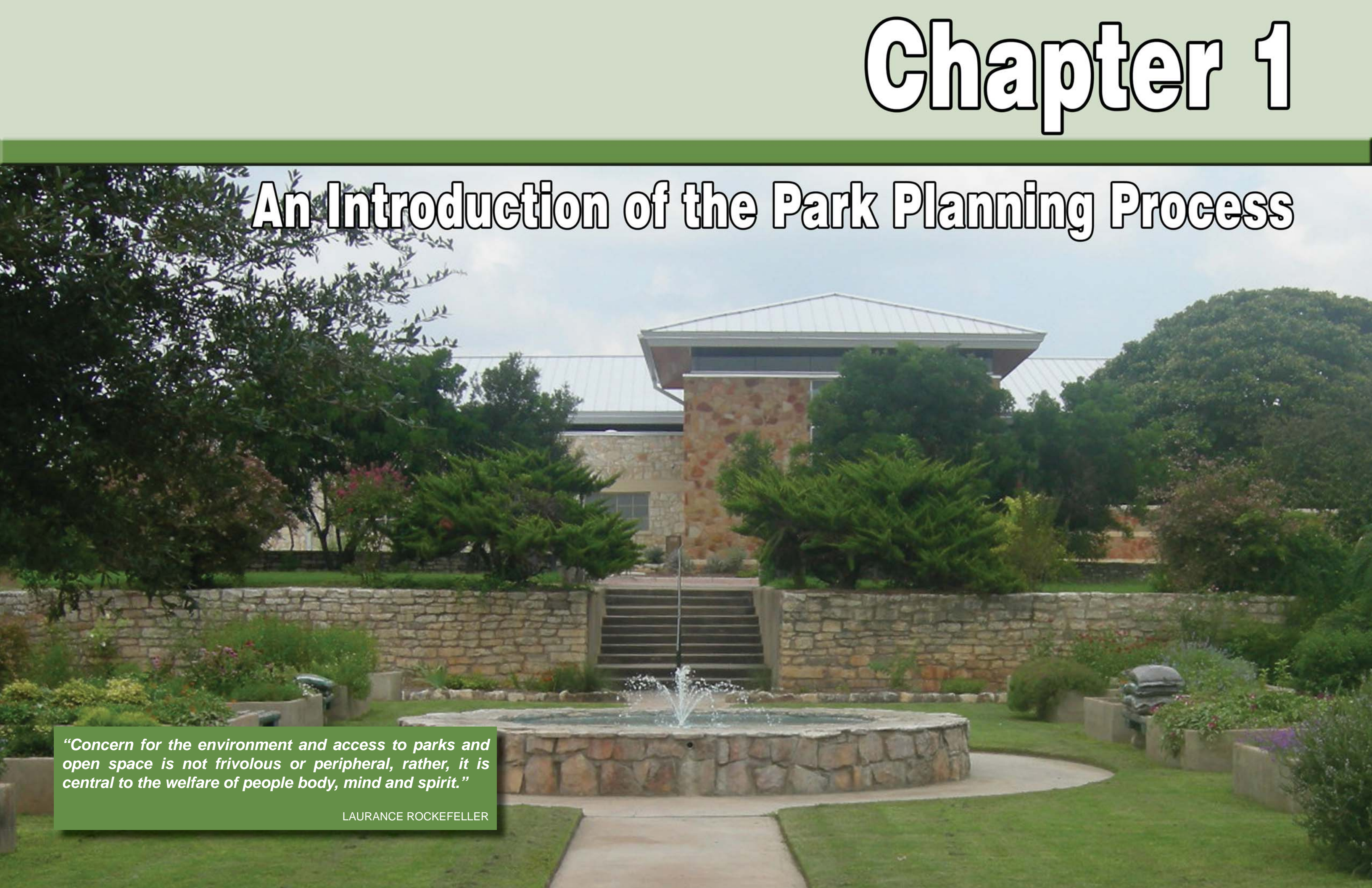


Chapter 1

An Introduction of the Park Planning Process



“Concern for the environment and access to parks and open space is not frivolous or peripheral, rather, it is central to the welfare of people body, mind and spirit.”

LAURANCE ROCKEFELLER

Introduction - The Importance of Parks

The City of Georgetown is a very desirable place to live, work and play. In fact, Georgetown was ranked as the number two city in the nation to live and start a small business by *Fortune Small Business Magazine* in 2008. When residents are asked what it is that they like about Georgetown, it is invariably the beauty of the rivers and the small town feel that brought them here in the first place. The country feel is also an extremely important quality of the City that residents wish to see retained and preserved. In fact, the biggest fear of most residents is uncontrolled and over development causing the destruction of the City's country feel.

