The inventory incorporates the City's rights-of-way (ROWs), utility infrastructure, greenways, vacant properties and underutilized sites, and City and other publicly-owned or institutional properties (such as schools, parking lots, and churches). Some, strategic private properties were identified for their existing environmental or recreational services; any projects or programs on these private parcels are dependent on the property owner's interest and consent and a final decision by the City Council to proceed with a specific project.

The opportunity inventory identifies pieces of land that may be redesigned or repurposed by a range of intervention types and levels of effort aimed at achieving this Plan's goals; interventions may be carried out by the community and/or the City. The opportunity inventory map on the following page was derived from community input, City staff and consultant direction.



4

vision and goals

CHAPTER 4

vision and goals

SECTIONS

- 4.01 Vision Framework
- 4.02 Overarching Goals
- 4.03 Primary Strategies
- 4.04 Vision Map

The City of El Cerrito is a safe, connected, and environmentally focused Bay Area destination with vibrant neighborhoods, businesses and public places, and diverse cultural, educational and recreational opportunities for people of all ages.

- El Cerrito Strategic Plan, 2013

The Urban Greening Plan goals and objectives build on the General Plan, the Strategic Plan vision, existing conditions analysis and other past and concurrent planning efforts. They reflect feedback received from the El Cerrito community and City staff to define the direction for Urban Greening projects, policies and programs. The goals and objectives are explored in the following chapter and are supported by potential locations for implementation that coincide with the City’s opportunity sites.

4.01 VISION FRAMEWORK

Overarching Goals



Objectives



Key City Policies Related to Urban Greening

General Plan (1999)

- Minimize environmental impacts
- Protect and restore habitat and rare and endangered species
- Maintain high quality runoff water
- Improve the Ohlone Greenway
- Preserve open space
- Develop strategies for long-term maintenance

Landscape Management Plan (2003)

- Address pest and disease, weed infestation, abiotic and tree structural issues in landscape management and design decisions

Urban Forest Management Plan (2007)

- Implement design principles to establish and reinforce community wide visual character
- Provide professional maintenance and consistent funding to maintain tree health and diversity
- Adopt policies and ordinances to expand and maintain the urban forest

Circulation Plan (2007)

- Create a network of bicycle and ADA accessible pedestrian routes that connect to local and regional destinations
- Promote bicycle and walking as alternative modes of transportation
- Foster a sustainable community

Climate Action Plan (2013)

- Invest in infrastructure that invites people to walk, bike and take transit
- Increase and enhance urban green open space to protect biodiversity, conserve natural resources & water, foster walking and bicycling, and improve health & quality of life
- Create a walkable physical environment

Strategic Plan (2013)

- Deepen a sense of place and community identity
- Foster environmental sustainability citywide

San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan (2014)

- Reinforce a sense of place by responding to existing assets such as the Ohlone Greenway
- Attract pedestrian activity to key nodes to foster community and identify places of interest
- Design streets for living instead of just driving through "re:Street" placemaking principles
- Create new gathering places to serve the needs of existing and new users
- Celebrate and strengthen the unique natural context
- Improve connectivity between the Green Belt (Wildcat Canyon Trail) and the Blue Belt (Bay Trail) through pedestrian and bicycle connections

4.02 OVERARCHING GOALS

The following overarching goals define the community’s priorities for urban greening. They guide development of the objectives, strategies and projects to ensure a robust and transformative Plan.



GOAL 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.



GOAL 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.



GOAL 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.



GOAL 4: ACTIVE LIVING/TRANSPORTATION

Enhance pedestrian and bicycle connectivity throughout the City and encourage walking, hiking, biking and active recreation to reduce reliance on fossil fuels and enhance community quality of life.



GOAL 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.



GOAL 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.

4.03 OBJECTIVES

The following objectives seek to accomplish the overarching goals through policies and programs that achieve measurable outcomes. The strategies build upon existing policies and programs, while formalizing current City practices and incorporating relevant best practices to create a policy toolkit that advances the Plan’s vision framework. For information on existing plans, policies, and programs, see **Appendix D**.

The icons are used to indicate the current level of effort for each strategy. “**KS**” stands for Key Strength and indicates that the City currently excels at implementing the strategy. “**E**” stands for Recommended Enhancements and indicates that the City is generally meeting the level of effort needed, but that opportunities for enhancement may exist. “**BP**” stands for National Best Practice and indicates that additional effort would be needed to meet the intended outcome.

KS Key Strength
key strength

E Recommended Enhancements
enhancements

BP National Best Practice
best practice

OBJECTIVE 1: IMPROVED TRAILS AND PATHS

Continue to invest in bicycle, pedestrian, trail and pathway improvements to reduce reliance on the private automobile, provide active recreation opportunities and support the local economy.

1.1 *Develop a trails program to encourage active recreation, community engagement, environmental stewardship and education.*

- Engage the Parks and Recreation Commission to consider and promote pathway and trail projects.
- Encourage summer camps to guide hikes and perform trail maintenance activities. Consider service activities as part of summer camp programs.
- Sponsor a self-guided Trails Challenge to incentivize use of the City’s trails and foster community buy-in. Refer to the East Bay Regional Parks’ Trail Challenge model.
- Develop an Adopt-a-Trails campaign to engage community members in the maintenance and upkeep of public trails.
- Partner with the El Cerrito Trail Trekkers to support regular hikes and community events.

Current Level of Effort: **E** enhancements

Responsible Party: Recreation; Public Works



Figure 30. Paved path in Canyon Trail Park

1.2 Develop a citywide Wayfinding Plan to highlight open spaces and community destinations and provide route guidance and travel time estimates.

- Build off other City wayfinding efforts, such as the West Contra Costa Transit Wayfinding Plan, the City Signage & Wayfinding Program Graphic Standards Manual, San Pablo Avenue Streetscape Improvements, and the Ohlone Greenway Wayfinding Project. Support development of the pilot trail signage program between the Trail Trekkers, National Park Service and City. Seek funding to install the pilot signs identified and to expand the planning effort to all City trails.
- Develop a trails brochure to highlight trails, major destinations and activity nodes. Implement the Active Transportation Plan (in development 2014) Pedestrian Improvement Projects to help improve and build upon the existing trail and pathway network.

1.3 Develop a Master Plan for Trails to specify trail design criteria and standards that strengthen environmental benefits, identify trail improvement projects, specify type(s) of usage and identify where new trails are needed.

- Work with Trail Trekkers inventory of existing trails, stairs and pathways to design gap closures and develop design guidelines for trail maintenance and construction projects.
- Establish performance metrics to ensure equitable access to trails and ensure the Plan prioritizes closing gaps in underserved neighborhoods.
- Include ecology, safety, and community amenity guidelines to balance needs and maximize trail benefits
- Connect the Green Belt (Wildcat Canyon Park) to the Blue Belt (Bay Trail) by developing strong pedestrian and bike facilities that connect these regional destinations. Create an on-street

Current Level of Effort:



Responsible Party: Community Development; Public Works

Current Level of Effort:



Responsible Party: Public Works



Figure 31. Informal path through Canyon Trail Park

Current Level of Effort:  **Responsible Party:** Public Works; Community Development; Recreation

landscaping and signage program to highlight these connections.

1.4 *Continue to co-sponsor community organizations and provide the support necessary to increase access to and awareness of their efforts. Coordinate with these organizations to provide education, outreach and volunteer opportunities to enhance and expand the trail network.*

- Consider expanding the co-sponsorship program to provide community outreach support and discounted use of City facilities for other events.
- Pursue external funding to provide community grants to local organizations, when feasible.

Current Level of Effort:  **Responsible Party:** Community Development

1.5 *Implement the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan (2014) Open Space and Midblock Connection Standards.*

Current Level of Effort:  **Responsible Party:** Public Works

1.6 *Implement the Active Transportation Plan (in development 2015) Proposed Sidewalk and Pathway Network projects.*

- Identify funding to construct pedestrian projects.
- Review street and parks projects to identify opportunities for pedestrian improvements as part of funded projects.

Current Level of Effort:  **Responsible Party:** Public Works

1.7 *Continue to identify funding for Creeks & Trails projects in the Capital Improvement Program to ensure continued maintenance of existing trails and construction of trail connectors, paths and stairs.*

- Develop priority criteria and monitor external funding opportunities to meet community needs and leverage resources.
- Foster interdepartmental collaboration on project review to capture additional opportunities that may arise.

Current Level of Effort:  **Responsible Party:** Community Development

1.8 *Consider including trails projects in the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan Open-Space In-Lieu program to improve connectivity between higher density neighborhoods and public parks and open space amenities.*

Current Level of Effort:  **Responsible Party:** Community Development; Public Works

1.9 *Engage the East Bay Regional Parks District and neighboring jurisdictions to complete trail projects and implement programs that improve connections to and incentivize use of regional amenities, neighboring open space and trail systems, such as Wildcat Canyon Regional Park, the Bay Trail, Albany Hill Park and the Richmond Greenway.*

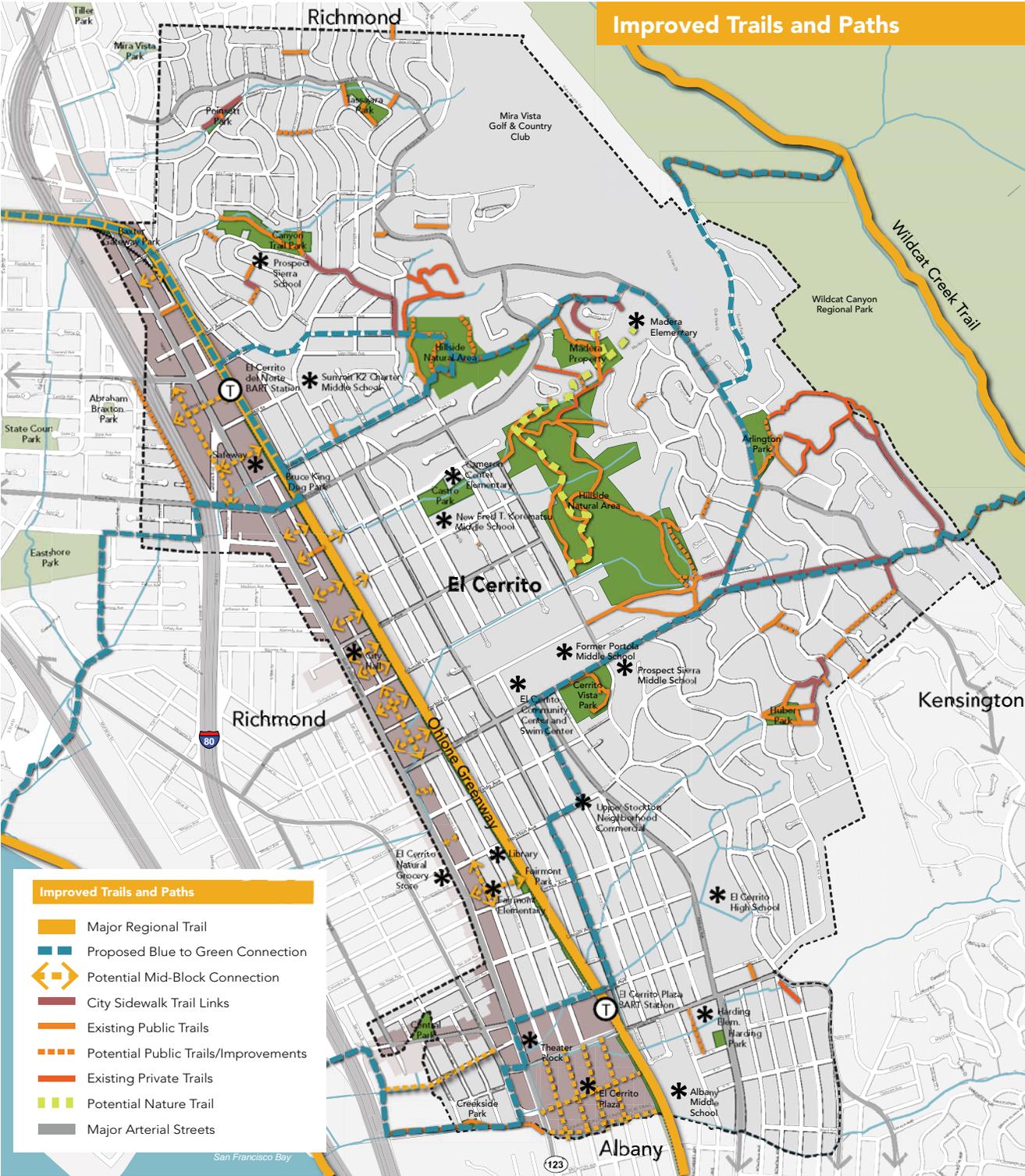


Figure 32. Strategy Map: Improved Trails and Paths

OBJECTIVE 2: GREENER GATEWAYS

Reinforce community identity and sense of place by creating distinct gateways that improve and highlight natural elements, reinforcing the community's commitment to environmental sustainability.

Current Level of Effort:  **E**
enhancements

Responsible Party: Public Works

2.1 *Begin to identify and catalog trees that define El Cerrito's streets to be included in the City's Approved Tree List.*

- Work with private developments to create distinctive landscapes that are consistent with adopted landscaping policies, such as the Urban Forest Management Plan and Master Street Tree List, while creating distinctive, sustainable gateways to the City.

Current Level of Effort:  **BP**
best practice

Responsible Party: Community Development; Public Works

2.2 *Work with private developers and property owners to implement the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan - Gateway Streets.*

- Pursue funding to implement gateway elements, including landscaping and streetscape projects, as identified in the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan.



Figure 33. Northern gateway at San Pablo Avenue and Baxter Creek Park

2.3 *Coordinate with BART to ensure that both El Cerrito stations function as gateways to the City, using green building design and sustainable landscape features in station modernization improvements to reinforce the City's identity.*

- Develop station designs that differentiate El Cerrito's two BART stations from other communities.
- Ensure that both stations celebrate El Cerrito's assets.
- Work with BART to provide information about major destinations and key attractions, public transportation connections, and other available services.
- Ensure that Ohlone Greenway Station Improvements funded through the One Bay Area Grant program contribute to El Cerrito's identity.

2.4 *Work with the Design Review Board to review consistency of proposed landscaping plans with existing landscaping palettes and Master Street Tree List near identified gateways, including public projects where appropriate.*

- Consider expansion of the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan Gateway Street regulations to all street segments identified as important, auto-oriented entrances to the City.

Current Level of Effort:  enhancements
Responsible Party: Public Works, Community Development

Current Level of Effort:  enhancements
Responsible Party: Community Development



Figure 34. Distinctive signage and landscaping to announce and highlight the City's urban edges



Figure 35. Trees and other plantings that emphasize El Cerrito's identity as an environmentally oriented destination, with community gathering spaces

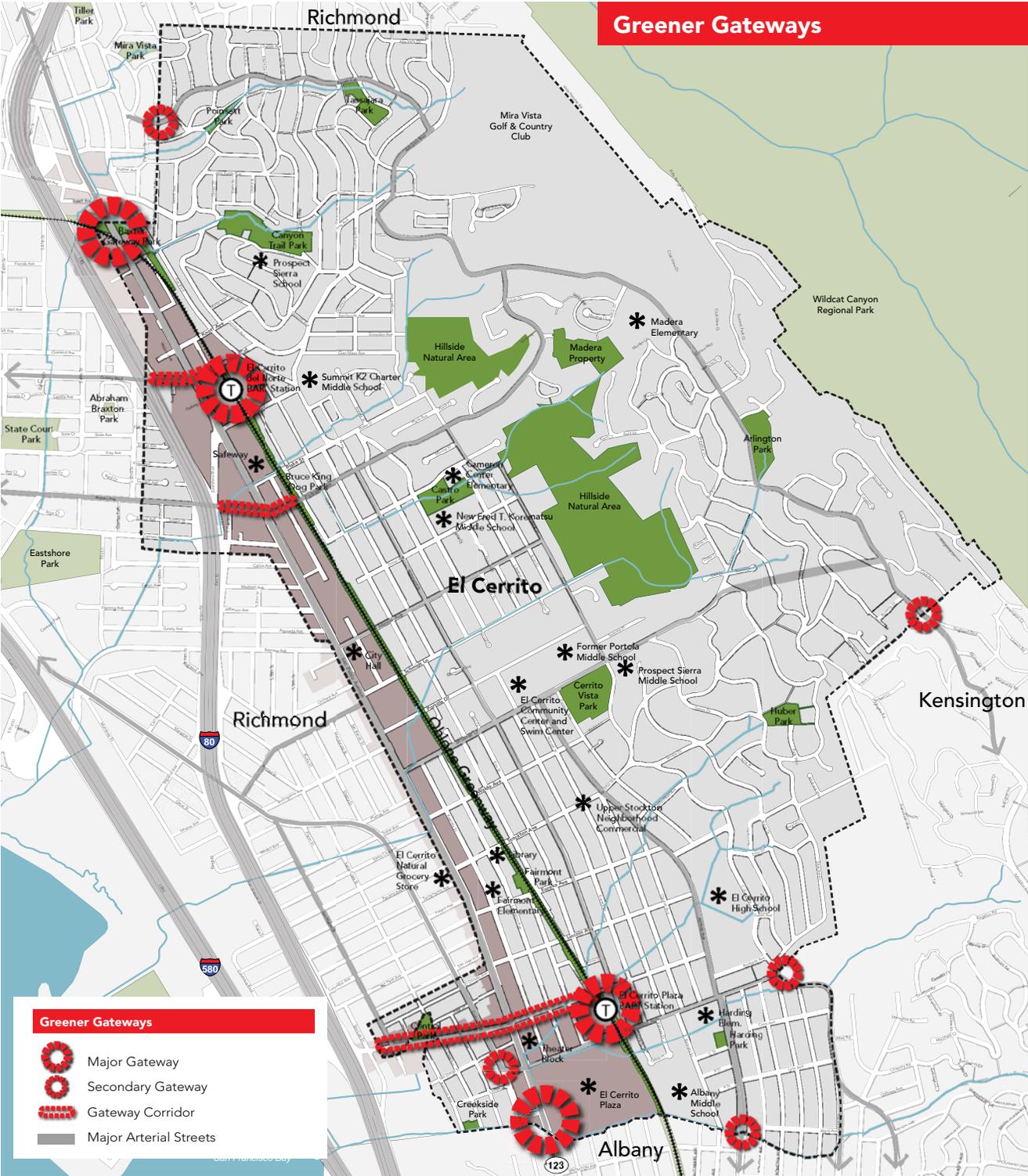


Figure 36. Strategy Map: Greener Gateways

OBJECTIVE 3: STRENGTHENED OHLONE GREENWAY

Continue to strengthen the Ohlone Greenway through public projects and private developments that increase connectivity, create community gathering spaces and activity nodes, and improve community health and safety.

