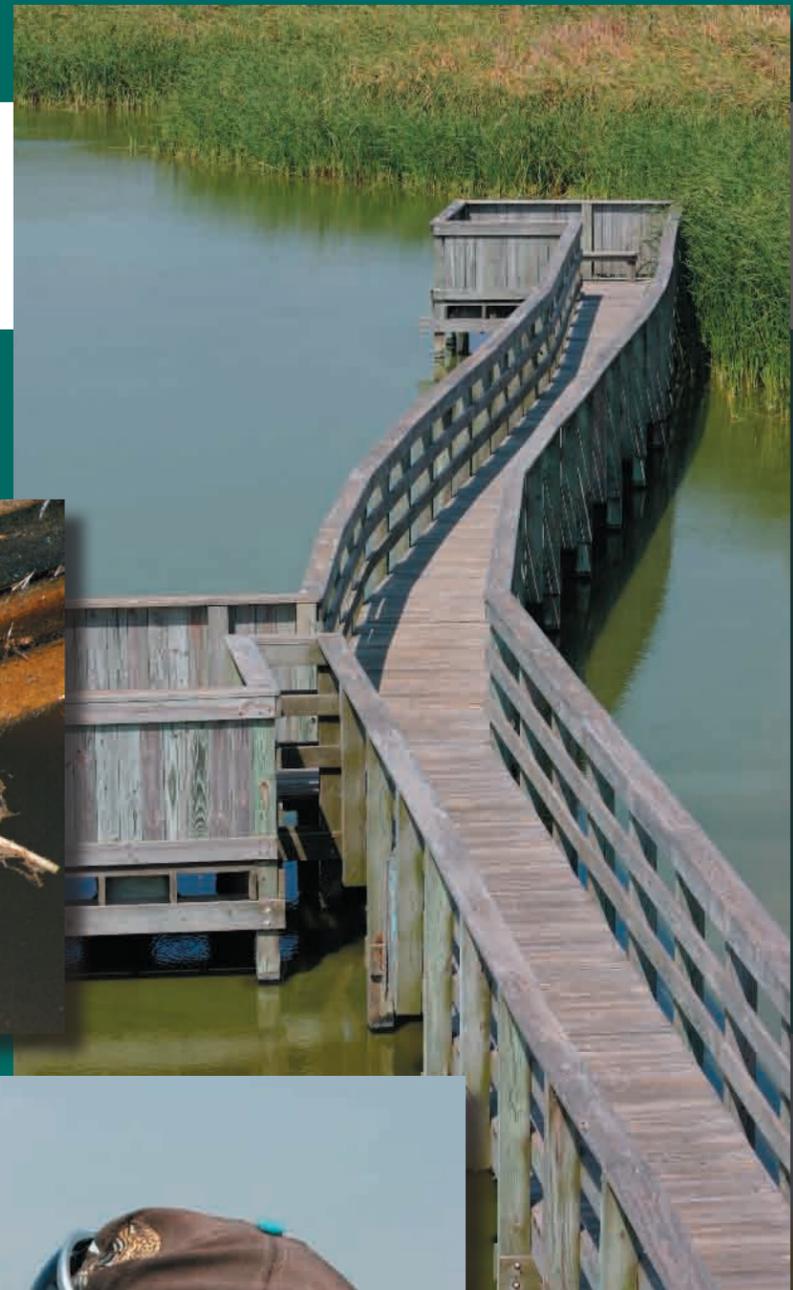


City of Port Aransas  
Nature Preserve Design Guidelines  
April 20, 2006



## Phase One - Design Guidelines

### Node Seven

Outdoor Pavilion  
Observation Point  
Entry Signage and Sculpture  
Entry Fencing

Master Plan Map

Connection Between Node Seven and Node Eight

Design Improvements along Bulkhead from the End of Port Street to Node Eight

### Node Eight

Connection Between Node Eight and Node Ten

### Node Ten

Connection Between Node Eight and Node Twelve

### Node Twelve

## Phase Two - Design Guidelines

### Node One-A

### Node One-B

Connection between Node One-B and Node Two

### Node Two

Connection between Node Two and Node Ten

### Node Three

Connection between Node Three and Node Six

### Node Six

Connection between Node Six and Node Seven

### Node Five

### Node Eleven

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The City of Port Aransas, Texas partnered with Land Design Partners to prepare the City of Port Aransas Nature Preserve Master Plan. The plan was developed between June 2005 and March 2006 by staff from Land Design Partners and includes the professional expertise of the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory and J.R. Thompson Engineering. The plan reflects a range of issues and levels of planning from the broad-scale contextual relationships of the preserve in the community to the details of integrated on-site design.

An integral part of the success of the City of Port Aransas Nature Preserve Master Plan was the tremendous public involvement and the contributions of City staff. Listed below are specific key individuals who participated in the public involvement process. We appreciate their guidance, input and vision.

## **City of Port Aransas**

Michael Kovacs  
Gary Mysorski  
David Parsons  
Rachael King

## **Port Aransas Parks and Recreation Board**

Charlie Zahn, Chairman  
Don Anz  
John Fucik  
Sharon Grumbles  
Scott Holt  
Debbie Kalke



## **Design Review Group Members**

Ray Allen, Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program, Inc.  
Tony Amos, University of Texas Marine Science Institute (Retired)  
Don Anz, Keep Port Aransas Beautiful  
Susan Armanov, Port Aransas 4-H Club  
Patsy Balcom, Port Aransas 4-H Club  
Sharon Burns, Port Aransas Garden Club  
Chuck Cazalas, County Commissioner, Pct. 4  
Carolyn Chancellor, Port Aransas Native Plant Society  
Robyn Cobb, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Services  
Nancy Donley, Port Aransas Garden Club  
Manuel Freytes, General Land Office /TX A&M Natural Resource Center  
Jerry Hauske, Shiner-Moseley  
Joan Holt, University of Texas Marine Science Institute  
Kay Jenkins, Texas Department of Parks & Wildlife  
Eliza Large, Port Aransas Citizens  
Mary Moss, Nueces County Water District No. 4  
Shirlee Page, Port Aransas Garden Club  
Cameron Perry, Shiner-Moseley  
Blake Pettis, Nueces County Parks & Recreation  
Linda Price May, Coastal Bend Land Trust  
Suann Pyle, Port Aransas Girl Scouts  
Tina Rabalais, Port Aransas Preservation and Historical Association  
Jesse Solis, General Land Office /TX A&M Natural Resource Center  
Francis Stokes, Recreation Development Corporation  
Jim Urban, Urban Engineering  
Ann Vaughan, Port Aransas Chamber of Commerce  
Kate Williams, Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program, Inc.

In 2004, the City of Port Aransas allocated \$2 million dollars in Certificates of Obligation to develop the Port Aransas Nature Preserve. The total project is outlined in this document and Phase One (pages 3-11) will use the majority of the available funds from the Bond Certificates.

Two main criteria guided the inclusion of elements that are part of the Phase One and Phase Two developments.

First, the Design Review Group and the Port Aransas Parks and Recreation Board wanted to open the interior of the Nature Preserve to passive recreational use. In its current state, much of the preserve is accessible only along the perimeter.

Second, the design team wanted to include elements that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE) would permit using only a COE Nationwide Permit (NWP). This permit already exists in the name of the COE and covers many activities that are frequently encountered in design improvements along waterways and wetlands of the United States. If improvements can be permitted under the NWP, a permit may be obtained within six months to one year. Activities or improvements that are not covered by the Nationwide Permit require review under a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Individual Permit (IP) that can take eighteen months to two years to process. Thus, to begin construction within the shortest timeframe, the design team has recommended amenities for Phase One Improvements that have the best chance of being permitted under an NWP.

Considering these criteria, Nodes Seven, Eight and Ten and the trails connecting these destinations were selected for the Phase One Improvements. (See map - Port Aransas Nature Preserve Improvements)

Each of these nodes is described below and the accompanying pictures and sketches of the nodes detail the intent and character of these areas.

## **Node Seven**

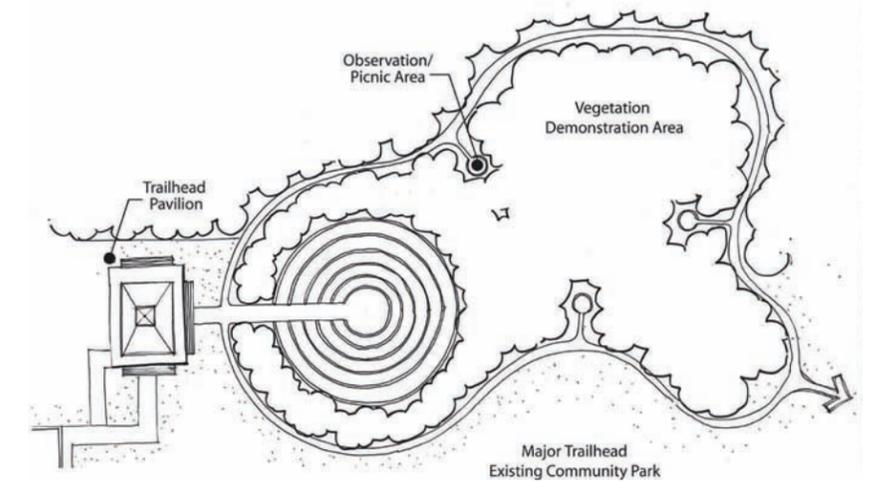
Node Seven is situated at the western side of the Port Aransas Community Park. This location allows the City of Port Aransas to use existing parking and utility infrastructure and is convenient for local residents, visitors and guests who frequent the Community Park. It is already a familiar point of entry for the community and provides for easy maintenance and upkeep by City staff.

### **Outdoor Pavilion**

The anchor amenity for Node Seven is a large, open-air pavilion. This covered facility, with a core area of 2,560 square feet (40' x 64'), is situated to take advantage of the prevailing southeasterly breezes. The pavilion would be enclosed and a proposed layout of interior program space is shown below:

#### Pavilion Interior Square Footage

Interpretive Display Room	500 SF
Restrooms	300 SF
Manned Information Desk	100 SF
Gift / Merchandise Area	300 SF
Educational Classroom	475 SF
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,675 SF</b>



**Node 7 Plan Sketch**

This site serves as a major trailhead for the Nature Preserve and since it is enclosed, will eventually have the basic infrastructure (restrooms, air conditioning, gift/merchandise area, and conference/meeting rooms) to support the Nature Preserve.

