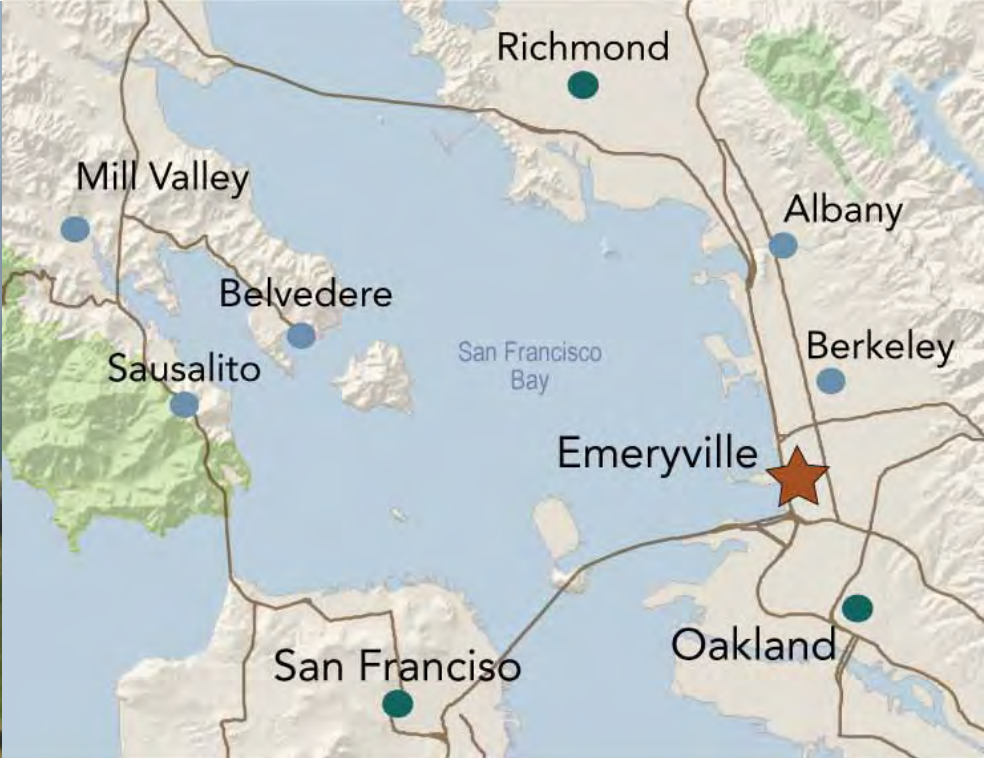




INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 2009, the City of Emeryville launched its first Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan. Building on the momentum and vision of the adopted Emeryville General Plan, this Strategic Plan establishes a course of action to create a sustainable and interconnected system of parks, recreation facilities, programs and services that promote recreation, health and environmental conservation as integral elements of the community.

The unique history and distinctive development and redevelopment pattern of Emeryville frame an interesting challenge for the community in expanding and maximizing the value of parks, recreation facilities and open spaces. The ongoing and deliberate shift in Emeryville from employment center to thriving mixed-use urban community necessitates flexibility in the park spaces, to serve the needs of current residents without jeopardizing the ability of new residents to help shape the community as well. This document, built on the strong foundation of the General Plan, is the community's plan for how to meet these challenges and create a beautiful, environmentally conscious and financially sustainable parks and recreation system.



CONTEXT

Emeryville is a compact city of just 1.2 square miles that occupies a unique location in the East Bay, between the cities of Berkeley to the north and Oakland to the south and east. The community is tightly integrated with its neighbors, sharing resources such as parks and libraries around its borders. Emeryville even jointly plans its border with Oakland. With its location on the San Francisco Bay, portions of the city enjoy views of San Francisco, the Golden Gate and Bay Bridges and the hills of Marin County to the west.

HISTORY

Emeryville's name came from early landowner Joseph Emery, who purchased a 185-acre tract in 1859. Emery set the tone of development that would dominate the area for nearly 100 years by financing multiple rail lines in the region. By the time Emeryville incorporated as a city in 1896, the area was already emerging as an industrial and rail terminal city.

Emeryville continued to grow during the early 1900s, until the city eventually began to expand into the bay on fill, creating the Emeryville Peninsula in the 1960s. A decade later, nation-wide shifts in the economy caused many urban areas to lose industry as businesses failed or moved elsewhere for cheaper land. In Emeryville, the city's industrial base also began to weaken, leaving behind vacant warehouses, factory and office buildings.

