



# FROM BAY TO BACKYARD

## OUR PARKS & RECREATION MASTER PLAN

AUGUST 2026



PLANNING &  
LANDSCAPE  
ARCHITECTURE

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



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*Thank you to the countless residents who participated in a community event, emailed, took a survey, colored a picture, or otherwise contributed to this Plan!*

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# LETTER FROM OUR CITY MANAGER

TO BE FINALIZED AS PART OF FINAL REVISIONS



Jody Weaver, PE- Port Lavaca City Manager



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Port Lavaca's parks and recreation system gives residents access to nature and outdoor recreation, especially activities that take advantage of its proximity to the coast, such as fishing, swimming, and bird watching.

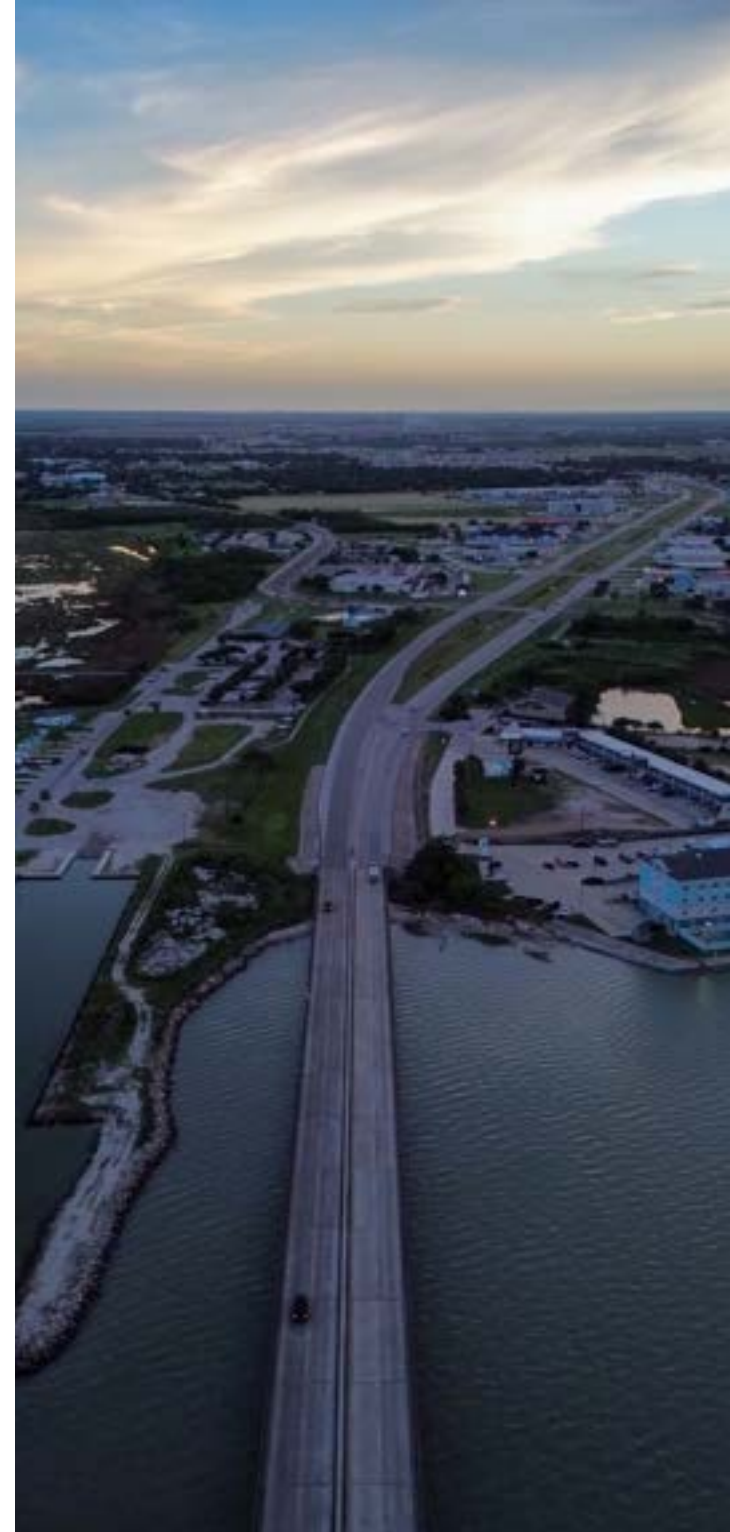
The *From Bay to Backyard Parks & Recreation Master Plan* (Plan) is a long-range guide for growing and maintaining the city's parks, recreation areas, and trail network. It establishes a framework for prioritizing capital investment and informing operational and budgetary decisions, so the community's vision for a connected, accessible parks system can be built rather than simply described.

This Plan evaluates existing conditions, identifies gaps in service, and anticipates future recreational needs, so that park and trail investment keeps pace as Port Lavaca evolves over time. An eye for coastal resilience and placemaking runs throughout the document.

Improving parks and waterfront spaces, expanding programs, and supporting community events will strengthen Port Lavaca's civic identity and establish its parks as community hubs. Investment in natural resource protection and coastal preservation protects the environmental assets that define the region.

The Plan is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 establishes the community's vision and guiding principles. Chapter 2 evaluates the city's parks and facilities, including level of service and park inventory. Chapter 3 addresses trails and connectivity, with emphasis on pedestrian access and system-wide integration. Chapter 4 covers events, programs, and placemaking as tools for activating public space. Chapter 5 presents the implementation plan — recommended projects, priorities, phasing, and partnerships to guide decisions over time.

Taken together, these chapters give Port Lavaca's parks and recreation system a roadmap to enhancing the community's quality of life, preserving natural landscapes, strengthening community identity, expanding connectivity, and encouraging economic vitality.



# Welcome To







Mural at Lighthouse Beach Park

Melroy Sanchez 2018  
The Mural Project is a collaboration of artists and the community.

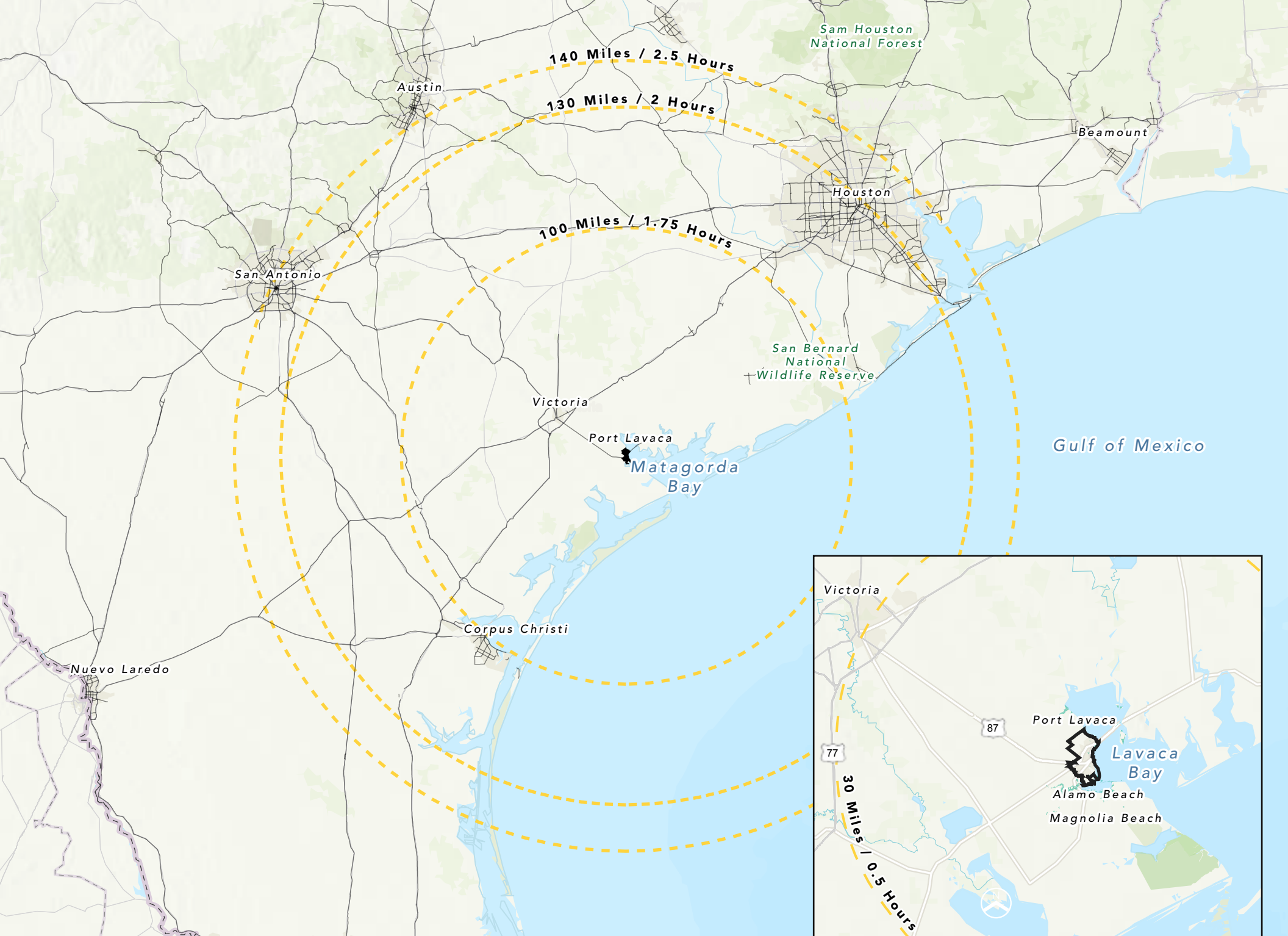
# INTRODUCTION

## PORT LAVACA

Port Lavaca is a coastal community with a distinctive history, economy, and culture that shape the way residents and visitors experience the city today. Located along the Texas Gulf Coast in Calhoun County, Port Lavaca occupies a strategic position within the broader Houston-Galveston region, connected to major employment centers, coastal destinations, and regional transportation networks. Its proximity to the Gulf and its relationship to the surrounding communities make Port Lavaca an important regional destination while maintaining a strong sense of local identity.

The city's development has long been influenced by its coastal setting, port, transportation connections, and industrial economy. From its early roots as a commercial and maritime community to its continued role within the region's petrochemical, manufacturing, agricultural, and maritime industries, Port Lavaca has evolved alongside the changing economic landscape of the Texas Gulf Coast. These industries have contributed to the city's growth while reinforcing its connection to the water and working waterfront.

Port Lavaca's culture is deeply rooted in its coastal character, community traditions, and connection to the outdoors. Fishing, boating, birding, waterfront recreation, and other activities tied to the Gulf are an important part of everyday life and the city's identity. At the same time, Port Lavaca's neighborhoods, historic areas, local businesses, community events, and public spaces contribute to a strong sense of place. Understanding this history and culture provides an important foundation for the Plan and for creating a connected network of parks, trails, and public spaces that reflects Port Lavaca's character and supports its future.





# PARKS FOR THE PEOPLE

## DEMOGRAPHICS

Understanding who lives in Port Lavaca is what keeps parks inclusive, accessible, and relevant. Anticipating how the population may evolve over time also helps the city direct investment toward initiatives that support long-term community health and quality of life.

The city’s population has held relatively steady between 11,000 and 12,500 residents for more than 30 years, but recent population decline should be monitored.

Port Lavaca is diverse and multigenerational. Hispanic residents make up 64 percent of the population, and the city’s Diversity Index of 83.7 sits well above the national average. Nearly one-quarter of residents are children, and a median age of 38 reflects a balanced mix of young families, working professionals, and retirees.

### COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

Current Population:  
**11,335**

Population Growth:  
**-0.5**

Average Household Size:  
**2.7**

Median Age:  
**38**

Median Household Income:  
**64,000**

Median Home Value:  
**\$135,000**

Median Net Worth:  
**\$197,000**

Residents Under Age 18:  
**24%**

Residents Over Age 65:  
**17%**

## TAPESTRY SEGMENTS

Esri’s Tapestry Segmentation system groups residential areas into segments based on shared demographic, socioeconomic, and lifestyle characteristics, which gives a clearer picture of how people in a community live, work, and recreate.

Three key takeaways emerge from Port Lavaca’s segments, each with direct implications for this Plan:

- » Even among high-earning households, the city’s primary demographic groups carry less discretionary income than comparable groups nationally.
- » That low discretionary spending suggests sales and property taxes alone will not fund a major overhaul of the parks and recreation system — outside funding will be necessary.
- » Discretionary spending varies significantly between groups and neighborhoods, meaning some areas will feel gaps in Level of Service (LOS) more acutely than others.

|                                   | <b>RURAL ROOTS</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <b>HERITAGE HOMESTEADERS</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <b>FOUNDATIONAL FAMILIES</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Description</b>                | Country-living and self-reliance are core values for this community. Residents place a strong emphasis on outdoor pursuits including hunting, fishing, motorcycling, hiking, camping, and golf, which play a significant role in their lifestyle.                                                                                                                                        | This community is broadly characterized by traditional rural lifestyles. Residents value family time, embrace outdoor living, and spend much of their free time planning fishing, boating, or camping excursions.                                                                                                                    | Family and the preservation of rich traditions are central to this community's identity. Residents deeply value time and activities spent with family and friends while carefully managing their budgets and expenses.                                        |
| <b>Education &amp; Employment</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Majority are college educated</li> <li>» Employed in professional sectors, self-employed, or retired</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Majority have a high school diploma and some college education</li> <li>» Employed in manufacturing, construction, or related industries</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Majority have a high school diploma</li> <li>» Employed in skilled positions across the manufacturing, construction, or retail trade sectors</li> </ul>                                                              |
| <b>Housing</b>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Older residents, primarily married couples with no children, living in single-family, owner-occupied homes</li> <li>» Older homes with ample acreage</li> <li>» Median home value: \$235,000</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» High homeownership rates</li> <li>» 2 in 3 households are married couples</li> <li>» Household income just over the national median and net worth is nearly double the national median</li> </ul>                                                                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Multi-generational households averaging 3.62 persons per home, living in older, owner-occupied homes</li> <li>» More than 1 in 4 households fall below the poverty line</li> </ul>                                   |
| <b>Lifestyle</b>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Physically active</li> <li>» Engaged in their community</li> <li>» Own a variety of vehicles</li> <li>» Access to high-speed internet</li> <li>» Technology is viewed as more of a tool than trend</li> <li>» Cautious consumers focused on quality and durability</li> <li>» Pessimistic economic outlook but comfortable with debt</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Enjoy outdoor activities</li> <li>» Typically 2-car households</li> <li>» Access to high-speed internet</li> <li>» Seek face-to-face contact for routine activities and businesses</li> <li>» Cost-conscious consumers loyal to brands they like with a focus on buying American</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» 1- or 2-car households</li> <li>» Access to cable television</li> <li>» Labor force participation is at 61%</li> <li>» Cost-conscious consumers loyal to brands they like with a focus on buying American</li> </ul> |

*Tapestry Segments of Port Lavaca*

# PARKS & RECREATION TEAM

The City of Port Lavaca's Parks and Recreation team maintains the city's parks, public spaces, and other city-owned properties. The team is responsible for routine landscape maintenance, tree trimming, litter and debris removal, restroom upkeep, and playground inspections and repairs. Its work also extends beyond the parks system to include downtown trash receptacles and mowing along the city's right-of-ways. These day-to-day efforts help keep Port Lavaca's public spaces clean, safe, and welcoming for residents and visitors.



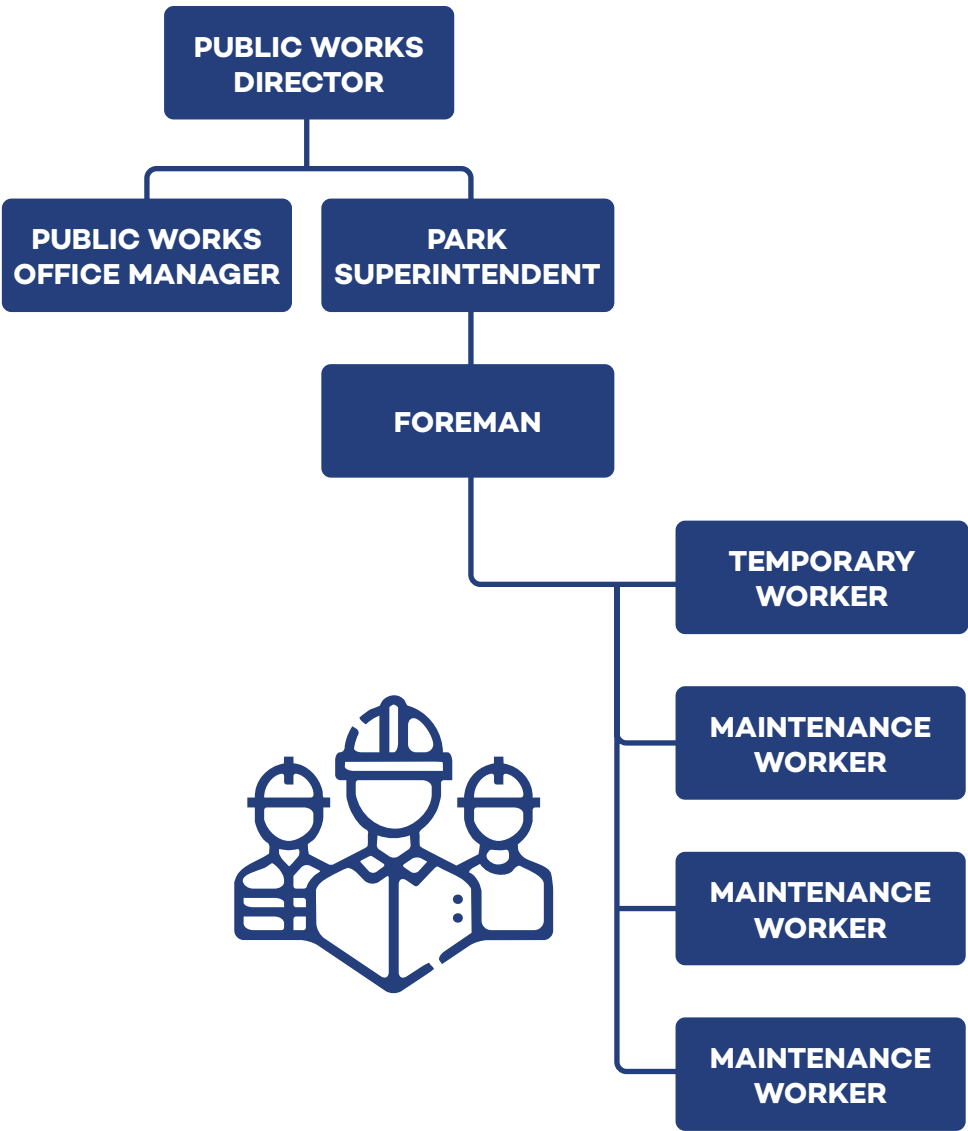


ADMINISTRATION

In the early 2000s, Port Lavaca operated a standalone Parks and Recreation Department. When the department’s director departed, the position was not refilled, and the department was consolidated under Public Works.

No city staff are currently assigned to manage recreation programming. The community pool is city-owned and open to the public, but daily operations and staffing are handled by the local YMCA, and public access covers the pool only — not other YMCA amenities or programs.

With Parks and Recreation folded into Public Works, five full-time city employees are dedicated to parks: one park superintendent, one foreman, and three maintenance workers. A single temporary worker assists part-time during the summer.



# PLANNING PROCESS 01

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# PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVE

Parks and trails do specific work in a community. Play facilities support childhood development, creativity, and social skills through safe, unstructured play. Gathering spaces build social connection and encourage civic engagement. Active and passive recreation supports physical wellness, mental health, and stress reduction. Natural spaces preserve ecosystems, improve environmental quality, and connect people to the natural world.

Port Lavaca's current system comprises eight city parks that offer a range of public amenities: playscapes, picnic areas, trails, beach access, a public pool, and other facilities.

This Plan is a comprehensive guide for enhancing, expanding, and shaping the future of the city's parks, recreation areas, and trail networks. It provides a clear framework for guiding improvements, prioritizing investment, and informing budgetary decisions, so the community's vision for a well-connected, accessible, and resilient system becomes reality.

The primary objectives of this Plan are to:

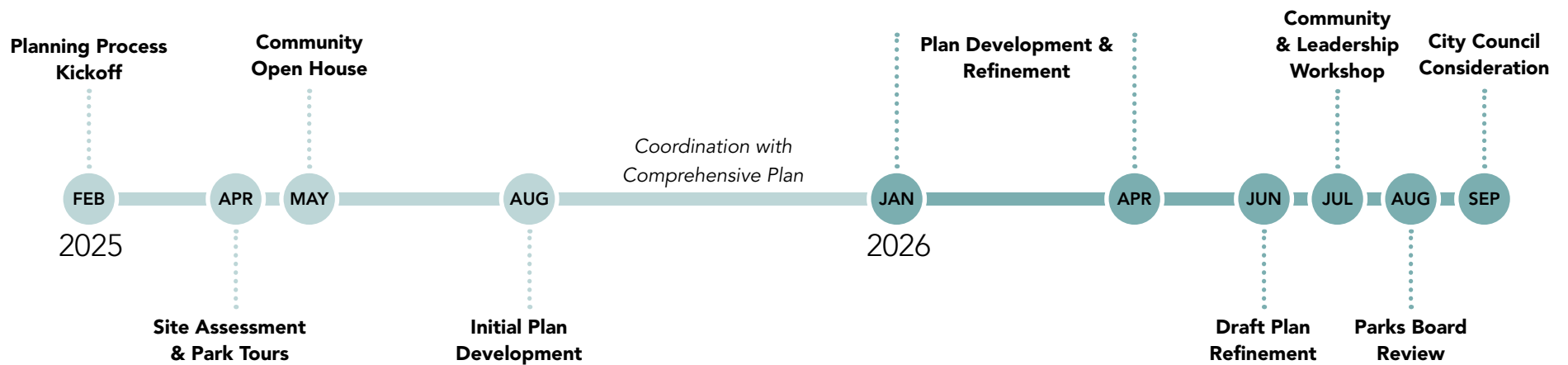
- » Enhance quality of life for all residents through exceptional recreational opportunities and green spaces
- » Preserve and protect the natural landscape while guiding growth for community resilience
- » Strengthen community identity and civic pride through investment in parks, trails, and recreational amenities
- » Expand connectivity and access through trails and pedestrian infrastructure
- » Strengthen economic vitality through recreational tourism, strategic partnerships, and innovation



Port Lavaca Lighthouse Beach Park

# PLANNING PROCESS AND SCHEDULE

The Plan was developed through a multi-phase process that combined site assessment, community engagement, plan development, and review. Work began in early 2025 with an evaluation of Port Lavaca's parks and an initial community open house. Plan development continued alongside coordination with the City's Comprehensive Plan, allowing the two efforts to inform one another. In 2026, the Plan was further developed and refined through community and leadership input before advancing to Parks Board and City Council consideration.



# LOCAL PLANS AND STUDIES

The Plan builds on goals and recommendations established through Port Lavaca's existing plans and studies listed below. Together, these efforts identify priorities for parks, recreation, trails, waterfront improvements, resiliency, and community investment. Aligning with these priorities helps connect future parks and trails projects to broader community goals and opportunities across Port Lavaca.

