



LAKE COUNTY FOREST PRESERVES
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Preservation, Restoration, Education and Recreation

DATE: November 2, 2015
MEMO TO: Bonnie Thomson Carter, Chair
Planning and Restoration Committee
FROM: Randall L. Seebach, Director
Planning and Land Preservation
SUBJECT: Master Plan Approval for Fort Sheridan Forest Preserve

Agenda Item# 9.6

RECOMMENDATION: Recommend approval of a Resolution approving the Master Plan for Public Access Improvements and Habitat Restoration at Fort Sheridan Forest Preserve.

BACKGROUND: Fort Sheridan is located in the southeast portion of Lake County near Lake Forest, Highland Park and Highwood. The site was formerly an active military base until the Department of the Army began transferring the northern 250 acres of the base to the District in the late 1990s. The Preserve is bounded by the Town of Fort Sheridan historic district on the south, Sheridan Road on the west, McCormick Nature Preserve on the north and Lake Michigan on the east, and contains the only Lake Michigan shoreline owned by the District.

Fort Sheridan Forest Preserve consists of upland forest areas, open grassland, three ravines, a narrow band of steep bluffs and ¾-mile of shoreline that are home to 31 endangered, threatened or rare plant species and 31 endangered, threatened or rare animal species. There have also been 226 different species of birds documented within the preserve.

The Master Plan process began in 2012 when a team of District staff, including representatives from each of the operating departments, were assembled to provide input into the Master Plan. Commissioners and community partners also participated in the planning process. The process also included input from the public through several methods including: two public open houses, an on-line comment forum (Idea Exchange), e-mails and letters. The District ultimately received more than 500 written comments during the planning process.

The Master Plan consists of public access improvements and habitat restoration activities, including a reconfigured main entrance road and a 45-car parking lot, north entrance and a 20-car parking lot, two evaporator toilets, 1.6 miles of mowed grass trails, 2.8 miles of asphalt trails, three scenic observation areas, five boardwalks, 12 interpretive exhibits and restoration of 73 acres woodland savanna. As part of the USACE Great Lakes Fish Ecosystem Restoration program additional restoration work is planned within the Preserve including: repair & restoration of eroded areas of the bluff and ravines, in-lake stone structures to improve fish habitat and restoration of the shoreline including the installation of native plants and the removal of existing steel piers and concrete rubble.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION: Committee and Board approval is required in accordance with District policy.

REVIEW BY OTHERS: Chief Operations Officer, Director of Finance, Standing Committees, Legal Counsel

FINANCIAL DATA: The public access improvements were approved as part of the adopted FY 2015/2016 Capital Improvement Plan for Fort Sheridan Forest Preserve in the amount of \$2,952,228.00. The woodland/savanna restoration activities were approved as part of the adopted FY 2015/2016 Capital Improvement Plan for Preserve Tree Planting in the amount of \$225,000.00. The cost estimate for all the public access improvements, as shown on the Master Plan, is \$3,810,000.00.

PRESENTER: Randall L. Seebach

**LAKE COUNTY FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT
LAKE COUNTY, ILLINOIS**

A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE MASTER PLAN FOR FORT SHERIDAN FOREST PRESERVE

WHEREAS, the Lake County Forest Preserve District (the "District") acquired the 250-acre Fort Sheridan Forest Preserve (the "Preserve") for the purposes of preserving this unique property and providing public use; and

WHEREAS, in August 2015, the District's Planning and Restoration Committee reviewed and unanimously recommended approval of a Revised Concept Plan for Fort Sheridan Forest Preserve (the "Concept Plan") and authorized staff to present the Concept Plan to the other District Standing Committees for review and comment, to convert the Concept Plan to a final master plan for Fort Sheridan Forest Preserve (the "Master Plan"), and to prepare a cost estimate for improvements to be made pursuant to the Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, in October 2015, the District's Education, Cultural Resources and Public Affairs Committee, Land Preservation and Acquisition Committee, and Finance and Administrative Committee reviewed and unanimously recommended approval of the Concept Plan , and

WHEREAS, the District had previously held two public open houses for public input on the ideas included within the Concept Plan on June 12, 2012 and April 8, 2015; and

WHEREAS, the District staff has converted the Concept Plan to the Master Plan, which is attached to this Resolution; and

WHEREAS, the Master Plan consists of public access improvements and habitat restoration activities including a reconfigured main entrance road and a 45-car parking lot, north entrance and a 20-car parking lot, two evaporator toilets, 1.6 miles of mowed grass trails, 2.8 miles of asphalt trails, four scenic observation areas, five boardwalks, 12 interpretive exhibits, restoration of 73 acres of woodland savanna, repair & restoration of eroded areas of the bluff and ravines, in-lake stone structures to improve fish habitat and restoration of the shoreline including the installation of native plants and the removal of existing steel piers and concrete rubble; and

WHEREAS, implementation of a portion of the Plan was approved and funding was included as part of the District's FY2015/2016 Capital Improvement Plan, and implementation of the remaining portions of the Plan will commence when funding is approved as part of future updates of the Capital Improvement Plan;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Commissioners of the Lake County Forest Preserve District, Lake County, Illinois THAT:

Section 1. Recitals. The recitals set forth above are incorporated as a part of this Resolution by this reference.