Another design element includes a wrap-around porch on the perimeter of the pavilion that provides an intimate setting. When the roll-up doors are lowered, the porch provides a transition from the exterior and interior space.

The concept sketches also indicate that the pavilion is elevated three to four feet above the existing grade. The rise is minimal in an area where the surrounding terrain is flat, but raising the structure highlights the pavilion and establishes it as the focus of this major trailhead.

The finish to the pavilion is painted metal with painted wood accents. The architectural style mimics that of the Tarpon Inn and includes colors that are synonymous with both the Nature Preserve and the Gulf of Mexico.

LEGEND

- Public Land
- Hike and Bike Trails
- Guided Trails
- Pedestrian Trails
- Roadway
- Temporary Roadway
- Observation Point
- Existing Observation Point
- Major Trailhead
- Minor Trailhead
- Remediation Area
- Primitive Camping Area



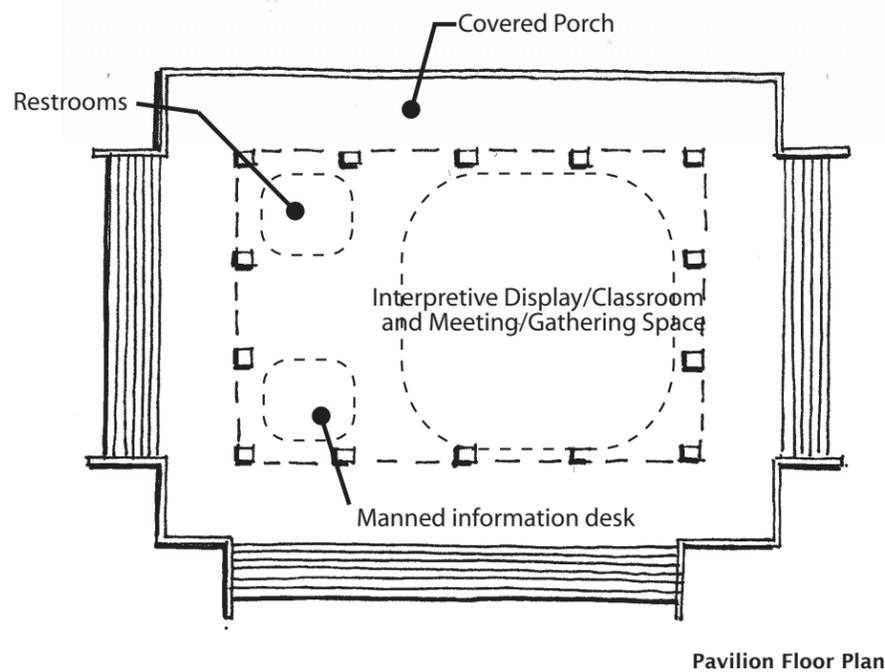
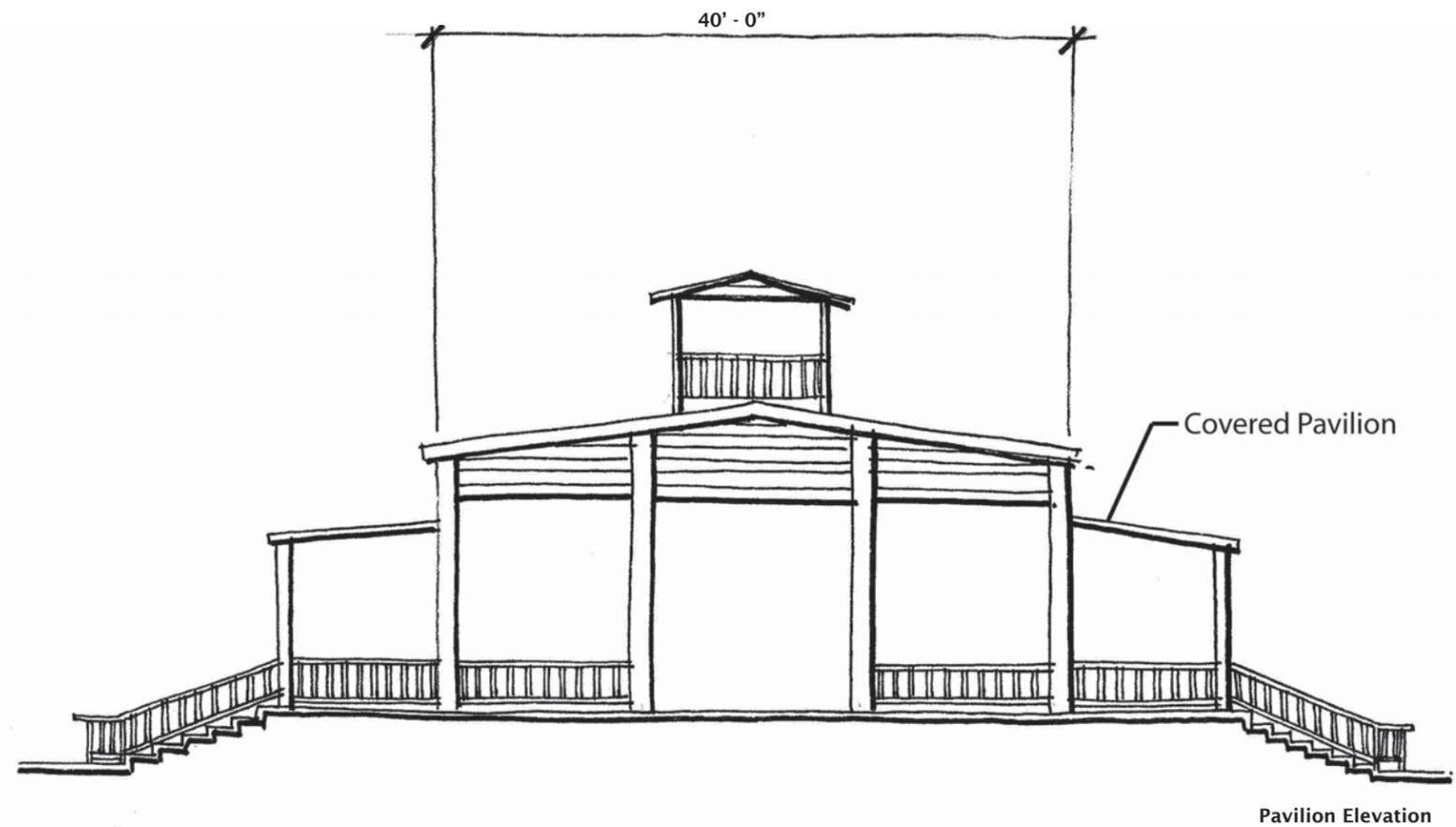
# PORT ARANSAS NATURE PRESERVE

October 24, 2005

Proposed Trail Layout



# PHASE 1 - DESIGN GUIDELINES



The separation between the pavilion and picnic areas also allows space for planned elements and activities to occur. One focus of the master plan is for people to have a successful experience as soon as they enter the preserve and this area can be programmed to make that experience happen.

A quarter-mile loop trail is short enough that it can be easily walked by young and old alike. It also provides the gateway to the multiuse trail that leads to Node Eight, the bulkhead along the Corpus Christi Ship Channel and the City Fishing Pier at Charlie's Pasture.

Interpretive signage and educational components about the Nature Preserve, combined with seasonal plantings and seating areas, can be included along the trail. The central core of this area can be used as an outdoor education classroom area.

## Entry Signage and Sculpture

Important elements at the major trailheads include entry signage, way-finding markers and educational sculptures.



Samples of Observation Points



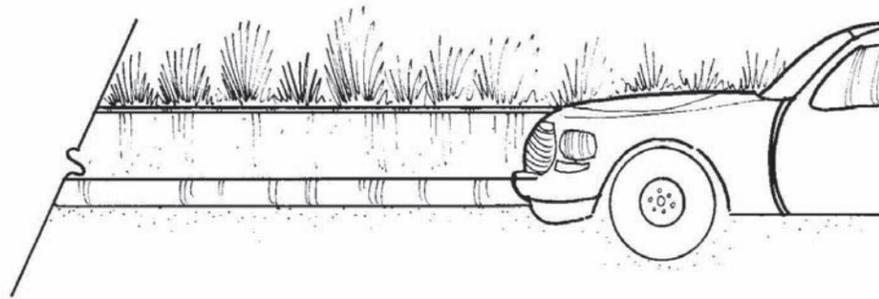
Sample Trailhead/Realistic Sculpture



Samples of Entry Signage/Sculpture

# PHASE 1 - DESIGN GUIDELINES

## Entry Fencing (Vehicular Barrier Control)



Concrete Barrier Wall

## Connection Between Node Seven and Node Eight

A five-foot wide concrete path currently extends from the western edge of the Community Park to several viewing pavilions approximately halfway to Node Eight. The concrete needs repair in several areas but this existing trail is in good shape overall.

The master plan proposes using the existing sidewalk and complementing it with interpretive signage and way-finding markers.

At the end of the existing sidewalk, the master plan calls for a new concrete path with an integral sand color finish to match the decomposed granite trails that will be found at other portions of the Nature Preserve. The path is five feet wide to keep an intimate trail experience.



