The Report Committee for Saul Israel Vazquez-Mejia
Certifies that this is the approved version of the following Report

Parqués: An Exploration of Cultural Identity and Accessibility

of Public Parks; A Comparison between Hispanic and White Neighborhood Parks

in Austin, TX.

APPROVED BY

SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:

_____

Sarah Lopez, Supervisor

_____

Junfeng Jiao

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by

Saul Israel Vazquez-Mejia

Report

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this report to my parents for providing me the opportunity to follow my dreams.

Abstract

Parqués: An Exploration of Cultural Identity and Accessibility

of Public Parks; A Comparison between Hispanic and White Neighborhood Parks

in Austin, TX.

Saul Israel Vazquez-Mejia, MSCRP

The University of Texas at Austin, 2018

Supervisor: Sarah Lopez

Public parks are important elements in the community and can play a major factor in community building. They serve as spaces where people interact, exercise, and can be spaces where cultural expression take place. There are numerous studies showing that park accessibility is linked to park proximity, however, accessibility is a multi-faceted word and can be defined in multiple ways. Park accessibility can refer to park distribution, proximity, safety, quality, and size. While the field of City Planning is centered around the notion of creating a just, sustainable, and structured future for cities and its residents, racist undertones have directly impacted the built environment throughout history. Direct and indirect racist ideologies have shaped the development of public space and park planning, park design and distribution. Since environmental justice issues often affect communities of color, the quality, quantity, and types of amenities that are offered at public parks is an important area to investigate.

The site chosen for this study is Austin, Texas. Austin has been and is experiencing major population growth, which is increasingly making the city demographically diverse. "The City of Austin has now crossed the threshold of becoming a Majority-Minority city. Put another way, no ethnic or demographic group exists as a

majority of the City's population. The City's Anglo (non-Hispanic White) share of total population has dropped below 50% and will stay there for the foreseeable future" (COA Website).

The methods used in this study were centered around field observations, and mapping utilizing geographic information systems. Mapping park and demographic data allowed me to build a comparative analysis across the eight neighborhood parks that were surveyed. This method was imperative to this research in order to bring forth and understand spatial patterns that may not have been found otherwise. Additionally, photographs of amenities were taken to capture the condition of each amenity. Park observations were conducted to understand how the community uses their neighborhood parks.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Motivation

The reasoning for this research is to provide insight to Urban Planners and Designers who directly affect decisions regarding park planning, design, and management. My intent is to showcase how cultural identity, park condition, and types of amenities play a role in park accessibility. My fascination with public parks, and environmental justice issues began at an age when I wasn't aware that these were real issues. My family immigrated to the U.S. from Mexico when I was a young child. My earliest childhood memories are of my younger sister and I playing with our father in a parking lot across the street from where we lived. We would anxiously wait for our parents to come home from work so that we could go play outside with them. I remember having such a good time. To my sister and I, the bank parking lot was not just a parking lot, for that moment in time it would transform into our playground. For my parents, the parking lot across the street was not only the most convenient, but also safer than the neighborhood park closest to us. As I got older I began to question why we would have to travel to other parts of the city to find a good quality park. I increasingly began to notice the inequalities in the built environment that my community faced and became intrigued by how I could help change this. These experiences have helped shape my educational and career paths and have allowed me to have a different perspective on Urban Planning, especially in regards to recreational spaces.

1.2 Why is this research important?

Public parks are important elements in the community and can play a major factor in community building. They serve as spaces where people interact, exercise, and can be spaces where cultural expression take place. As cities become more ethnically diverse, "it remains unclear how parks that are sensitive to ethnic and cultural differentiation can better serve marginalized social groups, and how ethnic based preference and socio-cultural concerns should be addressed" (Li, 231). There are numerous studies showing that park accessibility is linked to park proximity, however, accessibility is a multi-faceted word and can be defined in multiple ways. Park accessibility can refer to park distribution, proximity, safety, quality, and size. Some studies show that "minorities had greater or equal access to parks in terms of distance. Despite closer geographic proximity to parks, minorities face barriers that limit park access, sometimes called *social access* barriers" (Smiley, 2). Other studies show that park accessibility affect public health, and offer economic, environmental, and social benefits to society. While the field of City Planning is centered around the notion of creating a just,

sustainable, and structured future for cities and its residents, racist undertones have directly impacted the built environment throughout history. Direct and indirect racist ideologies have shaped the development of public space and park planning, park design and distribution. "Park development and design in America has historically reflected the instrumental goals of social control, which sought the assimilation of immigrants into mainstream American culture" (Li, 232). "Historically, low income people and communities of color in the city faced not only economic discrimination and social marginalization, but also environmental racism" (Byrne, 6). Increasingly, public park amenities have been a focus of environmental justice studies. Since environmental justice issues often affect communities of color, the quality, quantity, and types of amenities that are offered at public parks is an important area to investigate. "Environmental justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies" (Environmental Protection Agency Website). Research has indicated that the quality and condition of park features is unequal across areas comprised of varying race/ ethnicity and income characteristics (Bruton, 2).

Throughout history public parks have served different purposes for different people. As cities have evolved, so to have their parks. Different types of public parks at different scales have developed across the U.S., which include national, state, city, and neighborhood parks. The focus of this study will be neighborhood parks due to their scale and proximity to local neighborhoods and communities. The following study will investigate park accessibility through the lens of park amenity quality, quantity, and cultural identity. More specifically, this study will aim to uncover any discrepancies of park amenity quality, quantity, and cultural identity between neighborhood parks that are in census tracts composed of 75% or more Hispanic to neighborhood parks that are in census tracts composed of 75% or more White population. This research is also important because public parks are often the only places where people can come in contact with nature. Likewise, public parks are spaces where people are able to get some type of physical activity. Studies have shown that "while parks and recreational facilities are available throughout the U.S., there are several additional factors that affect park use and physical activity levels, such as, park access, park distribution, park facilities, and park condition" (NRPA, 3). Furthermore, studies also show that "disparities in park distribution and park access exist across communities particularly in neighborhoods that largely consist of low income and racial/ ethnic populations" (3).

