

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation

May 05, 2020

**DIRT WORLD BIKE PARK GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE**

Project No. 19-053-01

Project Manager: Brenda Buxton

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Authorization to disburse up to \$428,875 to The Watershed Project to finalize designs and construct green infrastructure and signage to improve water quality, prevent flooding, increase climate resiliency at a city park in Richmond, Contra Costa County, and adoption of findings under the California Environmental Quality Act.

**LOCATION:** Dirt World Bike Park in the Iron Triangle neighborhood, Richmond, Contra Costa County

**PROGRAM CATEGORY:** San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program

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EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Project Location Maps](#)

Exhibit 2: [Project Photos](#)

Exhibit 3: [Project Design Plan](#)

Exhibit 4: [Project Letters](#)

Exhibit 5: [CEQA Documents](#)

Exhibit 6: [LSA Letter](#)

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**RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:**

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31160 - 31165 of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes the disbursement of an amount not to exceed four hundred twenty eight thousand eight hundred seventy five dollars (\$428,875) to The Watershed Project (“the grantee”) to complete final designs and construct green infrastructure and signage to improve water quality, prevent flooding, and increase resilience to climate change impacts, along the Richmond Greenway Trail, along the public right of way on

21<sup>st</sup> Street, and in Dirt World, a city park for off-road bicycle use, in Richmond, Contra Costa County.

Prior to commencement of the project, the grantee shall submit for the review and written approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy (Executive Officer) the following:

1. A detailed work program, schedule, and budget.
2. Names and qualifications of any contractors to be retained in carrying out the project.
3. A plan for acknowledgement of Conservancy funding and Proposition 1 as the source of that funding.
4. Evidence that all permits and approvals required to implement the project have been obtained.
5. Evidence that the grantee has entered into agreements sufficient to enable the grantee to implement, operate, and maintain the project.
6. Evidence that the City of Richmond has made binding on the grantee those mitigation measures identified in the Urban Greening Master Plan Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration adopted by the City of Richmond in March 2017 and attached to the accompanying staff recommendation as Exhibit 5 that are applicable to the project.”

Staff further recommends that the Conservancy adopt the following findings:

“Based on the accompanying staff report and attached exhibits, the State Coastal Conservancy hereby finds that:

1. The proposed authorization is consistent with Chapter 4.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines.
3. The Watershed Project is a nonprofit organization organized under section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code
4. The Conservancy has independently reviewed and considered the *City of Richmond Urban Greening Master Plan Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration* (MND) adopted by the City of Richmond in March 2017 and attached to the accompanying staff recommendation as Exhibit 5, and has concluded that the proposed project falls within the scope of the MND; that the proposed project as designed and mitigated avoids, reduces, or mitigates the potentially significant environmental effects to a less-than-significant level; and that there is no substantial evidence that the proposed project will have a significant effect on the environment.”

**PROJECT SUMMARY:**

Staff recommends that the Conservancy authorize disbursement of up to \$428,875 to The Watershed Project to complete final design and construct green infrastructure at Dirt World,

along the Richmond Greenway Trail, and along the public right of way at 21<sup>st</sup> Street. Dirt World is a new park occupying a 2-acre segment near the center of the 3-mile long Richmond Greenway Trail. The proposed project includes installation of stormwater management features that will reduce flooding, eliminate standing water (and the related vector control issues), and improve water quality by cleaning and absorbing storm water. This project will also strengthen the community's resilience to climate change by planting trees, and native plant species, that will reduce urban temperatures and sequester carbon, as well as provide habitat and beautify the park, and provide educational and interpretive signs.

The project aims to alleviate pressing environmental challenges in the Iron Triangle neighborhood in central Richmond, California, on the San Francisco Bay. With a population of 104,000, Richmond has a high unemployment rate and about a third of the population living below the poverty line. Seventeen community groups, including The Watershed Project, collaborated with the City to transform a former rail corridor into the Richmond Greenway which provides valuable connections and open space for the community. (See Exhibit 1 for the project location maps). The Dirt World bike terrain serves as a cap on the brownfield site, and construction of undulating bike terrain has created areas where water currently ponds. Additionally, the neighborhood's inadequate stormwater infrastructure causes neighborhood-level flooding. (See Exhibit 2 for photos of the site showing ponding and flooding.) Ponding water on the bike terrain can lead to closure of the bike park, which can attract dumping and encampments. Immediate drainage issues were resolved in the summer of 2019 using City of Richmond funds, but the proposed project will ensure ponding issues on the bike terrain do not return, by installing rain gardens to soak up ponded water.

