

Charro Ranch Park

Master Plan



Approved by the City of Dripping Springs City Council

06/14/2011

(Version 1.10)

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Joe Volpe, Garry Child, Anne Child
Michelle Fischer, Lucy Reed Hibberd

1. Stakeholders Group

- The City of Dripping Springs
- Lucy Reed Hibberd and the Crenshaw Family
- The City of Dripping Springs Parks & Recreation Commission
 - Councilman Joe Volpe(CODS)
 - June Baumoel (CODS) - Vice Chair
 - Jeff Coffman (DSYSA)
 - Alan Atwood (DSISD)
 - Rex Miller (DSISD) – Chair
 - Robbie Zamora (DSYSA)
 - Brad Thomas (CODS)
 - Rich Moore (DSISD)
- The Charro Ranch Park Partners Committee
 - Michelle Fischer (City Administrator)
 - Councilman Joe Volpe(Parks & Recreation Commission & City Council))
 - Rich Moore (Parks & Recreation Commission)
 - Marisa Maher (Dripping Springs High School and Middle School Cross Country Track Teams)
 - Amy Gross (Dripping Springs High School National Honor Society)
 - M. Lee Brown (Hays County Master Naturalist)
 - Garry Child (Hays County Master Naturalist)
- Dripping Springs Independent School District
- Dripping Springs High School and Middle School Cross Country Track Teams
- Dripping Springs High School National Honor Society
- Neighborhoods adjoining Charro Ranch Park: Springwood and Woods Loop
- Hays County Master Naturalists
- Citizens of Dripping Springs

2. Mission

Parks and Recreation Mission Statement:

"Preserving Texas Hill Country for its people and their recreation/leisure, for its history and the sense of place, for its beauty and the open spaces."

Charro Ranch Park Mission Statement:

To create a natural setting for passive activities for the community of Dripping Springs to enjoy nature. It will be a multi-use park enjoyed for

- Casual recreation such as walking, family biking and picnicking
- Sports training for area cross country track runners
- Educational purposes to learn about plants, animals, geology, ecology, photography, etc.
- Reflection on peace and nature

3. Vision

"To preserve, restore, educate, and promote a natural Texas Hill Country experience for the people of Dripping Springs and citizens of Hays County."

4. Goals

Develop Charro Ranch Park as a "destination" for nature observation, bird watching, native plants, photography, peaceful reflection and public enjoyment. As a destination, Charro Ranch Park could bring more tourism to Dripping Springs.

- Restore and maintain the natural environment and provide public access and educational experiences.
- Maintain and enhance existing trails and create additional trails to enjoy the natural park setting while honoring its natural ecology and beauty.
- Provide public access through specified parking and picnic areas, walking and running trails and regulations meant to protect the natural aspects of the park.
- Encourage community use of the park by providing access from adjacent neighborhoods.
- Restore and maintain natural drainage to protect trails and reduce sediment erosion.
- Eliminate/control invasive species and restore area to a more natural Texas Hill Country environment.
- Reduce and limit damage done by Oak Wilt and mitigate Oak Wilt control mechanisms (ex. Oak Wilt Trenching).
- Minimize human impact on sensitive areas of the park, while providing public access and educational opportunities.

5. The Master Plan Process

(borrowed heavily from the [Blue Hole Regional Park Master Plan](#))

(see also the [Master Plan for Parks, Recreation, and Open Space – Dripping Springs](#))

The Charro Ranch Park Committee will work together to create ideas and seek expertise to provide input to direct the master planning process. It will be a continuous reassessment process of determining and prioritizing projects. The tasks consist of:

1. Clearly defining goals and objectives
2. Understanding the ecological, recreational and economic opportunities and constraints of the park
3. Developing a plan that ensures that the many proposed uses of the park are both economically and ecologically sustainable
4. Arranging park improvements in a way that works efficiently for the community and is true to the integrity of the site
5. Creating a synergy among park activities that links the park to the surrounding region—the park is greater than the sum of its parts
6. Guiding future park use and development to meet community needs while honoring the natural environment

6. History

Lucy Reed Hibberd donated Charro Ranch Park to the City of Dripping Springs in December 2008. The park was officially deeded to the City on 12/29/2008. Announcements were published in area media in April 2009.