Existing Trail



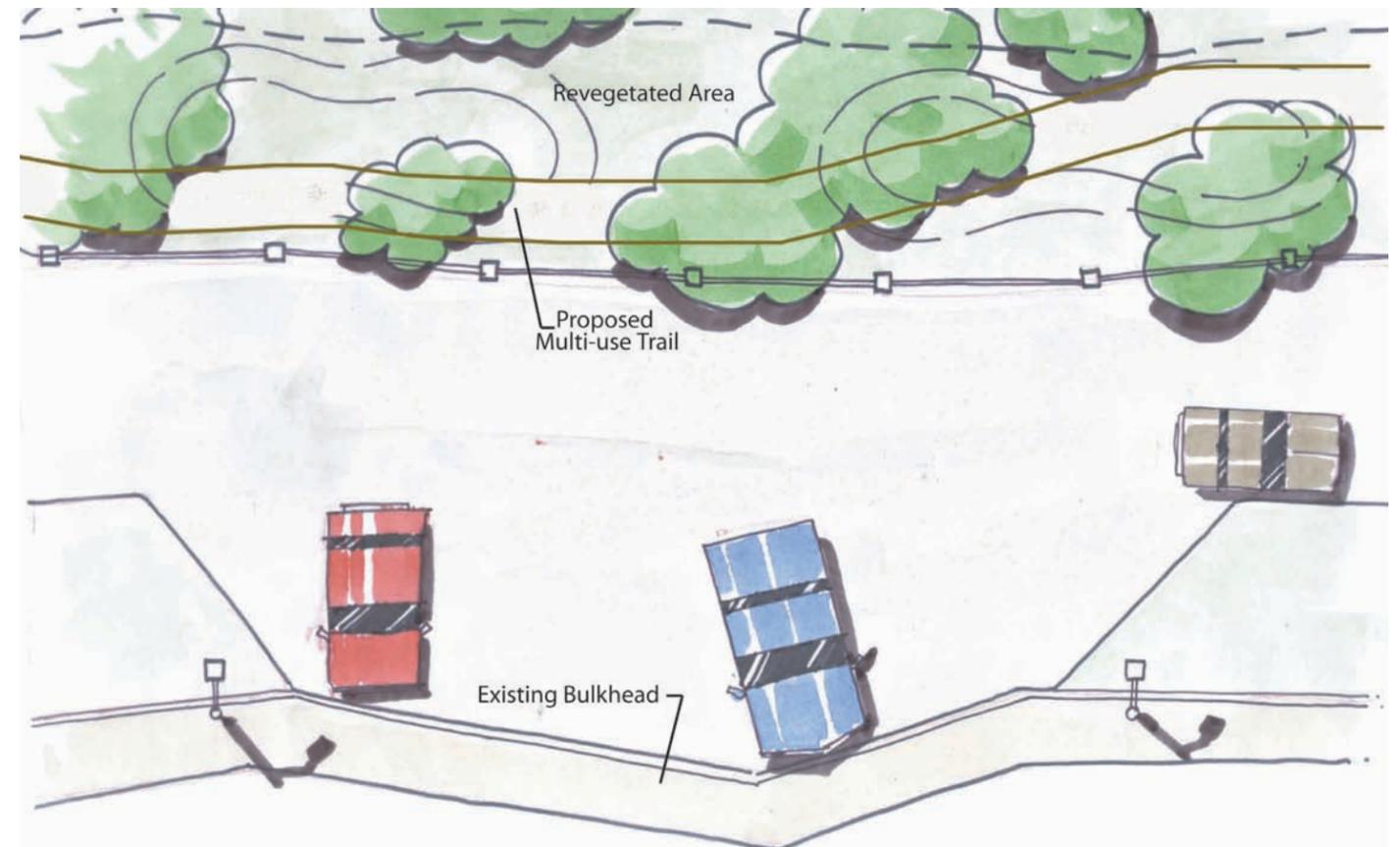
Section of Connecting Trail

## Design Improvements along Bulkhead from the end of Port Street to Node Eight

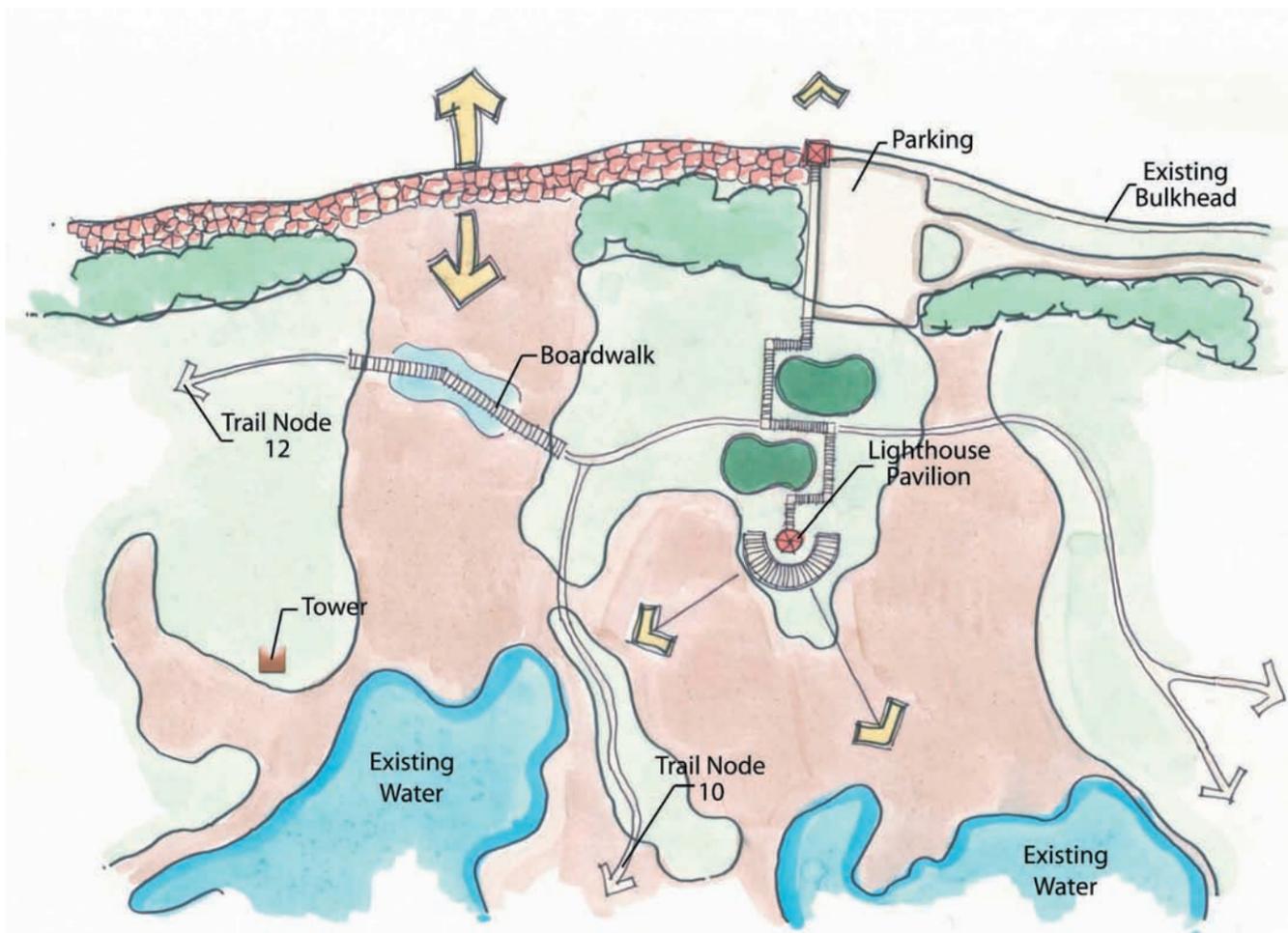
Port Street terminates at the parking area for the City Fishing Pier.

Phase One Improvements for the Nature Preserve propose to extend the 24' section of asphalt roadway 3,600 linear feet to the major trailhead of Node Eight. The roadway does not have a curb and gutter drainage system and will be very informal. Visitors to the bulkhead may pull off the roadway at any point along the drive to use the parking spaces along the bulkhead.

During the construction of the bulkhead, areas as wide as 200' have been bladed and stripped of vegetation. Phase One Improvements include reclaiming some of the land along the Nature Preserve side of the proposed roadway extension and re-introducing native vegetation for birding habitat. Current access points into the preserve can also be closed off using painted metal fence and natural berms. In addition, planting areas along the bulkhead are proposed for shade purposes.



Bulkhead Drive



Node 8 Plan Layout

## Node Eight

Node Eight will be located at the end of the existing bulkhead, approximately halfway from the existing fishing pier to the entrance of Piper Channel. Vehicular traffic along the perimeter of the preserve and the bulkhead will end at this node.

This second major trailhead will provide another entrance into the Nature Preserve with parking for approximately twenty four vehicles. Additional overflow parking will be available with the head-in spaces along the bulkhead. From the parking area, there will be a boardwalk and an observation deck facing the Corpus Christi Ship Channel to provide views of tankers, dolphins and other sights and sounds along the waterway.

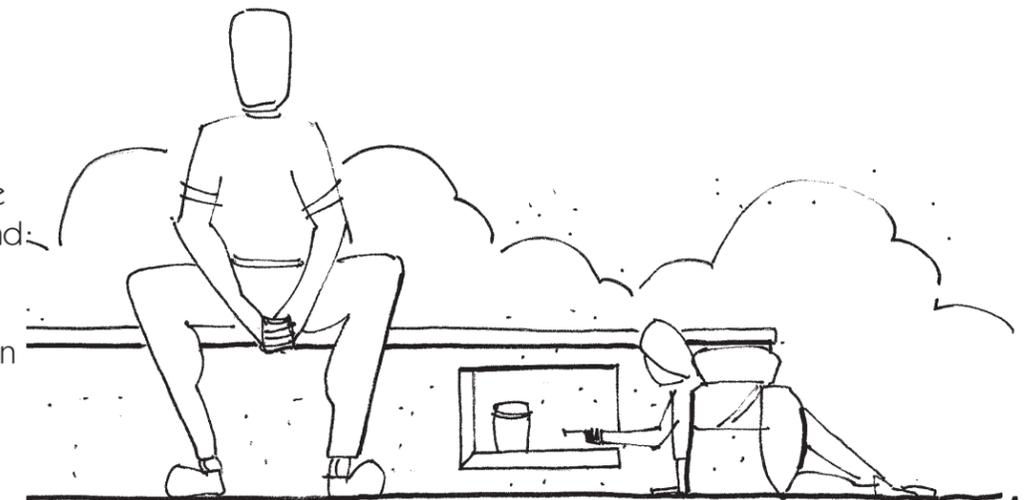
From the channel observation deck, a ten-foot wide ADA-accessible wooden boardwalk with handrails on each side meanders to a pavilion and observation area that are raised three feet above existing grade. The boardwalk also ties into the boardwalk from Node Seven. The elements at this node are shown on upland areas and the boardwalk has switchbacks and landings to bring pedestrian traffic up to the level of the pavilion and observation point.