## CALHOUN CO. HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN

- » Protect and restore wetlands, coastal areas, and other natural resources
- » Strengthen shoreline and erosion protection, including at Lighthouse Beach and the Harbor of Refuge
- » Improve the resilience of parks and public facilities through shade, drought-tolerant landscaping, and other mitigation strategies
- » Address flooding and stormwater impacts near parks, bayous, and public spaces
- » Expand shade and cooling opportunities within parks and public areas

## TX COASTAL RESILIENCY MASTER PLAN

- » Strengthen community and coastal resilience
- » Protect and manage coastal habitats, shorelines, and watersheds
- » Adapt to changing environmental and coastal conditions
- » Support resilient coastal communities and economic activity
- » Address community needs through coordinated planning and investment

## PORT LAVACA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

- » Expand parks, recreation, and programming for residents and visitors
- » Develop a connected citywide hike and bike trail system
- » Improve sidewalks, complete streets, and connections to parks and destinations
- » Strengthen the waterfront through resilient improvements and new amenities
- » Create community destinations and support recreation-based tourism
- » Plan for future parkland and recreation needs as the city develops

## DOWNTOWN WATERFRONT MASTER PLAN

- » Expand recreation, public access, and amenities along the waterfront
- » Protect natural resources while strengthening the waterfront's resilience
- » Reinforce the waterfront as a regional destination through placemaking and recreation
- » Strengthen community identity through cohesive wayfinding and branding
- » Restore the waterfront's role as a place for gathering and community activity



# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## WORKSHOP #1

The first public workshop was held Tuesday, May 20, 2025 at the Bauer Community Center, 6:00 to 8:00 PM, in a come-and-go format. Roughly 50 community members attended and shared their priorities at interactive feedback stations, helping shape the direction of the Plan.

### Workshop Goals:

- » Introduce the community to the fundamentals of park master planning
- » Share information about the existing parks and recreation system
- » Understand public perspectives on current parks, programs, and facilities
- » Gather input toward a collective community vision for the future

Stations throughout the community center mixed informational displays with hands-on activities designed to engage residents of all ages. Bilingual members of the LJA Planning Team facilitated discussions and answered questions throughout the evening.

## COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

- » Additional shade trees or structures within existing parks.
- » Larger parks with a range of amenities.
- » A community recreational center with amenities for all age groups, including sports courts and a public pool.
- » More community events and programming.
- » Rentals for kayaks, canoes, and paddle boats near the water.
- » Walking, running, and cycling trails within parks and neighborhoods.
- » Splash pads for younger children.
- » Free access to Lighthouse Beach for Port Lavaca residents.

Public Workshop (May 20, 2025)



## ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Workshop #1 participants took part in a variety of activities to share how they use Port Lavaca's parks today and what they value for the future. Feedback helped identify frequently used parks and recreation facilities, as well as the qualities and experiences participants would like to see reflected in future parks and public spaces.



### Which Parks, Trails, or Recreation Facilities Have You or Your Family Visited in the Last Year?

This station included a regional-scaled map to show local parks, trails, and facilities. Participants were asked to locate and name which parks, trails, and recreational facilities they and their families utilized in the past year. The top three most visited parks are Bayfront Peninsula Park, Lighthouse Beach, and Little Chocolate Bayou Park.



### Jars of the Future

This activity contained six parks initiatives/objectives and asked participants to fund their parks priorities by allocating each of the ten tickets they were provided as they felt appropriate: whether in just a few jars, evenly between the jars, or even all in one jar

**36%** Of participants want **Recreation**

**20%** Of participants want **Design**

**18%** Of participants want **Nature**

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CONT.

## WORKSHOP #2

The second workshop, held Monday, July 27, 2026 at the Bauer Community Center from 5:30 to 7:00 PM, presented the draft plan and gathered feedback on how to prioritize recommendations. Roughly 50 community members attended, including City Council, Planning Commission members, and staff.

### Workshop Goals:

- » Review the structure and content of the Plan
- » Understand public perspectives on the Plan's guiding principles, structure, and content
- » Gather feedback on the Plan's priorities and implementation strategies

Stations displayed maps and the recommended implementation strategies for each chapter. Participants received a limited number of colored sticker dots to distribute across those strategies — a constraint that forced real choices about which actions matter most.

## COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

- » Planting shade trees and installing shade sails or trellises around seating areas, playgrounds, and along trails
- » Increasing marketing and promotion of park programs and special events
- » Commissioning a Tourism Strategic Plan
- » Exploring investment in paddling trails through a working group and a water trail assessment of the shoreline
- » Developing flexible, multigenerational indoor and outdoor recreation areas, including multi-sport athletic complexes
- » Expanding partnership opportunities with the Calhoun County YMCA





## ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Workshop #2 included interactive activities designed to gather feedback on both the physical connections and implementation priorities proposed in the draft Plan. Participants reviewed and discussed mapped trail concepts and used a dot-voting exercise to identify the strategies they felt should receive the greatest attention moving forward.



**Mapping Port Lavaca's Present and Future**  
Residents and city leadership reviewed maps from the Plan showing current walkability and park accessibility across Port Lavaca, along with proposed locations for paddle trails and a regional greenway.



**Rock the Vote: Parks Edition**  
Attendees voted for their preferred implementation strategies. Strategies drawing the highest vote counts are treated as high priority for implementation.



## COMMUNITY “SWOT” ANALYSIS

A SWOT analysis identifies strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in existing conditions, which then informs where improvement strategies should focus. This analysis draws on community feedback and research gathered through the public engagement process.

### Strengths

- » Coastline access, particularly downtown Port Lavaca’s proximity to the shore
- » High-quality playgrounds, walking trails, and park splash pads
- » The number of existing parks
- » Strong prior planning efforts, including at the County level

### Weaknesses

- » A lack of shade trees and structures, which limits summertime use of parks and playgrounds
- » Trails, sidewalks, and pedestrian paths that are discontinuous, disconnected, or uneven
- » No indoor recreational center
- » Limited maintenance of park facilities, particularly restrooms

### Opportunities

- » Expanding trails and sidewalks to link parks with schools, the library, and other destinations
- » Developing an indoor recreation center, a dog park, and additional green space
- » Hosting more community events and pursuing partnerships for funding
- » Adding sports facilities such as tennis, pickleball, and volleyball courts
- » Promoting Port Lavaca’s parks as ecotourism destinations

### Threats

- » Limited funding and infrastructure constraints
- » Population decline, which brings economic vulnerability and fewer resources
- » Natural hazards, including sea-level rise, storm surge, and hurricanes

# GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Guiding Principles reflect the community's priorities for the future of parks, trails, and recreation in Port Lavaca. Informed by community feedback gathered throughout the planning process, they capture the qualities residents value today and the opportunities they want to see strengthened over time.

Together, the five principles provide a framework and direction for the Plan. They represent shared priorities that are reflected throughout from the quality and accessibility of parks and trails to environmental stewardship, economic vitality, and community life.



## **Quality of Life**

Enhance the quality of life for all current and future residents by providing exceptional recreational opportunities and green spaces.



## **Environmental Conservation**

Preserve and protect the natural landscape and build community resilience.



## **Equitable Access**

Expand access, connectivity, and accessibility through trails and pedestrian infrastructure.



## **Economic Vitality**

Encourage economic growth through recreational tourism, public-private partnerships, and innovative funding strategies.



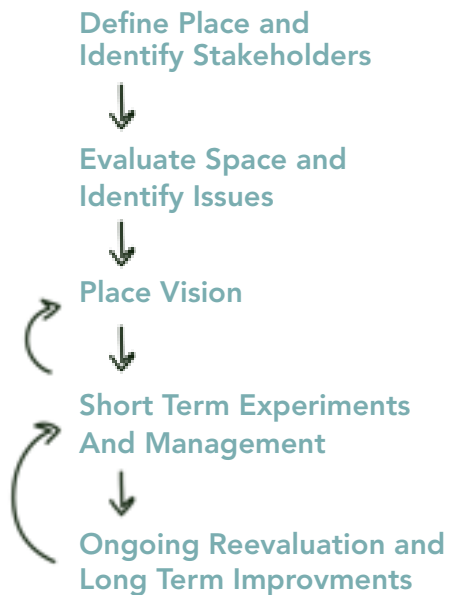
## **Community Empowerment**

Strengthen community identity and vitality through high-quality park programming and special events.

# PLACEMAKING APPROACH

Project for Public Spaces (PPS) is a cross-disciplinary nonprofit that promotes placemaking as an approach to designing and managing public spaces and gathering places with the people who use them every day. PPS defines placemaking as the collaborative process through which people collectively reimagine and reinvest public spaces as the heart of their communities.

The placemaking process includes five steps to transform an existing or plan a new public space. These steps are flexible and can be adjusted to meet the needs of each project's timeline, budget, and goals:



Learn more about Project for Public Spaces and their placemaking approach at [pps.org](https://pps.org)

## THE PLACEMAKING MODEL

This process brings community members and stakeholders together to understand a place, assess its strengths and challenges, and create a shared vision. That vision is tested through short-term improvements, evaluated continuously, and refined through long-term design and management.

The PPS Place Diagram provides a framework for understanding whether a public space, current or planned, functions as a welcoming, active, and meaningful “place.” The framework is divided into four interconnected dimensions:

**Sociability:** The degree to which a space encourages people to meet, interact, build relationships, and feel comfortable spending time together. A sociable place feels welcoming, inclusive, safe, and connected to a community’s social life.

**Users & Activities:** The range, quality, and suitability of things people can do in a place. Successful spaces support activities that reflect community needs and encourage people to return all year long.

**Access & Linkages:** How easily people can see, reach, enter, navigate, and connect to a place by walking, biking, driving, or transit. This also includes a space’s physical and visual relationship to nearby streets, destinations, and adjacent properties.

**Comfort & Image:** How safe, clean, attractive, and inviting a place feels. This includes seating, shade, maintenance, lighting, aesthetics, and the overall positive impression created by the space.

Anchoring the Plan in this placemaking framework conveys to residents that future parks investments are not simply about facilities and physical improvements. Rather, this Plan is a tool that will help connect the people of Port Lavaca to public parks and recreational amenities that reflect a shared community identity and support the city’s evolving needs. Each chapter includes “key placemaking considerations” that city leadership and community members should evaluate as they consider future investments to the parks, trails, and programs that make up its parks and



PARKS & FACILITIES

02

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# INTRODUCTION

Port Lavaca's parks and facilities are public assets in the fullest sense; they give the community places to gather, play, express itself culturally, and build a shared identity.

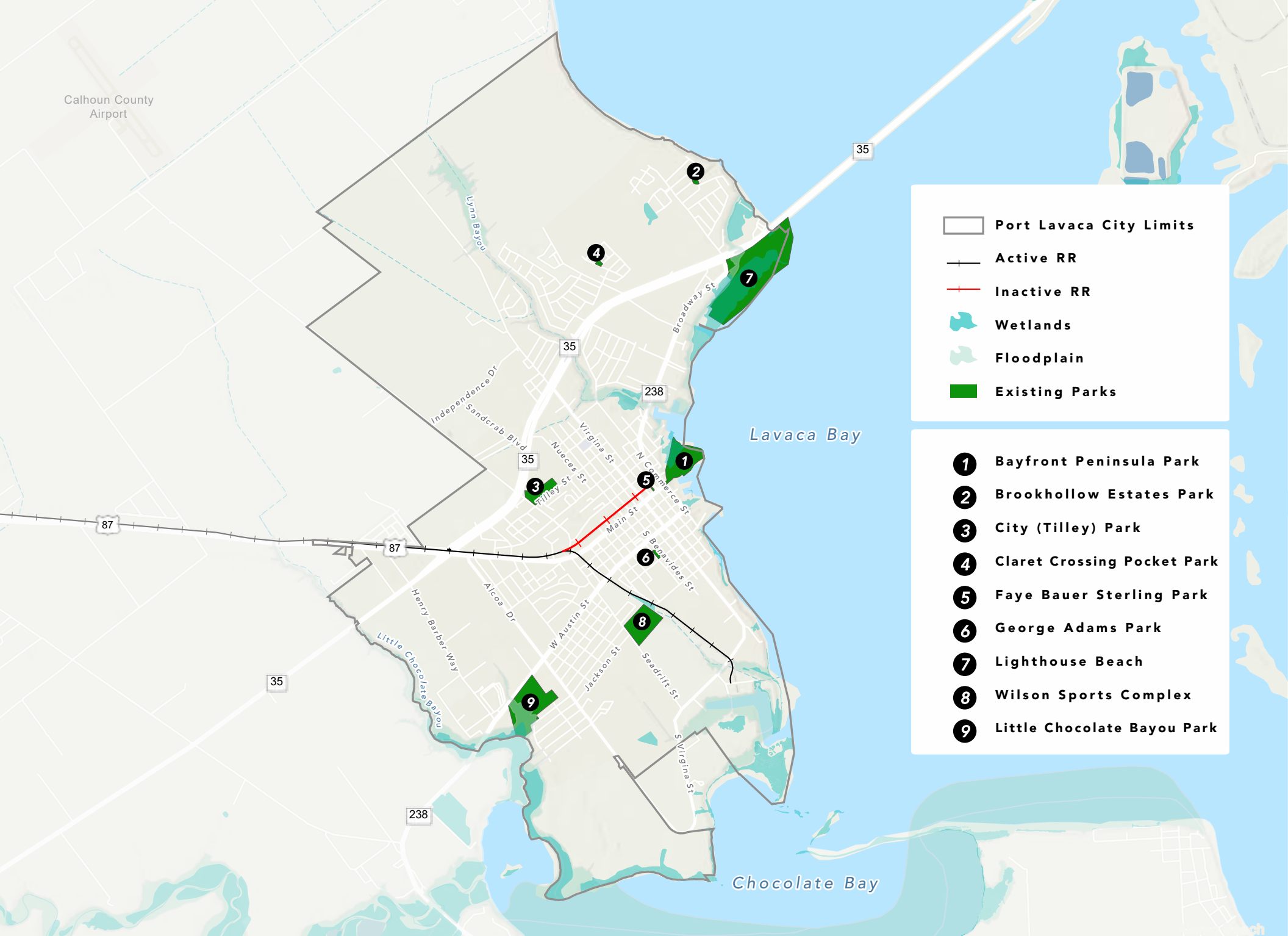
This chapter covers the city's parks and recreational facilities in detail, assesses how well the system meets community needs today, and how it's likely to perform in the near future. It defines the park and facility classifications that make up the local recreation network, giving the city a clear framework for future planning, investment, and parks development. It also inventories existing park assets and recreational facilities, establishing the baseline against which future improvements and expansion will be measured.

## COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Common community desires identified during the public engagement process:

- » Additional shade trees or structures within existing parks
- » Free access to Lighthouse Beach for Port Lavaca residents
- » Covered or indoor basketball court
- » Pickleball Courts
- » Obstacle course with zip lines or a climbing wall
- » Dog park(s)
- » Improved safety, sidewalks, and restrooms

Community members view local parks as places that provide fun, engaging opportunities for recreation, sightseeing, leisure, and health. Residents recommend focusing on larger parks with a wide range of amenities and facilities. They want enhanced public spaces that encourage social interaction through high-quality design and celebrate Port Lavaca's unique cultural, ecological, and social qualities.



# EXISTING PARKS MAP





# PHYSICAL FEATURES

Port Lavaca's natural and built environment shapes opportunities and constraints for parks and trails. Floodplains, wetlands, marshes, and bayous influence where and how improvements can occur, while also providing opportunities for habitat, recreation, and connections to the water. The city's rail corridors create an additional physical barrier that influences access and connectivity across the community.

## FLOODPLAIN

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) defines a floodplain as any land area susceptible to inundation by floodwaters. Port Lavaca's flood hazard areas are concentrated along Chocolate Bayou and Lynn Bayou.

## WETLANDS, MARSHES, & BAYOUS

Wetlands are areas where water covers the soil, or sits at or near the surface, either year-round or seasonally. Coastal and tidal wetlands are closely associated with estuaries, where seawater and freshwater mix to produce varying salinity levels. Port Lavaca's wetlands and marshes are concentrated along Lighthouse Beach and the Harbor of Refuge. Bayous are slow-moving tributaries feeding into larger bodies of water, and their characteristic marshy waters are common in low-lying coastal areas across the Gulf Coast. Like coastal wetlands, they may be freshwater, saltwater, or brackish. Port Lavaca's bayous support diverse estuarine ecosystems, provide wildlife habitat, and offer real recreational opportunity.

## RAILROAD

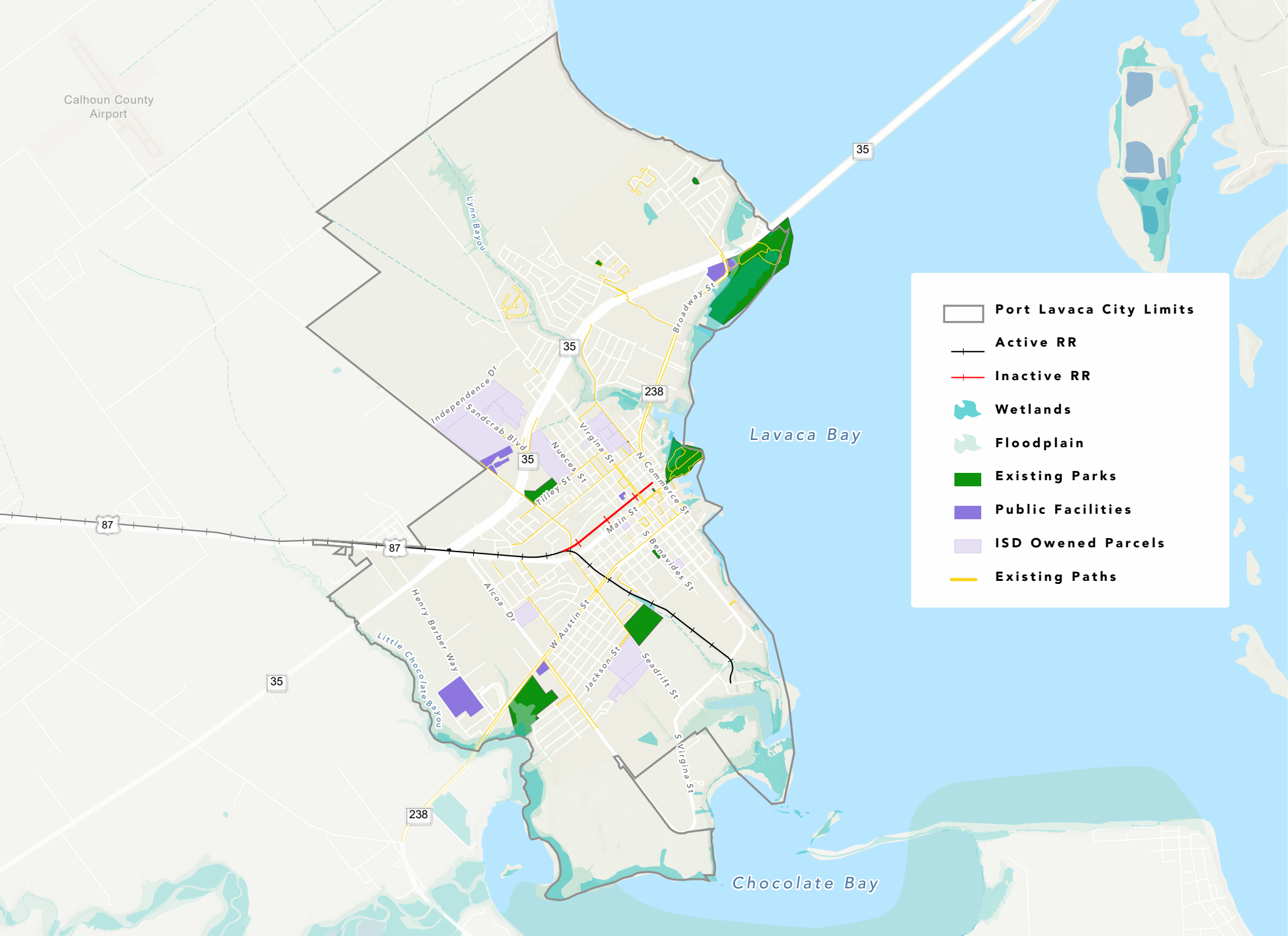
An active Union Pacific line bisects the city north to south along US 87, splitting at Half League Road. The southern portion remains technically active but is currently unused because of a washed-out bridge at Virginia Street / 1090. The northern fork is permanently inactive and terminates at the historic depot in the Waterfront District.

## IMPERVIOUS SURFACES

Impervious surfaces (roads, roofs, parking lots) act as an indirect indicator for human development because they directly correlate with population density, economic activity, and urban sprawl.

Port Lavaca Bird Sanctuary





# TREES & SHADE

As Port Lavaca evolves, the need to protect and expand its tree canopy and shade coverage becomes increasingly important. Trees play a critical role in reducing the urban heat island effect, improving air quality, and supporting stormwater management. Expanding the tree canopy doesn't just support health and livability—it also boosts economic value, with homes near green spaces often experiencing higher property values. Where tree plantings are not feasible, alternative shade infrastructure, such as shade sails, cantilevers, and umbrellas, should be considered.

To meet future needs and ensure all residents have adequate access to shade, Port Lavaca should continue investing in tree planting and the integration of other shade or cooling infrastructure into its parks and trails. As demand for outdoor recreation grows, these efforts will help strengthen the city's resilience and create a cooler, more comfortable outdoor environment.