Current Level of Effort:  **BP**
best practice

Responsible Party: Community

Development

3.1 *Work with private developers and property owners to implement the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan - Ohlone Greenway Street Type guidelines.*

- Encourage private developers to emphasize their project’s connection to the Greenway early in the process to maximize opportunities for pocket parks, plazas, entrances and mews onto the Greenway.
- Emphasize safety in use and design, encouraging “eyes on the Greenway” and increased levels of activity throughout the day to reduce crime.

Current Level of Effort:  **KS**
key strength

Responsible Party: Community

Development; Public Works

3.2 *Implement the Ohlone Greenway Master Plan, particularly projects that improve connectivity to San Pablo Avenue, the BART Stations and commercial nodes, projects that create activity nodes and community gathering spaces, and projects that improve the environmental services of the Greenway.*

- Pursue funding to design and construct projects identified in the Master Plan.
- Develop a pollinator pathway along the Greenway to provide pollinator species with adequate access to pollen and nectar.

Current Level of Effort:  **KS**
key strength

Responsible Party: Recreation;

Community Development; Public Works

3.3 *Incentivize community events and activities along the Greenway that provide recreational, environmental stewardship and community development opportunities.*

- Provide tools and support services to volunteer clean-up and maintenance efforts.
- When developing community events, consider locating them along the Greenway to increase activity.

OBJECTIVE 4: ENHANCED EXISTING PARKS

Enhance and expand existing parks to maximize their use, improve environmental and ecological services while reducing maintenance costs, encouraging volunteer efforts and meeting multiple Urban Greening goals.

Current Level of Effort:  best practice

Responsible Party: Recreation;
Community Development

4.1 Identify and pursue funding for a Parks & Recreation Master Plan to analyze access to a variety of recreational opportunities and to identify policies and programs to address these needs.

- The Plan should build off the environmental considerations of this Plan to balance the environmental and recreational needs of public parks and open spaces.
- Continue to survey and engage the community to better understand and meet El Cerrito-specific recreation needs.
- The Plan should consider adopting performance metrics to evaluate community access to active and passive recreation facilities in order to prioritize project construction where gaps exist.

	El Cerrito (residents) <i>Population based on 2013 Census estimates</i>		National Best Practice (residents)
	Total	Metric	
Park Playgrounds	14 <i>per 24,316</i>	5.8 <i>per 10,000</i>	3.6 <i>per 10,000</i>
Baseball or Softball Diamonds	9 <i>per 24,316</i>	3.7 <i>per 10,000</i>	3.5 <i>per 10,000</i>
Basketball Hoops	10 <i>per 24,316</i>	4.1 <i>per 10,000</i>	4.3 <i>per 10,000</i>
Recreation and Senior Centers	1.6 <i>per 24,316</i>	1.7 <i>per 20,000</i>	1.6 <i>per 20,000</i>
Skateboard Parks	0 <i>per 24,316</i>	0 <i>per 10,000</i>	1.5 <i>per 10,000</i>
Swimming Pools	1 <i>per 24,316</i>	4.1 <i>per 100,000</i>	4.6 <i>per 100,000</i>
Acres of Parkland	142.35 <i>per 24,316</i>	5.85 <i>per 10,000</i>	7.3 <i>per 1,000</i>
Households within 3 miles of an Off-Road Trail	100%		90%
Housing Units within a 1/2 mile of a Public Space/Park	100%		85%

4.2 Coordinate project design review to ensure that parks improvements integrate environmental benefits through restorative, resource-conserving landscaping and green infrastructure projects.

- Develop design guidelines and environmental criteria to streamline project design review. These design guidelines should consider broad community priorities, such as active and passive recreation, environmental services, and design review details including the relationship between tree selection, site planning, and the protection or enhancement of existing natural assets such as view corridors.
- Begin to engage the Parks & Recreation Commission on public project review by providing them with trainings and environmental guidelines to ensure that proposed projects meet these criteria.
- Consider engaging the Design Review Board on, high profile public parks projects to ensure they are consistent with landscaping and other design guidelines applicable to private projects.

Current Level of Effort:



Responsible Party: Recreation;
Community Development; Public
Works



Figure 38. Renovated Tassajara Park with new play areas

Current Level of Effort:  **KS**
key strength

Responsible Party: Public Works,
Community Development,
Recreation

4.3 *Continue to identify funding for Parks in the CIP to ensure continued maintenance and investment in projects that make parks more multipurpose and meet multiple community benefits.*

- Reference *Figure 29. Opportunity Inventory Map* to incorporate currently underutilized spaces that could provide a broader diversity of uses, including off-peak and joint use.
- Consider prioritizing projects that expand and develop play fields for flat spaces, particularly in higher density areas.
- Evaluate opportunities to enhance, expand and maintain existing fields, parks, trails and open spaces, including their trees and landscapes, and improve maintainability.
- Consider new projects when they fulfill an unmet community need or represent a unique acquisition or expansion opportunity. New projects should include maintenance projections for the first 5 years of the project.

Current Level of Effort:  **KS**
key strength

Responsible Party: Public Works

4.4 *Continue to identify trash generation hotspots as part of the Municipal Regional Stormwater process.*

- Evaluate different strategies on a site by site basis to improve capture and diversion: storm drain trash capture devices, waste receptacles, recurring clean-up events and education campaigns.
- When new receptacles are being considered, evaluate the use of new technologies to reduce maintenance costs and increase use.
- Evaluate parks projects for hotspots and include trash capture as a component of public projects.

OBJECTIVE 5: ACTIVE COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS

Create and strengthen active commercial corridors that allow community members to gather, stroll and interact while meeting their daily needs close to home.

Current Level of Effort:



Responsible Party: Public Works;
Community Development

5.1 *Develop district specific landscaping guidelines to reinforce neighborhood and district identity, and support economic development.*

- Engage the business community in planting and maintaining street trees.
- Work with the Design Review Board to review street tree selection for opportunities to create and reinforce district identities, while complying with the Master Street Tree list and district-specific landscaping guidelines, as developed. Species selection should be compatible with the needs and constraints of each planting site, with considerations for overhead and underground utilities, sidewalk and street pavement protection, and pedestrian visibility. Selected trees should not exceed the planting space available at maturity.
- Work with the Tree Committee to identify appropriate tree species to maximize the benefits of trees, while being sensitive to planting conditions.



Figure 40. Parklet along commercial street with children’s play opportunities

5.2 *Develop a program to provide opportunities for commerce, play and pop-up uses within the public right-of-way (sidewalks and streets), particularly along commercial corridors.*

- Complete a policy analysis to remove barriers to appropriate street activity.
- Incorporate sustainable elements, such as alternative energy generation technologies, rainwater capture devices, permeable pavers, etc. into 1% for Public Art Projects and consider amending the requirements to allow for funds to be spent on sustainable elements.
- Identify locations appropriate for mobile businesses and incorporate infrastructure elements like electrical outlets, water sources, grease drains, etc., into these streets during maintenance projects.
- Ensure that the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan Open Space requirements result in a diversity of open space types along the public right of way.
- Support community-generated events on the PROW by providing tables, chairs, waste receptacles, and other furnishings, promotional support and streamlined permitting.
- Develop a pop-up use policy that streamlines permitting to ensure that parking lots and street ROW allow for flexible uses.
- Identify underutilized existing parking lots for strategic open space improvements. Include these sites in parking demand analysis and propose conversion as part of parking demand phasing plans.



Current Level of Effort:

Responsible Party: Community Development; Public Works; Recreation



Figure 41. Alberrito Street Play highlights that streets may serve many purposes



Figure 42. New wayfinding systems must be compatible with existing successful signage

Current Level of Effort:  **KS**
key strength

Responsible Party: Community
Development

5.3 *Identify funding to develop and implement the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan Open Space In-Lieu program to develop green multi-purpose open spaces, such as pocket parks and plazas, that create active social gathering spaces and streetscape amenities to increase walkability and connectivity, catalyze continued investment, and support high density neighborhoods.*

- Incorporate environmental guidelines into the project design review process to ensure that these open spaces are providing environmental services, such as nodes along a pollinator pathway, stormwater capture and treatment, community gardening, connectivity, etc.

Current Level of Effort:  **BP**
best practice

Responsible Party: Community
Development; Public Works

5.4 *Build upon the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan Form-Based Code Street Type design guidelines to create distinct commercial corridors and districts, defining landscape and green infrastructure palettes where appropriate. Engage the Design Review Board and Planning Commission to review projects based on these district-specific guidelines for commercial corridors.*

- Encourage these project review bodies to evaluate project design based on its contribution to a sense-of-place and ability to activate the streetscape.
- Design guidelines should incorporate existing streetscape characteristics.
- Maximize the environmental services provided by streetscape elements, including pollution reduction and filtration, stormwater capture and treatment, heat island mitigation, etc

Current Level of Effort:  **BP**
best practice

Responsible Party: Public Works;
Community Development

5.5 *Develop an Adopt-a-Streets Program to encourage community members and business owners to clean and maintain the public right-of-way.*

- Provide supplies, such as tools and garbage bags, to help program members adequately maintain their portion of the ROW.
- Projects and improvements should help promote and highlight local business by providing and maintaining ROW amenities and marketing the efforts of local business owners to contribute to their community.

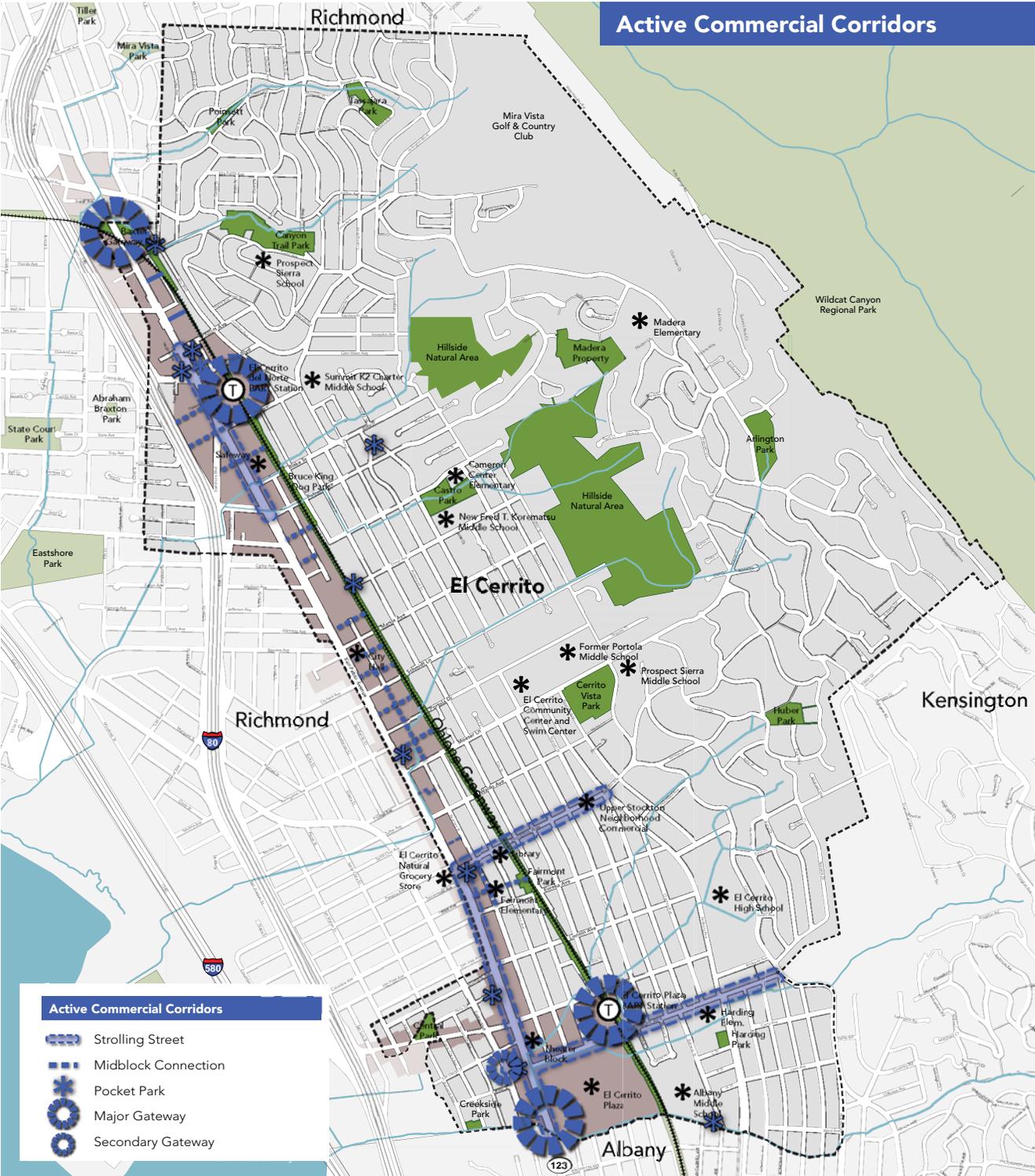


Figure 43. Strategy Map: Active Commercial Corridors

OBJECTIVE 6: RESILIENT HIGHER DENSITY NEIGHBORHOODS

Emphasize the need for strategic open spaces in higher density neighborhoods to provide multifamily housing residents with additional tot lots, playgrounds, and other active recreation, urban agriculture, and community gathering opportunities. Public open space should be flexible and accessible, meeting the needs of community members who may not have access to private open space.

Current Level of Effort:  **E**
enhancements

Responsible Party: Community
Development

Current Level of Effort:  **E**
enhancements

Responsible Party: Recreation;
Public Works

6.1 Consider amending the municipal code to include the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan open space requirements for other high density neighborhoods, as needed.

6.2 Prioritize projects that enhance existing parks in higher density areas to be more multipurpose and higher quality.

- Prioritize parks in high density residential neighborhoods.
- Evaluate open space access in high density neighborhoods on a regular basis to ensure residents have easy access to a range of parks and open spaces, including community gardens, tot lots, gathering spaces, and natural landscapes. Explore opportunities for land acquisition through the in-lieu program, condition of approval process, or other mechanisms where a need is identified.

Current Level of Effort:  **BP**
best practice

Responsible Party: Community
Development

6.3 As part of the General Plan update, develop zone-specific Level of Service standards to ensure residents of higher-density neighborhoods continue to have access to open spaces that provide multiple benefits.

- Review Best Practices to ensure these metrics are responsive to real conditions and work as a tool to improve open space access



Figure 44. Central Park, a potential space for multipurpose enhancements

OBJECTIVE 7: ENRICHED NATURAL AREAS

Develop projects that enrich natural features and ecological services, particularly in dedicated natural areas such as the Hillside Natural Area, Canyon Trail Park, Creekside Park, etc.

Current Level of Effort:  **BP**
best practice

Responsible Party: Community

Development; Public Works;
Recreation

7.1 Strengthen and, where needed, restore natural areas in existing open spaces to restore their natural function, wildlife habitat, biodiversity and ensure ecological resilience, as appropriate.

- In partnership with stakeholders, identify priority environmental services and develop project design, management and monitoring plans to conserve and restore these services while addressing other, potentially competing community needs.
- Consider strategic land acquisition where needed to preserve environmental benefits and establish or expand wildlife corridors.
- Participate in regional planning and management efforts that may identify critical services in El Cerrito.

Current Level of Effort:  **BP**
best practice

Responsible Party: Community

Development

7.2 Establish a Bortle Dark-Sky threshold or other light threshold for natural areas to reduce light pollution and its effects on wildlife. Maintain visual access to the night sky for community members.

- Analyze and address any major publicly-owned light sources, particularly as they effect light levels in natural areas.
- Include light analysis in major projects and projects that border natural areas.

Current Level of Effort:  **E**
enhancements

Responsible Party: Community

Development

Current Level of Effort:  **E**
enhancements

Responsible Party: Recreation;

Community Development; Public
Works

7.3 Designate the Hillside Natural Area and Cerrito Creek as Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) Priority Conservation Areas. Consider designation of other community areas in the future.

7.4 Engage the Parks & Recreation Commission and Tree Committee on land conservation and restoration activities and projects, helping to identify funding and resources and supporting community engagement where feasible.

Current Level of Effort:  **BP**
best practice

Responsible Party: Recreation;

Community Development

7.5 Analyze natural area use policies to better understand what uses are currently permitted in these areas.

- Identify Best Practices for increasing use of natural areas, such as nighttime use permits and restoration activities.

