

CITY OF ALBANY  
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION  
STAFF REPORT

Agenda date: May 8, 2014

**TO:** Parks and Recreation Commission

**FROM:** Chelle Putzer, Recreation and Community Services Director

**SUBJECT:** Ohlone Greenway

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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

That the Parks and Recreation Commission discuss and provide feedback to Staff and Landscape Architects Robin Kim and Mia Docto regarding the areas along the Ohlone Greenway that have been identified for possible modification.

**BACKGROUND**

BART is currently seismically retrofitting the columns under the BART tracks in Albany. Gates and Associates, a consulting firm hired by the City to assist in creating a Master Plan for the Ohlone Greenway, worked with the Commission, staff, and citizens to develop and review design plans for the Ohlone Greenway. During the planning phase in 2008, the community involvement process for the design of the Ohlone Greenway was extensive. Ideas regarding a par course, community gardens, a tree demonstration area, play equipment, etc., were ideas generated from the community discussions. Due to funding limitations, the plan that was ultimately submitted and approved by Council included pedestrian/bicycle path, irrigation, and tree/vegetation improvements only.

Planning for the Ohlone Greenway was again discussed after Measure WW was passed in 2008. For the first few months in 2009, the Parks and Recreation Commission developed a list of potential projects for Measure WW funding. Ohlone Greenway improvements were among the projects listed, but did not end up on the list of projects presented and approved by Council. Ideas generated for Measure WW funds mostly included beautification projects with the understanding that BART and the City needed an opportunity to finalize plans for the BART retrofit project along the Ohlone Greenway.

In December 2011 discussion regarding Ohlone Greenway recreational amenities was again brought to the Parks and Recreation Commission by a group of residents interested in replacing the par course. In an effort to have a comprehensive plan and consider short-term and long-term community needs and potential projects for the Ohlone Greenway, the Parks and Recreation Commission has agreed to open up the discussion again to hear what amenities the community would like to see along the Ohlone Greenway.

Discussions resumed at the PR Commission meetings on March 14, 2013 and April 11, 2013 about possible amenities that could be added to the Ohlone Greenway and a community survey was posted on the City's website to encourage input from residents. On February 9, 2014 and February 13, 2014 the Commission held walking tours of the Greenway led by Tony Wolcott, the City of Albany's Urban Forester.

On May 3, 2014, staff met with Landscape Architects Robin Kim and Mia Docto, who have agreed to assist the City of Albany (pro bono) in developing communitywide a plan for Greenway.

## **DISCUSSION**

Per the agreement with BART, the Ohlone Greenway is under a one year warranty from the completion date of the project and the City may modify the Greenway until the warranty has expired. The warranty on one section of the Greenway, between Brighton and Garfield, has expired and turned over to the City. The remaining sections will be turned over to the City in approximately ten months.

The Ohlone Greenway east of the bike/pedestrian path is owned by the City of Albany and the area west of the bike/pedestrian path to the street is a BART easement. Staff is in the process of clarifying if approval from BART is required for any changes to the BART easement section.

Through the years there has been much community input regarding the development of the Ohlone Greenway. For instance, in addition to what has already been mentioned, the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan completed in 2004, recommended that the planning process include consideration of the following types of improvements to the Greenway:

- New lighting system (Completed)
- Automatic irrigation system and general landscape improvements (Completed as part of the BART project)
- Specialized trail surfaces for bicycles, running, and walking (Completed as part of the BART project)
- Game courts
- An interpretive trail
- Native plantings (part of the BART project)
- Community gardens
- Play structures (tots) (Although not allowed due to decibel levels of BART Trains)

Ideas most recently generated through community outreach efforts to be included are a par course/fitness trail elements and a fruit and nut tree orchard. The Albany Arts Master Plan has recommended public art be placed in the Ohlone Greenway and the West Contra Costa/Albany Transit Wayfinding Plan has identified signage to be included along the Greenway for bikers and pedestrians.

Possible additional elements that have been suggested are:

- Historical signage
- Marking creeks that run under the Greenway and are located at both of Albany's entrances (map/historical signage and creek markings on Greenway)
- Public posts or public posting spots for general announcements and to be used as designated emergency posting locations
- Bike Fix stations
- Edible Landscape areas
- Memorial Tree grove
- Tree markers to identify trees on the Greenway and in the street tree demo areas

- Additional seating
- Tiny book libraries
- Welcome signs at Berkeley and El Cerrito boarders
- Relocate 5 large rocks that were moved from the Sr. seating area

Additional ideas may be generated through community outreach efforts.

Funding for implementing improvements for the Ohlone Greenway has not been approved or identified at this time.