## NATIVE TREE SPECIES



LIVE OAK



WAX MYRTLE



TEXAS SAGE



AUTOGRAPH TREE

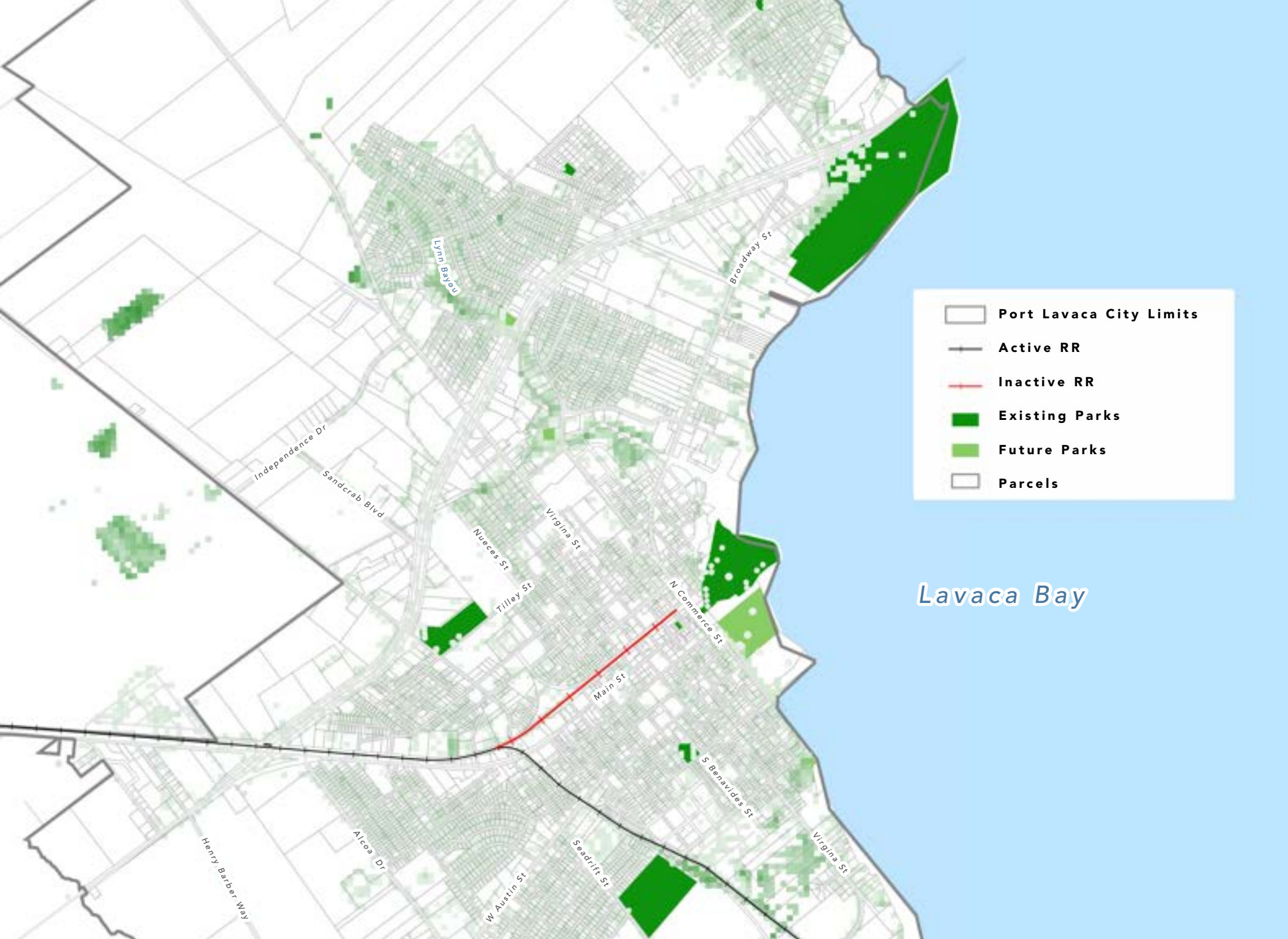


MEXICAN OLIVE TREE



MEXICAN FAN PALM







# PARK TYPOLOGIES

Parks vary in size, function, and the communities they serve. Park typologies provide a framework for understanding these differences and planning for a balanced system that offers recreation, gathering spaces, access to nature, and other community benefits.

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) provides classification guidance based on park size and service area. These classifications, from pocket parks to regional parks, help evaluate how different types of parks serve Port Lavaca residents. Larger parks can accommodate a broader range of amenities, programming, and natural areas, while smaller parks provide convenient access to recreation and green space close to home.

In addition to this size-based hierarchy, specialized typologies are defined by their primary function, form, or natural resources rather than acreage or service area. Together, these typologies provide a flexible framework for understanding Port Lavaca's existing parks and planning for future needs.

< 1 ACRE



## POCKET

**Size:** 2,500 sq. ft.–1 acre.

**Service Area:** 0.25-mile radius

**Purpose:**

- » Serves small, localized recreational needs
- » May offer active recreation areas (playground) and passive recreation areas (picnicking)
- » Small-scale parks designed to meet limited, localized recreation needs within a short walking distance

**Examples:**

- » Brookhollow Estates (Butterfly) Park
- » Claret Crossing Pocket Park
- » Faye Bauer Sterling Park



## NEIGHBORHOOD

**Size:** 1 - 15 acres

**Service Area:** 0.25- to 0.5-mile radius

**Purpose:**

- » Serves local residents
- » Offers active recreation areas (playgrounds, sports courts, sports fields) and passive recreation areas (walking, picnicking)
- » Serves nearby residents with daily-use amenities tailored to the surrounding community

**Examples:**

- » City (Tilley) Park
- » George Adams Park
- » Substation Site (future)

15+ ACRES



500+ ACRES



## COMMUNITY

**Size:** 16 - 99 acres

**Service Area:** 1- to 2-mile radius

### Purpose:

- » Serves multiple neighborhoods
- » Offers more intense active recreation (sports fields, swimming pools, sports courts) and passive recreation (hiking, picnicking)
- » Provides a broader range of recreation facilities that draw users from across the city

### Examples:

- » Bayfront Peninsula Park
- » Wilson Park

## METROPOLITAN

**Size:** 100 - 499 acres

**Service Area:** Entire city & surrounding areas

### Purpose:

- » Serves all city residents
- » Large, mixed-use park with natural landscapes and developed amenities including sports fields, trails, playgrounds, picnic areas, and water-based recreation
- » Large, citywide destination offering significant natural and recreational amenities

### Example:

- » Lighthouse Beach Park

## REGIONAL

**Size:** 500+ acres

**Service Area:** Multiple communities within a 1-hour drive

### Purpose:

- » Multi-use facilities supporting all ages and abilities
- » Often includes nature preservation, wildlife habitat, and conservation areas
- » Expansive multi-community destinations that conserve natural resources while supporting year-round recreational activities

### Example:

- » Little Chocolate Bayou Park

# SPECIALIZED TYPOLOGIES

These typologies are defined by their function, form, or natural resources rather than by park size or service area. They may occur as standalone sites or as distinct areas within larger parks.



## PRESERVE

**Size:** Varies

**Service Area:** Varies

**Purpose:**

- » Protects and manages natural or cultural resources
- » Active and passive recreation serve as a secondary focus

**Examples:**

- » Powderhorn State Park (future)



## LINEAR

**Size:** Varies

**Service Area:** Varies

**Purpose:**

- » Green corridors connecting neighborhoods, parks, and open spaces
- » Supports multimodal forms of transportation such as walking, jogging, biking, hiking, etc.
- » May include active recreation areas and/or gathering spaces

**Examples:**

- » Depot Linear Park (future)



## SPECIAL USE

**Size:** Varies

**Service Area:** Varies

**Purpose:**

- » Single-purpose or specialized activities such as marinas, golf courses, amphitheaters, plazas, arboretums, and historical sites

**Examples:**

- » Calhoun County Fairgrounds
- » Smith Harbor (future)
- » Boat docks
- » City Pool

# PARK INVENTORY MATRIX

|                     | ACREAGE | BARBECUE PIT | BASEBALL FIELD | BASKETBALL COURT | BEACH ACCESS | BENCH | BIKE RACK | BOAT RAMP | CABANAS | FITNESS CENTER | FISHING PIER | PICNIC TABLE | PET DRINKING STATION | PET WASTE STATION | PLAYGROUND | PAVILION | RESTROOM | SAND BOX | SAND VOLLEYBALL | SKATE PARK | SOCCER FIELD | SOFTBALL FIELD | SPLASH PAD | SWING SET | T-BALL FIELD | TEETER-TOTTER | TRASH/ RECYCLING BIN | WALKING PATH | WATER FOUNTAIN |
|---------------------|---------|--------------|----------------|------------------|--------------|-------|-----------|-----------|---------|----------------|--------------|--------------|----------------------|-------------------|------------|----------|----------|----------|-----------------|------------|--------------|----------------|------------|-----------|--------------|---------------|----------------------|--------------|----------------|
| EXISTING            |         |              |                |                  |              |       |           |           |         |                |              |              |                      |                   |            |          |          |          |                 |            |              |                |            |           |              |               |                      |              |                |
| BAYFRONT PENINSULA  | 25.8    | 1            |                |                  |              | 9     | 1         | 1         | 1       |                | 1            | 24           | 1                    | 2                 | 1          | 1        | 1        | 1        |                 |            |              |                | 1          |           |              |               | 18                   | 1            | 1              |
| BROOKHOLLOW ESTATES | 0.8     |              |                |                  |              | 4     |           |           |         | 1              |              | 2            | 1                    | 1                 | 1          |          |          |          |                 |            |              |                | 1          |           |              |               | 1                    | 1            | 1              |
| CITY (TILLEY)       | 0.3     | 4            |                | 1                |              | 4     |           |           |         |                |              | 7            |                      |                   | 2          | 1        | 2        |          | 1               |            | 1            |                |            | 1         |              |               | 8                    | 1            |                |
| CLARET CROSSING     | 0.7     |              |                |                  |              | 4     |           |           |         |                |              |              |                      |                   | 1          |          |          |          |                 |            |              |                | 2          |           |              | 1             | 2                    | 1            |                |
| FAYE BAUER STERLING | 0.2     |              |                |                  |              |       |           |           |         |                |              |              |                      |                   |            |          |          |          |                 |            |              |                |            |           |              |               | 1                    |              |                |
| GEORGE ADAMS        | 2.1     | 4            | 1              | 1                |              | 2     |           |           | 1       |                |              | 15           |                      |                   | 1          | 1        | 2        |          |                 |            |              |                |            | 4         |              | 1             | 4                    |              | 1              |
| LIGHTHOUSE BEACH    | 78.4    | 1            |                |                  | 1            | 3     |           | 1         | 1       |                | 1            | 11           |                      |                   | 3          |          | 2        |          | 1               |            |              |                | 1          |           |              |               | 25                   | 1            | 1              |
| WILSON              | 21.4    |              | 1              |                  |              |       |           |           |         |                |              |              |                      |                   | 1          |          |          |          |                 | 1          | 1            | 1              |            | 1         | 1            |               | 5                    | 1            |                |
| EXISTING TOTAL      | 139.7   | 10           | 2              | 2                | 1            | 26    | 1         | 2         | 3       | 1              | 2            | 59           | 2                    | 3                 | 10         | 3        | 7        | 1        | 2               | 1          | 2            | 1              | 2          | 9         | 1            | 2             | 64                   | 6            | 4              |
|                     |         |              |                |                  |              |       |           |           |         |                |              |              |                      |                   |            |          |          |          |                 |            |              |                |            |           |              |               |                      |              |                |
| PLANNED             |         |              |                |                  |              |       |           |           |         |                |              |              |                      |                   |            |          |          |          |                 |            |              |                |            |           |              |               |                      |              |                |
| KITCHEN SITE        | 2.4     |              |                |                  | 1            |       |           |           |         |                |              |              |                      |                   |            |          |          |          |                 |            |              |                |            |           |              |               |                      |              |                |
| SMITH HARBOR        | 15.0    |              |                |                  |              |       |           |           |         |                |              |              |                      |                   |            |          |          |          |                 |            |              |                |            |           |              |               |                      |              |                |
| HOLIDAY LANE SITE   | 0.5     |              |                |                  |              |       |           |           |         |                |              |              |                      |                   |            |          |          |          |                 |            |              |                |            |           |              |               |                      |              |                |
| WATER PLANT         | 2.9     |              |                |                  |              |       |           |           |         |                | 1            | 1            |                      |                   |            |          |          |          |                 |            |              |                |            |           |              |               |                      |              |                |
| COMBINED TOTAL      | 179.2   | 10           | 2              | 2                | 2            | 26    | 1         | 2         | 3       | 1              | 2            | 59           | 2                    | 3                 | 10         | 3        | 7        | 1        | 2               | 1          | 2            | 1              | 2          | 9         | 1            | 2             | 64                   | 6            | 4              |



# LEVELS OF SERVICE

The quality of a parks and recreation system is hard to quantify precisely, but Level of Service (LOS) gives a workable, qualitative read on how a system is actually performing. Three measures matter most here.

A half-mile is generally the farthest most people will walk to reach a park — 7 to 10 minutes at a brisk pace, 12 to 15 at a leisurely one. Based on current city- and county-owned parks within Port Lavaca’s limits, about 58.5 percent of residents live within that ten-minute walk.

With nine total parks, including Little Chocolate Bayou Park, Port Lavaca would need three more to fully serve its population under the national average ratio. Continued population decline could close part of that gap without the city having to do anything — worth keeping in mind, but not something to plan around.

## OBSERVATIONS

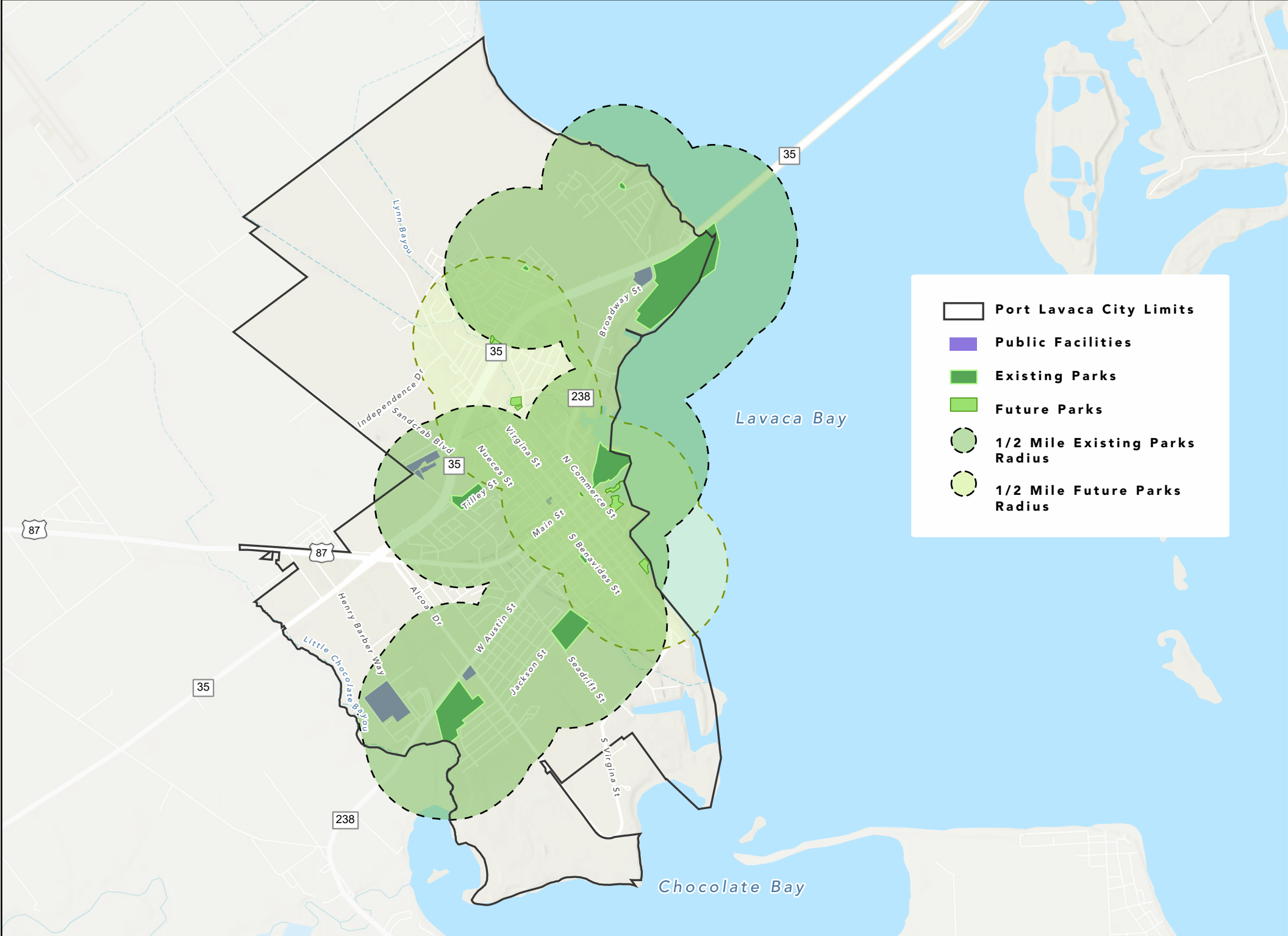
The Levels of Services map to the right identifies several areas where residents have limited access to a park within a 1/2 mile. These gaps can help focus future park investment and improve the distribution of recreational opportunities across Port Lavaca.

Key areas of need include:

- » **North-central Port Lavaca:** Between N. Virginia Street/FM 1090 and Lynn Bayou, where land has already been identified for future park acquisition
- » **Central Port Lavaca:** Between US 87 and W. Austin Street. Parkland has already been acquired
- » **Southwest Port Lavaca:** South of Leon Street

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>RESIDENTS PER PARK</b><br>National Average <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>» 1 park per 2,411 residents</li></ul><br>Average for communities with less than 20,000 residents <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>» 1 park per 1,001 residents</li></ul><br>Port Lavaca’s current los <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>» 1 park per 1,413 residents</li><li>» 1 park per 1,256 residents (If County-owned Little Chocolate Bayou Park is included)</li></ul> | <b>PARKLAND PER CAPITA</b><br>National Average <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>» 10.2 acres per 1,000 residents</li></ul><br>Average for communities with less than 20,000 residents <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>» 12.9 acres per 1,000 residents</li></ul><br>Port Lavaca’s current los <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>» 19.5 acres per 1,000 residents</li></ul> | <b>PARKS WITHIN 1/2 MILE</b><br>National Average <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>» 70% of residents within 10-minutes of a park</li></ul><br>Port Lavaca’s Current Los <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>» 58.5% of residents within a 10-minute walk of a park</li><li>» 1,265 need walkable park to meet national average</li></ul> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Source: 2025 NRPA Agency Performance Review



# EXISTING PARK PROFILES

This section reviews the existing conditions of Port Lavaca’s parks system. Each park profile includes an inventory of its current amenities, outline of planned improvements, and a placemaking score.

## THE PLACEMAKING SCORE

Park evaluations are based on site visits conducted on April 3, 2025, and the planning team’s knowledge of improvements that have taken place since. Each park in Port Lavaca’s current system has been evaluated against the four placemaking elements outlined in Chapter 1: Access & Linkages, Comfort & Image, Uses & Activities, and Sociability. Each element has been scored on a scale of 1 to 5, where:

- » **5** = abundant, well provided, excellent condition, very attractive, no concerns, true.
- » **1** = scarce, very unappealing, very concerning, false.

Scoring Visualization



An element that doesn’t apply to a given park receives a score of N/A rather than zero. Placemaking scores are contextualized by park size and type. While a pocket park might score well on its Uses & Activities element by providing a single bench and a playground, a regional park only providing those amenities would yield a lower score.

Placemaking score considerations include:

**Sociability:** Does the park offer enough gathering spaces, such as picnic tables, pavilions, or open space, that can accommodate a wide range of uses? Does the park provide amenities that are accessible across all ages and ability levels?

**Uses & Activities:** Does the park offer a diverse set of amenities relative to its available space? Do the park’s amenities encourage play, active living, and social connections?

**Access & Linkages:** Is the park easily accessible via local streets, trails, or sidewalks to surrounding neighborhoods or to the Port Lavaca community at large? Are pathways and sidewalks located within the park easy to navigate via high-quality signage or wayfinding infrastructure? Are available parking options and bicycle infrastructure enough to meet current user needs?

**Comfort & Image:** Is the park well maintained and clean? Does the park’s lighting and landscaping promote clear sightlines and create a sense of safety, especially at night? Does the park offer enough shade, seating options, and access to water that allow it to be enjoyed in all weather conditions?

# 1 BAYFRONT PENINSULA PARK

## LOCATION:

East of Commerce Street, along Lavaca Bay

## TYPE:

Community Park

## SIZE:

25.8 acres

## AMENITIES:

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

## PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS:

- » Shared-use path connecting to Fulton Street (2027)
- » Entrance rehab (2027-2028)
- » Bench Shade Structures (2027)
- » Amphitheater



## PLACEMAKING SCORE:

Access & Linkages 2.5

Comfort & Image 4.0

Users & Activities 4.0

Sociability 4.0

Total Park Score 3.6





## 2 BROOKHOLLOW ESTATES (BUTTERFLY) PARK

### LOCATION:

Harbor Drive East and West across from La Salle Boulevard.

### TYPE:

Pocket Park

### SIZE:

0.3 acres

### CURRENT AMENITIES

- » Playground
- » Swing set
- » Water fountain
- » Dog drinking station
- » Benches
- » Walking path

### PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS

- » Backfall fencing, entry improvements (2026)
- » Brick-lined walkways (2026)
- » Cabana structure (2026)
- » Lighting (2026)



### PLACEMAKING SCORE:

|                    |     |
|--------------------|-----|
| Access & Linkages  | 4.0 |
| Comfort & Image    | 4.0 |
| Users & Activities | 3.5 |
| Sociability        | 2.5 |

Total Park Score

3.8



# 3 CITY (TILLEY) PARK

## LOCATION:

Half League Rd. and Tilley St., next to Travis Middle School

## TYPE:

Neighborhood Park

## SIZE:

10.3 acres

## AMENITIES:

- » Half court basketball
- » Soccer goals
- » Sand volleyball court
- » Covered pavilion
- » Barbecue pits
- » Junior Playground
- » Music Park and child size stage
- » Walking/Born Learning® Trail
- » Benches
- » Water fountains
- » Restrooms
- » Parking

## PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS

- » Parking improvements (2028-2030)
- » Born Learning® Trail Shade Structure (2026)
- » Scoreboard, sign, and lights at football field (TBD)



## PLACEMAKING SCORE:

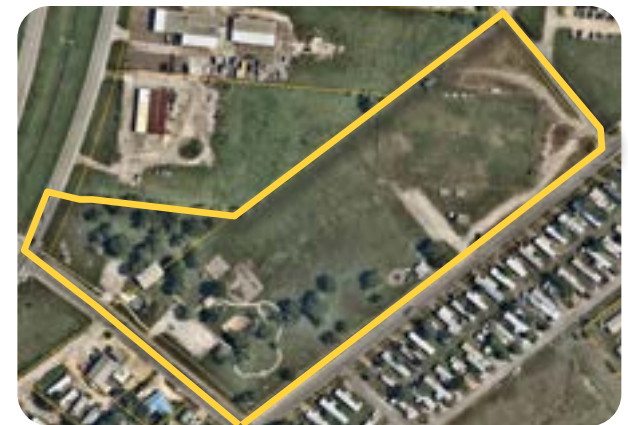
Access & Linkages 2.0

Comfort & Image 2.0

Users & Activities 4.0

Sociability 3.0

Total Park Score 2.8





# 4 CLARET CROSSING POCKET PARK

## LOCATION:

Between Aimable Street, Crimson Avenue, and Claret Drive.

