SPRING LAKE VISION PLAN

MAY 2025


TEXAS STATE

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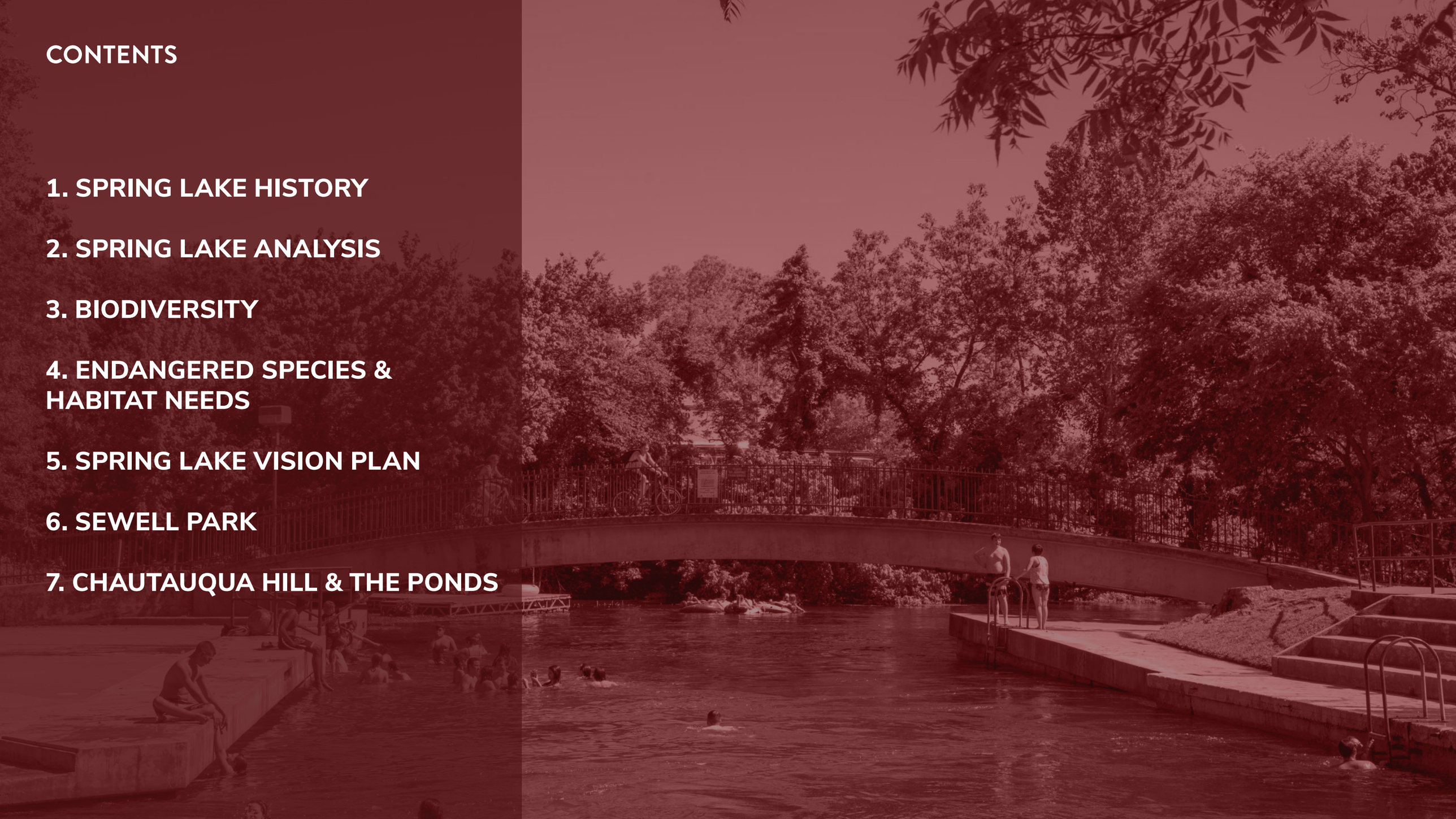


SPRING LAKE
HISTORY

Spring Lake is a site of profound cultural, historical, and ecological significance, shaped by millennia of human and natural history.

Ecological Significance
The plants and animals at Spring Lake and its surroundings have evolved in the unique habitat created by Hill Country topography and cool, clean, springfed waters over millions of years to create a globally unique ecosystem. The springs and lake form the headwaters of the San Marcos River, with a steady flow of water emanating from springs fed by the Edwards Aquifer which underlies a great deal of the Texas Hill Country. The site is home to five endangered species and the study area has over a 1,000 species all together.

Indigenous Heritage
For thousands of years, Spring Lake served as a vital resource for Indigenous peoples, drawn to the region by the abundant, clear springs that bubble up from the Edwards Aquifer. These springs form one of the oldest continuously inhabited sites in North America, a testament to the life-giving properties of this unique ecosystem. Archaeological evidence indicates that Paleoindian peoples settled near the springs as early as 12,000 years ago, relying on the abundant freshwater and fertile landscape for sustenance. The site remained a hub for various Indigenous tribes, who revered its waters for their spiritual and practical importance.


SPRING LAKE ECOSYSTEM


TEXAS WILD RICE ZIZANIA TEXANA


SAN MARCOS SALAMANDER

European Settlement and Industrialization
The arrival of European settlers in the 19th century marked the beginning of significant changes to the landscape. The springs' dependable flow and surrounding resources made the area a natural choice for mills and other industries. A series of dams and channels were constructed to harness the water for milling grain and powering local industries, initiating a period of industrialization that altered the springs and the surrounding environment. While these changes enabled the growth of settlements, they also introduced ecological challenges, reshaping the area's relationship with its natural resources.


INTERPRETIVE PAINTING OF CREATION SITE OF THE COAHUILTECAN INDIAN TRIBES SUSAN DUNIS, 2014


BURLSEON DAM AT SPRING LAKE

SPRING LAKE
HISTORY

Aquarena Springs Era
In the 20th century, Spring Lake underwent a dramatic transformation with the establishment of the Aquarena Springs Resort. Developed in the 1940s, the site became a premier destination for recreation and entertainment, featuring glass-bottom boat tours, aquamaid performances, and a host of family-oriented attractions. For decades, Aquarena Springs was one of the most beloved amusement parks in Texas, drawing visitors from across the state and beyond. While the park showcased the beauty of the springs, the development also introduced significant ecological pressures to the fragile ecosystem.

The Meadows Center and Modern Stewardship
As societal priorities shifted in the late 20th century, so too did the vision for Spring Lake. The amusement park was eventually closed, and in its place, a new era of stewardship began. Today, Spring Lake is home to The Meadows Center for Water and the Environment, a leader in water conservation and environmental policy. Texas State University now oversees the site, using it as a living laboratory for research and education. Glass-bottom boat tours continue, with a renewed purpose: to inspire appreciation and advocacy for one of the most ecologically significant spring-fed systems in the world.

Today, it has the potential to be a beacon of hope, demonstrating how thoughtful stewardship can restore and preserve the integrity of a precious natural resource for generations to come.


AQUAMAID AND RALPH, THE PIG AT AQUARENA SPRINGS


GLASS BOTTOM BOAT TOUR AT AQUARENA SPRINGS

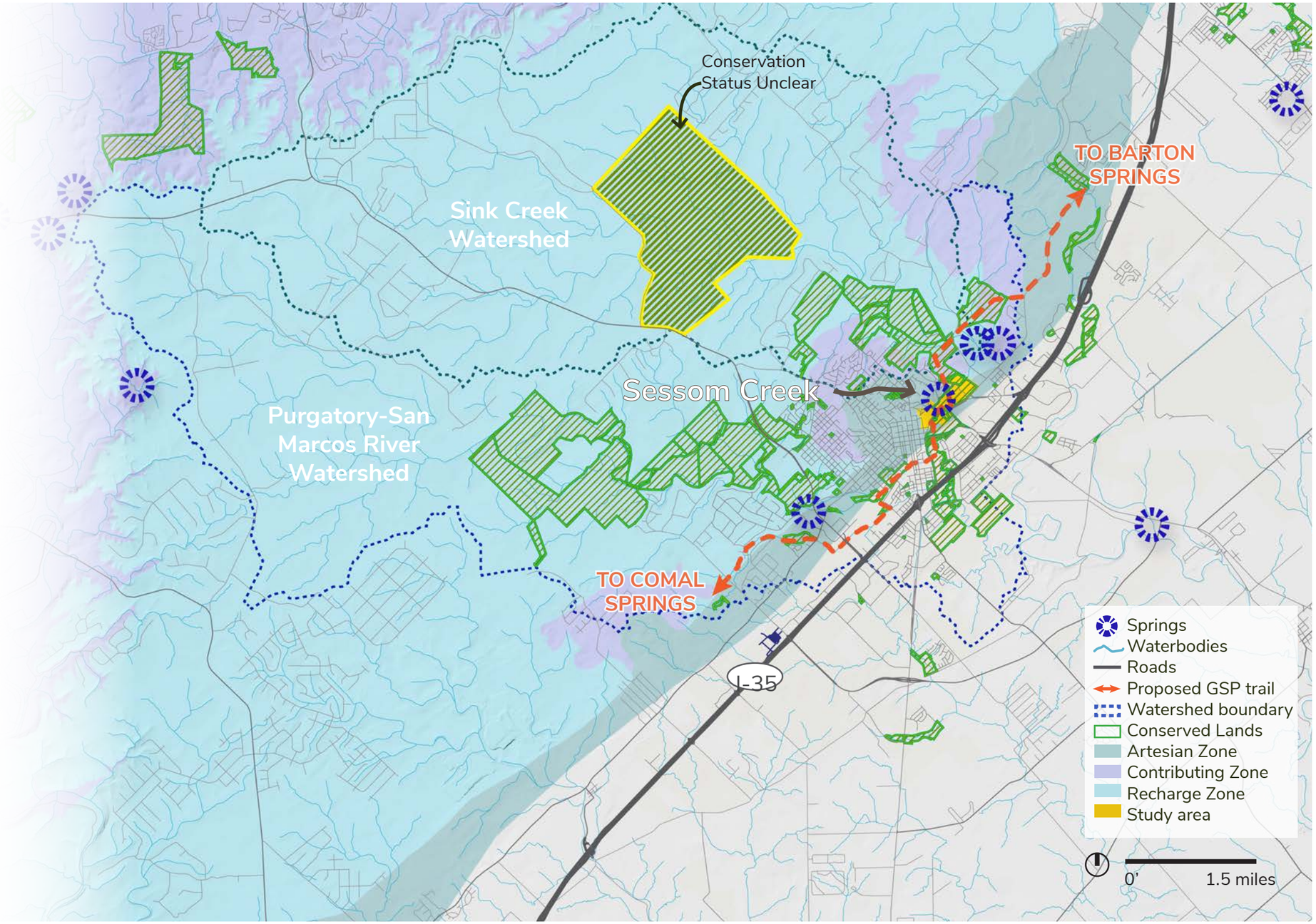

MEADOWS CENTER EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AT SPRING LAKE

SPRING LAKE
ANALYSIS

Context
The study area is situated within a matrix of ecological components that have shaped it over millions of years, with major influences from human settlements for the last 12,000 years. The springs are fed by the Edwards Aquifer and form the headwaters of the San Marcos River. The aquifer's contributing and recharge zones stretch deep into the Texas Hill Country. Land use decisions, both locally and regionally, can impact water quality at the springs.

