

**March 22, 2011**

The Board of Commissioners of the New Orleans City Park Improvement Association annually reviews and periodically amends a Master Plan for the development of the Park. (Act 865, Section 3 of the Regular Session of the 1982 Legislature)

**Proposition 1. Amending the Park Master Plan to make modifications to the plan for golf.**

**Background of previous Master Plan actions:**

The Park's current Master Plan was adopted on March 29, 2005 and subsequently amended in November 2007 and May 2009. The plan was developed after extensive research, study, surveying, public meetings and public hearing. The goal of the plan was and is, to make City Park the premiere urban park in the nation and to insure that the Park is financially sound so that it can be properly maintained and offer its extensive facilities and programs to the public.

As a component of the 2005 plan, the Park closed the South Golf Course in order to make more land available for general open space and recreational use. The approximately 100 acres of the old golf course is now being repositioned for new uses with the Big Lake project, fundamentally completed in 2010, being the first of those new uses. In 2011 the Park will begin the next phase of the redevelopment effort when work will begin on a new festival and recreation grounds in the area between Friedrich's street and I-610. Included within this former golfing area will be sports fields as well as jogging and biking trails. Subsequent phases are scheduled to include a relocated Children's Museum and Early Learning Village, a multi-purpose center and a skate park.

The Park's plan for golf in the 2005 plan, called for a three course complex with a hierarchical distribution of golf assets including a high quality 18 hole course, a moderate quality course and a course of average playability and price. A new clubhouse would have been built near the former clubhouse site and maintenance facilities and golf driving range would have been renovated at their existing locations. Approximately \$21 million was estimated to be needed to complete the plan and the Park began the process of raising these funds which included two funding allocations from the State prior to Katrina.

In November 2007, following a public hearing and consideration of a variety of proposals for inclusion in the plan, the Master Plan was amended to designate a land area to be utilized for golf following the destruction caused by the failure of the outfall canal floodwalls during Hurricane Katrina. The area designated for golf was substantially the existing area utilized by golf before Katrina, essentially the North, East, and West Golf Courses plus the area of the driving range and clubhouse. The area also included several parcels of property which were not currently in use as golf assets, such as the softball quadraplex and police horse stables. (In the past, the area of the softball quadraplex was used for golf).

The Park also determined that a new plan for golf should be prepared to determine exactly how best to use the area set aside for golf purposes, including the number and type of courses as well as the location of the clubhouse, driving range and maintenance facilities. New feasibility studies were undertaken to determine the market for golf in the area following the storm.

Subsequently, a new plan for golf was developed and presented at a March 10, 2009 public hearing. This plan proposed two 18 hole courses and a 9 hole par three course. The plan also recommended a new location for a golf clubhouse off Mirabeau and a relocated driving range between the new clubhouse location and Filmore. Course # 1 would have ranged between 5,275 and 7,540 yards depending on tee location. This course was intended to be of championship caliber capable of offering an excellent golf experience and hosting a wide variety of golf tournaments. Course # 2 was to be somewhat shorter with a range of 5,095 and 7,050 yards, while the par three course would be 1,050 yards long.

The new plan did not include the police horse stables or any part of Couturie Forest, Scout Island or the Marconi sports fields. (Such a plan was suggested by the Bayou District Foundation. That plan had an overall cost of \$46 million which was divided into two phases).

The new plan also proposed that the Park seek external capital funding by developing a public private partnership through a Request for Proposal process.

Following a public hearing in March 2009, the City Park Board adopted the new plan in May. While the Board approved the entire golf plan covering approximately 526 acres (includes water and roadways), it also voted to only implement Phase I of the plan which was the new 18 hole high end course while leaving the North Course as the moderate golf offering. Following completion of the new course a new evaluation of the golf market was planned.

### **Request for Proposals**

In February of 2010 proposals were received pursuant to an extensively advertised Request for Proposal and the Bayou District's Proposal to provide external capital was selected as the most responsive proposal. This proposal offered \$8.9 million in capital funding toward implementation of the plan and brought Golf Course Properties (a PGA affiliate) to the table as the proposed manager of the golf complex. The Park has been in negotiations with the Bayou District Foundation to develop a specific Cooperative Endeavor Agreement since that time.

