



PORT LAVACA PARKS & RECREATION MASTER PLAN

MAY 2026

CITY OF PORT LAVACA, TEXAS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Acknowledgement of the community members + partners that participated in the Public Workshop or otherwise helped contributed to this plan.

Cover image Source: Simonson, J. (2024) Port Lavaca is a hidden gem for wildlife on the Texas Coast, Lonely Planet. Available at: <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/articles/unexpected-texas-port-lavaca>

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LETTER FROM MAYOR OR CITY MANAGER

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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INTRODUCTION + PLAN CONTEXT

01

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVE

CULTIVATING THE FUTURE OF PARKLAND IN PORT LAVACA, TEXAS

The Port Lavaca Parks and Recreation Master Plan serves as a comprehensive guide for shaping the future of the city’s parks, recreation, and trails. Initiated in May 2024, this Plan provides direction for future improvements, investments, and budgetary decisions to ensure long-term success. This document outlines a vision for a well-connected, accessible, and sustainable parks and recreation system.

As Port Lavaca’s needs evolve, the City must take a proactive approach to its parks and recreation planning. This plan ensures that Port Lavaca’s park system continues to meet current demands while positioning the community for a vibrant, resilient future.

This plan prioritizes placemaking strategies in parks that support quality of life, economic vitality, and fiscal responsibility. By

enhancing public spaces, expanding programmatic offerings, and cultivating vibrant events, Port Lavaca will strengthen the local sense of place. Additionally, prioritizing coastal preservation efforts ensures the natural beauty of Port Lavaca will be enjoyed for generations to come.

Port Lavaca’s current Parks and Recreation System includes pocket parks, community parks, trails, and public facilities. Through strategic investment and collaboration, Port Lavaca is building a parks system that reflects its values—supporting a high quality of life, celebrating natural beauty, and creating inclusive spaces for the whole community. The primary objectives of this Parks and Recreation Master Plan are to:

- Enhance the quality of life for all current and future residents by providing exceptional recreational opportunities and green spaces.
- Preserve and protect the natural landscape, while expanding accessibility and building community resilience.
- Expand connectivity and access through trails and pedestrian infrastructure.
- Encourage economic growth through recreational tourism, public-private partnerships, and innovative funding strategies.
- Strengthen community identity and vitality through high-quality park programming and special events.

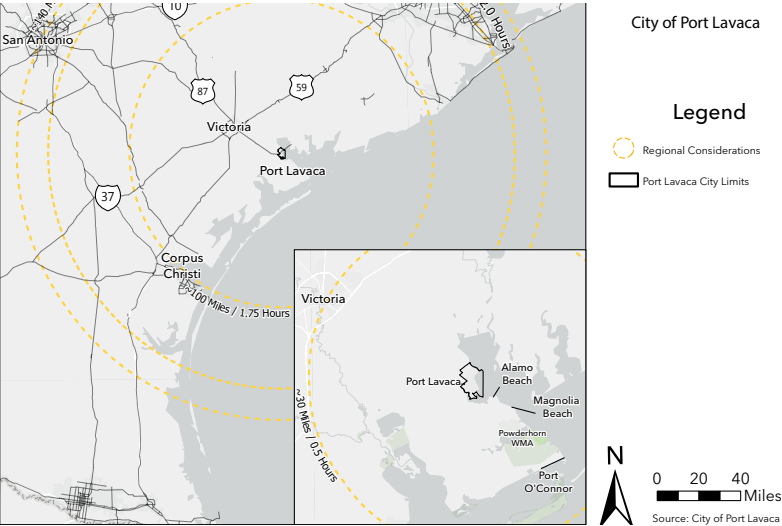


Figure 4: Current Parks administrative structure

TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE COMPLIANCE

TPW LOCAL PARKS GRANT PROGRAM

Texas Parks and Wildlife is one of the largest grant providers for local parks, trails, and facilities, giving more than \$30.1 million in local parks grants in 2025.

The Local Park Grant Program provides 50% matching grants on a reimbursement basis to eligible applicants to assist local units of government with the acquisition and/or development of public recreation areas and facilities throughout the State of Texas. As of 2019, funding for the Local Park Grant Program comes from a portion of the state sales tax on sporting goods as well as from off-shore gasoline royalties. A common misconception is that a ‘current’ parks master plan – one updated in the last five years with a 5-10-year horizon – is a requirement to meet TPW grant eligibility. In reality, park master plans are only required for certain grants, while park master plans are good for extra points when competing for grant funds.

This Parks & Recreation Master Plan is designed to highlight and inform key grant consideration scoring categories. Shown on the following pages are the scoring criteria for a grant Port Lavaca will likely pursue: Local Parks Non-Urban Outdoor Recreation (Population <500,000).

The maximum grant award is \$750,000. In the example below, ‘Project’ refers to the hypothetical park project seeking grant funding.



Figure X:

Image X: <https://www.lmtonline.com/local/article/laredo-splash-pads-available-throughout-spring-18925422.php>

Webb County received a \$585,000 non-urban outdoor grant for the 2025 Webb County Colonia Splash Pad project in Laredo. The project includes splash pads and three park sites, restroom renovations at two sites, site amenities, shade installation, lighting and accessible parking.

SCORING CRITERIA

1. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The project proposal identifies specific, well-defined goals and objectives that both clearly explain the local priorities to be addressed by the proposed project and illustrate how the proposed project, if funded, will support the TPW’s Land and Water Resources Conservation and Recreation Plan, Texas Outdoor Recreation Plan, and Local Park Grant program objectives, as applicable.

- Project goals are SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely)
- Projects align with Land and Water Resources Conservation and Recreation Plan (LWRCRP) + Texas Outdoor Recreation Plan (TORP)



Figure 1: Water-based activities are of critical importance to Port Lavaca, where water is a major economic resource. Image from Texas Parks and Wildlife

2. SITE DESIGN

The proposed site plan and boundary map are clear, easy-to-read and contain all information requested in the application. The proposed development prioritizes direct recreational opportunities, and acquisition-only projects include conceptual plans and schedule for future development.

- Site design takes into consideration the character and special features of the site, includes street names, acreage, and true north arrow, identifies utilities, easements and special features, and clearly defines boundaries of existing parkland and acquisition tracts.
- Project maximizes the use of funds for acquisition, recreation and conservation opportunities determined by dividing the direct acquisition, recreational, and conservation costs by the total project costs and multiplying the result by 5.

EXISTING CONDITIONS + PLAN CONTEXT

PHYSICAL FEATURES

Physical features include the noteworthy barriers - natural and manmade - that inform suitability for parks and trails. That suitability ranges from the actual location of parks to the layout and design of those spaces.

1. FLOODPLAIN

The Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) defines a floodplain as any land area susceptible to being inundated by floodwaters from any source. This can include coastal areas impacted by storm surge, land along a river or bayou that is flooded when that waterway rises out of its banks, or low-lying land that fills with water when it rains. Flooding occurs in a wide range of landscapes due to rainfall or storm surge.

Flood hazard areas fall into three levels:

- Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA), or the 100-year flood zone, encompass the area that will be inundated by the flood event having a 1-percent chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year.
- Moderate flood hazard areas, or 500-year flood zones, are the areas between the limits of the base flood and the 0.2-percent-annual-chance flood.
- Minimal flood hazard areas fall outside the SFHA and higher than the elevation of the 0.2-percent-annual-chance flood.

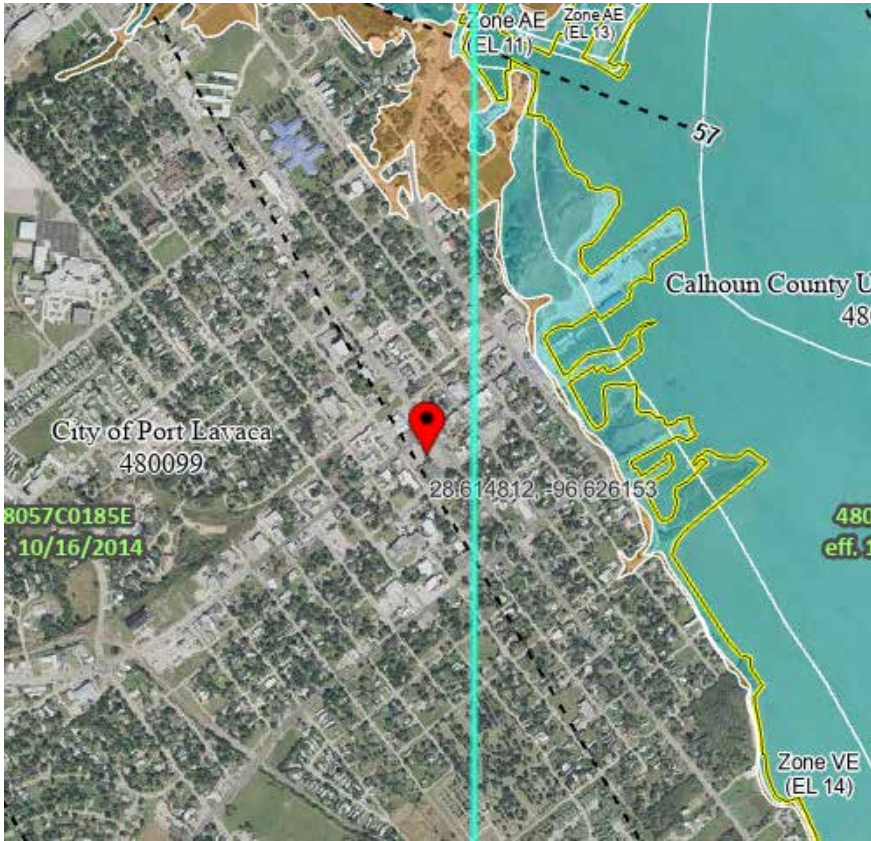


Figure X: FEMA Flood Map for Port Lavaca, Texas

WHY IT MATTERS

Development Best Practices tells us that building in the floodplain should be kept to structures that are designed to withstand the force of the water in a flood event. Many communities limit their tolerance for floodplain development to trails and passive open space.

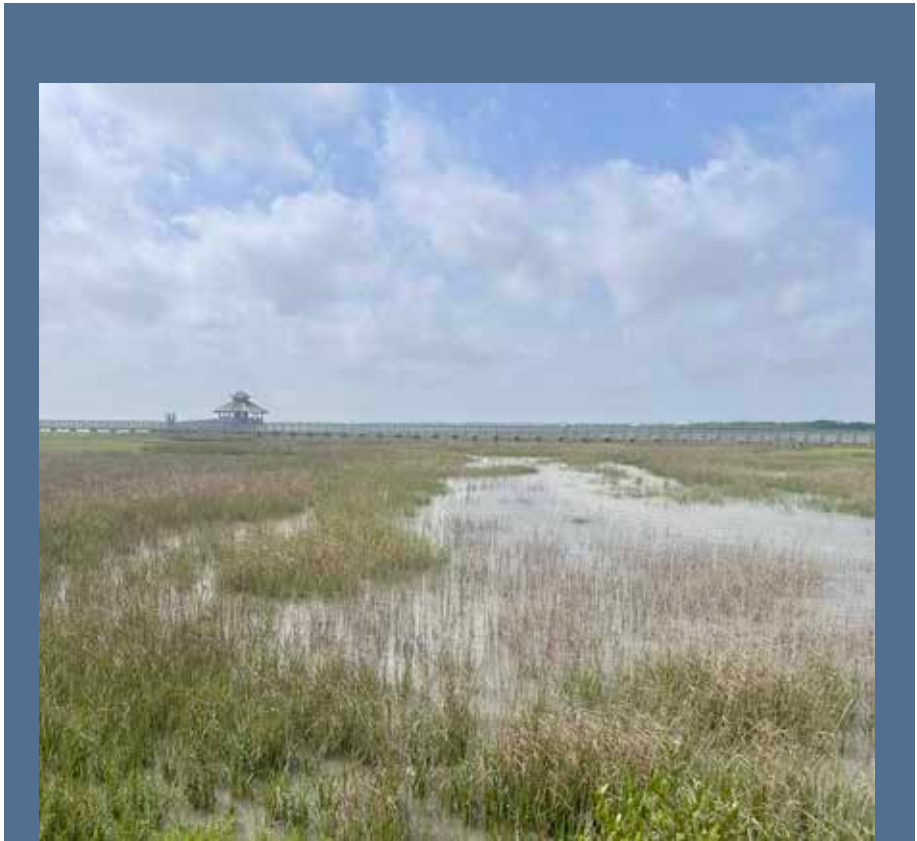


Figure X: View to the observation tower of the coastal marsh at Lighthouse beach.
Source: <https://texasseagrant.org/story/texas-shorelines-marsh-madness-heres-the-play-by-play-on-coastal-marshes/>

2. WETLANDS

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines wetlands as areas where water covers the soil, or is present either at or near the surface of the soil all year or for varying periods of time during the year, including during the growing season.

There are two types of wetlands:

- Coastal / Tidal: Found along coasts, these wetlands are closely linked to estuaries where sea water mixes with fresh water to form an environment of varying salinities.
- Inland / Non-tidal: Most common on floodplains along rivers and streams or along the margins of lakes and ponds, inland wetlands include marshes, wet meadows, and swamps.

3. EASEMENTS

Easements are legal agreements that grant the right to use or access a portion of another person's land for a specific purpose, such as utilities or pathways. Knowing the location of easements is crucial for planning because they can impact the layout and accessibility of these spaces. Properly identifying and managing easements ensures that park and trail development does not interfere with existing land rights and facilitates the creation of seamless and functional recreational areas.

4. UTILITIES

(CONTENT UNDER DEVELOPMENT)



Figure X: Historic Rail Depot in Port Lavaca, Texas

5. RAILROAD

Port Lavaca contains ### miles of inactive Union Pacific Railroad lines. Discussed on page ##, the rights-of-way for inactive railroad lines can be acquired by municipalities and converted into linear parks or trails.

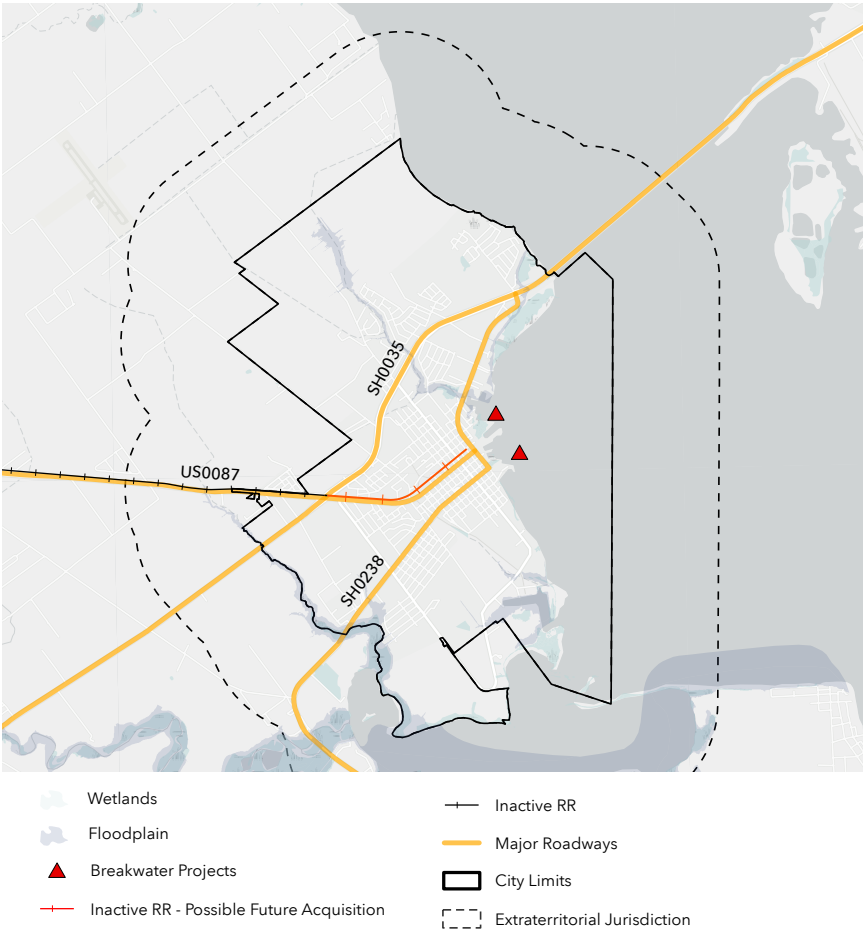


Image X: Map of inactive rail lines in Port Lavaca, Texas

6. TREE CANOPY

Tree canopy refers to the upper layer or habitat zone, formed by mature tree tops. According to publicly available data tools from American Forests, tree cover coverage in Lort Lavaca ranges from 6 to 20 percent of what is ideal for the area by biome, population density, and other factors as determined by the US Forest Service and Nature Conservancy.

Why it matters:
Texans already know! Mature trees are an essential component of urban forestry, providing shade, reducing urban heat islands, supporting biodiversity, and enhancing the aesthetic appeal of urban and suburban landscapes.

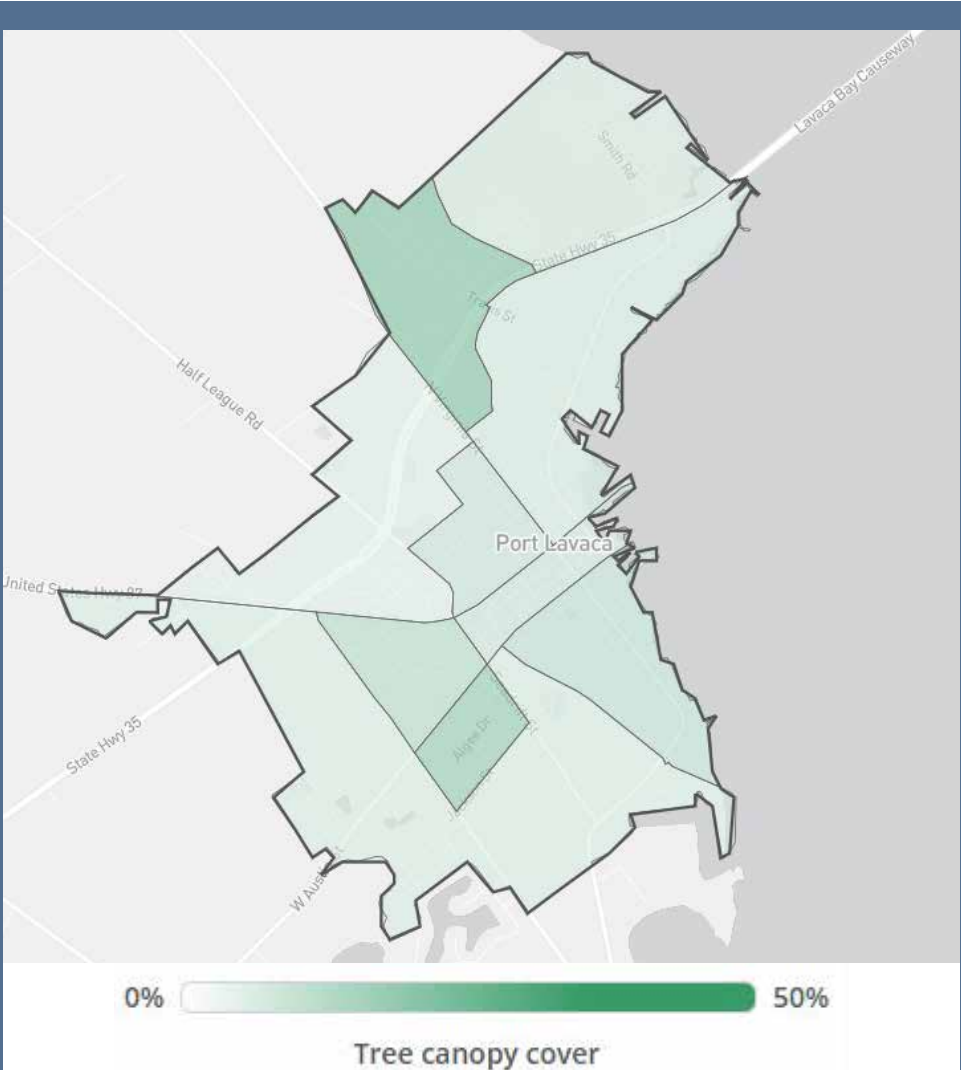
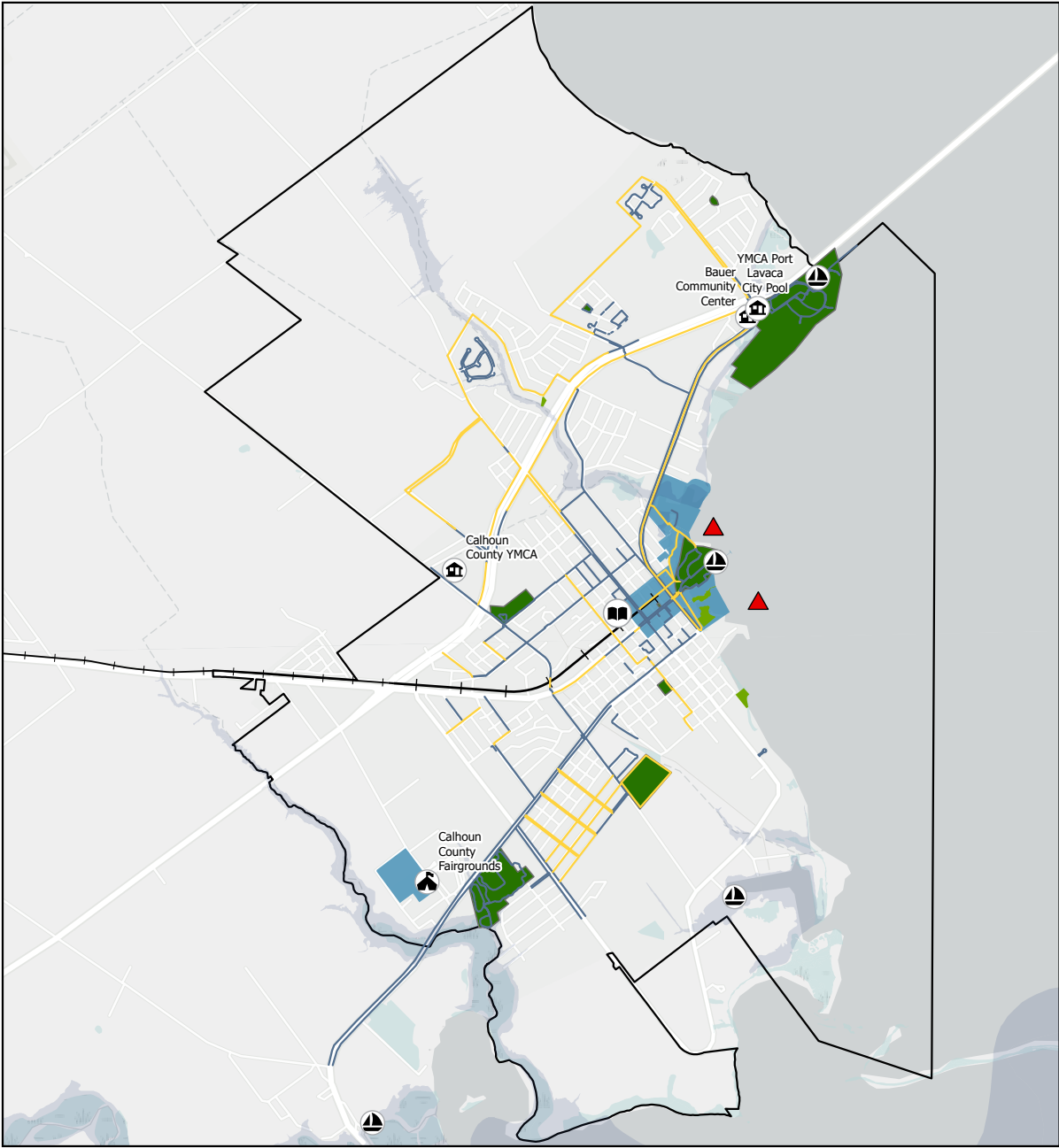