Today, Spring Lake is a part of the Texas State University San Marcos Campus. It is connected to open space via City parkland downstream and the Spring Lake Preserve to the west. This network of parks and open spaces extends to Austin with a focus on the protection of the Edwards Aquifer and to the south on the outskirts of San Marcos. This aligns with the city's "loop and check" greenspace vision.

Spring Lake plays a central role in the Great Springs Project, a regional trail initiative connecting Austin and San Antonio. The trail links four major springs of the Edwards Aquifer, with Spring Lake as one of the primary stops.



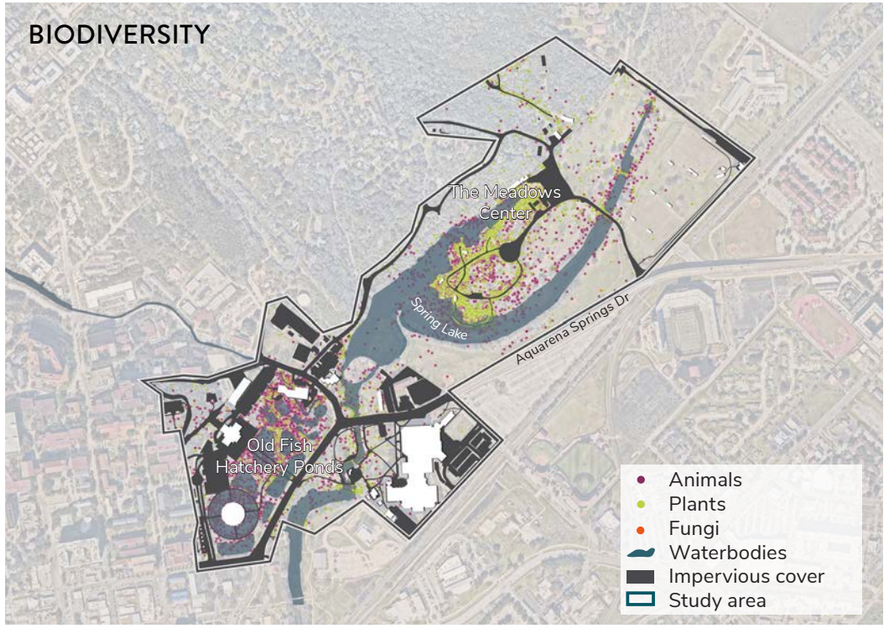
SPRING LAKE
BIODIVERSITY

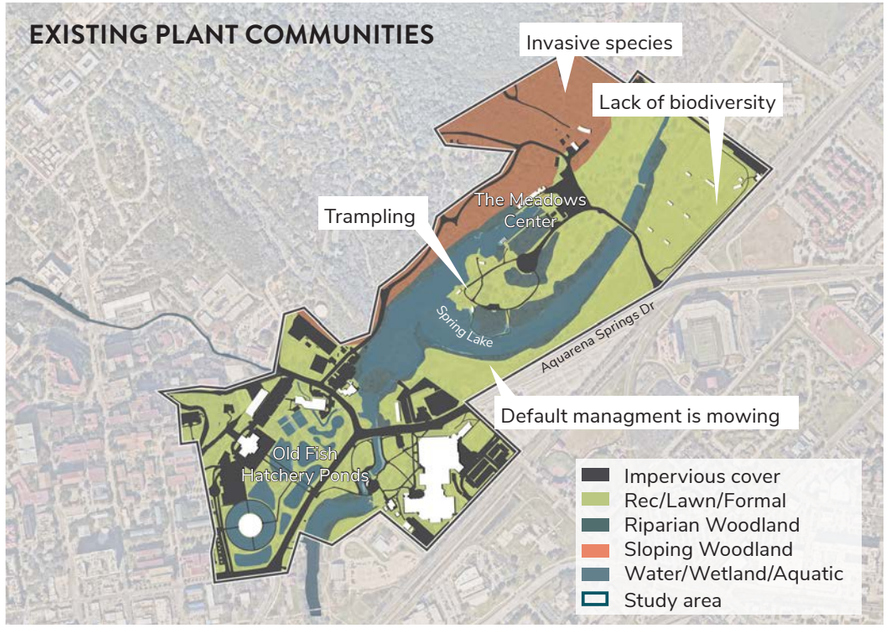
Topography
The site represents the divide between the Blackland Prairie to the east and the Texas Hill Country to the west with a 140’ shift in elevation across the study area. Areas to the east of the river and lake are relatively flat, with major slopes on the western side. The slopes on the western edge of Spring Lake and around the main building are susceptible to erosion. The slopes above Spring Lake contain exposed Limestone outcrops known as rim rock that provide unique Hill Country habitats.

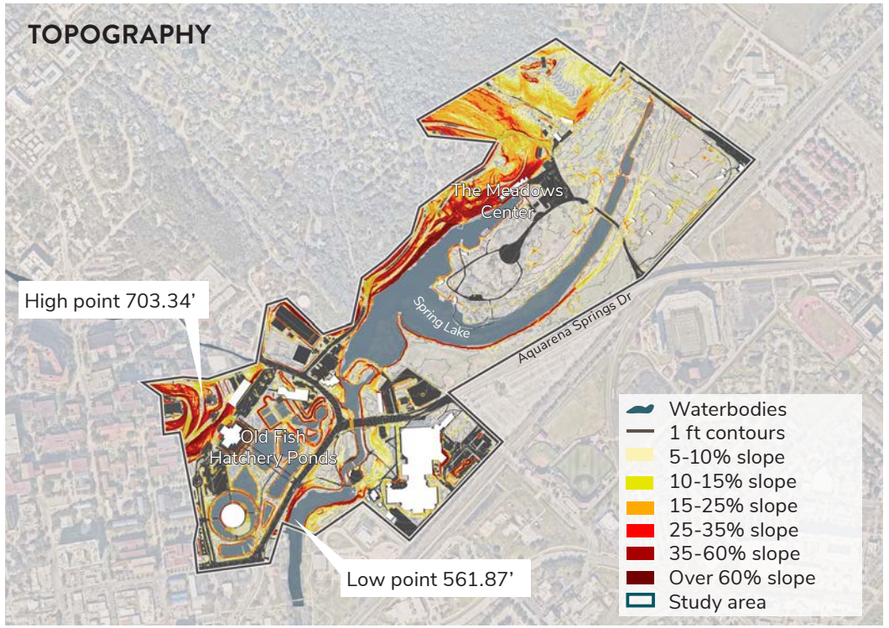
Floodplain
The flatter parts of the study area on the eastern sides of Spring Lake and the San Marcos River, as well as the areas at the mouth of Sessom Creek, are susceptible to flooding. Within the study area, over 95 acres are in the 100-year floodplain and 48 acres are in the 500-year floodplain. With over 70% of the study area in floodplain, improvements must be strategic and address the potential impacts of flooding on safety and property damage.

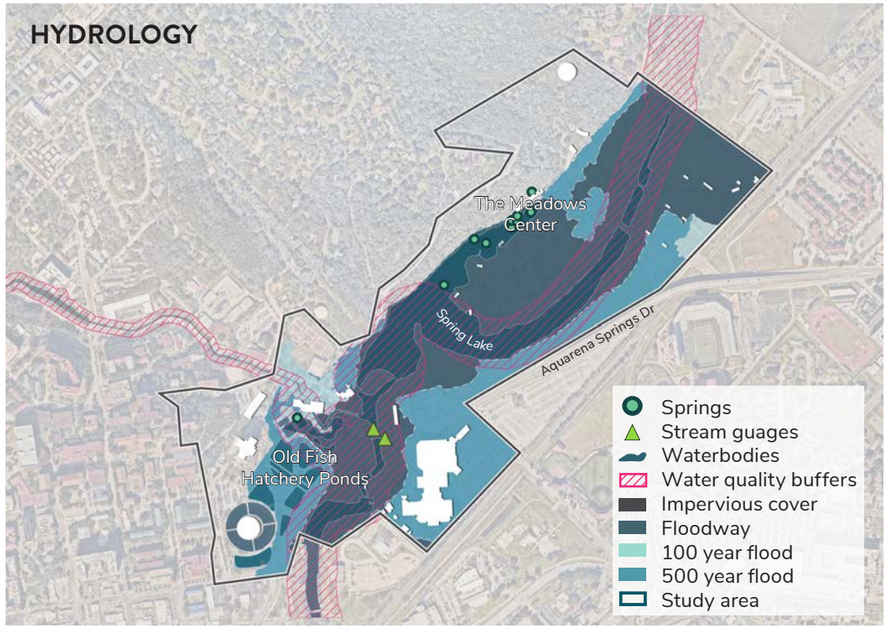
Biodiversity
Spring Lake and its surrounding areas host a rich array of biodiversity, including endemic species, diverse aquatic plants, and a vibrant terrestrial ecosystem. Over 1,000 species have been identified in the study area, with citizen science recording over 10,600 species through iNaturalist. The lake is home to unique species that include the endangered San Marcos Salamander, Texas Blind Salamander (subterranean), Comal Springs Riffle Beetle, Fountain Darter, and Texas Wild Rice.

Existing Plant Communities
The study area has been significantly altered by over 150 years of human settlement. While remnants of riparian woodlands, wetlands, and sloping woodlands remain, extensive mowing has diminished the site’s ecological and cultural value, limiting its potential to offer a meaningful nature experience.









SPRING LAKE
ENDANGERED SPECIES & HABITAT NEEDS

Spring Lake is a globally significant ecological site, hosting five endangered species within its compact area. This area was home to the San Marcos Gambusia (Gambusia georgei), which is now extinct due to habitat loss and environmental changes, underscoring the ecosystem's fragility and the importance of proactive conservation. Additional endangered species live in the Edwards Aquifer and river systems connected to Spring Lake.

The remaining endangered species depend on the lakes and river's clean, constant spring flow, and stable temperatures that create a unique habitat.

Future development must consider any impacts or "take" of endangered species habitat with a focus on practices and improvements that will enhance habitat by ensuring and improving water quality and minimizing disturbance. Thoughtful planning and design can prevent further loss, allowing these endangered species to thrive while preserving the lake's ecological and cultural heritage.

