

CITY MANAGEMENT

City Buildings Reopen Tuesday, July 6, 2021

On Tuesday, July 6, all City buildings will reopen to the public for the first time since March 2020. City Hall and the Community Center Office will have special limited open hours through Labor Day (September 6) with all City functions open, including the permit counter in City Hall. All other City buildings will have the same hours prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Special City Hall Open Hours:

Monday through Thursday 9:00am – 1:00pm

Special Community Center Open Hours:

Monday through Thursday 1:00-4:00pm

For City business outside of the special limited open hours, City staff may be available by appointment. Please see http://www.el-cerrito.org/directory.aspx for a listing of departments and divisions for contact information.

Mayor Paul Fadelli Drop-In Hours



Beginning July 15 on the 1st and 3rd Thursdays of every month, Mayor Paul Fadelli will hold drop-in hours at the El Cerrito Natural Foods Annex from 9:00-11:00am to meet with residents. Community members can drop-in during the open hours or schedule appointments directly with the Mayor by emailing pfadelli@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us.



COVID-19 Information - Unvaccinated Infection Rates 10x Greater than Vaccinated

Contra Costa County released data last week showing that daily infection rates of COVID-19 are 10x greater among unvaccinated residents. The City of El Cerrito strongly encourages all residents who are eligible to receive a vaccine to do so as soon as possible.

Everyone 12 or older (regardless living or working within Contra Costa County) can sign up to receive a vaccine. To sign up for a vaccination through the County, visit

https://covidvaccine.cchealth.org/COVIDVaccine/. For more information about how to get vaccinated, please visit: https://www.coronavirus.cchealth.org/get-vaccinated or call 833-829-2626 between 8:00am to 8:00pm seven days a week.



New Library Hours

Starting July 1, the library hours will change to the following schedule:

Monday: CLOSED
Tuesday: 10am-8pm
Wednesday: 10am-8pm
Thursday: 10am-8pm
Friday: 9am-5pm
Saturday: 9am-5pm
Sunday: CLOSED

For questions, call the Library at (510) 526-7512 or email Library Manager Heidi Goldstein at heidi.goldstein@library.cccounty.us.

El Cerrito Native Competes in Tour de France Race

El Cerrito Native Sean Bennett is completing in the Tour de France bike race running through Sunday, July 18. Sean, a graduate of El Cerrito High School (ECHS) and a former member of the ECHS Mountain Bike Team, is one out of four Americans to complete in the race this year out of a total of 184 riders. El Cerrito celebrates and is proud of one of its own participating in the Tour de France, go Sean! For more information about Sean's participation in the race, visit: https://www.letour.fr/en/rider/193/team-qhubeka-nexthash/sean-bennett.

Annual Tobacco Retailer License Renewals

Renewals for 2021 Tobacco Retailer Licenses are now being accepted through July 31, penalties will begin to accrue August 1. In 2015, the City Council established a series of regulations for tobacco retailers known as the "Tobacco Retailer License Program" that went into effect on January 1, 2016. The Tobacco Retailer License Program requires that all tobacco retailers operating in the City of El Cerrito have a tobacco retailer license and comply with these regulations. For more information, please visit: www.el-cerrito.org/tobacco-sales.

CITY CLERK

Upcoming Regular City Council Meeting(s)

The City Council adopted a <u>regular meeting schedule</u> reducing meetings to the 3rd Tuesday of the month during the summer months of July – September.

Tuesday, July 20, 2021 at 7:00 p.m.

- Drought/Wildfire Preparedness Presentations
- Annual Fire Hazard Abatement Public Hearing
- Monthly General Fund Budget Update (Thru May 2021)
- Discussion regarding Campaign Contribution Limits for EL Cerrito (in connection with AB571)

Meeting are currently held virtually. Agenda materials and public comment instructions are available online at www.el-cerrito.org/CouncilMeetingMaterials as well as video archives. For more information, please contact the City Clerk at cityclerk@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us or (510) 215-4305.

Recent City Council Meeting Highlights

City Council meetings are currently held virtually using Zoom Webinar. Agenda materials and public comment instructions are available online at www.el-cerrito.org/CouncilMeetingMaterials as well as video archives. For more information, please

June 15, 2021 Special meeting

• Appointed Megan Wier (Park and Recreation Commission)

contact the City Clerk at cityclerk@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us or (510) 215-4305.

