



## STAFF REPORT

### Parks and Recreation Commission

Meeting Date: 10/11/2017

Staff Report Number: 17-022-PRC

Study Session: Bedwell Bayfront Park Master Plan Draft Review

### Recommendation

City staff recommend that the Parks and Recreation Commission receive and provide feedback on the draft park master plan for Bedwell Bayfront Park.

### Policy Issues

The Project is consistent with City policies and 2017 Menlo Park City Council Work Plan item No. 13 – Develop a Bedwell Bayfront Park (BBP) operations and maintenance plan to enhance use, improve access and determine sustainable funding sources for ongoing maintenance.

### Background

BBP is the City's largest park and the City's only open space on the San Francisco Bay. Consisting of 160 acres, the Park's trails and hills provide great views of the Don Edwards Wildlife Refuge and South Bay. Its hilly terrain now serves as a landmark high point along the edge of the Bay.

Originally a sanitary landfill, construction of BBP on the site began in 1982 and was completed in 1995. Currently, the park is designed as a passive open space with minimal improvements, including bike/pedestrian trails and restrooms. Users enjoy "passive-recreation" through activities that include hiking, running, bicycling, dog walking, bird watching, kite flying and photography.

The park has seen a significant increase in usage over the years as the recreational interests and needs of users and area residents have changed. Through various public forums the City has learned that there is a desire for docent-led educational programs and tours, as well as spaces for interpretive displays and exhibits throughout the park. Other improvements requested by the community include access and connectivity to the Bay for nonmotorized small boats such as canoes, kayaks or sailboards similar to the floating dock at the Palo Alto Baylands Nature Preserve. In response to these requests, the Council included an item in their 2016 and 2017 work plans (No.17 and No. 13 respectively) to develop a park operations and maintenance plan to enhance use, improve access and determine sustainable funding sources for ongoing maintenance.

Staff issued the BBP Master Plan Request for Proposals (RFP) on November 4, 2016. The scope of work presented in the RFP included developing a Master Plan providing a long-term vision and general development guide for the park and its facilities, including how to protect resources, improve amenities to enhance the park user experience, manage visitor use, plan for future park enhancements and develop a financing plan to pay for maintenance and the capital cost of the park. The Master Plan was required to recommend improvements for the next 25 years. After a competitive process, Callander Associates Landscape Architecture was selected as the most qualified consultant based on their expertise in similar projects and their understanding of and approach to the project scope.

In conjunction with the BBP Master Plan RFP, staff issued a Request for Quotes to APTIM (formerly CB&I) for the development of the BBP Master Plan – Technical Evaluation. The primary objective of the Technical Evaluation was to ensure that the proposed improvements developed in the Master Plan are consistent with the operation and maintenance needs of the former landfill. APTIM and Callander Associates Landscape Architecture were required to collaborate on the development of the Master Plan. In addition, APTIM was tasked with identifying the regulatory and industry standard practices for similar park operations in former landfills; evaluating the park’s potable water and fire protection systems; and developing a feasibility study for the beneficial reuse of the landfill gas that is currently flared. The findings of the Technical Evaluation will be incorporated in the BBP Master Plan.

At their meeting on February 7, 2017, Council approved the scope of work and authorized the City Manager to enter into agreements with Callander Associates Landscape Architecture for the development of the BBP Master Plan and with APTIM for the technical evaluation of the plan. The staff report that includes the project scope of work is included as Attachment A.