Section 2. Approval of Master Plan. The Plan is hereby approved in substantially the form attached hereto, and the District may amend the Plan from time to time.

Section 3. Effective Date. This Resolution shall be in full force and effect from and after its passage and approval in the manner provided by law.

PASSED this _____ day of _____, 2015

AYES:

NAYS:

APPROVED this _____ day of _____, 2015

ATTEST:

Ann B. Maine, President
Lake County Forest Preserve District

Julie A. Gragnani, Secretary
Lake County Forest Preserve District

Exhibit _____

Fort Sheridan Forest Preserve

Conceptual Master Plan- Executive Summary

November 2, 2015

Project Background

Fort Sheridan Forest Preserve is located in the southeast portion of Lake County near Lake Forest, Highland Park and Highwood. The Preserve is bounded by the Town of Fort Sheridan historic district on the south, Sheridan Road on the west, McCormick Nature Preserve on the north and Lake Michigan on the east. This preserve contains the only Lake Michigan shoreline owned by the District.

The site is unique in its history, geology and biology. Fort Sheridan was a U.S. Army base from 1887 until 1993 when it was deactivated. The buildings were designed by Holabird and Roche, while the sighting of the buildings, roads and Parade Ground was performed by O.C. Simonds, one of America's earliest and most important landscape architects. In 1984, the Fort Sheridan Historic District, composed of 230 acres of land and buildings, was designated a National Historic Landmark by the National Park Service.

Measures to secure the Fort for public benefit began in the late 1980s when the base closure was announced. For nearly a decade, the Lake County Forest Preserve District (District) worked with surrounding communities to win congressional and presidential approval of legislation to have the U.S. Army transfer land to the District for public open space, recreation and preservation. In 1997, the Army began conveyance of sections of the former base to the District. The final parcel was received in 2001, completing a 250-acre forest preserve.

Fort Sheridan Forest Preserve consists of upland forest areas, open grassland, three ravines, a narrow band of steep bluffs and 0.75 miles of shoreline. These habitats are home to 31 endangered, threatened or rare plant species, and 31 endangered, threatened or rare animal species. There have also been 226 different species of birds documented within the preserve.

Previously completed improvements at the preserve include the removal of abandoned utilities and infrastructure, repair of aging infrastructure, improvements to the Fort Sheridan Cemetery, addition of cultural and environmental education exhibits along trails, restoration of degraded natural habitat, and the opening of temporary and permanent trails, entry drives and parking lots.

In 2012, the Forest Preserve Board voted to request that the Army remove the deed restriction regarding a golf course, and directed District staff to develop a long-term master plan for the site that incorporated alternate site uses such as trails, habitat restoration and scenic overlooks. After the Army granted the request in 2012, the master plan process began when a team of District staff, including representatives from each of the operating departments, was assembled to provide input during the planning process. Development of the plan also included input from Commissioners, community

partners and the public through two public open houses, an online comment forum, emails and letters. The District ultimately received more than 500 written comments during the planning process.

Project Goal

The overall project goal is to provide improved opportunities for the public to enjoy and learn about the unique natural and cultural history of this preserve. The master plan respects the integrity of nature on the site while offering paved, turf and sand surfaces for exploring the historic district, ravines, woodlands, savanna, bluff and lakeshore of this unique area. Natural resource management efforts are a key element of the plan and will provide long term preservation of the significant natural features and protection of wildlife for future generations to enjoy.

