



CITY OF ALBANY CITY COUNCIL AGENDA STAFF REPORT

Agenda Date: May 5, 2025
Reviewed by: NA

SUBJECT: Albany Hill Eucalyptus Project (CIP No. 41015) / Public Works Parks & Open Space Maintenance Program
Authorization to Partner with the City of El Cerrito to Apply for State Coastal Conservancy Wildfire Resilience Funds and Execute a Grant Agreement

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SUMMARY

The State Coastal Conservancy, who awarded funds to the City for development of the Albany Hill Forest Management & Habitat Restoration Plan, has invited Albany to submit a combined application with El Cerrito for available state-funded Wildfire Resilience Grant Funds. Albany staff are collaborating with El Cerrito staff to develop a proposal and submit an application. The action requested from the City Council is to authorize staff to apply for the grant funds and authorize execution of Albany's grant agreement with the Coastal Conservancy should funds be awarded. Staff will return to the Council to appropriate funds once funding amount is finalized.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

That the Council adopt Resolution No. 2025-25:

1. Authorizing staff to submit a grant application to the State Coastal Conservancy for the Albany Hill Eucalyptus Project (CIP No. 41015) and associated maintenance activities; and
2. Authorizing the City Manager to execute a grant agreement for the project, should funds be awarded.

BACKGROUND

The Albany Hill Eucalyptus Project (CIP No. 41015) was established in 2021 to address the declining eucalyptus forest on Albany Hill, and to facilitate visioning for the future of this element in Albany's natural landscape.

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. Funds were awarded, and the Albany Hill Forest Management & Habitat Restoration Plan (Plan) was adopted on [March 3, 2025 \(Resolution No. 2025-10\)](#).

Neighboring City of El Cerrito is concurrently working on the [Hillside Natural Area Fire Resilience and Forest Conservation Management Plan](#) (HNA Plan), also funded by the Conservancy. Albany and El Cerrito share commonalities in our approach to our natural resources regarding issues with eucalyptus, fire safety concerns, and community investment in sustainable practices.

In early 2025, staff from both Cities were approached by Conservancy staff, who invited the Cities to partner on a demonstration project of the Cities' choosing to leverage available State Wildfire Resilience funding administered through the Conservancy. Staff from both Cities are developing a shared project scope, in the hopes of demonstrating innovative practices for wildland management, education, and local partnerships.

DISCUSSION

At this time, Albany's portion of the project proposal includes the following items, although the final scope is subject to change based on available funds and grantor priorities. El Cerrito may partner on any or all these tasks and incorporate their own additional tasks. The proposed project ceiling, to be shared between the two Cities, is approximately \$800,000. Exact award amounts will be determined during the grant agreement process.

1. Forest Management & Pilot Planting Demonstration
 - a. Pilot planting project for suitable trees to replace eucalyptus in Monarch overwintering zone on Albany Hill; partnership with Urban Tilth (Plan Project 1 Phase 1)
 - b. High Priority tree removals (Plan Project 1 Phase 1-3, scope to be determined strategically as funds allow)
2. Public Education & Lumber Milling/Reuse
 - a. Mill Eucalyptus and reserve usable lumber for reuse on Albany Hill during maintenance operations (such as previously installed hill steps, retaining walls, etc.) Includes community demonstration, tour, and education.
 - b. Community volunteer workday(s) on Albany Hill, educating attendees about native and invasive plants, reuse of milled lumber for environmental stability/restoration, and in general activating residents to enjoy Albany Hill.
3. Community Partnership & Workforce Development
 - a. Urban Tilth certifications, tools, equipment, & supplies.
 - b. Support for the Habitat Restoration Internship Program and Urban Tilth annual maintenance contract costs as funding permits.

The Conservancy's Strategic Plan highlights workforce development as a key priority in ensuring California's long-term investment in conservation and environmental stewardship.

Conservancy staff shared with Albany staff that the City's partnership with Urban Tilth proposed as part of the previous grant application contributed to the project's competitiveness and highlighted Albany's commitment to investing in our local and regional community. The Council has acted previously to affirm that commitment, extending Urban Tilth's regular maintenance contract through FY 2027, and staff proposes to further invest in Urban Tilth's ability to deliver services on Albany Hill.

Estimated timeline:

- April 2025: Submit pre-proposal to Coastal Conservancy
- May/June 2025: Submit full application to Coastal Conservancy
- Summer 2025: Grant award announcements
- Fall 2025: Complete grant agreement and begin project
- Fall 2025-Spring 2027: Project activities

SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

This project supports the following Climate Action & Adaptation Plan goal(s):

Area 4: Accelerate Resilience

Goal 2: Increase resilience of built systems and infrastructure.

Approach: Increase the resilience of public projects and facilities.

Action 4.2.1.: Prioritize adaptation and resilience in discretionary Capital Improvement Program (CIP) projects. This action would include ensuring that the infrastructure being developed will be designed with forecasted changes in climate (precipitation, temperature, wildfire, sea level rise) in mind.

Goal 3: Increase resilience of natural lands and systems.

Approach: Manage, restore, and partner to foster resilient natural landscapes.

Action 4.3.2.: Continue to manage wildfire risk by implementing vegetation management and fuel reduction programs. These programs would focus on the highest hazard areas, including Albany Hill and areas adjacent to homes and recreation areas. These programs would defer to the Albany Hill Master Plan and recent Public Works fuel load assessment for fire mitigation efforts on the Hill and consider goals that also help maximize wildlife habitat. The City will ensure that vegetation management incorporates habitat management principles.

Goal 5: Secure funding for climate resilience projects.

Approach: Pursue unique funding opportunities.

This project supports the following Parks, Recreation & Open Space Master Plan vision(s):

Albany Hill: Keep Albany Hill an ecological icon for the community.

Objective 1. Continue implementation of the Albany Hill Creekside Master Plan, with a focus on improving ecological biodiversity.

Objective 3. Develop environmental educational opportunities in partnership with volunteer groups.

Environmental Beautification: Add additional native planting where possible.

Support Community Volunteers: Identify funding sources to promote community planting & cleanup events.

SOCIAL EQUITY & INCLUSIVITY CONSIDERATIONS

Ongoing vegetation management work by the Watershed Stewardship Restoration Field Crew of Urban Tilth is critical to keeping Albany Hill safe from fire hazards as well as helping to restore ecosystems on the hill. Their Watershed Stewardship Program employs and empowers young adults from underserved areas.

CITY COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN INITIATIVES

This project supports the following City Council Strategic Plan goal(s):

Goal 6: Increase Public Health, Safety, & Resiliency

Objective: Implement the Albany Hill Forest Management & Habitat Restoration Plan

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The proposed funding to be shared between El Cerrito and Albany is approximately \$800,000, exact amounts to be determined upon grant award. Funds will be distributed to Albany by the Conservancy on a reimbursement basis for expenditures incurred. Local matching funds are not required. Appropriations will be recommended to the Council at the time of grant award.

Attachment

1. Resolution No. 2025-25