

# STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS TABLE OF CONTENTS

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1: .....	16
STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2: .....	18
STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3: .....	20
STRATEGIC DIRECTION 4: .....	26
STRATEGIC DIRECTION 5: .....	34
STRATEGIC DIRECTION 6: .....	40
STRATEGIC DIRECTION 7: .....	42
STRATEGIC DIRECTION 8: .....	43

# STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS + ACTION ITEMS FOR P&E AND CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS FROM IYP2

During the implementation of Imagine Your Parks 1 (IYP1), 12 community parks were built, and this changed the parks and recreation experience within East Baton Rouge Parish. Since the Imagine Your Parks 2 (IYP2) vision and action plan was approved by the BREC Commission in 2014, our staff has been working hard to meet the goals outlined in the document. The eight Strategic Directions are outlined below.

- **STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1.** Continue to place a priority on the wise use of taxpayer dollars.
- **STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2.** Continue innovation in recreation programming.
- **STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3.** Continue to raise the standard for parks and recreation facilities, and ensure equitable access to park and recreation experiences across the parish.
- **STRATEGIC DIRECTION 4.** Strengthen and increase natural resource related recreational opportunities.
- **STRATEGIC DIRECTION 5.** Enhance connectivity by improving the network of multi-use trails to, within, and between parks and community assets.
- **STRATEGIC DIRECTION 6.** Increase local awareness of BREC's programs and facilities and the overall value of BREC.
- **STRATEGIC DIRECTION 7.** Work with partners and the BREC Foundation to achieve common goals and leverage resources.
- **STRATEGIC DIRECTION 8.** Ensure that BREC's parks and facilities are operated and maintained efficiently and according to best practices and to defined standards for park types.

Action Items have been developed for each item, and those that are relevant to the Planning & Engineering (P&E) Department have been listed within this document. In addition, a brief description of how the department met the action items within each Strategic Direction is included.

# STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1:

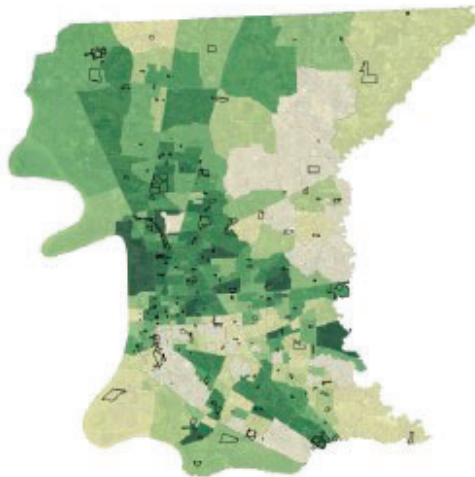
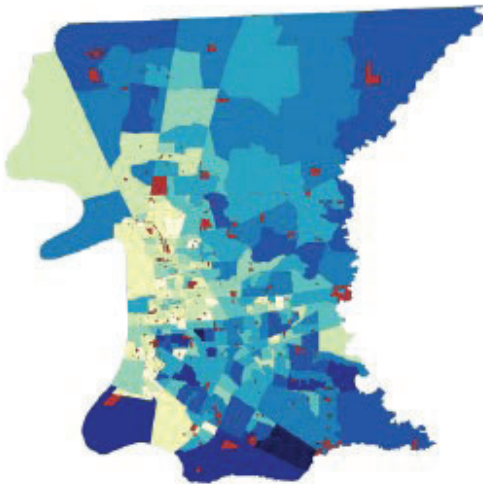
Continue to place a priority on the wise use of taxpayer dollars.

## ACTION STEPS

**1.1** Continue to approach planning, delivery, and maintenance of recreation programs and facilities in an equitable and balanced manner.

**1**

Integrate scientific needs index surveys with other relevant information to help in decision making for programming and planning.



### IMPLEMENTING GIS

Since 2017, BREC P&E has been implementing a GIS platform within the department. A GIS consultant, Environmental Science Services (ES2), was hired to help understand the GIS planning needs of BREC and to train staff in how to utilize the software. The team began working with the BREC IT Steering Committee to centralize all BREC spatial data, and a GIS Manual outlining procedures and workflow was written.

In 2017, P&E had 2-3 users of the software, and currently, we have 16 users within our department (2022). This software is used to create an inventory of existing amenities and programs within BREC parks, to survey and track natural resources, for long-range planning, and numerous other tasks.

### EQUITY-BASED PLANNING

In 2019, a “Needs Assessment Survey” and a “Level-of-Service Standards” report were completed to help understand the recreation priorities and needs of the public. Within these reports, equity-based desired future conditions were examined, including access, economic, quality, environmental, and engagement equity. These reports helped BREC to consider our parks as integrated elements of an interconnected public realm and as essential frameworks for achieving community sustainability, resiliency, and livability.

## 1.3 Increase consideration of costs and benefits in operations, maintenance, and capital decisions.

3

Evaluate whether park and recreation facilities that do not meet productivity standards can be brought up to standards in a fiscally responsible way, or if they should be reduced or re-purposed. Update and implement the obsolete land facility study.

4

Use site-level analyses to inform system-wide decisions.

5

Optimize operations, program, and maintenance standards to ensure financial sustainability.

## 1.4 Track and report revenues, direct and indirect costs, and participation associated with BREC's services.

3

Communicate the value that BREC parks, facilities and programs provide to the parish.

### BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

A study of obsolete land and facilities within the BREC system has been completed, and steps have been taken to remove obsolete facilities from the system. In one instance, Terrace Street Park was declared obsolete, and an agreement was entered into with Front Yard Bikes, a local nonprofit, for use of the space.

An document was developed to track small-scale experimental projects, such as fabricating concrete speed humps as opposed to purchasing prefabricated humps; erosion control test projects using gabions and plants; or field lights controlled by an automated payment kiosk. The results and documentation of these projects are being used to create a data dictionary of best practices. In addition, a P&E Standard Operating Procedures Manual draft was completed in 2021.

## STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2:

Continue innovation in recreation programming.

### ACTION STEPS

2.1

Strengthen BREC's commitment to improving public health and wellness through recreation for all segments of the community.

4

Work with health service providers and other partners to monitor and assess the effectiveness of BREC programming on public health over time.

