

From: [Sarah Henry](#)
To: [CityCouncil-List](#)
Cc: [Lara Weisiger](#)
Subject: Council retreat
Date: Friday, February 7, 2025 10:49:33 AM
Attachments: [Campaign Finance Analysis 2024.docx](#)

Attached is a document Allan Mann asked me to share in preparation for the Council workshop tomorrow. I will bring hard copies with me.

Many thanks,
Sarah

Campaign Finance Reform in Alameda

League of Women Voters Alameda

February 8, 2025

Executive Summary

1. 2024 Election Analysis

- Total contributions to City Council candidates in 2024 were lower than in previous years largely due to the default limit on individual contributions established by AB571.
- Due to the AB571 limit, independent expenditures have increased steadily over the last three election cycles, accounting for almost half of the total raised on behalf of candidates.
- Candidate self-funding through loans in 2024 significantly exceeded previous years.

2. Areas for Discussion

- Would public funding for city candidates reduce their dependence on special interest contributions, independent expenditures and self-funding while increasing voter engagement?
- Would stricter disclosure requirements on campaign materials increase transparency of independent expenditures?
- Would limits on candidate self-funding create a more level playing field for candidates of modest personal means?
- Would contribution limits lower than the AB571 default be more appropriate for a community the size of Alameda?
- Would a conflict-of-interest policy for the City Council reduce the perception that campaign contributions influence city policy?

Introduction

When the League of Women Voters Alameda first started tracking campaign contributions to candidates for local offices in 2018, we were concerned about the number of large contributions coming from special interest groups, including those outside Alameda. The city had not established limits on the size of contributions coming from any one source and some of the contributors had a financial interest in the outcome.

At that time, we didn't feel it necessary or appropriate to propose a limit on individual contributions as other cities have, but we did want the electorate to know where candidates were getting their funding. We posted easy-to-understand graphics to help voters know how candidates were funding their campaigns.

In the intervening years, we have been carefully tracking campaign spending and further developing our positions on campaign finance reform as outlined on our website: [Campaign Finance Reform - LWV OF ALAMEDA](#).

We believe it is time for the City Council to have a serious discussion about campaign financing in city elections. Following is our analysis of the most recent election from a campaign finance perspective and areas where we feel the City Council and staff should focus their attention.

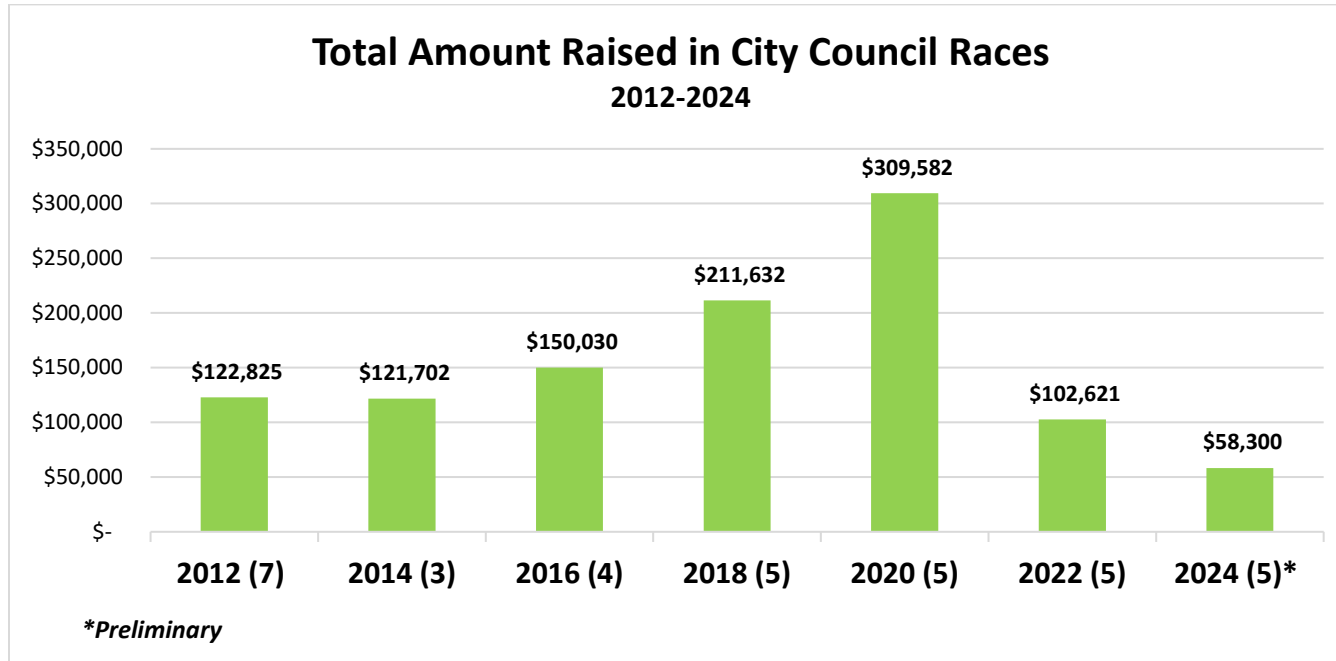
2024 Election Analysis

1. Contributions to City Council Candidates

As you can see from the chart below, campaign contributions to City Council candidates rose steadily from 2012 to 2020. The significant increases between 2018 and 2020 were largely due to two candidates who received major contributions from unions. In 2018, one candidate raised over \$80,000, which was just short of a third of the total; in 2020, two candidates together raised almost four times as much as the other three candidates combined.