June 15, 2021 (Regular meeting)

- Recognized upcoming August 3rd National Night Out
- Adopted support of Measure X Funding to support the Contra Costa Community Crisis Initiative
- Reviewed the proposed FY 2021-22 Budget and took action to direct staff to restore funding for additional library hours; establish a Section 115 Trust to address payment of pension obligations and reduce Police budget for vehicle purchases by \$50,000.

June 22, 2021 (Special meeting)

- Adopted Management/Confidential Resolution for 2021 salaries, benefits, and conditions for employment which included no FY 2021-22 salary increase or cost of living adjustments; no less than 15 unpaid furlough days; and an increase of 2% for employee paid pension contributions.
- Reviewed and approved the proposed FY 2021-22 budget for the City of El Cerrito, El Cerrito Public Employee Pension Board, and Public Financing Authority.

Seeking Residents to Serve on City Committees

The City Clerk's office is currently seeking interested applicants for several vacancies on city committees including the Committee on Aging, Crime Prevention Committee, Economic Development Committee, and Urban Forest Committee. Applicants for Committees will be directed to the staff liaison to begin attending meetings of the committee. After attending at least three meetings, the committee may take action to recommend that City Council appoint the individual. After the committee has made its recommendation, the City Council will consider appointment of the individual.

Apply Now

A full list of vacancies for city advisory bodies is available <u>online</u>. Applications are accepted on an ongoing basis and will be held for

future vacancies if none exist at the time the application is received. For more information about City Advisory Bodies, please visit www.el-cerrito.org/Commissions or contact the City Clerk at cityclerk@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us or (510) 215-4305.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Building Permits and Planning Applications

In the month of June, the Building Division issued 89 building permits and received 102 new applications. In order to be able to better handle the volume, applications for solar projects (including photovoltaic panels and associated upgrades, such as new electrical panels, batteries and powerwalls), are now being processed through the City's website by an outside vendor. Anticipated turnaround times are three (3) business days for 10kW or less or five (5) business days for over 10kW or additional upgrades. Thirteen permits were submitted through the new system this week (as of June 30). Non-solar building permit applications are still being processed as quickly as possible, depending upon their complexity and the order in which they were received.

Over the Counter permits will be available at City Hall, beginning July 6, 9am-1pm, Monday through Thursday and via self service applications when new software is released in the next month. Please contact Melanie Mintz, Community Development Director at mmintz@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us or Keith Marks, Building Official at kmarks@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us if you experience unusual delays.

In addition to the volume of applications for remodel and tenant improvement projects, the Planning Division is currently reviewing applications for mixed-use multifamily projects at 6501 Fairmont and 6115 Potrero, which will be scheduled for public hearings when the applications are complete.

Comings and Goings of El Cerrito Businesses

Several businesses will soon be opening in El Cerrito:

 <u>Foot Locker</u> and <u>Kids Foot Locker</u> (430 El Cerrito Plaza) at the site of the former Dressbarn is completing its build out and anticipates an August Grand Opening.

- <u>Big 5</u> (11048/11060 San Pablo Avenue) will be closing its El Cerrito location. <u>Harbor Freight Tools</u> has submitted a Design Review and Building Permit application for this location and anticipates a quick build out.
- **Potala Palace**: A building permit is under review for an outdoor food business at 10046 San Pablo Avenue, in a long vacant property on the Theater Block. The project includes restrooms, landscaping and a stationary food truck which was approved by Planning in November 2020 to be open 8am-8pm.
- El Cerrito Wellness Center received its Certificate of Occupancy from the Building Division on June 23. A grand opening has yet to be announced. The location will be the first of two cannabis dispensaries authorized to operate under the City's Commercial Cannabis Ordinance adopted December 19, 2017.

6th Cycle Regional Housing Needs Assessment

On May 20, the Association of Bay Area Government (ABAG) Executive Board approved the Final Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) Methodology and Draft Allocations for each Bay Area jurisdiction. Approval of the Final RHNA Methodology followed the finding in April 2021 by the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) that ABAG's Draft RHNA Methodology furthered the RHNA objectives. Each jurisdiction's draft RHNA allocation is shown in the Draft RHNA Plan: San Francisco Bay Area, 2023-2031. ABAG will conduct a public hearing later this year to adopt the Final RHNA Allocations.

