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PARKS + OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

A well designed and maintained interconnected network of neighborhood and community parks, waterfront open spaces, recreational facilities and natural habitat areas is essential to supporting the health and well-being of the community, sustaining and preserving the quality of the natural environment, and countering climate change.



THE GOALS OF THE OPEN SPACE, RECREATION + PARKS ELEMENT ARE TO:

GOAL 1



MAINTAIN & ENHANCE

Maintain, enhance and improve the existing system of parks, open spaces, Nature Reserves, trails, and recreational facilities.

GOAL 2



EXPAND & IMPROVE

Expand and improve the parks and open space system to address the evolving needs of a growing community, serve all residents and neighborhoods equitably throughout the city, and adapt to the climate crisis.



photo: Maurice Ramirez

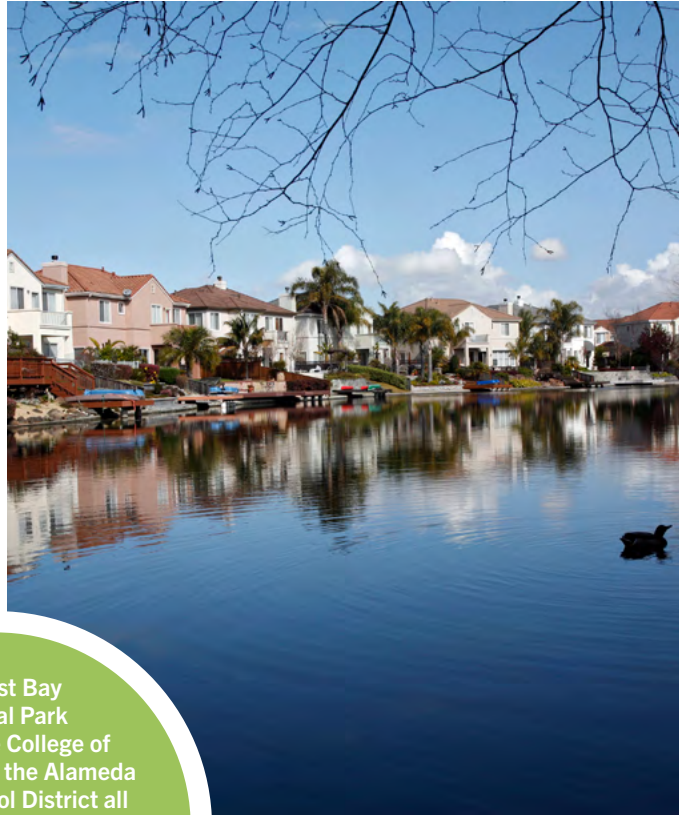
INTRODUCTION TO THE OPEN SPACE, RECREATION + PARKS ELEMENT

A growing population, evolving community needs and recreational preferences, and a changing climate are placing new demands and financial challenges on the community's network of open spaces, parks and recreational facilities.

Alameda's island setting provides a variety of unique open space, recreation, park and natural habitat resources for its residents and visitors. The San Francisco Bay, Oakland Estuary, San Leandro Bay, wetlands, marshes, tidal flats, beaches, public boat launches, small boat marinas, neighborhood and community parks, and recreational facilities provide an interconnected network of open space, parks, and recreational facilities that serve all Alameda residents, business employees, visitors, and local wildlife.

As the demands on the network grow, including rising groundwater and sea levels, many parks, trails and buildings must be managed to maximize the services they provide Alameda. Planning for the future of the community's open space, parks, and recreation network

must include planning for the financial resources needed to preserve, maintain and expand the size and diversity of that network. The City's recreation and parks program maintains more building floor area in support of its public programs than any other department or function in the City of Alameda. Unfortunately, many of these buildings are old, are suffering from the effects of deferred maintenance, and are not adequately accommodating access for individuals with disabilities. Expanding and modifying the network of parks and open spaces to address the needs of a changing population and climate will require additional financial resources and expanded partnerships with other public agencies, the private sector, and the Alameda community. Providing adequate maintenance for the growing network and the buildings and infrastructure that support those lands and facilities will also require increased expenditures of public resources. This will require a wide variety of funding sources, including state and federal grants, local General Fund allocations, development impact fees, and corporate funding.



