

Open Space Conservation Program

Prioritization Tool & Draft Program Recommendations

THE
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**FOR
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LAND**

December 7, 2021- Council Work Session

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Purple Paintbrush at Broadcast Hill, City's first Open Space Conservation Program Acquisition in Summer 2020; Photo by Michelle Villafranca

Today's Agenda

1. Background
2. Trust for Public Land's Role
3. Public Engagement
4. Benchmarking Study
5. Program Recommendations
6. Next Steps

Open Space Working Group

City

- City Attorney's Office
- Code Compliance - Environmental Quality
- Communications & Public Engagement
- Development Services
- Diversity & Inclusion
- Economic Development
- IT Solutions
- Park & Recreation
- Planning & Data Analytics
- Property Management
- TPW - Stormwater Management
- Water

Partners

- North Central Texas Council of Governments
- Streams & Valleys
- Tarrant County
- Tarrant Regional Water District
- Trust for Public Land



Fort Worth Vision & Strategic Goals

Vision

“...be the most *livable* and *best-managed* city in the country.”

Strategic Goals

- Make Fort Worth the nation's *safest* city
- Improve *mobility* and *air quality*
- Create and maintain a *clean* and *attractive* city
- Strengthen the *economy*, develop the future *workforce* and create *quality job opportunities*
- Promote *orderly* and *sustainable* development



Open Space Conservation Program

Mission: Conserve **high-quality natural areas** as the city grows to provide environmental benefits and recreational opportunities that support economic development and enhance the livability and desirability of Fort Worth.



Modeling Goal Areas

- Ecosystem Preservation
- Stream, River, and Lake Health
- Community Health
- Recreation
- Flood Control
- Equitable Access to Natural Spaces
- Economic Development

Wildflowers at Stella Rowan Prairie; Photo by Michelle Villafranca





THE TRUST FOR PUBLIC LAND: LAND FOR PEOPLE

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What we do

OUR SERVICES



PLAN



FUND



PROTECT



CREATE

Creating more parks for Texans

Since 1979, The Trust for Public Land has protected more than **43,000 acres** of Texas's most important natural places, including over **1,900 acres right here in North Texas.**

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McCallis Point; photo by The Trust for Public Land



Overview of TPL's Role

Purpose

- Develop data-driven Open Space Prioritization Tool
- Evaluate funding and policy options

Key elements

- GIS-based data-driven analysis and prioritization
- Online mapping interface and decision support tool
- Benchmarking study
- Strategy report
- Story map webpage

