



CHAPTER

06

Transformative Ideas

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Rockwood Golf Course, Photo Credit: City of Fort Worth

Lake Como Park established November 1, 1952

**Do Something
GOOD For
Your Neighbor**

On October 20, 1952, the American American Community Center requested that the City of Chicago purchase the Lake Como property to be used as "Lake Como Park," for the American American Community Center.

October 20, 1952

"Interestingly, it gives me great pleasure to tender to the City the Lake Como property consisting of 26.5 acres."

Yours very truly,

Aaron Q. Carter

"Today, our historic American American Community Center celebrates the Lake Como pioneers, legends, and stories and embraces the diversity of our evolving community."

Lake Como Community Leadership

Transformative Ideas

Since its founding in 1849, the City of Fort Worth has experienced steady growth and change—and with it, so have its parks, recreation facilities, and green spaces. Each era of expansion has been marked by the creation of significant public spaces that have helped the city adapt, thrive, and enhance its identity. Today, as one of North America’s most diverse, fastest-growing cities, Fort Worth faces a new set of challenges and opportunities.

The transformative ideas outlined in this chapter are not a break from tradition, but a bold continuation of it. They build on Fort Worth’s legacy of investing in parks and public spaces as essential infrastructure—tools for resilience, inclusion, connection, and economic vitality.

In an era defined by urban growth, cultural diversity, and a renewed desire for access to nature, these ideas respond to shifting patterns of how people live, move, and gather. They are designed to shape this generation’s contribution to Fort Worth’s rich legacy of public space—creating lasting value for future generations.

These transformative ideas will enable Fort Worth’s parks, recreation, and green space system to play an even greater role in advancing citywide goals for livability, equity, opportunity, and sustainability.

Overview: Transformative Ideas Essential to Achieve the City’s Goals

Going forward, the City of Fort Worth projects a population that will increase by more than 40%, beyond its 2024 level, to roughly 1.3 million by 2045, the City’s Comprehensive Plan acknowledges that, like every major city across North America, this next period of growth will be dominated by households without children. Households who are far more interested in living (and working) in mixed-use, walkable urban places than previous generations. The City of Fort Worth’s current Comprehensive Plan recognizes and capitalizes on this shift to a more centralized growth model by focusing on the development of a series of emerging urban growth centers, villages, and revitalized commercial corridors.

This new growth model suggests that—in addition to pursuing ongoing critical initiatives such as celebrating and enhancing access to the Trinity River; pursuing the Good Natured Green Space Initiative; and improving the city’s existing parks, recreation and green space inventory—the City of Fort Worth is poised to launch a new set of parks and public realm strategies and ideas that will further enhance quality of life, economic opportunities, and environmental responsibilities for current and future generations of Fort Worth’s diverse community.



Main Streets, Artist’s booths line Magnolia Avenue at the ArtsGoggle hosted annually by the Near Southside, Inc. Source: Near Southside Inc.

These transformative ideas recognize that to maintain its long-time commitment to ensuring that its parkland and related inventory keep pace with continuing population growth, the City of Fort Worth will need to explore new approaches that will rely less on the dedication of parkland as part of subdivision development and the ability to purchase less expensive land at the city's periphery while focusing more on approaches that tap into the impact fees and similar value capture associated with a significant increase in higher value multifamily and other forms of urban housing, together with a new generation of public/private partnerships, to bring access to nature, gathering places, recreation, and similar benefits to the residents of emerging growth centers, urban villages, and revitalized commercial corridors where the next generation growth will focus. These transformative ideas include:

- **New Parks and Public Realm Typologies** that respond to rapidly evolving growth dynamics and provide growth centers, urban villages, and revitalized commercial corridors with a new era of public realm. Green, mixed-use Main Streets whose eateries and shops invite walkability; lively squares animated with play fountains and cafés that promote interaction; small neighborhood parks that invite gathering, play, and recreation; and parklets that reclaim underutilized streets for outdoor dining and other community activities. In addition to meeting the needs of

these communities, these public realm amenities help Fort Worth achieve core goals including reducing fiscal costs by replacing decentralized with more centralized growth and creating the mixed-use, walkable neighborhoods that attract the increasingly scarce talent who in turn attract the knowledge and innovation industry jobs and investment that are essential to power 21st century economic growth.

- **A Green Connectivity Network** that links the entire system without depending on a car. Green mobility network consisting of tree-lined pedestrian connections, bikeways, and transit to enable residents of all ages and abilities to travel to and between parts—and potentially cultural and entertainment centers and other community destinations—without having to rely on access to a car. The network will not only promote healthier living—few factors correlate more directly with improved public health than increased walking and biking—but also improve access for the growing share of households living in Fort Worth's existing and emerging core neighborhoods who are far more likely to own fewer cars and prefer non-auto-dependent lives. This preference is particularly true for the talented workforce noted above who attract 21st century jobs and investment and who express a strong preference for living and working in communities that do not require auto-dependent lifestyles.



1. Create a new generation of urban *public realm*: PROS+PR
2. Create a green connectivity network
3. Realize the Trinity River's full environmental, recreational, economic and civic potential
4. Continue to align population growth and expanded PROS facilities.
5. Expand natural area and open space conservation initiatives.
6. Expand economic opportunity and regional competitiveness .
7. Celebrate Fort Worth's rich legacy and living culture.
8. Enhance equity and inclusivity.
9. Expand inter-agency partnerships

Key Messages from the 2023 Comprehensive Plan

- A greater emphasis on **Living with Nature** that extends the benefits of Fort Worth’s unique natural ecosystem to every part of the city. This transformative idea reinforces the City’s broader goals by encouraging a more intentional integration of natural systems into future development, supporting long-term resilience, environmental stewardship, and community well-being. While not explicitly stated, the approach aligns with the spirit of the Comprehensive Plan—advancing a healthier, more connected, and sustainable urban future.
- A **Central Common Ground** at the confluence of the Trinity River and Downtown that proactively invites the full spectrum of Fort Worth’s diversity to gather, interact, and celebrate the benefits of shared community. A site that connects the River, Downtown, and emerging redevelopment of Panther Island provides an ideal location for this new “central park” that celebrates the best of Fort Worth’s history, nature, and distinctive living culture. This central park would also transform a cluster of nearby parks—Heritage Park, Trinity Park, Riverside Park, and the Water Gardens—collectively into a destination representing the heart of 21st Century Fort Worth. Activate key nodes along the Trinity River—in ways that fully maintain the flood storage, respect the need for levees, and respect the River’s natural setting—to enhance the River’s value as a source of active recreation, a unique place for informal

gathering and hosting neighborhood events, and an opportunity to learn more about Fort Worth’s unique ecosystem. In effect the River’s edges would emerge as one of America’s great riverfront parks and further leverage the River’s ability to serve as a potent invitation to live, work, play, learn—and innovate—in Fort Worth’s urban core.

- A **New Era of Programming** that engages people with their parks and each other while unlocking the full potential of Public Spaces. Improve existing parks with a wider range of programming, facilities, and opportunities to enjoy nature to expand their appeal to a wider cross section of nearby neighborhoods—including the future residents of nearby growth centers, urban villages, and revitalized commercial corridors.

These transformative ideas also serve as key strategies in achieving the plan’s overarching goals. Each idea contributes to multiple goals, with some serving as essential drivers while others play a strong supporting role. Together, these transformative ideas shape a more Thriving Community, promote sustainable growth, and enhance Manageable Resources, ensuring Fort Worth’s parks and public spaces evolve in alignment with the city’s long-term vision.

GREENprint Fort Worth Goals:	#1: New Parks and Public Realm Typologies that respond to rapidly evolving growth dynamics.	#2: A Green Connectivity Network that links the entire system without depending on a car.	#3: A greater emphasis on Living with Nature that extends the benefits of Fort Worth’s unique natural ecosystem to every part of the city.	#4: A Grand Gathering Place & Common Ground that connects Fort Worth to the Trinity River.	#5: A New Era of Programming that engages people with their parks and each other while unlocking the full potential of Public Spaces.
Thriving Community	●	■	●	■	●
Connected System	●	●	■	■	●
Vibrant Nature	■	●	●	■	■
Common Ground	■	●	●	■	■
Premier Destination	■	■	●	■	●
Manageable Resources	■	■	■	■	■

- Essential role in achieving GREENprint Fort Worth Goal (see individual Transformative Idea descriptions for details)
 ■ Strong contributing role in achieving Goal (see individual Transformative Idea descriptions for details)

Transformative Idea #1

New Parks and Public Realm Typologies



An inspiring vision for activating the right-of-way, transforming it into a vibrant Green Neighborhood Main Street- Race St & Sylvania Ave Intersection, Fort Worth

Fort Worth's 2023 Comprehensive Plan places a new emphasis on growth centers, urban villages, and revitalized commercial corridors as a primary focus for the city's growth going forward. This chapter calls for additional park and public realm typologies that enhance quality of life, access to nature, and a sense of community for these compact, mixed-use, walkable environments.

GREENprint Fort Worth introduces a transformative strategy to redefine the city's park system by incorporating Public Rights-of-Way (ROW) into the park typologies and introducing the District Park classification within Community-Based Parks.

Public ROW, Parks and Green spaces represent an innovative approach to leveraging underutilized streets, alleys, and utility easements as vibrant public spaces. This new category redefines green space to

include Green Connectors (such as green main streets that link parks and neighborhoods) and Social Spaces (like parklets and pedestrian plazas for informal gatherings). These spaces enhance accessibility, equity, and connectivity while allowing for cost-effective activation strategies like pop-up parks or temporary street closures. Most importantly, this approach aligns with the emphasis of Fort Worth's Comprehensive Plan on urban villages, growth centers, and a centralized growth pattern, enabling ROWs to support walkability and enhance the vibrancy of these mixed-use areas.

To better serve Fort Worth's growing and diverse population, the plan introduces the District Park classification as a mid-sized recreational hub within the Community-Based Parks system. District Parks, ranging from 75 to 200 acres, complement Community Parks (redefined to 30 to 75 acres), and

Metropolitan Parks by bridging the gap between neighborhood and regional needs. These parks provide opportunities for larger-scale amenities such as sports fields, event spaces, and community centers while also allowing for scalable development based on future population growth. Additionally, the concept of District Parks aligns with Fort Worth's Park Planning Districts and the recommendation to create a signature park in each district. This approach ensures that every area of the city benefits from a unique, large-scale recreational and community-focused space.


This approach supports Fort Worth's Good Natured Green Space Initiative vision of becoming the "Greenest City in North America" by 2050. It also ensures that the park system evolves to meet the


needs of its rapidly growing population while creating vibrant, equitable, and accessible public spaces for all.


The typologies described below constitute essential components for the city's broad planning going forward. They represent the essential qualities needed to create green, mixed-use, and walkable places that improve quality of life and instill a sense of community in the neighborhood. In the process, these shifts will help the City of Fort Worth to achieve core goals for using a multi-centric approach to growth in a rapidly changing world to improve fiscal performance, economic competitiveness, and environmental performance.


Typology Category	Existing Typology	New Typology
Public Rights-of-Way Parks and Green spaces	Not included	Green Neighborhood Main Streets, Parklets, Squares
Neighborhood-Based Parks	Urban Parks (Less than 1 acre), Pocket Parks (1-5), Neighborhood Parks (5-30)	Urban Parks (Less than 1 acre), Pocket Parks (1-5), Neighborhood Parks (5-30)
Community-Based Parks	Community Parks (30-500), Metropolitan Parks (larger than 500)	Community Parks (redefined 30-75 acres), District Parks (75-200 acres), Metropolitan Parks (200+ acres)
Special Use Parks	Special Use Parks, Greenbelts, Conservancy Areas	Special Use Parks, Greenbelts, Conservancy Areas


Achieving The GREENprint Fort Worth Core Goals:


 **Thriving Community:** Create green urban streets and public places that invite walkability and in other ways enhance physical, mental, and emotional well-being and quality of life.

 **Connected System:** Extend Fort Worth's network of high-quality parks, public spaces, and trails directly into the heart of the growth centers, urban villages, and revitalized commercial centers which the city has targeted for significant future growth.

 **Vibrant Nature:** Integrate Fort Worth's unique nature into these urban growth targets.

 **Common Ground:** Create inclusive and authentic public spaces that invite social interaction and celebrate Fort Worth's multiculturalism for these growth targets.

 **Premier Destination:** Develop urban public realm in these growth targets that enhances their ability to achieve Fort Worth's economic development, growth, and innovation goals.

 **Manageable Resources:** Tap the economic benefits of development in mixed-use, walkable, urban places and partner with the private sector and other agencies to create, operate, program, and maintain these improvements. Note: Smart Growth's America's data indicates that development in mixed-use, walkable, places generates value premiums across the US that generally average 30-40% or more per square foot of development.¹

¹ Smart Growth America & Places Platform, LLC. (2023). Foot Traffic Ahead 2023: Ranking Walkable Urbanism in America's Largest Metros. Smart Growth America. <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Foot-Traffic-Ahead-2023.pdf>

Recommendations

Activating Public Rights-Of-Way

The integration of public right-of-way typologies into Fort Worth's urban fabric is not a new concept—these elements already exist in the City of Fort Worth Comprehensive Plan and sector plans. The GREENprint Fort Worth Master Plan recommends incorporating these typologies into a unified strategy for parks and public spaces, with PARD collaborating with other city departments to formalize their role in the overall system.

