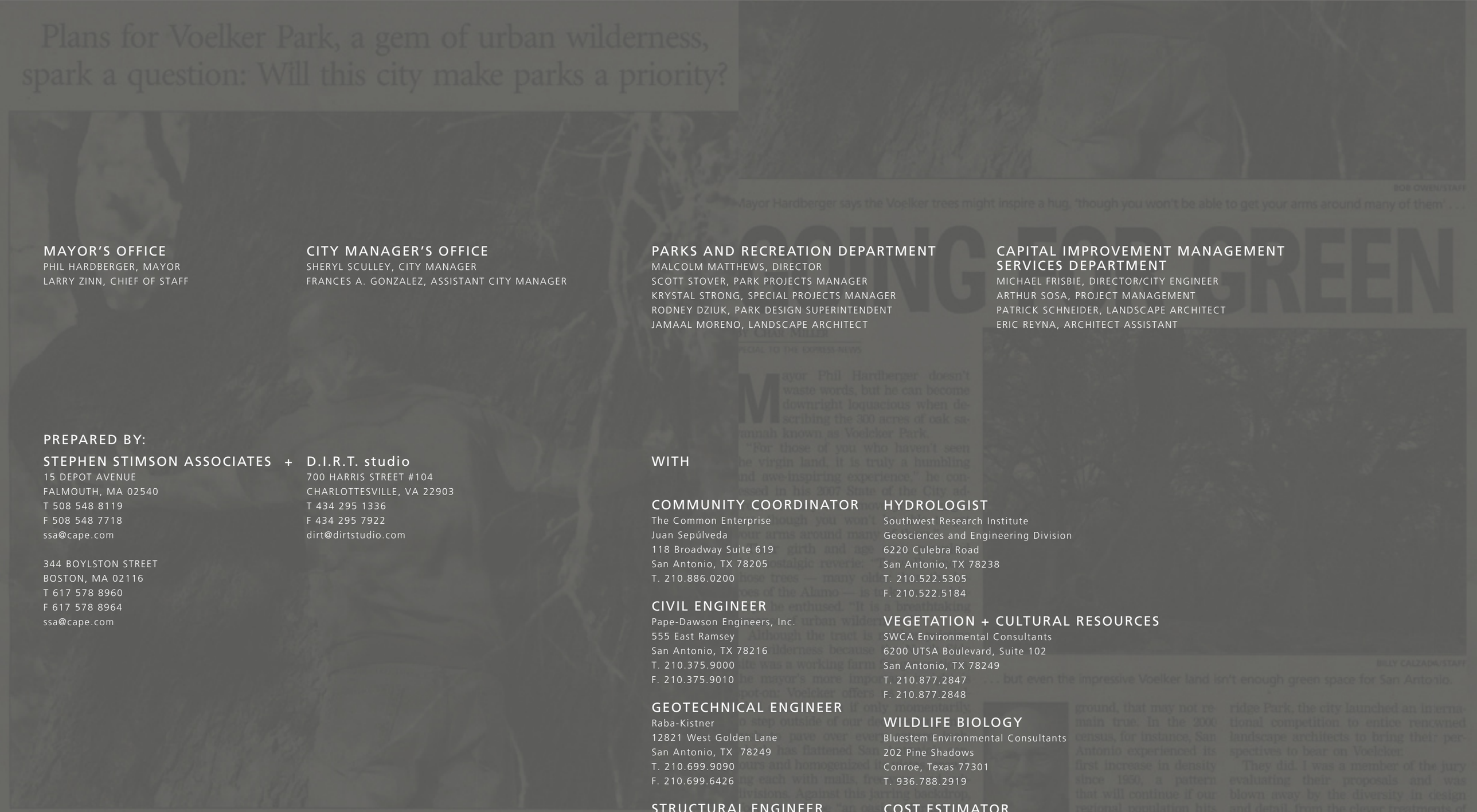
STEPHEN STIMSON ASSOCIATES and D.I.R.T. studio

city of san antonio | texas

VOELCKER PARK MASTER PLAN

final report



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ADOPTED BY CITY COUNCIL ON MAY 8, 2008


Plans for Voelker Park, a gem of urban wilderness, spark a question: Will this city make parks a priority?

BOB OWEN/STAFF

Mayor Hardberger says the Voelker trees might inspire a hug, 'though you won't be able to get your arms around many of them' . . .

GOING FOR GREEN

Mayor Hardberger s

GO

By Char Miller

Special to the Express-N

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"For those of y
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and awe-inspiring
fessed in his 2007
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Their girth and
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tory" he enthused.
expanse of urban
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CONTENTS

A NEW PARK FOR SAN ANTONIO

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A NEW PARK FOR SAN ANTONIO

The value of parks in improving the quality of life for our citizens is critical. Setting aside green space is part of being good stewards of our South Texas heritage. Our community has recognized this, leading the City of San Antonio to purchase 311 acres of the former Voelcker Dairy Farm as part of a strategy to increase acreage and accessibility to parks.

As one of the few remaining undeveloped parcels in San Antonio, Voelcker Park will be an oasis in a densely developed area surrounded by subdivisions, freeways and shopping centers. It is a particularly stunning parcel of land, with some of its trees having stood there since the Battle of the Alamo. To protect those trees is to honor history.

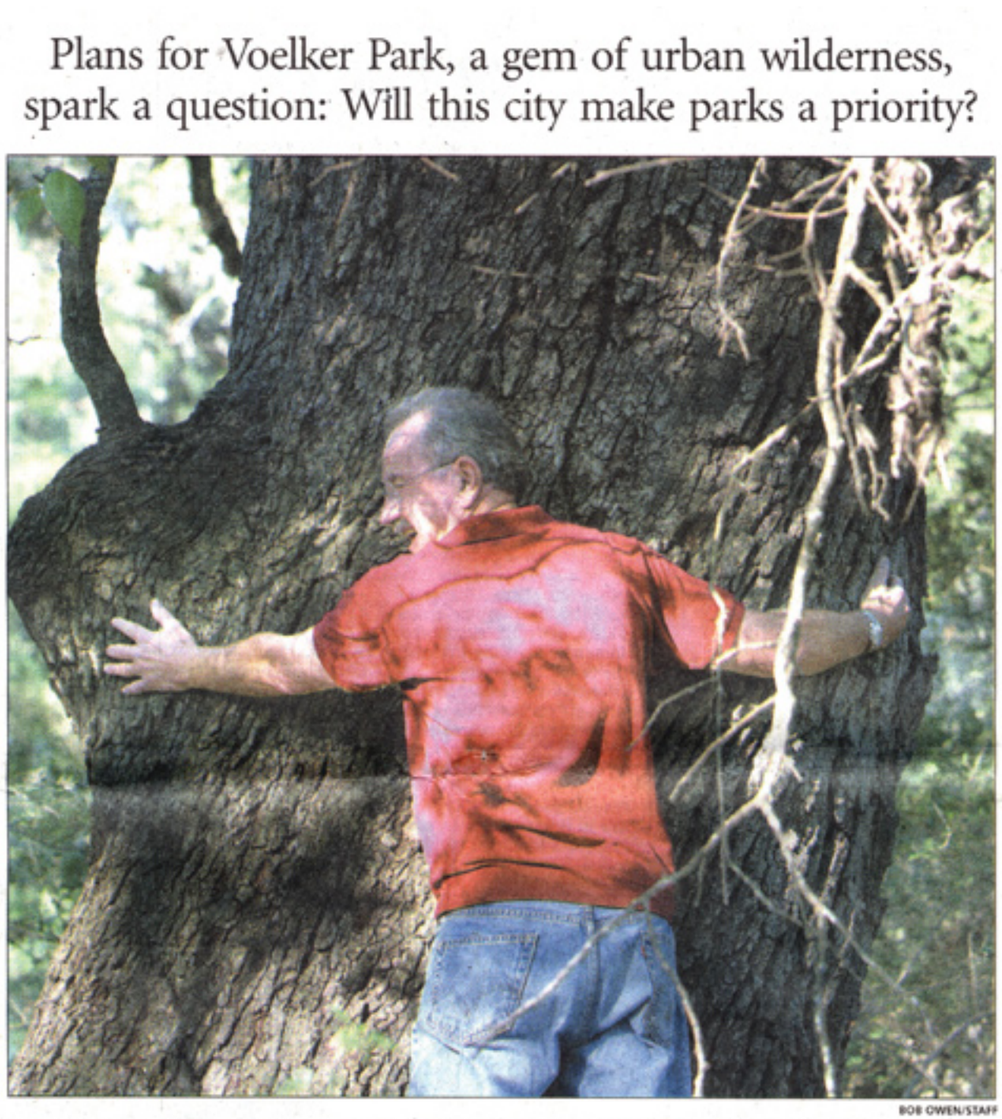
We are grateful to Max and Minnie Voelcker for entrusting their estate to those who want to see it preserved. This purchase improves San Antonio's quality of life by expanding the park system. It also extends the reach of the Voelcker Fund. About $47.3 million of the city funds utilized to purchase Voelcker Park will go toward the Voelcker Fund for charitable giving in the San Antonio community.

The design team of Stephen Stimson Associates and D.I.R.T. studio has developed a Master Plan for a park of the highest quality. Extensive community input has ensured that the resulting design is sensitive to the needs of all involved. In the end, I believe we will have a park that meets the needs of a modern San Antonio while preserving the breathtaking landscape and history of the Voelcker Dairy Farm.

Voelcker Park will distinguish San Antonio as one of the great livable cities of North America. The world will know that this is a community that values open space and invests in the things that make life fuller.

Thank you to all our partners and community members who helped to shape the Master Plan for Voelcker Park. I truly believe that Max and Minnie Voelcker would be pleased with the path we've taken.

Phil Hardberger, Mayor
City of San Antonio
April 14, 2008

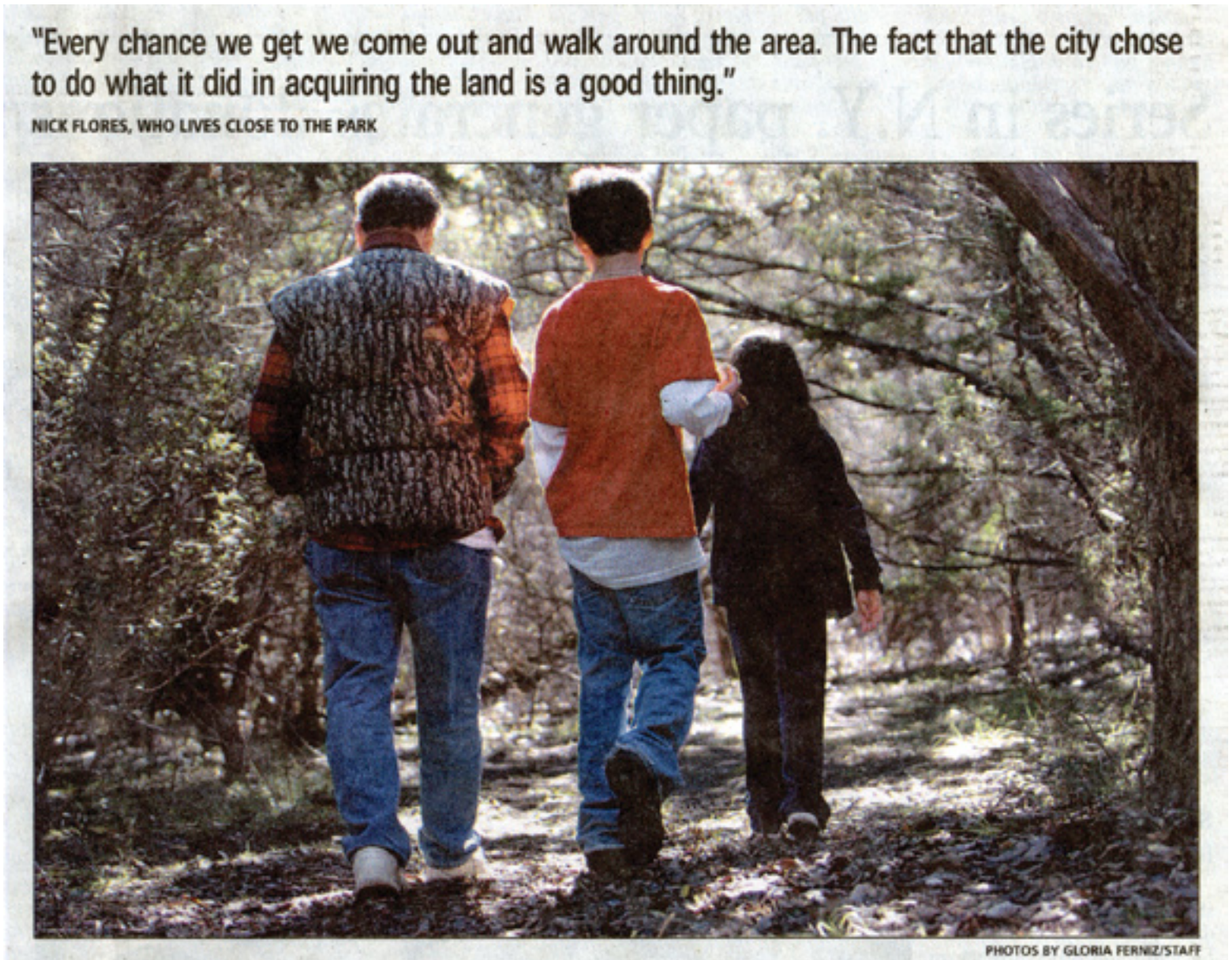

Plans for Voelker Park, a gem of urban wilderness, spark a question: Will this city make parks a priority?

BOB OWEN/STAFF

Mayor Hardberger says the Voelker trees might inspire a hug, 'though you won't be able to get your arms around many of them' . . .

GOING FOR GREEN

THE VISION →
Mayor Phil Hardberger demonstrates his support for Voelcker Park during a 2007 site tour.



"Every chance we get we come out and walk around the area. The fact that the city chose to do what it did in acquiring the land is a good thing."

NICK FLORES, WHO LIVES CLOSE TO THE PARK

PHOTOS BY GLORIA FERNIZ/STAFF

Nick Flores (from left) and his grandchildren, Alex Gonzalez, 10, and Karina Gonzalez, 6, take a walk on a cattle path through Voelcker Park. It is the second time the park has been open to the public.

A TREASURE FOR NATURE LOVERS

← A CITY-WIDE PARK

A March site tour and event organized by the Parks and Recreation Department attracted over 200 people from around the City to the Park.

With unprecedented vision and leadership, Mayor Phil Hardberger has created a legacy, Voelcker Park, which will stand the test of time. His foresight has left an indelible footprint on San Antonio's Park System that our residents will be able to enjoy for generations to come. Beginning in May 2007, voters overwhelmingly passed the largest municipal bond program in San Antonio history. The acquisition and development of Voelcker Park is the signature project among the 69 park projects included in the 2007-2012 Bond Program.

The Voelcker Park Project has provided the City of San Antonio Parks and Recreation Department the opportunity to raise the bar in the planning of our public parks. From the onset, the community has been a vital component in developing Voelcker Park. Recognizing the unique opportunity to design and develop the 311 acre site, the City embarked on its first ever national design competition for the Master Plan of the park. Through a series of public meetings and a juried competition, the design team of Stephen Stimson Associates/ D.I.R.T. studio was selected to complete the Voelcker Park Master Plan.

In developing the Master Plan, City staff has collaborated with Stephen Stimson Associates/ D.I.R.T. studio and ensured that feedback provided through the community input process is incorporated. Significant input received from the community and stakeholder groups have contributed and shaped the Park plan. The result is the preservation and restoration of seventy-five percent of the site's natural habitat, and sensitively developing twenty-five percent of the site, leading to a park theme centered on urban ecology.

San Antonio is a community whose residents desire new urban park areas and are conscientious about protecting open space. San Antonio leaders are passionate about improving the quality of life for their residents. The Parks and Recreation Department is committed to protecting valuable resources and sustaining new park opportunities. The benefits Voelcker Park will generate for our community are truly limitless.

As you review the Voelcker Park Master Plan, I hope you agree that it is a product of a great team. Our thanks go out to local elected officials, the Mayor's staff, the City Manager and the City Management team, the design consultants and most importantly, our community and neighborhood stakeholders. In true San Antonio style, Voelcker Park will honor San Antonio's rich history by preserving the tradition of this parkland while becoming a great public open space and destination for residents and visitors.

Malcolm Matthews
Director, Parks and Recreation Department
City of San Antonio
April 23, 2008

A VISION FOR VOELCKER PARK

01

A VISION FOR VOELCKER PARK

The citizens of San Antonio received a great gift when the old Voelcker dairy farm was presented to them as a new city park. The legacy of Alamo City's parkland includes the oldest of landscapes sited upon the unique resource of springs and one of the nation's most renowned urban parks built along the river. When charged by the Mayor to create a 21st century park for San Antonio, our design team drew inspiration from both a rich natural history of south Texas and the agrarian heritage of San Antonio dating back to the Missions. Acknowledging the evolution of the Voelcker site, the Master Plan builds upon those traditions yet introduces the idea that untamed nature could dynamically combine with the contemporary urban context to conceive of the Park as a cultivated wild.

THE SITE

The Master Plan for Voelcker Park asserts the power of this green microcosm engulfed by dense development yet situated where three eco-regions of Texas converge. The Master Plan recognizes that this confluence at the 311-acre parcels could be thought of as a large natural and cultural watershed gathering neighborhoods across the city into the Park, then flowing toward the regional system of the Salado Creek Greenway. The over-grazed and degraded former Voelcker farm left a treasure of centuries-old oaks but also overgrown woodlands and scrub begging for renewal. Eroded evidence of water suggests some pragmatic and poetic possibilities of harvesting and filtering this precious resource. This is the wilderness that many citizens have held sacred, and that the Master Plan reveres through the site's natural and cultural landscape origins allowing the Park to become productive again.

THE CONCEPT

The conceptual platform for the Master Plan of Voelcker Park as a cultivated wild is like a Texas Two-step. The first conception of the Master Plan commits 75% of the parkland to be renewed into a native landscape mosaic; the first step is the preservation of the heritage oaks and the restoration of woodlands and brush combined with reintroducing the long-gone oak savanna, the expansive native grasslands that personify a genuinely wild Texas territory. The second conceptual framework of the Master Plan devotes 25% of park acreage to active areas for community gatherings willfully carved out of the larger green matrix; the second step is the careful crafting of places inspired by the patterns of historic mission acequias and cultivated fields evoking associations with the local cultural landscape that reminds us of where and who we are.

THE PRINCIPLES

Four criteria have been fundamental in developing the principles presented in the Master Plan to guide the final design of the Park. The first is stewardship: the Plan sets out to foster understanding and care of the Park's unique urban ecology defined as the productive inter-relationship of natural processes and the built environment. The second is learning: the Park will become a living laboratory for sharing knowledge about the native Texas landscape and the larger environment. The third is re-creation: referring to the significant act of restoring the Park's native landscape back to health, and also alluding to that process of re-creating oneself both physically and emotionally. The fourth is sustainability: interpreted on this post-agricultural land as an inverse of production that once took resources from the land but now gives back clean water and rich soil, vibrant plants and abundant wildlife to a healthy landscape for all of San Antonio.

21st CENTURY PARK

The fundamental elements of every great park – equal access and social diversity, a strong landscape framework with programmatic flexibility, and revelatory memorable experiences – are as relevant today as they were over 200 years ago when the first great parks of San Antonio were created. The design for Voelcker Park must commit to long term landscape regeneration, interpret local and regional cultural histories, and inspire stewardship for generations. Today's collaboration of designers and decision makers must fully engage community members and others who have been advocates and remain vitally interested in this endeavor. The Master Plan embraces these challenges with intentions to preserve and expand the historic role that parks have played in the life of the City. The Voelcker Park Master Plan is presented here as a tool to produce, together, the final design that will achieve shared aspirations for this great park of the future.

BEGINNING THE DESIGN PROCESS

PRECIOUS PARCEL

DESIGN INSPIRATION

GREAT PARK

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

02

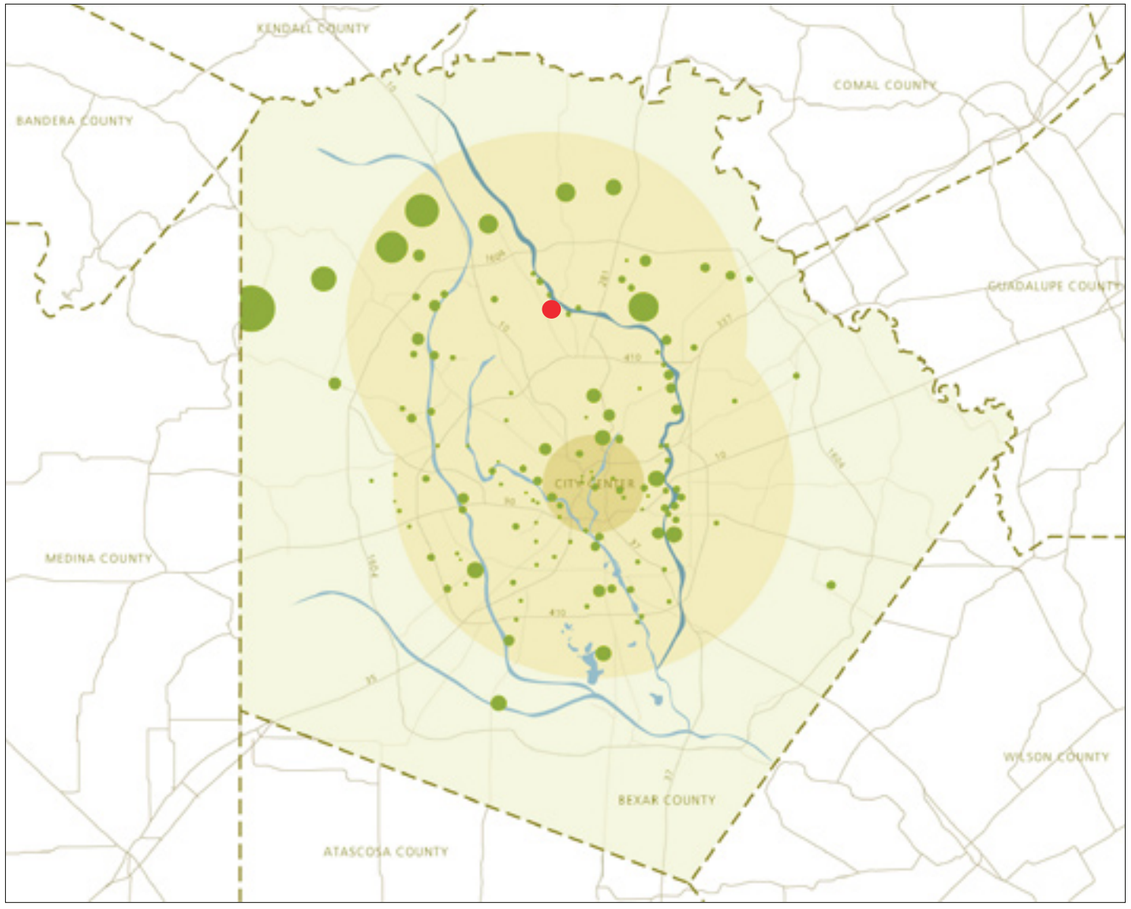
PRECIOUS PARCEL

For the past fifty years, a precious 311-acre landscape has stood its ground against a growing and urbanizing San Antonio. Withstanding the rigors of dairy farming and impact of new major roadways, this parcel has been overgrazed and degraded, yet maintains its rich history and potential to regenerate the wonders of the shrinking native landscape. Heritage oaks still stand tall through invasion of foreign species and thick brush; the historic grassland surface remains beneath the pioneer thickets; animal and bird species find food and shelter within its habitats; the historic Voelcker homestead still resides at its northern reach. Located within San Antonio and nestled among existing and growing neighborhoods, the site is in a unique position to thrive as an urban ecological park as it demonstrates how human enjoyment and ecological function can and must support each other.

The Park remains a precious parcel, but does not stand alone as Salado Creek forms a strong ecological and recreational ally to the east. Connecting to Salado Creek through its local hydrology and the regional greenway lends the Park an even larger presence in the City and sustains its ability to thrive.

NORTHERN NEXUS →

Located within the growing City of San Antonio, Voelcker Park [shown in red] is situated to become the northern nexus of the City-wide park system.

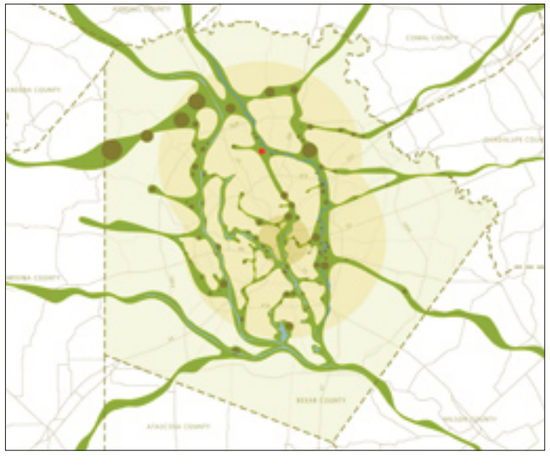


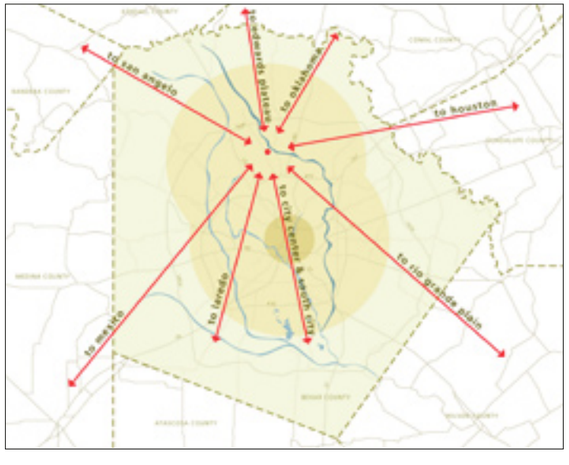
← SITE AS ANOMALY

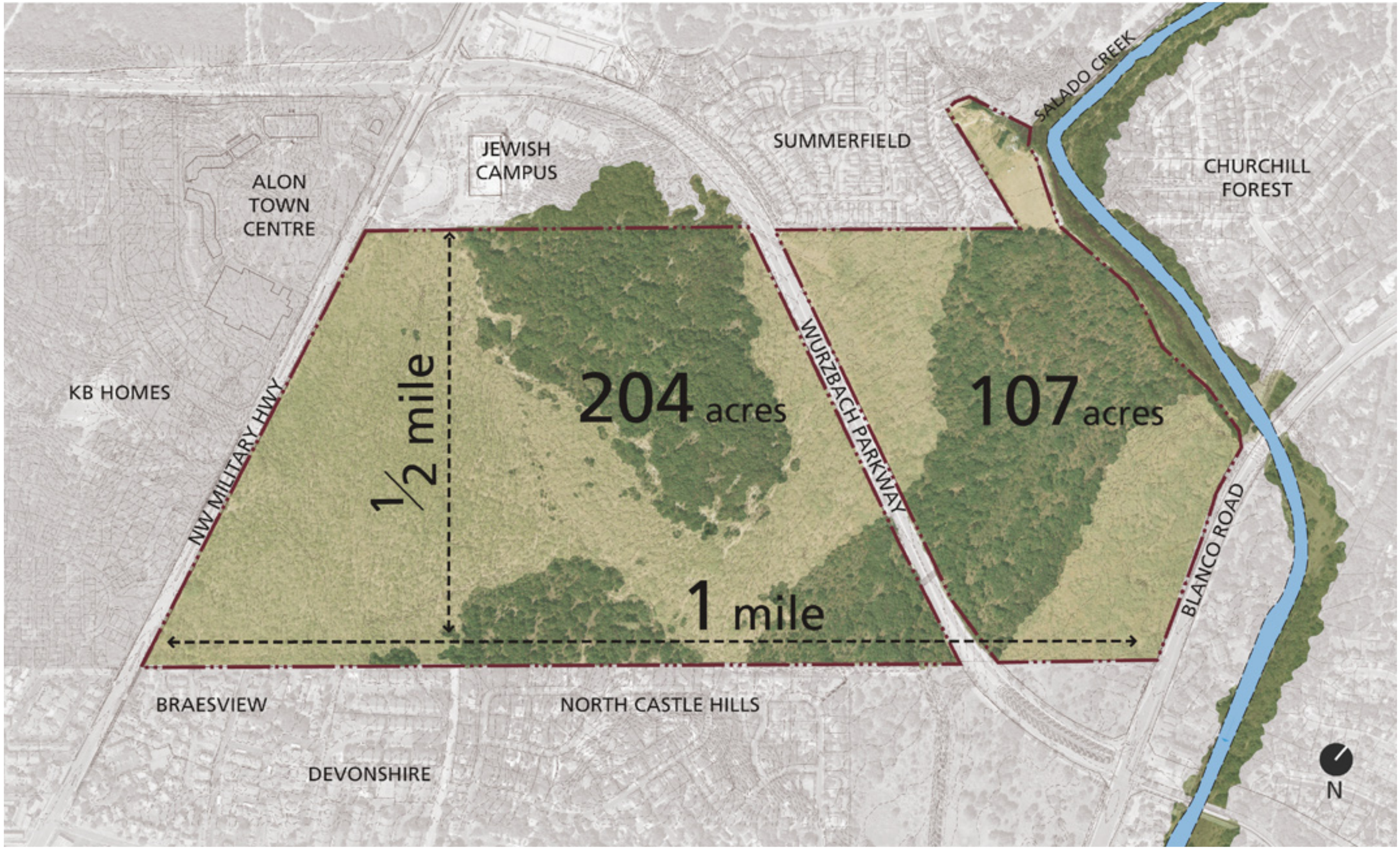
Voelcker Park remains an anomaly, as a stubborn green figure amidst the present-day urban condition.

GREEN NETWORK + BEYOND →

Voelcker Park is located at a critical place within a potential green network of parks and creekway corridors, and has the potential to influence Bexar County and beyond.






ALON
TOWN
CENTRE
JEWISH
CAMPUS
SUMMERFIELD
SALADO CREEK
CHURCHILL
FOREST
KB HOMES
NW MILITARY HWY
1/2 mile
204 acres
WURZBACH PARKWAY
107 acres
BLANCO ROAD
1 mile
BRAESVIEW
NORTH CASTLE HILLS
DEVONSHIRE
N

DESIGN INSPIRATION

cul•ti•vate	to foster the growth of by labor and attention; to nurture; to form and refine
wild	in a natural state; unrestrained; untrammeled

UNTAMED NATURE

The Voelcker site was once part of the vast native oak savanna that stretched across the San Antonio region, blanketing the landscape with grasslands, spots of oaks and oak mottes and seasonal wildflowers, offering habitat and food to native species that had adapted to its cycles. This was prime land for ranching, farming, and eventually urban development which changed the character of the landscape in dramatic ways. Fortunately, the Voelcker site has retained its potential for rich ecosystems and the creation of a new park highlights the opportunity to regenerate the mosaic of the native landscapes that once covered the City. The native regional landscape lends its clues to how the Park can become a microcosm of interwoven ecologies, supporting a richness and diversity of species within this urban setting.

CULTURAL HERITAGE

The health and resilience of the San Antonio landscape at Voelcker Park also takes its cues from the rich history of human settlement. Water resources and agriculture are at the foundation of the San Antonio region's cultural history. Four centuries of shaping the land have created distinct forms in the landscape, from the missions, acequias and agricultural fields to the social traditions of San Antonio's diverse communities, that have provided design inspiration for Voelcker Park.

CULTIVATED WILD

The concept of the Park as a cultivated wild interprets and integrates the rich cultural history of San Antonio with the diverse and resilient ecologies that are native to the region. Embedded in a region of productive modes of farming and ranching, as a cultivated wild Voelcker Park reverses and expands upon the concept of what a productive landscape can be. Rather than extract and exploit resources for human use, resources are respected, restored, and renewed. Through the science of ecology and the art of design, the Park can foster rich and diverse site ecologies in conjunction with healthy and active people. The integration of human recreation and non-human ecologies impacts far beyond the physical reaches of the Park as each visitor's awareness develops into an overall sense of environmental responsibility. The design of Voelcker Park's forms and spaces, systems and programs reflect the City's unique ecological and cultural heritage, engendering resonance with local residents and demonstrating its distinct South Texas identity to visitors from afar.

NATIVE LANDSCAPE →

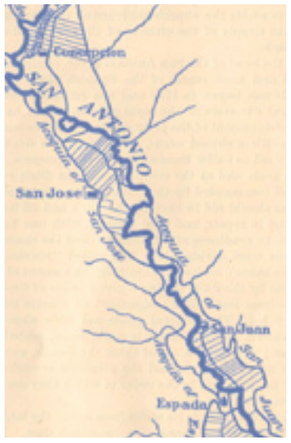
Early landscape paintings depict the nearly extinct ecosystems of native oak savanna and iconic bluebonnets of South Texas, illustrating what the landscape is capable of being. [Painting by P. Salinas]

UNIQUE FEATURES →

Impenetrable scrub, scoured waterways, pocket grasslands, remnant agriculture and heritage oaks define the landscape of the Voelcker site.

DAIRY FARM →

Max and Minnie Voelcker operated a dairy farm on over 800 acres of land at the edge of south Texas Hill Country.



MISSION LANDSCAPE →

The interpretation of waterways and spatial forms of the mission landscape of San Antonio has provided inspiration for the design of Voelcker Park's water systems and active spaces.

AGRICULTURAL LAND →

Early agricultural settlement of San Antonio exhibited specific patterns and relationships to watercourses that can be carried on through Park design. [Painting by G. Nelson]

GREAT PARK

Urban parks across the world impart lessons for the creation of a great city park for San Antonio. Five main characteristics were common to many of the precedents studied:

STRONG DESIGN FRAMEWORK

The sign of a great park is a visitor's ability to understand, implicitly or explicitly, the primary structure or the "bones" of the landscape. A good framework allows the park to adapt over time as the cultural and ecological needs of the city change and grow, while maintaining a cohesive vision of the park in people's minds.

MOSAIC IN FLUX

Great parks are able to withstand and celebrate changes at many different time scales, whether it be daily, seasonally, yearly or over decades. Program spaces are often flexible, multi-functional and multi-generational. A great park is enjoyed all year long and its landscape allows people to engage with the seasonal cycles of color and water in ways that are not always possible throughout the rest of the city.

← CENTRAL PARK, NY

Found geologic features of the site guided the park's framework, evoking the ancient formation of the local native landscape.

EXAMPLE FOR STATE AND REGION ↑

At the convergence of three important eco-regions of Texas, Voelcker Park can exemplify sustainable living within the native terrain for the region and the state.

PROSPECT PARK, BROOKLYN, NY ↓

Flexible, multifunctional spaces allow park visitors to engage seasonal cycles that are not always accessible in the midst of the City.

NATIONAL MODEL AND DESTINATION ↑

As a unique model of fostering a healthy native landscape and local cultural traditions of San Antonio, Voelcker Park can become a destination for the country.

HIGH PARK, TORONTO, CANADA ↓

A healthy landscape goes hand in hand with healthy people as the definitive park framework allows activity within the ecologically restored habitat.

CENTRAL PARK, NY →

The Mall provides a central promenade, serving as a flexible democratic space in the city where people of all backgrounds can relax, gather and interact.

HIGH PARK, TORONTO →

The ambitious restoration of native habitats are phased and configured to allow ecological health and resiliency while enabling public participation in the landscape.

PROSPECT PARK, NY →

Part of the overall design framework, the Long Meadow provides a flexible space for relaxation and play.

PARC SAUSSET, FRANCE ↑

Drawing upon the regional types of forest, agriculture, grassland and urbanity, the local landscape and seasonal changes are revealed over time around the distinct structure of human spaces.

GREAT PARK

RESPECT LOCAL CONTEXT

A great urban park is created for the people of the City in which it lies. The local culture and history is engaged and celebrated. Familiar design forms and materials that draw upon the unique qualities of a place can demonstrate that the Park is for the people of its city, as well as display the City's unique aspects to visitors from across the world.

A SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPE

Re-creation and renewal of landscapes that are historic or rare, in a way that respects and celebrates natural resources, benefits the ecology of a city and its people. Engaging in the respectful use of an ecologically healthy landscape can reach far beyond the boundaries of the Park as awareness and respect for larger ecological systems becomes a part of daily life. Great parks promote social equity and diversity as they are free and open to access by all people, including places and events for people of all backgrounds to interact, gather and play. Integrating a sustainable agenda and green infrastructure allows the Park to thrive and contribute to the ecology of the City, as well as act as a showcase to the rest of the City and the country.

HEALTHY ECOLOGIES + HEALTHY PEOPLE

Great parks allow people to rejuvenate and refresh themselves in the landscape, both consciously and subconsciously. As Frederick Law Olmsted suggested, the rejuvenation from city life happens effortlessly as you experience a landscape different from your daily life. Additionally, city parks are rich landscapes of learning and optimal places to create living laboratories where people can be active participants in the natural processes of the Park.

SAN PEDRO SPRINGS PARK, SAN ANTONIO

A series of wading and swimming pools celebrate the unique artesian geology of the Edwards Aquifer.

BRACKENRIDGE PARK, SAN ANTONIO

The San Antonio River flowing through Brackenridge Park allows park users to experience the riparian corridor.

SAN ANTONIO RIVER WALK

Flood control and graywater reuse infrastructure has transformed downtown into a national tourist attraction.

ZILKER PARK, AUSTIN

Communal picnic tables provide places for holiday picnics and birthday parties for all people of the City.

O.P. SCHNABEL PARK, SAN ANTONIO

A basketball court discretely tucked into the existing vegetation allows activity and play within the native landscape.

MISSION SAN JOSE, SAN ANTONIO

Remnant foundations define an outdoor room within the larger mission landscape and evoke the cultural history of the site through minimal intervention.

MEDINA RIVER PARK, SAN ANTONIO

Small paths through the native riparian landscape allow people to engage with the yearly cycles of the local ecosystems.

FRIEDRICH WILDERNESS PARK, SAN ANTONIO

The native savanna landscape of the Hill Country at the outskirts of the City celebrates the local ecology of the region.

LADY BIRD JOHNSON WILDFLOWER CENTER, AUSTIN

Water collection emphasizes responsible management of a precious resource.

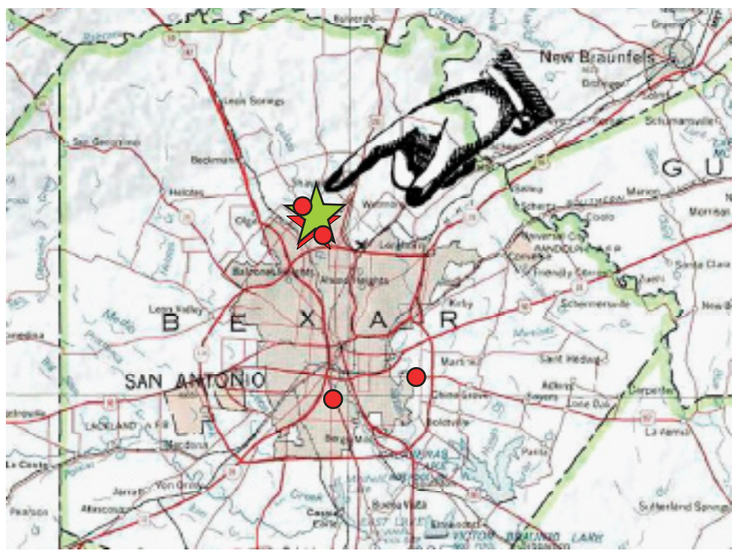
COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Park design begins with a public dialogue about the aspirations for a city's new public place. Charged with creating a city-wide park, the design team worked with Mayor Hardberger's Office, the City Manager's Office, the Parks and Recreation Department and community coordinator Juan Sepúlveda of the Common Enterprise to develop a method of integrating citizen input with the Master Plan design process. Beginning in October of 2007, a series of four public meetings were planned to reach out to neighborhoods across the City in an effort to include the diverse population of San Antonio. Each public meeting included informational presentations by the design team and interactive work sessions with the community.

At these community meetings, the design team was able to provide design progress through conceptual drawings that conveyed park use strategies. Community feedback on these design strategies was solicited through questionnaires and drawing exercises. As a result, themes for programming and park uses were then derived. These themes (discussed in Chapter 04), combined with intensive site analysis have become the foundation for the Master Plan. Community meetings and work sessions were also coupled with site tours and events, organized and led by the Parks and Recreation Department. Scheduled in sync with meeting dates, these tours and events offered the public an opportunity to experience the Park in its existing conditions, inspiring a sense of stewardship for the Park from the onset. The establishment of the Voelcker Park web site (www.voelckerpark.com) has also enabled the public to be informed on the Park planning and design process.

CITY-WIDE PARK

Community meetings for Voelcker Park were held at several locations across San Antonio to initiate a wide range of public participation.



COMMUNITY SURVEY

Anonymous surveys and questionnaires were distributed during community meetings to collect input and comments about the public's desires and aspirations for the Park.

Community Input DESIGN TEAM'S CONCEPTUAL SITE STRATEGIES 12.12.07

INFORMATION for data on community representation ONLY.
Anonymous: Do not include your name.

YOUR ZIP CODE + NEIGHBORHOOD 78248 Churchill Forest
YOUR AGE 51

RATING SYSTEM (assign number to each component)
3 = GREAT 2 = OKAY 1 = BAD IDEA

A. BOOKENDS
1 Large-sized areas of active recreation + program elements concentrated at park edges.
1/2 High visibility of activities from NW Military and Blanco.
1/2 Continuous landscape patches at center of the site.
1 Pedestrian bridge across Wurzbach Parkway.
2 Nature Center near Blanco Road.
Additional Comments:

B. PODS
3 Medium-sized areas of recreation and other program elements bundled in several areas.
2 Moderate visibility of activities from roads.
2 Landscape patches interwoven with activity areas.
3 Land bridge for pedestrians and wildlife.
2 Nature Center off NW Military.
Additional Comments: The landbridge is the best option by far for connecting the two and allowing wildlife to cross once again

C. CONFETTI
3 Small-sized areas of park uses broadly distributed.
3 Low visibility of activities from surrounding context.
2 Landscape patches largely maintained with imbedded program elements.
1 Intersection with pedestrian crosswalk at Wurzbach Parkway.
2 Nature Center on interior of east side.
Additional Comments: A crosswalk and light is a horrible idea Wurzbach Pkwy is supposed to limit stoplights

CITY-WIDE MEETINGS

City-wide meetings since October 2007 for Voelcker Park have occurred at various community centers throughout the City in order to engage the community in the Master Plan design process.

CITY CENTRAL
BODE COMMUNITY CENTER

CITY NORTH
JEWISH COMMUNITY CAMPUS

CITY SOUTHWEST
HARLANDALE COMMUNITY CENTER

VOELCKER PARK WEBSITE →

The launching of the Voelcker Park website has allowed citizens to keep up-to-date with the Master Plan and submit feedback on the Park planning process.

SITE TOURS →

Local newspapers published articles to disseminate information about the Park Master Plan, the community participation process and site tours to the wider public.

← COMMUNITY EXERCISES

Drawing exercises at community meetings allowed the public to contribute feedback on the Master Plan process.

GETTING TO KNOW THE SITE + THE COMMUNITY

SITE ANALYSIS

PARK USE POTENTIAL

COMMUNITY INPUT

03

SITE ANALYSIS

The design of Voelcker Park depends largely upon an understanding of existing site characteristics as well as the context in which the Park is located. The physical and social networks, neighborhoods and edges that bound the site help define its character and its ability to be connected to the City beyond its boundaries. The design team sought to understand the relationship to the two major roads that border the site, NW Military and Blanco Road, as well as Wurzbach Parkway which bisects the site, dividing it into two parcels. Salado Creek forms one of the most important edges to the east, connecting the Park to the larger region through the Salado Creek Greenway.

Understanding the site itself necessitated the insight of local expertise in geology, hydrology, vegetation, wildlife and cultural resources. Consultants based in the San Antonio area studied and analyzed the site through field visits and document research, offering their findings and recommendations for the Park. The geology + hydrology team investigated the surface and subsurface features of the site to determine the requirements and opportunities of the ground structure and water flows that the Park can engage. The landscape patches team studied the composition and health of the plant communities and wildlife, explaining the existence and potential for a diverse and resilient park. Lastly, the historic and cultural resources team researched documentation to determine the preservation potential of important sites and artifacts at Voelcker Park and its heritage homestead. The following sections summarize the consultants' preliminary findings and design potential for the Park.

SITE WORK →

Site visits and fieldwork sessions with the consultants have been a key step in understanding the site's history, existing conditions, and design potential.

← FIELD NOTES

Voelcker Park field notes from a site visit in May 2007 show the process of getting to know the site and its features in the field.

← NETWORKS

Integrating Salado Creek and its greenway into the planning for Voelcker Park will ensure connectivity between the Park and the City-wide park system.

EXISTING CONTEXT →

Traffic noise is one of several impacts on the site, which is tightly bounded by surrounding development.

← NEIGHBORS

Adjacent private property to the north and south of the Park necessitates a special sensitivity to neighbors' concerns.

← EDGES

Wurzbach Parkway currently divides the two Voelcker parcels and becomes a barrier to pedestrian and wildlife movement across the Park.

POTENTIAL CONNECTIONS →

The Master Plan proposes to connect with and cross the major roadways while also uniting the Park with Salado Creek.

SITE ANALYSIS: groundwork

GEOLOGY + HYDROLOGY STUDY

Voelcker Park is located in the transition zone of the Edwards Aquifer where areas of groundwater recharge often occur. Given its unique hydrogeological location and potential to contribute to the health of the aquifer, the geology and hydrology team [Raba-Kistner and Southwest Research Institute] inspected both surface water drainage features and surface geology at the Park and the adjacent branch of Salado Creek at the northeast edge. Observations of surface water flow and geologic structure were made during site visits and field work, and have been supplemented by previously completed geologic reports. A full version of the geology and hydrology study can be found in the Appendix.

STORMWATER RUNOFF + DRAINAGE

On the western parcel, surface stormwater flows primarily southeast, through a series of distinct water courses that are marginally wet during periods of heavy rainfall. Water moving through the western parcel flows through various landscape typologies, including oak woodland, ashe juniper, scrub and pocket grasslands. In some areas, the ephemeral movement of water flow is marked by exposed bedrock, where the underlying Austin Chalk formation is revealed. Stormwater moving through the western parcel that does not infiltrate on site culminates at the concrete spillway adjacent to the Park at the North Castle Hills neighborhood. Additional stormwater flows onto the western parcel at the backside of the Braesview Apartments, where parking lot runoff has created a man-made wetland on the Voelcker site. On the eastern parcel, stormwater runoff flows south out of the Summerfield neighborhood, is channelized into a concrete spillway and enters the site immediately west of the large heritage oak at the property boundary. Surface water flows through the east parcel along a large, primarily grass swale, and eventually exits the parcel through a culvert at Wurzbach Parkway, flowing southeast to the southern reach of Salado Creek.

The quality of water runoff from surrounding development onto both east and west parcels warrants further study. These discharges display the markings of characteristic urban runoff, including oil, gasoline and lawn fertilizer, all of which contribute to a nitrogen overload which results in the devastation of flora and fauna. Water samples will be collected from surface flow from specific locations throughout the site during an intense rain event in order to determine the types and amount of contaminants in the stormwater that is generated by neighboring developments. This data will provide indicators of where surface water is degraded, particularly due to cultural activities associated with residential developments, as well as guide the location, parameters and design of stormwater cleansing gardens in the Park. Additional quantitative analysis is required to determine the amount and quality of stormwater runoff that enters the site before a definitive recommendation regarding the size and design of the stormwater cleansing gardens can be made.

EROSION + INFILTRATION

Surface drainage features on both parcels indicate scouring of bedrock caused by excessive surface drainage. The movement of water on the west parcel can be characterized by deeper scouring, generated by the faster flow of water due to shallow soil conditions and steeper topography. [*continued on page 26*]

EXISTING HYDROLOGY

Runoff from adjacent development impacts drainageways on the west and east parcels and pose challenges for stormwater management.

POTENTIAL HYDROLOGY

Innovative and proven techniques of capturing and filtering water are proposed throughout the Park, limiting the threat of flooding of surrounding properties.

← WATER QUANTITY

A spillway from the Summerfield neighborhood directs stormwater runoff onto the site at the northeast edge.

← WATER QUALITY

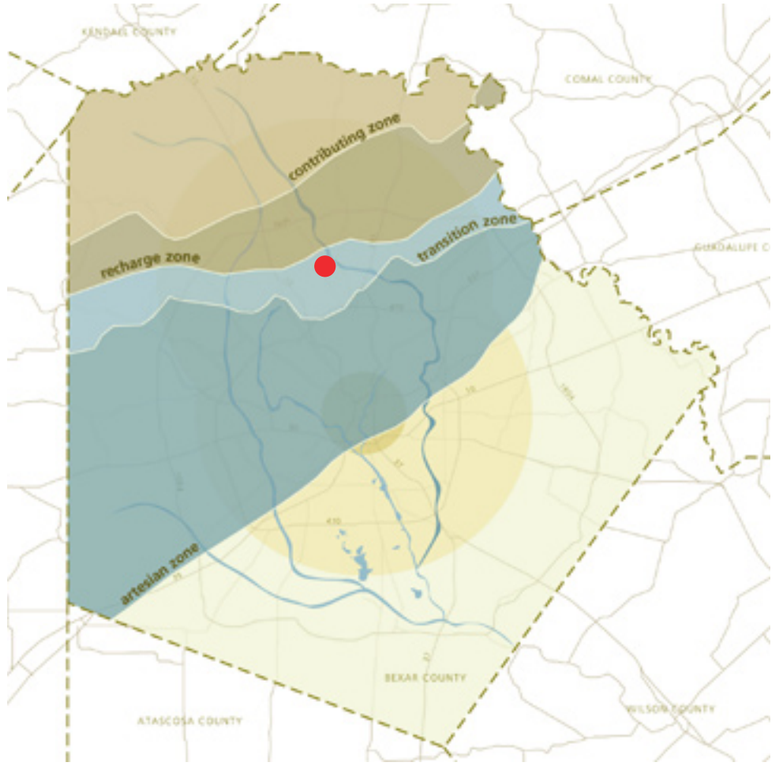
Urban runoff from parking lots at Braesview Apartments flows onto the site at the southern edge.

← SITE EROSION

Stormwater flowing through the site has eroded shallow soils and exposed bedrock.

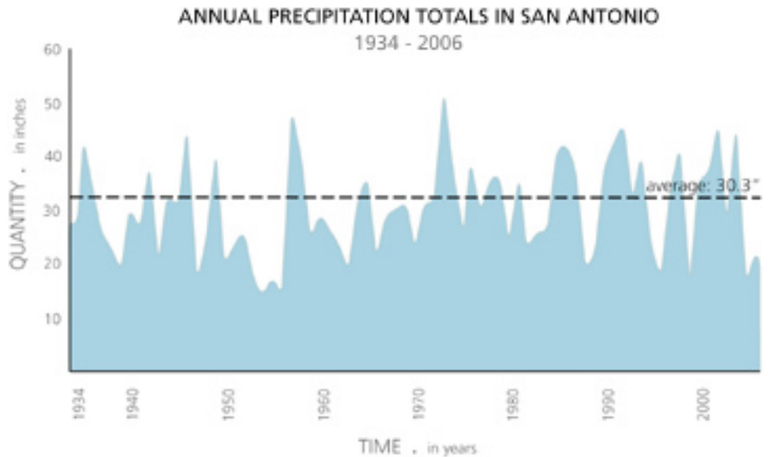
EDWARDS AQUIFER →

Voelcker Park is located within the transition zone of the Edwards Aquifer, a sensitive hydrogeologic zone with areas of stormwater recharge.



PRECIOUS WATER →

Inconsistent annual rainfall in San Antonio requires careful and creative attention to the design of water systems for quantity and quality in both wet and dry periods. [Source: U.S. Census Bureau].



SITE ANALYSIS: groundwork

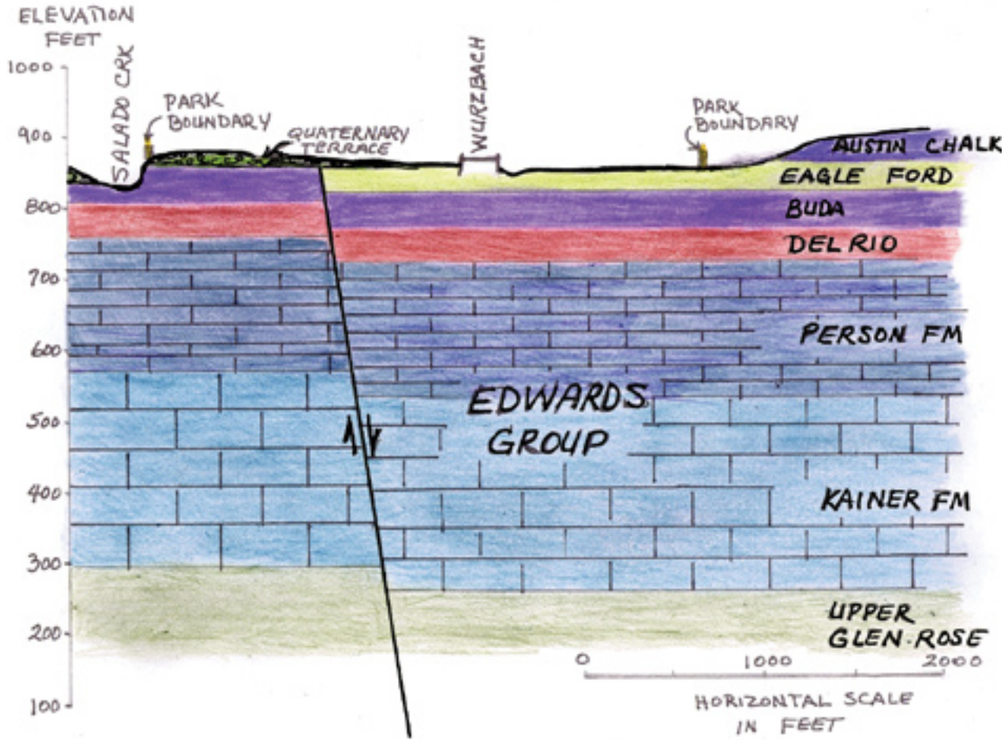
The flow of water on the east parcel is much slower than the west, due to gentle slopes and more substantial soils and grassland pockets. Overall, the lack of grasslands at the Voelcker site inhibits the majority of stormwater runoff from infiltrating on-site. With the overwhelming succession of scrub and woodland and overgrazing, grassland species are outcompeted and eradicated, and stormwater that flows through the site continues to diminish soils, expose bedrock and scour the landscape. The restoration of native grassland will reestablish soils and provide opportunities to slow stormwater runoff, cleanse graywater in key locations through the careful selection of plant species, and allow infiltration of clean water to occur on-site.

ROCKS + SOIL

Three geologic formations of the Upper Cretaceous Age are exposed at the Park site associated with past deposition of marine sediments. In accordance with the regional geologic settings, formations trend northeast-southwest and dip toward the current Gulf of Mexico, with youngest formations exposed to the southeast. The majority of the Park property including almost the entire extent of the west parcel is underlain by the Austin Chalk formation (Kau), characterized primarily by light gray to buff chalk, marl, and weakly cemented limestone strata. Very thin soil cover is present in areas of the Park underlain by the Kau. Based on interpretations of published information including a regional stratigraphic model developed by SwRI in addition to field observations, it is inferred that the Eagleford Shale (Kef) and Buda Limestone (Kbu) formations underlie the east parcel. In the site vicinity, Kef generally consists of yellow-brown to brown, thinly-bedded and flaggy mudstone strata. As the Kef is readily erodible and typically present under soil cover, suitable exposures for study throughout Bexar County are considered rare. A borrow pit at the eastern parcel near Blanco Road demonstrates thick alluvial sediments associated with Salado Creek. The Kbu was mapped along the Salado Creek channel following the east Park boundary and was observed to consist of gray to brown, hard limestone that resembles the Edwards Limestone in many respects. Within the creek channel, the rock character was observed to be nodular, having many dissolution (karst) openings including a significant cave feature.

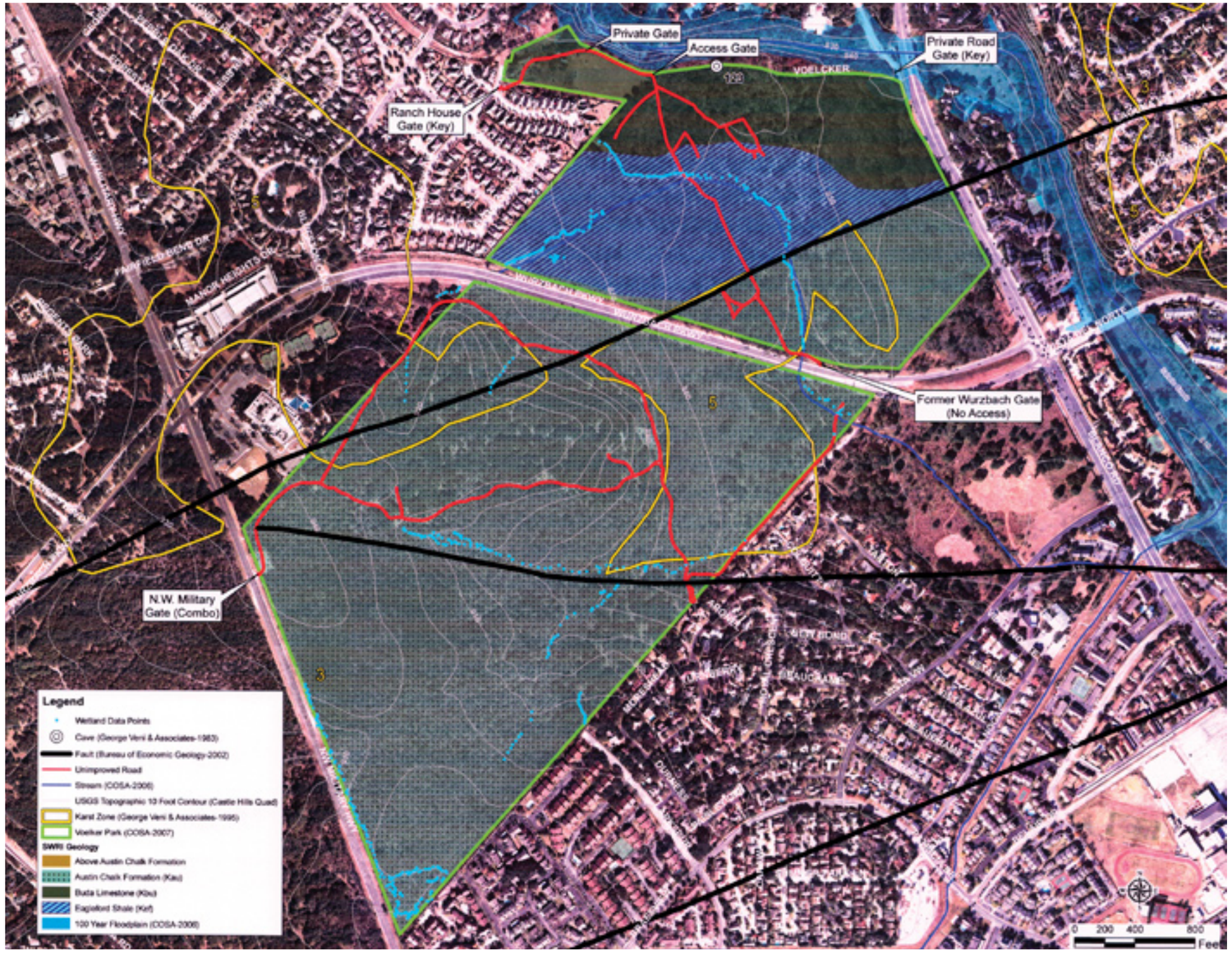
FAULT LINES

Review of previous publications indicates that two normal fault zones associated with the Balcones Fault System transect Park boundaries although only one fault zone was confirmed on the basis of field observations within the Salado Creek Channel. Fault zones are breaks in the rock strata that occur over relatively large distances and facilitate localized displacement associated with the settlement of Gulf Coastal Plain through geologic time. The Balcones Fault system crosses northern Bexar County in an arcuate band roughly paralleling North Loop 1604. Most of the faulting within this system is believed to have occurred during the Miocene epoch, beginning approximately 23 million years ago. In many instances normal faults in the site vicinity are pervasive, extending several hundred feet into the subsurface and facilitating the juxtaposition of older (Lower Cretaceous) and younger (upper Cretaceous) rock units. The presence of faults at the site are not visible from the surface, but offer opportunities for demarcation through creative interpretation and site design.



GEOLOGIC CROSS SECTION →
Three geologic formations are exposed on the site surface including Austin Chalk, Eagleford Shale and Buda Limestone, with known fault line displacement through the bedrock. [Source: Dr. Bill Ward].

DYNAMIC EDGE →
Buda Limestone exposed at the northeastern edge of the site at Salado Creek dramatically demonstrates the underlying geologic formations of the native landscape.



HYDROGEOLOGIC COMPOSITE MAP

Composite map of hydrologic and geologic features provided a picture of the physical conditions of the site.
[Source: Raba-Kistner].

RELATIONSHIP TO EDWARDS AQUIFER

Fault zones are also considered important with respect to Edwards Aquifer, as recharge can occur in these sensitive areas. At the project site, it is estimated that the depth to the top of the Edwards Limestone and the Aquifer is only 100'. Moreover, as the Buda Limestone Formation extends through the majority of the site, it is possible for stormwater runoff to infiltrate to the Edwards Aquifer at the Park. This is especially feasible in locations where the Buda Limestone is exposed at the surface and faulting is prevalent. Areas of scoured and exposed limestone are found at the site, particularly at the northern edge of the eastern parcel, where stormwater flows into the site from the Summerfield neighborhood. The fact that possible degraded surface water flows onto the site in this particularly sensitive location magnifies the importance of further study of stormwater quantity and quality at the Park.

JURISDICTIONAL AND NON-JURISDICTIONAL WETLANDS

A field survey was conducted to identify wetlands or drainage features located within property boundaries that may be subject to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. The property was surveyed by a trained biologist utilizing parameters specified by the Corps of Engineers Wetland Delineation Manual, which included evaluation of vegetation communities, the presence or absence of hydric soils, and hydrology. Three wetland areas (approximately 0.87 acres) were noted near the southwest corner of the property adjacent to NW Military Hwy. These areas appeared to have hydric soils under reducing conditions, hydrophilic plants, and distinct hydrology due to the adjacent development's landscape irrigation system and parking lot. The wetland areas do not have a hydrological connection to jurisdictional waters and are not considered to be jurisdictional. Numerous ephemeral streams and swales were also noted, many of which exhibit a defined channel and exhibit an ordinary high water mark. On the basis of preliminary survey results, approximately 5,427 linear feet of potentially jurisdictional ephemeral drainage/streams are located on the project site encompassing approximately 0.68 acres. Special consideration and permitting is necessary for jurisdictional water features in conjunction with any Park development in these areas.

GEOLOGIC + HYDROLOGIC POTENTIAL

Overall, the hydrologic features and geologic structure of the Voelcker site are quite ordinary. However, the Park's location and context, amidst a vastly-growing urban population, within the transition zone and bounded by the Salado Creek, gives it the opportunity to be a model for other urban parks and open space dealing with similar stormwater issues. The multiple sources of urban stormwater from adjacent developments and roads can be used to create an innovative model for dealing with surface water runoff. Rather than rely on conventional methods of stormwater conveyance, the Park can act as a living laboratory where state-of-the-art science demonstrates green infrastructure solutions to capturing, cleansing and reusing stormwater. Creative signage and interpretation of natural and cultural features, such as the borrow pit used as an amphitheater, can be integrated into the Park's programming and produce a didactic landscape experience for visitors.

SITE ANALYSIS: landscape patches

ECOLOGICAL SETTING

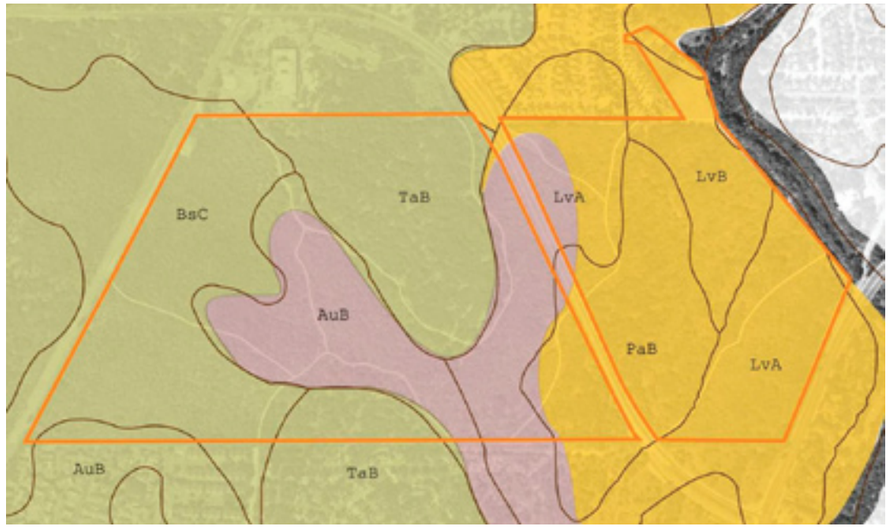
The Voelcker Park property occurs in an area where three ecoregions converge in northern Bexar County. These ecoregions include the Edwards Plateau in the north and west, Blackland Prairie across the center, and South Texas Plains in the southern part of the property. As mapped by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, general vegetation communities in the area include live oak (*Quercus fusiformis*)-mesquite (*Prosopis glandulosa*)-Ashe juniper (*Juniperus ashei*) parks, live oak-Ashe juniper woods, crops and urban area. Based on review of historic aerial photography going as far back as 1938, the property historically contained much more cleared area than is observed today. However, substantial patches of woodland have occurred on the property for decades, particularly in the north-central and eastern parts of the property. It is in these areas where numerous mature (heritage size) live oak (*Quercus fusiformis*) trees still occur. The mature woodlands are associated primarily with the Eckrant cobbly clay, Patrick soils, and Lewisville silty clay soil associations.

METHODS

SWCA Environmental Consultants (SWCA) reviewed current and historic aerial photography, USGS topographic maps, Bexar County Soil Survey, and other available information on the property. Site visits were performed to delineate general vegetation community types. In September and October 2007, SWCA also collected vegetation data for the property at points randomly generated with ArcGIS. Tree and shrub data were collected using the point-centered quarter method, a plotless sampling procedure. In areas dominated by herbaceous species, vegetation aerial cover was estimated using 20 cm by 50 cm Daubenmire frames. Field sampling data were used to determine the following vegetation parameters: cover (foliar cover for herbaceous species, basal cover for woody species), density (number of plants per acre), frequency (percent observed in sample points), and species composition. It is recommended that follow-up sampling be conducted in the spring to collect information on spring-blooming annual species.

VEGETATION TYPES

SWCA delineated six general vegetation communities in the Voelcker Park property: live oak woodlands, live oak/ashe juniper (*Juniperus ashei*) woodlands, live oak/mixed deciduous woodlands, live oak/cedar elm (*Ulmus crassifolia*) woodland, mesquite (*Prosopis glandulosa*) scrub, and pasture. Mature trees primarily occur within the live oak woodland community and the live oak/cedar elm community, which as discussed above have historically occurred on the property for at least several decades. In general, live oak, cedar elm, ashe juniper, and Texas persimmon (*Diospyros texana*) were the dominant woody species on the site. Live oak had the highest basal cover in most areas, while Texas persimmon had the highest density. Within grassy breaks, approximately one-third of the total herbaceous vegetation cover was comprised of two non-native grass species, King Ranch bluestem (*Bothriochloa ischaemum*) and bermudagrass (*Cynodon dactylon*). Other dominant herbs were prostrate lawnflower (*Calyptocarpus vialis*) and prairie tea (*Croton monanthogynus*). Occurrence of native grasses on the property, particularly climax grass species, was virtually nonexistent. This is likely due to the historic livestock grazing regime on the site.

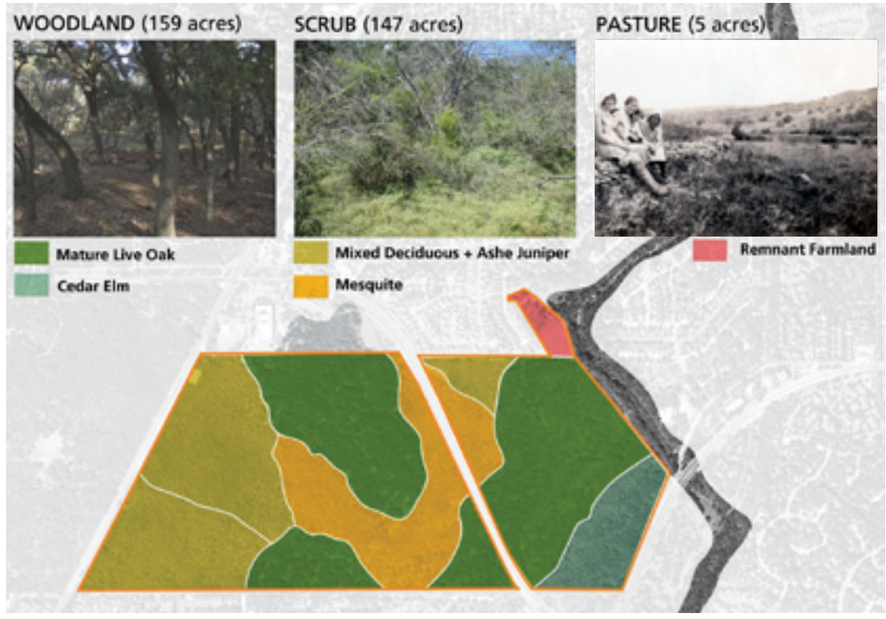


LANDSCAPE PATCHES

Various plant community types make up three distinct landscape patches on the site, including woodland, scrub and pasture patches.

ECOREGIONS

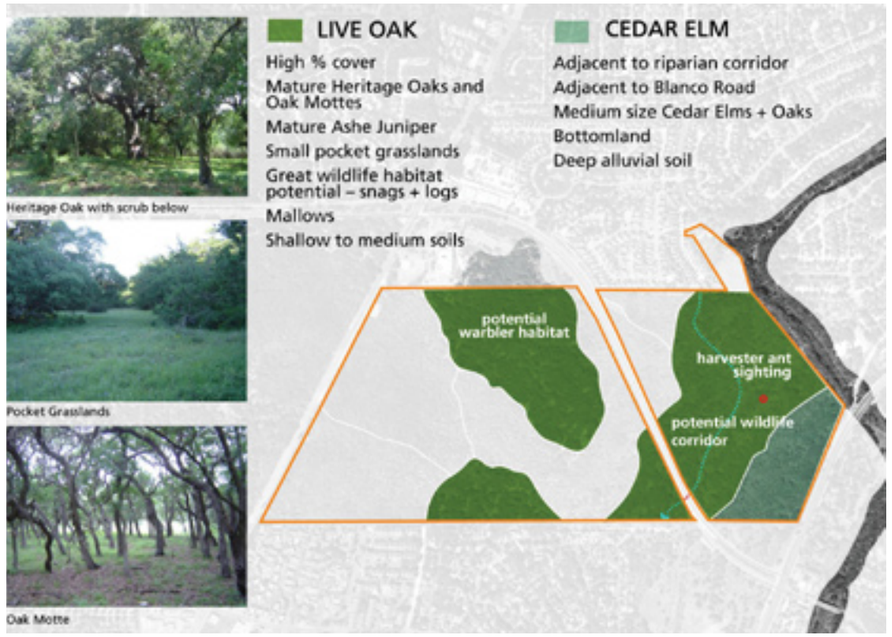
On the site, soils and plant communities display characteristics of the three ecoregions that converge at Bexar County: the Blackland Prairie, South Texas Plains and Edwards Plateau.




