



# HEALTHY PARKS PLAN

FOR TRAVIS, BASTROP & CALDWELL COUNTIES

**StDavid's**  
FOUNDATION



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robinson

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# Agenda



- Introduction to the Healthy Parks Plan
- Community Engagement Results
- GIS Mapping Results
- Decision-Support Tool Demonstration
- Healthy Parks Plan Design Guidelines
- Questions and Discussion

# Background

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- The Trust for Public Land
- Asakura Robinson
- TBG Partners
- Spring 2018-Spring 2019

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**FOUNDATION**



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robinson

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# OUR MISSION

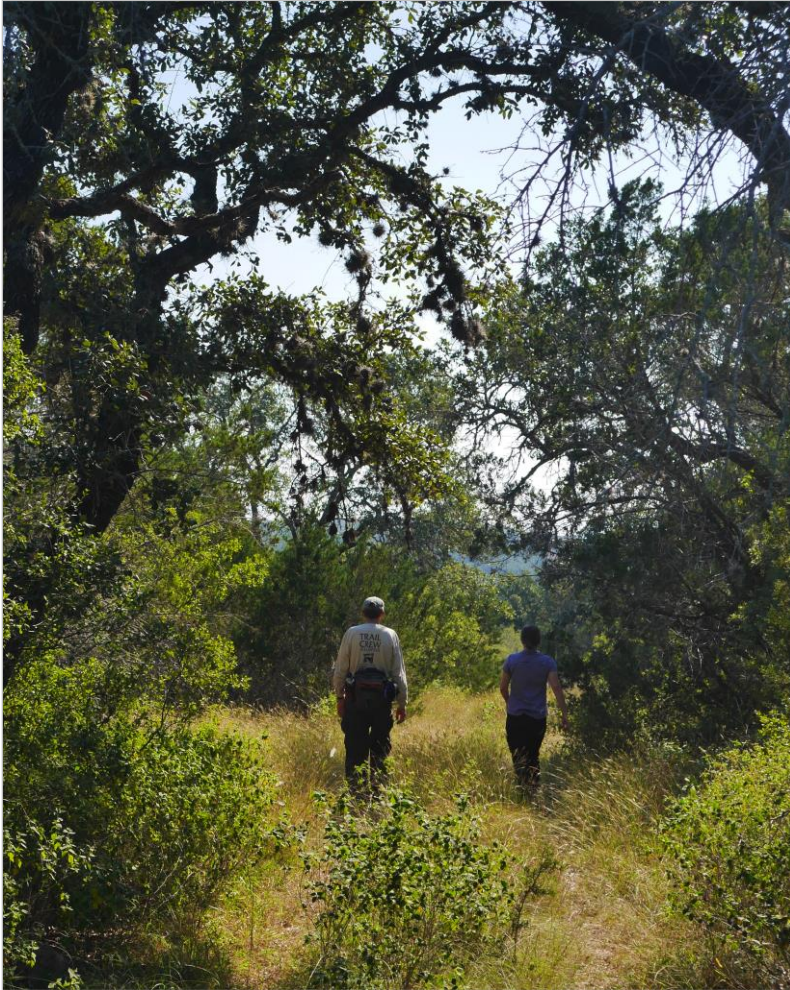
The Trust for Public Land creates parks and protects land for people, ensuring healthy, livable communities for generations to come.

A person is swinging on a swing set in a park. The swing set is made of wood and is suspended from a large, gnarled tree. The person is wearing a plaid shirt and dark pants. In the background, a city is visible, with a river and mountains in the distance. The sky is clear and blue.

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# Increasing access to parks can benefit all residents



- **Providing opportunities for physical activity**—one of the most important ways people can improve their health
- Creating welcoming green spaces where residents can relax and spend time outdoors, **reducing stress and risk of chronic disease** and increasing overall well-being
- Increasing **social connections** and community cohesion—combatting the serious health impacts of social isolation and loneliness
- Improving **local air and water quality** and mitigating climate impacts, such as **flooding** and **rising temperatures**

# Objectives

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- Identify the park investments that will maximize community health and equity
- Engage local community members in identifying park priorities and obstacles to using parks for physical activity
- Empower community groups to be active stewards of local parks and encourage health-focused park programming
- Develop a web-based decision-support tool that combines park and health data with community perspectives to help local partners identify opportunities for community investment
- Raise awareness about the connections between park access, equity, and community health

# Methods

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- Geographic Information Systems
- Community Engagement
  - 2,000+ community members engaged
  - Both local experts and community members
- Research
  - Healthy Parks Design Guidelines
  - Science-backed recommendations on how to make parks healthier
- Design
  - 3 Conceptual park designs
  - Used GIS results to locate high need areas
  - Used design guidelines and community engagement to inform design



# Deliverables

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- Decision-Support Tool
  - GIS analysis results and input data
  - Measure the impact of potential park projects
  - Identify gaps in service
  - Query parcels to identify sites with certain characteristics
- Written Report
  - Mapping Results
  - Community Engagement Results
  - Healthy Parks Design Guidelines
  - High Priority Projects
  - 3 Conceptual Park Designs
- Story Map
  - Interactive, online version of the report

# [web.tplgis.org/healthyparksplan/](http://web.tplgis.org/healthyparksplan/)

The Healthy Parks Plan - Plannin

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## HEALTHY PARKS PLAN

FOR TRAVIS, BASTROP & CALDWELL COUNTIES

- Mapping Portal**  
Explore the Interactive Decision-Support Tool
- Story Map**  
Explore the interactive story map to understand the analysis
- PDF Maps**  
Download static PDF maps displaying analysis results
- Final Report**  
Healthy Parks Plan Final Report
- Training Videos**  
Learn how to use the decision support tool
- User Guide**  
Learn how to use the Decision-Support Mapping Tool
- Data Description**  
View a description of the data that was used in this analysis
- Final Report Appendices**  
Healthy Parks Plan Final Report Appendices



# Community Engagement

# Community Engagement



**Community workshops → (5)**

**Speak-outs → (20)**

**Intercept Surveys → (12)**

**Telephone survey → (800 participants)**

**Online survey (866 participants)**

**Focus groups → (5)**

**Interviews → (28)**

**Over 2,000 community members engaged!**

# What are the greatest barriers to using parks for physical activity?



## Amenities

- Lack of restrooms
- Lack of active amenities
- Lack of water fountains

*“There needs to be a diversity of opportunities in a park for all of the things you might be interested in, not just grassy lots.”*

# What are the top requested active amenities?

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- Splash pads
- Walking paths
- Playgrounds/play structures
- Community gardens
- Fitness equipment
- Swimming pools

## What are the top requested supporting amenities?

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- Park restrooms
- Park drinking fountains
- Picnic shelters

*“If you want to do exercise, you also need water fountains and bathrooms.”*

*– Intercept Survey Participant,  
Mexican Consulate office,  
Austin Texas*

# What would make parks better places for relaxing?

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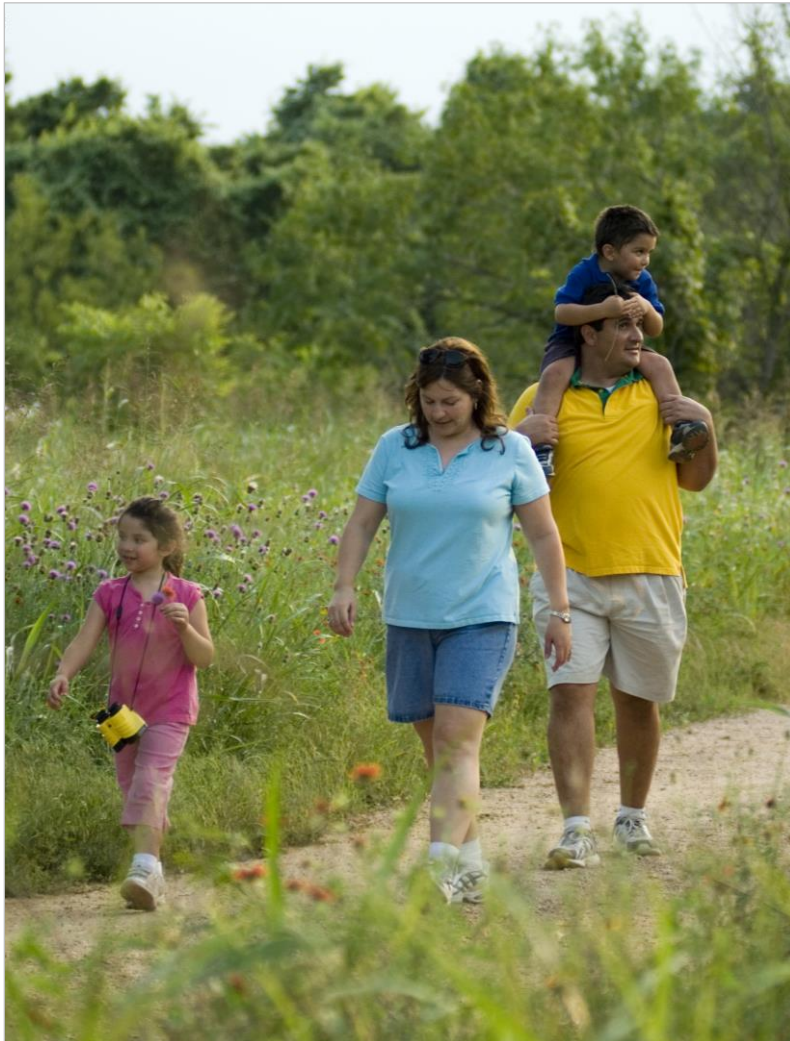
## Shade

