



# SAUSAL CREEK WALKABLE WATERSHED CONCEPT PLAN

*healthy waters : healthy communities*  
*Oakland California*  
*2016*

# PROJECT BACKGROUND

## Introduction

The Sausal Creek Walkable Watershed Concept Plan is an invitation for the community to enhance and celebrate Sausal Creek, promote creek stewardship and improve neighborhood trail connections to the creek and other open spaces.

The Walkable Watershed Concept Plan provides a roadmap for the broad coalition of partners that will be needed to implement this watershed vision. Once completed, these projects could connect communities along Sausal Creek from the Oakland Estuary tidal canal to Dimond Park. Future projects could connect further upstream in the watershed to Joaquin Miller Park. We invite you to learn more about the watershed and to reach out with questions and ideas using the contact information on page 15.

## Sausal Creek, then and now

Sausal Creek flows through Oakland's Fruitvale neighborhood, a vibrant arts community and one of the most culturally and ethnically diverse places in Oakland. In 1849, German, Italian and Portuguese immigrants started "Fruitvale", creating an extensive landscape of orchards, ranches and farms that became a major tourist destination. In the 1870s, many of these farms became dairies, factories and mills. In the 1900s, as the community grew, more construction and businesses attracted Latino, African-American and Asian immigrants.

Today, Fruitvale is a bustling urban center. However, it offers limited opportunities for residents to enjoy the creek and other nearby open spaces. Residents once walked through the creek, caught fish and tadpoles, and picked fruit from creekside trees. Today, many people in the community wish for the same experience but often do not feel safe walking in their neighborhoods. In many places, the creek is also hard to find, obscured by fences, trash and vegetation.

## What is a Walkable Watershed?

The Sausal Creek watershed includes all of the land that slopes down to the creek, collecting rainwater from surrounding neighborhoods. In urban areas such as Fruitvale, much of this water flows along streets and in underground pipes before reaching local waterways, picking up chemicals and wastes that can harm the environment. Many communities are now using green infrastructure, which include native plant gardens, to collect and clean the water before it flows to the creek.

The Walkable Watershed approach starts with community goals to identify green infrastructure opportunities to improve both the creek and neighborhood walking routes. Walkable Watershed projects can result in several benefits:

- Time spent outdoors in a safe environment with the sights, sounds and feel of nature, can reduce obesity, increase students' focus in school and reduce anxiety.
- "Greening" neighborhoods and improving sidewalks can make walking more pleasant, reduce congestion, improve property values, increase foot traffic and reduce energy bills.
- Fostering community stewardship of waterways such as Sausal Creek can help deter crime and trash dumping.

## Table of Contents

Project Background.....	1
Community Voice.....	2
Leveraging Opportunities.....	4
Concept Plan Overview and Strategies...	5
Potential Project Areas.....	13
From Plan to Action.....	15



*Sausal Creek above Barry Place*



*Josie de la Cruz Park*



*Fruitvale Transit Village and BART station*



## Community process

The Friends of Sausal Creek (FOSC) has been a long-time champion promoting stewardship and restoration of Sausal Creek. In 2016, FOSC committed to focusing efforts on Sausal Creek near Fruitvale and surrounding neighborhoods. With support from Skeo, FOSC launched the Sausal Creek Walkable Watershed process in January 2016. FOSC, Skeo and the National Park Service, hosted a series of community discussions to gather ideas and develop a concept plan to improve watershed and neighborhood health. The discussions focused on:

1. Bringing stakeholders together to listen to local needs and interests.
2. Developing a shared understanding of technical and community-based issues.
3. Identifying strategies that improve conditions for both pedestrians and water quality.
4. Unifying strategies as part of a concept plan to leverage funding and partnerships for moving forward.

