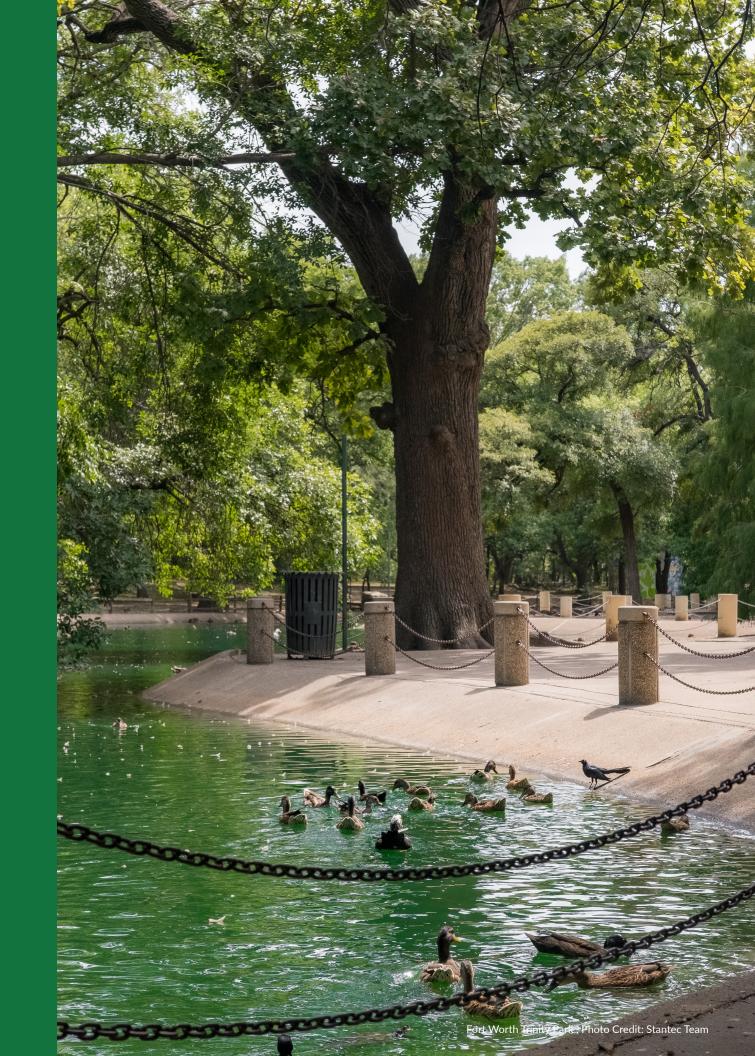


FORT WORTH'S RAILWAY FACILITIES.





# Fort Worth Park & Recreation System Background

## **History of Fort Worth Parks**

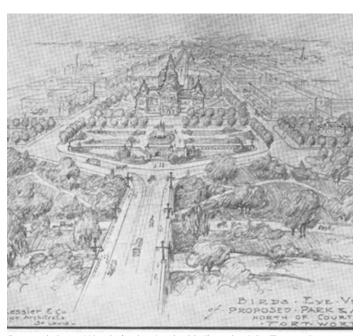
Fort Worth grew out of a frontier military outpost established in 1849 and disbanded in 1853. By 1890, the city had a population of 23,076 within approximately 7.2 square miles. In the early 1890s, a movement for public parks became a topic of earnest conversation among residents and City officials. Hyde Park, located downtown at the southeast corner of 9th Street and Throckmorton Street, became the first designated City park in 1873, donated by Sarah Gray Jennings in memory of her parents, John Hansford Hyde and Polly Struther Hyde.

By 1909, Fort Worth formally established its park department, laying the foundation for a structured approach to park planning and development. That same year, renowned landscape architect George E. Kessler developed Fort Worth's first Park Plan. His vision centered on an integrated system of parks that utilized the city's natural features, including drainageways, the Trinity River and its tributaries, and parkways that connected neighborhoods and businesses to green spaces. Kessler's plan became the basis for major park facilities that continue to shape Fort Worth's Park, Recreation, and Open Space System today.

In 1925, the firm Hare and Hare further analyzed and expanded upon the existing park system. Their plan, completed in 1930 as A Comprehensive Park System for Fort Worth, Texas, helped guide the City through a period of significant growth, ensuring that park development kept pace with expansion.