Image X: Tree canopy in Port Lavaca, Texas



Overall Park System Conditions
City of Port Lavaca

Legend

- Port Lavaca City Limits
- Wetlands
- Floodplain
- Downtown District
- Fair Grounds
- Community Centers
- Boat Ramps
- Breakwater Projects
- Inactive Railroad
- Existing Parks
- Future Parks
- Existing Trails
- Future Trails

Data sourced from the City of Port Lavaca

EXISTING CONDITIONS + PLAN CONTEXT

DEMOGRAPHICS + GROWTH

Port Lavaca’s population has remained between 11,000 and 12,500 for more than 30 years. The socioeconomic elements of this Plan will therefore focus on understanding the current population.

The community is quite diverse, with Hispanics making up 64% of the population and a higher-than-average Diversity Index (83.7 in 2025). Nearly a quarter of the population are children, and the median age of 38 indicates a balanced mix of young families, working professionals, and retirees.

Port Lavaca is characterized by a strong presence of young families and older, self-reliant households, with the dominant Esri lifestyle segments being “Cozy Country Living” (48%) and “Sprouting Explorers” (29%). Key characteristics of these broad Esri demographics segments include:

- “Cozy Country Living” (73%): Older, empty nesters in bucolic setting. These households prioritize ownership, traditional values, and outdoor recreation.
- “Sprouting Explorers” (27%): Younger families with children or single parent households their families. These households are often multilingual and multigenerational, as well as hardworking and optimistic.

The employment profile includes approximately 45% white-collar jobs, 36% blue-collar jobs, and 19% service industry roles. This distribution indicates a diverse workforce that will benefit from accessible and varied recreational opportunities

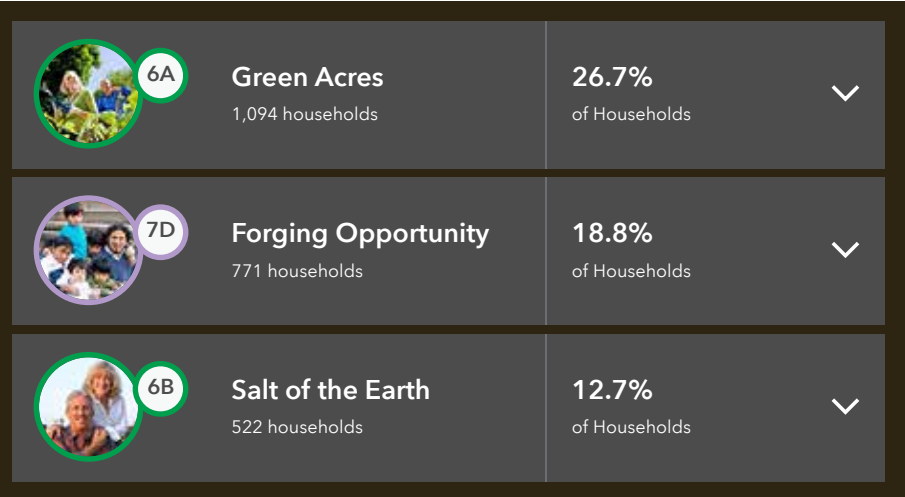


Figure 1: Esri demographics of Port Lavaca

Key TPW Item:

- Does the project improve opportunities for low-income citizens, defined as the percent of houselands earning less than \$35,000 annually?
- Does the project improve opportunities for ethnic minority citizens, defined as the percentage of a population that does not select “white alone” on the U.S. Census?
- Does the proposed project provide park and recreation oportunities for physically or mentally challenged citizens, which exceed the federal and state required accessibility standards?

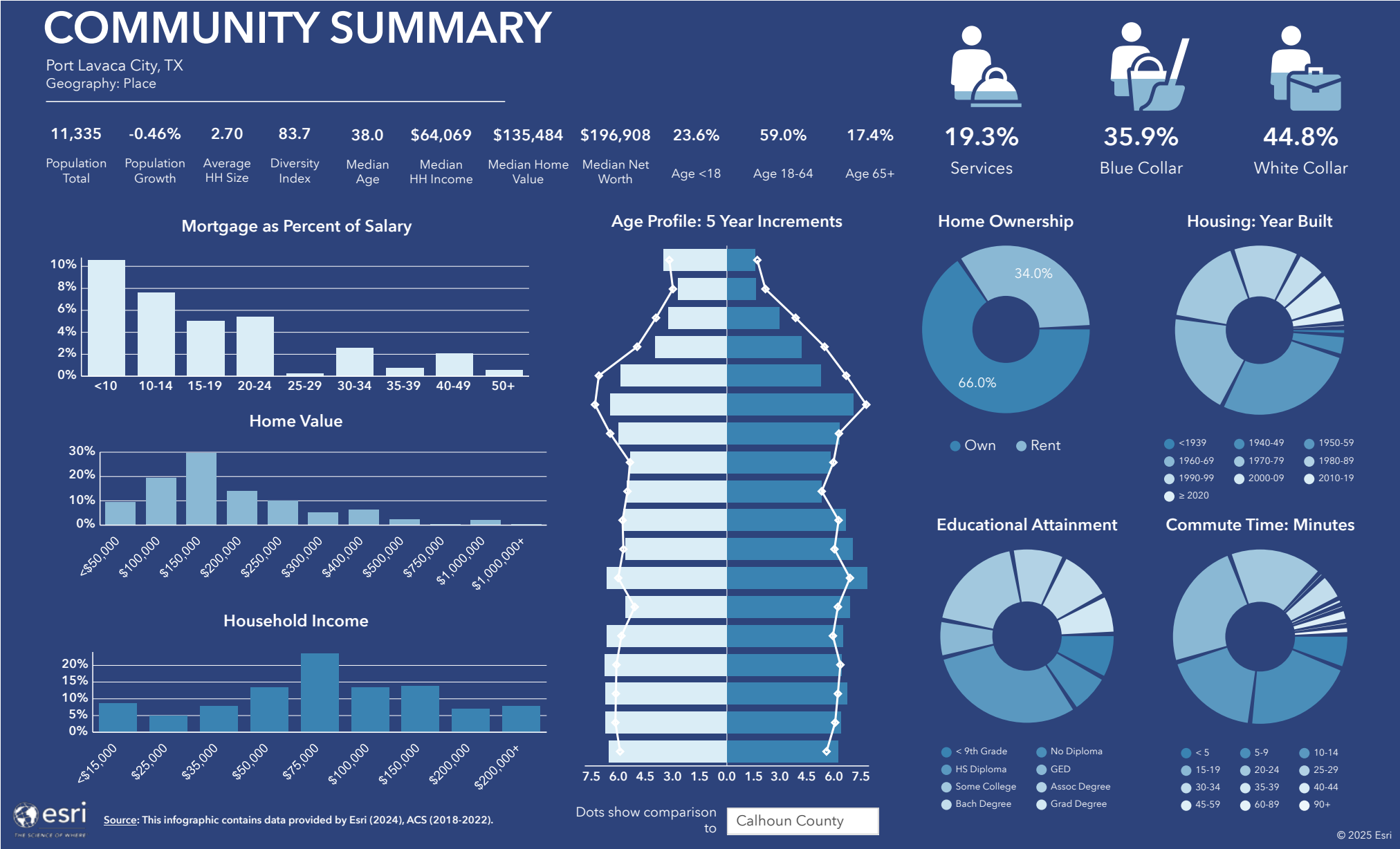
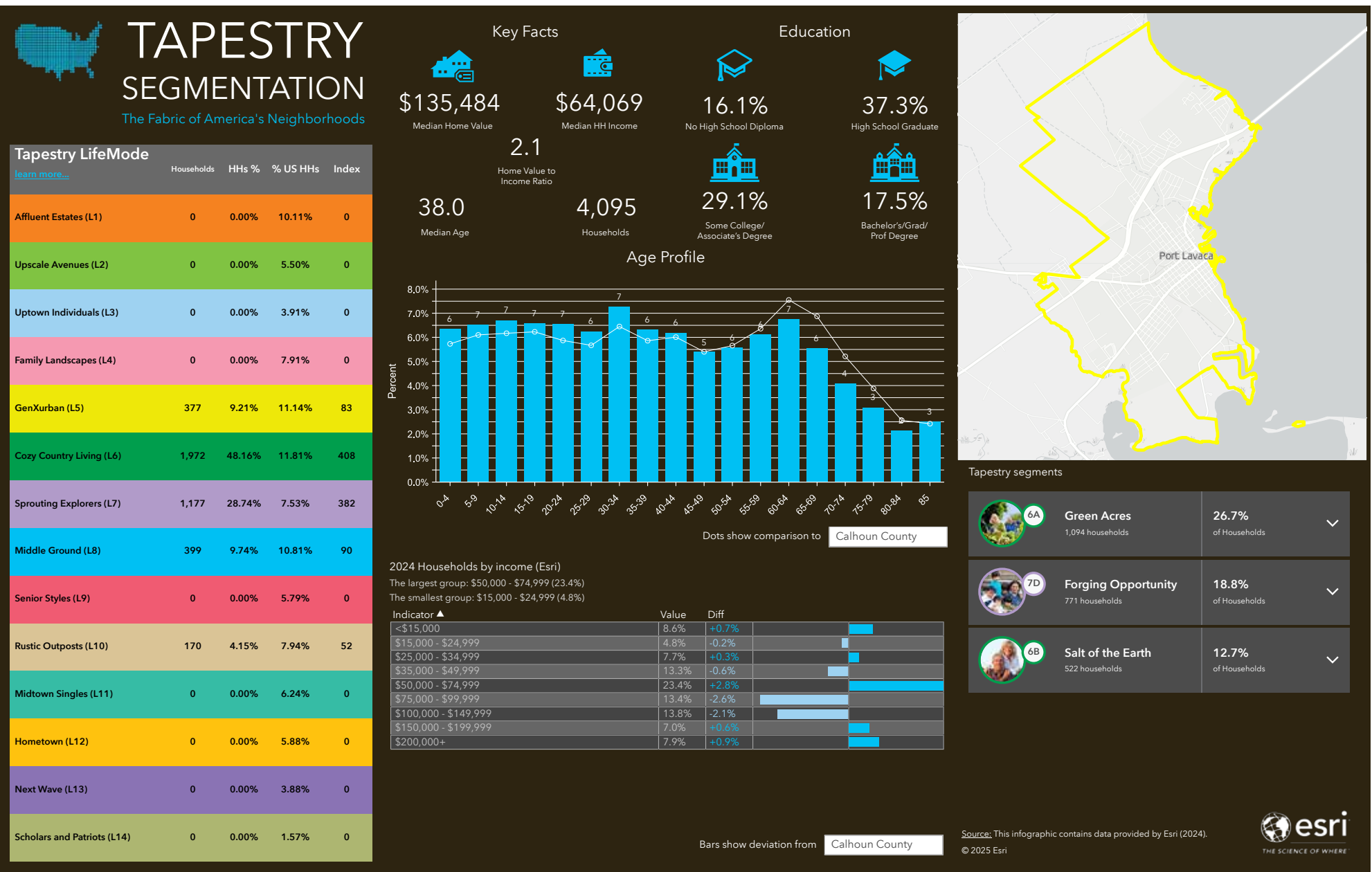


Figure 2: Community Summary from ESRI



EXISTING CONDITIONS + PLAN CONTEXT

ADMINISTRATION

In the 2000's, the City of Port Lavaca had a standalone Parks and Recreation department. However, after the director departed, their position was never backfilled, and the department was rolled into the Public Works department.

Currently, there are no staff allocated to managing recreation offerings. YMCA is the closest entity to a recreation services role.

STAFFING

Currently, as the Parks & Recreation department is rolled into the Public Works team, there are 5 City employees dedicated to parks: 1 park superintendent, 1 foreman, and 3 maintenance workers.

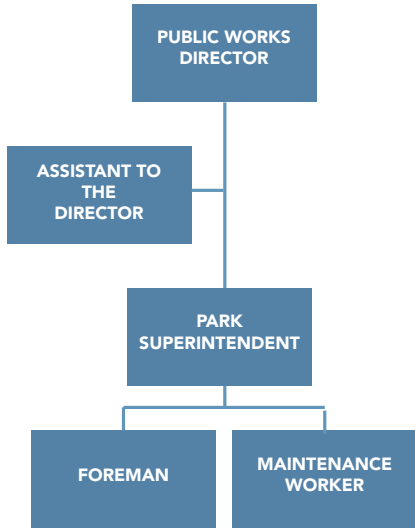


Figure X: Current Parks administrative structure

BUSINESS PLAN OBJECTIVES & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

2024-2025 Business Plan Objectives

- Replace all metal frame picnic tables with wood picnic tables at Lighthouse Beach.
- Repaint old bathroom at Bayfront Park and install new LED lights.
- Replace bollards at Blackrock and install new cables.
- Repaint curbs and lines and have curbs repaired where needed and mark fire lanes.
- Install surveillance cameras where needed.
- Remove shrubs at City Hall and install rock on the east side of the parking lot.
- Build 2-3 more cabanas at LHB splashpad.
- Reconstruct LHB volleyball court.
- Improvements at Butterfly Park including lighting, cabanas and fencing.
- Hire a consultant to apply with the Army Corp of Engineers to connec the Veterans memorial to Scully's via a boardwalk.
- Expand nuisance vegetation eradication program with bi-weekly spraying schedule.
- Install shade structure at bayfront splashpad.

2023-2924 Business Plan Accomplishments

- Daily Park Inspection of Maintenance and ground keeping.
- Constructed new restroom at wilson park and worked with rotary and united way to expand born learning trail.
- Hire a consultant to apply with the Army Corp of Engineers to connect the Veterans memorial to Scully's via a boardwalk.
- Built 1 cabana at LHB splashpad.
- Rehabed pool plumbing and chlorination system to meet current standards.
- Purchased and installed water slide at pool.
- Reconstructed volleyball court at city park

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Our Workload	Actual FY 2022-2023	Budget FY 2024-2024	Estimated FY 2023-2024	Budget FY 2024-2025
Acres of park grounds maintained	167.32	167.32	167.32	167.32
Number of playgrounds inspections performed	52	52	52	52
Measuring our Effectiveness				
% of park maintenance completed on time	100%	100%	85%	100%
% of bi-weekly spraying accomplished	85%	100%	50%	100%

Figure X: Current Parks administrative structure

ANNUAL BUDGET

According to the Annual Budget, the mission of the 'department' is to "Serve the City of Port Lavaca residents and visitors by providing the highest standard of parks and leisure services, available in a safe, efficient, and professional manner."

Description of our Services: The Parks Department provides operation and maintenance services to include mowing, landscaping, park maintenance, playground equipment inspections, and custodial duties, maintenance of the swimming pool and construction of new projects.

Strategic Focus – Infrastructure: Port Lavaca residents enjoy new streets, sidewalks, and other improvements year after year. Community Development Port Lavaca is a culturally diverse community actively promoting tourism and encouraging economic development opportunities. Quality of Life Port Lavaca residents enjoy a safe community with great amenities and affordable living.



Figure X:

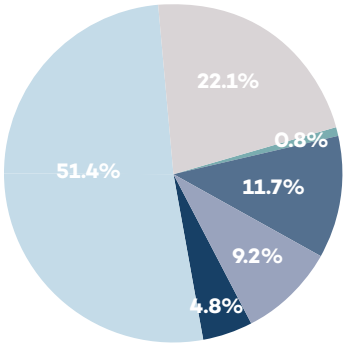
BUDGET 2024-2025



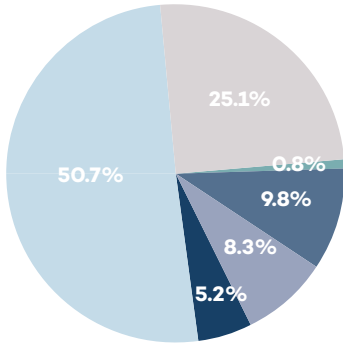
ANNUAL BUDGET

PARKS & RECREATIONEXPENDITURE DETAIL

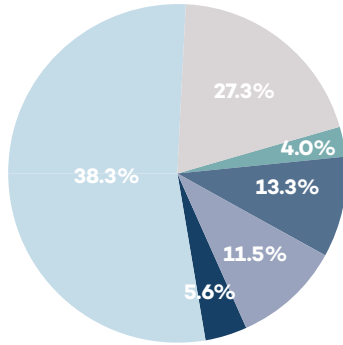
ACTUAL BUDGET
2022-2023



BUDGET
2023-2024

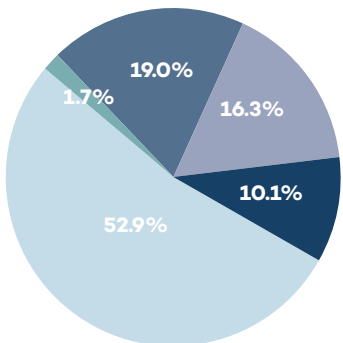


ESTIMATE
2023-2024

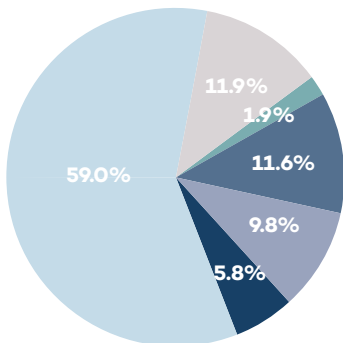


- Salaries & Benefits
- Materials & Supplies
- Services
- Maintenance
- Sundry
- Capital Expenditures

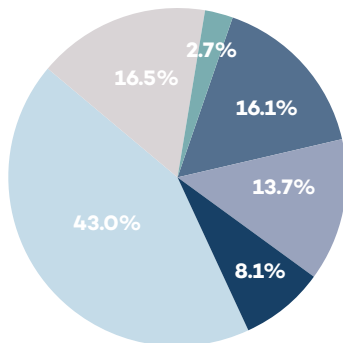
BASE BUDGET
2024-2025



ADJUSTMENT
TO BASE



BUDGET
2024-2025



PLANNING PROCESS OVERVIEW

STAKEHOLDER + COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

During this process a Public Workshop was held to obtain vital community feedback and direction for the development of its content. The event was held on Tuesday, May 20, 2025 at the Bauer Community Center from 6:00 to 8:00 PM in a come-and-go format.

