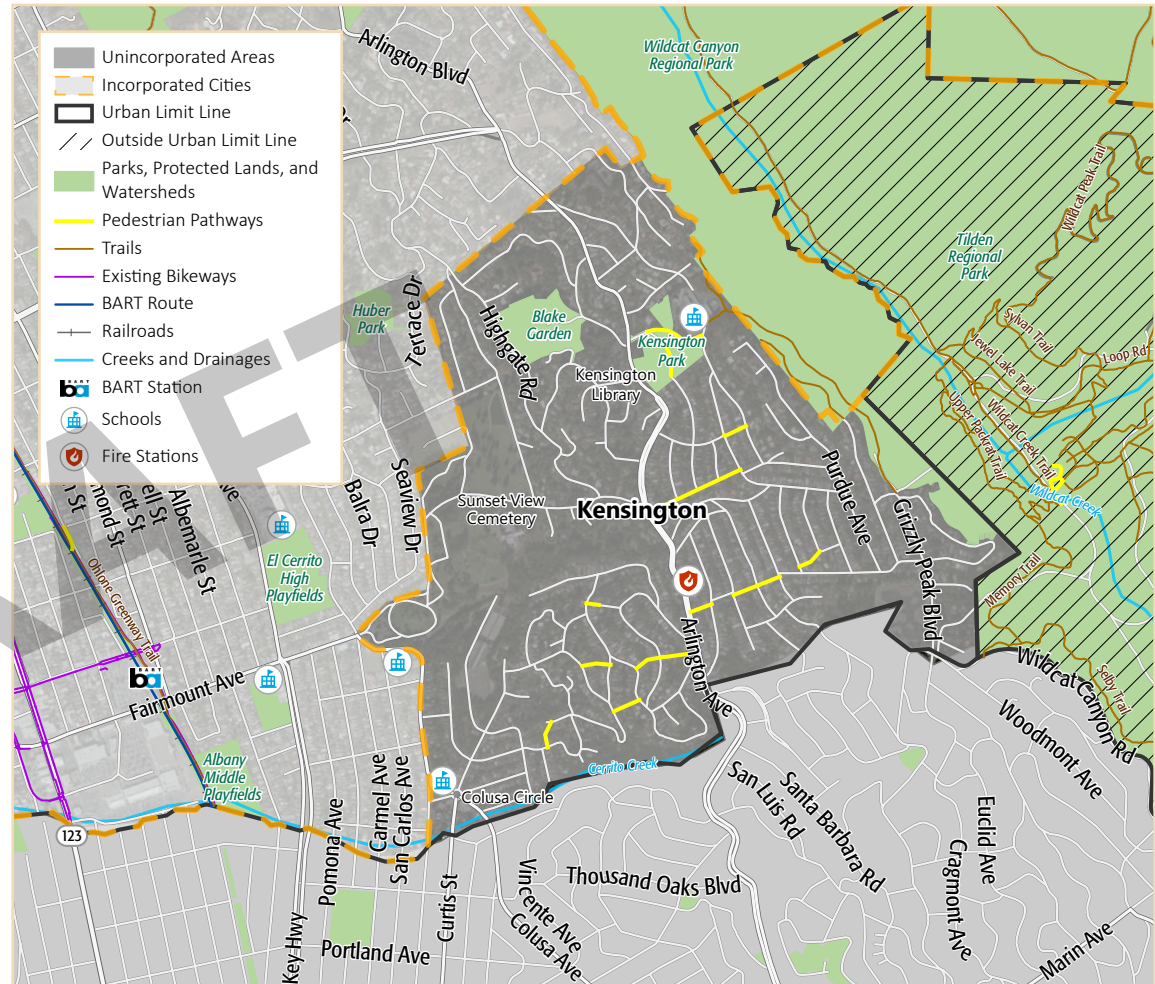


KENSINGTON | CONTEXT

1

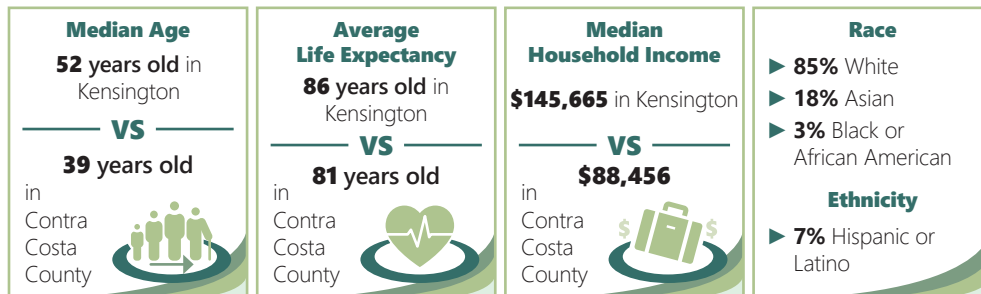
As a charming residential community situated near the University of California, Kensington has been a desirable neighborhood for academics, students, urban professionals, and families for decades. Kensington residents enjoy the community's panoramic views, mature trees, hillsides, walkable scale, and easy access to transit and regional parks. Although there is very limited potential for growth, many of the homes date from the 1930s and 40s and there is significant construction activity to upgrade and expand those homes.

Kensington is oriented along Arlington Avenue ("the Arlington"), a winding thoroughfare that connects to Berkeley on the south and El Cerrito on the north. There is a small commercial district located on the Arlington just north of the Berkeley city limit. A second commercial district is located on Colusa Circle in the lower part of Kensington, near the border with El Cerrito. Although almost all of the homes in Kensington are single family, it is relatively dense. Features that are important to the community include