The pavilion is similar to the outdoor structure at Node Seven and covers approximately 2,500 square feet of space that could be enclosed and air conditioned at a future date for indoor classrooms. The pavilion is bordered by steps on three sides and is ADA-compliant. Two viewing telescopes overlooking the Nature Preserve to the east are located inside the pavilion.

A terraced area with low seat walls that contain discovery boxes can serve as a meeting area or an outdoor classroom near the pavilion.

The discovery boxes, formed with concrete leave-outs as part of the makeup of the walls, complement the interpretive signage. The cubicles can serve as exploration boxes where visitors of all ages leave items found in the preserve (shells, plant leaves, even notes!) to share with future visitors. As part of guided tours, city staff members can also “plant” discovery items in the boxes for educational purposes or scavenger hunts.

Node Eight overlooks two large water bodies. The pavilion at Node Eight is located next to one water body and the Node Eight Observation Tower can be reached by crossing a wetland area via a ten-foot wooden deck with handrails on each side to another upland



Discovery Box and Node Eight Seatwall



Example Observation Deck



Viewing Telescopes

area above the second body of water. Approximately an eighth of a mile from the pavilion, the observation tower, with its own wooden discovery box, invites people to go a little further into the preserve.

A wooden discovery box is included with the wooden structure itself to compliment the discovery boxes at the pavilion seat wall and other observation towers.

An existing observation tower exists at the Leonabelle Turnbull Birding Center. The tower is built of wooden components, unpainted and unstained, and is very aesthetically pleasing. The use of natural materials integrates the element into the scenery of the Nature Preserve.

Because there is precedent for this structure, future observation areas include structures of similar build and finish.

The material finishes are different between the two structures, as the pavilion is more finished (sanded and painted finishes) and the observation structure is rougher in its finish. Instead of trying to make both of the structures mimic each other, the separation allows each structure to have its own character and finish.



Existing Tidal Flat



Current Observation Tower at the Birding Center

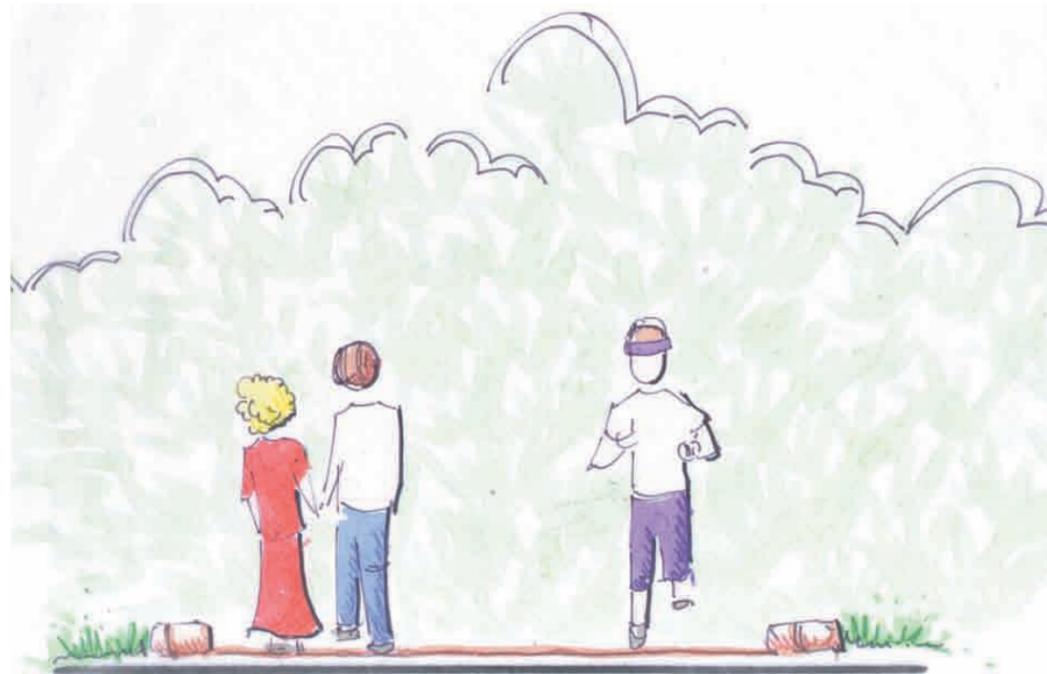


**Tower Sketch**

The observation tower is a dominant vertical structure. As such, it beckons people to it. This draw helps bring people from the parking area of the community center, to the pavilion, and then into the nature preserve itself.

The close proximity of the observation area encourages people to enter and experience the preserve.

The separation between the pavilion and observation area allows a space for other planned elements and space planning to occur. This is particularly important because one of the items that is a focus of the master plan is for people to have a guaranteed successful experience at the preserve as soon as they get there. This can occur in the area between the pavilion and the observation tower.



**Multi-Use Trail Elevation**

### **Connection Between Node Eight and Node Ten**

The trail connection to Node Ten is primarily over tidal flats. Sometimes these areas are underwater; at other times, visitors can travel by foot around the algal areas.

Two possible scenarios exist for the trail connection from Node Eight to Node Ten. A boardwalk can be elevated approximately one foot above finished grade and extend from the upland areas of Node Eight to the upland areas of Node Ten. The boardwalk would be six feet wide with a 2"x 4" lip edge on each side and designated "pedestrian only."

If costs or the triggering of an Individual Permit come into play, the other possibility is to mark a simple path to Salt Island, using wooden four-foot pylons driven into the tidal terrain. These vertical markers have an insignia or way-finding design on each pylon to show the path to the upland areas of Node Ten.

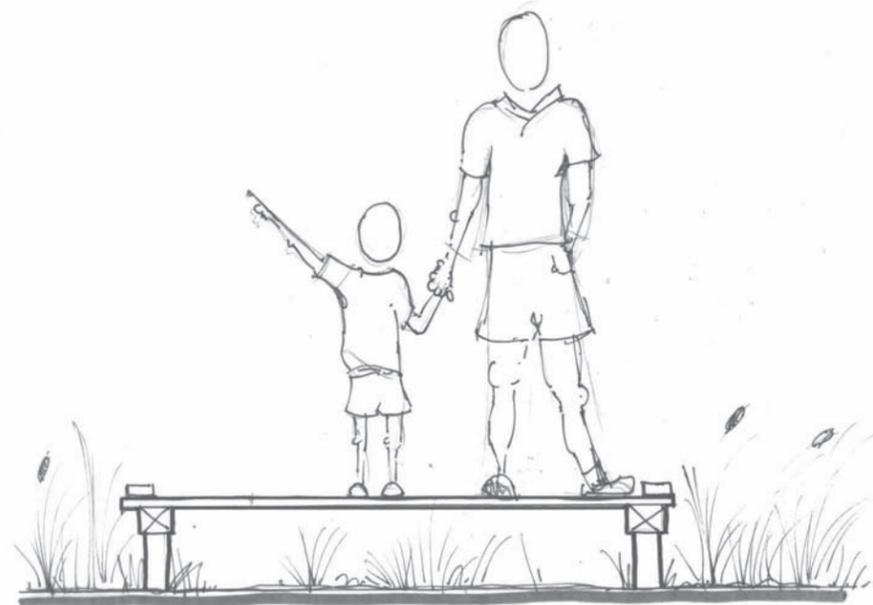
### **Node Ten**

Selectively opening up the interior of the Nature Preserve for low impact use and the observation of wildlife is one main aspect of the master plan and Node Ten fulfills that criteria.

Node Ten is found at Salt Island, a seven-and-a-half acre upland area in the center of the preserve. The island is home to many different viewing and interaction areas, from the grasses of the upland island and numerous shallow flats along the perimeter to one of the best birding areas located towards the east.

An observation tower is located on the island, just beyond the end of the trail connection from Node Eight. The tower provides a panoramic view of the Nature Preserve and also serves as a vertical destination point.

A four-foot wide pedestrian-only trail on the edge of the upland area circles the entire island. This trail is composed of either 90% compacted decomposed granite and 10% crushed oyster shell or mulch chips from eradicated Brazilian pepper trees.



**Boardwalk**

## Connection Between Node Eight and Node Twelve

A good portion of the land between Nodes Eight and Twelve is unofficial upland area. Funding has been allocated for future bulkhead improvements to this area. Two trails are planned from the observation tower at Node Eight.

The trail in the Phase One Improvements is primitive and located on the edge of the upland and tidal flat area. This simple marked route utilizes wooden four-foot pylon vertical markers described previously as an alternative method for the connection between Node Eight and Node Ten.