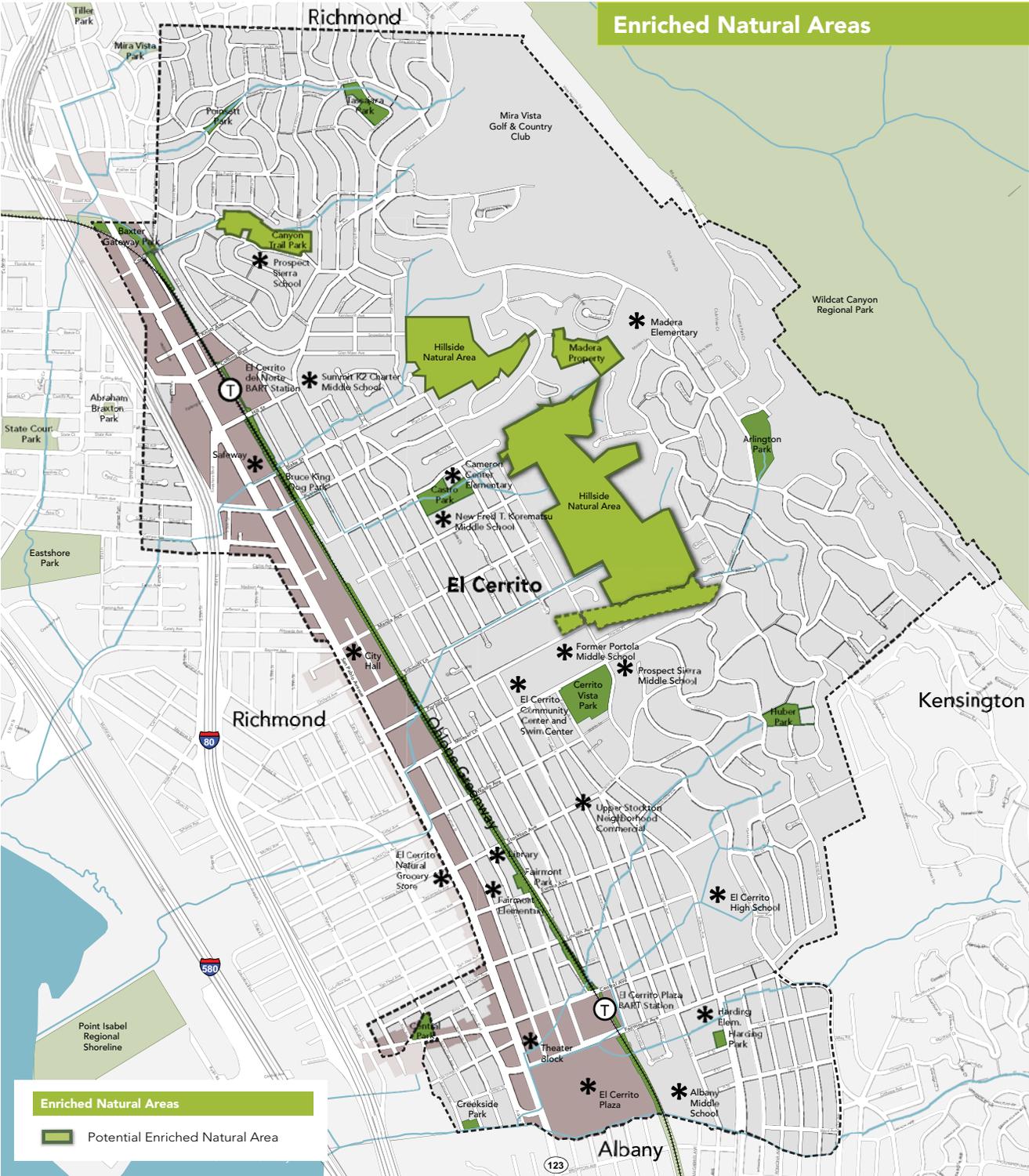


Figure 46. Strategy Map: Enriched Natural Areas

OBJECTIVE 8: ENHANCED CREEKS

Protect, enhance and celebrate creeks and riparian areas through landscaping, art, signage and other amenities that maximize their environmental services and create distinctive community gathering spaces. Restore the health of El Cerrito’s watershed through coordinated public projects and public-private partnerships.

Current Level of Effort:  **Responsible Party:** Community Development

8.1 Create design guidelines, consistent with the Creek Protection Overlay District, for private projects that celebrate creeks as amenities.

- For projects with culverted and underground creeks, develop landscape and open space design guidelines that highlight the natural path of the creek on site.
- For projects with daylit creeks, develop open space standards that celebrate the creek as a community amenity, providing access and gathering spaces in proximity to the creek.
- Encourage private developments to implement green infrastructure projects where creek daylighting is impractical to provide similar ecological functions.



Figure 47. Creek enhancement could help celebrate riparian corridors such as this creek adjacent to the Ohlone Greenway

8.2 Consider a Creek Daylighting Incentives Program to encourage private developments to daylight or naturalize creeks in culverts and channels.

- Identify potential funding sources to offset costs associated with daylighting creeks.

8.3 Engage key stakeholders and pursue grant funding to develop a Watershed Management Plan to identify important public and private creek restoration and watershed enhancement projects.

- Establish watershed performance metrics to improve creeks and stormwater system quality and function and include regular monitoring of vegetation and creek conditions.
- Include creek channel and riparian corridor management guidelines to reduce erosion, degradation, and deposition and to anticipate and prepare for flood risks. Develop guidelines that support existing and enhance wildlife habitat and wildlife corridors.
- Update the existing Storm Drain Master Plan and maintain the Trash Management Plan as required by the Municipal Regional Permit, as needed.

8.4 Develop Creek Maintenance Plans wherever 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.

- Work to ensure that the work of local non-profits and community volunteer efforts are included in Maintenance Plans and that creek maintenance projects are appropriately noticed and permitted.
- Regularly monitor creek conditions to identify maintenance projects that do not require prior approval or permitting to allow for continued community involvement and sensitive maintenance activities, such as trash removal, removal of non-native invasive plants without machinery, and the planting of appropriate native vegetation.
- Update existing maintenance and management plans to meet Regional Water Quality Control Board regulations, such as the *Baxter Creek Maintenance and Management Guide*

Current Level of Effort:



Responsible Party: Community Development

Current Level of Effort:



Responsible Party: Community Development; Public Works

Current Level of Effort:



Responsible Party: Public Works



Figure 48. Creekside Park provides wildlife habitat, native vegetation and stormwater control benefits, while creating a community gathering space that celebrates and engages with nature.

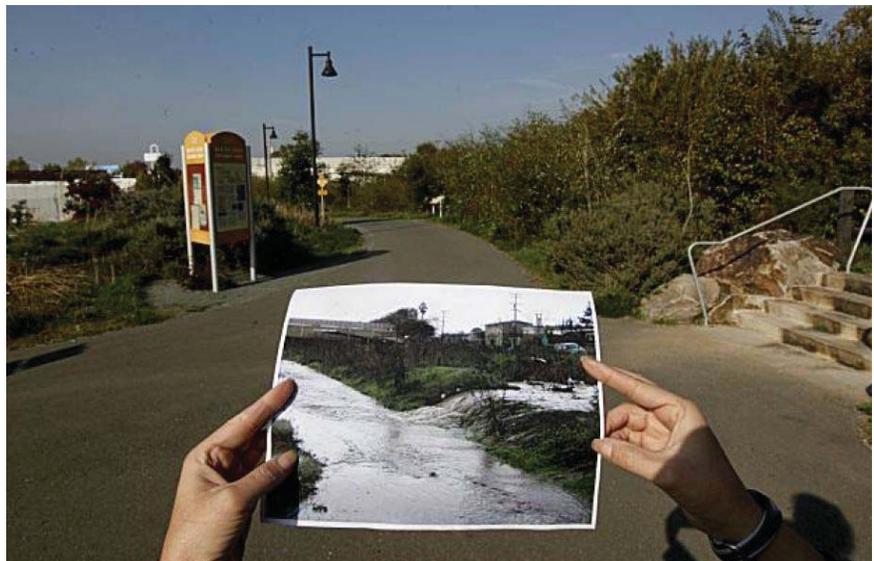


Figure 49. The Baxter Creek Gateway Project removed the Creek from an engineered channel to restore its natural function and provide a northern gateway to the City after acquiring the property from the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway.

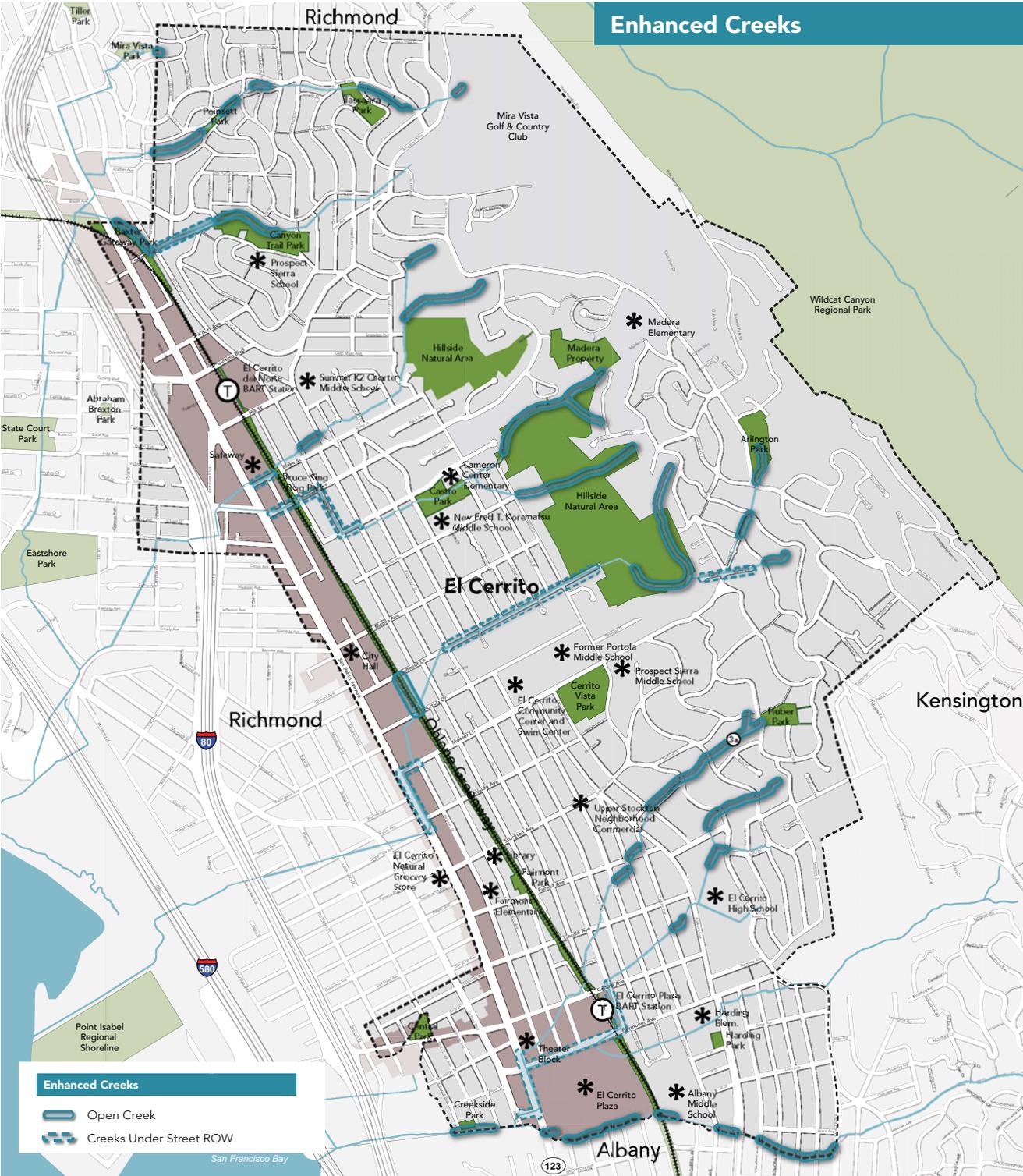


Figure 50. Strategy Map: Enhanced Creeks

*The creeks shown on this map were drawn from the City's GIS and may not represent all natural bodies of water within City boundaries. It is not to be used for regulatory decisions, but instead to highlight opportunities exist.

OBJECTIVE 9: GREEN STREETS

Continue to invest in making the public right-of-way more sustainable by reducing impervious surfaces, accommodating additional modes of transportation, adding landscaping and creating streets that are safe, comfortable and attractive for everyone.

Current Level of Effort:  **BP**
best practice

Responsible Party: Community
Development; Public Works

9.1 *Adopt a Green Streets policy that prioritizes green infrastructure along with pedestrian, bicycle and public transportation projects along the public right-of-way (ROW).*

- Develop a Municipal Green Infrastructure Ordinance to consider opportunities for green infrastructure and pervious pavement in City-funded streetscape, pavement, building or public open space improvement projects. Ensure all pervious pavements meet ADA requirements.
- Consider incorporating green infrastructure design guidelines in Complete Streets Plans to reduce the environmental impacts of street hardscape. Guidelines should address pavement conditions and types, landscaping and climate considerations and should identify green infrastructure projects to address stormwater concerns.

Current Level of Effort:  **KS**
key strength

Responsible Party: Public Works

9.2 *Continue to partner with the Contra Costa Clean Water Program to require a high level of stormwater capture and treatment from new developments, municipal projects and public infrastructure improvements through the Contra Costa Clean Water Program - C3 Requirements.*

- Consider a Designated Green Infrastructure Standard to ensure that sufficient land area has protected vegetated surfaces that help reduce the urban heat island, manage stormwater and provide active recreation opportunities.

Current Level of Effort:  **KS**
key strength

Responsible Party: Public Works

9.3 *Require new developments to plant trees along the PROW, where appropriate.*

- Continue to require adjacent property owners to water street trees, in a manner consistent with drought regulations. Require commercial developments to provide permanent maintenance of street trees and require residential developments to provide 1 year of street tree maintenance after construction.

- Monitor and report on City maintenance of landscapes along the PROW to better track City investment in sidewalk and median landscapes.
- Assess maintenance programs that would require adjacent property owners to maintain street trees and landscapes.

9.4 *Adopt a Bay Friendly Landscaping Policy to retrofit resource intensive public landscapes to be more resource conserving, where appropriate. Require that private developments follow Bay-friendly landscaping guidelines and maintenance.*

Current Level of Effort: 
Responsible Party: Public Works



Figure 51. Rain gardens and streetscape amenities in El Cerrito



Figure 52. The Cities of Albany and El Cerrito host semi-regular street play events, called Alberrito Streets, to create a fun, safe, car-free place for people to meet, play and enliven their streets.



Figure 53. The San Pablo Avenue Streetscape project resulted in rain gardens, bicycle facilities and pedestrian amenities to create a more pleasant and sustainable environment and help catalyze economic development.

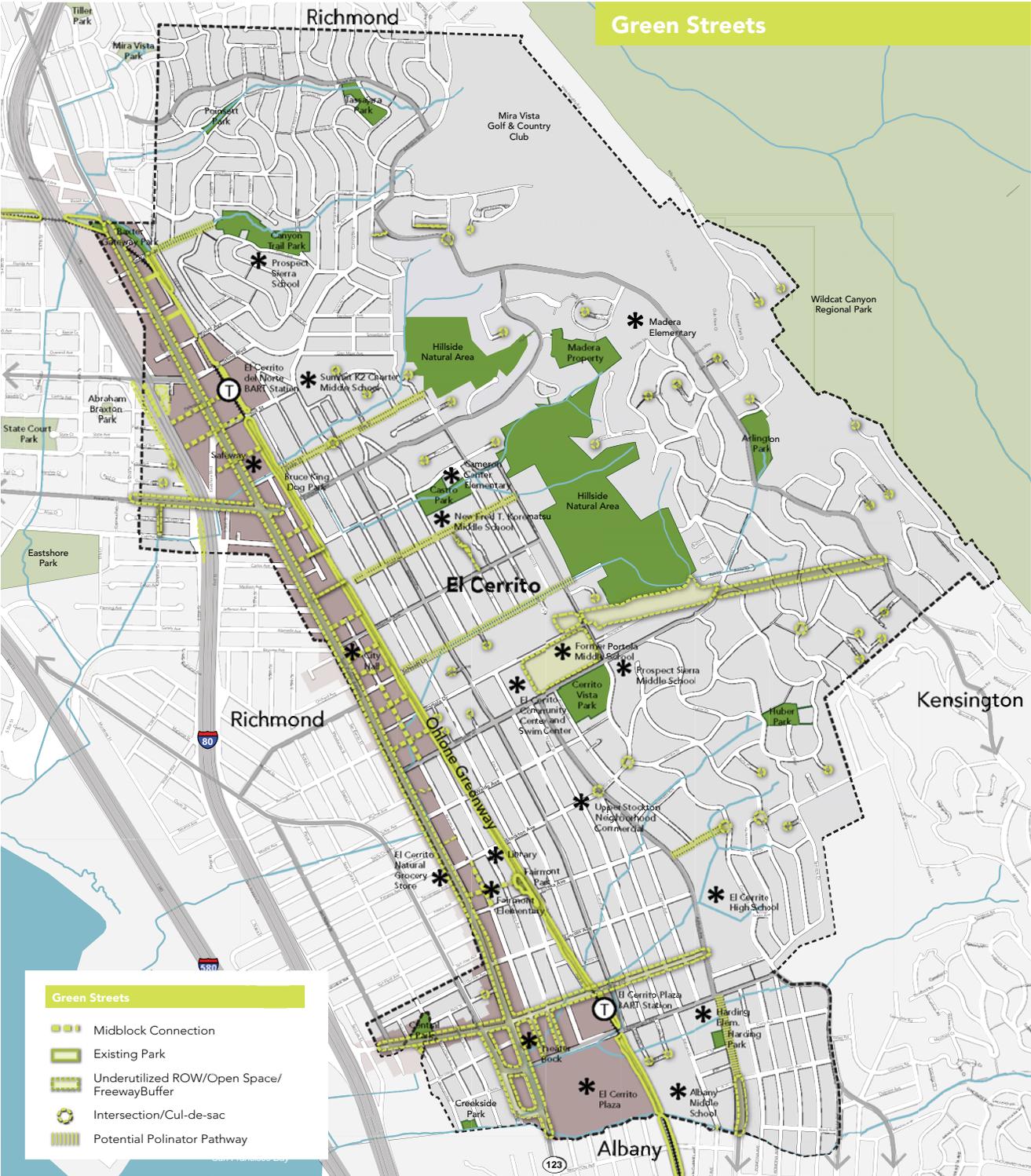


Figure 54. Strategy Map: Green Streets

OBJECTIVE 10: VIBRANT SCHOOLYARDS

Partner with the West Contra Costa Unified School District and private schools to maximize the benefits provided by their schoolyards. Encourage multipurpose spaces that jointly allow school children to learn from and interact with nature while reducing the need for additional recreation spaces for community members.

Current Level of Effort:



Responsible Party: Recreation;

Public Works; Community Development

10.1 *Work with the West Contra Costa Unified School District (WCCUSD) to develop Wilderness Classroom and other outdoor education programs that incorporate natural elements into schoolyards, parks and open spaces and encourage school use of natural areas.*

- Provide gathering spaces in park projects that allow classes to engage and interact with nature.
- Explore opportunities for school internships to provide local children with environmental management, science and gardening skills.