The decrease starting with the 2022 election was largely the result of the state legislature passing AB 571 which established a default limit in cities like Alameda that hadn't established their

own. The limit was pegged to inflation and is the same for Assembly and State Senate candidates -- \$4,900 in 2022 and \$5,500 this past election.

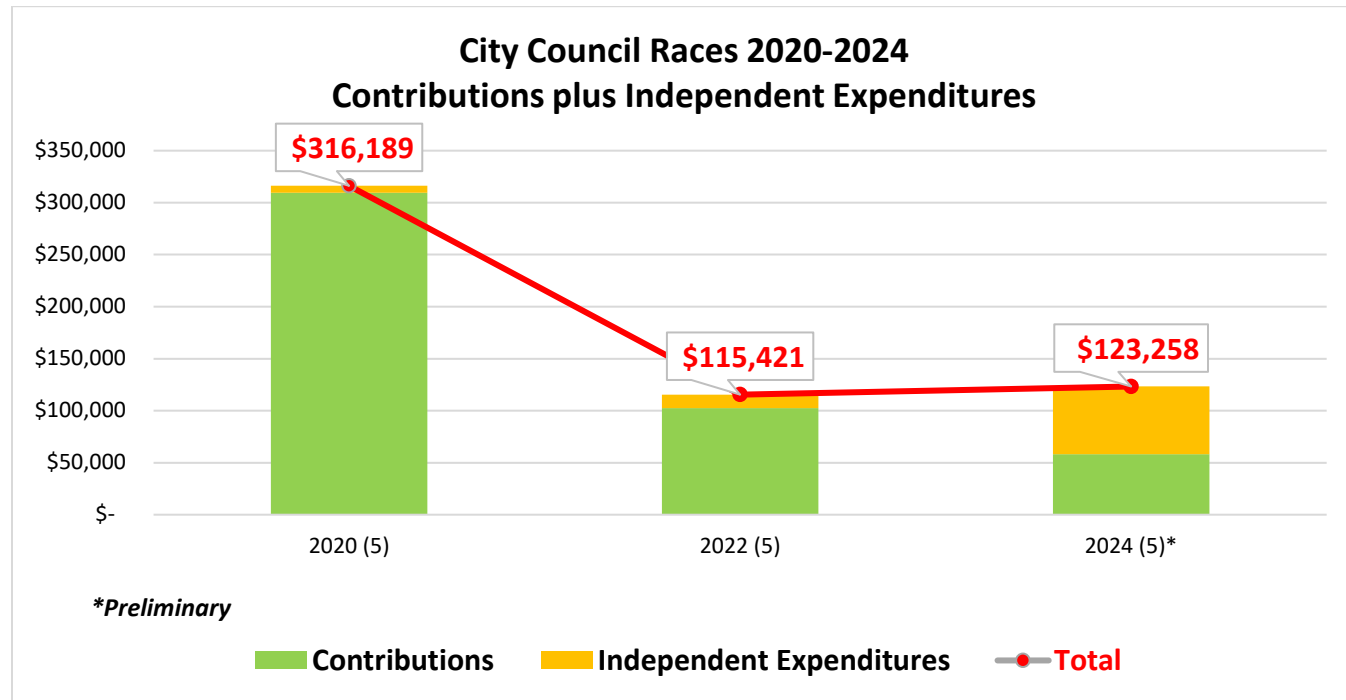


The numbers in parenthesis indicate the number of candidates running in that election. The 2024 totals are significantly below those of previous years, in part because two candidates did not raise funds at all. The 2024 totals are preliminary because not all Post-Election 460s have been filed.

2. Independent Expenditures

As we expected, the new limit resulted in an increase in spending by Independent Expenditure Committees (IECs) – groups that are not directly affiliated with candidates but spend money to support or oppose them. So long as the spending is not coordinated with the candidate, it is not subject to the limit. We estimated that had the AB 571 limits been in place in 2020, about \$90,000 of the contributions would have been over the limit and expected that independent expenditures in 2020 would approach that amount. However, the increase in independent expenditures did not accelerate as much as we thought

and the total raised by candidates and spent by IECs on their behalf in 2022 was actually less than the amount in 2020. That pattern was reversed in 2024 when a single IEC spent almost \$65,000 opposing a City Council incumbent, boosting the total raised by candidates and spent by IECs to about \$123,000.