EDWARDS PLATEAU

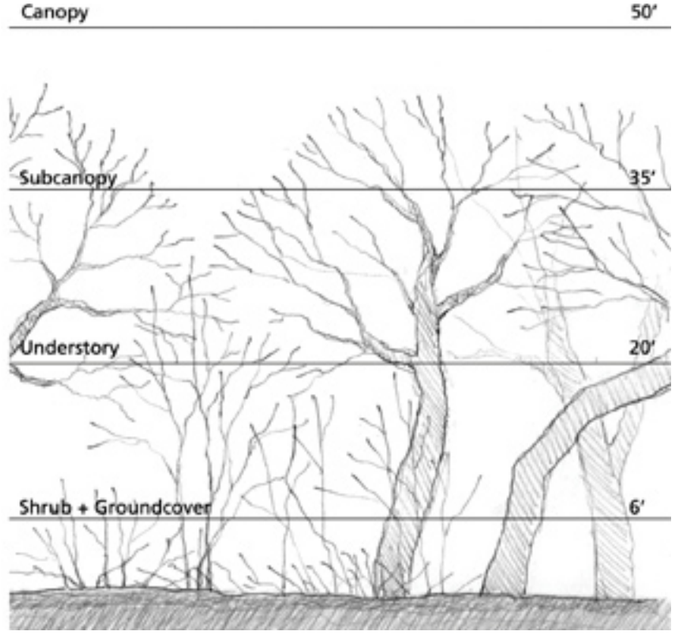

BLACKLAND PRAIRIE


SOUTH TEXAS PLAINS



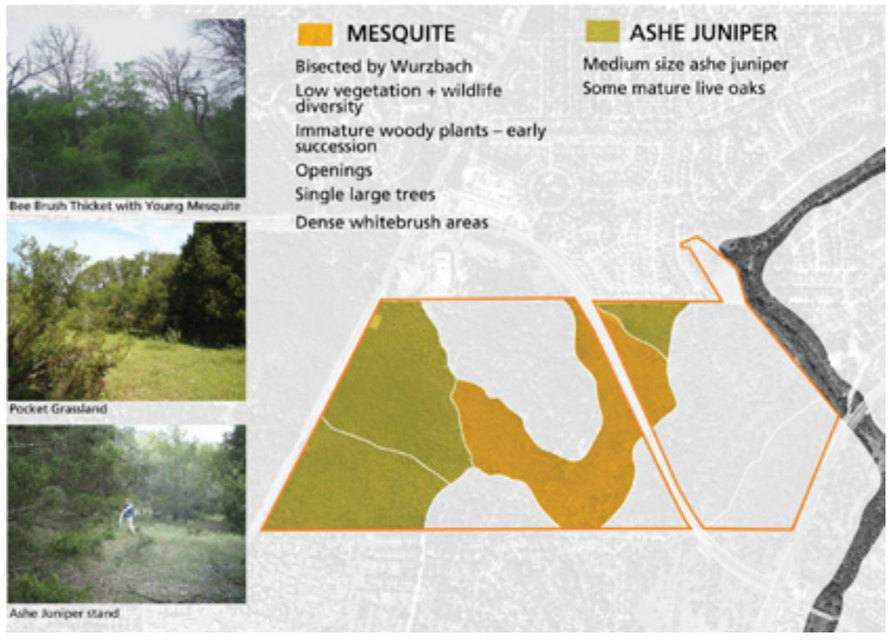
ENRICHED WOODLAND →

Restored woodland habitat with the addition of native understory and groundcover increases species diversity.



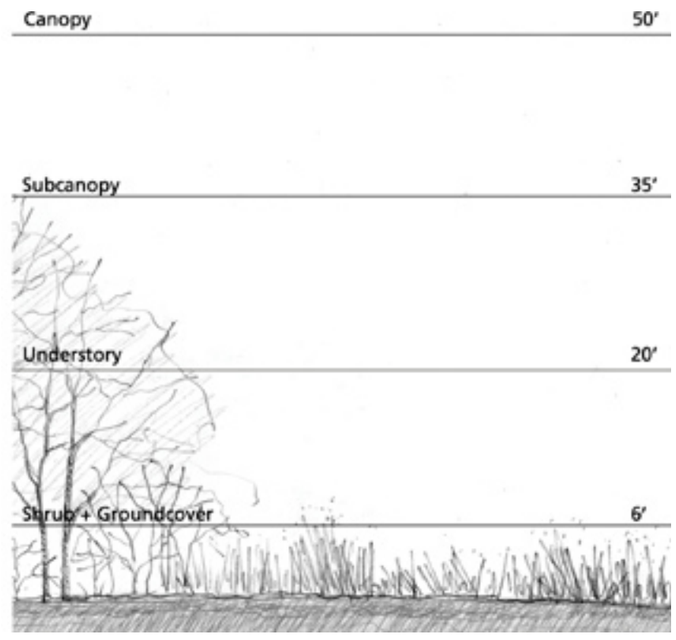
← EXISTING WOODLANDS

Live oak and cedar elm woodlands have great potential for wildlife habitat and corridor connection to Salado Creek.



BRUSH + GRASSLAND EDGE →

Scrub restored to Texas Brushland at the edge of a reintroduced grassland will increase edges of high biodiversity.



← EXISTING SCRUB

Dense scrub patches of mesquite and ashe juniper are areas with potential if selectively edited and supplemented with native species.

SITE ANALYSIS: landscape patches

WILDLIFE + HABITAT SURVEY

Bluestem Environmental Consultants conducted surveys during the months of September through December, 2007 at Voelcker Park, San Antonio, Texas. The four categories of surveys included (1) Avian (birds) (2) Vertebrate (3) Insect/Butterfly/Species Diversity and (4) Rangeland Soil and Health.

BIRDS

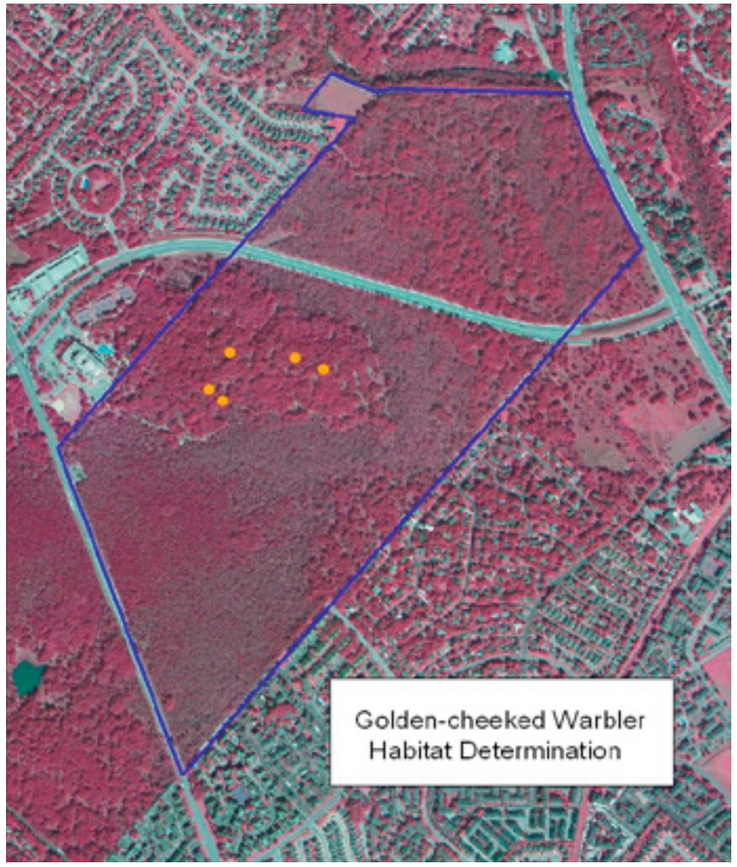
Voelcker Park, located on the central bird migratory flyway, is uniquely situated where birds from four geographical regions converge, with a total of 51 bird species observed at the Park. Neotropical migrants, 36% of Voelcker bird species, are declining in number due to loss of habitat and land fragmentation. Mature oak mottes at Voelcker offer excellent habitat to Neotropical migrants. Grassland birds which are rapidly declining in the US are few at Voelcker and would benefit from prairie restoration of live-oak savannah. This would also increase avian diversity overall. Management techniques for birds should include the following: restore grassland areas, burn and/or mow open areas, provide buffers, plant native species, make brush pile shelters, increase plant diversity, develop varied edges, treat fire ants, preserve snags, minimize pesticide use, control invasives, create more openings in the forest, install nest boxes and provide watering sites.

ENDANGERED SPECIES POTENTIAL

It was determined that a section of Voelcker Park (Tarrant soils) is potential golden-cheeked warbler habitat. Only habitat actually used by endangered or threatened animals is subject to protection by the Endangered Species Act. Not all potential habitat is actually utilized. Spring bird surveys should be conducted to determine the absence or presence of golden cheeked warblers and this potential habitat should be considered in development planning. If endangered species are present, then TPWD and Fish and Wildlife must be consulted to obtain permits. It is the opinion of Bluestem Environmental that golden-cheeked warblers are possible but not probable because of the lack of steep-sided canyons and small size of the protected area within an urban setting.

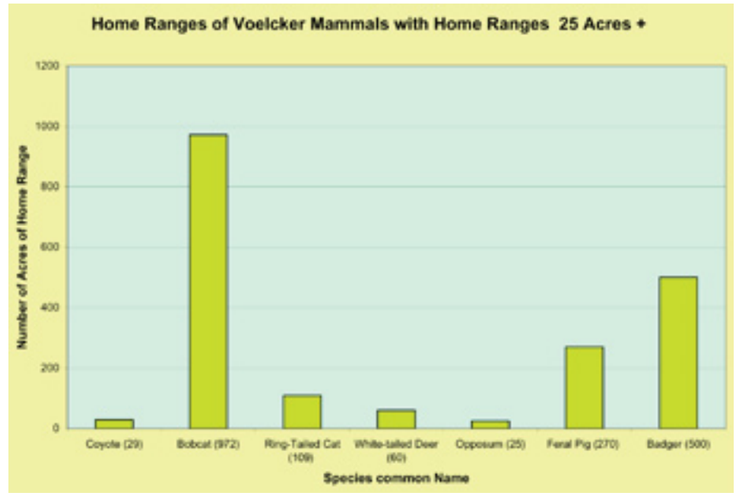
VERTEBRATES

Vertebrate surveys at Voelcker yielded 9 mammal species including, armadillo, opossum, ringtail cat, coyote, white-tailed deer, squirrels (2), rabbit and badger. Since the surveys, bobcat, skunk and red fox have been added. Most species are well adapted to urban habitats. Lizards are common, snakes are few and no rattlesnakes were observed. Low rodent populations may be impacting the kinds and number of predators present. Coyotes and deer pose potential problems from over browsing and human confrontations. To manage coyotes and deer, a population study and a public education program are essential. Wildlife management techniques will be developed to support wildlife and can include operations such as increasing plant diversity, decreasing canopy cover, increasing grass cover, creating edges and vegetation layers and providing water sources.



SPECIES HABITAT

Ambitious goals for the landscape restoration includes fostering habitat for a variety of native wildlife species. [Source: Bluestem Environmental].

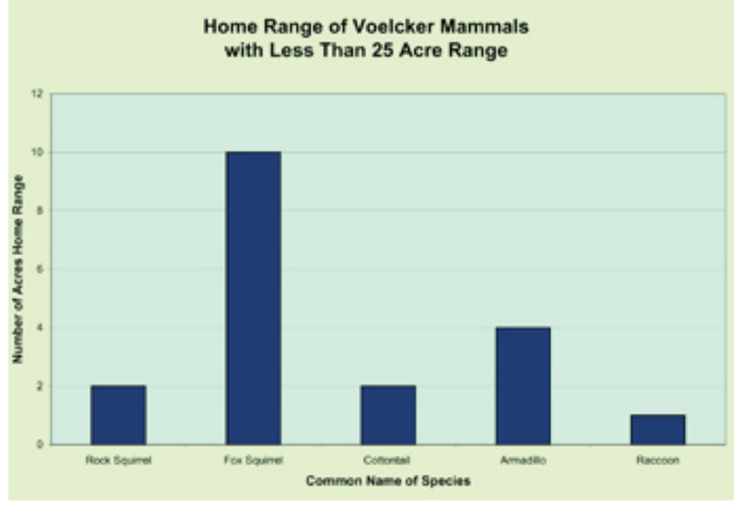


HOME RANGES > 25

Some animals identified at the Park such as the coyote, bobcat, ring-tailed cat, white-tailed deer, opossum, feral pig and badger need areas of more than 25 acres in order to thrive. [Source: Bluestem Environmental].

HOME RANGES < 25

Animals identified at the Park such as the armadillo, raccoon, rabbit and squirrels are able to survive within habitat that is less than 25 acres in size. [Source: Bluestem Environmental].



SAMPLE SPECIES OF EXISTING FLORA + FAUNA:


LIVE OAK


RINGTAIL CAT


HACKBERRY


COYOTE


TEXAS PERSIMMON


ROSEBELLY LIZARD

EXISTING WOODLAND HABITAT


AGARITA


RED RIM BUTTERFLY

EXISTING SCRUB HABITAT

SAMPLE TARGET SPECIES

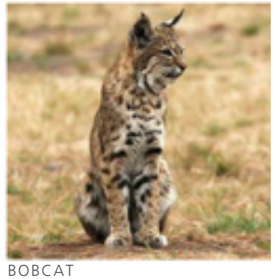

ESCARPMENT BLACK CHERRY


GOLDEN CHEEKED WARBLER


LITTLE BLUESTEM


EASTERN BLUEBIRD


EVERGREEN SUMAC


BOBCAT

POTENTIAL WOODLAND HABITAT


BLUEBONNETS


BADGER

POTENTIAL SCRUB/GRASSLAND HABITAT

INSECTS

Insect species richness and diversity surveys revealed a fairly low diversity index meaning insect numbers were high but a few species greatly outnumbered all the others and distribution was very patchy due to low diversity of the plant community. Red Imported Fire Ants (RIFA) are impacting all animal populations in the park and should be controlled by treatment of individual mounds. Control of mosquitoes will also be part of the management plan. Butterflies of South Texas and the tropics as well as all other geographic areas of the US are found in Voelcker as it is located along a major butterfly migratory route. More open areas and greater native plant diversity would increase butterfly populations.

GRASSLAND HEALTH

A rangeland health indicator survey revealed 6 major soil types including the blackland prairie Austin series. Findings show a complete reversal of cover classes from once open oak savannah of 15% - 30% cover to 66% - 98% tree cover now. Some soil compaction, sparse ground cover and patches of increasers show overgrazing which increases run-off and erosion. Persimmon, juniper and whitebrush are aggressive invasives requiring control. Due to fire suppression, juniper dominates many areas altering the hydrologic function of soil and decreasing infiltration to the aquifer. Although ground cover is not good, the tree canopy has prevented major erosion of the area. Lewisville and Austin series would benefit from grassland restoration and all soil types by removal of some juniper and persimmon improving hydrologic function and biotic potential of the soil.

URBAN ECOLOGY POTENTIAL

Overall the Park offers a significantly sized area within an urban setting that with proper management can be an example of how wildlife and people can coexist and be a center for urban wildlife studies. The unique plant and animal habitat at the convergence of several geographic areas provides opportunities for research, education and interpretation of Voelcker Park's urban ecology.

PARK BIODIVERSITY →

Enhancing habitat will support the existing desired species documented at the site and can include such plantings as mistletoe for the Great Purple Hairstreak butterfly. [Source: Bluestem Environmental].

SITE ANALYSIS: landscape patches + cultural resources

Owned for decades by Max and Minnie Voelcker, the 311-acre Voelcker Park contains existing historic cultural resources associated with the dairy farm as well as other historic artifacts indicative of prehistoric campsites. Several of these resources have been identified through previous archaeological surveys, including a survey of the right-of-way for Wurzbach Parkway conducted by the Texas Department of Transportation in 1991, a survey of the right-of-way for Blanco Road by the Federal Highway Administration in 1992, and another for the North Salado Greenway Belt by the University of Texas at San Antonio, Center for Archeological Research in 2006. The survey of the greenway belt was conducted in anticipation of a hike and bike trail along Salado Creek (Figueroa and Urich 2006). However, a full survey of the park to locate archaeological and historic resources has yet to be completed, and will be conducted in the near future.

The previously identified and recorded cultural resources located in or adjacent to Voelcker Park include sites referenced as 41BX560, 41BX946, and 41BX1744 in TARL site files. The first two are prehistoric archaeological sites and the third is Voelcker Dairy Farm itself. Site 41BX560 is located on the southwestern boundary of Voelcker Park, bisected by NW Military Highway. The site was identified as a prehistoric quarry found in the eroded areas within the right-of-way of NW Military Highway. The site most likely extends into the Voelcker Park area (TARL Site Files, 41BX560). Site 41BX946, found during the survey for Wurzbach Parkway, includes sparse lithic material in a scatter across a wide area (TARL Site Files, 41BX946). Finally, site 41BX1744 is the Louis Voelcker Dairy Farm. It was recorded as an archaeological site in August 2007 by the Texas Archaeological Society and City of San Antonio Historic Preservation Office. They identified the site as a mid to late nineteenth century German farmstead that has been marked as a site of historic importance to the City of San Antonio (TARL Site Files, 41BX1744). All of these sites will be revisited during the archaeological and historic above-ground cultural resources survey.

Figueroa, A. L., and K. M. Urich. 2006. *Archaeological Survey of the North Salado Greenway Belt, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas*. Archaeological Report No. 367, Center for Archeological Research, University of Texas at San Antonio. Produced for Rehler Vaughn & Koone, Inc.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

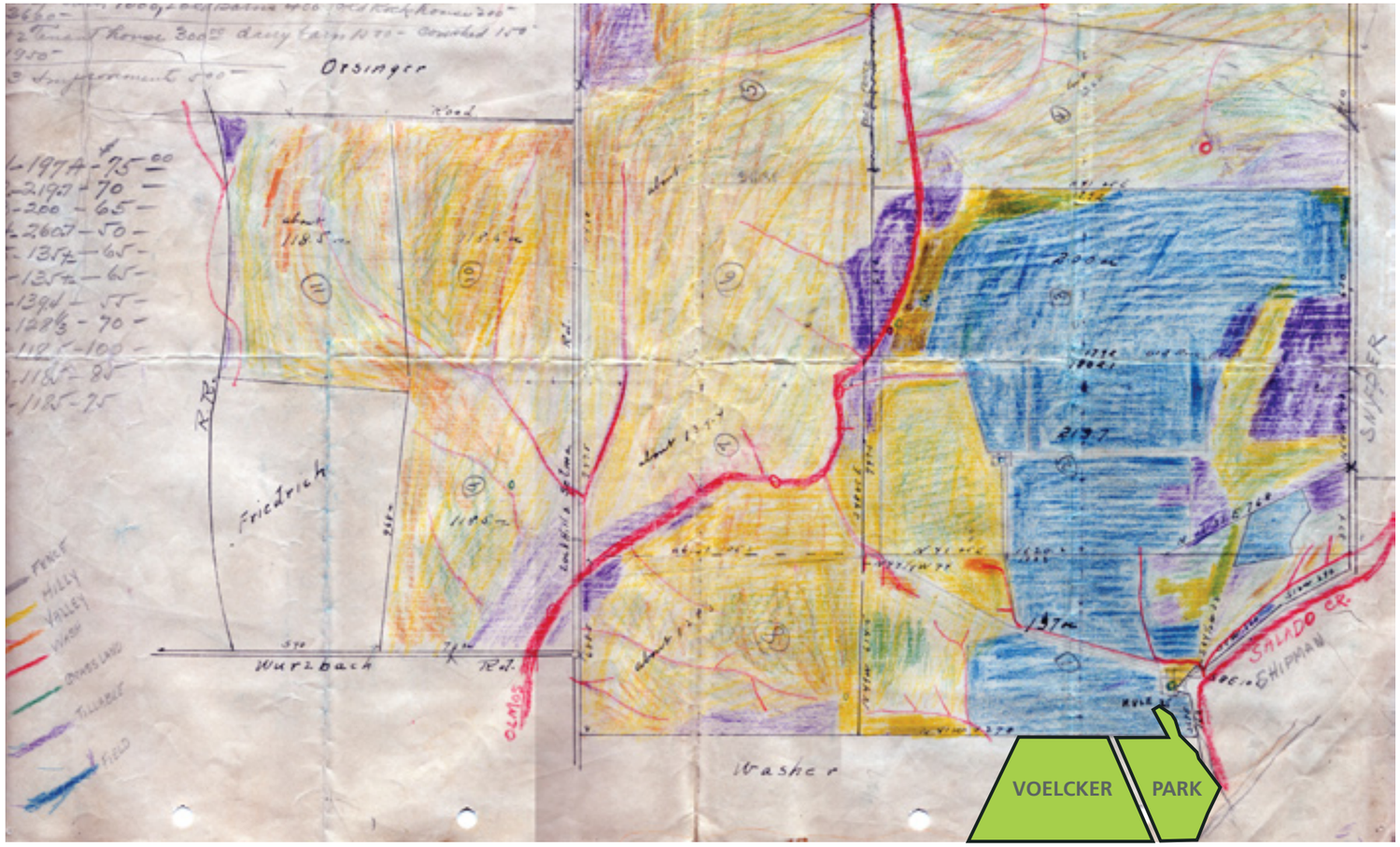
Dairy farm structures at the Voelcker homestead such as the old stone house, dairy barn and bungalow will be evaluated at a later phase for their potential for adaptive reuse.

REMNANT PARCEL

The heritage homestead at the northwest corner of the Voelcker property contains the most significant architectural features from the site's history as a dairy farm.

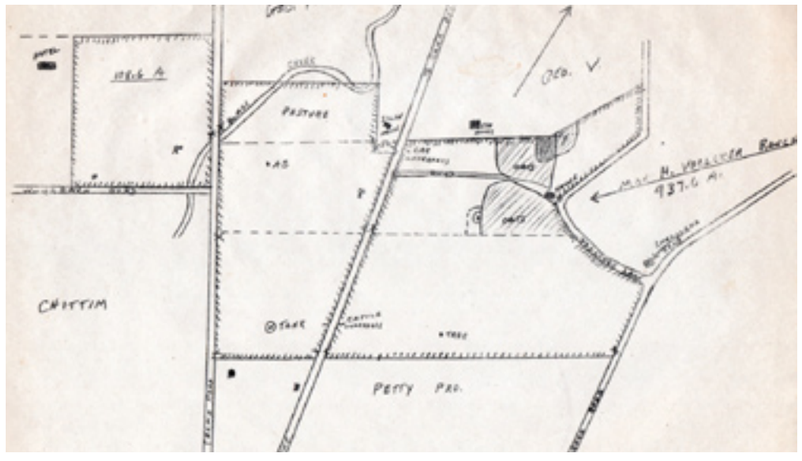
CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

Stone walls extend across expanses of the farm that included grassland pastures, tillable fields, and other landscape features (see legend on map to the right).



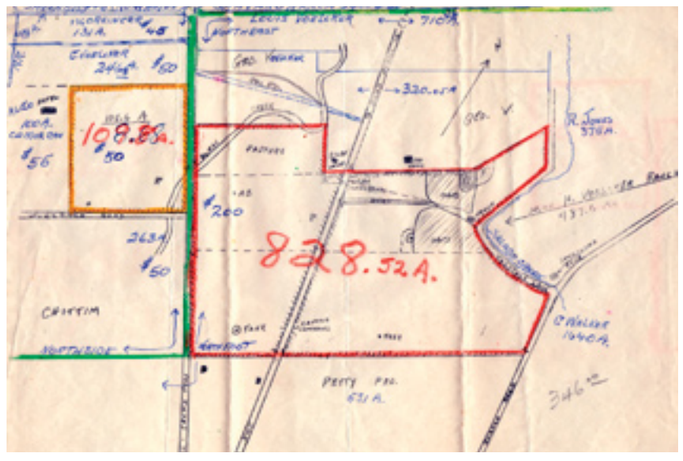
THE ORIGINAL FARMLAND

Voelcker Park outlined on this historic map illustrates how this remaining parcel is a fraction of the original acreage of the dairy farm. [date of map unknown]



VOELCKER PARCELS

As San Antonio developed, much of the Voelcker farmstead was divided and sold, leaving the current park site as the last remnant of original dairy farm homestead. [date of map unknown]



PARK USE POTENTIAL

The design team generated a preliminary set of park uses guided by site analysis and the needs of neighboring northern city parks. The uses range from active to passive activities and were classified according to levels of impact to the landscape patches as defined in the site analysis. The relative ecological value of existing and potential landscape patches served as the criteria for testing the fit of compatible park uses.

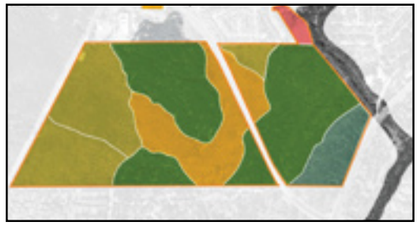
The preliminary studies indicated that woodland patches of high ecological value are compatible with more passive recreational activities and educational programs. The smaller size requirements of these activities could be inserted into the existing matrix with a small cultural footprint and the least amount of disturbance to existing flora and fauna. The compatibility of larger and more active recreational uses was tested in the scrub patches that are characterized as having lower biodiversity and requiring more aggressive restoration than the patches with higher ecological value. Selectively removing scrub to accommodate larger park uses could provide the opportunity to control the overabundance of aggressive species, introducing more diversity within a healthier native plant community.

Number of Parks	Name of Park/ Address of Park	Council District	Park Planning Subarea	Park Classification	Total Acres	Developed Acres	Undeveloped Acres	Year Acquired	Method of Acquisition	Lease on Property	Community Center/ Organizational Activity Building	Restroom Building	Pavilion/ Shelter	Swimming Facility/ Natatorium	Parking Spaces	Playground (Toddler to 5 yrs.)	Playground (5 to 12 yrs.)	Picnic Tables/ Picnic Units	Park Safety
1	**Scenic Canyon** 19115 Scenic Loop Road 78255	8	NW	NA	452.7000	0.0000	452.7000	2007	Purchased										
1	**Scenic Sunset** 78240	8	NW	NP	25.6300	0.0000	25.6300	2008	Purchased										
1	**Schnabel, O.P.** 9406 Bandera Road 78240	8	NW	LUP	202.0460	202.4600	0.0000	1964	Purchased	Yes									
1	**Schuchart** 12940 State Highway 211 78254	6	FW	NA	99.5505	0.0000	99.5505	Unknown	Purchased										
1	**Second Baptist Church** 3330 East Commerce 78220	2	E	NP	1.7000	1.7000	0.0000	N/A	Leased	Yes									
1	**Seeling** 105 Placid Drive 78228	7	W	NP	1.4570	1.4570	0.0000	1939	Dedicated										
1	**Skyline** 800 Green Valley 78219	2	E	NP	1.2300	1.2300	0.0000	1955	Dedicated								1		
1	**Slick, Tom** 7400 Highway 151 78227	6	W	CP	62.7720			1999, 2000	Purchased										
1	**Smith** 1301 Buena Vista 78207	5	W	US	0.2500	0.2500	0.0000	1916	Donated										
1	**South San** 2031 Quintana Road 78211	5	SW	CP	1.3160	1.3160	0.0000	1948	Purchased										
1	**South Side Lions** 3100 Hiawatha 78210	3	E	LUP	600.1000			1944, 1964	Purchased, Donated	Yes									
1	**Spanish Governor's Palace** 105 Plaza de Armas 78205	1	C	HF	0.4300	0.4300	0.0000	1929	Purchased										
1	**Spicewood** 3139 Fidelia 78224	4	S	CP	31.9550	10.0000	21.9550	1989	Donated	Yes						1	1	2	
1	**Spring Time** 6571 Spring Time 78249	8	NW	CP	2.7560	2.7560	0.0000	2002	Purchased						1	21		1	
1	**Stablewood Farms** 3903 Crooked Trail Road 78227	4	SW	CP	7.1445	7.1445	0.0000	2006	Dedicated										
1	**Stinson** 900 March 78214	3	S	CP	75.4840	75.4840	0.0000	1895	Purchased	Yes									
1	**Stone Oak** 20395 Stone Oak Parkway 78258	9	FN	NA	245.2960			2000	Purchased, Donated										
1	**Sunrise** 6525 Binz Engleman Road 78244	2	N	NP	5.5000			2000	Purchased									2	
1	**Sunset Hills** 500 Inspiration 78228	7	W	CP	1.9120	1.9120	0.0000	1977	Purchased			1		1	22		1	2	
1	**Tejeda, Frank** 541 Division 78214	5	S	NP	8.7570	8.7570	0.0000	1977	Purchased										
1	**Tobin, John** 1900 W. Martin 78207	1	W	CP	1.0640	1.0640	0.0000	1944	Donated										
1	**Tobin, Robert L.B.** 150 Ira Lee 78218	10	N	NA	60.5900	0.0000	60.5900	2003	Donated										
1	**Travis** 301 E. Travis 78205	1	C	SUF	2.5630	2.5630	0.0000	1870	Dedicated										
1	**Van de Walle, Gregory** 1925 Herbert 78227	6	W	NP	0.7170	0.7170	0.0000	1979	Donated										
1	**Veteran's Memorial Plaza** 100 Auditorium Circle 78205	1	C	SUF	0.7549	0.7549	0.0000	Unknown	Unknown										
1	**Victoria** 800 E. Durango 78210	1	C	NP	0.9080	0.9080	0.0000	1985	Donated										
1	**Vidaurri, Juan** 1201 Merida 78207	5	W	NP	7.4610	7.4610	0.0000	1952	Purchased										
1	**Villa Coronado** 11031 Ruidosa 78214	3	S	CP	14.8110	14.8110	0.0000	1979	Purchased										
1	**Voelcker, Max & Minnie** 1021 Voelcker Lane 78230	9	FN	LUP	311.3500	0.0000	311.3500	2006, 2007	Purchased										
1	**Walker Ranch** 12603 West Avenue 78216	9	FN	NA	90.6080	90.6080	0.0000	1993, 1997 1999	Purchased, Donated				1			1	1	12	2

SITE ANALYSIS

site context

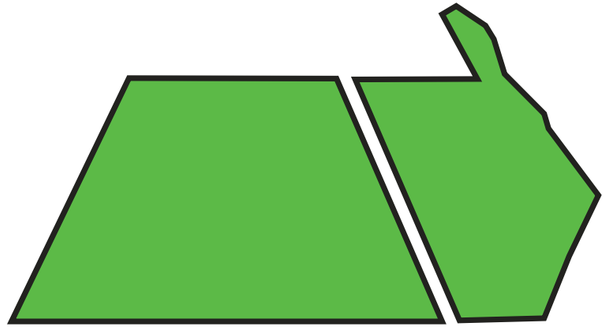
hydrology



landscape patches

POTENTIAL PARK USES*

COMPATIBILITY



← OTHER PARKS' USES

Reviewing the Parks and Recreation Department inventory of parks and their programmed activities helps inform choices for Voelcker Park.

*Park uses represented in the following pages are a sampling of initial requests by the community. The selections do not reflect consequent studies explored during the Master Plan process.

WHAT CAN THE WOODLAND PATCHES BECOME?

TEST FIT OF WOODLAND PATCHES →

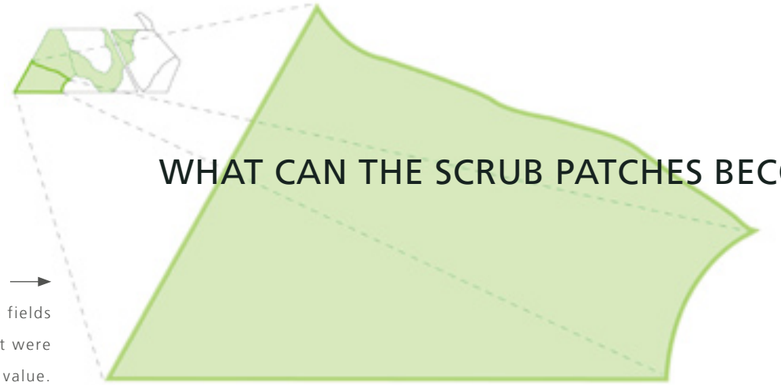
Representative types of low impact park uses were explored for compatibility in preserved and restored woodlands.

FRIEDRICH WILDERNESS PARK, SAN ANTONIO, TX

MCALLISTER PARK, SAN ANTONIO, TX

CONCEPTUAL COLLAGE OF WOODLAND PATCH AT VOELCKER PARK

WHAT CAN THE SCRUB PATCHES BECOME?



INSERTING USES IN SCRUBLAND →

Larger program elements such as play fields were tested within the scrub patches that were evaluated as having lower habitat value.

MEDINA PARK, SAN ANTONIO, TX

LADY BIRD JOHNSON WILDFLOWER CENTER, AUSTIN, TX

CONCEPTUAL COLLAGE OF PLAY FIELD WITHIN SCRUB PATCH AT VOELCKER PARK

WHAT CAN THE FARMLAND PATCH BECOME?

FARMLAND POTENTIAL →

To make the most of the remnant homestead, ideas for park uses such as historic preservation and demonstration gardens were considered.

SAN ANTONIO BOTANICAL GARDENS, SAN ANTONIO, TX

SAN ANTONIO COMMUNITY GARDENS

CONCEPTUAL COLLAGE OF FARMLAND PATCH IN VOELCKER PARK

COMMUNITY INPUT

At each of the four community meetings, work sessions were conducted after the design team's informational presentations to enable the community to directly convey their insights and perceptions of the Park's potential. During one session, the participants were given blank base maps of the Park property and post-it notes to record their wishes and aspirations. The outcome of each meeting was carefully reviewed and synthesized to inform the next stage of the Master Plan process. Key words captured from both group dialogues and individuals' remarks guided the creation of emerging themes. The site sketches revealed yet another level of how small groups envisioned priorities for park design objectives.

Community input was also supplemented by open houses and site tours organized by the Parks and Recreation Department. Along with Parks & Rec staff, design team consultants were on hand to point out some features of the site, many hidden and yet to be revealed by the Park design. Many residents were experiencing the Voelcker property for the first time, increasing the range of outreach and city-wide appreciation for the Park's existing qualities along with its future potential. Overall, the community participation process reflected the design team's own working method and fostered a culture of collaboration in the pursuit of the final Master Plan.

COMMUNITY DRAWINGS →

Community exercises produced drawings like these which allowed citizens to communicate their ideas and concerns visually.

← KIVA CONVERSATIONS

Community coordinator, Juan Sepúlveda, encourages community feedback and conversations at Bode Community Center [October 2007].


"Every chance we get we come out and walk around the area. The fact that the city chose to do what it did in acquiring the land is a good thing."

NICK FLORES, WHO LIVES CLOSE TO THE PARK

PHOTOS BY GLORIA RAMIREZ/EXPRESS-NEWS

Nick Flores (from left) and his grandchildren, Alex Gonzales, 10, and Karina Gonzales, 6, take a walk on a cattle path through Voelcker Park. It is the second time the park has been open to the public.

