TO:     HONORABLE CITY COUNCIL
FROM:   CITY MANAGER
        DEPARTMENT: PUBLIC WORKS
DATE:   NOVEMBER 8, 2004
CMR:417:04

SUBJECT: APPROVAL AND ADOPTION OF A PARK IMPROVEMENT ORDINANCE ASSOCIATED WITH THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE LUCY EVANS BAYLANDS NATURE INTERPRETIVE CENTER PARKING LOT IN BYXBBEE PARK AND CITY-OWNED BAYLANDS

RECOMMENDATION
Staff recommends that Council approve and adopt the attached Park Improvement Ordinance for approving and adopting plans for parking lot improvements in the Lucy Evans Baylands Nature Interpretive Center parking lot in Byxbee Park (Attachment A).

BACKGROUND
Palo Alto Municipal Code 22.08.005 requires that, prior to approving or commencing “any substantial building, construction, reconstruction or development” in any dedicated parkland, the City Council approve and adopt by ordinance a plan (Attachment B) showing the improvements. The plan must show, “as applicable, the nature, function, size, extent and general appearance of the proposed project.”

DISCUSSION
The existing parking lot adjacent to the Baylands Nature Interpretive Center (Attachment A) has settled since it was constructed in 1967, and water pools along the entire length of the center of the parking lot. Run-off flows onto a decomposed granite pedestrian path along the edge of the parking lot and then directly into the marsh. The proposed project would demolish the surface of the existing parking lot, add sufficient base rock to slope the new surface of the parking lot towards the south, repave the lot in the same size and with the same material (asphalt), and install a new valley gutter on the south side of the parking lot to collect run-off water and divert it through new bio-swales (areas planted with plants that naturally filter contaminated run-off water). The run-off water would pass through bio-swale areas on each side of the parking lot before flowing into the lagoon through a new 6” drain pipe running underneath the adjacent footpath. The number of parking spaces will be reduced from 44 to 43 in order to incorporate landscaped planting islands. The design includes two accessible parking spaces closest to the Nature Center. Staff is planning to construct this project during the spring of 2005.
RESOURCE IMPACT
The improvement of the Lucy Evans Baylands Nature Interpretive Center parking lot has been funded by Capital Improvement Project 10003 – Baylands Parking Improvements. Funding in the amount of $140,000 was approved in the FY 2003-04 CIP budget for the Interpretive Center parking lot. This funding has been carried over to the current fiscal year.

PROJECT REVIEW
The Evans parking lot resurfacing project was initially budgeted in the Capital Improvement Program for FY 2003-2004. These projects have been reviewed by the following boards and commissions:

Park and Recreation Commission
At its January 28, 2003, regular meeting, the Parks and Recreation Commission considered the proposed Park Improvement Ordinance for consistency with park uses for recreation and conservation. The Commission received comments from the public on the proposed improvements and asked staff to respond. The Commission voted unanimously to: “Recommend to the City Council that a Park Improvement Ordinance should be approved for these project plans in that they enhance the recreational value of Byxbee Park and City-owned Baylands. Further, the City Council should encourage staff to keep improvements as natural as possible.” A second motion was made and approved unanimously: “We encourage staff to consider the goal of preserving the natural setting of the Baylands and to aim for zero-runoff through the use of bio-swales and through the choice of materials.” Refer to Attachment C for the meeting minutes.

Architectural Review Board
At its July 1, 2004, regular meeting, the Architectural Review Board reviewed the Evans Nature Center parking lot project. The Board requested modifications to the plans to add landscaping planters with each row of parking. On August 19, 2004, the revised plans were returned to the Board and approved by consent.

This project has been coordinated between the Utilities Department, the Public Works Department and the Planning and Community Environment’s Transportation Division.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS
Improvement and maintenance of City facilities and parking lots furthers Policy N-1 of the Comprehensive Plan by managing open space areas in a manner that meets habitat protection goals, public safety concerns, and low impact recreation needs. These improvements also further Policy C-19 of the Comprehensive Plan by providing better access to persons with disabilities at public facilities.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW
The replacement or reconstruction of existing facilities with no change in location or capacity is exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)
pursuant to Section 15302 of the CEQA Guidelines (replacement or reconstruction of existing facilities) and Section 15311 (accessory structures). Accordingly, this project is exempt from CEQA review.

PREPARED BY:_____________________________________________
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DEPARTMENT HEAD:________________________________________
GLENN S. ROBERTS
Director of Public Works

CITY MANAGER APPROVAL:_________________________________
EMILY HARRISON
Assistant City Manager

ATTACHMENTS
Attachment A: Ordinance
Attachment B: Plans for Lucy Evans Baylands Interpretive Center Parking Lot
Attachment C: Adopted minutes from the January 28, 2003 Parks and Recreation Commission