Given these facts, this study will investigate if these disparities are present within the City of Austin, when comparing neighborhood parks of White and Hispanic ethnic communities. This study will aim to show

that public parks can contribute to the creation of cultural identity and that accessibility can be affected by park quality, quantity, and type of amenities. Additionally, I will investigate if ethnicity is correlated to park amenity quality. In efforts to bring awareness to this issue, this study will try to uncover unrecorded park access inequalities, which could be utilized to start a conversation on how to make parks equitably accessible.

1.3 Study Site Context

The site chosen for this study is Austin, Texas. Austin has been and is experiencing major population growth, which is increasingly making the city demographically diverse. "The City of Austin has now crossed the threshold of becoming a Majority-Minority city. Put another way, no ethnic or demographic group exists as a majority of the City's population. The City's Anglo (non-Hispanic White) share of total population has dropped below 50% and will stay there for the foreseeable future" (COA Website). The cities growth of Latino and Asian households is on the rise, causing this shift in demographics. It is also important to note that the influx of Hispanic families in Austin is "dampening the increase in the city's median age, keeping Austin one of the youngest cities in the country" (COA Website).

When selecting which parks to analyze, options were limited in regards to Hispanic parks. After mapping racial distribution and overlaying neighborhood parks, only four parks remained inside census tracts that were 75% or more Hispanic. The four selected Hispanic neighborhood parks are:

- •Civitan Neighborhood Park
- •Franklin Neighborhood Park
- •Kendra Page Neighborhood Park
- •Ponciana Neighborhood Park

White parks were selected on the basis of similar size, year built, and similar amenities as the selected Hispanic parks. In addition, the selection of White parks was also determined by finding neighborhood parks that were located in census tracts that had similar household incomes and education levels. The selected White parks are:

- •Little Zilker Neighborhood Park
- •Ramsey Neighborhood Park
- •Westenfield Neighborhood Park
- •West Austin Neighborhood Park

Maps of selected parks are shown below:

Figure 1.1 Shows Civitan Neighborhood Park

Figure 1.2 Shows Franklin Neighborhood Park

Figure 1.3 Shows Ponciana Neighborhood Park

Figure 1.4 Shows Kendra Page Neighborhood Park
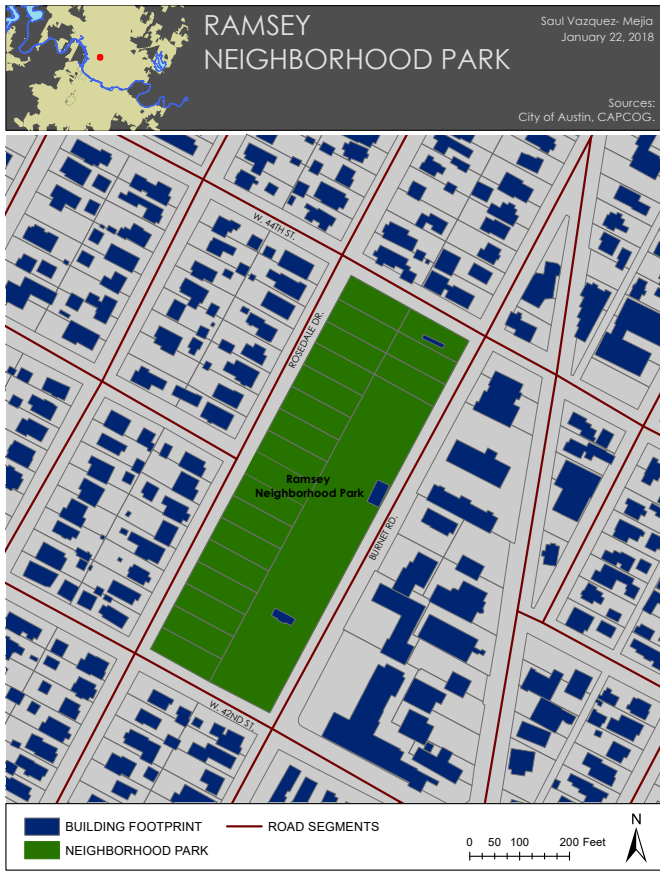
Figure 1.5 Shows Ramsey Neighborhood Park

Figure 1.6 Shows Little Zilker Neighborhood Park
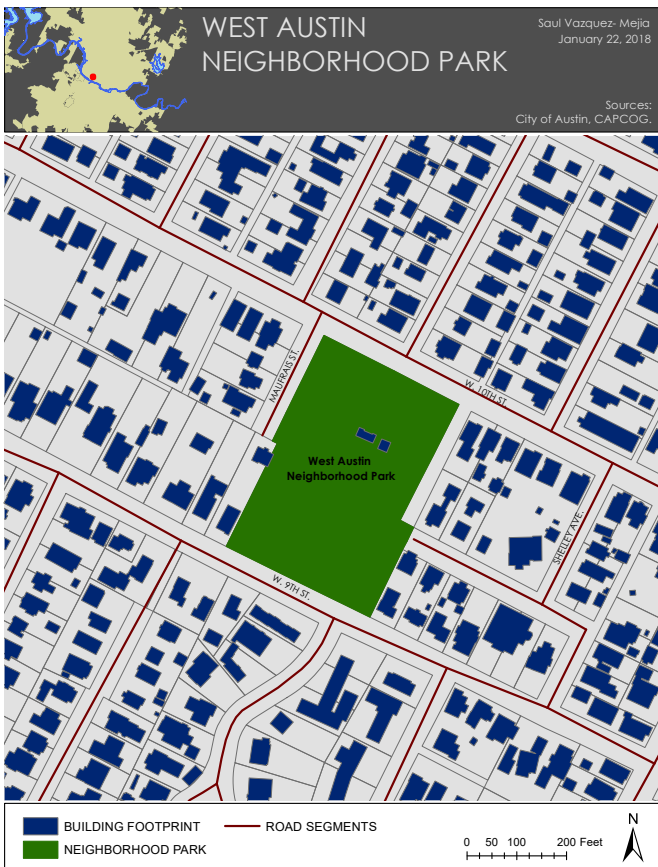
Figure 1.7 Shows West Austin Neighborhood Park

