

# Ch 8 Blueways, Greenways and Park Trails Plan

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## 8.0 Introduction

Austinites love blueways, greenways and park trails. With over 115 miles of trails to choose from, there are plenty of opportunities to indulge such passion. On any given day, park trails are enjoyed by walkers, runners, bicyclists, parents pushing baby strollers, and people walking their dogs. Austin is a well known runners' city, and a great destination for mountain biking. It is recognized as one of the most fit cities in the nation. Surveys conducted over the years have identified trail-related activities as the number one recreational activity in the Austin area.

Austin has a variety of park trail types and surfaces that serve the needs of many different trail users. Austin's park trails have received both regional and national attention. The popularity of some of Austin's greenways and park trails receive over 1.5 million visitors per year, are popular with locals and are considered destinations for out-of-town visitors.

## 8.1 Existing Blueways

A blueway is a river or creek that may serve as a wildlife corridor, a means of preserving water quality, and as a paddle trail. Blueways, or Paddle trails provide kayakers, canoeists and outdoor enthusiasts with many reasons to enjoy the outdoors along with excellent fishing and bird watching opportunities.

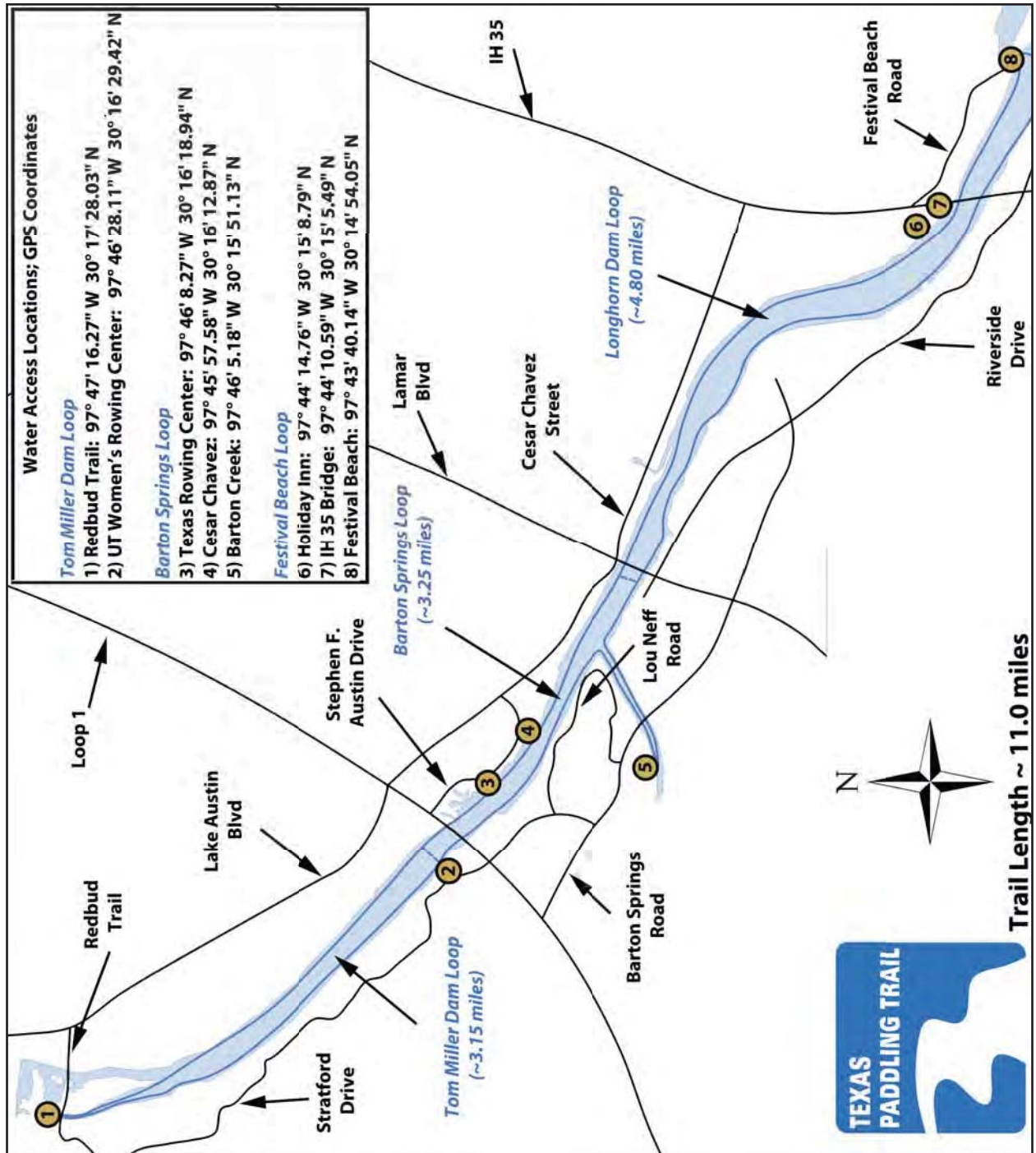
For the purpose of this document, blueways will focus on the existing dedicated Texas Paddling Trail.

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's (TPWD) Texas Paddling Trail program is designed to create access for paddlers on waterways throughout the state. Paddling trails typically have segments that are four to twelve miles long; however they do vary in length. Paddling trails network includes highway signage, maintained put-in and take-out locations, and interpretive information and maps to help visitors get the most out of their day on the water.

TPWD works with other governmental entities, such as river authorities and municipalities, to make the paddling trails a reality.

In May of 2009, the Lady Bird Lake (formerly known as Town Lake) was designated as the 18th Texas Paddling Trail. The Lady Bird Lake Paddling Trail is approximately 11 miles long and features multiple public access sites and recreational opportunities. This Paddling Trail provides an excellent venue for the novice and experienced paddlers alike. This trail was made possible through a partnership with the Texas River School, Austin Parks and Recreation Department, Lower Colorado River Authority and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/fishboat/boat/paddlingtrails/>

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## 8.2 Greenbelts and Greenways Definitions and Standard Guidelines

### Greenways

The term greenways and greenbelt are often used interchangeably. The term greenway is the standard term that will be used in this document to be consistent with National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) guidelines.

A greenway is a natural corridor that often follows a river, creek, ridgeline, valley or other linear open spaces. A greenway can serve multiple functions such as: hike and bike trails, a linear park system, a wildlife corridor, an area for flood control, a means of preserving water quality, and as a bicycle and pedestrian linkage throughout a community.

A greenway can serve as an area for passive recreation such as walking and nature observation. On the other hand, more active pursuits such as mountain biking, trail running, and rock climbing may also be a part of a greenway system.

Although greenways are mostly associated with natural areas, they can also serve highly urbanized areas. In these cases, a greenway is usually a linear park system with developed recreational and alternative transportation facilities, or park nodes along the length of the system.

Greenways are often natural transportation corridors that can link various aspects of the community and the countryside via trail systems. Trail types can range from nature trails to multi-purpose trails to bicycle pathways. They may be used for both recreating and commuting.

When associated with creeks and rivers, greenways also serve to protect water quality and other environmental values. Austin's creeks are protected by the City Code through requirements for 100-year floodplain, Critical Water Quality Zone (CWOZ), and Water Quality Transition Zone (WQTZ) setbacks. Additional guidelines have been published to define Erosion Hazard Zone setbacks. These requirements and setback ensure that new development does not occur too close to waterways. These setbacks ensure that new development does not occur too close to waterways.

Public greenways significantly reinforce and complement these water quality setbacks. The combination of regulatory requirements and the acquisition of public lands in the creek side environment improves water quality (soils and plants filter pollutants); keeps structures and other improvements further from erosion hazards; provides for space and habitat for riparian trees, vegetation, and wildlife essential to creek health; and confers a direct and tangible connection between the community, the land and the waterways.

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## Standard Guidelines

**Greenways:** A greenway corridor should have a minimum width of 50 feet from edge of creek bank, however a greater width is often desirable, especially to allow sufficient width to construct trails and other fixed facilities outside of erosion hazard areas.