*“I don’t go to the park because it’s too hot. I work in the heat all day, why would I want to spend more time in the sun?” Intercept survey participant, Lockhart HEB*



# What would make parks better for socializing?

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## Beautification

- Trees/Plants
- Art

# What types of programming would bring people to the parks?



- More events and activities
  - Second highest recommendation for improving parks (behind only requests to build new parks)
- Special events (e.g., movie in the park, fairs, concerts, etc.)
- Fitness classes
- Environmental education

# How could parks be healthier for people with disabilities?



- **Basic Maintenance**
- **Accessible Amenities**
  - Trails
  - Pools
  - Adaptive Sports Facilities
  - Playgrounds
  - Fitness equipment
- **Locating these amenities in a way that is visible and inclusive.**
  - *“You’re part of the community. It would combat stereotypes about people with disabilities not being active. Once you remove those barriers, people will start to realize this is part of our society.”*
- **Online database of accessible park amenities**

# How could park design encourage physical activity?



## Multigenerational Parks

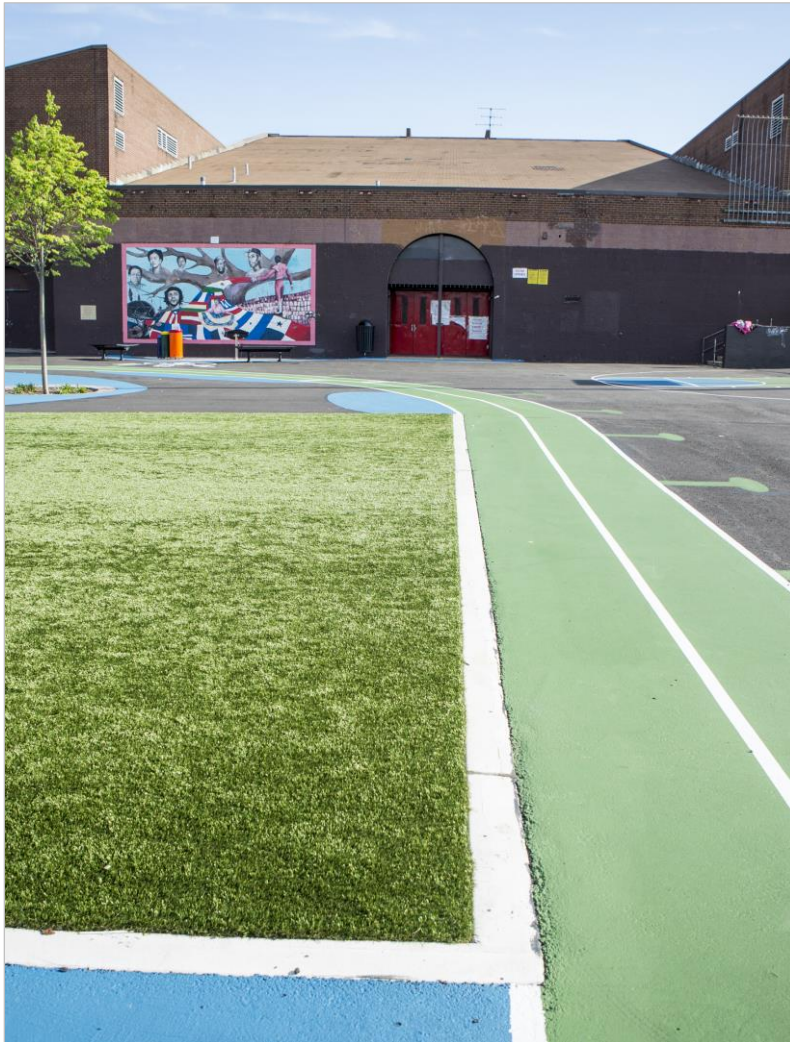
- *“It would be nice to do an exercise class at the park if someone were able to watch my kids”*
  - *Intercept Survey Participant, Lockhart Walmart*
- Locate exercise opportunities for parents (e.g. tracks and fitness equipment) near activities for children (e.g. playgrounds and sports fields).

## How could artwork in parks support community cohesions?



- Celebrate local culture and diversity
- “I feel like I belong to my neighborhood”
  - 9% of white respondents disagreed
  - 29% of Hispanic respondents disagreed
- *“There is a profound disconnection between arts-based programming and public parks. The most vibrant art scene are the murals in East Austin. It has nothing to do with parks.” Interview Participant*
- *“The trails are not culturally neutral. People feel like, ‘Those are not our trails’. A bunch of white guys on the trail sends a signal.” Interview Participant*

# How can stakeholders increase park access in areas with low capacity to build new parks?



- *“The place we go for exercise is my daughter’s high school. We live in suburbia and that place is very safe, belongs to the community, is fenced and there is only one entrance. You feel in control.” Intercept Survey Participant, Austin Texas, Mexican Consulate office*
- *“Community activities revolve around the schools. This is an opportunity.” Interview Participant*