## TYPE:

Pocket Park

## SIZE:

0.7 acres

## AMENITIES:

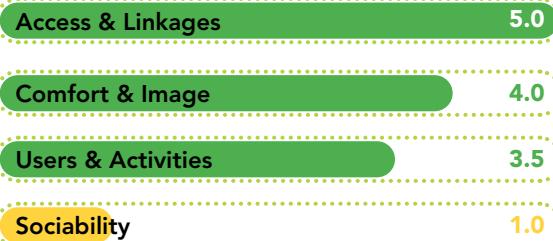
- » Playground
- » Swing set
- » Teeter-totter
- » Benches
- » Dog drinking station

## PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS:

- » NA - New Playground



## PLACEMAKING SCORE:



# 5 FAYE BAUER STERLING PARK

## LOCATION:

E. U.S. 87, between Colorado and Guadalupe Streets

## TYPE:

Pocket Park

## SIZE:

0.2 acres

## AMENITIES:

- » Gazebo
- » Event space
- » Planter boxes

## PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS:

- » Implement recommendations from the Waterfront Master Plan: plaza stage, string lights, public art (TBD)
- » Expand into adjacent Regan building (TBD)



## PLACEMAKING SCORE:

Access & Linkages 2.0

Comfort & Image 3.5

Users & Activities 1.0

Sociability 1.0

Total Park Score 1.9





# 6 GEORGE ADAMS PARK

## LOCATION:

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

## TYPE:

Neighborhood Park

## SIZE:

2.1 acres

## AMENITIES:

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

## PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS:

- » Sidewalk (2028)
- » Shade structure (2028)



## PLACEMAKING SCORE:

Access & Linkages 1.0

Comfort & Image 1.0

Users & Activities 2.0

Sociability 3.5

Total Park Score 1.9



# 7 LIGHTHOUSE BEACH

## LOCATION:

South of Lavaca Bay Causeway, along Lavaca Bay coastline

## TYPE:

Metropolitan Park

## SIZE:

78.4 acres (total), 12.34 acres (usable)

## AMENITIES:

- » Playground (3)
- » Splash pad
- » Sand Volleyball
- » Fishing pier
- » Cabanas
- » Barbecue pits
- » Restrooms
- » Water fountains
- » Parking
- » Gated entrance
- » RV Park
- » Preserved wetlands
- » Observation points
- » Beach access
- » Benches

## PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS:

- » Three new shaded cabanas at splash pad with covered seating area and picnic tables
- » Develop camping area (2026)
- » Reconstruct volleyball court (2026)
- » Raised crosswalk and accessible sidewalk from splash pad to restrooms (2026)
- » Improve rock jetties
- » Provide living shoreline protection to wetlands area



*Note: City Pool (2.87 acres) is adjacent to Lighthouse Beach Park, but does not require park admission and is not considered to be part of the park.*

## PLACEMAKING SCORE:

Access & Linkages 2.0

Comfort & Image 3.5

Users & Activities 5.0

Sociability 4.0

Total Park Score 3.6



# 8 WILSON SPORTS COMPLEX

## LOCATION:

East of Seadrift St. across from Jackson Roosevelt Elementary

## TYPE:

Community Park

## SIZE:

21.4 acres

## AMENITIES:

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

## PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS:

- » Covered Basketball Court (2026)
- » Sidewalk (2028)
- » Pickleball Court (2028)
- » Perimeter trail (TBD)
- » Additional parking along southeast edge (TBD)



## PLACEMAKING SCORE:

|                    |     |
|--------------------|-----|
| Access & Linkages  | 1.0 |
| Comfort & Image    | 3.0 |
| Users & Activities | 2.5 |
| Sociability        | 2.0 |

Total Park Score

2.1



# 9 LITTLE CHOCOLATE BAYOU PARK

## LOCATION:

South of Austin St., between Alcoa Dr. and Little Chocolate Bayou

## TYPE:

Regional Park

## SIZE:

35.0 acres

## AMENITIES:

- » Athletic fields
- » New Playground
- » Swing set
- » Fishing Pond
- » Trails
- » Restrooms
- » Picnic Area
- » Grills
- » Pavilion
- » Benches

## PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS:

- » Inclusive Playground (2025)

*Little Chocolate Bayou Park is maintained by Calhoun County.*





# PROPOSED FUTURE PARKS

Port Lavaca is actively working to expand open space recreation opportunities by improving waterfront access, enhancing multi-use trail and greenway connections, and strengthening shoreline resilience measures. These efforts are framed around increasing public access, supporting community events, protecting natural resources, and enhancing the quality of life.

## SMITH HARBOR

**Location:** S. Commerce St & Live Oak St

**Size:** 15 acres

**Planned Improvements:**

- » Public access boardwalk (2026)
- » Marina services area
- » Motorized boating and sailing center
- » Dredging, widening of Harbor
- » Seawall armoring
- » Peninsula shaping and edge treatment
- » Elevated (stilted) marina building
- » Lowland trails
- » Planned/Budgeted: 10' boardwalk along existing concrete seawall



## KITCHEN SITE

**Location:** E South St & S Guadalupe St

Type: Neighborhood Park

**Size:** 2.4 acres

**Planned Improvements:**

- » Public access to Lavaca Bay (2030)
- » Preserve
- » Fishing



## HOLIDAY LANE SITE

**Location:** Holiday Ln at Brookhollow Dr.; East of TX-35.

**Type:** Neighborhood Park

**Size:** 0.4 acres

**Planned Improvements:**

» TBD



## WATER PLANT SITE

**Location:** Newlin St & Houston St, near Lynn Bayou

**Type:** Neighborhood Park

**Size:** 2.8 acres

**Planned Improvements:**

» Fishing Decks

» Picnic Tables



# KEY PLACEMAKING CONSIDERATIONS

The city should take the placemaking framework into consideration when planning for future park investments and infrastructure:

## **Sociability**

- » Does park accessibility go beyond ADA compliance?
- » How can universal design standards extend to park walkways, inclusive play equipment, and seating options?
- » Are there volunteer opportunities for community members to participate in park cleanups, install new amenities or public art, or remove invasive species?
- » Can the parks system collaborate with Calhoun County Library to open little free libraries or offer other library programming within the parks system?
- » Are there local businesses or other community organizations that are willing to sponsor park amenities such as outdoor exercise equipment, benches, water fountains, or playgrounds?

## **Uses & Activities**

- » Where can Port Lavaca implement dog parks into its current parks system?
- » How can pet-friendly amenities, such as fencing, pet-friendly water foundations, and pet waste stations be incorporated into the current parks system?
- » From toddler-friendly splashpads to pools to coastal access, how can parks incorporate access to water into their design and amenity offerings?
- » Can future neighborhood developments set aside land for detention that can double as open spaces, trails, or other recreational amenities?

## **Access & Linkages**

- » Are parks evenly and equitably distributed throughout Port Lavaca?
- » Which neighborhoods or community groups have easy access to nearby parks? Which groups don't?
- » Are parks easy to navigate through signage and wayfinding infrastructure?
- » Can Port Lavaca residents easily access parks via sidewalks, trails, or bicycle paths?
- » Do parks have ample parking spaces for vehicular access?

## **Comfort & Image**

- » Do park users have adequate access to shade, whether from tree canopy or manmade shade structures?
- » How does park landscaping and lighting influence sightlines and provide a sense of security, especially at night?
- » How can parks incorporate public art, such as murals, painted utility boxes, or educational signage, that enhances the user's experience?
- » Can green infrastructure, such bioswales, permeable surfaces, or rain gardens, be incorporated into the park system as stormwater management tools?
- » Is native and pollinator-friendly landscaping considered when parks are designed or updated?
- » How can habitat preservation and restoration, as well as educational materials regarding native ecosystems, be incorporated into future park designs or signage?







# PARKS RECOMMENDATIONS

## NEW PARKS & TRAILS

**2.01** Prioritize the development of a neighborhood park or larger park along the southeast waterfront.

**2.02** Prioritize development of a neighborhood park or larger park between US 87 and W Austin.

**2.03** Prioritize development of a neighborhood park or larger, ideally a community park, north of SH 35 in the vicinity of Lynn Bayou.

**2.04** Accept the “100% Challenge” for all residents to be within 1/2 mile of a recreational resource within 10 years.

**2.04** Accept the “100% Challenge” for all residents to be within 1/2 mile of a recreational resource within 10 years.

**2.05** In recreationally underserved areas, prioritize active recreation amenities in any new parks over five acres constructed north of SH 35; at that time, allow for public input to guide which amenities are introduced.

**2.06** Identify floodplains, wetlands, easements, and distressed properties adjacent to existing pocket parks that could be used to expand park footprints.

## IMPROVEMENTS

**2.07** Conduct an ADA assessment on specified parks to determine what types of retrofits can improve ADA accessibility.

**2.08** Develop an “Adopt-a-Park” program inviting neighborhoods, businesses, and volunteers to provide support and monitoring.

**2.09** Install low-cost guidance elements (bollards, fencing, landscaping) to direct visitors toward desired areas and limit access to sensitive zones.

**2.10** Install multi-use features (e.g., lawn areas with power stanchions, flexible shade shelters, portable seating) to support varied community events.

**2.11** Plant fast-growing native, drought-tolerant shade trees around seating areas, playgrounds, and along trails.

**2.12** Plant shade trees throughout playgrounds and walkways.

**2.13** Continue installing shaded picnic pavilions and seating areas in existing parks and trails.

**2.14** Define clear, formal entry points and boundaries with signage, gateway elements, pavement changes, or landscape features.

**2.15** Ensure that drinking water fountains are readily available in existing public spaces.

**2.16** Implement stormwater management practices that double as cooling, such as installing shade trees in bioswales or around roadside planters.

**2.17** Incorporate water features such as splash pads or misting stations in existing parks.

**2.18** Install dark sky-friend lighting along high-use corridors, including parking lots, pavilions, and park entries; consider solar-powered or motion-activated fixtures in naturalized areas to reduce operational costs.

**2.19** Install trellises or pergolas and cover them with climbing vines to create natural shade curtains.

**2.20** Replace concrete or asphalt with turf, native grasses, or groundcover to reduce surface temperatures and heat radiation.

**2.21** Review the systemwide maintenance standard specifying routine cycles for mowing, litter removal, restroom cleaning, graffiti abatement, and vegetation trimming.

**2.22** Use high-density polyethylene (HDPE) shade sails over playgrounds, picnic areas, and along trails.

**2.23** Adopt a riparian buffer policy to safeguard waterways, prevent erosion, and improve water quality.

**2.24** Restore at minimum 50 acres of degraded prairie or wetland habitat through native planting and ecological enhancement features.

**2.25** Establish seasonal cooling centers in high-traffic and low-shade parks.

**2.26** Integrated Playground Shade: When replacing play equipment, prioritize structures with pre-installed shades, which are often more affordable than retrofitting separate structures.

## POLICIES & STANDARDS

**2.27** Adopt a park, trail, and improvements dedication ordinance to support efforts to expand the existing parks system.

**2.28** Issue an open call to churches and houses of worship in North Port Lavaca that have recreation facilities on their grounds; establish partnerships to spread awareness of the facilities and provide access for residents of recreationally underserved neighborhoods.

**2.29** Establish park identity with consistent branding and wayfinding, starting with the parks and drinking themes identified in the Waterfront Master Plan.

**2.30** Codify design and ADA minimum standards for all park infrastructure, including new parks, piers, boat launches, and playgrounds, including private parks within future master planned communities.

**2.31** Establish a City policy of developing pocket parks sparingly, such as for Downtown plazas.

**2.32** Establish conservation easements or designated preserves to protect 500 acres of ecologically sensitive land from development and degradation.

**2.33** Establish partnerships with churches and other entities in North Port Lavaca with private recreation facilities; provide access for residents of recreationally underserved neighborhoods.

**2.34** Offer a fee-in-lieu option, which is a method to fund park enhancements where the City Council has the ability to decide whether a financial contribution would be preferred to land dedication.

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

TRAILS

03

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# INTRODUCTION

Movement and connectivity directly shape a community's quality of life. Trails not only provide opportunities for outdoor exercise and exploration but also an alternative to driving. Linking parks, schools, neighborhoods, and other destinations through a pedestrian and bicycle-friendly trail network supports Port Lavaca through their residents' ability to navigate the community safely, comfortably, and enjoyably.

This chapter explores how an expanded trail network can make Port Lavaca a more accessible, active community.

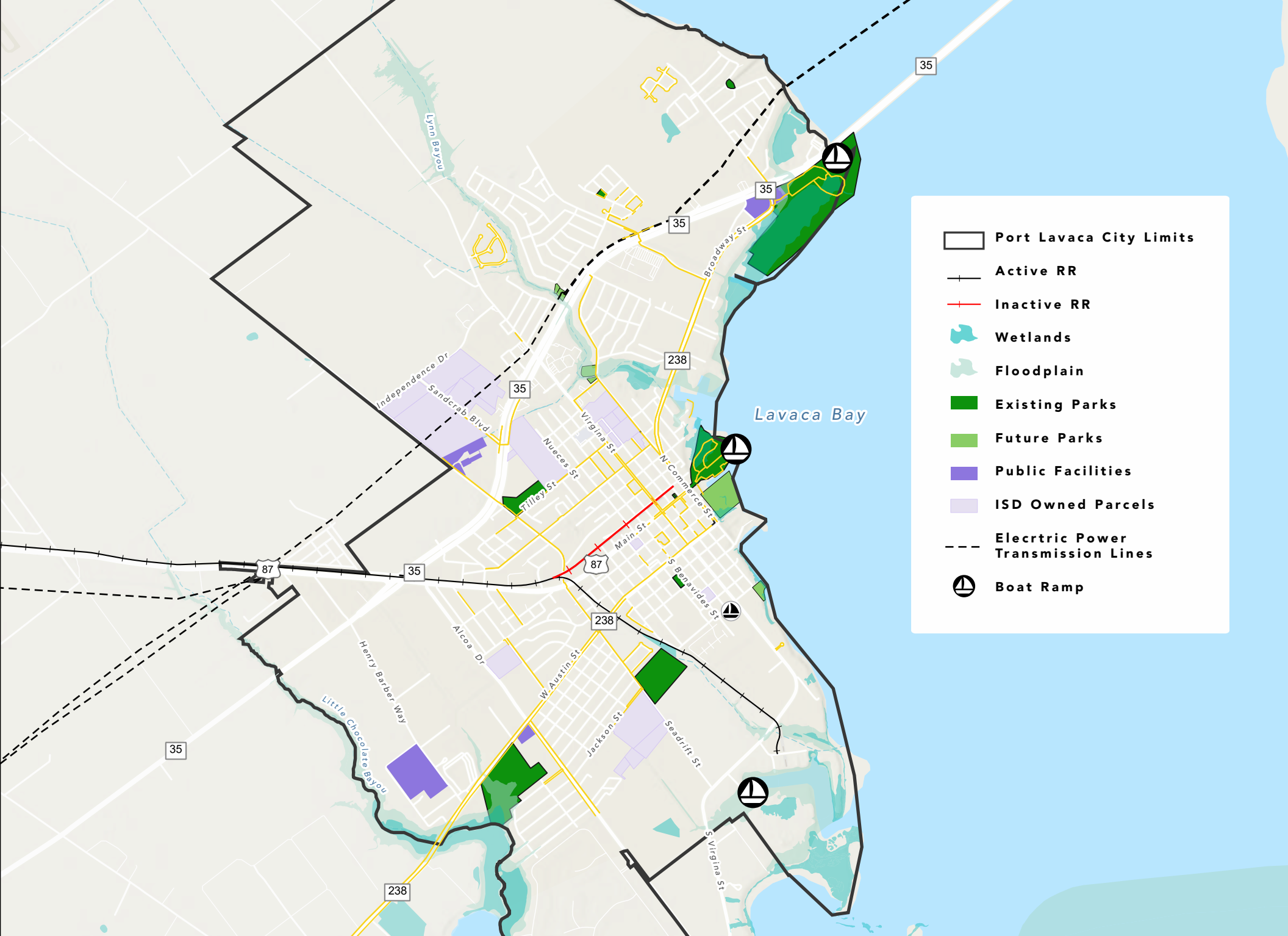
## COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Our public engagement process found that Port Lavaca residents desire:

- » Additional off-street and wooded trails to accommodate the growing running and cycling community
- » A sidewalk and trail system that better connects parks to residential neighborhoods, schools, and other community amenities
- » A paddle trails system, as well as boat ramps and rental opportunities for kayaks, canoes, and paddle boats near the water

Additionally, public input revealed that residents and visitors consistently respond well to Port Lavaca's existing piers, nature trails, and boardwalks.

Input from city staff prioritizes trail maintenance as well as incorporating stormwater management and hazard resilience into the trails system.



# TRAIL TYPOLOGIES

Trails serve different purposes based on their location, users, and role within the larger network. These typologies provide a framework for a connected system ranging from recreational trails to neighborhood, community, and regional routes.

Each typology considers the intended experience, level of use, context, cost, and environmental impact. Trail materials may vary based on these conditions. The typologies are intended as guidelines for future trail planning and design rather than fixed standards.

## LEVEL OF SERVICE

NRPA benchmarks provide context for Port Lavaca's existing trail system. Park and recreation agencies in communities with fewer than 20,000 residents typically manage between two and ten miles of trails, with a median of four miles. Port Lavaca currently provides 3.65 miles of trails, placing the city near the median for communities of similar size.



### NATURE TRAILS

**Uses:** walking, hiking, mountain biking, etc.

**Experience:** Natural Trail

**Cost/Environmental Impact:**  
minimal — uses existing vegetation and open space

**Attribute:** Some trails may be limited by use type (hiking or biking, not necessarily both)



### NEIGHBORHOOD PATHS

**Uses:** walking, hiking, biking, etc.

**Experience:** links neighborhoods to community pathways and greenways

**Cost/Environmental Impact:**  
medium — utilizes land set aside for open space

**Attribute:** Location, surface, and landscape design should tie to the development zone it's part of



## COMMUNITY PATHS

**Uses:** multi-use designation

**Experience:** unique environments and landscape treatments along its length

**Cost/Environmental Impact:** high, due to the amount of hardscape and adjacency to roadway

**Attribute:** Highly efficient at moving residents to and from key amenity areas and special nodes

## SIGNATURE GREENWAY

**Uses:** ultimate multi-modal use designation

**Experience:** regional connector between major community elements, with signature wayfinding and landscape features

**Cost/Environmental Impact:** high, given the level of investment required to construct and maintain

## TRAIL MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

|                  |                                                                                                     |
|------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Re-Adapted Roads | Parks or natural areas where existing roads are converted to trails                                 |
| Natural Surface  | Natural areas, or open space patchwork in urban areas                                               |
| Crushed Granite  | Rail-to-trails, urban to rural trails, long-distance trails with lower grade guidelines             |
| Asphalt          | Highly durable - High traffic, high use trails. Trails part of a multi-modal transportation network |
| Concrete         | Internal circulation, heavy use, areas prone to flooding, and greenway connectors                   |
| Boardwalk        | Environmentally sensitive areas                                                                     |



# CONCEPTUAL TRAIL CROSS SECTIONS

Trail cross sections give local agencies a starting point for project development and design. They're meant to anchor discussions with property owners, project engineers, landscape architects, and other stakeholders around a shared understanding of what a given trail type requires.



## COMMUNITY PATH

A shared-use path located along a street or roadway that provides dedicated space for walking and biking. Community paths can connect neighborhoods to parks, schools, and other destinations.



## IN-PARK TRAIL

A trail located within a park that supports recreation and internal circulation. These trails can connect park amenities while providing opportunities for walking, running, and biking.



## OFF-STREET TRAIL/ GREENWAY

A trail located outside the roadway network, often along waterways, drainage corridors, or other open spaces. These routes provide comfortable connections between parks, neighborhoods, and community destinations while creating a more recreational trail experience.



# EXISTING TRAILS

Port Lavaca's existing trails provide opportunities for recreation and access to the city's parks and natural areas. The profiles below summarize each trail by type, distance, and planned improvements.

## BAYFRONT PENINSULA PARK

**Type:**

Nature Trail/Community Path

**Distance:**

1.02 miles

**Planned Improvements:**

- » Shared-use path connecting to Fulton Street (2027)



## LIGHTHOUSE BEACH PARK

**Type:**

Nature Trail

**Distance:**

.93 miles

**Planned Improvements:**

N/A



## LITTLE CHOCOLATE BAYOU PARK

**Type:**

Neighborhood Path

**Distance:**

1.7 miles

**Planned Improvements:**

N/A





# FUTURE TRAILS

Planned trails will expand the existing network and create new opportunities for walking, biking, and access to parks and the waterfront. The projects below represent trail improvements currently planned or under consideration by the City.

## SMITH HARBOR

### Type:

Nature Trail/Community Path

### Distance:

TBD

### Planned Improvements:

- » Public Access Boardwalk (2026)
- » Lowland Trails
- » 10' boardwalk along seawall



## WILSON PARK

### Type:

Neighborhood Path

### Distance:

TBD

### Planned Improvements:

- » Sidewalk (2028)
- » Perimeter Trail (TBD)





## TRAIL LINKAGES

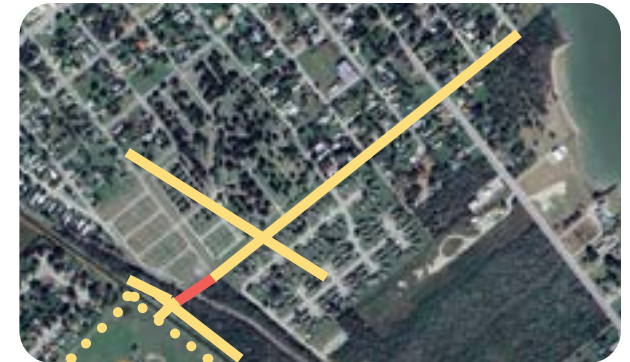
Trail linkages are the physical connections between separate trails, parks, neighborhoods, or destinations that create a continuous and accessible trail network. A relatively small investment in trail linkages could significantly improve connectivity throughout Port Lavaca.