## 8.3 Existing Greenways



### Barton Creek

One of the most popular and most valuable creek systems is Barton Creek which covers over 1,700 acres of public parkland. Barton Creek is both high in environmental values, and is well used by local residents and visitors alike. Its proximity to urban Austin makes it readily available for those seeking to mountain bike, rock climb, hike and swim. The Creek flows through a major aquifer recharge area that feeds directly into Barton Springs Pool. Surrounding lands support a variety of plant and animal life, including some that are rare and endangered species.



### Big Walnut Creek

This creek system, extending over 22 miles, is one of the longest in the Austin area north of the Colorado River. It runs from north Austin swinging to the southeast to its confluence with the Colorado River. Numerous parks and public open spaces can be found along the banks of Walnut Creek. The ongoing objective for this creek is to link these public spaces together into a continuous greenway system. There is a great urgency to acquire more open space while land is still available in an undeveloped state.



### Bull Creek

Significant progress has been made over the past decade to preserve the Bull Creek watershed. This area has the region's best endangered species habitat, and therefore has been the site of extensive acquisition of land for the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve system. The main branch of Bull Creek is lined with an almost continuous system of parks and public open spaces. The continuing goal for this area is to close gaps in the system and link it together as an uninterrupted greenway.



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### Onion Creek

This creek, and its tributaries of Marble Creek and Rinard Creek, form a large river-like creek that runs from Blanco County to its confluence with the Colorado River. Onion Creek flows almost continuously and is very scenic. The portion of the Creek that is east of IH-35 is bounded in many areas by Austin city parkland and McKinney Falls State Park. The lower section of the Creek beyond the State Park is targeted for acquisition by Travis County. Onion Creek is anchored at its terminus by Austin's Onion Creek Preserve and Travis County's Southeast Metropolitan Park. Significant portions of the Onion Creek watershed west of IH-35 are now part of the City's water quality protection lands, which are acquired public lands or protected by conservation easements.



### Slaughter Creek

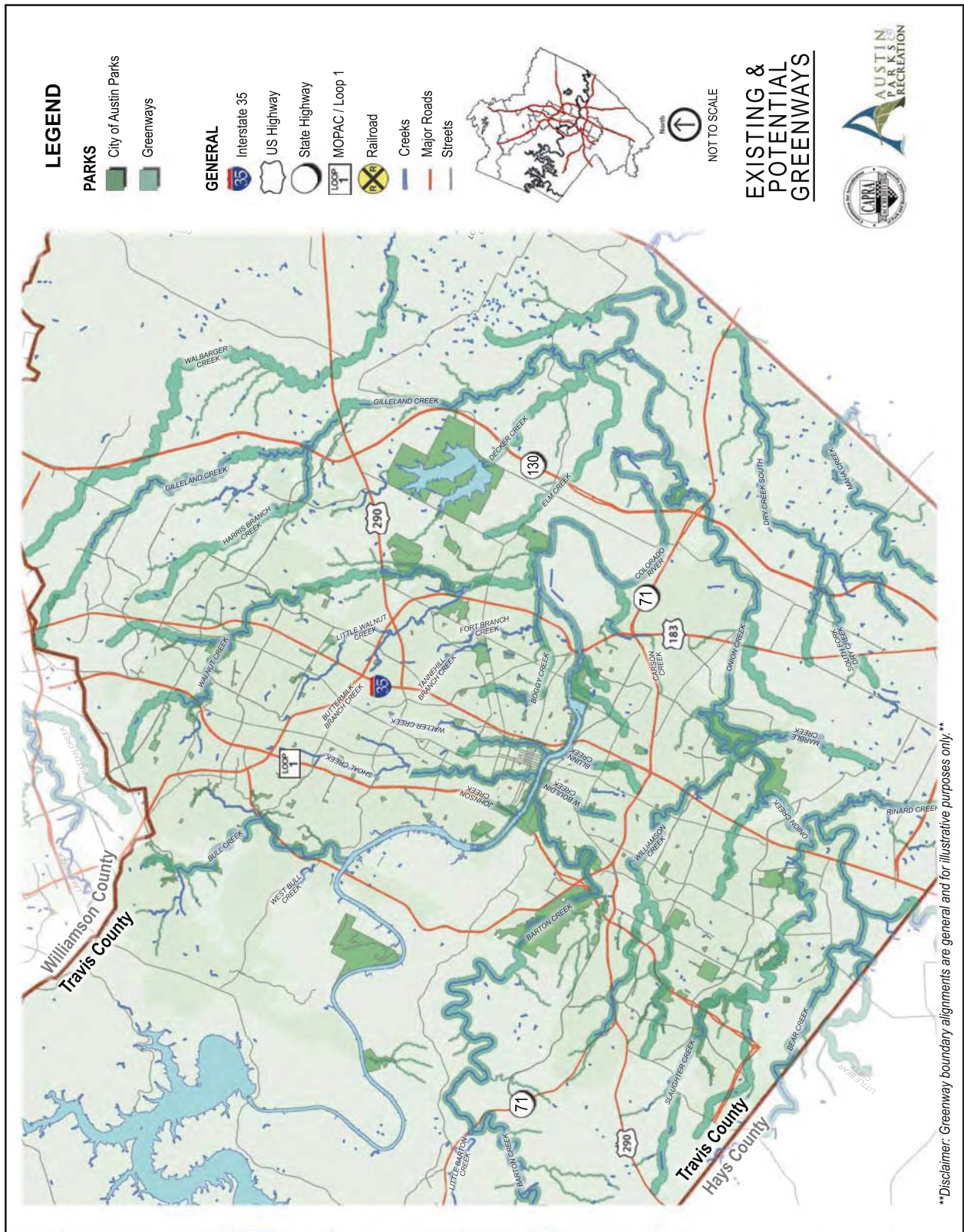
Large tracts of public land have been acquired along Slaughter Creek including Mary Searight Metropolitan Park, and parkland within the developments of Circle C Ranch and Bauerle Ranch. Land has also been acquired within this watershed for the protection of water quality that is managed by the City of Austin. Additional land on the north side of Slaughter Creek has been dedicated by developments between Mary Searight Park and IH-35. Slaughter Creek to the east of IH-35 remains in private ownership.



### Williamson Creek

This creek is a large system which joins Onion Creek at McKinney Falls State Park. Most of the watershed has already been developed and is a part of the urban environment. Several sections of the creek west of IH-35 are City parkland, but private property ownership separates these public lands and prevents a continuous greenway. The longest stretch of public land along Williamson Creek occurs to the east of IH-35. Parks and other public lands run almost continuously from the interstate to Williamson Creek's confluence with Onion Creek.

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### 8.4 Connecting Existing Greenways

**Connection of Existing Greenways and Parkland in Urbanized Watersheds** - Creeks within urbanized areas of Austin are a patchwork of public and private lands. Opportunities exist to acquire more creekside land, and create connections to existing parkland. Some of these areas have been described in the major greenways section. Others opportunities exist along the following creeks: Boggy Creek, Blunn Creek, Country Club Creek, Gaines Creek, and West Bouldin Creek.

**New Major Greenways along Creeks in Developing Watersheds** - Many watersheds within Austin's 5-mile jurisdiction have little current development but are expected to undergo significant impacts from developments in the near future. Securing public land in these areas is a high priority prior to development and as development occurs through parkland dedication when feasible include the following:

**Colorado River (below Lady Bird Lake)** - The Colorado River is one of East Austin's greatest natural assets. This area is within the City's "Desired Development Zone" and is being rapidly developed by residential, commercial, and industrial projects. Much of the land along the Colorado is currently being mined for sand and gravel resources. A recent revision to the City's Land Development Code gives expanded setbacks from the river that will help protect the riparian zone. A coalition of public and private entities has banded together to create a "vision document" for the Colorado River corridor from Austin to Bastrop. This document calls for the acquisition of public lands at strategic intervals along this 60-mile stretch of the river. An expanded greenway system along the Colorado can link many of the other developing watersheds and potential greenways.

