



August 1st, 2016

Rob De Geus, Director of Community Services
Peter Jensen, Landscape Architect
Daren Anderson, Division Manager- Open Space, Parks & Golf
Palo Alto Parks and Recreation Commission

Re: **Palo Alto Parks Master Plan: Baylands Athletic Center and the 10 acres of open space (formally golf course)**

Dear Mr. De Geus, Mr. Jensen, Mr. Anderson, Chair Lauing and Commissioners,

We submit the following comments on behalf of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society and the Sierra Club. We have reviewed the proposed plan for Baylands Athletic Center and its expansion into the 10 acres of open space (formally golf course). We appreciate the allocation of an area near the creek to "Native Habitat" and suggest that the native habitat area be expanded to create of a "bird grove" of at least 6 of the 10.5 acres. We believe that these requests reflect the hopes expressed by Palo Alto residents as well as the wishes of the Parks and Recreation Commission.

1. The Trees

Most of the trees of the golf course and the Athletic Center are slated for removal. The Golf Course Environmental Impact Report states, "There are 653 trees on the existing Golf Course site. Of these, 115 trees would remain, and 538 would be removed. There are 89 trees located on the site of the Athletic Center Expansion. Of these, 83 trees would be removed and 6 would be preserved. Trees would be replaced in accordance with the City of Palo Alto Tree Technical Manual and the Baylands Master Plan." The removal of the trees is an adverse impact to avian species on the golf course. We ask that trees not be removed from the 10.5 acre site until such time as plans for that area proceed to implementation.

2. The birds

Baylands Athletic Center is adjacent to San Francisquito Creek. In Santa Clara County, most birds use riparian corridors for all or part of their life cycle, and stopover sites near creeks and the bay are critical for many migratory species along the Pacific Flyway. Indeed, the trees at the terminus of Geng Road are a recognized

hot spot for viewing migratory avian species, and the trees that will soon be removed from the golf course have for many years served our most attractive birds as nesting sites. In spring 2016, the following species nested here:

"Species that were particularly productive throughout the golf environment this spring were, for example, Bullock's Oriole, Hooded Oriole, Lesser Goldfinch, House Finch, Violet-green Swallow, Nuttall's Woodpecker, Brewer's Blackbird, and others. Also, a single pair of Red-tailed Hawk completed its single-nest effort that fledged two young hawks."

Displaced species (few of many):

Hooded Oriole



Bullock's Oriole



Violet Green Swallow



Red-tailed Hawk



Nuttall's Woodpecker



House Finch



Overall, more than 130 species have been recorded at Geng Road, the Palo Alto Golf Course, and San Francisquito Creek by the terminus of Geng Road, see <http://ebird.org/ebird/hotspot/L694850>

The removal of the trees from the golf course and the Athletic Center can be expected to result in a significant impact to these birds and the people who enjoy them.

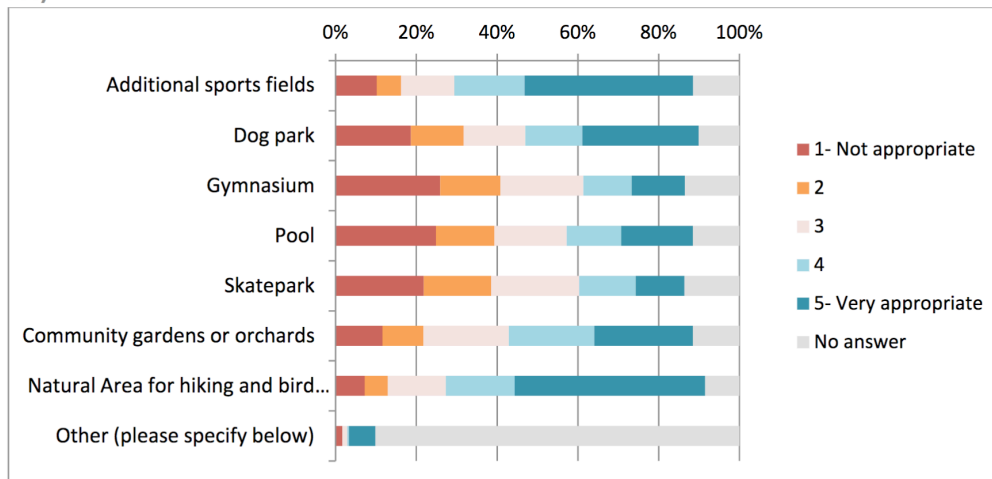
3. The Community wishes for Natural Areas for Hiking and Bird Watching here

