

PRIORITY CONSERVATION AREA APPLICATION

Benefits

Location: The Ohlone Greenway from El Cerrito's southern city limits to the intersection of San Pablo Avenue at Baxter Creek Gateway Park.

The Ohlone Greenway (Greenway) is an important multiuse trail that serves the Cities of Richmond, El Cerrito, Albany and Berkeley, providing active recreation, an alternative transportation corridor, and community activity nodes to residents and visitors. The Greenway runs beneath BART's aerial tracks and parallels San Pablo Avenue. It is bordered by community parks and open spaces, riparian corridors, and small wildlife habitat nodes and serves as an ecological pathway, providing stormwater and drainage benefits, local plant and animal habitats and community sustainability amenities, such as a neighborhood community garden and environmentally responsible plantings.

The City of El Cerrito (City) and BART have invested in creating a sustainable, accessible, vibrant and ecologically sensitive green corridor that runs through the City. A recent seismic retrofit project on BART's aerial structures resulted in a wider multiuse path with improved pavement and striping. The City constructed the Baxter Creek Gateway Project, Bruce King Memorial Dog Park, a natural area and rain garden at the intersection with Fairmount Avenue, and supported the development of a demonstration community garden at Fairmont Park.

Community Health

A recent analysis of El Cerrito's parks and open spaces identified the Ohlone Greenway as a key community amenity, closing critical park gaps and providing residents of nearly every El Cerrito neighborhood with access to active recreation, open space, natural amenities and benefits. As the neighborhoods bordering the San Pablo Avenue Priority Development Area increase in density, the community's reliance on the Greenway as a park space will only grow. Identification of the Greenway as a Priority Conservation Area will enable the City to prioritize projects that improve the resilience and ecological benefits of this green corridor.

In 2009, the City adopted an Ohlone Greenway Master Plan to articulate an overall vision and goals for the Greenway so that future improvements could help improve circulation and infrastructure, safety and security, maintenance, stewardship and community involvement, and could provide more modern amenities that better integrate into future and adjacent development. The City's Climate Action Plan identified continued implementation of the Master Plan as a key Sustainable Community strategy intended to reduce vehicle miles traveled and encourage investment in community-serving amenities that encourage residents to stay, shop and play local.

Recreation

The Ohlone Greenway is bordered by two community parks, provides 2.7 miles of multiuse trail, and connects to other city and regional trails, providing community members with opportunities to walk, run, bike, do tai chi and other group exercise,

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play with their kids and run around with their dogs. The City is working to connect the Greenway to the Bay Trail through on-street and trail connections and to the Richmond Greenway by providing a mid-block crossing and supporting to the planned extension of the Richmond Greenway. This formalized network would expand the recreational opportunities provided by the Greenway and provide access to additional local and regional amenities via the Greenway.

Compact Growth

The City recently adopted a San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan, which provides new development regulations and supports higher density development within the San Pablo Avenue PDA corridor. The Plan emphasizes the need for well-placed and programmed public gathering spaces by requiring both public and private open space; understanding the importance of community access to open space and identifying the Greenway as an existing and important community amenity. The Plan also recognizes the Greenway as a street type and encourages private developments to orient their buildings towards it. As increased development occurs, in part due to the amenity provided by the Greenway, the Greenway will continue to provide new residents, business owners and employees with a nearby green space and an alternative connection to the City's two BART stations, commercial districts, and community amenities.