Currently, at the park and neighborhood level, storm drains back-up when it rains. Thus, rain gardens and bioswales to be installed with this project will help soak up extra rainwater, before it gets to the storm drains, helping to alleviate some of the volume of water the storm drains need to capture, and thus alleviating neighborhood and park level flooding. Without Conservancy funds to mitigate localized flooding in the long-term, these issues may return and persist into the future, causing the park to close, and encampments and dumping to return. In addition to water capture, the project area, within the Iron Triangle, suffers from urban heat island impacts and extreme heat days. Eleven shade trees will be installed, as well as native vegetation, to help cool the park and neighborhood, sequester carbon, and provide habitat and beautify the park for community members.

The project will construct Low Impact Design (LID) stormwater management features, such as vegetated bioswales, tree box filters, and a rain garden, to provide a low-maintenance, drought-tolerant, Bay-friendly ways to absorb and treat stormwater and alleviate current flooding and ponding. Low Impact Design is a sub-set of green infrastructure, which refers to the range of measures that utilize ecological systems as living infrastructure. The majority of the 2-acre site is permeable, and the surface area of treatment features and new landscape areas combined is over 10,000 square feet. Calculating with annual estimated rainfall at 24 inches, this results in infiltration and treatment of approximately 65,532 gallons of stormwater annually at this new park. As shown in Exhibit 3, Project Design Plan, the rain garden by 20th street will provide habitat for birds, butterflies and insects, and the bioswale near 20th street

will increase stormwater capacity and mimic the function and appearance of a small stream, with rushes, sedges and other native plants, accented with trees where appropriate. The area draining to one of the rain gardens and bioswales is approximately 7,917 square feet, and the surface area of treatment features combined is 3,845 square feet. With 23 inches of rainfall annually, these features will result in 9,459 gallons of stormwater flowing into rain gardens and bioswales. The project will protect water quality, increase watershed health, and improve water sustainability.

In addition, the project includes planting trees and vegetation to sequester greenhouse gas emissions, lessen the impacts resulting from the urban heat island effect, and improve air quality, as well as increase the urban forest. Five new street trees will collectively sequester 733 pounds per year of carbon at maturity. In addition to street trees, the project will also plant six large, native trees on the Richmond Greenway, which will sequester 2,106 pounds per year of carbon at maturity. All improvements will take place within the Dirt World park, with the exception of 5 street trees to be planted along the public right of way along 21<sup>st</sup> St, and 6 large shade trees to be planted along the Richmond Greenway Trail. Tree species will be selected based on their drought tolerance and hardiness. Lastly, the project will encourage active transit, reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT), and provide access to a safe, fun park for over 2,524 local youth, where they can learn bike skills and enjoy outdoor activities.

The Watershed Project will complete final design, engineering, and permitting, in partnership with the City of Richmond who owns the public right-of-way, and oversees design review, permitting, and environmental review. The Watershed Project will hire contractors to construct the project and will oversee the construction. The Watershed Project will also conduct outreach with local organizations to ensure stakeholders are informed about and engaged in the project, as well as manage the fabrication of two educational and interpretive signs, one funder recognition sign, and a park identity sign near 20<sup>th</sup> street. As with numerous other projects, the City and The Watershed Project will work together to develop a long-term Management and Monitoring Plan for all green infrastructure LID components. The Watershed Project will monitor and maintain the LID features and monitor plant establishment (replanting as needed), erosion, and bioswale functionality. The Watershed Project will evaluate water quality before and after installation of bioswales, monitoring quality of runoff entering storm drains pre- and post-project for two rainy seasons. The Watershed Project's healthy watershed programs will provide ongoing community education and outreach, including watershed tours highlighting this project as a model. The Watershed Project has been leading monthly volunteer days on the Greenway since 2007 and will continue its successful approach.