- City of Drippings Community Newsletter – [The Gateway](#) – Spring 2009 – “DS Received Generous Park Land Donation – Charro Ranch Park to be Utilized for Passive Recreation”
- [Dripping Springs Babble](#) – “City of Dripping Springs receives its largest donation: Charro Ranch Park”
- [Austin American Statesman – Hill Country Rambler](#) – April 30, 2009 – “Land donated for Dripping Springs park”

The ranch was in the family for about 50 years. Ms. Hibberd and her family have a history of philanthropy, including parks. Ms. Hibberd had developed trails, created areas for a reflecting at the Walk of Peace and Solstice Circle, and posted signs indicating tree types.

Since the donation, the City of Dripping Springs Parks & Recreation Commission has been charged with determining the use of the park. Their first priority was to deal with Oak Wilt found on the property. Trees were treated and trenches were dug in two phases, the last in January of 2011 by Oak Wilt Specialists of Texas.

Dripping Springs High School National Honor Society has adopted the park for volunteer opportunities and has energetically spread mulch to enhance existing trails.

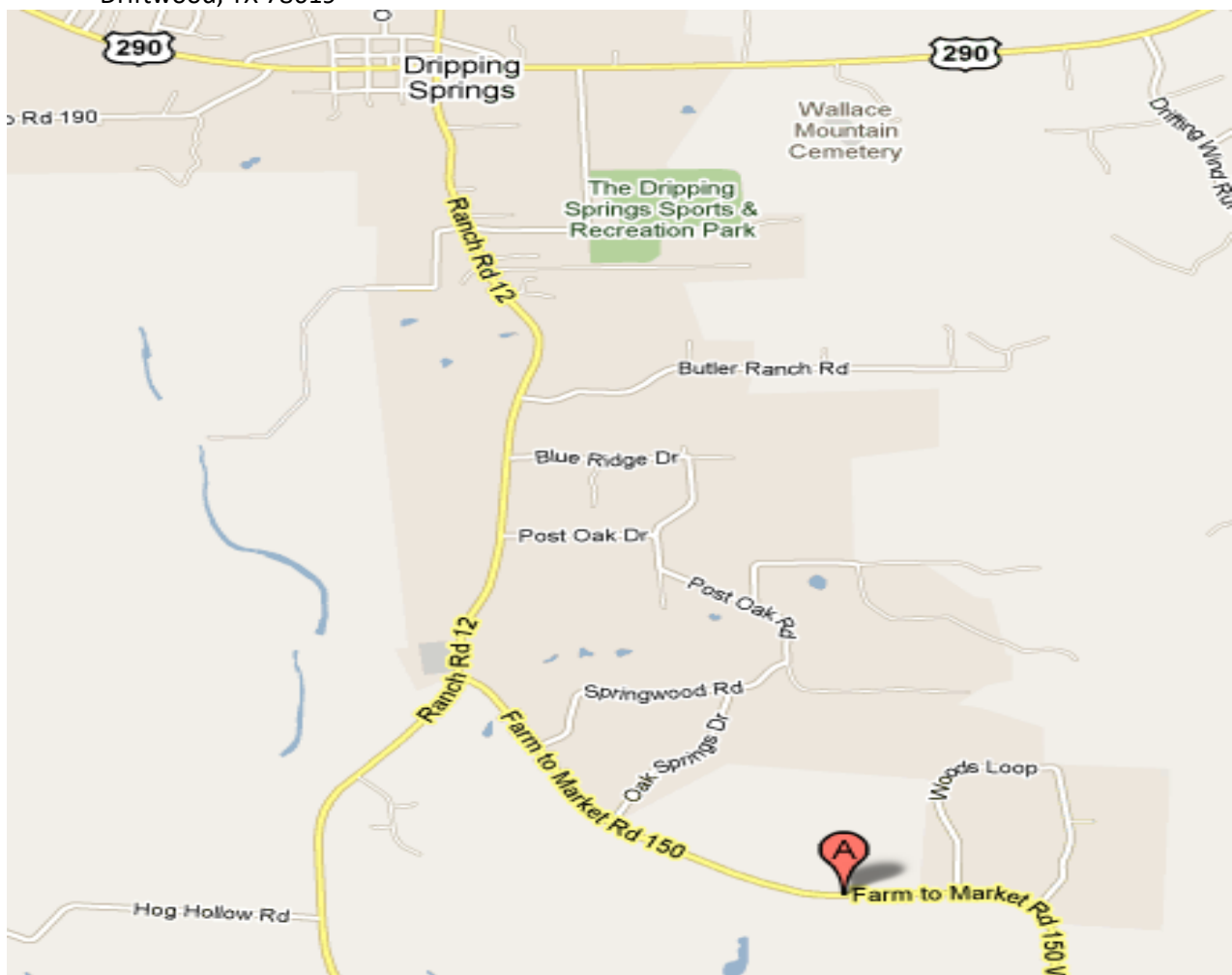


The Dripping Springs High School and Middle School track teams expressed interest in having a cross country trail at the park. This was plotted and blazed in November and December of 2010.

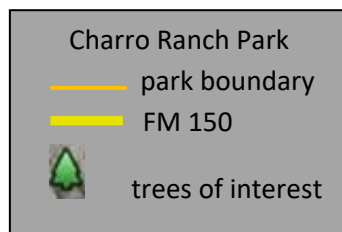
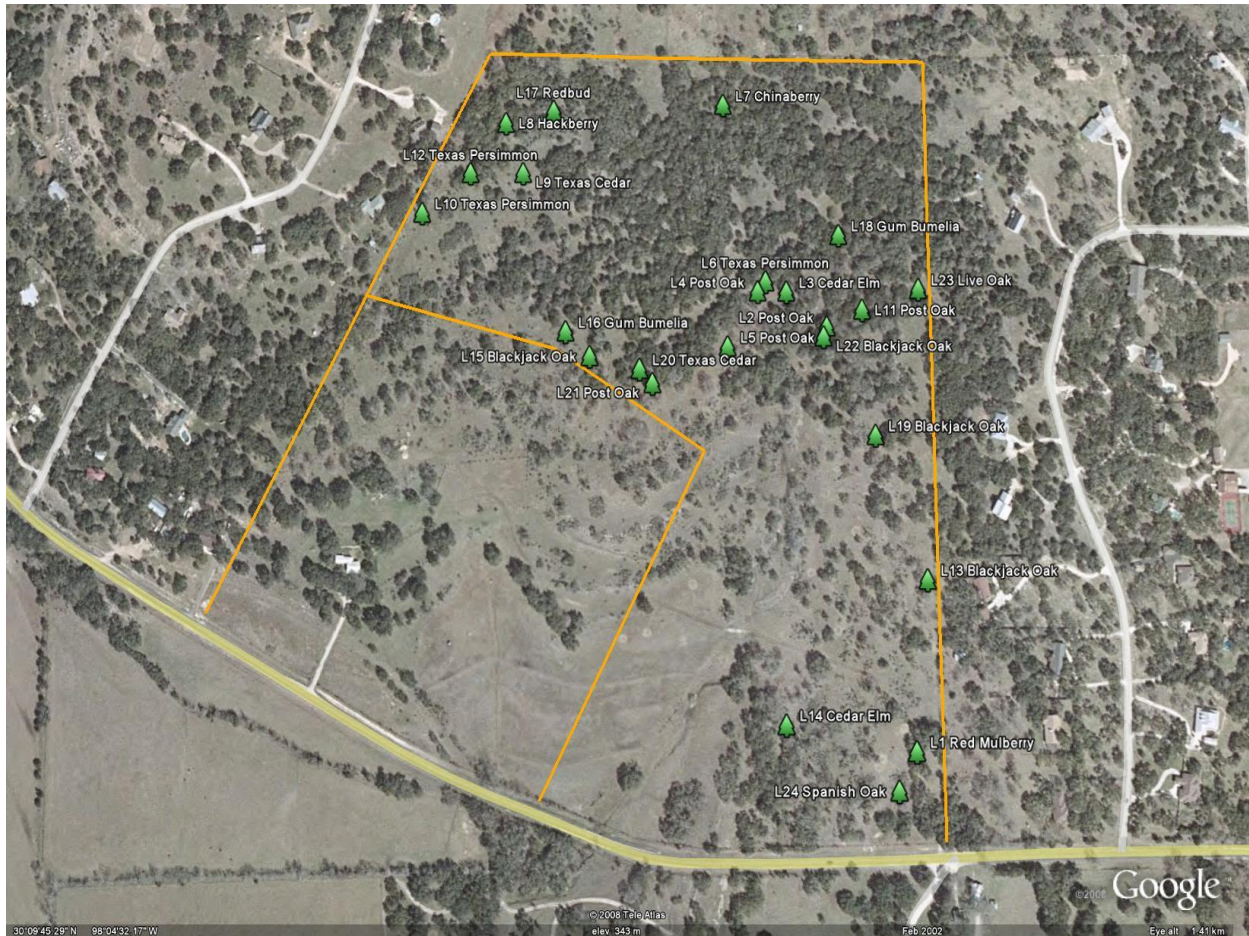
On November 8, 2010, M. Lee Brown presented a request for Hays County Master Naturalist volunteers to participate in the park planning and development. Their interest was to make Charro Ranch Park a destination for Dripping Springs citizens to learn about their environment and to create projects for Master Naturalists to achieve their required volunteer hours.