### **Continued Review**

In addition to negotiations with the Bayou District Foundation, the Park has also continued to examine the physical layout of the plan and the area devoted to golf as a

result of that plan. These analysis were designed to: (1.) minimize the land which would be necessary to implement the golf plan so as to make previously used golf acres available for other park uses, (2.) determine whether the two 18 hole and one 9 hole course were still the best use of golf assets, (3.) minimize the impact of implementing the plan on the park's urban forest, (4.) be certain that City Park could continue to offer a range of hierarchical golf experiences, (5.) be certain that the plan was able to maximize the revenue potential for the Park and (6.) settle on a final golf capital plan which was affordable and implementable.

As a result of these continued reviews, a significant modification of the adopted golf plan has been developed and is submitted for consideration.

### **Proposed changes in golf plan**

Keeping in mind the six goals outlined above staff proposes the following changes to the golf plan:

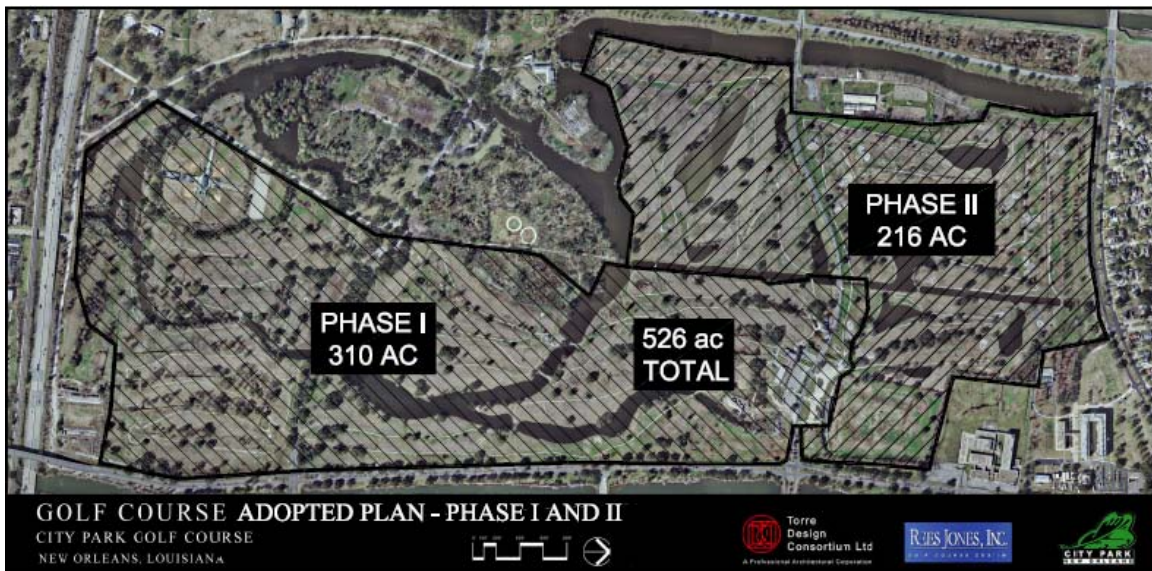
1. Instead of a golf master plan which contains two 18 hole courses and a 9-hole course, the proposed amendments would develop just the two 18 hole courses. One would be the North Course which would continue to be a moderately priced course offering affordable golf for those who wish that type of golf experience. The second 18 hole course would be a high end course for those who wish a more challenging golf experience.
2. The golf club house would be rebuilt generally on the site of the former clubhouse and not off of Mirabeau. The driving range would be improved generally on its current site and not relocated across Filmore.
3. The location of the high end course would not utilize land south of Harrison Ave. but would incorporate an area south of Filmore which was originally scheduled to be developed in a second phase golf project. The area for the new 18 hole course would be reduced from 310 acres to approximately 250 acres.
4. The total revised golf plan would shrink the golf footprint from the currently approved approximately 526 acres to a total of approximately 383 acres.