Approximately 50 community members attended and contributed to meaningful, collaborative discussion at the feedback stations available for community input. With lively conversation and active participation in the stations, this feedback shaped the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

The goals of the Workshop were to:

- Familiarize the community with park master planning basics
- Inform the community about the current Parks and Recreation System
- Understand the public’s perspectives on the current System
- Collect feedback to begin determining the community’s vision for the Parks and Recreation System

Stations were set up throughout the Community Center and ranged from informational to interactive for residents of all ages. Members of the LJA Planning Team also were available throughout the event to answer questions from and spark discussion among community members.



Figure 6:

- Recreation (36 percent): Provide fun and engaging opportunities for enjoyment, sightseeing, and/or fitness
- Design (20 percent): Enhance public spaces to encourage social interaction and beauty through high quality design to the places that make the City unique: 20 percent
- Nature (18 percent): Design spaces that protect sensitive or important natural areas and features, and integrate low impact / “green” practices

Additionally, community members appreciate larger parks with a range of amenities, such as Lighthouse Beach and Chocolate Bayou Park. Residents enjoy the wide, well-lit sidewalks of Bayfront Peninsula Park.

Common community desires identified across all activities and boards include:

- Additional shade trees or structures within existing parks
- Community recreational center with amenities for all age groups, such as sports courts or a public pool
- More community events and programs, such as movies in the park, live music, Christmas lights, First Friday art walks, etc.
- Rentals for kayaks, canoes, paddle boats, etc. near the water
- Walking, running, and bicycle trails within parks and neighborhoods
- Splash pads for younger children
- Free access to Lighthouse Beach for Port Lavaca residents



Figure 7:

COMMUNITY “SWOT” ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

- Coastline access, especially the proximity of downtown Port Lavaca to the water
- High-quality playgrounds, walking trails, and splashpads at parks
- Quantity, size, and distribution of existing parks

WEAKNESSES

- Lack of shade trees and structures, limiting summertime enjoyment of parks and playgrounds
- Lack of continuous, connected, and level trails, sidewalks, and safe pedestrian areas
- No indoor recreational center
- Limited maintenance for park facilities, especially restrooms

OPPORTUNITIES

- Expand trails and sidewalks, linking parks to schools, the library, and other destinations.
- Develop an indoor recreation center, dog park, and more green spaces.
- Host more community events and explore partnerships for funding.
- Offer more sports facilities like tennis, pickleball, volleyball, etc.
- Promote Port Lavaca’s parks as ecotourism destinations

CHALLENGES/THREATS

- Limited funding and infrastructure constraints.
- Population decline leading to economic vulnerability and limited resources
- Natural hazards, including sea-level rise, storm surges, and hurricanes

A SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) Analysis is a strategic planning tool used to identify and evaluate

PLAN ALIGNMENT WITH LOCAL PLANS + STUDIES

TEXAS GENERAL LAND OFFICE 2023 TEXAS COASTAL RESILIENCY PLAN

The Port Lavaca Parks and Recreation Master Plan aligns with key priorities outlined in the Texas General Land Office (GLO)'s 2023 Texas Coastal Resiliency Plan.

The Port Lavaca Parks and Recreation Master Plan aligns with key priorities outlined in the Texas General Land Office (GLO)'s 2023 Texas Coastal Resiliency Plan.

(Graphic Under Development)

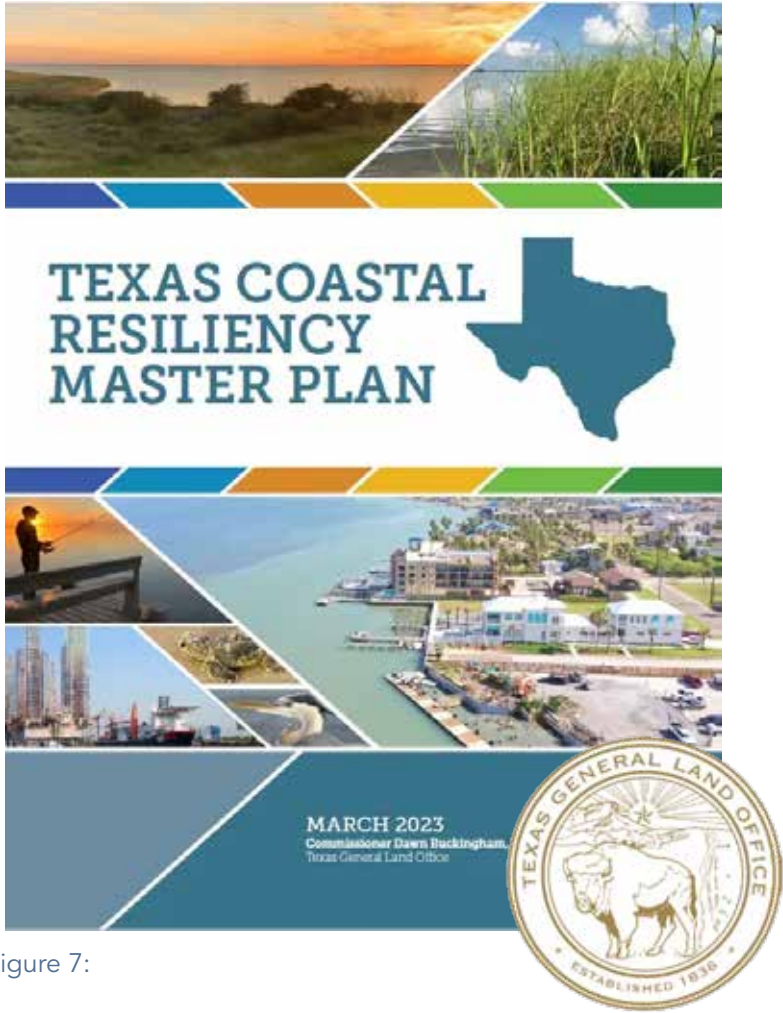


Figure 7:

2016 PLAN PORT LAVACA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Port Lavaca Parks and Recreation Master Plan aligns with key priorities outlined in Port Lavaca's 2016 Comprehensive Plan, Future Land Use Plan, Sidewalk Plan, and Waterfront Master Plan.



2023 WATERFRONT MASTER PLAN



Completed in 2023, the Waterfront Master Plan Report inventories existing conditions of the City and Downtown waterfront area, then provides the framework for a series of recommended design solutions ranging in from the physical to the organizational.

Several City parks are located within the Waterfront area, including:

- Bayfront Peninsula Park
- City/Tilley Park
- Fay Bauer Sterling Park

POWDERHORN RANCH

Located just 20 miles southeast of Port Lavaca, Powderhorn Ranch spans 17,351 acres of unspoiled coastal prairie, where expansive grasslands give way to a rich mosaic of freshwater wetlands, salt marshes, and seagrass beds. This ecologically significant landscape provides critical habitat for a wide range of native wildlife; notably, over 200 bird species, including the endangered whooping crane, have been observed on the property.

Powderhorn serves as a vital anchor in the Matagorda Bay coastal ecosystem, linking together a network of protected lands from the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge to Mad Island Wildlife Management Area and the Matagorda Peninsula. This historic conservation project was made possible through the Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation (TPWF), which secured the land and later transferred ownership to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) for permanent stewardship.

Today, much of the ranch is designated as the Powderhorn Wildlife Management Area, which offers scheduled access for research, education, birding, conservation efforts, and public hunting. Eventually, a portion of the land—2,253 acres with over 3 miles of bayfront shoreline and an additional 2.5 miles along Powderhorn Lake—will become a Texas State Park, ensuring long-term public access and enjoyment. Today, 26 miles of paddling trails are open to the public to explore this pristine shoreline.



Figure x:



Figure x:

Images courtesy of Texas Monthly

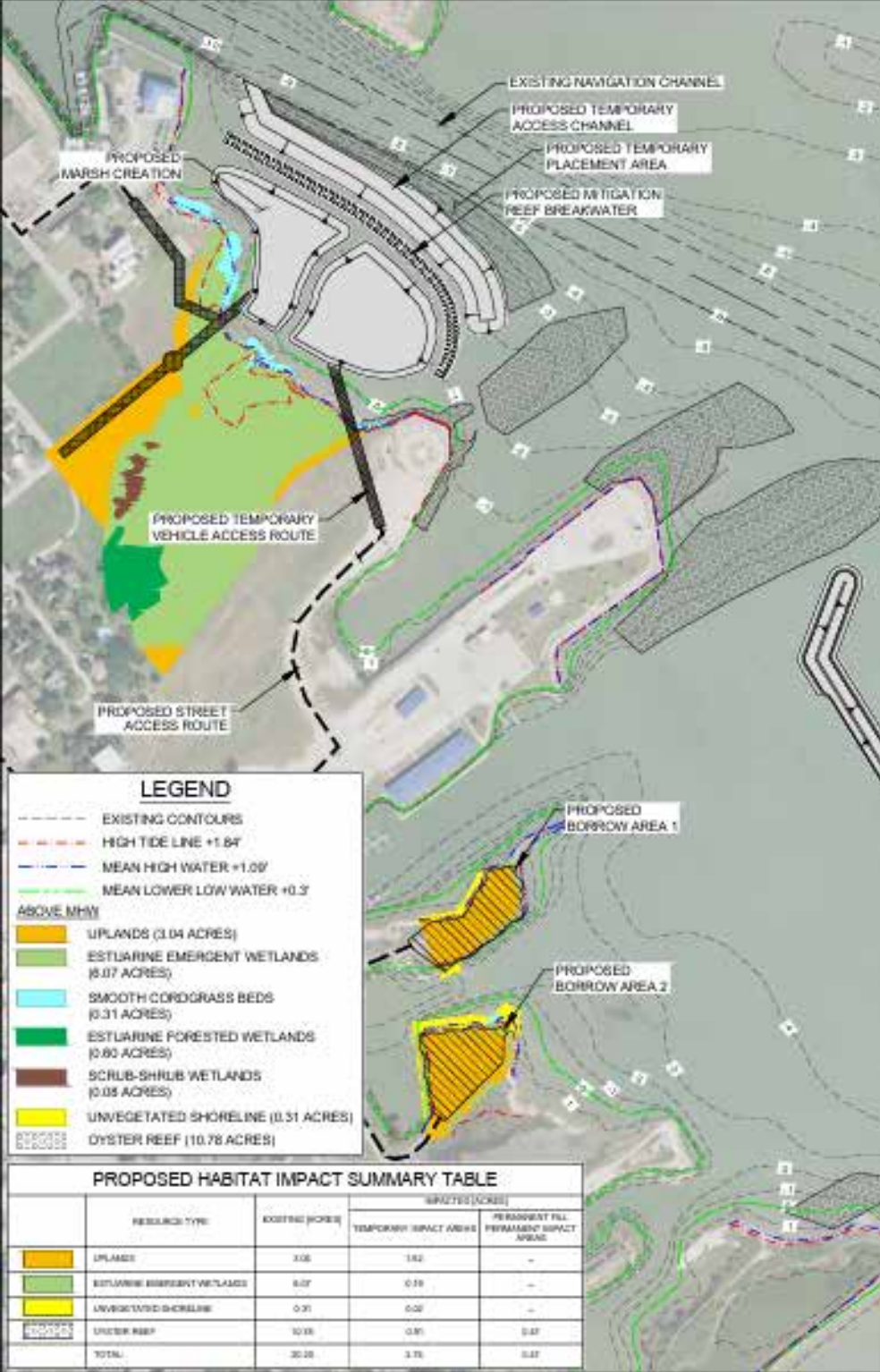


Figure x:

BREAKWATER PROJECT

Breakwater projects are coastal engineering structures designed to protect shorelines and harbors from wave action and erosion. The breakwater project in Port Lavaca will include:

- Living shoreline protection consisting of a rock breakwater
- A reef breakwater and two marsh creation islands

In total, there will be 7.7 acres of permanent fill related impacts below the high tide line (HTL).

The rock breakwater is proposed to be 2,120-foot-long by 70-foot-wide to 91-foot-wide at the ends , and the reef breakwater is proposed to be 950-foot-long by 30-foot-wide, which will be comprised of concrete oyster reef breakwater units and located along the northern portion of the project area. The reef is being proposed as compensatory mitigation to offset potential oyster bed loss, as well as to offer protection for the proposed marsh islands.

The proposed marsh islands would be approximately 1.55 acres and 2.01 acres and situated along the western shoreline of Bayfront Peninsula Park. The marsh creation islands will be contoured, graded, and planted with native vegetation species to provide additional habitat benefits to the project and aid in stabilization of newly placed material and shoreline.

The Breakwater Project aligns with the Parks & Recreation Master Plan in the following ways:

- Areas insulated by breakwater could be opportunities for kayaking or other water-based recreational activities
- New and enhanced marshland could create additional bird watching areas

Images courtesy of City of Port Lavaca

VISION + GUIDING PRINCIPLES

02



Figure X:

PARKS AND RECREATION AS A SYSTEM

(CONTENT UNDER DEVELOPMENT)



PARKS, FACILITIES, & PROGRAMMING

The Parks, Facilities, and Programming section focuses on creating inclusive, multi-functional spaces that support both active recreation and quiet reflection. From sport-focused community parks and peaceful gardens to educational signage and seasonal programs, the plan promotes physical well-being and cultural enrichment.

TRAILS

The trails section outlines a vision for a safe, connected, and accessible trail system that links Port Lavaca's recreational zones with neighborhoods, schools, and the Main Street area. Designed for all users, the network will feature sidewalks, multi-use paths, and equestrian routes that encourage walking, biking, and other forms of active transportation. Community-led maintenance efforts, accessibility improvements, and thoughtful design will ensure the trail system supports everyday mobility, outdoor recreation, and a stronger sense of connectivity throughout the city.

GREENSPACE + COASTLINE

Focused on preserving and enhancing Port Lavaca's natural beauty, this section outlines initiatives for native tree planting, coastal habitat restoration, and the creation of scenic trails within floodplain zones. These projects emphasize environmental stewardship, ensuring that the city's green spaces remain healthy, accessible, and sustainable for generations to come.

Chapter image courtesy of Lonely Planet, 22 Jul. 2022, www.lonelyplanet.com/articles/unexpected-texas-port-lavaca.

SYSTEM VISION

Consisting of parks, public facilities, nature preserves, trails, and much more, the Port Lavaca Parks and Recreation System aspires to be:

Connected + Tailored to the Community

Catalytic for Health, Wellness, & Fun

Adapted to Coastal Texas Conditions

Complimentary to Economic + Community Development

Figure X:



Figure X:



VISION STATEMENT

The City of Port Lavaca is responsible for a robust Parks and Recreation System that includes parks, preserves, event space, beaches, trails, and more. The Parks and Recreation System strives to efficiently thrill patrons of all ages and abilities by:

ICON

HEALTH+WELLNESS:

Enabling community health and quality of life through exercise, nature, learning, gathering spaces, fresh food, and more.

ICON

COMMUNITY CATALYST:

Developing the infrastructure and resources necessary for the System to generate revenue, host events, and attract visitors.

COMMUNITY DRIVEN:

Providing amenities and services that are tailored to the community's needs and preferences.

ICON

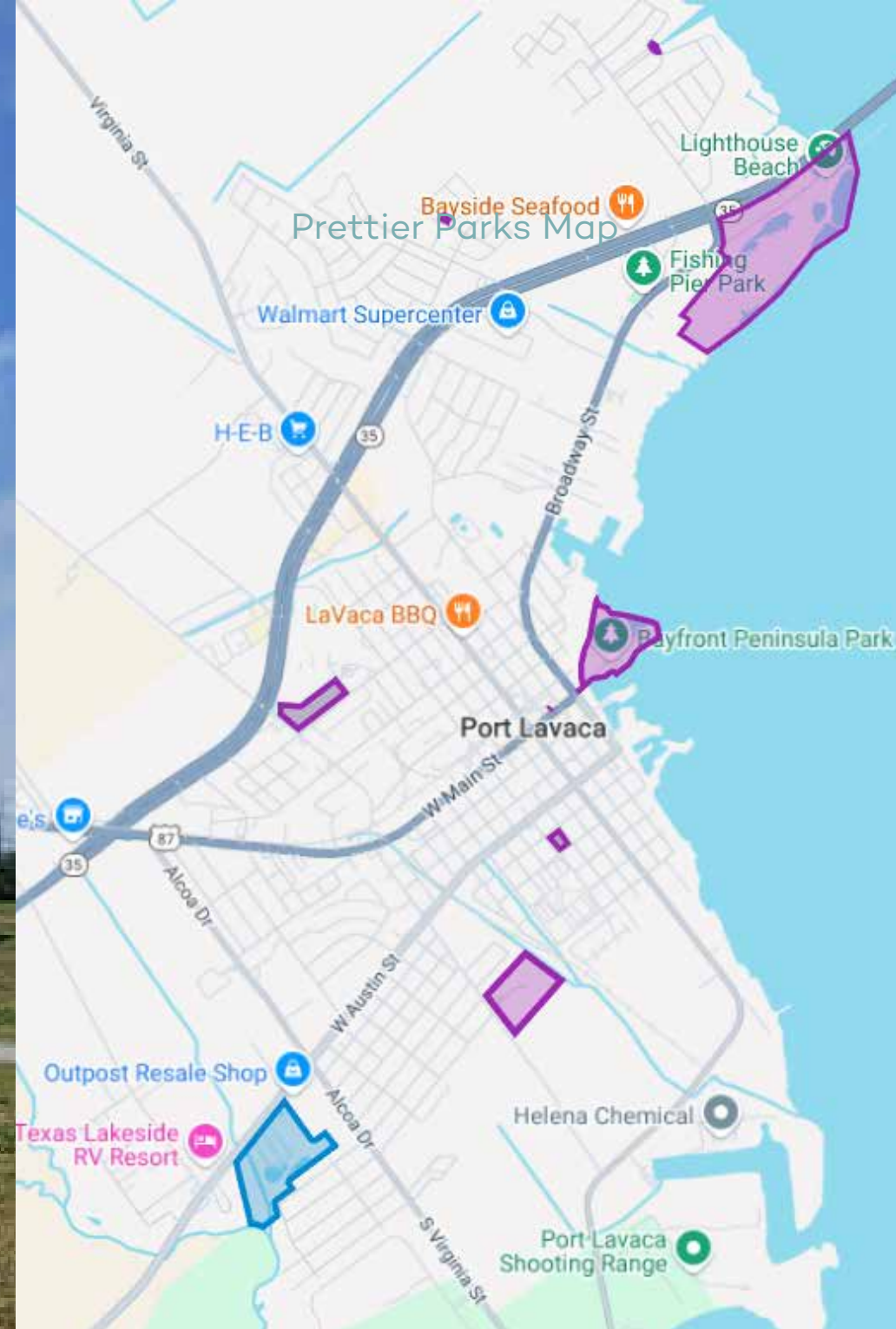
COSTAL RESILIENCE:

Utilizing resilient design practices to future-proof park and amenity investments.

ICON

EXISTING PARK SYSTEM CONDITIONS

03



MEASURING THE LEVEL OF SERVICE OF PARKS

PARKS, FACILITIES, AND RECREATION

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) provides benchmarking data. Provided below are some key findings from the 2025 NRPA Agency Performance Review and are utilized here to evaluate Port Lavaca's existing offerings.

NRPA emphasizes that optimal parkland acreage and some of the items listed below can vary based on specific community needs, population density, and local priorities. Therefore, while the benchmarks offer a reference point, Port Lavaca should assess its unique demographic and geographic factors to determine the appropriate features that best serve the residents.

Figure X: Current Park System of Port Lavaca

WALKING DISTANCE

Given the extreme temperatures of Texas summers, half a mile is generally considered the outer limit of what most people are willing to walk to access a park. It takes roughly 7 to 10 minutes to walk half a mile at a brisk pace or 12 to 15 minutes at a leisurely pace.

The next page showcases the current walking distance LOS via parks in Port Lavaca. A geographic analysis was conducted using existing and future public parks (shown in green). A 0.5-mile service buffer, representing a typical walkable distance, was applied around each park (displayed in light green or yellow), to identify areas with reasonable pedestrian access to parks.