Little Fossil Creek; photo by Jason Flowers for The Trust for Public Land

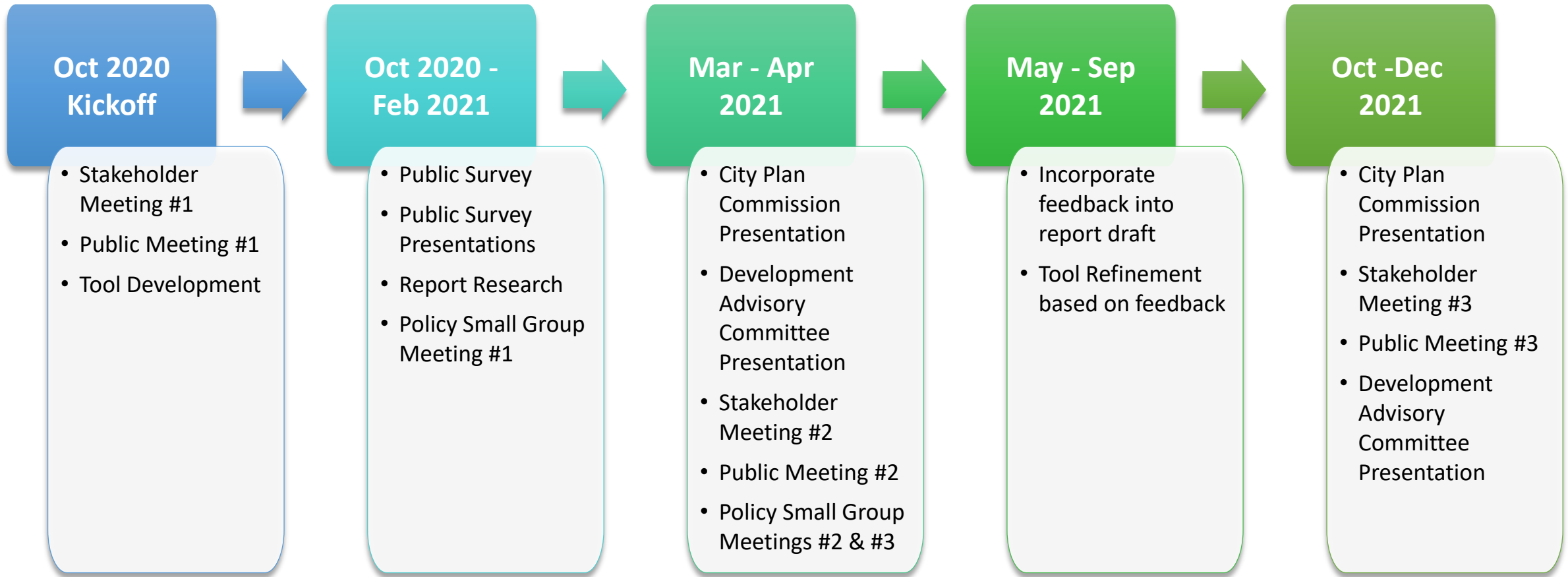


Public Engagement

- **Hosted 3 stakeholder meetings**
 - 65 members from different sectors (Environment, Academia, Development, Neighborhoods, State & Regional Government)
 - Held 3 Policy Small Group meetings
- **Hosted 3 public meetings**
- **Gave 3 virtual presentations on the public survey in English and Spanish**
- **Public Survey (English and Spanish) – received 1,429 responses**
 - Top responses for each question were consistent across demographics



Public Engagement Timeline



Public Engagement – Key Takeaways

Strong Public Support for the Open Space Conservation Program

- **96%** define conservation of natural areas as *“Very Important”*
- **99%** think the city should establish a *permanent program* to conserve natural areas
- **88%** strongly support *dedicating public funding* for land conservation
- **37%** willing to *volunteer*

Top Priorities

- Ecosystem Preservation
- Stream, River, and Lake Health
- Community Health



Prairie around Benbrook Lake; Photo by Jason Flowers for The Trust for Public Land



Tandy Hills BioBlitz 2016 - participants with TPWD Urban Biologist Sam Kieschnick; Photo by Michelle Villafranca

