



### **Grand Opening of Jean Sweeney Open Space Park**

On Saturday, December 15, at 10:00 am, the Alameda community will celebrate a historic occasion with the grand opening of Jean Sweeney Open Space Park. This 25-acre park on the west side of the island includes open space areas and active uses such as a natural based playground, picnic pavilion, open lawn area, a gazebo that is a restoration of the last Alameda Belt Line train waiting station, a plaza, small picnic areas, landscape with California native and drought-tolerant plants, and a segment of the Cross Alameda Trail for bicyclists and pedestrians. Future phases will add a community garden, more playgrounds, bike skills loop, demonstration gardens, outdoor classroom, and hiking trails through woodland areas.

The Jean Sweeney Open Space Park is located on the former Alameda Belt Line Railroad property that was secured by the City at its original purchase price due to the advocacy efforts of local resident, Jean Sweeney. This area extends from Constitution Way and Atlantic Avenue (by the Alameda Food Bank) to Sherman Avenue.

The history of this park is rich and colorful. After the railroad was decommissioned in the 1990s, the land was slated to be sold to a housing developer. Through tireless research, Jean Sweeney found the original contract between the City and the railroad, which entitled the City to purchase the land back at the original purchase price plus improvements. This land was valued at \$20 million and the City was able to purchase it for just under \$1 million. Jean Sweeney also initiated a ballot measure to zone the land as Open Space, which passed by a large majority of voters. The process to develop the Jean Sweeney Open Space Park master plan exemplified the residents deep-rooted commitment for this park development. Kristoffer K□□r of KKDesign generously developed the parks master plan at no cost to the City and more than 1,000 residents participated in the design process.

"This has to be a park." As Jim Sweeney explained, These were the inspired words Jean expressed when she first visited the Beltline Railroad yard property after observing the quiet, pristine, and secluded nature reigning there which surrounded her. She recognized it as a wonderful treasure that had to be preserved. It has taken 20 years, but through her dedication and persistence and that of many others her dream has come true. The strong community support of

Sweeney Park is also evident in the funding sources of this \$10 million project to date. Major funding came from grants from the Active Transportation Program, administered by Caltrans, the Land and Water Conservation Fund, administered by the California Department of Parks and Recreation, and Tim Lewis Communities. Additional significant local funding came from the Rotary Club of Alameda, Jean Sweeney Open Space Park Fund, Alameda Kiwanis Club, and

Alameda Community Fund - plus the City of Alameda. Sweeney Park is the culmination of the work and thought of our entire community. People who attended meetings, contributed to concept and design ideas, volunteered for clean-ups, donated funds, wrote letters of support, and voted. This park is here because of the desire and commitment of Alamedans, remarked Amy Wooldridge, Director of Alameda Recreation and Parks Department.

More info: <https://www.facebook.com/events/497328047418418/>

