

# KEMAH PARKS & OPEN SPACE FINAL DRAFT MASTER PLAN

ADOPTED APRIL 3, 2024



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Kemah sits at a unique point in its 130+ year history. As population pressures grow, the city recognizes the need to improve and expand its park system. Understanding what our parks need to do to support the communities they are located in has changed dramatically during and since the years of the COVID pandemic. Cities now understand that not only are parks a significant part of improving community aesthetics, but parks are also now being seen as a vital piece of our urban infrastructure. They can serve many functions simultaneously, from recreation and flood mitigation to buffers against disaster and a location to improve mental health. Parks have become the key to improving a multitude of conditions in our cities, communities, and neighborhoods. The City of Kemah also recognizes that the specific needs of residents change over time.

These changing opinions, trends, and needs require that we periodically review our infrastructure and check in with the people in our community to ensure we are heading in the right direction. All cities have finite resources and often face determining the best places to focus efforts. Periodically revisiting the question of where we want to be going allows us to prioritize projects, find opportunities to maximize the return on our investments, and ensure a healthy strategy for growth.

In the process of assessing existing spaces and engaging with the public, we discovered several key themes. Existing parks were well-maintained regarding mowing, trash pick-up, and removing graffiti. We also found that in general, park amenities are somewhat dated and had issues meeting current ADA accessibility standards. We also confirmed that Highway 146 acts as a massive barrier to movement from one area of Kemah to the next, resulting in documentable inequities in the park system.

Recommendations for the path forward include utilizing Highway 146 to reconnect the precincts of Kemah, leveraging existing underutilized, publicly owned land to build new, needed park spaces, and a decision-making hierarchy for improving existing parks. Recognizing that improvements do not come free, several methods and sources for funding various project types are identified to aid in moving forward with the plan.

Through this intensive series of site inspections, exhaustive research, and comprehensive public engagement strategy a bold, expansive vision for the future of parks in the City of Kemah has been developed. If followed in a deliberate process over the next five to ten years, the city will be in a position to serve all of its residents with a variety of new and renovated parks and trails. Additionally, the strategies outlined within this document will build Kemah to be more resilient to dramatic shocks to the system while raising a new eco-tourism sector for the community.



The Kemah Lighthouse on 6th St. Source: stock.adobe.com



# INTRODUCTION



## PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

Parks and open spaces are the lifeblood of a vibrant community; offering a myriad of benefits that enrich the physical, mental, social, and economic well-being of Kemah’s residents. Parks serve as essential sanctuaries for nature, supporting biodiversity and providing habitat for wildlife. Parks and open spaces also promote physical fitness and healthier lifestyles, encouraging recreational activities such as walking and playing sports, all while fostering connectedness among community members. Parks also act as social magnets, drawing people together for picnics, cultural events, and family gatherings; strengthening the social fabric of the city. As essential assets for coastal communities, parks and open spaces enhance property values, attract tourists, and promote local businesses, creating a positive economic impact. Parks and open spaces are an enduring testament to the City’s commitment to its residents’ well-being, and fosters harmony between nature, recreation, and community spirit.

The Kemah Parks and Open Space Master Plan will serve as the vision for the future of Kemah’s recreational assets. This plan ensures that the City’s parks and recreation system develop over time to meet the needs and demands of its community as Kemah continues to grow. This plan assesses the City’s current assets, identifies needs within the system, and then sets forth goals, recommendations, and priorities for the future of Kemah’s parks that align with the community’s needs and desires. It also identifies guidelines for implementation and funding.

## PLAN GOALS

1. Establish a current baseline of conditions of the parks and recreation facilities, including the size, location, type, quality, and accessibility.
2. Understand the community’s current needs within the parks and recreation system
3. Understand the community’s future needs through data regarding the anticipated changes in Kemah that affect the parks and recreation system.
4. Increase access to and use of unique natural features in Kemah, including, opportunities for nature-based tourism and recreation.
5. Guide planning, phasing, and suggested funding opportunities for ongoing enhancement and additions of the parks and recreation system.

## BENEFITS OF PARKS

<b>HEALTH</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provides free or low-cost fitness opportunities</li><li>• Reduces stress through contact with nature</li></ul>	<b>SOCIAL</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provides places for family and friends to gather and build social networks</li><li>• Fosters community interaction</li></ul>
<b>ECONOMIC</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Attracts businesses through public realm improvement</li><li>• Provides ecotourism opportunities</li></ul>	<b>ENVIRONMENT</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Vegetation in parks filters air and water pollution</li><li>• Preserves habitats</li><li>• Mitigates urban heat island effect</li></ul>



# THE KEMAH COMMUNITY

The City of Kemah is located in Galveston County, on Galveston Bay, approximately 30 miles southeast of Houston and 25 miles northwest of Galveston.

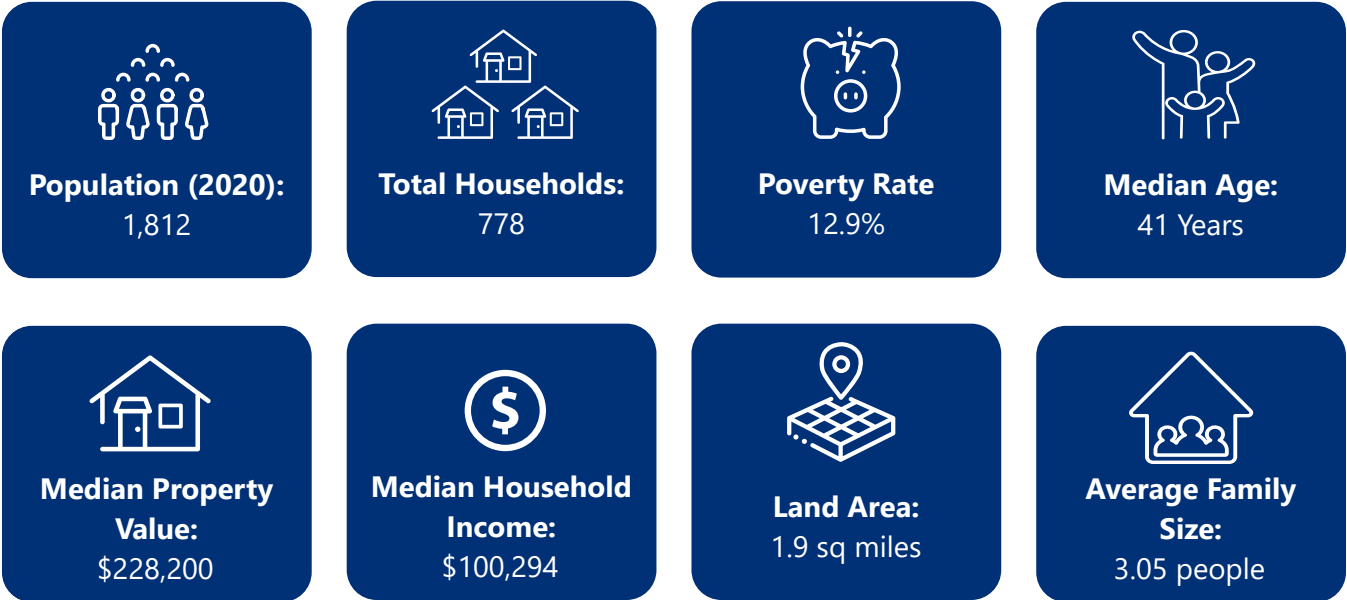
## KEMAH AT A GLANCE

Community demographic make-up is vital to understand to help inform the planning process. While the future can't be predicted, growth trends are especially useful in parks and open space planning to help determine the need for new parks and other facilities. This section describes the City of Kemah's current and projected future demographics.

In 2020, Kemah had a population of 1,812 people with a median age of 41.2 and a median household income of \$100,294. The 5th largest ethnic groups in Kemah, TX are White (Non-Hispanic) (58.8%), White (Hispanic) (18.1%), Black or African American (Non-Hispanic) (6.72%), Two+ (Non-Hispanic) (6.62%), and Other (Hispanic) (4.16%).



The median property value in Kemah was \$228,200, and the homeownership rate was 66.8%. In the 2020 ACS Survey. None of the households in Kemah reported speaking a non-English language at home as their primary shared language. 92.3% of the residents in Kemah, TX are U.S. citizens. The most common employment sectors for those who live in Kemah, TX, are Construction, Accommodation & Food Services, and Manufacturing.<sup>1</sup>



Source: UC Census 2020 ACS 5-Year Survey

## GROWTH

In 2008, Kemah's population peaked at 2,543 residents. The decrease in population likely correlated with the economic recession at the time. Since then, Kemah's growth has dipped but has stabilized between about 1,800 to 2,000 people. As of 2020, the Kemah population is 1,812. Population growth trends indicate a slight downward trajectory for Kemah's growth. The Texas Water Development Board creates annual population projections for water utility districts in Texas. Kemah is served by two water utilities, the Galveston County Water Control Improvements District and the Bayview Municipal Utility District. According to the Texas Water Development Board, the Galveston County Water Control Improvements District will have a 1% increase in population from 2020 to 2030. However, the Bayview Municipal Utility District population is expected to shrink by 8.4% from 2023 to 2030.<sup>2</sup>

Projections are just a predictor of future population if the status quo is maintained. As of 2023, the City has several developments underway that will attract many residents to town. A single-family community of approximately 500 homes is under construction, and up to three (3) apartment complexes are either under construction or moving through the approval process. These complexes could bring as many as 1,000 new housing units to town.



Boats in Kemah's marina. Source: kemahhtx.gov

With the increase in available housing and the improvements to local infrastructure, Kemah leaders see a potential doubling of the town's population in the next few years.

## HISTORY

Kemah was founded on the Texas and New Orleans Railroad in the late 1890s as a coastal fishing and shrimping town. It was originally named Evergreen, however this name was already in use by another community and was renamed Kemah. In the 1900s Kemah's population grew due to the oil-related and ship-building industries. In 1970, the City had 2,000 residents and about 43 businesses. By 2,000, the population grew to 2,330.<sup>3</sup>

## ASSETS

Kemah's proximity to Houston makes it an attractive area for those looking for small-town, coastal living within commuting distance of a large city. Although the City has a small footprint, it has a large cultural influence on the surrounding area. It is a regional destination for boating, fishing, dining, and visiting the family-friendly Kemah Boardwalk, a waterfront amusement park, shopping, and retail center that was established in 2001. The Kemah Boardwalk sits within the Kemah Entertainment District.



EXISTING PLANS AND INITIATIVES

Aligning the Parks and Open Space Plan with existing City plans and initiatives is an important step in the successful execution of the recommendations outlined in this document. The following provides an overview of existing plans and initiatives in the Houston-Galveston County area and their relevance to the development of the Kemah Parks Master Plan.

GALVESTON COUNTY PARKS MASTER PLAN (2017)

The plan is a continuation of the Parks, Recreation and Open Space, and Conservation/Natural Resource Master Plan in 2011. The plan outlines the existing park system conditions and suggests potential locations to extend the park system in Galveston County.<sup>4</sup>

KEMAH PARKS MASTER PLAN (2009-2016)

Plan priorities include maintaining and enhancing existing parks while acquiring land and developing new facilities (parks/pathways) to achieve the overall goal, of a well-balanced parks and recreation system.<sup>5</sup>

KEMAH STRATEGIC PLAN (2009-2013)

A planning process to prioritize public investments and community enhancement efforts. 4 out of 10 plan goals were related to parks and recreation.<sup>6</sup>

LEAGUE CITY PARKS, TRAILS, AND OPEN SPACE MASTER PLAN (2017)

The Master Plan proposes projects consisting of land acquisition, facility development, and renovations to existing parks. The plan proposes the immediate development of two neighborhood parks which are within a half-mile radius of the City of Kemah.<sup>7</sup>

	PARKS & OPEN SPACE	CONNECTIVITY & TRANSIT	ECOLOGY	HEALTH & WELLNESS	PUBLIC SAFETY
<p><b>2045 ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN (2019)</b></p> <p>The Houston-Galveston Area Council outlines a set of strategies that align the non-motorized transportation system across the region that are to achieve the council’s vision by year 2045. The ATP supports the larger 2045 Regional Transportation Plan.<sup>8</sup></p>					
<p><b>CITY OF KEMAH CIP PLAN (2021-2026)</b></p> <p>The City of Kemah Capital Improvement Projects Plan outlines park and trail projects as “priority goal #4.” The KCDC outlines Goal #4 - “Build More Livable Communities” with an implementation strategy to “Coordinate regional transit approaches with local infrastructure improvements that enable active transportation.”<sup>9</sup></p>					
<p><b>KEMAH LIVING SHORELINE HABITAT PROTECTION AND RESTORATION (2020)</b></p> <p>The project aims to restore estuarine and coastal habitats on Galveston Bay in the 30-acre proposed site location of the Galveston Bay Foundation. The initiative will use multiple ecological management systems such as installing rip rap wave break, planting native vegetation, shoreline stabilization, and water quality improvement.<sup>10</sup></p>					
<p><b>H-GAC 2035 REGIONAL BIKEWAY PLAN (2007)</b></p> <p>The plan provide the Houston-Galveston Are with council for best practice developing facilities for bicyclists.<sup>11</sup></p>					

Note: Several studies are currently underway or being planned for, including an update to the Kemah Downtown Redevelopment Strategies Report, and a Kemah Comprehensive Plan



# PARKS & OPEN SPACE REGIONAL CONTEXT

## CONTEXT

Kemah is located on Galveston Bay and at the mouth of Clear Lake, a brackish lake known for aerospace and tourism business sectors with a large recreation boating marina. Additionally, the City is surrounded by other cities and town centers, such as League City to the east, Bacliff to the south, and Clear Lake Shores and Seabrook to the north. These municipalities have parks, open spaces, and recreation opportunities that also serve the Kemah community. The table on the following pages shows the different municipalities around Kemah and the parks, facilities, and amenities found at each location with the approximate distance from Kemah.

## REGIONAL PARKS & OPEN SPACES

In addition to parks, open space, recreation facilities; multi-use trails, terrestrial and aquatic conservation areas, and kayak/small boat paddle

trails provide great opportunities for the area (more about the ecological context below). There is a multi-use trail, the FM 518 multi-use path, which enters Kemah from the west and connects the area to League City and north up to Nassau Bay; currently, this trail ends at Highway 146.

Kemah is surrounded by open water, such as Galveston Bay and Clear Lake; these areas are not traditional park spaces but provide important viewsheds and opportunities to watch wildlife and access the water in some locations. Kemah is eight miles from the Armand Bayou Nature Center, an important regional conservation area and the Galveston Bay Foundation has its headquarters and a coastal property within Kemah. The foundation is developing plans to add a "Living Building" and conservation space to the four-acre property. There are many opportunities to integrate the ecological context and regional character into Kemah's park system.



The bay area surrounding Kemah has a wealth of natural areas, including the Armand Bayou Nature Preserve in Pasadena, TX. Source: expedia.com





PARKS WITHIN A 6 MILE RADIUS OF KEMAH

REGIONAL PARK AMENITIES	LOCATION	APPROXIMATE DISTANCE TO KEMAH	BALL FIELDS	BASKETBALL COURT	BOAT LAUNCH	COVERED PAVILION	HIKING AND/OR BIKING TRAILS	PICNIC AREA	PLAYGROUND	SOCCER/ FOOTBALL FIELD	TENNIS COURTS	VOLLEYBALL NETS	DOG PARK	SPLASH PAD OR POOL	NATURAL AREAS	DISC GOLF	SKATE PARK
BAYRIDGE PARK	League City	2.5 mi	●	●		●		●	●								
CHESTER L. DAVIS SPORTSPLEX	League City	6 mi	●			●	●	●	●	●		●					
LYNN GRIPON PARK AT COUNTRYSIDE	League City	8 mi	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●				
DR. NED AND FAY DUDNEY NATURE CENTER	League City	4 mi				●	●	●									
HERITAGE PARK	League City	4.5 mi			●	●	●	●	●								
HOMETOWN HEROS PARK	League City	4.5 mi		●		●	●	●	●	●			●				
LEAGUE PARK	League City	5 mi		●		●		●	●								
LOBIT PARK	League City	4 mi		●													
NEWPORT PARK	League City	7 mi	●	●				●	●								
WALTER HALL PARK	League City	5 mi					●	●			●						
WILDWOOD PARK	Seabrook	1.5 mi							●								
BRUMMERHOP PARK	Seabrook	2 mi		●		●		●	●			●		●	●		
MIRAMAR PARK	Seabrook	1.5 mi							●			●		●		●	
PELICAN BAY POOL	Seabrook	1.5 mi												●			
REX L. MEADOR PARK	Seabrook	2 mi	●	●		●	●					●					●
FRIENDSHIP PARK	Seabrook	3 mi	●	●				●	●	●							
BAYBROOK PARK	Seabrook	3 mi		●				●	●		●						
SEABROOK WILDLIFE REFUGE AND PARK	Seabrook	3.5 mi					●								●		
CLEAR LAKE PARK	Seabrook	3 mi	●						●		●						
NASSAU BAY PENINSULA WILDLIFE PARK	Houston	3.5 mi								●					●		
EXPLORATION GREEN	Houston	6 mi															
BAYSHORE PARK	Bacliff	4.5 mi	●			●		●	●								
KIPPER MEASE SPORTS COMPLEX	Pasadena	6 mi															
ARMAND BAYOU NATURE CENTER	Pasadena	5 mi	●			●	●	●							●		

ECOREGION &  
ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS

Understanding the local ecoregion provides an idea of what terrain, soils, plant and animal species, and plant communities the site has historically supported, and what it is capable of supporting in the future. Ecoregions are areas of land or water that contain geographically distinct climates, groups of plant and animal species, and environmental conditions<sup>12</sup> and are often catalysts for an area’s historic economic base. These geographic areas are important for structuring and implementing parks, open space, landscape, ecological management, and restoration strategies.

Kemah, TX is in the Northern Humid Gulf Coastal Prairie Ecoregion, a mostly flat, coastal plain with poor-draining soils that historically supported tallgrass prairie with clusters of oaks. Approximately 1% of the Gulf Coastal Prairie Ecoregion remains in Texas; much of this ecosystem transformed into other landscape and land use types. Certain animals adapted to the

conditions within the Gulf Coast region still rely on important vegetation for survival; the Monarch Butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) needs Milkweed (*Asclepias sp.*) and abundant nectar sources to complete its long migration.

The name Kemah comes from a local tribal nation word meaning “facing the wind” reflecting the regional context of where Kemah sits on the bay. Kemah is also at the convergence of freshwater and saltwater aquatic systems at the mouth of Clear Lake. This ecotone, a transition region between habitats or ecological communities, is bio-diverse\* supporting many terrestrial and aquatic plant and animal species. In addition, Kemah is on the Central Migration Route. Over the course of a season, thousands of bird species pass through the Houston-Galveston area. This winged migration also includes bats and insects vital to the local ecology.

The ecological context, paired with the current assets in Kemah, such as the 57 Acre Nature Facility, the bay side pocket parks, and the Galveston Bay Foundation property, make the area ideal for ecotourism or nature-based tourism opportunities. Texas Parks and Wildlife provide “wildlife viewing driving trails such as the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail and Great Texas Wildlife Viewing Trails, helping canoers and kayakers discover public access sites through the Texas Paddling Trails program, and by working with private landowners and communities to develop nature tourism enterprises.”<sup>13</sup>

**What is biodiversity?**

Biodiversity is the variety and number of living things on Earth and includes all species, from the bacteria living in the soils around palm trees, to the song bird that lives in its fronds, to the tree itself. It includes diversity within species, between species, and among ecosystems. Just as species rely on each other for food and shelter, so do people rely on biodiversity for food, products, medicine, protection from weather, and much more. Ecosystem species richness supports mental health for people but also ensures a thriving ecosystem for wildlife. Most importantly, an ecosystem with higher biodiversity is more resilient to pests, disease, and large climatic shifts.

Source: Millenium Ecosystem Assessment - Facts on Biodiversity, accessed July 31, 2021, <https://www.greenfacts.org/en/v-foldout.pdf>



Roseate Spoonbill are one of the many coastal waterfowl found in Kemah. Source: travisaudubon.org



# KEMAH'S PARKS & OPEN SPACES

## OVERVIEW

The City of Kemah has a total of eleven properties that are considered parks or open spaces. In this report, **parks** are publicly accessible green spaces that contain recreational or aesthetic amenities, while **natural areas** encompass undeveloped or partially developed land that does not have the same level of amenities or recreational facilities as parks. For example, James A. Foster Park is considered a Park, and 57 Acre Nature Facility is considered a Natural Area.

## PARK TYPOLOGIES

Park typologies are a system of categorizing parks to help policymakers and the City's planners determine how to invest in a park based on its use type. Park typologies are typically defined by the park's size and geographic location.

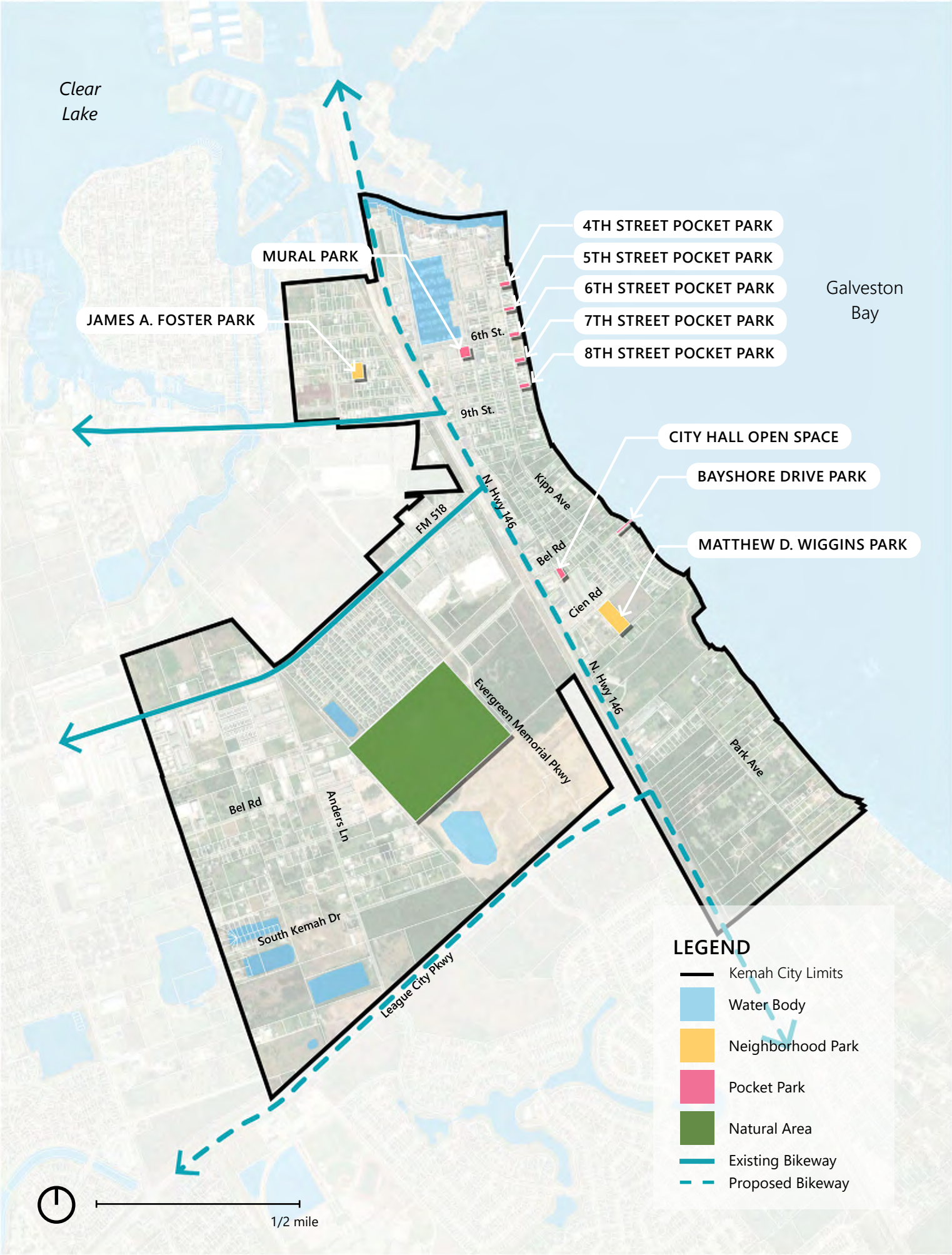
The City of Kemah has three park typologies:

Typology	Defining Features
Pocket Park	< 1 acre. Typically has a small gathering space and limited amenities.
Neighborhood Park	1-2 acres. Typically has sports and play recreation facilities.
Natural Area	Defined by its use as an ecology conservation area.

## KEMAH'S CURRENT PARKS & NATURAL AREAS

The map on the right identifies the typologies of the eleven properties throughout the city.

Name	Park Typology
57 Acre Nature Facility	Natural Area
James A. Foster Park	Neighborhood Park
Matthew D. Wiggins Park (formerly Cien Park)	Neighborhood Park
Bel Road Pocket Park	Pocket Park
City Hall Open Space	Pocket Park
4th Street Pocket Park	Pocket Park
5th Street Pocket Park	Pocket Park
6th Street Pocket Park	Pocket Park
7th Street Pocket Park	Pocket Park
8th Street Pocket Park	Pocket Park
Mural Park	Pocket Park





# PARK WALKABILITY

## OVERVIEW

A major goal of this Master Plan is to improve walkability and remove barriers that prevent pedestrians from navigating the city. It is important to initially evaluate the level of service that current parks provide and utilize this study to identify gaps in the current level of service.

For the report, Level of Service defines areas within a 10-minute walk of a park. The areas highlighted in green in the opposite graphic were provided by ParkServe, a GIS-based tool created by the Trust for Public Land. This tool highlights areas served by parks and clearly outlines gaps in the Level of Service. With this information, assessments can be made to determine what improvements have the most impact and encourage the most effective use of funding and resources.

## ASSESSMENT

A large majority of Kemah east of Highway 146 has a high level of access to nearby parks and open spaces due to the existing open spaces along Galveston Bay, Matthew D. Wiggins Park, the Mural Welcome Park, and City Hall Open Space. These are all linked by Kipp Avenue and the grid street pattern closer to the Lighthouse District.

When looking west of Highway 146, it is necessary to first examine the highway itself and study how it impacts connectivity and walkability. Navigating this crossing and making appropriate and effective improvements will create a truly connected Kemah.