Figure 1.8 Shows Westenfield Neighborhood Park

Chapter 2. Lterature Review

2.1 History of parks

Public Parks in the United States began as "pleasure grounds" where people who lived and worked in the city could find a space to relieve from the stresses of city life. The "pleasure grounds" were located at the edge of cities and broke away from the gridded nature of cities. "A stretch of nature would not merely give respite to the tired workers but also stimulate and exercise the unused part of their mind" (Cranz, 8). These initial parks were seen as places where "passive" recreation took place outdoor in order to help alleviate long work days indoors. "This pastoral landscape was conceptually mid-way between the wildness of pure nature and the finite and civilized nature of a city" (Cranz, WS). The initial parks were places to enjoy the countryside and admire nature. As time passed, parks began to host different types of activities that were not considered "passive". These activities included racing, polo-playing, circuses, tennis and croquet, baseball and lacrosse, and many others. More "urban" amenities and recreations were slowly introduced in parks. Initially city planners would not allow restaurants or restrooms at parks, claiming that these amenities resembled too much urban life. Zoo's, arboretum's, museum's, and other such institutions made their way into public parks on the basis of providing learning opportunities to the public. "If we can give people information in a playful way in the park, it will be a good thing to do" (14).

Unfortunately, because many of the first parks were located on the edge of cities, the working class could not afford to use them. The parks were too far to reach by foot and public transport was too expensive to ride for the average worker. "These parks became playgrounds for rich people who liked to race their carriages there- the parks had some of the best roads in the cities at that time" (Cranz, WS). This issue led to creation of a subset of the "pleasure ground" park model, which introduced smaller parks closer to the city where people lived. The same type of programming occurred in these parks, which allowed working people to enjoy different types of recreational activities. The "pleasure ground" park model dominated park design and culture from around 1850-1900.

A new park model emerged at the turn of the 19th century called the "reform park". This park model was no longer required to portray the illusion of a countryside but was more about structural organization. "The keynote approach of reform parks was to organize activity, since urban park planners now considered the masses incapable of undertaking their own recreation." (61). Not only were planners trying to restructure the concept of a park, but also trying to shape the city. "In the reform park, planners were trying to use the park as

a way to reform the city socially, primarily because they were dealing with so much immigration. Planners had a desire to bring everybody together so that they would speak the same language, they would know how to fill out government and other kinds of forms, they would know what it means to live in America." (Cranz, WS).

Another Park model came to fruition in the 1930's. The "playground and park" model, was concerned with incorporating activity facilities. "It became popular enough to force city governments to begin to install play equipment in existing parks and public squares" (63). Around the 1960's a fourth model of parks emerged. This model stated that all open space had potential recreational value. The "open space" model, located parks anywhere, location was no longer a limitation. Parks could be at waterfronts, at old railyards, on a rooftop, etc.. Likewise, the types of events that occurred at parks also became broader. "Jazz and rock concerts were introduced in Central Park, as the last tolerable stage of park liberality" (137). The "open space model also introduced more disruptive uses such as demonstrations and protest. During this period parks developed an "anything goes" attitude, which nonetheless created safety issues. At the time this park model took place, "white flight" was underway, which changed perceptions of the inner city and therefore inner city parks. Riots and demonstrations transfomed public parks into "unsafe" places.

Throughout time parks have undergone a significant number of changes that have distinguished their purpose. Parks have been spaces that have offered the public a bucolic escape from the bustling city, they have been used as a form of social reform, they have provided us with multiple types of recreational facilities and have introduced the use of open space for any type of events. History shows that parks are not stagnant, they have evolved and have continued to be shaped by its users wants and needs. As society changes so to shall its public spaces.

2.2 The Importance of Public Parks

Whether it is for job or education opportunities, or easier access to amenities, the United States continues to see more people moving to cities. Likewise, cities continue to expand and build out their developable land. While growth is usually seen as a positive measurement, sometimes growth can cause people to lose out on public places that allow them to enjoy nature and escape the city. Often, public parks are forgotten and considered superfluous amenities that are not necessary. However, there are those who believe, "parks are not amenities, they are necessities, providing recreation, inspiration, and essential respite from the city's blare and bustle" (Sherer, 5). Studies have shown that parks benefit society in numerous ways including socially, environmentally, and economically. Parks can help create a sense of community and have the

power to transform areas into attractive places to live and work. "But too few Americans are able to enjoy these benefits. Eighty percent of Americans live in metropolitan areas, and many of these areas are severely lacking in park place" (Sherer, 6). Recently, an interest in public parks has emerged, which is highlighting the importance of parks and pubic spaces.

As previously mentioned, one of the most common benefits of public parks are public health benefits. "Strong evidence shows that when people have access to parks, they exercise more" (14). A more active lifestyle can help reduce the risk to many preventable diseases. "When people have nowhere to walk, they gain weight" (14). Physical activity can also produce psychological benefits. "Horticultural therapy evolved as a form of mental health treatment, based on the therapeutic effects of gardening" (15). Often, parks can enhance the physical setting of a place, which in turn makes an area more attractive to live in. This benefit leads to the economic benefits of public parks. "The availability of park and recreation facilities is an important quality of life factor for corporations choosing where to locate facilities and for well educated individuals choosing a place to live" (7). Studies show that people are willing to pay more money when they are closer to a park. The important catch here is that parks must be well maintained, if a park is not clean and safe, then it is likely to do the opposite and lower the value of a home or business. A park can also become a signature landmark within a city and bring tourism, such as the San Antonio Riverwalk Park. "Organized events held in public parks-art festivals, athletic events, food festivals, musical and theatrical events- often bring substantial positive economic impacts to their communities, filling hotel rooms and restaurants and bringing customers to local stores" (19). Public parks also bring environmental benefits such as alleviating air and water pollution. "In an area with 100 percent tree cover, trees can remove from the air as much as 15% of the ozone, 14% of the sulfur dioxide, 13% of the particulate matter, 8% of the nitrogen dioxide and 0.05% of the carbon monoxide" (19). Trees help keep cities and buildings cooler and can also help control storm water runoff. "Trees intercept rainfall, and unpaved areas absorb water, slowing the rate at which it reaches storm water facilities" (20). Another very important benefit of public parks are the social benefits that they contribute to a community and city. Public parks are places where people from all walks of life come together and interact. Most importantly, "city parks make inner-city neighborhoods more livable; they offer recreational opportunities for at-risk youth, low-income children, and low-income families; and they provide places in low-income neighborhoods where people can experience a sense of community" (20). Studies have also shown that well maintained parks help reduce crime in an area through the use of community involvement. Public parks play a crucial role for small children. Children are able to learn multiple skills through playing and