The draft housing allocations for El Cerrito are listed by income category below.

	Very Low Income (<50% of Area Median Income	Low Income (50-80% of Area Median Income	Moderate Income (80-120% of Area Median Income	Above Moderate Income (>120% of Area Median Income	TOTAL
El Cerrito	334	192	241	624	1,391

El Cerrito was awarded \$29,888 through non-competitive Regional Early Action Planning grant funds as part of the RHNA allocation. This funding will support the Community Development Department in the implementation of various mandated advance planning efforts. In Fall 2021, staff will kick-off the 2023-2031 Housing Element Update and further engage with the community to help plan for our future housing needs. The San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan Update and proposed El Cerrito Plaza BART TOD also goes a long way to put the City in a strong position to meet the 6th Cycle RHNA targets. Both the Housing Element and Specific Plan Updates are fully funded through grants from HCD and ABAG. Please subscribe to the Community Development Department e-News www.el-cerrito.org/CommDev to receive housing updates and information regarding future community meetings.

Affordable Housing



<u>July 2021 Affordable Housing Opportunities</u> – All Bay Area Counties (Courtesy of <u>Openhouse</u>)

California COVID-19 Rent Relief Program

Do you need help paying your rent or utilities? Eligible El Cerrito renters impacted by COVID-19 may receive assistance for unpaid rent and utility bills. See if you are eligible and apply at www.housing.ca.gov or call 833-430-2122.



BART Berkeley-El Cerrito Corridor Access Plan Updates: Online Open Houses in July - August

BART has launched an online open house to solicit community feedback on walking, biking, rolling, taking transit, and driving to BART stations in Berkeley and El Cerrito. This feedback is needed because BART plans to build around 2,500 affordable and market rate homes on three station parking lots at El Cerrito Plaza, North Berkeley, and Ashby. To give residents ample time and flexibility to participate, the online open house will be open from **July 2 until August 20** at www.bartberkeleyelcerritocap.participate.online. The open house will give community members the ability to learn about the Berkeley-El Cerrito Corridor Access Plan and provide input.

The online open house is similar to an in-person meeting. Participants can move between the virtual "stations" to:

- Learn more about planning efforts for how people will get to and from BART; and,
- Fill out a survey and interactive map to express needs, concerns, and ideas for accessing BART.

Spanish and Chinese written translations will be provided for key sections of the virtual open house. BART plans to host virtual office hours during July and August. You can drop in to meet the project team, ask questions, and share input. Click here to view the flyer or visit BART's project website for dates and times of the virtual office hours as well as other future opportunities for residents and BART riders to ask questions, learn, and share comments with the project team. The City also has a dedicated website where you can read more about Transit-Oriented Development: www.el-cerrito.org/TOD.

FIRE

Retirement

Battalion Chief Joseph Grupalo has announced that he is retiring effective July 18. Joe started with El Cerrito in October of 2008 as a firefighter and promoted up the ranks to Battalion Chief in 2019. Upon retirement, Joe has accepted a position with Zonehaven, the company the Department has been working with to build out zones for evacuation plans. Joe has been very instrumental in the initial set up of the zones for our area as El Cerrito – Kensington along with Moraga-Orinda Fire were the first agencies to benefit from this new system. He will be missed, and his departure now places even more duties on the two remaining Battalion Chiefs. The City will be starting a process to replace him soon. Please wish Joe well on his new journey.

Encampment Fires

As we enter the summer months, the Fire Department has been experiencing an increase in fires involving homeless encampments. During June, we had fires involving trash piles along the Ohlone Trail and a shopping cart full of "stuff" that burned up in from of a business in the 10600 block of San Pablo Avenue. A week ago, the field behind the old Taco Bell burned during the night. While this fire was in Richmond, it is believed to have started due to the



activity at the old restaurant and area around it. In addition, there was also a fire in the 900 block of Kearney that threatened a home as well as one recently next to a church on Potrero Avenue. Code Enforcement and Public Works are aware and are actively working on mitigation measures.

