

Bastrop County Parks and Open Space Master Plan

2021-2031

April 2021

Draft



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Acknowledgements

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National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program



Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Bastrop County Office



Keep Bastrop County Beautiful



The Trust for Public Land

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1. Introduction and Community Context

Located in the southwestern part of the “Texas Triangle”, Bastrop County covers 896 miles and is situated 25 miles east of Austin, 130 miles west of Houston, and 200 miles south of Dallas. The area is notable for the Lost Pines forest, a geographically isolated section of loblolly pines which covers the central- eastern part of the County, and the Colorado River, which runs westwards from the Travis County line in the west to Fayette County southeast of Smithville.

History of Bastrop County

Bastrop County was established in 1836, when Bastrop (then Mina) was one of the original 23 counties created after Texan Independence, with a population of 592. The name change from Mina to Bastrop County occurred one year later, and over the next few years the former Mina municipality was divided up into smaller pieces, one being the present day Bastrop County, whose present day borders were not delineated until 1887.

Since then, Bastrop County has grown significantly from its original 592 residents. Transportation played a key part in this – whereas transportation had originally been provided by the small boats and El Camino Real (also known as Old San Antonio Road), the 19th century brought new transportation developments such as the Gotier Trace arterial in 1830 between Mina and San Filipe de Austin, steamboats and ferries along the Colorado River in the middle part of the 19th century, and the construction of the first bridge across the Colorado at Bastrop in 1891. However, it was the construction of the railroads (the first being the Houston and Texas Central Railroad in 1862) which brought about substantial growth to many wider parts of the County, including the settlements of Paige, Smithville, McDade, Red Rock and Elgin. With the railroads came industry, such as coal mining, pottery in McDade, and cotton processing and brick production in Elgin. The 20th century brought yet more change to the county when the Camp Swift military base was established between Bastrop and Elgin during the Second World War.

Today, Bastrop County growth is focused not along railroads but along arterial state roads which connect into the City of Austin. The population of the Austin-Round Rock MSA has increased by almost 30% since 2010 and many residents have relocated from the City of Austin to neighboring counties such as Bastrop due to rising housing costs in the urban core.

Physical Characteristics of Bastrop County

Although the County is experiencing growing development, the majority of the land remains rural and agricultural, with forest and pasture/hay being the most frequently found land cover types in the unincorporated part of the County (see Figure 1 – Land Cover).

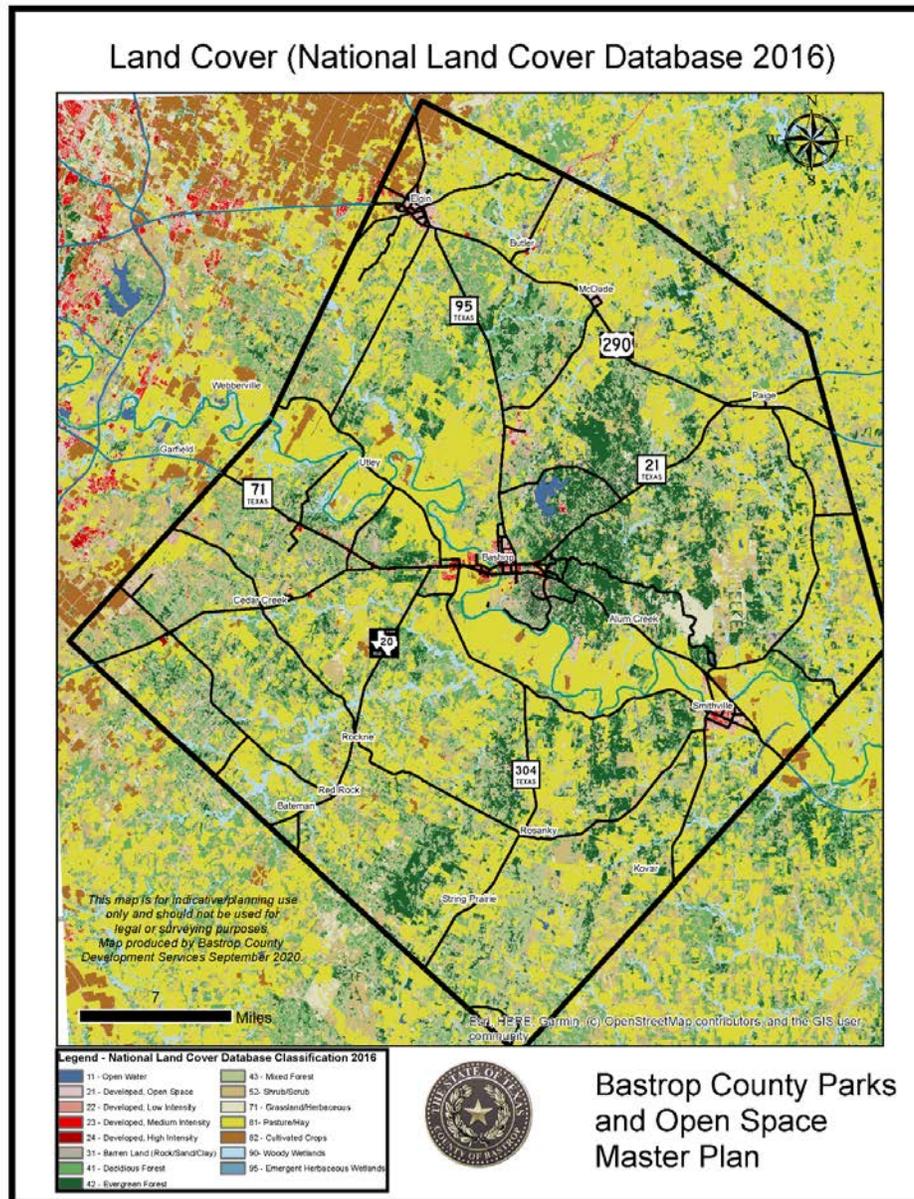


Figure 1

Approximately 13.7 % (78,560 acres) of Bastrop County land is located within the FEMA 100 year floodplain, with 0.02 % (12,371 acres) of the county in the “floodway”. In addition, several Hydrologic

and Hydraulic (H&H) studies undertaken by the County over the last several years have identified additional flood prone areas which are not within the FEMA floodplain. Bastrop County has suffered a number of Federally Declared disasters due to flooding, including Hurricane Harvey in 2017. The eastern part of the county has also experienced challenges in the form of wildfires, including the 2011 Bastrop County Complex Fire which caused the destruction of approximately 1,600 homes throughout 34,000 acres of land and over \$300 million in insured property damage. The “burn scar” which remained also left the land more susceptible to flooding and erosion.

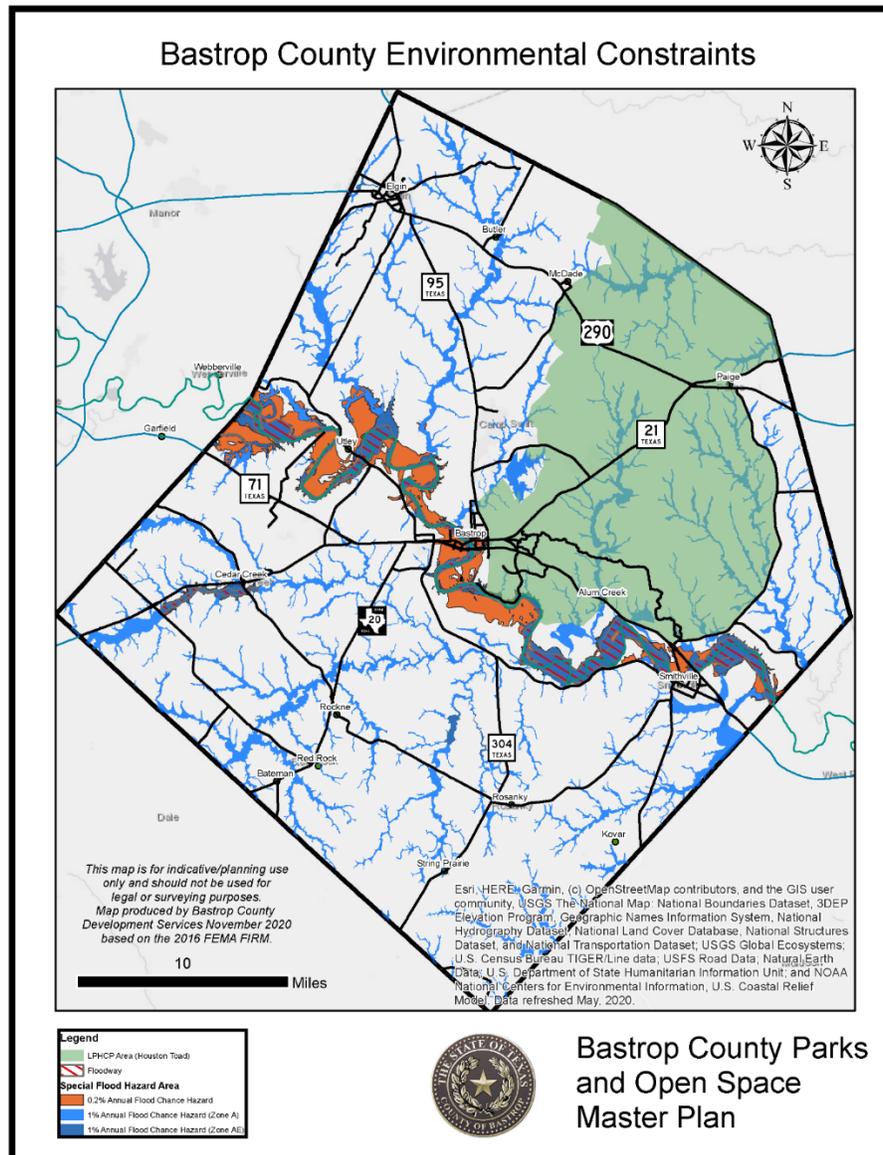


Figure 2

The eastern side of the county is also home to the Houston Toad which was listed as a federally endangered species in October, 1970 under the Endangered Species Act. The toad can be found in the “Lost Pines” of Bastrop County, a portion of loblolly pines separate from the pine forests of East Texas

(over 100 miles away). Approximately 84,000 acres of the county is designated as “Critical Habitat” for the Houston Toad and 124,000 acres of the County (or 28% of the total landmass) falls within the Lost Pines Habitat Conservation Plan Area where additional development permitting requirements have been implemented in order to ensure the integrity of the toad habitat.

Bastrop County Population Growth and Distribution

Bastrop County is part of the Austin-Round Rock- Georgetown Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) which was the third fastest growing metropolitan area in the United States between 2010 and 2019¹. In 2019, the County was estimated to have a population of **88,723** in 2019, a 19.6 % increase from the 2010 Census figure of 74,171, and a 53.7% increase from the 2000 Census figure of 57,733.

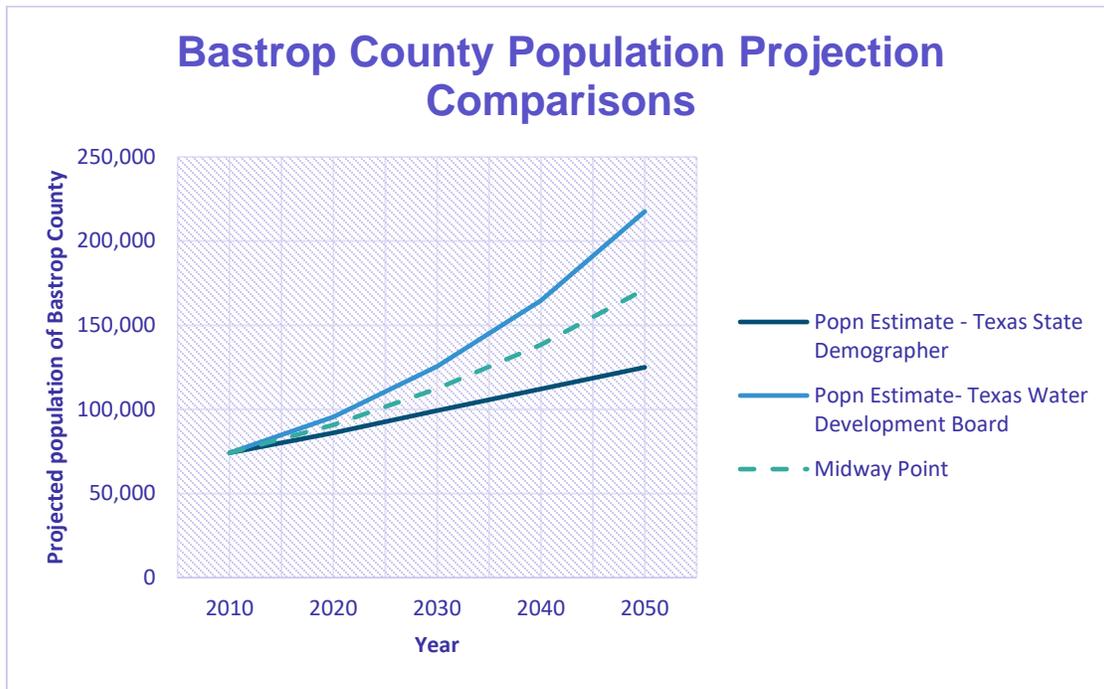


Figure 3 – Population Projections

Bastrop County’s population is projected to continue to increase over the plan period, and there have been a number of different population projections from various sources on the extent of this growth. The most conservative of these is the Texas Office of the State Demographer, which estimates that the Bastrop County population will increase to **99,211** in 2030. The Texas Water Development Board

¹ Based on percentage growth as opposed to numeric growth. US Census Bureau Annual Population Estimates, <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2020/pop-estimates-county-metro.html>

(TWDB) anticipates more rapid growth for the County, estimating that there will be **143,212** Bastrop County residents by 2030.