HUMANS HAVE LIVED IN THE VICINITY OF EMERYVILLE FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS. SOME OF THE EARLIEST INHABITANTS CREATED LARGE MOUNDS FROM DISCARDED SHELLS AND OTHER MATERIALS OVER TIME. ONE OF THESE MOUNDS, LOCATED AT THE MOUTH OF TEMESCAL CREEK, WHICH NOW FLOWS IN UNDERGROUND CULVERTS THROUGH THE CENTER OF EMERYVILLE, SURVIVED UNTIL THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY WHEN IT WAS DEMOLISHED FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT. THIS SITE, LOCATED AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE BAY STREET SHOPPING CENTER, HAS BEEN MEMORIALIZED AND INTERPRETED FOR THE PUBLIC.



The City built its first park—61st Street Mini Park—in 1976. This was soon followed by the Marina Park on the peninsula. Over the last 20 years, Emeryville has reemerged as one of the high-tech and regional retail centers of the Bay Area. Much of the City’s formerly underused and vacant industrial areas have been redeveloped as offices and retail markets.

DEMOGRAPHICS

The City’s current (2009 California Department of Finance estimate) population is 10,087. By 2030, Emeryville’s population is projected to reach 16,600 (July 2009 Draft Environmental Impact Report for the General Plan). Demographic analysis indicates that most of the population that will likely be in the 20 – 65 year age groups with an increasing number of seniors age 65 and up.

With approximately 20,000 jobs, Emeryville has almost twice as many employees as residents. The driving forces for projected employment growth are the expected office, hotel and retail developments and redevelopments. Overall, the more intensive land use pattern and the shift away from industrial uses will result in a net gain of 2.5 million square feet of non-residential building space and nearly 10,000 additional jobs.



LAND USE

Emeryville has developed distinct neighborhoods within its compact limits. Major streets and the I-80/I-580 freeway fragment the city. The freeway isolates the bayfront and peninsula with only one existing connection at Powell Street. Central Emeryville includes reused industrial sites and redeveloped areas with a dense mix of housing and commercial activity. On the eastern side of Emeryville, neighborhoods of single family homes begin at Doyle Street and continue into the Triangle Neighborhood, relatively cut off by busy San Pablo Avenue.

The city is almost entirely built-out, with only about 20 vacant acres, or four percent of the total land area. The General Plan also notes that parks and open spaces currently total seven percent of the City's land area. Emeryville will grow through redevelopment of existing underused sites, adding density and variety. The General Plan also calls for neighborhood centers and parks spaced for walking access, as well as expanded arts and cultural facilities, and designates park and open space land. The city's zoning ordinance provides greater detail about permitted uses.

TRANSPORTATION AND ACCESS

Transportation has defined the history and the transformation of Emeryville. From early rail connections, which continue to carry freight and passengers through the city, to the easy on-off access to the I-80 interstate bringing employees and shoppers from throughout the region. Commuters and residents take advantage of nearby Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) access, Alameda and Contra Costa County (AC) Transit and local Emery Go-Round shuttle services.

Compared to the average Bay Area resident, Emeryville residents rely on more alternative methods of commuting and rely less on driving alone. Walking and bicycling rates are particularly high amongst residents, likely due to the small size of the city and the level terrain. Major bike and pedestrian routes, such as the San Francisco Bay Trail and the Emeryville Greenway also make active transportation an attractive option. However, workers coming to Emeryville from other parts of the region tend to rely on driving, usually alone, to reach the city.





PUBLIC ART

Emeryville is well known for its promotion of the arts and is home to a lively community of artists. With help from the Emeryville Redevelopment Agency, a group of artists purchased two former industrial areas for artist space and, in 1987, artists formed the Emeryville Celebration of the Arts. Since then, there has been an annual art studio open house, as well as the Emeryville Art Exhibition. Since 1990, the City has been requiring a portion of all new private and public construction expenditures be used for art in the community. These public art funds have been applied, under the guidance of the Public Art Committee, to public art installations throughout the city.



GREEN DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

Emeryville is dedicated to improving the environment through planning and development of best practices for green design and development. Along with green building guidelines and energy conservation requirements, the City also encourages use of native landscaping, and salvaged, recycled and sustainably-harvested materials for new development. According to the City's climate action plan, by 2020 the City plans on reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by 25% from 2004 levels.

