

VI. HISTORY OF THE EL CERRITO PARK AND RECREATION SYSTEM

A. THE BEGINNING OF THE SYSTEM

El Cerrito was incorporated as a General Law City in 1917. In 1946, Resolution 1062 was adopted by the City Council of El Cerrito to establish the first program of recreation in El Cerrito. See Exhibit B. This resolution called for the Director of Recreation, City of Richmond to submit all requests for payments of funds from El Cerrito treasury on claims approved by the Elementary School Board.

Thus this unusual arrangement between the City of El Cerrito, City of Richmond and the Richmond Elementary District began the first recreational services to El Cerrito residents. A budget of \$10,950 was allocated for the 1946-47 fiscal year. The budget was to administer the two existing parks, Huber and Poinsett, and to provide programs at Harding and Fairmont Elementary Schools as well as El Cerrito High School.

B. PARK COMMISSION

In June of 1946 Resolution 1111 created a Park Commission. See Exhibit C. Its function was to "study present and future needs of the City of El Cerrito with regard to Park and Recreational facilities and to make recommendations to the City Council concerning Park and Recreation facilities."

The Park Commission in 1947 and 1948 presented proposals to voters seeking a special assessment for park purposes and then a bond issue for improvements. These two efforts were both defeated by the voters. The interests of the Park Commission waned and they became inactive for a few years.

C. CALIFORNIA STATE RECREATION COMMISSION STUDY

In 1948 the Council-Manager form of government was adopted in El Cerrito as a part of the reorganization of local government. The new City Manager requested the assistance of the California State Recreation Commission to "conduct an examination of Community Recreation in El Cerrito as a preliminary to the preparation of plans for the development of Recreation Services."

In June of 1949 El Cerrito Mayor, Millard E. Bostock, received a report from Sterling S. Winans, Director of Recreation, State of California. The report enumerated a variety of problems that the City should attempt to solve if they desired to institute a comprehensive Park and Recreation System. The report encouraged the City to take over full responsibility for administering a Park and Recreation System, providing personnel, establishing a special park tax and developing a master plan. See Exhibit D.

In 1949 El Cerrito hired its first professional employee to administer the Recreation System on a part-time basis (Richard Hunn) and created a combined Park and Recreation Commission. In 1957 the first Park and Recreation Director was hired (Robert Bonney) and the Park and Recreation Departments were combined.

D. PARK TAX AND CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT FUND

In 1954 the citizens of El Cerrito passed a 10¢ park tax which provided for almost \$250,000 over a ten year period. This amount was realized to be insufficient to accomplish the goals of the City's planned acquisition and development program and in 1958 an ordinance was passed to use 25% of the growing City's Sales Tax for Capital Improvements.

#### E. EL CERRITO'S FIRST PARK AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN

In 1956 El Cerrito adopted its first Master Plan for the City which included a Plan for Parks and Recreation facilities. In 1958 Resolution 2266 was adopted providing the Parks and Recreation System with a revised Master Plan. The Plan was prepared by the City Manager, Kenneth Smith, and its title was "A Revised Plan for Public Recreation in the City of El Cerrito." It was comprehensive and became the guide for action for the City during the next five years. The plan is valuable because of its long range approach and comprehensiveness and has therefore been summarized in Exhibit E.

#### F. 1964 BOND ISSUE

In 1958 and again in 1959 a Park Bond Issue was placed before the voters. When the issue failed by a narrow margin the Park and Recreation Commission became determined to find alternative funding. They recommended to the City Council that all of the Capital Improvement Funds be put in a reserve for construction of a swim center.

In 1961, a "Park Land Acquisition Priority" program was prepared by the Park and Recreation Department. This report represented another attempt to place before the Park and Recreation Commission and the city Council a plan to acquire land based on a priority system.

The City Manager recommended a 10 year Capital Improvement program amounting to \$1,022,500. The swimming pool was to be the first project and was completed from the Capital Improvement reserve in 1963.

In 1961, John Dunn, Jr., an intern with the San Francisco Coro Foundation, prepared another master plan for the El Cerrito Park and Recreation System. This extensive and comprehensive study was titled "A Survey of El Cerrito Park and Recreation Facilities - Present and Future." This plan greatly assisted in the preparation and the approval of the 1964 Bond measure for the amount of 1.2 million dollars. The Park and Recreation Commission also played an important role in informing the citizenry of El Cerrito about the need for the passage of the 1964 Bond Issue and in designing the fourteen bond projects. See Exhibit F.