The beauty of these birds and the importance of the site may be the reason why so many Palo Alto residents saw the 10.5-acre site as appropriate for “Natural areas for hiking and bird watching”. This was evident from the results of multiple surveys:

More than 1,000 Palo Alto residents responded to the first survey conducted by the City in 2015.

([http://www.paloaltoparksplan.org/pdf/10.Palo Alto Survey Initial Summary Package 3-17-15.pdf](http://www.paloaltoparksplan.org/pdf/10.Palo%20Alto%20Survey%20Initial%20Summary%20Package%203-17-15.pdf)). Of the respondents, 64% expressed an interest in natural areas, and 60% for sport fields.

Graph 17: What facilities or spaces would be appropriate for the additional 10.5 acres of land near the Baylands Athletic Center (designated for future recreational use)?



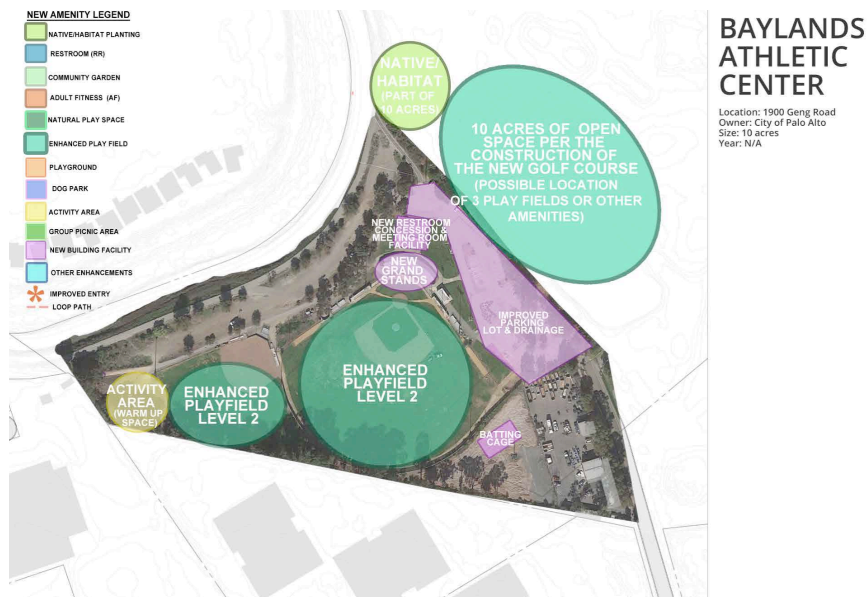
Supplemental surveys asking what would be appropriate uses for the 10.5 acres reveals consistent and prevalent interest in creating a “Natural area for Hiking and Bird Watching” among residents with and without children, residents of Asian Pacific heritage, and residents from north and south Palo Alto. The table below summarizes the results of Graphs 17a, 17c and 17d of the finding from the survey results

| Residents | Nature/hiking /bird watching | Sport Fields |
|------------------|---------------------------------|--------------|
| With children | 460 | 522 |
| Without children | 287 | 167 |
| Asian | 116 | 99 |
| All | 747 | 689 |
| South Palo Alto | 330 | 304 |
| North Palo Alto | 273 | 287 |

([http://www.paloaltoparksplan.org/pdf/7.PTOSR Supplemental Survey Findings_3-24-15.pdf](http://www.paloaltoparksplan.org/pdf/7.PTOSR_Supplemental_Survey_Findings_3-24-15.pdf))

4. The 10.5 available acres present a unique opportunity to provide a migratory hot-spot

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan present a unique opportunity to add a unique experience for Palo Alto residents. We appreciate the allocation of an area near the creek to “Native Habitat” and suggest that 1) trees should not be removed from the area ; and 2) the native habitat area be expanded to create a “migratory bird grove” on at least 6 of the 10.5 acres. If any space remains between the San Francisquito Creek Flood Wall and the existing playing fields, we hope that riparian trees can be planted there as well.