Areas falling outside this buffer are service gaps and highlight key opportunities for future park development. When calculating walking distance LOS via City-owned parks only, there are large pockets of the City that are not serviced by a walkable park, particularly in northwest and southern Port Lavaca. While many of the underserved areas according to this metric are less developed, coverage will be an important consideration if these areas become denser in the future.

What this graphic cannot capture is the experience of a resident walking to a nearby park - is there adequate sidewalks, shade coverage, or space to walk safely alongside a busy road?



RESIDENTS PER PARK

- 01 ON AVERAGE, COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE NATION OFFER:
One park for every 2,411 residents.
- 02 FOR JURISDICTIONS WITH POPULATIONS BELOW 20,000
This ratio improves to one park per 1,001 residents.
- 03 BASED ON PORT LAVACA'S CURRENT ESTIMATED POPULATION
11,300 residents, at least 11.3 parks would be provided

Currently, Port Lavaca has 8 parks, equalling a ratio of one park per 1,412.5 residents. When including the County-owned Little Chocolate Bayou Park, this ratio improves to 1:1,255.5.

ACRES OF PARKLAND PER 1,000 RESIDENTS

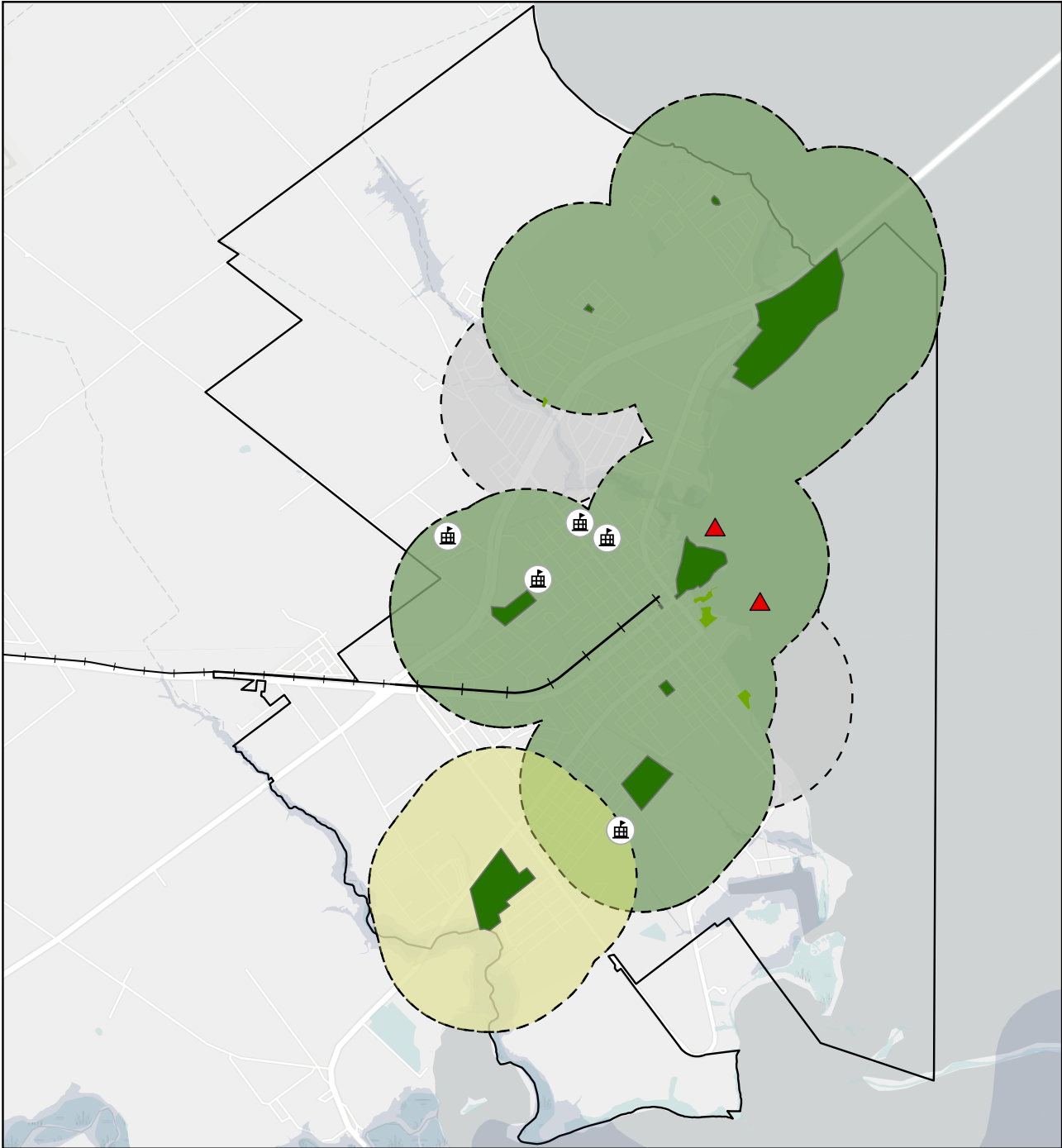


The typical parks and recreation agency offers:
10.2 acres of parkland for every 1,000 residents in the jurisdiction

Agencies serving fewer than 20,000 people typically offer:
12.9 acres per 1,000 residents.

In Port Lavaca, this would mean providing 145.77 acres of parkland.

Currently, there are ____ acres of dedicated parkland in Port Lavaca.



Park Inventory and Walkability Map
City of Port Lavaca

- Legend
- Port Lavaca City Limits
 - Floodplain
 - Wetlands
 - Breakwater Projects
 - Schools
 - Inactive Railroad
 - Existing Parks
 - Future Parks
 - 1/2 Mile Existing City Parks Buffer
 - 1/2 Mile Existing County Parks Buffer
 - 1/2 Mile Future Parks Buffer

Data sourced from the City of Port Lavaca

Image or Chart/Table

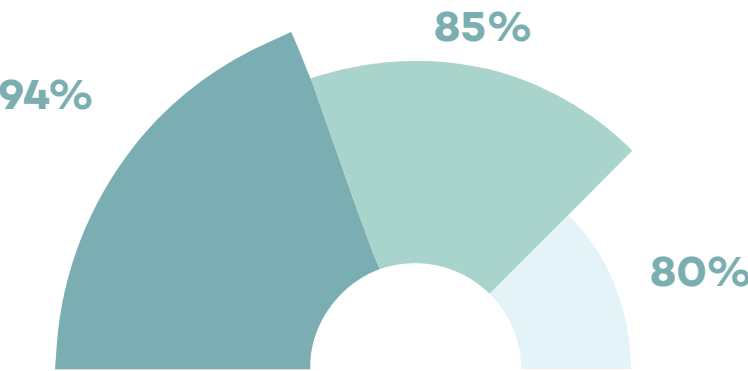
OUTDOOR FACILITIES

According to NRPA, an overwhelming majority of park and recreation agencies offer the following outdoor facilities:

- Playgrounds (94%)
- Basketball Courts (85%)
- Diamond Fields (80%)

Other common outdoor facilities include rectangular fields (77%), tennis courts (74%), and dog parks (70%).

We will discuss outdoor facilities later in this chapter.



MATRIX / PARKS & OUTDOOR FACILITIES



INDOOR FACILITIES

Most park agencies offer indoor recreation centers (63%) and community centers (60%). Just over half provide permanent or semi-permanent restrooms (52%), and two in five agencies offer performance amphitheaters (43%) and senior centers (41%). Approximately one-third of agencies offer a nature center (35%) or aquatic center (30%).

Port Lavaca’s Parks and Recreation Department does not currently provide a public indoor parks facility. The Calhoun County YMCA does currently offer the community indoor gathering space, a fitness center, and public pool at its facilities.

PROGRAMMING

Nationally, parks agencies offer a median of 250 programs annually, while communities smaller than 20,000 offer 45. Of these, 83% are fee-based. The vast majority of these programs (91%) are themed special events, such as movies or concerts in the park, cultural events, or holiday festivities.

Other common programs include social recreation events (88%), team sports (86%), health and wellness education (82%), and fitness classes (82%).

There are several types of programs focused specifically on children, older adults, and people with disabilities. Of agencies serving communities of less than 20,000 residents, 93% offer a youth summer camp, 85% provide older adult programs, 85% offer programs for people with disabilities, and 82% provide teen programs.

TRAILS

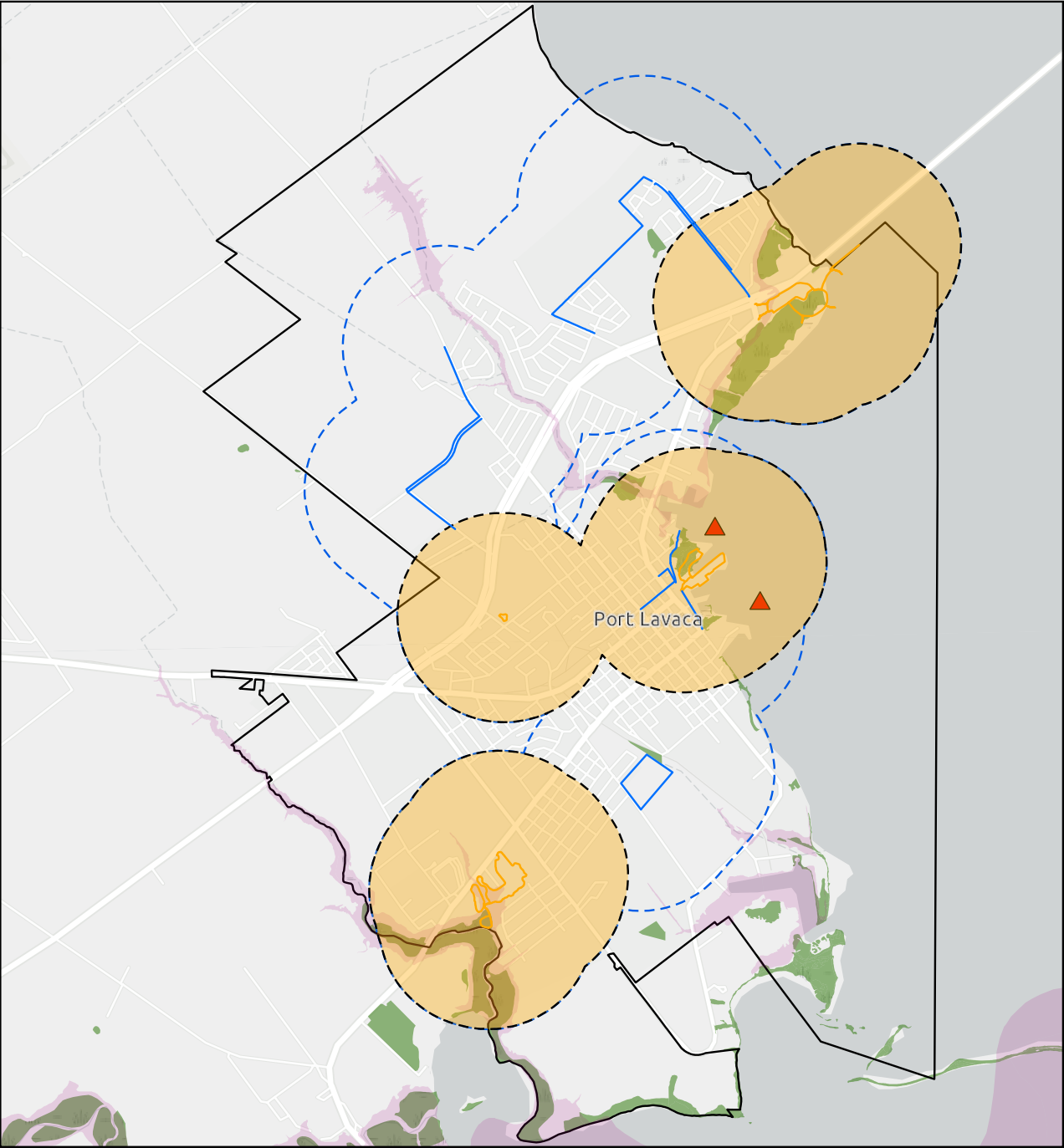
Trail systems are vital not only for providing both recreation and connectivity across a community free from vehicular traffic but also for their positive economic and health benefits.

According to NRPA, the typical park and recreation agency maintains 17 miles of trails; for smaller communities under 20,000, this number reduces to 4 miles.

Outside of trails located within parks, Port Lavaca currently offers residents no additional miles of trails. However, some future trails have been identified. Additionally, the Waterfront Master Plan has showcased the opportunity to create a waterfront trail system along Lavaca Bay.

The next page showcases the current walking distance LOS via trails in Port Lavaca. A geographic analysis was conducted using existing and future public parks (shown in orange and blue). A 0.5-mile service buffer, representing a typical walkable distance, was applied around each to identify areas with reasonable pedestrian access.

Currently, there is a large service gap of trails in the northwest, west, and southern regions of Port Lavaca. Once future trails are installed, this service gap reduces considerably. Additional service gaps exist are currently undeveloped, but coverage will become an important consideration to future development in those areas.



Existing Trail System Map

City of Port Lavaca

Legend

- Port Lavaca City Limits
- Floodplain
- Wetlands
- Breakwater Projects
- Existing Trails
- Future Trails
- 1/2 Mile Existing Trails Buffer
- 1/2 Mile Future Trails Buffer

Data sourced from the City of Port Lavaca

PORT LAVACA SIDEWALKS MASTER PLAN

Sidewalks play a critical role in promoting healthy lifestyles, enhancing pedestrian safety, and increasing access to parks, schools, and local businesses. While sidewalks are not necessary on every street, they are essential in areas with higher pedestrian activity, such as near schools and parks.

Currently, the City of Port Lavaca requires sidewalks to be at least 4 feet wide with 10-foot wide pedestrian easements (Sec. 42-134). The City should consider requiring all new residential and commercial developments to include sidewalks or sidewalk improvements as part of their site plan.

To support long-term mobility goals, Port Lavaca should adopt a formal sidewalk plan that identifies key sidewalk gaps and prioritizes high-need areas for investment in the City's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). This plan should include:

- An inventory of existing sidewalks, noting their location and condition
- Identification of priority areas based on pedestrian demand, safety concerns, and connectivity gaps
- Evaluation of key pedestrian routes, including those leading to schools, parks, and coastal amenities
- Integration of pedestrian safety improvements, such as high-visibility crosswalks, ADA-compliant curb ramps, better lighting, and wayfinding signage

Target areas should include access routes to City Park, Lighthouse Beach, and Wilson Park, as well as walking paths near school campuses and areas proposed for Complete Streets improvements. With a thoughtful approach to sidewalk planning, Port Lavaca can expand its safe, walkable infrastructure and improve access to the community's most valued recreational and educational assets.



BICYCLE LANES

Bicycle improvements in Port Lavaca should focus on enhancing connectivity throughout the City. Priority should be given to corridors that link key destinations, such as schools, parks, commercial areas, and city buildings, with the broader trail network.

Many on-street bicycle improvements can be implemented through roadway restriping, narrowing vehicle travel lanes to create space for wider outside lanes or dedicated bike lanes. Standard bike lanes, typically 5 to 6 feet wide, are best suited to roadways with speed limits under 35 mph. On higher-speed roads, bicycle lanes should include a striped buffer to separate bicyclists from vehicular traffic, enhancing rider safety and comfort.

As the city plans and constructs new streets, it should incorporate updated cross-sections that allow for the inclusion of on-or-off-street bicycle facilities. Doing so will support long-term multimodal connectivity that is designed with all users in mind.

COMPLETE STREETS

The Complete Streets movement is a national and international planning approach that advocates for streets designed to safely and comfortably accommodate all users, regardless of age, ability, or mode of travel. Complete Street users include pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, motorists, and people using mobility devices.

Future updates to the Capital Improvement Plan should prioritize the construction and repair of sidewalks, as these investments serve as critical foundations for walkability and broader community development. Enhancing pedestrian corridors acts as a catalyst for reinvestment and improved connectivity in surrounding areas.

The roadways highlighted in Figure 23 are recommended focus areas for the integration of Complete Street elements. Beyond the core principles outlined in this section, these priority corridors should also be guided by enhanced development standards that elevate their design, improve safety for all users, and contribute to the overall visual and functional quality of the streetscape

PARK DEFINITIONS AND CATEGORIES

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) has established target level of service ratios for each park classification:

- **Mini Parks** are the smallest unit of parks and are used to address limited, isolated, or unique recreational needs.
- **Neighborhood Parks** primarily serve the surrounding neighborhood within walking distance and should provide amenities based on adjacent populations.
- **Community Parks** have a much larger service area and provide recreation opportunities citywide.
- **Regional Parks** provide regional significance and attract year-round visitors.

Mini or Pocket Park

The mini park is used to address limited, isolated, or unique recreation needs of concentrated populations. Mini parks typically serve a quarter-mile radius. The size of a mini-park ranges between 2,500 square feet and one acre in size. These parks may be either active or passive, but address a specific recreational need rather than a particular population density, although a high population density may create a specific recreation need. Recommended improvements for mini parks may include a small pavilion, picnic area, park benches, and a 6 foot-wide perimeter trail. Off-street parking is not recommended.

Neighborhood Park

Neighborhood parks serve a variety of age groups within a limited area or neighborhood. They range in size from 1 to 15 acres and generally serve residents within a quarter- to half-mile radius.

The neighborhood park includes areas for active recreation activities such as field games, court games, playgrounds, etc. Passive recreation activities may include walking, viewing, sitting, and picnicking. Facilities are generally unlighted and off-street parking is not recommended.

Community Park

Community parks are larger than neighborhood parks and serve several neighborhoods. They range in size from 16 to 99 acres and generally serve a user area of one to two miles in radius. The community park may include areas for intense recreation activities such as competitive sports, swimming, tennis, playgrounds, volleyball, etc. There may also be passive recreation opportunities such as walking, viewing, sitting, and picnicking.

Metropolitan Park

Metropolitan parks are expansive recreation areas designed to serve the entire city and surrounding communities. Typically ranging from 100 to 499 acres, these parks offer a mix of natural landscapes and developed amenities to support a wide variety of outdoor activities. Common features include sports fields, playgrounds, picnic areas, trails, and access to water-based recreation such as boating, fishing, and swimming.

Regional Park

Regional parks are very large multi-use parks that serve several communities within a particular region. They are 500 acres or larger in size and serve those areas within a one-hour driving distance. The regional park provides both active and passive

recreation opportunities, with a wide selection of facilities for all age groups. They may also include areas of nature preservation for activities such as sightseeing, nature study area, wildlife habitat, and conservation. National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) standards for regional parks vary due to the specific site characteristics and natural resources.

Special Use Area

Special use areas and parks are for specialized or single-purpose recreation activities. NRPA defines these parks as historical areas, nature centers, marinas, golf courses, zoos, conservatories, arboretums, arenas, amphitheaters, plazas, or community squares. There are no specific standards for size or acreage since each site will vary. Special use parks may carry a double classification

Linear Park or Linkages

Linear parks and linkages are green corridors, either natural or constructed, that connect parks, open spaces, and neighborhoods. These parks are often designed to support a variety of recreational activities such as walking, jogging,

biking, skating, hiking, horseback riding, and paddling. While primarily focused on movement and connectivity, linear parks may also include active recreation areas or gathering spaces. The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) does not prescribe specific size or design standards for linear parks, but recommends they be sufficient to protect natural resources and support meaningful public use.

Conservancy

Conservancies are areas designated primarily for the protection and stewardship of natural or cultural resources, with recreation as a secondary use. Recreational activities in conservancies are typically passive, such as wildlife observation, nature study, or quiet reflection. The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) does not prescribe specific size or acreage standards for conservancies but recommends they be large enough to effectively safeguard the resource and support low-impact public use.