Public Engagement – Key Takeaways

Programs and Activities

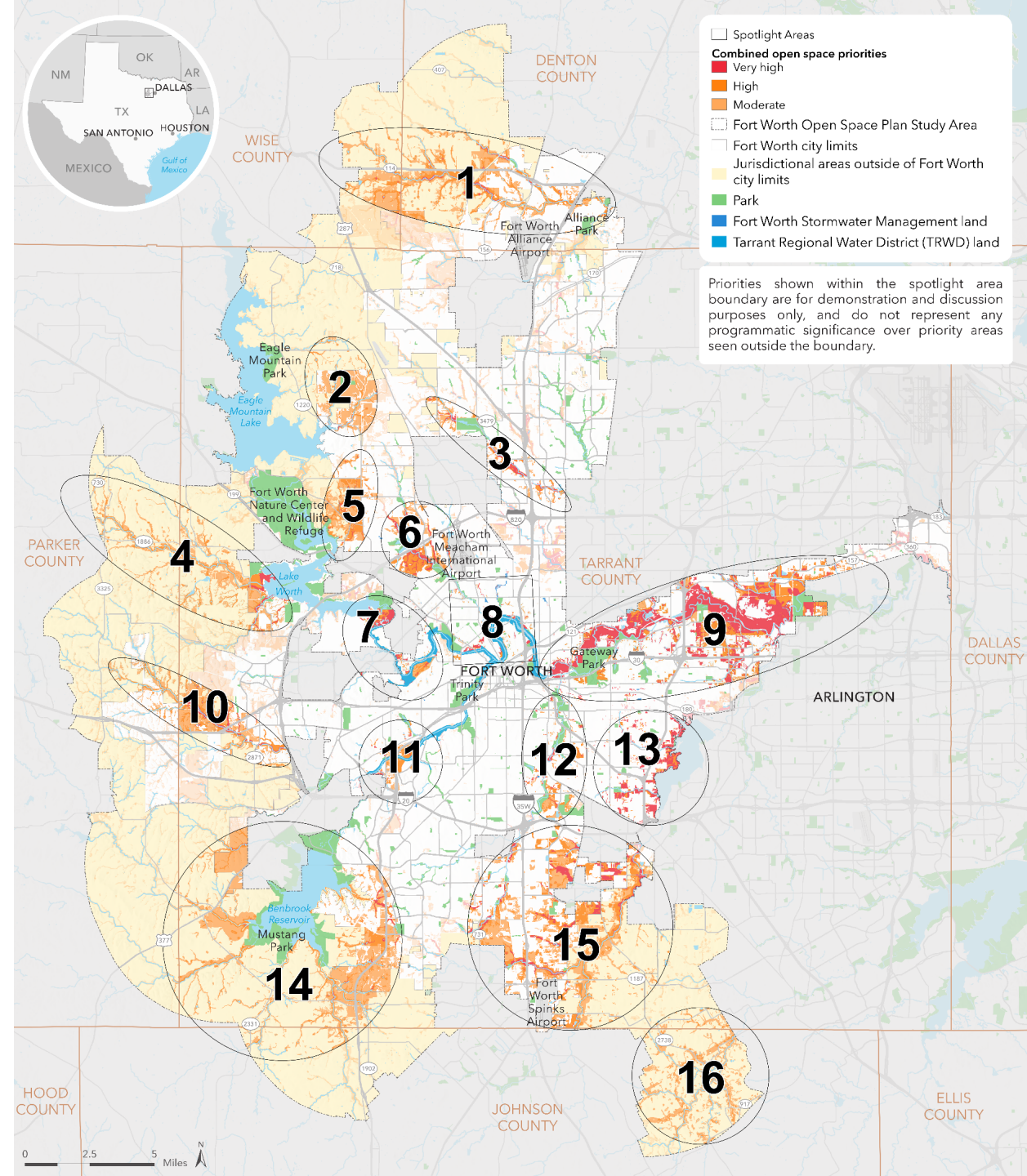
- Hiking/Walking
- Bird Watching & Wildlife Viewing
- Educational Programming & Outdoor Education

