

## II. VISION

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## Parks & Recreation

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Kayaking on the Charles River, Boston.

Dallas has an historic opportunity to create what could well become the largest urban park in the nation. A Trinity Central Park within the Dallas Floodway will knit scattered recreational facilities into one system, totaling thousands of acres. Regional open space including the West Fork, the Elm Fork, the Great Trinity Forest and trail systems such as the Katy, Buckeye and Santa Fe Trails will all be anchored and enhanced. The park area within the floodway would total approximately 2,000 acres and, with the Great Trinity Forest and Elm Fork areas, becomes a park of over 6,000 acres.

The new Trinity Central Park will feature the widest possible range of recreational opportunities within an urban area: playing fields for active sports, wilderness recreational uses such as river canoeing and bird-watching, and performance venues for festivals and other

events. Three lakes will be constructed between West Dallas and the Downtown that, together with the river, will provide flatwater and whitewater venues from sport fishing to canoeing and recreational rowing. The Trinity River will be reconfigured - with new meanders in the floodway - to maximize recreational uses and aquatic habitat.

Many cities in the arid west, such as Denver, Tempe and San Jose, are aggressively transforming their underutilized floodways into active recreational amenities, and in so doing, are improving their downtowns and their economic fortunes.

There are numerous challenges to constructing a public park and recreational facilities within an active floodway. This park has been designed to maximize the usability of



Recreational playing fields located within the floodway with the Dallas skyline in the distance.

recreational features during minor flood events and to reduce the costs of clean-up efforts after inundation.

### The Downtown Lakes

The two terraced lakes near Downtown will be placed above the level of the Trinity River and water will be supplied primarily from the Central Wastewater Treatment Plant. A portion of the supply water will enter the terraced lakes through a “headwaters wetland” created upstream of the upper Urban lake. The two terraced lakes, and their edge treatments, will range from the formal to the natural - creating a variety of human experience and wildlife habitats. The descriptions below describe the ultimate plan for the lakes, other water features and recreational facilities as they are currently envisioned. Further detailed engineering and geotechnical investigation may refine these concepts during the park’s design phases.

#### The Urban Lake

This urban, off-channel lake will be approximately twenty feet higher than the level of the Trinity River and located close to the Downtown levee. Thus positioned, aquatic recreation will be closer to downtown and the lakes will create a compelling image of the “city on the river” as viewed from Oak Cliff. The lake is placed so as to feature the two planned Calatrava signature bridges at Woodall

Rodgers and Interstate 30. It is expected to be approximately 75 acres in size, with an additional 10 acres of wetlands around its banks.

The Urban Lake will be edged with a formal promenade along the downtown side that will form a new “front porch” for the city - a new gathering place in the midst of city and park. Strolling along the promenade, watching the sunlight reflect on the Calatrava bridges and the water fountains below, or photographing

lakes with new Oak Cliff development in the background - all of these most urban experiences will be found in this part of Trinity Central Park. The ultimate plan for the Urban Lake could include a restaurant and other concessions. The promenade will connect directly to the pedestrian plaza deck at Reunion, so visitors could walk from the new urban development adjacent to this plaza and down to the promenade along the urban lake, enjoying views of downtown, Oak Cliff, lakes, waterfalls or fountains and Calatrava bridges.



The Downtown Lakes and the Braided River Channel.



The Urban Lake will be approximately one mile in length and average 800 feet in width. Paddleboats, canoes, kayaks, recreational rowing and small sailing craft are expected to be typical water uses. Small sailboats, with masts short enough to sail under the bridges, could be used. Recreational rowing or sculling would be possible as well, though the bridges and the curve of the floodway would preclude top competitive sculling events from any lake in the Trinity floodway. Canoes could travel either direction in the lake, as the current within

the lake would not be so strong as to force travel in only one direction. Portaging would be necessary at either end of the lake.

