

RATHGEBER NATURAL RESOURCE PARK



CITY OF DRIPPING SPRINGS

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June 26, 2020

Hays County Parks and Open Space Advisory Commission
San Marcos, TX

Re: Rathgeber Natural Resource Park Funding, Dripping Springs, Texas

Dear Commissioners:

This letter is to reiterate that The City of Dripping Springs Parks and Community Services Department is seeking funding to create a Natural Resource Park on a 300-acre parcel of land slated to be gifted to the City of Dripping Springs by Dick Rathgeber within the year. The gift of this nearly pristine piece of Texas Hill Country, with both Barton Creek and Little Barton Creek flowing through it, is adjacent to the larger Headwaters Development and Dripping Springs Independent School District properties. After recently walking the site with Robert Ellis, Mr. Rathgeber's grandson, and several local stakeholders, we have refined our vision for this park and together with Studio Balcones Landscape Architecture, and have assembled a package that tells the story of our future hopes for this remarkable site.

The four principles that would guide the creation of this Natural Resource Park (in addition to the Hays County 2012 goals for Dripping Springs & the DS PRO Plan) are as follows:

- **Protecting/Improving Water Quality** including all efforts to ensure that the two creeks are kept as pristine as possible as the park is created and used;
- **Environmental Education** including educational programming efforts with DSISD, educational signage throughout the park, and a future Natural Resource/Interpretive educational center on site;
- **Conservation** including a long-term land management plan that protects existing flora and fauna, restores disturbed land, and employs park managers to be on site; and
- **Responsible Recreation** including the creation of unobtrusive connectivity trails and gathering spaces, primitive youth camping & outdoor recreation (with Boy Scouts of America as leading partners), and a plan that balances recreation agendas so that the land is enjoyed through uses that complement the intended goal of a mindful nature immersion experience without land and natural resource degradation.

As Dripping Springs and Hays County continue to grapple with high rates of growth, access to, as well as conservation and proper management of public land becomes vitally important to the health of the Texas Hill Country and its stewards. The Rathgeber Natural Resource Park would not only protect and improve an indispensable piece of Hill Country habitat and watershed, it would also provide the greater Hays County and Dripping Springs community with a one-of-a-kind opportunity to experience and learn from this majestic and endangered landscape. This gifted land is a gem and we feel strongly that time is of the essence to protect and preserve it for future generations to come. Without the contributions of Hays County funding, this park will be decades away from managed public enjoyment and proper natural resource protection.