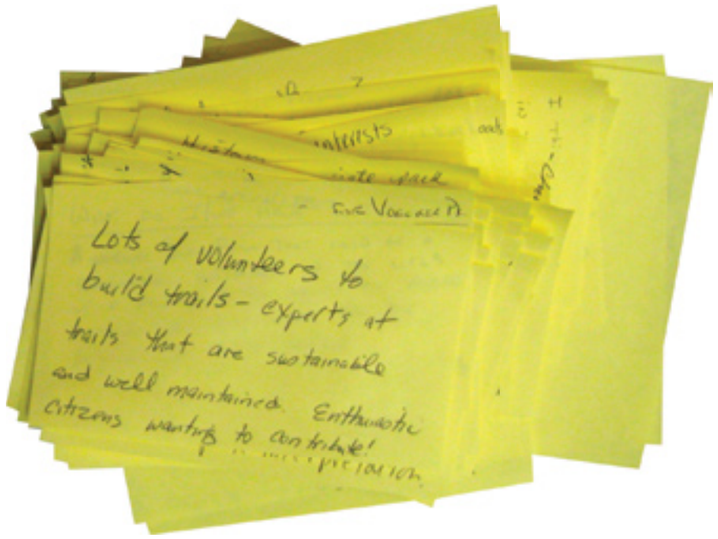
A TREASURE FOR NATURE LOVERS

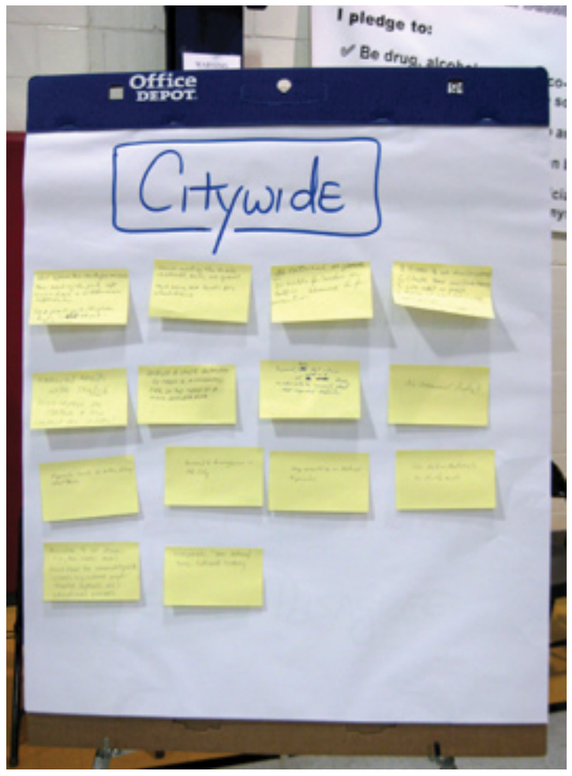
← SITE TOURS

A San Antonio Express-News article from December 16, 2007 highlights Voelcker Park's second open house and first trail opening on the west parcel, which attracted more than seventy-five people.

COME SEE VOELCKER PARK →

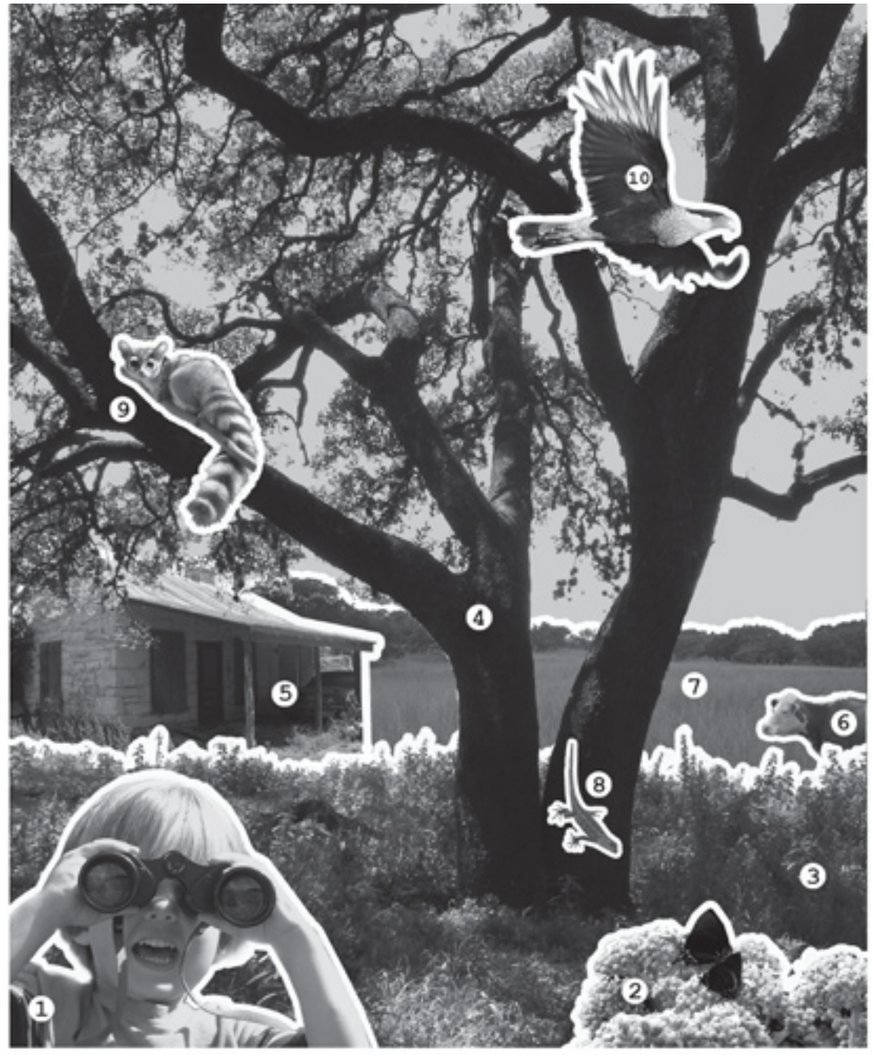
Advertised community meetings, work sessions and site tours invited residents from the City to contribute to the Master Plan process and experience the Voelcker Park site.





← CITY-WIDE PARK

Citizens post their feedback at a community meeting to the question 'how can we make Voelcker a City-wide park?'



Community Meeting at Churchhill High
Wednesday, 12 December 2007, 6:30 pm
12049 Blanco Road, Multipurpose Room

Site Tour of Voelcker Park Property
Saturday, 15 December 2007, 9 am-12 pm
12000 NorthWest Military Highway

For more information call 207-2879 or visit us at: www.sanantonio.gov/sapar/voelckerproperty.asp

Match the numbers:

1. Future Wildlife Biologist
2. Purple Hairstreak Butterflies
3. Native Grasses + Wildflowers
4. Heritage Oak
5. Voelcker Homestead
6. Cow
7. Restored Grasslands
8. Texas Spiny Lizard
9. Ringtail Cat
10. Mexican Eagle

Come See What's Happening at Voelcker Park!

Hear about initial community input.
Discover what the field scientists have found.
Join us to envision design potential for the future of the park.

EXPLORING DESIGN ALTERNATIVES

DESIGN THEMES + OBJECTIVES

SITE DESIGN SCENARIOS

COMMUNITY REQUESTS + DESIGN RESPONSES

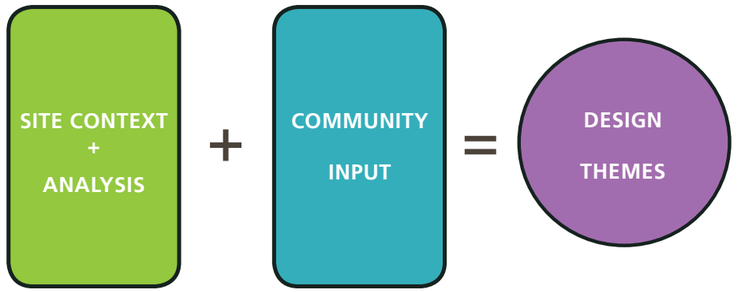
DESIGN STRATEGIES

04

DESIGN THEMES + OBJECTIVES

Community input and further site analysis continued to inform the design team's vision for the Park. Themes emerged from program elements requested by the community that the design team then interpreted and translated into landscape experiences, those moments that the most memorable parks provide. The theme of *renew* in relation to the Voelcker landscape reflects a commitment to regenerating the native habitat to enhance the experience of the Park as an urban wilderness. The theme of *recreate* is expressed in two ways; the first related to the common definition of active and passive recreation or play, the other associated with re-creating oneself emotionally and physically. The theme of *learn* permeated the hopes and desires of the community reinforcing the vision for a landscape of learning.

These themes generated distinct design objectives for the Park. **Renew**: preserve and restore the native Texas landscape and inspire a sense of stewardship for the Park. **Recreate**: provide ample passive and active recreational opportunities that are compatible with the sensitive ecosystem of Voelcker Park. **Learn**: create a living laboratory for environmental education focused on urban ecology. The design scenarios that follow explore how the established themes and objectives inform the design of the Park.



PARK USE THEMES →

A community survey summarized themes that were grouped to identify potential program elements for Voelcker Park.

MAJOR THEMES

KEEP VOELCKER PARK PREDOMINANTLY NATURAL...

This theme was mentioned fifty (50) times from community residents in our three community meetings making it the top issue raised by individuals.

BUT MAKE SURE TO INCLUDE SOME RECREATIONAL OPTIONS AND OTHER USES AS WELL...

Though there was strong support for keeping Voelcker Park predominantly natural, only five (5) comments from community members suggested doing nothing at all to the Park area and leaving it completely as it is. Most community members felt there should be a combination of uses at the Park.

On the recreational side, the most popular suggestion was the installation of trails. Walking (43), biking (41), hiking (29), and running/cross country (11) trails received the most support from community residents. Wellness/exercise trails (4) were also mentioned, but less frequently.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF VOELCKER PARK'S LOCATION AND MAKEUP TO OFFER EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL AGES...

The educational potential of Voelcker Park was highlighted by thirty-seven (37) comments by community residents.

The top two educational ideas brought forth by community residents were:

TO TRULY BE A CITY-WIDE PARK, VOELCKER PARK NEEDS TO ...

For Voelcker Park to become a City-wide Park it needs to offer unique and distinct attractions to convince people from all parts of San Antonio to get in their cars and drive across town to use Voelcker Park. It cannot be like traditional or typical neighborhood parks that already exist across the city.

NEIGHBORHOOD CONCERNS...

Nearby community residents identified a range of concerns. The top three were safety and security; the challenge of the Wurzbach Parkway; and the need for youth input in this process.

And don't forget, we have a lot ourselves—assets, skills, talents, experiences, passion, and interests—that can be tapped and built upon to make Voelcker Park an even larger success...

PARK EXPERIENCE THEMES →

The three themes emerged from grouping programmatic uses; they also formed the basis for the Master Plan objectives of creating memorable landscape experiences.

RECREATE ↓

The large field of Central Park's Sheep Meadow invites people of all ages and walks of life to congregate and play.

RENEW ↓

The Master Plan aspires to invite community members to participate in restoring and maintaining the health of Voelcker Park.

LEARN ↓

The Park conceived as a living laboratory builds knowledge about sustainability and fosters environmental stewardship.

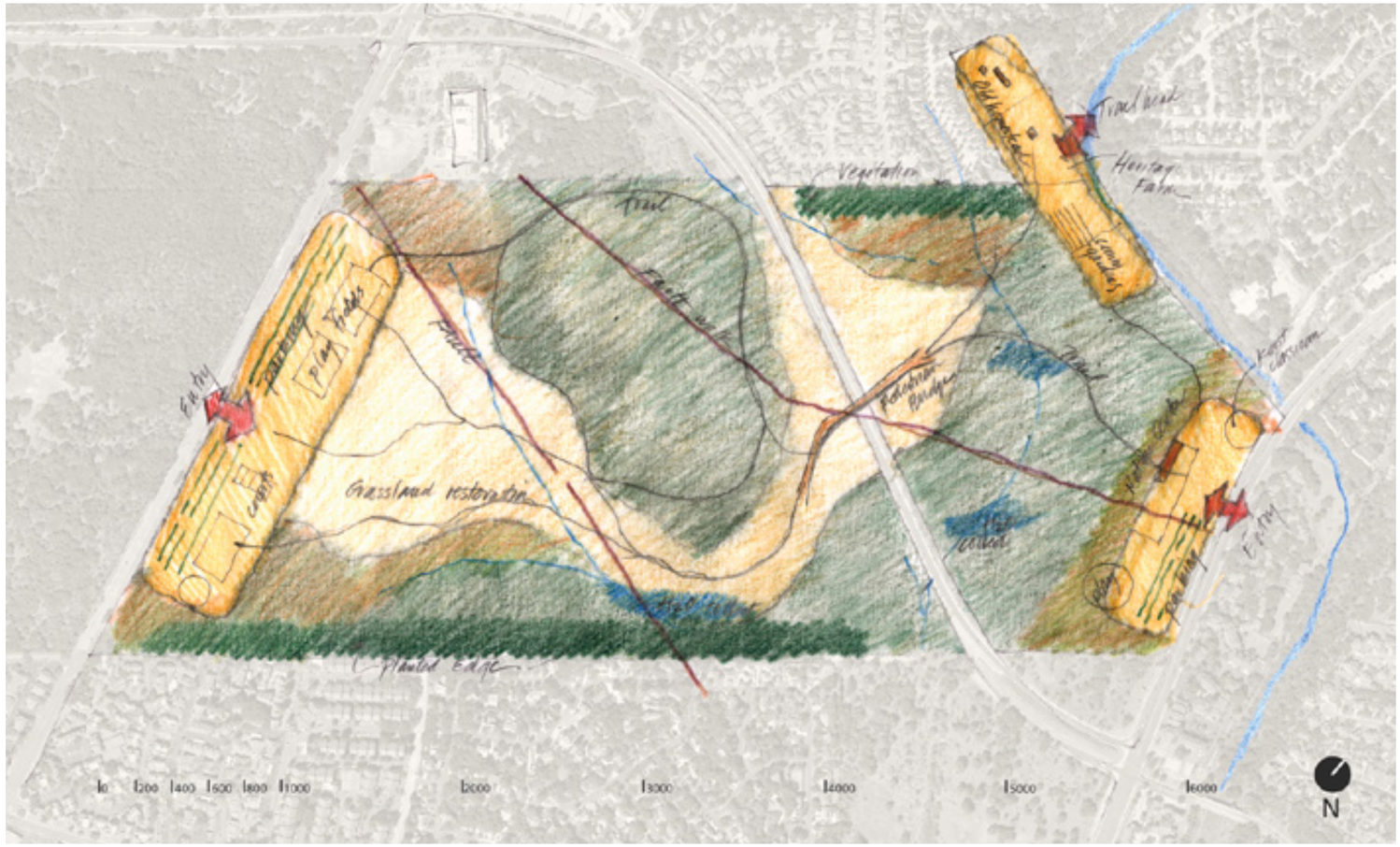
SITE DESIGN SCENARIOS: bookends

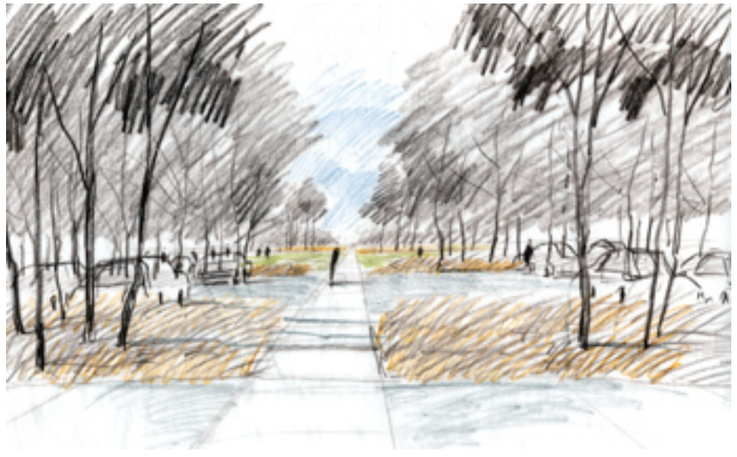
Based upon the earlier exploration of the compatibility between the native landscape patches and potential park uses, three preliminary site design scenarios were generated. Each scenario speculated about the distribution of the program elements within the landscape patches in relationship to the surrounding context. Some baseline conditions gleaned from site and context analysis along with community input (outlined on page 50) served as starting points. These parameters reinforced the design themes and objectives including the preservation and restoration of the natural and cultural landscape, critical connections and access to and across the primary roadways, sensitivity to the surrounding neighborhoods and a system of varied trails throughout the Park.

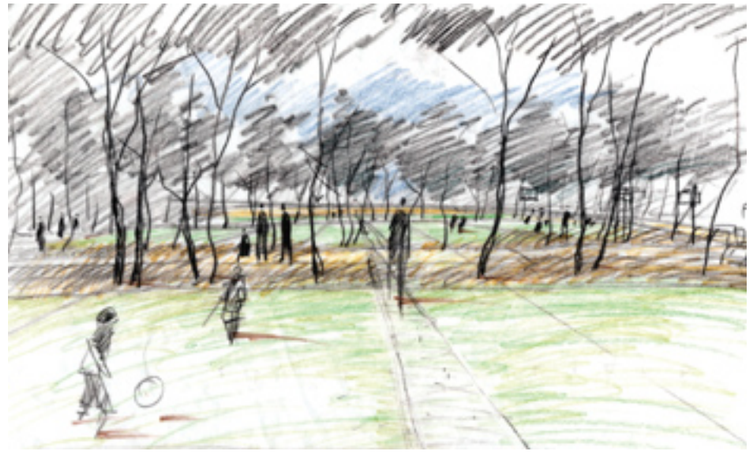
The three sets of site plans and perspectives explored different schemes for the proportion and distribution of park uses addressing pragmatic park functions while also evoking poetic landscape experiences. Each scenario tested a set of strategies (outlined with each preliminary site plan) including: the relationship of varied sizes of active program areas to park edges and interior; visibility from NW Military Highway and Blanco Road; the configuration of the landscape patches in combination with program elements; alternatives for crossing Wurzbach Parkway; and the location of a proposed nature center. These variations in the site scenarios became the basis for the community survey that follows.

BOOKENDS SCHEME COMPONENTS:

- large-sized areas of active recreation + program elements concentrated at park edge
- high visibility of activities from nw military and blanco road
- continuous landscape patches at center of the site
- pedestrian bridge across wurzback parkway
- nature center near blanco road







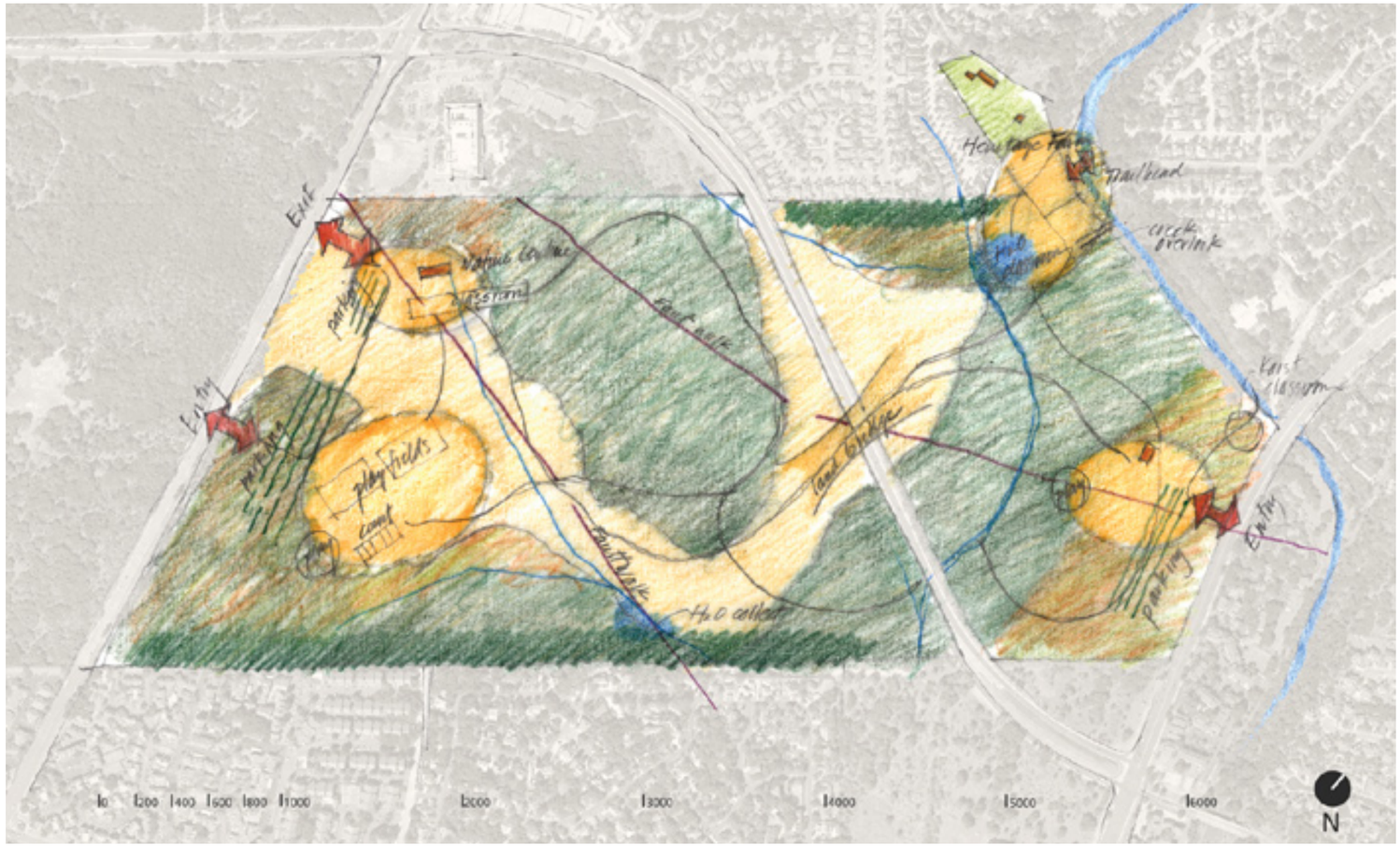
PARKING AND PLAY GROVE →
The bookends scenario incorporates tree groves layered with parking and play fields situated along east and west edges of the Park.


SUMMERFIELD
JEWISH CAMPUS
ALON TOWN CENTER
CHURCHILL FOREST
KB HOMES
LIVE OAK WOODLAND
LIVE OAK WOODLAND
LIVE OAK WOODLAND
LIVE OAK WOODLAND
LIVE OAK WOODLAND
grassland restoration
BLACKHORSE ROAD
BRAESVIEW
DEVONSHIRE
LARKSPUR
NORTH CASTLE HILLS
N
0
200
400
600
800
1000
2000
3000
4000
5000
5280 one mile
6000
7000 FEET

SITE DESIGN SCENARIOS: pods

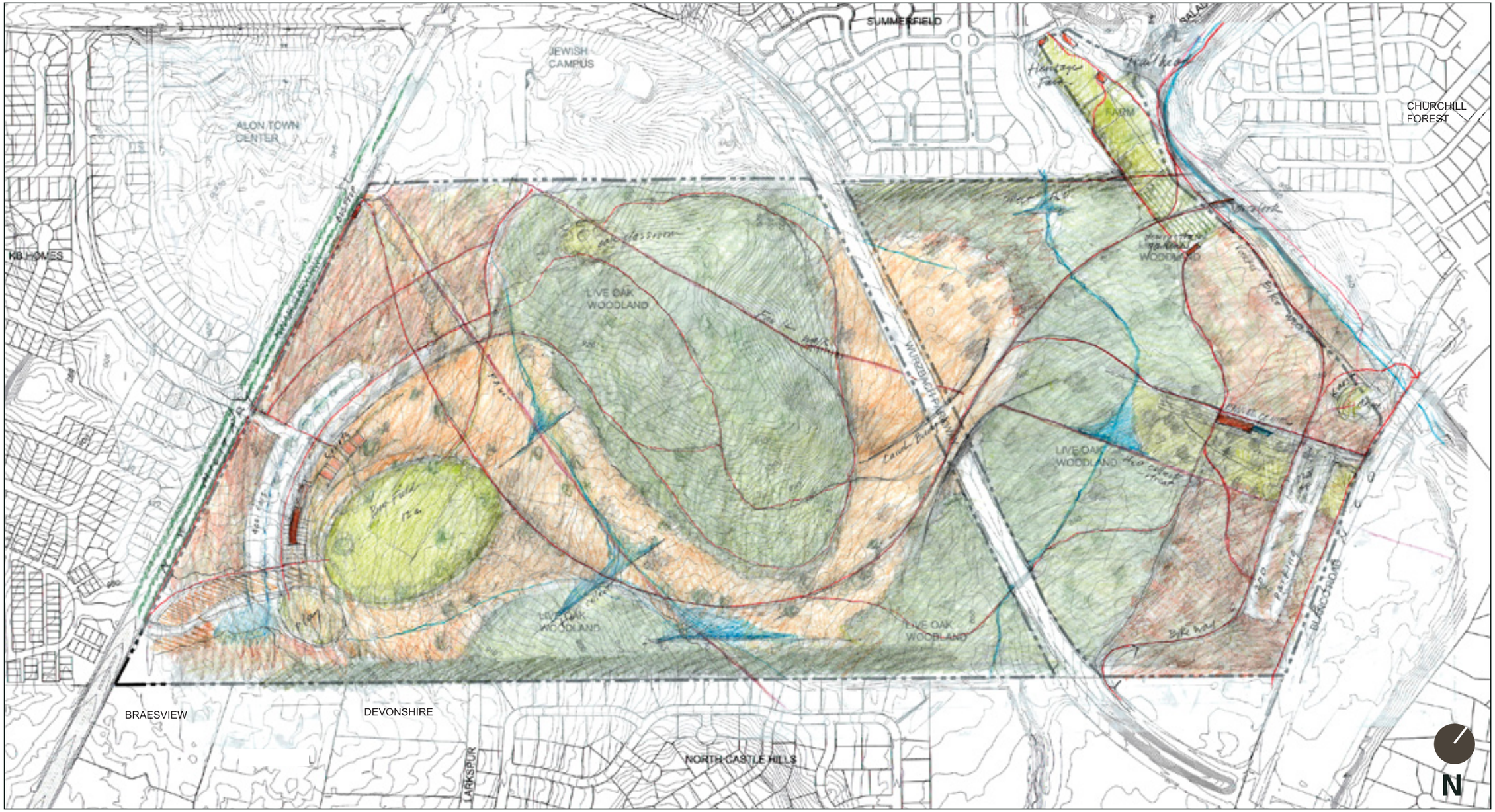
PODS SCHEME COMPONENTS:

- medium-sized areas of recreation and other program elements bundled in several areas
- moderate visibility of activities from roads
- landscape patches interwoven with activity areas
- land bridge for pedestrians and wildlife
- nature center off nw military highway



BUNDLES OF PARK USES →

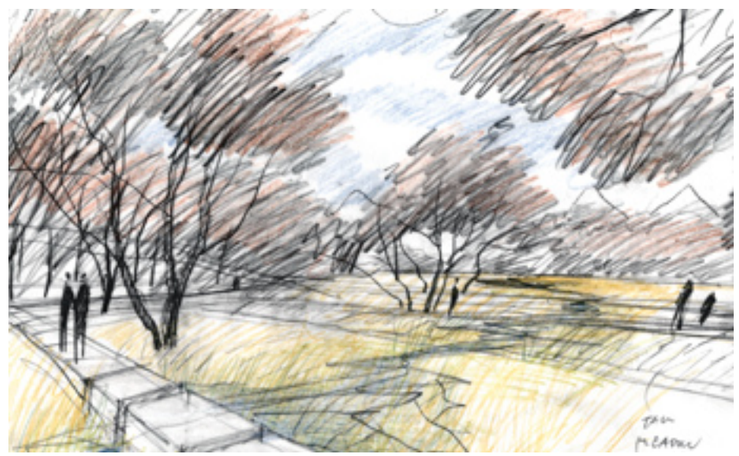
The pods design scenario locates clusters of active areas within the Park and includes a proposal for a land bridge crossing over Wurzbach Parkway.


SUMMERFIELD
JEWISH CAMPUS
ALON TOWN CENTER
KB HOMES
CHURCHILL FOREST
FARM
LIVE OAK WOODLAND
WURZBACH PKWY
BRAESVIEW
DEVONSHIRE
LARKSPUR
NORTH CASTLE HILLS
N
0
200
400
600
800
1000
2000
3000
4000
5000
5280 one mile
6000
7000 FEET

SITE DESIGN SCENARIOS: confetti

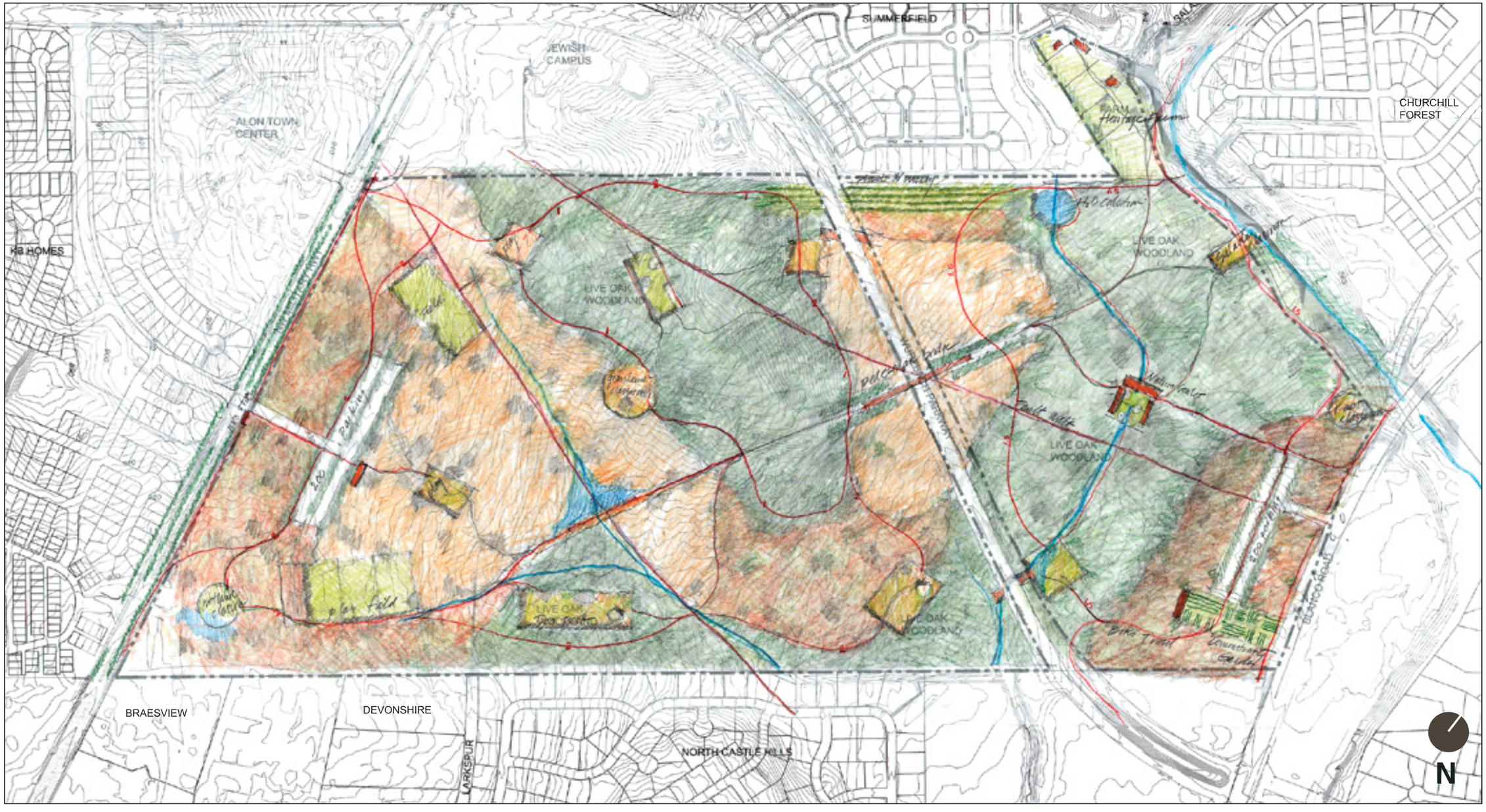
CONFETTI SCHEME COMPONENTS:

- small-sized areas of park uses broadly distributed
- low visibility of activities from surrounding context
- landscape patches largely maintained with embedded program elements
- intersection with pedestrian crosswalk at wurzbach parkway
- nature center on interior of east side



SCATTERED ACTIVITY →

The confetti scheme distributes active park areas such as outdoor classrooms and wet meadows throughout the Park.


SUMMERFIELD
JEWISH CAMPUS
ALON TOWN CENTER
CHURCHILL FOREST
K3 HOMES
LIVE OAK WOODLAND
LIVE OAK WOODLAND
LIVE OAK WOODLAND
LIVE OAK WOODLAND
BRAESVIEW
DEVONSHIRE
LARKSPUR
NORTH CASTLE HILLS
N
0
200
400
600
800
1000
2000
3000
4000
5000
5280 one mile
6000
7000 FEET

SITE DESIGN SCENARIOS: community exercise

The Voelcker Park design team orchestrated a drawing exercise as part of an on-going dialogue with the community about the site's capacity for potential park uses. Participants were organized into groups of six to eight and were provided with basemaps of the existing site. The basemaps delineated a set of baseline conditions intended to guide the exercise and provoke conversation between community members. Each group was asked to organize the site based on their newly acquired knowledge gained from the presentations of site analysis and potential park uses, as well as the three programmatic themes of *renew*, *recreate* and *learn*.

BASELINE CONDITIONS AS STARTING POINTS:

PRESERVATION OF THE OAKS

CONNECTION TO SALADO CREEK GREENWAY

RECOGNITION OF THE WATERWAYS ON SITE

CULTURAL VALUE OF THE REMNANT VOELCKER FARM

ACCESS OFF NW MILITARY AND BLANCO ROAD

NO VEHICULAR CROSSING OVER WURZBACH PARKWAY

BUFFERS ALONG EDGES OF PRIVATE RESIDENCES

PARK BUILDING FOR COMMUNITY AND/OR NATURE CENTER

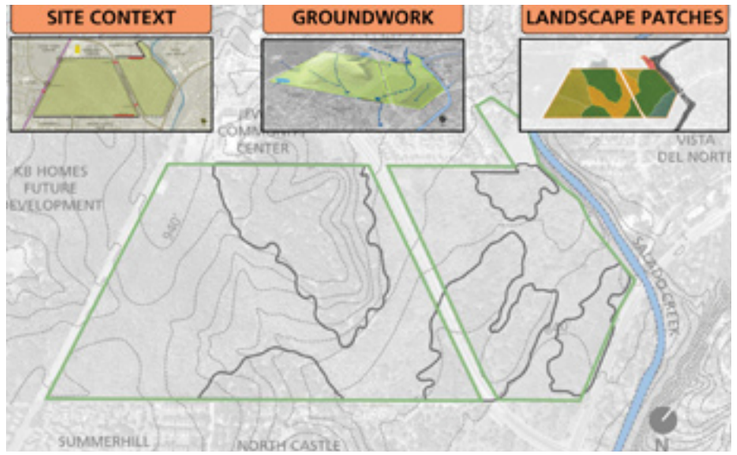
MULTIPLE TRAIL SYSTEMS THROUGHOUT THE PARK

COMMUNITY DISCUSSIONS

The community drawing exercise was guided by a set of baseline conditions intended to provoke conversations between community members.

SITE PARAMETERS

Basemaps of the existing site delineated with given baseline conditions were the starting point for a 15 minute community drawing exercise.



COMMUNITY INPUT

Groups of six to eight community members sketched their hopes and desires for Voelcker Park on the provided maps, drawing upon information from the presentation of the site analysis and Park themes.