Georgetown experiences many pressures to develop. Developers see the opportunity to profit in a place that is attractive to new home buyers which are drawn by easy and close access to Austin, the adjacency of the major Interstate Highway 35, excellent municipal facilities, ample recreational amenities, beautiful historic downtown, and a place that has a sense of being home.

However, it is when such development happens without consideration for the character and need for open space and pedestrian connections, that the quality of life in Georgetown will be compromised for everyone.

From its rural character to its modern recreation facilities, residents of Georgetown should feel proud to be part of a community that treasures and seeks to cultivate the health, safety, welfare and image of the City and its people.

Well developed parks and natural areas are often the first place that visitors view in a community. In fact parks are one of the most visible elements of a city government at work, and can instill a strong sense of pride in the residents of a community. A great park system lets both citizens and visitors know that the leadership of the city is interested in providing the best for its citizens. The leadership in Georgetown has long recognized that recreation plays an important role in the quality of life in Georgetown, and that a strong recreation system provides for a healthier environment, improves well being of children and young adults, and reduces the potential for crime in the City.

The Need for Park Planning in Georgetown

The purpose of this 2008 Parks, Recreation and Trails Master Plan is to update the previous plan prepared in 2001. This updated master plan provides an assessment of Georgetown's parks, recreation and trails system in the year 2008. The park planning process allows the citizens of Georgetown to determine what their preferred park and recreation priorities should be for the next five to ten years.

A Parks, Recreation and Trails Master Plan is exactly what its name indicates. Parks typically refer to land dedicated to outdoor areas programmed for Recreation which refers to both active and passive recreation activities including ball play, jogging, picnicking, etc. Trails refer to pathways used for jogging, biking, walking, etc. and usually follow along a linear corridor or loop within a park. Much of greenbelt corridors for trails are open space lands that can be dedicated for conservation and preservation due to its ecological value, wildlife habitat quality, cultural significance, and its functional role to assist with flood management, etc. Trail corridors also provide opportunities for bird watching and wildflower viewing, and contemplation. Strategically dedicating land as open space can contribute significantly to attaining and preserving a sense of rural character in a city environment.

The 2008 Parks, Recreation and Trails Master Plan aims to:

- Point out opportunities and recommends alternatives for improving the park system.
- Look at the potential growth of the City over the next five to ten years, and assess where additional facilities will be needed as the City grows, and what types of facilities are most needed.
- Guide City staff in acquiring land to meet current and future park and open space needs.
- Prioritize key recommendations of the Parks, Recreation and Trails Master Plan so that the most significant deficiencies are addressed as quickly as possible.
- Guide City staff and City leaders in determining where and how parks funding should be allocated over the next five to ten years.

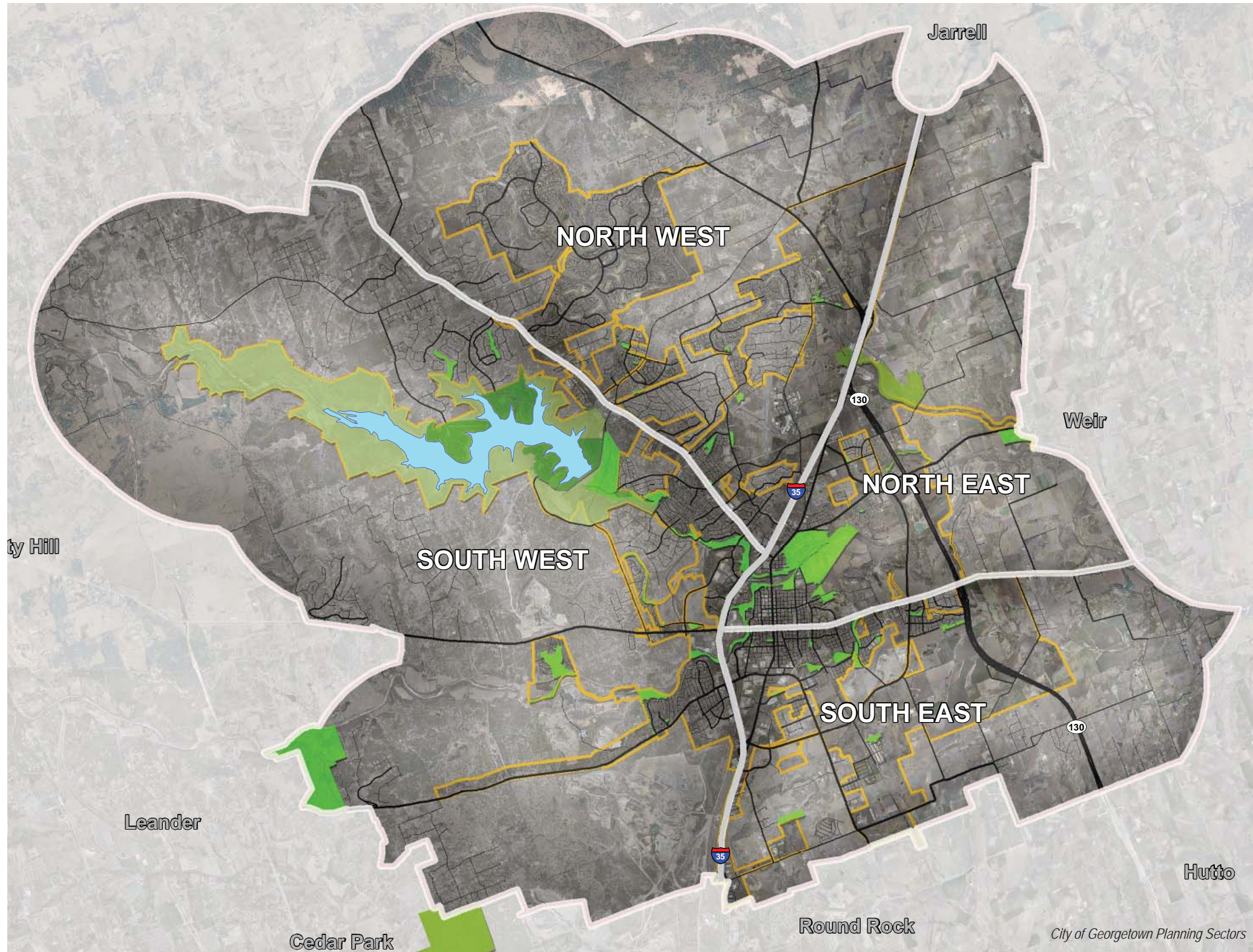
The Parks and Recreation Master Planning Process

