Little Walnut Creek Greenbelt

Community Master Plan

asakura robinson

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

AUSTIN PARKS & RECREATION
Cultural Places, Natural Spaces

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This master plan was prepared for the Pecan Springs/Springdale Hills Neighborhood Association by Asakura Robinson as part of the firm's Neighbors Program to activate existing community plans. Opinions and statements in this report are solely the responsibility of the authors and may not reflect the views of the National Parks Service, the City of Austin, or the Austin Parks and Recreation Department.

Special thanks to Liz Collins León for the logo design.

Contact the authors at brendan@asakurarobinson.com

www.asakurarobinson.com

asakura robinson

Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies

United States National Parks Service

Austin Parks and Recreation Department

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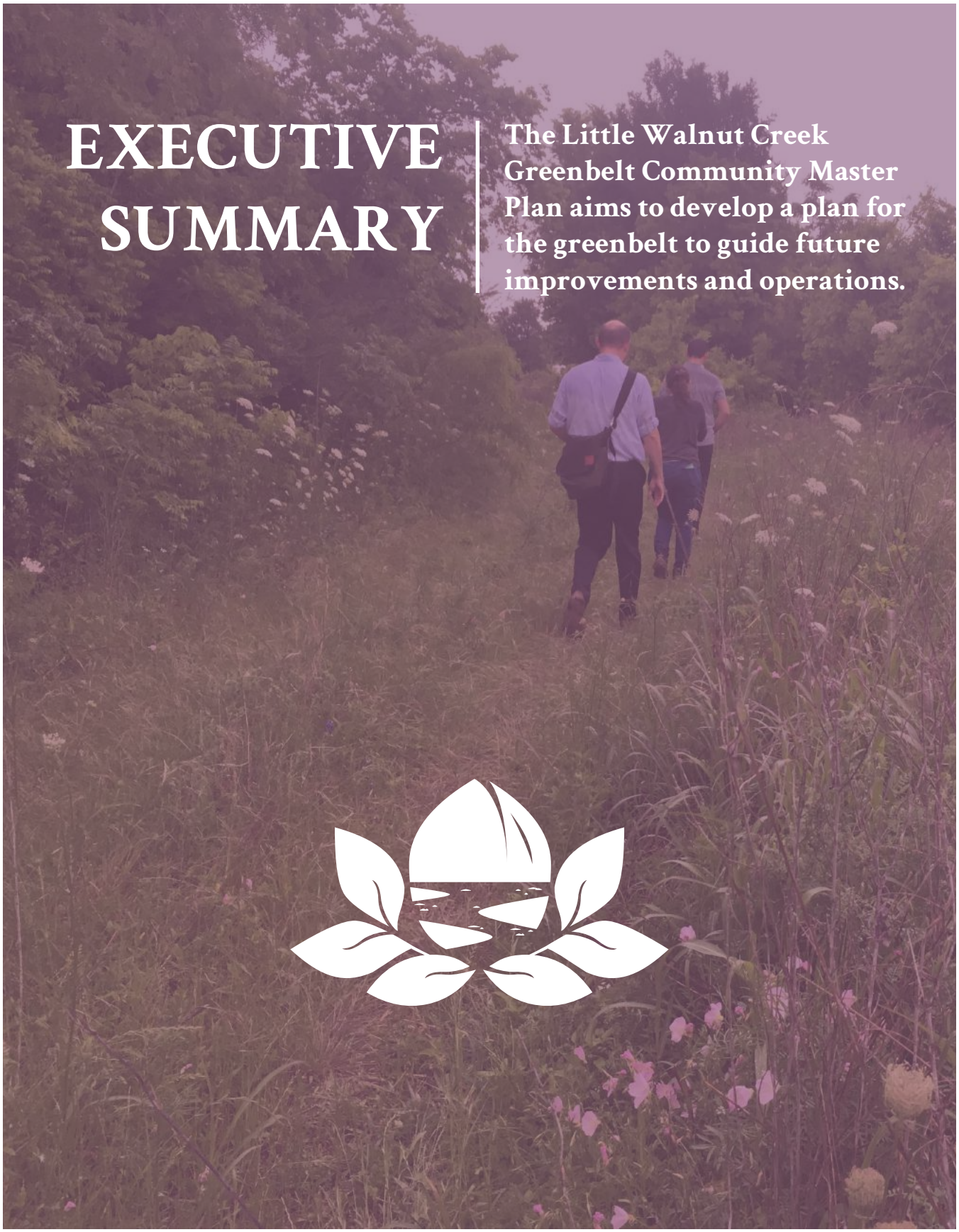
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Little Walnut Creek Greenbelt Community Master Plan aims to develop a plan for the greenbelt to guide future improvements and operations.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2017, the City of Austin Parks & Recreation Department (PARD) reclassified the 206-acre Little Walnut Creek District Park as a greenbelt. While the greenbelt's size lends itself to a District Park, its topography and steep slopes largely preclude the uses of a District Park, including ball fields. Prior to PARD's purchase of the land in 2003, the greenbelt had previously been zoned for a mix of multi-family, office and commercial uses.

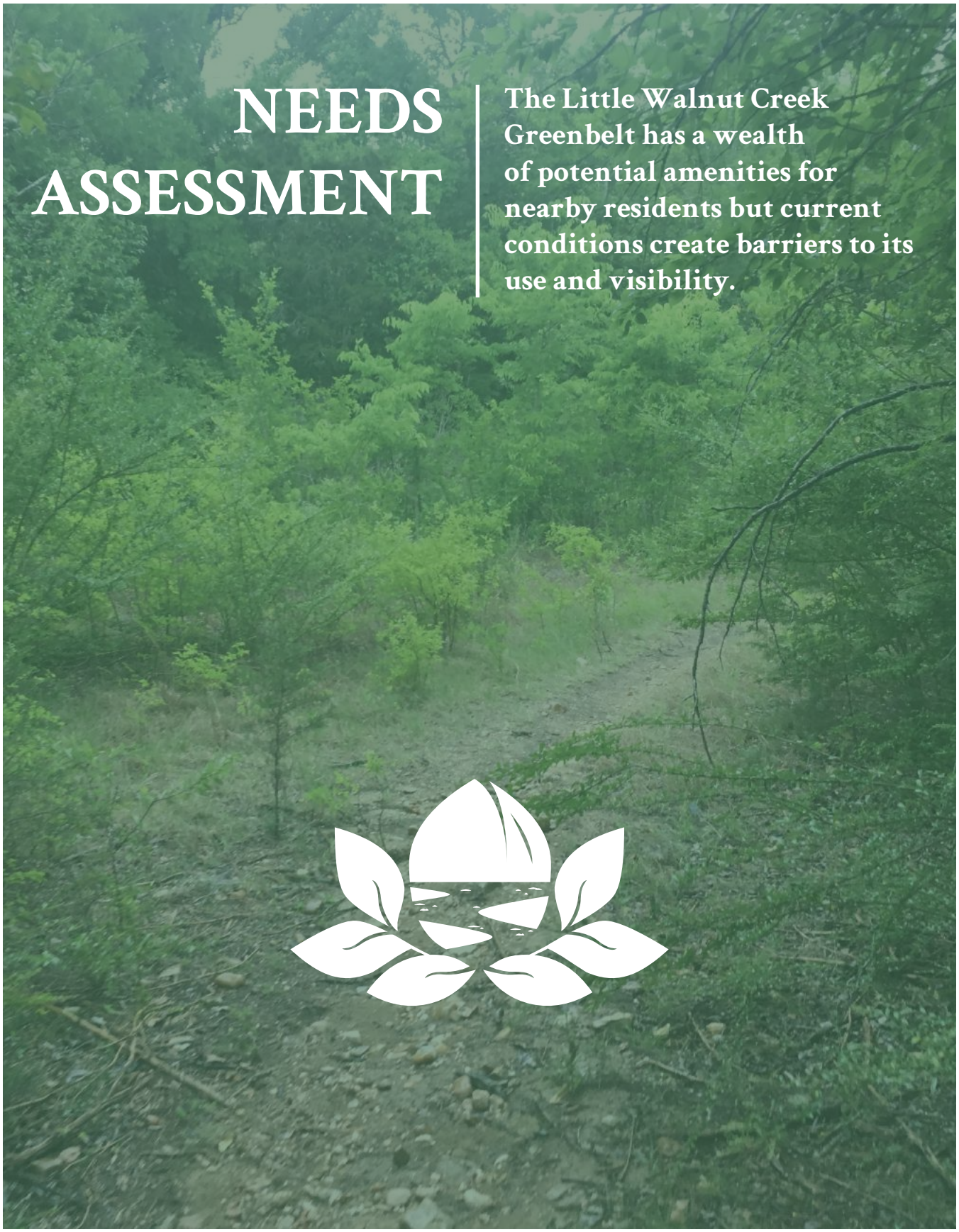
This Master Plan was initiated by the Pecan Springs/Springdale Hills Neighborhood Association (PSSHNA) and was facilitated by a grant from the National Park Service (NPS) Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program, who provided staffing for public outreach. Asakura Robinson, through its Neighbors Program, worked closely with the PSSHNA, members of the public, advocacy organizations, and the NPS staff to record community goals and create this master plan vision for the greenbelt.