7. The Site

Charro Ranch Park is in southern Dripping Springs. The address is
22690 W. FM 150
Driftwood, TX 78619

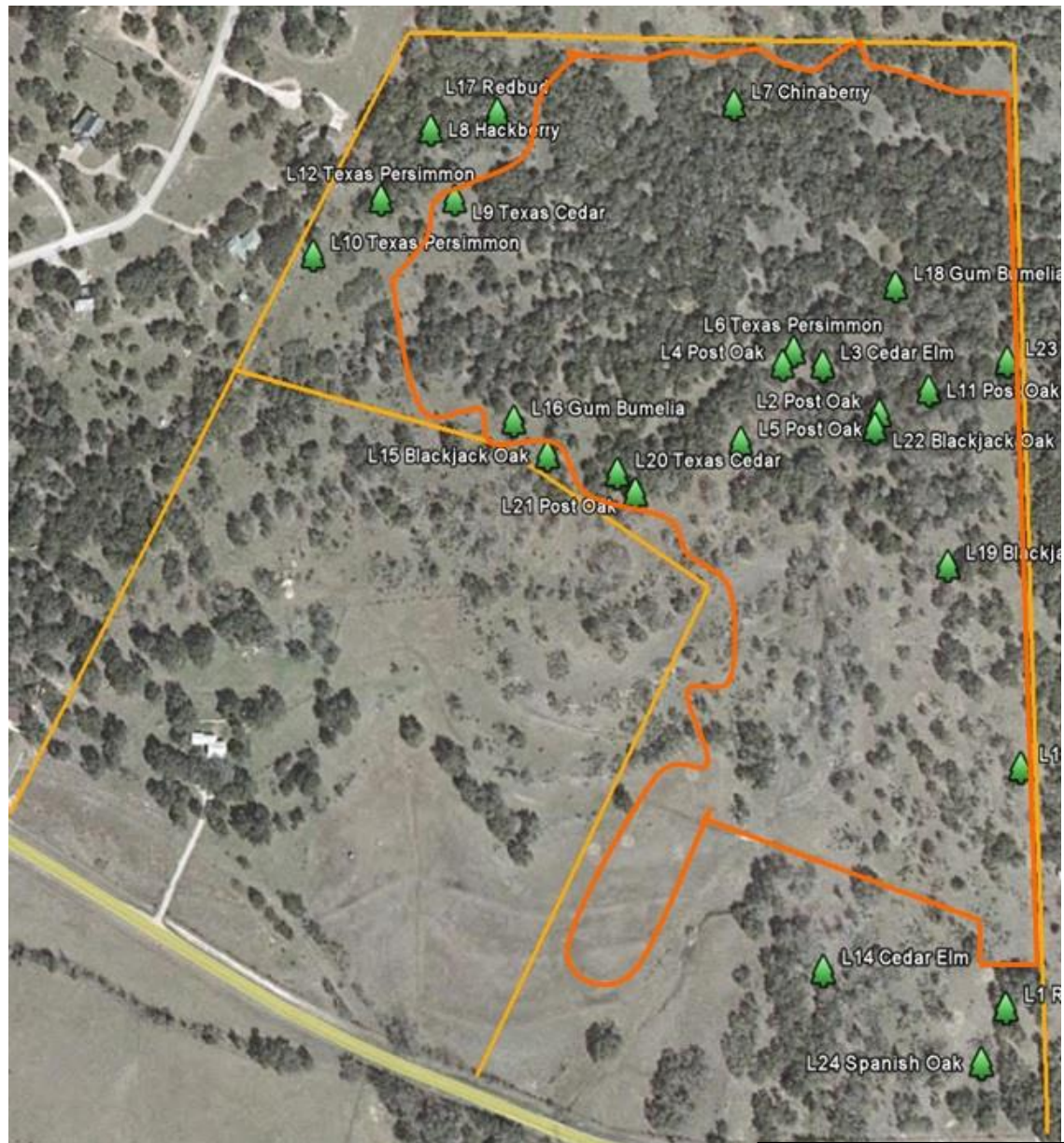


The site is 64.73 acres and is located between Oak Springs Drive on the west, Woods Loop on the east, and borders on FM 150 on the south.



Formerly a working ranch, the site is a mix of ecological regions. It is mostly grassland and Juniper and Oak woodlands. The park is a natural drainage basin for surrounding properties and has a pond area that fills in wet weather. Between the pond and FM 150, the wet weather creek forms a boggy area.

8. Uses



Recreation

Charro Ranch Park should be available for lots of outdoor recreation:

- Cross Country Track training
- Walking, hiking, biking and photography
- [Geo Caching](#) has already arrived at Charro Ranch Park

Charro Ranch Park
Cross Country Trail
— park boundary
— cross country trail

- [illegible]

Map of trails including original trails by Lucy Reed Hibberd and 2010 Cross Country Trail, created by Gary Pennington, RPLS



Environment

Native trees, shrubs, flowers and grasses abound in the park. The park sits on porous limestone rock serving as drainage for the area and likely a recharge zone for the aquifer below. Many species of both native and migratory birds can be found in the park.

Educational Opportunity

The environmental diversity affords many opportunities for education. Local schools could use the park for science classes. The Hays County Master Naturalists could lead interpretive walks/talks on the property.

Dripping Springs ISD may be interested in the educational opportunities at Charro Ranch Park. Initial ideas are science classes, the environmental club and the journalism department.

Reflection

The Solstice Circle and Walk of Peace, created by Lucy Reed Hibberd, are areas for learning about our place in the universe and reflecting on peace on this planet. A quiet walk through the fields and woods is nourishment for the soul.



9. Facilities

There are currently no buildings, water or restroom facilities on the grounds. This may limit approved school activities. There is only one picnic table on the property.