### PUBLIC HEALTH

Through the BREC Trails program, we have implemented trails throughout the parish within parks and as connectivity trails. These trails and open spaces are correlated with improved public health. A draft study completed by the Trust for Public Land (TPL) demonstrated that BREC facilities are utilized by 69.3% of parish residents and that residents visit our parks 9,524,458 times annually. When people visit, they are participating in activities such as walking, running, picnicking, or using the playgrounds, so they are getting physical activity, resulting in healthier citizens with lower health costs—for those below 65, annual health savings are about \$1,366, and the number doubles for those over 65.

As part of a Blue Cross Grant, BREC has installed automated trail counters in several parks, however there were technical difficulties, rendering the data unreliable. Instead, a system involving QR codes was used at fitness stations along trails--these were called QR Fit Trails Stations. When a person scanned a QR code to get info on how to do different exercises, this data point was collected, resulting in a sample of trail users being tracked.



## 2.2 Develop an integrated, regional and system-wide program plan that aligns provided programs with market demand and the needs of under-served populations.

1

Determine BREC's role in parish service delivery (core/essential, important and value added), factoring in other programming provided by municipalities, the parish, nonprofits, and others.

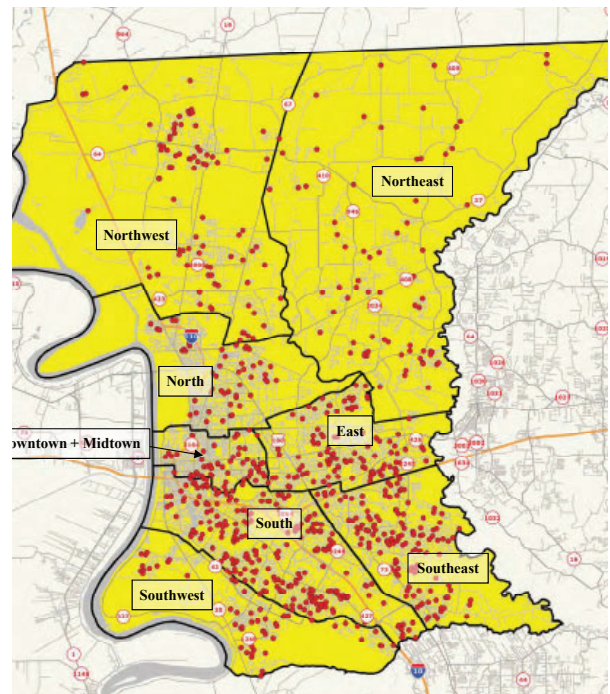
6

Monitor national recreation trends and incorporate new and innovative recreational programs to sustain community engagement.

### STANDARDS OF SERVICE

In 2015, BREC began inputting data into analysis maps to provide support information for use in decision making across all departments. BREC P&E continues to provide mapping support to various departments to aid in planning efforts and gap analysis to determine need throughout the parish. This information is compiled by the Planning & Development Division within P&E. This team has been diligently cataloging all amenities within the BREC system using GIS software.

A tracking document was also created to examine trends and best practices within the field of parks and recreation. Some of the recent trends that were researched as part of this goal include adventure playgrounds, pump tracks, cricket pitches, recreational trails, challenge courses and health-related recreational opportunities.



## STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3:

Continue to raise the standard for parks and recreation facilities, and ensure equitable access to park and recreation experiences across the parish.

### ACTION STEPS

#### 3.1 Efficiently and effectively implement the 2015–2024 Capital Improvement Program.

1

Continue to engage citizens, user groups, and staff in planning for renovations and new park improvements.

2

Plan for and conduct improvements in a fair, equitable, and balanced manner considering time and the geography of the parish.

3

Monitor and track progress, and disseminate information to commissioners, staff, and the public.



### BREC STANDARDS

Recently, BREC P&E completed a draft Standard Operating Procedures manual, which details items such as department policies and procedures, natural resource and land management procedures, system planning, design services, and construction contracting. This document details the workflows of all positions associated with P&E to ensure efficiency and optimal service to the public.

BREC strives to provide equitable amenities throughout the parish, and community engagement in the planning process is at the forefront of every project. Geospatial data is vital for visualizing needs assessments throughout the park system, and is used to determine where tax-payer dollars are spent. After specific park projects are chosen, park master plans are completed for larger parks to ensure we get enough public feedback and perform a complete site analysis to ensure we are providing what the community needs and wants. Each month, the BREC Commission is updated on ongoing projects in various stages of design.



#### PLANNING & ENGINEERING

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT MANUAL  
+ STANDARD OPERATING  
PROCEDURES

NOVEMBER 2021 DRAFT DOCUMENT

## 3.2 Develop an asset management plan with a life cycle replacement schedule to govern capital investment in existing parks and facilities.

1

Develop a standardized GIS-based inventory for staff to deliver facility improvement projects of the highest quality within the resources provided, within budget, on schedule, and that meet the needs of citizens.

2

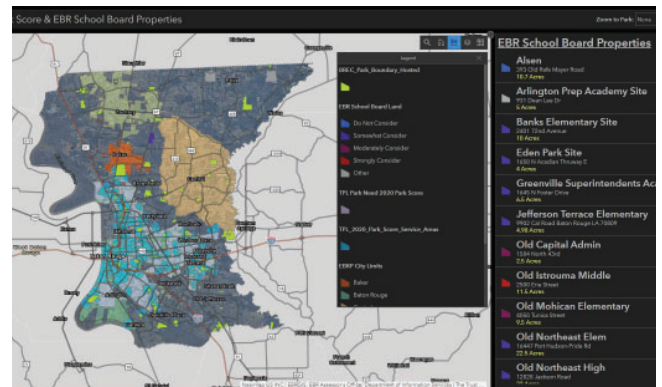
Monitor replacement needs over time, utilizing the GIS management system, and adjust planning accordingly.

3

Develop and apply cost-benefit criteria for investing in deferred maintenance of parks and facilities.

4

Evaluate underutilized assets for opportunities to either incorporate new uses that are consistent with the BREC mission or to remove from inventory based on cost-benefit analysis.



### PROPER USE OF BREC FUNDS

Each year, BREC staff reviews the list of projects laid out in IYP2--those completed, those under construction, and those in design. We also look at visitor use, the amount of existing programming, staffing needs and availability, the needs of the community, and other factors in determining which projects will be the focus each year. P&E staff has also recently completed a GIS Geodatabase inventory of buildings on BREC property, to better understand which locations need long-term maintenance and/or replacement.