Most of the bond projects were accomplished during the next few years. Additional land was purchased for Hillside Park but the landscape plan has not been completed. A plan for a mini park for young children near the High School was withdrawn from the bond program. Plans to develop the lower field at Camp Herms were implied in the bond program but have not been implemented. The proposal to build a multipurpose outdoor theater in the quarry was abandoned due to the instability of the quarry walls and the development of the Contra Costa Civic Theatre in 1971.

#### G. 1974 STATE BOND ISSUE

In early 1973 the City of El Cerrito was informed that the State of California Department of Parks and Recreation planned to submit a 250 million Bond Issue to the State voters. This Bond, known as Proposition 1 on the June 1974 State Election, would provide \$2,412,000 for Contra Costa Cities and eligible districts. The

official title of the Bond was "State Beach, Parks, Recreational and Historical Facilities Bond Act of 1974."

The distribution of the 2.4 million dollars to the Contra Costa Cities and eligible recreation districts would be at the discretion of each county, but 50% of the cities and districts with 50% of the population had to approve the projects. The Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors, with advice from the Contra Costa County Recreation and Natural Resources Commission, was given the responsibility to develop criteria and a method of distribution of the funds. A sub-committee was formed with representatives from each city and eligible district on a population per capita basis and the remainder would be distributed by the County Board of Supervisors to projects with regional significance.

El Cerrito became eligible for \$84,250 based on a per capita basis. One of El Cerrito's projects, a trail from BART Del Norte to Wildcat Canyon was funded as a regional project and a further \$6,000 was added for El Cerrito projects.

The El Cerrito Parks and Recreation Commission recommended a variety of projects to the City Council for the use of these funds. The highest priority was the addition of indoor space at the Community Center.

A last minute ruling by the State Attorney General in April of 1974 declared that indoor facilities were ineligible for the 1974 State Bond monies. Therefore, alternatives were submitted and approved by the City Council on July 12, 1974. See Exhibit G.

When the alternative projects were originally approved on July 12, 1974, the City Council was concerned that, due to the rush of meeting state and county deadlines, not enough planning time had been available. Therefore, in the motion to approve the projects the Council requested that before final application for funds was made, a thorough report on all the alternatives be made to the Council or that the Park and Recreation Element be completed.

The Park and Recreation Director recommended that a Park and Recreation Element would be the most thorough approach to ensure the validity of the projects submitted to the state.

The Parks and Recreation Commission concurred with this approach and five members of the commission along with the Director and Assistant Director began working on a new El Cerrito Park and Recreation Element.

#### H. FURTHER JUSTIFICATION FOR A PARK AND RECREATION ELEMENT

In addition to the availability of the 1974 Bond monies, the Federal Housing and Community Development Act was passed in 1974. Through an agreement with the county, El Cerrito became eligible for funding under this act. The Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund Program initially adopted in 1965 provides 50% matching funds for local agencies through the state for acquisition and development of outdoor recreational land. Presently, a bill is before the state legislature for 100% funding of recreational land and facilities in urban areas from off shore drilling taxes. Most of these fund sources require a Park and Recreation Element or Master Plan before applications will be accepted.

VII. CITY OF EL CERRITO LEISURE SERVICES, COMMUNITY APPEARANCE AND SPECIAL SERVICES SYSTEM

This section is divided into five areas. They are finances, facilities, services, personnel and community appearance. These are the basic components of a Park and Recreation System created to meet the Leisure Services, Community Appearance and Special Services Goals of El Cerrito.

A. FINANCE

El Cerrito adopted a policy in 1954 to establish a separate park tax as part of the property tax. This park tax for the 1974-75 fiscal year was 46¢ per 100 assessed valuation. This produced a revenue of \$365,506. In 1963 the completion of the swim center and in 1965 the completion of the community center provided a new source of revenue. This new source was a fee program for special classes, public swimming, and other activities. In 1974-75 this fund reached its highest revenue, (\$154,890). Included in this revenue program are reimbursements by the City of Richmond for the maintenance of Central Park and reimbursement by the Richmond Unified School District for the use of the swim pool and other services provided by the City.

It is the combination of these two sources of funds that make the El Cerrito Park and Recreation System function well. Without the park tax to maintain the parks and facilities and to cover the administrative and supervisory costs, the reimburseable program would not be able to provide the variety of programs at the swim center, community center, Casa Cerrito and other facilities. In 1974-75, \$46,000 in fees were collected for classes. These fees represent over 5,000 registrations.

In 1973 the City Council adopted a program to increase services to the elderly and handicapped. These services were to be primarily social services such as transportation, assistance in finding housing, medical referrals, Meals-on-Wheels, and a variety of other social services. In order to accomplish these programs a separate "Committee on Aging" was established by Resolution 3559 to advise the Council on the needs of the elderly and the handicapped, and to also act as volunteers providing services to the elderly and handicapped. See Exhibit H.

