

# OUR PARKS OUR FUTURE

---

## AUSTIN PARKS & RECREATION LONG RANGE PLAN



2018-2028

In Collaboration With:  
PROS Consulting, Inc, Studio Balcones, Go Collaborative,  
Adisa Communications, ETC Institute, The Trust for Public Land

First Draft for Public Review July 29, 2019



**AUSTIN  
PARKS  
FOUNDATION**



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

## AUSTIN CITY COUNCIL

- + Mayor Steve Adler
- + Natasha Harper-Madison (D-1)
- + Delia Garza (D-2)
- + Sabino “Pio” Renteria (D-3)
- + Gregorio “Greg” Casar (D-4)
- + Ann Kitchen (D-5)
- + Jimmy Flannigan (D-6)
- + Leslie Pool (D-7)
- + Paige Ellis (D-8)
- + Kathie Tovo (D-9)
- + Alison Alter (D-10)

## PARKS & RECREATION BOARD (CURRENT)

- + Dawn Lewis (D-10), Chair
- + Romteen Farasat (D-4), Vice Chair
- + Richard DePalma (Mayor)
- + Nina Rinaldi (D-1)
- + Anna L. Di Carlo (D-2)
- + Kate Mason-Murphy (D-3)
- + Tom Donovan (D-5)
- + Fred Morgan (D-6)
- + Francoise Luca (D-7)
- + Kim Taylor (D-8)
- + Laura Cottam Sajbel (D-9)

### **2018 members**

- + Jane Rivera, Chair
- + Rick Cofer, Vice Chair
- + Michael Casias
- + Richard DePalma
- + Tom Donovan
- + Romteen Farasat
- + Dawn Lewis
- + Francoise Luca
- + Randy Mann
- + Fred Morgan
- + Frank Ward

## AUSTIN PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT EXECUTIVE TEAM

- + Anthony Segura, Assistant Director
- + Liana Kallivoka, Interim Director
- + Lucas Massie, Acting Assistant Director
- + Kim McKnight, Acting Assistant Director
- + Kimberly McNeeley, Assistant Director
- + Sara Hensley, Director
- + Suzanne Piper, Chief Administrative Officer

## LRP CORE GROUP (STAFF)

- + Kim McKnight, Project Lead
- + Christine Chute Canul
- + Lauren Garrott
- + Charles Mabry
- + Gregory Montes
- + Justin Schneider
- + Randy Scott
- + Ricardo Soliz
- + Cara Welch

## TECHNICAL ADVISORY GROUP (TAG)

### **PARD Staff**

- + Charles Vaclavik
- + Rey Hernandez
- + Steven Linett
- + Ricardo Soliz
- + Lucas Massie
- + Laura Esparza
- + Tiffany Cabin
- + Christa McCarthy
- + Amanda Ross
- + Jodi Jay

- + Kevin Gomillion
- + Jason Maurer
- + Tonja Walls-Davis
- + John Nixon
- + Iliana Venegas
- + Suzanne Piper

## City Departments Staff

- + Austin Public Health
- + Austin Public Library
- + Austin Transportation Department
- + Austin Water
- + Balcones Canyonland Preserve
- + Communications and Public Information Office
- + Development Services
- + Economic Development Department
- + Equity Office
- + Office of Real Estate Services
- + Office of Sustainability
- + Planning and Zoning Department
- + Public Works Department, Urban Trails Program
- + Watershed Protection Department

## BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

- + African American Resources Advisory Commission
- + Arts Commission
- + Asian American Quality of Life Advisory Commission
- + Austin Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities
- + Austin Travis County Food Policy Board
- + Bicycle Advisory Council
- + Commission on Seniors

- + Community Development Commission
- + Downtown Commission
- + Early Childhood Council
- + Environmental Commission
- + Hispanic/Latino Quality of Life Resource Advisory Commission
- + Land, Facilities and Program Committee of the Parks and Recreation Board
- + LGBTQ Quality of Life Advisory Commission
- + Mexican American Cultural Center Advisory Board
- + Pedestrian Advisory Council
- + Planning Commission
- + Urban Transportation Commission

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CEAC)

- + Regina Adams Jackson, District 1
- + Lorena Solis, District 2
- + Kate Mason Murphy, District 3
- + Daniela Nunez, District 4
- + Kathleen Schneeman, District 5
- + Ruben Cavasos, District 6
- + Marissa Perryman, District 7
- + Nicole Carosella, District 8
- + Jill Nokes, District 9
- + Caroline Alexander, District 10
- + Brandi Clark-Burton, Mayor's Office

## CONSULTANT TEAM

- + WRT (Lead Planning and Design)
- + PROS Consulting Inc.
- + Studio Balcones
- + Adisa Communications
- + Go Collaborative
- + The Trust for Public Land
- + ETC Institute

Thank you to the Austin Parks Foundation for partnering to help fund the Long Range Plan.

**A special thank you to the many community members who participated in the planning process and contributed to *Our Parks, Our Future*.**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## 1 PURPOSE & BACKGROUND

### AUSTIN'S PARKS AND RECREATION STORY

- + Introduction
- + Our Goals
- + A Look Back at Our Parks

### WHY PLAN?

- + Parks Are Important
- + We're Experiencing Growth & Change
- + Ongoing Efforts & Our Partners

## 2 THE PLANNING PROCESS

### THE PROCESS

- + How We Developed the Plan
- + Community Engagement Activities

### HOW WE ENGAGED THE COMMUNITY

- + Advisory Bodies
- + Planning Summits
- + Engaging Hard to Reach Populations
- + Surveys & Online Engagement

## 3 OUR PARKS

### EXISTING SYSTEM

- + Overview
- + Open Space Framework
- + Park Planning Areas
- + Park Types
- + Non-PARD Parks & Open Space
- + Facility Distribution Analysis

### HOW DO WE COMPARE?

- + Benchmarking



## 4 OUR FUTURE

### CITYWIDE THEMES & KEY ISSUES

- + How Growth Impacts Park Planning

### CITY-WIDE STRATEGIES

- + A. Ensure Parkland Offers Relief from Urban Life
- + B. Expand and Improve Park Access for All
- + C. Activate and Enhance Urban Public Spaces
- + D. Align Programs with Community Interest
- + E. Optimize and Improve Efficiency of Operations

## 5 HOW WE GET THERE

### ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

- + PARD Implementation Structure
- + Contributions of PARD Partners

### PRIORITIZING INVESTMENT IN EXISTING PARKS

- + Park Condition Assessments & The Score Card Tool
- + The Action Priority Ranking System

### COMBINED PLANNING AREA RECOMMENDATIONS

- + Central
- + North
- + East
- + Southeast
- + Southwest
- + West

### IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

- + Funding Options
- + How We Will Measure & Track Progress

## 6 APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: PARK PLANNING AREA RECOMMENDATIONS

### APPENDIX B: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY





Runners in Austin.  
Source: PARD



# PURPOSE & BACKGROUND

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

*Our Parks, Our Future* is the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department (PARC)'s Long Range Plan (LRP) for Land, Facilities, and Programs. This plan, developed every ten years, is the guiding document for park system planning and growth in Austin and creates the foundation for individual park master plans and capital projects. The LRP was informed by a collaborative process with Austin residents, park partners, elected officials, and other stakeholders.

## IN THIS CHAPTER

### AUSTIN'S PARKS AND RECREATION STORY

- + Introduction
- + Our Goals
- + A Look Back at Our Parks

### WHY PLAN?

- + Why Parks are Important
- + Growth & Change
- + Ongoing Efforts & Our Partners

# AUSTIN'S PARKS & RECREATION STORY

## PARD'S MISSION

PARD'S MISSION IS TO INSPIRE AUSTIN TO LEARN, PLAY, PROTECT, AND CONNECT BY CREATING DIVERSE PROGRAMS AND EXPERIENCES IN SUSTAINABLE NATURAL SPACES AND PUBLIC PLACES.

AS AUSTIN EXPERIENCES POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT GROWTH, DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS, AND CHANGES IN RECREATIONAL PREFERENCES, THE PARK AND RECREATION SYSTEM MUST EVOLVE TO MEET THE NEEDS OF ALL RESIDENTS.



## INTRODUCTION

Austin has long been referred to as a “city within a park.” Our unique natural features form the city’s diverse landscape – green, rolling hills, dramatic topography, and striking waterways. The City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) protects and maintains our parkland and urban forest, and offers a variety of sports, recreation, educational and art programs, cultural opportunities, nature and aquatic activities for the ongoing enjoyment of residents and visitors.

Every ten years, PARD prepares the Long Range Plan (LRP) for Land, Facilities, and Program. The *Our Parks, Our Future* LRP is essentially a blueprint for how the department prepares individual park master plans, land acquisition, and capital improvements and develops programs and new amenities. This LRP builds on and updates the previous LRP prepared by PARD and adopted in 2010.



Hula hooping in Shipe Park, 1972  
Source: Austin History Center

Austin’s green spaces have never been static; PARD will celebrate its centennial in 2028, marking a period in which Austin created a park system with a variety of park types, active recreation, greenbelts, and trails, as the city’s population and economy experienced tremendous growth. *Our Parks, Our Future* provides the opportunity to reflect on the past and provide a community-based vision for the future, a vision for 2028 and beyond.

# OUR GOALS

Austin has nearly 20,000 acres of PARD parkland, over 300 parks, and more than 200 miles of trails traversing the city. The City of Austin's leadership, staff, and partners are committed to involving the community in planning and decision making through a variety of means and the community's voice creates the backbone of the *Our Parks, Our Future* LRP.

When this planning process kicked off in fall 2018, PARD's goals for the process included:



Planning Summit 1 Open House  
Source: PARD



## **Assess State of Current Park System**

Conduct a thorough assessment of the condition and quality of current parks to provide a strong data-driven baseline to inform prioritization and track implementation progress over time.



## **Create a Renewed Vision for Austin's Park System in 2028**

Engage the community, stakeholders, and city staff to define a new vision that is both inspirational and achievable.



## **Guide Future Growth and Development**

Create a guidebook for how and where to invest to ensure the park system supports our residents, employees, and visitors as Austin continues to grow and change.



## **Develop Strategies, Actions, and Priorities that can be Implemented and Tracked**

Provide citywide strategies and priorities that will inform development of the annual Capital Improvement Program and creation of park master plans.



## A LOOK BACK AT OUR PARKS

Looking to the past provides a better understanding of current conditions and an opportunity to build from PARD's roots - cultivating a stronger park system that speaks to the unique desires and needs of present-day Austin.

From its beginnings as four city squares sketched on Austin's original plat, the park system has expanded and evolved over time, with an increasing focus on preserving and protecting cultural resources as well as natural resources. The early 1900s saw the consistent expansion of the system through donations and acquisitions followed by the City of Austin's first Parks, Playground, and Boulevards Bond in 1929. The Federal Aid programs that followed the Great Depression had a major impact on shaping

and expanding Austin's park system, as did the ongoing growth in population and developed area. The park system grew through both opportunistic and systematic efforts based on the norms and resources available at the time. In recent years, the park system has come to embrace natural and cultural resources as two mutually reinforcing elements in Austin's parks.



Juneteenth Celebration in Rosewood Park  
Source: Austin History Center



Barton Springs Pool, 1947  
Source: Austin History Center



Visitors at Elisabet Ney Museum, 1970s  
Source: Austin History Center



Sliding at Zilker Park, 1970s  
Source: Austin History Center



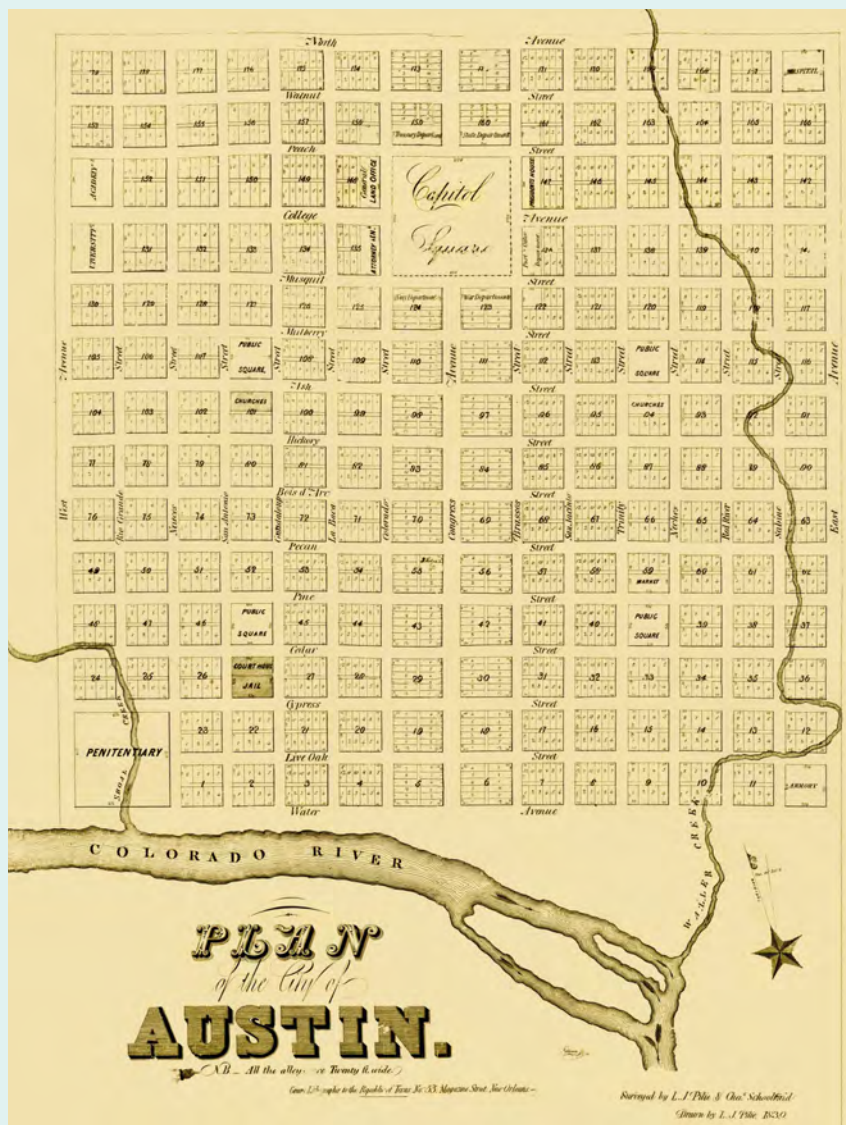
## CHARACTER OF THE EARLY PARK SYSTEM

### Early City Public Squares & Urban Neighborhood Parks

The earliest elements of Austin's public park system have their roots in Judge Edwin Waller's 1839 City Plat for the Republic of Texas' new capital city. This plan showed a grid radiating out from the new Capitol towards the rivers that served as boundaries, with four secondary public

squares framing the iconic ceremonial building. While the land for these four public squares was set aside for public use, there was no vision or investment framework to guide their use. As a result, these public squares remained largely undeveloped and underutilized in their early years and in some cases even became sites of storage, garbage dumps, parking lots, or other city services – in sharp contrast to their intended purpose. Three of these historic

squares (Wooldridge, Republic and Brush Squares) survive to this day, but have required much reinvention to develop a strong character and relationship to the city around them. It is through the reinvention of these historic squares and confronting the pressures of a rapidly expanding population in the early 1900s that Austin came to define what a “neighborhood park” can and should be.



Source: Downtown  
Austin Alliance

## THE 1839 ORIGINAL “WALLER PLAN”

EDWIN WALLER'S ORIGINAL DESIGN FOR THE CITY CONSISTED OF A GRID WITH A CENTRAL SQUARE (CAPITOL SQUARE) AND FOUR SMALLER PUBLIC SQUARES.

THE REMAINING THREE ARE NOW KNOWN AS BRUSH, REPUBLIC, AND WOOLDRIDGE.

## Contrast of Large Natural Areas & Neighborhood Parks

Waller's 1839 City Plat also set the stage for an enduring and dynamic contrast within the Austin park system – between the magnetic expanse of the rivers and natural areas and the need for more intimate, programmed urban spaces. These two elements remain embedded in the DNA of Austin's park system.

Austin's affinity for parks began with the recognition of the inherent value of the wild ravines and water features that framed the city and a love of outdoor athletics. The evolution of the park system has provided Austin with a unique network of metropolitan scale parks, athletic facilities, greenbelts, and nature preserves, but it has taken time and creativity for the city's smaller parks to find a clear identity and character that can offer a more intimate community-centric recreation experience as a counterpoint to the beloved destination parks within the system.

## The Birth of the Austin Parks & Recreation System

1928 is a major turning point for the Austin Parks and Recreation System. From 1928-1930 there is a series of critical civic actions taken to shape the future of the system. In this two-year period, the City of Austin not only planned for and funded the build-out of the physical park system, but also formalized two separate entities which would eventually merge to become PARD, the first focused on programming and the second focused on bricks and mortar projects.

### 1928 Recreation Department

The Recreation Department is founded after two years of volunteer work and devoted advocacy by the Austin Lions Club. It was tasked with running public athletics programs and supervising playgrounds.

### 1928 First Citywide Plan since 1839

*A City Plan for Austin, Texas* is released. The plan made a broad statement emphasizing the importance and role of parks, justified the need for public sector involvement and investment, and called for the development of a city-wide park system. Much of the foundational elements of Austin's park system were defined in this plan, including the four park types that continue to be core elements of the system. The 1928 City Plan, unfortunately, was also a major

driver for the codified racial segregation of Austin into east and west of present day IH-35, which led to lasting negative impacts including immense economic, environmental, and social inequity.

### 1929 First City Parks Bond

The City issues its first Parks, Playground, and Boulevards Bond, a \$750,000 bond for improvement of the system based on the recommendations in the 1928 City Plan.

### 1930 Parks & Playgrounds Commission

The Parks & Playgrounds Commission is formed in response to the vision laid out in the 1928 City Plan and 1929 Bond. This commission was an advisory body tasked with assisting the City Council and City Manager in the acquisition and improvement of all public parks, playgrounds, and boulevards.

PARD still displays a clear double lineage – one as the strategic entity responsible for planning, acquisition, and improvement of physical spaces and the other as the manager of public programs that take place in those same physical spaces. The park type definitions found in the 1928 plan are in many ways industry-defining and prescient, and have endured to the present day: the (school) playground designed for universal walkable access to supervised play space; the play field to be spaced farther

apart with specific sports and programs in mind; the multi-functional neighborhood park to be within walking distance for everyone in the city; and finally the metro park, boulevard or greenbelt to be chosen for their natural advantages and scenic pleasures as a reprieve at the periphery of more urbanized areas. Many cities would not arrive at a classification scheme and set of benchmarks (such as ½ mile constituting the maximum walking distance to a school playground or neighborhood park) for another fifty years.



# PARD & THE NEW DEAL: A FORMATIVE PARTNERSHIP

AUSTIN BEGAN ITS FIRST COORDINATED EFFORT TO EXPAND THE CITY'S PUBLIC PARK SYSTEM JUST AS THE FEDERAL NEW DEAL PROGRAMS WERE BEGINNING TO BE IMPLEMENTED.

AS A RESULT OF THIS ALIGNMENT OF NATIONAL CAPACITY AND LOCAL OPPORTUNITY, THE CITY OF AUSTIN RECEIVED AN UNPRECEDENTED INFUSION OF FEDERAL FINANCIAL AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT FOR THEIR FIRST MAJOR PARK SYSTEM EXPANSION.

THE LARGE ARRAY OF ICONIC STRUCTURES AND ARTWORKS REPRESENT THE NEW DEAL'S PHYSICAL LEGACY IN AUSTIN. IT ALSO GAVE THE AUSTIN PARK SYSTEM (AND LATER, PARD) A STRONG IDEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION ROOTED IN THE ETHIC OF THE NEW DEAL, HELPING PUSH THE CITY TOWARDS A MORE INTEGRATED AND AMBITIOUS APPROACH TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF PARKS AS ECONOMIC, ENVIRONMENTAL, AND SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORTING AUSTIN.



Zilker Park (1938)  
Source: Austin History Center



# PARK SYSTEM GROWTH

THIS TIMELINE TRACKS SIGNIFICANT EVENTS IN THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN'S PARK SYSTEM FROM 1839 TO TODAY.



Zilker Botanical Gardens  
Source: PARD



Palm Park Swimming Pool , 1941  
Source: Austin History Center

**HOUSE PARK  
(AISD)**  
1903

Parkland Acres (1840)

41

1839

1875

## NOTABLE ADDITIONS TO THE PARK SYSTEM

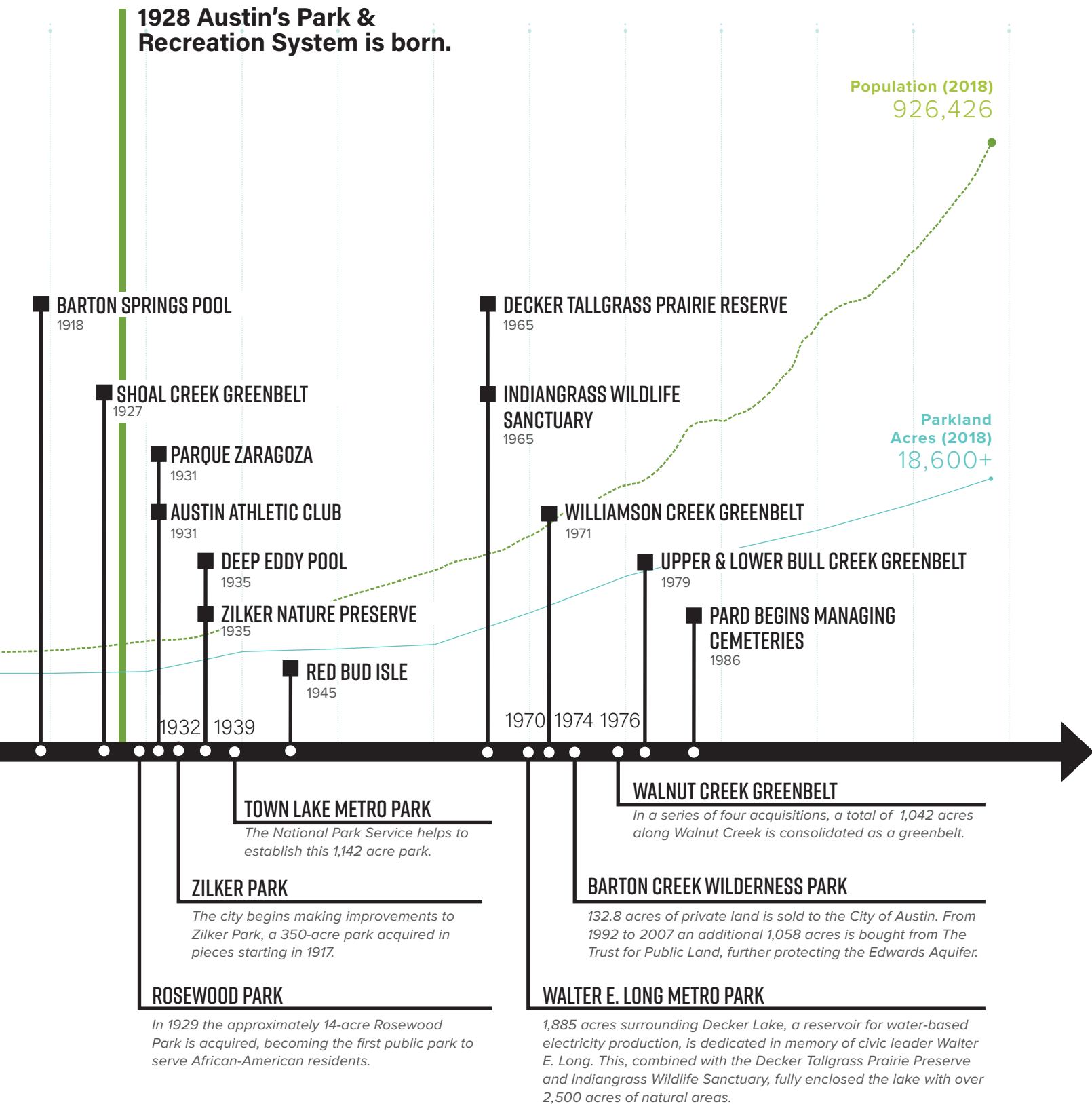
### FOUR HISTORIC SQUARES

Edwin Waller's city plat in 1839 establishes four historic city squares, which form the core open space network: Northeast Public Square (no longer extant), Bell (Wooldridge) Square, Hemphill (Republic) Square, and Brush Square. Originally just common land, over the period from 1840-1920, these squares are gradually improved for public use except the Northeast Public Square which was ultimately developed as an educational use and later a church.

### PEASE PARK

Approximately 23 acres of this 42-acre site was donated to the City of Austin by former Governor of Texas, Elisha M. Pease and his wife. Improvements to the park began in the early 1900s. These early improvements were supplemented by a public-private partnership which began investing in 1926, then by New Deal Programs in the 1930s. Now known for the much-loved "Eeyore's Birthday Party" Event which was moved to this location in 1974.

## 1928 Austin's Park & Recreation System is born.



## DEVELOPMENT PHASES

The evolution of Austin's park system can be organized into four key phases of development, each characterized by a common administrative, political, and/or cultural focus.

### 1839-1920

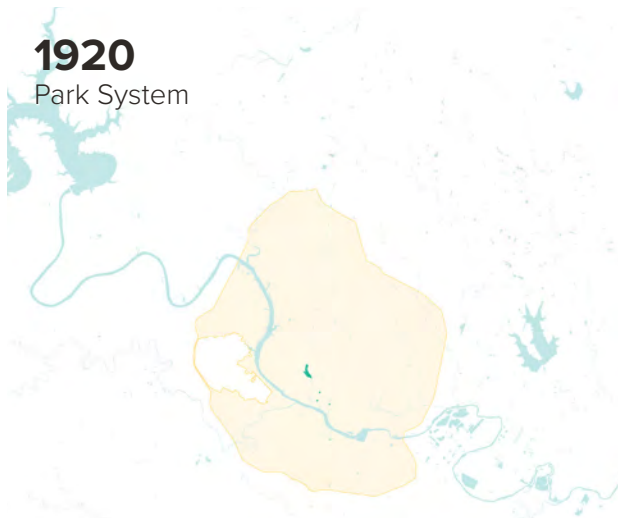
#### Sporadic Emergence of Core Structure

*The Edwin Waller's city plat in 1839 establishes a pattern of open space in Austin. This plat included four historic city squares and embedded natural features in the identity of the city by naming east-west streets after trees and north-south streets after creeks. The early park system included Wooldridge Park (first developed in 1911) and Pease Park (1875), and is complemented by cemeteries, which represent a significant portion of open space throughout this period.*

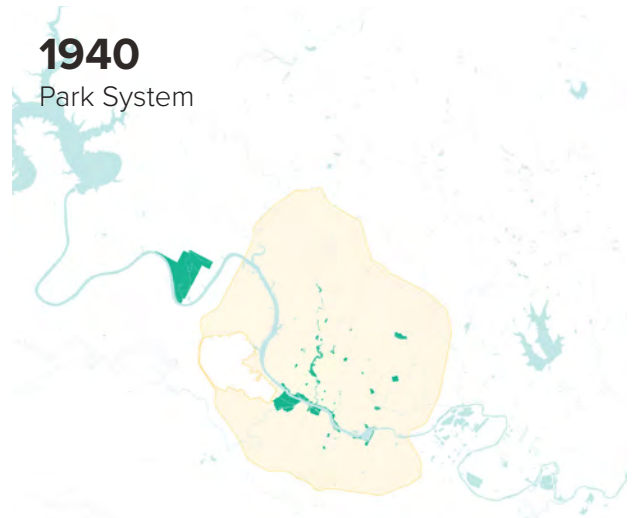
74  
Parkland Acres/1,000 People 1840

3  
Acres/1,000 People 1910

**1920**  
Park System



**1940**  
Park System



..... This is what 20 years of PARD impact looks like. ....

*From 1930 to 1940 Austin's population surged from just over 50,000 to about 90,000 - a 70% increase. In that same time park acres per 1,000 people increased from 5 in 1930 to 23 in 1940 - a 360% increase. This increase illustrates the impact of PARD's early systematic and strategic approach.*



1920-  
1940

**Systematic  
Investment +  
Federal Aid**

*A local effort to improve parks, playgrounds, and boulevards begins and is reinforced by the federal New Deal programs.*

1940-  
1970

**Active  
Recreation  
+ Gardens**

*The city invests in a wide array of pools, fields, and athletic facilities. Several botanical and cultural gardens are also created.*

1970-  
2017

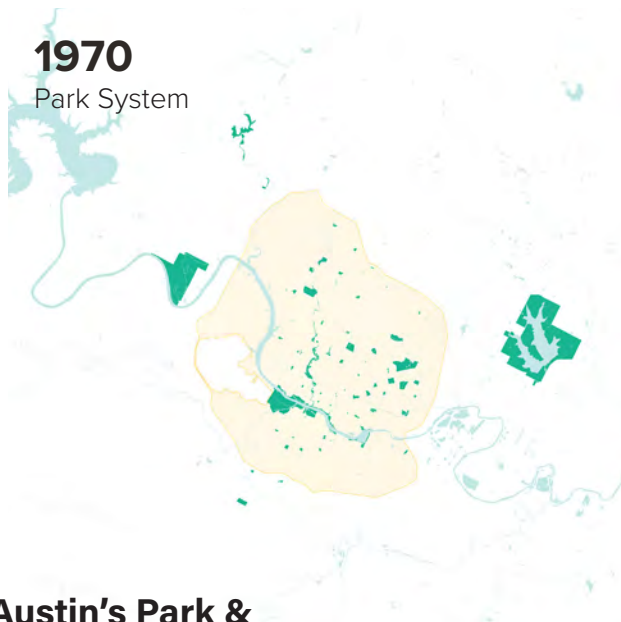
**Consolidation,  
Greenbelts + Cultural  
Heritage Preservation**

*PARD makes several large-scale acquisitions of greenbelts along creeks and valleys. A new focus on adaptive reuse and intentional preservation of cultural resources and significant civic sites begins. The city takes on ownership and management of sites previously owned and managed by private entities, consolidating a wide array of parks, cemeteries and recreational assets into one system.*



**1970**

Park System



**2017**

Park System



**1928 Austin's Park & Recreation System is born.**

# WHY PLAN?

## PARKS ARE IMPORTANT

Parks and our public spaces play a central role in how Austinites experience our city. They bring people together, offer recreational opportunities for residents, and provide critical environmental benefits that improve the quality of our air, water, and soils and help keep us cooler. Extensive research documents the varied benefits provided by public spaces, including improved physical and mental health, increased community cohesion, additional economic benefits, and elevated environmental services.

Parks also have a critical role to play in providing a living laboratory for communities to learn more about nature and the environment. Early hands-on education in parks and open spaces spurs the imagination of children and creates life-long stewards of our natural lands and habitat.



Parks provide economic, public health, environmental, community, and educational value

### Parks provide hands-on environmental education

- + Exposure to the outdoors improves children's analytical thinking and problem solving
- + Summer activities and education in parks can help to close opportunity gaps



### Parks support economic & community values

- + Redeveloped parks can reduce vacancy rates and increase safety
- + Increased social connections and community cohesion can combat the impacts of social isolation and loneliness (TPL Healthy Parks Plan)



Active Recreation. Source: PARD

“Parks are vital to the health and enrichment of our communities, from teaching children to be stewards of their natural environments, to keeping residents of all ages healthy, happy, and connected.”

**JANE RIVERA, PhD**

*City of Austin PARD  
Board Chair, 2011-2019*

The impact of parks cannot not be underestimated. According to the *City Parks Alliance*, today’s urban parks act as “green engines to help address nearly every critical urban need from health to housing, to education and environmental justice, and countering sprawl to combating crime.” These dynamic spaces are now being recognized as powerful tools for cities to address 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges including the environmental and social impacts associated with climate change and public health issues affecting our communities.

# WE'RE EXPERIENCING GROWTH & CHANGE

Austin is a city that is growing and changing. As our city grows it is important to ensure that our parks and recreation system is able to expand and adapt as needed. In the past, Austin's periods of rapid growth have coincided with the availability and increased capacity of the national government to support and guide local land acquisition and development of parks. This time, Austin needs to lead this effort on its own behalf.

In 2012, the city adopted *Imagine Austin*, a new comprehensive plan and vision for how we can better anticipate and manage continued growth in a way that provides opportunities for all residents. City Council then adopted a shorter-term *Strategic Direction 2023* plan that focuses on outcomes, including strategies, to create equitable access to parks, trails, open space, and recreational opportunities as the city grows. Key elements include improving walking distance to parks, acquiring new land for parks, and managing a growing demand for facilities and programming.



68%

of new development has occurred in the City's activity centers & corridors (since 2012)



## Population and developed land are both increasing

*Imagine Austin* has helped to focus and direct new growth into activity centers. However, the city continues to spread out as population in surrounding counties and cities increases.



## Need for parkland on the rise

As Austin's population and economy continue to grow, the demand for park space and recreational facilities is increasing as well. PARD manages over 300 parks, 26 recreation and senior centers, and a range of facilities including: natural areas, pools, splash pads, tennis courts, soccer fields, and playgrounds.



## Population within walking distance of parks increasing but still below city's goal

Currently, 65% of Austin residents are within walking distance to a park, a significant increase from 2011.



## Improving parkland access

Austin's park acres per 1,000 people peaked in 1994 at nearly 30 (its highest point since 1850). But this impressive achievement has since dropped down to only 19 park acres for every 1,000 Austin residents. The City of Austin, however, is committed to achieving a 20 park-acres/1,000 residents standard. Additionally, in 2016, City Council set a goal of providing parkland within 1/4 mile of Urban Core residents and 1/2 mile for those outside of the Urban Core.



## Keeping up with growth

First passed in 1985, the City of Austin's Parkland Dedication Ordinance was revised in 2007 and then in 2016 to add hotel/motel fees in addition to a new formula that requires a dedicated development fee. In 2016, Park Planning acquired 66 acres of new parkland.



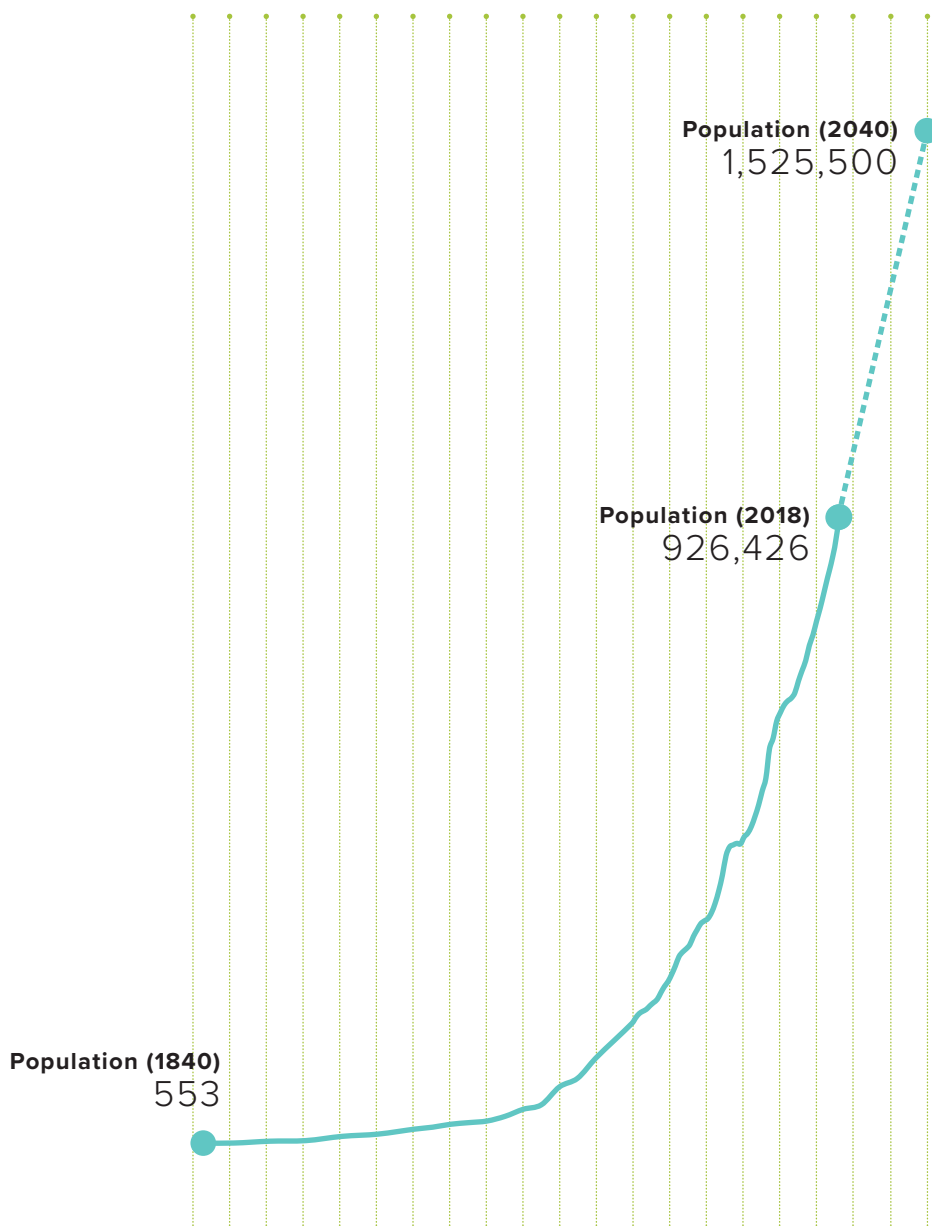


**45%**

population growth  
projected between  
2018 and 2040

**80%**

job growth projected  
between  
2018 and 2040



## THE IMAGINE AUSTIN VISION

“AUSTIN IS A  
BEACON OF  
SUSTAINABILITY,  
SOCIAL EQUITY,  
AND ECONOMIC  
OPPORTUNITY;  
WHERE DIVERSITY  
AND CREATIVITY  
ARE CELEBRATED;  
WHERE COMMUNITY  
NEEDS AND VALUES  
ARE RECOGNIZED;  
WHERE LEADERSHIP  
COMES FROM  
ITS COMMUNITY  
MEMBERS AND  
WHERE THE  
NECESSITIES OF LIFE  
ARE AFFORDABLE  
AND ACCESSIBLE TO  
ALL.”

**IMAGINEAUSTIN**  
Vibrant. Livable. Connected.

## ONGOING EFFORTS & OUR PARTNERS

The LRP effort is closely tied to other citywide plans, including *Imagine Austin*, the *Austin Strategic Mobility Plan*, and the *Austin Strategic Direction 2023*. As part of the planning process, relevant citywide, district, and neighborhood plans were reviewed. Since the last Long Range Plan update was completed in 2010, PARD staff and partners have been working to implement those strategies and actions, and the current status of each was

considered in completing this plan. PARD partners with other city departments, non-profit organizations, conservancies, community groups, and businesses to enhance and improve parks, increase recreational and cultural opportunities, preserve natural areas, celebrate arts and culture, and maximize the public benefit at minimum taxpayer cost. The current plans and initiatives of park partners are described in detail in Chapter 5.

Relevant citywide plans and initiatives are summarized on the following pages.



The overall 2018 Bond will fund citywide projects for affordable housing, libraries, museums, and cultural centers, transportation, and other improvements.

## WHO CAN PARTNER WITH PARKS?

### NEIGHBORHOOD/ COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Neighborhood, community and “friends of” groups that serve as advocates and stewards for a local park or facility

### BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS

Corporations and local businesses that provide a wide range of activities including: park improvements, maintenance and management; programs and services; and donations and sponsorships

### NON-PROFIT/ CONSERVANCY PARTNERSHIPS

Non-profits and conservancies that are mission aligned with PARD and dedicated to a particular park or facility, or specific types of amenities or programs throughout the parks system



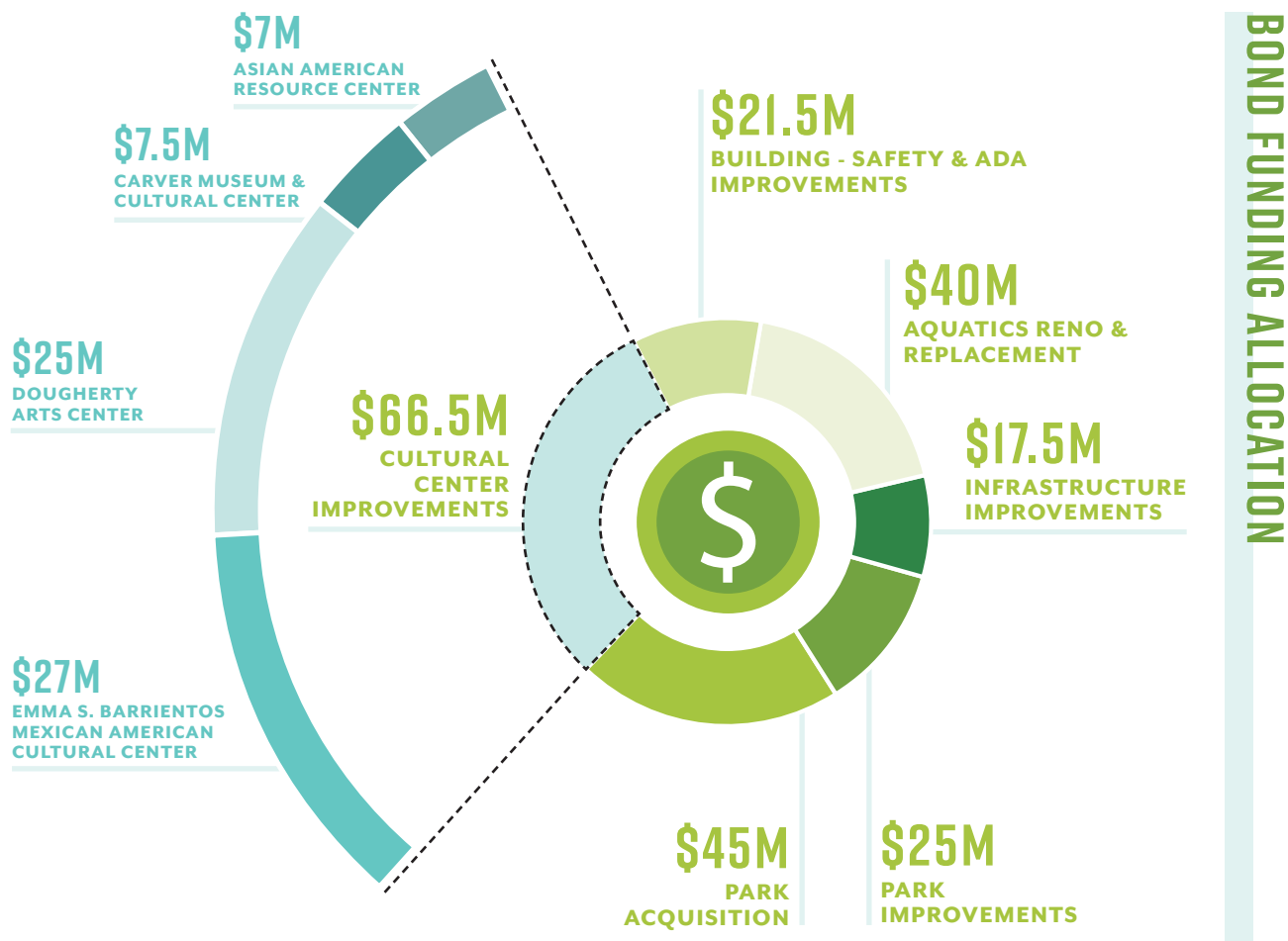
# 2018 BOND: OUR COMMUNITY. OUR FUTURE.

Over the course of two years, a citizen-led advisory group worked with residents, city departments, and elected officials to develop recommendations for reinvesting in current city infrastructure in areas of affordable housing, libraries and cultural centers, parks and recreation, flood mitigation and open space, health and human services, public safety, and transportation infrastructure.



Lady Bird Lake  
Source: PARD

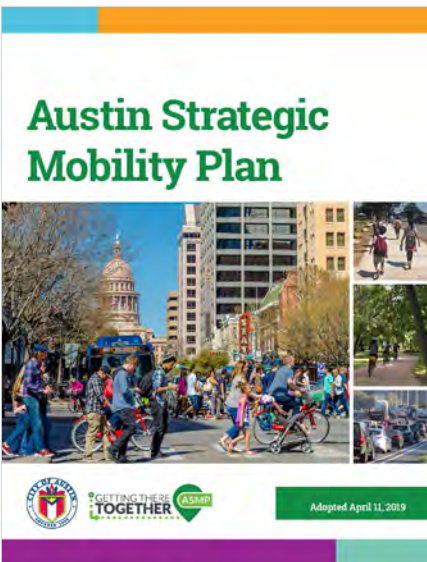
In 2018, Austin residents passed \$215.5 Million in bond funding to improve the park system & increase access





## City of Austin IMAGINE AUSTIN

Adopted in 2012, *Imagine Austin* is the city's 30-year comprehensive plan that details future growth of the city through eight priority programs: 1) Healthy Austin; 2) Creative Economy; 3) Compact & Connected; 4) Revise Land Development Code; 5) Water; 6) Environment; 7) Affordability; and 8) Workforce. The plan identifies key challenges of an increasing population and outward expansion. A priority of the comprehensive plan is to strengthen green infrastructure to protect the natural environment and enhance recreational opportunities, while turning more attention to the creation of smaller parks in or within walking distance of neighborhoods.



## City of Austin AUSTIN STRATEGIC MOBILITY PLAN

The *Austin Strategic Mobility Plan* (ASMP), adopted in April 2019, is Austin's first locally focused, comprehensive multimodal transportation plan intended to guide transportation policies, programs, projects, and investments. There are eight mobility goals addressed in the ASMP: commuter delays; travel choice; health & safety; affordability; sustainability; placemaking; economic prosperity; and innovation.

The plan recognizes the urban trail system as an "integral part" of the transportation network that is important to our mobility, calling for an increase in linear miles of Tier I urban trails and overall trail usage. The ASMP also calls for an increase in access by active modes to and around parks and trails as well as an increase in open space preserved through transportation project mitigation.



## City of Austin THE WATERSHED PROTECTION PLAN

The *Watershed Protection Plan*, last updated in 2016, seeks to protect Austin's watersheds, waterways, and water supply in light of a rapidly growing population. It identifies top priority problem areas that are susceptible to local and creek flooding and in need of erosion control. The plan details efforts to improve water quality in City parks' streams and creeks; one strategy is the implementation of grow zones. There is a need for increased interdepartmental coordination with entities like PARD for programs that involve joint efforts, such as sustainable maintenance practices for easements and channels in City parks.



## Downtown Austin Alliance

### DOWNTOWN PARKS VISION

The *Downtown Austin Vision* looks to guide the future of downtown Austin towards a “thriving, welcoming, vibrant, and connected” downtown, citing the importance of downtown parks for livability and sustainability. Priorities include creating new parks, places, and connections where possible and maximizing green infrastructure benefits of the public realm. This involves strategies like completing the urban greenbelt, which includes Waller Creek, Shoal Creek, Lady Bird Lake, and the Ann and Roy Butler Hike-and-Bike Trail, as well as burying I-35 from Cesar Chavez Street to 12th Street to allow capping of the tunnel with parkland.

