

EMMA LONG

METROPOLITAN PARK

VISIONING DOCUMENT





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Prepared for
AUSTIN PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

Prepared by
FREESE and NICHOLS, INC.
JOSE I. GUERRA, INC. CONSULTING ENGINEERS
CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT & PLANNING

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PREFACE

ABOUT THE VISIONING DOCUMENT

The contents of the Visioning Document identify the steps that were taken to create the Park Vision Plan.

The **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY** is a high-level summary of the Park Vision, an outline of the recommendations and an overview of the implementation.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION outlines the contents of the document, describes the park history, development and significance to the community, describes the site, and discusses the program elements.

CHAPTER 2: FRAMEWORK FOR THE VISION provides a basis for the vision plan recommendations. It describes the existing conditions of the recreational, natural, operational, and infrastructural inventory and discusses applicable regulatory and permitting constraints along with an overview of the community engagement.

CHAPTER 3: PARK VISION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

combines the analysis of the existing conditions with community input and establishes the Park Vision Plan and recommendations for the park.

The recommendations are broken into the categories listed below:

- a. Recreational and Natural Recommendations
- b. Operational Recommendations
- c. Infrastructural Recommendations

CHAPTER 4: IMPLEMENTATION provides prioritized, incremental recommendations for development, along with a breakdown of the high-level development costs.



FUNCTIONAL ZONES WITHIN THE PARK

Emma Long Metropolitan Park (the Park) is comprised of four functional zones. Each zone provides different park programming items, which help create the unique character of the park.



1. BOAT RAMP AND WATER ACCESS

Located along the southern edge of the park, the boat ramp and water access area provides a space for park users to access the water by boat or other watercraft. This area is also the emergency access location for all watercraft emergencies.



This area suffers from bank erosion due to waves. Currently, the City of Austin Watershed Protection Department is designing improvements to the area which include stepped limestone boulders with riparian plantings.



3. SECONDARY LAWN AND PASSIVE SHORELINE

The Secondary Lawn and Passive Shoreline is nestled between the Central Lawn and the Camping Areas. This area of the park starts to transition from a more active recreational area to a passive recreational area and provides an area for picnicking and enjoying the outdoors.



This area offers great views of Lake Austin and provides opportunities to restore part of the site back to its natural state and to provide trails for recreational use.

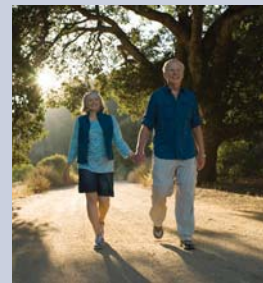


2. CENTRAL LAWN, SWIMMING AND DAY USE

Located near the entrance of the park, this area provides a central axis which connects the bluff campsites to the swim area, provides great views of Lake Austin, and is home to the iconic bathhouse that serves as the link to the historic importance of this park.



The central lawn, swimming and day use area is the heart of active recreation in the Park because it provides amenities such as volleyball courts, a basketball court, a sand beach, swim docks and picnicking.



4. CIRCULATION AND CAMPING AREAS

Emma Long Metropolitan Park is the only park within the City that provides camping opportunities. This unique amenity creates character within the park and has kept people coming back to visit year after year. Camping is provided along the bluff and along the edge of Lake Austin and can accommodate RV's or tent campers.



Park roads and parking are located throughout the site to connect park users to the various amenities.

A BREAKDOWN OF THE FUNCTIONAL ZONES WITHIN THE PARK

For consistency throughout the document, the Park has been broken down into four Functional Zones, dividing it into smaller, recognizable pieces. Each zone will be referenced throughout the document. The names assigned to each functional zone are for reference only.





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The land for Emma Long Metropolitan Park was acquired by the City of Austin in 1939 and the Park was built by the Civilian Conservation Corps later that year. Since that time, some park improvements have been made, but the park is not meeting the needs of today's park users. In 2015, the Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) embarked upon a planning process that would not only identify the needs of the public, park personnel, and City Staff, but would also analyze and prioritize the needs of each group so that phased incremental improvements can be made to the park as funding becomes available. This Visioning Document breaks down the various phases of the planning process, provides recommendations for the park, and prioritizes phases for improvement.