Photos of Various Park Types

CURRENT & PLANNED INVENTORY: PARKS, FACILITIES, AND RECREATION

The City of Port Lavaca owns and maintains eight public parks within its city limits:

- City (Tilley) Park
- Lighthouse Beach Park
- Wilson Park
- Bayfront Peninsula Park
- George Adams Park
- Claret Crossing Park
- Brookhollow Estates Park (Butterfly Park)
- Fay Bauer Sterling Park

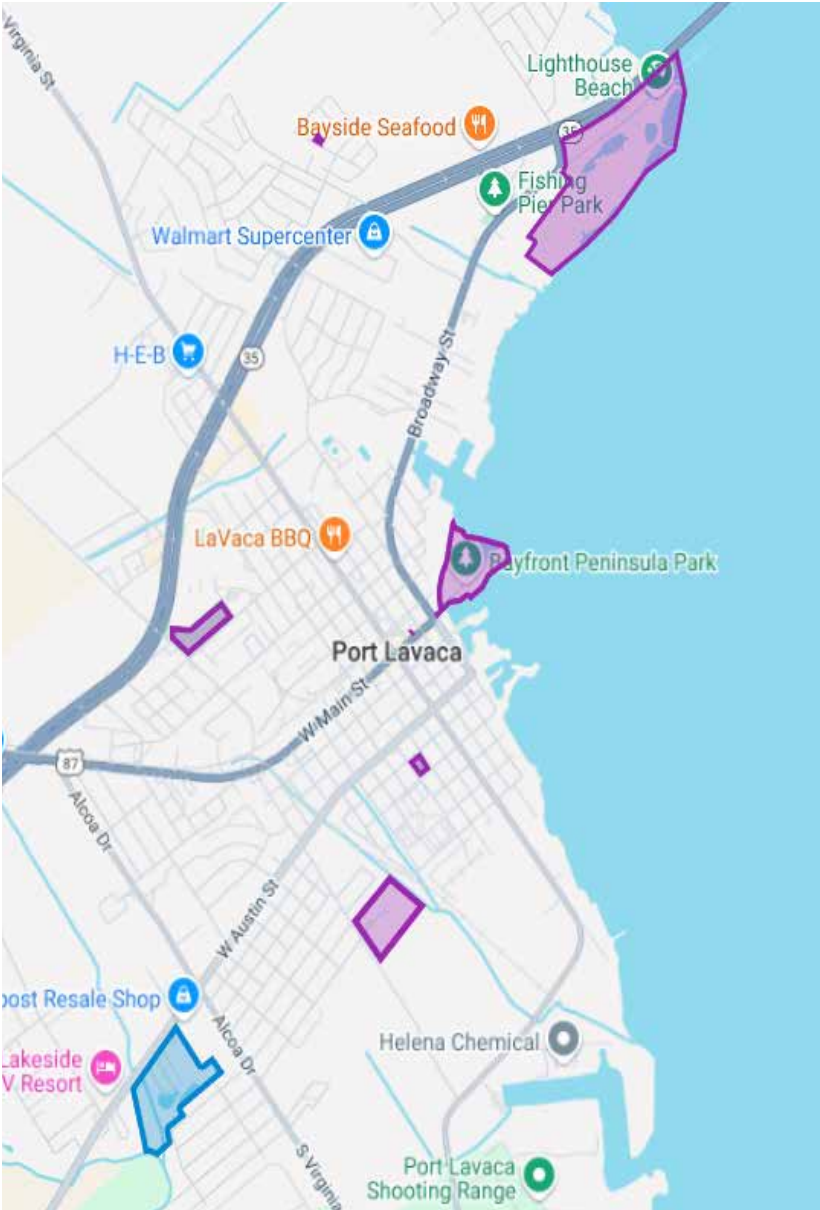
There are three sites where future parks are planned: Smith Harbor, the Kitchen Site, and the Substation Site.

Port Lavaca residents also enjoy the County-operated Little Chocolate Bayou Park and Bauer Community Center. Little Chocolate Bayou Park features a 1.7-mile loop trail and a recently installed playscape structure. The Calhoun County Library System, anchored by the Calhoun County Public Library in Port Lavaca, serves over 20,000 citizens of Calhoun County.

Additionally, the Calhoun County YMCA offers a pool, health and wellness services, youth sports opportunities, and on-site childcare. Calhoun County Senior Citizens Association, Inc. (CCSCA) provides hot meals, health services, and opportunities for connection for Port Lavaca’s senior population out of its Heritage Center.

With the exception of the Claret Crossing pocket park, all city-owned parks have been designated to receive improvements within the next five years in the 2025 Capital Improvement Plan, ranging from new shade structures to pickleball courts.

Nearby (<20-minutes by car) parks that provide extensive recreational areas to Port Lavaca residents include Six Mile Park and Magnolia Beach Park.



PARK MATRIX WITH FACILITIES + FEATURES

AMENITIES INVENTORY	ACREAGE PLAYGROUND SPLASH PAD FISHING PIER CABANAS BARBECUE PITS EXERCISE EQUIPMENT PLANTER BOXES RESTROOMS WATER FOUNTAINS DOG DRINKING STATION PARKING PRESERVED WETLANDS OBSERVATION POINTS BEACH ACCESS BENCHES BASEBALL FIELD T-BALL FIELD SOFTBALL SOCCER FIELD BASKETBALL COURT SAND VOLLEYBALL SKATE PARK JUNGLE GYM SWING SET MERRY-GO-ROUND TEETER-TOTTER BIKE RACK PET DRINKING STATION WALKING PATH PAVILIONS GAZEBO EVENT SPACE BOAT LUNCH VETERANS MEMORIAL																																		
LIGHTHOUSE BEACH PARK	100.13	3	1	1	1	1				1	1		1	1	1	1	1																		
WILSON PARK	21.44	1								1							1	1	1	1	1				1		1								
BAYFRONT PENINSULA PARK	25.77	1	1	1	1	1				1	1																	1	1	1	1			1	1
GEORGE ADAMS PARK	2.05	1				1	1					1					1				1			1	1	1	1				1				
CLARET CROSSING PARK	0.69	1										1					1								1		1								
BUTTERFLY PARK	0.82	1						1			1						1								1										
FAY BAUER STERLING PARK	0.16								1																							1	1		
CITY (TILLEY) PARK	10.29	2					1													1	1	1								1	1				
KITCHEN SITE, SUBSTATION SITE (PLANNED)																																			
SMITH HARBOR (PLANNED)																																			
FACILITIES TOTAL	161.35	10	2	2	3	4	1	1	3	3	2	1	1	1	1	4	2	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	4	1	2	1	1	2	3	1	1	1	1

CITY (TILLEY) PARK

LOCATION

At the corner of Half League Rd. and Tilley St., adjacent to Travis Middle School.

APPROXIMATE AREA

10.5 Acres

AMENITIES

- Half court basketball
- Soccer goals
- Sand volleyball
- Covered pavilion
- Barbecue pits
- Cabanas
- Full Playground
- Junior Playground
- Born Learning Trail (?? miles)
- Benches
- Water fountains
- Restrooms
- Parking



BAYFRONT PENINSULA PARK

LOCATION

East of Commerce Street, along the Lavaca Bay coastline.

APPROXIMATE AREA

35 Acres

AMENITIES

- Splash pad
- Playground
- Bike rack
- Pet drinking station
- Water fountain
- Restrooms
- Walking path
- Pavilions
- Cabanas
- Fishing pier
- Boat launch
- Barbecue pits
- Veterans memorial

LIGHTHOUSE BEACH

LOCATION

South of Lavaca Bay Causeway, along the Lavaca Bay coastline.

APPROXIMATE AREA

55 Acres

AMENITIES

- Playground (3)
- Splash pad
- Fishing pier
- Cabanas
- Barbecue pits
- Restrooms
- Water fountains
- Parking
- Preserved wetlands
- Observation points
- Beach access
- Benches



WILSON PARK

LOCATION

East of Seadrift Street, across from Jackson Roosevelt Elementary School.

APPROXIMATE AREA

21.5 Acres

AMENITIES

- Baseball field
- T-Ball field
- Softball
- Soccer field
- Skate Park
- Playground
- Swing set
- Restrooms
- Benches



CLARET CROSSING POCKET PARK

LOCATION

Wedged between Aimable St., Crimson Ave., and Claret Dr.

APPROXIMATE AREA

0.65 Acres

AMENITIES

- Playground
- Swing set
- Teeter-totter
- Benches
- Dog drinking station



FAY BAUER STERLING PARK

LOCATION

On the north side of E. U.S. Highway 87, between Colorado St. and Guadalupe St.

APPROXIMATE AREA

0.15 Acres

AMENITIES

- Gazebo
- Event space
- Planter boxes

GEORGE ADAMS PARK

LOCATION

Sandwiched within Center St., San Antonio St., S. Benavides St., and Martin Luther Kind Dr. Catty corner to the Port Lavaca Cemetery.

APPROXIMATE AREA

2 Acres

AMENITIES

- Basketball court
- Baseball field
- Playgrounds
- Jungle gym
- Merry-go-round
- Teeter-totter
- Swing set
- Pavilion
- Barbecue pits
- Cabanas



BROOKHOLLOW ESTATES (BUTTERFLY) PARK

LOCATION

Tucked on the eastern curve of Harbor Dr. E. and Harbor Dr. W., across from La Salle Blvd.

APPROXIMATE AREA

0.61 Acres

AMENITIES

- Playground
- Swing set
- Water fountain
- Dog drinking station
- Benches
- Exercise equipment



SMITH HARBOR (PLANNED)

LOCATION

S Commerce St & Live Oak St

APPROXIMATE AREA

15 Acres

AMENITIES

- Marina services area
- Motorized boating and sailing center
- Dredging, widening of Smith Harbor
- Seawall armoring
- Dredge-spoil donor area
- Peninsula shaping and edge treatment
- Elevated (stilted) marina building
- Lowland trails
- Limited cut and fill



KITCHEN SITE (PLANNED)

LOCATION

E South St & S Guadalupe St

APPROXIMATE AREA

2.4 Acres

AMENITIES

- N/A



SUBSTATION SITE (PLANNED)

LOCATION

Holiday Ln at Brookhollow Dr

AMENITIES

- N/A

APPROXIMATE AREA

0.4 Acres



ONGOING & PLANNED SPECIAL EVENTS

Public spaces are the heartbeat of a vibrant community, and in Port Lavaca, parks play a central role in gathering people together for connection, celebration, and everyday enjoyment.

This section outlines strategies to enhance these spaces as dynamic settings for festivals, farmers markets, and cultural events, while also promoting year-round activity. With an emphasis on placemaking, social gathering areas, and event-ready infrastructure, the plan highlights how targeted investments in public spaces can strengthen community bonds, support local businesses, and create meaningful experiences for both residents and visitors. Port Lavaca hosts several annual events that bring energy and revenue to the City. Listed below are just a handful:

- A newer tradition, the Port Lavaca Art Walk showcases local artistic talent along Downtown's Main Street promenade.
- Iguana Fest is a music festival that encourages dancing in the streets and mingling with new friends in downtown Port Lavaca.
- As a birding habitat for many rare and beautiful bird species, Port Lavaca's Mid-Coast Birding Festival invites participants to explore the hidden birding gems of the city for a chance to spot an iconic feathered friend.
- Juneteenth celebrations bring together meaningful history with joyful dreams of the future. Food, music, and community activations commemorate this historic milestone.
- Bayfront Beats at Bayfront Peninsula Park is a free summer concert series that invites residents and visitors to enjoy live music along the coast.
- The annual Star-Spangled Bash is Port Lavaca's celebration of Independence Day that features fireworks, local food, and live music.

- Held every Labor Day weekend, the Flip Flop festival celebrates Port Lavaca's laid-back, welcoming beach culture that raises funds for the Bayfront Veteran's Memorial.
- The Calhoun County Fair and Livestock Show & Rodeo, hosted each fall, provides enrichment and educational opportunities to local youth
- Holiday Activities: Starting off with a tree lighting ceremony at Bayfront Peninsula Park and continuing with a Christmas Parade down Main Street, Port Lavaca's holiday celebrations keep the bay feeling merry and bright all season long. Additionally, boaters participating in the Freeport to Port O'Connor Toy Run help Santa deliver gifts to children in need along the coast.



Figure X: Port Lavaca Flip Flop Festival



Figure X: Calhoun County Fair & Rodeo

GATHERING SPACES

High-quality public spaces, such as central plazas and pavilions, provide gathering places for any city's civic life and public participation. Port Lavaca's public gathering spaces include:

Many of the events listed above are hosted at Bayfront Peninsula Park, which boasts a lighted fishing pier, bathroom facilities, covered picnic tables, a public boat ramp, and a shady pavilion perfect for gathering.

Port Lavaca's Main Street district includes the Main Street Theatre and Main Street Park, which can be utilized as central gathering spaces

Adjacent to the Bayfront Peninsula Park, Bayfront Veterans Memorial provides a scenic and somber backdrop to civic gatherings on the water's edge.

Port Lavaca's other parks provide space for organized events, that range from family birthday parties to community farmers' markets to outdoor music festivals.



Figure X: American Legion Veteran's Memorial at Bayfront Park

**Content to Come:
Existing Conditions for Port Lavaca's
Trails, Waterways, and Greenspaces**

**Content to Come:
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Trails, Waterways, and Greenspaces**



As Port Lavaca’s population grows from 7,507 in 2024 to an estimated 10,144 by 2029, the demand for public gathering spaces, cultural programming, and event infrastructure will rise significantly.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 1: COMMUNITY-DRIVEN

Community events, concerts, and festivals act as economic drivers, attracting visitors and increasing local spending on hospitality, dining, and retail. Esri data projects that Port Lavaca residents will spend approximately \$57 per household annually on movies, museums, and parks, with an additional \$61 on sports events, reflecting a strong market for expanded entertainment and event

offerings.

KEY FEEDBACK THEMES

From the community workshop, the following themes emerged, relative to ideas about parks, recreation, and programming.

- Recreation (36 percent): Provide fun and engaging opportunities for enjoyment, sightseeing, and/or fitness
- Design (20 percent): Enhance public spaces to encourage social interaction and beauty through high quality design to the places that make the City unique: 20 percent

Additionally, community members appreciate larger parks with a range of amenities, such as Lighthouse Beach and Chocolate Bayou Park. Residents enjoy the wide, well-lit sidewalks of Bayfront Peninsula Park.

Common community desires identified across all activities and boards include:

- Additional shade trees or structures within existing parks
- Community recreational center with amenities for all age groups, such as sports courts or a public pool
- More community events and programs, such as movies in the park, live music, Christmas lights, First Friday art walks, etc.
- Rentals for kayaks, canoes, paddle boats, etc. near the water
- Walking, running, and bicycle trails within parks and neighborhoods
- Splash pads for younger children
- Free access to Lighthouse Beach for Port Lavaca residents
- Recreational center with sports courts and public pool
- Covered or indoor basketball court
- Community events, such as live music or movies in the park
- Obstacle course with zip lines or a climbing wall
- Additional bicycle infrastructure
- More trees to provide shade

GOALS

- Parks enjoyable 365
- Parks within 1/2 -mile of neighborhoods
- Leverage water access within coastal parks
- Something for everyone in every park
- Strategic enhancements to amenities
- Facilities for team sports
- Robust programming
- Efficient management

ADMINISTRATION

This section explores the administrative and operational aspects of Port Lavaca’s parks, facilities, and recreation. The goals that support the Park System vision of being community driven are:

- GOALS
1. Robust Programming

2. Efficient Management

Part Lavaca City had a standalone Parks and Recreation department in the 2000’s, but the Director position was never backfilled when the then-director left. The department was rolled into Public Works, where it remains as of 2025. Public Works maintains the parks, while the YMCA provides pool access to residents through an agreement with the City.

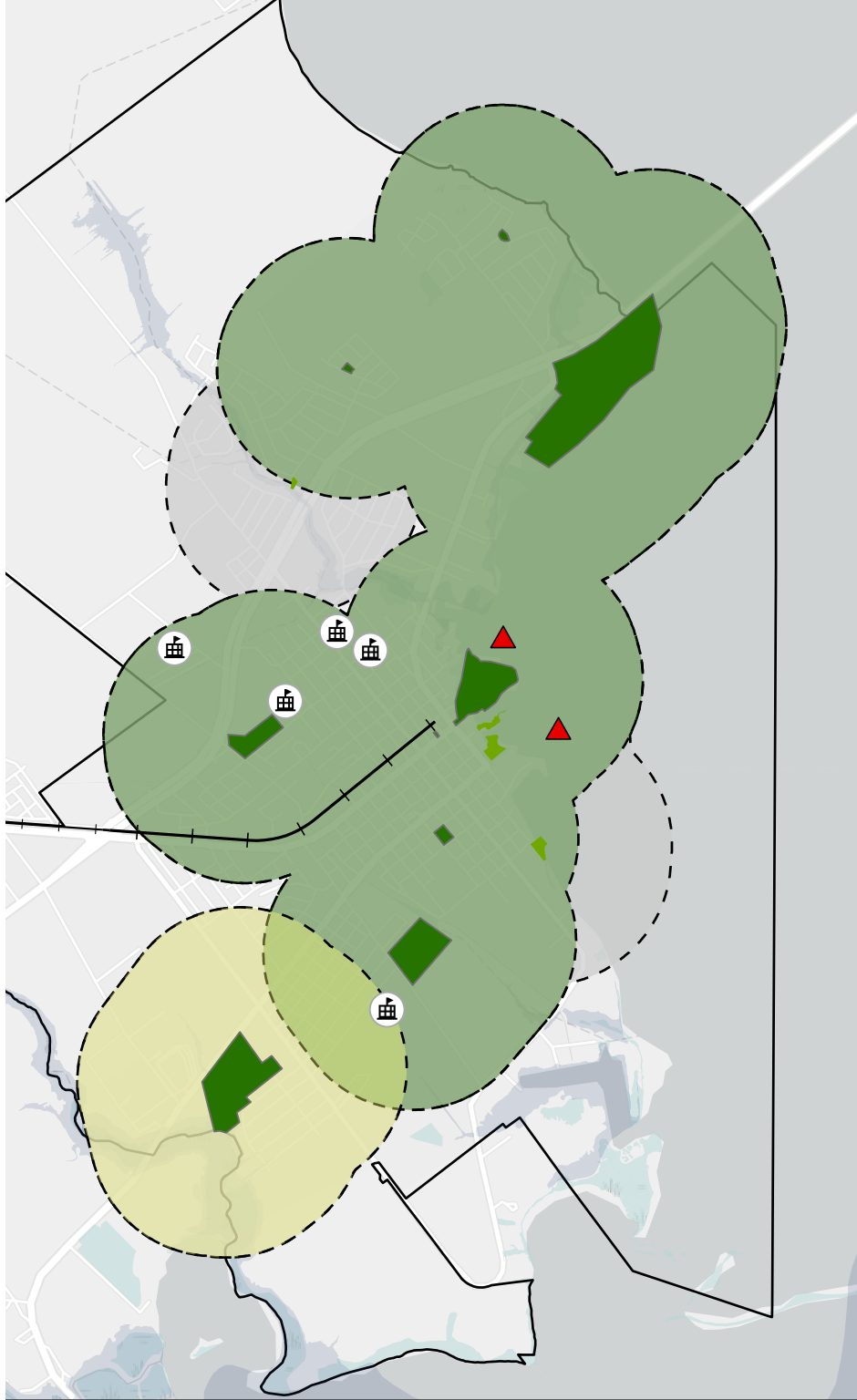
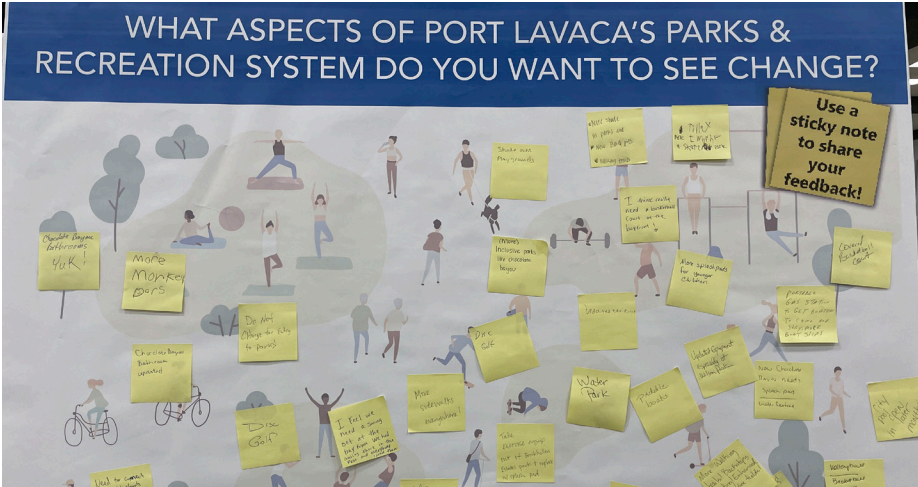
While the existing, relatively robust Park System has been manageable for the Public Works department and allocated park staff, it is likely that the System would benefit from the expertise and special attention afforded to standalone departments.

SERVICE PARTNERSHIPS

As discussed in chapter 3, the City currently partners with the local YMCA adjacent to the Bauer Community Center to provide community access to a community pool. These types of partnerships are the best practice in an efficient park system. However, this partnership also makes the community dependent on a third-party provider. Without a standalone Parks and Recreation department, even an industry-leading Public Works director is unlikely to know the nuances of recreational programming.

PARK ZONES

The Park Inventory Map introduced in Chapter 3 establishes defacto Park Strategy Zones.