## City of Austin

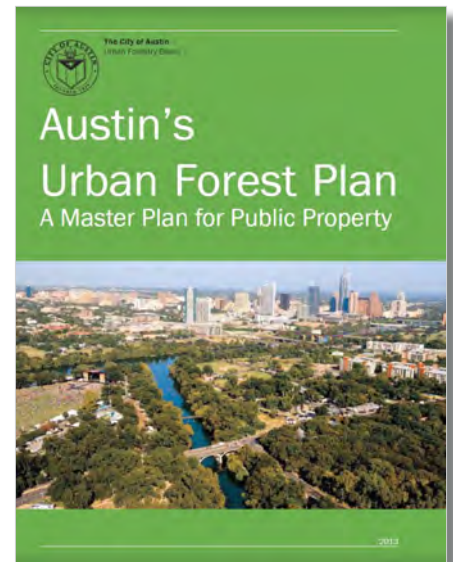
### URBAN FOREST PLAN – A MASTER PLAN FOR PUBLIC PROPERTY (2013)

The *Urban Forest Plan* analyzes Austin’s urban forest—trees and other vegetation on public property, including parkland—and emphasizes the role of urban forests to support the health of a community and public spaces, as well as support the City in managing infrastructure needs. The plan is a direct implementation of *Imagine Austin*’s priority item of protecting and expanding Austin’s green infrastructure. Strategies revolve around policy elements such as prioritizing tree planting in parks, coordinating efforts and partnerships across other City departments, nonprofits, the private sector, and governmental jurisdictions, and public education on urban forestry.

## City of Austin

### AUSTIN STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2023

In 2018, City Council adopted *Strategic Direction 2023*, an outcome-based plan guiding the city in short-term for the next three to five years. The shared vision and six priority Strategic Outcomes strive to create a complete community where every Austinite has choices at every stage of life that allow the community or citizens to experience and contribute to all of the following outcomes: Economic Opportunity and Affordability; Mobility; Safety; Health and Environment; Culture and Lifelong Learning; Government That Works for All. Related to parks and recreation, the plan strategies are focused on equity (accessible, diverse, and inclusive parks and recreation programs and amenities for use by all ages and abilities) and innovative financing models (to support, maintain, and expand parks and recreation).





Money Game - Community Meeting Series 1  
Source: WRT

# THE PLANNING PROCESS

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

The Long Range Plan was developed with extensive community input over the course of 16 months. PARD staff and partners engaged the community through open houses, surveys, focus groups, and virtual meetings. A statistically valid and an online survey helped to assess community-wide needs and preferences related to parks and recreation.

## IN THIS CHAPTER

### THE PROCESS

- + How we Developed the Plan
- + Community Engagement Activities

### HOW WE ENGAGED THE COMMUNITY

- + Advisory Bodies
- + Planning Summits
- + Engaging Hard to Reach Populations
- + Surveys & Online Engagement



# THE PROCESS

## HOW WE DEVELOPED THE PLAN

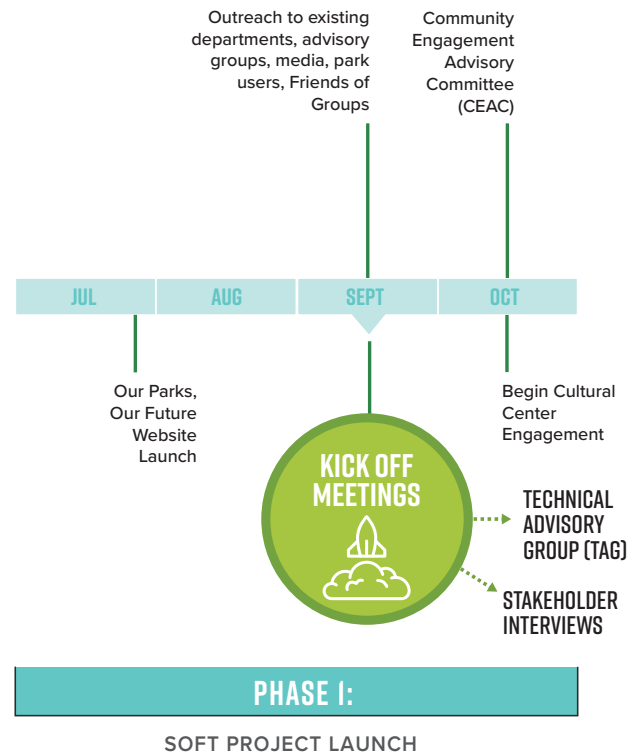
The planning process kicked off in June 2018 and was divided into three main phases of work: *soft project launch, active community engagement and stakeholder engagement, and plan development / priorities.* PARD selected a consultant team, led by WRT, to assist in engaging the community, evaluating existing conditions, and developing the plan. The full engagement and process summaries are included in Appendix B.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

### ADVISORY BODIES

The process included meetings with several key Advisory Bodies to help inform and guide the process throughout: Core Group

### PROJECT TIMELINE



(PARD), Technical Advisory Group (TAG), and the Community Engagement Advisory Committee (CEAC), described in the following section.

## OPEN HOUSES

All community meetings used an open house format rather than a traditional presentation and Q&A format in order to maximize interaction and opportunities for feedback. Planning Summits 1 and 2 each included five community meetings to ensure geographic and scheduling diversity. Planning Summit 3 included two community meetings/draft

plan conversations to review the plan recommendations and actions. A total of 12 community meetings were held throughout the process.

## POP-UP EVENTS

These quick engagement stations leveraged existing events or highly trafficked locations (e.g., parks, libraries, grocery stores) to supplement the community meeting series by meeting people where they already were. The pop-ups were modeled after the community meetings.



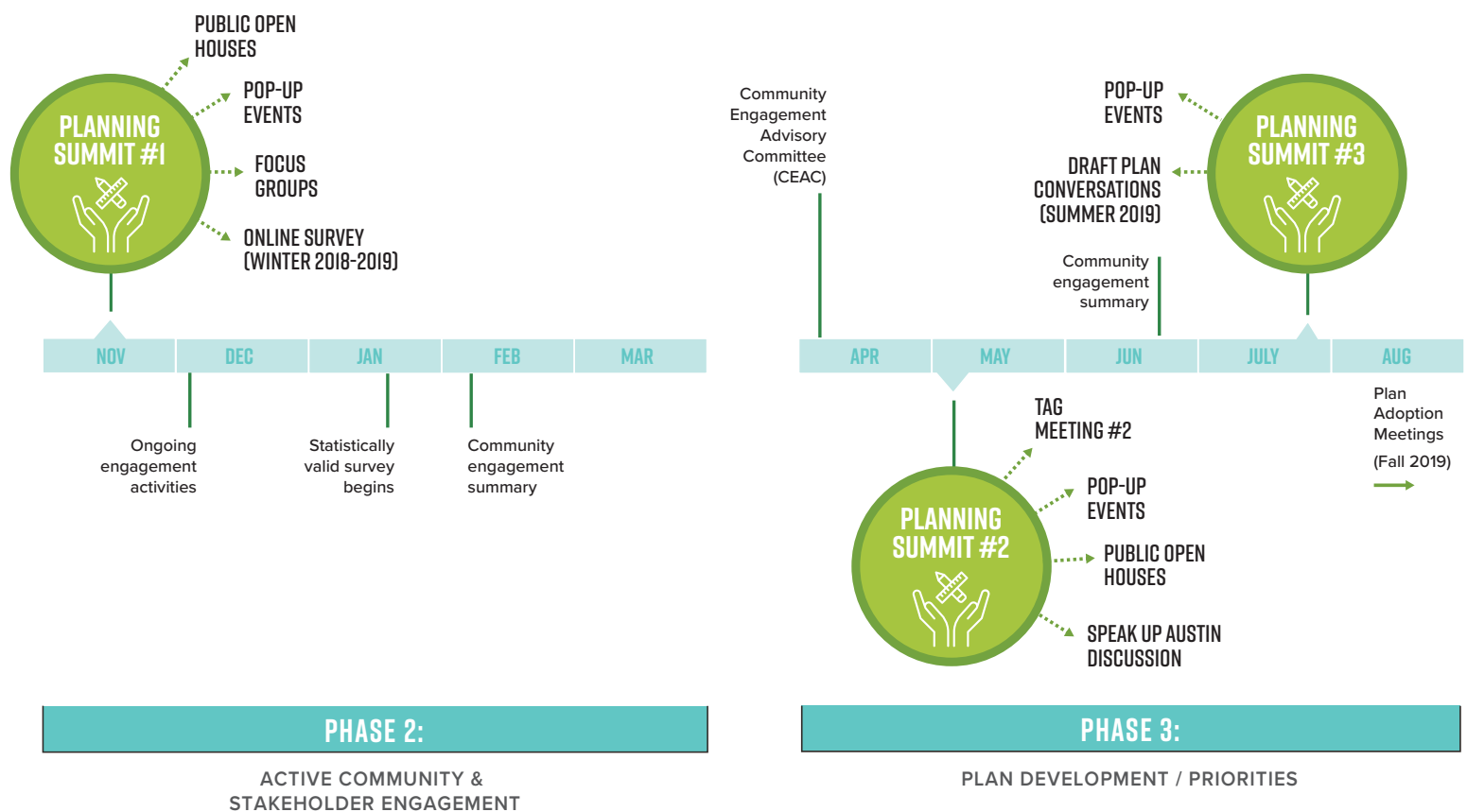


FIGURE 1. ENGAGEMENT PHASES TIMELINE

## SURVEYS

To ensure broad participation beyond those that can attend in-person meetings, several types of surveys were included: a citywide online community survey; a randomly selected statistically valid survey; and an audio survey of cultural facility users. Information and results from all surveys were shared with the community at large and used to inform the reporting of the Austin community needs and priorities for use in the plan development.



Pop-up event at MT Supermarket  
Source: PARD

## VIRTUAL MEETINGS

Understanding that many residents are either unable to or not willing to attend a community meeting, PARD developed a series of virtual meetings that lined up with each round of open houses. Using the City of Austin's *Speak up Austin* tool, City staff created an online meeting mirroring the format of the open houses allowing residents to provide feedback at their convenience.

## FOCUS GROUPS

As part of the outreach, six focus groups were held to engage a demographically diverse group of people in guided discussions. The specific groups engaged were selected based on input from PARD, the CEAC (at their first meeting in September), and through the public engagement plan. Focus groups included: off-leash dog park advocates, active older adults / seniors who use parks regularly and those

who do not, groups working with untapped youth, accessibility advocates and Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired / Texas School for the Deaf.

Once confirmed, each group (ranging from 6-7 per group) gathered for a ninety-minute conversation where participants introduced themselves and worked through a series of questions that looked to identify the key opportunities and barriers related to the central topic of that focus group.

## STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

In addition, the project team conducted stakeholder group interviews as part of each round of engagement. Groups included both City and non-City staff and were organized around topic areas, e.g., maintenance and operations, community partnerships, recreation, programs, mobility and trails, and community health and wellness.



Planning Summit 1  
Source: WRT

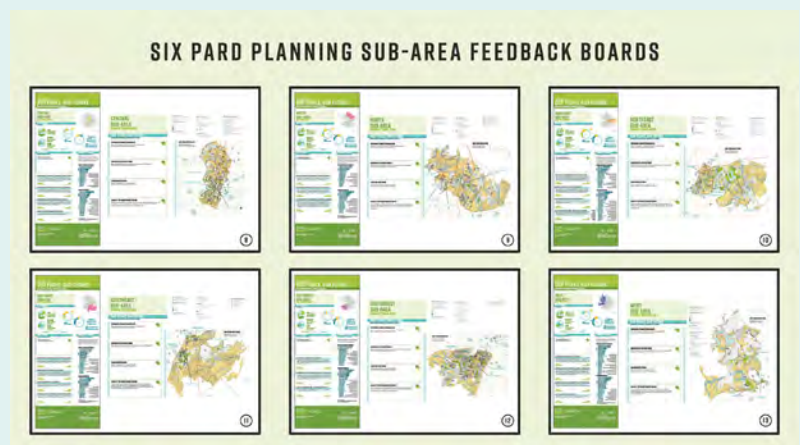
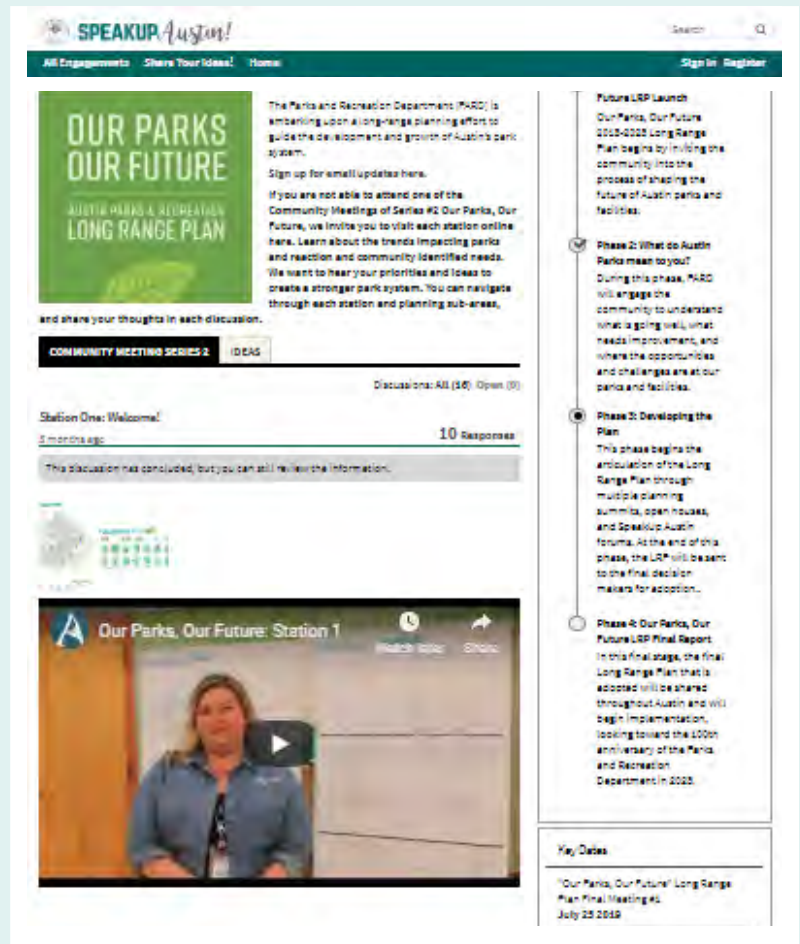


# SPOTLIGHT: VIRTUAL MEETINGS!

IT IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT FOR ALL PLANNING PROCESSES TO SUPPLEMENT IN-PERSON PUBLIC MEETINGS WITH EQUALLY ROBUST ONLINE RESOURCES. ONLINE VIRTUAL MEETINGS ALLOW RESIDENTS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PLANNING PROCESS AT THE TIME AND PLACE MOST CONVENIENT THEM.

USING THE CITY OF AUSTIN'S SPEAK UP AUSTIN PUBLIC FEEDBACK PLATFORM, PARD WAS ABLE TO HOST ONLINE "VIRTUAL MEETINGS" IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING EACH PLANNING SUMMIT. THESE VIRTUAL MEETINGS PRESENTED MEETING CONTENT THROUGH VISUALS AND VIDEO RECORDINGS AND INCLUDED ASSOCIATED QUESTIONS TO SOLICIT COMMUNITY FEEDBACK RELEVANT TO EACH INPUT STATION. EACH QUESTION HAD ITS OWN DISCUSSION BOARD WHERE PARTICIPANTS COULD VIEW OTHER INPUT AND ADD THEIR OWN.

## SPEAKUP Austin!



Speak Up Austin pages for Our Parks, Our Future with virtual meeting content for Planning Summit 2, including videos and associated graphics for each community input station.

# HOW WE ENGAGED THE COMMUNITY

## AT A GLANCE:

- ONLINE SURVEY RESPONSES: 4,400+
- ONLINE COMMENTS RECEIVED: 9,000+
- OPEN HOUSE & POP-UP PARTICIPANTS: 622+
- LOCAL EVENTS ATTENDED: 21

As the city's blueprint for new and improved parkland and recreation in Austin for the next ten years, it was critical that PARD staff hear from as many people as possible while the plan was being developed. In addition, the planning horizon of 2028 presented an exciting opportunity for storytelling and celebrating Austin's park system, as it coincides with the 100-year anniversary of the City of Austin's Parks and Recreation Department, which was created in February 1928.



Planning Summit 1 – How we can improve  
Source: WRT



Planning Summit 1 – Gus Garcia  
Source: WRT



Preference voting at Planning Summit 1  
Source: WRT



Kid's Activity at Planning Summit 1  
Source: WRT





Design your park activity  
Source: WRT



Posing with their favorite park!  
Source: WRT



Design your park activity  
Source: WRT

## ENGAGING KIDS THROUGH ART!

PLANNING SUMMIT  
1 MEETINGS  
INCLUDED A FUN,  
MULTIGENERATIONAL  
ACTIVITY WHERE  
PARTICIPANTS WERE  
ASKED TO CREATE  
A MODEL OF “THEIR  
FAVORITE PARK” (OR  
IF THEY ARE  
YOUNGER IN AGE,  
“THEIR FAVORITE  
PARK MEMORY”) OUT  
OF FOUND-OBJECT  
MATERIALS. THE  
ACTIVITY PROVIDED  
A CHANCE FOR  
PEOPLE TO ENGAGE  
IN A NON-LINEAR,  
VISUAL MANNER,  
AND ALLOW TIME  
FOR A DIRECT  
CONVERSATION  
ABOUT WHAT  
PEOPLE VALUE  
ABOUT PARK SPACES  
AND ACTIVITIES IN  
THEIR OWN LIVES.



# ADVISORY BODIES

## CORE TEAM

The LRP Core Team consisted of PARD leadership and staff from across the department who were closely involved in the planning process and implementation of the LRP. The Core Team met monthly to review materials and provide guidance and direction to the consultant team.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CEAC)

The role of the Community Engagement Advisory Committee (CEAC) was to help guide the outreach, serve as ambassadors of the *Our Parks, Our Future* planning process, identify strategies to engage hard to reach groups, and assist PARD in sharing information about the process and plan with the community. The CEAC met for the first time in October 2018 and assisted PARD with identifying outreach strategies, added to the stakeholder database, and supported the overall social media engagement. The CEAC also met prior to Planning Summits 2 and 3 to review and provide feedback on meeting content, logistics, and engagement strategies.



Technical Advisory Group (TAG) Kick-Off Discussions.  
Source: WRT

## TECHNICAL ADVISORY GROUP (TAG)

The Technical Advisory Group (TAG) was composed of a diverse group of representatives of various City departments including PARD divisions, Transportation, Public Works, Public Health, Watershed Protection, Economic Development, Real Estate Services, Planning and Zoning, Office of Sustainability, Office of Equity, among others. The TAG met for the first time as part of the project kickoff in September 2018 and met again as part of Planning Summit 2 and 3.

Each Planning Summit consisted of a series of open house format community meetings complemented by a series of pop-up events designed to be geographically diverse.



# PLANNING SUMMIT #1

November 2018

## AT A GLANCE:

- SURVEYS  
COMPLETED: 140+
- OPEN HOUSE  
PARTICIPANTS: 189
- LOCAL EVENTS  
ATTENDED: 12



Planning Summit 1 at the George Washington Carver Museum and Cultural Center  
Source: PARD

This series of five open houses focused on the question “what do our parks mean to you?” and consisted of stations supported by staff and the consultant team describing the existing parks and recreation resources in the city, the planning process and the LRP’s importance. These meetings solicited feedback on:

- + Current strengths, deficiencies, opportunities, and challenges
- + Facility and program priorities
- + Budget priorities and trade-offs (e.g., “money game”)
- + Park and recreation future vision

The associated pop-ups took place in December 2018 and January 2019 and were designed

to not only share information about the PARD Long Range Plan, but also to promote and extend the impact of the Community Meeting Series #1 by engaging residents and stakeholders outside of the meeting setting and encouraging more continuous, ongoing participation in the planning effort between meetings.

At the pop-ups, community members were greeted and provided with a fact sheet and one-page handout as well as PARD giveaways and additional Long Range Plan materials. Paper surveys and a tablet/computer were available to collect input for those interested. Participants

either completed the survey on-site or were asked to complete the survey at a more convenient time. The money game board from the first meeting series also proved a fun and concise way to gather input at these pop-ups.

## WHAT WE HEARD

Summary of top responses (for all participants, not individual meeting locations):

### **Favorite Parks:**

- + Zilker Metropolitan Park
- + Metz Neighborhood Park
- + Roy Guerreo Colorado River Park
- + Barton Creek Greenbelt



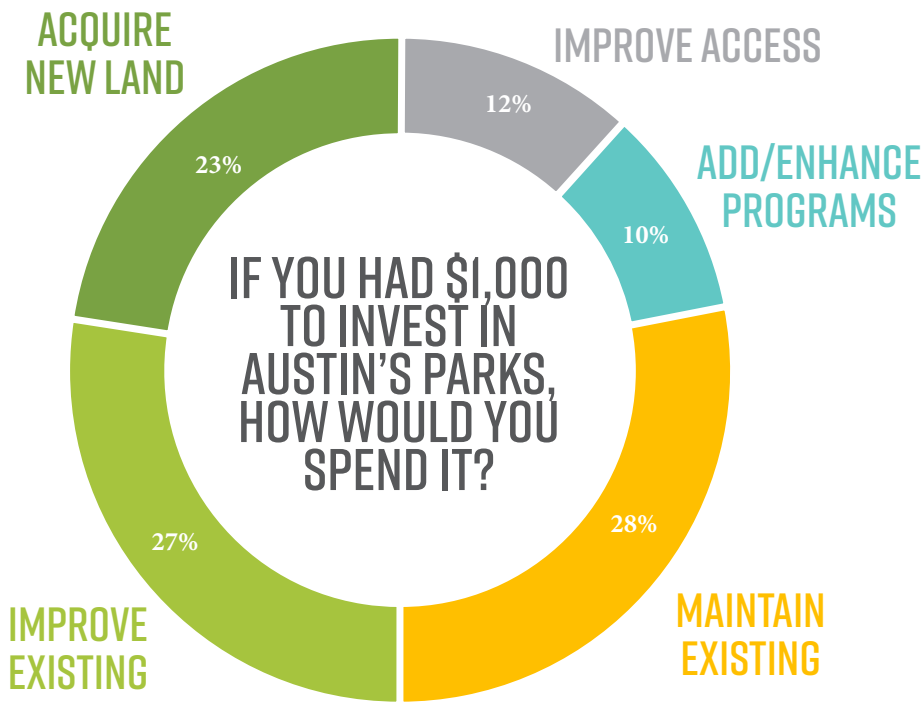


FIGURE 3. SUMMIT #1 MONEY GAME RESULTS  
Source: WRT.

- + Circle C Metropolitan Park
- + Gustavo “Gus” L. Garcia Recreation Center

#### What You Love About Austin Parks/ What Austin Parks Do Well:

- + Trails, variety in trails
- + Nature
- + Maintenance of facilities, parks and vegetation - always clean.
- + Sports programming (Basketball, volleyball, swimming, Disc Golf)
- + Spread throughout the city
- + Disc golf and multi-use courts
- + Programs/Activities offered, Accessible events

#### Facility Types That Are Most Important to You:

- + Nature Trails
- + Pools & Water Features
- + Natural Areas/Preserves
- + Community Gardens
- + Cultural/Historic Art Center

#### Programs That Are Most Important to You:

- + Outdoor Recreation
- + Aquatics
- + Stewardship Services (Adopt-a-Park/Trail)
- + Arts & Culture
- + Health & Fitness
- + Senior Programs & Services

#### How Austin Parks Can Improve:

##### OVERALL

- + Better, More Consistent Year-round Maintenance & Repair Programs for buildings, vegetation and infrastructure
- + Disc Golf Improvements (More courses, Add safer crossings)
- + Expanding Programming (More water stations/pads, dog parks, utilities for large events, educational classes)
- + Promotion/Outreach/ Education

##### FACILITIES

- + Trail/Path Improvements & Purpose/Mode Separations (ADA accessibility/paths, better access into parks)
- + Disc Golf (more and improved courses, disc golf tournament)
- + Trail Improvements (add separate bike/hike trails, repair throughout city, better signage)
- + Maintenance (on invasive species, repair infrastructure, bathrooms)
- + More Neighborhood Parks

##### PROGRAMS

- + Athletic/Sports Facilities (multi-use/bike polo courts, tennis courts)
- + Programming for Special Populations (youth Sports programs, fitness classes/ section for women)
- + Streamline the process for arranging events in Austin Parks



# PLANNING SUMMIT #2

May 2019

## AT A GLANCE:

- OPEN HOUSE PARTICIPANTS: 136
- POP-UPS HOSTED: 9
- POP-UP VISITORS ENGAGED: 157

This series of five open houses included results of the first round of community engagement, in addition to groupings of stations or themes discussing: current stats about the park system and benchmarking comparisons; growth and development trends; the distribution of facilities and amenities within the city's park system; and a look at how trends and conditions varied geographically.

The associated pop-ups took place in May and June of 2019 and were designed to expand the reach of the community meetings.

At the pop-ups, community members were greeted and provided with a fact sheet and

one-page handout as well as PARD giveaways and additional Long Range Plan materials. Several Community Meeting #2 boards were available for information and input gathering including a summary of community survey results, the community engagement theme dot-voting board, and the combined planning area input board for the area in which the pop-up was taking place.

## WHAT WE HEARD

### THEMES FEEDBACK

Participants were able to provide feedback and vote on the ten major themes that emerged from previous community engagement events and completed surveys. Those ten themes were: natural experiences, unstructured spaces, green infrastructure, linear parks & trails, proximity & access, urban spaces, parks & arts/culture, educational opportunities, inclusivity, and cleanliness, safety & homelessness. In general, there was consensus across all combined planning areas on what people wanted to see in the future. The top five long-range themes that participants agreed on were:

#### 1. Cleanliness & Safety

People were concerned that parks are not being adequately maintained. This includes issues around lighting, shade, maintenance, recycling, bathrooms, off-leash dog areas,

and dog waste disposal. People also expressed concern about the issue of homelessness and saw an opportunity to work with the homeless population to improve park cleanliness & safety.

#### 2. Linear Parks & Trails

People were more interested in parks that allow them to move (walk/run/bike) as opposed to staying in one place. There was an interest in nature and multipurpose trails within PARD parks as well as connectivity between parks along urban trails.

#### 3. Inclusivity

People expressed a desire for parks and programming to be more inclusive. This includes more publicity about activities, providing free parking, reducing fees that may prevent low-income residents from participating, and increasing multi-generational programs and spaces.

#### 4. Natural Experiences

People expressed a desire for parks that feel more natural. This includes undeveloped, wild natural spaces, rustic finishes instead of paved areas, and more native plants.

#### 5. Unstructured Spaces

In general, people cared less about spaces for specific programming, opting for more multi-use spaces. This includes preserving green "natural" and "open" spaces.

## PRIORITIES

Participants were asked what was most important to them, and responses varied from more recycling to increased parking to additional resources for disc golf. There was a general interest in increasing summer camp opportunities and striking a balance between active recreation/programming and preserving parks as natural areas. However, participants raised concerns on equity and affordable housing as parkland and amenities increase. Some comments include:

- + “More budgeting towards cleaning up trash on greenbelts”
- + “Park programming for kids + adults with disabilities”
- + “A functional multi-purpose court (fenced in, nice surface) for multiple sports to practice, hold tournaments, and engage in weekly pick-up games”
- + “Natural play and learning environments are important for early childhood development. Seeing money go towards installation of natural play sites is good for all of us”

## IDENTIFYING LOCAL NEEDS

Participants were also shown the six geographic combined planning areas that divide Austin for the purposes of the LRP: North, East, Southeast, Southwest, West, and Central. These combined planning areas

are intended to approximate the way residents and visitors might make use of the local park system-- what facilities and amenities are accessible to them and how they relate to one another. There were opportunities to give feedback on four different topics within each combined planning area:

**1. Improving Connections/ Access.** Where can access and connections to existing parks be improved?

**2. Investing in Existing Parks.** Where should investments in improvements/maintenance to existing parks be made?

**3. Creating New Parks.** Where would you like to see new parks located?

**4. Facility Type High Priority Needs.** Where should new facilities should be located in each area? This question was specific to each combined planning area and reflective of previous feedback. Priority needs were identified through the statistically valid survey.

## PLANNING SUMMIT #3

July 2019

### AT A GLANCE:

- PARTICIPANTS: TBD
- LOCAL EVENTS ATTENDED: TBD

This final series of two open houses were set up as an open house with a brief presentation providing an overview of the planning process and recommendations to orient participants. Participants were encouraged to review boards describing citywide strategies and planning area recommendations and ask questions and provide feedback on the recommendations.

The draft plan was made available online for public review, comment, and feedback. During this review period, a final series of pop-ups were hosted at locations across the city to get direct feedback from the community.

# ENGAGING HARD TO REACH POPULATIONS

## FOCUS GROUPS & INTERVIEWS

As part of the insight gathering process, the GO collaborative team conducted a series of six focus groups and interviews in March and May of 2019 to gain a deeper understanding about some key issues that PARD knows will be of community-wide interest in the future. The subjects for these engagements included: Parks Usage for Seniors, Dog Parks, Untapped Minority Youth Engagement, Accessibility and Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired / Texas School for the Deaf. While the focus group interests and backgrounds were very diverse, there were common themes that emerged across the discussions:

- + Accessibility and lack of clear signage is an issue that came up frequently in discussion. There was an interest and need for universal design in parks, from functional needs of play to accessibility of trails and restrooms, especially from public transit. There was also interest in collaborating with the tech sector to improve accessibility (e.g. audio systems for the blind). There was support for more sensory playscapes and pocket parks.

- + Inclusivity and creating a welcoming atmosphere for all was noted as an area for improvement. Visitors often wonder, “is this place for me?” Some ideas for improvement include bilingual signage, wayfinding, universal design, and increased access through multiple entrances / relationship to safe routes to schools efforts.
- + Active adults / seniors who use parks noted the need for improved transit routes to parks, more restrooms, shaded areas in parks, and multi-generational spaces – amenities that would benefit all, not just active adults and seniors.
- + Dog park advocates noted that it is not safe to get to parks by walking due to lack of sidewalks or gaps in the network – an improvement that would benefit all, not just dog walkers.

The focus group discussions also yielded more user-specific feedback and ideas:

### **Dog Park Advocates:**

- + Appreciation of growth in understanding around dog parks in last decade.
- + Need to continue to upgrade and maintain facilities over time (e.g., safety of dogs and owners through: double entry gates, water features, cooling zones).
- + Group interest in a dog sports center (amenity that could require user fees).

- + Support for and focus on important role of signage / communication around dog safety (e.g., body language, when is it safe to approach a dog).
- + Consider offering classes at the dog parks themselves (or other locations) to help with the many needed dimensions of community education – from “How to be a Good Dog Owner,” to “How to be with Dogs in Public” – similar to how community education offerings are at libraries and recreation centers.

### **Untapped Minority Youth Engagement:**

- + Need to improve facilities to address core concern of accessibility in every dimension, whether mobility infrastructure or cultural accessibility; this may include “in between” spaces, safe spaces, nursing rooms, and physically accessible spaces.
- + Focus on specific routes taken by youth to address park accessibility/connectivity and explore combining with safe-routes-to-school efforts.
- + Desire for better communication and administrative processes to increase sense of accessibility, such as bilingual signage, hiring staff from adjacent neighborhoods, more communication about what is available in all parks, improved process for groups trying to reserve PARD spaces.

### Active and Non-Active Seniors:

- + Potential to add multi-generational spaces to increase interaction between different age groups and foster connections.
- + Consider adding more enhanced facilities, such as more shaded rest spots, more restrooms, and segregated speeds on active trails.
- + Non-active seniors have similar needs to that of active seniors, but to a greater extent. While enhanced facilities may not be a necessity for active seniors, those same enhanced facilities (shaded rest spots, restrooms, etc.) determine whether parks are accessible for non-active seniors.

### Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired and Texas School for the Deaf:

- + Primary need for both groups is to hire an accessibility-design specialist to create a series of design guidelines.
- + Specific recommendations for the blind & deaf communities include more accessible wayfinding, amenities, and general urban design (e.g. tactile map, auditory locators like windchimes, visual aids, captioning at park events, sensory playscapes, and designated spots for MetroAccess).

# CULTURAL FACILITY AUDIO SURVEY

TO BRING A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF THE ROLE CULTURAL FACILITIES PLAY IN THE LIVES OF THEIR USERS THE TEAM CONDUCTED INTERVIEWS AT EACH CULTURAL CENTER IN AUSTIN. THE AUDIO RECORDINGS WERE THEN MIXED AND SHARED WITH THE COMMUNITY AS PART OF THE SECOND ROUND OF MEETINGS. “PARD RADIO” PROVIDED AN OPPORTUNITY FOR PARTICIPANTS TO LISTEN AND SHARE THEIR STORIES.



PARD Radio at Community Meetings  
Source: WRT



# SURVEYS & ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

## ONLINE COMMUNITY SURVEY

November 27, 2018 - January 27, 2019

Responses: 4,400+  
Comments: 9,000

The online LRP survey opened following the first round of community meetings and provided an additional forum for participation. PARD advertised the survey through pop-up events, flyers, email blasts and social media, signage, and ads on Capital Metro buses and media/ radio. The survey was designed to help the consultant team understand the current interests and needs of the community related to parks and recreational facilities, and included questions related to frequency of park use, how a person gets to or would like to get to their parks, and the types of programs and amenities they would like to see in future parks. The survey allowed for open ended comments, was provided in multiple languages, and received almost 9,000 comments.

This plan used two different types of surveys to achieve different but related goals. The first, the Online Community Survey, was designed as an explorative tool for more open-ended feedback that could shape the themes and focus of the plan, while the second, the Statistically Valid Survey, was designed as a more precise tool to prioritize investment and ensure results were representative of resident needs and desires at multiple geographic scales.



## HOW WE GOT THE WORD OUT



**WEB**  
Social media,  
e-blasts, Texts



**PRINT**  
Flyers, lawn  
signs



**MEDIA**  
Cap metro &  
media/ radio  
ads

## WHO TOOK THE SURVEY



**FAMILY SIZE**  
42% live in  
a 2-person  
household



**AGE**  
46% are 35-54  
years old

**TENURE**  
29% have lived  
in Austin for 30+  
years

28% have lived  
in Austin for less  
than 10 years

**49%**  
VISIT PARKS  
WEEKLY

**21%**  
VISIT PARKS  
MONTHLY

**16%**  
VISIT PARKS  
DAILY

## WHAT DO YOU VALUE?

- #1 (NATURAL) BEAUTY
- #2 PLACES TO CONNECT TO NATURE
- #3 CLEANLINESS
- #4 Easy to get to
- #5 Safety
- #6 Places to exercise or be active
- #7 Quiet places and places to relax

## WHAT KEEPS YOU FROM USING PARKS?

- #1 CRIME OR SAFETY CONCERNS
- #2 NO PARKS OR FACILITIES CLOSE TO HOME
- #3 PARKS APPEAR DEGRADED, IN POOR CONDITION
- #4 Inadequate parking
- #5 Presence of people experiencing homelessness
- #6 Lack of lighting
- #7 Parks & facilities do not appear clean
- #8 Lack of awareness of what programs are offered
- #9 Operating hours / length of season too short

## WHAT PROGRAMS WOULD KEEP YOU AT A PARK MORE?

**38%** ARTS & CULTURE

**12%** FITNESS & SPORTS

**24%** GROUP GATHERINGS

**12%** NATURE PROGRAMS

## WHAT PARKS DO YOU VISIT OUTSIDE OF AUSTIN?

**28%** VISIT TRAVIS COUNTY PARKS

**17%** VISIT LCRA PARKS

## DESIRES FOR THE NEXT 10 YEARS...

### AMENITIES

1. Nature trails for hiking and walking
2. Natural areas & preserves
3. Multi-purpose trails (walking, running, hiking, mountain biking)

### FACILITIES

1. Nature centers
2. Multi-generational community recreation centers
3. Community centers for recreation, art & culture

### PROGRAMS

1. Aquatic
2. Gardening
3. Group Exercise

### YOUTH PROGRAMS

1. Summer camps (nature-based)
2. Youth environmental education
3. Summer camps (adventure)

## MOST FREQUENTLY VISITED PARKS

### NEIGHBORHOOD/SCHOOL/POCKET PARK 1,906 Respondents

A.B. DITTMAR PARK



6%

BRENTWOOD PARK



5%

BARTON HILLS PARK



5%

### DISTRICT/METROPOLITAN PARK 2,098 Respondents

ZILKER PARK



21%

WALNUT CREEK PARK



10%



10%

### GREENBELT / GREENWAY 1,762 Respondents

BARTON CREEK



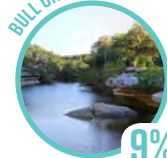
45%

SHOAL CREEK



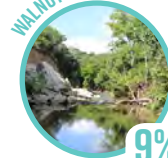
10%

BULL CREEK



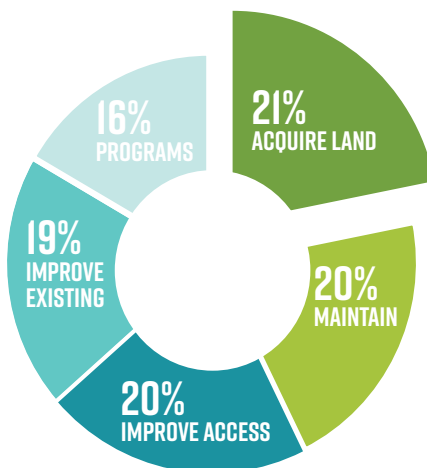
9%

WALNUT CREEK



9%

## INVESTMENT PRIORITIES



# STATISTICALLY VALID SURVEY

January 2019 - March 2019

Responses: 925

This survey was administered by ETC Institute via telephone, mail, and internet and was translated as needed in order to capture with a degree of certainty the needs and priorities of all residents in the city—not just those who choose to participate in other forms of engagement. This survey was designed to validate and complement other engagement through the use of more in-depth questions. The statistically valid survey continued until it had achieved a 95% confidence interval for all results at the citywide and combined planning area level. A total of 925 residents completed the survey. The overall results for the sample of 925 households have a precision of at least +/- 3.22 at the 95% level of confidence.

## Method

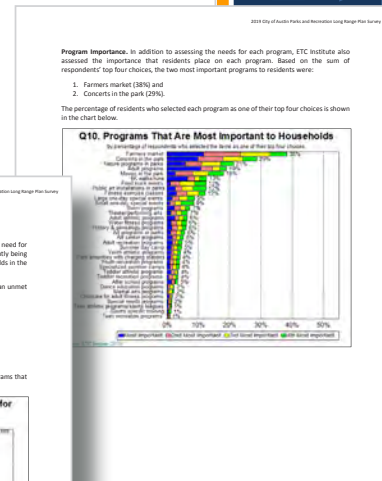
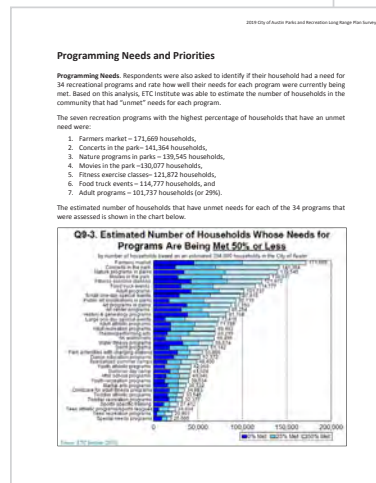
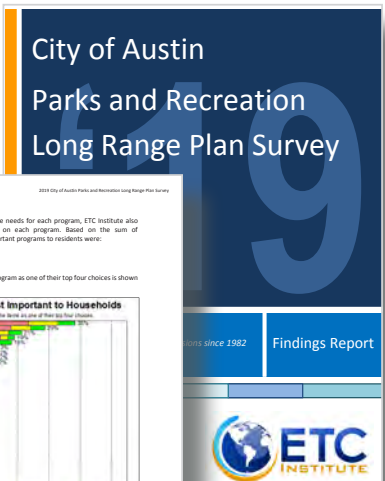
ETC Institute mailed a survey packet to a random sample of households in the City of Austin. Residents who received the survey were given the option of returning the survey by mail or completing it online. Ten days after the surveys were mailed, ETC Institute sent emails and placed phone calls to the households that received the survey to encourage

participation. The emails contained a link to the online version of the survey to make it easier for residents to complete. To prevent people who were not residents of the City of Austin from participating, everyone who completed the survey online was required to enter their home address. If the address from a survey completed online did not match one of the addresses selected for the sample, the online survey was not counted.

## Results

### Facility/Amenity Use, Ratings and Priorities

- + 90% of households visited a PARD park or facility during the past year.
- + 83% of households who visited a park or facility



indicated that the condition of the parks/facilities they visited was either “excellent” or “good.”

The two most important amenities to residents were multi-purpose and nature trails (57%) and open spaces/nature parks/preserves (42%). The four recreation amenities with the highest percentage of households that have an unmet need were:

- + Open spaces/nature parks preserve
- + Multi-purpose and nature trails
- + Community garden
- + Off-leash dog areas/parks



### Program Use, Ratings and Priorities

- + 17% of households participated in a program offered by PARD during the past year.
- + 90% of respondents who participated rated the programs their household participated in as either “excellent” or “good.”

The two most important programs to residents were farmers markets (38%) and concerts in the park (29%). The seven recreation programs with the highest percentage of households that have an unmet need were:

- + Farmers market
- + Concerts in the park
- + Nature programs in parks
- + Movies in the park
- + Fitness exercise classes
- + Food truck events
- + Adult programs

### Information Sources

Seventy-three percent (73%) of respondents indicated that word of mouth is the way they learn about City of Austin programs, activities, and events. Only 29% of respondents indicated they used the City of Austin website and another 29% indicated they use newspapers. However, respondents indicated that Email (28%) or the PARD website (18%) are the most preferred information sources for programs, activities, and events.

### Barriers to Usage and Participation

The biggest barriers to usage and participation were:

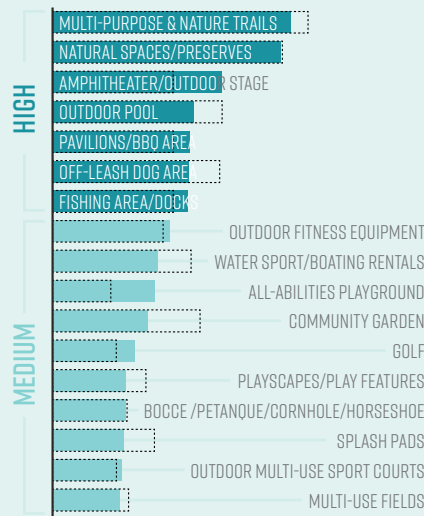
- + a lack of awareness of what programs are offered (69%)
- + inadequate parking at parks and facilities (61%)
- + the presence of people experiencing homelessness (54%)

## ESTABLISHING PRIORITY NEEDS

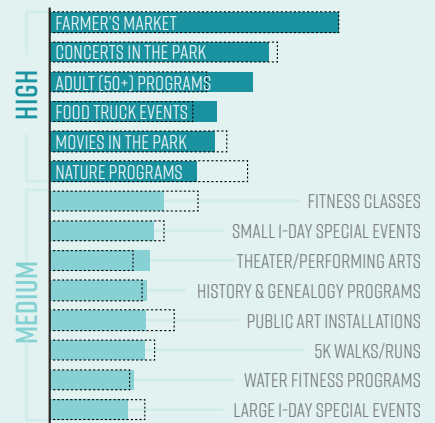
The Priority Investment Rating (PIR) System was developed by ETC Institute as an objective tool to evaluate the priority that should be placed on investments. The PIR equally weights the importance residents place on something and how many residents have unmet needs for that thing.

For example, using the PIR system for the statistically valid survey of residents of the Southeast Combined Planning Area, the following priorities emerged in this ranked order (compared against the citywide prioritization of the same elements, depicted in the black dashed outline).

### FACILITY & AMENITY PRIORITIES



### PROGRAM PRIORITIES



# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT THEMES

Ten themes emerged from the numerous community engagement events and surveys completed as part of this planning process. Those themes along with the priority needs and citywide analysis form the basis of the system-wide recommendations to follow.

## NATURAL EXPERIENCES

People expressed a desire for parks that feel more natural. This includes undeveloped, wild natural spaces, rustic finishes instead of paved areas and more native plants.

## UNSTRUCTURED SPACES

In general, people cared less about spaces for specific programming, opting for more multi-use spaces and preserving green, natural, and open spaces.

## GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

There was an interest in proactively using green infrastructure in parks to build a more resilient city. This includes stormwater management, flood protection, heat island effect mitigation, drought tolerance, and native planting/habitat areas.

“Please don't develop our natural areas! We need natural forested areas to relieve ourselves from the stress of the city.”

“I like the idea of parks integrated into every day life. Smaller parks throughout the city and better connectivity between parks could achieve this.”

Sometimes I notice homeless people sleeping on a bench, but in general I am happy that everybody has access to the park area and have not felt threatened by the homeless presence.

## LINEAR PARKS & TRAILS

People were more interested in parks that allow them to move (walk/run/bike) as opposed to staying in one place. There was an interest in nature and multipurpose trails within PARD parks as well as connectivity between parks along urban trails.

## PROXIMITY & ACCESS

People were concerned about both the lack of parks near them and/or their ability to get to parks. This includes walkability issues, lack of adequate parking and the lack of public transit access.

## URBAN SPACES

People expressed a concern that existing parkland in high-density urban areas exists already at critical locations, but is underutilized. The desire was for a renewed commitment to well-maintained green spaces and enhanced programming in urban parks in high-density areas.

"I don't have a pocket park close to me. Due to traffic and the lack of sidewalks and bike lanes, I have to drive to a park to arrive safely."

"Educate our youth. It is cost effective and fun. There are many activities youth can do outside and we need them out in nature as much as possible. It is healthy and has been shown to be calming and decreases anxiety."

"Brush Square should be an opportunity to show off what is great about Austin's outdoor culture to those at the convention center, instead of a forgotten lawn!"

Too many programs at high costs and fees. Need more accommodations for low income folks.

"More parks that embrace nature and Austin spirit. Do we really need more buildings in this city?"

"Make more art along trails [Butler Hike and Bike Trail]"

## PARKS & ARTS/CULTURE

People expressed a desire for increased arts/culture programming in parks. This includes increased community-focused programming and more cultural centers that could host these kinds of programs.

## EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

People were interested in more hands-on educational opportunities. This includes youth education, art-based education, and summer camps.

## INCLUSIVITY

People expressed a desire for parks and programming to be more inclusive. This includes more publicity about activities, providing free parking, reducing fees that may prevent low-income residents from participating, and increasing multi-generational programs and spaces.

## CLEANLINESS & SAFETY

People were concerned that parks are not being adequately maintained. This includes issues around lighting, shade, maintenance, recycling, bathrooms, off-leash dog areas and dog waste disposal. People also expressed concern about the issue of homelessness and saw an opportunity to work with individuals experiencing homelessness to improve park cleanliness and safety.





Yett Park.  
Source: PARD



# OUR PARKS

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

Austin's park system reflects its unique geography, climate, history, and culture. The PARD park system occupies a central place in the identity and lifestyle of Austinites weaving its way into the daily routines of residents and drawing visitors to its stunning natural features. Taking stock of the existing system involves understanding not only the physical assets but also how they are managed and used. In other words, before embarking on planning for the future, it is critical to understand how the park system functions currently and how it relates to its communities of users.