3. Candidate Self-Funding

Another interesting trend occurred in the 2024 election for City Council: four of the five City Council candidates loaned their campaigns total of over \$50,000 in amounts of money ranging from \$1,700 to \$30,000. Although candidates have loaned their campaigns funds in the past, the amount this election was significantly higher. Most of these loans are still outstanding, but if they are ultimately forgiven and become candidates' direct contributions to their own campaign, the total contributed to the five candidates in 2024 increases to \$110,00 – higher than the total for the 2022 election with the same number of candidates.

This is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, self-funding avoids the need to seek or accept major contributions from special interests. On the other hand, a high level of self-funding gives an edge to candidates with the personal means to afford it, leaving candidates of more modest means at a disadvantage. That would have the effect of skewing elected leadership toward the more affluent and limiting representation from working families.

Areas for Discussion

1. Public funding

We believe that public funding of local campaigns presents the best opportunity to avoid both the pitfalls of special interest contributions and the downsides of candidate self-funding. Public funding has been adopted by a number of larger cities in the form of either direct grants to candidates or vouchers to registered voters that they can use to support candidates of their choosing.

Berkeley has been offering a 6-to-1 match on contributions up to \$60 since 2016. In November 2022, Oakland voters adopted the “Democracy Dollars” approach pioneered in Seattle ([Seattle democracy vouchers increase donations, number of candidates in city elections | UW News](#)).

Unfortunately, the city has not yet freed up the necessary funds to make it happen.

Our preference has always been for candidates to fund their campaigns through small donations from Alameda voters, which reflects their level of support among city residents. Democracy Dollars does that without putting a financial burden on those least able to afford to contribute. It has the dual benefit of encouraging voter engagement while addressing the issue of special interest funding.

Public funding also provides the leverage to limit the size of contributions and the level of self-funding by requiring candidates to agree to voluntary limits to qualify. This avoids the necessity of asking voters or the City Council to approve contribution or spending limits as well as the free speech impediments to limiting self-funding by vote or ordinance.

Public funding does not have to be inordinately expensive. Our back-of-the-envelope estimate for funding such a program in Alameda at the same level anticipated in Oakland is less than \$30,000 plus staff time and materials. Optimal funding would be in the neighborhood of \$50,000. Perhaps some of the cost could be defrayed through donations from civic-minded individuals and groups in lieu of contributing to specific candidates.

2. Stricter disclosure regulations

While independent expenditures cannot be limited per *Citizens United*, stricter disclosure regulations on campaign materials could at least give the public a clearer idea of who is funding them. In

the most recent case, the mailings targeting a City Council incumbent by a group calling itself the “Coalition for Patient Access, sponsored by California Life Sciences” listed the top funder as the California Apartment Association. However, the group’s 460 filing identified Max Hodak of the Science Corporation as having contributed almost \$50,000 to the effort. As you know, Hodak and Spencer tangled over an Alameda Point lease, as pointed out in the Alameda Post by a number of her supporters: [Slick Scientists Sling Sludge in Alameda Council Race](#).

As you can see from the chart below, the city could require more disclosure on campaign materials. The recommendations in the chart are based on those required by the FPPC on statewide campaign materials.

Current and Proposed Advertising Disclosure Rules for Alameda Elections			
	Material	Current Rules	Possible Additions to Rules
Candidate Committees	All mass print mailings; radio, TV and social media ads; and telephone calls	Indicate “Ad Paid For” by Candidate Committee.	Require top three contributors \$2,500 or more
	Newspaper ads	Include the phrase “Paid Political Advertisement) but name of committee not required.	Require committee name/FPPC # and top three contributors \$2,500 or more
	Lawn signs, posters, billboards, doorhangers and non-social media electronic ads	“Paid for by committee name” and committee ID number recommended but not legally required	Require committee name/FPPC # and top three contributors \$2,500 or more

Primarily Formed, and General Purpose Committees	Print ads including mass/individual mailings, door hangers, flyers, faxes, posters, newspaper and magazine ads; telephone calls and radio/TV/internet ads.	"Ad paid for by [committee's name]" followed by "Committee major funding from [names of top three contributors of \$50,000 or more]" plus a statement that the advertisement was not authorized by a candidate or a committee controlled by a candidate	Require top three contributors \$2,500 or more
Independent Expenditure Committees	All	"Ad paid for by [committee's name]" plus a statement that the advertisement was not authorized by a candidate or a committee controlled by a candidate	Require top three contributors \$2,500 or more
Ballot Measures	All	"Ad paid for by [committee's name]" followed by "Committee major funding from [names of top three contributors of \$50,000 or more]"	Require top three contributors \$2,500 or more
Major Donor Committees	All	"Ad paid for by [committee's name]"	Require top three contributors \$2,500 or more

Sources

[Manual-1-Chapter-8-Ad-Disclosures.pdf \(ca.gov\)](#)

[California Code, Elections Code - ELEC § 20008 | FindLaw](#)

3. Limits on self-funding

Our reading of AB571 and the related Government Codes 85301 and 85307 regarding campaign contributions is that the state limits the amount a candidate can loan his/her own campaign to \$100,000,

but does not impose a limit on the amount a candidate can contribute directly to his/her own campaign. This would suggest that the City of Alameda could impose stricter limits on self-funding loans, but not on self-funding contributions. The City Attorney would have to weigh in on this.