BREC continues to engage citizens, user groups, and staff in planning for renovations and new park improvements. This is an ongoing process for P&E, and the BREC Partnerships & Development team has recently unveiled a community engagement plan that accesses the level and type of engagement needed for each project. This process is ongoing, and typically, the larger the project, the higher level of public engagement.



## STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3:

Continue to raise the standard for parks and recreation facilities, and ensure equitable access to park and recreation experiences across the parish.

### ACTION STEPS

#### 3.3 Upgrade or provide new parks and facilities to address shortcomings and meet changing user needs in line with level of service standards.

1

Identify new minimum design and maintenance standards for upgraded or new parks, recreation centers, and other facilities to meet program needs and further other strategic directions.

2

Study quality examples of park and recreation design to help improve BREC offerings.

3

Develop and implement a new plan and model for larger, multi-use, efficient recreation centers in community parks that includes facilities, operations, and air-conditioned gyms.

4

Selectively improve recreation centers at neighborhood parks based on cost and available space to ensure equitable access to improved facilities across the parish.

5

Consider theming of recreation centers to reduce duplication of services.

6

Continue to build new parks to serve growing parts of the parish, including a new community park in the southeast portion of the parish, either through new land acquisition or utilizing existing BREC-owned land.

7

Support opportunities to leverage BREC's funding with neighborhood-based funding in coordination with the BREC Foundation and other partners.

8

Monitor existing upgrade needs and new park and facility needs over time.

## UPGRADES + MAINTENANCE

In 2017, P&E staff has been gathering information on best practices, or Level of Service (LOS), from various parks and recreation departments around the country. The department then worked with a recreation planning consultant to develop LOS standards that were best suited to BREC, and then completed a draft LOS standards document. P&E staff continues to take staff field trips and encourages staff to attend conferences to keep abreast of industry trends.

Other studies and plans implemented as part of this strategic goal include the following:

- Recreation Center Charette and plan
- ADA Transition Plan
- Land Study to determine a location for a southeast community park location (Airline Highway Park)

In addition to these initiatives, BREC strives to leverage funds by partnering with local organizations to make best use of available funds. Finally, our BREC staff, including P&E, Construction Crews, and Park Operations, is involved in ongoing monitoring of maintenance needs at existing facilities.

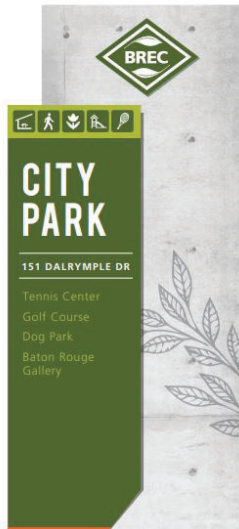


## STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3:

Continue to raise the standard for parks and recreation facilities, and ensure equitable access to park and recreation experiences across the parish.

### ACTION STEPS

#### 3.4 Improve design, construction, and maintenance guidelines for BREC facilities.



1

Develop BREC design guidelines for parks and facilities addressing, among other topics: materials, layout, safety, maintainability, environment, stormwater management, site furnishings, trees and vegetation, trails, lighting, sports fields, courts, and playgrounds in addition to ASTM standards.

2

Develop BREC standard site construction and maintenance details for all baseline site improvement needs.

3

Clarify and communicate differences among community, neighborhood, and special use park types, including service areas, design, amenities, and operation.

4

Review best practices in park planning, design, and operation from other park systems, and incorporate those best practices into BREC's guidelines.

### GUIDELINES

With the goal of developing design guidelines that address topics such as materials, layout, safety, environment, stormwater management, lighting, vegetation, and equipment for parks and facilities, several documents have been created. These include the following:

- Graphic Standards Manual (signage)
- BREC Design Guidelines document
- Standard Operating Procedures Manual

To further improve design and construction standards, a library of construction details has been established and is reviewed periodically. In this way, P&E staff can ensure a level of continuity across all projects. In addition, our staff has worked to inform the public of the differences in different amenities available at various park types. This information can be found on our BREC website where parks are clearly categorized.

## 3.5 Capitalize on existing historic and cultural resources in BREC parks, and evaluate the potential of protecting additional historic and cultural resources that have recreational value.

- 1 Inventory historic and cultural resources in BREC parks to identify facilities that may be eligible for local landmark or national register designation.
- 2 Identify resources of potential historic significance that may need protection and have potential educational and interpretive components.
- 3 Establish historic and cultural resource design guidelines for the treatment of BREC historic and cultural resources, and implement a design review process that is consistent with historic and cultural resource design guidelines.
- 4 Establish an interpretive and education program plan and guidelines for individual facilities.
- 5 Use objective criteria to evaluate whether potential historic or cultural resources should be added to the BREC system.



### NATURAL + CULTURAL RESOURCES

As part of the overall planning process, BREC P&E staff have created overall and individual plans to help conserve and protect our cultural and natural resources. The P&E Natural Resources Management (NRM) division has created a Natural Resource Management plan that guides all conservation work completed within our park system. In addition, at cultural facilities, such as Magnolia Mound Plantation or the Cohn Arboretum, special care is taken to address long-range planning to ensure these resources are available for generations to come.

## ACTION STEPS

**3.6** Implement BREC's strategic plan for golf.

**3.7** Implement the strategic plan for BREC's Baton Rouge Zoo.

## STRATEGIC DIRECTION 4:

Strengthen and increase natural resource related recreational opportunities.

### ACTION STEPS

#### 4.1 Implement BREC's Natural Resources Management Plan.

As the guiding document for BREC's conservation education, programming, and resource management since its inception in 1995, the Natural Resource Management Plan (NRMP) has changed progressively over the years as has BREC's conservation efforts. In 2014, after a gap in conservation staffing, the 2011 plan was reviewed and given a brief update by new staff. The 2014 plan focused on bringing facts and data back to the bases of the plan and included 17 Action items ranging from sustainability and marketing to land acquisition priorities. Due to low staffing levels, the early focus of the plan was on increasing the educational and programming opportunities offered to the public. However, to do so, amenities like hiking trails which allowed access into conservation areas and management units was required to host such programs. As a result, as program offerings increased, so did the number of hiking trail opportunities and ultimately the number of BREC staff dedication to conservation efforts.