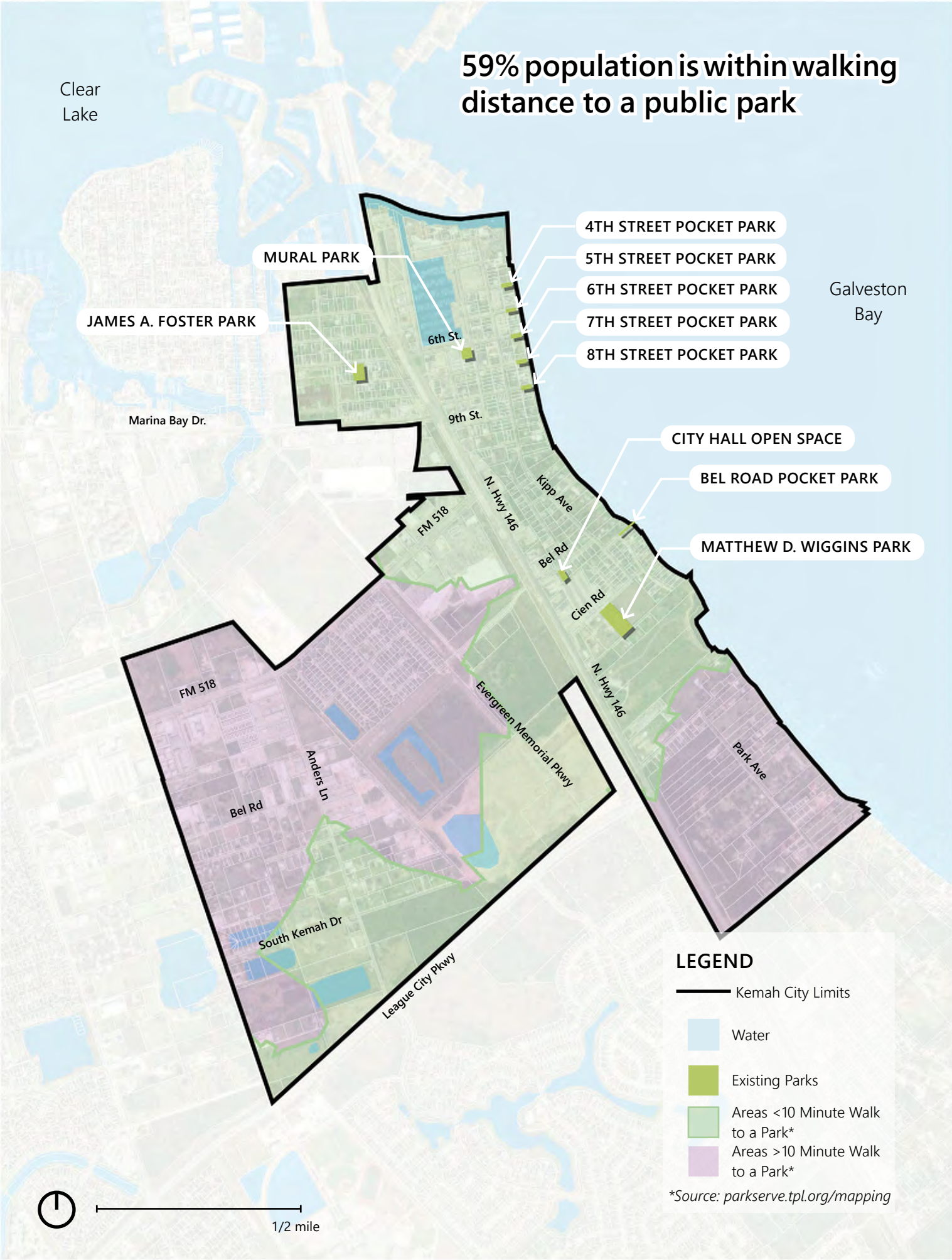
Looking further west of Highway 146, the only existing park spaces are James A. Foster Park and Kemah Oaks Park, which is a private park for Kemah Oaks residents only.

## CROSS-TOWN COLLABORATION

The locations outside the desired proximity to a local park are the Bayview and South Kemah Areas, however, the proximity does not take into consideration the proximity to parks outside the city of Kemah. The Bayview and South Kemah areas are within range of walking to other parks in League City and Bacliff, giving an opportunity to consider cross-town collaboration with the mutual goal of providing access to nature and increasing visitors to the parks.



Dick Benoit Prairie Preserve. Source: Issuu.com





# ACTIVITY MAP

## PROCESS

The modern world of apps and tracking of movement allows us to understand how people move in and around our communities. Strava is one such application and provides the data it collects in the form of compiled heat maps indicating paths of travel and by what mode: Walking/Running, Biking, and Boating. While specific data is not available from this site, experience has shown that this crowd-sourced data can be a good indicator of use in an area and can help in identifying broken linkages and heavily used routes for decision-making processes.

## ANALYSIS

While in many towns, we tend to focus primarily on the cycling, walking, & running communities, Kemah has a large amount of recreation focused on Galveston Bay. Three sets of data combined help paint a dramatic picture of the city's network of recreational opportunities and connectivity issues; using the survey data and physical observation, the Strava data paints a clear picture of Kemah.

In the data, we see the high use of the existing shared-use path along FM 518, strong connections to adjacent cities, high-use areas in West Kemah, Downtown Kemah, and the 57 Acre site. Likewise, we have a clear picture of common waterway routes and points of ingress/egress along the coast. These water routes and high-use areas are another piece of the Kemah Park system puzzle. While the city has little control over the waterways, we will focus on points of entry or gaps in access and include them in the

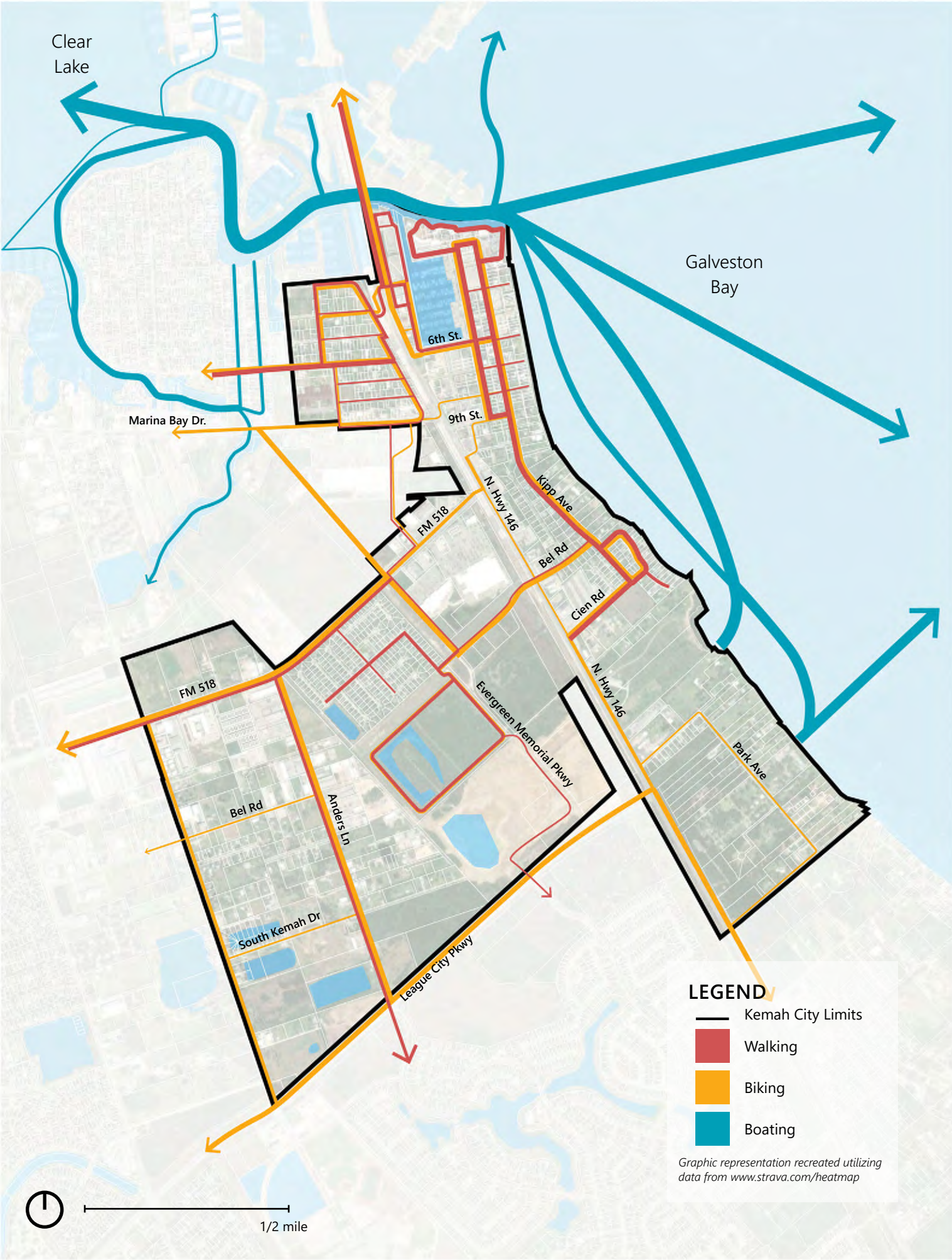
recommendations as part of long-term Parks and Recreation planning.

The aggregate data shows us use patterns and level of demand and is effective at identifying gaps and barriers in mobility in and around the city. The clearest example of this in the map is the lack of movement along, around, and across Highway 146. The data shows that this large multi-lane road is a barrier to movement for non-vehicular traffic. When coupled with existing parks information we identify communities isolated from unique amenities. Areas in South Kemah and Bayview have a clear separation from the rest of town. Downtown is heavily trafficked but with little connection to other communities.

When a stark barrier like a highway or elevated road bisects a town such as this, it can clearly lead to inequitable access in everything from socioeconomics to individual health. Those residents with greater access tend to have greater opportunities, better health, and higher property values. In many cases, this can be a dramatic barrier to overcome. In the case of Kemah however, the construction of a new elevated highway can be an opportunity to address this issue head-on by intentionally restitching the town together through needed crossings, public park spaces, and additional amenities. These will be discussed in detail in the recommendations.



The Toughest 10K Kemah. Source: [www.onetough10k.com](http://www.onetough10k.com)



**LEGEND**

- Kemah City Limits
- Walking
- Biking
- Boating

Graphic representation recreated utilizing data from [www.strava.com/heatmap](http://www.strava.com/heatmap)



# KEMAH'S PRECINCTS

## CONTEXT

There are seven distinct precincts in the city of Kemah as established by previous work done by LJA and adopted in the city's database of identified neighborhoods. These precincts are the Lighthouse District, Old Kemah, West Kemah, Bayview, Kemah Oaks, South Kemah, and Kemah Crossing. Some of the criteria analyzed when determining the extent of these precincts included land use, socioeconomics, culture, and physical limits.

## PHYSICAL BARRIERS

When coupled with the previous data shown in this report and coupled with several specific land use types including utility corridors and existing parks patterns of access and barriers begin to emerge.

Unfortunately, most circulation patterns in Kemah are limited to the individual precincts. Old Kemah and the Lighthouse District are the only precincts with interconnected circulation patterns.

Three physical barriers within the city severely inhibit walkability and non-vehicular circulation, creating a significant issue for Kemah residents. Industrial and commercial land use is not conducive to walkability, and a drainage channel (Jarbo Ditch) disrupts the continuity between South Kemah and the rest of the city. The 2020 Kemah Master Drainage plan proposes design solutions that entail the acquisition of more right of way for the channel and its expansion, in turn creating more of a barrier for South Kemah. Road and parcel layout creates a physical barrier

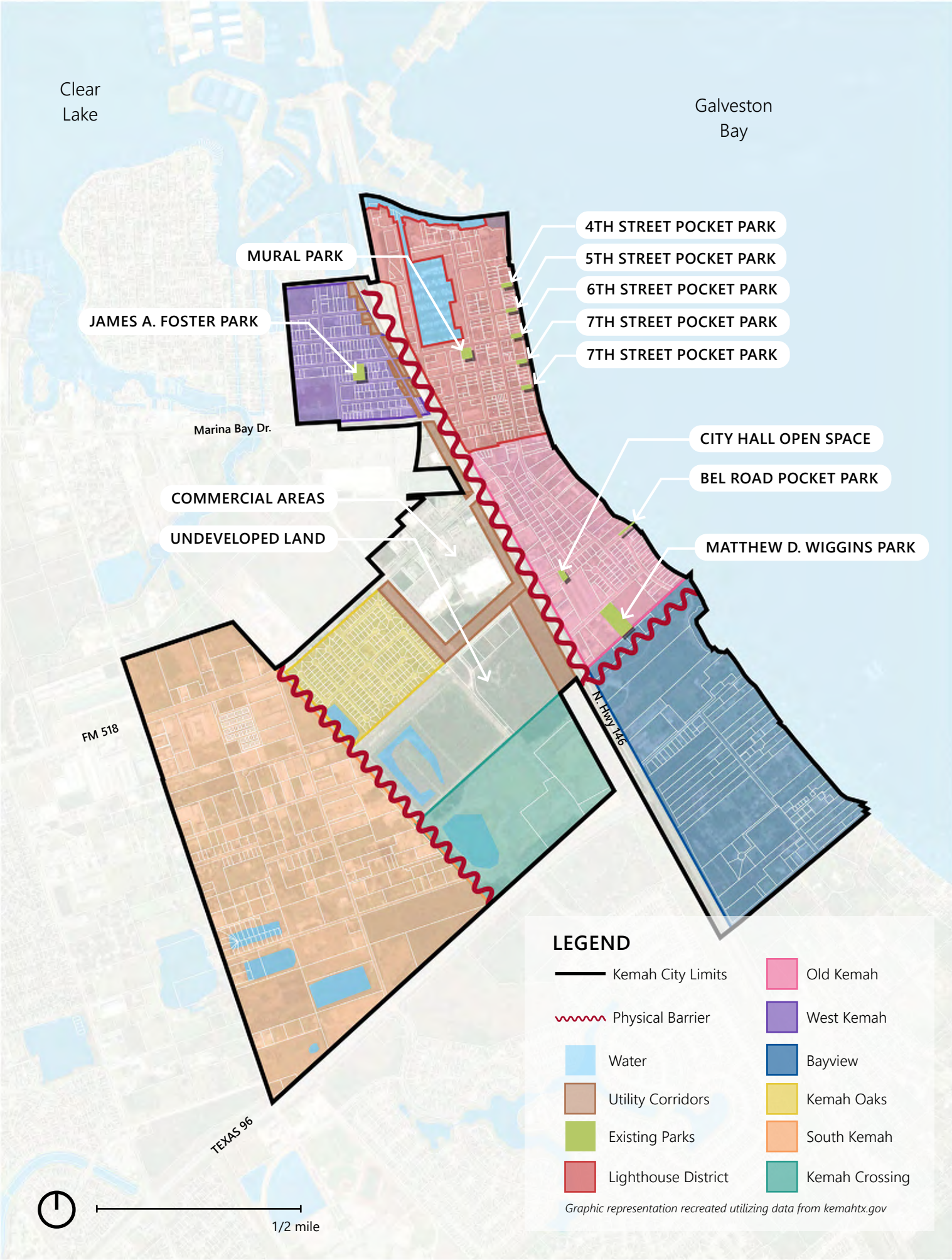
between Bayview and Old Kemah. The only means of non-vehicular connectivity is to utilize the planned sidewalks along the east side of N Highway 146. It is not the most optimal means of movement as the sidewalk is adjacent to the high-traffic, multiple-lane roadway.

N Highway 146 bisects the City in entirely and creates the largest barrier to connectivity. Opportunities for secure and comfortable pedestrian crossings are limited and are not adequate pathways for pedestrians going towards Bayview and Kemah Crossing. Expansion and improvements to Highway 146 are currently underway by TxDOT. Plans include proposed five-foot sidewalks on the east side of Highway 146 and ten-foot shared-use paths on the west side.

Effective solutions to navigate these barriers will be crucial to the Plan's success and overall city connectivity.



Expansion of Hwy 146 underway. Source: houstonchronicle.com





# PARKS AND OPEN SPACE ASSESSMENTS

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METHODOLOGY

In June of 2023, the project team conducted in-depth site assessments for parks and open spaces in Kemah. These ten assessments are intended to provide a baseline for future evaluations and inform decision-making regarding priorities for future investments. These assessments were conducted using a Park Evaluation Tool. This tool assessed existing parks and open spaces on seven factors.

7 PARK RUBRIC CATEGORIES:

- 1. **Park Access:** Assessed the number and location of entrances to the parks, appropriate signage, support for a variety of transportation types, and connections between other parks and open spaces.
- 2. **Park Features:** Evaluated the educational and recreational uses within the park and scored them based on their condition, usability, appearance, and maintenance. Examples include picnic areas, amphitheaters, and plazas.
- 3. **Supportive Facilities:** This category includes non-recreational amenities such as restrooms, trash and recycling receptacles, and drinking fountains.
- 4. **Safety and Maintenance:** Evaluated safety and maintenance concerns both inside the park and in the surrounding environment. Examples include animal waste, unmaintained vegetation, and evidence of substance abuse.
- 5. **Aesthetics:** Assessed the park spaces on a variety of features including quality and cohesion of materials and signage, and placement of trees.

- 6. **Health:** Assessed the combination of opportunities for physical health, mental health, and environmental health within the park. Physical health assessed recreation opportunities for all ages. Mental health evaluated opportunities for social gatherings and connections with nature, and environmental health considered the vegetation and stormwater infrastructure present.
- 7. **Culture and Convenience:** Reviewed existing public art, and educational opportunities.

Within each category, there were a number of factors that were graded on a scale of 1 to 5 in which:

- 5 = abundant, well provided, excellent condition, very attractive, no concerns, true, and other similar characterizations.
- 1 = scarce, very unappealing, very concerning, false, and other similar characterizations.

If a park or open space did not qualify for an element listed in the criteria, it received a score of N/A and no points were counted against the site in that category.

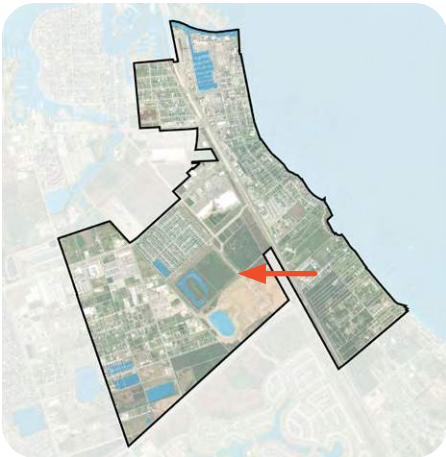
57 ACRE NATURE FACILITY  
(ENTRY ONLY)

PARK DESCRIPTION

57 Acre Nature Facility is...  
a large, abandoned Army Corps site that is currently undergoing improvements and is the largest public open space in Kemah. Near the entry of the park there are fitness stations that range from unusable to fair conditions. Overall, the site has potential for multiple nature oriented activities.



LOCATION



ADDRESS	1860 Park Oaks Street
ACREAGE	57
OPEN SPACE TYPE	Natural Area
AMENITIES	Benches, Dog waste bags, Flexible open lawn, Natural area, Picnic tables, Trails, Trash Receptacles

CATEGORIES

Park Access	2.7								
Park Features									N/A
Supportive Facilities								1.0	
Safety and Maintenance			2.8						
Aesthetics				2.3					
Health				2.5					
Culture and Accessibility					1.7				
Total Score				2.2					

JAMES A. FOSTER PARK

PARK DESCRIPTION

Foster Park is...  
a mid-sized park in the northwest part of the city that offers spaces to gather, play basketball, and a playground. This park predominantly serves the residents of West Kemah and is a popular park adjacent to Lavace Stewart Elementary.



LOCATION



ADDRESS	145 W 7th Street
ACREAGE	1
OPEN SPACE TYPE	Neighborhood Park
AMENITIES	Athletic fields, Benches, Dog waste bags, Flexible open lawn, Pavilion, Picnic tables, Play structure, Trash receptacles

CATEGORIES

Park Access	3.2								
Park Features									
Supportive Facilities						2.0			
Safety and Maintenance					2.4				
Aesthetics						1.7			
Health					2.3				
Culture and Accessibility							1.0		
Total Score					2.5				



# MATTHEW D. WIGGINS PARK

## PARK DESCRIPTION

Matthew D. Wiggins Park is... a mid-sized park in the southeast part of the city, and includes features such as a covered basketball court, skate park, playground, and multiple sport facilities. Residents of the Old Kemah District can easily access the park via Cien Road.



## LOCATION



**ADDRESS** 636 Cien Road

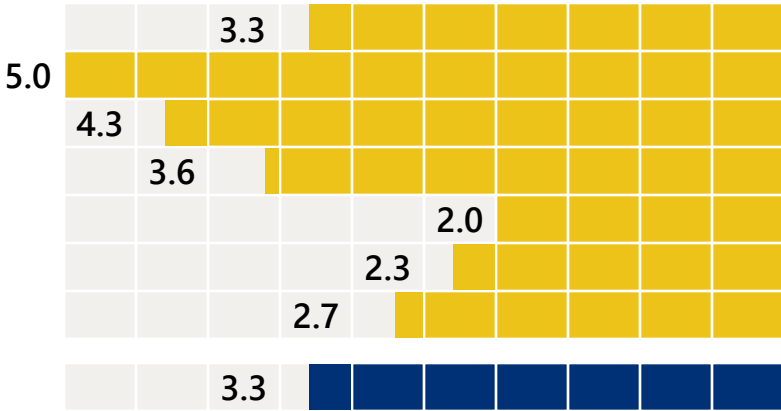
**ACREAGE** 1.5

**OPEN SPACE TYPE** Neighborhood Park

**AMENITIES** Athletic fields, Benches, Dog waste bags, Natural area, Pavilion, Picnic tables, Play structure, Restrooms, Trash receptacles, Water fountain

## CATEGORIES

- Park Access
- Park Features
- Supportive Facilities
- Safety and Maintenance
- Aesthetics
- Health
- Culture and Accessibility



Total Score

# BEL ROAD POCKET PARK

## PARK DESCRIPTION

Bel Road Pocket Park is... a small parcel of land amid two private residences. This little known space provides a quiet, reflective space for enjoying coastal bay and sunset views to the public.



## LOCATION



**ADDRESS** 1398 Bel Road

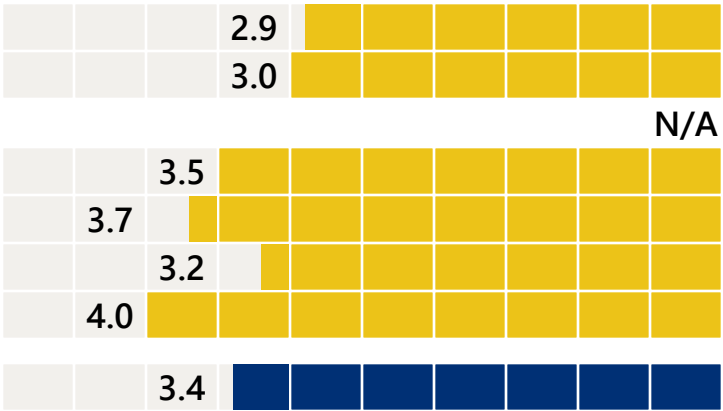
**ACREAGE** 0.1

**OPEN SPACE TYPE** Pocket Park

**AMENITIES** Benches, Dog waste bags, Natural area, Trails

## CATEGORIES

- Park Access
- Park Features
- Supportive Facilities
- Safety and Maintenance
- Aesthetics
- Health
- Culture and Accessibility



Total Score



CITY HALL OPEN SPACE

PARK DESCRIPTION

City Hall Open Space is...

an open space adjacent to city hall and municipal facilities. It includes a small pavilion and an open lawn with trees. The space provides an opportunity to get out in nature in an otherwise urban setting.



LOCATION



ADDRESS 524 Bel Road

ACREAGE 0.3

OPEN SPACE TYPE Pocket Park

AMENITIES Flexible open lawn, Pavilion, Picnic tables

CATEGORIES

Park Access							1.3				
Park Features							1.4				
Supportive Facilities											N/A
Safety and Maintenance	4.3										
Aesthetics							1.6				
Health					2.2						
Culture and Accessibility											N/A
Total Score					2.1						

4TH STREET POCKET PARK

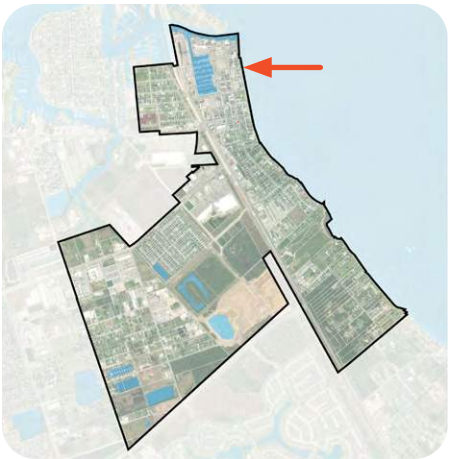
PARK DESCRIPTION

4th Street Park is.....

a small park that provides the public access to Galveston Bay. A cluster of well-established trees cover the open space lawn. Concrete slabs and wood pieces are on site to form makeshift seating spaces for users.



LOCATION



ADDRESS 731 4th Street

ACREAGE 0.05

OPEN SPACE TYPE Pocket Park

AMENITIES Benches, Pavilion

CATEGORIES

Park Access								1.0			
Park Features						2.0					
Supportive Facilities						2.0					
Safety and Maintenance						2.0					
Aesthetics							1.4				
Health						1.9					
Culture and Accessibility								1.0			
Total Score						1.6					



## 5TH STREET POCKET PARK

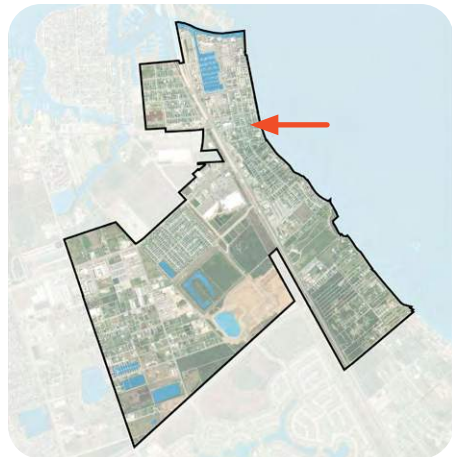
## PARK DESCRIPTION

## 5th Street Park is....

a small park that features a pavilion that sits on the bay. The pavilion has the Kemah Lighthouse inspired roof and serves as a landmark location for the city.



