



## Berkeley Partners For Parks

## Update 2008

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

### *Partnerships: Thoughts from the Board*

As fiscal sponsor for so many citizen groups, Berkeley Partners for Parks creates a whole that is much larger than the sum of its parts. The summary reports below show how our affiliates are continuing to transform our local green spaces, while at the same time energizing people to turn creative ideas into reality and work together to improve the community. Your donation to BPPF thus leverages tremendous citizen power.

This year we enlarged the group of affiliates in our "Greening Berkeley Hands-On" partnership with UC. The previous 2 years have been tremendously successful at getting UC students

out into the community to help us with their labor, a very welcome boost for the neighborhood volunteers. The benefits for the students are that they have a chance to really experience how much can be accomplished by volunteers working together and they are introduced to parts of town other than the campus and downtown. Next year's projects will include an increased focus on resources for children, with Adventure Playground slated to get rebuilt materials racks and a new layer of sand spread underfoot and the School Gardens slated for deliveries of compost and also several new worktables and potting benches. Our enthusiasm is running high!

### Schoolhouse Creek Common

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As our new community-built park at Virginia and Curtis came together, Schoolhouse Creek Common's third year was much calmer than the first two, with one very muddy exception. We planted new native shrubs and groundcovers as well as thousands of wildflower seeds. The one major element left to build was a sitting/gathering area at the eastern "top" of the park – very much the keystone. As we got to know the informal space we were creating, we settled on a wall of unmortared stones with a fairly flat top for sitting. With neighbors and UC students volunteering, this fine piece of work that came together in a day -- if you don't count the first day, when the forklift moving the bigger boulders got stuck and needed a triangulation of tow trucks to pull it out! Still, all's well that ends well, and neighbors, Berkeley Adult School students, and casual visitors are very much enjoying this transformed former blacktop.



### Friends of Five Creeks

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Friends of Five Creeks, which works to restore creeks and watersheds from Berkeley to Richmond, continued its growth with more than 40 work parties and 1500 hours of volunteer service, weekly "weed warriors" outings, tables at five fairs and festivals, a continuing series of public talks, and a new program of guided walks. Important Berkeley achievements include freeing Mortar Rock from its pall of ivy and establishing plants that Native American would have used; restoring Bay views at Shorebird Park Bay by removing a wall of invasive broom; and, in a growing partnership with East Bay Regional Park District, removing a carpet of ice plant from the mouth of Strawberry Creek and a forest of broom at the mouth of Schoolhouse Creek.



## Halcyon Neighborhood Association: Halcyon Commons

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Friends of Halcyon Commons/Halcyon Neighborhood Association continued care and improvements to our neighborhood-designed park in South Berkeley. UC Berkeley students took part in two of five work parties; dozens of new fill-in plants were added. Two important new elements funded by our UC Chancellor's Community Partnership Fund grant were successfully installed: a metal archway entry with animal cutouts, crafted by artist Amy Blackstone, and handsome boulders surrounded by flagstone, anchoring the south end of the park. In September, we celebrated with live music and much good cheer. Our next big project, for which we are raising funds now: a sculpture of a halcyon bird, the mythical kingfisher whose egg-laying was believed to bring peace and calm weather to the darkest days of winter.

## Terrace View Neighbors

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Terrace View Neighbors have successfully lobbied the city to begin working toward much-needed renovations in this hillside park/playground at Queens and Fairlawn. A survey of slopes and boundaries has been completed, and a consultant, Amphion Environmental, Inc., hired to work on a new landscape-design master plan. Neighbors are looking forward to seeing the ideas, expected at a December meeting.

Although the deck and some paths are considered unsafe, Terrace View Neighbors are making good use of the remaining space. The focus is on community building, with an Easter Egg hunt, movie nights under the stars, a fledgling community garden, and annual neighborhood party and pumpkin-carving event.



## Berkeley Path Wanderers Association

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Berkeley Path Wanderers Association had another very successful year restoring, extending, and popularizing Berkeley's historic path network. Volunteers completed opening and installing steps on Upper El Mirador Path, with its tranquil redwoods, and Bret Harte Lane, with a magnificent Bay view. The buckled brick steps on Poppy Path were replaced by handsome wood steps with a Craftsman look, while at Rose-Glen Alley, volunteers are piloting a new technique for installing steps on steep grades. Work continues on challenging Lower Covert Path, which crosses a Codornices Creek tributary and ends near the beautiful falls on Keith Ave.

Help continues to come from many quarters, from Danville high-school students to Mountain Hardware employees. Berkeley Hills Realty has offered to sponsor improvements on Summit Path, and Panoramic Hill Association has approached BPWA to discuss using our techniques to create an emergency exit route from the steep hill.