The planning process can be expressed by the flow chart shown below. The single most important characteristic of the process is the input of Georgetown citizens, elected officials, and staff. This plan should fully embrace the needs, concerns, and dreams of the residents of Georgetown.

The plan is divided into sections that address existing facilities, key needs, and then lays out recommendations for each type of park facility and major programs for the city. For each recommendation, the plan divides it into two categories:

- The first part addresses those actions that are immediate and that must be undertaken to renovate or better utilize existing facilities. It also addresses actions that meet the needs of today's population.
- The second part of each set of recommendations addresses longer range, visionary actions that can maintain Georgetown's parks position as one of the best systems in the state of Texas.





Jurisdiction and Planning Area

The plan looks at the park needs of the city on a sector by sector basis. Interstate 35 was used as the dividing line between east and west, Williams Drive was the north/south divider on the westside of the city, and Highway 29 was the north/south divider on the eastside. A map illustrating the planning sectors is shown on this page.

The recommendations of this plan will be implemented by the City of Georgetown. This plan is intended to cover all of Georgetown, as well as the areas included in the city's Extra Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ).

“A society grows great when old men plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in.”

Greek Proverb



Other Master Plans In and Around Georgetown

Part of the master planning process for a citywide parks system includes knowing what other recreational providers are planning. Often times the recommendations of other plans can help fulfill a deficiency that is lacking and this can prevent the city from duplicating unnecessary park and recreation facilities. The following pages summarize many different master plans including the previous 2001 Parks and Recreation Master Plan, Georgetown’s 2030 Comprehensive Plan, Williamson County Parks Master Plan, Williamson County Habitat Protection Plan, and the Master Plan for Garey Park.

The 2001 Parks Master Plan

Goals of the previous Parks Master Plan were to:

- Ensure access to recreation facilities and programs for all Georgetown residents regardless of race, gender, age, income, or physical ability.
- Consistently meet or exceed the expectations of our customers through proactive communications and the continuous improvement of our services.
- Promote youth activities that foster healthy decisions and use leadership skills to create a healthy and safe lifestyle.

Williamson County Parks Master Plan

Williamson County completed its first Parks Master Plan in 2001, and has recently updated its Countywide Parks Master Plan. One of the purposes of the Parks Master Plan was to establish what Williamson’s County role would be in providing parks and recreation to residents. The two main goals that came out of the plan were: to create a convenient and coherent park, recreation, and open space system that serves all citizens, that is fiscally responsible, and that complements facilities provided by other entities; and to plan for future park development and for preservation of natural, cultural, and historic resources.

Berry Springs Park and Preserve, located in the northeast sector of Georgetown, was opened in October of 2005. The County park’s main purpose is passive recreation by offering camping, hiking and fishing facilities. Little intensive development has been done to preserve the more natural state of the park.

