

5d

TO: HONORABLE CITY COUNCIL

FROM: CITY MANAGER

**DEPARTMENT: PLANNING AND
COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT**

CMR: 472:04

DATE: November 15, 2004

SUBJECT: UPDATE OF COMPREHENSIVE PLAN POLICIES ON BAYLANDS

BACKGROUND

In 1978, the City Council adopted the Master Plan and Environmental Impact Report for the Palo Alto Baylands. The following year, the Baylands Master Plan Summary Report was prepared to serve as a reference document, and included all of the significant recommendations approved by the City Council in adopting the Baylands Master Plan. The Summary Report was updated in 1987-1988 to reflect City Council actions in the intervening years regarding the Baylands. A copy of the 1987-88 Amended Summary Report of the Baylands Master Plan and EIR is attached to this memorandum. (See Attachment 2).

The Planning Division has undertaken the task of preparing an update of the Baylands Master Plan. The update is expected to be completed in mid- or late-2005, depending on other work assignments and availability of the consultant, Ken Kay Associates. The updated plan will reflect City Council actions regarding the Baylands and projects completed since 1988, and will include additional contextual and background material from the original approved Baylands Master Plan and improved maps and graphics to provide an up-to-date, easily understood Baylands Master Plan. Preparing the update has involved identifying Baylands-related City Council actions since 1988 and reviewing Baylands-related goals, policies and programs found in the 1998 Comprehensive Plan. Staff has been asked to bring forward this part of the work for City Council to use in reviewing the Environmental Services Center proposal.

City Council actions related to the Baylands since 1988 have essentially been actions to implement various elements of the Baylands Master Plan. The only significant policy change was the decision to locate the solid waste transfer station in Sunnyvale rather than at the Los Altos Sewer Treatment Plant site. Following is a summary of City Council actions since 1988:

- In 1989 the City Council approved a revised Byxbee Park Plan for the landfill area, and in 1991 a final design for construction of Phase I of Byxbee Park was approved. This 1989-91 Byxbee Park Plan is a similar but somewhat simplified version of the Byxbee Landfill Park, Park Conversion Plan adopted in 1981. The two main changes in the

1989-91 Plan are: the entrance to the park is relocated from Embarcadero Way to off Harbor Road; and a provision is made for the possibility that the recycling center, which according to the 1981 Plans was to be removed when the landfill was completed, may remain. A possible location of approximately one or two acres near the Electrical Generation Facility is identified for that purpose (page 26). Excerpts from the 1989-91 Byxbee Park Plan are attached to this report. (See Attachment 3).

- The 1989-91 Byxbee Park Plan (page 27) anticipated the possible use of the proposed Sunnyvale Material Recovery and Transfer (SMaRT) Station. This is a change from the 1987-88 update of the Baylands Master Plan which refers to 1984 City Council direction to staff to investigate use of the Los Altos Sewer Plant site as a future solid waste transfer station. Subsequently, the City became a partner with Mountain View and Sunnyvale in construction of the SMaRT Station located in Sunnyvale.
- During the 1990s, several key provisions of the Baylands Master Plan were implemented, including final closure of the yacht harbor, extensive marsh restoration, construction of the sailing station for hand carried boats, restoration of the Harbor Master's Cottage, the bicycle and pedestrian trail system substantially completed, and completion of Phase I of the landfill conversion to Byxbee Park.

Relationship to the 1998 Comprehensive Plan. The adopted 1978 Baylands Master Plan and EIR were incorporated into the City's Comprehensive Plan by Resolution 5675, April 2, 1979. When the 1998 Comprehensive Plan was prepared, a different approach was followed. Rather than incorporate the Baylands Master Plan document in total, the 1998 Comprehensive Plan recognizes the Baylands Master Plan as the adopted planning policy document for the area east of Highway 101, reaffirms the City policy of protecting the Baylands, and includes many goals, policies, and programs throughout the Comprehensive Plan that are consistent with and support the policies of the Baylands Master Plan. Baylands-related policies and references to the Baylands and the Baylands Master Plan are found in the Introduction, and in the Land Use and Community Design, Natural Environment, Community Services and Facilities, and Transportation Elements, and in the Glossary of the Comprehensive Plan.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this report is to provide the City Council a comparison of key policies in the Baylands Master Plan (as updated in 1987-88) with related goals, policies and programs found in the 1998 Comprehensive Plan. Additional policies in the Comprehensive Plan that are relevant to the ESC proposal, such as those addressing solid waste management, are discussed in the City Managers Reports: CMR:470:04 and CMR:471:04, November 15, 2004. The report is organized into the following nine topic areas:

1. Land Use:
 - Overall Environmental Protection of the Baylands
 - Urban Service Area
2. Parks:
 - Byxbee Landfill Park
 - ITT Property
3. Natural Environment

4. Views, Scenic Routes and Gateways
5. Los Altos Sewer Plant Site
6. East Bayshore Employment District
7. Airport
8. Access and Circulation
9. Park Enhancements

In addition to this narrative, the attached matrix (Attachment 1) compares Baylands Master Plan for policies each topic area in with related Comprehensive Plan goals, policies, and programs.

Land Use

The primary land use principles of the Baylands Master Plan are that the development already in place east of Highway 101 when the Plan was adopted may continue but will not be expanded, and the remaining undeveloped Baylands will be conserved as open space and restored where it has been degraded, including converting the landfill to pastoral park, removing the yacht harbor, and restoring the ITT property to marsh at such time as the antennas can be removed. The 1998 Comprehensive Plan reaffirms these principles, recognizing the Baylands Master Plan as the adopted planning policy document for the area east of Highway 101 and stating that the Baylands will continue to be conserved as open space over the term of the Comprehensive Plan.

The Comprehensive Plan treats the city's Urban Service Area as an urban growth boundary and states that future urban development will be limited to property within the urban service area. Baylands areas that are outside the urban service area are the landfill; the aquatic park including the Interpretive Center, Duck Pond, and Harbor; the Nature Preserves; and the Athletic Center and Golf Course. The Baylands Master Plan policies for these areas are consistent with their location outside the designated urban service area. The landfill is to be converted to park, and the other areas are park land that are proposed to have little or no change, or, in the case of the nature preserves, for conservation and restoration. The Baylands Master Plan also provides that there will be no more "urban intrusion" outside the currently urbanized corridor along Embarcadero Road. (See Attachment 4: Comprehensive Plan map L-2, Urban Service Area)

Parks

The Community Services and Facilities Element of the Comprehensive Plan recognizes that the City currently owns and operates several large open space preserves, including Byxbee Park, and describes the City's focus regarding parkland as maintaining and rehabilitating these existing facilities, given that as a "built-out" community there will be little opportunity to acquire new parkland. The Natural Environment Element provides that the baylands will continue to be conserved as open space and that the City will seek out new opportunities for more open space in the baylands. Converting the landfill area to parkland as provided for in the Baylands Master Plan is consistent with and helps to implement these Comprehensive Plan goals and policies. The Comprehensive Plan land use designation for the landfill area is public park and the site is dedicated park land.

The Comprehensive Plan Community Services and Facilities Element addresses the possibility that there may be proposals to locate infrastructure improvements in public open space and provides that this should be done only when such improvements are consistent with goals to protect and conserve the natural environment. Provision for possible location of the recycling center in Byxbee Park changed since the 1987-88 update of the Baylands Master Plan. The original Baylands Master Plan and the 1987-88 update provided that the recycling center would be removed from Byxbee Park when the landfill was completed. The revised Byxbee Landfill Park Master Plan adopted in 1989 states that a location for the recycling center may be provided in Phase III (later Phase IIc) of Byxbee Park, and identifies an area about one or two acres in size adjacent to the Electrical Generation Facility for that purpose.

The Baylands Master Plan calls for the former ITT property to be restored to marshland and incorporated into Byxbee Park when the existing antenna field located in the center of this site is removed. The eventual restoration of this property to marshland was reaffirmed by City Council action in 1981. The City does not have the authority at this time to remove the antenna field because federal regulatory authorities consider the facility essential for communication with ships at sea. Consequently, the 37 acres in the center of the site where the antenna field is operating is currently designated Open Space/Controlled Development. The remainder of the site which completely surrounds the antenna area is designated Publicly Owned Conservation Land. The entire property is park dedicated. Restoring this property to marshland and adding it to Byxbee Park would be consistent with Comprehensive Plan policies to restore the natural environment where it has been degraded by past development, and to seek out new opportunities for permanent open space in the Baylands. (See Attachment 5: Comprehensive Plan map C-2, Parkland Open Space)

Natural Environment

The Comprehensive Plan goals and policies in the Natural Environment element recognize the significance of the Baylands as a high value ecosystem, provide for the preservation and protection of the natural areas, and the conservation and preservation of the Baylands as open space. The Baylands Master Plan includes more specific recommendations for the natural areas that are consistent with and would help to implement the Comprehensive Plan goals and policies. The Baylands Master Plan includes specific recommendations for management of the wild life areas, including the need for a management plan and for controlling access to these areas. Policies and programs in the Comprehensive Plan Natural Environment Element address these same issues: managing open space in a way that meets habitat protection goals; the need to examine and improve management practices; and the need to review and control access to environmentally sensitive areas.