## Community engagement activities

People shared ideas during community events, listening sessions, walking tours, a student survey, interactive youth activities, a charrette with community leaders and two open houses. We synthesized the community ideas into a set of projects and activities. Project partners toured the watershed and met with city staff to determine which of these project ideas might be most feasible and promising. Key events included:

- **January:** Project partner kickoff meetings
- **March – May:** Community leader charrette and watershed tours
- **May – July:** Youth March Against Trash and in-class surveys to gather ideas from 130 students at Manzanita SEED, Urban Promise Academy, and Skyline and Oakland High schools
- **June – July:** Presentation to the Oakland Sustainable Neighborhood Coalition and Oakland's Measure DD Community Coalition
- **September:** City of Oakland staff meeting to seek alignment with city programs
- **October:** Community open houses at Cesar Chavez Library

## Community goals

Through these conversations, we heard the following goals to guide the project's concept plan:

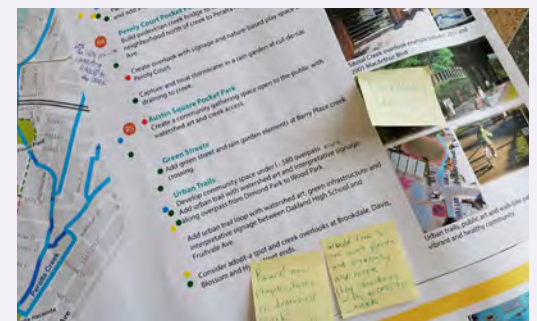
- Connect people to Sausal Creek with signage, park amenities, better access, viewpoints and activities.
- Include art in projects to highlight the creek, increase stewardship and celebrate local culture.
- Engage youth in creek restoration, walks and awareness of local plants and animals.
- Improve the creek and neighborhood greening and connections with native plants, rain gardens, nature centers, pedestrian bridges and daylighting the creek.



Conversation with Angelica Lopez (Josie de la Cruz park manager) and Councilman Gallo



Community leader charrette



Community open house



Youth March Against Trash

## Youth engagement

Over 130 students shared their vision for the watershed through a series of interactive activities. These efforts included group mapping activities, community surveys, and art and social media projects. Most students were interested in enjoying and visiting the creek; over half the students had never visited the creek or had done so only once. The main themes from the student surveys are summarized below in terms of what students would like to know, do and see.



Local youth in action, during cleanup, restoration, biological monitoring and visioning activities.



Youth leader vision of Sausal Creek

### What do students want to know?

- Where does the water come from, how clean is it and where does it go?
- What is the history of the creek and how did it become developed?
- What are the stories about local Native American culture, history and legends?
- What native or invasive plants and animals live in or near the creek?
- How have people affected the health of the creek?
- What are the benefits of the creek for me?

### What do students want to do?

- Restore and clean up the creek by removing invasive plants and planting native species, cleaning up trash and improving water quality.
- Learn more about the creek and what lives there by collecting bugs and fish, taking field trips and nature walks and observing the creek and the animals that use it.
- Engage in creekside recreation activities such as walks and hikes along and through the creek, as well as picnics and games.

