



Berkeley Partners for Parks

Working Together for 25 Years

*Building vibrant, healthy, ecologically sound communities
by providing structure needed to engage volunteers
in work for public open space and recreation.*

What is BPPF? We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit partnership of local volunteer groups working to enhance public open space, nature, and recreation in and near Berkeley. Our projects all spring from:

- people with an idea or dream for outdoor spaces or recreation
- people willing to volunteer their time or give money

When these folks come together as groups to achieve varied goals for their communities. BPPF stands ready to help. We manage finances and provide essential services including insurance, accounting, and tax deductibility. We also provide collegiality, inspiration, a wide range of experience, advice on funding sources, suggestions for partnerships, and encouragement.

BPPF is itself an all-volunteer organization except for our part-time bookkeeper. We charge our groups a modest fee on the funds they raise, but it does not fully pay for the services we provide. To make up the shortfall, we turn to people like you, who want our work to continue. **To support us, send a check payable to Berkeley Partners for Parks to PO Box 12521, Berkeley, CA 94712, or donate securely online from the DONATE tab on our website, www.bppf.org.**

A sampling from our Partner Groups in 2019-20:

Friends of West Street Park: In July 2019, the City of Berkeley designated the city's newest park: three blocks of the West Street bike path, on the old Santa Fe Railroad right-of-way from Delaware Street to the courts south of Cedar. Neighbors quickly began meeting monthly as Friends of West Street Park, working to improve and maintain this neighborhood asset. In addition to weeding, graffiti abatement, and litter control, the group has planted new trees, smaller native plants where neighbors can water, and wildflower seeds in the city-built planter boxes. An experimental sheet mulching included native milkweed that drew monarch butterflies.



Longer term aims include signage as well as pollinator-friendly native plants that harmonize with established Westbrae Community Gardens plantings and the hoped-for Bee Line project along the old rail corridor.



Berkeley Path Wanderers Association: Despite steep slopes and COVID-19, Berkeley Path Wanderers Association (BPWA) volunteers opened two challenging paths in the Berkeley hills in 2020. Rising 100 feet, with 182 steps, Lower Columbia Path is one of our longest to date. Completed in April 2020, with handrails added in July, it connects Queens Rd and Fairlawn Dr in the Terrace View neighborhood. Late in the year, we completed Lower Halkin Walk, with 145 step, north of Marin Ave. This "missing link" completes another pedestrian corridor from Grizzly Peak Blvd to Spruce St. — one of several opened by our hard-working volunteers over more than 20 years. Crews also rebuilt parts of Lower Stevenson Path and Mosswood Lane (left), making these two early BPWA projects safer for their many users.

To encourage health and enjoyment outdoors during the pandemic, we switched from free guided walks to **virtual presentations and self-guided walks**. Small weeding efforts keep the paths walkable. Our membership continues to grow, sales of our path map remain strong, and our monthly e-newsletter goes to more than 2000 subscribers. We were delighted that the City Council voted Jan. 20 to name paths after our four founders: Ruth Armstrong, Pat DeVito, Jacque Ensign, and Eleanor Gibson. For more information on our activities, visit www.berkeleypaths.org.

Take to the Hills: The past two winters have marked a second phase of revitalizing the Derby Canyon trail above UC Berkeley's Clark Kerr Campus. In **Take to the Hills'** first three years, we repaired the trail bed and installed about 300 stair treads. Usage soared.

Now we focus on removing invasives and restoring native shrubs and wildflowers (right). Thistles, French broom, and others no longer dominate the canyon. Each year we've transplanted more than 1500 locally grown seedlings. Some are starting to reproduce on their own! Contact jim@ThisIntoThat.com to participate.