A large step toward BREC achieving its natural resource management goals was in 2018 when the Superintendent created two separate divisions for natural resource management and conservation programming. By 2019 the number of staff dedicated to conservation efforts quadrupled and allowed a direct focus on management activities that previously there was not adequate time for such as biodiversity studies, invasive species management, hiking trail enhancements and more. At the same time, BREC made significant technological advancement as

a geodatabase was developed to catalog and store data about the parks. With these significant changes it was obvious that the NRMP needed to be updated to reflect the new focus on conservation. In 2021, the commission passed the updated Natural Resource Management Plan which is now a comprehensive view of existing conditions, common conservation practices and goals which reflect new capabilities. The updated plan reevaluated BREC's conservation and resource management goals and updated as follows:

- Promote recreational and educational activities focusing on appreciation and understanding of the natural environment
- Protect and restore unique, healthy, and historically representative habitats
- Preserve biodiversity and reduce the loss of native species.
- Conserve, restore and expand ecosystem services for the benefit of residents.
- Manage resources adaptively using innovative approaches.

Backed by data, the new plan focuses on measurable metrics to evaluate the effectiveness of management prescriptions which are broken down into an annual work plan. The following Action Steps listed below highlight the different ways in which BREC implemented the NRMP over the last 10 years. These Action Steps were developed from the NRMP and so reflect its achievements as well.

## 4.2 Develop and implement a land acquisition and easement program focused on creating a connected parish-wide network of natural resources, particularly greenway and blueway corridors.

1

Convene a working group of land owners, environmental organizations, trusts, greenway and waterway user groups, and policy makers as needed to develop a strategy for greater protection of natural resources and providing public access to key river and stream corridors.

2

Update and prioritize lands for BREC acquisition or easements based on defined criteria (e.g., habitat value, stormwater management, adjacency to existing parks or open space corridors, recreational value, connectivity) as outlined in BREC's Natural Resource Management Plan.

3

Study and provide support facilities such as canoe launches for a blueway system to allow access for active canoeing, kayaking, and stewardship projects primarily on the Comite River, Amite River, Bayou Fountain, and Bayou Manchac.



### STRATEGIC LAND ACQUISITION

As part of the updated NRMP, natural resource staff developed a Land Acquisition Rubric designed to evaluate the value of the land in question and the priority in which it should be pursued for acquisition. The rubric evaluates the land from both an ecological and ecosystem services perspective but then also includes other factors such as recreational benefit, cost, funding, proximity to an existing BREC park and so on.

Additionally, the Urban Trails Division, which was created in 2019, has made significant progress in acquiring the necessary servitudes and property agreements to extend BREC's Greenway trails which in the future will most likely also serve as trailheads for the Blueway trail system. In 2017, BREC's first Blueway launch was opened at Highland Community Park allowing public access on the Bayou Fountain blueway trail. This allowed paddlers to access 4 miles of Bayou Fountain and the Bayou Manchac connection. In 2023, BREC opened in most recent addition to the blueway system at Bayou Manchac Park. The new floating dock system allows access to the Bayou Manchac blueway and allowed easier access to the Ward Creek blueway as well.

## STRATEGIC DIRECTION 4:

Strengthen and increase natural resource related recreational opportunities.

### ACTION STEPS

#### 4.3 Use a holistic approach to managing natural resources within BREC parks.

- 1 Develop management plans for each conservation area.
- 2 Educate BREC staff in all divisions on natural resource management objectives.
- 3 Integrate staff and department practices including operations, natural resource management, and park planning to ensure protection of natural resources.
- 4 Work with partners to inventory baseline conditions of natural communities within parks using GIS, and identify areas of concern within local catchment areas that negatively affect those resources.
- 5 Continue to establish ecological performance measures for systematic long term monitoring and assessment of key terrestrial and aquatic resources.
- 6 Consider limiting or restricting access to parts of parks that have high natural resource values as part of the park master planning process.
- 7 Proactively educate and develop cooperative solutions with surrounding property owners and others to address their impacts on natural resources within the parks.
- 8 Educate and involve community partners (volunteers, community groups, conservation organizations, universities, youth programs, etc.) in natural resource restoration and management activities.
- 9 Provide BREC Rangers with information on policies and regulations regarding the protection of natural resources to increase enforcement.
- 10 Continue the use of best management practices and pilot projects for cleaning waterways through public education. If pilots are successful, work with partners to implement practices parish-wide.

The diverse habitats within BREC parks mixed with the unique balance of recreation and conservation needs within each require the use of innovative approaches to natural resource management. In 2019 when the Natural Resource Management was created, it allowed BREC to hire staff with scientific degrees to foster a more data driven and research-based approach. All management strategies are conducted using an Adaptive Resource Management Strategy (ARMS) which require continual reevaluation of outcomes and strategies based on constantly changing conditions. This model allows staff try and sometimes fail as needed to achieve the most rewarding outcomes. Over the last 10 years BREC has made significant improvements and achievements in resource management and to the right are a few highlights reflecting such.



- 8 newly designated Nature Reserves
- Completed Blackwater Management Plan in 2018
- Completed Invasive Species Management Plan in 2021
- 10 Biodiversity Assessments Reports completed
- 2,867 unique flora and fauna Species surveyed in BREC parks to date
- 9 successful BioBlitz's conducted
- Assisted with placement of the Bayou Fountain Boom with Paddle Br and Louisiana Stormwater Coalition
- ATV gates installed at three parks in areas of misuse to restrict access to conservation land
- Successfully conducted 2 large waterway litter clean-up events which involved local partners, volunteer groups and the public.
- Developed a Rapid Ecological Assessment Protocol (REAP) which integrates data collection through GIS to establish long-term monitoring plots to assess impacts and changes to local ecosystems
- Developed the Ecological Value rubric which assesses the inherent value of a park's undeveloped natural areas for values such as wildlife habitat, invasive species dominance, hydrology, rare and unique species, and natural communities
- Mapped and surveyed 1,802 trees to date in BREC parks
- Creation of conservation management units within community and neighborhood parks
- Creation of sensitive habitat zones which protect and buffer unique and rare species and habitats or extraordinary features within the BREC system.