### What do students want to see more of in the watershed?

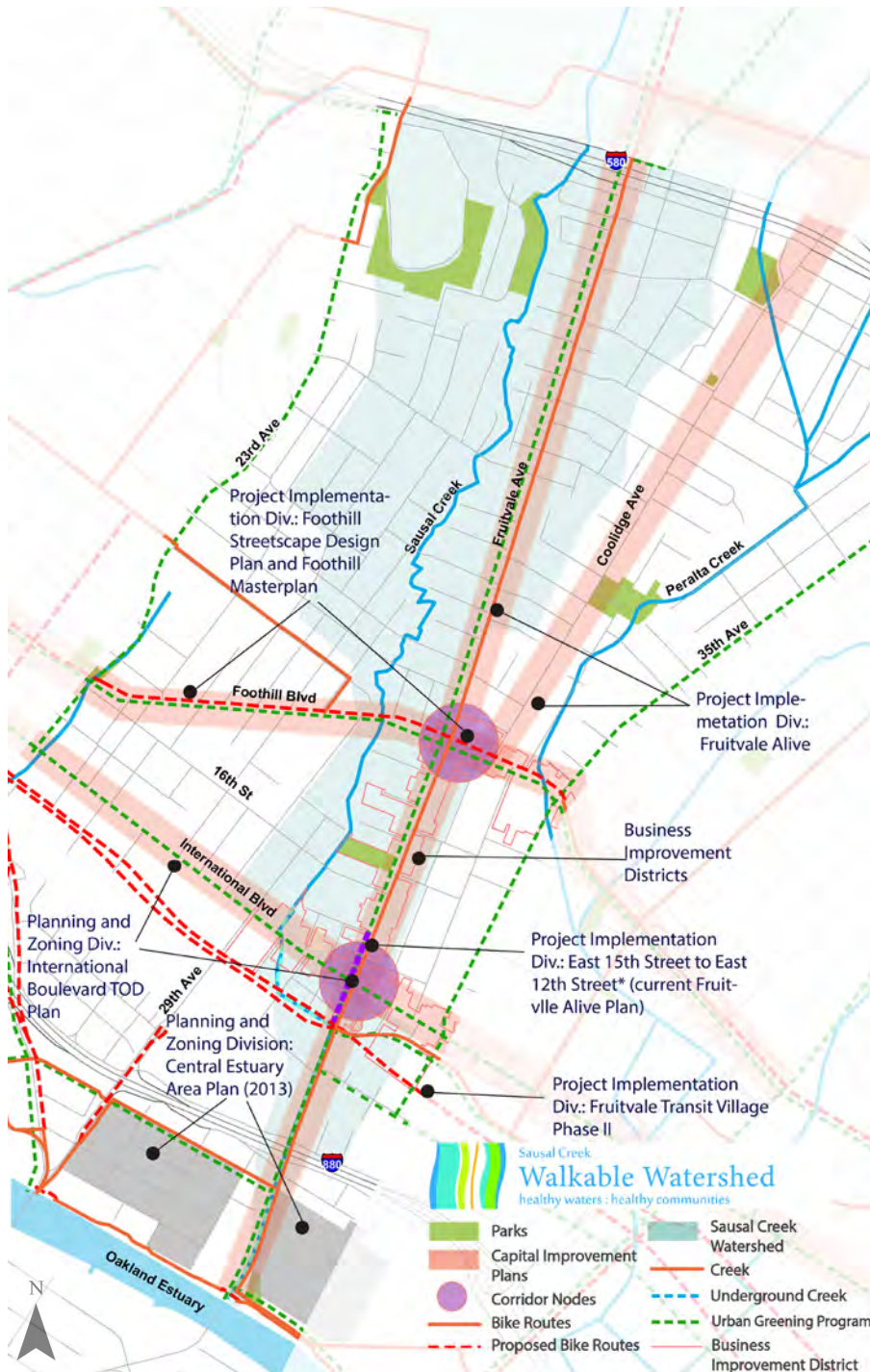
- A clean and beautiful creek with more trash cans and pet waste bags, fruit trees and colorful art.
- Animal and plant identification signs, interactive features to amplify creek sounds, binoculars to see small wildlife and more walking bridges over the creek.
- Creekside resources such as playgrounds, benches and tables, restrooms and water fountains and more parks and trails.



## City programs

Discussions with City of Oakland staff have informed the Sausal Creek Walkable Watershed Concept Plan. During these discussions, staff recommended identifying near-term opportunities by evaluating existing programs. Note that some programs may require additional funding to meet project needs. Specific initiatives that informed this work include:

- Public Works Bicycle and Pedestrian Program's East 12th St Bikeway Project/International Blvd Bikeway and Fruitvale Alive Gap Closure Streetscape Project.
- Relevant streetscape improvements by the Project Implementation Division include East 15th Street to East 12th Street as part of Fruitvale Alive Plan, Fruitvale Transit Village Phase II and Foothill/Fruitvale Streetscape Revitalization.
- The Zero Waste and Illegal Dumping Removal programs can target the Sausal Creek area to help residents and businesses reduce trash in their communities.
- The Urban Greening, Creek to Bay Protection, Only Rain Down the Drain and Adopt a Drain programs can be promoted in the Sausal Creek watershed along with the Public Works Department's Watershed Conservation & Restoration Projects.
- The Planning and Zoning Division's International Blvd Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Plan includes streetscape improvements in the Fruitvale and International Blvd node.
- The East Bay Greenway trail will go under the BART line from Oakland to Hayward. Construction is planned for 2018.
- The East Bay Municipal Utility District (MUD) has plans to renovate the Central Reservoir. Projects could include creek awareness signs, native plant gardens and trail connections.



Map of City of Oakland plans and priorities. The Sausal Creek project area includes the Fruitvale Avenue corridor from I-580 to the Oakland Estuary. The Sausal Creek watershed is shown in light blue. It includes all land that drains to Sausal Creek.