Kensington Park, Sunset View Cemetery, the University's Blake Garden, the Kensington Library, Kensington Elementary School, and public pedestrian paths. Unlike most unincorporated communities, Kensington has jurisdiction over many of its local services, including police, fire, parks, and waste collection. Many of the planning and development issues in Kensington relate to view preservation, design compatibility and scale, parking, hillside protection, ingress/egress, and emergency access.



Source: Contra Costa County, 2018; PlaceWorks, 2020.

WHO LIVES IN KENSINGTON?



The information on this page presents a summary of hazards and vulnerabilities in Kensington based on the Contra Costa County Vulnerability Assessment; please see the [online Vulnerability Assessment](#) for a full description of these hazards and vulnerabilities.

Hazards

-  Drought
-  Extreme Heat
-  Human Health Hazards
-  Landslides
-  Seismic Hazards
-  Severe Weather
-  Wildfire

Major Vulnerabilities

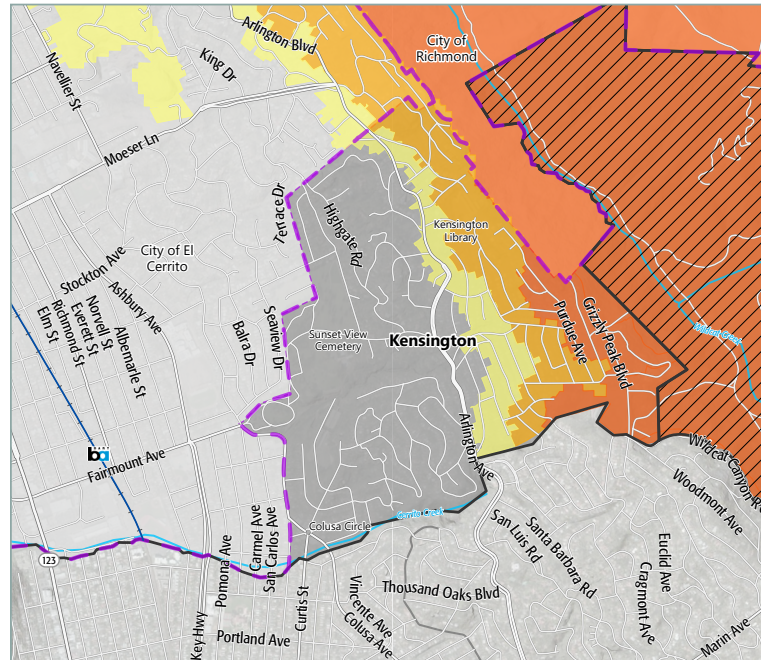
Seniors, especially seniors living alone, are vulnerable to extreme heat, human health hazards, and wildfire due to limited mobility.