The primary intent of this Master Plan is to document the community feedback in a consolidated report and provide design concepts and an implementation plan. This includes a preliminary opinion of cost and potential funding and phasing strategies to ensure that the plan will be brought to life in the near term.

Existing Trail

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The Little Walnut Creek Greenbelt has a wealth of potential amenities for nearby residents but current conditions create barriers to its use and visibility.



NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The greenbelt is primarily wooded with a series of informal trails cutting through creeks and ravines. The greenbelt has outstanding views, robust nature and wildlife, and has potential creek access. While the greenbelt has many existing and potential assets, the area is challenged by illegal dumping, homeless encampments, poorly-draining clay soil, utility easements, limited access points, and a lack of parking and visibility. Although the community and nearby property owners have made significant progress in cleaning up dumped materials at the greenbelt, the challenges associated with clean-up will require City of Austin leadership and collaboration.

A site assessment was performed through a series of site visits and mapping analyses. The following pages document site context and opportunities within the greenbelt. It examines connectivity and access, active transportation, development and community context, topography and geography, hydrology and landscape, and existing vegetation.

The site photos shown here illustrate the high banks, steep ravines and hillsides along the dense, wooded trails of the greenbelt. The banks along the creek are so steep as to be largely inaccessible.

Site Photos

Connectivity & Access

A system of trails runs throughout much of the greenbelt. These trails vary dramatically in condition, with some well-worn paths providing a comfortable walking space and other paths more difficult to traverse due to vegetation or steep slopes. Many if not most of the trails become impassable during and after rain events, owing to the poorly-draining clay soils, a lack of trail maintenance, and the location of many trails along and across creek beds.

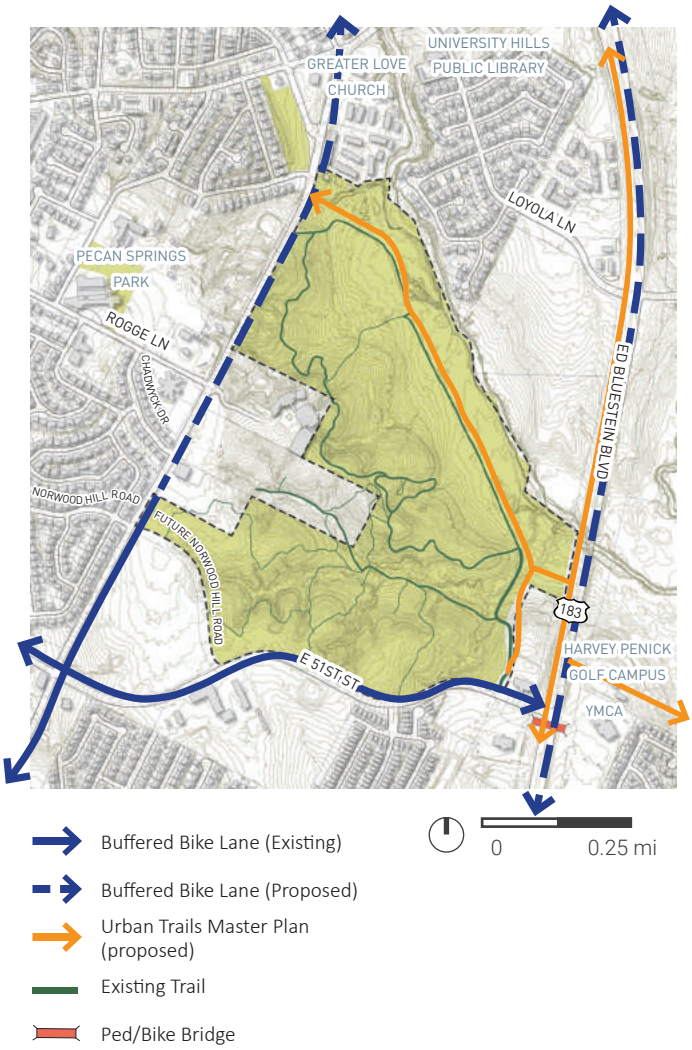
The entrances to the greenbelt are poorly marked and it is not immediately evident from any entrance to the greenbelt that the land is for public use. Currently, the primary entries to the interior trail system are at the northwest corner of the greenbelt from a utility access road and at Rangoon Road, which is City of Austin-owned right-of-way. It is currently being used as a staging area by the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority (CTRMA) for their TX-183 widening project and will be returned to its original condition as an unpaved access road following completion of that construction.

The recently-constructed Reserve at Springdale housing development includes a sizable forested space on its eastern side, including a wide path connecting to existing paths in the greenbelt. Within this property, the trail is considerably more maintained than in the public greenbelt, including the use of mulch made from trees removed from the path.

Mountain bike riding is a popular activity at the greenbelt and will likely continue to be popular. GIS information showing the locations of trails was provided to the design team for this report by the Austin Ridge Riders.

There are no formal parking areas within the greenbelt. An access road from Springdale road at the northwest corner is closed off but could be used to provide parking; however, visibility from the street is limited, creating security and safety concerns. Rangoon Road could support a parking area following the construction at TX-183. A future extension of Norwood Hill Road around the 51East housing development, allowing additional street parking, is planned by the City of Austin but not funded.

Active Transportation



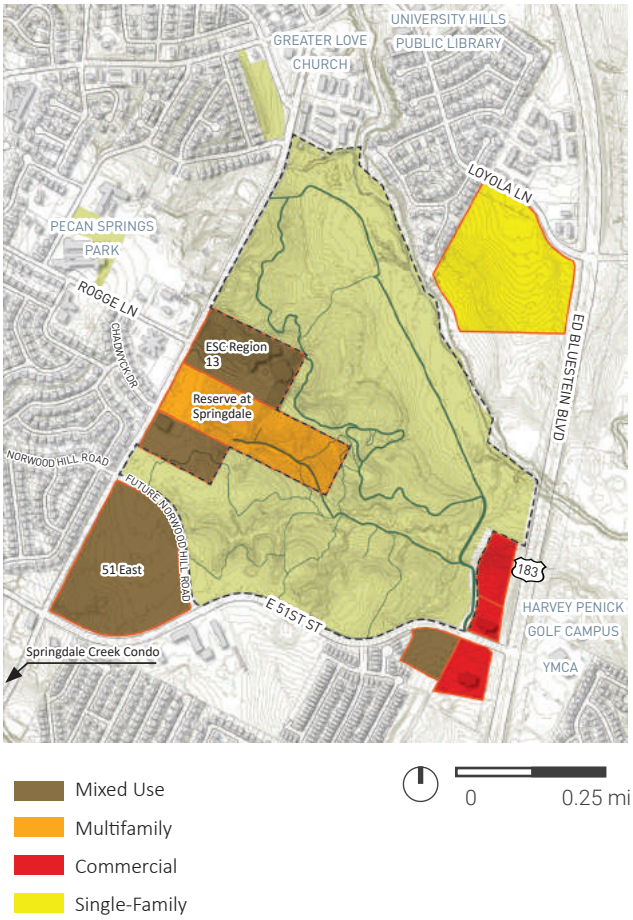
The greenbelt contains a wide utility easement for a natural gas line which is listed on the 2014 City of Austin Urban Trails Master Plan as a Tier 2 trail connecting the greenbelt to 51st Street.

The greenbelt's proximity to the shared use path along TX-183, currently in construction, and the planned connection to the Southern Walnut Creek Trail make this a highly desirable location for a trail connection. Additionally, the greenbelt is bounded on two sides by Springdale Road and 51st Street, both of which have recently been "right-sized" to reduce vehicle lanes and provide dedicated buffered, unprotected bike lanes to the standards set forth by the 2014 Austin Bicycle Plan.

Despite the planning efforts of the Urban Trails Master Plan and the Bicycle Master Plan, the greenbelt is not currently used for active transportation and its internal trails currently only house recreational uses. These trails are frequently used by local residents as walking paths and for dog walking.