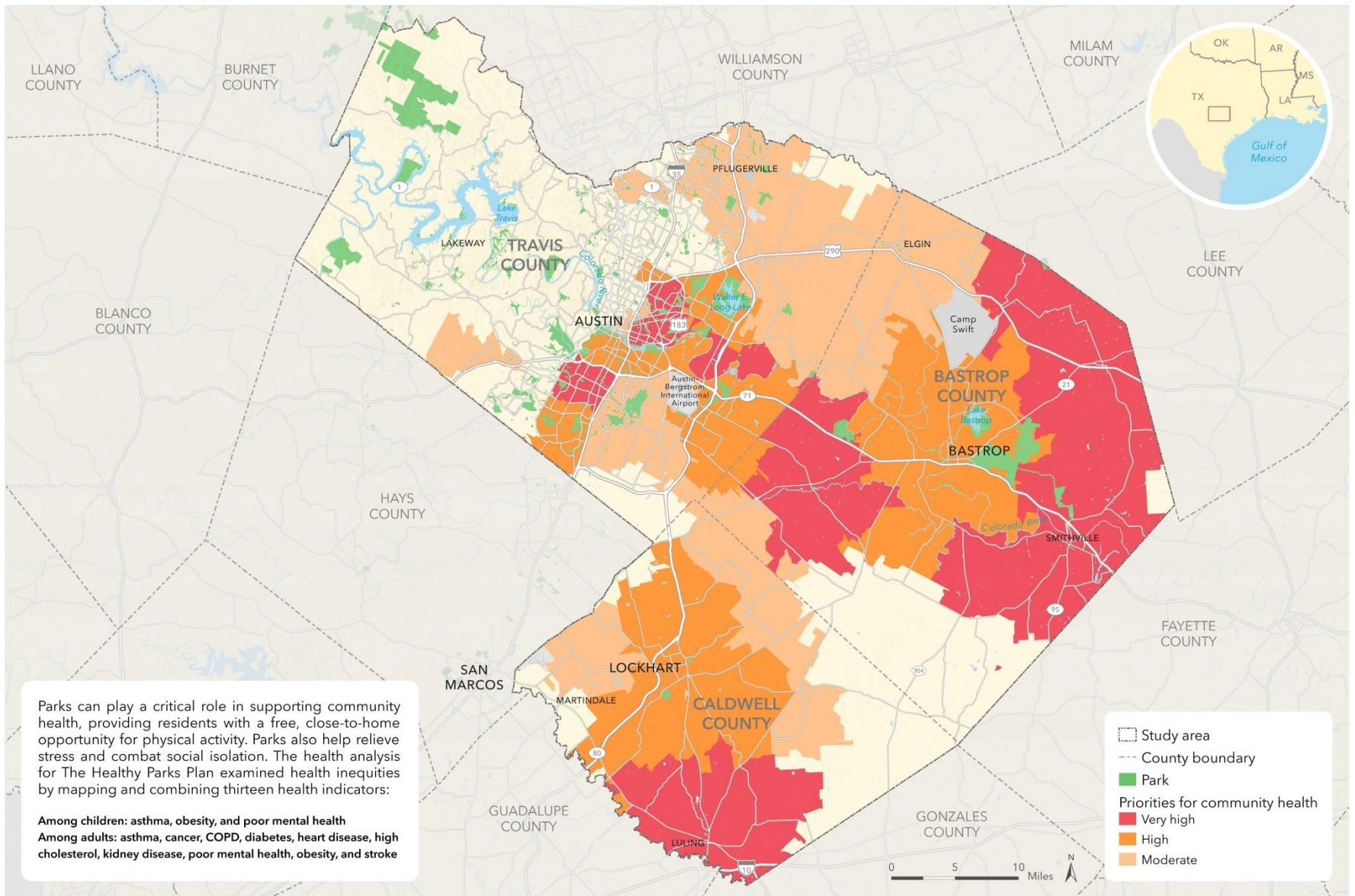
# Geographic Priorities

# Geographic Information Systems Approach



- *Use GIS to identify areas with the greatest park need*
- *Guided by 79 local experts serving on a Technical Advisory Team*
  - *Dr. Pritesh Ghandi, People's Community Clinic*
  - *Dr. Philip Huang, Austin Mayor's Office*
  - *Jennifer Bristol, Texas Parks and Wildlife*
  - *Amy Belaire, The Nature Conservancy*
  - *Julia Cleary, Bastrop County*
  - *Jack Page, Smithville Parks*
  - *Trey Bailey, Luling Economic Development Corporation*





Parks can play a critical role in supporting community health, providing residents with a free, close-to-home opportunity for physical activity. Parks also help relieve stress and combat social isolation. The health analysis for The Healthy Parks Plan examined health inequities by mapping and combining thirteen health indicators:

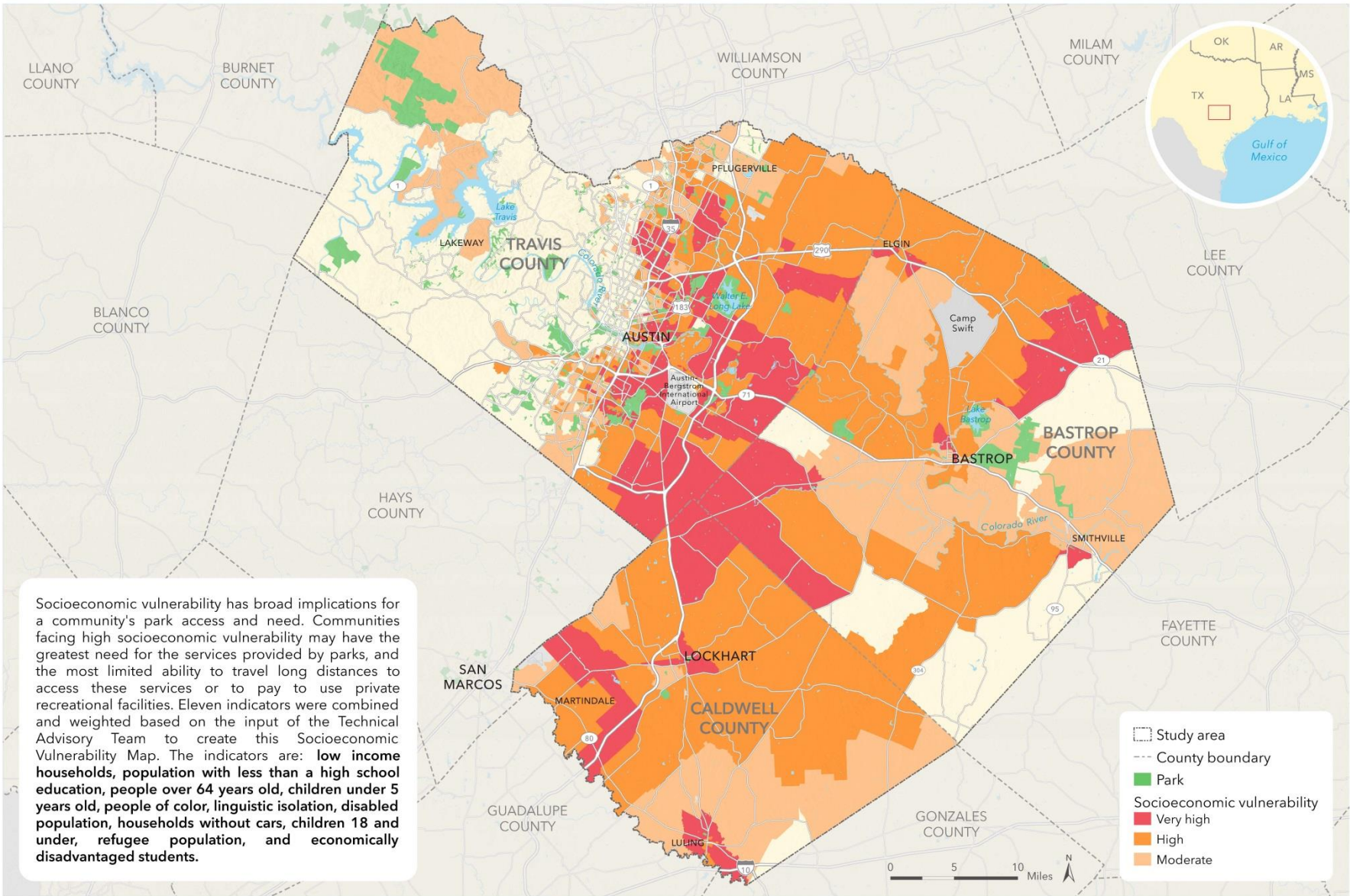
**Among children: asthma, obesity, and poor mental health**  
**Among adults: asthma, cancer, COPD, diabetes, heart disease, high cholesterol, kidney disease, poor mental health, obesity, and stroke**

