



# WALTER E. LONG METROPOLITAN VISION PLAN

AUSTIN, TX





# WALTER E. LONG METROPOLITAN PARK VISION PLAN

AUSTIN, TX

OCTOBER 2020



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## IN MEMORIAM

Louis’ Rene Barrera advocated for, managed and protected the Austin Nature Preserve System for 23 years as an employee with the City of Austin. He was a philosopher who could eloquently explain the details of erosion while quoting Walden. In 2005 the Austin Chronicle called attention to just how special Rene was... “The city of Austin is home to roughly 1 gazillion waxleaf ligustrum plants, and only one René Barrera.” In 2019, one of the preserves that benefited from his leadership was renamed in his honor to the Louis’ Rene Barrera Indiangrass Wildlife Sanctuary.

Amanda Ross, PAR Division Manager, Natural Resources Programs

The Walter E. Long Metro Park planning and design team are very grateful for Rene’s service to the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department and his work managing the Austin Nature Preserve System. We are especially grateful for his involvement in this vision planning process to help shape the future of the city’s largest municipal park.

PARD Planning Team and Halff Associates





# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION & ANALYSIS

Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park is regionally renowned for its beautiful lake with its surrounding natural resources, and also as an outstanding fishing location.



INTRODUCTION

The Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park Vision Plan will help determine the long-range vision for the entirety of the park, including areas currently used by other organizations. Potential improvements in the park could include elements such as enhanced trails, additional water-related recreation, fitness opportunities, camping, special event venues, and educational and cultural exhibits.

OVERVIEW

Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park is Austin’s largest park. It is located on the far eastern boundary of Austin, just west of State Highway 130, and is a comfortable drive from Downtown Austin. The park property includes 3,695 acres of parkland which includes Lake Walter E. Long, which is 1,165 acres in size and is teeming with countless preserved habitats. The Travis County Exposition Center is located within the site. There are several existing facilities in the park which include hike and bike trails, picnic areas, volleyball courts, boat ramps, and fishing piers. There is also a skeet shooting range and model airplane range within the park which are operated by separate organizations. There have been several previous plans to develop the park which date as far back as the mid-1960s.



A typical view of thriving prairie grass and woody vegetation present in Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park.

OUR PURPOSE - WHY CREATE A PLAN FOR WALTER E. LONG METROPOLITAN PARK?

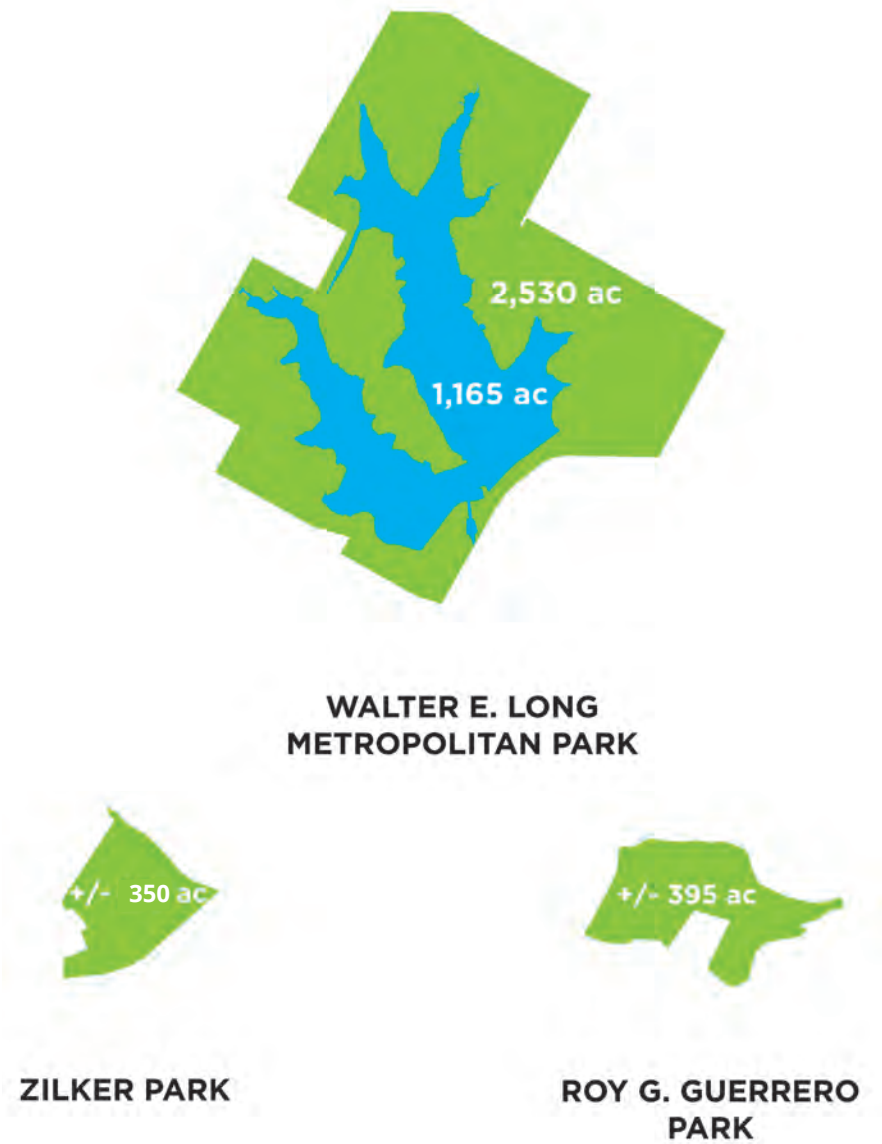
The primary function of this vision plan is to determine a vision for Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park that takes into consideration significant growth throughout Austin, and in particular growth around Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park. It looks at current and future trends in recreation, in park planning and design, in technology and funding in creative mechanisms for funding, so as to ensure that park development is guided in a feasible and responsible manner. The Plan’s vision intends to create a path toward development of Austin’s largest park resource. The plan will also look at how the park can be maintained over time. The vision plan explores many possible park improvements, including trails, water-related recreation, special event venues, education opportunities, sports attractions, and the site’s relationship to the existing Travis County Exposition Center.

INTENDED PURPOSE

The adopted plan for Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park is intended to provide the Parks and Recreation Department a blueprint for future development of the park. The plan will be regularly reviewed as other regional planning efforts occur within the surrounding census tracts to ensure compatibility. As appropriate, the Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park Vision plan will be amended to incorporate regional concepts with Austin City Council approval.

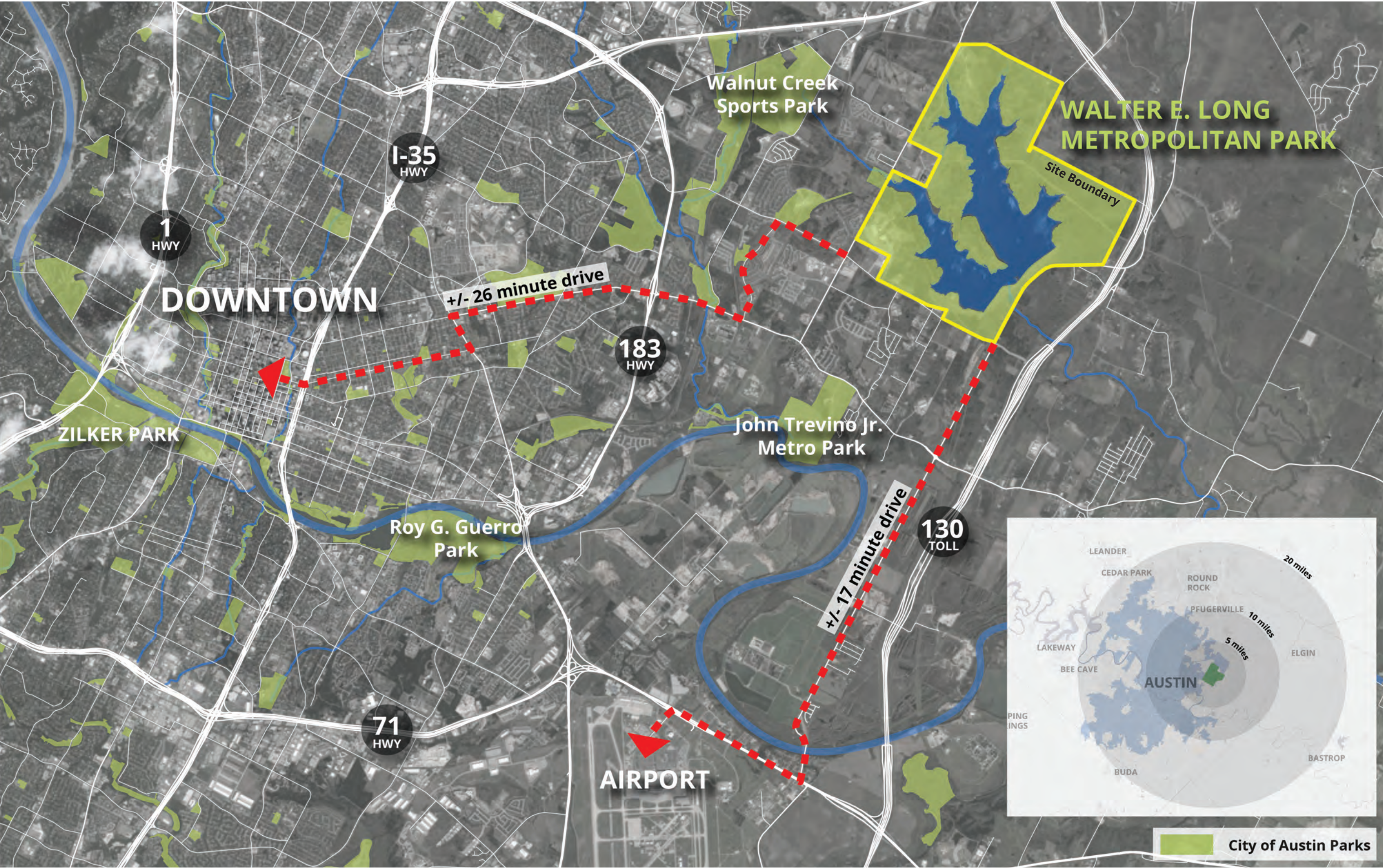


Lake Walter E. Long allows for a variety of recreational opportunities which includes swimming and fishing.



AUSTIN’S LARGEST PARK

Austin is a city known for its parks and natural greenbelts which make it a fantastic place to live. While many parks around the Austin area are known for their natural beauty and notable events, only one city park holds the distinction of being the biggest - Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park. Aside from its size, it contains a wide variety of natural resources, including a 1,165 acre lake which offers many recreational opportunities. This vision plan will focus on how this park’s development can be guided into the future.



Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park is strategically located on the east side of Austin but is readily accessible from the entire metropolitan area.

**“I enjoy taking my family to Walter E. Long park, and will continue for many years!”**

*- City of Austin Resident*



HISTORY

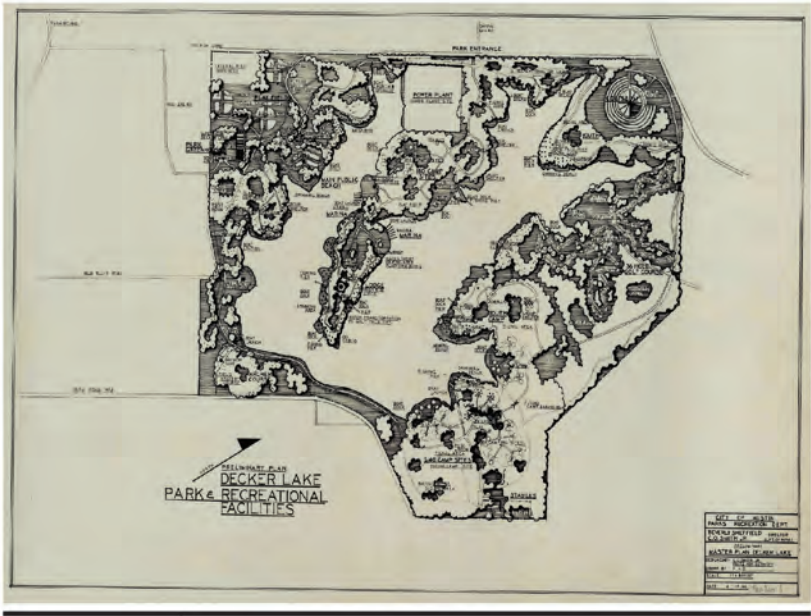
The expansion of the City of Austin’s steam turbine plant along Decker Road in the mid 1960’s required a constant source of water for cooling, and resulted in the need for a new lake in the area. Construction of the dam started in May 1966 and introduction of water began in early 1967.

There have been numerous planning and development efforts for the land surrounding the lake over the years; the ones shown here are the 1966 Preliminary Master Plan for Decker Lake, the 1968 Lake Walter E. Long Land Use Plan, the 1977 Walter E. Long Recreation Evaluation, the 1978 Walter E. Long Proposed Development Plan, the 1985 Golf Course Proposal, and the 2014 Golf Course Proposal. Since 1968, the following master plan items have been constructed: established two Nature Preserves - Louis Rene Barrera Indiangrass Wildlife Sanctuary and the Decker Tallgrass Prairie Preserve; two boat docks; restrooms; a portion of a hike and bike trail; enhanced native grassland areas, main park road, picnic areas, and a swimming area. The restrooms are no longer in operation.

Several golf courses have been proposed since the creation of the park. The initial golf course, proposed with the 1966 master plan, included a 36-hole course, driving range, putting green, clubhouse, pitch and putt, and miniature golf. The idea of golf at Walter E. Long Park has been part of succeeding master plans beginning with the 1978 master plan. Most of these courses were proposed where the Louis Rene Barrera Indiangrass Wildlife Sanctuary is now located, with others in the eastern sector of the site.



1968 Lake officially impounded/created



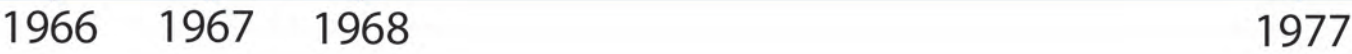
1966 Preliminary Master Plan for Decker Lake



1968 Lake Walter E. Long Land Use Plan



1977 Walter E. Long Recreation Evaluation



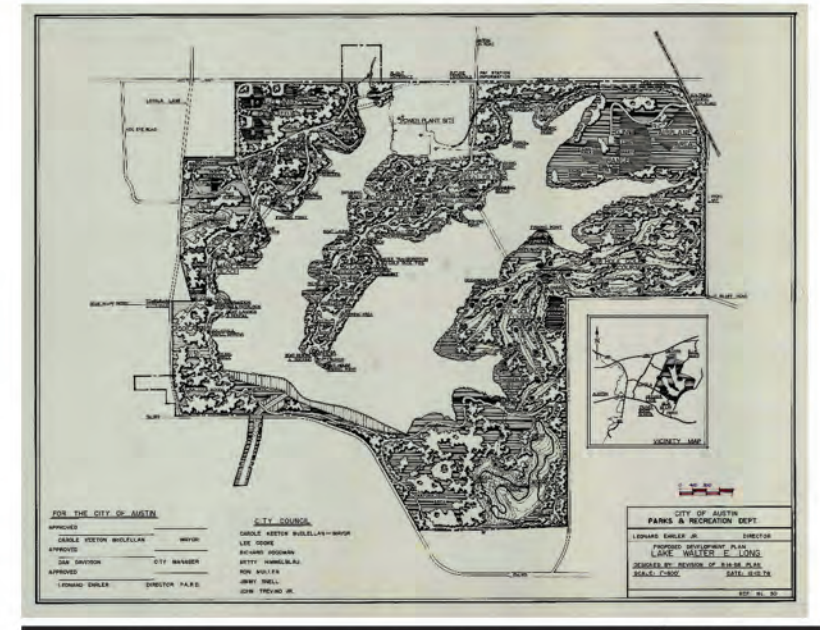


The Travis County Expo Center is located on the southwest corner of the park and hosts multiple events annually.

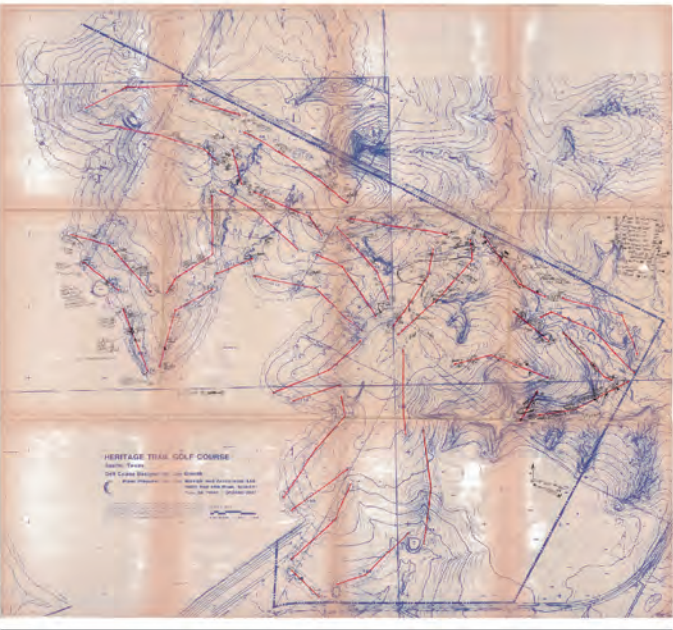
## HISTORY

In more recent years, several plans have been proposed, which include the 1978 Walter E. Long Proposed Development Plan, the 1985 Golf Course Proposal and the 2014 Golf Course Proposal. In 1983, voters approved construction of the Travis County Exposition Center. In 1983, the Travis County Exposition Center was built on 128 acres leased from the City of Austin for 50 years. The Exposition Center was built to host livestock exhibitions, equestrian shows, rodeos and a variety of other events. Today, this large facility is host to multiple annual events such as Austin-Travis County Livestock Show, Rodeo Austin, and ROT Rally, as well as numerous other types of events (weddings, arts and crafts shows and trade shows).

2016 Travis County Expo Market Study



1978 Walter E. Long Proposed Development Plan



1985 Golf Course Proposal



2014 Golf Course Proposal

1978

1983

1985

2014

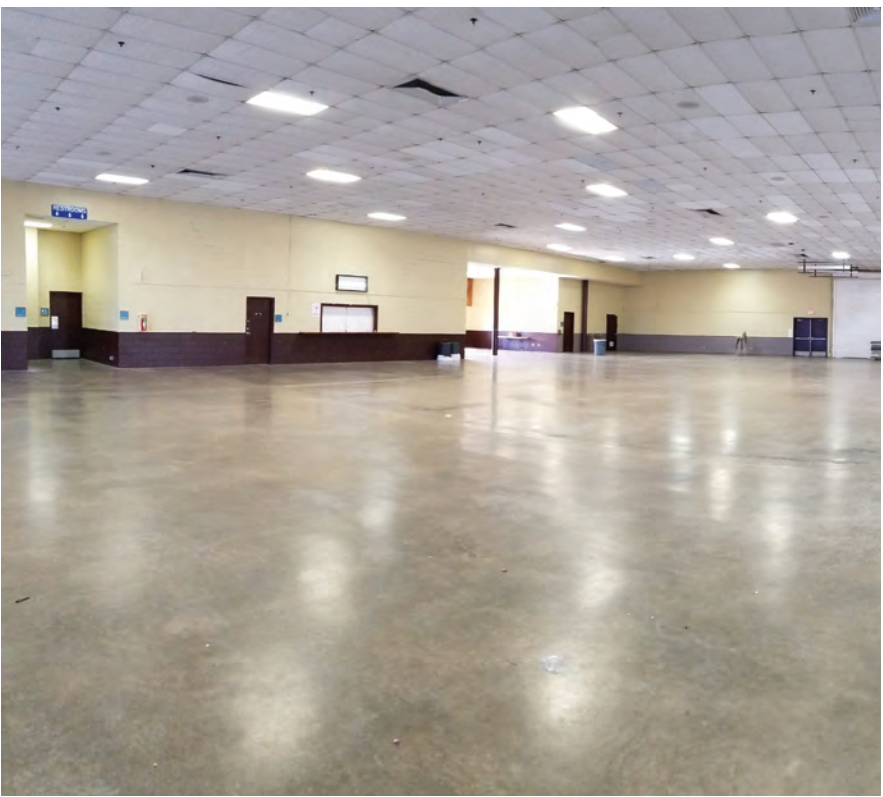
2016

TRAVIS COUNTY EXPOSITION CENTER

The Travis County Exposition Center (Expo Center) is a unique partnership of the city, county and the private not-for-profit Rodeo Austin. The 128 acres used by the Expo Center facilities are on city-owned parkland; the buildings are owned, operated and managed by Travis County and their facilities Management Department. Despite the fact that the facilities are quite large, they only use less than four percent of Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park land. Given its current state, it is the general consensus that the Expo Center and the land around it are under-utilized , but have a lot of potential.

The Expo Center facility is located in the southwestern corner of the park and is adjacent to land owned by Rodeo Austin. The property has several large structures that are dated and in need of major rehabilitation or replacement. The major facilities are comprised of a 6,400-seat pre-engineered arena, club and exhibit space totaling about 36,000 square feet; a 210,000 square-foot partially enclosed, partially asphalt floored, un air-conditioned show barn; and a 15,000 square-foot fully enclosed, fully conditioned meeting space with offices. There are approximately 4,000 parking spaces to support the facilities and events at the Expo Center.

With no major improvements over the last decade, the Expo Center is rapidly aging and in need of significant upgrades. In 2016, the City of Austin, Rodeo Austin, and Travis County completed an analysis of the Expo Center. That analysis indicated the need for over \$500 million in new building and site improvements. In 2033, the lease the City of Austin and Travis County for the Expo Center will expire.



Photos from within the Expo Center reveal the condition of the existing facilities and the large amount of space available.



A view of the exterior of the Expo Center and a historical aerial photograph showing the extent of the facilities.

## EMERGING AREA DEVELOPMENT

Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park is located in east Austin in an area experiencing extensive growth. An economic analysis, commissioned by the City of Austin Economic Development Department and completed in the direction of the City Council and the Economic Development Dept contracted by Economic & Planning Systems, Inc. (EPS) in 2018, indicates that approximately 19,000 residential units, and over 740,000 square feet of retail, two million square feet of office, and six million square feet of industrial/flex uses are planned and could be built within five miles of the park. If those development plans are realized, the number of households in the five-mile area are projected to grow by 152 percent, retail by 471 percent, and office/commercial by 254 percent. Much of this new development has been proposed along State Highway 130, east and north of the park.

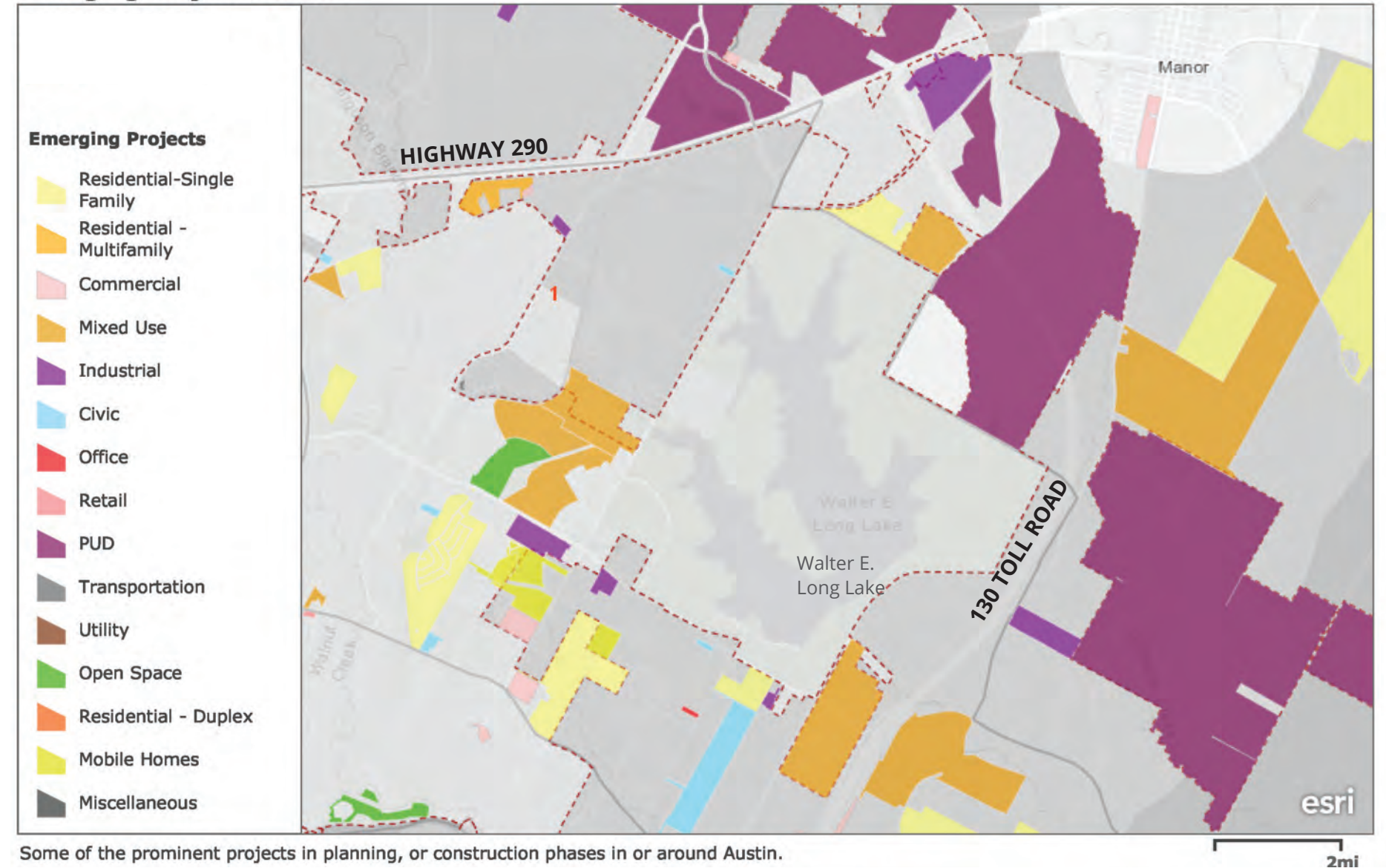
The availability of extensive nearby lands with significant development potential of all types indicates that Walter E. Long parklands, even if undeveloped, are not critically needed to accommodate area growth.

There is an immense amount of development planned, entitled, and underway that will transform the area surrounding the Park

- Most, if not all, market-driven development opportunities for office, retail, hotel, housing, etc. will be satisfied by emerging projects and need not be located at the Park
- Non-recreational development at the Park may be most appropriately geared toward projects and programs driven by public policy objectives rather than private market factors

However, the significant amount of projected growth in the area will greatly transform the park's surroundings. As development commences, the park will play an even greater role in providing recreational opportunities and environmental preservation for the area.

## Emerging Projects Austin



Some of the prominent projects in planning, or construction phases in or around Austin.

