



PARKS & OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMISSION
Recommendations to Commissioners Court

July 28, 2020



A SENSE OF PLACE



“As the state’s population becomes more urban and disconnected from our lands, water and wildlife it becomes increasingly important to provide accessible, safe and enjoyable outdoor opportunities and to educate the public about the natural resources of Texas.

Access to parks, neighborhood green spaces and nature centers helps children and people of all ages develop a sense of place. A sense of place describes the relationship with where one lives, and an appreciation of its unique natural and cultural heritage ...



A SENSE OF BEAUTY AND WONDER



Experiencing nature as a shared heritage combats isolation and builds stronger communities.

Experiences that bond children to the natural world sharpen their senses, inspire a sense of beauty and build emerging concepts of biology, geology, physics and language.”

Dr. Joe Frost, Professor Emeritus, College of Education University of Texas at Austin



AN INVESTMENT IN HEALTH



“Time in nature is not leisure time; it’s an essential investment in our children’s health — and also by the way, in our own.”

Richard Louv, author Last Child in the Woods



POSAC APPOINTED – FEB 2020



Commissioners (Appointed by)

- Scott Way, Chair (Shell)
- Kathryn Nichols, Vice-Chair (Jones)
- Lori Olson, Vice-Chair (Becerra)
- Jim Camp (Jones)
- Burt Dement (Smith)
- Laura DuPont (Shell)
- Carolyn Gonzales (Ingalsbe)
- Blanca Loya (Ingalsbe)
- Lisa Prewitt (Becerra)
- Scott Tomhave (Smith)

OUR CHARTER



...to establish a democratic, inclusive process to study a parks, open space, and conservation bond program that will yield project recommendations to the Hays County Commissioners Court meant to ensure the confidence and trust of Hays County voters.

Identify the fundamentally critical needs for Hays County projects that include parks, open space, scenic vistas, water quality, water quantity, endangered species habitat, access to water recreation, trails/trail systems, flood mitigation lands, and any other necessary land or water conservation project(s)....

POSAC goals and priorities are found in the 2012 Hays County Parks, Open Space and Natural Areas MASTER PLAN.

OUR PATH & COMMITMENT



POSAC took the Charter and charged ahead

- 11 meetings, March 7 through July 22 (all but first conducted via Zoom)
- Charter accepted; Bylaws adopted
- Consensus-based decision-making process
- Leadership team selected
- Educational and project presentations; site tours (June 20, June 27)
- Development of criteria, forms, process, evaluation, scoring
- Subcommittee evaluations, July 1–July 22
- Estimated total of 600-700 POSAC person hours for meetings, study, analysis, evaluation, recommendation
- Desire for continuance

OUR PROCESS



Call for projects, May 19 (media, social, sharing, direct emails)

Project Information Form (PIF, online submission form)

- Criteria from 2012 Master Plan
- Three categories
 - Urban Parks
 - Open Space/Natural Areas/Trails/Water Quality/Habitat
 - Connectivity
- Funding request, match, partners

OUR PROCESS (CONT.)



Review/Research/Evaluation/Scoring by Sub-Committees

- Project Scoring Sheet, up to 100 pts, High-Med-Low
- All POSAC review and consensus reached (7/15/20)

Leadership Team strawman for tiered recommendations

- Discussed and approved 7/22/20
- See handout and project map



Project evaluation emphasized top 10 priorities from 2012 Master Plan

- River/creek access
- Multi-use trails
- Youth camping
- Camping
- Nature enjoyment
- Nature center
- Festival and event space
- Recreation center /sport complex/sports fields
- Shooting sports
- Community gardens



Scoring criteria developed from Master Plan, Charter, & POSAC community values.

- Meet Master Plan goals
- Provide high priority facilities
- Demonstrate readiness to complete project in 5 years
- Provide leverage — land and/or funds
- Demonstrate on-going management and operations capacity
- Accessibility to the public
- Accommodate variety of users
- Preserve/protect natural resources
- Make significant scale of impact
- Create new recreational opportunities
- Demonstrate broad community support



Thorough evaluation process

- Follow up with proposers if additional information needed
- Reviewed and scored by POSAC sub-committees
 - Urban Parks
 - Open Space/Natural Areas/Trails/Water Quality/Habitat
 - Connectivity
- All POSAC members participated in a sub-committee
- Review by Leadership Team
- Review and agreement by full POSAC



2007 Hays County Parks & Open Space Bond

“The issuance of \$30,000,000 of Hays County Tax Bonds for Parks, Natural Areas, Open space and related projects, and the Preservation of Water Quality, Aquifer Recharge Areas, and Wildlife Habitat, and the Levying of a Tax in Payment thereof.”

- No projects identified BEFORE the bond election
- Voter approved by 2:1 margin (68% YES)
- POSAB Citizen committee appointed to score/recommend
- Goal of 1:1 matching funds was exceeded
- County invested ~\$30 Million in projects totaling ~ \$76 Million

HAYS COUNTY HISTORY OF SUCCESS (CONT.)



By leveraging \$30 Million from 2007 bond, today we enjoy all these projects:

Five Mile Dam Park | Jacob's Well Natural Area | Winter's Mill/Blue Hole Loop Trail | Dahlstrom Ranch Conservation Easement & Gay Ruby Dahlstrom Nature Preserve | La Cima Conservation Easement | Wildenthal RHCP | Buda Stagecoach Park | Buda Tyler Norris Memorial Skateboard Park | Buda Bradfield Park & Trails | Dripping Springs Ranch Park | Kyle City Square Park | Kyle Gregg-Clarke Park | Kyle Plum Creek Preserve/Lake Kyle Park | San Marcos Combined Parks Improvements | Wimberley Blue Hole Regional Park | Dripping Springs Youth Sports Association Sports Fields | Hays County Youth Sports Complex/FM 2770 | Bear Creek Park & Trail (Belterra) | North Hays Optimist Foundation Park (Goforth Road) | Village of San Marcos Youth Sports Fields

TIME FOR CONTINUED INVESTMENT



Hays County 2nd fastest growing county in the nation in past decade

- Current population est. 230,191
 - more than double from 2000 at 97,589
- Median value of owner-occupied housing units
 - 2014-2018: \$222,300
- Median household income
 - 2014-2018: \$65,935
- County tax rate stable
 - 0.4337/100 (2018-2019)

OPPORTUNITY ABOUND



POSAC Call for Projects

- 16 Projects submitted, May – July
 - Hays County
 - Municipalities
 - Non-Profit Organizations
 - Land Trusts/Landowners
- Total funding requests to Hays County ~\$115,400,000
- Total project costs > \$176 Million
- Projects yet to come from cities of San Marcos and Buda
- Opportunities for additional project partners and federal/state funds, loans, grants

TIERED PROJECT RECOMMENDATIONS



Tier One Projects: very best; highly recommend to fund at some level

- Open Space/Natural Areas/Trails/Water Quality/Habitat
 - Coleman's Canyon Preserve
 - Sentinel Peak Park & Preserve
 - San Marcos River Recharge Lands
 - 1,200-acre regional park, water quality/trails
 - Purgatory Creek Open Space, Habitat and Clean Waters Preserve
- Connectivity
 - Violet Crown Trail in Hays County
 - Cape's Fishing Pond

TIERED PROJECT RECOMMENDATIONS (CONT.)



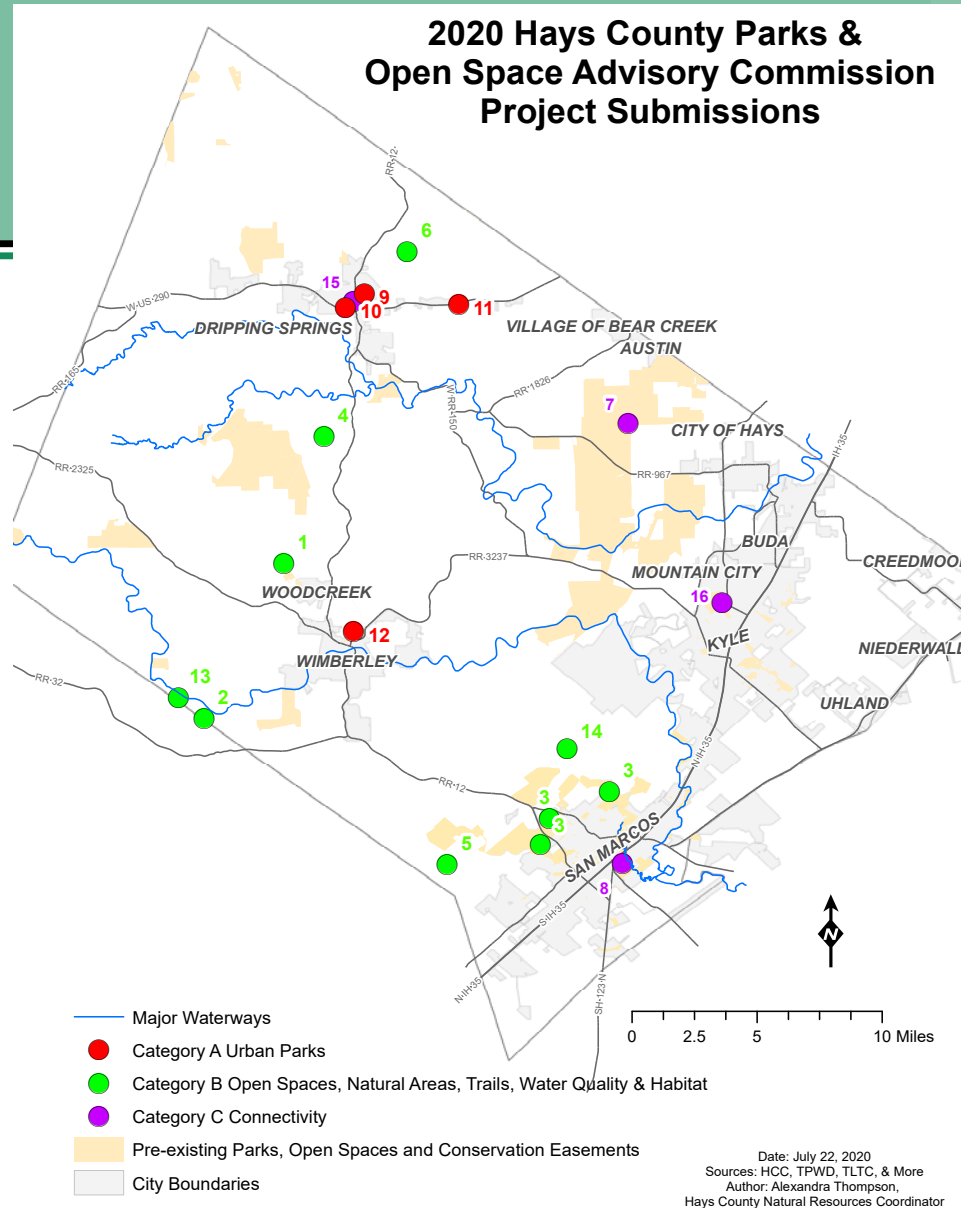
Tier Two Projects: very good; strong recommendation to fund at some level

- Urban Parks
 - Dripping Springs Regional Skate Park
 - Dripping Springs Town Center
 - Patriot's Hall
 - Nature Center at Blue Hole Park
- Open Space/Natural Areas/Trails/Water Quality/Habitat
 - John Knox Ranch Preserve
 - Presa Grande, Sink Creek Watershed
- Connectivity
 - Old Fitzhugh Road Trail
 - Kyle Fajita Fields



2020 Hays County Parks & Open Space Advisory Commission Project Submissions

Recommended Project Overview by Tier in order of priority within each Category





1. COLEMAN'S CANYON PRESERVE

TIER ONE: Open Space/Natural Areas/Trails/Water Quality/Habitat

Project Sponsor: Wimberley Valley Watershed Association (WVWA)

Coleman's Canyon Preserve is a 117-acre land conservation and restoration project contiguous to Jacob's Well Natural Area. The property contains significant karst features that recharge Jacob's Well Spring including the iconic Wimberley Bat Cave and more than 100 acres of Golden-cheeked Warbler habitat.