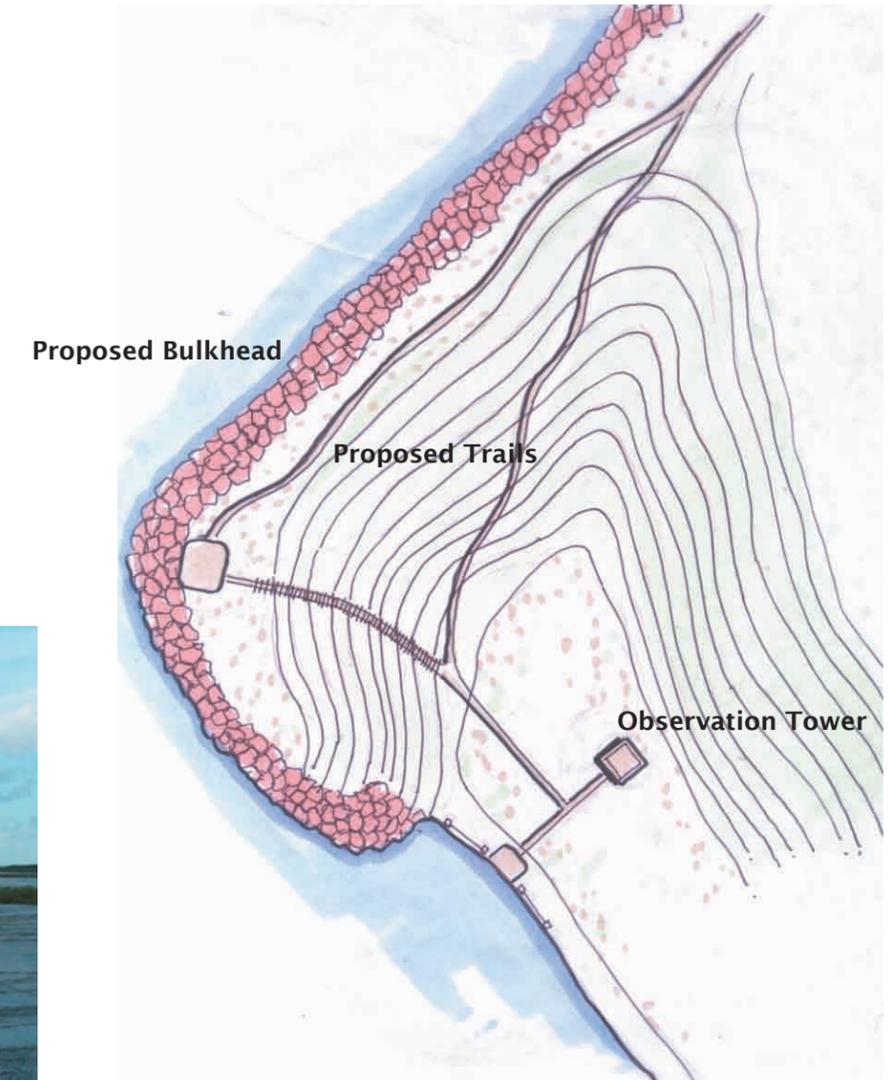
The second segment is a natural trail composed of 90% compacted decomposed granite and 10% crushed oyster shell and it meanders directly behind the future bulkhead improvements. This second trail is not part of the Phase One Improvements.



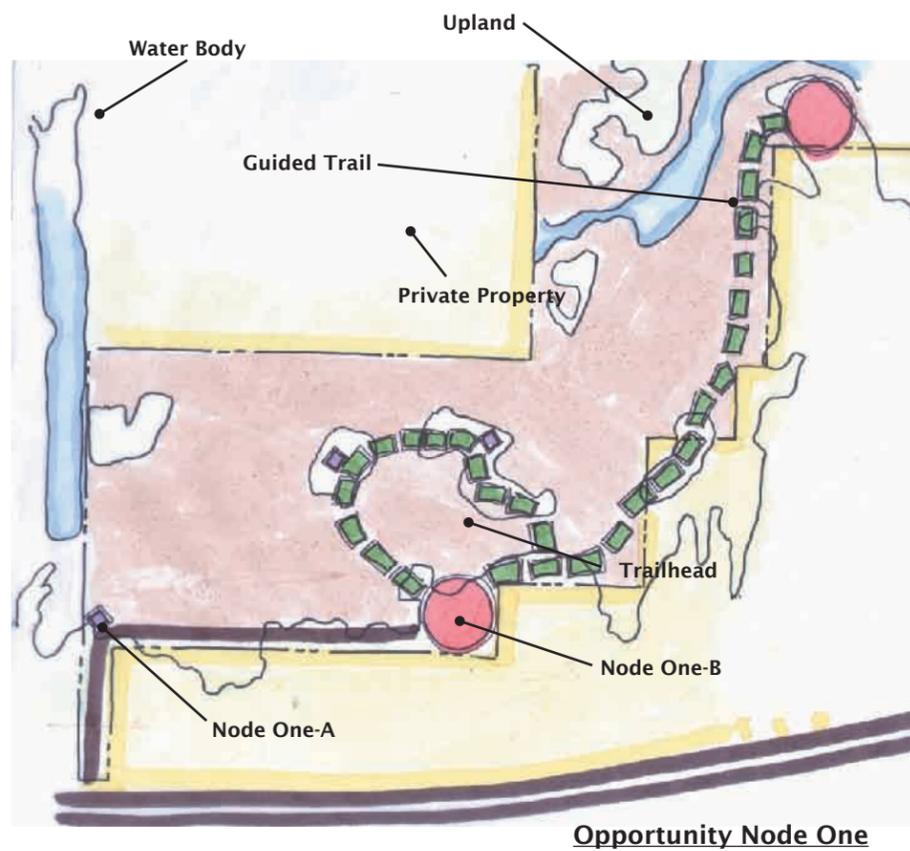
## Node Twelve

Node Twelve provides the western termination point of the Nature Preserve at the intersection of Piper Channel and the Corpus Christi Ship Channel. The elevation rises fifteen feet above the typical grade of the Nature Preserve and offers a commanding view of the Nature Preserve and the ship channel.

Phase One improvements at Node Twelve include an access trail to the viewing tower atop the spoil hill. At a later date, a viewing site at the base of the spoil hill would be incorporated with the design of the bulkhead improvements.



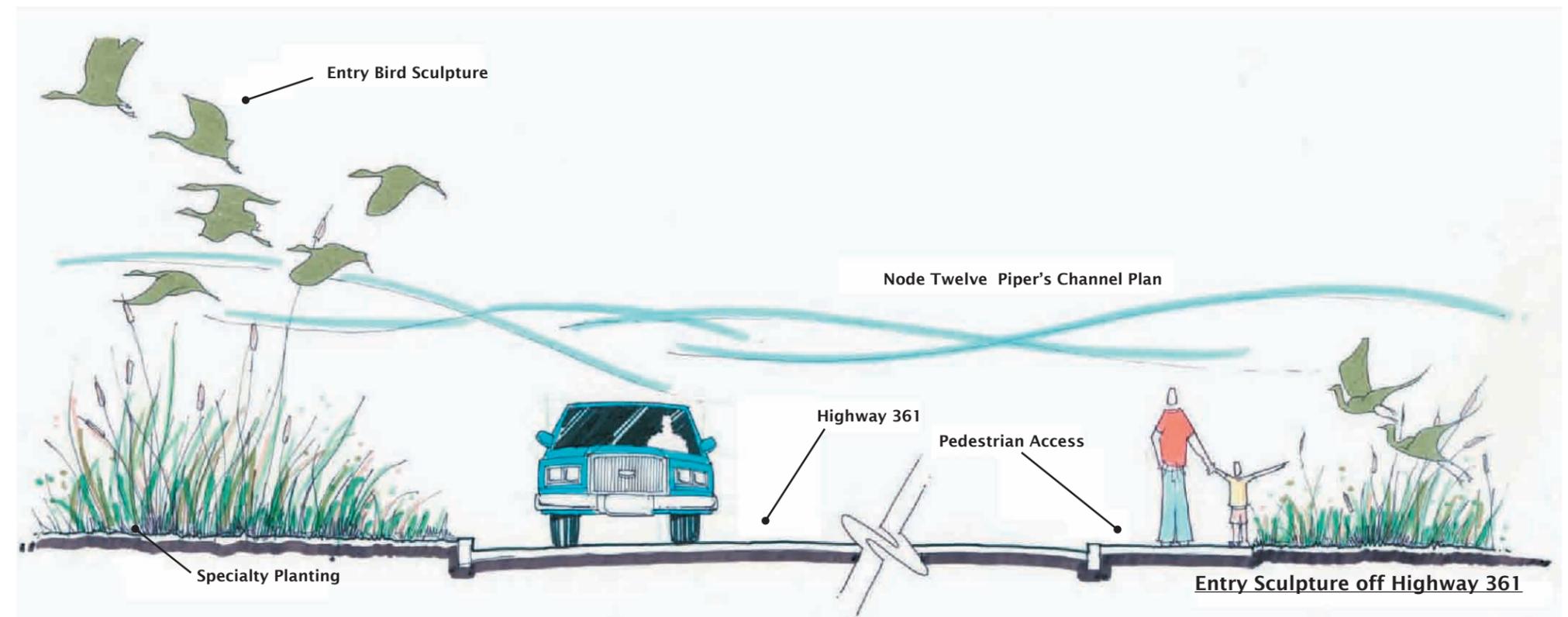
**Node 12 Plan Sketch**



## Node One-A

The Port Aransas Nature Preserve has a 100' wide strip of land at the very southeastern corner of the site that is the only direct access to Highway 361. This node will provide access to the southern-most part of the Nature Preserve.

A twenty-four-foot wide improved roadway of compacted base material is proposed to run six hundred feet from Highway 361 to a minor trailhead with covered parking for up to twelve vehicles at the end of this roadway. A covered viewing pavilion is provided but restroom facilities are not included.