Texas Blind Salamander
(Typhlomolge rathbuni)

Endemic to the underground water system of the Edwards aquifer

Fountain Darter
(Etheostoma fonticola)

Clean, clear, flowing water with undisturbed sand and rock outcrops alongside submergent vegetation (algae, moss, vascular plants)

Rely on visual cues to hunt copepods, aquatic insect larvae, and amphipods

San Marcos Salamander
(Eurycea nana)

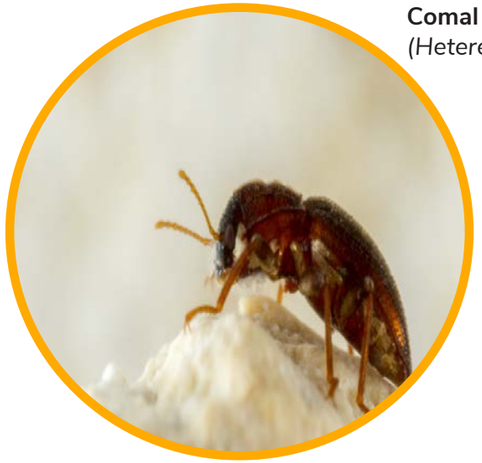
Spring openings in rocky areas (sand, gravel, large rock) amidst vegetative cover in clean, clear waters that are 3.3-6.6' deep serve as refuge

Prey consist of small aquatic snails, amphipods, as well as small insect pupae and larvae

Texas Wild Rice
(Zizania texana)

Establish in moving waters no deeper than 3.3'

Roots anchor in undisturbed and intact river bottoms that are composed of Crawford black silt and clay, with sand and gravel sediments underneath



Comal Springs Riffle Beetle
(Heterelmis comalensis)

Flowing, unpolluted spring waters held at constant temperatures

Main food sources are algae and detritus scraped from rocks and submerged plants

SPRING LAKE
VISION PLAN

The Spring Lake Vision Plan envisions a future that honors the site's rich cultural and ecological heritage while promoting accessibility, education, and sustainability. This thoughtfully designed plan strengthens connections between the Texas State University community, the City of San Marcos, and the broader public, creating a space where history, nature, and innovation intersect.

At the heart of the Vision Plan is a partnership with Indigenous stakeholders to highlight and preserve the cultural legacy of Spring Lake. The highest point of the site will serve as home to the Academic Center, a landmark facility celebrating the traditions, stories, and knowledge of the Indigenous peoples who have called this area home for millennia. By situating the Academic Center at this prominent location, the plan honors the spiritual and historical significance of the site and provides a dedicated space for education, community engagement, and cultural preservation.

The Urban Ecology Zone serves as the nexus of the vision plan, symbolically and physically connecting the Academic Center and The Meadows Center. Acting as a bridge between the cultural focus of the Academic Center and the environmental mission of The Meadows Center, the Urban Ecology Zone provides visitors with a seamless introduction to Spring Lake.

This zone includes a Welcome Center Building, offering interactive ecological exhibits to educate and inspire visitors about the interconnectedness of human history and natural systems. Adjacent to the Welcome Center, an Event Building provides a versatile venue for gatherings, conferences, and celebrations, ensuring a vibrant, community-oriented experience.

By weaving together cultural and ecological narratives, the Spring Lake Vision Plan provides a framework for collaboration and stewardship. Partnering with Indigenous stakeholders ensures the heritage of the site remains a central focus, while the Urban Ecology Zone and Meadows Center inspire environmental awareness and research.

This integrated approach transforms Spring Lake into a vibrant hub for education, celebration, and preservation. Visitors embark on a meaningful journey that begins with cultural understanding, transitions through ecological exploration, and culminates in an appreciation for the interconnectedness of human and natural history. The plan ensures that Spring Lake's legacy as a place of significance, learning, and renewal will thrive for generations to come.

BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF MEADOWS CENTER AT SPRING LAKE

SPRING LAKE
VISION PLAN

The Vision Plan reimagines three iconic study areas of Texas State University, Spring Lake, Sewell Park, and The Ponds. The plan honors their history, enhances ecological health, and creates dynamic spaces for education, recreation, and community.

Spring Lake
Spring Lake connects cultural heritage and ecological education. By relocating parking away from the spring and introducing biofiltration systems, the area prioritizes environmental stewardship. The Academic Center, Welcome Center, and Meadows Center, linked by a canopy walk, enhance accessibility and engagement. Features like the Discovery Peninsula and Nature Exploratorium highlight the intersection of culture, ecology, and play.

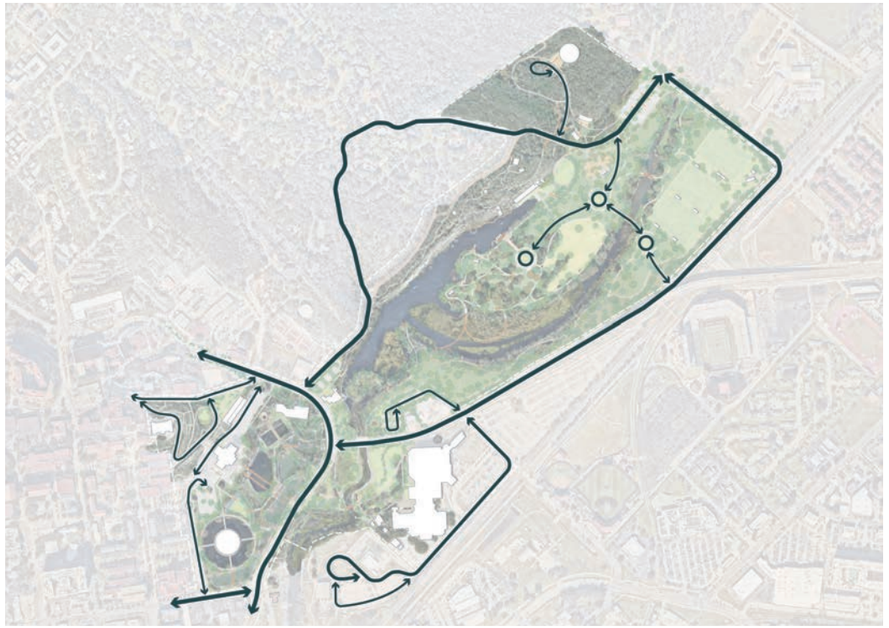
Sewell Park
At Sewell Park, a beloved recreational space, the redesign celebrates the concept of tradition and safety with a more accessible river edge. The addition of a Sewell Plaza amphitheater, a new pedestrian bridge, and improved amenities ensures the park remains a hub for student recreation.

The Ponds & Chautauqua Hill
The Ponds will integrate sustainable water management with cultural and ecological preservation. Historic fish hatchery ponds are repurposed as filtration systems while others are maintained as wetland habitats. Trails, boardwalks, and overlooks offer immersive learning experiences and new gathering spaces. Spaces such as the Social Green and the Geothermal Meadow, balance ecological preservation with opportunities for community engagement.

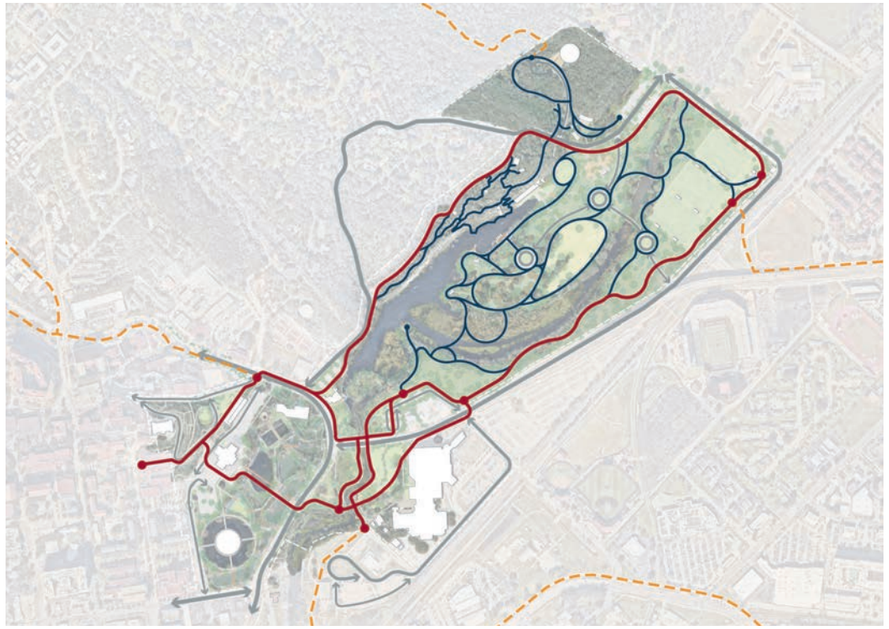
SPRING LAKE
CIRCULATION

Enhancing Accessibility and Visitor Experience
Accessibility and inclusivity are guiding principles of the Spring Lake Vision Plan. Thoughtfully designed parking and pathways are included so all visitors and users can navigate the site with ease. These improvements cater to a wide array of users, from school groups to researchers and families, ensuring a welcoming and inclusive environment.

Defined vehicular access routes enable the site to host large events like the Texas Water Safari, scuba diving activities, and cultural celebrations, such as the annual Powwow, without disrupting the site's ecological balance. With over 30,000 schoolchildren and 120,000 visitors annually, these enhancements will elevate Spring Lake to a world-class destination while preserving its unique character.



VEHILCULAR CIRCULATION



PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION

SPRING LAKE
TRAIL HIERARCHY

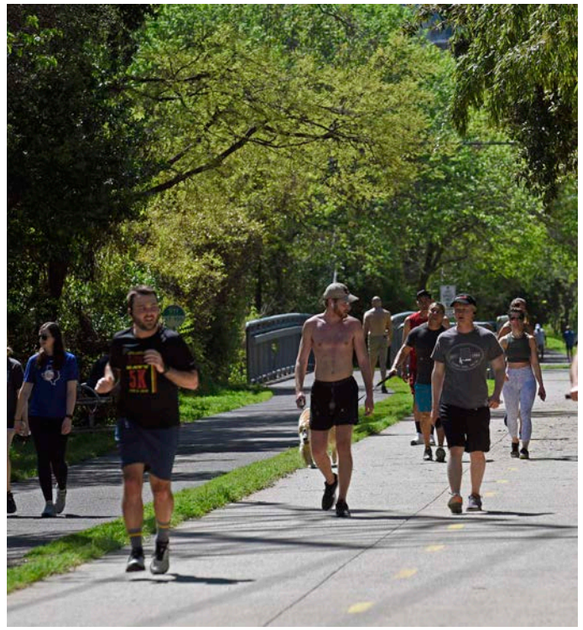
Accessibility, Functionality, and Experience
Trail hierarchy is a key component of the Vision Plan, ensuring that pathways cater to a wide range of users while enhancing connectivity, safety, and the overall experience of the site.

Main Loop Trail & Regional Connections
For high-traffic areas and regional connectivity, the plan includes 12-foot-wide concrete paths designed for faster-paced park users such as cyclists, groups, and commuters. These trails provide safe, efficient routes for those seeking to move quickly through the site or connect with regional trail networks.

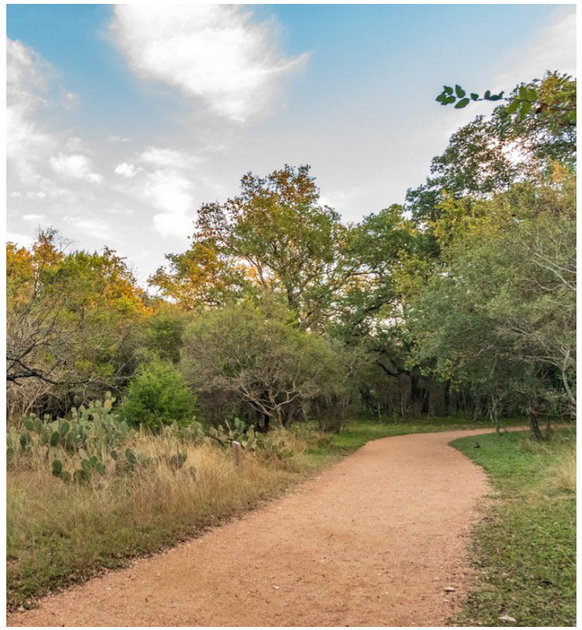
Ed J L Green Bikeway
A major feature of the trail hierarchy is the transformation of Ed J L Green Road into a multi-use hike and bike path. Previously a vehicular road, it has been reimagined to prioritize non-motorized use while retaining its function as a fire lane for emergency access. This redesign creates dedicated lanes for both cyclists and pedestrians.

