

Kate Harrison  
Councilmember District 4

**24**

**CONSENT CALENDAR**  
September 24, 2019

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council  
From: Councilmembers Harrison, Wengraf, and Bartlett  
Subject: Pollinators and Habitat

**RECOMMENDATION**

Adopt three referrals that will deepen Berkeley's commitment to protecting pollinator plants and establishing habitats that will protect pollinators and our environment:

1. Refer to City Manager to establish a City Liaison to the Bee City USA program.
2. Refer to Public Works Commission and Parks and Waterfront Commission consideration of how to incorporate pollinators and habitat into the Adopt-A-Spot initiative referred on April 2, 2019.
3. Refer to the City Manager to transition the City's medians to non-turf green infrastructure, including pollinator gardens when appropriate.

**BACKGROUND**

At least 75% of all flowering plants require pollination assistance from birds, bats, bees, butterflies, or other pollinators.<sup>1</sup> These flowering plants bring us fruits and vegetables, represent half of the world's oils and fibers, and prevent soil erosion. Unfortunately, pollinators have been under attack over the past several decades.<sup>2</sup> Agriculture and over-paving decrease physical space for pollinator habitats; commerce and globalization transfer parasites and diseases more rapidly; climate change affects flowering rates and plants become out of sync with their pollinators; pesticides kill pollinators or hamper their ability to navigate and forage.

The threats facing pollinators are wide and varied, but the solutions are remarkably simple. To protect pollinators,<sup>3</sup> we need to maximize land conservation by creating pollinator gardens with native plants and no pesticides.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.pollinator.org/pollinators#importance>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/pollinators/pollinators-in-trouble.htm>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/plantsanimals/pollinate/gardeners/>

## **Joining Bee City USA**

Bee City USA is a coalition of cities across the United States that have committed to creating sustainable habitats for pollinators.<sup>4</sup> Bee City USA affiliates are accountable for achieving pollinator conservation results every year, and receive ongoing support from the program to achieve these goals. The purpose of Bee City USA is not to replace other conservation efforts, but to allow cities to become part of a larger network committed to these efforts and more.

On November 8, 2017, the Parks and Waterfront Commission<sup>5</sup> established a subcommittee to explore becoming a Bee City USA affiliate. On October 11, 2018, the Community Environmental Advisory Commission<sup>6</sup> created a subcommittee for the same purpose. Various city entities have spent years exploring this program, and have laid the foundation for Berkeley to officially become a Bee City USA affiliate.

Bee City USA requires every affiliate have a facilitation committee, a role which Transition Berkeley<sup>7</sup> has generously agreed to play. The program must be housed in a local government department, such as Parks Waterfront and Recreation, and an employee thereof liaises with Bee City USA. In discussion with other Bee Cities, the role of liaison requires about 20 hours of work per year. After the facilitation committee and government liaison are chosen, the City Council can pass a resolution formally establishing that Berkeley is a Bee City.<sup>8</sup> By choosing a staff liaison, the Parks Department allows pollinator activists to take the next step in a multiyear process of becoming an affiliate of Bee City USA.

## **Pollinators as Part of Adopt-A-Spot**

Joining Bee City USA is only a first step in becoming a pollinator activist city. Berkeley should seriously consider how to convert public land into pollinator gardens and habitat, particularly our medians and other areas that are already public green space.

On April 2, 2018, the City Council unanimously voted to refer the creation of an Adopt-A-Spot program to the Parks Commission and to the Public Works Commission. Adopt-A-Spot is a city-run program that will utilize volunteer labor to clean, maintain, and beautify public spaces.<sup>9</sup> Some projects include maintaining storm drains and other infrastructure, but many adoptable spots are parks, creeks, and even traffic circles, all of which are

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.beecityusa.org/what-is-a-bee-city.html>

<sup>5</sup>

[https://www.cityofberkeley.info/uploadedFiles/Parks\\_Rec\\_Waterfront/Commissions/PWC%20Agenda%20-%2011-08-2017.pdf](https://www.cityofberkeley.info/uploadedFiles/Parks_Rec_Waterfront/Commissions/PWC%20Agenda%20-%2011-08-2017.pdf)

<sup>6</sup>

[https://www.cityofberkeley.info/Planning\\_and\\_Development/Commissions/Commission\\_for\\_Community\\_Environmental\\_Advisory/20181011\\_CEAC\\_Agenda.aspx](https://www.cityofberkeley.info/Planning_and_Development/Commissions/Commission_for_Community_Environmental_Advisory/20181011_CEAC_Agenda.aspx)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.transitionberkeley.org/get-involved-1>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.beecityusa.org/application-city.html>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www2.oaklandnet.com/government/o/PWA/o/FE/s/VO/index.htm>

possible locations for native plant pollinator gardens. In all cases, volunteers should consider the local ecological conditions of their “spot”; this referral is a request that as this program develops, we consider where such habitats may be appropriate, and how to incorporate native plants into ongoing projects.

### **Adding Pollinators to Medians**

In addition, Berkeley has roughly nine miles of medians and islands in major roads across the City. Our medians provide important engineering and aesthetic benefits:<sup>10</sup> they visually break down the right-of-way, create space for pedestrian refuges and traffic signs, and guide traffic for calming measures. However, the majority of medians in Berkeley are only, or primarily, grass. In Berkeley’s climate zone,<sup>11</sup> where an overwhelming majority of rain occurs in the four-months between December and March, grass dies in the summer and autumn, and grows faster than it can be maintained in the spring. Over the past several years, many Council offices have received complaints over the maintenance of our medians. Berkeley residents take great pride in the aesthetics of our City, and it is not possible to keep grass attractive year-round without sizeable increases to our Parks maintenance staff.