Sources: EPS, City of Austin Development Services Department, City of Austin "Emerging Projects" website, <http://www.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?webmap=a7677079f571441f98f9ed8df5ece62f&extent=-97.9753,30.2645,-97.3124,30.6263>, accessed 27 April 2018



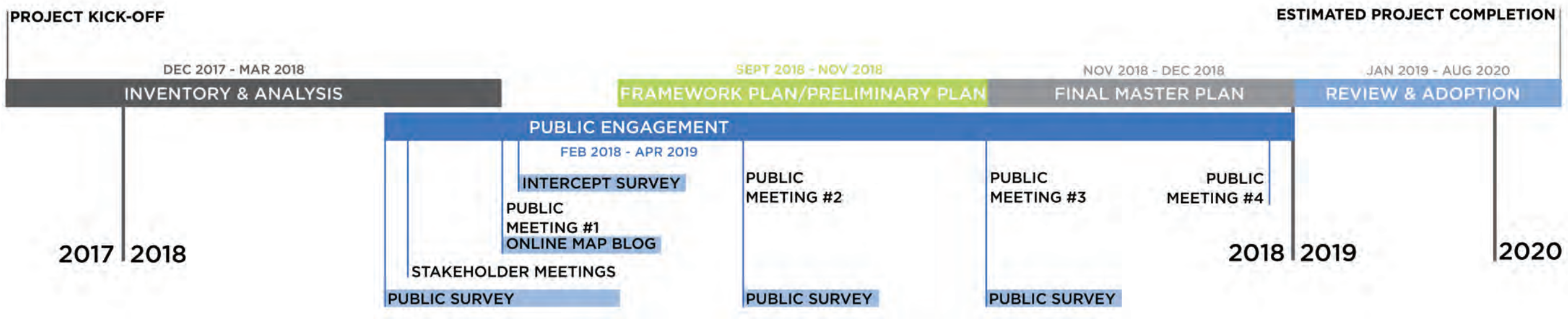
Development of Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park Vision Plan was guided by input from the public at large, area residents and park users, and technical guidance from City of Austin staff.



PLAN DEVELOPMENT

The Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park Vision Plan was developed over a 33 month time period from November 2017 to August 2020. The development of this long-range vision for the park was led by the Austin Parks and Recreation Department. A team led by Halff Associates facilitated the process and provided technical guidance throughout. Additional plan guidance was provided by a Technical Advisory Group made up of City and county staff as well as select key stakeholders (see Chapter 2, *Public Outreach*, for more information).

The community helped to identify issues and provide the vision for the future by participating in various forms of public engagement including stakeholder meetings, opinion surveys, and four public open house events (see Chapter 2, *Public Outreach*). The Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park Vision Plan was adopted by the Austin City Council in August 2020.

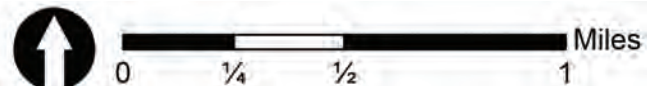




Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park and its area surroundings. Sources: Roadways (TxDOT 2018), Parks/Lake (City of Austin), Map compiled by Halff Associates.

SITE CONTEXT

Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park is located approximately eight miles east of Downtown Austin and contains approximately 3,695 acres of parkland. Within the park is a 1,165-acre reservoir, over 765 acres of preserved habitats and the Travis County Exposition Center located on 128 acres leased from the City of Austin. Some of the surrounding key locations include Bluebonnet Hill Golf Course, Decker Elementary School, Decker Middle School, and Colony Park. Austin Energy (AE) is located directly adjacent to Walter E. Long Park, and currently utilizes the lake water as part of its operations. The lake is used for a variety of recreational uses including swimming, fishing, boating and even as a training area for the University of Texas rowing team.



CIRCULATION

Since only portions of the park site are developed, circulation around and in the park is limited and fragmented. The primary park access point is off Blue Bluff Road at Decker Lake Road. Paved roads are located in that southern portion of the park near the entrance, as well as on the Travis County Expo site. Unpaved roads are located within the fenced parkland running parallel to FM 973. The unpaved road in the eastern portion of the park provides access to swimming and picnic areas, the Austin Energy dam and to the Louis Rene Barrera Indiangrass Wildlife Sanctuary. Another unpaved road in the northwestern portion of the park provides access to the skeet and aeromodeler center. New dedicated bike lanes have been built on Loyola Lane, west of Decker Lane, and on FM 973 east of Decker Lake Road. However, none of the roads around the perimeter of the park have dedicated bike lanes, despite much bike ridership. The roads around the park are termed “Shared Lanes” by the Austin Transportation Department, with recommendations for future bike lanes to be added.

The City has constructed a portion of the Austin-to-Manor Urban Trail in the northwest portion of the park, providing nearly 7,000 LF of existing urban trail for the park’s western side paralleling Decker Lane. The potential future parkland/vehicular access points shown have not been officially approved and are subject to change. Their locations are approximations based on currently available data.

LEGEND

Shared Road (bike/vehicular)

Bike Lane

Existing Unpaved Site Road

Existing Paved Site Road

Potential Future Parkland/ Vehicular Access Point

Proposed Urban Trails

Existing Urban Trails

Multi-Use Path

Vehicular and non-vehicular circulation around and in Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park. Sources: Roadways (TxDOT 2018), Parks/Lake/Site Roads/Trails (City of Austin), Map compiled by Halff Associates.



Utility infrastructure in and adjacent to Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park. Sources: Roadways (TxDOT 2018), Parks/Lake (City of Austin), Utility Data (Provided by Crespo Consulting Services, Inc.), Map compiled by Halff Associates.

## UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Overhead utility lines extend along the perimeter of the site, except along a portion of the east side. Wastewater lines are located on the southwest corner and along the peninsula adjacent to the lake. Over 34,000 linear feet of transmission lines span the site. These overhead electric lines are located within easements with a minimum 150-foot width. Existing infrastructure locations are a major consideration with regard to proposed design solutions. Utility easements bisect the landscape and have a strong visual impact. Several utility corridors are located throughout the park including natural gas lines, electric transmission lines, distribution lines, and miscellaneous access roads. Most of these utility corridors are periodically mowed and appear to be well-maintained.



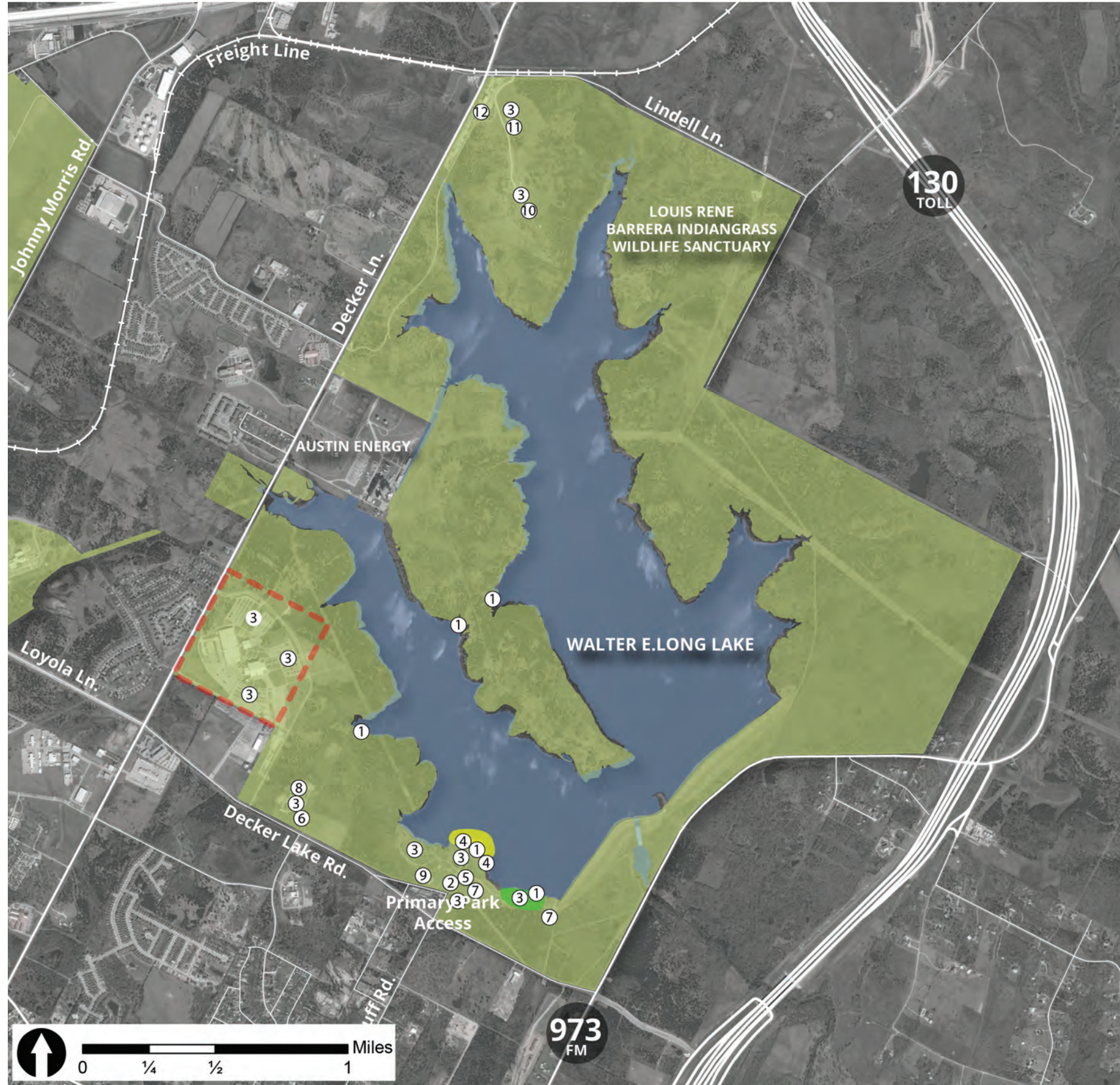
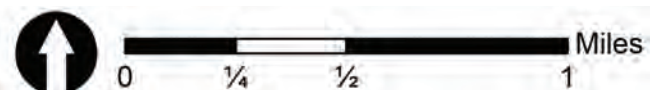
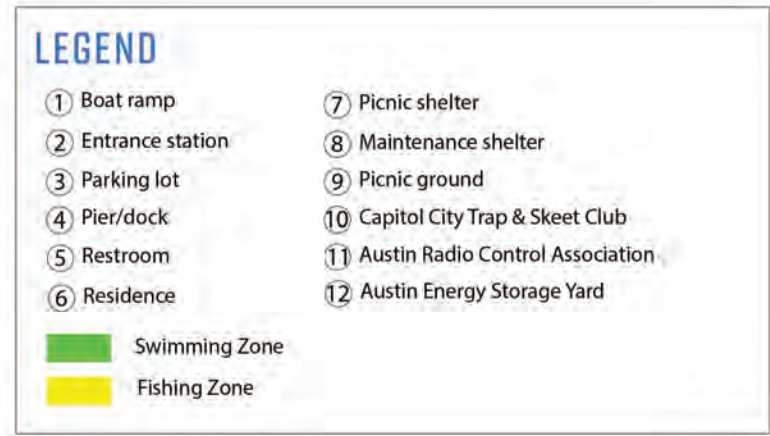
Regional overhead power lines passing through Walter E. Long park.

### LEGEND

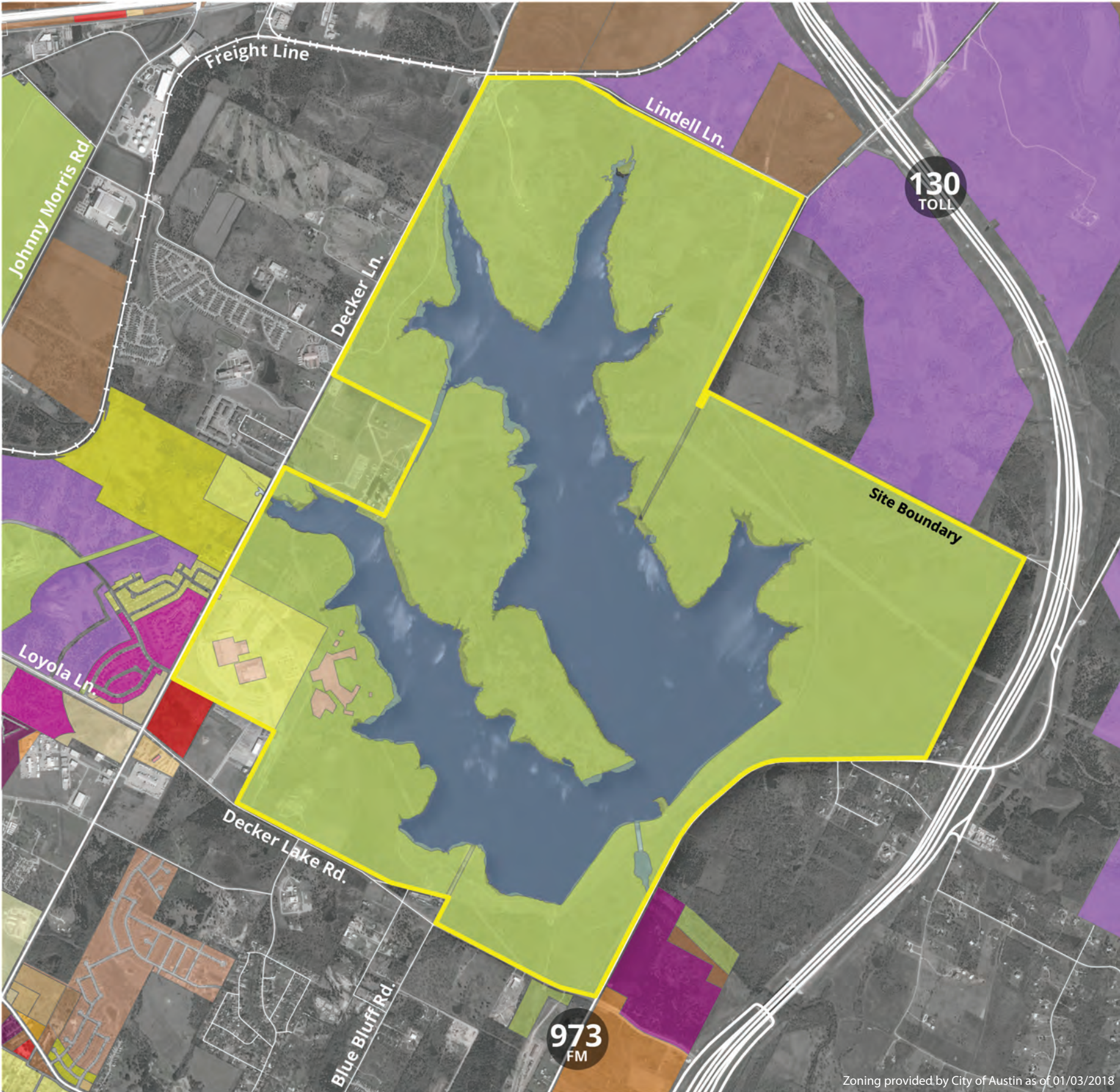
- |  |   |
|--|---|
|  Wastewater Lines |  Transmission Lines (50' buffer) |
|  Water Lines      |  Overhead Powerlines & Utilities |

EXISTING FACILITIES/IMPROVEMENTS

There are a number of existing park elements mainly located on the south and west side of the park. Some of the prominent park features include a boat ramp, entrance station, boat dock, restrooms, picnic shelters and picnic grounds. Also located within the park are the Travis County Expo Center, Austin Energy Decker Creek Power Station, Austin Energy maintenance yard, Capital City Trap and Skeet Club and Austin Radio Control Association. Improvements associated with these uses are also located in the park, including parking and site utilities.



Existing park, event, or other improvements at Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park. Sources: Roadways (TxDOT 2018), Parks/Lake/PARD Facility Points (City of Austin), Map compiled by Halff Associates.



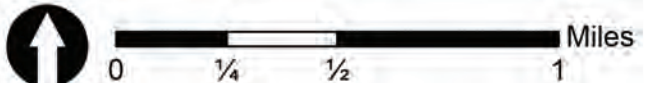
Area zoning. Sources: Roadways (TxDOT 2018), Parks/Lake/Zoning as of 01/03/2018 (City of Austin), Map compiled by Halff Associates.

## ZONING

Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park is zoned as “public,” with parts of the Travis County Expo Center area zoned as “commercial – liquor sales.” Much of the land to the north is zoned as Planned Unit Development (PUD), while some land zoned as residential lies to the west. The variety of land uses around the site may influence the design and planning solutions in this Vision Plan. As a critical step in the planning process, the ability to propose connections to surrounding land uses will be informed by current zoning conditions.

### LEGEND

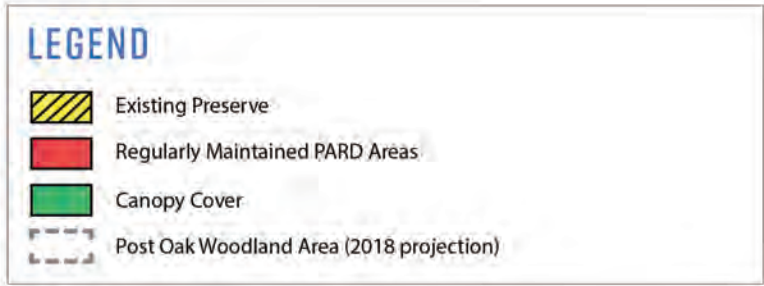
CS-1	Commercial-liquor sales	LI-CO	Limited industrial services (conditional)
CS-1-CO	Commercial-liquor sales (conditional)	MF-2	Multifamily residence low density
CS-CO	General commercial (conditional)	MF-3	Multifamily residence medium density
DR	Development reserve	MH	Mobile home residence
GO-CO	General office (conditional)	P	Public
GR	Community commercial	PUD	Planned unit development
GR-CO	Community commercial (conditional)	SF-2	Single-family residence standard lot
GR-MU-CO	Community commercial -mixed use (conditional)	SF-3	Family residence
I-RR	Interim rural residential	SF-4A	Single-family residence small lot
I-SF-4A	Interim single-family residence small lot	SF-4A-CO	Single-family residence small lot (conditional)
IP-CO	Industrial park (conditional)		



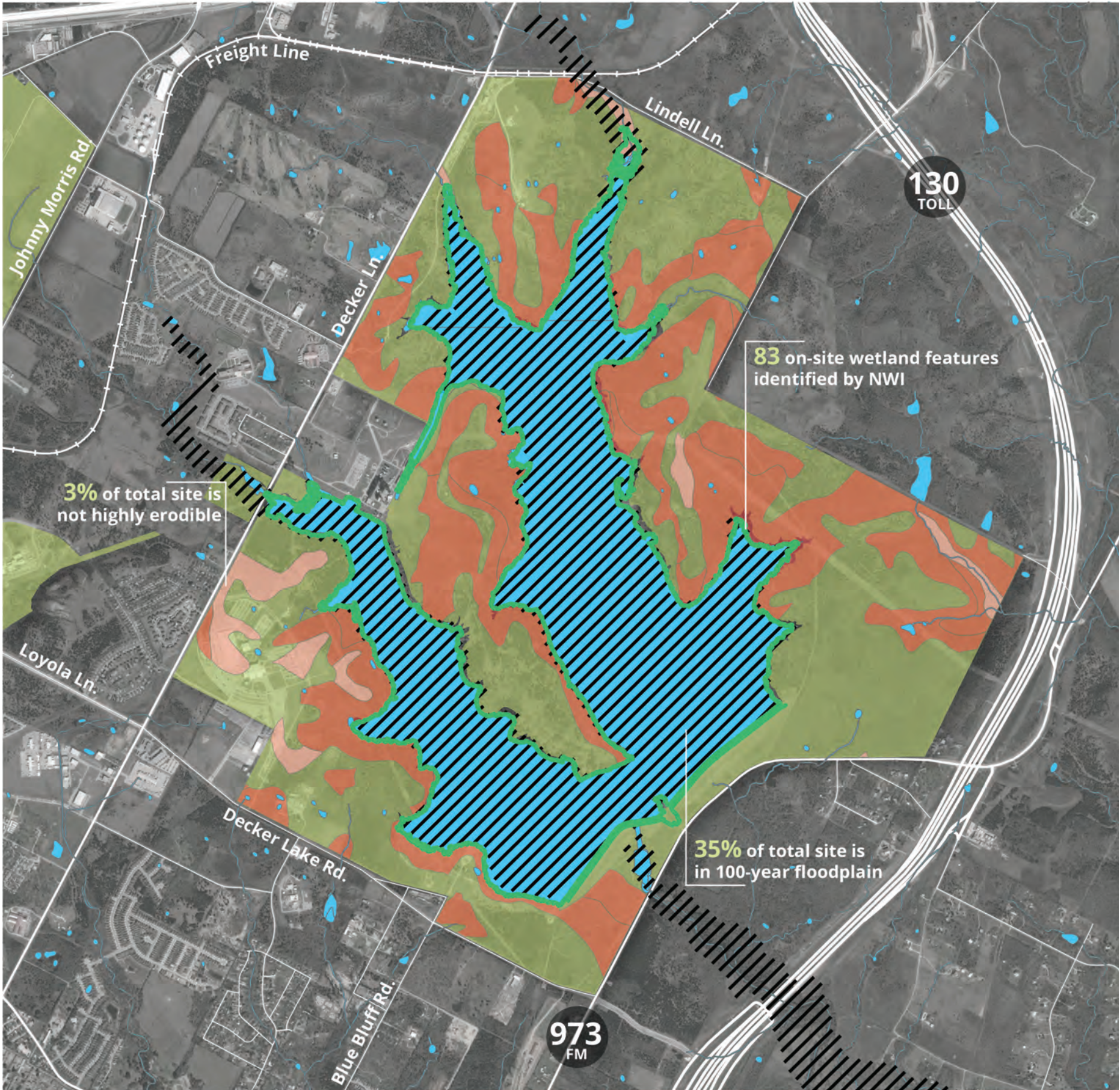
VEGETATION

The entire site is in the Blackland Prairie ecoregion, which is the highest conservation priority in the state of Texas. Plant species associated with human disturbance are common in the active, developed areas of the site. Approximately 70% of the total site contains canopy cover, while some areas have been clear cut and regularly maintained. There are two existing preserves: Decker Tallgrass Prairie Preserve and the Louis Rene Barrera Indiangrass Wildlife Sanctuary. The remnant Post Oaks in the Post Oak Woodland Area (2018 Projection) and the two existing Preserves contain rich wildlife habitats. Some of the more prominent existing woody species present are Eastern Red Cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*), Post Oak (*Quercus stellata*), Chinaberry (*Melia azedarach*), and Chinese Tallow (*Triadica sebifera*). Many of the natural areas in the park are havens for wildlife. The historical notes mention plant and animal species encountered during the 1980's. These include Beaver and Nutria, as well as Least Bitterns, Pied-billed Grebes, and American Coot. Bird sightings at the shoreline include rare nesting Least Bitterns.

Large areas on the southern end of the site have been cleared and regularly maintained by PARD. The Tallgrass preserve and Louis Rene Barrera Indiangrass Wildlife Sanctuary are maintained via conservation management, including prescribed burns with assistance from the Austin Fire Department.



Existing vegetation cover and preserves. Sources: Roadways (TxDOT 2018), Parks/Lake (City of Austin), Vegetation (Provided by Crespo Consulting Services, Inc.), Map compiled by Halff Associates.



Area hydrology in and around Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park. Sources: Roadways (TxDOT 2018), Parks/Lake (City of Austin), Floodplain (Provided By Crespo Consulting Services, Inc.), Wetland Data (Obtained from NWI), Hydrology Data (Provided by John Gleason, LLC), Map compiled by Halff Associates.

## HYDROLOGY

An outstanding natural feature of Walter E. Long Park is the extensive wetland system, one of the largest in central Texas. Individual wetlands (outside of the lake itself) comprise only a small portion of the total land mass and can be easily protected by appropriate buffers. According to National Wetlands Inventory (NWI), there are 83 on-site wetlands totaling over 1000 acres including Lake Walter E. Long. These wetlands provide invaluable wildlife, fishery, recreational and aesthetic benefits. Wetland plant species recently observed in the wetlands include Spikerush (*Eleocharis sp.*), Cattail (*Typha sp.*), and Willow (*Salix nigra*). Walter E. Long Park supports a variety of terrestrial and aquatic plants that are important to the ecology of the area. A critical water quality zone (CWQZ) is established around the lake at approximately the 554.5 foot contour, which precludes certain activities from taking place such as the development of amenities which contain a high amount of impervious cover.

### LEGEND

- CWQZ (Critical Water Quality Zone)
- Wetlands
- 100-year floodplain (including Lake Walter E. Long)
- Highly erodible land
- Not highly erodible land



0 1/4 1/2 1 Miles

SOILS

According to the National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Soils Survey, which includes Web Soil Survey (WSS) data, most of the soils on the site are clayey and prone to erosion, thus presenting limitations and challenges to natural area management and park development. Gravelly clay soils and those with high shrink-swell potential are present, and oftentimes exhibit cracks in response to drought. Soil erosion is a concern at the shoreline and where steep grades exist. The unique soil conditions present within Walter E. Long Park will impact design solutions in this vision plan with regard to strategic placement of development, location of amenities, and arrangement of programs.



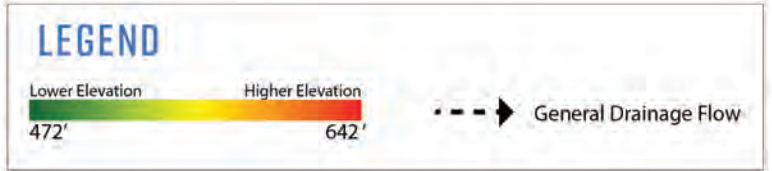
Area soils in and around Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park. Sources: Roadways (TxDOT 2018), Soils (Provided by Crespo Consulting Services, Inc.), Map compiled by Halff Associates.



Topography and elevation change across the park site. Sources: Roadways (TxDOT 2018), Parks/Lake (City of Austin), Topography (Provided By Crespo Consulting Services, Inc.), Map compiled by Halff Associates.