Amenities

- Natural Paths & Trails
- Picnic Areas
- Educational Signage

Spotlight Areas

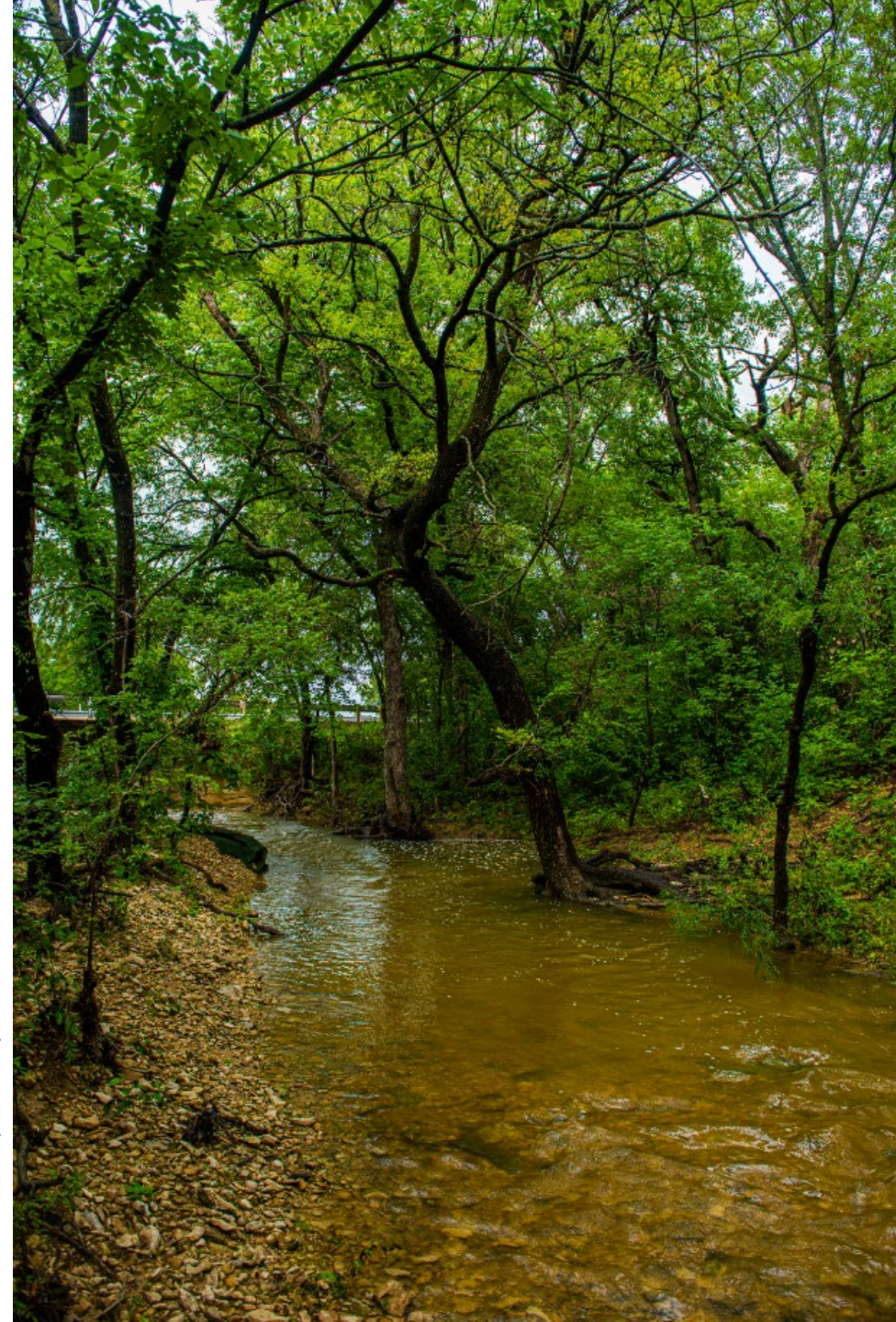
1. Denton Creek Watershed
2. Dosier Creek Watershed
3. Big Fossil Creek Watershed
4. Silver Creek Watershed
5. Lake Worth North Watershed
6. Marine Creek Lake Watershed
7. West Fork Trinity Watershed
8. City Center
9. Trinity River/Eastern Cross Timbers
10. Mary's Creek/Fort Worth Prairie
11. Clear Fork Trinity Watershed
12. Sycamore Creek Watershed
13. Lake Arlington/Eastern Cross Timbers
14. Benbrook Lake/Fort Worth Prairie
15. Village Creek Watershed
16. Upper Walnut Creek Watershed



Research Methods

- Compiled best practices and lessons learned from eight cities
- Synthesized key guidance from *The Conservation Program Handbook - a guide for local government land acquisition*
- Evaluated existing Fort Worth open space goals highlighted in various reports and planning documents
- Met with a policy-focused small group to gather information and tailor recommendations to local conditions