# CONCEPT PLAN OVERVIEW

- Sausal Creek Watershed
- Park
- Publicly-owned or Utility Lands
- Friends of Sausal Creek Projects

## Creeks

- Creek on Surface
- Creek Underground

## Trails Network

### Existing

- Trails and Bike Paths
- Proposed Bike Paths

### Community Recommendations

- Proposed Trails
- Proposed Green Streets
- Potential View Point or Signs
- Potential Public Art or Signs
- Potential Public Art or Signs at Creek Crossing
- Proposed Pedestrian Creek Crossing



0 0.5 1 Miles



The Sausal Creek watershed is shown in blue on page 5. The map highlights potential trails and green streets, locations for viewpoints, public art, educational signs and creek crossings. Pages 7-12 highlight recommended projects in each of these categories.

## Urban Trails, Public Art and Educational Signs

**Urban trails** along streets, public rights-of-way and parks can provide a safe and engaging walking experience. Along these trails, art and educational signs can tell the story of the creek and connect residents to creekside parks, viewpoints, regional trails and the Oakland Estuary. Walking bridges across the creek can bring people close to the creek and promote walking by connecting people with where they need to go.

## Creek Access, Viewpoints and Parklets

Like many urban streams, Sausal Creek is hidden underground or behind fences through much of the Fruitvale area. Parts of the creek that are above ground cross private property or public areas that are closed off due to safety concerns, leaving residents with few opportunities to enjoy the creek.

**Creek access** includes public locations where people can touch and experience the life in and along the creek. Dimond Park is a good example of creek access. Barry Place and Austin Square could provide similar access in the future. A creek viewpoint or parklet includes benches, signs that share information to help residents enjoy and protect the creek, and nature-themed playgrounds.

## Green Streets

Some streets are well designed for cars, but may not be safe for pedestrians or bicyclists. Road runoff from rainstorms can send oils and other pollutants into nearby creeks and the Oakland Estuary.

**Green streets** provide space for cars while also including bike lanes and sidewalks as well as rain gardens to trap and clean rainwater. Green streets can make it safer and more pleasant for people to walk home from school, church or shopping and provide habitat for birds and butterflies. Examples of green street projects are listed below.

**Rain gardens and bioswales** are bowl-like gardens that trap and clean water running off streets and support wildlife. **Wetlands** are similar, but often stay wet most of the year and tend to attract a greater range of birds and other wildlife. **Curb extensions** are rain gardens and bioswales that jut into the street to calm traffic and improve safety at crosswalks. Trees placed along streets also slow the flow of water, provide shade and clean the air.

**Permeable pavement** is sponge-like concrete and asphalt that can filter water and chemicals where people walk or drive.



Urban trails provide community access to the creek while creating engaging pedestrian and bike routes



Parklets, overlooks, and viewpoints provide opportunities for access and enjoyment of the creek



Bioswales capture stormwater and contribute to safe streets



Example of safe and inclusive green streets



# ZONE I: DIMOND PARK TO FOOTHILL BLVD

- Sausal Creek Watershed
- Park
- Publicly-owned or Utility Lands
- Friends of Sausal Creek Projects

## Creeks

- Creek on Surface
- Creek Underground

## Trails Network

### Existing

- Trails and Bike Paths
- Proposed Bike Paths

### Community Recommendations

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- Potential View Point or Signs
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- Potential Public Art or Signs at Creek Crossing
- Proposed Pedestrian Creek Crossing





## R1 Pedestrian connectivity across I-580

Enhance pedestrian safety across I-580. Place signs for wayfinding and creek awareness.

## R2 Wood Park Area

Restore Sausal Creek surface flow to provide opportunities for the community to enjoy the creek.

Improve opportunities to enjoy Wood Park with benches, tables, wildlife habitat and signs that identify local plants and wildlife.

Improve pedestrian access to Wood Park at School Street and Sausal Street.

## R3 Barry Place Pocket Park

Create a creek overlook with signs that could include stormwater or fish passage information.

Partner with interested property owners to improve creek access and add a rain garden to treat stormwater.

## R4 Peroly Court Pocket Park

Build pedestrian bridge over the creek to connect Manzanita School and neighborhood north of the creek to Peralta Hacienda and Fruitvale Avenue.