### TOPOGRAPHY

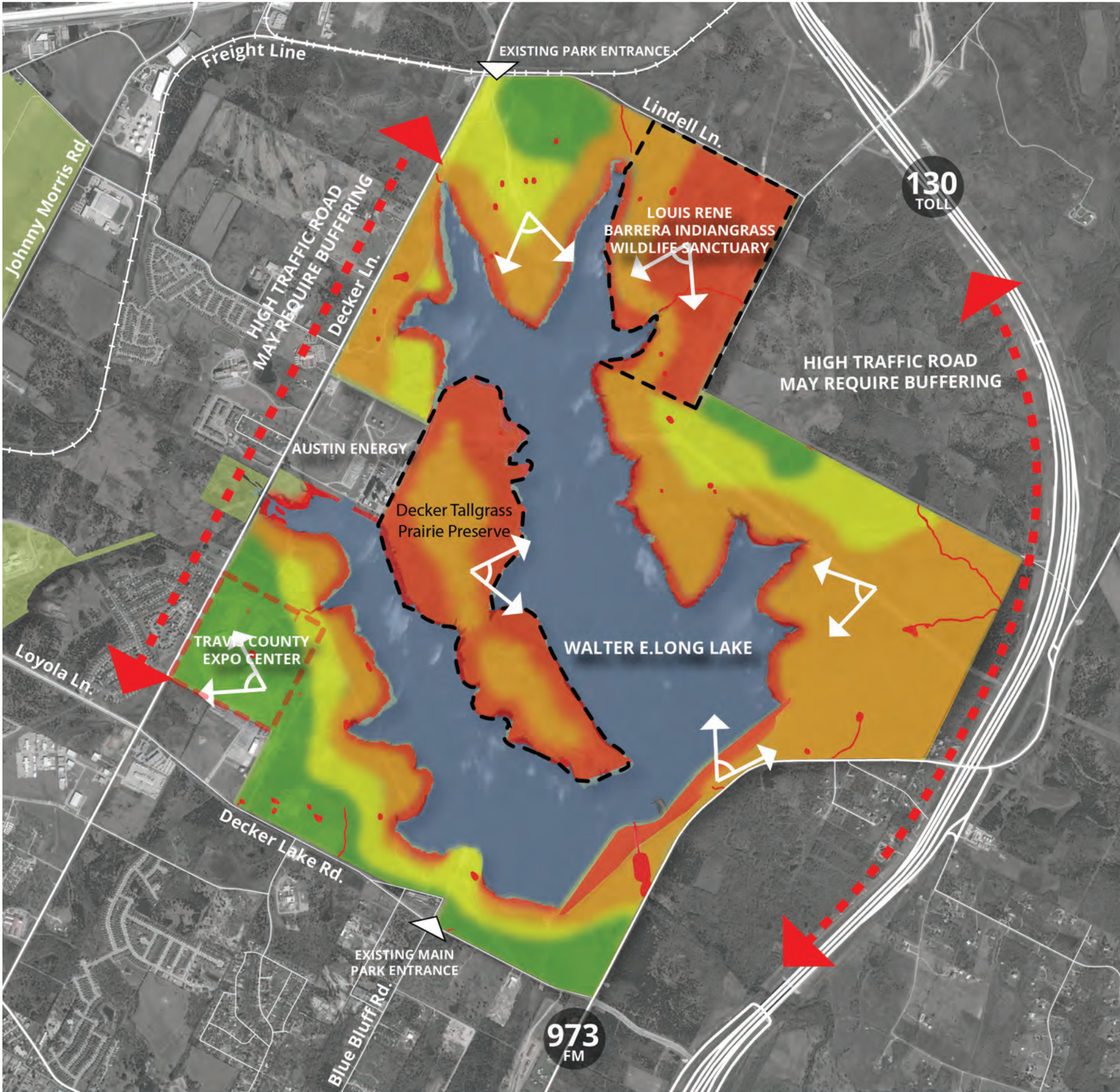
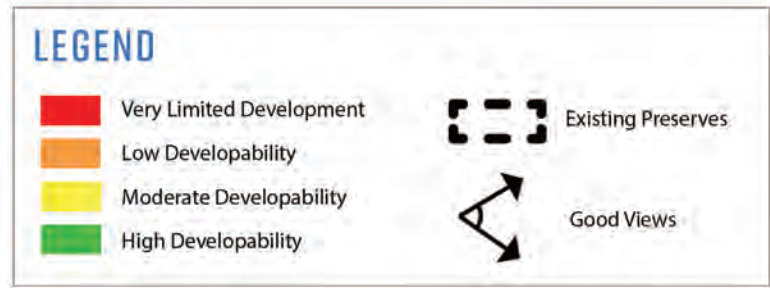
The park contains varying topography with approximately 170 feet of vertical elevation change. The high point of the site is located in the north section of the park, while the low point is located near the existing dam on the southeast side of the park. There are several quality scenic views, most of which are located on the northern side of the park. From a planning perspective, the grade change will allow for many creative opportunities, both from a visual and physical point of view. The grade of the land will inform and influence this vision plan and the feasibility of design solutions.



OVERALL SITE SUITABILITY

Given the diversity found within Walter E. Long Park in terms of vegetation, slope, soils, and wildlife, determining areas of suitability for various potential park elements is a critical step in the vision planning process. Areas where very little or restrained development can occur are the existing grass preserves, as well as existing wetlands which include a buffer around Lake Walter E. Long. Conservation will be the primary goal when dealing with these sensitive habitats. Areas with steep slopes and highly erodible soil have been classified as zones to avoid high intensity development. While many parts of the park may not be suitable for development, there are key locations which can contains both moderate and high levels of development.

Very limited development is defined as development requiring very limited construction, if any (e.g., wetlands, trails, etc.). Areas with low developability hold the potential for passive amenities (e.g., trails, boardwalks, pavilions, etc.). Moderate developability may allow for condensed amenities (e.g., playgrounds, picnic areas, etc.). High developability areas are more conducive to more intensive amenities (e.g., buildings, surface parking, athletic fields, infrastructure, etc.).



Preliminary site analysis. Sources: Roadways (TxDOT 2018), site analysis compiled by Half Associates and sub-consultants.

**“Walter E. Long has always been a favorite fishing spot for both of my sons and my nephew growing up”.**

*- City of Austin Resident*







## CHAPTER 2: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Multiple open house events were conducted at key stages during the vision planning process. They provided opportunities for both residents of the area as well as regional park users to consider ideas and alternatives for the long range plan for Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park.



## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT INTRODUCTION

Public engagement was a critical step in the planning process for Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park which involved gathering information directly from the community to inform and guide the design. This community input strongly guided implementation and success. Support comes from a plan that reflects the wants and needs of both nearby residents and the greater city population.

To create a vision plan for Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park which reflects the preferences of all relevant stakeholders, the public was engaged frequently throughout the 33-month planning process. A variety of different engagement strategies were utilized to gain a well-rounded understanding of people's needs and desires. Through the use of a diverse public engagement strategy, different user groups were provided a chance to voice their thoughts. In conjunction with public engagement efforts, additional applicable findings and engagement summaries from other relevant planning processes were reviewed and incorporated.

Overall, the planning process included a project website, Technical Advisory Group (TAG) meetings, multiple opinion surveys, stakeholder interviews, review and input from PARD (Austin Parks and Recreation Department), in-park intercept surveys, an online map blog, meetings with elected and appointed officials, and a series public meetings and open houses.

Engagement efforts were designed to target three types of individuals: a) surrounding neighborhoods and stakeholders who may significantly benefit from the development of the park, b) citywide residents of Austin and regional users for the park, and c) key stakeholder individuals and groups who are interested in one or more key aspects of the vision plan. Since public engagement was central to the success of the vision plan, input strategies were utilized from project initiation through plan adoption and functioned as a barometer of public opinion about strategic decisions moving forward.



**In open house meetings, an open format was utilized to provide more direct interaction with the community at large.**



**Community engagement during one of many public open houses held where feedback was gathered to better inform the planning process.**



**Area yard signs and online advertising helped inform the community and city residents when and where public open houses were happening.**

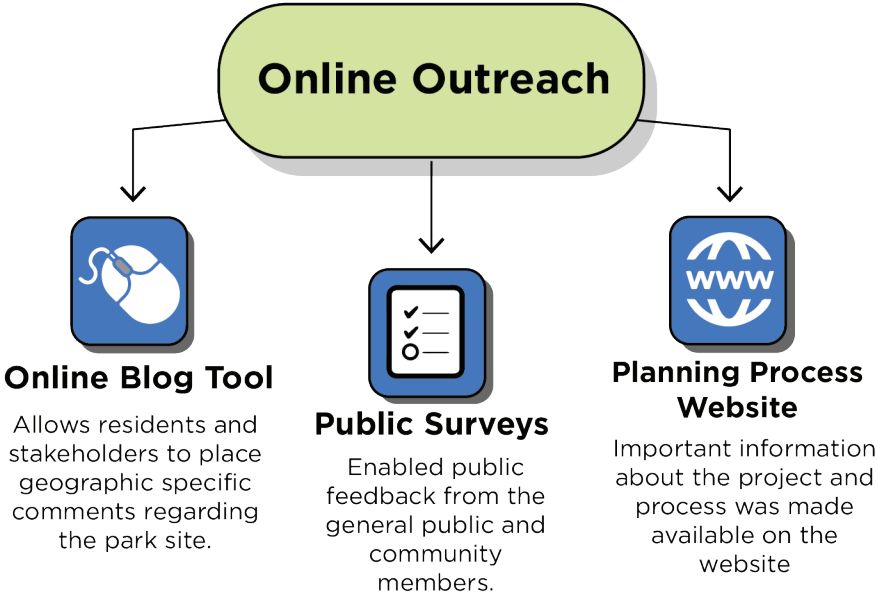


**A significant level of public interaction during open houses helped direct the planning process and guide vision plan decisions.**

ONLINE OUTREACH

A crucial step in the planning process was producing material for a website where relevant information was featured for public access. Components of the website included an outline of the planning process, a working schedule, summaries from key meetings, framework concept plans, preliminary vision plans, and the final vision plan. In addition to the website, an online map blog

was created to allow residents and stakeholders to place geographic specific comments on various areas of the park. Additionally, the website was used to engage the public through the use of multiple online surveys, which were conducted at key periods during the planning process.

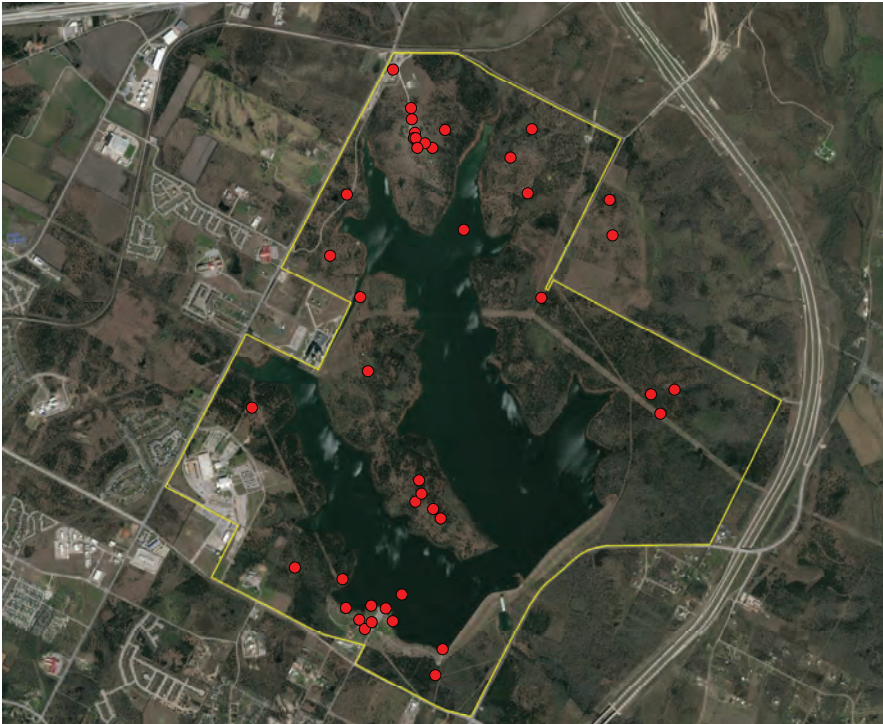


Project Background

Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park is a regional park located in east Austin, situated just west of State Highway 130. The park is accessed via Blue Bluff Road (see map below). The property includes 3,695 acres of parkland and the 1,165 acre Lake Walter E. Long. The park also includes approximately 765 acres of preserved habitats and the Travis County Expo Center grounds. Some of the existing facilities in the park include hike and bike trails, picnic areas, volleyball courts, boat ramps, and fishing piers. A skeet shooting range and model airplane area are also operated by organizations within the park.



The Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park Vision Plan website on the official City of Austin web page was used to post content to keep the public informed about the status of the project.



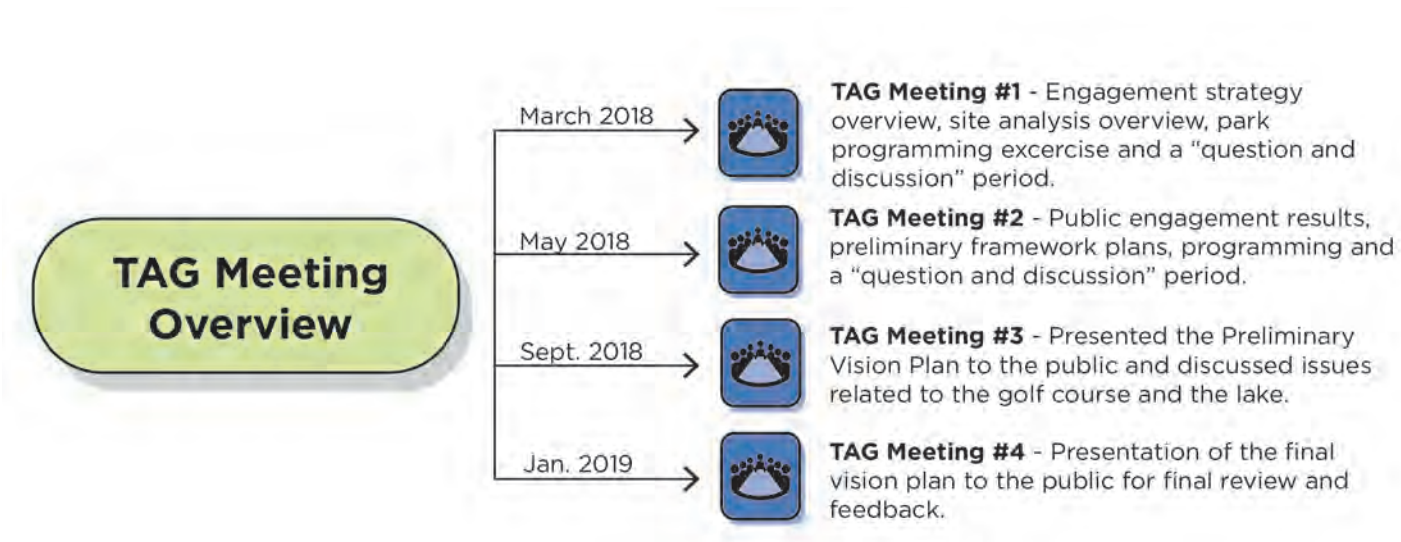
As part of the online blog tool, points were plotted where users had the opportunity to provide specific feedback on certain areas of the park. Comments were stored in a separate table online.



This screen shot of the online blog tool helped to inform the public by presenting a platform from which to solicit feedback about specific locations within the park.

TECHNICAL ADVISORY GROUP (TAG) MEETINGS

Four meetings with the Long Park Technical Advisory Committee were held to gather feedback at critical points during the planning process. The role of the TAG was to help identify community goals and objectives, review and comment on preliminary park programming and concepts, help solicit public participation, build general support and generate public consensus. Additionally, the TAG aided in providing technical guidance regarding design parameters and ensured that the process was efficient and properly addressed the needs of the community at-large. During TAG meetings, project updates were presented and hands-on exercises were conducted to solicit further feedback. After each meeting, summary findings were featured on the City’s website to keep the public informed about key decisions related to the planning process.



The interpersonal dialogue and information gained at TAG meetings were an invaluable asset to the planning process.



During the typical meeting, key technical issues were discussed which helped facilitate the planning process and move it forward.

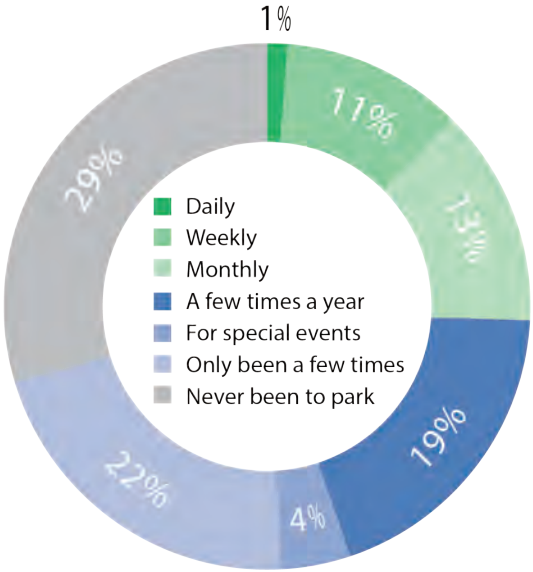


Interactive exercises were used during TAG Meetings to help prioritize programming elements.

INITIAL ONLINE SURVEY - EVALUATING USE & INTERESTS

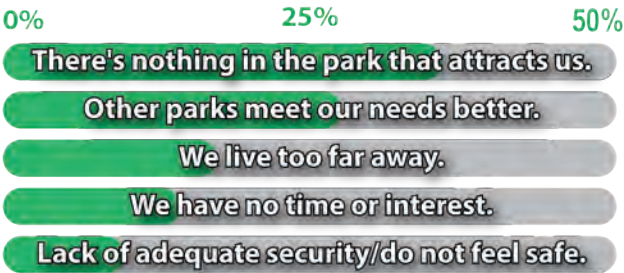
As part of the public engagement process, an initial citizen survey was administered to evaluate current use and perceptions regarding the park. The results of this survey significantly influenced the preliminary program of uses and created a foundation for subsequent design alternatives.

How often do you visit the park?



Approximately, 71% of respondents had visited Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park, while 29% of respondents have never visited the park. Daily and weekly visitors comprise a very small portion of respondents, with the combined amount at 12%.

Why don't you visit the park?



Although there could be a variety of reasons why people have not visited the park, over 30% of respondents indicated that there wasn't anything currently in the park of interest.

Which programs are important to the public?

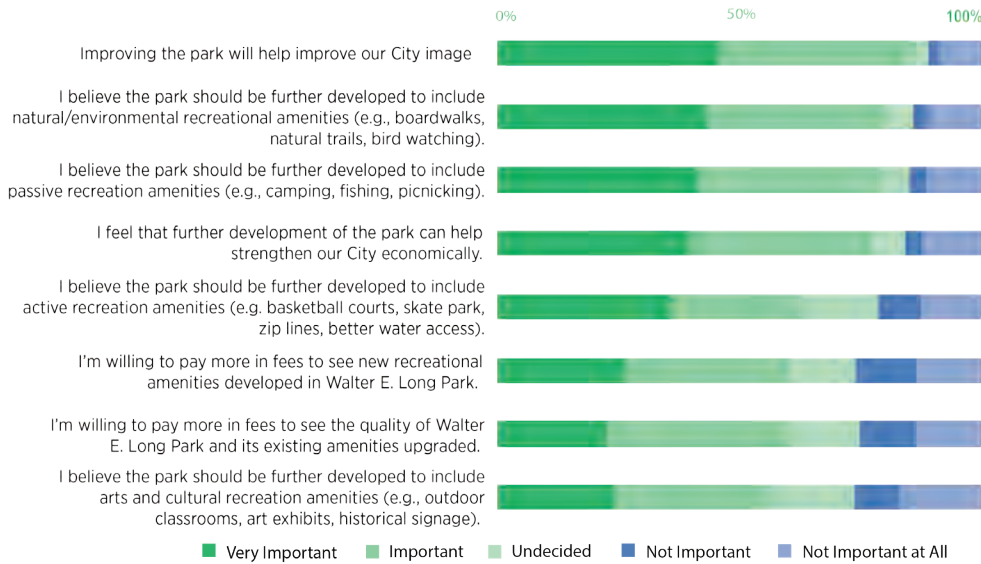


Based on the initial public survey, the majority of respondents indicated that multi-use trails were the most important to the public. Picnicking and nature discovery were also highly valued to those who took the survey.

## INITIAL ONLINE SURVEY - EVALUATING USE & INTERESTS

A large component of the initial online survey was to gauge the public's opinions regarding active recreation, passive recreation, natural/environmental recreation and arts/cultural recreation. To do this, a series of questions were posed which gave participants the opportunity to share their opinion. Based on the participant's answers, a conceptual framework was developed which reflected the public's sentiments regarding Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park. An important aspect of the survey which helped prioritize what the public wanted was posing questions which asked users to prioritize different types of recreation in terms of active, passive, natural/environmental and arts/cultural.

### Public's degree of agree-ability/disagree-ability with the following statements about Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park.



The top three answers indicate strong public support for a proposed program which reflects improving the City image and the development of natural/ environmental and passive aspects of the park.



After the initial survey was held, additional interactive exercises were held with staff and public open house attendees.

## WALTER E. LONG METROPOLITAN PARK DESIGN PHILOSOPHY

Based on public opinion, preliminary design of the park focused on the following:



### Active Recreation

Includes outdoor recreational activities, such as organized sports, playground activities, and the use of motorized vehicles, that require extensive facilities or development or that have a considerable environmental impact on the recreational site.



### Passive Recreation

Includes outdoor recreational activities, such as nature observation, hiking, and kayaking, that require a minimum of facilities or development and that have minimal environmental impact on the recreational site.



### Environmental Recreation

Activities which provide a more hands-on and educational interaction with the natural environment. These program items also provide opportunities to restore and improve upon the existing natural systems.



### Arts/Cultural Recreation

Program items within this category serve to provide an opportunity for the community to take an ownership in the park. Local art, food, history, and cultural opportunities are some of the features found within this category.

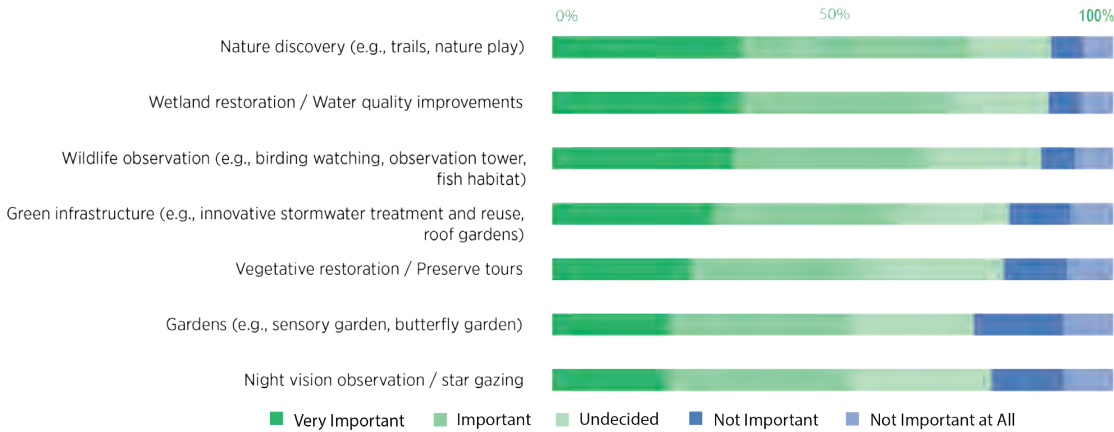
## INITIAL ONLINE SURVEY - DEVELOPING THE PROGRAM

Included in the survey were questions related to different types of recreation and how the public prioritized them.

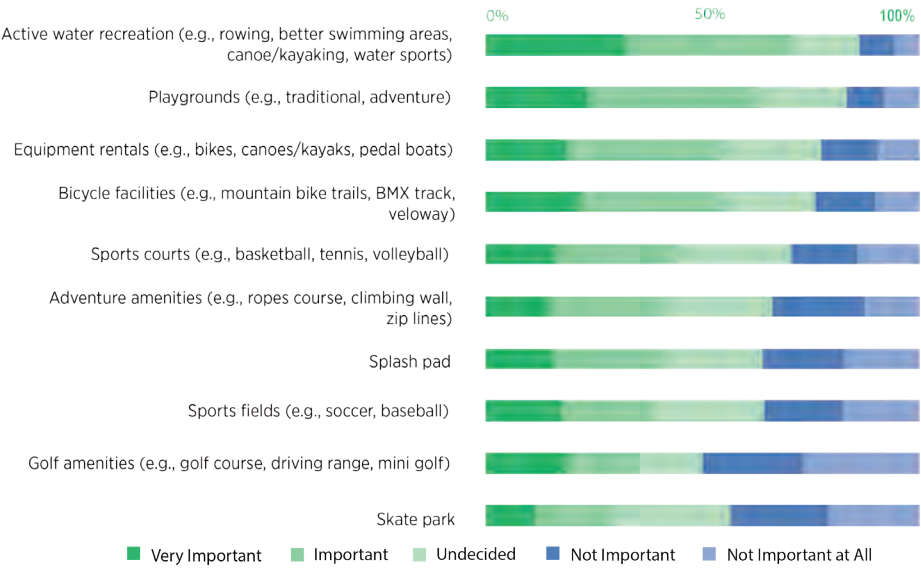


Summary chart of public feedback on the park vision for Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park developed during online survey #1.