Calls for Service

The Fire Department responded to a total of 311 calls for service in June. While there were no major fires or fire loss, the number of vegetation and encampment fires continued to rise. Total recap of all the calls for June are as follows:

Fires: 41
 Explosions/Ruptures: 0
 Medicals: 115
 Hazardous Conditions: 8
 Service Calls: 56
 Good Intent: 75
 False Alarms: 16

July 4 Fire Department Staffing

Due to the premature dryness of the fuels in our hillsides, the Fire Department is staffing an additional engine on July 4. The purpose of this engine will be to conduct patrols for any illegal fireworks as well as provide additional personnel for any potential fires. In addition to this increased staffing, several other agencies in the County will be upstaffing as well as the County

will have a strike team of engines, a hand crew, dozer and helicopter available to respond anywhere in the County. Cal-Fire is also increasing staffing for the entire weekend and will be available for additional resources if needed. If severe weather or Red Flag conditions occur on the 4, the Department will also add a 4th firefighter to each engine. However, for now, no extreme weather conditions are predicted for the holiday weekend.

Vegetation Management

The Fire Department is continuing with the annual residential vegetation inspections of properties in the City, attempting to get 100% compliance before the super critical late summer/fall heat and Diablo winds. Early cleanup of residents' property will make the Fire Department's job easier and help everyone avoid inspection fees and abatement costs. The Department will be coming to the City Council on July 20 with a resolution for the Declaration of Nuisance for those properties that have not been cleaned up. Vegetation Management Information is available at the Department's website: www.el-cerrito.org/402/Vegetation-Management.

POLICE

Calls for Service

In May, the Police Department handled 1,780 calls for service. As of June 28, the Police department has handled 1,517 calls for service.

Officer Administers Naloxone (Narcan)

On June 21 at 3:52 a.m. officers responded to a 911 call where a man reported that a woman was unconscious and not breathing. Officers arrived within three minutes and quickly assessed that it was an opioid overdose. K9 Officer Paul Cooper administered Naloxone and the woman regained consciousness. Naloxone kits are available in all of the patrol cars and annual training on their use is conducted with all Officers.

Fireworks

This year, the Police Department is partnering with the Contra Costa County Sheriff's Department and the Richmond, San Pablo, Pinole and Hercules Police Departments to make an impact on illegal fireworks. Officers from these agencies will be out doing directed patrols to identify the individuals and locations responsible for setting off these hazardous fireworks. You can do your part, too! If you know who or where fireworks are coming from, call the non-emergency police line at (510) 233-1214 to report it.

National Night Out

National Night Out (NNO) is taking place on Tuesday, August 3. NNO is our chance to celebrate community by welcoming new neighbors, reconnecting with friends and fostering better relationships with local police and first responders. Celebrate community by hosting a block party for your neighbors. If you would like to host an event, please complete and submit a National Night Out Block Party Host Sign Up Form by July 18.

Annual Report

The Annual Report for the Police Department can be found on the department's website at 2020 Annual Report

Crime Blotter

The El Cerrito Police Department releases a weekly summary of criminal activity that occurs in El Cerrito. Please visit https://local.nixle.com/el-cerrito-police-department to view the blotter and other PD updates and messages.

PUBLIC WORKS

Recycling Center Exchange Zone Reopening Tuesday July 6 & Other Announcements

After closing for a brief period at the start of the pandemic, the El Cerrito Recycling + Environmental Resource Center (RERC) was able to reopen on May 15, 2020, to continue providing essential services to El Cerrito residents, businesses, and the larger community. With the public health orders continuing to loosen, the City will be further expanding offerings at the RERC beginning Tuesday, July 6 as follows:

- The RERC Exchange Zone will reopen
- The Admin Office lobby will reopen and expand hours
- The Admin Office will again accept fluorescent lightbulbs, sharps, and pharmaceuticals from non-residents (for a fee)
- The RERC will pilot again accepting Expanded Polystyrene (EPS), "Styrofoam", from El
 Cerrito residents ONLY, on Thursdays ONLY. (Proof of address required).