# PHASE 2 - DESIGN GUIDELINES

## **Node One-B**

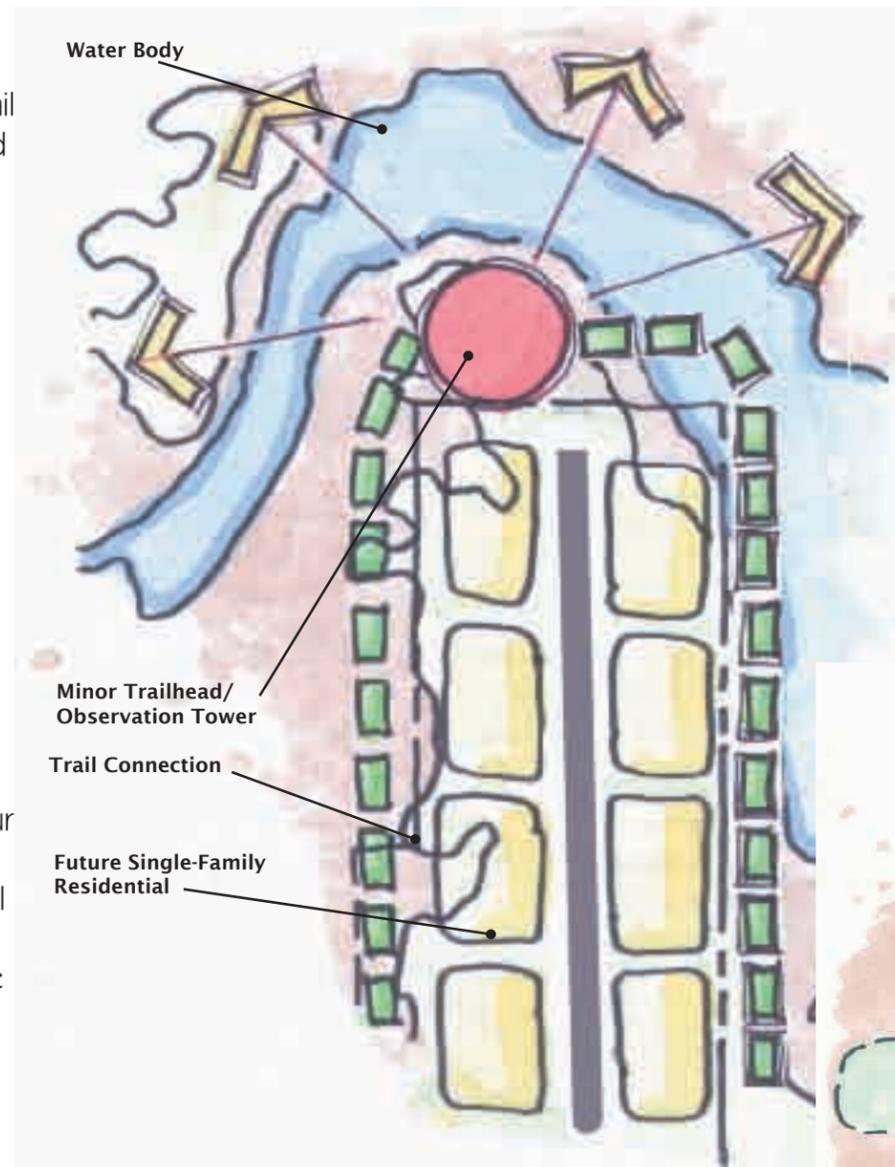
From Node One-A to Node One-B, approximately 40% of the pedestrian-only trail is over wetland areas. The proposed wetland trail is a boardwalk, six feet wide with a 2"x 4" lip edge on each side. The upland trail is a four-foot wide trail composed of 90% compacted decomposed granite and 10% crushed oyster shell.

An observation tower at Node One-B is visible from Highway 361 and will be the landmark to a one-quarter-mile loop trail that takes visitors further into scenic upland and wetland areas of the southern portion of the Nature Preserve.

## **Connection Between Node One-B and Node Two**

The route between Node One-B and Node Two is a guided-only trail. City-sponsored tour guides will lead visitors along this trail only at times during the year determined by seasonal influences and by requests from visitors. The trail will be unimproved and the exact course of the trail will vary with each guide who conducts a tour.

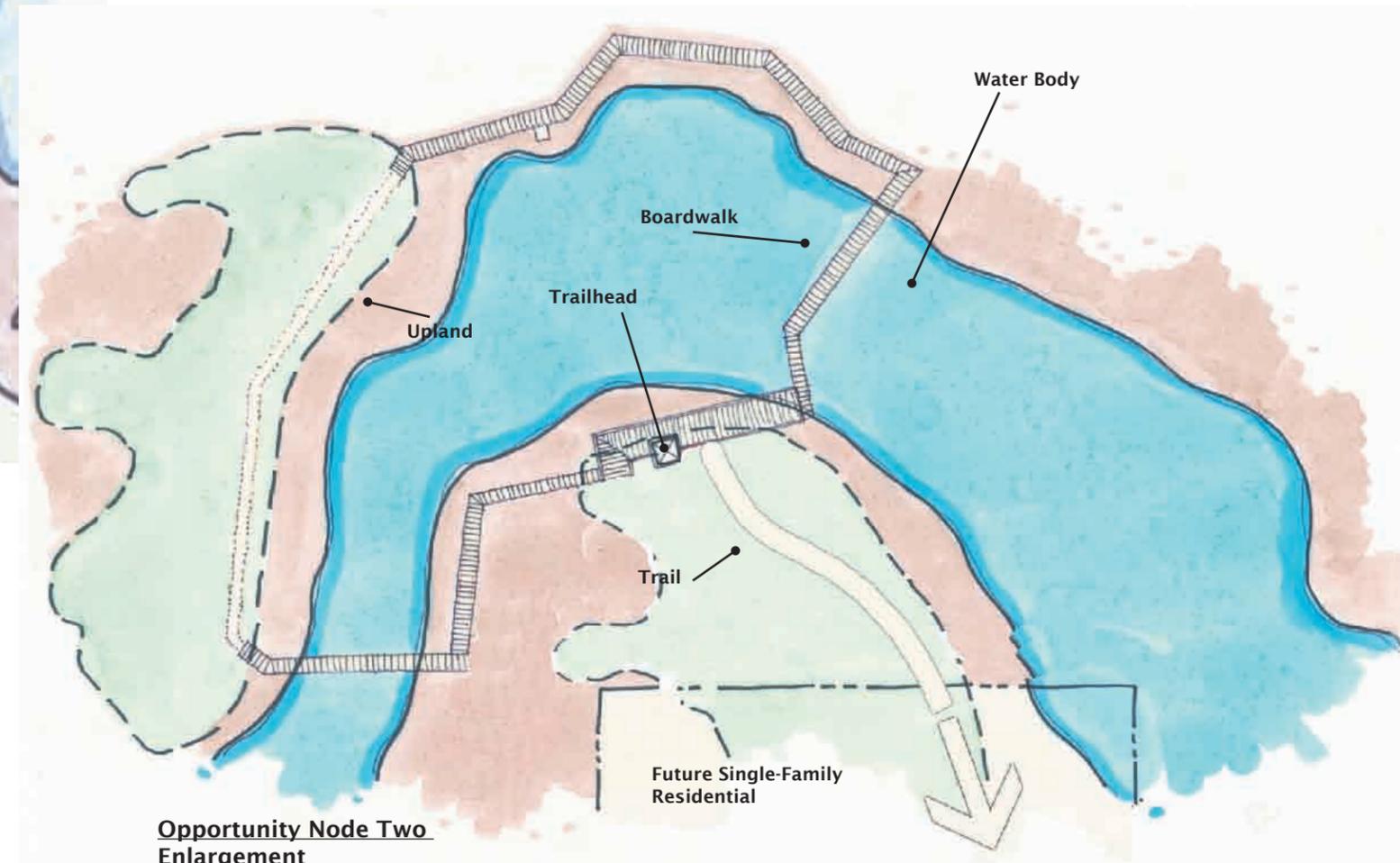
The intent of this link is to provide access to these portions of the Nature Preserve at designated times while limiting permanent intrusion into the eco-sensitive areas.



## **Node Two**

Node Two serves as an observation point for beautiful scenic views of the Nature Preserve to the west. This upland node extends four hundred feet into the Nature Preserve and is surrounded by wetland areas. An observation tower provides access to panoramic views and a one-quarter-mile loop trail meanders into the Nature Preserve over both upland and wetland areas.

Currently, a residential community is proposed for the land directly east of Node Two. As planning for the community continues, a great partnership opportunity exists for the City and the developers to provide access to the point via roadways and trail routes. It is the hope of the design team that the developers will embrace Node Two as part of the fabric of their community and explore a plan to create a multiuse trail connection between Node Two and Node Three.



## Connection Between Node Two and Node Ten

A guided-only trail between Node Two and Node Ten will allow visitors to explore the natural beauty and the environmental sensitivity of the area in the heart of the Nature Preserve on a limited basis under the supervision of designated tour leaders. In the master plan, an unmarked and unimproved trail meanders through some of the most scenic areas in the Nature Preserve and affords abundant viewing opportunities of birds and wildlife.

## Node Three

Node Three serves as a minor trailhead that links the Nature Preserve to Highway 361 and areas east of the highway. It has parking for twelve vehicles and a shade pavilion located at the west end of Howard Boulevard. Way-finding signage will lead visitors into the Nature Preserve.

Node Three serves as the main connection for the multiuse trail to the bulkhead along the shipping channel. This multiuse trail is a major component of this plan and of the City of Port Aransas City-wide Hike and Bike Plan.