**Site Description:** The proposed project is located in the Iron Triangle neighborhood in central Richmond, California. Once a vast wetland ecosystem, central Richmond is now a highly urbanized watershed isolated from the regional parks and open space at the perimeter of the city. The Iron Triangle is bounded by heavy industry (including an oil refinery) and major regional shipping and transportation corridors (I-80, I-580, and railway freight lines). As a result of decades of major industrial activity in the immediate vicinity of the project, Iron Triangle residents suffer from some of the highest rates of cancer, asthma, heart disease, diabetes, and

premature birth in the state.<sup>1</sup> The Urban Greening Master Plan identified 12,000 tree opportunity sites and an extreme dearth of street trees and stormwater infrastructure in the neighborhood. A combination of clay soils, a high-water table, and impervious surfaces result in localized flooding, a nuisance to residents and detrimental to water quality. The Richmond Greenway Trail is owned by the City. As a capped brownfield site, it remains largely un-paved which allows rainfall to infiltrate through contaminated soils. Flooding “hot spots” occur where the streets drain toward the former elevated railroad bed. Storm drains are clogged from water that flows onto the Greenway, picking up debris, and flowing back into the storm sewer. In addition to creating poor water quality, these conditions are uninviting to Greenway users and impede accessible paths of travel which decreases frequency of use. The community’s vision for this rails-to-trails project is to transform the neglected corridor now owned by the City into a string of vibrant parks, reducing environmental health hazards and improving community health in one of the most disadvantaged communities in the state. The proposed project site has recently been developed as a bike park with jump lines for various skill levels, a BMX track, a strider track, and a pump track. The site also includes a segment of the Richmond Greenway trail and an existing bioswale that runs along 20<sup>th</sup> Street. The Dirt World Bike Park Green Infrastructure project will improve a site once plagued by illegal dumping, homeless encampments, flooding, and crime to create a safe, clean, and green public amenity.

**Grantee Qualifications:** The Conservancy has a history of working with The Watershed Project on similar urban greening projects, as well as other restoration projects in the San Francisco Bay Area. First, with a restoration and stewardship project in 2007 along San Pablo Creek, an education program with classroom curriculum and field visits called *Wild! Oysters* in 2013 and again in 2015, the Booker T Bioswales: Beads on a Green Necklace project, and an urban greening project at the Booker T. Anderson Jr. Park in Richmond to construct and install bioswales.

**Project History:** The Conservancy has a history of granting funds to The Watershed Project, as well as other agencies and organizations, for work involving, or benefiting, the Iron Triangle neighborhood and community. In 2001, the Conservancy granted funds to the City of El Cerrito to acquire a 1.64-acre parcel on San Pablo Avenue in El Cerrito near the City of Richmond border, which provides land for an extension of the Ohlone Greenway, a bicycle/pedestrian trail that begins in Berkeley and connects to the Richmond greenway. Then, in 2003, the Conservancy granted funds to the City of El Cerrito to prepare construction documents and final permitting for the restoration of Baxter Creek, and enabled restoration of the creek, which included improved flood control and water quality, among other benefits. In 2003, the Conservancy granted funds to the City for Rails-to-Trails support to produce technical studies and final design plans for the Richmond Greenway (which this project is physically adjacent to.) When completed, the Richmond Greenway will run along the former Santa Fe railroad corridor, connecting the San Francisco Bay Trail on the west, to the Ohlone Greenway in El Cerrito to the east. Currently, the majority of the Richmond Greenway is completed, with two remaining gaps between Unity Park and 23<sup>rd</sup> street, which this proposed project helps, and a last gap from 2<sup>nd</sup> street to Garrard Boulevard. In addition, in 2016, the Conservancy granted funds to the City of

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<sup>1</sup> Pacific Institute, Measuring What Matters, 2009. <http://pacinst.org/publication/measuring-what-matters/>

Richmond, in partnership with The Watershed Project and other partners, to plant 277 shade providing and carbon sequestering trees in Richmond’s Iron Triangle neighborhood, as well as in the Richmond Greenway, and incorporated 6,478 square feet of LID stormwater features for bioretention, including vegetated bioswales and a rain garden.