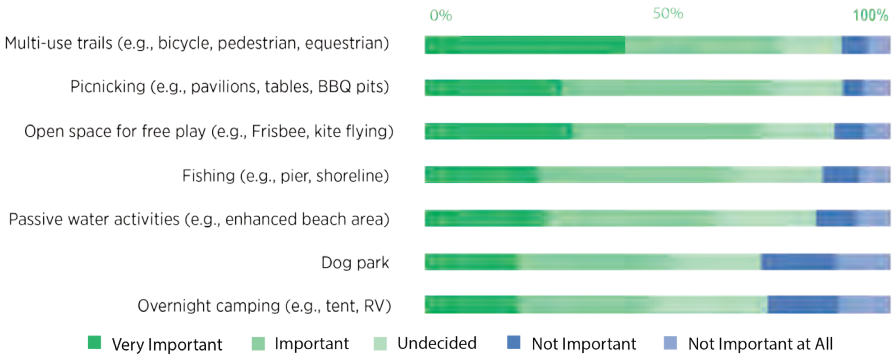
### Degree of importance regarding ENVIRONMENTAL/NATURAL recreation items



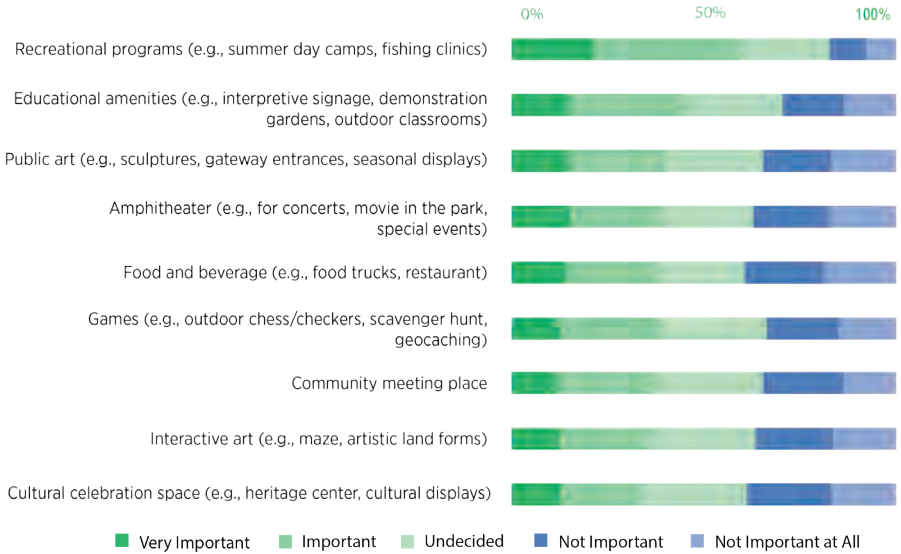
### Degree of importance regarding ACTIVE recreation items



### Degree of importance regarding PASSIVE recreation items



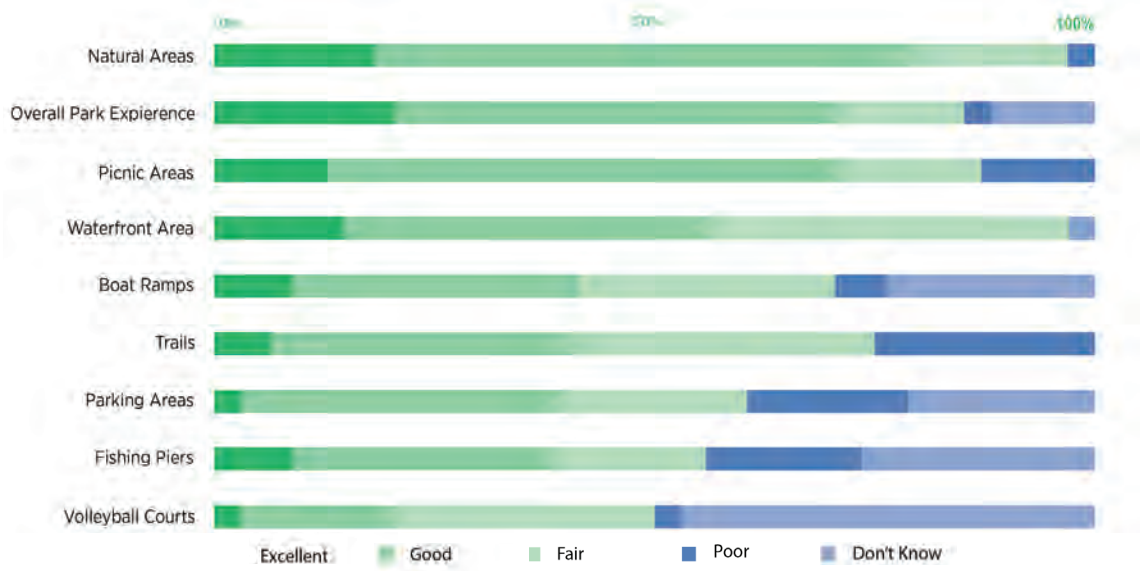
### Degree of importance regarding ARTS & CULTURAL recreation items



INTERCEPT SURVEY

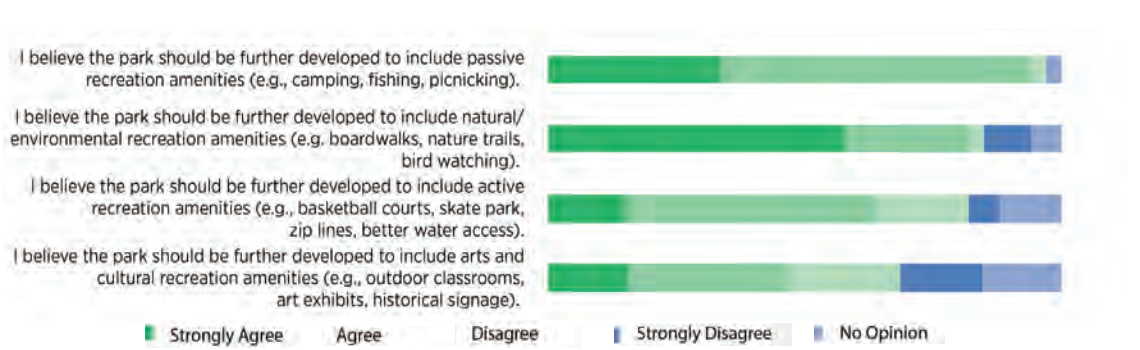
In addition to the online survey, an in-park intercept survey was administered over the Easter Weekend to collect targeted feedback from park users. Over 35 respondents took the survey.

How would you rate the quality, appearance, and maintenance of Walter E. Long Park?



According to the intercept survey results, a majority of respondents found the natural areas and overall park to be an excellent or good experience.

Check the box that best describes how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements about Walter E. Long Park



The top three answers indicated majority public support for a proposed program which reflects improving the City image and the development of natural/environmental and passive aspects of the park.

WALTER E. LONG METROPOLITAN PARK MASTER PLAN PARK USER SURVEY

Introduction

The City of Austin needs your help and input! The City is developing an updated master plan for improvements to Walter E. Long Park. As a concerned citizen, the City of Austin takes your views about the park very seriously. Please take some time to answer this survey about the park.

All individual survey answers will remain confidential and your information will not be sold or used for solicitation.

- 1. Are you male or female? ☐ Male ☐ Female
- 2. In which zip code do you live? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Do you have any children under the age of 19 living in your home? Check all that apply.  
☐ No children ☐ Children under age 4 ☐ Children ages 5-8 ☐ Children ages 9-12 ☐ Children ages 13-19
- 4. How often do you typically visit Walter E. Long Park?  
☐ Daily ☐ Weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ A few times a year  
☐ For special events (please specify below) ☐ I've only been there a few times  
Please specify which special events: \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. How would you rate the quality, appearance, and maintenance of Walter E. Long Park?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Don't Know
Overall park experience					
Trails					
Natural areas					
Picnic areas					
Boat ramps					
Fishing pier					
Waterfront area					
Volleyball courts					
Parking areas					
Wayfinding signage					

- 6. What new or improved amenities or activities would you like developed in the park?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for participating in the Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park Master Plan public survey.

If you would like to receive updates on the master planning process for Walter E. Long Park, please provide your email address below.



For more information call (512) 974-6700  
Email: WalterLongMasterPlan@makingthingsclear.com  
200 S. Lamar Blvd., Austin, TX 78704

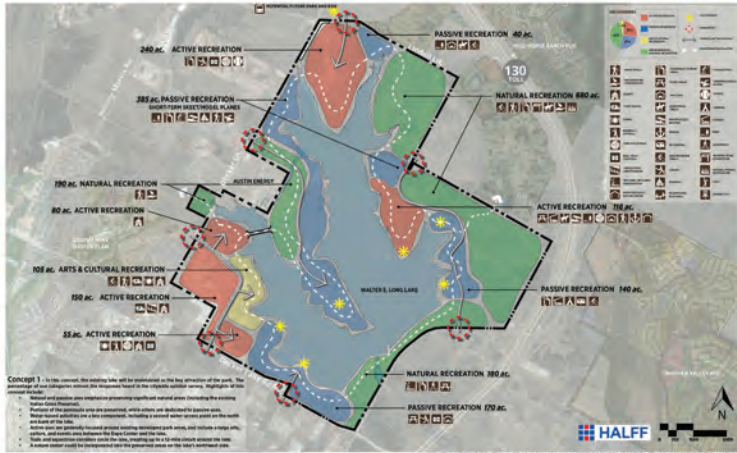
A sample copy of the intercept survey distributed to the public on Easter weekend.

SECOND ONLINE SURVEY - FRAMEWORK CONCEPTS

As a follow up to the second public meeting, an online survey was created which was intended to solicit additional feedback on the four framework concepts presented at the second public meeting. The first section of the survey posed general questions to the respondent. Then, a series of questions were asked in reference to the four concept plans (see Chapter 3 for an enlargement of these concepts.)

Based on the results, the vast majority of survey respondents supported Concept 1. Additionally, a large portion of respondents did not support a golf course at Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park; of these a majority did support maintaining the lake at its present water level. The survey was analyzed two ways, which involved separating survey responses between all survey respondents as well as just respondents within the 78724 area zip code which is where Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park is located.

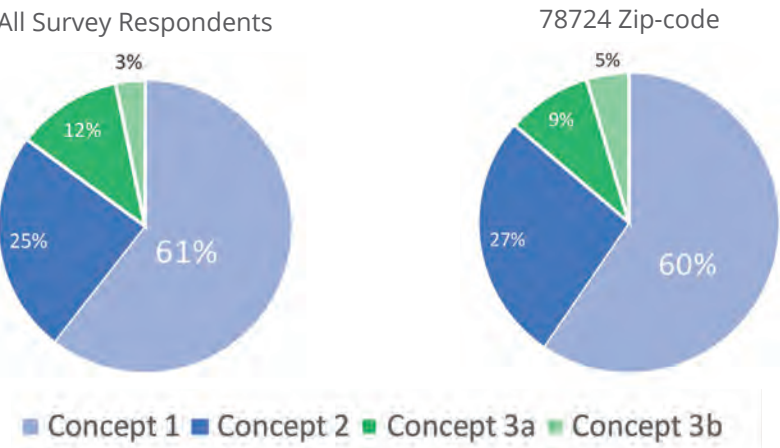
FRAMEWORK CONCEPT 1



FRAMEWORK CONCEPT 3A



Which is your preferred park uses arrangement plan?



Based on the survey results, the vast majority of respondents, both within the 78724 zip-code and all respondents, favor Concept 1.

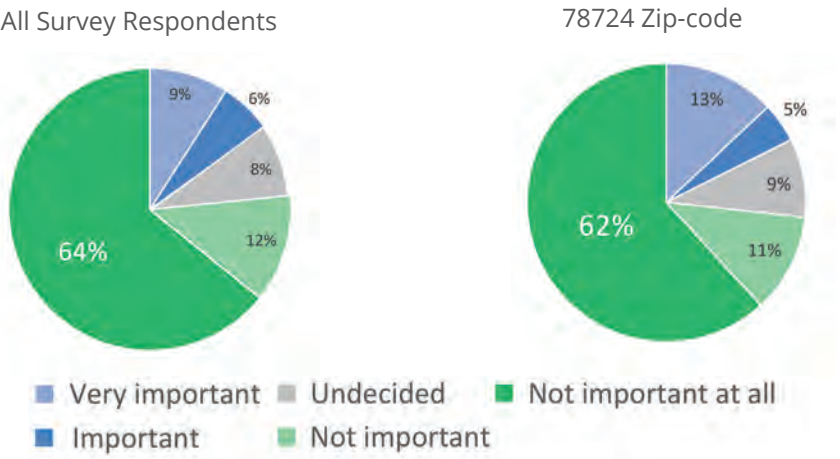
FRAMEWORK CONCEPT 2



FRAMEWORK CONCEPT 3B

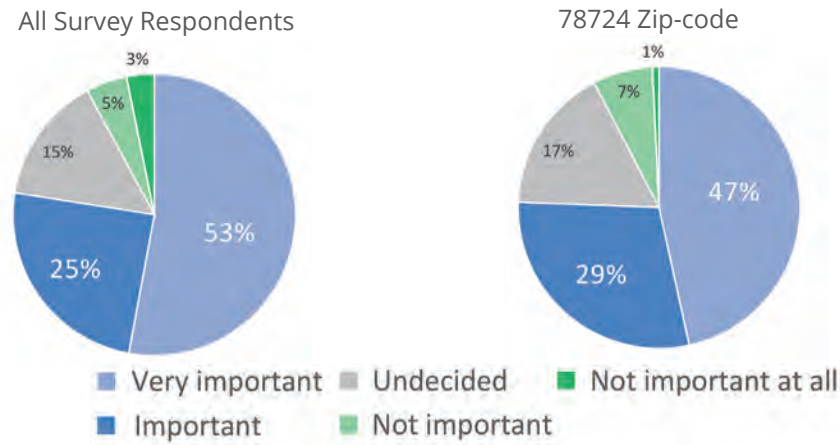


Public opinion on importance of golf course development



As to whether the public supported a golf course at Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park, the majority of respondents considered it “not important at all.”

Public opinion on importance of maintaining current lake levels



As to whether the public supported maintaining current lake water levels, the majority of survey respondents found it was “very important”.

THIRD ONLINE SURVEY

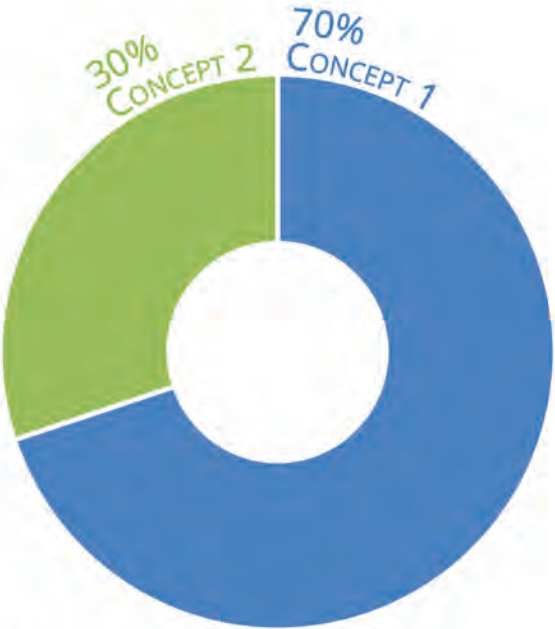
The purpose of the third survey was to present two preliminary vision plan alternatives and to solicit feedback as to which one was the preferred option. Concept 1 featured a range of passive and active park uses, as well as extensive nature-based features. Concept 2 replaced much of the nature-

based features with an extensive multi-course golf zone. Four ultimate vision plan configurations were presented during public meeting #3 and a follow-up opinion survey was conducted to determine which alternative was preferred. Responses to the third opinion survey indicated a strong preference for

the concept that did not include a golf course zone. These responses are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.



Which is your preferred Vision Plan Concept?



1,482 RESPONDENTS

According to the results in this survey, 70% of respondents preferred Concept 1 while only 30% preferred Concept 2.

PUBLIC MEETING SUMMARY

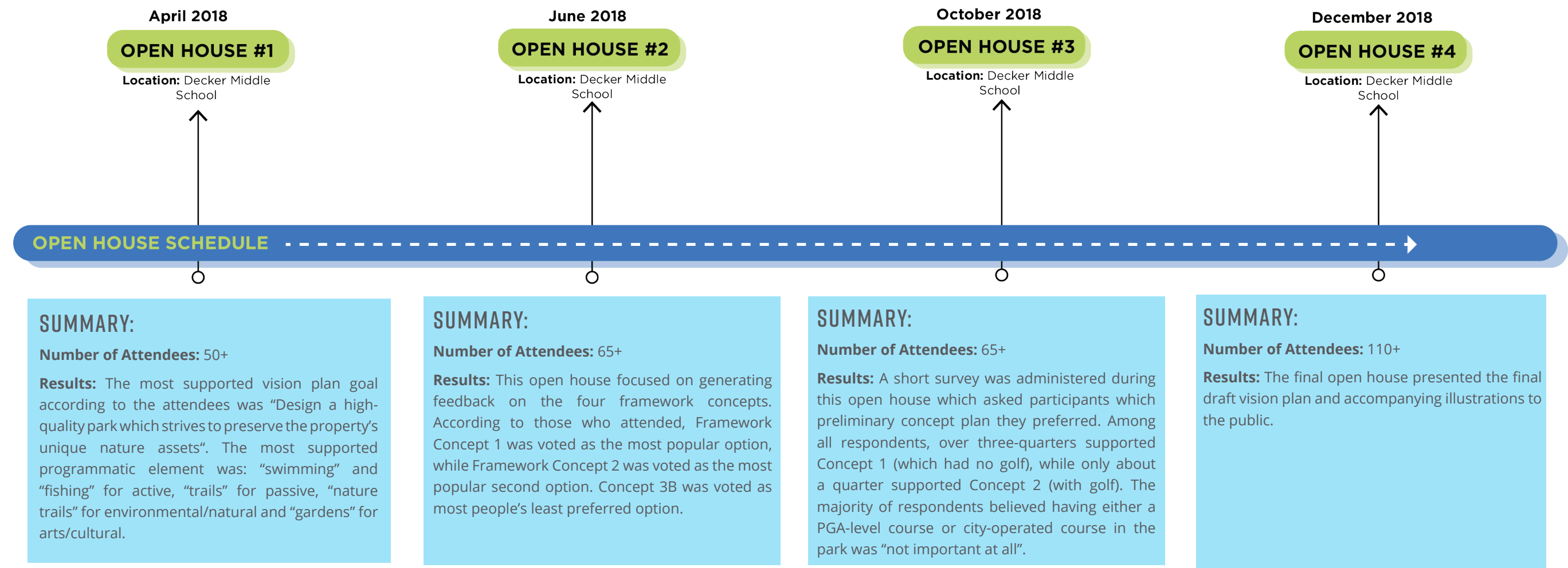
During the course of the planning process, four public meetings were conducted. The kickoff meeting was a “town hall” style meeting where general issues were introduced and discussed. The second public meeting was conducted to discuss alternative frameworks for the site. The purpose of the third meeting was to review the preliminary vision plan and background recommendations, while the fourth presented the final vision plan. The purpose of the final two meetings was to confirm the recommendations contained in the Final Vision Plan. Summaries of the respective public meetings were developed and made available on the project website.

KEY AGENDA ITEMS

- Public Meeting #1** - Introduction to the public and overview of the opportunities and constraints of the site. Several exercises were organized where the public had the opportunity to provide feedback on the process.
- Public Meeting #2** - The framework concepts were presented and attendees were asked to provide feedback about their preferences.
- Public Meeting #3** - The preliminary vision plan was presented to the public.
- Public Meeting #4** - The final vision plan was presented to the public.



In all four public meetings, sufficient staffing was available to engage the public in dialogue and interaction.



OVERALL ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

Public engagement was a critical step in this planning process, and contributed significantly to the quality and success of the vision plan. The project website was the first step in ensuring that project information and data was easily accessible to the public. The TAG meetings ensured that the planning process was moving in a positive direction. The online surveys were meant to include and involve the public throughout the planning process. The public open

houses and meetings with elected officials also helped guide the process. Thanks to the diverse public engagement strategy utilized throughout the planning process, the Final Vision Plan closely reflects public sentiment and interests. The eight meetings, over 300 attendees and over 5000 survey responses generated input which helped guide, inform and ultimately shape the Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park Vision Plan.



Throughout the planning process, a diverse public engagement strategy was employed which aided in the creation of a plan that coincided with the public’s stated interests. This helped to strengthen the City’s long-term support for plan implementation.



One-on-one staff interaction was a hallmark of the public open houses and helped facilitate community feedback.



The first few open houses utilized a formal presentation format followed by more personal, one-on-one interaction with staff.



Interactive exercises with the TAG helped to ensure that the process was headed in a productive direction.





# CHAPTER 3: VISION, PROGRAMMING AND FRAMEWORK DEVELOPMENT

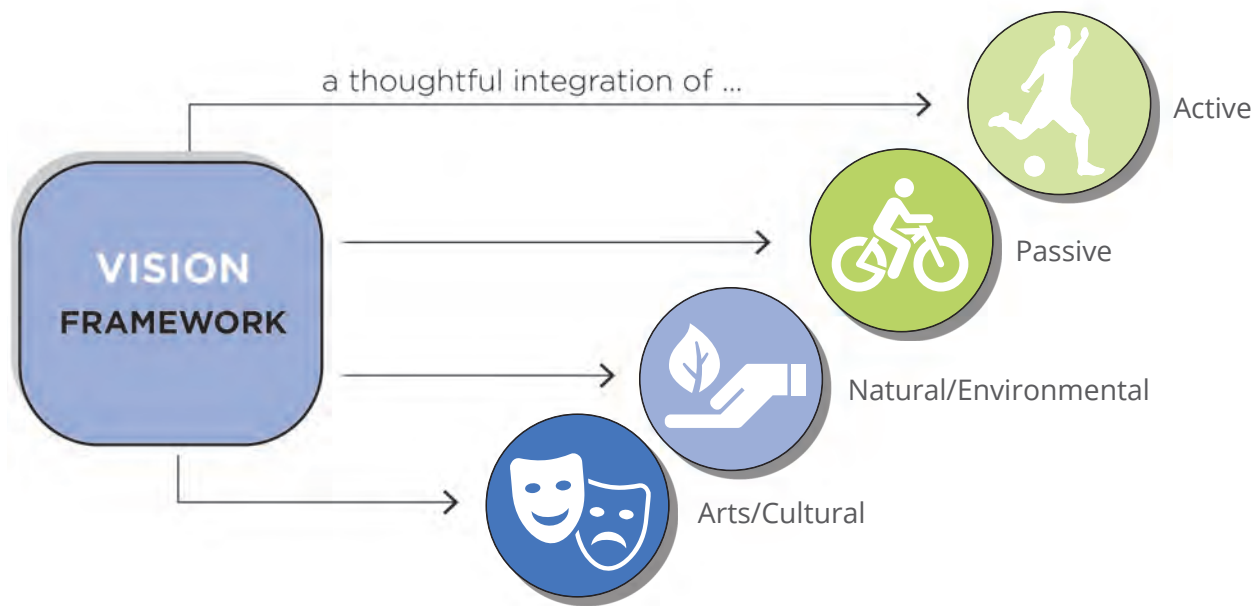
The rich natural resources found within Walter E. Long Park present countless opportunities and challenges to this vision plan process.



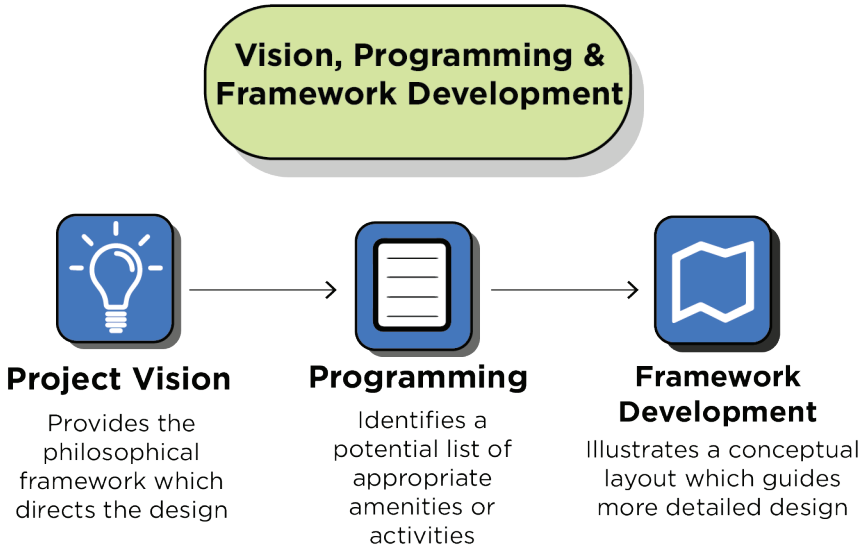
VISION & PROGRAMMING INTRODUCTION AND IDENTIFYING RECREATIONAL NEEDS & OPPORTUNITIES

The vision and programming phases were critical to the success of the overall planning process. In this phase, the project began to take form through the establishment of a planning vision, frameworks concepts, and the development of a program matrix. Input received from the public engagement phase directly informed this phase by providing design direction and identifying recreation needs and opportunities.

The vision for the project was also informed by the analysis of the overall park site and by exploring how different user groups would or could utilize the park. Using this vision, a subsequent program matrix, guided by the overall vision, was developed to explore the range of recreation opportunities throughout the park and to generate additional public input on specific recreation preferences.



Walter E. Long Lake presents countless fishing, recreational and leisure opportunities for park visitors.



The first step in developing an overall vision framework involved categorizing potential park elements into active, passive, natural and cultural components. Active recreation typically includes outdoor activities (e.g., organized sports, playground activities, the use of motorized vehicles) that require extensive facilities or that have a considerable environmental impact on the recreational site. Passive recreation involves outdoor recreational activities (e.g., nature observation, hiking, and kayaking) that require a minimum level of facilities or development and that have minimal environmental impact on the recreational site.

Natural/environmental recreation usually provide a more hands-on and educational interaction with the natural environment and also provide opportunities to restore and improve upon existing natural systems. Arts and cultural elements serve to create opportunities for the community to take an ownership in the park. Local art, food, history, and cultural opportunities are some of the potential features found within this category. Developing a vision which captured the proper balance of these programmatic elements, while at the same time effectively responding to the wants and needs of the community and city at large, was critical for the success of the vision plan.

PLANNING VISION

“WALTER E. LONG PARK STRIVES TO BE ONE OF THE AUSTIN’S PREMIERE METROPOLITAN PARKS SERVING BOTH LOCAL NEIGHBORHOODS AND THE GREATER REGION. THE PARK EMBODIES ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND AND SUSTAINABLE PRINCIPLES AND INCLUDES AN INTEGRATED PROGRAM OF ACTIVE, PASSIVE, CULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL RECREATIONAL USES.”

PROTOTYPE PARKS

Walter E. Long Park  
Park Prototype Long List  
2/22/18

					Note: See Metric Definitions table for explanations of each category				
Precedent	Location	Key Components	Land Acreage	Distance from CBD	Programming	Density	Demographics	Typology	Metro / Context
Walter E. Long Park	Austin, TX	Lake, nature preserve, expo center, and picnic area	1,200	9 miles					
Shelby Farms	Memphis, TN	Trails, lakes, amphitheatre, destination playground, events center, dog park, laser tag center, stables, adventure sports area, disc golf course	4,500	11 miles	X	X	X	X	X
Deer Lake Park	Burnaby, Canada	Lake, scenic walking trails, art gallery, arts center, museum, restaurant, "festival lawn", boat dock, playground	500	7 miles from Vancouver		X	X	X	X
White Rock Lake	Dallas, TX	White Rock Lake, hiking and biking trails, blackland prairie, picnic areas, event spaces, adjacent to the Dallas arboretum	2,200	5 miles		X	X	X	X
Eagle Creek Park	Indianapolis, IN	Reservoir, marina, beach, hiking & biking trails, wildlife-discovery centers, zip lines, golf club	5,300	5 miles	X	X		X	
Fairmount Park	Philadelphia, PA	River, athletic fields, gardens, premier performance venue, playgrounds, arts centers, museums, equestrian center	2,100	3 miles	X	X		X	
Memorial Park	Houston, TX	Arboretum, nature center, running trails, golf course, athletic facilities, picnic area, Buffalo Bayou	1,500	4 miles	X	X			X
Belle Isle	Detroit, MI	Aquarium, Conservatory, Zoo, the Detroit Boat Club, Fountain, Great Lakes Museum, a municipal golf course, small swimming beach, monuments, casino, athletic fields, trails	1,000	3 miles	X		X	X	
Van Cortland Park	Bronx, NY	Lake, golf course, nature center, museums, stadium, athletics fields, running trails, stadium, pool, stables	1,100	2 miles from Manhattan / 8 miles from Midtown	X		X	X	
Brackenridge Park	San Antonio, TX	Historic sites, hiking trails, golf course, zoo, botanical garden, theater, museum, athletic fields, donkey barn	300	2 miles	X		X		X
Anderson Lake County Park	Morgan Hill, CA	Multiple use trails, Jackson Ranch historic park site, additional park areas, reservoir	3,000	17.5 miles (San Jose) / 3 miles (Morgan Hill)		X	X	X	
Papago Park	Pheonix, AZ	Desert trails, zoo, botanical garden, sports facilities, two golf courses, museum, heritage center	1,200	6 miles from Pheonix / 1 mile form Tempe / 2.5 miles from Scottsdale		X	X	X	
Cherry Creek State Park	Denver, CO	Campgrounds, ampitheater, picnic area, marina, shooting ranges, stables, beach, trails, reservoir, dog off leash area; adjacent golf course	5,100	9 miles from Denver / 1 mile from Centennial		X		X	X
Assiniboine Park	Winnipeg, Canada	Zoo, conservatory, outdoor theatre, play equipment, river, trails, adjacent golf course	1,100	3.25 miles	X	X			
Great Park	Orange County, CA	Hot air balloon ride, sports complex, arts complex, ice facility	1,300	N/A	X	X			

Metrics Definition

Programming	Denotes parks with a similar mix of highly-programmed components (e.g., the Travis County Exposition Center) and lower-intensity space (e.g., the Decker Tallgrass Prairie Preserve).
Typology	Denotes parks with similar natural features to Long Park such as major bodies of water and grassland areas.
Density	Denotes parks with surrounding neighborhoods that are similarly composed of lower-density single family homes.
Demographics	Denotes parks with surrounding communities that are similarly middle-income and/or working class.
Metro Area	Denotes parks in or near comparable cities in terms of region, size, culture, or a combination of the three.