## LOCATION



**ADDRESS** 711 5th Street

ACREAGE 0.1

**OPEN SPACE TYPE** Pocket Park

**AMENITIES** Dog waste bags, Pavilion,  
Trash receptacles

## CATEGORIES

Park Access	3.6
Park Features	4.0
Supportive Facilities	3.0
Safety and Maintenance	3.5
Aesthetics	3.8
Health	3.3
Culture and Accessibility	3.1
Total Score	3.5

## 6TH STREET POCKET PARK

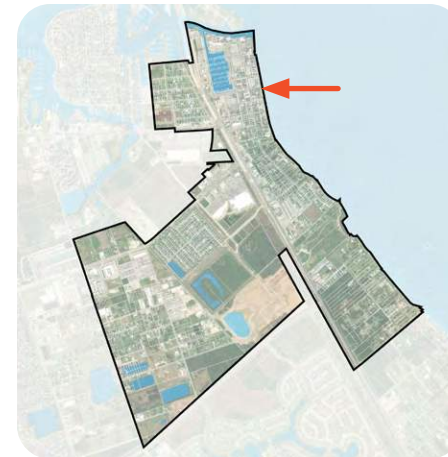
## PARK DESCRIPTION

## 6th Street Park is.....

a small park on the edge of the bay and features one of the two iconic lighthouses in the Lighthouse District. The site has palm trees and a paved walkway around the lighthouse. It is a popular touristic location for taking pictures.



## LOCATION



**ADDRESS** 706 6th Street

ACREAGE 0.12

**OPEN SPACE TYPE** Pocket Park

**AMENITIES** Benches,  
Lighthouse monument,  
Trash receptacles

## CATEGORIES

Park Access				2.5					
Park Features							1.0		
Supportive Facilities				3.0					
Safety and Maintenance			3.2						
Aesthetics			3.3						
Health				2.6					
Culture and Accessibility		4.0							
<b>Total Score</b>				2.8					



7TH STREET  
POCKET PARK

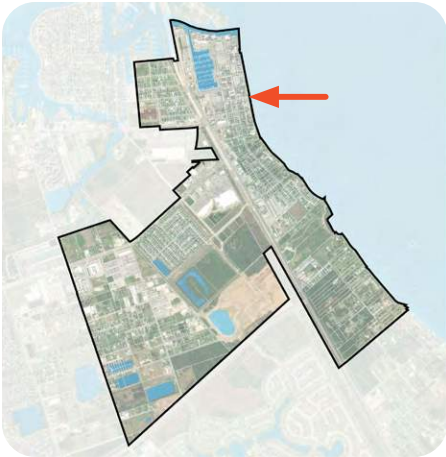
PARK DESCRIPTION

7th Street Park is.....

a small open space overlooking Galveston Bay with a swimming ramp in the center of the area. The site is adjacent to an event venue and private property. There is no parking available at this location.



LOCATION



ADDRESS	708 7th Street
ACREAGE	0.03
OPEN SPACE TYPE	Pocket Park
AMENITIES	Flexible open lawn, Swimming ramp

CATEGORIES

Park Access								1.0		
Park Features								1.0		
Supportive Facilities										N/A
Safety and Maintenance			3.1							
Aesthetics										N/A
Health								1.5		
Culture and Accessibility								1.0		
Total Score								1.5		

8TH STREET  
POCKET PARK

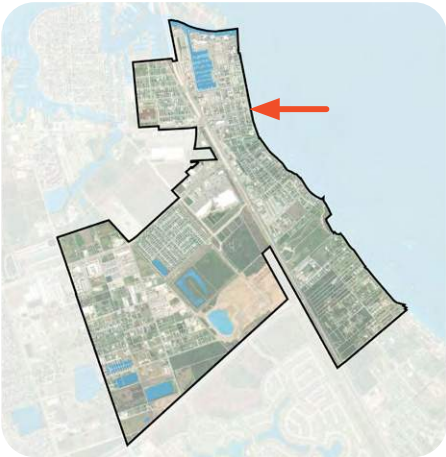
PARK DESCRIPTION

8th Street Park is.....

a small park on Galveston Bay that features lawn and palm trees. The adjacent private properties frames the pocket park and limited parking is available for users.



LOCATION



ADDRESS	712 8th Street
ACREAGE	0.1
OPEN SPACE TYPE	Pocket Park
AMENITIES	Flexible open lawn

CATEGORIES

Park Access								1.0		
Park Features								1.0		
Supportive Facilities										N/A
Safety and Maintenance			3.1							
Aesthetics										N/A
Health								1.5		
Culture and Accessibility								1.0		
Total Score								1.5		



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# WHAT WE HEARD

Summary of Community Engagement Round





INTRODUCTION

Community engagement plays a pivotal role in the development and success of parks and open space master plan. Involving residents, stakeholders, and community members throughout the planning process ensures that the plan reflects their needs, desires, and vision. The first round of community engagement is an exploratory phase, where the City seeks to understand community park usage and their opinions and ideas about the City’s parks. A community survey, community workshop, crowd-sourced virtual map, and a Pop-up event at Matthew D. Wiggins Park were tools used in this first round of community engagement. The community survey and virtual map were hosted on Social Pinpoint and ran from June 14th to July 19th. The community workshop was held on June 26th at the Kemah Community Center,



and the Pop-up, which had many of the same activities as the workshop, was held on June 25th at Matthew D. Wiggins Park. The methodologies and results of this community engagement effort are summarized in this chapter.



Community engagement pop-up event in Kemah.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ROUND 1 SUMMARY

COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

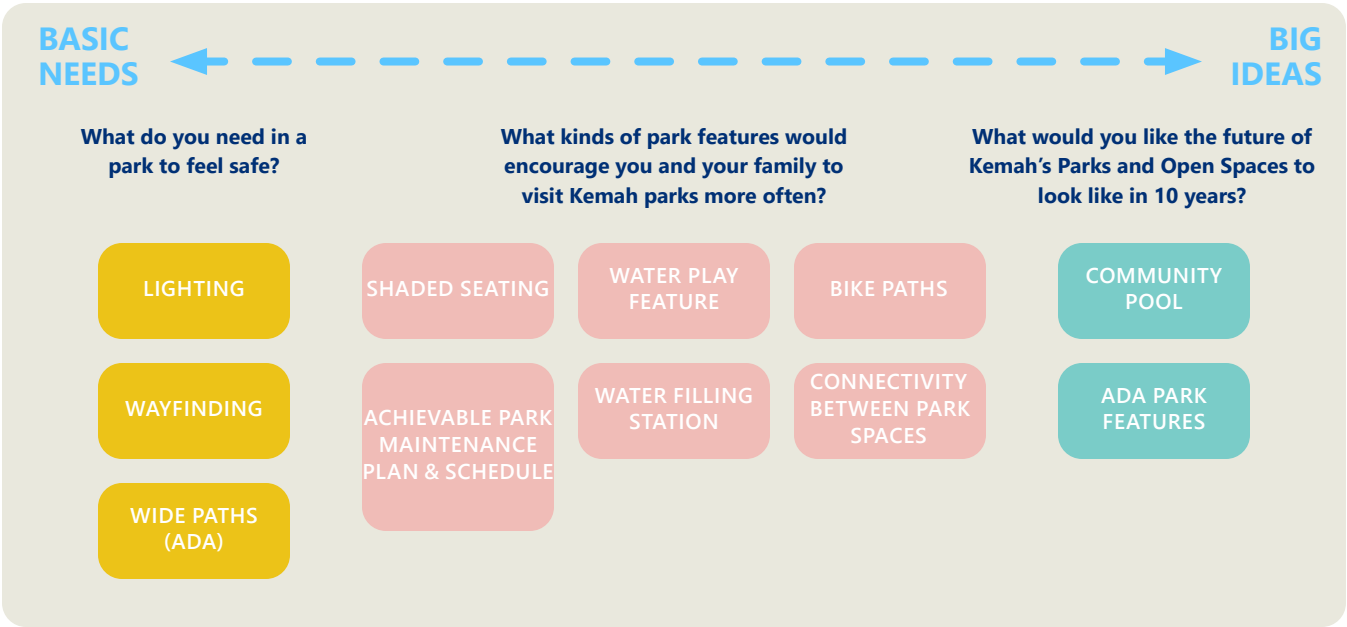
The community workshop was held on June 26th from 6:30-8:00pm at the Kemah Community Center, with 12 participants in attendance. The primary goal of the workshop was to understand the community’s vision for the future of Kemah’s Parks and Open Spaces and what basic elements are needed. There were three activities for participants at the event:

**Park Ideas Map:** The activity helped the project team determine what concerns, likes, and desires community members have for Kemah’s park system. Participants were asked to place their ideas and concerns on a large map of the Kemah park system. This activity corresponded with the Social Pinpoint Virtual Map, and there results are summarized as part of the Virtual Map summary.

**Basic Needs to Big Ideas:** The activity helped the Kemah community dream big about the future of their parks system, while also helping to identify basic upgrades and additions to the Parks system. Example questions include “What do you need in a park to feel safe” and “What would you like the future of Kemah’s parks and Open Spaces to look like in 10 years?” The results of this activity are found below.

**Where Do you Go To...:** This activity helped the project team understand where Kemah residents go when they want to participate in recreational activities. Do they visit parks within Kemah or travel outside the City? What should Kemah be investing in versus where can other cities fill gaps in the Kemah park system? Community members wrote the park activity on a post-it note and placed it on a regional map of the area surrounding Kemah.

BASIC NEEDS TO BIG IDEAS RESULTS





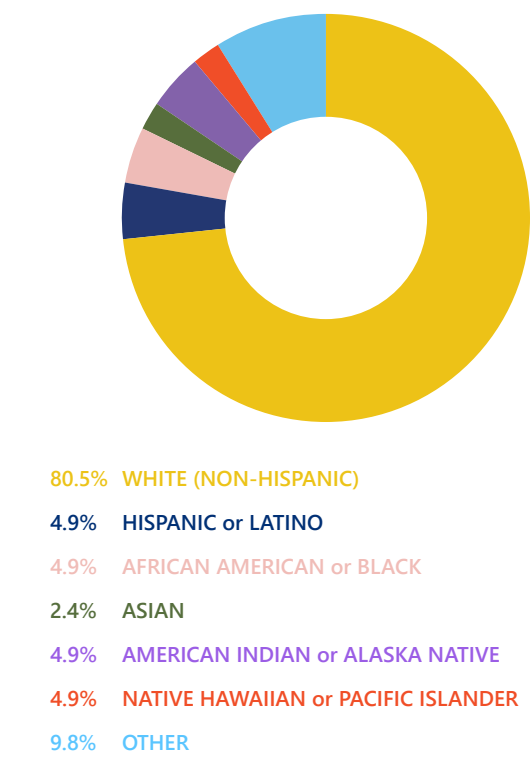
ONLINE SURVEY

46 community members participated in the survey from June 14th to July 17th. The goal of the survey was to understand who the respondents were, understand their needs, and receive feedback on how the Kemah Parks and Open Space system can be improved. <sup>14</sup>

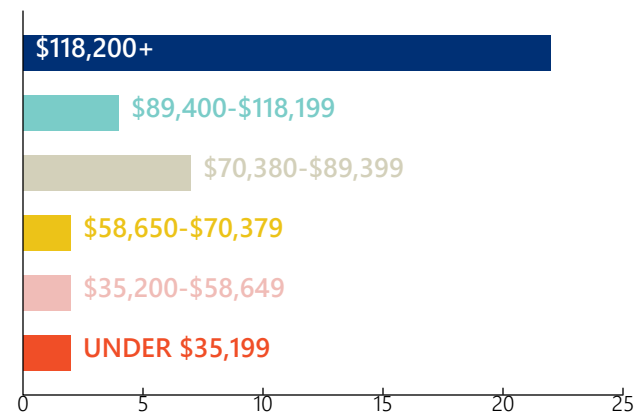
**Most of the respondents live in Kemah (85%).** 39% work in Kemah, and 46% work elsewhere. The majority of those who provided feedback live in a single-family detached home (98%) and are homeowners (93%).

Respondents mostly identified as white (80%), with about 5% identifying as Hispanic or Latino. 63% of respondents identify as female, 37% identify as male, and 5% are a member of the LGBTQ+ community.

Respondents’ reported ethnicity:

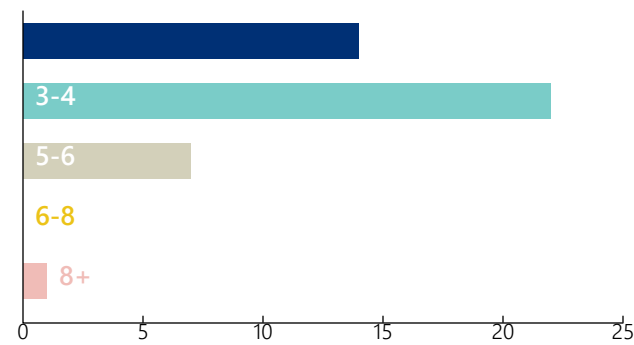


Respondents’ reported household’s annual income:

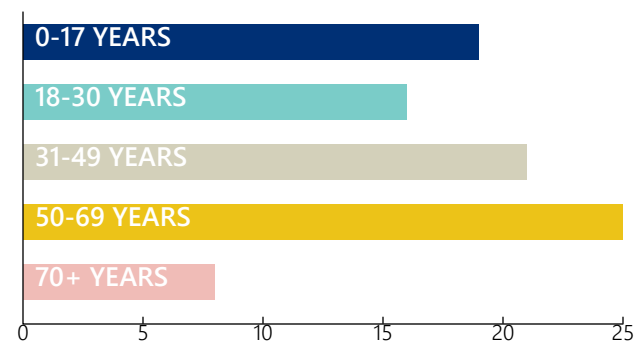


Households that had an annual income over \$118,000 were most represented. Households with 1 to 4 individuals were the most common and a variety of ages were represented within respondent’s homes.

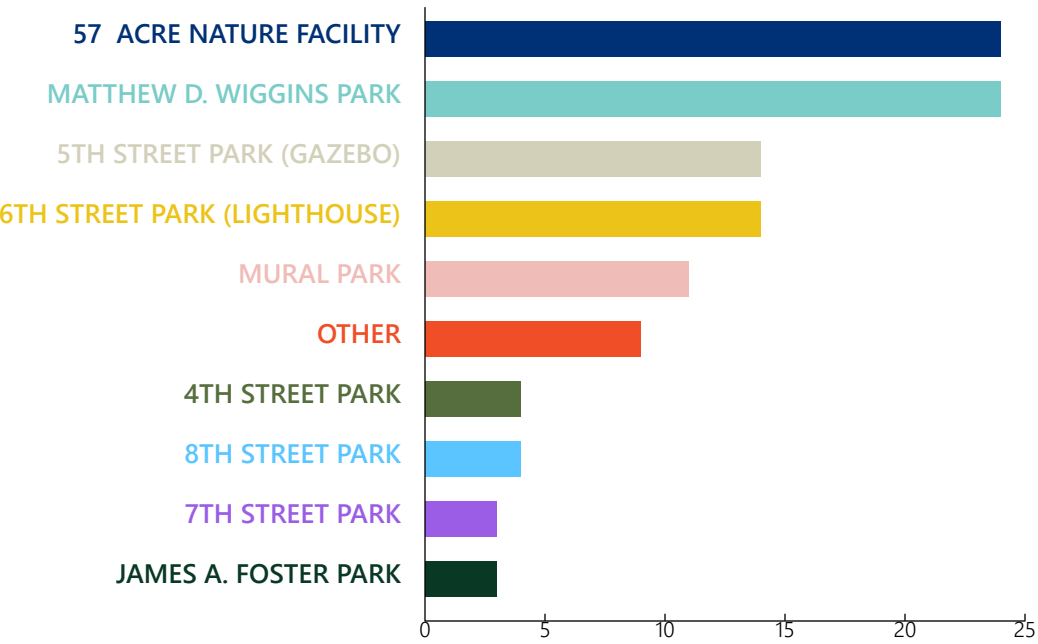
Respondents’ household size:



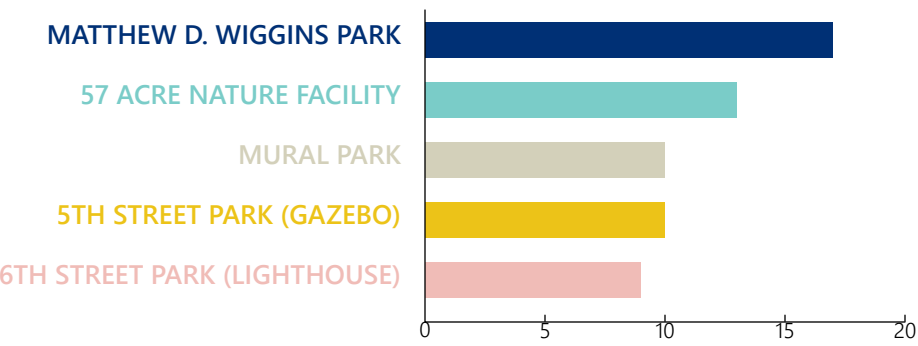
Respondents’ household ages:



Parks rated by reported visits over the last year:



Top 5 park experiences rated excellent and good:



Top 5 park experiences rated poor:





50% of respondents visit both local and regional parks, depending on the activity they are looking for. **48% of individuals report using the park closest to their home.** 30% of respondents report using a combination of two or more modes of transportation to get to parks. **26% walk less than 10 minutes to get to parks they visit** and another 26% drive.

The survey asked for individuals to select all the parks they visited in the last year. **The most visited parks by respondents were 57 Acre Nature Facility and Matthew D. Wiggins Park (formerly Cien Park).** When asked to rate parks by experience, Matthew D. Wiggins Park and 57 Acre Nature Facility were rated 'Good' and 'Excellent' by the most individuals. 57 Acre Nature Facility was also rated the poorest in terms of user experience. The 'Good' and 'Poor' ratings for 57 Acre Nature Facility could be an indicator of

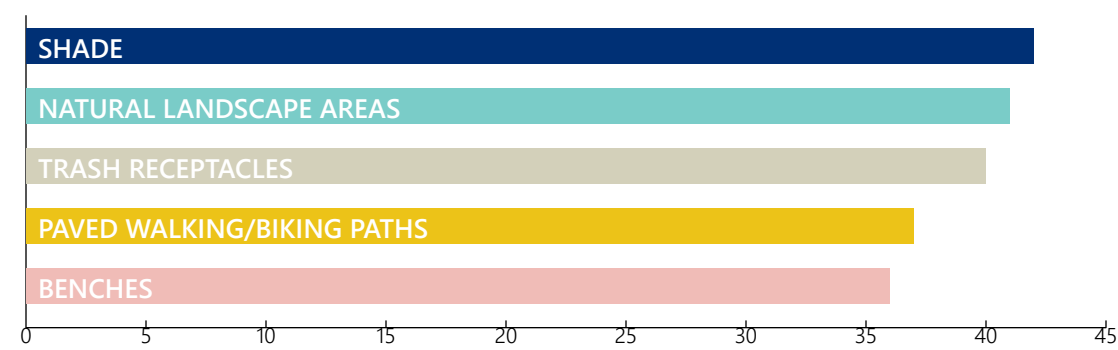
missing facilities that certain users would like to see installed.

The most common reasons parks were rated poor:

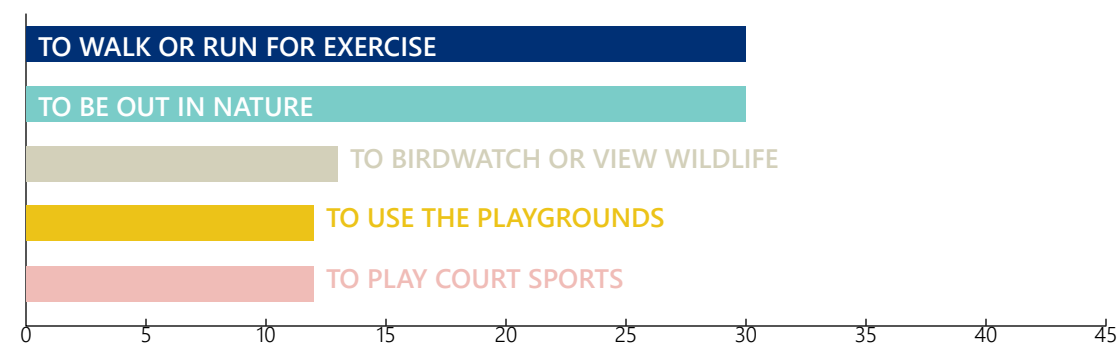
- the amenities/equipment is outdated or not well maintained
- there isn't enough to do in the park
- the park is not used enough
- they do not feel safe or comfortable at the park

The top 10 most important park features for respondents' households included shade, natural landscapes, trash receptacles, paved walking and biking paths, benches, lighting, restrooms, signage and wayfinding, natural surface paths, and parking.

The top 5 most important park features to respondents:



The top 5 reason people visit parks in Kemah:



Most of the community reports receiving information about the parks and open space system by **word of mouth, and through the City's website and social media channels.** 32% said information is hard to find.

When asked what is great about the Kemah park system, the community said:

- Good variety of parks
- Convenient locations

**35% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that the amenities and features within Kemah Parks and Open Space are diverse and meet all of their interests and needs.** Around 15% agreed.

When asked what improvements could be made to the Kemah park system, they said:

- Overall maintenance
- The system should be more accessible and pedestrian-focused
- There should be more shade throughout

The top 10 amenities and/or facilities needed were:



**13 of the 16 respondents with accessibility concerns would like to see improvements to accessibility** within the Kemah Parks and Open Space system. The top suggestions include:

- ADA pathways
- Accessible play equipment
- Shade
- Places to rest

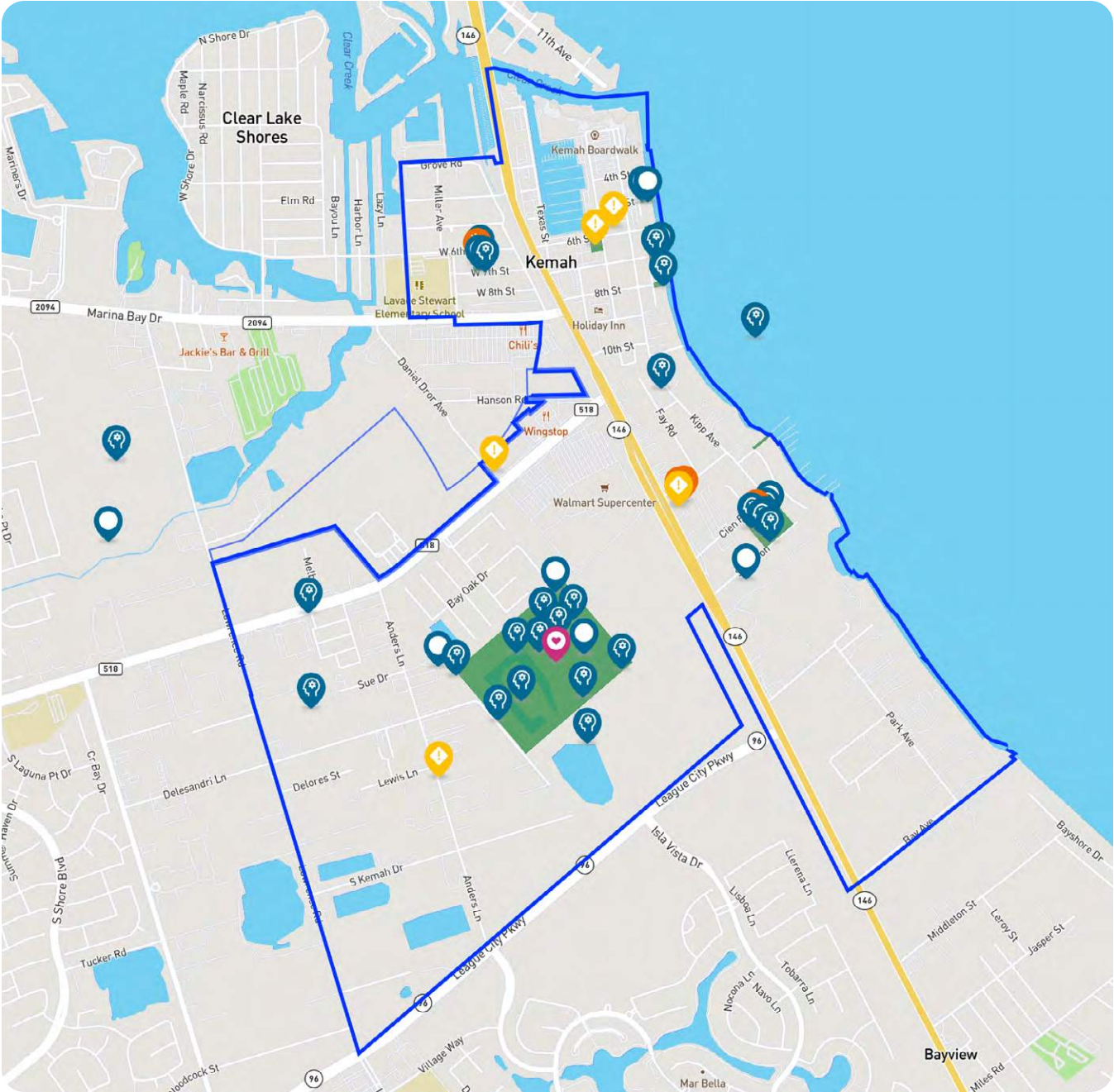


INTERACTIVE MAP

The interactive map was open from June 14th to July 17th. This feature allowed the community to share concerns, ideas, and general comments with regard to a specific location. There were a total of 51 contributions by 20 individuals.

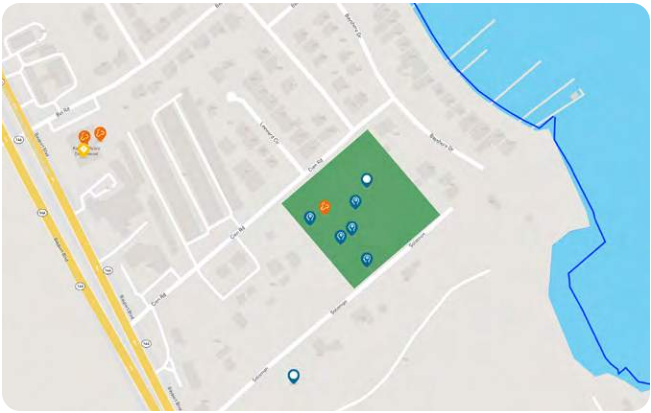
The community provided feedback for specific parks and the city, overall. There were several requests to make the city more pedestrian-

friendly through adding sidewalks and more trees. One individual suggested creating a trail or series of trails that could connect the waterfront pocket parks. There were also several community members that wanted a dog park on the southwest side of the city.