By 1992, Fort Worth adopted a systems approach to park planning, emphasizing the review of existing facilities, public input, and alignment with community goals. This approach, first formalized in the 1992 Strategic Plan and reaffirmed in the 1998 Master Plan, has continued to guide planning efforts, including the 2015 PROS Master Plan.

Throughout its history, Fort Worth's park system has greatly benefited from the generosity of individuals, citizen groups, and foundations. Organizations such as the Amon G. Carter Foundation, the Anne Burnett and Charles Tandy Foundation, the Sid W. Richardson Foundation, and the Communities Foundation of Texas have played key roles in funding and shaping parks. Citizen-led groups, including Streams and Valleys, Inc., the Fort Worth Zoological Association, the Fort Worth Botanical Society, the Friends of the Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge, Friends of Tandy Hills, and numerous neighborhood associations, have also made significant contributions. Their efforts have been instrumental in developing iconic destinations such as the Water Gardens, Burnett Park, Heritage Park, the Botanic Garden, the Nature Center & Refuge, Gateway Park, and the Fort Worth Zoo.



Postcard view of Kessler's plan for the bluff north of the Tarrant County Courthouse as drawn by his assistant, Henry Wright. Image courtesy Larry Schuessler.

### New Planning for a New Era of Growth: Beyond Traditional Parks

The City of Fort Worth has maintained a proud tradition of building and continuously adapting a citywide park system that serves the needs, reflects the values, and pursues the aspirations of the community. Each "era" of park development has contributed to a legacy that continues to define the City's unique character today.

### From the Frontier to 1900

Parks have played an important role in shaping Fort Worth since its establishment at the country's western frontier in the late 19th century. As people began to settle, there was an early effort to create public parks for the community. The City's first significant park, Sundance Square, was developed in the 1880's, and it originally served as a marketplace and social hub for a city of less than 10,000 residents.

#### 1900 to 1950

In the early 1900's, Fort Worth's meatpacking industry spurred rapid growth. By 1910, the population had more than doubled. In just over a decade, a city of 30,000 became a city of 75,000 and Fort Worth faced the challenges of rapid industrial urbanization that characterized cities across North America during this time. In the midst of this urbanization, Fort Worth chose to prioritize park planning.

In 1907, the City hired landscape architect George Kessler to design a comprehensive park system inspired by the "city beautiful" movement that sought to preserve the presence and benefits of nature in rapidly growing urban environments. This park system soon incorporated Lake Worth and additional lakes that were created to provide drinking water for the booming population. As the City continued to grow, it transformed several parks into new citywide attractions such as the beginning of the Fort Worth Zoo in 1909 and the Rock Springs Arboretum (known today as the Fort Worth Botanic Garden) in 1934.

#### 1950 to 2000

The City of Fort Worth's park system expanded in tandem with rapid population growth in the post-World War II era. In the 1950s, the City's population was around 300,000; by 2000, it had doubled to around 600,000. During this time, the City became committed to expanding its park system to keep pace with growth. As new housing subdivisions were built, developers dedicated parkland to the City as part of the development process. As a result, much of the system's expansion mirrored suburban growth, helping to maintain a consistent ratio of parkland acreage per thousand residents.

## **Fort Worth Park History**

City makes first purchase of land for park purposes. Located on the west of the Clear Fork of the Trinity River and south of what would become 7th Street, the park is named City Park.

1892

Fort Worth Playground and Recreation Association created. The association becomes a major advocate for the creation on a official city recreation department.

1922

## 1873

Sarah Jennings donates a tract of land to the city for parkland to be named Hyde Park in honor of her parents. Because the tract was not initially deeded to the public, it would be years before it was recognized as a public park.

### 1909

Kessler completes his master plan for Fort Worth parks.

#### 2000 to 2024

As the City of Fort Worth has taken its place as twelfth largest city in the United States, it has built on its Kessler Legacy with initiatives like the Trinity River Vision project that have been designed to enhance access to the river while creating new recreational opportunities.

Additionally, the 2023 Good Natured Green Space Initiative was launched to help preserve highly valued natural areas ahead of anticipated urban growth. Today, the cumulative legacy of more than a century of commitment to parks, recreation, and preserving open spaces has endowed the City of Fort Worth with a strong foundation for meeting the needs and aspirations of a new cycle of continued evolution.

