



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## BREC Park and Recreation System Master Plan



### What is a park and recreation system master plan?

The System Master Plan is a **comprehensive approach** to park planning that will determine East Baton Rouge Parish's **vision and goals** and develop a set of **policies and strategies** that realize them.

The plan will serve as the **guiding document for future development and redevelopment** of BREC's system of parks and green spaces, conservation areas, recreation facilities, off-road greenway trails, recreation programs, services, and maintenance plans for the next ten years. It will:

- Serve as the **guiding path** that reflects the values, expectations, and the vision of East Baton Rouge Parish residents, BREC Commissioners, and BREC staff
- Identify **gaps** in programs, services, facilities, and maintenance with a **strong focus on excellence and equity**
- Propose **new park and facility improvements** over the next ten years
- Build on the strengths of our current programs and establish new **programs, partnerships, and services**
- Establish a **comprehensive maintenance approach** and identify the required **funds** needed to sustain BREC's capital investments
- Increase **awareness** of BREC facilities and develop marketing and communication strategies

### What is the timeline? What will the process look like?

The planning process, which will take approximately one year to complete, will bring together significant community, staff, stakeholder input, and data analysis to determine future recommendations. The project will include 5 main phases:

- **Phase 1: Understanding and Analysis** will evaluate the current state of BREC's system, including inventorying existing facilities, research, plan review, and mapping and data analysis.
- **Phase 2: Needs and Gaps** will identify unmet community park and recreation needs.
- **Phase 3: Vision & Opportunities** will develop a high-level vision and goals.
- **Phase 4: Market Research + Business Planning** will include market research related to specialized facilities and developing business planning recommendations.
- **Phase 5: Implementation Strategy + Final Plan Documentation** will develop long-range recommendations; a ten-year action plan for capital improvements, operations, and maintenance; and a strategic plan to guide the first three years of implementation. Phase 5 will also include creating an equity-based decision-making framework for prioritizing capital improvements.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS CONT.

Community, stakeholder, and BREC staff engagement will occur throughout the process and be integral to shaping final plan recommendations. **Community and stakeholder engagement** will include a wide range of opportunities, including pop-up booths at events, interactive community-wide workshops, focus group meetings, online input opportunities, and a statistically-valid community needs assessment survey, which will be sent to a randomly selected sample of Parish residents. A **Community Advisory Committee** will serve as a steering committee for community engagement. **BREC staff engagement** will include drop-in sessions to learn more and share ideas, bi-monthly updates shared in BREC's Park Bench newsletter, and updates at Town Hall meetings.

## Why is this plan needed?

System-wide planning processes have many benefits and support strategic action in multiple ways. This plan will allow BREC to:

- **Continue to work towards improvements that are guided by community goals:** The plan will create a roadmap for next ten years that is based on a shared vision developed through community, Commission, and staff input.
- **Act efficiently and use resources wisely:** The plan's implementation strategy will prioritize action, set priorities, and focus energy to maximize the value of funding resources and staffing.
- **Support continued funding and sustain system quality:** The plan will communicate the vision for the next ten years and the resources required to achieve the vision.
- **Enhance equitable access:** The plan will include an actionable framework for equity-based decision-making that ensures resources are prioritized with an equity lens.

## What BREC facilities will this process consider?

The System Master Plan will encompass the **entire BREC system**, including parks, greenways, facilities, programs—as well as funding, maintenance, and operations recommendations. The planning process will take a comprehensive, high-level look at the opportunities and challenges the system faces today, as well as community needs and regional/national trends. It will develop recommendations to help the system better support community needs, with a focus on enhancing equitable access.

BREC maintains over 6,568 acres of land which includes 175 parks and facilities that offer a wide variety of recreational activities for all ages and population groups including playgrounds, tennis centers, golf courses, athletic fields, dog parks, open green space, aquatic facilities, recreation centers, disc golf courses, skate parks, conservation areas, historic sites, an equestrian center, a zoo, and an art gallery. BREC offers an extensive number of recreation programs for people of all ages including summer camps, leisure classes, sports and fitness classes, nature and outdoor programs, learn to swim programs, arts and culture programs as well as many adult, youth, and inclusive sports leagues.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS CONT.

