



Recreational Vision Study for the City of Converse, Texas

An assessment and vision for recreational facilities

Center for Urban and Regional Planning Research - College of Architecture, Construction and Planning
The Institute of Economic Development - Rural Business Program
The University of Texas at San Antonio - January 2016

Preface

This report by the Center for Urban and Regional Planning Research (CURPR) at the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) presents a Vision Study that assesses the existing park assets and makes proposals to the existing park system for the City of Converse.

This study was funded by the City of Converse and also by the Rural Business Program (RBP), a part of the South-West Texas Border Small Business Development Center (SWTSBDC) which is hosted by the Institute for Economic development (IED) at UTSA.

A number of recommendations are made to encourage further development and improvements to the City of Converse Park system.

- Potential for a Hike and Bike Trail System
- Amphitheater at City Park Lake
- Campgrounds at City Park Lake
- Lake Recreation Improvements
- Boating at City Park Lake
- Boating at North Park Lake
- Additional Parking at City Park
- Potential for Recreational Softball Leagues
- Potential for a Dog Park

This Vision Study will assist the City of Converse in improving its existing park system and in acquiring funds for additional studies and improvements.

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INTRODUCTION

Geographic and Historical Context of Converse, Texas

The City of Converse is located in the northeastern portion of Bexar County, Texas. It is bordered by the cities of Live Oak and Universal City to the north, by Randolph Air Force Base and the City of Schertz to the east, by the City of San Antonio to the south, and by a combination of unincorporated Bexar County and the City of San Antonio to the west. It is approximately 12 miles northeast of downtown San Antonio, 17 miles southwest of downtown New Braunfels, 21 miles west of downtown Seguin, and at its closest point is about two miles southwest of the Bexar County line.

Converse was initially founded as a settlement in 1877 in conjunction with the construction of the Galveston, Harrisburg, and San Antonio Railway. The town was named after the chief engineer in charge of constructing the railway, Major James Converse. Converse incorporated in 1961 as the suburbanization and growth of San Antonio changed the nature of the surrounding area from rural to suburban.

Much of the growth in the San Antonio area, especially during and after World War Two, was due to the presence of several U.S. military bases. One of these bases, Randolph Air Force Base, officially opened in 1930 to train pilots for the U.S. Army Air Corps (later the U.S. Air Force). In 1957 it became the home of the Air Training Command (later the Air Education and Training Command), which coordinates pilot, aircrew, and officer training, as well as recruitment. The base remains an important part of the local and regional economy.

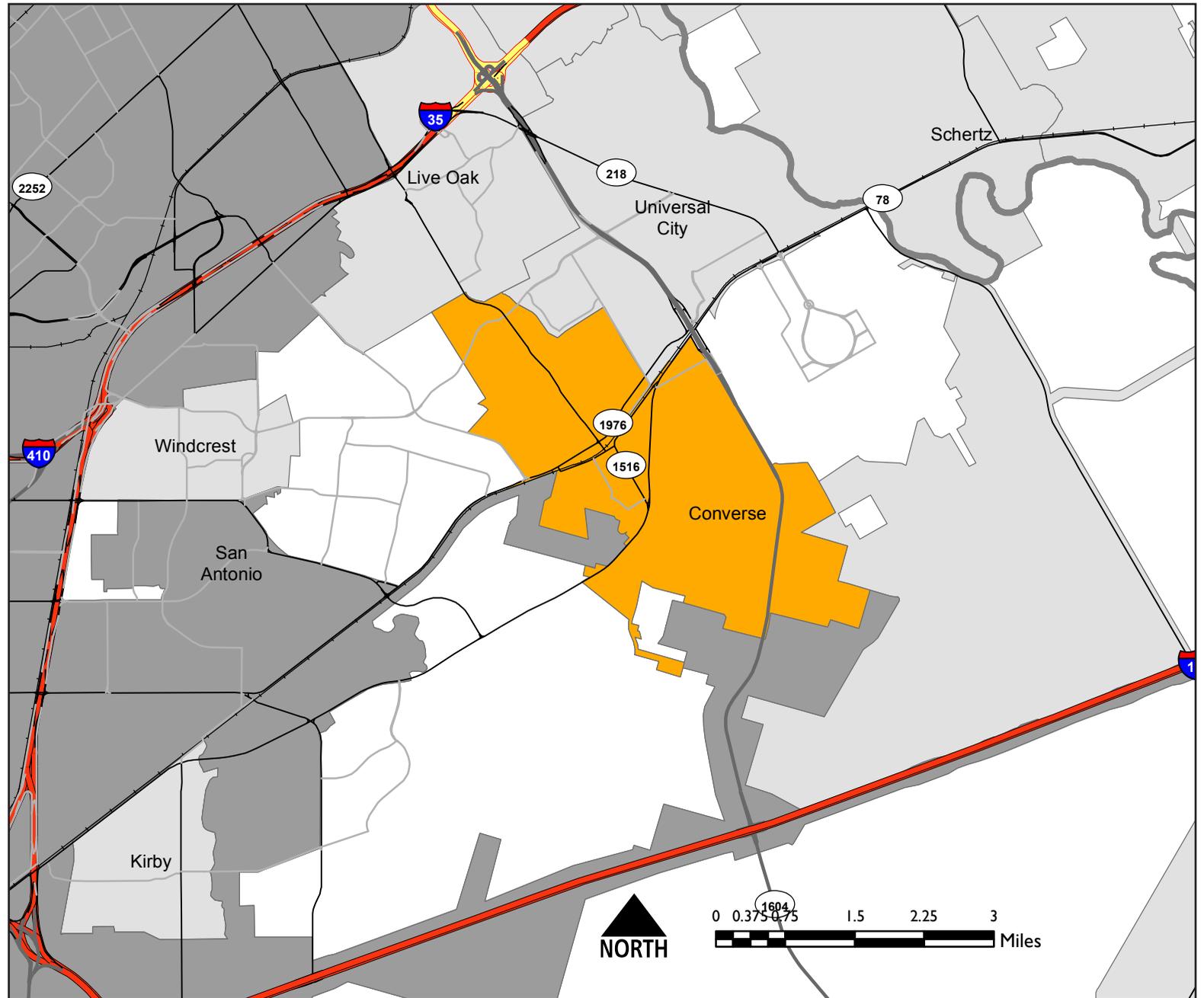


Figure 1: Converse, TX

Source: Created by CURPR using ArcGIS

In the early 1970s, the City Council of Converse appointed a Park Committee to oversee fundraising for the establishment of a municipal park. The “Night in Ole Converse” celebration was first held in October 1974. The City Park and its swimming pool were dedicated in October 1975. It was during this time that Converse experienced its most rapid population growth to date as an incorporated city: the population more than tripled, increasing from 1,383 in 1970 to 4,907 in 1980. While no decade since has seen such a rapid increase, the 2010 population is approximately four times the 1980 population.

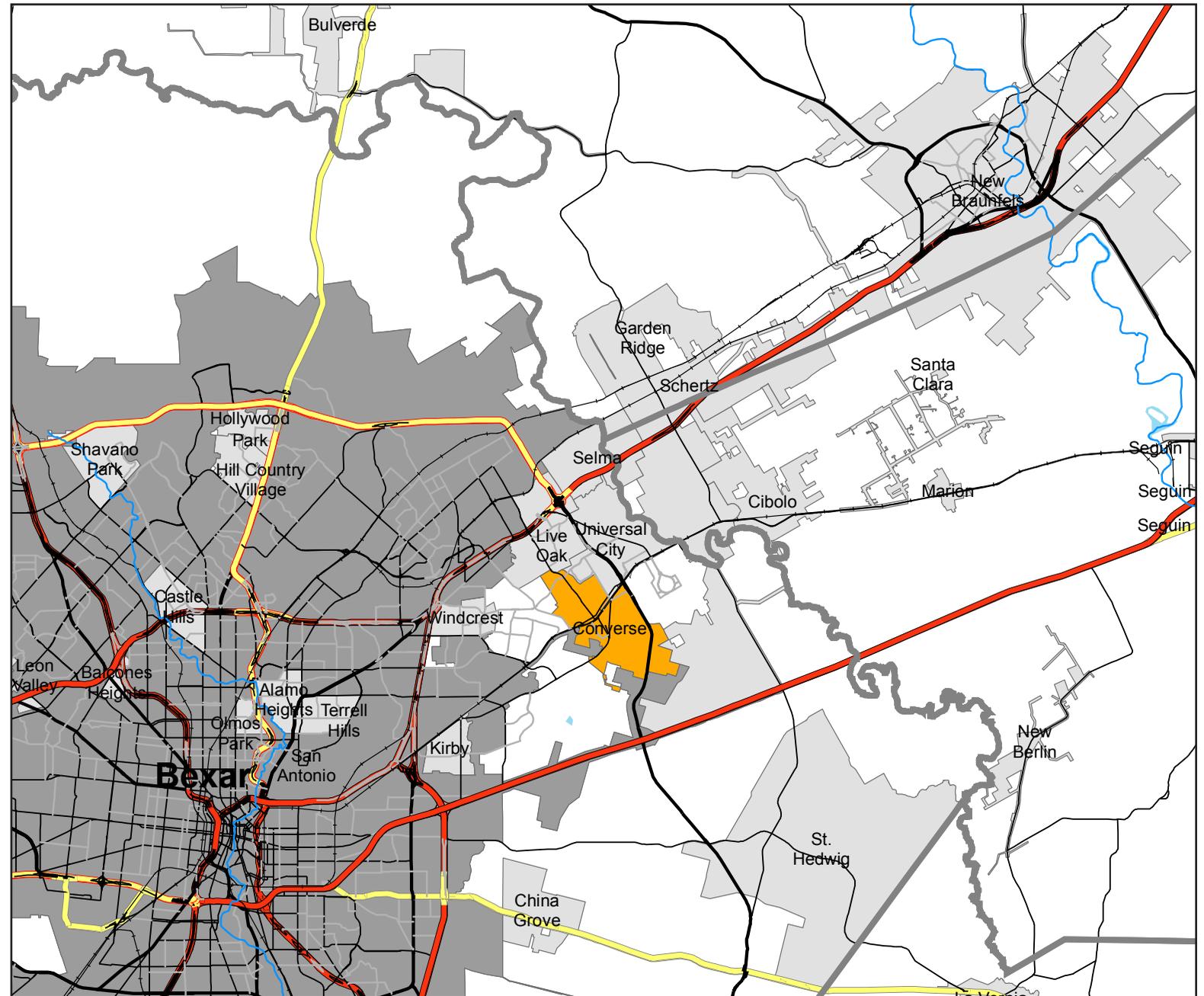
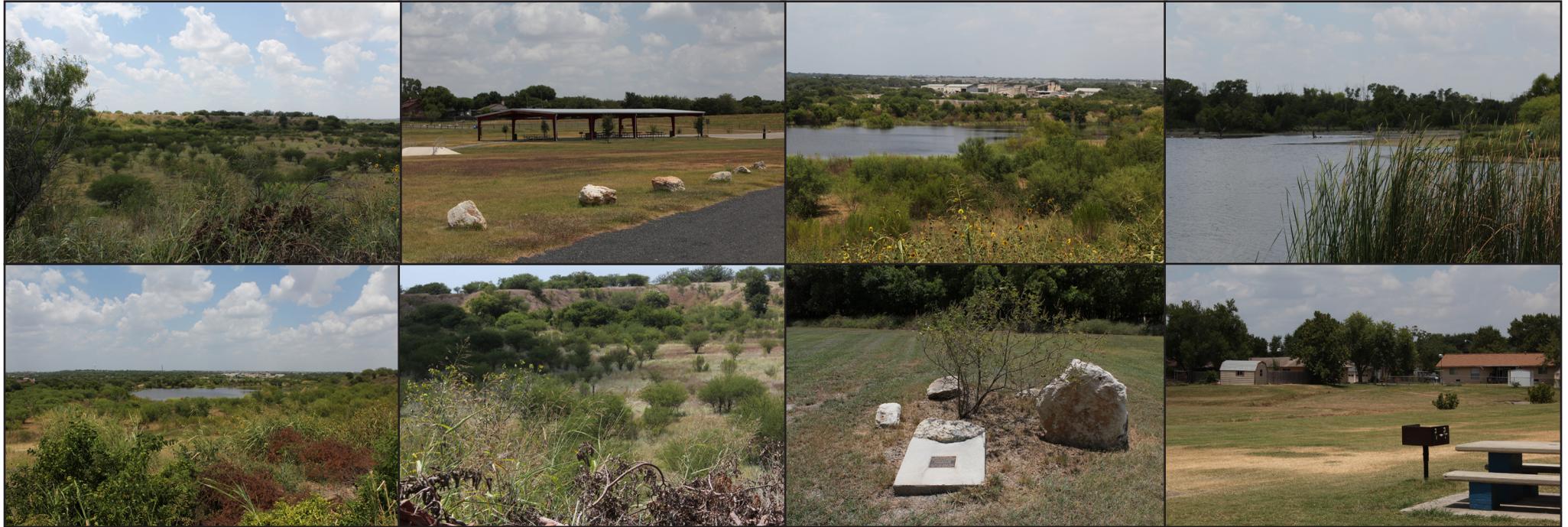


Figure 2: Regional Context - Converse, TX

Source: Created by CURPR using ArcGIS



BACKGROUND ASSESSMENT

Demographics

2010 Demographic Profile of Converse

As of the 2010 Census, the population of Converse was 18,198. This represented a major increase from the 2000 Census population of 11,204. The structure of the population by gender and age cohort is different from that of Bexar County, as demonstrated by the superposed population pyramids below (Figure 3).

The indentation in the population pyramid for Converse compared to the population pyramid for Bexar County for the young adult cohorts, and specifically the 20-24 cohort, which is typically the range of age of most undergraduate college students. This reveals that Converse is losing its young population once they finish high school. Converse has a lower share of elderly population aged 60 and over when compared to Bexar County, especially for those over 75 years of age.

Some cohorts represent a higher share of the population for Converse when compared to Bexar County. The two specific demographics are children 14 years old and under (of both sexes) and women from ages 30 to 49. The age groups that Converse should prioritize in its recreation planning efforts are therefore children 18 years old and younger (Pre-K through 12th grade), along with women from 30 to 49 years old. Residents of all ages should be adequately served by parks and recreational services. It is important to know that certain segments of the population have a higher share of the total population than the county average and so should be given special consideration.

Projected Growth of Converse Population to 2040

The Converse Recreation Plan should take into account for projected population growth to the year 2040. There are two different long-term forecasts: one from ESRI Community Analyst, which has an estimate for 2015 but only extends to 2020; and

one from the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB), which does not have an estimate for 2015 but extends to 2040. These projections are shown in Figure 4 along with the recorded population growth between 2000 and 2010 (according to the U.S. Census).

