

PARKS and TREES

Achieve and maintain healthy, sustainable, functional, quality, safe and aesthetically-beautiful parks and green spaces that provide opportunities for cultural interactions within the North Lamar Combined Neighborhood Planning Area.

Parks

Parks are the cornerstones of a city's neighborhoods; they foster a sense of community by offering the opportunity to congregate, interact, and recreate with one another. Parks can also provide healthy and natural alternatives to their surrounding built environments.

With only two parks within its boundaries, the North Lamar Combined Neighborhood Planning Area (NLCNPA) is underserved; of the approximately 1,297 acres of the NLCNPA, only 0.67 percent (8.67 acres) are City parks. These two parks do not meet the current and future needs of the community as its population continues to grow.

❖ The existing parks of the NLCNPA should better serve the community.

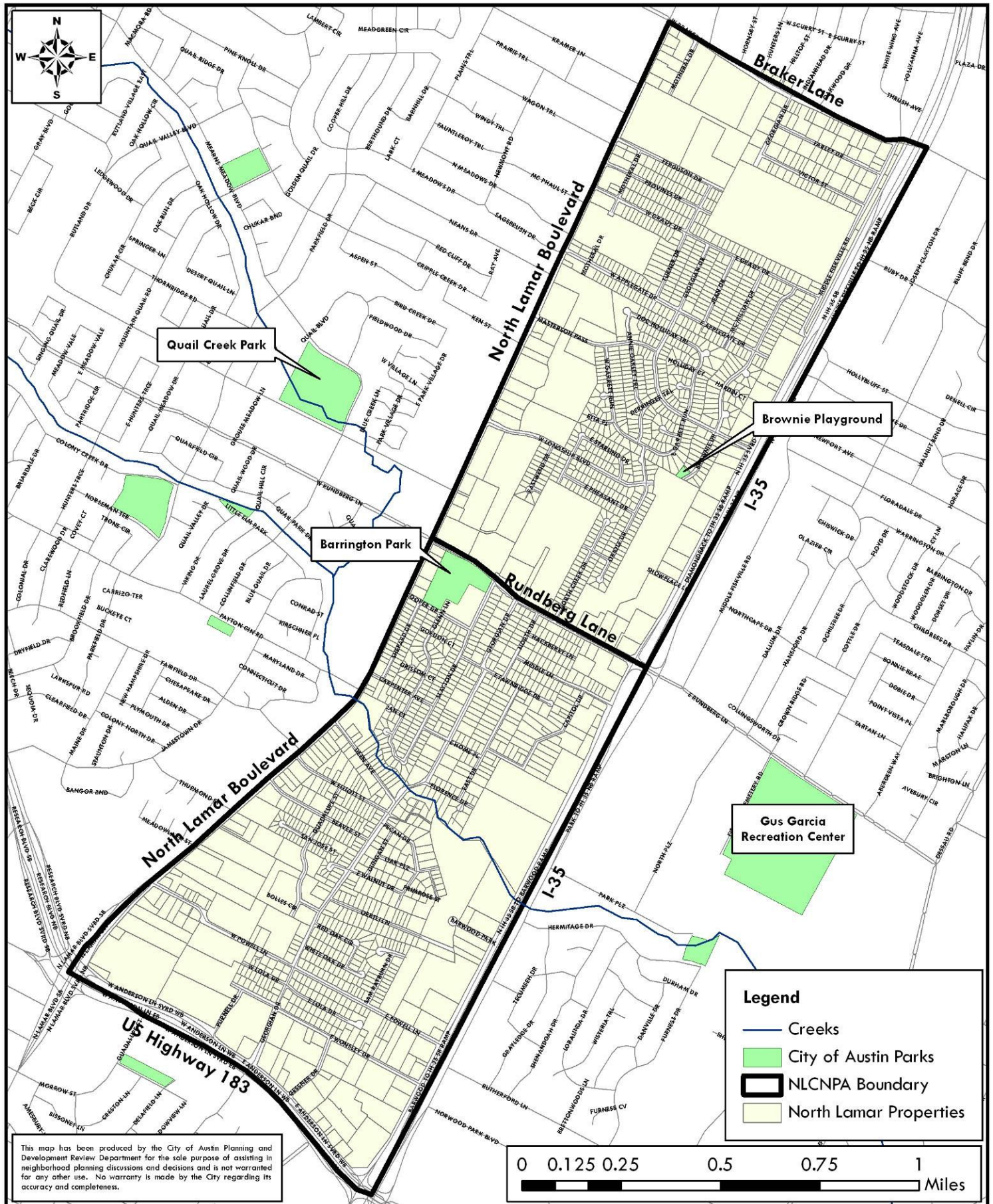
The two existing parks in the NLCNPA, Barrington Park and Brownie Playground, should be improved in both their functionality and safety. See the *Area Parks* map on page 39 for the location of these parks within the NLCNPA.

