



CITY COUNCIL

**Darryl Moore**  
Councilmember District 2

CONSENT CALENDAR  
September 10, 2013

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council  
From: Councilmember Darryl Moore, District 2  
Councilmember Linda Maio, District 1  
Councilmember Kriss Worthington, District 7  
Subject: South Berkeley Santa Fe Right of Way Cost Estimate

RECOMMENDATION

Direct the City Manager to develop a cost estimate for the planning and implementation of the South Berkeley Santa Fe Right of Way (SF ROW) Greenway. The estimate would include rough costs for preparing a master plan, design drawings for, and construction of the greenway. The planning process should assume a “garden greenway”, i.e. a string of community gardens in combination with a multi-use path as the preferred alternative, as has been established through community-based process conducted thus far, and planning should be done in consultation with stakeholders that have been involved in the process to date (Berkeley Partners for Parks, Berkeley Gardening Collaborative, Rails to Trails, etc.). This estimate would be used as a benchmark for seeking grants and including the So. Berkeley SF ROW as a project in the potential Parks Bond Measure that the Parks and Waterfront Commission is presently evaluating for recommendation to the City Council.

BACKGROUND

**Basis for Recommendation:** South Berkeley has the fewest parks of any area in Berkeley and is in need of places to play, walk and bike, for community gardening, or just to sit and enjoy more natural surroundings. In addition, this segment of the Santa Fe ROW, stretching from Dwight Way to Oregon Street, (see Figure 2 in Attachment 1) - is fenced in and is unused, while the remainder of the Santa Fe corridor north of Dwight Way to the City’s border with Albany has been developed with a combination of parks, community gardens and the Ohlone Greenway. Indeed, this is the last segment of the 7-mile Santa Fe ROW corridor, stretching from Spiral Gardens (at Sacramento Street) to the Bay Trail in Richmond that has not been developed as a greenway. Creating this final link in this East Bay greenway is an opportunity of a lifetime for the City of Berkeley and its citizens.

The Santa Fe Right of Way community planning effort for the past five years has been a partnership of a variety of organizations and has a steering committee that periodically meets regarding planning efforts. The South Berkeley Santa Fe Right of Way partners/ stakeholders include:

- Berkeley Community Gardening Collaborative (BCGC) a *lead sponsor (Beebo Turman)*
- Berkeley Partners for Parks (BPFP) a *co-lead sponsor, (John Steere, President and coordinator of the SF ROW)*
- The Berkeley Ecology Center
- City of Berkeley - Public Health Department, Public Works Department, and Parks and Recreation Departments
- Rails To Trails Conservancy
- Berkeley Youth Alternatives or BYA (*maintains Strawberry Creek Park in the north end of the Project area.*)
- Center for Eco-literacy
- The Berkeley Path Wanderers
- San Pablo Park Neighborhood Council (*resident association near the southern terminus of SF ROW*)
- Spiral Gardens (*non-profit nursery located at the southern terminus of the SF ROW*)
- Friends of Westbrae Commons (*non profit coalition, maintains the "Ohlone Natural and Cultural History Corridor"*)
- Livable Berkeley (*organization that advocates for sustainable development in Berkeley*)
- University of California (including the Art Practices Department, Department of Environmental Planning and Landscape Architecture, Environmental Sciences, Policy and Management – Pallud Soil Sciences Lab)
- Neighbors of the South Berkeley Santa Fe ROW

**History of the Santa Fe Right of Way in Berkeley:** The Santa Fe Railroad operated on this ROW from Point Richmond to Oakland from 1904 to the 1960s. In 1977, the citizens of Berkeley approved "Measure Y," which provided about \$500,000 for the acquisition and development of the full 3.1-mile stretch of the Santa Fe Railroad Right-of-way (**SF ROW**) through Berkeley. Berkeley's City Council approved the acquisition in 1978. Two parks were built on the ROW in the early 1980s: Cedar-Rose Park and Strawberry Creek Park, built just south of University Avenue (this was the first removal from a culvert or "day-lighting" restoration of an urban creek in the nation). Since then and continuing to the present, the remainder of the SF ROW in Berkeley, particularly north of University Avenue, has been developed largely as a greenway, comprising a multi-use path; intermittently adjoined by other features, such as basketball courts, and community gardens (e.g., Peralta and Northside Gardens).

During the mid-1980's several affordable housing projects which were built on parcels adjacent to Channing and Dwight Way. In addition, immediately south of Ward Street, the City built a housing development, Sojourner Truth Way. Opposition to the continued loss of the SF ROW as a public asset led to the passage of the voter-approved Measure L which mandated retention of the remainder of the corridor as open space.

The Santa Fe ROW is formally recognized in the Open Space Element of the Berkeley General Plan (2000), which includes two policies related to the protection of the undeveloped portions of the SF ROW by indicating that no segments should not be sold off for housing, but be entirely retained as public "open space" in a multipurpose manner "including for greenways, parks, and community gardens."

There have been three community-led and developed improvements to SF ROW in the past two decades. In the early 1990s, the City granted Berkeley Youth Alternatives the use of one block of the Santa Fe ROW—between Bancroft Street and Channing Way—for a youth-training and community garden. It remains a large and active garden today. In 2003, the City Council approved Spiral Gardens' plan to build a plant nursery and urban farm at Sacramento and Oregon streets, at the very south end of the Santa Fe ROW. It is now a thriving native and edible plants nursery and educational center that also sells fresh produce from a street-stand. The third addition was the construction of a paved multi-use pathway running north of University Avenue for three blocks to Delaware Street and an informal, Berkeley Partners for Parks' affiliates-led development of a trail on the corridor between Delaware and Lincoln Streets, connecting it to the Ohlone Greenway.