Create creek viewpoint with signs about creek wildlife and nature-themed playground at Peroly Court.

Capture and treat stormwater in a rain garden at the existing cul-de-sac next to the creek.

## R5 Austin Square Pocket Park

Create a community gathering space open to the public with watershed art and creek access.

### Green Streets and Urban Trails

Create urban trail loop to connect community destinations. Trail could connect existing parks (Dimond, Wood, Central Reservoir, Curt Field, Nichol and Peralta Hacienda), schools (Manzanita SEED, Oakland High and Fruitvale Elementary) and churches and businesses on Fruitvale Avenue. Loop could include signs with information about wildlife, drinking water, flooding, healthy watersheds and cultural history, and gardens with native plants and trees to collect stormwater before it runs into the creek.

### Viewpoints and Cul-de-Sacs

Consider adopt-a spot and creek viewpoints at Brookdale, Davis, Blossom, Nicol and Hyde street ends.



R1: Adding trees and native plants and protected walking routes improve community safety and air quality



R2: Restoring Sausal Creek surface flow in Dimond Park



R3: Sausal Creek viewpoint example between 2011 and 2001 MacArthur Boulevard



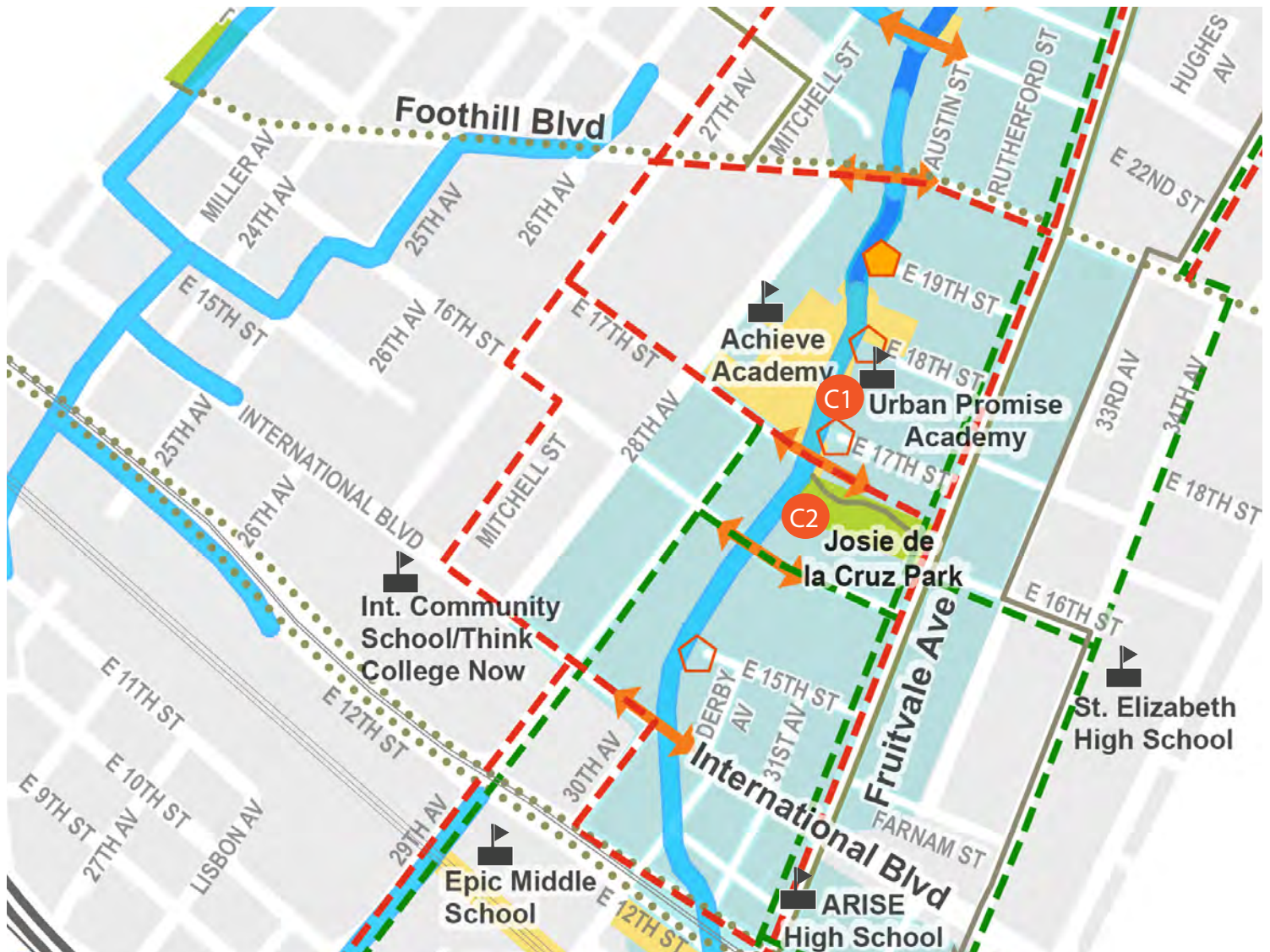
R4: Nature-themed playground and wildlife signs