BPWA also has continued monthly Saturday and First Wednesday walks and twice-yearly public meetings, adding popular summertime evening walks. A fifth edition of the extremely popular map is expected in 2009!



## East Bay Labyrinth Project

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The East Bay Labyrinth Project also is focused on fundraising, with the aim of crafting a permanent 11-circuit labyrinth on the Bay shore, south of University and west of the mouth of Strawberry Creek. The goal is 2010 construction. Meanwhile, the group continues to offer the meditative experience of walking the labyrinth through monthly guided walks at the demonstration labyrinth at Willard School (3 pm on third Sundays). Information at [info@eastbaylabyrinthproject.org](mailto:info@eastbaylabyrinthproject.org).



Conceptual illustration of the labyrinth at the Marina

## Westbrae Commons-Ohlone Greenway

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Passers-by as well as butterflies, bees, and birds are enjoying Friends of Westbrae Commons' big extension of plantings of coastal prairie plants along the Ohlone Greenway. The fascinating stretch of path between Peralta and Gilman, with community gardens, interpretive signs, and wonderful public art now has three hundred feet of new planting and decomposed-granite pedestrian path next to the bike-dominated concrete. Monthly work parties cleared the weeds, installed the path, and put in plants that once flourished in our native coastal prairie -- chosen by looking at remnant populations, evidence from shellmounds, reports of Spanish explorers, and information shared by descendants of the Ohlones, especially at their fall Gathering of Ohlone Peoples at Coyote Hills Regional Park.

## Aquatic Park EGRET

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Hundreds of volunteers joined Aquatic Park EGRET in continuing to expand efforts to improve Berkeley's largest municipal park for both visitors and wildlife. For the September Coastal Cleanup, for example, EarthTeam brought 140 energetic high-school students to clean up the debris piped into the lagoons from city storm drains! Student volunteers from UC Berkeley, Berkeley High, and Head-Royce School spread mountains of wood chips to control weeds and save moisture, especially protecting the Monterey Cypress trees planted last year by Rosa Parks Elementary School kids. Friends of Five Creeks' Weekday Weed Warriors removed Russian thistle from the shoreline, allowing natives to flourish, while other volunteers cut ivy, pulled kikuyu grass, and controlled broom and giant reed. Super-volunteer Ted Roberts single-handedly demolished 15-foot-high blackberry next to the Bay inlet for the southernmost lagoon!

Now that volunteers have excavated the 1930s seating terraces and reopened the loop trail, the middle lagoon is now a prime destination for birders and picnickers. Come enjoy the winter bird migrants, along with the year-round population of feeding and roosting herons and egrets.



## Friends of Becky Temko Tot Park

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Friends of Becky Temko Tot Park, 2424 Roosevelt Ave., are thrilled to announce the return of swings! The City of Berkeley installed two swings earlier this year, and they are drawing many more neighborhood children to the park. Neighborhood play dates are also a success – upcoming dates are posted on the board in front of the park.

On Saturday, Oct. 25, about 40 neighbors and friends turned out for the Friends' Second Annual Pumpkin Carving Bash. The group presented a check to the Alameda County Chapter of Bikers Against Child Abuse (BACA, [www.bacausa.com](http://www.bacausa.com)) in appreciation for its support over the last few years in keeping the park a safe place for families and small children. BACA members, in turn, gave out balloon animals, pumpkins, and Halloween toys.

## BPFP Events

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Berkeley Partners for Parks sponsored a very successful Hidden Gems walk and bike ride in May, visiting public and artistic contributions, especially those created by BPFP members along and near the Ohlone Greenway/Santa Fe Right of Way. In September, we created a “park” from a single parking space on Center Street, part of the now-international PARK(ing) Day - original concept by REBAR. Ours helped support Measure WW, continuing support for the East Bay Regional Parks District -- which passed on Election Day. Also in September, our fall potluck picnic gave us a chance to enjoy beautiful Halcyon Commons, another of our members' projects, with great food and music by the Berkeley Old Time String Players.



## Berkeley Community Gardening Collaborative and Friends of School Gardens

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With food prices up and folks wanting to “eat locally,” most community gardens have long waiting lists. The Berkeley Community Gardening Collaborative is working to find empty lots for gardeners, and has joined with Berkeley Partners for Parks and the Rails to Trails Conservancy to develop the Santa Fe Right of Way in South Berkeley into a bicycle/pedestrian pathway bordered by community gardens. (South Berkeley has the least green space in the city). Our new Friends of School Gardens, a BPFP affiliate, looks forward to new gloves and tools, thanks to our Greening Berkeley Chancellor's Grant.

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