LONG-TERM PLANNING ZONES

Areas in grey (see Fig. X, Walkability Map), located in three large pockets to the north/northwest, west, and south/southeast, are outside of a half-mile walkshed (the land area within a defined walking range of a specified location). However, these areas are less densely populated and only require planning to achieve an adequate Level of Service (LOS) when these areas develop. When these areas are ready for development, the project team recommends the following considerations:

- Strategies: Land assemblage, 5-10 year Capital Improvement Project (CIP) planning for site park planning and development
- Stopgap: Negotiate community access to public school facilities
- Development Prioritization: Developing areas first
- Maintenance: General upkeep of undeveloped park sites
- Creative: Develop future park sites to a minimum level to support community events

MAINTENANCE AND ENHANCEMENT ZONES

Areas in green and yellow are serviced by public parks within a half mile. Priorities in this zone focus on maintaining and enhancing existing parks, as well as developing future park sites that have already been acquired.

- Strategies: Need-based park improvements (Shade, safety, ADA accessibility)
- Stopgap: Negotiate community access to public school facilities
- Development Prioritization: Community-driven amenities as appropriate for park size
- Acquisition: NA unless high priority for connectivity, coverage improvement, or economic development/ special events
- Maintenance: Varies (Mowing/landscaping, trash, watering, cleaning, equipment upkeep, storm repair)

STRATEGIES

The following strategies will help ensure ongoing and long-range administrative responsibilities will be community-driven for parks, programs, and recreation:

- Budget for a director level hire
- When evaluating prospective directors, prioritize candidates with CPRP, MPA, or another industry-leading certification
- Identify expanded partnership opportunities with the YMCA, such as free recreational programming in City parks in return for free park rentals
- Consider how to provide continuity of services if the YMCA is ever unable to augment City services in the future
 - Develop a Neighborhood Park Level of Service Standard accompanied by a parkland dedication or improvement fee structure. This standard should reflect community input, national best practices, and emerging trends in park design. At a minimum, each neighborhood park should include:
 - A playground
 - Trash receptacles
 - Benches
 - Pedestrian-scale lighting
 - Irrigated shade trees
 - Off-street parking
- Revise the Subdivisions and Plats Ordinance (Chapter 42) should be revised to include:
 - A parkland dedication requirement based on the number of residential units or population
 - A fee-in-lieu option for developments where land dedication is not feasible, to support park improvements elsewhere in the community
 - Update the City’s Code of Ordinances to require

that all new master planned communities and planned development districts dedicate a minimum of 10% of gross acreage as usable public parkland and/or open space.

- Collaborate with Port Lavaca ISD to establish a joint-use agreement, allowing shared access to school playgrounds and recreational assets during designated times to enhance community park access.
- Conduct an evaluation of existing City land that can be utilized for parks and recreation amenities.
- Adopt a policy to actively acquire new parkland in areas that are currently outside of a 10-minute walk (i.e. half a mile) to a park. Utilize parkland dedication fees that have been collected and/or public-private partnerships to attain park land in underserved areas, along the three High Priority Greenbelt Corridors, and/or adjacent to waterfront properties.
- Acquire and/or designate land for the DETERMINE.
- Expand parkland acreage following NRPA guidelines to maintain a balance of a minimum of 11212.9 acres per 1,000 residents.

The actions in this section recognize that significant facility and staffing increases and improvements will be required to accomplish these. For this reason, these actions will be achieved in a different approach, phased over time, as facility construction and staffing occur.

- Establish a five-year phased plan to introduce league play, tournaments, and instructional programs, and include a staffing plan for additional personnel and their responsibilities. Prioritize youth and adult participation to maximize facility use and revenue generation.
- Implement at least three new programs utilizing any available areas and partnering with businesses and organizations when necessary or relevant, such as:

- Youth: STEM-based outdoor camps, intro-to-sports leagues.
- Adults: Fitness boot camps, recreational team sports.
- Seniors: Low-impact exercise zones, social walking clubs.
- Update the Parks Department website to include
 - Online program registration, league sign-ups, and facility reservations.
 - Real-time event notifications, fitness tracking incentives, and gamified community challenges.
- Structured after-school sports and arts programming in partnership with schools.
- Summer camps focusing on fitness, outdoor education, and recreation safety.
- Expand park availability, in areas without parks, through strategic land acquisition and partnerships.
- Utilize shared-use agreements with schools, churches, and private developments to maximize park access.
- Activate underutilized spaces by developing pocket parks, community gardens, and flexible recreation areas.
- Improve existing park facilities and maintenance to enhance recreation experiences.
- Provide ADA-compliant features in new and existing parks to improve access for all abilities.

DESIGNED FOR ALL AGES AND ABILITIES

GOALS

Goal: Something for everyone in every park

Goal: Strategic enhancements to amenities

Nearly 30 percent of Americans have a disability of some kind, be it physical or mental [CDC Source]. As a key means to exercise, play, and nature, it is critical that the Parks and Recreation System be designed for every single resident and visitor to Port Lavaca.

Accessible parks for all ages and abilities are designed to be inclusive, ensuring that people with disabilities, seniors, young children, and individuals with limited mobility or sensory challenges can fully use and enjoy park amenities. Accessibility includes physical features (like ADA-compliant paths, ramps, and playgrounds), as well as sensory, cognitive, and social components, such as wayfinding signage, shaded seating, and quiet zones. For communities like Port Lavaca, which serve a diverse population including aging adults and families with young children, prioritizing accessibility is key to equity and public health.

Sources:

- [NRPA Parks for Inclusion Program](#)
- [Playcore](#) (Funding Tool + Resource Library)
- [Play 4 All Park](#) in Round Rock, Texas

Examples of ADA-accessible parks, facilities, and recreation include:

- List

AGES

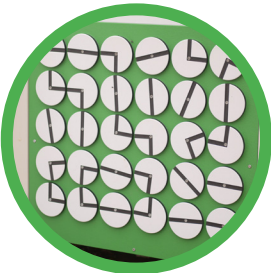
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Abilities

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ACCESSIBLE SURFACES AND STRUCTURES



MENTAL CHALLENGES



ACCESSIBLE AMENITIES



MULTISENSORY



FLEXIBLE AND FORGIVING IN USE



PHYSICAL CHALLENGES



Strategies

- Integrate universal design standards into all park infrastructure, including piers, boat launches, and playgrounds. At minimum, ensure ADA compliance is met with all current and future park projects.

- As applicable, begin and/or continue to:
- Develop multi-sport athletic complexes that accommodate youth and adult leagues and informal play.
- Create flexible indoor and outdoor recreation areas for fitness, wellness, and community programs.
- Design multi-generational recreation areas, including:

For Youth: Playgrounds, splashpads, and skate plazas/features.

For Adults: Fitness stations, jogging trails, and sports courts.

For Seniors: Shaded seating, accessible pathways, and low-impact exercise zones.

Conduct an ADA assessment on specified parks to determine what types of retrofits can improve ADA accessibility. Can be accomplished through park design efforts for each park as well.

- [List of parks where the recommendation is applicable]

INDOOR RECREATION

GOALS

- Goal: Parks enjoyable 365
- Goal: Something for everyone in every park
- Goal: Facilities for team sports
- Goal: Robust programming

Indoor recreation refers to physical, social, and wellness activities held in enclosed public facilities such as recreation centers, gymnasiums, fitness studios, or multi-purpose halls. These spaces allow parks departments to offer year-round programming regardless of weather conditions—critical in Texas communities where heat, storms, or flooding can limit outdoor use. Indoor recreational programming can include sports leagues, dance and fitness classes, senior activities, arts and crafts, youth camps, and community events.

Recreation centers also play a vital role in climate resilience by offering a safe, conditioned space for cooling/warming stations, storm shelters, or disaster recovery zones as a resilience hub.

- *Despite community interest in indoor recreation, voters are historically averse to bond proposals*
 - *Again, look at options, caveats*
- *Strengthening/expanding the YMCA partnership is more realistic in the interim*
 - *Note the threat to relying on a third party for recreational services – Does YMCA receive federal funds?*
 - *Emphasis on public private partnerships*



LIBRARIES

Partnerships between parks departments and public libraries combine the strengths of both institutions to expand access to learning, wellness, and community engagement. These collaborations often involve co-hosted programs (like summer reading in the park), mobile library services at park events, shared public facilities, or even co-located buildings. For cities like Port Lavaca, aligning parks and libraries enhances the value of each without duplicating infrastructure, especially important in smaller communities with limited resources.

The Calhoun County Library System serves over 20,000 citizens of Calhoun County, and its main branch is the Calhoun County Public Library in Port Lavaca. Though not directly adjacent to any City-owned parks, this library is just .5 miles from Bayfront Peninsula Park and 1 mile from City (Tilley) Park. This physical proximity encourages collaboration between library and park professionals.

Calhoun County library already offers [a variety of regular events and programs](#), many of which could be (re)located to a nearby park. Additional collaborative program offerings include:

- Storytime in the Park
- Community Garden located on library property + maintained by P+R
- Walking trail featuring favorite childhood literary characters

MAKER INNOVATION SPACES

Maker and innovation spaces within park systems are creative, hands-on environments where community members gather to build, learn, and invent. These spaces may include outdoor classrooms, mobile tool libraries, STEAM-focused play areas, or workshops with 3D printers, woodworking tools, or art supplies. While traditionally located in libraries or schools, integrating them into parks brings new energy to public spaces and engages youth, families, and entrepreneurs in meaningful, skill-building activities.

For communities like Port Lavaca, incorporating maker spaces into parks expands the role of recreation from purely leisure to include economic development, workforce readiness, and intergenerational learning. These spaces can host DIY workshops, robotics clubs, gardening classes, or craft markets, blending creative placemaking with educational programming. This approach fosters community resilience by offering low-barrier access to skills training and innovation.



STRATEGIES

- Include commercial kitchen equipment in recreational centers; this opens potential to utilize space as a resilience hub during disaster events or to earn revenue by renting out space for events.
 - [City of San Antonio Resilience Hubs](#)
- Co-locate indoor recreation space with libraries, public health clinics, or parks/trail networks to increase benefits. Offer youth/adult/senior programs such as dance classes, basketball camps, swim lessons, soccer teams, etc.
 - [Sugar Land Recreational Center](#)
 - [Allen Recreational Center](#)
- Invest in a sports complex to create revenue opportunities by hosting youth sports leagues competitions. Collaborate with local hospitality businesses to coordinate group discounts or sponsorship.
 - [City of College Station Sports Facilities](#)
- Co-locate indoor recreational centers with libraries, clinics, or parks/trail systems to maximize benefits.
- Incorporate interactive public art, outdoor play labs, or mobile maker spaces into parks, focusing on locations with youth access. There are opportunities to partner with local libraries and schools to share the cost/maintenance burden of the equipment.
 - San Antonio's [Hemisfair Park](#) features a hands-on outdoor play areas that incorporate science and fine motor skills
 - Brownsville's library system offers [a makerspace service](#) for community members to utilize 3D printers, laser cutters, sewing machines, etc.
 - [Cedar Park as well](#)

Sources:

- [USDN Resilience Hubs Network](#)
- [HUD Community Block Grants](#)
- [Better Block Foundation](#)
- [Project for Public Spaces](#)

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 2:

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Intro text.

GOALS

Goal: Reduce barriers and increase outlets to physical activity

Goal: Improve access to fresh, nutritious food

LIFETIME SPORTS

Tennis, golf, pickleball, swimming, walking, and yoga. All of these are key examples of lifetime sports - those we can play at any age. Regular exercise is important for people of all ages and has been shown to reduce and prevent many health conditions. Lack of physical activity can lead to more visits to the doctor, more hospitalizations, and more use of medicines for a variety of illnesses, according to the National Institute on Aging.

Almost any sport can be a lifetime sport for the right person. However, if you’re starting a little later in life, some sports might be too risky. “Lifetime” status is less likely in contact and high-impact sports because there is a higher risk of long-term injuries.

Some of the most common lifetime sports include:

- Tennis
- Golf
- Pickleball
- Swimming
- Track
- Yoga



For adults aged 65 and older, the United States Center for Disease and Control (CDC) recommends 20 minutes of moderate physical activity every day and 75 minutes of vigorous physical activity a week. Ideally, you also should do some strength training like yoga, gardening, or lifting weights, at least twice a week, in addition to exercises that improve balance.

According to the Mayo Clinic, exercise has been shown to slow the body’s natural decline from 1-2% to about half a percent every year. Researchers have found sedentary people lose about 70% of their functional ability by age 90. Those who exercise regularly lose only 30% of their functional ability by the same age.

Exercise can benefit a wide range of areas that impact quality of life:

- Keep your strength and stay independent
- Reduce fatigue
- Improve your balance
- Manage and prevent diseases like arthritis and heart disease
- Improve sleep
- Reduce levels of stress
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Reduce feelings of depression

COMMUNITY GARDENS

Some gardens exist primarily to grow fruits and vegetables for donations, some are used to educate students, to build communities, and/or to provide food for nutrition and sales. Most gardens have a primary focus, though many serve more than one function.

- Donation Gardens: The fruits and vegetables grown in these gardens are donated to local food pantries, soup kitchens and homeless shelters.
- School Gardens: School gardens are used as outdoor classrooms, providing hands-on education. School curricula are reinforced through planting, cultivating, and harvesting vegetables and fruits. Through these skills, children learn valuable lessons in teamwork, decision making, and healthy lifestyles.
- Neighborhood Gardens: There are several gardens in Houston where neighbors work collectively, and share produce equally. Sometimes these gardens donate leftover produce as well. Neighborhood gardens provide beautiful green spaces where residents gather and commune.
- Allotment Gardens: In allotment gardens, gardeners rent individual plots for a monthly fee. As a group, they maintain the shared spaces.
- Therapy Gardens: Therapy gardens provide an opportunity for physical, emotional, and spiritual health and healing. Gardens at hospitals, clinics and special-needs schools provide therapy to the disabled and, at the same time, serve as a source of nutritious food. Gardens at elder-care centers inspire residents to get exercise and fresh air while working with their neighbors in a community setting.
- Market Gardens: A market garden has a primary purpose for growing vegetables, fruits and herbs for sale. This is a business enterprise selling locally grown produce at a farmers’ market, to a Community Supported Organization

or to restaurants and grocery stores. A market garden can also donate unsold harvested produce.

Benefits of community gardens as a whole include:

- Improved nutrition: Access to fresh fruits and vegetables can improve dietary habits and overall health.
- Increased physical activity: Gardening activities can promote exercise and reduce sedentary behavior.
- Reduced stress and improved mental health: The act of gardening and connecting with nature can have therapeutic effects, reducing stress and promoting relaxation.
- Community building: Community gardens bring people together, fostering social interaction and strengthening community bonds.
- Educational opportunities: Community gardens can provide educational opportunities related to gardening, sustainable agriculture, and environmental stewardship.

PLACEMAKING

Port Lavaca will build a connected network of green spaces and public places that support health, mobility, and climate adaptation. This goal prioritizes walkability, nature-based design, and everyday access to safe, comfortable outdoor environments. The City will:

- Develop tree-lined streets, shaded trails, and inviting parks to reduce heat and provide year-round comfort.
- Incorporate nature into public spaces with features like community gardens, native landscaping, and wildlife corridors.
- Encourage pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly design that promotes physical activity and reduces vehicle dependency.
- Use resilient landscaping and infrastructure to manage stormwater, reduce localized flooding, and support environmental adaptation.

PLANNING FOR HEAT

GOALS

Goal: Reduce barriers and increase outlets to physical activity

Goal: Create spaces that reduce stress

As Port Lavaca sits along the Texas coast, high temperatures and intense sunlight are common challenges that can significantly impact the enjoyment and safety of public parks and recreation spaces. Thoughtful planning for heat is essential to protect residents' health—prolonged exposure to heat can increase the risk of dehydration, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke, especially among vulnerable groups such as children and seniors.

Strategies

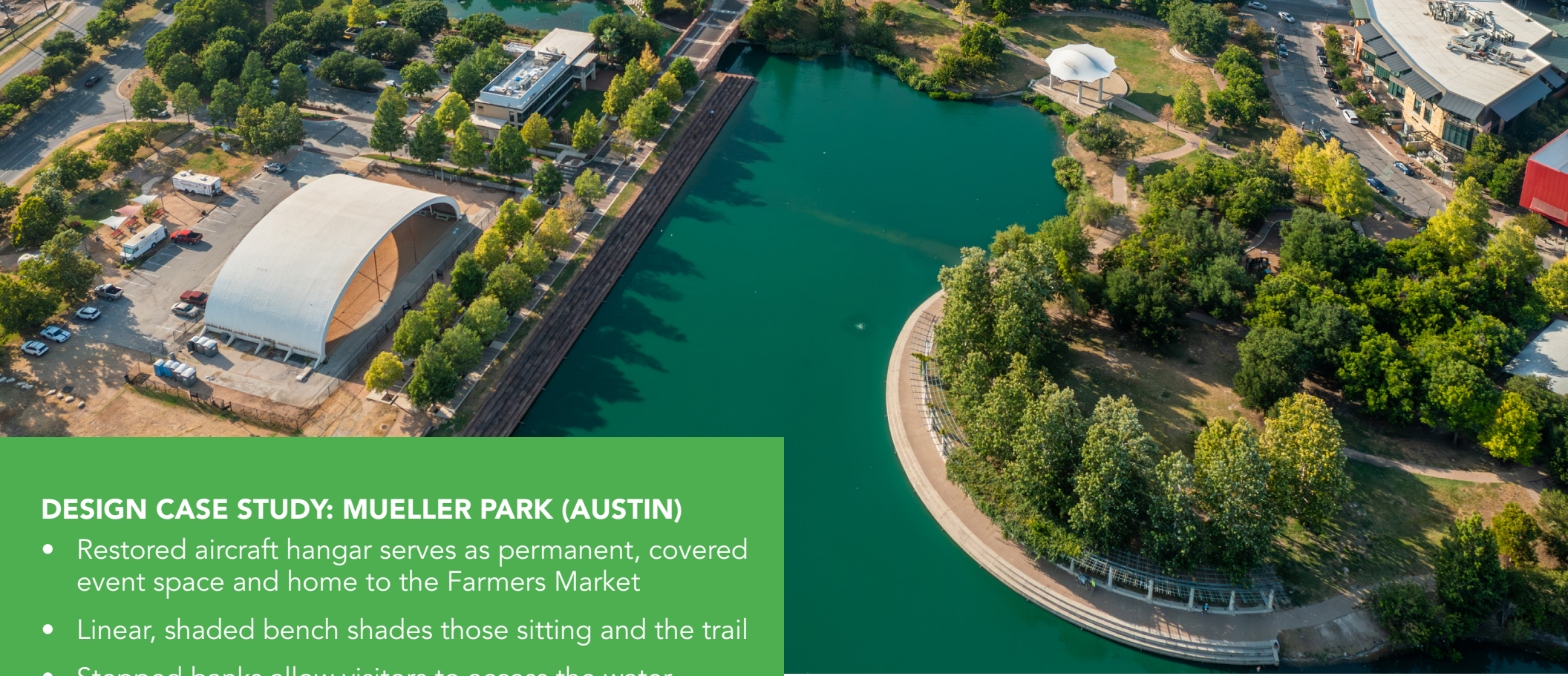
- Set a leadership goal of increasing shade – by trees or structures

To mitigate these risks, the city can implement design strategies like planting shade trees throughout playgrounds and walkways, installing shaded picnic pavilions and seating areas, and using heat-reflective and permeable materials for paths and playground surfaces. Incorporating water features such as splash pads or misting stations provides additional ways for park visitors to cool off during hot days. Ensuring that drinking fountains are readily available, signage about heat safety is posted, and operating hours are adjusted during extreme heat events are also key considerations. By prioritizing these elements in parks and recreation planning, Port Lavaca can create more comfortable, welcoming spaces that support public health and encourage year-round outdoor activity, even in the face of rising temperatures.



STRATEGIES

- Proactively evaluate adaptable shade structures to mitigate sun and extreme heat to better support events and gatherings in the summer. Also evaluate the installation of interpretive signs and public art that can highlight local history, traditions, and/or culture throughout the space.
- Evaluate outdoor seating, shaded areas, and informal performance areas for year-round use with upcoming Parks Master Plans for Allen Groff III Memorial Ballpark, Pullen Park, and Mustang Creek Park.
- Adopt a Public Art Donation Policy to encourage easy donation and installation of public art, such as murals, sculptures, and digital kiosks that tell the story of Port Lavaca's history and culture.
- Create and adopt event space standards that include lighting, signage, and ADA-accessible amenities, ensuring all public gathering spaces are welcoming and safe.
- Purchase and organize a complete set of moveable street furniture and modular event infrastructure (such as pop-up tents, sound systems, temporary seating, and fake plants) to enhance different types of City gatherings.