Three typologies, shaped by their urban context, stand out as essential components of a thriving public realm:

Green Neighborhood Main Streets

Mixed-use, walkable “signature” streets that, for at least two blocks are programmed with sufficient shopping, eateries, places offering beverage service, arts, and similar uses that animate the pedestrian experience, function as the symbolic and social heart of the surrounding neighborhoods because they proactively invite the full spectrum of these neighborhoods to enjoy them in all seasons and

embody the diverse multiculturalism of these neighborhoods. Key qualities should include:

- Street trees that enhance Main Street's character and offer shade during hot seasons.
- Rain gardens and swales that enhance environmental responsibility, that visibly celebrate Fort Worth's ecosystem, and also enhance Main Street's character.
- A diverse mix of shopping (preferably locally owned and operated retail) and eateries ranging from places that offer food and caffeine to wine and beer that invite the neighboring community to celebrate its cultural diversity often.
- Sidewalks with sufficient width to accommodate outdoor dining, which significantly enhance the opportunity to see friends and enjoy a sense of shared community.
- The ability to close the street periodically for neighborhood events and festivals.
- Public art displays that tell the stories of the residents and their surrounding community.
- Lighting.
- Curbside parking that supports local businesses



An inspiring rendering for Green Neighborhood Main Streets, Source: Stantec, Global Mall, Antioch, Nashville.

and promotes walkability by buffering pedestrians away from moving traffic.

- Bike lanes and storage that expand access to a broader market area and enhance Main Street's lively character.

It should be noted that Main Streets do not happen spontaneously. They generally require a critical mass of households—often projected at roughly one thousand—within a five-minute (quarter-mile) walk to attract the critical mass of retailers who in turn transform the street into a successful retail (shopping and eateries) destination that invites people to walk and find community.

A strong local example is Magnolia Avenue, a thriving corridor that exemplifies how streets can become vibrant public spaces through thoughtful urban design, active ground-floor uses, and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure.

Collaboration with Fort Worth's Economic Department can enrich local Main Streets by helping local entrepreneurs open small businesses that bring a unique authenticity and provide an additional draw for residents and visitors alike.



Magnolia Avenue, Fort Worth. Source: Near Southside, Inc.

Squares

These small, inviting public gathering places offer opportunities for friends to meet or hold small neighborhood events. Squares may be publicly or privately owned but must function as fully public spaces open to the full spectrum of the community. They can be fully successful as spaces containing one-quarter acre or less and are often created in conjunction with a larger mixed-use development (most often housing with retail at street level), possibly as a public benefit in exchange for increased density or other development benefits. Key qualities should include:

- A location fronting a mixed-use, walkable Main Street.
- Adjacent cafés, public art, fountains, and similar features that animate the spaces.
- Trees, gardens, or other forms of nature.
- Shade.
- The ability to be programmed for musical performances, small neighborhood gatherings, and similar events.
- Lighting to extend active use into evening hours.
- Easily accessible bike storage.



Former location of the Micro Park on Magnolia Avenue, once a vibrant community gathering space. Source: Near Southside, Inc.



Magnolia Avenue parklet, A multifunctional linear public space



Magnolia Avenue parklet, Patios for diners and drinkers



Vancouver Picnurbia pop-up park



FIKA edge, New York City, NY

Parklets

Parklets represent opportunities to extend the public realm into the streets. They have often been deemed “Neighborhood front porches.” The National Association of City Transportation Officials’ (NACTO) Urban Design Guide defines parklets as “public seating platforms that convert curbside parking spaces into vibrant community spaces. Also known as street seats or curbside seating, parklets are the product of a partnership between the city and local businesses, residents, or neighborhood associations. Most parklets have a distinctive design that incorporates seating, greenery, and/or bike racks and accommodate unmet demand for public space on thriving neighborhood retail streets or commercial areas.”

It should be noted that parklets are most often created to accommodate outdoor dining but have been created to serve uses as diverse as outdoor lending libraries, exhibits for local public schools, initiatives to bring nature into urban neighborhoods, and neighborhood sponsored interactive public

art. They can take many forms—from a single day re-purposing of a curbside parking spot or lane to celebrate National Parking Day to evening and weekend outdoor dining to semi-permanent public spaces sponsored by local businesses or community groups willing to retrofit curbside parking—or in some cases traffic lanes no longer required to meet traffic requirements.

Cities currently operating successful parklet programs include Dallas, Corpus Christi, and Round Rock in Texas in addition to San Francisco, Montréal, New York, Vancouver, Philadelphia, Long Beach, Oakland, and Boston. A local example is “The Skinny”, a multifunctional, linear park created through a partnership between the City of Fort Worth, Near Southside Inc., and Stonehawk Capital Partners.

Key qualities should include:

- A location fronting a mixed-use, walkable Main Street.
- A designated active (e.g. outdoor dining) or

passive (street garden) use.

- An active sponsor such as a local business association, individual business, community organization, or similar entity that can take responsibility for the initial installation and subsequent maintenance and operation.
- A design approved by the Park & Recreation Department, another city agency, or a similar entity designated by the City to be responsible for the quality and character of public right of ways.
- Lighting.

Redefine Community-Based Parks

GREENprint Fort Worth proposes redefining the Community-Based Park category to better serve the city's growing population and evolving recreational needs. The current classification, which includes Community Parks (30–500 acres) and Metropolitan Parks (greater than 500 acres), is too broad to address the diverse demands of the community. The redefined typology introduces three distinct categories:

Community Parks: Parks ranging from 30–75 acres, offering amenities and programming tailored to multiple neighborhoods.

District Parks: A new category of parks sized 75–200 acres, serving as signature parks and hubs for each Park Planning District, equipped with specialized facilities and programming.

Metropolitan Parks: Parks larger than 200 acres, designed as regional destinations for large-scale recreation and nature preservation.

This reclassification enhances scalability and functionality by creating a clear framework for addressing the recreational needs of both neighborhoods and the city as a whole.

These revised Community Parks provide a diverse mix of recreational opportunities which may include several types of sports fields and courts, swimming pools and/or splash pads, trail networks, multiple playgrounds, picnic areas, and natural green spaces.

In contrast, District Parks are larger spaces designed to serve multiple neighborhoods, offering

amenities such as sports complexes, amphitheaters, botanical gardens, and event spaces. These parks serve as cultural and recreational focal points within their respective planning districts. Meanwhile, Metropolitan Parks continue to provide expansive facilities for regional activities, including campgrounds, extensive trail networks, and water-based recreation, attracting visitors from across Fort Worth and beyond.

Clear definitions for these park categories improve planning, resource allocation, and programming enabling Fort Worth to strategically scale its park system. The introduction of District Parks ensures each district has a signature hub while the refined focus of Community Parks addresses localized needs. For more information about each park category check Appendix B.



An inspiring rendering for Signature District Park; Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Centennial Park, Detroit, MI

Targeted Implementation Strategies

- Connecting Fort Worth's Planning Division together with other key agencies to incorporate green mixed-use walkable Main Streets, squares, neighborhood parks, and parklets into planning for growth centers, urban villages and revitalized commercial corridors.
- Developing guidelines to ensure these initiatives meet PARD's and the City of Fort Worth's goals.
- Reviewing plans, designs, and programming agreements to ensure they achieve the letter and spirit of these guidelines.
- Supporting the Development Services and Economic Development Departments in negotiating public/private partnerships.
- Tap growing funding from the fees generated by growth center, urban village, and similar denser housing and mixed-use development to help provide necessary funding.

Transformative Idea #2

Green Connectivity Network

Create a dynamic network of high-quality parks, public spaces, and trails connected by paths, bikeways, and transit to ensure that everyone can enjoy the city's parks, recreational facilities, public spaces, and natural resources without having to depend on access to a car.

This network should be conceived, planned, and implemented from two essential and complementary perspectives that together achieve the city's goals:

Transformative Idea A: The parks system as a contributor to enhanced mobility

Transformative Idea B: Integration of the city's mobility network with the Parks System



An inspiring vision for integration of the city's mobility network with the Parks System, Decatur Ave, Fort Worth

Transformative Idea A

The parks system as a contributor to enhanced mobility

Background

Adapting Fort Worth to a new era of growth

Fort Worth is taking a more multimodal direction with its transportation policy and investments. The Move A Million comprehensive transportation plan is integrating more people-focused street design, a rethinking of its transit network, and a holistic focus on safety for all transportation modes and travelers.

There are many ways in which the City's parks system, already a significant collection of land and capital assets and recreation-focused policy

frameworks, can advance these mobility goals. However, the organizational responsibilities of the two City departments with primary responsibility for parks and mobility, the Park & Recreation Department and the Department of Transportation & Public Works (TPW), have historically focused on their individual responsibilities without a systematic way of integrating efforts. This is hardly unique to Fort Worth, but as both departments are interested in exploring transformative approaches to improve quality of life and make Fort Worth a more attractive place to live, joint approaches to responsibilities can

facilitate innovative approaches, streamline how resources and budgets are used to meet agency priorities, and give Fort Worthians new opportunities for travel and recreation.

This is also a key pathway to achieving the GREENprint Fort Worth vision in that it more tightly integrates parks and nature—vital components of public health, sustainability, and resiliency—into the public right-of-way that makes up over 15 percent of Fort Worth’s land area. There is no greater opportunity to extend the physical reach and influence of the City’s parks than by bringing it into the ways that Fort Worthians access their daily destinations and serve their daily needs.

Recommendations

This transformative idea can take shape through numerous actions and policies and should be a long-term policy commitment of the City that is implemented over several years. This plan presents

eight focused action areas that represent pilot approaches to broader methods of parks and transportation integration.

“Park-First” Street Design Guidelines

Tailor street design policy and guidance to be inclusive of parks-focused enhancements and features. PARD has long had a responsibility unique among major park agencies in that it maintains portions of the street right-of-way where planting and landscaping are located. Traditionally, maintenance has been kept to a basic level. In this new approach, the maintenance function will be utilized to better enhance city neighborhoods and create more visually appealing commercial districts.

It is estimated that nearly 60 percent of the City’s streets (measured by centerline mileage) carry no more than 2,000 vehicles per day. Broken down into simpler terms, this is likely no more than 200 vehicles in the busiest travel hours or around 3 vehicles

Achieving The GREENprint Fort Worth Core Goals:



Thriving Community: Create green urban streets and public places that invite walkability and enhance physical, mental, and emotional health and quality of life. Promoting recreation and active living by making it a larger part of how people get around Fort Worth for daily functions can allow major strides in greater public health.



Connected System: Create a connected network of pedestrian, bike, transit and similar connections that take advantage of Fort Worth’s network of low volume traffic streets to offer alternatives to auto-dependence across the city.



Vibrant Nature: Design streets, bus stops, and other components of Fort Worth’s mobility system to bring nature into the daily life of Fort Worth, from increasing tree canopy and bolstering the biodiversity of the North Texas ecosystem to using nature-based approaches, managing stormwater, and maintaining public right of ways.



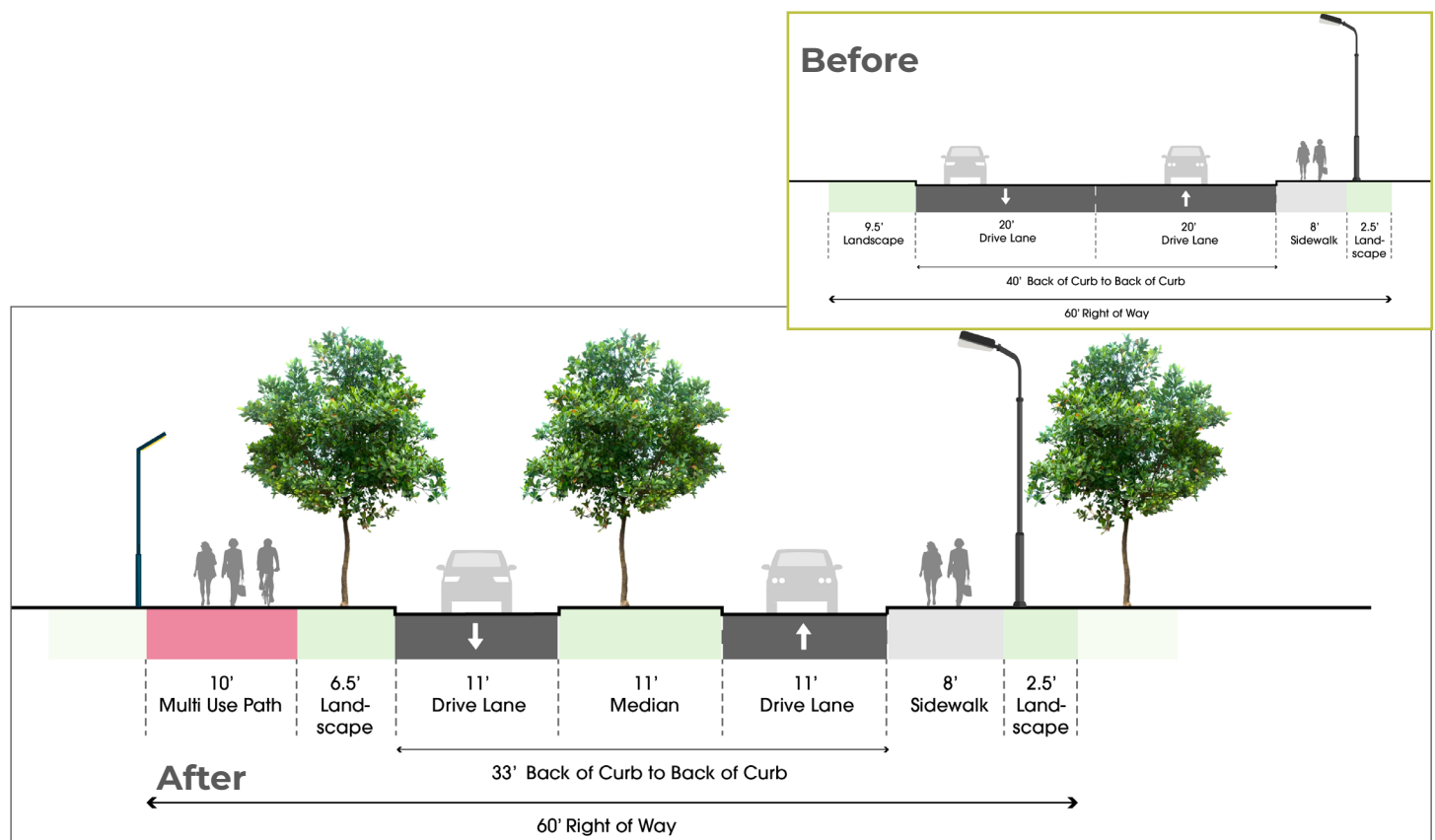
Common Ground: Bring transit and other transportation services in closer connection to the Fort Worth parks system to unlock the system’s potential to invite the full spectrum of the community to come together to use the city’s parks, recreation facilities, and green spaces without the expense and complications of auto-dependence.