#### 2024 and Onward

The City of Fort Worth projects its population will grow by over 28% from 2024 levels, reaching approximately 1.3 million by 2050. The City's Comprehensive Plan recognizes that this next phase of growth will be shaped by increasingly diverse households—with and without children—who seek greater housing choices and more walkable, mixeduse communities. Families, young professionals, and older adults alike are showing a growing preference for neighborhoods that offer access to parks, transit, and daily needs within close proximity. In response, the City of Fort Worth current Comprehensive Plan supports a more centralized growth model through the continued development of emerging urban centers, village hubs, and revitalized commercial corridors.

In the competition of cities for new and desirable population, no other element of advertisement is worth so much as an ample and attractive park system, making a pleasant city in which to live comfortably. <sup>77</sup>

George Kessler, Fort Worth's first Park and City Master Plan, 1909



GEORGE E. KESSLER.



Plan for Fort Worth Park and Boulevard System by Hare and Hare

Hare and Hare complete revision to Master Plan of Park and Recreation Areas for Fort Worth.

1957

Adoption of the Park & Recreation Department Strategic Plan

1998

### 1930

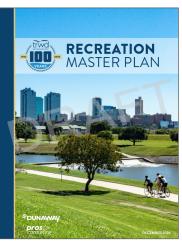
Hare and Hare completes an update of the park master plan. It follows Kessler's concepts of linking parks by scenic drives and parkways and creation of the neighborhood parks.

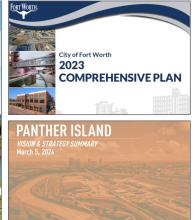
## 1992

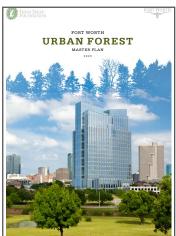
The plan development process took a systems approach.

## **Related Plans and Citywide Initiatives**









# Building on the Past, Looking to the Future

The success of GREENprint Fort Worth depends on seamless coordination with citywide initiatives. By aligning parks and public spaces with transportation, economic development, and sustainability strategies, Fort Worth is ensuring that parks are not just recreational spaces but essential infrastructure places that enhance the city's livability, resilience, and identity.

Fort Worth's continued growth and transformation require a coordinated approach to planning. To ensure GREENprint Fort Worth aligns with broader citywide goals, this plan integrates insights from past and ongoing planning efforts. These foundational documents provide a framework for shaping parks, green spaces, and the public realm in ways that support sustainability, equity, and economic development.

# City of Fort Worth Park, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan (2015)

The 2015 Master Plan laid the groundwork for Fort Worth's park system, providing strategic direction for the city's investments in parks, trails, and recreational facilities. As Fort Worth experienced rapid growth and demographic shifts, the plan emphasized the need for equitable park access, environmental sustainability, and the integration of green spaces with urban development.

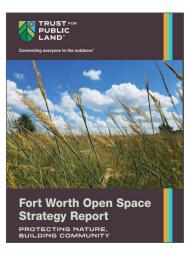
#### **Evolution into GREENprint Fort Worth**

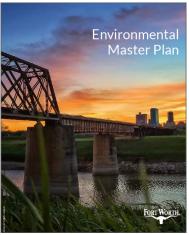
GREENprint Fort Worth builds upon the vision set forth in the 2015 Master Plan, serving as its natural evolution and expansion. While the 2015 Master Plan focused on traditional park planning and recreation needs, GREENprint Fort Worth broadens the scope to include the entire public realm—leveraging parks, green infrastructure, and urban spaces as essential components of citywide sustainability, resilience, and livability.

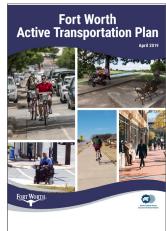
#### Alignment with GREENprint Fort Worth

- Beyond Recreation: Parks as Infrastructure Recognizing parks as more than recreational spaces, GREENprint Fort Worth integrates them into broader citywide initiatives for climate resilience, economic development, and community well-being.
- Expanding Green Infrastructure Advances strategies from the 2015 Master Plan by incorporating floodplain conservation, urban tree canopy expansion, and stormwater management solutions.
- A Connected and Walkable City Builds on the 2015 Master Plan emphasis on trails and mobility, reinforcing an interconnected network of green corridors, complete streets, and multimodal transportation.
- Equitable Access & Public Space Activation –
  Moves beyond park service standards by actively
  addressing gaps in park equity, ensuring that
  public spaces serve as vibrant, inclusive hubs for
  all communities.









