

2012

Albany Hill Creekside Master Plan



DRAFT: 1/12/12

City of Albany

1/12/2012

Access and Circulation Albany Hill Creekside Master Plan 2012

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Introduction

Like the Vegetation Management Plan, the Access and Circulation Plan for Albany Hill and Creekside Park is an update of the 1991 Plan. This portion of the updated plan concentrates on access and circulation, trail maintenance, signage, benches, and viewing corridors.

This updated plan was developed through a series of public meetings with the Parks and Recreation Commission in 2011 as well as final approval by the Albany City Council in (month) 2012. The Access and Circulation portion of the plan was specifically discussed at the December 2011 and January 2012 Parks and Recreation Commission meetings. Friends of Albany Hill and Friends of Five Creeks also provided information regarding the updated plan.

The objectives for the Access and Circulation recommendations are:

- (1) To improve the safety of the trails through ongoing maintenance
- (2) To improve access and circulation through trail improvements
- (3) To improve the trail experience through repaired and maintained amenities such as benches, viewing portals, and signage.

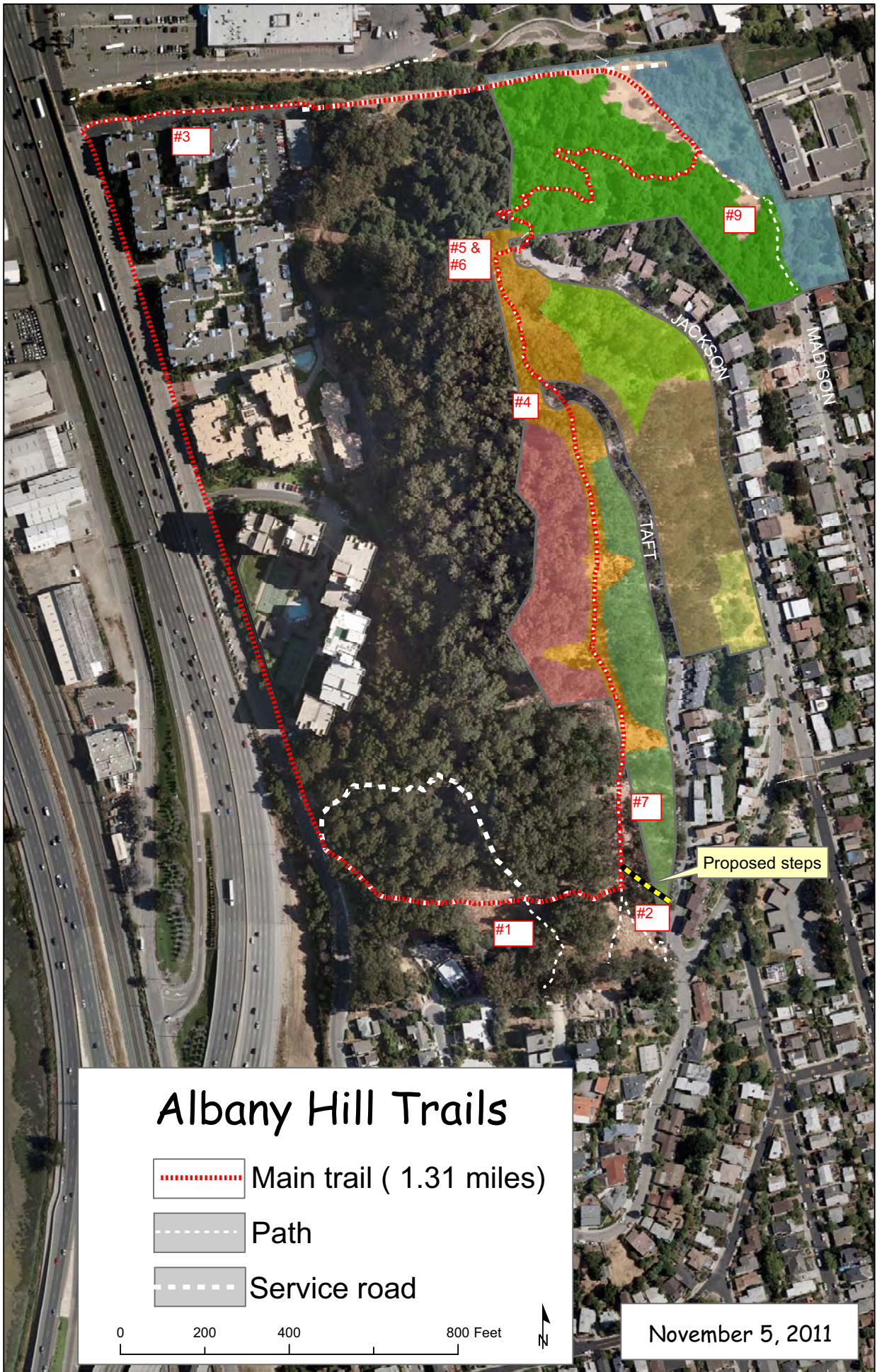
Access and Circulation

The current vehicular access will continue to be the main entries at Taft, Jackson, Madison and Pierce. A “main trail” has been identified per the map on page 5. The main trail allows a full loop that is approximately 1.3 miles. The trail takes hikers through a variety of vegetation, spectacular views, and a variety of terrain that meanders through steep slopes, flat and wide trails, and narrow trails.

To improve the existing circulation on the main trail, there are nine recommendations; the recommendations are located by number on the map on page 5. Cost estimates for the recommendations are included in a table on page 8.

1. In order to complete the main trail, it is recommended that an easement be secured through the 11 acre parcel that is currently privately owned. It should be noted that the draft Albany Active Transportation Plan also recommends the trail through the 11 acre privately owned parcel. A map of Albany Hill showing land ownership including the 11 acre privately owned parcel can be found on page 2 of the Vegetation Management Plan.
