COMMUNITY PARKS

Planning, Design, and Implementation Of Large Municipal Parks
Baton Rouge April 17, 2012 NARRP Conference

PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

• Overview of BREC
• General Overview of 2004 BREC Strategic Plan
• Community Park Program and Description
• Case Study of 2 out of 12 Community Park Projects
• Overview of other Community Parks Completed and Under Construction.
WHO, WHAT IS BREC?

The Recreation and Park Commission for the Parish of East Baton Rouge

Parish Population:
- 2010: 440,000
- 2010: largest Parish in LA.

Parish Size:
- 471 square miles

Parish Cities:
- Baton Rouge – 55%
- Zachary – 3%
- Baker – 3%
- Central – 7%
- Unincorporated areas – 32%
- Southern part of Parish is most populated.

BR for Baton Rouge and REC for recreation.

WHO, WHAT IS BREC?

- BREC's Charge: to develop, maintain and operate public parks, recreational facilities and programs for all citizens of EBR Parish.
- Created by a State Legislative Act in 1946 - 56 years
- Autonomous - does not operate under the Parish Government.
- Funded by a property tax.
- Overseen by a Commission.
- Tax is subject to voter approval every 10 years.
- NRPA nationally accredited agency.
BREC FACILITY INVENTORY

- 5,600 acres of Parks
- 184 parks and facilities
  - 60 recreation centers – many are undersized, outdated.
  - A Zoo.
  - Numerous Tennis Complexes.
  - Seven Golf Courses.
  - 4 Pools – most are out dated and require high maintenance. Some to be closed, repurposed.
  - Sports fields – soccer, football, baseball.
  - Historic Sites.
  - Equestrian.
  - Conservation Areas.

Historically, BREC has been a Neighborhood Park System

- Most close-to-home, small parks.
- Many outdated, furnishings, playgrounds, facilities at end of life cycle.
- Neighborhood system difficult to achieve and maintain
“Imagine Your Parks” – strategic plan developed in 2004 to guide BREC through the next 10 years.

Why did BREC need this plan?

- Major refocusing of BREC’s objectives to meet changing public needs and demands.
- Change in leadership.
- Time for Major Update (Done Every Ten Years).
- Re-accreditation
- The right thing to do......
2004 STRATEGIC PLAN

Tasks to Complete The Strategic Plan:

- Park, open space and Facility inventory and analysis
- Demographic Analysis
- Citizen input – including random surveys
- Visioning process
- Projects and costs
- Implementation
  - Historical, cultural and natural resource analysis
  - Recreation Program and social impact analysis
  - Analysis of other providers
  - Economic Impact analysis
  - Partnership analysis
  - Policy Framework
  - Educate Public
  - Train Staff

COMMUNITY INPUT

A citizen-driven strategic plan to understand how the public would like BREC to spend its resources......

- 125 meetings throughout Parish over a three month period.
- Focus group meetings
- Random survey – 500 households
Q. 16 Support for Actions BREC Could Take to Improve The Parks & Recreation System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Very Supportive</th>
<th>Somewhat Supportive</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
<th>Not Supportive</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upgrade existing parks, shelters, playground areas</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upgrade existing youth/adult athletic fields</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>1%</td>
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<td>Develop walking/biking trails in existing parks</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<td>0%</td>
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<td>Improve Parking Lots</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>8%</td>
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<td>Develop areas in parks for family reunions</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>11%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Purchase land to preserve open space, etc.</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop trails connecting major destinations</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>11%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop additional historical &amp; cultural fac</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>19%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Purchase land to develop passive parks</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop more public fishing areas</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop additional athletic fields</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>16%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop hobby parks</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop a skate park</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop climbing walls</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>24%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop dog parks</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop/Improve equestrian centers</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute (March 2004)

FINDINGS.....

Park improvements most important to respondents:

- Higher level of safety and security: lighting, more presence of staff.
- Larger, more up-to-date playgrounds.
- More paths for walking/jogging
- Improved signage.
- Themeing/branding.
- Higher level of maintenance.
FINDINGS…..