## STRATEGIC DIRECTION 4:

Strengthen and increase natural resource related recreational opportunities.

### ACTION STEPS

#### 4.4 Integrate natural resource interpretation as a key component of programming in BREC parks.

- 1 Develop a system-wide natural resource interpretive plan.
- 2 Educate additional BREC staff on fundamentals of natural resource interpretation.
- 3 Work with community partners (volunteers, community groups, conservation organizations, universities, youth programs, etc.) to develop and implement interpretive programs.
- 4 Implement interpretive signage in relevant parks about water pollution and unlawful hunting, fishing, or other consumption of natural resources.
- 5 Improve on basic messaging about the physical and mental health benefits of the natural environment.
- 6 Work with research partners to measure the benefits of BREC's natural resources and conservation areas, and communicate these benefits to staff and to the public.

As BREC's outdoor recreation resources have expanded in the last 10 years, so has the need for interpreting the environment to the public so they feel a connect with the places they go to hike, paddle, and explore. The hiring of additional staff for conservation programming was a large step towards achieving this goal and since 2014, the number of staff interpreting nature to the public has more than quadrupled. This increase allowed the creation of a second nature-themed summer camp and a diverse offering of environmental education programs available for all ages. In 2017 BREC staff was Certified as an Interpretive Guide through the National Association of Interpretation to ensure programming was conducting in line with national standards. Since that time, additional staff

have been trained and in 2023 have received the interpretive planning training necessary to begin the process for developing an Interpretive Plan for the agency.

In addition to active interpretive opportunities for the public, large strides have been made to increase the passive interpretive opportunities for the public in the form of signage and other materials. To date, 5 parks spread out around the parish have received high quality interpretive signage along trails, near gardens and grow zones and in high use areas of the park. These signs feature the natural resources in the park, discuss the human element of conservation and draw attention to issues and concerns.

## 4.5 Foster, develop, and promote nature-based education and recreation programming across ages and skill levels.

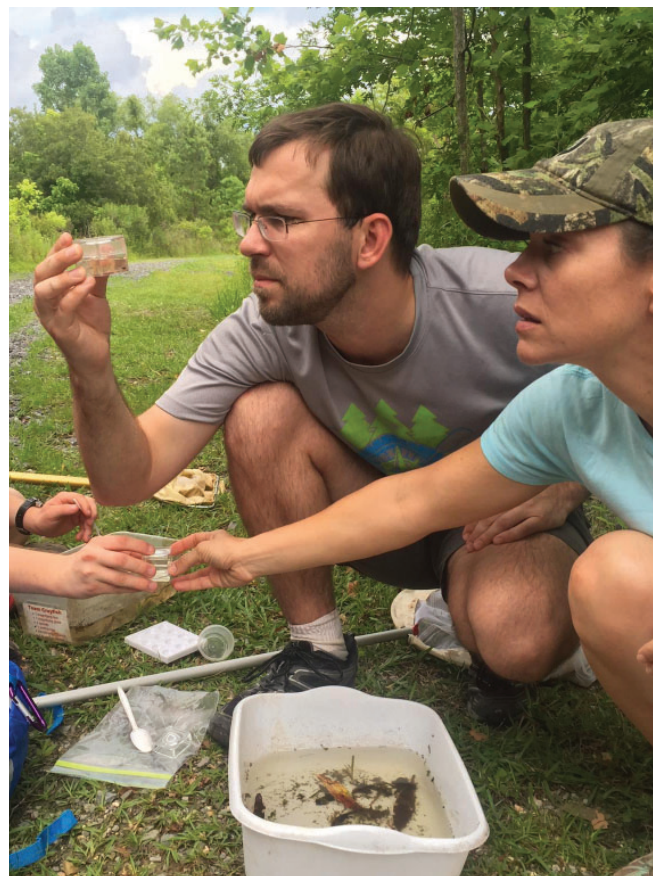
4

Promote outdoor leadership training to better connect teens and young adults to nature.



In the last 10 years social media has become a staple element of marketing and messaging and ultimately, interpretation. This was shown directly in 2020 when COVID restrictions forced programming and interpretation to go online. During this time, staff produced videos and posts which met patrons where they were virtually so they could still have a more interactive one on one experience with BREC staff without the risk. Social media has also allowed for messaging related to the impact nature has on physical and mental health and the benefit BREC parks have on local communities.

In 2014 BREC increased its nature-based programming considerably including a new nature-based summer camp, additional guided hike opportunities and more. Additionally, staff attended outreach events like Ocean Commotion and Louisiana Earth Day. In 2018, BREC's Nature Explorers Camp created a Counselor In Training Program which trained young adults too old for summer camp how to interpret BREC's resources and become camp counselors.



## STRATEGIC DIRECTION 4:

Strengthen and increase natural resource related recreational opportunities.

### ACTION STEPS

#### 4.6 Promote conservation stewardship volunteerism that provides opportunities for individuals and organizations to leave a positive legacy in the park system.

1

Identify opportunities for conservation stewardship activities, such as recycling at large BREC events, removing garbage from lakes or parks, planting trees, or removing invasive plants.

2

Expand efforts to develop collaborative relationships and partnerships with community groups, businesses, service clubs, and other groups that are not currently engaged in conservation stewardship activities.

3

Maintain a list of specific conservation projects that are achievable by volunteers that support meaningful efforts consistent with management plans for BREC conservation areas.

In 2014 when BREC began to expand its hiking trail opportunities throughout the parish, only one staff member was dedicated to maintaining those trails in addition to providing programming to the public. Although the number of staff has increased over the last ten years and there are now 2 staff positions dedicated to maintaining trails, it would not be possible to maintain the existing trail system of nearly 30 miles without volunteer assistance. Staff recognized this need early on and in 2015 welcomed its first handful of consistent conservation volunteers to help with cumbersome tasks and programming. Large volunteer groups were also utilized to help put trails in and for clean-up projects to keep litter out of parks.