# Community health

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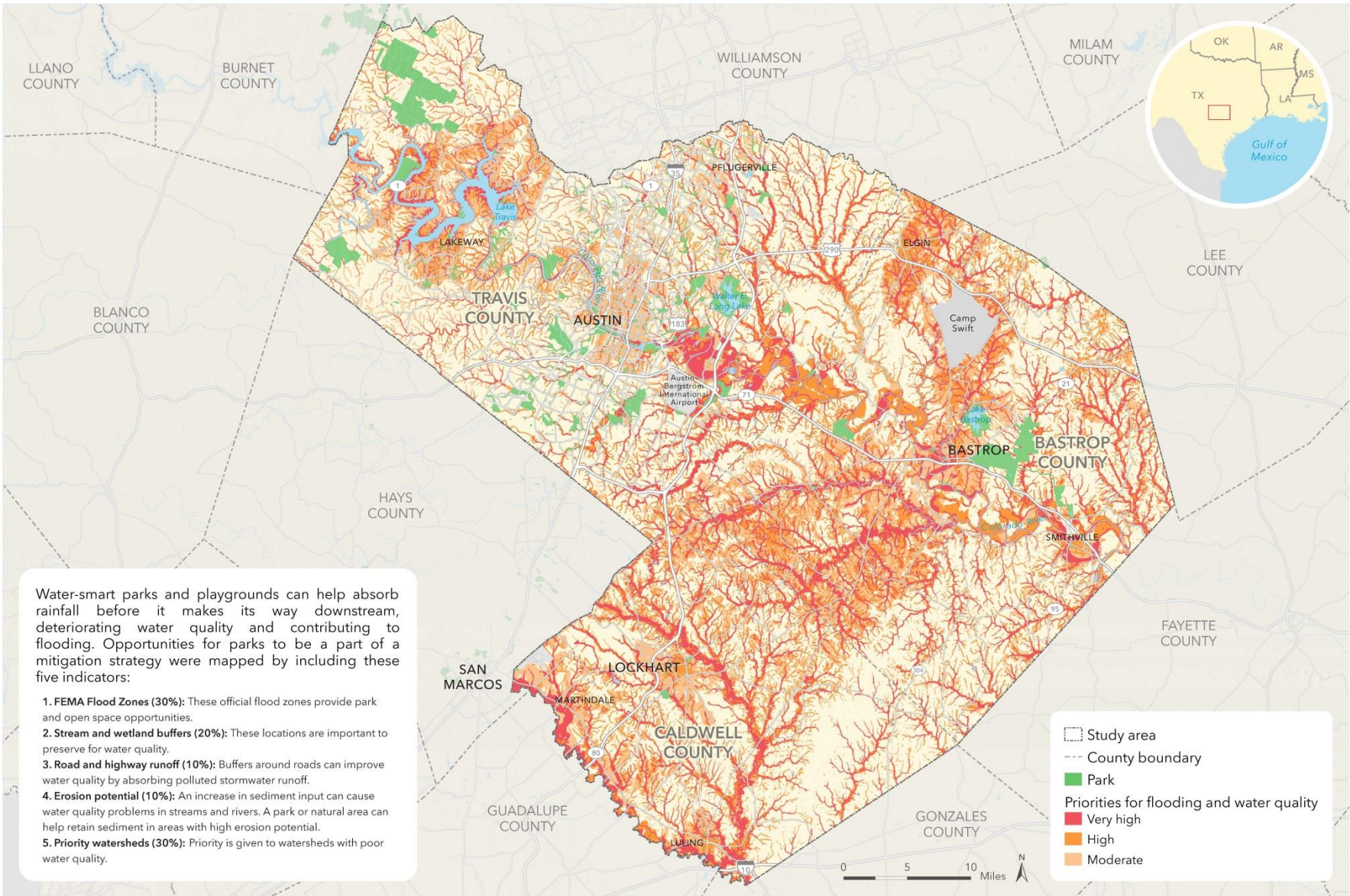


# Socioeconomic vulnerability

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Water-smart parks and playgrounds can help absorb rainfall before it makes its way downstream, deteriorating water quality and contributing to flooding. Opportunities for parks to be a part of a mitigation strategy were mapped by including these five indicators:

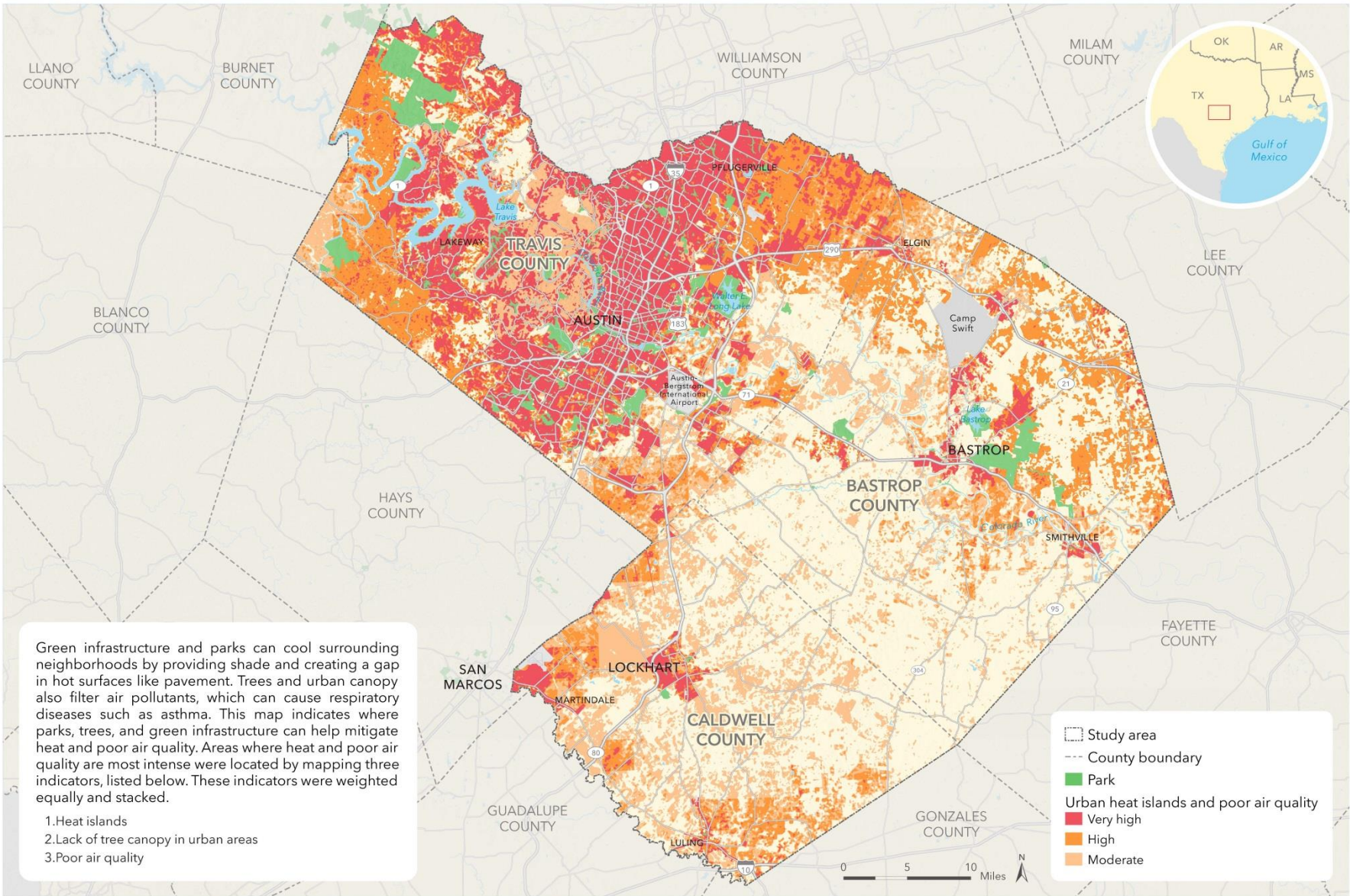
- 1. FEMA Flood Zones (30%):** These official flood zones provide park and open space opportunities.
- 2. Stream and wetland buffers (20%):** These locations are important to preserve for water quality.
- 3. Road and highway runoff (10%):** Buffers around roads can improve water quality by absorbing polluted stormwater runoff.
- 4. Erosion potential (10%):** An increase in sediment input can cause water quality problems in streams and rivers. A park or natural area can help retain sediment in areas with high erosion potential.
- 5. Priority watersheds (30%):** Priority is given to watersheds with poor water quality.

# Flooding and water quality

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Green infrastructure and parks can cool surrounding neighborhoods by providing shade and creating a gap in hot surfaces like pavement. Trees and urban canopy also filter air pollutants, which can cause respiratory diseases such as asthma. This map indicates where parks, trees, and green infrastructure can help mitigate heat and poor air quality. Areas where heat and poor air quality are most intense were located by mapping three indicators, listed below. These indicators were weighted equally and stacked.