4. Contribution limits

LWVA's Campaign Finance Committee has not yet determined that stricter limits on contributions are an effective approach for Alameda: The default limit established by AB 571 appears to have limited outsized contributions from special interests without a dramatic increase in independent expenditures. Nonetheless, the default limits are based on the cost of running for Assembly or State Senate in districts considerably larger than the City of Alameda. (Assembly districts are almost six times larger in population than the City of Alameda. State Senate districts are more than 12 times larger.) Capping contributions in Alameda to a percentage of the default limit would not be a major stretch: the largest individual contribution to a City Council candidate in 2024 was \$2,500 – about 45% of the AB 571 default limit.

5. Conflicts of Interest

Limiting the amount special interests can contribute to candidates may address the problem at the front end but is a difficult path in a political environment shaped by *Citizens United*. However, addressing the potential negative outcomes at the back end in the form of Conflict-of-Interest Policy for elected city officials can be equally effective.

AB 1489 expanded the reach of the Levine Act to local elected officials including city councilmembers, prohibiting them from “accepting, soliciting, or directing campaign contributions over \$250 from any party to, or participant in, a proceeding involving a license, permit, contract, or entitlement for use (“proceeding”) before their agency.” Notwithstanding ongoing legal challenges, the City Attorney considers it to be in effect. The League of California Cities has published a good summary of the impact of SB1489: [9.2023-annual-fabela-freeman-moon---pay-to-play-no-more-levine-act-sb-1439.pdf](#).

It's not clear to us how Levine is being enforced in Alameda. We may be unaware of efforts by the City Attorney to educate the City Council on its requirements, but he should brief members and provide guidance with regard to its impact on voting.

Other cities in the country have adopted similar approaches, such as requiring disclosure and/or recusal by elected officials of any contributions exceeding a minimum from parties with a matter before the elected body. A number of Bay Area cities have created ethics and/or election commissions to

address conflict-of-interest and other campaign finance issues on an ongoing basis. It is worth a discussion to see if this approach would work in Alameda.

Conclusions

With the next city election two years away, we believe that this is a good time for an exploration of campaign finance reforms in Alameda. We are open to working the City Council and getting input from the community to identify the best means of ensuring fair elections and a City Council unencumbered by conflicts of interest. We believe the best outcome will be achieved if the leadership for this effort comes from the City Council itself. Please let us know how we can help you move this issue forward.

From: [Edward Sing](#)
To: [Marilyn Ezzy Ashcraft](#); [Michele Pryor](#); [Greg Boller](#); [Tony Daysog](#); [Tracy Jensen](#)
Cc: [Lara Weisiger](#); [Amy Wooldridge](#); [Manager Manager](#); [Patricia Lamborn](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] 2025 Alameda City Council Strategic Planning Retreat - Parcel Four Trail Proposal
Date: Friday, February 7, 2025 10:47:39 AM
Attachments: [2025 Alameda City Council Strategic Planning Retreat - Parcel Four Trail Proposal.pdf](#)

Alameda City Council Members:

We represent a group of Alameda citizens who have been working with City staff since 2019 on a proposal (see attached) to improve the deteriorating asphalt pavement of the Bay Trail through City-owned Parcel Four in the Harbor Bay Business Park.

During the February 8th Strategic Planning Retreat, we ask that you consider inclusion of this proposed project into the City's Strategic Plan of projects.

It fits into the category "INVEST IN TRANSPORTATION, INFRASTRUCTURE, ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES & HISTORIC RESOURCES", and subscribes to the purposes of "upgrade and enhance Alameda's bicycle, pedestrian... infrastructure to increase safety, reliability, sustainability and safety".

Please let us know if you have any questions on the above or attached.

Thank you for your consideration of the above.