The East Bay Regional Park District, the College of Alameda, and the Alameda Unified School District all provide important open space, and sports and recreational facilities that complement and support the City's open space and parks network.



TABLE A: CITY OF ALAMEDA OWNED AND OPERATED OPEN SPACE, PARK AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

Community Parks	Approximate Size in Acres
Jean Sweeney Open Space Park	10.64
Krusi Park	7.46
Leydecker Park	5.88
Lincoln Park	7.8
Main Street Linear Park	11
Neptune Park	3.08
Shoreline Park	31.83
Washington Park	14.71
Washington Dog Park	5.7
TOTAL COMMUNITY PARK ACREAGE	98.1
Neighborhood Parks	Approximate Size in Acres
Bayport Park	4.25
Enterprise Park	13.4
Franklin Park	2.98
Godfrey Park	5.45
Chochenyo Park	2.27
Lexington Fields	6.96
Littlejohn Park	3.45
Longfellow Park	1.14
Main Street Dog Park	1.3
Marina Cove Waterfront Park	3.2
Marina Village Park	4.5
McKinley Park	1.22
Portola Triangle	2.15
Rittler Park	4.81
Tillman Park	4
Towata Park	1.55
Woodstock Park	3.96
TOTAL NEIGHBORHOOD PARK ACREAGE	66.59
Regional Parks	Approximate Size in Acres
Alameda Point City Skate Park + Multipurpose Field	5.35
Bill Osborne Model Airplane Field	1.3
Corica Park and Golf Complex	332
Estuary Park Athletic Fields	4.26
Harrington Soccer Field	2.02
Grand Street Boat Launch Facility	n/a
Encinal Boat Ramp Launch Facility	n/a
TOTAL RECREATION ACREAGE	344.93
TOTAL EXISTING	509.62





GOAL 1: MAINTAIN & ENHANCE

Maintain, enhance and improve the existing system of parks, open spaces, nature reserves, trails, and recreational facilities.

POLICIES:

OS-1

Parks and Open Space Funding. Secure adequate and reliable funding for the development, rehabilitation, programming and maintenance of parks, community and recreation facilities, trails, greenways, and open space areas.

Actions:

- a. **Equitable Budget Process.** Provide an annual opportunity for a representative group of the public to review the park maintenance budget and comment on upcoming priorities and plans to ensure compliance between the biannual Capital Improvement Program and the General Plan.
- b. **Maintenance.** Monitor parks and open space and recreational facilities on a regular basis and identify those sites that require repair, renovation and/or improvements. Assign high priority to maintenance and renovation of existing parks and facilities.
- c. **Assessment Districts.** Consider establishing neighborhood park assessment districts to fund neighborhood park maintenance and improvements.
- d. **Natural Areas.** Annually consider restoring and preserving natural areas for habitat protection, climate adaptation and passive recreation use such as walking, hiking, and nature study.
- e. **Recreation Areas.** Annually consider developing areas for recreation use, active transportation and public access along the islands' shorelines and interior. Improve parks and related open space facilities to ensure safety for users and adjacent properties.

OS-2

Partnerships. Pursue and develop partnerships with federal, regional, and local non-profits, agencies, organizations, and districts to reduce the costs borne by the City of Alameda for the acquisition, construction, operations, and/or maintenance of parks, open space, facilities and programs. (See also Policies ME-24 and HS-16).

Actions:

- a. **Alameda Unified School District (AUSD) Partnerships.** Continue to support and collaborate with the AUSD to ensure that school and park open space joint uses are optimized.
- b. **East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) Partnerships.** Continue to support and collaborate with the EBRPD to ensure and protect the benefits of regional parks in Alameda. Collaborate with the EBRPD to develop, operate and maintain facilities and programs at regional parks including Alameda Point Northwest Regional Shoreline Park, Encinal Beach, Crown Memorial State Beach and Alameda Beach, portions of the Bay Trail, and the Elsie D. Roemer Bird Sanctuary.
- c. **Federal Partnerships with the U.S. Veterans Administration and U.S. Fish and Wildlife.** Continue to develop and sustain partnerships with the Veterans Administration and the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife to ensure the protection and maintenance of the Nature Reserve at Alameda Point.
- d. **Private Sector Partnerships.** Continue to develop public-private partnerships for the development, maintenance and operation of publicly accessible open space and recreational facilities, such as the Corica Park Golf Course Complex, Alameda Point Sports Complex, and the development of new parks at Alameda Point and along the Northern Waterfront.