In the Exchange Zone, customers may drop off selected materials including: Books, Magazines, Hangers, Corks, and small Office + School Supplies. Customers may browse items in the Exchange Zone, and take up to two boxes of materials per day. Additional book donation bins will continue to be available elsewhere within the Recycling Center as an alternative to the Exchange Zone.

Regardless of vaccination status, visitors to the Admin Office are encouraged to wear face coverings. At the Exchange Zone, face coverings are recommended for unvaccinated visitors where six feet of physical distancing cannot be maintained. For more information regarding continuing COVID-19 related safety measures at all City facilities, please see the City Management section above. For more information regarding the Recycling Center and services offered, please ask Recycling Center staff at the Customer Service Window, in the Admin Office, or by contacting green@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us or 510-215-4350.

Engineering Services at City Hall Beginning Tuesday, July 6

As noted in the City Management section above, City Hall will be reopening on Tuesday July 6. Engineering Services will be offered at the Permit Counter on a walk-in and appointment basis.

Applications and payments for Encroachment Permits, Grading & Transportation Permits, and Oversize Transportation Loads will be accepted. Please note, however, that same-day permit issuance will not be available at this time.

To enable City staff to provide the most efficient services, property owners and contractors are encouraged to submit applications electronically. Please visit www.el-cerrito.org/encroachmentpermit for the electronic application form, process, required supporting documents and additional information. If you have any questions, please contact Engineering staff at encroachmentpermit@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us or 510-215-4382.

El Cerrito 2021 Summer Bike Challenge

511 Contra Costa is coordinating a Summer Bike Challenge in El Cerrito and other cities in Contra Costa County, encouraging community members to explore their cities by bike, participate in weekly challenges, and win prizes. Download the game board for El Cerrito at https://511contracosta.org/sbc/ and bike to locations through August 31 to collect prizes. El Cerrito locations include Centennial Park, the Recycling Center, the Farmers' Market, and more. The Summer Bike Challenge is made available with funding from Contra Costa Transportation Authority and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District.

Comparing Diesel, Biodiesel, and Renewable Diesel for use in the City's Vehicle Fleet

Following the March 16 El Cerrito City Council meeting, at which the City Council approved the lease-purchase of two new diesel recycling trucks to replace aging vehicles, City staff responded to a Council member request to further explore what it would take to use alternative fuels in these trucks including bio-diesel and "renewable diesel." Evaluating these alternatives aligns with the City of El Cerrito's Climate Action Plan (2013) and goals and the City's efforts to lower the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions and environmental impacts from the City's vehicle fleet.

"Biodiesel" is a renewable fuel that can be produced from vegetable oils, animal fats, or recycled restaurant grease, and contains physical properties that are similar to that of petroleum diesel. "Renewable Diesel" is a newer fuel source, that is also produced from renewable sources, but is refined in a way that makes it chemically identical to traditional petroleum diesel. Both offer opportunities to reduce the emissions associated with operating fleet vehicles, without having to invest in large scale fueling/charging stations or new vehicles.



Due to the advantages seen in biodiesel, the City actually used the fuel in all recycling collection trucks from approximately 2008 to 2011. However, during that time, two issues were experienced. First, the City did have to invest in a separate biodiesel storage tank, since the Fire Department's trucks, which are fueled at the same City-owned and maintained fueling station

as the recycling trucks, were not able to make the switch to biodiesel. This added an additional capital and maintenance expense, while also eliminating the bulk pricing received by purchasing diesel alongside other departments. Second, after some time, it was determined that bacteria in the storage tank (stemming from the biodiesel fuel) was contaminating the fuel storage tank and ultimately causing costly damage to the city's fleet vehicles. Citing similar reasons, the City of Berkeley also ceased using biodiesel in 2009.

"Renewable Diesel" appears to be a much easier substitute. The following jurisdictions appear to all use Renewable Diesel to power at least some of their fleet vehicles: City of Oakland, City of Walnut Creek, City of Berkeley, City of San Francisco, County of Sacramento, City of San Diego, Contra Costa County, City of San Leandro, City of Long Beach, and City of Carlsbad. In particular, a City of Oakland analysis asserts that renewable diesel offers up to a 75% reduction in GHG emissions from petroleum diesel and notes that "renewable diesel is currently in use in all 366 vehicles in the City inventory, including emergency response vehicles."