Premier Destination: Transform Fort Worth’s parks, recreation and green space system into a significant economic development asset by reducing auto dependence, a core requirement for attracting and retaining the talent that unlocks the city and region’s competitive position in the “New Economy.”



Manageable Resources: Tap into the economic benefits of development in mixed-use, walkable, urban places and partner with the private sector and other agencies to create, operate and maintain a Green Connectivity Network.



Redesigning streets with a 'Park-First' approach, Decatur Ave, Fort Worth

per minute passing on these streets. This points to enormous potential for local streets to be rethought of as more active spaces without creating significant impact on traffic flow throughout Fort Worth. The other 40 percent of streets serving most of the city's travel demand are the primary corridors to be reserved for transportation purposes.

Guidelines should include the kind of complete streets-focused approach to street carriageways and sidewalks that the Move A Million plan is exploring but should use functional elements to add park-oriented amenities and features into street design. These should include:

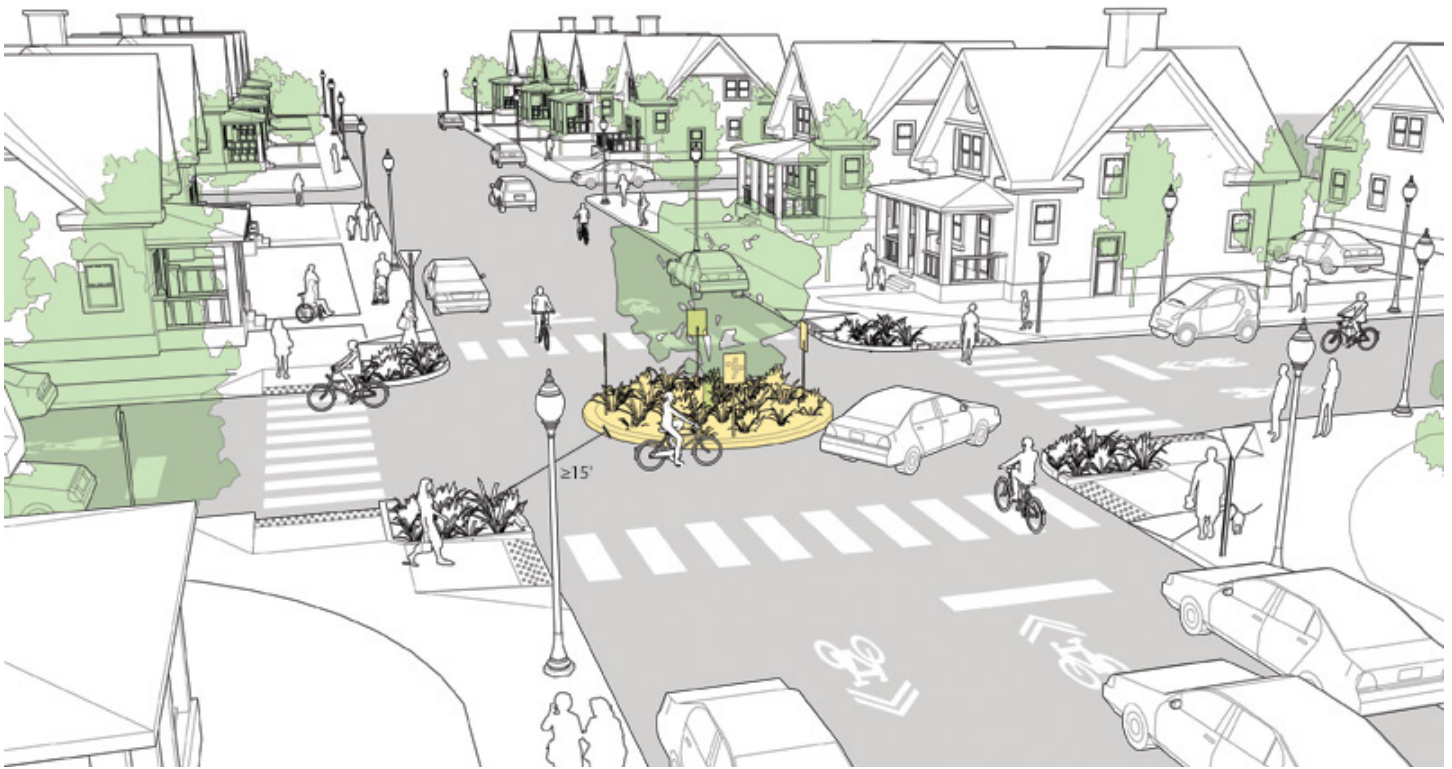
- Appropriate tree and plant species to help provide pedestrian and safety comfort, considering tree calipers, canopy reach, and potential for shade along sidewalks and parking areas.
- Raised medians in multi-lane thoroughfare streets where left turn access is not needed, and design standards and landscape materials to be used in their construction.
- Pedestrian crossings, allowing pedestrian refuge and comfort to be provided through landscaping.
- Dimensions of cross-section elements that emphasize tree planting capability and growth.

Strategic Repurposing Of Traffic Calming Policy

The City's Neighborhood Traffic Calming Policy currently sets the terms by which traffic calming treatments happen and the types of installations that are allowed. This policy's criteria generally align with the recommendation that traffic volumes must be under 4,000 vehicles per day with posted speeds of 35 miles per hour or less and only two-lane streets may have traffic calming applied.

Repurposing of local streets carrying 2,000 or fewer vehicles per day with a more design-based traffic calming and street design policy that allows more of the public right-of-way to be used for planting, permeable areas, and potential plaza or green space can make contributions toward a more connected network of parks with 'park streets' making some of these connections.

Actual traffic calming devices used should reflect a variety of options that combine speed reduction and horizontal deflection with increased space for permeable surfaces and landscaping, such as neckdowns, chicanes, mini-roundabouts, and deflection islands at intersections.



Reimagining neighborhood traffic calming policies; Source: NACTO

Reworking the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Policy in this way will involve a series of coordination steps to ensure that a more proactive use of the policy is not disruptive to neighborhood needs. This should include the following steps:

- Identification of pilot streets to make connections. These are ideally streets that form reasonably direct links between parks and other related facilities, such as school campuses, community centers, regional trails and greenways, and transit stations.
- Conducting neighborhood planning sessions to introduce concepts for these kinds of park streets and gather neighborhood feedback. This proactive application of the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Policy should continue to follow that policy's thresholds for neighborhood support and gather documented consent of two-thirds of properties along affected blocks and 100 percent of properties directly adjacent to installations.
- Data collection to assess levels of traffic, parking use, driveway access to individual properties and special needs for right-of-way and curbside.

Installations must continue to allow current functions of streets, including specialized parking or curbside use, driveway access, and utility access. Application of traffic calming must also provide for replacement of on-street parking potential in areas where neighborhood parking permits are used or on-street parking regularly occurs on at least 50 percent of a block's length.

ADA Compliant Means Of Access

PARD should coordinate with TPW on its Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) transition plans to ensure that accessibility improvements made around parks and PARD facilities can be combined with any needed improvements on PARD properties themselves to ensure a greater degree of accessibility throughout the park system.

This should be coordinated to result in a priority focus on ADA enhancements at parks throughout the city, ensuring more accessible entry and exit from park properties as well as more accessible movement within parks.



Safe Routes to School Bike Ride; Seattle Department of Transportation

Active Transportation Integration With End-Of-Trip Facilities

Active transportation (bicycle and pedestrian) connections to parks are often a key focus of cities in advancing their multimodal transportation systems but the enhancements made within parks are critically important as well.

PARD and TPW should partner to identify locations and programs to expand the end-of-trip facilities for these users. This is intended to promote their access to park properties but also to increase the options for active transportation users to safely and conveniently park and store bicycles and other mobility devices. Specific actions to increase end-of-trip facilities include:

- Bicycle corrals and racks within street right-of-way adjacent to park entry points.
- Covered bicycle storage stations inside entries of parks.
- Bicycle repair stations adjacent to entries and major buildings and facilities.
- Charging infrastructure (with charging paid for by users) for electric bicycles and scooters.

Shared Parking Around Parks

Although stronger bicycle and pedestrian connections to parks will improve access from a low-impact means of travel, there will certainly be continued demand for access to parks via automobile travel. PARD should



ADA enhancements at parks, North Park Universal Playground, Fort Worth

explore partnerships and management opportunities for shared parking with park-adjacent land uses so that PARD land and resources do not need to be used to accommodate parking demand.

Parking is important, but parking facilities that only see utilization during limited times represent an opportunity cost for the parks system in forgone land, capital funds, and maintenance resources. For this reason, adjacent land uses may be able to offer parking that supports park activities and functions.

PARD is in a position to lead this effort in partnership with TPW on parking management, as TPW already manages existing regulated parking in downtown Fort Worth and other key districts. Steps to achieve this program would include the following:

- Assessments of available parking by land use around PARD facilities, with an overall estimation of utilization by time period across a typical week.
- Identification of candidate districts and locations that offer potential for sharing based on PARD operations and activities aligning with parking potential.
- Outreach to property owners and proposal of shared-parking management services that allow PARD and TPW to provide maintenance and liability protection to parking owners wishing to participate in shared-parking arrangements.

Transformative Idea B

Integrating the city's mobility network with the Parks System—Making parks more accessible as well as more physically connected



Trinity Metro services, Fort Worth

Background

In addition to an approach that combines the physical networks of Fort Worth's parks and transportation systems, parks should also be a more accessible part of the city and open to serving as a venue for civic and community functions that increase the demand for travel to them.

This extends the approach of the previous transformative idea to other agency partners beyond the Department of Transportation & Public Works. Perhaps the most notable among these is Trinity Metro, the primary transit service provider in Fort Worth, and a major contributor to the city's overall mobility profile.

This type of integration complements the physical connection of parks with the city's street and transportation system as it engages other forms of mobility serving a broader range of travel options. This offers a particular benefit to Trinity Metro's current services in that it expands a potential increase in transit-ridership and more cost-productive transit service.

The traditional focus on serving areas of high employment, high population density, or simply high levels of transit dependency keeps ridership patterns focused on the movement patterns between these major destination areas, leading to relatively low

levels of transit service. By treating parks as another major destination for transit service and generator of ridership, Trinity Metro's service planning can consider parks a part of what makes the transit system successful.

Recommendations

PARD Programs With Trinity Metro

Trinity Metro currently offers transit fare products that provide cost savings to regular riders (often referred to as bulk fare sales), consisting of weekly or monthly passes. Integration of these services with PARD programs could help to drive transit access to park facilities, thus reducing overall drive-alone travel in Fort Worth. This recommendation should explore the following opportunities for program integration:

- Trinity Metro currently offers no locally-based monthly or annual passes, only weekly passes. Coordination of special-duration pass programs that coincide with PARD program schedules could allow an opportunity to tailor specialized fare products to the times that programs are active but could offer discounts compared to single-ride tickets and weekly passes.
- Each of PARD's community centers should offer transit ticket and fare sales to facilitate park users having access via transit. Trinity Metro and PARD should identify a level of user interest to allow Trinity Metro leadership to approve fare programs in advance and remain compliant with Federal requirements.

In addition, overall coordination with Trinity Metro service planning offers ways to increase the profile of park facilities in the transit system and serve as more effective generators of transit ridership.

To achieve this, PARD should coordinate with the Transportation & Public Works Department (TPW) and Trinity Metro on service development, planning and capital projects that support transit service. This involves identifying strategies for park assets having a greater role in ridership forecasts, stop and station location, and service alignments.

PARD Programs With Trinity Metro: Strategic Coordination Of Paratransit

Transit agencies operating fixed-route service are required by federal law to provide paratransit service, usually serving riders with limited personal mobility and other special needs with more door-to-door focused service. This service must be provided within three-quarters of a mile from any fixed-route service, and its emphasis on direct pickup and drop-off of passengers makes its costs per passenger trip much higher than the general fixed-route service it supplements.

Integration of the park system with transit should explore ways to combine paratransit service destinations and use park facilities as venues for the types of community and personal services to which many paratransit trips connect. This includes approaches such as:

- Hosting community medical services at PARD community centers, especially for common health treatments such as vaccinations and dialysis.
- Combining health appointments with community functions to allow paratransit riders a combination of daily services and activities.
- Hosting of other community services such as farmer's markets and food banks to allow paratransit users to reduce the number of trips they need to call.
- Leveraging mobility hubs (discussed in a later recommendation) to serve as connection points between paratransit and other transit services, potentially reducing operating costs.

Mobility Hub Program

Park facilities can and should serve as focal points for micromobility and other personal mobility systems, such as scooters, shared bicycles, and on-demand ride-sharing systems (Uber and Lyft). However, these can work most effectively when organized around hub locations that serve as transfer points for different travel options and allow common locations where longer trips to a park (such as by transit) offer seamless transition to other forms of travel to complete trips.

- Establishment of joint resource funds (who would fund—city interdepartmental, public/private, other, all of the above?) for areas of overlap, allowing greater resources to enable bulk purchases, more competitive bids and terms with contractors, and a greater ability to leverage funds for attracting outside grants and other funding opportunities.
- Adding a PARD-TPW mobility liaison to the City's development review process and committees, allowing any private development adjacent to parks to address how private-development enhancements or improvements can be focused on improved park access.



Mobility Hub - Goldring Crescent, Camden, England

Transformative Idea #3

Living with Nature



An inspiring vision for living with nature, Boca Raton Blvd., Fort Worth







Extending the benefits of Fort Worth's unique natural ecosystem to every part of the city

City planners have the opportunity to create, preserve, and establish an enviable network of interconnected green spaces, shaping a new identity for the city. Achieving this will require a strategic approach, focusing on early action and demonstrated success on specific improvements while avoiding the dilution of resources. Potential projects include public art installations on both small and large scales, digital engagement, connected trails, protected hillsides and riparian zones, preserved forests and farmland, and places for gathering, cooling, and learning. Experiential learning is gaining importance, and parks provide essential venues for teaching about the environment, diversity, the value of ecosystems, and land management.