EMERYVILLE GENERAL PLAN

The City of Emeryville completed a General Plan process in the year that this Strategic Plan was begun, adopting the plan in October of 2009. The General Plan is designed to guide the growth and development of the City. The Plan focuses on enhancing livability and quality of life for the city's expanding population; fostering responsible sustainable development; increasing connectivity; and enhancing the public realm. Recognizing that each of these focus areas is strongly connected to parks and recreation, the City followed up the General Plan process with this planning effort to set a clear implementation path for the vision the community had established. The future parks and recreation system, described in Chapter 3 of this Strategic Plan, is based on the guiding principles of the General Plan.

PLANNING PROCESS

The planning process for this Strategic Plan was designed to determine the specific actions, capital improvements and initiatives necessary to move from the current system to the vision described in the General Plan. Figure 1 below illustrates the four phases of the Plan as well as the general timeline.



Figure 1: Planning Phases

Phase 1: Where Are We Now?

Phase 1 included an inventory of the current parks and recreation resources in Emeryville, focusing on park land, park facilities and recreation programming. Tasks in this phase included an analysis of the planning context, including a review of the geographic, historical and cultural context, local government and park providers, demographics and anticipated population growth, land use and development. Available under separate cover, the Existing Conditions Report includes a complete inventory of Emeryville’s parks and recreation resources.

Phase 2: Where Do We Want To Be?

The second phase identified and refined the community’s vision for parks and recreation, building on the guiding principles of the General Plan. During Phase 2, public involvement activities including community events and workshops, focus groups and a recreation questionnaire, helped identify public preferences and community needs for parks and recreation.

Phase 3: How Do We Get There?

In Phase 3, the planning team developed specific strategies and actions for improving the parks and recreation system. This phase generated conceptual park designs, a capital improvement plan and operational plan, resulting in the Administrative Draft Plan.

Phase 4: Adoption

In Phase 4, the Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan was available for public review, and was presented to staff, the Ad-Hoc Committee, the Planning Commission and the City Council for refinement and adoption.

MOVING TOWARD THE VISION

In the end, this process has validated and built on the vision of the Emeryville General Plan and has pointed implementation in three general directions.

COMPLETING ACTIVE PROJECTS

The community has started a number of projects that take advantage of one-time opportunities or fill a long-standing demand for connections and additional facilities. Strong support for expanding the greenways and moving forward with the City and School District partnership for a new joint facility was shown throughout the planning process.

COMMIT TO OPERATING RESOURCES

With many new facilities opening and nearing completion as the economic depression constrains the public resources available from the City's general fund, the challenge of how to sustain funding for the operation and maintenance of parks and recreation sites and facilities stands out. Initial attempts to fund this need with a special district were rejected by Emeryville property owners, leaving the question unresolved. Emeryville will need to build and strengthen partnerships with residents, property owners and employers. These partnerships need to be built on a shared understanding of the full range of benefits that well maintained parks provide. Further, in order to avoid making the situation worse, the City needs to carefully consider the availability of operating resources prior to moving forward with new projects.

SERVING THE TRIANGLE NEIGHBORHOOD

The Triangle neighborhood, with closely developed single family homes, creates a different challenge than much of the rest of Emeryville. With large scale redevelopment not intended for this area, making the most of the limited park land and adding an additional park site are particularly important. Enhancing the safety and use (often referenced as two sides of the same issue) of Temescal Creek Park and identifying an additional park site are the major recommendations.

The final priority setting is the purvue of the City Council, and the purpose of this document is to provide the projects and the decision making tools to assist them in that process.

DOCUMENT ORGANIZATION

Following the phasing of the planning process, this plan is organized into the following four chapters and three appendices:

Chapter 1: Introduction provides an overview of the planning and public involvement process, and describes the planning area and key demographic characteristics of Emeryville;

Chapter 2: Existing Park System describes parks and recreation activities and summarizes the city’s park and facility inventory, recreation programming and facility operations and maintenance;

Chapter 3: Future Parks and Recreation System presents the park system concept and supporting activities, as well recommendations to achieve the envisioned parks and recreation system;

Chapter 4: Plan of Action addresses the critical decisions the City will need to make to implement Plan recommendations, including capital projects and parks and recreation operations. This chapter also provides strategies to fund the future park system.

Appendices include the following:

Appendix A: Summary of Public Input

Appendix B: Design Guidelines

Appendix C: Capital and Operations Cost Model

Appendix D: Funding Opportunities

Other documents created during the planning process are also available under separate cover, including:

- *Planning Context Summary*
- *Existing Conditions Summary*
- *Community Needs Assessment and Preliminary Site Programming*