DESIGN STRATEGIES

BOOKENDS

nature center near blanco road

pedestrian bridge across wurzbach

continuous landscape patches at center of site

high visibility of activities from nw military and blanco

large-sized areas of active recreation and program elements at park edges

PODS

nature center off nw military

land bridge for pedestrians and wildlife

landscape patches interwoven with activity areas

moderate visibility of activities from roads

medium-sized areas of recreation and program elements bundled

CONFETTI

nature center on interior of east side

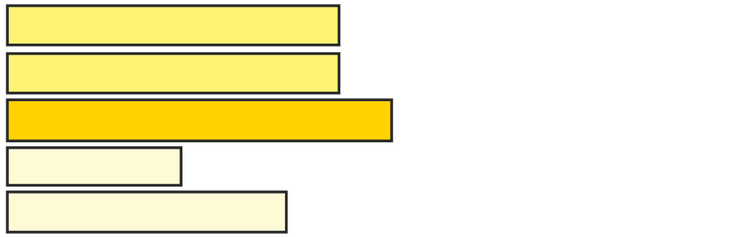
intersection with pedestrian crosswalk at wurzbach

landscape patches largely maintained with embedded program

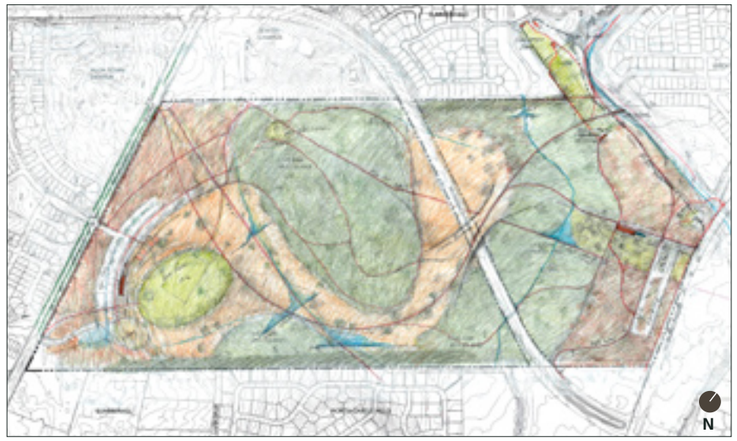
low visibility of activities from surrounding context

small-sized areas of park uses broadly distributed

SURVEY RESULTS



NUMBER OF CITIZEN RESPONSES



COMMUNITY REQUESTS + DESIGN RESPONSES

The multiple venues of community input, including city-wide meetings and comments posted on the website added up to informed criteria for the Master Plan proposal. Discussion points with the Parks and Recreation Department, the Mayor's and City Manager's offices, were based upon a careful inventory of all of the many forms of feedback from citizens across the City. All of these hopes and desires for the precious parcel of land became an integral part of the design team's vision for Voelcker Park.

In formulating the design responses that structure the Master Plan, every effort has been made to synthesize community input and integrate with the insight provided by the experienced staff at the Parks and Recreation Department, along with the continued support and the challenge by the Mayor to create a 21st century park for San Antonio. The goals of the Master Plan are outlined in the following design responses, organized by the categories of park elements and issues. Each program element has been considered in relation to the objective to establish the ratio of a predominantly native landscape with a balance of active park use areas.

Many of the components included in the design responses comprise the landscape framework of the Master Plan. An essential aspect of the design strategies that follow is the ability for compatible park elements to be tested for their fit within this framework. The selection criteria for park uses emphasizes the need for minimal impact on the preserved and restored native landscape. As part of the future phases of design development, the specifics of those program elements will continue to be studied and discussed with the community. Together with more knowledge about the site and the practicalities of constructing and maintaining a large park the more specific program components will evolve as Voelcker Park becomes a reality.

DIRECT QUOTES →
Community members comments were captured to ensure that they were heard in their own words.

nature center should be close to salado creek

…believe land bridge to be of utmost importance…land bridge should be the "shining star" to make this a regional draw…

landscape patches should be kept intact

"green" center used as a teaching aid

develop a unique experience by making voelcker a wilderness park in the middle of a highly developed area

I love the land bridge!!!! great idea

nature center must be in the woods near the creek

you need to raise wurzbach and have a nice tunnel

keep the coyotes around

restoration of oak/prairie savanna

hate parking right on road – too close!

minimize soccer fields

bat houses; birding tours

busline important!!!

continuous landscape at the center would provide a way to "get away" from the city

maintain significant undergrowth for animals

park should retain as much of nature as possible

3 important words that help define the project: **1. NATURE; 2. WILDERNESS and 3. EDUCATION**

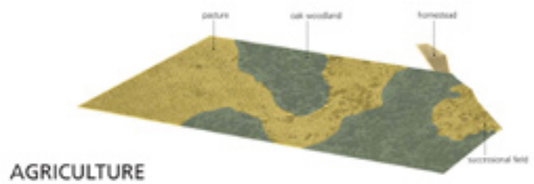
COMMUNITY REQUESTS	DESIGN RESPONSE
'NATURAL' PARK	**75% OF PARK PRESERVED + RESTORED TO NATIVE TEXAS LANDSCAPE**
wildlife habitat / corridors	protected to/from the Salado Creek Greenway
tree preservation	heritage oaks plus other valuable trees to remain
tall grass prairie	oak savanna re-established with preserved oaks in restored grasslands
EDUCATION / ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER	**URBAN ECOLOGY CENTER, SALADO CREEK CLASSROOM + TRAILHEAD, HERITAGE HOMESTEAD**
lessons about native + urban landscape habitats	classroom pavilions and field learning stations
ecological succession + agricultural demonstrations	educational plots of native landscape restoration + urban agriculture
field trips + youth training about care of parks	city-wide program with schools + community centers
adult education / senior center	multi-purpose facilities for community programs + events
SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES	**INNOVATIVE 'GREEN' TECHNOLOGIES INTEGRATED THROUGHOUT THE PARK**
low impact / eco-sensitive design	minimal disruption and maximum improvement of natural systems
water harvesting / natural drainage	progressive storm water management: collect, filter + reuse
'green' energy / solar power	alternative energy for all park structures and systems
PASSIVE RECREATION	**WOVEN THROUGHOUT THE PARK**
walking / hiking trails	5 distinct trail loops, varied surfaces, ADA + stroller accessible
picnic areas	large + small, in entry groves + along trails
sculpture garden / public art	potential for revolving installations / design enhancements
amphitheater	event space potential at pavilions and open fields
ACTIVE RECREATION	**LARGE AND SMALL OPEN AREAS FOR LOW IMPACT ACTIVITIES**
sports fields + courts	open fields for practice + pick-up games near parking groves
playgrounds	enclosed areas in entry groves
dog park	designated areas on east and west side
swimming pool / water play	shallow water channels for splash pad + wading pools
disc golf	potential locations for low impact
skills area [bike, skateboards, etc.]	potential in designated active recreation areas on west side
biking [recreational]	limited to designated trails
biking [off-road, velodrome]	incompatible with proposed park; provide connection to Salado Creek Greenway
ACCESS	**CITY-WIDE CONNECTIONS TO NEIGHBORHOODS + PARK SYSTEM**
transportation to park	proposed VIA bus stops plus ample parking for cars + buses
connection to Salado Creek Greenway	greenway incorporated into east side of park
crossing over Wurzbach Parkway	proposed (large) land bridge or (smaller) pedestrian bridge
access into park	to be coordinated with various agencies and adjacent property owners
SAFETY/MANAGEMENT	**SECURITY AT PARK EDGES + INTERIOR**
neighborhood buffers	wide bands of vegetation + distance from active areas
emergency access + security route	all trails + perimeter path designed for emergency + security vehicles
park patrol reporting station	park patrol reporting station to be determined in later phases
personnel/maintenance space	to be determined in later phases

DESIGN STRATEGIES

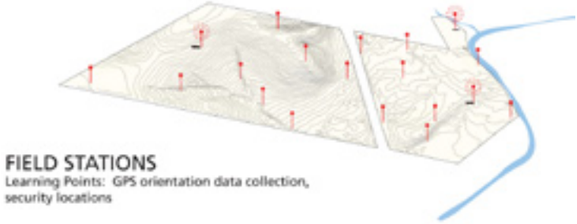
The landscape framework for the Master Plan is structured upon layers of one set of enhanced site characteristics superimposed with another set of park elements and systems. Each layer contains its own unique physical forms that reflect the established design themes and objectives while also adding up to a simple yet complex park proposal. By exploring each aspect of the site and its potential individually, on-going site analysis can continue to take advantage of the design team's consultants and other local expertise with a focus on inventive and sustainable systems. A study of the separate layers of park elements and systems allows in-depth investigations maximizing the design function and expression through carefully crafting the landscape.

Beginning with the underlying layer of the site context, design propositions include primary park entrances in conjunction with other limited entry points, critical bus stops for city-wide access and buffers at neighborhood edges (detailed on pages 72-73). The following more detailed layers of the design strategies outline the design team's proposal to optimize the characteristics of site specific geology and hydrology, to celebrate the agricultural history of the Voelcker farm and to diversify the native south Texas landscape.

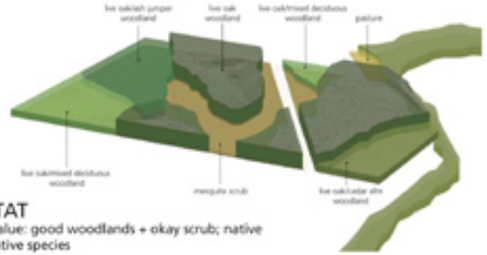
The second set of design strategies begins with the preserved and restored vegetation and wildlife habitat as a landscape mosaic where outdoor rooms are carved out in various ways to give form to the overall concept of the Park as a 'cultivated wild.' Meandering trail loops are associated with distinct areas of the site connected by direct routes that lead to particular park destinations. Finally field stations punctuate the Park as points of both monitoring and education in this landscape of learning. Compiling all the layers creates the structure for the Master Plan presented in the next chapter, a design proposal setting forth the design team's vision for the Park.



AGRICULTURE
Agrarian Heritage: remnant homestead, suppressed oak savanna, resilient oaks + woodlands

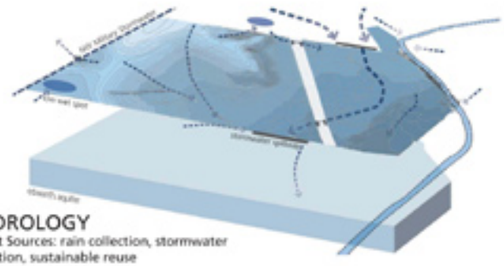


FIELD STATIONS
Learning Points: GPS orientation data collection, security locations

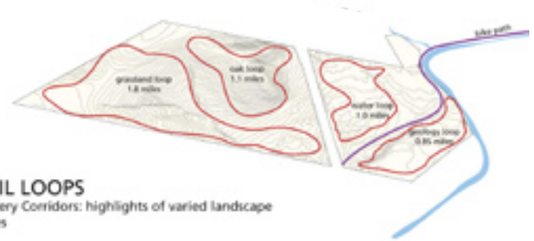


HABITAT
Varied Value: good woodlands + okay scrub; native + non-native species

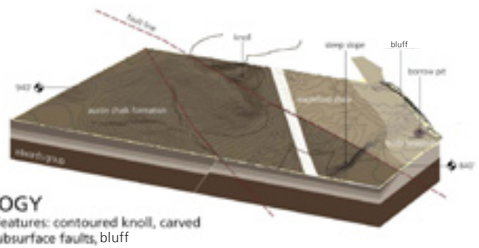
SITE LINES
Direct Routes: acequias, allees, hedgerows, bridges



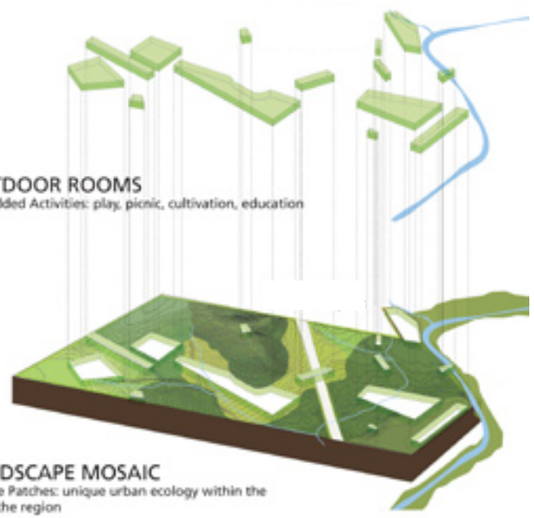
HYDROLOGY
Latent Sources: rain collection, stormwater collection, sustainable reuse



TRAIL LOOPS
Discovery Corridors: highlights of varied landscape patches



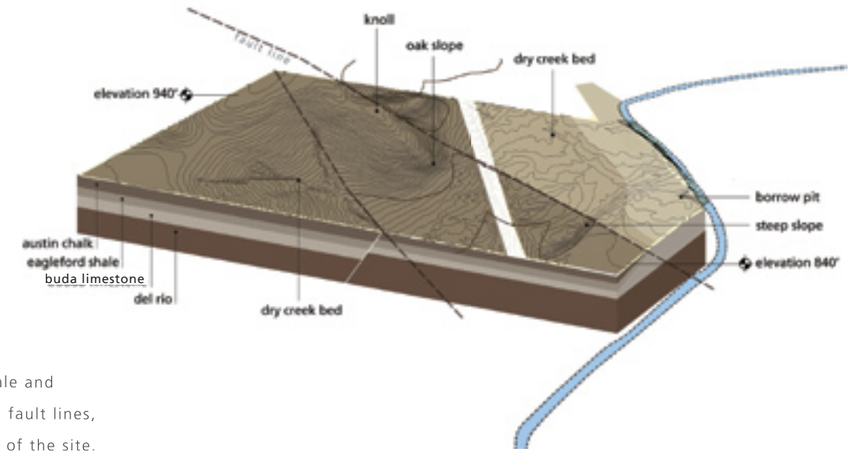
GEOLOGY
Hidden Features: contoured knoll, carved slopes, subsurface faults, bluff



OUTDOOR ROOMS
Embedded Activities: play, picnic, cultivation, education

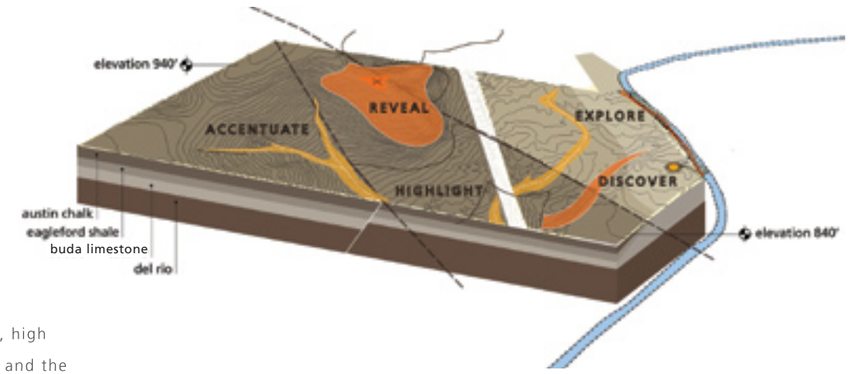
CONTEXT
Edges + Connections: buffered neighborhoods, bisecting thoroughfare, linked greenway

LANDSCAPE MOSAIC
Diverse Patches: unique urban ecology within the City + the region



GEOLOGY BEFORE

Austin Chalk, Eagleford Shale and Buda Limestone, along with fault lines, form the geologic structure of the site.

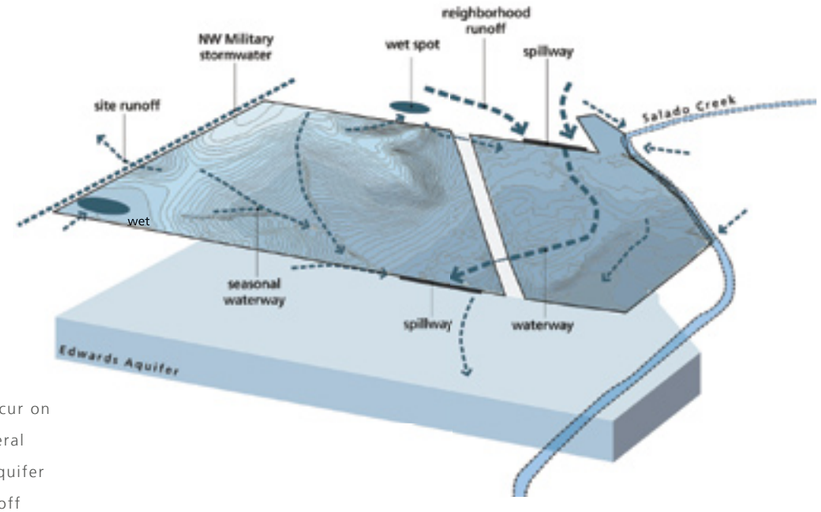


GEOLOGY AFTER

The intermittent creek beds, high points, slopes, a borrow pit and the Salado Creek bluff are revealed as the significant features that characterize Voelcker Park terrain.

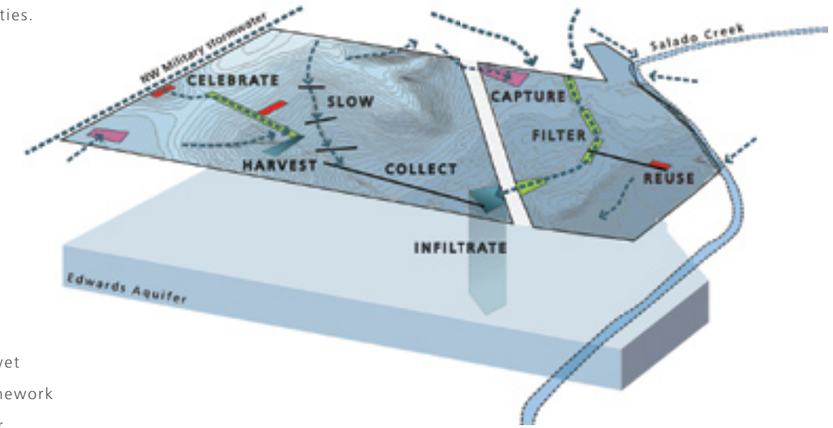
GEOLOGY REVEALED →

The borrow pit near Salado Creek provides a place for learning about the geology of the site and the region.



HYDROLOGY BEFORE

Various forms of water occur on the site, including ephemeral drainageways, ponding, aquifer infiltration spots, and runoff from surrounding properties.



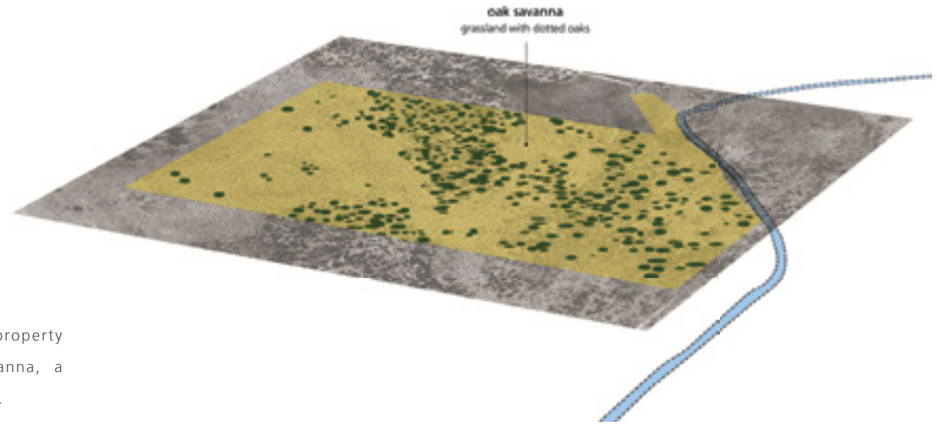
HYDROLOGY AFTER

Acknowledging the fluctuations of dry and wet conditions, the Park framework optimizes available water by harvesting, filtering and reusing all sources of flow onto the site.

SUSTAINABLE WATER SYSTEMS →

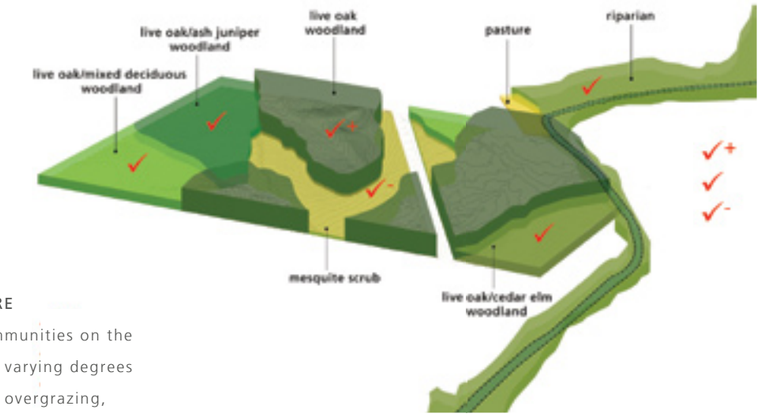
Many of the water systems will be didactic as demonstrations of applying better-than-current "Best Management Practices".

DESIGN STRATEGIES



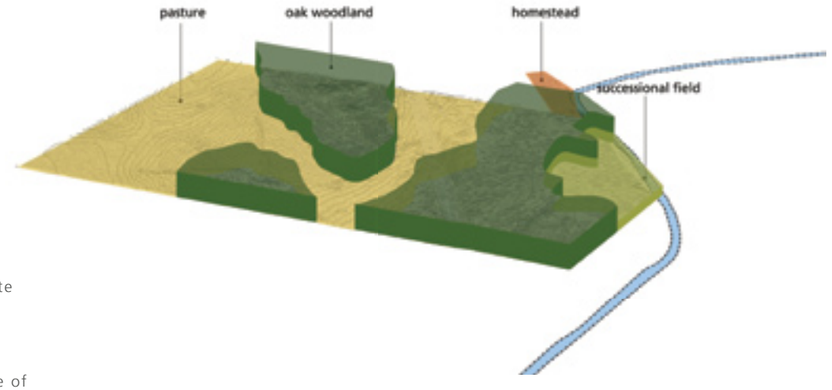
SITE PRESETTLEMENT

The origins of the Voelcker property are most likely the oak savanna, a quintessential Texan landscape.



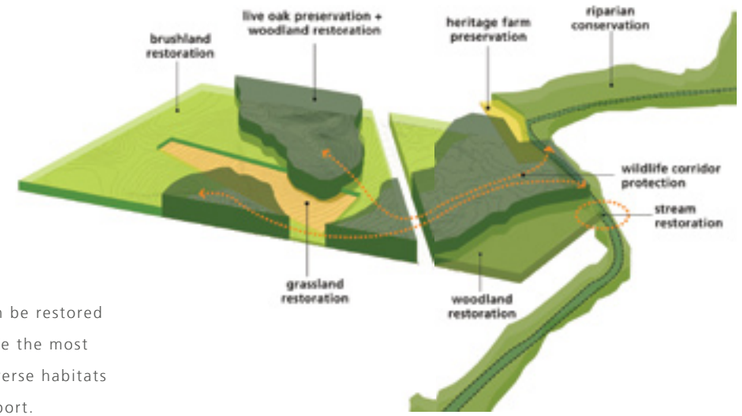
VEGETATION BEFORE

Patches of plant communities on the site have undergone varying degrees of degradation from overgrazing, including the presence of dense brush and invasive species that reduce the value of habitat to native species.



RESILIENT AGRICULTURAL LANDSCAPE

The restoration and re-newal of the many site and cultural histories can be made legible throughout the Park, such as enhancing a healthy oak savanna, and celebrating culture of the dairy farm homestead with some managed pasture land.



VEGETATION AFTER

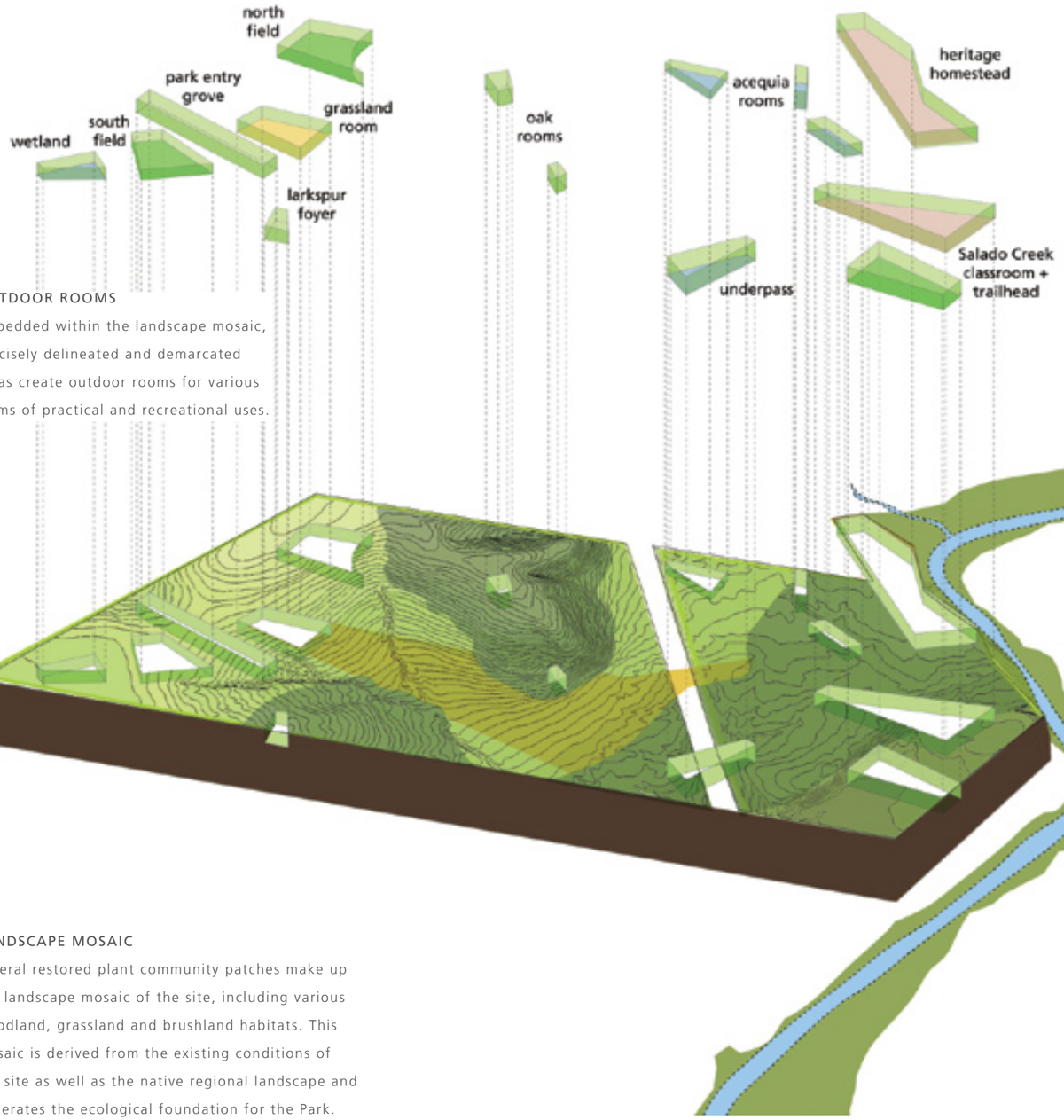
These communities can be restored and enriched to provide the most native, healthy and diverse habitats Voelcker Park can support.

SITE HISTORY →

The Voelcker homestead offers opportunities for interpreting the cultural landscape.

LANDSCAPE RESTORATION →

Voelcker Park will restore the south Texas native understory, oak woodland and oak savanna.

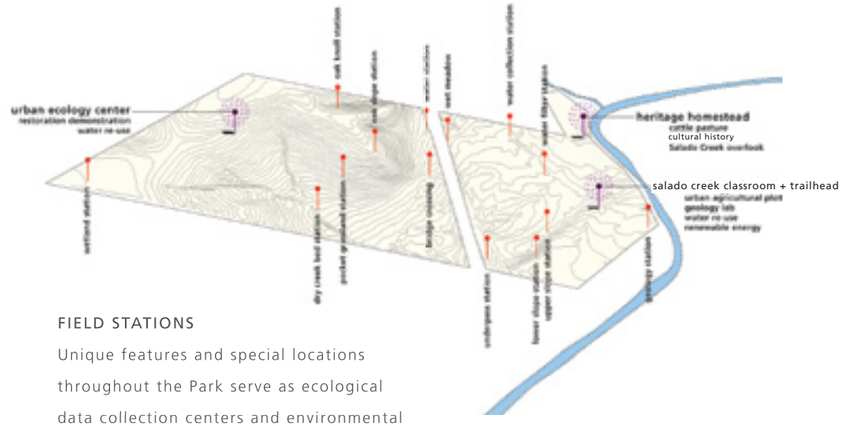


OUTDOOR ROOMS

Embedded within the landscape mosaic, precisely delineated and demarcated areas create outdoor rooms for various forms of practical and recreational uses.

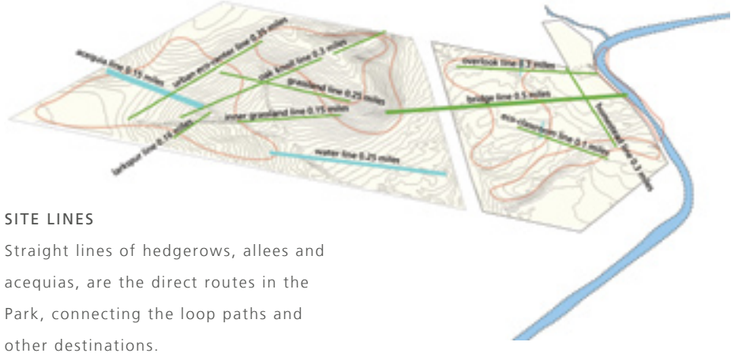
LANDSCAPE MOSAIC

Several restored plant community patches make up the landscape mosaic of the site, including various woodland, grassland and brushland habitats. This mosaic is derived from the existing conditions of the site as well as the native regional landscape and generates the ecological foundation for the Park.



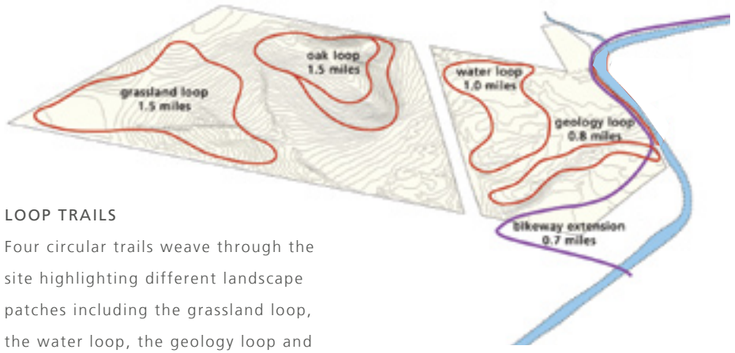
FIELD STATIONS

Unique features and special locations throughout the Park serve as ecological data collection centers and environmental learning points, contributing to scientific efforts and dissemination of knowledge about the Park's environment.



SITE LINES

Straight lines of hedgerows, allees and acequias, are the direct routes in the Park, connecting the loop paths and other destinations.



LOOP TRAILS

Four circular trails weave through the site highlighting different landscape patches including the grassland loop, the water loop, the geology loop and the oak loop, allowing recreation and discovery of park ecosystems.

PRESENTING THE MASTER PLAN

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

SITE DESIGN FRAMEWORK

SITE PLAN + PLACES

MANAGEMENT OUTLINE

NEXT STEPS

05

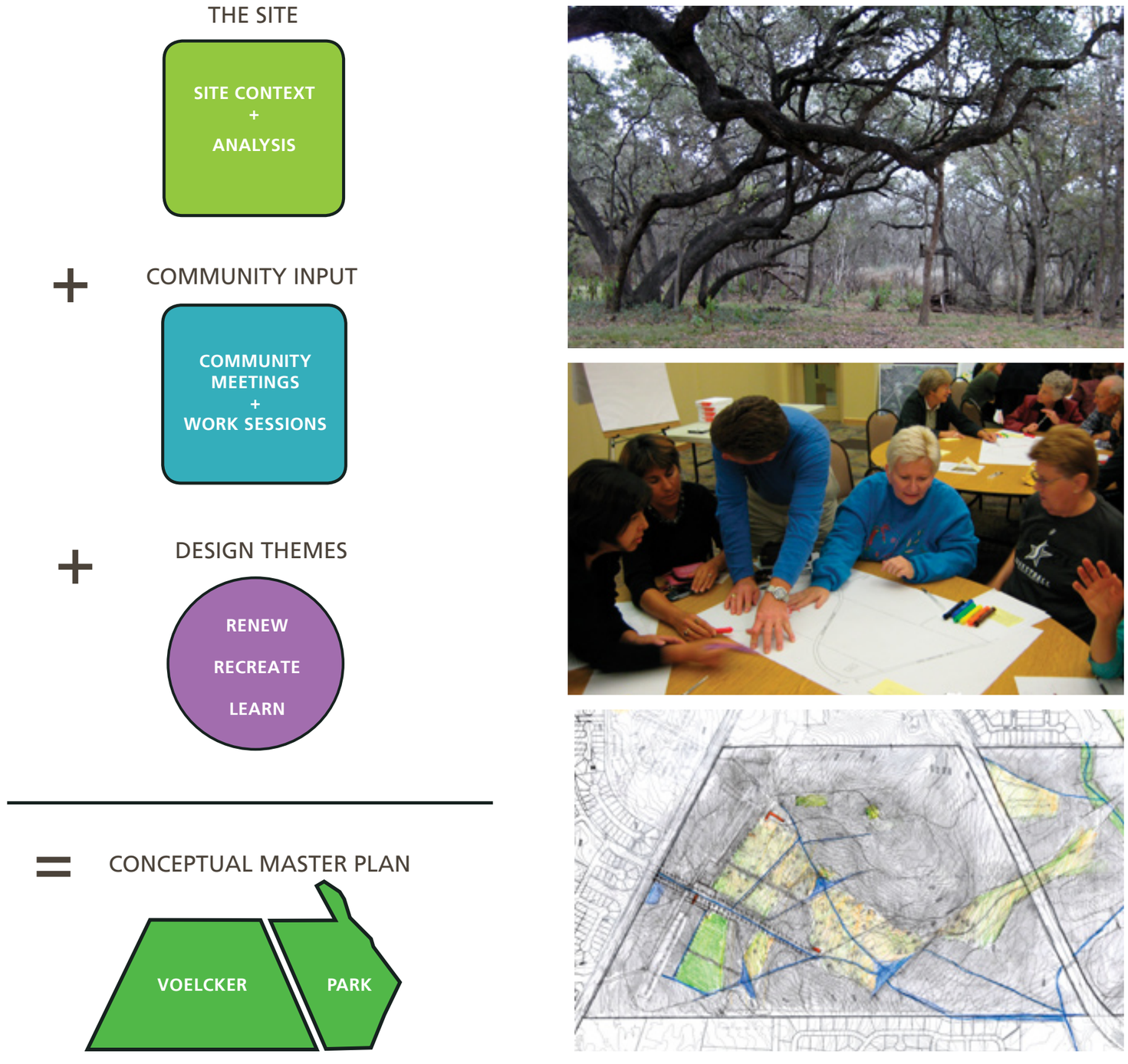
DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The guiding principles for the design of Voelcker Park as a cultivated wild are like a Texas Two-step. The natural history of the region inspires the respectful preservation of the centuries-old oaks that once dotted a nearly extinct ecosystem of sweeping grasslands. The first and foremost principle of the Master Plan is devoted to reclaiming a native landscape that personifies a genuine and wild Texas territory; first design step reintroduces the oak savanna while also ambitiously restoring the woodlands and brushland.

A contemporary interpretation of the cultural history of San Antonio beckons the cultivation of Voelcker Park as an urban wilderness, a wild that literally grows out of the site's history as a dairy farm now engulfed by urban development. The second principle of the Master Plan is committed to celebrating the cultural expression of an agrarian heritage; the next design step willfully carves out spaces and orchestrates systems taking cues from the patterns of historic mission acequias and cultivated fields. As an inverse of agriculture once taking resources of the land, the design ethic for Voelcker Park gives back clean water and rich soil, vibrant plants and thriving animals; the Park becomes a healthy landscape for all of San Antonio.

The intent of the cultivated wild is to invite visitors from across the city to play, wandering through the restored oak woodlands and savanna and picnicking next to an acequia that functions as a water cleansing channel. The mission of the Master Plan envisions the Park as a living laboratory for learning how to care for the native Texas landscape and larger natural systems. Like all great parks, these activities are for all people of all ages to participate in and benefit from a rich and healthy landscape.

The design of the Master Plan aspires to the manifestation of a land ethic that fosters stewardship of both the Park and the larger environment. The way in which the Park is designed, and the choices that are associated with its built form, will demonstrate a resourcefulness of doing more with less and inviting the many individuals and groups to contribute to a Park that is ultimately theirs. The Master Plan strives to exemplify an ethic, an inventiveness, and a generosity that will make this Park a national model.



AGRARIAN HERITAGE
Celebrate the cultural history of San Antonio with inspiration from productive patterns of acequias and cultivated fields.

NATIVE LANDSCAPE
Respect the natural history of Texas by preserving and restoring unique ecosystems that converge in Bexar County.

CULTIVATED WILD
Create a dynamic contrast between geometric agrarian forms and organic landscape patches to cultivate a unique urban ecology at Voelcker Park.

