




IMAGINE YOUR PARKS₂
Better Parks – Better Living




STRATEGIC PLAN 2015 - 2024 PORTFOLIO
BREC PLANNING & ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT
CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS + PLANNING PROJECTS



Imagine Your Parks 2 Portfolio
Prepared by BREC Planning & Engineering
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BREC MISSION

It is BREC's mission to contribute to a healthier, more vibrant community by providing exceptional parks, open spaces and recreational experiences for all of East Baton Rouge Parish.

BREC VISION

BREC's vision is to provide an extraordinary system of parks, open spaces, and facilities that engages the parish's unique natural and cultural landscape to enrich parish life by providing diverse and memorable recreational experiences.

BREC VALUES

- ▶ **EXCELLENCE:** striving to provide high quality, state-of-the-art experiences
- ▶ **SERVICE:** attending to the patrons' needs in a courteous, timely fashion
- ▶ **ENGAGEMENT:** regularly seeking feedback and direction from the community
- ▶ **EQUITY:** delivering comparable experiences across the parish
- ▶ **INTEGRITY:** being honest, fair, and objective
- ▶ **PROFESSIONALISM:** employing skill, good judgment, and politeness
- ▶ **COLLABORATION:** working with community partners to achieve mutual goals
- ▶ **FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY:** using taxpayer dollars as efficiently as possible
- ▶ **SAFETY:** ensuring that park, program, and facility users feel free from harm
- ▶ **SUSTAINABILITY:** serving as responsible stewards of the environment



MISSION + VISION



Greenwood Zoo Public Meeting 2019

IMAGINE YOUR PARKS₂ BACKGROUND

The Imagine Your Parks₂ (IYP2) plan provided a vision for East Baton Rouge Parish that aimed to help BREC staff build on the success of the original Imagine Your Parks₁ (IYP1) strategic plan. While IYP1 focused on developing more community parks across the parish, IYP2 accounted for recent trends in recreation, changes in demographics, and community input.

IYP2 established eight strategic directions for BREC to focus on between 2015-2024, and it included a road map for how to accomplish those items. Action items for each department were broken down under each step, and these were reported on each year within the annual report.

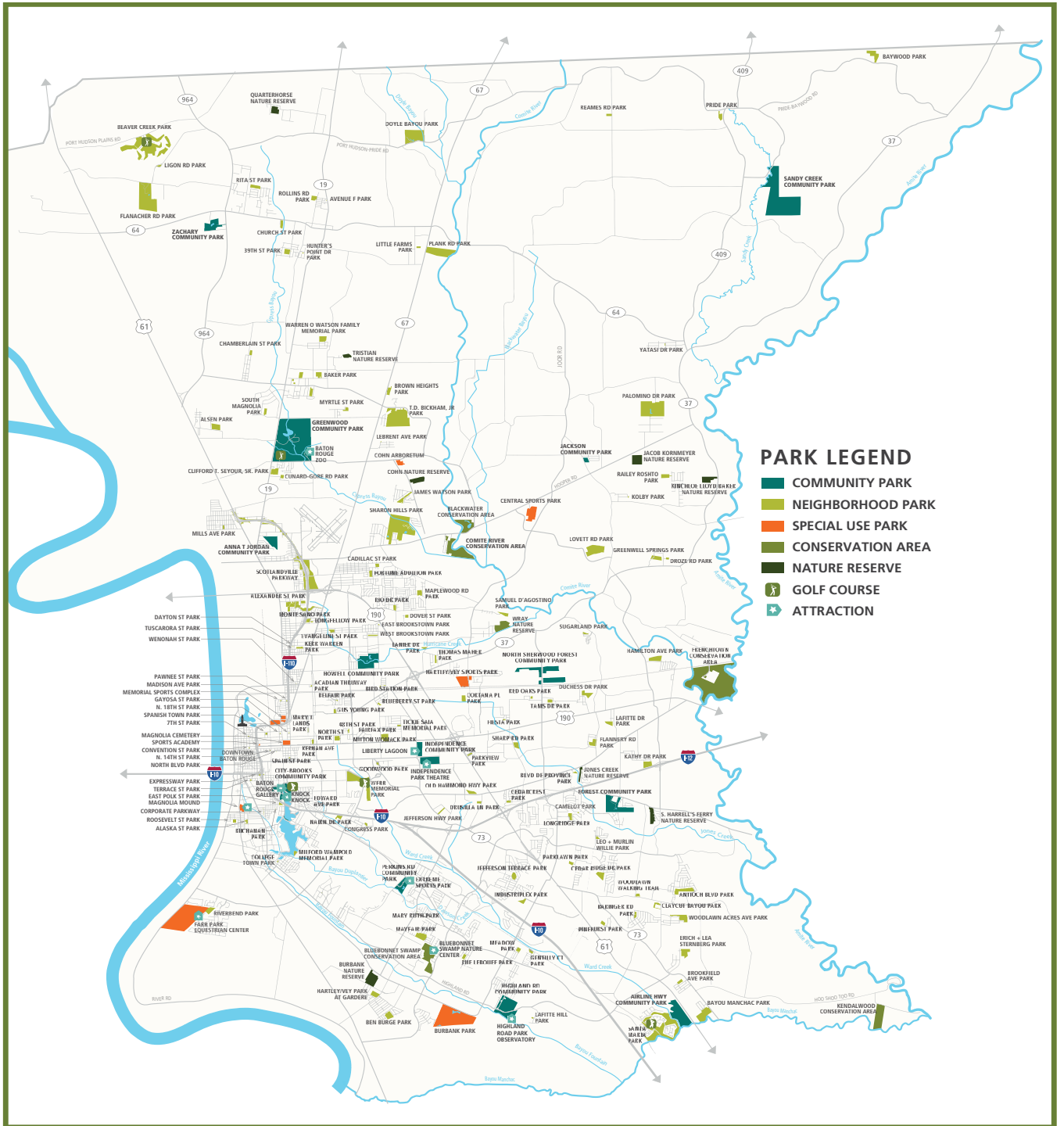
The strategic directions and action items associated with the Planning & Engineering Department are outlined within the following chapter.





