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City adds 20 acres for neighborhood hillside trails, open space

By Pippa Fisher



Lafayette, in partnership with John Muir Land Trust, has added 20 acres of open space to its inventory of natural parkland with the purchase at the end of last month of the "Batwing" property - the rambling hillside property located at 3333 Hamlin Road, so-called because its shape when mapped out resembles a flying bat.

The property sits between St. Mary's Road and Sweet Drive, roughly halfway between Stanley Middle School and Buckeye Fields. Once offered for sale for residential development, the property is now guaranteed to remain a permanent nature park with walking trails open to everyone.

With the unanimous decision at the Jan. 28 city council meeting, the city is now halfway to meeting its General Plan goal of five acres of parkland for every 1,000 residents. Prior to the acquisition of this land the city

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needed to add 44 acres to the current 91 acres. The city's plan had identified this property as a priority dating back to the 1980s.

Parks, Trails and Recreation Director Jonathan Katayanagi credited the hard work of the many volunteers who made this possible, including Linus Eukel, executive director of John Muir Land Trust, past and present city councils, and the Parks, Trails and Recreation Commission.

Funding for the \$1.8 million price tag will come from the Parkland Acquisition Fund, fees that are collected when new development occurs, and from the city's remaining Measure WW local grant funds. This sum includes money for signage, installation of some stairs, trail development, some fencing and initial costs for maintenance.

"A healthy park system offers diverse opportunities for outdoor recreation," commented Eukel, explaining that this acquisition is part of a comprehensive strategy for the entire region. "In Lamorinda, John Muir Land Trust has protected 604-acre Carr Ranch, a pristine addition to a large wilderness refuge. We're raising funds to protect Painted Rock, the potential anchor of a centrally located 505-acre community park that would be enjoyed by hundreds of visitors daily. The 20-acre Batwing property is a wonderful example of a neighborhood park that gives people everyday access to the outdoors just steps from their homes."

Mayor Cam Burks described the actions as representing for him one of the most historic city council decisions in decades. "Generations of Lafayette residents and others will be able to enjoy this pristine, nature parkland for many years to come; an area that truly represents the special character of our community. I want to express my profound thanks to Jonathan for his leadership, and the entire Parks, Trails and Recreation Department; in addition to our PTR commission and many other members of the staff involved in this undertaking."

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back

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