

SECTION 2 – Planning Context

2.1 Regional Context

The City of Albany is located on the eastern shoreline of the San Francisco Bay in Alameda County. The City is linked with other communities by several major roadways. Interstate 80 provides linkages north (e.g., Richmond) and south (e.g., Berkeley and Alameda). Highway 123 (San Pablo Avenue) also provides access north and south. In addition, Union Pacific Railroad operates a major rail line that runs parallel with Interstate 80 & 580.

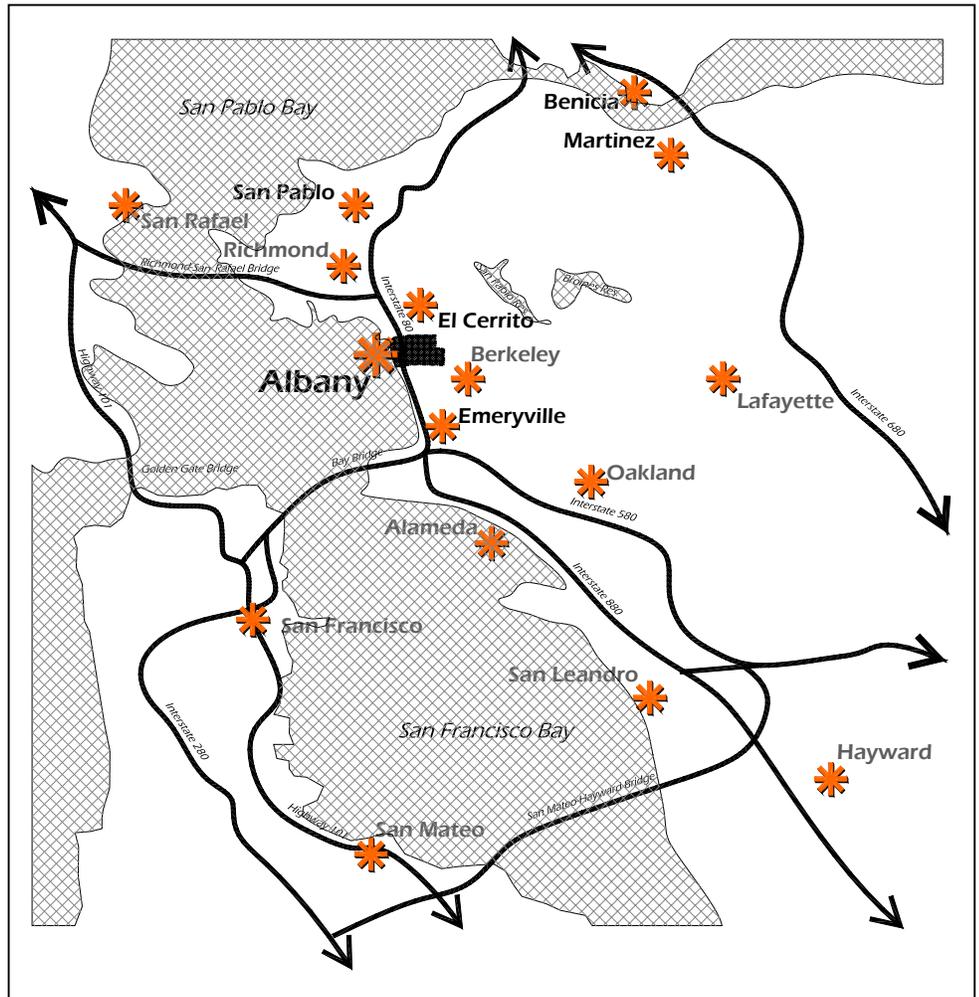


FIGURE 2.1
Regional Location

2.2 Planning Area

The planning area for this study consists of the Albany city limits. In general, the planning area extends from the San Francisco Bay on the west to the Berkeley city limits on the east and from El Cerrito city limits on the north to Berkeley city limits on the south. The planning area measures approximately 5.47 square miles in size and includes roughly 3,501 acres.