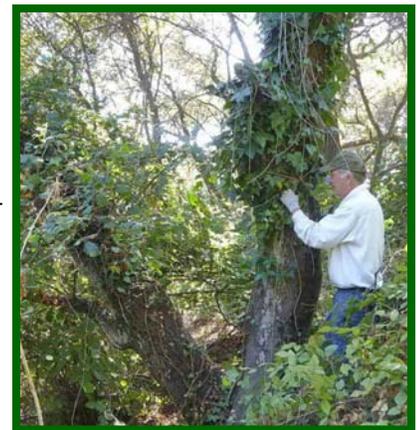


Greens at Work: In 2019-2020, the Greens at Work's wonderful volunteer stewards continued to restore nature and habitat in South Richmond's coastal areas: Marina Bay, East and West Stege Marshes, Hoffman Marsh, and Pt. Isabel. Especially since late summer 2019, small numbers of volunteers have been hand-pulling Algerian Sea Lavender (*Limonium ramosissimum*) and Russian thistle (*Salsola soda*) from the marshes and Bay edges. We have removed over a half million Algerian sea lavender plants! These prolific invaders crowd out or smother native plants important for wildlife habitat. We also pick up trash and remove wood and debris that cover and smother plants.

Our largest restoration, along the Bay Trail from Central Avenue north, continues to expand and thrive despite the setbacks common in urban areas where many agencies do maintenance and constructions. A few individual

volunteers continue to tend "adopted" spots here during the COVID-19 shutdown. Enjoy the results of their labors when you walk or bicycle the Bay Trail!

Tending the Ancient Shoreline Hill: Even with big groups from schools, religious organizations, and the like suspended, TASH — **Tending the Ancient Shoreline Hill** — continues hands-on care for Albany Hill, a remarkable urban oasis on a hunk of Jurassic sandstone that got stuck on what is now the edge of the Bay. Defended from development by citizens for a century, the hill and adjacent Cerrito Creek are a rare fragment of nature surrounded by city. TASH volunteers, now working far apart, continue to remove weeds — mostly ivy (right) — that had cloaked diverse native vegetation. They also are planting natives grown from seed collected on the hill.



Friends of Albany Hill: Into early 2020, Friends of Albany Hill maintained a busy

schedule of public activities. These included frequent bird walks, a hike on newly improved trails, counts of birds and monarch butterflies, a field trip and talk on monarch habitat, a talk by Peter Oboyski of UC Berkeley's Essig insect museum, and an Albany Library exhibit of chair Carole Fitzgerald's botanical drawings and Robert Langston's collection of butterflies and moths from the hill.

COVID has shut off many of these avenues, although the group continues issuing monthly e-newsletters. Efforts now are focused on a mural (left) to be executed by community members and donated to the city, along with guides to plants and butterflies of the hill. For information visit our web site, <https://friendsofalbanyhill.org/>.



Friends of Five Creeks: When COVID-19 closed down our free Bay Currents lectures and large work parties, all-volunteer **Friends of Five Creeks** pivoted in order to continue reviving urban nature from hills to Bay. Adult volunteers working semi-independently have taken on much of the maintenance. For young people, we added high-school students to our short-term, part-time, paid internships. These also offer hands-on experience to young adults starting environmental careers. New “pop-up” signs enrich visits to our areas. New online handouts and our e-news give tips on savoring nature close to home, including citizen science projects and educational resources for kids and families.



Progress continues at Codornices Creek west of San Pablo, our largest current effort and our area’s only trout stream,. We have freed large swaths from smothering weeds and planted hundreds of new natives (right). A portable toilet we pay for reduces pollution and helps keep the creekside trail welcoming to all. Our ongoing efforts have greatly improved coordination among managing agencies Albany, Berkeley, and UC Berkeley.



Hillside Club Front Garden: The challenges to the 1500-square-foot native-plant garden we established in 2010 are summed up in a tale of two fall garden cleanups. In October 2019, high winds and smoky air forced volunteers to don masks and abandon raking — yet they still filled a pickup truck with leaves for composting (left). In October 2020, volunteers were again masked, this time bringing their own gloves and water bottles and keeping safe distances due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Still, all the planned raking, cleaning, sweeping, pruning, and mulching got done in two hours — along with talking and laughing, welcome after months of isolation.

The garden and its redwood bench continue to welcome passers-by at our historic building on Cedar, carrying out the **Hillside Club** mission established at its founding in 1898: “To cultivate a spirit of civic patriotism among the residents of Berkeley; to work for and encourage the making of parks and the planting of trees within the city limits; to beautify the streets, gardens and homes within said city; and to encourage all branches of art.”