The opposite shore of the urban lake (in the center of the floodway) will be more natural in character and will be protected from the Trinity River with a gently sloping berm. This berm will be landscaped to provide wildlife habitat near the river and would include trails or pathways so walkers can circle the lake.

The Natural Lake

The Natural Lake will be located to the southeast of the Urban Lake, adjacent to the southern part of The Cedars and Cedars West areas. It is intended to provide a water recreation experience of a more natural character. The lake would be approximately 75 acres in size with an additional 15 acres of wetlands around its shores. The lakeshore would have walking and biking paths and picnic or nature observation areas rather than the formal promenade of the Urban Lake. Trees, grasses and other vegetation would create desirable habitat for birds and wildlife. Water sports would include canoeing and kayaking, again able to travel up and down the lake. Fishing could be available at the lakes, creating possibilities for fishing tournaments and family outdoor activities.

Water for the lakes would be pumped from the Central Wastewater Treatment Plant to the headwaters wetland and other outlets along the lake shores. Since the difference in elevation of the Natural Lake is expected to be approximately 5 feet lower than the Urban Lake, there are opportunities to create a wonderful and distinctive water feature between the two. Water fountains, water cannons with a pedestrian walkway below, or a dramatic waterfall are some of the possibilities. Depending on the design and specific location, this water feature could be viewed from the Oak Cliff Levee Top Road or the Reunion Pedestrian Plaza, adding drama to the view.



A range of activities . . . both programmed and “wild”.

Water from the Natural Lake would flow down an elevation drop of approximately fifteen feet to rejoin the Trinity River in the area of the braided channels and islands. This elevation drop would likely require a portage by canoeists, but could be designed to include a whitewater course for kayakers.

### The Braided River Channel

As the lake water enters the Trinity River east of Cadiz Street, the Trinity River will be divided into multiple braided river channels with low-lying wetlands and protected islands for wildlife. These channels will be designed to ensure that a primary channel has flowing water even during low water periods, so canoeists and wildlife would be assured of passage. With higher water levels, several channels would offer options for canoeists and would create



The proposed amphitheater at West Dallas.

protected islands for wildlife. Periodic inundation during heavy rain periods will create temporary lake-like conditions in this area. Canoe access will be provided here to offer educational programs within this reconstructed wetland habitat. The banks of the river in this area would have shrubs and trees and would be part of the Great Trinity Forest’s extension upstream into the existing floodway area.

### The West Dallas Lake

The West Dallas Lake is intended to provide water recreation and outdoor activity areas appealing to residents of adjacent neighborhoods. It could be supplied with water by pumping of sump waters, wells and/or periodic inundation by the Trinity River. The 80 acre lake will be highly irregular in shape with recreational opportunities for canoeing and walking through an additional 65 acres of



Proposed lakeside recreation at the natural lake.

wetland habitat. The lake shore could be designed with periodic overlooks, picnic areas and recreational access.

### The Trinity River

The Trinity River will become an important recreational resource through improved access and reconfiguration of its course. Re-creating a more varied, and sinuous course for the river will increase the variety of flow patterns within the river. More pronounced riffles and pools, and divided channels will improve the recreational experience for canoeists by creating faster sections interspersed with slower pools. Divisions in the channel will allow for smaller whitewater features to be created and managed for recreational uses. The plan calls for additional canoe launches at the upper and lower ends of the Dallas Floodway to allow for a variety of trip lengths and experiences depending upon interest and skill level.

### Active Sports and Recreation

Recognizing a real, identifiable public need for active recreation facilities in Dallas, the Trinity Central Park will feature playing fields on terraces raised above typical flood levels. The playing fields, predominantly located upstream of Sylvan Road, will provide ample areas for a complete array of active recreation adjacent to neighborhoods that are in need of additional



recreational resources. Running, jogging and bicycling will be accommodated on the network of in-park roads and trails that will run the length of the 6.5 mile corridor.