PLAY
Invite communities across the city by providing active and passive recreation in a variety of park spaces embedded within the larger landscape mosaic.

LEARN
Establish a living laboratory for learning about native and urban ecologies seeking partnerships with schools and community organizations.

INTERACT
Reach out to people of all ages and create opportunities to work together towards healthy living in a healthy city.

LAND ETHIC
Foster stewardship of the natural and cultural landscape to inspire generations to care for Voelcker Park and the larger environment.

RESOURCEFULNESS
Promote innovative practices of integrating ‘green’ technologies setting examples in the Park that protect our natural resources.

NATIONAL MODEL
Demonstrate the dynamic and productive interaction between natural processes and urban systems, contributing to a legacy of great parks across the country.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES: urban ecology

Urban ecology is the subfield of ecology which deals with the interaction of plants, animals and humans with each other and with their environment in urban or urbanizing settings. Analysis of urban settings in the context of ecosystem ecology can result in healthier, better managed communities. Studying the factors which allow wild plants and animals to survive in built environments can also create more livable spaces. It allows people to adapt to the changing environment while preserving the resources. Emphasis is also placed on planning communities with environmentally sustainable methods via design and building materials in order to promote a healthy and biodiverse urban ecosystem.

--Wikipedia entry for "Urban Ecology"

Located within the urban reaches of San Antonio, yet retaining the potential for a rich and diverse array of ecosystems, Voelcker Park can be a model for a vibrant urban ecology, demonstrating the dynamic and productive interaction between natural processes and urban systems, and contributing to a legacy of great parks across the country. The presence of a living and working ecological system in the midst of the city fosters the stewardship of the natural and cultural landscape to inspire generations to care for Voelcker Park and the larger environment.

Urban ecology centers support the missions of both science and education, contributing to a wealth of knowledge about our environment and helping foster ecologically responsible citizens through hands-on discovery. This may occur through exhibit and example; field work and data collection; lessons and observation, all while taking advantage of unique physical conditions and local ecologies.

MILWAUKEE URBAN ECOLOGY CENTER →

The science education and community center building constructed with attention to visible ecological design and environmental systems serves as a model for sustainability city-wide.

WILDLIFE INTERACTIONS →

Providing the ability for visitors to interact and observe wildlife engenders respect for other living things and enables a deeper understanding of how to maintain and live with all creatures in the city.

← EXPLORATION AND LEARNING

Serendipitous discovery of ecological processes and cultural artifacts found at the Park serve as didactic experiences about the local environment.

CIBOLO NATURE CENTER →

Games designed to mimic local wildlife life cycles such as migrating species allow people to experience the ecosystem from a new perspective.

← OUTDOOR CLASSROOM AND AMPHITHEATER

Outdoor classrooms provide meeting and gathering spaces where lessons about the Park ecosystems can be held and information disseminated to visitors.

← GROWING AN URBAN GARDEN

Productive plots provide places to learn about the environment and urban agriculture through the cultivation of small crops.

← LESSONS IN THE FIELD

Hikes and excursions into the Park enable field observations and lessons about various ecologies through guided experience and exercises.

CLEANING THE STREAM →

Volunteer events working within the Park landscape foster environmental stewardship as people learn to care for their common resources.

Environmental education programs abound in many of the natural areas in and around San Antonio with attention to native plant communities and wildlife. A rare remnant of degraded, yet undeveloped land in the midst of urbanized and urbanizing areas of San Antonio, Voelcker Park can both cooperate with and supplement the programs that exist in the area. Voelcker Park is also in a unique position at the convergence of Edwards Plateau Savanna, Blackland Prairie and South Texas Brush, with the potential to support the habitats of each of these regions within the Park. The juxtaposition of urban conditions with the ecological potential of the site enables the Park to serve as a complimentary environmental model, research laboratory, and learning ground for San Antonio.

Proposed restoration of the various plant communities and habitats creates a foundation and vitality for living laboratories and monitoring stations at the Park. An enhanced live oak woodland and its oak motte community forms the forest research and learning center, while grass identification, living prairie exhibits and a seed bank grows out of the restoration of Edwards Plateau Savanna and Blackland Prairie ecosystems. Wildlife studies of rare and endangered species, as well as urban critters, enables a deeper understanding of how to maintain and cohabitate with all creatures in the City. Data collection of native plants, butterflies, birds and insects can help enrich the knowledge of the native habitants of Bexar County.

Engagement and study of the native ecology fosters respect for these systems, while other aspects of the Park may be able to demonstrate the ability to live ecologically within a city. Lessons from the field, in addition to sustainable and green infrastructure throughout the Park finds its nexus at the urban ecology center where water reuse methods, sustainable energy strategies, and real-time environmental monitoring becomes explicit and accessible. Urban agriculture engenders the appreciation of an urban productive landscape and attention to healthy food and bodies.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES: renewal of the native landscape

Great parks reveal the uniqueness of their natural and cultural landscapes. The landscape origins of San Antonio are celebrated in its parks, San Pedro Springs being one of the first in the nation to set the example of the cultural expression of a native landscape. Voelcker Park presents an opportunity to renew native plant communities and wildlife habitats that are decreasing rapidly in the region, recapturing the significant landscape identity of south Texas. The three Texan eco-regions of Edwards Plateau, Blackland Prairie and South Texas Plains converge in Bexar County and are manifested within the Park in the potential plant communities on the site such as oak savannas and woodlands. Setting state-wide benchmarks for the timely reintroduction of diverse regional ecosystems and for the creative use of sustainable restoration practices, Voelcker Park can be distinguished as a paradigm of native landscape renewal. Unlike other natural areas in San Antonio, Voelcker Park is a remnant patch surrounded by dense development; an urban wilderness. The interface of wilderness and city provides the impetus to demonstrate how unique the Park could be as a 'cultivated wild,' advancing park traditions for a contemporary San Antonio.

LIBERATE THE OAKS ↓

Existing and potential views of heritage oak tree on site being liberated from invasive scrub succession and planted with a ground plane of native grasses and wildflowers.

PRESERVE HERITAGE TREES →

Protecting and preserving live oaks and oak mottes ensures woodland habitat integrity and enables increased biodiversity across the site while maintaining culturally important trees.

RESTORE THE GRASSLANDS →

Restoration of the grasslands reintroduces a native ecosystem at the site, providing ecologically rich edge conditions and recapturing the unique landscape identity of South Texas.

INCREASE BIODIVERSITY →

Increasing the growth of native flora promotes overall biodiversity and demonstrates the unique qualities of Voelcker Park as a cultivated wild in the City of San Antonio.

← WATER SUSTAINABILITY

The Birding Center in Mission, TX demonstrates how sustainable technologies can be incorporated into the design and construction of park buildings through the capture, cleansing and reuse of rainwater.

← CLOSING THE LOOP

Recycling programs can be incorporated into park design and management as part of the larger economic sustainability of the City.

← MASS TRANSIT

Providing accommodations for various modes of transportation supports the sustainable mission of equitable access for all people of the City while fostering more sustainable means of energy use through mass transportation and bikeway connections.

↓ CLEANSE THE WATER

Existing and proposed stormwater cleansing gardens at the Summerfield neighborhood edge.

Sustainable principles optimistically aspire to fulfill the interdependence and continuous integrity of ecology, economy and equity. With a goal of providing a park that adopts and promotes these ideals, sustainable practices govern choices for the ecological systems, the economic use and contribution to natural resources, and equal access to the benefits of the Park. In every aspect and each element of the Park, sustainable practices will be made legible to foster environmental stewardship. At the scale of the City, sustainable principles will be demonstrated to provide a model for how San Antonio can build wisely and fairly for the next century.

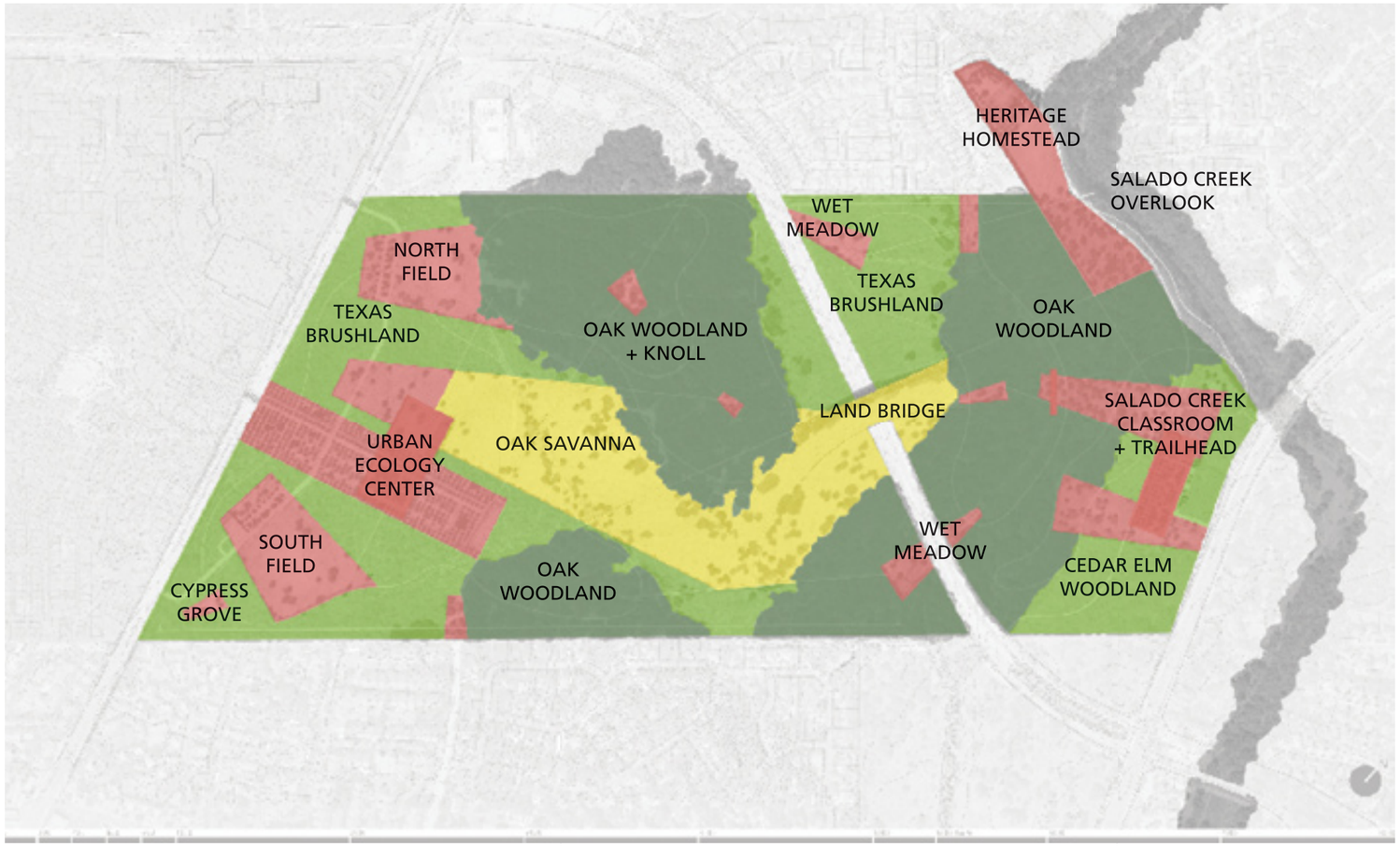
Environmentally sustainable technologies will be employed in various forms throughout the Park to both function and demonstrate the sustainable practices such as water reuse and energy generation. The Park and City can create resourceful loops of material reuse minimizing waste and promoting an economy of means for all parks and the City at large. Social sustainability is fulfilled through equal access to all by providing various spaces and events that bring people of diverse backgrounds together and allowing for all modes of transportation and entry to the Park including bus stops, parking lots, and bikeway connections.

SITE DESIGN FRAMEWORK

The goal of maintaining and enhancing the urban wilderness character of the site was the determining factor that led to the designation of seventy five percent of the Park for landscape preservation and restoration and twenty five percent of the acreage for programmed park uses. To ensure ecological connectivity and continuity along with the experience of a large landscape mosaic, the more active recreation areas were strategically distributed and embedded into the green matrix.

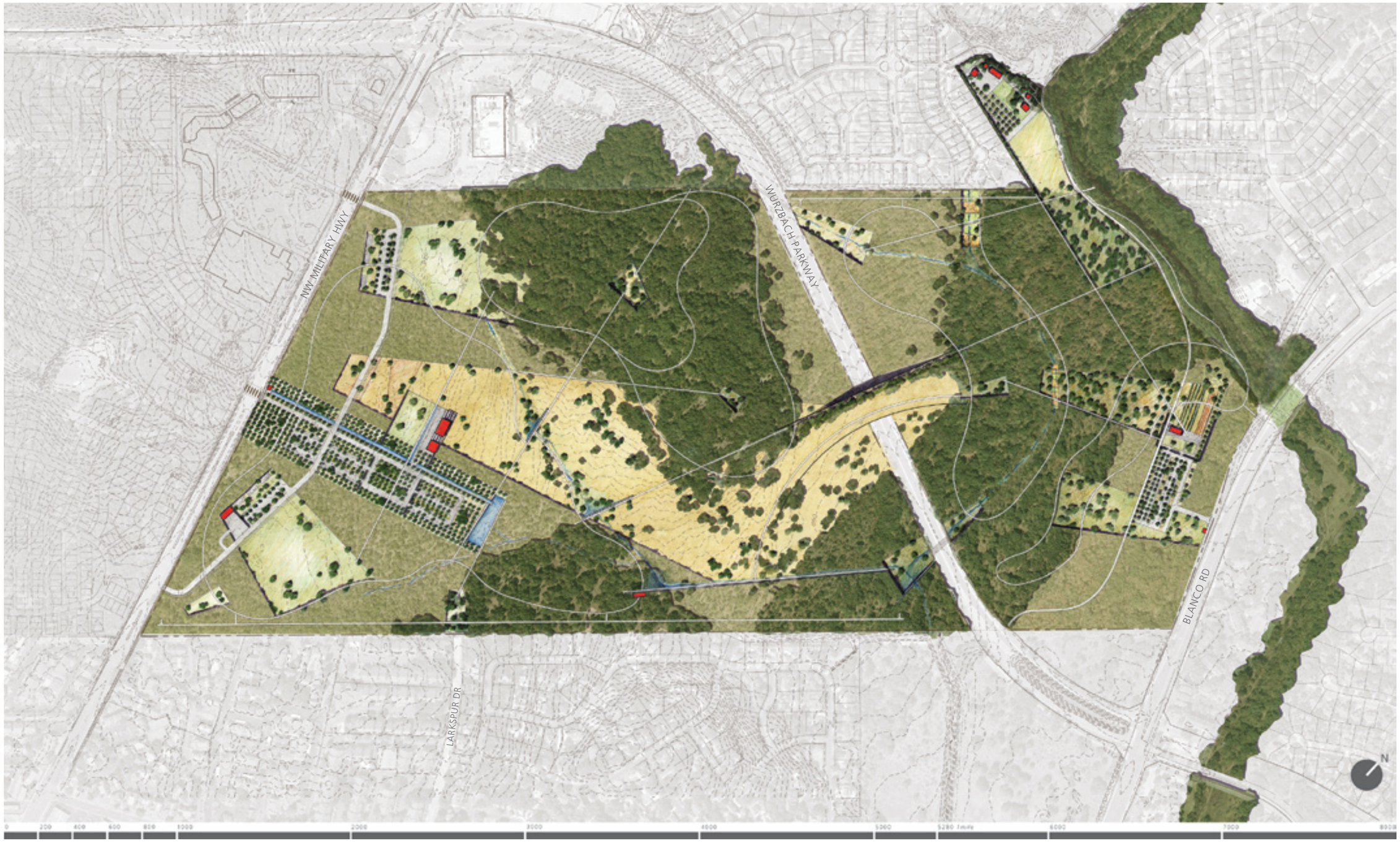
The native landscape patches are restored with specific and creative restoration techniques (see Management Plan, page 90) to cultivate a rich plant and wildlife habitat that will increase in diversity over time. The ecological connection to Salado Creek is critical as a wildlife corridor and for Voelcker Park's role in the larger park system. As a living laboratory, scientific innovation and attention is placed on how these habitats differ from other a natural areas and function uniquely in an urban context.

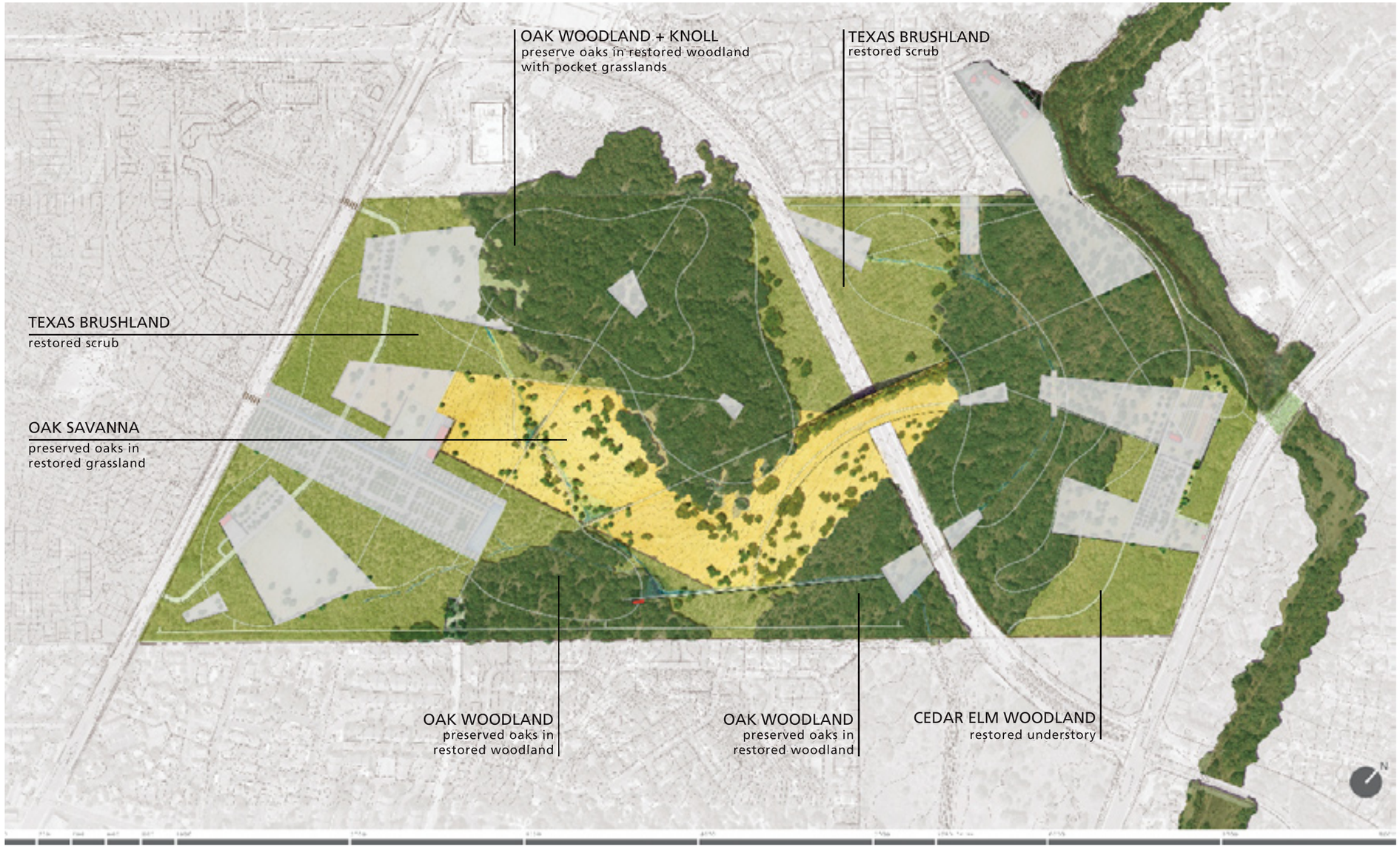
With passive recreation woven throughout the larger native landscape mosaic, the other portion of the Park is designated for active program uses. The outdoor rooms are articulated with strong geometric form with the intention that this clear delineation will maintain the proportion prescribed by the Master Plan. These carefully crafted spaces host a variety of activities, ones that could change over time, but always with caution to their impact on the surrounding native landscape patches.



PROGRAMMED PARK USES
78 ACRES (25% OF 311 ACRES)

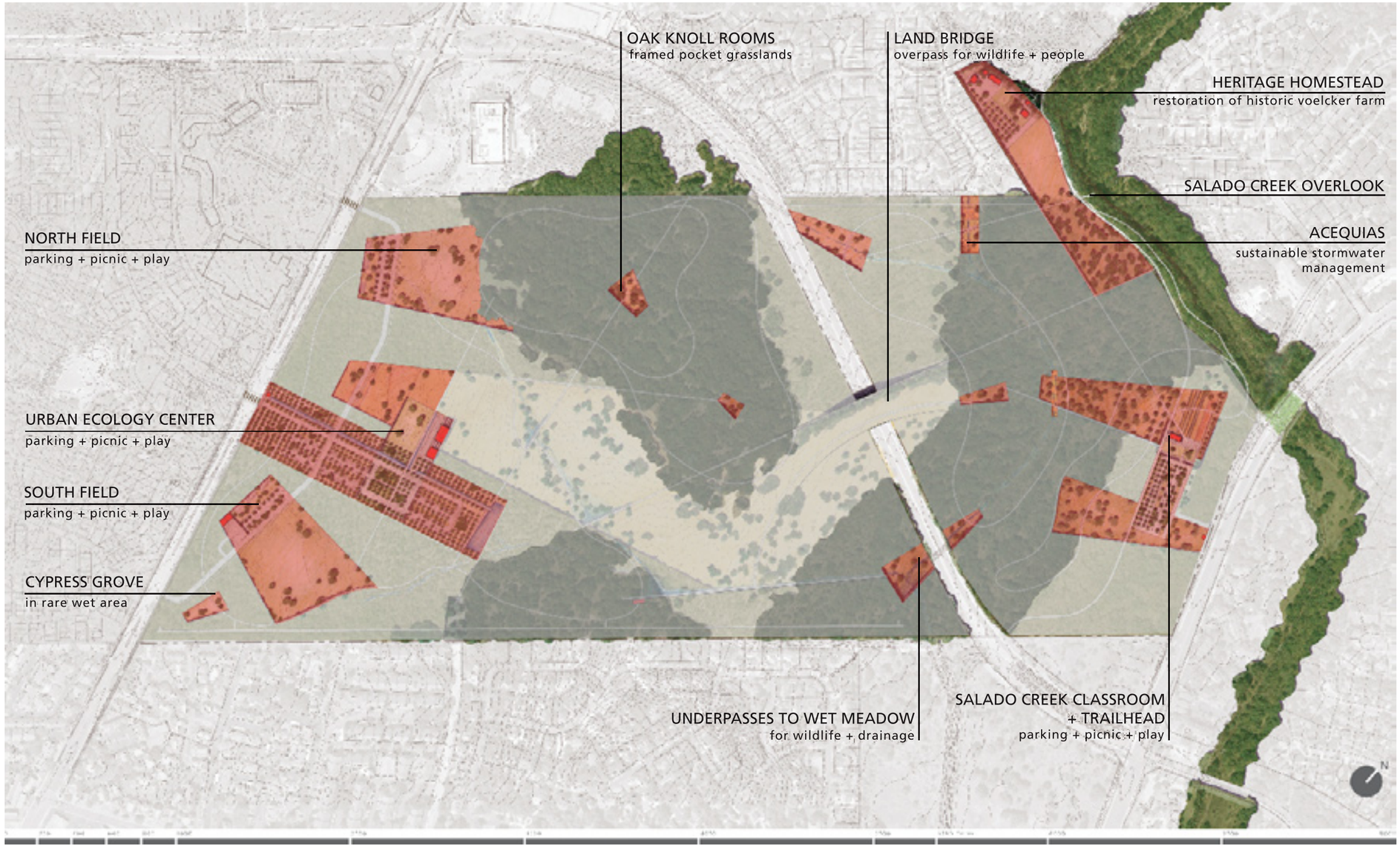
LANDSCAPE PRESERVATION + RESTORATION
233 ACRES (75% OF 311 ACRES)


NW MILITARY HWY
WURZBACH PARKWAY
BLANCO RD
LARKSPUR DR
N
0
200
400
600
800
1000
2000
3000
4000
5000
5280 feet
6000
7000
8000



75% LANDSCAPE MOSAIC →

Preservation and restoration of the native landscapes with enriched plant communities and wildlife habitat comprise three quarters of the Park.



← 25% OUTDOOR ROOMS

Programmed areas embedded within landscape patches comprise one quarter of the Park, situating recreation in proximity to restored habitats.

SITE DESIGN FRAMEWORK: loop trails + site lines

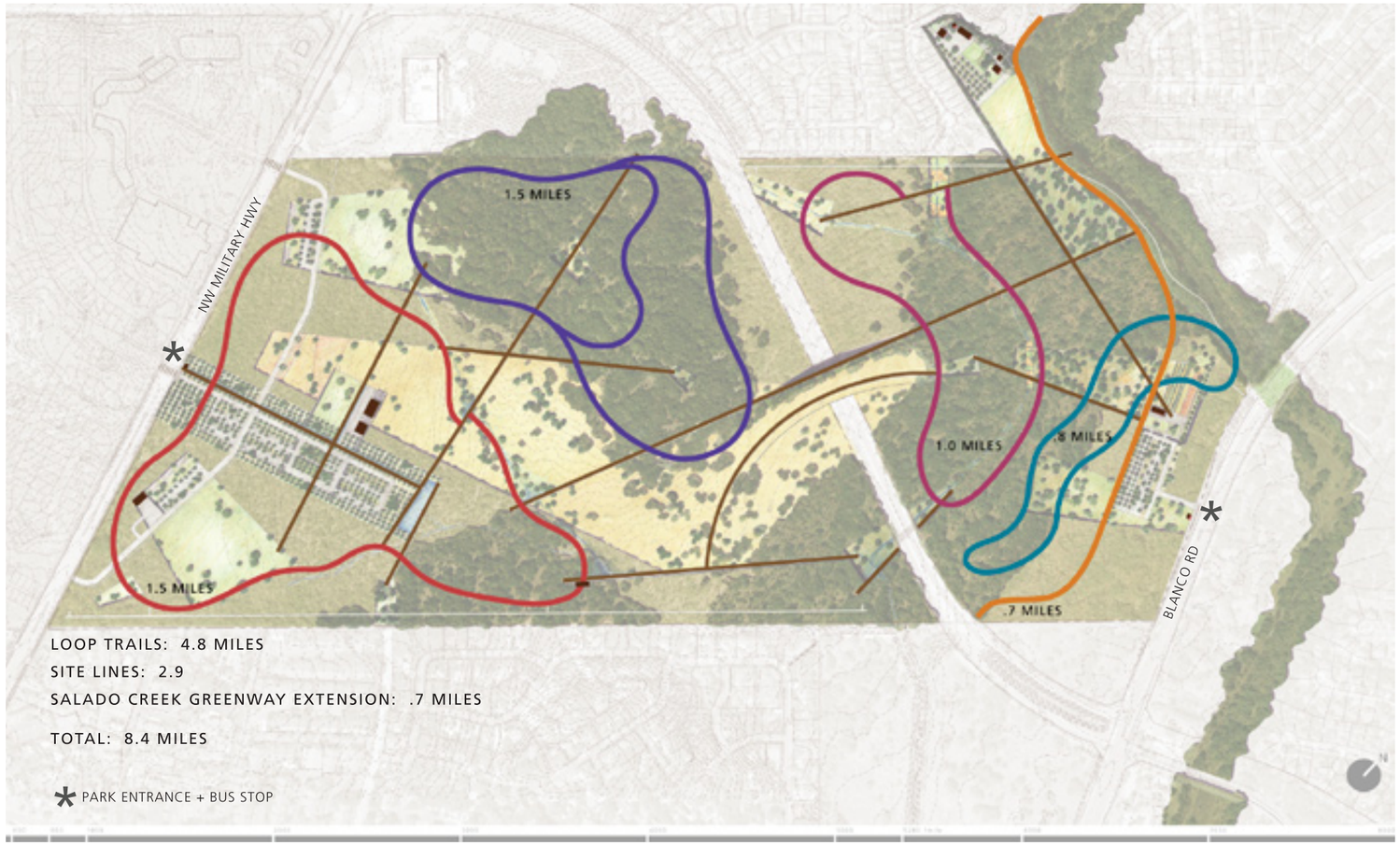
A clear system of distinct trails is needed to provide orientation, especially amongst overgrown areas that are found on the Voelcker site. Associated with the restored native landscape patches, the four loop trails that orchestrate movement through the Park provide passive learning as unique site features are revealed and highlighted.

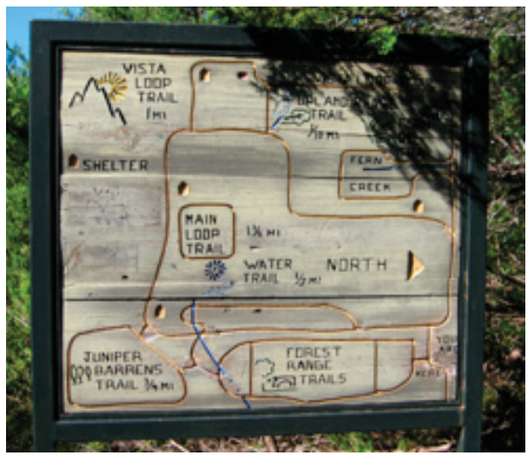
On the east parcel, the Water Loop traces the movement of water through the site. The trail leads people through the water cleansing gardens, where they can learn about water harvesting, filtering and reuse in the Park. The Geology Loop is situated atop a ridge and descends to where honeycomb layers of Buda limestone are exposed under the canopy of the restored cedar elm woodland. On the west parcel, the Oak Loop encircles the Austin Chalk outcrop at the highest point of the site weaving through the heritage oak woodland and ashe juniper stands. The Grassland Loop meanders through the restored oak savanna linking the north and south fields.

The four loop trails vary in length and surface. Some loop trails will be managed as soft trails, while others will be a hard-packed, permeable surface to maintain ADA accessibility. The trails will accommodate emergency access and all terrain vehicles for maintenance and security. Additional trails of a finer scale will support and branch out from these loops lending another level of discovery throughout the Park.

In addition to the loop trails, the Salado Creek Greenway extension connects the existing greenway bike trail that begins north at Huebner Road through the east side of the Park to Wurzbach Parkway, and in future phases, continuing south to Walker Ranch. Voelcker Park is the most significant public park at the northern reach of Salado Creek spurring the integration of a trailhead for the paved bike path at the proposed Salado Creek Classroom to accommodate local and regional visitors to the new greenway.

Site lines form the counterpart to the four loop trails. While the loop trails meander through the distinct landscape patches and maximize distances, site lines are trails that are designed to lead people from point 'A' to point 'B' in the shortest amount of time. They serve as direct routes from one programmatic room to another and connect the four loops to each other. The longest site line connects the west to the east parcel, extending over Wurzbach Parkway to Salado Creek. This three quarter mile site line along with the collection of other site lines would vary in surface types, some made of soft organic material while others would be covered with hard-packed and permeable materials to accommodate ADA accessibility, strollers and emergency vehicles.





THEMED LOOP TRAILS →
Meandering trails are associated with distinct areas of the landscape mosaic.

← DIRECT ROUTES

Site lines provide straight paths to park destinations.

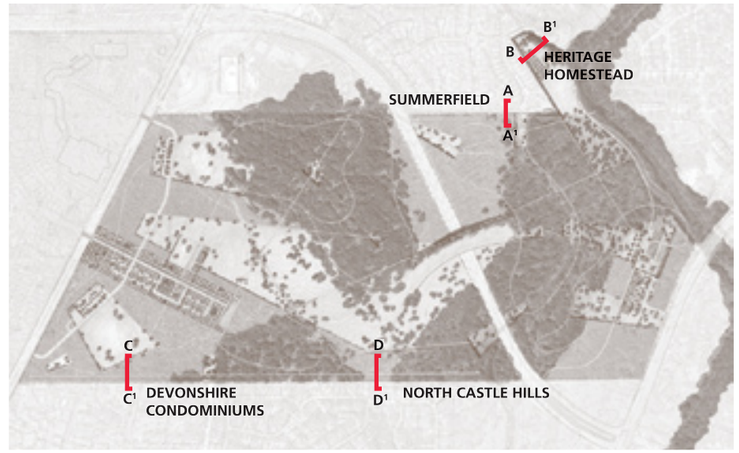
SITE DESIGN FRAMEWORK: park edges

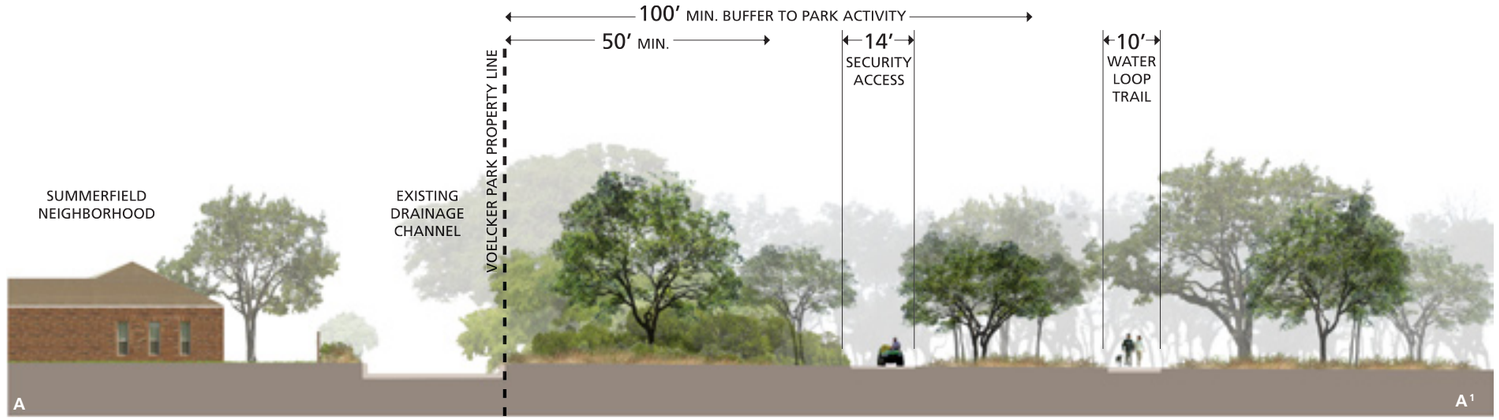
Voelcker Park is nestled among established neighborhoods of San Antonio, necessitating special attention to the Park's edges in regard to both connections and protection. Respecting the privacy of adjacent homeowners, recreation and program uses are located away from Park edges and a 100-foot minimum vegetated area serves as a separation between the residential areas and the Park. Within this zone, the only allowable uses are security and emergency access trails along the edges shared with adjacent neighborhoods. The security trail is set 50' from the property line and is an unpaved clear zone maintained at 14' wide for fire truck access.

At the Heritage Homestead, the Master Plan proposes a 25' wide evergreen tree buffer to improve neighborhood privacy and help define the cluster of buildings and working landscape as a special precinct. This woodland area is thickened further by the location of a park tree nursery that will add depth and additional tree screening.

It is expected that vegetation along the edges will increase and thicken over time due to the relocation of grazing cattle. Habitat management and planting activities within these edges will aid in increasing biodiversity of the Park and support the health of the plant communities along the neighborhoods. Special planting events may be planned for Arbor Day in coordination with local schools and environmental groups.

Larkspur Road, which ends at the Park, provides an opportunity for a convenient neighborhood pedestrian entrance away from the busy traffic of the main Park entrances on Northwest Military Highway and Blanco Road. The Larkspur entrance will also serve as fire and emergency access into the Park. The Master Plan recognizes the concerns of the neighborhoods regarding the potential for parking and safety problems. The entrance will be implemented only if parking, safety and security concerns have been addressed to the satisfaction of the adjacent neighborhoods.