These actions do not need to translate to exorbitant cost. Considered early in the conception of public infrastructure capital improvement projects and private development bring added value to projects including enhanced economic, social and environmental sustainability and a significant return on investment.

Achieving The GREENprint Fort Worth Core Goals:

-  **Thriving Community:** Create a network of interconnected green spaces that are accessible to all and that encourage walkability, healthy lifestyles, and cultural and educational experiences championed by the public and private sectors.
-  **Connected System:** Extend Fort Worth's network of high-quality parks, public spaces, and trails directly into the heart of neighborhoods, growth centers, urban villages, and revitalized commercial centers to create highly functional landscapes that provide cooling, stormwater management, and biodiversity that are attractive.
-  **Vibrant Nature:** Nature provides multidimensional benefits including social, educational, and physical infrastructure that enhances community resiliency.
-  **Common Ground:** Create inclusive and authentic public spaces where water resources, mobility networks, and greenways converge to create dynamic destinations accessible to all.
-  **Premier Destination:** Fort Worth's growth centers, traditional neighborhoods, and natural resources linked by a stewardship of civic leaders, its citizenry, and the private sector will form a true City within a Park that is unique amongst its peer cities nation-wide.
-  **Manageable Resources:** Partner with universities, schools, and other institutions together with other nonprofits and neighborhood organizations to create, program, operate and maintain more robust initiatives to connect everyone in Fort Worth with the city's unique nature.

Recommendations

Natural areas serve as critical infrastructure. In Fort Worth, the Trinity River acts as an organizing element, providing a major artery that links many neighborhoods while optimizing citywide flood control. Natural green spaces connected to multifamily housing, apartments, schools, senior housing, and employment centers offer opportunities to boost resiliency. These are optimized when they are connected to a broader network and the Trinity River.

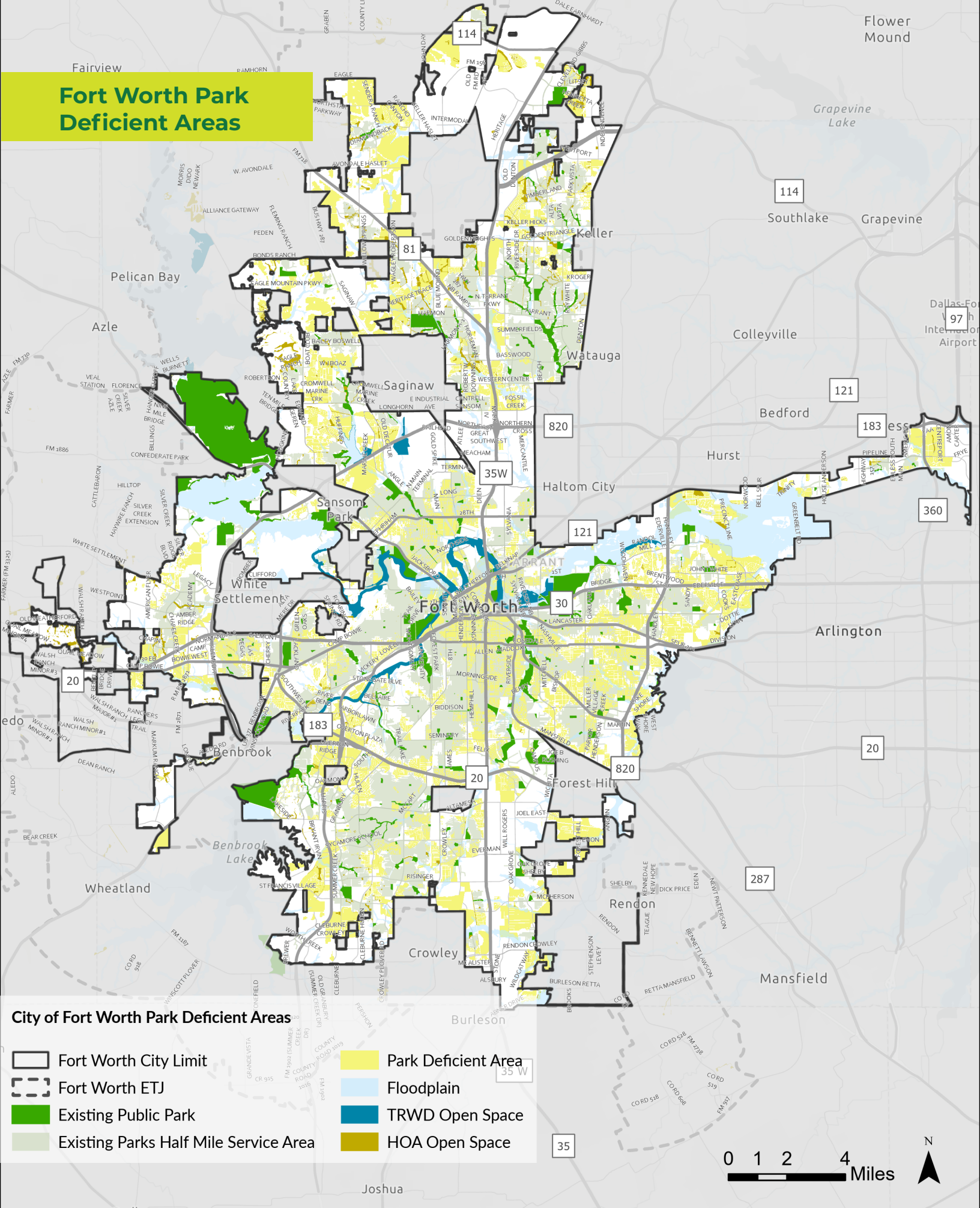
While communities across the United States conduct climate vulnerability assessments and climate action plans, Fort Worth has an extraordinary opportunity to leverage its green spaces to serve residents in preparation for, during, and following natural or other disasters. These same corridors and natural infrastructure can provide rich habitats for nature education, beneficial pollinators, water quality enhancements, and forest canopy for neighborhood cooling. Interconnected natural corridors also offer improved mobility by including walking and bicycle paths that link job centers, transit hubs, and surrounding neighborhoods.

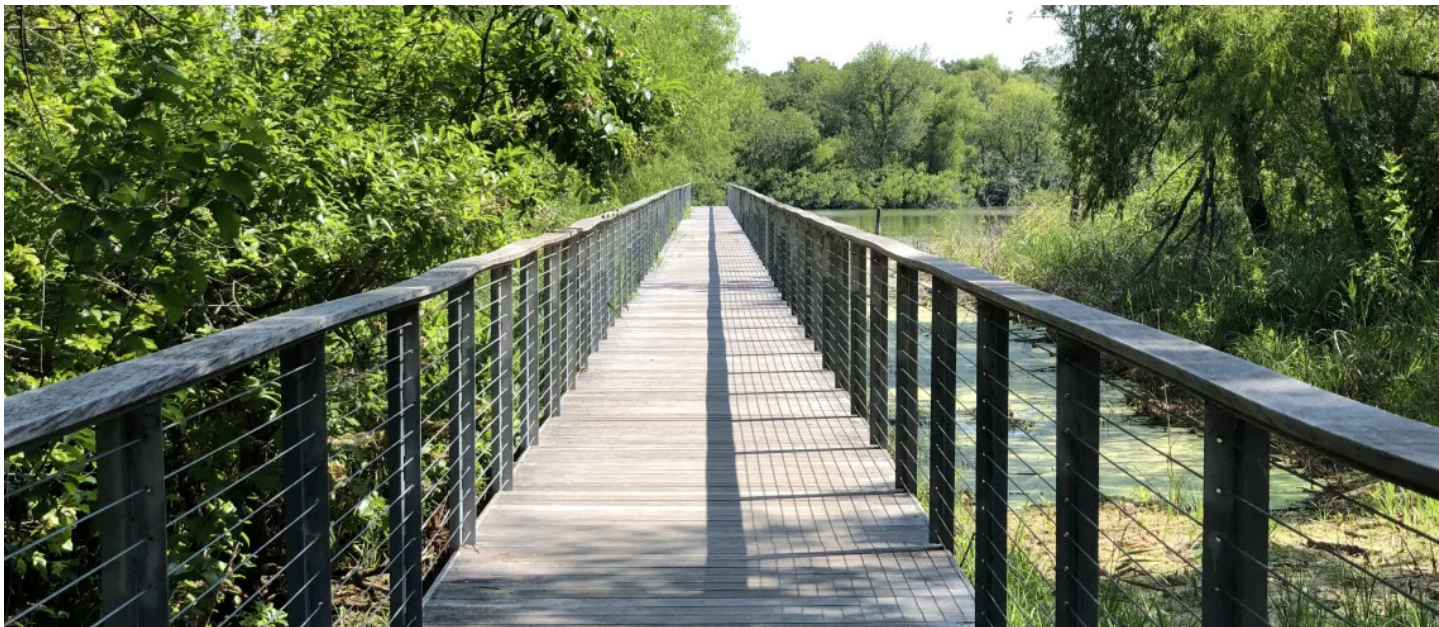
Expand Nature And City-Wide Biodiversity

The following illustration depicts the existing network of publicly owned parks and green spaces in Fort Worth. Areas of both connectivity and fragmentation are apparent, highlighting gaps that need addressing. Establishing connectivity through these gaps can be achieved through acquisitions, easements, private land deed restrictions, use of school properties, privately held or not-for-profit conservation lands, and refurbished streets that prioritize pedestrian, cyclist, and transit mobility.

A vibrant nature concept provides activated spaces for people within natural environments. These interconnected ecosystems support native flora and fauna, serve as living labs for education and outdoor experiences, offer functional aesthetic amenities, and provide vital infrastructure to build resilience against increasing and more intense flood and heat events. The rich mosaic of natural resources, landscape types, and people of varying cultural and demographic backgrounds creates an exciting and diverse network of both tranquil and lively spaces. Demographic diversity encourages participation while species diversity fosters a resilient and sustainable environment that an engaged and informed public will appreciate and support.

Fort Worth Park Deficient Areas





Boardwalks can provide access to water resources, connect green space, contain public access to safe corridors, and allow for the enjoyment and protection of nearby habitat, The Marty Leonard Lotus Marsh Boardwalk, Fort Worth Nature Center and Refuge

Achieving species diversity requires controlling the growth of invasive species, educating the public, effective management, building an economy that thrives on the city's commitment to its natural spaces, and a sustained effort to mitigate detrimental human impacts. Managing the city's green spaces and providing vibrant nature will encourage public engagement with nature, meeting recreation needs for passive activities, trail access, positive social interaction, and healthy lifestyles.

Natural spaces can sometimes be perceived as messy or misused, seen as nuisances, drains on municipal resources, or deterrents to the public. Changing these perceptions requires carefully planned capital investment, aligned maintenance resources, and public education about the value of these spaces to city residents.

Build Resiliency

Residents of Fort Worth face several climate related risks and vulnerabilities. According to the National Risk Index, Tarrant County, where Fort Worth is located, has a relatively high-risk index. The most significant risks are associated with tornadoes, hail, heat waves, riverine flooding, winter weather, and respiratory diseases. The top climate change risks for Fort Worth include heat, fire, and drought. These hazards can significantly impact the local environment, residents' health and well-being,

and strain municipal services in weather related emergencies.

Natural areas can provide a mitigating resource for residents and elevate preparedness to the risks and vulnerabilities that face the city in times of emergency and decrease annual loss and social and economic disruption. Creating community resilience through nature involves a multi-faceted approach. Strategies include:

- **Improving Social Connectedness:** Social networks and relationships facilitated by attractive and inviting green spaces can help communities withstand and recover from adversities. This can be achieved through community events, shared spaces, and programs that encourage awareness, education, familiarity, and a sense of belonging.
- **Fostering Intra-Municipal Collaboration:** Government involvement in planning, improving, maintaining, and programming natural spaces is crucial. This includes creating and implementing policies and partnerships that promote resilience and provide resources to stakeholders who can sustain a network of shared spaces, for example, resiliency hubs that provide areas for respite and essential services in times of need.
- **Communicating Risks:** It's important to communicate risks to the population, especially to at-risk groups. This involves educating the



Interconnected corridors of native plantings along roadways, parks, and privately owned properties enhance stormwater management practices, increase pollinator habitat, and reduce heat island effects, Circle Drive, Fort Worth

community about potential threats and how to prepare for them. Natural spaces can provide respite from heat and mitigate the impact of floodwaters.

Integrating technology for communication and identifying safe zones can enhance community preparedness. A healthy community is a resilient one. This can be achieved through healthy lifestyles afforded by providing accessible and inviting outdoor and natural space for all residents. Building strong connections within the community and with neighboring communities can also boost resilience. Connected green space provides opportunity for expanded social networks and access to resources. Parks and natural spaces connect communities by providing alternative modes of mobility (walking, cycling, dedicated transit routes), without reliance on personal vehicles. Vibrant nature provides resiliency – the capacity to withstand and recover from adversity - and offers respite when other forms of public infrastructure may be compromised. It endures political and economic overtures, ensuring that natural ecosystems are protected, that they thrive in our cities and suburbs, and are available to future generations.

Enhance Accessibility And Connectivity

Universal accessibility for people of all interests, physical abilities, economic backgrounds, ethnicities, and ages is paramount. Green spaces and natural environments are a common interest, and the diversity of patrons brings desired vibrancy to the public realm. Connectedness, green spaces and natural corridors provide affordable and safe alternative modes of mobility while promoting healthy lifestyles. Cooling these corridors with tree canopies and connecting commercial centers make them more viable and attractive to a wider population. Activating the corridors provides exposure to environmental education and an elevated sense of safety. Natural corridors can complete the last mile for community connectivity, linking transportation hubs, bus stops, employment and shopping centers, with the places people live.