Patricia Lamborn and Ed Sing

Alameda Residents

Proposal for Repair of Bayshore Trail on City-Owned Parcel Four

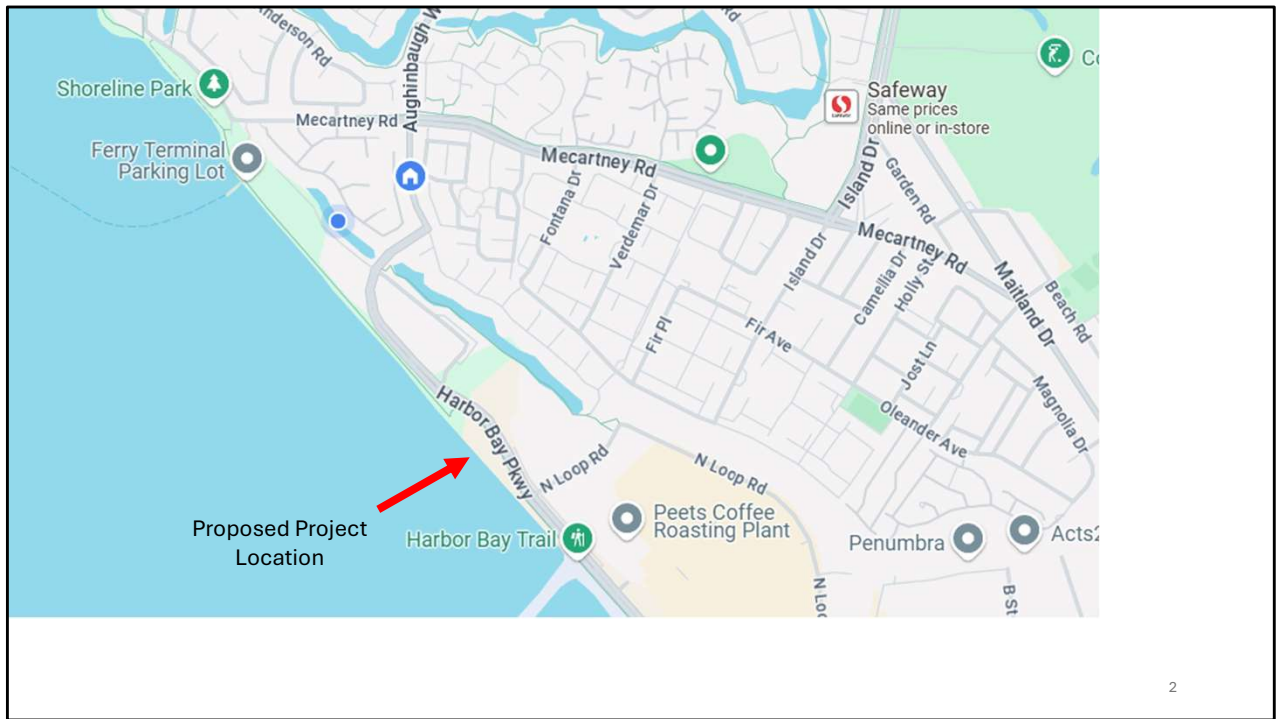
Bay Farm Island / Harbor Bay Business Park

**Patricia Lamborn and Ed Sing
February 8, 2025**

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For consideration during the Alameda City Council Strategic Planning Retreat on February 8, 2025.

Since 2019, a group of Alameda citizens, including residents of the Main and Bay Farm Islands, HOA Board members and business owners in Harbor Bay Business Park, have been working with City Staff on this project, consisting of improvement of the last remaining “unimproved” section of the Bay Trail adjacent to Harbor Bay Business Park.



The proposed project is located on Bay Farm Island along the bay shore adjacent to Harbor Bay Parkway, south of the Ferry Terminal.



The Bay Trail runs thru City-owned Parcel Four at this location and is a deteriorating asphalt pavement approximate 370 foot long. The Bay Trail north and south of this reach is a wide concrete pavement used daily by both pedestrians and bicyclists.