Sincerely,


Kelly Schmidt
Parks & Community Services Director
City of Dripping Springs

Gateway to the Hill Country



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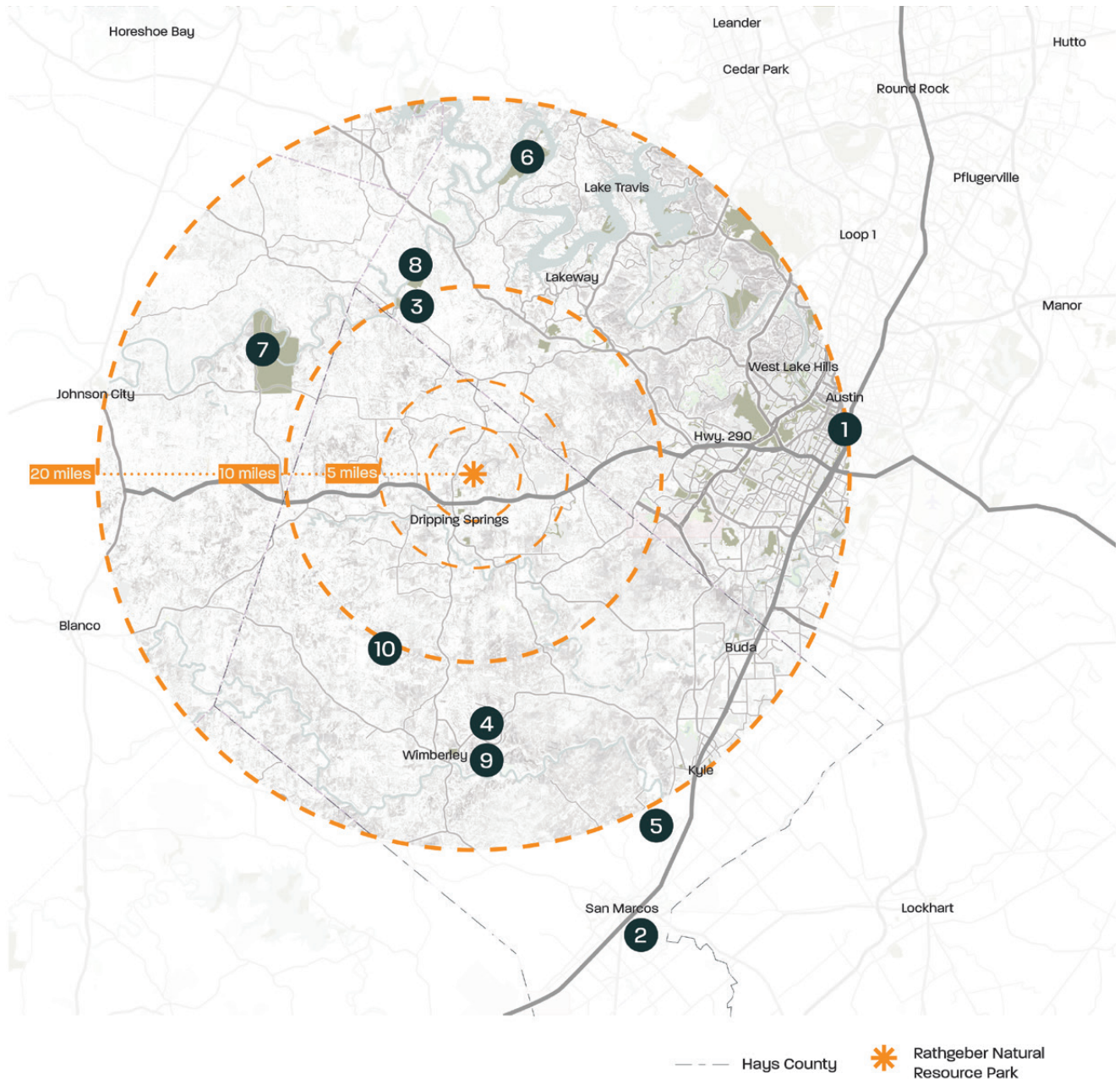
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PROJECT OVERVIEW