OS-3

Revenue Generating Opportunities. Pursue and develop revenue generating approaches, including cost recovery opportunities, concessions, design flexibility, independent use, and opportunities for rentals.

Actions:

- a. **Leases.** Consider long term leases for complementary revenue generating uses, such as concessions or other uses available to the public.
- b. **Sponsorship.** Consider corporate sponsorship and/or naming rights agreements that do not limit or change public access rights.

OS-4

Grant Funding Opportunities. Continue to pursue park and open space grant opportunities and cooperative agreements with local, regional, state and federal agencies for expansion of the City’s park and open space system.

OS-5

Accessibility For All. Continue to upgrade parks, trails, and community facilities to ensure accessibility and inclusivity for all residents. (See also Policies LU-2, LU-3 and LU-24).

OS-6

Efficient Operations. Reduce operational duplication and provide services, programs, and facilities as efficiently as possible.



Photo by Alain McLaughlin



SPOTLIGHT

**MONARCH BUTTERFLY**

These orange and black butterflies make massive migrations from August-October, flying thousands of miles south to winter along the California coast and in central Mexico. Every fall, the monarch flies to the same overwintering sites and frequently to the same trees. Alameda Point, Estuary Park, and the Chuck Corica Golf Complex on Bay Farm Island have all served as autumnal roost sites for these unique butterflies on their long annual travels. Given the subspecies of the Monarch Butterfly that calls North America home, *Danaus plexippus*, is imperiled. Preserving winter habitats along the California coast is a conservation priority.

**LEAST TERN**

The California least tern, by far the smallest member of the gull family, has become a top priority in recent decades for Open Space planning at Alameda Point. In the summer breeding and hatching season, the endangered species often has over 300 nests on Alameda Point thanks to continued efforts to protect and improve its habitat. The tern migrates south each year to Mexico and Guatemala and feeds primarily on small fish and shrimp.

**GOAL 2: EXPAND & IMPROVE**

Expand and improve the parks and open space system to address the evolving needs of a growing community, serve all residents and neighborhoods equitably throughout the city, and adapt to the climate crisis.

POLICIES**OS-7**

An Interconnected Network. Promote the creation of and maintenance of a comprehensive, seamless, interconnected system of parks, open space, commercial recreation, trails, and urban forest that frames and complements the City's waterfronts, neighborhoods, and commercial areas. (See also Policies LU-3 and ME-10).

Actions:

- a. **Trails.** *Continue to create a network of safe and convenient pedestrian and bicycle trails connecting all public open spaces, parks, and recreational facilities to improve access to parks and destinations throughout Alameda.*
- b. **On-Street Connections.** *Promote improvements to on-street connections to ensure pedestrian and bicycle safety where separated trails are not feasible.*
- c. **Slow Streets.** *Work with community stakeholders to expand a network of slow streets to create additional spaces for active recreation, while maximizing existing trails, open spaces and destinations to make them more accessible and enjoyable to more people.*
- d. **Flexible Spaces.** *Consider public and privately owned sites that could be made available for public use, such as community gardens and sports fields.*
- e. **Collaborative Design.** *Work with neighborhoods in the design of parks and recreational facilities to meet the unique needs and interests of residents.*

OS-8

Waterfront Access. Ensure safe and convenient access to the Alameda waterfront from all Alameda neighborhoods. (See also Policies LU-30 and ME-13).

Actions:

- a. **Trails.** *Expand the City's trail system to provide additional north-south trails and safe on-street connections to link neighborhoods to the closest waterfront shoreline facilities.*



- b. Bike Parking.** Provide bike parking at public access points along the waterfront.
- c. Preservation of View Corridors.** Preserve view corridors to the waterfront along public streets, pathways, and trails.
- d. Protect Public Rights-of-Way.** Prohibit private encroachments on public property and ensure that the use of public property does not create significant negative impacts to adjacent property owners.