Development & Community Context

The fabric of the surrounding neighborhood is largely single-family residential but is changing rapidly with an increase in multi-family developments in recent years. Large multi-family developments including the Reserve at Springdale (a mixture of residential and live/work units at 60% Area Median Income), 51East (single-family residential condominiums), and Springdale Creek (single-family residential condominiums) are adding a substantial number of new housing units to the area. Additionally, the burgeoning Mueller Planned Unit Development continues to approach full build-out and is adding businesses and services to the neighboring area along with increased residential density.



Topography & Geography

The highest elevations of the greenbelt are relatively flat areas toward its southernmost abutment to Springdale road and at some areas along its southern edge at 51st Street. In its center, the greenbelt is dominated by small, steep hills and gullies and dry creek beds. Erosion is visible along many gullies, which funnel stormwater north to Little Walnut Creek. In total, the greenbelt contains an elevation change of well over one hundred (100') feet from its highest point to the creek bed.

The soils in and around the greenbelt are classified in a 1974 Soil Survey of Travis County as Lewisville-Patrick association, a mix of soils predominantly constituted of two layers of clay roughly totalling three feet in depth over a six-foot depth of silty loam. These soils are known to be problematic for development due to their corrosivity, swelling and shrinking potential, and surface flooding.[1]

To the north, where Little Walnut Creek defines the boundary of the greenbelt, the creek bed is significantly lower than the surrounding land. Recently, creek bed erosion has caused the City of Austin to purchase and demolish several single-family residences along the northern side of the creek. Access to the creek from the greenbelt is prohibitively difficult due to this severe grade change and ongoing concerns of bank erosion.

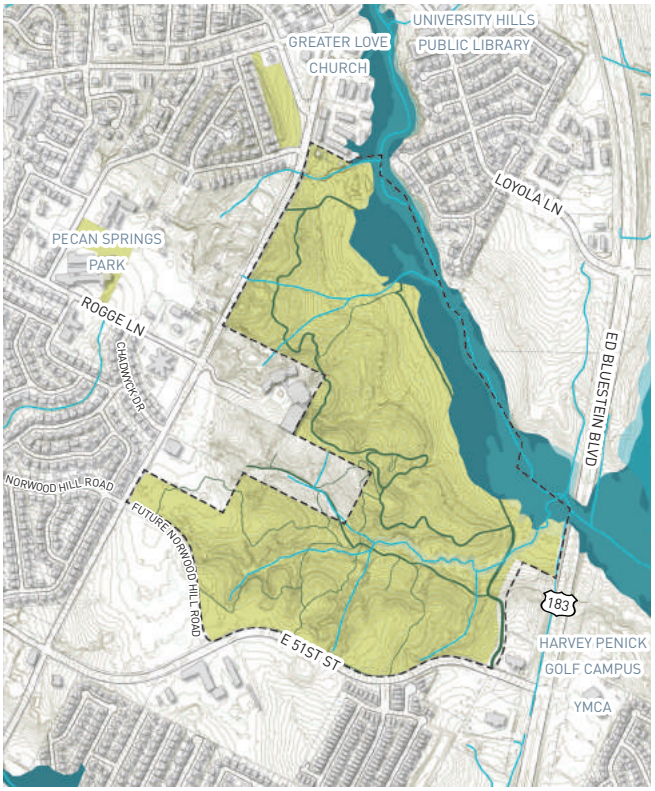
1 sources: http://www.chotelaboratories.com/garden_diary/docs/General%20Soil%20Map.pdf https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_MANUSCRIPTS/texas/TX453/0/Travis.pdf

Hydrology & Landscape

The entirety of the greenbelt is part of the Walnut Creek watershed. Little Walnut Creek forms the northern boundary of the greenbelt and drains to Walnut Creek just east of TX-183. Walnut Creek reaches the Colorado River at John Treviño Jr. Metropolitan Park at Morrison Ranch just outside of Austin city limits.

Despite the proximity to Little Walnut Creek, the greenbelt is largely cut off from water access due to the steep topography at the creek edge. Despite the current challenges to traversing the creek, in the long-term, there is a desire to explore bridges or other crossings between the greenbelt and residences on the north side of the creek.

The greenbelt hosts mostly new growth forest, dominated by young cedar elms and red cedar. In many places, the lower canopy consists of thick ligustrum and grape varieties, which limit propagation of other species beneath the understory. In open spaces, a variety of grasses and patches of prickly pear cactus thrive. Wildflowers are also abundant in these open areas. Bluebonnets are seasonably prevalent in open areas, especially along the utility road at Springdale Road and in the unpaved easement along the creek. Lower areas, particularly along seasonal creeks, include young cottonwood trees.



Park
2 Ft. Contours
Existing Trails
500 yr Flood
100 yr Flood
Creek

0 0.25 mi

Existing Vegetation

Woody Species

Eastern Red Cedar
Juniperus virginiana

Cedar Elm
Ulmus crassifolia

Osage Orange
Maclura pomifera

Cottonwood
Populus deltoides

Mesquite
Prosopis pubescens

Fragrant Sumac
Rhus aromatica

Cacti Species

Prickly Pear Cactus
Opuntia Spp.

Forbs and Grass Species

Texas Bluebonnet
Lupinus texensis

Giant Ragweed
Ambrosia trifida

Vervain
Verbena Spp.

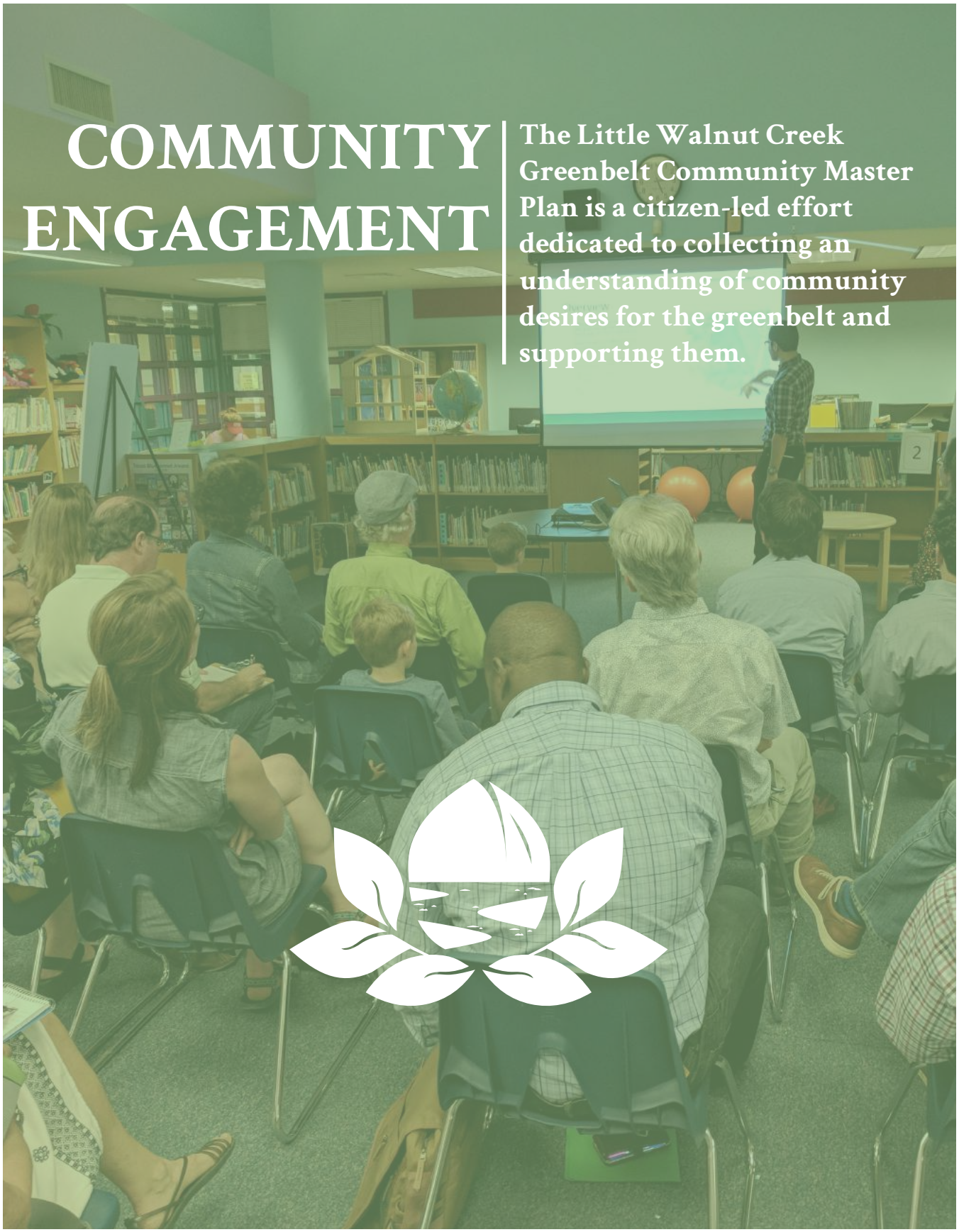
Indian Blanket
Gaillardia pulchella

Mexican Hat
Ratibida columnifera

Little Bluestem
Schizachyrium scoparium

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Little Walnut Creek Greenbelt Community Master Plan is a citizen-led effort dedicated to collecting an understanding of community desires for the greenbelt and supporting them.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Three public meetings were held to gain feedback from current and future trail users. Attendance at the meetings ranged from 25 to 40 people. The first two meetings included brief presentations about the planning and input process, followed by open houses with activities that sought input on participants' perception of and visions for the greenbelt. Attendees provided feedback on the following: how they used the greenbelt, amenities and improvements, priorities, programming, trails and trailheads, and specific areas for improvements.