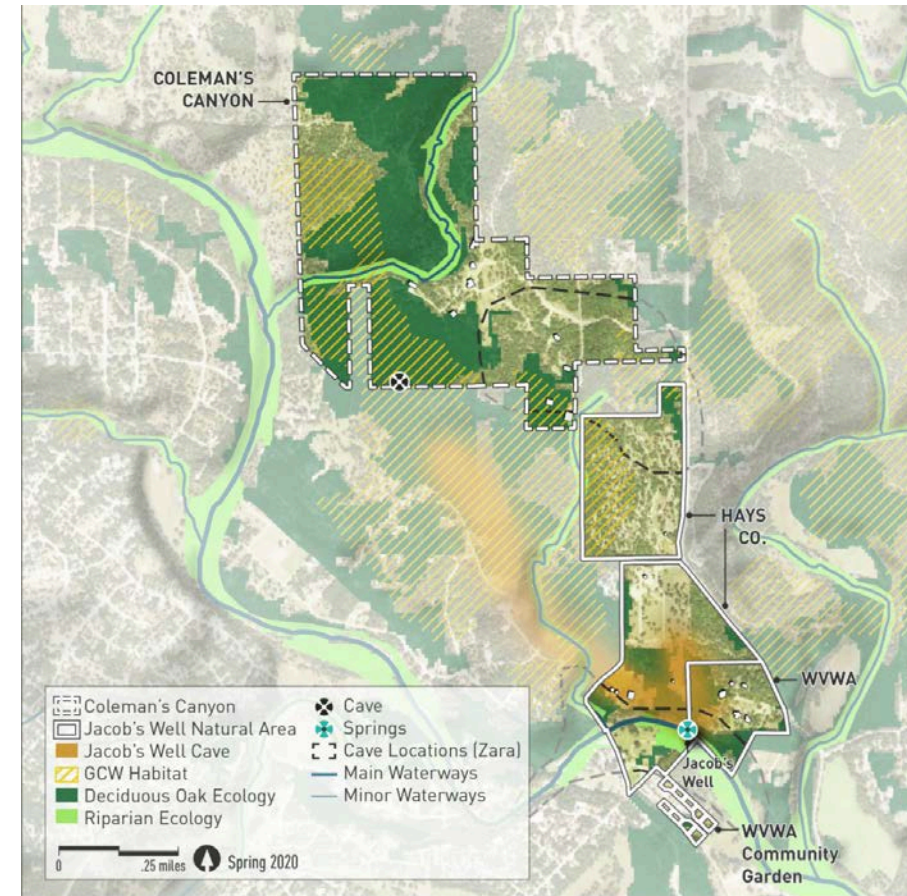
**Funds requested
\$2,600,000**

Fee simple land acquisition,
117-acres

Potential for re-investment
of \$2-2.6 million by WVWA
to secure adjacent lands,
design and engineering for
site improvements and
infrastructure



1. COLEMAN'S CANYON PRESERVE



1. COLEMAN'S CANYON PRESERVE



“Excellent opportunity to add to jewel of Hays County parks – Jacob’s Well Natural Area; unique opportunity for long trail system; multiple benefits and partners; camping (new) access in area.”

From POSAC Review Notes

2. SENTINEL PEAK PARK & PRESERVE



TIER ONE: Open Space/Natural Areas/Trails/Water Quality/Habitat

Project Sponsor: Hays County

This property will serve mainly as a Golden-cheeked Warbler habitat preserve, but the County wants to include limited public access and low-impact and passive recreation for the public on the property as well. This passive recreation will include river access and river recreation activities as well as trail usage on the pre-existing trails originally created by the Boy Scouts when they owned the property.

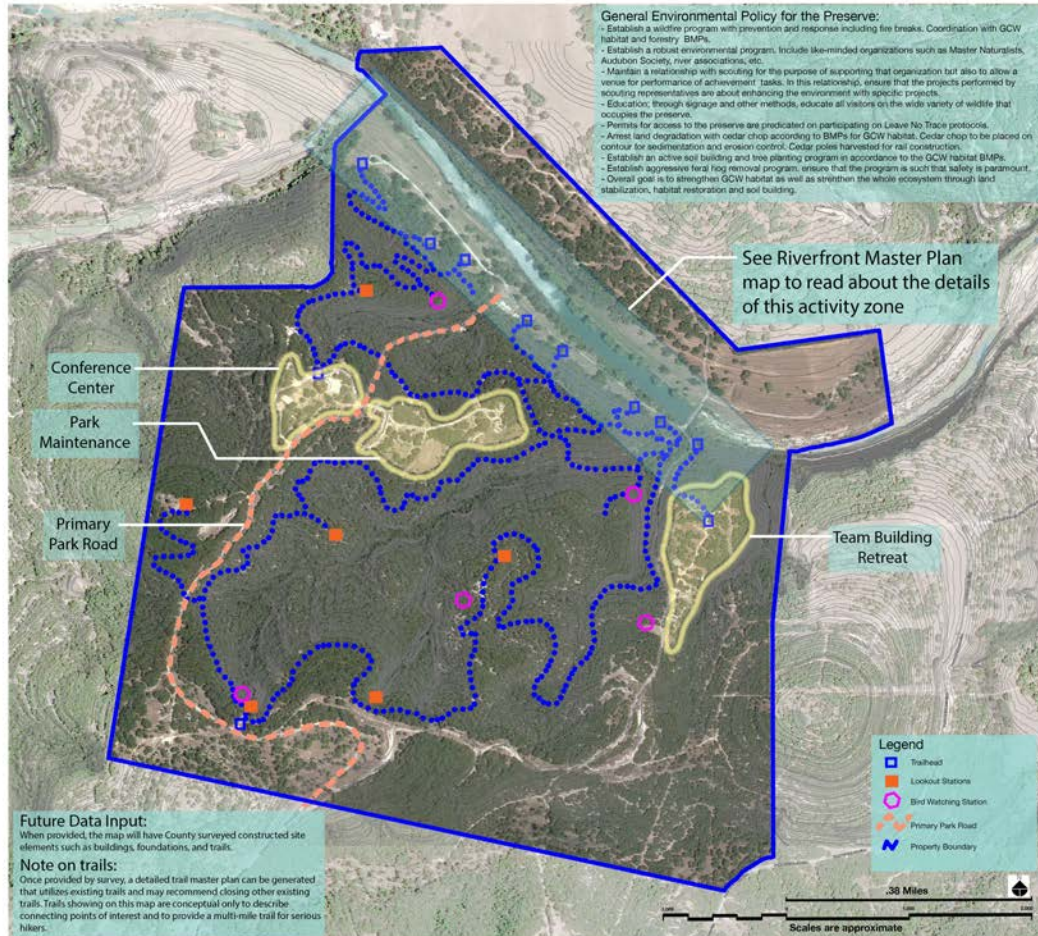
**Funds requested
\$10,000,000**

Fee simple land acquisition (535-acres); Facility design and/or construction

Potential for up to \$6 Million from the TWDB Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF), if the County is approved, to fund the fee-simple acquisition of the property



2. SENTINEL PEAK PARK & PRESERVE



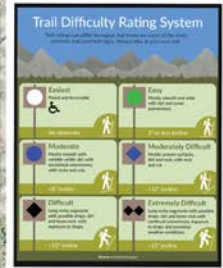
Conference Center:
There are many organizations in Central Texas or state-wide that need small to medium size space for all types of educational events. This is seen as a profit center for funding park improvements. The facility is perfectly situated for environmental education and programming with a broad variety of outdoor and indoor space.

Team Building Retreat:
This campus has the right kinds of elements for team-building retreat activities. In a recent conversation with a consultant that organizes these, the activities for team building are both lecture oriented and physical activity oriented. This was formerly one of two scout skills campuses. This particular one is focused on ropes, climbing, and other agility related skills the highlight of which is a zipline that crosses the Blanco River, currently not functional.

Park Management Campus:
Parks require a significant amount of work and all larger, remote parks need that space to be onsite for efficient operations. This site is the former scout skills shooting range. Being designed that way has provided several "yards" clear of trees and vegetation available for a wide variety of use such as mulching woody materials, stockpiling construction and farming equipment and materials, tree farming, stone yard, soil stockpile, etc.

Bird Watching Stations:
Birding as an activity is very popular all over the country and could be a source of revenue considering the incredible habitat value that the preserve offers. If a mechanism for allowing non-river patrons to park and hike, then this particular activity has the potential for tremendous activity.

Lookouts:
The potential locations for lookouts on the plan are mostly positioned along the trail that works its way around the preserve. In many cases, to function as lookouts, either elevated platforms could be incorporated or some tree clearing may have to be done.



Trail Signage falls into three categories:

- **Wayfinding:** Clear signs to indicate where you are and where you want to go.
- **Trail difficulty:** As shown above, it is important to call out the difficulty of a particular path so a hiker can decide if it's within their ability. In addition to the above, indicating where a trail is ADA compliant is important.
- **Information & Education:** Trails are multifunctional. Primarily as exercise, fresh air, and instructional, take advantage to educate on a wide variety of issues such as environmental health, wildlife viewing, geology, cultural history, and Leave No Trace.

Overall Preserve Master Plan

Vista Planning & Design
Master Planning & Design

Sentinel Peak Preserve Master Plan
El Rancho Cima, Hays & Comal Counties, Texas

3/2020
sheet number
Exh

2. SENTINEL PEAK PARK & PRESERVE



“Excellent!
Must do!”

From POSAC Review Notes



3. SAN MARCOS RIVER RECHARGE LANDS

TIER ONE: Open Space/Natural Areas/Trails/Water Quality/Habitat

Project Sponsor: San Marcos River Foundation

SMRF would like for Hays County to purchase the three properties listed below to create more greenspace for its residents. All properties are within the planned loop around the city and within the recharge zone. Protecting this acreage protects the Edwards Aquifer and San Marcos River.