It became apparent with this 20 member committee and diverse services program that this new program needed professional assistance. Therefore, paid staff were provided to coordinate the work of the volunteers and to also provide direct services to the older adults and handicapped adults. The funding for the staff and programs of the Committee on Aging comes from the General Fund of the City. In 1974-75 the Senior and Handicapped Services program was budgeted for \$20,156 from the General Fund. The revenue for this budget represents approximately 2.5¢ on the property tax.

In addition to these three sources of funding for the Leisure Services, Community Appearance and Special Services program of the City, there is a capital improvement fund for one time expenditures. These expenditures result from needed improvements to parks and facilities or acquisition and replacement of equipment. This source of funding is provided presently by unused revenues of the prior year. During 1974-75 the Leisure Services, Community Appearance and Special Services program of the City had a capital improvement budget of \$31,263.

The total budget for Park and Recreation System in 1974-75 was \$567,095. The total operating budget for 1975-76 is \$612,120. See Exhibit I for a summary of the 1975-76 budget.



During a portion of the 1974-75 fiscal year and a part of the 1975-76 fiscal year, the Leisure Services, Community Appearance and Special Services program budget has been augmented with four additional staff members. This source of additional staff was from the Federal Comprehensive Employment and Training Act that was passed by Congress due to the high unemployment problem. During this period of time it has been possible to establish two temporary Neighborhood Recreation Coordinator positions and to hire two additional Park Maintenance Workers.

El Cerrito consistently funds its Park and Recreation System on a high level and there have been no reductions in services requested by the present City Council. On the contrary, the present City Council has desired to improve the existing program each year. The establishment of an expanded street tree maintenance program, an expanded teen program (including a job referral service), and the development of a special program of services to the elderly and handicapped represent the major improvements to the Leisure Services, Community Appearance and Special Services program of the present City Council.

## B. FACILITIES

### Introduction

Since 1920, when Huber and Poinsett were the only two City parks, there has been a continual growth of the system. Today, the City of El Cerrito owns 109 acres of land designated for recreational purposes. In addition, the City has access to 34 acres of Richmond Unified School District recreational areas, 24 acres of utility lands and 7 acres of BART Right-of-way. The total public recreation land is presently 174 acres (See Exhibit J).

### Neighborhood Facilities

There are eleven neighborhood parks in El Cerrito, ranging from 1.1 to 7.6 acres in size. The size and facilities of the parks vary considerably. A neighborhood may be defined as the area served by an elementary school. The reason for using the school attendance area is that the majority of use of the neighborhood parks is by elementary age youth. The second heaviest use is by the junior high age group. Since a large percentage of the junior high youth at Portola and Adams graduated from a elementary school in El Cerrito or Mira Vista School, there is a tendency to return to the elementary school/park for recreation services. The only major exception would be Madera School where the junior high age group would return to either Arlington Park or the Madera playground depending on the activity season. (See Exhibit K for boundaries of the Richmond Elementary Schools' attendance areas).

There are six elementary schools in El Cerrito. Three of these schools (Castro, Harding, Fairmont) are school/parks. A school/park occurs where school land has been dedicated to the City for the purpose of operating a city park on school property. Two schools (El Monte and Del Mar) are located adjacent to City parks (Canyon Trail and Cerrito Vista respectively,) and one other school (Madera) is located approximately 1/4 mile from Arlington Park.

Mira Vista School is located outside the City limits; however about 1/3 of its attendance area is in El Cerrito. Poinsett and Tassajara Parks are within this school attendance area.

The El Cerrito 1973 Residential Analysis approached the neighborhood concept on the basis of census tracts. Some of these census tracts correspond to school neighborhoods and some do not. Therefore, a certain amount of estimation is required in order to use the Housing Analysis to understand the make-up of each school neighborhood. Exhibit L provides a

summary of the characteristics of each neighborhood, adapted from the 1973 El Cerrito Residential Analysis.

In order to understand the variation between the seven school neighborhoods, a brief description of each neighborhood and its recreational facilities is given below.

#### Mira Vista Neighborhood

The Mira Vista School neighborhood serves approximately 250 elementary children from El Cerrito. The total enrollment at Mira Vista School is 699. It has two parks, Tassajara and Poinsett. The Richmond Recreation and Park Department provides recreation leadership at Mira Vista School. However, there is no playfield at this school. The Mira Vista Annex School, adjacent to Tassajara Park, was formerly a primary school and in the fall of 1975 will become an audio-visual center for the school district. It is within the El Cerrito City boundaries and the asphalt playground is unsupervised and used on a minimal basis. Thus, there are four recreational facilities of various sizes and quality serving this school neighborhood although their use occurs in an uncoordinated manner.

