

What would the trail look like?

New trails in Lafayette as envisioned in the Trails Master Plan are all single-track dirt trails with the usable width generally being 3 feet. Desired trail easements width is a minimum of 20 feet wide depending on the topography. This allows some leeway in the exact location of the 3-foot track when the trail is actually built. The City has pictures and videos of our existing trails, and the trail volunteers and City staff are more than willing to provide a guided tour of an existing trail. An important objective to both trail users and property owners is keeping views of the residential structures hidden to the extent feasible.



Community Support

Lafayette is fortunate to have a community that supports and uses trails. A dedicated and well-informed group of citizens devote their time and resources to preserving and enhancing the City trails, and to developing new trail opportunities. The City's Trails Master Plan is the guiding document for new trails, although opportunities can arise that were not captured in that plan.

Revised April 2019

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Who will use the trail?

Your neighbors!

Who is responsible if someone is hurt on the trail?

Without an easement, the property owner may be liable for injuries on the trail. Granting a trail easement to the City may allow the property owner to reduce or eliminate their liability for such injuries.

Am I giving up my land to the City?

No, the easement just provides trail development and passage rights to the City.

Who maintains the trail?

In most cases the City maintains the trail. Maintenance responsibilities can be included in the easement document.

Will the trail bring law-breakers or vandals to my property?

Quite the opposite, trails often serve as a neighborhood watch program for adjacent properties.

People already walk across my property, why should I make it a trail easement?

The trail easement will preserve the trail for generations to come and can reduce property owners' liability and maintenance responsibilities for public use of the trail.

How do we start the trail easement process?

Contact the City of Lafayette Parks, Trails & Recreation Director through the City's Recreation Department:

Recreation@ci.lafayette.ca.us
(925) 284-2232

LAFAYETTE TRAILS AND EASEMENTS



A COMMUNITY BENEFIT FOR GENERATIONS TO COME



CITY OF LAFAYETTE
PARKS, TRAILS & RECREATION DEPT.

Unique Opportunity

Lafayette is surrounded by beautiful hills and open space. Trails provide a way for citizens to directly access and interact with this world, as well as provide transportation alternatives. Lafayette has seven City-managed trails plus a trail network in the Community Park — about 16 miles of trails. Additionally, Lafayette has the benefit of East Bay Regional Park District trails – the Lafayette-Moraga Regional Trail, and many other trails in our surrounding hills. The East Bay Municipal Utility District Lafayette Reservoir property has a paved trail around the water and an upper dirt trail around the reservoir rim. These trails are used and enjoyed extensively and provide a wonderful benefit to the Community, especially for those living close to trails.

The purpose of the City's trails is to link neighborhoods, to provide alternative routes to public facilities, and to connect to the regional and other Lamorinda trail networks. The City, through its Trails Master Plan process, has identified new trail opportunities that build on what already exists. However, to achieve this fully developed vision, trail access rights need to be obtained – in many cases on private properties. Some new trails can be added as part of a subdivision process as provided by State law, while others need trail easements on specific private parcels. These easements are obtained through discussions and agreements with the property owners and are formalized in a Trail Easement Agreement. The City policy is to negotiate the specific locations and conditions that apply to such easements. This brochure further explains the benefits of these easements and answers questions that property owners may have.

“In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks.”

-John Muir

Trail Benefits

1. Create recreational opportunities to walk and hike – singly or with a group.
2. Provide connections to nature and the wonderful outdoor ambiance of the back woods and hills that are an integral part of Lafayette.
3. Offer a safe way for the public, especially children, to connect with neighbors, parks, community center, schools, and other trails.
4. Reduce parking and traffic congestion as many may choose walking/biking over driving.

Benefits for the Property Owner of Providing a Trail Easement

1. The property owners' liability for people using a trail on their property can be reduced or eliminated
2. The City assumes responsibility for maintaining the trail.
3. The City regulates trail use as part of its municipal code – examples of these rules are daylight use only, no smoking, dogs on leash and droppings picked up, and no motorized vehicles.
4. Property tax benefits may be available to the property owner of land offered for public use and/or enjoyment by virtue of an easement.*
5. The proximity of a public trail is a benefit to the property and property value. Real estate ads often cite this benefit when there is trail access. Some use the term “trail neighborhood.”
6. Local trails are used by neighbors and provide another set of friendly eyes on the property.

*Check with your tax preparer



Easement Agreement

The Trail Easement Agreement, along with a legal description of the easement, is negotiated with the willing property owner and the City, and is recorded with the County Clerk. The agreement is needed so all parties clearly understand such trail issues as how it is to be built (including possible structures such as bridges that may be needed), maintenance, usage regulations, added landscaping, and other matters. The City can provide examples of Trail Easement Agreements that have been set up with other property owners. The Trail Easement Agreement is a partnership between the City and the landowner. The City is committed to keeping an open line of communication with the landowner through the process and long after a trail is constructed and opened to the public.

Ownership

By granting a trail easement to a trail group, land trust, municipality, authority or other charitable or governmental entity (the "holder" of the easement), landowners ("owners") may make their land available for a public trail for walking, running, bicycling or other recreational or transportation purposes without having to subdivide and while still maintaining underlying ownership of the land.

In Summation

Trails provide vibrancy and connections to the Community that are highly desired. Lafayette is extremely fortunate to have topography and open space within reach of our local trails for the enjoyment of it citizens. Expanding our local dirt trails through City acquisition of new easements on private property, will enhance these benefits for all.