**PROJECT FINANCING**

<b>Coastal Conservancy</b>	<b>\$428,875</b>
City of Richmond	\$60,000
<b>Project Total</b>	<b>\$488,875</b>

The expected source of funding for this \$428,875 authorization is the fiscal year 2018/19 appropriation to the Conservancy from the “Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014” (Proposition 1, Division 26.7 of the Water Code, § 79700 et seq.). Funds appropriated to the Conservancy derive from Chapter 6 (commencing with Section 79730) and may be used “for multi-benefit water quality, water supply, and watershed protection and restoration projects for the watersheds of the state” (Section 79731). Section 79732(a) identifies the specific purposes of Chapter 6, of which the following pertain to this project: subsection (a)(2): implement watershed adaptation projects in order to reduce the impacts of climate change on California’s communities and ecosystems, subsection (a)(9): protect and restore urban watershed health to improve watershed storage capacity, protection of life and property, stormwater resource management and greenhouse gas reduction, and subsection (a)(11): reduce pollution or contamination of rivers and streams, and protect or restore natural system functions that contribute to water supply, water quality, or flood management.

As required by Proposition 1, the proposed project provides multiple benefits and will help achieve the above-referenced Chapter 6 purposes. By installing the proposed bioswales, rain gardens, and native and street trees, the project will help absorb and treat approximately 65,532 gallons of stormwater annually, calculating with an average 24 inches of rainfall a year. The planting of 11 street and native trees will reduce the urban heat island effect. The trees are also expected to provide a combined 2,839 lbs. of carbon storage per year at maturity. This project will make an urban park area more resilient, safe, and inviting, and will increase the public’s access to native vegetation and green, open space.

The proposed project was selected through the eleventh-round competitive grant process under the Conservancy’s Proposition 1 Grant Program Guidelines adopted in June 2015 (see section 79706(a)). The proposed project meets each of the evaluation criteria in the Proposition 1 Guidelines as described in further detail in this “Project Financing” section, the “Project Summary” section and in the “Consistency with Conservancy’s Project Selection Criteria & Guidelines” section of this report.

Match funds consist of \$60,000 from the City of Richmond to fix the drainage of the BMX track and to build the training strider track for an outdoor classroom. In addition, \$10,000 of in-kind match will come from The Watershed Project’s staff time on design, community engagement,

and stakeholder engagement as well as The Watershed Project's volunteers and student time. There is an additional \$4,971 in in-kind match from the City of Richmond for mulch.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:**

The proposed project would be undertaken pursuant to Public Resources Code section 31113, which establishes the Conservancy's Climate Ready Program to address the impacts and potential impacts of climate change on resources within the Conservancy's jurisdiction, and Chapter 4.5 of the Conservancy's enabling legislation, Public Resource Code Sections 31160-31165, which states that the Conservancy may award grants in the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area to help achieve the goals of the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program. The proposed project is located in Contra Costa County, one of the nine San Francisco Bay Area counties. As described below, the goals of the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program are achieved by this proposed project.

Section 31113(b) authorizes the Conservancy to undertake projects within its jurisdiction, including, but not limited to, those that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, address extreme weather events, sea level rise, storm surge, beach and bluff erosion, salt water intrusion, flooding, and other coastal hazards that threaten coastal communities, infrastructure and natural resources. This project provides a low-cost solution to localized flooding from a 1- to 5-year rainstorm in a neighborhood that suffers from chronic flooding, while also mitigating the urban heat island effect by planting 11 trees.

Section 31162(b) authorizes the Conservancy to "protect, restore, and enhance natural habitats and connecting corridors, watersheds, scenic areas, and other open-space resources of regional significance within the SF Bay Area." This project will enhance an urban watershed.

Section 31162(d) authorizes the Conservancy to award grants to "promote, assist, and enhance projects that provide open space and natural areas that are accessible to urban populations for recreational and educational purposes." This project will enhance a public open space that is easily accessible by the residents of the City of Richmond and nearby communities for recreational and educational purposes.

Section 31163(b) authorizes the Conservancy to award grants to "support interagency actions and public/private partnerships in the San Francisco Bay Area ...providing for broad-based local involvement in, and support for, the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program." This project involves a partnership between the City of Richmond and The Watershed Project, as well as public engagement and outreach with the surrounding community.