**Gilleland Creek System** - Gilleland, and its tributaries of Harris, Decker, and Elm Creeks, compose a large, continuously flowing creek system that runs over 30 miles from Pflugerville to the Colorado River. Gilleland Creek and its tributaries are traversed many times by the newly constructed State Highway 130 within Austin's jurisdiction. This roadway is spawning rapid growth and development in this region. With much of the creek system's riparian corridor still in a natural state, there is a pressing need to capture a continuous greenway system prior to development. The City of Austin, the City of Pflugerville and Travis County all have an interest in this potential greenway system.

#### **Dry Creek East System**

The Dry Creek East System has tributaries that include both North and South Fork Dry Creeks. The main stem of the Creek runs approximately 19 miles within the City of Austin's jurisdiction. This large watershed south of Onion Creek is mostly undeveloped but will likely experience rapid development with the build out of areas around State Highway 130. Lands along the critical water quality zone and 100-year floodplain should be acquired for an important greenway in East Austin.

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## 8.5 Greenways and Park Trails Goals

The goal of the Parks and Recreation Department, along with the Watershed Protection Department, is to continue to improve the health and quality of life for Austin and its visitors by making greenways and trails available to everyone.

## 8.6 Greenways and Park Trails Public Input

During the public input process, many citizens expressed a desire for better connectivity to parks and neighborhoods. Additional comments regarded partnerships with Austin Water Utility and the Watershed Protection Department to maximize the usage of their lands for recreational purposes while preserving the land from development. Existing drainage and utilities easements are currently under review for potential connectivity to parks and neighborhoods. Of course, responsible development of these and all lands must be carefully considered for sustainable trail development.

### Input from PARD's Public Input Meetings on City-Wide Greenways and Park Trails

*(paraphrased & pulled from Ch 6)*

- Continue efforts for extending Walnut Creek Trail
- Additional hike and bike trails throughout Austin
- Walking trail at Springdale Park
- Continue to pursue opportunities to complete the Country Club Creek Trail system
- Connectivity of trails to parks and neighborhoods
- Increase security along trails
- Connect Gaines Creek to Barton Creek
- Pursue funding for planned trail network
- Additional signage on trails
- Increase land acquisition for greenways and trail connectivity
- Increase trail connectivity to mass transit areas
- Work with other COA departments to utilize their land for trail connectivity
- Work with watershed protection to prevent erosion in parks with creeks and greenways
- Work with non-profit groups to help eradicate non-native invasive plants within greenways and restore with native plants
- Work with developers to create trails within Transit Oriented Development (TOD)
- Increase restoration efforts in overused greenways
- Work with water utility and Balcones Canyon Preserves for public access on water quality protection lands for trail connectivity
- Continue trails and greenway land acquisition to close gaps



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### 8.7 Park Trails Definitions, Standard Guidelines and Types

Austin has a variety of park trail types and surfaces that serve the needs of many different trail users. Austin's park trails have received both regional and national attention. The Trail at Lady Bird Lake is listed by the National Park Service as a National Recreation Trail. This popular park trail receives over one million visits per year, many of whom are tourists. Both the Barton Creek Trail and the Walnut Creek Trail are very popular with locals, and are considered destinations for out-of-town visitors. In 2004, Austin was selected as the site for the 17th National Trails Symposium.



#### Various Trail Definitions and Standard Guidelines

- International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA): Non-profit organization that developed construction techniques for sustainable, natural surface trails
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA): Accessibility guidelines for public facilities
- American Association of State and Transportation Officials (AASHTO): Federal guidelines for the development of bicycle facilities
- Multi-use Trail: Two or more different users on the same, undivided trail. For example, trail users could include pedestrians, bicyclists, skaters, equestrians, etc
- Single Track Trail: A narrow trail designed for a certain challenge and experience. Usually associated with mountain bike riding
- Tread: Trail surface - the portion of the trail corridor on which users travel
- Trail Corridor: In addition to the width of the trail tread, there is a trail corridor that acts as a cleared "envelope" around the tread

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## Park Trail Standard Guidelines

A **park trail** provides a wide variety of trail types located within parks, greenways, and natural resource areas. Located within a mostly natural setting, park trails provide recreational opportunities and may also provide connectivity to other green spaces, neighborhoods, urban development, and alternative transportation modes outside of the park.

### Park Trail Size:

#### Recommended Multi-use Trail Tread Widths (non-motorized)

All users except equestrian:	All users including equestrian:
Urban – 12' wide	Urban – 16'
Suburban – 10' wide	Suburban – 12' wide
Rural – 6' to 8' wide	Rural – 10' wide

#### Recommended Single-use Trail Tread Widths

Pedestrian – 4' to 6' wide
Mountain Bikes (single track) – 2' to 3' wide
Equestrian – 6' wide
Motorcycle – (single track, trails-type course) – 4' minimum width

**Park Trail Corridor** - should be a cleared area level with the trail, extending 2' from each side of the trail tread edge. An area of selective woodland thinning should extend 20' (single use) to 26' (multi-use) from the centerline of the trail. Clearing height should extend 8' (pedestrians) to 10' (bicycles) to 12' (horses) above the trail.

### Park Trail Types:

**Improved Surface Trail** - consists of high-use trails located mainly within urban and suburban areas. A typical tread width ranges from 10' to 16', depending on anticipated user volume. Tread surface would be granite gravel, concrete, asphalt\* or other added material including porous pavement systems. These trails could have bridges, and typically have amenities such as information kiosks, benches, drinking fountains, rest rooms, exercise facilities, etc at trail heads. Improved surface trails where possible will be built to conform to AASHTO and/or ADA standards. (*\*asphalt is discouraged for trails near waterways due to negative water quality impacts.*)

**Natural Surface Trail** - are located mainly in greenways or natural resource areas. A typical trail width ranges from 2' to 10' depending on specific uses. Trail tread would be existing natural soil that has been cleared, grubbed of rocks and roots, leveled and compacted. These trails would have limited amenities such as way finding. Natural surface trails would be built to conform to IMBA standards.

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### Special Use Park Trails

**Equestrian Trail** – A natural surface trail developed for horseback riding, usually located in larger parks or greenways. Trail length should be extensive in order to warrant transporting a horse and trailer to the site. Typical amenities include a hitching post, water, and trailer parking area.

**Motorcycle Trail** – A natural surface trail designed for technical use by motorcycle users riding at a slow speed over challenging surfaces. Trail use is one-way directional use only. The trail would be a closed loop with a primary trailhead parking and rules posting at the entrance. Trail amenities are limited.

**Mountain Bike Trail** – Usually a single track, natural surface trail that is designed to facilitate and challenge a range of riding skills for mountain bike riders. Trails are built to IMBA standards that follow natural land contours and minimize erosion potential. These trails should have a primary trailhead with parking and rules posting at the main entrance. Mountain bike trails are typically closed during wet periods in order to reduce trail damage. Trail amenities are limited.

**Nature Trail** – A natural surface trail designed to emphasize harmony with the natural environment. Trail use is by pedestrians only. Amenities would include wildlife viewing areas, scenic overlooks, educational signage, etc. Trail access may be limited by special conditions such as bird nesting seasons or other environmental considerations.





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### Other Modes

**Connector Trails** - Provide connectivity and safe travel to parks and throughout the community; and may follow various easements such as utility corridors, drainage ways, etc. Connector trails may use non-park public land or private land by means of a trail easement for the purpose of public use. One advantage of the dedication of a trail easement for public access in Texas is that State law protects private landowners from liability in such cases. The primary function of these trails is transportation, although recreational values are also present. These trails have standards similar to AASHTO (American Association of State Highway of Transportation Officials) and depending on the specific situation, may intersect with park trails in order to promote continuous travel ways.

**Shared Use Path** - A multi-use trail physically separated from motorized vehicular traffic by an open space or barrier and within the highway right-of-way or within an independent right-of-way. Shared use paths may also be used by pedestrians, skaters, wheelchair users, joggers/runners and other non-motorized users.