Six potential sites were selected to illustrate how these projects could:

- » Connect parks directly into adjacent neighborhoods
- » Introduce trails into currently underserved areas
- » Reroute bike and pedestrian traffic away from high-volume roadways



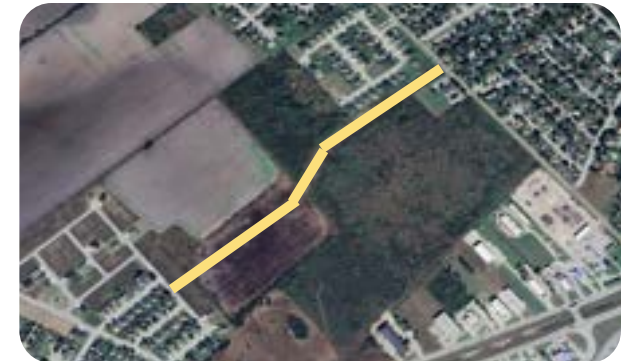
Little Chocolate Bayou Park (±2,300')



Wilson Park & Kitchen Site (±5,900')



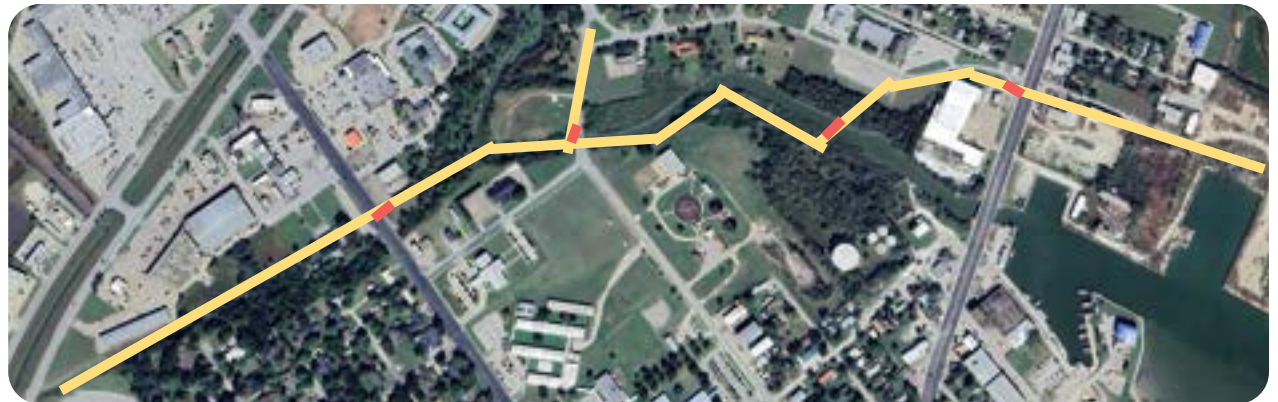
Substation Sites (±730')



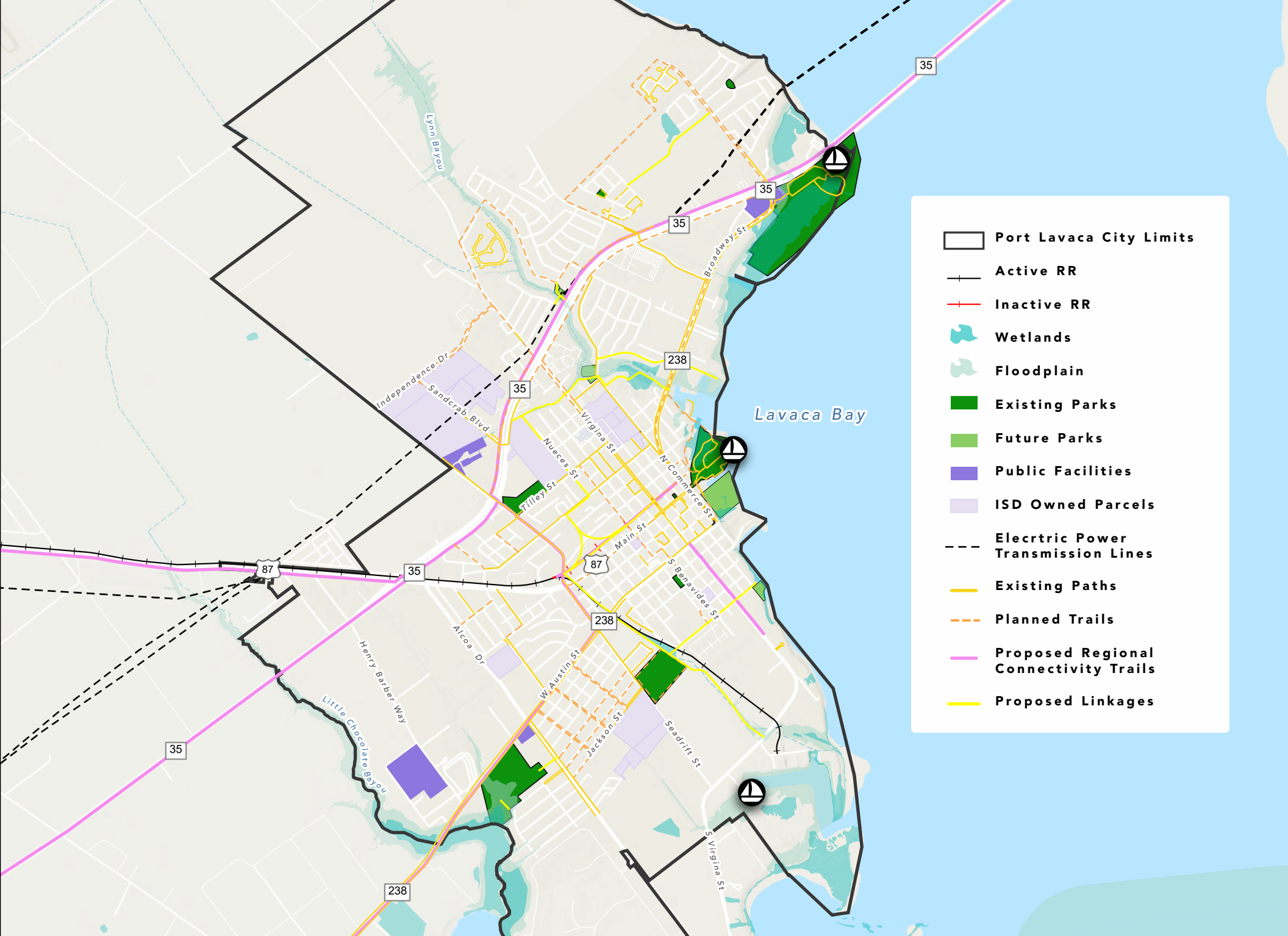
Claret Crossing & Brookhollow (±2,930')



RR Linear Park (±1,000')



Central City (±6,030')





## PADDLE TRAILS

A paddle trail is a designated route along a river, lake, bay, or other waterway that guides paddlers between launch points, natural areas, recreational sites, and community destinations. Paddle trails in and around Port Lavaca have been discussed and researched since at least the 2012 Calhoun County Texas Shoreline Access Plan, but concerns about water chopiness stalled real progress. The anticipated completion of an offshore breakwater project through the Living Shoreline Project could reactivate these conversations.

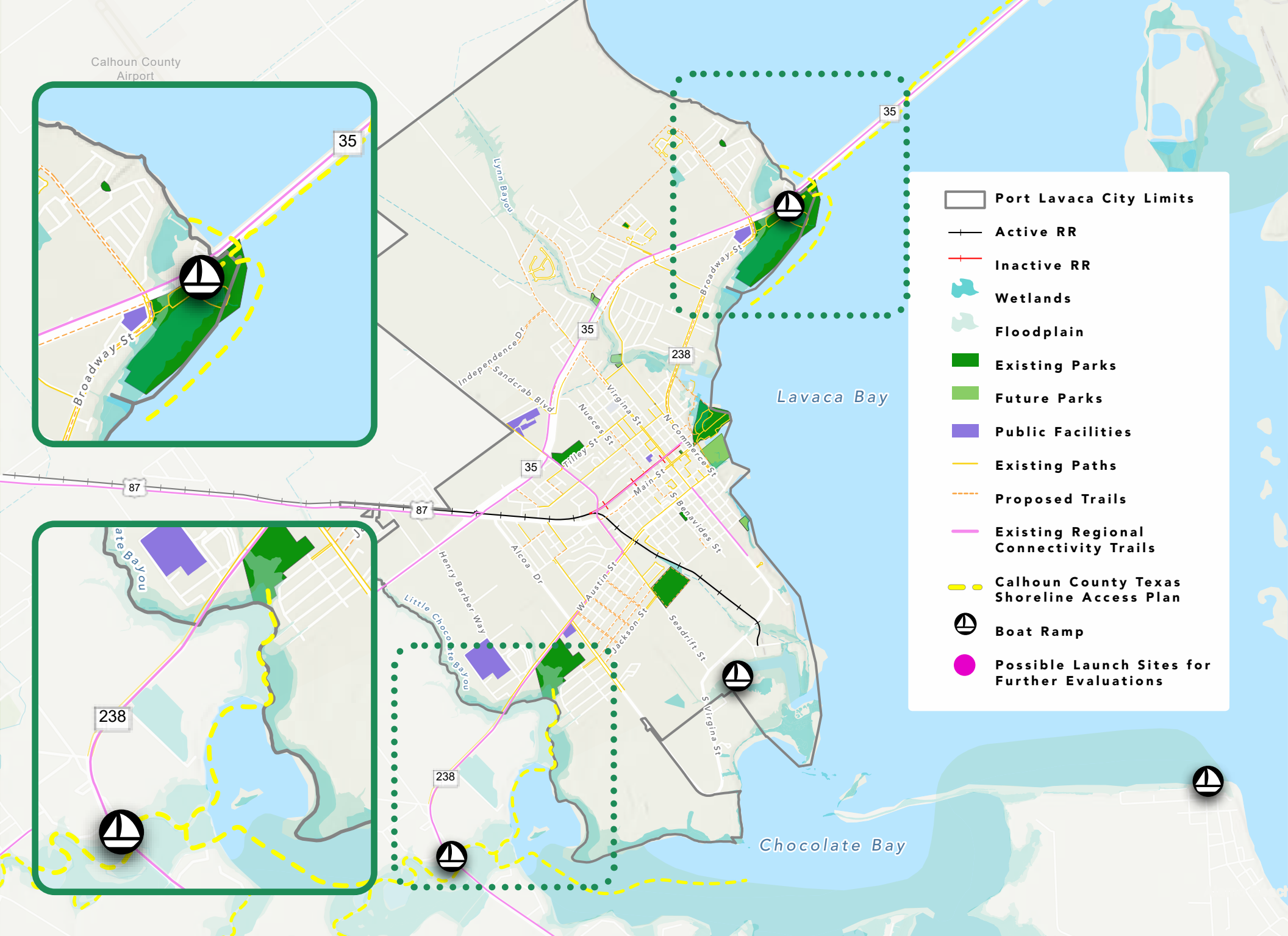
Texas Parks and Wildlife (TPWD)'s Texas Paddling Trails program (TPT) partners with communities and landowners to help develop paddling trails that both conserve habitats and provide recreational amenities to residents and visitors along waterways. Through this program, TPWD will assist communities in establishing and growing their paddle trail networks through surveying proposed paddle trail routes, developing a paddle trail map, promoting the paddle trail through a launch event and marketing materials, and providing educational material.

TPT-designated paddling trails must have public access points for kayaks and canoes and meet the following criteria:

- » Public access must be a minimum of four paddling miles to a maximum of twelve paddling miles for each linear segment
- » Presence of natural or historical attractions such as rapids, mature trees or unique habitat, wildlife diversity, historic sites, etc.
- » Adequate water quality, river flows or water depth
- » Population center within 100 miles
- » Designated parking
- » Local partner(s) to maintain parking and trashcans for put-in/take-out locations
- » Ability to post all applicable TPT marker signage and kiosk
- » If possible, access to canoe and/or kayak rentals and/or shuttles from local sources

Learn more about the TPT Program at: <https://tpwd.texas.gov/boating/paddling-trails/future/>







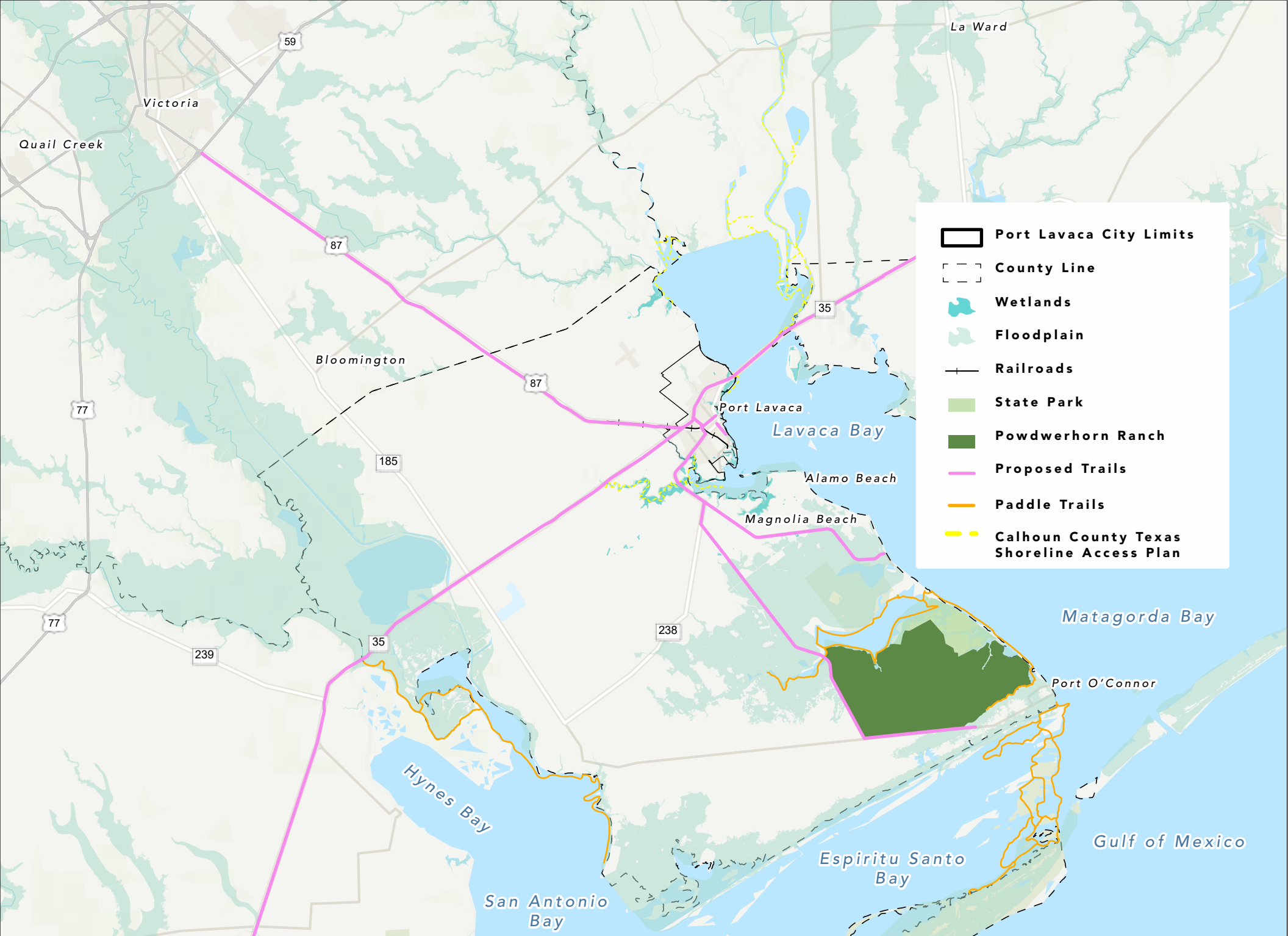
## REGIONAL TRAILS

Regional trails are recreational corridors that connect to different cities, counties, and other jurisdictions. They support exercise and leisure just as much as non-motorized commuting. Designed to stay physically separate from vehicular traffic, regional trails are accessible to a wide range of users. They can range from paved multi-use paths to natural-surface trails, and together they help complete a larger, interconnected network of greenways.

Characteristics of regional trails include:

- » **Geographic scope:** regional trails extend beyond local neighborhoods to link entire cities or regions.
- » **Shared use:** multi-use paths designed for pedestrians, cyclists, and sometimes equestrians.
- » **Separation from traffic:** physically separated from vehicles, offering a safer, more pleasant experience; in some cases, they connect segments of off-road paths with on-road bikeways or sidewalks.
- » **Connectivity:** regional trails serve as major arteries in a larger network, connecting local trails, parks, preserves, and other destinations.





## HERITAGE TRAILS

The Texas Heritage Trails Program (THTP) is the Texas Historical Commission's (THC) heritage tourism initiative, spanning 28 counties to promote the state's historic and cultural resources along key highway routes.

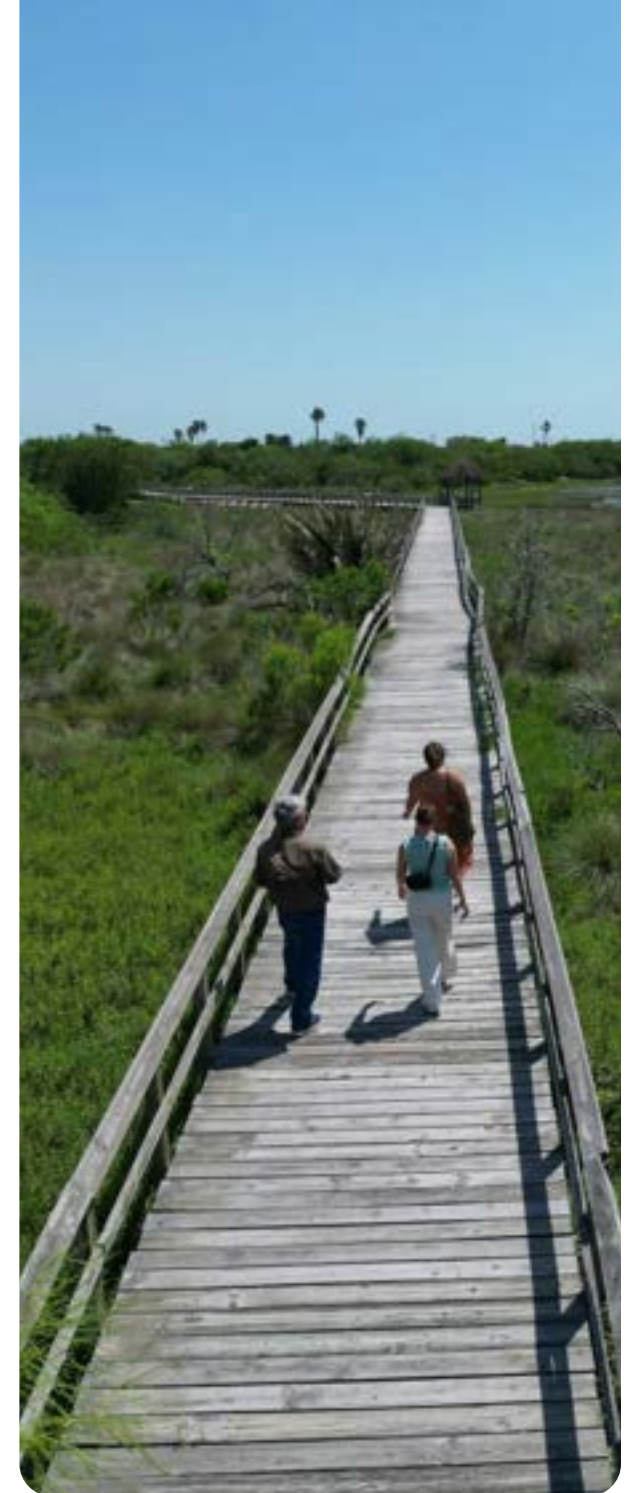
Local preservation efforts, combined with statewide marketing of heritage regions as tourism destinations, drive more visitation to cultural and historic sites and bring more money into Texas communities. Each region builds its own blend of programs and partnerships around its own attractions. Port Lavaca falls within the Independence Trail region, alongside sites like the Alamo, the San Jacinto Battleground, and the Galveston coast.

By connecting its trail network to the THTP program, Port Lavaca can highlight local historical, ecological, or cultural sites and grow heritage and ecological tourism.

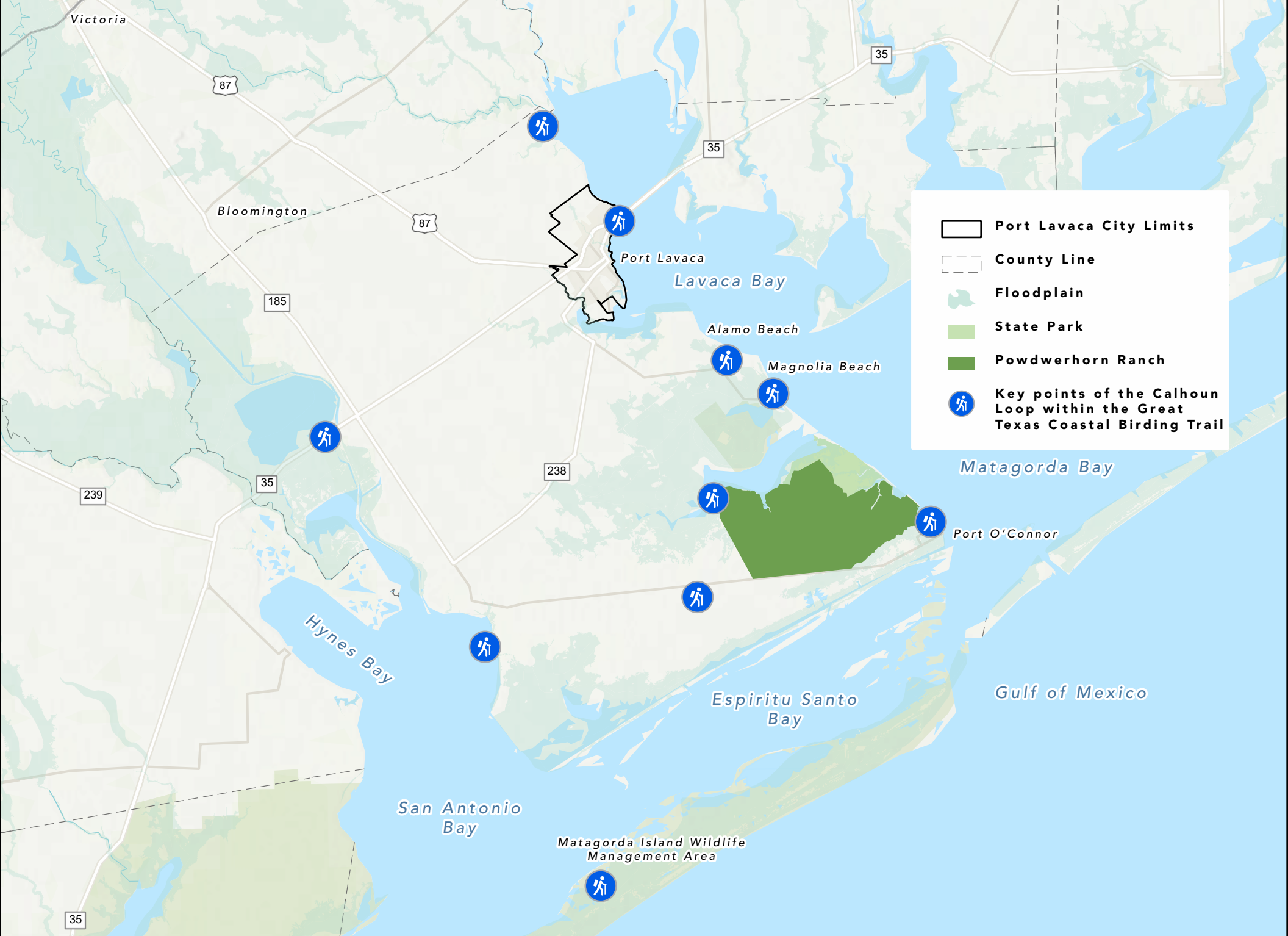
## WILDLIFE TRAILS

TPWD's Great Texas Wildlife Trails are driving routes that highlight distinctive Texas regions and connect visitors with notable locations for wildlife viewing, birding, and outdoor recreation. Port Lavaca lies within the Central Texas Coast section, specifically the Calhoun Loop, which highlights the bay, marsh, and beach landscapes of Calhoun County.

Within and near Port Lavaca, the Calhoun Loop includes the Port Lavaca Bird Sanctuary, Formosa Wetlands Walkway and Alcoa Birding Tower, where visitors can view marsh and bay habitats; Six Mile Park, with a lighted pier, boat ramps, marshland, shoreline, and natural beach; Magnolia Beach and nearby Indianola, where coastal habitats support migratory shorebirds, sandhill cranes, waterfowl, and rails; and Magic Ridge south of Magnolia Beach. Together, these destinations highlight Port Lavaca's role as a gateway to coastal wetlands and wildlife habitats.







**Port Lavaca City Limits**

**County Line**

**Floodplain**

**State Park**

**Powdwerhorn Ranch**

**Key points of the Calhoun Loop within the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail**



# KEY PLACEMAKING CONSIDERATIONS

A high-quality trail system considers user needs, environmental impact, site specifics, and connectivity. Taking the placemaking framework into account when planning for trail improvements and investments, the City should consider the following:

## **Sociability**

- » Are trails accessible to a wide range of ages and ability levels?
- » Are there opportunities within the trails system to encourage civic participation through volunteering or an official adopt-a-trail program?
- » How can educational programs, such as nature walks or birdwatching, be incorporated into the trails system?
- » Are there opportunities for trails to strengthen community identity through public art and naming that acknowledges local flora, fauna, or history?

## **Uses & Activities**

- » Does the network accommodate everyday travel, recreation, exercise, nature observation, children's play, commuting, and social outings?
- » Can wider segments, trailheads, and adjacent open spaces accommodate different activities without obstructing through movement?
- » Are there opportunities to create specific-use trail types, such as mountain biking, paddling, or horseback riding?