A connected network requires wayfinding to provide direction, information, and access to activities for people. A wayfinding network offers opportunities to celebrate community heritage, promote local businesses, and activities for passersby—all essential to introducing vibrancy and spontaneity to the user experience.

Creating a vibrant natural environment for Fort Worth parks involves developing a network of corridors

and patches. These corridors provide connections through verdant, habitat-rich environments equipped with pedestrian amenities, while the patches offer a variety of destinations (e.g., retail, transit hubs) along the way.

These patches may be neighborhood centers rich in culture or regional destinations attracting city residents. The “patch” spaces can include re-purposed parking areas, parks, watercourses, gateways to streets, and commercial centers. Patches should feature amenities for seniors, youth, low-impact fitness, socializing, education, and informal and formal performances.

Essential facilities like restrooms, potable water, shelter, and access to food within these patches encourage extended and enjoyable visits to these areas. An expanded network of public spaces may include deeded parcels gained through private development in nearby neighborhoods. Design guidelines can shape the form, accessibility, features, and location of these facilities, integrating local culture and heritage. These are opportunities for placemaking that bring vibrancy—through patches—via interconnected and naturalized corridors.

Avoiding fragmentation is crucial to creating vibrant and functional natural corridors. Water conveyance, wildlife, ease of non-motorized mobility, neighborhood cooling, safety, and recreation are greatly enhanced by creating quality habitats, scenic vistas, and uninterrupted passage to natural resources. The Trinity River and its tributaries can serve as the foundation for interconnected corridors, becoming a signature element within the city. The river can offer greater recreational opportunities combined with nature-based and social infrastructure. Every element of the natural environment should be considered multi-dimensional, qualifying investment in capital improvements, maintenance, expansion, education, and programming.

Targeted Implementation Strategies

These Transformative Ideas will each be implemented through partnerships with a variety of public agencies, private sector entities, and in some cases non-profit and neighborhood organizations. In each case PARD will have a unique leadership role—convening its partners and providing the planning, design, and programming expertise that will be essential to realize

the full potential for each Transformative Idea. The ideas identified in this plan are closely interrelated. Each Idea will support the execution of the others.

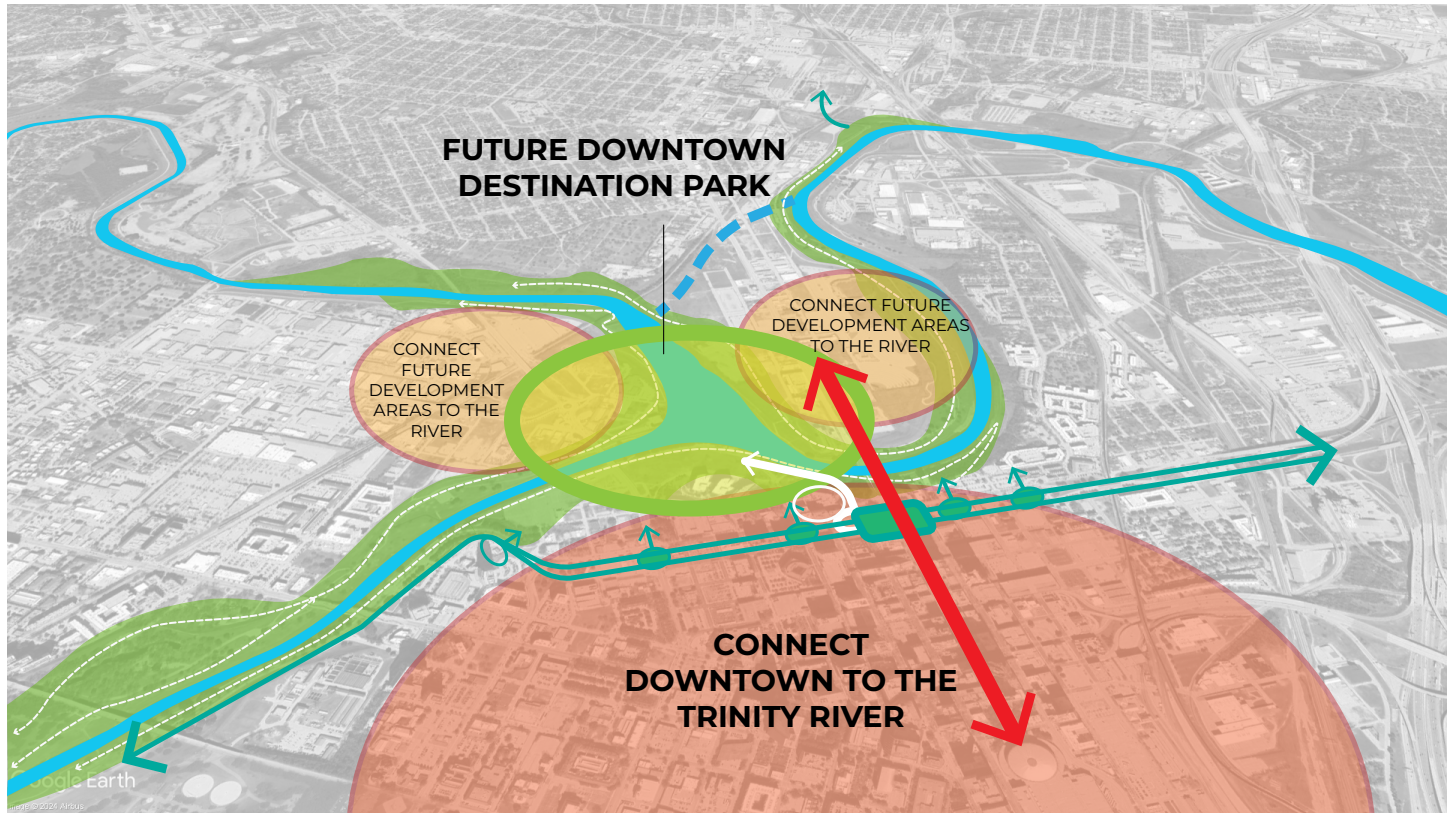
Core strategies to achieve Transformative Idea #3's Living with Nature initiatives will include:

- Identifying and incorporating improvements to the public realm in the early stages of project development including public infrastructure and private development.
- Building stewardship and similar partnerships with a wide variety of entities, including:
 - Universities
 - Schools and school districts
 - Public health networks
 - Transportation providers
 - Conservation organizations
 - Outdoor outfitters and vendors
 - Foundations
- Focusing on expanding access to nature in “park deserts” and new urban growth target areas.
- Developing guidelines and standards for providing access to Fort Worth’s unique natural environment and park amenities.
- Ensuring the internal capacity essential to creating, operating, and maintaining public places that provide access to nature, including:
 - Building trusted working relationships built on regular contact with local communities to plan and design new and changed parks, recreation, and other facilities together with local communities.
 - Programming that caters to the diverse interests, physical abilities, economic statuses, cultures, ages and other distinctions that define the full spectrum of the community.
 - Expanding nature education and immersion programs.
 - Ongoing operations and maintenance.
 - Securing capital, operations, and maintenance funding.

Transformative Idea #4

A Central Common Ground

Create a signature downtown park at the confluence of the Trinity River and Panther Island—positioned as Fort Worth’s cultural, civic, and ecological heart.



A diagram imagines the point at which the Trinity River meets downtown as a great central common ground

Background

The Trinity River is a connective force through the heart of all of Fort Worth. The Trinity Trails of Fort Worth include 100+ miles of trails and amenities, and is cooperatively managed by Tarrant Regional Water District (TRWD), City of Fort Worth, and Streams & Valleys. TRWD manages the overall system, the City manages the recreational and park destinations, and Streams & Valleys provides advocacy and fundraising. The Confluence Plan: The Trinity River Strategic Master Plan, adopted in 2018, outlined a vision, priorities and several key projects to enhance connectivity, amenities and landscape.

The development of Panther Island, projected mixed-use growth of Downtown, and Trinity River improvements present a once in a lifetime opportunity for an iconic riverfront park. This area is

uniquely positioned to invite the full cross section of the community together to celebrate the best of Fort Worth. In a single visit, residents could experience land and river, food and nature, quiet reflection and multicultural gatherings, and the city’s origins and its newest neighborhood.

Focusing on the downtown area, ongoing flood control work as part of the Central City project will create transformational opportunities where the Trinity River meets Fort Worth’s downtown. A bypass channel is planned to connect the Clear Fork to the West Fork of the Trinity River, bypassing the existing oxbow that bends around Panther Island and touches downtown. Flood control gates will control water levels in the oxbow area, allowing for an interior water feature adjacent to downtown and Panther Island and the existing levee removed.

Achieving The GREENprint Fort Worth Core Goals:



Thriving Community: Create a unique public space that enhances the amenity of living and working in Fort Worth—increasing its appeal to a broad cross section of talent and the full spectrum of knowledge, innovation, and many other jobs and investment that follow. Encourage active transportation, leverage the Trinity Trail as a key “spine” corridor.



Connected System: Transform the River corridor into a central spine that not only offers access to Fort Worth’s extensive, connected network of trails and parks but also creates a series of trailhead amenities and services that make both the trails, and River corridor, more compelling destinations. Encourage a “Trails as Mobility” approach to connecting people to major downtown destinations.



Vibrant Nature: Highlight and celebrate the region’s diverse ecology along the entire River corridor and in a prominent downtown location accessible to all Fort Worth residents. Invite residents to play, explore, and celebrate in the waters and landside ecologies of the entire corridor and the Downtown and Trinity River nexus. Transform landscape areas along the trail to a more native planting palette and improved biodiversity.



Common Ground: Create a Downtown Riverfront park that will act as a central common ground for every Fort Worth resident. By leveraging its location at the junction of the Trinity River and Downtown, this common ground will invite residents to gather, interact, and celebrate the City. This common ground can be the point where the city’s origins and future come together.



Premier Destination: Create a quintessential Downtown Riverfront Park, on par with recent initiatives in Memphis, TN, Chattanooga, TN, and Birmingham, AL (common ground, but not on a river), connected to other nearby downtown and cultural district parks that together form a nationally significant destination additional symbol for Fort Worth.



Manageable Resources: Partner with the private sector and with city, regional, and state agencies as well as schools, universities, and nonprofits to plan, create, program, operate, and maintain a series of initiatives to expand access to and use of the River Corridor and to create a central common ground park that proactively invites the full spectrum of the Fort Worth community to gather, interact, and celebrate together.

Major infrastructure projects can open the door to transformational opportunities in cities, and Fort Worth is currently on the verge of one of these opportunities. The character, shape, density, and residential population will shift dramatically as the Central City project and Panther Island redevelopment are implemented. While a series of destination parks have been planned in association with the future redevelopment of Panther Island, there is an opportunity to imagine a large, connected and regionally significant city park that fully engages downtown, Heritage Park, and Panther Island’s North and South islands. This park becomes Fort Worth’s Central Commons – a widely known and admired park space that becomes synonymous with the city of Fort Worth.

Building from this Central Commons, there is an opportunity to further connect the Trinity River and Downtown by enhancing the trail connections to major destinations in the downtown area. The Botanic Garden, the Cultural District, Trinity Park, the Zoo, the Stockyards, and Rockwood Park are all less than 2.5 miles from the proposed Central Commons and Trinity Trailhead. Encouraging a trail network approach aligned with the ATP trail classification system can enhance mobility by connecting people to key destinations. With the Trinity Trail serving as a key “Spine” corridor, it links major activity centers and neighborhoods, strengthening connections to Downtown and the Trinity River while ensuring most destinations are accessible within a 10-minute or less bike ride.

Recommendations

Transform the River into the heart of Fort Worth park, recreation, and public space system

While preserving its unique ecosystem and ability to adapt to periodic flooding, enhance the Trinity River with a series of places connected to nearby neighborhoods and unlock the River's potential for:



Trailheads with Amenities



Outdoor Environmental Education



River Art Corridor



Athletics



Flexible Use Destinations



Water-based Recreation Access



Downtown Park

Imagine the point at which the Trinity River meets Downtown as a Great Central Common Ground

Create a park that proactively invites the full spectrum of Fort Worth's rich and growing diversity to come together to celebrate the crossroads of the two places in Fort Worth that everyone can call "mine"—the Trinity River and Downtown.

Leverage current and future planning efforts to develop a shared vision for a true central park. Engage the City of Fort Worth departments (Economic Development, Planning, Park & Recreation, the FW Lab, others), Tarrant Regional Water District, Tarrant County College, Downtown Business Improvement Districts, property owners, USACE and ultimately the citizens of Fort Worth in developing a parks-focused vision that is transformational for the City and creates an iconic brand at the nexus of the City and the River.

Future planning can build upon the work completed to date while envisioning the Central City project through a parks and recreation lens. Planning to date has been more focused on the development opportunity in bringing over 2,000 acres of land out

of the floodplain. The Panther Island 2.0 plan explores a more comprehensive vision for the area and identifies several regional destination parks, but more visionary, bold and transformational proposals for a central common ground should be explored.

Recent and current precedents and a rich array of design and programming ideas

Cities across the country have recognized the unique social and economic value of investing in downtown riverfront parks, for example:

Chattanooga, TN – Lively Connection

The City of Chattanooga made a commitment to invest in its waterfront and now benefits from a vibrant new district that connects Downtown to the River and attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors each year. The Chattanooga Riverfront is home to Ross's Landing, a vibrant events space, boat launch, trail connections, civic facilities (aquarium, art museums, art district), AT&T Field, and the National Park Service's Walnut Street Bridge. Chattanooga's Riverwalk | Access Points, Maps & Activities.



Chattanooga Riverfront



Tom Lee Park, Memphis, Tennessee

Memphis, TN – Celebration of Living Culture and Ecological Diversity

Tom Lee Park welcomes Memphians to meet each other and recreate along the banks of the Mississippi River. The 31 acre park links some of the City's poorest neighborhoods with the river and the Downtown, creating a space that offers the region's rich living culture and opportunities to perform and draw people from every walk of life and neighborhood to celebrate together and interact. The park design provides a mix of developed and natural spaces, balancing active, social spaces with increased biodiversity and stormwater management.

