



## CITY OF ALBANY CITY COUNCIL AGENDA STAFF REPORT

Agenda Date: March 3, 2025

Reviewed by: NA

**SUBJECT:** Public Works Creeks & Open Space Maintenance Program  
Contract Change Order #2 to Contract No. C21-28 for Urban Tilth

**REPORT BY:** Margot Cunningham, Natural Areas Coordinator  
Devora Zauderer, Program Manager  
Mark Hurley, Public Works Director/City Engineer

---

### **SUMMARY**

The City of Albany partners with local non-profit Urban Tilth to perform maintenance and restoration work for the City's natural areas and open spaces. This work includes vegetation management and habitat improvement in service of wildfire resilience, ecosystem longevity, and safe recreational access. The issue before Council is approval of Contract Change Order #2 to Contract No. C21-28, a two-year and four-month extension to the existing four-year contract with Urban Tilth (Contractor). This contract extension is within the existing Public Works Operating Budget as part of the Creeks & Open Space Maintenance Program and no budget adjustments are recommended at this time.

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

That the Council adopt Resolution No. 2025-09, authorizing the City Manager to execute Contract Change Order #2 for Contract No. C21-28 with Urban Tilth in the amount of \$162,817.65 for a total contract amount of \$563,136.57, using funds previously appropriated as part of the Public Works Departmental Operating Budget.

### **BACKGROUND**

Urban Tilth, a Richmond-based 501(c)-3 non-profit, operates the Basins of Relations Watershed Stewardship Program. Established in 2015, this program teaches young adults essential skills for restoring critical riparian and watershed habitat in collaboration with local agencies and landowners. Urban Tilth has a Watershed Stewardship Restoration Field Crew employing exceptional graduates from this program.

Starting in 2017, the City increased vegetation management and related maintenance on Albany Hill and Cerrito Creek in alignment with the Albany Hill Creekside Park Master Plan (2012), with Urban Tilth performing work on projects on the hill in 2019-2020. In 2018 the City also increased restoration and maintenance activities along the section of Cerrito Creek from San Pablo Avenue to Adams Street. with Urban Tilth as the contractor.

Since 2019, the City has taken on vegetation maintenance along Codornices Creek per the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the City of Albany, City of Berkeley, and University of California. The MOU is intended to outline responsibilities related to maintenance and restoration work that has occurred on the creek over the course of the last several years, and it authorized collection of funding from all three agencies to be expended in the course of the delineated activities. There is currently no plan for renewal of funding once the initial investment of funds is exhausted.

Formalizing the City's longer-term and more comprehensive partnership with Urban Tilth, on [March 1, 2021, the City Council](#) adopted Resolution No. 2021-24, executing Contract No. C21-28 in the amount of \$293,651.93 for the Creeks & Open Space Maintenance Program, using funds appropriated as part of the Public Works operating budget. Urban Tilth's scope of work included maintenance and restoration work on Albany Hill and for Cerrito, Middle, and Codornices Creeks.

On [May 2, 2022, the City Council](#) approved Resolution No. 2022-41, authorizing an application to the State Coastal Conservancy's Wildfire Resilience Grant Program for Plan development for forest management and habitat restoration projects and programming on Albany Hill. Included in this application was funding for an additional year (Y4, at the time) of Urban Tilth's contract. Workforce development is a key factor in the Coastal Conservancy's strategy for grant distribution and this added to the competitiveness of Albany's application. The grant was awarded and funds were integrated into the Public Works Operating Budget in the Creeks & Open Space Maintenance Program.

Continuing the successful partnership with Urban Tilth, on [January 16, 2024, the City Council](#) adopted Resolution No. 2024-04, extending Contract No. C21-28 for said fourth year in the amount of \$106,666.99 for a total contract amount of \$400,318.92.

## **DISCUSSION**

Since 2021, Urban Tilth's Watershed Stewardship Crew has provided year-round, long-term vegetation management on Albany Hill, Cerrito Creek, and Codornices Creek. Their work has been of high quality, and it has allowed Albany to both perform the necessary maintenance work on regular basis and also to invest into a strong local hub for youth workforce development. Their work has benefited the residential communities surrounding the open spaces by regularly mitigating fire hazards and contributed to ecosystem stability by restoring native plant and animal habitats.

Activities have included planting native plants from seed harvested from Albany Hill, applying erosion control cloth, pruning branches away from paths and fire roads, repairing trails, building retaining walls, thinning young oak thickets, removing invasive plants, and fire risk mitigations such as mowing grasslands and removing downed bark and branches near fire roads.

Additionally, Urban Tilth has a relationship with members of the Sogorea Te Land Trust and works with them on a project in El Sobrante. On Albany Hill, members of Sogorea Te and the Urban Tilth crew collect native plant seeds and share knowledge about native plants, propagation, and watersheds maintenance and habitat restoration. The Urban Tilth partnership is an integral element to the City's current stewardship of Albany's precious natural resources, and is a strong way for the City to contribute to investment in local youth.

Staff has been working with consultant Restoration Design Group on the Albany Hill Forest Management and Habitat Restoration Plan (Plan) to provide an implementation roadmap for addressing issues of eucalyptus die-off, monarch and native plant habitat, and long-term vegetation management on Albany Hill. This Plan has been developed through extensive community engagement and is presented for adoption by the Council as a separate item on this agenda. It is projected that the City will incorporate restoration work identified as part of the Plan into future amendments to Urban Tilth's contract.

## **SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS**

Urban Tilth's contributions to Albany's natural and open spaces benefit the environment and community of Albany by improving fire safety, maintaining open areas for safe and comfortable recreational access, and restoring and preserving native ecosystems.