This change to the golf plan achieves the following:

- It will reduce the total number of acres designated for golf from roughly 526 in the current plan to approximately 383. If the entire South Course is factored in (lake and pathways), this plan would reduce the footprint of golf in City Park from approximately 600 acres (in 2005) to approximately 383. This makes available additional land for other types of park and recreation uses.
- The proposed plan would utilize ground for the new course which has substantially less tree cover than the current plan which utilized the area from Harrison to Zachery Taylor.
- By rebuilding the clubhouse and improving driving range on their present sites, significant savings on site development costs are achieved, further disturbance to Park land not previously used for these purposes is prevented and the "clustering" of golf operations and management will reflect pre-Katrina conditions.

- The reduction in land for the new course from 310 acres to 250 acres substantially reduced costs thus making its development affordable with available funds.
- The new plan designates the golf footprint at approximately 387 acres and does not leave the potential for additional land to be added to golf in subsequent phases.
- It should also be noted that the recommended change in the plan does not change the economics of building the golf course. The Park's economic research consultant still estimates that in the first normalized year of operation, the entire complex will generate over \$4.0 million of gross revenue and approximately \$900,000 of net operating income for the Park. In 2010, the North Golf Course had approximately 41,000 rounds of golf played, while the North Course and Driving Range grossed nearly \$1,500,000 in revenue.
- By making the new course more compact and closer to the North Course and Driving Range, the costs of operation of the entire complex should be less than the current plan.
- The new course layout will continue to offer a high end golf experience. The course will range from 5,150 yards to 7,240 yards depending on tee location. Reese Jones Architects believe that the new course will be challenging for every type of golfer

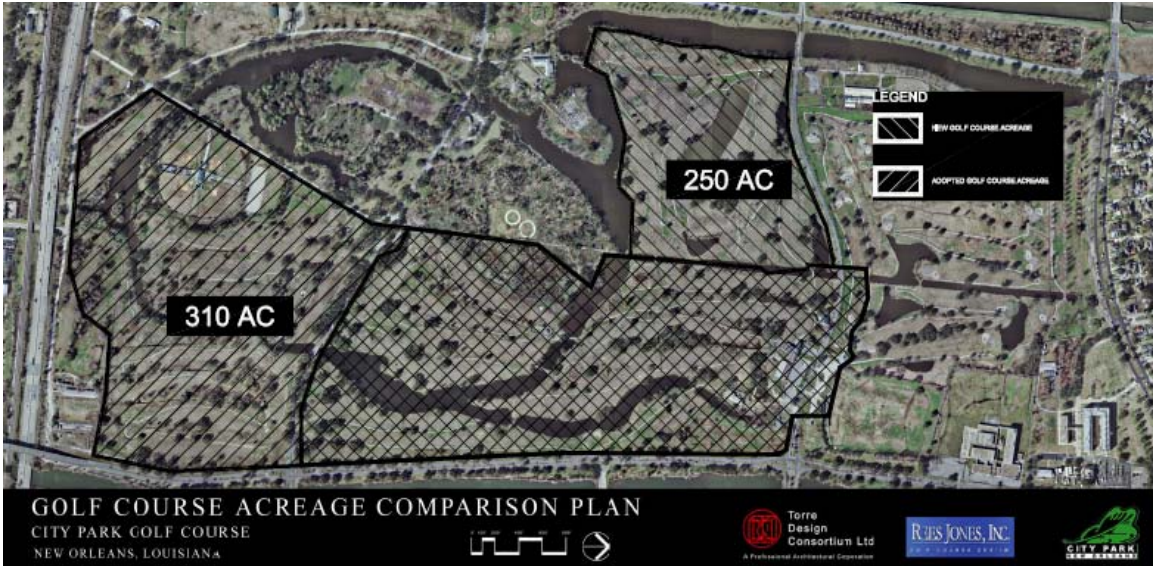
**Staff Recommendation:** Given the multiple advantages of the proposed plan over the current plan, staff recommends that the board approve the new golf plan and it be reflected in the Master Plan.