**Bike Lane** - A portion of a roadway which has been designated by striping, signing and pavement markings for the preferential or exclusive use of bicyclists. The primary use of a Bike Lane is bicycle commuting within the community.

**Bike Route** - A system of bikeways designated by the jurisdiction having authority with appropriate directional and informational route markers, with or without specific bicycle route numbers. Bike routes should establish a continuous routing, but may be a combination of any and all types of bikeways.

**Bikeways** - A generic term for any road, street, path or way which in some manner is specifically designated for bicycle travel, regardless of whether such facilities are designated for the exclusive use of bicycles or are to be shared with other transportation modes. These off-street modes are built to AASHTO standards. User speeds may be in the range of 10 to 15 mph, and thus may not be appropriate for pedestrian activity.

*Note: It is Austin Parks and Recreation policy that motorized vehicles (excluding wheelchairs) are prohibited on trails. This includes bicycles powered by an electric motor.*

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### 8.8 Existing Major Park Trails

Over 115 miles of park trails with various types of surfaces are within Austin's parks, preserves and greenways. The core of Austin's park trail system is the downtown "hub and spoke" system that provides an inter-connected web of approximately 30 miles of park trails.



\*The "hub" is the 10-mile **Trail at Lady Bird Lake** park trail that loops through central Austin. The "spoke" trails follow the various creeks that feed into the Lake. These trails that follow creeks include Shoal, Waller, Blunn, West Bouldin, Barton, and Johnson. This trail system also connects the two major "bookend" parks – Zilker Park and Roy G. Guerrero Colorado River Park. These trails provide a vital source of recreation and travel opportunities for central Austin.



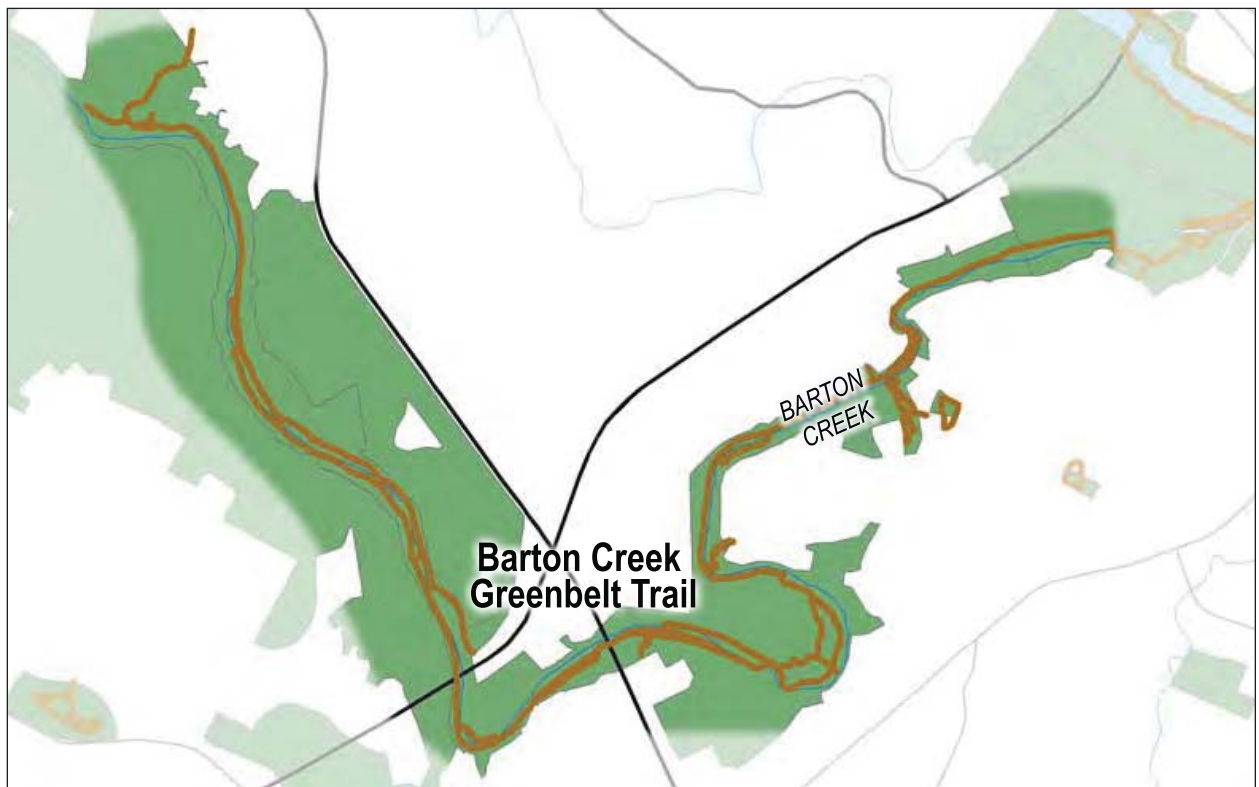
The National Trails System Act of 1968 authorized creation of a national trails system comprised of National Recreation Trails (NRT), National Scenic Trails, and National Historic Trails. NRTs are designated by the Secretary of Interior or Secretary of Agriculture recognizing trails of local, regional, and national significance.

Upon designation, NRTs become part of the National Trails System of pathways, trails, greenways and other routes that invite us to enjoy the great outdoors. The Trail at Lady Bird Lake, formerly known as Town Lake Hike & Bike Trail, was designated as a National Recreation Trail on December 1, 1975.

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The rugged 7.5-mile **Barton Creek Greenbelt Trail** is regionally known as a dynamic mountain bike trail. Additionally, trail running is becoming more popular on this trail. When water is running in the creek, the trail is often crowded with hikers seeking their favorite swimming holes.





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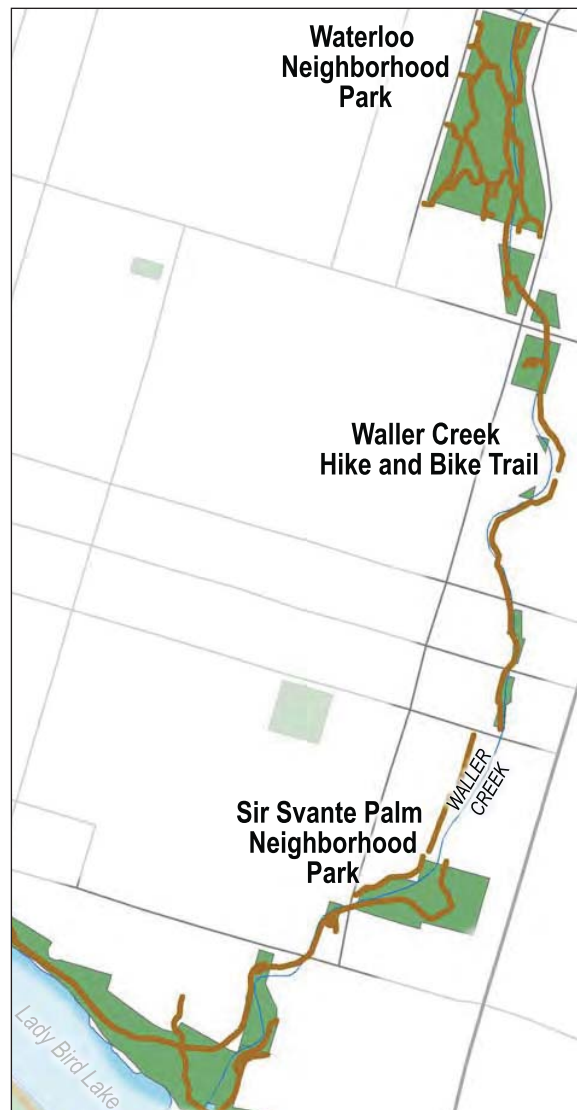
The 4.62-mile **Shoal Creek Hike and Bike Park Trail** is truly a multi-use trail that often finds commuters, hikers, dog walkers, and disc golf players sharing the same trail. The lower part of the trail is increasingly important for access to newly developing downtown residential and entertainment centers.