Tassajara Park is 2.85 acres in size; however, it is underused and poorly designed for programming. The separation of the playing field on one level and the recreation building on another, makes supervision and programming difficult. There is a need for two recreation leaders due to its design, but because of its competition with Mira Vista School in Richmond, there is insufficient attendance to warrant two leaders. The predominant users of Tassajara are teenagers.

Poinsett Park is 1.1 acres in size and is located on the boundary between the Mira Vista neighborhood and El Monte neighborhood. It has no playing field and therefore does not serve the total athletic program needs of the youth in the neighborhood. Its small 800 square foot recreation building is inadequate for a total neighborhood program; however, it does provide a facility for primary age groups' arts and crafts activities. The lower area of asphalt does provide two basketball courts which are used primarily by teenagers and young adults in the neighborhood.

#### El Monte Neighborhood

The El Monte School neighborhood is served only by El Monte School and Canyon Trail Park recreation areas. The enrollment of this school is 240. The school and park are located adjacent to each other and there is a combined recreation area of 10.5 acres. The recreation building is located in close proximity to all the play areas. However, due to the inclusion of the canyon in the park and its natural growth, a large proportion of the park is difficult to supervise. 1.10 acres of the school property was developed by the City for a playfield as part of the 1964 City Park Bond.

#### Castro Neighborhood

The Castro School neighborhood is served only by the facilities at Castro School/Park. The school enrollment is 446. The park facilities, Castro School and Cameron School for the handicapped all share a 10 acre parcel of land. Castro Park facilities were developed on the school property with the 1964 Park Bond monies. In addition to its high elementary school enrollment it attracts a large proportion of teens that spend a higher percentage of their time at this park compared with teens in other neighborhoods. The diverse socio-economic groups and ages of users within the neighborhood make the park extremely difficult to program.

The land available for recreation at Castro totals 2.7 acres, which is insufficient in comparison to the land available in the other school neighborhoods. It is difficult to supervise the upper area of the school grounds from the lower park area. The park building has become inadequate for the amount of demand and it is difficult to serve the elementary and teenage populations equally.

#### Madera Neighborhood

The Madera School neighborhood is served by both the Madera School playground and Arlington Park. Madera School has an enrollment of 275. The school has an asphalt playground area of 1.5 acres and some additional undeveloped space. Arlington Park has 5.20 acres of space and is considered the most aesthetically attractive park in the system. It is heavily used by families within and outside of the City for picnics. Within a short distance from the park, hikers can easily enter Wildcat Canyon. There are several limitations to this park in that it has inadequate play field space and hard surface area for programming. Therefore, some of the programming must be transferred to the Madera School. The 1.60 acres of playgrounds and no acres of playfields for this school neighborhood would be considered inadequate space.

#### Del Mar Neighborhood

The Del Mar School neighborhood is served by Del Mar playground, Cerrito Vista Park, Huber Park, and Portola Junior High playground. Del Mar Elementary School has an enrollment of 281 and Portola Junior High an enrollment of 1200. In addition to these neighborhood-type recreation areas the Community Center, the Swim Pool Complex, and Casa Cerrito Recreation Center which serve city-wide population are located within this neighborhood. Although there is more outdoor recreation space than in most of the other neighborhoods, there is little coordination of these extensive facilities for the neighborhood residents. There are presently no tennis courts or adequate picnic facilities in this neighborhood; however, they are being considered for the 1974 State Bond projects.

Huber Park is 2.6 acres in size. It was originally developed by the WPA in a canyon area given to the City by a resident. The 1964 City Park Bond provided for the construction of an 800 square foot recreation building similar to that at Poinsett. The park has only 6,000 square feet of level land which is used primarily for two half court basketball courts on the lower area. The upper area of the park is in its natural state and is difficult to supervisor or program. The limited facilities attract mostly children from the immediate area of the park.

Portola Junior High has over 4.7 acres of playground space (asphalt) including outdoor basketball courts and an extensive open area for softball and touch football. It also has an indoor gymnasium available for recreation programs. The junior high school physical education classes use Cerrito Vista Park for their playfield needs. Therefore, the school has no demand for additional playfield space. However, the after-school weekend and summer programs in this neighborhood place a heavy demand on playfield space.

#### Fairmont Neighborhood

The Fairmont School neighborhood is served by Fairmont School/Park, Central Park, and Creekside Park. Fairmont School has an enrollment of 403. Approximately 20% of the neighborhood is in the Richmond Annex. Also, a portion of the youth in the Alvarado School neighborhood (Richmond Annex) makes use of Fairmont School/Park because of Alvarado School's lack of playfields. This neighborhood has a larger concentration of multiple dwelling units than the other school neighborhoods in El Cerrito.