Conceptual designs for the greenbelt were presented at the third meeting. Attendees were invited to give feedback on what they liked about the conceptual design and what they would change about the design. This feedback was integral to this final master plan.

All three meetings were staffed by community planners from National Park Service, and were attended by many members of the Pecan Springs/ Springdale Neighborhood Association (PSSNA) in addition to PARD Staff, the Austin Parks Foundation, Families in Nature staff, Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority (CTRMA) 183 South Project employees, local residents, and Asakura Robinson staff.

Activity: Children's Illustrations

Public Meeting #1

The first public meeting included approximately 40 attendees and was held in the afternoon on February 25th, 2018 at the Givens Recreation Center at 3811 E 12th Street. Participants were asked to share their existing awareness of the greenbelt, perceptions of the greenbelt, place-specific comments, and desired improvements. The event also featured children's activities, including asking children to draw their own vision for the greenbelt.

Activity: Improvements

Trail-Specific Improvements

VOTES

25	Natural Surface Trails
16	Trail Markers
13	Creek Access - ensure quality is protected
6	Paved trails - pave only primary trails
2	Lighting

Recreation and Enjoyable Additions

VOTES

10	Play Areas
10	Outdoor Education
5	Exercise Equipment

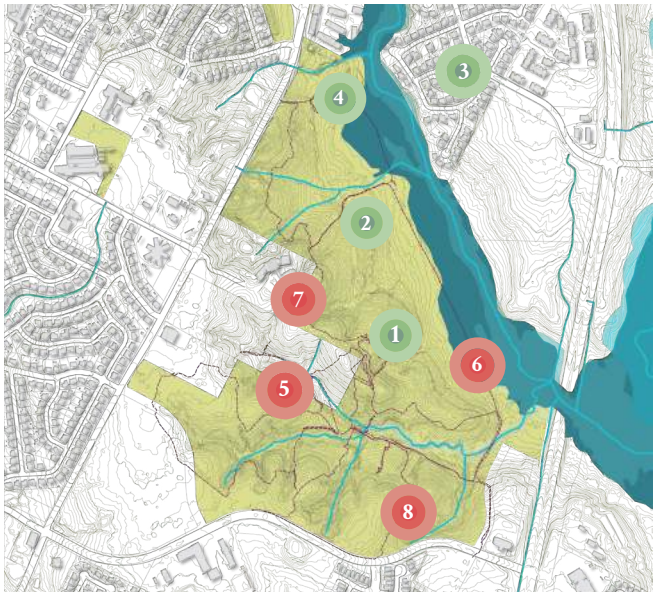
Basic Park Amenities

VOTES

10	Bike Racks
6	Seating
6	Bathroom
3	Water Station
2	Trash Cans

Activity: Points of Discussion

Meeting attendees viewed a map of greenbelt assets and current issues. Attendees were asked to help generate alternative areas that are appealing or have issues.



Site Assets

1. Six- to eight-mile trail network
2. Outstanding views
3. Proximity to neighborhoods
4. Potential creek access

Site Constraints

5. Poor trail conditions
6. Homeless encampment
7. Clay soil difficult to traverse
8. Limited access points

Public Meeting #2

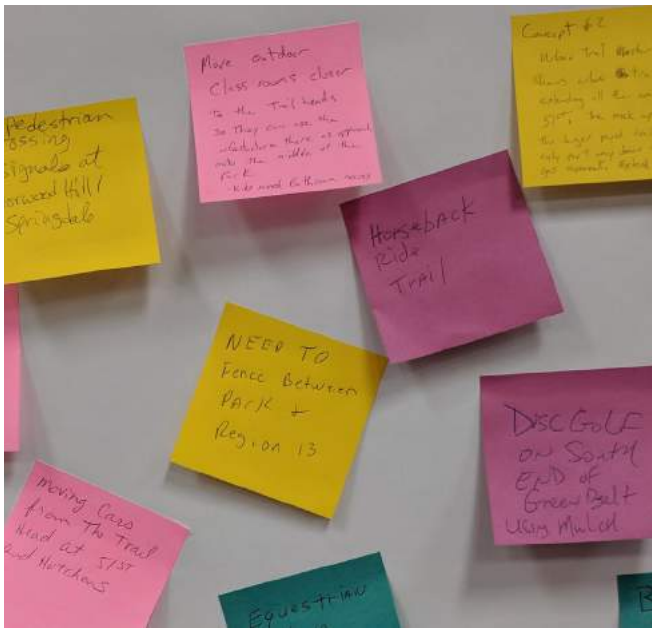
A second meeting, held on the evening of Tuesday, April 7, 2018 at Pecan Springs Elementary School at 3100 Rogge Lane, included approximately 25 attendees. At this meeting, attendees were encouraged to fill out the survey, rank priorities for development, suggest future programming, and provide feedback for gateway design and entries.

Activity: Visitation

	Seniors	Adults	Families	Children
Amenities	• *Seating*	• *Board game tables* • *Exercise Equipment* • *Facilities: shower, bathroom, picnic area* • *Sport fields* • *Amphitheater* • *Disc golf*	• *Family fitness* • *Pet friendly areas* • *Lean-to* • *Stage area for events* • *Picnic area* • *Playground*	• *Nature play areas* • *Outdoor classroom* • *Playground* • *Splash pad* • *Sport fields*
Trail Design	• *Vista points* • *Gently sloped paths*	• *Soft trails for biking and hiking* • *Dog running areas* • *Trail markers*	• *Vista points* • *Places to see the creek* • *Native plant groves*	• *Signage* • *Hiking trails* •
Programs	• *Organized Nature Walks* • *Bird watching classes* • *Coordinated hiking days*	• *Nature in the City Challenge events* • *Bird watching classes*	• *Movies in the Park* • *Guided nature walks and education: Bird Blind, prairie education*	• *Nature education: species identification, orienteering, ecosystem* • *After school* • *and weekend programming*
Access	• *Clean, accessible facilities* • *Accessible trails* • *Trails separate from bikers*			

Public Meeting #3

The final public meeting was held at the Education Service Center Region 13 on Thursday, September 27th, 2018. Approximately 30 people were in attendance. At this meeting, conceptual designs were presented to the public through a series of posters and a presentation about the proposed plan and the five core concepts of the design. After the presentation, participants provided feedback by writing answers to prompts, which included questions like "What did you like about the design?" and "What would you change about the design?"



Activity: Feedback

Attendees provided feedback by writing answers to a series of prompts on post-its. This is a selection of the feedback.

What do you like about the plan?

- Soft trails and easy access.
- Dog park.
- Natural element play area.
- Invasive species removal.
- Bike parking and paths.

What would you change about the plan?

