

Second phase of Exploration Green flood-control project in Clear Lake complete

By [Olivia Pulsinelli](#) – Assistant managing editor, Houston Business Journal

Oct 13, 2020, 3:43pm EDT

The second phase of a major local flood-control project has wrapped up amid a record-breaking hurricane season.

Clear Lake City Water Authority recently completed work on the second phase of the 178-acre Exploration Green project on a former golf course, according to a press release from Houston-based Lockwood, Andrews & Newnam Inc., the project's design engineer.

The second phase features a 26.2-acre detention pond, 18 acres of natural habitat with wetlands, and 1.3 miles of hike-and-bike trails. The first phase, which was completed in April 2018, included a 23.7-acre detention pond, 15.2 acres of natural habitat with wetlands, and 1.25 miles of hike-and-bike trails.

The overall project will feature five detention ponds — each holding 100 million gallons of stormwater — as well as 105 acres of natural habitat with wetlands and native grass land areas, 6 miles of hike-and-bike trails, two athletic fields and other amenities. Of the 40,000 people living in the direct Clear Lake area, nearly 70% will be within walking distance from one of the sections of Exploration Green, with the other 30% less than a mile from part of the project.

"Exploration Green is transforming Clear Lake from a flood-prone community into one of the most flood-resilient communities in Texas," said [Wayne Swafford](#), LAN's president. "In addition, it is creating a healthy, sustainable neighborhood for its residents."

The first pond protected at least 150 homes from flooding during Hurricane Harvey in 2017 — and it was only about 80% complete at the time. The area also

withstood Tropical Storm Imelda in 2019 and Tropical Storm Beta just weeks ago. When all five phases are finished in 2021, Exploration Green is expected to protect between 2,000 and 3,000 homes near the floodplains by Horsepen Bayou.

“With the recently completed Phase 2 undergoing a test from Tropical Storm Beta, it was a great indicator to see how well Phase 1 and 2 integrated together,” said [Jennifer Morrow](#), CLCWA’s general manager. “This opportunity to provide retrofitted detention to a community previously struggling with drainage has been a huge benefit so far, and we are looking forward to completing the entire project.”

The total cost of the Exploration Green project is expected to be \$30 million, [John Branch](#), the board president of CLCWA, [told the Houston Business Journal in 2018](#). Funding for the project is coming from part of an \$88 million bond voters approved in 2016 as well as grants and donations to Exploration Green Conservancy Inc., a 501(c)(3) entity that formed in 2014 with the goal of raising awareness of the redevelopment project and securing funding.

Exploration Green has already received numerous awards for its master plan and community partnerships, and it has secured an agreement with the Galveston Bay Foundation to protect the area from commercial development in perpetuity. [In 2019, Exploration Green was named the People's Choice winner in Houston District Council of the Urban Land Institute’s annual Development of Distinction Awards](#). The project was a finalist in the Open Space category.