As part of the Visioning Document, this Executive Summary identifies the Primary Use Area that was studied, outlines the vision for the park, and provides a overview of recommendations and implementation.



VISION

EMMA LONG METROPOLITAN PARK IS...

- a safe, well-maintained recreational destination park which is accessible to all and serves the surrounding neighborhoods and communities
- a getaway where visitors can unplug from life, reconnect with nature, participate in active recreation and focus on spending time with family and friends
- a green space nestled along Lake Austin whose open spaces, forested areas, and historic features are thoughtfully preserved and maintained



GOALS AND ACTIONS

The goals of the Visioning Document focus on meeting the current and future needs of the park. In order to identify those needs, the Primary Use Area was broken into four Functional Zones which include: the Boat Ramp and Water Access; Central Lawn, Swimming and Day Use; Secondary Lawn and Passive Shoreline; and Circulation and Camping Areas. Within each functional zone, we analyzed the park's physical arrangement through the 4 lenses shown below.

INFRASTRUCTURAL

What facilitates park use?

Goals:

- a. Develop new means of exploring the site
- b. Repair aging/failing infrastructure
- c. Preserve historic/cultural features

RECREATIONAL

How do you spend your time in the park?

Goals:

- a. Maximize potential to play, gather, and exercise
- b. Enhance opportunities to connect with nature
- c. Provide amenities for all generations

OPERATIONAL

What helps the park function?

Goals:

- a. Develop unified park character
- b. Improve access, signage and wayfinding
- c. Enhance comfort, safety and security

NATURAL

What sustains the land from overuse?

Goals:

- a. Strengthen ecological processes
- b. Create sustainable landscapes
- c. Protect trees and riparian zones

PARK VISION PLAN

Emma Long Metropolitan Park is a beautiful 1,147 acre nature and recreational park located in northwest Austin. A large portion of the park is located within the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve (BCP) which provides habitats to hawks, wildflowers and Golden-cheeked Warblers, as well as access to fossils and many other natural features. The Park Vision Plan focuses on the Primary Use Area, which is comprised of 75 acres within the overall park and is located along a one-mile stretch of Lake Austin. The park has been a beloved amenity for surrounding neighbors and families throughout Texas for many years. When asked, park users reminisced about memories of fishing at the park with their dad, camping with their kids, picking up pecans in the fall, playing in the sand, and picnicking with friends and family. This park has provided a retreat for many families and will continue to do so as new phases of development are implemented.