• Respondents preferred larger parks which featured more amenities for all ages of their families.

• Respondents interested in: quality vs. quantity

COMMUNITY PARKS

For High quality parks and facilities:

• Focus resources into developing 12 Community Parks (Signature Parks) throughout the parish.

• The 12 Community Parks would be the “heart” of the park system.

• Move away from "one size fits all"

• A paradigm shift for BREC
COMMUNITY PARKS

- Serve a larger geographic area than neighborhood parks.
- Destination Parks.
- Designed to engage individuals or an entire family for a whole day.
- Include higher levels of quality, maintenance, security, and recreational opportunities.
- Located so public has only a 10 minute drive from anywhere in Parish.

Max. No. Minutes Respondents Would Travel to Parks
- 66% Will drive more than 10 min
- 19% Will drive 6-10 min
- 7% Will Not Use Parks
FUNDING FOR COMMUNITY PARKS

- Pay-as-you-go tax – short term funding not sufficient for this aggressive plan
- Bond Tax referendum to supplement
  - Approved by Voters November 2004
  - 20 Year
  - $70.5 Million Program
  - Mixture of Borrowing and Pay-As-You-Go

FUNDING FOR COMMUNITY PARKS

Allocation of funds for 12 community parks:

- Based on acreage for each x unit cost ($20,000)
- Unit cost for new playgrounds for each park $325,000
- Special use facilities individually funded - some located in Community parks:

  *Splash Pads  *Dog Parks  *Skatepark
  *Ball Fields  *Tennis Courts  *Golf Courses
BASELINE DESIGN AND PROGRAM ELEMENTS

12 New Community Playgrounds Improvements at all 12 Community Parks

**Neighborhood Playgrounds**
- Playground standards changed in 1990's
- Cost of building and maintaining increased

**Community Playgrounds**
- Larger than neighborhood playgrounds
- Quality and up to latest standards
- Creatively designed
- Inspiring
- Variety of play activities; higher play value
- Themes
BASELINE DESIGN AND PROGRAM ELEMENTS

**Paths & Trails**
- Promote healthy lifestyles
- Requested by citizen input
- Internal park loops
- All ages
- Connectivity to other parks wherever feasible
- Mile markers provided
- Some multi use
- Others trails

**OTHER BASELINE ELEMENTS**
- Special design elements
- Higher grade site furnishings
- Architectural security lighting
- Park Attendants – Extended hours
- Open space
- Improve legibility and function of parking and circulation
VARIATIONS – PROGRAM AND DESIGN ELEMENTS

Dog Parks – to be in 4 of the Community Parks

- Easier to maintain than pools
- Safer than pools
- Less supervision required

VARIATIONS – PROGRAM AND DESIGN ELEMENTS

Splash Pads – to be in 6 of the Community Parks

- Easier to maintain than pools
- Safer than pools
- Less supervision required
Municipalities are embracing the recreational and societal benefits of skateparks.

- Ball fields
- Tennis Centers
- Golf Courses
- Recreation Centers
- Lakes for fishing
- Disc golf
TWO CASE STUDIES

• City-Brooks Community Park
• Perkins Road Community Park

Two of the first 3 Community Parks designed and implemented

CASE STUDY: CITY – BROOKS COMMUNITY PARK

• 1st park in Community Park program to be designed.
• Planning/design began in 2004
• Construction completed in 2007
CASE STUDY: CITY – BROOKS COMMUNITY PARK

**SITE CONTEXT**

- Oldest Park in Baton Rouge – 1926
- Designed by National Park Builders of Chicago
- 9- hole Golf Course designed by the renowned Tom Bendelow
- Located in the “heart” of old Baton Rouge
- Walk-able neighborhoods
- Surrounded by diverse socio-economic conditions.
- Close proximity to LSU
- Golf course is one of only 20 courses to be placed on the NRHP

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**
CASE STUDY: CITY – BROOKS COMMUNITY PARK

CONTEXT AND DEVELOPMENT

Historical Background 1950’s & 60’s
CASE STUDY: CITY – BROOKS COMMUNITY PARK

SURROUNDED BY DIVERSE NEIGHBORHOODS

Opportunities….