Current Level of Effort:



Responsible Party: Recreation;

Community Development

10.2 *Partner with WCCUSD to develop Green Schoolyard Design Guidelines that encourage school-design and programming to better integrate facilities into neighborhoods, i.e. access, connectivity, neighborhood cohesion and multipurpose/public use. Develop guidelines that ensure students have the opportunity to interact with and learn from nature.*

- Consider guidelines that create permeable boundaries between schoolyards and neighboring parks to increase use of City resources.



Figure 55. Vibrant green schoolyards are rich learning environments

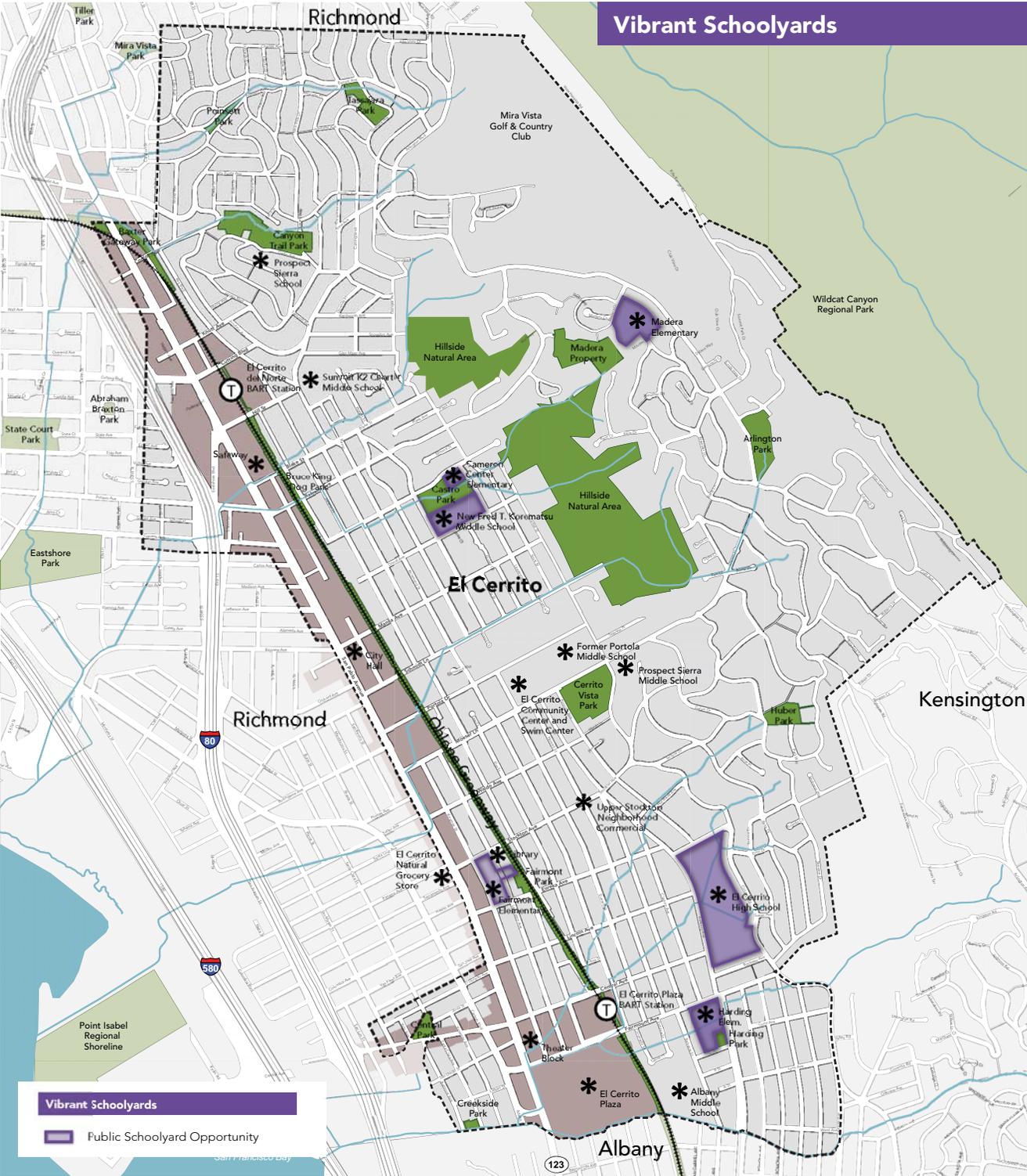


Figure 56. Strategy Map: Vibrant Schoolyards

OBJECTIVE 11: URBAN AGRICULTURE

Ensure that all El Cerrito residents have opportunities to grow their own food by removing barriers to urban agriculture and providing opportunities for gardening where they may not otherwise exist.

Current Level of Effort:



Responsible Party: Public Works;

Community Development

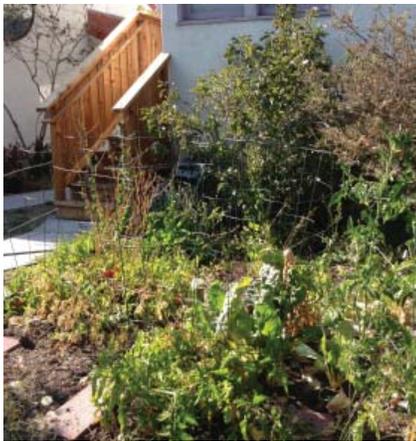


Figure 57. Strategic, small-scale urban agriculture provides environmental benefits while feeding the community

Current Level of Effort:



Responsible Party: Community

Development; Recreation

11.1 *Develop a program that allows local volunteers to request planting of food crops in the public right-of-way (ROW) when they develop an agreement to support and maintain these public resources.*

- Evaluate key nodes and opportunity sites for urban agriculture, including medians, sidewalks and other street ROW. Focus urban agriculture near low income and multi-family residences which do not have adequate access to space to grow food.
- Establish agreements with organizations or local volunteer groups to maintain requested projects.
- Consider low maintenance edible plants that provide pollination and other habitat services as part of the City's Master Street Tree List and other ROW and privately-owned public open space projects.
- Notify community members of urban agriculture locations to ensure that food is gathered and used by the community.

11.2 *Create a Community Garden program that develops maintenance and partnership regulations, and allows for flexibility in establishing neighborhood community gardens on public and private property.*

- Clearly identify the process to establish a community garden on public open space and ensure that policies and permits do not deter or restrict community gardens on private open space.
- Assess opportunities for City-supported community garden efforts in higher density neighborhoods.

11.3 *Ensure that landscaping guidelines and plant palettes allow low maintenance edible plants that provide pollination and other habitat services in the ROW and in privately-owned public open spaces.*

- Develop height and setback guidelines for residents interested in planting edibles in the planting strips adjacent to their property to ensure safety and access, while allowing flexibility in plant selection.
- Develop food safety standards for publicly-accessible projects, including soil remediation requirements, pesticide use restrictions and noticing requirements, and prohibiting dogs.
- Identify and address other policy barriers that may limit growing food, including restrictions on vertical gardening and planting in the ROW on neighborhood streets.

11.4 *Actively monitor regional, State and national urban agriculture policies, programs and best practices to identify new opportunities to provide residents with increased access to land and project financing.*

- Work with the Contra Costa County Assessor to evaluate incentive programs, such as Assembly Bill 551: Urban Agriculture Incentive Zones Act (AB 551).

Current Level of Effort: 
Responsible Party: Public Works;
Community Development

Current Level of Effort: 
Responsible Party: Community
Development



Figure 58. The El Cerrito Plaza Farmers' Market takes place every Tuesday and Saturday, 9 am - 1 pm



Figure 59. The pilot community garden at Fairmont Park was constructed on Earth Day 2013 and is maintained by the El Cerrito Community Garden Network and continued community volunteerism.

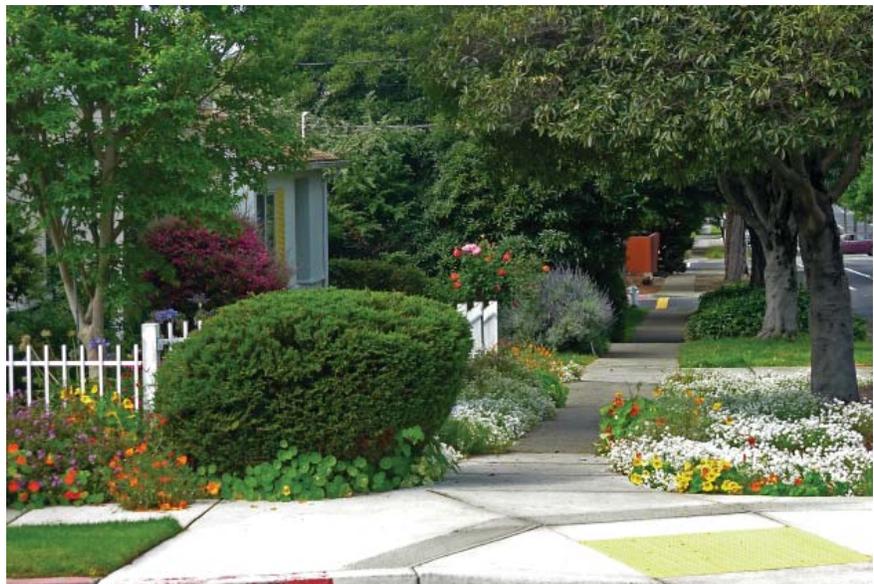


Figure 60. El Cerrito's street right-of-way provides numerous opportunities for small-scale urban agriculture, including private planting of sidewalk gardens and food crops in medians and along City streets when stewarded by community volunteers.

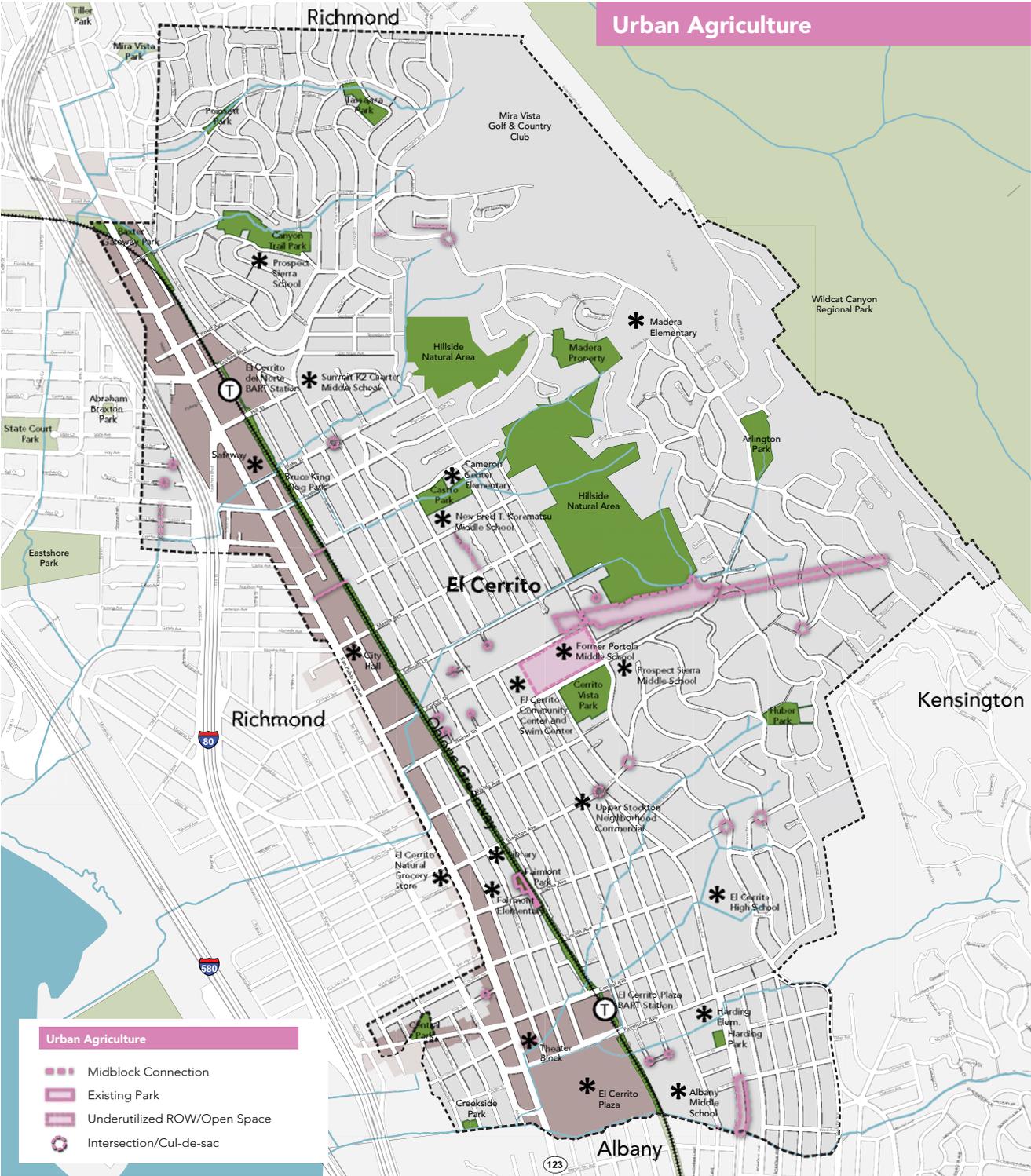
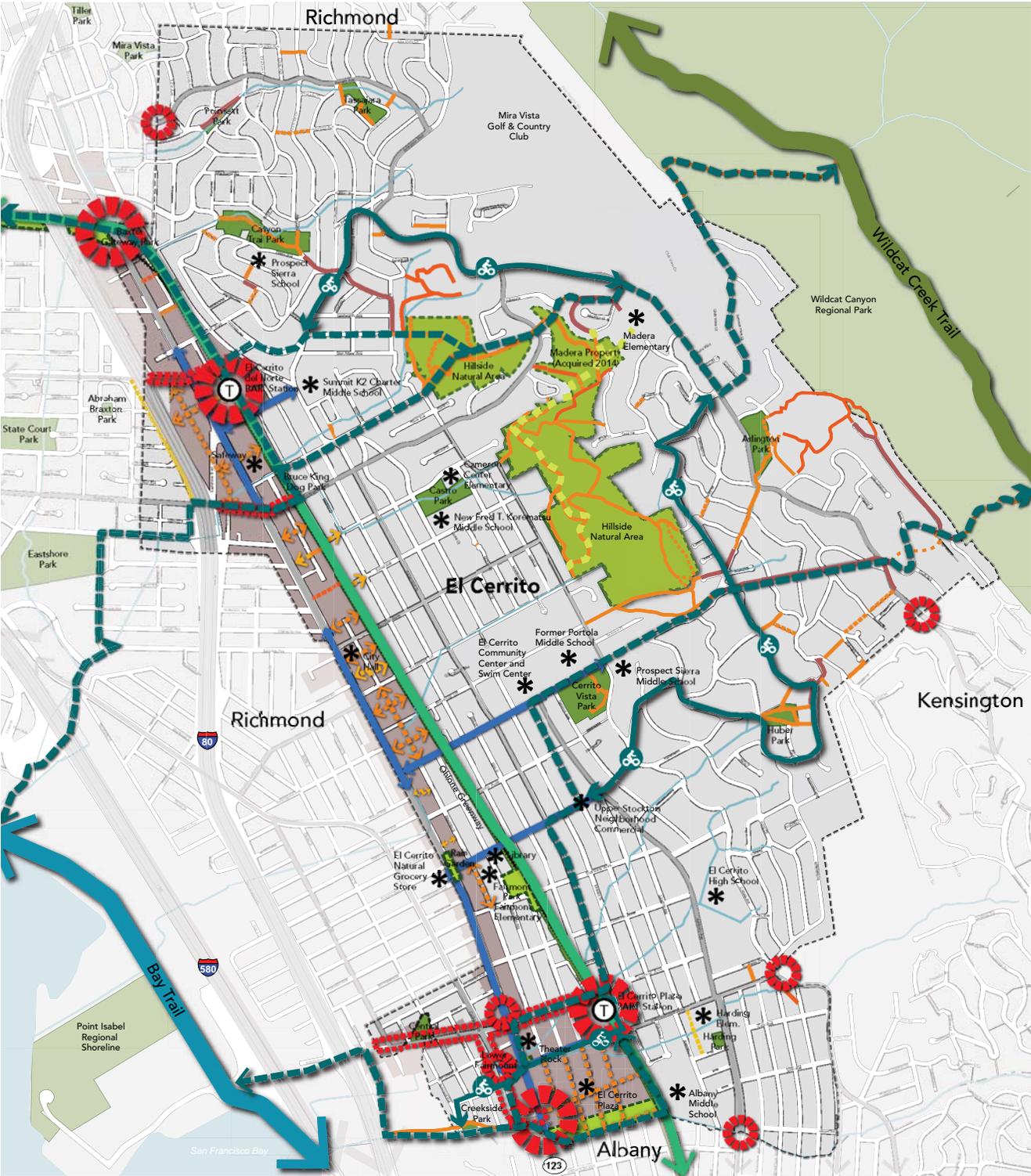


Figure 61. Strategy Map: Urban Agriculture

4.04 VISION MAP

The vision map consolidates the opportunities outlined in the previous strategy maps to provide an overview of potential locations for urban greening interventions throughout the City. Together these interventions create a well-connected, vibrant green network of open spaces, streetscapes, trails and paths that serve both the commercial corridors and neighborhoods.