Domino Park, NYC – Activation and Programming

Domino Park is a 5-acre parcel where once a sugar factory separated the riverfront from the neighborhood. The park successfully reconnects the neighborhood to the river through trails, promenades, event spaces, dog runs, sport courts, food stands, playgrounds and more. There is something for everyone at Domino Park. The park offers over 100 events, free to the public, each year, attended by thousands of people. Domino Park: Waterfront Park in Williamsburg, Brooklyn.

Seattle Waterfront Parks, WA - Bringing Together the High Bluff and the River's Edge

The recently opened Overlook Park connects Pike Place Market to the new Seattle Waterfront Park through a gently sloping promenade lined with art, play areas, overlooks and other amenities. The new park descends 100' feet while offering unique experiences along the way. Seattle's Olympic Sculpture Park also connects the high bluff to the waterfront using a similar approach. The 12 acre park creates a broad, zig-zagging ramp that threads through public art telling Seattle's rich story as it gently descends to the waterfront.

Fort Worth can look to other cities for how they met the challenges of steep terrain separating downtowns from the waterfront. Fort Worth's downtown sits on a high bluff above the river, with nearly 75' feet separating the downtown and the river. Heritage Park and its trails navigate the steep terrain, leading pedestrians to the river edge. However, there is little visual connection between the top and bottom of the bluff, and limited visibility and connection to Panther Island. Other cities, faced with similar challenges, have found effective strategies in overcoming challenging terrain.



Domino Park, Brooklyn, New York



Waterfront Park, Seattle, Washington

Creative solutions to a better connection may be found through collaborative efforts between surrounding landowners, such as Tarrant County College. Concept designs for Heritage Park have recently been developed, and as this park is reimagined, there is enormous value in considering how a new central commons vision might be integrated with modifications to the current Heritage Park.

Diverse programming

The central commons should be a vibrant, activated place where there is something for everyone, everyday throughout the year. The current use of the riverfront is infrequent, with popular events like “Rockin’ the River” attracting a large crowd, while everyday use is limited, leaving many to feel unsafe in areas at the river’s edge. Implementing diverse programming will attract people throughout the day and evening, creating a sense of security and safety for users.

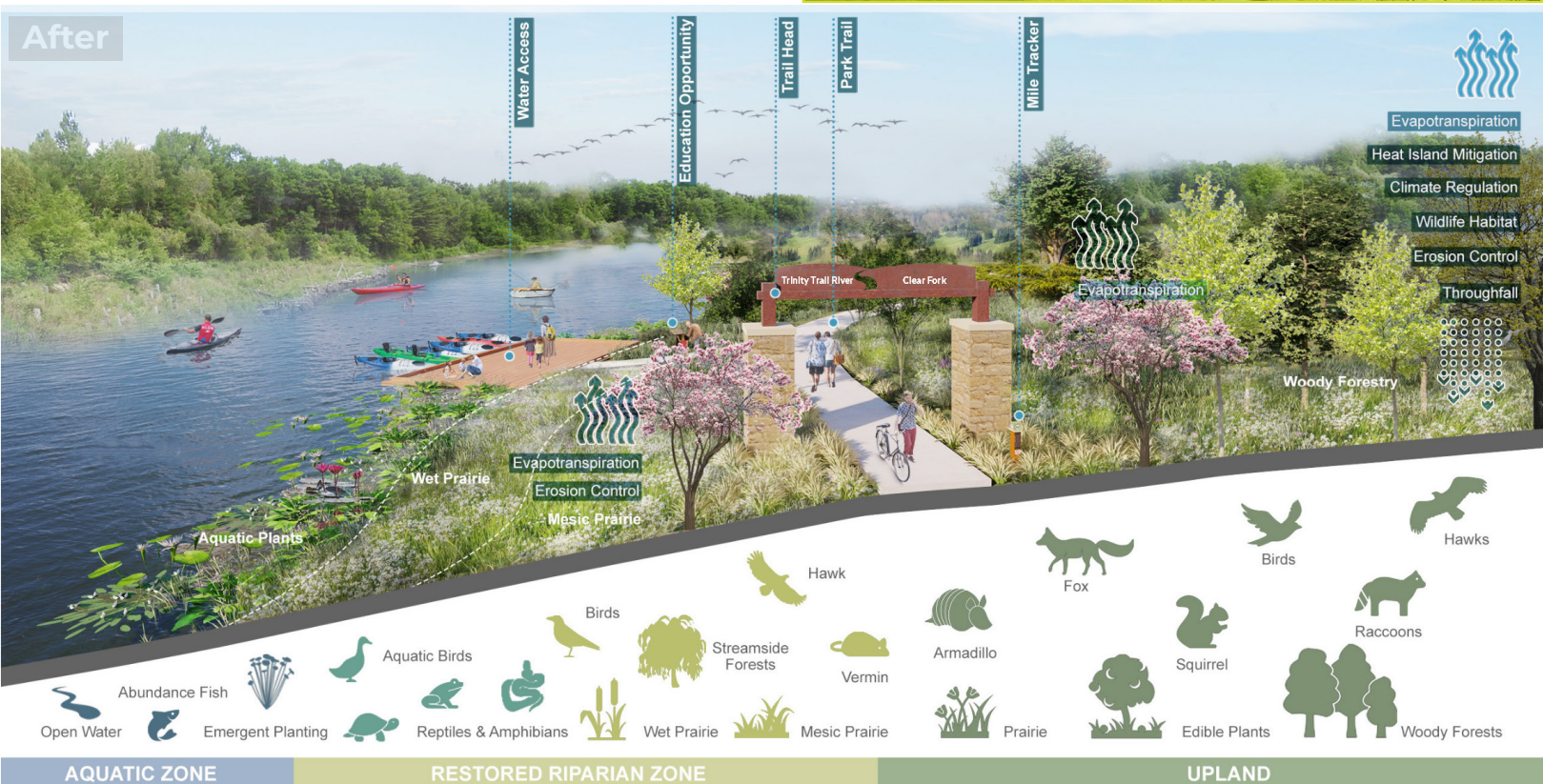
The list of potential experiences is endless, including:

- Walkways and overlooks
- Distant views and immersive experiences
- Close connections with river ecology

- Waterplay of all sorts
- Active and passive recreation
- Citywide and neighborhood event space
- A trailhead to the Trinity River
- Restaurants and mobile vendors
- Active and passive places
- Education for all ages
- Sports equipment rentals and boat launches

Trinity Trail Gateway

The Trinity River threads together many neighborhoods within Fort Worth. The Central Commons Park, at the heart of the city where downtown and the river meet, becomes the gateway to the river corridor’s trails and amenities. This important trailhead can provide the launching point for excursions to other areas of the city, such as the Stockyards, the Cultural District or one of the many



An inspiring vision for activating Trinity River

other riverside parks. Trail information, bike rentals, repair stations, seating areas and nearby refreshments will add to the quality of experience of those utilizing the trail and may encourage greater use of the existing trail system.

Connecting the downtown to the Trinity River is critical, and ecological and mobility connections are equally important. As the Central City project takes shape, the river ecosystem from the high bluff to the riparian areas can be restored, planting trees that create shade, promote biodiversity, and provide more diverse habitat. Riparian areas can be restored by providing more naturally occurring topography with gentler slopes supporting greater diversity of plant communities and habitat. The Central Commons can serve as an ecological “generator”, setting the stage for greater biodiversity throughout the Trinity River corridor.

Trinity Trail Connector - Connecting Downtown To Major Destinations

Create a unique identity for the sections of the Trinity Trail connecting major downtown destinations. Signage, trail markings, trailside amenities, bike share or pedicab programs – all can contribute to a recognizable identity that attracts more people to use the trail to reach these major destinations:

- The Stockyards – The Confluence Plan calls for trail and access improvements linking Marine Creek to the West Fork of the Trinity River.
- Trinity Park, Botanic Garden and Cultural District



The Trailhead at Clearfork, Fort Worth

– Trinity Park is just over 1.0 mile from the proposed Central Commons, with the Botanic Garden access another 1.5 miles further down the trail. Enhancing the trail with additional amenities and attractions could enliven this segment and celebrate these beloved destinations.

- The Zoo and Forest Park Boulevard – The Confluence Plan also prioritizes improvements on the opposite side of the river, around the Zoo and Forest Park Boulevard.
- Panther Island – future development here will be a major attraction and should be included in future planning.

Targeted Implementation Strategies

- Create a Vision for a Central Commons Park
 - Prepare a feasibility assessment – assess park potential alongside flood control improvements.
 - Conduct a Visioning and Conceptual Design process with robust public input and ambitious, bold concepts.
- Incorporate this vision into future planning for the Central City project, Panther Island redevelopment, Heritage Park enhancements and future downtown planning.
- Catalytic projects – determine if early implementation of central park improvements can catalyze future redevelopment.
- Partner with TRWD and Streams & Valleys in testing the need and validity of the concept.
- Engage the Stockyards, Zoo, Botanic Garden and Cultural District in the Trinity Trail as a spine corridor concept.
- Collaborate with other city agencies to implement the Confluence Plan Projects.

Transformative Idea #5

A New Era of Programming

Unlocking the Potential of Public Spaces



The Power of Ten, Unlocking the potential of parks and public spaces by offering a variety of experiences

Background

Transforming Fort Worth Parks into great community destinations

The Power of Ten

Simply put, great parks offer a variety of things to do for a variety of people, making the park more than just a collection of amenities. A park is good, but a park with a fountain, playground, and food vendors is better. A nearby library or school adds even more value, especially if the library offers storytelling hours for children and local history exhibits in its public spaces. Add a sidewalk café, a bus stop, a bike trail, and an ice cream parlor, and you begin to create a place that most people would consider great—and adds far more value to the surrounding neighborhoods.







This idea aligns with the principles of Placemaking, often referred to as the “Power of 10.” While the number “10” is symbolic, the core idea is about offering a variety of experiences and choices to meet the diverse needs of the community. Whether we are discussing specific parks or entire neighborhoods, the goal is always the same: variety and choice, creating places that cater to many different interests and activities.

In Fort Worth, we aim to apply this concept across our park system at various scales. We understand great parks are not just defined by a single activity or attraction. Instead, a mix of uses, experiences, and opportunities for different people and groups is essential. By creating spaces that blend natural beauty with recreational, educational, and social opportunities, we aim to enhance not only the park itself but also the surrounding neighborhoods and the city as a whole. As we plan the future of Fort Worth’s parks, we focus on fostering places that support community engagement, create vibrant public spaces, and contribute to the city’s overall growth and vitality.

Why is Programming needed: What qualities, including programming, make a great public destination in Fort Worth? Placemaking Principles for Great Park Destinations?

Fort Worth city parks have so much to offer and to gain by becoming the places where community institutions go to reach people and by offering programming geared to the full diversity of nearby communities so that everyone can call their local

Achieving The GREENprint Fort Worth Core Goals:

-  **Thriving Community:** Expand park programming to promote physical, mental, and emotional well-being, enriching their quality of life by supporting increased social interaction and engaging diverse communities.
-  **Connected System:** Use the Power of Ten to enhance the city's parks as a system of interconnected places and experiences that links directly into the growth centers and urban villages of Fort Worth. Bring programs from community institutions and partners to parks, and vice versa, to intensify neighborhood use of parks and awareness of the central role parks can play in the daily life of surrounding neighborhoods.
-  **Vibrant Nature:** Focus a portion of programming around the flora, landscapes, topography, and waterways that characterize Fort Worth's parks to build greater awareness and understanding of Fort Worth's unique ecosystems.
-  **Common Ground:** Enhance and expand park programs to foster social interaction and celebrate the city's diverse cultures. Inclusive and authentic parks create spaces that invite people from all backgrounds to call a park "mine" and to interact. Dynamic programs and events, such as cultural festivals, community gatherings, outdoor classes, and collaborative art projects, promote cross-cultural understanding and bring people together.
-  **Premier Destination:** Use programming to unlock the ability of parks to promote collaboration, creativity, and entrepreneurship. Support local small businesses and provide opportunities for networking and innovation. Foster inclusive environments where diverse communities can interact to stimulate economic activity, continue to promote the city's growth in emerging industries aligned with the 'New Economy'.
-  **Manageable Resources:** Partner with schools and universities, nonprofits, arts and cultural organizations and others to expand the frequency, range, and depth of programming across the city's parks, recreation, and green space system.

park "mine". Currently, most programming offered by PARD takes place inside the community centers, and rarely outside in the parks where these facilities are located. There is a tremendous opportunity and a need for Fort Worth parks to do more and be more for the people they serve through more focused and intentional programs and activities.

There is a growing trend among community-focused institutions like libraries, museums, schools, performing arts centers, and even sports arenas, to bring the inside out. That is, to take the exciting events, performances, and competitions, or the humble story time, scrabble game, and salsa class to outdoor spaces. Community institutions are reaching beyond their walls in order to better connect to their audiences and to grow new ones.

Often, they have to create the outdoor space they

want to be visible in from scratch, transforming parking lots into plazas, paved areas into gardens, or taking what they have to offer across the street or across town to reach people.

Urban parks and park systems are especially good arenas for system thinking and design excellence. Over the years, we have identified certain elements and principles that make parks more enjoyable and attractive to people of all ages, and ultimately great places.

The Inner Park and the Outer Park

Visionary Park Planner Frederick Law Olmsted's idea of the "inner park" and the "outer park" is just as relevant today as it was over 100 years ago. To really succeed, a great park needs to extend beyond its physical boundaries. The streets and sidewalks around Fort Worth parks greatly effect their

accessibility and use, as do the buildings surrounding them. Parks need to have a green attractive presence, inviting and connecting with surrounding neighborhoods by ensuring active, accessible edges; entrances that link easily to area destinations like schools, libraries, community centers, shops, bike routes and transit stops. Adding activity that is visible from the street and seeking to make entrances more engaging are all good ways to support the “outer park.” The outer edge is essential to the well-being of the inner park.