2. Currently, access to lower Taft does not exist except via steps located on a resident’s private property. The installation of steps on City owned property just north of the privately owned steps is recommended to prevent hikers from using steps belonging to the homeowner. A photograph is provided on page 10

3. Repair the existing path from Pierce Street by constructing a 5' path made of ¾" crushed rock that extends from Pierce Street to the end of the rod iron fence delineating the Bayside Commons property. Although this path is not on City owned property, the City has secured an easement with Bayside Commons and the path may be improved and is to be maintained by the City.
4. At the primary entrance at the top of Taft, install a ramp that has an ADA compliant grade to allow those with limited mobility an opportunity to enjoy the crest which hosts the best east and west views on Albany Hill. A photograph is provided on [page 10](#).
5. Improve the existing trail between Taft and Jackson by providing additional wooden steps, preferably made from Eucalyptus logs, with switchbacks as determined during installation.
6. The existing steps closest to Jackson Street are too narrow and need to be removed and replaced. A photograph is provided on [page 10](#).
7. For the trail on the crest that runs parallel to Taft Street, install wooden beams that run adjacent to the fire trail that are set 30-40 feet apart. Since the current trail along the crest is a fire trail for vehicles, installing the beams adjacent to the fire trail at the steepest points of the trail will improve pedestrian circulation without impacting vehicle transportation. This type of wooden beam has been installed on the trail leading to the Madison entrance. A photograph is provided on [page 10](#).
8. The 2012 Albany Hill Creekside Master Plan endorses the Albany Active Transportation Plan recommending the installation of two non-vehicular bridges across El Cerrito Creek. A bridge is proposed at the end of Adams Street which would improve access from the Orientation Center for the Blind and the second bridge is farther west connecting to Creekside Park near Belmont Street. Please see the map from the Active Transportation Plan on [page 12](#).
9. The existing steps and wooden beams leading to the Madison entrance are in good condition, but need to be monitored annually as part of the inspection program.