Population Distribution

The County covers 896 square miles, of which approximately 98% is outside the limits of an incorporated city. Per Census estimates, approximately 74% of Bastrop County residents live in the “unincorporated area” (outside City limits) compared to only 17% of Travis County residents and 49% of Caldwell County residents.

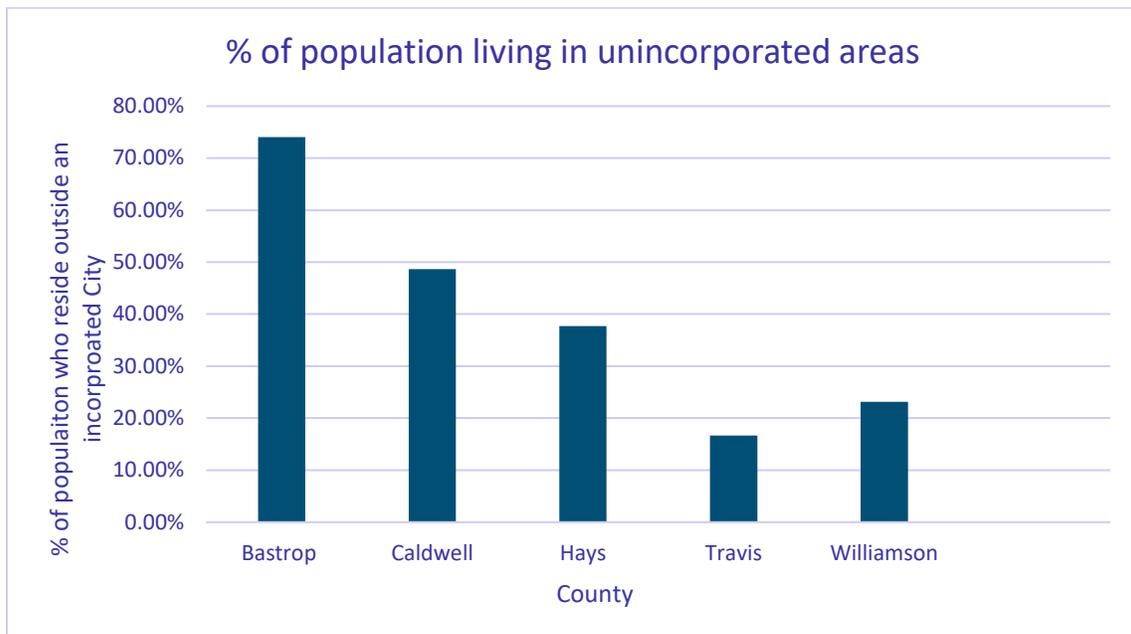


Figure 4 - Incorporated vs Unincorporated Population Distribution in Austin- Round Rock MSA Counties (US Census Bureau)

Figure 5 shows the general address distribution across the County – although the highest density of population does occur within the incorporated City limits, there are clusters of development throughout the unincorporated area, including, but not limited to, the Camp Swift/ LBA area along SH 95 between Bastrop and Elgin, the Twin Creeks area along FM 812 in southeast Bastrop County, the Circle D-KC Estates area along SH 21 East, the Lake Thunderbird area along FM 2104 northeast of Smithville, and the Del Valle area towards the Travis County line.

Address Density in Bastrop County

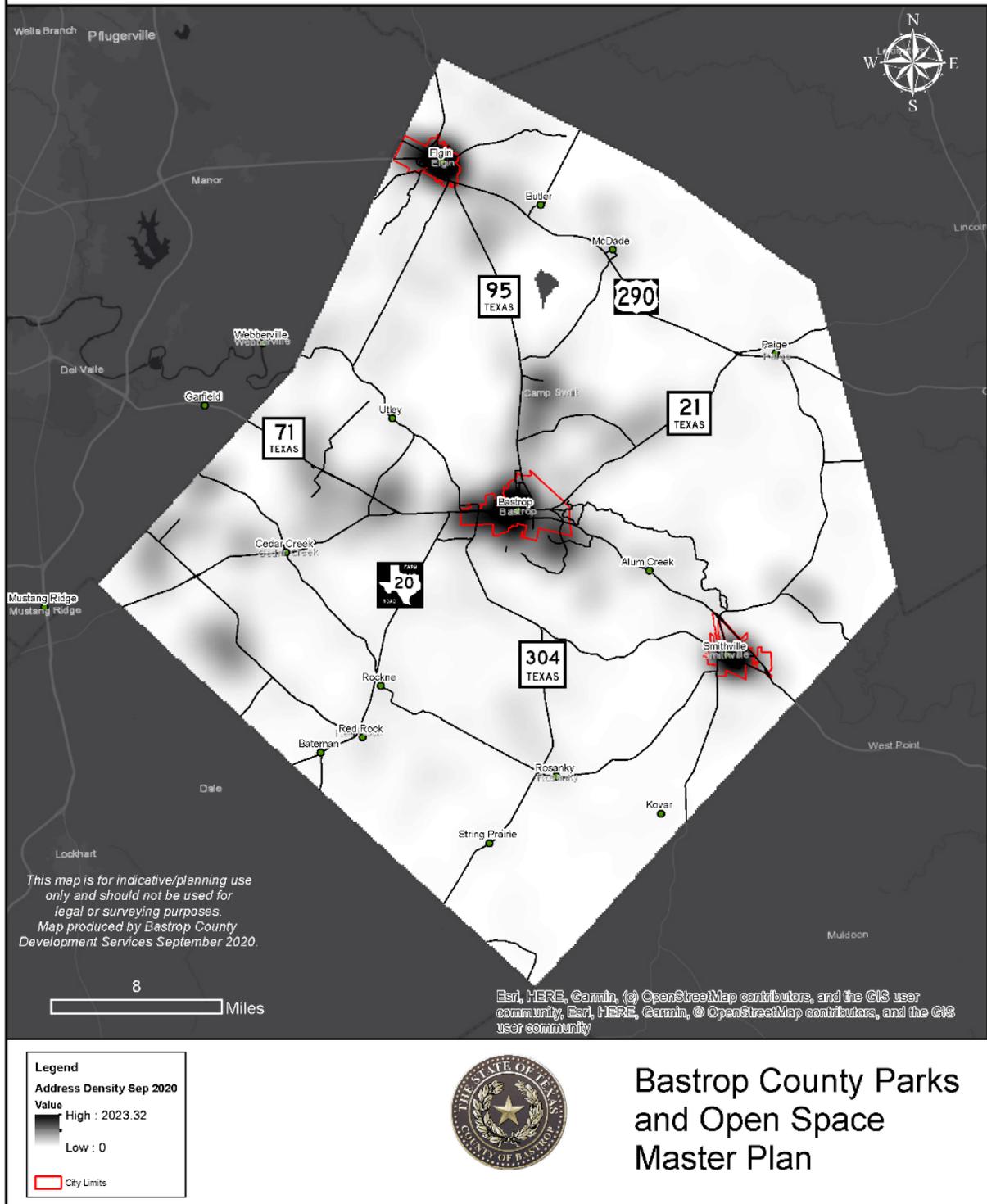


Figure 5 - Address Density in Bastrop County heat map. (The land within the red boundaries is considered "incorporated" or within the City limits.)

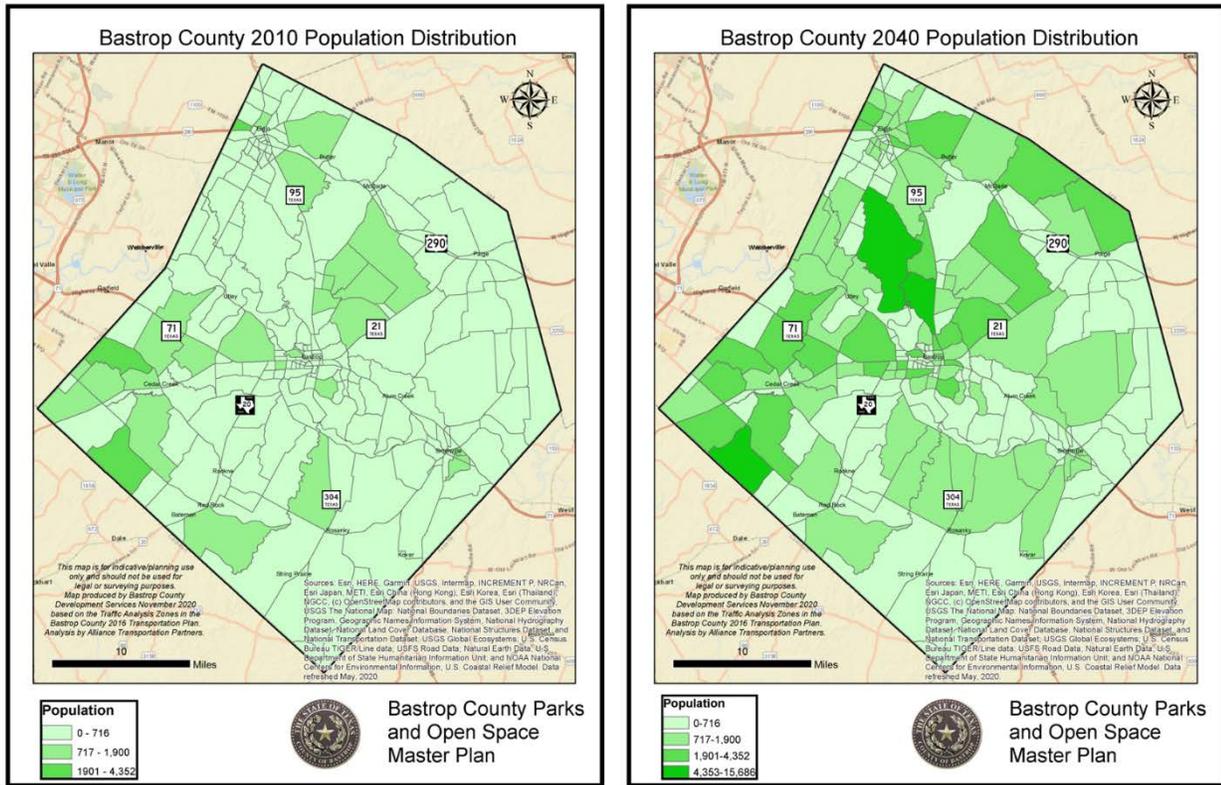


Figure 6 Population Distribution by Traffic Analysis Zone (TAZ) - Bastrop County 2016 Transportation Plan

Race and Ethnicity

According to the Census Bureau’s American Community Survey 2018 5 year estimates, approximately 68.5 % of the population identifies as “white”, 6.9% identify as “Black or African American”, 3.4% identify as “American Indian and Alaska Native” and 24.6% identified as “some other race”. 39.7% of the County’s population identify as “Hispanic or Latino (of any race)”.

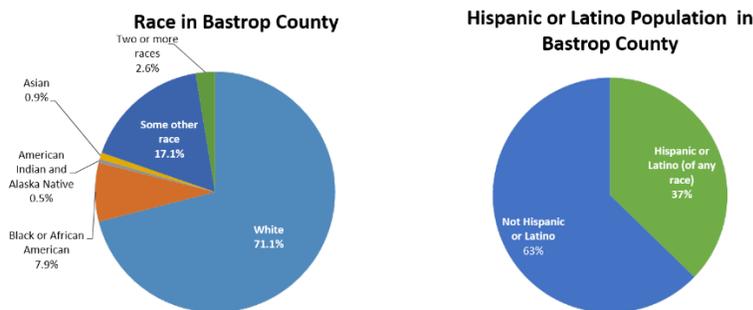


Figure 7 - Race and Ethnicity in Bastrop County, American Community Survey 2018 5 Year Estimates

Age

The average (median) age of a Bastrop County resident is 38.6, which is 4.2 years higher than the average of the Austin-Round Rock MSA and the State of Texas, and 0.7 years higher than the national average. However, as the bar chart below shows, Bastrop County has a higher percentage of children than the national average – with 25.5% of Bastrop County residents under 18 years of age, compared to only 22.8% of residents in the USA².