## **Access & Linkages**

- » Are trailheads clearly visible from public roads or sidewalks?
- » Can people reach trailheads safely without driving?
- » Do trailheads offer adequate space for parking and amenities, such as restrooms, picnic tables, or bicycle racks?
- » Are there opportunities to co-locate trails or trailheads within parks or adjacent to schools, community centers, or other public facilities?
- » Is there adequate signage and wayfinding infrastructure at trailheads and along trail paths, to ensure users don't get lost?
- » Are there missing links, confusing gaps, abrupt endings, barriers, or difficult transitions between on- and off-street trails?

## **Comfort & Image**

- » Do trail materials, landscape character, and maintenance practices create a recognizable and cared-for trail experience?
- » Do route alignments, lighting, sight lines, vegetation management, emergency access, and passive surveillance support users' perceptions of safety?
- » Are pavement, boardwalks, bridges, drainage, landscaping, litter control, and seasonal conditions appropriate for the intended users?







# TRAILS RECOMMENDATIONS

## NEW PARKS & TRAILS

**3.01** Consult with TXDOT about constructing pedestrian bridges over SH 35 at key locations.

**3.02** Consult with TXDOT about developing off-street trails within the ROW of SH 35.

**3.03** Consult with Union Pacific about constructing pedestrian bridges over their active tracks at key locations.

**3.04** Identify City- and partner-owned waterfront sites that could host paddle-focused amenities.

**3.05** Coordinate with TXDOT, Union Pacific, and utility providers, in addition to partner communities, to study easement opportunities for off-street trails.

**3.06** Create small activity nodes every ½–1 mile along long trails (water fountains, fitness stations, picnic pads) to encourage continuous circulation.

**3.07** Budget for ±1 miles of local linkages annually.

**3.08** Budget for the purchase, installation, and maintenance of one kayak launch annually, beginning with existing public boat ramps and shoreline access sites.

**3.09** Continue to coordinate with Union Pacific about acquiring the unused portion of tracks leading into Downtown and express interest in acquiring the southern spur should the opportunity arise.

**3.10** Endeavor to establish a regional trail greenway by 2050.

**3.11** Include trail, sidewalk, and/or bike lane access as part of the “100% Challenge” for all residents to be within 1/2 mile of a recreational resource within 10 years.

## IMPROVEMENTS

**3.12** Coordinate with Calhoun County and TXDOT’s Support Services Division to install signage along key roadways leading to Port Lavaca.

**3.13** Consolidate informal trails by converting the feasible and most-used into formal paths and decommissioning the rest with vegetation or barriers.

**3.14** Continue installing shaded picnic pavilions and seating areas in existing parks and trails.

**3.15** Ensure that drinking water fountains are readily available in existing trails, when applicable.

**3.16** Incorporate water features such as splash pads or misting stations in existing trails.

**3.17** Use high-density polyethylene (HDPE) shade sails over playgrounds, picnic areas, and along trails.

**3.18** Establish a policy for schools, parks, and recreation amenities to connect to the closest sidewalk if located 1/4-mile.

**3.19** Identify and map the locations of all undeveloped City-owned properties, floodplains, and utility easements - relative to parks, schools, and neighborhoods - to determine possible additional trail linkages.

## **POLICIES & STANDARDS**

**3.20** Apply for the Texas Paddling Trails Program Community Application for Assistance, via Texas Parks and Wildlife's Nature Tourism Program.

**3.21** Coordinate with the City of Port O'Connor and Texas Parks and Wildlife to bring the City and Powderhorn State Park into the existing trail network.

**3.22** Submit historic sites and community events to Texas Time Travel, part of the Texas Historical Commission, to be featured online and on the organization's trip planning app.

**3.23** Upon completion of the breakwater project, commission a Water Trail Assessment to determine the experience level for a shoreline paddle trail along previously identified alignments.

**3.24** Establish a working group through the local Council of Governments or form a standalone group to explore the feasibility of a regional trail system from Victoria to Port Lavaca to Powderhorn State Park and Port O'Connor.



PROGRAMMING

04

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# INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the events, programs, and placemaking activities that help bring Port Lavaca's parks and trails to life. Beyond physical improvements, programming can encourage people to use these spaces more often, bring the community together, and create new reasons to visit and enjoy the park system.

Programs can support recreation, public health, youth activities, environmental stewardship, and community events. Even relatively simple efforts, such as seasonal events, volunteer days, or partnerships with local organizations, can expand how parks are used and strengthen connections within the community.

Some of the opportunities discussed in this chapter are not services the City currently provides due to staffing, funding, and operational limitations. They are included to identify potential partnerships, best practices, and longer-term opportunities that could be pursued over time as community interest, resources, and capacity allow.

## COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Throughout the public engagement process, the Port Lavaca community expressed a strong desire for:

- » An indoor recreation center with multigenerational amenities
- » Desired amenities at a recreation center that include sports courts, a covered or indoor basketball court, pickleball or tennis courts, and a pool
- » Additional community events in the parks, such as live music, movie screenings, or First Friday art walks
- » After-school, weekend, or summer programs directed at youth or teenagers
- » Multigenerational programming that supports active living or nature-based activities





# RECREATIONAL PROGRAMMING

This section reviews common service offerings of parks and recreation departments, recognizing that many are not currently offered in Port Lavaca. It also considers special events and recreational tourism opportunities that the park system currently offers or could offer in the future.

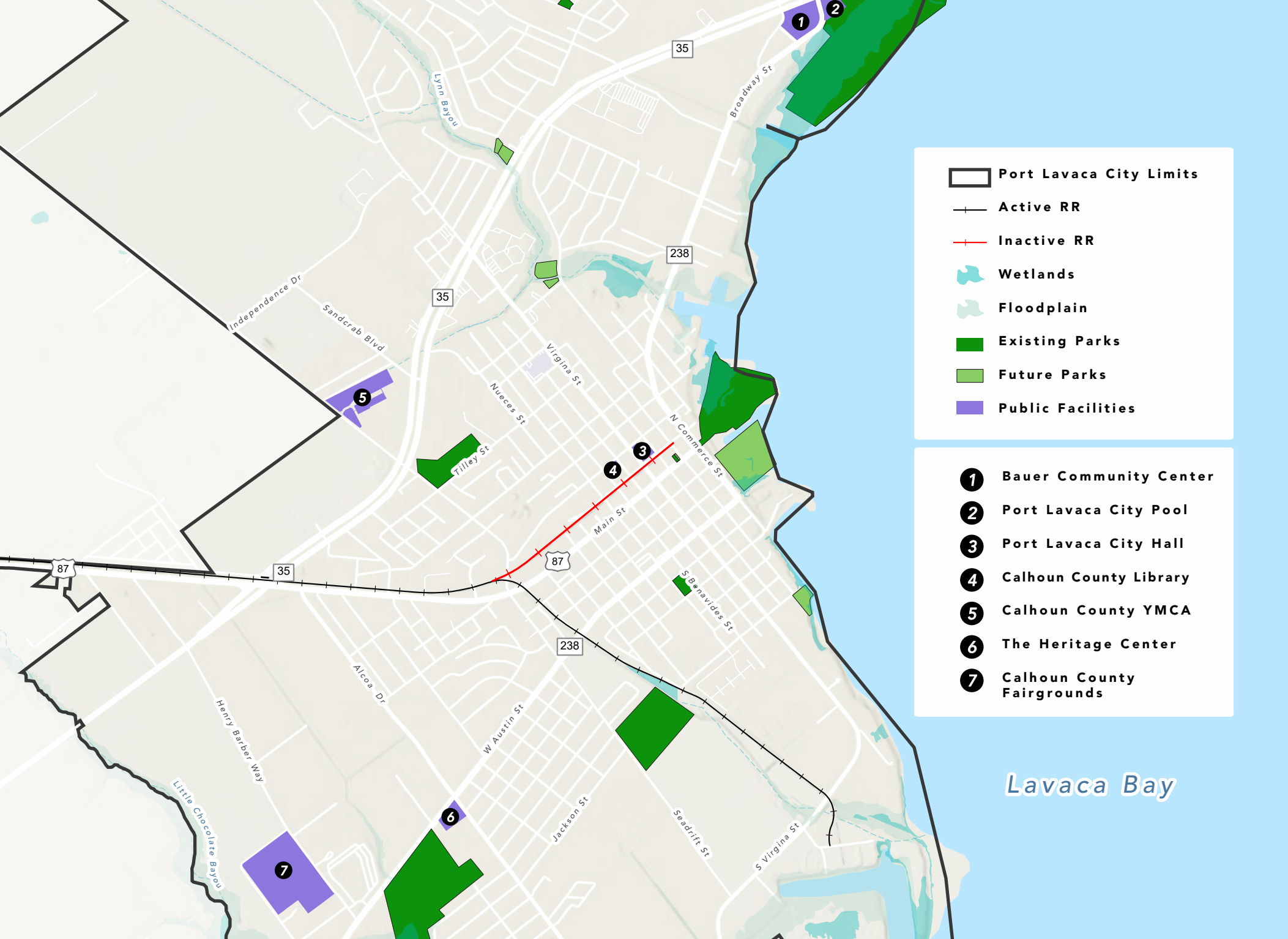
With the caveat that the City of Port Lavaca can realistically only provide so many services without indoor recreation and the resources of a standalone parks-first department, this section will review the City's current program level of service and event inventory.

## EXISTING PROGRAMS

The following is a list of major program categories that park and recreation agencies throughout the country commonly provide. Items in **blue** currently are provided by the City, while italicized items are provided by a different public entity - most often Calhoun County via the Calhoun County Library(\*), Fairgrounds, or YMCA.

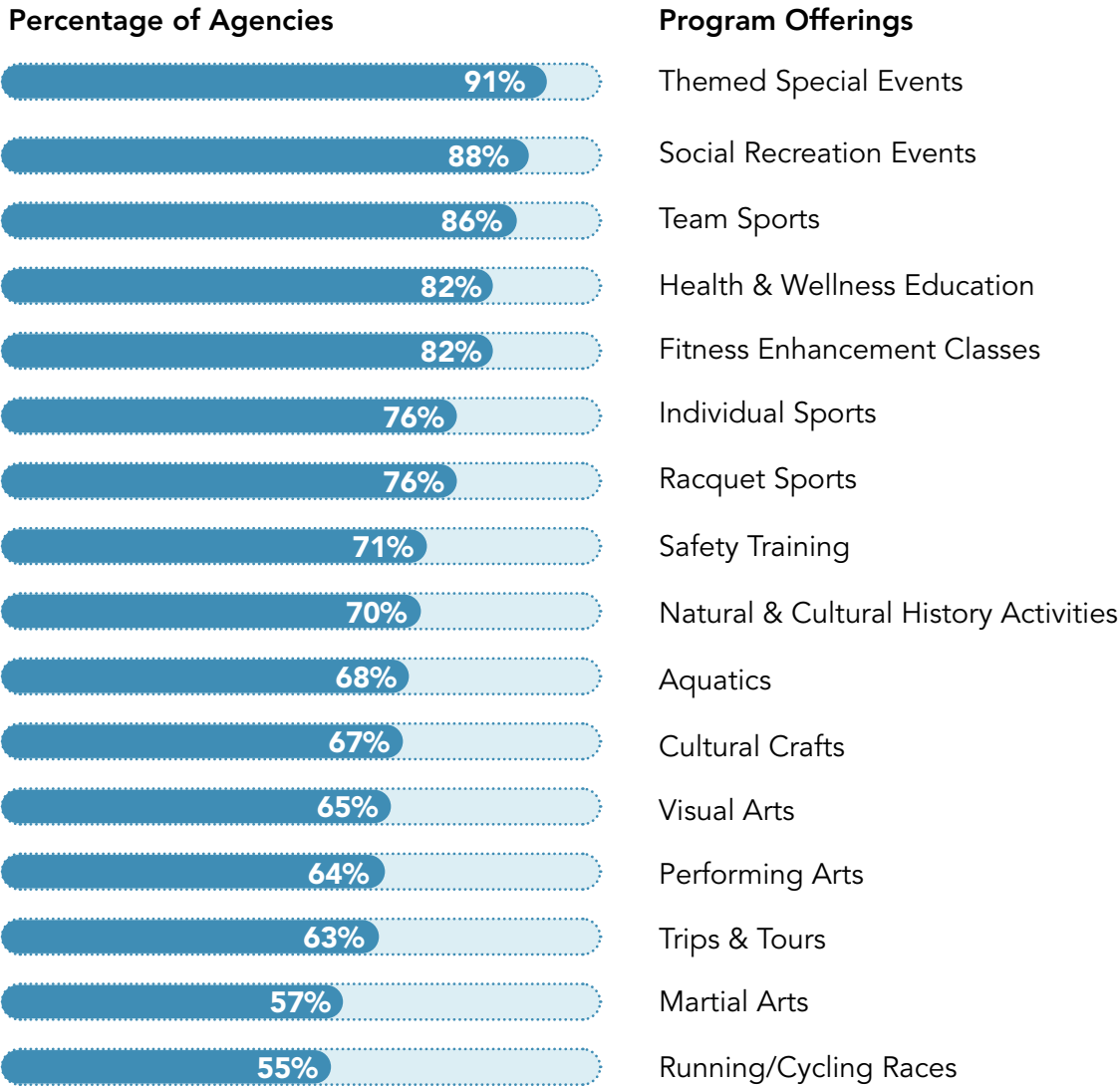
Nationwide, eighty-two percent of park and recreation programming is fee-based. While enrollment-based activities are not currently offered in Port Lavaca's parks system, as team capacity increases, these types of programs could be considered to both increase community engagement within parks and generate revenue:

- » *Active Adult Programs\**
- » Aquatics
- » Arts
- » Before/After School
- » **Biking**
- » Birthday Party Services
- » Child Care
- » Child Programs\*
- » Cooking
- » Dance
- » Day/School Break Camps
- » Disc Golf
- » Esports
- » Early Childhood/Preschool
- » **Environmental/Nature**
- » Extreme Sports
- » Fitness
- » *General Interest\**
- » Golf
- » Gymnastics/Tumbling
- » Historical Programs
- » Homeschool
- » Horseback Riding
- » Ice Skating/Hockey
- » *Language Arts/Foreign Language\**
- » *Lifelong Learning\**
- » Martial Arts
- » Music
- » Open Gym
- » Outdoor Adventure
- » Pets
- » **Pickleball\***
- » Seniors
- » **Special/Community Events**
- » Specialty Camps
- » Sports
- » STEM/STEAM Summer Camps (Daylong)
- » Sustainability/Green
- » Teen Programs\*
- » Tennis
- » Theatre/Acting
- » Therapeutic Recreation
- » Trips
- » Wellness



# LEVELS OF SERVICE

Nationally, park agencies run a median of 250 programs a year; smaller communities like Port Lavaca with a population under 20,000 residents offer a median of 45. The most common recreational programs offered nationwide are outlined below:



## SPECIAL EVENTS

Port Lavaca is home to a wide variety of engaging annual events that energize the city and generate revenue through local spending and regional tourism:

- » February — Calhoun County Quilt Show
- » March — Port Lavaca Art Walk
- » April — Iguana Fest
- » May — Texas Mid-Coast Birding Festival
- » June — Juneteenth Celebration
- » July — Star Spangled Bay Bash
- » August — Bayfront Beats Summer Concerts
- » September — Hardhead Derby Youth Fishing Tournament
- » October — Calhoun County Fair
- » December — Christmas Parade

## EVENT READY SPACES

Port Lavaca's park system needs event-ready spaces to support community gatherings, festivals, markets, and special events. These sites should sit on relatively flat, accessible ground that works for people of all ages and abilities, with easy access to restrooms, parking, and roadways. When planning for event-ready spaces, the city will need to consider the space, flexibility, and equipment needed for different event types: stages, sound systems, temporary restrooms, fireworks, lighting displays, drones, and photography or videography.

## PERMITS & RESERVATIONS

The Department has numerous facilities that residents, visitors, and businesses can rent for parties, picnics, socials, programs, and competitive sport events. When considering how to implement a facility reservation system, the city will need to consider standard fee rates, facility rental policies and procedures, and managing a publicly available reservation portal.



*Texas Mid-Coast Birding Festival*



*Indoor Recreation Court*



## RECREATIONAL TOURISM

Port Lavaca's greatest asset is not a single attraction; it's the combination of coastal landscapes and waterfront access that provide countless opportunities to experience nature through birding, boating, hiking, fishing, or relaxing on the beach.

It is important to note the distinct differences between community versus tourism-oriented events. Although there can often be overlap between community interests, deliberate recreation tourism policies must be made holistically with other factors like:

- » Alignment with key industries
- » Hospitality accommodations
- » Community branding
- » Promotional marketing
- » Design intent of public spaces

A parks-focused approach to recreational tourism should therefore focus on creating a seamless network of experiences that support locals while also inviting visitors to explore the waterfront, attend events, access nature, and patronize local businesses.



## EMERGING TRENDS

Recreation needs and interests continue to evolve, creating opportunities to broaden how parks and public spaces serve the community. The following emerging trends highlight activities and partnerships that could complement Port Lavaca's existing recreation offerings and attract new users as interest, resources, and opportunities develop.

### Leveraging Assets

Underutilized land, paired with the right private partner, can make a strong candidate for amenities like indoor climbing walls, paintball parks, and BMX tracks. These carry more liability risk than the cCity is likely willing to take on directly, but through a private partner they could generate jobs and tax revenue, give teens more to do, and possibly draw regional tourists.

### Makerspaces

Makerspaces can expand a parks system's programming beyond traditional recreation by providing supervised locations for hands-on learning, creativity, and skill development. Equipped for activities such as arts and crafts, woodworking, digital fabrication, and technology projects, these spaces can support youth programs, community workshops, and partnerships with local schools, businesses, and cultural organizations.

### E-Sports

E-sports can provide a structured, accessible program offering that engages teens and young adults through organized gaming, tournaments, and technology-focused activities. A dedicated, well-managed space could promote teamwork, strategy, digital literacy, and social connection while creating opportunities for partnerships, special events, and workforce-oriented programming. Together, makerspaces and e-sports can diversify the parks portfolio and provide year-round indoor amenities that appeal to a broad range of interests.

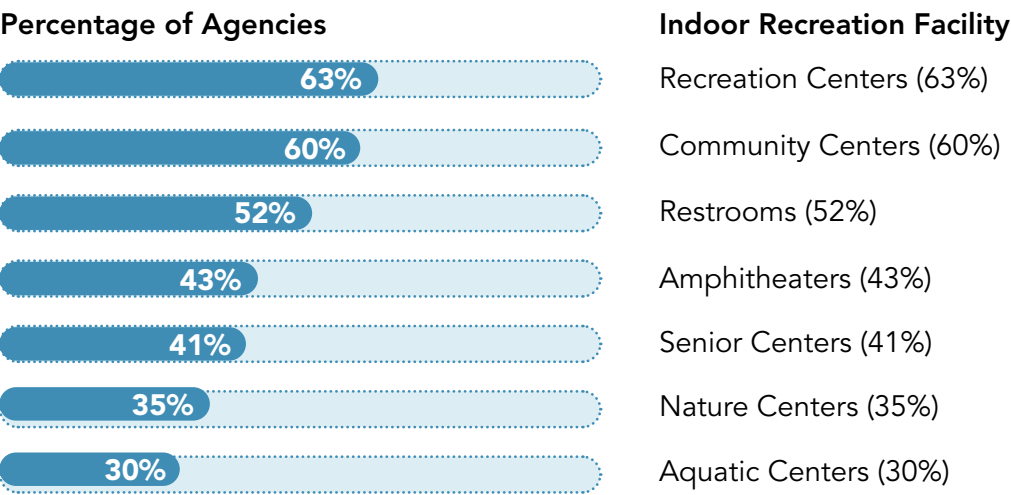


# INDOOR RECREATION

Indoor recreation covers the physical, social, and wellness activities that happen in recreation centers, gymnasiums, fitness studios, and multi-purpose halls. These spaces let a parks department run programming year-round regardless of weather — a real advantage in Texas, where heat, storms, and flooding all limit outdoor use.

Indoor parks programs can include sports leagues, dance and fitness classes, senior activities, arts and crafts, youth camps, and community events. Recreation centers can also double as resilience infrastructure, offering climate-controlled space for cooling and warming stations, storm shelters, or disaster recovery operations.

Community interest in expanded indoor recreation is real and well documented, but Port Lavaca voters have historically been reluctant to approve bond-funded initiatives, which leaves the feasibility of a new, city-led facility genuinely uncertain. City-sponsored recreation centers are common in communities of Port Lavaca’s size, so this isn’t a matter of the city being unusual. Until residents show a willingness to fund one, strengthening the city’s current partnership with the Calhoun County YMCA is the practical near-term path to meeting indoor recreation needs.



## BENCHMARKING

No universal standard sets the size of a community center. The right square footage depends on local needs and desired programming. For a city of 12,000, that could mean as little as 12,000 square feet for a basic facility, or considerably more if it includes gymnasiums, pools, and other extensive amenities. A comprehensive needs assessment should determine the actual size and scale.

Additional considerations for an indoor recreation center include the inclusion of reliable technology systems (Wi-Fi, audiovisual displays), operational needs (staffing requirements, lifecycle costs, and maintenance demands), and resilience capacity (commercial kitchen, backup generators, warming/cooling center capability).

## INDOOR-OUTDOOR COMPLIMENTARY ACTIVITIES

Co-locating outdoor park amenities, such as playgrounds, walking trails, splash pads, multipurpose fields, or a skate park within the site plan of a recreation center provides opportunities for a cohesive indoor-outdoor experience that fully utilizes a site's potential.

## OTHER SERVICES

Americans increasingly want more than the traditional community and recreation center offerings. Expanding expectations for indoor recreational activities include:

- » Healthy living classes
- » Programming for older adults
- » Nature-based activities
- » Access to computers and the internet
- » Inclusive facilities for all needs and abilities
- » Health clinics and services

Additionally, indoor recreation spaces can support youth and teenagers by offering drop-in activities such as open gym hours and game rooms with computers, video games, board games, comfortable seating, and books.





# POTENTIAL PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships can help expand the reach of Port Lavaca’s parks and recreation system by connecting existing community resources, programs, and expertise. Local organizations offer opportunities to coordinate programming, share resources, and serve a broader range of residents without relying solely on City staff and funding. The organizations highlighted below represent potential partners for future collaboration.

## **Calhoun County Library System**

The Calhoun County Library System serves more than 20,000 residents, and its main branch, the Calhoun County Public Library, sits in Port Lavaca. It isn’t directly adjacent to any city-owned park, but it’s a half-mile from Bayfront Peninsula Park and a mile from City (Tilley) Park — close enough to make collaboration between library and park staff practical.

## **Calhoun County Independent School District**

Calhoun County Independent School District serves students throughout the county through its public schools. Its schools and related facilities represent important potential partners for the city’s parks and recreation system, particularly for youth athletics, outdoor learning, recreation programs, and community events.

## **Calhoun County YMCA**

The Calhoun County YMCA provides recreation, fitness, aquatics, childcare, youth sports, outdoor enrichment, and health and wellness programming in Port Lavaca. It already acts as a valuable partner for expanding recreation opportunities, coordinating youth and family activities, supporting wellness initiatives, and hosting community events.

## **The Heritage Center**

The Heritage Center is operated by the Calhoun County Senior Citizens Association. Sixty-nine percent of Calhoun County’s senior citizens are low-income, and forty-eight percent are minorities. For many in this group, the Center’s services are what makes independent living on a fixed income possible.



