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Cypress Creek

Park projects contribute to Houston's green space

Agency honors Kickerillo Mischer Preserve, Timber Lane utility district

By KIM JACKSON

Chronicle Correspondent

Two Cypress Creek-area community-driven park projects were lauded this week for their contributions to the Houston-Galveston region's green landscape.

The Houston-Galveston Area Council honored the the Kickerillo Mischer Preserve Acquisition and Plan, and the Timber Lane Utility District Master Park Plan as part of the agency's "2007 Best Practices in Parks and Natural Areas Honor Award" program.

The future Kickerillo Mischer Preserve project off Texas 249 received an award for collaborative efforts between developers, government and citizens in the award competition's "Planning" category. Timber Lane UD was recognized for its outstanding contributions to the region.

Kickerillo Mischer Preserve

Almost three years ago, V&W Partners, a joint venture between the Kickerillo Cos. and Mischer Investment, pledged to donate land to Harris County for a public park. The nearly 100-acre tract sits on Cypress Creek at the southern end of a large 462-acre tract the company purchased from Hewlett-Packard in 2005.

A group of local residents, who formed the HP Park Committee, served as the driving force in lobbying for that park donation. The committee was made up of representatives from the Greater 1960 Tree Alliance, Cypress Creek Flood Control Coalition, area municipal utility districts, homeowners associations and the Legacy Land Trust organization.

V&W Partners sealed its pledge to donate the property with a "memorandum of understanding," and has been working with Harris County and the residents' group to hammer out a tri-party agreement that will determine the future of the Kickerillo Mischer Preserve. The three parties also formed the Friends of the Kickerillo Mischer Preserve, which meets monthly to work out the details of that agreement, which should be signed, sealed and delivered later this year.

"The three partners are thrilled to be acknowledged," said Linn Smyth, an original member of the HP Park Committee, and now the Friends of the Kickerillo Mischer Preserve. "We have worked very hard to get this far, and hope this project will serve as a model for other governmental/developer/community park projects. This project is a win-win for all of us, and this award is the icing on the cake."

Tentative plans call for the acreage to be developed as a nature preserve with lakes and hike-and-bike trails.

Smyth said the park will be rustic and unnoticeable with preservation a key component in the plan. She said it will be a place for people to ride bikes, walk, birdwatch and commune with nature.

Precinct 4 Harris County Commissioner Jerry Eversole has committed to contribute park bond funds to the development of the Kickerillo-Mischer Preserve once that land is officially donated to Harris County.

Timber Lane UD

Last fall, the Timber Lane Utility District opened the first five miles of a trail system that will eventually link together three parks in the north Harris County community along Cypress Creek off Aldine-Westfield Road.

The 10-mile Timber Lane Utility District trail system will tie together the water district's 37-acre Sandpiper Park near Treaschwig Road on the district's east end, to the 13-acre Timber Lane Park near Wood River Drive in the center of the district, to the 36-acre Highland Glen Park near Hardy Road at the west end of the district.

The entire plan is mapped out in Timber Lane's innovative Master Parks Plan, which was honored by H-GAC last week.

"We are very excited," said Bud Gessell, a Timber Lane Utility District board member. "This is a big boost in the arm to be recognized for our project."

Timber Lane UD has not taken a breath since opening a 3.5-mile stretch of trails between Timber Lane Park and Highland Glen Park, and another mile-and-a-half coming out of Sandpiper Park in November.

Gessell said Timber Lane UD was awarded a \$160,000 grant from the Texas Department of Parks and Wildlife in November. With an added \$100,000 contribution, in June the utility district will get started on an 1,800-foot section of paved trail that extends out of Sandpiper Park, and the construction of restrooms and a parking lot at that park.

Timber Lane UD was also notified that they were awarded a \$3.75 million grant through H-GAC's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) that will go toward constructing a bridge over Cypress Creek to connect Timber Lane Park to the west end of Harris County Precinct 4's Mercer Arboretum; and a section of trail that links the Memorial Hills and Cypress Trails subdivisions in to the larger trail system.

Cypress Creek runs through the Timber Lane Utility District, which provides water and sewer services to the Timber Lane, Cypress Trails, Sandpiper, Sandpiper Village, Werrington, Arbor Trails, Cypress Terrace, Maple Terrace, Park Spring and Spring Crossing subdivisions and retail areas located north of FM 1960 along Aldine Westfield Road.