Under former Governor Brown’s Executive Order B-40-17<sup>12</sup>, cities will be prohibited from watering grass medians starting in 2020. However, that prohibition does not extend to other plants. In light of this executive order and ongoing maintenance concerns, it is prudent to consider transitioning our city-owned green space away from grass quickly anyways, and we have an opportunity to add well-needed pollinator and habitat space in its stead.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Staff time:

1. Bee City USA: average of two hours per month
2. Adopt-A-Spot: no additional staff time beyond original Adopt-A-Spot referral
3. Median upkeep: potential to significantly reduce staff time, as pollinator gardens do not require annual mowing and volunteers may be able to contribute to ongoing maintenance.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**

Pollinators and the flowering plants that they pollinate bring us fruits and vegetables, represent half of the world’s oils and fibers, and prevent soil erosion. Pollinator gardens require significantly less water than grass. Hardscape causes a heat-island effect and

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.sfbetterstreets.org/find-project-types/pedestrian-safety-and-traffic-calming/traffic-calming-overview/medians-and-islands/>

<sup>11</sup>

[https://www.pge.com/includes/docs/pdfs/about/edusafety/training/pec/toolbox/arch/climate/california\\_climate\\_zone\\_03.pdf](https://www.pge.com/includes/docs/pdfs/about/edusafety/training/pec/toolbox/arch/climate/california_climate_zone_03.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water\\_issues/programs/conservation\\_portal/executive\\_orders.html](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/conservation_portal/executive_orders.html)

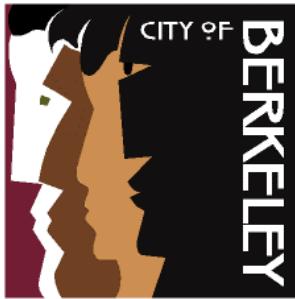
causes water run-off, both of which are mitigated by open green space and healthy soil that can absorb water.

**CONTACT PERSON**

Councilmember Kate Harrison, Council District 4, (510) 981-7140

**ATTACHMENTS**

1: Item 12, April 2, 2018: "Adopt-A-Spot Initiative."



Lori Droste  
Councilmember, District 8

**Consent Calendar**

April 2, 2019

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of City Council

From: Councilmember Lori Droste and Councilmember Rashi Kesarwani

Subject: Adopt a Spot Initiative

**Recommendation**

Refer to the Public Works Commission and Parks and Waterfront Commission to develop an Adopt A Spot initiative; specifically outlining potential environmental benefits, program costs, staffing.

**Rationale:**

- *Adopt a Spot programs enable a network of volunteer residents to assist in city maintenance and clean up efforts which have great impact using minimal City staff/funding.*
- *Vision 2050 will include stormwater and watershed management goals, both of which this program would support.*

**Background**

The City of Berkeley currently maintains an Adopt A Drain program. An Adopt A Spot program would utilize volunteers to assist with activities including, but not limited to, storm drain maintenance, street beautification, trash cleanup, gardening initiatives, etc.

*The City of Oakland Adopt a Spot Program*

The City of Oakland coordinates hundreds of volunteers to clean, green, maintain, and beautify public spaces (such as parks, libraries, creeks) and infrastructure (such as signs, storm drains, litter containers, utility boxes and poles, street tree wells, and

trees). Managed by the Environmental Stewardship Team within the Oakland Public Works Department, this volunteer program has been active throughout the city for over thirty years. The volunteer program supports community cleanups throughout the year, annual city-wide cleanups for Earth Day, Creek to Bay Day, MLK Day of Service, and “Adopt a Spot,” an ongoing volunteer stewardship program that includes a growing list of over 2,000 Oakland “spots.”

Volunteers contribute over 100,000 hours each year, contributing to a wide range of environmental sustainability impacts such as pollution cleanup and prevention; wildlife habitat protection, enhancement, and restoration; and stormwater management. Volunteerism also strengthens communities by connecting people to each other, to their neighborhoods, and to their environment. These benefits enhance Oakland’s economy, safety, and livability,

The City of Oakland Public Works’ *Adopt a Drain* program supports volunteer efforts to keep storm drain inlets clean and clear of trash and debris. Clear and clean inlets keep water flowing and ensure “only rain down the drain,” which is especially helpful during storm events when blocked storm drains can back up and cause flooding. Year-round storm drain maintenance helps intercept trash before it enters the storm drains and connecting creeks and water bodies.

The City of Oakland provides support for Adopt a Drain volunteers through instruction, tools and supplies, assistance with debris pickups, and notification of impending storm events.

Over 1,000 of Oakland’s approximately 12,000 storm drains have been adopted. The more than 800 Adopt a Drain volunteers greatly supplement the capacity of the twenty City staff servicing the storm drain system, with its more than 1,200 storm drains, 370 miles of drain pipe, seven pump stations and 40 miles of creeks. Volunteers can quickly and preemptively provide basic maintenance on drains and can have a far more extensive and immediate reach across the city than staff during storm and flooding emergencies.

Oakland uses a map interface at [www.AdoptaDrainOakland.com](http://www.AdoptaDrainOakland.com) for depicting the City’s storm drain inlets to the public for possible adoption. This easy to use interface has helped spur new volunteer registrations. Social media, word-of-mouth, and timely news coverage prior to and during storm events has also contributed to volunteer registrations. More information is available at [www.oaklandadoptaspot.org](http://www.oaklandadoptaspot.org).

## **Environmental Sustainability**

Helps Berkeley fulfill Watershed and Stormwater Management Plan goals.

**Financial Implications**

Staff time to coordinate volunteers and provide technical assistance.

**Contact**

Councilmember Lori Droste 510-981-7180

