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Fort Worth Launches New Conservancy to Grow Parks and Open Space

FORT WORTH, Texas — As Fort Worth continues its rapid growth, Mayor Mattie Parker has established a new nonprofit organization to help ensure the city’s parks, open spaces and natural areas grow along with it.

The **Fort Worth Open Space & Parks Conservancy** will bring together public and private resources to enhance existing parks, conserve strategic lands and waters, and engage private landowners in conservation. The Conservancy will work closely with the City of Fort Worth and other community partners, while using private philanthropy to help move ambitious parks and open space projects forward.

“The Conservancy will provide the necessary support to ensure Fort Worth’s growth doesn’t mean we have to lose our natural landscape,” said Fort Worth Mayor Mattie Parker, co-chair of the Conservancy. “We can be more intentional with additional resources toward protecting and growing Fort Worth’s parks, prairies, waterways and open spaces as our city develops. The Conservancy gives us another way to bring private partners to the table to make sure nature remains part of Fort Worth’s future.”

Parker launched the Good Natured initiative in 2023 with a goal of conserving 10,000 acres and a long-term vision for Fort Worth to have more open space than any city in the country. The effort comes as one of North America’s fastest-growing cities continues to lose approximately 50 acres each week to development.

To complement the Good Natured vision, Parker worked with community leaders to establish a dedicated nonprofit capable of attracting private investment and supporting large-scale conservation and open space projects. Similar public-private models have been successfully developed in other major Texas cities.

Joining Parker as honorary co-chair is Martha V. “Marty” Leonard, a lifelong Fort Worth resident and longtime conservation leader. Leonard served for 17 years on the Tarrant Regional Water District board, where she advocated for watershed conservation and long-range water planning. She also has been a longtime champion of the Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge and the protection of Fort Worth’s native prairie.

“I’ve had the privilege of watching Fort Worth grow and change over many decades, and I’ve seen how important it is to protect our city’s natural heritage,” Leonard said. “Our city is going to keep growing. We have a chance now to protect some of those places, and I believe we should take it.”

The Conservancy will initially focus on two major projects: a concept for a state park around Lake Benbrook and development of a long-term strategic plan for the Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge.

At Lake Benbrook, the Conservancy is working with Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the City of Fort Worth on an opportunity to bring together a mosaic of public and private lands, improve existing recreational amenities and permanently protect portions of Fort Worth’s native prairie ecosystem.

The Conservancy is also working with the Fort Worth Park & Recreation Department and Friends of the Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge on a long-term strategic plan for the 3,621-acre Nature Center, which protects forests, prairies, wetlands and wildlife within the city.

The Beverly Ray Legacy Fund at North Texas Community Foundation provided funding to help establish the Conservancy, with additional seed funding from Oncor.

“Fort Worth has always been a city where philanthropy helps turn ambitious ideas into lasting community assets,” said Rose Bradshaw, president and CEO of the North Texas Community Foundation. “People here care about the future of their community, and they are willing to invest in it. The Conservancy gives donors a new way to help protect Fort Worth’s parks and open spaces and support projects that otherwise might not be possible.”

With support from North Texas Community Foundation, Parker enlisted Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation (TPWF) to incubate the new organization. TPWF has helped the Conservancy prepare for its public launch and will continue to provide support as the organization establishes itself.

“Conservation on this scale rarely happens because one organization has all the resources or all the answers,” said Anne Brown, executive director of Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation. “It happens when public agencies, private philanthropy, landowners and community leaders come together around a shared vision. Fort Worth has all of those ingredients, and the Conservancy creates a lasting framework for putting them to work for the people and natural places of this city.”

For more information about the Fort Worth Open Space & Parks Conservancy and to sign up for updates, visit FWConservancy.org.

About the Fort Worth Open Space & Parks Conservancy

The mission of the [Fort Worth Open Space & Parks Conservancy](http://FWConservancy.org) is to grow a vibrant network of open spaces by enhancing existing parks, conserving strategic lands and waters, and engaging private land stewards. Grounded in Fort Worth’s history as a city shaped by grasslands, water and wildlife, the Conservancy’s vision is to cultivate a thriving ecosystem for the people of Fort Worth. Working in close partnership with the City of Fort Worth and community partners, this independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit serves as a dedicated, long-term engine for protecting, restoring and expanding the natural places that define Fort Worth’s character.

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