Figure 62. Vision Map



- | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| City Limit | Destinations | Bay Trail | City Sidewalk Trail Links |
| San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan Area | BART Line and Station | Wildcat Canyon Trail | Existing Public Trails |
| El Cerrito Park | Arterial Roads | Ohlone Greenway | Proposed Public Trails |
| Park Outside El Cerrito | Major Gateway | Blue/Green Connection | Proposed Nature Trail |
| Water | Secondary Gateway | Blue/Green Bike Alternative | Existing Private Trails |
| Creek | Gateway Corridor | Mid-block Connection | Strolling Street |

 Key Strength

 Recommended Enhancements

 National Best Practice

4.05 SUPPORTING POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

- These policies build upon existing City practices and previously approved plans to create a policy framework that should be referenced and expanded upon for robust and sustainable implementation of the Plan. As new policies are developed, existing regulations should be carefully reviewed to ensure that the new regulations are needed and that they do not contradict previous policy direction. For information on existing plans, policies and programs as they relate to these strategies, see **Appendix D.**

SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPE AND MAINTENANCE POLICIES

Implement sustainable landscape maintenance practices to conserve natural resources and reduce costs in order to maximize the ecological services of existing parks and open spaces.

1. *Develop a Drought Response and Management Plan to develop short-term and long-term drought mitigation and response protocol.*

- Analyze long-term water conservation practices to proactively transition landscapes and projects to be less resource-intensive and more resilient.
- Evaluate the feasibility of water recapture and reuse.
- Evaluate the long-term water use of landscaping and parks projects to anticipate periods of reduce water use.

2. *Develop 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.*

3. *Continue to implement the City's Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Policy.*

- Periodically review the IPM Program to ensure that it is meeting local and regional goals

Current Level of Effort: 

Responsible Party: Public Works; Recreation

Current Level of Effort: 

Responsible Party: Public Works

- Maintain accurate records on IPM implementation and pesticide use
- Continue to train staff on IPM best practices
- Include IPM policies and practices in pest management contracts and maintain a list of available expert resources accessible to staff.
- Develop a citywide invasive species management plan to identify invasive species of the greatest threat and priority areas for protection; include monitoring to ensure that projects are efficiently reducing identified invasive species.
- Notify community members via the City’s website of pesticide use in public spaces.

4. *Develop sustainable specialized landscape practices, including monthly, seasonal and annual maintenance schedules.*

- Establish an athletic field maintenance schedule to encourage field “downtime” and reduce regular maintenance requirements.
- For natural landscapes, particularly native and riparian landscapes, establish a budget, schedule, and staff training or contracting that maximizes resilience and diversity while minimizing maintenance costs.
- Include vegetation management and maintenance guidelines in new City projects to ensure the establishment of functioning, resilient plant communities.
- Establish standard operating procedures to hand over the maintenance of new landscapes from the contractor hired to build and maintain them to the City’s general landscape maintenance team at the time of project completion; procedures should include early site visits and coordination with City maintenance to ensure understanding and ownership of the project.
- Develop internal protocol to recycle and compost plant debris in City facilities to reduce costs of disposal and purchasing new materials.

Current Level of Effort:  **Responsible Party:** Public Works; Recreation



Figure 63. Maintenance is necessary for promoting plant health

Current Level of Effort:  **Responsible Party:** Public Works

Current Level of Effort:



Responsible Party: Public Works;
Community Development

Current Level of Effort:



Responsible Party: Public Works;
Community Development

5. Establish pollinator friendly maintenance guidelines.

- In coordination with the Fire Department, establish “No Disturbance” areas, as appropriate, free from mowing, tilling and mulching, which may disturb ground nesting bees that play an integral part in natural pollination.
- Ban the use of neonicotinoids on City property.
- Design pollinator corridors through coordinated park plantings that meet established best practices.
- Incorporate bird-friendly planting and pruning practices that provide appropriate plant species and vegetation for nests.
- Encourage the use of pollinator friendly plants in other sidewalk, median and linear planting strips, where appropriate. Clearly identify the permits needed to establish a community garden on public open space.

6. Expand Bay-Friendly Landscaping requirements.

- Continue to train maintenance staff in Bay-Friendly Landscaping practices.
- Ensure that all landscape maintenance is performed by Bay-Friendly qualified professionals, including outside contractors.
- Encourage new developments to pursue Bay-Friendly ratings for all new landscapes.

7. Continue to update and implement the City’s Landscape Management Plan (2003), emphasizing the removal of invasive species, planting of low-maintenance, resource-conserving species, and leveraging of community partnerships.

- Identify projects to convert resource-intensive landscapes to Bay-Friendly, low maintenance palettes.



Figure 64. Bay Friendly and drought tolerant landscape have lower maintenance requirements

SUPPORTING OBJECTIVE: VOLUNTEERISM

Engage the El Cerrito and East Bay community in stewarding public lands in partnership with the City, both to increase community ownership of public lands and to conserve City maintenance resources.

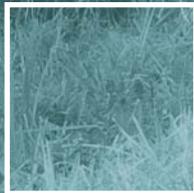
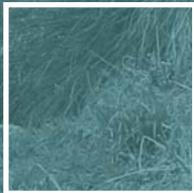
1. *Develop and coordinate a Trail Maintenance Volunteer Program that leverages existing community efforts and partnerships to better meet trail maintenance needs.*
 - Help facilitate communication between multiple volunteer efforts.
2. *Expand the Green Teams program to include additional work days, clean-ups, invasive species removal and maintenance tasks.*
 - Provide additional assistance in outreach and community engagement.
 - Help establish a list of priority projects at the beginning of each fiscal year.
 - Continue to identify funding sources to offset the costs of clean-ups, invasive species removal, and community volunteer efforts, such as grants to buy tools, plants and other materials or to expand and publicize major events, such as Earth Day.
3. *Continue to co-sponsor nonprofits and community organizations, providing the support necessary to increase access to and awareness of their efforts. Coordinate to provide education, outreach and volunteer opportunities that enhance and expand the City's environmental stewardship and sustainability.*
 - Establish feedback loops to engage co-sponsored organizations and identify what additional support is needed.
4. *Explore various "Adoption" programs to encourage community members to take responsibility for their trees, parks, streets, and trails, including the Ohlone Greenway.*
 - Provide access to tools and other resources.
 - Clearly define an application process that provides community members. Program should include information about neighboring adoption activities and encourages joint community efforts.
 - Celebrate volunteer efforts online and through community events, such as garden tours, volunteer appreciate events, and community volunteer spotlights online.

Current Level of Effort:  **Responsible Party:** Public Works

Current Level of Effort:  **Responsible Party:** Public Works

Current Level of Effort:  **Responsible Party:** Recreation

Current Level of Effort:  **Responsible Party:** Public Works;
Community Development;
Recreation



implementation

CHAPTER 5

implementation

SECTIONS

- 5.01 Top Projects
- 5.02 Pilot Projects
- 5.03 Supporting Policies & Programs
- 5.04 Funding

The goals, objectives and strategies of this Urban Greening Plan were identified to address opportunities for both public and private projects that will improve the sustainability, vitality and livability of El Cerrito. Its long-term implementation will require broad participation and investment from all sectors of the community over time.

This chapter outlines the public projects and supporting policies identified through the planning process. Based on the opportunity analysis and needs assessment of potential urban greening projects, a subset of 14 projects has been selected in order to achieve multiple urban greening benefits, build off existing projects and community efforts, and catalyze additional investment within the City over time. Four of these focus areas were selected for additional conceptual design work that will pilot potential Urban Greening interventions and prepare the projects for additional outside funding.

5.01 FOCUS AREAS

The 14 sites build on the planned and underway projects to represent a broad spectrum of potential urban greening interventions. The focus areas were selected based on their ability to achieve the following criteria:

- Address multiple Urban Greening objectives, see 4.03 Objectives
- Pilot Urban Greening strategies
- Include green infrastructure opportunities
- Catalyze economic development
- Enhance placemaking
- Include implementable and funding-eligible projects
- Fulfill City goals and policy priorities
- Build on community stewardship and engagement

The following map identifies the 14 focus areas, highlighting relevant objectives to illustrate the long-term potential of these projects. The urban greening potential varies project-to-project and has been captured in the opportunities identified on the following pages. Potential stormwater benefits have been identified and analyzed for relevant projects.

From the 14 focus areas, four projects were selected for additional analysis and design. These four potential early implementation, or pilot, projects are the *Hillside Natural Area*, *Blue-to-Green Connections*, *Fairmont Park* and *Lower Fairmount Avenue*. The fact sheets for these four pilot projects include conceptual designs and next steps intended to prepare them for grant applications and external funding and partnership opportunities.

Figure 65. Focus Areas



Citywide

- 1. Blue to Green Connections, page 128

Existing Parks

- 2. Ohlone Greenway - Portola to Schmidt, page 101
- 3. Ohlone Greenway - Gladys to Blake, page 102
- 4. Fairmont Park, page 116
- 5. Central Park, page 104
- 6. Creekside Park, page 105
- 7. Hillside Natural Area, page 124

Underutilized Land

- 8. El Cerrito Plaza, page 107
- 9. Conlon Avenue and Key Boulevard, page 108
- 10. Cutting Boulevard and San Pablo Avenue, page 109
- 11. Avila Street and San Pablo Avenue, page 110
- 12. Former Portola Middle School site, page 111

Street ROW

- 13. Ashbury Avenue, page 112
- 14. Lower Fairmount Avenue, page 120

For additional Urban Greening projects within the City, see Figure 11, Planned and Underway Projects

FOCUS AREA 1: BLUE TO GREEN CONNECTIONS



Figure 66. Connecting City streets, trails and stairs to the Bay Trail and Wildcat Canyon Trail is a unique opportunity

The goal of Blue to Green Connections is to improve pedestrian and bicycle connectivity between the area’s major natural assets: the Bay Trail and Wildcat Canyon Trail.

Blue to Green Connections was identified as a unique El Cerrito opportunity and was advanced as one of the final four “Pilot Projects”. A conceptual design for this project was developed, as detailed in 5.02 Pilot Projects.



Figure 67. Blue to Green Connections will improve connectivity from the hills to the Bay

FOCUS AREA 2: OHLONE GREENWAY - PORTOLA TO SCHMIDT

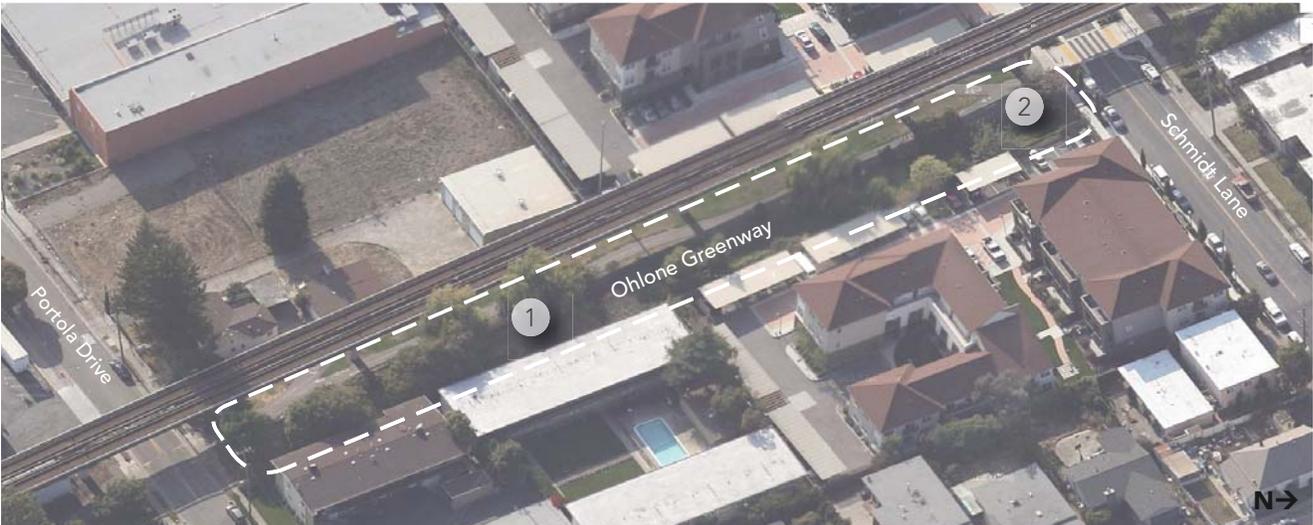


Figure 68. Ohlone Greenway – Portola to Schmidt

Urban Greening Opportunities

1. **Creek Daylighting:** Restore the existing creek channel to improve habitat and water quality benefits. Make the creek a visible amenity along the Greenway (*Fluvius Innominatus Restoration Channel Design Memorandum, 2008*)
2. **Activity Node:** Incorporate social gathering and play opportunities near the restored creek (see *Ohlone Greenway Master Plan, 2009*)

Urban Greening Objectives Targeted

- Improved Trails and Paths
- Strengthened Ohlone Greenway
- Enhanced Creeks

Project Stormwater Benefits

Annual Runoff Treated (gal/yr): 3,740

Pollutants Removed (lb/yr):
 TSS: 2.010
 TP: 0.003
 Nitrate + Nitrite: 0.008
 Lead: 0.002
 Zinc: 0.002

Project treatment levels analyzed by Sherwood Engineers. For additional information, see Appendix F



Figure 69. Fluvius Innominatus runs along the Ohlone Greenway from Portola to Schmidt and encounters regular sediment buildup, requiring significant maintenance

FOCUS AREA 3: OHLONE GREENWAY - GLADYS TO BLAKE



Figure 70. Ohlone Greenway – Gladys to Blake

Project Stormwater Benefits

Annual Runoff Treated (gal/yr): 194,161

Pollutants Removed (lb/yr):
 TSS: 5.07
 TP: 0.05
 Nitrate + Nitrite: 0.01
 Zinc: 0.01

Project treatment levels analyzed by Sherwood Engineers. For additional information, see Appendix F

Urban Greening Opportunities

1. **Green Gateway:** Create a gateway experience along Potrero Avenue.
2. **Biofiltration Gardens:** Repurpose small portions of the landscaped areas along the Greenway for stormwater management and water quality improvements. Focus on areas adjacent to existing inlets to minimize area of disturbance and costs.
3. **Activity Node:** Create social gathering and play opportunities near Potrero Avenue to create an activity node. Enhance the existing Bruce King Dog Park.

Urban Greening Objectives Targeted

- Greener Gateways
- Improved Trails and Paths
- Strengthened Ohlone Greenway



Figure 71. The Ohlone Greenway from Gladys to Blake includes key opportunities for increased activity and amenity improvements, particularly at the Bruce King Dog Park and in conjunction with Safeway Greenway improvements

FOCUS AREA 4: FAIRMONT PARK

The goal of the Fairmont Park project, including segments of the adjacent Ohlone Greenway, is to enhance and improve an existing neighborhood park.

Fairmont Park was identified as an important community project and was advanced as one of the final four "Pilot Projects". A conceptual design for this project was developed, as detailed in 5.02 Pilot Projects.



Figure 72. An aerial view of Fairmont Park



Figure 73. Formalizing the demonstration garden at Fairmont Park was identified as a community priority



Figure 74. Preservation of some existing elements, such as the stone turtle, while upgrading play equipment and park furnishings was identified as important to the community

FOCUS AREA 5: CENTRAL PARK AND ADJACENT PARCEL AT CENTRAL AND BELMONT



Figure 75. Central Park and adjacent private parcel*

* Private Property highlighted in purple; * 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.

Project Stormwater Benefits

Annual Runoff Treated (gal/yr): 27,429
 Pollutants Removed (lb/yr):
 TSS: 5.72
 TP: 0.02
 Nitrate + Nitrite: 0.02
 TKN: 0.04
 Zinc: 0.01

Project treatment levels analyzed by Sherwood Engineers. For additional information, see Appendix F



Figure 76. Opportunities to improve Central Park’s baseball diamond, incorporate new community amenities, and create a more multi-use park were identified as key opportunities to improve the livability of El Cerrito and Richmond’s neighborhoods west of San Pablo Avenue

Urban Greening Opportunities

1. **Creek Naturalization:** Work with private property owners and/or identify outside funding to realign and naturalize existing concrete channel south of Central Avenue to improve habitat and water quality and create a riparian edge.
2. **Improved Play Structures and Gathering Spaces:** Enhance the existing park by installing a new play structure and park furniture.
3. **Multi-functional Park Space:** Program the park as a multi-use space, with flexible recreation uses at different times to allow the park to serve more neighborhood residents.
4. **Green Gateway:** Create a gateway experience and improve connectivity along Central Avenue.
5. **Connectivity:** Create a pedestrian and bicycle pathway that better connects Central Park to Creekside Park

Urban Greening Objectives Targeted

- Greener Gateways
- Improved Trails and Paths
- Enhanced Existing Parks
- Resilient Higher Density Neighborhoods
- Enhanced Creeks

FOCUS AREA 6: CREEKSIDE PARK



Figure 77. Creekside Park

Urban Greening Opportunities

1. **Wetland:** Consider repurposing existing shallow concrete pools to create functioning wetlands or other flow-based, stormwater treatment measure. Maintain the overall form of the existing stormwater feature to celebrate its history. Lower bottom of the feature to be consistent with adjacent creek bed and plant with appropriate riparian species of reeds/rushes. Ensure design is consistent with C.3 requirements to allow for potential future Low Impact Development (LID) credits/banking and creates a more resilient creek corridor.
2. **Enhanced Gathering and Play Spaces:** Provide additional seating and furniture for social gathering near the play structure and repurposed wetlands.
3. **Wayfinding:** Improve park wayfinding. Expand existing sidewalk recycled glass treatments with additional improvements that lead visitors from surrounding neighborhoods and San Pablo Avenue to the park.
4. **Connectivity:** Create a pedestrian and bicycle pathway connecting Creekside Park to Central Park, the Ohlone Greenway and Pierce Street to connect to the Bay Trail.

Project Stormwater Benefits

Annual Runoff Treated (gal/yr): 3,740

Pollutants Removed (lb/yr):
 TSS: 2.010
 TP: 0.003
 Nitrate + Nitrite: 0.008
 Lead: 0.002
 Zinc: 0.002

Project treatment levels analyzed by Sherwood Engineers. For additional information, see Appendix F



Figure 78. Creekside Park currently supports wildlife habitat, stormwater management and treatment, and community gathering; opportunities to create functioning wetlands was identified as an important stormwater project with potential C.3 benefits

Urban Greening Objectives Targeted

- Improved Trails and Paths
- Enhanced Existing Parks
- Enhanced Creeks

FOCUS AREA 7: HILLSIDE NATURAL AREA



The goal of the Hillside Natural Area project is to enhance and improve El Cerrito’s largest open space.