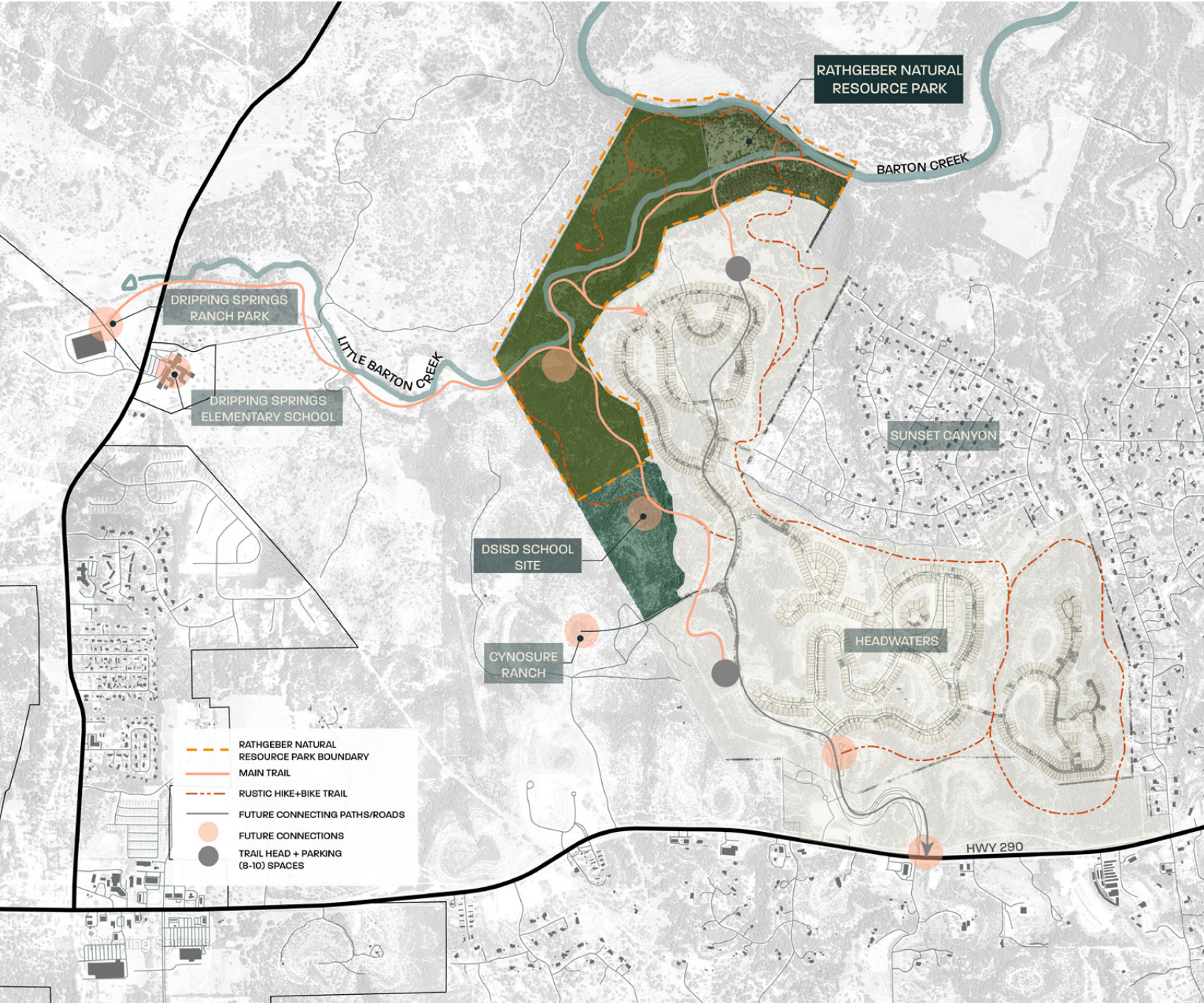
SURROUNDING AMENITIES



- 
1. Barton Springs
- 
3. Hamilton Pool
- 
5. Five Mile Dam Park
- 
7. Pedernales Falls
- 
9. Cypress Creek Nature Preserve
- 
2. Rio Vista Park
- 
4. Blue Hole Park
- 
6. Pace Bend Park
- 
8. Reimers Ranch
- 
10. Jacobs Wells

PROJECT OVERVIEW

SITE MAP



PROJECT OVERVIEW

SITE FEATURES



- RATHGEBER NATURAL RESOURCE PARK BOUNDARY
- MAIN TRAIL
- RUSTIC HIKE+BIKE TRAIL
- FUTURE CONNECTING PATHS/ROADS
- FUTURE CONNECTIONS
- TRAIL HEAD + PARKING (8-10) SPACES

- 1** Defunct Dams
- 2** Large Meadows & Forest
- 3** Little Barton Creek
- 4** Barton Creek Confluence

PROJECT OVERVIEW

SITE FEATURES



1 Defunct Dams



2 Large Meadows & Forest



3 Little Barton Creek



4 Barton Creek Confluence

PROJECT OVERVIEW

PROPOSED SITE AMENITIES



- - - RATHGEBER NATURAL RESOURCE PARK BOUNDARY
- MAIN TRAIL
- - - RUSTIC HIKE+BIKE TRAIL
- FUTURE CONNECTING PATHS/ROADS
- FUTURE CONNECTIONS
- TRAIL HEAD + PARKING (8-10) SPACES

- 1 Trail Heads and Signage
- 2 Trail Connectivity
- 3 Interpretive Center
- 4 Primitive Camp Sites

PROJECT OVERVIEW

PROPOSED SITE AMENITIES



1 Trail Heads and Signage



2 Trail Connectivity



3 Interpretive Center



4 Primitive Camp Sites

PROJECT OVERVIEW

CONCEPT

Together, The City of Dripping Springs Parks and Community Services and Studio Balconies, who generously donated their time and dedication, have developed the following vision for the Rathgeber Natural Resource Park. Should the Rathgeber Natural Resource Park Project receive grant funding from Hays County, we plan to build on these ideas with our own daily insights and input from the community and various external stakeholders, ultimately building upon the hard work already done by the land donor and their family members.