Summary

Key metrics and park programming uses were compiled from a series of generally similar parks from around the United States and Canada. An extensive list of prototype parks were looked at in terms of their overall size, metro area context, types of programming. Typology similarities, such as

The presence of major bodies of water, natural grassland areas, and the overall configuration of each park were also considered.

Three parks in particular were identified as prototypes that could inform the overall development and/or management of Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park. They include:

**Shelby Farms, Memphis, Tennessee:** located near the greater Memphis metro area, Shelby Farms is one of the largest urban parks in the United States. The park site is built on a converted prison farm facility, and is similar in overall size to the greater Walter E. Long park site. It was vision planned in 2008, and an initial phase has been developed that includes boating and rowing, hiking and nature trails, nature play features, horseback riding, picnic pavilions, a great lawn for events, a radio-controlled model aircraft field, and disc golf. An architecturally compelling visitors center includes meeting rooms, a gift shop, and food vending opportunities. A boat house provides rental and boat storage opportunities. The park is operated by a conservancy.

**Deer Lake Park, Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada:** Deer Lake Park is the cultural center for the City of Burnaby, a community of almost 250,000 located just east of Vancouver. The park is operated by the City of Burnaby, and includes as its prime focus a large festival and concert zone, multiple museums and cultural centers, and an almost 800 acre lake with a beach. A boat house provides rentals and boat storage. The park also includes extensive trails and preserved natural areas.

**White Rock Lake Park, Dallas, Texas:** Known as Dallas’ urban oasis, White Rock Lake Park encompasses more than 2,200 acres, including the 1,015 acre lake. The park includes extensive trails, picnicking facilities, a marina, boating access, multiple public art displays, and a cultural center. Dallas’ renowned arboretum also is located on the edge of lake within the park. The park is owned by the City of Dallas Parks and Recreation Department, but development of the master plan is supported by White Rock Lake Park Conservancy, which hosts annual races and other events as fundraisers in support of continued improvement to the park. A separate Friends organization focuses on nature preservation and conservation programming and fundraising.

PRELIMINARY PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT



# ARTS & CULTURAL RECREATION



Children's Garden



Cultural Center



Garden



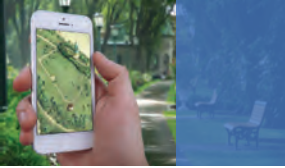
Graffiti Wall



Iconic Art Piece



Interpretive Signage



Phone Application



Sculpture Garden



Summer Camp

# ENVIRONMENTAL/ NATURAL RECREATION



Nature Trails



Tower



Green Roofs



Nature Play



Sensory Garden



Star Gazing



Park Greenhouse



Nature Center



Bridge

# ACTIVE RECREATION



Adventure Playground



Basketball



Mountain Bike



Rowing



Splash Pad



Swimming



Volleyball



Disc Golf



Rock Wall

# PASSIVE RECREATION



Boardwalk



Dog Park



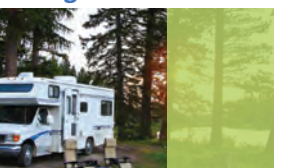
Fishing Pier



Open Lawn



Picnic Pavilion



RV Camping



Tent Camping



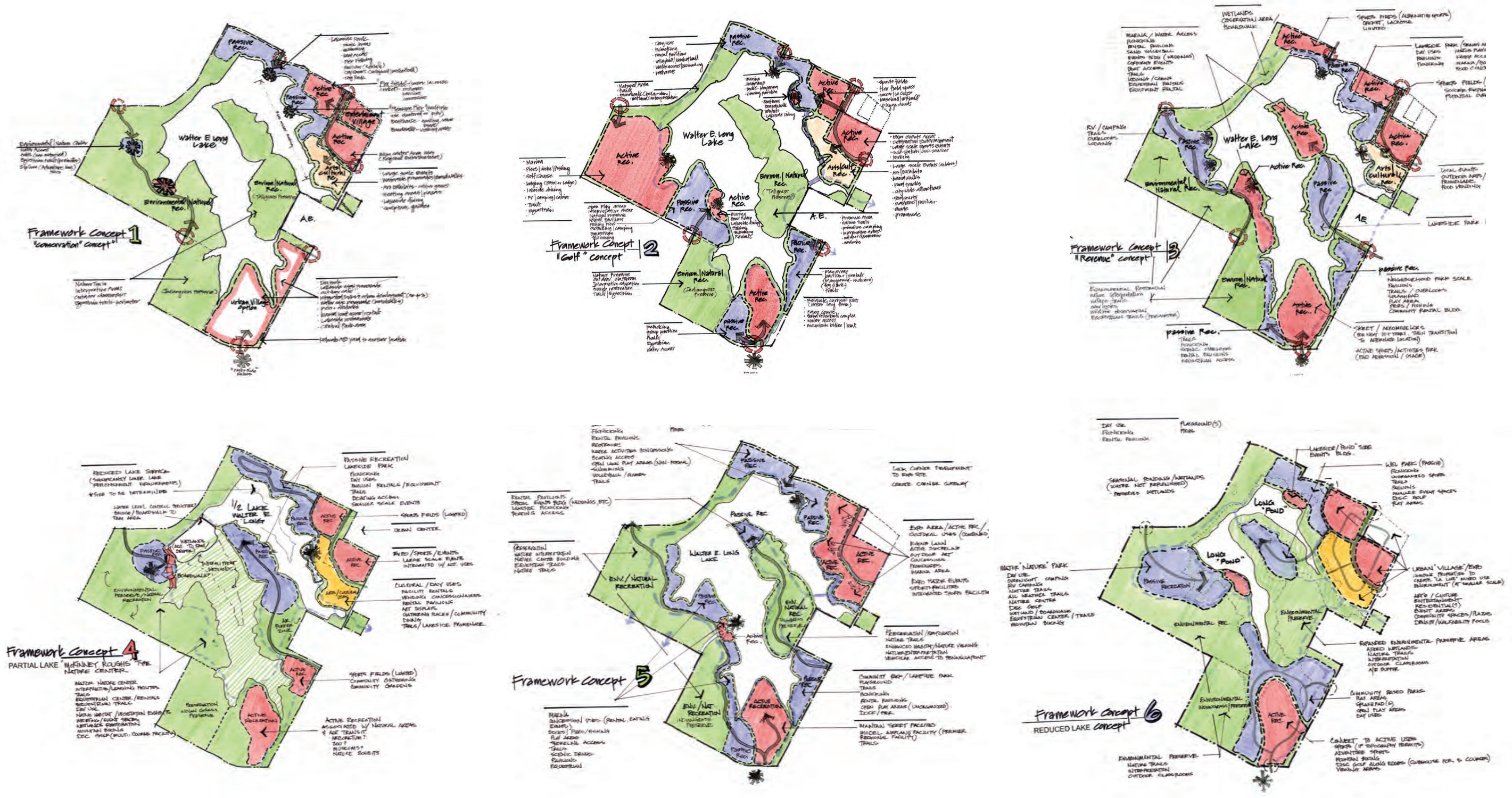
Overnight Cabin



Equestrian Trail

PRELIMINARY FRAMEWORK CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

An exploration of potential site configurations and overall design feasibility led to a series of six preliminary Framework Concepts. These preliminary site arrangements were vetted by City staff and the Technical Advisory Group (TAG), and served to guide subsequent framework layouts.




FRAMEWORK CONCEPTS

From the six preliminary concepts, a series of four final framework concepts were created and presented to the public for further feedback. The four final framework concepts represent the culmination of substantial amounts of research, analysis, early public input and technical programmatic evaluations. Each give direction and form to the four unique future scenarios for Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park. Their purpose is to clearly communicate to the public various potential options for moving forward. These final framework concepts are further explored on the next four pages.

INFORMED BY...

Analysis Phase



Vision Framework



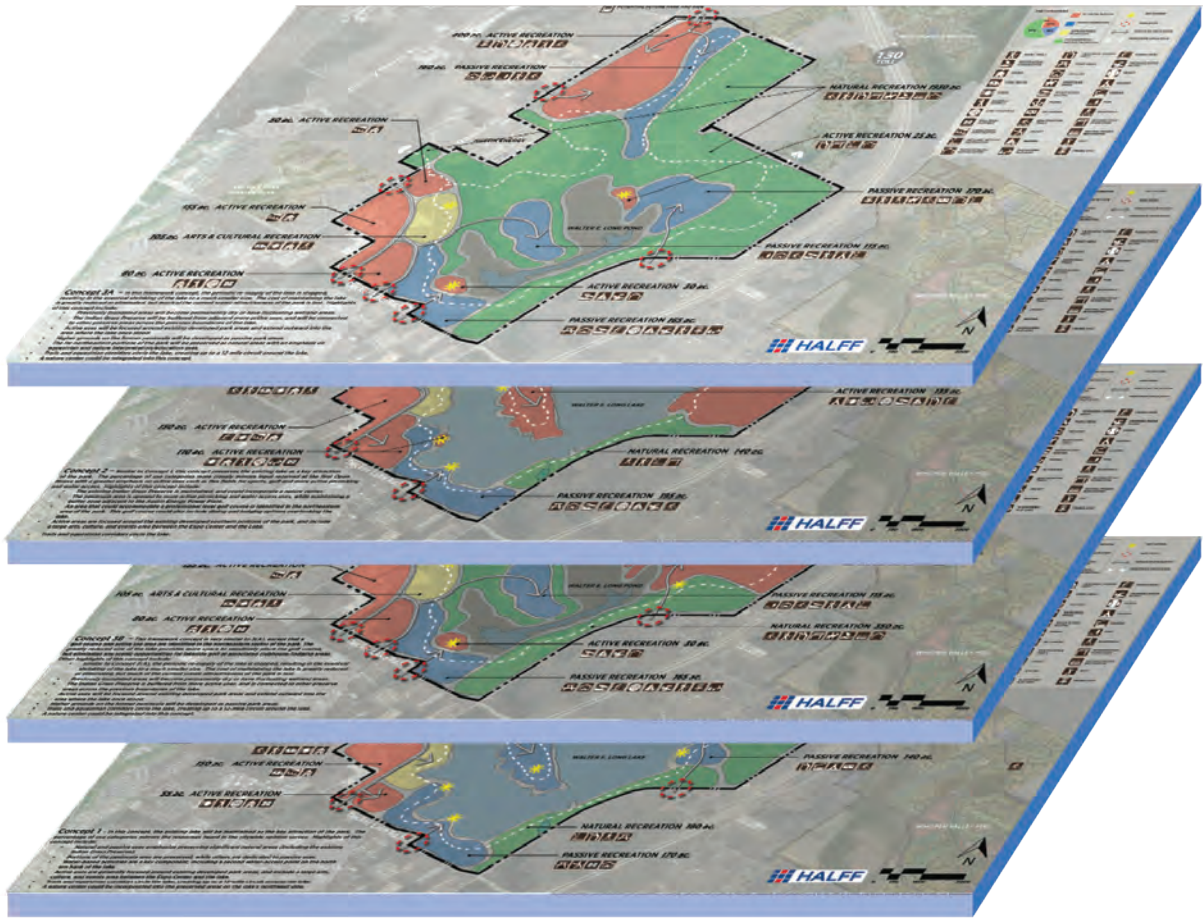
PARD/Technical Group/Consultant Expertise



Public Engagement



FRAMEWORK CONCEPTS



CENTRAL ISSUES

Key issues that were considered as the framework alternatives and subsequent preliminary vision plan concepts were developed included:

- 1. **Whether to incorporate golf as a component of the overall long-range vision plan for the park** – Several golf course proposals in a variety of locations around the park have been put forth over the last few decades. Ultimately, none of those came to fruition for a variety of reasons. A recent proposal received by the City of Austin suggested incorporating a Professional Golf Association (PGA) multi-course golf complex on 700+ acres in the northeast corner of the Walter E. Long Park site. That suggested course and facility layout was included as an option in both the framework and preliminary vision planning alternatives, so as to provide an opportunity for citizen input and feedback.
- 2. **Future lake water levels at Walter E. Long Lake** – Early in the vision planning process, uncertainty existed as to whether water levels in the lake would be maintained in the future. Given the relatively small rainfall

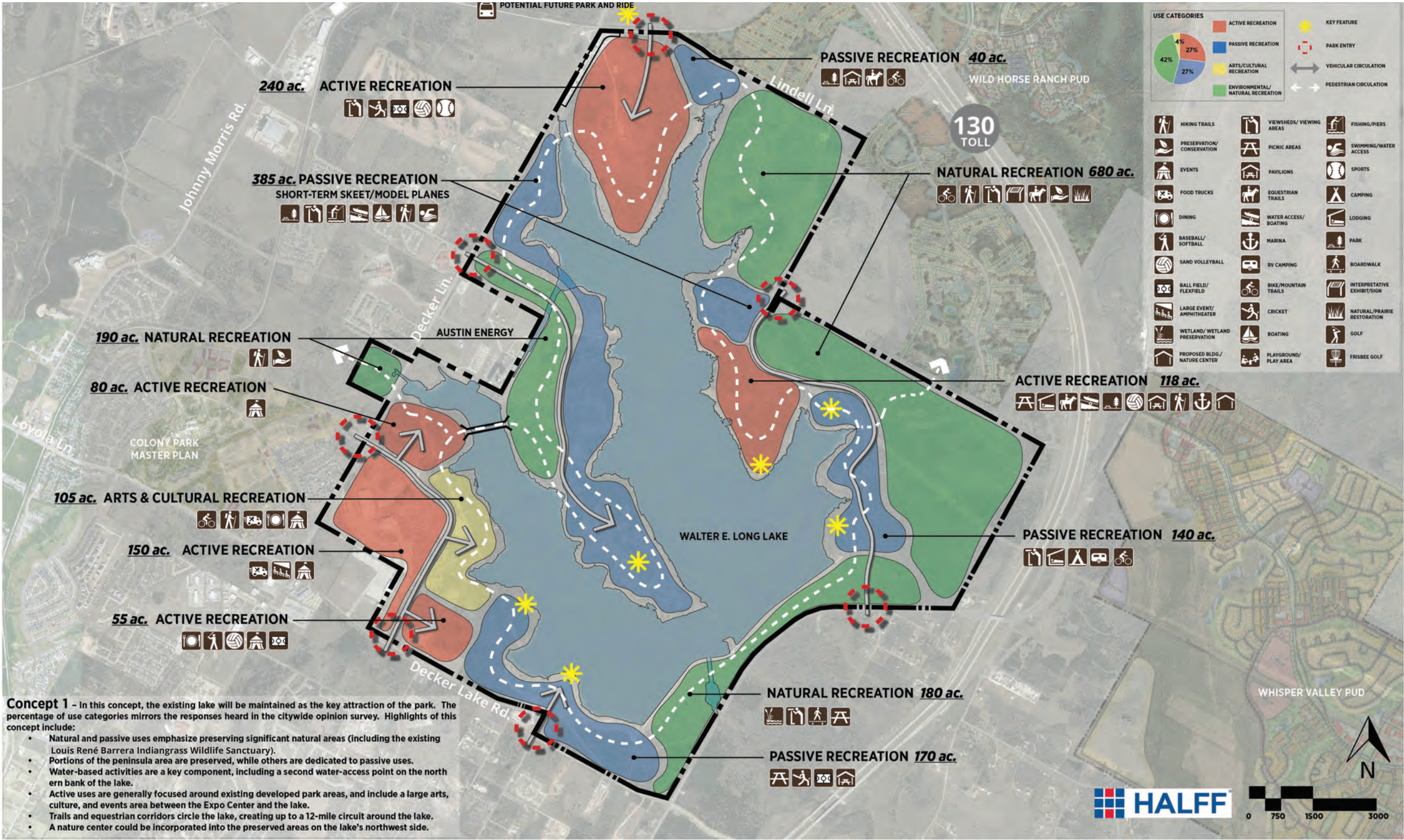
watershed that supplies the lake, supplemental water is periodically supplied from the Colorado River by Austin Energy (AE). Lake water has been used as part of the energy generation systems operated by AE at their plant adjacent to the lake. As AE's energy generation systems at the lake transition to other methods that do not need the same amount of water, consideration was given to a possible future where the lake levels might be lower than current levels. Early framework concepts showed a reduced lake condition as a potential alternative to consider how to configure the park if it were to occur. Near the end of the framework concept step, AE confirmed that future energy generation would still need lake water, and as a result lake levels would remain consistent.

- 3. **Size of the overall park area** – As noted earlier, the overall size of Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park makes it by far the largest park in Austin's parks system. At over 3,600 acres (including the lake), the park could accommodate more than 10 Zilker Parks. This sheer size, as well as the separation of the park into different zones by the lake, is a key design consideration, both in terms of access, but also in terms of connecting areas together and in phasing improvements.
- 4. **Extensive programming opportunities** – The sheer size of the park also allows it to accommodate a much larger variety of uses than the traditional district or metropolitan park. This opportunity for a programming-rich park was considered from early framework concepts all the way through to the final recommended vision plan.



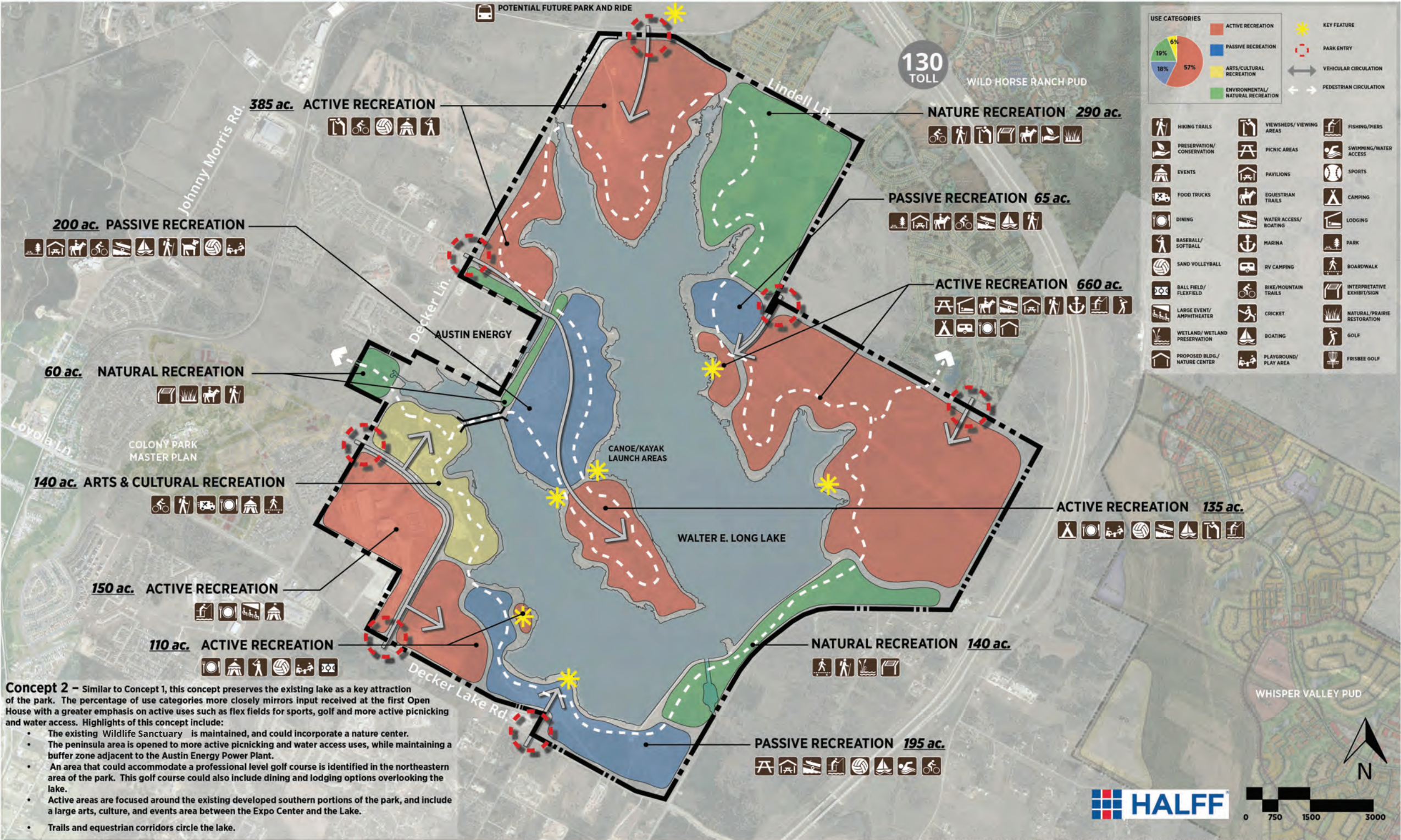
FRAMEWORK CONCEPT I - BALANCE OF USES AND RECREATION TYPES

Framework Concept 1 was developed utilizing a balanced approach in direct response to some of the overall trends observed in the public survey. In terms of land use, a significant portion of the park was designated “natural recreation,” while “passive recreation” and “active recreation” zones composed the rest of the site. A small portion of the site near the Expo Center was designated as “arts and cultural recreation.” This approach most closely resembled the public’s early input and was ultimately selected as the preferred option moving forward into the preliminary and final vision plan phases.



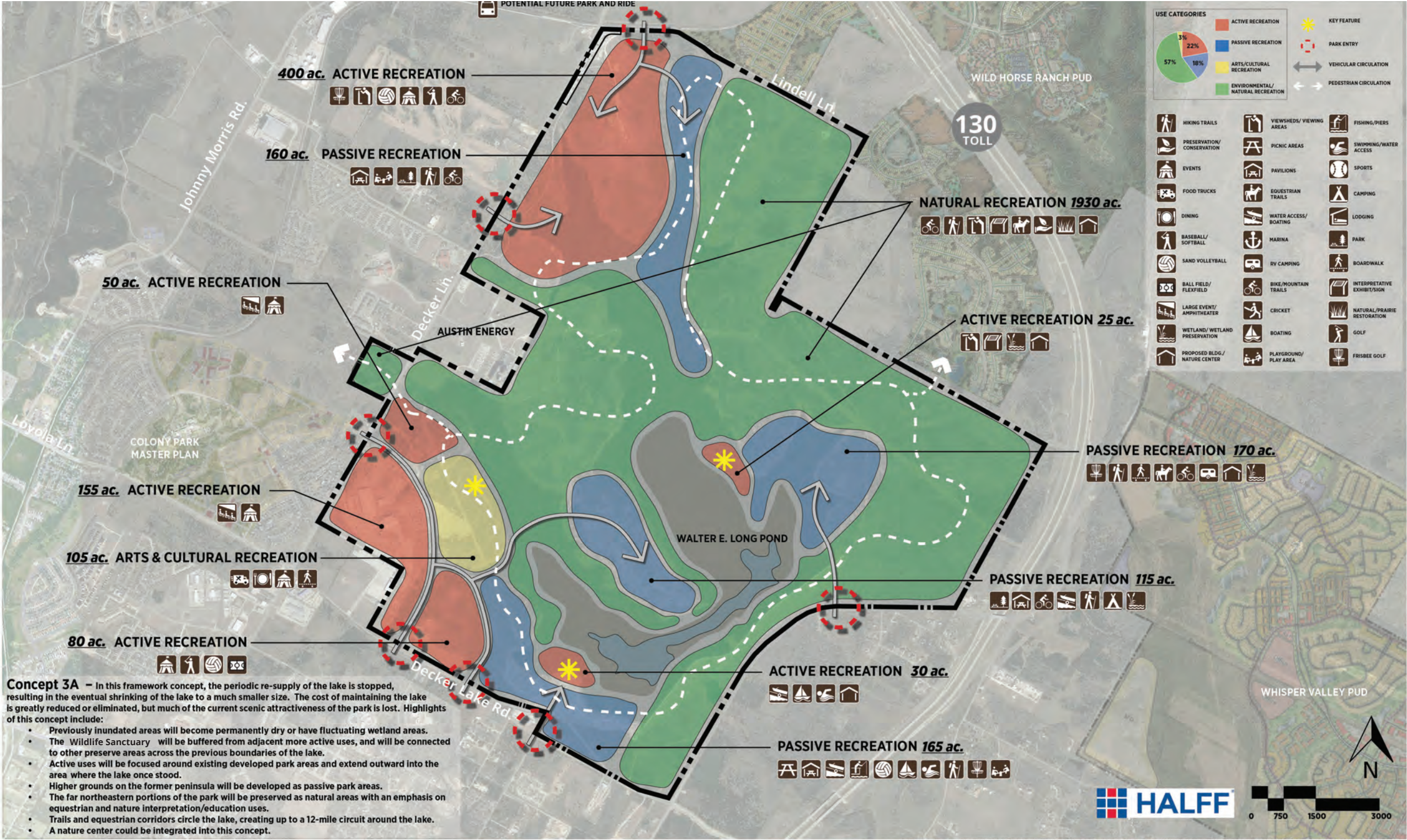
FRAMEWORK CONCEPT 2 - EMPHASIS ON ACTIVE RECREATION

Framework Concept 2 was developed with a much greater focus on active recreation. In this regard, program items like athletic fields, golf, equestrian activities and formal event space were given precedent over less intensive types of development. A smaller portion of the site was dedicated to natural recreation, passive recreation and arts & cultural recreation than in Framework Concept #1. Vehicular circulation along with proposed park entry locations were similar to Concept 1.