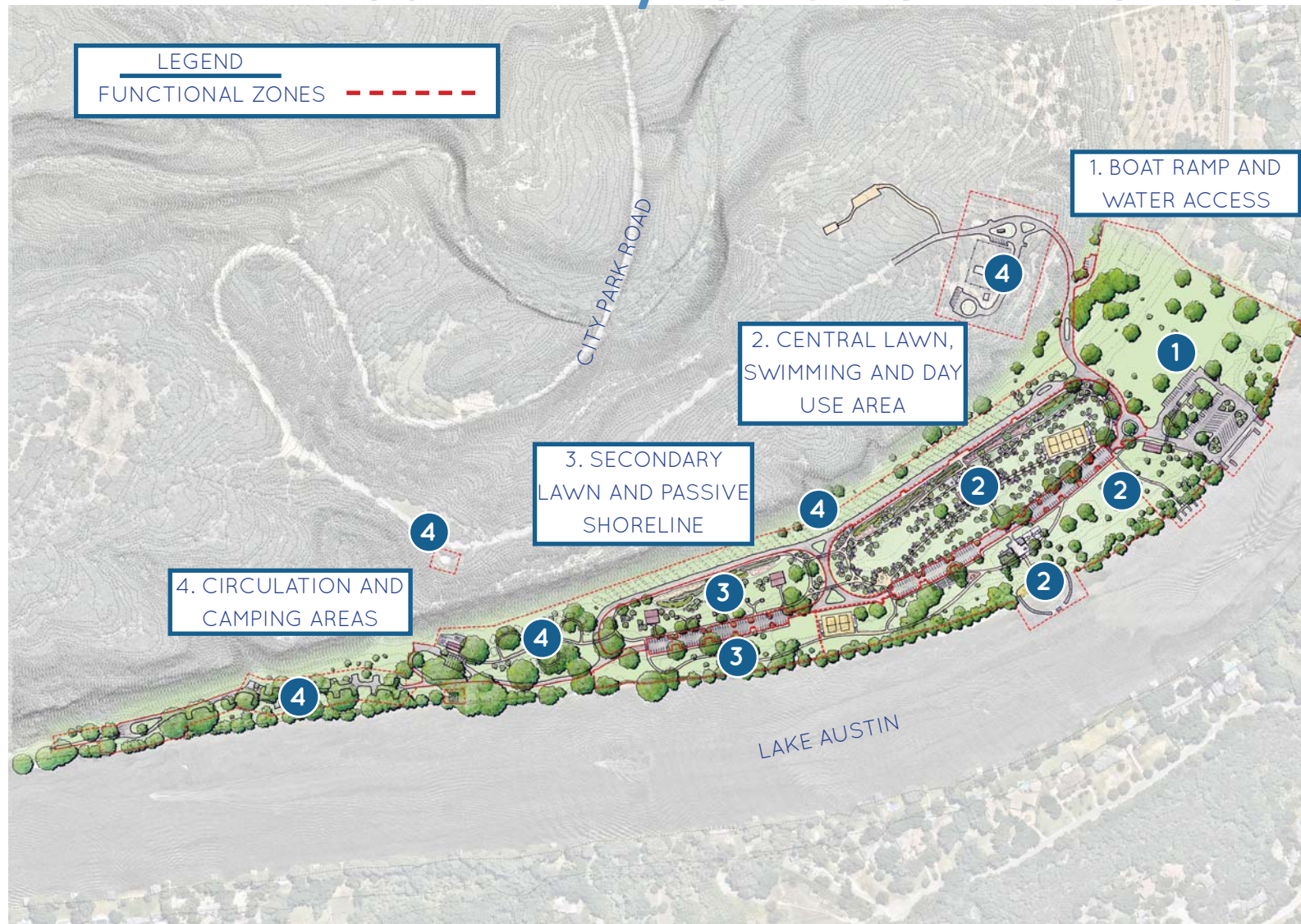
Because of the unique nature of this park providing overnight camping, a boat launch area, 1-mile lake front, and a swim beach, it has been determined that existing park amenities will remain and the intention of this Visioning Document is primarily to improve what currently exists in order to meet the needs of current and future generations.

To further break down the 75-acre Primary Use Area, the park has been divided into four Functional Zones which identify the following amenity areas within the park:

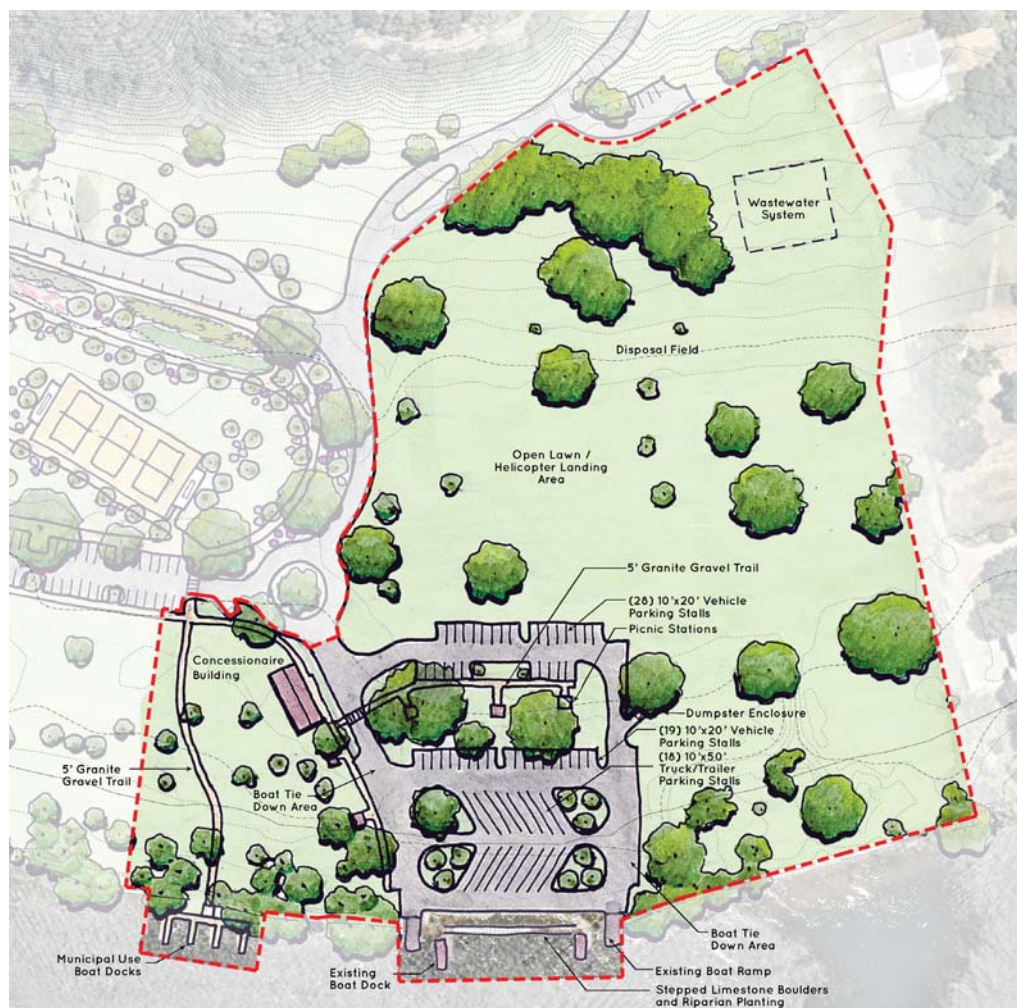
1. Boat Ramp and Water Access
2. Central Lawn, Swimming and Day Use
3. Secondary Lawn and Passive Shoreline
4. Circulation and Camping Areas

Each of the four Functional Zones provide amenities that are unique to the Park and help provide the character and historic significance that make this park what it is today.