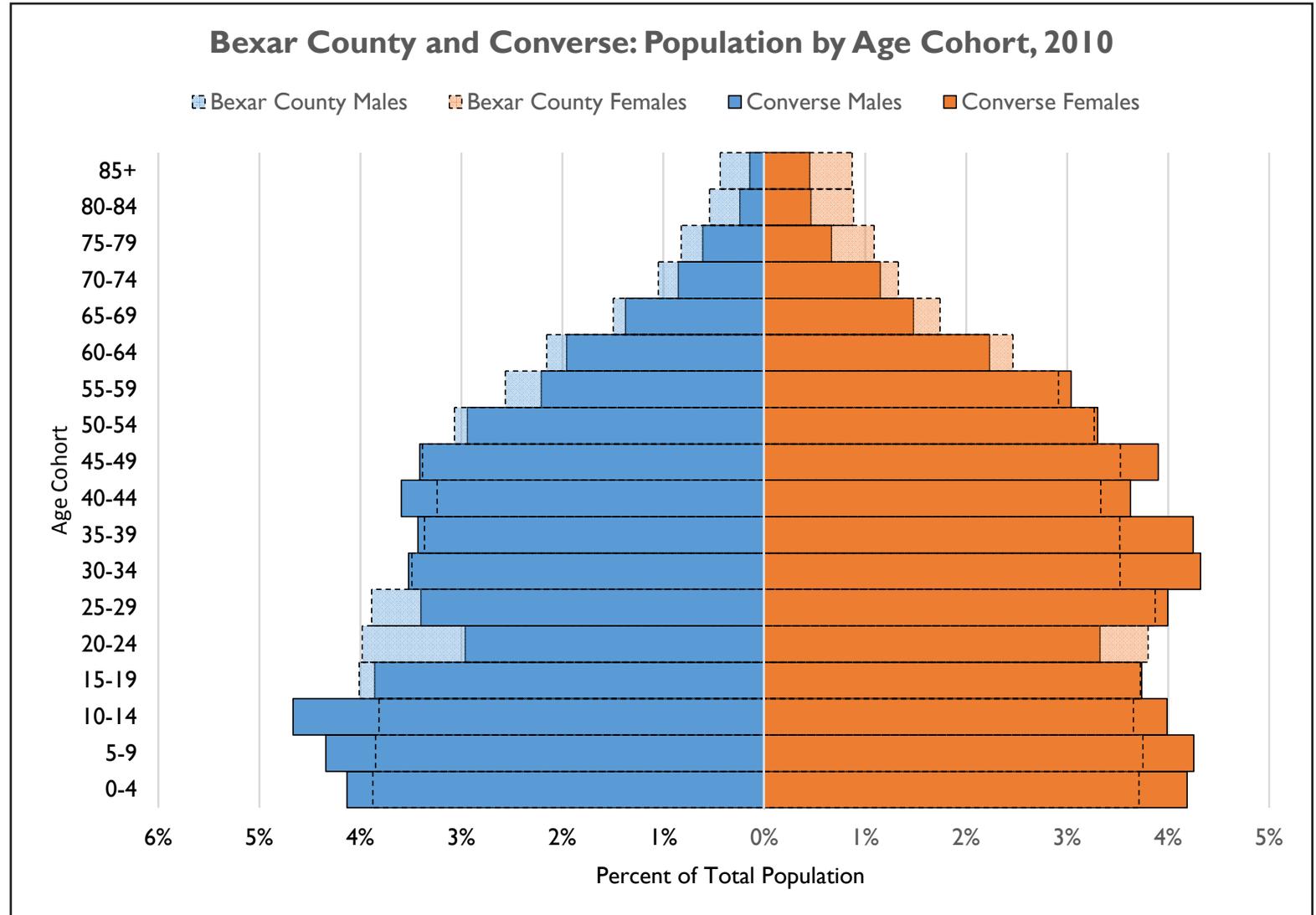


Figure 3: Converse Population and Bexar County Population by Age and Sex, 2010

Source: U.S. Census

According to U.S. Census data for 2000 and 2010, the population of Converse grew from 11,204 to 18,198 between 2000 and 2010, an increase of over 62% for the decade. Population projections can vary significantly from one model to another, since one of the key factors is migration (either in-migration or out-migration of residents) and migration patterns can change rapidly from year

to year. Another caveat is that projections made further into the future will incorporate a wider range of probable outcomes.

ESRI Community Analyst projects a population of 24,733 in Converse in 2020, representing an increase of about 36% over the decade between 2010 and 2020. The Texas Water Development

Board projects a population of 23,289 for Converse in 2020; while this is smaller than the ESRI Community Analyst projection, it is factored on past and current water usage, and it is part of a long-range forecast to 2040 (since the very purpose of the TWDB is to ensure an adequate long-term water supply for the state's population). The TWDB projects a population of 28,193 in 2040, which would represent a population increase of about 21% between 2020 and 2040.

Since the TWDB projections rely in large part on Texas-specific data and its success is partly contingent on its ability to gauge future population and future water demand, this study will use the TWDB projections in calculating park and recreation needs.

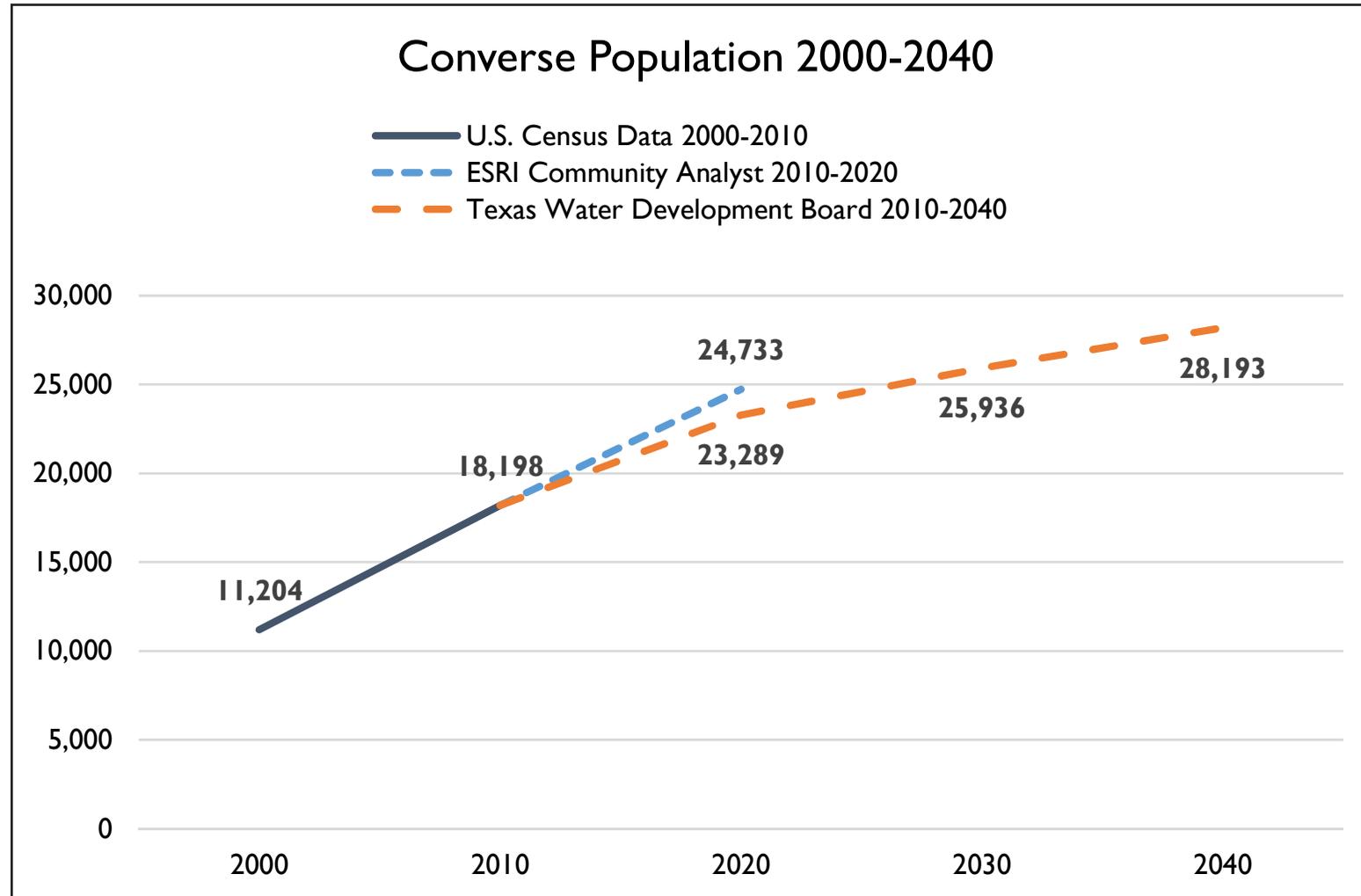


Figure 4: Converse Population Growth, 2000 - 2040

Source: U.S. Census

Existing Recreational Facilities in Converse

The City of Converse has three separate areas allocated for park space within the city (see Figure 5). City Park, located at 307 School Street, is the largest at 162.5 acres; North Park, located at 8200 Spring Town Street, is 42.3 acres; and East Park, located on East Norris Drive just south of Schaeffer Road (allocated but remains undeveloped), is approximately 72 acres.

City Park has an Olympic-size swimming pool, a baseball field, a softball field, two Little League fields, a Tee-ball field, a football field, a children’s playground, three restroom facilities, a covered pavilion, and an 11-acre lake.

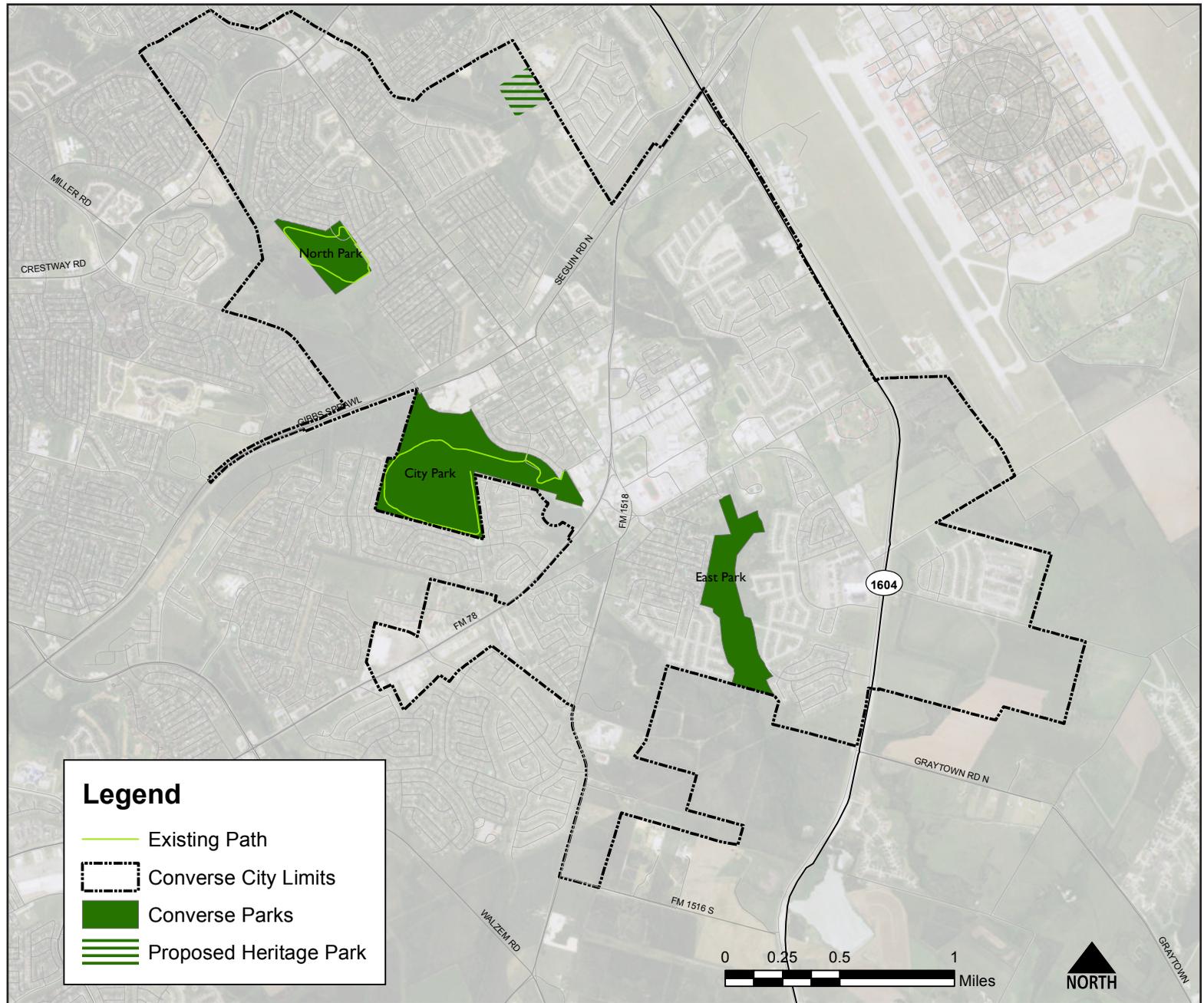


Figure 5: Existing Parks

Source: Created by CURPR using ArcGIS



Figure 6: Entrance to City Park

Source: CURPR



Figure 7: Softball Field - City Park



Figure 8: View from City Park Pavilion

Source: CURPR

North Park has four baseball-softball fields, two basketball courts, a football field, four sand volleyball courts, two children’s playgrounds, two restroom facilities, a butterfly garden, a pavilion (the Melvin Shumann Memorial Pavilion), approximately a mile of paved walking surface with benches and a water fountain, and a 15.5-acre lake.

Table I shows the allocation of recreational amenities within each of the three parks.

East Park is not yet developed, but lies along the Salitrillo creekbed and is proposed to eventually be linked with City Park and North Park via a hike-and-bike trail connecting the Salitrillo and the West Salitrillo creekbeds (see Figure 22). West Salitrillo Creek flows from North Park through City Park to the confluence with Salitrillo Creek proper. Salitrillo Creek flows from Live Oak Park through Judson Middle School and the proposed East Park.