The homes of cost-burdened households and renters are vulnerable to landslides, wildfire, seismic hazards, and severe weather.

Sunset View Cemetery, Tilden Regional Park, Kensington Park, and general outdoor recreation are vulnerable to drought, landslides, severe weather and wildfire.

The Kensington Community Center, Kensington Library, and commercial centers along Colusa Avenue and Arlington Avenue are vulnerable to damage from landslides, seismic hazards, severe weather, and wildfire.

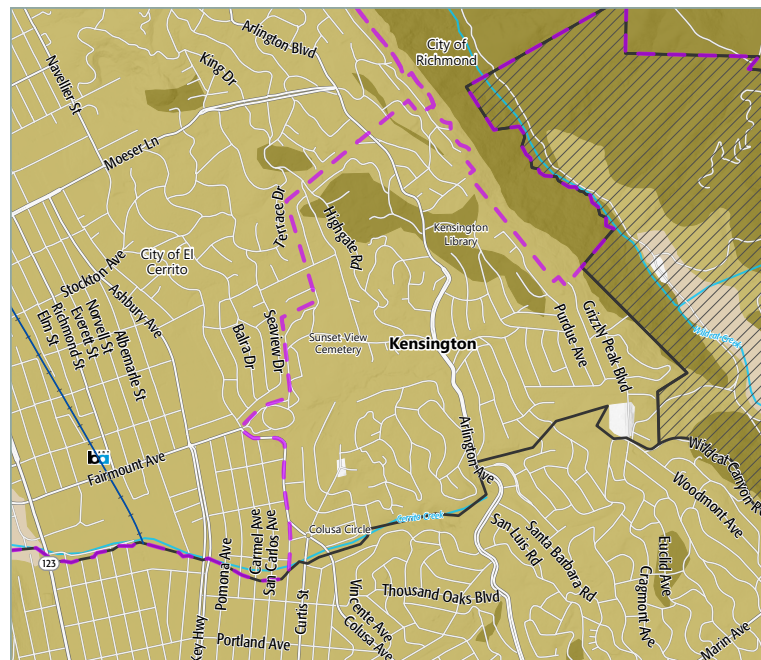
Public health and safety response, water and wastewater infrastructure, and public transit access are vulnerable to obstruction and delay from landslides, severe weather, and wildfire.



WILDFIRE HAZARD SEVERITY ZONES

- Very High
- High
- Moderate
- Unincorporated Areas
- Incorporated Cities
- Urban Limit Line
- Outside Urban Limit Line
- BART Route
- Railroads
- Creeks and Drainages
- BART Station

Source: CalFire, 2018; Contra Costa County, 2018; PlaceWorks, 2020.



LANDSLIDES

- Mapped landslides
- Few large mapped landslides, but contains scattered small landslides and questionably-identified larger landslides
- Areas of gentle slope at low elevation that have little or no potential for landslides
- Incorporated Cities
- Urban Limit Line
- Outside Urban Limit Line
- BART Route
- Railroads
- Creeks and Drainages
- BART Station



Source: US Geological Survey, 2018; Contra Costa County, 2018; PlaceWorks, 2020.

PLANNED LAND USE

Land use designations for Kensington are shown on the Land Use Map and defined in the Land Use Element. Kensington is planned primarily for single-family residential use, with small pockets of mixed use, commercial and office uses, public/institutional sites, and abundant parks and recreation land.

Kensington contains two small commercial areas that serve as the primary centers of local business for Kensington residents. They are located on the Arlington, just north of the Berkeley city limit, and on Colusa Circle, in the lower part of Kensington near the border with El Cerrito. Colusa Circle is designated to encourage mixed-use development on vacant and underutilized parcels. The commercial area along Arlington is intended to maintain the community-serving uses already in place.