 Resiliency & Climate Adaptation – Elevates sustainability goals by integrating nature-based solutions to mitigate urban heat islands, enhance biodiversity, and prepare Fort Worth for climaterelated challenges.

# Fort Worth Good Natured Green Space Initiative Strategic Framework (2024)

The Fort Worth Good Natured Green Space Initiative (FWGN) is a long-term vision spearheaded by Mayor Mattie Parker, aimed to position Fort Worth as the greenest big city in the U.S. by 2050. The initiative integrates parks, open spaces, trails, and conservation efforts to enhance the city's resilience, livability, and environmental sustainability.

#### Alignment with GREENprint Fort Worth

- Park System Enhancement Aligns with GREENprint Fort Worth's goal of creating an interconnected network of high-quality green spaces.
- Large-Scale Conservation Prioritizes the acquisition and preservation of critical green spaces to balance urban growth.
- Green Land Use Policies Advocates for integrating open space preservation into land development regulations.
- Public Engagement & Activation Encourages community participation in green space planning, access, and stewardship.

 Sustainable Funding & Governance – Establishes partnerships with public and private entities to ensure long-term investment in parks and conservation.

# Fort Worth Aspirational Strategies Plan (2024–2025)

The Aspirational Plan, developed by HR&A in coordination with GREENprint Fort Worth, serves as a critical strategy and roadmap to guide the Park & Recreation Department in advancing toward a best-in-class parks and recreation system. Building on the bold vision set by the Good Natured Green Space Initiative, this plan also helps PARD achieve the future roadmap and vision recommended by the GREENprint Fort Worth plan.

It focuses on supporting the department through key transitions, enhancing departmental culture, strengthening environmental stewardship, and delivering high-quality, equitable facilities and services. The plan bridges best practices, lessons from peer cities, and Fort Worth's specific goals to empower the department to not only meet current needs but also proactively steward the system as the city grows and evolves. Together with GREENprint Fort Worth it provides a unified approach that connects parks, recreation, and the public realm as one integrated system.

- Transforming department culture to support innovation and staff development,
- Elevating data-driven decision-making to support funding and equity,
- Developing community-responsive programming and design,
- And diversifying funding sources through publicprivate partnerships.

# Tarrant Regional Water District (TRWD) Recreation Master Plan (2024)

The TRWD Recreation Master Plan provides a comprehensive framework for enhancing and expanding recreational access across the district's water resources, including the Trinity River, Eagle Mountain Lake, and Marine Creek Reservoir. The plan seeks to align TRWD's recreational amenities with community needs while maintaining environmental stewardship and flood management priorities.

### Alignment with GREENprint Fort Worth

- Enhancing Recreational Access Expands trail networks, parks, and water-based recreation, supporting GREENprint Fort Worth's vision of interconnected public spaces.
- Sustainability & Water Management Integrates stormwater management strategies and natural area conservation, aligning with GREENprint's environmental sustainability goals.
- Connectivity & Mobility Prioritizes improved pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure along the Trinity River and its floodways, enhancing active transportation options.

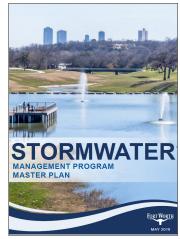
- Community Health & Engagement Encourages outdoor activities through trails, parks, and environmental education programs, fostering social and recreational opportunities for all residents.
- Placemaking & Economic Development Leverages TRWD's assets for placemaking and cultural activities, complementing GREENprint's emphasis on public space activation.
- The TRWD Recreation Master Plan aligns with GREENprint Fort Worth's efforts to integrate parks and public spaces into broader citywide initiatives, reinforcing Fort Worth's commitment to livability, resilience, and equitable access to nature.

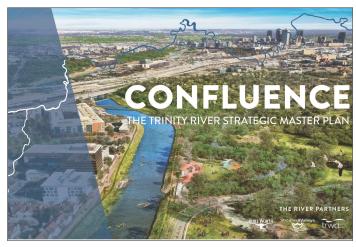
# The City of Fort Worth Comprehensive Plan (2023)

Comprehensive Plan serves as the city's guiding document for growth and development. It emphasizes five key themes:

- Economic Growth Positioning parks and public spaces as economic drivers, attracting visitors, and enhancing livability.
- Growing Population Needs Ensuring parks evolve to serve a rapidly expanding and diverse community.
- Revitalizing the Central City Leveraging green spaces to support urban redevelopment and placemaking.
- Developing Growth Centers Integrating parks into emerging districts to support connectivity and resilience.
- Celebrating the Trinity River Strengthening riverfront access, recreational opportunities, and ecological preservation.