Table I: Recreational Facilities in Converse

Facility	City Park	North Park	East Park	Converse
<i>Total Acreage</i>	<i>162.5 acres</i>	<i>42.3 acres</i>	<i>72.4 acres</i>	277.2 acres
Baseball Field	1	0	0	1
Softball Field	1	0	0	1
Baseball/Softball Field	0	4	0	4
Little League Field	2	0	0	2
Tee-Ball Field	1	0	0	1
Football Field	1	1	0	2
Basketball Court	0	2	0	2
Sand Volleyball Court	0	4	0	4
Pavilion (Covered)	1	1	0	2
Swimming Pool (Olympic)	1	0	0	1
Children's Playground	1	2	0	3
Butterfly Garden	0	1	0	1
Restroom Facility	3	2	0	5
<i>Lake (acres)</i>	<i>11.0 acres</i>	<i>15.5 acres</i>	<i>n/a</i>	26.5 acres
<i>Paved Walking Track (miles)</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>1.0 miles</i>	<i>n/a</i>	1.0 miles

Source: City of Converse



Figure 9: Playground and Restrooms - North Park Source: CURPR



Figure 10: Baseball and Softball Fields - North Park Source: CURPR



Figure 11: Walking Trail - North Park Source: CURPR



Figure 12: North Park Lake

Source: CURPR



Figure 13: North Park Lake viewing Northwest

Source: CURPR



Figure 14: Parking at North Park Lake

Source: CURPR



Figure 15: Melvin Shumann Memorial Pavilion - North Park

Source: CURPR

Northampton Park – City of San Antonio

Figure 16 also shows the location of Northampton Park, which despite being immediately adjacent to Converse and City Park, is situated within the city limits of San Antonio, and is therefore part of the San Antonio Parks & Recreation system. The land was acquired by the City of San Antonio in 2000, and the park opened in 2003. The park is 20.6 acres in size and contains a 0.33 mile walking path and a children’s playground. Fitness equipment and a new concrete walking trail are scheduled to be added to the park during 2015.

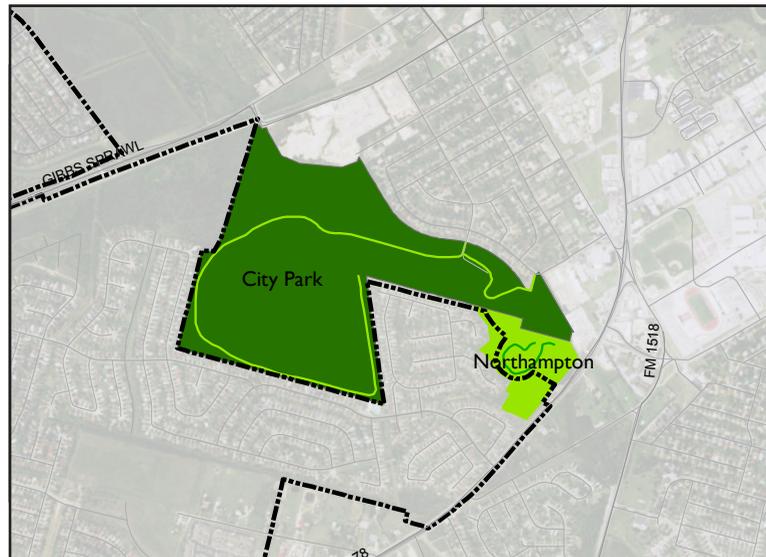


Figure 16: Northampton Park
Source: Created by CURPR using ArcGIS

Crescent Bend Nature Park – Bexar County/City of Schertz

The Bexar County Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2008-2020) lists various county-owned facilities—those which are not exclusively the responsibility of incorporated cities and towns—and notes the relative absence of both parks and natural



Figure 17: Crescent Bend Nature Park Sign Source: Panoramio

areas in unincorporated areas. In 2008 within the boundaries of Bexar County, Bexar County owned 24 park properties with a total area of 1,182 acres. However, only 3 properties totaling 276 acres (Bullis, Hilltop Acres, and what is now Crescent Bend Nature Park) were actually on unincorporated land, while the remaining 21 were located within the City of San Antonio. Since then, Schertz has annexed Crescent Bend Nature Park. As this demonstrates co-management of county park facilities by the county and an incorporated city is done in some cases.

For example, when the Bexar County Parks Master Plan was first published in 2008, the area now known as Crescent Bend Nature Park had not yet opened as a park. The Lakewood Acres subdivision had flooded in 1997 and 1998. The area was subsequently designated a flood zone by FEMA, after which the federal government purchased the land from the various owners, removed the flooded structures and most of the infrastructure, and transferred it to Bexar County with the agreement that it become a park.

It opened in 2009 as Crescent Bend Nature Park, with an area of 175 acres, a 1.3 mile walking trail, and a picnic area. It is co-managed by Bexar County and the City of Schertz according to the terms of an Inter-Local Cooperation Agreement. Schertz is involved because it already had annexed a sizable amount of nearby land in Bexar County. The agreement stipulated that Schertz annex the park along with much of the adjacent land to make it contiguous with the rest of the city, and that Schertz is responsible for both park security and normal upkeep and maintenance.

Crescent Bend Nature Park is thus part of both the Bexar County Park System and the City of Schertz Park System. The park signage reflects this co-management.

Federal, State, and County Guidelines

The National Recreation and Park Association was created in 1965 from the merger of four national park and recreation organizations, and represents over 4,000 state and local parks and recreation departments. It advocates for federal funding of various parks and recreation initiatives and programs. See Table 2 on the next page for the last published standards for acreage as of 2008.

Though many state and local governments have some sort of classification and standards system such as this one, the NRPA makes clear that local economic circumstances, government resources, and public preferences will vary widely, and so these are not strict or rigid categories.

Level-of-Service (LOS) Analysis

A Level-of-Service (LOS) Analysis is a standard-based approach for evaluating whether the existing park and recreational facilities of a jurisdiction (for example, Bexar County or the City of Converse) meet the estimated need of the population within that jurisdiction. As seen in the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Classifications and Standards in Table 2, the assessment and analysis is often based on the amount of acreage per 1,000 residents. For example, the Bexar County Parks Master Plan compared the acreage of county-owned parks (excluding city-owned parks or federal/national parks) against the population of the county to arrive at the ratio of county-owned park acreage per 1,000 residents.

The acreage and population data for Converse and its nearby ‘peer’ cities are shown in Table 3 to evaluate how Converse compares to its neighbors in terms of providing parks and other recreational facilities. With the land for East Park allocated to Parks & Recreation, Converse has the highest LOS ratio with 15.22 acres per 1,000 residents. Given its size and the economies of scale involved in park acreage—specifically the ability to allocate and/or annex vast acreage for a regional- or state-level park, in this case the 12,085-acre Government Canyon State Natural Area—San Antonio has the second-highest LOS, with 13.77 acres per 1,000 residents. Schertz is third at 11.89 acres per 1,000 residents, in large part because of its annexation of 175-acre Crescent Bend Nature Park. Live Oak, Universal City, and Selma all have LOS ratios under 10.0 acres per 1,000 residents, but this is in part due to their smaller size and the absence of large park areas co-managed with the county or state.

Table 2: National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Classifications and Standards for Park Acreage

Classification	Mini-Park	Neighborhood Park	Community Park	Regional Park	Greenway/ Linear Park
Typical Uses	small playground benches sandbox local garden	large playground small field small pond a few courts picnic tables outdoor grill	dog park athletic fields large pond many courts pavilion Olympic pool	wildlife preserve historical site reservoir hiking trails campground open-air venue	wildlife corridor hike & bike trail kayaking rafting birdspotting open space
Service Area	less than 1/4 mi.	1/4 to 1/2 mi.	1 to 2 miles	city/county-wide	city-countywide
Desired Size	up to 1 acre	15+ acres	25+ acres	50+ acres	varies
Acres/1,000 pop.	1/4 to 1/2 acre	1 to 2 acres	5 to 8 acres	15 to 20 acres	varies
Geographic Scale	block/subdivision	neighborhood	community/town	city/county	varies
Civic Scale	n'hood watch	elementary school	high school	community college	varies

Source: Bexar County Parks & Open Space Master Plan 2008-2020

Table 3: Level-of-Service Comparison between Converse and Nearby Cities.

City	2010 Population	Park Acreage	Acres/ 1,000 pop.
Converse	18,198	277	15.22
San Antonio	1,327,407	18,284	13.77
Schertz	31,465	374	11.89
Live Oak	13,131	112	8.53
Universal City*	18,530	109	5.88
Selma**	5,540	24	4.33
*park acreage includes 53 acres of Nature Conservancy Land			
**park acreage estimate			

Source: U.S. Census, Trust for Public Land, City of Converse

Even though there is no generally agreed-upon standard for acres per 1,000 residents, most cities and towns strive for a ratio of 10.0 acres per 1,000 residents.[^] Converse, San Antonio, and Schertz exceed the ratio, but primarily because they have been able to include the presence of co-managed regional (as in the case of Schertz and Bexar County) or state (as in the case of San Antonio and the TPWD) facilities. For its part, Converse has been proactive in acquiring new park acreage (East Park) as its population has grown.

[^]The 6.25 to 10.5 acres per 1,000 residents standard given in this context comes from the “Report on Recreation Standards”, Detroit Metropolitan Area Regional Planning Commission, 1954. Cited in *Standards for Outdoor Recreational Areas (Report No. 194)*, American Society of Planning Officials (ASPO), 1965. The ASPO is one of the predecessors of the American Planning Association (APA). The specific standard of 10.0 acres per 1,000 is also from this report, as the recommended standard of the National Recreation Association (NRA), one of the predecessors of the NRPA.

The Level of Service (LOS) ratio is based on population. Population is a dynamic variable that changes constantly. If the Converse LOS ratio is to be maintained above the 10.0 acres/1,000 population threshold, then future population increases will necessitate an increase in park acreage.

In the case of Converse, the Texas Water Development Board projects a population of 28,193 in 2040. In order to maintain the 10.0 acres/1,000 population ratio, the city would require a total of 282 acres of park and recreational facilities. If the acreage were to remain constant at 277 acres over the next quarter-century, the acreage surplus would steadily decrease until 2040, when the acreage would fall short by about 5 acres (see Table 4). The difficulty of keeping pace with population growth is one reason the NRPA eventually abandoned the ratio as a strict “one-size-fits-all” recommendation. However, cities and towns should still monitor and assess their park and recreation facilities to make sure that they are adequate to the needs of their specific population and their specific circumstances.

Another way to evaluate and compare the park and recreation departments across cities of different sizes is to calculate the amount of budget money spent per resident each year. This figure may fluctuate greatly from year to year due to the initiation and completion of projects, but it allows for the comparison between cities from year to year. In this case, Converse falls roughly in the middle of the pack in terms of park and recreational funding spent per resident (excluding San Antonio); it spends less than Schertz and Live Oak but more than Universal City or Selma (Table 5).

At the state level, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) has issued Park, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan Guidelines for its Local Park Grant Program (which

allocates state funds to the creation and maintenance of public parks). The TPWD specifies that these Master Plans must cover a 10-year period and be updated at 5-year intervals (effectively twice, regardless of the exact date of the interval). It requires an inventory, a needs assessment, and an implementation/prioritization plan.

At the county level, the Bexar County Parks Division (a part of the Bexar Heritage & Parks Department) oversees the administration

and planning for the county-owned parks and jointly administers some parks with incorporated cities, as mentioned previously. One method by which Bexar County Parks does this is by using a Level-of-Service (LOS) Analysis.

Table 4: Projected Park Acreage Surplus/Deficit for Converse (based on 10.0 LOS ratio)

Year	Population*	Current Acreage	Acres per 1,000 pop.	Acres for 10.0 Ratio	Surplus (Deficit)
2010	18,198	277	15.22	181.98	95.02
2020	23,289	277	11.89	232.89	44.11
2030	25,936	277	10.68	259.36	17.64
2040	28,193	277	9.83	281.93	(4.93)

*projected population 2020-2040

Source: U.S. Census, Trust for Public Land, City of Converse

Table 5: City Budget Allocated for Park and Recreation per 1,000 Residents, FY 2014-15 and FY 2015-16

City	Est. Pop. 2015	FY 2014-15	\$/Resident	FY 2015-16	\$/Resident
Converse	21,236	\$410,031	\$19.31	\$399,129	\$18.79
Live Oak	15,033	\$466,700	\$31.05	\$537,200	\$35.73
Schertz	36,726	\$1,376,400	\$37.48	\$1,350,793	\$36.78
Selma	7,831	\$15,000	\$1.92	\$30,000	\$3.83
Universal City	18,650	\$281,433	\$15.09	n/a*	n/a*
San Antonio	1,380,401	\$77,940,501	\$56.46	\$102,522,659	\$74.27

*Universal City Budget for FY 2015-16 is not yet posted to the city website.

Source: ESRI Community Analyst (population estimate), city websites (for budget information)

NRPA Guidelines for Facilities

The NRPA Park, Recreation, Open Space, and Greenway Guidelines were last published in 1995. It has not published any guidelines since. Instead it has created a Geographic Information System (GIS) database (the PRORAGIS Benchmarking Database, accessible only to NRPA members) that calculates the median LOS ratio for facilities (number of facilities per 1,000 population).

As with the overall LOS ratio, the facilities ratio should not be taken as a definitive ‘pass-or-fail’ statistic, but more as a theoretical ratio for a hypothetical ‘City A’. Each city will have different priorities, and the key to meeting the needs of city residents is a close collaboration between parks department staff, city government (council, mayor, manager), and residents. The NRPA database is intended to facilitate the comparison of park and recreation indicators between cities of similar size, budget, demography, etc.

Table 6 shows the 1995 NRPA Guidelines for the service radius of different types of park and recreation facilities. This metric is different from the LOS ratio, as it is based on area and not population. For the most part, it reflects the conditions and circumstances of auto-centric suburbs (i.e. those built after World War II) which tend to have more open space to work with than cities, and more population density (and funding) than rural areas. This table corresponds somewhat to the 2008 classification metrics previously presented in Table 2.