• Great natural characteristics
• Majestic Live Oaks
• Unusually hilly terrain
• Lake vistas
• Existing Bath House (now art Gallery)
CASE STUDY: CITY – BROOKS COMMUNITY PARK

Two master plan alternatives developed in 2004

Alternate 1
retain the golf course

Alternate 2
Turn golf course into additional park space

Public Meetings on Proposed Alternative Plans

- Presentation format
- Very well attended and passionate
- Extreme views were heard

- Keeping the golf course
- Not keeping the golf course
CASE STUDY: CITY – BROOKS COMMUNITY PARK

Public Meetings on Proposed Alternative Plans

- Hard feelings from neighborhood groups and historic groups.
- A lot of divided and heated opinions among the community.
- BREC made the decision to move forward with a plan **keeping the golf course** – primarily due to its historic designation and strong outside preservation efforts.

CASE STUDY: CITY – BROOKS COMMUNITY PARK

A fresh start and a new team.....

1. Focus group meetings: Neighborhood leaders, groups and organizations, other stakeholders,
2. Visioning – BREC, Consultants
3. Preliminary master plan
4. Public Meetings – **Open house format**
5. Questionnaires
6. Final Master Plan Development
7. Design development
8. Final design & plans
9. Implementation

Carol R. Johnson Associates, Inc.  
Boston, MA  
Prime Consultant

Schreiner Golf, Inc.  
Golf Course Design
Guiding Design Philosophy

- Preserve the character of this historic park.
- Continue stewardship.
- Accentuate views to unite the park.
- Improve park safety and security.
- Unite the two halves of the park.
- Understand the physical, historical, and cultural setting of the park.
- Provide meaningful, memorable and uplifting park spaces.
- Focus on people, the environment, and connections between the two.
- Open spaces should fit seamlessly within their surroundings.
- Attention to details and craftsmanship.

CASE STUDY: CITY – BROOKS COMMUNITY PARK

Focus Group Meetings

Developing a new master plan

Early schematics

New entry drive & parking

Picnic Hill & Dog Park studies
CASE STUDY: CITY – BROOKS COMMUNITY PARK

Park and Golf Course Budget – Approx. $6M

Program Elements Identified

- New Tennis Center
- Interactive Fountain
- Themed playground
- Improvements to Historic Golf Course
- New vehicular circulation and parking
- Extensive walking paths
- Open green spaces
- Labyrinth
- New architectural lighting
- Special elements – Park Identity
- Dog Park
- New restroom on west side (Picnic Hill)

CASE STUDY: CITY – BROOKS COMMUNITY PARK

Questionnaires

Results
Final Master Plan

Design Thoughts-Promenade
CASE STUDY: CITY – BROOKS COMMUNITY PARK

Design Thoughts - Promenade

Option 3. Smooth walking surface, textured border
CASE STUDY: CITY – BROOKS COMMUNITY PARK

Design Thoughts-Art Gallery & Labyrinth

Design Thoughts-Art Gallery & Fountain

Fountain Surface Design
- Carved Granite with LA flora and fauna
- Historic bricks
CASE STUDY: CITY – BROOKS COMMUNITY PARK

Design Thoughts-Art Gallery & Labyrinth

Labyrinth Inspired by a pattern found in a 13th-century French church

Design Thoughts-Tennis Center

Tennis Center Building – Florentine architecture to match the old bath house

7 courts
CASE STUDY: CITY – BROOKS COMMUNITY PARK

Walking Path Circulation Study

CASE STUDY: CITY – BROOKS COMMUNITY PARK

Promenade
CASE STUDY: CITY – BROOKS COMMUNITY PARK

Picnic Hill

CASE STUDY: CITY – BROOKS COMMUNITY PARK

Cane’s Dog Park
CASE STUDY: PERKINS ROAD COMMUNITY PARK

Park already contained a Velodrome and BMX Track.
Extreme Sports

- Also called action sports
  - Skateboarding
  - Rock climbing
  - BMX

- Term came about by marketing of the X Games in the 1990’s.
- Extreme sports have a younger-than-average target demographic.
CASE STUDY: PERKINS ROAD COMMUNITY PARK