(http://www.migcom.com/files/managed/Document/760/Parks Master Plan - Site Concept Plan Document_052316_Full.pdf)

Planting a riparian / birding grove here would protect the creek ecosystem from spillover of lighting from the playing fields, allow proper mitigation for the loss of trees from the golf course, help compensate for the emissions associated with

increased traffic to the site, and create a unique attraction for nature lovers and birders in our region.

We appreciate your hard work on Park Master Plan, your extensive outreach to the public, and your consideration of our comments.

Thank you,



Michael Ferreira
Executive Committee Chair
Sierra Club-Loma Prieta Chapter
3921 East Bayshore Road, Suite 204
Palo Alto, CA 94303



Shani Kleinhaus, PH.D.
Environmental Advocate
Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society
22221 McClellan Rd.
Cupertino, CA 95014

Attachments:

July 31, 2013

Dear Planning and Transportation Commission,

I am here on behalf of the Palo Alto Parks and Recreation Commission to relay our concerns about the DEIR for the Golf Course Reconfiguration and Baylands Athletic Center Expansion as it relates to park impacts.

As you've heard, the Baylands Athletic Center expansion proposed in the DEIR is a worst-case scenario "place-holder" if you will. There has been no public deliberation on the details of what form such an expansion would take. We feel strongly that a full, open and inclusive process should be undertaken to consider not only appropriate recreational use of the 10.5 acre land bank at the golf course, but also the best location within the City for future field or gym space, should it be needed. We encourage you to be mindful of the inertia a place-holder like this can take on as it moves forward. We hope that the final EIR has a broader review of alternatives.

5-1

Although tonight's staff report mentions repeated consideration of the golf course redesign by the PARC, it does not incorporate the substance of our comments. Back in March, 2012 we transmitted a recommendation to Council and we want to be sure our concerns about the project are before you. I've attached the text of our recommendation and reiterate the following concerns:

- The Commission recommends that an open and inclusive process be undertaken to explore the full array of recreation needs for the use of the 10.5 acres.
- The full long-term vision to complete transformation of the site – including clubhouse architectural drawings, new parking and pedestrian flow and practice areas - needs to be presented to the Council now for future planning.
- While there is a lot of ad-hoc comment on the need for athletic fields there is not sufficient analysis to determine the need for more athletic fields at present nor the most appropriate placement of these fields should they be needed.

5-2

5-3

5-4

In addition, Commissioners have repeatedly raised concerns about the loss of trees. While we understand the need for tree removal, the proposed mitigation of placing a large number of trees in Arastradero Preserve has not come before our Commission. The final EIR should include a fuller consideration of appropriate mitigations.

5-5

We look forward to working together with you to consider future park and recreational opportunities in the Baylands.

Sincerely,

Deirdre Crommie, Member of the Parks and Recreation Commission

From: Regional Commissioner [mailto:rc@ayso26.org]
Sent: Tuesday, July 30, 2013 2:05 PM
To: Teresi, Joe
Subject: Comments on Golf Course Draft EIR

Mr. Teresi,

I represent the soccer interests of approximately 1000 Palo Alto families. I am the Regional Commissioner of the Palo Alto AYSO, and we have approximately 2000 Palo Alto children play in our year-round soccer programs.

You can read more about our programs here, <http://www.ayso26.org>

The Palo Alto AYSO is by far the largest user of soccer fields in Palo Alto, and is larger than all the clubs combined.

My comments relate specifically to the citing of soccer fields in the Golf Course area of East Embarcadero.

I can state categorically and with strong evidence, that the area on the east side of 101 will not serve our constituency. We will not be able to use them. Our parents have strong preferences for where their children play soccer, and it is clear they will not participate with fields on east Embarcadero.

Please investigate other locations, where they would be used by Palo Alto families.

Best Regards,
Gordon Short

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