However, as with the LOS ratio, this should be taken as a reference for purpose of evaluation and not as a requirement. The most effective way to assess whether facilities are adequate is to conduct surveys of park patrons and city residents (particularly

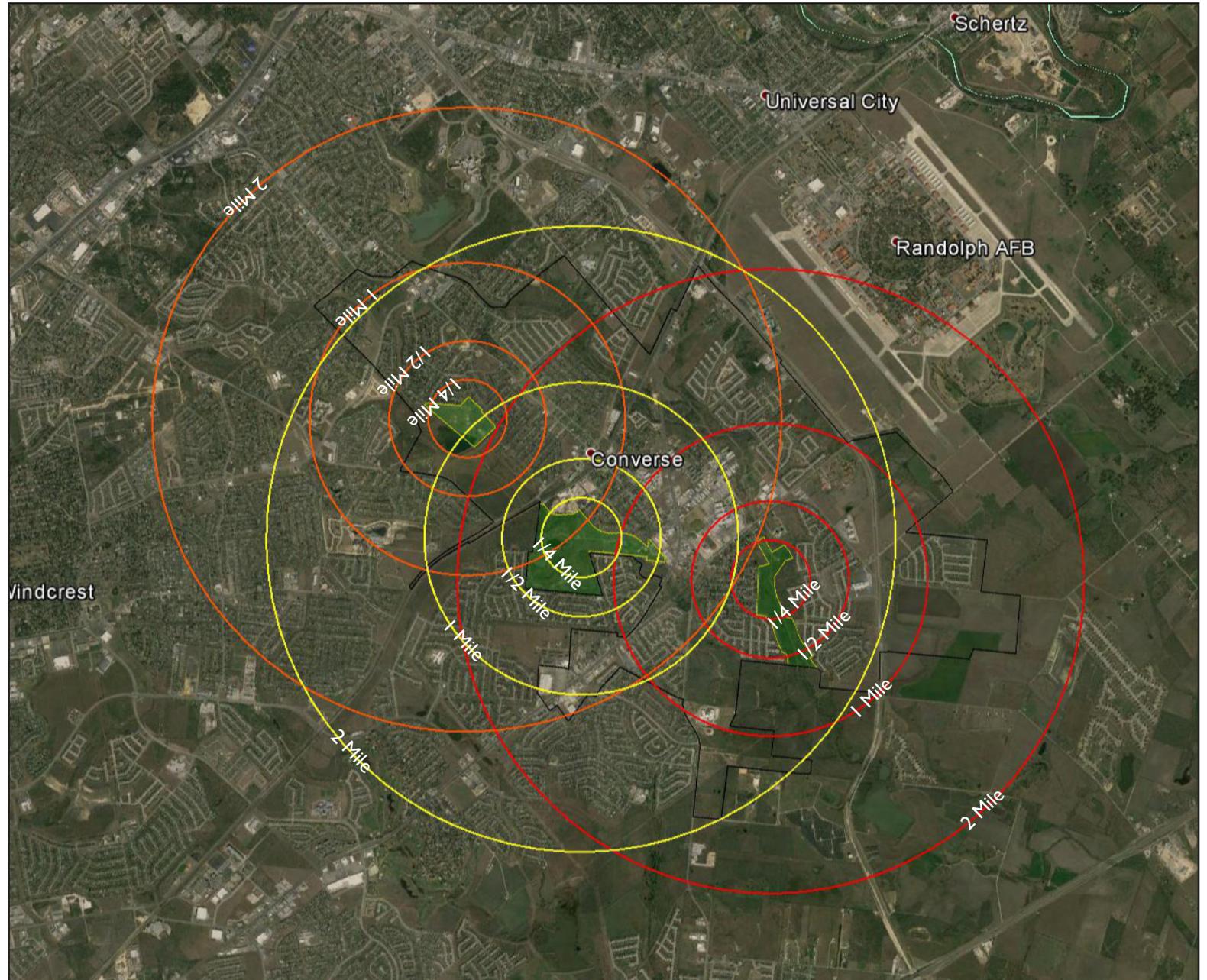


Figure 18: Google Earth View of Service Radii by park: Yellow = City Park; Orange = North Park; Red = East Park
 Source: NRPA Google Earth View, modifications by author

how far they live from the parks they use) and keep statistics of park use insofar as that is practical.

Converse has some facility types that are not included in the NRPA suggested service radii: T-ball, pavilion, children's playground, butterfly garden, (permanent) restroom facilities, lakes, and paved walking tracks/paths. Quarter-mile running tracks are considered, but those are usually specific to football stadiums and often belong to school districts and not to a parks and recreation department.

Table 6: NRPA Suggested Service Radius for Outdoor Facilities, 1995

Facility Type	Service Radius (miles)
Basketball Court (outdoor)	0.25 to 0.50
Tennis Court (outdoor)	0.25 to 0.50
Baseball (Little League)	0.25 to 0.50
T-ball*	0.25 to 0.50
Softball	0.25 to 0.50
Volleyball (outdoor)	0.50 to 1.00
Baseball (official)**	1 to 2
Soccer	1 to 2
Football***	1 to 2
Swimming Pool (large)***	1 to 2
Multiple-Use Courts	1 to 2
<p>* not on NRPA list ; often played on Little League fields ** NRPA gives '0.25 to 0.50 miles' but notes this is often grouped with other large fields in community parks *** NRPA gives '15 to 30 min.' but notes these are often grouped with soccer fields in community parks</p>	

Source: NRPA



PROPOSED PARK IMPROVEMENTS

Proposed Park Improvements

The following images show the various new facilities that will best enhance City Park and North Park so that it offers a wide range of recreational possibilities and thus becomes a destination where the community gathers and interacts.

Converse has a unique opportunity to create a linked seventeen mile recreation trail network that connects the three existing parks using the drainage ways of Salitrillo and West Salitrillos Creeks. The proposed hike and bike trail loop would be easily accessed by the residents of Converse at many different entry points throughout the City and make recreational opportunities more accessible. Much of the right-of-way along the creeks is already in the control of the City of Converse and other public agencies. The trail system could also be used for timed bike races and running events.

Recommended improvements to City Park, North Park and East Park are also covered in this section. Periodic surveys of the residents of Converse should be conducted to determine their recreational preferences so that the park system can be adjusted to meet their expectations.

Hike-and-Bike Trail

One of the most important features of the natural landscape in Converse has heretofore gone unused; the open space corridors provided by the course of the Salitrillo and West Salitrillo Creeks. The two creeks are dry most of the year, only filling during periods of excess rain and flooding. The creek beds are not suitable for any permanent uses or structures (such as houses, pavilions, restrooms), but could be easily adapted into a hike-and-bike trail that provides an almost traffic-free course for those who wish

to walk or bike for exercise or recreation to do so with little interruption and in a less urban environment. The proposed open space network also gives the community an alternative to city streets when navigating through the city on foot or bicycle.

The proposed hike-and-bike trail is a 17 mile circuit which connects City Park, North Park, East Park, and the location of the future Heritage Museum. Figure 20 shows the entirety of the circuit, along with potential connections to existing hike-and-bike trails and pathways. The majority of the trail would follow the creek beds. East Park and the future location of the Heritage Museum are along the course of Salitrillo Creek; City Park and North Park lie along the course of the West Salitrillo Creek.

The circuit “connections” that would link Salitrillo Creek and West Salitrillo Creek would be designated sidewalks with wayfinding (special signage) for park users along Kitty Hawk Road (in the north), Gibbs Sprawl Road (in the center), and Schaeffer Road/Upper Seguin Road (in the south). A portion of West Salitrillo Creek is channelized along Farm to Market Road (FM) 1516 between City Park and the confluence with Salitrillo Creek, and the trail would therefore run along the opposite side of FM 1516. At the southern edge of the circuit, the trail would adhere closely to the property line marking the edge of the Astoria Place subdivision in order to stay within the Converse city limits (the confluence of the two creeks lies within San Antonio city limits).

The next several exhibits illustrate the potential of an open space network or Hike and Bike Trail by utilizing the existing right of ways and floodways in Converse. The floodways are ideal for a Hike and Bike Trail because they are unsuitable for commercial and residential development (See Figure 22). Many of the parcels that would need to be acquired in order to develop the Hike and Bike Trail are owned by the City of Converse or other public

entities such as San Antonio River Authority and the Judson ISD (See Figure 23).

Once the parcels are obtained or partnerships are formed the City of Converse could begin developing the trail network in phases. The first phase could be to connect North Park with City Park via the defined right of way (See Figure 24). Once that is completed the next objective would be to connect City Park to East Park. Eventually the network could be divided into segments utilizing the existing and proposed sidewalks (See Figure 25). The final phase would be to link the adjacent neighborhoods and surrounding city parks to the Hike and Bike Trail (See Figure 20).