Albany Hill Trails

- Main trail (1.31 miles)
- Path
- Service road

0 200 400 800 Feet



November 5, 2011

Trail Maintenance

Trail maintenance is an essential part of the 2012 updated plan. A maintenance plan that is followed with timely implementation is vital in preventing deferred maintenance which ultimately leads to additional costs.

Recommendations for trail maintenance:

1. All trail and trail structures/features should be inspected at least once a year at the close of the winter “wet season.” Inspections will help identify public safety and resource management problems, as well as routine maintenance needs. When unsafe conditions are identified they should be corrected immediately or the trail section should be barricaded from use until the trail can be made safe for public access.
2. Trail deficiencies should be noted and recorded in the GIS database. Once identified, these problems can be scheduled for correction.
3. Repairing and preventing erosion especially on the steepest portions of the trails will improve and help maintain a safe tread surface. There are two areas that need priority attention: (1) the last 150 yards approaching Jackson from Taft has particularly eroded; and (2) the steepest section of the trail between upper and lower Taft. After installing additional steps and wooden beams as recommended in #5 through #7 in the Access and Circulation section, erosion control measures such as surrounding slopes using rocks, erosion cloth, net or other biodegradable materials, and/or the installation of drain dips or ditch channels are needed to prevent or at the very least slow down erosion. It should be added that the installation of the steps and wooden beams also assist in erosion control.
4. Vegetation along the main trail needs to be cut back approximately every two years.
5. The City needs to foster the Adopt-a-Trail program as some of the maintenance projects are ideal for volunteers. Maintenance projects located near Poison Oak should not be identified for volunteers. Keeping the main trail cut back as well as clear from debris are projects that could be coordinated with an Adopt-a-Trail program, for example.

Benches and Viewing Corridors

The most prominent viewing corridor is the trail running parallel to Taft Street along the Crest of Albany Hill. From the 1991 Plan, there were four suggestions for benches which have been installed, but need to be repaired and/or replaced. Photographs of the benches listed currently located on the crest are provided on [page 11](#).

East facing bench: view to East Bay hills (one bench currently near the cross)

South West facing bench: view to SF (one bench currently near the cross)

West facing bench: view to Mt Tamalpais and Golden Gate (one bench currently)

Taft Street circle: view of East Bay hills (one bench approximately 100 yds from circle)

There are also two benches located in City Park for a total of six benches currently on Albany Hill.

Recommendations for the viewing corridor and benches:

1. Views to these Bay Area landmarks should be maintained by controlling eucalyptus seedlings and by pruning view-blocking on existing Eucalyptus. Branches blocking views will need to be cut back approximately every two years.
2. All six of the existing benches need to be repaired or replaced as most of the back panels have been removed and the benches are covered with graffiti.
3. One or two additional benches should be installed along the crest trail facing east. There is an open area where the view is spectacular with no tree branches blocking the view. A photograph of this area is provided on [page 11](#).

Signage

Currently signage on Albany Hill consists of a fire sign at each of the four entrances as well as signs at the end of Jackson Street. At the end of Jackson Street there is a very small sign with Albany Hill rules per the City Municipal Code. There are no educational signs and no trail map signs located on Albany Hill at this time.

Recommendations for signage:

1. Signs identifying Albany Hill with a trail map should be placed at each of the four entrances; Taft, Madison, Pierce, and Jackson. The sign should also include basic rules for Albany Hill per the Municipal Code.
2. An educational sign including information regarding the various vegetation areas and a brief history of the Hill should be placed at the upper entrance of Taft. The design of the sign and the information to include should be discussed by the Parks and Recreation

Commission in the near future. No other locations for education signs are being proposed.

3. At the upper Taft entrance, a sign describing the trail difficulty including grade information should be placed at the beginning of the ramp that is recommended in the Access and Circulation section. Another sign warning of a grade change should be placed just before the cross where the trail becomes much steeper. The trail description signs will allow those with limited mobility an opportunity to decide if they are able to traverse the trail safely.