The outdoor playfields were developed at Fairmont School/Park as part of the 1964 City Park Bond. Grass playfields replaced a portion of the school asphalt playground and additional grass play areas were developed adjacent to the BART path with a small pre-school play area. This pre-school area was poorly located and is difficult to supervise. The total indoor space available at the recreation building is 1410 square feet. This is the largest indoor recreation space available for neighborhood programs in the system.

The combination of park/school facilities and a full time Recreation Coordinator make it possible to provide a total neighborhood programming service at Fairmont School/Park.

Central Park is 1.5 acres in size. It was constructed jointly by El Cerrito and Richmond and is maintained by El Cerrito with half the cost (approximately \$2,500) reimbursed to El Cerrito by Richmond. El Cerrito, however, provides the full cost of programming the park, (approximately \$2,500 for leadership plus supplies and administrative costs.)

Although the park has restrooms and a small storage area, it does not have any indoor activity area. The lack of this indoor space makes programming possibilities very limited. The density of population in this neighborhood is very high and an indoor recreation building is needed to serve it.

Creekside Park is 1.5 acres in size although only about 1/2 acre is usable for play areas due to the large pond developed as part of the flood control program. Creekside was the most recent development (1974) of the park system. It acts primarily as a mini-park for the local residents and does not have any restrooms. It is not programmed as a neighborhood park at the present time.

The completion of the Albany Hill development "Gateview" will provide 5000 new residents over the next five years and may have serious impact on the Bay View neighborhood as well as El Cerrito's own facilities such as the swim pool and tennis courts. El Cerrito and Albany should carefully consider the impact of the development as it relates to new demands placed on both cities.

#### Harding Neighborhood

The Harding neighborhood is served by Harding School/Park, El Cerrito High School recreational facilities and limited use of the Albany School Football Field. The Harding School/Park combination provides 3.5 acres of play area. The school enrollment of Harding is 371. The location of a park building and school facility together provides an excellent potential for developing coordinated programming for this neighborhood.

In addition to the two tennis courts at Harding, there are five tennis courts at the high school. Therefore, this community has the greatest amount of easy access to tennis courts in the City. There is also about 3 acres of playfield at the high school and 1/2 acre of playground space with outdoor basketball courts. The gymnasium is open for recreation play during evenings, weekends, and summers when not in use by the school. The use of the track and football field is restricted due to the damage to the turf and buildings that occurs without supervision. During the summer evenings it is open for joggers when supervision is provided by the El Cerrito Parks and Recreation Department. As a neighborhood resource it is very limited but on a reservation basis for soccer and special department events it is an excellent facility. Albany High School football field (Cougar Field)



has potential for providing additional neighborhood facilities.

Harding School neighborhood has more public recreational lands and facilities than any other neighborhood in El Cerrito. However, maximum benefit is not obtained from these resources since this use is not yet coordinated by full time staff.

#### Community Wide Service Facilities

##### Community Center

The El Cerrito Community Center located adjacent to the Swim Center was completed in 1965. This is an "L" shaped, one-story building encompassing approximately 8,000 square feet. Included in the facility are two offices, a social hall, crafts room, meeting room, kitchen, storage area, covered patio and a formal garden patio.

This facility is the hub of the recreation fee program for the City. During available time the Center is also used for receptions, weddings and private group activities on a rental basis. The fees collected for rentals during 1974-75 totalled \$6,000 which represents an average of two rentals per weekend.

Each Monday and Wednesday night an average of 150 Seniors attend the Center. On Friday nights the Center holds a teen dance which draws between 200 and 300 teens for live band dancing.

The Community Center is heavily programmed during weekday afternoons and evenings and presently has minimal time or space for additional programming.

##### Swim Center

The Swim Center, which was completed in March of 1963 under the Ten Year Capital Improvement Program, provides a diving and 25 yard competition pool as well as an instructional pool whose dimensions are 20'X40'X3'. Through an agreement with the Richmond Unified School District, swim lessons are provided for the Portola Junior High Physical Education classes and the El Cerrito High School Swim Team uses the pool for practice and competition. Approximately \$11,000 per year is reimbursed to the City for this service.

The City also co-sponsors an A.A.U. Youth Swim Team that uses the pool daily throughout the year. Approximately 75 youth are enrolled in the various levels of competition contributing approximately \$5,000 per year to the operation of the pool.

Swim lessons for all age groups are provided throughout the year (approximately \$17,600 was obtained in lesson fees in 1974-75) and recreation swimming (Public Swim) takes place seven months out of the year (providing approximately \$15,850 in entrance fees).