Figure 19: Existing Undeveloped Right of Way

Source: CURPR

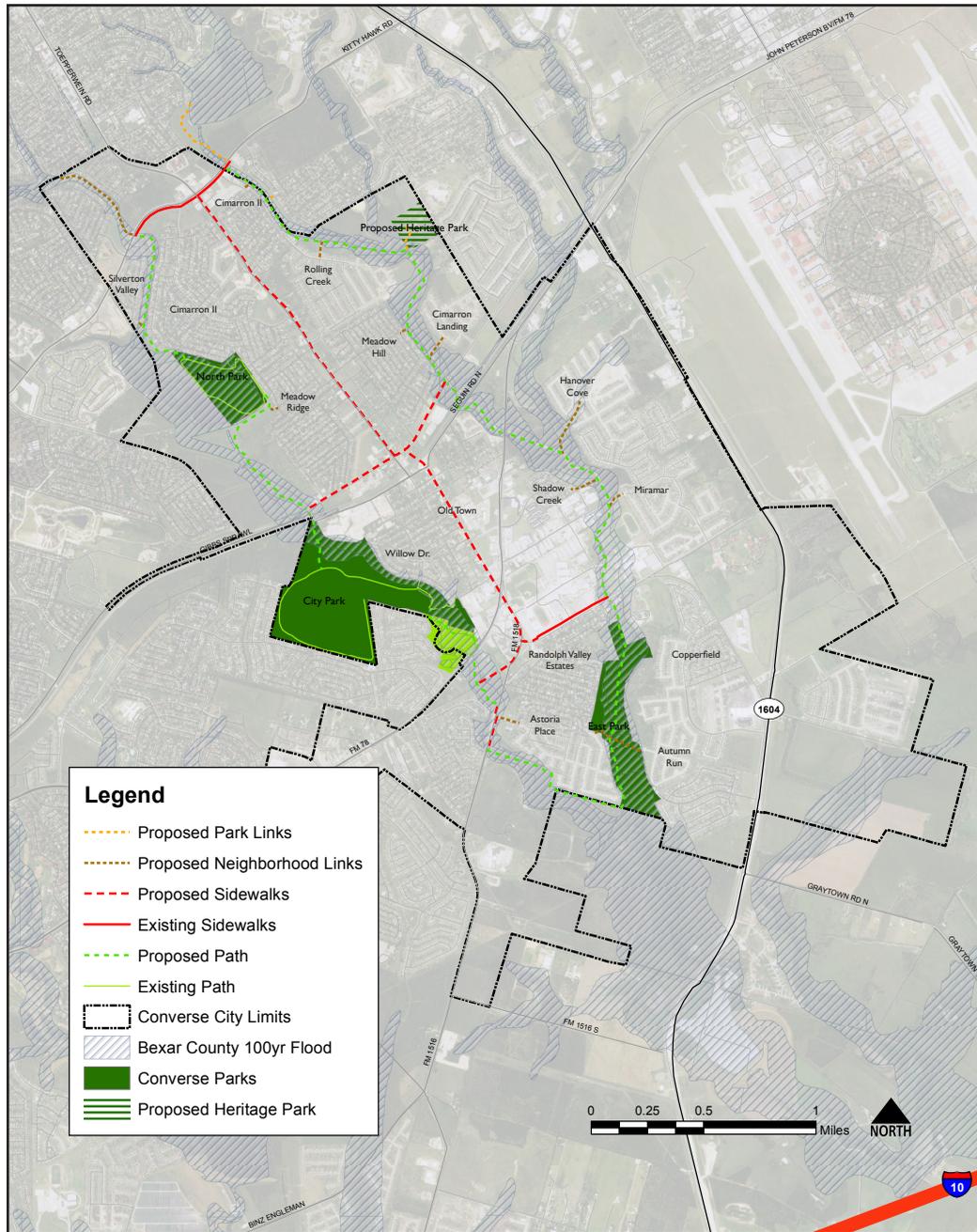


Figure 20: All Proposed and Existing Paths

Source: Created by CURPR using ArcGIS

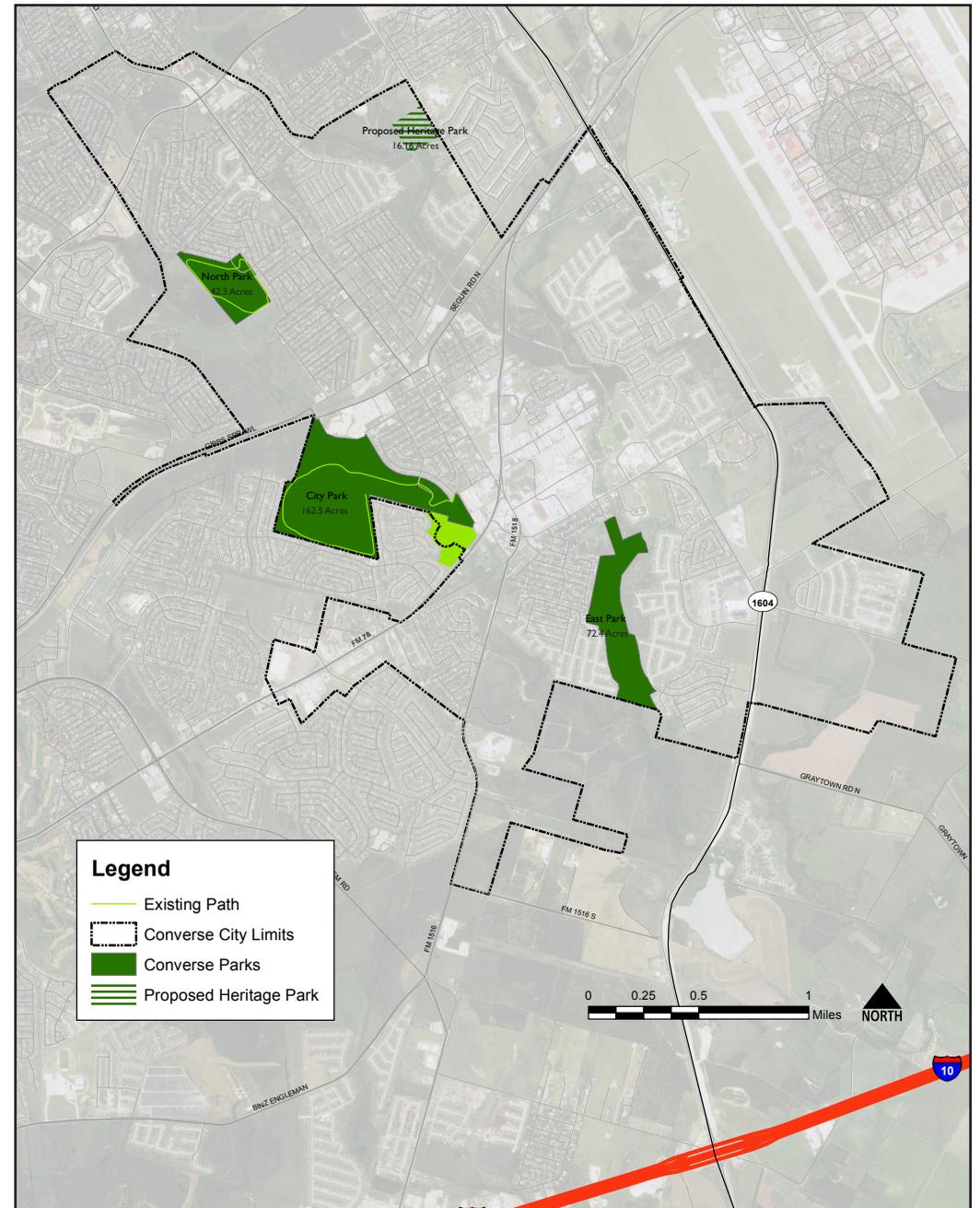


Figure 21: Existing Parks and Paths

Source: Created by CURPR using ArcGIS

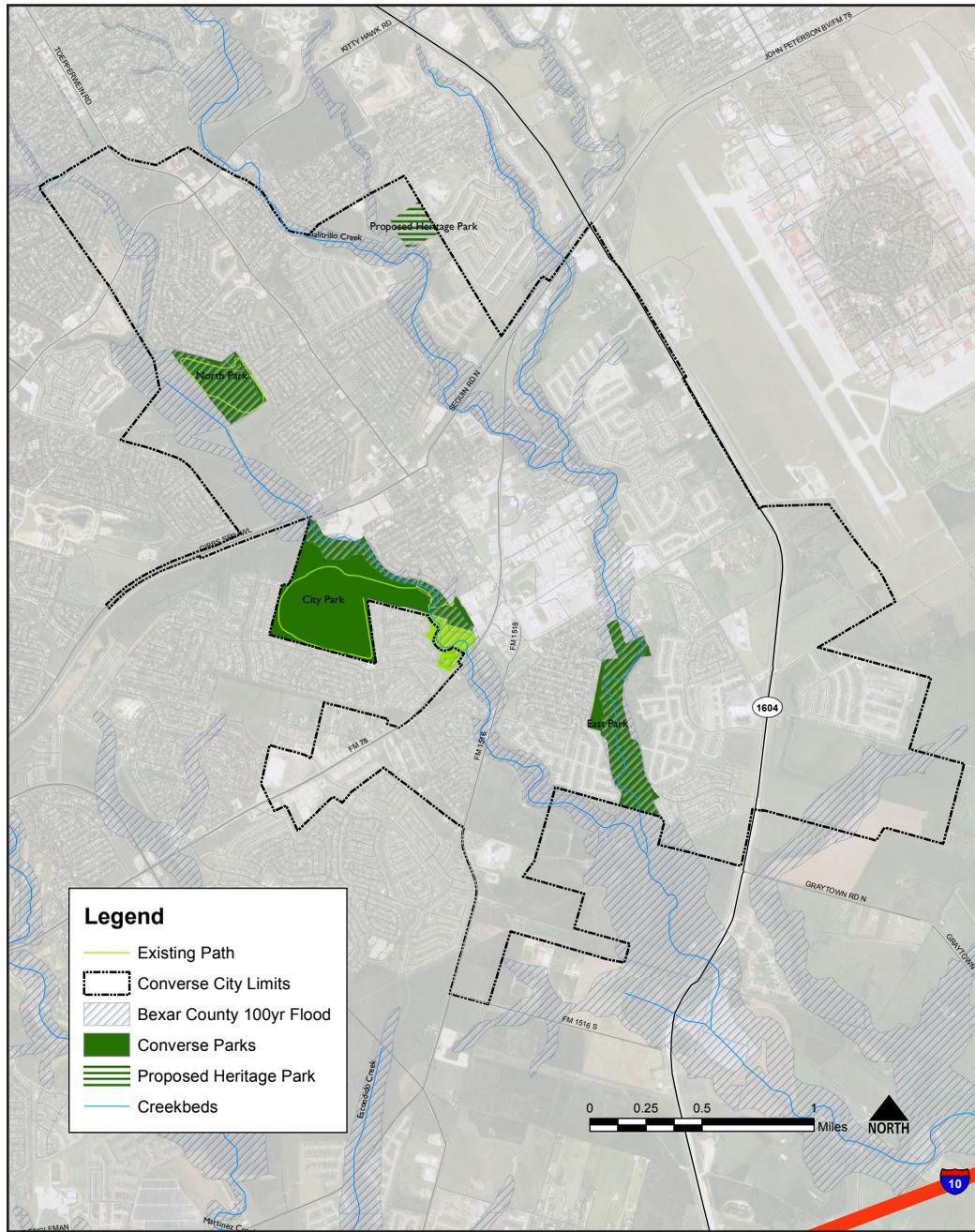


Figure 22: Creekbeds and 100yr Floodplain

Source: Created by CURPR using ArcGIS

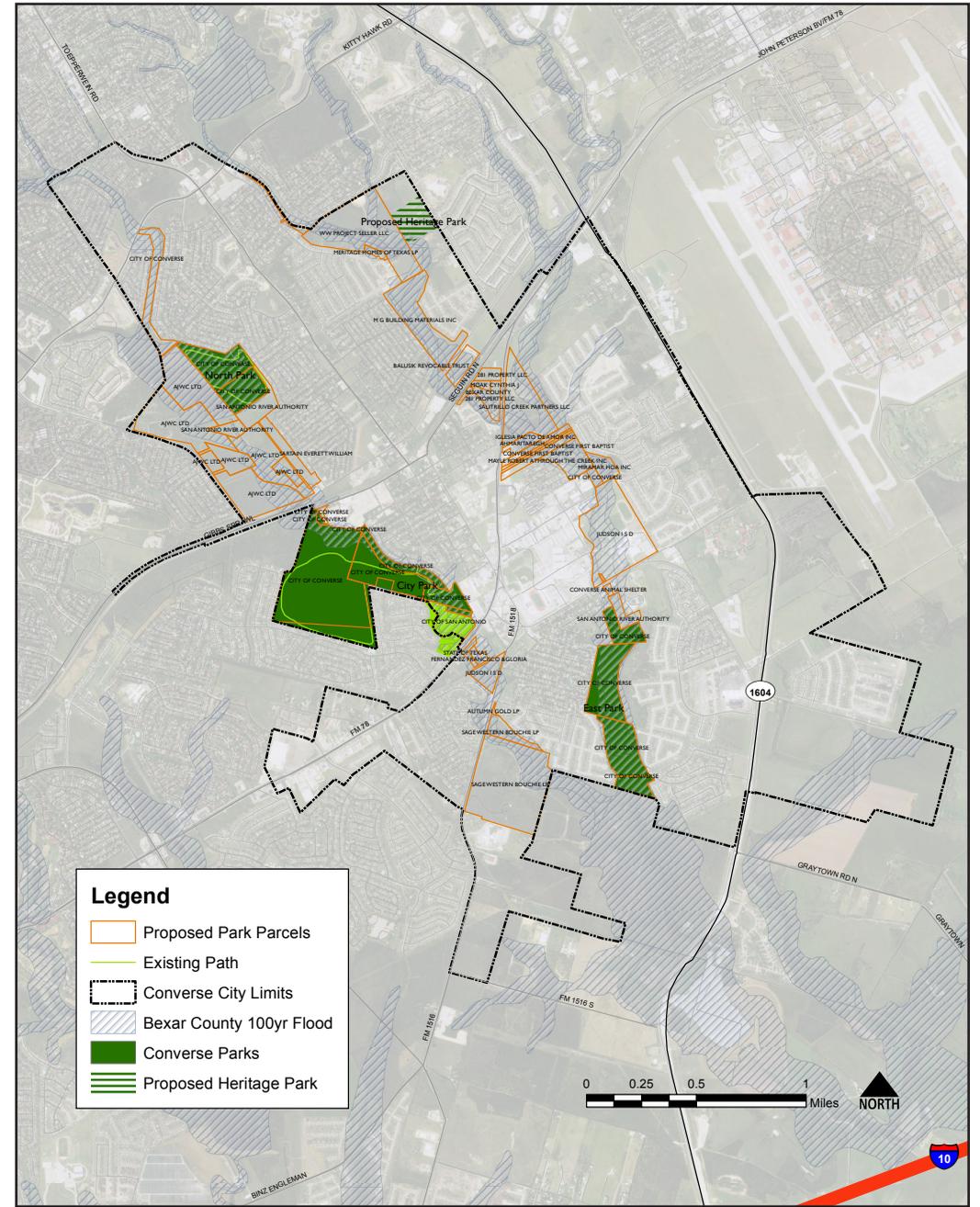


Figure 23: Parcels needed for proposed Hike and Bike

Source: Created by CURPR using ArcGIS

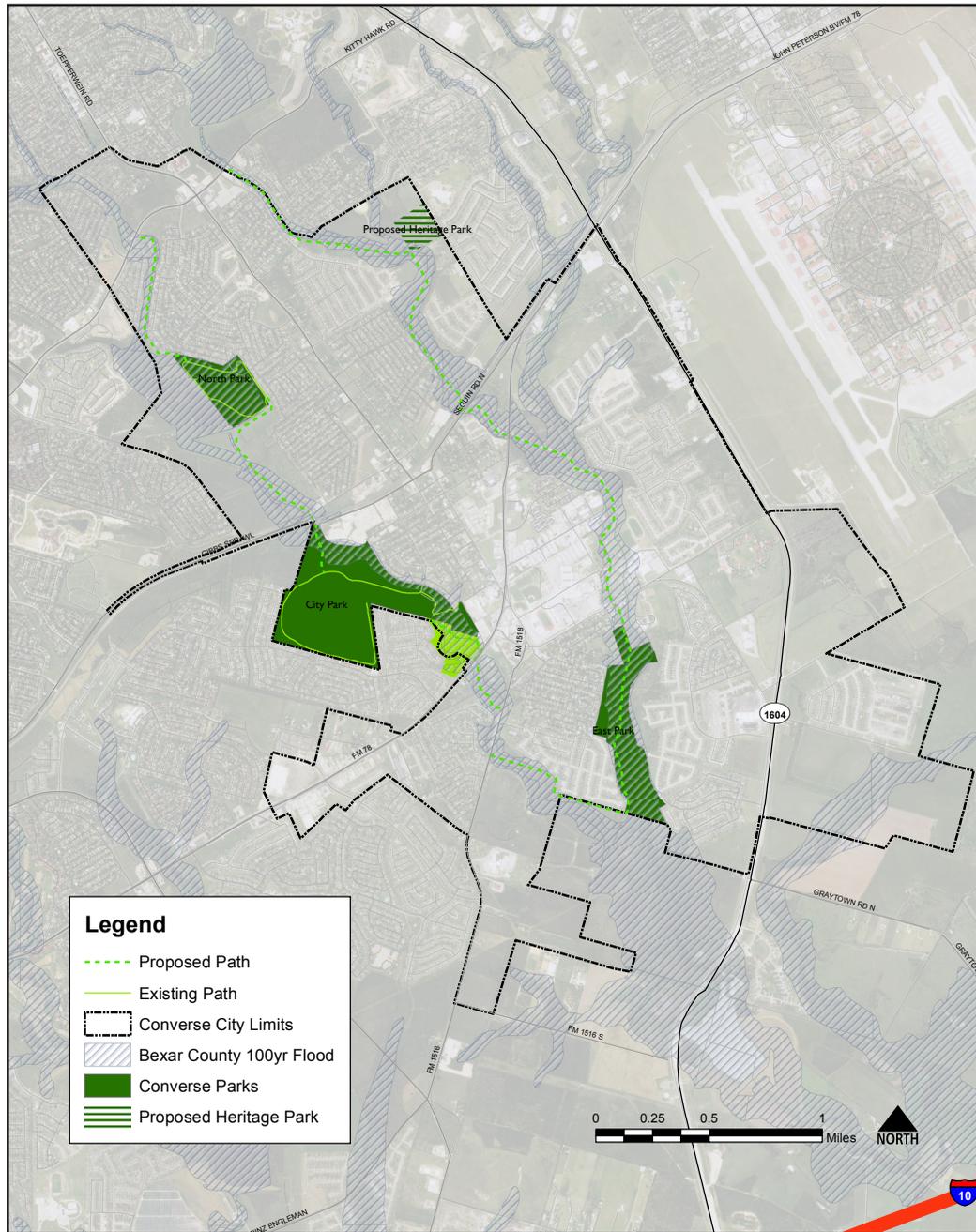


Figure 24: Existing and Proposed Paths

Source: Created by CURPR using ArcGIS

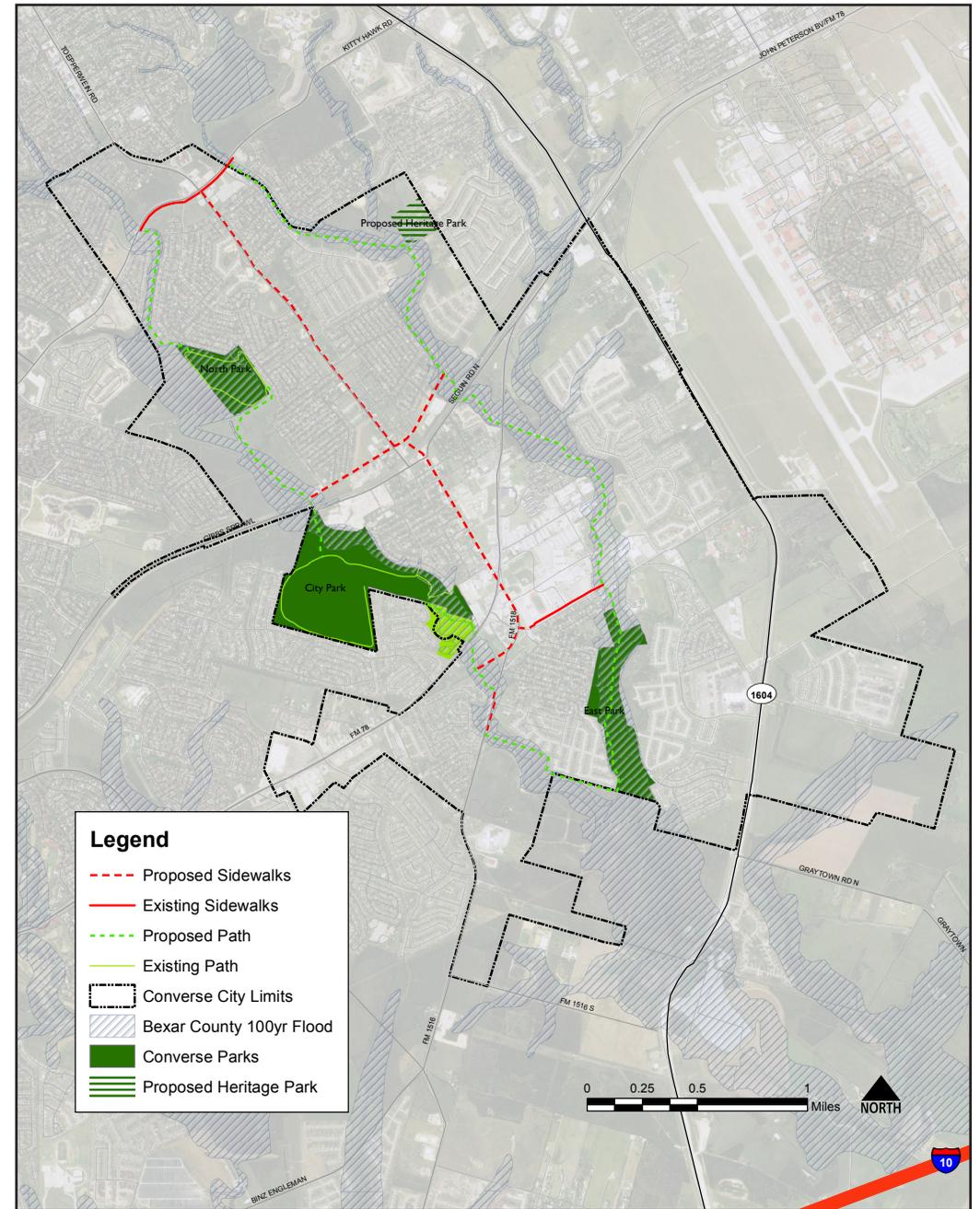


Figure 25: Existing and Proposed Sidewalks

Source: Created by CURPR using ArcGIS

Amphitheater at City Park Lake

Part of making City Park a more attractive destination for residents is to offer cultural programming as well as recreational programming. Having an open-air amphitheater facing the lake, with a simple stage and one or two support structures for ticket-selling and concessions, would provide an opportunity for enhanced concert experiences during Night in Ole Converse and other occasions (see Figure 27). It could also provide a venue for outdoor summer movies. The amphitheater may or may not need separate vehicle access; if it did, then dedicated parking would have to be located immediately behind it.

Campground at City Park Lake