# KEY PLACEMAKING CONSIDERATIONS

Placemaking, at its core, is about the human experience in shared space — building social connections, community identity, and well-being through deliberate design and programming. Programs, events, and indoor recreation investments should do more than fill a calendar. They should create welcoming destinations where residents can participate, interact, build community identity, and return throughout the year.

## Sociability

- » Do park programs encourage people of different ages, backgrounds, and abilities to participate together?
- » Are there designated gathering areas within event spaces where participants can sit, talk, share food, and observe activities?
- » Will potential indoor recreation spaces include informal, recurring opportunities such as open gym, drop-in activities, community game nights, makerspace sessions, and small-scale cultural programs?
- » Are there spaces available that support resident-led programming by providing opportunities for local clubs, schools, artists, and community organizations to host activities?
- » How can park programs encourage social connections through team-based activities, sports leagues, volunteer opportunities, and community challenges?
- » Do parks or other recreational spaces provide welcoming programming for teens and young adults, with a balance of structured activities, supervised drop-in time, and spaces where they can socialize appropriately?
- » Do planned park events and programs celebrate Port Lavaca's coastal character, local history, arts, and cultural traditions?

## User & Activities

- » Is there a diverse mix of active, creative, educational, cultural, and technology-based programs that appeal to multiple age groups and interests?
- » Can existing outdoor programs be offered within indoor facilities year-round so they remain active during extreme heat, storms, seasonal weather, or times when outdoor activities are less practical?

- » How can parks provide flexible spaces that can accommodate a wide variety of uses, such as fitness classes, youth activities, community meetings, workshops, live music performances, markets, and other special events?
- » Are there opportunities to offer mobile or pop-up programs in neighborhoods, parks, schools, or community gathering places to reach residents who may not regularly visit recreation facilities?
- » Does Port Lavaca have the capacity to develop a balanced calendar of recurring programs and signature events rather than relying only on occasional large-scale gatherings?

## Access & Linkages

- » Are existing programs and facilities located in spaces that are easy to find, visible from nearby streets, and connected to existing parks, schools, neighborhoods, trails, sidewalks, and other community destinations?

- » How locating or scheduling parks programs consider service gaps, population density, transportation options, neighborhood needs, and equitable geographic distribution?
- » During special events, are there clear routes, intuitive entrances, visible signage, and welcoming arrival points so first-time visitors can easily understand where activities are taking place?
- » When planning special events, have event organizers coordinated event schedules with available parking, pedestrian routes, bicycle facilities, transit options, and traffic-management needs?
- » How will event organizers provide safe and accessible connections between parking areas, drop-off zones, and event spaces?
- » Have event organizers considered the implications of flood risk, drainage, evacuation routes, and emergency access when selecting sites for facilities or major events?

- » How can park programs be made accessible to people with different mobility, sensory, and other needs through appropriate facility design, communication, scheduling, and staffing?

#### **Comfort & Image**

- » Are park facilities and event spaces clean, safe, attractive, and well-managed, so they encourage visitors to stay longer and return?
- » Have event organizers provided comfortable seating, shade, cooling options, restrooms, drinking water, waste receptacles, and weather-protected areas where appropriate?
- » How can lighting, landscaping, public art, colors, coastal design elements, and high-quality furnishings strengthen community identity during special events?
- » How can indoor recreation areas support visibility, supervision, security, natural light, acoustical comfort, and a positive sense of welcome?

- » How can a potential indoor recreation center or event space incorporate durable, adaptable, and easy-to-maintain materials that support long-term operational sustainability?
- » Can the program and event organizers establish regular review processes based on event attendance, community feedback, operating costs, and observable conditions to keep programs relevant and sustainable?



# PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATIONS

## NEW PARKS & TRAILS

- 4.01** Commission a Community Center Master Plan that provides an initial feasibility study and design program.
- 4.02** Create flexible indoor and outdoor recreation areas for fitness, wellness, and community programs.
- 4.03** Issue an open call to local landowners to explore interest in establishing a private paintball, airsoft, or dirtbike park.
- 4.04** Design multi-generational recreation areas, including: Youth (playgrounds, splash pads, and skate plazas/features); Adults (fitness stations, jogging trails, and sports courts); Seniors (shaded seating, accessible pathways, and low-impact exercise zones).
- 4.05** Develop multi-sport athletic complexes that accommodate youth and adult leagues and informal play.

## PROGRAMMING

- 4.06** Activate underutilized spaces with creative placemaking initiatives, such as food truck courts, live performance spaces, and seasonal/temporary pop-ups/installations.
- 4.07** Co-locate indoor recreation space with libraries, public health clinics, or parks/trail networks to increase benefits.
- 4.08** Coordinate with Calhoun County ISD and Calhoun County Library to explore esports.
- 4.09** Coordinate with schools and youth organizations to host stewardship days and environmental learning programs.
- 4.10** Develop partnerships with local organizations to host a senior-focused gathering or event.
- 4.11** Develop partnerships with local schools and organizations to host a youth-focused gathering or event.
- 4.12** Encourage third-party partners (youth groups, nonprofits, businesses) to host activities through simplified permitting and low-cost use agreements.
- 4.13** Establish partnerships with churches, private rec centers, and other entities with indoor recreation facilities, youth sports, after-school/daycare, and seniors events on their grounds; to spread awareness of the facilities and provide access for residents at a fraction of the cost of a flagship recreation center.
- 4.14** Explore partnership opportunities to use vacant public property for semi-permanent uses like bouldering/climbing, paintball, or airsoft.
- 4.15** Fill in programmatic gaps for adult fitness and wellness, nature, aquatic, and inclusive and adaptive program areas.
- 4.16** Foster public-private partnerships to expand event funding, sponsorships, and programming.
- 4.17** Identify existing makers spaces and potential partnerships with local makers, schools, community colleges, non-profits, and/or city staff.
- 4.18** Identify expanded partnership opportunities with the YMCA, such as swim lessons and aquatic safety.

**4.19** 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.

**4.20** Offer vendor and sponsorship incentives for local businesses to participate in festivals, ensuring new sponsor or vendor participants in City-hosted events per year.

**4.21** Poll community interest in a seasonal, monthly farmer’s market. If interest is strong, identify a location with sufficient infrastructure that is appealing to residents and visitors alike.

**4.22** Support local businesses through vendor opportunities, pop-up markets, and collaborations with restaurants, breweries, and artisans.

**4.23** Create and launch a Block Party Trailer that can be rented for neighborhood events. The Trailer can be delivered upon request and will include movable seating, tables, yard games, and other useful celebration materials for neighborhood (not private) events.

**4.24** 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.

**4.25** Conduct a STEM feasibility study focused on Esports and Makerspaces, in coordination with the EDC and ISD.

**4.26** Establish a small business grant and support program, in coordination with the Parks Board, TIRZ Board, and/or Port Lavaca Economic Development Corporation, that could:

- » Partially fund site assessments or designs for prospective sites
- » Contribute to basic renovations or site improvements
- » Provide advertising and promotion
- » Negotiate for voluntary public park areas, trail easements, or coastline dedication

**4.27** Issue an open call to churches, private rec centers, and other entities that have indoor recreation facilities, youth sports, afterschool/daycare, and seniors’ events on their grounds.

**4.28** 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.

**4.29** Program parks intentionally with recurring events to reinforce legitimate occupancy and passive surveillance.

**4.30** Provide affordable vendor spaces at community events, allowing local entrepreneurs to showcase their products and services to a wider audience.

# PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATIONS CONT.

## IMPROVEMENTS

- 4.31** Evaluate public Wi-Fi hotspots in major destinations to support real-time communication.
- 4.32** Include commercial kitchen equipment in recreational centers to use the space as a resilience hub during disasters or to earn revenue by renting it for events.
- 4.33** Place benches, bridges, and gathering areas so they are visible from main circulation routes.
- 4.34** Where vandalism is recurring, replace vulnerable materials with high-durability options (steel, anti-graffiti coatings, tamper-resistant hardware, public art).

## POLICIES & STANDARDS

- 4.35** Incorporate QR codes on Wayfinding to facilitate reporting issues, provide maps, and share safety tips.
- 4.36** Update the City website to better connect users to County- and TPW-managed facilities
- 4.37** Update the City website to better showcase the City's parks, including new photography, consistent naming and addressing, "sort by features" functionality, and all reservation/cost information and links.
- 4.38** Develop a promotional campaign with digital marketing, social media highlights, and printed event guides to increase event awareness and attendance.
- 4.39** Encourage community participation by involving local organizations, schools, and businesses in event planning and sponsorships.
- 4.40** Establish partnerships via a 380 agreement to spread awareness of the facilities and provide access for residents at a fraction of the cost of a flagship recreation center.
- 4.41** Formulate and launch a recreation-focused campaign to attract snowbirds, partners, vendors, sponsors, and new development.
- 4.42** Increase marketing and promotion of programs and special events.
- 4.43** Work with neighborhood associations to conduct periodic "walk audits" identifying visibility and safety issues.
- 4.44** Budget for a director-level hire. Work with the City Council to initiate the process of establishing a Parks and Recreation Department.
- 4.45** Commission a Tourism Strategic Plan to: identify resources and assets needed to support special events, including public and private spaces; review and prioritize the next round of long-term improvements from the Waterfront Master Plan; identify the public and private spaces needed to support special events; and determine use needs for future parks.

**4.46** Identify high incident locations and create a rapid-response protocol (24–72 hours) for graffiti, vandalism, and damaged infrastructure.

**4.47** Implement asset management software to track condition, repairs, and lifecycle replacement schedules.

**4.48** Work with the City Council to initiate the process of establishing a Parks and Recreation Department.



IMPLEMENTATION

05



# INTRODUCTION

This chapter translates the Plan’s recommendations into a framework for action. Implementation will require the City to prioritize investments, coordinate responsibilities, pursue funding and partnerships, and adjust as needs and resources change over time.

Port Lavaca enters this next phase with several park and recreation improvements already completed or underway. Recent accomplishments and current budget priorities establish a starting point for implementation, while the strategies that follow identify the organizational, financial, and project-specific actions needed to continue building on that progress.

## 2023-2025 Accomplishments

- » Replaced all Lighthouse Beach metal frame picnic tables with wood.
- » Constructed a bird blind at Lighthouse Beach.
- » Repainted the old bathroom at Bayfront Park.
- » Installed new LED lights at Bayfront Park.
- » Replaced bollard cables at Blackrock.
- » Expanded the nuisance vegetation program to a bi-weekly spraying schedule.
- » Installed a shade structure at the Bayfront Park splash pad.
- » Instituted daily park inspections for maintenance and grounds keeping.
- » Constructed a new restroom at Wilson Park.
- » Worked with private partners to expand the Born Learning Trail.
- » Built one cabana at the Lighthouse Beach splash pad.

- » Rehabilitated pool plumbing and the chlorination system.
- » Installed a new water slide at the community pool.
- » Reconstructed the volleyball court at City Park.

## 2025-2026 Budget Objectives

- » Install new surveillance cameras where needed.
- » Build two to three cabanas at the Lighthouse Beach splash pad.
- » Reconstruct the Lighthouse Beach volleyball court.
- » Complete Butterfly Park improvements, including lighting, cabanas, and fencing.
- » Add a covered basketball court at Wilson Park.
- » Hire a consultant to apply with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to connect the Veterans Memorial to Scully’s via a boardwalk.

## FOUNDATIONAL CHANGES

Several of the recommendations introduced in this Plan cannot be implemented or reach their full potential without some foundational work first.

This Plan recommends that Port Lavaca:

- » Budget for a director-level hire.
- » Work with City Council to start the process of establishing a standalone Parks and Recreation Department.
- » Create a Health, Parks & Resilience Partnership connecting parks, trails and sidewalks, public works, planning, local healthcare providers, EDC, ISD, County, and MPO/COG. This group should:
  - » Coordinate park investments with public health priorities.
  - » Review annual implementation progress.
  - » Support grant applications.
  - » Identify resilience opportunities.
  - » Evaluate health outcomes tied to park investments.
- » As part of the annual budgeting process, build a systematic funding strategy for:
  - » Grants.
  - » Sponsorships.
  - » Donations.
  - » Public-private or foundation partnerships.
- » Update the City website to better showcase the City's parks. The parks and recreation webpage should include
  - » New photography.
  - » Consistent naming and addressing.
  - » Updated parks system map.
  - » Sort by feature functionality.
  - » Complete facilities reservation and cost information with working links
- » Build an in-house GIS system to map all parks, trails, facilities, and undeveloped city-owned properties, floodplains, and utility easements relative to parks, schools, and neighborhoods.



# FUNDING

Parks and trails projects are a significant investment of resources with the purpose of providing recreational, natural, health and environmental benefits many years into the future. Researching and evaluating potential funding sources and opportunities will potentially lighten the load of resources on the city.

## STRATEGIES

There are two strategies for funding projects recommend in this plan:

- » Identify a project partner, or lead, and appropriately budget for associated development. Potential costs include preliminary reports, site surveys, engineering and design, permitting and environmental considerations.
- » Seek alternative methods of funding including volunteer builds, donations, and grant programs.

Budgeting for projects includes evaluating annual resources including Capital Improvement Project funds, operating funds, or planning for the approval, sale and use of special tax bonds.

## FUNDING SOURCES

### Financing & Grants

There are a variety of approaches to source funding for the planning and construction of parks, nature-based tourism, and trails available at the state and regional levels. Texas parks and Wildlife provides many grant opportunities to cities within the State of Texas, but in addition to grant-giving organizations, financing may come from a municipal management district, tax increment reinvestment zones (TIRZ), and/or General Obligation Bonds for Parks.

### Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones (TIRZ)

Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones can fund parks by levying an incremental property tax revenue within a designated zone. As revenue within the designated zone increases over time, the tax from that revenue may be set aside and earmarked for parks. TIRZ may also leverage public-private partnerships to fundraise additional capital for parks and trails projects.

### **General Obligation Bond**

General obligation bonds and certificates of obligation are obligations to fund the construction and improvement of the city's infrastructure and capital projects. Generally, Obligation bonds require voter approval, and historically, Texas voters have consistently supported bonds that focus on park improvements. In general, bonds can only be used for capital improvement projects rather than ongoing yearly expenses such as operations and maintenance.

### **Donations**

Private companies and foundations may also be interested in funding parks and trail projects. Several national trail systems and well-known parks have been funded in this manner. Major corporations, foundations, and organizations should be considered for potential partnerships and support.

### **Public-Private Partnerships (PPP)**

The City's relationship with residents, Homeowners Associations, and various organizations can lead to future partnerships and increased advocacy for parks and trail projects in Port Lavaca.

### **Volunteer Labor**

Volunteer builds can be utilized for several different phases of park and trail construction. Volunteers can help with initial clearing of brush and small trees, and also help with the installation of landscape. Partnering with civic organizations, nonprofits, or school groups can help provide necessary volunteers.

### **Interlocal Agreements**

A crucial step in the development of parks and trails projects is to identify property ownership. Some project areas may fall into different jurisdictions or be owned by one entity and managed by another. Entities such as Calhoun County should be contacted to determine what level of agreement is necessary for construction within their right-of-way.

### **Utility Corridors**

Utility corridors present alternative pathways to create connectivity throughout a community, such as linear parks or trails built along pipelines or utility easements.

## PARKS DEDICATION ORDINANCE

Parkland dedication is a standard local government requirement on subdivision and site plan applications: developers either dedicate land for a park or pay a fee-in-lieu of dedication that the City uses to acquire land or build park facilities.

The underlying logic is an “essential connection” between the demand a development creates and the park improvement built with the developer’s resources. Land or fees collected this way have to benefit the people who will actually live in the development.

### Dedication Formula

- » 750+ homes: 1 acre per 75 dwelling units established by the plat.
- » Fewer than 750 homes:
  - » Donation to the City of at least 10 acres of parkland; or
  - » Cash payment into the park development fund in an amount per dwelling unit as set by City Council.

### Typical Parkland Dedication Criteria

- » Location is consistent with the city’s future park needs
- » Frontage on an existing public roadway
- » Dimensions, topography, elevation, and other natural features that allow for organized or passive recreation
- » Potable water, sanitary sewer, and electric power readily available from an adjacent right-of-way or easement
- » Adequate drainage
- » Free of easements, pipelines, overhead utilities, and other conditions that would inhibit effective use
- » Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment within the preceding 12 months
- » Cleared of all trash, refuse, waste materials, dilapidated structures, abandoned vehicles, and unwanted trees and brush

# GRANTS

This Plan can help provide the necessary requirements for many key grant opportunities. These grants typically require a planning document that outlines the vision for the City's parks and

## TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT (TPWD)

### Local Parks Grant Program

TPWD provides 50% matching grants on a reimbursement basis for eligible applicants. All grant assisted sites must be dedicated as parkland in perpetuity, properly maintained and open to the public. The grant program assists local with the acquisition and/or development of public recreation areas and facilities. Entities with populations 20,000 or under may apply to either the Small Community or Non-Urban Programs. The amount of grant funds requested determines the program.

- » Small Community Outdoor (20,000 or less): \$150,000 Grant Ceiling
- » Non-Urban Outdoor (500,000 or less): \$750,000 Grant Ceiling
- » Non-Urban Indoor (500,000 or less): \$1,500,000 Grant Ceiling

### TPWD Boating Access Grant Program

Provides 75% matching fund grant assistance to plan and construct new, or renovate existing, public boat ramps that provide public access to public waters for recreational boating.

### TPWD Community Outdoor Outreach Program (CO-OP)

Provides funding to tax-exempt organizations for programming that engages under-served populations in TPWD mission-oriented outdoor recreation, conservation and environmental education activities.

### TPWD National Recreational Trails Fund

Provides grants up to 80% of project cost with a maximum of \$300,000 for non-motorized trail grants.

### TPWD Conservation Grant Funding (Birding)

Provides grants for nature tourism and bird habitat restoration, enhancement, and land acquisition projects. With no matching requirement, this grant provides between \$1,000-\$20,000.

## PRIORITY GRANTS

Although there is a myriad of options for potential funding sources to help build the Port Lavaca's Parks System, the chart to the right highlights several grant opportunities that potentially yield a significant result.

## OTHER GRANTS

In addition to the grants listed to the right, there are ample opportunities to seek grant funding or sponsorship from local businesses, corporate entities, and private foundations.



| GRANT NAME                                                    | OFFERED BY                                 | AWARD PER PROJECT                                                      | APPLICATION CYCLE |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Local Park Grant Program: Small Community                     | Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) | \$75,000 Maximum Award                                                 | Summer            |
| Local Park Grant Program: Non-Urban Indoor/Outdoor Recreation | Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) | \$750,000 Maximum Award                                                | Summer            |
| Recreational Trail Fund                                       | Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) | \$200,000 Max. Non-Motorized Trails<br>\$400,000 Max. Motorized Trails | Winter            |
| Green Ribbon Program                                          | Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT) | \$75,000-\$30,000                                                      | Varies            |
| Governor's Community Achievement Awards                       | Keep Texas Beautiful partnering with TXDOT | \$50,000-\$100,000                                                     | Winter            |
| Texas Preservation Trust Fund                                 | Texas Historical Commission (THC)          | \$50,000                                                               | Winter            |
| Community Forestry Grants                                     | Texas A&M Forest Service                   | Varies                                                                 | Annual            |
| Community Facilities Direct Loan & Grant Program              | USDA Rural Development                     | Varies                                                                 | Rolling           |
| Coastal Management Program Grant                              | Texas General Land Office (GLO)            | Varies                                                                 | Spring            |
| Trail Grants                                                  | Rails to Trails Conservancy                | \$25,000                                                               | Spring            |
| Green Ribbon Program                                          | Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT) | \$20,000                                                               | Varies            |

# KEEPING IT CURRENT

A parks and recreation master plan should generally be updated every 5 to 10 years (with 5-year interim reviews and 10-year complete rewrites being a common industry standard) to maintain

## KEY TRIGGERS

### Time Intervals

Complete major re-writes every 10 years and smaller interim check-ins every 5 years.

### Grant Eligibility

Refresh timelines to meet state standards (such as guidelines from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department) which often require plans to be under 5 to 8 years old to qualify for funding.

### Community Growth

Revise whenever rapid local development, shifting neighborhood populations, or changing community recreational needs outpace the existing blueprint.

### Comprehensive Alignment

Update concurrently whenever the municipality adopts a new overarching city comprehensive or long-range growth plan.

### New Strategic Goals

The adoption of a new citywide or countywide strategic plan requires alignment.

## THE UPDATE PROCESS

### Data & Needs Assessment

Review current facility conditions, usage rates, and demographic shifts.

### Public Engagement

Collect community feedback via digital surveys, public open houses, and stakeholder meetings.

### Drafting & Approval

Refine the final recommendations with local boards before presenting them for formal adoption

# PRIORITIZATION FRAMEWORK

Not all actions can or should be implemented simultaneously. Prioritization helps ensure that limited resources are directed toward initiatives with the greatest impact and feasibility. The City of Port Lavaca should regularly review and update priorities based on progress, funding opportunities, and external influences such as regional growth, economic shifts, and infrastructure demands. By aligning actions with available resources and strategic partnerships, the Plan provides a clear and achievable roadmap for delivering the parks system envisioned by Port Lavaca residents.

## COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

On July 27, 2026, members of the public, City Council, and City Staff were invited to review the recommendations outlined in the parks and recreation master plan and vote for their top priorities for implementation.

The top ten strategy recommendations, by order of total votes:

- » Plant fast-growing native, drought-tolerant shade trees around seating areas, playgrounds, and along trails.
- » Increase marketing and promotion of programs and special events.
- » Establish a working group to explore the Texas Paddling Trails program.
- » Develop multi-sport athletic complexes.
- » Explore private landowner interest in establishing a private paintball, airsoft, or dirtbike park.

- » Identify and map the locations of all undeveloped City-owned properties, floodplains, and utility easements relative to parks, schools, and neighborhoods - to determine possible additional trail linkages.
- » Commission a Tourism Strategic Plan.
- » Use shade sails or trellises over playgrounds, picnic areas, and along trails.
- » Prioritize development of a neighborhood park between US 87 and W Austin.
- » Create flexible, multigenerational indoor and outdoor recreation areas for fitness, wellness, and community programs.

## TIMEFRAME

- » **Short-Term (1–3 Years):** Low-cost, high-impact actions that require minimal policy changes.
- » **Mid-Term (4–7 Years):** Projects needing moderate investment, regulatory updates, or additional planning.
- » **Long-Term (8+ Years):** Major infrastructure efforts, high-cost initiatives, and actions requiring significant funding, partnerships, or phased implementation.

## CONCEPTUAL COST

- » **\$ (Low Cost):** Planning studies, minor beautification, and administrative policy updates.
- » **\$\$ (Moderate Cost):** Targeted incentives, small-scale infrastructure improvements, and support programs.
- » **\$\$\$ (High Cost):** Roadway upgrades, utility improvements, and economic development projects.
- » **\$\$\$\$ (Major Cost):** Large-scale infrastructure, multimodal transportation systems, and capital-intensive investments.

