



Berkeley Partners For Parks

Update 2006

Editor's Notes: 2006 has been an exciting and eventful year as Berkeley Partners for Parks (BPPF) and our affiliates continue to move forward in greening Berkeley and improving recreational opportunities for the community's residents. As revealed below, there is a broad spectrum of initiatives that BPPF and our affiliates have developed. They encompass parks, pools, and playgrounds, creeks, paths and greenways, community gardens, and labyrinths, community art for children, and wetland restoration at Aquatic Park. And they reflect the integrative, umbrella role that BPPF ably plays through fiscal and technical assistance.

Berkeley Partners for Parks is a citywide nonprofit devoted to supporting parks and open space in Berkeley through encouraging citizen involvement.

Progress on the Santa Fe ROW Greenway

The recent opening of the new pedestrian-bicycle trail on the Santa Fe Right of Way (SFROW) between University Avenue and Delaware Street is the fruit of six years of initiatives by Berkeley Partners for Parks (BPPF) working in partnership with the City of Berkeley. Coordinated by Stephen and Zasa Swanson, BPPF led efforts to stop the ROW's piecemeal sale and change Berkeley's official plans to focus on public use of the former railroad right-of-way. BPPF then collaborated with neighbors and City officials, to secure a \$1 million MTC grant for planning and constructing the three-block trail. "Our raising the issue of sale of the right-of-way helped create space for the Spiral Gardens Community Food Project and Berkeley Community Orchard on the right-of-way," Stephen Swanson said. "The next step" he added, "is to connect to Strawberry Creek Park to the south and to the Ohlone Greenway to the north."

BPPF is continuing this long-term goal to complete the SFROW Greenway in association with the Berkeley Community Gardening Collaborative. The next step BPPF affiliates are seeking is the opening of the fence at Lincoln Street -- the only barrier to connecting the ROW from University to the City of Richmond! Meanwhile, BPPF and the Gardening Collaborative

have brought in "Rails to Trails," (RTC) to partner with the City in planning the SFROW segments to the south of University. To lay the groundwork, we've conducted public surveys, in association with students from U.C.'s Dept. of Landscape Architecture to reveal the demographics of the areas involved and identify preferred uses for the SFROW. These include -- community gardens, a tot lot area, a dog park, butterfly gardens, demonstration gardens and orchards, among other suggestions. We're looking for help in making the quilting together of a SFROW greenway a reality! *Please contact Beebo Turman at 510-527-3773 or beebot@pacbell.net or John Steere at jsteere@igc.org.*



Undeveloped section of SF ROW south of University

Berkeley Path Wanderers Association



New Cedar Street path under construction

2006 has been a very active year for Berkeley Path Wanderers Association (BPWA). Especially heartening has been the range of volunteers who've worked on our city's paths this past year, from high school to UC students to service organizations, to REI employees, in combination with the sustained efforts of BPWA's own members. Bret Harte Path, Cedar Street Path, and Middle Glendale Path have been finished, while Shasta Path and Poppy Path are underway. In 2007 BPWA intends to complete rustically styled improvements on the Santa Fe ROW between Delaware and Cedar Streets, as well as to install steps on Whitaker Path, Upper El Mirador Path, Lower Halkin Walk among others. BPWA's monthly Wednesday and Saturday walks continue to be popular--and free--and residents throughout Berkeley are encouraged to visit the BPWA web site, "berkeleypaths.org," and to join in a walk or a path-building work party. *For more information, contact Charlie Bowen at 540-7223 or charlie_paths@comcast.net.*