The City of Georgetown should continue to work close with the County to establish and preserve more natural land. As Georgetown grows, preservation of the creeks, floodplain, and San Gabriel River will be imperative. There is a desire among the residents of Williamson County to preserve these features. Any recommendations by the County and the City of Georgetown should complement each other and work towards preserving the natural features of Williamson County that make Georgetown as attractive as it is.

Williamson County has two species of birds and three species of karst invertebrates that are endangered. In order to ensure habitats for the endangered species and to prevent development conflicts, the County has prepared a Regional Habitat Conservation Plan. As part of the Regional Habitat Conservation Plan, the Williamson County Commissioners Court approved the purchase of 1,011 acres of land between Leander and Liberty Hill that the county plans to use for mostly recreational purposes. The scenic Hill Country ranchland on CR 282 is on the south fork of the San Gabriel River. The land was owned by the heirs of the Williams family that began ranching the land in the 1930s.

“What a desolate place would be a world without a flower! It would be a face without a smile, a feast without a welcome. Are not flowers the stars of the earth, and are not our stars the flowers of heaven.”

A.J. Balfour



Garey Park Master Plan

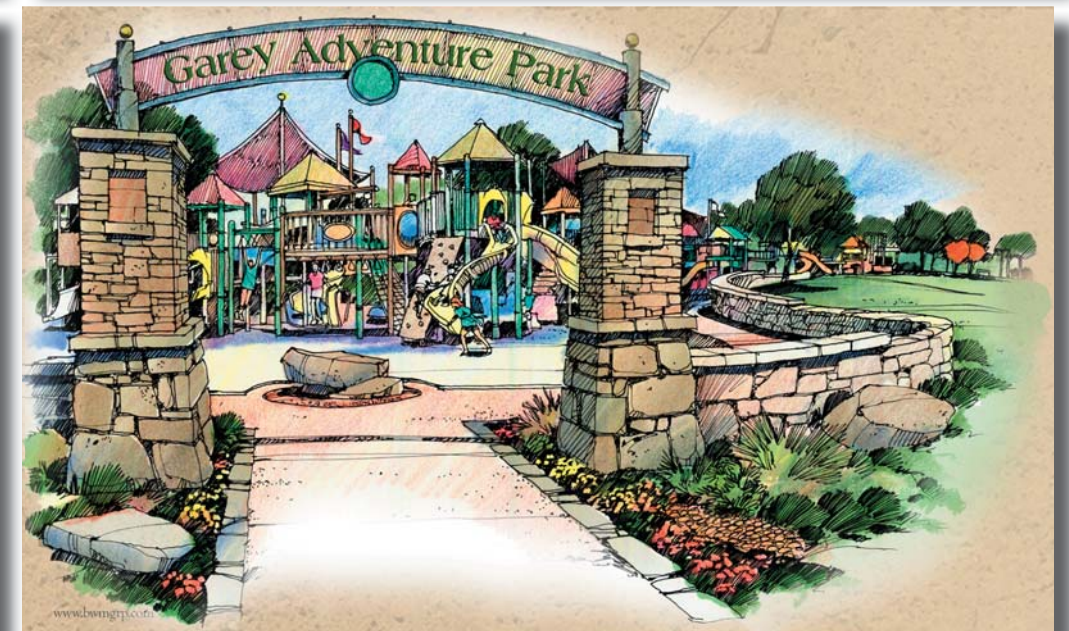
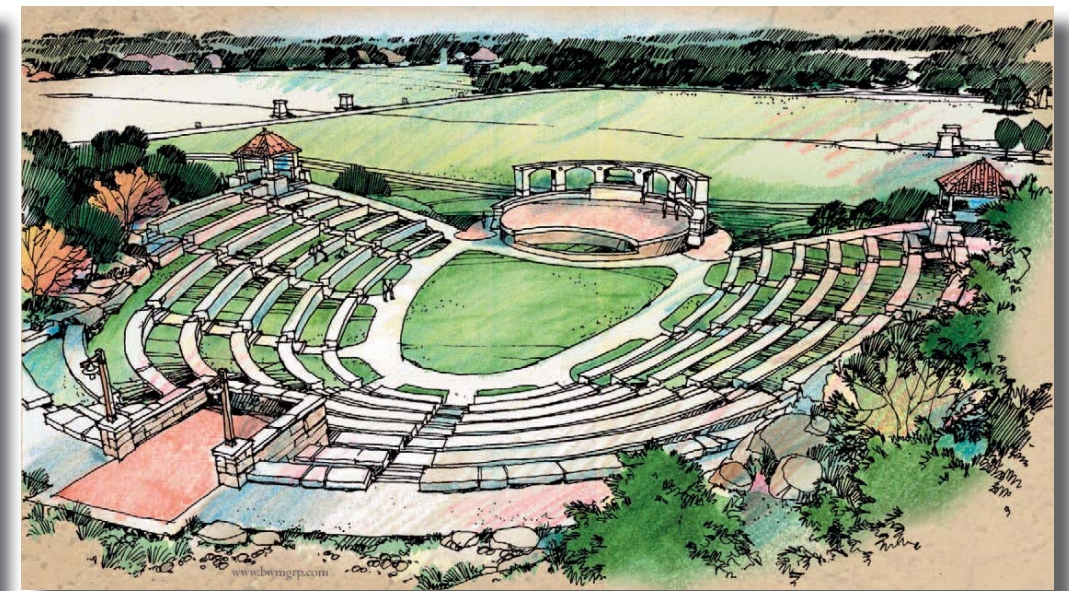
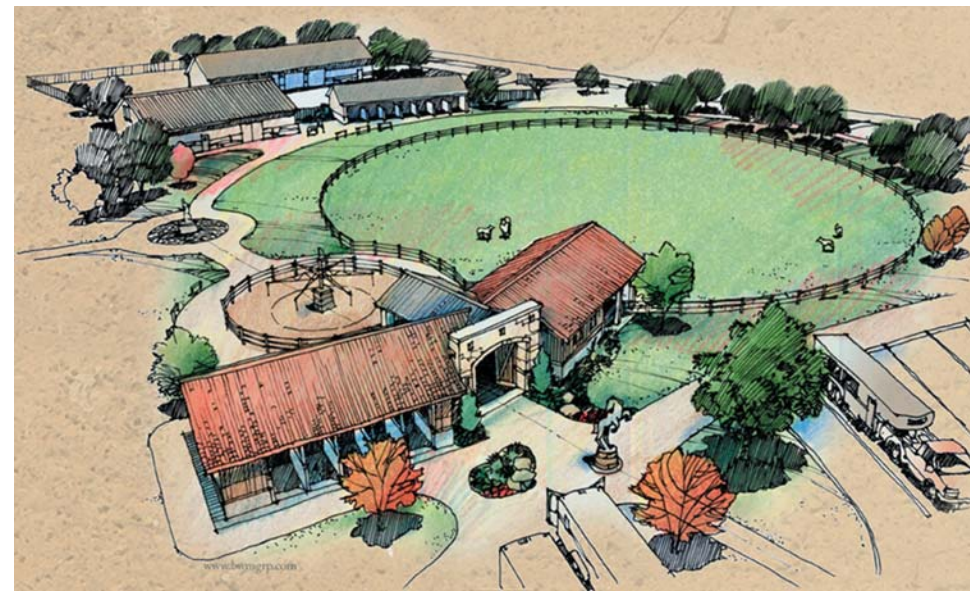
In 2004, local residents of Georgetown, Jack and Cammy Garey, announced they would donate to the City their 525 acre ranch to one day be developed into a city public park. In addition to the land, Mr. and Mrs. Garey are also providing the city with \$5 million to develop the property, provided that the city can match the amount. The property is located in the far southwest portion of the Georgetown's ETJ. It is between I-35 and Highway 183, and the South San Gabriel River flows through it.