### Analysis

Work began on the Master Plan with the creation of the BBP Master Plan Community Outreach Plan that was presented to Council at their meeting February 28, 2017. The extensive community engagement plan was based on the City’s Community Engagement Model and includes:

- Project review by the Parks and Recreation Commission and City Council
- Stakeholder coordination
- Interactive workshops and community meetings
- Community newsletter
- On-site posters
- Event promotional booths
- Project website
- Formation of an oversight and outreach committee

### Outreach Effort

The oversight and outreach group consisting of City staff, Parks and Recreation and Environmental Quality Commissioners, a Friends of Bedwell Bayfront Park representative, a community member at-large from Belle Haven, a local environmental conservation group representative and a local business representative provided feedback from different segments of the community and were responsible for getting the word out to their respective groups. In addition, the project team worked with agencies that have a direct impact on the park including the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project, SAFER Bay, Don Edwards Wildlife Refuge, West Bay Sanitary District and a host of other agencies to address interjurisdictional issues and concerns regarding proposed park improvements. Through the following events and meetings, the project team gathered qualitative data supporting the design direction for the preferred master plan:

Meeting	Date	Purpose
Kick-off Meeting	2/8/17	Kick-off the project and review outreach and strategy
Oversight Group Meeting # 1	3/23/17	Review project goals and open house format materials
Open House # 1	4/8/17	Solicit community input on what users would like to see for BBP
Oversight Group Meeting # 2	6/8/17	Review open house # 1 results and design alternatives

Open House # 2	6/17/17	Solicit community input on the design alternatives
Interagency Meeting	7/12/17	Solicit input on the design alternatives
Open House # 3	8/10/17	Solicit input from members of the Belle Haven neighborhood
Oversight Group Meeting # 3	9/13/17	Review open house # 2 and # 3 results and the draft park plan
Parks and Recreation Commission	10/11/17	Study session on the draft park plan seeking community and commission input
Parks and Recreation Commission	10/25/17	Recommendation on the draft park plan
City Council Meeting	11/14/17	Solicit input and approval of park master plan

Public participation was a priority for the project and three (3) public outreach events have been hosted. Open House # 1 was held on April 8, 2017 at the Senior Center; Open House # 2 was held on June 17, 2017 at Bedwell Bayfront Park; and Open House # 3 was held August 11, 2017 again at the Senior Center with focused marketing geared to the Spanish speaking population in Belle Haven. The community was notified about these input opportunities through an extensive list of activities, including mailers, email blasts, intercept events at the park and throughout the City and indirect methods including on- and off-site posters, newsletter ads, and City webpage updates. Materials included information in both English and Spanish.

Notification Method	Open House # 1	Open House # 2	Open House # 3	PRC/Public Mtg # 4
Update City webpage	✓	✓	✓	✓
Update Facebook page	✓	✓	✓	✓
E-mail blast to stakeholders	✓	✓	✓	✓
E-mail blast to NextDoor	✓	✓		✓
Ad/notice in Belle Haven newsletter*	✓	✓		✓
Direct utility billing*	✓			
On-site marquee / electronic board	✓	✓		✓
On-line survey for Open House*	✓	✓	✓	
E-mail blast to prior attendees		✓	✓	✓
Outreach at community events	✓	✓	✓	
Project outreach on-site	✓	✓		
On-site posters*	✓	✓		✓
Posters at City facilities*	✓	✓	✓	
On-site brochures*	✓	✓		✓
Direct postcard mailing*			✓	

Event Spanish translator\*

✓

✓

✓

\*Resources available in Spanish

### **Community Meetings and Feedback**

Open Houses have been a primary input method. To bolster the input received, an on-line survey was created for the first two Open Houses to allow for input by a wider audience.

#### Open House # 1

Open House #1 was Saturday April 8, 2017 at the Senior Center in Belle Haven from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. It was a very rainy day, but 50 people attended and 39 people completed a response packet. The packet was the primary collection tool used to gather feedback at this event. The packet asked participants to review materials and respond to questions identifying preferred activities and amenities for the park. A survey based on the open house materials was posted on-line and received 70 responses.

At the event participants were asked to define “passive recreation”. Bedwell Bayfront Park was founded as a passive recreation park, but the definition of this meaning ranges in interpretation. The public was asked to respond to a grid of images describing passive recreation from less active to more active. People were also asked to respond to park amenities images indicating preferred amenities to include in the master plan.