Views, Scenic Routes and Gateways

The Comprehensive Plan recognizes the importance of dramatic views from the Baylands, and acknowledges the importance of visual connections in defining the character of the community. Map L-4 showing Community Design Features identifies major view corridors in all directions from within the Baylands. (See Attachment 6) In the Baylands Master Plan, a major design concept for the landfill park is the introduction of a high place in an otherwise horizontal landscape that will provide panoramic views of the surrounding marshes and beyond to the hills

ringing the south Bay. The Baylands Master Plan also includes several recommendations to enhance the park quality of Embarcadero Road as the entrance to the Baylands and to create a gateway experience for visitors to the park. This is consistent with Comprehensive Plan identification of Embarcadero Road as a scenic route and as a gateway to the Baylands at East Bayshore Road.

Los Altos Treatment Plant Site

The 1978 Baylands Master Plan recommended that the Los Altos Sewer Plant site should remain in park land. However, the 1987-88 update refers to City Council direction to staff in 1984 to explore use of the site as possible location for a solid waste transfer station. The adopted 1989-91 Byxbee Park Master Plan anticipates the possible location of the transfer station in Sunnyvale. By the time of the 1998 Comprehensive Plan, the location of a regional transfer station had been resolved with construction of the SMaRT Station in Sunnyvale. The Comprehensive Plan land use designation for the Los Altos site is public park and the site is dedicated park land.

East Bayshore Employment District

The Comprehensive Plan provides that the design of buildings east of the Bayshore Freeway should reflect their location near the Baylands, that visual connections should be developed by exploiting views of the Baylands, and that physical connection to the nearby open space for bicycles and pedestrians should be enhanced. The Baylands Master Plan includes several related and more specific recommendations that would help implement the Comprehensive Plan policies.

Airport

The Comprehensive Plan continues the airport policies that were adopted in the Baylands Master Plan, reaffirming the limit of a single runway, not more than two fixed base operators, and only minor expansion and improvement of airport facilities without significantly increasing its intensity or intruding into open space.

Access and Circulation

The overarching concepts in the Baylands Master Plan regarding automobile access are to reduce automobile use in the park as much as possible, facilitate alternative ways to get to the park and to move around in the park, to provide only the amount of parking that is really needed and to locate and design parking lots in a way that will minimize their visual impacts in the Baylands. These objectives are consistent with the policies in the Transportation Element to support programs that reduce auto use and to minimize negative physical impacts of parking lots.

The objectives of the Comprehensive Plan policies and programs for bicycle and pedestrian access are to provide a system that is integrated with local and regional networks, and to maintain bicycle and pedestrian facilities that are safe and easy to use. The Transportation Element includes policies regarding completion of the Bay Trail and evaluating a Bay-to-Foothills trail. The recommendations in the Baylands Master Plan are consistent with these policies and programs.

Park Enhancements

The Baylands Master Plan includes specific proposals for park improvements such as landscape screening in strategic locations, park quality signs, the undergrounding of telephone and electric lines, and reduction of glare from night lighting. While there are no Comprehensive Plan programs that specifically address these park improvements in the Baylands, the Comprehensive Plan Community Services and Facilities Element includes a general policy to maintain and enhance existing park facilities.

PREPARED BY:

VIRGINIA WARHEIT
Senior Planner

DEPARTMENT HEAD APPROVAL:

STEVE EMSLIE
Director of Planning and Community Environment

CITY MANAGER APPROVAL:

EMILY HARRISON
Assistant City Manager

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: Matrix shows Baylands Master Plan policies in the left column and related Comprehensive Plan goals, policies, and programs in the right column.
- Attachment 2: Amended Summary Report, Baylands Master Plan, 1987-88.
- Attachment 3: Excerpts from the 1989-91 Byxbee Park Master Plan
- Attachment 4: Comprehensive Plan Map L-2, Urban Service Area
- Attachment 5: Comprehensive Plan Map C-2, Parks and Open Space
- Attachment 6: Comprehensive Plan Map L-4, Community Design Features