The Hillside Natural Area project was identified as an important next step in the open space’s development and was advanced as one of the final four “Pilot Projects”. A conceptual design for this project was developed, as detailed in 5.02 *Pilot Projects*.

Figure 79. Continuing to improve the Hillside Natural Area’s paths and trails, while preserving its views, native vegetation and wildlife habitat was identified as a community priority



Figure 80. An aerial view of the Hillside Natural Area

FOCUS AREA 8: EL CERRITO PLAZA



Figure 81. El Cerrito Plaza

* Private Property are highlighted in purple. 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 other City regulations.

Urban Greening Opportunities

1. **Connectivity:** Create a mid-block crossing at San Pablo Avenue to connect the east and west segments of the Cerrito Creek pedestrian trail. Improve connections to the Ohlone Greenway from Albany Middle School and the planned Creekside Apartments.
2. **Biofiltration Gardens:** Repurpose small portions of the street right-of-way for water quality management. Focus on areas adjacent to existing inlets to minimize disturbance and costs.
3. **Green Gateway:** Create an identifiable gateway experience at the southern entry to the City along San Pablo Avenue.
4. **Commercial Corridors:** Activate San Pablo Avenue and Fairmount Avenue by creating a more attractive streetscape through landscaping and building design to encourage increased pedestrian activity.
5. **Enhance Creeks:** Daylight Cerrito Creek as part of the entitled Creekside Apartments project and pursue daylighting of additional segments per City Council Resolution 96-103.

Project Stormwater Benefits

Stormwater benefits were not studied for this project.



Figure 82. The El Cerrito Plaza Shopping Center has been identified for strategic opportunities to improve stormwater runoff management, increase connectivity and provide strategic open space in the City's commercial corridor

Urban Greening Objectives Targeted

- Greener Gateways
- Improved Trails and Paths
- Strengthened Ohlone Greenway
- Enhanced Existing Parks
- Active Commercial Corridors
- Resilient Higher-Density Neighborhoods
- Enhanced Creeks

FOCUS AREA 9: CONLON AVE AND KEY BOULEVARD

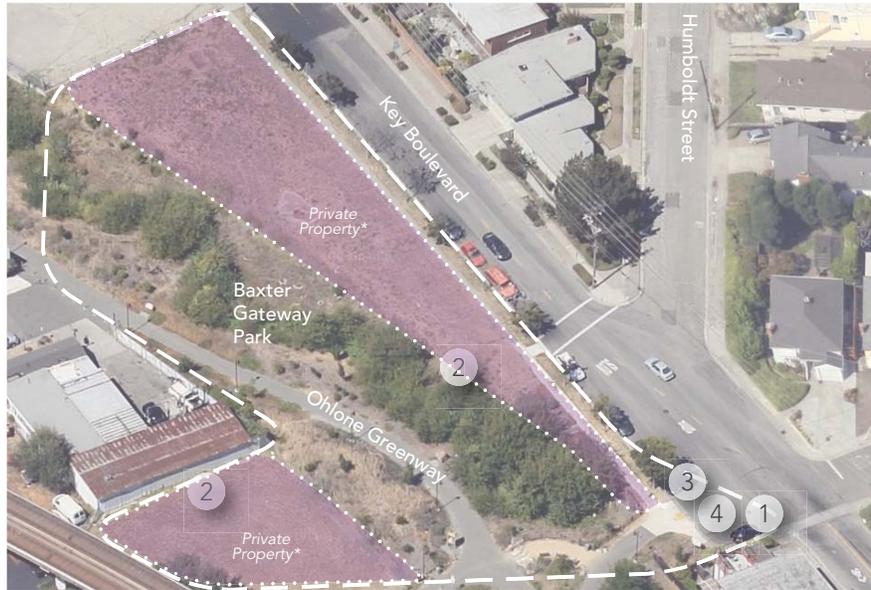


Figure 83. Conlon Ave and Key Boulevard area*

* Private Property highlighted in purple; 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.

**Greening opportunities may be considered in aggregate or as separate projects pending site and funding availability. Traffic calming measures at Conlon and Key, as proposed in the Active Transportation Plan (in development 2015), should be considered along with urban greening improvements.

Project Stormwater Benefits

Stormwater benefits were not studied for this project.



Figure 84. Street Play at the intersection of Key and Conlon highlights the excess ROW and landscaping opportunities

Urban Greening Opportunities

1. **Pocket Park:** Repurpose the excess street right-of-way to create a pocket park with furnishings and space for social gathering and to improve connectivity as a gateway to the Ohlone Greenway.
2. **Neighborhood Park:** Consider opportunities, including acquisition of adjacent parcels or private-public partnerships, to develop active play spaces and other recreational amenities.
3. **Pollinator Pathway:** Establish a pollinator pathway up Conlon Avenue between the Ohlone Greenway and Canyon Trail Park.
4. **Creeks:** Highlight the creek that runs under Conlon Avenue through landscaping, special paving, and/or signage.

Urban Greening Objectives Targeted

- Improved Trails and Paths
- Strengthened Ohlone Greenway
- Enhanced Creeks
- Resilient Higher Density Neighborhoods
- Green Streets

FOCUS AREA 10: CUTTING AND SAN PABLO AVENUE

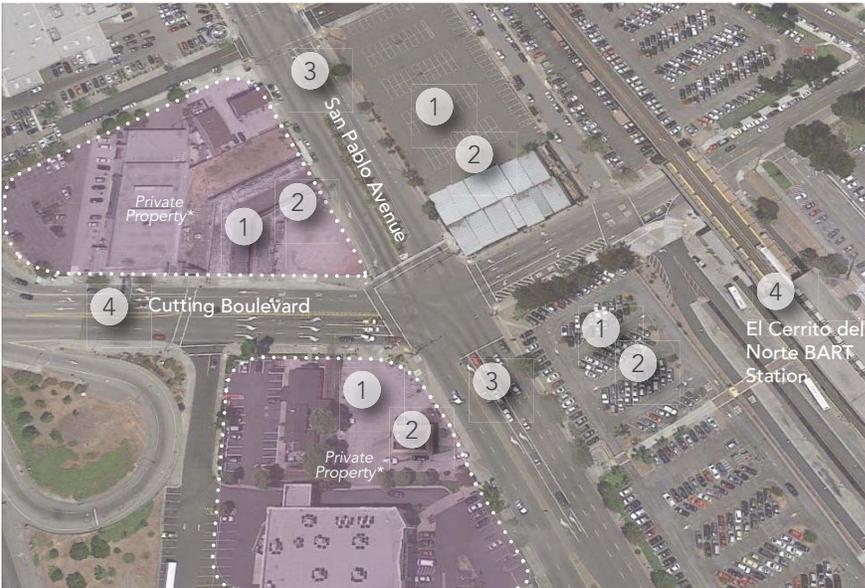


Figure 85. Cutting and San Pablo Avenue

* Private Properties highlighted in purple. Any opportunities on a private parcel will be dependent on property owner's interest and consent and a final decision by City Council to authorize a specific project.

Urban Greening Opportunities

1. **Pocket Parks:** Create increased activity and open space along San Pablo Avenue and near the BART station to encourage social gathering and economic development by integrating open space as a part of new development. Encourage private development to strategically site public open space requirements along San Pablo Avenue to activate the street.
2. **Temporary Pop-up Parks:** Encourage short-term activities such as community events, food vendors, and seasonal commercial uses to activate vacant properties and parking lots until a permanent pocket park can be planned and constructed.
3. **Green Infrastructure:** Repurpose small portions of the street right-of-way on San Pablo Avenue for runoff and water quality management. Focus on areas adjacent to existing inlets to minimize area of disturbance and costs.
4. **Green Gateway:** Create a gateway experience along Cutting Boulevard and at the El Cerrito del Norte BART Station, using large trees and other strategic landscaping enhancements to create a gateway.

Project Stormwater Benefits

Stormwater benefits were not studied for this project.

Urban Greening Objectives Targeted

- Greener Gateways
- Resilient Higher-Density Neighborhoods
- Green Streets



Figure 86. Wide ROW and underutilized properties provide several opportunities for Urban Greening

FOCUS AREA 11: AVILA STREET AND SAN PABLO AVENUE



Figure 87. Avila St and San Pablo Avenue

* Private Property highlighted in purple; 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.

Project Stormwater Benefits

Stormwater benefits were not studied for this project.



Figure 88. Avila Street dead ends in a cul-de-sac with pedestrian access to San Pablo Avenue.

Urban Greening Opportunities

1. **Pocket Park:** In partnership with private development, repurpose the cul-de-sac to create a pocket park with furnishings and space for social gathering.
2. **Connectivity:** Enhance mid-block pedestrian and bicycle connection to San Pablo Avenue.
3. **Activity Node:** Provide additional landscaping and install seating and tables to encourage activity along San Pablo Avenue.

Urban Greening Objectives Targeted

- Improved Trails and Paths
- Active Commercial Corridors
- Resilient Higher Density Neighborhoods
- Green Streets

FOCUS AREA 12: FORMER PORTOLA MIDDLE SCHOOL SITE



Figure 89. Former Portola Middle School site (WCCUSD)

Urban Greening Opportunities

The Former Portola Middle School site is owned by the West Contra Costa Unified School District (WCCUSD). The site has been identified as an important opportunity to the El Cerrito community, given its size, proximity to the El Cerrito Community Center, Cerrito Vista Park, Hillside Natural Area and Recycling + Environmental Resource Center. The site’s topography includes sections of both flat and steep terrain and provides views of the entire San Francisco Bay. The City and WCCUSD are in conversation about the future of the site, which could include new community facilities, recreational facilities and urban greening opportunities.

Project Stormwater Benefits

Stormwater benefits were not studied for this project.

FOCUS AREA 13: ASHBURY AVENUE - BRIGHTON TO LYNN

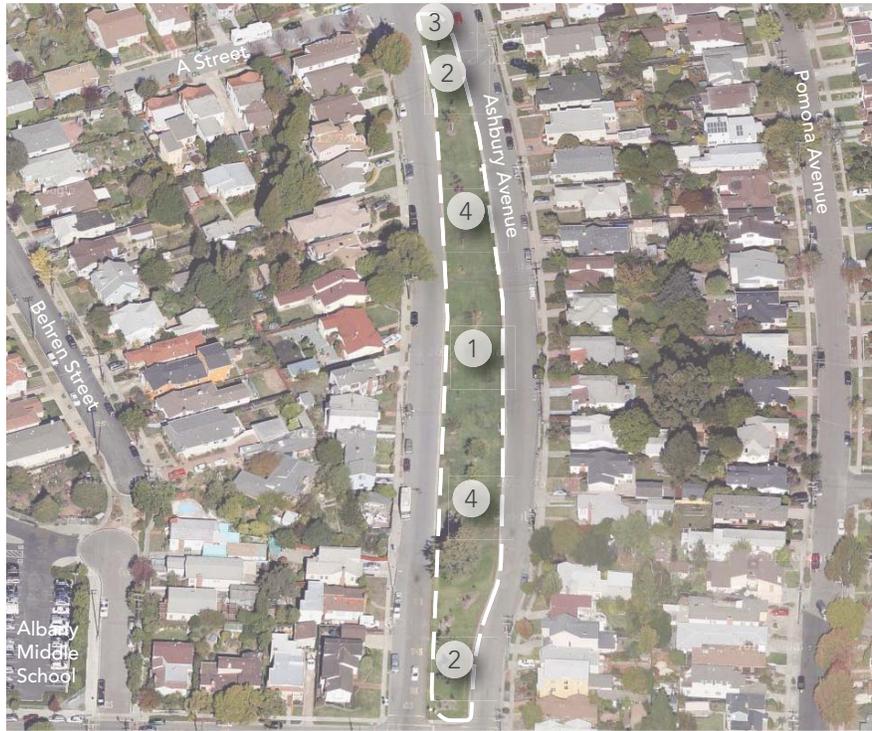


Figure 90. Ashbury Avenue

Project Stormwater Benefits
 Annual Runoff Treated (gal/yr): 117,774
 Pollutants Removed (lb/yr):
 TSS: 77.3
 TP: 0.07
 TKN: 0.68
 Zinc: 0.1
 Nitrate + Nitrite: 0.11
 Lead: 0.05
 Copper: 0.02

Project treatment levels analyzed by Sherwood Engineers. For additional information, see Appendix F

Urban Greening Opportunities

1. **Edible Orchard:** Create an edible orchard within the existing large median to attract public use of the street right-of-way and provide an urban agriculture opportunity. *(Will require a strong community organization to steward the orchard).*
2. **Biofiltration Gardens:** Repurpose a small portion of the grassed median for runoff and water quality management. Focus areas adjacent to existing inlets to minimize area of disturbance and costs.
3. **Pollinator Pathway:** Establish a pollinator pathway through appropriate landscaping within the median and along Ashbury Avenue.
4. **Social Gathering:** Create areas for seating and social gathering. Also encourage use of median and street right-of-way for community events.
5. **Reduce Water Usage:** Replace turf with low water usage landscaping



Figure 91. Volunteers plant trees on the wide Ashbury Avenue median on Earth Day

Urban Greening Objectives Targeted

- Greener Gateways
- Enriched Natural Areas
- Urban Agriculture

FOCUS AREA 14: LOWER FAIRMOUNT AVENUE

The goal of the Lower Fairmount Avenue project is to re-envision and reinvigorate street right-of-way space within El Cerrito.

The Lower Fairmount Avenue project was identified as a unique opportunity to pilot place-making and green street interventions in El Cerrito and was advanced as one of the final four “Pilot Projects”. A conceptual design for this project was developed, as detailed in 5.02 *Pilot Projects*.



Figure 92. Lower Fairmount Avenue



Figure 93. The Off the Grid food truck market currently utilizes lower Fairmount Avenue every Wednesday night

5.02 PILOT PROJECTS

The Hillside Natural Area, Blue-to-Green Connections, Fairmont Park and Lower Fairmount Avenue projects were all selected for additional opportunity analysis and conceptual design based on their near-term ability to address multiple urban greening objectives and achieve community priorities. The project descriptions and identified improvements are based on extensive community engagement and serve to identify existing opportunities within each site. Conceptual design of these projects prepares them for grant application and outside funding sources to perform additional design and community engagement prior to construction.

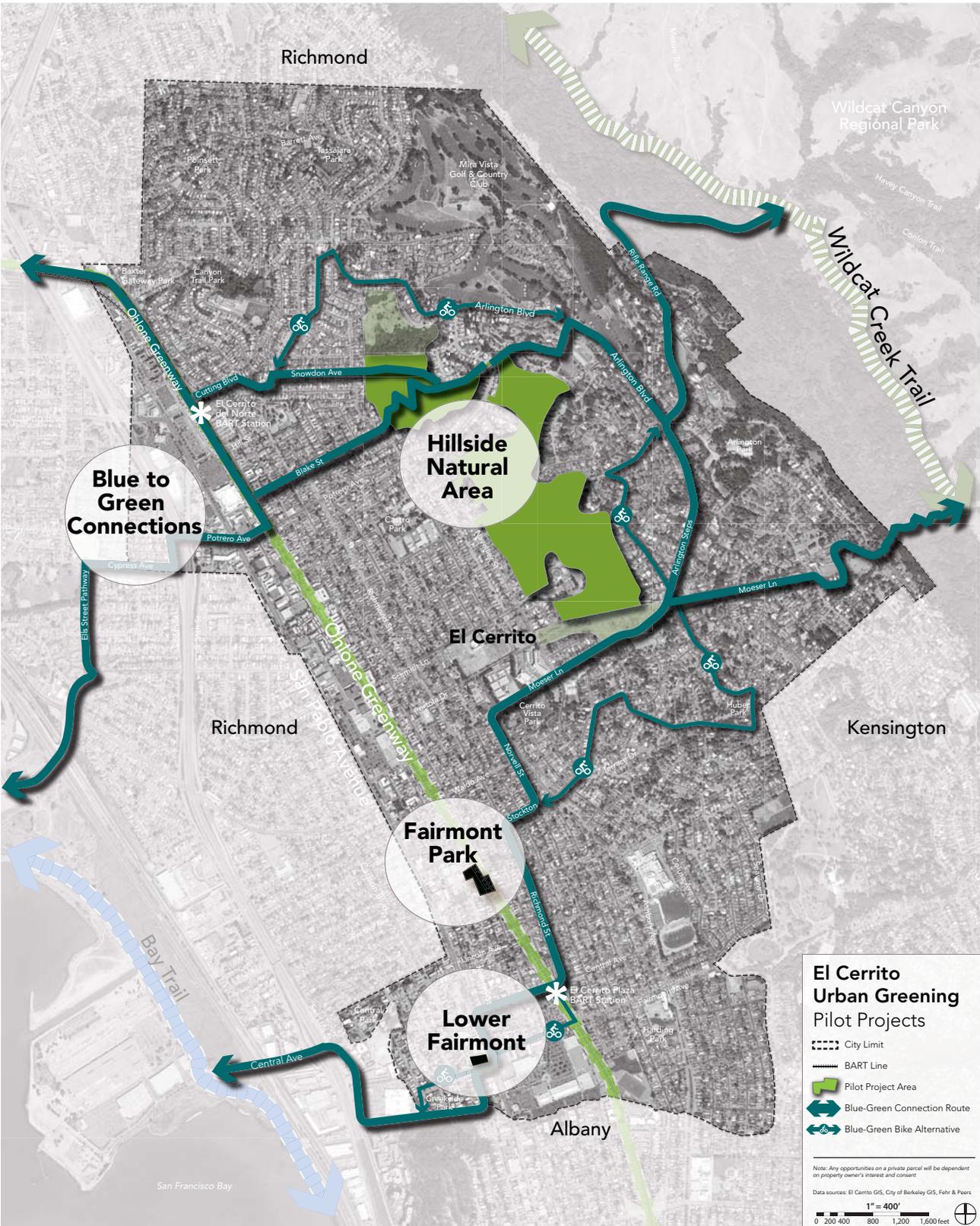
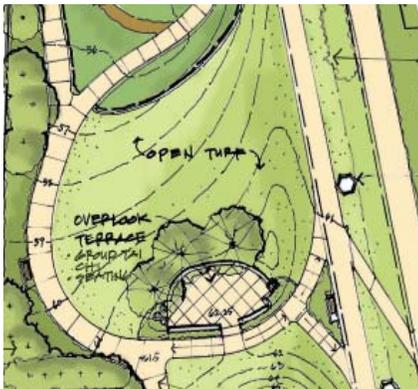


Figure 94. Pilot Projects

FOCUS AREA PLAN

Fairmont Park



Urban Greening Objectives Targeted

- Improved Trails and Paths
- Strengthened Ohlone Greenway
- Enhanced Existing Parks
- Vibrant Schoolyards
- Urban Agriculture

Overview

Fairmont Park is a 78,000 square foot park along the Ohlone Greenway at Eureka Avenue and Liberty Street, bordering the Senior Center, Fairmont Elementary School and a predominantly residential neighborhood near San Pablo Avenue and the Stockton Avenue/San Pablo Avenue commercial areas. The park is home to a “pop-up” community garden project constructed during Earth Day 2013 that is maintained by the El Cerrito Community Garden Network, and serves as an informal gathering space and dog park for residents of the surrounding medium-density neighborhoods and Ohlone Greenway users. A group of Tai Chi practitioners meets in the park daily and local community groups maintain habitat along the recessed areas at the base of the retaining wall on the east side of the Ohlone Greenway. The park’s existing design and furniture were a 1965 project by the landscape architecture firm Royston, Hanamoto, Mayes & Beck and include elements that have been identified as important to the community, including a stone statue of a turtle near the playground and steps and field-stone walls classic of the firm’s design. Fairmont Park sees fairly significant foot and bicycle traffic, despite its aging infrastructure, due to its proximity to the Ohlone Greenway, Stockton Avenue and community facilities and accessibility to surrounding neighborhoods.