Matthew D. Wiggins Park & City Hall Park

- The community wants to see more shade throughout - trees and shade sails for existing play equipment.
- Several respondents mentioned the volleyball court is underutilized.
- A water play features and more natural plantings were suggested.



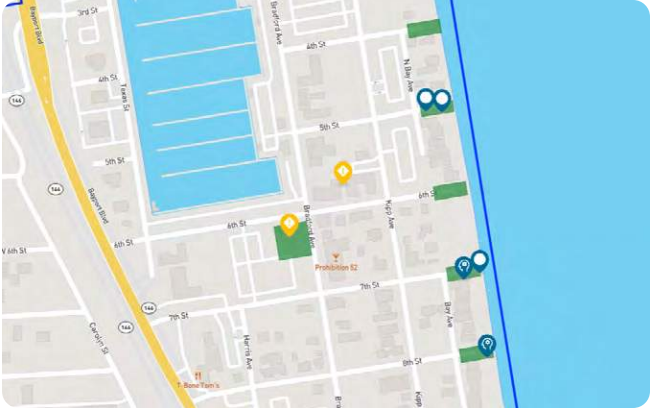
57 Acre Nature Facility

- The community is excited to see more multi-use (running, biking) nature trails through 57 Acre Nature Facility.
- A disc golf course was suggested.



Waterfront Pocket Parks

- The community suggested adding amenities like benches, trash cans, dog stations, and bike racks.
- At least one of these parks should offer water access, such as a kayak ramp.
- Park space could be expanded by removing parking spots.



Foster Park

- The community wants to see restrooms and more shade at Foster Park.
- There is opportunity to make this park accessible and all-inclusive.





COMMUNITY  
ENGAGEMENT  
ROUND 2 SUMMARY

VIRTUAL COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

A virtual community workshop was held on the evening of October 16th, 2023. At the workshop, the project team presented the conceptual vision plan to community members. The following summarizes feedback from the virtual meeting:

- There were some concerns over noise conflicts at the proposed dog park with neighbors.
- Future phasing plans and cost estimates will be important for implementation of the ideas within the plan.
- Presenting the plan to the Kemah Community Development Corporation (KCDC) will be an important next step.
- It is important that the City makes necessary improvements to existing parks before building new parks or other recreational infrastructure.
- Building a pier out into the water will be an asset to the community that has been requested by residents.

VIRTUAL ENGAGEMENT ON DRAFT PLAN

The presentation from the virtual meeting was posted to the Kemah Parks Plan Social Pinpoint Site and community members were asked to give feedback via the City of Kemah’s website. The Plan received the following comments:

What do you like about what you’ve seen in the presentation?

1. I like how natural vegetation is included in all designs and appreciate that there will be sidewalks to get most places. Love the pickleball courts! And the use of the space under the overpass.
2. Not interested in this project at this time.
3. Love the walking path and playground addition to 57 acre park!
4. I like the upgrade’s.
5. I found the maps a little hard to understand especially about bike and walking trails.
6. I like the lighthouse theme. The bayshore drive pocket park looks a little isolated, don’t know if I would visit.

What suggestions do you have for improving this plan?

1. It’s not clear to me if trees will be planted along any or some of the walking paths/ sidewalks to ensure they are usable year round.
2. Please consider using the cushioned ground for all playgrounds and NOT mulch or rocks! All playgrounds should have access for all ages and abilities.
3. Table it for now.
4. Improve parks that we already have.

Is there any other feedback you would like to provide?

1. Thank you for soliciting feedback, making it easy for residents to provide feedback, and for truly taking it in to consideration. The plan appears to be very thoughtful.
2. James A Foster park is a hazardous place. Playground has been closed for a year. Stewart uses this park, new young kids in the neighborhood.
3. Before funds are spent on parks, Anders Lane repairs must be funded and completed!
4. Look beyond the standard upgrades to make our city fun for the all residents. Check out what The Woodlands has done in many of their park areas. Thank you for your hard work to make it very wonderful.
5. Thank you for your hard work to make Kemah more beautiful
6. Website like LC , use website, to let community know when parks are closed for any reason, such as flooded, rented for a party, etc. Signage , maps and directions for golf cart, bike and walking paths. Connect to LC and Seabrook trails/walking paths. What is Clear Lake Shores bringing to the table? Their residents use Kemah golf cart/walking and biking trails a lot! What is the plan when there is a car accident on 146 with parks and rec areas near there?
7. Have some piers out on the water for people to walk on to.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Community members were generally in favor of the plan.
- There is a lot of support for a new pier for fishing and recreation.
- Community members appreciated the beautification efforts.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

Analyzing all the information we have gathered during the study, and bringing it together in a way that produces a path for community leaders is the primary goal. Interpreting the feedback from the public can often be the largest challenge of this type of process. That was not the case following the conversations we had through the months. While there were a variety of opinions and ideas, clear trends and needs emerged early in the process which aligned with what we saw and in the data we collected.

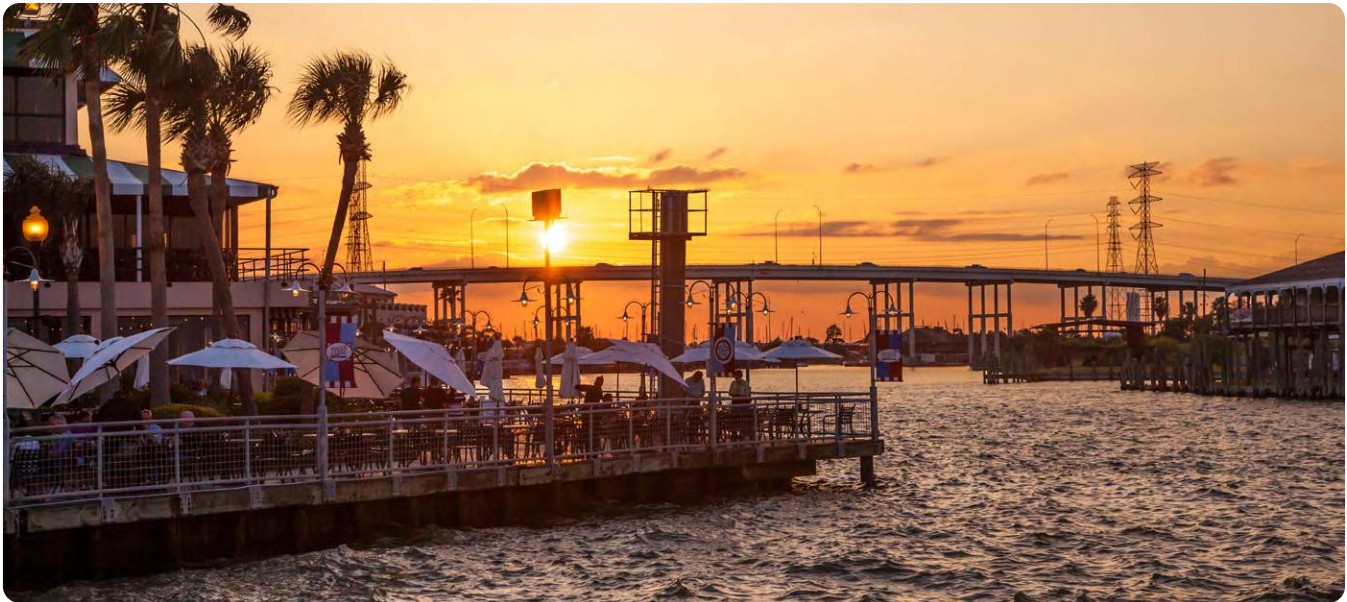
There is a strong desire to create recreational trails, develop wildlife habitats (particularly for pollinators), and create parks that attract people to Kemah - both to visit and to live. There is also a recognition from the public that the city has limited resources.

This knowledge leads to ensuring that money is invested wisely in projects. A sentiment expressed by many residents is to be cautious and deliberate with developing new park spaces to prevent building more than the city is capable of maintaining.



Blue Jay resting on a fence Source: stock.adobe.com

The following pages will take you through the recommendations for Kemah Parks. From setting large goals for connectivity to repairing small pieces of equipment, the recommendations cover a variety of needs. While extensive, these recommendations cannot cover everything, rather they cover most of the needs seen. Later we will look at prioritizing projects that come up over time.



Sunset view at The Boardwalk Source: stock.adobe.com



# RECONNECTING KEMAH

## SYNTHESIS

The Master Plan recommends increasing the number of sidewalks in both commercial and residential areas of the city to continue and enhance the level of connectivity efforts and initiatives in Kemah.

This Plan proposes design solutions to address different urban site conditions within Kemah. The recommendations contribute to a placemaking effort that will lead to the City of Kemah to a more resilient, safe, and vibrant future.

When evaluating Kemah’s connectivity through sidewalks and trails, there are clear pathways in and out of the city via existing sidewalks on Marina Bay Drive and shared use paths on FM 518. Once inside the city, connectivity stalls off due to a lack of non-vehicular facilities and the barriers highlighted in this document.

## ANALYSIS / RECOMMENDATIONS

Major Connectivity Gaps Include:

### N Highway 146

This roadway severely limits the overall east-west connectivity within Kemah.

Improvements and enhancements can...

- Improvements would promote walkability between various retail and civic establishments along Highway 146.
- Create connectivity to Bayview Shores as well as the Galveston Bay Foundation.
- Promote regional connections to Seabrook and League City.

### Kipp Avenue and Cien Road

These street lack existing pedestrian infrastructure.

Improvements and enhancements can...

- Create a continuous pathway from Highway 146 to the Boardwalk District.
- Provide a quieter walking experience in comparison to walking along Highway 146.
- Promote existing parks including Cien Park as a walkable destination.

### 8th Street

This street lacks pedestrian infrastructure and does not promote direct access to the Pocket Park District from N Highway 146.

Improvements and enhancements can...

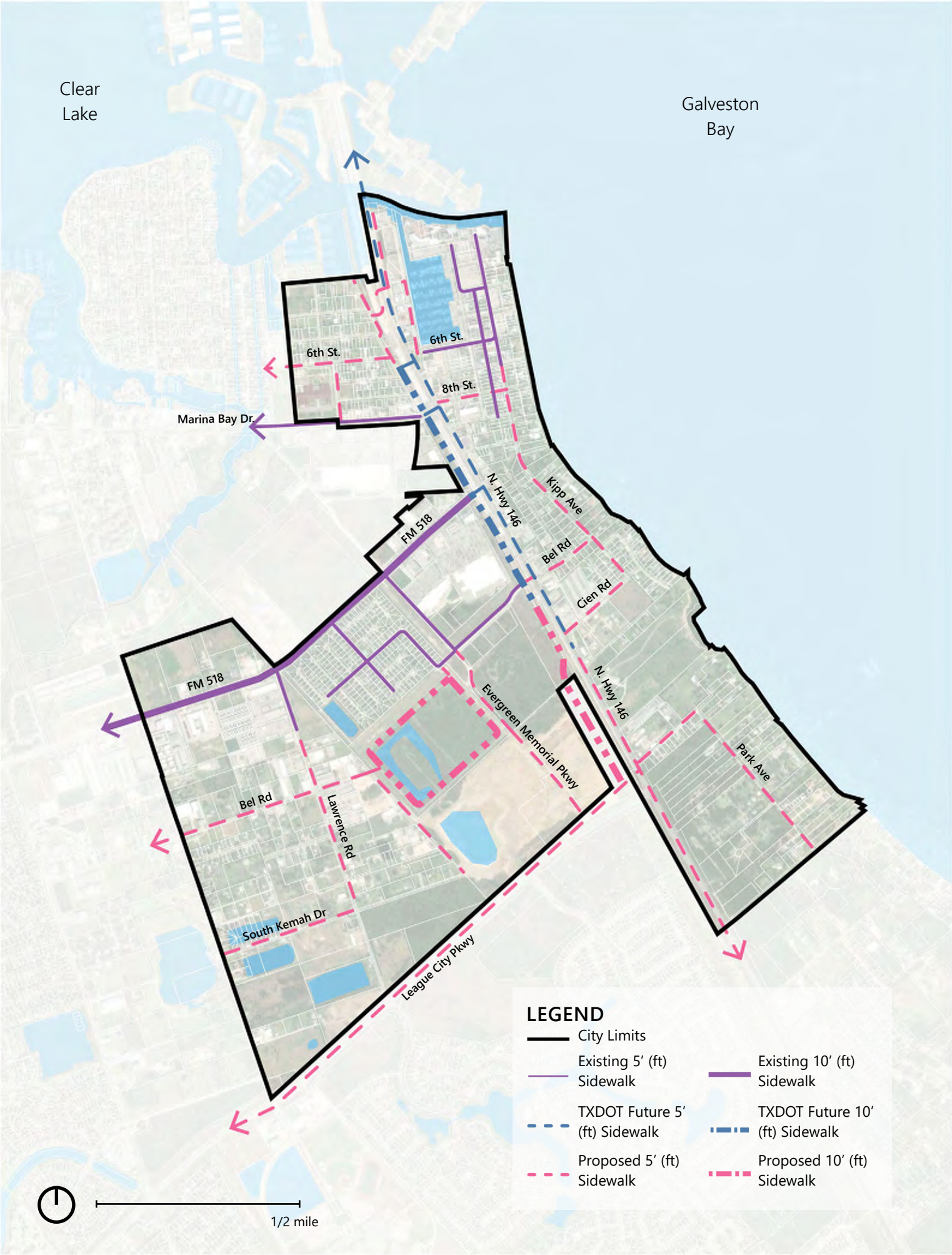
- Encourage alternate paths into the Boardwalk and Pocket Park Districts.
- Utilize future connections stemming from TxDOT improvements to Highway 146.
- Provide connections to the Boat Launch and Pier at 1st Street Park.

### 3rd Street

This roadway severely limits the overall east-west connectivity within Kemah.

Improvements and enhancements can...

- Create a shared use path through 3rd Street to connect the east and west side of the city without having to cross Highway 146.
- Provide a direct means for pedestrians to access the Boat Launch and Pier at 1st Street Park.





# SAFETY, DRAINAGE, & ACCESS IN THE ROAD

## CURRENT CONDITIONS

The City of Kemah’s sidewalk conditions have a limited number of areas and zones where people can walk safely. The majority of right-of-way in the city have open ditches for directing stormwater flow.

### Commercial Areas

On major roads such as FM 518 and Marina Bay Drive, there are shared-use paths that connect Kemah to neighboring cities and communities. The eight to ten-foot wide (8'-10') paths are sufficient to drive a golf cart and for pedestrians to commute.

### Residential Areas

In most of the residential areas of the City, there are no sidewalks for people to walk on. There is also no signage or marking to indicate safety for pedestrians walking on the road.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Master Plan recommends increasing the number of sidewalks in both commercial and residential areas of the City. The sections on the opposite page indicate different methods of creating new sidewalks in existing and new neighborhoods, and retrofit existing streets. The recommendations contribute to a more sustainable, safe, and enhanced connectivity system for the City of Kemah.



Roadway with sidewalk and buffer in Commercial Area  
Source. earth.google.com

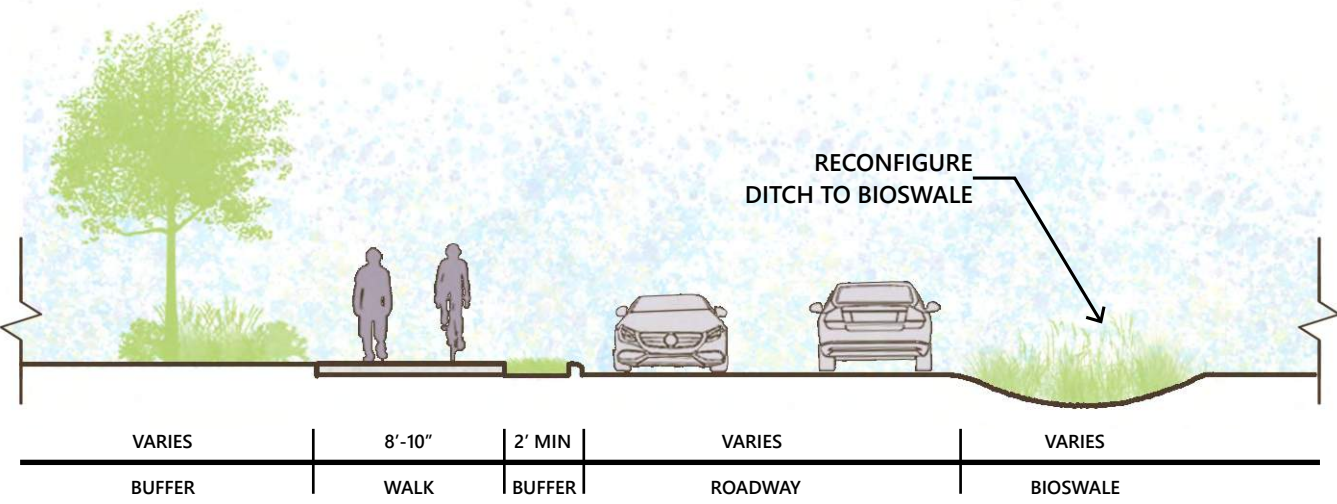


Roadway with open ditches in Residential Area  
Source. earth.google.com



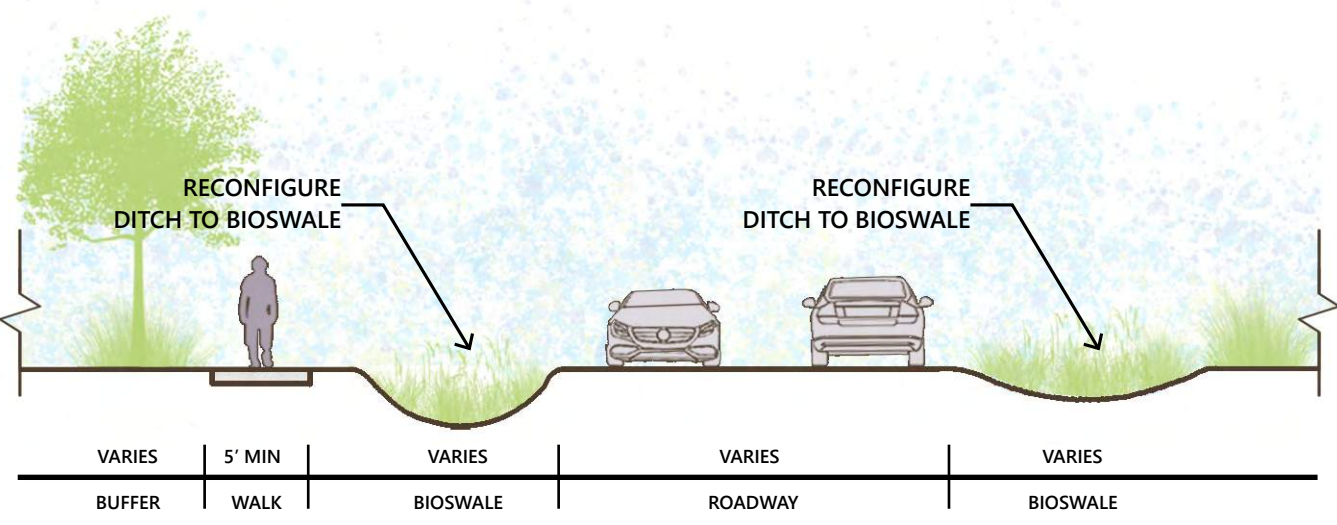
Built example of bioswale and sidewalk in Seattle, WA.  
Source. mithun.com

## PROPOSED TRAIL CONDITIONS



One design solution to improve connectivity is to add a sidewalk on at least one side of the right-of-way. This solution separates the walkway from the roadway by a two-foot minimum buffer. This buffer can include turf, grasses, and other

softscape and hardscape elements. Additional improvements include reconditioning the open drainage ditches in the city into bioswales to improve stormwater management. Bioswales are proven to be cost-effective methods to control floods and treat runoff.



When open ditches are present on both sides of the right-of-way, proposing a thinner sidewalk will provide a means of connectivity while

working in areas where space is limited. Bioswales reconditioned from the open ditches serve as buffers between the roadway and sidewalk.



# PARK RECOMMENDATIONS

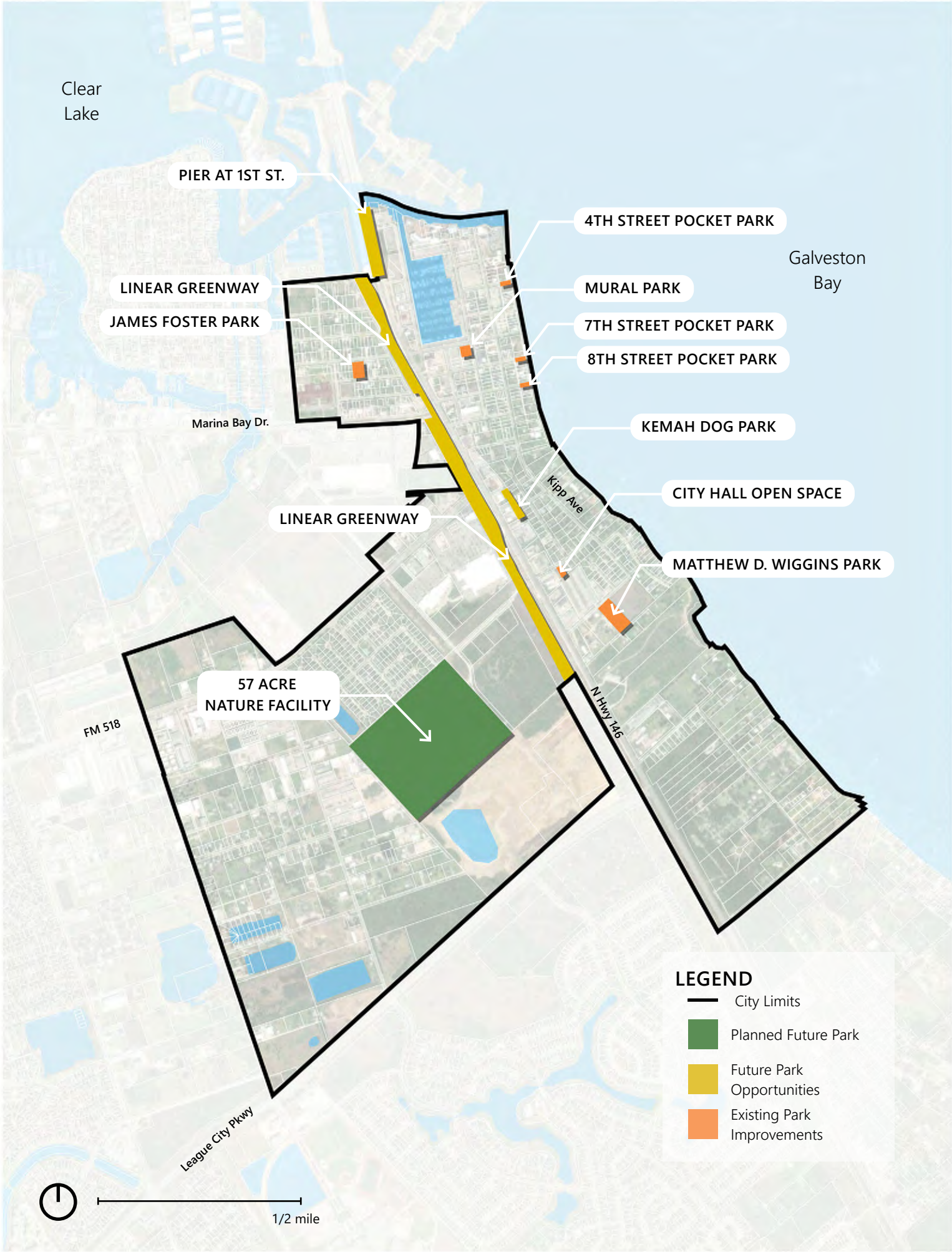
## METHODOLOGY

Evaluating the proposed park improvements as a whole is an important step in the parks planning process. Once improvements are identified, categorizing the projects helps City decision-makers appropriately schedule and phase improvements to maximize the available funding and resources.

## PARK RECOMMENDATIONS CATEGORIES:

- 1. Planned Future Park:**  
This category includes which are currently in the design and construction phase, or already have funding or resources allocated to them.
- 2. Future Park Opportunities:**  
The design team evaluated vacant and undeveloped city-owned parcels of property to capitalize on what is presently available for future park opportunities. The team also evaluated whether there were opportunities present at Highway 146 with the incoming express bridge.
- 3. Existing Park Improvements:**  
The existing park system is equally important to analyze and identify the locations that could use improvements. The improvements vary in scale depending on the dynamic of the park and suggested plan of action.

Park Name	Park Category
57 Acre Nature Facility	Planned Future Park
Pier at 1st St.	Future Park Opportunities
Linear Greenway	Future Park Opportunities
Kemah Dog Park	Future Park Opportunities
Matthew D. Wiggins Park	Existing Park Recommendations
James Foster Park	Existing Park Recommendations
Mural Park	Existing Park Recommendations
City Hall Open Space	Existing Park Recommendations
4th Street Pocket Park	Existing Park Recommendations
7th Street Pocket Park	Existing Park Recommendations
8th Street Pocket Park	Existing Park Recommendations





# PARK PROXIMITY RECOMMENDATIONS

With more than one in four residents not living within a 10-minute walk of a public park, there are many places we need to look at to improve access to healthy green spaces. While developing the park recommendations, especially new park spaces and Linear Greenway, we prioritized looking at the impact we could be making on walkability in town.

