

El Cerrito Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan

COMMUNITY PROFILE & TRENDS IN RECREATION

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COMMUNITY PROFILE 5
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INTRODUCTION

The City of El Cerrito Community Profile is a summary of baseline conditions and trends within the community. The community profile establishes the context for assessing potential impacts for a project and informs decision-making. Information to develop the profile was collected from primary sources, demographic data, growth data, City housing documents, and secondary sources included previous planning studies, transportation plans, stakeholder interviews, and surveys.

- Demographic characteristics can be predictive of how segments of the population are likely to use the City's parks, programs, and facilities. Interests vary based upon age, household composition, income, education, race/ethnicity, and other demographic measures. Social, economic, environmental, demographic, and recreation trends also impact services and are included in this profile. Key community profile findings are listed below.
- The Census estimates El Cerrito's population was 24,418. Although reaching build-out in the 1980s limited the City's growth, recent infill development is expected grow the population to 27,500 by 2040.
- El Cerrito is a densely populated urban community with 6,600 persons per square mile. This compares to 1,548 persons per square mile for the Contra Costa County. Parks play an important role in decreasing the impact of high-density development.
- El Cerrito has an older population than neighboring communities and the County. The median age in El Cerrito is 43.8 years compared to 38.8 for the County. This suggests residents prefer to age in place and have a strong affinity for the community. This suggests a growing demand for services to serve the aging population
- Baby Boomers and Older Adults are the largest age groups in El Cerrito, with residents aged 55 years and older comprising 33.7% of the City's population and growing. Services and facilities that serve the needs of older adults will be an increasing demand. This includes active aging activities

for Boomers who as a group, are very focused on maintaining health and wellness as they age.

- El Cerrito's median household income is \$92,670; higher than Contra Costa County's median household income of \$82,881. This indicates that many residents have the capacity to pay for recreational services. There is also price sensitivity to fees due to the high cost of living in the Bay Area.
- There is income stratification with 9.1% of residents living below the poverty line. Although lower than the County (10.2%) and the State (15.8%), subsidized programs, scholarships, and low cost or no cost access will continue to be important to ensure access by the entire community.
- The City is ideally located on a transportation hub with an average commute time of 33 minutes. This relatively "short" commute has implications for the hours for childcare and afterschool programs, and the opportunity for commuters to attend programs and classes after work hours.
- Residents are well educated, with 59.7% of the population having earned a bachelor's degree or higher. Frequency of use of recreation resources has a positive correlation with higher education. This is true for both active recreation and enrichment classes.

The detailed analysis of the City demographics follows.

DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

An analysis of El Cerrito's population was conducted using the demographic measures of age, household composition, race/ethnicity, income, education, and travel time to work. This data is derived from the 2010 US Census, as well as current year estimates and five-year projections calculated from the American Community Survey (ACS), DATA USA, Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), and the City of El Cerrito Adopted 2015-2023 Housing Element.

Population

The City of El Cerrito was incorporated in 1917 and surrounded by the cities of Albany, Richmond, Kensington, and Berkeley. The City is located along the Interstate 80 and 580 corridors placing it along the area’s most active regional arteries. Largely built out by the 1980s, El Cerrito’s population growth has been slow relative to its neighbors, however with growing regional demand for increased infill development along transit corridors the City’s population has slowly increased since the late 2000s. Currently at an estimated 24,418 residents, the City’s population is expected to host continued growth through 2040. Between 2010 and 2020, El Cerrito’s population is projected to grow 4.9%, from 23,549 in 2010 to 24,700 by 2020. From 2020 to 2030, the population is expected to grow another 5.3% to 26,000 residents, and by 5.8% in the following decade, reaching 27,500 by 2040. These projections are lower than the county overall, which will continue to grow at a slightly higher rate of 7.1% from 2010 to 2020, 9.0% from 2020 to 2030, and 9.3% from 2030 to 2040. See **Table X** for a comparison of population growth, from 2010 to 2040, between El Cerrito and Contra Costa County.

With a geographic area of 3.7 square miles, El Cerrito density is 6,600 persons per square mile, much more than the county’s 1,577 persons per square mile. The City’s dense, built-out nature and expected increases in population will require thoughtful planning of the City’s natural resources and recreation attributes to serve the greatest number of residents with efficiency.