Albany's vegetation maintenance managed through the Public Works Creeks & Open Space Program is consistent with the goals, policies, and actions of the following plans:

### City of Albany Climate Action and Adaptation Plan 2019

*Goal 3: Increase resilience of natural lands and systems.* Approach: Manage, restore, and partner to foster resilient natural landscapes. Action 4.3.1 Continue to restore and maintain creeks to accommodate increased rain events Action 4.3.2 Continue to manage wildfire risk by implementing vegetation management and fuel reduction programs.

### Albany 2035 General Plan, Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Element:

- *Policy PROS-6.7: Albany Hill:* Maintain and expand the system of trails on Albany Hill, including connections between Creekside Park and the neighborhoods on the hill's perimeter.
- *Action PROS-6.E: Community-Based Creek Restoration:* Continue to support the work of Friends of Albany Hill, Friends of Five Creeks, and other community based organizations to enhance the open space and trail potential of Codornices Creek, Cerrito Creek, Village Creek, and other natural areas in the city.

### Albany 2035 General Plan, Conservation and Sustainability Element:

- *Policy CON-1.3: Conservation of Albany Hill:* Protect and restore natural features, native vegetation, and wildlife on Albany Hill.
- *Action CON-1.A: Codornices and Cerrito Creek Restoration Initiatives:* Continue collaborative efforts with community organizations, resource agencies, and adjacent cities to restore natural conditions and stabilize banks along Albany’s creeks, particularly Codornices and Cerrito Creeks.
- *Policy CON-2.5: Albany Hill Vegetation Management:* Protect the remaining native plant communities on Albany Hill. Vegetation on the Hill should be managed in a way that gradually reduces the extent of the eucalyptus forest and encourages native plants to return.
- *Action CON-2.G: Native Plant Restoration:* Preserve and enhance native plant communities in the city while encouraging the control or removal of invasive and non-native species.
- *Policy CON-5.3: Monarch Butterfly Roosting:* Consider potential impacts to Monarch butterfly roosting sites on Albany Hill in any future applications for development, park expansion, trail construction, and fuel reduction on the Hill.

### **SOCIAL EQUITY AND INCLUSIVITY CONSIDERATIONS**

The project encourages access to opportunities and resources by providing gainful long-term employment to young adults through the Watershed Stewardship Restoration Field Crew of Urban Tilth, a 501(c)-3 non-profit founded in 2005. Urban Tilth teaches local residents about the relationships between natural ecosystems, food, health, and justice, and directly engages community members in activities to improve urban environments.

Urban Tilth’s Basins of Relations Watershed Stewardship Program has been empowering young adults as they restore critical riparian and watershed habitat in collaboration with local agencies and landowners. Since the program’s creation in 2015 over thirty young adults have graduated from the 15-week-long hands-on program. Exceptional students from the program earn permanent employment in the Stewardship Field Crew. They have learned a diverse array of knowledge and skills to steward and restore ecosystems within their communities, including native plant identification and propagation, invasive species removal, wildland weed control, erosion control, trail maintenance and stewardship, soil bioengineering, green infrastructure construction and maintenance, creek restoration, and more.

### **CITY COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN INITIATIVES**

This project is consistent with the following goals from the City’s Strategic Plan 2023-2025:

- GOAL 1: Advance Climate Action & Adaptation
- GOAL 6: Increase Public Health, Safety, & Resiliency (Hazard Mitigation: Wildfire)

**FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The budget for Contract No. C21-28 is included in the Creeks & Open Space Program as part of the Public Works Departmental Operating Budget, most recently adopted as part of the FY24/FY25 Biennial Update.

The components of Contract Change Order #2 for Urban Tilth to continue scheduled work for the period of March 2025 through June 2027 are briefly summarized below, with further information available in Attachment 2 to this report.

| <b><u>Work Area</u></b>                            | <b><u>Total Cost</u></b> | <b><u>Source</u></b>   |
|--|--------------------------|--|
| Codornices Creek                                   | \$57,398.57              | Funds allocated by MOU, to maintain restoration areas shared with Berkeley and UC Berkeley |
| Albany Hill, Cerrito Crk, Middle Crk               | \$244,699.19             | Public Works Operating Budget, Creeks & Open Space Program                                 |
| <b>Total service extension costs through FY27:</b> | <b>\$302,097.76</b>      |  |

The recommended contract extension is proposed to be structured as follows:

| <b><u>Contract Item</u></b>          | <b><u>Total Costs</u></b> |   |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|---|
| Base Contract (C21-28)               | \$293,651.93              | Y1-Y3   |
| Contract Change Order #1             | \$106,666.99              | Y4  |
| Funds Remaining from Base + CCO #1   | (\$139,280.11)            | Funds were not entirely expended from Y1-Y4; these are to be deducted from the CO #2 total amount to add to the contract. |
| Service extension costs through FY27 | \$302,097.76              | See previous table.   |
| <b>New Contract Total:</b>           | <b>\$563,136.57</b>       |   |

The recommended Contract Change Order #2 is calculated based on the delta between the funds remaining in the contract and the service extension costs, and is in the amount of \$162,817.65.

Codornices Creek maintenance work specifically is supported by funds allocated as part of the Memo of Understanding (MOU) & associated maintenance agreement for restored creek areas currently held between the City of Albany, City of Berkeley, and University of California.

Albany Hill, Middle Creek, and Cerrito Creek vegetation management and related maintenance are budgeted as part of the Public Works Creeks & Open Space Program, which is funded in part by Measure M Parks & Open Space Parcel Tax revenues.

The recommended contract amendment is within the appropriated program budget for the Public Works Creeks & Open Space Maintenance Program, and no budget adjustments are needed at this time.

**Attachments**

1. Resolution No. 2025-09
2. Contract Change Order #2 to Contract No. C21- 28
3. Contract No. C21-28