R5: Urban trails, public art, and walking and biking paths support a vibrant and healthy community



# ZONE II: FOOTHILL BLVD TO INTERNATIONAL BLVD



## Trails Network

### Existing

- Trails and Bike Paths
- Proposed Bike Paths

### Community Recommendations

- Proposed Trails
- Proposed Green Streets
- Potential View Point or Signs
- Potential Public Art or Signs
- Potential Public Art or Signs at Creek Crossing
- Proposed Pedestrian Creek Crossing

Sausal Creek Watershed

Park

Publicly-owned or Utility Lands

Friends of Sausal Creek Projects

### Creeks

- Creek on Surface
- Creek Underground

0 0.25 0.5 Miles

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## C1 Achieve and Urban Promise Schools

Create creek viewpoint with signs about wildlife living in and around the creek and use of wildfire to understand health of the creek. Provide interactive opportunities to engage with the creek. For example, aqua-tubes could amplify the sounds of nature.

## C2 Josie de la Cruz Park

Collect and recycle roof water from recreation center in demonstration rain drums and water storage tanks.

Plant and irrigate native trees using water storage tanks.

Direct extra stormwater to a depression with a native plant garden to clean water before it enters the creek.

Create a storytelling area next to trees and signs that includes information on water conservation, stormwater management, native plants and the area's natural and cultural history.

## Green Streets and Urban Trails

Add watershed art, native plant gardens and creek awareness signs along urban trail routes running along Coolidge Street and 33rd Avenue, and from Achieve Academy and 29th Avenue, to the Bay Trail. Where possible, create green streets along 34th Avenue, Fruitvale Avenue and 29th Avenue.

## Viewpoints and Cul-de-Sacs

Add creek viewpoints, art and signs about the creek and watershed at streets that cross the creek as well as the East 19th Street, East 18th Street, East 17th Street and East 15th Street cul-de-sacs.



Oakland's "Creeks Beneath Your Feet" plaques increase awareness of buried creeks.



C1: Viewpoint example



C2: Example rain drum (left) and water storage tanks (right) to collect roof water at Josie de la Cruz Park



C1 and C2: Example rain garden and signs about creek wildlife



C1 and Viewpoints: Example wildlife and creek sound amplifier



Protected and inclusive streets for walking and biking for safe access to schools



# ZONE III: INTERNATIONAL BLVD TO OAKLAND ESTUARY



## Trails Network

### Existing

— Trails and Bike Paths

.... Proposed Bike Paths

### Community Recommendations

--- Proposed Trails

--- Proposed Green Streets

⬠ Potential View Point or Signs

⬠ Potential Public Art or Signs

➡ Potential Public Art or Signs at Creek Crossing

➡ Proposed Pedestrian Creek Crossing

■ Sausal Creek Watershed

■ Park

■ Publicly-owned or Utility Lands

\* Friends of Sausal Creek Projects

### Creeks

— Creek on Surface

— Creek Underground



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## W1 Fruitvale Avenue west of I-880

Create wetland in existing rail right-of-way with trail and interpretive signs to provide and highlight open space, habitat and stormwater treatment. Signs could include historical images of Sausal Creek and area wetlands.

Create gardens with native plants and watershed art in planned Fruitvale and 12th Street improvement. Consider planting fruit trees to reflect Fruitvale's cultural history.