The southern shore of City Park Lake is the most remote and least developed area of City Park. There is a broad expanse of relatively flat terrain which would lend itself to campground use (see Figure 28). Note that the campsites themselves are not situated at the lakeshore; they are set a certain distance away in order to allow free movement along the lakeshore while also giving campers some shade from existing trees. Similarly, they would not be situated too close to the de facto hiking trail that circles the lake .

Lake Recreation Improvements

Converse has lake recreation available at both City Park and North Park. Currently, the North Park Lake is stocked for recreational fishing, while the City Park Lake is left primarily as is. To expand activities at either lake, it will be necessary to establish first which uses are most requested by the residents of Converse, and then to manage the uses such that they do not conflict with each other.



Figure 26: Proposed Improvements - City Park

Source: CURPR

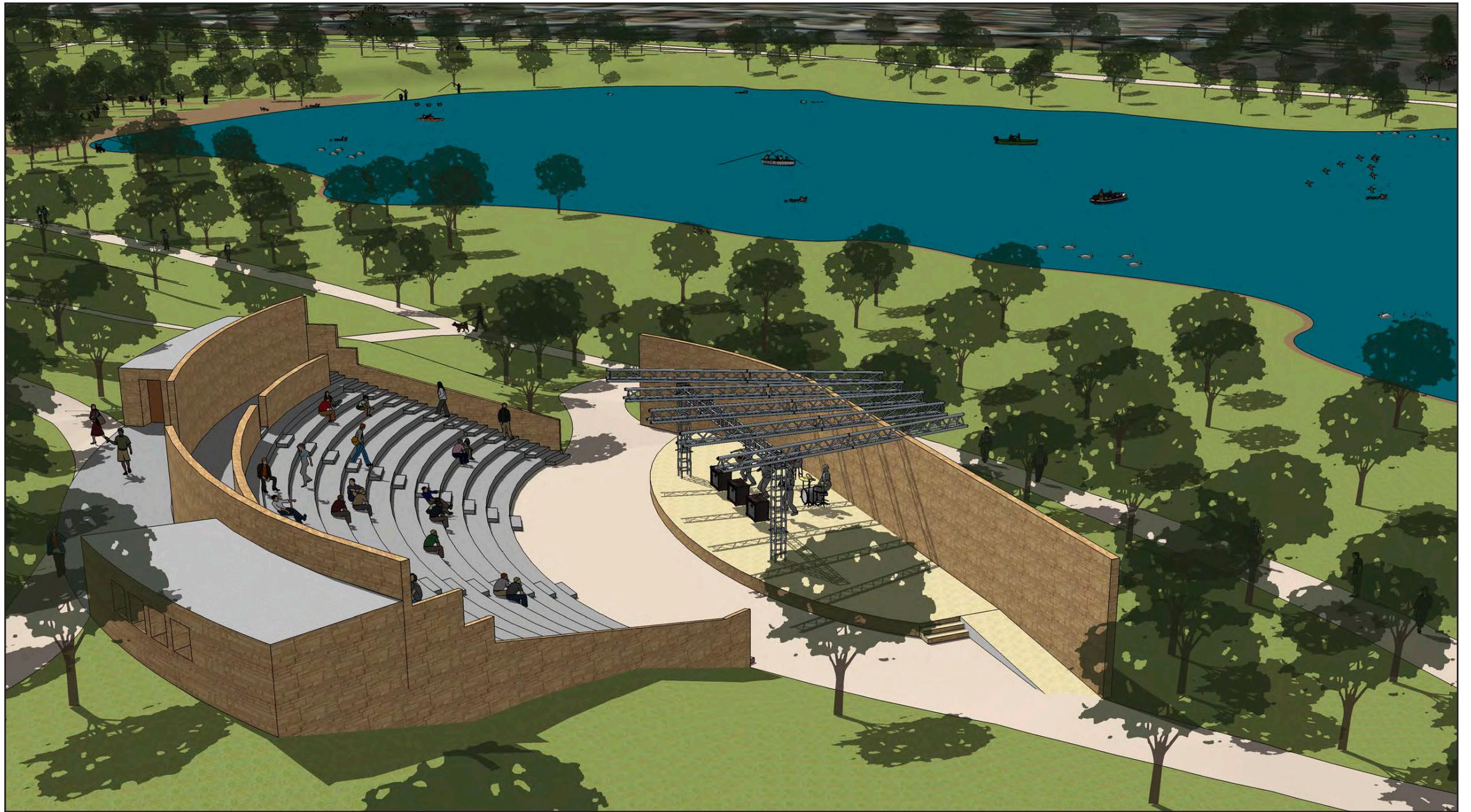


Figure 27: Proposed Amphitheater - City Park

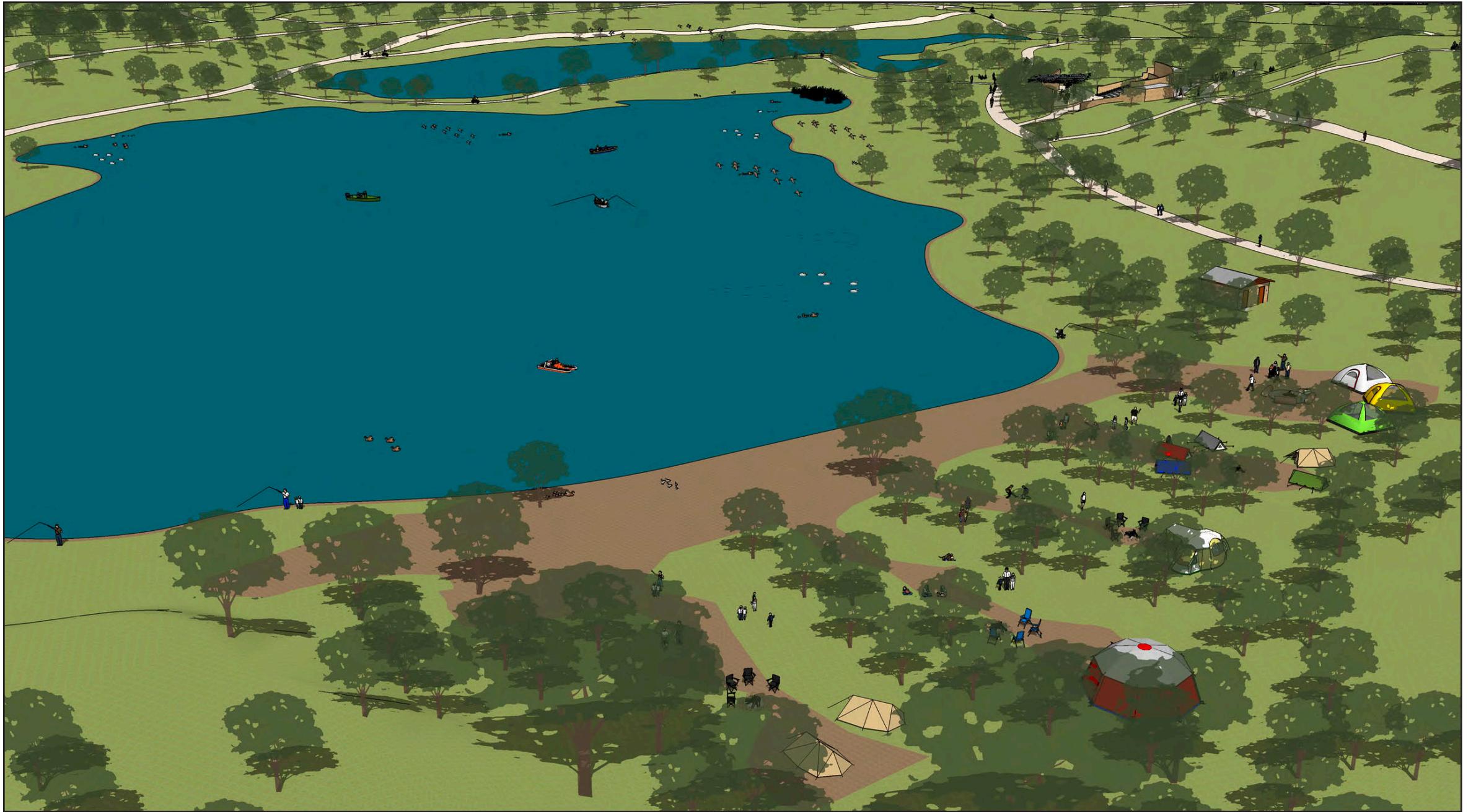


Figure 28: Proposed Campground - City Park

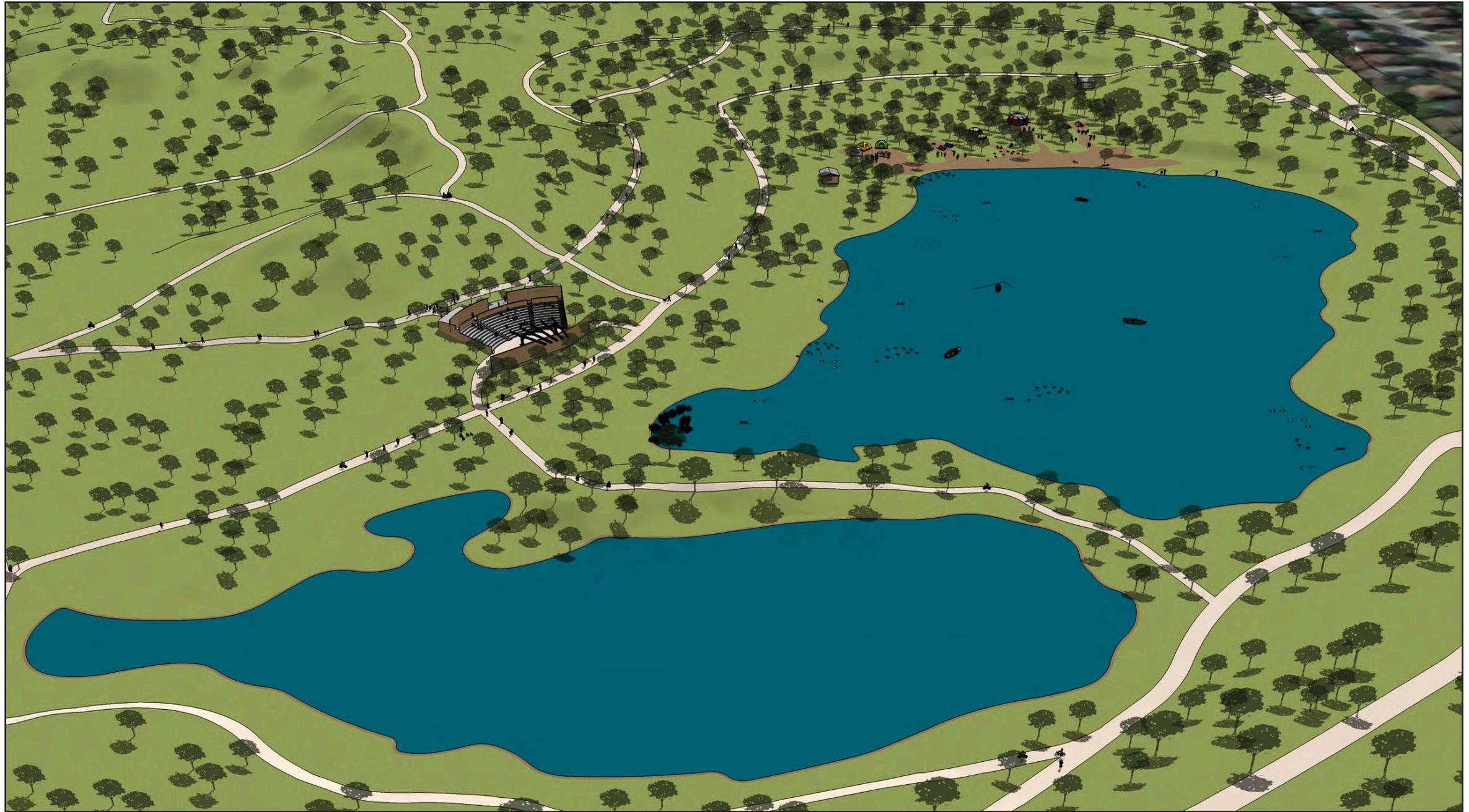


Figure 29: Proposed Lake Improvements - City Park

Source: CURPR



Figure 30: City Park with Proposed Improvements

Source: CURPR

Given the existing uses of the lakes it makes sense to keep and enhance the fishing uses at North Park Lake. Fishing at City Park Lake presents more of an obstacle due to access and also due to the specific physiography and hydrology of the lake. During drought it is divided into two parts (See Figure 29 and 30).