It should be noted that during 1974-75 fiscal year the pool revenue from fees was \$48,045 and the expenses for lifeguards, instructors and expenses were \$50,517. This budget does not include the supervisory and administrative staff. However, the lesson and entrance fees and the support from the Richmond Unified School District almost provide the direct expenses of the pool. This indicates the extensive use and acceptance of the Swim Center by the community. Presently, the pool is almost used to its maximum capacity and there is minimal available time or space to accommodate additional programming, particularly during warm weather.

##### Putting Green

During the publicity that led to the passage of the 1964 El Cerrito Park Bond, plans for a putting green at Cerrito Vista Park were suggested.

It was not installed immediately due to higher priorities for other projects and lack of funds.

In 1973 the Park and Recreation Commission recognized the still existing need for more outdoor facilities for older adults. However, instead of constructing the putting green and horseshoe pits at the original proposed site at Cerrito Vista Park they recommended another area. This area was the vacant parcel of land adjacent to the Swim Pool. This area was once planned for wading pools but was eliminated from the original Swim Center Plan. The putting green was completed in 1974. It has a putting surface of 4,500 sq. feet and 9 cups. Two horseshoe pits were installed adjacent to the putting green. The total area is 9,300 sq. feet. It was constructed for less than \$2,000 in supplies and designed and built by two of the Park Maintenance staff. It is gaining in popularity by all age groups and is used for golf classes conducted by the Department.

#### Casa Cerrito Recreation Center

In 1963 the City acquired the present 1/2 acre Casa Cerrito Recreation Center on Portola Drive opposite the putting green. The acquisition was an exchange of property owned by the City on Norvell Street that had been used primarily for girl scouts and campfire club groups. The original two story home on Portola was then converted into a small recreation center. The upper area is presently used for a pottery and ceramics studio. The lower area is used by girls' groups and adult clubs for meetings during the school year and by the City's Day Camp during the summer. It is a unique service to the private youth groups because our neighborhood park buildings are used for public programming during the after-school hours when the youth groups meet.

The total indoor space is 2,000 square feet with an equal amount of space on each floor. The back yard is 1/4 acre with an extensive growth of pine trees and a small succulent garden developed and maintained by the El Cerrito Sea View Spaders. This area is used as a day camp during the summer and an overnight campout area by private youth groups.

The building is heavily used throughout the year and the pottery studio has inadequate space for present program needs.

#### Tennis Courts

The Harding Elementary School courts and two courts at the High School were the only tennis courts in El Cerrito until 1967. These four courts were originally constructed by the School District. The 1964 El Cerrito Bond monies provided funding for the development of eleven new courts and resurfacing of existing courts bringing the total number of courts to fifteen by 1972. The tennis courts are distributed in the following manner: Tassajara Neighborhood Park (2 courts); Canyon Trail Neighborhood Park (2 courts); Castro Neighborhood Park (2 courts); Arlington Neighborhood Park (2 courts); Harding Neighborhood Park (2 courts); and El Cerrito High School (5 courts). Four additional courts were to be installed at Cerrito Vista Park. However, this was not feasible due to lack of space and bond monies were reserved to complete this project at a later time in a new location.

In 1972 a five court Tennis Center was completed by resurfacing the two courts at the High School and constructing three more courts. There is presently space for one additional court. However, bleachers used for the adjacent baseball diamond would have to be moved to allow adequate space for a sixth court.

The courts are used during school hours for El Cerrito High Physical Education classes and during non-school hours by the general public.

One of the courts has been established as a reservation court on weekends. Presently a resident may rent a court for 1½ hours for \$1.00 service charge. This allows up to 12 reservation periods on weekends. Therefore, a minimum of 24 and maximum of 48 residents can use this court, on a reservation basis. Reservations and payment of fees are made at the Community Center. Reservations are in such demand that a weeks notice is required.

There are community planning concepts that need to be addressed when considering both the need for tennis courts and their location. The 1964 Bond Issue that provided the financial resources for the expansion of tennis courts in El Cerrito was based on a combined concept. This was that each Neighborhood Park should have at least two tennis courts. This both supported the concept that tennis courts should be located within easy access to the neighborhood and also addressed the desire to have facilities at Neighborhood Parks that would attract adults. In addition to the Neighborhood Park location of tennis courts, there appeared to be a need to group more than 2 courts together to provide a Tennis Center. In 1964, the location of the Tennis Center had not been decided; however, after further study the High School was agreed upon as the most logical location for the Center based on land availability and maximum use. (P.E. Classes.)