Barrington Park is an approximately 8.35 acre, shared park facility with the Austin Independent School District (AISD) located at Barrington Elementary School. Current facilities at Barrington Park include a playground area, multi-purpose field, covered basketball court, dirt track, and several fitness machines. The park's facilities truly make it a public gathering place, utilized by schoolchildren, neighborhood residents, and area sports leagues.



Barrington Park offers its patrons a playground area (left) and a multi-purpose field for various recreational activities (right).

At approximately 0.32 acres, the Brownie Playground is a modest park containing a small playscape and picnic area. Located at the southern terminus of Brownie Drive, the playground is not easily accessible from many parts of the NLCNPA. In fact, the



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immediate neighborhood near the playground is perceived as being neither inviting nor safe for visitors; thus, the playground is used most by those families living within close proximity.



Brownie Playground's playscape and picnic area provide recreational opportunities to area residents.

Objective P.1: Improve Barrington Park facilities.

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| Recommendation 39 | Install additional drinking fountains at Barrington Park. |
| Recommendation 40 | Provide continual clearance of trash and debris found on the Barrington Park grounds. |
| Recommendation 41 | Develop a maintenance strategy to improve the quality of the park's multi-purpose field. |

Objective P.2: Improve the access to and safety of Brownie Playground.

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| Recommendation 42 | Investigate ways to improve access to Brownie Playground. |
| Recommendation 43 | Examine strategies that will promote wider usage of the Brownie Playground. Such strategies could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improved lighting• The placement of emergency call boxes |
| Recommendation 44 | Encourage increased police patrols by the Austin Police Department at or near Brownie Playground. |

❖ **Future parks should meet the needs of those living within the NLCNPA.**

The NLCNPA does not have a local-serving, neighborhood park that would allow its residents opportunity to recreate, gather, and interact. The NLCNPA also lacks a sufficient amount of City-owned land where a future City-run park could be located; refer to the *Area Parks and COA-Owned Land* map on page 42 for the location of these parcels. However, concurrent with the planning process, the Parks and Recreation Department (PAR) was actively seeking land within the NLCNPA to provide another park in the immediate area. For a list of criteria PAR uses in determining the location and placement of future parks, refer to the Criteria for Parkland Acquisition informational box below.

If a new park is developed, it will be a local asset for the NLCNPA community and its diverse population. Neighborhood stakeholders explicitly stated their desire to incorporate amenities that would address the area's cultural diversity, climate change initiatives, and the overall health of their neighborhood. Stakeholders felt the new park should have a limited service area, serving only the NLCNPA and its immediate surroundings. They were concerned that a larger-scaled park would not foster a sense of community; consequently, they decided to limit the type and number of amenities that support large-group activities (e.g., baseball and softball fields, basketball courts) at a new neighborhood park.

Criteria for Parkland Acquisition

The Parks and Recreation Department (PAR) uses a gap analysis to identify areas throughout the City of Austin that are deficient of public parkland. According to PAR officials, in 2008, NLCNPA residents lacked adequate access to neighborhood parks and, therefore, PAR was actively seeking opportunities to provide a park within the area.

When analyzing land for future acquisition, PAR uses the following criteria:

- Current deficiency of parkland within the area
- Size of the land
- Road frontage
- Developable ability
- Present natural features
- Accessibility
- Connectivity
- Leverage opportunities with developers or the public
- Present cultural features



For more information, refer to PAR's "Long Range Plan for Land and Facilities" at:
<http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/parks/history.htm>.