Section 31163(c) mandates that the Conservancy use specific criteria to develop priority projects within the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program. The project meets the selection criteria under 31163(c), in that it: 1) is supported by adopted local or regional plans, including Richmond's **Climate Action Plan**, the City of Richmond's **Parks and Landscaping Plan** Contra Costa County's **Stormwater C.3 Guidebook**, the City of Richmond **Urban Greening Master Plan**, the City of Richmond **Greenway Master Plan**, the **Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan** (2007) for the San Francisco Estuary, and the **Bay Area Integrated Regional Water Management Plan** (IRWMP); 2) serves a regional constituency in enhancing a park of regional significance; 3) can be implemented in a timely way because the partners have

the necessary expertise, CEQA completed, and the basic design plans scoped and ready for the final design and implementation phase; 4) provides opportunities or benefits that could be lost if the project is not implemented quickly, in that the project is happening in concurrence with a variety of urban greening projects within the Iron Triangle neighborhood, and alleviates current and pressing environmental challenges in Richmond; and 5) includes matching funds from The Watershed Project and the City of Richmond.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S [2018-2022 STRATEGIC PLAN](#) GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S):**

Consistent with **Goal 8, Objective C** of the Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed project implements a project that increases resilience to climate change impacts of increased heat and increased flooding, using nature-based solutions such as LID, and utilizes a multi-benefit strategy.

Consistent with **Goal 11, Objective A** of the Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed project protects and enhances natural habitats, and prioritizes recreational goals, in an important area of open space within the Iron Triangle in Richmond, Dirt World, a popular recreation site for residents.

Consistent with **Goal 16, Objective A**, the proposed project is within a disadvantaged community, and directly benefits a disadvantaged community, in the Iron Triangle neighborhood of Richmond.

Consistent with **Goal 16, Objective B**, the proposed project increases the resilience to climate change impacts of communities in the San Francisco Bay Area, for the community within the Iron Triangle in Richmond, that lacks capacity due to systemic inequities, by providing nature-based adaptation for extreme heat and flood impacts.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA & GUIDELINES:**

The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines, last updated on October 2, 2014, in the following respects:

**Required Criteria**

1. **Promotion of the Conservancy's statutory programs and purposes:** See the "Consistency with Conservancy's Enabling Legislation" section above.
2. **Consistency with purposes of the funding source:** See the "Project Financing" section above.
3. **Promotion and implementation of state plans and policies:** Project is consistent with, and supports the goals and intended outcomes of the following state and local plans:
  - **California @ 50 Million: The Environmental Goals and Policy Report** - The Project is consistent with two of the Pillars of California @ 50 Million: Reducing emissions of short-lived climate pollutants and stewarding natural resources to



ensure that they store carbon and are resilient to climate change. It supports the key strategies identified in the report to build a resilient and sustainable water system; steward and protect natural and working landscapes; incorporate climate change adaptation into all planning and investment; and lead by example to make the state a model for long-term sustainability.

- **CA Climate Adaptation Strategy/Safeguarding California: Reducing Climate Risk Plan** - The project is aligned with the overall goal of Safeguarding California, to reduce impacts and prepare for climate risks. The Health Implementation Plan of the Safeguarding California Plan specifically identifies urban greening as a strategy to reduce the impacts of extreme heat events and heat islands. The green infrastructure component of the project is also consistent with the Land Use and Community Development Implementation Plan as well as the Water Implementation Plan.
  - **CA Climate Adaptation Strategy/Safeguarding California: Reducing Climate Risk Plan** - The Project is aligned with the overall goal of Safeguarding California—to reduce impacts and prepare for climate risks. The Health Implementation Plan of the Safeguarding California Plan specifically identifies urban greening as a strategy to reduce the impacts of extreme heat events and heat islands. The green infrastructure incorporated into the Project is also consistent with the Land Use and Community Development Implementation Plan as well as the Water Implementation Plan.
  - **California Coastal Sediment Management Master Plan** - The Project’s bioswales and rain gardens will reduce sediment loading in downstream receiving waters.
4. **Support of the public:** This project has received broad public support, including support from the City of Richmond and the 510 Bay Area BMXers. See “Project Letters,” Exhibit 4.
  5. **Location:** The project is located in the City of Richmond in Contra Costa County, within the jurisdiction of the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program, and will improve watershed health and habitat value at the site, reduce flooding and eliminate standing water and related vector control issues, improve the capacity of existing, and create new, bioretention features, mitigate hot, dusty site conditions, and repair bike trails damaged by flooding.
  6. **Need:** The Conservancy provides the majority of funding for this project, which is needed to prevent localized flooding in the long term, and make the bike terrain park rideable, to enable The Watershed Project to run park programs, and avoid a decrease in park access and equity in the neighborhood. The City of Richmond is an under resourced City, with not enough funds to properly care for this park, which is why partnerships with The Watershed Project are so important.
  7. **Greater-than-local interest:** This project, improves water quality, reduces the urban heat island effect, and increases carbon sequestration within a disadvantaged urban community. The project also benefits the Iron Triangle neighborhood in the City of Richmond.