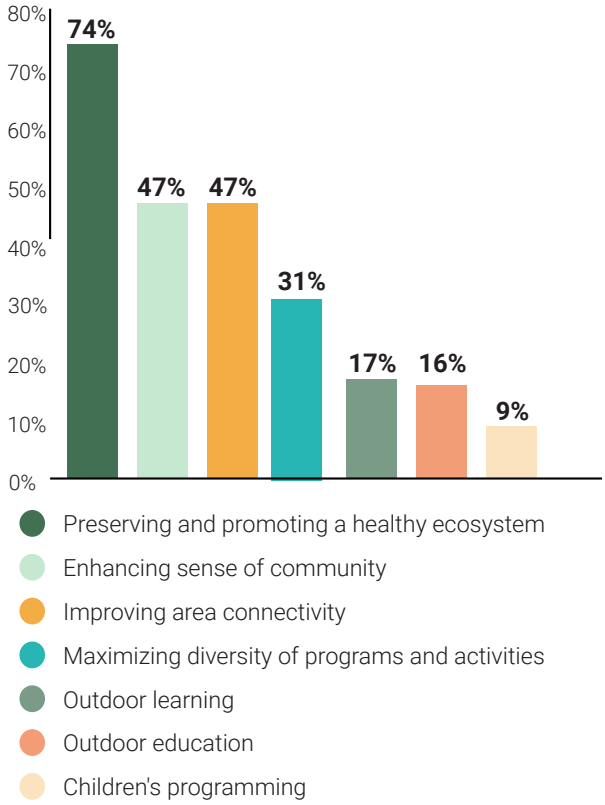
- Better creek access.
- Use all 8 miles of bike trails instead of just 4.
- Parking!
- Move outdoor classrooms closer to trailheads.
- Composting toilets.

What are you unsure about?

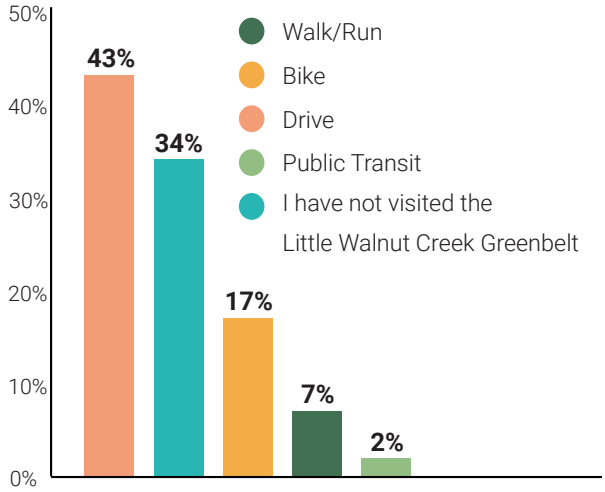
- Will city extend Norwood Hill Road?
- What is the lighting plan?
- Homeless people using the park after hours.
- Safety at night.
- Accessible facilities for families.

Survey Results

Desired Improvements at the Little Walnut Creek Greenbelt? (Select 3)



How do you typically travel to Little Walnut Creek Greenbelt?

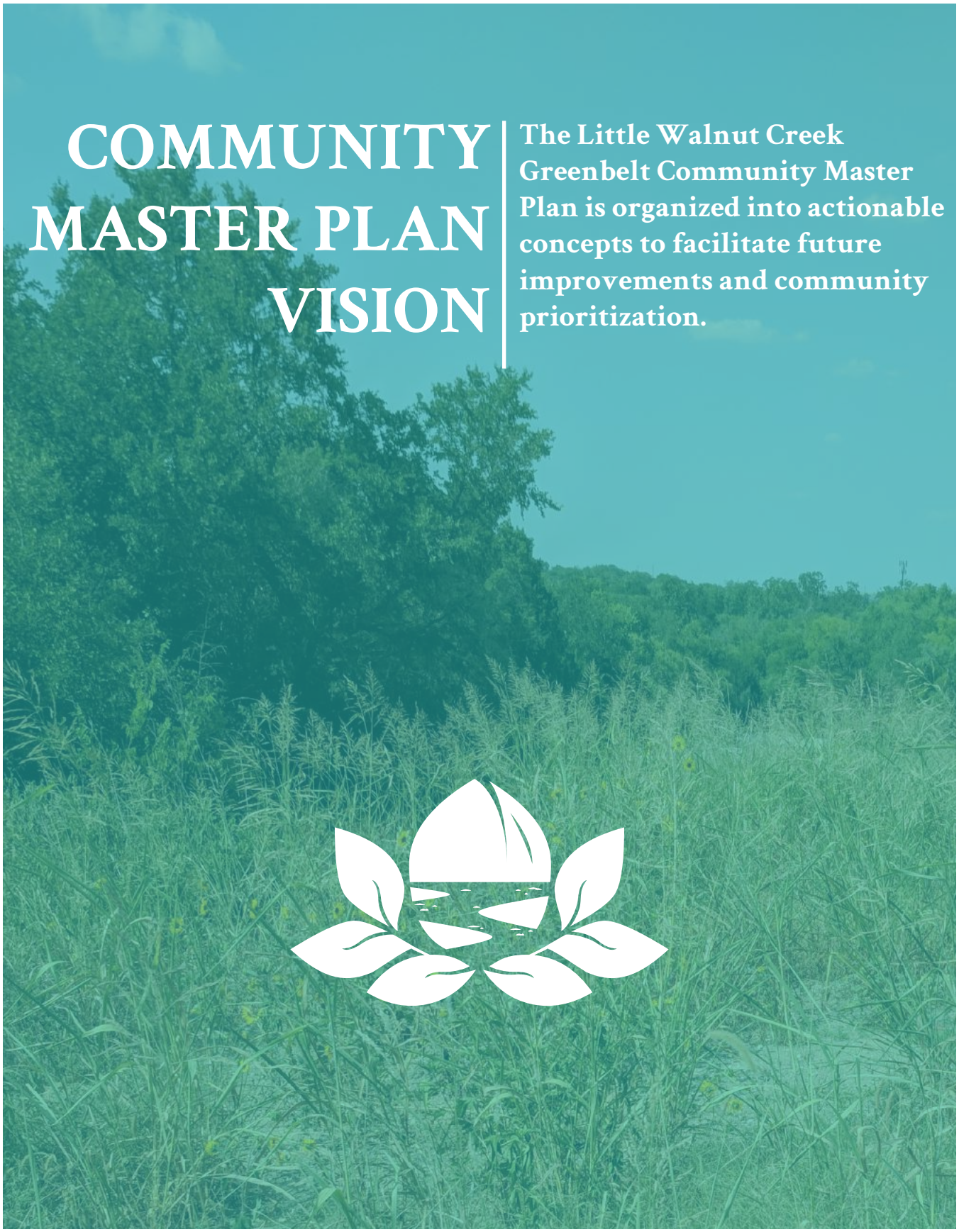


A city-wide survey was conducted between February and April 2018 to gauge current perceptions of the greenbelt and desired improvements. Over 500 participants provided responses, nearly half of whom regularly or occasionally visited the greenbelt. For those who visited the greenbelt, driving was the most common means of travel. Common reasons for not visiting the greenbelt included a lack of awareness about it and its recreation options, and a concern for personal safety.

The survey results indicated, among other things, that the most desired features at the greenbelt are soft-surface trails, trail markers, and picnic areas, and parking. The most desired qualities and goals of the greenbelt are preserving and promoting a healthy ecosystem, improving area connectivity, and enhancing a sense of community.

COMMUNITY MASTER PLAN VISION

The Little Walnut Creek Greenbelt Community Master Plan is organized into actionable concepts to facilitate future improvements and community prioritization.



COMMUNITY MASTER PLAN VISION

This Master Plan is organized into five key concepts for the development and design of the greenbelt. These concepts include a range of interventions and investments, including the addition of site amenities (including play areas, restrooms, and shelter) as well as trail and path construction and forest management planning.

These core concepts form the conceptual master plan are detailed on the following pages.

