

Community Pollinator Garden

- 54th and Shattuck
- Meeting Notes — April 19, 2025

Rob Selna, of nonprofit Sidewalk Gardens, opened the meeting of about 35 neighbors. He and Jenny Kauffman founded Sidewalk Trees & Gardens 10 years ago and last year led the effort that created a community garden on CalTrans land adjacent to Highway 24 and 43rd Street. They kicked off today's first meetup of North Oakland neighbors wanting to do the same on a CalTrans plot at 54th and Shattuck.

Brennan Cox, a landscape architect, presented a preliminary plan for a native plant garden on the site, whose northwest corner boasts seven large redwood trees. He said neighbors must meet to discuss their ideas for the plan so it may be modified and finalized soon. CalTrans would like a plan submitted by the end of May.

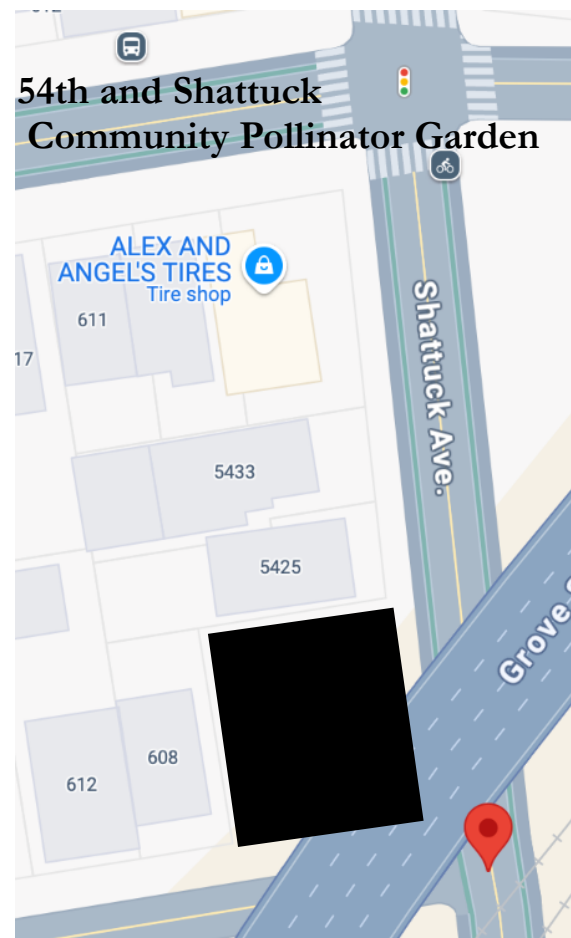
Once CalTrans approves the plan and issues a permit, neighbors can begin building the garden. That will take donations of money and materials, as well as organizing volunteer work crews and later, maintenance/trash pick-up crews.

Laura, volunteer fundraising lead, suggested \$40,000 might be needed to complete the project. She also said there are grants that might help, and specifically said it might be possible to land a \$20,000 MLK corridor beautification grant. Selna then suggested the 54th and Shattuck project might handle its finances under the nonprofit umbrella of Sidewalk Trees & Gardens' 501(c)3.

A massive Highway 24 support pillar stands in the southeast corner of the site. As part of the plan, a mural will be painted on the pillar. It will help announce to passersby that this is a neighborhood garden deserving their respect. Kauffman has a muralist in mind, but asked for help getting paint, as well as for a volunteer to be the muralist point person.

Jack Forder, a Dover Street neighbor and current Laney College horticulture student, will be the garden's volunteer construction lead. He acknowledged that this site, as well as the whole neighborhood, exists on unceded Ohlone land. He asked for help organizing and activating work crews.

He also went into more detail about the garden plan, for example, to use native plants, set log seating under the redwood trees and ideas for how to mark



Black square shows site of Community Pollinator Garden at 54th Street and Shattuck Avenue

the site's border, possibly with low hedges and boulders. Noah Katz offered help sourcing native plants. Forder also suggested that showing CalTrans a successful 54th and Shattuck garden might lead to accessing other nearby CalTrans plots in the future.

To maintain good communication it was suggested a project website be launched. Selna said it could be a page on the Sidewalk Trees & Gardens website. Kent Porter volunteered to work on a website.

More discussion of the plan included the idea of adding a climbing structure for kids. Also, another volunteer will be needed to coordinate meetings of task group leaders.

It was mentioned that Alex and Angel's Tires, a tire shop at 55th and Shattuck, often parks cars on the site. They must be notified of the garden plan and asked to stop parking there.

Water sources were discussed, including possibly harvesting rainwater from the roofs of adjacent buildings and exploring an existing water pipe on the site: Is the pipe live and can it be used for the project?

According to Selna, CalTrans won't allow planter boxes or food plants on the site, or any kind of solid fence. But boulders, pavers or low hedges could be used along the east and south sidewalks. He said he's happy to offer his experience dealing with CalTrans.

Others suggested developing contacts with nearby UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland and with Zac Unger, our District 1 councilmember, as well as with neighborhood businesses, such as the tire shop.

After the meetup, neighbors mingled, visited, exchanged names and got to know each other.

Volunteers Needed!

- **Garden Design Lead and Work Schedule Coordinator**
 - Work with Jack Forder, garden design lead, and with Rob Selna and Jenny Kauffman
- **Fundraising**
 - Work with Laura
- **Mural Lead**
 - Jenny currently leading, but ready to hand off to someone else.
- **Neighborhood Communications**
 - Help Vinny Kitirattagarn and Cathleen Li
- **Event Organizer**
 - Schedule meetings, take over from Vinny and Cathleen
- **CalTrans and External Vendor Communications**
 - Collaborate with Rob Selna and eventually take this on
- **Task Group Meeting Coordinator**
 - Coordinate meetings of task group leaders