- 1.Heat islands
- 2.Lack of tree canopy in urban areas
- 3.Poor air quality

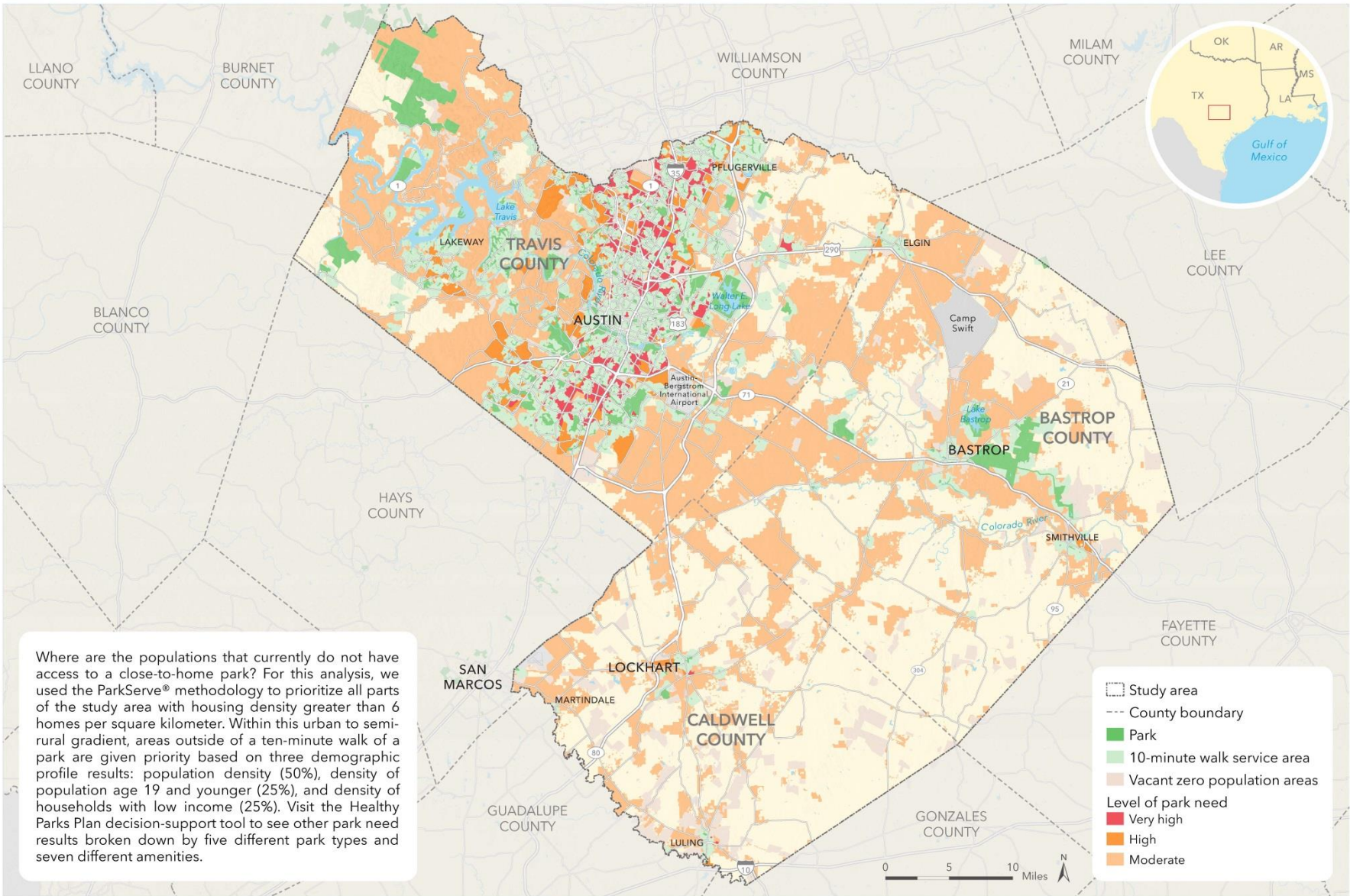
Study area  
 County boundary  
 Park  
 Urban heat islands and poor air quality  
 Very high  
 High  
 Moderate

# Urban heat islands and poor air quality

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Where are the populations that currently do not have access to a close-to-home park? For this analysis, we used the ParkServe® methodology to prioritize all parts of the study area with housing density greater than 6 homes per square kilometer. Within this urban to semi-rural gradient, areas outside of a ten-minute walk of a park are given priority based on three demographic profile results: population density (50%), density of population age 19 and younger (25%), and density of households with low income (25%). Visit the Healthy Parks Plan decision-support tool to see other park need results broken down by five different park types and seven different amenities.

- Study area
- County boundary
- Park
- 10-minute walk service area
- Vacant zero population areas
- Level of park need**
- Very high
- High
- Moderate

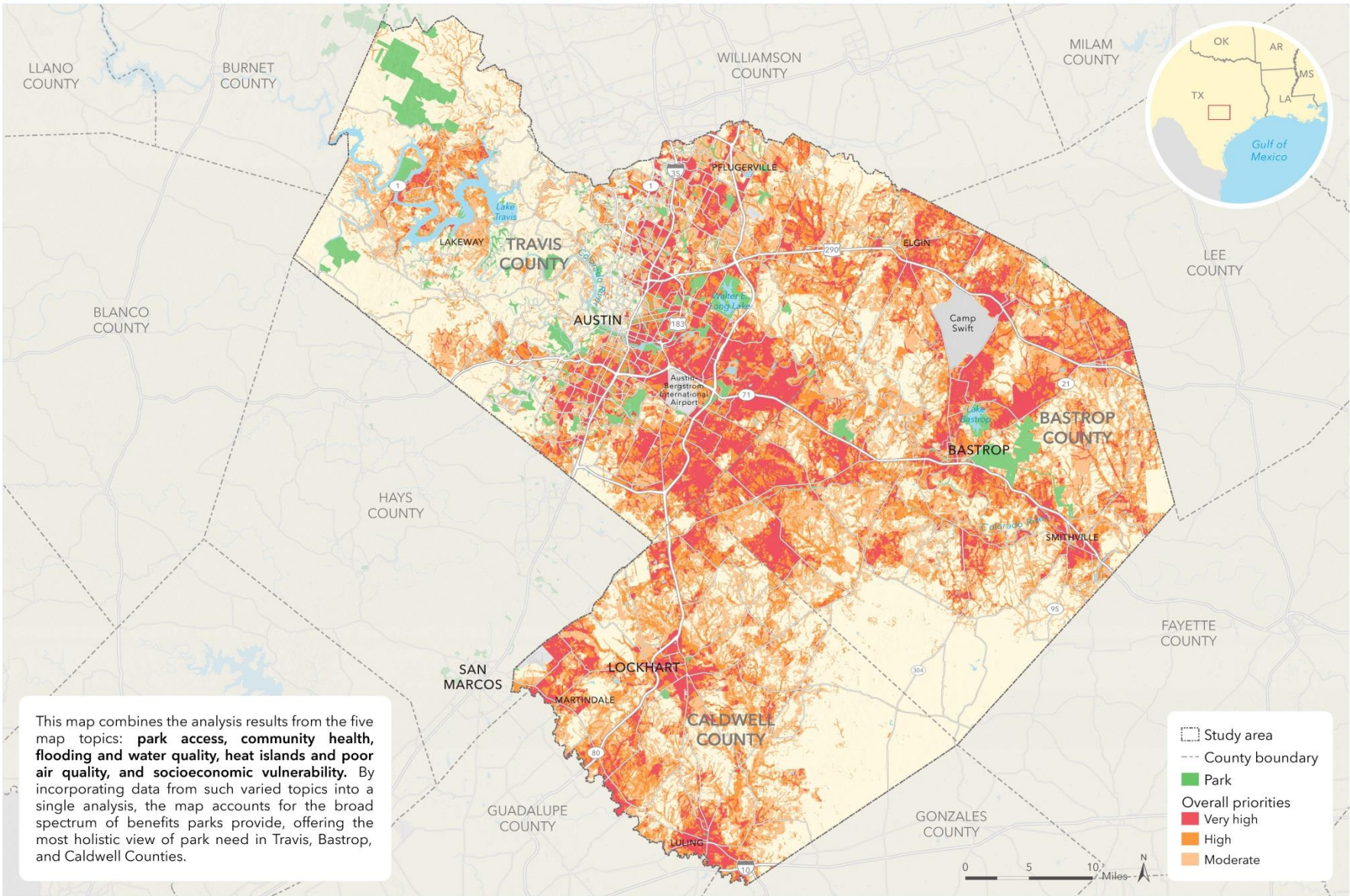
# Park access

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# Overall priorities for The Healthy Parks Plan

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# The Healthy Parks Decision- Support Tool

# [web.tplgis.org/healthyparksplan/](http://web.tplgis.org/healthyparksplan/)

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# Decision-Support Tool

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- “We already used the tool this morning to make a decision on a playground replacement project. It was easy!”
  - Ladye Anne Wofford, Austin Parks Foundation
- “I am already using it to look for new park sites.”
  - Michael Gonzalez, Elgin Parks and Recreation
- “You could use this for a lot more than just parks.”
  - Priscilla Estrada, Community Health Center of Central Texas

# Prioritizing Healthy Parks Sites

# Healthy Parks Priority Sites

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- List of highest priority sites for ‘Healthy Park’ Improvements
- Utilized GIS to identify parks in high need areas
- Other considerations:
  - Parks with most potential for improvement regarding health
    - *“Just grassy lots.”*
  - Parks that do not already have major upgrades scheduled
- Schoolyards
- Areas without parks or school yards
  - Creative solution?