## IN THIS CHAPTER

### EXISTING SYSTEM

- + Overview
- + Park Planning Areas
- + Park Types
- + Non-PARD Parks & Open Space
- + Facility Distribution Analysis

### HOW DO WE COMPARE?

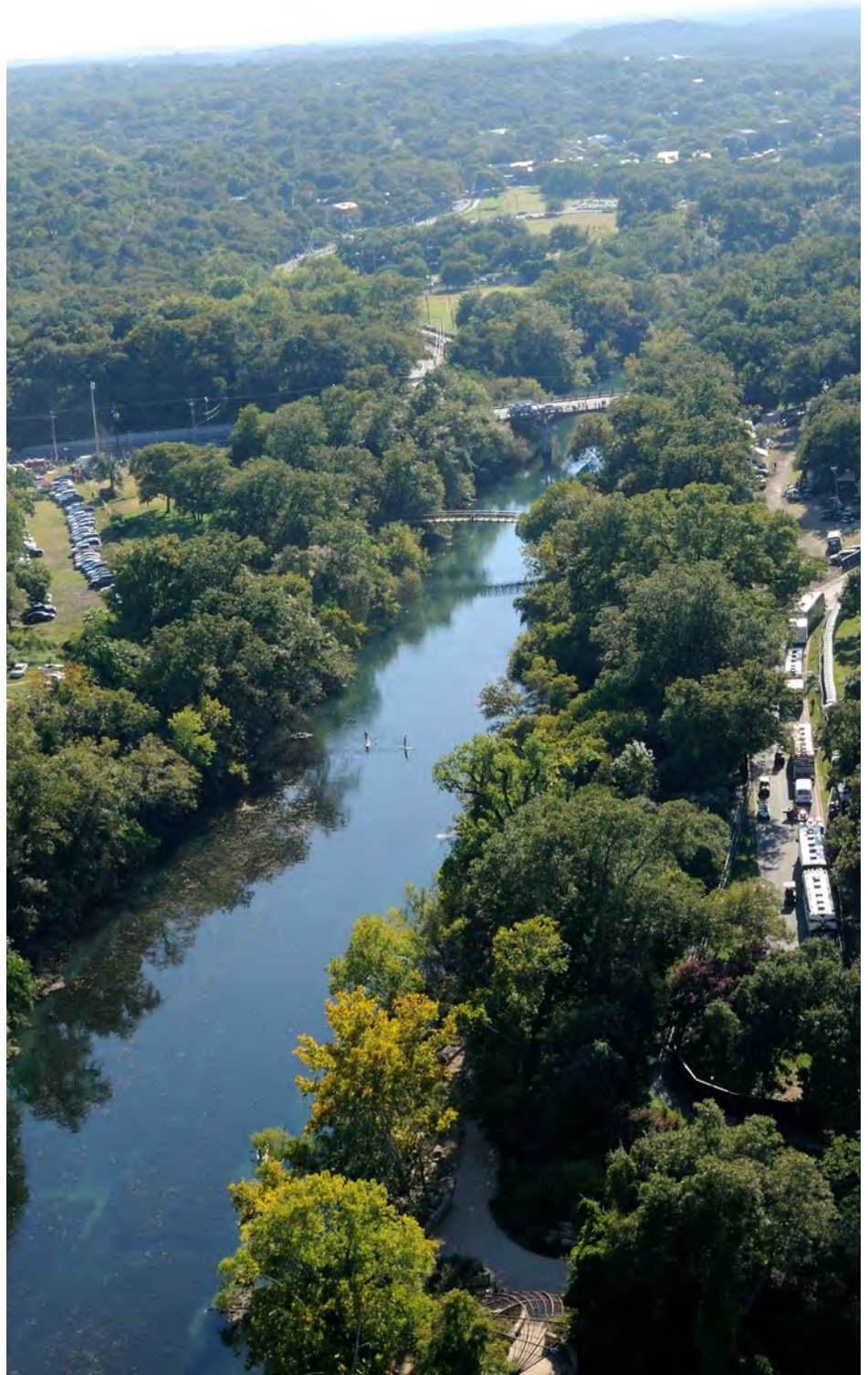
- + Benchmarking

# EXISTING SYSTEM

## OVERVIEW

Austin's park and recreation system is diverse and far-reaching with over 300 parks. PARD owns and maintains more than 20,000 acres of land, including over 227 miles of trails, 40 pools, and numerous mixed-use fields, volleyball courts, playgrounds, golf courses, and off-leash dog areas. PARD is unique from many other city park departments in that the department oversees five historic cemeteries, more than 20 museums, art, performance and cultural venues, and numerous historic buildings.

Each individual park and facility together form a network of spaces and city amenities, connected by trails, sidewalks, and streets. Nearly 720 full-time staff and 1,500 temporary or part-time staff work together to operate and maintain Austin's park and recreation system.



Source: PARD



# OPEN SPACE FRAMEWORK

## THE RIVER AND LAKES

Spanning more than 800 miles long across Texas, the Colorado River is one of Austin's prominent natural features. The river's watershed also encompasses the city. Austin relies on the Colorado River for 100% of its municipal water. The majority of Austin's public spaces and parks are connected to the river, including some of Austin residents' favorite parks like Zilker Metropolitan Park. The river also forms Lake Austin, Lake Travis, and Lady Bird Lake via its dammed portions. Along Lady Bird Lake, the 10-mile Ann and Roy Butler Hike and Bike Trail offers many vantage points of the city and runs almost consistently on the river's edge.



## THE GREENWAYS

Greenways, or greenbelts, are linear natural feature-focused open spaces intended for passive recreational use, flood control, and water quality preservation. Austin boasts various greenbelts that serve multiple functions, whether for recreation purposes, wildlife habitation, or transportation. These greenbelts also have the potential for expansion, linking different public spaces together. The Barton Creek Greenbelt is one of Austin's most popular and beloved greenbelts, covering more than 1,700 acres of parkland. With multiple access points, trails, and diverse terrain, it is used for both passive and active recreation by residents.



## PARKS AND PRESERVED OPEN SPACE

Integrated into the rest of Austin's urban fabric are its parks (both PARD and non-PARD owned/maintained) and preserved open spaces. This includes everything from large district parks, nature preserves, smaller pocket parks, urban plazas, and even cemeteries. Parks that are part of other counties, like Travis and Williamson County, or owned and managed by independent entities, are included as they are also well-used by Austin residents.



# OUR PARK SYSTEM, BY THE NUMBERS

100 YEAR ANNIVERSARY  
OF PARD (2028)

19,000+ ACRES OF PARKLAND      967,000 2018 POPULATION → 1.143M 2030 POPULATION

14 DIVISIONS      700 FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES      & 1,000+ PT & SEASONAL



## Environmental Features

- PARD Park (owned and/or maintained)
- Other Non-PARD Open Space
- Waterways

## Political Boundaries

- County Boundaries
- City of Austin
- Austin Limited Purpose Planning
- Austin 2 Mile ETJ; 5 Mile ETJ
- Beyond Austin Jurisdiction

## Transportation

- MetroRail Commuter Line (Existing/Under Construction)
- Other (non-passenger) Rail Lines
- Downtown Austin
- Airport

## PARD Recreation / Community Centers

- Pickfair Community Center
- YMCA North Austin Community Recreation Center
- Gustavo "Gus" L. Garcia Recreation Center
- Northwest Recreation Center
- Virginia L. Brown Recreation Center
- Dottie Jordan Recreation Center
- Hancock Recreation Center
- Turner/Roberts Recreation Center
- Austin Recreation Center
- Alamo Recreation Center
- Delores Duffie Recreation Center & Britton, Durst, Howard & Spence Building
- Givens Recreation Center
- Oswaldo A. B. Cantu / Pan-American Recreation Center
- Lorraine "Grandma" Camacho Activity Center
- Metz Recreation Center
- Parque Zaragoza Recreation Center
- Danny G. McBeth Recreation Center & Annex Building
- South Austin Recreation Center
- Montopolis Recreation Center
- Dittmar Recreation Center
- Dove Springs Recreation Center

Source: PARD Annual Report, 2018 Fiscal Year



Source: WRT.



# PARK PLANNING AREAS

In order to coordinate local needs with system-wide needs in an efficient and consistent way, PARD has sub-divided the City of Austin into 26 park planning areas. The park planning areas remain the same each year, while census boundaries and council districts change with population shifts, making them useful for tracking and monitoring park improvements and needs. These

planning areas were developed in the 1970s as a means for collecting data over time. Park planning areas are numbered with the lowest numbers closer to the urban core, and the larger numbers at the periphery.

For the purposes of the LRP, the individual park planning areas are grouped into six geographic combined planning areas: North, East, Southeast, Southwest, West, and Central. The intent is for the combined planning areas to approximate the way residents and visitors might make

use of the local park system – what facilities and amenities are accessible to them and how they relate to one another. Chapter 5 includes a customized set of short and long-term strategies for how to maintain and invest in the local park system in a balanced and holistic way.

The combined planning area groupings allow PARD to better meet needs and aspirations that are more specialized or larger in scale, like a new nature center or a metro park.

## Individual Park Planning Areas

The **CENTRAL** combined planning area captures the majority of Austin's Urban Core. Dominated by residents aged 18-65 with small household sizes, it has the highest population & employment densities with healthy growth expected in both.

1 2 3 9 17

The **NORTH** combined planning area has the second highest population & employment densities in the city but is more racially diverse than Central with more youth and larger household sizes.

4 5 6 7 8 21 22

The **EAST** combined planning area has one of the lowest population densities with the highest proportion of black residents, highest poverty rate and a higher youth population. It also has the highest projected population growth and substantial expected job growth.

10 11 23

The **SOUTHEAST** combined planning area has the highest proportion of Hispanic residents and the second highest poverty rate along with the second highest youth population. Healthy population growth and substantial job growth is expected here.

12 13 24 25

The **SOUTHWEST** combined planning area has mid-level population and employment densities with minimal population growth but substantial employment growth expected and the highest proportion of white residents.

14 15 16 26

The **WEST** combined planning area has the lowest population and employment densities, with minimal growth expected and has the highest proportion of both senior residents and youth.

18 19 20

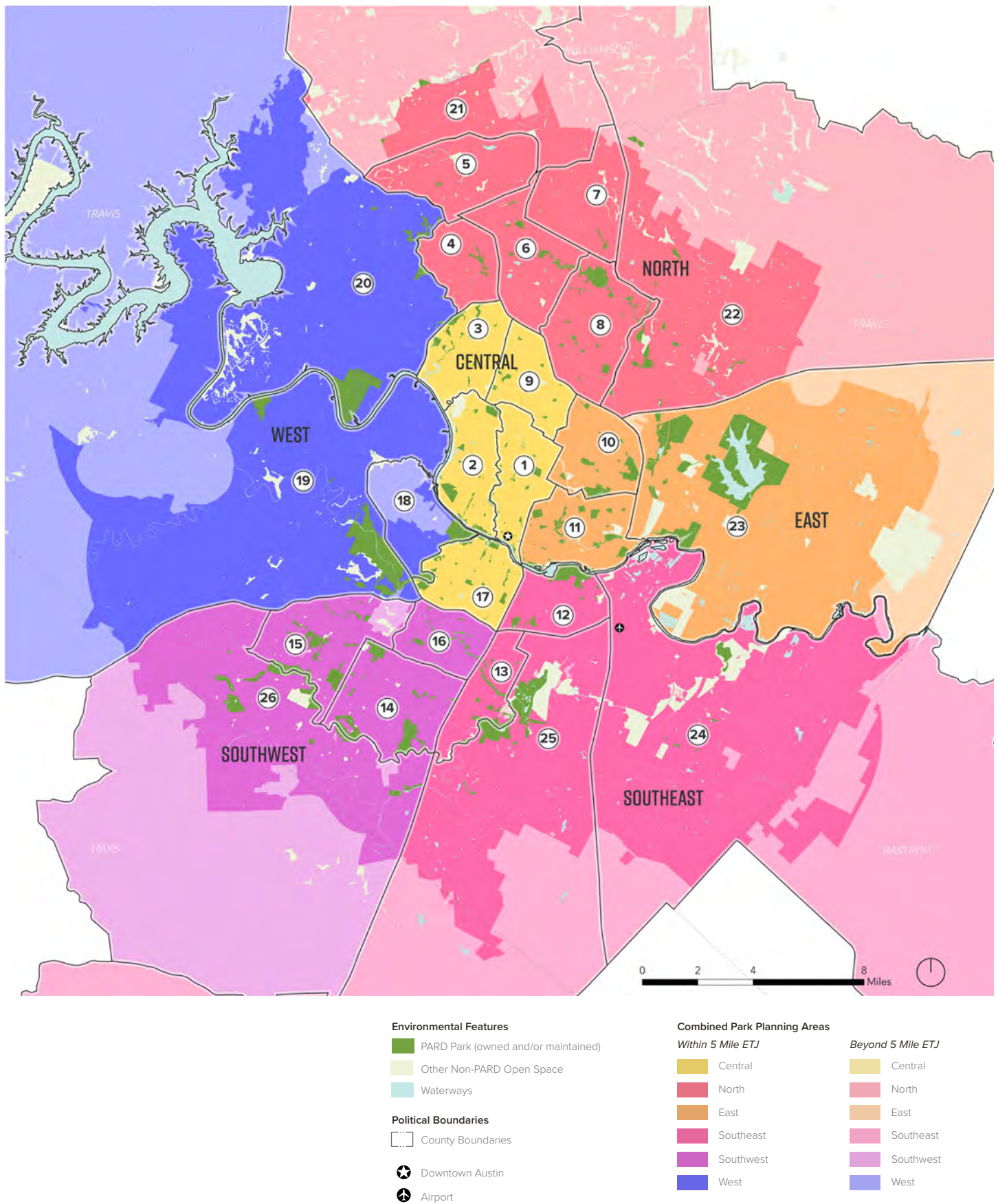


FIGURE 5. PARD'S INDIVIDUAL & COMBINED PARK PLANNING AREAS  
Source: WRT.

# PARK TYPES

The 11 park types help to shape the way that we manage and develop parks to enhance the balance and diversity of the system while keeping in mind local needs and specialized features that are unique to a particular park or community. They are broken into two categories: all-purpose and special purpose parks. Each type is described below.

All-Purpose		Size (Acres)	Service Area	Access	Feature Mix
METROPOLITAN	Focus on natural resource values and recreational diversity. Often include water-based recreation and environmental education.	201+	citywide	Major Arterials (Cars, Public Transit)	DISTRICT MIX + More Large, Specialized Features and Facilities
DISTRICT	Sites for major indoor facilities, specialized/large outdoor facilities. Natural features may play a more central role in the park.	31-200	2 mile	Minor Arterials (Cars, Public Transit)	N-HOOD MIX + Indoor, Large/ Specialized Outdoor Athletics
NEIGHBORHOOD	Typically located in the center of a single neighborhood or in conjunction with an elementary school or a greenbelt. Local recreation focus.	2-30	1 mile	Collector Streets (Bike & Pedestrian)	POCKET MIX + Compact / Multi-Purpose Outdoor Athletics
POCKET	Serve high density areas not well served by other public parks. May be non-green spaces (plazas, courtyards, paseos, pedestrian malls).	up to 1.99	up to 1/4 mile	Collector Streets (Bike & Pedestrian)	Trails, Playscapes, BBQ/ Picnic Areas, Gardens
BUTTON	Provides smaller park spaces on shared school property	0.25 or less	up to 1/4 mile	Collector Streets (Bike & Pedestrian)	Playscapes, Nature Play, Passive Uses
Special Purpose	size and service area varies depending on use.				
NATURE PRESERVE	Focus on natural resource & habitat conservation with minimal or no recreational facilities.				
GREENBELT	Linear natural feature-focused open spaces intended for passive recreational use, flood control and water quality preservation.				
SCHOOL	Slightly smaller than Neighborhood Parks with recreational facilities responding first to the student population, then to the neighborhood.				
CEMETERY	Places for burial, mourning and reflection with only passive recreational facilities such as trails and benches.				
GOLF COURSE	Golf courses including 9- and 18-hole courses.				
OTHER	Varies.				



**PARD Parks**  
(owned and/or maintained)

**ALL-PURPOSE**

- Metropolitan
- District
- Neighborhood
- Pocket

**SPECIALIZED**

- Nature Preserve
- Greenbelt
- School
- Cemetery
- Golf Course
- Other Special Purpose

**Environmental Features**

- Other Non-PARD Open Space
- Waterways

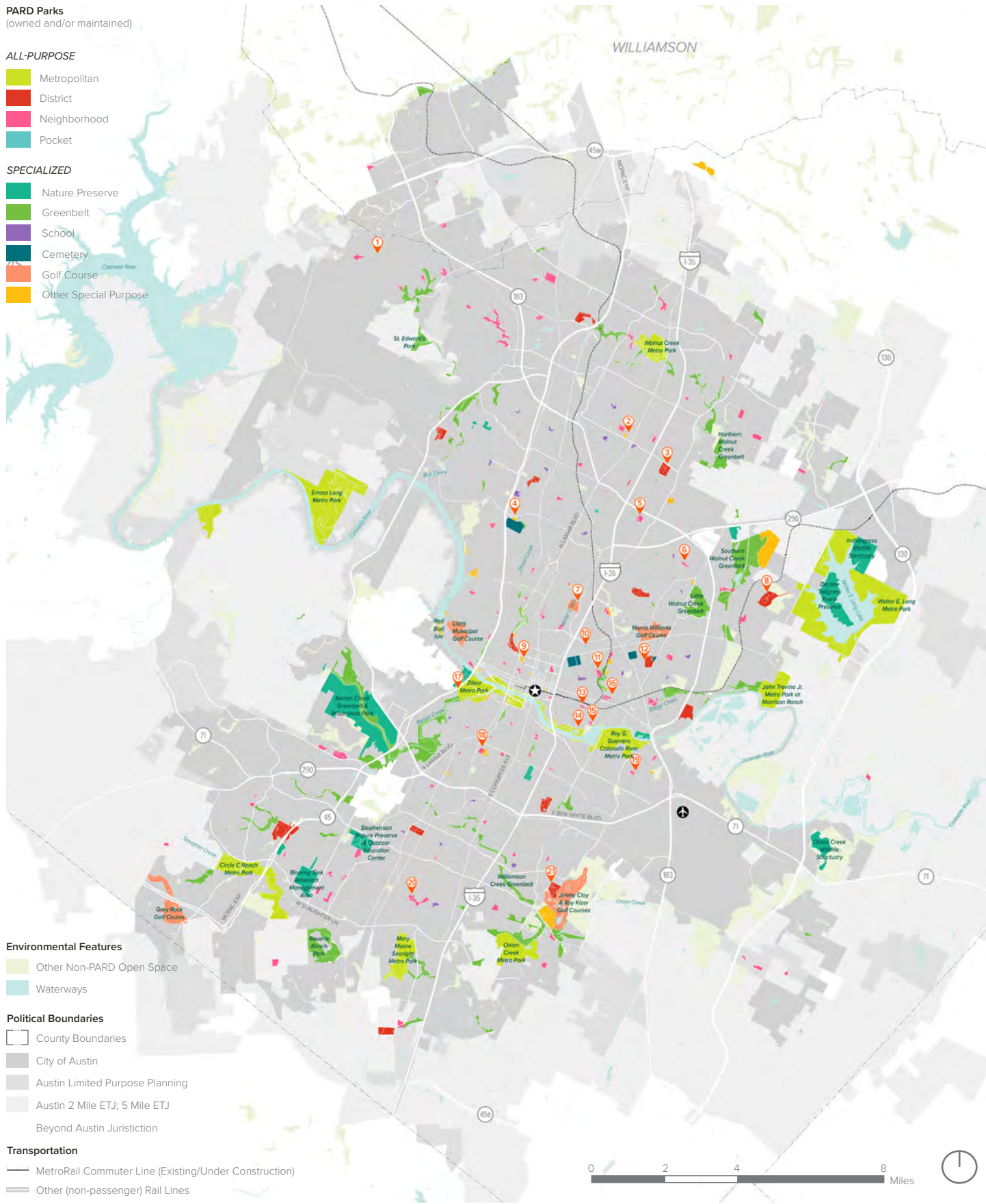
**Political Boundaries**

- County Boundaries
- City of Austin
- Austin Limited Purpose Planning
- Austin 2 Mile ETJ; 5 Mile ETJ
- Beyond Austin Jurisdiction

**Transportation**

- MetroRail Commuter Line (Existing/Under Construction)
- Other (non-passenger) Rail Lines

- Downtown Austin
- Airport



**FIGURE 6. EXISTING PARD PARKS BY TYPE**

Source: WRT.

# NON-PARD PARKS & OPEN SPACE

The PARD park system is complemented by a wide variety of other parks and open spaces that are owned and managed by independent entities but are equally valuable and well-used by Austin residents and visitors. These non-PARD parks and open spaces include, but are not limited to:

**28% OF**  
AUSTINITES VISIT  
TRAVIS COUNTY PARKS

**17% OF AUSTINITES**  
VISIT LCRA PARKS

THESE VALUABLE NON-PARD PARKS & OPEN SPACE RESOURCES WILL BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION AS IMPORTANT CONTEXT AS FUTURE PARD INVESTMENTS ARE CONSIDERED.

## PARD Parks

### Non-PARD Preserves

#### Balcones Canyonlands Preserve (BCP) Land

One of the nation's largest urban preserves, it provides habitat for a number of rare and endangered plant and animal species found nowhere else on earth, and is cooperatively owned and managed.

#### Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) Parks

LCRA owns and operates more than 40 parks, recreation areas, and river access sites along the Colorado River.

### State of Texas Parks

The State Parks Division is responsible for protecting, interpreting and managing cultural and natural resources of statewide significance and providing outdoor recreation and learning.

### County Parks

Provide county residents a system of community parks, signature parks and nature preserves linked by greenbelts, riparian corridors and trails.

### Other City of Austin Open Space

Spaces owned or managed by other City of Austin departments and programs.

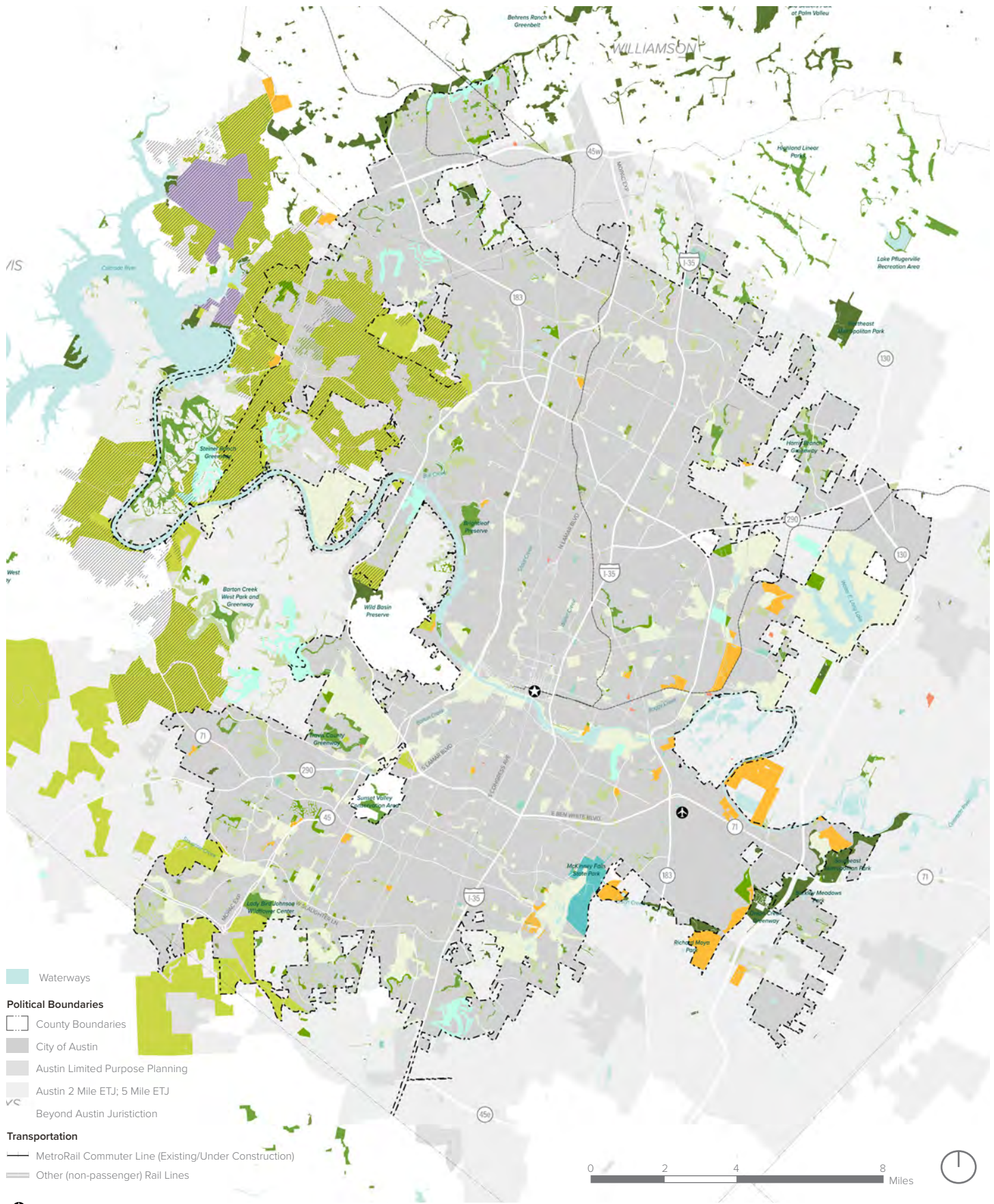
### Other Jurisdiction Parkland

### Private Community Gardens

### Other Open Space

This category, which is not shown on the map to the right, includes all other open space land uses such as the quasi-public Homeowners Association (HOA) and Municipal Utility District (MUD) outdoor common spaces.





**FIGURE 7. EXISTING NON-PARD PARKS & OPEN SPACES**  
Source: WRT.



# FACILITY DISTRIBUTION ANALYSIS

Austin’s park system offerings are diverse and the location of facilities varies across geographies. This map series shows where there are concentrations of or a lack of different park facility types, grouped by: Nature, Passive Recreation, Active Recreation, Arts & Culture. The city’s park planning areas are grouped into North, Central, East, Southeast, Southwest, and West. For this analysis, the number of each facility type per resident is calculated for each combined park planning area and then compared against the citywide average.

Grouping facilities thematically in this way and comparing

them against a citywide status quo enables a more robust understanding of how to balance facility types. For instance, active recreation facilities can sometimes crowd out the passive and natural experiences residents and visitors are seeking to find in their parkland. By looking at the ratio of Nature Facilities vs. Active Recreation Facilities in a given part of the city, it becomes possible to consider how these facilities can best complement one another to support a wider variety of park uses that are well-matched with the unique needs and preferences of their community.

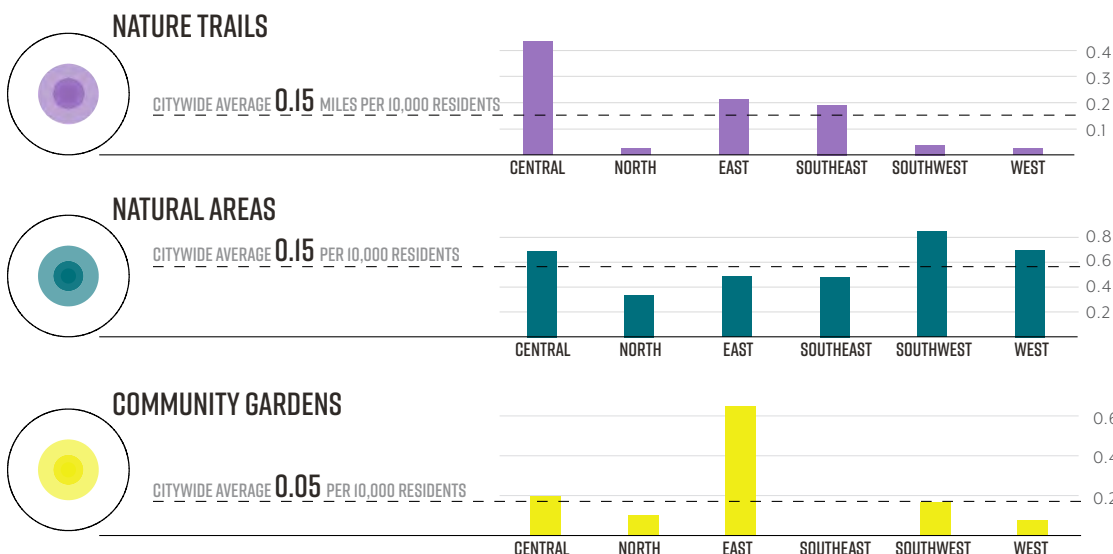
## NATURE FACILITY DISTRIBUTION

This grouping of facilities help connect Austin residents and visitors to the natural environment through immersive experiences in unstructured, wild, cultivated, and natural spaces.

We have heard throughout this process that natural experiences are one of the strengths of the park system and something residents are eager to maintain, protect, and enhance as the park system continues to grow.

The three facility types considered under this theme are:

- + **Nature Trails** – defined as PARD owned and managed trails within the park system. This facility type was measured and compared by miles of trail per 10,000 Austin residents in each combined planning area.
- + **Natural Areas** – defined as nature preserves and managed habitat areas owned and managed by PARD.
- + **Community Gardens** – defined as gardens located on parkland that community members can join and cultivate a dedicated plot.



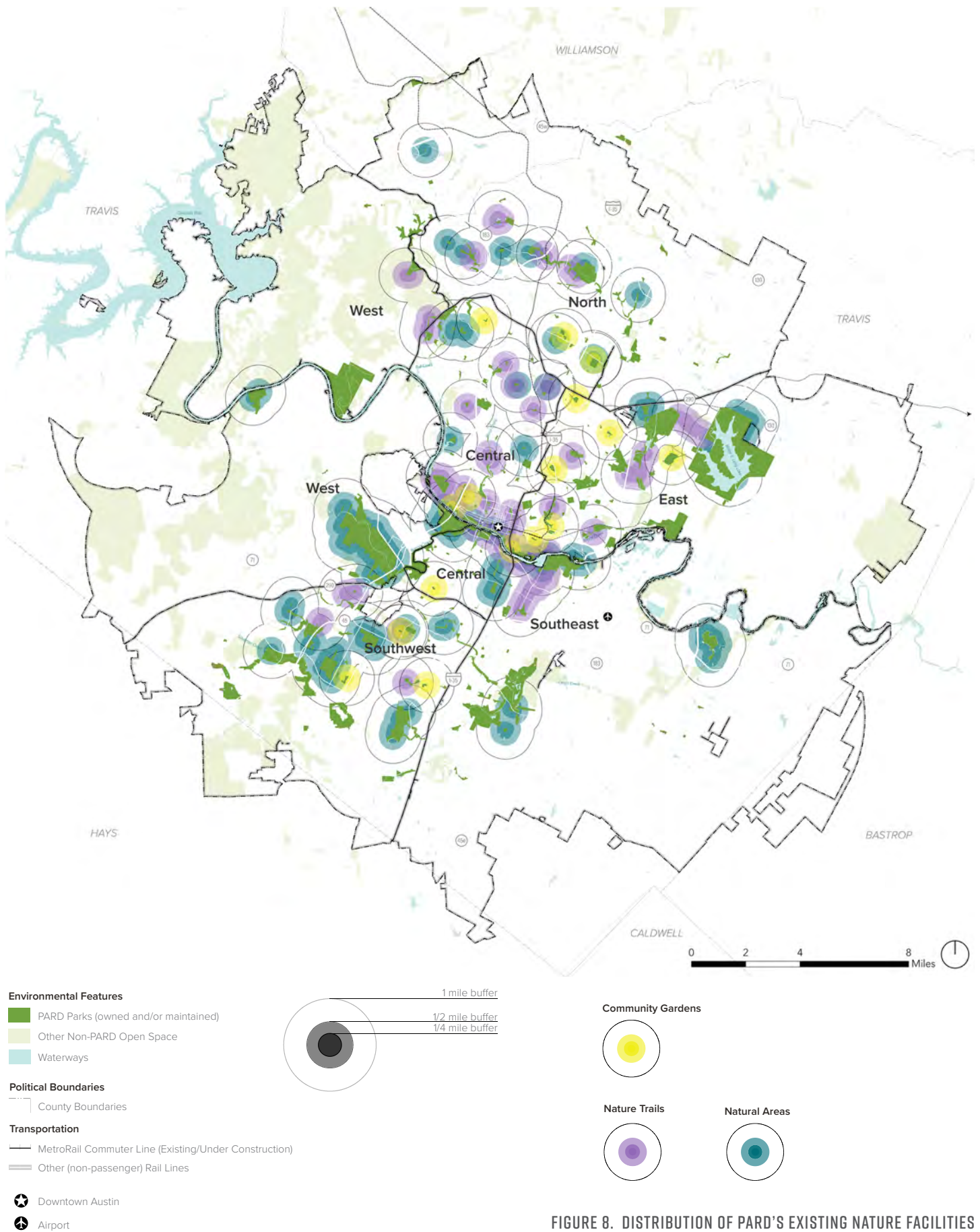


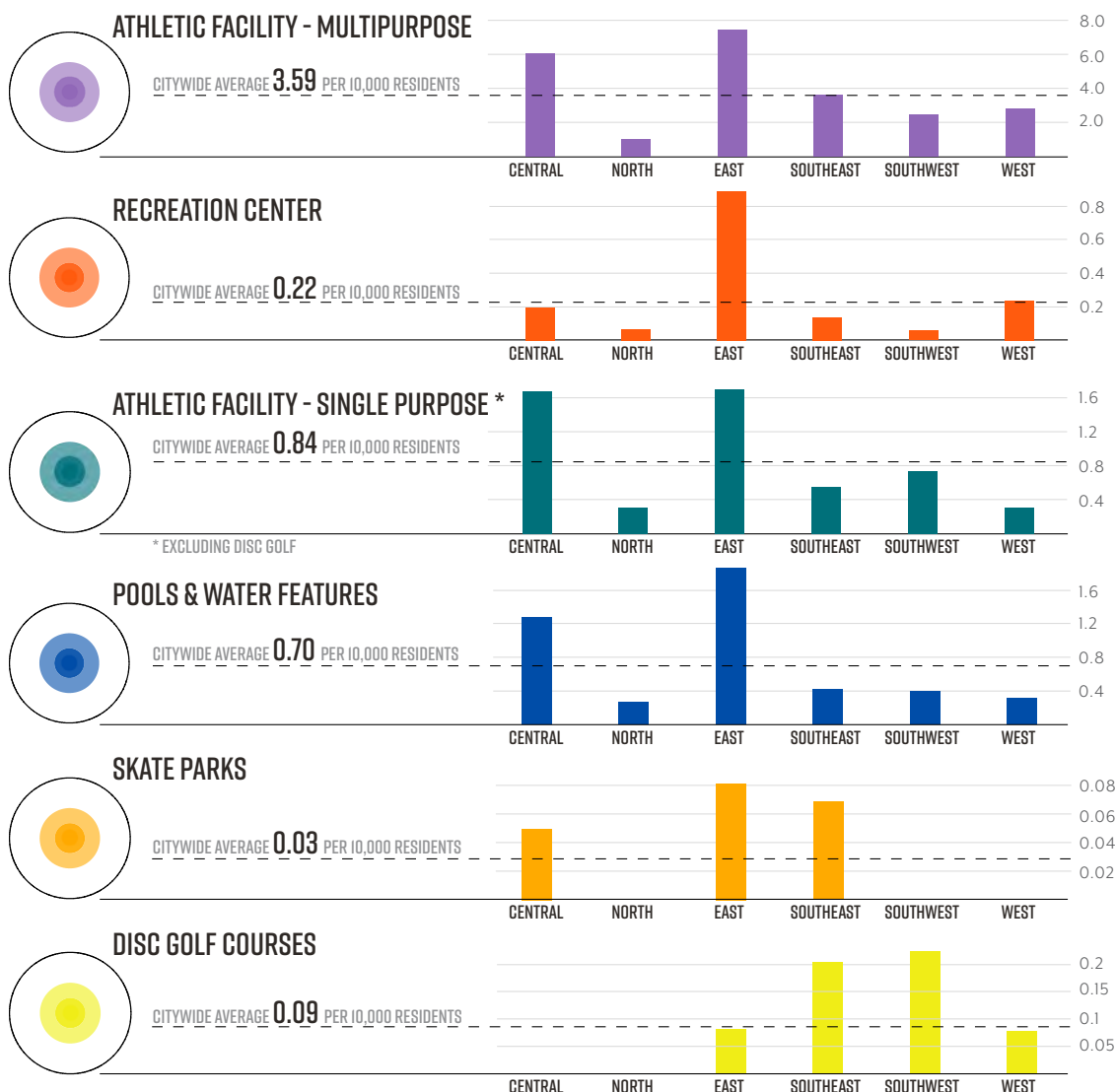
FIGURE 8. DISTRIBUTION OF PARD'S EXISTING NATURE FACILITIES  
Source: WRT.

# ACTIVE RECREATION FACILITY DISTRIBUTION

Austin has a rich history of organized sports and athletic programming in the park system. As a result, a wide variety of facilities support active recreation in parks. These facilities not only support active and healthy lifestyles, they also help bring residents together and make athletic programming affordable and accessible to a wider range of individuals than private athletic programs can serve.

Based on emerging national trends in recreation and Austin resident feedback, there are a few important distinctions:

- + **Single-purpose fields and courts** are grouped together to emphasize the overall facility patterns more so than the representation of each sport. Sport preferences often vary from neighborhood to neighborhood and so the specific allocation of different types of sport facilities is best dealt with at a more local level.
- + **Disc Golf Courses**, however, are included as a stand alone category because of the consistent citywide interest in the future of these facilities that we heard throughout the process.
- + **Multi-purpose athletic facilities** are separated from single-purpose ones because of the increasing interest in more flexible, unstructured facilities that can serve a wide variety of users rather than having a fixed, single use.



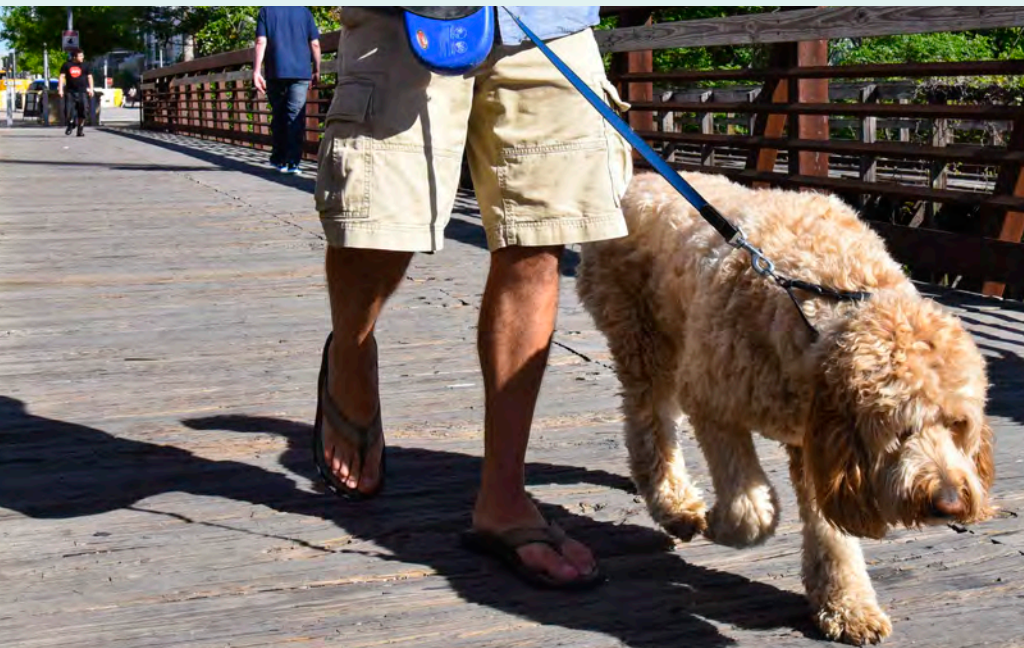






# ON PARD'S CANINE USERS

AUSTINITES HAD A LOT TO SAY ABOUT HOW TO IMPROVE AMENITIES FOR DOG OWNERS WITHOUT DIMINISHING THE ENJOYMENT OF OTHER PARK USERS. NEW OFF-LEASH DOG AREAS & BETTER ENFORCEMENT ARE KEY.

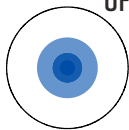


Source: PARD

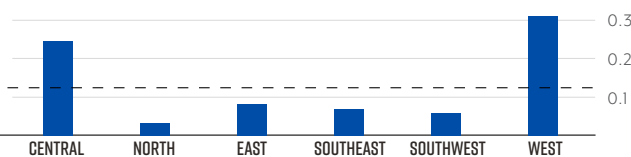
## PASSIVE RECREATION FACILITY DISTRIBUTION

Passive recreation facilities help Austinites unplug, relax, reflect and get some relief from the intensity of living in the city. These offer places to sit and share low-key time with family and friends or to have a quiet moment alone in a beautiful, comfortable and safe place. Off-leash dog areas, picnic areas, pavilions, and scenic overlooks are just some of the more substantial facilities that support this important use of Austin's parks, but smaller interventions like benches can also support passive recreational uses of parkland.

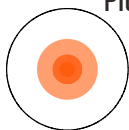
### OFF-LEASH DOG AREAS



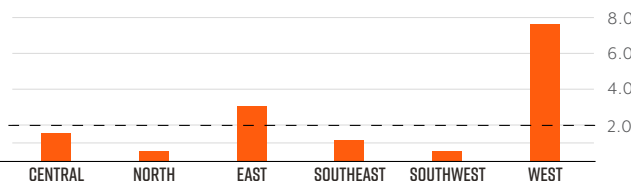
CITYWIDE AVERAGE **0.12** PER 10,000 RESIDENTS



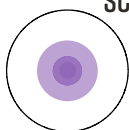
### PICNIC AREAS & PAVILIONS



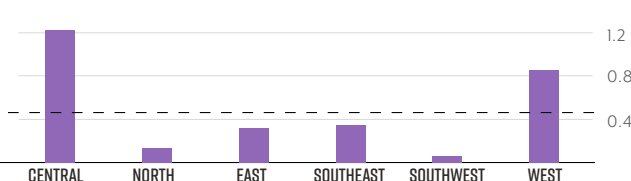
CITYWIDE AVERAGE **1.97** PER 10,000 RESIDENTS



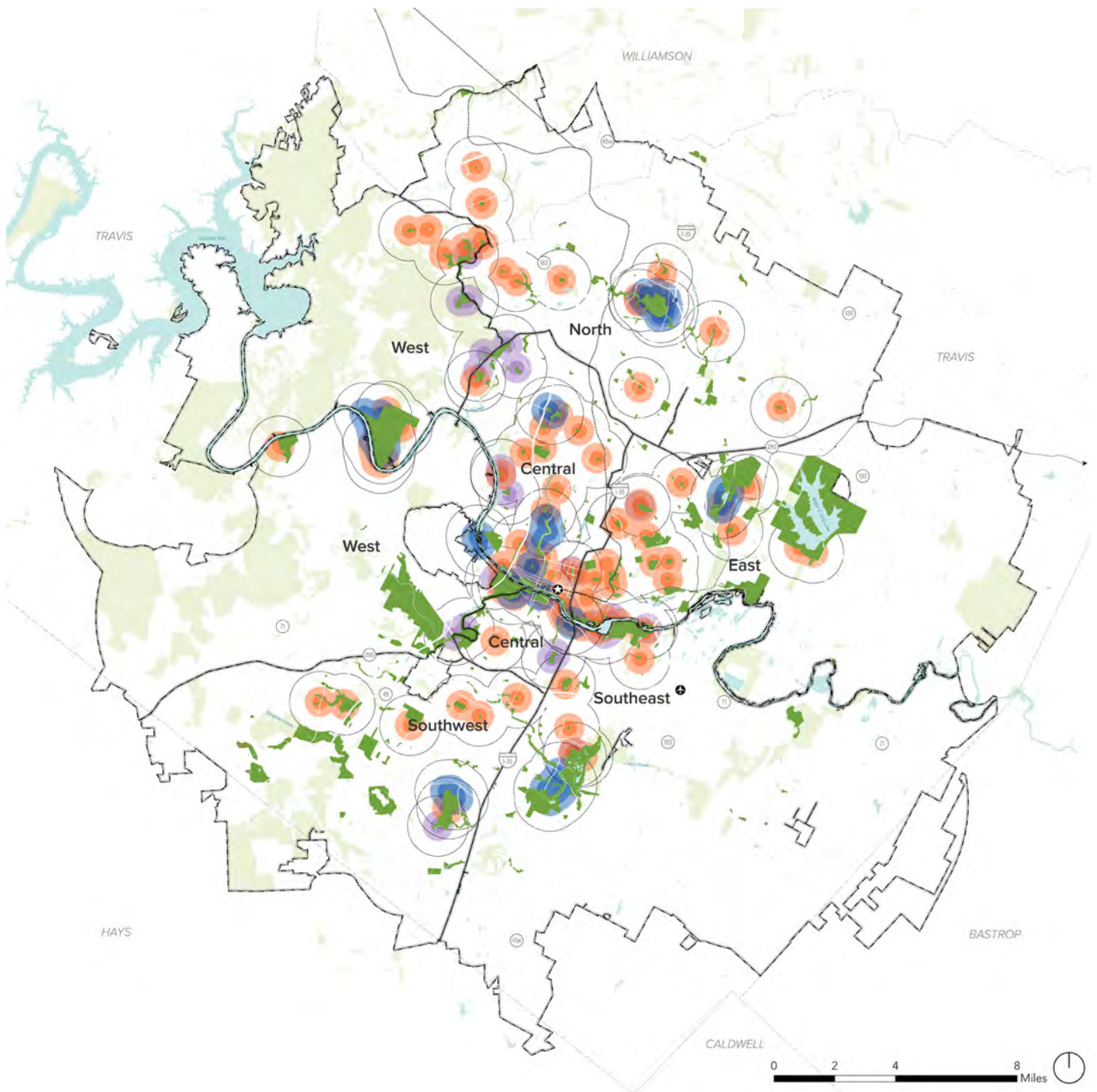
### SCENIC OVERLOOKS



CITYWIDE AVERAGE **0.46** PER 10,000 RESIDENTS







#### Environmental Features

- PARD Parks (owned and/or maintained)
- Other Non-PARD Open Space
- Waterways

#### Political Boundaries

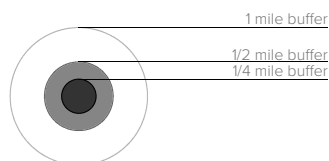
- County Boundaries

#### Transportation

- MetroRail Commuter Line (Existing/Under Construction)
- Other (non-passenger) Rail Lines

★ Downtown Austin

✈ Airport



Off-Leash  
Dog Areas



Scenic  
Overlook



Picnic Areas &  
Pavilions



FIGURE 10. DISTRIBUTION OF PARD'S EXISTING PASSIVE RECREATION FACILITIES

Source: WRT.