10. Projects

Prioritized Projects

1. Maintenance of existing trails previously built by Lucy Reed Hibberd. Determine how much of the crushed limestone stockpiled in the park could be used on the trails.
2. Designate and develop a parking, picnicking and pavilion area. The first step is to determine where parking and a potential pavilion should be located. Soon after, the parking area could be mowed, lined and covered as much as possible with the crushed limestone piles already in the park.
3. Determine a plan for a latrine. Initially a rental porta-potty could be used. These cost about \$80 per month. The committee would like to explore installing a composting toilet. There may be grants available for this.



4. Create signage for the park. A kiosk could be built near the trail entrance to include information such as park rules, trail map, “pack it in, pack it out” and no alcohol policies. Create a comprehensive map of original trails and the new cross country trails. GPS plotted maps would be best. Other possible signs are mile markers for the trails.
5. Oak wilt trench mitigation. This includes filling in dangerous trench gullies along the trails and blocking off the trenches so people do not consider them to be trails.
6. Removal of invasive species.



Future Projects

Facilities:

- Maintenance of the recently blazed cross country track training trail.
- Pick up trash found in the park.
- Improve driveway entrance. Consider its relocation, width and prominence.
- Installation of picnic tables and benches.
- Plan for waste management. Trash cans should be sturdy and chained down. Trash pickup could simply be volunteers taking it to a City dumpster off site.
- Determine if public water is available. If so, determine the costs for water tap installation, facilities to use the water, and ongoing water usage.
- Plan the pavilion feasibility:
 - Size
 - How to be funded
 - How to be used / rented
 - Could it include rainwater collection off roof
 - How will the rainwater be used
 - Materials
 - Etc.
- Properly designate bike routes –Perhaps not on cross country trail, may need to widen other trails.
- Identify additional trail options, perhaps using some of the oak wilt trenches.

Environmental:

- Identification of flora and fauna in the area. These actions could be coordinated with other Dripping Springs parks, specifically Harrison Ranch Park and Founders Memorial Park.
 - Participation in Great Backyard Bird Count
 - Participation in Ebirds - a monthly count of bird species
 - Identify and label trees, grasses, other plants. Enter these into the LBJ Wildflower Center's NPIN collection (Native Plant Identification index)
- Removal of Oak Wilt trees (?).
- Removal of junipers to encourage native grass growth. This would be especially good between parking area and the creek to open the area for picnic and pavilion areas. There are other places in the interior of the park that could benefit from thinning of the junipers.
- Determine if creation of habitat areas for various types of wildlife is desired. A demonstration butterfly garden using local native plants would be one habitat area to consider.
- Investigate geologic features of the park. Do an environmental & geological assessment. Determine where flood plain and water quality buffer zones may exist.



Educational:

- Create educational signage for environmental features.
- Create demonstration restoration / xeriscape area.
- Create community garden (?).
- Build rainwater collection demonstration facility (?) (See pavilion plan above)
- Validate and correct Solstice Circle angles. (Lucy Hibberd is currently working on this)
- Create educational signage for the Solstice Circle.
- Correct Longitude and Latitude sign.
- Develop walking/docent-lead tours.
- Develop educational programs on, for example, plants, birds, geology, photography, ecology.
- Establish regular Workdays to involve the community.

11. Workday Participation

To accomplish all these projects, the Charro Ranch Park Partners Committee would like to have workdays. Some workdays could be led by the various groups, for example, the cross country teams, National Honor Society and Hays County Master Naturalists. Another source of volunteers for workdays could be Texas State University in San Marcos.

Boy Scouts working on obtain the Eagle Scout award could take on some projects. Potential scout projects include trail markers, picnic tables and potentially composting toilets.

The City of Dripping Springs could publicize regularly scheduled workdays in the local newspapers, local websites, and in the City's newsletter and website.

12. Funding

What needs to be funded is yet To Be Determined. Funding from the City of Dripping Springs will be limited as park funding is being concentrated on Harrison Ranch Park at this point.

