



**MEMO**

Date: June 5, 2009

To: El Cerrito Environmental Quality Committee (EQC)

From: Melanie Mintz, Environmental Services Division Manager

Subject: Possible EQC Sponsorship of Citywide Tree Planting Event in Support of the Urban Forest Master Plan

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### **ACTION REQUESTED**

The Environmental Services Division (ESD) and Public Works staff are requesting that the Environmental Quality Committee consider sponsoring an event, or events, to assist with the planting of approximately 200 street trees to support implementation of the Urban Forest Master Plan. If the Committee decides that it would like to pursue this effort, a discussion of the event would be placed on the agenda for the July EQC meeting, at which Public Works staff and ESD staff could be available to brainstorm and coordinate logistics with the Committee. The Committee may also determine not to lead such an event at this time.

### **BACKGROUND**

The Public Works Department received a Caltrans Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program (EEMP) grant to plant trees to mitigate for the air quality and loss of vegetation impacts of the 2001 widening of I-80 to accommodate HOV (High Occupancy Vehicle) lanes. The grant pays for the planting of approximately 600 trees in El Cerrito. The Department has used the funds to pay for the planting of 300 trees thus far, with approximately 50 more trees pending. The remaining 250 trees need to be planted by February 2010. ESD and Public Works staff see a need and an opportunity for the EQC to coordinate a citywide neighborhood tree planting effort in support of Council's goals for the Committee to promote and foster public awareness, education, interest and support for environmental quality efforts; and to foster volunteer opportunities. The event could provide an excellent opportunity, also, for the EQC to introduce itself and its other programs to the El Cerrito community.

More information about the Urban Forest Master Plan can be found at [http://www.el-cerrito.org/public\\_works/urbanforest.html](http://www.el-cerrito.org/public_works/urbanforest.html)



Date: June 5, 2009  
To: El Cerrito Environmental Quality Committee (EQC)  
From: Melanie Mintz, Environmental Services Division Manager  
Subject: Fall/Winter Environmental Workshop Series

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### **ACTION REQUESTED**

To discuss fall/winter workshop series and provide indication of interest in the topics offered as well as suggestions for other future topics.

### **BACKGROUND**

The Environmental Services Division (ESD) is interested in hosting regular environmentally-themed workshops for the public. Depending upon funding availability, the workshops will either be offered at cost or subsidized, e.g. when grants or other dedicated funding sources can be located. For Fall/Winter 2009, workshop offerings need to be finalized by July in order to be included in the Fall/Winter Citywide Recreation brochure.

For Fall/Winter 2009, ESD staff is currently considering offering:

- **Healthy Gardens Without Toxic Chemicals Workshop**

Home gardeners would learn to create a healthy garden ecosystem, and protect themselves, family, pets, and the environment. The program will have hands-on activities to introduce participants to less-toxic gardening, Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and attracting beneficial insects. Options for dealing with pests, and review of safe use and disposal of common garden products will be explored. Handouts will be provided as additional resources and references.

- **Healthy Homes**

Participants would explore a variety of less-toxic alternatives to common indoor pesticides and cleaning supplies. Residents learn to assess household products and make informed choices to make our watersheds healthier. This course includes hands-on activities and background information on Integrated Pest Management for the home, Green Cleaning, and understanding product labels including safe use and disposal.

The two workshops above would likely be taught by The Watershed Project and subsidized, or partially subsidized, by the City's Clean Water Program.

- **Native Plant/Low Water Use Gardening**

ESD staff is considering sponsoring a workshop that will teach residents to create an attractive healthy garden with native plants and other drought tolerant species that may result in a low-water using native garden at a City facility, such as the Community Center. Public Works Maintenance staff has a list of local residents interested in caring for the resulting garden, and others are invited to join this growing list.

This workshop is under development, and will likely be offered over two days.

- **Low Carbon Diet**

ESD staff is considering teaching this workshop which would offer a “prescription” for lowering one’s own carbon footprint. It would likely be offered in multiple sessions. ESD staff has discussed offering this class for “beginners” and following it up for graduates with an Advanced Class that might be able to serve as a springboard for neighborhood Green Teams, as previously discussed by the EQC. The EQC’s feedback on this idea is invited.

In addition to the above classes, the ESD is working with the Recreation Department to develop summer-camp and after-school programs with an environmental theme for next school year and summer. More information will be shared as it is developed.