W1: Example of restored wetland and walking path

## W2 Space under I-880 overpass at Fruitvale Avenue

Develop parklets, trails and community space.



W2: Example of community space and parklet under I-880

## W3 Derby Beach and Bay Trail Entrance

Add native plant gardens to collect stormwater, benches and signs about the Oakland estuary and connection to Sausal Creek to highlight entrance to Derby Beach and Bay Trail network.



W3: Example of stormwater planter to be used along Bay Trail

## W4 Nature Center at Fruitvale Bridge

Create small nature center - permanent or mobile - to provide hands-on access to animals and plants in the creek and estuary. Connect to planned section of Bay Trail.



W4: Example of hands-on nature education center

## Sustainable Redevelopment

Partner with city and developers to include parklets, rain gardens, trail connections and signs and art about water quality and stormwater in future development plans.

## Urban Trails and Green Streets

Create native plant gardens and watershed art on 29th Ave west of I-880 to estuary.



Examples of watershed awareness art



Sidewalk art to make watershed connections



# POTENTIAL PROJECT AREAS

Community participants prioritized the following four projects as priorities for partnership building, funding and implementation. Potential partners and funding sources are outlined further on page 16.

## Wood Park and Barry Place

Wood Park is a central community gathering space. Walking connections and creek awareness activities could improve mobility between Dimond and Fruitvale parks, Manzanita SEED and Fruitvale Elementary, and east-to-west connections to community assets on Fruitvale Avenue. Integrated planning and green infrastructure could help address safety issues, park and creek access, and stormwater management.

### Short-term Actions

- Create overlook at Barry Place and demonstration rain gardens.
- Create improved entrance to Wood Park at School Street with educational signs about buried creek and invasive plants.
- Create rain garden, benches and restrooms at Wood Park to encourage use of space.

### Long-term Actions

- Partner with City of Oakland on restoring surface flows and stream restoration opportunities at Wood Park and Barry Place. Barry Place is part of the City's existing creek restoration priorities.



*Existing Wood Park*



*Barry Place, existing access to Sausal Creek*

## Josie de la Cruz Park and nearby schools

Josie de la Cruz Park is a vital part of the Fruitvale community; it provides activities and open space for all ages. The park and nearby Urban Promise and Achieve Academies are located on top of Sausal Creek, providing opportunities for creek restoration and awareness-building projects.

### Short-term Actions

- Plant native trees, install rain drums and decorative water storage tanks to capture water from recreation center, and irrigate trees. Partner with local artists to decorate drums and water storage tanks.
- Create creek viewpoint and sitting area at above ground section of creek with educational signs about creek wildlife and creek health monitoring and lighting.
- Develop an Adopt a Park program with neighbors and students to address trash in the park.

### Long-term Actions

- Plan, design and put in a creek-like depression with native plants where Sausal Creek flows under Josie de la Cruz Park.
- Partner with Achieve Academy to install rain gardens along 17th Street.
- Partner with Urban Promise Academy and Achieve Academy to provide students with safe access to the creek. Explore potential creek restoration opportunity at Urban Promise Academy identified by the City of Oakland.
- Develop creek awareness and stormwater education programs.



*Existing creek overlook at Josie de la Cruz*



*Drop-off zone at Achieve Academy*



## I-880 and Fruitvale Avenue

Below Josie de la Cruz Park, Sausal Creek is entirely underground and green space is lacking. The City of Oakland, CalTrans and BART are improving mobility, safety and access to green space in the area. Partnerships with these landowners and Union Pacific will be key to making the actions below possible.

### Short-term Actions

- Partner with the City of Oakland, BART and Caltrans on awareness building and restoration opportunities. Partner with Caltrans to develop a pop-up community space under the overpass to replace existing automobile storage.
- Partner with the City of Oakland on potential green street funding for the Fruitvale Alive project.
- Partner with the City of Oakland and Union Pacific to develop an interactive phone app or series of signs and artwork along Fruitvale Avenue showing historical photos of Sausal Creek and community walks.
- Plant a mix of fruit trees and native trees and plants in swales along Fruitvale Avenue.

### Long-term Actions

- Restore small wetland area in right of way along Fruitvale Avenue along space owned by Union Pacific.