- Parks serve as key assets in attracting tourism and events.
- Planning and zoning efforts help identify future parkland needs in growth centers.
- Revitalization strategies include acquiring underutilized land for parks and public spaces.
- Expanding sidewalk networks, trails, and treelined corridors enhances walkability and public space activation.

# Panther Island: Vision & Strategy Summary (2024)

Panther Island is a transformative riverfront development that prioritizes flood control, mixed-use growth, and enhanced recreational spaces along the Trinity River.

### Alignment with GREENprint Fort Worth

- Supports new parks, trails, and water-based recreation.
- Advances Complete Streets design for improved pedestrian and bicycle access.
- Positions the Trinity River as a defining public space.

### Fort Worth Urban Forest Master Plan (2024)

The Fort Worth Urban Forest Master Plan is a comprehensive strategy to manage, preserve, and expand the city's urban tree canopy. As Fort Worth continues to experience rapid growth, this plan ensures that trees remain a vital component of the city's infrastructure, providing environmental, economic, and social benefits.

### Alignment with GREENprint Fort Worth

- Enhances urban cooling and resilience against extreme heat, improving comfort in parks and public spaces.
- Supports environmental sustainability through tree preservation and green space conservation.
- Integrates tree planting efforts into park design, promoting equitable access to shaded public spaces.
- Strengthens partnerships for community-led tree planting initiatives, aligning with GREENprint's goals of fostering engaged and healthy communities.
- Advances stormwater management by reducing runoff and improving water absorption in parks and green spaces.

# **Drought Contingency & Emergency Water Management Plan (2024)**

This plan ensures Fort Worth remains resilient in the face of drought and water scarcity.

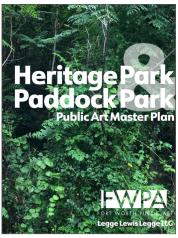
### Alignment with GREENprint Fort Worth

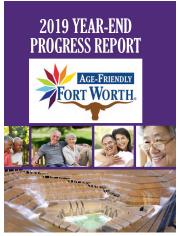
- Expands green infrastructure to reduce heat islands and manage stormwater.
- Encourages water-efficient landscaping in parks and public spaces.

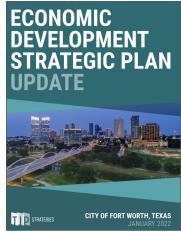
# Fort Worth Open Space Strategy Report (2022)

This strategy focuses on conserving critical open spaces amid rapid development, ensuring parks and green corridors serve as essential infrastructure.









- Encourages land acquisition for pocket parks, trails, and greenways.
- Prioritizes environmental sustainability through natural area conservation.

### **Environmental Master Plan (2021)**

The 2021 Environmental Master Plan is Fort Worth's guiding document for protecting public health, safety, and the environment while fostering sustainable development. The plan outlines strategic actions in key areas such as air and water quality, land conservation, waste management, and climate resilience, ensuring that Fort Worth meets the highest national environmental standards.

### Alignment with GREENprint Fort Worth

- Green Infrastructure & Sustainable
   Development Encourages the integration of
   green infrastructure, such as rain gardens and
   permeable pavements, into public spaces and
   new developments, aligning with GREENprint's
   emphasis on sustainability.
- Urban Canopy & Heat Resilience Supports tree planting and urban forestry programs to mitigate heat islands and enhance shade in parks and public spaces.
- Water Quality & Stormwater Management Reinforces GREENprint's focus on watershed conservation by promoting natural stormwater filtration systems and floodplain preservation.
- Air Quality & Mobility Advocates for active transportation solutions such as bike and pedestrian infrastructure, complementing GREENprint's vision for an interconnected park and trail network.
- Equitable Access to Environmental Resources Identifies strategies to improve environmental quality in underserved communities, ensuring that parks and public spaces contribute to healthier and more livable neighborhoods.

### **Active Transportation Plan (2019)**

This plan envisions a multimodal transportation network that promotes walking, biking, and public transit while reducing vehicle dependency.

### Alignment with GREENprint Fort Worth

 Expands and connects on- and off-street trail systems.

- Reduces accessibility barriers to parks and recreation spaces.
- Enhances pedestrian and bike infrastructure across the city.