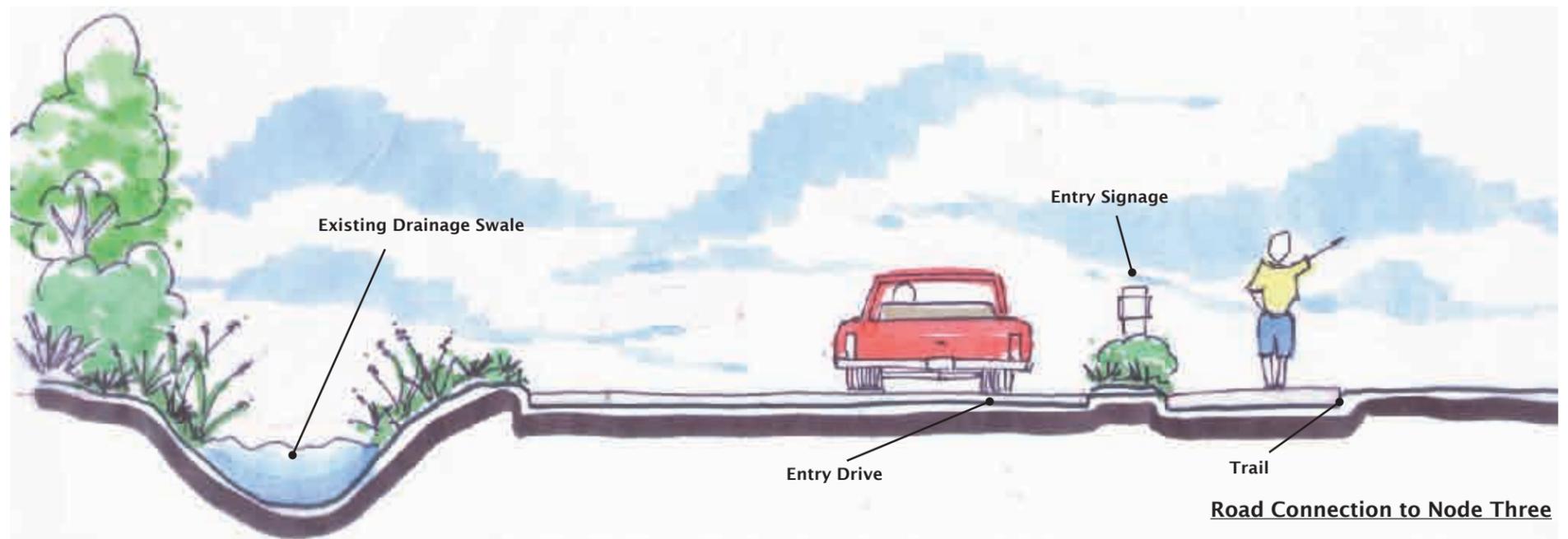
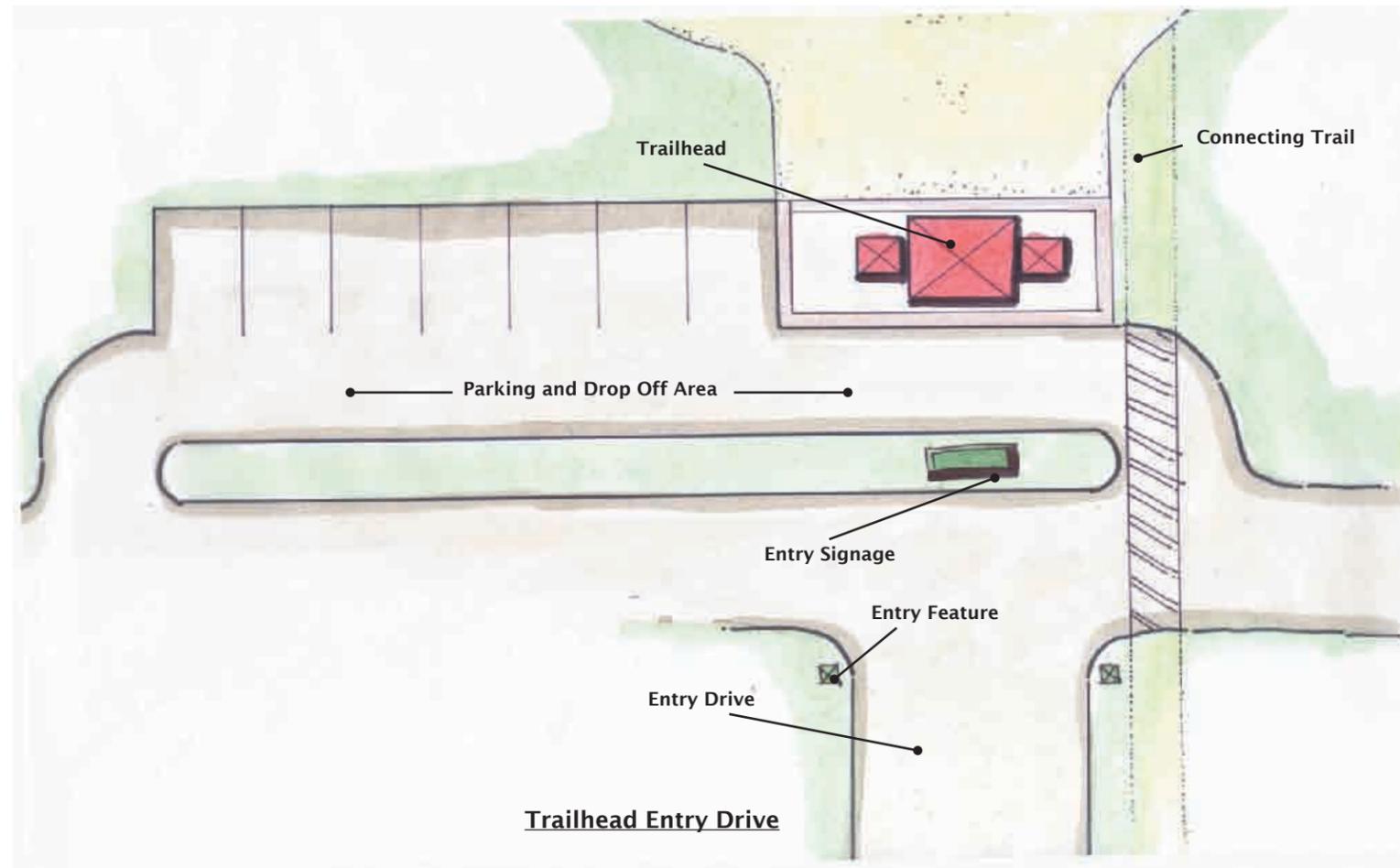
## Connection Between Node Three and Node Six

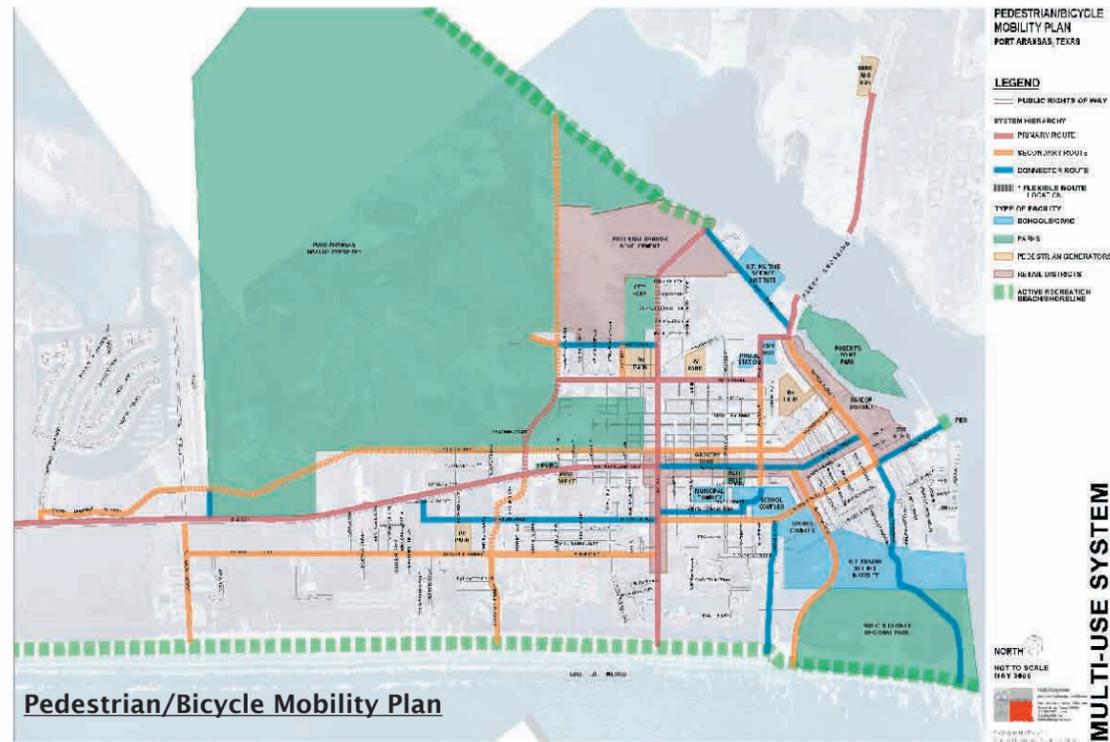
The minor trailhead at Node Three connects to the minor trailhead at Node Six with an eight-foot wide multiuse trail that will be a combination of integral color concrete in the upland areas and wooden boardwalk over the wetland areas.

## Node Six

The existing parking area at the City of Port Aransas Leonabelle Turnbull Birding Center serves as the Node Six minor trailhead for the Port Aransas Nature Preserve. Currently, there is parking available for twelve vehicles at the Birding Center and amenities include a boardwalk, an observation tower and interpretive signage.

There is approximately one-acre of land north of the parking area that could potentially be available for expansion, but no plans for expansion are included in these guidelines at this time.





sometimes includes fish scraps from fishing vessels and the smells are not the most pleasant as visitors go from the Birding Center at Node Six to Node Five. Prevailing winds come from the southeast, blowing the refuse smells away from Node Five; however, sometimes the winds blow directly from the north, carrying those odors into the Node Five area.

In addition to the odor problem, the entrance to Node Five is visually uninteresting. To alleviate this concern, there are recommendations in the master plan to relocate several features of the transfer station or to screen them with a freestanding wall or evergreen plantings. While these issues are problems upon entering the site, once visitors arrive at Node Five, the tranquility of the nature preserve takes over and they feel they are outside of the City.