A slightly larger number of participants supported a “more active” park (ie. the addition of activities such as fitness equipment) than a “less active” park. Participants also supported preserving the park’s natural qualities and keeping a majority of the trails unpaved. Input gathered at Open House # 1, both from the meeting and through the online survey, was utilized to generate concept alternatives. Results from Open House # 1 were summarized and made available at Open House # 2. The input results from Open House # 1 and the first on-line survey are included as Attachment B.

#### Open House # 2

Open House # 2 took place on Saturday, June 17, 2017 at Bedwell Bayfront Park from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. In the midst of a heat wave 60 people attended and 56 completed response packets. Participants were asked to review the materials and respond to questions to help identify preferences between two concept plan alternatives.

Plan alternatives varied in design emphasis, amenities, types of uses, and materials used. Participants were asked to select a preferred plan and provide input on features they liked, disliked, or would like to change. This allowed participants to customize the plan by providing comments on park features and describing what they would change about the design, if anything. A third option, or a “Do Nothing” option, was not provided because the design team wanted the public to respond to specific concepts and describe why certain features were desired or not desired, in order to have enough qualitative data to develop a preferred plan. Additionally, a “Do Nothing” approach would not address Council’s basic project goals of addressing existing access and infrastructure deficiencies and the future pressures of development in the Bayfront area.

#### Open House # 3

Open House # 3 was held on Thursday, August 10, 2017 in response to the low participation of Spanish-speaking participants at prior events. A significant percentage of park users speak Spanish and live in the Belle Haven neighborhood, less than 2 miles from the park. The same content from Open House # 2 was utilized for Open House # 3 but materials were translated and two Spanish interpreters participated. Twenty eight people attended the evening meeting, and 19 packets were turned in. The on-line survey, which spanned Open Houses # 2 and # 3, yielded 151 responses.

The community input received indicated a preference for Plan A (42%) over Plan B (32%). 27% of respondents elected not to select a preferred plan, indicating a potential desire for the “Do Nothing” option. A majority of participants (more than 50%) were in favor of preserving existing uses (i.e. walking, jogging, kite flying, biking on paved paths, orienteering, geocaching, and The Great Spirit Path artwork) and providing wheelchair accessible paths and summits. A majority of respondents also supported the addition of amenities such as picnic tables and seating, educational support facilities such as habitat restoration and interpretive signage, and new uses such as nature play and a boat launch. Respondents were split in their support of a fitness course, amphitheater, model gliders, off-leash dog park, and ranger’s office building. The input results from Open House # 2, Open House # 3, and the second on-line survey are included as Attachment C.

### ***Draft Park Master Plan***

The draft master plan ensures a balance between public access, environmental sustainability and stakeholder input. The plan accommodates amenities and activities that also fit the park’s natural and passive recreation aesthetic and includes features that address four main goals:

- Accessibility improvements
- Enhanced educational opportunities
- Environmental protection considerations
- Passive recreation enhancements

*Accessibility Improvements:* Accessibility improvements provide an inclusive trail system for people of all abilities to experience the park and include widening, (re)paving, and (re)grading pathways to meet the American with Disabilities Act, providing wheelchair access to two of the seven summits, and introducing a treated trail providing the natural look of a dirt trail while meeting ADA standards.

*Enhanced Educational Opportunities:* Bedwell Bayfront Park is a unique open space because it appears, at first glance, to be a natural environment yet it is built on a capped landfill in a dense urban area. This aspect of the park will be described and celebrated through a series of interpretive signs that tell the story of the landfill, provide explanations about methane capture, and explain the purpose of the flare visible from a portion of the park. Other interpretive signs will discuss the special environmental features of the park such as threatened bird species nesting in the adjacent refuge and how water levels fluctuate in the tidal ponds.

*Environmental Protection Considerations:* While the park is man-made and came to exist after the closure of the landfill, people often view the park as an environmental gem in the region. The plant and animal species are a large attraction for visitors and their protection must be balanced against the need to provide public access and enjoyment. Habitat restoration was well supported by the community and will consist of planting upland species along Flood Slough. Although the input supported keeping the undesignated shoulder parking along the entrance road, the Plan eliminates this parking and restores it with native planting due to the erosion and storm water pollution it causes.