PROTECT + IMPROVE WATER QUALITY -

- Restore the stream banks and river forest
- Remove defunct dams
- Manage cedar and non-native vegetation
- Restrict vehicular access and detrimental uses



PROVIDE ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION -

- Naturalist led walks and talks
- International Dark Sky Certified star gazing programs
- Interpretive & Outdoor Recreation Center (fee based and sponsor driven programming)
- Boy Scout and Youth Nature immersion camping program
- Self guided interpretation panels & trailhead kiosks



PROMOTE CONSERVATION -

- Continue the land and wildlife management practices and hard work established by the Rathgeber Family to protect the site's natural resources: managing the property for Golden-cheeked Warbler habitat, protecting old growth forest, controlling brush and erosion, and managing wildlife for deer, turkey, invasive species and predators.
- Establish a long term natural resource management plan
- Protect native meadows + forest, remove invasive species and restore damaged areas



PROMOTE RESPONSIBLE RECREATION -

- Primitive youth camping
- Mountain biking/hiking/bird watching/kayaking
- Park and gathering spaces
- ADA accessible bathrooms and facilities
- Employ park rangers and stewards

PROJECT OVERVIEW

SITE PHOTOS



PROJECT OVERVIEW

SITE PHOTOS



PROJECT OVERVIEW

BUDGET AND PHASING

PHASE I (2020-2022)

COMMITTED PRIVATE CONTRIBUTION IS ACCEPTED BY THE CITY OF DRIPPING SPRINGS

- Value \$3,750,000 - \$5,250,000 – 300 acres of pristine Barton and Little Barton Creek riparian area and watershed have been committed via signed agreement by Dick Rathgeber.

PROPOSED CITY OF DRIPPING SPRINGS CONTRIBUTION

- \$50,000 - Master Plan & Public Input Process
- \$60,000 – \$125,000 – Engineering/Environmental studies

PHASE II (2022 – 2024)

- \$500k – 1m – Trailheads. Parking lots & Park Entrances w/ Signage & ADA compliant (Three access points, One may require additional easement or land acquisition)
- \$1.5 - \$2.5m – Connectivity. A mixture of rustic/primitive (DG) & ADA Compliant Trails
Existing dilapidated low water crossing (dam) redesigned into pedestrian bridge

PHASE III (2024- 2026)

- \$300,000 - \$500,000 - Interpretive Master Plan & Installation.
Interpretive Kiosks, trailside interpretive panels, wildflower & pollinator meadows, wayfinding signage throughout park and interactive exhibits
- \$300,000- \$500,000 – Boy & Girl Scout / Youth & Family Group Campground.
Platforms, gathering pavilion, water spickets, firepits, pit toilets or restrooms

**PHASE IV (2026 - 2028)

- \$3-\$4m – Dripping Springs Natural Resource & Outdoor Recreation Center.
Restrooms, classrooms, meeting space, staff offices, night sky viewing center, outdoor recreation amenities and features (example climbing wall, high element challenge course, hiking, etc.)