It is also very important that the influence of a park be extended into neighborhoods for environmental and physical health. Nothing correlates more directly with enhanced public health outcomes than creating places that invite people to walk. Green spaces in nearby streets cool the urban environment through shade and reduction of the heat island effect. Vegetation and trees purify air quality, manage stormwater runoff, and support local wildlife. Green corridors enhance the enjoyment of a neighborhood by aesthetically tying natural and built systems together. The “outer park” enhances the social and environmental well-being of the inner park through perceived activity and engaging entrances.

Attractions and Destinations: The Art of Clustering

Within the inner park, visible focal points and a variety of smaller “places” are needed to appeal



A vibrant outdoor space, Beer Garden; Governors Island, New York

to diverse park users. Many Fort Worth parks already possess such small destinations like picnic shelters, playgrounds, water features, stage areas for performances, skateboard areas, and so on. The attractions don’t need to be big or expensive to make the park a success. They do benefit—and magnify their impact—by being located as part of a cluster of activities—for example a playground adjacent to seating for adults, shade, drinking fountains, restrooms, and a game cart or foosball table for older kids. The details will be specific to different places, but the important element is to offer attractions for a few different age groups - not just kids, but their caregivers, and older siblings. In Fort Worth parks, where destinations are often spaced out, building destinations up can happen gradually, when replacement and renovation happens, and with lighter, programmatic elements that are more “movable.”

A Front Porch or a Backyard

A flexible, inviting space will be instrumental in attracting residents and a variety of users. These areas are an easy transition from the public realm into the park and all its amenities, creating a feeling of ownership and inclusion.

The development of a “front porch” or “backyard” area in a park would involve the nurturing of a space where people are comfortable staying in, interacting, and being involved in. The imagery of the front porch



A front porch or backyard area in a park

implies an outward-oriented facility that is active, easy to just hang out in, strike up a conversation with others, or hold events that will draw them in. In contrast, the imagery of the backyard is of an inward-oriented and cozier area, to be used by locals to relax in, socialize, or engage in low-key, self-guided or self-organized activities, like yard games, or meet-ups. With elements that balance vibrancy with comfort, extended hours, adaptable seating, and programming reflective of neighborhood culture, parks can become the vital areas of everyday life. Parks can thus be an inviting extension of home for all visitors.

Amenities & Aesthetics

Great parks feature amenities that make them comfortable and easy for people to use, not just amenities that are easy to maintain. Appropriate seating, shade or a waste receptacle in just the right location can make a big difference in if and how people choose to use a place. In general, flexible amenities, such as movable chairs, umbrellas, benches and plantings that are not structural but could be moved for a special event or celebration, make for the most comfortable and inviting public spaces.

Adding color, through soft amenities and plantings can also be very impactful. Such features are rarely used in Fort Worth parks in part because of the substantial labor they require for management and care. Addressing some of these management needs potentially with the cooperation of “Friends Groups”

and other partner organizations will be instrumental in maintaining high quality, attractive amenities while enhancing the image of City parks.

Flexible and Seasonal Features

Park uses and users change during the course of the day, week, and year. To respond to the outdoor conditions and the natural fluctuations of park use, flexibility needs to be built in. Instead of a permanent stage, for example, a movable stage could be used, with the design allowing for needed infrastructure, access, and potential green room or backstage areas. Seasonal strategies are also important. Skating rinks, outdoor cafés, book festivals, author readings, horticulture displays, and temporary art installations can all help adapt the use of the park, and its image, from one season to the next.

Public art and landscaping features in the right location can be a great magnet for adults and children of all ages to come together. Whether portable, seasonal or permanent, good thoughtfully selected artistic elements paired with seasonal horticultural displays can be invaluable in establishing a lively setting for social interaction, learning and deep engagement. Digital and interactive public art can be updated periodically by local artists and resident participants.



Vibrant public space with flexible and inviting amenities, Downtown Atlanta



Seasonal features, ice skating rink in Prado de San Sebastian Park, Spain

Enhanced Programming and Setting the Stage for Enhanced Partnering

Building great parks requires a diverse array of community events and programs for different members of the community. Not unlike a food pyramid, an active community space needs a solid base of simple, daily activities (often self-led), followed by weekly programs, monthly and seasonal events, and a sprinkle of special events. The programming pyramid doesn't reflect the importance of activities, but rather their frequency and number. Regular or recurring programs are also very important as they begin to make their way onto people's personal calendars, so participants know when to show up.

Great parks offer programming and a human presence, which can best be achieved through active management. Appropriate levels of programming as well as opportunities for self-led, spontaneous activities are all needed and important. In a multi-partner context, the role of PARD is not to organize the large majority of programs and events, but to create and support the "infrastructure" for programming in Fort Worth parks. This involves maintaining spaces and facilities, but also promoting parks as venues by offering easy ways to propose and sign-up for programs, clear approvals and permitting processes, outreach and communications to other city departments.



Hierarchy of Needs for an Active Public Space

Working with partners to develop programming also facilitates PARD's ability to connect with and empower local communities through various approaches including support for "Friends' Groups", aligning with area organizations to bring programs (and people) to the parks, and developing philanthropic support.

Recommendations

Creating vibrant parks that attract a large and diverse range of users requires engaging programming, thoughtful planning, and functional design to support the activities identified in this programming and planning that animate a park. The following recommendations will help PARD and the City of Fort Worth increase park usership, better connect with residents, and transform parks into vibrant, engaging gathering spaces at the core of their neighborhoods and communities.

Building Critical Mass: Cluster Uses and Activities

Clustering amenities in ways that encourage interaction and activity will promote vibrant, multi-use parks that attract a diverse range of visitors. This approach, often referred to as "triangulation," involves positioning complementary features near one another to create lively, engaging spaces. Imagine a shaded picnic table situated within a clear



Cluster uses and activities, working with underfunded communities

view of a playground—parents can relax and enjoy a meal while keeping an eye on their children. This kind of thoughtful design fosters social connection and natural circulation, transforming a park from a spread-out collection of amenities into a cohesive destination.

Visits to the Trailhead and Thomas Place Park revealed good examples of improved triangulation. These parks, like many others in Fort Worth, feature excellent amenities - playgrounds, picnic pavilions, and seating areas. However, in other parks, these elements are spaced too far apart, limiting their ability to function cohesively and effectively at each scale. By grouping amenities — benches, kiosks, playgrounds, and shade — closer together, the space becomes not only more functional but also more dynamic. Creating sub-places within parks, such as quiet areas, active play zones, and social hubs, can further enhance this effect. These distinct zones should cater to a range of users while maintaining a unified park identity.

Successful examples of triangulation and critical mass can be seen in places like Sundance Square Plaza in Fort Worth. This urban plaza exemplifies how interactive features, a vibrant atmosphere, and proximity to dining and shopping can transform a space into a lively social hub that generates significant social as well as economic value. Similarly, Trinity Park leverages its prime location near Downtown Fort Worth and the cultural district to attract significant user traffic through its extensive trail network, diverse recreational opportunities, and community events. Larger parks can feel isolated due to their size, but intentional triangulation can bridge some of those gaps, creating moments of connection that resonate.

Discovery Green in Houston and Bryant Park in New York City illustrate the power of critical mass and thoughtful design. These parks effectively use year-round programming, diverse amenities, and strategic co-location to foster engagement and extend visitor experiences. For example, Discovery Green hosts movie nights, exercise classes, and art installations, while Bryant Park offers ice skating, literary events, and seasonal markets.

These vibrant spaces exemplify how clustering and programming can turn parks into dynamic destinations for all.

By intentionally and systematically applying principles of triangulation, and the creation of diverse sub-spaces, many Fort Worth parks can become more than just green spaces; they can become purposeful invitations to gather, play, relax, and build strong community connections.

Human Presence

PARD's staff should be trained and encouraged to an even greater extent to interact with the public whenever they are in the parks. Park workers possess a lot of great information about plants, wildlife, and facilities. They have informal observations and knowledge of how people use specific destinations - when a place is busy, what groups use it often, what people need, or what they ask for, what they leave behind, etc. This is all information that park users - young and old - can appreciate and learn from.



Human presence, North Z. Boaz Park, Fort Worth

A volunteer-based Park Ambassador Program could be a great way to build community connections and empower individuals to support their local parks. Not all volunteers like gardening, and non-gardening tasks like welcoming visitors, sharing park information, reporting maintenance needs, or organizing small events could be a good alternative. A Park Ambassador program fosters pride, ownership, and a stronger bond between people and their parks.

Community Events and Programs

A thriving park system needs both active and passive programming to attract and engage users. What draws people to parks is nature and other people.

Creating opportunities for more self-led, spontaneous activities will also be essential. While parks may not always have active monitoring or programming, providing activities and designing spaces that encourage independent engagement will draw visitors. Grass and wide-open fields alone aren't sufficient to fill a park with users. To attract users, a robust calendar of programming that gets people excited to visit is critical.

Some recommendations for broadening the appeal of parks include:

- Concessions: Food and beverage options are always a draw. Either a concession building, food



Summer camp group, Fort Worth

trucks or cafes open to the outside in existing community buildings will provide the comfort factor for visitors, and also additional human presence in the park.

- Festivals, markets, and celebrations of local culture.
- Performances, music, and cultural events to connect community members.
- Sports demonstrations and competitions to promote active engagement.
- Naturalist events that tap into the community's love of nature and learning.

Physical Improvements to Support Programs

Below is a list of key physical improvements that could lead to transformative changes in Fort Worth parks:

- One key focus should be creating a sense of arrival at each park, which helps establish its identity and sets the tone for the visitor experience. Enhancing existing gateways provides a "template" for different park typologies can achieve this effectively. For example, iconic signage can define the entrance of a Metropolitan Park, similar to the Cobb Park towers, while thoughtful native landscaping can create a welcoming gateway for Community Parks.
- In Fort Worth's hot climate, providing user comfort is critical. Shade and weather protection together with play fountains and other ways to experience water are already provided in many parks, like Lake Como or Cobb Park. Comfort promotes usability—there's no play without a place for caregivers to rest nearby.
- To make parks inclusive for everyone, provide accessible pathways, shaded seating, and clear, easy-to-read signage. These elements not only enhance comfort but also increase the usability of parks for a diverse range of visitors, including those with limited mobility.
- Incorporating flexible features such as open lawns, bike-learning zones, splash pads, and public art fosters a lively and dynamic environment. These multi-use spaces can accommodate changing needs and encourage creative and active engagement across all age groups.
- Adding local materials and design elements, parks can create spaces that resonate with the community and reflect the area's unique character. Fort Worth offers numerous examples of this approach: Cobb Park's iconic limestone entry towers and bridges, Lake Como Park's pavilions, and the modern Clearfork and Trinity Trails, which combine contemporary design with native materials.
- Many parks also feature beautiful native planting beds in key locations that enhance the landscape's appeal, creating visual interest for visitors while attracting beneficial insects and birds. These features not only improve the park experience but also promote sustainability and celebrate the region's natural and cultural heritage.

By focusing on these improvements—creating a strong sense of arrival, prioritizing comfort and accessibility, and providing flexible, active spaces—Fort Worth’s parks can become vibrant, inclusive destinations that meet the needs of their communities while enhancing quality of life for all.



An inspiring visualization of physical enhancements designed to support programming.

Enhance Park Identity & Information

Create a Unique Identity for Parks Showcasing Local Community Culture

Defining a unique identity for each park in Fort Worth is aspirational and an ongoing task aimed at enhancing its connection to the community and improving the visitor experience. PARD can achieve this by fostering partnerships with local groups and organizations to develop and refine these park identities.

A key strategy is to partner with local community members, artists, and groups to implement programming that reflects the neighborhood’s specific culture, history, and identity. Engaging the local community ensures that park programming aligns with their values and interests, fostering a sense of ownership and pride. For example, Fire Station Park on Hemphill Avenue has become a successful model of park programming led by community engagement. Residents envisioned the park with a small neighborhood skate park, which was incorporated into the park’s design and became a successful feature.

In addition to community input, collaborating with local artists helps incorporate culturally relevant artwork and performances—elements that might not have been identified without this direct involvement. Hosting cultural events, such as music performances and skill demonstrations, can significantly enrich the

park experience. These activities foster community engagement while celebrating Fort Worth’s rich cultural diversity. Parks like Trinity Park with the annual Mayfest, and neighborhood favorites like Rosedale Park (with block parties, movie nights, and holiday celebrations) and Como Park (featuring live music, food festivals, and cultural events) are great examples of parks that use such activities to strengthen community ties and showcase local culture.



Sensory play, enriching visitor experience, Dream Park

Education and Visitor Experience

To enhance the visitor experience and ensure parks are accessible and engaging for all, it is critical to provide clear and comprehensive information about both the activities available and the park’s history and significance. Fort Worth parks have increasingly embraced this approach, providing opportunities for visitors to learn about the natural and cultural heritage of the area through various means.

One effective way to enrich the visitor experience is by offering ranger-led programs and self-guided activities. These programs provide educational opportunities while allowing visitors to engage with the park at their own pace. For example, parks like Trinity Park host ranger-led nature walks that educate participants about local wildlife and ecology, providing an interactive learning experience.

Additionally, technology can play a key role in enhancing the educational experience. Interactive exhibits and apps can be used to provide real-time information about the park, its history, and upcoming events. Parks such as Lake Como Park and Cobb Park are beginning to integrate digital tools that allow

visitors to explore the parks' unique natural features and learn about the area's cultural and environmental history in a more dynamic way.

Collaboration with local schools and community organizations is also a powerful way to connect visitors to the park's resources. Partnering with these groups for educational outreach programs can foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of the parks, encouraging families, students, and local residents to engage in activities that promote both environmental stewardship and cultural awareness. This approach has been successfully implemented at parks like Rosemont Park, where community organizations lead programs designed to engage young people in environmental education and artistic expression.

By integrating these approaches, Fort Worth parks can continue to create immersive, educational experiences that are accessible to all visitors, enhancing their connection to the places they visit.

Integrate Identity and Information

Fort Worth parks can strengthen their identity by incorporating both branding and effective wayfinding systems that make the parks more accessible and engaging for all.