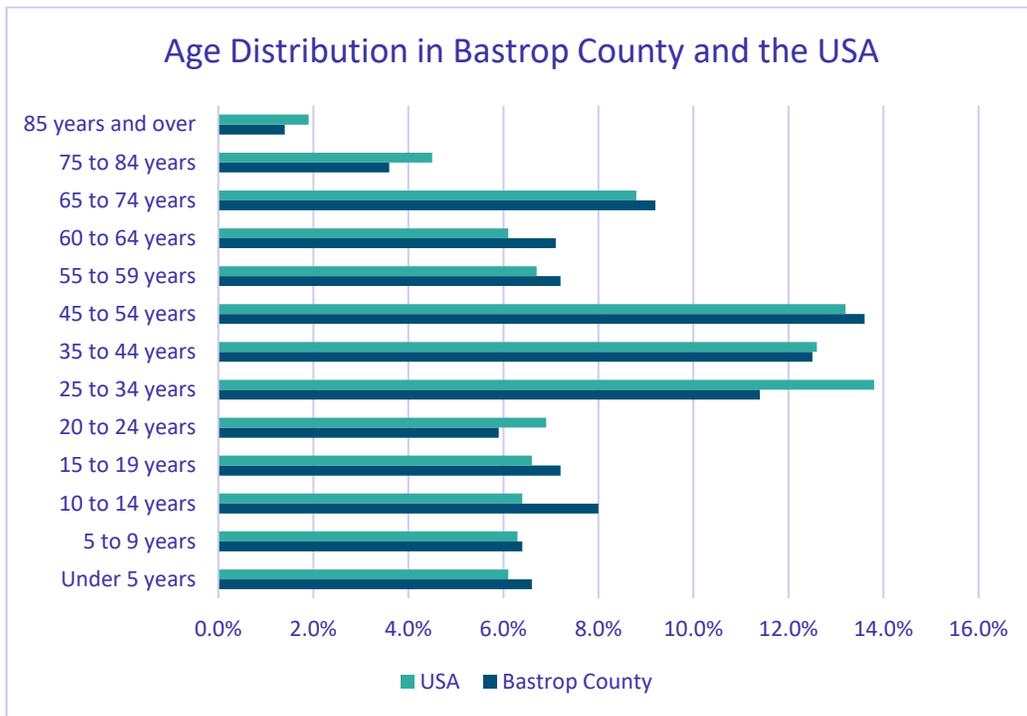


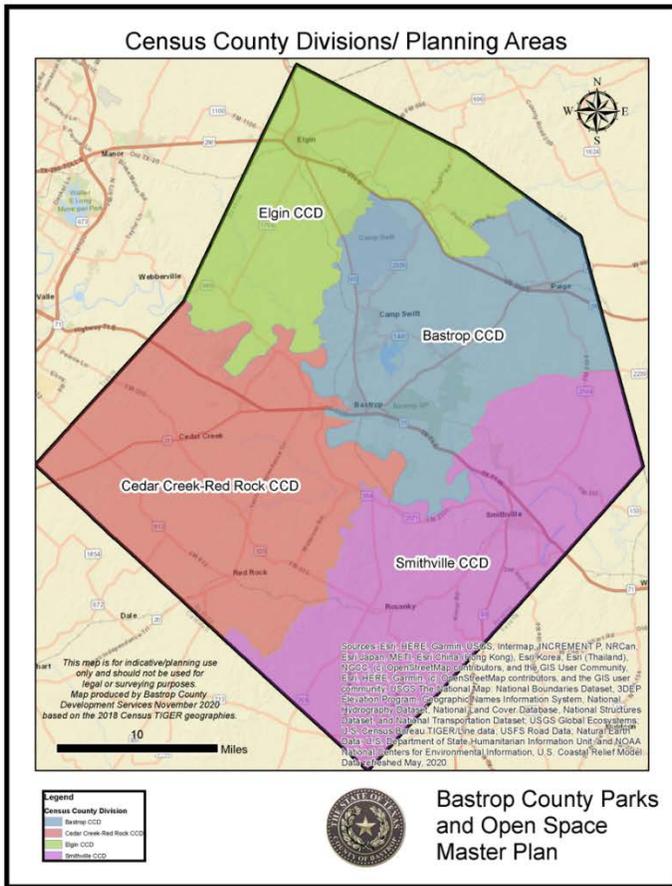
Figure 8

Socio-economic profile of the four County Census County Divisions/ Planning Areas

The Census Bureau divides the County into four separate “divisions”. The key data for each of these divisions is summarized on the next page. These divisions will also be referenced in the County Parks Inventory Section later on in this report.

Additional maps showing demographic details by census tract and block group can be found in Appendix A of this document.

² American Community Survey 2018 5 Year Estimates (US Census Bureau)



American Community Survey 2018 5 Year Estimates	Bastrop CCD	Cedar Creek -Red Rock CCD	Elgin CCD	Smithville CCD
Total population	24,079	30,898	17,517	10,083
Median age	41.4	33.4	37.5	46
Percent white	85.6%	64.4%	66.5%	81.3%
Percent Hispanic	27.8%	49.5%	40.4%	13.2%
Percentage African American	7.3%	6.1%	14.4%	12.5%
Percentage in poverty	8.6%	9.1%	13.2%	10.6%
Average household size	2.91	3.54	3.32	2.64

Figure 9 – American Community Survey Census Data by Census County Division (CCD)

Public Health in Bastrop County

Access to open space is often cited as a key strategy in the promotion of public health, and so the following section gives a brief overview of some key health demographics of county residents.

According to the American Community Survey 2018 5 Year estimates, **13.7%** of the Bastrop County civilian noninstitutionalized population has a disability, 1.1% higher than the national average. Residents identifying as “Black or African American” or “White alone – not Hispanic or Latino” are more likely to have a registered disability (20.1% and 16.7% respectively) compared to their Hispanic counterparts (8.2%). Bastrop County also had a higher proportion of working age adults reporting a disability – **16.7%** of noninstitutionalized civilians between 35 and 64 years old had a disability, compared with only 9.6% of 35 to 64 year olds across the MSA. Ambulatory difficulties were the most common problem for Bastrop County residents, impacting 8% of noninstitutionalized residents, followed by independent living difficulties, hearing difficulties, and cognitive difficulties.

Approximately **16.3%** of the Civilian noninstitutionalized population (and 11.1% of children under 19) does have any health insurance coverage, compared to a national average of 9.4%. Almost a fifth (19%) of the civilian population who had jobs still do not have any health insurance coverage.

One of the biggest public health issues in Bastrop County is chronic disease.³ Adult obesity in Bastrop County is higher than average – per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 38% of adults aged 20+ years in Bastrop County have a body mass index (BMI) classified as “obese”. This is partly attributable to “sedentary lifestyles”. According to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 52% of Bastrop County residents did not have access to exercise opportunities (compared to 9% across the USA and 19% in Texas).

Residents of Bastrop County also have longer commutes than the Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) as a whole with a median commute to work time of 34.4 minutes each way; this is around 8 minutes longer than the average commute length for the State of Texas, and 7.3 minutes longer than the mean commute for the Austin-Round Rock MSA. Of the Cities and Census Designated Places (CDPs), the Circle D-KC Estates had the longest commute length (38.2 minutes one way) whereas the City of Elgin had the shortest (26.4 minutes). 14.9% of Bastrop County workers commute 60 minutes or more each way every day compared to only 7.8% across the MSA⁴.

Previous Planning Efforts

Bastrop County Parks Master Plan 2001 – 2011

Bastrop County originally developed and adopted a Parks and Open Space Master Plan in 2001. At that time, Bastrop County did not own or manage any parks, however one recommendation of the plan was that the County actively procure land for a County Park in southwestern Bastrop County. Cedar Creek Park opened in 2008 on land formerly owned by the Bastrop Independent School District. Site plans were developed by the County as part of the initial acquisition, grant applications and development of the park – Figure 10 shows the proposed long term development and phasing of the site.

³ Ascension Seton East Region Community Health Needs Assessment - <https://www.seton.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/East-CHNA-May-2019.pdf>

⁴ US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2014-2018 5 Year Estimates

Other Planning Efforts

In addition to these planning studies, there have also been a number of planning documents developed by third parties which cover Bastrop County including the Central Texas Greenprint in 2012, and the Healthy Parks Plan for Travis, Bastrop, and Caldwell Counties in 2019. Both of these efforts were managed by the Trust for Public Land, with the latter funded by the St David's Foundation. Bastrop County has utilized some of the data generated by the Trust for Public Land during the Healthy Parks Plan as a baseline for this planning study. The St David's Foundation also provided funding to develop a Master Plan for Stony Point Park in partnership with Bastrop County Cares, a local nonprofit. The plan was developed by Asakura Robinson in 2020 and involved a number of workshops with the local community – the final document has served as input into this wider County Plan.



Figure 11 - Stony Point Park Master Plan (courtesy of Asakura Robinson)

The Cities of Bastrop and Elgin also have their own adopted Parks and Open Space Master Plans, and at the time of writing the City of Elgin was in the process of updating its plan.

2. Planning Process and Methodology



Figure 12 - Bastrop County Nature Park

Vision

Bastrop County desires to provide all the residents with adequate, safe, and reliable facilities, and to address the needs of the rapidly growing population within Bastrop County, including the needs for varied types of recreational activities from organized sports to the enjoyment of the natural beauty of the County.

Time period for the plan

The time period for this plan is 10 years, with a recommended update in 5 years in order to ensure that the plan remains current with the needs of this rapidly growing county. It is also suggested that the County undertake an annual community park survey of local residents in order to consolidate resident suggestions and concerns which may develop over time. This plan may be amended to include additional projects subject to a public outreach process and approval by the Bastrop County Commissioners Court.

Goals and Objectives

The following goals and objectives were developed by the Bastrop County Parks Advisory Committee and refined through feedback during public meetings in September 2020. The goals are used as a basis for the project scoring criteria which are set out on the following page.

Plan Goals and Objectives

Goal 1.0 Parks and recreational facilities should be accessible to all county residents.

Objective 1.1 All recreational facilities should be designed to provide access regardless of age, sex, income, cultural differences, location in the county, and handicap status.

Objective 1.2 Parks should be developed in tandem with incorporated communities so that existing resources can be leveraged to address the recreational deficiencies of rural residents.

Objective 1.3 Parks planning should take into account population distribution and growth in the county so new parks can be placed where the population concentrations are the highest.

Objective 1.4 Where feasible, all parks should be equipped with sufficient supporting amenities such as bathrooms and accessible parking.

Goal 2.0 Open spaces and natural habitats should be preserved for future generations.

Objective 2.1 The County should partner with organizations to provide environmental education opportunities. Interpretive signage and other educational displays need to be incorporated with parks so that future generations do not lose the Bastrop legacy of its natural resources such as the Lost Pines.

Objective 2.2 Parks should be integrated with the preservation of endangered and declining species.

Objective 2.3 Wetland and native species preservation should be considered during the acquisition and development of County Parks.

Goal 3.0 Public recreation should be integrated with all public services

Objective 3.1 Park planning and management should be coordinated with the Sheriff's Department and local community watch networks to ensure the safety of existing and future parks.

Objective 3.2 All transportation programs need to be linked to facilitating access to future County Parks. Transportation services need to be considered for residents who live in outlying areas.

Objective 3.3 Where feasible, the County should promote active transportation by identifying pedestrian and biking opportunities to safely link existing parks to nearby high density neighborhoods.

Objective 3.4 The County should partner with local health providers to encourage park use as a way of improving physical and mental health.

Goal 4.0 Public recreation should be coordinated with other community recreation providers to avoid unnecessary duplication and promote innovation.

Objective 4.1 With limited financial resources, the County needs to consider joint venturing with incorporated communities, school districts, State installations, and other non-governmental community organizations so that their resources can be leveraged to provide recreational opportunities in the County.

Objective 4.2 The County should develop partnerships with existing recreation providers to provide programming opportunities.

Objective 4.3 Surplus lands owned by public entities can be used for park development.

Goal 5.0 Park planning should be coordinated with new development.

Objective 5.1 As appropriate, the County should collaborate with developers to provide for the recreational needs of the future residents. The County should be open to accepting appropriate park and open space dedication in new subdivision plats.

Objective 5.2 Flood plains make ideal locations for open space recreational activities – the County should consider park and open space opportunities in the floodplain when approving new subdivisions and when contemplating buyouts for flood mitigation purposes.

Objective 5.3 Not all parkland is created equal – the County should develop a "Parkland Acceptance Policy" that identifies the criteria for accepting new parkland into the County system which considers both the long term maintenance burden on the County and the potential benefits to the wider community.

Goal 6.0 Parks and recreational planning should be incorporated into tourism and economic development efforts.

Objective 6.1 Parks and recreation facilities are economic development issues that affect a company or industry's locational decisions – the County should partner with organizations that will promote activities in the park and attract visitors, and clearly market all of its parks to the public.

Objective 6.2 Broadband development is critical to the economic resiliency of unincorporated Bastrop County. County parks in areas which have limited internet service should provide Wi-Fi connectivity to the public.

Objective 6.3 Bastrop County Parks should enhance and maintain public access to, and stewardship of, the Colorado River.

Goal 7.0 Parks and recreational programs must find ways to celebrate the variety of cultures within the community.

Objective 7.1 Parks need to be sensitive to the cultural contributions made by all population groups in the County.

Objective 7.2 Special occasions or festivals that celebrate events in the County should be incorporated into park planning.

Goal 8.0 Bastrop County needs to put appropriate organizational mechanisms in place to ensure the long term sustainability of the County Parks system.

Objective 8.1 The Department of General Services should be renamed "Department of General and Park Services" to clearly identify its role within the maintenance and management of existing and future County parks.

Objective 8.2 Fund raising for parks and recreational programs needs to be an ongoing effort.

Objective 8.3 Volunteers are critical to the long term sustainability of the Parks system. Bastrop County should establish and support a network of volunteers in partnership with local nonprofits, and develop a "Park Host" program to assist in the maintenance and security of the park.

Methodology

This plan was developed over the course of approximately one year, and involved extensive stakeholder and public participation.

The development of the plan was overseen by the Bastrop County Parks Advisory Committee, a resident and stakeholder group established in 2019 by the Commissioners Court in order to provide guidance on program creation and planning, program policy and procedures, planning and implementing public relations, and fund raising for Bastrop County parks and related programs. County staff also worked in partnership with Texas AgriLife Extension Bastrop County Office (who oversee the Master Naturalists and Master Gardener programs in Bastrop County), Keep Bastrop County Beautiful and the National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Technical Assistance program.

The development of this plan can be broken down into three main phases.

Phase 1 –Community Survey and initial Parks Advisory Committee workshops

Although in person outreach had originally been planned for the development of the masterplan, in March 2020 the global COVID-19 pandemic forced the County to reevaluate its public outreach strategy and pivot to an online approach.

Workshops with the Parks Advisory Committee were held in spring 2020 to discuss the background to the plan, goals and objectives, outreach strategies, and park standards. The team also gathered data from previous plans and studies that had been undertaken

In May 2020, the County conducted an online survey to generate stakeholder feedback on each of the County parks, as well as identify potential opportunities for capital improvement projects. The survey was made available for approximately 1 month in English and Spanish, and was shared directly with a number of stakeholders including school districts, non-profits, Head Start, City park staff and homeowners' associations as well as being promoted on social media.

161 responses were received to the survey, with the majority of those being located in the 78602 (Bastrop) zip code.

The full results of this survey can be found in the appendices of this plan.