- 1) Geiger tract: 75 Acres; COST: \$225,000-1,130,000 (CE with public trails)
- 2) Elsik tract: 102.8 Acres; COST: \$2,225,000
- 3) Icehouse: 56 Acres; COST: \$1,000,000

**Funds requested
\$3,475,000 – 4,380,000**

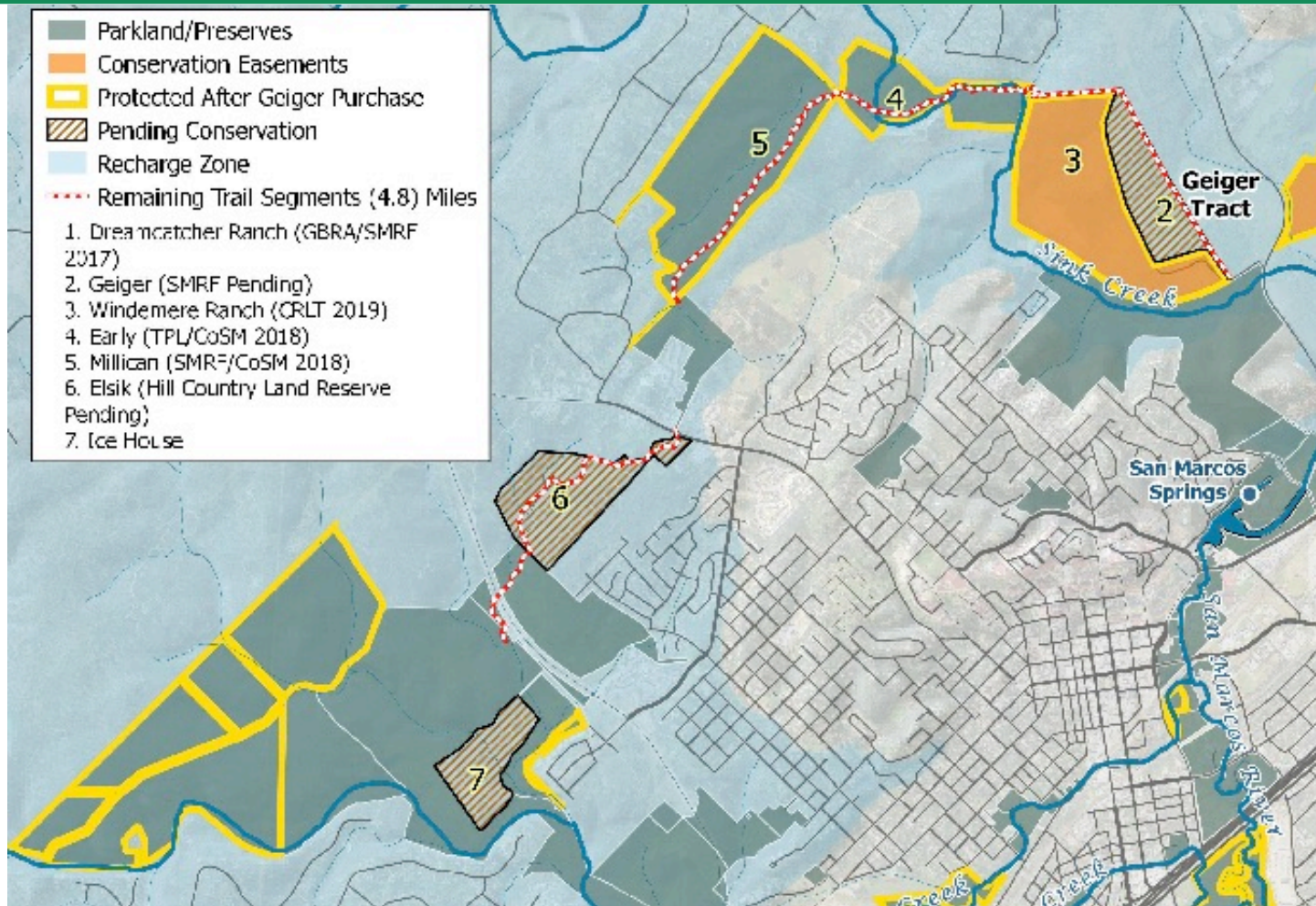
Fee simple land acquisition;
and conservation easement
(CE) acquisition

\$782,450 from SMRF and San
Marcos Greenbelt Alliance



3. SAN MARCOS RIVER RECHARGE LANDS

Tract 2: Geiger
Tract 6: Elsik
Tract 7: Icehouse



“Excellent opportunity to add to San Marcos greenbelt project; many benefits.”

From POSAC Review Notes



4. 1,200-AC. REGIONAL PARK (WATER QUALITY/TRAILS)

TIER ONE: Open Space/Natural Areas/Trails/Water Quality/Habitat

Project Sponsor: Hays County/COA via HCC

Adjacent to approximately 4,700 acres of permanently protected heritage ranch lands, that contains important, scenic watershed and habitat lands within the Gatlin Creek and Onion Creek watersheds.

The City of Austin has confirmed interest in partnering with Hays County to finance water quality protection through a fee acquisition (by the County) and subsequent or simultaneous protection of the property with a conservation easement to be held by the City.

Permitted uses could include passive recreation such as walking and hiking trails, similar to the Gay Ruby Dahlstrom Nature Preserve. Other forms of recreation consistent with open space protection may be possible in less sensitive area.

**Funds requested
\$10,000,000**

A regional, 1,200-acre park for Hays County, surrounded by conserved lands

City of Austin to pay the value attributable to the conservation easement; ~ \$10-11,000,000 providing at least a 1:1 match



4. 1,200-AC. REGIONAL PARK (WATER QUALITY/TRAILS)



Protects important watershed lands which are critical to the protection of Onion Creek and the quality of water recharging the Edwards Aquifer at downstream conduits.

5. HAYS COUNTY HABITAT, OPEN SPACE AND CLEAN WATERS PRESERVE (PURGATORY CREEK AREA)



TIER ONE: Open Space/Natural Areas/Trails/Water Quality/Habitat

Project Sponsor: Hill Country Conservancy

The proposed project is for the acquisition of a conservation easement over 1,068 acres of high-quality habitat, watershed, water quality, recharge and flood mitigation land, contiguous to the Purgatory Creek Natural Area, the La Cima Parkland, and the Hays County La Cima Preserve.

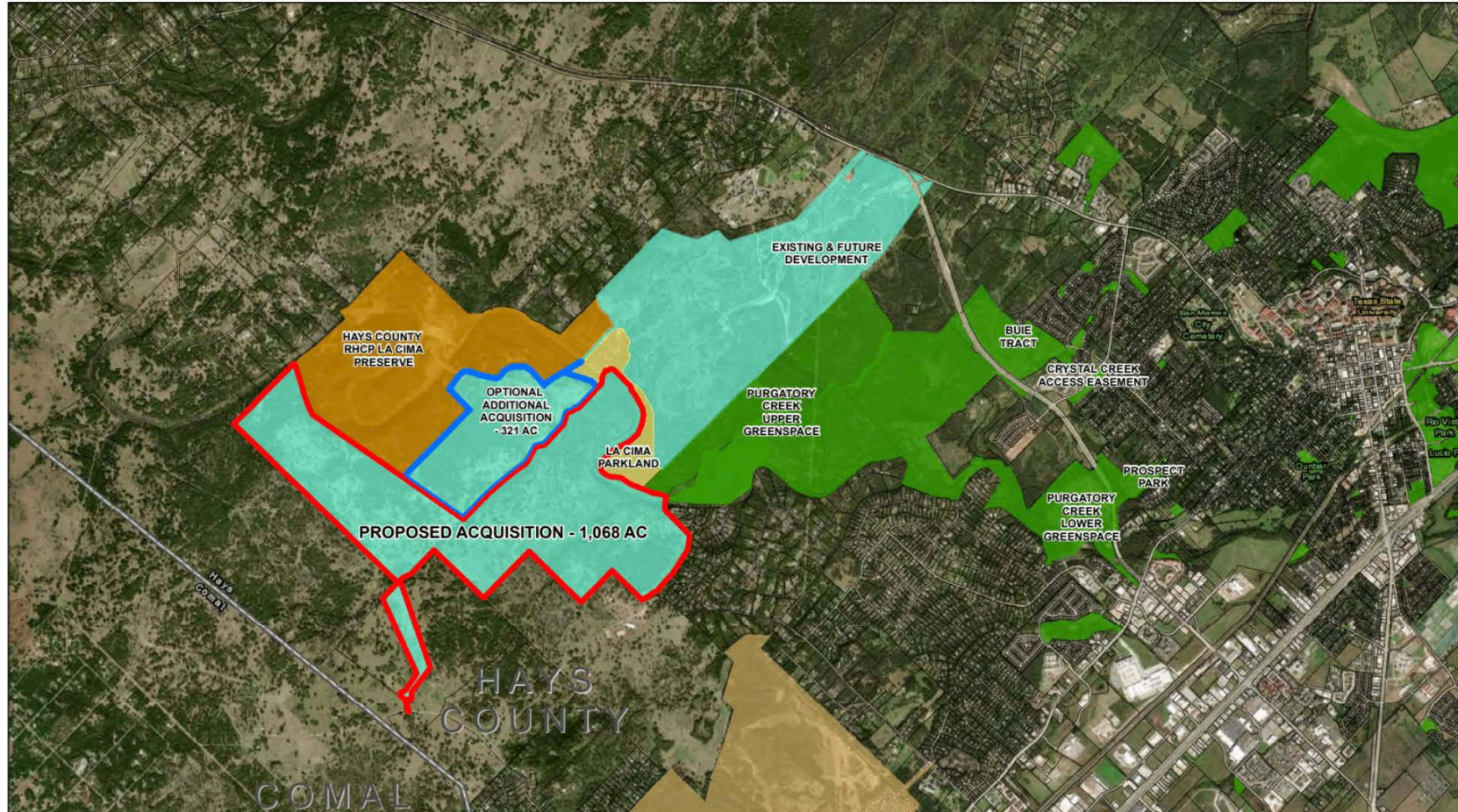
The project provides for public trail expansion and offers significant Golden-cheeked Warbler Mitigation Credits valued at more than \$5.7 million.

Funds requested
\$17,717,500

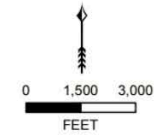
Conservation easement acquisition

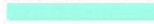

Potential for TWDB Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) low interest loan to the County

5. HAYS COUNTY HABITAT, OPEN SPACE AND CLEAN WATERS PRESERVE (PURGATORY CREEK AREA)

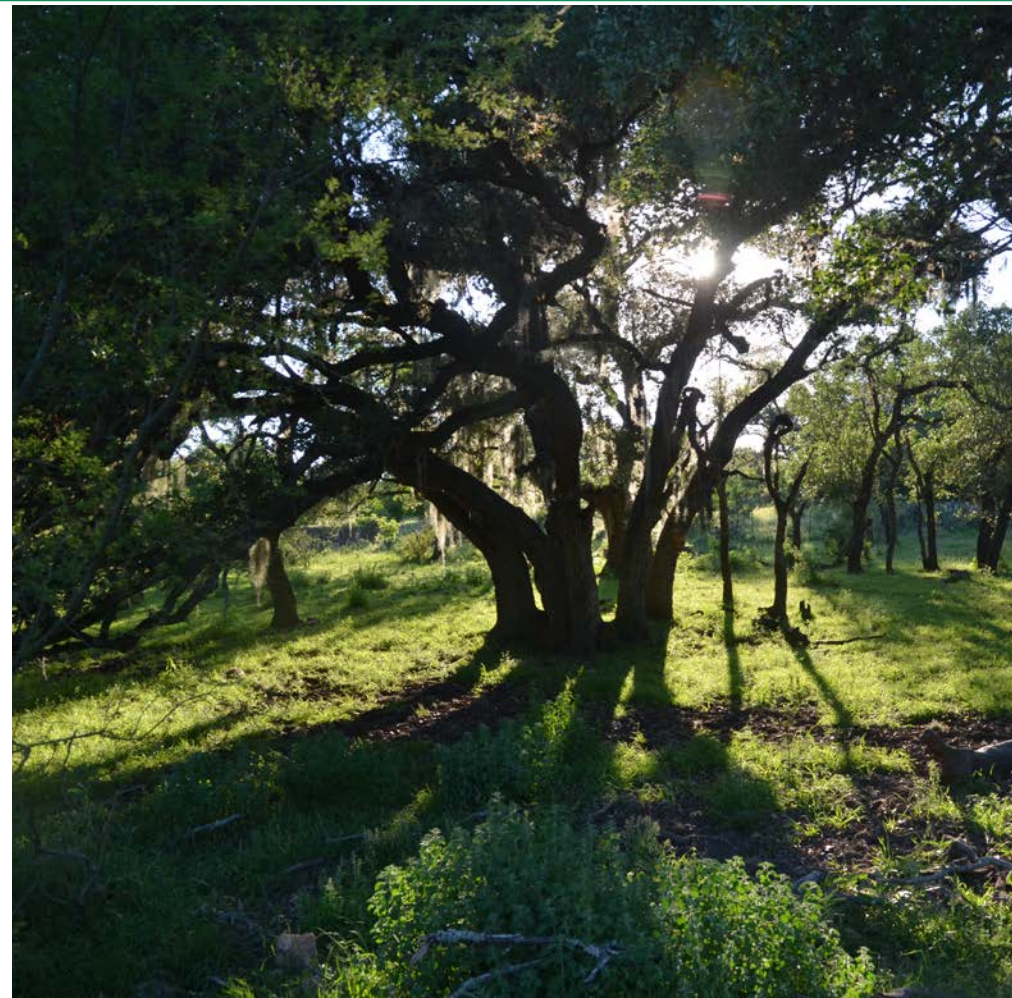


HAYS COUNTY HABITAT PRESERVE, OPENSACE, & CLEAN WATERS OPPORTUNITY REGIONAL MAP



-  PROPOSED ACQUISITION - 1,068 AC
-  OPTIONAL ADDITIONAL ACQUISITION - 321 AC
-  EXISTING AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENT TRACTS
-  HAYS COUNTY RHCP LA CIMA PRESERVE - 700 AC
-  LA CIMA PARKLAND - 91.5 AC
-  PUBLIC PARKLAND
-  KISSING TREE DEVELOPMENT
-  HCAD PARCELS
-  COUNTY BOUNDARY

5. HAYS COUNTY HABITAT, OPEN SPACE AND CLEAN WATERS PRESERVE (PURGATORY CREEK AREA)



“Great continuous addition to Purgatory Greenspace; Warbler habitat and potential for grant funds; hiking access to regional trail system.”