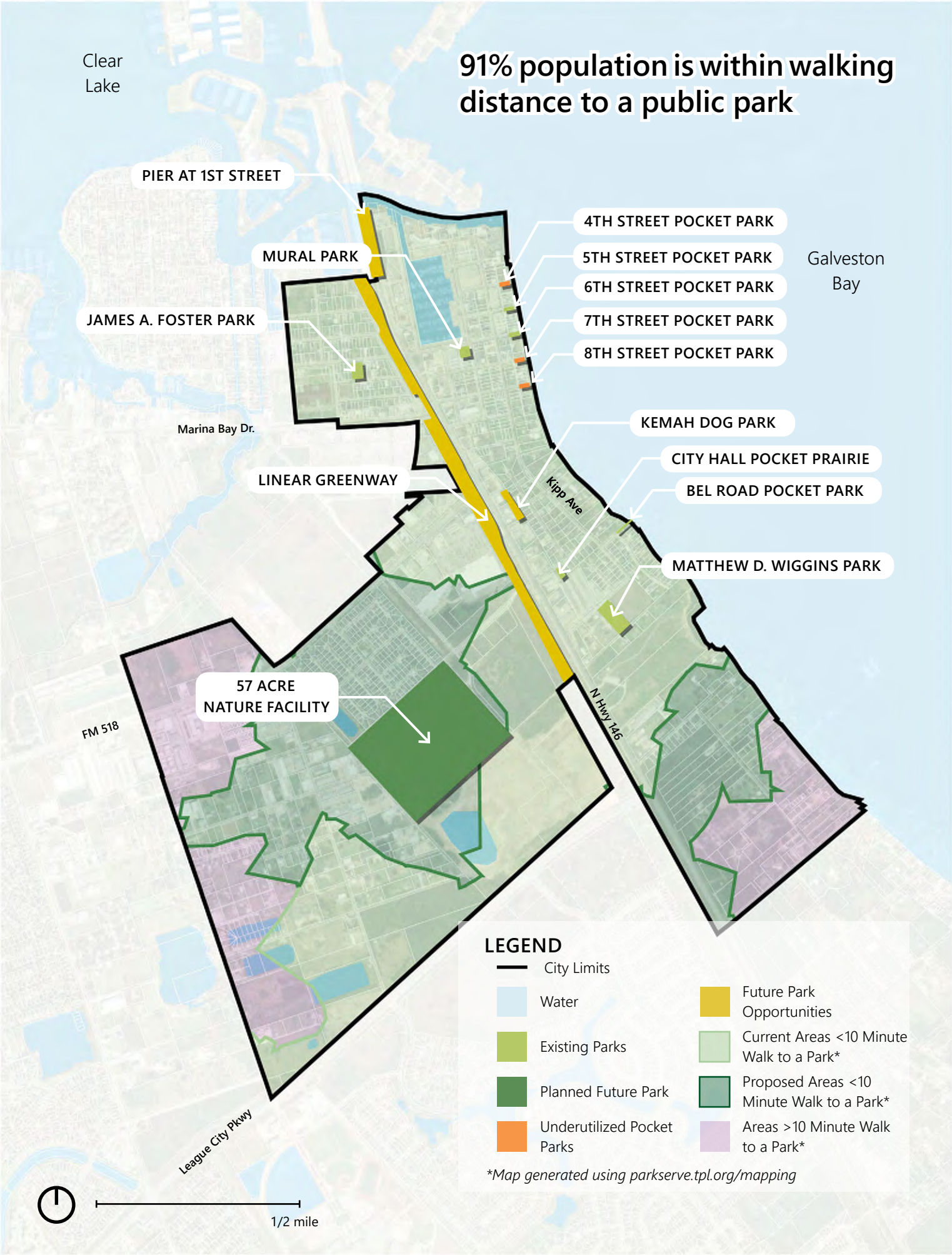
Adding new park spaces could improve access to parks from the current fifty-nine percent to up to ninety-one percent of town residents. This is a significant improvement and should be a primary metric of successful implementation of the Plan moving forward. This data is easily calculated over time and will be one of several measurements we use to determine success.

As a national standard<sup>15</sup>, this will also make it easy to compare Kemah to other similar cities. Similar to economic opportunity or education standards, park access can become a part of selling life in Kemah to future residents when discussing quality of life. It also should be noted that “10 minutes” is a recommended distance.

As Kemah grows and conditions improve, this metric can be updated to a shorter or longer distance, such as 8 or 12 minutes (whatever meets the needs of residents) as a way to continue to develop the system moving forward. The ability to adjust this standard allows us to continue to meet the needs of the community as expectations shift over time.



Trail along 57 Acre Nature Facility





PARK AMENITIES

Through an inventory of existing facilities within the City of Kemah, as well as regionally in neighboring cities and communities, open space improvements can fill in gaps of service via renovation or introduction of new amenity types.

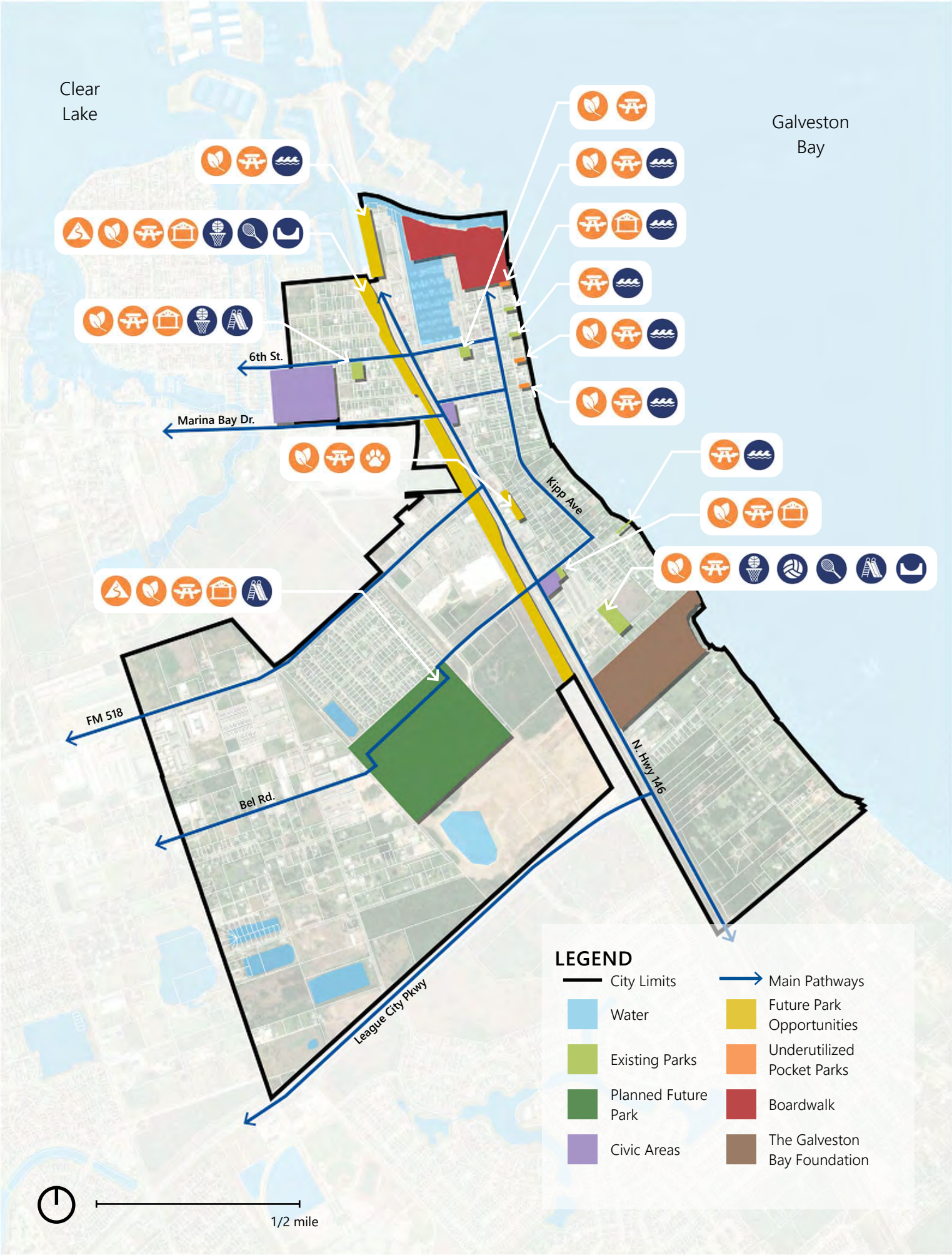
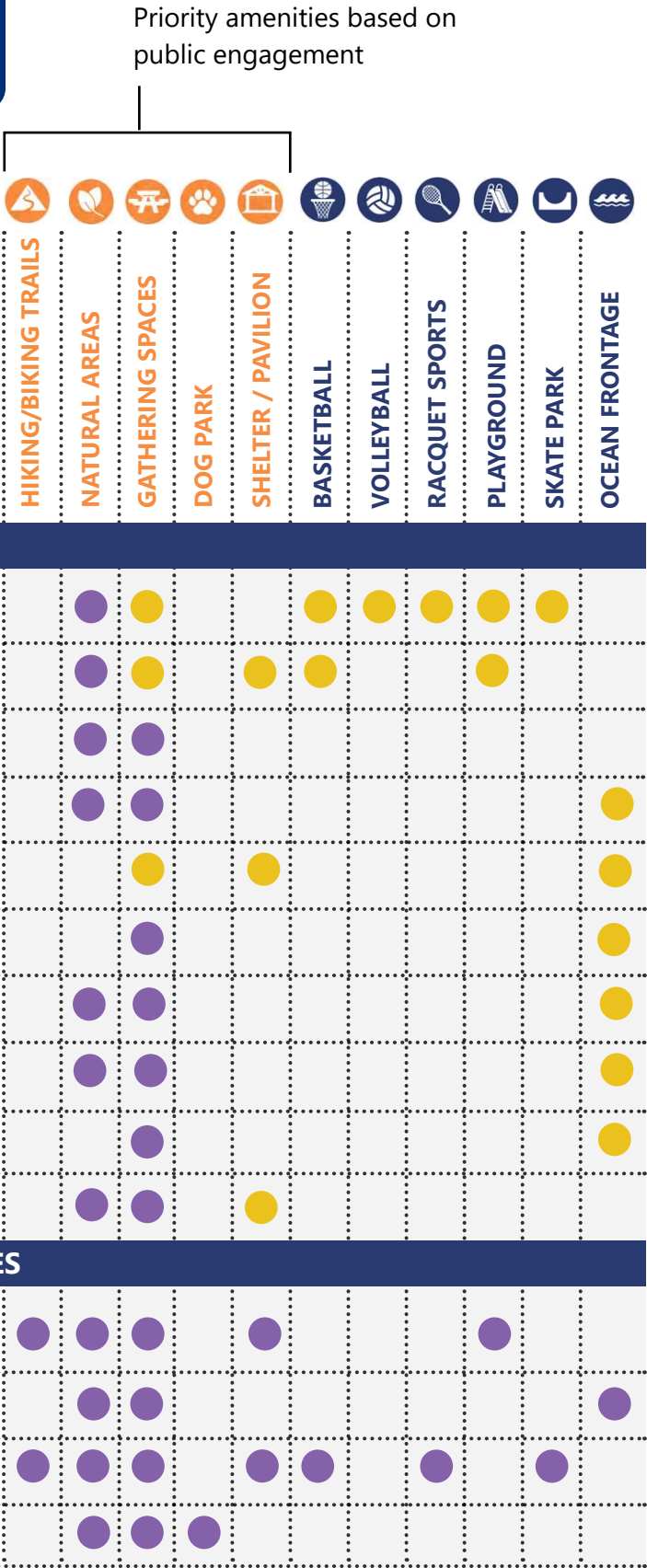
- EXISTING AMENITIES
- PROPOSED AMENITIES

EXISTING PARKS

Matthew D. Wiggins Park / Cien Park  
James A. Foster Park  
Mural Park  
4th Street Pocket Park  
5th Street Pocket Park  
6th Street Pocket Park  
7th Street Pocket Park  
8th Street Pocket Park  
Bel Road Pocket Park  
City Hall Open Space

PROPOSED PARKS + PARK OPPORTUNITIES

57 Acre Nature Facility  
Pier at 1st St.  
SH 146 Linear Greenway  
Kemah Dog Park





# 57 ACRE NATURE FACILITY

## CONTEXT

This project seeks a strategy for creating a public asset from an underutilized, Army Corps of Engineers, dredge material dump site. Through thorough inventory and analysis, the team was able to develop a phased implementation plan that meets the needs of the community while meeting capacity and budgetary constraints. The plan developed builds on the existing novel ecology, wetlands, and isolated location of the site to improve community health, increase resident access to green spaces, and address the community’s ability to recover in the face of natural disasters and climate change.

## EXISTING CONDITIONS



LOW GROUNDS AT WETLANDS



STEEP SLOPES AROUND PERIMETER

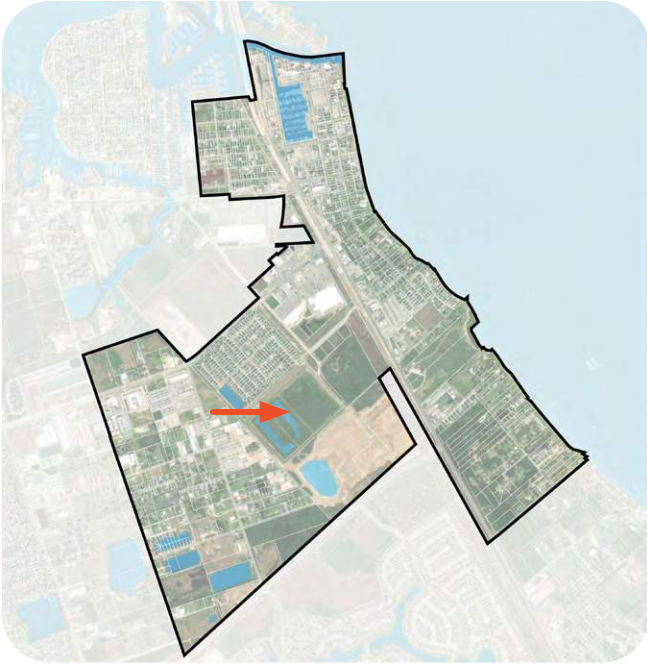


ELEVATED EXISTING TRAILS



RAISED PLATFORM AT HEART

## LOCATION



## PHASE DESCRIPTIONS

### Phase 1 (Year 1 & 2)

Phase Includes: Welcome center, Concrete sidewalks & container bands, Benches, Picnic tables, Primary monumentation, Hydromulch seeding, Berms

### Phase 2 (Year 3)

Phase Includes: Playground equipment, Playground safety surface, Artificial turf

### Phase 3 (Year 4)

Phase Includes: DG fitness trails, Concrete container bands, Composite decking platform, Retaining walls, Benches

### Phase 4 (Year 5)

Phase Includes: Concrete Sidewalks, Benches

### Phase 5 (Year 6)

Phase Includes: Composite Boardwalk with Railing

### Phase 6 (Year 7)

Phase Includes: Outdoor classroom pavilion, Wayfinding signage, Picnic tables, Concrete benches, Shade trees, Ornamental trees, Landscape bed area, Mulch, Wildflower ix, Berms

### Phase 7 (Year 8)

Phase Includes: Picnic pavilions, Concrete sidewalks & Container band, Parallel parking spaces, Retaining wall with steps, Benches, Shade trees, Ornamental trees, Mulch, Hydromulch seeding

### Phase 8 (Year 9)

Phase Includes: Wildlife observation tower, Wayfinding, Signage

### Phase 9 (Year 10)

Phase Includes: Overlook decks, DG fitness trails, Concrete Container bands, Retaining walls, Benches, Shade trees, Ornamental trees, Wildflower mix

## PHASE 1 & 2 VISION:



ENTRY MONUMENT



WELCOME PAVILION



INCLUSIVE PLAYGROUND



TRAILING & GATHERING SPACES



# 57 ACRE NATURE FACILITY: MASTER PLAN

## GRAPHIC LEGEND

- 1. WELCOME CENTER
- 2. PLAYGROUND
- 3. MONUMENTATION
- 4. NO-MOW WILDFLOWER MIX
- 5. 6' WIDE CONCRETE TRAIL
- 6. NATIVE GRASS PLANTING
- 7. PICNIC SHELTER
- 8. OPEN LAWN SPACE
- 9. 8' WIDE FITNESS TRAIL
- 10. 8' WIDE BOARDWALK
- 11. PROPOSED PARALLEL PARKING
- 12. EXISTING TREES TO REMAIN
- 13. SHADE TREES
- 14. ORNAMENTAL TREES
- 15. PROPOSED BERMS
- 16. WILDLIFE OBSERVATION TOWER
- 17. SWITCHBACK RAMP
- 18. OUTDOOR CLASSROOM
- 19. CLASSROOM SEATING
- 20. VIEWING PLATFORM
- 21. BOARDWALK PLATFORM

## EXPECTED PARK BUDGET

\$5,000,000 - \$6,000,000





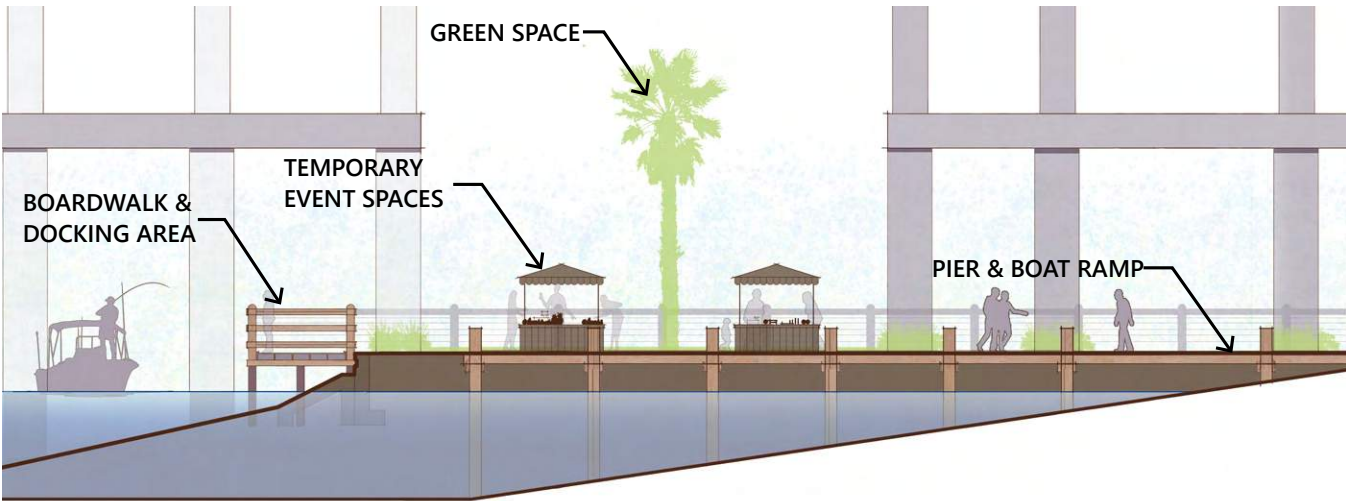
# PIER AT 1ST STREET

The space beneath N Highway 146 on the outlet of Clear Lake has the potential to be another hotspot for locals and tourists in the City of Kemah. While the site currently only features a boat launch, the site’s amenities could be expanded to serve a wider range of needs. The proximity of the Pier at 1st Street to the Kemah Boardwalk creates a link in events between the two spaces. The ambient noise from Hwy 146 and the Kemah Boardwalk as well as the isolated location of the pier would allow for the hosting of louder public events without disturbing adjacent residents.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

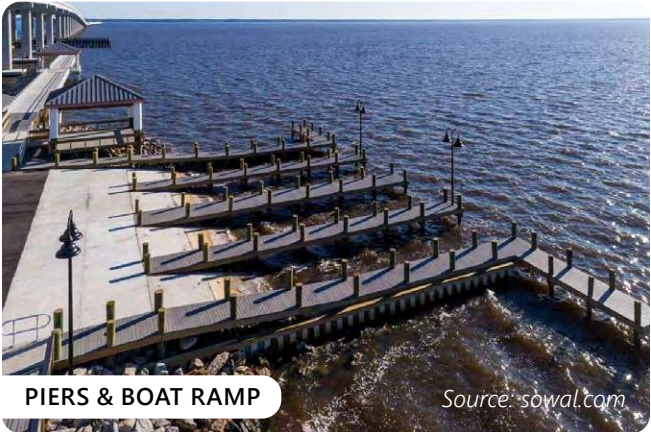
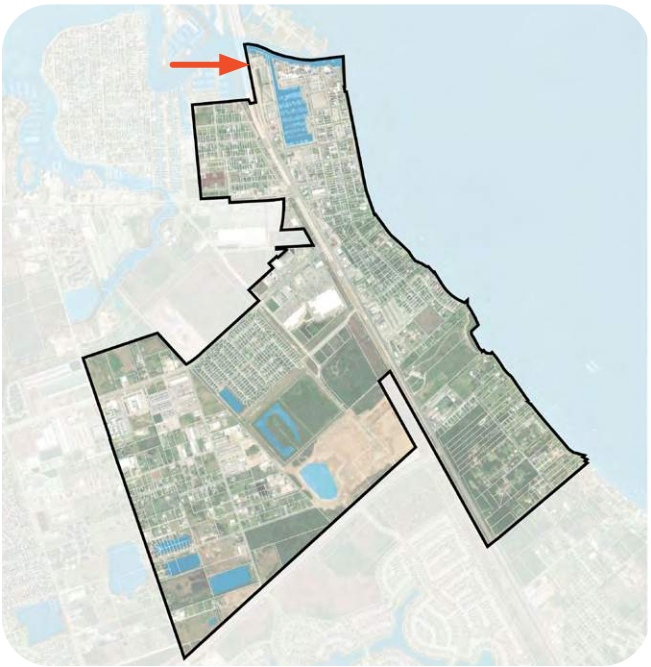
The vision of the Pier at 1st Street is to be a hotspot for events hosted by the City of Kemah. These events can be unique or recurring and can vary based on community needs. They could include farmers markets, festivals, food trucks, and other celebrations. This space needs to be adaptable and flexible in the face of changing tidal conditions and multiple user groups.

## ELEVATION



The amenities proposed by the team are to enhance the piers and boat ramp, provide a large multi-use area with softscape and hardscape surfaces, a focal point that will give the space identity, a docking area for boats, a shared-use path to connect the space to other nearby attractions, as well as native planting to revitalize the local ecology. The linear shape of the space is appropriate for the flow of people attending an event and compartmentalizes the different amenities and activities.

## LOCATION





# PIER AT 1ST STREET: CONCEPT PLAN

## GRAPHIC LEGEND

- 1. PARKING
- 2. HARDSCAPE MIXED USE AREA
- 3. SOFTSCAPE MIXED USE AREA
- 4. EVENT SPACE
- 5. PIERS & BOAT RAMP
- 6. BOARDWALK
- 7. DOCKING AREA
- 8. PROPOSED FOCAL POINT ARTWORK
- 9. 10' WIDE TRAIL
- 10. NATIVE PLANTING
- 11. VEGETATIVE SCREEN

## EXPECTED PARK BUDGET

\$4,000,000 - \$5,000,000

Plans shown do not indicate feasibility. These are conceptual in nature and will require feasibility studies for realization, budgeting and construction.\*





# LINEAR GREENWAY

According to construction plans from TxDOT, Highway 146 is expanding to a multiple-lane highway. The plans also include an elevated express lane that spans from Bel Road to the opposite side of the Clear Lake Channel in Seabrook.

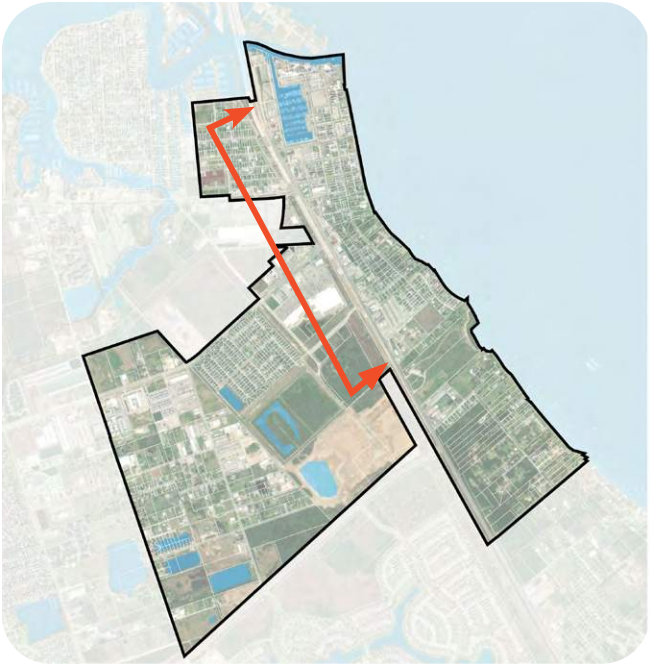
These improvements present multiple opportunities to activate and amenitize the underutilized space beneath the overpass, create gateways into the precincts east of Highway 146, and develop more accommodating and safer crossings for non-vehicular users.

The plans include five-foot sidewalks on the east side of Highway 146, and a ten-foot shared-use path on the west side of Highway 146, from Bel Road to 6th Street. These shared-use paths provide a way for people to comfortably move north and south without being immediately adjacent to vehicular traffic. Signalized crossings at major intersections provide safer connections to the east and west.

Proper planning can maximize the opportunities in the spans between the columns that hold up the express lane. Multiple use types and amenities that can utilize these spaces are discussed later in this chapter.

In addition, the utility easement running parallel to the highway is an open canvas that can be used for prairie restoration, trails, and increasing biodiversity.

## LOCATION



View under the SH146 Express Bridge. Source: earth.google.com

## LINEAR GREENWAY DESIGN GUIDELINES

The Linear Greenway Design Guidelines provide a recommended set of amenities to provide a toolkit for the City of Kemah. Locations for proposed amenities are explored later in this chapter. A summary of the inventory that will define the Linear Greenway can be seen below. Further feasibility studies will be necessary for realization, budgeting, and construction. The information shown is conceptual in nature.

As the Linear Greenway develops, amenity locations are to be determined based on the appropriate conditions of the options provided in the conceptual diagrams explored later in this chapter.

## EXPECTED PARK BUDGET

\$500,000 - \$6,000,000

## INVENTORY

Item	Amount
Trail	.75 mile long concrete walk by TXDOT
Underpass Space	The dimension of the underpass space is broken up by the space in between the bridge columns of Express SH 146 and are referred to as Bays.
• Galveston Bay to Marina Bay Dr.	3 Bays : Approximately 55' x 110' Each
• Marina Bay Dr. to FM 518	8 Bays: Approximately 55' x 110' Each 1 Bay: Approximately 55' x 75'
• FM 518 to Bel Rd.	3 Bays : Approximately 55' x 110' Each
Centerpoint Easement	28.52 ac

## TOOLKIT INDEX

The Linear Greenway Design Guidelines provide recommended amenities to provide a toolkit for the City of Kemah. The recommendations are broken up into 4 categories:

- **Connection**
- **Gathering**
- **Recreational**
- **Ecological**

### Each Recommended Amenity has:

- A visual image with similar characteristics as the target development of the Linear Greenway
- A scale description appropriate to the design intent
- A list of benefits of the design
- A potential cost based on current projected amount to budget per amenity as of the date the Master Plan is published (2024).