8. **Sea level rise vulnerability:** The Project addresses sea level rise vulnerability by incorporating green infrastructure improvements that will alleviate localized flooding associated with the undulating bike terrain, and inadequate stormwater infrastructure. The site is located less than one mile from the San Francisco Bay, which will experience sea level rise, and the proposed project will counteract secondary impacts by capturing large amounts of stormwater. Stormwater challenges are understood to be a secondary impact of sea level rise, since stormwater systems and the bay are connected, and stormwater systems can back-up even further, with elevated bay water levels. While not located directly in an area affected by a projected 1.4-meter (approximately 4.6 feet) sea level rise specifically, the project site and surrounding neighborhood are historic wetlands, and are thus low-lying, and part of a community that is vulnerable to the secondary impacts of rising sea levels and associated floods. Outmoded stormwater infrastructure in the Iron Triangle neighborhood is already incapacitated by increased rain events because the heavy clay soils, large amount of paving, and high-water table inhibit infiltration, causing stormwater to back-up and overflow. Urbanization of the watershed and the elevation of the Greenway (formerly a railroad bed) in respect to the surrounding topography causes localized flooding at the adjacent street ends on the Greenway, which this project will address. Green infrastructure on site will help aide the oversubscribed and outdated stormwater system by absorbing and filtering water into the water table on site, alleviating some of the water traditionally captured by storm drains, when not ponding on site.

#### **Additional Criteria**

9. **Urgency:** The project site currently floods and causes standing water up to 12 feet deep in some areas of the site and has low permeability rates due to clay soils. This ponding has created concern with the City of Richmond around potential vector control issues, and has made the park unusable, which has led to a decrease in park access, and could lead to increases in illegal dumping and weeds at the site. Thus, site conditions must be addressed in a timely manner to ensure this park remains open to users in the surrounding disadvantaged community living in the Iron Triangle neighborhood.
10. **Resolution of more than one issue:** This project reduces the impacts (and expected increased impacts due to climate change) of localized flooding events through the installation of LID enhancements. LID stormwater projects such as bioswales, in addition to serving as flood management, will help to filter out toxic chemicals and heavy metals from the surrounding industrial environment. The tree planting aspects
11. **Leverage:** See the “Project Financing” section above.
13. **Innovation:** This project is innovative in that it uses green infrastructure solutions to mimic natural features will be specifically suited to local constraints, including soils, hydrology, budget, climate, drought, and limited maintenance. For example, trees will be selected for the greatest likelihood of success for their drought tolerance and hardiness.
14. **Readiness:** Final design and permitting is included as part of the project, with construction to start immediately after final design and permitting tasks are completed. The grantee is

ready to start work on final design and permitting as soon as the potential project is authorized by the Conservancy.

15. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** See “Project History” above.
16. **Cooperation:** The proposed project is a partnership between the City of Richmond and The Watershed Project. The City is the property owner of the public right-of-way in which the work will take place, and is in charge of design review, permitting, and environmental review. The project will also partner with, and outreach to, the surrounding community.
17. **Vulnerability from climate change impacts other than sea level rise:** Dense urban portions of Richmond are projected to experience a 4-4.5 °F temperature increase by 2040–2060. This will directly subject urban residents to increased heat stress. The surrounding neighborhood’s high-density dwelling units and critical lack of permeable surfaces and tree canopy coverage exacerbate the urban heat island effect, which will only worsen with the anticipated increases in temperature resulting from climate change. Higher temperatures and impacts on air quality can negatively affect public health. This is particularly significant to the proposed project site, as the neighborhood already suffers from higher-than-average pollution levels. Diesel particulate matter per square mile in Richmond is 40 times higher than the statewide average.<sup>2</sup> The project’s 11 trees will sequester a total of 2,839 pounds of carbon at maturity annually, as well as help to improve local air quality, and reduce urban heat island impacts.
18. **Minimization of greenhouse gas emissions:** The project will result in temporary construction impacts, including GHG emissions, caused by transporting the construction equipment, trees, and plants to the site. Since The Watershed Project plans to grow much of the vegetation in its own nursery (less than a mile from the site), those emissions will be minimal. Carbon sequestration will increase as these plants and trees mature. The planting of large native trees on the Greenway will help to sequester carbon and reduce heat island impacts, cooling adjacent homes and reducing energy consumption. In addition, the project will contribute to making the Richmond Greenway a safer and more pleasant path, increasing active transit and resulting in reduced Vehicle Miles Traveled and reduced GHG emissions. The Watershed Project is not seeking carbon credits for this project. In addition, the project’s 11 trees will sequester a total of 2,839 pounds of carbon at maturity annually.