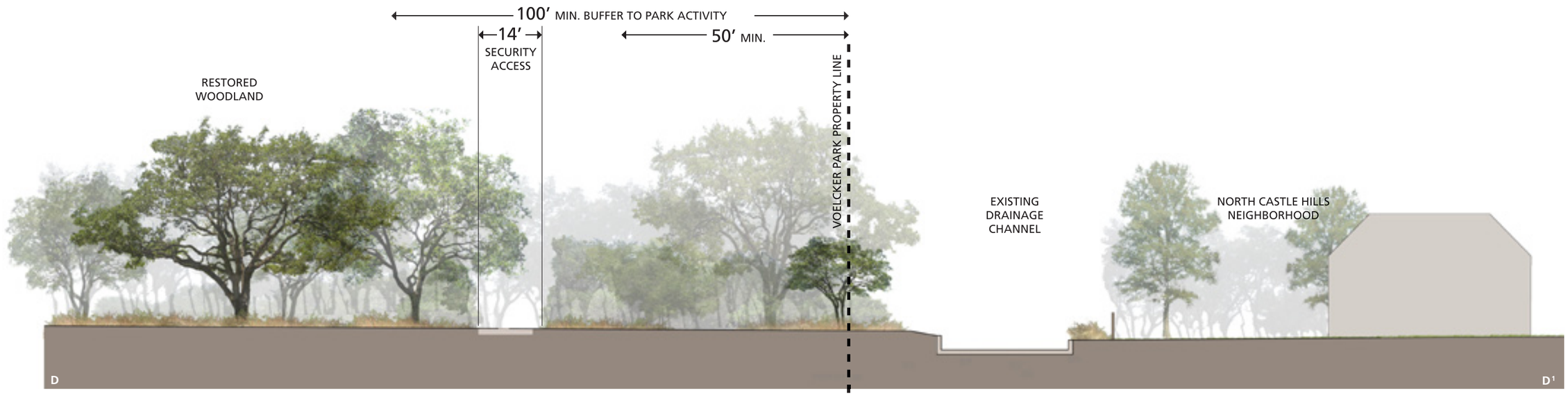




TYPICAL PARK EDGE AT SUMMERFIELD NEIGHBORHOOD

TYPICAL PARK EDGE AT HERITAGE HOMESTEAD

TYPICAL PARK EDGE AT DEVONSHIRE CONDOMINIUMS



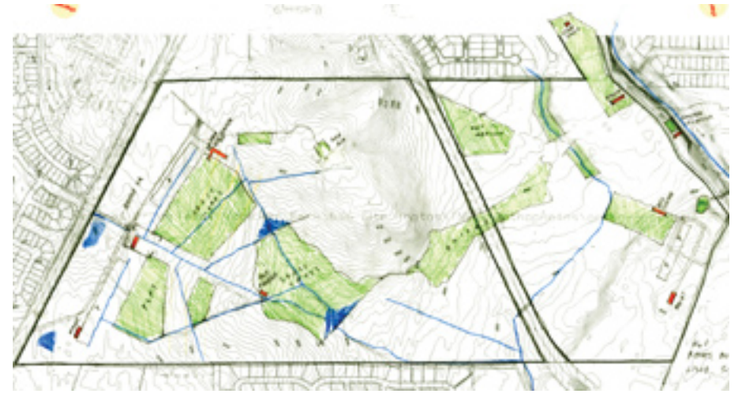
TYPICAL PARK EDGE AT NORTH CASTLE HILLS NEIGHBORHOOD

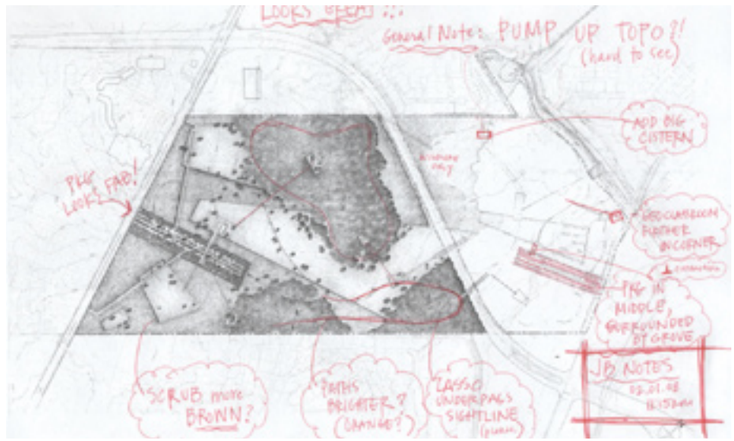
SITE PLAN + PLACES

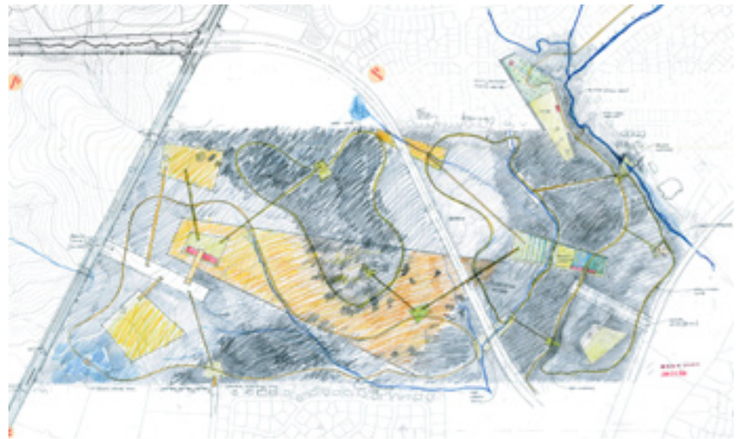
The Master Plan site design is a physical manifestation of the principles based on the two types of landscapes characterized as the cultivated wild. Making the preservation and restoration of the native landscape legible and explicit, each patch is amplified to make these habitats distinct from one another. Visitors will at first simply appreciate the differing qualities of the space, the light, sounds and the seasonal changes unique to the woodlands, savanna and brush. Over repeated visits, people may increasingly become 'citizen scientists' identifying specific plant and wildlife species. In doing so, the experiential qualities and ecological function of Voelcker Park's urban ecology emerge.

The outdoor rooms, large and small, are carved out of the expansive landscape mosaic. Designed with inspiration from agricultural patterns, each space makes cultural references to San Antonio's agrarian heritage through contemporary interpretations of emblems such as missions squares and acequias. These communal places play host to everyday experiences and special events, from a dog walk to a holiday picnic. The three primary centers of the Park – the Urban Ecology Center, the Salado Creek Classroom and Trailhead, and the Heritage Homestead serve as City and region-wide destinations for recreation, education and cultural interpretation. The North and South Fields provide ample space for pick up games and larger community gatherings.

Other landscape rooms punctuate the Park offering destinations from the west side of the Park to the east. Making the two parcels one Park, a most popular proposed feature of a land bridge lifts the grasslands with a dramatic sweep over Wurzbach Parkway. A site line path crosses over that bridge to an overlook, a perch over the Salado Creek Greenway that connects Voelcker Park to the city's ecosystem, both natural and cultural.

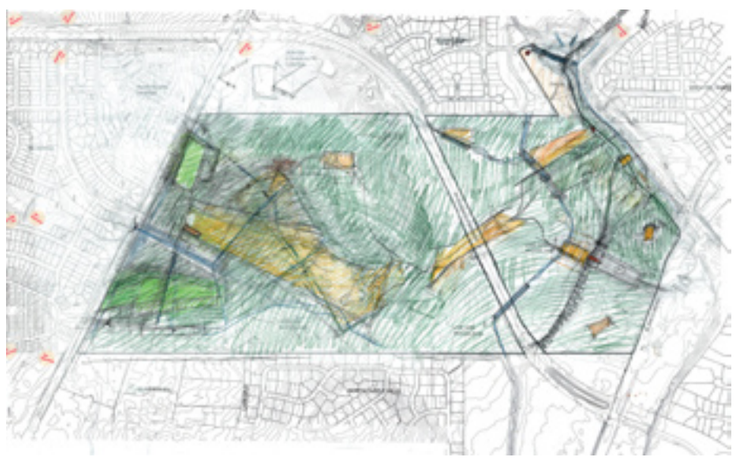


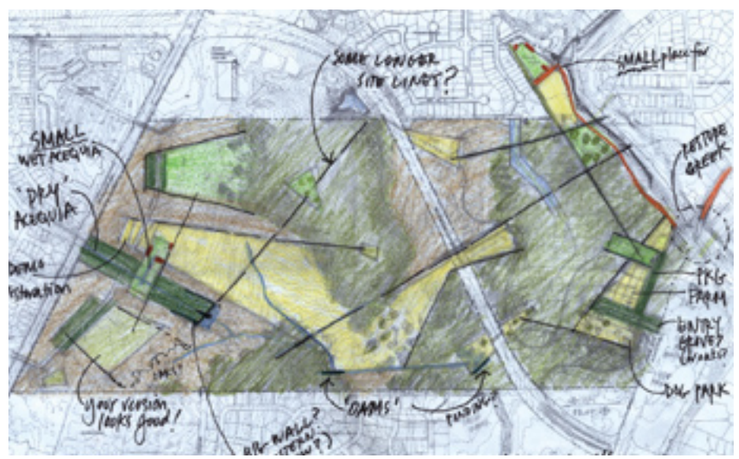


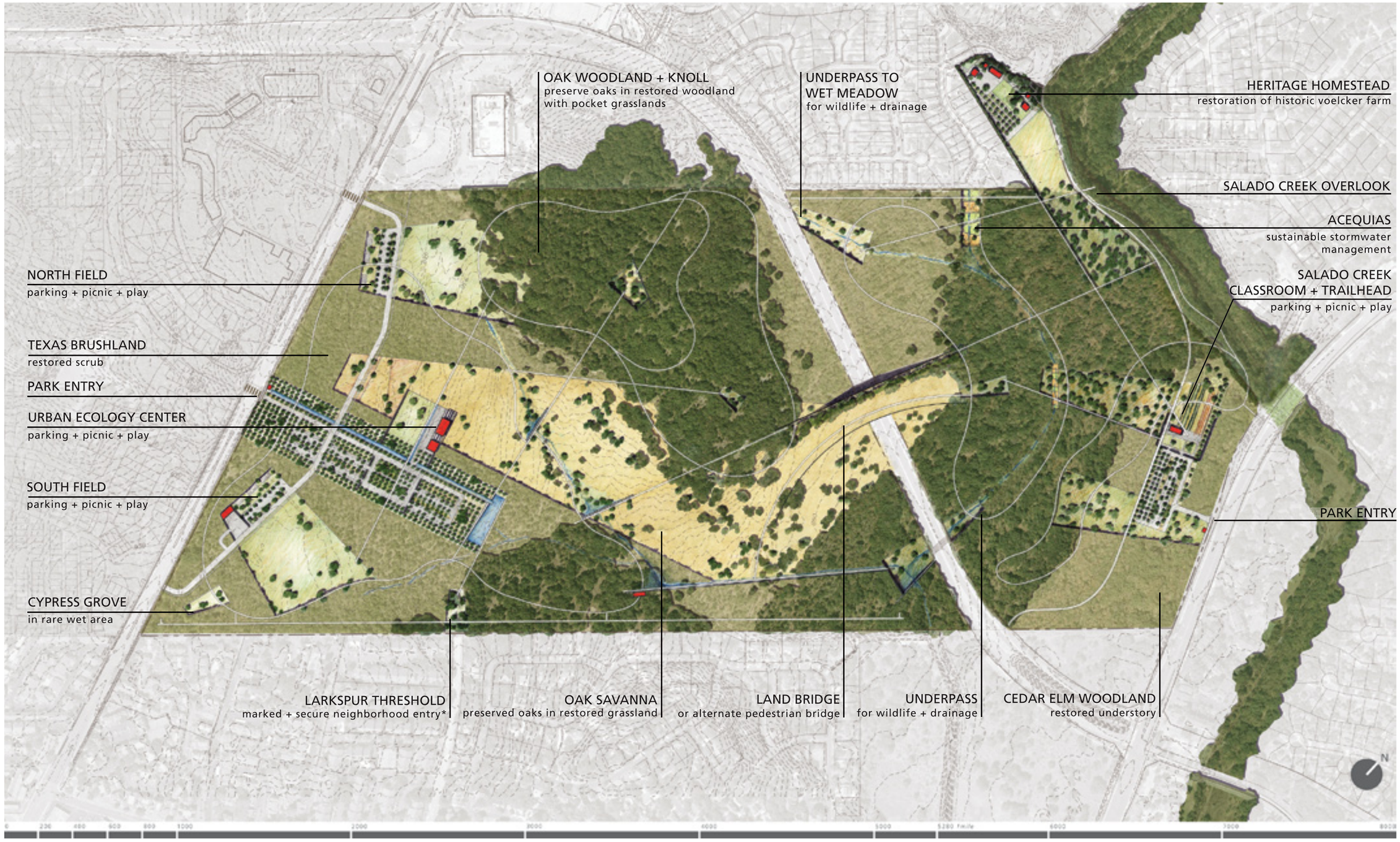


MASTER PLAN PROCESS →

Many iterations of sketches and plans informed the Park configuration and special places as the design developed through the Master Plan process.



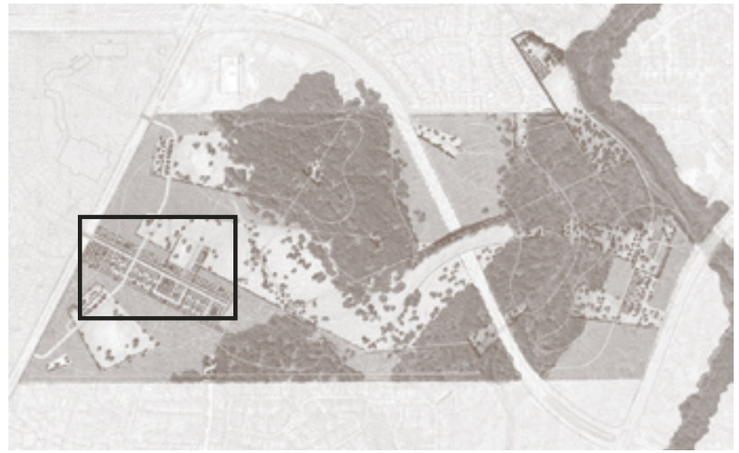




*The Larkspur entry will not be implemented until such time as parking, safety and security have been addressed to the satisfaction of the adjacent neighborhoods.

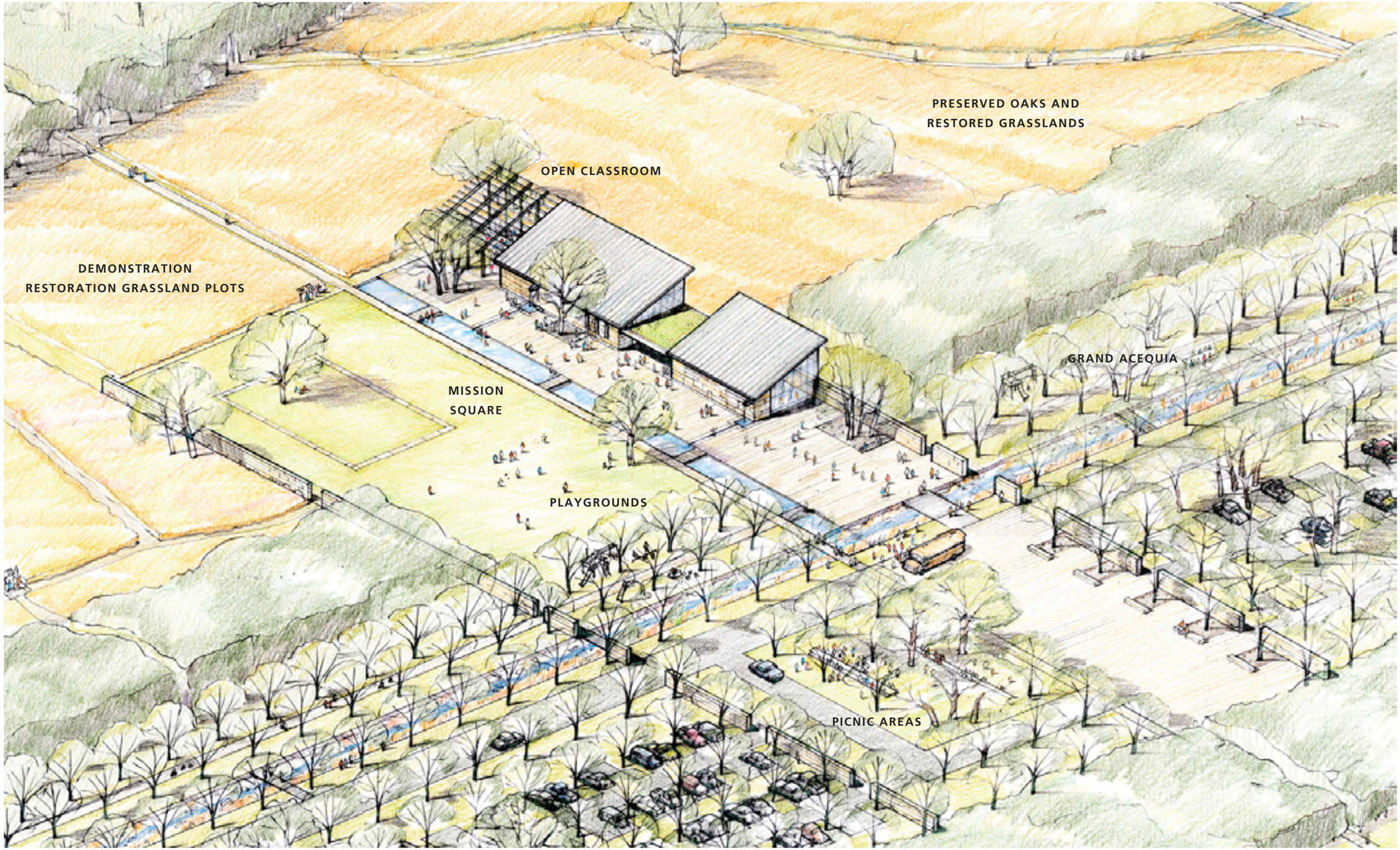
MISSION SQUARE

The Urban Ecology Center and Grand Acequia act as places for playing and learning within the landscape of the restored oak savanna.



ENTRY GROVE AND MISSION SQUARE

The entry grove leads from NW Military to the ecology center, providing Park access and places to park, picnic and play.

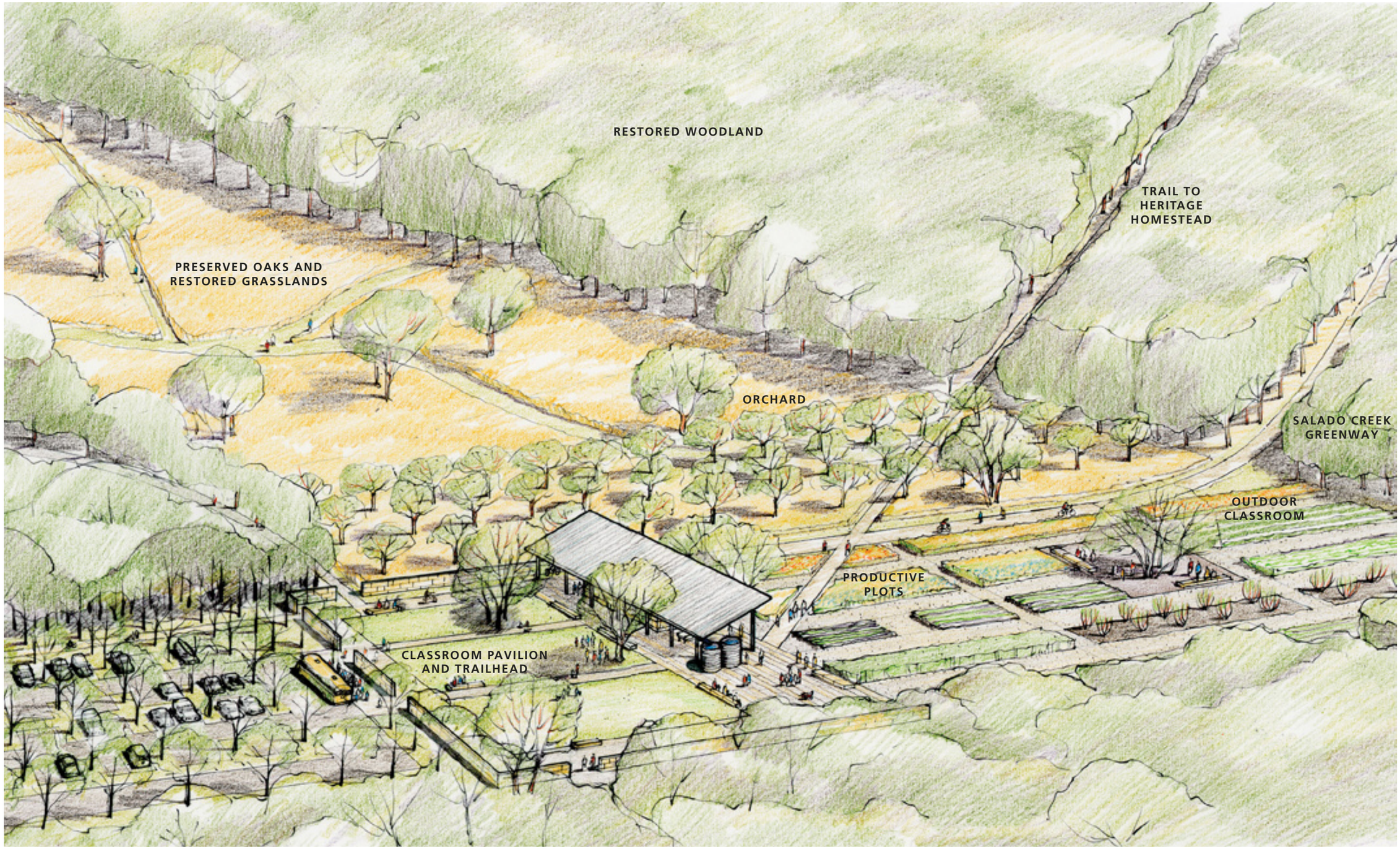

PRESERVED OAKS AND
RESTORED GRASSLANDS
OPEN CLASSROOM
DEMONSTRATION
RESTORATION GRASSLAND PLOTS
GRAND ACEQUIA
MISSION
SQUARE
PLAYGROUNDS
PICNIC AREAS

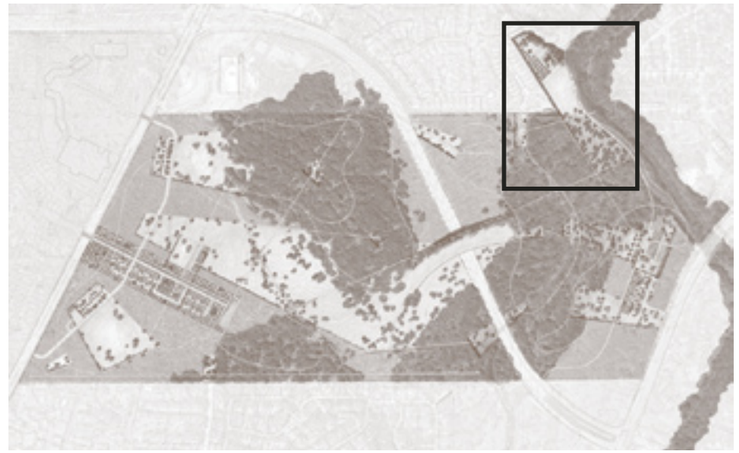
SALADO CREEK CLASSROOM + TRAILHEAD

The classroom and trailhead serves as a place to learn about ecology and urban agriculture and sustainable technologies.

SALADO CREEK CLASSROOM + TRAILHEAD DETAIL

The parking grove, education center and trailhead that links to the Salado Creek Greenway allow access to the east side of the Park while connecting it to the larger park and greenway system.


RESTORED WOODLAND
TRAIL TO HERITAGE HOMESTEAD
PRESERVED OAKS AND RESTORED GRASSLANDS
ORCHARD
SALADO CREEK GREENWAY
OUTDOOR CLASSROOM
PRODUCTIVE PLOTS
CLASSROOM PAVILION AND TRAILHEAD

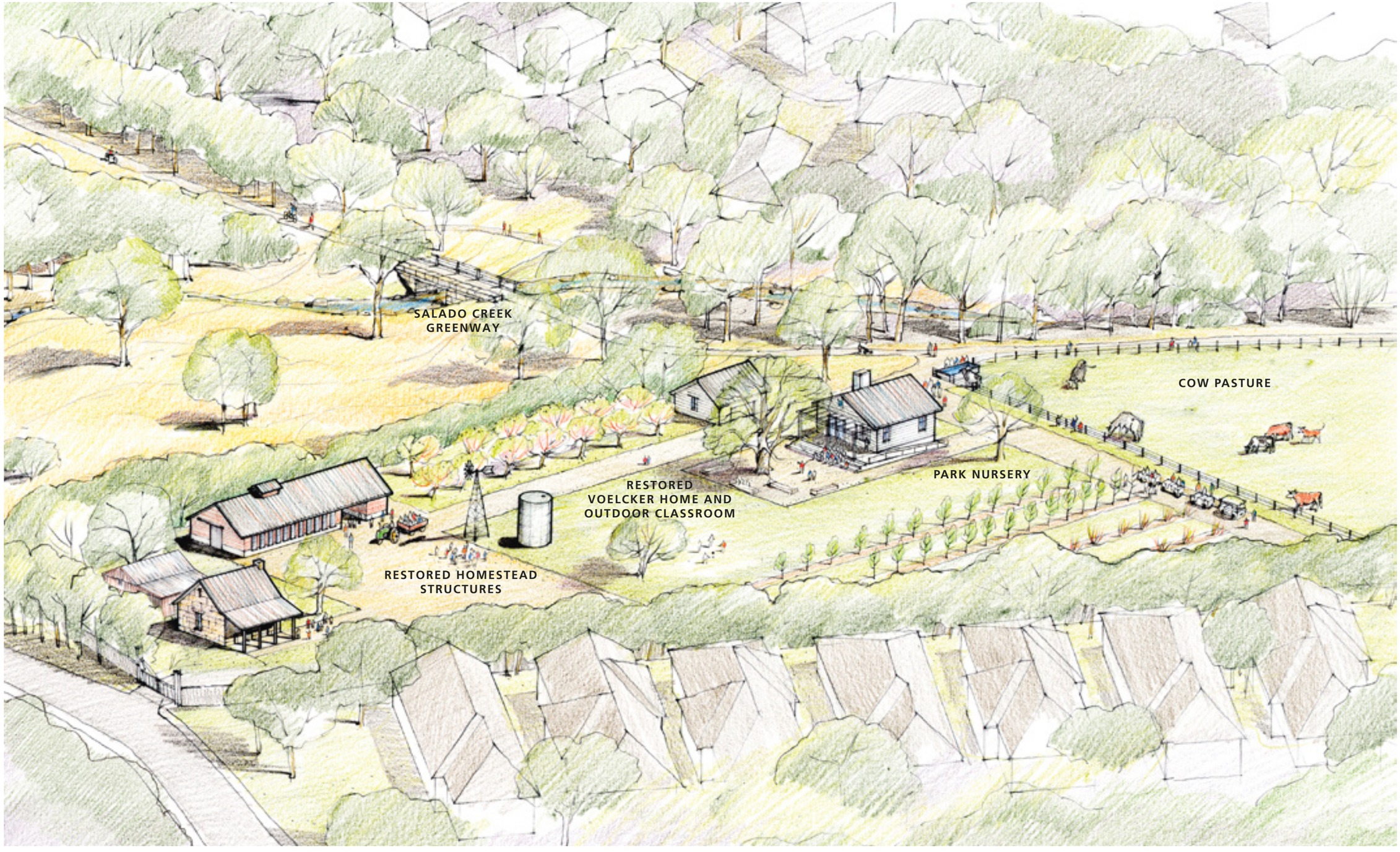


WATER CLEANSING

Stormwater runoff from Summerfield neighborhood is captured in the water cleansing room where native plants filter the water.

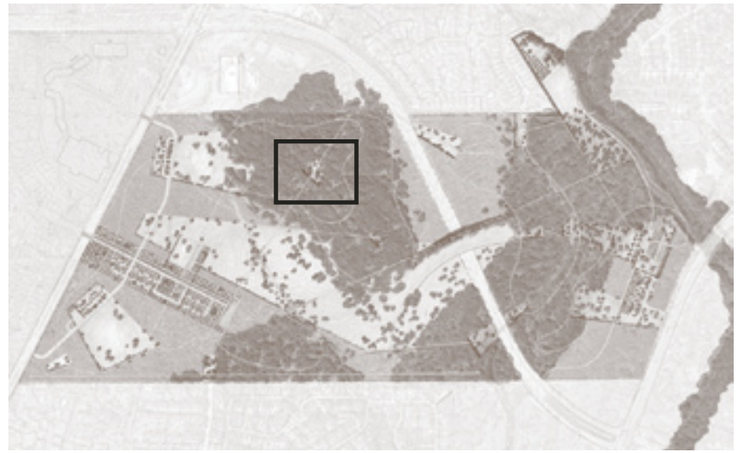
HERITAGE HOMESTEAD

Productivity is re-established within the historic compound of the heritage homestead along Salado Creek.


SALADO CREEK
GREENWAY
COW PASTURE
PARK NURSERY
RESTORED
VOELCKER HOME AND
OUTDOOR CLASSROOM
RESTORED HOMESTEAD
STRUCTURES

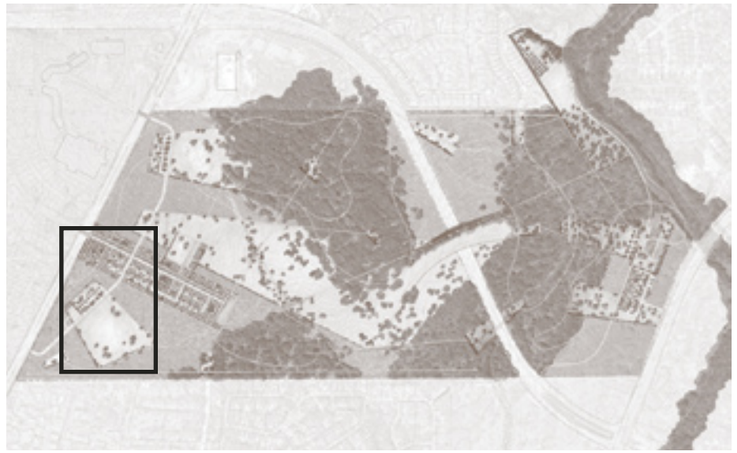
FRAMED PRAIRIE PATCH

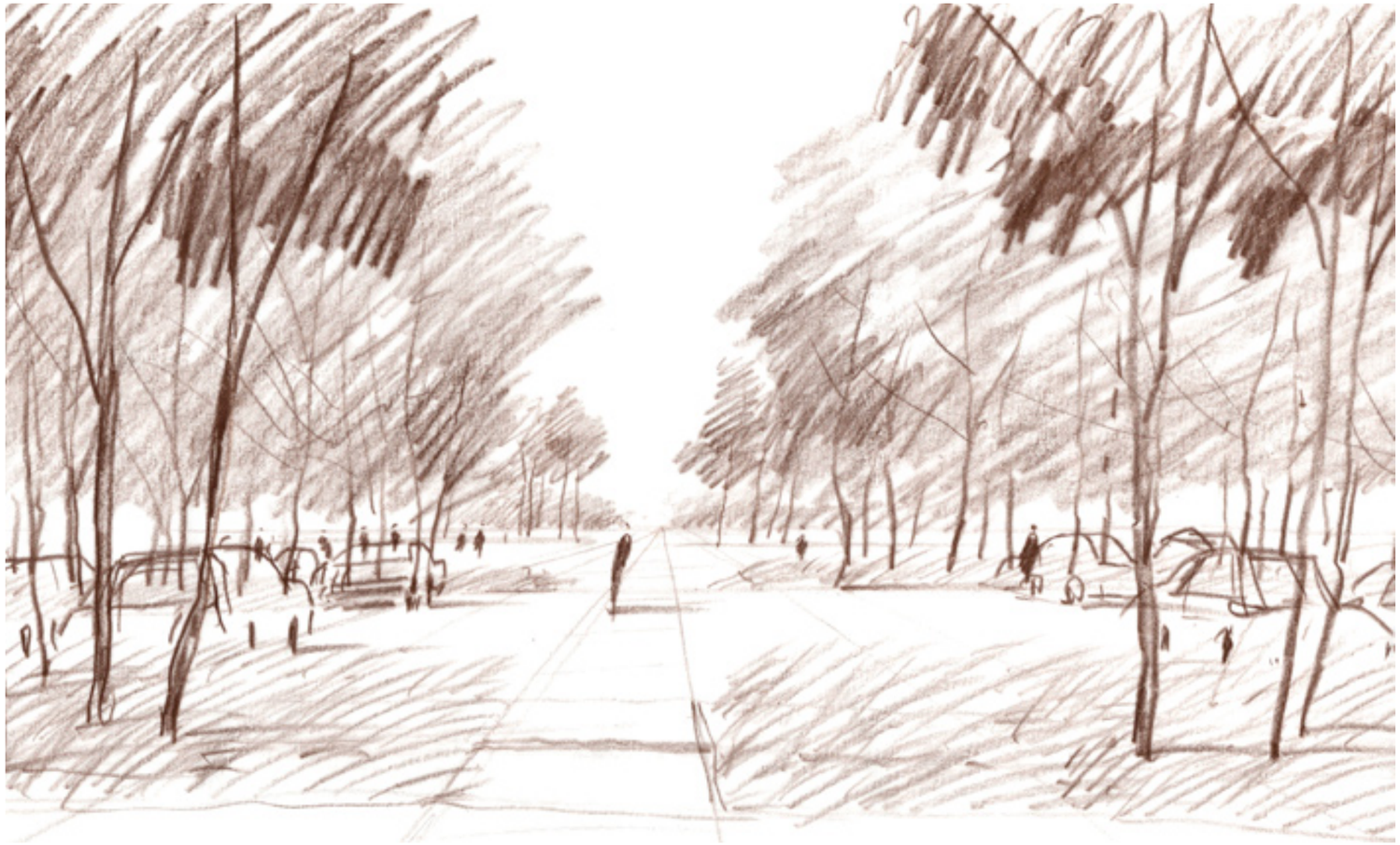
Beneath the bows of the heritage oaks, restored native understory frame a reinstated pocket grassland.



OAK WOODLAND

A strategically placed site-line trail leads into the oak knoll room, which is carefully placed within the habitat restoration of the live oak woodland.





ENTRY GROVE + PARKING

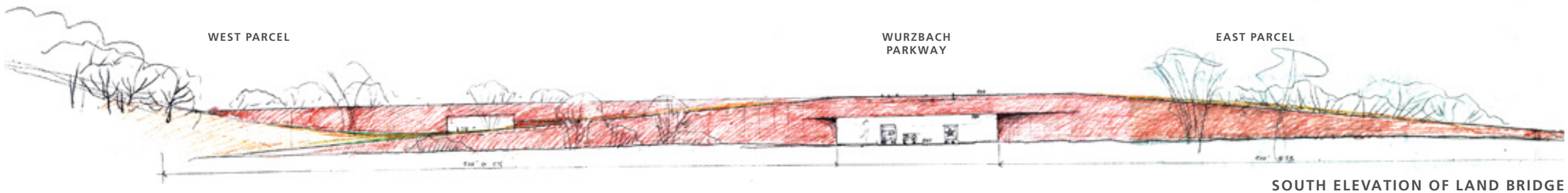
Preservation and planting of heritage oaks and understory trees provide layered entry and shade for the parking, picnic and play areas.

← SOUTH FIELD

The open field and picnic and play areas connect to the entry grove and provide spaces for passive and active recreation on the western side of the Park within the restored brushland habitat.