# LINEAR GREENWAY

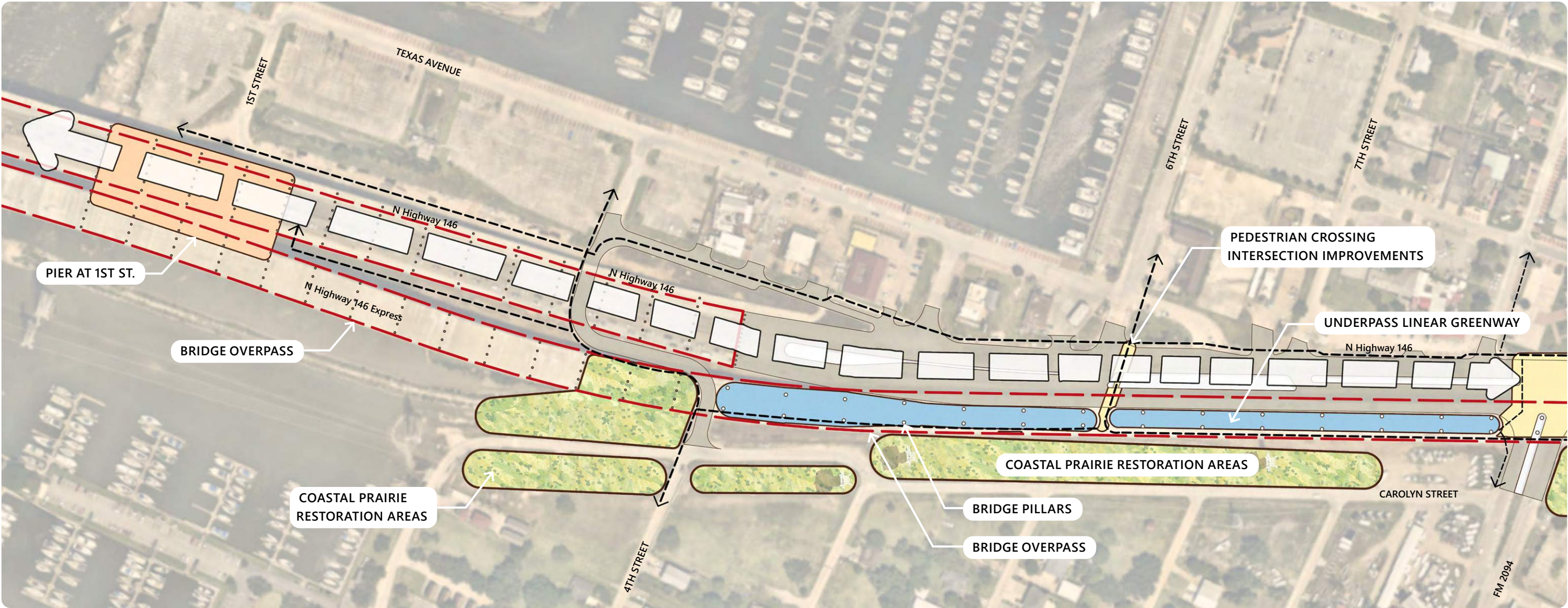
The Highway 146 Linear Greenway is a unique element to the parks and recreation facilities in Kemah because it utilizes spaces that are traditionally underused and otherwise left vacant. The Greenway converts an eyesore into a destination and provides amenities in a creative way.

## CONCEPT DIAGRAM 1.A

The Linear Greenway extends from the Clear Lake Channel and proposed Pier at 1st Street Park, all the way south to Texas 96. The categories for proposed amenities within the Greenway include:

- Ecological
- Gathering
- Recreational
- Connection

The Design Guidelines highlighted in this chapter outline more specifically the identified location options for the amenities.



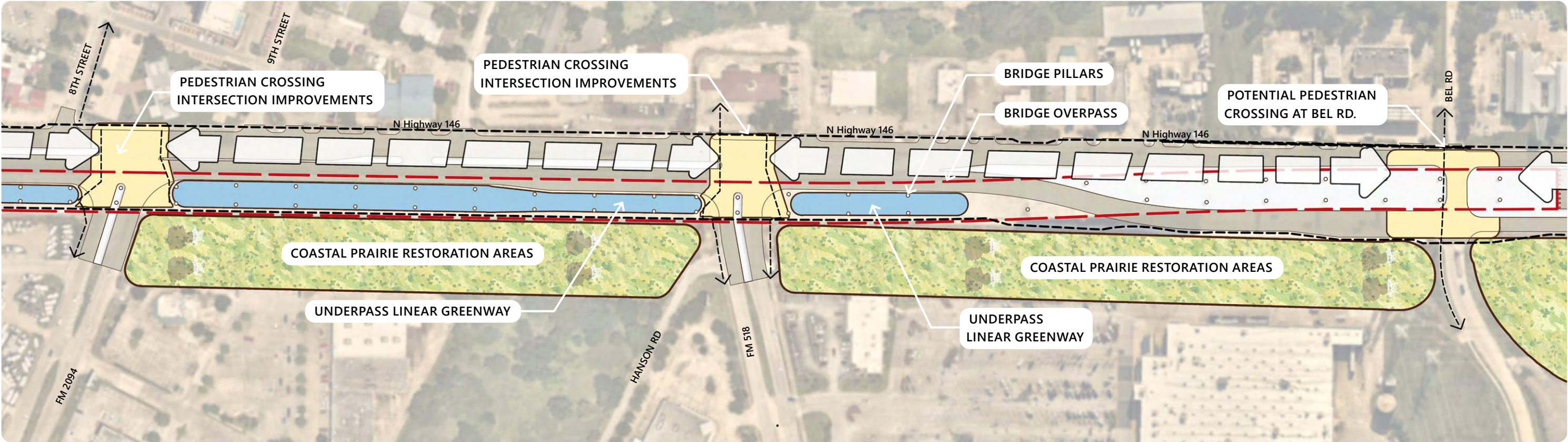
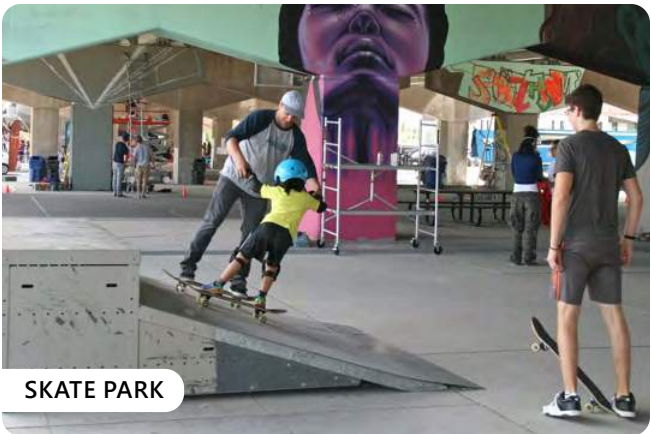


# LINEAR GREENWAY

Amenities within the Greenway can take on a variety of forms and allow for the inclusion of unique uses. Spaces underneath the noisy overpass allow including amenities that would be too busy for a quieter part of the City, some of which include sports courts, fitness stations, and skate parks.

In addition, the highway infrastructure, such as columns and retaining walls, can be blank canvases for local artists to utilize. Gathering spaces can be designed and centered around these art pieces, providing a slower experience along the Linear Greenway.

CONCEPT DIAGRAM 1.B





# LINEAR GREENWAY

Looking further south along the Greenway, the amenity types transition from a hard, built environment, to a focus on softscape and biodiversity improvements. Once past Bel Road, a utility easement runs parallel to N Highway 146. Recent developments with inter-local agreements around the Houston-Galveston Metropolitan Area have opened up numerous doors of opportunity to create amenities within these easements.

There are limitations to what can be added in these areas, but nature-based amenities are potential options. This segment of the Greenway is a space to increase biodiversity, ecological awareness, and education; and also create points of connection to destinations within and outside

the city limits. This last segment finalizes the connection from Marina Bay Drive to League City Parkway through a connector for residents and visitors to move north and south through Kemah.

## POLLINATOR HIGHWAY

The Centerpoint easement along the Linear Greenway is an adequate space for biodiversity to thrive in the urban environment. By taking initiative in restoring the Coastal Prairies, the space’s potential will expand on not only serving as a utility zone but a pollinator highway for wildlife to thrive.

### CONCEPT DIAGRAM 1.C





# LINEAR GREENWAY

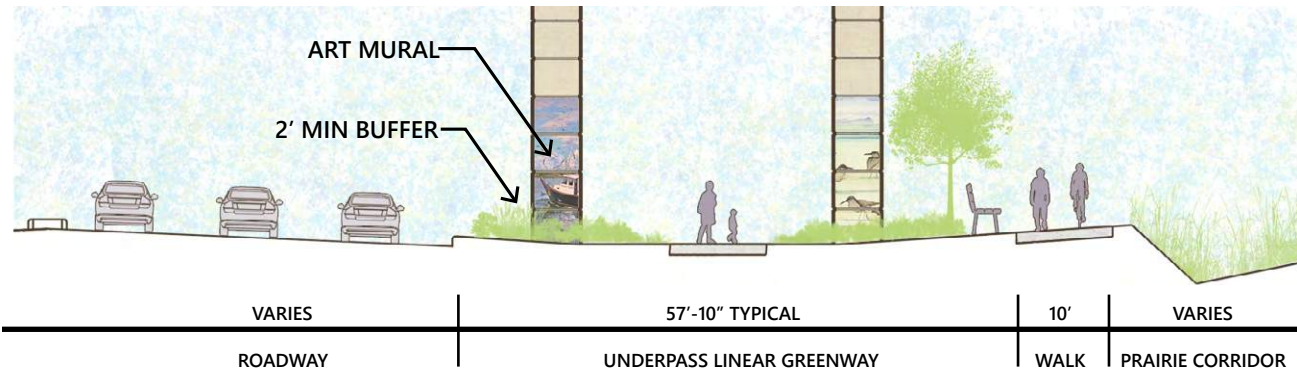
## RECREATIONAL PROGRAMMING

Sports courts and similar activities bring people together to maintain an active lifestyle. Potential activities and amenities to consider will need to be contained inside fencing to prohibit balls and people from running into oncoming traffic. Seating and gathering areas are recommended to provide a space for spectators during games, and socializing in between and after games. The desired locations for the amenities are to be explored based on the appropriate conditions of the bays under the SH 146 Express Bridge.

## SAFETY PROGRAMMING

Activities near the bustling Highway 146 traffic will all be in vain if there are no safety precautions taken. Safety programming includes bollards and vegetated buffers to separate pedestrians and amenity users from the traffic. Another aspect of safety programming includes lighting, especially in the evenings when it is harder for someone to discern what is going on around them. Overhead lighting can include 10-12 foot height light posts, lights at sports courts, or overhead lighting from the overpass. Lower-level lighting includes lighted bollards of varying heights along pathways, uplighting at overpass columns, and other solutions.

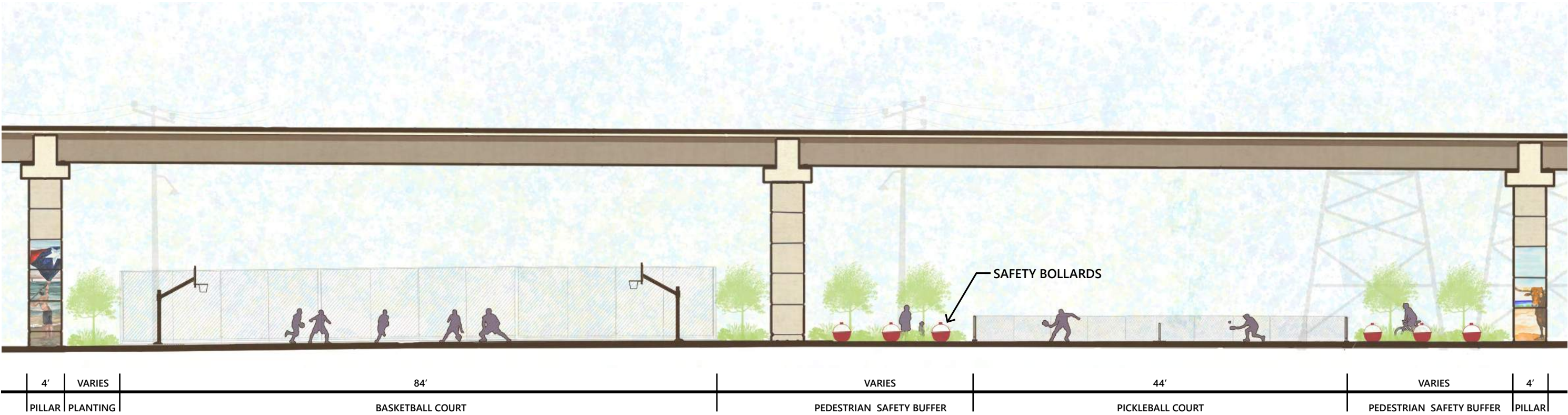
## SOUTH ELEVATION



Despite the linear shape and characteristics of the Greenway, the typical width of the underpass provides enough space for a variety of activities to take place. It is a high priority to include buffers that separate people from vehicular traffic as they create a sense of security and safety when moving along a trail. Buffers are typically a two-foot minimum width but can extend wider if so desired. Bollards, planting, walls, and other

elements can serve as buffers, provided they fall within the TxDOT design guidelines. To move people along the Greenway trails, proposed art murals on the columns of Highway 146 express lanes create visual interest to lead people from one point of interest to the next. These art pieces can also provide opportunities for gathering spaces, education, wayfinding, and other uses.

## EAST ELEVATION





# LINEAR GREENWAY DESIGN GUIDELINES: CONNECTION

## SHARED USE PATHS



Source: theunderline.org

### Scale

Shared use paths can vary in length based on the available space and existing site conditions. The minimum recommended width is eight feet (8').

### Benefits

The addition of a shared-use path increases the walkability range of the city and expands its trail system. Non-motorized modes of transportation and pedestrians benefit from shared-use paths because of their safety, accessibility, and connectivity to the city.

### Potential Cost

Concrete Shared Use Path.....\$8.00-\$10.00 / LF

## REFUGE ISLANDS



Source: oaklandca.gov

### Scale

The ideal proportions are at least six feet by eight feet (6' x 8'). Smaller dimensions put pedestrians at risk of being struck by oncoming traffic.

### Benefits

Refuge Islands provide a location for pedestrians to safely wait for a gap in traffic to cross the road in two stages instead of in a single attempt. Adding the islands allows pedestrians to negotiate one direction of traffic at a time.

### Potential Cost

Raised Concrete

Refuge Island.....\$6,000-\$9,000/EA

Refuge Island w/  
Landscaping.....\$10,000-\$30,000/EA

## CROSSWALKS



Source: observerlocalnews.com

### Scale

Crosswalks should be at least ten feet (10') wide to provide enough safety and visibility for pedestrians.

### Benefits

As the city continues to grow and expand, additional crosswalks around the city can improve pedestrian circulation. Adding a crosswalk at Bel Rd across SH 146 is recommended to establish a connection point to the Galveston Bay Foundation, Bel Road Pocket Park, and City Hall.

### Potential Cost

Standard Crosswalk Striping.....\$750/LS

High Visibility Crosswalk.....\$2,500-\$5,000/LS

Custom Crosswalk.....\$10,000-\$20,000/LS

## SIGNAGE



Source: merjedesign.com

### Scale

Signage can be done in multiple sizes appropriate for different uses around the city.

### Benefits

Signage is an effective way to guide people to and from landmarks within the trail system. Informational signage, city branding, and educational content can be included to create an effective wayfinding system for the city.

### Potential Cost

Primary Wayfinding.....\$10,000 - \$30,000/EA

Secondary Wayfinding.....\$500 - \$1,500/EA



# LINEAR GREENWAY DESIGN GUIDELINES: GATHERING

## BENCHES



Source: como.gov

### Scale

A minimum width of seven feet and length of ten feet (7' x 10') for a concrete pad is necessary to accommodate a bench.

### Benefits

Providing benches at different intervals throughout the Greenway trail will give users a space to recover and rest. Providing rest spaces can increase the duration users stay outdoors.

### Potential Cost

Basic Bench.....	\$750-\$1,000/EA
Durable Bench.....	\$1,000-\$2,000/EA
Premium Bench.....	\$2,000-\$3,500/EA

## TABLES



Source: archive.curbed.com

### Scale

Tables must be big enough to host a group of four or more people and consider ADA accessible tables.

### Benefits

Adding tables to a space invites users to gather in groups and have social interactions. Including tables as an amenity allows for different forms of gathering activities, including sharing a meal, playing board games, and other events with multiple people.

### Potential Cost

Basic Table.....	\$1,000/EA
Durable Table.....	\$1,500-\$3,000/EA
Premium Table.....	\$3,000-\$5,000/EA

## ART SPACES



Source: upsidegallery.co.uk

### Scale

Art spaces are versatile and can be designed in many scales on vertical or horizontal surfaces.

### Benefits

Murals and other forms of artwork are a dynamic and captivating way to display the city's culture. The displays aid in welcoming and inviting users to interact with the underpass space which would otherwise be a bleak and uninviting piece of infrastructure.

### Potential Cost

Art installations range from medium to high costs depending on the scale of the artwork. Costs are to be explored by an artist commissioned.

## ACCESSORIES



Source: civiq.com.au

### Scale

Accessories are flexible in scale and can serve a variety of needs based on community demand. Utility location and installation will need to be considered in design and budgeting process.

### Benefits

Accessories and furnishings that provide services for the public increase the quality of the outdoor experience. Useful accessories for the public include bike racks, drinking fountains, trash receptacles, bike service stations, and lighting.

### Potential Cost

Bike Rack.....	\$300-\$1,500/EA
Trash Receptacle.....	\$750-\$2,000/EA
Drinking Fountain*.....	\$2,500-\$5,000/EA

\*Installed price per fixture, does not include utility connection.



# LINEAR GREENWAY DESIGN GUIDELINES: RECREATIONAL

## BASKETBALL



Source: network.thehighline.org

### Scale

The standard dimensions for a basketball court are 84 feet long by 50 feet wide (84' x 50'). The court fence height is ten feet (10') high.

### Benefits

Basketball courts and other forms of contact sports increases the diversity of activities in the Linear Greenway for all age groups. The sport is a great way to socialize, keep a healthy lifestyle, and spend recreational time outdoors.

### Potential Cost

Basic Basketball Court  
w/ Fence & Gates.....\$40,000-\$60,000/LS

## PICKLEBALL



Source: nycpickleball.com

### Scale

A pickleball court is 44 feet long and 20 feet wide. Net height is 36 inches. A six-foot (6') minimum height perimeter fence should be included.

### Benefits

In recent years pickleball has gained popularity as a recreational activity among people aged 35 and up. The loud environment of traffic along the Linear Greenway provides a space for pickleball courts without disrupting quieter neighborhoods. The sport is a great form of fitness for a community age group with limited time for recreational activities.

### Potential Cost

Basic Pickleball Court  
w/ Fence & Gates.....\$30,000-\$40,000/LS

## SKATE PARKS



Source: torontofunplaces.blogspot.com

### Scale

Skate parks are commonly 3,000 to 8,000 square feet. They can feature several types of equipment and serve about 30-70 skaters at the same time.

### Benefits

The harsh characteristic of the underpass is an place to incorporate a skate park. The activities are low to the ground, and require little to no maintenance. The community benefits from a place to participate in recreational activities and create a safe space for the skating community.

### Potential Cost

3,000 Sq/Ft Concrete  
Skate Park.....\$150,000-\$200,000/LS  
  
8,000 Sq/Ft Concrete  
Skate Park.....\$400,000-\$500,000/LS

## FITNESS STATIONS



Source: stock.adobe.com

### Scale

Fitness equipment is best placed near the Linear Greenway trail, and at different intervals to encourage users to walk between stations and exercises

### Benefits

Outdoor fitness equipment helps users with limited resources or non-exercisers participate in workout activities. People of all ages and abilities can exercise and enjoy their workout outdoors at their own comfort and pace.

### Potential Cost

Fitness Equipment.....\$500-\$10,000/EA



# LINEAR GREENWAY DESIGN GUIDELINES: ECOLOGICAL

## COASTAL PRAIRIE RESTORATION



Source: [blog.cwf-fcf.org](http://blog.cwf-fcf.org)

### Scale

Restoration projects are adaptive to the size of space provided, and can expand to the extent of the Centerpoint easement.

### Benefits

Revitalizing the Centerpoint easement into a Coastal Prairie will convert a limited-use area for development into a high-impact zone for pollinators. The uninterrupted linear corridor of vegetation has the ideal qualities for a restoration project for the benefit of the local habitat. Coastal prairies serve as a vital food source for birds and pollinator insects.

### Potential Cost

Coastal Prairie Planting.....\$5.00/SF

## VEGETATIVE BUFFERS



Source: [naturalwalkingcities.com](http://naturalwalkingcities.com)

### Scale

The buffers can extend as needed, but the width between roadway and pedestrians must be three feet (3') minimum.

### Benefits

Vegetative buffers provide a multitude of benefits in an otherwise urban environment. They provide safety by separating roadways from pedestrians and alternative modes of transportation, and enhance the aesthetic and ecological value of the space. They can also improve groundwater filtration and reduce flooding and drainage problems.

### Potential Cost

Landscape Planting.....\$12.00-\$35.00/SF  
45 Gal. Tree.....\$600/EA

## GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE



Source: [cityhabitats.org](http://cityhabitats.org)

### Scale

Green infrastructure is dynamic and adaptive to the space depending on its purpose and location.

### Benefits

Green infrastructure reduces and treats stormwater before it connects with valuable bodies of water such as Galveston Bay. Introducing green infrastructure can decrease private and public costs for stormwater management and promote a positive quality of life.

### Potential Cost

There is a wide price range for up-front investment into green infrastructure. When compared to conventional stormwater management methods, it can cost less over time.

## POCKET PRAIRIES



Source: [epicgardening.com](http://epicgardening.com)

### Scale

A green space under one acre of native vegetation is considered a pocket prairie.

### Benefits

Pocket prairies are smaller versions of coastal prairies. Their smaller size makes them adequate for hands-on learning opportunities for the community. They also serve as valuable food sources for local wildlife and enhance the beauty of a space.

### Potential Cost

Landscape Planting.....\$12.00/SF  
Native Seeding.....\$1.50-\$5.00/SF



# KEMAH DOG PARK

Having a dedicated location for taking the dog for a walk is an essential amenity in urban and suburban areas. Most municipalities have strict rules regarding dogs and taking them off-leash in public which limits a dog’s ability to socialize with other dogs.

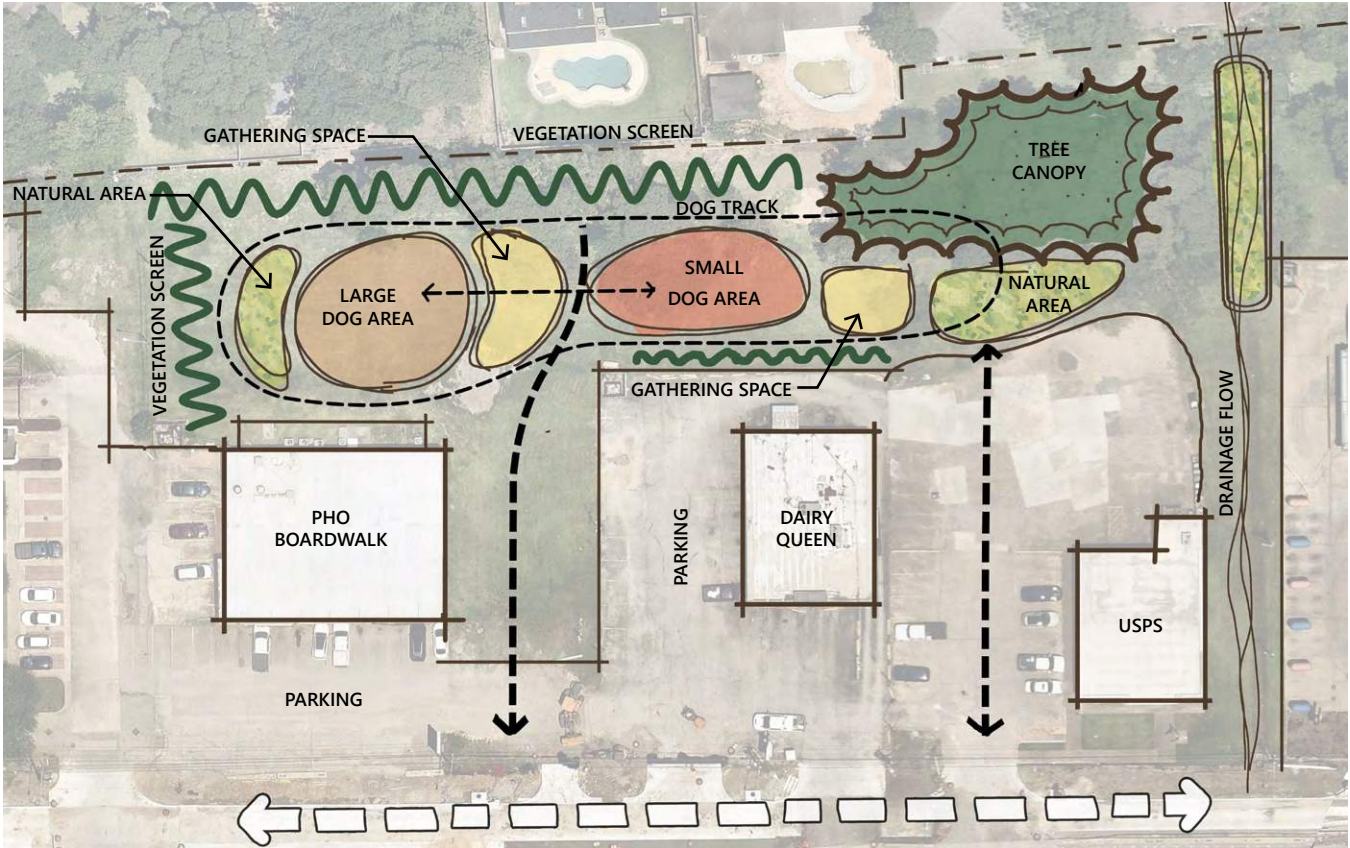
Using a currently unused, publicly owned site, we can provide a park where pets can run free and play in a safe and shared space. This park will provide an essential asset for socialization, training, exercise, and for dog owners to gather.

## LOCATION



**EXPECTED PARK BUDGET**  
\$75,000 - \$300,000

## CONCEPT DIAGRAM



## RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommended site is a nearly landlocked property to the east of Highway 146. Developing this into a dog park can be an excellent use of the property and meet a need often mentioned by the public. There is room for a small parking area, as well as pedestrian access to a sidewalk which could connect to the large network of walks

and shared-use paths. The primary issues are the adjacent single-family residential properties located to the rear of the site. We recommend that part of the design strategy be a large vegetative screen along this edge to minimize impact on homeowners.



