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Independent Watchdog Committee

Report

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A vote for our green places and spaces

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Residents of

the East Bay enjoy a stroll in an East Bay Park

When Berkeley resident Sandra Martinez takes her daily walk around Lake Temescal, it's with a sense of gratitude. She's grateful her job ends early, grateful she has her health and two strong legs and, as an East Bay resident, very grateful to have beautiful trails on which to walk and explore.

"Lake Temescal is one of my favorite places to walk," says Martinez. "The lake is gorgeous, the park is always nicely maintained and I feel safe here."

The East Bay is blessed with many such parks that local residents enjoy in many diverse ways. Making these nature havens accessible, safe, and enjoyable is the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD). With such an abundance of natural beauty, it might be easy to forget that providing, maintaining and improving the East Bay's magnificent parks from Alameda Point to Tilden, require manpower, expertise, planning, designing and a lot of funding.

Yet money doesn't grow on trees.

“I voted yes on Prop 68,” said Martinez referring to the California State Park Bond that passed in June supporting environmental issues from clean water to climate change to preserving natural habitats. “I never used to vote until I realized that a lot of things on the ballot affect me and my family. It’s a way to use our voices. We need our parks!”

Just as our regional parks encourage the wellness of people, the wellness of parks relies on the support of those who use and appreciate them. Voting for the measures that make it all possible is key.

This November, measure FF is the district’s funding initiative on the ballot. According to Robert Doyle, EBRPD General Manager, it is merely an extension of what has been working well for the district for years. “Measure FF will extend existing, voter-approved funding for Regional Parks in western Alameda and Contra Costa counties without increasing taxes,” says Doyle.

FF simply extends Measure CC, a \$12 a year parcel tax, which passed in 2004. Eric Pfueller, Legislative Administrative Manager, EBRPD, says it’s a small price to pay for additional services provided to the CC Zone from Oakland to Richmond to Alameda and beyond.

“Essentially it costs taxpayers \$1 a month or 69 cents for multi-family parcels to help provide wildlife protection, public safety, more access to environmental education, infrastructure and staff, stewardship and habitat protection,” says Pfueller. “These services are vital to sustaining existing parks and making way for improvements and new development.”

Exempt from this minimal tax are non-residential parcels, public property, mobile homes, floating homes and easement parcels. Low income seniors receive a discount.

The funding from Measure FF will help carry out ambitious environmental plans for the area, according to Lisa Baldinger, Legislative Assistant, EBRPD. “Within the ballot will be a commitment list of where Measure FF’s funding will be going,” says Baldinger. Natural habitat enhancements will include water quality improvement along the shoreline, erosion reduction and urban creek restoration; stewardship of natural habitats and endangered and threatened species, and nature-based flood protection. Public access and environmental education will improve via better access to trails and shorelines, hillside and urban parks. The measure will also fund more naturalists, recreation coordinators and programming.

In addition, 50 new projects will be added, including historical facility enhancements at Tilden Park, water quality improvement at Lake Temescal, marina repairs at Lake Chabot, a new park at the base of the Bay Bridge and Alameda Point, and water bottle filling stations throughout the region.

“That sounds wonderful,” says Martinez as she raises her water bottle to cheer, “I’ll be voting again all right. I will support anything that ensures my kids and my kid’s kids will be able to enjoy the nature our beautiful East Bay has to offer. Now if you’ll excuse me,” she says adjusting her visor, “I have a sunset to catch.”