# Healthy Parks Priority Sites

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Austin's Colony Neighborhood Park,  
Austin's Colony

Blanche Square, Luling

Boggy Creek Greenbelt, Austin

Brownie Neighborhood Park, Austin

Buttermilk Neighborhood Park, Austin

Camp Swift Park, Camp Swift

Cedar Creek Park, Cedar Creek

City Park, Lockhart

Civitan Neighborhood Park, Austin

Delgado Park, Bastrop

Earl J. Pomerleau Pocket Park, Austin

Edgar B. Davis Northside Park, Luling

Givens District Park, Austin

Houston School Park, Austin

Longer Park, Luling

McDade Elementary School, McDade

McDade High School, McDade

MLK Park, Smithville

Montopolis Recreation Center, Austin

Patton Park, Luling

Prairie Lea School, Prairie Lea

Sanchez School Park, Austin

South Austin Neighborhood Park, Austin

St. Elmo School Park, Austin

Stony Point Park, Stony Point

T.A. Brown Neighborhood Park, Austin

Thomas Memorial Park, Elgin

Town Branch Trail System, Lockhart

Williams School Park, Austin

Wooldridge School Park, Austin

Wooten Neighborhood Park, Austin

# High Potential Schoolyard Parks

**Table 8:**  
Potential Schoolyard Parks Ranked by Number of New People with Park Access (Bastrop County)

School	School District	County	Grade Range	New Population Served
Smithville Junior High	Smithville ISD	Bastrop	6-8	1,202
Smithville Elementary School	Smithville ISD	Bastrop	3-5	1,088
Cedar Creek Intermediate School	Bastrop ISD	Bastrop	5-6	263
Bastrop Middle School	Bastrop ISD	Bastrop	7-8	252
Elgin Middle School	Elgin ISD	Bastrop	6-8	230
Smithville High School	Smithville ISD	Bastrop	9-12	224
Cedar Creek Middle School	Bastrop ISD	Bastrop	7-8	204
Booker T. Washington Elementary School	Elgin ISD	Bastrop	K-5	187
Brown Primary School	Smithville ISD	Bastrop	Pre K - 2	141
Emile Elementary School	Bastrop ISD	Bastrop	Pre K - 4	136

# High Potential Schoolyard Parks

**Table 7:**  
Potential Schoolyard Parks Ranked by Number of New People with Park Access (Travis County)

School	School District	County	Grade Range	New Population Served
Pleasant Hill Elementary School	Austin ISD	Travis	Pre K-5	5,522
Padrón Elementary School	Austin ISD	Travis	Pre K-5	5,379
Ridgetop Elementary School	Austin ISD	Travis	Pre K-5	4,640
Galindo Elementary School	Austin ISD	Travis	Pre K-5	4,591
Reagan Early College High School	Austin ISD	Travis	9-12	4,409
Baty Elementary School	Del Valle ISD	Travis	Pre K-5	4,170
Settlement Home	University of Texas University Charter School	Travis	6-12	3,893
Harris Elementary School	Austin ISD	Travis	Pre K-6	3,796
Burnet Middle School	Austin ISD	Travis	6-8	3,542
Bedichek Middle School	Austin ISD	Travis	6-8	3,232
Dawson Elementary School	Austin ISD	Travis	Pre K-5	2,593
Pickle Elementary School	Austin ISD	Travis	Pre K-5	2,564
Walnut Creek Elementary School	Austin ISD	Travis	Pre K-6	2,468
T.A. Brown Elementary School	Austin ISD	Travis	Pre K-6	2,362
Dobie Middle School	Austin ISD	Travis	6-8	2,278

# High Potential Schoolyard Parks

**Table 9:**  
Potential Schoolyard Parks Ranked by Number of New People with Park Access (Caldwell County)

School	School District	County	Grade Range	New Population Served
Navarro Elementary School	Lockhart ISD	Caldwell	1-5	1,124
Clear Fork Elementary School	Lockhart ISD	Caldwell	1-5	985
Lockhart High School	Lockhart ISD	Caldwell	9-12	884
Bluebonnet Elementary School	Lockhart ISD	Caldwell	Pre K - 5	869
Lockhart Junior High School	Lockhart ISD	Caldwell	6-8	577
Luling Primary School	Luling ISD	Caldwell	Pre K - 1	306
Leonard Shanklin Elementary School	Luling ISD	Caldwell	2-5	283
Gilbert Gerdes Junior High School	Luling ISD	Caldwell	6-8	271
Luling High School	Luling ISD	Caldwell	9-12	265
Pride High School	Lockhart ISD	Caldwell	9-12	204



**Healthy**

**Parks**

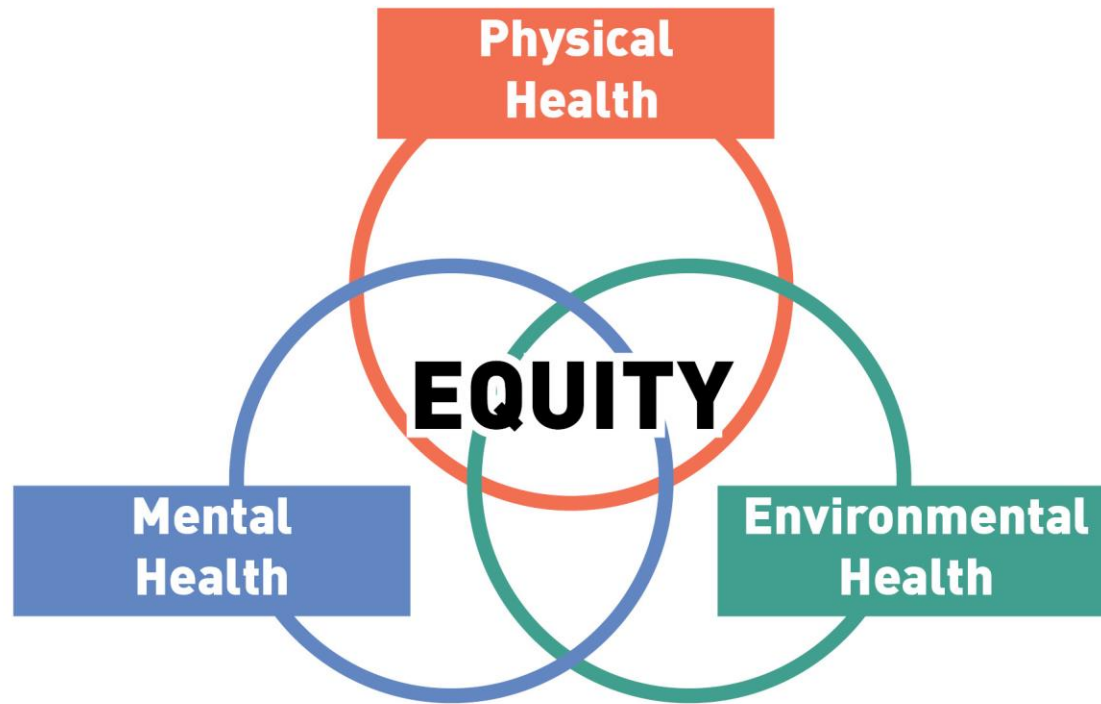
**Design**

**Guidelines**



# What is a Healthy Park?

A healthy park provides a range of amenities that enhance each facet of community health - **physical**, **mental**, and **environmental**.



# Guiding Design Principles

1. Use community engagement strategies throughout the design process to determine local park needs and preferences.
2. Parks should have a mix of physical health, mental health, and environmental health opportunities for all age groups.
3. Parks should tie-in to existing trail networks and be accessible by bicycle, public transit, and pedestrian access.
4. Safety features like lighting and visibility should be prioritized. Parks should have a planned maintenance schedule to keep all amenities functional for visitors.
5. All park amenities and areas should be designed using Universal Design principals and accessible to all regardless of age, gender, and ability.



# Healthy Park Toolkits

## Physical Health Toolkit

**Athletic Fields**



**Benefits**

- Varies with activity, but generally
- Helps Prevent Obesity
- Lowers Blood Pressure
- Strengthens Muscles

Adolescents who play sports have a lower body mass index and are less likely to have smoked cigarettes or used drugs.