Nature Trails
Intermediate trails offer a quieter, more natural experience. These paths are narrower and use materials that blend harmoniously with the environment. These meandering trails allow visitors to immerse themselves in the landscape while maintaining accessibility for most users.

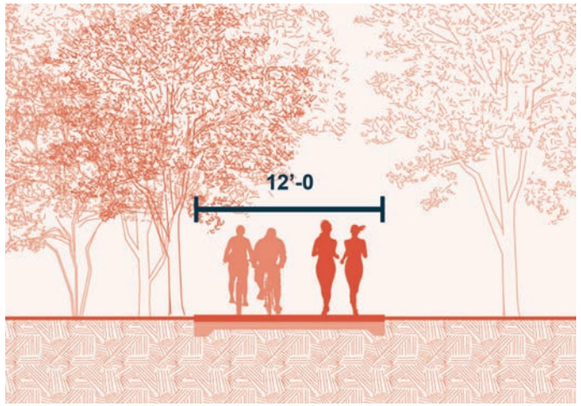
MAIN LOOP TRAIL

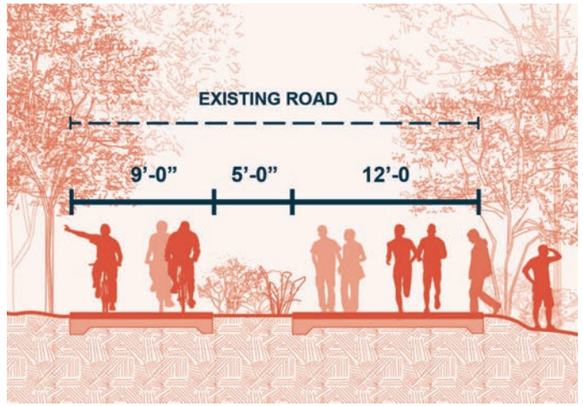


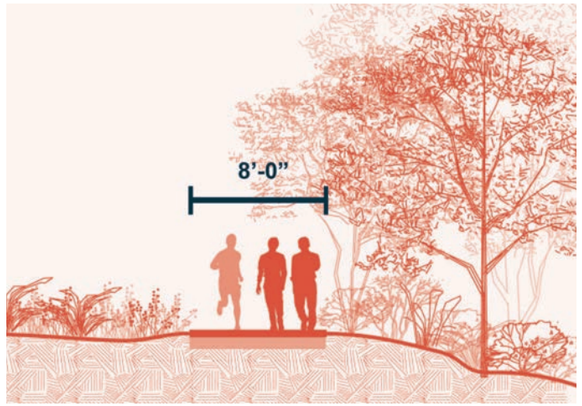
ED J L GREEN BIKEWAY



NATURE TRAIL & TYPICAL PATH





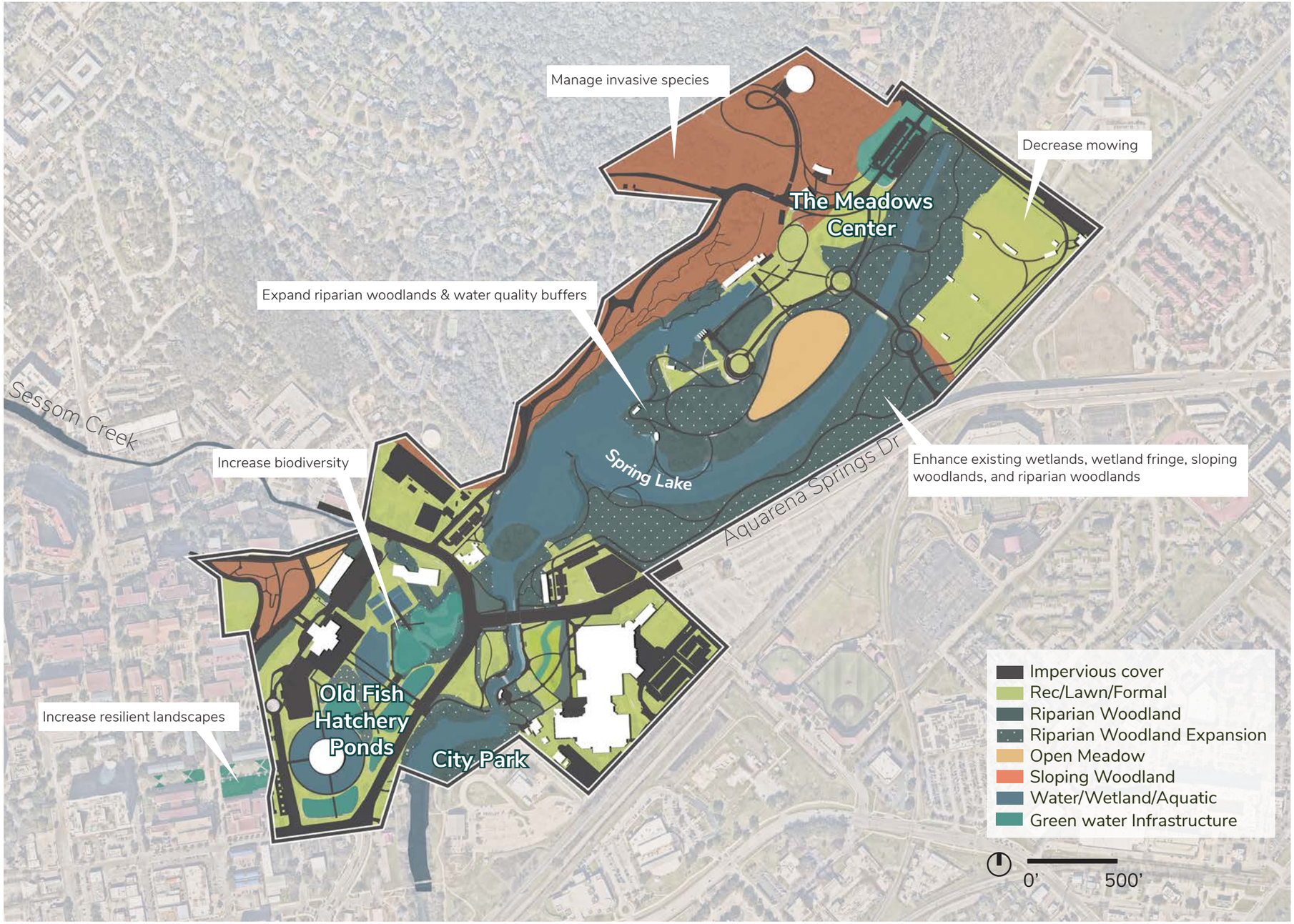


SPRING LAKE
ECOLOGY

The recommended plant communities acknowledge the land use needs of the University, while incorporating components of the site's ecological heritage. Primary plant communities found in the area will include riparian woodlands, sloping woodlands, wetlands, as well as formal and recreational areas. Areas adjacent to Spring Lake that were previously used for golfing or are currently mowed will be restored to riparian woodlands. Edges of most open waters will be converted to wetland fringes, meadows will be introduced, and mowing will be significantly reduced.

Establishing these plant communities as a foundational element of the landscape and user experience will occur over several years through ecological restoration within an adaptive management framework. This approach ensures tasks and objectives are scaled to meet immediate needs while working toward larger goals and adapting to on-the-ground issues, weather conditions, and available resources. The restoration process will address key challenges such as invasive species, erosion, and user impacts. Restoration efforts will focus on establishing native plant communities, integrating green infrastructure, and improving wildlife habitats.

Outcomes can be measured through reductions in mowing, invasive species, and water use, as well as increases in biodiversity, shade, soil fertility, water infiltration, and people enjoying the site.



SPRING LAKE
ECOLOGY

Through more detailed design, ecological restoration and native plant communities will incorporate current uses of the site, and enhance them through greater biodiversity, appropriate infrastructure, and design elements that match the intended use.

Sections represent restored areas along Spring Lake that support a robust user experience while prioritizing ecological restoration, with a focus on enhancing endangered species habitat, stormwater management, and increasing biodiversity.

The user experience will be enhanced through increased beauty, thermal comfort (shade), educational opportunities, engagement, and wildlife viewing opportunities.