In 2017 a more formal volunteer group was created called the Green Force, dedicated to conservation efforts in the BREC system. This program which now consistently has over 100 active members every year, includes a required 8- hour training on BREC procedures and management techniques. The Green Force now helps to maintain 4 different pollinator and rain gardens, remove invasive species from parks, maintain trails, pick up litter and much,

much more. Annually, the Green Force volunteers dedicate around 1,500 hours of their time to BREC conservation efforts which equates to roughly \$60,000 in savings for BREC as an agency. Volunteers in the program are rewarded for their efforts through appreciation events and awards based on the number of hours they provide. Additionally, BREC continues to utilize general volunteers from the public and local organizations for large events and projects. These projects impact a large population of the public and do not require any advanced training, so volunteering is accessible and fun for all demographics. Below is a sample of projects and events that have utilized both Green Force and general conservation volunteers over the last 10 years.

- Annual Bioblitz
- Biannual Geaux Fish Catfish Rodeos
- Restoration Tree Plantings
- Pollinator Garden maintenance
- Waterway and park litter pick-ups
- Guided hikes and programs
- Invasive species removal projects
- Trail creation and bridge building
- Trail Signage installation

## 4.7 Build on BREC's "Geaux Green" movement to strengthen sustainability policies across the organization.

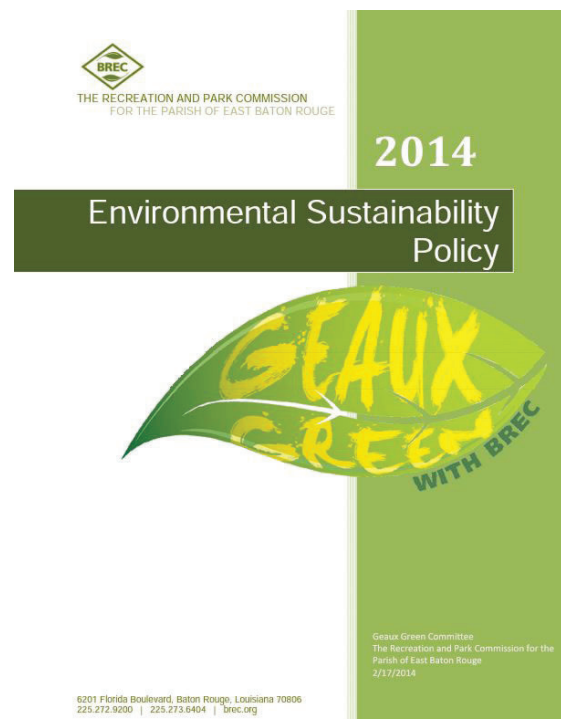
- 1 Develop, or strengthen, and implement policies that target waste reduction, recycling, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, reduced energy usage, reduced water consumption, and light pollution.
- 2 Study effective procedures and activities that could benefit BREC and the public, and conduct pilot projects to determine effectiveness for system-wide application.
- 3 Communicate progress throughout the BREC system to staff and to the public.

the public and typically focused around a special event like a race, walk or scavenger hunt to attract a diverse crowd and increase community health.

BREC continues to look for ways to reduce its environmental footprint and has evaluated purchased and stocked items in the warehouse to determine if there are more environmentally friendly alternatives. BREC is working towards creating an Environmentally Preferred Purchasing Procedures which will help guide BREC staff as they design parks, acquire assets and plan events. Every year departments are tasked with creating a new Green goal that helps move their department towards a sustainable effort that have yet to achieve.

BREC's Environmental Sustainability Policy was adopted by the commission in 2014 and the Recycling and Zero Waste Plan in 2018. To move waste reduction forward in the parish, BREC's public recycling program was initiated in 2014 through the Keep Louisiana Beautiful Grant for 1 park which was expanded in 2015 with the Dr. Pepper Snapple Grant to two additional parks as a pilot project for the rest of the parish. The project proved successful, and BREC now offers recycling at most community parks and sports complexes. On average, BREC diverts over 350,000 lbs. from the landfill annually, recycling plastic, paper, cardboard, and metal.

Additionally, the Geaux Green Committee has hosted several public awareness campaigns for new sustainable policies and efforts through annual events focused on sustainability. Whether on America Recycles Day, or as part of its "Extreme Green" campaign, the events invite partners to come share their knowledge of sustainable resources with



## STRATEGIC DIRECTION 5:

Enhance connectivity by improving the network of multi-use trails to, within, and between parks and community assets.

### ACTION STEPS

#### 5.1 Take a lead role in facilitating the development of a complete parish-wide multi-use trail network.

- 1 Complete development of a parish trail network plan.
- 2 With priority on existing Capital Area Pathways Project initiatives, support and advocate for the implementation of ongoing trail efforts such as the Mississippi River levee trail, the Downtown Greenway, the Medical Loop, and the Highway 19 rail trail.
- 3 Name major spine trails and secondary trails so they have identities that can be used in marketing the trail network.
- 4 Work with municipal public works departments, the Capital Region Planning Commission, and other partners to prepare an implementation plan that assigns responsibilities for developing and managing segments of the parish trail network.
- 5 Involve trail user groups in the planning, implementation, and maintenance of the parish trail network.
- 6 Develop an informational piece for potential land owners that informs about recreational land corridors.
- 7 Under Planning and Engineering, hire a trail planner to spearhead greenway and blueway trail development.

### URBAN TRAILS

Beginning in 2015, BREC partnered with the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LADOTD), the City-Parish and other community partners and stakeholders to develop and deliver the East Baton Rouge Parish Pedestrian & Bicycle Master Plan (EBRPBPMP). The EBRPBPMP established two networks: 1. The Bicycle Facilities Network and 2. The BREC Greenways Network. Together, these routes create a connected, multimodal system.

The plan also provides a comprehensive approach toward active alternative transportation, with the well-being and quality of life of the citizens of EBRP at the center of its guiding principles. It is a proactive approach and a first step to creating a safer and more connected network for cyclists and pedestrians in our community.

To ensure that the plan is implemented, the Planning & Engineering department created a new division: Urban Trails. This group is charged with the development of strategic implementation efforts of the planned network, as well as planning for future trails and education/outreach.

## 5.2 Continue to expand trail experiences within parks.



1

With practicality and efficiency, develop park trail plans to provide experiences that appeal to a variety of skill levels and modes. Consider a combination of loop and linear trails and reducing conflicts between modes.

2

Ensure clear signage in parks that alerts users to available trails, their hierarchy, and destinations that can be reached.

3

Develop a BREC trail management plan that addresses maintenance, safety, cost recovery, marketing, and a planning/decision-making process.