#### Centralized System

The concept of the Tennis Center has become popular in the past few years, particularly in communities where the tennis demand increased drastically. This is an excellent approach to meeting the tennis demand for the following reasons:

1. Cost. It is usually less costly to develop 10 courts in one location than 2 courts in five different locations.
2. User Convenience. It is more practical to have one area where the tennis player can come and find court space rather than having to drive from one neighborhood to the next in search of a free court. It also improves the efficiency of holding tennis tournaments.
3. Administration. It is more logical to concentrate the administration of a tennis program in one area. The demand on courts in El Cerrito appears to be heavier than their supply at peak time (weekends). Through a centralized court system, staffing courts to insure proper enforcement of rules and equal time for participants is more easily provided than if 5 different locations were staffed.

If a community desires to establish a policy of resident use first, or a fee schedule, decentralized courts are not practical.

#### Decentralized System

The decentralized system also has benefits that should be balanced against the centralized system.

1. Youth Use. The growing interest in tennis by youth poses transportation problems for this age group. El Cerrito's hills, as indicated earlier, make it very difficult for youth to travel distances to a centralized facility.
2. Adult Supervision. Neighborhood Parks are continuously subjects of vandalism and, at times, anti-social behavior is displayed at Neighborhood Parks. The use of Neighborhood Parks by adults will often provide adult supervision without relying on paid staff to be on duty during all daylight periods.



The present and projected future demands on public tennis courts indicate that a combined centralized and decentralized system is appropriate for El Cerrito.

### Park Clubhouses

The 1640 square foot Clubhouses are used primarily in three categories:

#### Afterschool & Summer Programming

The Clubhouses at the Neighborhood Parks are used primarily for games and arts and crafts after school and summers. The Recreation Leaders are therefore not limited to outdoor activity programming (sports) when they have the use of an indoor facility. Depending on the Recreation Leader's creativity, the programming of these indoor facilities are unlimited. Although the emphasis on day time programming at these indoor facilities is toward the elementary age group, there is an increasing percentage of junior high age youth using the buildings due to the installation of pool tables at each of the parks and a re-emphasis of programming the parks towards teens. This age group mixing requires a minimum of two leaders to provide a compatible program.

#### Teen Drop-In Centers

In 1973, a new approach was developed in El Cerrito to provide programming for the growing teenage population. Rather than establishing a teen center for the City, the decision was made to attempt to program for teenagers at their Neighborhood Park on a decentralized basis during week nights. On weekends, one large City-wide activity would be provided in the form of a live band dance or comparable activity at the Community Center.

This program approach has continued for two years. During this two year period, six drop-in centers have been closed either from lack of attendance, leadership conflict with teens or continual vandalism of the building. Presently, all six of the drop-in centers are operating, some with higher attendance than others.

Two nights per week are presently set aside for teen drop-in centers at the park clubhouses.

#### Special Interest Groups

On a reservation basis, there are a variety of community groups using the clubhouses for their own programs. In most cases, five of the seven nights per week are available at the clubhouses for these community groups.

### School Indoor Facilities

#### Multipurpose Room

The Multipurpose Rooms at the six elementary schools were used primarily by community groups during 1974-75. A total of 51 groups used these six indoor facilities during a year period of time.

These facilities are not as usable for programming as they are for community groups. This is due to the need to return the facility back to its primary use (school activities) after each use. There are no storage areas presently available for recreation programming.

These facilities could, however, be used more for recreational programming if proper storage space were available. This is particularly true during the summer time when there are no school demands on these indoor facilities.

### Gymnasiums

The El Cerrito High School Gymnasiums and Portola Junior High Gymnasiums are exceptional resources for the community. Presently, basketball, volleyball and badminton programs are provided by the City when the space is available. More use of these facilities could be made by the recreation program staff.

### BART Linear Park

During the construction of the Bay Area Rapid Transit District elevated tracks through El Cerrito and Albany, a proposal to the Federal Department of Transportation was made for a Linear Park Demonstration Grant. This grant was applied for by BART through the Metropolitan Transportation Commission. The grant was for the construction of a linear park with a path through the cities of El Cerrito and Albany.

Within El Cerrito, the park averages about 30 feet in width and  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles in length. It is landscaped and lighted for night use. It parallels the Santa Fe Railroad tracks which are used less than once a day.

The agreement with the local cities involved was that they would maintain the park after construction. BART however must clean and maintain the pillars holding up the elevated tracks.

In an effort to determine the use and acceptance of the BART Linear Park by residents a survey was taken on two separate days at two separate locations. The survey was taken from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.. A total of 233 people used the linear park path on Wednesday, July 9, 1975 and a total of 189 used the path on Saturday, July 12, 1975.

The results of this two day sample survey indicate that the BART Linear Park is used more than was anticipated. Since this was a very limited survey and only one surveyor per day was placed along the  $2\frac{1}{2}$  mile path, it can be assumed that the total number of users of the path was many more than could be tallied from the location of the surveyors.

