

TO: PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

FROM: DAREN ANDERSON DEPARTMENT: COMMUNITY SERVICES

DATE: SEPTEMBER 25, 2018

**SUBJECT: BAYLANDS COMPREHENSIVE CONSERVATION PLAN: FORMER
ITT/RENZEL WETLANDS CONCEPTS**

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Parks and Recreation Commission (Commission) discuss and provide feedback on the various conceptual options developed for the former ITT/Renzel Wetlands area (Attachment A). The feedback from the Commission will guide the development of a preferred alternative conceptual plan for the former ITT/Renzel Wetlands site.

BACKGROUND

The purpose of the Baylands Comprehensive Conservation Plan (BCCP) is to develop goals, policies, prioritized action steps, and best management practices to holistically manage the Baylands Nature Preserve over the next 15 years and beyond. The BCCP will provide staff, the Parks and Recreation Commission, and the City Council will with clear direction on how to manage the Baylands using an ecosystem-based approach that will help guide the protection of the preserve's habitat, wildlife, and natural resources; ensure that stewardship and access to nature-friendly recreational opportunities are available for park visitors to enjoy the Baylands now and in the future; and help the City manage the Baylands in a way that allows the preserve to thrive in the face of challenges such as sea level rise and climate change.

The former ITT property/Renzel Wetlands is a muted tidal seasonal wetland. In 1992, hydrology to the areas was reconnected through a pipe from the former yacht harbor and the diked marshland was partially restored, allowing some limited tidal flow to occur. In the western portion of the site, a freshwater pond was created by pumping reclaimed water from the Regional Water Quality Control Plant. This area, except for the easement where the former ITT antenna field exists, was dedicated as parkland on May 3, 1982. It was named the Emily Renzel Wetlands on September 29, 1992. On June 6, 2017, City Council dedicated the 36.5 acre former ITT site as park land (Attachment C)

DISCUSSION

The consultant used feedback from the stakeholder group to create four conceptual plan options for the former ITT/Renzel Wetlands area. Each of the four plans had a theme:

- Option 1: Habitat Restoration
- Option 2: A Balanced System
- Option 3: ITT Park
- Option 4: Return to Nature

The plans were sent to the stakeholder group for review. Attachment B is a summary of stakeholder feedback received to date. Although there are four options, stakeholders were told to feel free to mix and match features that they liked from any of the options.

Below is a summary of the themes that emerged from stakeholder feedback for Summary of the Concept Designs for the ITT Building Footprint and the Freshwater Pond & Marsh and Emily Renzel Wetland.

Support for Options 1 and 4

The majority of stakeholders expressed support for a combination of concept designs reflected in Options 1 and 4. These include the following:

1. **Complete Habitat Restoration**: Many stakeholders prioritized the restoration of the freshwater pond and marsh, and the Emily Renzel wetland habitat to the full extent possible with the removal of the ITT building, antennas and other related structures and the restoration of the ITT footprint to wetland/marsh habitat. Additional considerations expressed by stakeholders for the ITT footprint included providing upland refugia for salt marsh harvest mouse within the footprint and salvaging wood materials from the ITT building during removal.
2. **Hydrological Connectivity**: A few stakeholders commented on the importance of hydrological connectivity from the Emily Renzel wetlands to the remnant marsh and flood basin, including adding dendritic pattern drainage features and managing tidal flow to preserve the features of the saltwater marshes for mitigation requirements. Other stakeholders supported maintaining the current footprint of the freshwater marsh and pond.
3. **Proposed Pedestrian Trails**: The majority of stakeholders indicated support for the proposed pedestrian trail (yellow-dotted path) along the northern perimeter of the Emily Renzel wetlands. A concern was expressed regarding the impact to a historical wildlife corridor between the wetlands and the Regional Water Quality Control Plant. Feedback received on the proposed pedestrian trails (purple-dotted path) included concerns about the potential impacts to the interior marsh and wetland habitat. Specifically, some stakeholders expressed a preference to eliminate the proposed pedestrian trail along the existing maintenance road (maintenance access only) and to change the placement of, or removal of the overlook platforms and interpretative signage within these areas to preserve the integrity of the habitat. There was one suggestion for this proposed trail to operate seasonally to reduce disturbance in the area. Overall, there was mixed opinion on whether to provide a pedestrian trail and viewing platforms (overlooks) along the perimeter of the freshwater pond and marsh.

Support for Retaining the ITT Building (Option 3)

A small number of stakeholders were in favor of retaining the existing ITT building, antennas, and other related infrastructure for historic preservation and interpretive purposes. A suggestion for interpretive design of this area included opening one wall of the ITT building for interior viewing by the public, installation of sculptures with historical relevance to the area (i.e. Silicon Valley themed), and signage providing information on the historical significance of the ITT

equipment. The cost for renovating the ITT building for historical preservation and public access purposes was brought into consideration by stakeholders supporting this option.

It is also important to note that the City's Historic Resources Board has expressed an interest in protecting the ITT building.

Other Considerations

Comments received by stakeholders related to concept designs which were not reflected in Options 1 through 4 included the following:

1. Proposal for the restoration of the Duck Pond to salt marsh habitat;
2. Establishing a connecting Baylands perimeter trail away from East Bayshore Road and potentially around the perimeter of Egret Pond;
3. Suggested plantings along Bayshore which may be equivalent to plantings along Mayfield Creek.

NEXT STEPS AND TIMELINE

- Host two community/stakeholder meetings-- Dates to be determined
- Develop Final ITT Concepts – October 2018
- Stakeholder review of the Draft Opportunities, Limitations, and Best Management Practices report and Draft Sea Level Rise and Climate Change Analysis – October 2018
- Final Opportunities, Limitations, and Best Management Practices report and Final Sea Level Rise and Climate Change Analysis – October 2018
- Develop Draft Action Plan, and Byxbee Park Conceptual Design Plan – October 2018
- Stakeholder review of Action Plan, and Byxbee Park Conceptual Design Plan – November 2018
- Final Action Plan, and Byxbee Park Conceptual Design Plan – December 2018
- Develop Draft Baylands Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Presentations – December-January 2018
- Produce Final Baylands Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Presentations – February-March 2018

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Former ITT/Renzel Wetlands Conceptual Plan Options

Attachment B: Stakeholder Feedback on Conceptual Plan Options

Attachment C: City Council Staff Report - June 5, 2017 Adoption of an Ordinance Dedicating 36.5 Acres of Land at the Former ITT Property Antenna Field to Become Park of the Baylands Nature Preserve