**Map 1 Adopted plan for golf**



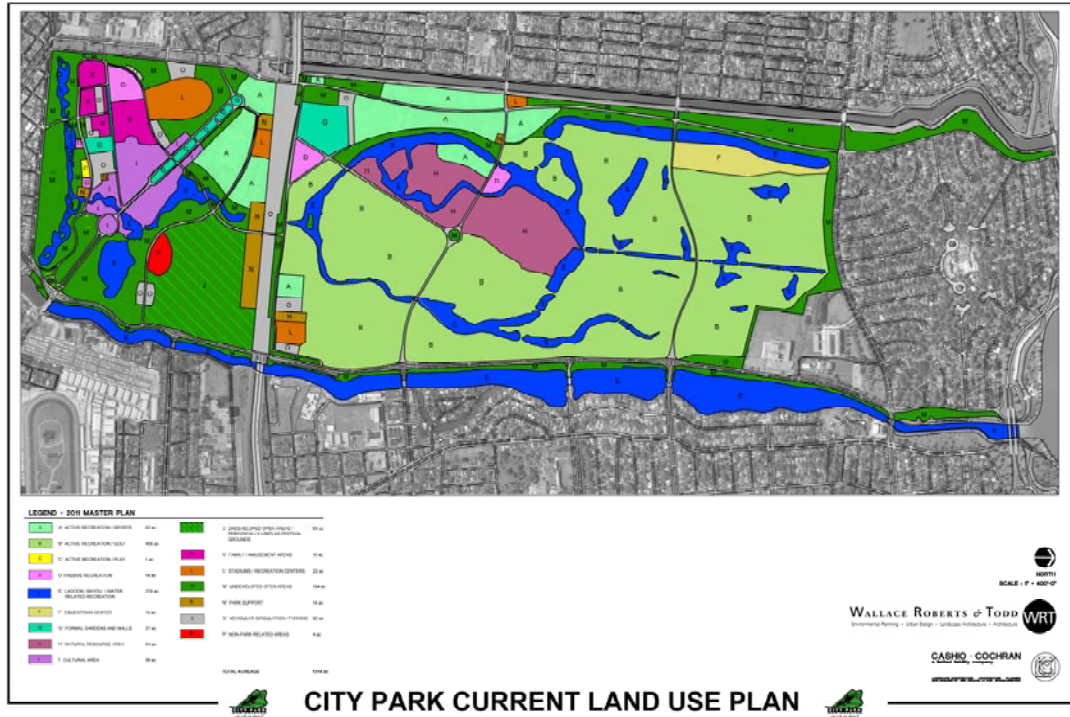
**Map 2 Proposed revisions to golf**



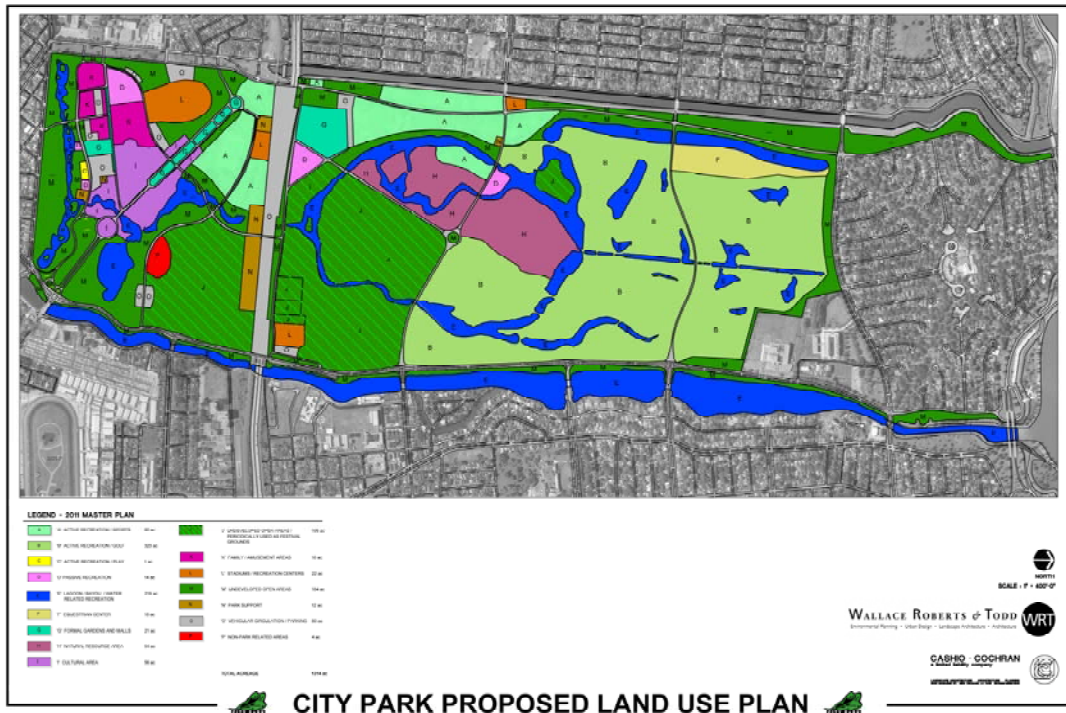
**Map 3 Comparison of required acreage for course #1 versus new plan**