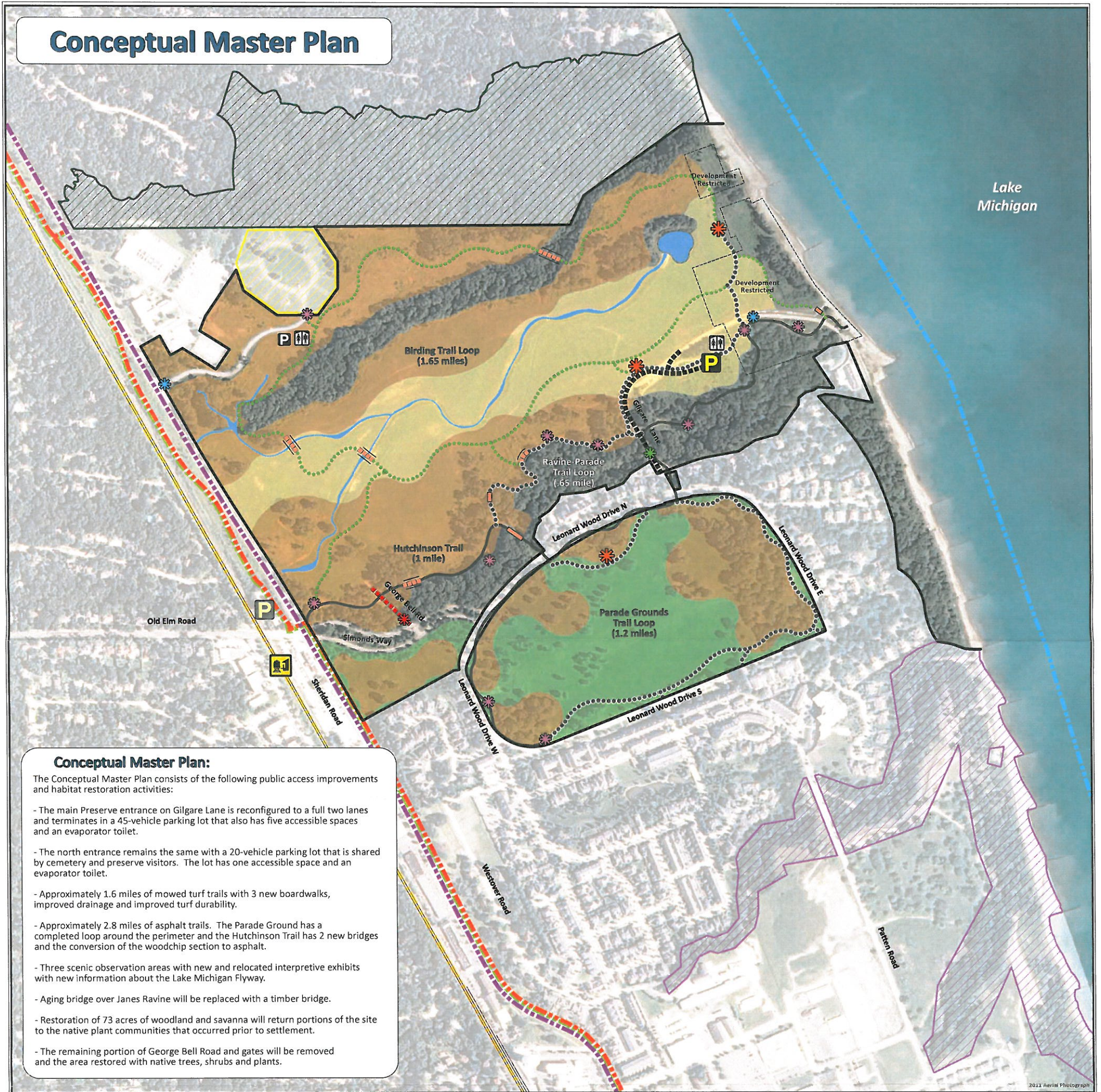
Project Program

The Conceptual Master Plan consists of the following public access improvements and habitat restoration activities:

- The main Preserve entrance remains at Gilgare Lane and is reconfigured to a full two lanes and terminates in a 45-vehicle parking lot that also has five accessible spaces. A new evaporator toilet is located near the parking lot.
- The north entrance remains the same with a 20-vehicle parking lot that is shared by cemetery and preserve visitors. The parking lot includes one accessible space. A new evaporator toilet is located near the parking lot.
- Approximately 1.6 miles of mowed grass trails. The temporary turf trail is transformed into a "Birding Trail Loop" with three new boardwalks, improved drainage, and improved turf durability.
- Approximately 2.8 miles of asphalt trails. The asphalt trail to the south on the Parade Ground is extended to create a complete accessible loop around the perimeter. The Hutchinson Ravine Trail has two new bridges and the conversion of the woodchip surface to asphalt. This improves accessibility and simplifies maintenance of the trail surface.
- Three scenic observation areas with new and relocated interpretive exhibits provide information about the cultural and natural history of the preserve. Information will be added on the significance of the Lake Michigan Flyway and the efforts that are taking place to restore the unique natural communities at the site.
- Five timber boardwalks, one of which serves as a replacement of an aging bridge acquired with the original land transfer.
- There are 12 interpretive exhibits that provide information on the natural and military history of the area.