1 Define Activity Zones

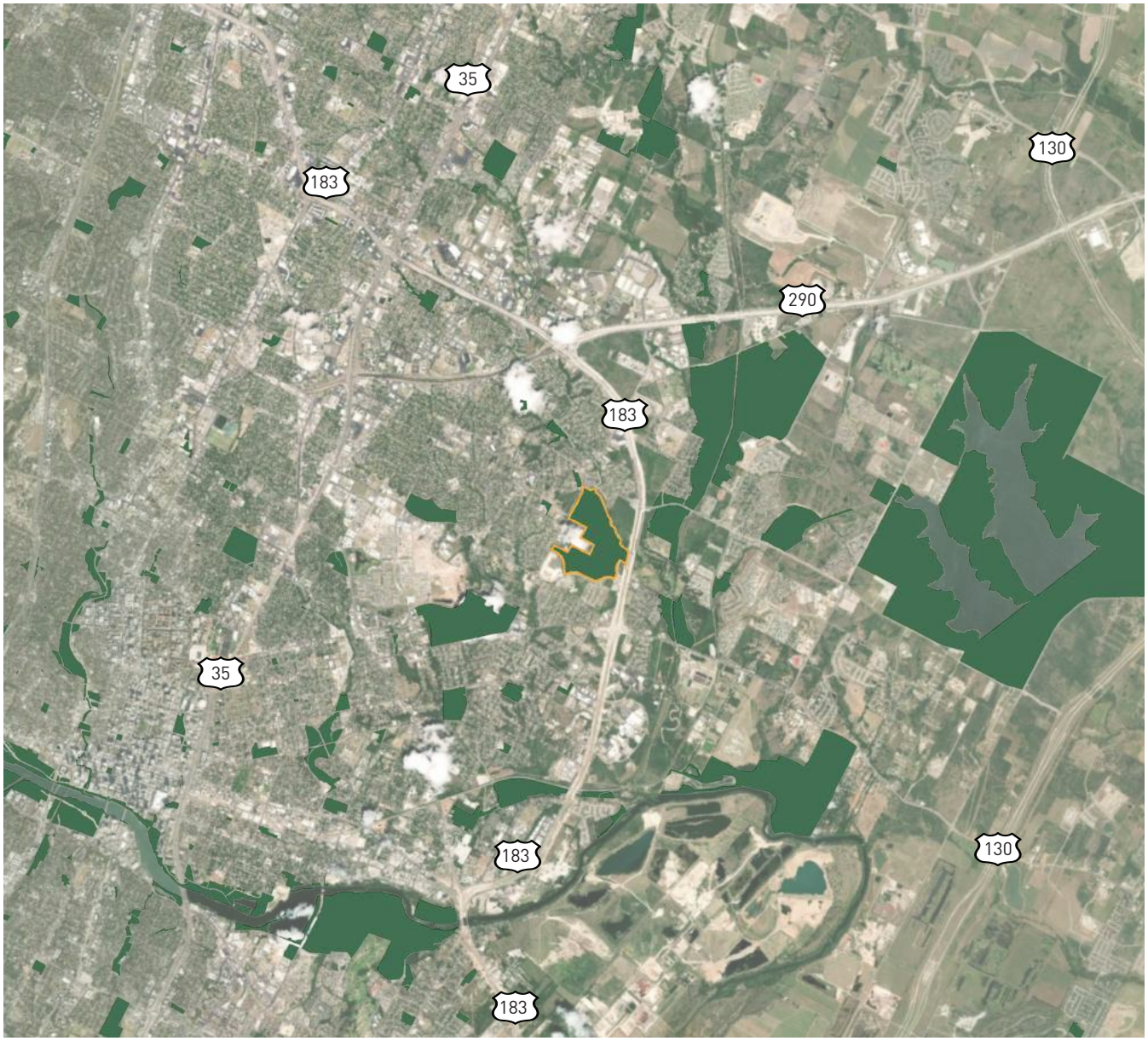
2 Organize Trails by Use and Develop Internal Wayfinding

3 Create Forest Stewardship Plan for Sensitive Areas

4 Incorporate Programming for Community Use

5 Formalize Parking and Transportation Amenities

Site Context



N

0 1.5 mi 3.0 mi

COA PARD Parks

Little Walnut Creek Greenbelt

Conceptual Master Plan

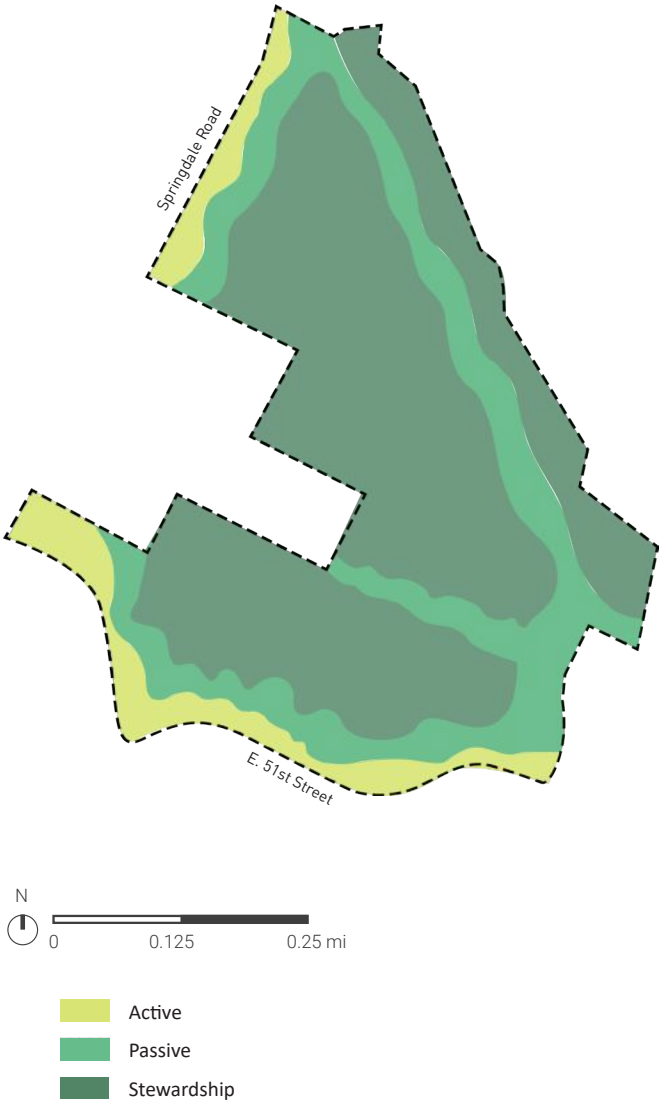
N

0 0.125 0.25 mi

- Cycle Track
- Shared-use Path
- Recreation Path
- Natural Path
- Neighborhood Connection
- Active Area
- Passive Area
- Stewardship Area
- Existing Amenities
- Proposed Amenities
- Potential Bridge Crossing
- On-site Parking
- Bicycle Parking
- Internal Wayfinding
- Entry Signage

Concept One: Define Activity Zones

One of the most significant obstacles to use of the greenbelt is that is does not present itself as public space on its edges along Springdale Road and E. 51st Street. To combat the perception that the greenbelt is not open for the use of the public and to increase visibility of the trail system and other programming, a hierarchy of activity zones and clearly marked greenbelt entrances should be developed. These zones can be considered as the "active", "passive", and "stewardship" areas.



Activity Zone Distinctions

Active

Active edges feature explicit programming, including play equipment or amenities such as shelter houses, water fountains, and fitness equipment. Within active areas, the existing forest is extensively culled to remove understory growth and identify key shade and ornamental trees in good health; these areas are planted with native grasses and wildflowers along a system of paved and unpaved paths for walking, running, and bicycling.

The Active edge is the most intensive greenbelt zone and contains most of the potential capital projects identified in *Concept Five: Introduce Programming for Community Use*. It is recommended that the Active edge be at least thirty feet in depth along the full frontage of Springdale Road and E. 51st Street, with areas containing additional programming at least fifty feet in depth. Trails and Wayfinding signs are present throughout, as discussed in *Concept Two: Organize Trails by Use and Develop Wayfinding*.

Passive

Passive zones offer a transition to the more environmentally sensitive areas in the center of the greenbelt. They also contain portions of an unpaved trail system, along with wayfinding and other light amenities. The understory is selectively kept in place, encouraging a natural aesthetic with more shade and privacy and fewer defined uses than the active edge.