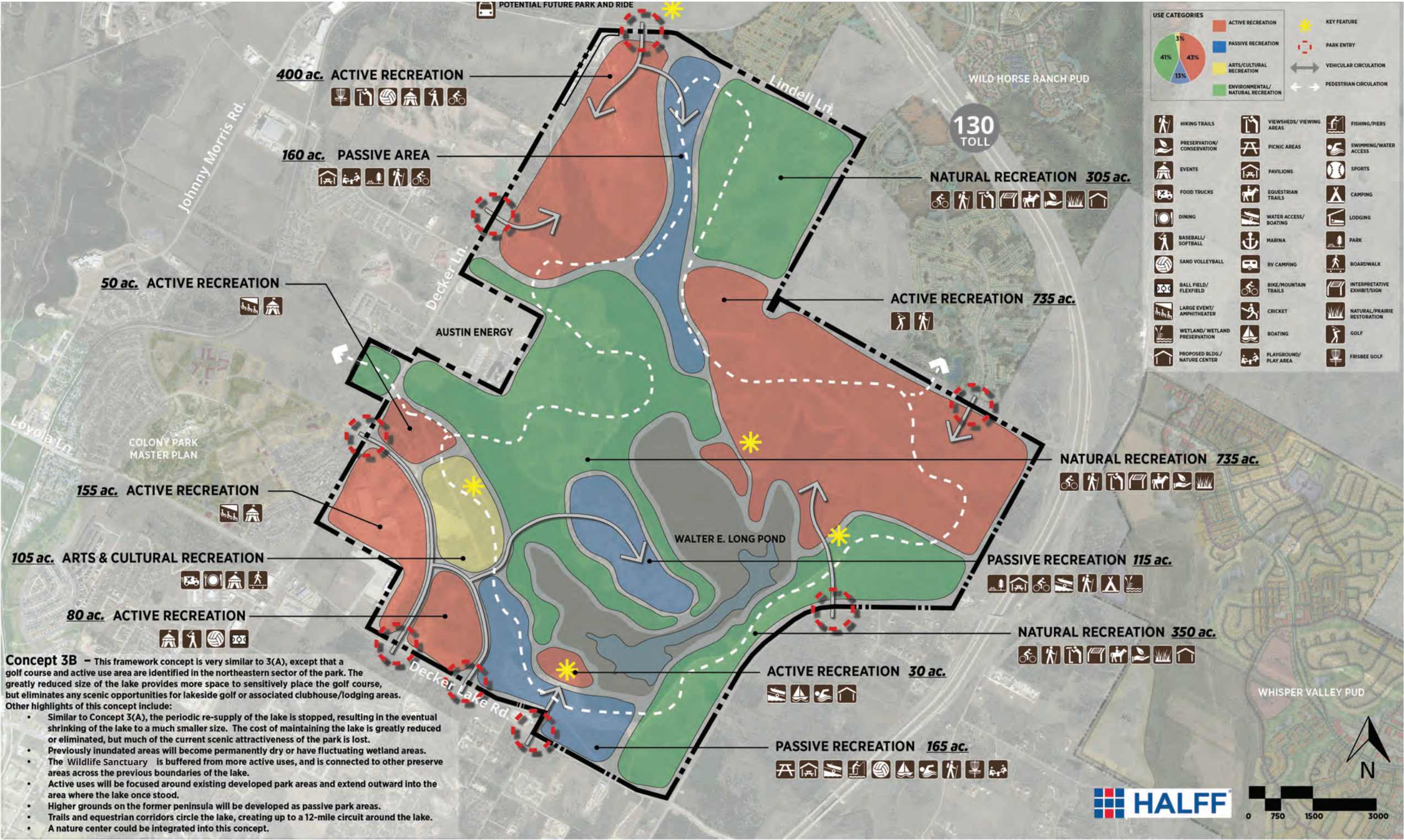
FRAMEWORK CONCEPT 3A - REDUCED LAKE SIZE WITH NATURAL RECREATION EMPHASIS

Framework Concept 3A was developed to identify a potential future where the level of Walter E. Long Lake might not be as high as it is today. In this concept, a much larger percentage of the park would be dedicated to natural uses and preservation. The area around the Expo Center would remain as an active hub, while the northern and eastern portions of the site would be dedicated primarily to natural and passive uses.



FRAMEWORK CONCEPT 3B - REDUCED LAKE SIZE WITH ACTIVE RECREATION EMPHASIS

Framework Concept 3B, similar to the previous concept, was developed acknowledging a decreased lake level moving forward. While concepts 3A and 3B are remarkably similar, this concept has a golf course in the northeastern portion of the site. Additionally, the existing preserves would remain as natural open space, while the area around the Expo Center, northeastern corner and northwestern corner of the site would be designated as active areas.



PLANNING VISION

“WALTER E. LONG PARK STRIVES TO BE ONE OF AUSTIN’S PREMIERE METROPOLITAN PARKS SERVING BOTH LOCAL NEIGHBORHOODS AND THE GREATER REGION. THE PARK EMBODIES ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND AND SUSTAINABLE PRINCIPLES AND INCLUDES AN INTEGRATED PROGRAM OF ACTIVE, PASSIVE, CULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL RECREATIONAL USES.”



TAG REVIEW OF THE FRAMEWORK CONCEPTS

A meeting was held with the TAG to review the framework concepts for technical and operational feasibility prior to being presented to the public. The primary purpose of this key meeting was to discuss public engagement results, present the programming process and framework plans, and receive feedback from the TAG moving forward.



TAG members discuss the preliminary framework concepts and review the site analysis phase.

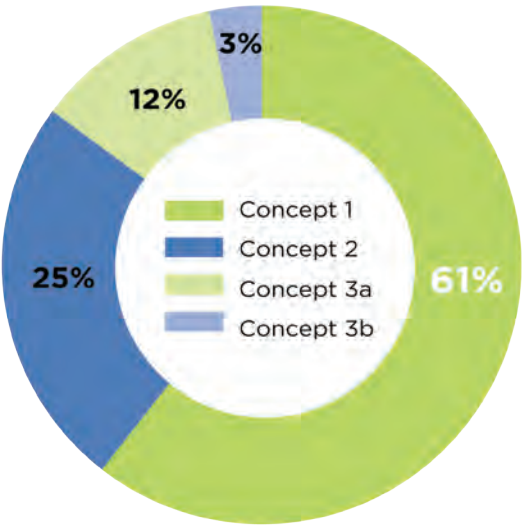


The TAG meetings were highly collaborative and interactive with the goal being to draw productive feedback from the group of technical experts.

PUBLIC FEEDBACK

During the public open house, various exercises were conducted which sought additional public feedback. Additionally, an on-line survey was conducted which asked respondents key questions such as “Which is your preferred park uses arrangement plan?”. As discussed in Chapter 2, *Public Outreach*, the vast majority of respondents supported Framework Concept 1. In this concept, a large portion of the site contains natural recreation, while passive and active recreation each comprised roughly a quarter of the site respectively. Concept 1 did not include golf as a programmed element.

Which is your preferred park uses arrangement plan?



This key question provided direct feedback from the public regarding the four concepts. The public’s overwhelming support of Concept #1 is shown above. Concept 1 can be seen on page 35.



# CHAPTER 4: A PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

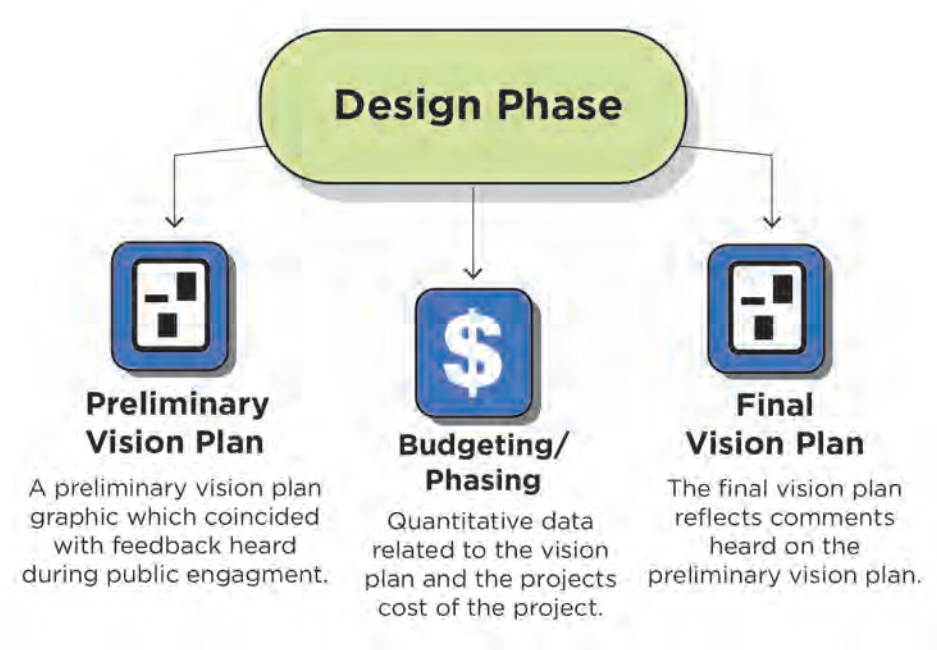
NOTE: All plan and perspective images in the following sections of this document are illustrative in nature and serve to conceptually illustrate the framework plan direction and vision generated during this vision planning process. Future proposed development will comply with all applicable code requirements at the time of site development permit application or otherwise seek necessary variances when more detailed development plans have been created.

The vision plan for Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park recommends a variety of active, passive, cultural and natural uses. The existing park area on the south side of the lake is ideally suited for active lake-side park uses.



A PLAN FOR THE FUTURE - INTRODUCTION

The design phase is when the physical design took shape and represented the culmination of the analysis phase, public engagement phase and visioning phase. In this critical final stage, the main purpose was to further develop the program through the production and refinement of a cohesive vision plan. Some of the key deliverables during this period were a preliminary vision plan, a final vision plan with supporting graphics and a final budgeting and phasing plan. The final vision plan graphic and other supporting imagery were crucial in communicating the character of the final design to the City, stakeholders and members of the general public.



Rolling prairies exist on portions on park site.



Sunrise on the lake illuminates the wetland vegetation along the lake edge.



Swimmers compete in a triathlon.



The lake is home to some of the best fishing in the region.

DEVELOPING THE DESIGN

To initiate the final phase, a design charrette was held which focused on generating ideas for the vision plan. These ideas built on the framework plans and public input and preferences. Concepts were produced and advanced, and ultimately

became part of the vision plan. During this multi-day session, collaboration was encouraged while key topics that were unique to this planning process were discussed. The innovative and communal nature of the design charrette, and

some of the material generated during that period is shown below.



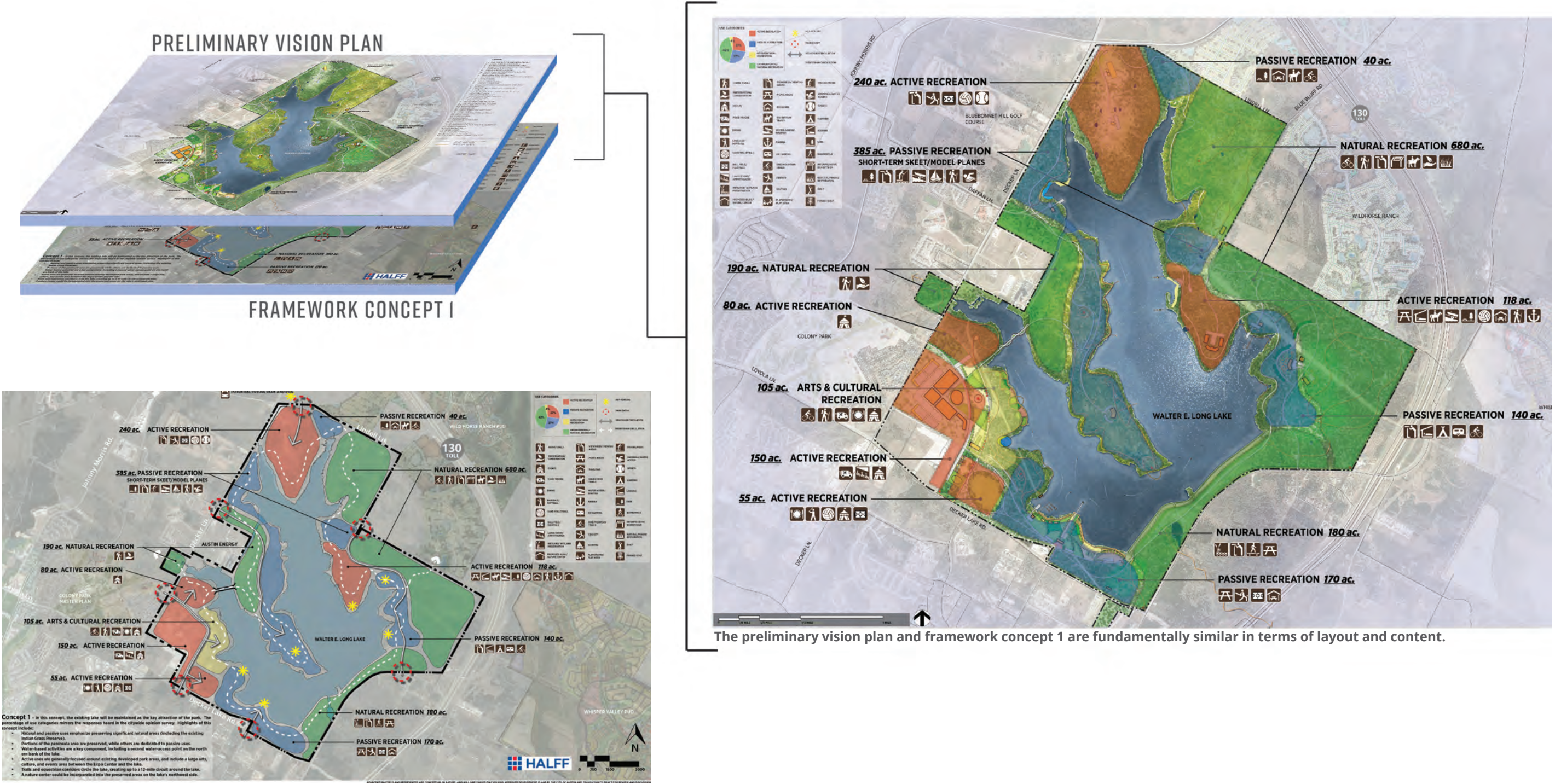
Multi-day charrette with design team and city to develop park concepts.

PRELIMINARY VISION PLAN

The preliminary vision plan contained program elements that were consistent with the citizen feedback heard during public engagement, along with some additional design ideas. Some of these program elements included a nature center, multiple camping areas, a comprehensive trail network, a visitor center and premier event space with supporting facilities. Other potential features

include a research facility, planetarium, wind farm, and solar art areas. The preliminary vision plan follows direction from the public (vetted during the framework phase of the planning process) to consider more natural and passive uses on the northern side of the lake. The southern side of the park already contains the Expo Center and the existing developed park areas, and

lends itself to further, more active park development. The northern portion of the park, north of the lake, is undeveloped, contains an existing preserve, and is better suited to more passive recreation uses. The structure of the preliminary vision plan was fundamentally built on the layout established in Framework Concept 1.



The preliminary vision plan and framework concept 1 are fundamentally similar in terms of layout and content.

PUBLIC FEEDBACK ON THE PRELIMINARY VISION PLAN

In order to determine public perception of golf at Walter E. Long park, two preliminary vision plans were presented to the public during pubic open house #3: one concept featured a golf course complex, while the other did not.

Afterwards, a follow-up survey (Survey #3) was conducted which asked the public which concept they preferred. The results of the survey helped ensure that the vision plan was reflective of the public’s preference on this key issue.

KEY ISSUE

**Golf at Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park** – While the recurrent issue of golf at Walter E. Long Park had been extensively explored, based on the present survey results and all data from the public engagement phase, it was clear that golf did not coincide with the public’s preference for the park. In keeping with this, golf was not recommended in the final vision plan.



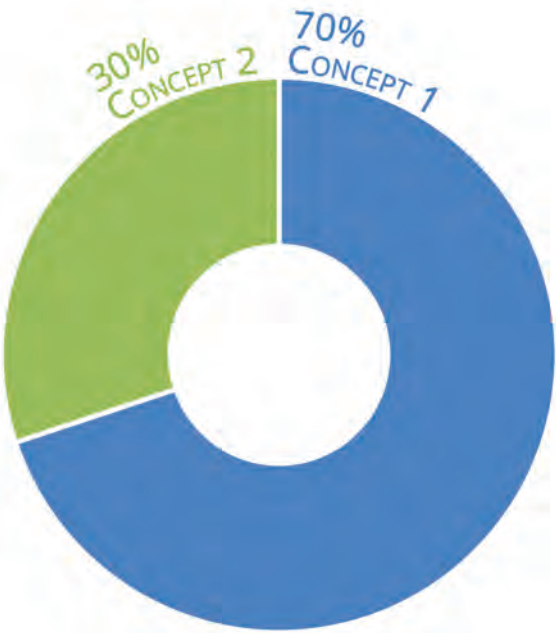
<https://www.pga.com/news/pga-tour/after-all-these-years-riviera-holds-its-own-against-pga-tours-best>



<https://www.wilmingtonandbeaches.com/golf/>

RESPONSES REGARDING THE PRELIMINARY VISION PLAN  
(SURVEY #3)

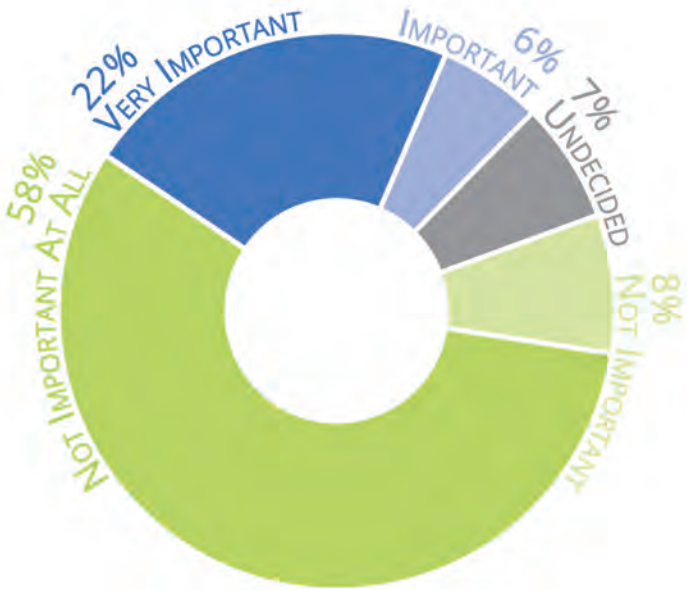
Which is your preferred Vision Plan Concept?



1508 total respondents

According to the results in this survey, 70% of respondents preferred Concept 1 while only 30% preferred Concept 2.

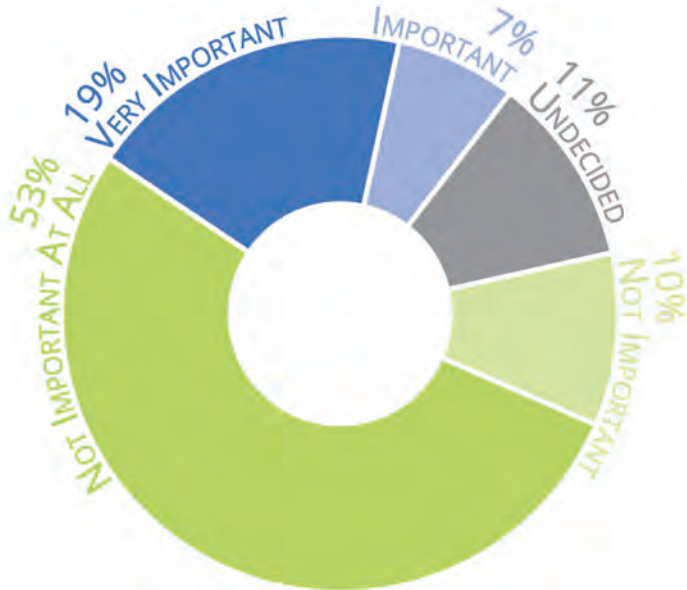
How important do you think it is for a PGA Tour-level golf course to be developed at Walter E. Long Park?



1503 total respondents

According to the results, 66% of respondents thought a PGA-level golf course at Water E. Long Park was either “not important” or “not important at all”.

How important do you think it would be to have a City-operated golf course in Walter E. Long Park?



1508 total respondents

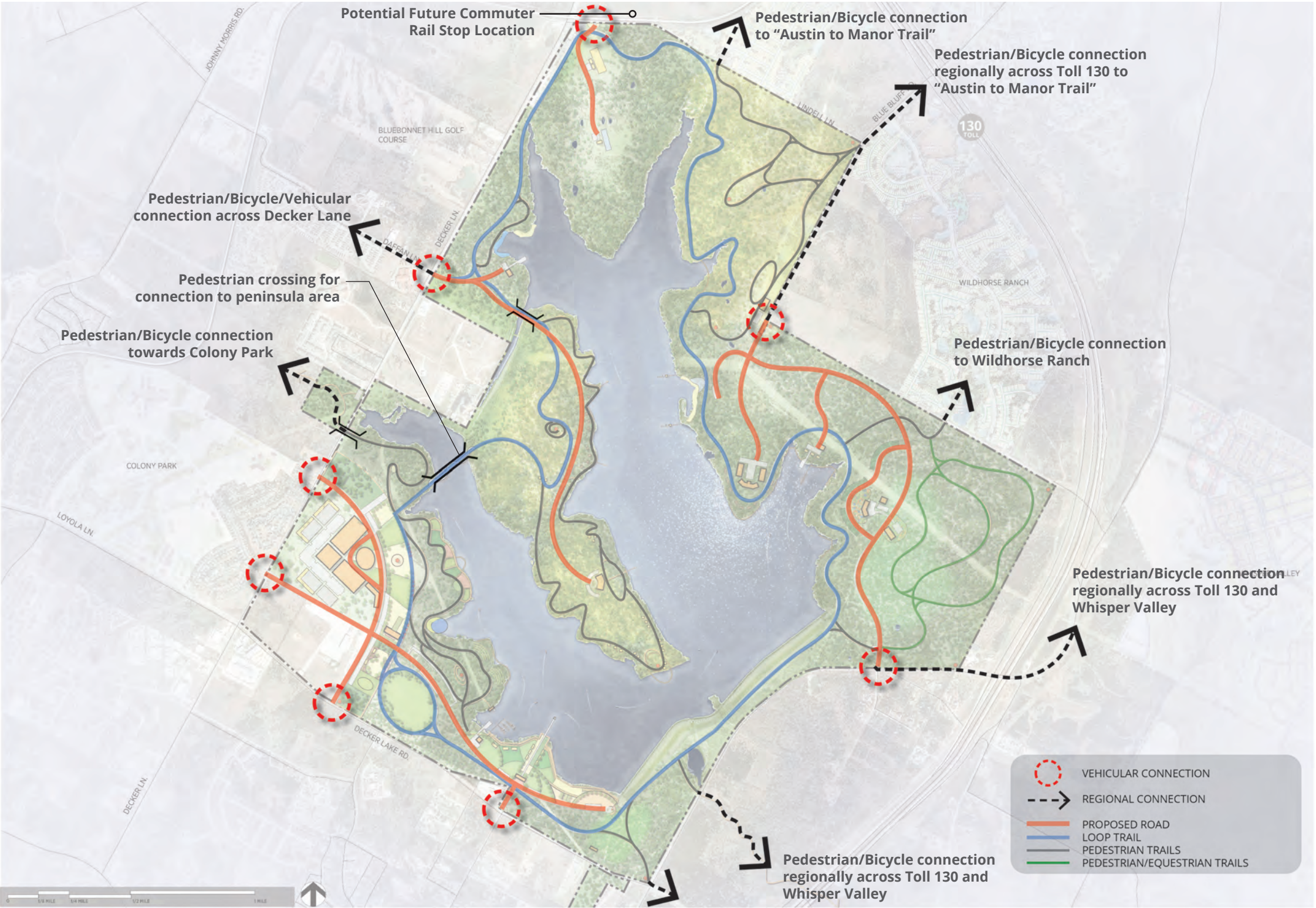
63% of the public indicated that a City-owned golf course at Walter E. Long Park was either “not important” or “not important at all”.



The final vision plan represented the completed vision plan design and contains numerous opportunities for all types of recreation, nature interaction and exciting activities for park visitors and community members. In its totality, the final vision plan contains numerous elements which have the potential to generate revenue and greatly enhance the user experience for local and regional visitors.

ENHANCED ACCESS & CIRCULATION

The final vision plan features an extensive network of enhanced connectivity both within the park and regionally to the greater Austin area. This proposed circulation system offers visitors a better park experience through the provision of multiple types of amenities, such as: increased roads and parking, pedestrian/equestrian trails and a loop trail which enhanced user access around the entire park.



ENHANCED CONNECTIVITY

In addition to pedestrian and vehicular connections to the surrounding area, the internal and external connectivity of Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park has been enhanced through the following features:



Lake Perimeter Loop Trail

13 miles

This 12-foot wide concrete trail circumnavigates the lake while providing park users the opportunity to engage in recreation and experience the entire park. Additionally, its specific length allows for the possibility of formal race events.



Pedestrian/Equestrian Trails

18 miles

In addition to the loop trail, other trails are available which allow visitors to explore the varied natural resources of the park and engage in different recreational activities. Regional trail connections provide connectivity to surrounding communities, via the Austin to Manor Trail and a pedestrian/bicycle connection to Wildhorse Ranch.



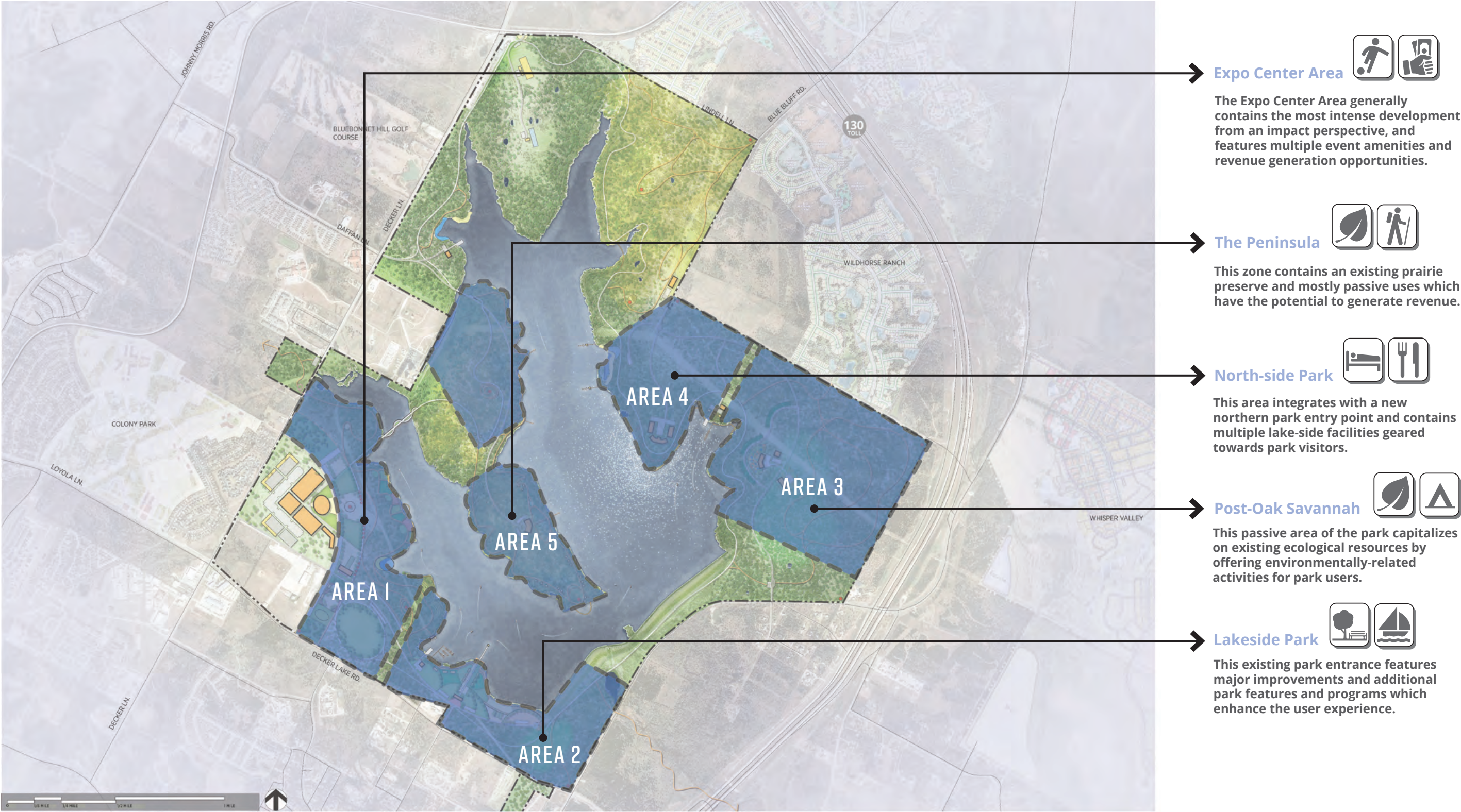
Vehicular Circulation

9.5 miles

Increased vehicular infrastructure and parking availability make the 3,695 acres of parkland more readily within reach for prospective park visitors.