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The hard surfaced **Waller Creek Hike and Bike Park Trail**, although only 2.46 miles in length, provides a link between the University of Texas on the north and Lady Bird Lake on the south. This trail is likely to undergo significant improvements in the future as part of urban redevelopment plans for the Waller Creek district.



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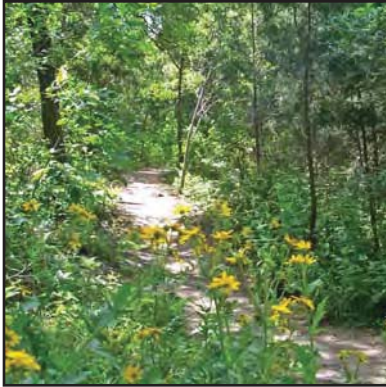


The concrete surface of the **Johnson Creek Hike and Bike Park Trail** is popular with bicycle commuters. The Blunn Creek and West Bouldin Creek Trails await a final linkage to the Trail at Lady Bird Lake in order to be fully connected.





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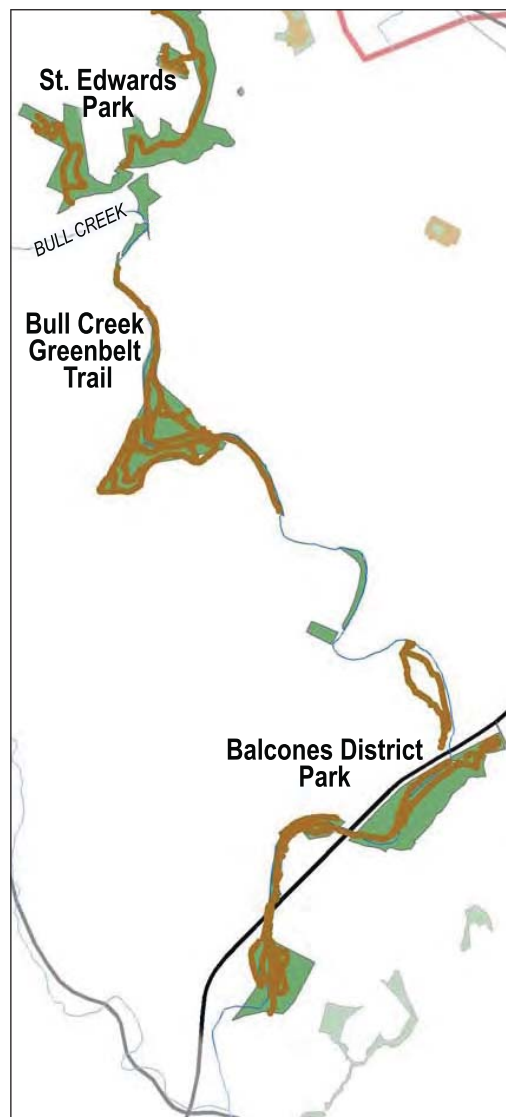
The park trails at **Walnut Creek Metropolitan Park** are a regional destination for mountain bikers. The 15.81 mile trail system has various segments to challenge all levels of riders. These trail segments have names such as Windy Loop, Waterfall Crossing, Rock Bridge, and many others. These recreational trails will soon be connected to the Northern Walnut Creek Trail that will run east and west from the park to Balcones District Park.



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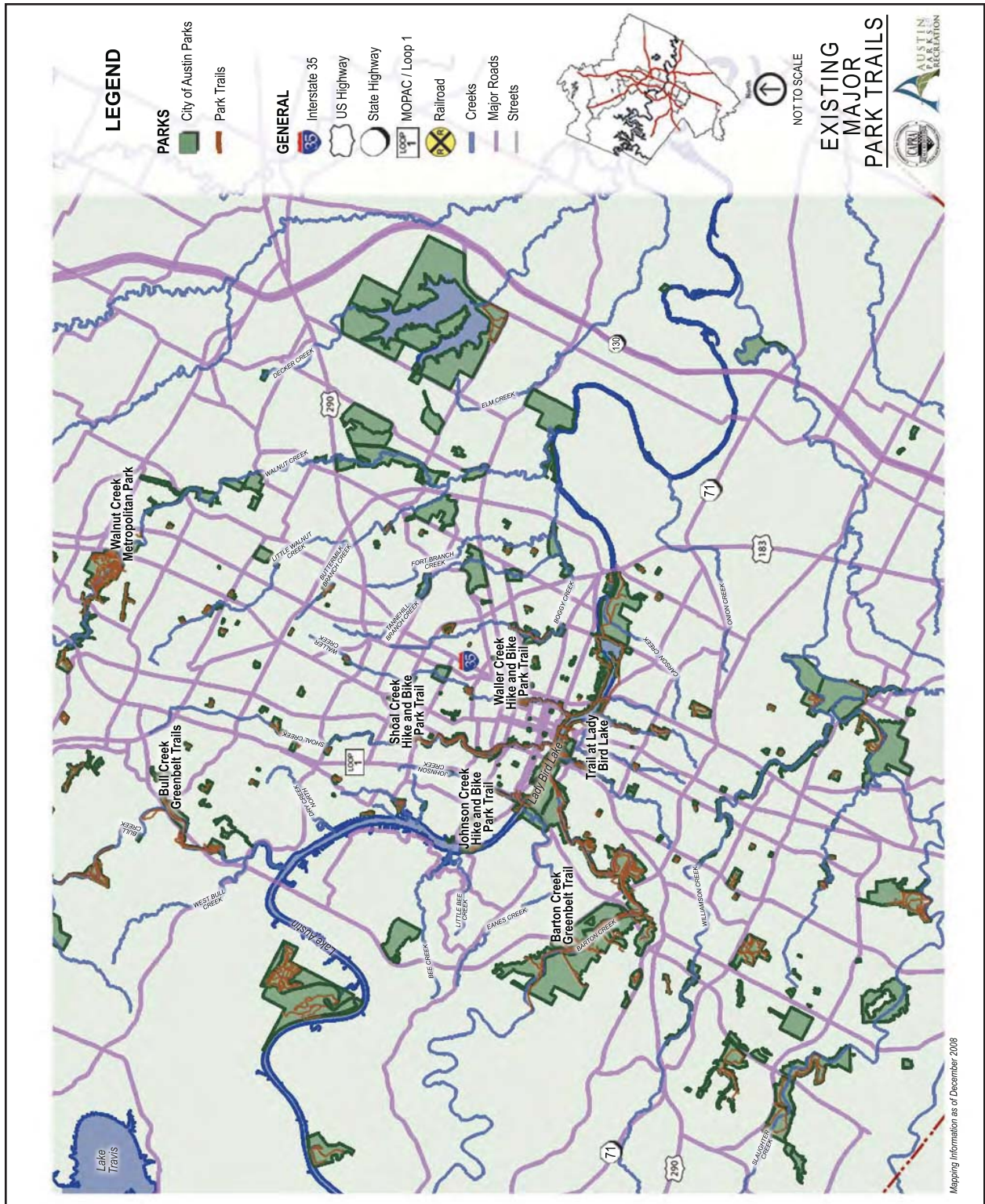


The Upper and Lower **Bull Creek Greenbelt Trails** cover over six miles of scenic urban and rural areas of west Austin. These trails connect to another three miles of trails at St. Edwards Park.





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## 8.9 Park Trails Stakeholder Groups

Currently there are several stakeholder groups assisting with the various phases of trail development such as planning, implementation and maintenance of trails.

### **Austin Parks Foundation (APF)**

Austin Parks Foundation is a non-profit organization committed to building partnerships, advocacy and action for parks.

### **Austin Ridge Riders**

Austin Ridge Riders is a non-profit, membership organization that promotes awareness of safe and environmentally conscientious off-road bicycling. The Ridge Riders is an affiliated club of the International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA), the National Off-Road Bicycling Association (NORBA), the Texas Mountain Bike Racing Association, and a member of the Texas Bicycle Coalition.