#### **CEQA COMPLIANCE:**

On April 4, 2017, the City of Richmond adopted the *City of Richmond Urban Greening Master Plan Initial Study/Mitigated Negative*(Final IS/MND) and associated mitigation monitoring and reporting program, for urban greening projects throughout the City of Richmond, as detailed in the City of Richmond Urban Greening Master Plan. The Plan includes projects along the Richmond Greenway, as well as those within the proposed project area, the Dirt World bike park, along the Richmond Greenway Trail, and along the public right of way along 21<sup>st</sup> street.

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<sup>2</sup> Community Health and Wellness: City of Richmond General Plan Element 11, page 11.

The Final IS/MND evaluated the potential environmental impacts anticipated to result from construction and operation of the Urban Greening Master Plan (Plan), including implementation of recommended projects that were identified in the Plan. In addition to goals and policies, the Plan identified various projects to enhance the City's urban forest. Implementation projects included tree planting, renovation of existing City-owned facilities to incorporate green infrastructure (e.g. bioswales, permeable surface), installation of improvements along San Pablo Avenue, and daylighting of creeks and streams within the City. Although the proposed project was not explicitly identified in the Plan, the installation of green infrastructure within the Richmond Greenway, within which the project site is located, was included as part of the Plan and evaluated in the Final IS/MND. Thus, the proposed project is within the scope of the Final IS/MND. Further, as described in a memo from Shanna Guiler, Associate Environmental Planner with LSA Associates Inc., to Lina Velasco, City of Richmond, dated February 18, 2020 (LSA Letter), attached as Exhibit 6, all potential effects of the proposed project are evaluated in the Final IS/MND. In brief, the potentially significant effects of the proposed project are in the areas of air quality, cultural resources, and hazardous materials. All of the potentially significant effects will be mitigated to less than significant.

### **Air Quality**

The proposed project could have short-term, construction-related impacts to air quality. No long-term operational impacts were identified. Construction of the proposed project will utilize construction techniques intended to reduce air quality impacts. In addition, implementation of **Mitigation Measure AIR-1** will ensure that impacts related to air quality will be reduced to less than significant levels. This mitigation measure identifies specific management practices to reduce and other air pollutants, including watering of exposed surfaces and covering of dirt and sand during transport.

### **Cultural Resources**

The proposed project has little potential to affect unidentified archaeological resources or human remains. However, the proposed project has the potential to encounter unidentified cultural deposits during construction activities. This potential effect will be mitigated by implementation of **Mitigation Measures CULT-1 and CULT-3**. These mitigation measures identify all of the protective steps to be taken in the event that archaeological resources or human remains are uncovered during project construction.

### **Hazards and Hazardous Materials**

During construction, the proposed project could entail use of hazardous substances, such as pesticides and fuels, and could cause exposure of subsurface hazardous materials. These potential effects will be mitigated by compliance with applicable laws and regulations and by implementation of **Mitigation Measures HAZ-1, HAZ-2, and HAZ-3**.

Based upon the Final IS/MND and the LSA Letter, Conservancy staff concurs that there is no substantial evidence that the proposed project will have a significant effect on the environment. Staff therefore recommends that the Conservancy find that the project as designed and mitigated avoids, reduces or mitigates the possible significant environmental

effects to a level of less-than-significant and that there is no substantial evidence that the project will have a significant effect on the environment as that term is defined by 14 Cal. Code Regs. §15382. Upon Conservancy approval of the project, staff will file a Notice of Determination.