

Funding Combination Benefits Boardwalk

City of Fort Worth



A public-private-nonprofit funding combination will benefit a new project for the Lotus Marsh Boardwalk at the Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge. FWNC&R Staff Photo.

Fort Worth has received a \$1.5 million grant from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to make improvements at the Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge. The grant is matched with \$1.2 million in City of Fort Worth funds and a \$300,000 donation from Facebook, raised by the Friends of FWNC&R.

The 2020 Urban Outdoor Recreation Grant funds will be used to complete a restoration of the Lotus Marsh Boardwalk. Funding will be used for improvements that include replacing the original collapsed wooden boardwalk, extending accessible concrete trail, restoring native vegetation and habitat, installing site furnishings and interpretive signage, constructing a solar-powered restroom and rehabilitating the existing parking area.

"The Friends of the Fort Worth Nature Center are deeply grateful to Facebook for its incredibly generous donation for this project. The restoration of the Lotus Marsh Boardwalk will provide expanded visitor access to the Nature Center's beautiful surroundings," said Lynda Gearheart, past-president of the Friends.

Friends Executive Director Haily Summerford added: "This is the largest gift we have ever received, and the largest funded capital project to occur at the Nature Center in the last 50 years. We look forward to working alongside the city and Facebook on this important and historic project."

"Nature is vital to humanity, as the pandemic has underscored," said Holli Davies, community development regional manager for Facebook. "We are proud to support this beautiful boardwalk and all it will provide to Fort Worth residents, visitors and the flora and fauna that reside there."

Facebook has been part of the Fort Worth community since

opening a data center in 2017.

Fort Worth was awarded 36% of the total statewide allocation from the Urban Outdoor Recreation Grant funds.

The Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge is located in Council District 7, but serves the entire city.

Councilmember Dennis Shingleton, who represents the area, said: "The city places a great emphasis on developing partnerships in an effort to leverage taxpayer-generated resources to accomplish and expand on such opportunities. Facebook's contribution reflects a corporate commitment to the community, and their involvement would not have been possible if it were not for the Friends reaching out for their support."

The 2020 Urban Outdoor Recreation Grant program is funded by a portion of the state sales tax on sporting goods through the Texas Recreation and Parks Account and the Texas Large County & Municipality Recreation & Parks Account. Additional funds come from offshore gas royalties through the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund.

"This grant represents another example of what can be accomplished when we all work together for the good of the community – local government, a nonprofit support group and the corporate sector all coming together in true partnership," said Park & Recreation Director Richard Zavala. "The beneficiaries of this collaboration are the people of Fort Worth, both today and into the future."

Zavala said the department will continue to work with community and state partners to leverage funds through partnerships and grants.