El Cerrito Community Garden Network: The **El Cerrito Community Garden Network** has been without a “home” garden since 2018, when we took down our Fairmont Park community garden for park renovation. We still hope to return. In the meantime, we continue to support healthy edible gardens as home gardening has boomed during the COVID shutdown. Besides educational materials on our [website](#), we provide starts for preschool and senior food gardens, maintain seed libraries at the El Cerrito Recycling Center and Public Library, sponsor fruit-gleaning and neighborhood crop-swap events, and support the Fairmont Elementary School Garden with seeds students take home. We help maintain several gardens and parks and have provided volunteers to help the City of El Cerrito qualify for grants to mitigate fire danger. We hope interest in healthy, environmentally friendly gardening will continue to flourish once the crisis has passed.



Pacific Oaks Community Garden: The pandemic has brought new families to grow vegetables and flowers in **Pacific Oaks Community Garden**, established five years ago on 5,000 square feet of unused and unbuildable West Contra Costa Unified School District property north of Moeser, in El Cerrito. We recently renewed our right of entry agreement for an additional three years, and hope that the garden will continue in some form for many more.

Turtle Island Monument Project: In 1997, a team of citizens revived efforts to revitalize the long-dry, dilapidated fountain in Berkeley’s Martin Luther King Jr. Civic Center Plaza. They have worked with more than 50 entities including tribal representatives, a range of professionals, and city officials and commissions. Strong support backs a design that honors the Indigenous people of our area and can be built and maintained at reasonable cost.

This plan (right) would fill the outer circles with drought-tolerant native plantings, with loggerhead turtle sculptures and Native-artist-designed medallions, already owned by the city, set among them. In the center, a ring of obsidian would surround a reflective dome honoring water. The City Council has approved Measure T1 bond money and the project is listed for early action, so the Turtle Island Monument may at last provide a worthy, appropriate centerpiece in our Civic Center Plaza.



Chavez Park Conservancy: Berkeley’s 90 acres of urban nature atop old garbage landfill in the Bay is thriving in exciting ways. Our [Chavez Park Conservancy](#) volunteers’ cleanup and weeding have begun to revitalize the historic native-plant grove. A \$5000 UC Chancellor’s Grant promises a study on how to maintain this important legacy. Volunteers also restored the peace-symbol artwork on the northwest hilltop. We enriched visitors' experience in varied ways — from a table giving away free face masks (left) to a viewing station for the park’s rare burrowing owls. Two movies about the owls, lists of plants and birds, and daily blog posts add to appreciation.

Management improvements that followed our urging include a fence separating the dog park from the nature area, and better protection for ground nesting birds. Perhaps most exciting, the city has promised to use Measure T-1 bond money to build a much needed permanent restroom — the basic need that sparked our efforts beginning in 2014.

Friends of Ohlone Park: On June 1, 2019, hundreds celebrated the 50th anniversary of the green swath along Hearst Street, protected by citizen insistence as open space above BART’s underground tracks. The rededication of the Ohlone mural (right, with Ohlone of today), Native American arts and culture fair, history pavilion, crop swap, music, and more were organized by Friends of Ohlone Park (FOOP), Berkeley’s Parks Department, the California Institute for Culture, Art and Nature, and the Alliance for California Traditional Arts.



Since then, FOOP has continued steady progress toward multicultural and multigenerational improvements for our park. Grants are funding sculptures and a native-plant garden beside the Ohlone Mural. The City Council in December OK’d \$1.6 million in T1 bond funds for our priorities: a permanent restroom, better lighting, and new play and exercise equipment for all generations near the North Berkeley Senior Center.



Our mission: *Berkeley Partners for Parks builds vibrant, healthy, ecologically sound communities by providing structure needed to engage volunteers in work for public open space and recreation, in and around Berkeley, California.*

*Berkeley Partners for Parks is organized exclusively for charitable and educational purposes within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. **Donate securely on line by clicking on the DONATE tab on our website, www.bfpf.org, or send a check to Berkeley Partners for Parks, PO Box 12521, Berkeley, CA 94712.***