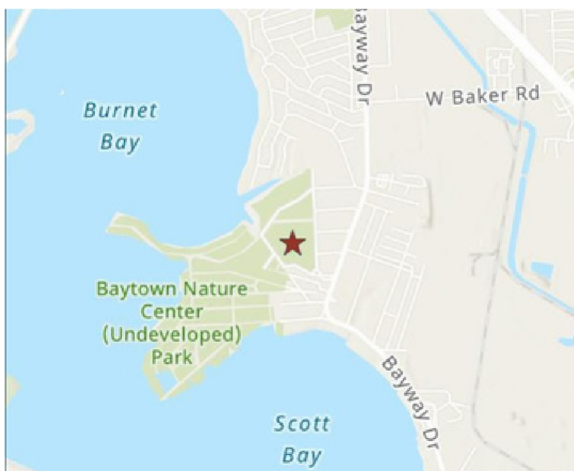




Baytown Nature Center Education Facility and Arboretum Gardens Phase I



Location:

Baytown Nature Center – 6213 Bayway, Baytown, TX 77520

Description:

This project proposes the construction of a nature education facility and surrounding arboretum gardens, serving as both a new home for existing programs at the Eddie V. Gray Wetlands Center and an ecotourism draw for the City. The current Wetlands Center faces ongoing facility maintenance and flooding issues due to its age and location on Goose Creek.

Benefits:

The Baytown Nature Center Education Facility and Arboretum Gardens will deliver modern education infrastructure, including classrooms, lab and exhibit space to support STEM-based learning opportunities and bolster ecotourism activities in the City. Arboretum gardens Phase I will add an additional learning/ecotourism element, based on concept plans completed during the 2030 Parks and Recreation Master Plan project.

Project Timeline

Grant Application	Grant Award	Design Start	Construction Start
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Project Budget

\$13,000,000

Bond Funding

\$13,000,000

Grant Funding

\$0



Baytown Nature Center Education Facility and Arboretum Gardens Phase I (Page 2)



Additional Information

This project involves design and construction of a new Nature Education Facility, including classroom space and outdoor Arboretum gardens. The current Eddie V. Gray Wetlands Education Center, operating since 1998 in a renovated bowling alley on the banks of Goose Creek, has ongoing issues with flooding and aging infrastructure, as well as space constraints that limit the group size that can visit. Currently all 5th and 7th graders and a portion of 9th graders in Goose Creek ISD attend programs at both facilities throughout the school year. In 2025, 8 local districts and 6 private schools also utilized the centers. However, each year schools are turned away because they need space for larger groups, or space that's not weather dependent for their programs. There is a clear need for more functional educational space.

The Baytown Nature Center currently has NO indoor education space, severely limiting the number of programs that can be offered. Being at the mercy of both weather and climate restrictions is not ideal for growth in valuable educational programs. A new greenhouse will be constructed on the site of the proposed Nature Center soon, which will increase the value of adding a new arboretum at the site. The Arboretum addition to the Nature Center will include educational and aesthetically inviting gardens, tree trails, and interpretive signage, inviting visitors to learn about forestry and its economic and health benefits. The site has been promoted as the future Chandler Arboretum site for years, building on plans started thirty years ago with the Chandler Family Foundation.

The current location of the Wetlands Center lends itself to repeated threats of flooding during storm seasons. In 2008, Hurricane Ike flooded the center with 4 feet of water, destroying exhibits and fixtures and closing the facility for months. Hurricane Harvey brought in a foot of water, also closing the facility for months. At the Nature Center, the proposed location of the Nature/Arboretum Center is in an area above the floodplain, lessening the chances of storm related damage and closures.

A nature center serves as a powerful draw for tourism. It provides educational opportunities for all ages, with interactive exhibits, guided hikes, and wildlife observation areas that increase appreciation for nature and the environment. As the City moves toward expanding its offerings for tourism, adding an ecotourism facility would attract environmentally conscious travelers, boosting Baytown's economy and enhancing its reputation as a forward-thinking, eco-friendly destination. The Nature Center would also serve as community meeting space, wedding venue and recreation hub.

This project directly aligns with the Parks, Recreation, Trails, and Open Space Master Plan, adopted by City Council on August 12, 2021. Specifically, Strategy 5.2.2 calls for the relocation of the Eddie V. Gray Wetlands Center to the Baytown Nature Center to improve the alignment of educational programs and remove logistical impediments, while Strategy 5.2.5 calls for the development of the George and Freda Chandler Arboretum at the Baytown Nature Center site. Both projects are listed as 3–10 year improvement priorities.

Project Timeline

Grant Application	Grant Award	Design Start	Construction Start
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Project Budget

\$13,000,000

Bond Funding	\$13,000,000
Grant Funding	\$0



Baytown Nature Center Education Facility and Arboretum Gardens Phase I (Page 3)



Figure 1 The Wetlands Center flooded after Hurricane Ike in 2008



Figure 2 Current Wetland Facility Location



Figure 3 Design Proposal – NOT FINAL DESIGN

Project Timeline

Grant Application	Grant Award	Design Start	Construction Start
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Project Budget

\$13,000,000

Bond Funding	\$13,000,000
Grant Funding	\$0