- e. School Partnerships.** Work with the Alameda Unified School District in obtaining shoreline access at Lincoln Middle School, Paden School and Encinal High School.
- f. SF Bay Water Trail.** Add access to the water with public boat launches for non-motorized craft at strategic points around the island with connections to the SF Bay Water Trail.
- g. Continuous Public Shoreline Access.** Require that new developments along or adjacent to the waterfront provide continuous shoreline access to serve the public.



SPOTLIGHT

SF BAY
WATER TRAIL

The SF Bay Water Trail is a regional program that encourages non-motorized small boaters to safely enjoy the San Francisco Bay. Just as the SF Bay Trail connects people to the bay by land, this project promotes recreational access to the water itself.

While there are a couple trailheads in and around Alameda, the Encinal Beach and Boat Launch is Alameda's signature launch site for the Water Trail. This site, located between rich wildlife habitat areas, offers a unique way to see the wide variety of birds and other Bay wildlife that spend time near the shore.

OS-9

San Francisco Bay Trail. Support the completion of a continuous shoreline Bay Trail along the entire perimeter of the City of Alameda, refer to Figure 6.3. (See also Policies LU-30 and ME-13).

Actions:

- a. **Diversity of Uses.** *Support a variety of recreation activities including walking, rolling, running, bicycling, fishing, and vista points along the Bay Trail.*
- b. **Destinations.** *Promote the creation of a sequence of open spaces and activity areas that occur at significant points along the waterfront and offer recreational opportunities and enhance other uses along the waterfront.*
- c. **Room for Everyone.** *Ensure that the public access path along the waterfront includes a separated path for bicyclists or is wide enough to minimize conflicts between pedestrians and bicyclists.*
- d. **Neighborhood Connectivity.** *Support the creation of pedestrian and bicycle pathways and visual corridors along the waterfront that link the waterfront to inland neighborhoods.*
- e. **Resilience.** *Utilize current sea level rise projections when planning trail expansion and maintenance and design trail upgrades to ensure long-term resilience.*

OS-10

Cross Alameda Trail. Promote the completion of the Cross Alameda Trail for people walking, rolling and cycling from the Alameda Point park at Seaplane Lagoon to the Miller Sweeney Bridge to support access to the citywide network of parks. Refer to Figure 6.3. (See also Policy ME-13).

Action:

- a. **Oakland Connection.** *Work with the County of Alameda and the City of Oakland to provide safe and convenient pedestrian and bicycle facilities from the Cross Alameda Trail across the Miller Sweeney Bridge to the Bay Trail in Oakland.*

**FIGURE 6.3:
CROSS ALAMEDA TRAIL + BAY TRAIL ALIGNMENTS**

- Existing Public Parklands
- Existing Open Space/Habitat
- Planned Public Park
- Planned Waterfront Public Access
- Cross Alameda Trail
- San Francisco Bay Trail
- SF Bay Water Trail Trailhead
- Potential Bike + Pedestrian Bridge Locations

0 1,800 3,600



SPOTLIGHT

THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY TRAIL

One of the most ambitious trail networks in the United States, the San Francisco Bay Trail follows much of the shoreline of the San Francisco Bay. It is planned to provide over 500 miles of trails connecting residents of 77 cities with opportunities for active and passive recreation while enjoying fresher air and pleasant views that come with being close to the Bay. With the addition of ferry terminals, the Bay Trail will become a more important commuting corridor, especially for waterfront cities like Alameda.

CROSS ALAMEDA TRAIL

The Cross Alameda Trail, when completed, will provide a safe bicycle and pedestrian connection from Alameda Point to the Fruitvale Bridge. The rails-to-trails movement has become a massive success around the United States, with Atlanta’s BeltLine as the largest example of how linear parks can completely transform a city’s central neighborhoods. These linear parks have an advantage over their shoreline cousins in that they are surrounded by destinations, and ideally, connections, on all sides. The crown jewel of the

Cross Alameda trail, Jean Sweeney Open Space Park, is a rails to trails project that turned an old rail yard into a park that provides key walking and biking connections between Constitution Avenue and Sherman Street. With the rise of electric-assisted, shared micro-mobility options, the Cross Alameda trail could lead to a major reduction in car trips and improved access to Alameda’s top destinations as well as to key transportation hubs like the new ferry terminal at Seaplane Lagoon.