In 2005 a master plan was completed for this park that outlines the proposed facilities and usage. Because of its location and the high amount of expected growth in the area, this park will be a welcoming retreat to not only the residents of Georgetown but also the surrounding communities of Williamson County.

Public input during the master planning process included meetings with focus groups, workshops, surveys, and public meetings. Meetings with the park directors within Williamson County were also held, since the impact of a park this large will attract visitors from all over the area.

Currently there are plans for several different and unique facilities within the park. Trails throughout the park as well as connections to other trails in the community are essential. The Garey Family was the owner of an award winning race horse, Heritage of Gold, therefore equestrian trails are proposed as well as an equestrian center to be called the Jack Garey Equestrian Facility. Active recreation is proposed in the form of playscapes, splash pads, open fields for playing, and a dog park. There is to be cabins and camping grounds for overnight stays. In the area of the park being designated the event area, there is to be an amphitheater and festival grounds. Passive recreation includes several gardens in the Cammy Garey Garden Center and an observatory. The house that the couple is currently living in will stay on the property and could be used for meetings, art exhibits, family reunions, weddings, and other recreational and educational purposes.

Once the city formally acquires the land, it is estimated to take 3 to 4 years to have the Grand Opening of the park. Park upgrades and improvements will continue long after the initial opening. The Garey Park Master Plan does not outline which phase of the park should be constructed first. More than likely, the development of Garey Park will be decided by the Parks and Recreation Department, city officials, and budgetary matters.



Conceptual drawings from the Garey Park Master Plan done by BWM Group.