From POSAC Review Notes

6. RATHGEBER NATURAL RESOURCES PARK



TIER ONE: Open Space/Natural Areas/Trails/Water Quality/Habitat

Project Sponsor: City of Dripping Springs

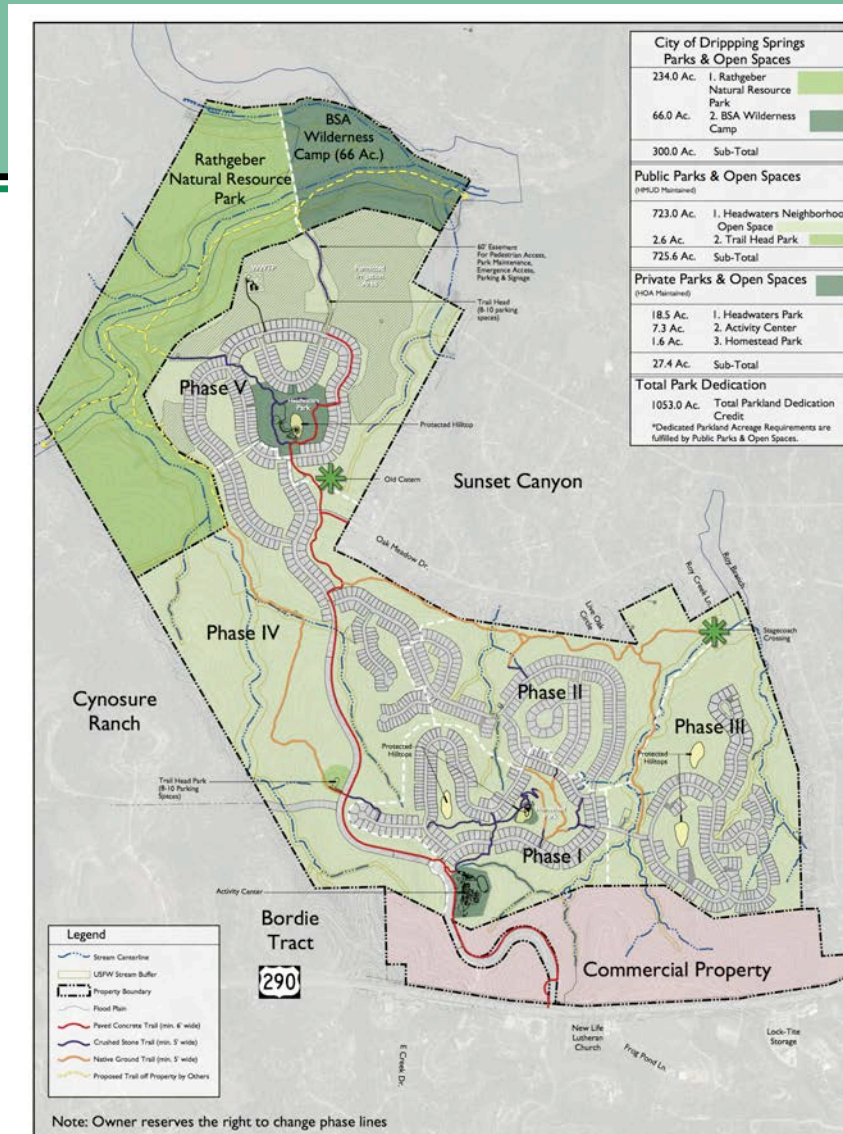
The Rathgeber Natural Resources Park (300 acres) is a future City of Dripping Springs Regional Nature Park that will enhance the lives of Dripping Springs and Hays County residents for generations. The mission of the park is to preserve, protect and connect a piece of iconic Texas Hill Country to its visitors.

**Funds requested
\$7,500,000**

Land acquisition (300 acres), Planning (land management, design, engineering), Facility design and/or construction

Land value estimated at \$3,750,000 to \$5,250,000; plus City of DS additional \$110–175,000 for planning, public input, preliminary engineering, environmental studies

6. RATHGEBER NATURAL RESOURCES PARK



6. RATHGEBER NATURAL RESOURCES PARK



“A nearly pristine piece of Texas Hill Country, with both Barton Creek and Little Barton Creek flowing through it.”

From project submission letter

7. VIOLET CROWN TRAIL IN HAYS COUNTY



TIER ONE: Connectivity

Project Sponsor: Hill Country Conservancy

Fourteen miles of new, single-track, nature trail traversing publicly owned lands in Hays County about six miles West of Buda, with trail heads at Bliss Spillar Road and at the FM 967 crossing. Built to high-quality, sustainable trail standards.

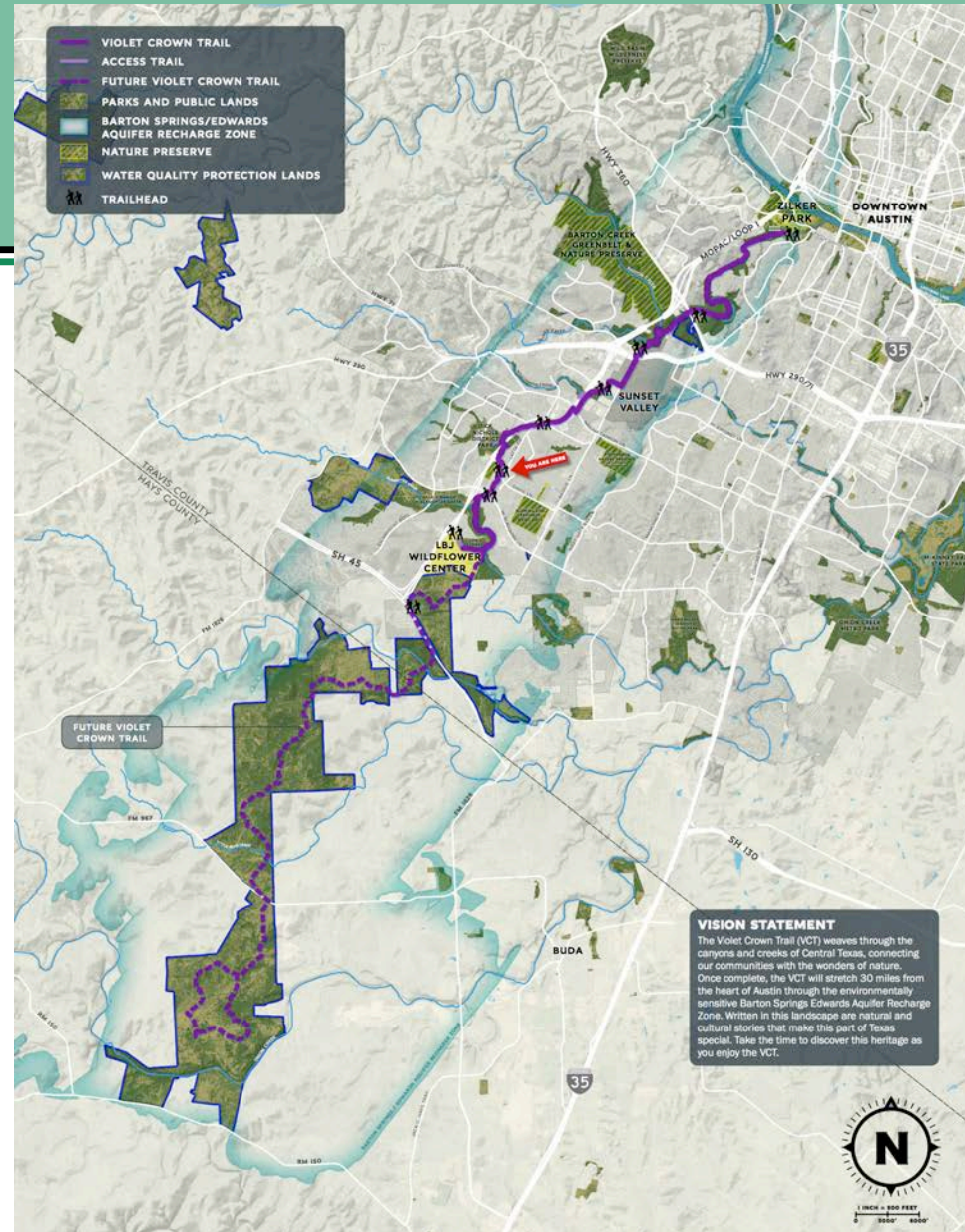
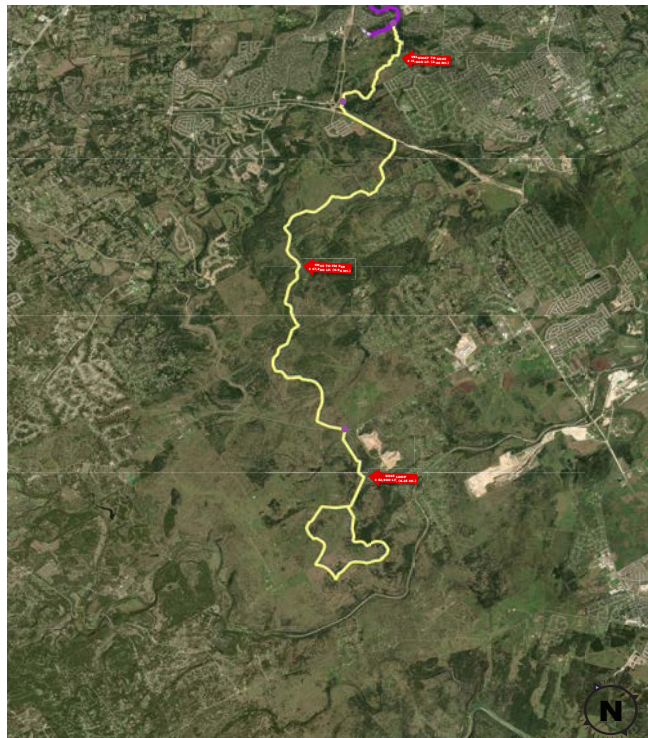
Funds requested
\$3,800,000

Facility design and/or
construction

TPWD trails program, \$200K;
HCC grant, \$500K



VIOLET CROWN TRAIL



“14 miles of trail in the heart of the Edwards Aquifer recharge zone in northern Hays Co. Trail Heads at Bliss Spillar Road and FM 967. Trails would loop south near Onion Creek near FM 150”

From POSAC Review Notes

7. VIOLET CROWN TRAIL IN HAYS COUNTY



8. CAPE'S FISHING POND



TIER ONE: Connectivity

Project Sponsor: Hays County

A key land acquisition to provide multi-modal transportation connectivity between currently disconnected areas of San Marcos and local (and proposed regional) hike and bike trail systems.

The project pond could also qualify for a TPWD grant program known as Neighborhood Fishin'.

