After nine years of dreams,

A PARK PLAN

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After more than 30 community meetings and contributions from 7,000 citizen participants, leaders of the Park at the Horse Farm on Sunday unveiled the 100-acre space's master plan, which includes amenities like a horticulture center, a dog park and a multi-use pavilion.

Design Workshop, an Austin-based architecture and urban design firm, revealed the master plan — a culmination of nine years of community effort and feedback — in a series of poster boards that laid out 16 sections of the park, which will be built if fundraising goals are met in two separate phases.

The plan was announced at the Party in the Park, a kickoff fundraiser event hosted by Lafayette Central Park Inc., a nonprofit in charge of developing the park. Elizabeth “EB” Brooks, the nonprofit’s director of planning and design, said she has not heard “a single bad thing” about the park’s proposed future.

“It really brings together family- and community-oriented plans, but at the same time, it enhances and preserves the natural beauty that’s out here now,” she said.

There will be three entrances, two for the public on Johnston Street and one for delivery and maintenance trucks off Doucet Road. Visitors entering from the opening nearest Bertrand Drive, where the weekly Farmers and Artisans Market is held, will walk into an area for mini golf and a carousel, which, with no tax dollars invested in the park, will bring in some revenue to help fund the park’s ongoing expenses, Brooks said.

State Rep. Stephen Ortego, a Democrat, examined the master plan at the party. Judging from his professional perspective, he said, the park will be “world-class.”

“It’s unlike anything I’ve ever seen,” Ortego said.

Beyond the carousel, a boardwalk will line a sloped event lawn for the amphitheater, which will “funnel sound away from the neighborhoods toward Johnston,” Brooks said. Between the slopes will sit Hammock Grove, an area with trees...
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spaced far enough apart to set up hammocks. It is also called Founders' Grove as a nod to Brooks, who conceived the idea.

Mark Whitney, a UL student from St. Martinville, volunteered at the party because he said he believes "in everything the park stands for."

"Beautifying the park is in essence beautifying the world," he said.

Most of the lush landscaping will have to be planted, Brooks said. The Children's Discovery Gardens, the Natural Display Ravine Gardens and a prairie will be beyond the event lawn, which illustrations show will nearly reach the park's center.

Cost estimates, Brooks said, are roughly $40-60 million, and the nonprofit's next fundraiser will ideally raise $30 million, which would cover the first phase of construction. She said it all depends on the generosity of Lafayette.

"We're really committed to doing $1 for capital construction for building the park elements, and then putting another dollar in an endowment fund, so we don't have to worry about building the park one year and then seven years down the road it goes away," Brooks said.

Construction for the first phase will last "hopefully 12-16 months," Brooks said, but that depends on what will be built first, which in turn depends on how much money will be raised. The city owns the land, but Lafayette Central Park leases it, and it will maintain and run the park, Brooks said. The nonprofit's lease will officially begin when it breaks ground for construction, which is projected to happen later this fall.

James Parker, a librarian from Scott, said she thinks "it's a great adventure," but she admitted she is concerned whether enough funds will be raised to complete it.

"We need it, though," she said. "We need more of an environment for nature in Lafayette."

"It's attainable," Brooks said, "and it's going to change the face of Lafayette forever."

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