FIGURE 2.2
Planning Area

2.3 Conservation Resources

Conservation resources in the Albany area are important for a variety of reasons. The water features (creek corridors and bay) and the presence of open space (wildlife and vegetation areas) all impact the potential for development. While these lands are generally considered environmentally sensitive and have limited development potential, they are often conducive to park, open space, and recreation uses. Aside from providing these potential functions, the protection of these areas has a number of other benefits, such as protecting unique landforms, maintaining habitat and preserving the riparian and vegetative cover. The conservation resources that influence the provision of park, recreation and open space areas are listed below:

Water Features (Creeks and Drainage ways)

The drainage system in the Albany area is part of the Berkeley Hills watershed. This watershed consists of a hierarchy of streams, creeks and other drainage ways that flow into the San Francisco Bay. In Albany, there are three major hydrological corridors: Cerrito Creek, Codornices Creek and Village Creek.

The creeks and drainage ways in Albany are important due to their ability to provide habitat corridors for fish and wildlife, preserve riparian vegetation and carry storm water runoff. In addition to their functional and aesthetic characteristics, the drainage ways can also serve as conduits for trails.

Open Space Wildlife Area, Vegetation and Wetlands)

Due to the level of development within the City, the creek corridors, waterfront area and Albany Hill are the only areas that offer open space (wildlife/vegetation/wetlands) opportunities.

The three creek corridors offer opportunities for fish and wildlife habitat as well as corridors for riparian vegetation. Most of this land is to remain in private ownership. Portions of these creeks have been re-routed, encased in culverts, and covered beneath roadways.

The waterfront areas, on the other hand, are largely in public ownership. The bulb, itself, is owned by the City of Albany and will soon be transferred to the State of California, to become part of the East Shore State Park. These areas provide some limited upland vegetation along the beach areas and an abundance of wildlife habitat areas for fish and shore birds within the mud lands and submerged areas.

All of these conservation areas are considered significant natural features and their development is constrained by various local, state and federal regulations. For the purpose of parks and recreation, these areas are important because they can supplement the existing park, recreation and open space opportunities.



FIGURE 2.3
Conservation Areas

2.4 Climate

Albany has a temperate Mediterranean climate providing for diverse forms of year-round recreation opportunities. Weather is strongly influenced by Pacific Ocean and the San Francisco Bay. The proximity to these features has a moderating influence on the climate in the Albany area.

Similar to the rest of the Bay area, the warmest months in Albany occur in late summer. This is due to the presence of fog and wind that persist much of the summer months. Albany averages 23 inches of precipitation per year, with the majority occurring in winter and spring. The average temperature in the winter is 50 degrees. The average temperatures during the summer is 62 degrees.

From the perspective of providing park, recreation and open space services, the varying climate would necessitate the need to provide a variety of indoor and outdoor recreational facilities. During the winter months, indoor facilities, gymnasiums and indoor pools support programs, such as basketball, volleyball and swimming. Meetings and classrooms provide space for instructional classes and arts/crafts. During the summer months, park facilities provide space for organized sports, playground activities and picnicking.

2.5 Demographic Characteristics

Demographic characteristics are important attributes because they create demand and influence recreational interests and participation. The existing population base serves as the foundation for the creating demand. Factors, such as age and income, significantly affect the level and individual ability to pursue recreational activities. To a lesser extent, employment, education and ethnicity also play a role.

Age

While Albany was, at one time, referred to as “kid town”, this profile has changed with maturation of the population. As you can see from Table 1.2, the profile for the City of Albany varies slightly from the surrounding communities and the rest of Alameda County and the State of California.

In general, the age profile in Albany is concentrated in the middle age groups (ages 18-64) with a higher percentage of the population in the over 65 age groups. Overall, the age distribution can be characterized as a community with a high number of middle-aged adults.

In general, the older the population, the less they participate in active or competitive recreation activities. In contrast, youth age groups tend to participate in recreation activities more frequently than any other age group and favor more active and competitive activities. This includes activities such as basketball, baseball, soccer, swimming, and bicycling.