Phase 2 – Initial Public Outreach Meetings

Following on from a number of summer workshops with the County Parks Advisory Committee, in September 2020 the County hosted a series of online workshops with the local community members where residents were asked for their feedback on the proposed goals and objectives of the plan, as well as the wording and weighting of the project scoring criteria. Summaries of these workshops can be found in the appendices of this document.

As part of this phase a plan website was established which contained details of draft goals and objectives, project ideas, scoring criteria, and demographic and park access maps as well as general educational material in English and Spanish about the County Parks system. The website was also used to share copies of the presentations used during the public meetings for those who were unable to attend.



**BASTROP COUNTY PARKS
AND OPEN SPACE MASTER
PLAN COMMUNITY
MEETING**

Join us for an online public workshop on
the future of Bastrop County Parks!

[Online Workshop Dates and Times](#)

Tuesday, December 8th, 2020 at 2:30pm
<https://bit.ly/35Zdwgp>

Wednesday, December 9th, 2020 at 6 pm
<https://bit.ly/2J8bv9h>

Visit the Master Plan website at
co.bastrop.tx.us/page/par_openspace for
more information.

Figure 13 - Social Media Graphic for December Meeting (English)

Phase 3 – Second Series of Public Meetings and publication of Draft Plan

In December 2020 a second series of virtual public meetings was held. During these meetings, County and National Park Service staff discussed potential project ideas, green infrastructure and flood mitigation opportunities as well as park standards. Around this time, the County also hosted a virtual volunteer and nonprofit workshop in partnership with Texas AgriLife Extension Office and Keep Bastrop

County Beautiful where collaboration and development opportunities were discussed with existing and potential volunteers. Virtual breakout sessions were utilized in order to ensure as many participants as possible were able to give their input.

Parks and Open Space Classifications and Standards

Traditional Park Standards

The most frequently utilized standards for park and recreation facilities are those developed by the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA). These standards outline the estimated population that one amenity can serve, or the minimum suggested facilities per population (see table below for examples). Over the last decade and a half, NRPA has moved away from prescriptive park and facility standards and replaced them with level of service (LOS) standards based on comparisons to *peer agencies* serving communities of similar size. The NRPA, in collaboration with the Trust for Public Land and Urban Land Institute, has also developed the 10-Minute Walk campaign, which recommends that residents have access to parks within a ten-minute walk of their front door.

The New Standards for Bastrop County identified in this plan were adapted from NRPA’s traditional guidelines, the goals of the 10-Minute Walk campaign, peer agency performance, and community survey responses.

Select NRPA Traditional Standards

Recreation Facility / Amenity	Suggested amount
Total parkland	10 acres/1,000
Baseball (adult & HS)	1 field/10,000
Baseball (youth)	1 field/6,000
Basketball (outdoor)	1 court/2,000
Basketball (indoor)	1 court/5000
Football Field	1 field/10,000
Golf Course	1 course/25,000
Handball court	1 court/5,000
Horseshoe court	1 court/2,000
Multi-use court	1 court/3,000
Outdoor Theater	1 theater/20,000
Picnic Shelters	1 shelter/2,000
Playgrounds	1 playground/2,000
Soccer Fields	1 field/4,000

Softball Fields (adult)	1 field/3,000
Softball Fields (youth)	1 field/5,000
Swimming Pool (25m)	1 pool/10,000
Swimming Pool (50m)	1 pool/20,000
Tennis Courts	1 court/2,000
Trail, Bicycle	1 mile/2000
Trail, Equestrian	1 mile/6,250
Trail, Exercise	1 mile/7,500
Trail, Hiking	1 mile/4,000
Trail, Jogging	1 mile/2,000
Trail, Nature	1 mile/2,500
Volleyball Courts	1 court/3,000
Wading Pool	1 pool/5,000

Table 1 - Select NRPA Traditional Standards



Figure 14 - Basketball Court at Cedar Creek Park

NRPA now recommends gauging agency performance not by achievement of the set standards above, but in comparison to agencies serving communities of a similar size. The tables below show data obtained from NRPA for 36 communities with populations between 20,000 and 250,000 residents.

Agency Summary Effectiveness Ratios			
	Total Agencies	Median	Bastrop County General Services (Parks Section)
Operating expenditures per capita	36	\$29	\$0.56
Revenue per capita	32	\$8	0
Total revenue to total operating expenditures	31	24.3%	n/a
Total tax expenditures per capita	31	\$25	0.56
Park operating expenditures per acre of parkland	27	\$1,358	833
Operating expenditures per acre of parkland	30	\$3,987	833
Operating expenditures per acres of parks and non-park sites	24	\$3,120	833
Operating expenditures per FTE	34	\$81,286	833
FTE's per 10,000 population	34	3.6	0.45
Acres of parks per 1,000 residents	30	9.6	0.74
Number of residents per park	31	5,175.3	29574.33
Number of acres per park	30	55.4	22
Number of participants per program	23	166.7	n/a
Ratio of fee programs to all programs	22	83.1%	n/a
Ratio of building attendance to park attendance	19	12.5%	n/a

Table 2 - NRPA Agency Summary Effectiveness Ratios for Counties with Populations of 20,000-250,000

Agency Responsibilities			
	Percentage of Agencies Listing this Item as a Responsibility	Number of Agencies Listing this Item as a Responsibility	Bastrop County General Services (Parks Section)
Agency Responsibilities			
a. Operate and maintain park sites	94.1%	32	Yes
b. Operate and maintain indoor facilities	79.4%	27	No
c. Operate, maintain, or contract golf courses	17.6%	6	No
d. Operate, maintain, or contract campgrounds	35.3%	12	Yes (Boy Scouts only at Cedar Creek Park)
e. Operate, maintain, or contract indoor swim facility	23.5%	8	No
f. Operate, maintain, or contract outdoor swim facilities/water parks	47.1%	16	No
g. Operate, maintain, or contract tennis center facilities	32.4%	11	No
h. Operate, maintain, or contract tourism attractions	44.1%	15	No
i. Provide recreation programming and services	79.4%	27	No
j. Operate and maintain non-park sites	64.7%	22	No
k. Operate, maintain, or manage trails, greenways, and/or blueways (TGB)	79.4%	27	Yes
l. Operate, maintain, or manage special purpose parks and open spaces	67.6%	23	No
m. Manage or maintain fairgrounds	11.8%	4	No
n. Maintain, manage or lease indoor performing arts center	8.8%	3	No

	<i>Number of Facilities Operated by Peer Agencies</i>	<i>Median Population Per Facility</i>	<i>Bastrop County General Services (Parks Division)</i>
o. Administer or manage farmer's markets	2.9%	1	No
p. Administer community gardens	14.7%	5	No
q. Manage large performance outdoor amphitheaters	26.5%	9	No
r. Administer or manage professional or college-type stadium/arena/racetrack	8.8%	3	No
s. Administer or manage tournament/event quality indoor sports complexes	14.7%	5	No
t. Administer or manage tournament/event quality outdoor sports complexes	38.2%	13	No
u. Conduct major jurisdiction wide special events	73.5%	25	No
v. Have budgetary responsibility for its administrative staff	79.4%	27	No
w. Include in its operating budget the funding for planning and development functions	61.8%	21	No

Table 3 - NRPA Agency Responsibilities for Counties with Populations of 20,000 - 250,000

	Facilities			
		Number of Facilities Operated by Peer Agencies	Median Population Per Facility	Bastrop County General Services (Parks Division)
1	Jurisdiction population per facility or activity areas within facilities:			
	a. Recreation centers	16	49,243.5	Not provided by Bastrop County
	b. Community centers	17	35,108	Not provided by Bastrop County
	c. Senior centers	7	76,397	Not provided by Bastrop County
	d. Teen centers	1	43,051	Not provided by Bastrop County
	e. Fitness center	3	89,866	Not provided - outdoor fitness park provided in Cedar Creek Park
	f. Gyms	5	44,933	Not provided by Bastrop County
	g. Stadiums	7	76,397	Not provided by Bastrop County
	h. Ice rink	1	134,557	Not provided by Bastrop County
	i. Arena	1	160,912	Not provided by Bastrop County
	j. Performance amphitheater	9	149,960	Not provided by Bastrop County
	k. Indoor track	1	78,870.7	Not provided by Bastrop County
	l. Nature centers	9	184,998	Not provided by Bastrop County
2	Jurisdiction population per outdoor facility:			
	a. Playgrounds	28	8,446.1	44,361.5
	b. Totlots	11	30,841.7	Not provided by Bastrop County
	c. Community gardens	5	13,049.5	Not provided by Bastrop County
	d. Basketball courts	25	14,350.3	88,723.0

		<i>Number of Facilities Operated by Peer Agencies</i>	<i>Median Population Per Facility</i>	<i>Bastrop County General Services (Parks Division)</i>
	e. Multiuse courts - basketball, volleyball	14	38,666.7	88,723.0
	f. Tennis courts (outdoor only)	22	7,357.1	Not provided by Bastrop County
	g. Diamond fields: baseball - youth	24	10,475	88,723.0
	h. Diamond fields: baseball - adult	16	45,213.5	Not provided by Bastrop County
	i. Diamond fields: softball fields - youth	20	13,731.9	Not provided by Bastrop County
	j. Diamond fields: softball fields - adult	20	35,564.6	88,723.0
	k. Diamond fields: tee-ball	1	61,666	88,723.0
	l. Skate park	11	112,664	Not provided by Bastrop County
	m. Dog park	19	78,870.7	Not provided by Bastrop County
	n. Ice rink (outdoor only)	0	n/a	Not provided by Bastrop County
	o. Rectangular fields: multi-purpose	21	15,523.1	88,723.0
	p. Rectangular fields: cricket field	1	89,866	Not provided by Bastrop County
	q. Rectangular fields: field hockey field	3	39,600	Not provided by Bastrop County
	r. Rectangular fields: football field	16	22,351	88,723.0
	s. Rectangular fields: lacrosse field	3	24,993.3	Not provided by Bastrop County
	t. Rectangular fields: soccer field - adult	13	23,124.8	88,723.0
	u. Rectangular fields: soccer field - youth	12	10,232.8	12,674.7

		<i>Number of Facilities Operated by Peer Agencies</i>	<i>Median Population Per Facility</i>	<i>Bastrop County General Services (Parks Division)</i>
	v. Overlay field	3	11,562.4	Not provided by Bastrop County
	w. Multipurpose synthetic field	5	13,632.7	Not provided by Bastrop County
3	Jurisdiction population per golf facility:			
	a. Driving range stations	3	10,727.5	Not provided by Bastrop County
	b. Regulation 18-hole courses	5	112,664	Not provided by Bastrop County
	c. Regulation 9-hole courses	0	NA	Not provided by Bastrop County
	d. Executive 9-hole courses	0	NA	Not provided by Bastrop County
	e. Executive 18-hole courses	0	NA	Not provided by Bastrop County
	f. Par 3; 18-hole courses	0	NA	Not provided by Bastrop County
	g. Par 3; 9-hole courses	0	NA	Not provided by Bastrop County
4	Jurisdiction population per swimming/ aquatics facility.			
	a. Aquatics centers	5	134,557	Not provided by Bastrop County
	b. Swimming pools (outdoor only)	12	64,466.3	Not provided by Bastrop County
	c. Indoor competitive swimming pools: 50 meters	4	175,880	Not provided by Bastrop County
	d. Indoor competitive swimming pools: 25 meters	5	89,866	Not provided by Bastrop County
	e. Other indoor competitive swimming pools	1	149,960	Not provided by Bastrop County

		<i>Number of Facilities Operated by Peer Agencies</i>	<i>Median Population Per Facility</i>	<i>Bastrop County General Services (Parks Division)</i>
	f. Indoor separated diving well	2	175,880	Not provided by Bastrop County
	g. Total indoor competitive swimming pools	7	92,525	Not provided by Bastrop County
	h. Indoor pool designated exclusively for leisure	3	92,525	Not provided by Bastrop County
	i. Therapeutic pool	5	92,525	Not provided by Bastrop County

Table 4 - NRPA Facility Standards for Counties with Populations of 20,000- 250,000



Figure 15 - Stony Point Park

New Standards for Bastrop County

The NRPA standards and peer agency statistics outlined above provide insight and general guidelines for recreation planning. The resources and population of Bastrop County demanded more detailed analysis and adapted standards to reflect the trends, needs, and desires of county park users. The following standards have been adapted from NRPA traditional standards, peer agency performance data, and resident survey responses.

Most guidelines require that parks be readily accessible by residents to be counted in public park inventories; as such, parks in gated communities, HOA parks, private fields or stadia, and private amenities with entrance fees are generally not included in park and facility calculations.

Recreation Facility / Amenity	Standard
Baseball (adult &HS)	1 field/10,000
Baseball (youth) / Softball	1 field/6,000
Basketball (outdoor)	1 court/2,000
Basketball (indoor)	1 court/5000
Football Field	1 field/10,000
Picnic Shelters	1 shelter/2,000
Playgrounds	1 playground/2,000
Restrooms	1 set per park
Soccer Fields	1 field/4,000
Swimming Pool (25m)	1 pool/10,000
Swimming Pool (50m)	1 pool/20,000
Tennis Courts	1 court/5,000
Trail, Paved	1 mile/10,000
Trail, Unpaved	1 mile/2,000
Volleyball Courts	1 court/3,000
Water Fountains	1 per park
Wading Pool	1 pool/5,000
Distance to Park for Majority of Population	5-mile drive

Table 5 - Proposed Adjusted Standards

In addition to periodically updating or modifying the standards outlined above, Bastrop County may consider and adopt other standards relevant to this plan, such as those pertaining to open space, conservation, staff, demand, and programming. All changes to park and recreation facility standards shall follow the same adoption process as other amendments to this plan.