Building a unique brand identity for each park is an important step in distinguishing one park from another. By highlighting the distinct cultural, historical, or environmental aspects of each park, such as the cultural significance of Trinity Park near the Cultural District or the natural beauty of Lake Como Park, parks can attract visitors from across the city and beyond. Fort Worth's parks can use this branding to foster a sense of pride and ownership in the community, encouraging local residents to become more involved in preserving and enhancing these spaces.

Alongside branding, effective wayfinding is essential for helping visitors navigate the park system and fully experience all that the parks have to offer. Fort Worth parks should maintain a consistent wayfinding system that includes clear maps and directional signs placed at key entry points and throughout the park.

By ensuring that signs are easy to read and tailored for different audiences—such as families with young children or visitors with disabilities—parks can improve accessibility and ensure all visitors have a positive experience. Natural landmarks can also serve as helpful cues for visitors to orient themselves, enhancing the park's navigation and connection to its surroundings.

Social media also plays a key role in promoting parks and expanding their reach. By sharing regular updates, event information, and community stories, parks can connect with a wider audience and build a stronger relationship with both residents and visitors. Rosedale Park, for instance, has seen increased participation in its community events through targeted social media campaigns that showcase the vibrancy of its activities, such as block parties, movie nights, and holiday celebrations.

By blending identity and information, Fort Worth parks can offer a truly immersive experience that connects both locals and visitors to the city's vibrant cultural and natural landscapes.

Harness the Power of Volunteers

Volunteers are vital to urban parks and can continue to have strong impacts in Fort Worth parks, enriching park experiences through guided nature walks, clean-ups, programming, and garden care.



An inspiring visualization of enhancing Fort Worth parks with branding and wayfinding

Some Fort Worth parks already benefit from the attention and care of committed neighbors. This work should be highlighted, supported, and enriched to encourage more people to participate. Best practices from experienced volunteer coordinators show the importance of understanding what motivates volunteers, such as challenging work, responsibility, and recognition. Marlene Wilson, author of *The Effective Management of Volunteer Programs*¹, writes that the five motivations for volunteering are:

- Challenging work
- Increased responsibility
- Growth and development
- Achievement
- Recognition of accomplishment

Understanding these motivations helps match individuals to roles that encourage long-term commitment and community ownership. Harnessing the power of volunteers and partnering with community organizations can elevate park programming and expand outreach. Collaborations with libraries and local groups bring fresh ideas, insights into audience interests, and access to new or renewed audiences, fostering community investment in parks.

Strategies for developing volunteer programs

Engaging local community volunteers through neighborhood associations, schools, and faith-based organizations can build a grassroots network of park advocates. Establishing a “Friends of the Park” group for each major park can offer consistent support, allowing volunteers to take on leadership roles and create customized programs that reflect the community’s unique needs. Additionally, corporate volunteering initiatives can be expanded through partnerships with local businesses, encouraging companies to adopt parks or sponsor large-scale volunteer events, such as annual clean-up days or tree-planting festivals.

Strategies for recruiting volunteers

Community outreach efforts, such as hosting volunteer fairs or setting up information booths at local events, can help tap into diverse audiences who might not yet be aware of volunteer opportunities.

Partnering with schools and universities to offer service-learning credits or internships can attract younger volunteers eager to gain experience and contribute to their community. For corporate volunteers, offering team-building experiences or recognition through co-branded signage in parks can enhance participation while strengthening ties between businesses and the community.

Social media platforms are vital for recruiting, engaging and keeping connected with volunteers. They promote events, highlight volunteer stories, and attract new participants while keeping current ones connected. Live-streaming orientation sessions can make them more accessible and exciting, helping new volunteers integrate smoothly.

Volunteer recognition is key to retention. Simple gestures like social media shout-outs, newsletter features, and appreciation events create a sense of belonging. Innovative approaches, such as exclusive park access or hosting “Spruce Up” days, can attract both long-term and one-time volunteers, offering flexible participation opportunities. A dedicated volunteer coordinator is essential to streamline efforts. Using management software, they can efficiently handle schedules, communication, and event coordination. By understanding volunteer motivations, leveraging social media, and fostering meaningful connections, urban parks can build vibrant communities through active participation and collaboration.

Programs like the Partnership for Parks in New York City, a joint initiative of NYC Parks and the City Parks Foundation, demonstrate the potential of leveraging corporate sponsors and local volunteers to improve and maintain parks. Through this initiative, corporate groups participate in park clean-ups and beautification projects, while local volunteers engage in stewardship activities, creating a model for public-private collaboration that strengthens community ties and park resources.

¹ Wilson, M. (1976). *The Effective Management of Volunteer Programs*. Boulder, CO: Volunteer Management Associates.

Targeted Implementation Strategies

To transform the recommendations in this section into a reality, three interconnected strategies will be critical. Start with a pilot destination park, developing a non-profit arm for implementation, and then applying the lessons of the pilot to a broader, Catalyst Park program with the help of the non-profit arm.

Develop One Pilot Destination Park

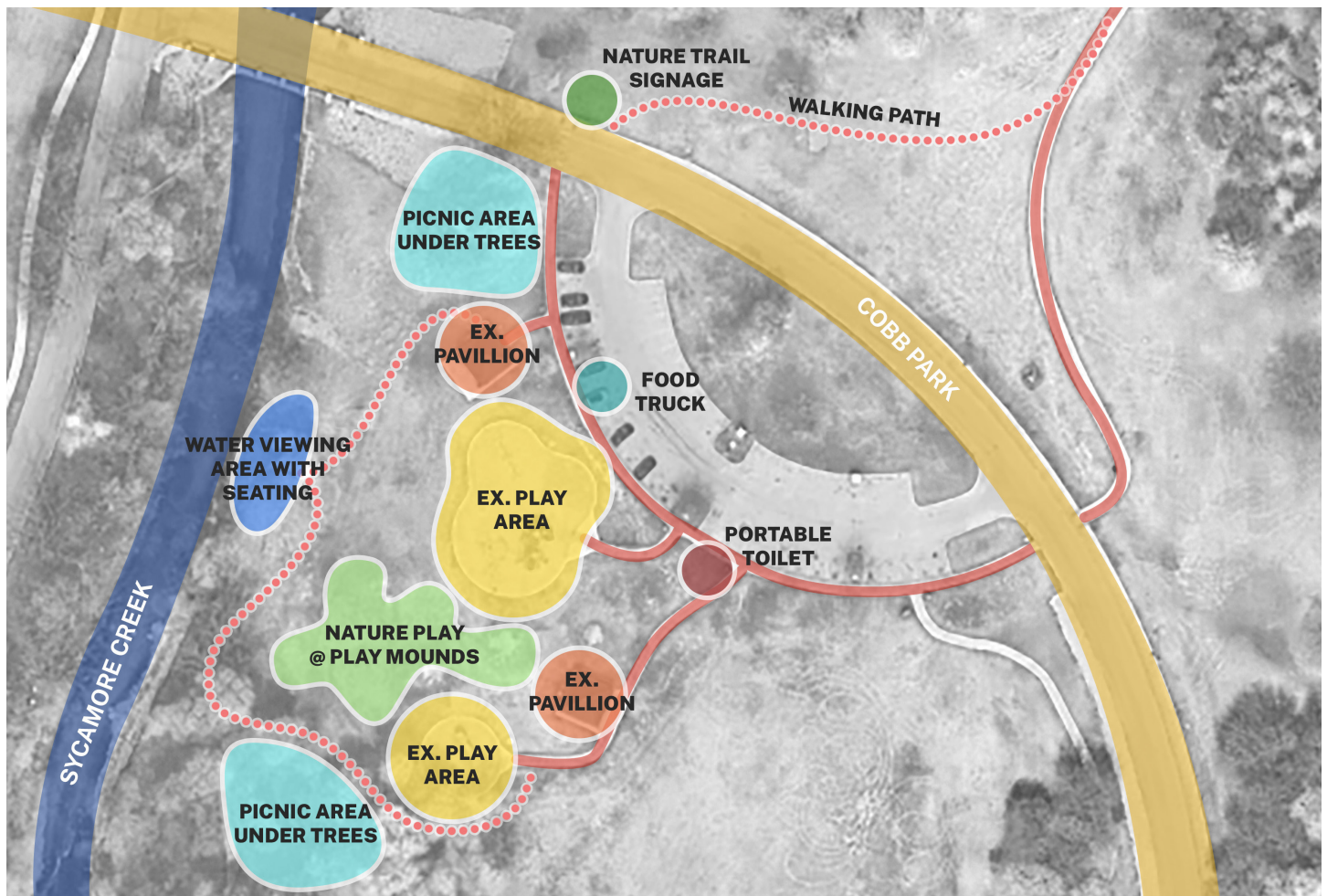
- **Project Proposal: Cobb Park Placemaking Initiative**

Launch a pilot project in a destination park in Fort Worth to serve as a collaborative space for exploring how placemaking and collaborative programming can transform parks into vibrant, and lively community spaces. This pilot project will act as a template for future projects, such as the Catalyst Parks (see Strategy #3 below) and a demonstration model for teasing out lessons and scaling up a broader program. By integrating community-driven programming,

innovative design adjustments, and sustainable management practices, the initiative will provide the PARD with an opportunity to verify new strategies, refine community-building programs, and devise approaches for broader application.

- **Selecting the most impactful pilot**

A park with many “low hanging fruit” opportunities and strong potential to go from good to great quickly, like Cobb Park, would make the most impactful pilot. Cobb Park is an important community asset, and offers diverse high-quality amenities such as playgrounds, picnic shelters, sports facilities, trails connected to the Trinity Trails system, and natural features along Sycamore Creek. Its combination of recreational assets, natural beauty, and an existing Park Friends Group, makes it an ideal site for this Pilot project. The pilot project should showcase how light programmatic and placemaking improvements can transform a good park into a popular community destination. Cobb Park could serve as the model for



Cobb Park destination diagram



A proposed pilot project at Cobb Park envisions transforming a parking area into an inviting public space with seating by the creek, a shaded picnic area under trees, and enhanced play areas.

broader programming and design strategies to be explored across the park system potentially through a Catalyst-type program, offering a replicable template for success.

- **Building on Cobb Park’s existing resources and engaging the community, this initiative would aim to strengthen the park’s role as an inclusive, and unique destination. The Pilot Placemaking Focus Areas should include:**

- * Sycamore Creek as an underutilized asset in the park. A simple enhancement to open views to the creek and create connections to the park’s existing playgrounds, picnic areas, and parking would transform it into a central feature, and will significantly enrich the visitor experience.
- * Introduce food and beverage options through food trucks or carts, encouraging extended stays and increased activity, and providing a steady presence in key locations of the Park.
- * Community-Driven Programming could include festivals, markets, and cultural celebrations to highlight local heritage; performances, music, and events to strengthen community connections; sports demonstrations and competitions to encourage active participation; nature-focused events like nature walks and learning

to foster appreciation for the environment and learning.

- * Build on the existing triangulation. The arrival parking lots are already thoughtfully located next to playgrounds, shade shelters, and other game activities. Adding special programming, extra uses, and high-quality ancillary amenities could help move these places from good to extraordinary.

Create a Non-Profit Arm of the Park & Recreation Department

A non-profit organization can have a wide range of relationships and experiences depending on the direction and needs PARD would want it to fulfill. According to its role in relation to PARD such an organization could be an assistance provider, helping PARD with education, programming, and volunteers. The organization could also assist with fundraising and advocacy and would primarily operate with few paid staff and no direct responsibility for park grounds.

Another model would be a non-profit organization that works in collaboration with PARD through a position jointly shared by PARD and the non-profit that oversees fundraising, planning, programming, as well as supporting capital construction efforts, in addition to connecting with community and volunteers. This organization would share some responsibility for park grounds or facilities on a case-by-case basis.

Finally, a citywide partner organization could focus on raising the level and quality of parks city-wide through advocacy, fundraising efforts, programming, training smaller friends groups, and initiating citywide park-related initiatives.

Whichever model is selected, a non-profit arm will be instrumental in fundraising and building philanthropic relationships, as well as in outreach efforts and organizing volunteers. The tax-exempt status makes a non-profit eligible for funds from foundations and more attractive to individual donors. It can also support PARD in articulating a bold new vision for the system as a whole and help generate the funds to implement it.

Creating a non-profit arm of the Park & Recreation Department could take some time, it is important that in the near future PARD expands its internal capacity to collaborate with other city departments and outside entities. This means ensuring that PARD is properly staffed to adapt to emerging needs, and in particular to engage actively in community and partner outreach focused on programming. This may require staff that is specifically trained and focused on outreach, as well as on harnessing the power of volunteers, as described in the recommendation section.

Develop a Catalyst Parks Program

An important strategic step towards implementation would be to create a multi-year Catalyst Parks program combining City-funded improvements with non-profit privately funded arts, sports, education and community-building programs in selected parks.

Learning from other Catalyst programs, the key is to select several parks - potentially one in each park district - and apply long-term community engagement and park improvement tools to revitalize these parks

The Catalyst program should include three key components:

- Community engagement in collaboration with a non-profit parks arm as described in strategy #2;
- Enhanced programming specific to the community and the selected park, accomplished in partnership with non-profit parks arm and a variety of local partners; and
- Capital investment in physical improvements that support uses and programs from PARD and the City budget, with potential for private and philanthropic contributions.

In order to track progress and record substantial impact, the Catalyst program should run in three to four-year cycles. Each cycle would start with a thorough understanding of selected parks' existing conditions - current uses, physical amenities, popular events, busy days and seasons, available programs, nearby partners, and a survey of area residents both users and non-users of the park. Based on these initial findings the program would be able to benchmark success and measure progress towards its goals.

It is important to note that this would not simply be a one park pilot, but a program that encompasses several parks to track its effectiveness. Selection could be made by district, by park type, or by other criteria to be defined by PARD.

For example, New York City's four-year Catalyst for Neighborhood Parks cycle began in 2004 by selecting four parks based on their potential for improvement. The program was a public-private partnership that combined City-funded capital improvements with non-profit/privately funded arts, sports, education and community-building programs.