13. Park Rules

Park's Hours: Dawn to Dusk

See Dripping Springs Park Rules Ordinance: <http://z2.franklinlegal.net/drippingsprings-flp/>

Specifically, see Chapter 16 PUBLIC WAYS AND PLACES; ARTICLE 16.02 PARKS AND RECREATION; Division 2. Park Rules; Sections 16.02.031 – 16.02.065.

14. The Future

What else can we see down the road?

15. Revision History

1.1 Original draft by Anne & Garry child

1.2 Comments added from M. Lee Brown. This was the first edition sent to the Charro Ranch Park Committee and to the main body of HCMNs involved with Charro Ranch.

1.3 Comments incorporated from the 02/15/2011 Charro Ranch Park Committee meeting

- Add Table of Contents
- Add page numbers
- In Stakeholders Group, change “Hibberd family” to “Crenshaw family”
- In Stakeholders Group, specify Springwood and Woods Loop neighborhoods
- In Mission, include “picnicking”
- In Mission, change “cross country track team” to “cross country track runners”
- In Goals, include “picnicking”
- In The Master Plan Process, change “iterative” to “continuous reassessment”
- In History, correct “Hibbard” to “Hibberd”
- In History and in Reflection, change “Peace Garden” to “Walk of Peace”.
- In History, add specifics of article titles and dates (links not useful in printed version)
- In The Site, add the specific address “21290 West Farm to Market Road 150”
- In Educational Opportunity, add specific DSISD groups who might have interest.
- In Projects, change “Solstice Garden” to “Solstice Circle”
- In Projects, categorize projects into Prioritized and Future Projects. Prioritized Projects were prioritized and detailed a bit more. Future Projects were split into Facilities, Environmental and Educational sections. The order of the Future Projects is not significant.
- In Funding, note that funds will be limited.
- Add the Workday Participation section.

1.4 Information supplied by Michelle Fischer

- Lucy Reed Hibberd deeded the park to the City on 12/29/2008
- Address is 22690 FM 150
- PDF by Gary Pennington, RPLS, of complete trail routes created via GPS.
- Link to City’s current Rules document
- Added pictures

1.5 Maps enlarged

1.6 The fix of “Hibberd family” to “Crenshaw family” was inadvertently dropped. Re-fixed. Also somehow the trail map was designated as a Heading 2. Now it is Normal.

1.7 Includes many clarifications from Michelle Fischer, City Administrator:

- Official title designations
- Grammar, spelling and punctuation corrections
- Correction to the date of Oak Wilt treatment to January 2011

- Simplification of location description
- Change “drainage for the neighborhoods” to “natural drainage area”
- Remove Entry Post Chain project – already done
- Correct Porta-potty pricing
- Remove LCRA as possible grant funder for composting toilet
- Add “water quality buffer zones” to items to be located
- Add the idea of benches
- Clarify that trash could be taken to a “City dumpster off site”

Other changes were added at the 4/14/2011 Charro Ranch Park Partners meeting:

- Add “picnicking” to the parking and pavilion area project
- Separate cross country trail markers from the kiosk description
- Remove cost estimate from public water tap reference
- Add “label” to plant identification project.
- New Charro Ranch Park sign picture

1.8 Includes corrections and clarifications from Michelle Fischer, City Administrator.

1.9 Includes comments from 5/9/2011 Dripping Springs Parks & Recreation Commission meeting and comments sent from Lucy Hibberd.

- Change front page picture to not include incorrect longitude and latitude sign.
- In Goals, add Lucy Hibberd’s goal to include access from surrounding neighborhoods.
- Under Future Projects: Facilities: improve driveway entrance/consider its relocation
- Under Future Projects: Environmental: include Rex Miller’s suggestion of a butterfly garden as a potential habitat.
- Under Future Projects: Environmental: include June Baumoel’s thought of hosting bird counts at other parks too.

1.10 Amended Section 4. Goals as follows: Minimize human impact on sensitive areas of the park, while providing public access and educational opportunities.