interacting with other children. "Play has proved to be a critical element in a child's future success. Play helps kids develop muscle strength and coordination, language, cognitive thinking, and reasoning" (21). Public parks are increasingly becoming spaces that bridge the divide between different communitites. Whether the divide may be due to income, education, race, or location, parks are playing important societal roles in helping bring people together. As the City of Austin, as well as other U.S. cities, continue to diversify and become increasingly multicultural, it is important to recognize the societal benefits that public parks offer to different ethnic communitites. Public parks have the potential to enrich peoples cultural knowledge by exposing them to different customs and traditions, languages, food, music, etc.. In ever increasingly divided cities and communities, parks have the ability to teach us tolerability.

Public parks are invaluable spaces that provide society with many benefits. They are necessary for a society to function in a healthy and sustainable way. With rapid growth in many of our cities, we as planners and designers must emphasize the importance of placing parks closer to where people live in order for them to enjoy and reap the benefits that they provide.

2.3 The role of public parks within the City of Austin

The City of Austin has unique natural settings and topography. It sees itself as "a city within a park". (COA, Long Range Plan, 2). It's a city where public parks and recreation spaces are important to the residents of Austin. "The mission of the Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) is to provide, protect, and preserve a park system that promotes, cultural and outdoor experiences for the Austin community" (3). The city of Austin recognizes the importance of cultural affairs within public spaces and has therefore undertaken efforts to determine the cultural needs of the citizens of Austin. In regards to cultural affairs, the city would like to "provide artistic, cultural and historical experiences for Austin's public, at museums, theaters, and arts centers along with various outreach programs" (251). In 2011, the City of Austin adopted a Long-Range Plan for Land, Facilities and Programs (LRP) in efforts to provide a guide for future growth and development on Austin's parks and recreation system. "The plan takes a look at the need for parks, trails, programs, preservation of environmental and ecological areas, parks standards, best management practices, land stewardship and national and department standards" (COA, Website). The plan was developed through collaborations with citizens, neighborhood groups, public entities, non-profit groups and other entities over a period of four months. The goals of the LRP are as follow:

•Provide safe and accessible parks and facilities to all citizens

- Provide a diversity and sufficiency of recreational opportunities

- Design and maintain parks and facilities to achieve environmental sustainability

- Foster collaboration, coordination, and partnerships throughout the community

- Employ an ongoing system of organizational evaluation

- Maintain fiscal responsibility throughout the Department

- Improve maintenance and operational efficiency throughout the park system

Public input was received throughout the process, existing neighborhood plans were taken into consideration, and local trends that might affect public parks were examined. City-wide recommendations that pertained to this research study included:

- Improve existing facilities and provide new types of facilities throughout the city. Improve existing facilities, add support facilities, and provide more neighborhood tennis opportunities

- Increase diversified play opportunities for toddlers, teens and special needs children

- Ensure all existing and new facilities are safe, secure, barrier free and comfortable for all users; develop field offices for athletics and aquatics

- Consistently inventory, track and update all PARD assets in the Asset Management Database

- Partner with school districts, other city departments and advocacy groups

- Expand and promote outdoor and indoor recreational, cultural and nature programs

- Improve security, increase interpretive signage, improve trails, and increase operational support

This list identifies the qualities and goals that the City of Austin deems as important in public parks. Austin recognizes the value in providing quality public spaces for all residents and promotes the opportunity to showcase the cities' diversity. The city also points out the importance of maintaining and improving existing facilities through the use of partnerships and inventory tracking. The Long Range Plan is a step in the right direction to acieve the goals that PARD has outlined.

2.4 How does Imagine Austin view public parks?

Adopted in 2012, the City of Austin's comprehensive plan, Imagine Austin, contains information about public parks. The plan recognizes that parks are an integral component that will transform the city into a great city. While the plan recognizes this, the city also states that funding and maintenance is not up to par with the national average. "Austin's park area has doubled in size over the past two decades, but funding and

maintenance has not kept pace with growth. The parks and recreation department's operations and maintenance budget is $20 per capita, which is lower than the national average of $91 per capita" (City of Austin, Imagine Austin, 56). According to the Austin Parks Foundation (APF), "our parks and recreation department is woefully underfunded to the tune of nearly $100 million, every single year" (Austin Parks Foundation Website). As the city continues to grow in exponential numbers, constraints on the city budget arise. More often than not, the Parks and Recreation Department is one of the first to recieve budget cuts. These actions respond to the historical sentiment that is proclaimed of parks, where parks aren't seen as a necessity, but rather a gratuitous amenity. While the city has an adequate acreage of parkland, the budget allocated for maintenance and improvements does not correlate. Oddly enough, the manner in which the city's comprehensive plan talks about parks, would infer that providing high quality public spaces is of high priority for the city. The comprehensive plan also points out and understands the need to promote infill parkland in order to increase parks within walking distance of homes. "More attention needs to be paid to creating smaller parks that are in or within walking distance of neighborhoods. The absence of these smaller parks means that many areas of the city are not adequately served by the park system" (City of Austin, Imagine Austin, 61). The city is well aware of the issues regarding parks and has outlined clear goals and processes in order to help alleviate the issues that affect public parks throughout the city. Additionally, the comprehensive plan recommends to create design standards for public spaces that directly respond to the unique setting in which they are located.