DESIGN CASE STUDY: MUELLER PARK (AUSTIN)

- Restored aircraft hangar serves as permanent, covered event space and home to the Farmers Market
- Linear, shaded bench shades those sitting and the trail
- Stepped banks allow visitors to access the water
- Native street trees are used to provide shade at the sidewalk level, while mature heritage trees shade recreational areas



COMMUNITY SPACES

Port Lavaca will build a connected network of green spaces and public places that support health, mobility, and climate adaptation. This goal prioritizes walkability, nature-based design, and everyday access to safe, comfortable outdoor environments. The City will:

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- Incorporate nature into public spaces with features like community gardens, native landscaping, and wildlife corridors.
- Encourage pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly design that promotes physical activity and reduces vehicle dependency.
- Use resilient landscaping and infrastructure to manage stormwater, reduce localized flooding, and support environmental adaptation.



PASSIVE RECREATION

Passive recreation includes activities like walking, picnicking, and simply enjoying the scenery, which is crucial for both physical and mental well-being. It provides a valuable space for stress reduction, social interaction, and connection with nature, ultimately enhancing overall quality of life.

By nature, many of the community and regional parks offer passive recreation spaces in some form.

Mental health benefits of passive recreation include:

- Stress Reduction: Studies show that spending time in nature, even passively, can lower stress hormones like cortisol and improve mood.
- Improved Mental Well-being: Passive recreation in parks can reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression and enhance a sense of wellness and relaxation.
- Cognitive Function: Exposure to natural environments can improve cognitive functions like working memory, attention, and focus.

Physical health benefits of passive recreation include:

- Encourages Walking and Movement: Passive recreation areas, like trails and open spaces, often encourage



walking, which is a low-impact form of exercise.

- Supports Active Recreation: Passive spaces can serve as starting points for more active pursuits, such as hiking, biking, or sports.

Social benefits of passive recreation include:

- Community Gatherings: Parks with passive recreation areas provide spaces for social interaction, community events, and building social connections.
- Intergenerational Connections: Passive areas like picnic tables and benches encourage families and individuals of all ages to gather and interact.
- Sense of Belonging: Parks with well-maintained passive recreation areas can foster a sense of community and belonging for residents.

Public places will be designed and programmed to be welcoming and inclusive, ensuring people can access them and enjoy them, regardless of age, ability, or background. The City will begin or continue to:

Enhance accessibility and universal design in public spaces, incorporating ramps, seating, shaded areas, and ADA-compliant amenities.

Develop multi-use community hubs that accommodate a wide range of gatherings, from casual meetups to large-scale festivals.

Ensure public places are safe, inviting, and well-lit, fostering a comfortable environment for families, seniors, and visitors.

Introduce interactive public art and cultural displays that celebrate Port Lavaca’s identity and encourage social connections.

Strategies

- Expand with all recommendations for Guiding Principles 2

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 3: ADAPTED TO COASTAL TEXAS CONDITIONS

As Port Lavaca continues to grow and evolve, the need to protect and expand its tree canopy, green spaces, and natural systems becomes increasingly important. With population and household growth expected over the next several years, expanding development brings new challenges—particularly around preserving the city’s coastal prairie landscape and managing environmental impacts. Trees and open space play a critical role in reducing heat, improving air quality, and supporting stormwater management. Restoring riparian corridors—such as those along creeks and drainage areas—helps prevent flooding, improves water quality, and preserves the region’s natural character.

Current demographic trends show an increasing preference for nature-based recreation and shaded outdoor areas, especially among older adults. With nearly one in five residents over the age of 65, the City should prioritize accessible green infrastructure—such as shaded walking trails, seating areas, and native gardens—that support passive recreation and aging in place. Expanding tree canopy and park access doesn’t just support health and livability—it also boosts economic value, with homes near green spaces often experiencing higher property values and greater curb appeal.

To meet future needs, Port Lavaca should continue investing in tree planting, riparian restoration, and the integration of natural features into its parks and trails. As demand for outdoor recreation grows, these efforts will help strengthen the city’s resilience, foster a stronger local economy, and ensure that Port Lavaca remains a healthy, beautiful, and connected community for generations to come.

GOALS

- Facilities and amenities are designed for long-term wear-and-tear
- Coastline integrity within coastal parks
- Preserve + Enhance Port Lavaca’s Natural Landscape

Expand Access to Nature

- **Identify and secure** at least three strategic sites for future parks, preserves, or greenbelt extensions to improve public access to nature and recreation.
- **Pursue grant funding** and forge public-private partnerships to support at least two eco-tourism initiatives, such as wildlife observation areas or



- interpretive nature trails.
- **Launch a citywide tree-planting campaign** with the goal of planting 1,000 native, drought-tolerant trees across parks, public spaces, and streetscapes over the next five years.
- **Establish conservation easements or designated preserves** to protect 500 acres of ecologically sensitive land from development and degradation.
- **Adopt landscape and tree standards** for parks, trail corridors, new developments, and major roadway projects to ensure long-term urban greening.
- **Create a community tree program** that encourages residents to plant native trees along trails and on private property to expand shade and habitat connectivity.

INTEGRATE NATURE INTO DESIGN

- **Develop green infrastructure standards** that define best practices for bioswales, permeable pavement, rain gardens, and other nature-based systems that build climate resilience.
- **Strengthen tree preservation requirements** by protecting mature trees, requiring native replacements, and incentivizing sustainable landscaping in new developments.



- **Construct two urban gardens** with meditation and reflection areas in underserved neighborhoods, improving access to fresh food, biodiversity, and nature-based wellness.
- **Install at least five stormwater features**—such as bioswales, rain gardens, or permeable pathways—in areas most vulnerable to flooding, informed by drainage studies.
- **Design a signature nature-themed playground** that uses natural materials and educational signage to connect children and families to local ecosystems.
- **Set new park development standards** requiring ADA-accessible trails, native landscaping, shade trees, seating, and wayfinding elements that highlight green infrastructure.

RESTORE, PROTECT, AND STEWARD NATURAL RESOURCES

- **Restore at least 50 acres** of degraded prairie or wetland habitat through native planting and ecological enhancement.
- **Remove invasive species** from five key sites and reintroduce native plants to improve ecosystem health and biodiversity.
- **Adopt a riparian buffer policy** to safeguard waterways, prevent erosion, and improve water quality along streams, creeks, and shorelines.
- **Launch a “Nature Steward” volunteer program** to engage residents, businesses, and local organizations in habitat restoration, tree care, and litter cleanup—offering easy online sign-up and community recognition.
- **Implement a Dark Sky initiative** by retrofitting outdoor lighting in parks and trails to reduce light pollution and protect wildlife and adopt Dark Sky standards for future installations.

Strategies

Adopt a policy and standards for new parks to include drought-resistant landscaping, shade trees, and water-efficient features for water conservation to reduce urban heat effects. Evaluate specified parks to see where these features may be appropriate and install them temporarily until the parks are master planned.

- List of parks where recommendation is applicable
- Adopt a policy and standards for new parks to include green stormwater infrastructure, stormwater filtration features (ex. bioswales), and permeable paving (where practical) to minimize flooding risks and protect water quality.
- Adopt a policy and standards for new parks to include small, quiet garden areas and seating spots to encourage reflection and relaxation, as well as to provide sensory-sensitive buffers from louder play areas. Evaluate DETERMINE to see where these areas may be appropriate and install them temporarily until the parks are master planned.
- Adopt a policy and standards for low-cost signage that highlights local history, native wildlife, and conservation efforts, linking to Texas Parks and Wildlife Department priorities.
- Adopt a policy and standards to develop parks with solar-powered charging stations, shaded pavilions, and emergency water access to serve as disaster relief centers.
- Integrate universal design standards into all park infrastructure, including piers, boat launches, and playgrounds. At minimum, ensure ADA compliance is met with all current and future park projects.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 4:
COMPLIMENTARY TO ECONOMIC
+ COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Parks and recreational spaces yield significant economic benefits for communities like Port Lavaca. In 2021, NRPA reported that local public park and recreation agencies across the United States generated more than \$200 billion in economic activity and supported over 1 million jobs. Beyond direct economic contributions, the presence of parks increases nearby property values by upwards of 20%, benefiting both homeowners and tax revenues.

Physical activity associated with access to parks improves public health outcomes, reducing health care costs. Communities with ample green spaces see decreased rates of chronic disease, translating to significant medical cost savings.

According to a 2020 survey, 94% of Americans support their local government investing in infrastructure that promotes economic activity in their community. Parks attract tourism, which stimulates the local economy through increased hospitality and retail spending. Port Lavaca’s prime location on Lavaca Bay places it in a prime position to capitalize on water-based recreational offerings and coastal ecotourism, including birdwatching and fishing.

GOALS

- [Content Under Development]

SPECIAL EVENTS

An exciting, year-round lineup of events will enhance Port Lavaca’s character, encourage community engagement, and offer entertainment for diverse ages and stages. The City will begin and/or continue to:

- Host a variety of cultural, recreational, and seasonal events, such as farmers’ markets, concerts, art festivals, and holiday celebrations.
- Expand programming for all age groups, including youth activities, family-friendly gatherings, and senior engagement opportunities.
- Leverage Port Lavaca’s history and heritage by hosting signature events that highlight the city’s traditions, culture, and local arts scene.
- Encourage community participation by involving local organizations, schools, and businesses in event planning and sponsorships.

Community events and public gatherings will drive economic growth, stimulate local business activity, and attract visitors, creating a stronger, more connected city. The City will begin or continue to:

- Leverage events to boost tourism, attracting regional visitors and increasing foot traffic in Downtown and commercial areas.
- Support local businesses through vendor opportunities, pop-up markets, and collaborations with restaurants, breweries, and artisans.
- Foster public-private partnerships to expand event funding, sponsorships, and programming.
- Activate underutilized spaces with creative placemaking initiatives, such as food truck courts, live performance spaces, and seasonal/temporary pop-ups/installations.

STRATEGIES

- Hire a Community Events Manager and at least one initial support staff member to plan, coordinate, and execute community events (including events Downtown).
- Enhance/evaluate the rotating seasonal event schedule, ensuring at least one major community event per quarter, such as a winter holiday market, spring art fair, summer concert series, and fall harvest festival.
- Develop partnerships with local schools and organizations to host a youth-focused gathering or event.
- Develop partnerships with local organizations to host a senior-focused gathering or event.
- Adjust farmers’ market operations by adding evening or themed markets, increasing vendor participation, and continuing to incorporate live entertainment or cooking demonstrations.
- Secure funding and sponsorships to add at least one large-scale horse or agriculture-focused event to the events calendar, such as an informal rodeo or farm-to-table dining experience, which attracts tourism and economic activity.
- Provide affordable vendor spaces at community events, allowing local entrepreneurs to showcase their products and services to a wider audience.

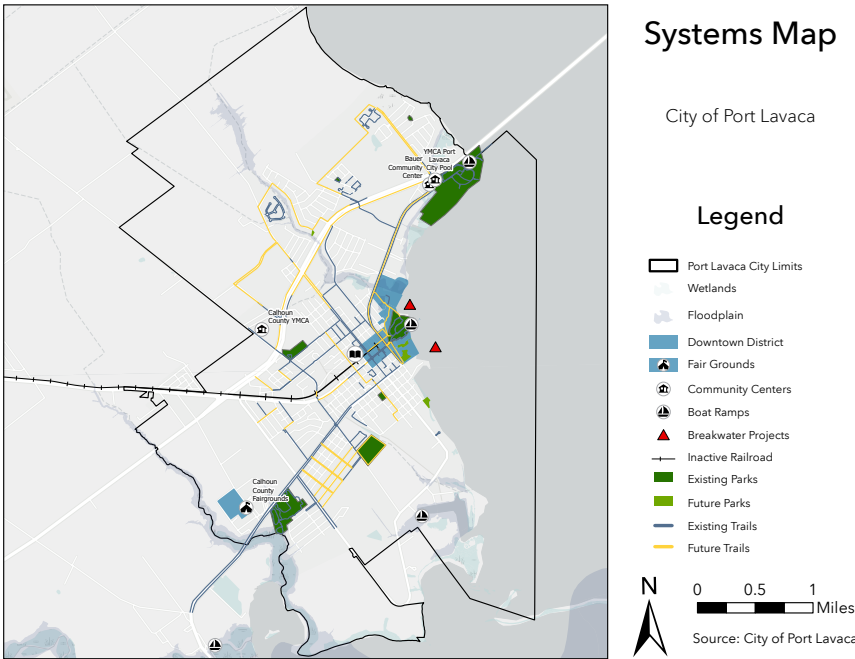
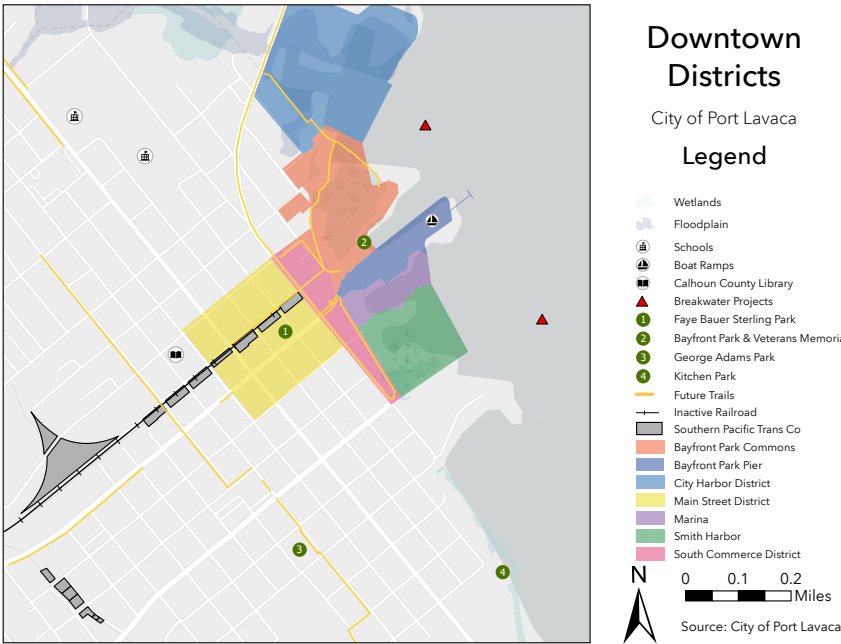
Revenue + Funding Mechanisms

Goals

Potential revenue generation opportunities include:

1. Rental Revenue

Parks frequently offer amenities like community centers, sports fields, picnic areas, and pavilions that can be rented for various occasions, including events, parties, weddings, sports tournaments, and other gatherings.



To begin, consider renting the following:

- **Renting Facilities:** Renting buildings, rooms, sports fields, and picnic areas can raise capital.
- **Renting Parking Lots and Streets:** Many events need space like parking lots, such as churches, schools, and non-profits looking for outdoor gathering space.
- **Equipment Rentals:** Rent out tennis rackets, basketballs, pickleball paddles, and more!

2. Program Fees Revenue

Parks and recreation departments can generate extra income through recreation programs and classes. Parks departments often already offer programs and activities, including sports leagues, fitness classes, art workshops, and summer camps. By implementing registration or participation fees for these programs, parks and recreation departments can contribute to their revenue generation efforts.

3. Special Events Revenue

Hosting special events such as concerts, festivals, farmers’ markets, or holiday celebrations within park areas can draw in visitors and generate income through various means, including ticket sales, fees, sponsorships, and concession stands.

A woman practices yoga in a public park. Utilize EAM software to provide your community the best resources possible.

4. Concession and Vending Revenue

Concessions, leasing, and other partnerships are other ways to generate revenue for parks and recreation departments. Parks can lease out spaces to vendors offering food and beverage services, equipment rentals, or other recreational services. Collecting a percentage of their sales or charging rent for the use of park facilities can provide a steady stream of revenue.

5. Sponsorships and Advertising Revenue

Parks and recreation departments can generate revenue by leveraging advertising and sponsorship agreements. Partnering with local businesses, corporations, or nonprofit organizations

to sponsor park initiatives, events, or facilities can generate additional revenue. In exchange, sponsors may receive acknowledgment and branding opportunities.

Additionally, selling advertising space or showcasing sponsored signage within parks is another way to generate income. Departments can display advertisements in parks, sports fields, department websites, digital screens within facilities, catalogs, brochures, newsletters, and program registration software.

6. Tax-Related Revenue

Parks and recreation departments can generate revenue through taxes because the public is generally more inclined to vote in favor of such initiatives.

Here are some methods that parks and recreation departments employ to increase their revenue through taxes:

Property Tax Revenue

By collaborating with local officials and raising awareness among the public about the value of parks and recreational opportunities, departments can gain public support for property taxes.



Park Impact Fees

Developers get charged park impact fees to offset the costs of new parks and recreational facilities in newly developed areas. As new residents move into these areas, maintenance expenses of parks will increase. Departments can establish specific fees to address these expenses.

Landscape Lighting District

By establishing a landscape lighting district, parks and recreation departments can generate revenue specifically dedicated to covering the costs of installing and maintaining lighting in parks and other public spaces.

Community Facility District

Parks and recreation departments can impose fees to help finance any construction, operation, and maintenance.

<https://www.assetworks.com/eam/blog/eam-creative-ways-parks-and-recreation-can-generate-revenue-strong/#:~:text=Parks%20and%20recreation%20departments%20can%20generate%20revenue%20by%20leveraging%20advertising,facilities%20can%20generate%20additional%20revenue>.

Strategies

Community Activation

Text.

Goals

Strategies

- Create and launch a Block Party Trailer that can be rented for neighborhood events. The Trailer can be delivered upon request and will include moveable seating, tables, yard games, and other useful celebration materials for neighborhood (not private) events.
- Launch a collaboration with the School District to create a

Community Event Committee to link student volunteers, who need community volunteer hours, with the City’s events team to provide outreach assistance, setup, cleanup, and event staffing.

- Implement a “Patio Night Series” featuring live music, art walks, and open-air dining experiences at least once per month. Restaurants or establishments without outdoor dining facilities would be invited to activate a few parking spaces outside their area, or other nearby spot, in a City-approved configuration.
- Develop a promotional campaign with digital marketing, social media highlights, and printed event guides to increase event awareness and attendance.
- Offer vendor and sponsorship incentives for local businesses to participate in festivals, ensuring at least 10 new sponsor or vendor participants in City-hosted events per year.

Efficiency Through Coordination

Goals

Close collaboration between city parks departments and school districts is essential to ensure that all neighborhoods benefit



Guide busses queue at local hotel to shuttle birdwatchers to inaugural Birding Festival

equitably from recreational opportunities. Without strategic coordination, it’s easy for new parks to cluster around schools in some areas while leaving other parts of the community underserved. By working together in the early stages of planning, cities and school boards can map existing and proposed facilities, identify service gaps, and align investments to create a truly comprehensive parks network. This approach not only maximizes public benefit but also prevents the duplication of parks and recreational spaces in certain districts, thus ensuring that resources are distributed where they are needed most.

In addition to planning, cities and school districts can jointly develop contracting frameworks and maintenance schedules. By pooling resources and synchronizing service contracts for landscaping, repairs, and facility upgrades, both entities can increase their buying power, negotiate better rates with contractors, and reduce disruptions. Shared-use agreements, co-managed facilities, and cross-promotional programming are other actionable strategies that foster efficiency and community engagement. Regular joint planning sessions and transparent data sharing on usage patterns and community needs will further streamline these efforts, ensuring that public dollars are invested wisely and every resident has access to quality recreation.

Strategies

- Interlocal agreements for playground and running track access
- Permanent seats on Park Board for ISD and Calhoun County

Implementation

[Relist all chapter recommendations here.]



TEXAS MID-COAST
BIRDING
Festival

MAY 1 - 4, 2025

PORT LAVACA, TEXAS

Experience the Texas Mid-Coast Birding Festival and discover rare and beautiful bird species, including the iconic Roseate Spoonbill, Reddish Egret and American Oystercatcher, while enjoying insider access to prime birding habitats. Perfect for both seasoned birders and nature enthusiasts, this festival offers an unforgettable adventure along one of North America's most important migratory flyways. Don't miss your chance to explore hidden gems and enhance your birding skills with expert guidance!