- The restoration of 73 acres woodland savanna supports the District's goal of returning portions of the site to the native plant community that occurred prior to settlement.
- Restoration on the bluff and ravines will provide needed repairs of eroded areas that have occurred as a result of increased storm water inputs and foot traffic.
- The installation of in-lake stone structures to improve fish habitat and restoration of the shoreline including the installation of native plants and the removal of existing steel piers and concrete rubble.
- Removal of the remaining portion of George Bell Road and the restoration of that area with native trees, shrubs and plants.

Conceptual Master Plan



Conceptual Master Plan:

The Conceptual Master Plan consists of the following public access improvements and habitat restoration activities:

- The main Preserve entrance on Gilgare Lane is reconfigured to a full two lanes and terminates in a 45-vehicle parking lot that also has five accessible spaces and an evaporator toilet.
- The north entrance remains the same with a 20-vehicle parking lot that is shared by cemetery and preserve visitors. The lot has one accessible space and an evaporator toilet.
- Approximately 1.6 miles of mowed turf trails with 3 new boardwalks, improved drainage and improved turf durability.
- Approximately 2.8 miles of asphalt trails. The Parade Ground has a completed loop around the perimeter and the Hutchinson Trail has 2 new bridges and the conversion of the woodchip section to asphalt.
- Three scenic observation areas with new and relocated interpretive exhibits with new information about the Lake Michigan Flyway.
- Aging bridge over Janes Ravine will be replaced with a timber bridge.
- Restoration of 73 acres of woodland and savanna will return portions of the site to the native plant communities that occurred prior to settlement.
- The remaining portion of George Bell Road and gates will be removed and the area restored with native trees, shrubs and plants.

Fort Sheridan Forest Preserve

- Forest Preserve Boundary
- - - Restricted Parcels
- ▨ City of Lake Forest
- ▨ Cemetery
- ▨ Openlands

- ### Existing Features
- 🚪 Train Station
 - P Parking
 - 🌻 Interpretive Exhibit
 - 🚪 Gate
 - 🌻 Gate to Remove

- 🌉 Bridge
- Asphalt Trail
- 🌊 Channel

- ### The Lake Michigan Trail
- Mode
- 🚲 Bike
 - 🚗 Drive
 - 👤 Hike
 - 🚣 Paddle
 - 🚆 Train

- ### Proposed Features
- P Parking
 - P Potential Parking
 - 🚪 Evaporator Toilet
 - 🌻 Seating Area Interpretive Exhibit
 - 🌻 Gate

- ▨ Entry Drive Proposed
 - ▨ Entry Drive to Remove
 - 🌊 Reshaped Pond
- ### Proposed Trails
- Surface
- 🌱 turf
 - 🛣️ asphalt
 - 🚶 boardwalk

- ### Proposed Plant Communities
- 🌳 Woodland/Savanna Restoration
 - 🌾 Grassland Restoration
 - 🌱 Turfgrass



Lake County Forest Preserves
www.LCFPD.org

Planning and Land Preservation Department
1155 W. Winchester Road
Liberty, IL 60435
(630) 946-3270

November 2, 2015



Fort Sheridan Master Plan Preliminary Cost Estimate
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November 2, 2015

1	Parade Ground	\$475,000
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- trail loop
- seating area
- removal of golf landforms.

2	George Bell Road	\$85,000
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- removal of existing road
- connect sidewalk and curb at Simonds Way

3	Hutchinson Trail	\$575,000
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- two bridges
- conversion of wood chip surface to asphalt

4	Gilgare Lane	\$1,225,000
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- new entry drive and parking lot
- asphalt trail to bluff overlook
- bird observation area
- toilet

5	Birding Trail Loop	\$1,100,000
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- three bridges
- permanent turf trail with ditching
- toilet

Engineering	\$350,000
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Grand Total	\$3,810,000
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Approved CIP Funding FY 2015/16	\$262,228
FY 2016/17	\$2,690,000
Total Available Funding	\$2,952,228

FORT SHERIDAN MASTER PLAN

November 2, 2015

RECOMMENDED PHASING IDEAS

Potential Improvements for future Phase (with additional funding allocation)

Parade Ground	All Parade Ground Improvements	\$475,000
Birding Trail Loop	Evaporator Toilet (North Parking Lot)	\$ 90,000
Birding Trail Loop	Two (2) Timber Bridges (Plateau Area)	<u>\$225,000</u>
	Total Phased-In Later	\$790,000
	<u>Engineering Savings</u>	<u>\$ 70,000</u>
	TOTAL FUTURE PHASE	\$860,000

MASTER PLAN IMPROVEMENTS (COMPLETE) \$3,810,000

POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS FOR FUTURE PHASE (\$ 860,000)

TOTAL PHASE I ESTIMATE **\$2,950,000**