## IMPLEMENTATION READINESS

- » **Funding Availability:** Can grants, city funds, or private investment support the initiative?
- » **Policy Requirements:** Are code updates or new regulations needed?
- » **Partnerships:** Does the action require collaboration with entities like TxDOT, TPWD, CCISD, GCRPC
- » **Community & Political Support:** Is there alignment with public priorities and leadership direction?



| PARK RECOMMENDATIONS |                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |            |        |                               |
|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|--------|-------------------------------|
| #                    | RECOMMENDATIONS                                                                                                                                                                                                        | TIMELINE   | COST   | POTENTIAL FUNDING             |
| New Parks & Trails   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |            |        |                               |
| 2.01                 | Prioritize development of a neighborhood park or larger along the southeast waterfront                                                                                                                                 | Mid-term   | \$\$\$ | CIP, PPP, Grants              |
| 2.02                 | Prioritize development of a neighborhood park or larger Between US 87 and W Austin                                                                                                                                     | Mid-term   | \$\$\$ | CIP, PPP, Grants              |
| 2.03                 | Prioritize development of a neighborhood park or larger, ideally a community park, north of SH 35 in the vicinity of Lynn Bayou                                                                                        | Mid-term   | \$\$\$ | CIP, PPP, Grants              |
| 2.04                 | Accept the “100% Challenge” for all residents to be within 1/2 mile of a recreational resource within 10 years                                                                                                         | Long-term  | \$\$\$ | CIP                           |
| 2.05                 | In recreationally underserved areas, prioritize active recreation amenities in any new parks over five acres constructed north of SH 35; at that time, allow for public input to guide which amenities are introduced. | Long-term  | \$     | CIP, PPP, Grants              |
| 2.06                 | Identify floodplains, wetlands, easements, and distressed properties adjacent to existing pocket parks that could be used to expand park footprints                                                                    | Short-term | \$     | CIP                           |
| Improvements         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |            |        |                               |
| 2.07                 | Conduct an ADA assessment on specified parks to determine what types of retrofits can improve ADA accessibility.                                                                                                       | Short-term | \$\$   | CIP, PPP, Grants              |
| 2.08                 | Develop an “Adopt-a-Park” program inviting neighborhoods, businesses, and volunteers to provide support and monitoring.                                                                                                | Short-term | \$     | Operating Budget, PPP, Grants |
| 2.09                 | Install low-cost guidance elements (bollards, fencing, landscaping) to direct visitors toward desired areas and limit access to sensitive zones                                                                        | Short-term | \$     | CIP, PPP, Grants              |
| 2.10                 | Install multiuse features (e.g., lawn areas with power stanchions, flexible shade shelters, portable seating) to support varied community events.                                                                      | Short-term | \$\$   | CIP, PPP, Grants              |
| 2.11                 | Plant fast-growing native, drought-tolerant shade trees around seating areas, playgrounds, and along trails                                                                                                            | Short-term | \$     | CIP, PPP, Grants              |
| 2.12                 | Plant shade trees throughout playgrounds and walkways                                                                                                                                                                  | Short-term | \$     | CIP, PPP, Grants              |

## PARK RECOMMENDATIONS

| #    | RECOMMENDATIONS                                                                                                                                                                                                         | TIMELINE  | COST   | POTENTIAL FUNDING |
|------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|--------|-------------------|
| 2.13 | Continue installing shaded picnic pavilions and seating areas in existing parks and trails                                                                                                                              | Mid-term  | \$\$   | CIP               |
| 2.14 | Define clear, formal entry points and boundaries with signage, gateway elements, pavement changes, or landscape features.                                                                                               | Mid-term  | \$\$   | CIP, PPP, Grants  |
| 2.15 | Ensure that drinking water fountains are readily available in existing public spaces                                                                                                                                    | Mid-term  | \$     | Operating Budget  |
| 2.16 | Implement stormwater management practices that double as cooling, such as installing shade trees in bioswales or around roadside planters                                                                               | Mid-term  | \$\$   | CIP, PPP, Grants  |
| 2.17 | Incorporate water features such as splash pads or misting stations in existing parks                                                                                                                                    | Mid-term  | \$\$   | CIP               |
| 2.18 | Install dark sky-friendly lighting along high-use corridors, including parking lots, pavilions, and park entries; consider solar-powered or motion-activated fixtures in naturalized areas to reduce operational costs. | Mid-term  | \$\$   | CIP, PPP, Grants  |
| 2.19 | Install trellises or pergolas and cover them with climbing vines to create natural shade curtains                                                                                                                       | Mid-term  | \$\$   | CIP, PPP, Grants  |
| 2.20 | Replace concrete or asphalt with turf, native grasses, or groundcover to reduce surface temperatures and heat radiation.                                                                                                | Mid-term  | \$     | CIP, PPP, Grants  |
| 2.21 | Review the systemwide maintenance standard specifying routine cycles for mowing, litter removal, restroom cleaning, graffiti abatement, and vegetation trimming.                                                        | Mid-term  | \$     | CIP, PPP, Grants  |
| 2.22 | Use high-density polyethylene (HDPE) shade sails over playgrounds, picnic areas, and along trails.                                                                                                                      | Mid-term  | \$\$   | CIP, PPP, Grants  |
| 2.23 | Adopt a riparian buffer policy to safeguard waterways, prevent erosion, and improve water quality.                                                                                                                      | Long-term | \$\$   | Operating Budget  |
| 2.24 | Restore at minimum 50 acres of degraded prairie or wetland habitat through native planting and ecological enhancement features.                                                                                         | Long-term | \$\$   | CIP, Grants       |
| 2.25 | Establish seasonal cooling centers in high-traffic and low-shade parks                                                                                                                                                  | Long-term | \$\$\$ | CIP, Grants       |

| PARK RECOMMENDATIONS |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |            |        |                             |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|--------|-----------------------------|
| #                    | RECOMMENDATIONS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | TIMELINE   | COST   | POTENTIAL FUNDING           |
| 2.26                 | Integrated Playground Shade: When replacing play equipment, prioritize structures with pre-installed shades, which are often more affordable than retrofitting separate structures.                                                                                                 | Long-term  | \$\$   | CIP, PPP, Grants            |
| Policies & Standards |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |            |        |                             |
| 2.27                 | Adopt a park, trail, and improvements dedication ordinance to support efforts to expand the existing parks system                                                                                                                                                                   | Short-term | \$     | Operating Budget            |
| 2.28                 | Issue an open call to churches and other houses of worship in North Port Lavaca that have active recreation facilities on their grounds; establish partnerships to spread awareness of the facilities and provide access for residents of recreationally underserved neighborhoods. | Short-term | \$     | CIP                         |
| 2.29                 | Establish park identity with consistent branding and wayfinding, starting with the parks and drinking themes identified in the Waterfront Master Plan.                                                                                                                              | Mid-term   | \$\$   | CIP, PPP, Grants            |
| 2.30                 | Codify design and ADA minimum standards for all parks infrastructure, including new parks, piers, boat launches, and playgrounds, including private parks within future masterplanned communities                                                                                   | Long-term  | \$     | CIP, PPP, Grants, Donations |
| 2.31                 | Establish a City policy of developing pocket parks sparingly, such as for Downtown plazas                                                                                                                                                                                           | Long-term  | \$     | CIP                         |
| 2.32                 | Establish conservation easements or designated preserves to protect 500 acres of ecologically sensitive land from development and degradation                                                                                                                                       | Long-term  | \$\$\$ | CIP                         |
| 2.33                 | Establish partnerships with churches and other entities in North Port Lavaca with private recreation facilities; provide access for residents of recreationally underserved neighborhoods.                                                                                          | Long-term  | \$     | Operating Budget            |
| 2.34                 | Offer a fee-in-lieu option, which is a method to fund park enhancements where City Council has the ability to decide whether a financial contribution would be preferred to land dedication.                                                                                        | Long-term  | \$\$   | CIP                         |
| 2.35                 | 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 parks projects                                                                             | Long-term  | \$\$\$ | CIP, PPP, Grants            |

| TRAIL RECOMMENDATIONS |                                                                                                                                                                                               |            |        |                   |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|--------|-------------------|
| #                     | RECOMMENDATIONS                                                                                                                                                                               | TIMELINE   | COST   | POTENTIAL FUNDING |
| New Parks & Trails    |                                                                                                                                                                                               |            |        |                   |
| 3.01                  | Consult with TXDOT about constructing pedestrian bridges over SH 35 at key locations                                                                                                          | Short-term | \$     | CIP, PPP, Grants  |
| 3.02                  | Consult with TXDOT about developing off-street trails within the ROW of SH 35                                                                                                                 | Short-term | \$     | CIP, PPP, Grants  |
| 3.03                  | Consult with Union Pacific about constructing pedestrian bridges over their active tracks at key locations                                                                                    | Short-term | \$     | CIP, PPP, Grants  |
| 3.04                  | Identify City- and partner-owned waterfront sites that could host paddle-focused amenities                                                                                                    | Short-term | \$     | CIP, PPP, Grants  |
| 3.05                  | Coordinate with TXDOT, Union Pacific, and utility providers, in addition to partner communities, to study easement opportunities for off-street trails                                        | Short-term | \$     | CIP               |
| 3.06                  | Create small activity nodes every ½–1 mile along long trails (water fountains, fitness stations, picnic pads) to encourage continuous circulation.                                            | Mid-term   | \$\$   | CIP, PPP, Grants  |
| 3.07                  | Budget for ±1 miles of local linkages annually                                                                                                                                                | Mid-term   | \$     | CIP               |
| 3.08                  | Budget for the purchase, installation, and maintenance of one kayak launch annually, beginning with existing public boat ramps and shoreline access sites                                     | Mid-term   | \$     | CIP               |
| 3.09                  | Continue to coordinate with Union Pacific about acquiring the unused portion of tracks leading into Downtown and express interest in acquiring the southern spur should the opportunity arise | Mid-term   | \$     | CIP, PPP, Grants  |
| 3.10                  | Endeavor to establish a regional trail greenway by 2050                                                                                                                                       | Long-term  | \$\$   | CIP               |
| 3.11                  | Include trail, sidewalk, and/or bike lane access as part of the “100% Challenge” for all residents to be within 1/2 mile of a recreational resource within 10 years                           | Long-term  | \$\$\$ | CIP               |



| TRAIL RECOMMENDATIONS |                                                                                                                                                                                                               |            |      |                   |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|------|-------------------|
| #                     | RECOMMENDATIONS                                                                                                                                                                                               | TIMELINE   | COST | POTENTIAL FUNDING |
| Improvements          |                                                                                                                                                                                                               |            |      |                   |
| 3.12                  | Coordinate with Calhoun County and TXDOT's Support Services Division to install signage along key roadways leading to Port Lavaca                                                                             | Short-term | \$   | CIP, PPP, Grants  |
| 3.13                  | Consolidate informal trails by converting the feasible and most-used into formal paths and decommissioning the rest with vegetation or barriers.                                                              | Mid-term   | \$\$ | CIP, PPP, Grants  |
| 3.14                  | Continue installing shaded picnic pavilions and seating areas in existing parks and trails                                                                                                                    | Mid-term   | \$\$ | CIP               |
| 3.15                  | Ensure that drinking water fountains are readily available in existing trails, when applicable                                                                                                                | Mid-term   | \$   | Operating Budget  |
| 3.16                  | Incorporate water features such as splash pads or misting stations in existing trails                                                                                                                         | Mid-term   | \$\$ | CIP               |
| 3.17                  | Use high-density polyethylene (HDPE) shade sails over playgrounds, picnic areas, and along trails.                                                                                                            | Mid-term   | \$\$ | CIP, PPP, Grants  |
| 3.18                  | Establish a policy for schools, parks, and recreation amenities to connect to the closest sidewalk if located 1/4-mile                                                                                        | Mid-term   | \$   | CIP               |
| 3.19                  | Identify and map the locations of all undeveloped City-owned properties, floodplains, and utility easements - relative to parks, schools, and neighborhoods - to determine possible additional trail linkages | Mid-term   | \$   | CIP               |
| Policies & Standards  |                                                                                                                                                                                                               |            |      |                   |
| 3.20                  | Apply for the Texas Paddling Trails Program Community Application for Assistance, via Texas Parks and Wildlife's Nature Tourism Program                                                                       | Short-term | \$   | CIP               |
| 3.21                  | Coordinate with the City of Port O'Connor and Texas Parks and Wildlife to bring the City and Powderhorn State Park into the existing trail network                                                            | Short-term | \$   | CIP, PPP, Grants  |
| 3.22                  | Submit historic sites and community events to Texas Time Travel, part of the Texas Historical Commission, to be featured online and on the organization's trip planning app                                   | Short-term | \$   | CIP, PPP, Grants  |

## TRAIL RECOMMENDATIONS

| #    | RECOMMENDATIONS                                                                                                                                                                                                             | TIMELINE  | COST | POTENTIAL FUNDING |
|------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|------|-------------------|
| 3.23 | Upon completion of the breakwater project, commission a Water Trail Assessment to determine the experience level for a shoreline paddle trail along previously identified alignments                                        | Mid-term  | \$   | CIP, PPP, Grants  |
| 3.24 | Establish a working group through the local Council of Governments or form a standalone group to explore the feasibility of a regional trail system from Victoria to Port Lavaca to Powderhorn State Park and Port O'Connor | Long-term | \$   | CIP, PPP, Grants  |

| PROGRAMS RECOMMENDATIONS |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |            |        |                               |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|--------|-------------------------------|
| #                        | RECOMMENDATIONS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | TIMELINE   | COST   | POTENTIAL FUNDING             |
| New Parks & Trails       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |            |        |                               |
| 4.01                     | Commission a Community Center Master Plan that provides an initial feasibility study and design program.                                                                                                                                                        | Mid-term   | \$\$   | CIP                           |
| 4.02                     | Create flexible indoor and outdoor recreation areas for fitness, wellness, and community programs.                                                                                                                                                              | Mid-term   | \$\$   | CIP, PPP, Grants              |
| 4.03                     | Issue an open call to local landowners to explore interest in establishing a private paintball, airsoft, or dirtbike park.                                                                                                                                      | Mid-term   | \$     | Operating Budget              |
| 4.04                     | Design multi-generational recreation areas, including: Youth (playgrounds, splash pads, and skate plazas/features); Adults (fitness stations, jogging trails, and sports courts); Seniors (shaded seating, accessible pathways, and low-impact exercise zones). | Long-term  | \$\$\$ | CIP, PPP, Grants              |
| 4.05                     | Develop multi-sport athletic complexes that accommodate youth and adult leagues and informal play.                                                                                                                                                              | Long-term  | \$\$\$ | CIP, PPP, Grants              |
| Programming              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |            |        |                               |
| 4.06                     | Activate underutilized spaces with creative placemaking initiatives, such as food truck courts, live performance spaces, and seasonal/temporary pop-ups/installations.                                                                                          | Short-term | \$\$   | CIP, PPP, Grants              |
| 4.07                     | Co-locate indoor recreation space with libraries, public health clinics, or parks/trail networks to increase benefits.                                                                                                                                          | Short-term | \$     | CIP                           |
| 4.08                     | Coordinate with Calhoun County ISD and Calhoun County Library to explore esports.                                                                                                                                                                               | Short-term | \$     | CIP, PPP                      |
| 4.09                     | Coordinate with schools and youth organizations to host stewardship days and environmental learning programs.                                                                                                                                                   | Short-term | \$     | Operating Budget, PPP, Grants |
| 4.10                     | Develop partnerships with local organizations to host a senior-focused gathering or event.                                                                                                                                                                      | Short-term | \$     | Operating Budget              |
| 4.11                     | Develop partnerships with local schools and organizations to host a youth-focused gathering or event.                                                                                                                                                           | Short-term | \$     | Operating Budget              |

## PROGRAMS RECOMMENDATIONS

| #    | RECOMMENDATIONS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | TIMELINE   | COST | POTENTIAL FUNDING             |
|------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|------|-------------------------------|
| 4.12 | Encourage third-party partners (youth groups, nonprofits, businesses) to host activities through simplified permitting and low-cost use agreements.                                                                                                                                                                         | Short-term | \$   | Operating Budget, PPP, Grants |
| 4.13 | Establish partnerships with churches, private rec centers, and other entities with indoor recreation facilities, youth sports, after-school/daycare, and seniors events on their grounds; to spread awareness of the facilities and provide access for residents at a fraction of the cost of a flagship recreation center. | Short-term | \$   | CIP, PPP                      |
| 4.14 | Explore partnership opportunities to use vacant public property for semi-permanent uses like bouldering/climbing, paintball, or airsoft.                                                                                                                                                                                    | Short-term | \$   | CIP, PPP                      |
| 4.15 | Fill in programmatic gaps for adult fitness and wellness, nature, aquatic, and inclusive and adaptive program areas.                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Short-term | \$   | Operating Budget              |
| 4.16 | Foster public-private partnerships to expand event funding, sponsorships, and programming.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Short-term | \$   | PPP                           |
| 4.17 | Identify existing makers spaces and potential partnerships with local makers, schools, community colleges, non-profits, and/or city staff.                                                                                                                                                                                  | Short-term | \$   | Operating Budget              |
| 4.18 | Identify expanded partnership opportunities with the YMCA, such as swim lessons and aquatic safety.                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Short-term | \$   | CIP, PPP                      |
| 4.19 | 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.    | Short-term | \$   | Operating Budget              |
| 4.20 | Offer vendor and sponsorship incentives for local businesses to participate in festivals, ensuring new sponsor or vendor participants in City-hosted events per year.                                                                                                                                                       | Short-term | \$   | Operating Budget              |
| 4.21 | Poll community interest in a seasonal, monthly farmer's market. If interest is strong, identify a location with sufficient infrastructure that is appealing to residents and visitors alike.                                                                                                                                | Short-term | \$   | Operating Budget              |
| 4.22 | Support local businesses through vendor opportunities, pop-up markets, and collaborations with restaurants, breweries, and artisans.                                                                                                                                                                                        | Short-term | \$\$ | Operating Budget              |



## PROGRAMS RECOMMENDATIONS

| #    | RECOMMENDATIONS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | TIMELINE | COST | POTENTIAL FUNDING |
|------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|------|-------------------|
| 4.23 | Create and launch a Block Party Trailer that can be rented for neighborhood events. The Trailer can be delivered upon request and will include movable seating, tables, yard games, and other useful celebration materials for neighborhood (not private) events.                                                                                                                                                                          | Mid-term | \$\$ | CIP, PPP, Grants  |
| 4.24 | 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.                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Mid-term | \$\$ | Operating Budget  |
| 4.25 | Conduct a STEM feasibility study focused on Esports and Makerspaces, in coordination with the EDC and ISD.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Mid-term | \$   | Operating Budget  |
| 4.26 | "Establish a small business grant and support program, in coordination with the Parks Board, TIRZ Board, and/or Port Lavaca Economic Development Corporation, that could:<br>-Partially fund site assessments or designs for prospective sites.<br>-Contribute to basic renovations or site improvements.<br>-Provide advertising and promotion.<br>-Negotiate for voluntary public park areas, trail easements, or coastline dedication." | Mid-term | \$\$ | CIP, PPP, Grants  |
| 4.27 | Issue an open call to churches, private rec centers, and other entities that have indoor recreation facilities, youth sports, afterschool/daycare, and seniors' events on their grounds.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Mid-term | \$   | Operating Budget  |
| 4.28 | 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.                                                                                                                                                                                      | Mid-term | \$   | Operating Budget  |
| 4.29 | Program parks intentionally with recurring events to reinforce legitimate occupancy and passive surveillance.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Mid-term | \$   | CIP, PPP, Grants  |
| 4.30 | Provide affordable vendor spaces at community events, allowing local entrepreneurs to showcase their products and services to a wider audience.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Mid-term | \$   | Operating Budget  |

| PROGRAMS RECOMMENDATIONS |                                                                                                                                                                                                             |            |      |                               |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|------|-------------------------------|
| #                        | RECOMMENDATIONS                                                                                                                                                                                             | TIMELINE   | COST | POTENTIAL FUNDING             |
| Improvements             |                                                                                                                                                                                                             |            |      |                               |
| 4.31                     | Evaluate public Wi-Fi hotspots in major destinations to support real-time communication.                                                                                                                    | Mid-term   | \$\$ | Operating Budget, CIP, Grants |
| 4.32                     | Include commercial kitchen equipment in recreational centers to use the space as a resilience hub during disasters or to earn revenue by renting it for events.                                             | Mid-term   | \$\$ | CIP                           |
| 4.33                     | Place benches, bridges, and gathering areas so they are visible from main circulation routes.                                                                                                               | Mid-term   | \$\$ | CIP, PPP, Grants              |
| 4.34                     | Where vandalism is recurring, replace vulnerable materials with high-durability options (steel, anti-graffiti coatings, tamper-resistant hardware, public art).                                             | Mid-term   | \$\$ | Operating Budget, CIP, Grants |
| Policies & Standards     |                                                                                                                                                                                                             |            |      |                               |
| 4.35                     | Incorporate QR codes on Wayfinding to facilitate reporting issues, provide maps, and share safety tips.                                                                                                     | Short-term | \$   | Operating Budget, CIP, Grants |
| 4.36                     | Update the City website to better connect users to County- and TPW-managed facilities.                                                                                                                      | Short-term | \$   | Operating Budget              |
| 4.37                     | Update the City website to better showcase the City's parks, including new photography, consistent naming and addressing, "sort by features" functionality, and all reservation/cost information and links. | Short-term | \$   | Operating Budget              |
| 4.38                     | Develop a promotional campaign with digital marketing, social media highlights, and printed event guides to increase event awareness and attendance.                                                        | Short-term | \$   | Operating Budget              |
| 4.39                     | Encourage community participation by involving local organizations, schools, and businesses in event planning and sponsorships.                                                                             | Short-term | \$   | Operating Budget              |
| 4.40                     | Establish partnerships via a 380 agreement to spread awareness of the facilities and provide access for residents at a fraction of the cost of a flagship recreation center.                                | Short-term | \$   | CIP                           |
| 4.41                     | Formulate and launch a recreation focused campaign to attract snowbirds, partners, venders, sponsors, and new development.                                                                                  | Short-term | \$   | Operating Budget              |

## PROGRAMS RECOMMENDATIONS

| #    | RECOMMENDATIONS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | TIMELINE   | COST   | POTENTIAL FUNDING             |
|------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|--------|-------------------------------|
| 4.42 | Increase marketing and promotion of programs and special events.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Short-term | \$     | Operating Budget              |
| 4.43 | Work with neighborhood associations to conduct periodic “walk audits” identifying visibility and safety issues.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Short-term | \$     | Operating Budget              |
| 4.44 | Budget for a director level hire. Work with the City Council to initiate the process of establishing a Parks and Recreation Department.                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Mid-term   | \$\$\$ | CIP, PPP, Grants              |
| 4.45 | Commission a Tourism Strategic Plan to: identify resources and assets needed to support special events, including public and private spaces; review and prioritize the next round of long-term improvements from the Waterfront Master Plan; identify the public and private spaces needed to support special events; and determine use needs for future parks. | Mid-term   | \$\$   | CIP, PPP, Grants              |
| 4.46 | Identify high incident locations and create a rapid-response protocol (24–72 hours) for graffiti, vandalism, and damaged infrastructure.                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Mid-term   | \$\$   | Operating Budget, CIP, Grants |
| 4.47 | Implement asset management software to track condition, repairs, and lifecycle replacement schedules.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Mid-term   | \$\$   | Operating Budget, CIP, Grants |
| 4.48 | Work with the City Council to initiate the process of establishing a Parks and Recreation Department.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Long-term  | \$\$\$ | CIP, PPP, Grants              |