# ARTS & CULTURE, AT A GLANCE

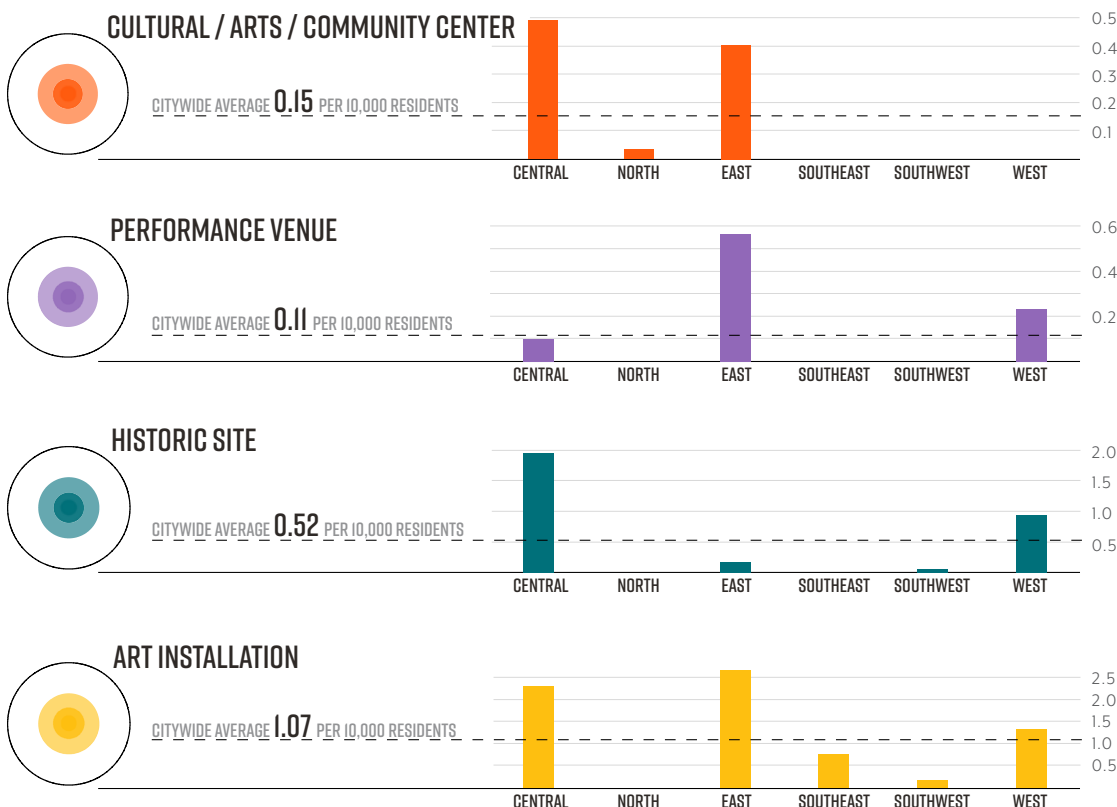
SPARKING THE IMAGINATION AND CREATIVITY OF AUSTINITES EVERY DAY! THESE FACILITIES WELCOMED OVER 400,000 VISITORS IN AND HOSTED 1,302 PROGRAMS IN 2018.



Source: PARD

## ARTS & CULTURE FACILITY DISTRIBUTION

Parks provide an important space for communities to learn about and celebrate history. These arts and cultural facilities support communities in expressing their identity, showcase the dynamism and creativity of community members, and foster dialogue and social cohesion. Some of the more significant facilities that support arts and cultural uses of the PARD park system are cultural, arts and community centers, performance venues, historic sites, and art installations. Austin's museums and cultural centers provide the community with family-friendly, free, and low-cost engagement with the languages of music, dance, film, theater, and art.



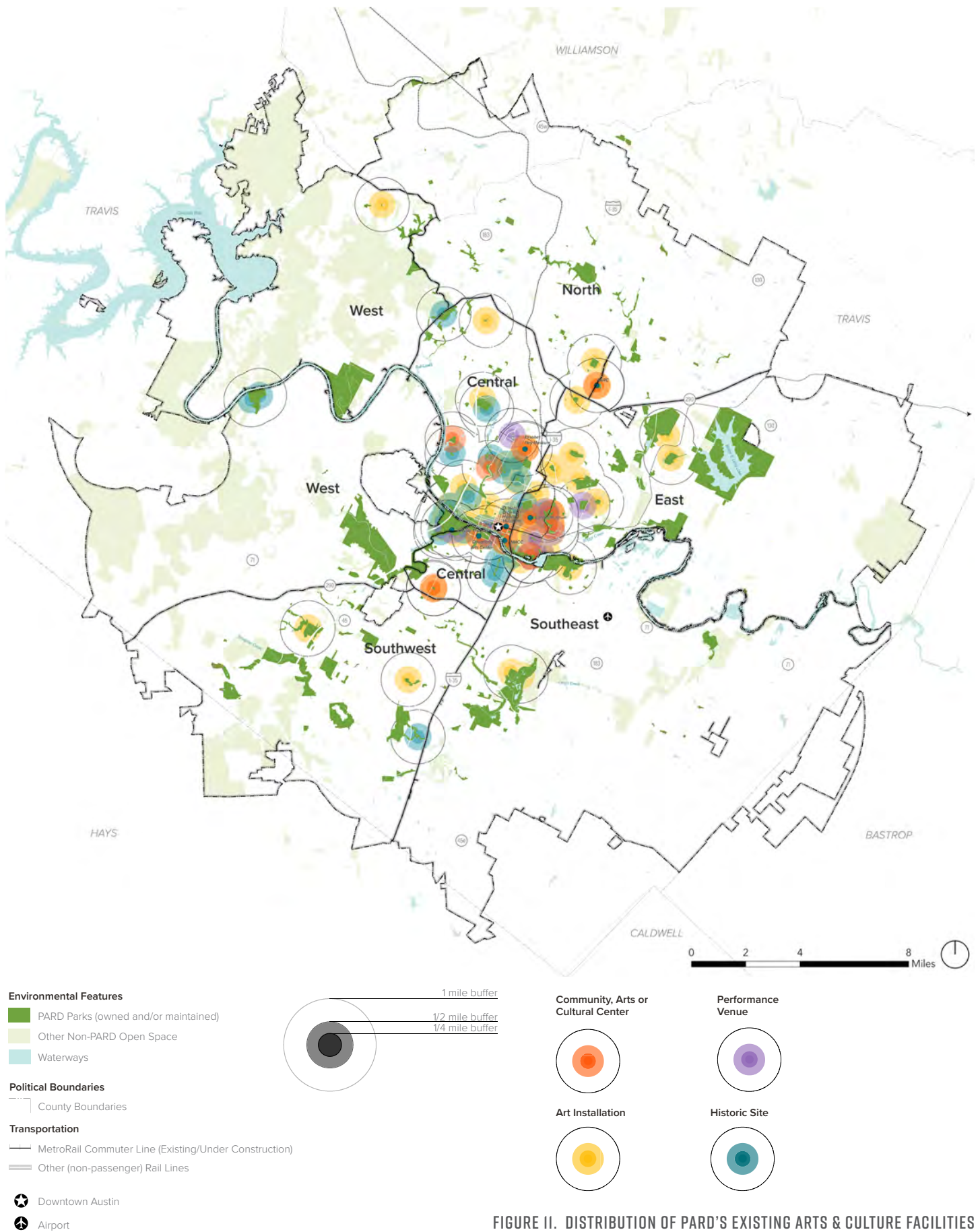


FIGURE II. DISTRIBUTION OF PARD'S EXISTING ARTS & CULTURE FACILITIES  
Source: WRT.

# HOW DO WE COMPARE?

## BENCHMARKING

Benchmarking provides a glimpse into how Austin's park and recreation system compares with other cities across the country. Austin is unique in many ways, and its park system reflects

this. It is the state capital of Texas and is home of the flagship campus of the University of Texas. The city is rapidly growing, with a population increase of almost 23% since 2010. Long known for its thriving music scene, the city is also a hub for the technology and software industries. The selection of

comparison cities aims to reflect this unique combination in order to offer the best representation of how Austin compares to its peer cities.

## COMPARISON CITY SELECTION CRITERIA

The Trust for Public Land (TPL), working with PARD, selected comparison cities based on:

### Growth

Austin is experiencing similar growth, such as Atlanta (14% increase in population since 2010) and Dallas (13% increase in population since 2010).

**Regional** San Antonio and Dallas were included to capture elements that are unique to the region.

### Climate and Weather

Cities were also selected that experience similar weather to Austin, as a similar climate means comparable challenges.

### Population Density

Finally, cities were selected that were comparable in population density.

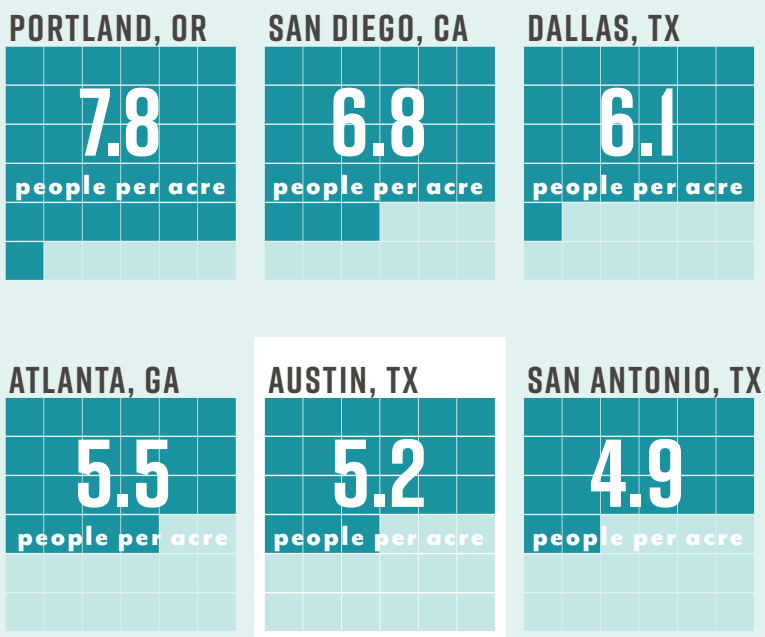


FIGURE 12. PEER CITIES BY POPULATION DENSITY  
Source: WRT, TPL.



## PARK SYSTEM SPENDING

### Public Spending

Austin spends less than comparison cities Portland and San Diego, is on par with Dallas, and spends more than San Antonio and Atlanta.

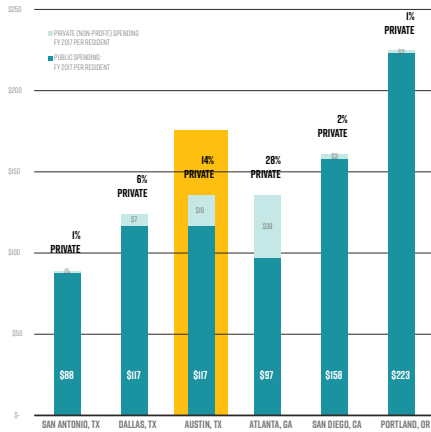
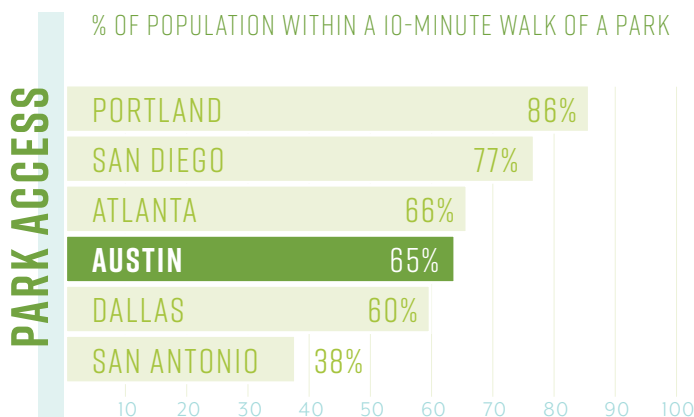
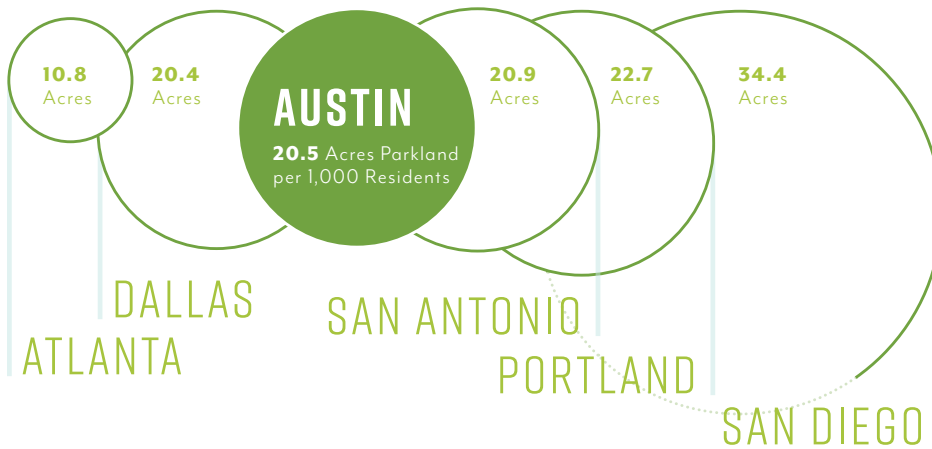


FIGURE 14. PARK SPENDING BENCHMARKING

Source: WRT, TPL.



### MEDIAN PARK SIZE

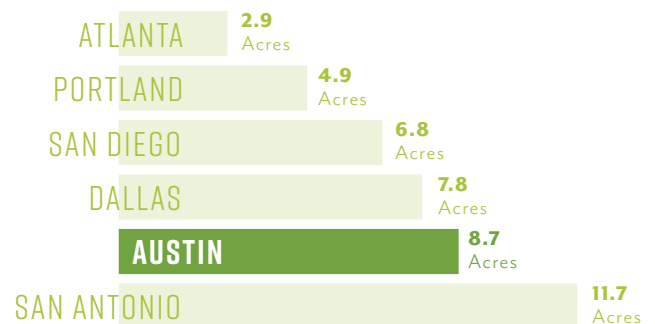


FIGURE 13. PARK SYSTEM BENCHMARKING

Source: WRT, TPL.

## PARK SYSTEM OVERVIEW & ACCESS

The City of Austin has an expansive park system, but only 65% of residents live within walking distance of a park. This is low in comparison to peer cities, however it is consistent with the national average. Cities across the country are challenging themselves to improve walkability to parks and recreation.

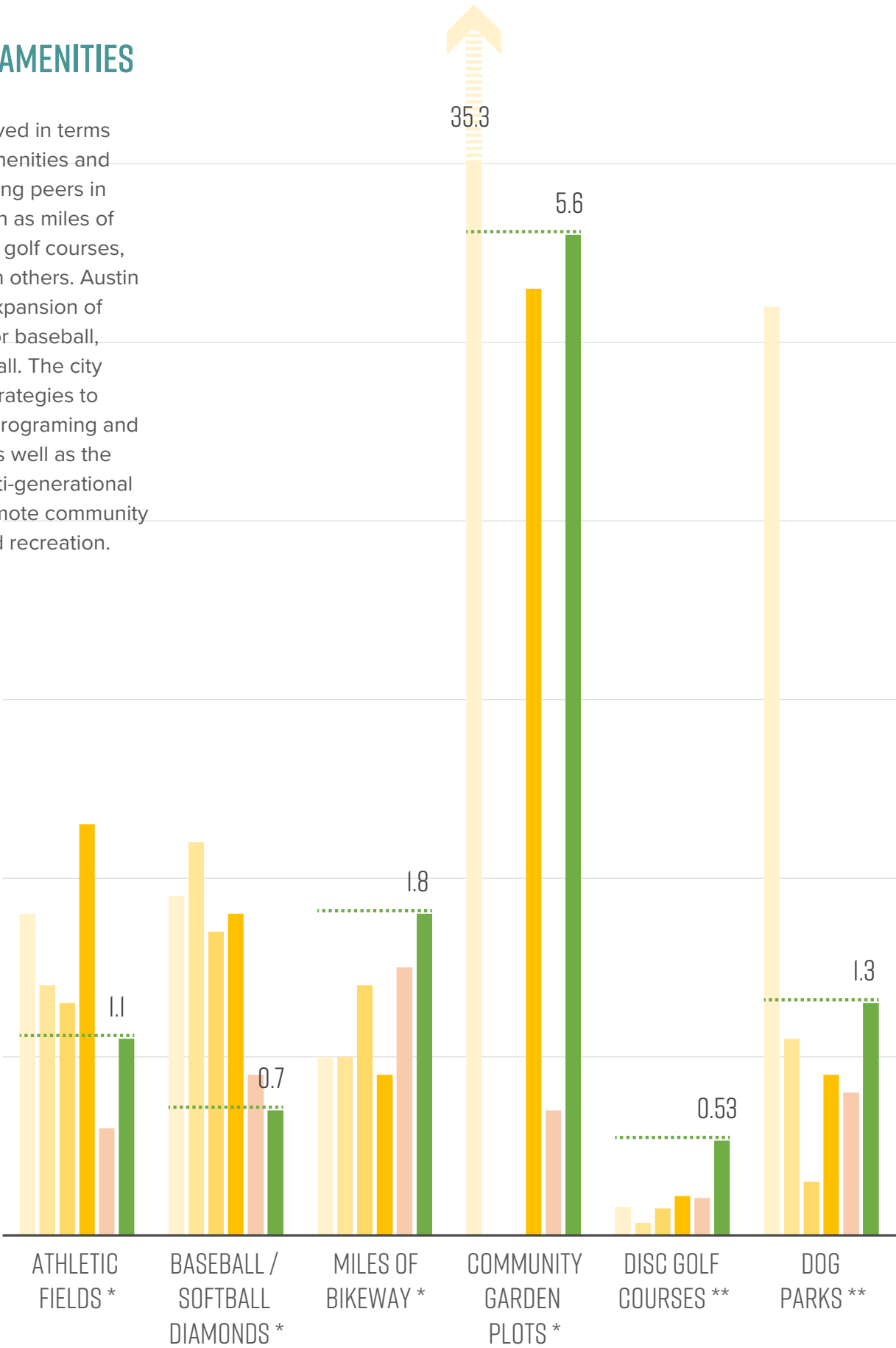
### Private Spending

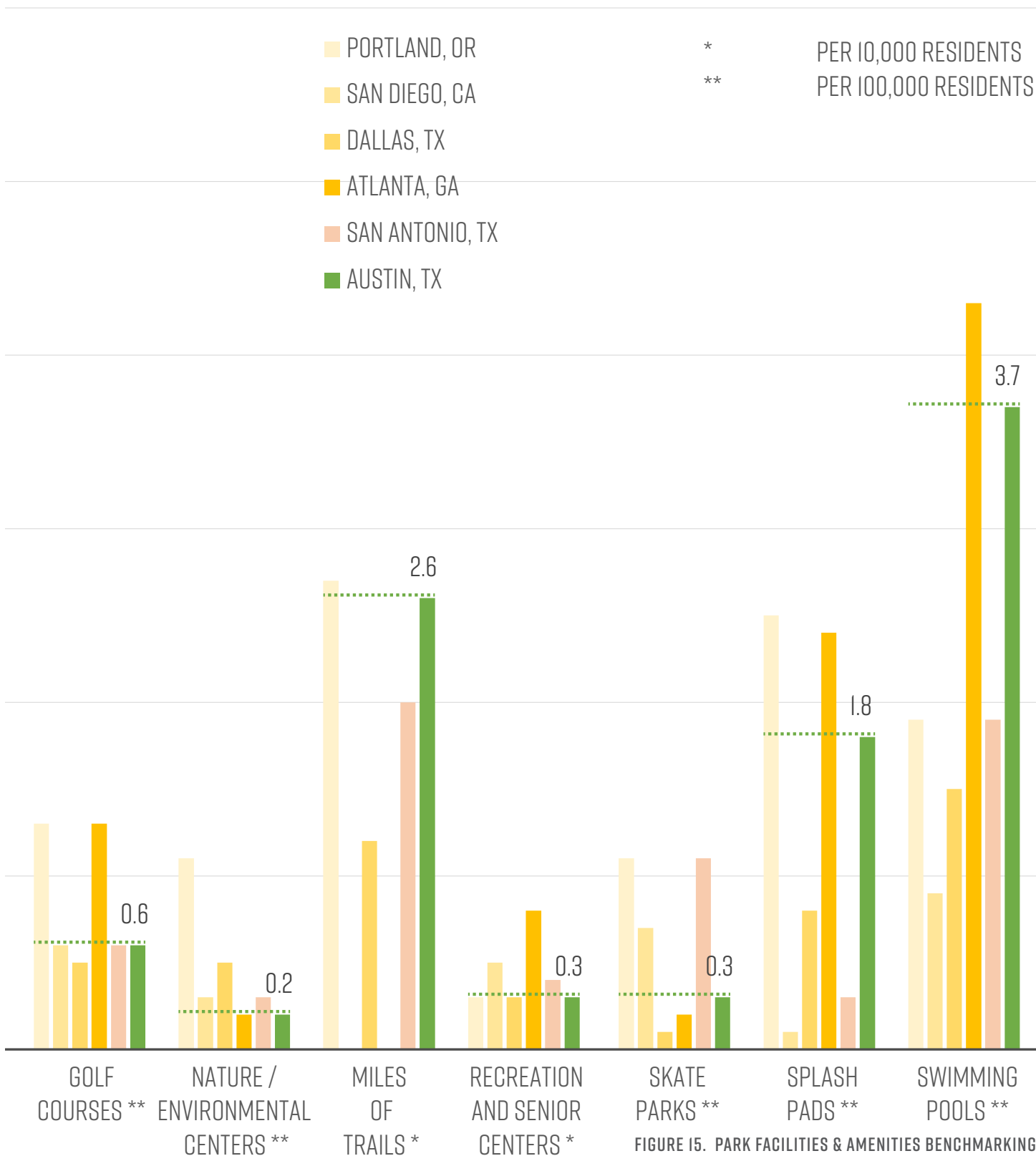
Spending by non-profits (foundations, conservancies, etc.) makes up a significant portion of park investment, totaling 14% of all park investment in Austin in 2017 and includes spending by the Austin Parks Foundation, Downtown Austin Alliance, The Trail Foundation, and local conservancies related to parks and recreation.

Non-profit spending can provide extra support above and beyond what public dollars are often able to do, but should not replace public agency funding and government support.

# FACILITIES & AMENITIES

Austin is well-served in terms of recreational amenities and facilities, surpassing peers in certain areas such as miles of bikeway and disc golf courses, but falling short in others. Austin might consider expansion of multi-use fields for baseball, soccer, and softball. The city should explore strategies to increase nature programming and nature facilities as well as the expansion of multi-generational facilities that promote community programming and recreation.









Yett Park. Source: PARD

# OUR FUTURE

Chapter 4 provides the vision and strategies for *Our Parks, Our Future* over the next decade. Key themes derived from community input through surveys and public meetings provide the guiding framework for the plan's strategies and actions. Chapter 4 describes the strategies as they apply citywide and includes some sample actions. Chapter 5 applies the strategies more specifically by geography using the PARD planning areas and includes a detailed action table.

## IN THIS CHAPTER

### CITYWIDE THEMES & KEY ISSUES

- + How Growth Impacts Park Planning

### CITY-WIDE STRATEGIES

- + A. Ensure Parkland Offers Relief from Urban Life
- + B. Expand and Improve Park Access for All
- + C. Activate and Enhance Urban Public Spaces
- + D. Align Programs with Community Interest
- + E. Optimize and Improve Efficiency of Operations

# CITYWIDE THEMES & KEY ISSUES

## HOW GROWTH IMPACTS PARK PLANNING

As a city that is in a period of fast-paced growth and change, PARD must proactively plan for expansion of the park system each year to keep up with population growth and maintain a similar level of service for all residents.

## EXISTING HIGH-DENSITY AREAS

As Austin's population increases and some areas of the city densify, it is important to ensure access to parks and open space, particularly in more urban areas where residents may have little private outside space.

Existing high-density areas are highlighted in blue, ranging from lightest blue (medium density) to darker blue (higher density). Figure 16 shows the highest density areas are located in and around the urban core and along major road corridors such as Interstate 35, Ben White Boulevard, and Highway 183. As

Austin grows, the city envisions a more compact and connected development pattern. One that reduces the need to drive from place to place and is supported by a complete transit, bicycle, trail, and sidewalk network.

Creative strategies are needed to address park needs in areas of higher density where land values may be higher. Potential strategies include improving connections to parks and open space and developing new entrances to parks that make it easier for access into parks.

### Existing Development Density 2016 Existing Land Use FAR, Quantiles

- High (0.32 or more)
- Medium High (0.24 - 0.31)
- Medium (0.19 - 0.23)

### Environmental Features

- PARD Park (owned and/or maintained)
- Other Non-PARD Open Space
- Waterways

### Political Boundaries

- County Boundaries
- City of Austin
- Austin Limited Purpose Planning
- Austin 2 Mile ETJ; 5 Mile ETJ
- Beyond Austin Jurisdiction

### Transportation

- MetroRail Commuter Line (Existing/Under Construction)
- Other (non-passenger) Rail Lines
- Existing / Proposed Urban Trails

- Downtown Austin

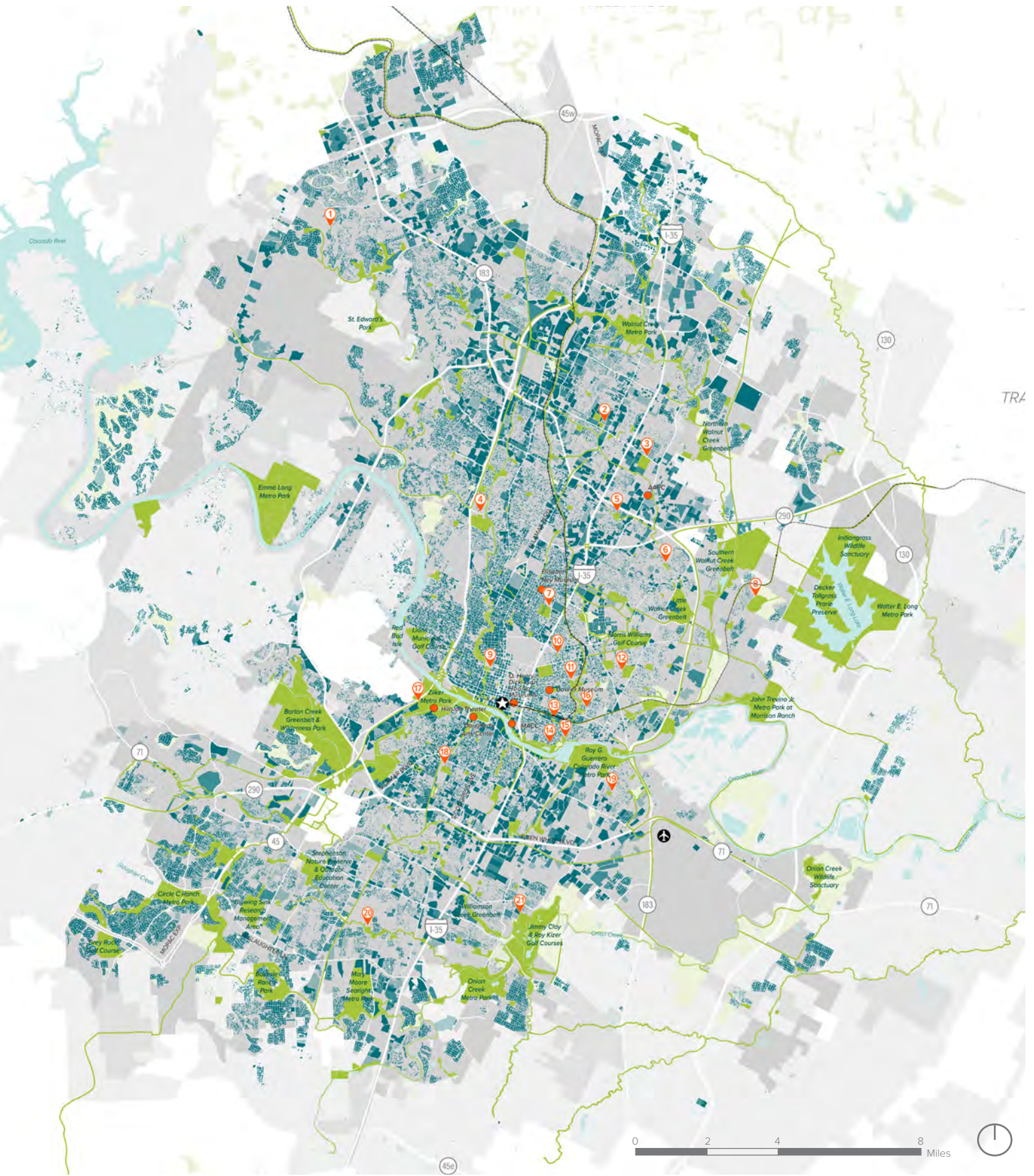
- Airport

- PARD Cultural Center

- PARD Recreation / Community Center







**FIGURE 16. EXISTING HIGH-DENSITY AREAS MAP**  
 Data Source: 2016 Existing Land Use, City of Austin.

## AREAS AT RISK OF GENTRIFICATION

Since the 1990s Austin's housing prices and cost of living have been on the rise. While once a very affordable city, many long-time residents find it difficult to afford the increasing costs of housing, transportation, healthcare, and childcare. Many cities are struggling with the risk of displacement as young adults and older "empty nesters" are moving back to urban areas, reversing past trends of disinvestment. As one of the fastest growing large cities in the country, new residents are attracted from other cities and towns in Texas – and from across the country to Austin's employment opportunities, arts and music scene, creative culture, and recreation.

In 2018, the City of Austin sponsored a UT study of gentrification to better understand trends and areas where communities are at risk for displacement. The 2018 "Uprooted" study identified areas where gentrification has already occurred, areas where displacement is beginning to occur, and neighborhoods that are susceptible or at risk where increased market activity will likely result in displacement of current residents. The displacement risk mapping and analysis can serve as a tool for PARD in planning new or improved parks, and as part of a larger citywide conversation and policies to allow people to choose to stay in the homes and neighborhoods.

## KEY CITY INITIATIVES

### THERE IS NO ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL SOLUTION TO GENTRIFICATION.

In 2017, Austin City Council adopted the first ever Strategic Housing Blueprint with a goal of adding 60,000 affordable units in 10 years. The blueprint built on strategies from Imagine Austin and focused on five community values:

- + prevent households from being priced out of Austin
- + foster equitable, integrated, and diverse communities
- + invest in housing for those most in need
- + create new and affordable housing choices for all, in all parts of Austin
- + help Austinites reduce their household costs

#### Gentrifying Neighborhood Stage/Typology

- At Risk (Susceptible - increased market activity will likely trigger displacement)
- Stage 1 (Early: Type 1 - displacement is beginning to occur)
- Stage 2 (Dynamic - displacement is well underway)
- Stage 3 (Late - majority of vulnerable population has already been displaced)
- Stage 4 (Continued Loss - few remaining vulnerable populations)

#### Environmental Features

- PARD Park (owned and/or maintained)
- Other Non-PARD Open Space
- Waterways

#### Political Boundaries

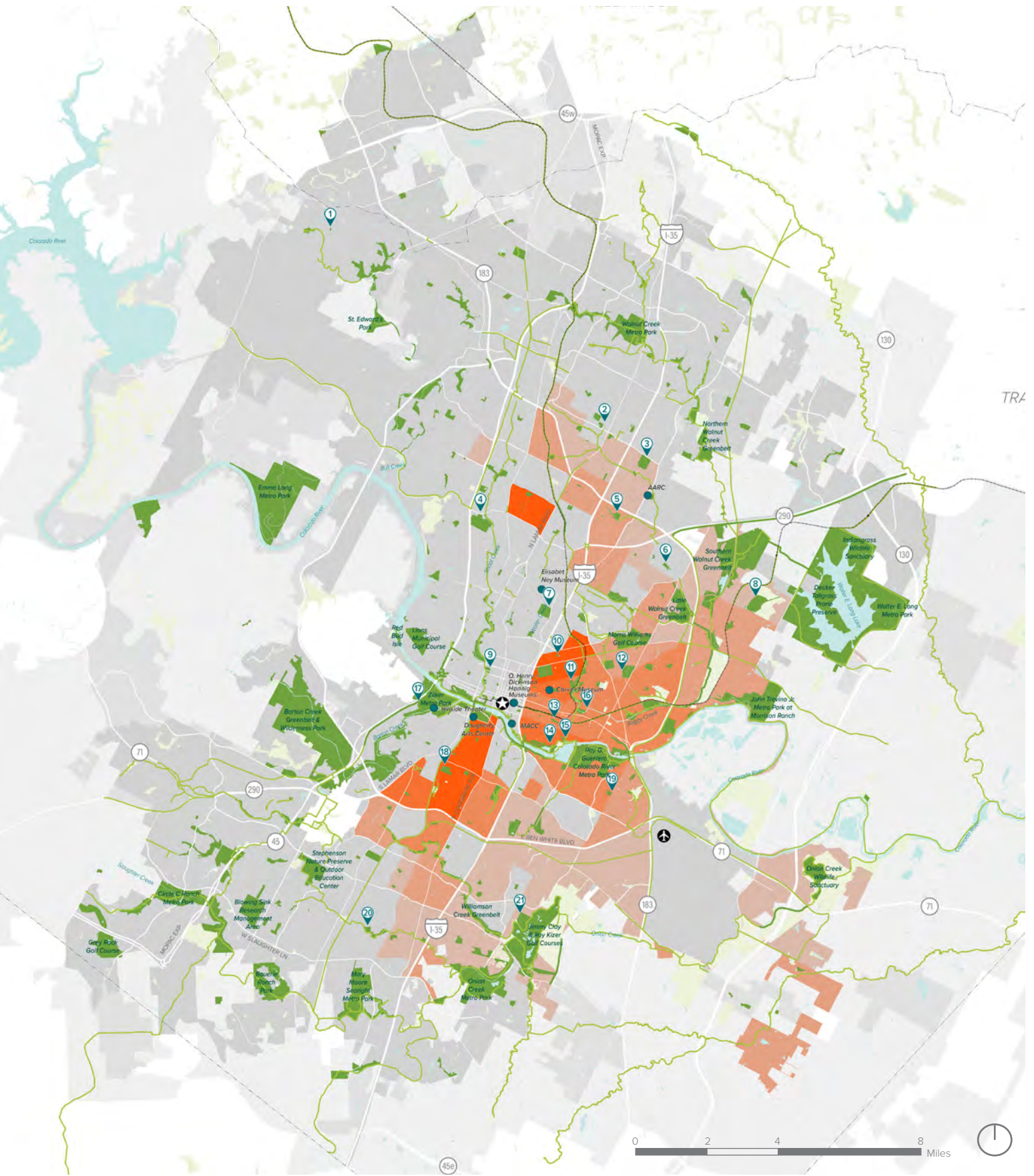
- County Boundaries
- City of Austin
- Austin Limited Purpose Planning
- Austin 2 Mile ETJ; 5 Mile ETJ
- Beyond Austin Jurisdiction

#### Transportation

- MetroRail Commuter Line (Existing/Under Construction)
- Other (non-passenger) Rail Lines
- Existing / Proposed Urban Trails
- Downtown Austin
- Airport
- PARD Cultural Center
- PARD Recreation / Community Center

HAYS





**FIGURE 17. AREAS AT RISK OF GENTRIFICATION MAP**

Data Source: 2018 UT Austin Study "Uprooted: Residential Displacement in Austin's Gentrifying Neighborhoods, and What Can Be Done About It" - Stages of Gentrification Mapping..

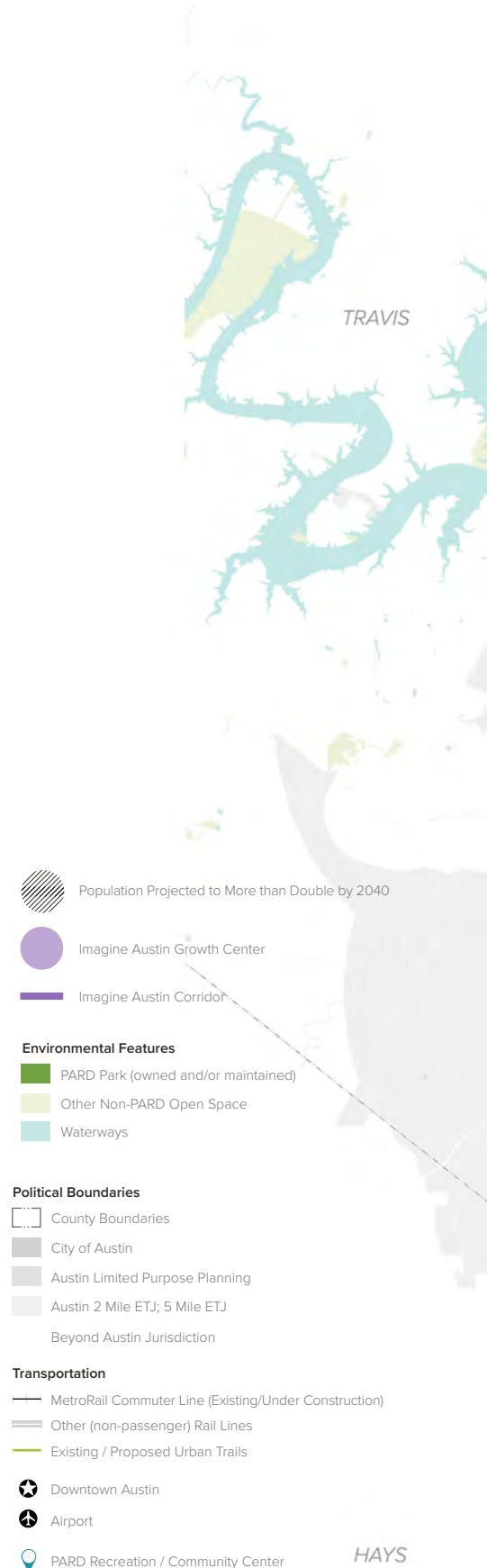


# IMAGINE AUSTIN GROWTH CENTERS & CORRIDORS

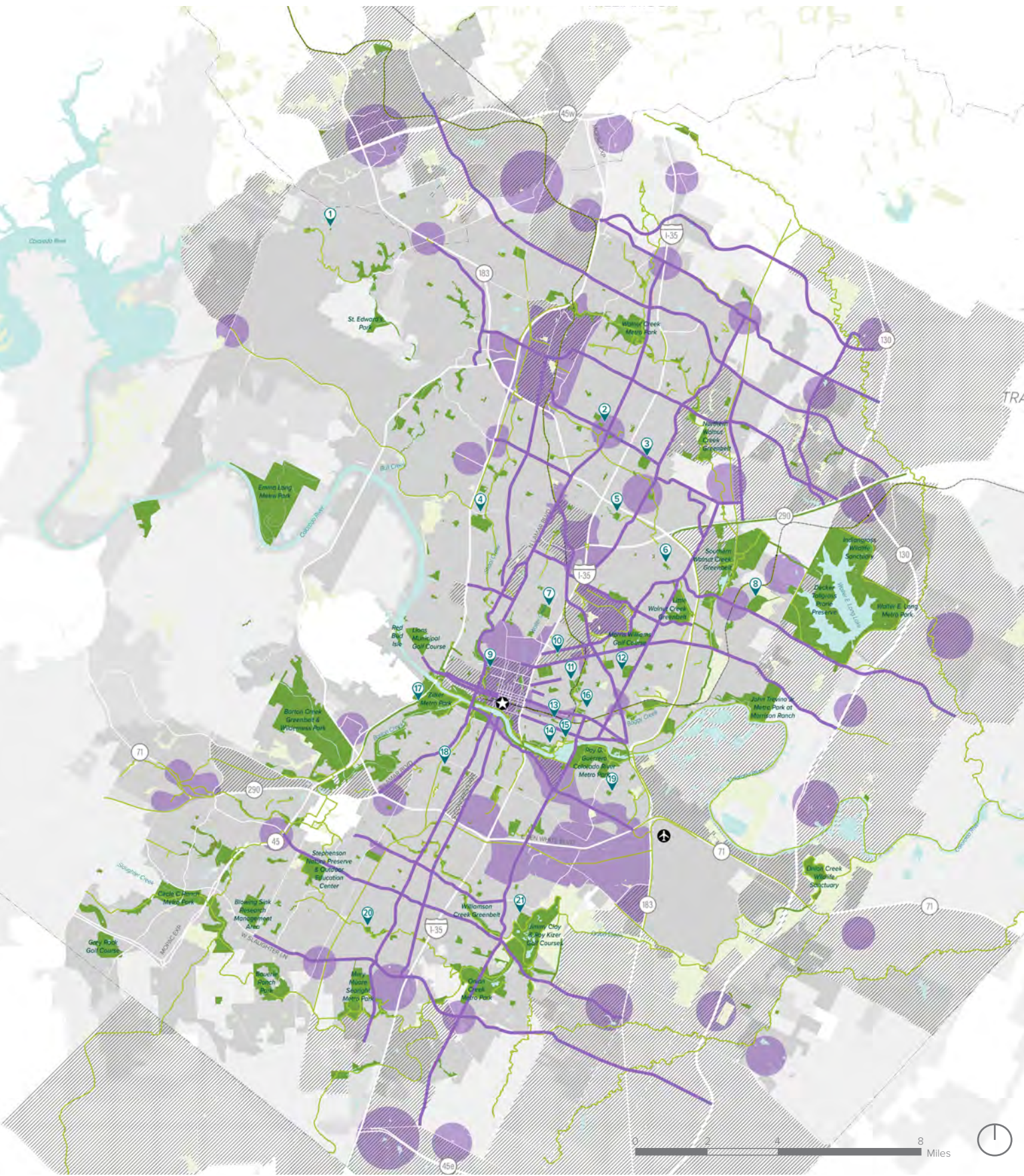
In 2012, the city passed a new community-led comprehensive plan and vision for Austin – one that seeks to direct growth into and along mixed-use centers and corridors, where moving through the city is easier and residents have easy access to everyday services, jobs, and parks. The *Imagine Austin* growth centers and corridors and the 2040 population/employment growth projection help us to anticipate future park need and plan for long-term park improvements and acquisition in areas where growth is anticipated to occur. Figure 18 highlights and illustrates the overlap between:

- + Imagine Austin Centers and Corridors
- + Areas where population is projected to increase by 200% or greater
- + Metro Rail Commuter Line
- + Existing and Proposed Urban Trails (bike or multi-use trails separated from traffic)

The city's population growth requires that PARD continue to add land to the park system to maintain a high level of parkland acres per person. One essential tool Austin has to expand the park system is the Parkland Dedication Ordinance, which provides a legal tool requiring the dedication of useable parkland or a fee in lieu of land that can be used for acquiring new parkland. The ordinance also helps to ensure that land is acquired in areas of high growth.







**FIGURE 18. IMAGINE AUSTIN GROWTH CENTERS MAP**  
 Data Sources: Imagine Austin Growth Centers, City of Austin official  
 2040 Growth Projection.



## IDENTIFYING AREAS THAT LACK PARKLAND

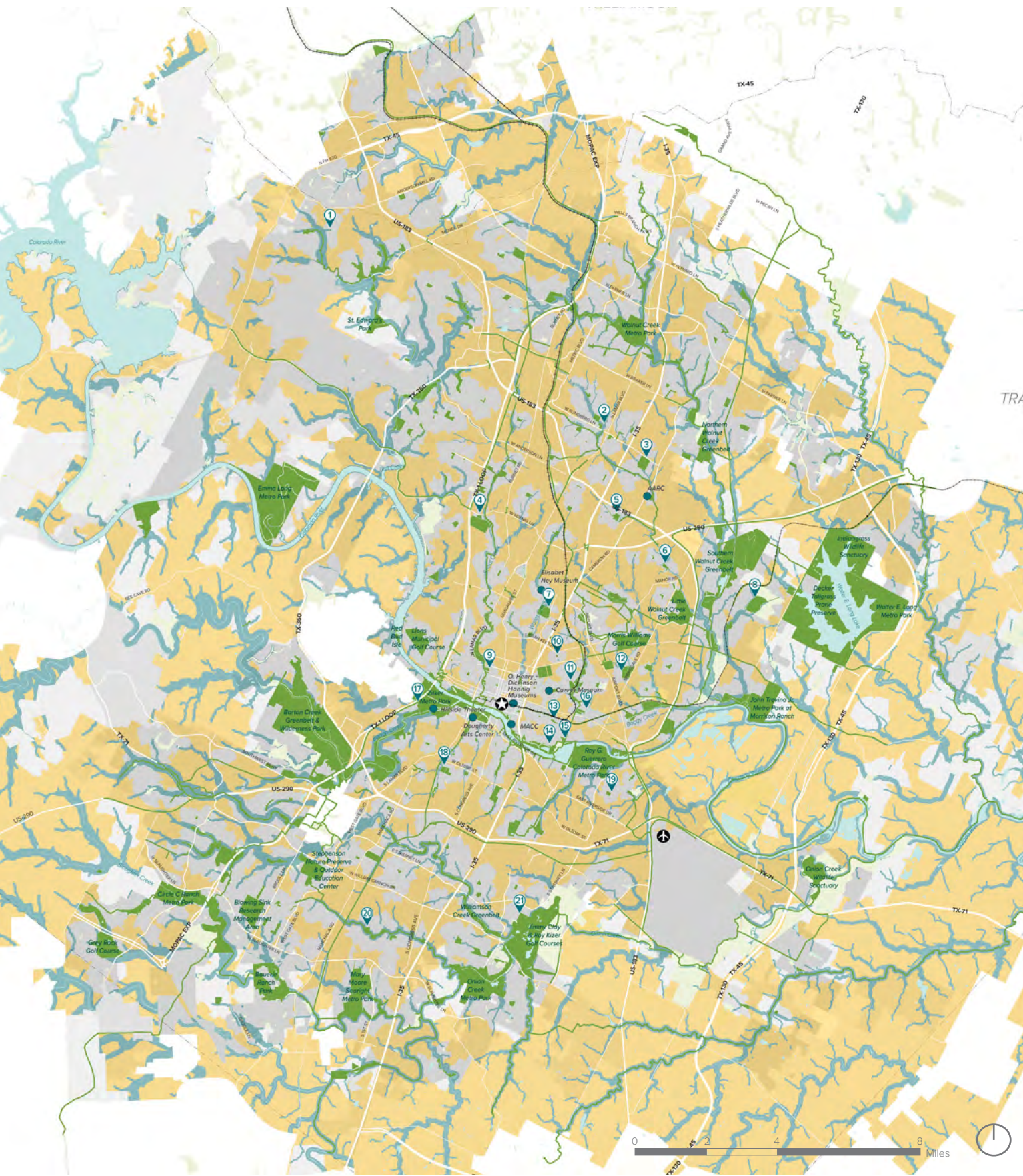
Realizing the importance of living near parks and open spaces, in 2009 City Council passed a resolution stating that all residents living in the urban core should be within a ¼ mile of a publicly accessible and child-friendly park (a five-minute walk) and within a ½ mile (10-minute walk) for those outside the urban core. This target is consistent with a national movement led by the Trust for Public Land and partners to encourage a 10-minute walk to park campaign. By mapping areas of the city that are not within the walking distance goal, using the sidewalk, trail, and roadway network, PARD can identify areas that are park deficient, indicating areas that are high priority for the acquisition and development of new land to meet the access to parkland goals.

Figure 19 identifies the areas where there is not enough current parkland to meet the five and ten-minute walk goals. These areas are prioritized for parkland acquisition and development of new parks.

Other strategies to increase access to parkland include improving bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure connecting parks to neighborhoods, identifying ways to increase public access to open spaces which may have limited access now, and considering new entrances into parks since the five or ten minute walk is measured from a park's entrances rather than any point at the boundary. Areas in need of parkland are highlighted in orange in Figure 19. Another priority for PARD is to increase parkland and open space along creeks across the city. This priority creek buffer is shown in dark blue.







**FIGURE 19. AREAS THAT LACK PARKLAND MAP**  
 Data Source: PARD Park Deficient Network Analysis

# SYSTEM-WIDE RECOMMENDATIONS

## METHOD

The system-wide recommendations were developed in two steps. First, the team mapped out the relationships between the priority needs identified in the citywide statistically valid survey and the community engagement themes that emerged from all other forms of community engagement. Second, the team considered how each of these issues interacted with the growth trends impacting park planning in Austin.

## WHAT WE LEARNED

Priority needs from the statistically valid survey, voices from community members, and information from stakeholders.





We distilled all of the input we received into 10 community engagement themes that informed strategies.