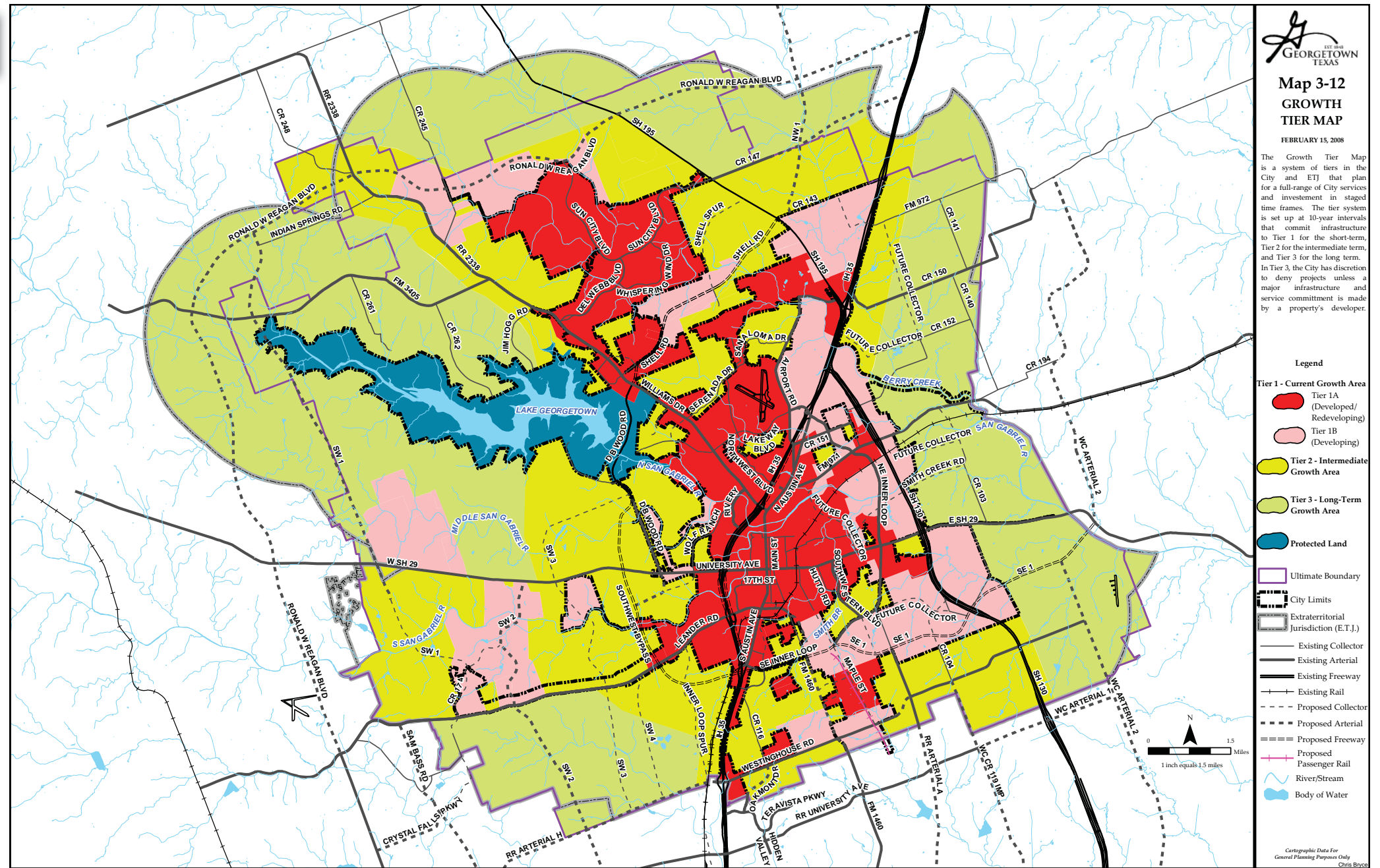


2030 Comprehensive Plan

The 2030 Comprehensive Plan builds on the foundation established by the Century Plan and advances the state-of-the-art planning for the city's future in five important ways. First, the 2030 Comprehensive Plan establishes a definitive Vision Statement reflecting the shared values and aspirations of citizens, which becomes the policy touchstone and the destination for the comprehensive plan. Second, it identifies the tools that should be put in place to better manage the city's growth so as to realize the Vision. These include a tier system to stage the city's growth over time and prevent the consequences of fragmented sprawl, as well as land use categories and development standards to promote more creative and efficient development, such as mixed-use and walkable communities. Third, it depicts on its Future Land Use Map the desired patterns and locations for land use between now and 2030, including the land needed for future employment uses to strengthen the tax base and enable the city to become more economically independent. Fourth, as the city has grown, Georgetown has reached its potential ETJ limits to the east, south and west, creating an ultimate growth boundary in those directions. This allows the City the opportunity to begin approaching planning decisions based on the ultimate build-out, potential redevelopment, and inter-connectivity to adjacent communities without an endless horizontal growth scenario. Finally, it provides a framework for implementation that includes a timetable of actions along with protocols to monitor progress and make amendments thus ensuring that the plan will remain relevant to emerging challenges and changing circumstances.