Stewardship

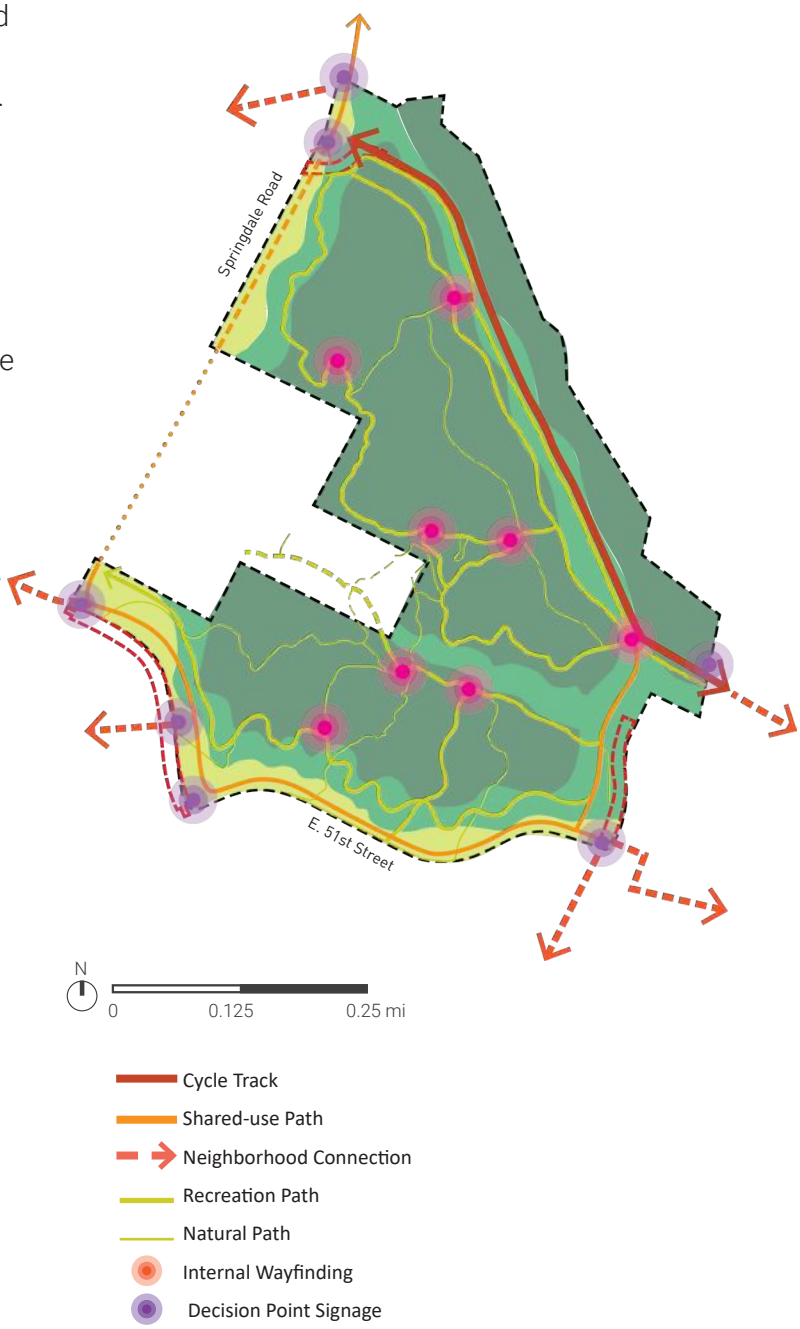
Stewardship areas cover the majority of the greenbelt interior, including steeper slopes and sensitive water quality areas. Here, forest management is kept to a minimum to provide for the health of younger native and non-invasive plant species, provide habitat, and reduce the risk of forest fires. Human activity in these areas, including walking, running, and biking, is minimal and confined to trails throughout the greenbelt. Stewardship methods for all areas are described in *Concept Three: Incorporate Programming for Community Uses*.

Concept Two: Organize Trails by Use and Develop Internal Wayfinding

A trail hierarchy exists within the current system of trails in the greenbelt; with the addition of Active edge and passive trails, this hierarchy is expanded and clearly identified in trail construction to provide clear organization to the greenbelt's trails.

This organization of trails and pathways requires a comprehensive system of internal wayfinding. A signage system at a minimum identifies trail classifications, names (where applicable), destinations, and approximate distances to key landmarks. Recreation paths also include mileage markers throughout the greenbelt.

In addition to this internal wayfinding system, wayfinding is added to the Active edge and greenbelt entries. At a minimum, this includes signage announcing the greenbelt's primary entry points and internal decision points.



Trail Types

Cycle Track

Image: Fairfax County

These tracks are exclusively for bicyclists' use and are 16 feet in standard width per the Austin Urban Trails Master Plan. The locations of cycle tracks in the greenbelt reflect the bicycle connections identified in the 2014 Urban Trails Master Plan. All cycle tracks are paved with directional markings.

Shared-use Path

Image: York Region

Per City of Austin Urban Trails Master Plan guidelines, these trails serve dual use for walking and bicycling and are a standard 16 feet in width per the Austin Urban Trails Master Plan. All shared-use paths are paved concrete; these paths are used by commuting bicycle traffic as well as recreational bicycle traffic.

Recreation Paths

Image: Permatrak

Active Paths - These paths are installed only in relatively flat areas and are used for walking, jogging, running, and bicycling. Their widths may vary but remain a minimum 6 feet in width. All active use paths are a decomposed granite surface over compacted soil.

Passive Paths - These paths are most similar to existing path conditions; they are used in flat or relatively steep areas throughout the greenbelt. Their widths vary substantially. Generally, passive use paths are mulched annually and best practices for trail maintenance are recommended to control water drainage and prevent erosion.

Nature Trails

Image: Trip Advisor

Areas of limited foot traffic, particularly in steep slope areas, are characterized as nature trails. These paths are marked with directional signs but otherwise do not require surface improvements other that stabilization against erosion. Mountain biking may continue along many of these trails. Areas with high erosion are secured with compacted fill prior to being stabilized for erosion.

Concept Three: Incorporate Programming for Community Use

The results of public meetings and surveys demonstrated a clear community interest in increasing programming and connections to the surrounding neighborhood. Programming suggestions include recreational features such as playgrounds and basic amenities, such as seating and water fountains, that are currently missing from the greenbelt. After balancing community desires with feasibility, this master plan recommends incorporating the following targeted programming for community use.

Outdoor classrooms and pavilions are located near trailheads, where they have access to restrooms and are conveniently accessed by neighborhoods, schoolchildren, and attendees of small events. Deeper within the greenbelt, a series of small open-air structures are recommended that do not require electrical or plumbing service. These open-air structures serve as shelter or respite for hikers.

Programming Opportunities

Image: Waukesha County

Picnic Pavilion

Covered picnic area pavilions serve as gathering space and provide shade for visitors during Austin's hot summers.

Image: Chronogram

Dog Park

Designated dog parks separate trails and areas for human use from areas for dogs to safely experience off-leash play and exploration.

Image: Irmo Park

Amphitheater

Amphitheaters provide an opportunity for programmatic integration of parks and the performing arts. A restroom should be available for event users.

Image: Lake Flato

Outdoor Classroom

Outdoor classrooms provide opportunities for science field trips from local schools to educate students about Austin's wildlife and ecology. A restroom should be available.

Programming Opportunities

Image: City of Columbia

Trail Amenities

Integration of trash cans, benches, and water fountains within the greenbelt ensures that visitors are comfortable and have places to rest along the trail.

Image: Site Design Group

Nature Play

Nature-based playgrounds that integrate natural elements, such as logs and vegetation, connect children to their environment and encourage physical and social development. A public restroom should be provided here.

Concept Four: Create Forest Stewardship Plan for Sensitive Areas

A stewardship plan is needed to manage plant life in the greenbelt, likely through professional consultation. In many areas of the greenbelt, native species are being crowded by invasive species, including Ligustrum (*Ligustrum japonicum*), Chinaberry (*Melia azedarach*), and the native, but aggressive Prickly Pear Cactus (*Opuntia spp.*). An Invasive Species Removal Plan will direct and prioritize future stewardship and forest management. At a minimum, such a plan calls for the complete removal of Ligustrum (except in some steep slope areas where it may be beneficial in stabilization).

The Austin Parks Foundation is a resource for removal methods, which include uprooting saplings with tree irons, cutting and applying glyphosate to stumps (under no circumstance should glyphosate or other poisons be used as spray), or ringing mature trees. Species such as Prickly Pear Cactus, which are valuable for their visual interest and as habitat and food source, are not removed entirely but may be cut back in areas where they are crowding other understory vegetation or sapling trees.

The stewardship plan also includes actions to intermittently plant young trees. Annual native tree planting fortifies the longevity of the greenbelt tree canopy.

Aggressive Species

Prickly Pear Cactus

Prickly Pear Cactus should be selectively removed from the greenbelt where it has become aggressive.

Image: Gardening Know How

Ligustrum

Ligustrum, or Privet, should be eliminated from the greenbelt via cutting and the careful application of herbicide according to City of Austin guidelines.

Concept Five: Formalize Parking and Active Transportation Amenities

As a regional greenbelt and one of the largest contiguous open spaces in the City of Austin, the greenbelt is both an amenity for nearby residents and the city as a whole. The provision of parking will be a key necessity in the near future to accommodate future demand for use of the greenbelt.

Accessibility to Little Walnut Creek Greenbelt can be further enhanced through the addition of one or more bridges across Little Walnut Creek connecting to housing developments. To provide this connection, negotiations with adjacent developers would be necessary.

Parking Recommendations

Street Parking (Norwood Hill Road)

The potential future construction of the Norwood Hill Road extension between the greenbelt and the 51East subdivision at the southwest corner of the greenbelt is critical to provide parking areas for the amenities located near this area. This right-of-way is currently owned by the City of Austin and this street is planned but not funded. A funded Norwood Hill Road extension will include parallel parking on both sides of the street for users of the future playground area to the immediate north and to nearby trailheads. The on-street parking at Norwood Hill Road will add up to 100 parking spaces and should be prioritized.