**Intensity:**

☺☺☺

**Cost:** \$\$\$

U.S. Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion

P N C D M

**Fitness Programs**



**Benefits**

- Varies with activity, but generally
- Helps Prevent Obesity
- Lowers Blood Pressure
- Strengthens Muscles, Improves Flexibility

A recent study showed that those who engage in physical activity in outdoor environments, rather than indoors, were more likely to repeat the activity and continue to exercise over time.

**Intensity:**

☺☺☺

**Cost:** \$

Hampson et al., 2017

P N C D M

**Swimming Facilities**



**Benefits**

- Increases Lung Capacity
- Lowers Blood Pressure
- Full Body Strength

In addition to the benefits of cardiovascular exercise, swimming can improve various measures of blood sugar control, such as insulin sensitivity, and improve lung capacity.

**Intensity:**

☺☺☺

**Cost:** \$\$\$

Chen et al., 2013

C D M

## Mental Health Toolkit

**Social Events**



**Benefits**

- Helps Prevent Depression
- Supports Heart Health

Strong social connections have been shown to ease depression and reduce risk of heart disease and stroke. These connections form "social cohesion," which is the experience of mutual trust that may arise through neighborhood social events.

**Cost:** \$

Payne et al., 2010

P N C D M

**Gathering Spaces**



**Benefits**

- Helps Prevent Depression

Benches, tables, picnic areas, unprogrammed open spaces, and shelters provide formal and casual places for people to gather and maintain close social ties that prevent depression and isolation, especially in elderly adults.

**Cost:** \$\$

Kokoro & Berthoin, 2001

P N C D M

**Mature Trees**



**Benefits**

- Helps Prevent Depression
- Improves Cognitive Performance

Trees have been shown to reduce depressive symptoms. In one study, adults with major depressive disorder reported improvements in both mood and cognitive performance after taking weekly walks on streets with trees.

**Cost:** \$

Berthoin et al., 2012

P N C D M

## Environmental Health Toolkit

**Community Gardens**



**Benefits**

- Helps Prevent Obesity
- Improves nutrition

Many urban and rural communities have limited access to affordable, fresh, and nutritious food. Studies have shown that participating in community gardens increases fruit and vegetable consumption, promotes physical activity, and strengthens social ties.

**Cost:** \$

Pepin et al., 2014

P N C D M

**Green Infrastructure**



**Benefits**

- Decreases Stress Levels
- Reduces Risk-related Anxiety

Networked systems of green stormwater infrastructure in cities can reduce home flooding, which increases stress and may worsen mental health problems.

**Cost:** \$

Morgan et al., 2017

P N C D M

**Native Plantings**



**Benefits**

- Immune System Development

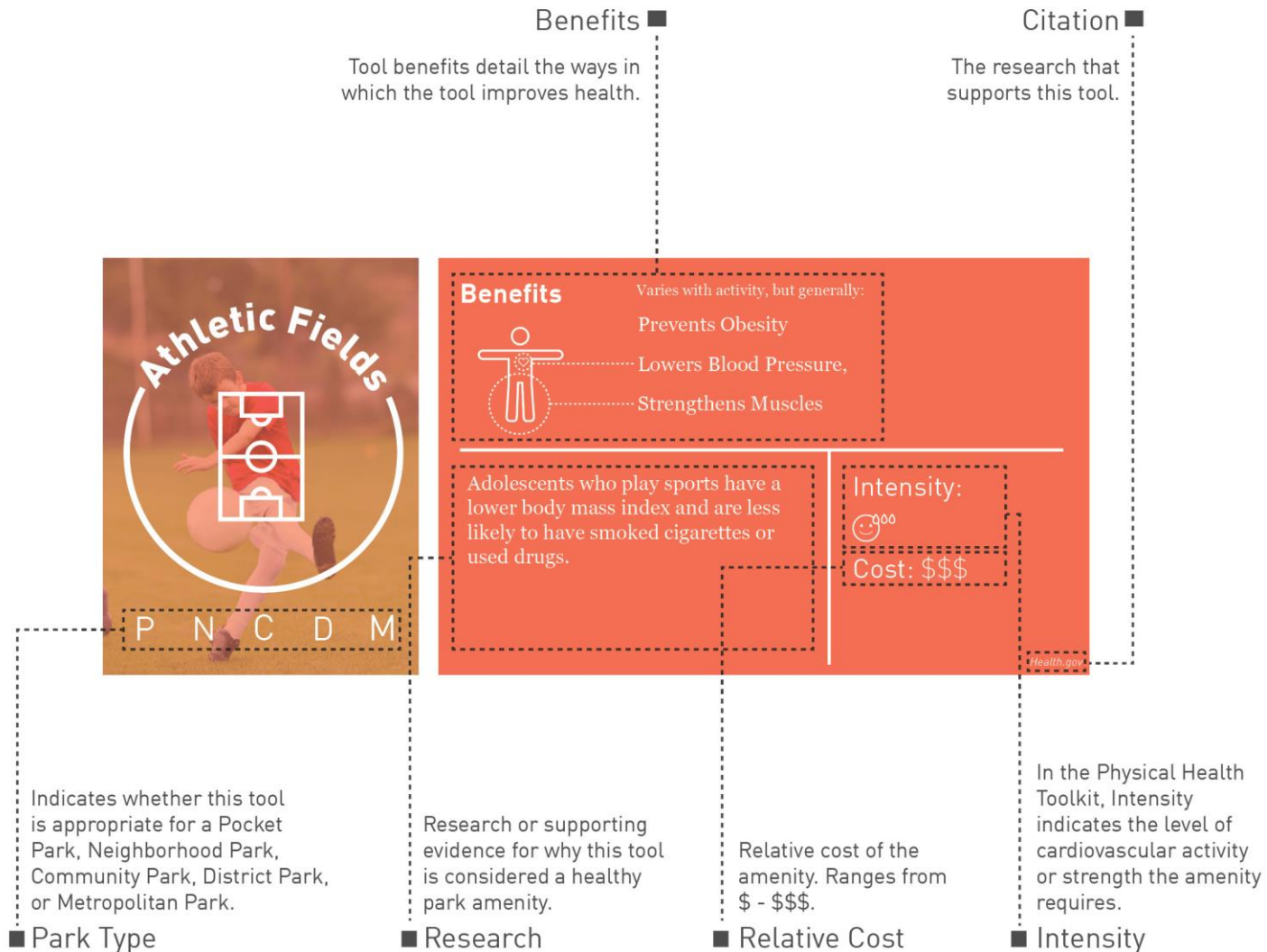
Exposure to diverse natural habitats, which can be achieved by planting a diverse mix of plants and trees in parks, helps children develop normal immune responses to allergens and other disease-causing factors.

