



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

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This Introduction outlines the contents of the Visioning Document and sets the stage for why this document is important to the future development of the park. It provides the history of the park and how the park became what it is today. It also identifies the location and boundary of the study area and lists the existing program elements that were analyzed during the planning process.

1.1 ABOUT THE VISIONING DOCUMENT

The intent of the visioning document is to serve as a guide for future development of Emma Long Metropolitan Park. The year-long planning process combines the goals for improving the site with the input that was received from the public, park personnel and the City, which influenced, shaped and defined what is included in the Vision Plan. Recommendations and a prioritized phasing plan were then created to support build-out of the Vision Plan. This document embraces the historic significance which gives this park its unique character.



1.2 PARK HISTORY, DEVELOPMENT AND SIGNIFICANCE

ABOUT THE PARK

In 1939, the City of Austin acquired 1,008 acres of the park along approximately one mile of lake frontage on Lake Austin. The majority of the park is covered with oak, ash and juniper woodland and provides habitats to hawks, wildflowers and Golden-cheeked Warblers, as well as access to fossils and many other natural features.

In December 1939, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) set up housing within the park and began developing the land into a municipal park, which was originally known as Lake Austin Park. Their work included planting trees and sod, stabilizing the banks, and building the roads, bathhouse and concession stand. Many years later, the original wooden bathhouse and concession stand burned down and were replaced, in 1953, by stone buildings which still stand today.

The park faced challenges with the maintenance of the existing park infrastructure in the 1950s and 1960s which led the City Council to approve moving a house onto the park so that it could serve as a living quarters for the caretaker.

In the early 1970s, a portion of the park was dedicated to motorcycle trails. The trails are actively used by three different riding clubs today. The majority of the park is located within the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve (BCP) and has eight endangered species within the preserve, including two songbirds and six invertebrates. The most notable endangered species is the Golden-cheeked Warbler.

In 1984, Austin City Council changed the current City Park name to Emma Long Metropolitan Park after Austin City Council member Emma Long. Ms. Long reactivated the Parks and Recreation Board and was a long-time supporter of the board. Because of her dedication to the City Council and love for the park, Austin City Council renamed the park in her memory.

The City eventually purchased more land which expanded the park to 1,147 acres.