Improved trail North and South of Parcel 4

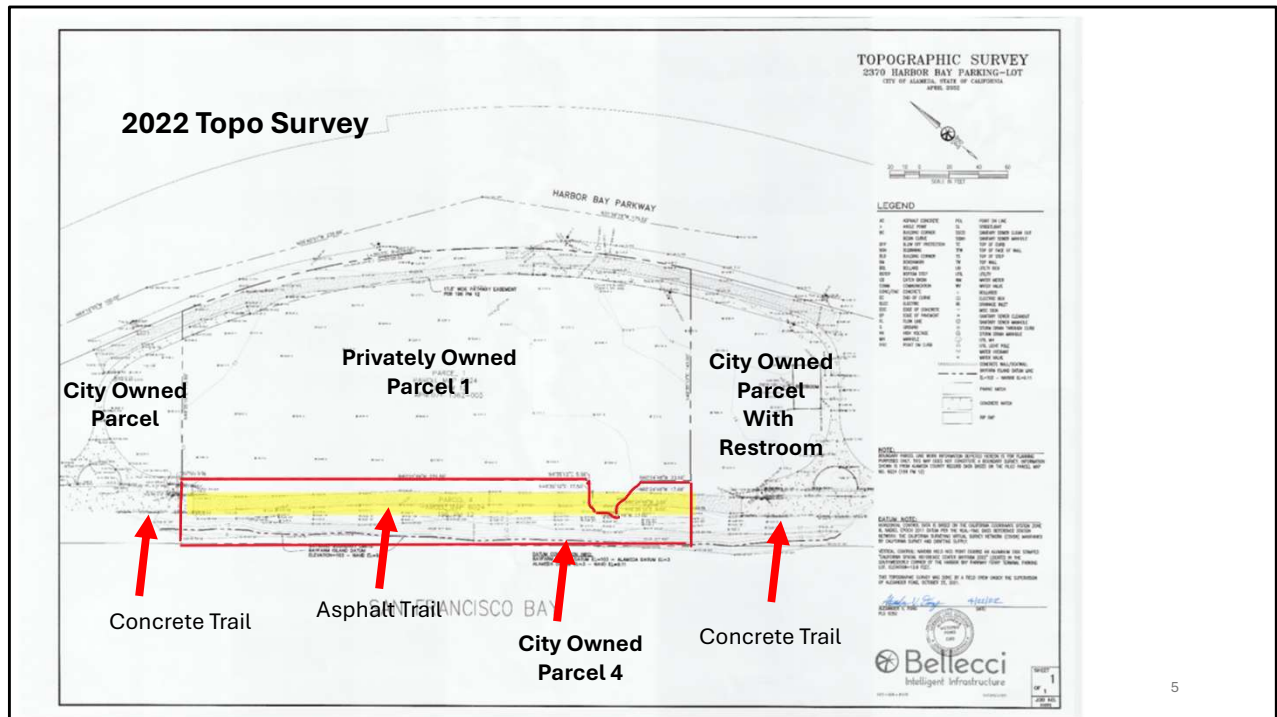


Asphalt trail thru Parcel 4

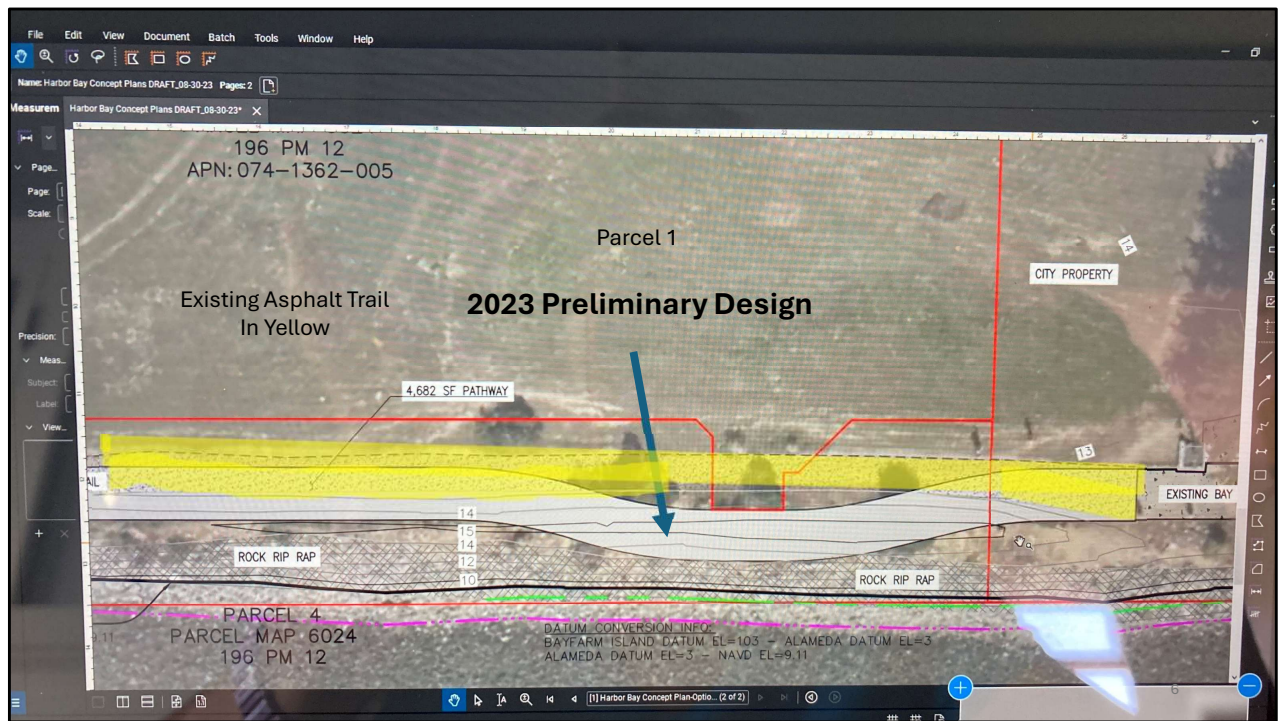
Upper left photo: Photo (looking south) of the improved trail north and south of Parcel Four. Note the parapet wall on the left side which brings the final elevation 2 to 3 feet above the pavement elevation. It is unknown whether this feature is purposeful, but possibly could be considered later for incorporation into flood control efforts with sea level rise.