2.5 Park Funding

Public parks in Austin receive funds from the city through two revenue sources: The City Budget and General Obligation (GO) Bonds. The City Budget revenue comes from " utility charges (49%), various taxes (including property) (24%), charges for services and goods (14%), and other revenue such as interest, fees, and transfers (13%)" (COA Financial Service Report, 9). GO bonds pass through voters, who decide whether they get approved or not. These funds help the City of Austin aquire parkland, construct new parks, and make necessary park improvements. Unfortunately, city park funds have been diminishing overtime not only in Austin, but also nationwide. "Government funding for parks has declined in recent years. Cuts to state and local budgets after the 2008 financial crisis hit parks hard, exacerbating downward trends that many park systems were already experiencing" (Walls, 1). These cuts have led residents to look to philantrophic sources of revenue such as park foundations, conservancies, and non-profits. In Austin, entities such as Austin Parks Foundation, Pease

Park Conservancy, Barton Springs Conservancy, and others are led by local neighborhood residents who work together to collect private funds in effort to fill the budget gap. While these grassroot initiatives produce great work, they come with drawbacks such as:

- •"Free riding: a donations-based approach will almost always lead to underfunding because people can enjoy the benefits of the park without helping to cover its costs
- •Uncertainty in the year-to-year funding stream: voluntary donations are inherently uncertain, which makes it difficult to rely on them for ongoing operational expenses
- •"Crowding out" of public funds: as the private sector steps in with greater levels of funding, the public sector tends to step out and put its limited dollars toward other uses
- •The need to spend money to make money: foundations, conservancies, and other park non profits incur significant costs to raise money—executive salaries, proposal writing, and the myriad other costs involved in securing donations
- •Potential neighborhood "haves" and "have nots": park amenities may be targeted toward selective groups or areas rather than the entire community" (Walls, 2).

The last bullet point is of concern when it comes to having an equitable park system. People often donate to causes that they are directly impacted by, which may lead to an uneven distribution of funds across city parks. While self initiatives and community organizing are applaudable efforts, minority communities often do not have the time or resources to build such networks. Moving forward, cities should take this into account in order to create good quality parks in underserved communities.

2.6 Parks and Environmental Justice

Historically, environmental justice has looked at the impact of hazardous environment elements in marginalized communities. "Environmental justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies" (Environmental Protection Agency Website). However, environmental justice can also encompass components of the built environment such as housing, transportation, and parks and green spaces. Research shows that public parks play a role in public health benefits. For this reason, inadequate park amenities or an inequitable distribution of parks directly impact issues of environmental justice planning. "The environmental justice literature, which started in the 1980's to document ethnic minority people's disproportionate exposure to environmental hazards like landfills and

power plants, has more recently focused on the spatial distribution of environmental amenities across income and ethnic groups, particularly on parks" (Rigolon, 1). Throughout multiple studies, the word "access" is used to determine these inequities. As previously mentioned, the term accessibility can mean multiple things. "Currently accessibility research generally evaluates the spatial-physical dimension of accessibility, leaving other relevant and important dimensions unexplored" (Wang, 1). The field of planning has greatly influenced park design, location and distribution. Unfortunately, due to the racial origins of zoning, the design and distribution of public parks and spaces has also been affected. "Park development and design in America has historically reflected the instrumental goals of social control, which sought the assimilation of immigrants into mainstream American culture" (232). "Historically, low income people and communities of color in the city faced not only economic discrimination and social marginalization, but also environmental racism" (Byrne, 6). When studying public spaces, park amenities have often been a focus of environmental justice studies. These issues most often affect communities of color which is why the quality, quantity, and types of amenities that are offered at public parks is a relevant subject. Additionally, studies show that people of color have greater access to parks that are poorly maintained and have higher crime issues. This is important to recognize because, while communities of color may be of close proximity to a park, there may be other elements that may deter them from utilizing them. When considering the number of accessible parks, low-income communities of color with fewer recreational facilities in the U.S. tend to have lower levels of physical activity and higher overweight rates among their adolescents (Rigolon, 8).

2.7 Parks and Cultural Identity

Parks not only provide spaces for recreation, socializing, and political activism, but can also be a physical setting for cultural expression. Parks are able to assist in creating a cultural identity to a space or area. It can be done through cultural programming, signage, culturally significant statues, public art, as well as many other forms. A parks' perceived identity can also be used to deter certain people from using it. Often times minorities may feel unwelcome in a park and may choose to avoid the park altogether. Throughout history we have seen how structural racism has affected minority communities, including the use of public space and the built environment. The manner in which a park is designed can greatly influence who and how the public uses the park. Research has shown that race and ethnicity play a role in how public parks are used. Different races and ethnicities use public parks in different ways. "While parks are technically public and all citizens are, in theory, automatically welcome, we must recognize the ways in which the design, construction, programming,

use, and alteration/renovation of public parks can reinforce divisions, both physical and perceived, between populations" (BC Workshop). This is of particular importance because minority communities often lack recreational space. "Regarded as the urban landscape's 'green lungs', parks are particularly beneficial to racial minority groups who often have limited socioeconomic resources and may live in crowded and stressful urban environments. Parks provide a healing retreat for these populations and can contribute significantly to their physical and social health" (Li, 230). As cities continue to become more diverse, it is imperative that public parks become an extension of the communities which they are a part of, in the hopes to provide a safe welcoming space for all ethnic communities.

History shows us that while the parks were considered "public", rules and policies were put in place in order to exclude certain people. "Like other early parks, Central Park was far from public transportation and beyond walking distance from working-class tenements" (Wolch, 747). These barriers made it more difficult for the working class, often minority immigrants, to have access to recreational space. As time progressed and parks become more accessible, "park managers imposed strict behavioral rules and dress codes to inculcate cultural norms of the elite within working-class and immigrant visitors (747). As previously stated, parks were often seen as spaces were assimilation could occur. They were considered places where immigrant families could learn and mimic the American way of life. "Park development and design in America has historically reflected the instrumental goals of social control, which sought the assimilation of immigrants into mainstream American culture (Li, 231). Unfortunately, by instilling these rules and policies, immigrant communities were forced to either find other recreational spaces or not practice their culture and traditions in public parks. Effect of these policy and design decisions can still be seen today.