Source: jadlogcuritiba.com.br

### Natural Areas

Natural areas can serve a variety of purposes in our parks. In the case of this site, there is a drainage swale to the south end of the site. The natural area proposed will act as the first area of filtration for storm runoff that has washed across the dog park areas.



Source: roundrocktexas.gov

### Dog Park

The dog park should focus on creating spaces for both large and small dog species. This is typical when creating these spaces and can help minimize conflicts. At its most basic, this is a fenced space where owners can release their pets. At its highest quality, it can contain play and training equipment, shade structures, and drinking fountains.



Source: landezine.com

### Gathering Spaces

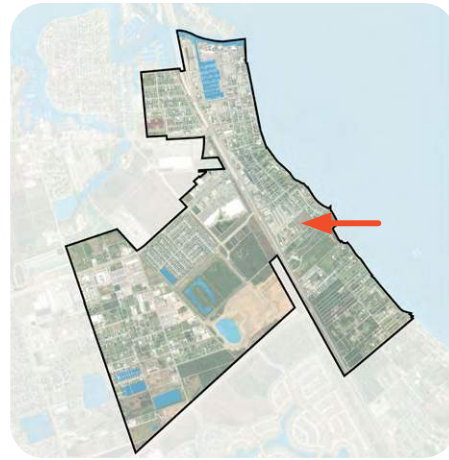
One function of a dog park is to provide dog owners with a safe space for their pets to play off-leash and socialize with other dogs. This often results in owners hanging out watching. Creating a comfortable, shaded seating area should be a long-term goal for implementing the park. This area can become a place to get to know other dog owners or to hold training classes, shot clinics, or pet registration drives.



**MATTHEW D. WIGGINS/  
CIEN PARK**

Through the park assessments, we identified that the high diversity of activities gives Matthew D. Wiggins a positive rank in the assessment rubric. It also identifies which of the programs were favorable and which were deficient in meeting the needs of users. This allows the city to enhance those programs through the set of recommendations listed. The concept diagram provided demonstrates the location and scale of the proposed recommendations.

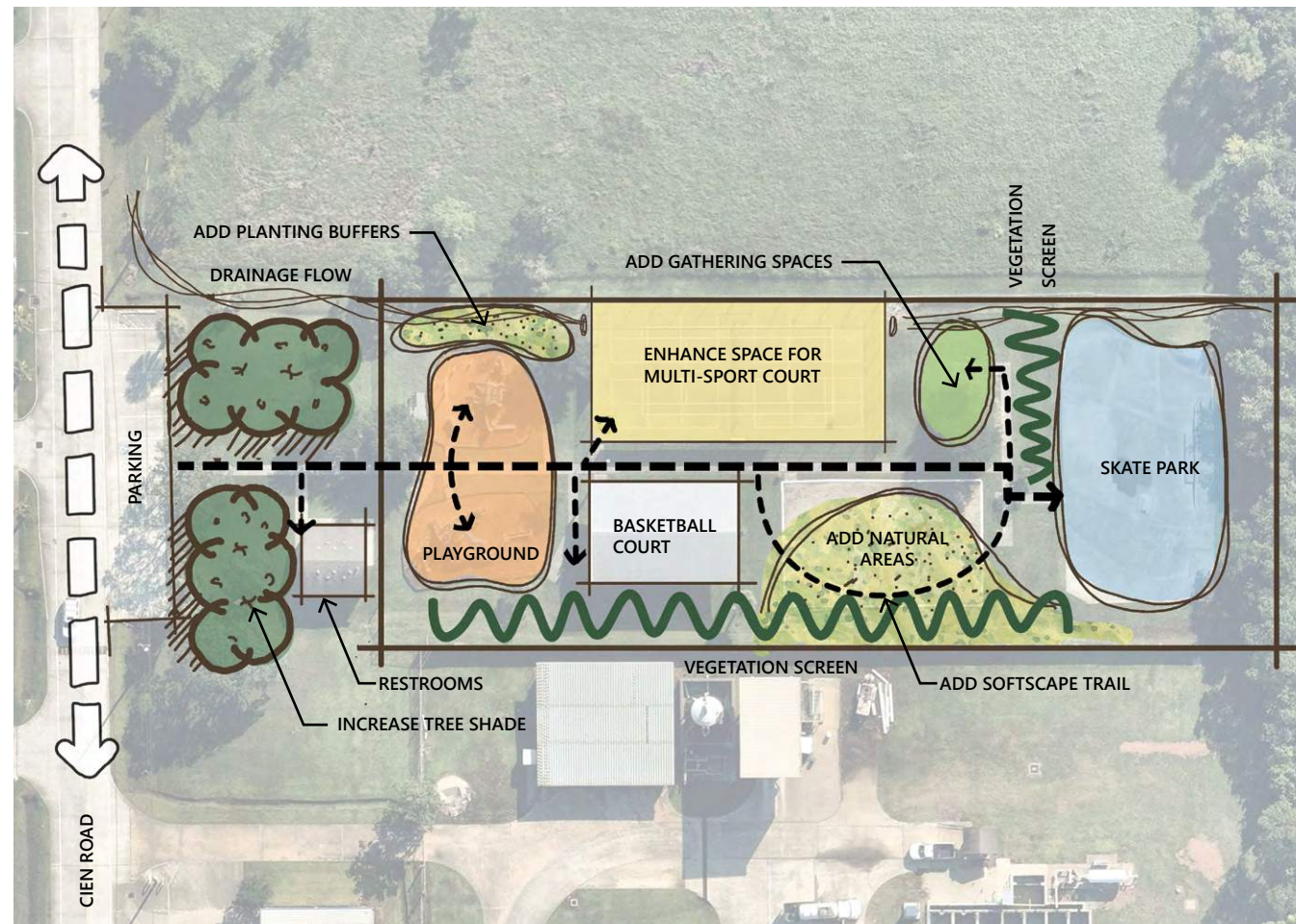
## LOCATION



## EXPECTED IMPROVEMENTS BUDGET

\$50,000 - \$100,000

## CONCEPT DIAGRAM



## RECOMMENDATIONS

Matthew D. Wiggins Park includes a wide range of amenities focused on active play and recreation such as a playground, tennis court, basketball court, and a skate park. Introducing more passive elements and gathering spaces will

help diversify the experience of users in the park. As well as updating and maintaining the existing programs to be safe, fun, and relevant to the passage of time.

## Park Improvements

Improvements to the play equipment help the aesthetics of the park, as well as increase the inclusivity and addition of supportive facilities. Play equipment improvements can include updated equipment that serves varying age groups and selecting equipment that is universally accessible by all user types.



## Natural Areas

Incorporating natural buffers and borders around the perimeter of the park enhances the natural experience of the spaces and screens views and sensory activities from unwanted sources outside the park. Additional benefits of adding planting to the park are wildlife food sources, stormwater mitigation, and aesthetic value.



Source: [theconservationfoundation.org](http://theconservationfoundation.org)

## Gathering Spaces

Including gathering spaces can create a new experience, allow people to rest between activities, or provide a place for friends and family to be spectators during activities. A variety of seating opportunities are recommended such as adequate turf to sit on, benches, and tables.





# JAMES FOSTER PARK

James Foster Park provides the community in West Kemah with a good range of passive and active recreational activities. Updates to the park throughout the years are visible from the park assessment made previously. The recommendations listed only intend to continue taking care of what is existing to enhance the user experience.

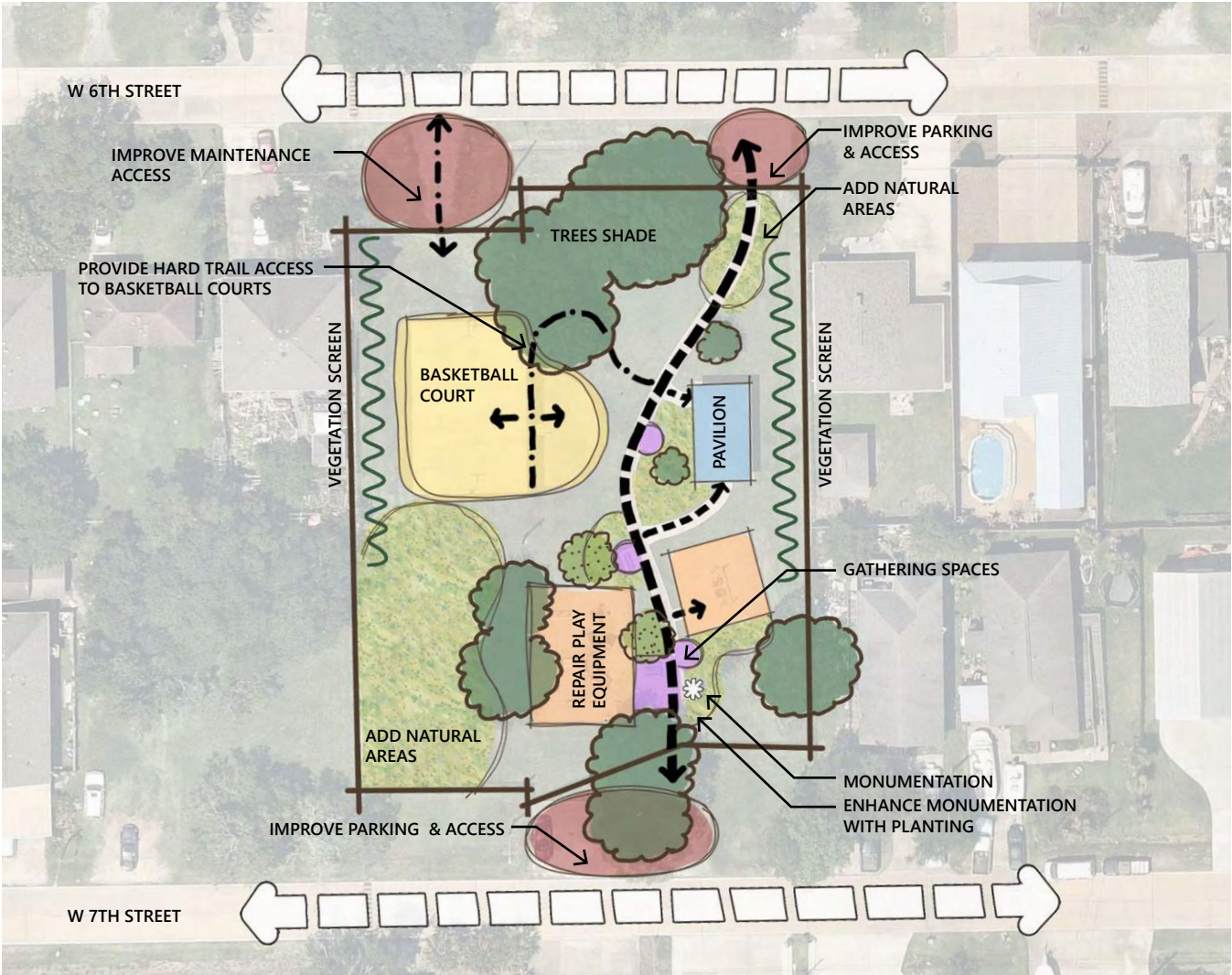
## LOCATION



## EXPECTED IMPROVEMENTS BUDGET

\$100,000 - \$200,000

## CONCEPT DIAGRAM



## RECOMMENDATIONS

With time, the conditions of parks tend to deteriorate and require attention. Based on the current conditions of James Foster Park, it is important to analyze what needs maintenance, repair, or replacement.

As the only park in the West Kemah District and near Lavace Stewart Elementary, the recommendations will keep a safe, fun, and healthy environment for the community.



### Park Maintenance

The playground equipment must be restored to working conditions for children to continue playing safely. It is critical to schedule routine inspections based on the age of the playground. Older playground equipment is more prone to safety hazards and requires more frequent repairs and maintenance.



### Improve Access

Improving external and internal access to park features is necessary to provide safe access for users with mobility impairments. The south and north entry parking areas need improvement.

A walkway connection from the main path to the basketball courts is also necessary for equal access for all users and to avoid unwanted trails caused by foot traffic.



### Natural Areas

Adding natural areas in multiple areas of the park will improve the aesthetic value of the park. Vegetation screens in the east and west areas of the park will provide a more pleasant experience and remove unwanted views into neighboring properties.



# CITY HALL POCKET PRAIRIE



## RECOMMENDATIONS

The existing open space behind City Hall is an opportunity to create a natural refuge for people working at or visiting City Hall. Park programming at the site, which is approximately 0.3 acres, can scale from formal park improvements to restore the existing pavilion, including a more natural space with softscape improvements with pocket prairies, pollinator gardens, and other natural improvements of similar scale. Seating areas, outdoor furnishings, and outdoor games help create gathering spaces and encourage people to spend time together outside. Shared-use paths and walking trails encourage people to get outside into the park space and take a step into nature for a change.

## EXPECTED IMPROVEMENTS BUDGET

\$20,000 - \$200,000



PARK IMPROVEMENTS



NATURAL AREAS



SHARED USE PATH



GATHERING SPACES

# MURAL PARK

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Kemah Mural Park utilizes large-scale artwork from local artists to draw people to the Museum and Welcome Center and provide a unique visitor experience.

Natural areas, like pollinator gardens, create other forms of visual interest, encourage biodiversity in an urban setting, and provide a softer, more natural buffer to the space. Gathering spaces increase the variety of uses and activities available at this park. Amenities can include picnic tables, benches, and other seating furniture.

## EXPECTED PARK BUDGET

\$120,000 - \$175,000



NATURAL AREAS



GATHERING SPACE

Source: kayak.com



GALVESTON BAY MURAL



NASA MURAL



ENTRY MURAL



ASTROS MURAL



# POCKET PARK DISTRICT

## LOCATION



## CONTEXT & ANALYSIS

The Pocket Park District provides unique opportunities for people to experience Kemah’s waterfront views of Galveston Bay. The design considerations and recommendations provide a stark contrast to Kemah’s Boardwalk by providing more natural and passive amenities.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The pocket park district serves a quieter waterfront experience and is meant to be a place where people will partake in more passive activities. Passive activities can include birdwatching, delighting in nature and the scenery, having a conversation with friends and family, and other activities. To account for the contrast of experience, amenities such as native plantings, benches, and picnic tables are recommended to encourage people to slow down for a quiet experience.

## EXPECTED IMPROVEMENTS BUDGET

\$20,000 - \$50,000 per Pocket Park



4th Street Pocket Park



7th Street Pocket Park



8th Street Pocket Park



Source: [fineartamerica.com](https://fineartamerica.com)

## Ocean Frontage

A unique amenity opportunity, ocean frontage provides people access to the waterfront outside of the context of a busy public beach. Jetties, sitting and gathering areas, gazebos, and other items can be utilized to add interest to the space. Within the context of the pocket park district, improvements to the ocean frontage can provide the most impact and help define the series of pocket parks as their own destinations.



Source: [wilflower.org](https://wilflower.org)

## Natural Areas

In areas such as the pocket park district, where space is limited, adding natural areas provides movement, color, and varieties of visual interest to cause people to ‘slow down’ and stop to visit the space. The plants established on-site must be native species to provide a local food source for wildlife and to tolerate the site conditions.



## Gathering Spaces

Gathering spaces in the pocket park district can activate what are otherwise open areas lacking formal programming. Gathering spaces can scale from highly programmed plazas to open areas for people to sit and relax in a space. Benches, picnic tables, and other small-scale amenities will activate these spaces in the Pocket Park District.



# SIGNAGE SYSTEM

## BENEFITS

A unified and consistent signage system is a key element to unify a parks and trails system, it helps create a consistent brand for a larger area, creates a sense of place on a smaller scale, and is an effective way of guiding people to and from landmarks within the system.

### Signage should include:

- Consistent logos and branding to create unity within the city.
- Easy to read maps that communicate pertinent and relevant information to the user.
- Wayfinding to guide residents and visitors to landmarks and points of interest. As well as provide distance and current location information.

- Educational Materials can add an additional layer of storytelling, historic information, and introduce different themes to the trail / connectivity system.
- Must be located in appropriate location for visibility and public awareness of nearby trail systems.

Public engagement respondents and satellite data reflect a lack of signage in current parks and trailheads. It is recommended to install signage standards in current and future parks and trailheads.

The images on the following page highlight various types of signage and wayfinding designs with effective elements to inspire the City to create a unique signage system.



Entrance Monument to Kemah's Lighthouse District. Source: Rasmin Kathiriya





# NATURE-BASED TOURISM

## WHAT IS THE OUTDOOR INDUSTRY AND NATURE-BASED TOURISM?

The outdoor industry and nature-based tourism are intimately connected. The outdoor industry can be defined as a commercial enterprise or venture that promotes or contributes to the use and enjoyment of nature and natural resources. Nature-based tourism is a type of tourism that focuses on experiencing and appreciating natural environments and their wildlife. Texas Parks and Wildlife Department defines nature-based tourism as “discretionary travel to natural areas that conserves the environmental, social, and cultural values while generating an economic benefit to the local community.” It involves travel to natural areas with the primary purpose of enjoying and appreciating the scenery, connecting with nature, viewing wildlife, and the cultural heritage of the destination. Nature-based tourism often includes elements of conservation and environmental education.



Fishing is a major nature-based tourism activity.

## BENEFITS OF OUTDOOR INDUSTRY AND NATURE-BASED TOURISM

Nationally, the Outdoor Industry Association reported a 2.3 percent increase in outdoor participation at a record 1,68.1 million participants, or approximately 55 percent of the U.S. population ages six and older in 2022.<sup>16</sup> Some of this growth is attributed to pandemic influences that saw a surge of people enjoying time spent outside. This trend may be cooling slightly from 2021, but seems to have permanence as a key value to most U.S. citizens and certain areas of the country are well positioned to provide more opportunities for tourists and community members to connect to nature. In Texas’ coastal cities, the most common nature-based tourism attractions are birdwatching and coastal activities such as kayaking and fishing, both of which Kemah is well-positioned to implement. In Texas alone, the travels of roughly 2.2 million bird watchers have generated around \$1.8 billion in economic impact in 2021.<sup>17</sup> Birdwatchers contribute to the local economy by spending money on supplies and at restaurants and hotels. Nature-based tourism contributes additional benefits to the local economy. When public lands provide habitat for desirable birdwatching species, such as the Black-throated Green Warbler (*Setophaga virens*), other species can take advantage of the habitat. The land provides ecosystem services, such as cleaning air and water, and community members may see wellness and health benefits.

## NATURE-BASED TOURISM IN KEMAH

There are several opportunities to bring nature-based tourism to Kemah by emphasizing the City’s coast and location along the Central Flyway. Coordination with regional and state partners on these following efforts will be important. In addition, there are likely funding opportunities to pursue nature-based tourism and conservation projects in Kemah:

### 1. Establish resident and migratory birding areas. Invest in natural spaces that attract birds of interest.

- **Existing Parks & Open Space:** For some bird species, having even a small area of habitat can make a big difference. Find ways of incorporating habitat design into existing parks and open space, such as feeders, nesting boxes, and native plants to attract insects.
- **Existing Parks & Open Space in Development:** 57 Acre Nature Facility is an opportunity to foster a unique ecology that attracts a variety of birds drawn to a mosaic of habitat types. Consider targeting the habitat needs of a few specific species, and find ways to include nesting boxes, if applicable.
- **Future Parks & Open Space in Development:** If opportunities arise, consider expanding the public natural lands in Kemah and find ways to connect or link existing parks and open spaces to create habitat corridors and networks.

*Keep in mind that installing and maintaining habitat areas can take time and effort. Consider creating community volunteer and stewardship programs to keep the habitat areas functioning. There are opportunities to provide environmental education that will help visitors get a sense of the local ecology and wildlife.*

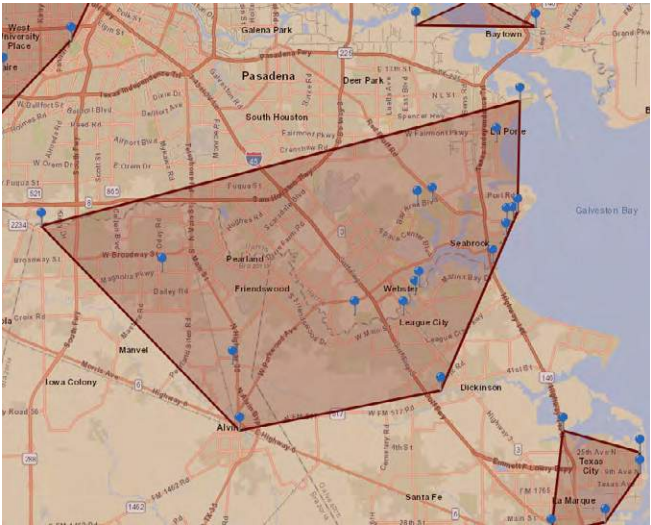


Coastal areas like Kemah host an abundance of avian species.  
Source: stock.adobe.com



2. Work with regional organizations to establish Kemah’s presence as a birdwatching hotspot. Create awareness about Kemah’s nature-based tourism opportunities.

- **Greater Texas Coastal Birding Trail:**  
Advocate for Kemah, and specifically 57 Acre Nature Facility, to be listed as part of the Clear Lake Loop of the Birding Trail by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Once the designation is achieved the city can advertise the status. For example, the City of League City advertises the birding sites in the Clear Lake Loop on their Visit League City website.
- **Bird City Texas:**  
Consider becoming a designated Bird City with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Every year Texas Parks and Wildlife Department hosts an annual workshop to learn more about the designation and how to apply. If this is pursued there are opportunities for further resources, and the ability to advertise the designation.
- **Galveston Bay Foundation:**  
Work with the Galveston Bay Foundation (GBF) on initiatives to increase visitorship to their property and Kemah for the purposes of wildlife viewing and environmental education.



Clear Lake Loop of the Great Texas Birding Trail. Source: TPWD

GBF is currently working on their headquarters on a four-acre property along the bay in Kemah. There is future interest opening the property up to the public once improvements have been completed.

3. Establish pollinator areas. There are more than just birds that migrate through Central Texas, every year monarch butterflies (*Danaus plexippus*) and other important pollinators make the journey and need refueling areas.

- **Existing Parks & Open Space:**  
Habitat and refueling areas for pollinator species does not take up much real estate. Find ways of incorporating pollinator areas into existing parks and open space including flowering native plant species.
- **Existing Parks & Open Space in Development:**  
57 Acre Nature Facility is an opportunity to restore meadow and prairies to provide habitat for pollinator species by incorporating milkweed and nectar sources for butterflies and other insects.



Pollinator areas support monarch butterflies and other important species.

- **Future Parks & Open Space in Development:**  
If opportunities arise, consider expanding the public natural lands in Kemah and find ways to connect or link existing parks and open spaces to create habitat corridors and networks.

4. Provide on-shore fishing opportunities. On-shore fishing areas provide a more accessible way to fish the bay.

- **Existing Park & Open Space:**  
Investigate if any bay side open space could be appropriate for on-shore fishing. For example, the underutilized open space at the end of 4th Street and the bay may be a suitable place to pilot an on-shore fishing area. There also may be areas associated with the Highway 146 improvements that could be suitable as well.
- **Future Parks & Open Space in Development:**  
Consider growing the Kemah public lands to include more bay side property or even the addition of a pier where on-shore fishing could be thoughtfully planned and incorporated.



Galveston Bay Foundation's Master Plan for their headquarters in Kemah, Texas. Source: Galveston Bay Foundation

5. Promote safe water-based activities. While kayaking directly in the bay may be dangerous for new kayakers and canoers, there are other locations where boat launches could be appropriate, such as directly west of Highway 146.

- **Future Parks & Open Space in Development:**  
Consider growing the Kemah public lands to include more Bayside or Clear Lake property. There may be opportunities to create small watercraft launch areas to link into kayak and canoe aquatic trails and provide a different and exciting way to recreate in and around Kemah.

On-shore fishing areas need certain amenities to function well, such as fish cleaning stations, large trash receptacles, and fishing wire disposal areas. Fishing areas will need maintenance, care, and basic infrastructure to function properly.



# KEMAH PRAIRIE CRAWL

## 57 ACRE NATURE FACILITY

Explore the largest park in the City of Kemah which offers many nature activities such as hiking, birding, educational programs, among other opportunities unique to the ecology of the Texas Coast.

## LINEAR GREENWAY

Take a walk across the linear trail that is transforming the underpass of the State Highway 146. The Linear Greenway is creating a recreational destination in the urban heart of the city.

## PIER AT 1ST STREET

Check out the seasonal events happening at Pier at 1st Street such as Farmers Markets, Holiday Events, Concerts, and other fun activities. As well as go boating at one of our public entrances to Galveston Bay.

## MURAL PARK

Welcome to Kemah’s Visitor Center and Museum located at the entrance of the Lighthouse District. Learn about our local history and enjoy taking selfies at our public art destination.

## POCKET PARK DISTRICT

Continue the Prairie Crawl through the Lighthouse District and enjoy the unique features of the city with the backdrop of the Galveston Bay coast.

## BEL ROAD POCKET PARK

In this small hidden gem of the city you can enjoy a beautiful scenery of the Texas Coast. This intimate location is perfect for sunrise and sunset lovers.

## CITY HALL POCKET PRAIRIE

Enjoy a sunny day around pollinators as they buzz around the native flora of Texas. The City Hall Pocket Prairie is a good place to test your green thumb and learn about transforming urban environments.

## MATTHEW D. WIGGINS PARK

Keep an active lifestyle at Matthew D. Wiggins Park. Pick up a game of basketball, or ride your skateboard on the skatepark; there is many activities to enjoy at this small but mighty park.

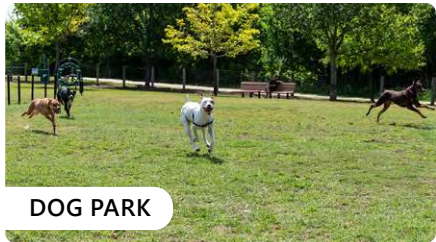
## GALVESTON BAY FOUNDATION

Take action in preserving the health and beauty of our Bay. At Galveston Bay Foundation there are many programs available to make a positive ecological impact to the Bay.