Upper Right Photo: Photo (looking south) of the asphalt trail through Parcel Four. The earth embankment along the shore is covered in vegetation and rodent holes, and is listed in some City documents as a “dike”, but offers little formal flood

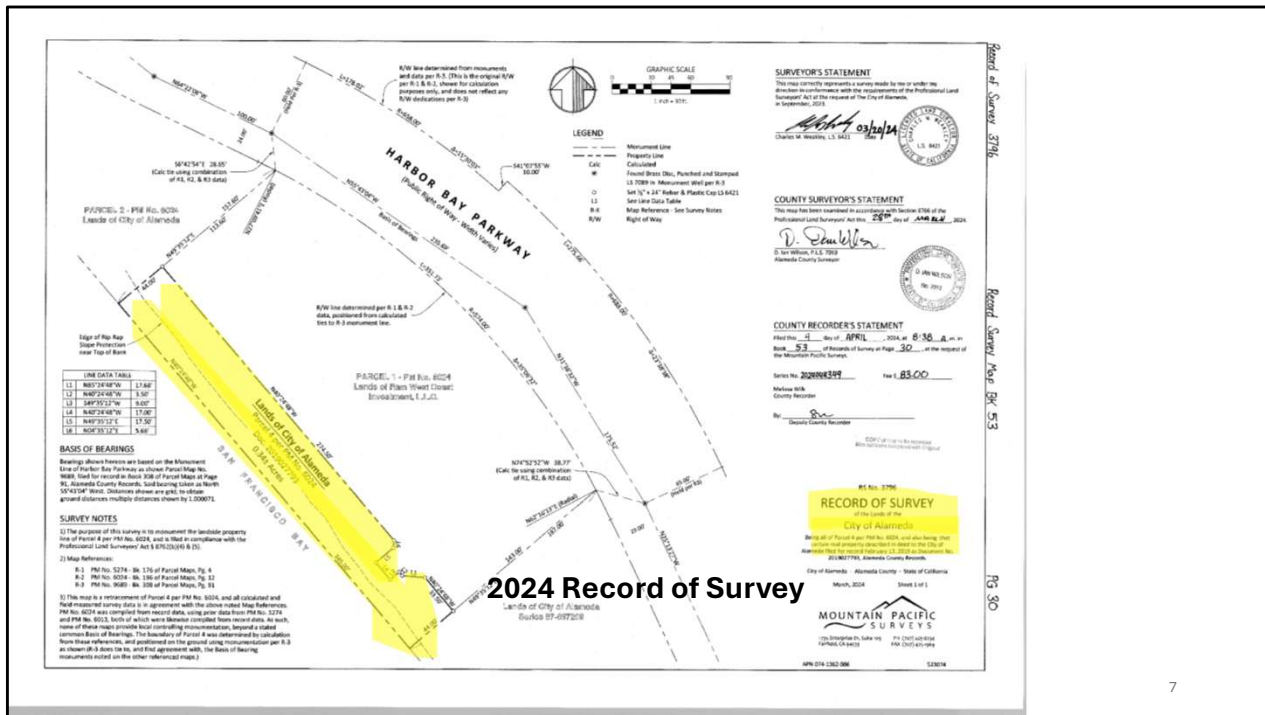
control capability due to its deteriorating condition as well as blocks any view of the Bay.



As our group discovered uncertainty in City records as to the exact location of the boundary between City owned Parcel Four and privately owned Parcel One and the location of the trail to this boundary, the city retained a contractor in 2022 to perform a topographic survey showing the relationship of the Parcel Four Trail to adjacent parcels. Note that City-owned Parcel Four is bounded on the north and south by City-owned parcels, and on the east by one privately owned.



Also at the urging of our citizen group, the City contracted with NCE to develop a new concrete trail design, similar to that north and south of this reach, which would fit wholly within Parcel Four without intruding into the adjacent privately owned parcel nor into the Bay. NCE reported that such a design was possible.



Due to uncertainties in the boundary between City-own Parcel Four and the adjacent privately owned parcel, NCE also performed a Record of Survey in 2024 to definitively identify these boundaries.

SUMMARY

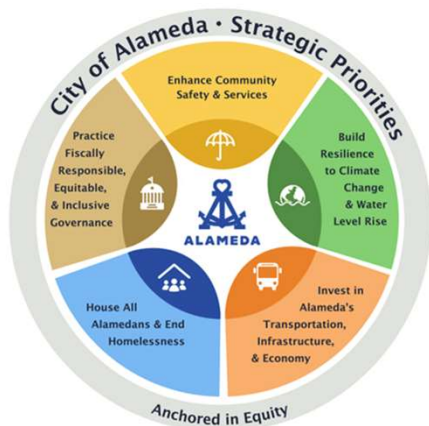
- Parcel 4 deeded to City in 2018
- Bay Trail improved North and South of Parcel 4
- Bay Trail in Parcel 4 is deteriorating asphalt
- Civic Group working since 2020 to improve Parcel 4 Trail
- City signed contract in 2021 for topo, later extended to design
- Topo completed in 2022
- Preliminary design and informal BCDC coordination completed in 2023
- Record of Survey Completed in 2024
- Design work currently stalled
- Sunk Cost (City and Community Support, Funding) →

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Through coordination and work with City staff, our citizens group has demonstrated that improvement of the Bay Trail can be accomplished within the boundaries of Parcel Four. However, further design work has been stalled since 2023 due to the departure of City staff.