Of the 233 BART path users recorded on Wednesday, July 9th, the largest percentage (30%) used the trail between the hours of 12 noon to 3 P.M.. On Saturday, July 12th, the same hours received the heaviest use (40%).

On both days the largest use of the path was by bicycle riders (62% on Wednesday, 42% on Saturday).

This survey would indicate that a bicycle path away from the heavy traffic pattern is appreciated and used by the residents. Although there are many inconvenient cross streets (13) during the  $2\frac{1}{2}$  mile path, it appears that this does not deter the use of the path. However, these cross streets provide a dangerous hazard to users of the BART paths, especially cyclists and joggers.

A more detailed breakdown of the survey can be found on Exhibit M.

### Hillside Park and the Quarry

The natural park lands of Hillside Park may appear to be unuseable space. However, upon walking through the park it becomes obvious that this is an outstanding resource within El Cerrito. Hillside Park does not have a landscape plan at the present time. The trails are inadequate and need improvement and expansion. With the development of suitable trails, the hiker will be able to walk for several miles in a natural environment. In many cases residents can walk into the park from their own homes.

The 15 acre privately owned parcel just north of Hillside Park has a north sloping hill which would make

it a desirable addition to the City's park. This property also includes a stream. The Tri-Cities Open Space and Conservation Element, adopted by the El Cerrito City Council in December of 1973, identifies this stream as a surface waterway which should be protected. Because of this unique stream and related vegetation, a portion of this land may be eligible for special funding.

A second important privately owned parcel of land adjacent to Hillside Park is a 7-1/2 acre area of natural landscape located below Madera School. It is situated in such a manner that it could provide a link between the north and south portions of Hillside Park.

There is a vegetation management problem in Hillside Park due to several factors. Eucalyptus trees and Monterey pines that were planted there in the past are now blocking the bay views of many residents living above the park. This type of unplanned and uncontrolled vegetation pattern not only creates public relation problems but also eliminates the growth of other native vegetation. However, there is one native plant, poison oak, that prevents full utilization of the park and needs to be controlled.

The El Cerrito Quarry lands are adjacent to and below Hillside Park. The property is owned by the City and presently used as a corporation yard for the Public Works and Park Maintenance Divisions of the City. Stege Sanitary District has its offices at this location. In addition, the El Cerrito Recycling Center and the Fire Department's training tower are situated in the Quarry. Unused land in the Quarry provides a dump site for Public Works projects (asphalt, cement, etc.) and tree mulch by the Parks Division. There are approximately 1.7 acres of undeveloped land at the bottom of the Quarry.

The walls of the Quarry are over 200 feet high and create an important visual impact when viewed from the flat lands of El Cerrito and Interstate 80. The cuts in the hillside are an unsightly reminder of poor land management that took place in the past. The walls are surrounded by a cyclone fence to protect hikers in Hillside Park. They are unstable and subject to erosion creating safety problems for users of the Quarry basin, particularly during heavy rains.

### Trails

Since 1946, the State has discussed the development of trails for bicyclists, hikers and equestrians for recreational use and as an alternative to the auto. However, the acquisition of land for trails has been delayed due to the high priority for a highway system to keep pace with California's growth.

The State legislature presently has a number of bills pending which would provide for the early acquisition of land for trails. The State Department of Parks and Recreation is now in the process of developing plans for a California Recreational Trails and Hostel System which would extend from the Mexican border to Canada.

With the recent growth of interest in bicycling, many cities have also recognized the need for trails. However, the implementation of



trail projects is slow due to the high costs of land, particularly in urban areas, and of construction. The cost of constructing a mile of bicycle path is estimated to be \$20,000 - \$40,000, depending on the engineering requirements. The availability of suitable land is also a problem. Hill areas, which are usually less intensively developed than flat lands, can be traversed by hikers and equestrians but cannot be easily handled by the average bicyclist.

Recently, State representatives have been meeting with local community members to discuss a trail corridor plan for California. However, the local communities have been emphasising that any money available for trails development should first be spent on a "feeder system" to connect the cities with the State corridor trails while land is still available for acquisition. The State-wide trails could be only minimally used if access from the urban areas is not provided. The construction of trails in areas where an auto is needed to get to them would defeat the purpose of the program.

El Cerrito has the opportunity of playing a major role in the development of a Bay Area trail system. Access to the East Bay Regional Park System could be provided by a trail connecting the BART Linear Park and Hillside Park with Wildcat Canyon. A trail from El Cerrito Plaza along Cerrito Vista Creek could allow access for bicyclists and hikers from El Cerrito and adjacent cities to the exceptional resource of Point Isabel and ultimately to a shoreline bike path.