PRIMARY USE AREA/FUNCTIONAL ZONES



FUNCTIONAL ZONE 1: BOAT RAMP AND WATER ACCESS

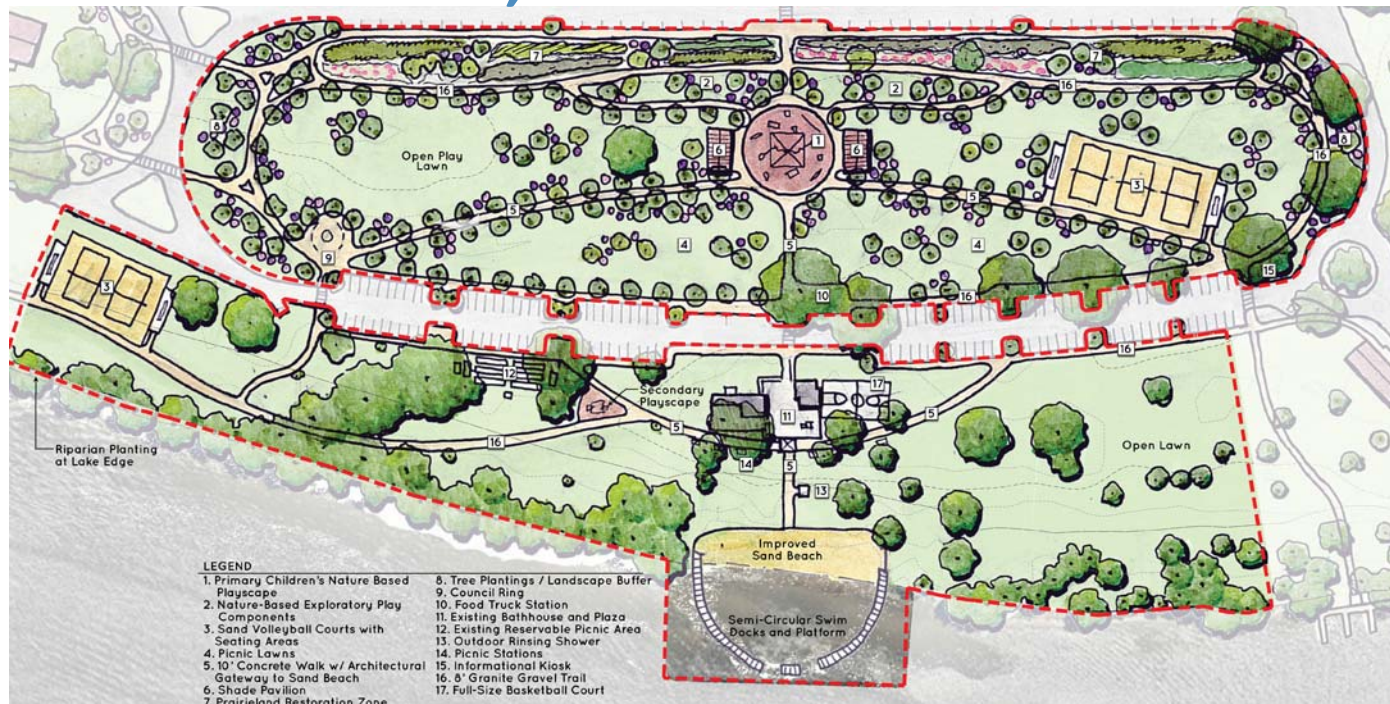


The only watercraft access area within the park will feature paved park roads and parking lots, access to the boat launch, a municipal-use boat dock, and a helicopter landing area for emergencies.

The boat ramp and water access area will be transformed from an unorganized circulation and parking space to an easy-to-manuever space with new park amenities that help enhance the space. The new space will include:

- New stepped limestone boulders and riparian plantings for shoreline protection
- Re-designed parking lot and park roads to provide organized parking, boat tie-down areas and additional shade
- New trails with shaded picnic stations
- Replacement of boat dock decking material, cleats and bumpers and improved security lighting
- Extension of boat ramps further into the water for use when lake levels are lowered
- New concessionaire building to provide necessities for overnight campers, park users and individuals accessing the park by boat
- New municipal-use boat dock for providing security and safety within the park

FUNCTIONAL ZONE 2: CENTRAL LAWN, SWIMMING AND DAY USE



The most active zone within the park will feature playscapes, sports, open play lawns, and access to the beach and swimming. The central lawn area will be transformed from a underused open space to a fun and inviting space that provides activities for everyone to participate in. Amenities within the swimming and day use area will be improved and new trails will provide better connectivity between the various park spaces.

Central Lawn

- New trails with shade trees/picnic stations
- New food truck vendor pads
- More reservable shade pavilions
- New primary children's playscape
- New informational and wayfinding kiosk
- New irrigated sod to eliminate sticker burrs
- Prairieland restoration
- Relocated sand volleyball courts
- New nature-based exploratory play area
- New council ring