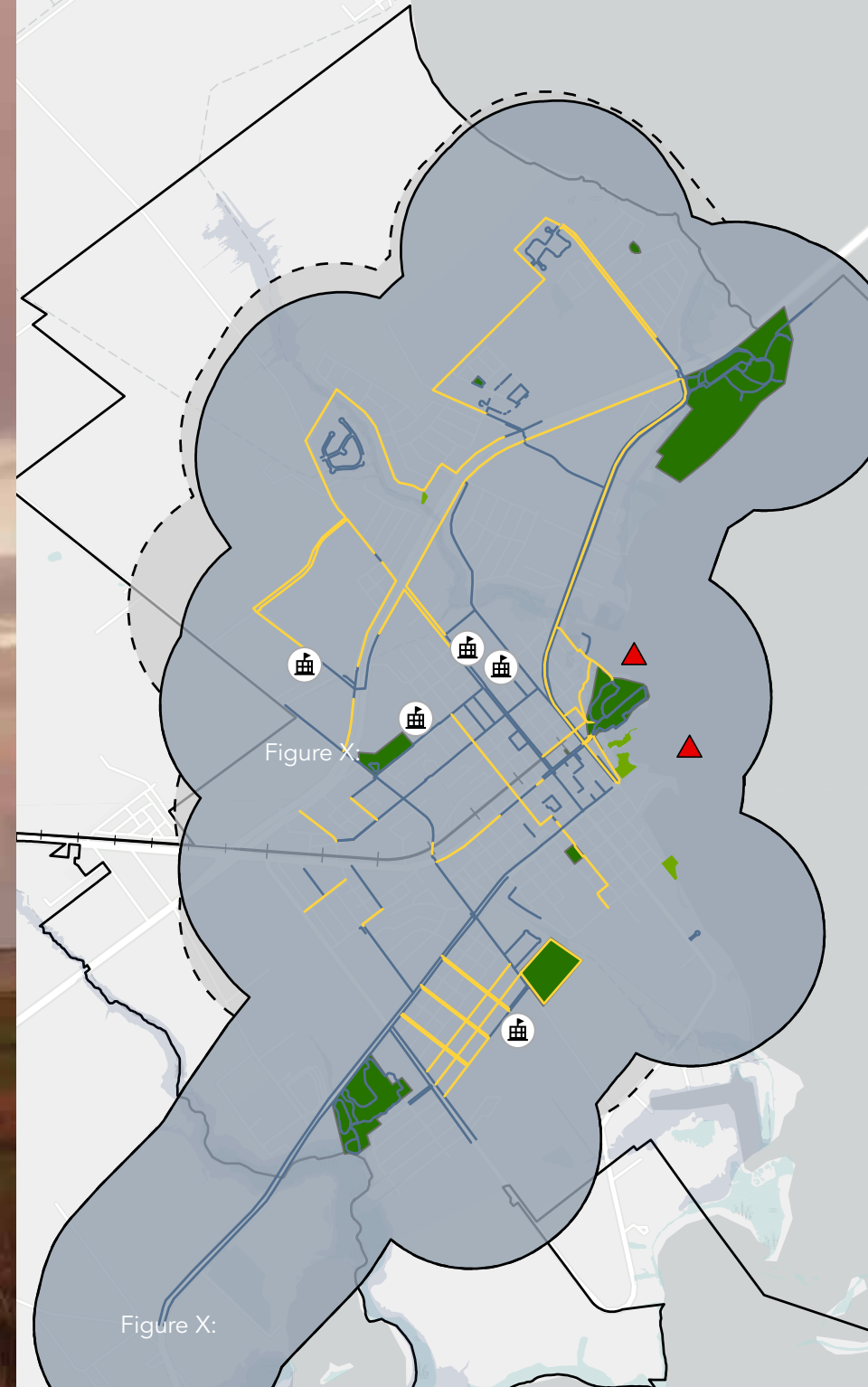
This is one festival you won't want to miss!



FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT [TEXASMIDCOASTBIRDINGFESTIVAL.COM](https://www.texasmidcoastbirdingfestival.com)
EMAIL US AT [INFO@TEXASMIDCOASTBIRDINGFESTIVAL.COM](mailto:info@texasmidcoastbirdingfestival.com)



TRAILS 05



Multiuse trails and greenways are essential components of outdoor recreation infrastructure, providing a range of benefits including exercise opportunities, alternative transportation options, and access to natural spaces. This chapter considers trails located within City parks as well as those functioning more like sidewalks outside of parks themselves. This chapter also considered a range of trail types, including those for walking/running, biking, and paddling.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 1: COMMUNITY-DRIVEN

[Introductory text under development]

- Have a comprehensive trail network that connects neighborhoods, parks, schools, and destinations, ensuring safe and easy access for residents and visitors.
- Have a trail network that will be a backbone for community mobility, recreation, connectivity, and wellness.
- Complete a phased expansion of multi-use trails, ensuring that safe and direct access for pedestrians, cyclists, and equestrians is prioritized.

Goals

- Safe connectivity to parks, schools, and community hubs
- Year-round usability
- Build an Integrated, Accessible Trail Network
- All ages and abilities

KEY FEEDBACK THEMES

From the community workshop, the following themes emerged, relative to ideas about trails (percent of responders at workshop indicated in parenthesis):

- Recreation (36 percent): Provide fun and engaging opportunities for enjoyment, sightseeing, and/or fitness
- Design (20 percent): Enhance public spaces to encourage social interaction and beauty through high quality design to the places that make the City unique: 20 percent

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) is a community-based initiative aimed at making it safer and easier for children, especially those in kindergarten through 8th grade, to walk or bike to school. Combining infrastructure improvements (e.g., sidewalks, crosswalks, bike lanes), education, enforcement, and encouragement strategies, SRTS programs help reduce traffic congestion, increase physical activity, and improve student safety.

For Port Lavaca, implementing SRTS aligns closely with parks and recreation goals by promoting active transportation, connecting neighborhoods to green spaces, and supporting child health while also enhancing community walkability and reducing vehicle emissions.

Additionally, community members appreciate larger parks with a range of amenities, such as Lighthouse Beach and Chocolate Bayou Park. Residents enjoy the wide, well-lit sidewalks of Bayfront Peninsula Park. Common community desires identified across all activities and boards include:

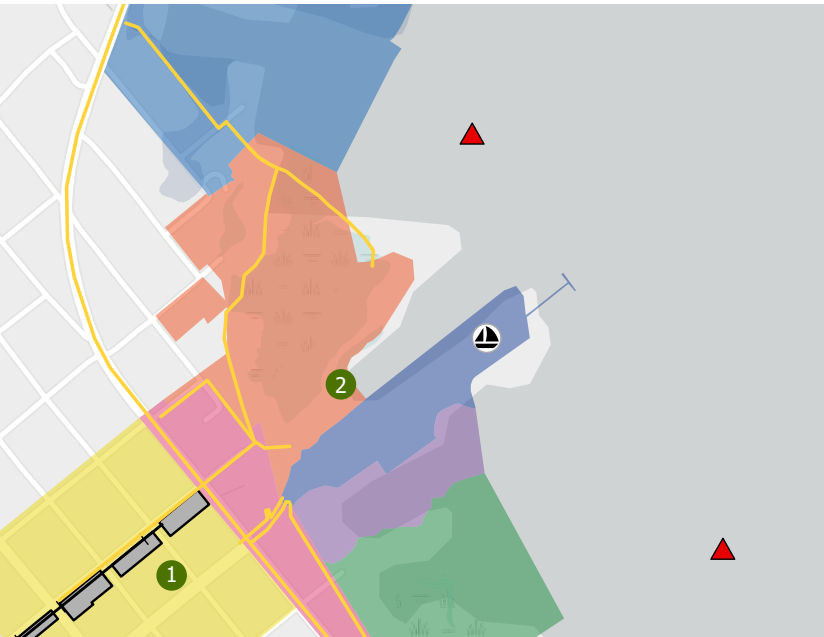
- Rentals for kayaks, canoes, paddle boats, etc. near the water
- Walking, running, and bicycle trails within parks and neighborhoods
- Additional bicycle infrastructure



Figure X: Boardwalks adjacent to wetlands or detention areas amenitize and humanize elements that would otherwise be strictly infrastructure.

PADDLE TRAILS

(CONTENT UNDER DEVELOPMENT)



Branding and Advertising

- Develop a trail logo to be used on promotional literature and signage. Consider the development of a catchy trail name and motto.
- Allocate or raise funds to promote the trail(s) with rack cards, printed guides, and an interactive website. If budget permits, advertise in paddling publications such as Canoe and Kayak, Sea Kayaker and a host of others. Less expensive are advertisements on paddling club websites and in their newsletters.
- Install signs at trail access/ launch points. Use trail logo on signs.
- Create a short description (300 words or less) to use when replying to e-mails and/or requesting partnerships and other uses. This quick word picture describes what it's like on your trail(s) and who uses it in what ways.
- Create a PowerPoint program or film about the trail(s) that can be shown to a wide variety of groups around the region and state such as paddling clubs, environmental groups and civic organizations. The Florida Trail Association, although primarily a hiking group, is also interested in paddling trails, and they have chapters throughout the state.

Media Outreach

- Invite travel writers and bloggers on guided trips of the trail(s) so they can feature them in publications (e.g. Canoe & Kayak, Sea Kayaker, newspaper travel sections). For film crews, an accompanying motorboat will likely be necessary.
- Reach out to a waterfront hotel, RV park or campground and get them to agree to put up the invited journalists free of charge for a night or two. Travel writers rarely come without free lodging.
- A library of outstanding photos and video clips that are available to the media can be very helpful. Encourage volunteers, paddling clubs and trail users to take photos and have a designated e-mail address where they can submit them. Photos can also help to woo travel writers, enhance press releases, and document active trail use for grant applications. Paddlers depicted in photos should be wearing life jackets, and photo release forms should be used if the subject's face is showing. A talented local freelancer or staff member can be encouraged to write articles to submit for publication.
- Create an ongoing trail newsletter.
- Put out periodic press releases about trail happenings and improvements. Include stock photos.

Events

- Sponsor paddling festivals, kayak and canoe races and other events to help promote the trail(s). Establish at least one annual event that tourists can plan their vacations around. Work with local paddling clubs on these events. Work with groups such as Paddle Florida on establishing multi-day excursions for large numbers of paddlers down the trail(s) if possible.



Figure X:

STRATEGIES

- Ensure all schools and neighboring communities have ample sidewalks and safe pathways to and from school
- Consider closing school-fronting streets completely to vehicular traffic during the hour directly before or after school to encourage walking and prevent vehicular accidents
- Revise the Code of Ordinances to require public trail dedication and construction of trails, in accordance with this Plan and the Anticipated Trails Level of Service Map, as public improvements within new development or redevelopment as applicable. The standards should also require a continuous pedestrian system, to include dedicated public trails, where trails are not shown on the Anticipated Trails Level of Service Map.

(CONTENT UNDER DEVELOPMENT)



Figure X: Wayfinding signage should be clear and take into consideration visitors with disabilities

Create and adopt a Complete Streets policy to inform new rights-of-way and associated improvements, which should include Context-Sensitive Solutions (CSS).

Create and adopt Trail Corridor Design Standards for each trail type. Standard multi-use trails should be 10 feet wide and paved. Trail corridors should be designed to be multi-functional, where possible, to absorb and/or treat stormwater.

Require amenities along future trails that generally reflect the following:

At minimum:

- Shaded off-spots with a bench or place to sit generally every half mile
- Waste/recycling bins
- Wayfinding signage and distance markers
- Parking at major access points



Where possible:

- Water fountain approximately every two miles, as possible with available infrastructure
- Restrooms
- Interpretive/educational signs and public art, such as sculptures and storytelling panels
- Security callboxes
- Picnic tables
- Dark Sky-compliant, pedestrian-scale lighting for high use trails
- Install wayfinding signage and interpretive markers along trails, highlighting local history, nature, and cultural landmarks, with an initial objective of placing 15 signs in key locations. Some of the locations can be proactively identified for future trails and can be installed when they are constructed.
- Improve accessibility by upgrading the existing trail at Allen Groff III Memorial Ballpark to be a continuous loop that meets ADA standards, provides direct connections to the adjacent school and neighborhood to the north, and includes amenities as outlined herein.
- Implement a Themed Trail Program with designated sections for nature immersion, fitness loops, and historical storytelling, piloting at least one themed route.
- Partner with the School District to have a communitywide Walk, Bike, and Roll Day, in conjunction with the school-based program that happens each spring.
- Add four seasonal (minimum one per season), trail or path-based community events to the City event calendar that are guided nature walks, art or wine walks, history tours, and/or themed experiences.
 - Create a volunteer “Trail Steward” program that enlists residents in maintenance, cleanup, and enhancement efforts, with a goal of two active Trail Stewards per mile of existing trail. Ensure role is exciting, communicates importance, and is easy to sign up for online.
 - Develop an inspirational set of interactive features that can be provided to developers for potential installation along trails in new neighborhoods, such as fitness stations, geocaching points, and/or scavenger hunt markers, to enhance engagement and appeal.
 - Partner with local schools, companies, and/or organizations to plan, design, and install at least two educational trail segments focused on nature, wellness, and/or history



Figure X: Safe crosswalks and walk signals are essential safety features when encouraging active transportation.

Goals

- Goal: Reduce barriers and increase outlets to physical activity

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 2:
HEALTH & WELLNESS

- Promote active transportation and outdoor recreation by improving trail accessibility, crafting partnerships with local businesses, and hosting community events focused on walking, biking, and non-motorized forms of transportation.
- Have a trail network will not only serve as transportation and recreation infrastructure but also as a catalyst for community engagement, health, and economic activity.
- Encourage trail usage by providing programming, partnerships, and ongoing investment for active, outdoor-focused lifestyles.

STRATEGIES

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 3: ADAPTED TO COASTAL TEXAS CONDITIONS

Floodplains as Trail Easements

Designing and routing trails through floodplain areas, or reserving floodplain land for trail easements, serves the dual purpose of flood mitigation and providing recreational corridors. These greenways absorb and manage excess stormwater while offering connected, natural pathways for walking, biking, paddling, and wildlife viewing. In flooding-prone areas like Port Lavaca, floodplain-aligned trails are low-impact infrastructure that enhance public access to natural areas without compromising upstream drainage or increasing flood risk.

When thoughtfully planned with resilient surfaces, elevated boardwalks, and green stormwater design, floodplain trails become year-round community assets. They provide safe, scenic routes while preserving coastal habitats, improving water quality, and reinforcing park systems' roles in ecosystem stewardship. While some sections may temporarily flood, trail design accommodates flood dynamics, ensuring easy maintenance and rapid restoration afterward. These corridors are long-term investments in both climate resilience and active transportation, reflecting best practices in sustainable parks planning.

STRATEGIES

Set aside land in the 100 and 500-year floodplain to serve as recreational spaces, such as parks, trails, and bike paths

- Connect parks through a trail system that takes advantage of floodplain space, like Brays Bayou Greenway in Houston or Onion Creek trail in Buda



Figure X:



Figure X:

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 4: COMPLIMENTARY TO ECONOMIC + COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

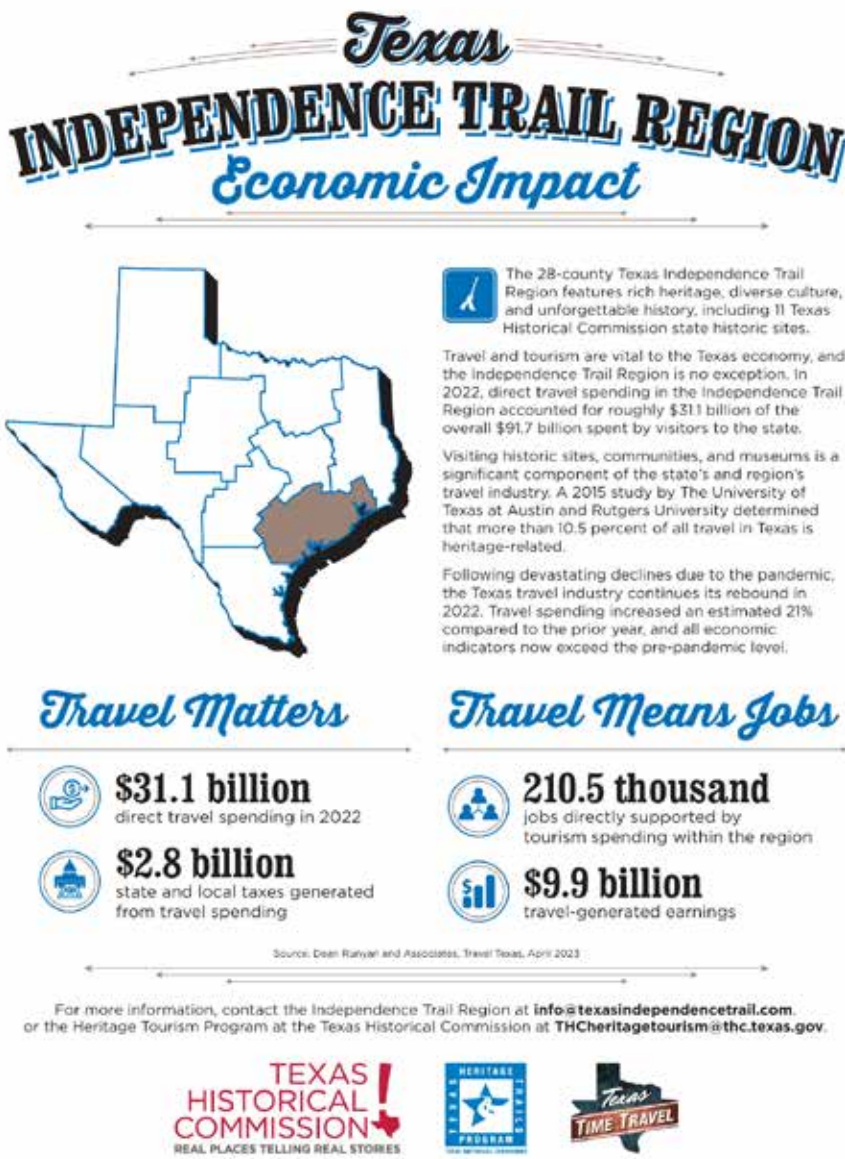


Figure X:

One major benefit of trail tourism is that it is money spent in rural towns and in more economically disadvantaged areas. Many of the people traveling to a trail and spending a night or more in the area are economically well off and have significant discretionary income.

- Have trail routes that celebrate local history, culture, and natural beauty, incorporating inspired design elements and connecting key landmarks.
- Trail network that will be well-designed and will provide a sense of place and identity.
- Have trails that will connect Port Lavaca and serve as economic development and recreation corridors that tell a story and create experiences.

Goals

- Enhance Port Lavaca’s Unique Character Through Trails

Figure X:

TEXAS INDEPENDENCE TRAIL REGION

The Texas Heritage Trails Program (THTP) is the Texas Historical Commission’s award-winning heritage tourism initiative. This economic development initiative encourages communities, heritage regions, and the state to partner and promote Texas’ historic and cultural resources. These successful local preservation efforts, combined with statewide marketing of heritage regions as tourism destinations, increase visitation to cultural and historic sites, and bring more dollars to Texas communities. This, in turn, supports the THC’s mission to protect and preserve the state’s historic and prehistoric resources for the use, education, economic benefit, and enjoyment of present and future generations.

Each heritage region works to forge local tourism partnerships and support the region’s attractions by developing its own unique blend of programs and promotions. Regions offer many opportunities to become involved in the program. Calhoun County is located in the Texas Independence Trail Region. Spanning 28 counties, the Trail Region features rich heritage, diverse culture, and unforgettable history, including 11 Texas Historical Commission state historic sites.

Travel and tourism are vital to the Texas economy, and the Independence Trail Region is no exception. In 2022, direct travel spending in the Independence Trail Region accounted for roughly \$31.1 billion of the overall \$91.7 billion spent by visitors to the state. Visiting historic sites, communities, and museums is a significant component of the state’s and region’s travel industry. A 2015 study by The University of Texas at Austin and Rutgers University determined that more than 10.5 percent of all travel in Texas is heritage-related.

TRAIL ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT

Trail Oriented Developments (TrOD), coined by the Rails to Trails Conservancy, are land use typologies defined by:

- Clustered around off-street trails
- Mixed use, residential, and/or commercial
- Compact Development
- Walkable, human-scaled land use
- Designed for trail users
- Creates vibrant places with many mobility options

The Conservancy identifies 10 different types of TrODs, and typologies that could suit Port Lavaca include:

- Vertical Mixed-Use
- Main Street Connector
- Local Community Gathering
- Civic / Employment Hub
- Commercial /Entertainment Center
- Innovation / Maker Place
- Recreation Destination
- Low Density Neighborhood



Figure X:



Figure X:

LOCAL ECONOMIES

Trailheads

Text.

Rental Shops

Text.

STRATEGIES

Trail Oriented Development design guidelines

Development: Within the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance:

- Land Use Mix
- Trail Access
- Orientation & Parking
 - Building frontages oriented towards trail
- Building Massing & Design
- Landscape & Public Art

Mobility & Safety: Within the Master Thoroughfare Plan:

- Multimodal Parking, Share Stations, Repair
- Crossings & Accessibility
 - Spurs to destinations and neighborhoods
 - Parallel trail frontage
- Lighting & Trail Design
- Signage
 - Signage at intersections

Public Improvements:

- Seating & Passive Space
- Amenities Access (Restrooms, Water, Bins)
- Refuge & Shade
- Signage