**Events and Celebrations**

Parks must be designed to work for everyday conditions, yet be usable for large events and celebrations. The Trinity Floodway is ideally suited for large events because of its central location and its large size. Fireworks, air shows and other types of events normally associated with bodies of water can be acommodated within the floodway. The lakes and the playing fields can be transformed for tournaments and other seasonal events like the Fourth of July TrinityFest.

A twelve-acre amphitheater will be carved into an upland terrace to provide an active venue for community and regional performances and events. The audience for these events would enjoy a dramatic stage area with the lakes, Calatrava bridges and the downtown skyline in the background. Concession, sports, and event infrastructure will be built into the fabric of the park along the length of the river. This infrastructure can and must be designed to be movable in the event of major flooding, or to withstand floodwaters and then be put back in service.

**Nature Recreation**

The underlying fabric of the park, its wetlands, stormwater and treated water, and its new river and upland habitat, provide a rich diversity of environmental education potential. Specific environments for interpretive exhibits, nature observation areas and self-guided trails include wetlands, riparian and lowland forest zones. These habitats are not currently well represented in the floodway. As these new habitat and water areas are designed, they would be located to incorporate and enhance the existing wetland and other habitat areas wherever possible.

Environmental exhibits support other nature-oriented activities such birding and ecotourism. Depending on programming resources, future plans for the park and its lakes could include fishing as well, whether catch-and-release or

fishing to keep. 25 to 30 miles of hiking and equestrian trial will be constructed within the park. This trail system will tie into the larger regional trails system and link the Trinity Central Park into the larger context of parks and trails within the Metroplex.

**A Park in a Floodway**

Because the new river park is in an active floodway, it must be designed to function during minor floods and be repaired quickly after a flood event. This means management of floodwaters, debris and sediment. The park must be designed to work with the hydrodynamics of the river to allow for conveyance of the river from low flows to the extreme high flows during flood events. The configuration and reinforcement of major park elements, elevations of park program, slopes of surfaces for drainage, plant and paving material selections must all be



Louisville's Park along the Ohio during an event.



Proposal for Moore Park improvements.

designed to allow for peak flows and resist erosion during those events. Permanent facilities within the floodway must be designed to withstand inundation without damage to electrical and mechanical systems. Concessions can be trailer based and moved seasonally or during extreme flood conditions.

Constructed wetlands and lakes will be elevated and protected by constructed earthen berms to minimize flood-borne debris and sedimentation. The stormwater wetlands at the pumped outfalls will have a primary bypass channel for major storm event conveyance that can be accessed by rubber-tired maintenance equipment. The off-channel lakes will be configured to allow for sediment to pass through and return to the main channel during extreme flood events to reduce lake siltation. Recreation fields will be raised to an elevation to minimize inundation of floodwaters and protect turf.



Mill Race Park in Columbus during a performance.

### Park Access and Regional Connections

Two-lane park roads and scattered parking areas within the floodway will make the park equally accessible to local and regional residents. Direct park road connections to Oak Cliff and downtown will reconnect the Trinity River to the fabric of Dallas. Twelve vehicular access points will connect major viaduct crossings and Reunion Boulevard in the downtown to the park road. The plan (see the map at the end of this section) identifies 24 pedestrian/bicycle access points to the park from both sides of the river. In addition, the existing DART stations at 8<sup>th</sup> and Corinth and the Cedars, as well as potential stations on future lines, will provide convenient non-automobile access.