Signs with Albany Hill rules per City Ordinances 8-4.3 through 8-4.4 could be summarized to make for a more readable sign as follows:

1. No bicycles or motor bikes allowed on Albany Hill
2. No person shall use remain in or enter upon Albany Hill area between 10:00 p.m. and 5:30 a.m.,
3. No overnight camping
4. No fires or fireworks of any kind.
5. No digging or removing any soil, rock, sand, stones, trees, shrubs, plants or other wood and/or materials, or make any excavation without permission from the City.
6. No littering

Cost Estimates for Trail Circulation and Maintenance Projects:

Project	Cost	Comments
Staircase at Lower Taft	\$88,592	Wooden steps similar to Catherine's Walk
Pierce Street Path next to El Cerrito Creek	\$29,434	¾" crushed rock
Ramp at Upper Taft Entrance	\$59,783	Graded for ADA compliance
Additional wooden steps (all locations)	\$250-\$300 per step	Cost includes materials and labor
Erosion Control	TBD	Could be done in-house
Bridge: Adams Street @ Cerritos Creek	\$162,000	
Bridge: Belmont St. @ Cerritos Creek	\$197,000	
Smaller Signs	\$100-\$150/sign	Smaller signs with map and rules
Educational Sign	Pending design and size	
Annual Inspection (including GPS inputting and report writing)	30 hours @ \$15/hr \$450	If full-time staff is unavailable, part-time staff could be assigned
Annual Trail Maintenance; clearing trails, cutting back vegetation, repairing benches, signs, steps	200 hours @ \$15/hr \$3,000	Additional part-time hours when volunteers and full-time staff are not available

Conclusion

The overall objectives of the updated 2012 Albany Hill Creekside Master Plan are to maintain the existing trails (with no additional trails recommended), improve circulation with relatively minor trail improvements, and develop a maintenance plan that includes an annual inspection of the trails and trail amenities such as benches, steps, and signs. Nearly all of the recommendations from the 1991 Albany Hill Creekside Master Plan remain in the 2012 updated Plan with the addition of more detailed trail maintenance and erosion control recommendations.



Steps at lower Taft on private property. New steps are being proposed on City owned property just north (or to the right of the privately owned steps.) #2 from the Access and Circulation recommendations.



At the primary entrance at the top of Taft, install a ramp that has an ADA compliant grade to allow those with limited mobility an opportunity to enjoy the crest which hosts the best east and west views on Albany Hill. #4 from the Access and Circulation recommendations.



Steps off of Jackson. #6 from the Access and Circulation recommendations.