Young adults (ages 18-35) are also an active age group and typically form the core of adult competitive sports. Older adults (ages 35-65) typically have less time to devote to recreational activities and tend to have a more passive interest in recreation programs. Recreational time is at a premium and often limited to weekends and occasional evenings.

Table 2.1
Age Distributions 2000
Selected Geographic Areas

	Age 17 and Under	Ages 18 to 64	Age 65 and Over	Median Age
State of California	27.3%	62.1%	10.6%	33.3
Alameda County	24.6%	65.2%	10.2%	34.5
City of Albany	22.9%	66.0%	11.1%	36.3
City of Benicia	27.1%	63.6%	9.3%	38.9
City of El Cerrito	15.9%	63.7%	20.4%	42.7
City of Emeryville	11.4%	78.8%	9.8%	35.2
City of Martinez	22.7%	67.2%	10.1%	38.6
City of San Pablo	31.7%	58.0%	10.3%	29.5

Source: US Bureau of the Census

As you can see from the table above, the City of Albany has a higher percentage of residents over the age of 65. Also, significant portion of the residents are within the age 18-64 category. By the median age, it would appear that a majority are middle-aged adults. The specific age breakdowns are listed below.

Table 2.2
Age Breakdowns 2000
City of Albany

Category	Population	Percentage
0-9	2,013	12.2%
10-14	1,120	6.8%
15-17	625	3.9%
18-24	1,163	6.2%
25-34	2,873	17.5%
35-44	2,874	17.5%
45-54	2,753	16.7%
55-64	1,204	7.3%
65-74	853	5.2%
75+	966	5.9%
TOTAL	16,444	100.0%

Source: US Bureau of the Census

2.6 Land Use

Land use plays an important role in the location, distribution and availability of park, recreation and open space facilities. The diversity of land uses in the Albany area makes it necessary to evaluate the most effective means of meeting the park and open space needs for each major category. Residential areas will need parks to fulfill the day-to-day needs of area residents. Industrial areas will require parks that focus on use during the day, or where people will travel to at night. Commercial areas are more likely to require plazas and places for passive recreation that are smaller in area. In addition, land use helps to identify areas where development is at a high density.

Table 2.3
Breakdown of Lands By Zoning Designation -2002
City of Albany

Zoning Designation	Total Acres
Residential	(est.) 1,437
Industrial	(est.) 58
Commercial	(est.) 175
Public Facilities	(est.) 743
Water	1,088
Total	3,501

2.7 Housing

The total land area of the City of Albany is 3,501 acres, of which approximately 1,088 acres is water. The distribution of the land is as follows. The majority of land is zoned residential (41%). This area encompasses most of the eastern portion of Albany (east of I-80). Industrial lands are primarily found around the railroad. Commercial property located downtown, along Salano Avenue, San Pablo Avenue (Highway 123), John T. Knox Freeway (Interstate 580) and East Shore Freeway (Interstate 80) makes up 5% of land.

Based on the 2000 US census, there were approximately 7,248 housing units in the City of Albany. Of this supply, 96.7% were considered occupied and 3.3% were vacant. Of the 7,011 occupied units, 50.6% are owner occupied and 49.4% are renter occupied. At build-out, the City is expected to have 8,135 housing units including 920 student housing units from the University of California.

2.8 Population Projections

Population growth in a community typically occurs through two means; 1) annexation and 2) in-migration and infill. However, in Albany, there are no opportunities for annexation due to proximity of adjoining cities. Therefore, new population growth will only occur as a result of redevelopment and infill. Unless some major land use changes occur, it is assumed that minor infilling will continue and the City will grow at a rate consistent with historical levels.

Shown below is the population projection for the City of Albany.

Table 2.4
Population Projections
City of Albany

Year	Population Based on Straight Line Projection
2000	16,444
2003	16,800
Build-out ¹	17,020

¹ Source 1990-2010 General Plan