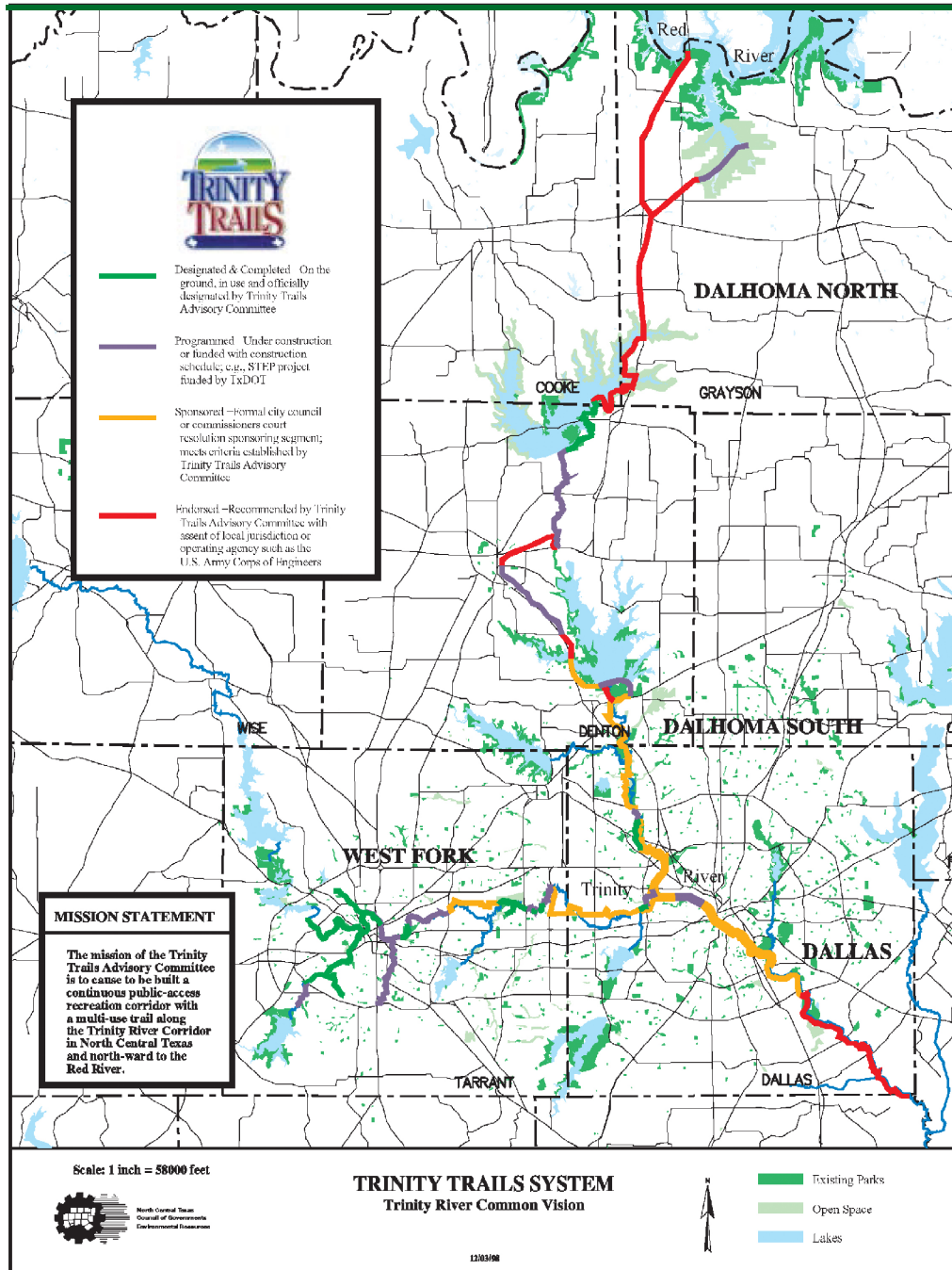
Mill Race Park during a river flood.

Pedestrian access to the park will be easily accomplished on the Oak Cliff side of the river. Here, a continuous levee-top trail or new local roadways along the levee will allow for unimpeded access to parklands. New levee-top roads will allow on-street parking for park users.

On the downtown side of the river, the limited access Trinity Parkway will present an obstacle to such direct pedestrian access. New overpasses or crossings under the parkway will be constructed at critical locations. At existing viaducts, pedestrian stairs or ramps will be provided adjacent to vehicular ramps. In addition, a longer pedestrian plaza is proposed over the parkway at Reunion Boulevard and wide pedestrian connections would extend this human-scale environment at levee top in key downtown locations.