### TRAILS WITHIN PARKS

New trail plans have been developed within several parks and along several connectivity trails, which are also known as greenways. In 2019, BREC P&E worked with MERJE Design Consultants to complete a Park Signage and Wayfinding Graphic Standards Manual, which has been used to update the signage within our parks.

After completing a management plan typology study, BREC developed a draft Trail Management Plan which incorporates aspects of maintenance, conservation issues, construction concerns, and habitat restoration.

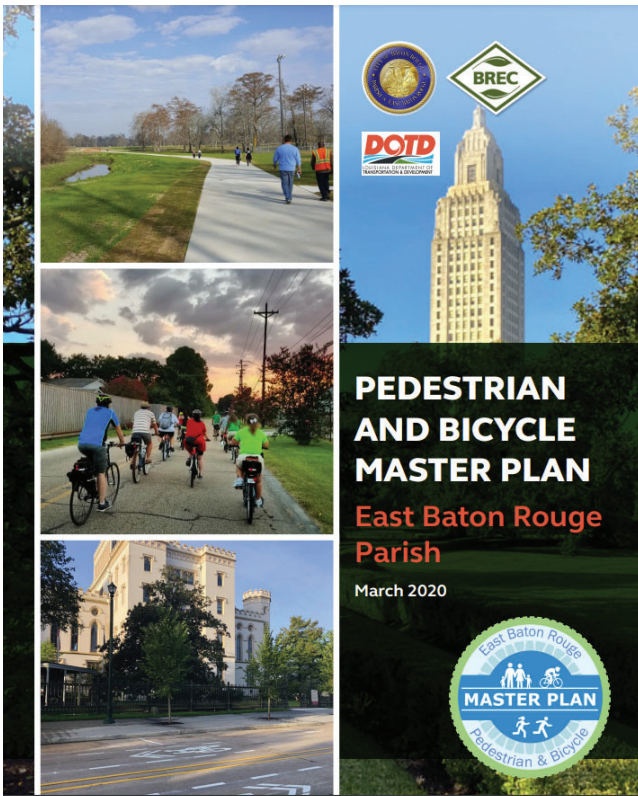
## STRATEGIC DIRECTION 5:

Enhance connectivity by improving the network of multi-use trails to, within, and between parks and community assets.

### ACTION STEPS

#### 5.3 Improve connections to and between BREC parks.

- 1 Identify, develop, and manage priority segments of the parish trail network that link two or more BREC parks.
- 2 Work with partners to secure funding for better trail, bike lane, and sidewalk connections between neighborhoods and BREC parks.
- 3 Connect to adjacent trail systems beyond the parish.



### CONNECTING PEOPLE TO PARKS

As mentioned previously, the East Baton Rouge Parish Pedestrian & Bicycle Master Plan (EBRPBMP) was a collaborative effort between BREC, LA DOTD and City-Parish to create a roadmap for trail planning across the Parish. Upon completion of the recommended network and resulting increases in walking and biking, anticipated benefits include but are not limited to greater connectivity between parks, improved health outcomes, improved environmental conditions like air quality, and enhanced economic opportunity for all. The EBRBPMP concluded that over 100 miles of on-road bike facilities and over 250 miles of off-road side paths and trails (aka greenways) are needed for the region to be more accessible and safer for non-motorized uses.

BREC has also worked with the Capital Region Planning Commission (CRPC) on a Regional Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan that considers how the network will connect to adjacent parishes. It is adopted in early 2023.

## 5.4 Establish a trail use monitoring methodology.

- 1 Build upon the infrared trail counter system being implemented on the wards Creek trail, and expand this system to other trail segments to gather consistent long-term data.
- 2 Continue to develop and implement a trail use observation procedure to be used by staff and volunteers (e.g., trail use form, schedule, safety measures, surveys).
- 3 Use gathered trail data to help guide the trail system planning process, secure outside funding, and garner support for future trail development.

### TRAIL DATA

With the completion of the Pennington trail segment, infrared trail counters and QR fits signs were installed along both the Pennington and Perkins trail segments.

Additionally, BREC participated in a study with the University of New Orleans (Pedestrians and Bicyclists Count: Implementing and Applying Multimodal Demand Data), in which counters were installed along the City Park greenway and within the Government Street separated bike lane.

The data collected is used to help inform the use intensity of each trail segment and to inform the planning and development of future trail segments.



Pictured above is one of the counters installed by UNO near the LSU Lakes. The objectives of the project include the identification, support, and informational opportunities for coordinated local and MPO-led data collection.



## STRATEGIC DIRECTION 5:

Enhance connectivity by improving the network of multi-use trails to, within, and between parks and community assets.

### ACTION STEPS

#### 5.5 Develop trail standards for parish trails.

- 1 Define signage / branding standards.
- 2 Define construction standards.
- 3 Define maintenance standards.



### STANDARDIZATION

BREC has worked closely with Communications to develop signage and branding standards for trail signage that is appropriate for the much larger urban scale of our greenways.

Further, in 2019, a graphics standards manual was developed to ensure that all parks, conservation areas, greenways, blueways and special use facilities feature a consistent wayfinding system that is both unique and functional.

The manual ensures that BREC's unique identity is effectively communicated to the public. Additionally, it includes user experience requirements, materials that are sensitive to the environment in which they exist, costs, and the management and maintenance of the overall signage program.

## 5.6 Provide the community with materials and information that demonstrate the many benefits of a good recreational (and transportation) trail system.

- 1 Taking advantage of broadly available research as well as data gathered through the monitoring of BREC's own trails, compile descriptions of the many benefits of trail systems.
- 2 Disseminate answers to frequently asked questions about trails and their benefits across different media (e.g., on the BREC website, in written materials, for presentations, and for staff educational pieces).

### TRAIL INFO

For the past couple years, the BREC Natural Resource Management team, which manages trails within parks, and the Urban Trails team, which manages greenways and connectivity trails, has been participating in Trails Day in early June. On this day, we set up stations in several of our parks and along our greenways to give out parish-wide trail maps that P&E has worked with our Communications staff to develop. We also talk to people about what kinds of trails and greenways BREC offers.

In addition, our BREC trails webpage has information on the different types of trails--greenways, blueways, park trails, primitive trails, and nature trails--as each offers visitors a different type of experience and user accessibility level.