Other Metrics

As with park standards, there are multiple options for measuring progress in park service provision. One holistic assessment framework is ChangeLab Solution’s *Complete Park Indicators: A Systems Approach to Assessing Parks*, which was developed specifically for local governments providing parks and recreation. This guide includes dozens of indicators of community and park system health broken up into the following seven categories:

1. Inclusive, Meaningful, Ongoing Dialogue (*Engage*)
2. Safe Routes to Parks (*Connect*)
3. Equitable Distribution of Complete Parks (*Locate*)
4. Community-Led Park Activities and Programs (*Activate*)
5. Parks Maintenance and Ecology (*Grow*)
6. Safety in and Around Parks (*Protect*)
7. Park Funding (*Fund*)

The *Complete Park Indicators* framework outlines the process of collecting and analyzing data for each of these topics. Data collected can be utilized to assess agency and park performance, identify gaps in service, and prioritize park projects. See more details in Appendix B (*Complete Park Indicators*).

Bastrop County will conduct yearly reviews of its parks and open space utilizing community surveys and the Complete Park Indicators or a similar framework.

Park Types and Service Areas

In addition to the amenity based standards described above, it is important to take into account the geographical context of where parkland is located, and the varying service areas of each park depending on its size. In 2019, the Trust for Public Land developed the following “Park Type” classification method as part of the development of the St David’s Healthy Parks Plan, which is set out in the table below.

Park Type	Park Size (Acres)	Typical Service Area
Pocket	<1	10-minute walk (0.5 mile)
Neighborhood	1-15	10 minute walk (0.5 mile)
Community	15-30	2 miles (driving)
District	30-200	5 miles (driving)
Metropolitan	200+	10 miles (driving)

Table 6 - Typical Service Areas by Park Size (Trust for Public Land Healthy Parks Plan)

These park types were taken into consideration when compiling the Parkland Inventory and Needs Assessment later on in this report.

3. Bastrop County Parks Inventory

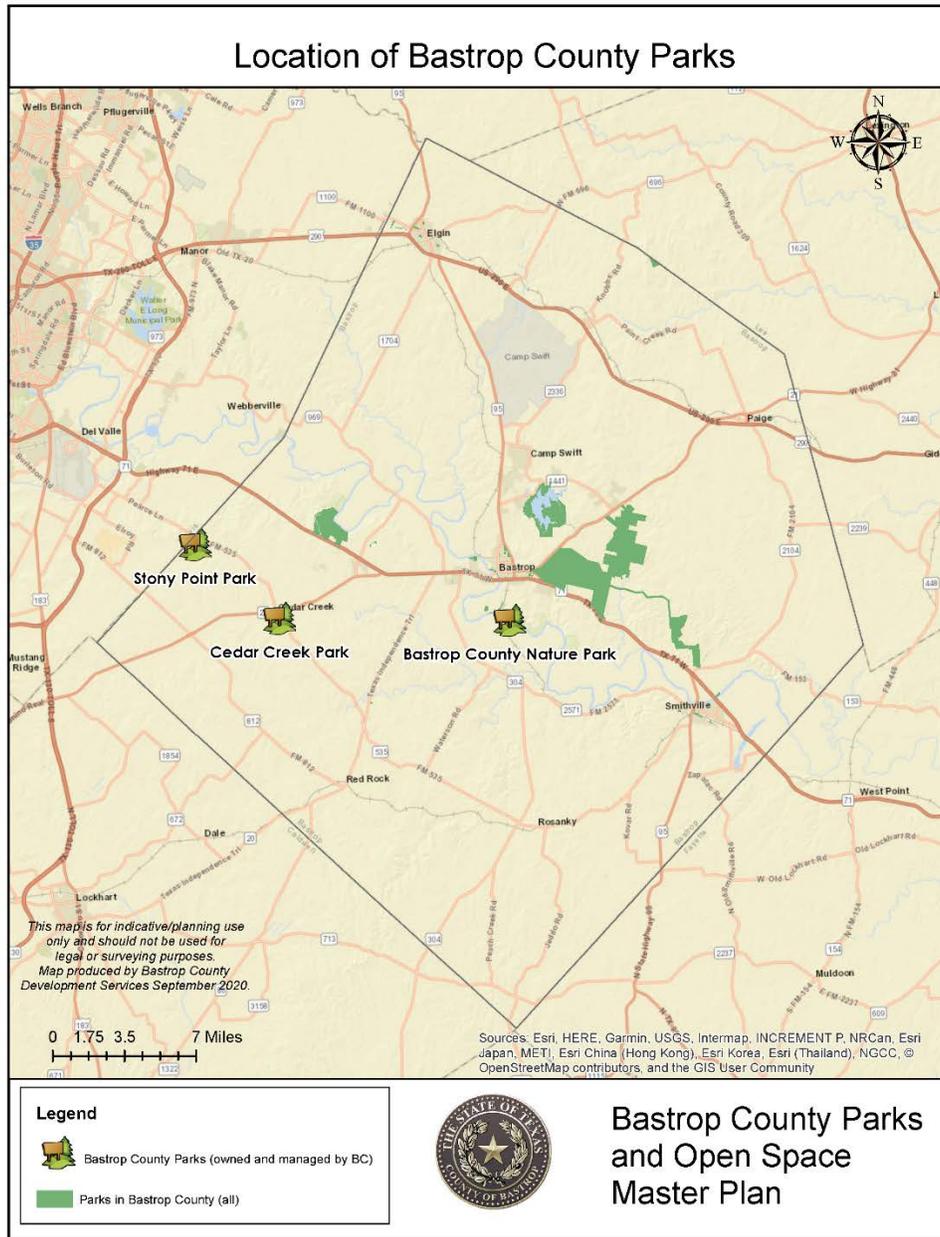


Figure 16- Bastrop County Park Locations

In 2020, there were currently approximately 40 publicly accessible parks located within Bastrop County, covering approximately 9,623 park acres. Public parkland is provided by the three incorporated municipalities, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, the Pines and Prairies Land Trust (PPLT), and the Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) in addition to Bastrop County General Services. There are also smaller community parks facilities found in the unincorporated area which are provided by local community organizations - the playground at the Rosanky Community Center and the Rockne

Recreation Center in southern Bastrop County were counted as public parks for the purposes of this analysis.

Although it is acknowledged that private facilities such as HOA parks play a critical role in providing park amenities to their own residents, it should be noted that this park inventory does not include Homeowners Association parks, private golf courses or other private facilities. Non-publicly accessible or highly restrictive conservation reserves (such as the Yegua Knobbs Preserve in McDade and the Welsh Tract in eastern Bastrop County), church and school facilities (with the exception of the McDade ISD playground) were also excluded from the analysis.

According to the US Census Bureau annual population estimates for 2019, the Bastrop County population is 88,723* and therefore there are approximately 108 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents for the County as a whole. In terms of total park acreage, Bastrop County residents are well served, in part due to the presence of two State Parks, which together comprise approximately 80% of the total park acreage.

Park facilities are summarized by Census County Division (CCD) in the table below.

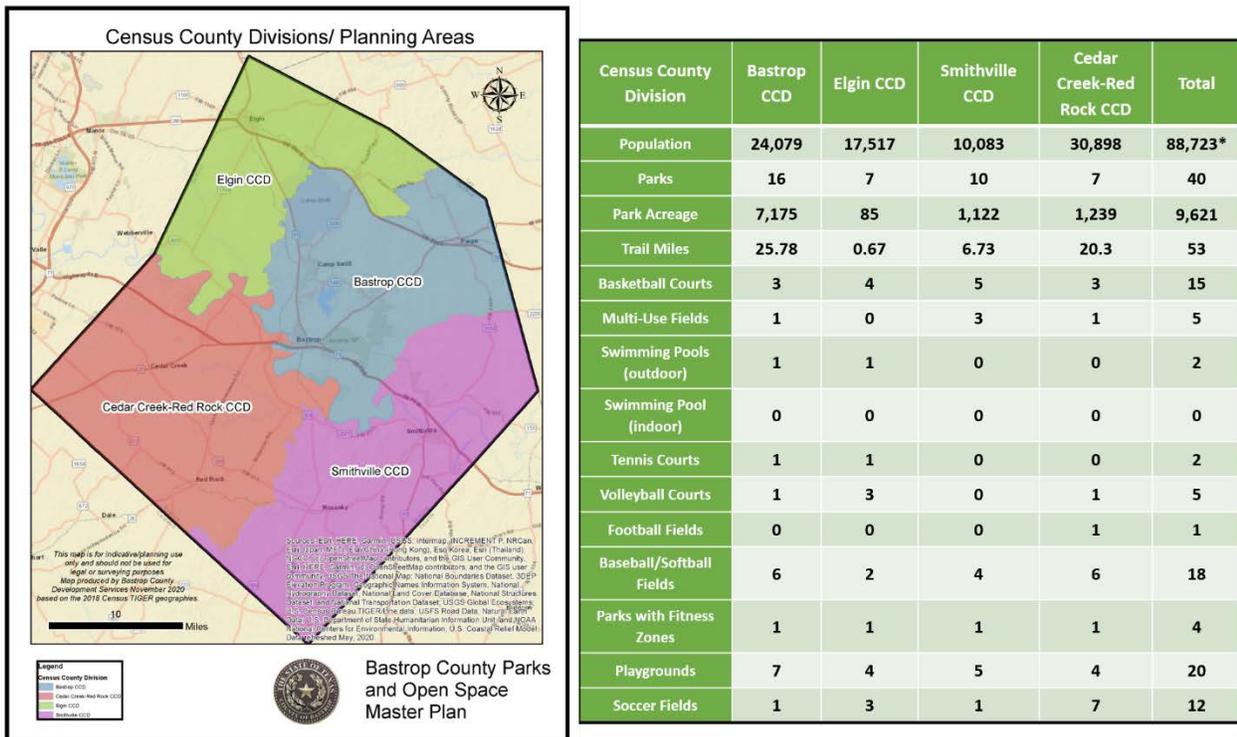


Figure 17 - Total Public Park amenities by Census County Division (*n.b the total population count for the County is taken from the Census Bureau 2019 Annual Population Estimates Program, and so the figure is higher than the sum of the estimates for each CCD which utilize data from the American Community Survey 2018 5 year estimates)

County Owned Facilities

There are currently 3 parks located within the Bastrop County system, in addition to a Houston Toad Preserve which is not accessible to the public in order to protect the integrity of the habitat.

Cedar Creek Park

Located at the intersection of SH 21 and FM 535, Cedar Creek Park was granted to Bastrop County in 2008 and was the first Bastrop County Park. The land was formerly owned by the Bastrop Independent School District and was developed utilizing funding from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the Lower Colorado River Authority.



Figure 18 - fitness equipment at Cedar Creek Park

The park covers approximately 37 acres and is classified as a District Park under the Healthy Parks Plan classifications.

Cedar Creek Park offers a range of sporting facilities including soccer fields, a full size basketball court, adult fitness equipment, baseball fields, and a volleyball court and walking trails. It also includes more general recreational amenities such as two shaded outdoor seating areas, barbeques, a water fountain, walking trails, children's playscape and a butterfly garden which is managed in partnership with the Master Gardeners. Adult fitness equipment and bathrooms were also recently installed.

In addition to the main “developed” area of the park, approximately ten acres of the eastern part of the park adjacent the creek remains mostly undeveloped – including a number of small clearings which are used for camping by the Boy Scouts. An abandoned dirt County Road runs along the north eastern boundary of the site.

Cedar Creek Park Amenities

The park contains the following amenities:

1. Basketball court
2. Children’s playground equipment
3. Volleyball court
4. Butterfly garden
5. Baseball field and bleachers
6. Soccer field
7. Barbeque facilities
8. Bathrooms
9. Walking trails
10. Trash cans
11. Parking lot
12. Outdoor seating
13. Shelter/gazebo
14. Adult fitness equipment



Figure 19 – signage at Cedar Creek Park

Cedar Creek Park Access and Surrounding Facilities

Cedar Creek is situated within what is arguably the “core” of Cedar Creek Park at the intersection of FM 535 and SH 21, with a mixture of land uses surrounding the site including Cedar Creek Elementary School, the ESD 1 Fire Station, a restaurant and food truck, a convenience store and a local church. There is a residential subdivision approximately 2,500ft to the south of the Park entrance on FM 535, with another residential subdivision under development approximately 2,000 ft to the east of the SH 21/ FM 535 intersection.

There are currently no sidewalks in the vicinity of the park, although the intersection at FM 535 and SH 21 does include a pedestrian crosswalk.



Figure 20 – baseball fields at Cedar Creek Park

Cedar Creek Park Environmental Constraints

The southern part of the park lies within the FEMA 100 year floodplain, with the land immediately adjacent Cedar Creek designated floodway.⁵

The park has suffered flood damages, most recently during the 2015 Memorial Day floods after which the County received a grant from FEMA to repair the bleachers on the baseball fields.

Stony Point Park

Stony Point Park is located within the Stony Point neighborhood in Del Valle, next to the Travis County line. The park was originally platted as a subdivision park, however without a homeowners association there were limited resources available to maintain it. Citing security concerns, local community members petitioned the Commissioners Court to take over the park and it was adopted by the County in 2017. Several park improvements were undertaken in 2019, most notably local non-

⁵ Difference between “floodplain” and “floodway” – according to FEMA, a “floodway” means the channel of a river or other watercourse and the adjacent land areas that must be reserved in order to discharge the base flood without cumulatively increasing the water surface elevation more than a designated height.

profit Bastrop County Cares partnered with the St David’s Foundation, KaBOOM and local community members to construct a new playground and ancillary amenities.



Figure 21 – Playground developed with KaBOOM! At Stony Point Park

Stony Point Park Amenities

The park contains the following amenities:

- a) Soccer field
- b) Picnic tables and seating
- c) Barbeque facilities
- d) Children’s Play Park
- e) Take a Book Leave a Book free library
- f) Paved Parking

Stony Point Park Access and Surrounding Facilities

Stony Point is one of the densest residential neighborhoods in unincorporated Bastrop County, and its gridded roadway network means that it can be accessed by many of the nearby residents. There are no sidewalks adjacent the park, and during community meetings concerns were raised that vehicles posed a safety risk to children walking to the park.