SITE PLAN + PLACES: wurzbach crossing

Wurzbach Parkway currently splits the Voelcker property into two distinct parcels, disconnecting the Park and preventing access between the two halves as well as Salado Creek. Strategies for crossing Wurzbach will allow Voelcker to be one cohesive Park and enhance its connection with the Salado Creek Greenway. A proposed land bridge allows the Park to move up and over Wurzbach broad enough for the Park experience to feel continuous; its width also calculated to form a wildlife corridor. The edges of the bridge are defined by safety parapets. A vegetated corridor along one side provides cover for wildlife. A pedestrian bridge alternative can provide a smaller and lighter structure to cross over the parkway. Potential underpasses may utilize existing culverts that might be enlarged to accommodate movement for pedestrians and wildlife.



SOUTH ELEVATION OF LAND BRIDGE

PEOPLE + WILDLIFE →

With careful design feasibility studies, enlarged culverts under Wurzbach Parkway may enable movement of people, animals and water across the Park.

← PEDESTRIAN CROSSING

A pedestrian bridge in Minneapolis, MN by Siah Armajani links the sculpture garden to Loring Park and has become an icon for the City.

PEDESTRIAN UNDERPASS →

The pedestrian walkway of Deer Moat in Prague demonstrates the unique experience of an underpass to access a destination that can be utilized at Voelcker Park to cross Wurzbach Parkway.

← PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE

A pedestrian bridge in Austin illustrates how a unique and evocative structure enables crossing over a barrier, which could aid in connecting the two halves of Voelcker Park.

MANAGEMENT OUTLINE

The management of Voelcker Park is intended to achieve and maintain a balance between the restored native landscape patches and introduced active park uses. Each of these designated areas has different implications for necessary maintenance and intensity of management.

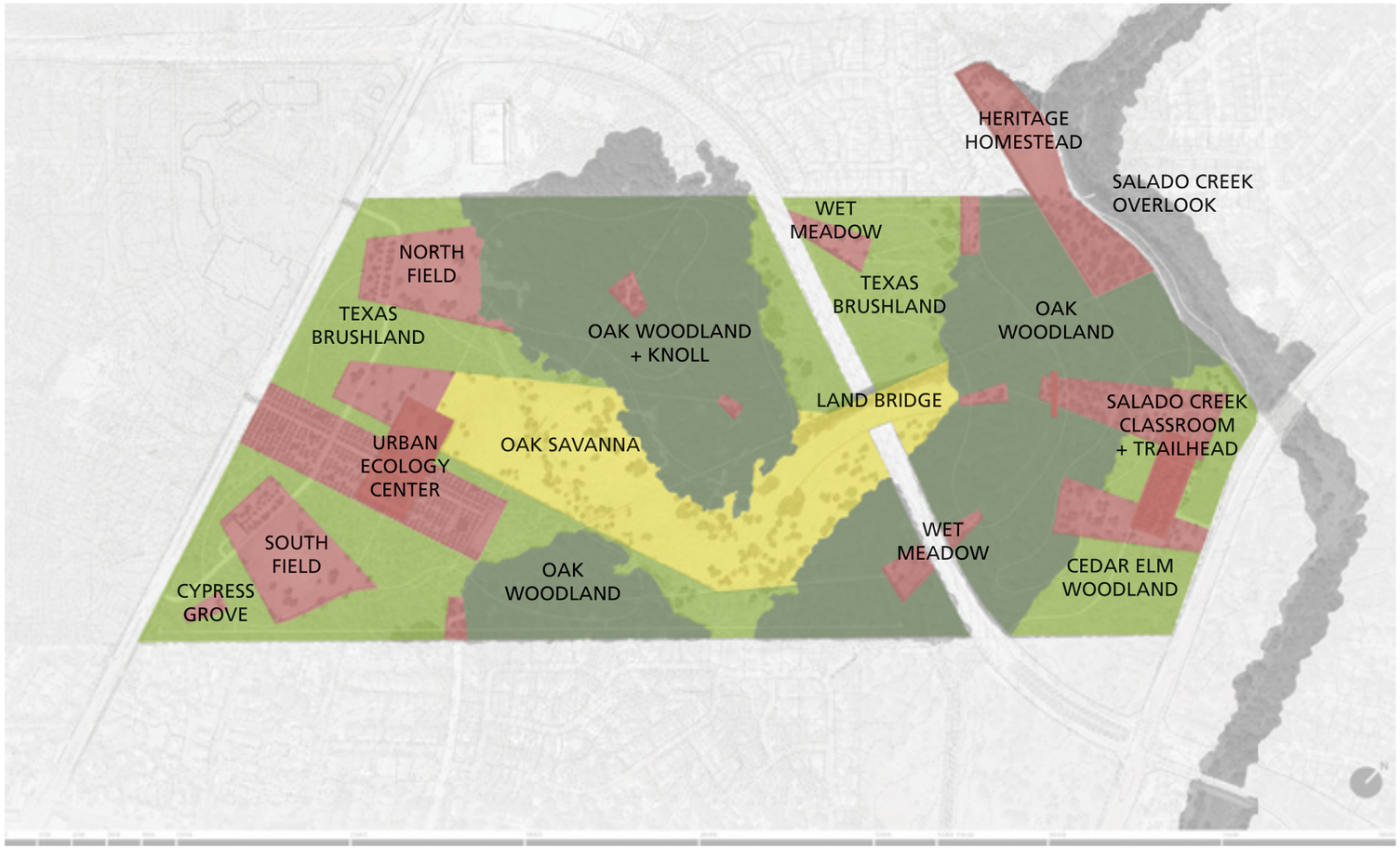
LANDSCAPE MOSAIC

Seventy five percent of the property will be managed as landscape preservation and restoration with distinct plant and wildlife communities; low-impact park uses are strategically inserted to minimize disturbance of these habitats. Woodland, brushland, and oak savanna patches interlock to form the three-quarters of the Park that will undergo gradual renewal and be managed for long term healthy habitats. Informed by on-going site analysis by expert consultants, both proven and innovation restoration practices will be applied and tested.

Throughout the seasons, management plans will be created to restore and enhance the biodiversity of each particular wildlife and plant community. These plans will include efforts such as preserving the oaks by removing aggressive brush and developing long term arboriculture program to address oak wilt and other threats; removing invasive exotic species in woodland and scrub areas; controlling aggressive native species that have become dominant due to grazing; reintroducing native understory species diversity to woodlands and scrub to improve habitat health and value; reintroducing native grassland species to increase vegetation and wildlife diversity and bring back a sense of the visual openness and power of the Hill Country. This majority of the Park will require a lower level of maintenance and will be based on the long term management of the native communities.

OUTDOOR ROOMS

As Voelcker Park is built over time, the programmed park uses will be 25% of the overall acreage. To ensure this proportion, the management plan designates zones throughout the Park as clearly delineated outdoor rooms that can contain and support programmed spaces. These rooms are embedded within the landscape mosaic to allow proximity to the native landscape, yet they are distributed and configured to minimize impact on the ecological health of the Park's native landscape. As the landscape adapts with the developing Park restorations and activities, the rooms will remain clearly demarcated over time to maintain obvious visual cues about the sensitive environments on the site. The outdoor rooms will require more short term routine maintenance than the surrounding landscape as it is expected they will support more visitors and activity. These more articulated spaces will be carefully crafted with precision of construction which may require regular care and perhaps repair if damaged. Sustainable systems such as cisterns and graywater reuse will need attention to remain functional. All of these constructed elements and systems will be detailed in the following design phases with close attention to practical issues and the budget for the Park.



OUTDOOR ROOMS | ROUTINE MAINTENANCE
78 ACRES (25% OF 311 ACRES)

LANDSCAPE PATCHES | LONG TERM MANAGEMENT
233 ACRES (75% OF 311 ACRES)

Landscape Patches

Live Oak Woodland

Cedar Elm Woodland

Texas Brushland

Oak Savanna

Patch Restoration + Management Strategies

Re-Establish Native Plant Communities + Species:
control invasive plant species; restore rare native plant populations

Increase Diversity

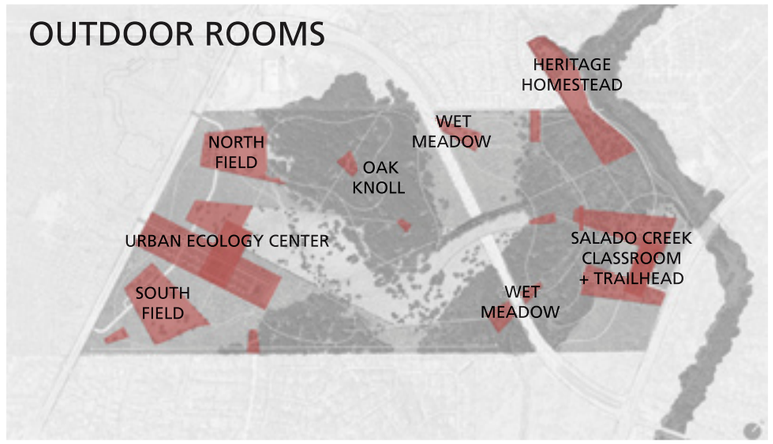
Restore + Create Native Wildlife Habitat:
identify target species; restore + protect wildlife corridors; restore tall shrub habitat for migrant songbirds; increase abundance of cavity trees + woody debris; develop varied edges + internal openings in woodland canopy cover; provide watering sites; install nest boxes

Manage Low-Value Species:
install exclosures; allow predator establishment

Restore Grasslands:
mowing; grazing; prescribed burning

Limit Lighting

Limit Trampling Damage:
demarcate rooms + trails clearly; install human exclosures



Outdoor Rooms

Urban Ecology Center:
Environmental Education Center + Mission Square

Salado Creek Classroom + Trailhead:
Urban Agriculture + Dog Park

Heritage Homestead

Parking Groves:
Including Picnic, Playgrounds + Dog runs

Wet Meadow Rooms

Oak Knoll Rooms

Multipurpose Fields:
North + South Field

Outdoor Room Management Strategies

Turf Management

Utilitarian Lighting

Tree Maintenance

Trash Removal

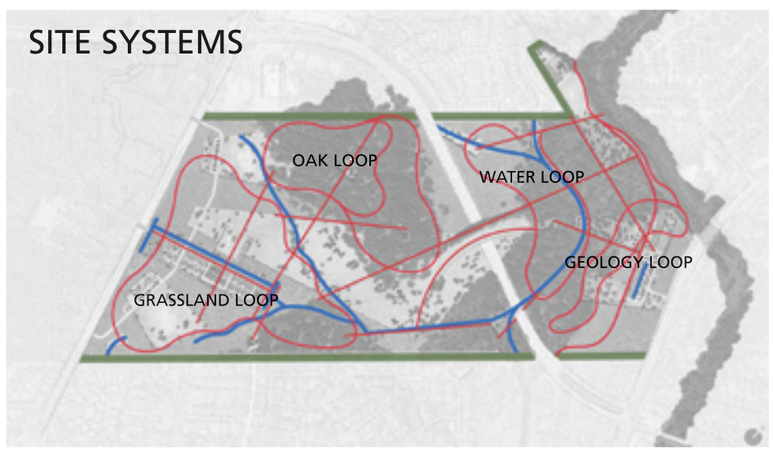
Soil Building: on site composting

Cow Management

Productive Garden + Crop Management

Orchard + Nursery Operations

Cultural Resource Interpretation



Site Systems

Bioswales, Streams + Acequias

Loop Trails + Site Lines

Perimeter Buffer

Field Stations

Site Systems Restoration + Management Strategies

Restore Bioswales, Streams + Acequias

Clear Loop Trails + Site Lines

Mowing and Pruning

Ensure Clear Emergency Vehicle Access

Increase Density of Perimeter Buffer

Monitoring + Data Collection at Field Stations:
wildlife + plant species; water quality + quantity; air pollution; energy use; climate change

MANAGEMENT OUTLINE

THREATS + STRESSORS TO LANDSCAPE PATCHES + WILDLIFE

1. LOSS OF SPECIES DIVERSITY

Initial plant and wildlife surveys have revealed that the total number of plant and wildlife species are low for the geographic region. Although a number of factors may be causing this, years of overgrazing by cattle caused a decline in the number of plant species within the Park property. The lack of wildlife diversity parallels the lack of diverse habitat within the Park.

2. CANOPY CLOSURE

Fire exclusion and overgrazing by cattle have allowed canopy trees to outcompete the native Texas grasslands. This canopy closure decreases plant and wildlife diversity of the site.

3. INVASIVE PLANT SPECIES

Aggressive non-native plants have been introduced into the Voelcker property that outcompete the native plant communities. Often, invasive plants form dense colonies that dramatically alter the composition, structure and function of the regional ecosystem, adversely affecting both the plant and wildlife communities.

4. OVERABUNDANCE OF LOW-VALUE SPECIES

Several low value species threaten the restoration of the plant and wildlife communities within Voelcker Park. The overpopulation of White Tailed Deer will cause damage to plant communities by over-browsing. Red Imported Fire Ants threaten wildlife such as deer, tortoises, ground nesting birds, and birds that nest in low shrubs or small trees. Domestic cats and dogs also damage the native plant and wildlife communities.

5. OAK WILT

Oak wilt is an infectious fungal disease which invades and disables the water-conducting system in susceptible trees. This disease is one of the most destructive tree diseases in the United States and is killing oak trees in Texas at epidemic proportions.

6. URBAN ISOLATION

Surrounding development eliminated many native plant and wildlife communities of San Antonio. Wildlife corridors and habitat have been extremely fragmented, causing great stress on the wildlife.

7. ALTERED HYDROLOGICAL REGIMES

Increased impermeable surfaces of the surrounding development have increased the quantity of stormwater flow, potentially causing soil loss within Voelcker Park. The quality of stormwater is degraded as pollutants are carried from the surrounding development to the Voelcker Property.

8. TRAMPLING

Off trail recreational use of Voelcker Park is a serious cause of damage to soils and plant communities. Soils become compacted, leading to the decline of soil health, which is reflected in poor health of plant communities. Trampling also damages wildlife habitat.

9. DUMPING

Illegal dumping of household garbage as well as organic waste have been found within the Voelcker property. This dumping not only damages the impacted plant and wildlife communities, it often contains seeds of invasive species which will continue to compromise the native ecosystem.

10. LIGHT POLLUTION

Bright urban lighting that reflects back from the atmosphere has an adverse effect on wildlife habitat.

11. POLLUTION

Air and waterborne contaminants have an adverse affect on the native and wildlife communities of Voelcker Property. Poor air quality, largely resulting from the burning of fossil fuels, has been associated with the declining health of many native plants.

12. CLIMATE CHANGE

Global climate change is expected to cause a dramatic shift in regional temperatures, rainfall, and plant communities in the future.

← EXISTING HYDROLOGY

Stormwater runoff from surrounding development is a resource to be tapped.

HYDROLOGY + GEOLOGY

Voelcker Park has the opportunity to be a living laboratory and model for sustainable technologies which demonstrate how the urban environment can be constructed in ways that benefit the environment, while counteracting the impacts of urbanization and impervious cover. Both innovative and proven technologies for capturing, cleansing and reusing stormwater will be integrated into the Park structure, responding to the site's ecology and ensuring the safety and welfare of the greater Voelcker Park area by exceeding typical best management practices. Bioswales and acequias convey water through the site while cleansing it. Check dams along waterways slow and pool water decreasing the quantity of runoff and erosion. Ponds, wetlands and wet meadows function as points of collection and infiltration as well as storage for reuse in the Park. Cisterns at the Park buildings collect and store rainwater for building uses.

Park elements will not only address the surface water within the site but also water flowing from and to areas outside of the Park boundaries as well as deep beneath the site. As the Park is located within the Edwards Aquifer Transition Zone (EATZ), the potential exists that the capture and treatment of stormwater runoff will contribute to enhanced recharge of the underlying Edwards Aquifer. Water that once flowed from and into surrounding neighborhoods will be held and treated on the site to help reduce runoff and flooding of nearby communities. Further studies involving watershed modeling and water quality analysis at source points on the site will be necessary to determine the parameters and design of water treatment strategies at the Park.

Voelcker Park is also conceptualized to be a community paragon of resource stewardship; water elements in the landscape will allow people to experience and learn about the variety of ways the different forms of water can be cleansed and used on site and throughout the region. Water reuse will meet the needs of the Park in a manner that is compatible with the south Texas climate, setting a relevant example for regions with similar characteristics to San Antonio.

← PROPOSED HYDROLOGY

Conceptual strategy for capturing, cleansing, infiltrating and reusing stormwater at the Park.

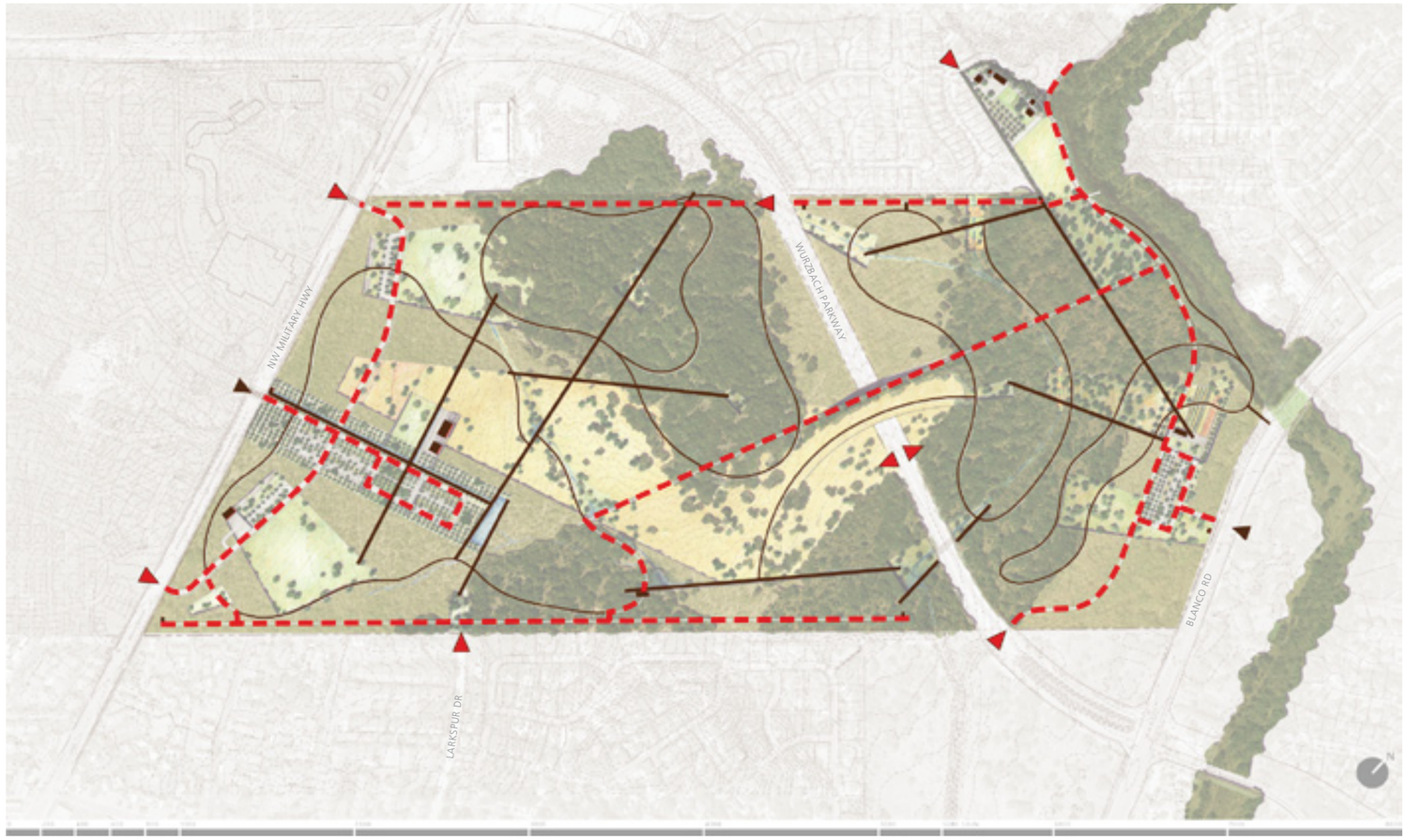
CULTURAL RESOURCES

As the Voelcker property is owned by the City of San Antonio, a political subdivision of the State of Texas, any undertaking at the site will need to comply with the Texas Antiquities Code. Owned for decades by Max and Minnie Voelcker, the property is known to contain existing structures (some of historic age) as well as other cultural resources such as prehistoric campsites. As the City of San Antonio moves forward with the design of the Park, an archaeological and above ground historic resources survey is necessary to locate and identify any cultural resources that are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and/or for listing as a State Archaeological Landmark (SAL) prior to development. The archaeological field survey will consist of archaeologists examining the 311-acre property, with particular focus on the areas where known cultural resources are present and the high probability areas for intact subsurface deposits. During the survey, archaeologists will examine the ground surface and erosional profiles for cultural resources. In areas where the potential for subsurface deposits is low, SWCA will conduct walkover inspections, and in areas where the potential for subsurface deposits are higher, shovel testing will be conducted. Artifacts will be tabulated, analyzed, and documented in the field, but not collected. The researchers will document the nature, extent, and, if possible, significance of the archaeological sites found at Voelcker Park.

In addition, the historic structures at the Voelcker Homestead will be assessed by an architectural historian in order to evaluate the significance of each structure, determine the appropriate treatment approach and develop preliminary recommendations for construction work required for each structure. This preliminary historic structures assessment will be comprised of an existing conditions survey, floor plans of each structure, and record photographs. Buildings may be reused for new activities while restoring their historic structures and emphasizing cultural significance for the site. As the planning and design for Voelcker Park continues to evolve and programming and uses are found for historic structures, further research and study will provide recommendations for the historic preservation and interpretation of the Park's cultural history and resources.

BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES ⟶

Structures such as the stone house, bungalow, dairy barn and outbuildings will be assessed for historic integrity in future phases.



VEHICULAR ENTRANCES
EMERGENCY FIRE ACCESS
EMERGENCY + FIRE VEHICLE ROUTE

NOTE: ACCESS OVER WURZBACH DETERMINED BY TIMING OF BRIDGE

SAFETY + SECURITY

The Master Plan establishes a system of major Loop Trails and Site Lines that connects all the program areas and provides multiple means of access throughout the Park. Together these trails serve as the primary routes for park safety patrol. As the plan is developed, secondary trails will further increase patrol coverage and safety. Additionally the plan identifies emergency routes and access for fire and emergency vehicles. To adequately cover such a large park, multiple access points are planned. The main entrances on Northwest Military Highway and Blanco Road will provide primary emergency access into the Park. On Wurzbach Parkway secure emergency entrances are proposed at the intersection with the Salado Creek Greenway, at the midpoint of the parkway and at the northeast corner of the west parcel. The Master Plan also identifies potential gated emergency entrances at the end of Larkspur Drive and at the gate to the Heritage Homestead from within the Summerfield neighborhood. As stated earlier, the pedestrian and emergency entrances will only be implemented if parking, safety and security concerns have been addressed to the satisfaction of the adjacent neighborhoods and approval by the City.

The Master Plan acknowledges the neighborhood concerns regarding park safety and security and encourages further studies to address the concerns. The Parks and Recreation Department will continue to coordinate with appropriate City departments in the further development of management, security and safety plans for the Park.

LARKSPUR DRIVE →

Emergency access at Larkspur Drive will be determined by further studies in coordination with City departments and community stakeholders.

NEXT STEPS

The Master Plan is the first step in the process of fulfilling the vision of the great 21st century park. It provides a guiding framework for the development of Voelcker Park over time, beginning the process to identify specific phases of construction to follow. At 311 acres, divided into two parcels and featuring ambitious program elements such as the Urban Ecology Center and Land Bridge, Voelcker Park will necessitate a development process that is flexible and adaptable to changing economic, social and environmental conditions.

The goal of setting 75% of the Park for landscape restoration and preservation means implementation will occur in phases. The landscape restoration process includes site preparation, establishing target species, monitoring and maintenance. This complex process must be coordinated with site ecology, management of storm water runoff from disturbed land, conditions and seasons. The development of 25% of the Park designated for programmed activities will also correspond to establishing the budget during the next stage of park studies.

While the Master Plan recognizes a park of this size and program will be implemented incrementally, it also acknowledges the sense of urgency to provide a significant park for the city and neighborhoods which currently lack public parks and green space. To that end, the following steps were identified to continue the momentum of the Master Plan process.

1. Like all successful parks in great cities, partnerships and alliances must be formed between city government, state agencies, private foundations, community groups and individual citizens to realize the vision maintain it for perpetuity. Models include the Central Park Conservancy of New York City and Forest Park Forever of St. Louis.

2. Identify potential private and public funding sources and develop fundraising plan.

3. Conduct feasibility studies of major program elements identified in the Master Plan.

4. Conduct in-depth site data analysis identified in the Master Plan for future design.

5. Management, security and safety plans will be developed in coordination with appropriate departments and partners.

These steps toward realizing the Master Plan will unfold as the design team continues to develop the Park plan. Throughout the upcoming design phases that progress into the next few years, the design team will continue to work with the Parks and Recreation Department, the City and the community to realize the vision for Voelcker Park.

VOELCKER PARK CONSERVANCY

Proposed Mission Statement and Vision, Value Statements
and Short and Long-term Goals for
The Voelcker Park Conservancy
May 2, 2008

THE MISSION

To advocate renewal, recreation, and learning through nature in an urban setting for all in accordance with the Master Plan for Voelcker Park.

THE VISION

The Voelcker Park Conservancy (VPC) will be a community-based organization of committed individuals whose concern is for excellence in the development and management of Voelcker Park as envisioned in the Master Plan. The VPC will ensure access to the natural environment through stewardship of the land. The VPC will be a model of public-private partnership with the City of San Antonio (COSA).

VALUE STATEMENTS

• The VPC will ensure all park development will be in accordance with the Master Plan and that all VPC efforts will have a positive impact on the park.

• The VPC will advocate for and enhance an accessible and sustainable natural landscape for generations.

• Through collaboration, the VPC will seek to educate the public about the value and importance of our natural environment.

LONG-TERM GOALS

1. VPC will work collaboratively to foster support at all levels.

2. The management practices of VPC will reflect the park's themes of sustainability and urban ecology.

3. VPC will actively and consistently pursue funding to support the park and will establish a budget with annual fiscal goals while keeping administrative overhead to a minimum.

4. VPC will be an advocate for Voelcker Park throughout changes in city leadership or policy by continually promoting the themes of renewal, recreation, and education.

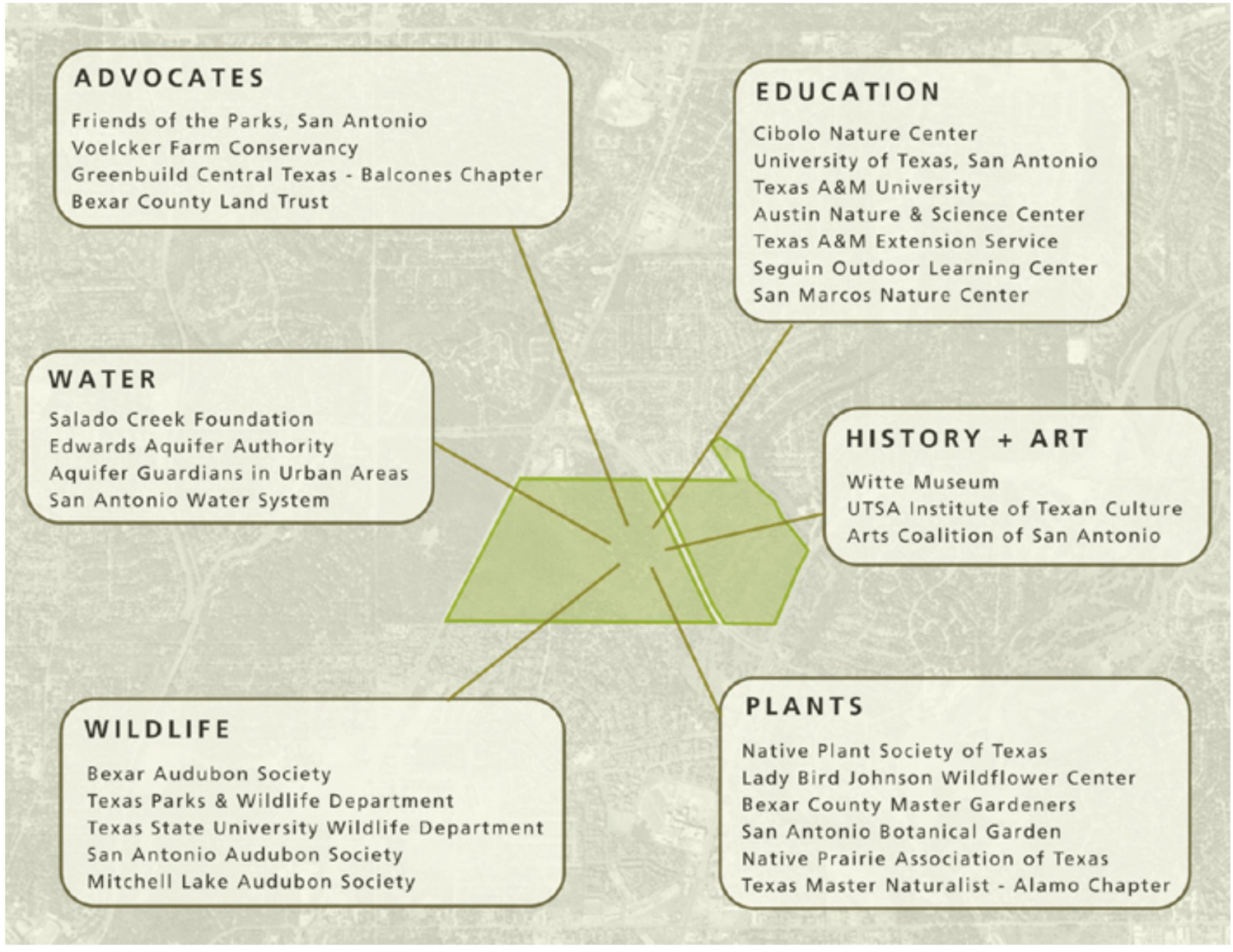
IMMEDIATE ACTION PLAN:

1. VPC will be established as a non-profit 501(c)3 corporation.

2. The VPC will engage an executive whose duties will include but not be limited to:

- Administrative tasks
- Identifying fundraising opportunities
- Membership recruitment
- Community outreach
- Marketing of VPC events
- Public relations
- Establishing a collaborative communication plan with COSA.

3. The VPC will gain recognition in the community through branding (logo), a website which will allow online contributions, community events, and partnerships with relevant organizations at the local, state, and national levels.



STEWARDSHIP + PARTNERSHIPS

Stewardship of the Park does not occur in isolation but as part of a larger network of neighbors, community groups, local organizations and regional institutions. Taking care of Voelcker Park generates a relationship between the ecologies of the Park and the people who enjoy it. Organized partnerships can foster relationships between people and their environment through the Park in very specific ways including formation of routine volunteer groups and special seasonal events. As Voelcker Park benefits from the efforts of these groups, it also contributes to their missions. Potential collaborations include local and national groups interested in parks and green space, water resources and systems, wildlife health and diversity, native plant health and diversity, cultural history and art, and ecological education and research. The identification of several organizations has only just begun a working and presently growing list of potential partners for Voelcker Park.

← POTENTIAL PARTNERSHIPS

This partial working list represents the recommended promotion of forming productive partnerships of local and regional organizations; also included will be essential associations that concern park management operations such as law enforcement agencies for safety and security.

VOELCKER PARK DESIGN TEAM

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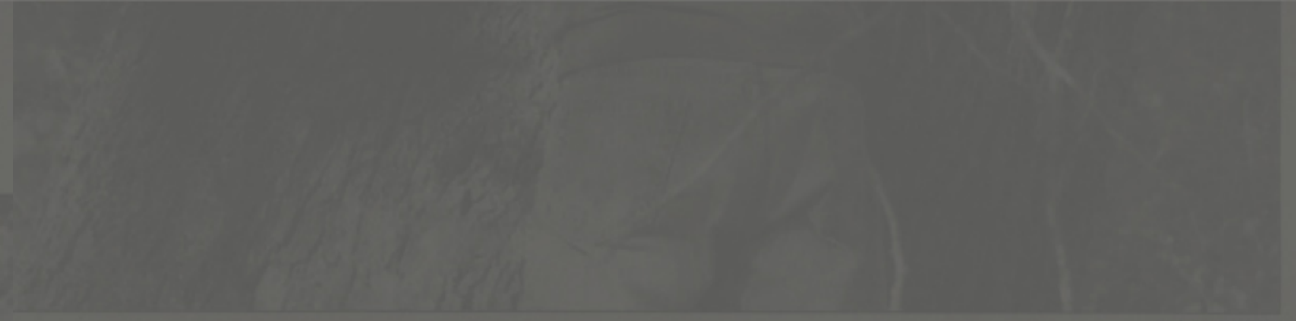
Plans for Voelker Park, a gem of urban wilderness, spark a question: Will this city make parks a priority?

BOB OWEN/STAFF

Mayor Hardberger says the Voelker trees might inspire a hug, 'though you won't be able to get your arms around many of them' ...

GOING FOR GREEN



BOB OWEN/STAFF

Mayor Hardberger says the Voelker trees might inspire a hug, 'though you won't be able to get your arms around many of them' ...

GOING FOR GREEN

By Char Miller

SPECIAL TO THE EXPRESS-NEWS

Mayor Phil Hardberger doesn't waste words, but he can become downright loquacious when describing the 300 acres of oak savannah known as Voelcker Park.

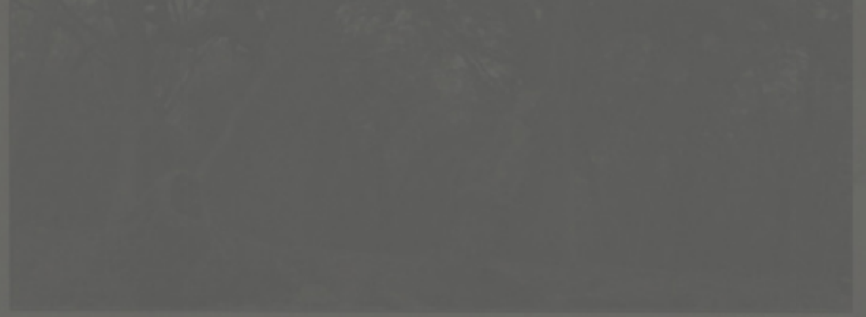
"For those of you who haven't seen the virgin land, it is truly a humbling and awe-inspiring experience," he confessed in his 2007 State of the City address. "It may even move you to hug a tree, though you won't be able to get your arms around many of them."

Their girth and age even provoked his nostalgic reverie: "To walk among those trees — many older than the heroes of the Alamo — is to know our history" he enthused. "It is a breathtaking expanse of urban wilderness."

Although the tract is neither pristine nor wilderness because the North Side site was a working farm for generations, the mayor's more important insight is spot-on: Voelcker offers us an unparalleled chance, even if only momentarily, to step outside of our decades-long mad rush to pave over every square inch, which has flattened San Antonio's contours and homogenized its vistas, crowding each with malls, freeways and subdivisions. Against this jarring backdrop, Voelcker will be "an oasis," Hardberger affirmed, "and it is now ours to keep."

How we will keep its quiet beauty is a vital concern, because our current parks inventory contains only 14.5 acres per 1,000 residents, two acres less than the national average.

The gap used to be wider. Forty years ago, we had less than half the national average, and while we have made up



BILLY CALZADA/STAFF

... but even the impressive Voelcker land isn't enough green space for San Antonio.

MILLER

ground, that may not remain true. In the 2000 census, for instance, San Antonio experienced its first increase in density since 1950, a pattern that will continue if our regional population hits the 2.5 million predicted for 2040, pressuring our already stressed parks.

This head-shaking projection is why it matters how Voelcker (and subsequent open space) is designed. Believing that this bucolic parcel could become a signature landscape, with an impact akin to that 19th-century green gem, Bracken

ridge Park, the city launched an international competition to entice renowned landscape architects to bring their perspectives to bear on Voelcker.

They did. I was a member of the jury evaluating their proposals and was blown away by the diversity in design and detail, from the clever treatments of terrain and topography to the artful use of native flora and local culture. They understood us in ways we often miss about ourselves and the places we inhabit.

None more so than Stephen Stimson Associates and D.I.R.T. Studio, into

See CAN SAN ANTONIO/6H