"Since the last decade of the twentieth century, ideas about urban parks have begun to acknowledge multiculturalism, yet recent studies have found that contemporary parks often still do not adequately respond to culturally diverse needs" (Li, 231). The city of Houston, Texas, recently went through a public participation process in which the city gathered information to help guide their master plan park project. Their initial result showed that the number one priority for Houston residents was greater connectivity between parks through hiking and biking trails. Upon a closer look at the participants of the survey, they realized that the majority of respondents were white, affluent residents. With the help of Rice University, a second survey was taken that included more minority communities, which greatly skewed their results. The results showed that the priority among minority communities "envisioned a diverse set of new or improved amenities—most prominently, restrooms and water fountains, and an array of recreational infrastructure—in better maintained

and safer parks" (Mock, City Lab). The results of the second survey depicted what minority communities across the U.S. are mostly concerned about- maintenance and safety. "What do they want for their parks? Not only clean, functioning public bathrooms, but also better lighting to make parks safer at night and better playground equipment that's not prone to breaking down" (Mock, City Lab). Luckily, in this case a second survey was done which practiced a more inclusionary process. However, this is often not the case in participatory planning processes. Most often than not, minority input is not taken into account for a variety of reason. Sometimes the exclusion of minorities in planning processes can be downright racist. "There's a perception, and not just in Houston, that if you have too many black people or Mexicans in the park, they don't know how to act" (Mock, City Lab).

Park design plays a major role on how people perceive and use public parks. "The cultural landscape perspective reveals that most American parks have been designed according to Anglo-Celtic landscape aesthetics – i.e., language of park signage, layout of the park space, landscaping, which may not attract foreign-born visitors (Wolch, 752). Studies have shown that different ethnicities use parks in different ways. A park design that may work for one community may not work for another. "In general, the focus of previous research has been on outdoor recreation indicating that ethnic minorities tend to recreate closer to home, use city parks, be more family oriented, and utilize local facilities rather than national, state, or regional sites" (Juniu, 1). It appears that the results of these studies suggest that cultural identity within city parks should be something that we should be investigating. Should the identity of a community be mirrored onto its public spaces? A study shows that when comparing White and Hispanics groups in social settings, there are cultural differences in family structure, social values, and social participation. "Latin American cultures place high value on group-oriented activities and human interaction. For these cultures, social interaction is stressed during leisure time and considered an important recreational activity" (6). Hispanic populations tended to visit parks in larger groups and made more use of the neighborhood facilities" (8). The same study showed that White populations used the park as a place for reflection and meditation and were often alone. This study enforces the ideology that city parks should resemble the communities that they are a part of. "The sensitivity of a park design to cultural and ethnic difference has a big impact on the way and degree that the park space is integrated into the everyday lives of individuals within the ethnic group" (Li, 231). The design and amenities offered at a park could be the determining factor on whether it is highly utilized or not. However, it is important to note that another study shows that "the marginality or socio-economic status hypotheses suggest that differences in leisure participation are a function of poverty and/or discrimination. Leisure differences are

due to unequal access and inequitable distribution of recreational facilities and other public goods (Juniu, 3). Currently state and national parks are trying to find a way to attract more minority populations. Studies done by national parks show that there is a lack of diversity when it comes to people attending natural wonders. "Only about one in five visitors to a national park site is nonwhite, according to a 2011 University of Wyoming report commissioned by the Park Service, and only about 1 in 10 is Hispanic — a particularly lackluster embrace by the nation's fastest-growing demographic group" (Johnson, NY Times). Some initiative that national parks have put in place in order to attract minorities include different funds, such as the American Latino Heritage Fund, that help preserve American Latino's historic landmarks and historic stories. "New attractions are part of the mix, too. National monuments managed by the Park Service have been created in the past few years to recognize more minority figures in American history" (Johnson, NY Times). Another initiative is called the American Latino Expeditions, which helps fund trips to national parks for minority people. These and other programs are being put in place at the state and national level in efforts to try to have more inclusive parks. However, some studies show that minority communities feel uncomfortable visiting these places due to accessibility, and amenities, as well as other factors. One study shows that typically, "black residents use Detroit city parks more than whites, but less than whites in surrounding regional parks. Marginality, specially restricted access to transportation, played more of a role than subcultural factors in this underrepresentation by black residents in regional parks" (Juniu,7). Although national and state parks have put efforts in place to try to attract minorities, "the reality that going to a park, at least for now, means encountering mostly white people is its own potential barrier. Research by the Park Service says some members of minority groups have said they fear they would feel unwelcome" (Johnson, NY Times). Feeling unwelcome is only one barrier that minorities encounter when trying to access public parks. Policies and regulations still in place may also be a determining factor as to why some minorities avoid national parks. Maximum number of people per campsite may limit minorities who enjoy traveling in large groups. "Mexican-Americans camped in larger groups than Anglo and placed higher priority on tangible campground design features such as toilets and fire rings. Anglo campers preferred quite surroundings and privacy, whereas Mexican-American did not care if other people were around" (Juniu, 3). Additionally, to some, like Ms. Cain, a recipient of the program American Latino Expeditions, states that "the idea of roughing it in a tent, however, can feel to some people like going backward, said Ms. Cain, a first-generation American who said the stories in her family about escaping the hard-rural life still resonate" (Johnson, NY Times).

While these studies seem to pertain to barriers affecting national and state parks, some if not all are

applicable to city and neighborhood parks. Nonetheless, planners as well as parks and recreation departments should recognize the importance of minority representation in public parks. Cities will continue to diversify and as minorities, "increasingly live in close proximity in neighborhoods, new opportunities open to transcend historical boundaries of race and culture and build a broad movement for equity, justice, and inclusion" (Policy Link, Why Place and Race Matter, 28).

Chapter 3. Methods

Maps were extensively used to visually and graphically represent the findings of this research. Mapping park and demographic data allowed me to build a comparative analysis across the eight neighborhood parks that were surveyed. This method was imperative to this research in order to bring forth and understand spatial patterns that may not have been found otherwise.

3.1 Measuring Population

Creating a method for measuring park amenity accessibility and cultural identity in Austin, TX involved 2 general steps: demographic mapping of the population and collecting park amenity and cultural data. The overall objective was to assess the quantity and quality of amenities as well as document aspects of cultural significance within selected parks. Demographic mapping was done to get a more detailed spatial distribution of Austin's population. The collection of amenity data provided a quantifiable method for comparing park amenity quality and quantity.