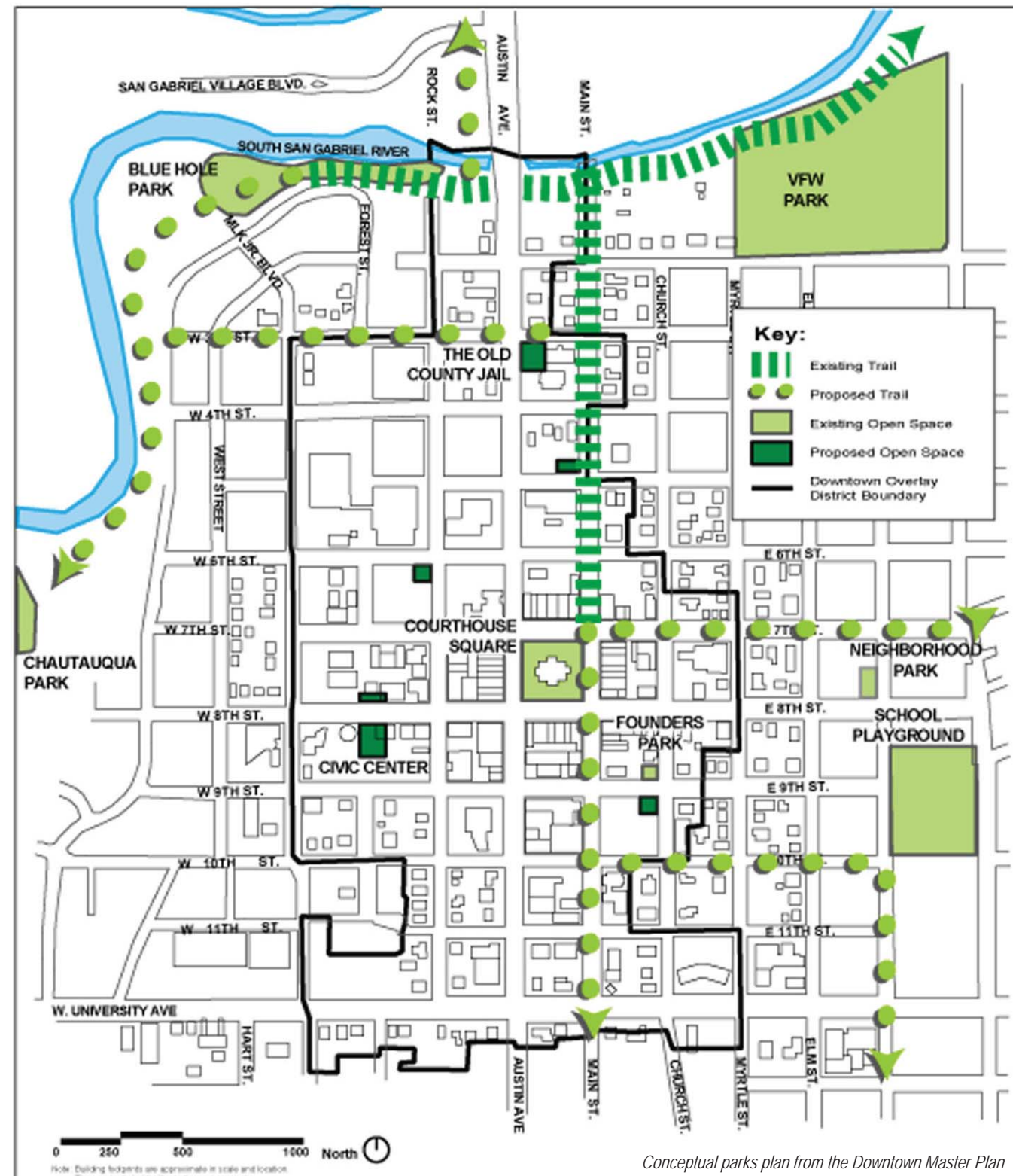
Goals of the 2030 Comprehensive Plan that relate to the Parks Master Plan include:

- Encourage sound, compact quality growth, including pedestrian-friendly development patterns that incorporate mixed uses and densities, conserve resources, and accommodate public transportation, alternative fuel vehicles, biking and walking as convenient substitutes for automobile use.
- Enhance the community's visual character through greater attention to roadway aesthetics, conservation of our tree canopy and green spaces, standards for appropriate signage and enhanced gateway corridors.
- Preserve irreplaceable natural resources such as lakes, rivers and hill country scenery. Protect open space for future generations through strategic acquisition and development of park lands, trails and greenways, partnerships and effective use of incentives for voluntary preservation.
- Expand public recreational use and enjoyment of parks and open space by expanding sports facilities and by enacting a network of greenways and trails, which link major open spaces, recreational areas and rivers and lakes.