- NATURAL EXPERIENCES
- UNSTRUCTURED SPACES
- GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE
- LINEAR PARKS & TRAILS
- PROXIMITY & ACCESS
- URBAN SPACES
- PARKS & ARTS/CULTURE
- EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES
- INCLUSIVITY
- CLEANLINESS & SAFETY

Five city-wide strategies organize both large-scale actions and individual planning area recommendations.



ENSURE PARKS ACT AS A RELIEF FROM URBAN LIFE



EXPAND & IMPROVE PARK ACCESS FOR ALL



ACTIVATE & ENHANCE URBAN PUBLIC SPACES



ALIGN PROGRAMS WITH COMMUNITY INTEREST



OPTIMIZE & IMPROVE EFFICIENCY OF OPERATIONS





NATURAL EXPERIENCES	UNSTRUCTURED SPACES	GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE	LINEAR PARKS & TRAILS	PROXIMITY & ACCESS	URBAN SPACES	PARKS & ARTS/CULTURE	EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES	INCLUSIVITY	CLEANLINESS & SAFETY
✓	✓	✓					✓		

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT THEMES





Source: PARD

# A. ENSURE PARKS ACT AS A RELIEF FROM URBAN LIFE



The impact of Austin's rapid growth is becoming apparent as Austinites increasingly confront the loss of natural areas and increased development. While this growth provides PARD with new resources and more opportunities, it also means PARD has to guard the park system's role as a relief from and counterpoint to Austin's increasingly urban context. Likewise, the parks must become more flexible and multi-purpose to support a higher intensity and wider variety of park users.

## — KEEPING UP WITH DEMAND

**21% MIN.**  
INCREASE IN  
PARKLAND IS  
NEEDED BY  
2028

“Please set aside areas in parks where native plants and wildflowers can grow. Many parks are mowed and weed-wacked with very few natural areas.”

### COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

2018

1. Add between 4,000 and 8,000 acres of new parkland over the next 10 years, maintaining the current park acres standard of 20 acres/1,000 residents while striving to achieve 24 acres/1,000 residents.

*A priority of the Parks and Recreation Department is to acquire land that can be used for parks in the future as our population grows. Austin’s Parkland Acquisition Program selects sites with the potential for conservation of unique natural features, sites that can be developed and maintained as parks, and those that meet community needs (e.g., in areas that are currently park deficient). To continue to maintain a high acreage to population ratio, PARD will need to acquire parkland at a much higher rate than in recent years.*

- 1.1. **Use Level of Service guidelines and park deficient area mapping to help determine and prioritize areas for parkland acquisition.**

- 1.2. **Seek out opportunities to increase public access to non-PARD owned parks and open space.**

Strategies may include access easements, formalized agreements, or land transfer/acquisition.

2. Protect and increase natural areas that support immersive nature experiences and provide space for environmental stormwater benefits.

*Austinites treasure having access to nature and feel this access is threatened by increased development and overly programmed spaces. A connection with natural areas is vitally important for the education of youth, the mental health of residents, and the environmental resiliency and health of the city’s ecosystems. The material finishes of these spaces is also significant, with many Austinites expressing a desire for the paths and activity areas in parks to have more rustic, natural finishes such as mulch, sand, gravel, and stone instead of concrete and asphalt.*

- 2.1. **Expand greenways and trails along existing creek buffers.**



Creek buffers have the ability to not only provide space for expanded greenways and trails, but also to act as crucial flood mitigation and green stormwater infrastructure areas.

**2.2. Create a set of standard materials and finishes that are unique to Austin.**

Update the standard materials palette for PARD parks and facilities to reflect the unique natural beauty of the Hill Country. These materials should also include green materials that reduce impervious surfaces in PARD-owned parks and facilities.

**2.3. Use parks as functional landscapes that perform green stormwater infrastructure and flood mitigation roles to support resiliency efforts.**

Build on existing partnerships with departments including the Watershed Protection Department (WPD), to continue building green stormwater infrastructure projects that improve environmental and public health.

**2.4. Require the consistent use of native or native/adaptive landscaping and planting.**

Ensure all PARD-led design efforts adhere to planting materials included in the “Grow Green” native and adapted plant guide for Central Texas.

**2.5. Work with the Office of Sustainability, Watershed Protection Department, and other partners to support Austin’s green infrastructure and strengthen the network connections.**

The city is continuing to improve its network of natural lands, parks, working landscapes, and open spaces. An immediate next step is to analyze areas of strength (that are efficiently used) and areas of deficiencies (gaps in the network) to better understand the existing network and where gaps can be addressed and better managed in the future.

**3. Make it easier for Austinites to spend time interacting with water.**

*For many Austinites, interacting with water –swimming, fishing, boating, or just dipping toes in the water – is an important part of life in the city. Aquatics facilities have been a key element of PARD’s network from the beginning, starting*



## GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

### OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT – TREES, LANDSCAPE, PLANTS, AND WATER SYSTEMS MAKE UP AUSTIN’S GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE.

*Within parks and other spaces there is an opportunity to better manage stormwater and reduce the impacts of major flood events through “greening.” Austin has already developed recommendations and guidelines for green stormwater infrastructure practices that can be implemented in parks, including rain gardens, porous pavers, rainwater harvesting, and green roofs. Well designed and maintained green stormwater infrastructure can reduce negative impacts of pollutant runoff into Austin’s creeks and rivers.*



Source: PARD

with Barton Springs and the WPA-era outdoor pools in the urban core. However, these aquatic facilities are not evenly distributed throughout the city and maintenance and staffing has historically been a challenge. Outdoor pools also provide important public health benefits during heatwaves and help ensure that all children have an opportunity to learn how to swim. Moving forward, it will be important to elevate the quality of these facilities and introduce new facilities so that all Austinites can experience the joy and calming effect of taking a break at the water on a hot day.

### 3.1. Implement the Aquatics Master Plan.

- 3.1.1. Pursue opportunities to upgrade some pools to Regional Aquatic Centers that provide a greater diversity of programming, training, and amenities. Upgrade facilities, per the Aquatics Master Plan at the following sites: Balcones, Garrison, Northwest, Deep Eddy and use recent upgrades at Bartholomew as a model.
- 3.1.2. Pursue opportunities to upgrade some pools to Community Pools. Upgrade facilities, per the Aquatics Master Plan at the following sites: Dick Nichols, Dittmar, Dove Springs, Givens, Montopolis, Springwoods, Walnut Creek
- 3.1.3. Consider new aquatic facilities in underserved locations. Colony Park/Lakeside Community, Northeast (east of I-35 and north of Highway 290), Northwest (Long-term replacement of Canyon Vista), Southeast, and Southwest.
- 3.1.4. Consider the addition of a Natatorium (indoor pool) as referenced in the Aquatics Master Plan to provide a year-round, climate-controlled aquatics facility in Austin. The natatorium would be an ideal facility for on-going lifeguard and staff training and could be jointly funded through partnerships.

### 3.2. Assess aquatic facilities on a regular basis to determine remaining lifecycle, the feasibility of continued maintenance, and the potential need to decommission or redevelop the site.

## AUSTIN AQUATICS

**\$5.37M**  
PLANNED  
CAPITAL  
PROJECTS



3.2.1. Explore partnerships with aquatic service providers to share capital, operations, and maintenance costs.

**3.3. Create a fishing and boating guide.**

**3.4. Explore opportunities to increase public access to waterways, including creeks, rivers, and lakes.**

3.4.1. Increase more interactive opportunities on Lady Bird Lake, Lake Austin, Colorado River, and Decker Lake.

3.4.2. Ensure public access to waterways in park master plans and along greenbelts and trail corridor plans.

3.4.3. Implement recommendations for water-based recreation found in Town Lake Metro Park, Emma Long, and Walter E. Long Park Plans.

## 4. Increase the number of PARD community gardens.

*Community gardens are seen as both a mental health and community building program and as an extension of nature-based educational programming – a way of enabling residents and especially youth to interact with and learn about the natural environment around them. Austin established the PARD Community Gardens Program in 2009 to have a single point of contact and streamline the process for creating community gardens on City land, including school parkland.*

**4.1. Establish a community garden at every Metro Park.**

Work with local partners to create a community gardening space at each Metro Park in the city. Assess the staff capacity and partnerships required at each location.

**4.2. Ensure equitable distribution of community gardens.**

Use new level of service standards and existing facility mapping to guide the development of new community gardens in underserved areas.

**4.3. Expand programming and activities around existing and newly established community gardens.**

Create programs and activities that are targeted to specific groups like kids, seniors, and low-income populations.



### INTERVALE CENTER: BURLINGTON, VERMONT

*This non-profit center operates and manages a 350-acre campus with farmland, composting areas, and food hubs. For over 30 years, this organization has worked to create a sustainable food model that supports the local economy and allows food businesses to thrive. Their farm incubation program helps support new farms by helping emerging farmers overcome a number of challenges including: establishing land and infrastructure, business planning, accessing seasoned growers, and isolation from the larger farming community. Farmers using the incubator are currently cultivating 135 acres of produce, herbs, and flowers. The program supports about 60 jobs.*



Pitchfork Farm Incubator  
Source: Intervale Center



“Community gardens...  
allow children to learn  
how natural foods are  
grown.”

## COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

2018

**4.3.1. Work with partners to host food preparation and nutrition classes.**

**4.3.2. Evaluate the potential to create a food-based incubator space.**

Work with other city departments, including Economic Development, to explore the creation of small food-based businesses or farm to table products.

**4.3.3. Consider the creation of a farm incubator space on PARD property.**

The creation of small farming plots would enable new farmers to learn how to farm at a very small scale, eventually moving to their own property.

**4.3.4. Work with partners to host gardening classes for the general public.**

Use the newly acquired Sustainable Food Center Teaching Garden to teach the basics of gardening to interested community members.



## IN PROGRESS: COMMUNITY GARDENS

### PARD STAFF ASSIST COMMUNITY MEMBERS WITH LAND SEARCH, LICENSE AGREEMENTS, WATER TAP ACCESS, AND PERMITTING.

*Through the Community Gardens Program Austin residents are not only able to re-engage with their food and enjoy affordable, fresh, local, nutritious and culturally-appropriate food, they are also able to develop a sense of pride and stewardship, benefit from the therapeutic effect of connecting to nature and soil, and foster friendships and cooperation across racial, socioeconomic, and age groups. Throughout Austin there are 67 community gardens, 23 of which are on City of Austin land. Of the 23 public gardens, six are specifically designed for seniors and are located at senior centers and recreation centers. Plots at the existing community gardens are generally made available for a seasonal or yearly fee, with some offering sliding fee scales.*



Gus Garcia Rec Center Garden  
Source: WRT

#### **4.4. Increase the number of dedicated park staff for the community garden program.**

##### **4.4.1. Consider creating a “community gardener” position.**

Empower individuals within the community to act as liaisons and help manage the garden and associated programs. Individuals could be trained and provided with a small stipend for working part-time in the garden.

##### **4.4.2. Continue to support a dedicated staff person to work across departments and help to navigate the permit process for those interested in starting a community garden.**

#### **4.5. Simplify the process for starting a community garden.**

##### **4.5.1. Host workshops for organizations or individuals interested in starting a garden.**

##### **4.5.2. Proactively identify potential sites for new community gardens and food forests.**

Work with the Office of Sustainability to prioritize sites for new gardens and forests based on analysis that considers location, food access, neighborhood organizations and stakeholders, and availability of land.

Community food forests are spaces that imitate the organization of a forest at a small-scale. These forests have a variety of planting, vertical and horizontal, that provide edible fruit, nuts, and vegetables.

They provide multiple benefits – access to fresh produce, wildlife habitat, a canopied park space, and a space for social interaction.

### **COMMUNITY FOOD FOREST HANDBOOK**

*Chelsea Green, 2018*

## **5. Invest in multi-purpose, unstructured spaces capable of supporting flexible uses.**

*As Austin continues to grow and densify, the use of our parks is intensifying and diversifying. Accommodating and supporting this increased intensity and diversity of use requires a more flexible approach to park design that allows multi-use spaces in addition to tailored, single-use spaces. Park elements like small plazas or pavilions with electrical/ water hookups, moveable furniture, and multi-purpose athletic fields allow for informal use of space while maintaining a natural, open feel. This light-touch approach enables more users to enjoy parks in a variety of ways.*

### **5.1. Create a set of standards for flexible spaces in parks. Provide standards to help incorporate flexible recreation spaces and associated infrastructure within parks.**



## B.A.R.K

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, THE B.A.R.K PROGRAM IS A PART OF THE HEALTHY PEOPLE HEALTHY PARKS INITIATIVE BY THE NATIONAL PARKS SERVICE.

B.A.R.K teaches dog owners about the benefits of visiting a park with a dog and stands for: **B**ag your pet's waste; **A**lways leash your pet; **R**espect wildlife; and **K**now where you can go. After completing a short program, dogs can become Bark Rangers, serving as a role model for other visitors (human and canine alike).



BARK Ranger Timber  
Source: NPS

**5.2. When developing plans for parks, include intentionally designed flexible use spaces where appropriate. Park master plan should include consideration of flexible use spaces.**

## 6. Provide dedicated off-leash dog areas in appropriate locations to ensure both dog-owners and non-dog-owners can enjoy parks.

*Dog owners and non-dog owners alike are interested in having more clarity on where dogs can and cannot be off-leash. Community members expressed a desire for more dedicated/fenced spaces for dogs (dog parks & secluded off-leash zones) alongside dedication and enforcement of dog-free and leashed-dog zones. This includes adding fenced-in play areas and larger off-leash areas with dog-friendly trails and dog-runs that are adequately buffered from other park activities to minimize conflict. Providing adequate dog amenities and separation will enable all users to enjoy parks in a low-stress setting. This must also be coupled with more enforcement of where dogs must be on-leash. The overall goal is to expand access for both user groups by setting expectations and minimizing conflicts (e.g., preventing the intermingling of incompatible uses that cause park users stress when in close proximity – such as a dog running off-leash near a playground filled with toddlers or a community garden for seniors).*

### 6.1. Ensure equitable distribution of off-leash areas throughout the city.

- 6.1.1. Negotiate public access, where appropriate, to non-PARD owned or operated off-leash areas. This could include areas operated or managed by neighborhood organizations or private entities.
- 6.1.2. Implement off-leash areas in all metro parks and some district parks, where feasible.
- 6.1.3. Acquire parkland specifically for new dog parks focusing on areas of the city that lack these facilities.

### 6.2. Refrain from placing dog parks and off-leash areas in existing neighborhood parks with space constraints.



Typically, neighborhood parks are smaller in scale leaving little available space for appropriately sized dog parks and off-leash areas.

### **6.3. Create a set of standards for off-leash areas and dog parks.**

Design considerations should include: complete fencing and a double entry gate, separate designated areas for small and large dogs, waste management (dog waste bags and trash cans), a drinking fountain for humans that includes a dog bowl component, shade (whether it be trees or a shade cover), and seating.

### **6.4. Provide dedicated, well-signed off-leash dog trails in large parks where these trails are buffered from other densely used park areas.**

The dog-owner focus group indicated that trails allowing dogs to be off-leash were equally if not more valuable than fenced-in play areas because dogs tend to be more relaxed and social with one another when they can move freely. Off-leash dog trails also offer dog owners the opportunity to enjoy a linear experience moving through a natural area while getting their dog some engaging exercise.

#### **6.4.1. Place clear signage on both off-leash dog trails and trails where dogs are required to be on-leash.**

### **6.5. Increase educational efforts to encourage a safe and enjoyable environment in off-leash areas.**

The best dog parks have an active friends group that can help enforce behavior and conduct clean-ups and improvement projects.

Off-leash dog areas can be a valuable asset to a park system. Dog parks can help build community by bringing dog owners and dog lovers together, and these areas can also help activate parks especially at off-hours since dogs are often walked earlier in the morning and later in the evening than when other park goers may be present, even in bad weather.

**TRUST FOR  
PUBLIC LAND**  
2019

## **7. Protect and manage natural areas to intentionally balance recreational use with environmental protection.**

*As park use intensifies, it is increasingly important that PARD develop an approach to support recreational use that does not threaten or degrade natural resources and supports the health and longevity of these natural areas.*

### **7.1. Create and implement land management plans.**

The land management plans should include vegetation management guidelines with detailed-planting, mowing,

“The capacity to enjoy the parks and natural areas, in an unprogrammed setting, is what enables many people’s enjoyment and use of Austin parks. No need to clutter or over-program.”

## COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

2018

design, access, restoration plans, risks, etc. Ensure adequate funding for maintenance of these elements beyond basic trash pickup and mowing.

### **7.2. Manage trail access and limit active recreation that negatively impacts natural areas.**

Adopt trail standards and plan for maintenance of established natural spaces. Close illegal trails and work to improve trailheads. Plan for greenbelts as part of the active transportation network, while balancing environmental impacts.

### **7.3. Actively manage natural areas to understand and increase ecosystem services.**

**7.3.1. Support implementation of Austin’s Urban Forest Plan and create an inventory of trees that is updated and leads forest management and tree considerations.**

**7.3.2. Inventory and actively manage natural spaces to increase habitat for pollinators and other species when not in conflict with passive recreation.**

**7.3.3. Continue to explore value of controlled fire as natural area management technique.**

**7.3.4. Consider ways to open limited public access to natural areas and undeveloped parks for an immersive nature experience.**  
Methods could include providing nature trails and signage, clearing some brush and canopy, and limited on-going trail maintenance.

### **7.4. Continue to prioritize acquisition of parkland for natural areas, including creek buffers for greenbelt extensions.**

Land acquisition should have a natural focus of larger green spaces that can be used for nature appreciation and connectivity.

### **7.5. Increase public access easements to conservation areas and natural lands.**

Work with landowners to negotiate limited public access, where feasible. Prioritize areas that provide additional connectivity to existing trails, increase overall access to open space, or provide views of or access to natural waterways.





Source: PARD





NATURAL EXPERIENCES	UNSTRUCTURED SPACES	GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE	LINEAR PARKS & TRAILS	PROXIMITY & ACCESS	URBAN SPACES	PARKS & ARTS/CULTURE	EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES	INCLUSIVITY	CLEANLINESS & SAFETY
✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT THEMES





Source: PARD

# B.

## EXPAND & IMPROVE PARK ACCESS FOR ALL



Providing equitable access to parkland for all residents is a priority for PARD. Through the LRP process some community members commented on the difficulty of accessing and navigating the park system. There are multiple tools that can be used to improve park access including expanded trail connections, improved wayfinding, and greater sensitivity to ADA standards.



## CITY OF AUSTIN / UT AUSTIN: UPROOTED GENTRIFICATION DISPLACEMENT STUDY.

*In 2018, the City of Austin commissioned a study led by the University of Texas: "Uprooted: Residential Displacement in Austin's Gentrifying Neighborhoods and What Can Be Done About It," to establish a baseline understanding of residential displacement risk. The study includes a framework for 1) identifying and prioritizing gentrifying neighborhoods where residents are at the highest risk of displacement and 2) matching strategies to needs of vulnerable residents in these neighborhoods.*



Source: PARD

1. Prior to any significant master plan or development, work with partner organizations and current and long-time residents to ensure community involvement in the process.

*Many areas of the city that have unmet park needs are also at risk of gentrification and displacement as the city continues to grow. In order to ensure park investments that improve local quality of life do not trigger or accelerate displacement, it is necessary to proactively plan to mitigate and protect against market-based displacement.*

### 1.1. Review current trends and risk for displacement for relevant area.

When beginning a master planning process for an individual park, review relevant trend data and analysis related to gentrification and displacement risk within the immediate surrounding areas and include in the community discussion. Sources could include research conducted by UT Austin, the City, or other agencies.

### 1.2. Establish engagement partnerships.

Early in the planning process identify potential local community organization partners who can help to meaningfully engage current and long-time residents in the park master planning process.

### 1.3. Ensure equity throughout the process.

Engage the City of Austin Equity Office in developing a set of park master plan goals and use the process and questions laid out in the draft Equity Assessment Tool to guide the planning process. The Equity Office developed this tool to help city departments systematically integrate "purposeful consideration to ensure budget and planning decisions reduce disparities, promote service level equity, and improve community engagement."

### 1.4. Consult the LRP identified priority needs for facilities and programs.

Priority needs should be assessed in collaboration with the identified engagement partners and the Equity Office to inform potential enhancements and what displacement risks might be associated with those activities.



## 2. Invest in the acquisition of new parkland that can make parks a part of everyday life in existing and future underserved areas.

*There is a strong desire for parks to be a part of everyday life – this is seen as a characteristic Austin experience. In order to extend this experience to all residents, PARD should introduce and develop a collection of smaller pocket and “button” parks that can be woven into existing urban areas with insufficient access to parks. Additionally, PARD will use the Imagine Austin Growth Centers and Corridors along with the ASMP priority networks to coordinate new parkland acquisitions with where the City is focusing future transportation investments that will help improve, increase, and expand access to future parkland.*

### 2.1. Create additional pocket and button parks to extend additional parkland into dense areas of the city.

Pocket parks are less than 2 acres in size and typically serve residents in more urban, denser neighborhoods in the city. Button parks are a new park type in Austin and can be less than one acre, similar to a school park but without the limited hours of a school park. Both park types help to provide easy, walkable access to residents in park deficient areas. They should be integrated into surrounding retail, restaurants, employment, and residential uses to create a strong sense of place and attractive, vibrant greenspace within neighborhoods.

### 2.2. Create additional neighborhood parks in areas that are underserved.

### 2.3. Acquire land for larger greenbelt parks in less-developed parts of the city where substantial growth and development is expected.

These parks can provide access and function as water resource and flood management within creek buffer zones.

### 2.4. Acquire land to provide better connectivity between parks.

“I would like to see a balance of facilities in all parts of Austin, in other words, there is a concentration of wonderful park amenities central west but not central east”

## COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

2018

---

### 3. Increase the number of entrances and access points to existing parks in order to expand the number of residents within walking distance of a park.

*Residents are often within a quarter mile of a park based on straight line measurement, but must go substantially further to reach the park either because there are limited entrances or sidewalks leading to the park.*

#### 3.1. Assess opportunities for additional entrances and access points using the parkland deficiency mapping.

Using the parkland deficiency map, analyze opportunities to provide additional points of access that may allow additional residents to walk to a local park.

#### 3.2. Proactively plan entrances and access points for new parks to ensure the greatest number of residents are within walking distance.

#### 3.3. Prioritize new access or entry points near existing mobility networks, including sidewalks, bike routes and transit.

##### 3.3.1. Look for opportunities to strengthen Safe Routes to Schools pathways near parks.

In some instances, children do not have a safe way to cross through a park. Ensure access plans consider the location of these routes when planning new entrances.

“I would like more well maintained and marked/ mapped... trails. South Austin has an amazing trail network that is almost impossible to navigate because there are no signs.”

## COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

2018

---

### 4. Increase multi-use and nature trails within the existing PARD park system and continue to acquire land for linear parks and greenbelts that can accommodate larger trail systems.

*People are more interested in parks that allow them to move (walk/run/bike) as opposed to staying in one place. Increasing the number of trails within the existing park system will enable Austinites to fully enjoy the park system as they move through it.*

#### 4.1. Look for opportunities to acquire properties for greenway, trail, and linear park expansion.

Prioritize areas that fill in the gaps in existing networks of trails and greenways and are adjacent to waterbodies.

**4.1.1. Work with partners and community organizations to acquire ownership or easements from willing sellers for land adjacent to creeks and waterways.**

**4.1.2. Complete trail networks.**

Assess opportunities to acquire new land or easements through private property to complete existing trail networks and loops in the City and adjacent municipalities.

## 5. Support the efforts of the *Austin Strategic Mobility Plan*, city departments, and partners in advancing the mobility network beyond the PARD park system.

*There is a need for more high-quality sidewalks, urban trails, and bike infrastructure that link parks and allow people to move easily between different parks without a car. Trails also help to address issues of proximity and access, which have come up as a concern due to a lack of both parks near them and/or their ability to get to parks.*



## FUNDING TRAILS: SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

SAN ANTONIO HAS A GROWING TRAIL NETWORK THAT IS FUNDED THROUGH A SERIES OF SPECIFIC SALES TAX AMOUNTS, CURRENTLY 1/8TH OF A CENT, FIRST APPROVED BY VOTERS IN 2000.

*There are 65 miles of multi-use trails, now called the Howard W. Peak trail system, currently are in place. The city's trails are supported by a growing Trail Watch volunteer program, which is a great way to build community awareness and engagement with a park and trail system and support better maintenance and growth of the trail system.*



Leon Greenway Trail, San Antonio, TX  
Source: SA2020



## — DISC GOLF

THERE WAS  
STRONG  
COMMUNITY  
SUPPORT FOR  
MORE DISC GOLF  
FACILITIES.



**5.1. Improve pedestrian access to parkland by advocating for safe crossings within 1/4 mile walkshed of all PARD parks, as described in ASMP Action 139.**

**5.2. Improve integration with transit & bikeshare networks to expand non-automobile access to parkland.**

5.2.1. Work with Capital Metro to evaluate the potential for expanding transit stops near PARD parks and facilities.

5.2.2. Expand bikeshare locations near trails and greenways.

**5.3. Work with the Austin Transportation Department, Public Works, Corridor Program Office, and other partners to improve mobility around and between parks and nearby activity areas.**

5.3.1. Work with relevant partners to implement the sidewalk improvement plan specifically for areas of need adjacent to parks.

Sidewalks are a key part of mobility systems within a city. They provide safe, walkable access to existing parks. Consider creating sidewalk improvement plans for key neighborhoods and areas of the city where gaps exist.

5.3.2. Work with partner departments and organizations to implement safe bicycle infrastructure near parks.

Comfortable on and off-street bike infrastructure can improve access to parks and facilities.

**5.4. Explore regulations for new forms of mobility near parks and along trails.**

Rules for new forms of mobility, including motorized rental scooters, should be evaluated to ensure the safety and security of all users.

---

## 6. Achieve a more even distribution of facilities that have a strong citywide interest.

*Some facilities (e.g., cultural centers) have a notably imbalanced distribution despite a consistent interest across all parts of the city.*

- 6.1. Evaluate the need for different facilities based on geographic distribution and population-based level of service on a regular basis.

## 7. Aspire to provide universal access.

*Park spaces should be accessible, to the greatest extent feasible, by everyone regardless of age, ability, or language. Strive to create equal access for all Austinites by reducing barriers to use.*

**7.1. Seek opportunities to go beyond minimum ADA requirements and Texas Accessibility Standards to achieve broader access for all residents.**

When the budget and site constraints allow, find opportunities to exceed minimum standards through universal design.

**7.2. Add playscapes in existing under-served areas and ensure there is at least one playground with all-abilities components in each planning area.**

Inclusive play should be available to all residents in Austin. Development of new playscapes should focus on not just being accessible, but rather inclusive for all. These spaces should be thoughtfully designed to provide a safe place where children of all ages and abilities can play together.

**7.3. Implement PARD's ADA Transition plan.**

7.3.1. Ensure trails and associated amenities are ADA-accessible, to the greatest extent possible.

7.3.2. Create a guide to ADA-accessible trails, park, and facilities that is available both on-line and in print.

**7.4. Provide culturally appropriate signage in parks.**

Work with communities to determine if signage is needed in multiple languages or additional interpretive signage is needed.

**7.5. Increase access to restrooms that are gender neutral, ADA/TAS compliant.**

Identify opportunities to adapt existing and develop new restrooms that provide single staff, gender neutral, ADA/TAS compliant accessible restrooms, which are also large enough to accommodate family use. Additionally,



## ADAPTIVE PLAY

SALEM, OREGON  
LET'S ALL PLAY PLACE  
IS AN ADAPTIVE  
PLAYGROUND  
FOLLOWS UNIVERSAL  
DESIGN AND ALL-  
ABILITIES PLAY  
PRINCIPLES.

*The structures and equipment are designed to be usable by all people regardless of ability. It features an accessible slide, sensory elements, specialized swings, geoball climber, collaborative water play, smooth and grass areas (no wood chips), and a serpentine track that also functions as an accessible circuit.*



Let's All Play Place, Salem, OR  
Source: Harper's Playground

explore opportunities to incorporate adult-sized tables to accommodate adults with disabilities who require assistance from a caretaker.

## 8. Improve signage and wayfinding markers at entrances and along trails to help park users navigate with confidence.

### 8.1. Create and Implement a signage and wayfinding plan.

This plan should include signage standards for main entrance signage, wayfinding and identification signage within the park and along trails, and a list of preferred materials. PARD's signage and wayfinding guidelines should be developed collaboratively with the PWD Urban Trails and ATD Bicycle Program to ensure new PARD signage and wayfinding is complementary of and consistent with signage and wayfinding on urban trails and bicycle routes beyond PARD land. The plan should also include schedules for implementation of new signage, removal of out-of-date signs to reduce visual clutter in parks, and a maintenance schedule for the new signage.



## SIGNAGE: NYC PARKS, LANGUAGE ACCESS

NEW YORK CITY'S DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION CURRENTLY OFFERS TRANSLATED SIGNAGE IN MULTIPLE LANGUAGE ACROSS ALL CITY'S PARKS.

*In their 2018 Language Access Plan, the main goals include expanding the services available to phone interpretation services, language identification posters, and to provide all signs in 11 languages that are targeted to each area's population.*



NYC Park Signage in multiple languages  
Source: Pentagram



## 8.2. Incorporate signage and wayfinding into park master plans.

When developing master plans for parks, ensure that signage considers standards, includes key wayfinding elements, and is culturally appropriate.

## 9. Improve the web-based information describing the park system to help people quickly find the amenities and experiences they are seeking.

### 9.1. Redesign the PARD website.

Create a user-friendly, community-facing, streamlined web interface that provides key information for residents.

## 10. Work with Austin Transportation to evaluate the need and appropriate fee structure for private automobile parking areas.

### 10.1. Create parking standards for parks and facilities.

Standards should include maximum number of parking spots, location of safe bicycle and micromobility device parking, appropriate use, and potential fee structure. Regulations should take into consideration proximity to existing mobility networks as a way to reduce private automobile parking at certain facilities.

#### 10.1.1. Consider adding car-share only parking spots.

#### 10.1.2. Evaluate methods to reduce inappropriate use of parking.

In denser areas of the city, parking may be used inappropriately by non-park users if it is available and free.

### 10.2. Explore ways to reduce car trips to parks and reduce parking demand.

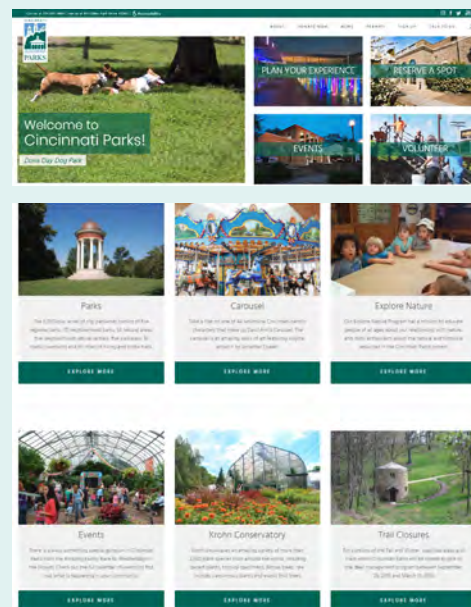
Methods could include reduced entry fees or discounted transit fares and passes for visitors who choose to take sustainable modes to parks and facilities.



## WEBSITE COMMUNICATIONS

**CINCINNATI'S PARK AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT REDESIGNED THEIR WEBSITE IN 2018 TO STREAMLINE CONTENT AND CREATE AN EASY-TO-NAVIGATE LAYOUT.**

*Keeping the user in mind, the new website includes a modern, responsive web design that provides an interactive experience for users as well as improved organization. A key feature is the calendar of events page, which allows the user to filter based on preferences for day, time, or venue.*



Cincinnati Parks Website  
Source: [cincinnatiiparks.com](http://cincinnatiiparks.com)





NATURAL EXPERIENCES	
UNSTRUCTURED SPACES	
GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE	
LINEAR PARKS & TRAILS	
PROXIMITY & ACCESS	✓
URBAN SPACES	✓
PARKS & ARTS/CULTURE	✓
EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES	✓
INCLUSIVITY	✓
CLEANLINESS & SAFETY	✓

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT THEMES





Source: PARD

# C. ACTIVATE & ENHANCE URBAN PUBLIC SPACES



Urban public spaces require a different approach and have historically been overlooked and underestimated in terms of their ability to improve quality of life in denser urban areas. As PARD looks to expand park access and reach developed areas, activating smaller urban public spaces will become an increasingly crucial strategy to extend the benefits of parks to more. To be successful, this will require a flexible, partnership-centric approach with a blend of PARD programming on non-PARD-owned spaces, and partner programming and maintenance at PARD parkland.



“[Republic Square] is a gem. Please keep it vibrant with quality care and community events.”

## COMMUNITY FEEDBACK 2018

### 1. Build on the Downtown Austin Alliance’s Downtown Parks Vision to holistically elevate the quality of the urban public realm.

*This includes streetscapes, parklets, green infrastructure, urban trails, downtown park programming, and pop-up events and installations that build community and identity around underutilized spaces that have the potential to become pocket parks, trails, and button parks. This could also include adding more educational and informational signage that calls attention to features and locations that have natural, cultural, or historical significance.*

#### 1.1. Implement the Downtown Parks Vision (from Downtown Austin Alliance).

The vision prioritizes creating new parks, places, and connections, including the completion of the urban greenbelt and burying Interstate Highway 35.

1.1.1. Track and monitor implementation of the Brush Square Master Plan.

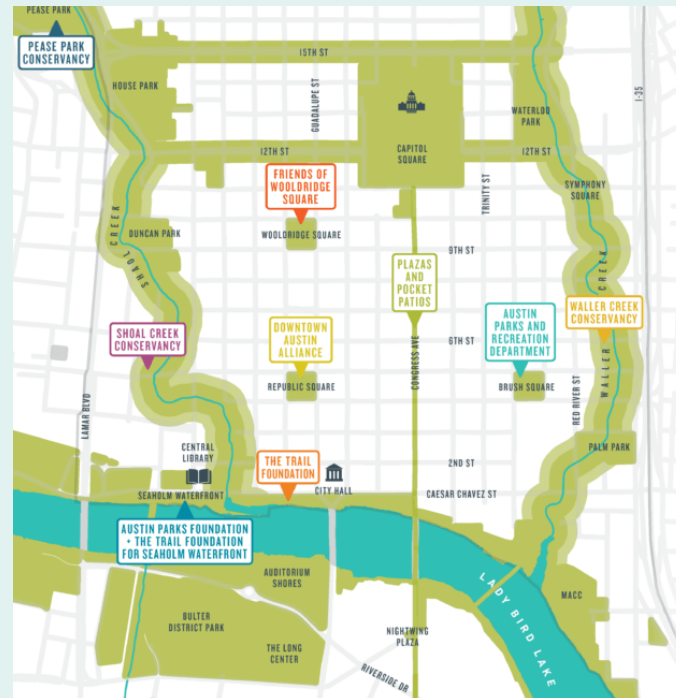
1.1.2. Track and monitor implementation of the Wooldridge Square Preliminary Plan.



## IN-PROGRESS: AUSTIN’S URBAN GREENBELT

THE DOWNTOWN AUSTIN VISION, CREATED BY THE DOWNTOWN AUSTIN ALLIANCE AND ITS PARTNERS ENVISIONS A CONNECTED AND INTEGRATED OF PARKS AND PLACES ENCIRCLING DOWNTOWN.

*Eventually the network will include a pedestrian and bicycle connections linking Waller Creek, Shoal Creek, Lady Bird Lake and the Ann and Roy Butler Hike-and-Bike Trail. The long-range plan supports the completion of this loop.*



Austin’s Urban Greenbelt  
Source: Downtown Austin Alliance

**1.2. Reduce barriers to hosting seasonal / special events on underutilized land downtown.**

Work with downtown organizations and City departments to schedule and host a series of pop-up seasonal or special events on underutilized land. This could include moving beer gardens, farmer's markets, or night markets.

**2. Invest in more lighting and increased staff and volunteer presence, especially along trails and pathways, to ensure parks feel safe after dark.**

**2.1. Incorporate Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles in all park master plans.**

CPTED principles provide guidelines for increasing safety, providing more visual and physical access in and out of a space, improving lighting, and using other design intervention to reduce crime and improve the perception of safety.

**2.2. Use the Park Score Cards to assess parks in need of safety improvements.**

**2.3. Assess trails for safety concerns and create a plan to address any issues.**

**2.4. Create a park ambassador program.**

Park ambassadors can not only improve perceptions of safety in parks, but also provide users with information and address any potential concerns. A park ambassador program could be paired or partnered with Workforce First to provide additional sources of employment for individuals experiencing homelessness.

**3. Support more dense, flexible, and diverse programs and amenities (e.g., temporary seating or play equipment) in urban public spaces within and beyond PARD parkland.**

**3.1. Find opportunities to reduce barriers to hosting programs in urban spaces.**



# ACTIVATING URBAN SPACES

**PARKS ON TAP  
IS A PROGRAM  
THAT BRINGS A  
BEER GARDEN TO  
VARIOUS PARKS  
IN PHILADELPHIA  
THROUGHOUT THE  
SUMMER SEASON.**

*Featuring craft beer, cocktails, and food, Parks on Tap encourages people to discover, enjoy, and support open park space. Since its 2016 launch, the program has generated enough revenue to support improvements, maintenance, and programs in the city's parks. The events are often paired with "friends-of" fundraisers and outreach events.*



Parks on Tap, 2018  
Source: WRT



# FARMERS MARKETS

## CLARK PARK FARMERS MARKET, PHILADELPHIA PA.

*Established in one of West Philadelphia's main parks in 1998, the Clark Park Farmers Market is a neighborhood favorite that operates year-round through support from Philadelphia Parks and Recreation, Friends of Clark Park, and University of the Sciences. Vendors at this market accept WIC and Senior FMNP vouchers as well as ACCESS/food stamps card. For every \$5 that customers spend using food stamp benefits, they receive a \$2 Philly Food Bucks coupon that can go towards fruit and vegetables.*



Clark Park Farmers Market  
Source: University City District

### 3.2. Work with partners to invest in the necessary infrastructure to host programs in the urban core.

Water and electricity are often key infrastructure elements that are needed to support flexible use of spaces, as is multi-modal access that can efficiently and safely transport large crowds arriving and departing at the same time.

## 4. Continuously monitor and provide a clear picture of cost and revenue information to the community, including community and economic impacts associated with large events.

### 4.1. Create a fact sheet, available digitally and in print, that provides answers to commonly asked questions.

Improve transparency about large events that happen on publicly-owned land by creating a user-friendly fact sheet available on PARD's website and in print. Include answers to frequently asked questions and a summary of how these large events benefit the park system as a whole by increasing operation revenue, increasing tourism dollars, and providing opportunities for community engagement.

### 4.2. Continually evaluate the public benefit of events held in parks and measure social and economic impacts that are shared with the community.

## 5. Increase the number of Farmers Markets associated with parks and open spaces.

### 5.1. Work with other City partners to reduce barriers to farmers' markets locating and operating on City-owned land.

It is currently very difficult to navigate the permit process for getting a market located at a PARD facility. This process should be stream-lined and expedited.

### 5.2. Support community organizations and partners interested in hosting farmers' markets.

Texas is 50th in the nation in number of farmers' markets



per capita (source: Farmers' Market Coalition). There are barriers to organizing farmers' markets on public or private land and it can be difficult to get a farmers' market up and running.

**5.2.1. Partner with the regional Farmers' Market Coalition to explore opportunities for markets on parkland and potential for bringing in community gardens.**

Utilize metrics from the Office of Sustainability pilot program with the Texas Center for Local Food to communicate the value and impact of farmers markets on the local economy and communities.

**5.2.2. Host farmers' market workshops for interested organizations where PARD and partners provide key information.**

Information could include required staff capacity, recommended partnerships, and available resources.

**5.3. Build on the success of The City of Austin's "Fresh for Less" program.**

Fresh for Less is a public-private partnership with the Sustainable Food Center, Farmshare Austin, and GAVA (Go Austin!/Vamos Austin!) that offers fresh, affordable, convenient, and nutritious food through farm stands, mobile markets, and healthy corner stores. Consider PARD facilities that could potentially host the program using existing food access data from the City.

**5.4. Create a comprehensive guide for vending on PARD-owned property.**

Provide transparency around regulations and guidelines for vending.



## GARDEN PARTNERSHIPS

**PORTLAND HAS 57 COMMUNITY GARDENS THROUGHOUT THE CITY THAT ARE SUPPORTED BY THE PORTLAND PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT.**

*The city has the most community garden plots per resident among the 100 largest US cities. Aside from the sheer number, one of the most notable facts about Portland's community gardens is that they are also supported by a thriving nonprofit, the Friends of Portland Community Gardens, which has been in existence for over 30 years. A strong partnership between one umbrella nonprofit and the city in terms of community gardens is certainly part of what makes the city garden program so successful. Similar public-private partnerships for public community gardens exist in Seattle, Philadelphia, Boston, New York City, and San Francisco..*



# HERITAGE TOURISM

HERITAGE TOURISM  
IN TEXAS IS A \$7.3  
BILLION DOLLAR  
INDUSTRY AND  
ACCOUNTS FOR  
MORE THAN 10.5  
PERCENT OF ALL  
TRAVEL IN THE STATE.

*The Heritage Tourism Program  
in Texas promotes travel to  
experience the places, artifacts  
and activities that authentically  
represent the stories and people  
of the past and present. The Texas  
Heritage Trails, a component of  
the program, is a network of 10  
regional, non-profit organizations  
working across the state to develop  
sites and increase awareness.*



Texas Heritage Trails  
Source: Texas Historical Commission

## 6. Expand PARD's Historic Preservation and Heritage Tourism Program to protect, restore, and promote the cultural and historic resources of the park system.

### 6.1. Maintain and update an inventory of PARD's historic and cultural resources.

PARD is the steward for more than 30 City of Austin historic landmarks, 10 State Antiquities Landmarks, and more than 60 resources that are listed to the National Register of Historic Places.

### 6.2. Provide online access to information about historic resources, including historic designations and archives.

### 6.3. Continue investing in the restoration of historic sites through funding from the City of Austin's Historic Preservation Fund.

### 6.4. Develop marketing material and web presence for PARD historic sites; Explore opportunities to provide interpretive materials and on-site signage.

### 6.5. Raise awareness about the importance of protecting archaeological resources.

### 6.6. Provide training and educational resources to staff and PARD partners on historic preservation best practices.





Oak Hill Cemetery  
Source: PARD





NATURAL EXPERIENCES	UNSTRUCTURED SPACES	GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE	LINEAR PARKS & TRAILS	PROXIMITY & ACCESS	URBAN SPACES	PARKS & ARTS/CULTURE	EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES	INCLUSIVITY	CLEANLINESS & SAFETY
✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT THEMES



Source: PARD

# D. ALIGN PROGRAMS WITH COMMUNITY INTEREST



While there is a high demand for more programs at parks, there is also a strong interest in Austin for natural experience and unprogrammed spaces and activities. As the needs and interests of community members change, program offerings should be evaluated and adjusted as needed to reflect the most relevant programs.

“Educate our youth. It is cost effective and fun. There are many activities youth can do outside and we need them out in nature as much as possible. It is healthy and has been shown to be calming and decreases anxiety.”

## COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

2018

### 1. Provide more nature-based programs.

*“Nature Deficit Disorder,” a term coined by Author Richard Louv, highlights how the densification of cities and our tendency to spend more time indoors makes us feel alienated from nature and can potentially lead to negative behavioral outcomes. Providing more access to nature and nature programming can help restore our connection to nature and improve physical and mental health.*

#### 1.1. Work with partners, including recreation centers and summer camps, to increase nature programming.

#### 1.2. Add high-quality educational signage to natural areas.

Clear interpretive signage can help increase awareness and appreciation of nature without additional staff resources.

#### 1.3. Consider using public art as a way to interpret natural areas and features.

Public art can be both educational and beautiful. It can help bring attention to key natural resources while enhancing aesthetics of the place.

#### 1.4. Add programming to natural spaces in a guided way to increase peoples’ ability to comfortably explore on their own.

#### 1.5. Consider the feasibility of creating a second, smaller nature center or the potential for rotating satellite pop-up/temporary exhibits and programs to reach a greater slice of the community.

Exhibits or pop-ups could take place within existing facilities or on parkland.

#### 1.6. Create more nature-based youth education and summer camps.

1.6.1. Build on the resources developed from the Cities Connecting Children to Nature Initiative.

1.6.2. Formalize a “Junior Park Ranger” program.

#### 1.7. Provide nature stewardship training to better connect residents of all ages to nature.

Leadership programs can teach skills like plant and animal identification, navigation skills, and key





# CONNECTING WITH NATURE

MINNEAPOLIS'S PARK AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT HOSTS A VARIETY OF NATURE EDUCATION PROGRAMS DESIGNED SPECIFICALLY FOR CHILDREN, HELD AT RECREATION CENTERS THROUGHOUT THE CITY.

*Programs are separated out by age, from preschoolers to those age 6 – 12 to children of all ages and their parents/guardians. Other nature-based programs include adult and family programs which encourages families to get out and enjoy nature together, as well as a monthly 'Come Out and Play' free, no-registration program for families. While most of the programs are fee-based, there are scholarships available.*



Nature Play Event - Minneapolis  
Source: Free Forest School

environmental ethics that focus on “Leave No Trace” principles.

- 1.8. Incorporate natural areas (native plant gardens, tree groves, etc.) in all PARD public facilities, where feasible.**

## 2. Increase Adult and Senior programming across multiple categories – active recreation, nature-based and arts & culture.

*Today's older adults are more active than they were in the past and the programming offered by PARD should respond to that trend by providing more diverse and inclusive offerings.*

- 2.1. Consider changing the nomenclature for “Senior Centers” to “Active Adult Centers.”**
- 2.2. Enhance programming at existing Senior Centers.**  
Expand program offerings at Senior Centers to cater to the needs of more active, older adults.
  - 2.2.1. Help to organize walking groups for adults.**

“Austin has an abundance of spaces for children, youth, and families in comparison to quality spaces and activities for the growing senior population. Please keep in mind the needs of seniors for non-crowded or designated walking, swimming, and social activities”

**COMMUNITY  
FEEDBACK**  
2018

“If there are to be arts programs, they should pertain to the local neighborhood culture and not be brought in from outside.”

## COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

2018

### 2.2.2. Develop nature-based programming for adults.

This could include birding groups, stewardship programs, and park ambassador roles.

### 2.3. Provide more intergenerational programs.

## 3. Increase the number, diversity, and equitable distribution of arts and culture programs being offered through PARD.

### 3.1. Explore the feasibility of partnering to establish new cultural/arts/community centers in areas that fall substantially below the citywide average (North, Southeast, Southwest, and West).

### 3.2. Expand Art-Based Education.

### 3.3. Partner to pilot a new type of indoor cultural facility, a “Community Creativity Center,” which would provide multi-disciplinary arts spaces in response to community needs.

Community Creativity Centers (CCC) are community-driven creative spaces that, through extensive community engagement, are designed to meet the needs of artists and audiences in different communities across the city, while at the same time endeavoring to be as flexible as possible to accommodate the changing dynamics of their locale. They can also function as “one-stop” centers in the arts, providing information to artists about grants or technical assistance as well as information about City resources to all citizens. CCCs can be a component of any type of public building that serves a public assembly or public service purpose. Recreation Centers, libraries, one-stop centers, athletic centers, public housing, schools and health centers are just a few of examples of facilities that could include a CCC with just the addition of 10,000-12,000 square feet of usable space. CCC spaces may include but are not limited to studios, exhibition spaces, multi-purpose performance spaces, as well as event and administrative support spaces.

### 3.4. Increase public art installations.

Public art is a tool for placemaking that can activate and enliven spaces. Explore opportunities to have artists

work with community members to site new community-centric public art installations throughout PARD parkland and work with the Art in Public Places program to look for new opportunities in parks.