### **Hill Country Conservancy**

Hill Country Conservancy is a nonprofit land trust committed to preserving the natural beauty and open spaces of the Texas Hill Country. The Hill Country Conservancy works to ensure a healthy environment and economy in the Barton Springs Edwards Aquifer region by preserving natural areas, scenic vistas, rivers and streams, working farms and ranches and the rural heritage of the Texas Hill Country for generations to come.

### **Oak Hill Trails Association (OHTA)**

Oak Hill Trail Association is an association of residents of the Oak Hill area on the southwest flank of Austin, Texas. OHTA was formed in March 2007 to nurture and provide neighborhood preferences for pedestrian hike and bike trails in the Oak Hill area.

### **Southeast Austin Trails and Greenways (SEATAG)**

The Southeast Austin Trails and Greenways alliance is an all volunteer group of citizens working to promote trails and greenways in southeast Austin. The group has focused on the creation of the Country Club Creek Trail by obtaining a recreational easement on private property and will continue efforts to obtain similar easements along the creek to complete the trail. The trail is proposed to run from R. G. Guerro Colorado River Park to Mabel Davis Park.

### **The Trail Foundation**

The Trail Foundation (formerly known as the Town Lake Trail Foundation) was formed to continue the work of the Citizen's Committee and ensure the Trail at Lady Bird Lake (the Trail) remains one of Austin's outstanding places. The Trail Foundation implements careful improvements to the Trail's infrastructure and environment, through devoted efforts to protect and enhance the Trail, while honoring the original vision of the Trail's founders. The Trail Foundation works in cooperation with the Austin Parks and Recreation Department to close the gap between what the government provides and what the trail requires.

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### Enhancement Plan for the Trail at Lady Bird Lake

The intent for The Enhancement Plan for the Trail at Lady Bird Lake was to compliment the recommendations set forth within the Lady Bird Lake Vision Plan; which was prepared by RVI Planning & Landscape Architecture for the Trail Foundation in 2008.

The Lady Bird Lake Vision Plan established a set of goals and objectives for the Lady Bird Lake corridor (formerly known as Town Lake corridor) established a broad framework for future enhancement projects the Enhancement Plan identified to a greater level of detail with a series of park improvements. When constructed, these specific projects will help the City of Austin and its residents realize the goals set forth in the Lady Bird Lake Vision Plan and as stated within prior studies, reports, and master plan documents that have focused on this parkland.

The Lady Bird Lake Vision Plan draws upon a number of previous planning efforts, including but not limited to:

- Town Lake Corridor Study, 1985
- Town Lake Comprehensive Plan, 1987
- Austin Town Lake Corridor Study, 2000
- Town Lake User Survey, 2003

To further assess the current wants and needs of park users, a Stakeholders Workshop was conducted by the Vision Plan team.

The Enhancement Plan for the Trail at Lady Bird Lake itemizes, prioritizes, and estimates the costs associated with the specific enhancements recommended in the lady Bird Lake Vision Plan. In general, these enhancements include:

- Trailhead improvements, including restrooms and fitness stations
- Expanded trail opportunity through development of parallel routes and by remedying existing trail congestion points.
- Complete trail projects that fill existing gaps such as the proposed boardwalk
- Improved connectivity to spoke trails and neighborhoods
- Improved directional, informational and interpretive signage
- Integrated neighborhood and pocket park spaces along linear trail corridor
- Site enhancement to under-utilized spaces beneath bridges
- Landscape improvements including additional tree planting for shade
- Enhanced access to water activities such as fishing and rowing
- Vegetation management for improved visibility to lake
- Unify and supplement site furnishings such as drinking fountains, benches, trash receptacles and picnic tables.

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### 8.10 Trails Feasibility Studies *(directed by council resolution)*

#### **Country Club Creek**

The concept plan for the proposed Country Club Creek Trail is to connect the Roy G. Guerro Colorado River Metropolitan Park to Mabel Davis District Park. The project would utilize the creek corridor, private property trail easements, City sidewalks and utility easements to complete the trail by means of a multi-modal system.

#### **Bull Creek**

The Upper and Lower Bull Creek Greenway systems have an extensive variety of trails throughout, but gaps exist that prevent a continuous trail. The proposal is to work with private landowners to secure trail easements that would allow trail segments to be connected.

### 8.11 Newly Funded Park Trails

Current trail projects include over \$18 million in funding from grants and the City's Capital Improvement Program (CIP). Over 14 miles of new major trails are funded for design and construction along with improvements to existing trails; which are described below:

#### **Northern Walnut Creek Trail, Phases I & II**

The first phases of the Walnut Creek trail begin at Balcones District Park and will follow the Walnut Creek Greenbelt to connect to the Walnut Creek Metropolitan Park. Phase II will extend the trail on to IH-35. This trail will be a commuter style, multi-purpose, 10'-wide concrete trail that runs almost 5 miles. This project will connect major parks, the Austin Community College Northridge Campus, a major medical center, and the Central Texas Girl Scout headquarters.

#### **Southern Walnut Creek Trail**

This trail begins at Govalle Park and follows the Boggy Creek and Walnut Creek Greenbelts approximately 7 miles to its destinations at the Gus Garcia Middle School and the future Walnut Creek Sports Fields. The trail will be extended another 2 miles to the Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park under a separate project by the Bicycle and Pedestrian program of the Public Works Department. The 10'-wide multi-purpose trail will also be connected via on-street bike lanes to the Lance Armstrong Bikeway.

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### **The Boardwalk Trail on Lady Bird Lake – Design and Engineering**

The Trail at Lady Bird Lake has a gap on the south side of the lake where the 10-mile loop trail is interrupted by private properties. This gap forces trail users to exit onto sidewalks on City streets and across IH-35 in order to reach the east side of the lake where the trail continues. In order to close this gap, a 1.25 mile “boardwalk” is proposed to be placed over lake to continue the trail system. Based on support from The Trail Foundation and City resources, a design and engineering plan is being developed for the boardwalk trail. No funding for construction is available at this time.