*TOTAL PROJECT COSTS RANGE – \$6,210,500 - \$7,675,000

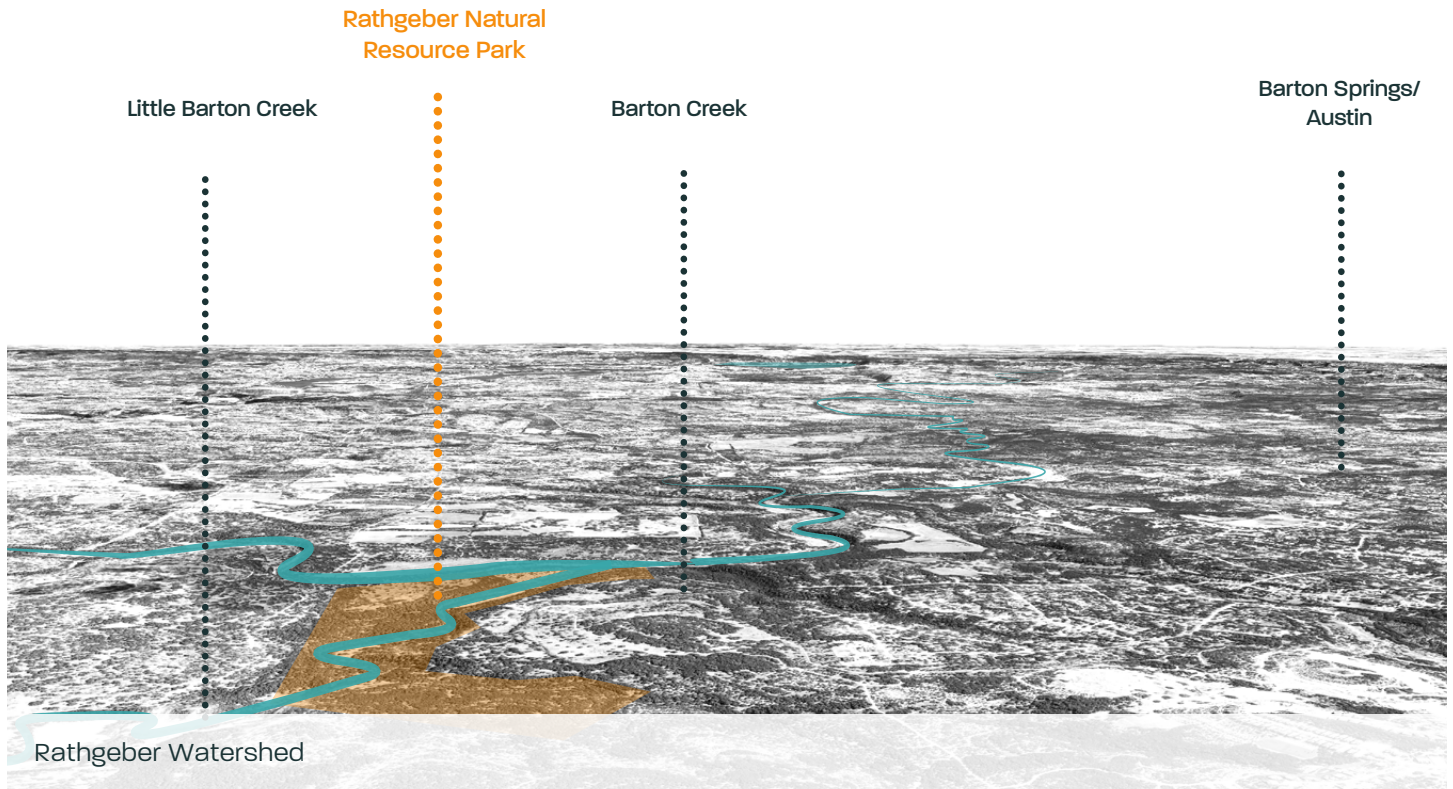
(without Interpretive/Outdoor Rec Center – project costs \$3,210,500 - \$4,675,000)

*This rough budget estimate was compiled from consultation with Rvi Planning and established from nearby similar projects.

** If not awarded funding by the POSAC opportunity, for PHASE IV, our goal is to partner with other potential funding sources for the Natural Resource & Outdoor Recreation Center project – DSISD, TPWD, Private Donations, In-Kind, City funding, etc.)