### Connection Between Node Six and Node Seven

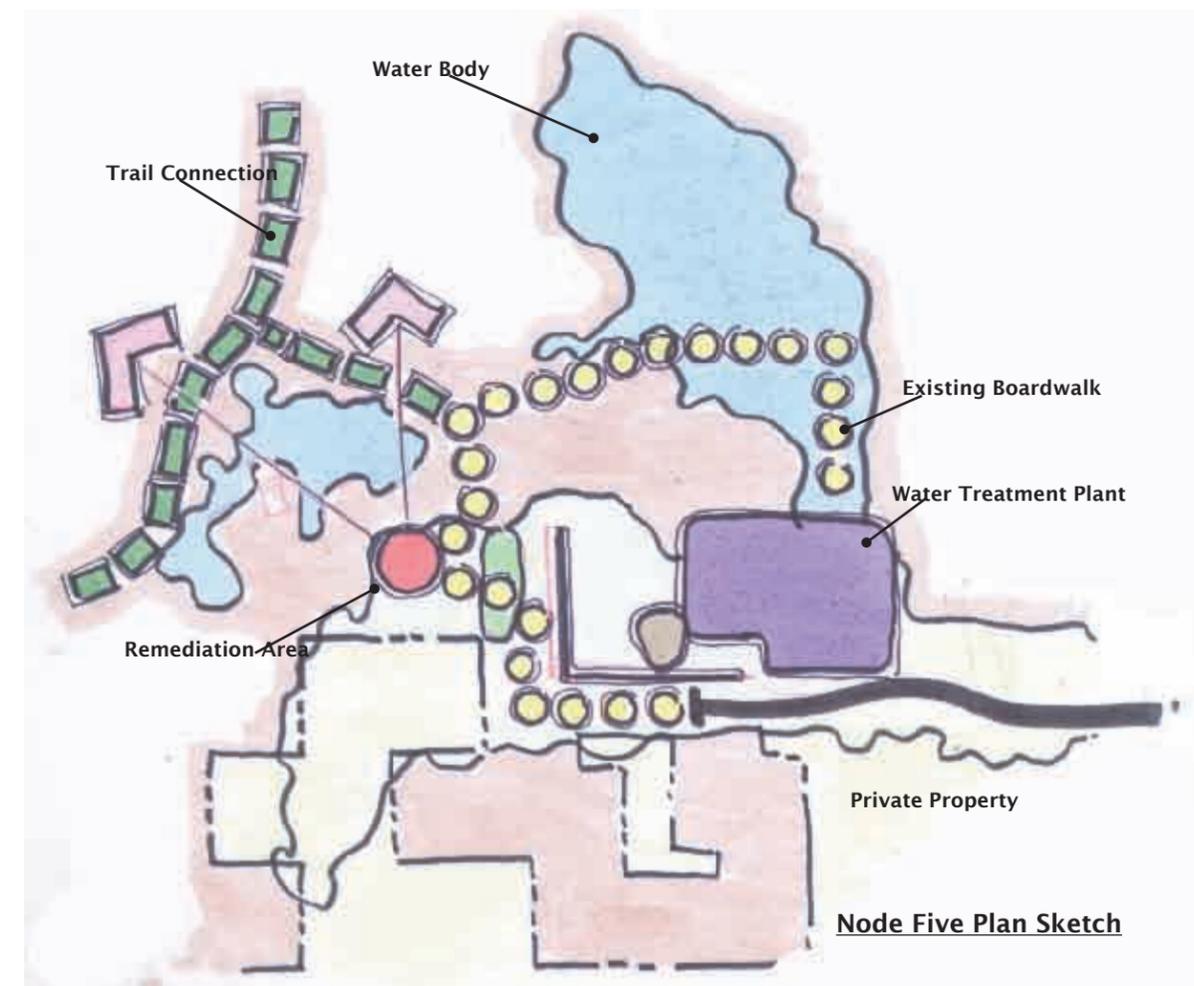
Residents and visitors currently use Ross Avenue as a pedestrian and bicycle route, although there is not a dedicated bicycle lane along this roadway.

Under the master plan, the multiuse trail that continues along Ross Avenue should be expanded to accommodate the additional pedestrian and bicycle use anticipated with the opening of the Nature Preserve. There are upland areas along the entire east side of Ross Avenue, while approximately 50% of the land on the west side of Ross Avenue is wetland area.

This multiuse trail connection will also extend south of the Birding Center to Node Five.

### Node Five

Node Five is located just south of the current City transfer station. This area is unique and also problematic. While the landfill is not operational, the site does serve as a transfer station for waste and according to City staff, there are no plans to change the use of this area in the near future. The material deposited at the transfer station



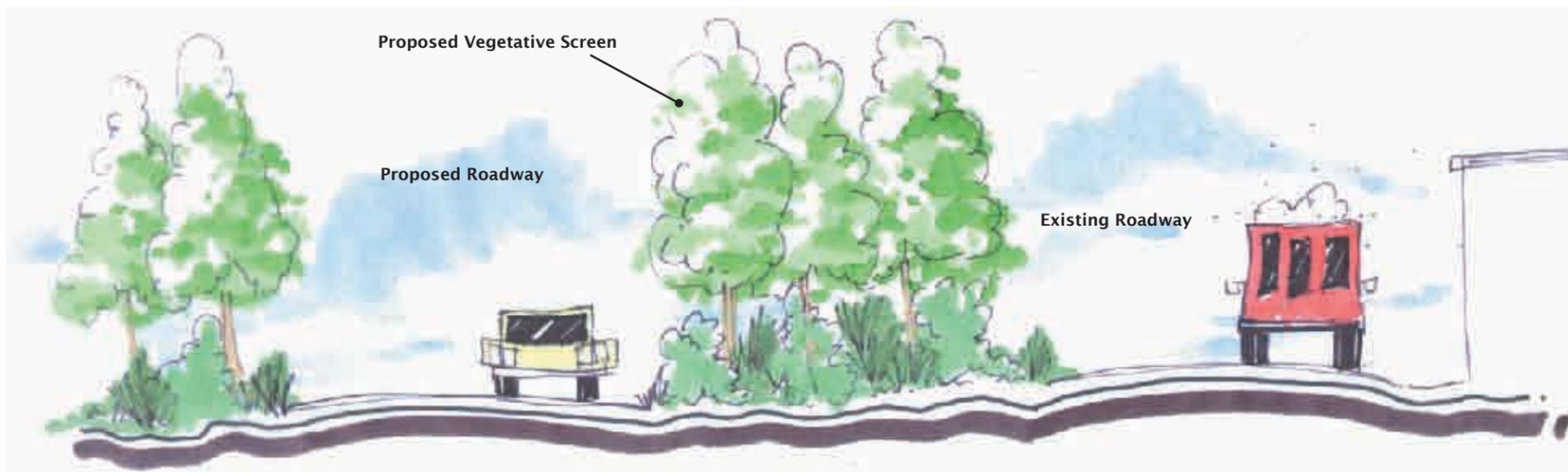
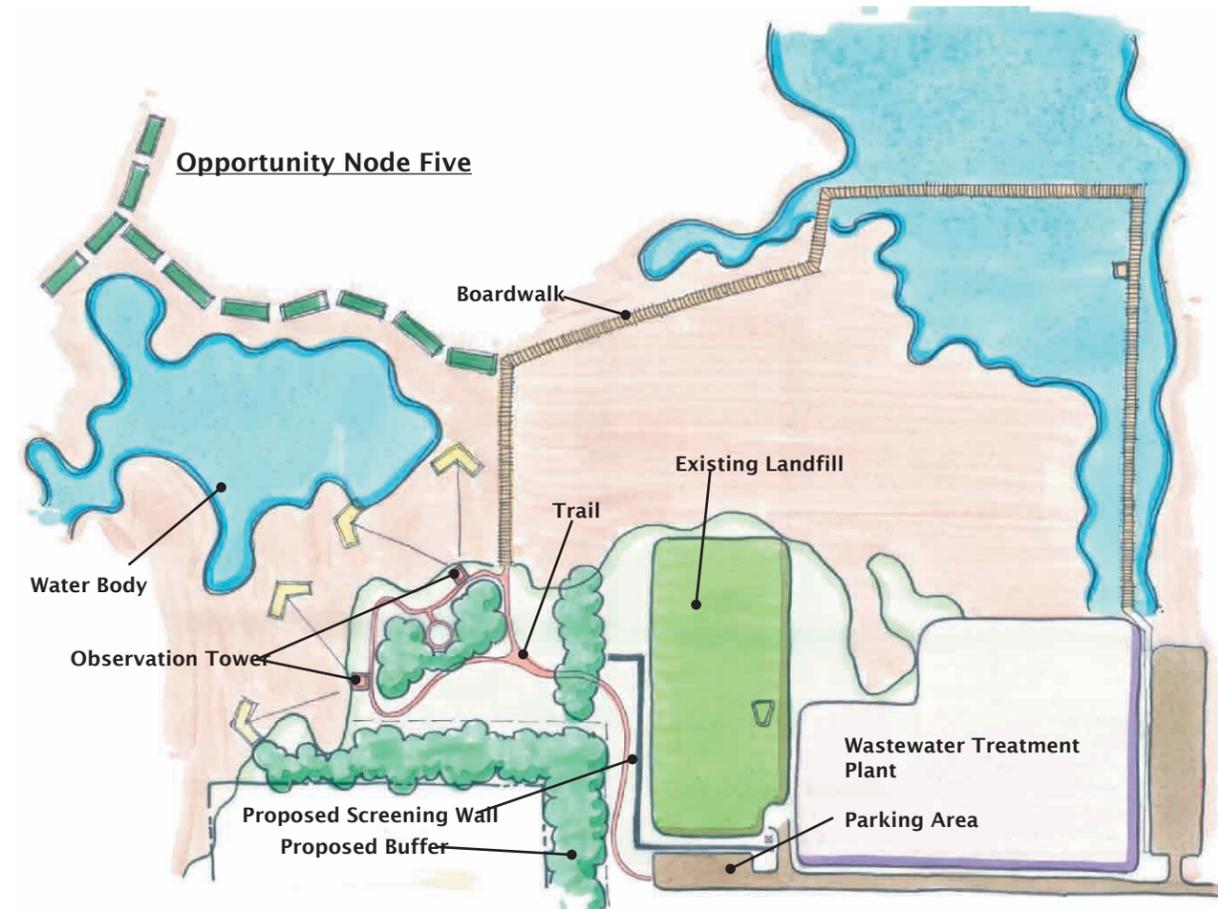
# PHASE 2 - DESIGN GUIDELINES

Node Five is located atop the old landfill on upland areas that are surrounded by wetlands and cattails offering numerous bird viewing opportunities. Amenity improvements for Node Five include an observation tower, a loop trail, interpretive signage and an outdoor classroom. Node Five would be one of the last nodes to be developed under the proposed master plan.

## **Node Eleven**

Node Eleven is targeted for restoration and celebration in the Nature Preserve. Created by past dredging projects, Node Eleven is a long finger lake that currently has minimal value as a habitat for birds or other wildlife. It is located east of the trail corridor from Node Eight to Node Twelve and is surrounded by several spoil piles.

Because of its location and the amount of water in the finger lake, this node has great potential as a wetland restoration and demonstration area. By widening the lake and introducing native plant material, Node Eleven could provide a sustainable habitat. This area would also serve as an on-going project with community participation and an education program about the restoration and preservation of the Port Aransas Nature Preserve.



**Vegetative Buffer Between Park Entry and Landfill Entry**

