

## Palo Alto Landfill Conversion to Parkland

### Executive Summary

Starting in 2010, the City fast-tracked the conversion of the Palo Alto Landfill to parkland, augmenting the original Byxbee Park Hills with additional hiking trails and spectacular views of the Palo Alto Baylands and foothills. The City closed the landfill to incoming waste in July 2011. By late 2011, the City had been repairing subsided areas and brought them back to final required elevations. Over 43 new acres of parkland were opened, more than doubling the acreage of the original Byxbee Park Hills. The City's consultant designed the remaining 51 acres of the landfill with a new type of environmentally friendly earthen cap known as an evapo-transpirative cap. The City obtained regulatory approval of the earthen cap and began construction on the final 51 acres in 2014. Heavy rains slowed construction in December 2014, with over half of the last 51 acres capped. The remaining area are scheduled to be capped by late 2015 and opened to the public in early 2016. Palo Alto will then have the entire 126 acre park for hiking, running, biking, bird watching and relaxing.



### History

The Palo Alto Landfill, also known as Bxybee Park Hills, is located in the eastern edge of the Palo Alto Baylands and is currently being converted into pastoral parkland. Landfilling in the Palo Alto Baylands started in the 1930's after the City's trash incinerator at Newell Road and Embarcadero burned down. During this time period, city engineer John Fletcher Byxbee considered designs for the development of the baylands.

In October 1978, Palo Alto City Council approved and adopted a Palo Alto Baylands Master Plan and Environmental Impact Report. The principal element of the Master Plan was to convert the existing landfill into a pastoral park. Although some of the original elements of the Master Plan have changed, the fundamental goals of utilizing the baylands for recreation and conservation remain.

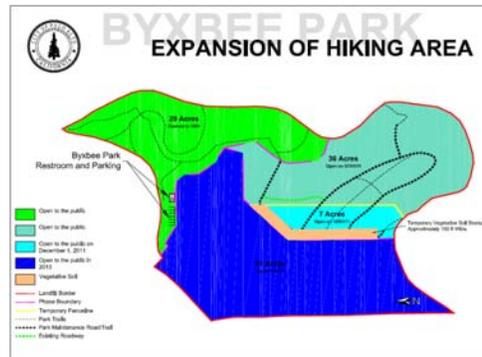
### Fast Fill Plan

In 2010, the Palo Alto landfill only received waste from "self-haulers" – not from the municipal garbage trucks that served residents and businesses. Due to the decreasing amount of incoming waste because of recycling efforts and limited waste from self-haul, the City projected the Palo Alto Landfill to continue filling until 2014 or beyond before it could be filled to the elevations mandated by the State-approved Closure Plan. City staff developed a "fast fill" plan in response to the desire to reduce landfill operating costs and to quickly convert the landfill to public parkland. This "fast fill" plan redirected all of the City's commercial and residential garbage waste from the Sunnyvale Materials Recovery and Transfer (SMaRT) Station to the Palo Alto Landfill until the final permitted elevation grades were met. The landfill was quickly filled to capacity and the gates closed in July of 2011.



## Previously capped areas

During this “fast fill” period of the remaining portion of the landfill, the City prepared the other previously closed areas into parkland. By 2011, only 29 acres of the 126 acre landfill had been converted to parkland and opened to the public. In late 2011 an additional 43 acres of parkland was regraded and opened to the public, more than doubling the open acreage. The City constructed over 2.5 miles of compacted base rock trails and improved drainage features to minimize erosion and safely direct stormwater to nearby receiving waters.



## Improved Cap Design for Final Phase (Phase IIC)

Prior to 2014, the closure plan design was to install a plastic “geosynthetic” cap over the final waste area (known as Phase IIC). In 2013, City Staff directed the City’s consultant to design an earthen evapo-transpirative cap and request approval from the applicable regulatory agencies. Formal approval of an enhanced Closure Plan was received in January 2014.. Since then, the City has imported, placed and compacted over 200,000 cubic yards of cap soil, completing the cap over 29 acres. Another 140,000 cubic yards is still needed to complete the remaining 22 acres, expected in 2015. The City submitted a partial closure certification report to the State in January 2015 to open most of the 29 acres to parkland to the public in early 2015. The remaining 22 acres is expected to be opened to the public in early 2016.

## Interim Byxbee Park Hills Plan

In 2014, the City hired a consultant to develop an interim park plan for Byxbee Park Hills to plan for amenities such as signage, benches, enhanced trails and vegetation islands that would address vegetation and habitat concerns. The concepts were presented to the Parks and Recreation Commission and the Architectural Review Board (ARB). A park improvement ordinance is expected to be approved in early 2015 and the improvements constructed later in Fiscal Year 2015-2016.