### **Race and Culture Task Force Report (2019)**

The 2019 Race and Culture Task Force Report was developed in response to community concerns regarding racial and cultural disparities in Fort Worth. The report outlines key recommendations across multiple sectors—including criminal justice, economic development, education, governance, health, housing, and transportation—to address equity issues and promote inclusivity across city policies and services.

#### Alignment with GREENprint Fort Worth

- Equitable Park and Public Space Access –
   Supports strategies to ensure all neighborhoods,
   particularly historically underserved areas, have
   access to quality parks, trails, and public spaces.
- Economic Development & Neighborhood Revitalization – Aligns with GREENprint Fort Worth's efforts to use parks and public spaces as economic catalysts, particularly in communities facing systemic disinvestment.
- Mobility & Connectivity Advances equitable access to transportation, ensuring that park and greenway expansions prioritize walkability, bikeability, and access to transit.
- Health & Well-being Reinforces the role of parks in improving health outcomes, addressing disparities in active living opportunities across different racial and socioeconomic groups.
- Community Engagement & Representation
   Supports inclusive planning and decision-making processes, ensuring that historically underrepresented voices are actively involved in shaping public space investments.

# **Stormwater Management Program Master Plan (2018)**

The 2018 Stormwater Management Program Master Plan establishes Fort Worth's approach to mitigating flood risks, managing stormwater infrastructure, and integrating green infrastructure solutions to enhance resilience and sustainability. The plan prioritizes flood reduction, system maintenance, development review, and public engagement to address the city's evolving needs.

- Green Infrastructure & Climate Resilience -Supports strategies to integrate stormwater management into parks and green spaces, aligning with GREENprint Fort Worth's sustainability goals.
- Public Space & Flood Mitigation Encourages the use of parks and green corridors for flood management, ensuring that public spaces serve both recreational and environmental functions.
- Equitable Access & Risk Reduction Identifies opportunities to mitigate flooding in vulnerable communities, complementing GREENprint's focus on equitable access to safe and wellmaintained parks.
- Urban Canopy & Water Quality Promotes tree planting, wetland restoration, and natural stormwater filtration to improve water quality and urban cooling.
- Connectivity & Smart Growth Advocates for multi-benefit infrastructure that enhances walkability, bikeability, and ecological corridors within Fort Worth's public realm.

### **Confluence: The Trinity River Strategic** Master Plan (2018)

The Confluence: Trinity River Strategic Master Plan is a long-term vision aimed at enhancing the Trinity River and its surrounding public spaces to serve as a central, unifying feature of Fort Worth's identity. The plan builds upon past river planning efforts and sets forth strategies for connectivity, recreation, economic development, and environmental stewardship, ensuring the river remains a vibrant community asset.

### Alignment with GREENprint Fort Worth

- Public Space & Park Integration Reinforces the role of the Trinity River as the backbone of Fort Worth's public realm, enhancing accessibility and recreational opportunities.
- Sustainable Growth & Environmental Resilience - Aligns with GREENprint Fort Worth's focus on sustainable land use and floodplain management by preserving riverfront green spaces.
- Active Mobility & Trail Connectivity Expands and improves trails along the river, linking them with citywide pedestrian and bike infrastructure to support non-motorized mobility.

- Economic & Cultural Revitalization Encourages mixed-use riverfront development that enhances economic opportunities while celebrating Fort Worth's heritage.
- Placemaking & Community Engagement -Supports activation of the riverfront through events, cultural programming, and public art installations, aligning with GREENprint's emphasis on inclusive, vibrant spaces.

### **Other Key Plans & Initiatives**

Several additional plans contribute to the broader vision for Fort Worth's future:

- Five-Year Consolidation Plan (2023) Invests in neighborhood revitalization through sidewalk improvements, recreational amenities, and public space enhancements.
- Neighborhood Conservation Plan & Affordable Housing Strategy (2023) - Integrates parks and urban green spaces into affordable housing developments.
- Heritage Park & Paddock Park Public Art Master Plan (2023) - Incorporates public art into parks to celebrate Fort Worth's cultural identity.
- Master Thoroughfare Plan (2020 Update) -Enhances park access through improved roadways, bike lanes, and pedestrian corridors.
- Age Friendly Fort Worth: 2019 Year End Progress Report- Access to engaging activities in recreation, leisure, education, and socializing
- Economic Strategic Plan (2017) Recognizes parks as economic catalysts, attracting investment and improving citywide quality of life.