In both cases, it is more practical and cost-efficient to incorporate non-swimming activities. This is due both to environmental issues (water quality suitable for swimming usually requires a set of expenses for maintenance and testing) and to safety issues (whether to prohibit children under a certain age, whether to have staff present, potential conflicts with fishing or boating). To that end, the existing swimming pool should be maintained in usable condition and evaluated by a specialist to determine what maintenance is necessary to keep it up to standards.

If City Park Lake is not used for fishing, then it could be used for canoeing, kayaking, and possibly paddleboat rental. If it is used for fishing, then it will be necessary to separate fishing from the other uses, either temporally (i.e. only during certain hours) or spatially (i.e. only in certain locations). Functionally, it makes most sense to keep North Park Lake for fishing and to have City Park Lake be used for other recreational opportunities.

Boating at City Park Lake

Due to the small size, no motorized boats or sailing boats should be allowed at the lake. Canoes, kayaks, paddleboats, and possibly rowboats or inflatable dinghies would be the general category of acceptable vessels. Windsurfing or sailing would be examples of prohibited activity; all vessels should be human-powered (i.e. by rowing), not gas-powered or wind-powered.

Paddleboat rental in particular would be a possible concessionary activity, and canoes and kayaks could be rented as well.

Paddleboats would only be a seasonal activity and only under specific conditions (i.e. not rented during cold or rainy weather).

Almost all of these boating uses would require some sort of stable launch area. In most cases, those bringing their own canoes, kayaks, etc., would need to be able to park in close proximity to the lake. For this reason, a boat launching and rental area would most likely be located along the northern or western shore of the lake, where there is an existing road and some possibility for a designated parking area for boat users.

Boating at North Park Lake

In order to keep use conflicts to a minimum, boating could be allowed at North Park Lake but only beyond a certain distance from the fishing area. Access could also be problematic if the portion of the lake outside the existing city parcel was not controlled by the city.

There may be additional restrictions on use, or even prohibitions on trespassing because North Park Lake is shared by two different users, the City and a private land owner. Expanding recreational uses at this lake may need to be negotiated with the land owner depending on the current agreement.

Developing Soccer Fields

With the increasing interest in Soccer by today's youth, consideration should be given to developing soccer fields in the Converse Parks system. Currently, the City of Converse does not have any soccer fields at its park facilities. Soccer Fields range in size depending on the age group using the field. Converse should first identify the primary users and then determine which field size best satisfies the needs of the community. This should be



Figure 31: Proposed City Park Lake Improvements

determined by surveying the community to better understand their needs.

There are two viable options for the location of a soccer field in the City of Converse, North Park or City Park. Locating a new soccer field at North Park would complement the existing ball fields already in place and a more feasible option monetarily given the topography of the park. City Park's centralized location within the city limits allows for the assets at this park to be more accessible by the larger community but may be more costly to develop due to the uneven slopes.

Once a new soccer field is in place the city must determine the usage and if additional fields are needed. Dispersing additional soccer fields between the different parks will improve the accessibility for all members of the community.

Additional Parking Lot at City Park

With regard to the proposed dog park area, City Park would require an additional parking lot so that park patrons using the western portion of the park would have sufficient access. Beyond a certain point (such as the existing gate), only Park Commission vehicles or vehicles with boats would be permitted, and then only to use the boat launch area.

The parking lot would be located to the south of the access road. It would be about 3.5 acres in size and have a capacity of approximately 380 cars (See Figure 32). Those staying overnight would need to have special permit tags (hanging tags, dashboard cards, etc.) to indicate they were staying overnight; others would be towed after closing hours. This parking lot will likely be used by campers, concertgoers, dog park users, and trail hikers, and so it should provide sufficient parking to accommodate those uses.



Figure 32: Proposed Parking - City Park

Source: CURPR

Hosting Recreational Softball Leagues

Converse currently has five softball-ready fields; this excludes the three softball fields at Judson High and Middle Schools, which are property of Judson Independent School District and not of the City of Converse. City Park has one softball field, which is fenced and has dedicated parking along with actually sheltered benches and open-air bleachers. North Park has four potential softball fields, although none of them have fenced outfields, bleachers, or dugouts, and the designated parking is adjacent to the lake. In addition, one of the four fields has a baseball/Little League infield and another has an irregular outfield (essentially limited by the lake and a pathway) in which there is virtually no center field. These four fields have backstops, but there is virtually no additional park infrastructure.

There are some examples of softball complexes or centers in neighboring cities and in San Antonio which can serve as templates or models for the development of a recreational softball league facility. One example is the San Antonio Sports and Social Club (SASSC) which operates leagues on Sundays, Mondays, and Thursdays at three different locations: Rusty Lyons Softball Fields (part of Olmos Basin Park), which has two dedicated softball fields; Tony Martinez Softball Field (part of Brackenridge Park, which also contains Lambert Beach Softball Field); and Monterrey Park, which has two dedicated softball fields.

Another example is the San Antonio Amateur Softball Association, which organizes leagues at three different facilities: the Alva Jo Fischer Softball Complex in Northeast San Antonio (part of Lady Bird Johnson Community Park), which has four dedicated softball fields in the “cloverleaf” arrangement; Koger Stokes Softball Complex just north of Downtown San Antonio (part of San Pedro Springs Park), which has two dedicated softball fields;

and Kennedy Softball Complex in Southwest San Antonio (part of Kennedy Park adjacent to John F. Kennedy High School), which has four dedicated softball fields in the “cloverleaf” arrangement. A third example is the San Antonio Senior Softball League (SASSL), which serves players 40 years and older from throughout Bexar County. The SASSL holds all its games at Normoyle Park, which has three dedicated softball fields, in Southwest San Antonio near Port San Antonio (formerly Kelly Air Force Base) and the Quintana Community.

Facilities closer to Converse include Time Warner Cable Park (part of McAllister Park), which has six dedicated softball fields; Takas Park in Windcrest, which has one dedicated softball field; a softball field behind the Municipal Pool in Live Oak; Lou Cardon Memorial Park (in the East Village subdivision of San Antonio), which has two dedicated softball fields; Red Horse Park and Universal City Park in Universal City, with one softball field each; Randolph Air Force Base, which has two softball fields; and Friendship Park in Kirby, which has one softball field.

In order to have a city recreational softball league or leagues, Converse should gauge public interest in softball, and more specifically gauge interest among various age cohorts. If the demographics skew young (say, 20-40), then most likely there will be steady participation in recreational leagues. If they skew older (i.e. 40+) then participation will not be as steady, but there should still be enough interest to have at least one season per year.

A feasible approach to developing an adult softball league in Converse would be for the Converse Parks Commission to pool its resources with the surrounding cities (Windcrest, Kirby, Live Oak, Selma, Universal City, Schertz, and possibly Randolph Air Force Base). The operational organization would most likely be similar to the Greater Northeast Little League (GNELL).



Figure 33: Alva Jo Fischer Softball Complex, radius 353'

Source: Google Earth, modifications by author

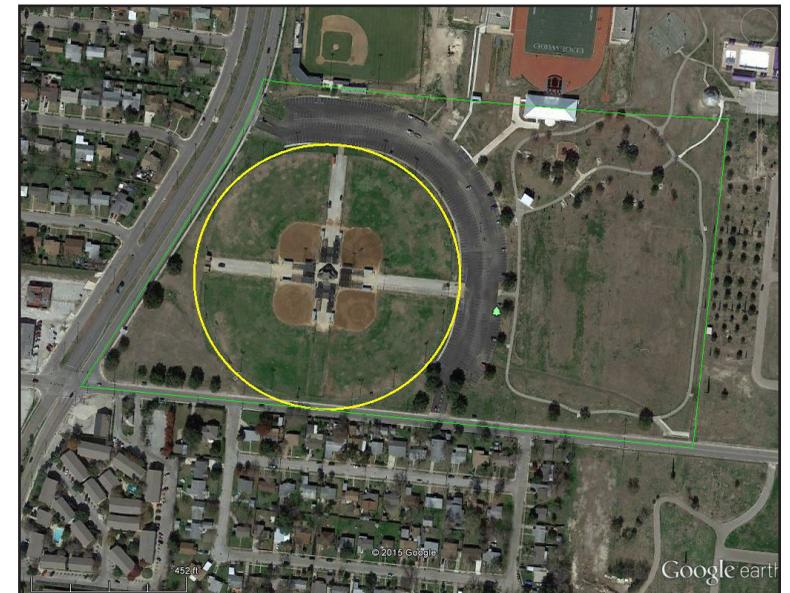


Figure 34: Kennedy Softball Complex, radius 386'

Source: Google Earth, modifications by author

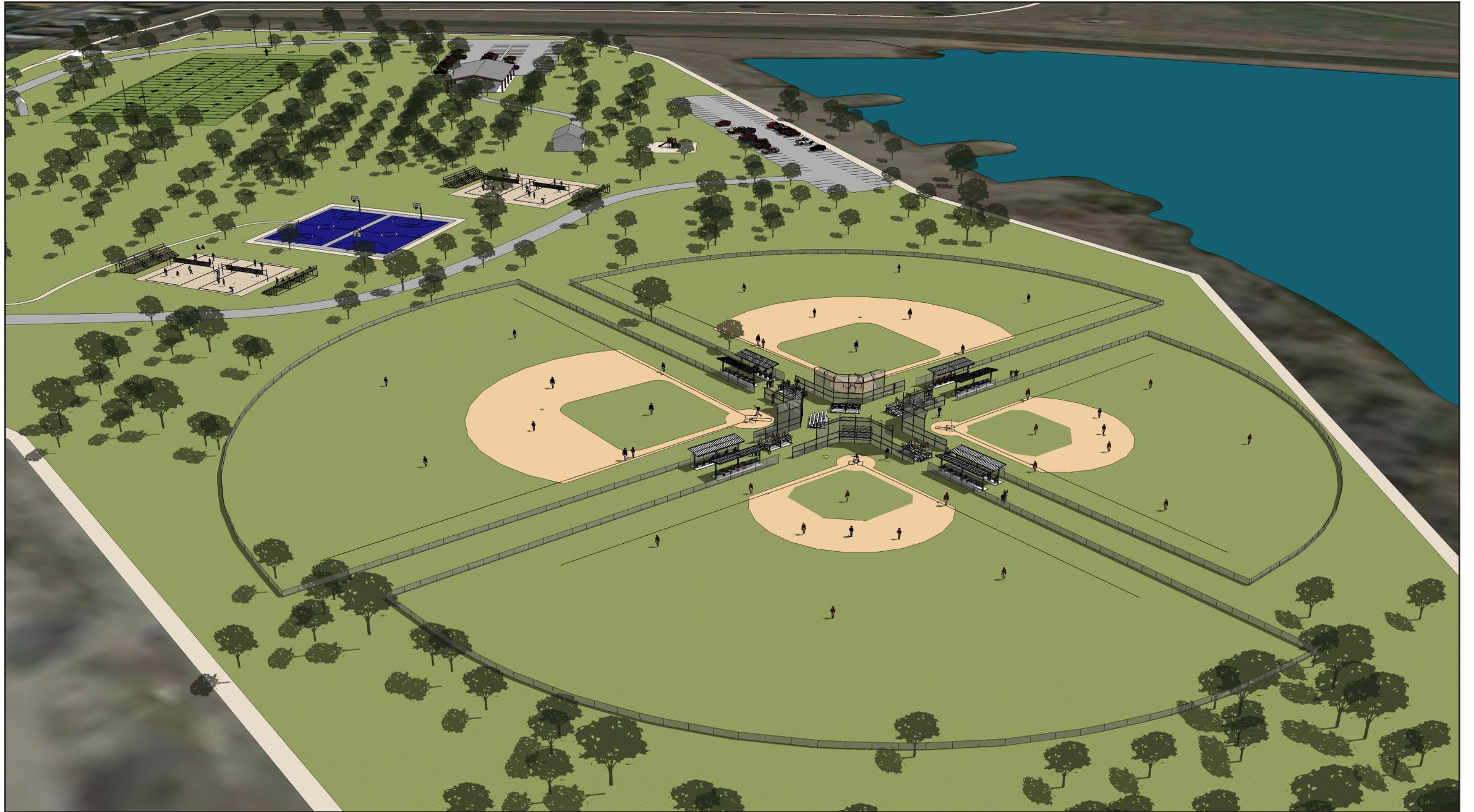


Figure 35: North Park with Proposed Softball Field Improvements

It could have participation boundaries and specific age and residency requirements. If that were to happen, Converse could conceivably upgrade its softball facilities at North Park to have four full softball fields in a cloverleaf arrangement (see Figure 35) and dedicated parking immediately adjacent to the fields by expanding the existing parking along the lakeshore to the west and north.

Potential for a Dog Park

An increasingly important facility that a substantial number of residents want nationwide is a dog park: a specific area where dogs can be let off their leash to run and socialize with other dogs. A dog park affords an opportunity for community residents to meet and socialize. It is an example of a ‘third place’: that is, a place other than home or work where people interact and form bonds of community and common interest. In this sense, it is not much different from other park facilities such as children’s playgrounds, Little League or T-ball fields.

In general, dog parks should be considered as a community facility with a service radius of 1 to 2 miles. They should, therefore, be located a certain distance from residential areas so as not to constitute a nuisance. The closest comparison would be to a community swimming pool. The dog park would need to have a fence to restrict access when it is not open.

Most cities choose to create the dog park within an existing park; for example, the several dog parks in San Antonio are all part of existing city parks, with a standard size of 1.5 acres for the fenced off-leash area. The dog park needs dedicated parking regardless of location (even more so if residences are nearby). It requires that owners monitor their dogs and retrieve their dogs if the dogs get into trouble. It would require regular maintenance to

keep it usable. In the case of the dog park, the dog owners are responsible for picking up after their dogs, and for disposing of the waste in the proper location, while the park and recreation department would need to keep the fence, restrooms, water fountains (for both dogs and humans), garbage cans, and ground cover (usually grass) in proper condition.

If there are ordinances prohibiting dogs from being off-leash on public property anywhere in city limits, the ordinance should be revised or amended with a special use exemption. For example, dogs could be off-leash in the dog park, but only if being monitored by their owners and only if they were properly socializing (and the owner would have to retrieve them and re-leash them if they were fighting or being aggressive).

City Park could be a possible location for a dog park. The proposed location is close to proposed additional parking, so it is accessible. However, it is also a certain distance from residential areas and not too close to any other park uses such as fishing, sports, or picnicking (see Figure 36).