1.3 SITE DESCRIPTION

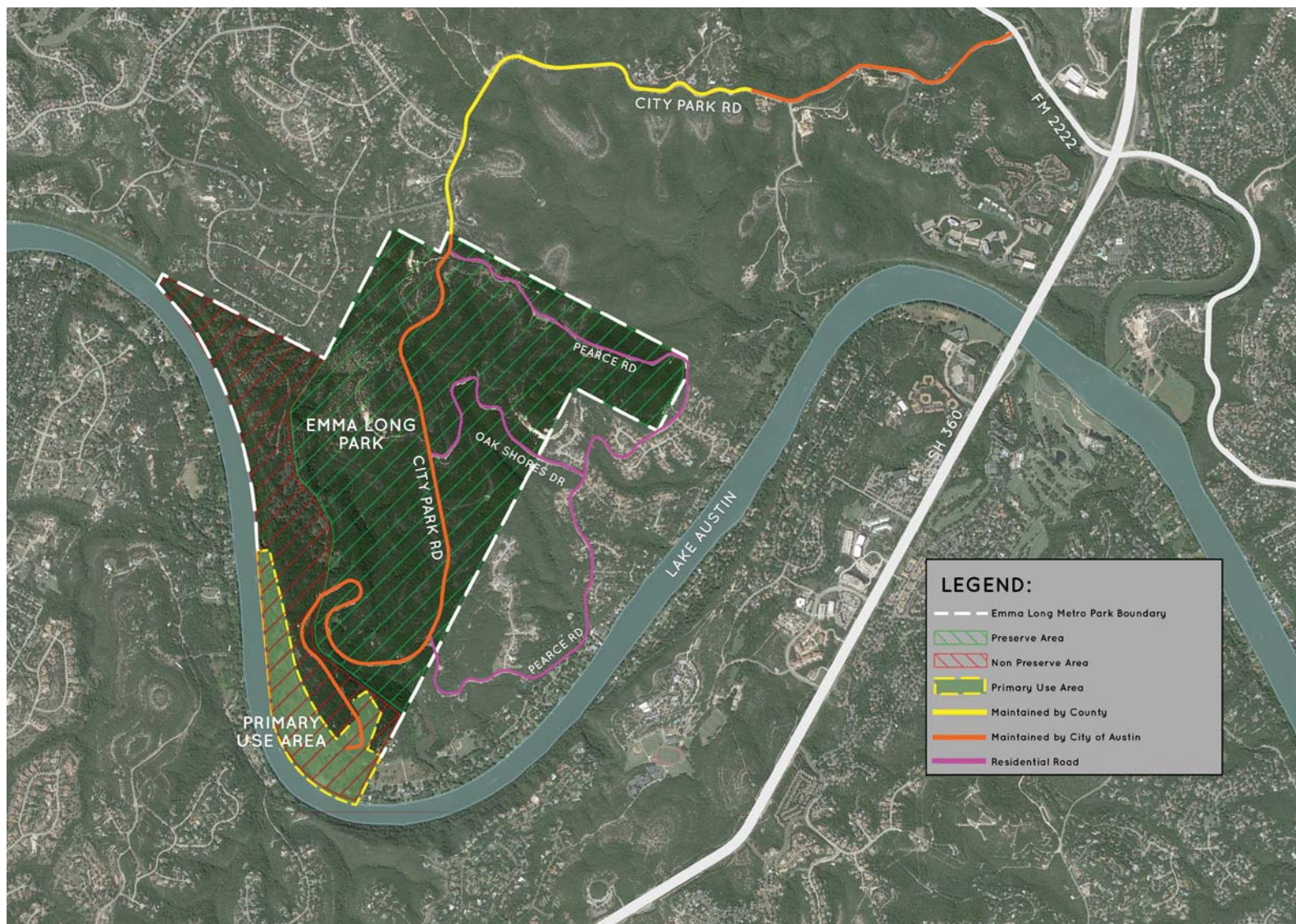
Emma Long Park is a beautiful 1,147 acre nature and recreational park located in northwest Austin. The park is accessed by car from the intersection of FM 2222 and City Park Road, which begins the six-mile long journey to the park entry booth. City Park Road is a curvy, narrow road that winds through thick forested areas in order to reach its remote location along Lake Austin. City Park Road contains a stretch of roadway that shifts from City of Austin to Travis County maintained right-of-way, which is diagrammed on the following page. There are multiple residential roads that intersect with City Park Road. Most notably, Pearce Road north, Oak Shores Drive, and Pearce Road south. City Park Road not only carries traffic to the park but it is an important connection for many residential homeowners.

On the facing map, the white dashed line represents the Park in its entirety which encompasses the 1,147 acres. The area of the Park that is within the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve (BCP) is represented by the green diagonal lines. The BCP consists of a system of preserves that exists as a multi-agency conservation effort operating under a regional 10(a) permit issued under the Endangered Species Act by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), with the goal of protecting endangered species habitat. Because of the sensitive nature of the BCP, construction activities are limited to certain times of the year and extra care has to be taken when construction is underway.

As visitors drive further into the park, they leave the preserve area and enter the non-preserve area, represented by the red diagonal line. This area is still important and should be protected, but it does not follow the stringent development guidelines that have to be followed within the BCP.

Towards the end of City Park Road, visitors enter the Primary Use Area, represented by the yellow dashed line. This area encompasses approximately 75 acres, has one mile of lake frontage along Lake Austin and is the primary focus of this Visioning Document.

EMMA LONG METROPOLITAN PARK AND CITY PARK ROAD DIAGRAM



1.4 PROGRAM ELEMENTS

The Park is home to many planned community activities and provides program elements that attract people to the park on a year-round basis. Boy Scouts camping trips, neighborhood meetings, birthday parties, weddings and family celebrations are just a few of the organized activities that occur at the Park each year.



Access to Lake Austin



Basketball Court



Bathhouse Plaza



Bathhouse



Boat Ramp and Dock



Central Lawn



Connection to Nature Trails



Fishing along the Shoreline

In addition to providing a space for organized activities, the Park has active and passive recreational activities that attract people of all ages. Picnicking, swimming, boating, camping, fishing and sports are among the most popular activities provided within the Primary Use Area.



Open Lawn for Picnicking



Reservable Group Picnicking Area



RV Camping



Sand Beach



Swim Docks



Tent Camping along the Bluff



Turkey Creek Pavilion



Volleyball Courts

