



AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY FORM

MEETING DATE: 1/27/2026

PREPARED BY: Jason O'Mara, Director of Parks & Recreation

AGENDA CONTENT: Update and discussion on Wildscapes at Lakeside Park.

AGENDA ITEM SECTION: Consent Agenda

BUDGETED AMOUNT: N/A

FUNDS REQUESTED: N/A

FUND: N/A

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

In January 2025, staff presented the Parks & Recreation Board and City Council with a proposal for the Lakeside Park Wildscape Initiative, a long-term habitat restoration effort designed to realign the park with its original vision of balancing recreational use with environmental conservation. The approved proposal established seven designated wildscape areas where mowing was reduced, native vegetation was encouraged, and invasive species management began.

Over the past year, significant foundational work has been completed. Seven wildscape areas have been clearly delineated and allowed to return to a more natural state. Native seeds representing 13 species of trees, shrubs, wildflowers, and emergent wetland plants were collected locally from Brazoria and Fort Bend Counties and planted in November 2025. These plantings included native tree species such as live oak, pecan, green ash, and rough leaf dogwood. Shrubs including American beautyberry and buttonbush, wetland plants, and a diverse mix of native wildflowers to support pollinators and wildlife.

Initial site management efforts also included limited removal of non-native and invasive plant species. While the project remains in its early stages, several wildscape areas successfully supported native asters, sunflowers, and broomweed during the 2025 growing season, attracting butterflies and other pollinators and providing improved habitat for insects, birds, and small wildlife.

As anticipated when the project was approved, progress has not been without challenges. Inadvertent mowing impacted portions of Areas 1, 4, and 5, and weather conditions (particularly prolonged dry periods) have limited seed propagation and late-season growth. These setbacks reinforce that the wildscape initiative is a multi-year effort that may appear unmanaged before visible improvements become fully established. Staff anticipate more noticeable ecological results by the end of 2026.

2026 Wildscape Goals

- Continue supporting native plant establishment.
- Continue invasive species management to protect and strengthen restored habitats.
- Install signage and improve coordination to clearly identify and protect wildscape areas.
- Expand native planting and seeding as conditions allow using locally sourced species.
- Increase community awareness and appreciation of wildscape areas through education and outreach.

Overall, the Lakeside Park Wildscape Initiative continues to reinforce the park's original scope and vision by restoring planned natural areas while advancing City goals for sustainability, environmental stewardship, and long-term operational efficiency.

RECOMMENDATION:

N/A