A trail system through the Dallas Floodway will connect trails that now are isolated and separated from one another. Along the Elm Fork, the Trinity River Greenbelt Park and L.B. Houston Parks will be able to connect via the Old Meanders Trails to the Katy Trail and the Trinity Forest. In West Dallas, the Bernal Trail system will be connected to the regional trail system and downtown. Future trails planned for Cedar Creek to connect Moore Park with the Dallas Zoo will in turn be connected to Fair Park and South Dallas via the Trinity River trails. The Trinity Floodway will set an example for how





the West Fork to the Trinity River can be developed with trails and public access all the way to Fort Worth.

Some Dallas residents enjoy recreational activities in the Trinity floodway today, but most people do not perceive this as a desirable destination for active recreation, major celebrations or nature observation. The diverse water and landforms envisioned in this floodway will change that perception and will offer attractions for residents and Dallas visitors alike.

Trinity Trails: The Trinity River will become the backbone of a regional water, open space and trails network.

# Fact Sheet



## LAKES

- Two off-channel stepped lakes totaling 150 acres adjacent to downtown with an additional 25 acres of wetlands along lake edge
- A downstream bichannel system will be called “braided river channel” totaling 60 acres with an additional 45 acres of wetlands
- An Off-channel lake in West Dallas totaling 80 acres with an additional 65 acres of wetlands
- Lake recreation, both active and passive included canoeing, sailing, rowing and fishing
- Protected with berms that provide 2-year flood protection
- Between-lakes waterfalls, pedestrian overlooks and wildlife viewing areas
- Lakeside hard-edge promenade at downtown and soft edge riparian habitat elsewhere

## PLAYING FIELDS

- 160 acres of playing fields including soccer and softball fields. Fields are accessed from an internal park road system
- Irrigation from Central Wastewater Treatment Plant

## EVENT/CONCESSION SPACES

- 12 acre amphitheater of sloped turf and stage structure with utilities
- 2 concession pads for seasonal or permanent use
- 1 floating restaurant pad at Upper Trinity Lake (potential if concession interest)
- 1 recreational building near playing fields

## BOAT LAUNCHES

- Car-top boat launches at Westmoreland, and Corinth Streets
- Trailer-boat access at Sylvan and at Urban Lake for larger boats

## VEHICULAR ACCESS POINTS

- 5 miles of internal park roads running the length of the park. 12 vehicular access points to the park road: at Canada Drive(2), Westmoreland(2), Hampton, Sylvan, Continental, Commerce, Reunion, Oak Cliff levee-top, Moore Park, and Martin Luther King Blvd.
- 6-7 acres of distributed parking areas within floodway for park users

## TRAILS AND PATHS

- 4,500 foot long promenade at Downtown

- 9 miles of trails with a variety of surfaces
- 3 miles of equestrian trails within the floodway (surface to be determined)
- 5,000 feet of wetlands boardwalks for nature viewing and access

## PEDESTRIAN ACCESS POINTS

- One 600 foot-long pedestrian plaza overlooking the lakes and park at Reunion
- Widened pedestrian connections at other locations along the downtown levee
- Continuous pedestrian access to parkland from the Oak Cliff Levee-top road with on-street parking
- 20 new pedestrian/bicycle access points including 8 over the Parkway
- 4 vertical connector stairs/ramps added to historic viaducts at Continental, Commerce, Houston and Cornith Streets

## OPEN SPACE CONNECTIONS

- On-street trail connections to Turtle Creek Katy Trail, and Bernal Trail
- MLK bike route from Trinity to Fair Park and proposed veloway
- Equestrian/pedestrian trail to Trinity Interpretive Center / Equestrian Center
- On-street connection to Oak Cliff Founders Park