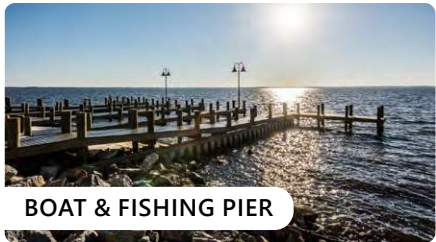




CITY WIDE IMPROVEMENT  
THROUGH PARK IMPROVEMENTS



DOG PARK



BOAT & FISHING PIER



OCEAN FRONTAGE



VEGETATIVE BUFFERS



GATHERING SPACES



ART SPACE



NATURAL AREAS



FITNESS STATIONS



SHARED USE PATH



RACQUET SPORTS



GOLF CART RENTAL



COASTAL PRAIRIE RESTORATION



SKATE PARKS



SPORT COURTS



GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE



WAYFINDING



REFUGE ISLANDS



BIOSWALES





# IMPLEMENTATION

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# 5 YEAR ACTION PLAN

The 5-Year Action Plan is not intended to be a checklist of items, but rather a guideline for meeting the overarching goals of the Master Plan. The action plan provides a series of tools for addressing the recommendations made in a logical way that prevents indecision or being inadvertently pulled in the wrong direction. Used properly, the action plan will help keep momentum moving forward and result in measurable changes to the inventory and impacts of the Kemah Parks system.

## PRIORITY PROJECTS/ CATEGORY

When looking at all the suggestions from a large-scale planning process, it can be easy to become overwhelmed. Everything looks important, and should all be implemented at once! However, identifying key areas to focus on will help the community move from one successful project to the next. To develop this strategy, we looked at all the data collected and emphasized the public feedback we received regarding their needs. Besides looking at what to fix or build, understand the City’s capacity to expand its ability to maintain added facilities. Building this capacity for additional and more specialized maintenance will ensure the community’s investments are well managed.

## TAKE CARE OF WHAT WE HAVE

The first priority for the City is to take care of and improve Kemah’s existing amenities and public spaces. Now that we have established this prerogative, we can categorize projects in those spaces based on what they’re addressing.

Every project should contain one of the following criteria:

- 1. Broken or Damaged
- 2. Improving Access/Comfort
- 3. Underutilized
- 4. Natural Enhancements/ Resilience

### Broken or Damaged (Level 1)

Equipment, furnishings, and facilities should be the first thing addressed in all situations. When this level of maintenance isn’t performed it can lead to a decrease in public safety, an increase in injuries, vandalism or additional damage, and a loss of use in the public space. Building the capacity for maintenance teams to address these issues quickly will not only build faith from the public that the City is addressing their needs but will also result in lower long-term costs as well-maintained equipment does not need to be replaced as often.

### Improving Access/ Comfort (Level 2)

Lack of adequate access excludes community members with limited mobility from participating in recreational settings. Parks should be designed and maintained so anyone can easily access them and use all the park features. Improving access goes beyond meeting Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements and forces us to look at anything that might be a barrier to enjoying the space. Likewise, comfort plays a large part in the success or failure of our public spaces. If someone cannot find a comfortable place to sit and talk with a friend, feels like they’re intruding, or feels unsafe, they will tend to look for other places to spend their time. Whether these feelings are founded in reality or not, the result is the same. We can address many issues through design and maintenance: benches without middle arms, open spaces without hidden corners, trash picked up, and light fixtures working. These all contribute to feeling comfortable in a park.

### Underutilized (Level 3)

Facilities and areas of parks should be looked at closely. If parks are not updated to address current trends in exercise and recreation, activities and public engagement will decrease. The safest public spaces are the active ones with higher numbers of visitors. Addressing underutilized spaces will ensure that facilities are well-used and continue to be an asset to the community. This does not mean every square inch of a park has to serve a specific purpose. Open spaces are necessary for programmed play as our general health. But rather, looking at facilities such as sports courts, playground equipment, or dead-end sidewalks to determine if minor updates could dramatically improve their usability.

### Natural Enhancements and Resiliency (Level 4)

In our parks and public spaces is the final piece of improving our existing facilities. From providing habitat to cleaning our air and water, our park systems provide many resources beyond health & recreation. Eco-services are an integral piece of this urban infrastructure and provide countless benefits.

As a coastal city, Kemah is subject to frequent natural disturbances, and developing a healthy, systemic, natural buffer to shock is vital to long-term survival. Developing underutilized spaces into small, natural refuges not only enhances the aesthetic of the park but also creates pockets of habitat that help mitigate on-site rainwater, improve air quality, increase biodiversity, improve soil health, improve the mental health of visitors, and reduce long-term maintenance costs of the living material. Additionally, as the number of these spaces increases around the community, it creates a natural buffer that improves the recovery time of local plant and animal populations following natural disturbances including flooding and hurricanes.

Building these systems is relatively low cost and can be an impetus for creating capacity in the city for additional green stormwater infrastructure is an increasingly used set of solutions around the country.



### Case Study 1: James Foster Park

In the assessment of James Foster Park, two key projects were identified.

- 1. The playground slide is broken and the playground is wrapped in caution tape. As a Level 1 project, the repair should be made as soon as possible.
- 2. There is also a lack of paved access to the basketball court limiting who is allowed to use it. While not as immediate, a Level 2 project should be done to create access to the court.

These projects, while small, will have a dramatic impact on the usability, accessibility, and comfort of James Foster.





### Case Study 2: Matthew D. Wiggins Park

The assessment of Matthew D. Wiggins Park identified several areas of improvement.

1. The tennis courts have become an underutilized space as tennis has decreased in popularity versus other court sports. A low-cost solution to this problem would be re-striping the existing court for multiple racket sports and installing a movable net system. This small Level 3 project would have a quick positive impact on the park.
2. The central sidewalk that runs the length of the park dead ends before reaching the skate park. This can be addressed with a small Level 2 project to complete the walk. If coupled with the recommendation to add a shade structure for gathering near the skate park, this park now has both Level 2 and 3 projects. This increases its importance in terms of need and the budget for the project. These factors need to be weighed thoughtfully to determine the best way forward.
3. The beach volleyball court is essentially an unused amenity in the park, which has led to less maintenance over time. This missing recreation feature has not led to a significant decrease in visitors to the park, therefore, the recommendation is to convert this space into a natural area. This will address the underutilized space, increase natural

plantings, and the poor visuals of the water treatment facility to the north. This park would now contain Level 3 & 4 projects with additional benefits to the park experience.

Categorizing and evaluating each project will help the City easily prioritize projects in the existing park system.

### NEW SPACES

There are several reasons why a community should develop new park spaces. Reasons include everything from providing missing amenities and activities to reducing crime through the activation of underused/vacant sites. The key to successful implementation is to be deliberate about the creation of these new sites. Continuing to engage the community as an individual site develops will ensure that the new park meets the needs of its intended users. This will avoid spaces being built that are only wanted by a few.

During the development of the new park, a thoughtful approach to the quality of materials and design should also be taken. It can be easy to fall into the trap of buying the cheapest product to keep budgets down. However, this approach often leads to a life cycle cost much higher than a quality product might have been, for example, buying a park bench. It might be easy to buy the cheapest one, but with shorter warranties, low-quality materials that break down faster/ fade in the Texas sun, are not graffiti resistant, and are less comfortable, the City will end up paying more over a 10-year span in maintenance and repair. All for a seat that is not comfortable to sit on! These value judgments should be discussed early and frequently to ensure that projects are properly budgeted for and the final delivery meets the expectations.

Approaching new projects with the proper expectations will ensure that grants are pursued, partnerships developed, and funds raised are spent successfully. Likewise, understanding the

maintenance implications of new park spaces early in the process will be vital to their success. If the maintenance department waits until after a new prairie planting is installed before hiring qualified team members to help them get established and care for them long-term, it is already too late and the planting will be likely to fail. This is the case with many components of modern parks - from green stormwater infrastructure to solar lighting to poured-in-place rubber surfacing, being ready to maintain these systems in advance of their completion will maximize the long-term benefits to the community.

In the previous section, we discussed the need to prioritize existing park spaces and focus on building up the existing system.

This does not mean that all existing parks need to be one hundred percent updated before approaching new parks. The two programs can run successfully simultaneously.

These guidelines are merely to help prioritize limited resources. New parks take capital and there are a variety of ways to procure these funds. However the funds are acquired, the early legwork on a project will be key to its success. First, if you are sacrificing current resources or capacity to build new facilities, it is likely an indicator of the potential of new parks becoming a burden on the system. At this point, you should look at building up the current system before continuing. Then you can dive into setting expectations for the appropriate quality, a reasonable budget, and preparing for the long-term impacts on existing systems and infrastructure.

### NATURAL ENHANCEMENTS/ RESILIENCE

It is easy to overlook the long-term impacts that developing a system of natural spaces can have on the city. Small, well-designed pockets of natural enhancements will have a cumulative effect as more and more are added to an area. Many species rely on a variety of spaces, palettes, and conditions to thrive in various natural communities. By adding small pockets of nature, a network of habitats is created. Although this network will not have the same individual impact as a large, continuous tract of native restoration, it will have a cumulative impact greater than the sum of each pocket.

Many plant, animal, and insect species will perform better within a network of habitats and this method is an approach growing in popularity in more built-up environments as a way to support local, natural communities. For the City of Kemah, this approach can also be part of the strategy of building capacity in maintenance teams for maintaining a different type of park space than they're accustomed to. The long-term benefits can be measured in improved water quality, air quality, biodiversity, and the ability for all these communities to recover from natural disturbances and to thrive in the face of urbanization and climate change.



Source: stock.adobe.com



ALL OTHER THINGS BEING EQUAL:

Every community has limited resources and eventually has to decide between this item and that. The key to preventing losing momentum in growing the Kemah Parks system will be to decide which way to aim in the face of “one or the other”. Understanding these critical items can also be another key in prioritizing projects and deciding what order to implement them. For Kemah, there are several bottom-line factors that should be considered and monitored continuously.

1. Under-served Communities

In Kemah, the data and engagement revealed several under-served communities related to public parks. The primary metric for measuring growth and success in the area will be the walkability map. This map has already helped us identify current neighborhoods with limited access to public spaces. Moving forward, these park projects that directly impact this access should be prioritized.

2. Focus on Missing Amenities

Kemah is a small, tightly-knit community. There is no need to duplicate many of the amenities requested by residents. Relatively, smaller ticket items like pickleball and

playgrounds would be considered a typical feature and should be added to multiple parks. A dog park, boat launch, or fishing pier are large, and each one can serve the entire community without a second location. This should be monitored over time to address changes in popularity so that if needed, a unique amenity should be expanded or duplicated. All other things being equal, building new, unique items should be prioritized over building duplicates of amenities already serving the community.

3. Income Generation/Funding

Many types of amenities contained within parks can become income-generating. Either through use fees, donation solicitation, or increased customer traffic to adjacent businesses. These income producers can help fund other park projects and should be given some weight in balancing community needs. This does not mean sacrificing park space for business. What it means is to see an opportunity to increase financial stability in the park budget by generating income through park activities including golf cart rentals, donation boxes, and use permits, which allow us to quickly move to the next project that does not have the same earning potential.



Source: stock.adobe.com

FUNDING

Parks and trails projects are a significant investment of resources with the purpose of providing recreational, natural, health and environmental benefits many years into the future. Researching and evaluating potential funding sources and opportunities will potentially lighten the load of resources on the City.

STRATEGIES

There are two strategies for funding projects recommended in this plan:

- 1. Identify a project partner, or lead, and appropriately budget for associated development. Potential costs include preliminary reports, site surveys, engineering and design, permitting and environmental considerations.
- 2. Seek alternate methods of funding including volunteer builds, donations and grant programs.

Budgeting for projects includes evaluating annual resources including Capital Improvement Project funds, operating funds, or planning for the approval, sale and use of special tax bonds.

FUNDING SOURCES

Financing & Grants

There are a variety of approaches to source funding for the planning and construction of parks, nature-based tourism, and trails available at the state and regional levels. Texas Parks and Wildlife provides many grant opportunities to cities within the State of Texas, but in addition to grant-giving organizations, financing may come from a municipal management district, tax increment reinvestment zones, (TIRZ), and/or General Obligation Bonds for Parks.

Municipal Management Districts (MMDs)

Municipal Management Districts are special districts created by local governments to provide additional services and infrastructure improvements within a specific area. They have been used throughout the greater Houston Area as a means to allow commercial property owners to work together to supplement City services and complete infrastructural or aesthetic improvements. There are a variety of ways by which MMDs can fund parks. For example, they may levy property taxes within their boundaries, and the revenue generated from the taxes can be set aside for parks and recreational facilities. MMDs may also use tax increment financing to allocate funds to parks.

Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones (TIRZ)

Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones can fund parks by levying an incremental property tax revenue within a designated zone. As revenue within the designated zone increases over time, the tax from that revenue may be set aside and earmarked for parks. TIRZ may also leverage public-private partnerships to fundraise additional capital for parks and trails projects.



General Obligation Bond

General obligation bonds and certificates of obligation are obligations to fund the construction and improvement of the city’s infrastructure and capital projects. Generally, Obligation bonds require voter approval, and historically, Texas voters have consistently supported bonds that focus on park improvements. In general, bonds can only be used for capital improvement projects rather than ongoing yearly expenses such as operations and maintenance.

Grants

The Texas Parks and Wildlife District (TPWD) offers several recreational grant programs. This Plan can help provide the necessary requirements for these grant opportunities. These grants typically require a planning document that outlines the vision for the City’s parks and recreational spaces. See TPWD’s website for more information. A summary of applicable Texas Parks and Wildlife District grants, in addition to other regional grants, can be found in the table.

Donations

Private companies and foundations may also be interested in funding parks and trail projects. Several national trail systems and well-known parks have been funded in this manner. Major corporations, foundations, and organizations should be considered for potential partnerships and support.

Public / Private Partnerships

The City’s relationship with residents, Homeowners Associations, and various organizations can lead to future partnerships and increased advocacy for parks and trail projects in Kemah.

Volunteer Labor

Volunteer builds can be utilized for several different phases of park and trail construction. Volunteers can help with initial clearing of brush and small trees, and also help with the installation of landscape.

Interlocal Agreements

A crucial step in the development of parks and trails projects is to identify property ownership. Some project areas may fall into different jurisdictions or be owned by one entity and managed by another. Entities such as Galveston County and Galveston County Flood Control District, should be contacted to determine what level of agreement is necessary for construction within their right of way. Typical interlocal agreements between various agencies and municipalities include one entity developing the improvement, and the other taking over the maintenance once constructed. An attorney and/or easement specialist should be consulted to assist with securing access for trail development, either by land acquisition or recreational easement.

Utility Corridors

Utility corridors present unique and alternative pathways to create connectivity throughout a community. Working with utility corridors is more along the lines of getting approvals from utility companies to perform work on their easements and properties.

BUDGET EXPECTATIONS

Name	Park Typology	Expected Project Budget
57 Acre Nature Facility	New Park	\$5,000,000 - \$6,000,000
Pier at 1st Street	New Park	\$4,000,000 - \$5,000,000
Linear Greenway	New Park	\$500,000 - \$6,000,000
Kemah Dog Park	New Park	\$75,000 - 300,000
Matthew D. Wiggins Park	Park Improvements	\$50,000 - \$100,000
James Foster Park	Park Improvements	\$100,000 - \$200,000
City Hall Pocket Prairie	Park Improvements	\$20,000 - \$200,000
Mural Welcome Park	Park Improvements	\$120,000 - \$175,000
4th Street Pocket Park	Park Improvements	\$20,000 - \$50,000
7th Street Pocket Park	Park Improvements	\$20,000 - \$50,000
8th Street Pocket Park	Park Improvements	\$20,000 - \$50,000

PRIORITY GRANT PURSUITS

Although there is a myriad of options for potential funding sources to help build the Kemah Parks system, the chart below highlights several grant opportunities that yield a significant result when compared to the process to apply for the grant.

Name	Offered By	Award Per Project	Submission Timeframe	Potential Projects to be Funded
Local Park Grant Program: Small Community	Texas Parks and Wildlife Department	\$75,000 Maximum Award	August 1	57 Acre Nature Facility, Kemah Dog Park, Improvements to Existing Park Spaces
Local Park Grant Program: Non-Urban Indoor/Outdoor Recreation	Texas Parks and Wildlife Department	\$750,000 Maximum Award	August 1	57 Acre Nature Facility, Pier at 1st Street, Kemah Dog Park, Improvements to Existing Park Spaces
Recreational Trail Fund	Texas Parks and Wildlife Department	\$200,000 Max. Non-Motorized Trails \$400,000 Max. Motorized Trails	February 1	Trails along Bel Road, Kipp Avenue and 6th Street. Trail improvements along Highway 146
Green Ribbon Program	Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT)	\$75,000 - 300,000	N/A	Linear Greenway
Governor’s Community Achievement Awards	Keep Texas Beautiful partnering with TxDOT	\$50,000 - \$100,000	Applications typically open from Early January to Mid February	Linear Greenway



FUNDING SOURCES

NAME	DESCRIPTION	OFFERED BY	ELIGIBLE ENTITIES	TOTAL PROGRAM FUNDING	MAX-MIN AWARD PER PROJECT	MATCH
Local Park Grant Program: Small Community (Eligible Population 2010 Census < 20,000)	Provides communities with a population of 20,000 or less with acquisition or development of public recreation facilities and areas.	Texas Parks and Wildlife Department	Local governments, river authorities, municipal utility districts, other special districts	\$750,000	\$75,000 Maximum Award	50%
Local Park Grant Program: Non-Urban Indoor/Outdoor Recreation (Eligible Population 2020 Census < 500,000)	Provides eligible non-urban communities with a population of 500,000 or less with the acquisition and/or development of public recreation facilities and areas.	Texas Parks and Wildlife Department	Local governments, river authorities, municipal utility districts, other special districts	\$2,000,000	\$750,000 Maximum Award	50%
Recreational Trails Fund	Assists communities in constructing and improving motorized and non-motorized recreational trail projects, developing trail facilities and trailheads, and acquiring land for trail corridors. Funding is provided through cost reimbursements.	Texas Parks and Wildlife Department	Local governments, river authorities, municipal utility districts, other special districts	\$3,900,000	\$200,000 maximum for non-motorized trails and \$400,000 maximum for motorized trails	Up to 80%
Boating Access Grants	Assists in the development of boat launch facilities, including land acquisition, ramps, boat lifts, signage, restrooms, parking areas. Funding is provided through cost reimbursements.	Texas Parks and Wildlife Department	Local, state, and federal governments	\$2,200,000	\$500,000 maximum award	25%
Conservation Grant Funding (Birding)	Provides grants for nature tourism and bird habitat restoration, enhancement, and land acquisition projects.	Texas Parks and Wildlife Department	Local, state, and federal governments, nonprofits, community groups	Variable Yearly	\$1,000-\$20,000	None
Green Ribbon Program	Provides funding for construction of hardscape and landscape projects along State owned right of ways, contingent upon an agreement that the municipality will maintain the newly constructed improvements.	Texas Department of Transportation	Local governments	Variable Yearly	Varies	None

NAME	DESCRIPTION	OFFERED BY	ELIGIBLE ENTITIES	TOTAL PROGRAM FUNDING	MAX-MIN AWARD PER PROJECT	MATCH
Stronger Region	Assists communities with capital improvement, policy, public engagement, operating support, an other capacity-building projects within the Houston region.	Houston Endowment	Nonprofit Organizations; Harris, Brazoria, Chambers, Fort Bend, Galveston, Liberty, Montgomery, and Waller Counties	N/A	N/A	None
Kaboom! Grants Program	Provides communities with assistance in the construction of outdoor playgrounds	Kaboom!	City and county governments, schools, and nonprofits	N/A	Varies	Varies
Shade Structure Grant Program	Provides funding for the installation of shade structures to cover outdoor areas not protected from the sun, such as playgrounds, pools, or recreational spaces	American Academy of Dermatology	Public Schools, nonprofits	N/A	\$8,000	None
Galveston Bay Implementation Grant Program	The grant program is designed to fund innovating solutions to local water pollution; protect, preserve and restore habitat; and encourage people of all ages to be environmental stewards	The Galveston Bay Estuary Program	City and County Governments, State Agencies; Colleges and universities, School districts, Councils of governments and Nonprofit organizations	N/A	Varies	None
Local Community Grants	Assists local organizations in 8 areas of funding: community and economic development, diversity and inclusion, education, environmental sustainability, health and human service, hunger relief and healthy eating, public safety, and quality of life.	Walmart and Sam's Club Facilities	Nonprofit organizations, Government entities, K-12 Public or Nonprofit Private School, College or Universities	N/A	\$250-\$5,000	None
Governor's Community Achievement Awards	Provides funding for the construction of landscape projects on State owned right of way that fulfills the winning city's expectations and meets TxDOT's design, safety, maintenance, and funding requirements.	Keep Texas Beautiful partnering with Texas Department of Transportation	All Texas Communities	\$2,000,000	Population based. \$90,000 for communities of 3,000 or less	None



# KEYS TO SUCCESS

Defining a successful project can be especially difficult in multi-use, multi-benefit public spaces. Everyone has a different opinion as to what “good” looks like, and for every person who likes something, there is another who hates it.

For us, there are several key items that we can look at to both help us define success and to set proper expectations with end users and stakeholders so they see success when it is completed. There may be additional items that the City adds to the list, but the following are a good foundation for approaching projects in the Plan.

## BUILD TO COMPLETION

We need to look closer to understand what it means. Public projects can take a long time to implement. They are typically funded with taxpayer money at one level or another, and this means we have to be careful with how funds are spent to ensure that it is a good use.

This is not bad, but it means public projects are highly susceptible to political changes. For example, if a mayor is elected, and one of their ideas is creating new public space, a project will commence soon thereafter. However, for any number of reasons, they may not be re-elected, and their replacement has different ideas.

Unfortunately, at this point, a project has to shift, restart, or change completely. Over the life of a project, this can happen many times and will lead to fatigue in the public over the engagement, budgets that continue to grow without results, or loss of interest in a project entirely (since it will never be finished anyway). We want to minimize how projects can be impacted in this way through

a calculated approach to project phasing and implementation.

Large projects have large budgets and can take several years to construct. For this reason, they are often split into multiple phases. Building to completion is related to how we break apart projects into those phases. Great care must be taken to design each phase as a fully functioning, stand-alone project.

If done well, a phase can be completed in a relatively short time frame, and if the next phase is impacted by social/ political change, the users of the unfinished park may not notice it when they visit the park. 57 Acre Nature Facility has been broken down in this manner. When the first phase is complete, there will be a playground, picnic area, and great lawn. It will feel like a fully built design and if you did not know the full plan, you would not realize that the sidewalk surrounding the great lawn is supposed to lead off as trails from several locations into the woods. Future new parks and park renovations should consider the same approach to ensure the public is served adequately along the way.

## FINDING OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN EXISTING BUDGETS

This key takes a bit of consideration and understanding of how all the parts of a city budget fit together but will primarily manifest in three areas:

- **Completing or Improving Specific Portions of an Existing Park Project.** Many grants are too small to complete capital projects on their own or even with a match. An approach to fully utilizing these funds is to look at smaller parts of a park’s total improvement list and tackle each one individually. For example, there might not be enough money in a grant to update all pieces of Matthew D. Wiggins Park, but this year there could be enough to re-stripe the

sports court and buy movable nets, next year to remove the sand volleyball, the year after to implement the natural planting, etc. Focusing on small projects can have a dramatic impact in just a few years without the issues surrounding a large, project budget addressing everything at once.

- **Building long term capacity** This can be in both new staff or the education of existing staff. Bringing in a new team member who has the necessary expertise to, in this case, install, establish, and maintain a native plant system will be a good first step in being prepared for successfully bringing this planting type to the community. This person can serve as a facility manager and an educator to the public and other staff members. An experienced person can also help prevent common mistakes from having seen these systems in practice before. From there, success can build upon itself as the City team becomes more comfortable with the new plantings and the benefits become visible.
- **Developing a “Fix it Immediately” Mentality** This goes to ensuring that maintenance budgets so issues in parks are addressed immediately. Broken items, vandalism, and accidents, if not addressed promptly, can quickly grow into larger issues affecting

usability and public safety. This can take a considerable effort and shift in culture but needs to be a deliberate part of improving the system overall.

## IMPROVING KEMAH’S CAPACITY

It cannot be stated clearly enough how important growing Kemah’s capacity concerning its park spaces is. Parks are no longer a basic mowed area between homes with a swing set. These required minimal input and no longer served the demands and needs of the public. Modern parks are key features in our infrastructure and serve to improve the mental and physical health of users, provide assets that meet a wide variety of ever-changing recreational trends, work to provide a diverse palette of ecosystem services, and (if done properly) become a catalyst for economic growth. That is a lot to ask from a vacant one-acre lot! The only way for these parks to succeed is to anticipate and meet the needs of these various systems and components before they arrive. There are countless examples of neighborhood growth and improvements related to new park construction. This is one method used as a catalyst for change today. People want a nearby park to relax and play in. They want to live next to the new park.



Source: stock.adobe.com



# 10 YEAR HORIZON PLAN

## UPDATE TIME

It's 2034, and Kemah Parks does not look much like they did way back in 2024!

That is the hope. The 5-Year Action Plan was just that... a series of guiding principles and decision-making processes to help improve and grow parks in the City of Kemah. However, it has been a while since you have thought about the direction you are headed, and looking back, you cannot tell if you got where you wanted to go. What do you do now?

It's update time! Time to pull out the book, look around the city, talk to the public, and see where to go next. Are people happy with the public parks? Are parks meeting everyone's needs? How are facilities holding up? These are just a few questions to start asking as you step back and look again at your community and how you want to continue to grow and improve.

## Walkability Improvement

One key metric will be to look at your walkability. We were aiming for 95%. Did we get there? Did we exceed expectations or fall short? What made it easier or what got in the way? This should provide at least one very clear indicator of the successful implementation of the Master Plan.

## Capacity Increase

This is a second, easily measured area of improvement. How did your park's budget change over the years? Did that manifest in better-maintained park spaces? How big is the staff? What skills/ knowledge do they have? Have they been able to improve habitat, aesthetics, and preventative maintenance programs? Has this resulted in a lower need to replace items? Identifying these key areas of capacity and tracking them over the years will make it easy to measure results.

## Economic Impact

Finally, the impact of park improvements and more obviously, new parks, should be able to be identified. Although quantification may be difficult, using sales tax revenue, hotel tax revenue, property tax rates, and business growth, you can start to identify the impact improvements made have on the local economy. When analyzed at a micro-scale, these indicators can correlate over time to larger project start and completion, as well as trends over time. This can be a complicated process, but as the data is collected and analyzed, it will become an indicator of improved health in the Kemah Park System over time.

These key metrics should be used when updating the next set of goals and can become milestones of achievement in Kemah's growth. Following these plans is an indicator of the City's commitment to building towards future generations and creating a reputation to residents and visitors alike that Kemah focuses on a healthy, green, walkable city with a bold vision for growth.

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