Table X: El Cerrito Population Growth

Year	El Cerrito	% Growth	Contra Costa County	% Growth
2010	23,549		1,049,025	
2020	24,700	4.9	1,123,500	7.1
2030	26,000	5.3	1,224,400	9.0
2040	27,500	5.8	1,338,400	9.3

2040 ABAG projections; US Census Bureau, Adopted 2015-2023 Housing Element City of El Cerrito

Age

Understanding El Cerrito’s population trends in age provides valuable planning information as variant age groups have differing recreation needs and interests.

The three significant age cohorts in El Cerrito include Youth (aged 0 to 14 years), Family Forming Adults (aged 20 to 44 years), and Baby Boomers (55 years and older). These cohorts made up 14.7%, 32.8%, and 33.7%, respectively, of the City’s 2015 population. Within these age cohorts there also sits two groups that have experienced substantial growth – Teens (aged 15 to 19 years) and Seniors (aged 65 to 74 years). Of the City’s age cohorts, it is significant that baby boomers comprise the largest percentage. This demographic will continue to age in place and impact recreational programming and demand for increased services to active older adults. Family forming adults, inclusive of the millennial demographic, will additionally impact the City’s recreational programming and services as this cohort is interested in technology, social activities, health, and services for youth and families. See **Table X** for El Cerrito’s major age cohorts and their growth, as a percentage of the total population, from 2010 to 2015.

Table X: El Cerrito Age Cohorts as a Percentage of Total Population, 2010 to 2015

Age Cohort	2010	2015
Youth (0-14 years)	14.8%	14.7%
Family Forming Adults (20-44 years)	33.7%	32.8%
Baby Boomers (55+ years)	32.3%	33.7%
Age Cohort Sub-Groups		
Teens (15-19 years)	3.7%	4.3%
Seniors subset (65-74 years)	7.8%	9.9%

Race/Ethnicity

El Cerrito, like the Bay Area, is a diverse community. Though nearly 60% of the City is white, 34.5% of El Cerrito residents speak a non-English language, which is significantly higher than the national average of 21%. Per 2015 estimates the most common non-English language spoken was Chinese (8.3%), followed by Spanish (7.7%). Social diversity impacts the provision of park and recreation services as different races and ethnic groups seek various types of programming and utilize park and recreation facilities according to their interests; El Cerrito’s diversity influences community participation in recreation and park services. Recognizing the diversity of residents served by recreation and park providers assists in addressing the community’s unique cultural needs and interests while additionally ensuring that communication, or marketing, of services is equitable.

See **Table X** for the City’s major race/ethnic groups, from 2010 to 2015.

Table X: El Cerrito Race/Ethnicity 2010 to 2015

	2010	%	2015	%
Total Population	23,549		24,418	
White	12,960	55.6	14,090	57.7
Black	1,772	7.6	1,672	6.8
Asian	6,255	26.8	6,054	24.8
Two or More Races	1,408	6.0	1,629	6.7
Hispanic of Any Race	2,654	11.4	2,796	11.5

2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Education

El Cerrito residents are well educated with 93.8% (aged 25 or older) having earned a high school diploma and 59.7% (aged 25 or older) having earned a Bachelor’s degree or higher. Compared to the Contra Costa County rates of 88.9% and 39.6%, respectively, the City’s education status is slightly higher. For California as a whole, the high school graduation rate is estimated to be 81% while only 31% of state residents hold a Bachelor’s degree or higher. In recreation, there is a correlation between education and interest in wellness and fitness programming.

Household Income

In 2015 the median household income in El Cerrito was \$88,737, 4% higher than the median income in 2014. Compared to neighboring cities, El Cerrito residents are financially better off. The 2015, median household income documented for the cities of Albany and Richmond, in 2015, were \$79,596 and \$55,102 respectively. The median household income for Contra Costa County, in the same period, was \$80,185. Financial resources are a factor when setting program and higher income suggest the likelihood of participation in recreation services.

In 2015, 9% of the City’s population lived below the poverty line, the largest age group within the poverty figure is women aged 18 to 24. This rate compares

favorably to the state average of 15.3% and the county’s rate of 10.3%, however it does indicate that there is a portion of the community that will continue to benefit from subsidized programming, possibly in the form of reduced fees, scholarships, and other measures that improve access to park and recreation facilities and services. For El Cerrito, the target population for such aid would be young, adult women who may be supporting children and family members.