1. Focus group meetings: Skaters, cyclists, BMX, high schools, other stakeholders
2. Visioning
3. Schematic design
4. Public Meetings – open house format
5. Questionnaires
6. Final Master Plan Development
7. Design Development
8. Workshops – Skate Park, BMX
9. Final Plans
10. Implementation

Site Design Group
Carlsbad, CA
Prime Consultant

JFDS
Landscape Architects

Team Approach
• Stakeholders, neighborhood
• ABA, SABR, cyclists
• High schools

SkatePark Association of Baton Rouge
CASE STUDY: PERKINS ROAD COMMUNITY PARK

Early Schematic

- Centralized plaza “wheel” at the center of programming.
- Skate park between plaza and velodrome.
- The south end more passive green space and shade.
- Storm water management pond for bank fishing
- New Playground
- Refurbished BMX Track
- Extensive Walking paths.

CASE STUDY: PERKINS ROAD COMMUNITY PARK

1st Public Meeting

- Open House Forum
- Schematic MP Displayed
- Questionnaires

![Perkins Road Community Park Public Survey - January 22, 2007](chart.png)
CASE STUDY: PERKINS ROAD COMMUNITY PARK

Master Plan

BMX & Skatepark Workshops

- Hands-on
- Interactive
- The users are the designers
- Sense of ownership
CASE STUDY: PERKINS ROAD COMMUNITY PARK

Final Plan

Activity Hub

CASE STUDY: PERKINS ROAD COMMUNITY PARK

Construction
CASE STUDY: PERKINS ROAD COMMUNITY PARK

OTHER COMMUNITY PARKS

Greenwood Community Park

Conditions prior to improvements
OTHER COMMUNITY PARKS

Anna T. Jordan Community Park

Master Plan
OTHER COMMUNITY PARKS

Anna T. Jordan Community Park

PRIOR TO IMPROVEMENTS

FOREST COMMUNITY PARK

PRIOR TO IMPROVEMENTS

MASTER PLAN
OTHER COMMUNITY PARKS

Forest Community Park

PRIOR TO IMPROVEMENTS

OTHER COMMUNITY PARKS

Howell Community Park

PRIOR TO IMPROVEMENTS
OTHER COMMUNITY PARKS

Howell Community Park

MASTER PLAN
OTHER COMMUNITY PARKS

Zachary Community Park

PRIOR TO IMPROVEMENTS

MASTER PLAN
OTHER COMMUNITY PARKS

Zachary Community Park

OTHER COMMUNITY PARKS

Highland Road Community Park
OTHER COMMUNITY PARKS
Highland Road Community Park

PRIOR TO IMPROVEMENTS

OTHER COMMUNITY PARKS
North Sherwood Forest Community Park

PRIOR TO IMPROVEMENTS
OTHER COMMUNITY PARKS

North Sherwood Forest Community Park

OTHER COMMUNITY PARKS

Independence Community Park

EXISTING CONDITIONS

New Library in the Park
OTHER COMMUNITY PARKS

Independence Community Park

AQUATICS – COMPLETED IN 2011

BOTANIC GARDEN IMPROVEMENTS

NEW MULTI-USE PATH ON SOUTHSIDE

CLOSING

“...the goal is to elevate parks to the same level of community importance as other civic assets: as basic as schools; as essential as libraries; as necessary as hospitals; as valuable as clean air and water; as culturally important as symphony halls, opera houses, and museums.”

Greg Moore, Exec. Director of Golden Gates National Park Conservancy