Renewable Diesel is also reported to be a cleaner combusting fuel that improves engine performance and can reduce maintenance costs. In California, renewable diesel is cost competitive with petroleum diesel and biodiesel thanks to the state's Low Carbon Fuel Standard (LCSF), which offsets some of the expense. Notably, recent cost inquires completed by City staff determined the possibility of procuring Renewable Diesel at no additional cost compared to petroleum diesel, at least in the near term.

Given the latest findings around cost competitiveness and confirmation that the fuel has been used successfully in other agencies, City staff will begin coordinating across departments to assess the feasibility of procuring renewable diesel in lieu of traditional diesel, on a pilot basis, sometime in Fiscal Year 2021-22. For more information, please contact the Operations + Environmental Services Division Manager, Will Provost at wprovost@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us.

During a Drought – Conserving Water, Caring for Trees

Governor Newsom has announced a state of emergency drought proclamation for 41 counties in California, including Contra Costa County. These drought conditions will likely continue and worsen during the warm dry summer months. EBMUD has also declared a Stage 1 drought shortage and has asked customers to voluntarily begin reducing water use. To reduce water use and minimize waste, residents and businesses are encouraged to:

 Adjust outdoor irrigation timers or manually water landscapes three times a week or less, at dawn and dusk to avoid evaporation.

- Check and repair leaks in toilets and irrigation systems.
- Sign on to EBMUD's <u>web portal</u> to set up leak alerts and monitor water use.
- Install a sustainable landscape. EBMUD offers rebates for landscape redesigns and irrigation upgrades.
- Consider skipping watering lawns during times of drought.



- Use a hose with a shut-off nozzle.
- Use only recirculated water in decorative fountains.
- Sweep sidewalks and driveways. If you must wash hard surfaces for sanitary reasons, use a hose with a shut-off nozzle.
- Prevent runoff into gutters, patios, walkways, driveways or streets while watering.
- Continue to water trees as needed to protect the urban tree canopy, which helps protect against other drought impacts.

The City is also doing its part to reduce water use, and has begun adjusting irrigation timers and mulching around stressed trees at City parks to retain moisture and reducing watering schedules at public facilities. The City also works proactively to eliminate leaks. If you see an irrigation or other water leak in El Cerrito parks, fields, and property, please report it to the City's Public Works Department by calling (510) 215-4369 or by sending an email to maintenance@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us.

RECREATION

Fall Childcare Registration is OPEN

West Contra Costa Unified School District (WCCUSD) Principals at Fairmont, Harding and Madera Elementary Schools have confirmed that school will resume "normal operations" this fall, and that childcare programs will be able to utilize school spaces to operate. The Recreation Department is currently taking registrations for both morning and afternoon care at all three schools for all grades. Registration information is available at https://www.el-cerrito.org/childcare. The fall childcare program is set to begin Monday, August 23 (one week after school begins).

Stay Up to Date on Recreation Programs

As pandemic-related guidelines and restrictions loosen, the Recreation Department is continuing to add programs to our activity calendar. This past spring, we rolled out our Summer Camp program and brought back Water Aerobics, Swim Lessons, Youth Soccer, Picnic Rentals and more. With the production of our seasonal rECguide on pause, the best way to stay up to date on new programs and activities is to subscribe to our e-newsletter "rECnews" and follow us on social media.

Subscribe to rECnews: http://el-cerrito.org/143/Get-Informed

Facebook: www.facebook.com/ecrecreation
Instagram: www.instagram.com/ecrecreation
Twitter: www.twitter.com/ElCerritoREC

Easy Ride Para-Transit Senior and Disabled Transportation

Easy Ride is a door-to-door shuttle van service for seniors (65 and over) and persons 18 and over with a disability who are El Cerrito residents, 94530. The program is funded by Measure J Sales Tax. Registration in our Easy Ride Para-Transit program is required and must be renewed

annually. Registration information is available at https://www.el-cerrito.org/adult. Call (510) 559-7000 or email recreation@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us for more information.

ATTACHMENTS/FLYERS

• Berkeley-El Cerrito Corridor Access Plan (BECCAP) Online Open House Starting July 2 Flyer