Pecan

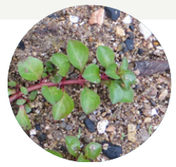

False Indigo


Shrubby Boneset


Bulrush


Arrowhead


Pickerelweed


Ludwigia


Fanwort

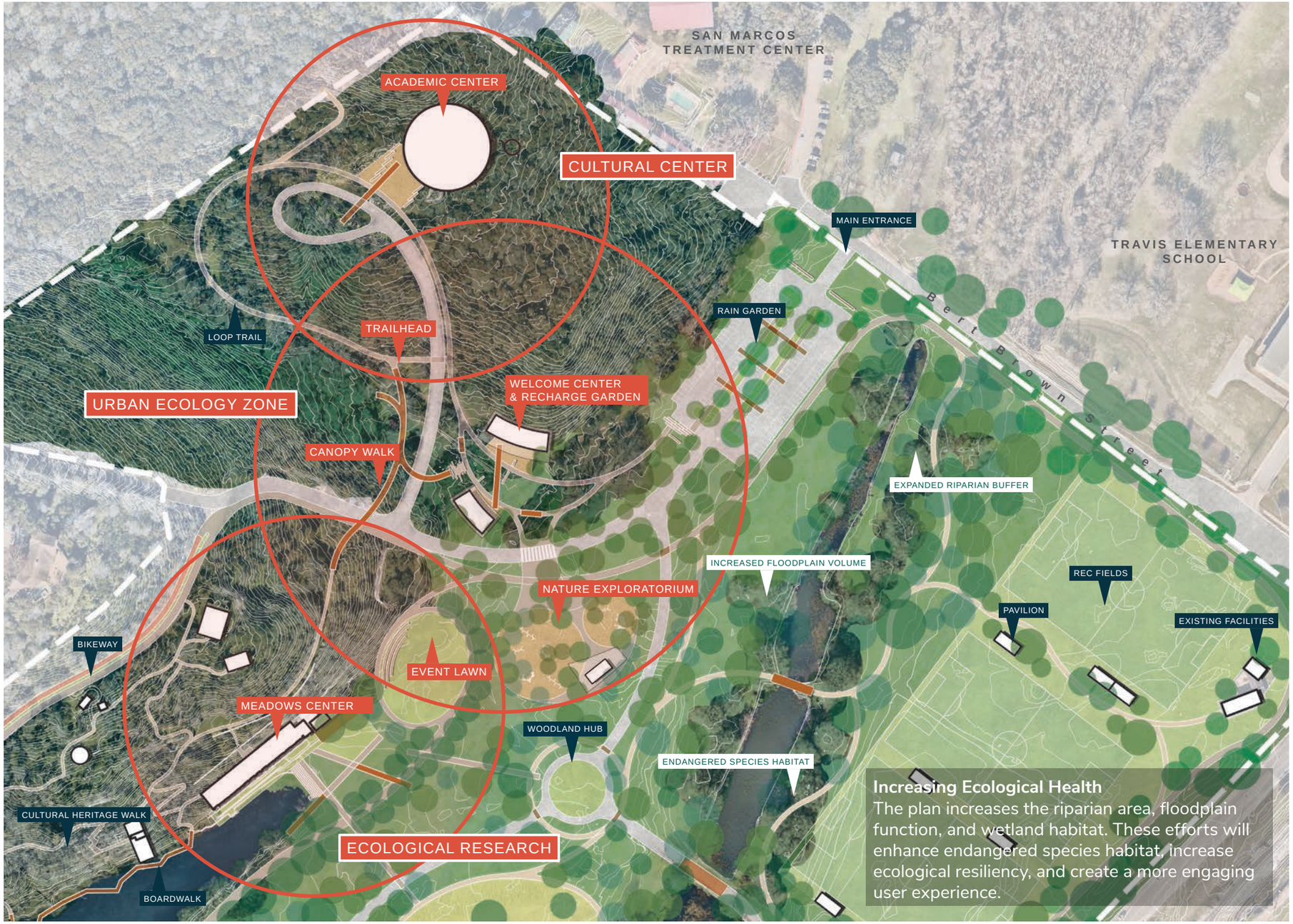

Texas Wild-Rice

SPRING LAKE
CAMPUS CORE

A Welcoming Gateway
The reimagined campus core of Spring Lake Park transforms the site into a more accessible and interconnected destination, while honoring its cultural, historical, and ecological significance. The new primary entrance, accessed along Bert Brown Road, provides a clear and welcoming gateway to Spring Lake Park. Visitors are seamlessly guided to the Academic Center at the top of the hill and the Urban Ecology Zone, nestled into the wooded hillside below.

The Nature Exploratorium, designed for school groups, families, and visitors of all ages, is located on the site previously utilized as a golf course. The Meadows Center anchors the park's environmental education and research efforts and is surrounded by rain gardens and a newly designed spring edge. The plan retains some lawn area to accommodate large group gatherings and formal events, ensuring the park remains a versatile space for both community and educational purposes.

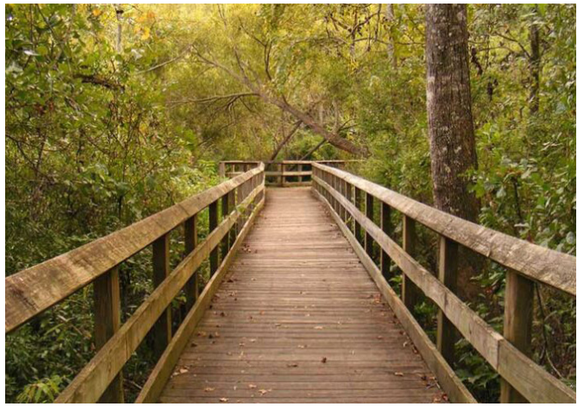
The new campus core of Spring Lake Park represents a vision of connection: between people and the natural world, between cultural heritage and environmental stewardship, and between the past and the future. By creating an accessible and sustainable hub centered on education, culture, and biodiversity, the campus core ensures that Spring Lake Park will continue to inspire, educate, and connect generations to come.



SPRING LAKE
WELCOME CENTER

Welcome Center & Recharge Garden
Nestled into the wooded hillside, the Welcome Center serves as the entry point to the Spring Lake experience. The center offers ticket kiosk for the Glass Bottom Boats, educational exhibits, a conference space, and access to the Recharge Garden, a vital feature for stormwater management. This garden filters runoff from the hillside, using biofiltration to ensure clean water enters Spring Lake, reinforcing the park's commitment to ecological stewardship.

Canopy Walk
Physically and metaphorically tying the Academic Center, the Welcome Center, and the Meadows Center together is the Canopy Walk, a raised walkway that traverses the site. Spanning over Ed J L Green Road, the Canopy Walk allows users to move safely and effortlessly between destinations while offering a unique perspective of the tree canopy. This elevated path immerses visitors in the beauty of the wooded landscape, creating a journey that connects culture, education, and nature in a seamless experience.

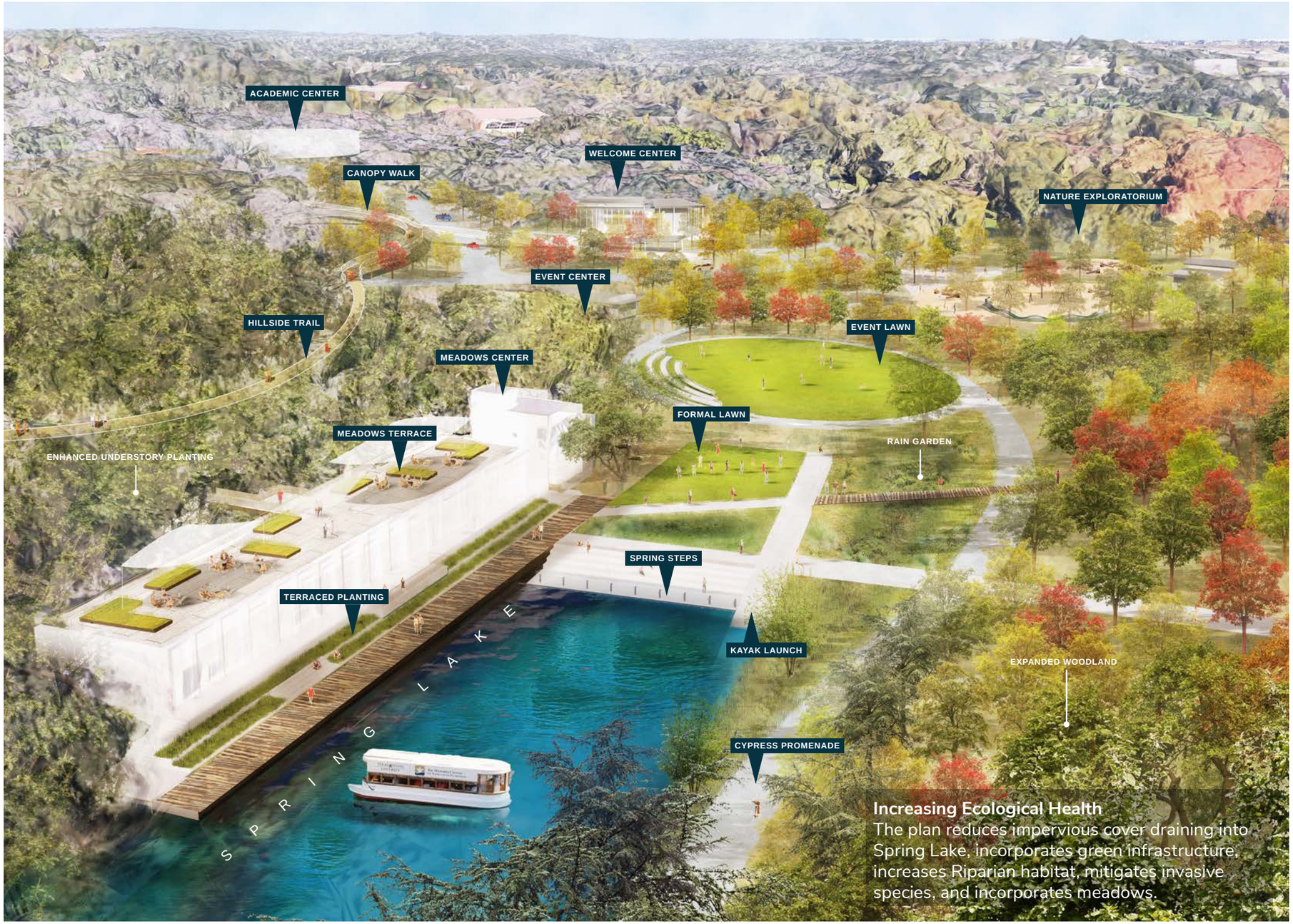


SPRING LAKE
MEADOWS CENTER

A Stronger Connection to Spring Lake
The renovation of the Meadows Center is a transformative effort to align its facilities more closely with the organization's mission of environmental stewardship and education. By rethinking the interface between the building and the spring, the proposal enhances engagement with the water. The new design replaces the existing guardrails and walls that currently obstruct views and access to the spring with planted terraces and a boardwalk.

These terraces create a visual connection to Spring Lake, and are also thoughtfully designed to accommodate spectators of the Texas Water Safari, the legendary canoe race that begins at Spring Lake each June and spans 260 miles to the Gulf of Mexico. To support the Texas Water Safari, everyday kayakers, and canoers, the plan incorporates a dedicated small boat launch at the lake's edge. This launch encourages responsible recreation by reducing habitat damage caused by visitors using various informal spots to enter the water.

The Glass Bottom Boat tours, which draw nearly 150,000 visitors annually, remain a cornerstone program for the Meadows Center. To elevate the experience, the design introduces a Cypress Promenade that leads from the event lawn to the boat entrance. This promenade showcases the existing majestic Bald Cypress trees, creating a serene and iconic procession for visitors as they prepare to embark on their journey across the spring.



Increasing Ecological Health
The plan reduces impervious cover draining into Spring Lake, incorporates green infrastructure, increases Riparian habitat, mitigates invasive species, and incorporates meadows.

SPRING LAKE
NATURE EXPLORATORIUM

A Place of Learning and Joy
The Nature Exploratorium is a dynamic, multi-generational play area that combines education, exploration, and recreation. The Nature Exploratorium offers a unique opportunity for visitors to engage with the natural world while learning about the Edwards Aquifer system — one of the most important freshwater sources in Texas— and the region's distinctive karst geology. Through interactive play features, visitors gain an understanding of how water moves through the aquifer, the role of karst formations in shaping the landscape, and the importance of preserving these fragile ecosystems.

The Exploratorium includes play structures inspired by the karst landscape, such as:

- Climbing features that mimic limestone outcroppings and caves, allowing users to explore and understand the geological formations of the region.
- Water-themed play zones that simulate the flow of water through the aquifer, demonstrating concepts like recharge and filtration.
- Discovery stations with interactive exhibits that teach about aquifer-dependent species and the biodiversity of the area.

Alongside group-friendly areas, the Exploratorium includes quiet zones for individual discovery. These spaces invite visitors to observe, reflect, and connect with the environment at their own pace.

SPRING LAKE
DISCOVERY PENINSULA

A Living Classroom
The Discovery Peninsula serves as the heart of environmental education and outdoor exploration at Spring Lake. This area includes formalized spaces and pavilions, which cater to the needs of scuba divers, kayakers, and other outdoor enthusiasts, ensuring they have the infrastructure necessary for safe and enjoyable experiences.