**3.5. Complete necessary improvements and renovations to existing cultural, arts, recreation, and community centers to support additional programming.**

**4. Explore partnership strategies to increase low-income access to PARD programming.**

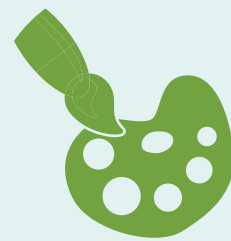
*The Community Recreation Division operates 20 community recreation centers with diverse programming and special events across the city. Several partnerships are focused on improving public health and access to free fitness and nutrition programming.*

- 4.1. Provide a guide highlighting the range of programs available to residents at reduced or no-cost.**
- 4.2. Review opportunities to expand reduced or provide no-cost programming in areas that may be lacking based on local community need, interest, grant opportunities, and funding availability.**

**5. Leverage “pop-up” programming and temporary uses to activate public spaces and expand access to programs typically held in recreation and cultural centers.**

*Temporary or pop-up uses can add value to and activate underutilized public spaces, without requiring investment in new facilities. PARD should work with willing partners to find opportunities to create parklets or beer gardens, host special or seasonal events, or bring exercise or nature-based programming to public spaces throughout the city.*

**5.1. Increase support and staffing for PARD’s Community and Engagement Division to help plan and implement increased programming and improve equity across the park system.**



## IN PROGRESS: PUBLIC ART IN PARKS

AUSTIN’S ART IN PUBLIC PLACES (AIPP) PROGRAM WAS ESTABLISHED IN 1985 AND INVITES LOCAL AND NATIONALLY KNOWN ARTISTS TO HELP REPRESENT THE LOCAL VALUES AND CULTURAL HISTORY OF AUSTIN THROUGH ART.

*The program is funded through a 2% set aside for capital improvement projects and includes locations such as the airport, convention center, libraries, parks and recreation centers, police stations, and along streets. There is an Art in Parks walking tour developed through AIPP that could be highlighted on PARD’s website and through educational materials. There are future opportunities to expand public art in parks, including temporary art installations that provide opportunities for the community to interact and reflect in Austin’s parks and community centers.*



“I enjoy musical and theatrical performances in the parks but in recent years the crowds at events such as the Zilker Hillside Theater and Blues on the Green have made it too difficult to attend these events, especially with children. I would enjoy smaller scale events at neighborhood parks”

## COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

2018

- 5.2. Work within the partnership structure to explore opportunities for increased programs in unconventional or underutilized spaces, where gaps exist.**

## 6. Continually assess community needs and proactively plan for recreation programming that aligns to these needs and trends.

*Ensure that PARD facilities are offering recreation programming and facilities that address community desires and needs. Programming types to consider include golf, bocce ball, disc golf, bike polo, and skateparks.*

**6.1. Invest in existing golf infrastructure to maintain conditions.**

Projects may include improving cart paths, replacing key bridges, updating irrigation systems, and replacing turf in heavily used areas.

**6.2. Proactively look for ways to maximize flexibility of facilities to accommodate multiple programs and emerging recreation needs.**

During master planning and evaluation of facilities, consider new programming needs.



Source: PARD





NATURAL EXPERIENCES	UNSTRUCTURED SPACES	GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE	LINEAR PARKS & TRAILS	PROXIMITY & ACCESS	URBAN SPACES	PARKS & ARTS/CULTURE	EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES	INCLUSIVITY	CLEANLINESS & SAFETY
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT THEMES





Source: PARD

# E. OPTIMIZE & IMPROVE EFFICIENCY OF OPERATIONS



Leverage partnerships and revenue opportunities to elevate the quality of PARD operations and maintenance while upholding equitable park access and ensuring a sustainable and well-balanced PARD budget.



## WORK DEVELOPMENT

PHILADELPHIA'S  
UNIVERSITY CITY  
DISTRICT GREEN  
CITY WORKS  
PROGRAM PROVIDES  
OPPORTUNITIES.

*Green City Works is a social venture that builds on the success of the University City District's West Philadelphia Skills Initiative to train, educate, and provide employment opportunities for local residents. GCW is a full-service landscape design-build company that provides high-quality wages and benefits while helping grow the local economy.*



Green City Works  
Source: University City District

### 1. Consolidate and improve efficiency of maintenance operations, administrative, and program management functions to a central location with appropriate level of office space and facilities.

#### 1.1. Consider relocation of maintenance operations staff to a more centralized, accessible and efficient location.

Explore potential for a centralized location at Bolm District Park, considering the benefits of combining staff from Forestry, and Park Operations and Maintenance, as well as secure storage and parking space for maintenance vehicles.

#### 1.2. Explore a new headquarters for the Aquatics Division that has close proximity to a pool to make lifeguard training easier.

One option that could be considered is the Nash Hernandez Building at Edward Rendon Sr. Metro Park at Festival Beach.

#### 1.3. Explore the possibility of three separate maintenance satellite facilities, geographically dispersed through the city to minimize staff travel time between parks and facilities.

Travel time should be less than 30 percent of a regular staff workday. New or existing locations to be considered include: Onion Creek (south), one centrally located facility (Central Main Complex or Bolm District Park), and one northern location (may require land acquisition).

#### 1.4. Consider development of new PARD Headquarters at site of current Central Maintenance Complex (CMC) on Lakeshore Blvd. Once CMC is relocated, the Lakeshore Blvd site provides an excellent opportunity for a centralized headquarters large enough to accommodate PARD's growing staff.

With the growth of the department, the staff has become very decentralized. PARD would benefit from a central headquarters that is still in close proximity to City Hall, One Texas Center, and the new city office building on East Ben White Blvd. The Lakeshore Drive location is ideal from a public transportation perspective and is

envisioned to be near the Blue Line on CapMetro's Project Connect. The proximity to the Butler Trail and Boardwalk open up possibilities for a visitor center and possibly weekend public parking for access to the trail.

### **1.5. Formalize and create common standards for operations and maintenance agreement with school parks and other partner organizations.**

Currently, many agreements are long established and unequal with respect to maintenance responsibilities at existing school parks.

#### **1.5.1. Develop formal MOUs that detail maintenance responsibility and hours of public access between PARD and each school park.**

School parks are valuable places of community gathering and recreation within each neighborhood and have the potential to help meet park needs in already developed areas.

#### **1.5.2. Explore opportunities to partner with school districts and pilot green stormwater or green building practices at school park sites.**

As institutions of learning, schools and school parks should be considered high priority for installation of highly visible green stormwater infrastructure projects (e.g. permeable paving, green roofs, rain gardens, stormwater parking lot improvements) and can be integrated into the school's curriculum.

#### **1.5.3. Consider proactively working with school districts in the region, in addition to AISD, to plan for new school parks, either on site or adjacent to schools.**

As population shifts and growth occur, partner with schools in full purpose jurisdiction to plan for new parks and facilities that can be developed potentially in partnership with the school district.

#### **1.5.4. Work with AISD to understand long-term population shifts and where schools may be reused or repurposed.**

If a school is no longer viable, or is to be recommissioned for another use, PARD should have opportunity to evaluate the property for potential park or recreation use.



## **CONSIDERING TOTAL COST OF OWNERSHIP**

*Communities spend considerable time and resources in land and asset capital development. In considering new park development projects, it is essential to include operational costs, including staff, equipment, and materials, as part of the overall "total cost of ownership." New amenities in parks have a useful lifespan if properly maintained, however if maintenance practices and annual repairs are not fully funded then the effective lifespan will fall short and could result in a hazard, or additional costs for replacement and removal. The cost of replacement is subject to inflation as labor, materials, and equipment costs increase over time. It is important to consider the short-term (5 years or less) and long-term (5-10 years) forecast to adequately gauge the level of funding needed. Together, capital investment, operations and maintenance, and life cycle replacement represent the total cost of ownership of a park system. Austin's new Asset Management Division, created in 2018 is responsible for planning and tracking investments.*





## SPOTLIGHT: HOMELESSNESS

### AUSTIN CERTAINLY ISN'T ALONE IN SEEKING CREATIVE, INNOVATIVE, AND EFFECTIVE WAYS TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE OF HOMELESSNESS.

*Parks and recreation departments and employees are increasingly on the frontline of dealing with these issues, particularly in the form of people camping in public parks as parks are one of the few truly free and public resources available in most cities. Homelessness has been a recurring and popular topic at recent NRPA and Greater and Greener conferences, often filling rooms for all available sessions. Best practices are still emerging and being developed, and there is not yet a consensus or standard approach. However, homelessness is not specific to city park systems; it exists in communities as a whole and therefore a more comprehensive approach, in which parks and recreation departments work in conjunction with other public agencies, non-profits, and funders representing a variety of disciplines, is a strong approach.*

## 2. Engage with and provide work opportunities in parks to help people experiencing homelessness.

*Austin's Ending Homelessness Coalition estimates there are 2,147 homeless individuals in Austin, a five percent increase from 2017. Many individuals expressed a general feeling that urban public spaces are not being taken advantage of and are pass through spaces for individuals experiencing homelessness, which is only amplified by maintenance concerns.*

### 2.1. Strengthen and expand the Workforce First program.

Work with partners to secure additional funding and support to expand the Workforce First program which currently pays individuals experiencing homelessness to help remove trash in public parks. Expansion could include full-time park ambassador roles or a workforce training track that leads to full-time employment with PARD or partner organizations.

### 2.2. Consider a holistic approach that bring together police, health, advocacy, conservation, and park operations and maintenance staff to expand resources available to those experiencing homelessness in parks.

## 3. Improve the value and awareness of the parks and recreation system offerings to the community.

*Based on the community survey results, many residents placed a high value on Austin's parks and recreation, however the percentage of the population using parks regularly is relatively low compared with national averages. This disconnect suggests that there is a need to enhance communications and engagement/marketing staff to increase awareness and visitation, as well as enhance revenue operations.*

### 3.1. Increase staff capacity in the Communications and Engagement Division to help bridge the gap between existing resources and offerings and community knowledge of and interaction with the parks system.

A common theme that emerged through the LRP process is the lack of knowledge or the difficulty of getting information about the diverse parks and open space resources in Austin. Through investment in communications and outreach, the city can increase use of facilities and ultimately revenue to support the park system.

**3.2. Develop an effective data collection system of users and profile information.**

Collect point-of-sale data on users of the parks and recreation services including: youth sports, adult sports enrichment, senior, and outdoor recreation/ environmental education programs. Collect the same data for facility rentals, special events, health and wellness, and aquatics users.

**3.3. Advance the use of technology on marketing and promotions of key programs and recreational offerings as an attraction.**

Collect information on point-of-sale entrance and program fees, centralized reservation system for programs and events, and intercept surveys of users and non-park users.

**3.4. Expand customer training and focus of staff and volunteers on “selling” the value of Austin’s park system to residents and visitors.**

Customer service training and philosophy will focus on the basics of customer service for full and part-time staff and volunteers. Additional training will be developed based on direct business planning unit requests to the revenue development staff within the department. Customer satisfaction levels should be tracked in all divisions, reported for assessment and training will be determined based on the results.

**3.5. Expand recreation program standards to support core recreations services.**

Recreational standards should focus on delivering a consistent high-quality experience while achieving operational and cost recovery goals as well as marketing and communication standards that are needed to create awareness and customer loyalty.



## IN-PROGRESS: WORKFORCE FIRST PROGRAM

**A PARTNERSHIP  
BETWEEN THE CITY,  
AUSTIN PUBLIC HEALTH,  
PARKS AND RECREATION,  
FAMILY ELDERCARE,  
AND THE OTHER ONES  
FOUNDATION.**

*The Workforce First Program provides individuals experiencing homelessness with an opportunity to earn income by helping maintain city parks. First launched as a pilot in October 2018, the program provides individuals with income and connects them to resources to help them find permanent employment and housing. Participants earn \$15 per hour and help clear invasive species, clean up litter, and remove graffiti.*



Workforce First Program  
Source: CBS Austin



## PARTNER AGREEMENTS

DEVELOPING PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS WITH FOR-PROFITS, NON-PROFITS, AND GOVERNMENTAL ENTITIES TO WORK WITH PARD CAN BE BENEFICIAL AND ENSURE LONG-TERM SUCCESS AND FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY.

*With a model partnership agreement, PARD can expand its reach and invest more in its park system. Different partnership classifications can exist in the form of operational partners, vendor partners, service partners, co-branding partners, and fund development partners, allowing the partner to contribute value in the form of operational revenue or capital revenue to help build or maintain the site and/or bring paying users.*

- 
4. Develop a clear organizational framework for PARD partnerships that is equitable, supportive of PARD's mission and goals, and is regularly evaluated to track and monitor impacts and outcomes.

- 4.1. **Develop a partnership assessment tool that can be used to help develop a framework for the many types of partnership models.**

Engage partners in developing a tool to include delineation by partnership type (e.g., friends groups, non-profits, foundation, public-private, programming, etc.) and should result in a consistent guidebook for and formal process for entering into partnerships and defining appropriate structures and oversight.

- 4.2. **Use the LRP needs assessment and park condition assessments to match up partners with priority areas of need – or specific parks in need of volunteer support.**

- 4.3. **Develop goals and metrics to evaluate partnership impacts and share results with the community.**

- 4.4. **Communicate areas of need and opportunity with existing and potential partners.**

Seek out new partners in highest areas of need.

- 4.5. **Provide opportunities for partners to engage with each other and find potential ways to work together where interests and areas of high need overlap.**

- 4.6. **Consider an enhanced donor recognition program that provides structure and opportunities for enhanced public-private partnership and financial support from the Austin community.**

- 
5. Work with partners to improve existing parks, trails, and facilities by creating and implementing master plans.

*As a part of on-going maintenance and stewardship of the park and recreation system, PARD should continue to create new master plans and work with partner organizations and departments to implement those plans.*



## 6. Pursue sustainability and resiliency goals in all PARD facilities.

*Parks have an essential role to play in supporting community resiliency.*

### 6.1. Coordinate with the Office of Sustainability to meet goals for reductions in energy use and carbon neutral operations.

Consider energy efficiency, water conservation efforts, and use of sustainable materials and renewable energy in all new and existing facilities and structures.

### 6.2. Consider environmental standards that bolster the health of the surrounding community and the local ecology.

Rating systems, like SITES, provide designers and organizations with guidelines to enhance community benefits and build resiliency that helps mitigate flooding, store carbon, and weather the effects of climate change.

### 6.3. Implement comprehensive recycling and composting standards at all facilities to meet zero waste goals.

Ensure that all PARD facilities adhere to recycling standards and provide ‘organic diversion’ / composting opportunities.

### 6.4. Educate members of the community to ‘leave no trace’ in parks.

Create educational materials and ensure that signage clearly highlights recycling and waste procedures that emphasize “pack it in, pack it out.”

### 6.5. Ensure that emergency operations management and resiliency are included in all park planning efforts.

Parks and their facilities have the ability to bolster community resiliency by mitigating flooding through green stormwater infrastructure, offsetting carbon emissions with planting, and even acting as shelters during power outages and natural disasters.

### 6.6. Work with partners to improve sustainability of purchasing and operations.

Consider adopting efforts like the Good Food Purchasing Program to help drive all food procurement towards a more sustainable, local, and equitable system.

“Maintenance of existing parks and facilities must include mandatory recycling. It is really hard to believe that Austin doesn’t have recycling bins at parks since residents and businesses are required to recycle at home and work.”

## COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

2018



FIGURE 20. YETT PARK  
Source: PARD

# HOW WE GET THERE

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

Chapter 5 includes a description of the roles and responsibilities of the PARD divisions involved in the LRP, as well other city departments and partners. It also discusses several early action tools that have been developed to better understand current condition needs and priorities. Citywide strategies are applied to the combined park planning area level.

## IN THIS CHAPTER

### ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

- + PARD Implementation Structure
- + Contributions of PARD Partners

### PRIORITIZING INVESTMENT IN EXISTING PARKS

- + The Score Card Tool
- + The Action Priority Ranking System

### COMBINED PLANNING AREA RECOMMENDATIONS

- + Central
- + North
- + East
- + Southeast
- + Southwest
- + West

### IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

- + Funding Options
- + How we will Measure & Track Progress



# ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

## PARD IMPLEMENTATION STRUCTURE

PARD as a whole takes responsibility for the implementation of the *Our Parks, Our Future* Long Range Plan, but pieces of it will be owned and advanced by different teams within the PARD organization and by our partners.

### PARK PLANNING

Individual park master plans are the primary vehicle to holistically improve existing parks in alignment with the citywide strategies and priority actions laid out in this plan. These individual Park Master Plans will also be led by the Park Planning Division in coordination with other PARD divisions and City of Austin departments. Park Master Plans can either be initiated to guide the development of an undeveloped plot of parkland,

or to guide reinvestment in an already-developed park. In either case the individual park master planning process are designed to bridge the gap between the citywide and combined planning area goals and the site-specific conditions and community context of each park.



It's My Park Day. Source: PARD

## PARKLAND ACQUISITION

A priority goal for the LRP is to increase the number of acres of parkland in Austin as the population grows. The plan sets a goal of 24 acres of parkland for every 1,000 residents. Parkland acquisition is one of the primary tools in which PARD can ensure equitable access to the benefits of parks and protect and enhance the natural ecosystems that keep the City of Austin a safe, sustainable and beautiful place to live. This is especially important for current underserved areas, environmentally sensitive areas, and high-growth areas. The Park Planning Division is responsible for ensuring that parkland acquisition meets the goals laid out in this plan by identifying acquisition candidates, prioritizing their acquisition to achieve the maximum positive impact, and working with public and private partners to ensure the resources and relationships are in place to complete the acquisitions. The Parkland Acquisition Program utilizes the Long Range Plan to help guide and prioritize land for acquisition, including spatial analysis in GIS, demonstrated needs through community input, gap analysis for infill parks, natural resources including waterway buffers, demographic and growth trends, and recreation trends.



City of Austin tree cover and open space.  
Source: PARD

The site analysis for a particular property that could eventually be acquired for parkland includes the following factors:

- ➔ **Need:** there is a demonstrated need for a park in a particular area.
- ➔ **Suitability:** the land meets the criteria for the desired use.
- ➔ **Connectivity:** the land provides access to existing parks or continues a greenbelt or trail.
- ➔ **Proximity:** close to a school, neighborhood, water body or some other desired area.
- ➔ **Projected Growth:** a rapidly growing area necessitates advance acquisition in order to secure available land for parks and open space.
- ➔ **Unique Values:** an area has unique environmental, cultural, historic, geologic, scenic or other scarce or endangered resources.
- ➔ **Opportunity:** land is available for acquisition (note: as a policy, condemnation is not used).
- ➔ **Affordability:** land must be within the range of the appraised market value.
- ➔ **Funding:** adequate funding must be available for the acquisition.
- ➔ **Partnership:** a leveraged opportunity with parkland dedication, donation, or another governmental agency.

## PARK DEVELOPMENT

Following the acquisition of land, identification of rehabilitation need, or completion of an individual park master plan, the Park Development Division is responsible for the build-out of park facilities and amenities like trails, plazas, buildings, and wayfinding signage. The Park Development Division also is responsible for more basic site preparation like re-grading and drainage infrastructure.

The PARD Park Development Process is standardized into phases of development that follow after acquisition of land – the initial “limited use” period and then three progressive levels of development, each enhancing the park further. The park improvements and amenities which describe levels I, II, and III serve as targets for typical development, but are not guaranteed items in each park. The timing, techniques and procedures for accomplishing each level may vary significantly in response to funding availability, constituent preferences and natural characteristics of the parkland.



### Undeveloped / Limited Use

When parkland is newly acquired, it is considered “undeveloped” – as soon as possible after acquisition, PARD creates cleared trails and allows for minimal access prior to pursuing Level I Development.



### Level I Development

Level I development marks the beginning of the Park Development Process by providing basic recreational opportunities and easy access for the public. The first step is the design process. For all park development projects, basic socio-economic data on likely users and data on the natural features of the park are analyzed to provide a basis for initial design work. A series of conceptual development plans are prepared for review by those who will build, maintain and use the park. The design review process, including meetings with staff, neighborhood representatives and other interested users, is intended to identify design problems and solutions prior to construction. Ultimately, a conceptual plan is refined to a master plan to guide development through Level III Development.

Typically, Level I development in neighborhood and district parks provides traditional recreational opportunities as possible for the available funds. Open playfields, signage, picnicking, trails and support facilities such as trash receptacles and drinking fountains are typically included. If funds allow, recreational items responsive to specific groups, such as a children’s playscape or community picnic shelter, may also be constructed.

In metropolitan parks and greenbelts, Level I development emphasizes construction of basic infrastructure such as parking lot or trails. Instead of active recreational facilities, Level I development in a metropolitan park provides access to the natural resources found on the site.





## **Level II Development**

Level II development provides many of the remaining facilities typical of the park type. Upon completion of Level II development, a park is not yet finished, but has a wide variety of recreational opportunities typical of its park type. For neighborhood parks, Level II may mean the inclusion of a playground, open playfields with goals, basketball and tennis courts, designated trails, landscaping or irrigation. Level II development in district parks usually results in construction of a swimming pool, recreation center or both.

In metropolitan parks, Level II may include the addition of large playscapes, miles of trails with interpretive signage, restrooms and major recreation facilities such as a sports complexes or a swimming pools. Since items in a metropolitan park are generally more expensive than facilities found in other park types, several funding cycles may be needed to complete its Level II development. Level II development in greenways and special parks varies considerably, but generally accommodates increased visitation through additional infrastructure or expansion of a main facility.



## **Level III Development**

For Level III development, final improvements are made to complete the park's full potential. Typical improvements might include special landscaping, recreation facilities for special interest groups or formalization of informally designated use areas. Level III development is usually initiated when existing park facilities are well-used and their infrastructure is still sound. Many parks found in the older part of central Austin have reached the Level III stage, where a full range of recreational facilities exist.



## **Rehabilitation**

Rehabilitation is required when a park, facilities or infrastructure are falling into disrepair due to age or heavy use, or when the park no longer responds to target user groups or new standards. Rehabilitation may be for a specific facility within a park, may include a general face-lift to the park showing signs of heavy wear and tear, or may require complete redevelopment in order to respond to changing user needs. Whatever the extent of wear/damage, the rehabilitation project will cycle back through the Park Development Process.

## OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE

Recommendations under Citywide Strategy E (Optimize & Improve Efficiency of Operations) will be implemented by the Operations and Maintenance Division, which is organized into Facilities and Parks & Grounds sub-divisions. Together these two sub-divisions are responsible for the O&M needs of all parkland. These O&M needs are handled at the district level and in some cases at the individual facility level for large-scale and heavy-use facilities like Zilker Park. Additionally, specialized O&M teams exist for mowing, graffiti, playgrounds, horticulture, trails, plumbing, turf, athletics fields, and courts.

In addition to the Operations and Maintenance Division, there are also four independent specialized divisions for cemeteries, aquatics, golf services, and special events that are part of PARD's overall administration rather than nested within the Operations and Maintenance Division because their O&M needs are different enough from the general parkland maintenance needs.

The Asset Management Division will also play a role in supporting Citywide Strategy E through its information technology, geospatial, business process, and engineering capacity.

Across all subdivisions responsible for operations and maintenance, PARD strives to meet the following park maintenance guidelines:



### **Service Level I: State-of-the-art-maintenance**

Applied to a high-quality diverse landscape, this is associated with high-traffic urban areas, such as public squares, malls, government grounds, colleges, or university campuses.



### **Service Level II: High-level maintenance**

This is associated with well-developed public areas, malls, government grounds, or college/university campuses. Recommended level for most organizations.



### **Service Level III: Moderate-level maintenance**

This is associated with locations that have moderate to low levels of development or visitation, or with operations that, because of budget restrictions, cannot afford a higher level of maintenance.



### **Service Level IV: Moderately low-level maintenance**

This is associated with locations affected by budget restrictions that cannot afford a high level of maintenance.



### **Service Level V: Minimum-level maintenance**

This is associated with locations that have severe budget restrictions.



### **Service Level VI: Natural area that is not developed**

## PROGRAM DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

Program design and development will be implemented by a collection of sub-divisions, each of which is responsible for a specific type of programming:

### Museums and Cultural Programs Sub-Division

- + Arts Centers
- + Cultural Centers
- + Museums

### Community Recreation Sub-Division

- + Community Programs / Recreation Centers
- + Senior Programs / Services

### Centralized Programs Sub-Division

- + Out of School Programs
- + Athletics

### Nature Based Programs Sub-Division

- + Park Rangers
- + Forestry
- + Gardens and Preserves
- + Nature Centers

## COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT

Community outreach and engagement will continue to be an important part of plan implementation both in terms of the continued planning of individual parks and programs, and also in terms of promoting the use of those parks and programs (existing and new). The Communications and Engagement subdivision will be the lead entity ensuring that the planning processes and promotion of parks and programs is reaching a wider audience and providing valuable information and input opportunities.

The Communications and Engagement subdivision will also specifically be responsible for the implementation of community outreach and engagement recommendations nested under Citywide Strategies B and D.

The Asset Management Division will also play a role in supporting Citywide Strategies B and D through its information technology, geospatial, business process, and engineering capacity. Additional staffing and funding for the Communication and Engagement Division is recommended in the plan strategies.



Playing soccer  
Source: PARD



# CONTRIBUTIONS OF PARD PARTNERS

Partnerships are a vital part of the work that PARD does on a day-to-day basis and over the long-term implementation of the plan. Park partnerships occur at different scales and may focus on a specific initiative or citywide priority – or may be geographically focused on a park or neighborhood. Many organizations and partners are actively engaged in park-related improvements that touch on the LRP priorities and PARD’s mission. Ongoing park partnerships and their priorities include:

## AUSTIN PARKS FOUNDATION

EST. 1992, CITYWIDE

**MISSION:** *to partner with our community to enhance people’s lives by making our public parks, trails and green spaces better through volunteerism, innovative programming, advocacy and financial support.*

### CURRENT KEY PLANS & INITIATIVES

- + Colony Park: In partnership with the City of Austin, with support from St David’s Foundation, development of 93 acre site which will include multi-use trails, children’s play environment, two sports fields, a pavilion, benches. Will also include a fitness plaza supported by Dell Match Play.
- + Pan Am Park: In partnership with the City of Austin and with support from the ACL Music Festival, this project is a complete playground rehabilitation, including ADA improvements and connectivity to the adjacent school and recreation center at Pan American Neighborhood Park.
- + Eastlink: In partnership with the City of Austin and the Mueller Foundation, this multi-use community trail will link Bartholomew Park to Lady Bird Lake, and connect residents to community assets in a safer more accessible way.
- + Ongoing Programs: ACL Music Festival Grants Program, It’s My Park Day, Design Services, Adopt-A-Park Program, Little Hummingbird Society, Movies in the Park.

### PRIORITIES & GOALS FOR THE NEXT 10 YEARS

- + Execute programs and projects in alignment with APF’s mission that develop, maintain and preserve all our parks; build community engagement; support active, healthy communities, and clearly meet needs in underserved communities.
- + Influence the long-term sustainability of parks, trails and green spaces by increasing awareness and understanding among local decision makers of the importance of providing appropriate funding, legislation and resources.
- + Assure diversified funding streams to further expand APF’s contribution to Austin’s parks, trails and green spaces.



**AUSTIN  
PARKS  
FOUNDATION**



Dove Springs Playscape  
Source: APF



Downtown Austin Open Space  
Source: DAA

**MISSION:** *to create, preserve, and enhance the value and vitality of downtown Austin.*

## CURRENT KEY PLANS & INITIATIVES

- + Republic Square: Through a unique public-private non-profit partnership, the Downtown Austin Alliance, Austin Parks Foundation, and PARD partnered to renovate the historic square and elevate its status once again as an important gathering place in the heart of downtown Austin. The Downtown Alliance through the Downtown Parks LLC is responsible for operations and maintenance for the square, along with community programming, managing the café building and operator, event booking and logistical support.
- + Interpretive Planning & Implementation: Documenting and telling the diverse stories of the people and places who shaped important downtown civic spaces, offering an important historical perspective. This has resulted in interpretive signage, events and programs, walking tours, and guidance on how to integrate history into future initiatives downtown.
- + Historic Squares: Advancing current plans for renovation and preservation of Brush and Wooldridge Squares, including advancement of Brush Square Master Plan and continued support for security at Brush Square.

## PRIORITIES & GOALS FOR THE NEXT 10 YEARS

- + Advancing the Downtown Vision. The community-based Downtown Vision, completed in 2018, outlines a number of goals that help to advance the vision's priority for creating Welcoming Places. These goals range from creating and activating new parks and plazas to fully connecting to and leveraging the downtown waterfront.
- + Completing and promoting the Urban Greenbelt. The Urban Greenbelt is a 5-mile network of parks, places and experience that encircle downtown. It is currently being created by a number of public and private partners.
- + Republic Square is first and foremost a neighborhood park with a design intended to support and encourage regular, daily use of the park. Our long term goals are to continue to provide a safe, comfortable green-space that is inclusive and welcoming to a diverse group of users ranging including families, transit users, seniors, neighbors and downtown visitors to name a few. Curate programming that is multicultural, collaborative, interactive and accessible -- positioning the park as a neighborhood, civic space in a network of downtown public spaces.

# STRONGER AUSTIN

EST. 2017, SERVING AUSTIN'S UNDERSERVED  
NEIGHBORHOODS



**MISSION :** *Stronger Austin believes that every neighborhood in Austin should have easy access to health and wellness programs. Stronger Austin is a joint initiative of PARD and the Austin Public Health Department that provides free exercise classes, after school programs, and nutrition education right in the heart of the Austin communities we serve.*

## CURRENT KEY PLANS & INITIATIVES

- + Free exercise classes, nutrition access, healthcare services and after school programming.

## PRIORITIES & GOALS FOR THE NEXT 10 YEARS

- + Solidify Stronger Austin's four pillar model with a cohesive participant tracking plan.  
The four pillars are:
  - Expanded Out-Of-School Time
  - Fitness in the Park & Group Fitness Classes
  - Nutrition/Cooking Education Classes
  - Activity Groups
- + Increase diversity in class offerings.
- + Grow programming such that it aligns with the community's needs and the plans from the City of Austin.



Stronger Austin Group Fitness  
Source: Stronger Austin





# GO AUSTIN / VAMOS AUSTIN (GAVA)

EST. 2018, SERVING THOSE WHO LIVE, WORK, OR WORSHIP IN DOVE SPRINGS (78744), SOUTH AUSTIN (78745), AND NORTH-CENTRAL AUSTIN (ST. JOHNS AND THE RUNDBERG AREA)

**MISSION :** *GAVA organizes and mobilizes community power to reduce barriers to health while increasing institutional capacity to respond to the people most impacted by historic inequities.*

## CURRENT KEY PLANS & INITIATIVES

- + Increasing access to improved nutrition and physical activity opportunities by organizing to improve the built environment and creating partnerships that provide healthy programming and activities.
- + Building community power for health through organizing and leadership development.
- + Foster community permanency via anti-displacement efforts.

## PRIORITIES & GOALS FOR THE NEXT 10 YEARS

- + Cultivate a strong network of community leaders and partnered organizations that support health equity.
- + Continue to improve access to green spaces, active living and opportunities for improved health in our neighborhoods of focus, while also mitigating the effects of displacement so that people are able to achieve the long-term health outcomes that we know GAVA's wins can create if people can stay in place.

Priorities include:

- + Ensure equitable spending on parks, public works, transit and other infrastructure in the built environment. e.g. ensuring that all parks have adequate lighting, walking/running areas, drinking water access and restrooms (even if portable) before funds are all divided equally.
- + Ensure access to culturally inclusive, geographically accessible and economically affordable physical activity and sports programming for families in our neighborhoods of focus.
- + Ensure processes for participatory budgeting, development and community planning that center those most directly impacted by health disparities.
- + Increase the demand for and use of healthy programming, assets and facilities.
- + Preserve affordable housing and influencing the equitable creation of new housing and community assets.
- + Create and maintain equitable research and evaluation mechanisms for population health efforts that center the people being studied and allow them to set the indicators and metrics, own their own data, and be able to participate in using the information to make change.

# THE TRAIL FOUNDATION

EST. 2003, FOCUSED ON THE BUTLER HIKE-AND-BIKE TRAIL, SURROUNDING PARKLAND AND LADY BIRD LAKE



**MISSION:** *to protect, enhance, and connect the Butler Hike-and-Bike Trail at Lady Bird Lake for the benefit of all. The Butler Trail is the 10-mile lush, urban path in the heart of Austin that gets more than 2.6 million visits every year. Since it was founded in 2003, The Trail Foundation has achieved restoration and beautification projects to the trail's infrastructure and environment, while honoring the original vision of the Trail's founders and ensuring its vibrancy for generations to come.*

## CURRENT KEY PLANS & INITIATIVES

- + Ecological Restoration
- + 15 Projects for the 15th Anniversary
- + Exploring the possibility of establishing an agreement that would transition the responsibilities of operations and maintenance of the Butler Trail, and surrounding parkland, from the Parks & Recreation Department to The Trail Foundation.

## PRIORITIES & GOALS FOR THE NEXT 10 YEARS

*Recently, The Trail Foundation established criteria by which its projects are selected. These criteria centered around two focus areas: 1) Community need and benefit, and 2) TTF's capacity and ability to complete the projects. With these criteria in mind, TTF selected 15 charter projects in honor of its 15th anniversary and created the Corgan Canopy Fund dedicated to financing the initial phases of each future project. Slated for completion over the next five years, the 15 projects range from new trailheads and bathrooms to new water access points and playgrounds. Nine projects are on the east side of the Trail, four on the west, and two along the entirety of the Trail.*



The Butler Trail  
Source: The Trail Foundation



# PEASE PARK CONSERVANCY

EST. 2008, FOCUSED ON PEASE PARK, FROM 15TH STREET TO 31ST STREET.

**MISSION:** *to celebrate the diverse ecology and history that make Austin's first public park valuable and unique. The Conservancy works to restore, enhance and maintain this 84-acre public green space for the sustainable use and enjoyment of all.*

## PRIORITIES & GOALS FOR THE NEXT 10 YEARS

In partnership with PARD, the Conservancy will evaluate potential future phases for implementation of the Pease Park Master Plan approved by the Austin City Council in 2014.

## CURRENT KEY PLANS & INITIATIVES

- + Kingsbury Commons Project: In partnership with PARD, the Conservancy is embarking on an exciting new project to revitalize the southernmost tip of Pease Park, known as Kingsbury Commons. As the recreational heart and cultural soul of Pease Park, Kingsbury Commons serves as the welcoming front door to the park and consequently, has been prioritized as the first major project implemented from the Pease Park Master Plan. The Project Team has designed a world class park experience with features that include the adaptive repurposing of the Tudor Cottage as a community gathering space with new terraced seating, a unique nature play area, state-of-the-art water play feature, an innovative treescape, safe and inviting park gateways, a spring-fed water feature, improved basketball court and baseball field, a new volunteer plaza and storage building, multigenerational workout equipment, enhanced restrooms, new bocce court and numerous new native plantings.
- + Land Stewardship/Operating & Maintenance Agreement: The Conservancy is embarking on a process with PARD to develop a land stewardship and O&M agreement with the City of Austin for the area included in the Kingsbury Commons Project. The goal is to create a public/private partnership that will serve as a model for conservancies across the city and across the country to help ensure that urban green spaces will be restored, enhanced and maintained for the sustainable use and enjoyment of all.



Rendering of Kingsbury Commons Project  
Source: Pease Park Foundation



# BARTON SPRINGS CONSERVANCY

EST. 2014



BARTON SPRINGS CONSERVANCY

**MISSION:** *to honor, preserve, and enhance the experience of Barton Springs through education and facility improvements.*

## CURRENT KEY PLANS & INITIATIVES

Completion of Barton Springs Bathhouse rehabilitation project (design and construction).

## PRIORITIES & GOALS FOR THE NEXT 10 YEARS

Future facility and education improvement projects include:

- + Expanded education and outreach programming to increase access, including 2019 “Family Days at the Springs” for Housing Authority for the City of Austin (HACA) families
- + Construction of Zilker Park Visitor Welcome/Education Center
- + Zilker Park Master Plan
- + Continuing outreach efforts, including the Huston-Tillotson University student orientation events, Deep Dives lecture series, and the social history of Barton Springs
- + Selected projects from 2008 Barton Springs Pool Master Plan (e.g., visitor center, south side restroom, parking lot improvements, retention ponds, etc).



Barton Springs  
Source: Barton Springs Conservancy

# WALLER CREEK CONSERVANCY

EST. 2011



**MISSION:** *to create and maintain a chain of extraordinary urban parks around a restored Waller Creek, in partnership with the City of Austin, for the benefit of all. The Conservancy renews the natural environment, promotes play, health and wellness, economic vitality, and mobility, and engages the community through outreach, education, cultural events, and the arts.*



Waterloo Park  
Source: Waller Creek Conservancy

# SHOAL CREEK CONSERVANCY

EST. 2013, FOCUSED ON SHOAL CREEK WATERSHED

**MISSION:** *to champion the Shoal Creek watershed in order to create a healthy and vibrant community.*

## CURRENT KEY PLANS & INITIATIVES

- + Create a Shoal Creek Watershed Action Plan to act as a guiding document to restore and protect the creek's water quality and address erosion, habitat and spring flow challenges.
- + Implement projects outlined in the Shoal Creek Trail Vision to Action Plan to improve and expand the Shoal Creek Trail.
- + Create a public plaza with improved bike and pedestrian pathway at Cypress & Shoal Creek/rail trestle site.

## PRIORITIES & GOALS FOR THE NEXT 10 YEARS

- + Create a seamless network of wayfinding signage, so users can easily navigate the Shoal Creek Trail from street intersections, Lady Bird Lake trail and the Northern Walnut Creek trail intersection
- + Significantly increase the number of trail users and event attendees, expand park user base to more residents from other parts of the city
- + Explore possibility of having concessionaires along the trail
- + Add safety features to protect pedestrian and on-road cyclists along the Shoal Creek Trail's on-street sections
- + Create a sustainable framework for maintenance of the creek, trail and trail amenities.



**SHOAL  
CREEK**  
CONSERVANCY



Shoal Creek Trail  
Source: Shoal Creek Conservancy



# ZILKER BOTANICAL GARDEN CONSERVANCY

EST. 2015, FOCUSED ON ZILKER BOTANICAL GARDEN



**MISSION:** *to inspire people of all ages to treasure, promote, and protect the botanical wonders of our world.*

## CURRENT KEY PLANS & INITIATIVES

- + Transition management/staffing at the Garden from the City of Austin to the Conservancy and expand staff to meet needs.
- + Complete a site/master plan for the Garden and raise funds through a capital campaign to begin plan implementation.
- + Expand events and educational programming offered at the Garden.

## PRIORITIES & GOALS FOR THE NEXT 10 YEARS

- + Transition operation of the gate from the CoA to the Conservancy.
- + Increase attendance at the Garden and grow membership program.
- + Expand events and educational programming offered at the Garden.
- + Fund and complete a site/master plan for the Garden.
- + Manage a capital campaign to fund site/master plan.
- + Begin implementation of the site/master plan.
- + Transition rentals from the CoA to the Conservancy.
- + Transition grounds staff from the CoA to the Conservancy.



Zilker Botanical Garden  
Source: PARD





# UMLAUF SCULPTURE GARDEN & MUSEUM

EST. 1991

**MISSION:** *to exhibit the work of Charles Umlauf, his influences, and other contemporary sculptors in a natural setting, and provide educational experiences that encourage the understanding and appreciation of sculpture.*

## CURRENT KEY PLANS & INITIATIVES

- + Be a Museum for the city of Austin that is accessible and affordable.
- + Contribute to Austin's reputation and identity as a cultural arts destination by welcoming guests from around the world to our Museum in the heart of the city.
- + Provide educational opportunities and experiences for people of all ages to learn more about sculpture, art in nature, and the life and work of Charles Umlauf.

## PRIORITIES & GOALS FOR THE NEXT 10 YEARS

The UMLAUF would like to make inroads on opening the home and studio of Charles Umlauf to the public as well as continuing to grow and gain a reputation as a premiere arts destination in Austin. The UMLAUF is also looking to address some of the challenges that will come with growth, especially in nearby parts of the city (e.g. parking and accessibility).



Umlauf Sculpture Garden  
Source: Umlauf Sculpture Garden & Museum

# NORWOOD PARK FOUNDATION

EST. 2012

**MISSION :** *to restore Austin's iconic Arts & Crafts Norwood House to its historic 1922 exterior appearance, and repurpose the home and surrounding estate grounds to serve the people as a premier, nonprofit and self-sustaining rental venue and community meeting space.*

## CURRENT KEY PLANS & INITIATIVES

The Norwood project is currently in site development permitting, with a goal to break ground by the end of 2019 and be open to the public by 2022, the 100-year anniversary of the Norwood House.

## PRIORITIES & GOALS FOR THE NEXT 10 YEARS

The initial priority will be to successfully launch operation of the Norwood House both as a public asset with open hours and as a premier event venue available for private rental. The goal will be to balance these uses to achieve 100% sustainable self-sufficiency while making the historic bungalow and grounds available as much as possible to park visitors and as an affordable community meeting space.



Artist rendering of the Norwood House  
Source: Norwood House Foundation



# RED LINE PARKWAY INITIATIVE

EST. 2017, FOCUSED ON THE 32-MILE RED LINE  
CORRIDOR AND ITS ENVIRONS

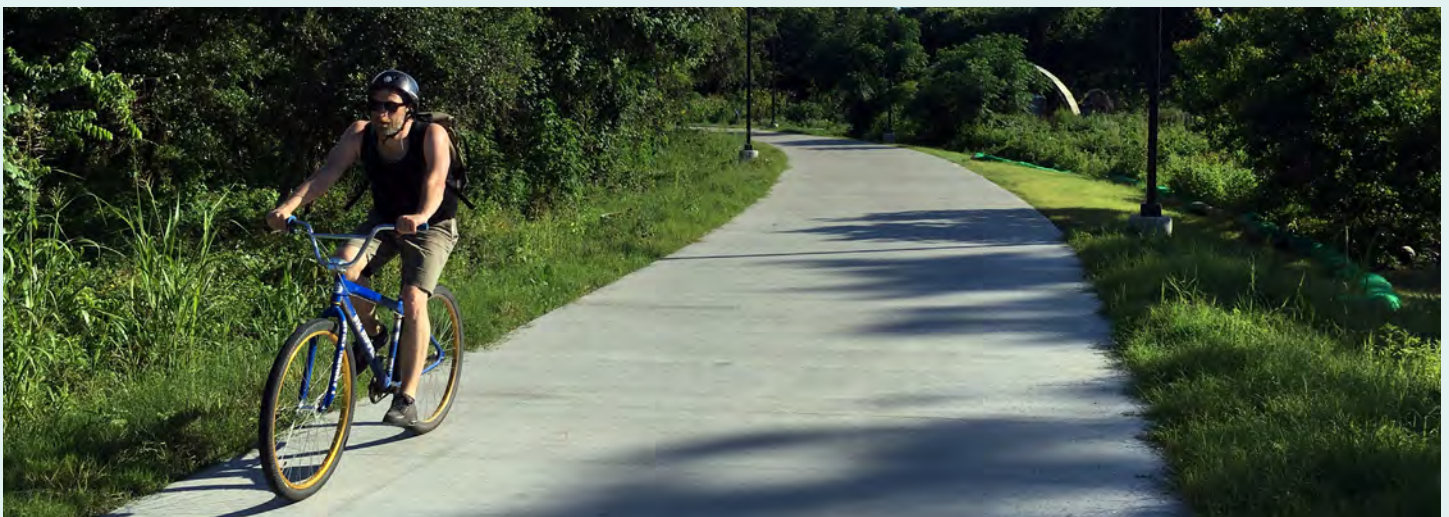
**MISSION:** *to empower diverse communities to enjoy, develop, and enhance the Red Line Trail and Parkway corridor to serve Central Texas mobility, recreation, parks, arts, affordability, social equity, physical & mental health, public space, and economic needs.*

## CURRENT KEY PLANS & INITIATIVES

- + Develop parkway plan, including trail, parks, and public spaces, in coordination with stakeholders.
- + Raise funding for building the parkway.
- + Activate the parkway via events and wayfinding along existing routes.

## PRIORITIES & GOALS FOR THE NEXT 10 YEARS

- + Complete construction of the 32-mile Red Line Trail.
- + Build stronger walking, bicycling, and trail connections to the parkway.
- + Develop partnerships and supporters among trail users all along the corridor.
- + Create new parks and water features along the corridor.
- + Develop public art and curated landscapes along the corridor.
- + Ensure development of affordable housing along the corridor.
- + Guide development to face and serve the parkway.
- + Provide programming for and promote the parkway.
- + Ensure ongoing maintenance and enhancement of the parkway, including wayfinding.



Red Line Trail  
Source: Red Line Parkway Initiative



# PRIORITIZING INVESTMENT IN EXISTING PARKS

## THE SCORE CARD TOOL

### What are the park Score cards?

As part of our efforts to better monitor and track park condition information and to communicate needs with the community and partners, PARD is piloting a park score card tool that provides a snapshot of a park's needs and determine areas where parks are performing well and areas where we need improvement. Criteria for the score cards include topics of park access, key features, supportive facilities, safety & maintenance concerns, aesthetics, and health. This tool is being piloted for neighborhood and pocket parks and is tied to a similar survey tool through the Park Partnership Program. The score card will evolve over time and can be updated as additional park assessments are completed.



FIGURE 21. SAMPLE PARK SCORE CARD  
 Source: WRT

# THE ACTION PRIORITY RANKING SYSTEM

## How were current park conditions evaluated?

PARD staff and Studio Balcones, a local Austin Landscape Architecture firm, visited every PARD park to complete detailed park condition assessments based on pre-determined common criteria. This field evaluation occurred from November of 2018 through April of 2019 followed by two months of review and cross-checking to ensure consistency and accuracy, concluding in June of 2019. The individual assessments were then compiled and given weighted ranking of their relative performance, which resulted in an overall score at the individual park and park planning area level.

## How will they be used?

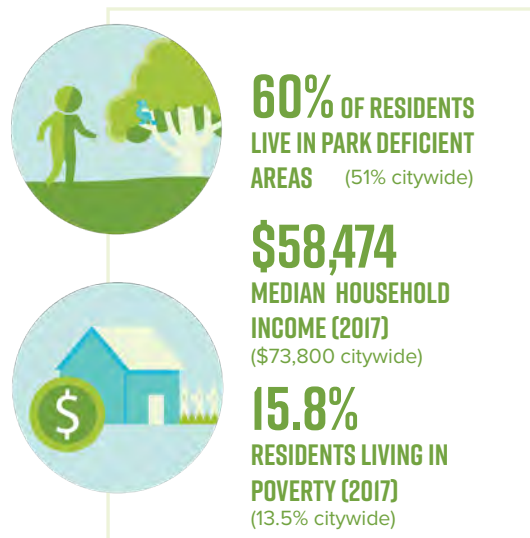
These score cards will be both a snapshot and a living database PARD can utilize to make data-driven, priority-based decisions for investment. The assessments will be employed to increase accountability, transparency, and equity in park level of service across the city.

The LRP includes both city-wide and park planning area strategies and actions. In order to develop specific recommendations by park planning area, PARD staff reviewed 1) all previous LRP recommendations and priorities from neighborhood plans, as well as recent citywide plans with a focus on the City of Austin *Strategic Direction 2033*; 2) current status of plans and park development and identified needs within each planning area; 3) demographic conditions and trends to determine areas where needs may exist and opportunities to improve equity; and 4) LRP survey results and community feedback. Staff developed a ranking system to review each potential LRP action, which is described in more detail in Section 5.4. This tool will be used to track progress over time and to select priorities for future funding.

