

**CITY OF ALBANY
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA
STAFF REPORT**

Agenda date: June 17, 2019

Reviewed by: NA

Subject: Authorization to Submit a Grant Application to the California Coastal Conservancy Priority Conservation Area for the Albany Hill Access Improvements Project

Report By: Robert Gonzales, Capital Improvements Program Manager
Mark Hurley, Public Works Director/City Engineer

SUMMARY

The action before the City Council is to authorize submitting a grant application for funding from the California Coastal Conservancy in cooperation with the Metropolitan Transportation Commission for the Albany Hill Access Improvements Project (Project). Staff submitted a Letter of Interest to the Priority Conservation Area (PCA) grant committee Project in March 2019 and the grant committee has invited the City of Albany to apply for a 2019 PCA grant. The Project involves design and construction of trail improvements to the Albany Hill Park including construction of an ADA compliant trail from the parking area at the end of Taft Street to the summit. City staff has completed the plans, specifications, estimate (PS&E) and CEQA compliance and the proposed project is included in the Capital Improvement Program. On January 22, 2019 Council approved the Project Call for Bids.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

That the Council adopt Resolution No. 2019-52 authorizing the City Manager to submit the Albany Hill Access Improvements Project to the California Coastal Conservancy for a 2019 Priority Conservation Area grant.

BACKGROUND

In 2012, Council adopted the Albany Hill Creekside Park Master Plan which included recommendations to 1) improve the existing trail system to improve safety, access, and circulation; 2) repair existing amenities including benches, viewing areas, and signage and 3) construct a pedestrian bridge across Cerrito Creek at Belmont Avenue (El Cerrito). The 2016-2020 CIP approved the Project and established Measure R as a funding source. In April 2018, Council approved a design contract with Restoration Design Group (RDG) to prepare design drawings, specification and a construction cost estimate for the project (Resolution No. 2018-39). This work is largely complete.

The project design has also been reviewed by a Monarch butterfly expert, Dr. Stuart Weiss of Creekside Science. Dr. Weiss's review of the project concluded that the project would not impact sensitive butterfly habitat on Albany Hill.

The Parks and Recreation Commission also provided design feedback on planned tree removal and potential impacts to Monarch butterfly habitat. Staff incorporated the comments into the design by adding the installation of bird boxes and the use of protective fencing around valuable Monarch habitat to the construction documents.

On January 22, 2019, Council approved the design and authorized a Call for Bids.

DISCUSSION

The PCA Grant Program is funded through the One Bay Area Grant (OBAG) program and was initiated by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission in 2013 to provide funding to cities, counties, park districts, utility districts and other agencies and non-profits to acquire, enhance or improve designated PCAs.

PCAs are open spaces that provide agricultural, natural resource, scenic, recreational, public health and/or ecological values and ecosystem functions. These areas are identified through consensus by local jurisdictions and park/open space districts as land in need of protection due to pressure from urban development or other factors. PCAs are categorized by four designations: Natural Landscapes, Agricultural Lands, Urban Greening, and Regional Recreation. Albany Hill was designated as a PCA in 2007 and is categorized as Agricultural Land. The designation covers City property as well as private development on and near Albany Hill.

The project scope includes trail improvements on the existing trail system between Madison and Jackson and between Jackson and Taft; ADA parking at the Taft Street turnaround, a new ADA Summit trail; and improvements to park entrances at Madison, Jackson and Taft. The project also includes selected tree removals and a new fire hydrant and buried water line to provide fire water service near the summit of the hill and selected tree removals. The Albany Fire Department requested both scope additions.

ENVIRONMENTAL CLEARANCE:

This project consists of park improvements and minor alterations of land and is determined to be categorically exempt under CEQA.

SUSTAINABILITY

The project would benefit the community by making Albany Hill more accessible. The project is consistent with the City's Strategic Plan Element 3.2.A to prioritize Albany Hill projects. The proposed improvements promote the use of City owned open space as well as residents' health and wellness.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Total project cost is estimated at \$1,890,000 including elements such as the Taft steps and the bridge over Cerrito Creek that are not planned for construction this summer. Staff plans to request approximately \$220,000 or 12% of the project cost through this grant application.

Attachments:

1. Resolution 2019-52

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RESOLUTION NO. 2019-52

**A RESOLUTION OF THE ALBANY CITY COUNCIL AUTHORIZING
THE CITY MANAGER TO SUBMIT ALBANY HILL ACCESS
IMPROVEMENTS FOR FUNDING FROM THE 2019 PRIORITY
CONSERVATION AREA GRANT PROGRAM**

WHEREAS, in 2012, the City Council adopted the Albany Hill Creekside Park Master Plan, and

WHEREAS, the Albany Hill Creekside Master Plan recommends improvements to the existing trail system to improve safety, access, and circulation; repair existing amenities including benches, viewing areas, and signage; and construction of a pedestrian bridge across Cerrito Creek at Belmont Avenue (El Cerrito); and

WHEREAS, on March 19, 2018, the City Council adopted Resolution No. 2018-36 authorizing the adoption of the FY2018 – FY2022 Five Year Capital Improvement Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Capital Improvement Plan establishes a strategic planning document for capital projects including scoping, scheduling and funding individual projects to be implemented within five years; and

WHEREAS, the Capital Improvement Plan included funding through Measure R for the Albany Hill Access Improvements Program; and

WHEREAS, in April 2018, Council approved a contract for design services to prepare plans, specifications, and a construction cost estimate for the Project; and

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WHEREAS, the Project was presented to the Parks and Recreation Commission five times to solicit feedback on specific project elements including trail materials for the summit path; and

WHEREAS, the project design has been reviewed by Dr. Stewart Weiss, a recognized expert on the Monarch butterfly and its habitat and the Project was found to have no impact on the sensitive butterfly habitat on Albany Hill; and

WHEREAS, on January 22, 2019, the City Council approved the project design and a Call for Bids for the Project.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Albany City Council authorizes the City Manager to submit the Albany Hill Access Improvements Project to the California Coastal Conservancy in cooperation with the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and Association of Bay Area Governments.

ROCHELLE NASON, MAYOR