Halcyon Neighborhood Association: Halcyon Commons



Members of the Halcyon Neighborhood Association (HNA) have had an exciting year in and around Halcyon Commons in South Berkeley (a small park designed by the community to replace a parking lot, constructed and planted in partnership with the City). HNA just celebrated the park's 10th Anniversary with a lovely event featuring music, food, and a mayoral proclamation. HNA also received a \$13,640 grant from the UC Chancellor's Community Partnership for the Halcyon Commons Rejuvenation Project to fund three new features — an animal cutout arbor entryway at the north entrance, a halcyon bird sculpture, and redesign of the southeast corner of the park. They look forward to presenting plans to the Parks and Recreation Commission and moving forward with their UC and community partners to implement the project. *Contact Nancy Carleton (644-0172) or John Steere (849-1969), jsteere@igc.org to help.*

Friends Of Five Creeks

The Friends of Five Creeks (F5C) celebrated 10 years of caring for local creeks and watersheds this past year. In Berkeley, volunteers continued to control invasive species at the mouths of Strawberry and Schoolhouse Creeks in the Eastshore State Park. Student groups have helped pull ice plant and pepperweed, and pick up the city trash along the creeks. UC Berkeley students and F5C's "Weekday Weed Warriors" have been stewards for lower Codornices Creek, maintaining the new creek restoration projects west of Fifth Street, as well as in the block from Ninth to Tenth Streets. Branching out into new ways to appreciate nature in the city, F5C and environmental artist Zach Pine hosted "Art to Action on Berkeley Creeks," three sessions of making ephemeral art with natural materials, at creek headwaters, middle reaches, and mouths. Look for a gallery showing of these participatory art offerings in January! *Please contact Susan Schwartz, coordinator, at F5creeks@aol.com or 848-9358 to get involved.*



Friends of Strawberry Creek/Strawberry Creek Lodge Restoration Project



In 2001, Jane and Tom Kelly of the Friends of Strawberry Creek (FSC) began looking for a small site to create a native garden. Capitalizing on the generous offer of Lois O'Connell, the Administrator at the Strawberry Creek Lodge, to have at the overgrown creek bank, they pulled together volunteers to remove thick and impassable stands of ivy and blackberry and begin replacing those invasive plants with native plants common in the upper Strawberry Creek watershed. With successive grants from the Alameda Countywide Clean Water Program and the San Francisco Estuary Institute, the FSC, along with hundreds of volunteers restored almost 200 feet of the creek's bank. Amazingly, once the area was cleared, coyote bush and California sage have reappeared. This winter the FSC will begin assessing their previous work and filling in areas that are too sparsely planted. Volunteers who don't mind the cool and damp Berkeley winters are encouraged to participate. *Contact: Jane and Tom Kelly at 510-528-3949 or jandtkelly@igc.org*

East Bay Labyrinth Project

During this past year the East Bay Labyrinth Project (Project) has begun its fund-raising phase. The Project is committed to raising \$100,000-plus to install a labyrinth at the City-approved site on the Marina's East Lawn made with materials suitable to the site's natural beauty. Identifying potential funding sources and creating a gifting structure attractive to individual donors have been the two priorities of their fund-raising. The Project continues to host monthly labyrinth walks on the third Sunday of each month at 3 p.m. (rain cancels) at the painted demonstration labyrinth at Willard School. Please join them! *Contact Nina Ham (nina@eastbaylabyrinthproject.org or 510.526.7377) if you'd like to help with creating the permanent labyrinth adjacent to the Berkeley Marina.*



Future site of labyrinth at Marina

Westbrae Commons-Ohlone Greenway & Peralta/Northside Gardens



This year the Friends of the Westbrae Commons held an anniversary celebration marking their tenth year of building and nurturing community spaces. Work is proceeding on the expansion of the native planting along the greenway and the addition of exhibits documenting the history of the Westbrae neighborhood. The commons has hosted community events furthering peace in the Middle East and been the focus of the Bringing Back the Natives garden tour. The adjacent EcoHouse project is developing the first city-approved gray-water utilization project. *For more information or to get involved please call Neal Collier at 510-527-9445 or nacollier@pacbell.net.*

United Pool Council

The United Pool Council (UPC) promotes swimming for public health, safety, recreation and fitness for people of all ages and physical conditions. This year they worked with the school district and the City of Berkeley to restart youth swimming middle school PE programs. Projects have included:

- Painting the locker rooms at King Pool with the "Rebuilding Together" organization
- Helping the City of Berkeley purchase pool covers at King, Willard and West Campus pools

- Purchasing lane lines and other equipment for those three pools.