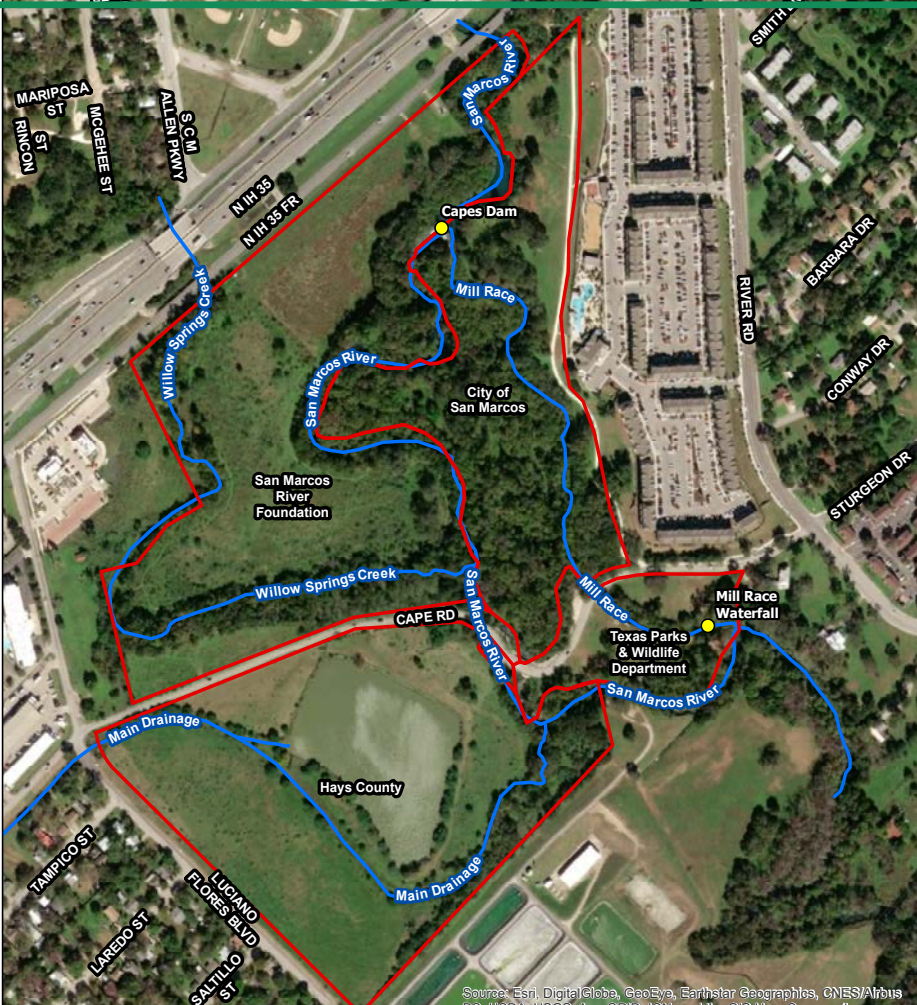
The Cape's Fishing Pond also offers educational and other recreational opportunities and demonstration of rain gardens, bioswales and natural water filtration.

Funds requested
\$2,500,000

Phase I investment in trail improvements, a hike/bike bridge over the San Marcos River, and capital improvements related to the Neighborhood Fishin' program, river viewing areas, and demonstrative drainage facilities

County purchased the land in March 2020 for \$2,600,000.

8. CAPE'S FISHING POND



8. CAPE'S FISHING POND



9. DRIPPING SPRINGS REGIONAL SKATE PARK



TIER TWO: Urban Parks

Project Sponsor: Dripping Springs Skate Park, Inc.

A plaza-style skatepark designed to provide a facility for young people, particularly at-risk youth, to pursue an athletic activity that they love.

In addition, it is a safe place for young people to develop active lifestyles away from the risks found in the streets. (14,000 square foot facility)

Funds requested
\$550,000

Facility design and/or
construction

\$178,750 from land donation
and other philanthropic
grants/community partners

9. DRIPPING SPRINGS REGIONAL SKATE PARK



“This park will provide a fun and safe place for kids of all ages (as well as adults) to get exercise, hone a skill, and enjoy the outdoors.”

Comment from supporter

10. DRIPPING SPRINGS TOWN CENTER



TIER TWO: Urban Parks

Project Sponsor: City of Dripping Springs

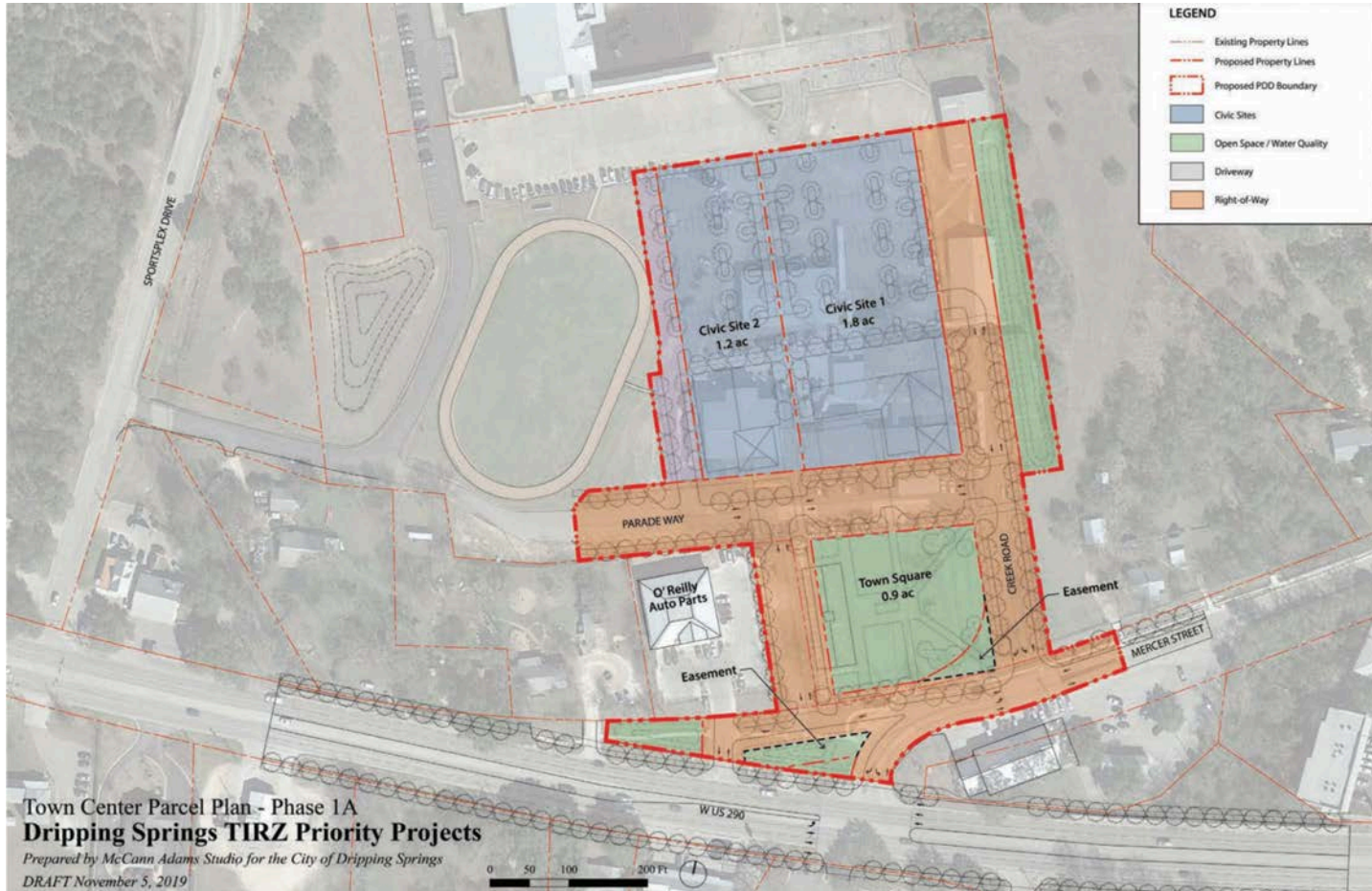
Town Center Square will be the symbolic heart and vibrant public open space for Downtown Dripping Springs. An anchor and focal point for the Mercer St. Historic District and the town's future civic buildings, it will draw both residents and visitors alike to its green spaces, festivals, markets and events.

Funds requested
\$4,480,600

Land acquisition, Planning (land management, design, engineering), Facility design and/or construction

TIRZ partners: City of DS, Hays County, DS Library, DS School District

10. DRIPPING SPRINGS TOWN CENTER



“To co-locate the City, the School District, the County, and the Library in a cost-effective way into shared facilities (to provide) Civic Services...to serve future Community needs.”

From presentation notes

10. DRIPPING SPRINGS TOWN CENTER



“A civic open space in the heart of Dripping Springs ... for festivals, market activities, an events venue ... TIRZ project.”

From presentation notes

11. PATRIOT'S HALL, NEAR DRIPPING SPRINGS



TIER TWO: Urban Parks

Project Sponsor: PatriotsHall.org; Kathryn Chandler

Town Patriots' Hall is a 10-acre retreat and resource base for ALL veterans and their families to connect and find support. The Gathering Hall will provide therapeutic classes, vet-to-vet mentoring, educational and motivational workshops, and job networking.

Project will be preserving approx. 60-70% of green space for veteran campouts, cookouts, fitness challenges, weekend equine therapy and fishing. Outdoor recreation to enjoy nature and socialize with other veterans and families is key, including working with the land, such as land stewardship through beekeeping and a vegetable garden.

Funds requested
\$1,500,000

Facility design and/or
construction

Total project is \$5,900,000;
have raised \$1,500,000 from
local donors, + \$100K in-kind
services.

11. PATRIOT'S HALL, NEAR DRIPPING SPRINGS



“Great project and will serve the veteran community with pride.”

From POSAC Review Notes

12. NATURE CENTER AT BLUE HOLE PARK



TIER TWO: Urban Parks

Project Sponsor: City of Wimberley

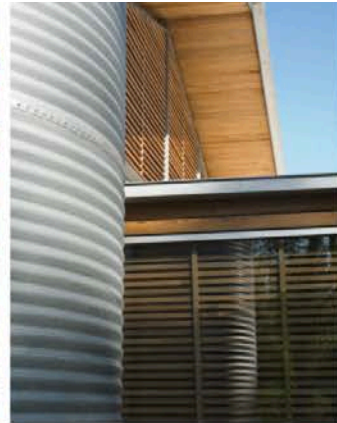
This project will include a public Nature Center, indoor/outdoor classrooms for our nature camp expansion, a greenhouse, a theatre to showcase nature documentaries, prairie and wetland restoration areas, and staff offices. The buildings will have rainwater collection systems for the greenhouse on approx. 7K square feet of covered space, and 2.5 acres outdoor space.

Funds requested
\$3,136,425

Planning (land management, design, engineering), Facility design and/or construction

No match at this time; project received numerous letters of support from Wimberley Community and Friends of Blue Hole

12. NATURE CENTER AT BLUE HOLE PARK



“Blue Hole Nature Camps that will utilize facility provide positive revenue for the City of Wimberley. In addition, fees for usage could provide revenue. Wimberley has a parks department that can maintain the facility.”

From POSAC Review Notes

13. JOHN KNOX RANCH PRESERVE



TIER TWO: Open Space/Natural Areas/Trails/Water Quality/Habitat

Project Sponsor: John Knox Ranch, Hill Country Conservancy

John Knox Ranch is a summer camp and retreat center owned and operated by Mission Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church (USA). John Knox Ranch's 300 acres of beautiful Texas Hill Country and our Blue Hole Spring are unique natural resources.

The natural beauty of JKR includes Blanco River frontage, an artesian spring, Blue Hole, which is the head waters for Carpers Creek, grass savannahs, Texas hardwoods, old-growth Ashe Juniper, and Golden-cheeked Warbler habitat.