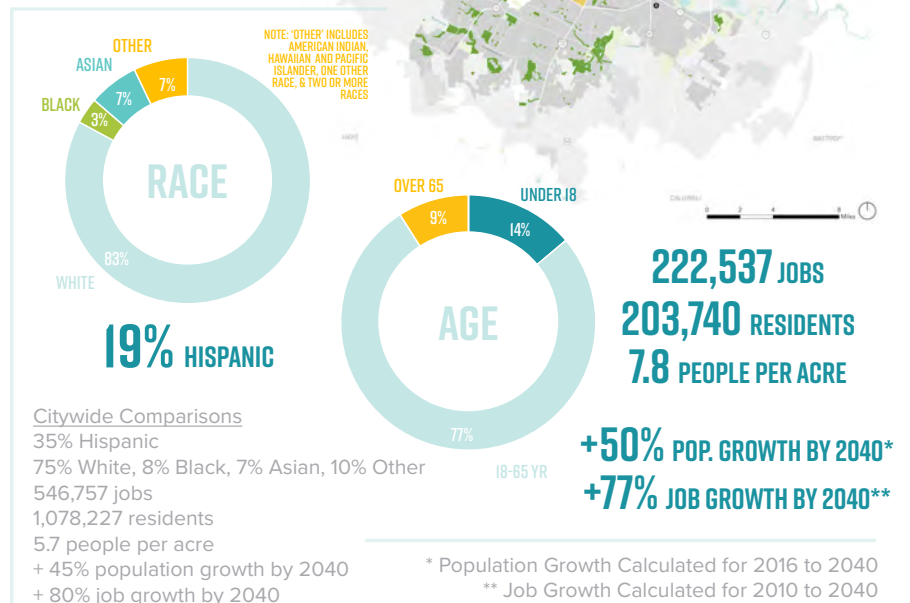
# COMBINED PLANNING AREA RECOMMENDATIONS

## CENTRAL

### CENTRAL, AT A GLANCE



All “At A Glance” statistics are calculated using the 5 mile ETJ boundary NOT the City of Austin boundary.



## TOP ISSUES

- + **Expanding park access when land is costly.** Existing parks in central are rich in amenities, but access to those facilities is low with only 40% living within walking distance to a park. Given the dense development pattern in central Austin, location, and high land costs, potential new parkland may be difficult and expensive to acquire.
- + **Integrating parks into new development.** As development continues and the population continues to grow, expanding convenient and safe access to parks to keep up growing demand.
- + **Cultivating active urban park spaces.** Some of the city’s smaller centrally-located urban parks are underperforming. Public-private partnerships may be an important tool to revitalize urban parks and ensure they are diverse, engaging, and welcoming to all residents with more frequent and active programming.
- + **Parks in non-residential areas.** Many parts of the central area are dominated by non-residential office, institutional, and commercial uses that have unique park needs, including a surge in the daytime population.

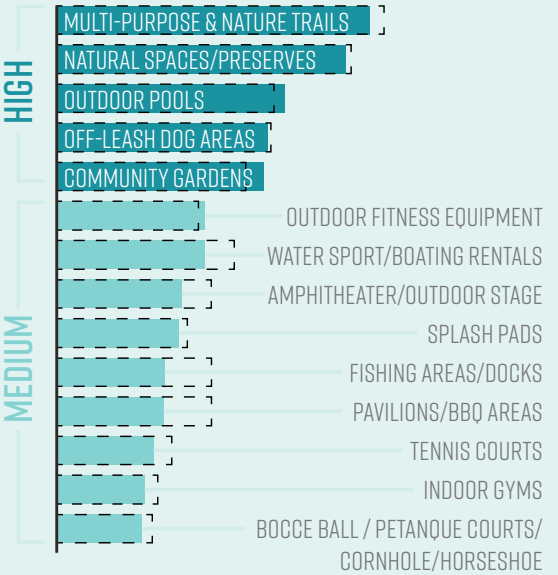


# CURRENT & FUTURE NEEDS

## What We Heard

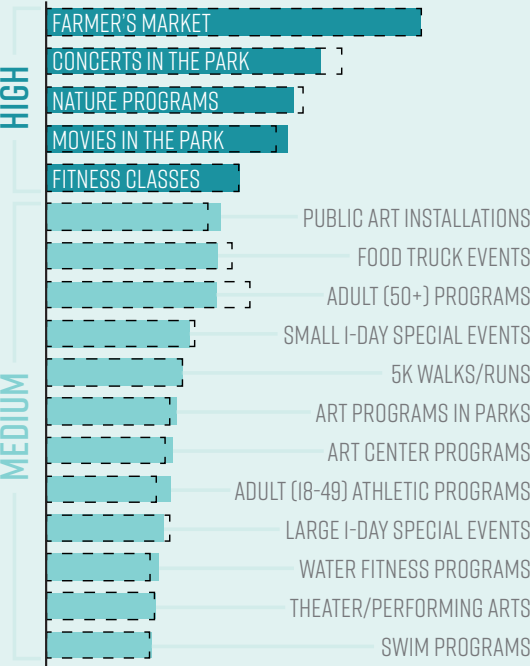
Feedback from surveys of central area residents closely match feedback from Austin residents as whole. Residents would like to see more trails, natural areas, outdoor pools, as well as farmers markets, events (concerts, nature programs, movies in the park) and exercise programs in parks.

### Facility & Amenity Priorities



**PRIORITIZATION PROCESS**  
Based on the statistically valid survey of residents of this Combined Planning Area, the priorities above have emerged in this ranked order (compared against the citywide prioritization of the same elements, depicted in the black dashed outline).

### Program Priorities



## Areas for Investment

Based on initial Level of Service guidelines, the following current and projected needs are expected up to 2034.

### Parkland & Indoor Facilities

✓	GREENBELTS
✓	NATURE PRESERVES
✓	TRAILS
✓	POCKET PARKS
✓	NEIGHBORHOOD / SCHOOL PARKS
✓	RECREATION / COMMUNITY CENTER

### Outdoor Amenities

+	Baseball Diamond (Teen/Adult)
+	Softball Diamond (Youth/Adult)
+	Disc Golf Course (9 hole)
+	Playground
+	Dog Park
+	Tennis Court (Publically Accessible)
+	Pickleball Court (Publically Accessible)
+	Outdoor Basketball Court
+	Reservable Picnic Shelters
+	Skate Park / BMX Bike
+	Rectangle Fields (Mixed-use, including soccer)

## SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

PARK DEVELOPMENT & IMPLEMENTATION				
Adams-Hemphill Neighborhood Park	develop and implement vision plan, improve accessibility and key amenities			
Barton Creek Greenbelt	improve access points, signage and wayfinding			
Blunn Creek Preserves	improve access, trailhead, and nature play			
Brush Square	master plan implementation			
Covert Park at Mt. Bonnell	design and construction			
Dougherty Art Center at Butler Shores	complete design and implementation			
Elisabet Ney Museum	development of visitors center on north side of Waller Creek			
Grove at Shoal Creek	park system master plan implementation, includes dog park			
Lamar Beach	master plan implementation			
Mayfield Park	rehabilitate buildings, grounds, and ponds			
Old Bakery Emporium & Visitors Center	rehab and plaza renovation			
Perry Neighborhood Park	work with AISD to improve neighborhood access			
Seaholm Waterfront	master plan implementation			
South Austin Neighborhood Park	master plan implementation, includes trail & multiuse field improvements			
Steck Valley Greenbelt	improvements and pocket park development			
Reed Neighborhood Park	continue renovations			
Walsh Boat Landing	implement improvements			
West Austin Neighborhood Park	master plan implementation, includes addressing failing retaining walls			
Waller Creek	continue to collaborate with Waller Creek Conservancy improvements			
Wooldridge Square	master plan implementation			
Zilker Metropolitan Park	construct loop trail extension and bridge; master plan implementation including: Eliza Springs Historic Amphitheater Rehab, Sunken Gardens Rehab, Zilker Gardens Rehab, Zilker Clubhouse Rehab			
Work with AISD to implement parks at:	Pre-K Schools: <i>Uphaus Early Childhood Center, Read Pre-K Demonstration</i>	Elementary Schools: <i>Webb Primary, Gullet, Reilly, Wooten, Pillow, Brentwood, Brown, Lee, Pease, Ridgetop, Dawson, Travis Heights, Zilker, Galindo, Barton Hills, Becker, Doss, Hill, Bryker Woods, Casis, Mathews, Highland Park, Austin St Hospital</i>	Middle Schools: <i>Lamar, Burnet, Webb, Murchinson, O. Henry</i>  Middle & High Schools: <i>Richards School For Young Women Leaders</i>	High Schools: <i>Mccallum, Travis, Premier at Travis, Anderson, Austin, Travis County Juvenile Detention Center, Phoenix Academy, Leadership Academy</i>  Special Needs: <i>Rosedale</i>
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS				
Shoal Creek	reestablish the trail connection in landslide area			
PARTNERSHIPS				
Brackenridge Tract	work with UT to retain golf and/or recreational opportunities			
Norwood House	continue to collaborate with the Norwood Foundation to rehab the house and implement the master plan			
Pease District Park	continue to collaborate with Pease Park Conservancy on improvements			
Shoal Creek Corridor	continue to collaborate with Shoal Creek Conservancy on improvements			
Town Lake Hike and Bike Trail	work with UT to promote park trail connectivity to Red Bud Isle			
ACQUISITIONS				
Blunn Creek Trail	extension to Lady Bird Lake Boardwalk Trail			
West and East Bouldin Creek Greenbelt	acquisition and trail development			
New parkland within park deficient areas				
MASTER PLANNING				
Beverly S Sheffield Northwest District Park	including Level 2-3 development			
Butler Shores	master plan			
Gillis Neighborhood Park	including reinvestment in key amenities			
Zilker Metropolitan Park	including Umlauf, Zilker Botanical Garden, and Austin Nature & Science Center			
FEASIBILITY STUDIES				
Hancock Golf Course	study feasibility of golf and other recreational opportunities that can enhance sustainability of course			

The **CENTRAL** combined planning area captures the majority of Austin's Urban Core. Dominated by residents aged 18-65 with small household sizes, it has the highest population & employment densities with healthy growth expected in both.

Individual Park Planning Areas

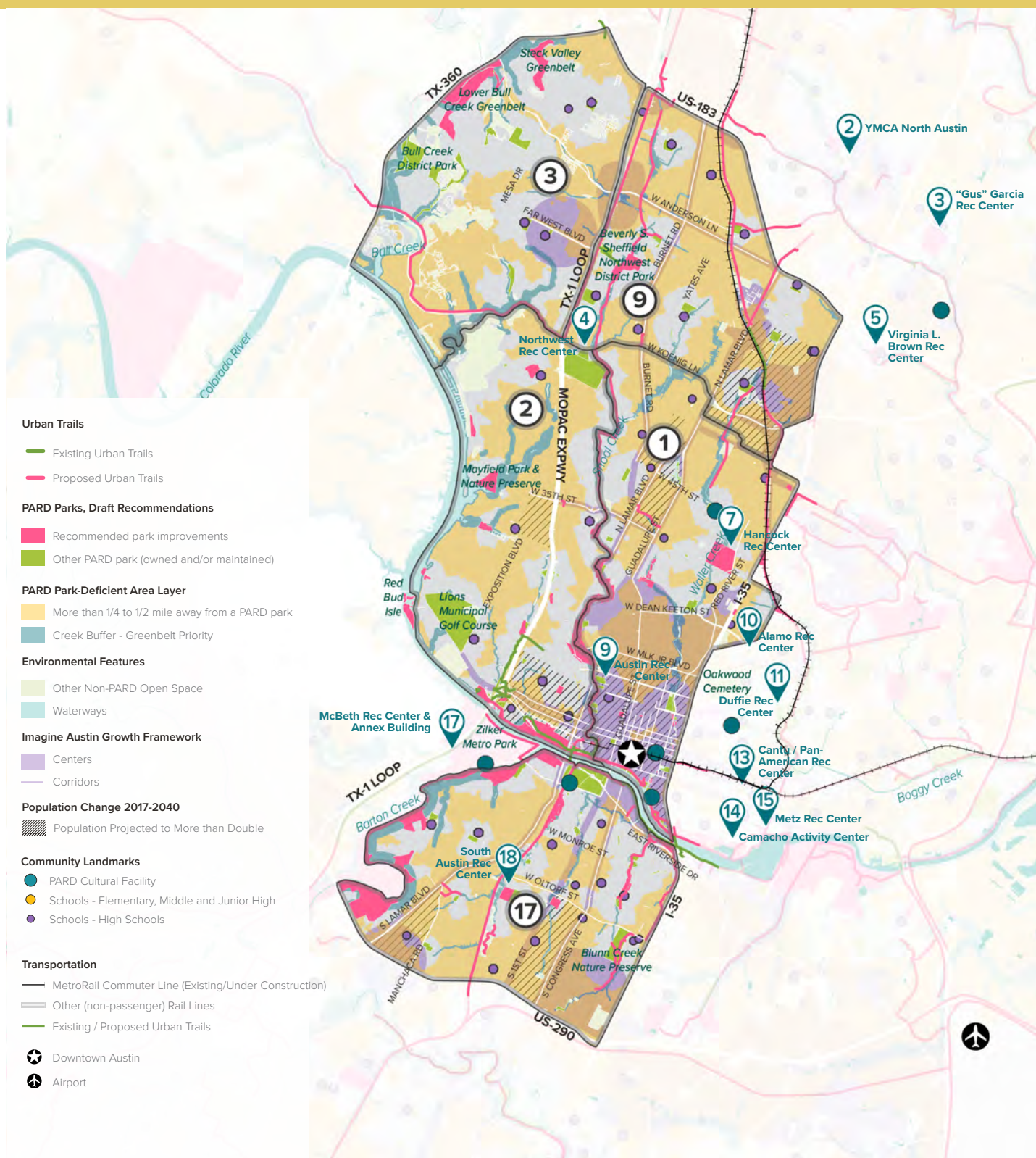
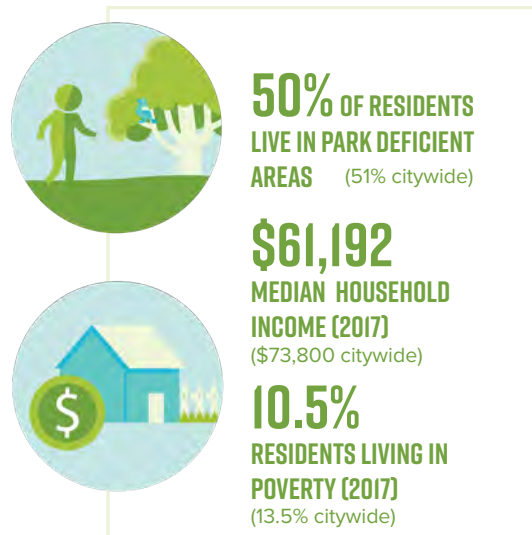


FIGURE 22. CENTRAL COMBINED PLANNING AREA MAP  
Source: WRT.

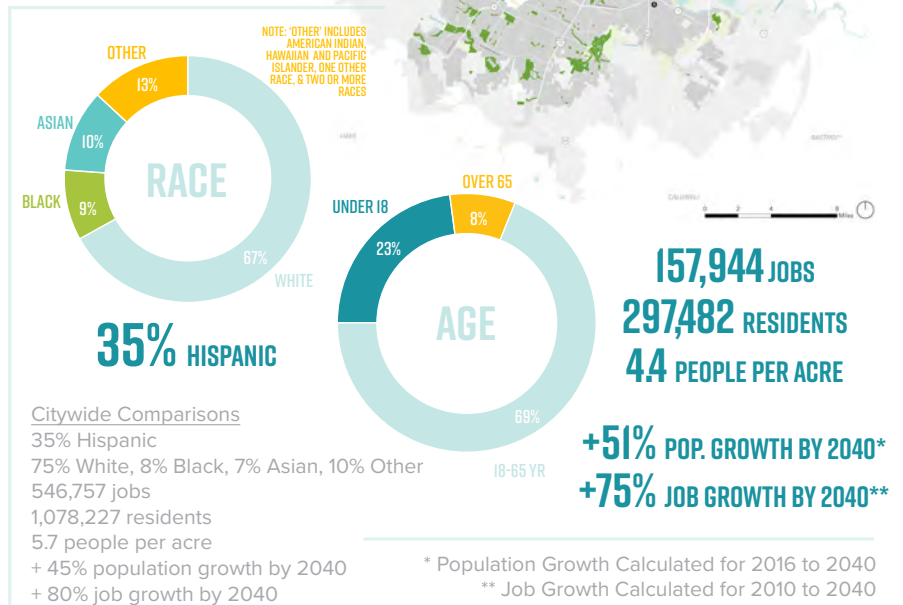


# NORTH

## NORTH, AT A GLANCE



All "At A Glance" statistics are calculated using the 5 mile ETJ boundary NOT the City of Austin boundary.



## TOP ISSUES

- + **Park provision alongside densification.** Neighborhoods in the north park planning areas have the second highest average density, after central planning areas, and nearly 300k residents. New growth is proposed or anticipated in centers (e.g., Domain, Apple Campus) providing an opportunity to expand access and amenities within new development.
- + **Increasing resident access to facilities.** While more residents live walking distance to a park than in the central planning areas,

those parks in general have fewer amenities, such as natural trails and off-leash dog parks. Adding facilities to existing parks will be a key strategy. Several projects are already underway and improvements are planned to increase amenities, including expanded access to greenbelts. Any new parkland should seek to strategically address facility needs.

- + **Extend diverse programs at New rec centers.** Two of Austin's recreation and community centers are located in the north park planning area with four more closeby to the south. While

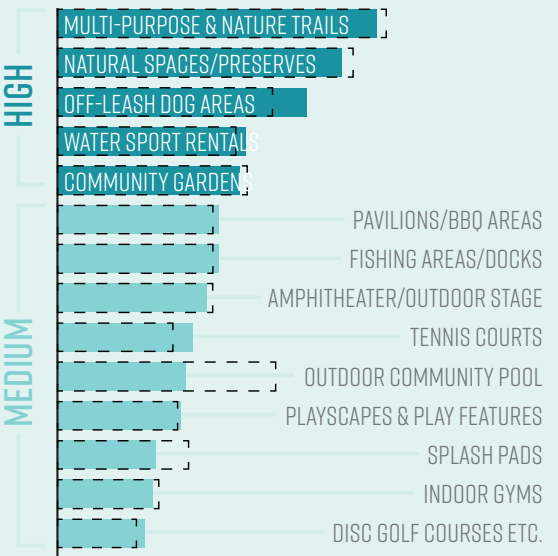
this is below the citywide average, these are two very high-performing rec centers with diverse offerings. The City of Austin/YMCA North Austin Community Recreation Center includes an expansive community garden and community gathering spaces while Gustavo "Gus" L. Garcia Recreation Center provides active recreation for residents including youth, teen, adult, and senior adult programs. These programs could be replicated at other existing park sites that currently have less access to rec centers.

# CURRENT & FUTURE NEEDS

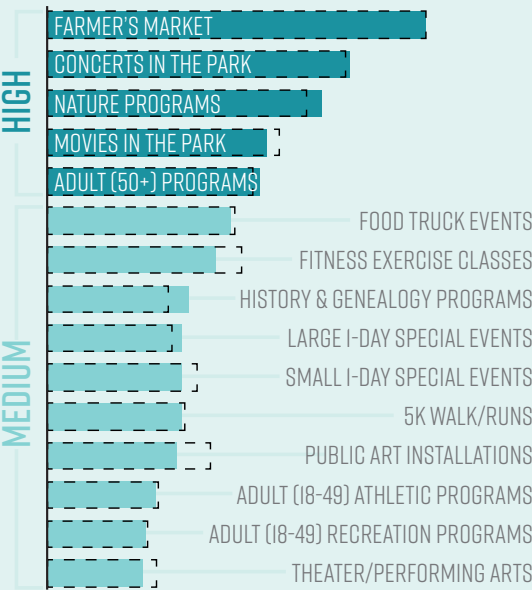
## What We Heard

Feedback from surveys of north park planning area residents closely matched feedback from Austin residents as whole. Residents would like to see more trails and natural areas, as well as farmers markets, events (concerts, nature programs, movies in the park) and exercise programs in parks. There is higher demand for off-leash dog areas and canoe rental, compared to the city overall.

### Facility & Amenity Priorities



### Program Priorities



#### PRIORITIZATION PROCESS

Based on the statistically valid survey of residents of this Combined Planning Area, the priorities above have emerged in this ranked order (compared against the citywide prioritization of the same elements, depicted in the black dashed outline).

## Areas for Investment

Based on initial Level of Service guidelines, the following current and projected needs are expected up to 2034.

### Parkland & Indoor Facilities

✓	GREENBELTS
✓	TRAILS
✓	POCKET PARKS
✓	NEIGHBORHOOD / SCHOOL PARKS
✓	DISTRICT PARKS
✓	METROPOLITAN PARKS
✓	SPECIAL USE PARKS / CEMETERIES
✓	RECREATION / COMMUNITY CENTER
✓	NATURE / ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER
✓	CULTURAL / ARTS CENTERS & MUSEUMS

### Outdoor Amenities

+	Baseball Diamond (Teen/Adult)
+	Little League / Girls Fast Pitch Softball Diamond
+	Softball Diamond (Youth/Adult)
+	Rectangle Fields (Mixed Use)
+	Disc Golf Course (9 Hole)
+	Golf Course (18 Hole)
+	Playground
+	Dog Park
+	Tennis Court (Publically Accessible)
+	Pickleball Court (Publically Accessible)
+	Outdoor Basketball Court
+	Sand Volleyball Court
+	Reservable Picnic Shelters
+	Skate Park / BMX Bike
+	Rectangle Fields (Mixed-use, including soccer)

## SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

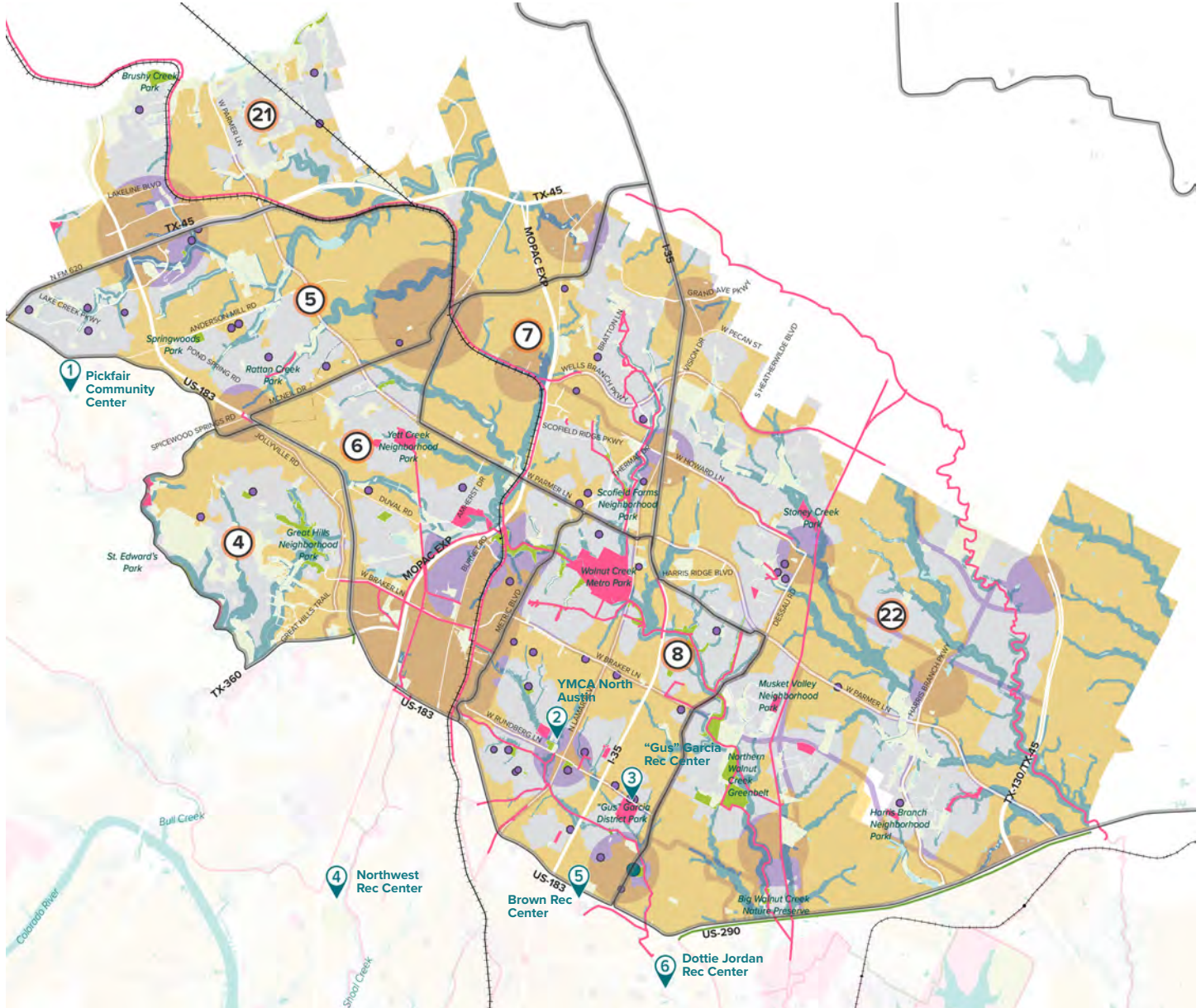
PARK DEVELOPMENT & IMPLEMENTATION				
Brownie Neighborhood Park	master plan implementation			
Georgian Acres Park	master plan implementation			
Gustavo “Gus” Garcia Park and Recreation Center	develop outdoor recreation amenities			
Harris Branch Neighborhood Park	Level 1 development			
Northern Walnut Creek Greenbelt	enhance trail connections throughout (1) Phase 2 development of existing trail, (2) development of trail section from Balcones District Park to Yett Creek Neighborhood Park, and (3) development of trail connection to Brushy Creek Trail			
Red Line Trail	continue trail development			
Riata Tennis Courts and Yett Creek Neighborhood Park	improve connections and implement better signage to connect parks to one another and to the surrounding neighborhood			
Upper Bull Creek Greenbelt	develop trail			
Walnut Creek Greenbelt	Phase 3 development of hike and bike trail			
Work with AISD to implement parks at:	Pre-K Schools: <i>Dobie Prekindergarten Center</i>	Elementary Schools: <i>Summitt, Davis, McBee, Barrington, Wooldridge, Graham, Cook, Hart, Walnut Creek, Guerrero Thompson</i>	Middle Schools: <i>Dobie</i>	High Schools: <i>Lanier, Premier at Lanier, Travis County Day School</i>
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS				
Quail Creek Park	upon completion of watershed protection department project, restore park			
PARTNERSHIPS				
Gilliland Creek	coordinate with Travis County on acquisition and trail development			
Austin Energy	Work with Austin Energy to provide connectivity to neighborhood to the south			
ACQUISITIONS				
Janet Fish Neighborhood Park	acquire land and develop trail to connect to Northtown MUD			
Robinson Branch PUD	implement land acquisition plan			
Scofield Farms Neighborhood Park	nearby land acquisition and park trail development along Wells Branch Creek			
Walnut Creek Greenbelt	additional acquisitions and Phase 3 trail development			
Walnut Creek Metro Park	acquisition to improve connectivity from the south			
Avery Ranch MUD/PUD	implement acquisition plan			
North Burnet Gateway area	land acquisition and Level 1 development of pocket parks			
East of MoPac & South of Wells Branch Pkwy	land acquisition and development of a pocket park or neighborhood park			
New parkland within park deficient areas				
MASTER PLANNING				
Balcones District Park	master plan			
Lakeline Neighborhood Park	including Phase 1 development			
Musket Valley Neighborhood Park	including Phase 1 development			
Oertli Neighborhood Park	including Phase 1 development			
Pioneer Crossing Park	including Phase 1 development			
Walnut Creek District Park	including Phase 1 development			
Walnut Creek Metropolitan Park	including implementation			
FEASIBILITY STUDIES				
Oertli Neighborhood Park and Copperfield Neighborhood Park	Study the feasibility of connecting the parks to one another			



The **NORTH** combined planning area has the second highest population & employment densities in the city but is more racially diverse than Central with more youth and larger household sizes.

Individual Park Planning Areas

4 5 6 7 8 21 22



#### PARD Park-Deficient Area Layer

- More than 1/4 to 1/2 mile away from a PARD park
- Creek Buffer - Greenbelt Priority

#### Environmental Features

- Other Non-PARD Open Space
- Waterways

#### Urban Trails

- Existing Urban Trails
- Proposed Urban Trails

#### PARD Parks, Draft Recommendations

- Recommended park improvements
- Other PARD park (owned and/or maintained)

#### Population Change 2017-2040

- Population Projected to More than Double

#### Community Landmarks

- PARD Cultural Facility
- Schools - Elementary, Middle and Junior High
- Schools - High Schools

#### Transportation

- MetroRail Commuter Line (Existing/Under Construction)
- Other (non-passenger) Rail Lines
- Existing / Proposed Urban Trails

- Downtown Austin
- Airport

#### Imagine Austin Growth Framework

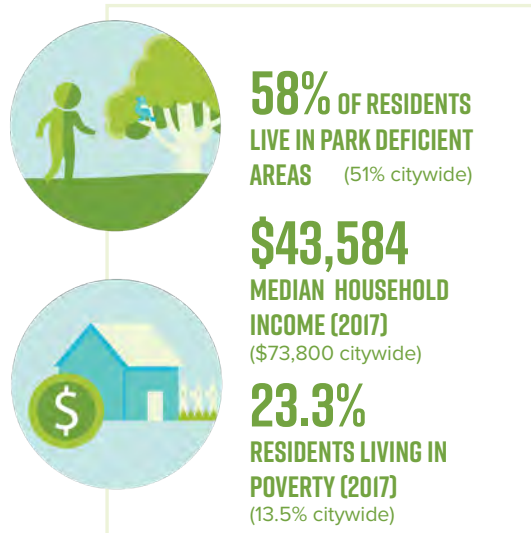
- Centers
- Corridors

FIGURE 23. NORTH COMBINED PLANNING AREA MAP

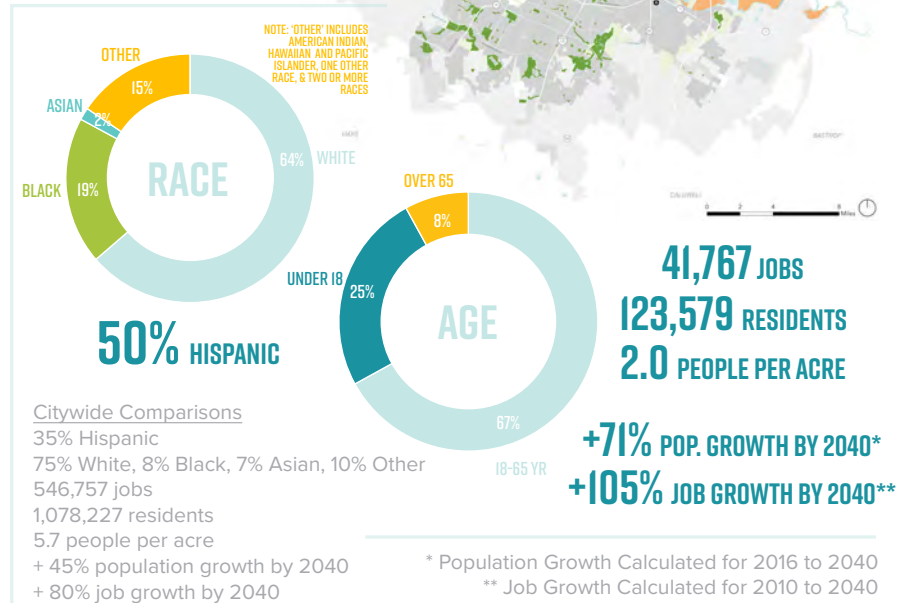
Source: WRT.

# EAST

## EAST, AT A GLANCE



All "At A Glance" statistics are calculated using the 5 mile ETJ boundary NOT the City of Austin boundary.



## TOP ISSUES

- + **Access to existing wealth of facilities.** The number of facilities per capita is higher than other areas. The more urban areas west of US-183 include a high number of recreation and community centers, as well as the Carver Museum. Still, population is expected to grow, particularly in the urban core and employment is projected to increase by over 100% by 2040. Expanding walkable access to these facilities beyond the existing 42% will be a key way of preparing for growth.
- + **Higher rates of poverty & youth.** The poverty rate in the east planning area

is 23% and 25% of the population is under 18 years old. According to studies of gentrification risk, households within these planning areas are also at risk for displacement moving forward. Planned improvements in parks should be sensitive to the needs of current residents, including young adults and children. Programming should be focused on inclusivity and supporting paths out of poverty through education and health.

- + **New park improvements underway.** The Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park is a large regional park located

in east Austin, and a new master plan will guide future park improvements. In addition, a new master plan for development of the John Treviño Jr. Metropolitan Park is slated to begin in 2019.

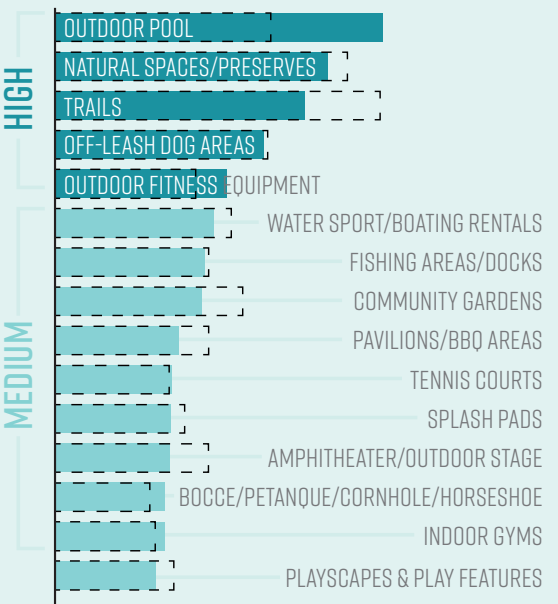
- + **Reflecting cultural diversity in parks.** The east planning areas benefits from one of the most racially diverse resident populations in Austin with a high percentage of Hispanic residents. Finding ways that the parks can reflect, support and celebrate this diversity through design, multilingual signage, facilities and programming should be a priority.

# CURRENT & FUTURE NEEDS

## What We Heard

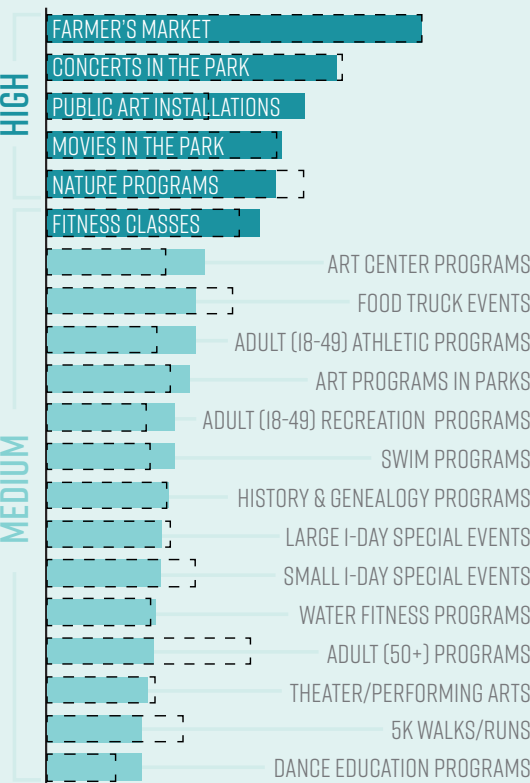
Feedback from surveys of the east park planning areas closely matched feedback from Austin residents as whole. However, residents did express a stronger preference for public art installations in parks, in addition to farmers markets and movies in the parks. Interest in outdoor pools also came out strongly, though the east planning areas have higher than the citywide average aquatic facilities per capita.

### Facility & Amenity Priorities



**PRIORITIZATION PROCESS**  
Based on the statistically valid survey of residents of this Combined Planning Area, the priorities above have emerged in this ranked order (compared against the citywide prioritization of the same elements, depicted in the black dashed outline).

### Program Priorities



## Areas for Investment

Based on initial Level of Service guidelines, the following current and projected needs are expected up to 2034.

### Parkland & Indoor Facilities

✓	GREENBELTS
✓	NATURE PRESERVES
✓	TRAILS
✓	POCKET PARKS
✓	NEIGHBORHOOD / SCHOOL PARKS
✓	DISTRICT PARKS
✓	SPECIAL USE PARKS / CEMETERIES
✓	RECREATION / COMMUNITY CENTER
✓	NATURE / ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER

### Outdoor Amenities

- + Baseball Diamond (Teen/Adult)
- + Little League / Girls Fast Pitch Softball Diamond
- + Rectangle Fields (Mixed Use)
- + Playground
- + Dog Park
- + Pickleball Court (Publically Accessible)
- + Sand Volleyball Court
- + Skate Park / BMX Bike
- + Rectangle Fields (Mixed-use, including soccer)



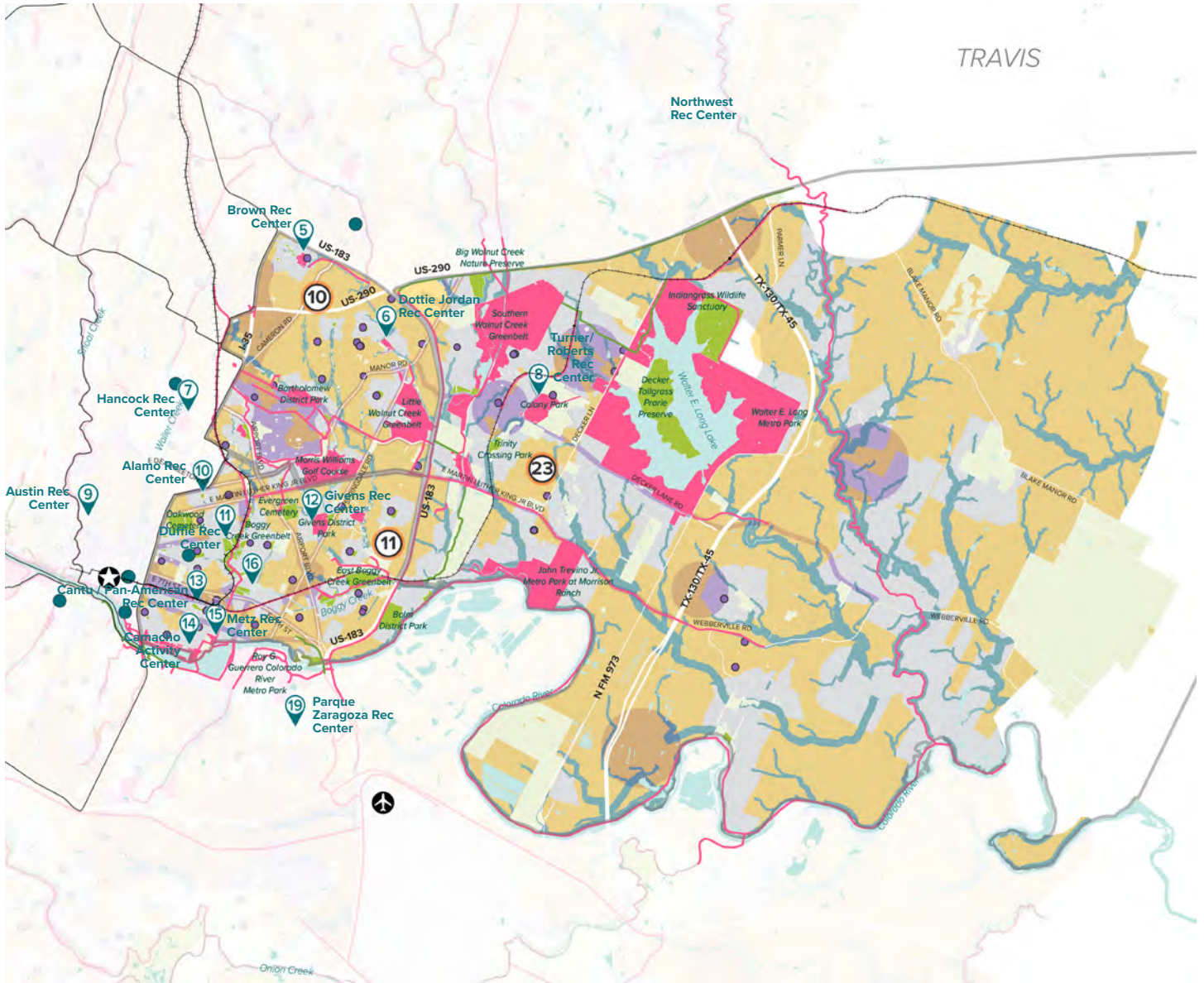
## SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

PARK DEVELOPMENT & IMPLEMENTATION			
Bartholomew District Park	Phase 2 master plan implementation, including disc golf course upgrades, fenced in dog park, ball fields rehab		
Colony Park District Park	develop park and pool		
Dottie Jordan Recreation Center	provide creek access		
Edward Rendon Sr. Park at Festival Beach, Town Lake Metropolitan Park	implement Level 2 & 3 development consistent with master plan including Fiesta Gardens rehab		
Givens District Park	Level 2 & 3 development		
Holly Power Plant	develop recreational facilities consistent with the master plan		
John Trevino Jr Metropolitan Park at Morrison Ranch	Phase 1 development		
Little Walnut Creek Greenbelt	Level 1 development, Phase 1 master plan implementation, which includes parking facilities, fitness equipment, playground, restrooms, fence in dog park, nature play, bridge across Little Walnut Creek		
Morris Williams Golf Course	develop trail on the edge of Morris Williams		
Patterson Neighborhood Park	Implement Patterson neighborhood vision plan (explore Pharr tennis center)		
Springdale Neighborhood Park	continue Level 1 & 2 development		
Walnut Creek Metropolitan Park	design and implement sports facility (tennis, softball, baseball, soccer)		
Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park	Level 1 development, new welcoming entrance		
Work with AISD to implement parks at:	Elementary Schools: <i>Pickle, Children's Medical Center, Harris, Maplewood, Pecan Springs, Winn, Andrews, Blanton, Govalle, Metz, Oak Springs, Ortega, Sanchez, Sims, Allan, Zavala, Norman, Blackshear, CAMPB, Brooke, Jordan, Overton</i>	Middle Schools: <i>Pearce, Kealing, Martin, Garcia, School For Young Men</i>  Middle & High Schools: <i>School For Young Women</i>	High Schools: <i>Reagan, Garza Independence, International, Lasa, LBJ, Eastside Memorial at The Johnston Campus</i>
PARTNERSHIPS			
Gilliland Creek	complete park agreement between Travis County and PARD		
PROGRAMMING			
Dottie Jordan Recreation Center	expand programming		
ACQUISITIONS			
Agave Neighborhood Park & Colony Park District Park	new connection between existing parks		
Colony Park & John Trevino Metro Park	new connection		
Catellus Mueller Greenbelts	complete transfer of parkland to PARD from Mueller, complete Parkland Improvement Agreement (PIA) and maintenance agreement between COA and Mueller		
Dottie Jordan Neighborhood Park	improve neighborhood connectivity		
Mueller Lake Park	improve neighborhood connectivity		
Springdale Neighborhood Park	improve neighborhood connectivity		
Walnut Creek Greenbelt	continue land acquisition		
MLK Transit Oriented Development (TOD) area			
MLK Blvd and Ed Bluestein Blvd	land acquisition		
Along Colorado River			
Along Fort Branch Creek			
East of I-35, South of 290 and West of Cameron Rd	acquire land for neighborhood or pocket parks		
New parkland within park deficient areas			
MASTER PLANNING			
Buttermilk Neighborhood Park	including Phase 1 improvements		
Schieffer Tract	including Level 1 development		
Walnut Creek Metropolitan Park	design and implement sports facility (tennis, softball, baseball, soccer)		

The **EAST** combined planning area has one of the lowest population densities with the highest proportion of black residents, highest poverty rate and a higher youth population. It also has the highest projected population growth and substantial expected job growth.

Individual Park Planning Areas

10 11 23



#### PARD Park-Deficient Area Layer

- More than 1/4 to 1/2 mile away from a PARD park
- Creek Buffer - Greenbelt Priority

#### Environmental Features

- Other Non-PARD Open Space
- Waterways

#### Urban Trails

- Existing Urban Trails
- Proposed Urban Trails

#### PARD Parks, Draft Recommendations

- Recommended park improvements
- Other PARD park (owned and/or maintained)

#### Population Change 2017-2040

- Population Projected to More than Double

#### Community Landmarks

- PARD Cultural Facility
- Schools - Elementary, Middle and Junior High
- Schools - High Schools

#### Transportation

- MetroRail Commuter Line (Existing/Under Construction)
- Other (non-passenger) Rail Lines
- Existing / Proposed Urban Trails
- Downtown Austin
- Airport

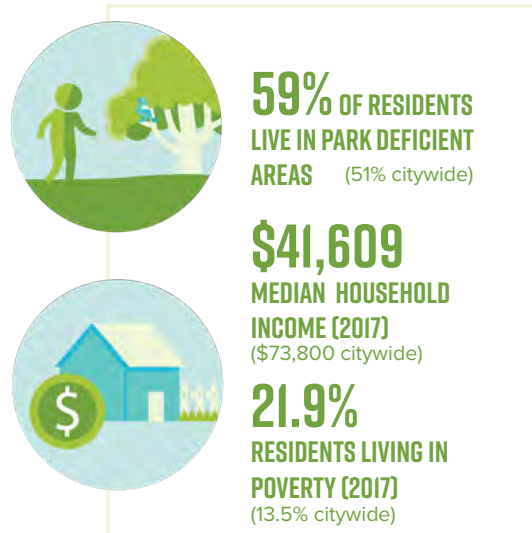
#### Imagine Austin Growth Framework

- Centers
- Corridors

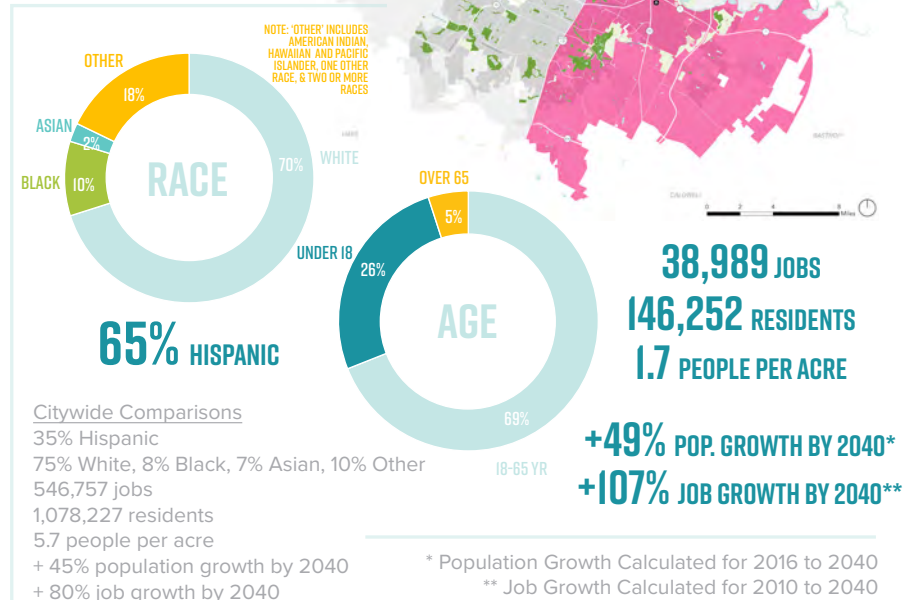
FIGURE 24. EAST COMBINED PLANNING AREA MAP  
Source: WRT.

