A Destination Park for West Houston

Terry Hershey Park is a popular and important park in The Energy Corridor. The trails and landscape connect the entire Buffalo Bayou system with the Addicks and Barker Reservoirs, and include a range of active and passive park and recreation spaces. The master plan recommends building upon these great assets and evolving the park into a world-class regional destination for The Energy Corridor and West Houston. A new central park for people and wildlife, the transformation will preserve and enhance the riparian environment, protect environmentally sensitive areas, and introduce community amenities including fields, trails, a pond, public art, gardens, playgrounds, and picnic areas.

Major elements of the new park (henceforth Langham Park) would include the following:

- Refinement of the Langham Creek channel and riparian landscape to enhance the environmental values of the creek corridor for local flora and fauna
- An event and lawn space with a pond and large open space along Langham Creek just north of Memorial Drive serving as a destination for informal recreation, public art, concerts, and festivals
- A spillway park below Addicks Dam with boardwalks, scenic overlooks, and an archeological preservation area to showcase the natural and cultural history of The Energy Corridor
- Additional pedestrian bridges over Langham Creek as well as boardwalk bike trails to enhance connectivity for pedestrians and bicyclists to entry points along the neighborhood
- A neighborhood park for residents and families with community gardens, playgrounds, and picnic areas, complete with barbecue grills east of the creek
- A comprehensive landscape strategy that integrates environmental systems to better manage stormwater and urban runoff within the park and adjacent properties

A new park, responsive of the needs and desires of the community, can be a valuable catalyst to developing new and high quality residential and commercial uses in The Energy Corridor. With its ideal location in close proximity to job centers, residential neighborhoods, transit routes, and the larger reservoir parks, Langham Park is the perfect place to implement a great community park. With a focus on designing and implementing a contemporary, sustainable, and diverse park experience for visitors, Langham Park will be a focal point of in the larger Houston park system.
Program Concept

The vision for the future Langham Park is multi-use with a wide variety of landscape conditions that allow for active and passive uses.

The concept addresses the edge condition, with respect to how development will meet the edges, as well as the interior function of the park. It is intended to begin a conversation about what activities and uses belong within the 80-acre site. Central to the plan is the existing (rerouted) Langham Creek and the riparian corridor adjacent to it. Integrating this feature and other existing assets in the newly designed park space is the key to transforming this important space.

The proposal creates five distinct zones linked together by Langham Creek.

**Neighborhood Park**
The neighborhood park zone is the most active and organized recreation and athletic zone in the park. Situated adjacent to existing and future residential development to the east of the park, it will include volleyball, tennis, and other athletic courts, picnic areas, barbeque pits, and other facilities that will serve as amenities for local residents.

**Open Field and Event Space**
The grassy fields in the open field and event space zone will allow for formal events, such as festivals, concerts, retreats, and gatherings, as well as informal picnics, Frisbee, pick-up games, and passive activity. These zones are situated closely adjacent to new development at the north and south. The southern event space is ideal for festivals integrating with the new mixed-use center.
Forested Space
The forested zones of the park provide respite and protection from development at the park’s edges. These zones will allow visitors to experience a more natural wilderness. These areas also provide additional habitat space along the riparian corridor.

Archaeological Preservation Park
This zone represents the designated archaeological site. In respecting this important historical asset, the design recommends a preservation approach coupled with a low-impact, interpretive pedestrian trails to allow for exploration and on-site learning while respecting the environmental sensitivity of the area.

Stormwater Park
Utilizing the existing stormwater basin to the north of I-10, this zone will continue to serve the stormwater run-off needs of The Energy Corridor while offering light-touch interpretive trails and connections to the larger park system.
This hilly open space is designed for passive recreation such as pick-up games, and formal events like concerts, festivals, and social gatherings.

Multiple opportunities to touch, get close to, and experience the water create a rich intermingling of users and nature.

Some areas of the park are environmentally sensitive and will be respected while allowing opportunities for interpretive learning.

Pedestrian and bicycle trails will traverse the park and connect to the larger Corridor-wide networks of trails.
Paths will connect the various areas of Langham Park, allowing visitors to experience the different conditions and amenities on one stroll.

In the neighborhood park, athletic and recreation spaces will create active family and sport zones, fully integrated with the natural setting.

Located close to new mixed-use developments, the waterfront event space will host events such as corporate retreats and festivals.

In the secluded pond area, forest will buffer development allowing visitors a relaxing respite from the bustling activity of the neighborhood.
Vehicular Circulation

Circulation around and through the park is an important consideration for access and long term success of the park. A permeable edge with public access along its full length is an important aspect of the urban character of Langham Park. The plan recommends two main vehicular circulation priorities.

Frontage Roads
In order to maximize public access to the park from local and regional visitors, frontage roads along the major east and west edges of the park are recommended. These roads will allow visitors arriving by foot, car, or bicycle to enjoy a public street presence as a gateway to Langham Park while still maintaining high value properties facing the park.

Parking
Since many visitors to the park will arrive by car, providing ample public parking opportunities along the park’s edge will be vital to its success. Installing parking zones regularly along the frontage roads will provide sufficient parking for daily usage, while nearby garages can be used for overflow while the park is hosting large events.

Vehicular Routes

- **Vehicular Circulation**
- **Parking**
- **The Energy Corridor Circulator**
Pedestrian and Bicycle Circulation

Langham Park is primarily an opportunity for pedestrians to enjoy outdoor leisure, exercise, and entertainment. A core component of any community park is the complete system of paths and trails available for mobility and exploration.

While various path/trail typologies will be employed in the different zones of the park, the most important consideration is the interconnectedness of the system at large—both within and outside of the park’s boundaries. Connecting to trails and sidewalks outside the park will encourage more pedestrians to access the park by foot and bicycle and will better tie Langham Park into the urban character of the area.

Pedestrian Paths

- **Bicycle Trail**
- **Pedestrian Circulation**
Urban Design Guidelines

Specific design decisions should be employed to fully connect Langham Park to the urban fabric developing outside its boundaries. This is largely accomplished by establishing strong physical connections and access points, including the following features.

Development Frontage
Development parcels directly adjacent to the park should utilize a set of design guidelines with respect to how the building meets the park. These standards will touch upon factors such as entry, façade treatment, setbacks, and street detailing. The park will serve as the front of the developments, with buildings facing the space.

Program Buildings in the Park
In addition to convenience and maintenance facilities such as restrooms and storage/grounds sheds, community parks that often host events might provide programmed buildings to accommodate vendors, amusements, or cafes.

Event Space
Large open lawns with features such as seating, amphitheaters, and stages are ideal locations for hosting festivals, concerts, and corporate events.

Entry Plaza
In the space between parkland and development, an entry plaza can serve as a bi-directional transition zone. This plaza could be a central node of activity for the area and welcome visitors through a formal gateway.

Green Finger Extension
Langham Park is one component of a larger park system. Connections to development and other parks in the system via green connections or fingers create desirable and valuable urban green space.

Legend
- Strong Urban Frontage Facing the Park
- Program Building in the Park
- Regional Bicycle Trail
- Event Space
- Entry Plaza
- Green Finger Extension
Langham Park Edge Street

Credit: Robert O’Brien, Texas A&M University, tree illustrations
Existing Bike Path Under I-10

Proposed Circulator and Bike Path Under I-10