The site is about 2.7 acres, of which 1.5 to 2 acres would be the actual “play area” and the remaining portion used for the installation of features such as benches, water fountains, plastic bag dispenser, and possibly a “rinsing/washing” area. The area should be fenced to ensure that dogs do not wander to other areas of the park and to allow the dogs to be off the leash to play. The proposed site occupies the southwestern edge of the parcel in which it is located, leaving the large parcel containing the lake undisturbed.



Figure 36: Proposed Location for a Dog Park

Source: Google Earth, modifications by author

Other Considerations for Park Improvements

The following list of proposals should also be considered for future improvements to the City of Converse park system.

- Adding combination courts (basketball and tennis) to the facilities at City Park.
- Add lighting to the existing fields and courts.
- The development of a community garden.
- An assessment of the existing swimming pool located at City Park to determine the condition and the possible need for an additional pool or replacement of the existing one.
- A feasibility study to consider the need for a skate park in the park system.

Conclusion

These proposed park improvements represent only a starting point as Converse begins to upgrade and possibly expand its recreational assets. As pointed out earlier, Converse has a unique opportunity to build an expanded park/recreational system using its current facilities. As it grows, Converse will have to examine other options. The key here is to begin planning for the long term. The improvements proposed in this study are an important step in that process.



NEXT STEPS

Development Strategy

This vision study presents a number of strategic initiatives designed to improve the recreational resources for Converse. The recreational proposals and recommendations discussed in this study, dictate the need for a long-term strategy to continue to improve the community's park system and quality of life for residents. The important thing here is to devise a strategy and a game plan to accomplish these ends, and put in place an implementation plan that will help the local leadership and the residents of Converse to achieve their vision.

Implementation – the execution of a selected course of action – is a crucial step in this process. While this recreational vision study offers an overall plan of action, it will be up to the local leadership in Converse to carry it out. Just as important is the need to involve individuals and groups in the community from the very beginning to help carry out this park vision plan, and along the way to add to it. This will require the local leadership to both organize and motivate the community to move forward. This study and its recommendations should also be shared with the community and made a part of its daily dialogue. After all, the future of the park system in Converse should involve the total community as well as its civic and business leadership.

Park planning is a continuous process. It is a way of thinking about and organizing the recreational activities needed to achieve a particular end or goal. Managing that process will be critical.

In developing a plan it is important for a community to organize itself. Planning involves a number of other distinct steps such as creating a vision, collecting and analyzing data, identifying goals, and establishing a strategic framework through which the

park development process can proceed. By creating a vision we are asking residents, business leaders, public officials, etc., to determine what they would like their community park plan to be at some point in the future. The key here is coming up with a community park vision that is both achievable and sustainable. Equally important it must be something that everyone can buy into.

Once this is done, the next step is to identify a set of goals. Goals are essentially statements of what a community wants to achieve. They almost always include objectives. Objectives, in this context, indicate how the goals can be achieved. They are more specific than goals. In some cases, they also include quantitative statements such as creating so many recreational opportunities over a specific timeline. In effect, objectives provide a map of sorts to get a community or planning team from one point to another, i.e., Point A to Point B.

As the community defines its vision, goals and objectives, it is also developing a strategy and a plan of action to achieve them. Implementation then becomes the next step. The strategic framework and the plan of action indicate how the community will manage the implementation process over time.

Funding Considerations/Resources

Financial resources and funding considerations are a critical component of any long term park planning effort in Converse. Financial requirements will always be a limiting factor in any community development project. As a result, priorities will need to be established, and a plan of action devised that will take into consideration these priorities. Equally important, is the need to put in place an implementation plan that is both realistic and doable.

In Texas, property and real estate taxes are the primary resources for funding local operations, services and capital improvements. Also important are local sales taxes, hotel occupancy taxes, state and federal grants, and the issuance of city and county bonds. Local governments also have the power to initiate special programs like municipal development districts, empowerment zones and tax increment financing districts to leverage additional financial resources. These resources, in turn, can be used to incentivize revenue generating development in a community or a special district within a community to improve the local economy, redevelop an area, or improve its quality of life.

In Converse, the development and of the Park Vision Plan will likely utilize several types of funding streams or sources to facilitate park improvements. At the state level several programs administered through the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department can be accessed to provide additional funding. Keeping in mind that these funding sources are competitive in nature they will require additional research and project clarification on the part of the local government in Converse. The key, however, is to devise a long-term strategy that will lay the foundation for the trail network and park development. Once the vision and the goals are in place the community and its implementation team can begin to align themselves to seek state and federal grants.

Listed on the next page are several grant programs the City of Converse could use to upgrade and expand its recreational assets and facilities.

State of Texas Funding Sources

Texas Water Development Board (TWDB)

The TWDB offers grants and loans for the planning, design, and construction of water related infrastructure and improvement programs. They also offer grants to local governments and technical assistance for agricultural water conservation, flood mitigation, and clean drinking water programs. More information can be found at: <http://www.twdb.state.tx.us/financial/programs/AWCG/index.asp>

TWDB funding could be applied to improvements to the lakes at City Park and North Park as well as to flood mitigation measures related to West Creek in both parks, and to the construction of appropriate water-related infrastructure for Salitrillo Creek at East Park.

Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB)

The TSSWCB offers a matching funds program for soil and water conservation assistance. Through local conservation boards they also offer technical and planning assistance to agricultural producers to incorporate best management practices on their farms and ranches. Additional information can be found at: <http://www.tsswcb.texas.gov/programs/swcdassistance>

TSSWCB funding is only available on a matching basis (i.e. Converse would allocate a specific amount which would then be matched by TSSWCB). However, this may be one of the best options to address maintenance and improvement to the lake at North Park, since it is designated as 'Soil Conservation Service

Site 4 Reservoir'. Converse is part of the Alamo Soil and Water Conservation District No. 330 (part of State District 3, which covers South Texas). The lake at North Park was built by the federal Soil Conservation Service (SCS), which was created in 1935 in the wake of the 'Dust Bowl', to address topsoil erosion.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD)

The TPWD offers 50% matching grant funds to municipalities, counties, and other units of government for the development of parks, nature centers, urban outdoor recreation, and recreational trails. They also offer 75% matching funds for the construction of public boat ramps throughout Texas. Further information on programs and deadlines can be found at: <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/business/grants/trpa/#outdoor>

TPWD funding would also be on a matching basis, and is the most directly related to parks in particular. Park improvements to City Park and North Park and development in East Park could be matched on a 50% basis, including funding specifically for nature centers, recreational trails (hiking, biking, etc.), and other outdoor recreation facilities (playgrounds, picnic areas, disc golf, etc.). Funding for construction of boat ramps at either North Park or City Park would be matched on a 75% basis.

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ)

The TCEQ offers both competitive and non-competitive grants to local governments for a variety of uses. Funds can be provided for cleanup or prevention of pollution, research into pollution reduction, or for replacing old municipal vehicles with newer, more efficient models. More information can be found at: http://www.tceq.texas.gov/agency/governments_main.html.

TCEQ funding could be used for specific cleanup and/or prevention measures to address existing or potential pollution (water, soil, etc.) at the park sites.

Additional Funding Sources

U.S. Soccer Foundation: Safe Places to Play (USSF)

The USSF provides grants to organizations to help them build or enhance soccer fields in their communities. Grants cover installation of field surfaces, lighting, and irrigation. Further information is available at: <http://www.ussoccerfoundation.org/our-grants/application-process>

National Environmental Education Foundation: Every Day Event Grants (NEEF)

The NEEF awards fifty grants of \$2,000 each annually to groups to hold a minimum of three events that are volunteer-based and provide enhanced educational and recreational events in communities. Further information is available at: <http://www.publiclandseveryday.org/grants/every-day-event-grants-0>

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: Urban Bird Treaty Grants (USFWS)

The USFWS will award \$400,000 in 2016 to fund projects that enhance urban habitat for migratory birds, engage citizens in bird conservation, and educate children and adults about birds and bird conservation. The projects must involve wetlands and associated habitats for wetlands-associated migratory birds. Further information available at: <http://www.fws.gov/birds/grants/urban-bird-treaty/urban-bird-treaty-grant.php>

Other grants that the City of Converse could apply for include North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) U.S.

Standard (above \$75,000 matching funds) and U.S. Small (up to \$75,000 matching funds) Grants. Further information is available at: <http://www.fws.gov/birds/grants/funding-sources-and-how-to-apply.php>

Levitt AMP [Your City] Grant Awards

Levitt Pavilions provides matching grants to small and mid-sized cities nationwide. Ten grantees are awarded up to \$25,000 each annually in matching funds to produce their own Levitt AMP [Your City] Music Series (an outdoor free concert series). Further information is available at: <http://grant.levittamp.org/submit-a-registration/> (current grantees at <https://grant.levittamp.org/events-page/>)

Outdoor Foundation: Community Investment Fund

The Outdoor Foundation awards grants up to \$1,000 to projects that directly result in young people engaging in outdoor recreation. Further information is available at: http://www.cybergrants.com/pls/cybergrants/quiz.display_question?x_gm_id=4494&x_quiz_id=5378&x_order_by=1

The North Face: Explore Fund Grant

The North Face Explore Fund awards grants from \$5,000 to \$25,000 to non-profit 501(c)(3) organizations to encourage youth participation in outdoor exploration and conservation by creating more connections of children to nature, increasing access to outdoor exploration opportunities (such as camping, hiking, rock climbing, mountaineering, mountain biking, etc.), and providing education for both personal and environmental health. Further information is available at: <https://www.thenorthface.com/about-us/outdoor-exploration/explore-fund.html>

National Endowment for the Arts: Our Town Grants (NEA)

The NEA awards \$25,000 to \$200,000 to deserving “creative placemaking” projects to finance the creation (design, not construction) of master plans, cultural district plans, public art, public spaces (such as parks), and to support public involvement through design charrettes, design competitions, and community design workshops. Further information is available at: <https://www.arts.gov/grants-organizations/our-town/introduction>

Patagonia: Environmental Grants

Patagonia awards grants to protect local habitat to small, grassroots, activist non-profit 501(c)(3) organizations to fund work that is action-oriented, builds public involvement and support, accomplishes specific goals, and demonstrates a commitment to long-term change. Further information is available at: <http://www.patagonia.com/us/patagonia.go?assetid=2942>

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: Green Infrastructure Funding Opportunities

The U.S. EPA offers several funding sources along with funding information resources and tools from other federal agencies, including (for example) the U.S. Department of Interior National Park Service (NPS) Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) Program.

Further information is available at: <http://www.epa.gov/green-in-frastructure#CommunityPartnerships> and <http://www.epa.gov/green-infrastructure/green-infrastructure-funding-opportunities>; further information about National Park Service RTCA at: <http://www.nps.gov/orgs/rtca/apply.htm>

Major League Baseball (MLB): Baseball Tomorrow Fund

The Baseball Tomorrow Fund awards grants on a quarterly basis to organizations involved in the operation of youth baseball and softball programs and facilities. It also funds programs, fields, coaches’ training, and uniforms, equipment, and certain other program expenses, and provides educational support to grant recipients to help organizations become self-sufficient. Further information is available at: http://web.mlbcommunity.org/programs/baseball_tomorrow_fund.jsp?content=about

Little League Baseball: Grow the Game Grant

The Little League Grant program was introduced in 2015 to provide assistance to local Little League programs working to further the mission of Little League in their community. Further information is available at: <http://www.littleleague.org/learn/rules/grant-application.htm>

The Trust for Public Land: Center for City Park Excellence

The TPL does not actually provide funding, but serves as an information resource about various financial tools such as public-private partnerships, ballot/bond measures, and developer extractions. Further information is available at: <http://www.tpl.org/creating-and-funding-parks>; <http://www.tpl.org/center-city-park-excellence>

Development Timeline

In putting together a development timeline it is important to keep in mind several things. First, the recommendations and courses of action proposed in this study is only a start. Second, the development/redevelopment/revitalization process described here is an ongoing process. Planning, as noted several times in this study, is a continuous process that constantly builds upon past and present successes and changes in the community's economic, social and physical environment. The first step in this process is to carefully address the proposed recommendations for action outlined in this study, and make adjustments, as needed. Once this is done it will be important to establish priorities for development. This will be one of the main tasks for those responsible for carrying out the plan of action. However, these priorities will always be governed by the availability of resources, and their relationship to other needs the community has to address.

Implementation Strategy – Proposed Action Plan

To carry out the recommendations and action steps included in the implementation strategy and action plan it will be important to bring together the community's leadership to address issues of concern regarding the development of new parks and recreational facilities in Converse. The key players in this task should be the municipal government of Converse, the City Manager, the Type B Economic Development Corporation and the Chamber of Commerce. At the same time, the process of developing and revitalizing the community's parks and recreational assets should be opened up to include local citizens, business and civic leaders and public officials. Bexar County should also be included in this process as it plays a major role in park development. As the implementation process moves forward additional input may be needed.

Implementing the Plan – Areas of Responsibility

In carrying out this plan a blend of public and private participation will be necessary. This public/private partnership is important because no one entity or sector has the knowledge and resources needed to fully implement this effort over time. Each sector also has a set of responsibilities. These are briefly described below:

Public Sector – City of Converse

City and county government are the key public entities involved in this process. Both are responsible for the planning and construction of infrastructure improvements, the platting of land for various uses, and the development of ordinances and laws to guide long-term economic and community development in the county and the incorporated area that comprises Converse.

Private Sector

The private sector in Converse creates the basis for its overall economy. It also helps to generate the necessary revenue and investment assets that drive that economy. It is comprised mainly of local and area businesses that provide goods and services to the local population.

Communities are most successful when they are able to pull themselves together when needed. Successful communities are also proactive. They are not willing to let things just happen. Instead, they seek to anticipate change rather than merely react to it. This park vision plan reflects the community of Converse's desire to create new recreational opportunities for its citizens.

Conclusion

The vision study presented and discussed, at length, a number of initiatives and projects designed to enhance existing park and

recreational facilities in Converse. Several recommendations for future development were also proposed. They included the need to develop new facilities such as an amphitheater at City Park Lake, and the better utilization of existing open space corridors centered around the Salitrillo and West Salitrillo creeks. Also stressed was the need to plan for the future. Current projections, for example, indicate a significant growth in population for the Converse area over the next 20 years. This growth, in turn, is being influenced by strong demographic and economic forces now operating in northeastern Bexar County. This means that Converse and the other cities in the area - Live Oak, Schertz, Selma, Universal City and San Antonio - will need to expand their existing parks and recreational assets to handle this growth in the years to come. This study is an important step in meeting these long term needs. It also sets the stage for additional park and recreational facility development in Converse.

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