**Cost:** \$

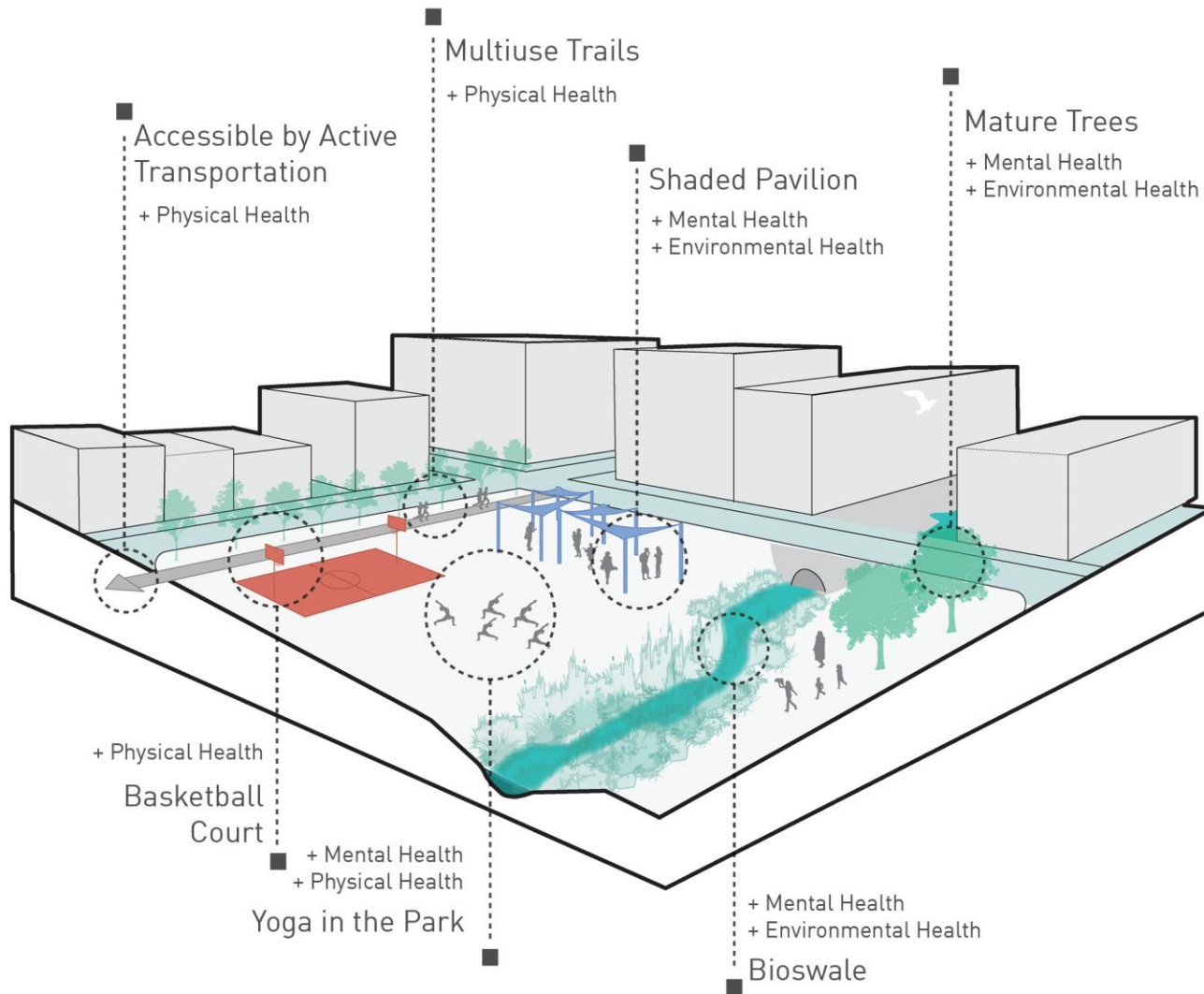
Jacobson, Gaulton-Daniel and Davis, 2015

P N C D M

# Tool Example: Physical Health

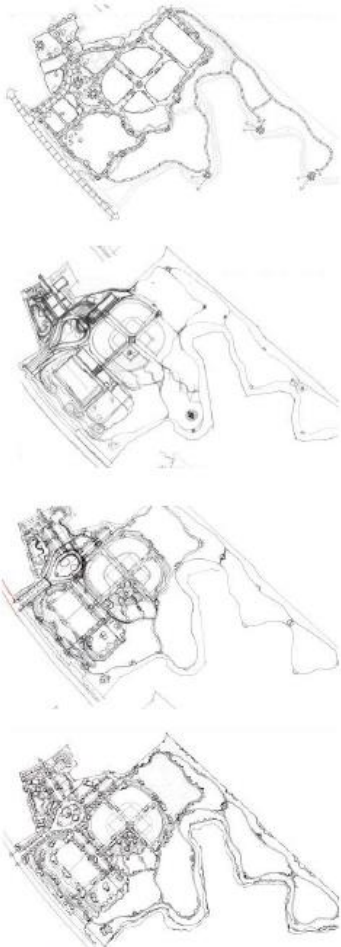


# What does a healthy park look like?



# Conceptual Park Designs

# Cedar Creek Park



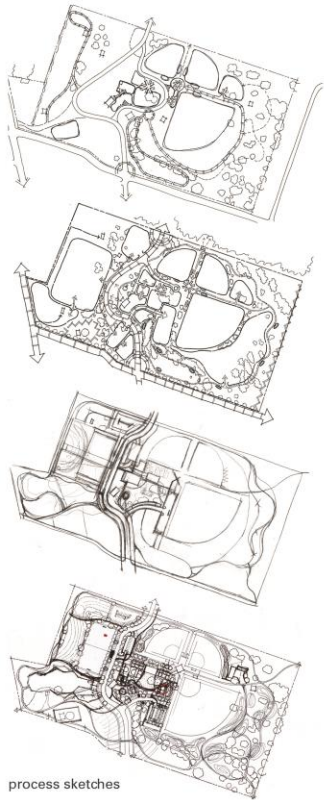
process sketches



concept plan

- 01\_ entrance with upgraded landscaping/signage
  - 02\_ parking area
  - 03\_ pool area opportunity (m)(p)
  - 04\_ water play and splash pad (m)(p)
  - 05\_ event pavilion and lawn (m)
  - 06\_ open field for performances/movies/free play (m)
  - 07\_ paved 5' - 8' trail loop (p)(m)
  - 08\_ 3' - 5' nature trail with exercise nodes (p)(m)(e)
  - 09\_ upgraded play area (p)
  - 10\_ upgraded sport courts (p)
  - 11\_ community butterfly garden (e)
  - 12\_ dog park (m)
  - 13\_ open meadow at roadway (e)
  - 14\_ added soccer field (p)
  - 15\_ updated baseball fields (p)
  - 16\_ existing tree canopy (m)(e)
- (p) physical tool  
 (m) mental tool  
 (e) environmental tool

# E.B. Davis North Side Park



process sketches



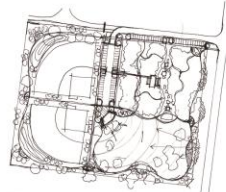
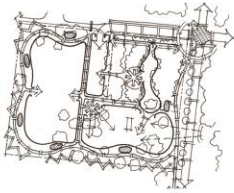
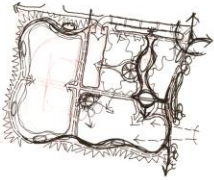
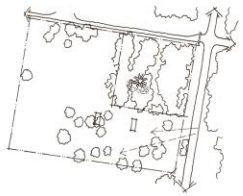
concept plan

- 01\_ entrances with upgraded landscaping (e)
- 02\_ possible splash pad zone (visible from road) (p) (m)
- 03\_ added parking areas
- 04\_ updated protected play area (p)
- 05\_ upgraded baseball fields (p)
- 06\_ upgraded batting cages with added screening (p)
- 07\_ sloped event lawn for movies/performances (m)
- 08\_ dog park zone (m)
- 09\_ updated community event space with access to restrooms/event lawn/picnic areas/food truck zone (m)
- 10\_ upgraded basketball court (improve restrooms, remodel walls, repave court, new goals) (p)
- 11\_ upgraded pavilion (possible 2nd) with new seating (m)
- 12\_ paved minor loop trail (p)
- 13\_ major loop trail with exercise nodes (p)
- 14\_ secondary recreation area/bmx trail system (p)
- 15\_ slightly re-oriented park drive with some on-street parking
- 16\_ added soccer field (p)
- 17\_ exercise/fitness node (p)

- (p) physical tool
- (m) mental tool
- (e) environmental tool



# Camp Swift Park



process sketches



concept plan

- 01\_ crosswalks to neighborhoods
- 02\_ make entry statement
- 03\_ parking on street with walk
- 04\_ paved entry road
- 05\_ privacy gateway into gun range
- 06\_ 5'-8' gravel trail (p)(e)
- 07\_ 3-5' berms for buffer/seating area (m)
- 08\_ fitness plaza with exercise equipment (p)
- 09\_ soccer fields (p)
- 10\_ community bldg/restrooms/  
concession/stage opportunity (e)
- 11\_ parking lot with walks
- 12\_ picnic pavilion at old building with  
architectural character and seating (m)
- 13\_ dry creek along play area (e)
- 14\_ playground area with swings/seating (p)
- 15\_ nature trails/shaded seating (m)(e)
- 16\_ upgraded landscape along roadway
- 17\_ open field for performances/  
movies/free play (m)

- (p) physical tool
- (m) mental tool
- (e) environmental tool

# [web.tplgis.org/healthyparksplan/](http://web.tplgis.org/healthyparksplan/)

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## HEALTHY PARKS PLAN

FOR TRAVIS, BASTROP & CALDWELL COUNTIES

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View a description of the data that was used in this analysis
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Healthy Parks Plan Final Report Appendices



Thank you!

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