Stony Point Park Environmental Constraints

There is currently no FEMA identified floodplain within the park. However a ditch runs through the center of the park and often conveys water during storm events. An existing onsite septic facility is

located in the southern part of the park and serves the Head Start facility in the southeastern corner of the park.

Bastrop County Nature Park

Bastrop County Nature Park (formerly known as the Lost Pines Nature Trails) was adopted by Commissioners Court resolution in 2017. The park of approximately 29 acres was originally platted as a subdivision park within the Tahitian Village subdivision and owned by the Bastrop County Water Control and Improvement District 2. However, the WCID2 had limited resources to maintain the park and so local community members petitioned the Commissioners Court to take over the ownership and maintenance of the park.



Figure 22 – Colorado River access at Bastrop County Nature Park

The Bastrop County Nature Park is currently the only County owned park which offers direct access to the Colorado River, and is part of the Texas Paddling Trail. This is often utilized by river outfitters as well as members of the public who use it for swimming, fishing and paddling.

Bastrop County Nature Park Amenities

Bastrop County Nature Park contains the following amenities:

- Walking trails
- Picnic tables
- Barbeque facilities
- River access/take in and out point in paddling trail
- Beach area



-
- Outdoor classroom
 - Parking
 - Boat ramp
 - Bathrooms (port a potty only)

Bastrop County Nature Park Access and Surrounding Facilities

The park is located adjacent the 65 acre Colorado River Refuge, which is owned by the Pines and Prairies Land Trust. There are currently no physical barriers between the County owned land and the PPLT land, and so for the user both sites appear as one park. On the eastern side, the park abuts the Pine Forest Golf Club, which is privately owned. Out of the three County Parks, it is the one which has seen the least development.

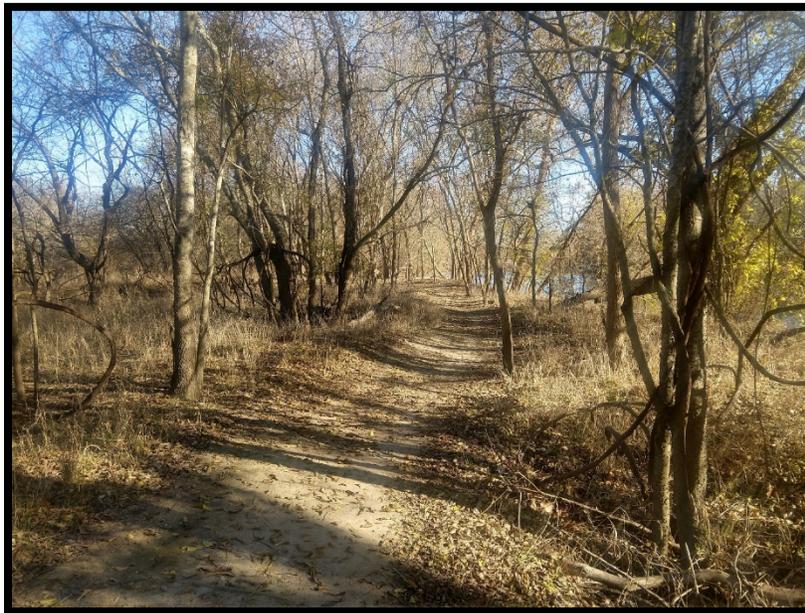


Figure 23 - Trails in Bastrop County Nature Park

Bastrop County Nature Park Environmental Constraints

About half of the Bastrop County Nature Park lies within identified habitat of the Federally Endangered Houston Toad. Due to its riverside location the entirety of the park is also within the 1% annual chance (100 year) FEMA floodplain, and approximately 63 percent of the 28.5 acres is comprised of soils characterized as “frequently flooded”, although on several occasions, such as the 2015 Memorial Day Flood event, the entirety of the park has been known to flood reaching up to Riverside Drive⁶.

⁶ Lost Pines Nature Trails Management Plan (p3), 2016



Figure 24 - Bastrop County Nature Park Outdoor Classroom

4. Needs Assessment and Identification

Bastrop County used a combination of standards based needs assessment, input from local residents, fiscal capacity considerations and best practice analysis of similar jurisdictions to develop a list of project priorities for each Bastrop County Park. Each of these elements fed into the project scoring criteria which were developed to objectively rank and prioritize park needs.

Other County Park Systems

As part of this planning process, the team conducted a review of other small-medium size County Park systems in Texas in order to establish benchmarks and best practices.

County	Population
Liberty	88,000
Guadalupe	167,000
Tom Green	119,000
Cass	30,000
Montgomery	607,000
Orange	83,000
Victoria	92,000
Matagorda	37,000
Kendall	47,000
Hays	230,000
Bastrop	89,000

Table 7 - Texas Counties with Similarly Sized Populations which have Park Systems

The counties above were contacted and interviewed on the number of parks they managed, who manages them, what is their acreage, how are they funded, do they have volunteers, do they have an updated master plan and any advice they would provide growing counties trying to enhance their parks.

Of the few counties that were available for interview, we obtained insightful feedback and potential new ideas that Bastrop County park systems could use. Most of the other counties had recently updated their Park Master Plans in the past 3 years, confirming Bastrop County's desire to keep a current plan for the park system. Of the counties surveyed, only one county had a county led parks department. Other counties had maintenance teams advised by county commissioners and judges. None of the other counties interviewed had park advisory committees. Popular funding opportunities

from these counties included percentages of county budgets, parking donations at parks, pavilion reservation fees for parties, camping/RV fees, building rent outs, and local fundraising for community amenities like a disc golf course. Typical volunteer programs for other county parks included, county inmates participating in clean-ups once a month, school booster clubs fundraising activities, and Boys/Girl Scouts gaining field experience in the parks. Lastly, some overall advice received mentioned taking advantage of Texas Parks and Wildlife opportunities, tending to the community, and making sure to purchase recreation amenities that last.

Input from Local Residents

Community input comprised the cornerstone of the needs analysis in the unincorporated part of the County. (An overview of the various stage of community input can be found in Section 2 of this plan). A key component of this was the initial online community survey, which was made available for approximately 1 month during spring 2020.



Figure 25 - new permanent restrooms in Cedar Creek Park. Restrooms were one of the most requested amenities by local residents

Top 10 Amenities Requested by Local Residents			
Stony Point Park	Bastrop County Nature Park	Cedar Creek Park	Bastrop County Overall
1. Splash pad	1. Bathrooms	1. Bathrooms	1. Bathrooms
2. Water fountains	2. Water fountains	2. Splash pad	2. Water fountains
3. Bathrooms	3. Sidewalks within the park	3. Water fountains	3. Shade
4. Programming/County Sponsored Events	4. Shade	4. Programming/County Sponsored Events	4. Sidewalks within the park
5. Basketball court	5. Benches	5. Shade	5. Benches
6. Sidewalks within the park	6. Sidewalks to access the park	6. Picnic tables	6. Sidewalks to access the park
7. Picnic tables	7. Programming/County Sponsored Events	7. Recreation Center	7. Programming/County Sponsored Events
8. Community garden	8. Picnic tables	8. Benches	8. Picnic tables
9. Recreation Center	9. Community garden	9. Sidewalks within the park	9. Splash pad
10. Shade	10. Climbing wall	10. Community garden	10. Community garden

Table 8- Top 10 Park Improvements from 2020 Community Survey

In the survey residents were asked to identify required park improvements for both the County Parks system as a whole, and for each individual park. The results are set out in the table above.

The top 10 needs are reflected in the project scoring criteria, with additional points being allocated to projects that appear in the above table. Residents were also given the opportunity to provide input on the project scoring criteria and their weightings through interactive polling during the virtual public meetings.

The following additional comments were also noted during the public participation component of this plan:

- Improved trash pick-up was the most requested maintenance improvement, followed by sidewalk/trail improvements.
- Many residents stressed the need to retain Bastrop County Nature Park in its existing state as a natural area – they did not wish to see major additional capital improvements with the exception of essential amenities.
- A number of residents were interested in volunteering at County Parks, particularly in conjunction with existing organizations such as the Master Naturalists and Keep Bastrop County Beautiful, Central Texas Trail Tamers, Ranch House Recovery and Down Home Ranch. Potential volunteers felt that training opportunities in things like trail maintenance and leading nature hikes would be helpful, as would the provision of a more efficient and comprehensive communication system to let residents know about potential volunteering

opportunities. Some also suggested partnering with the local School Districts and other organizations that have a service requirement in order to broaden the pool of potential volunteers.

- There is a need for programming and dedicated park staff.
- The County should work the local health providers to ensure patients are aware of the parks as an opportunity for fitness.
- There were some concerns about park security and nuisance vehicles, and a need for law enforcement in the parks. During the public meetings there was also a suggestion that the local residents groups could work to maintain the security of the parks.
- Other capital improvements needs including:
 - Lighting
 - Swimming pool
 - Parking lot improvements
 - Stocked fishing ponds with dock
 - Pickle ball courts
 - Improved creek access
 - Tennis courts

Park Access Analysis and Considerations for Future Parkland Acquisition

Park access was also considered during the needs assessment when discussing potential additional parkland acquisition in the future. During initial meetings with the Parks Advisory Committee and the general public it was acknowledged that the typical urban standard of having every resident within 10 minute walk to a park was unreasonable in the unincorporated area due to the relatively low population density outside the City limits, and so the team investigated alternative access benchmarks more appropriate to the density of the County.

The maps on the next three pages show two different ways of considering park access at a spatial level. The first map (figure 25) shows all Bastrop County land within 5 mile driving distance from any publicly accessible park, regardless of park size, as recommended by the Robert Woods Foundation County Health Indicators. The next two pages (figures 26 and 27) show park access by park size and service area as set out in table 6 in Section 2 of this report (derived from the Trust for Public Land’s Healthy Parks Plan).

In both cases, there are large areas of the unincorporated area which do not have sufficient access to a park, particularly in the southern/ southeastern and eastern parts of the county, as well as along the FM 1704 corridor. However, if the County were to use the Healthy Parks Plan approach, then the

acquisition of land for larger parks (over 30 acres) may be more effective than acquiring land for smaller parks because the service area for larger parks would cover a greater part of the County. Nevertheless, it is also acknowledged that there are a small number of areas of the County which have a higher population density (such as the Camp-Swift LBA Census Designated Place), and smaller sized parks may be suitable in those areas.