All of the workshops will be publicized via the Citywide Recreation brochure, the website and other avenues.



## MEMO

**To:** Environmental Quality Committee

**From:** Melanie Mintz, Environmental Services Division Manager

**Date:** June 2, 2009

**Subject:** Appreciation and Current/Upcoming ESD Activities

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First of all, I'd like to commend the Environmental Quality Committee (EQC) members on a very productive first year. Your willingness, ability and dedication to working as a team as you interpreted the intent of the City Council in establishing the Committee has been impressive. You successfully prioritized and turned the Council's goals into concrete programs and actions that will serve as a foundation for achieving their goals, and your own, in the upcoming years. I just re-reviewed Council's Resolution, and encourage you to take a look at it again as you proceed in the upcoming year.

Secondly, the Environmental Services Division (ESD) has also just completed its first year, having been born out of the reorganization of the former Integrated Waste Services Division. The reorganization has allowed the Division to work on a broader scope of environmental issues and to play a leadership role in promoting environmental quality and innovation in the City of El Cerrito. The potential synergies between the Committee and the Division are abundant, and I look forward to continuing to work together.

In addition to serving as Staff Liaison to the Committee, and providing regular Staff Updates, Division staff will work to keep you informed of our activities so that such synergies and opportunities for collaboration can be identified and discussed at EQC meetings. This Memo is intended to brief you on a selection of projects the Division is currently working on that may be of interest to the EQC; it is our intent to prepare such a Memo at regular intervals throughout the year. These projects are specifically those that Staff believes have near-term opportunities for the EQC to advise, support, vet, promote or play a role in. Please contact ESD staff for more information on any of these projects, or agendaize them for a future EQC meeting if you'd like to discuss them as a Committee.

**Green Building Program:** The ESD is working with non-profit Strategic Energy Innovations (SEI), our Planning Department, and Building Department to draft guidelines for an El Cerrito Green Building Program. It is anticipated that a draft program, consisting of educational materials, a draft ordinance, and other programmatic elements would be ready for EQC review in fall with the goal of bringing it to Council for adoption prior to January 2010.



At a future meeting, ESD staff would like to discuss opportunities for integrating the program into the EQC's upcoming Environmental Recognition programs, as well as discuss opportunities for Green Building education and outreach.

**California Youth Energy Services: Green Home Visits:** The ESD has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with California Youth Energy Services (CYES) to provide free "Green Home Visits" to a limited number of El Cerrito residents. CYES is a Bay Area summer youth employment and free energy efficiency retrofit program. At each green "house call", CYES Energy Specialists educate the resident about sustainability, install free equipment that saves energy and water, and provide personalized recommendation for further energy savings. The program will run from June 30-August 6 this year. Staff will work with CYES to develop web content and additional outreach materials in the next couple of weeks, as well as provide more information at the July EQC meeting.

Although the spaces available in this year's program are limited, due to the City's budget limitations in supporting the program, it is hoped that the summer program can serve as a template for an expanded program in the future, perhaps a program that could work in concert with the EQC's "Green Team" ideas. Furthermore, if a "waiting list" is established this year, it will help the City gauge demand for such a program.

**Website Update:** The ESD is currently updating its website and envisions it as an easy to use "one stop shop" for residents, businesses and others looking to locate environmental resources and inspiration, as well as to find out what programs and projects the ESD offers or has under development. The website will be updated in the next few weeks, and in an ongoing incremental fashion. Staff invites the EQC and the public to use the website often and provide feedback on what would make it more user-friendly and useful to you. Contact the Division at 215-4350 or [greenassistant@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us](mailto:greenassistant@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us) to provide feedback and input.

**Welcome New Environmental Analyst:** Please join me in welcoming Maria Sanders as the Environmental Service Division's second Environmental Analyst. With the help of a Bay Area Air Quality Management District grant, we have filled the Analyst position left open for the last year. Maria brings many years of environmental planning, energy efficiency, and municipal sustainability experience to the job. She will work with other ESD staff on a variety of endeavors, including reinvigorating the City's internal conservation efforts; initiating Climate Action Planning and implementation; and supporting, identifying and pursuing funding for El Cerrito to continue to undertake new and expanded environmental programs, especially in the realm of energy efficiency and renewable energy. She will be a "regular" at upcoming EQC meetings, and along with other ESD staff, looks forward to supporting EQC activities and utilizing the EQC as a resource in developing new programs.