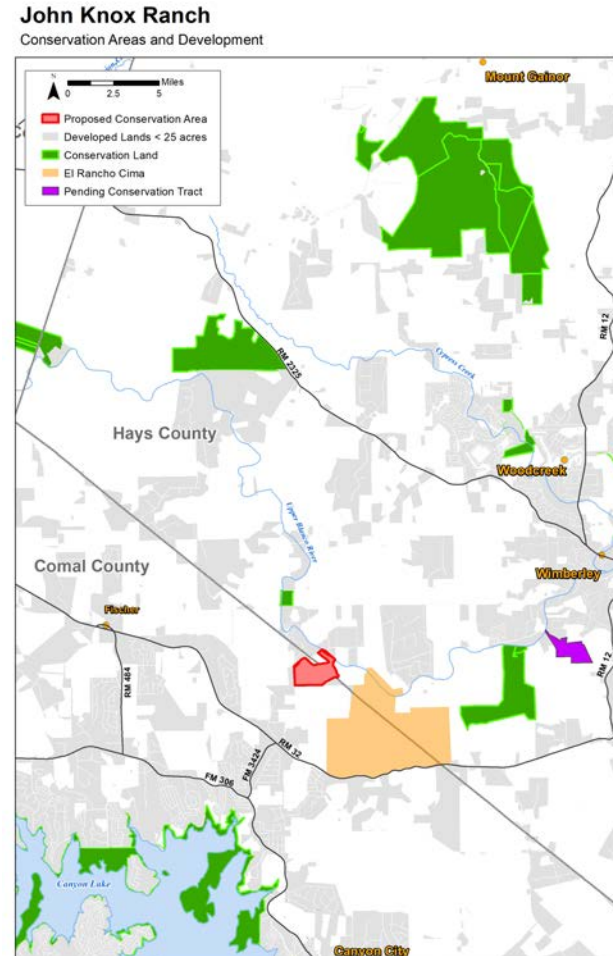
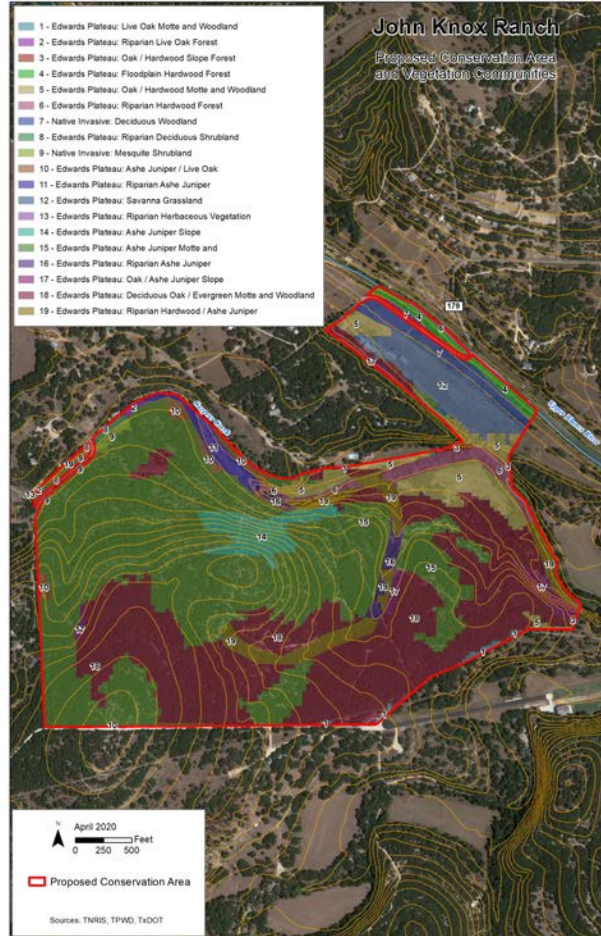
**Funds requested
\$2,500,000**

Conservation easement
acquisition

No match at this time, but
opportunity for NRCS funding



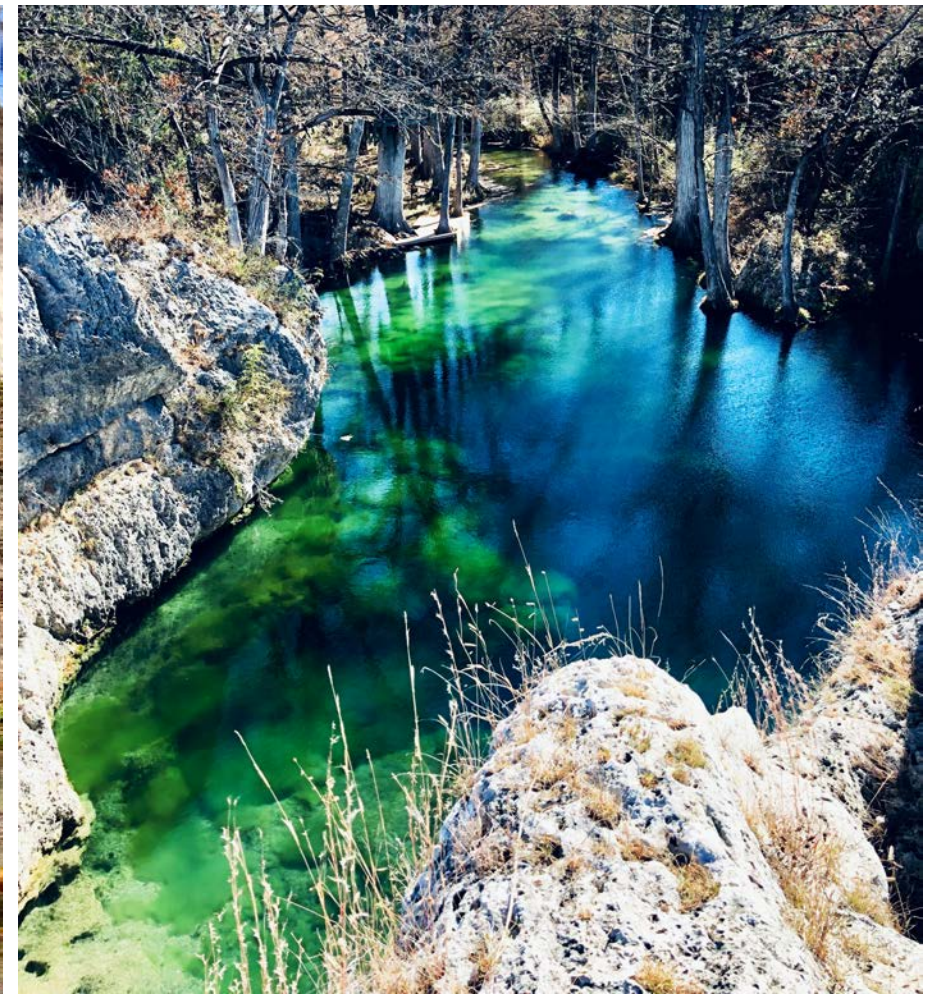
13. JOHN KNOX RANCH PRESERVE



“Presume some public access on conservation easement (seasonal/on certain weekends, etc.) for trail and/or river access;
Great natural resource protection opportunity.”

From POSAC Review Notes

13. JOHN KNOX RANCH PRESERVE



14. PRESA GRANDE – SINK CREEK WATERSHED



TIER TWO: Open Space/Natural Areas/Trails/Water Quality/Habitat

Project Sponsor: Great Springs Project/Hill Country Conservancy

This project is the purchase of fee simple or a conservation easement on an 844-acre tract that lies in the Sink Creek watershed. It contains significant aquifer recharge features, karst areas, water quality buffers, and spring buffers.

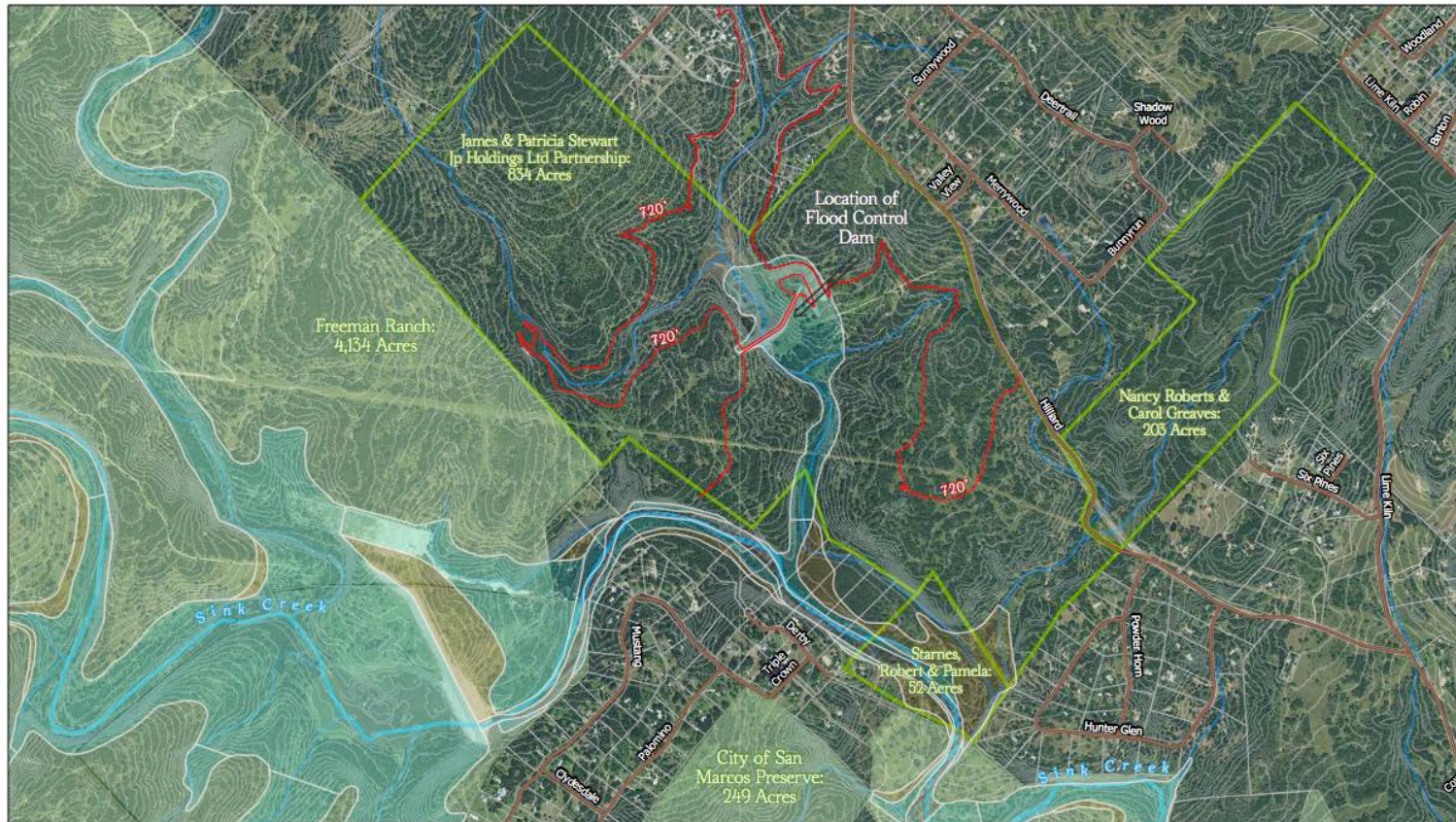
The property may contain some Golden-cheeked Warbler habitat. Natural areas on the property provide wildlife viewing and general nature enjoyment.

**Funds requested
\$8,500,000**

Fee simple land acquisition
(844-acres) at cost above.

Conservation easement
acquisition at \$4 Million,
with \$4,500,000 from
Conservation Buyer.