Planning for sea level rise and the impacts of climate change on the city's parks is an important goal of the General Plan.



OS-11

Climate Adaptation. Adapt the existing park and open space network to rising sea levels, more severe storm events and wave energy and rising groundwater. (See also Policies CC-21 and CC-33).

Actions:

- a. **Green Infrastructure.** Utilize natural, green or 'soft infrastructure' such as sand dunes and wetlands over 'hard infrastructure' (concrete seawalls and/or levees) wherever possible.
- b. **Hidden Benefits.** Recognize and promote the open space network as an expanding asset that contributes to community character, reduces stormwater runoff and increases citywide resiliency.

OS-12

Wildlife Habitat. Promote the preservation, protection and expansion of wildlife habitat areas, open space corridors, and ecosystems as essential pieces of the overall network and important contributors to building citywide resiliency. (See also Policy CC-27).

OS-13

Jean Sweeney Open Space Park. Support the completion of the last two phases of the 25-acre Jean Sweeney Open Space Park to include a community garden, demonstration gardens, walking trails, a bicycle skills loop, an outdoor classroom, picnic areas, and large areas of open space and trees.

OS-14

Estuary Park. Support the completion of the 8-acre Estuary Park to provide recreational facilities for the neighborhoods on the former Naval Air Station property in western Alameda to include passive recreational space, picnic areas, and basketball courts.

OS-15

City Aquatic Center. Partner with the Alameda Unified School District to develop a City Aquatic Center to serve the community's swimming needs and AUSD swim programs.

OS-16

Alameda Point Northwest Shoreline Park and Bay Trail Extension. Partner with the East Bay Regional Park District to develop a 158-acre waterfront public park and Bay Trail extension on the Northwest Territories.

OS-17

Alameda Nature Reserve and Bay Trail Extension. Partner with the Bureau of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Fish and Wildlife to create a seasonal trail along the shoreline of the Nature Reserve. (See also Policy CC-28).

Action:

- a. **Education.** Support creation of related educational facilities and programs.
- b. **Ship/Ferry Access.** Ensure access for ships, ferries, and water-taxis within the deep-water channel to the Alameda Point piers and the Seaplane Lagoon through the southern bay waters of the Nature Reserve.
- c. **Habitat.** Promote the maintenance of the breakwater gap and Breakwater Island for wildlife habitat.
- d. **Wetlands.** Support actions by the federal government that improve and manage wetlands, increase carbon sequestration, and support long-term climate resiliency for Alameda.

OS-18

DePave Park on the Seaplane Lagoon and Bay Trail Extension. Implement the development of the 22-acre western shore of the Seaplane Lagoon as a passive nature park with upland and floating wetlands, educational and interpretive programs, picnic areas, camping opportunities, and nature trails. (See also Policy CC-27).

OS-19

Seaplane Lagoon Park and Bay Trail Extension. Support the development of the northern and eastern shore of the Seaplane Lagoon as an urban waterfront with access to the Ferry Terminal, the Bay Trail, waterfront dining and cafes, passive recreation space, an outdoor amphitheater, public boat launches, and non-motorized watercraft rentals and lessons.

**SPOTLIGHT****WILDLIFE HABITAT
AREAS OF INTEREST**

The San Francisco Bay is the largest estuary along California's coastline, and the estuarine environment of marshlands, mudflats, salt production lands, and open water supports close to 100 species of fish. As an essential portion of the Pacific Flyway, a bird migration route which spans from Canada to Mexico, the Bay supports countless migratory as well as year-round bird species.

Alameda Nature Reserve: the endangered California least tern has its nesting sites in the Reserve. In spite of its restricted access, citizen scientists have identified 209 different species of birds from April 2004 to March 8, 2020 in the Reserve (source: eBird).

Elsie Roemer Bird Sanctuary has had sightings of 165 different species of birds from 2010-2019.