There is a unique opportunity to upgrade Fairmont Park with new, more accessible paths, improved playground and gathering spaces and a formalized community garden. The project could provide the community facilities and environmental services needed to create a greener, safer neighborhood park within walking distance of San Pablo Avenue, the El Cerrito Plaza BART Station and denser residential neighborhoods.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Fairmont Park is located along the Ohlone Greenway at Eureka Street. Today its facilities include outdated playground equipment, worn benches and seating, and a “pop-up” community garden, as well as unprogrammed and largely unimproved green space.

OPPORTUNITIES

- **Urban Agriculture:** Build on Earth Day pilot project to make community gardens permanent.
- **Urban Wilderness Classroom:** Connect to Fairmont Elementary School to bring nature closer to students.
- **Improved Play Structures and Gathering Spaces:** Enhance the existing park and attract multi-generational use.
- **Connections to Greenway:** Improve access from Eureka Street stubs, and create a defined entry from Liberty Street to the Greenway and Park (per *Ohlone Greenway Master Plan*).
- **Wildlife Habitat:** Protect wildlife habitat and connect to wilderness classroom activities (per *Ohlone Greenway Master Plan*).
- **Potential Connection:** Study a future connection to Lexington Avenue.

CATALOG OF PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS

- **Community Garden:** Formalized community garden at north end of park, bordering schoolyard.
- **New Path Network:** New fully-accessible pathways throughout the park, with emergency access.
- **Entry Plaza:** New welcome kiosk, seating, signage, and group exercise area.
- **Children’s Play Area:** New nature-based play areas and play structures with seating, picnic tables, and drinking fountain.
- **Overlook Terrace:** Quiet meditation or group exercise area with seating and views over the lawn.
- **Community Art Mural:** A new art mural to enliven the retaining wall bordering the Ohlone Greenway.

NEXT STEPS

1. Identify potential design and construction funding
2. Final design of complete site
3. Construction, could take place in phases



Figure 95. Fairmont Park Key Map



Figure 96. Fairmont Park site

COST ESTIMATE

- **Final Design:** up to \$75,000
- **Renovation:** up to \$630,000, including design

For more detailed information on project cost estimates see Appendix E.

EXISTING SITE



Figure 97. Bare space, used as a dog run and active recreation space



Figure 98. Community garden

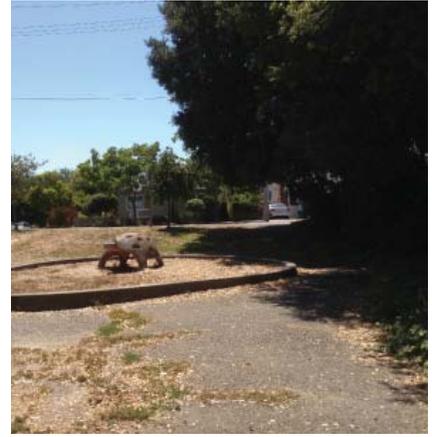


Figure 99. Play equipment, including historic stone turtle

EMERGING OPPORTUNITIES



Figure 100. Community garden



Figure 101. Outdoor education



Figure 102. Improved play area and Tot Lot



Figure 103. Connections to park



Figure 104. Connections to Greenway



Figure 105. Wildlife habitat



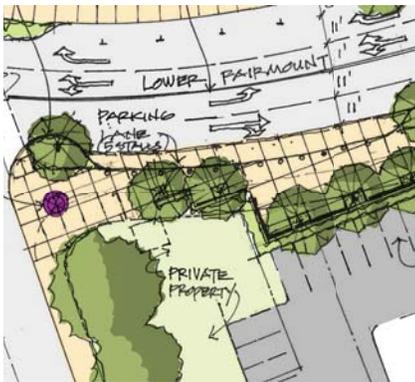
Fairmont Park: Concept Plan

January 2015

Figure 106. Fairmont Park Concept Plan

FOCUS AREA PLAN

Lower Fairmount Avenue



Urban Greening Objectives Targeted

- Improved Trails and Paths
- Greener Gateways
- Enhanced Existing Parks
- Active Commercial Corridors
- Resilient Higher Density Neighborhoods
- Green Streets

Overview

The Lower Fairmount Avenue site is a 18,000 square foot street stub between San Pablo Avenue and Carlson Boulevard in El Cerrito's downtown. It represents an opportunity to add a civic space and provide a distinct identity to downtown El Cerrito, supporting the commercial and higher-density residential neighborhoods. Despite its sufficient right-of-way and downtown location, the street segment currently offers few pedestrian amenities with narrow sidewalks, no street furniture and minimal landscaping. The street is currently closed one night a week for the Off-the-Grid food truck market.

Two project design alternatives were presented to the community. One alternative, shown here, reallocates the wide central median and travel lanes to create a downtown plaza on the south side of the street. Site design could include street trees and improved landscaping, pedestrian amenities, and opportunities to highlight historic resources and incorporate public art. This design alternative would provide opportunities for smaller events on an ongoing basis and would continue to require street closure for larger events, like Off-the-Grid.

An alternative design would including vacating the street and creation of a larger plaza. This would require permanent rerouting of the north-bound left turn lane and would reduce the need for ongoing Caltrans permits. This alternative could be constructed as a second phase to the first design alternative or could be pursued from the onset. A complete street closure should consider maintained bicycle access and connectivity through the site.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Lower Fairmount Avenue is the stub end of Fairmount Avenue between San Pablo Avenue and Carlson Boulevard. Today it primarily serves as an additional connector route for vehicles, and does little to improve or add open public space to the district.

OPPORTUNITIES

- **Pocket Parks:** Explore opportunity to reallocate street space or vacate street and convert to downtown plaza/park space for social gathering, pop-up uses, and play.
- **Connectivity:** Enhance pedestrian and bicycle connections to San Pablo Avenue by providing additional facilities and on-street amenities that encourage strolling and community gathering.
- **Activity Node:** Plant shade trees and install seating and tables to encourage active use along San Pablo Avenue.
- **re:Streets:** Consider opportunities for green infrastructure, and events and programs, and use wayfinding and signage for distinctive image and identity.

CATALOG OF PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS

- **Safer Street and Crossings:** Narrowed and enhanced pedestrian crosswalks will calm the street and improve safety for all users
- **Bicycle Connectivity:** New bicycle facilities will improve safety and comfort for bicyclists on a key connecting route. Consider bicycle improvements consistent with the *Active Transportation Plan* (2015).
- **Public Space:** New shade trees and seatwall with history wall will anchor expanded public space on south side of street, which can accommodate pop-up uses and public events, such as Off the Grid.
- **Public Art:** A new kiosk for wayfinding, new public art and signage will create a distinctive image and identity.
- **Street Trees:** Asphalt and concrete will be replaced with new street trees and plantings to green the area.
- **Stormwater Management:** Permeable paving in the paving lane could help manage stormwater on site.

NEXT STEPS

1. Engage residents and businesses to understand needs, opportunities and desires, including tolerance for the full plaza
2. Identify design and construction funding
3. Final design, including traffic analysis of full street closure
4. Construction

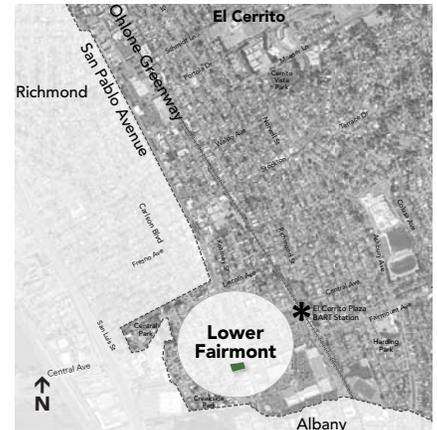


Figure 107. Lower Fairmount Avenue Key Map



Figure 108. Lower Fairmount Avenue site

COST ESTIMATE

Alternative 1:

- **Final Design:** up to \$75,000
- **Construction:** up to \$465,000, including design

Alternative 2:

- **Final Design:** up to \$99,000
- **Construction:** up to \$670,000, including design

For more detailed information on project cost estimates see Appendix E.

Note: Final design would be determined through a complete public engagement, design, engineering process, and environmental analysis.

EXISTING SITE



Figure 109. Wide pedestrian crossings



Figure 110. Wide right of way



Figure 111. Temporal events and community gathering

EMERGING OPPORTUNITIES



Figure 112. Enhanced Pedestrian Activity



Figure 113. Enhanced Bike Connectivity



Figure 114. Parklets



Figure 115. re:Streets: Temporal plazas and public spaces



Figure 116. re:Streets: Gathering spaces

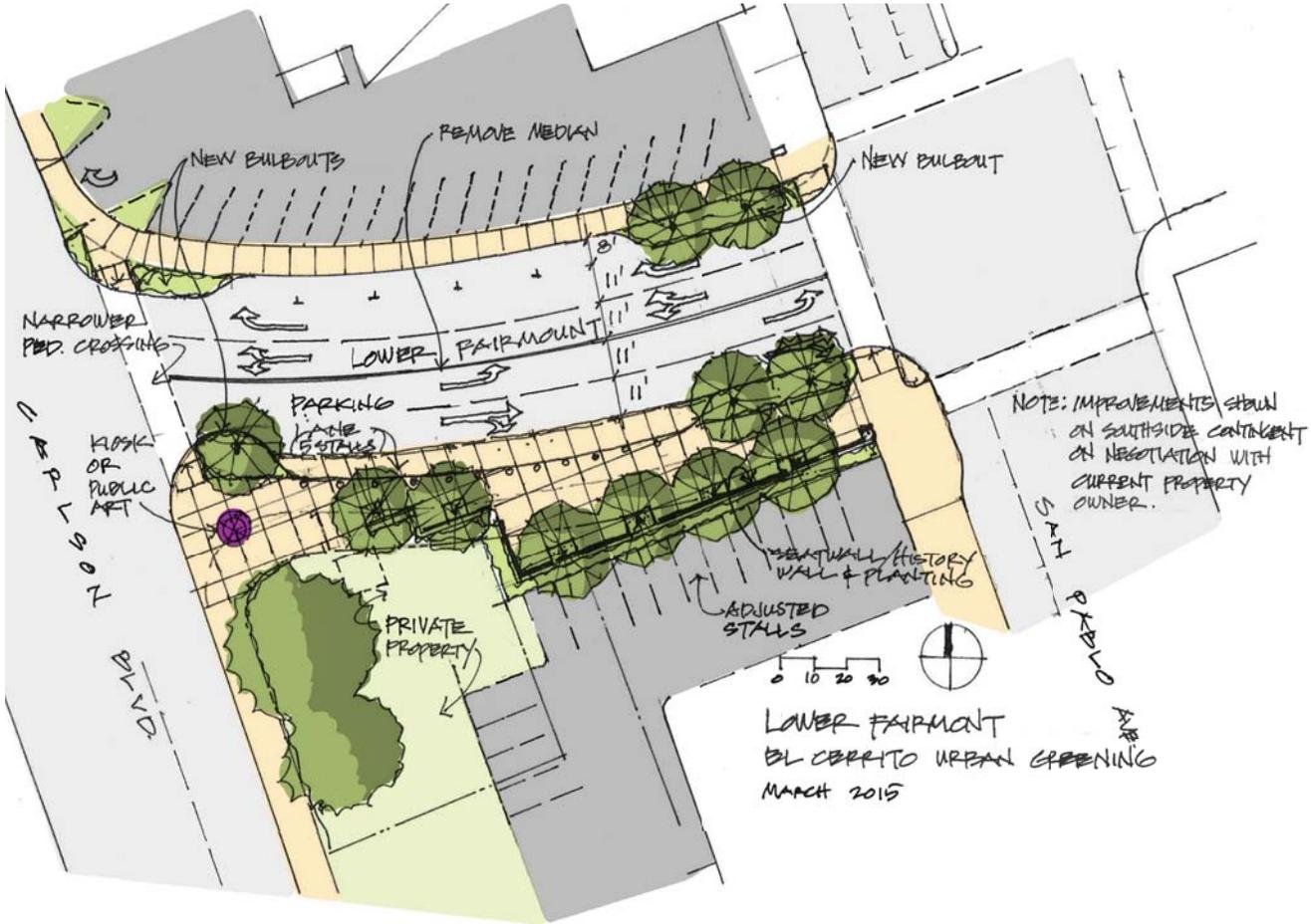


Figure 117. Lower Fairmount Avenue Concept Plan

POTENTIAL LONG-TERM IMPROVEMENTS

- **Additional Trees and Greening:** Engage neighboring businesses to consider replacing north-side on-street parking with street trees to increase greening and improve the pedestrian experience with wider sidewalk.
- **Alternative 2:** Study impacts of street vacation to dedicate full right-of-way to public open space.
- **Integration:** Work with business district to orient new buildings toward the plaza, including pedestrian access and additional open space where appropriate.
- **Additional Space:** Work with owner of green space on southwestern corner to integrate additional open space into the project. Adding this space through a public-private partnership would allow for a larger plaza footprint, enhanced greening and additional street trees.

FOCUS AREA PLAN

Hillside Natural Area



Urban Greening Objectives Targeted

Improved Trails and Paths

Enhanced Existing Parks

Enriched Natural Areas

Enhanced Creeks

Vibrant Schoolyards

Urban Agriculture

Overview

The Hillside Natural Area is 102.5 acres of open space in the El Cerrito hills, surrounded by built-out, predominantly single-family, residential neighborhoods. Home to small creeks, grasslands and forests, the Natural Area provides habitat for native vegetation and wildlife that is rare in urban environments. In addition, it provides a very large active recreation space for hikers, bikers, and dog walkers who have easy access through several neighborhood entry points and enjoy the quiet oak groves, open fields, and expansive views of the San Francisco Bay. As such, it not only presents myriad benefits but also many potentially conflicting needs, such as safe trail use, natural habitat and native vegetation preservation, ecological function and fire and community safety, all of which need to be resolved through a master planning process.

While extensive, the existing trail network includes opportunities for trail improvements, new trail connections, and the design of a multiuse trail system to better meet needs while connecting to natural habitats, outdoor educational opportunities and community gathering spaces. Trail Trekkers, Friends of Five Creeks, the El Cerrito High School Mountain Bike Team and other active community groups and volunteers help inventory, build and maintain the trails, paths and habitat areas with maintenance projects, invasive species pulls and creek cleanups. The El Cerrito Fire Department conducts regular controlled burns and vegetation management to reduce fire risks, particularly in areas with significant, identified fuel loads. To facilitate strategic coordination of these disparate efforts, a Master Plan would enable the community to highlight its priorities while providing the additional vegetation, watershed and fire risk analyses to define projects going forward.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Hillside Natural Area is largely unprogrammed open space with views of the San Francisco Bay, extensive woodlands, grasslands, creeks, trees, native and non-native vegetation, and unmarked trails. The site presents maintenance, fire abatement, and vegetation management needs, which increased with purchase of the 8 acre Madera Property.

OPPORTUNITIES

- **Connectivity:** Improve trail connections between natural areas, schools and other community assets using best practice trail building techniques.
- **Park Expansion Integration:** Integrate the recently-purchased Madera property and investigate opportunities to acquire privately-owned, in-holdings. Explore opportunities for access, recreation and/or conservation easements on adjacent properties.
- **Natural Amenities:** Celebrate and preserve creek corridors, diverse plant and animal communities, forests, and grasslands.
- **Green Gateways/Trailheads:** Create more welcoming park gateways and trailheads. Develop a master signage plan.
- **Active Recreation:** Enhance opportunities for active recreation by constructing bicycle trails, parks and other amenities.

CATALOG OF IMPROVEMENTS

- **Trail Network:** Formalize some of the existing unimproved trails and close gaps to create a coherent and connected multiuse trail system. Implement pedestrian crossing improvements and safety and streetscape enhancements at key street connections. Consider opportunities for accessible trails.
- **Nature Trail:** Create a special, pedestrian-only nature trail that highlights the diverse wildlife and native plant communities, creek corridors and other amenities through interpretive signage and education.
- **Preserve and Enhance Creeks:** Assess and improve the existing open creeks to assure they are healthy in their run through the natural area.
- **New Trailheads:** Create major and minor gateways at key entrances and trailhead locations, with signage and park information.
- **Vegetation Management:** Manage vegetation to decrease fire hazard while also protecting the area's native-plant and wildlife communities. Encourage spread of diverse native vegetation by limiting harmful invasives, setting appropriate mowing heights and timing, and planting if needed.
- **Maintenance:** Maintain the existing fire-road trails and reduce fire hazards as defined in the Fire Hazard Reduction Plan (1994).
- **Recreation:** Support community-led efforts to create active recreation areas, such as bicycle trails, bike parks and other amenities.