A key addition to the peninsula is an extension of the existing boardwalk, which now connects to the opposite side of Spring Lake and Sewell Park. This new connection strengthens the site's overall accessibility and aligns with the Spring Lake Vision Plan's emphasis on connectivity. Visitors can seamlessly traverse the site, enhancing their experience and understanding of the interconnectedness of Spring Lake's ecosystems and Texas State's iconic public spaces.

Throughout the Discovery Peninsula, a series of Trail Hubs provides a clear and cohesive wayfinding language to orient visitors. These hubs serve as pedestrian trailheads and small parking areas designed to accommodate accessibility needs and larger events. By offering intuitive navigation and infrastructure, the plan ensures that the peninsula is welcoming and inclusive for all visitors. The Discovery Peninsula is home to the annual Sacred Springs Powwow, a festival celebrating Native American culture that occurs every October. The design incorporates spaces to support this cherished event, including areas for gathering, performances, and education about Indigenous traditions and heritage.

Increasing Ecological Health
Restoration will expand on work previously completed to restore riparian canopies and understory, reducing mowing, and introducing native meadows.


SPRING LAKE

SPRING LAKE
DISCOVERY PENINSULA

A Hub for Environmental Education
The Discovery Peninsula is home to a diverse and robust trail system. Two primary trail loops offer distinct experiences; the Arboretum Loop winds through a diverse tree palette and the Sun Loop immerses visitors in a restored prairie ecosystem, providing signage about the critical role these habitats play in supporting biodiversity. To create an engaging and dynamic space, the Discovery Peninsula includes a wide range of programs and features, carefully integrated into the landscape.

- **Meditation Stations:** Quiet and secluded spots throughout the peninsula provide spaces for visitors to pause, reflect, and connect with nature.
- **Educational Stations:** A series of nodes along the trails that allow visitors to learn about the unique ecological systems of the Edwards Aquifer, karst geology, and the flora and fauna of the region. These stations support the educational programs hosted by the Meadows Center throughout the year.
- **Stargazing Circles:** Recognizing the peninsula's potential as a prime spot for nighttime programming, stargazing circles are included. These spaces can also host astronomy-related educational events, enriching the site's offerings.
- **Hammock Groves:** Shaded hammock groves provide a space for relaxation and informal recreation.
- **Art Installations:** These pieces, located along the trail, provide a creative lens through which visitors can experience the site, blending artistic expression with environmental storytelling.

SPRING LAKE
CULTURAL HERITAGE WALK

A Trail for Reflection and Discovery
The Cultural Heritage Walk weaves together the rich history of Spring Lake. By capitalizing on the existing trail system behind the Meadows Center, this feature highlights the transformations that Spring Lake has undergone over centuries. The Cultural Heritage Walk features key relics from Spring Lake's dynamic history, transforming them into interpretive moments that tell the story of the site's evolution:

- A relic of the Aquarena Springs amusement park era, the gondola station structure, refered to as the **Swiss Sky Ride,** serves as a whimsical reminder of Spring Lake's recreational history.
- From the settlement and industrialization era the **Burleson Cabin and Grist Mill** stand as testaments to Spring Lake's early history.
- The **San Xavier Mission**, a replica of a Spanish mission, built during the mid-20th century, remains in excellent condition and offers a moment of reflection along the trail and provides a unique backdrop for storytelling and interpretation.
- The **Sky Spiral**, a 220-foot observation tower from the Aquarena Springs era, no longer exists, but its foundation remains. The design team proposes a treehouse or canopy experience in its place, offering a more ecologically sensitive way to engage with the tree canopy.
- The existing **Overlook** will be renovated and expanded with a boardwalk that ties directly into the trail system and connects to the Meadows Center, enhancing the trail's functionality and user experience.

SWISS SKY RIDE ENTRANCE

BURLESON CABIN

SKY SPIRAL FOUNDATION

BURLESON GRIST MILL

SAN XAVIER MISSION

OVERLOOK

SEWELL PARK

Sewell Park is a vibrant six-acre destination that combines the natural beauty of the San Marcos River with the traditions and recreational spirit of Texas State University. The park is a cherished space for sunbathing, frisbee games, and volleyball matches, picnics, and community gatherings. The redesign of Sewell Park honors its rich traditions while introducing thoughtful enhancements to safety, accessibility, and programming, ensuring its role as a treasured campus and community resource.

Central to Sewell Park's identity is the beloved River Jump, a uniquely Texas State tradition that celebrates commencement. Graduating Bobcats, clad in cap and gown, leap into the San Marcos River as family and friends cheer them on. This joyful tradition symbolizes transition, accomplishment, and connection, blending the natural beauty of the river with the spirit of the Bobcat community.

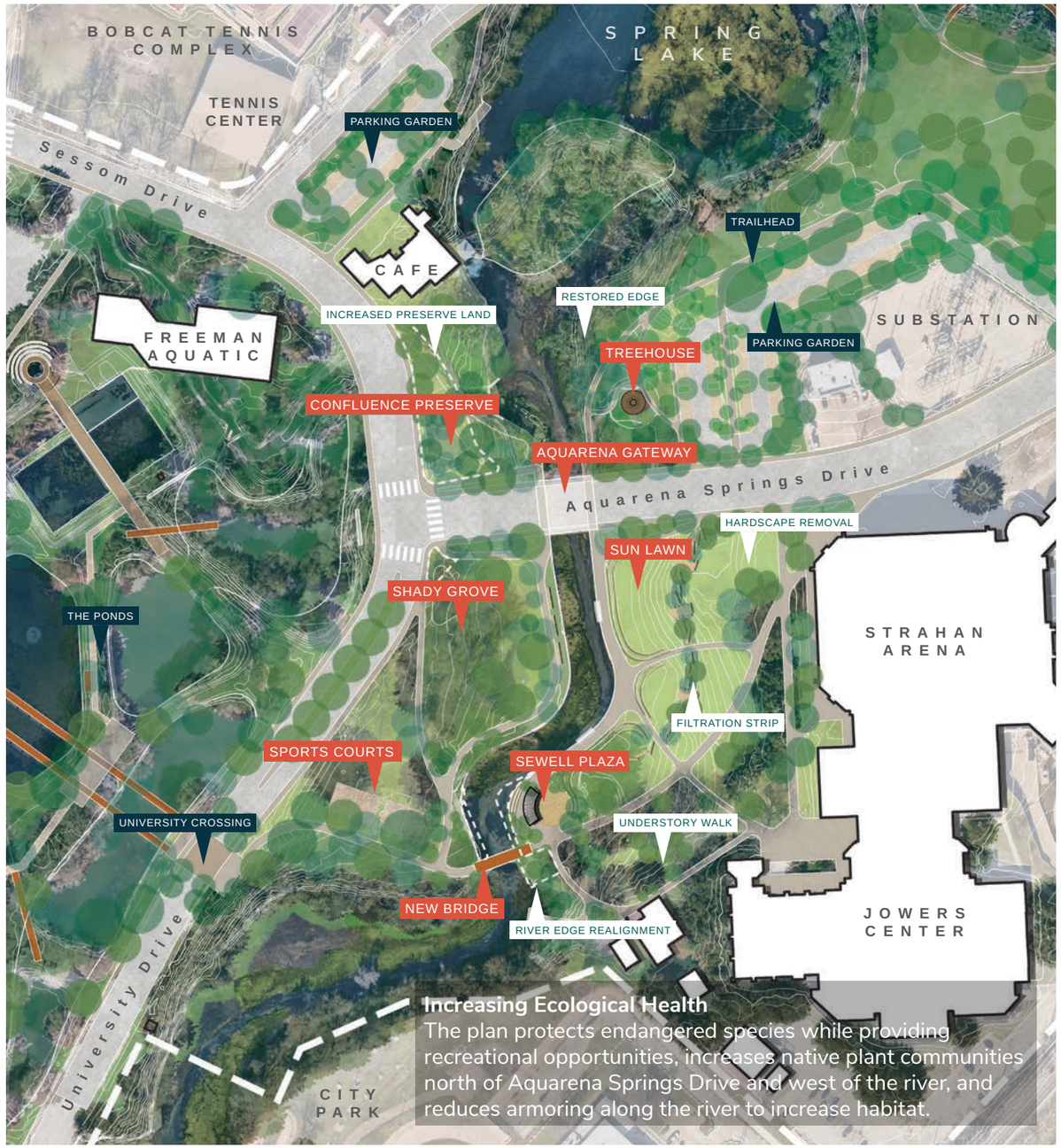
The new river edge incorporates expanded stairways that lead directly into the water, providing safe and secure access for swimmers. These steps improve usability while enhancing the celebratory atmosphere of traditions like the River Jump.

Larger stone blocks replace plain concrete walls along the river's edge, creating a more dynamic and engaging environment. These blocks provide informal seating and gathering spaces, allowing visitors to relax by the water, sunbathe, or watch the activity in the river.

A centerpiece of the redesign is the creation of Sewell Plaza, an amphitheater nestled at the bend of the river. This space provides a stunning vantage point overlooking the water, ideal for performances, lectures, or quiet reflection. A new pedestrian bridge crossing, aligned with the well-trodden commuter desire path, improves connectivity and facilitates movement across the site. This bridge offers practical benefits for daily commuters while creating an iconic visual element that enhances the park's aesthetic and utility.

Preserving Sun Lawn and Park Identity
The redesign carefully preserves Sun Lawn, the iconic sun lawn that has been a staple of Sewell Park's identity for generations. This cherished space remains a haven for sunbathers, offering an expansive grassy area where visitors can relax and enjoy the sunshine. The integration of Sun Lawn into the updated design ensures that Sewell Park's traditional charm is retained while blending seamlessly with the new features.

The treehouse across Aquarena Springs Drive from Sewell Park adds a destination to draw users across the road to experience the beauty of Spring Lake and enhance the connection between the two iconic spaces.