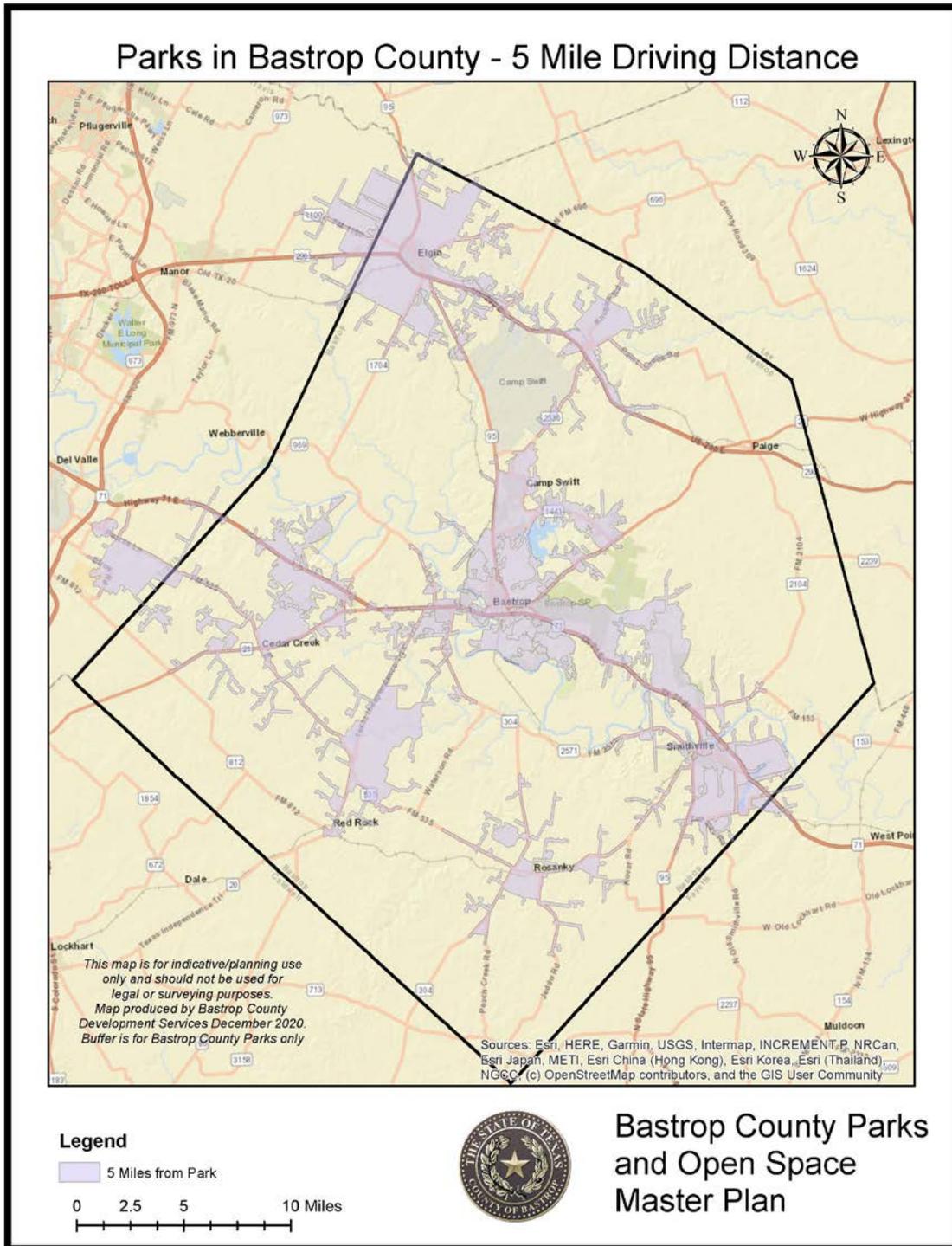
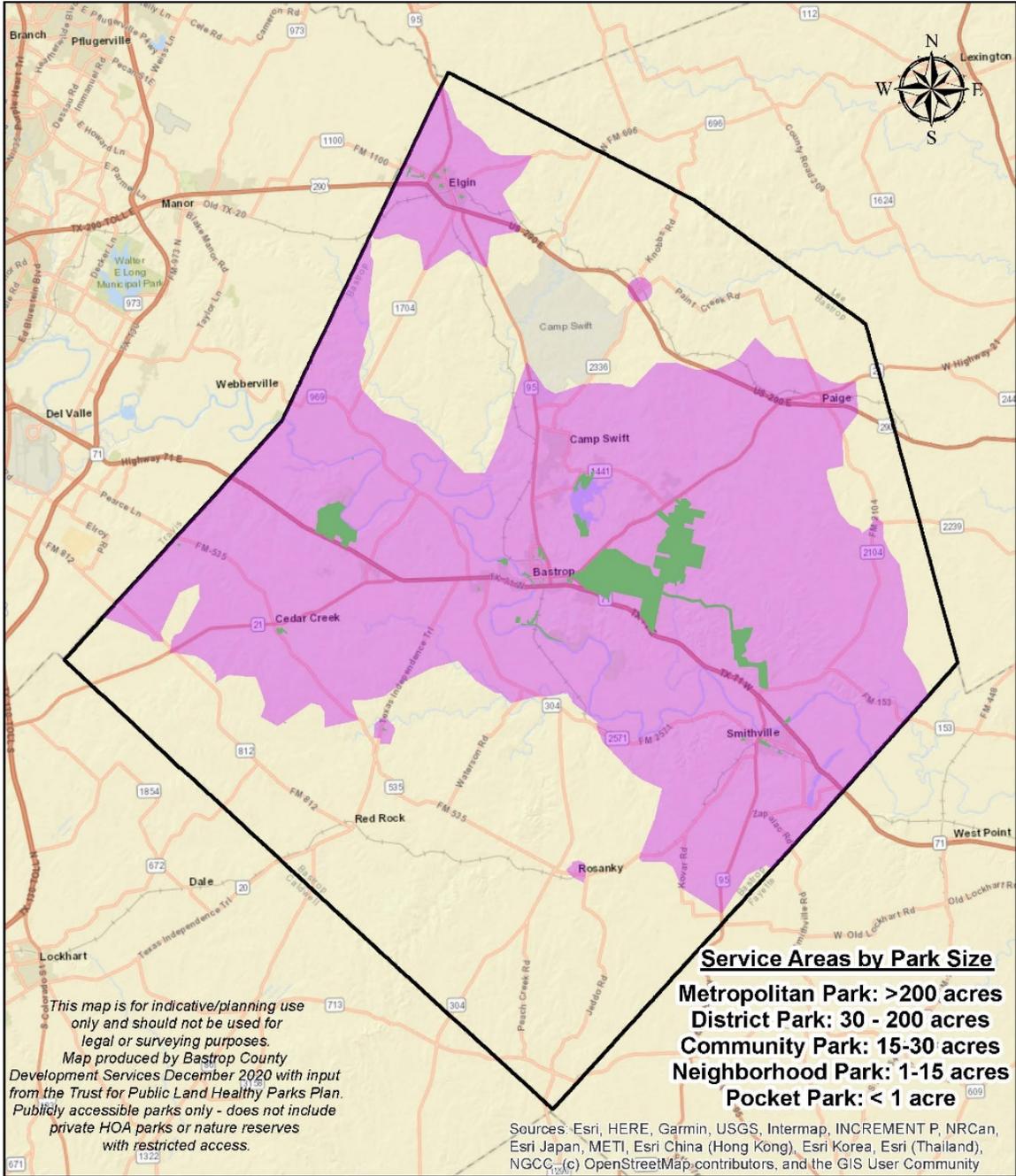


Figure 26 - 5 Mile Drive Distance from any Park in Bastrop County

Bastrop County Land within Service Area of Any Park



Legend

- Publicly Accessible Parks in Bastrop County
- Land in Service Area of Any Park

0 2.5 5 10 Miles



Bastrop County Parks and Open Space Master Plan

Figure 27 - Bastrop County Land within the Service Area of any Park

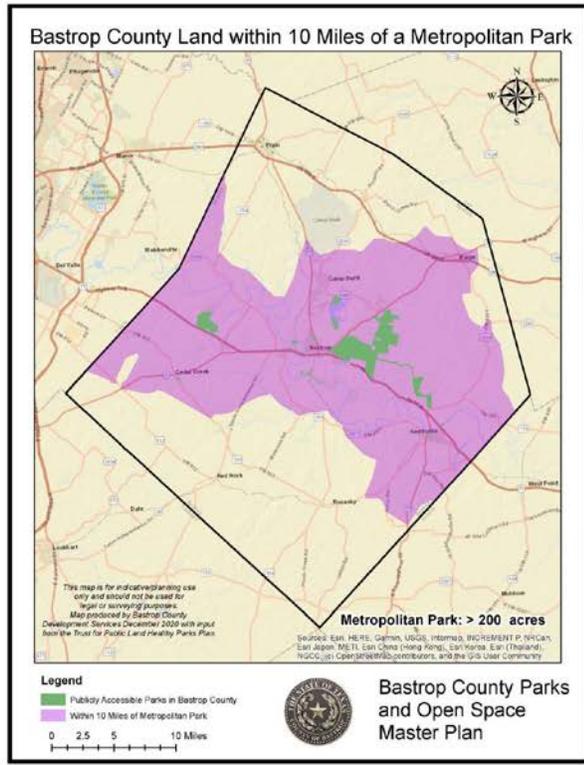
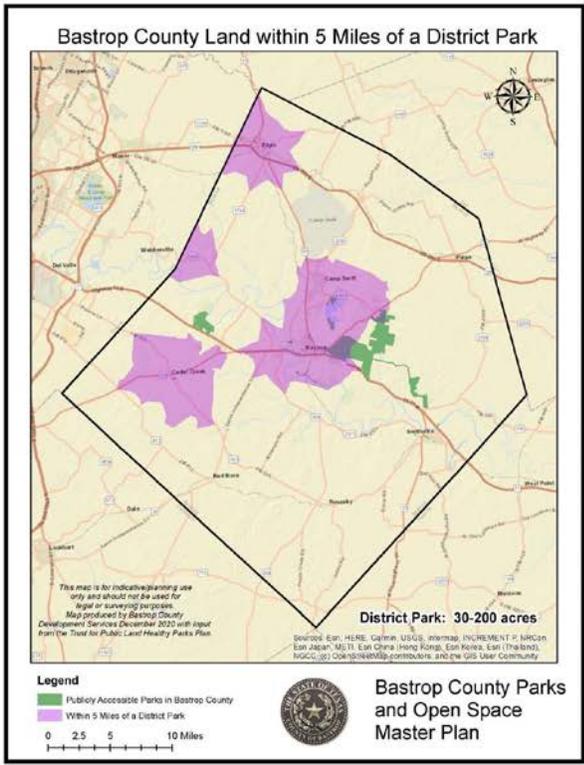
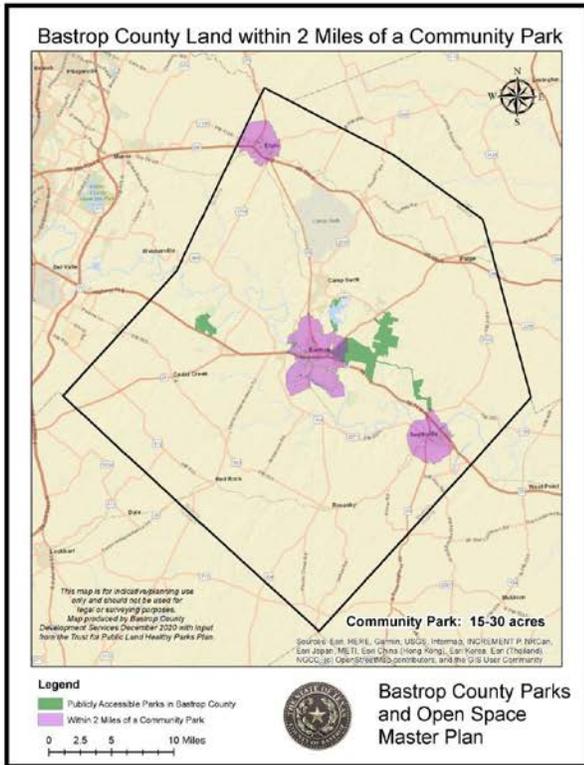
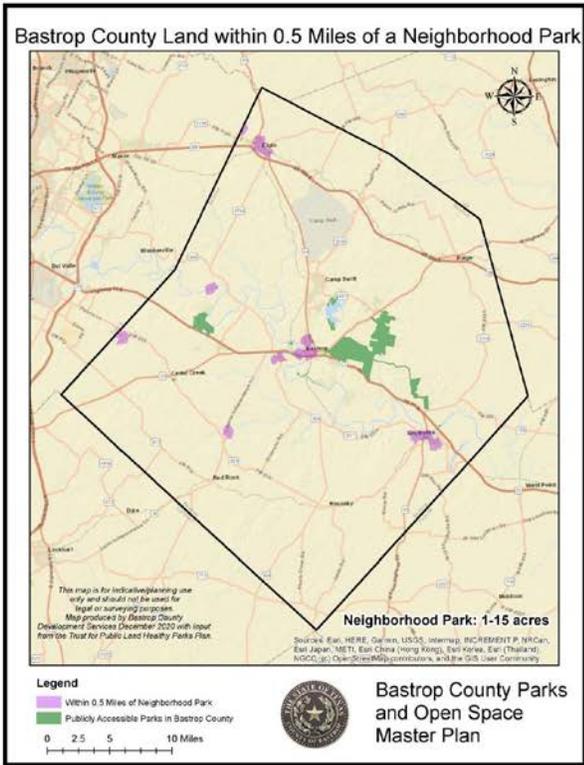


Figure 28 - Park Service Areas Comparison

Project Priorities

Project Scoring Criteria

The scoring criteria and weightings were developed in consultation with the Parks Advisory Committee, with additional input received through the public participation process. These scoring criteria were then used to rank each project in order of priority.

Number	Criteria	Relevant Goal	Total Points Available
1	Project provides an essential amenity in the park.	1	5
2	The project provides a new facility in an underserved area.	1	15
3	The project will actively support or restore sensitive ecosystems and incorporates elements that cultivate support for natural resources, including endangered species.	2	10
4	Project will promote active transportation by providing bike/ ped infrastructure linking parkland to nearby residential neighborhoods and/or other parks.	3	5
5	Project will improve public safety within the parks.	3	5
6	The project will be undertaken in partnership with another organization.	4	10
7	Project will have a positive impact on the floodplain	5	10
8	The project will promote broadband connectivity within the parks.	6	5
9	The project will promote Tourism within Bastrop County	6	5
10	The project will enhance access to the Colorado River	6	5
11	The project actively protects and increases awareness of existing cultural resources	7	5
12	Project has a low ongoing maintenance requirement	8	15
13	Project will improve the efficiency and sustainability of park operations	8	5
14	Project is identified as a Top 10 need in the Bastrop County Parks Survey	n/a	10
15	Project improves facilities already located within an existing park.	n/a	5
16	Project does not require additional utility hookups (with the exception of “essential amenities”) ⁷	n/a	5
		Total	120

Table 9

⁷ “Essential amenities” include bathrooms, parking and waste infrastructure.

Prioritized Project List for each County Park

A prioritized project list was developed for each of the 3 County Parks. Due to the long range nature of this plan, inclusion within this list or the associated implementation strategy in Chapter 6 does not constitute a formal commitment by the County to undertake these improvements, rather it acts as a guide for future funding decisions by the Court. Projects will need to be formally approved by Commissioners Court before they can move forward for implementation. Ongoing maintenance of existing amenities, although not specifically listed, is also considered to be fundamental to the long term success of the County parks system.

Bastrop County Nature Park Projects			
Ranking	Project Description	Indicative Cost	Priority
1	Installation of entrance signage (to include park rules, contact details and trail map developed in partnership with PPLT)	\$8,800	High
2	Installation of Information Kiosk w/ volunteering opportunities/community events as well as park rules, trail maps and contact details	\$18,293	High
3	Installation of ADA accessible, flood proof bathrooms	\$198,000	High
4	Trail upgrades and wayfinding signage within the park	\$11/ft for natural surface, \$9-13/sqft for concrete	High
5	Installation of solar powered automatic gate	\$22,000	Medium
6	Installation of pavilion and outdoor classroom (upgrades)	\$38,500	Medium
7	Install additional benches	\$1,100 each	Medium
8	Upgrades to existing boat ramp and installation of contextual signage	Signage: \$2200; Ramp upgrades: varies	Low
9	Water fountains (2)	\$1,100	Low
10	Install Solar Power Trash Cans	\$38,500	Low

Table 10 - Bastrop County Nature Park Projects – costs include 10% contingency

Note on the Houston Toad

Development activities within the Bastrop County Nature Park will follow the Lost Pines Habitat Conservation Plan (LPHCP) guidelines and meet any USFWS requirements for the endangered Houston toad.