Some Berkeley community members have been interested in converting the Santa Fe ROW into a succession of green spaces since the early 1980s. During that time, a group formed to encourage the City to allocate funds. Community participation has been a key element in many of the existing greening, and park projects that have been established along the corridor, although public outreach and participation focusing on the So. Berkeley SF ROW began relatively recently.

2005 and 2006 a class of Landscape Architecture graduate students from the University of California, Berkeley conducted outreach to better understand the desires and concerns of community members related to the Berkeley Santa Fe corridor. Their work, which culminated in a publication that summarized their projects, "Citizen Participation in the Planning Process... Berkeley Parks and Open Space," contributed a wealth of knowledge and new ideas about how to transform the physical space of this corridor. In May 2006, the UC Berkeley students presented their projects to the community at a meeting in the old Santa Fe Depot (now the Montessori School). The community gathering brought renewed interest to the potential for re-developing the corridor. Community members began to talk together and brainstorm on how to get organized. Soon after the students' presentation, a stakeholder meeting was convened in May 2006, including Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, Berkeley Partners for Parks, the Berkeley Community Gardening Collaborative, Mayor Tom Bates and several other community

organizations. The goal of the convening was to continue the planning process for the remaining available space along the Santa Fe ROW.

### **Community-based Planning Initiatives: 2009 to Present**

In November 2009, Berkeley Councilmember, Darryl Moore, whose district includes the southern portion of the SF ROW, helped to organize a community meeting to re-connect with Berkeley residents regarding the project of planning and developing the remaining open space. More than 40 people convened at the San Pablo Park Community Center to discuss the future uses of the Santa Fe Corridor. Among the potential open space features that were most-favored by the participants were a community garden or orchard, habitat restoration, a small, continuous pathway, a dog parks/run and tot-lot(s). Many expressed the desire that the space support multiple purposes, and that while nearby San Pablo Park is devoted mainly to active sports, this space should complement the park by focusing on more passive uses.

In addition, the City authorized the preparation and publication of a “Vision Document” by the Rails to Trails Foundation, in cooperation with Berkeley Partners for Parks and the Berkeley Community Garden Collaborative, which resulted in ***The Berkeley Santa Fe Right-of-Way: AN OVERVIEW: HISTORY AND OPPORTUNITIES*** ( 2010). (See Attachment 1) The document was sponsored by the City of Berkeley and overseen by the City’s Parks and Recreation and Waterfront Department.

Other community-based efforts and grants secured in the past several years include:

- **2009-2010 – Chancellors Grant for the “mobile mural”** (\$12,000). The mural was painted by neighbors of all ages and represents the expression of the community’s vision for the Santa Fe ROW. That vision includes community gardens/linear urban farm and a greenway for bicyclists and pedestrians. The “Mobile Mural” project was funded by a UC Berkeley Chancellors Grant and is part of a larger community planning process spearheaded by the Berkeley Community Gardening Collaborative (BCGC) and the Berkeley Partners for Parks (BPPF). Imagine the public land behind this fence, and running for several blocks in each direction, like the scene portrayed in this mural...it is meant to inspire and mobilize the wider community toward creating a green and growing corridor across South Berkeley. It is called a mobile mural since the intention is to move the mural to cyclone fences at other street crossings of the Santa Fe ROW over the next few years.
- **2010-2011 National Park Service: Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program/Grant.** BPPF and BCGC secured a grant for 12 to 18 months of a planner from the National Parks Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Programs to lead the preparation of an opportunities and constraints analysis and schematic plan for the South Berkeley SF ROW. City of Berkeley Parks staff determined that it did not have staff time to support this effort and abandoned the partnership.

- **2012-2014 Chancellors grant for Bioremediation Garden (\$40,000):** This Project involves a n active research garden on the SF ROW using Brake Ferns as a biological means to safely remediate soil toxins, in particular, Arsenic. It is being conducted by UC Berkeley's Environmental Science, Policy, and Management (ESPM) Department in cooperation with Berkeley Partners for Parks, the Ecology Center and the Spiral Gardens. The Pallud Lab of UC Berkeley's ESPM Department is supervising the research plots on the SF ROW, being conducted via a two year lease with the City of Berkeley. The Ecology Center in collaboration with Spiral Gardens will plan, promote, and execute the six public educational workshops throughout the grant period. These workshops will be variations on the theme of soil contamination.

**Conclusion:** In order to move forward with converting the use of the S. Berkeley Santa Fe Right-of-Way from unutilized plots of land into something that could serve the broader community, it is crucial to conduct a comprehensive planning process and to better understand the costs involved in implementation. If the City were to establish a cost estimate for this type of project, it would be in a better position to understand its feasibility and/or how to move forward in an appropriate fashion. The initial community outreach seemed to indicate a great deal of interest in converting the Santa Fe Right-of-Way into a community amenity. This interest will likely translate into considerable community involvement in helping to maintain and manage the space, which could reduce overall city operating costs, particularly if ROW maintenance is performed using a non-profit model, with the Ecology Center or similar organization operating the community gardens and maintaining the path. It would also be important to include stakeholders/partners that have been involved in the initial community outreach effort since they have the advantage of communicating with the neighboring community extensively on the matter and better understand what would be utilized and what would not.

#### FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

Unknown

#### CONTACT PERSON

Councilmember Darryl Moore, District 2 981-7120

#### Attachments:

1. The Berkeley Santa Fe Right-of-Way: AN OVERVIEW: HISTORY AND OPPORTUNITIES (2010)