Kensington's proximity to Tilden and Wildcat Canyon Regional Parks provides premier outdoor recreational opportunities for residents. As such, there are wide swaths of land designated for open space and park uses. Kensington also includes multiple areas designated for public use, including community facilities such as the Kensington Public Safety Building, the University of California's Blake Garden, the Kensington Library, and Kensington Elementary School.



Existing commercial on Arlington Boulevard in Kensington.



Colusa Circle in the commercial area.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following guiding principles articulate the values, priorities, and aspirations for the future shared by Kensington community members:

1. Kensington residents live in close proximity to their neighbors and care about their community. The friendly, safe, quiet, and small community feel should be preserved.
2. Kensington's panoramic views of San Francisco Bay, bridges and cities, and natural landscapes are a defining characteristic that should be preserved.
3. Kensington residents enjoy easy access to regional parks, trails, and open spaces. Bicycle and pedestrian access to these amenities should be enhanced.
4. To maintain a safe and tight-knit community, enhancements to the existing public services and facilities, such as the Kensington Fire Protection District and Police Department facility, Kensington Library and Community Center, the pedestrian path network, and local schools, should be supported.
5. Because Kensington is proximate to Wildcat Canyon and Tilden Regional Parks and the Hayward Fault, it is exposed to potentially severe wildfires and earthquakes. The community should be protected from these hazards through proper planning, mitigation, and emergency preparedness and response.
6. A variety of housing types, including small multi-family developments, duplexes, and accessory dwelling units (ADUs), should be encouraged within Kensington to diversify the housing stock and better serve residents of all ages and abilities.
7. New housing should be compatible with Kensington's low- to medium-density character and be designed to minimize negative impacts on roads, emergency response capacity, and infrastructure.



Existing park and open space in Kensington.



Existing single-family home in Kensington.

POLICIES

1. The maximum allowed density and intensity of development in the Mixed Use designation is X units per net acre and Y floor area ratio (FAR).
2. When reviewing new development proposals, prioritize the need for mitigation of wildfire and earthquake exposure.
3. Ensure new development provides reasonable protection for existing residences with regard to views, design compatibility (including building mass, height, and mechanical devices), adequate parking, privacy, and access to sunlight. (3-211, 3-213, 3-214)
4. When reviewing new development proposals, ensure views of scenic natural features (e.g., San Francisco Bay, mountains) and the developed environment (e.g., bridges, San Francisco skyline) are substantially preserved. (3-212)
5. Improve pedestrian and roadway infrastructure in a way that balances the needs of users with the desire to maintain Kensington's character.
6. Prioritize review of projects that incorporate community-serving medical facilities and services.
7. Improve public safety facilities and emergency medical services to meet community needs.
8. Ensure that new construction and home renovation activities minimize impacts on neighbors and local roads, which may be compounded by Kensington's small lots and narrow, winding roadways.
9. Accommodate new accessory dwelling units while minimizing their potential effects on street parking and emergency vehicle access.

ACTIONS

1. Facilitate the development of a comprehensive emergency plan with public safety and health agencies, including designated evacuation routes in Kensington.
2. Improve pedestrian safety and roadway infrastructure with designated paths, ongoing maintenance, illuminated crossings, stop signs, traffic calming measures, on-street parking spaces along Arlington Avenue and Colusa Circle, and ADA facilities.
3. Complete sidewalk gaps throughout Kensington, especially near schools and transit stops.
4. Coordinate with PG&E to underground utilities to reduce fire hazards and improve community safety and appearance.
5. Explore financial assistance programs to help Kensington residents maintain and upgrade their homes and implement seismic safety improvements.
6. Review the view protection ordinance to ensure that it adequately addresses issues such as view blockage by trees and vegetation.
7. Develop programs to maintain and improve Kensington's public pedestrian path system.
8. Support the replacement or updating of police and fire facilities with new or modernized facilities that meet Kensington's long-term needs.