Figure 29 - Houston Toad

Stony Point Park Projects			
Ranking	Project Description	Indicative Cost	Priority
1	Construct basketball court/ shade structure	Court: \$66,000 Shade: \$33,000	High
2	Install shade structure over existing playground	\$22,000	High
3	Tree sculpture/ art project	Varies	High
4	Construct ADA accessible circular trail around park (including 2 footbridges)	Stabilized DG: \$8.25/sqft; Concrete:\$13,20/sqft	High
5	Construct 200 meter running track around soccer field with retaining wall	Track: \$44,000 for stabilized DG, \$19,800 for DG; Concrete edge: \$25,000; Retaining wall: Varies	High
6	Construct bio swale with retrogrades within existing drainage channel	\$11,000	High
7	Construct pavilion	\$38,500	Medium
8	Installation of bike racks (5)	\$1,980	Medium
9	Installation of ADA accessible bathrooms	\$198,000.0	Medium
10	Expand existing community garden	\$5,500.0	Medium
11	Install dog proof fencing around park perimeter	\$42,900.0	Medium
12	Installation of additional seating and picnic tables	\$1,100 each	Low
13	Installation of telecommunications infrastructure to enable public wifi connectivity in the park	\$2,200.0	Low
14	Install four square court	\$5,500 (concrete pad)	Low
15	Upgrades to existing picnic area	Varies	Low
16	Install splash pad	\$88,000.0	Low
17	Construct new covered picnic area and adjacent visiting food truck spot	\$55,000.0	Low
18	Install tetherball	\$1,100.0	Low
19	Install outdoor exercise equipment	\$33,000.0	Low
20	Upgrades to soccer field including new posts/ netting and installation of benches	Posts: \$6,600; Bleachers: \$11,000	Low

Table 11 -Stony Point Park projects

Cedar Creek Park Projects			
Ranking	Project Description	Indicative Cost	Priority
1	Establish/ construct and maintain a community garden	\$11,000.0	High
2	Installation of event pavilion	\$136,400.0	High
3	Install bike racks	\$1,100.0 each	High
4	Trail improvements and wayfinding signage (various)	\$11/ft for natural surface, \$8.8-\$14.4/sqft for concrete	High
5	Installation of additional picnic tables	\$1,430 each	High
6	Installation of additional benches	\$1,100 each	High
7	Upgrades to entrance with Landscaping and Signage	Signage- \$1,650; Landscaping: varies	High
8	Installation of telecommunications infrastructure to enable public Wi-Fi connectivity in the park	\$2,200.0	Medium
9	Upgrades to sports courts including installation of energy efficient/ drip irrigation system.		Medium
10	Install splash pad	\$88,000.0	Medium
11	Swimming pool (management partnership would be required for ongoing maintenance)	\$2,200,000.0	Medium
12	Dog Park	\$16,500.0	Low
13	Additional soccer field and goal posts	\$16,500.0	Low
14	Upgrades to Sports Courts	Varies	Low
15	Upgrades to play equipment	Varies	Low
16	Upgrades to baseball fields	Varies	Low

Table 12 - Cedar Creek Park Projects



Figure 30 - Cedar Creek Park

5. Green Infrastructure

As part of the development of this plan, Bastrop County partnered with the National Park Service (NPS) to identify potential green infrastructure opportunities to improve the resilience of the park system. The section outlines ideas which should be explored by the County in each of the three parks, although the final project details will be contingent upon further engineering and feasibility studies.

The Case for Green Infrastructure

Green infrastructure (GI) is a technical practice that integrates the use of natural and manmade features to create a conducive environment whereby storm water and rainwater can safely runoff land. GI aids in preventing unnecessary damage and erosion to property by re-using or channeling rainwater runoff to vegetative swales, retention basins, and other mitigation sites. These mitigation sites allow for retaining of the rainwater by allowing the water to be absorbed into vegetation or by collecting the water in a more suitable and controlled area. Common examples of GI include wetlands, retention ponds, bioswales, rain gardens, pervious pavers, planters, tree trenches, and bump outs.

Reference Image:



Source: Stormwater Wet Pond & Wetland Management Guidebook | epa.gov

As Bastrop County seeks to redefine and improve its existing park amenities, a recommendation from the National Park Service is the incorporation of green infrastructure within the parks. Green infrastructure is not currently an intentional practice within Bastrop County Parks. It is understood that implementing green infrastructure in our parks would benefit sites by reducing flood risk, increasing usability, enhancing beautification, protecting ecosystems, and protecting watershed.

Summary of the Benefits:

Reducing Flood Risk: GI reduces flood risks by creating natural absorption sites within a property or re-directing storm water to controlled spaces.

Increasing Site Usability: GI increases usability of sites by lowering the risk of large-scale flooding through storm water re-direction and supporting the absorption process, consequently creating more usable land due to the lower risk of premature wetlands.

Enhancing Beautification: Utilizing GI can naturally create a more beautiful and scenic park by using plants, stones, or other nature friendly material. Proper installation of mitigation resources can make GI attractive features on park property with generally low maintenance.

Protecting Ecosystems: Implementing GI will keep the balance of ecosystems in place by preventing the devastation that comes from floods. Flood water can cause not only plant species displacement but also animal and marine life havoc.

Protecting Watersheds: While premature flooding may occur, premature watersheds create undo mayhem in many areas due to the lack of control from early designation. Having flooding can pollute the natural and designated watersheds by displacing materials both natural and manmade. GI helps protect watersheds by implementing features that control and protect both the land use as designated and the water resources.

Additionally, utilizing GI could assist the county in acquiring lands that might be deemed unusable from a development perspective but practical for public parks or recreation. Lands that are deemed unusable for development do exist in heavily saturated real estate areas where there may not be current or existing “close to home” park and recreational opportunities. Consequently, utilizing minimally flood prone lands through green infrastructure mitigations may provide an easy opportunity for Bastrop County to acquire public land at reduced costs to better serve the populations not near a park.

Park Specific Proposals for Green Infrastructure

After scoping the parks of Bastrop with county staff, the National Park Service recommends select GI improvements that could encourage the long-term viability of these sites. The recommendations that NPS illustrates are only proposals for what can be done at each site to protect or improve natural drainage and increase recreational opportunities. Recommendations that require significant change to a site should go through a proper architectural and land survey process.

Stony Point: A Bioswale to Enhance the Drainage Channel

Stony Point exists as a park on two elevations and two distinct planes. Separating these planes is a drainage channel that dissects the park. This channel while designated is not controlled nor is it able to be crossed without stepping into the channel area. The danger of not having a clearly controlled space

on the park site includes increased risk of injury via slipping, risk of unintentional social widening from trampling and walking in the channel, and risk of unsafe crossing. NPS recommends configuring the drainage channel as a bioswale by utilizing planting with retrograde into the channel and the option of lining the direct area of flow with stones. The plants along the bank of the channel will allow for absorption while the stones will assist with flow and distinguishing the space. This design will facilitate a controlled space by creating an aesthetically pleasing space that would highlight this area in the park. Foot bridges traversing that channel also is recommended to keep the channel as a controlled feature and create safe passage between the two planes.

REFERENCE IMAGES:



Source: Foot Bridge Options | redwoodbridges.com

Cedar Creek Park: A Retention Pond that could be utilized for Recreational Fishing

Cedar Creek Park boasts the most expansive recreation resources for the county and in many ways exists as a central park option. Seeing that this park already hosts various recreational opportunities it would be fitting to explore ways to capitalize and expand on this reputation if possible. One issue that has occurred at this site in the past is severe flooding. Due to the site’s topography of relative flatness around the primary fields, with the dramatic topography shift occurring near the creek, the land is ripe for flooding and pooling issues. A recommendation that could address this long-term issue would be the construction of a recessed retention pond that could also be utilized for fishing. A recessed retention pond would benefit this site by providing a low point for the runoff to go to after a storm or rain fall. Additionally, this pond could benefit the park system by creating a new recreation resource by adding fish to the pond. It is recommended that the fish could be sourced from Fish & Wildlife free of charge, but this needs to be verified. Additionally, this retention pond would ideally be siphoned via a diversion stream that directly flowed down to the creek allowing for steady alleviation of the pond especially during periods of high rain fall. A dam system of some sort might also need to be implemented into the diversion stream to ensure that the pond does not become overly siphoned.

REFERENCE IMAGES:



Figure 31- Source: Greenfield Park | mesaparks.com

Bastrop County Nature Park: Parking that is Permeable

Bastrop County Nature Park is a unique gem amongst the park sites in that it is a riverside park. While being a riverside park comes with the great benefits and wonder of water access. The water also poses great threats to the park site. Some of the common occurrences at this site is the over saturation of sand and the high likeliness of river water intermittently rising to overtake the park. When the rising levels of water occur, the park is always at risk of flooding. Due to this most of the site is not feasible for development of permanent and impermeable structures. This disadvantage for construction is at odds with the overall demand of use at the park that require increased parking availability at the site. To address this issue NPS has recommended expanding parking but by using permeable pavers such as TRUEGRID™ or HEXpave™. Pavers such as these allow the creation of a parking structure that can maintain compaction while supporting fluid permeability. These would benefit this park site better than any form of asphalt or concrete due to the need to avoid holding water. Moreover, pavers such as these would decrease the likelihood of contributing to river pollution via runoff due to their penetrable design. An additional advantage of permeable pavers is that it supports the sites functional designation as a dam diversion outlet location, or an area that’s intended to be used as overflow for the river. Implementing permeable pavers will help secure the long-term viability of this site and decrease the likelihood of runoff pollution if future flooding or diversion were to occur at the site.

REFERENCE IMAGES:



Source: Permeable Paver | truegridpaver.com

Additional Resources on Green Infrastructure:

- **Green Infrastructure in Parks:** https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2017-05/documents/gi_parksplaybook_2017-05-01_508.pdf
- **The Value of Green Infrastructure:** A Guide to Recognizing it's Economic, Environmental & Social Benefits:
<https://www.cnt.org/publications/the-value-of-green-infrastructure-a-guide-to-recognizing-its-economic-environmental-and>
- **The Stormwater Wet Pond & Wetland Management Guidebook:**
<https://www3.epa.gov/npdes/pubs/pondmgmtguide.pdf>
- **The Economic Benefits of Green Infrastructure:**
https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-10/documents/cnt-lancaster-report-508_1.pdf

6. Implementation

Implementation Strategy and Timeline

Short Term (Years 1-3)

- Identify specific volunteering opportunities and promote them on the County website and through the Bastrop County Connects Platform.
- Change the name of the General Services Department to “General and Park Services”.
- Identify public and private grant opportunities for capital improvement projects as well as programmatic funding, such as volunteer development and training.
- Identify and develop facility use policies (including events management), fees and reservation system.
- Commission a detailed topographical survey for each of the existing County Parks.
- Seek funding for approved projects marked as “high priority” in the prioritized project list.

Mid-Term (Years 4-6)

- Allocate County funding for a full time Park Coordinator position to be located within the General and Park Services Department to be responsible for volunteer management and program development.
- Identify and acquire land for a park in the Camp Swift-LBA area.
- Identify and acquire land for an additional park with access to the Colorado River between the Bastrop County Nature Park and Smithville.
- Develop a “Park Host” program for Bastrop County Nature Park and Cedar Creek Park.
- Seek funding for approved projects marked as “medium priority” in the prioritized project list.
- Active transportation opportunity for Bastrop County Nature Park -Develop and seek funding to construct a side path/ trail along Riverside Drive to connect into City of Bastrop's proposed Active Transportation Network.

Long Term (Years 7-10)

- Seek funding for approved projects marked as “low priority” in the prioritized project list.
- Acquire land for district and metropolitan parks in underserved parts of the County.
- Investigate feasibility of ADA accessible sidewalks/ hike and bike trail along SH 21 and FM 535 to provide safe bike and pedestrian access to access to Cedar Creek Park– (will require concurrence from TXDOT).

Partnerships

Bastrop County cannot implement this plan alone – partnerships are vital to the long term sustainability of the County Parks system. The following is a list of potential partners who the County should seek to engage with over the period of this plan:

- Texas Agri-life Extension
 - Bastrop County Master Naturalists
 - Bastrop County Master Gardeners
 - Bastrop County Master Wellness Volunteers
- Keep Bastrop County Beautiful
- Bastrop County Cares
- School Districts
- Austin Area YMCA
- The incorporated Cities of Smithville, Elgin and Bastrop
- Texas Parks and Wildlife
- Local Health Providers
- The Lower Colorado River Authority



Figure 32 – Stony Point Park

Bastrop County Parks Acceptance Policy Recommendations

- Before any parkland acquisition, annual maintenance cost estimates should be developed in partnership with the General Services Department and the Sheriff’s Office. This should be assessed on a case by case basis, although as a guideline 2 additional FTE grounds keeping staff will be required for each new park.
- Larger parks have a greater service area and ensure sufficient land is available to accommodate parking and essential amenities. Smaller parks (typically, less than 30 acres) are considered appropriate under the following circumstances:
 - The park will provide public access to the Colorado River, or
 - The parkland is immediately adjacent/ contiguous to an existing County owned and managed park, or
 - The park will be located within a Census Designated Place (CDP) as defined by the US Census Bureau.
- Should a group of local community members request that the County adopt an existing park onto the County system, the community members should establish a “Local Parks Residents Committee” of at least 5 (five) members who shall be responsible for providing oversight and assisting in the fundraising, management and community engagement in the park. The Chair of said committee shall be recommended as the Local Parks Representative on the Bastrop County Parks Advisory Committee.
- All new parkland should have road frontage onto a publicly maintained road and should be able to comply with the Bastrop County Driveway Regulations.
- New park acquisition should improve park access and increase the percentage of County residents who live within a 5 mile drive of a publicly accessible park. Parkland acquisition should prioritize areas of existing and anticipated high residential growth.



Figure 33 – Bastrop County Nature Park