# SOUTHEAST

## SOUTHEAST, AT A GLANCE



All "At A Glance" statistics are calculated using the 5 mile ETJ boundary NOT the City of Austin boundary.



## TOP ISSUES

### + **Expanding access despite low pop density.**

The southeast planning areas include a mix of neighborhoods and communities with varying levels of density and development. Residents have relatively high access to nature trails and natural areas, however some areas are lacking in several types of active and passive recreation facilities as well as community gardens and cultural facilities.

### + **Higher rates of poverty & youth.**

The poverty rate in the southeast planning area is 22% with 26% of

the population under 18 years old. According to studies of gentrification, households are also at risk for displacement as Austin continues to grow. Planned improvements in parks should be sensitive to the needs of current residents, including young adults and children. Programming should be focused on inclusivity and supporting paths out of poverty through education and health.

### + **Lack of cultural facilities.**

Performance venues, historic sites, cultural / community centers are lacking, as compared to Austin as whole. Any future expansion

of cultural facilities and programming should reflect, support and celebrate the racial diversity and high percentage of Hispanic residents in this area.

### + **Leverage creek buffers as open space opportunity.**

Improvements are underway at Onion Creek Metro Park and the many environmentally sensitive areas along creeks provide opportunity for increased natural areas and greenbelts in the southeast.

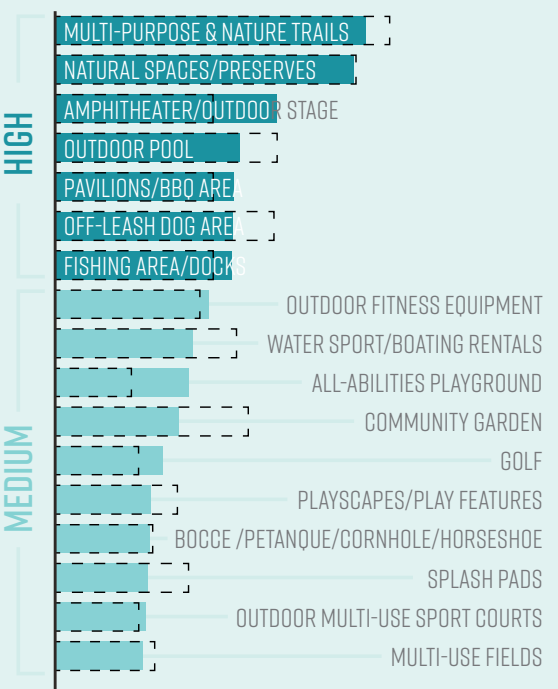


# CURRENT & FUTURE NEEDS

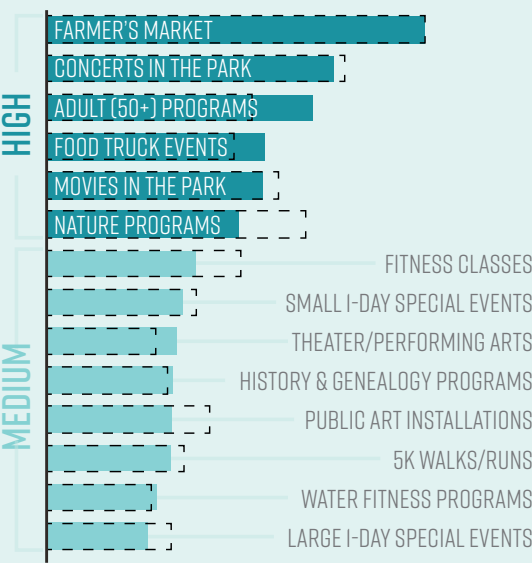
## What We Heard

Feedback from surveys of the southeast park planning areas closely matched feedback from Austin residents as whole. However, residents did express a stronger preference for adult (Over 50) activities, as well as food trucks, outdoor amphitheater, and pavilions / BBQ area in comparison to Austin.

### Facility & Amenity Priorities



### Program Priorities



#### PRIORITIZATION PROCESS

Based on the statistically valid survey of residents of this Combined Planning Area, the priorities above have emerged in this ranked order (compared against the citywide prioritization of the same elements, depicted in the black dashed outline).

## Areas for Investment

Based on initial Level of Service guidelines, the following current and projected needs are expected up to 2034.

### Parkland & Indoor Facilities

✓	GREENBELTS
✓	NATURE PRESERVES
✓	TRAILS
✓	POCKET PARKS
✓	NEIGHBORHOOD / SCHOOL PARKS
✓	DISTRICT PARKS
✓	SPECIAL USE PARKS / CEMETERIES
✓	RECREATION / COMMUNITY CENTER
✓	NATURE / ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER

### Outdoor Amenities

- + Baseball Diamond (Teen/Adult)
- + Little League / Girls Fast Pitch Softball Diamond
- + Playground
- + Dog Park
- + Tennis Court (Publically Accessible)
- + Pickleball Court (Publically Accessible)
- + Outdoor Basketball Court
- + Sand Volleyball Court
- + Reservable Picnic Shelters

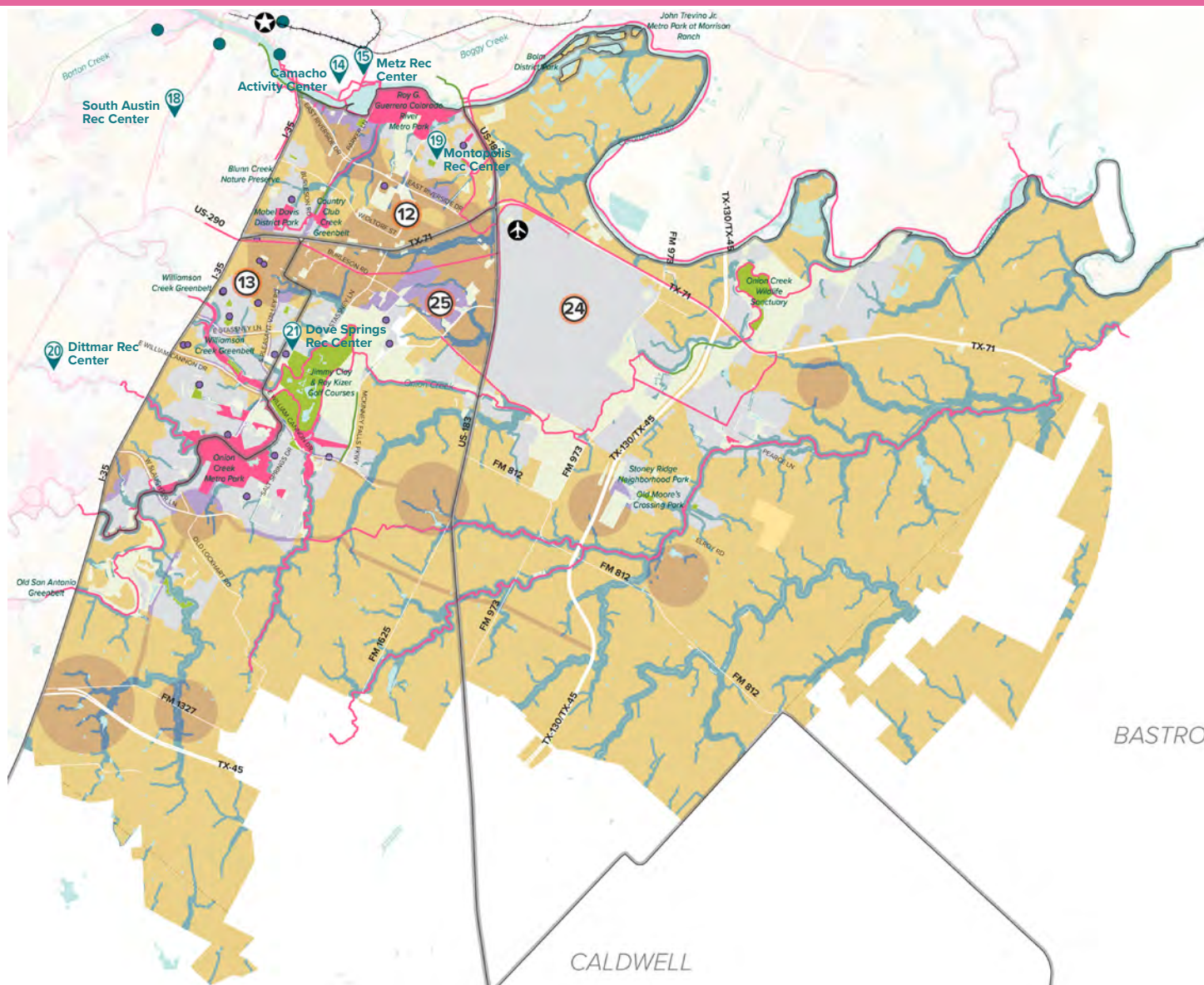
## SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

PARK DEVELOPMENT & IMPLEMENTATION			
Grand Meadow Neighborhood Park	Level 1 development		
Marble Creek Greenbelt	trail development, improve access and parking (at William Cannon and Salt Spring Dr intersection)		
Onion Creek Metropolitan Park	implement the park development plan for phase 2 & 3		
Roy G. Guerrero Colorado River Metropolitan Park	implement future phases, incorporate better trail connections to parkland associated with improvements to Pleasant Valley and the reconstruction of Longhorn Dam (may also improve trail connections to Metz Neighborhood Park and Holy Shores at Town Lake Metro Park)		
Work with AISD to implement parks at:	Elementary Schools: <i>Linder, Allison, Rodriguez, Houston, Langford, Perez, Casey, Cowan, Williams, Kocurek, Mills, Patton, Sunset Valley, Boone, Palm, Widen</i>	Middle Schools: <i>Mendez, Bedichek, Paredes, Small, Covington, Gorzycki</i>	High Schools: <i>Bowie</i>
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS			
Country Club Creek	coordinate with Watershed to replace the bridge and channel stabilization		
PARTNERSHIPS			
Ann and Roy Butler Hike and Bike Trail	Implement the master plan for the Southeast Lakeshore in collaboration with The Trail Foundation		
Roy G. Guerrero Colorado River Metro Park	Coordinate with Ecology Action to make trail connections to the park and Montopolis School		
Along Bluff Springs Rd.	continue working with Travis County on floodplain buyouts		
Along S. Pleasant Valley Rd.	continue working with Watershed on buyouts		
ACQUISITIONS			
Civitan Neighborhood Park	acquire and develop trails connecting at the intersection of Airport Commerce and Riverside Dr		
Roy G Guerrero Metro Park & Mabel Davis District Park	create parkland and improved trail connection along Country Club Creek		
South Boggy Creek Greenbelt & Onion Creek Metropolitan Park	create parkland and improved trail connection		
Williamson Creek Greenbelt & Onion Creek Greenbelt	create parkland and improved trail connection		
Along Colorado River			
Along North and South Dry Creek Greenways	including trail development		
Austin Water Utility property at William Cannon and Onion Creek			
New parkland in park deficient areas			
MASTER PLANNING			
Civitan Neighborhood Park	including rehabilitation		
Dogshead at the Colorado	create a vision for future acquisition		
Montopolis School	including improvements		
FEASIBILITY STUDIES			
Mabel Davis District Park	potential to expand the existing skate park, make improvements such as lighting, bathrooms, lockers, and drinking fountains without compromising the landfill cap		
Maintenance Facility	potential to relocate, reinvest and/or build new		

The **SOUTHEAST** combined planning area has the highest proportion of hispanic residents and the second highest poverty rate along with the second highest youth population. Healthy population growth and substantial job growth is expected here.

Individual Park Planning Areas

12 13 24 25



#### PARD Park-Deficient Area Layer

- More than 1/4 to 1/2 mile away from a PARD park
- Creek Buffer - Greenbelt Priority

#### Environmental Features

- Other Non-PARD Open Space
- Waterways

#### Urban Trails

- Existing Urban Trails
- Proposed Urban Trails

#### PARD Parks, Draft Recommendations

- Recommended park improvements
- Other PARD park (owned and/or maintained)

#### Population Change 2017-2040

- Population Projected to More than Double

#### Community Landmarks

- PARD Cultural Facility
- Schools - Elementary, Middle and Junior High
- Schools - High Schools

#### Transportation

- MetroRail Commuter Line (Existing/Under Construction)
- Other (non-passenger) Rail Lines
- Existing / Proposed Urban Trails
- Downtown Austin
- Airport

#### Imagine Austin Growth Framework

- Centers
- Corridors

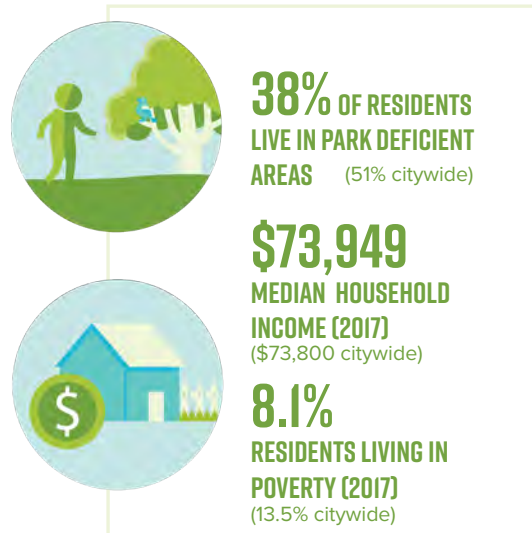
FIGURE 25. SOUTHEAST COMBINED PLANNING AREA MAP

Source: WRT.

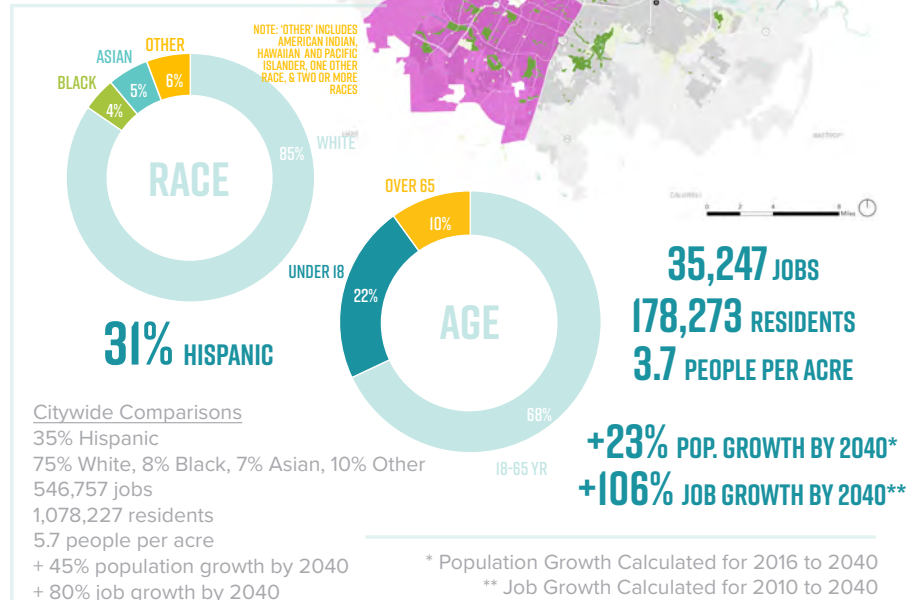


# SOUTHWEST

## SOUTHWEST, AT A GLANCE



All "At A Glance" statistics are calculated using the 5 mile ETJ boundary NOT the City of Austin boundary.



## TOP ISSUES

+ **Leverage high access to parks.** About 62% of residents are within walking distance of park. While the number of natural areas per capita is high, access to nature trails and community gardens along with several passive, active, and cultural facilities is below average or low in the southwest planning areas. Selectively adding these facilities to existing parks could be an important strategy moving forward.

+ **Lower rates of poverty & large youth population.** The average poverty rate in the southwest planning

areas is 8% with 22% of the population under the age of 18 years old. Families may have greater access to private programming and recreational activities. The full range of facilities may not be wanted or needed in parks if structured private offerings are meeting that need - if this is the case, it may be appropriate for parks to have more limited facilities with an emphasis on unstructured multi-purpose natural and social spaces to complement private offerings.

+ **Lack of Recreation / Cultural Centers.** Recreation centers are limited in the southwest planning areas. Performance

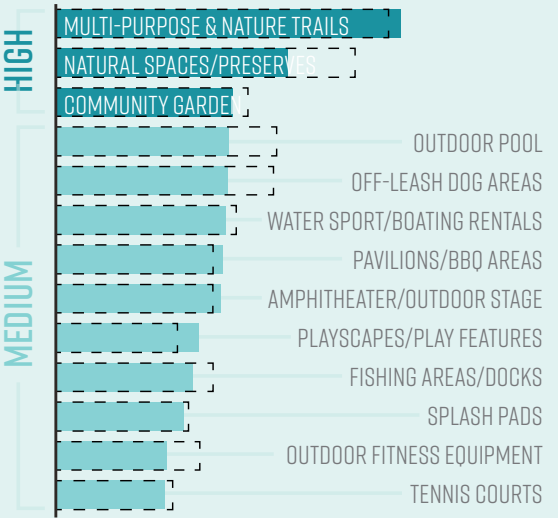
venues, historic sites, cultural / community centers are lacking, as compared to Austin as whole.

# CURRENT & FUTURE NEEDS

## What We Heard

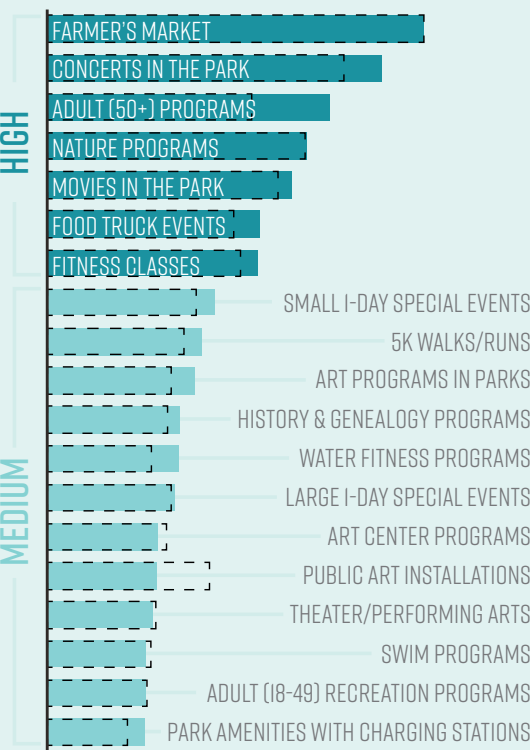
Feedback from surveys of the southwest park planning areas closely matched feedback from Austin residents as whole. However, residents did express a stronger preference for concerts in the park and adult (Over 50) activities.

### Facility & Amenity Priorities



**PRIORITIZATION PROCESS**  
Based on the statistically valid survey of residents of this Combined Planning Area, the priorities above have emerged in this ranked order (compared against the citywide prioritization of the same elements, depicted in the black dashed outline).

### Program Priorities



## Areas for Investment

Based on initial Level of Service guidelines, the following current and projected needs are expected up to 2034.

### Parkland & Indoor Facilities

✓	GREENBELTS
✓	NATURE PRESERVES
✓	TRAILS
✓	POCKET PARKS
✓	NEIGHBORHOOD / SCHOOL PARKS
✓	DISTRICT PARKS
✓	SPECIAL USE PARKS / CEMETERIES
✓	RECREATION / COMMUNITY CENTER

### Outdoor Amenities

+	Baseball Diamond (Teen/Adult)
+	Little League / Girls Fast Pitch Softball Diamond
+	Softball Diamond (Youth/Adult)
+	Rectangle Fields (Mixed Use)
+	Playground
+	Dog Park
+	Tennis Court (Publically Accessible)
+	Pickleball Court (Publically Accessible)
+	Outdoor Basketball Court
+	Sand Volleyball Court
+	Reservable Picnic Shelters
+	Skate Park / BMX Bike

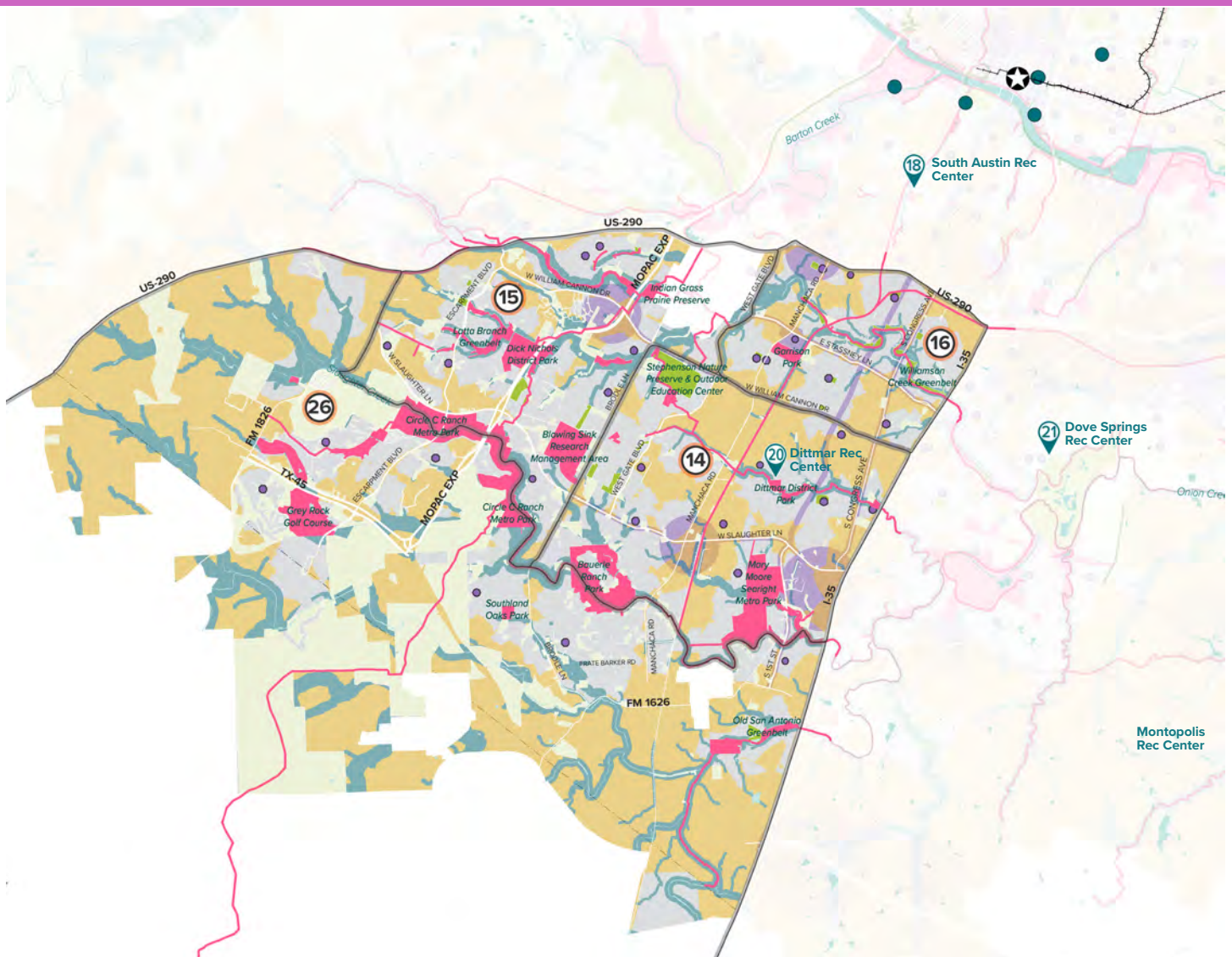
## SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

PARK DEVELOPMENT & IMPLEMENTATION			
Circle C Ranch Metropolitan Park at Slaughter Creek	implement off leash area, extend park trail connection to the Veloway		
Grey Rock Golf and Tennis	expansion of tennis center		
Latta Branch Greenbelt	park trail development where feasible		
Mary Moore Searight Metropolitan Park	improve access from the eastern side or along south 1st		
Onion Creek Greenbelt	trail development from Old San Antonio District Park to IH 35		
Slaughter Creek Greenbelt	renovate the historic Matthew Brown House and make it available for concession, develop trail between Mary Moore Searight Metropolitan Park and IH 35		
Work with AISD to implement parks at:	Elementary Schools: <i>Pleasant Hill, Cunningham, Joslin, ST/MO, Odom, Branoff, Menchaca, Clayton, Kiker, Baldwin</i>	Middle Schools: <i>Bailey</i>	High Schools: <i>Crockett, Akins</i>
PARTNERSHIPS			
Violet Crown Trail	continue to partner with Hill Country Conservancy to develop trail		
Austin Water Utility	Work with Watershed and Austin Water Utility to promote additional public access and trail development on water quality lands		
PROGRAMMING			
Blowing Sink Research Management Area	opportunity for nature center or nature education		
ACQUISITIONS			
Circle C Metropolitan Park	at Slaughter creek - connection to Hielscher Tract through water quality land		
Dittmar Recreation Center	expand and improve access		
Onion Creek Greenbelt	continue acquisition		
Slaughter Creek Greenbelt	acquisition and trail development		
South Boggy Creek Greenbelt	acquire land along creek		
Violet Crown Trail	transfer Convict Hill Austin Energy property to PARD for trail		
Williamson Creek Greenbelt	acquisition and trail development		
Oak Hill Area	acquire and develop land as a destination park		
Support the acquisition for Bergstrom spur to develop pocket parks at neighborhood connections			
New parkland within park deficient areas			
MASTER PLANNING			
Bauerle Ranch Special Park	develop a vision or concept plan, including soccer fields and parking		
Circle C Metro Park at Slaughter Creek			
Davis Hill Neighborhood Park	concept plan and development		
Dick Nichols District Park	master plan update		
Garrison District Park			
Lewis Mountain Ranch Neighborhood Park	concept plan and development		
Longview Neighborhood Park	concept plan and development		
Mary Moore Searight Metropolitan Park	including implementation of priority projects		
Old San Antonio Greenbelt	include water access to Onion Creek		
Southland Oaks Neighborhood Park	develop a vision or concept plan		



The **SOUTHWEST** combined planning area has mid-level population and employment densities with minimal population growth but substantial employment growth expected and the highest proportion of white residents.

14 15 16 26



#### PARD Park-Deficient Area Layer

- More than 1/4 to 1/2 mile away from a PARD park
- Creek Buffer - Greenbelt Priority

#### Environmental Features

- Other Non-PARD Open Space
- Waterways

#### Urban Trails

- Existing Urban Trails
- Proposed Urban Trails

#### PARD Parks, Draft Recommendations

- Recommended park improvements
- Other PARD park (owned and/or maintained)

#### Population Change 2017-2040

- Population Projected to More than Double

#### Community Landmarks

- PARD Cultural Facility
- Schools - Elementary, Middle and Junior High
- Schools - High Schools

#### Transportation

- MetroRail Commuter Line (Existing/Under Construction)
- Other (non-passenger) Rail Lines
- Existing / Proposed Urban Trails
- Downtown Austin
- Airport

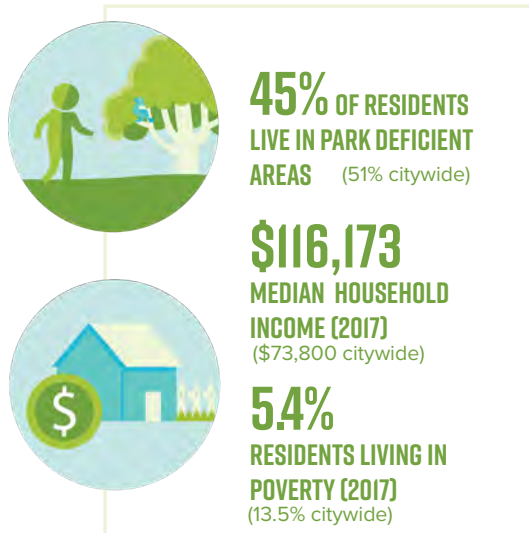
#### Imagine Austin Growth Framework

- Centers
- Corridors

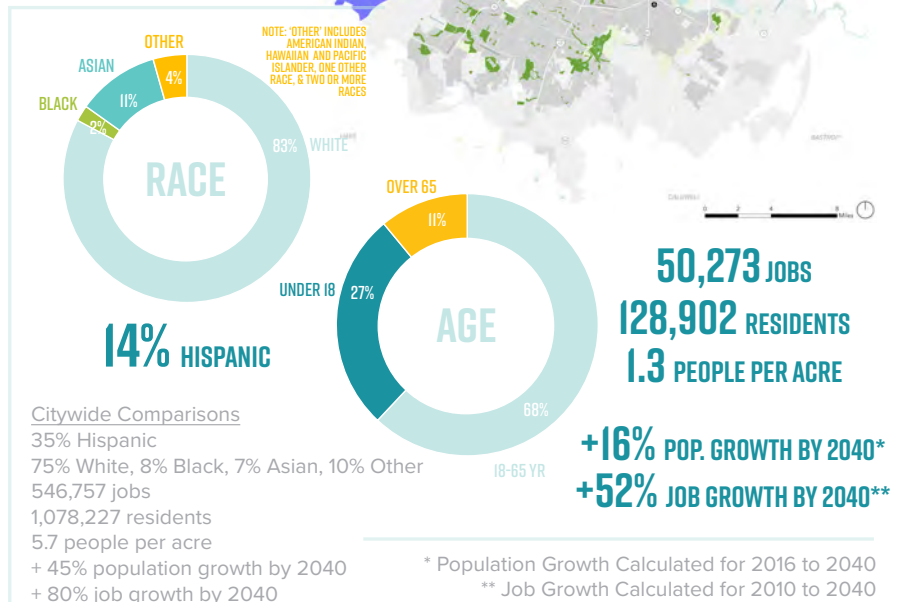
FIGURE 26. SOUTHWEST COMBINED PLANNING AREA MAP  
Source: WRT.

# WEST

## WEST, AT A GLANCE



All "At A Glance" statistics are calculated using the 5 mile ETJ boundary NOT the City of Austin boundary.



## TOP ISSUES

+ **Leverage high access to parks.** About 55% of residents are within walking distance of park. Nature trails, water features, and community gardens are limited, while natural areas are higher than the city average. The western planning areas are lucky to be home to Zilker Park and benefit from the highest off-leash dog parks per capita compared to Austin as a whole. Selectively adding facilities may make the existing parks more valuable to residents already living nearby.

+ **Lower rates of poverty & large youth population.** The average poverty rate in the west planning areas is 5% with 27% of the population under the age of 18 years old. Families may have greater access to private programming and recreational activities. The full range of facilities may not be wanted or needed in parks if structured private offerings are meeting that need - if this is the case, it may be appropriate for parks to have more limited facilities with an emphasis on unstructured multi-purpose natural and social spaces to complement private offerings.

+ **Natural areas & disconnected development.** Some of the lowest densities and population projections are found in the western planning areas. Sensitive environmental features and physical boundaries play a role in development patterns in the western planning areas.

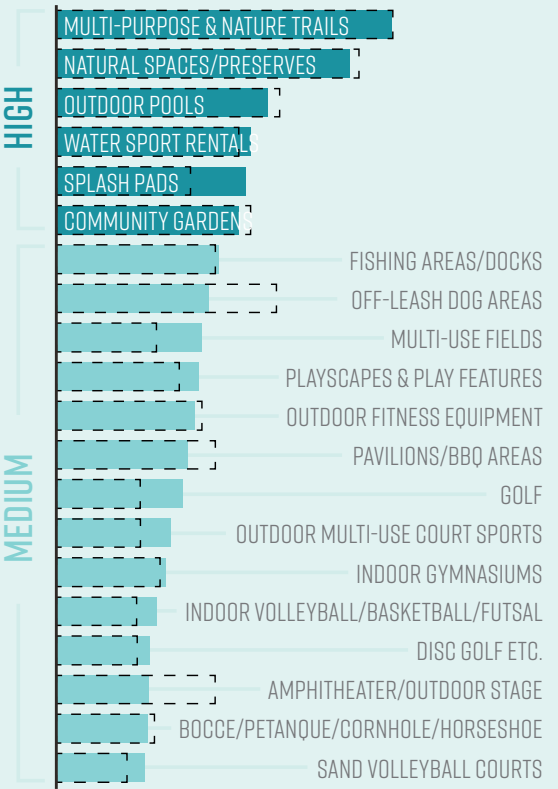
+ **Multi-modal park access.** Additional effort may be required to make parks more accessible by foot and by bike due to the low densities and low population projections in this area. Parking needs may also be higher than average.

# CURRENT & FUTURE NEEDS

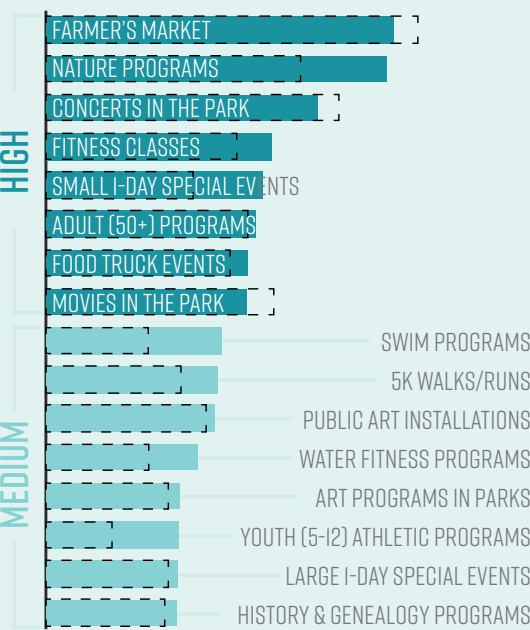
## What We Heard

Feedback from surveys of the west park planning areas closely matched feedback from Austin residents as whole. However, residents did express a stronger preference for nature programs and group fitness.

### Facility & Amenity Priorities



### Program Priorities



**PRIORITIZATION PROCESS**  
Based on the statistically valid survey of residents of this Combined Planning Area, the priorities above have emerged in this ranked order (compared against the citywide prioritization of the same elements, depicted in the black dashed outline).

## Areas for Investment

Based on initial Level of Service guidelines, the following current and projected needs are expected up to 2034.

### Parkland & Indoor Facilities

✓	GREENBELTS
✓	NATURE PRESERVES
✓	TRAILS
✓	POCKET PARKS
✓	NEIGHBORHOOD / SCHOOL PARKS
✓	DISTRICT PARKS
✓	RECREATION / COMMUNITY CENTER
✓	NATURE / ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER

### Outdoor Amenities

- + Baseball Diamond (Teen/Adult)
- + Little League / Girls Fast Pitch Softball Diamond
- + Softball Diamond (Youth/Adult)
- + Playground
- + Dog Park
- + Pickleball Court (Publically Accessible)
- + Reservable Picnic Shelters
- + Skate Park / BMX Bike



## SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

PARK DEVELOPMENT & IMPLEMENTATION	
<b>Ann and Roy Butler Hike and Bike Trail</b>	improvements at narrow spots (west of Lou Neff to MoPac)
<b>Barton Creek Greenbelt</b>	improve access and parking
<b>Emma Long Metropolitan Park</b>	development as indicated in Master Plan
<b>Commons Ford Metropolitan Park</b>	stabilize shoreline and provide water access
<b>Red Bud Isle</b>	improve kayak launch, explore expansion to the north of Red Bud Trail Rd
<b>St. Edward's Greenbelt</b>	improve access, parking and trailhead
<b>Upper Bull Creek Greenbelt</b>	trail development and repair
<b>Zilker Metropolitan Park</b>	upgrade and improve site conditions at Zilker Clubhouse, continue Zilker Loop Trail development and Barton Creek Crossing upstream from pool
<b>Work with AISD to implement parks at:</b>	Elementary Schools: <i>Oak Hill Elementary School</i>
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS	
<b>Bank stabilization along Colorado River</b>	
PARTNERSHIPS	
<b>Barton Creek Greenbelt</b>	work with watershed to complete bank stabilization
ACQUISITIONS	
<b>Barton Creek Greenbelt</b>	acquire land to expand upstream
<b>Eagle's Nest Park</b>	Acquire additional adjacent land
<b>Gaines Creek Greenbelt</b>	acquisition and park trail development
<b>Upper Bull Creek Greenbelt</b>	acquisition and park trail development
<b>Williamson Creek Greenbelt</b>	continue land acquisition
<b>Oak Hill Area</b>	new parkland for development of a destination park, park trail corridor acquisition and development
<b>Acquire land in park deficient areas for pocket and neighborhood parks</b>	
MASTER PLANNING	
<b>St. Edwards Greenbelt</b>	develop vision or concept plan

The **WEST** combined planning area has the lowest population and employment densities, with minimal growth expected and has a the highest proportion of both senior residents and youth.

18 19 20

#### Urban Trails

- Existing Urban Trails
- Proposed Urban Trails

#### PARD Parks, Draft Recommendations

- Recommended park improvements
- Other PARD park (owned and/or maintained)

#### Imagine Austin Growth Framework

- Centers
- Corridors

#### PARD Park-Deficient Area Layer

- More than 1/4 to 1/2 mile away from a PARD park
- Creek Buffer - Greenbelt Priority

#### Environmental Features

- Other Non-PARD Open Space
- Waterways

#### Population Change 2017-2040

- Population Projected to More than Double

#### Community Landmarks

- PARD Cultural Facility
- Schools - Elementary, Middle and Junior High
- Schools - High Schools

#### Transportation

- MetroRail Commuter Line (Existing/Under Construction)
- Other (non-passenger) Rail Lines
- Existing / Proposed Urban Trails
- Downtown Austin
- Airport

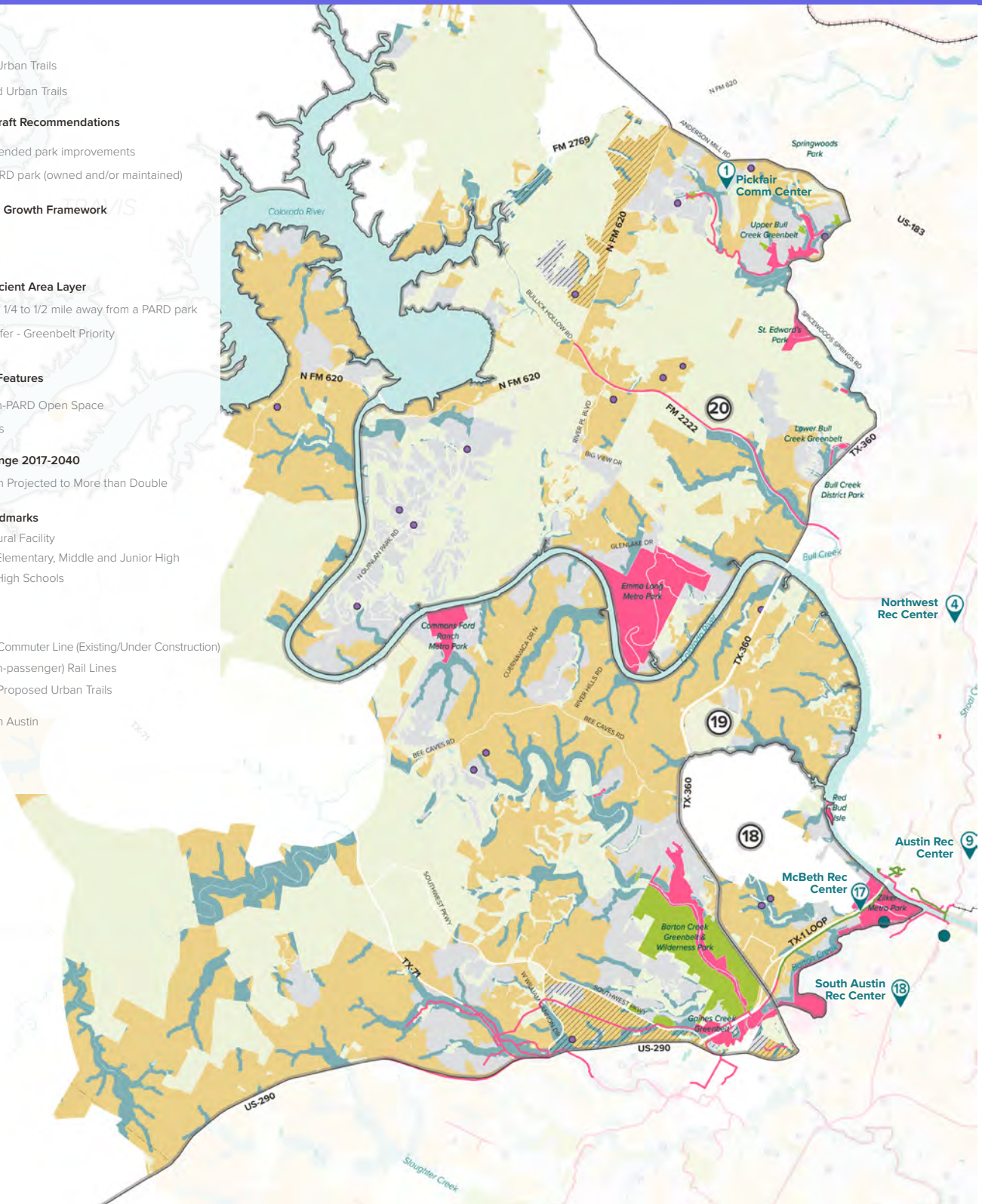


FIGURE 27. WEST COMBINED PLANNING AREA MAP  
Source: WRT.

# IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

## FUNDING OPTIONS

In order to continue to build and maintain the parks and recreation system, funding should be pursued for operations and capital improvement projects, like those presented in this plan. PARD has primarily relied upon the general fund (funded primarily by property taxes), grants, bond programs and the Austin Parks Foundation to fund the operations of, and/or capital improvements to its parks and recreation system.

With the adoption of Senate Bill 2 in June, 2019 lowering the cap on the amount of property tax revenue for cities and counties from 8% to 3.5%, new, sustainable funding sources are essential to implementing the LRP for PARD. There is potential for increasing revenues for the parks and recreation system while still providing affordable recreation opportunities. The following are the funding options are most the most feasible to implement in the City of Austin for the funding of PARD and should be fully explored and vetted within the next year.

## EXTERNAL FUNDING

### **Corporate Sponsorships**

This revenue-funding source allows corporations to invest in the development or enhancement of new or existing facilities in park systems. Sponsorships are also highly used for programs and events.

### **Partnerships**

Partnerships are joint development funding sources or operational funding sources between two separate agencies, such as two government entities, a non-profit and a City department, or a private business and a City agency. Two partners jointly develop revenue producing park and recreation facilities and share risk, operational costs, responsibilities and asset management, based on the strengths and weaknesses of each partner.



## **Foundations/Gifts**

These dollars are raised from tax-exempt, non-profit organizations established with private donations in promotion of specific causes, activities, or issues. They offer a variety of means to fund capital projects, including capital campaigns, gifts catalogs, fundraisers, endowments, sales of items, etc.

## **Private Donations**

Private Donations may also be received in the form of funds, land, facilities, recreation equipment, art or in-kind services. Donations from local and regional businesses as sponsors for events or facilities should be pursued.

## **Irrevocable Remainder Trusts**

These trusts are set up with individuals who typically have more than a million dollars in wealth. They will leave a portion of their wealth to the City in a trust fund that allows the fund to grow over a period of time and then is available for the City to use a portion of the interest to support specific park and recreation facilities or programs that are designated by the trustee.

## **Volunteerism**

The revenue source is an indirect revenue source in that persons donate time to assist the department in providing a product or service on an hourly basis. This reduces the City's cost in providing the service plus it builds advocacy into the system.

# **CAPITAL FEES**

## **Capital Fees**

Capital fees are added to the cost of revenue producing facilities such as golf courses, pools, recreation centers, hospitality centers and sports complexes and are lifted off after the improvement is paid off.

## **Impact Fees**

These fees are on top of the set user rate for accessing facilities such as golf courses, recreation centers and pool facilities to support capital improvements that benefit the user of the facility.

## USER FEES

### Recreation Service Fees

This is a dedicated user fee, which can be established by a local ordinance or other government procedures for the purpose of constructing and maintaining recreation facilities. The fee can apply to all organized activities, which require a reservation of some type or other purposes, as defined by the local government. Examples of such activities include adult basketball, volleyball, tennis, and softball leagues, youth baseball, soccer, football and softball leagues, and special interest classes. The fee allows participants an opportunity to contribute toward the upkeep of the facilities being used.

### Fees/Charges

The Department must position its fees and charges to be market-driven and based on both public and private facilities. The potential outcome of revenue generation is consistent with national trends relating to public park and recreation agencies, which generate an average 35% to 50% of operating expenditures.

### Ticket Sales/Admissions

This revenue source is on accessing facilities for self-directed activities such as pools, ice skating rinks, ballparks and entertainment facilities. These user fees help offset operational costs.

### Permits (Special Use Permits)

These special permits allow individuals to use specific park property for financial gain. The City either receives a set amount of money or a percentage of the gross service that is being provided.

## TAX SUPPORT

### Bond Issues

Agencies typically seek park bonds to meet park-related needs. The key is to use debt financing through bonds to address needs that are both unmet and clearly a community priority. It is best to propose a capital-bond project that serves a variety of users and needs.

### Property Taxes

Ad valorem taxes on real property.

## **Special Improvement District/Benefit District**

Taxing districts established to provide funds for certain types of improvements that benefit a specific group of affected properties. Improvements may include landscaping, the erection of fountains, and acquisition of art, and supplemental services for improvement and promotion, including recreation and cultural enhancements.

## **Public Improvement District (PID)**

New developments can establish a Public Improvement District (PID) when authorized by the City Council and legally set up according to state law. This taxing district provides funds especially for the operation and maintenance of public amenities such as parks and major boulevards.

# **FRANCHISES AND LICENSE AGREEMENTS**

## **Concession Management**

Concession management is from retail sales or rentals of soft goods, hard goods, or consumable items. The City either contracts for the service or receives a set amount of the gross percentage or the full revenue dollars that incorporates a profit after expenses.

## **Private Management**

Contract with a private business to provide and operate desirable recreational activities financed, constructed and operated by the private sector, with additional compensation paid to the City.

## **Naming Rights**

Many cities and counties have turned to selling the naming rights for new buildings or renovation of existing buildings and parks for the development cost associated with the improvement.

## **Private Developers**

These developers enter into license agreements for City-owned land through a subordinate agreement that pays out a set dollar amount plus a percentage of gross dollars for recreation enhancements. These could include a golf course, marina, restaurants, driving ranges, sports complexes, equestrian facilities, recreation centers and ice arenas.



## **Easements**

This revenue source is available when the City allows utility companies, businesses or individuals to develop some type of an improvement above ground or below ground on their property for a set period of time and a set dollar amount to be received by the City on an annual basis.

## **Advertising Sales**

This revenue source is for the sale of tasteful and appropriate advertising on park and recreation related items such as in the City's program guide, on scoreboards, dasher boards and other visible products or services that are consumable or permanent that exposes the product or service to many people.

## **Interlocal Agreements**

Contractual relationships entered into between two or more local units of government and/or between a local unit of government and a non-profit organization for the joint usage/development of sports fields, regional parks, or other facilities.

## **GRANTS**

The grant market continues to grow annually. Grant writers and researchers are essential if the Department is to pursue grants. Matching dollars are required for most federal grants and many state grants. A detailed listing of grants available to the Department can be found as a stand-alone document separate from the LRP.

# HOW WE WILL MEASURE AND TRACK PROGRESS (THE MATRIX)

## NOTE:

AS DESCRIBED PREVIOUSLY IN THIS CHAPTER, THE ACTION PRIORITY RANKING TOOL (THE MATRIX) IS BEING DEVELOPED TO HELP PARD PRIORITIZE EACH ACTION RECOMMENDED BY THE LRP AND WILL BE COMPLETED FOLLOWING PLANNING SUMMIT #3.