## What is Imagine Your Parks? What did Imagine Your Parks 1 and 2 accomplish?

Nearly two decades ago, BREC implemented the *Imagine Your Parks* strategic plan (2005-2014) which was created after a year and a half of surveys, community meetings, brainstorming sessions and public planning meetings. The results transformed the parks system in East Baton Rouge Parish featuring 12 new community parks, five dog parks, Liberty Lagoon Water Park, skate parks, fishing ponds, a new conservation area in Central for hikers and nature lovers, improved playgrounds, a growing trails system, a mobile playground unit as well as renovations to our neighborhood parks and special use facilities such as the Realm of the Tiger exhibit at BREC's Baton Rouge Zoo.

*Imagine Your Parks 2*, developed in 2014, set eight strategic directions and has resulted in 88 capital projects underway or completed to date, ranging from neighborhood parks and playgrounds to conservation areas, recreation centers, trails, and pollinator gardens. In addition to guiding capital investments, Imagine Your Parks plans have improved technology and software, partnerships, innovative programs, natural resources management, and operations and maintenance practices.

Imagine Your Park plans have transformed the BREC system, expanding and modernizing the system to meet community needs. BREC was recognized as the #1 large park system in 2022 by winning the prestigious gold medal, awarded each year by the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA). This marks the third time in BREC's 75-year history that BREC has been named the number one large park system in the country.

To learn more about prior Imagine Your Parks planning and implementation results, visit these pages on BREC's website:

- <https://www.brec.org/ImagineYourParks1>
- <https://www.brec.org/ImagineYourParks2>
- <https://www.brec.org/75-years-of-brec> - See decades: 2000-2009, 2010-2019, and 2020-present

## What does “equity” mean for parks planning?

The System Master Plan will have a deep focus on equity. “Equity” is a broad term that encompasses BREC's intention to make parks and recreation **more accessible, welcoming, and inclusive**, especially for community members who may have historically or currently face barriers to accessing and enjoying BREC parks, facilities, and programs. Equity has many dimensions: physical access, racial equity, environmental justice, financial access, cultural relevance, and beyond. This process will consider where parks and services are located; facility quality, maintenance, and safety; histories of investment; and current barriers.

Integral to equity is also how decisions are made. This process will continue BREC's commitment to **meaningful community input**. Through pop-up outreach and providing a range of ways to participate BREC will place a focus on making input opportunities accessible for underrepresented community voices.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS CONT.

## National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA)'s Working Definition of Equitable Park and Recreation Access:

The just and fair **quantity, proximity** and **connections** to **quality** parks and green space, recreation facilities, as well as programs that are **safe, inclusive, culturally relevant** and **welcoming** to everyone. When people have just and fair access, our **health and social wellbeing** improve, and our communities can protect and better **recover from environmental, social and economic challenges**.

Learn more: <https://www.nrpa.org/publications-research/best-practice-resources/creating-equity-based-system-master-plans/>

## How will this process support the sustained funding necessary to maintain the BREC system and enhance equitable access?

The BREC System Master Plan will play a major role in communicating the successes of the last twenty years, the vision for the next ten years, and the resources required to achieve this vision. BREC's current Capital Improvements Program (CIP) is funded by a 2-mill property tax levied across the Parish, which is brought to the voters for renewal every ten years. In addition, a 1.75 mill enhancement tax has allowed BREC to bring its parks and recreation facilities to a much higher standard of quality, funding the construction of twelve regional community parks, a major aquatic center, and more. To sustain the current level of quality parks, and to meet the growing needs and vision of the citizens of East Baton Rouge Parish (EBRP), continued funding is critical.

## How can I learn more and stay in touch?

You can visit the project website: [www.brec.org/ImaginingYourParks](http://www.brec.org/ImaginingYourParks)

To sign-up for project updates, enter your email address in the form at the bottom of the project website.