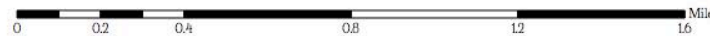
14. PRESA GRANDE – SINK CREEK WATERSHED



Flood Hazard Zones
 ■ 1% Annual Chance Flood Hazard
 ■ Regulatory Floodway
 ■ 0.2% Annual Chance Flood Hazard

Parcel Ownership
 ■ Priority Parcels
 ■ Hays County Parcels
 ■ Protected Parcels

Data Sources: FEMA National Flood Hazard Layer, 2005.
 Hays County Parcel Data, 2018.



If Conservation Easement purchased, public access to the property would be provided via a trailhead and network of multi-use trails on the property for local connectivity and increased regional connectivity.

From submission notes

15. OLD FITZHUGH ROAD MULTI-USE TRAIL



TIER TWO: Connectivity

Project Sponsor: City of Dripping Springs

Old Fitzhugh Rd. Multi-Use Trail, a critical link in the City-wide Trail Plan, improves pedestrian access, safety and connectivity through the Historic District from Mercer St north to RR12.

An eight-foot wide multi-use trail facilitates future linkages to Founders Memorial Park, the Heritage planned development, and northward to Dripping Springs Ranch Park.

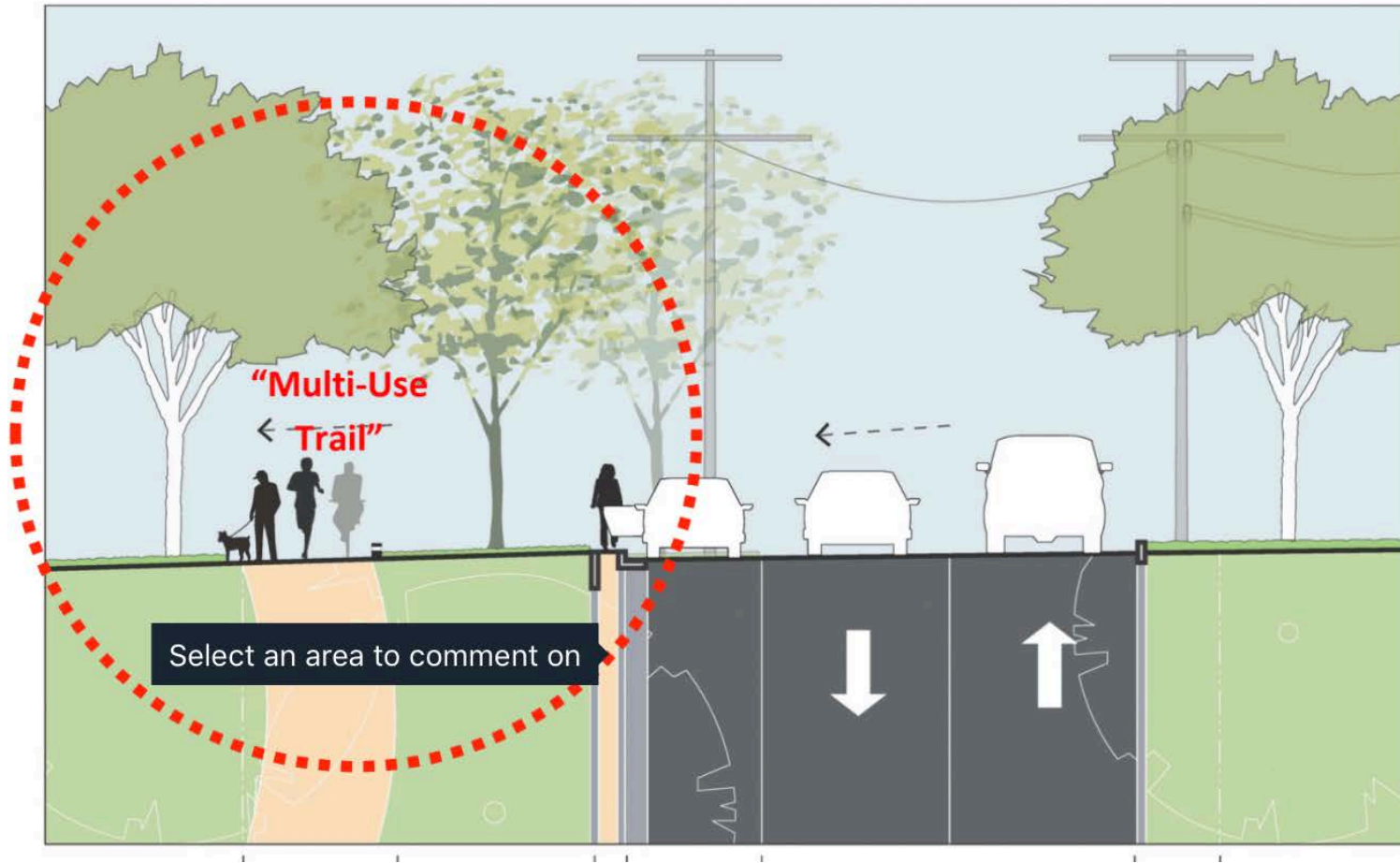
Funds requested
\$1,305,000

land acquisition, planning (land management, design, engineering), facility design and/or construction

TIRZ, City of Dripping Springs
(Total Project, \$ 4,822,652.97)



15. OLD FITZHUGH ROAD MULTI-USE TRAIL



“Improving pedestrian access along OFR from Mercer Street to RR12 (.62 miles) is a plus for a more pedestrian-friendly town center. Ideally if OFR can connect trails with their signature parks ... that might be a bonus for Hays County.”

From POSAC Review Notes

16. FAJITA FIELDS, FESTIVAL GROUNDS, TRAIL SYSTEM



TIER TWO: Connectivity

Project Sponsor: City of Kyle

Fajita Fields, Festival Grounds and Trail System includes a festival area, sportsplex and amenity area, approximately 21 acres of competition soccer fields, 39 acres of open space and practice fields, approximately 4 acres of greenway and a 1-mile linear trail on 64 acres of undeveloped parkland.

The project will serve a variety of users by serving as a central hub for athletics, recreation, and event space in Hays County. The trail provides future connectivity to the Violet Crown Trail, Uptown and Heroes Memorial Park. The location and amenities allow numerous possibilities to enhance economic development year-round.

Funds requested
\$14,520,000

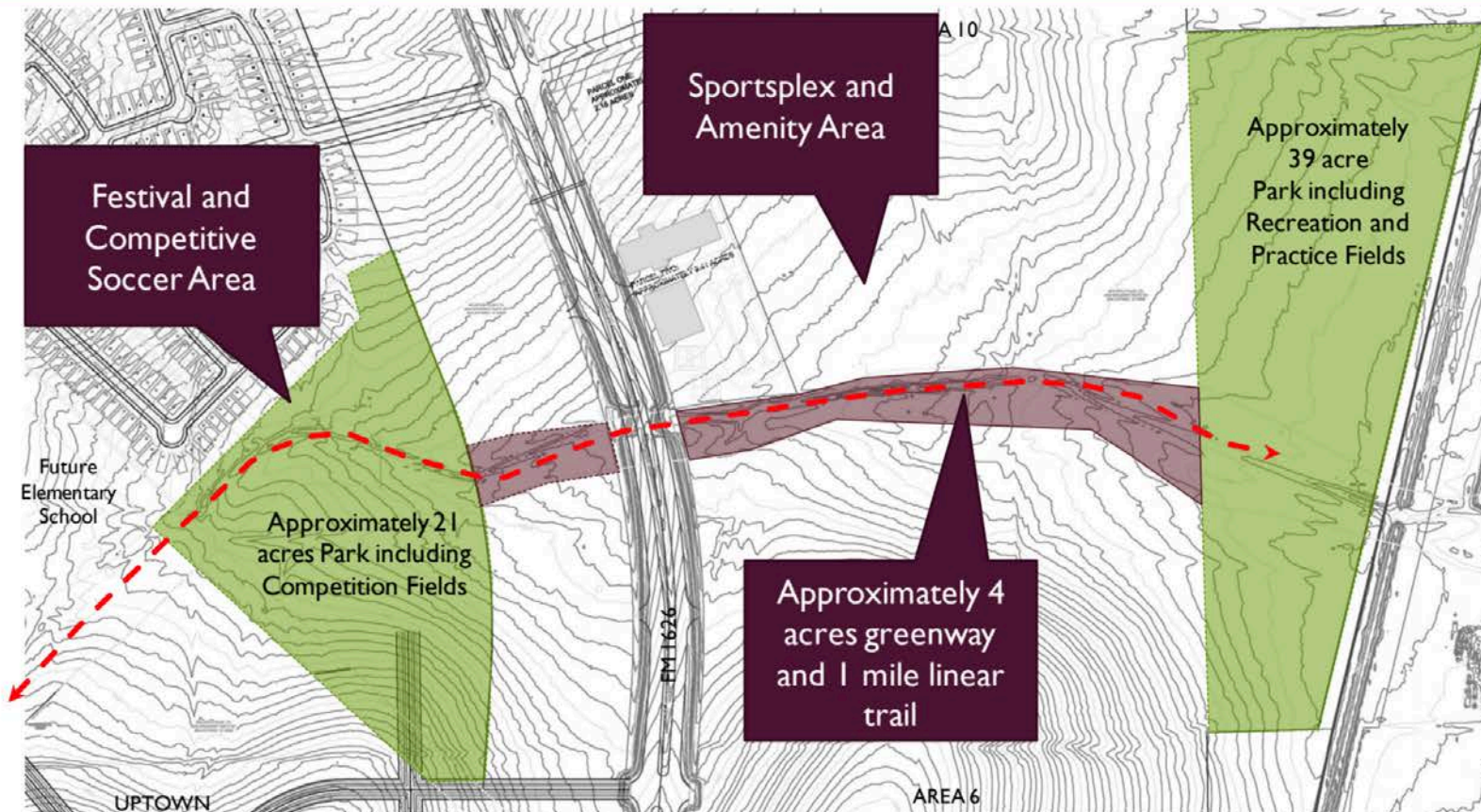
land acquisition, facility design
and/or construction, park
amenities

City of Kyle 1:1 match,
\$14,520,000

16. FAJITA FIELDS, FESTIVAL GROUNDS, TRAIL SYSTEM



DETAILED AREA PLAN

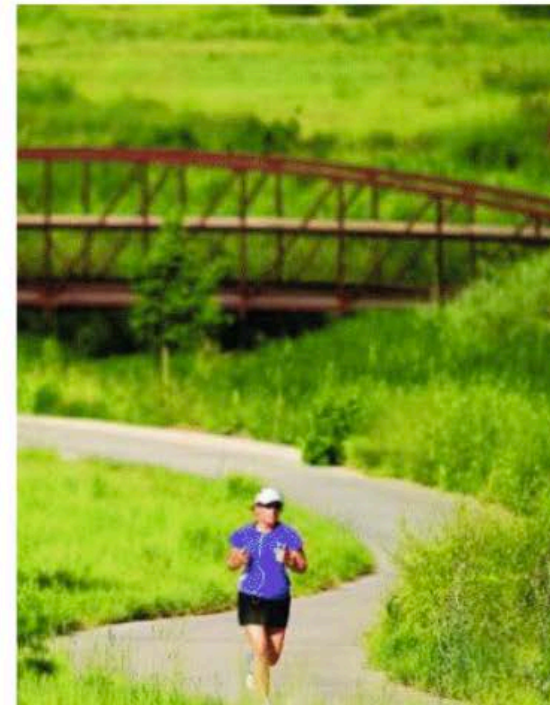




16. FAJITA FIELDS, FESTIVAL GROUNDS, TRAIL SYSTEM

“Project that will enhance equity and access for all.”

From submission document



PUBLIC POLL SHOWS SUPPORT



94% AGREED: “We owe it to future generations of Texans to preserve special places in Central Texas so they can enjoy them as we have.”

