



AGENDA

SPECIAL JOINT MEETING OF THE Environmental Quality Committee and Urban Forest Committee

Tuesday, December 10, 2024 at 7:00 p.m.

Staff Liaisons

Christina Leard | (510) 215-4338
cleard@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us

Stephen Prée | 510-559-7685
spree@ci-el-cerrito.ca.us

City Council Chambers
10890 San Pablo Avenue

This Meeting Place is Wheelchair Accessible

7:00 p.m. CONVENE SPECIAL MEETING

1. **ROLL CALL** – Chairs Cathy Bleier (UFC) and Simrun Dhoot (EQC); Vice-Chairs Fred Bialy (EQC) and Robin Mitchell (UFC); Members Buddy Akacić, Pamela Austin, Howdy Goudey, Heather Hayashi, Robert Hrubes, Jennifer Kaczor, Yan Linhart, Mark Miner, Sean O'Connor, Paloma Pavel, Eleanor Pilling Chappellear (Youth Member), Sheila Tarbet
2. **ORAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC** *(Estimated time: 5 minutes)*
Remarks are typically limited to three minutes per person, and may be on anything within the subject matter jurisdiction of the body. Remarks on non-agenda items will be heard first. Remarks on agenda items will be heard at the time the item is discussed.
3. **COUNCIL/STAFF LIAISONS ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REPORTS** *(5 min.)*
Staff and/or Council Liaison Carolyn Wysinger may report on policies, priorities, and actions taken by the City Council, and/or on matters of general interest to the EQC.
4. **DRAFT FINAL HILLSIDE NATURAL AREA FIRE RESILIENCE AND FOREST CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN** *(40 min)*
Receive a presentation from City Staff, participate in discussion and consider possible action items regarding the [Draft Final Hillside Natural Area \(HNA\) Fire Resilience And Forest Conservation Management Plan](#).
5. **EQC & UFC FUTURE COLLABORATION** *(20 min)*
Participate in discussion and consider possible action items regarding future collaboration between the Environmental Quality Committee and the Urban Forest Committee.
6. **ADJOURNMENT**

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact the Staff Liaison, Christina Leard, at (510) 215-4338. Notification 48 hours prior to the meeting will enable the City to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to this meeting. (28 CFR 35.102-35.104 ADA Title I).

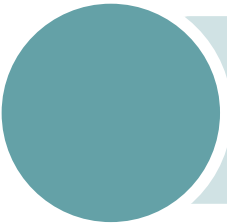
Any writings or documents provided to a majority of the members regarding any item on this agenda will be made available for public inspection at the El Cerrito Recycling + Environmental Resource Center (7501 Schmidt Lane) during normal business hours.

HNA Fire Resilience and Forest Conservation Management Plan

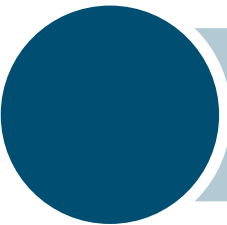
Karineh Samkian, Stephen Prée & Battalion Chief Beckman
December 2024



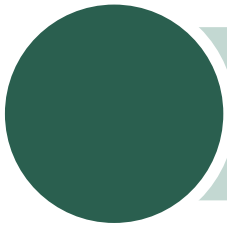
Overview



Major Recommendations



Public Comments



Next Steps

Background & Purpose

- City awarded State Coastal Conservancy grant to develop Plan.
 - Guide maintenance activities
 - Secure future implementation grants
- Conducted assessments and received public input over the last 1.5 years.



Prioritized Recommendations

1. Create Defensible Space
2. Establish Shaded Fuel Break
3. Remove Eucalyptus & Non-Native Conifers
4. Create System of Fire Roads & Trails
5. Manage Threats to Oak
6. Remove Invasives
7. Restore and Re-establish Natives
8. Monitor Key Performance Indicators



Public Comment Process



- Public Comment was open from July 12 to August 25, 2024.
- Received 108 thoughtful comments from 25 individuals/organizations.
- Reviewed all comments and updated the Plan as applicable.

Changes to Draft



Comments & Recommendations	Changes
Advisory body for implementation of the Plan	Added Parks and Rec Commission (or other body designated by the City Council)
Ability for community to provide feedback	Added updates to Council and advisory body every 2 years as well as updating the project website
More frequent reviews of the Plan than 10 years	Changed to reviewing the Plan every 5 years and update if necessary
Resident responsibility for fire resilience	Added home hardening and Firewise landscaping language
Use monitoring to adapt management practices	Added to table under Action 8
Remove all dead vegetation (except as noted by the biologist in the pre-work survey) and reduce dry vegetation	Added a removal threshold of 4", and limit the removal of ground cover to prevent exposed soil

Changes to Draft (cont'd)



Comments & Recommendations	Changes
Coordinate prescription for tree understories: Larger overstory trees count as residual trees and, to reduce ladder fuels, low growing native vegetation will be retained	Larger overstory trees count as residual tree, low growing native vegetation will be retained and kept to $\leq 5'$, if horizontal separation is 3 to 5 times the height of residual plants and residual plants are not within the drip lines of an overstory tree
Change prescription for grasses in shaded fuel breaks	Added that mowing heights should not be lower than 4" to prevent scalping damage to plants
Add more information on invasive plant management under Objective 2.2	Added three bullets to help prevent spread and strategically remove invasive plants
Impacts of vegetation management can result in loss of biodiversity	Added a sentence stating that treatments should minimize disturbance
Request that eucalyptus growth be monitored annually	Added that eucalyptus re-growth will be monitored annually as resources permit

Changes to Draft (cont'd)



Comments & Recommendations	Changes
The importance of ongoing maintenance activities should be highlighted	Added in multiple sections that success of the actions will be enhanced with ongoing maintenance activities
Include ongoing maintenance costs	Added ongoing costs in the table and recommended developing a maintenance program with relative cost
Eucalyptus and pines are not a “community”	Revised “community” with vegetation “type”
The description of native grasslands should acknowledge that specific grassland species and sword fern are rare, and the presence Melica species along trails is likely to be harmed by mowing	Changed to state that native grasslands in the HNA are rare as is sword fern, and that Melica species are common along trails
Two ferns not mentioned in Plan but common	California polypody and goldback fern added

Next Steps

- CEQA Review & Public Comment – In Progress
- Plan Consideration by City Council – Spring 2025



UFC and EQC Actions



DRAFT FINAL

HILLSIDE NATURAL AREA FIRE RESILIENCE AND FOREST CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

EL CERRITO, CALIFORNIA



LSA

November 2024

- Consider recommending the Draft Final Plan to the City Council once CEQA finalized

OR

- Take no action

Questions?