Dosier Creek; photo by Jason Flowers for The Trust for Public Land



Benchmarking Study

Benchmarking Cities

Best practices among similar cities

- Austin
- Dallas
- San Antonio
- Oklahoma City, OK
- Charlotte, NC

Showcase Cities

Best practices from best-in-class cities

- Boulder, CO
- Albuquerque, NM
- Minneapolis, MN

Pilot Knob Park, Minneapolis, MN; photo by The Trust for Public Land



Key Program Recommendations

Acquisition

- Short-Term: Identify individual priority parcels that fit program goals
- Short-Term: Identify partners that can support program and explore opportunities to acquire properties
- Medium-Term: Explore opportunities to incentivize or require open space conservation

Funding

- Short-Term: Determine funding sources for program
- Short-Term: Ensure annual city budget appropriations keep pace with maintenance demands
- Medium-Term: Conduct public opinion survey to gauge voter support for different funding mechanisms and uses of funds

Potential Open Space Funding Sources

Funding Source	Acquisition & Capital Projects	Maintenance
Bonds	X	
General Fund/Paygo	X	X
Gas Lease	X	
Special Revenue & Enterprise Funds	X	X
Dedicated Fee	X	X
Dedicated Tax	X	X
Mitigation Banking	X	X
Carbon Offset Markets	X	X
Grants	X	X
Partnerships/Donations	X	X

Benchmark Cities Funding Sources

Jurisdiction	Funding for acquisition	Funding for maintenance
Albuquerque, NM	Bonds, open space impact fee, gross receipts tax, grants	Interest from permanent fund
Austin, TX	Bonds, parkland dedication, fees	General fund
Boulder, CO	Bonds, dedicated sales tax, state lottery funds	Dedicated sales tax
Dallas, TX	Bonds, parkland dedication	General fund, fees
Mecklenburg County, NC	Bonds, capital appropriations, grants, donations	General fund, earned revenue, grants
Minneapolis, MN	Parkland dedication	General fund
Oklahoma City, OK	Parkland dedication, dedicated sales tax for Metropolitan Area Projects (MAPS)	General fund
San Antonio, TX	Bonds, dedicated sales tax, parkland dedication, grants, general fund	General fund, fees

Current Open Space Funding

Funding Source	Amount
Oil & Gas Trust – General/Water	~\$11M Funding ~\$5.3M not yet encumbered to an acquisition, with ~\$2.9M to be used for water quality protection
Proposed 2022 Bond	\$15M
General Fund Annual maintenance by Park & Recreation Dpt. for acquisitions approved by Council to date (25-acre property adjacent to Fort Worth Nature Center, 24-acre Patino Road & 50-acre Broadcast Hill)	~\$30,000

Key Program Recommendations

Goals

- Medium-Term: Include seven goal areas in master plans and other guiding documents

Management

- Short-Term: Commit to equitable and inclusive open space management
- Medium-Term: Evaluate passive recreation opportunities for open spaces that meet the diverse needs of our growing city
- Long-Term: Explore opportunities to work with partners to establish regional open space system

Key Program Recommendations

Maintenance

- Short-Term: Continue maintaining open space through Park & Recreation Dpt.
- Medium-Term: Develop training program for maintenance of open space
- Long-Term: Develop management plans for major parcels and track impacts

Continuous Public Feedback & Volunteers

- Short-Term: Consider how to incorporate continuous public feedback such as through a continued stakeholder group, advisory committee or board
- Short-Term: Work with city's volunteer coordinator to identify opportunities to engage residents with different interests and physical abilities

Next Steps

- Refine program recommendations based on city management, stakeholder, and public feedback
- Finalize prioritization tool
- Finalize report
- Finalize story map webpage
- Stakeholder Meeting #4
- Public Meeting #4



First Open Space Conservation Program Acquisition - Broadcast Hill prairie and Fort Worth skyline; photo by Michelle Villafranca

Questions & Discussion

FortWorthOpenSpace.org