Map 4 Layout of proposed Course #1



Map 5 Current Land Use Plan



**Map 6 Proposed Land Use Plan**

**Proposition 2: Modifying the “J” land use category in the land use plan to better reflect potential land uses in that category.**

Currently the “J” category in the land use plan reads “J” Undeveloped open areas/periodically used as festival grounds” This category now applies to the festival grounds area between Christian Bros. and I-610. This modification designates the area between Harrison and Zachery Taylor which had been designated as active recreation/golf to the “J” category which is proposed to be reworded as “J” Undeveloped open areas utilized for festivals, sports, urban farming, and other similar uses.. This change will allow for a wide variety of uses to be considered for this area.

**Staff Recommendation: approve the rewording of category “J” and apply it to the area being removed from golf roughly between Harrison and Zachery Taylor and Nursery Island.**

**Proposition 3: Designating a site in the Big Lake area for a Boat House containing food service, restrooms and boat rental offices.**

**Background of previous Master Plan actions:**

In 2005, the adopted Master Plan of City Park recommended the closure of the South Golf Course and it was subsequently closed in July. The plan recommended that a portion of the land around the Big Lake which was formally occupied by golf, be

repositioned as an open green space. Subsequent to the Board's actions closing the South Course, the Park entered into a partnership with the Trust for Public Land to develop a new plan for the space.

The Trust hired the international park planning firm of Wallace, Roberts and Todd together with local park planners Cashio, Cochran LLC. to develop a specific plan for new uses for the area. The developed plan included a  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile bicycle/jogging trail around the site, extensive landscaping and sculpture, parking, and a new facility to accommodate the park's boating program which had been closed since Hurricane Katrina. The plan created a long boat dock and outlined a site on the plan for a future boat house which would provide not only ticketing and boating operations, but restrooms for the area and potential food service facilities including a restaurant.

The consultants felt that the Big Lake area would be a perfect location for a boat house containing those features and pointed out that similar boat house facilities offering restrooms, food service, ticketing and boat storage exist in Central Park and Forest Park in St. Louis.

The Park approved a Master Plan showing the beautification of Big Lake in general in 2005 and again in 2007 and a specific plan for improvements in 2008. However the future boat house was not shown on the adopted plan although the clear intent was to provide such a facility. Therefore it was clearly an error that the facility was left off the plan. In order to partially accommodate the boating operation prior to building a permanent facility, the Park moved a temporary building onto the site which has been there since 2009.

Since the time that the Big Lake has opened, the most frequent requests we receive tend to be about the provision of bathrooms and food service. These requests have increased with the frequency of use. Removing the temporary building and building a suitably designed permanent structure which incorporated restrooms, food service (including a potential restaurant) and boating operations will complete the master plan for Big Lake and provide additional amenities to the users of the area. Preliminary estimate of the building - \$2.0 million.

**Staff Recommendation: Since the provision of a boathouse facility incorporating restrooms, food service and boating operations was clearly the intent from the beginning of the Big Lake transformation, staff recommends that it be adopted as part of the Master Plan and a site for the facility designated on the plan.**