*Passive Recreation Enhancements:* The Plan’s time horizon of 25 years requires that it address the current population growth and anticipate the future development impacts in the area. The park plan, therefore, continues to support and enhance the variety of existing uses while accommodating future growth by including community-supported amenities and uses:

- Park ranger
- New restroom
- Trees to screen sewage facility
- Picnic tables, seating, bike racks, and trash receptacles

- Non-motorized small boat launch
- Nature play
- Ranger's office building (also for use by volunteers and docents)
- Fitness course

### **Additional Items for Consideration**

The community input results showed mixed support for amphitheater/group seating, an off-leash dog park, and model glider area, so these items were not included in the Draft Park Master Plan. Reasons for considering these elements are outlined below:

*An amphitheater/group seating area was proposed to support the park as a place for learning about nature and for students to engage with the natural world. "Amphitheater" is perhaps a misnomer and a better description would be "outdoor classroom". The seating would provide a place for docent-type presentations, for birder groups to stage, and for one to two classroom sized groups of students to gather.*

*An off-leash dog park was proposed to address the existing issue of park users letting their dogs run off-leash through the park. Concern has been expressed by the adjacent Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge that off-leash dogs entering the marsh environment can endanger wildlife. An on-site off-leash dog park providing dedicated space for dog owners to exercise their dogs, coupled with enforcement from a park ranger to prohibit off-leash dogs elsewhere in the park, could help reduce the potential for dog/wildlife conflicts. The dog park, if provided, would be one acre in size and have separate enclosed spaces for small and large dogs. It would supplement the two other dog parks in Menlo Park at Willow Oaks Park and Nealon Park.*

*A model glider area was proposed because model glider hobbyists have been flying at the park almost since it opened, and then was stopped in August 2016 with the approval of a City Ordinance banning public use of unmanned aircraft systems at parks. There are relatively few other open spaces available to glider hobbyists. If glider use is allowed at Bedwell Bayfront Park, it should be restricted to hand-launched gliders coupled with enforcement from a park ranger to prevent use of drones and other non-approved types of gliders, and enforce other use restrictions. An Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) assessment is included as Attachment D.*

The draft park master plan map and image boards are provided for reference and are included as Attachment E.

Following a presentation from City staff and the project consultant, Callander Associates, the Parks and Recreation Commission will be asked to provide general feedback on the draft park master plan for Bedwell Bayfront Park. The following questions may help guide the Commission's discussion:

1. Does the draft park plan reflect the community input? What changes should be made to reflect the community input?
2. There was varying support for three components including an amphitheater/group seating, off-leash dog park, and model glider area which are not included in the preferred plan. Is there sufficient support and justification to include any of these components in the preferred plan?
3. Does the Commission have any questions or need additional information in order to approve a recommendation to the City Council at their October 25, 2017 meeting?

### **Impact on City Resources**

City staff is working with Callander Associates to determine overall project costs which include addressing

current deferred maintenance, costs for new activities and enhancements, sea level rise and 100 year flood event, and needed landfill improvements. Project costs will be phased in over a period of 15 years for a park plan life of 25 years. This information will be presented at the Commission's October 25, 2017 meeting.

### **Environmental Review**

The project is categorically exempt under Class 6 of the current State of California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines, which allows for information collection, research and resource evaluation activities as part of a study leading to an action which a public agency has not yet approved, adopted or funded. The results of the project will identify environmental reviews and studies required to advance the project.

### **Public Notice**

Public Notification was achieved by posting the agenda, with the agenda items being listed, at least 72 hours prior to the meeting.

### **Attachments**

- A. Council Staff Report February 7, 2017
- B. Open House No. 1 and Survey Results
- C. Open House No. 2-3 and Survey Results
- D. UAS Assessment
- E. Draft Park Plan Materials

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