



CITY COUNCIL MEMORANDUM

FROM: The Office of the City Manager **DATE:** January 13, 2020
SUBJECT: Discussion of Mountain Bike and Hiking Trails at Fossil Creek Park.
PRESENTER: Vickie Loftice, Managing Director

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Improvements to Fossil Creek Park were identified as a priority in the update to the *Park System Master Plan*. Given that the park is contained almost fully within the *floodway*, development is problematic. There is a small section of the park that is contained within the *floodplain* and in those areas, limited development is possible.

The 58.5 acre park contains beautiful natural areas and is split between Big Fossil Creek which is prone to flooding during rain events. On each side of the creek are mature hardwood trees, a mixture of grasslands, and riparian and water habitats. The park also contains three softball fields on the west side of the park with limited parking. The far eastern side of the park contains an open meadow where limited development can occur since it resides in the floodplain and not the floodway.

Because the majority of the park is contained within the floodway, FEMA regulations do not allow for significant improvements. With federal regulations in mind, staff has been evaluating different options for positive uses of the park absent of development.

One possible option is to create hike and mountain bike trails within the park. While there are several mountain bike trails in the North Texas area, the two closest ones are at Gateway Park in Fort Worth and Rockledge Park on Grapevine Lake.

Mountain biking has grown in popularity over the past decade. In the U.S., an estimated 50 million people (20% of Americans 16 and over) mountain bike. The most recent membership statistics from the International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA) show that their riders are young professionals who are well educated and affluent. The median age for members is 44 years old; 76% have a bachelor's degree or higher; 53% work in professional/managerial positions with a median household income of \$100,000.

In exploring the possibility of creating mountain bike trails at Fossil Creek Park, staff has talked extensively with the Fort Worth Mountain Bike Association (FWMBA) about a possible partnership for the development and sustainability of the trails. Through an agreement, FWMBA would help develop and maintain the trails. The association currently has agreements with the City of Fort Worth for maintaining Gateway Park and Samson



Park mountain bike trails. They use volunteers and trail stewards for protecting and maintaining the trails.

On the professional services side of the project, staff has visited with Baird, Hampton & Brown (BHB) about the project. They have developed several mountain bike trails in the region. Professional services would include a ground survey, a base map to include topography and preliminary and final trail alignment with recommended locations for parking, trailhead kiosk and trail heads. They would also design user maps, informational signs and wayfinding signs along the trails.

Professional services is anticipated to cost approximately \$15,000 with construction costs at approximately \$100,000. Construction is anticipated to include a 20 space parking lot, informational kiosk, park sign, route signage and approximately five miles of dirt trails. Funding for the project is available in Park Impact Fees Reserves. Staff reviewed the project with the Park Board on December 2 and the Board was in favor of the project.

Fossil Creek Park is a beautiful natural area and unknown to many residents. Mountain bike and hike trails will attract nature enthusiasts and positive uses while helping to eliminate nefarious activities and homeless camps. Over the last few years, large homeless camps have popped up in various locations within the park. Increased use of the park will help eliminate these future encampments.

Staff is seeking input from City Council on the project along with the possible partnership with FWMBA and consensus on funding from Park Impact Fees.

If Council is in support of the project, staff would like to move forward with the project and revise the Parks Capital Projects Budget at a future City Council Meeting.