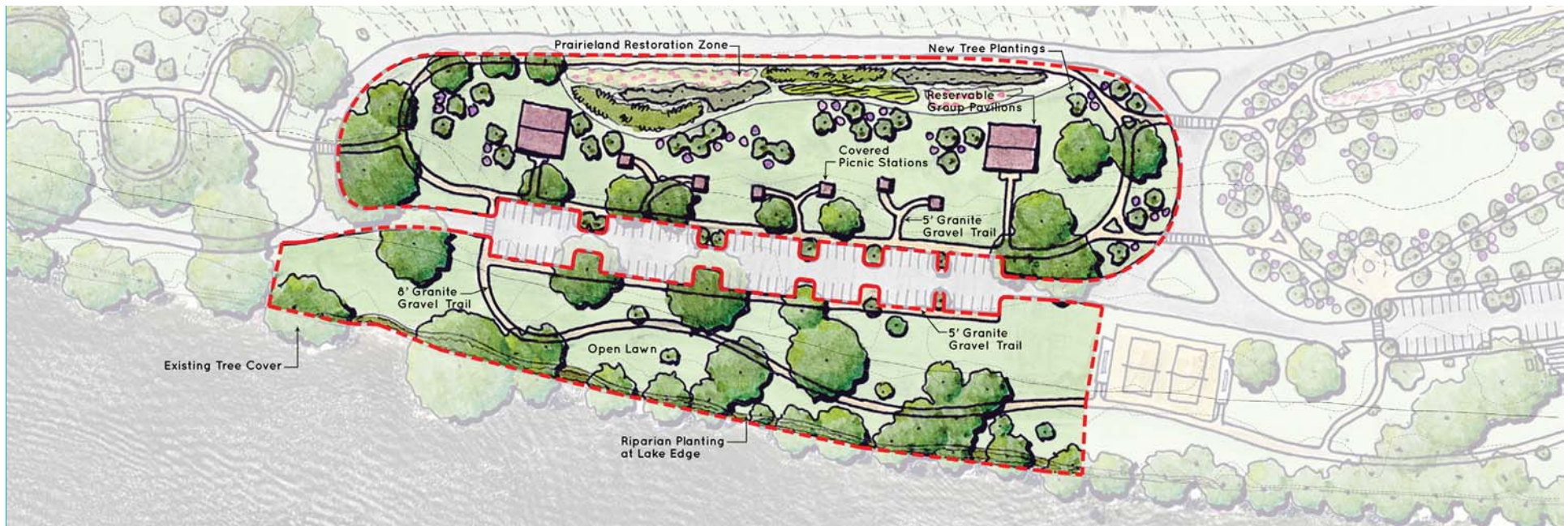
Swimming

- New trail extension from existing bathhouse plaza
- Expanded sand beach footprint
- New semi-circular swim docks and platform with improved security lighting
- Improved rinsing shower station

Day Use

- New trails with shade trees/picnic stations
- New architectural gateway feature
- New secondary playscape
- Full-size basketball court
- Relocated sand volleyball courts with shaded seating and drinking fountain
- Riparian plantings at lake edge to help reduce erosion

FUNCTIONAL ZONE 3: SECONDARY LAWN AND PASSIVE SHORELINE



One of the more passive zones within the park will feature open lawn, picnic stations, group pavilions, and trails.

The secondary lawn area will be transformed from a underused open space to a relaxing and enjoyable space that provides a place for picnicking and enjoying the outdoors. The passive shoreline area will be improved with new trails which will provide better connectivity between the various park spaces.

Secondary Lawn

- New trails to connect this area to other places within the park
- Add reservable group pavilions and include site furnishings
- Prairieland restoration
- Provide covered picnic stations
- Plant shade trees
- Create a landscape buffer along the lawn edges to buffer the bluff camping spaces

Passive Shoreline

- New trails to connect this area to other places within the park
- Riparian plantings at lake edge to help reduce erosion

FUNCTIONAL ZONE 4: CIRCULATION AND CAMPING AREAS



Located throughout the park, the new circulation will provide curbed, paved and striped parking stalls that will be dispersed throughout the site. The camping areas feature opportunities for RV, tent and group camping. The campsites will be enhanced with upgraded utilities to meet the needs of park users, new site furnishings, and additional shade trees.

Circulation

- Construct new park road and parking lots to organize and disperse parking throughout the park
- Construct new 30-yd. dumpster area
- New trails with shade trees
- Provide an asphalt overlay for the waterfront campsites
- Bury the overhead electrical distribution lines where possible

Camping Areas

- Upgraded transformer to provide 50A service
- Replace failing electrical pedestals
- Provide water, wastewater, and electrical hookups for the 30 bluff campsites
- Relocate the RV waste station
- Provide grass pave parking area for RV use at the bluff campsites
- Provide shared electrical and water connections for the group campsites
- New northern restroom building
- New primitive camping area with restroom building

Park Entry Gate and Pay Station

- New park control gate by Turkey Creek Trailhead
- Increased parking capacity at Turkey Creek Trailhead
- Electronic notification sign at FM 2222 intersection
- Reconfigure road and parking at existing entry station
- New pay station structure, additional self-pay kiosks and prominent park entry sign

IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation plans utilize the four functional zones within the park, categorize the needs of the park into Priority One, Priority Two and Priority Three and provide high-level development costs for budgetary purposes only.