AREAS OF INTEREST

The size of the park allows for multiple unique areas, each with their own character and purpose. These areas were designated by name, and are further detailed on the following pages. Within each unique zone, the feature costs represent the most costly proposed elements in terms of material costs. A more complete diagram of costs is provided in the cost estimate.



AREA I - EXPO CENTER AREA

Located adjacent to the Travis County Expo Center and a highly visible intersection, this section of the park is dedicated to event space and active infrastructure to connect with themed areas of park land and green spaces. The proposed concept includes areas for picnicking, adventure courses, outdoor play, athletic events, recreation, nature observation, outdoor event seating, and cultural arts. This area is intended to be actively programmed throughout the year, and should be a place where events, attractions, vendors and lakeside viewing are available much

of the time. With countless opportunities for active programming, the design has proposed intertwining and connecting infrastructure in the shape of pleasing geometric forms that compliment both the existing Expo Center and Decker Lake. Between attending events, picnicking, or strolling along the boardwalk, guests will likely find plenty to stay engaged in within this zone of Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park.



ACTION STEPS:

- Communication with Travis County regarding Expo Center area property and future enhancements/ renovations
- Identify funding sources and priorities
- Coordinate and execute detailed design/construction efforts
- Implement operations and maintenance plan

FEATURE COSTS:

- Amphitheater (\$20-\$50 million)
- Arts & Cultural Center (\$15-\$20 million)
- Interpretive Garden & Event Space (\$15-\$25 million)
- Event Lawn (\$3-\$7 million)

POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES:

Municipal bonds, state grants, naming rights, cost-sharing agreement, partner funding.

EVENT LAWN

The Event Lawn is a key feature of the park and contains perhaps the greatest potential for revenue generation. Its large size means it could accommodate musical or art events which frequent the Austin area. When not hosting an event or festival, the large lawn panel would serve as passive park space for group gatherings, athletic activities or other types of informal gatherings.



View of event lawn during at an event.



Festival Events



Play/Recreation Areas



Outdoor Events



View from the day use areas of the lakeside park zone towards the Expo Center Area

AREA 2 - LAKESIDE PARK

This area of the site contains enhanced amenities to complement the already existing day-use park. Upon entering the park from the south, guests can participate in a variety of active and passive recreation options. This area focuses on access to the lake and water-based activities. From this zone, guests will be immediately introduced to event space, vending, boat docks,

waterside pavilions, playgrounds, sports fields, and a disc golf course. From here, guests may use the loop trail or park road to access other regions of the park. The design will ideally serve the interests of a wide variety of park visitors and be an opportunity for fun, recreation, and family gatherings for both regional and local visitors.



ACTION STEPS:

- Refine area program with user groups and vendors
- Identify funding sources
- Coordinate and execute design and construction efforts
- Coordinate with potential rowing facility/course partners
- Implement operations and maintenance plan

FEATURE COSTS:

- Park Visitor Center/Park Entry Plaza (\$5-\$7 million)
- Marina Building (\$2-\$3 million)

POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES:

Municipal bonds, state grants (and others), partner naming rights, local clubs/interest groups.

CENTRAL LAWN & PLAZA

The central lawn and plaza are key focal elements within the existing lake-side park area. A proposed pier extending out on the water gives users direct interaction with the lake and a sense of the scale of the park. Surrounded by passive park space, the central promenade

contains multiple food and vending opportunities, play space for children and space for social gatherings. A boardwalk frames this space and allows for free-flowing circulation both to and away from the central lawn and plaza.



View of central promenade on central lawn & plaza looking towards pier.



Water Sports



Iconic Pavilions & Structures



Lakeside Boardwalks

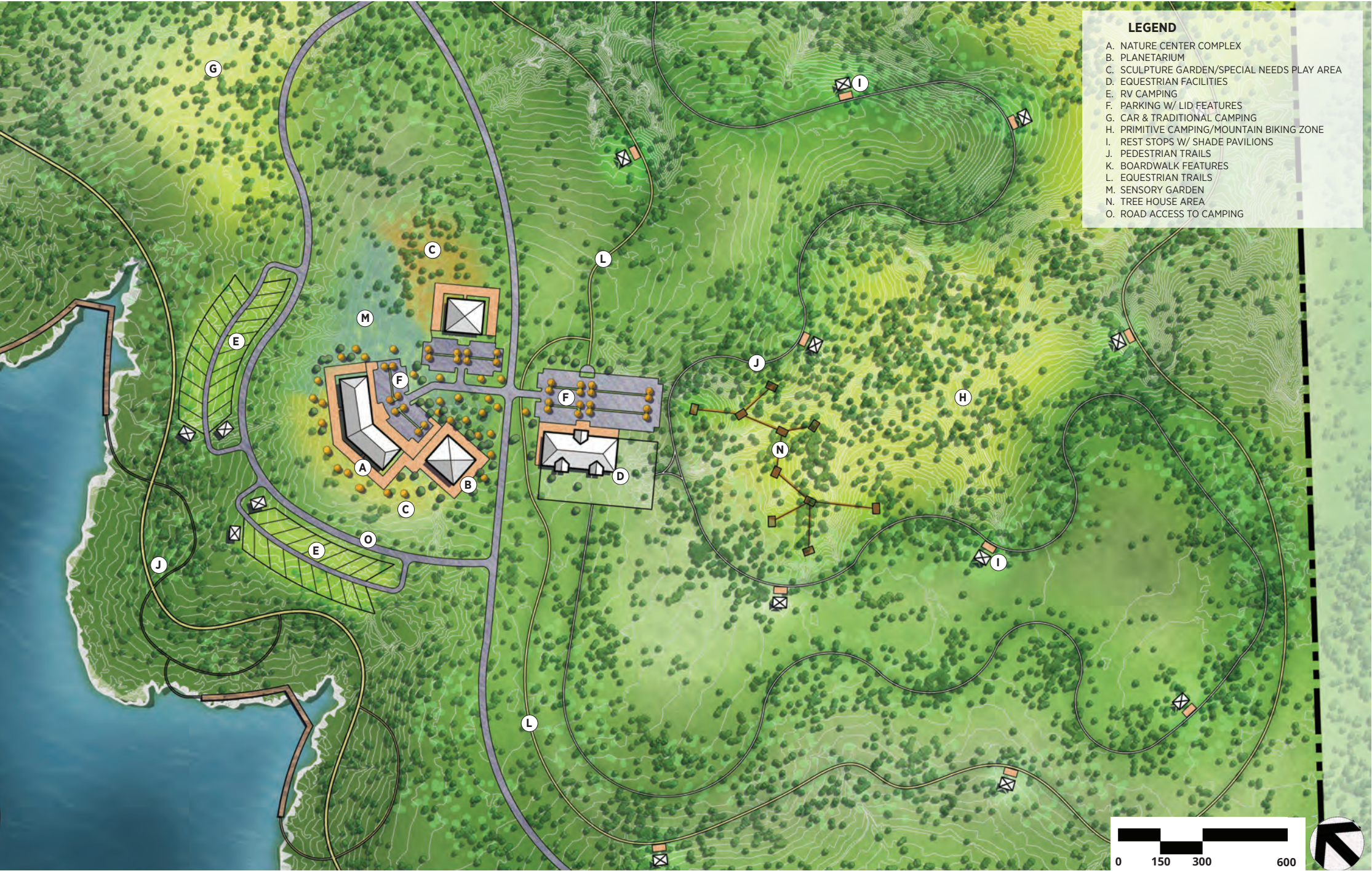


View towards concentrated high activity levels of the park including Expo Area, proposed cultural center and event lawn.

AREA 3 - POST-OAK SAVANNAH

This highly scenic area contains high-quality woodland and natural open space, as well as areas of significant grade change. The western half of the site serves as an area for active education, camping, and nature interaction. Along the shore, the concept focuses on active programming with boardwalks, RV camping, a nature center, playgrounds, and opportunities for a planetarium and ecological education. The eastern half of the site, which contains

grasslands and forest, will be preserved in a more natural state. In this more passive half of the concept, pedestrian and equestrian trails run through areas for campsites which will offer recreation and an appealing view of the water for campers. A tree-house area is located inland from the Nature Center Complex and will take advantage of the high-quality woodland contained within that area.



ACTION STEPS:

- Communicate with interest groups
- Secure funding
- Coordinate and execute consultant efforts
- Implement operations and maintenance plan

FEATURE COSTS:

- Nature Center Complex (\$25-\$30 million)
- Equestrian Facility (\$15-\$20 million)
- Planetarium (\$6-\$7 million)

POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES:

Municipal bonds, state grants, naming rights, interest groups.

NATURE CENTER

An equestrian facility, planetarium and multiple camping opportunities allow users with diverse interests to intimately experience nature and the rich natural resources of the park. By providing activities for a varied range of park users, this opens up the park regionally and also increases potential revenue. Multiple pedestrian and equestrian trails are offered which are located near the lake and on higher ground within the north-east sector area.



View towards proposed equestrian center.



Camping Opportunities



Equestrian Activities



Nature Trails

AREA 4 - NORTH-SIDE PARK

The north-side park features things such as a proposed beach, a welcome center, rent-able cabin facilities, a marina/boat launch, kayak rentals and a pier. This area of the site provides opportunities for a plethora of active programming within a peaceful, natural environment. Direct access to the lake along with varied topography topped by event structures will provide visitors a chance to enjoy Decker Lake in a variety of ways throughout the year. Whether a day

at the beach, fishing from a nearby boardwalk or pier are proposed, launching a motorboat, kayaking along the shore, or attending a group workshop or reception, visitors to the park will be drawn to this area as a relaxing multi-use zone with lots of variety and multiple points of lake access by foot, pier, or boat.



ACTION STEPS:

- Secure funding
- Coordinate and execute consultant efforts
- Implement operations and maintenance plan

FEATURE COSTS:

- Welcome Center with Lakeside Restaurant and Lodge (\$50-\$60 million)
- Boathouse/Marina (\$2-\$3 million)
- Boat/Kayak Rental Facilities (\$1-\$2 million)

POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES:

Municipal bonds, state grants, naming rights, partnerships, concessionaires, development.

VISITOR CENTER

At the terminus of the northern park entry road lies the welcome center, visitor center and a boat launch facility. Some of the amenities provided include a visitor information center, dining, lodging and other entertainment amenities which cater to a wide range of potential

users. Not only does developing this area of the park increase overall accessibility, but it also opens up other areas of the lake for fishing and boat access.



View towards visitor center and cabins overlooking the lake.



Boardwalks & Fishing Piers



Lake Access



Cabins

AREA 5 - THE PENINSULA

This area of the site contains mostly passive and recreational program elements. Some of the key features are a park road, boardwalk features, pedestrian trails, a bridge feature, a lookout feature, groupings of pavilions and several pier features. This previously inaccessible area of the park will be opened up via a new road which can be accessed directly off of Decker

Lane. This area of the site is located directly adjacent to the existing Austin Energy facility; in an attempt to avoid any potential use conflict, an approximately 300 foot vegetative buffer is provided on the land adjacent to the facility. Vehicular access to this area requires an entrance fee which has the potential to generate revenue for both park operations and the community.



ACTION STEPS:

- Secure funding
- Coordinate and execute consultant efforts
- Implement operations and maintenance plan

FEATURE COSTS:

- Lakeside Cabins (\$7-\$8 million)
- Iconic Overlook Feature (\$4-\$5 million)
- Boardwalk Feature (\$6-\$7 million)

POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES:

Municipal bonds, state grants, naming rights, partnerships, concessionaires, development.

CABINS & BOARDWALK

At the entry of the peninsula lies a free, day-use zone containing open space, a playground, a splash-pad and other related amenities. Beyond that, any vehicle seeking to enter the peninsula area needs to pay a fee. A series of cabins overlook the lake giving park users an

intimate experience with the rich natural resources of the park. In order to capitalize on the scenic beauty of the park, some iconic overlooks are located nearby which visitors can access and enjoy.



Boardwalks are proposed throughout the plan to minimize impacts to shoreline areas and guide lake access.



Iconic Observation Tower



Boardwalks



Revenue Generation

AREA 5 - THE PENINSULA

This area of the site contains mostly environmental, passive and recreational program elements. While the site is largely undisturbed, the proposed elements seek to capitalize on the existing preserve and natural features. Some of the proposed uses are an event venue and interpretative area, several boardwalk features, pavilion groupings, pier features and

pedestrian trails. This area seeks to generate revenue for the community by requiring vehicles to pay an entrance fee in order to gain access to the event facility and other amenities. There are numerous view-sheds in this area and the proposed plan takes advantage of these scenic locations.



ACTION STEPS:

- Secure funding
- Coordinate and execute consultant efforts
- Implement operations and maintenance plan

FEATURE COSTS:

- Event Venue and Interpretative Center (\$50-\$60 million)
- Boardwalk Feature (\$4-\$5 million)

POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES:

Municipal bonds, state grants, naming rights, partnerships, concessionaires, development.

EVENT VENUE & INTERPRETATIVE CENTER

The main revenue generating feature of this area is the Event Venue and Interpretive Center which can hold conferences, retreats and other large social events. Adjacent to the facility is an iconic dock where users can enjoy views onto the lake and can travel on the pedestrian trail circumnavigating the peninsula.



Background architectural representation designed by hatch + ulland owen architects

Boardwalks are proposed throughout the plan to minimize impacts to shoreline areas and guide lake access.



Event Venue & Interpretative Center



Iconic Structures



Boardwalk Features

FINAL VISION PLAN - GOLF ALTERNATIVE



This final draft vision plan alternative featured golf and debuted to the public during the final open house. The legend items with a red line represent some of the main proposed features which would be lost with the implementation of this golf course proposal.

The question of whether a golf course should be incorporated within the Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park site was considered throughout this vision planning process. As noted previously, golf was a consideration at the park during previous vision planning efforts, given the size and undeveloped state of the park, as well as growth in the sport at that time. However, the vast majority of the programmed elements from those earlier vision plans were never built.

In 2014, a proposal submitted to the City outlined a plan for a Professional Golf Association (PGA) level course in the northeast quadrant of the park. This proposal envisioned a premier complex of courses, along with practice, meeting and event facilities. The project would

be developed on 735 acres of the overall 2,530 land acres contained in Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park (approximately 30% of the overall land area of the park). The proposal projected potential revenue streams from the course that could be used to help fund development and operations of the remainder of Walter E. Long Park. The projected revenues that would be returned to the City of Austin ranged from approximately \$128,000 (with 22,000 rounds played) in the first year, to approximately \$640,000 in year ten (with a projected 70,000+ rounds). The revenues were projected to continue to rise as the complex was finished out. As proposed, the site would be the location for the PGA's Dell Match Play event, held annually in the spring in Austin.

During this vision planning process, alternatives illustrating the 2014 proposal's placement of the golf course(s) were incorporated at both the framework and the preliminary vision plan levels. Citizens, including residents of the surrounding area, park user groups and interested users from the greater Austin region, were asked to consider their preferred types of recreation activities and uses for the overall park property, as well as their preferences regarding golf as a use within the park.

Overall public input received during the vision planning process pointed to a preference to maintain that area of the park in a more natural state, by approximately a 70 to 30 percent margin. Three separate survey efforts each clearly indicated that there was little desire for golf.

The recommended final vision plan, along with the proposed golf development, is illustrated on this page for reference. Concerns regarding the golf course voiced during the vision planning process are shown below. These serve as considerations to be further investigated if interest in the golf course continues. These items include:

**Need to prove the economic viability of the course:** Given the cost of play for the course, an independent analysis/ marketing study to confirm the viability of the anticipated rounds played and revenue from other secondary uses should be conducted. This is important since a large area of public lands (30% of the park site) would be consumed, and also since projected revenues back to the City of Austin are being shown as a major benefit of the development.

**Concern over responsibility for the course if usage projections are not met:** The City of Austin operates six

public courses, including a course that until recently was privately operated. Reintegration of the site back to a more natural state would be very difficult once the course is developed, and its use as a city-operated public course might be cost prohibitive.

**Loss of a significant amount of public lands to more traditional park/natural area uses:** Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park's public lands will continue to increase significantly in recreational value as the eastern portion of Austin grows over the next few decades. The park lands with access to the lake, trails circumnavigating the lake, and the limited amount of other natural areas in the eastern half of Austin should be considerations as to whether use of the lands for golf are the preferred long-term use of the site.

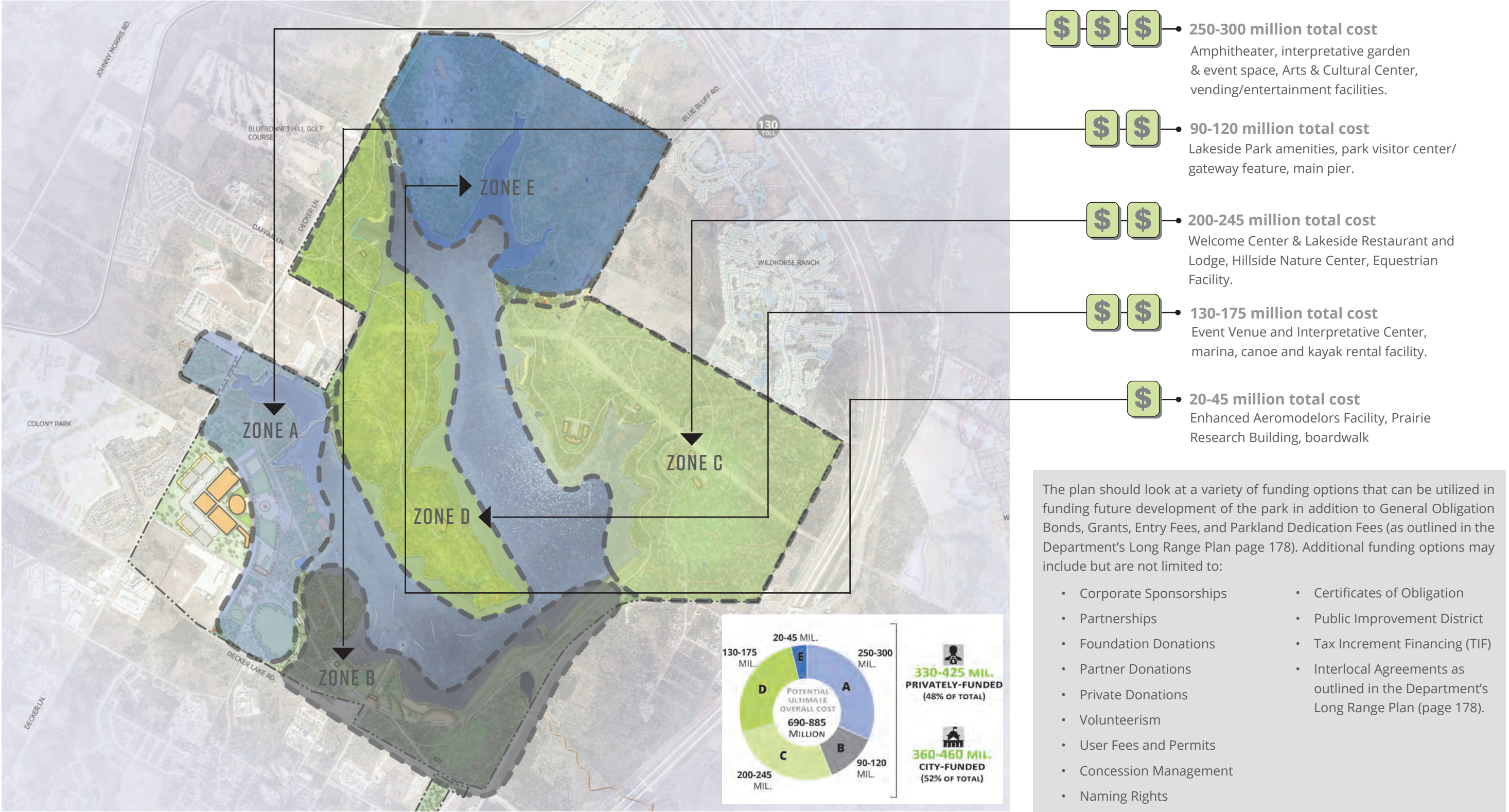
**Lack of ability to return the area to a more natural state in the future:** Once developed and configured as a complex of golf courses, that area of the park site would be difficult to return to its current natural state.

**Cost of participation for using the course:** The premier nature of the course will result in a high cost of play, which could be a financial challenge for everyday users.

**Anticipated employment and types of jobs:** The number, type and wage levels of employment opportunities created by the complex of courses should be confirmed to determine if they are adequate for the amount of land consumed.

ESTIMATED PROJECT BUDGET

Critical to the vision planning process was providing cost-related information which begins to give an idea of the potential ultimate true cost of the proposed park improvements. Given the large size of the park, various zones were designated and the cost estimate was subdivided in this manner.



POTENTIAL PHASE ONE

The southern edge of the park, including the existing lake access parts and portions of the park along Decker Lake Road, are recommended as the initial phase of development for Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park Vision Plan. This

area is recommended due to the existing access and park infrastructure already in the area, as well as its proximity to and potential synergy with the Travis County Expo site. It can provide excellent park amenities for local

community members as well as for lake users from around the region. Multiple partnerships to help develop this area and to provide economic and employment opportunities.



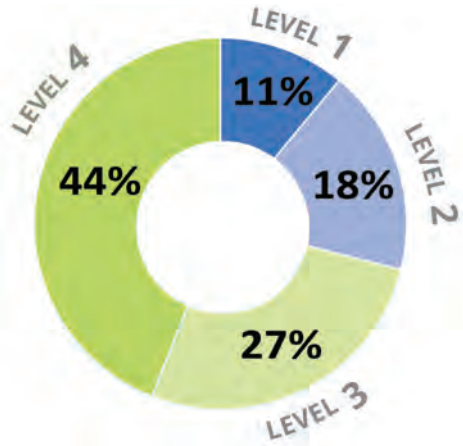
Phase One

- Total Area:** +/-272 acres (7% of total park land area)
- Estimated Capital Costs:** \$140-160 million (\$20-40 million estimated to be funded privately). Initial Phase 1(a) - 10-20 million, Phase 1(b) 15-25 million, Phase 1(c) and beyond - cost TBD. The Phase 1 area shown on this page includes portions of Zone A and B shown on page 63.
- Featured Amenities:** Park visitor center, day use and water access facilities, championship rowing course, vending/entertainment facilities, event open lawn, floating water sports zone, canoe/kayak rental facilities and other amenities are proposed for this area.

City of Austin Maintenance Levels

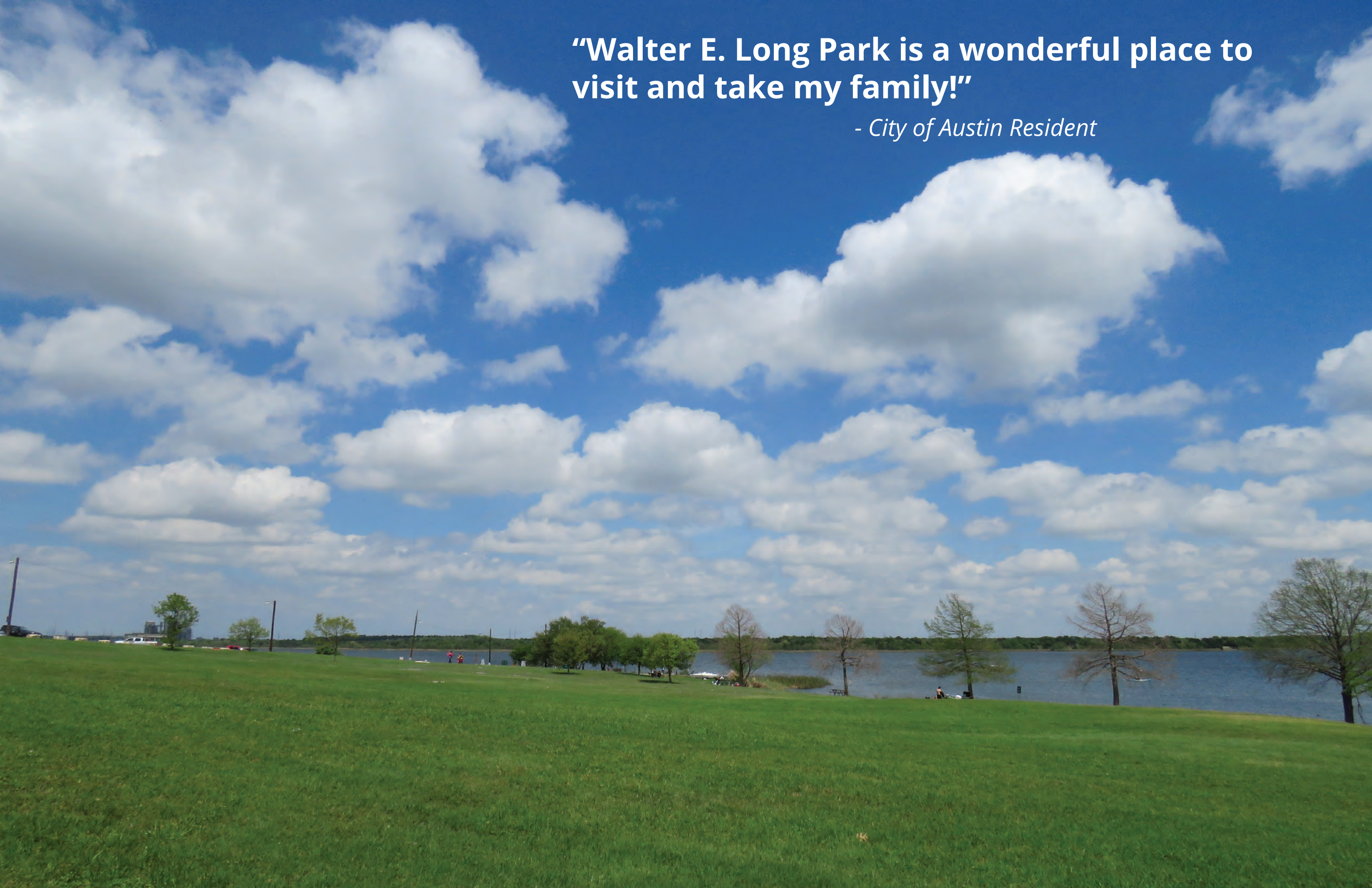
- Level 1** - Typically have high traffic areas that have amenities that require significant staff time and attention
- Level 2** - Typically have less volume: however, park amenities are associated in these parks as well as basic repairs.
- Level 3** - Associated with a low volume of traffic.
- Level 4** - Typically associated with non-developed parks, trails or natural areas

Phase One Estimated Maintenance



**“Walter E. Long Park is a wonderful place to visit and take my family!”**

*- City of Austin Resident*





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# CHAPTER 5: NEXT STEPS

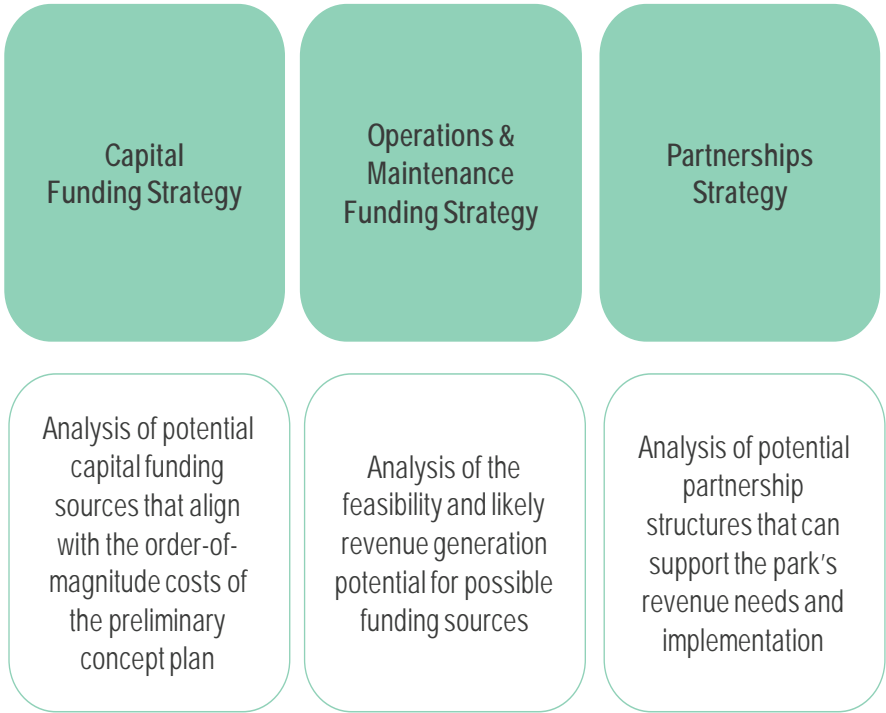


In order for the vision plan for Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park to become a reality, phasing, funding and operating costs need to be considered.



MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE & OPERATIONS

To develop a funding and partnerships approach that will support the Walter E. Long vision plan, three high-level categories are examined here: capital funding strategy, operations & maintenance funding strategy and partnership strategies.



CAPITAL COSTS

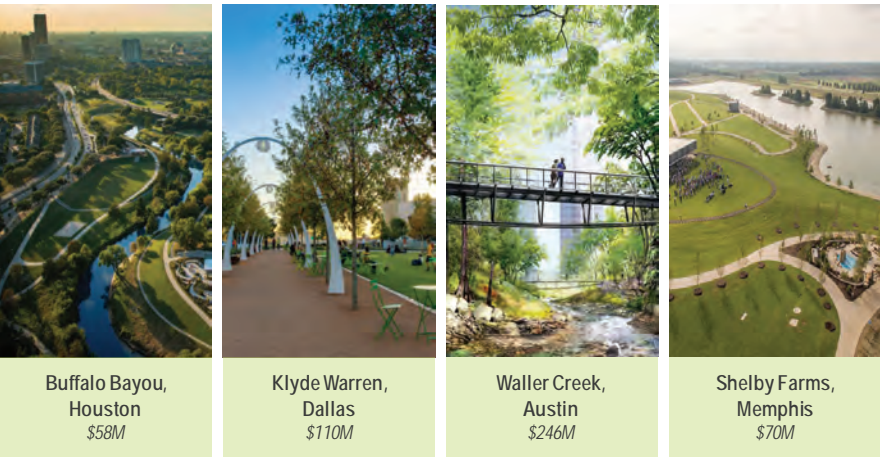
Capital costs reflect fixed, one-time expenses that are incurred to fund the upfront construction of a park and its supporting amenities. This may include the costs associated with building new infrastructure, constructing park facilities, creating new access points, landscaping to support park programming, and more investments that are required before the park can be utilized at its desired level. Capital costs are influenced by a variety of factors that vary park to park. These include site conditions, design decisions, and community aspirations which all impact the ultimate design that capital construction is striving to create.

Comparable parks provide a rough indication of the magnitude of funding needs for other parks around the country and the wide range of capital costs that are incurred under different settings.

Based on order of magnitude and pre-design cost estimates of the program plan envisioned under the vision plan, the total capital cost of the entire 3,600+ acre park is estimated to range from \$450-\$750 million. This includes both publicly funded features as well as locations for privately funded amenities or concession/partnership-driven facilities.

It is also important to recognize the sheer size of the park and its probable phasing over a decades long period. This includes both publicly funded features as well as locations for privately funded amenities or concession/partnership-driven facilities.

This entire initial +/-272 acre phase, which incorporates the most active portions of the park, is projected to range in costs from \$140-\$160 million. This is a significant number that dwarfs even similarly ambitious public space projects. To make this more manageable, it is essential for Walter E. Long Park to be constructed over multiple phases. The section of the park that is identified for Phase I reflects a much more manageable project that amounts to roughly \$140-160 million in total capital costs. However, even this section may need to be constructed over multiple phases and multiple development periods to better align costs with available capital funding sources.



CAPITAL FUNDED SOURCES

The significant scale of improvements proposed for Walter E. Long Park will require an aggressive capital funding campaign. Walter E. Long Park will require capital funding that leverages multiple sources of revenue to meet the significant capital cost investment outlined in the vision plan. There are three principal buckets of revenue that can be tapped to support this but these funding sources will not contribute equally to park capital needs.

Public Funding

Government entities – city, state, regional, and federal – will likely provide a baseline of funding for capital support for the park which is consistent for the majority of parks across the country. Federal and state sources are likely to include competitive grant and loan programs and regional sources

will likely require an application that demonstrates the regional importance of the project. Local sources consist primarily of the City of Austin. While all of these potential sources should be explored, the City of Austin should expect to demonstrate a sizable upfront commitment to investing in this park if the vision laid out in the vision plan is to be realized. Fortunately, City of Austin residents have demonstrated a sustained commitment to supporting their public spaces so this could be a promising avenue that should be explored.

Value Capture

There is ample evidence documenting the benefits parks create for their surrounding areas and some of these benefits are able to be monetized. The extent to which monetization is feasible varies by park location and design. One type of value capture mechanism that has precedent in Austin for being used to support capital construction needs is tax increment financing (TIF) or tax increment reinvestment zones (TIRZ). These mechanisms allow the City to borrow money to pay for capital projects within a certain area and this debt is secured by a future stream of tax revenues that are expected to materialize over time as the result of the capital investment. One of the more recent examples of this being used in Austin is the TIRZ that was created to support the development of Waller Creek chain of parks. While this TIRZ was initially created in 2007, in 2018 the City Council voted to extend the life of the TIRZ which allowed them to invest an additional \$110 million in Waller Creek. However, this mechanism is unlikely to be replicated here. Unlike Waller Creek which is located in the commercial heart of Downtown Austin, the area surrounding Walter E. Long is primarily residential. While development of the park may marginally increase surrounding property values, it is unlikely to reach the level of supporting the significant scale of capital funds needed here. Value capture does not seem promising as a reliable capital funding source.

Contributed Income

The majority of parks rely on some form of philanthropy but the extent to which that funding is individual or corporate varies based on a variety of local factors. Contributed income for capital can take the form of naming rights or philanthropic donations from individuals, nonprofits, or corporations. Contributed income will likely play a critically important role in supporting upfront capital needs at Walter E. Long Park and multiple forms and sources should be explored from the surrounding local and regional area. The vision plan for Walter E. Long has presented a compelling vision for what the park could become and marketing this vision will be critically important to soliciting contributed income opportunities. Excitement generated by the vision plan's vision can translate into direct financial support from donors who wish to play their part in making the vision become a reality.


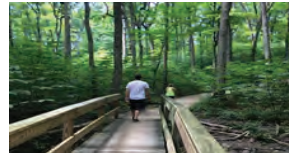




POTENTIAL OPERATING COSTS

The required annual operations and maintenance (O&M) costs for a redeveloped Walter E. Long Park will be a function of aspiration, design, and desired activation. These operating costs vary considerably for different parks around the country and are influenced by park size, usage, program intensity, site conditions, quality of design and expectations. Based on national precedents, annual operations costs can range from \$1,000 per acre for natural areas, \$5,000 per acre for minimally programmed neighborhood parks, \$25,000 per acre for multi-use regional parks, \$250,000 per acre for Downtown linear parks, and \$1,000,000 per acre for densely programmed Downtown parks.

Comparable parks that are similar in size, physical landscape, regional positioning, and programming vision to the proposed vision plan for Walter E. Long Park, provide a rough indication of the magnitude of funding needs for the park as a whole. This is likely to range between \$5,000 and \$15,000 per acre for the developed portions of the park for the entire park.

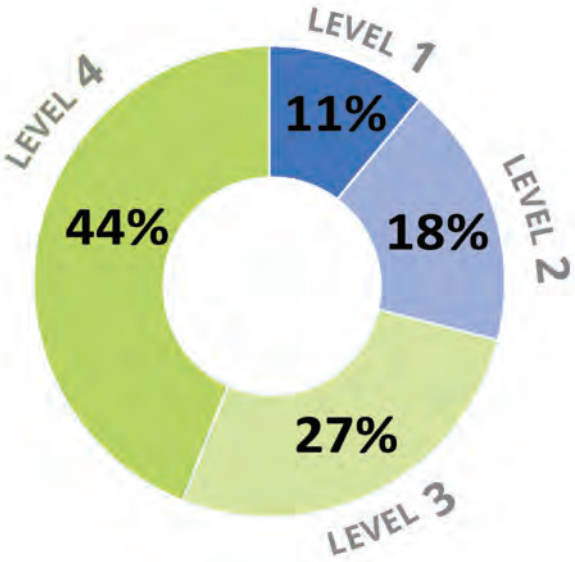


Comparable Park O&M Costs Per Acre

 Shelby Farms, Memphis \$800 / Acre*	 Eagle Creek Park, Indianapolis \$1,200 / Acre	 Fairmount Park, Philadelphia \$4,200 / Acre
 Hermann Park, Houston \$10,100 / Acre	 Deer Lake Park, Burnaby \$10,400 / Acre	 Forest Park, St. Louis \$11,000 / Acre

\*Shelby Farms is able to significantly minimize costs by maintaining some of their operations with labor from the Shelby County Division of Corrections which incurs no cost to the park itself.

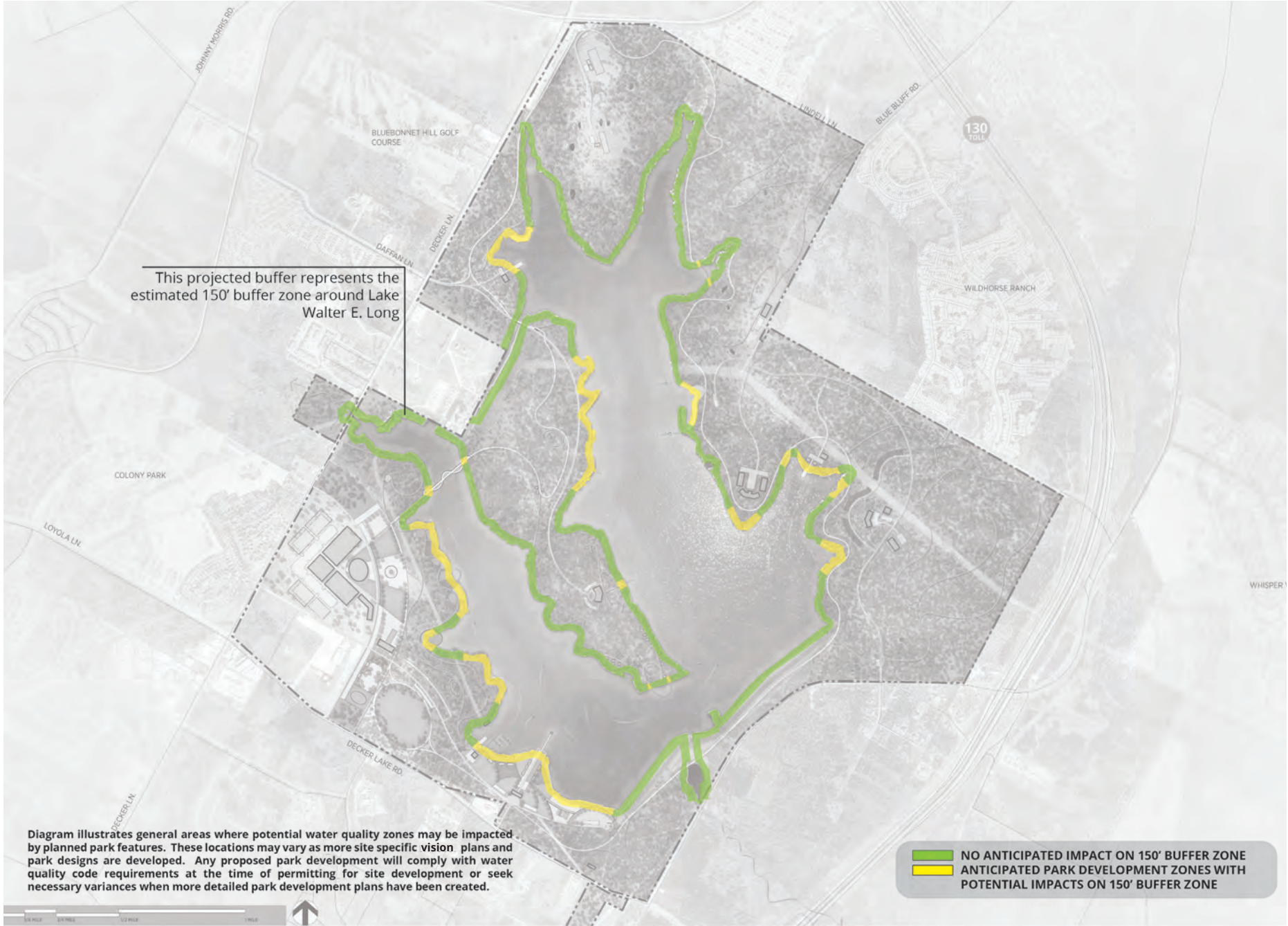
PHASE ONE ESTIMATED MAINTENANCE



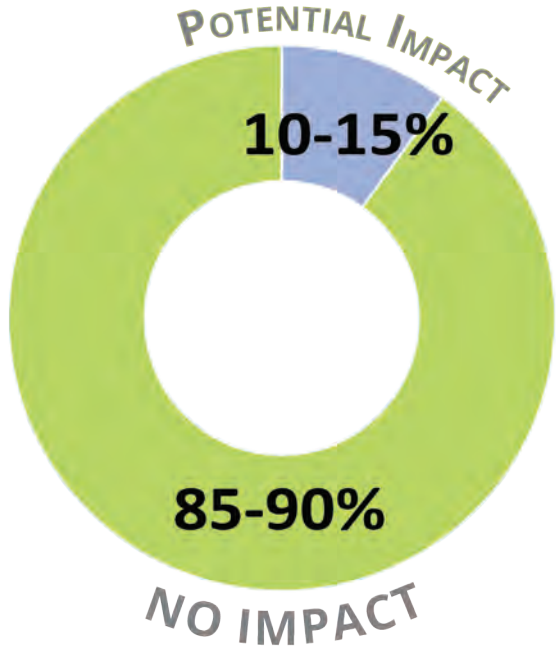
Formal operational & maintenance projections should be developed as the initial phase and the program of facilities and uses for that area are confirmed.

POTENTIAL SHORELINE IMPACT MITIGATION




A component of this vision plan involved looking at the potential shoreline impacts that future development may have at Walter E. Long Park. While the actual impact and extent of future development is unknowable at this time, the following information describes the potential impact to the shoreline based on this vision plan vision. According to this preliminary analysis, approximately 10-15% of the overall shoreline could be potentially impacted. Austin’s park and recreational department will work with other related departments such as the Watershed Protection Department to ensure all codes are abided by or that variances are requested if needed.



ESTIMATED POTENTIAL SHORELINE IMPACT TO LAKE WALTER E. LONG



FUTURE STRATEGIES TO MITIGATE POTENTIAL DISTURBANCE

-  Integrate piling/pier systems
-  Employ low-impact material
-  Follow sustainable construction methods

POTENTIAL REVENUE OPPORTUNITIES

Within the proposed phase one area, a number of amenities, events, and areas have the potential to generate revenue. For example, festivals, music events, and triathlons would produce funds where a portion of which can go directly back to the city. The potential events, vendors, rentals, and estimated levels of participation were developed through consultation with City staff, are generally conservative in nature, and represent an approximate picture of future activity and City of Austin net revenue levels in the phase one area at Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park.

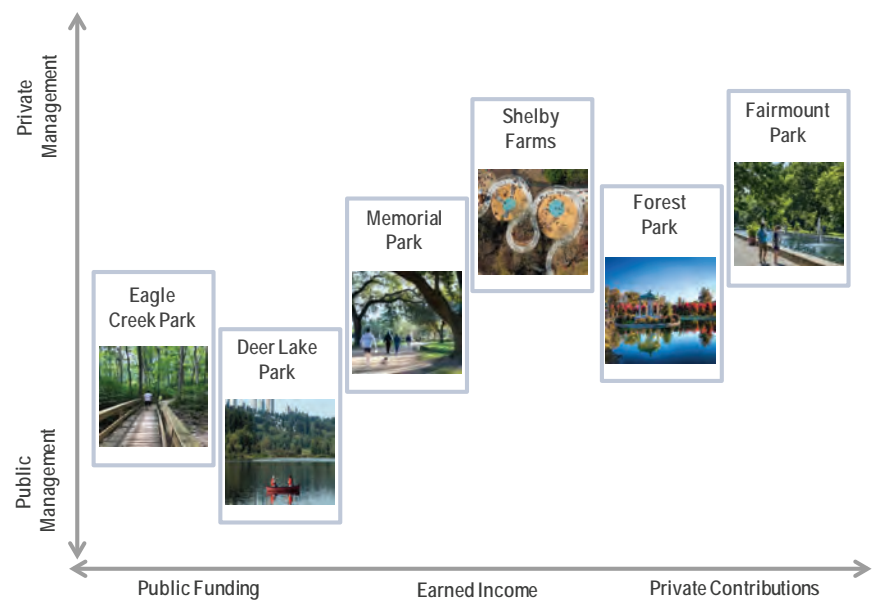
Walter E. Long Park

Revenue Opportunities Scenario - Initial Phase Only

PROGRAM ELEMENT TYPE	POTENTIAL EVENT TYPES	POTENTIAL ANNUAL PARTICIPATION RANGE	POTENTIAL REVENUE TO CITY (Note: Amounts may vary based on the method of charging users and specific contract requirements)
Area Wide Events in Phase One Zone	Major festival/music events (3-5 Annually) Rowing Events (4-8 Annually) Mud Runs/Triathlons (4-6 Annually)	150,000 to 250,000 & attendees total (all events together)	\$750,000 to \$1,500,000 annually (flat park usage fee, percentage of gate or net revenue)
Expo Center Area Lakeside Destination and Facilities	Small to medium-sized events Pavilions & rentals Parking Fees Adventure Course/Splash Pad/Ferris Wheel	200,000 to 400,000 annually (day use and entrance to special attractions)	\$500,000 to \$750,000 annually (base fee for usage, percent of gross or net revenue from concession facilities, percent of gate)
South Marina Area	Boathouse rental/storage Food vendor Kayak/boat rentals Fishing guides. Lessons (by instructions)	10,000 to 20,000 annually	\$50,000 to \$75,000 annually (fees from concessions, fees for usage, percent of gross or net revenue)
Pier Area	Pavilion rentals Food vendors Parking Fees Small events Café/restaurant revenue Basketball/sand volleyball tournaments Optional weekend access fees	75,000 - 100,000 annually	\$75,000 to \$150,000 annually (usage fees, rental fees, concessionaire fees, percentage of gross or net revenue for events, special events charges)
Beach/Day-Use Park Area	Pavilion rentals Water obstacle course Food vendors Disc golf access Equipment Rentals	75,000 - 100,000 annually	\$100,000 - \$200,000 annually
Annual Subtotal - Events		510,000 - 870,000	\$1,500,000 - \$2,700,000

PARTNERSHIP STRUCTURE

Open spaces around the country are managed under a variety of different governance structures. The appropriate governance structure for each individual public space is more often than not a function of the funding that is used to support the public space. The more public funds used to support funding, the more likely that the space will be under public or quasi public management. The more private funds used to support funding, the more likely the space will also be under private management. The governance and management structure that is best aligned to Walter E. Long Park’s needs should be a function of the final park vision and the corresponding capital and operating funding strategies that are used to realize this vision.



- Eagle Creek Park: run by the city with a small conservancy that contributes to maintenance
- Deer Lake Park: run by the city
- Memorial Park: run by the city with conservancy support
- Shelby Farms Park: run by a conservancy
- Forest Park: run by the city with conservancy support
- Fairmount Park: run by a conservancy

Guiding Principles for Partnerships

Regardless of structure, identification of the appropriate governance structure for Walter E. Long governance should be guided by the following principles:

- Leverage Existing Capacity-** Take advantage of current resources embedded within public and non-profit entities to fill programming offerings.
- Produce Best-in-Class Operations & Programming-** Rapidly build capacity to deliver high quality operations and robust programming
- Support Brand Development-** Maintain a high-quality brand attractive to residents and visitors
- Secure Diverse Funding Streams-** Secure public and private funding mechanisms from new and existing sources along with earned income
- Cultivate Longevity-** Enable and plan for sustainable, long-term management of the open space and supportive resources essential for growth.

Partner Responsibilities

The range of responsibilities necessary to achieve the goal of the Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park Vision Plan fall into three main buckets – vision, capital needs, and operations. Each of these responsibilities must be handled by an existing entity, such as the ones identified on the previous page, or a new entity.

Vision	Capital Needs	Operations
Vision Implementation	Capital Construction	Operational Maintenance
Capital Fundraising	Structural Maintenance	Operational Fundraising
Ownership of Structure		Marketing
Ownership of Park		Programming

Strategic relationships with existing organizations can help move envisioned programs to implementation. The lead operator of Walter E. Long should actively seek partnerships with existing entities in the City of Austin that can bring programming to the vast amount of public space at the park. The benefit of these partnerships is the ability to take advantage of current resources embedded within public, private, and non-profit entities to support near-term implementation, fill program offerings, and maintain a high quality brand.

Partner Responsibilities

The range of responsibilities necessary to achieve the goal of the Walter E. Long Vision Plan require partnerships, such as the following:

Stakeholders

Non-Profits

City Agencies

State Agencies

CONCLUSION

Very few parks in Austin have the potential to be as transformative and influential as the proposed development of Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park. The sheer size of the park, at over 3,600 acres, offers an incredible potential to include a wide and very diverse range of recreation opportunities and programs, ranging from citywide events, to many sports and cultural activities, to long lakeside walks, to connecting with nature. The park is anchored by a beautiful lake that provides easy access to extensive water-oriented opportunities. And its location is accessible to many throughout the entire Austin and Central Texas region.

Most importantly, this park has the potential to be the heart of the eastern half of Austin. In its current state, the park has limited facilities and a gate fee that is an impediment to frequent use by surrounding residents. In a more developed and accessible state, this park will be a major attraction to bring more visitors, residents and interest to the area.

This is a park that is greatly needed in this fast-growing area of the City. While its many components may take a long time to be completed, its initial phases will be a catalyst to the growth of eastern Austin. Park investments of this magnitude have been slow to come to this area of the City, and this vision plan encourages a commitment to near-term investment in the park.

With that investment, Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park can truly become one of the foremost jewels of the Austin Parks System and the centerpiece of eastern Austin.

FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION

During the implementation phases of the park, the Parks and Recreation Department will make a concerted effort to provide regular updates to City Council on the development of the park, beyond the required City Council approvals for design and/or construction contracts for capital improvement projects and the grant award process.



PLANNING VISION

“WALTER E. LONG PARK STRIVES TO BE ONE OF AUSTIN’S PREMIERE METROPOLITAN PARKS SERVING BOTH LOCAL NEIGHBORHOODS AND THE GREATER REGION. THE PARK EMBODIES ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND AND SUSTAINABLE PRINCIPLES AND INCLUDES AN INTEGRATED PROGRAM OF ACTIVE, PASSIVE, CULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL RECREATIONAL USES.”

A wide-angle photograph of a natural landscape. The foreground is filled with tall, thin, light-brown grasses and numerous small, bright yellow wildflowers. In the middle ground, there are several green bushes and small trees. The background shows a distant treeline under a vast, bright blue sky filled with many small, white, fluffy clouds.

**“Walter E. Long is a fantastic resource for  
the City of Austin”.**

*- City of Austin Resident*





## CHAPTER 6: APPENDIX





### ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION MOTION 20190717 007a

**Date:** July 17, 2019

**Subject:** Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park Master Plan

**Motion by:** Linda Guerrero

**Seconded by:** Katie Coyne

#### **RATIONALE:**

**WHEREAS**, Walter E. Long Lake is known to contain multiple high-value water quality resources, including wetland shoreline fringe Critical Environmental Features that are of the highest quality in the City; and

**WHEREAS**, park development must comply with water quality protection requirements of the City code including protections for shoreline and Critical Environmental Features; and

**WHEREAS**, Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park contains a myriad of high-value resources that need protection for future generations; and

**WHEREAS**, framework designs presented by the Parks and Recreation Department (PARC) indicate intense development is planned along the shoreline and potentially within the buffers of the Critical Environmental Features and the Critical Water Quality Zone that may conflict with City code.

**THEREFORE**, the Environmental Commission recommends support of staff recommendations and approval of the Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park Master Plan with the following:

#### **Staff Conditions**

- Add language to the Master Plan to indicate that the images in the document with regard to compliance with the City code are for illustrative purposes only.
- The proposed development will comply with water quality code requirements at the time of site development permit application or otherwise seek necessary variances when more detailed development plans have been created.

#### **Environmental Commission Conditions**

- Uphold all environmental considerations outlined in the memorandum dated June 20, 2019 by the City of Austin Environmental Officer.
- PARC staff will continue to collaborate with the Watershed Protection Department regarding Critical Environmental Features, buffers, and wetland requirements during the planning and design work phases at Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park.
- Complete the Environmental Resource Inventory.

- Adhere to the water quality protection in current code requirements.
- Adhere to Heritage Tree regulations.
- Incorporate dark skies, noise abatement, and habitat corridors within the design plans.
- Provide a Heritage Tree inventory.
- Design environmentally beneficial innovations.
- Bring back the Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park Master Plan design to the Environmental Commission for review at 50 percent completion.
- Review the environmental concerns defined in the Special Events Task Force recommendations.
- Bolster recommendations for ideal approaches to environmental protection, sustainable design, land stewardship, and/or other potential best design and management practices.
- In areas already defined in the process as more environmentally sensitive and categorized as passive or environmentally/nature, integrate more context for the future environmental ethics that should inform further master planning efforts at an area scale.
- Identify environmentally-focused capital projects in addition to built or program offerings in key areas identified as vulnerable.

#### **VOTE 6-0**

For: C. Smith, Thompson, Guerrero, Gordon, Coyne, and Maceo

Against: None

Abstain: None

Recuse: None

Absent: Creel, B. Smith, Neely, Ramberg

Approved By:

Linda Guerrero, Environmental Commission Chair



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