Parking Lot 1 (Rangoon Road)

The largest parking area is recommended adjacent to the current Rangoon Road right-of-way owned by the City of Austin; CTRMA has entered into an agreement with the City of Austin to return this right-of-way to its original condition following their use of it as a staging area for TX-183 reconstruction. Rangoon Road has access to E. 51st Street and the southbound TX-183 frontage road, making this a desirable and accessible location for parking. This location is also located at an existing trail entry. If the City of Austin constructs a paved right-of-way at Rangoon Road with pull-in parking on both sides, this parking location can accommodate between 100 and 150 parking spaces. It remains to be determined whether the City of Austin Transportation Department has identified this road construction as a high priority.

Parking Lot 2 (Springdale Road)

A secondary parking lot is recommended to be located at the existing northernmost entry to the greenbelt from Springdale Road. This existing entrance is used for service to the utilities along the gas line and for service vehicle entry into the northern portion of the greenbelt along Little Walnut Creek. Currently, there are security concerns at this location due to a lack of visibility from Springdale. These sight lines must be improved if parking is to be added in this location; however, the increased use of the greenbelt will substantially alleviate security concerns as more people are present. This parking location is also reconstructed and can accommodate between 50 and 75 additional parking spaces.

Multi-Modality and Accessibility

Bicycle amenities are recommended with all on-site parking. Parking areas include sufficient bicycle parking to meet or exceed City of Austin standards, as well as bicycle repair stations at trailheads. To the extent feasible, covered bicycle parking is recommended at all major greenbelt entries and at parking lots.

Trailheads, parking, and amenities must be designed in compliance with Texas Accessibility Standards. The intent of this master plan is to provide a vibrant public space for users of all ages, abilities, heritage, identities, and financial circumstances.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

This master plan provides initial recommendations for the immediate implementation of these design concepts.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

A key effort moving forward will be the phasing of greenbelt improvements. Some elements of this master plan, such as identifying a consultant or other partner to produce a stewardship plan and direct volunteer forest management, may be implemented immediately and at little cost. Other elements, including the construction of paved trails and installation of playground equipment and structures on site, will require significant funding and design effort.

This master plan recommends that first priority be given to the funding, design, and construction of the playground area along Springdale Road. This design project should include the initial brush clearing and selective forestry to initially define the Active and Passive zones in which the playground area would be built. The playground itself--including play equipment, adult fitness, shade, restrooms, and an enclosed dog park--may be funded incrementally; however, effort should be made to plan and design this location of the greenbelt so that it will be ultimately identifiable as a unified whole.

As the greenbelt programming is realized--and as residential construction continues in the area--parking will become a more pressing need. While the master plan encourages walking and bicycling to the greenbelt, the team also recognizes that a district amenity of this scale will also need to accommodate vehicles to ensure equitable access to all ages, abilities, and financial circumstances.

To this end, the second phasing priority is recommended to be the funding, design, and construction of a surface parking lot at Rangoon Road. This will increase access to the trails and provide visitors easy access to the greenbelt from 51st Street and TX-183. City of Austin standards require that these lots be paved and include accessible parking as well as ample bicycle parking, preferably covered.

With the playground program and initial parking construction in place, the third capital priority is recommended to be the funding, design, and construction of the Active edge, including shared use paths, decomposed granite recreation paths, new planting, trailheads and wayfinding, and amenities such as water fountains, waste receptacles, and dog waste bag stations at key locations to be determined in design phases.

Cost Opinion

A preliminary line item opinion of unit costs accompanies this plan. This should be interpreted as a high-level estimate for the sole purpose of identifying and securing funding for specific capital improvements in the greenbelt. All future design and construction projects should include a more developed opinion of probable cost.

Funding Sources

No funding for improvements to the Little Walnut Creek Greenbelt has been identified to date. The Pecan Springs/Springdale Hills Neighborhood Association will collaborate with PARD in the future to identify small capital projects through the department's operating budget or in collaboration with the City's Neighborhood Partnering Program.

Funding for significant greenbelt improvements may come from future General Obligation bonds. This level of funding, if put on a bond election and approved by voters, could cover major capital expenses such as the construction of the two parking lots, the construction of Norwood Hill Road, the installation of shared use paths and cycle tracks, and the provision of playground equipment and other greenbelt amenities, including connection to electrical and water utilities. Many of these items could be reasonably funded through a parks-based bond or a transportation bond initiative.

Finally, the City and Neighborhood Association will look at philanthropic partnerships with private donors. Continued partnership with the Austin Parks Foundation and Bike Austin, who have consulted on this plan, is strongly encouraged.

Preliminary Opinion of Probable Cost

Concept	Item	Quantity	Unit	Unit Cost	Summary Cost	Comments
Playground/ Adult Fitness/ Restrooms/ Dog Park						
	Restroom	*3*	*ALLOW*	*$ 100,000.00*	*$ 300,000.00*	
	Utilities from Street	*3*	*ALLOW*	*$ 50,000.00*	*$ 150,000.00*	
	Playground equipment and furnishings	*1*	*ALLOW*	*$ 300,000.00*	*$ 300,000.00*	
	Add Nature Play	*1*	*ALLOW*	*$ 100,000.00*	*$ 100,000.00*	
	Dog park fencing and furnishings	*1*	*ALLOW*	*$ 100,000.00*	*$ 100,000.00*	
	Fitness equipment	*1*	*ALLOW*	*$ 50,000.00*	*$ 50,000.00*	
Parking Lots						
	Parking lot (50 spaces x 3 locations)	*56250*	*SF*	*$ 6.00*	*$ 337,500.00*	*375 sq ft per space. Report calls out 50-150 spaces per parking lot.*
Trails						
	Cycle Track	*97140*	*SF*	*$ 6.00*	*$ 582,840.00*	*8095' x 12'*
	Shared Use Path (Decomposed Granite)	*55936*	*SF*	*$ 3.00*	*$ 167,808.00*	*3496' X 16'*
	Recreation Path (Mulch)	*67825*	*SF*	*$ 1.00*	*$ 67,825.00*	*13565' x 5'*
	Wayfinding Signs- internal	*8*	*EA*	*$ 1,000.00*	*$ 8,000.00*	
	Signs- Perimeter	*7*	*EA*	*$ 4,500.00*	*$ 31,500.00*	
Selective forestry						
	Invasive removal, active zone	*760000*	*SF*	*$ 0.25*	*$ 190,000.00*	
Amphitheater/ Outdoor Classrooms/ Pavilion						
	Amphitheater	*1*	*ALLOW*	*$ 500,000.00*	*$ 500,000.00*	
	Outdoor Classroom	*1*	*ALLOW*	*$ 100,000.00*	*$ 100,000.00*	
	Outdoor Classroom	*3*	*ALLOW*	*$ 25,000.00*	*$ 75,000.00*	
	Pavilion(20'x30')	*1*	*ALLOW*	*$ 50,000.00*	*$ 50,000.00*	
Tree Planting						
	New trees- shade and ornamental mix	*50*	*EA*	*$ 300.00*	*$ 15,000.00*	*30 gallon*

This opinion of probable construction cost is made on the basis of Asakura Robinson's experience and qualifications and represents Asakura Robinson's best judgment as an experienced and qualified professional generally familiar with the industry. However, since Asakura Robinson has no control over the cost of labor, materials, equipment, or services furnished by others, or over the Contractor's methods of determining prices, or over competitive bidding or market conditions, Asakura Robinson cannot and does not guarantee that proposals, bids, or actual construction cost will not vary from opinions of probable construction cost as prepared by Asakura Robinson.

Subtotal : $3,125,473.00

20% Contingency: $625,094.60

Grand Total: **$3,750,567.60**

CONCLUSION

With strategic investment and design, The Little Walnut Creek Greenbelt has the potential to become a major asset to the growing neighborhood and Austin community.

CONCLUSION

This master plan, a collaboration with the Pecan Springs/Springdale Hills Neighborhood Association and the National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Texas Field Office, has been created to guide future greenbelt improvements and support fund-raising efforts by identifying key principles and amenities for the greenbelt based on community input and urban design best practices.

The five concepts identified in this plan have demonstrated success in similar public open space utility, and together support a vision for the greenbelt that encourages a wide and constant variety of enriching outdoor experiences for people while also honoring and protecting habitat and stream ecology.

Upon approval by the PARD Board, this plan is to become a planning document of record, reflecting a coordinated effort by the Pecan Springs/ Springdale Hills Neighborhood Association to craft a proactive and inclusive vision for the Little Walnut Creek Greenbelt.

Little Walnut Creek Greenbelt

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