Figure 118. Hillside Natural Area Map*

*Properties shown in light green are private. Any opportunities on a private parcel will be dependent on property owner's interest and consent and final decision by City Council.



Figure 119. Hillside Natural Area Aerial

NEXT STEPS

1. Master Plan, including trail maintenance and design guidelines, a vegetation management plan, and multi-use trail analysis and designation
2. Construction of discreet trail projects

COST ESTIMATE

- **Master Plan:** up to \$300,000
- **Improvement Buildout:** up to \$1,750,000 for full project, including design. Implementation could be incremental.

For more detailed information on project cost estimates see Appendix E.

EXISTING SITE

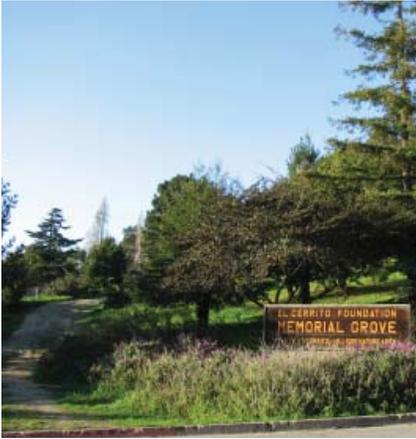


Figure 120. Distinctive spaces and natural area access

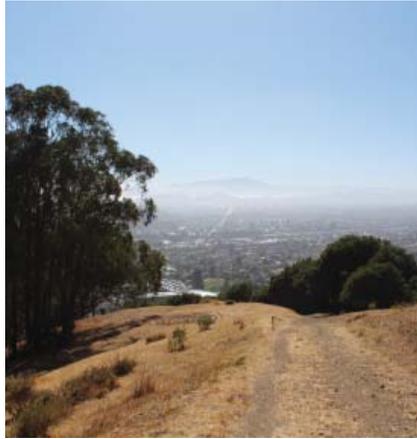


Figure 121. Views



Figure 122. Quiet Groves

EMERGING OPPORTUNITIES

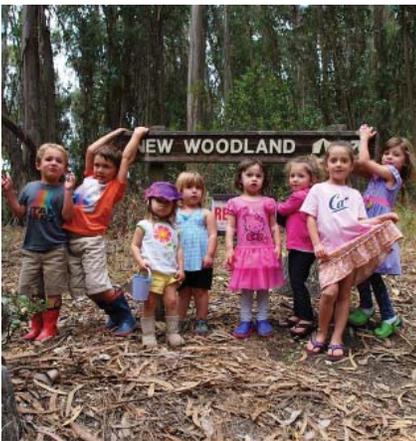


Figure 123. Wilderness Education



Figure 124. Nature walks and speakers



Figure 125. Enhanced Creeks



Figure 126. Bike park and recreation



Figure 127. Native habitat



Figure 128. Running, hiking and recreation

Figure 129. Hillside Natural Area Concept Plan



*The creeks shown on this map were drawn from the City's GIS and may not represent all natural bodies of water within the project area.

POTENTIAL LONG-TERM IMPROVEMENTS

- **Full Master Plan:** Engage stakeholders and residents in community planning process to create full master plan for all Hillside Natural Area and Madera Property lands.
- **PG&E Property Integration:** Work with PG&E to include adjacent open space owned by PG & E in the master planning process for Hillside Natural Area.
- **New Education and Community Programs:** Study new programming such as summer camps and other community-based programs. Explore opportunities to use these programs to help fund Natural Area improvements and maintenance.

FOCUS AREA PLAN

Blue to Green Connections



Urban Greening Objectives Targeted

Improved Trails and Paths

Greener Gateways

Active Commercial Corridors

Green Streets

Overview

This city-wide, long-term project would address barriers to connect key open spaces on the edges of El Cerrito - the "blue" San Francisco Bay and Bay Trail to the west, and the "green" Wildcat Canyon and its trails to the east - with a well-defined and designed network of green corridors. These routes would help highlight and connect signature open spaces from the Bay to the hills with key community open spaces and destinations, including the Ohlone Greenway. The project prioritizes active transportation and recreation along its corridors, resulting in a network of safe green streets, improved multi-use trails, enhanced neighborhood staircases, and on- and off-street bike routes. Currently the I-80 Freeway, high traffic volumes and poor pedestrian conditions on Central, minimal wayfinding and signage citywide, trail and sidewalk gaps, and limited Wildcat Canyon trail connections restrict community access to these regional amenities. The catalog of project improvements are intended to identify and address these barriers, while providing strategies and interventions that create a defined and recognizable identity that draws people in and helps them find where to go.

The Blue to Green Connections project is envisioned as a long-term project to be developed and built-out over the next 20 years. It will require a range of investment. The routes follow four predominant corridor types: on-street routes, multi-use path corridors, pedestrian trails, and staircases; bicycle alternatives are provided where bicycle travel is difficult or not allowed on the primary route. A subsequent design process to finalize routes and key project components, such as signage, landscaping and pavement conditions, will be required. Prototypical projects are detailed on the following pages.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Connecting trails like the Bay Trail, Wildcat Canyon Trail, and the Ohlone Greenway, El Cerrito's Blue to Green Connections will develop green and safe active transportation corridors that will inspire and educate generations to come. The project celebrates El Cerrito's unique proximity to the Bay and the hills by formalizing critical arteries that connect and enliven streets, sidewalks and public spaces throughout the city.

OPPORTUNITIES

- **Connectivity:** Improve pedestrian and bicycle connectivity between natural assets. Enhance access to major trailheads.
- **Wayfinding and Signage:** Develop distinct signage and pavement markers to distinctly identify the routes.
- **Street Trees:** Implement a consistent yet diverse palette of street trees and other coordinated landscaping.

CATALOG OF IMPROVEMENTS

- **Traffic Calming and Sidewalk Improvements:** Calm and improve all on-street routes to make them safe for all ages.
- **Multiuse Trails:** Enhance multiuse trails and add wayfinding, signage, and artistic elements to clearly identify them as key connections.
- **Upgrade Staircase Routes:** Assess and improve existing staircases to ensure they are identifiable, interesting and safe to travel.
- **New Trailheads** Create defined gateways at key entrances and trailheads, with signage, route information, and other amenities.
- **Alternative Bike Routes:** Implement alternative bike routes where needed, consistent with the *Active Transportation Plan (2015)*.
- **Green Infrastructure:** Use low-maintenance plantings, furnishings and materials and integrate green infrastructure to lower resource use.
- **Recreation and Public Spaces:** Support community-led efforts to create active recreation areas and public spaces along the routes.

NEXT STEPS

1. Finalize preferred routes
2. Implement signage, landscaping and pavement condition plans
3. Identify and construct discreet on-street, trail and stair projects

COST ESTIMATE

The estimated cost for improvement build out on all routes is up to \$6,000,000. Implementation would be incremental and could be coordinated with other street improvements.

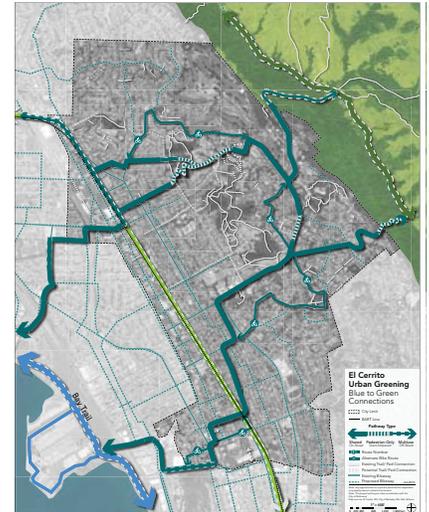


Figure 130. Blue to Green Connections Key Map



Figure 131. Improve pedestrian and bicycle connectivity to the San Francisco Bay



Figure 132. Improve pedestrian and bicycle connectivity to the El Cerrito hills

For more detailed information on project cost estimates see Appendix E.

EXISTING CONDITIONS



Figure 133. Potrero Avenue looking east: wide streets, and minimal pedestrian amenities



Figure 134. Moeser Lane looking northeast: steep topography, wide medians, and significant vegetation



Figure 135. Central Avenue looking west toward the I-80 Freeway: limited pedestrian infrastructure and heavy traffic are barriers to Bay Trail access



Figure 136. Central Avenue & Rydin Road (Richmond) entrance to the Bay Trail



Figure 137. Rifle Range Road entrance to Wildcat Canyon

EMERGING OPPORTUNITIES



Figure 138. Integrated interpretive signage and green landscaping



Figure 139. Staircase upgrades and place-making opportunities



Figure 140. Distinctive wayfinding signage

ON-STREET ROUTE INSPIRATION



Figure 141. Wayfinding and interpretive signage



Figure 142. Distinctive pavement markings (Seattle Lake to Bay Loop)



Figure 143. Green street design

MULTIUSE TRAIL INSPIRATION



Figure 144. Bay Trail wayfinding



Figure 145. Design, branding, and connectivity through public art, multi-use plazas and pavement markings (Indianapolis Cultural Trail)

TRAIL AND STAIRCASE INSPIRATION



Figure 146. Stairs as community spaces with art and other amenities



Figure 147. Trail wayfinding



Figure 148. Environmentally sensitive landscaping (Seattle Pollinator Pathway)

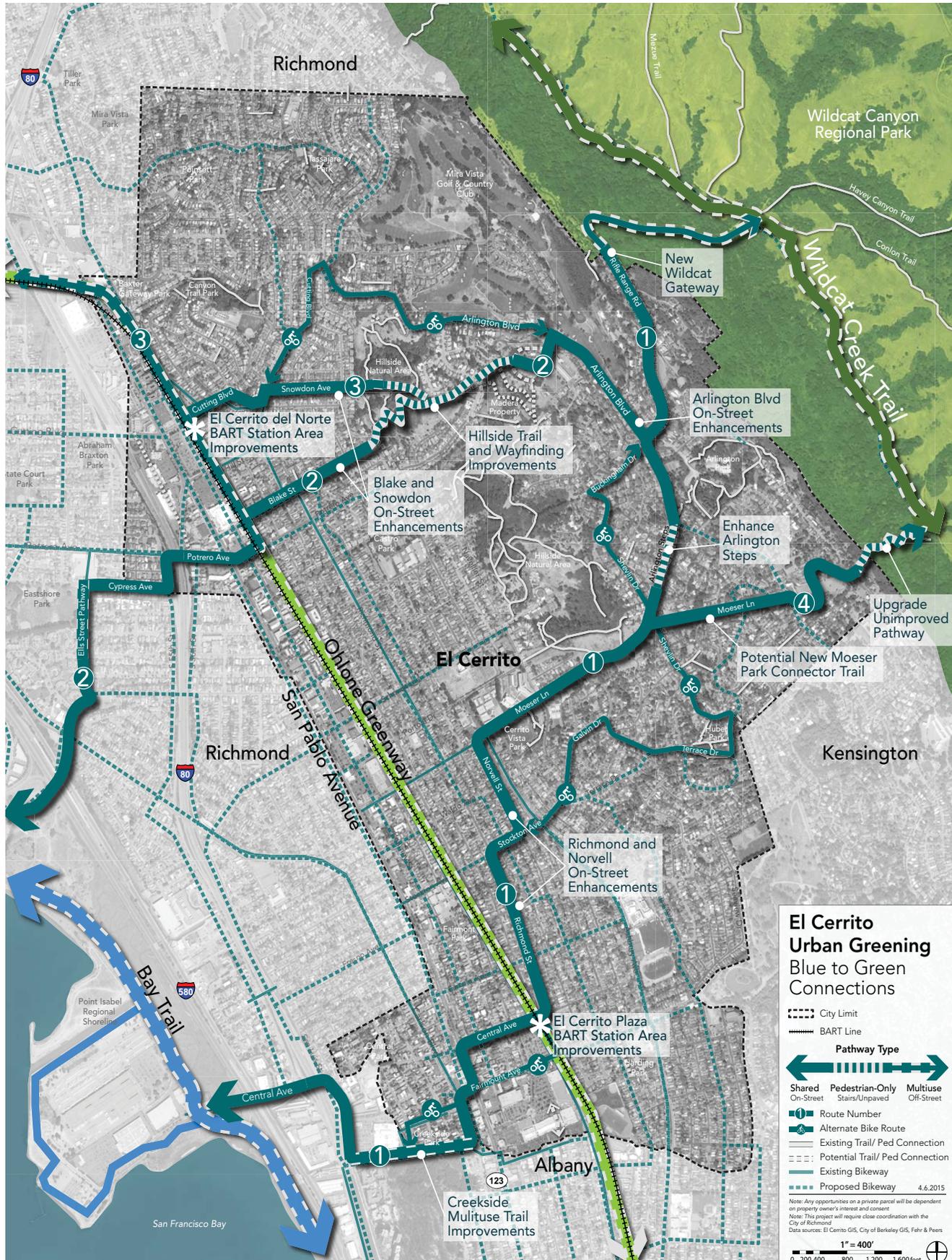


Figure 149. Blue to Green Connections Route Design Concept

5.03 FUNDING

Federal, State, regional, County and local agencies provide funding for active transportation, urban greening, parks and place-making projects. The successful implementation of this Urban Greening Plan will depend on leveraging external funding sources to support projects and programs funded by the City.

INTERNAL FUNDING SOURCES

The following special funds were established to dedicate funds associated with new development to the construction of park improvements and public art projects. Money raised through these funds may be allocated to projects and programs identified in this Plan.

Park In-Lieu Fund

This Fund accounts for money received through negotiations with developers to be used for park improvements; historically this fund has been small, but with passage of the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan, it is anticipated that fund revenues will grow.

Art in Public Places Fund

This Fund was established to account for the public art in-lieu contributions and any and all other revenues appropriated or received for public art and/or public arts and cultural programs, including donations from the public. Urban Greening Projects have identified a need for more public art and could construct new projects with money from this fund, pursuant to the Arts in Public Places Program.

EXTERNAL FUNDING SOURCES

A number of grant programs allocate funds to park, open space, trail, path and sidewalk projects that accomplish the goals outlined in this Plan. In addition, El Cerrito community members have supported regional bond measures for parks improvements and public projects.

Active Transportation Program

In 2013, the California Legislature created the Active Transportation Program by consolidating the federal Transportation Alternative Program, State Bicycle Transportation Account, and federal and state Safe Routes to School programs into a single program to encourage use of active transportation. The Program is intended to increase the proportion of biking and walking trips, increased safety and mobility for non-motorized users, help advance greenhouse gas reduction goals, improve public health and provide a broad spectrum of projects that benefit active recreation users.

Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation (EEM) Program

The California Natural Resources Agency administers the EEM Program which allocates \$7 million each fiscal year to state, local, federal and nonprofit organizations. Eligible projects must be directly or indirectly related to the environmental impact of the modification of an existing transportation facility or construction of a new transportation facility. Grants are awarded in to projects in three categories: 1) Urban Forestry, 2) Resource Lands Projects, and 3) Mitigation Projects Beyond the Scope of the Lead Agency.

Fish and Wildlife Propagation Fund

The Contra Costa County Fish and Wildlife Committee administers the Fish and Wildlife Propagation Fund Grant through fine revenues resulting from violation of the Contra Costa County Fish and Game Code. The Fund allocations money to projects that benefit the fish and wildlife resources of Contra Costa County by improving habitat and performing scientific research. The program sometimes funds public education projects related to fish and wildlife conservation.

Habitat Conservation Fund Program

The State of California Office of Grants and Local Services (OGALS) administers the state-funded Habitat Conservation Fund grant program which allocates approximately \$2 million each year to cities, counties, and districts. This program requires a 50% match from grantees. Eligible projects: nature interpretation programs to bring urban residents into park and wildlife areas, protection of various plant and animal species, and acquisition and development of wildlife corridors and trails.

Land and Water Conservation Fund Program

OGALS administers California's appropriation of Land and Water Conservation funds for park acquisition and development projects up to \$2 million. Projects must meet state-identified funding priorities that support access to recreation and conservation of natural resources.

Measure WW

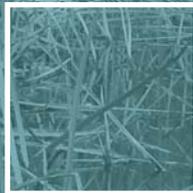
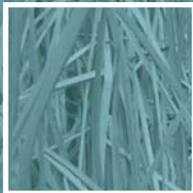
An Alameda and Contra Costa County park bond measure to make funding available directly to cities and special park districts for high priority community park projects, such as urban creek restoration, wildlife protection and land acquisition. El Cerrito is eligible for a percentage of Measure WW funds, which could fund Urban Greening acquisition and construction projects.

River Parkways Program

The California Natural Resources Agency administers the California River Parkways Grant Program to fund projects which reduce greenhouse gas emissions, increase water use efficiency, reduce risks from climate change impacts and demonstrate collaboration with local, state and community entities. Projects must involve natural creeks, streams and/or rivers, or channelized or culverted creeks, streams and/or rivers and must meet at least two of five conditions: 1) Recreation, 2) Habitat, 3) Flood Management, 4) Conversion to River Parkways, or 5) Conservation and Interpretive Enhancement.

Urban and Community Forestry Program Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund Grants

The Department of Forestry and Fire Protection administers Urban and Community Forestry Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund Grants in five major categories: 1) "Green Trees for the Golden State" for urban tree planting projects; 2) Urban Forest Management for GHG Reduction for planning and inventorying; 3) Urban Wood and Biomass Utilization; 4) "Woods in the Neighborhood" reclamation projects; and, 5) "Green Innovations" Projects for green infrastructure projects. This grant program requires a 25% match and proof of GHG reduction.



appendix

Appendix

**A: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY
(INCLUDING SURVEY RESULTS AND CHARRETTE
SUMMARY)**

B: BEST PRACTICES CATALOG

C: PLANT PALETTE

**D: EXISTING PLANS, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS THAT
SUPPORT THE OBJECTIVES**

E: PILOT PROJECT COST ESTIMATES

F: PROJECT STORMWATER TREATMENT ANALYSIS