Growth tier map from Georgetown's 2030 Comprehensive Plan





Conceptual parks plan from the Downtown Master Plan

Downtown Master Plan

The City of Georgetown's Downtown Master Plan was completed in October of 2004. The plan made several recommendations that also pertain to parks and this plan. One of the main focuses of the Downtown Master Plan was on pedestrian traffic. The plan recommended constructing sidewalks and intersections so that people could be downtown without having to drive through it. The idea is to have people on foot so they could walk past a shop or restaurant then stop in, thus increasing the economically vitality of the downtown. There were also recommendations in the plan to connect downtown to the river system with sidewalks and trails. Once connected to the trail system along the river, people could ideally travel to anywhere in the city by walking or bicycling. Similarly, people could get from anywhere in Georgetown to downtown by using the trails, once the trail system is connected to downtown.

Another goal of the plan was to enhance parks and open space in downtown. The idea was to have open spaces that could accommodate activities, events, markets, and recreation. Many festivals throughout the year currently take place in downtown Georgetown. Having a specific area that could serve as a festival area is needed however it would need to be flexible so that it could be used as something else when a festival is not occurring. The Downtown Master Plan recommends adding small amphitheatres for performances and art installations where appropriate in the downtown. The lawn surrounding the courthouse currently serves as a park like feature. However, to adequately provided parkland to the residents in close proximity of downtown, the plan recommends adding passive green spaces and a playground where it is possible.



Southwestern University Facilities Master Plan

In Texas during the mid 1800s, there were five Methodist Universities. By 1872, the five universities decided it was best to combine their resources and establish one central university. Georgetown was chosen as the site for the new university and Southwestern University opened in the fall of 1873, at the time with the name of Texas University.

By 1875, just two years after opening, the university was granted its Union Charter by the State of Texas and given its current name of Southwestern University. The university offers liberal arts and sciences degrees. It now has close to 3,000 students and is ranked as one of the best national liberal arts colleges.

In 2003, Southwestern University located near downtown Georgetown updated their Facilities Master Plan. One of the main goals in this plan was to create Pedestrian Circulation, meaning it wanted to connect all facilities of the University with pedestrian walkways and promenades. Portions of this plan coordinated with the Parks and Recreation Department’s previous planning efforts so that the trails of the University would be connected to the citywide trails system.

Who Will Implement this Plan?

The implementation of this plan will be lead by the City of Georgetown and the Parks and Recreation Department. However, everyone in Georgetown has a vested interest in ensuring the parks system in the city continues to be one of the best in the state – this includes:

- Primary responsibility – the City of Georgetown
- All governmental entities, including the City of Georgetown, Williamson County, all area school districts, the US Army CORPS of Engineers, and other advisory group entities such as the Parks Board.
- In their own way, all departments within the City of Georgetown, from Planning and Development to even the Police and Fire Departments.
- The business community of Georgetown, including property owners, developers, commercial entities and others.
- All citizens of Georgetown, no matter which part of the City they live in.
- Residents of Williamson County, since the Georgetown park system can offer services to them.

The Parks, Recreation and Trails Master Plan follows the general guidelines for local park master plans established by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD). This document also is intended to meet the requirements of the Department of Interior for the Urban Parks and Recreation Recovery Program, and will serve as a Recovery Action Plan document. This document will be filed with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and allows the City to better qualify for grant opportunities as they become available.

Parks, Recreation & Trails Master Plan Timeframe

- This plan is formulated to address the timeframe from the year 2008 to 2018 but should be updated in five years.

Many of the recommendations of the plan are valid for a period of up to ten years, but should be reassessed periodically. Per planning requirements issued by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Departments, the Parks, Recreation and Trails Master Plan should be updated after a five year period, or before if any major developments occur which significantly alter the recreation needs of the city. In addition, an annual review workshop by the Georgetown Parks Board and city staff will be conducted to review progress over the last year, and bi-annual updates by city staff will also be prepared, or on a more frequent basis if special needs or occurrences require modifications to the plan. In all cases, public involvement through citizen meetings, interviews, and workshops will be included in any updating process.

“Adopt the pace of nature, her secret is patience.”
Ralph Waldo Emerson