BREC 75th Anniversary Celebration 2021

BREC PARK SYSTEM MAP



SUMMARY OF MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

COMMUNITY PARKS

One of the foundations of BREC's 2004 Imagine Your Parks Plan (IYP1) was to focus on developing a higher level of quality parks. Twelve Community Parks were identified throughout the parish to serve this purpose and provide at least one Community Park within a 10-minute drive from anywhere in East Baton Rouge Parish. BREC was able to utilize nine existing parks and purchased land for three additional Community Parks. The average Community Park size is 140 acres.

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY PARK?

A Community Park is a classification of BREC parks meant to serve a larger geographic area than the surrounding neighborhood. These parks are designed to engage families and visitors for an entire day with multiple and diverse activities and amenities throughout. They serve a broader purpose than neighborhood parks and focus on meeting a wide variety of community-based recreation needs.



Over the last 10 years, BREC has set a new standard for quality in its Community Parks. Between the transformative master planning processes for Airline Highway Park and Greenwood Community Park, to the extensive renovations at Howell, City-Brooks, Jackson and North Sherwood Forest parks, we have over-delivered on our promise to enhance these parish-wide assets.



Both Airline and Greenwood will feature state-of-the-art green infrastructure and amenities that seamlessly coalesce the goals of environmental protection, flood risk reduction, recreation, and education.

The dog park at City-Brooks received major upgrades, while Jackson received a new community center, playground, shade structures, and open green space with additional lighting, planting, and stormwater management features.

NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

A Neighborhood Park is the smaller type of BREC parks meant to serve the citizens living within walking distance of the park. Neighborhood Parks remain the core facility of the BREC park system and serve as the recreational and social focus of neighborhoods throughout all of East Baton Rouge Parish. The concentration in Neighborhood Parks is on informal activity, programmed activity, passive recreation, and community cohesion.

With 142 Neighborhood Parks, BREC aims to serve every part of EBR Parish. In the past 10 years, BREC completed work in 96 of these parks. The average Neighborhood Park size is 15 acres but can range anywhere between approximately 1 and 60 acres. Below, we have highlighted 2 parks that have received “major” work, meaning the parks that had a complete overhaul, although the type of work completed in this category since 2015 ranges from new ball parks to recreation center renovations and tree surveys. See the Neighborhood Parks section for more detail.



Our neighborhood parks are tailored to serve the individual communities of East Baton Rouge Parish. BREC is able to accomplish this by working with our Communications Department to survey specific neighborhoods to learn the age range of children in the area, in addition to what families would like to see in each park.