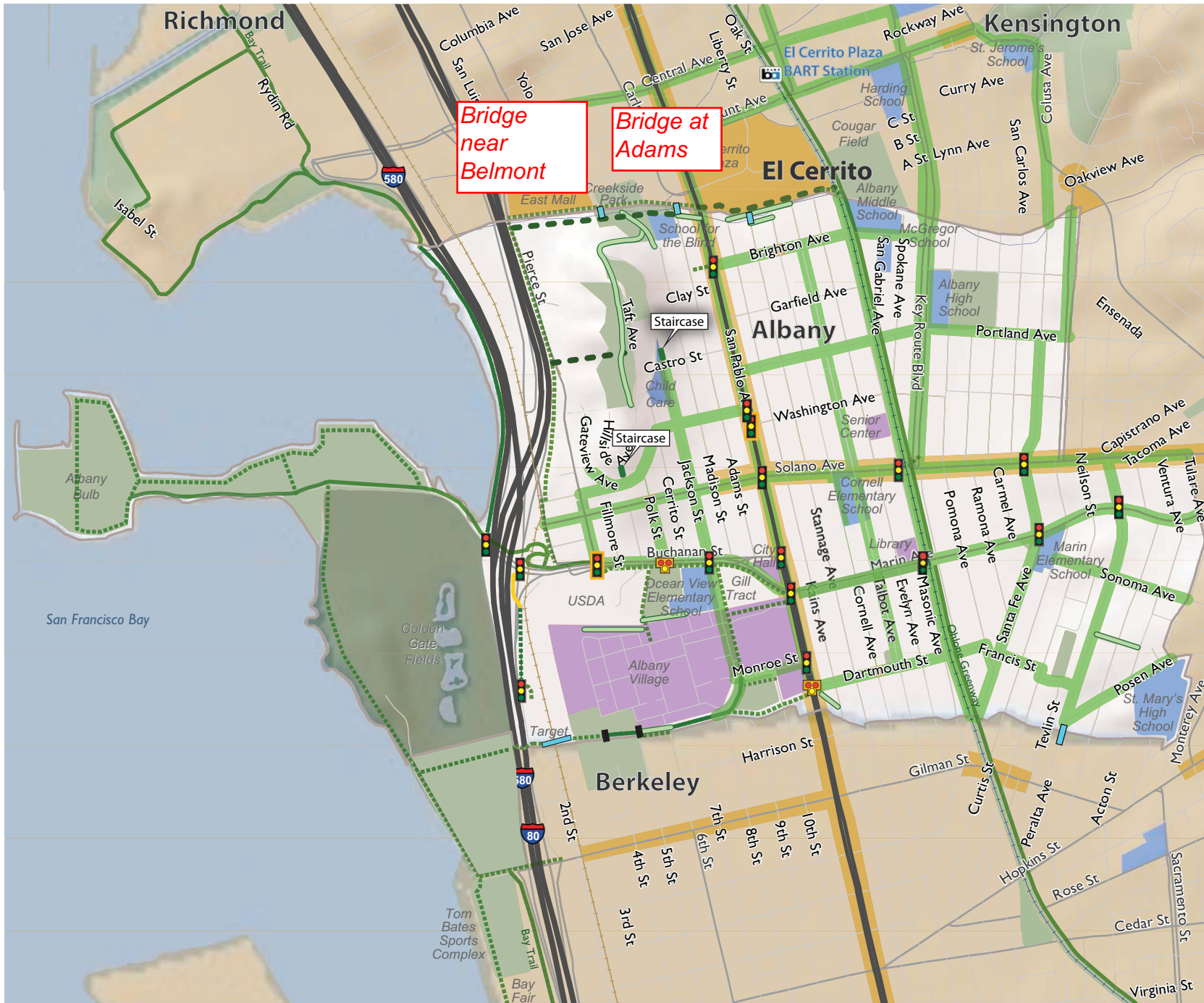
Logs on the Madison Trail. A similar installation is recommended on the steepest parts of the trail on the crest of the Hill. #7 from the Access and Circulation recommendations.

Current bench locations: east and north facing benches next to the cross, west facing bench near the center of the crest, and the east facing bench near the Taft entrance.



Recommended location for one or two additional east facing benches on the crest.





Bridge near Belmont

Bridge at Adams

- Albany**
- Proposed Pedestrian Priority Network
 - Class I Shared Use Path (Pedestrian & Bikes Permitted)
 - Pedestrian Only Path
 - - - Proposed Class I Shared Use Path (Ped & Bikes Permitted)
 - - - Proposed Pedestrian Only Path
 - Albany City Limits
 - BART Station
 - BART Line
 - Schools
 - Points of Interest
 - Commercial District
 - Parks
 - Racetrack
 - Existing Signal
 - Proposed Signal
 - Proposed Ped Hybrid Beacon
 - Proposed Pedestrian/Bicycle Bridge
 - Existing Pedestrian/Bicycle Bridge

Notes:

1. Location of Creekside trails is not precise.
2. Proposed Pedestrian Priority Network in El Cerrito is from the El Cerrito Pedestrian Master Plan.