Berkeley's aging neighborhood pools have much deferred maintenance. The UPC has initiated discussions with the City of Berkeley Recreation and Aquatics staff to help develop plans for maintaining, rebuilding, or relocating pools so our community will have these resources into the future. *To make a splash and get involved, contact Gael Alcock at 510-548-9050.*

Aquatic Park EGRET

Banks of native vegetation are thriving along the shoreline of San Francisco Bay thanks to the volunteer habitat stewards of Aquatic Park EGRET. EarthTeam brought 250 high school students over the course of the year to remove trash, pull weeds, and spread mulch. Other partnerships are bringing UC students and others to work in the park every month. Improvements to the Cabin which houses EGRET's nature center make it an ideal place to stop by when visiting the park, as well as to watch the great egrets as they arrive every evening at dusk to roost in the trees above. Among the new grants is one from the SF Estuary Project that will fund graphic displays to interpret the park's natural and cultural history. *To volunteer, take a guided walk, or learn more about Aquatic Park, contact Mark Liolios at 549-0818 or egret@lmi.net*



Volunteers restoring brackish marshes at Aquatic Park

Aquatic Park Dreamland Garden

Since 2000, the Berkeley Garden Club volunteers have been maintaining the garden at the north end of the playground. It was established to attract birds and butterflies, using drought resistant plants, primarily native shrubs and flowers. Plants have been put in and watering and mulching have been carried

out periodically. Soon more planting will take place when the winter season can take care of the watering! By spring there should be colorful blossoms to attract butterflies, hummingbirds and people, alike. Come see for yourself! *Contact: Mildred Bennett; 510-526-1260 or ELBMARIN@aol.com*

Schoolhouse Creek Common

With the support of the Berkeley Adult School, Schoolhouse Creek Common (Curtis and Virginia Streets) has been an evolving reality since 2004, with grants being secured and new native plants being established. Friends of the Common staged a dedication celebration with the City, School District and neighbors in May 2006. With student help from the UCB, neighbors have begun to prepare a section of the Common as a toddlers' play area. The plan for the play area has been developed and approved by neighbors work in the Common from 10 to noon on the second Saturday of each month. *For more information on how you can get involved, call Brad Smith at 524-1938 or e-mail at brad_smith@earthlink.net.*



Friends of Berkeley Rose Garden

Since the passing of one of its founders, Gail Keleman, in 2004, the Friends of the Berkeley Rose Garden have coordinated the creation of a beautiful new entry sign on Euclid Avenue, along with a sitting stone in memory of Gail. The drinking fountain under the pergola has also been restored, and three new picnic tables with benches have been donated. One of the

primary needs of the Garden is the restoration of its spectacular view of San Francisco and the Golden Gate Bridge which has come to be largely obscured by trees; it's been estimated to cost as much as \$50,000 for the necessary work for which the support of the community is needed. *Contact Peggy Smukler at 526-0172 or peggysmukler@yahoo.com*

The Young Artists Workspace

The Young Artists Workspace (YAWS) was created ten years ago to provide Berkeley's children, ages two to sixteen, with low cost, high quality fine art classes. At a time when arts curriculum in schools has been dwindling, YAWS fills the gap in Berkeley by holding weekly after school art classes for children and families who recognize the importance of artistic expression painting, drawing, sculpting, and printmaking. Classes are held throughout the academic year in four sessions of eight classes. Exhibits of YAWS students work can be seen at local venues throughout the year. *For more information, please email Jennifer Burke at jennyaws@yahoo.com or call (510) 204-YAWS*



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