

# Richmond Confidential



## Public invited to view proposed Greenway bridge that could become a Richmond tourist attraction

[Beki San Martin](#) on December 8, 2022

It's Bridge Week in Richmond and through Saturday, people can attend events that showcase the proposed Richmond Greenway Bridge over 23rd Street, a project that would close the Greenway trail's remaining gap, providing an uninterrupted 17-mile biking and walking path from Berkeley to Marin County.

The proposal grew out of the Richmond Greenway Gap Study, which was funded by a \$280,000 grant from the California Department of Transportation.

"It's going to blow everyone's minds. It's going to be really cool!" said Catherine Waller, an artist and West Contra Costa resident who attended Monday's Bridge Week kickoff at Armistice Brewing Co.



People review plans for the proposed Greenway Bridge. (Beki San Martin)

The weeklong series of events is hosted by Pogo Park, a Richmond-based organization that works to rebuild city parks. Pogo Park collaborated with the city and Civic Well, a nonprofit that helps local governments implement sustainability projects, to carry out the study.

According to Patrick Phelan, infrastructure administrator in the Richmond Public Works Department, the project started in 2021 to close the final gap in the Richmond Greenway that divides the east and west portions of the trail.

This is the first phase of the project. The next will be securing funding for construction, possibly from the Contra Costa Transportation Authority and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, among other entities. Toody Maher, Pogo Park's executive director, said the bridge is expected to cost between \$30 million and \$40 million to design and build.

The trail used to be railroad tracks, which were converted in the early 2000s to a Greenway. It is divided by Carlson Boulevard, railroad tracks, and BART tracks, forcing users to exit and travel over half a mile to get back on. Closing the gap will allow for uninterrupted travel from the East Bay, across the San Francisco Bay, to Marin County.



Toody Maher, executive director of Pogo Park, explains the Greenway bridge project during one of several Bridge Week events.

Phelan said there was a bridge over 23rd Street, but it was torn down in the 1980s because of an engineering error that mismeasured the bridge's clearances.

Maher calls the bridge's destruction "Richmond's original sin," because it disconnected North Richmond, the Iron Triangle, and South Richmond from the commerce that coalesced in the eastern portion of Richmond.

"By taking that bridge down, it completely separated the western part from the eastern part and all the economic and social advantages that go with it. So this is like the healing, in my view. This is the healing of the sin that should have never happened," Maher said.

With the bridge, people from the surrounding neighborhoods will be able to access the Greenway to reach a number of BART stations along the trail, connecting them to other Bay Area cities.

"What we're trying to also show is that this has regional significance. This is something that will allow you to get from Berkeley all the way to Marin without ever having to bike on the road," Phelan said.

Residents played a role in the design. They were invited to meet architect Donald McDonald to inform a vision for the bridge and provide essential community knowledge, such as where the best takeoff and landing spots for the bridge would be. McDonald listened and came back with concepts, Maher said. His final design was inspired by the official bird of Richmond, the osprey.

"They have fabulous bridges in Redding and fabulous bridges in London and fabulous bridges in Tokyo. People notice them and like them," Waller said. "And I'm very thrilled. Poor old, downtrodden Richmond is going to get this fabulous, exciting thing."

Phelan believes the bridge could be an attraction that people would come to Richmond to see.



The proposed Greenway bridge design would resemble the osprey, Richmond's city bird. (Beki San Martin)

Pogo Park spent 18 months getting public input on the project, holding meetings and going door to door, providing community members with information about the plan and inviting them to question-and-answer sessions that occurred throughout the year.

Community feedback from Bridge Week will be integrated into the Richmond Greenway Gap Study, which will be presented to the Richmond City Council in February.

Maher estimates that once the plan is adopted by City Council, it will take about three years to secure funding to build the bridge and another three years to design and construct it, meaning it could be built in about six years.

All are welcome to view the bridge plan and provide feedback from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. Friday at the Farmers Market, 24 Barrett Ave.; and from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday at the East Bay Center for Performing Arts.

"We want people to see this bridge, we want them to get excited. We want them to tell their friends and family, and tell their elected officials that this is important and we need to make this a priority," Phelan said.