PROTECTING + IMPROVING WATER QUALITY

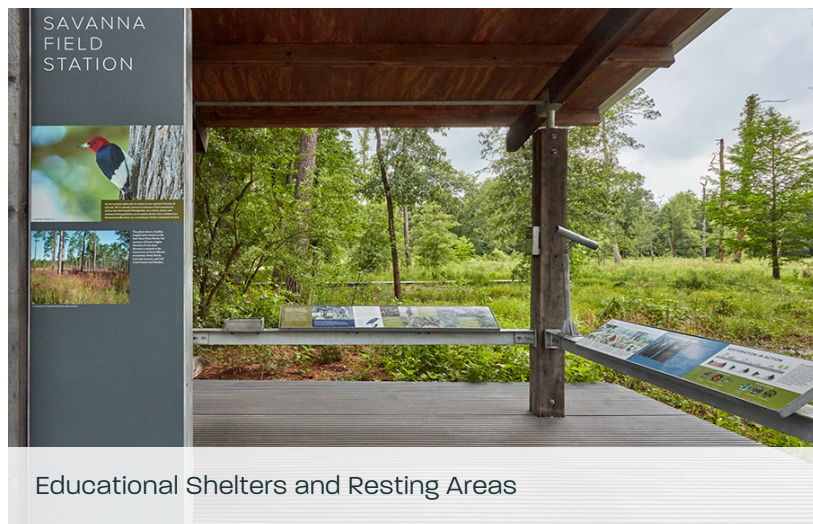
Protect and maintain the existing watercourses including parts of Little Barton Creek, Barton Creek, and their on-site confluence. Keeping them as pristine as possible to preserve existing habitat, water quality, prevent downstream contamination, and ensure the longevity of the watershed for all future generations to enjoy and benefit from.



Rathgeber Site - Looking downstream at the Barton Creek and Little Barton Creek confluence

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Provide children access to the outdoors to encourage learning and to develop a sense of environmental stewardship and investment in our future. Incorporate educational programming through collaboration with all educational insitutions in Hays County, educational signage throughout the park, and a future educational center on site.



“If we want our children to flourish, to become truly empowered, let us allow them to love the earth before we ask them to save it.” - David Sobel



CONSERVATION

Develop a long-term land management plan that protects existing flora and fauna, restores disturbed land and ecosystems, and employs on-site park managers.



Creek Restoration in West Texas



Native Prairie Mix



Degraded Creek



Restored Creek

RESPONSIBLE RECREATION

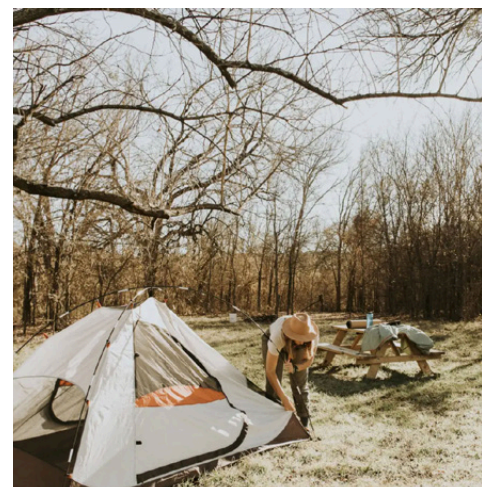
Create unobtrusive trails, gathering spaces, and primitive youth camping. Foster an approach to outdoor recreation that encourages uses which promote a mindful and immersive natural experience without land and resource degradation.



Mountain Bike Trail



Bird Watching Blind



Camping

VISUALIZATION

RESPONSIBLE RECREATION

- BIRD WATCHING
- FISHING
- HIKING
- KAYAKING
- YOUTH CAMPING
- SWIMMING
- BIKING
- ADA ACCESSIBILITY

WATER QUALITY + CONSERVATION

- CREEK RESTORATION
- NON-NATIVE VEGETATION REMOVAL
- REMOVE DEFUNCT DAMS
- RESTORE RIVER FOREST



VISUALIZATION

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

ENTRY SIGN FOR PRIMARY
PARKING AREAS; INTERPRETIVE
SIGNS FOR EDUCATIONAL USE

RESPONSIBLE RECREATION

FLEXIBLE AND SHADED GATHERING
AREAS AT MAJOR TRAILHEADS FOR
EDUCATIONAL USE AND CONNECTIVITY



**RATHGEBER
NATURAL RESOURCE PARK**