Travel Time to Work

Employees in El Cerrito have a longer commute time than the national average of 24.8 minutes, with 3% of the workforce in the City having “super commutes” in excess of 90 minutes. Though exacerbated by the amount of traffic during peak hours, the average commute time for El Cerrito residents was 33 minutes in 2015. This suggests that community members are mobile and commute for employment. Due to the high density of El Cerrito, many residents likely work in a neighboring city. For programming purposes, recreation planning should consider commuter schedules and services that are desired before and after work, such as childcare, and youth and adult programming.

SUMMARY

El Cerrito is a densely populated urban city with a population that is educated, older and choosing to age in place. Residents are a financially comfortable and mobile. The City’s built out nature and diversity of member requires thoughtful use of El Cerrito’s existing parks and recreation facility network, and efficient planning for improved capacity in the network’s future. Understanding the community’s unique profile while acknowledging the City’s growth will inform the recommendations made through the *El Cerrito Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan* planning process.

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INTRODUCTION

State and national social, demographic, and environmental trends impact the demand and delivery of recreation services. The analysis of trends is one of several forecasting tools used to project interest in and the potential use of amenities and services for recreation, leisure, and outdoor activities. Understanding recreational trends also provides planning information to anticipate the recreation desires and needs of El Cerrito's community. Recreation trends identified, that may inform the future of El Cerrito's park and recreation facilities, include community design and inclusion, environmental sustainability, health and wellness, and unstructured programming.

Community Design and Social Recreation

Addressing issues of social alienation and physical inactivity, through community design, is a rising trend in regional and national recreation planning. As inactivity and social isolation increase, so do the incidence of obesity, heart disease, diabetes, depression, and mental illness. Recreation providers are increasingly supporting parks as vibrant social meeting places where public space promotes familiarity and social bonds, making communities and neighborhoods safer and healthier.

In promoting social recreation, an important factor is the design and provision of environments for a range of age groups, physical abilities, and ethnic/cultural interests. Beyond making facilities and parks social gathering places, promoting inclusiveness in design is a growing priority of recreation providers. An application of broadened inclusivity in community design is seen in park play structure design. Parks and play equipment can be designed to allow use by community members with physical restrictions and special needs, as well as older adults. Playgrounds can feature equipment that is accessible, fun, and easy to use by those who require mobility assistance. Using firmer material alternatives to sand and wood chips and the utilization of ramps supports this. Outdoor fitness equipment, designed for adults and seniors of all ability levels, additionally combats obesity and inactivity. Park design can also combine active and passive uses and provide for a variety of leisure activities within close proximity of each

other for a mix of recreation uses and users. Inclusive design enables park and recreation facilities to operate at fuller capacity and meet a variety of community demands.

Environmental Sustainability

El Cerrito is a leader in environmental sustainability and has embraced planning strategies that improve the City's natural spaces and places. As a national and international trend, environmental sustainability reflects a growing awareness of environmental health and further supports opportunities for healthier parks and sustainable facilities. Supporting environmental sustainability, green building components and systems can be incorporated into the City's facilities and parks while having a significant impact on operational costs. These opportunities include preserving and reclaiming open space, conserving energy, water, and resource use, using environmentally friendly materials, and implementing energy-efficient building systems.

To support sustainable components in the City's recreational planning, green initiatives can be implemented to promote sustainable practices and awareness, such as educational programs on environmental topics, recycling and energy saving campaigns within facilities, creating community gardens, and continued support of non-vehicular transportation throughout the City. The City of El Cerrito has already established goals in these areas and continues to incorporate environmental sustainability in all its planning efforts.

Health and Wellness

Disease prevention, improved health, and active aging are primary motivators for recreation and exercise participation. Public Park and recreation agency are the leaders in providing these services. Programming that promotes fitness and a healthy lifestyle benefits the health and wellness of a community, and should be available for all ages, fitness levels, and abilities. Additionally, the availability of programs that engage citizens in physical activity has a direct correlation to the amount of physical activity individuals will perform. Physical barriers, safety concerns, and distance to parks and facilities can prevent residents from using facilities and programs. El Cerrito's availability of park and recreation services

plays an important role in increasing the physical activity of its community, and equitable access to these facilities is a priority.

Unstructured Outdoor Recreation

Increased interest in unstructured outdoor play and the provision of unstructured recreational space is a significant trend impacting park and recreation planning. Supporting a variety of passive recreation activities, such as walking, social gathering, and nature viewing, is a valuable component of El Cerrito's park system. The City's Ohlone Greenway additionally provides an active corridor through which El Cerrito's open spaces are linked while also encouraging pedestrian-oriented mobility. Supporting passive recreation in natural open space remains a top priority.

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