Alameda Strategic Plan

(Upcoming February 8th Retreat)



Invest in Transportation, Infrastructure, Economic Opportunities & Historic Resources

Upgrade and enhance Alameda's bicycle, pedestrian, transit, and car infrastructure to increase safety, reliability, sustainability and accessibility. Beautify public places, restore historic buildings, rehabilitate utilities and expand broadband. Support local businesses and workforce development.

9

We have learned that the City Council will be conducting a Strategic Planning Retreat on February 8th to, in part, review project and study priorities for the coming and future years.

Our group believes that the Parcel Four project would be best fit under the Strategic category "INVEST IN TRANSPORTATION, INFRASTRUCTURE, ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES & HISTORIC RESOURCES", as this proposed project would "upgrade and enhance Alameda's bicycle, pedestrian...infrastructure to increase safety, reliability, sustainability and safety".

Way Ahead

- **Add Proposed Project to Strategic Plan:**
 - Under category: **“Invest in Transportation, Infrastructure, Economic Opportunities and Historic Resources”**.
 - New initiative entitled: **“Repair of the Bayshore Trail on city-owned Parcel Four on BFI”**
 - Suggested In four phases: **“Design, Environmental Coordination, Identify Funding and Construction”**
- **For consideration at February 8th Alameda City Council Strategic Planning Retreat**
- **Thank you!**

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We ask that you consider including this proposed project in the City Council Strategic Plan. As a preliminary design has already been completed, final design work could be completed in short order. In the meantime, a multi-year effort could be ongoing to identify funding required for construction (City, Harbor Bay Business Park Maintenance Funds, government and private foundation grants, etc.)

From: [Cyndy Johnsen](#)
To: [CityCouncil-List](#)
Cc: [City Clerk](#); [board](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Item 3-A (Strategic Plan Workshop)
Date: Friday, February 7, 2025 7:43:40 AM
Attachments: [2-8-2025 CC Strategic Plan.pdf](#)

Dear City Council,

We hope you will consider our attached comments during the Strategic Plan Workshop tomorrow.

Thank you,

Bike Walk Alameda Board



Board of Directors

February 7, 2025

Denyse Trepanier
President

RE: [Item 3-A: Strategic Plan Workshop](#)

Brian Fowler
Treasurer

Dear Mayor Ezzy Ashcraft and Members of the City Council,

Tim Beloney
Secretary

We're writing to express on-going support for the priorities identified in the [Strategic Plan](#), and to encourage continued alignment with other visioning documents which took years of work and community engagement to develop. These include the [Active Transportation Plan](#), the [Vision Zero Action Plan](#), the [Climate Action and Resiliency Plan](#), and the [General Plan](#).

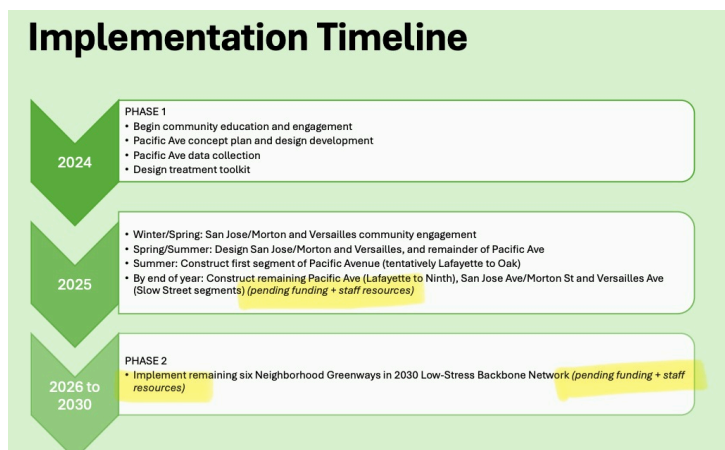
Cyndy Johnsen
Board Member

Maria Piper
Board Member

We also wanted to urge you to ensure programs in those plans are sufficiently resourced so they roll out without delay. The Neighborhood Greenway program, and the conversion of Slow Streets in particular, comes to mind. As you may recall, the Active Transportation Plan called for these conversions to be completed in 2024, but that did not happen due to limited resources.

Lucy Gigli
Founder, non-voting

Last year closed out with good progress, and the [updated Strategic Plan](#) revised this project (TIE9) to now being on track. However, the timeline proposes 2026/27 for completion, which is significantly longer than the new target of 2025 proposed on the [Neighborhood Greenway web page](#). Notably, the 2025 target is dependent on funding and staff resources, and that's why we're bringing it to your attention:



Our hope is that at this workshop, if appropriate, any potential issues can be discussed and sorted so this program can get done this year, just one year behind the original target in the Active Transportation Plan.

Thank you for your consideration, and as always, for your service to our City.

Bike Walk Alameda Board