### **Circle C at Slaughter Creek Metropolitan Park to Veloway Extension**

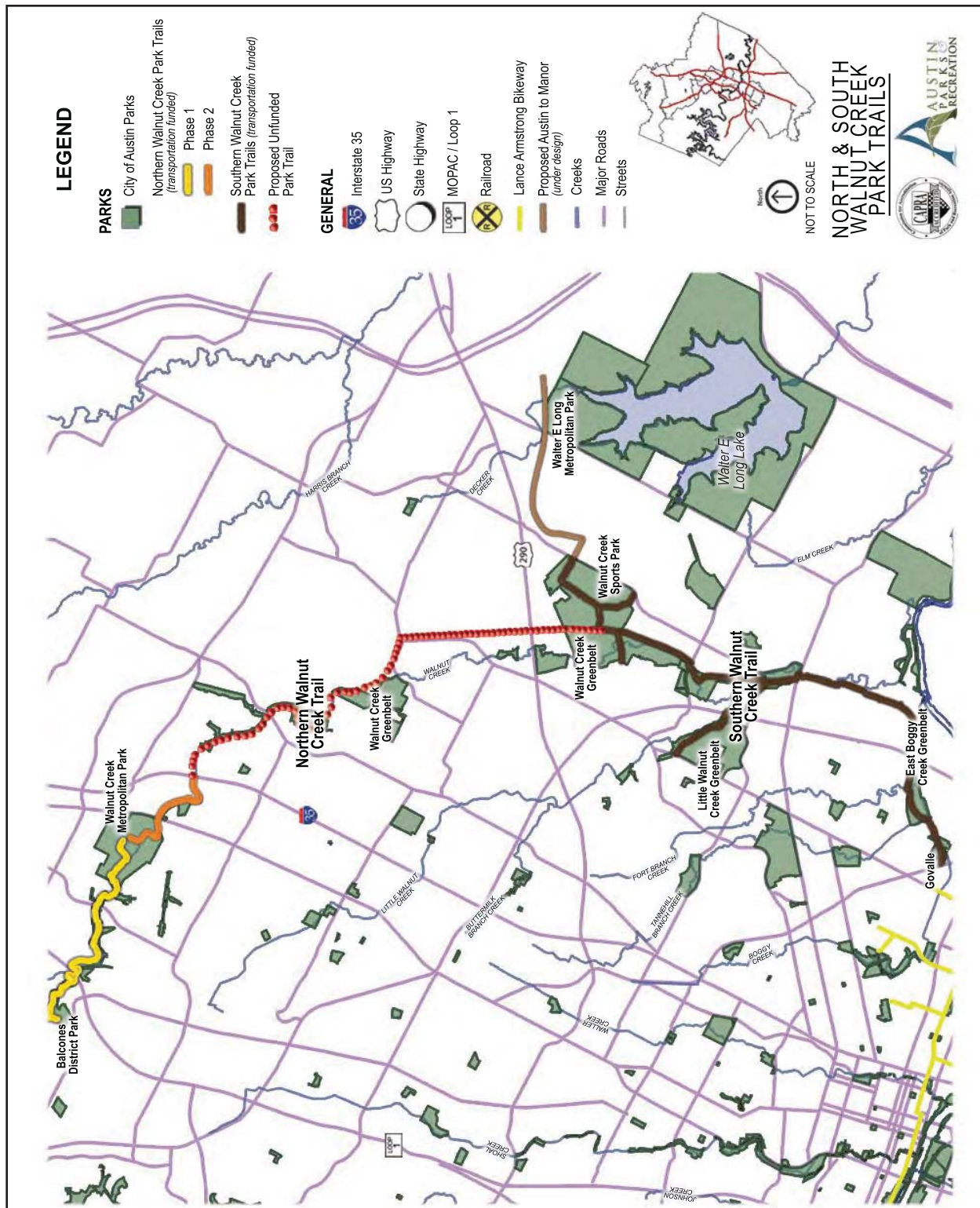
The existing trail within the Circle C Park will be extended to allow trail users and residents to have access to the Veloway without vehicular travel. The new trail will extend to the west, crossing under the MoPac bridge and travel on to the parking lot at the Veloway trailhead.

### **Various Improvements to Existing Park Trails**

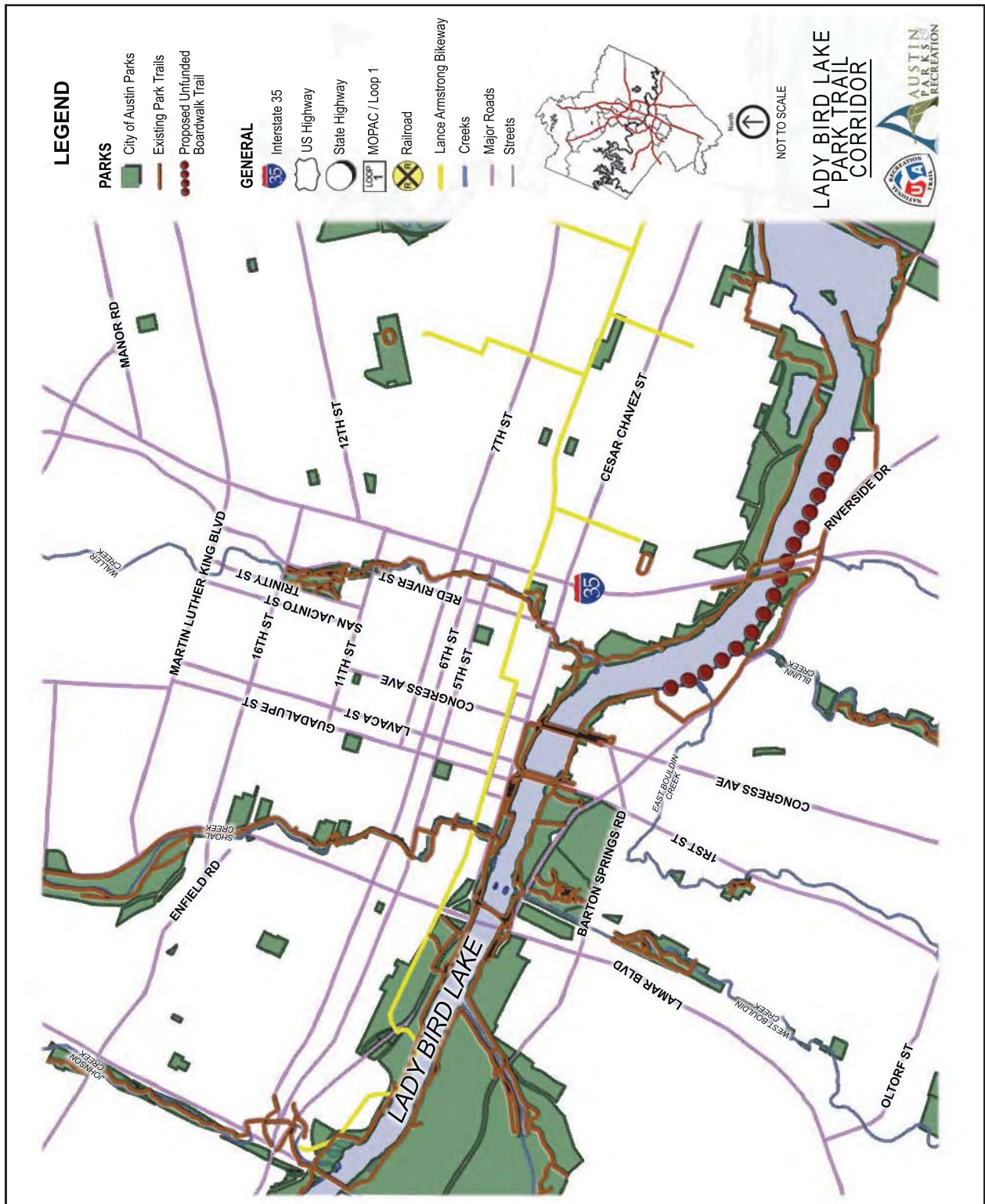
In the 2006 Capital Improvements Program (CIP), funding was allocated for improvements to existing trails throughout the city. Much of the work will consist of drainage improvements and surface renovation. Work is currently underway on the Trail at Lady Bird Lake, the Shoal Creek Trail, and various neighborhood trails.



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### 8.12 Proposed Park Trails (unfunded)

Because of the nature of the physiographic makeup many river and creek systems crisscross the landscape. These water corridors make natural trail corridors. Therefore, many proposed trails are associated with waterways. There are exceptions in more heavily urbanized parts of the city where trails must follow other linear pathways to get from destination to destination. These trails will be of various types, sizes and materials, depending on each unique situation.

#### Near term trail projects (requires no additional land acquisition)

##### **Little Walnut Creek to the Southern Walnut Creek**

This trail would connect a 200 acre open space area and a densely developed neighborhood to a YMCA facility, golf course and the Southern Walnut Creek Trail.

##### **Bauerle Ranch**

This 300 acre park is well suited with the development of a large loop trail system. The Bauerle Ranch neighborhood has formed a trails committee to facilitate this trail development.

##### **Blunn Creek from Little Stacy Neighborhood Park to the Trail at Lady Bird Lake**

This trail connection would join a park and inner-city neighborhood to Lady Bird Lake, and the future boardwalk trail. This connection would facilitate pedestrian access to the urban core of Austin.

##### **Dick Nichols District Park to the Hampton Library at Oak Hill**

A short trail across city-owned land would connect two major public facilities. The Oak Hill neighborhood trails committee has identified this connection as a high priority.

##### **Slaughter Creek from Mary Searight Metropolitan Park to the Southpark Meadows Development (at IH-35)**

Dedicated parkland along the north bank of Slaughter Creek offers connectivity between newly created residential and commercial areas to a metropolitan park. This area is very high in scenic and environmental values.

##### **Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park**

Austin's largest park has over 2000 acres of land surrounding a 1200 acre lake, but lacks a comprehensive trail plan. Community interest in developing trails at this park is high. The trail system will be planned in conjunction with an overall park master plan.