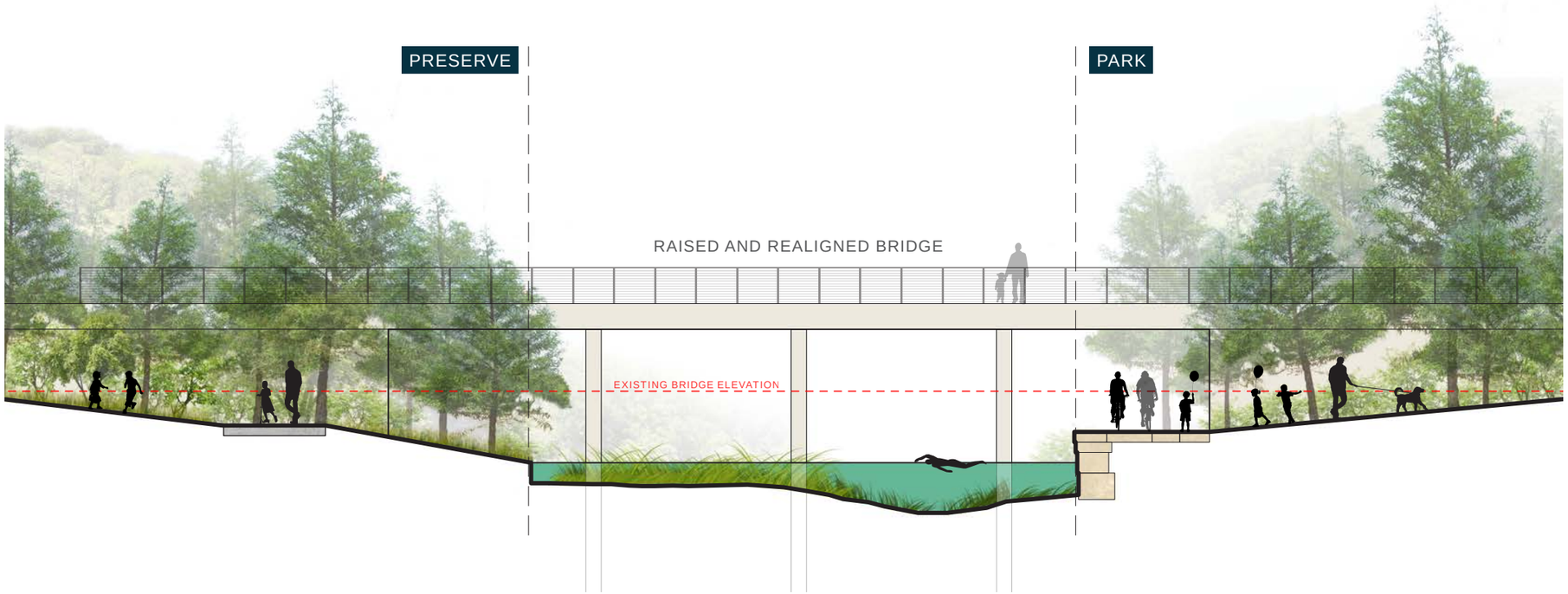

TEXAS STATE

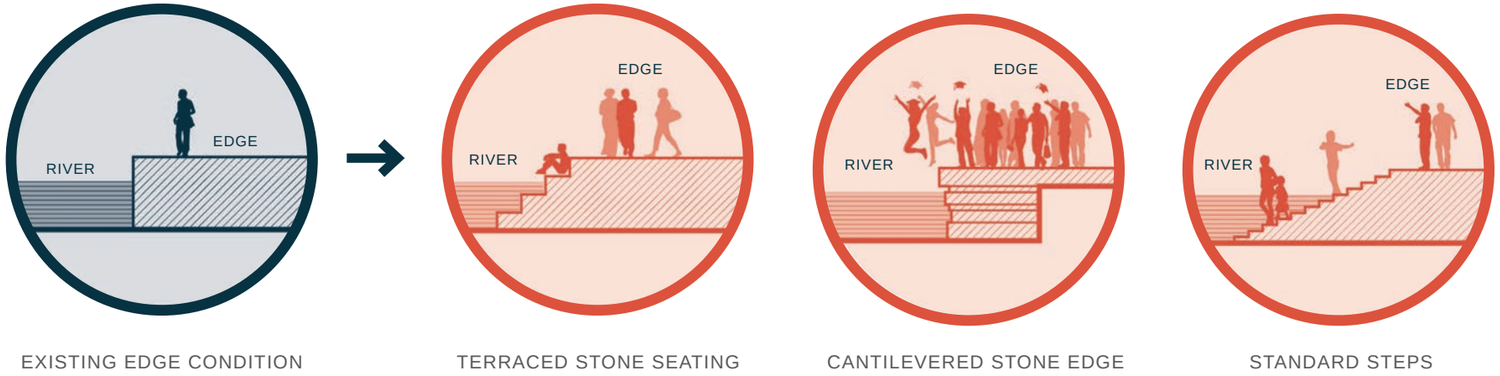
SEWELL PARK
AQUARENA GATEWAY

The connection between Spring Lake and Sewell Park is a pivotal element of the plan, designed to unify two of the most significant spaces at Texas State University. The Aquarena Gateway creates a seamless transition between these destinations, while reimagining one of the University's primary entry points to enhance accessibility, safety, and ecological health.

A New Campus Entry
The Aquarena Gateway transforms the existing "Y" intersection of University Drive, Sessom Drive, and Aquarena Springs Drive into a reimagined entryway to campus. This elevated bridge design integrates transportation infrastructure, pedestrian access, and ecological improvements, creating a gateway that reflects the University's commitment to innovation, sustainability, and connectivity.

A raised section of Aquarena Springs Road allows for an underpass that improves circulation for pedestrians and cyclists while minimizing conflicts with vehicular traffic. The reconfiguration introduces pedestrian crossings at all four corners, increasing from the current two crossings. Shortened turn radii reduce pedestrian crossing lengths, making navigation safer and more accessible. A reduced number of car lanes accommodates dedicated transit corridors, encouraging sustainable transportation options and reducing congestion. The design also incorporates design strategies to address environmental concerns and protect the San Marcos River, a vital ecological and cultural resource.





EXISTING EDGE CONDITION | TERRACED STONE SEATING | CANTILEVERED STONE EDGE | STANDARD STEPS

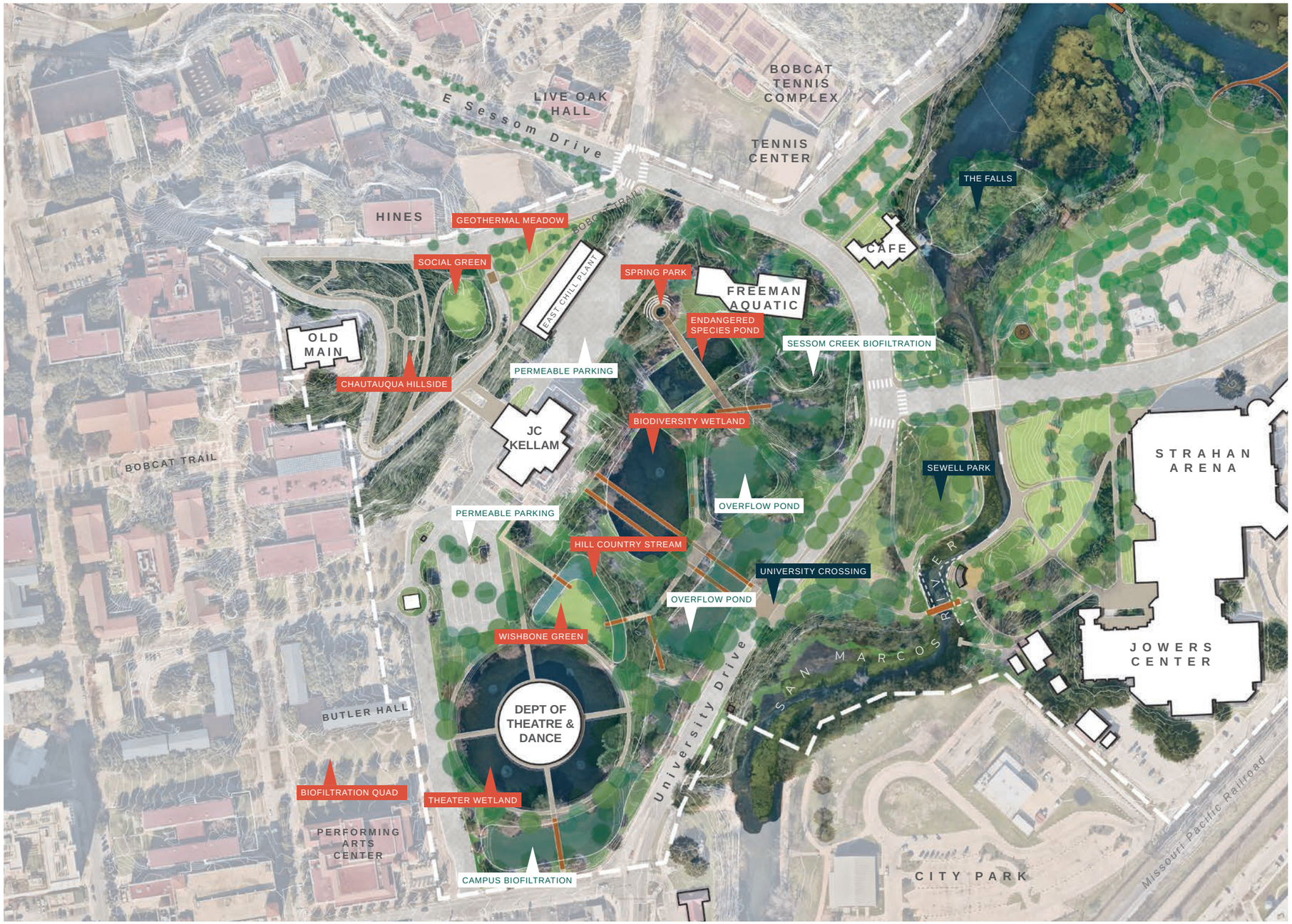

RESTORATION PLANTING
TO WOODLAND PROMENADE
STRAHAN ARENA
TREEHOUSE
CAFE
PRESERVE PATH
CONFLUENCE PRESERVE
SUN LAWN
BIOFILTRATION GARDEN
AQUARENA CROSSING
PROTECTIVE PLANTING
FILTRATION STRIP
RESTORATION PLANTING
ENTRY MONUMENT
RESTORED RIVER EDGE
UNDERSTORY WALK
SHADY GROVE
BIOFILTRATION POND
SEWELL PLAZA
GAINED RIVER ACCESS
RIVER BEACH COURTS

CHAUTAUQUA HILL & THE PONDS

The vision for The Ponds transforms the historic U.S. Federal Fish Hatchery site into a dynamic and multifunctional space that embodies Texas State University's commitment to environmental stewardship. This 43-acre area balances the preservation of its historical significance with innovative strategies for sustainable water management.

The ponds adjacent to University Drive are proposed to be converted into overflow ponds. This water will be filtered before entering Spring Lake via The Preserve or the San Marcos River via Pyramid Park, improving the overall water quality and setting a regional example for water stewardship in Central Texas. Three ponds will remain as water features, supporting endangered species and creating critical wetland habitats. These ponds are a testament to the University's commitment to protecting biodiversity. A network of boardwalks and overlooks allows visitors to engage with the ponds and surrounding landscape. Near the Freeman Aquatic Building, the existing well is transformed into a small contemplative space. Enhanced with seating and native plantings, this serene spot invites students to pause and relax. The plan incorporates a small lawn space near the Department of Theatre and Dance, creating an "arts hub" at this corner of the site.