The 2 parks highlighted here include Lovett Road and Jefferson Highway park, both of which have received considerable improvements during IYP2. These parks are small, but packed with amenities that offer a range of services. Lovett Road Park has a new dog park, playground, walking path, and an updated recreation center. While Jefferson Highway Park offers a renovated community center that can host conferences, weddings, receptions, and community events. In addition, this park also offers tennis and basketball courts, and a playground.

CONSERVATION AREAS + NATURE RESERVES

Conservation is critical to ensuring the protection of local habitats and biodiversity within the parish. BREC has several parks devoted specifically to conservation including Bluebonnet Swamp Nature Center, Blackwater, Comite River, Frenchtown, and Kendalwood. These sites typically include primitive and nature trails, and they often include an educational facility devoted to either teaching about wildlife and habitats or research purposes.

WHAT IS A NATURE RESERVE?

Nature Reserves are tracts of land set aside as protected natural habitat to preserve their biodiversity, geomorphic features, and the ecosystem services they provide. Ecosystem services refer to things like stormwater retention, and carbon sequestration. Nature Reserves are undeveloped parks with access limited to those completing scientific research and management activities. For more information, see the Nature Reserves section.



Frenchtown Conservation Area is located at the confluence of the Amite and Comite rivers and is BREC's largest Conservation Area comprising 495-acres. The habitat includes a mix of rare and common native ecosystems ranging from bottomland hardwood forest to spruce pine hardwood-flatwood forest. It currently has over 3 miles of trails in the park including access to the Amite River beach area, several Amite and Comite River overlooks, and access to Cypress-Tupelo sloughs and swamps.



The Burbank Nature Reserve is the in the BREC park system at 58.18 acres and is in an area that is quickly being developed. This reserve is an isolated patch of natural area, largely composed of forested wetlands, and plays an important role in stormwater retention for the parish. Here, LSU researchers are examining how human impacts change patterns in biodiversity across taxa.

SPECIAL USE FACILITIES

Special Use Facilities are parks or facilities within a park that are typically devoted to one unique recreational or cultural opportunity. These facilities draw citizens from throughout the parish and surrounding region. The acreage varies from a few acres to over 100 acres based on the needs and focus of each park. Some Special Use Facilities make up an entire park such as Magnolia Mound and Hartley-Vey Sports Park, while others are facilities within a larger park such as the Baton Rouge Zoo (Greenwood Community Park) and Liberty Lagoon (Independence Community Park).

These facilities are regional in function and require high visibility and ease of access from major streets. There are cases where access is limited due to the nature and location of the facility, Frenchtown Conservation Area and Bluebonnet Swamp are examples of this. Amenities at each Special Use Facility will vary based on the function of the facility.



There were numerous Special Use Parks and Facilities that received enhancements in IYP2 program. Athletic facilities such as Burbank Park, Central Sports Park, and Hartley/Vey Sports Park received high-tech sports lighting.

Liberty Lagoon was a part of the original Imagine Your Parks Master Plan. Phase II of the Liberty Lagoon improvements (part of Imagine Your Parks 2) included a significant park expansion with new features and amenities. The expansion would also increase the maximum capacity of the park from 600 to 900 guests.

Cultural sites such as Magnolia Mound and Cohn Arboretum received enhancements to historic structures to preserve the southern vernacular so that current and future generations can connect to the past.

GREENWAYS + BLUEWAYS (CONNECTIVITY TRAILS)

During IYP1, surveying the public showed trails to be in high demand—connectivity trails in particular. These were defined as pathways used for biking, walking, hiking, etc. to connect from one greenspace to another. Further planning and collaboration with other Baton Rouge Organizations and stakeholders brought about the EBR Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan (Bike Ped Plan), which recommended several BREC-led trail priorities known as “greenways”—a shared-use path located within parks, natural environments, or urban settings where landscape provides a buffer between motor vehicles and facility users.

WHAT IS A BLUEWAY?

A blueway provides public access to local waterways through access to canoe and kayak launches. The first access point is located on Bayou Fountain in Highland Road Park.



The existing and planned greenways and blueways in the BREC system were designed to connect North and South Baton Rouge. With trails beginning in Scotlandville that lead to Downtown, through the Lakes area, and the Health Loop, these trails will provide access for residents to bike safely across town. The Health Loop specifically creates a roughly 10-mile ring through the “Health District” where many hospitals and medical facilities are located.



BREC’s blueway trails were created to provide greater access to waterways throughout the parish. BREC currently has two blueway launches built at Highland Road Community Park and Bayou Manchac Park that provide access to Bayou Fountain and Bayou Manchac. More launches are planned along our waterways throughout the parish.