# BREC Trails

Did you know BREC has a variety of trails for you to explore? From primitive to paved, BREC has you covered!

The map displays a network of trails across the BREC area, including parks and conservation areas. A legend on the right side of the map identifies the following trail types: BREC Parks (green square), Nature Trails (green leaf icon), Primitive Trails (green tree icon), Park Trails (green person icon), Greenways (orange line), BREC Operated (red line), Partner Operated (yellow line), and Blueway Launch (blue circle). The map also shows major roads like I-10, I-55, and I-24, and water bodies like the Mississippi River and Bayou Manchac. A note at the bottom right states: "Please note that not all parks with park trails are labeled on this map." Social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube are located at the bottom left, along with the BREC.ORG website address. The BREC logo is at the bottom right.

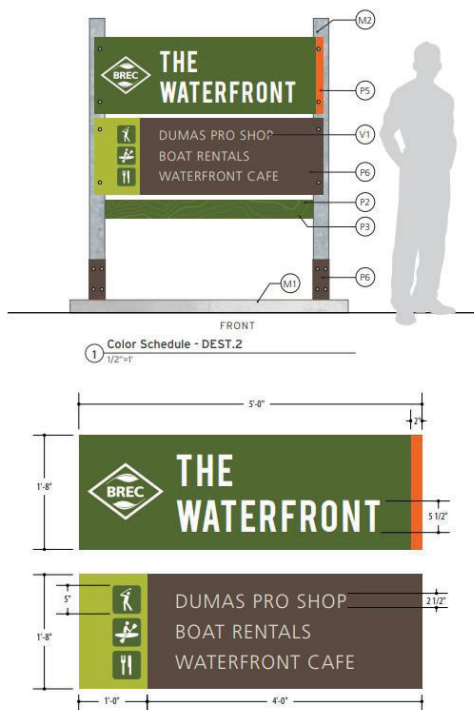
## STRATEGIC DIRECTION 6:

Increase local awareness of BREC's programs and facilities and the overall value of BREC.

### ACTION STEPS

#### 6.4 Work with regional tourism and economic development organizations to market BREC parks and facilities as destinations for visitors from the region and beyond.

- 1 Work with Visit Baton Rouge and area chambers of commerce to strengthen BREC's contribution to regional marketing efforts.
- 2 Develop new special events and recreation opportunities offered by BREC as part of a regional economic strategy.
- 4 Enhance and extend the BREC brand through effective signage, wayfinding, and communication on a regional and state-wide basis.
- 5 Work with the Department of Public Works and the Department of Transportation and Development to place highway and street signs to direct residents and visitors to BREC parks and special facilities.



### BRANDING

BREC P&E has worked to enhance and extend the BREC brand through clear and consistent signage and wayfinding devices. P&E has also collaborated with the Communications Department on implementing various forms of communication strategies to keep the public informed of progress throughout the park system. More work is to be completed on working with various partners to promote the programs and amenities that BREC offers.

## 6.5 Evaluate and enhance BREC's online and social media presence.

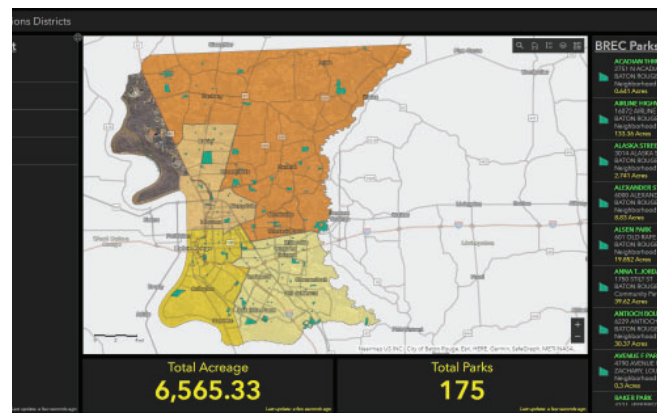
2

Incorporate an interactive map of the parish into the BREC website, with links to each park.

### INTERACTIVE MAPS

Work on the interactive parish map has been ongoing since 2016. Our agency is currently revamping the entire website platform, and the map will be available with the unveiling of the new site.

The public-facing GIS map will show parks, trail maps, pavilion rental locations, and construction updates. This map will also allow for destination mapping, in addition to detailing park amenities and rules. A version of this GIS map will be used to demonstrate progress and give construction updates during BREC Commission meetings as well.



## STRATEGIC DIRECTION 7:

Work with partners and the BREC Foundation to achieve common goals and leverage resources.

### ACTION STEPS

**7.1** Support and strengthen BREC's robust volunteer program.

- 1 Encourage BREC employees to volunteer in the community.



**7.3** Streamline the processes of identifying areas in need of donor support and reaching out to donors to provide support.

- 1 Identify and prioritize capital improvement projects that could benefit from donor support, based on costs and benefits, and update the list at least every five years.
- 2 Identify and prioritize programs and special events That could benefit from donor support, based on costs and benefits, and update the list annually.

### VOLUNTEERS + DONORS

As with all departments, BREC P&E staff are encouraged to participate in community activities, and volunteer opportunities are announced to staff as they come available.

To streamline the process of identifying areas that need donor funding, P&E developed a presentation with feedback from all of BREC, which was presented to the BREC Foundation. The outcomes of this meeting were used to determine which projects had the most chance of success. The Foundation rated and developed a short list of projects that they would focus on for fund raising efforts. The first of which included Farr Outdoor Arena and City Park Dog Park.

## STRATEGIC DIRECTION 8:

Ensure that BREC's parks and facilities are operated and maintained efficiently and according to best practices and to defined standards for park types.

### ACTION STEPS

**8.3** Continue to consider operational and maintenance requirements as critical factors in park planning and design.

1

Continue regular meetings with Planning and Engineering staff to voice maintenance needs during planning and design stages.



### INTER-DEPARTMENT COLLABORATION

Over the last 10 years, the Park Operations Department has been proactively engaged in their efforts to efficiently and effectively provide parks and facilities that are safe, functional, and aesthetically pleasing with other departments, including Planning and Engineering.

Regularly-occurring meetings are scheduled between the two departments to ensure that realistic maintenance is considered at the inception of project planning, not as an after-thought.



**GREENWOOD WEST DOCK**