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### **Williamson Creek (east of IH-35) to Onion Creek to McKinney Falls State Park**

This greenway system has extensive linkage to two large creeks, the Onion Creek Soccer Complex, the future Onion Creek Metropolitan Park, and McKinney Falls State Park. This trail system would be one of the most extensive in an area of southeast Austin that is growing rapidly.

### **Southern Walnut Creek Trail to John Trevino Jr. at Morrison Ranch Metropolitan Park**

The Southern Walnut Creek trail would be connected to a 300 acre metropolitan park through City-owned greenbelt and public land owned by Travis County. This connecting trail should be developed in conjunction with the master planning and phase I development of the metropolitan park.

### **Long Term Projects (requires land acquisition)**

#### **The Boardwalk Trail at Lady Bird Lake**

The construction of the boardwalk is a high priority by the community. The existing trail around Lady Bird Lake receives over 1.5 million visits per year and is a major contributor to the emerging development of downtown Austin into a vibrant urban destination.

#### **Central Walnut Creek from IH-35 to Pioneer Farms**

This trail would extend the Northern Walnut Creek trail eastward to the Copperfield neighborhood, and then on to parkland near Pioneer Farms. This trail would link several neighborhoods to numerous existing and planned parks.

#### **Central Walnut Creek from Pioneer Farm to the Southern Walnut Creek Trail**

The proposed trail would be the final link in the planned Walnut Creek system. The combining of the northern, central and southern parts of this trail system would yield Austin's longest continuous trail that would run from north Austin eastward to Walnut Creek's confluence with the Colorado River.

#### **Colorado River (north side) from Longhorn Dam to Hornsby Bend**

The extension of Austin's premier trail system on Lady Bird Lake eastward along the free flowing Colorado River below the Longhorn Dam is a priority for the community. This trail would connect to the Southern Walnut Creek Trail, the John Trevino Jr. at Morrison Ranch Metro Park, and the City's Center for Environmental Research at Hornsby Bend.

#### **Colorado River (south side) from Longhorn Dam to the mouth of Onion Creek**

The trails of the Roy G. Guerro Colorado River Metropolitan Park would extend eastward along the Colorado towards the Austin's Onion Creek Preserve and Travis County's Southeast Metro Park. A trail connection could be made with a planned south Onion Creek trail system.



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### **Gilleland Creek**

One of the most promising greenway systems involves Gilleland Creek. If contiguous properties can be secured along this creek, an extensive trail system can be developed that would range from Pflugerville to the Colorado River. Austin, Pflugerville, and Travis County all have an interest in achieving this plan.

### **Oak Hill Neighborhood Trails**

Neighborhoods within the Oak Hill area have a strong interest in a variety of trails that would connect residential areas, parks and other community facilities. Some of these trails would be on public land and in other areas trail easements would have to be secured from private property owners.

### **Walk for a Day Trail (WFAD)**

The Walk for a Day Trail (WFAD) is an ambitious, proposed 35 mile regional trail system that would stretch from the Barton Creek Greenway to deep into Hays County. The project is envisioned to be constructed in phases as funding and other resources become available. WFAD will provide public recreational and wilderness experiences connecting people to the environment and heritage of Barton Springs and the Central Texas Hill Country.

<http://www.hillcountryconservancy.org/land-projects/walk-for-a-day-trail/>

### **Travis County's Onion Creek Greenway**

Travis County's proposed Onion Creek Greenway is a 21-mile corridor that extends from Slaughter Creek, east of IH35, to the confluence of the Colorado River crossing multiple jurisdictions. It includes an extensive trail system that will connect City of Austin, State, and Travis County parks and greenways. Places to play sports, picnic, camp at primitive or improved sites, fish, boat, hike, bike, walk, and enjoy nature will be provided in the metropolitan and neighborhood parks along its route.

In addition to providing recreational opportunities, the greenway also serves environmental purposes. Much of the greenway lies in floodplain land that plays a critical role in water resource protection. By restoring bottomland woods in areas that were cleared for timber, agricultural, and aggregate mining, the capacity of the land to improve water quality and quantity will be greatly enhanced. Storm waters are slowed, runoff filtered and groundwater is recharged. This is particularly important as more land in the watershed is made impervious and runoff increases. By protecting and highlighting natural and cultural resources of the area, the greenway will contribute to the sense of southeastern Travis County as a special place.

<http://www.co.travis.tx.us/tnr/parks/default.asp>

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### 8.13 Austin Trails Master Plan and Regional Park Trails Master Plan

#### Austin Trails Master Plan

In April 2008, the Austin City Council passed a resolution mandating the creation of a comprehensive and coordinated trails map to guide in the effort to enhance and connect the City of Austin's existing bicycle and pedestrian trails networks. The Austin Bicycle Plan contains this map (<http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/publicworks/bicycle-plan.htm>), which includes existing park trail networks, potential additions, and opportunities to eliminate gaps in the network. The vision for the map is: to create an interconnected non-motorized network of on-road bike routes, sidewalks and off-road park trail corridors that provide transportation, environmental and historic resources preservation, recreation, socialization and health benefits.

In addition to the expansive central system envisioned by the Trails Master Plan, the city's geography, land use patterns, and street layouts offer ample opportunity for the development of supplemental trails that could significantly enhance mobility and safety for both cyclists and pedestrians as well as provide potential connections to a regional trails system.

#### Regional Park Trails Master Plan

As Austin grows its trail systems will extend and connect to surrounding counties and adjacent cities. There is a compelling need to coordinate with other governmental entities concerning their parks trails and bicycle plans. Williamson County has a trails master plan which emphasizes the Brushy Creek Trail which Cedar Park, Round Rock and Austin can all be connected with. Pflugerville, Austin and Travis County can all share in trail development along Gilleland Creek. Austin and Travis County can share the development of trails along Onion Creek. Austin and Hays County and San Marcos can potentially connect through the proposed Walk for a Day Trail.

The City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department is working with other City departments, Counties, concerned governmental agencies and citizen-based park trails groups to create a regional park trails master plan that will be a key component in the city-wide and regional multi-modal and recreation trails network.



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## 8.14 Guidelines for Trail Safety, Operations and Maintenance

### Trail Safety:

**Planning and Design** – Designing trails for slopes, drainage, sight lines and avoidance of obstructions are essential safety considerations for trail users. Trails on Parkland shall be designed to comply with uniform guidelines referenced elsewhere in this document. Trails must be wide enough to accommodate the intended users as noted elsewhere herein and should be designed to avoid user conflicts. Depending upon specific site conditions trail access and egress points should be provided at a minimum of every mile and/or at every street crossing. When a trail is located in the flood plain, egress points should be provided within 50' to 100' of any possible entrapment points, bridges, tunnels or street overpasses. Because lighting may be a nuisance to adjacent property owners, attracts users at unauthorized times of day and can provide a false sense of security, lighting should be restricted to trailheads, parking lots and locations on trails that pose a tread or tripping hazard.

### Trail Operations and Maintenance:

The key objective of Operations and Maintenance is to ensure the safe use, enjoyment and long term success of a trail route. Routine maintenance shall occur on a day-to-day basis with remedial maintenance applied on an as-needed basis.

#### Routine Maintenance Includes:

- Trail safety inspections (railings, signage, ramps, minor trail surface issues, minor drainage repairs)
- Trail sweeping (Concrete trails only)
- Litter and Trash removal
- Tree and brush pruning
- Mowing buffer strips
- Graffiti control
- Restroom cleaning

#### Remedial Maintenance Includes:

- Major Trail surface repair
- Plumbing and Electric repairs (restrooms, water fountains)
- Trail replacement or rerouting
- Closing and restoring unauthorized trails
- Revegetation of disturbed or eroded areas
- Invasive species removal
- Drainage corrections
- Signage replacement or additions
- Habitat enhancement
- Public education
- Volunteer coordination
- Surface maintenance of parking lots/ trailheads
- Kiosk repair
- Crosswalk stripping
- Fence and wall repairs
- Bridge decking
- Low water and stream crossing repairs