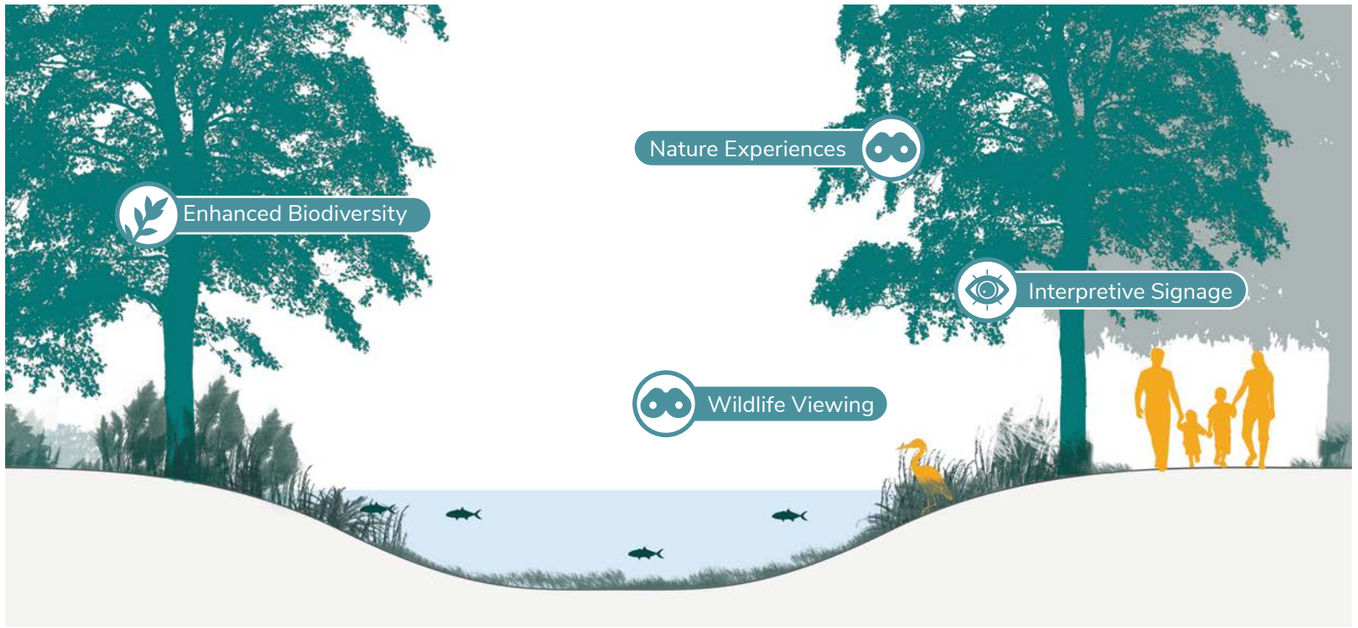
The Chautauqua Hillside preserves the wooded character of the area, while also introducing a variety of landscape typologies. A social green and geothermal meadow provide an open, flexible space for formal and informal university events, creating a balance between natural preservation and functional campus programming.

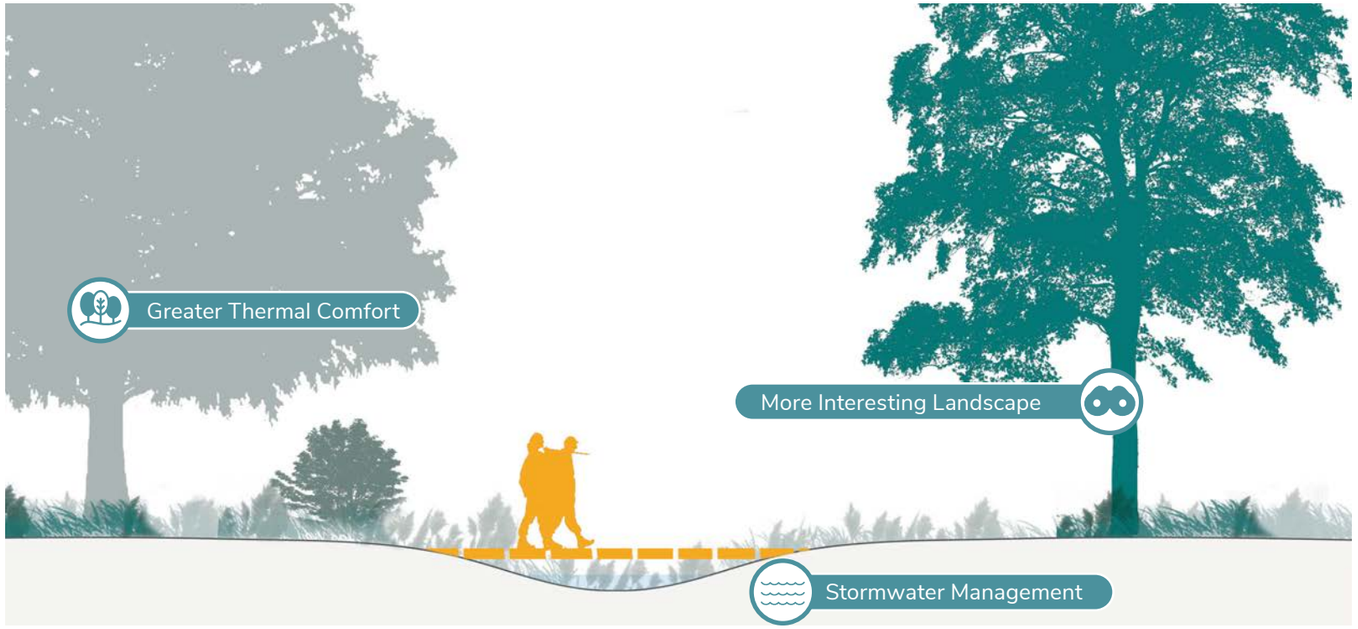


CHAUTAUQUA HILL & THE PONDS

The plan will integrate green infrastructure to transform the campus ponds into ecologically functional and visually engaging spaces. Some ponds will showcase wetland diversity, highlighting native aquatic plants and animals while serving as living laboratories for students and visitors. Others will focus on cleaning stormwater runoff through natural filtration, improving water quality before it enters the San Marcos River. Additionally, select ponds will mitigate flooding issues from Sessom Creek, reducing erosion and enhancing stormwater management.

These enhancements will foster biodiversity, creating habitats, and increase wildlife viewing opportunities. Signage will provide insights into the ecological roles of the ponds and the importance of water as a regional resource. Shaded paths and native vegetation will improve thermal comfort.






American Elm


Bald Cypress


Bushy Bluestem


Lindheimer Muhly

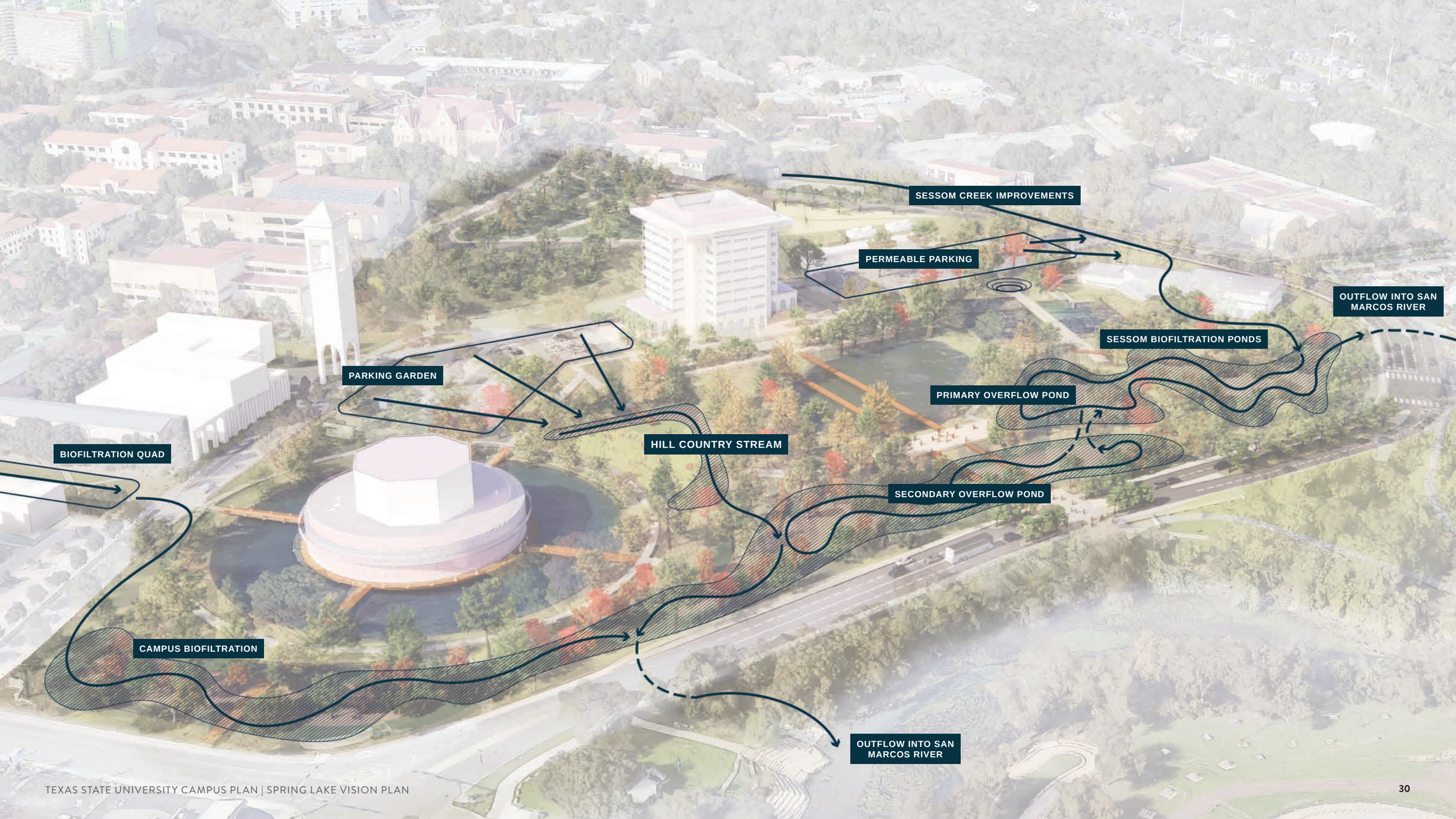

Ludwigia


Pickerelweed


Switchgrass


Bulrush


OLD MAIN
FUTURE BELL TOWER
CHAUTAUQUA HILLSIDE
SOCIAL GREEN
JC KELLAM
GEOTHERMAL MEADOW
TENNIS CENTER
SESSOM BIOSWALES
SPRING PARK
FREEMAN AQUATIC
ENDANGERED SPECIES POND
FUTURE MUSIC BUILDING
BIODIVERSITY WETLAND
OVERLOOK
SESSOM CREEK BIOFILTRATION
HILL COUNTRY STREAM
EXISTING TREES
BRIDGE PLAZA
DEPT OF THEATRE AND DANCE
BIOFILTRATION QUAD
OVERFLOW POND
MOOM ST
OVERLOOK
WISHBONE GREEN
OVERFLOW POND
TRAIL TO SEWELL PARK
UNIVERSITY CROSSING
EXISTING TRAIL
THEATER WETLAND
SAN MARCOS RIVER
EXTENDED BOARDWALK
STORMWATER OUTFLOW
CAMPUS BIOFILTRATION
PYRAMID PARK
UNIVERSITY DRIVE


SESSOM CREEK IMPROVEMENTS
PERMEABLE PARKING
OUTFLOW INTO SAN MARCOS RIVER
SESSOM BIOFILTRATION PONDS
PARKING GARDEN
PRIMARY OVERFLOW POND
BIOFILTRATION QUAD
HILL COUNTRY STREAM
SECONDARY OVERFLOW POND
CAMPUS BIOFILTRATION
OUTFLOW INTO SAN MARCOS RIVER