Existing Union Pacific Rail right-of-way



Existing I-880 overpass

## Fruitvale Bridge Park

Fruitvale Bridge Park is a key gateway to Fruitvale and the end of Sausal Creek as it flows into the Oakland Estuary. The pier was recently demolished but was used for birding and fishing and is located at a gap along the Bay Trail. Adjacent to the park is an unused Union Pacific right of way and the old Owens-Illinois Glass Factory, which is slated for redevelopment.

### Short-term Actions

- Coordinate with Bay Trail developers to develop interpretative signage and creek access at or near the former pier.
- Develop hands-on environmental education program at the former pier and mobile education center building on existing cleanup, birding and sea level rise programs.

### Long-term Actions

- Design a permanent nature center at the former Fruitvale Bridge Park pier or next to it.
- Coordinate with the City of Oakland and the community on green infrastructure projects that address local priorities during redevelopment of sites such as the Owens-Illinois glass factory.



Former Fruitvale Bridge Pier



End of Sausal Creek as it flows into the Oakland Estuary



## Recommended programs and activities

Community participants identified a range of opportunities to leverage existing programs to improve neighborhood spaces and watershed health.

### Neighborhood Investments

Improve pedestrian and biking safety by integrating handicap access, solar or LED lighting, and protected bike lanes into street improvement projects and remove excess brush along routes to increase visibility.

Reduce trash and illegal dumping by providing trash cans at trash hotspots and promoting free bulk-item disposal options through Oakland Recycles. Trash cans could be covered with youth and community art modeled after the mosaic trash cans in other parts of Oakland.

Public property owners including the City of Oakland and Alameda County Flood Control District could provide more creek access, along with signs, playgrounds and benches at select public properties along the creek. Viewpoints with informational signs could be created along select public rights of way to enable residents to enjoy the creek, plants and wildlife from the safety of an overlook.

### Stewardship

Community members and organizations have expressed eagerness to create and maintain public creek access points to enhance the creek and local quality of life. Project partners can expand and build on Adopt a Spot, Adopt a Storm Drain and Adopt a Tree programs, as well as the Unity Council's Safety Neighborhood Ambassador Program to enlist creek stewards to promote positive use of sites and reduce illegal dumping and crime.

### Walking Tours

Build appreciation for the creek by integrating educational signs and art into trails, and by leading activities such as treasure hunts, storytelling and community creek walks that highlight community and watershed history. Self-guided tours can be developed and shared through brochures, websites or apps. Artistic elements such as animal footprints, fish imprinted on sidewalks, water painted at creek crossings, and art on bus shelters and trash cans can build awareness about the watershed and increase interest and investment in the creek as a community asset.

### Capacity Building

Build partnerships with community organizations and co-host projects and educational activities across the watershed such as field trips, walking tours, and education on safety and schoolyard stormwater programs. Project partners could form a coalition to share strategies for engaging communities, restoring the watershed, providing job training and fundraising.

### Partnerships and Acknowledgements

Many thanks to all the community residents and the following organizations who shared ideas and support along the way: Barry Place adopters, Brothers on the Rise, the City of Oakland, Cohen Bray House, Friends of Wood Park, Fruitvale Bridge Park adopters, Jingtletown Arts and Business Community, Keep Oakland Beautiful, Nomadic Press, Peralta Hacienda Historical Park, Pollinate Farm and Garden, local students (Manzanita SEED, Oakland High School, Skyline High School, Urban Promise Academy), Unity Council and Walk Oakland Bike Oakland.

Looking forward, project implementation partners include the Alameda County Flood Control District, BART, Bay Trail, CalTrans, the local fishing and recreation communities, area health centers and businesses, the Oakland Heritage Alliance, Union Pacific and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

**Find out more and share your thoughts:**

**[www.sausalcreek.org](http://www.sausalcreek.org) or [www.walkablewatershed.com/sausalcreek](http://www.walkablewatershed.com/sausalcreek)**

**Contact us:**

**Kimra McAfee**  
**[coordinator@sausalcreek.org](mailto:coordinator@sausalcreek.org)**  
**Marcus Griswold**  
**[mgriswold@skeo.com](mailto:mgriswold@skeo.com)**



Friends of Sausal Creek  
PROMOTING WATERSHED AWARENESS