Public poll findings:

- Private phone poll of 408 likely voters
- Statistically accurate within +/- 4.9% at 95% confidence level
- Representative of Hays demographics and geographics (minor exceptions)
- Surveyed amidst the impact of coronavirus and economy
- 71–78% support for \$75 Million bond for parks/open space, when
 - Tax rate not affected
 - Sentinel Peak Preserve purchase included

POSAC BOND RECOMMENDATION



POSAC recommends a total bond initiative in the range of \$75–80 Million.

November 2020 Bond Initiative: \$60-65 Million for the named projects

- Tier One, highest priority
- Tier Two, second priority
- Not all possible at full funding request
- POSAC has suggestions for funding levels

Flexible Fund: \$15-20 Million for future opportunities

- Some municipalities unable to present a project within compressed time
- Modifications to existing projects
- Unanticipated opportunities to come

NEXT STEPS



Public Outreach & Engagement

- Now through week of August 3: two public webinars (Zoom) with live stream
- POSAC as bond ambassadors for County now to Nov 3

Call for Election

- August 17 deadline
- Support to Court and staff in decision-making

Post November Election

- Work with project proposers and County staff toward additional funding sources
- Engage with conservation development project
- Participate in comprehensive countywide visioning process
- Support Court and staff on next level of current and future project review

TO REMAIN OF SERVICE



THANK YOU for appointing each one of us to fulfill this important first step toward a bond initiative for parks, recreation, open and natural spaces for Hays County.

We would be honored to continue to serve in an advisory capacity to the Court and to County staff in order to help further successful bond project implementation in the coming year(s).

Respectfully submitted by

2020 Hays County Parks and Open Space Advisory Commission

July 28, 2020



HAYS COUNTY

★ Dripping Springs Projects:

★ DS TIRZ Projects:

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**PARKS AND OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMISSION (POSAC)
RECOMMENDATIONS TO COMMISSIONERS COURT**

The following recommendations are respectfully submitted by members of the Hays County Parks and Open Space Advisory Commission (POSAC) on July 28, 2020.

This document is a synthesis of the Powerpoint presentation to be made to the Court on above date and is meant to provide an easy visual overview of the projects submitted by various entities which were evaluated by the POSAC through the lens of the 2012 Parks, Open Space and Natural Areas Master Plan.

These project recommendations demonstrate a substantial need for additional resources available for parks and open space within Hays County.

The named projects below are presented by category and ranked within the tiers showing highest ratings from top down within each category. Included also are project sponsor and funding request. The numbering of projects relates to the attached project map.

TIER ONE PROJECTS ("very best"; highly recommend to fund at some level)	Amount Requested
Open Space/Natural Areas/Trails/Water Quality/Habitat	
1. Coleman's Canyon Preserve (WVWA)	\$ 2,600,000
2. Sentinel Peak Park & Preserve (Hays County)	10,000,000
3. San Marcos River Recharge Lands (SMRF)	4,380,000
4. Regional Park, water quality/trails, 1200 acres (Hays County/COA via HCC) ¹	10,000,000
5. Purgatory Creek: habitat, clean water preserve (HCC)	17,717,500
★ 6. Rathgeber Natural Resource Park (City of Dripping Springs)	7,500,000
Connectivity	
7. Violet Crown Trail in Hays County (HCC)	3,800,000
8. Cape's Fishing Pond (Hays County)	2,500,000
TOTAL Tier One Project Requests	\$ 58,497,500

TIER TWO PROJECTS ("very good"; strong recommendation to fund at some level)	Amount Requested
Urban Parks	
★ 9. Dripping Springs Regional Skate Park (DS Skate Park, Inc, non-profit)	\$ 550,000
★ 10. Dripping Springs Town Center (City of Dripping Springs)	4,480,600
★ 11. Patriot's Hall, near Dripping Springs (PatriotsHall.org; non-profit)	1,500,000
12. Nature Center at Blue Hole Park (City of Wimberley)	3,136,425
Open Space/Natural Areas/Trails/Water Quality/Habitat	
13. John Knox Ranch Preserve (John Knox Ranch/HCC)	2,500,000
14. Presa Grande, Sink Creek Watershed (Great Springs Project)	8,500,000
Connectivity	
★ 15. Old Fitzhugh Road Trail (City of Dripping Springs)	1,305,000
16. Kyle Fajita Fields (City of Kyle)	14,520,000
TOTAL Tier Two Project Requests	\$ 36,472,025

TOTAL TIER ONE & TWO PROJECT REQUESTS	\$ 94,969,525
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¹Recommendation subject to site control.

TIER THREE PROJECTS (for consideration at a future date)	Amount Requested
Open Space/Natural Areas/Trails/Water Quality/Habitat	
Regional Conservation Fund for Jacob’s Well Groundwater Management Zone (WDWA)	\$20,000,000
Wimberley Dog & Skate Park (City of Wimberley)	450,110
TOTAL Tier Three Project Requests	\$ 20,460,111
TOTAL TIER ONE, TWO, THREE PROJECT REQUESTS	\$115,439,630
TOTAL PROJECT COSTS FOR ALL PROJECTS SUBMITTED	> \$176,000,000

ADVISEMENTS TO HAYS COUNTY

- 1) Recognize the incredible opportunities that arose within the last few months (March-July) in our County for outdoor recreation, nature experiences, trails, conservation of natural areas, access to rivers/creeks, perpetual scenic vistas, water quality protection, habitat preservation, flood mitigation – and a connection with nature and sense of place – for now and forever.
- 2) Understand that both the applicants and reviewers were functioning to the best of their abilities within a compressed time frame and during a most unusual and challenging time at the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, and that further work can be done to evaluate projects and negotiate with sponsors, which may lead to some modifications of the rankings and costs.
- 3) See that there is more opportunity right now than we can fund with County tax dollars to fulfill the visionary goals of the 2012 Hays County Master Plan for Parks, Open Spaces and Natural Areas.
- 4) Be assured there is a solid community of conservationists, non-profit organizations, municipal and government partners ready and willing to invest along with Hays County in order to make sure our plentiful resources are protected, and our citizens have outdoor places to play, explore, experience and treasure.
- 5) Know that POSAC members have exerted a substantial and collective body of time, effort, thought and feeling that hopefully provides a valuable service to all Hays County leaders, residents and visitors for years to come.

- 6) Appreciate that a scientific poll was conducted among Hays County voters, in reflection of our demographics, that revealed strong support (71-77%) for \$75 million in general obligation bonds to be sold to protect our open spaces, water quality lands and natural places – especially when the county’s property tax rate would not be affected.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A BOND IN NOVEMBER 2020

POSAC recommends a total bond initiative in the range of \$75-80 Million.

Of that total, we see up to \$60-65 million to be used toward the named projects above – with Tier One projects having highest priority and Tier Two to be funded in the best way possible.

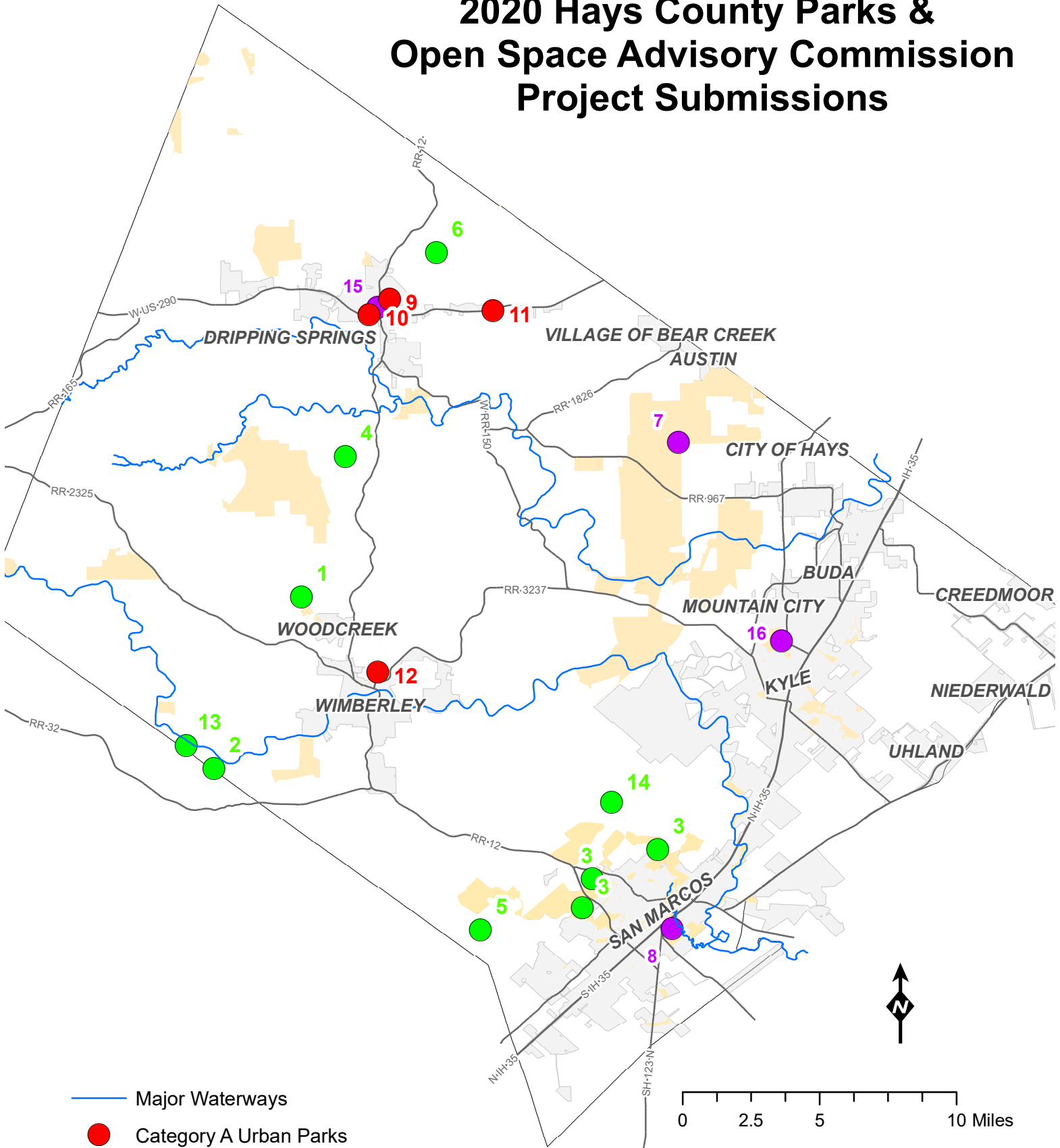
Further, we recommend that \$15-20 million be set aside in a flexible, non-specific fund to accommodate future projects in partnership with municipalities and organizations who were not able to present a viable project at this time, and for potential modifications to existing projects – as well as for unanticipated opportunities for conservation or recreation projects within the next five years.²

REQUEST FOR POSAC TO REMAIN IN ADVISORY/ SUPPORT ROLE

POSAC recognizes the importance of thorough project vetting, evaluation, and negotiation and would be honored to continue to serve in an advisory capacity to the Court and to County staff in order to help further successful bond project implementation. Further, it is the firm desire of POSAC to continue to receive and evaluate projects and review the financial aspects and public benefits for each project.

²One member of the commission was not supportive of having unallocated funds as part of the bond package.

2020 Hays County Parks & Open Space Advisory Commission Project Submissions



- Major Waterways
- Category A Urban Parks
- Category B Open Spaces, Natural Areas, Trails, Water Quality & Habitat
- Category C Connectivity
- Pre-existing Parks, Open Spaces and Conservation Easements
- City Boundaries

0 2.5 5 10 Miles



Date: July 22, 2020
 Sources: HCC, TPWD, TLTC, & More
 Author: Alexandra Thompson,
 Hays County Natural Resources Coordinator