3.2 Measuring Racial Distribution

The three main data sets that were used for mapping the distribution of Hispanic and White ethnicities included, U.S Census 2010 population data, census tract boundary information, and city and county boundaries. The 2010 Census data for Travis County was obtained from the Texas Data Center, the census tract boundaries were obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau, and the Travis County and Austin city boundaries were attained from the Capital Area Council of Governments (CAPCOG) and the city of Austin. The city of Austin boundary was clipped to the Travis County boundary and the demographic data was clipped to the City of Austin boundary. The U.S. Census data contained population estimates for census tracts according to the 2010 U.S. Census. The population data was downloaded as a data table and joined to a polygon data set of census tract polygons based on the GEO.id field. The City of Austin has approximately 217 census tracts within Travis County. To get a better understanding of where the highest concentration of Hispanic and White populations lived, the data was categorized in four classifications.

The following are the four categories:

- 0%-25% White or Hispanic

- 26%-50% White or Hispanic

- 51%-75% White or Hispanic

- 76%-100% White or Hispanic

These categorize allowed me to visually represent the census tracts with the highest concentration of either populations. New shapefiles were created to separate majority White population census tracts from majority Hispanic population census tracts.

3.3 Mapping Park Distribution

The data used to map park distribution within the City of Austin were City of Austin boundary and a park polygon shapefile. All data was obtained from the City of Austin's geographic information system (GIS) database. The City of Austin categorizes parks by park type, which allowed me to easily select all neighborhood parks. The following are the categories that the City of Austin uses for public parks:

- Special
- Neighborhood
- Nature Preserve
- Greenbelt
- Metropolitan
- School
- Pocket
- Planting Strips/ Triangles
- Cemetery
- District
- Golf Course

The different categories of park types that the City of Austin recognizes are distinguished by acreage. All parks within the city of Austin were included to show an overall view of park distribution. Because neighborhood parks are the focus of this study, they were distinguished by utilizing a different symbology. Neighborhood parks were then clipped to the selected census tracts. Only neighborhoods parks that were located within majority white population census tracts and majority Hispanic census tracts were considered for

located within majority white population census tracts and majority Hispanic census tracts were considered for this study. This process allowed me to help narrow down which neighborhood parks to survey.

3.4 Mapping Demographic Data

In addition to mapping out race and park distribution, housing tenure, income level, and education level, were also taken in to account. The process for obtaining and mapping this information was the same for all three categories. There were three datasets obtained in order to map this information. The 2010 housing tenure, income level, and educational level information was obtained from the Texas Data Center, the census tract boundaries were obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau, and the Travis County and Austin city boundaries were attained from the Capital Area Council of Governments (CAPCOG) and the city of Austin. This data, like the race/ ethnicity data, was also downloaded as a data table and joined to a polygon data set of census tract polygons based on the GEO.id field. Something important to note, was that the education level category was only looking at the population twenty-five years and older with at least a bachelor's degree. The housing tenure data was categorized as follows:

- •0%-25% Home owner or Renter
- •26%- 50% Home owner or Renter
- •51%-75% Home owner or Renter
- •76%-100% Home owner or Renter

The income level data was presented with the following categories:

- •$0-$25K
- •$25K- $50K
- •$50K- $75K
- •$75- $100K

Finally, the education level data was looked categorized as follows:

- •0%- 33%
- •34%- 60%
- •61%-95%

This demographic information was collected in order to assist in selecting neighborhood parks that had similar levels of housing tenure, income levels, and education levels.

3.5 Measuring Crime

As previously stated minority communities are often concerned with park safety. Safety and crime are factors that play a major role in analyzing park quality. For this reason, crime reports were attained for the years 2014, 2015, and 2016 for the City of Austin. The data was gathered from the Austin Police Department, conveniently categorized by census tracts. The data was obtained in table format and was categorized as follows:

- •Murder
- •Rape
- •Robbery
- •Aggravated Assault
- •Burglary
- •Theft
- •Motor Vehicle Theft
- •Arson

This information was kept in its original source format and was not mapped. Tables with a breakdown of crimes for each census tract with a selected neighborhood park were created.

3.6 Measuring Park Amenities

For this study, park amenities were analyzed based on quantity and quality. All eight selected neighborhood parks were visited and analyzed. Neighborhood parks within majority Hispanic census tracts were visited on a Saturday between the times of 9:00am -1: oopm. Neighborhood parks within majority White census tracts were also visited on a Saturday between the times of 9:00am- 1:00pm. The only exception was Little Zilker neighborhood park. Due to excessive use, Little Zilker had to be revisited to take photographs. Approximately one hour was spent at each park taking an inventory on amenity type, quantity, and quality of each amenity. Observations of park usage were notated for each park. The results were compiled into a table which was categorized by the following sections:

- •Basketball Court
- •Baseball Field
- •Volleyball Court
- •Tennis Court

- •Play Equipment

- •Pool

- •Bathrooms

- •Picnic Tables

- •BBQ Pit

- •Benches

- •Drinking Fountain

- •Trash Containers

- •Pet Station

- •Bike Rack

- •Exercise Equipment

The quantity of each amenity was notated and compared to the City of Austin's Parks and Recreation Department inventory. Regarding quality of amenities, photographs were taken in order to better analyze the condition of each amenity. Each amenity was then given a score of:

- •Great condition

- •Good condition

- •Poor Condition

The results were placed in a table format which compared the conditions across all eight neighborhood parks.

3.7 Measuring Cultural Identity

Cultural identity was also measured during the visits to each neighborhood park. This study focused on trying to measure cultural identity through the use of objective and quantifiable measurements such as:

- •Historical Markers

- •Interpretive Signs

- •Public Art

- •Memorials

- •Bilingual Signs

The quantities of these elements were compiled and put in a table format to compare them among all eight neighborhood parks. Additionally, photographs were taken to document any findings.

Chapter 4. Results

4.1 Racial Distribution within Austin

Upon analyzing racial distribution of Hispanics and White populations within the city of Austin, there is a clear divide between the two ethnic groups. Figure 4.1 show that the majority of the Hispanic population lives in the eastern part of the city. Out of 217 census tracts that lie within Travis County, six of them were found to have between 76%-100% majority Hispanic population. Those six census tracts are located relatively close to each other on the southeastern part of the city. Two of those census tracts are located in the Montopolis Neighborhood, and the remaining four are close to the Franklin Park and McKinney Neighborhoods. Figure 4.2 shows IH-35 is a major physical barrier between the two communities. On the other hand, it appears that the majority of the White population in Austin is located in the west and northwestern parts of the city. Out of the 217 total census tracts, fifty-two of them have greater than 76% White population. These census tracts are part of multiple neighborhoods which include, North Shoal Creek, Allendale, West Austin, Barton Hills, Oakhill, and multiple other neighborhoods.