Robert W. Crown State Marine Conservation Area has had sightings of 189 species of birds (2010-2019), while in 2019 Alameda County as a whole had 298 species of birds identified within its borders.

Bay Farm Island was identified by Bay Area Greenprint as having much of Alameda's especially valuable habitat for federally endangered and threatened species.

Bay Farm Island Shoreline has had documented sightings of 126 species of birds (from 2010-2019), with its habitat value higher thanks to its proximity to Arrowhead Marsh (214 species) and other rich habitat areas like Peet's Pond (96 species).

The egret rookery on Bay Farm Island (on the lagoon by the Peter Pan School) has had sightings of 53 species of birds from 2010-2019.

Seaplane Lagoon has had sightings of 89 different bird species from 2010-2019.

Wetlands: Two separate beds of eelgrass provide distinctive habitat for marine organisms living in the waters off of Alameda. The bed which is southwest of Bay Farm Island is believed to be the richest grass bed left in San Francisco Bay, with respect to the presence of small animals. The grass is long and wide, grows quickly, and dozens of common species are known to be associated with this bed of eelgrass. The endangered Least Terns are known to forage on herring living in and around this eelgrass. The second bed of eelgrass off of Crab Cove, although shorter and growing in shallower water, probably also provides a nursery for fish species which the Least Terns nesting at Alameda Point (GPA 01-01) forage.

Continuing to upgrade parks, trails, and community facilities to ensure inclusivity for all residents and visitors is a primary goal of the General Plan.



(PHOTO BY ALAIN MCLAUGHLIN)

OS-20

Regional Sports Park. Promote the development of a 55-acre regional sports complex for active recreational uses and team sports, including baseball and softball diamonds, multi-purpose rectangular fields, expanded skate park, BMX park, tennis and pickleball courts.

OS-21

Waterfront Developments. Partner with private property owners to develop publically accessible waterfront open space and Bay Trail facilities in new waterfront developments. (See also Policies LU-18, LU-23, and CC-34).

Action:

a. New Open Space. Partner with private property owners and businesses to develop publicly accessible waterfront parks and trails at:

- » Alameda Landing Waterfront
- » Ballena Isle
- » Marina Village Shipways property
- » Former Windriver property on the Alaska Basin
- » Encinal Terminals and the Alaska Basin
- » Alameda Marina
- » Other future waterfront development

OS-22

Alameda Point Marine Conservation, Wildlife and Recreation Area. Support partnerships with regional, state, and federal conservation agencies, and volunteer non-governmental organizations to seek funding to enhance and protect habitat values, ensure safe public access, and foster appreciation of the marine environment just south of Alameda Point. (See also Policy CC-29).



SPOTLIGHT

SPECIAL STATUS WILDLIFE SPECIES

A number of species known to occur in and around Alameda are protected pursuant to federal and/or State of California endangered species laws, or have been designated Species of Special Concern by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Special status wildlife species that have been observed or have a moderate to high potential to occur in and around Alameda, include:



MARINE SPECIES:

- + Green sturgeon
- + Central California coast coho salmon
- + Central California coastal steelhead
- + Central Valley steelhead
- + Sacramento River winter-run Chinook salmon
- + Central Valley spring-run Chinook salmon
- + Longfin smelt
- + Pacific herring
- + Central Valley fall/late fall-run Chinook salmon
- + Pacific harbor seal
- + California sea lion



BIRDS, BUTTERFLIES, AND BATS:

- + California least tern
- + Western snowy plover
- + White-tailed kite
- + Peregrine falcon
- + California brown pelican
- + Monarch butterfly
- + Cooper's hawk
- + Great egret
- + Great blue heron
- + Burrowing owl
- + Great horned owl
- + Red-tailed hawk
- + Red-shouldered hawk
- + Northern harrier
- + Snowy egret
- + California horned lark
- + American kestrel
- + Caspian tern
- + Loggerhead shrike
- + California gull
- + Alameda song sparrow
- + Osprey
- + Double-crested cormorant
- + Townsend's big-eared bat
- + Ridgway's Rail
- + California Black Rail
- + Bryant's Savannah Sparrow