Objective P.3: A new park should be located within the NLCNPA.

Recommendation 45 Find and allocate land for a new park within the NLCNPA.

Recommendation 46 Examine opportunities for a public-private partnership to develop and manage community recreational facilities, including a new park, within the NLCNPA.

Objective P.4: The new park should become a neighborhood asset to the NLCNPA.

Recommendation 47 Consider the incorporation of the following amenities within the design of a new park:

- 47.A. Drinking fountains for both people and dogs
- 47.B. Interactive water fountain
- 47.C. Benches
- 47.D. Picnic tables
- 47.E. A pavilion and/or an area that can be reserved for various functions
- 47.F. Bar-B-Que pits and/or grills
- 47.G. Trash cans
- 47.H. “Mutt Mitt” stations with bags and receptacles for pet waste
- 47.I. Playground equipment
- 47.J. Walking trails
- 47.K. Exercise equipment similar to that found at Barrington Park
- 47.L. An area for a community garden
- 47.M. Large open space to allow for various activities, including football and kite-flying

Objective P.5: The new park should directly serve the NLCNPA community and its surrounding neighborhoods.

Recommendation 48 Examine the feasibility to limit the number of amenities within the new park so as not to attract large groups of people from outside the neighborhood.



A new neighborhood park should have a gazebo (left) and playscapes made from recycled materials (right).

Photo at left courtesy of:
<http://www.banff.ca/locals-residents/recreation/facilities/central-park.htm>

Photo at right courtesy of:
<http://www.learningstructures.com/>

Objective P.6: The new park should address the cultural diversity present within the NLCNPA.

Recommendation 49 Incorporate into the park’s design a gazebo or other performance-type venue that will allow for a variety of

culturally-related performances, including music and dance.

Objective P.7: *The design for a new park should include facilities that promote the safety, convenience, and comfort of its users.*

- Recommendation 50** Provide restroom facilities for park users.
- Recommendation 51** Provide adequate parking for park visitors.
- Recommendation 52** Investigate safety measures that will protect all park visitors. These measures could include:
- Emergency call boxes
 - Lighting
- Recommendation 53** Encourage Austin Police Department security patrols at or near the new park.

Objective P.8: *The design for a new park should include facilities and amenities that promote sustainability and climate protection.*

- Recommendation 54** Incorporate renewable energy sources into the design of the park's facilities. These sources could include:
- Rooftop wind turbines
 - Solar paneling
 - Electric car plug-in sites
- Recommendation 55** Use recycled and/or recyclable materials in the construction of the parks' facilities and amenities.



The landscaping of the area's new park should resemble that of the Cherrywood Green in east Austin with its native, low-growing plant species.

Objective P.9: *The new park's landscaping should provide function and safety to all visitors.*

- Recommendation 56** Place landscaping in areas where it will not interfere with activities that occur on the park's open spaces.

Recommendation 57 Plant those tree species that will, upon maturation, enhance the tree canopy of the new park. These species include:

- Pecan
- Live Oak
- Chinquapin Oak
- Bur Oak
- Cedar Elm

Recommendation 58 Plant low-growing, native shrubbery and/or greenery that promote natural surveillance¹⁵ among visitors of the new park. Certain species could include:

- Prickly pear cactus
- Yucca
- Agarita
- Naturalized rose species
- Other similar plant types

Recommendation 59 Provide regular maintenance of the park's landscaping.

Trees

Trees are an asset to any neighborhood, providing economic, aesthetic, and environmental value. Areas with trees are generally more desirable and potentially more valuable than those without. Trees also improve the surrounding environment by absorbing carbon dioxide and other air pollutants, mitigating storm-water runoff, and acting as a passive heating and cooling mechanism for area homes and businesses.



Large trees at homes on Georgian Drive (left) and Red Oak Circle (right) enhance the aesthetic quality of the NLCNPA

¹⁵ Refer to the *What is Crime Prevention through Environmental Design?* informational box on page 28 for a definition of “natural surveillance.”