The Park Vision Plan provides a conceptual framework for the development of the Primary Use Area within Emma Long Park and improvements along City Park Road for the next 20-30 years. Chapter 4 lists all of the suggested priorities and provides a high-level development cost for each priority. The park vision plan, developed through a community engagement process, provides guidance for future park development and can be used as a tool to leverage contributions, grants and funding from various organizations and private donors. The visioning document will also act as a tool to provide guidance for the City to apply for additional funding through the Capital Improvements Program (CIP). Currently, no grants or private sector funding has been identified for the implementation of this plan.

During public engagement, various individuals expressed an interest in donating money to fund improvements to the Park and forming a Friends of Emma Long Metropolitan Park group. The consulting team recommends that these efforts be coordinated through close and continued partnership with the Austin Parks Foundation, who are more readily equipped to accept private donations.

The highest-need projects that have been identified through this planning process include the following and will be implemented based on available funding:

1. Infrastructural Needs:

- Upgrade northern electrical transformer and replace failing electrical pedestals at camp areas
- Improve roadway along bluff and extend utilities to Bluff Camp areas
- Replace failing water tank with a new tank with increased capacity

2. Operational Needs:

- Implement day-use reservation system and a per-person entry fee
- Reconfigure entry station and sequence to streamline vehicular process
- Replace and install additional animal-proof trash receptacles along shoreline area

3. Recreational Needs:

- Extend walking trails along shoreline and into Central Lawn

4. Natural Needs:

- Replace bulkhead at boat docks to reduce effects of erosive wave action

HIGH-LEVEL-DEVELOPMENT COSTS/PHASING PRIORITIES

Boat Ramp and Water Access		High Range
Priority One		\$571,211
Priority Two		\$146,750
Priority Three		\$828,500
TOTAL		\$1,546,461
Central Lawn, Swimming and Day Use		High Range
Priority One		\$2,532,687
Priority Two		\$986,150
Priority Three		\$423,620
TOTAL		\$3,942,457
Secondary Lawn and Passive Shoreline		High Range
Priority One		\$1,098,695
Priority Two		\$433,620
TOTAL		\$1,532,315
Circulation and Camping Area		High Range
Priority One		\$1,811,405
Priority Two		\$3,499,096
Priority Three		\$4,066,212
TOTAL		\$9,376,713

PARK OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE, PARTNERSHIP, REVENUE GENERATION AND FUNDING STRATEGIES

As part of the planning process, a Business Plan was created to address the park operations and maintenance, partnership, revenue generation and funding strategies for the Park as it currently exists today and in the future when full build-out of the park is complete. The full Business Plan can be found in Appendix A. An outline of the business plan is shown below:

Park Operations and Maintenance:

The operational and maintenance plan identifies short- and long-term management strategies, as well as establishes financial strategies and principles that will enhance the efficiency and revenue capacity of the park once developed.

Partnership:

The strategies listed below have been identified to help the Park achieve financial success:

- Fundraising
- Understanding and nurturing partnering
- Government finance
- Cost recovery
- Enterprise management
- Operational management

Revenue Generation and Funding Strategies:

Policies and management practices that should be considered for the future as well as for new revenue sources include operational funding sources and volunteer sources.

1. Operational Funding Sources include:

- Land leases/concessions
- User fees
- Corporate naming rights
- Corporate sponsorships
- Maintenance Endowment Fund
- Park and Recreation Revenue Revolving Fund
- Permit fees

2. Volunteer Sources include:

- Adopt-an-Area of the Park
- Adopt-a-Trail
- Community service workers
- Greenway sponsors
- Volunteer work