Overall, Figures 4.1 and 4.2 show that the Hispanic and White populations live on opposite sides of the city. The City of Austin is not alone in this. Many large cities seem to have a similar distribution and segregation patterns between ethnic communities.

4.2 Park Distribution within Austin

A total of 282 parks were found within the City of Austin. Figure 4.3, shows the distribution of public parks overall. Neighborhood parks were symbolized with a different color in order to distinguish them from all other parks. A total of eighty-two neighborhood parks were found within the City of Austin. Twenty-five of them are found east of IH-35 and fifty-seven of them are located west of IH-35. Out of eighty-two neighborhood parks, four of them are located in census tracts that are between 76%- 100% Hispanic. This means that 5% of all neighborhood parks are within close distance to majority Hispanic neighborhoods. The analysis also found that thirteen of all neighborhood parks are located in census tracts that are between 76%- 100% White. This translates to 16% of neighborhood parks being located in majority White neighborhoods. Figures 4.4 and 4.5, show the location of these parks throughout the City of Austin. These findings show that, there are three times more White neighborhood parks than Hispanic neighborhoods parks in the City of Austin.

CITY OF AUSTIN HISPANIC POPULATION DISTRIBUTION

Saul Vazquez- Mejia
January 10, 2018

Sources:
City of Austin, US Census Bureau,
Texas Data Center, CAPCOG.

HISPANIC POPULATION DISTRIBUTION BY CENSUS TRACT

- 0% - 25%
- 26% - 50%
- 51% - 75%
- 76% - 100%
- Colorado River

0   2   4   8 Miles

N

Figure 4.1 Shows Racial Distribution of Hispanic Population

Saul Vazquez- Mejia
January 10, 2018

Sources:
City of Austin, US Census Bureau,
Texas Data Center, CAPCOG.
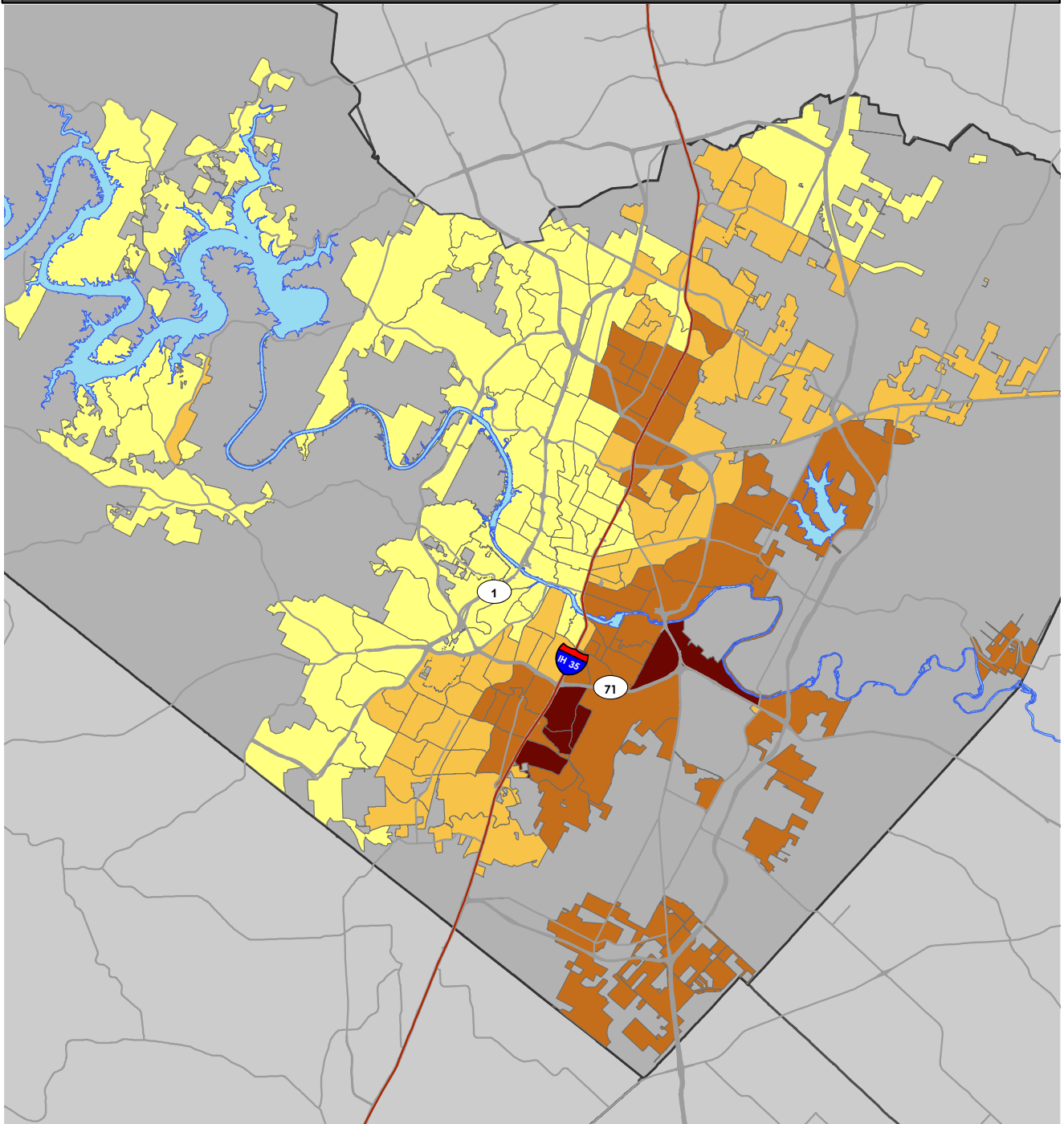
WHITE POPULATION DISTRIBUTION BY CENSUS TRACT

0% - 25%	51% - 75%	Colorado River
26% - 50%	76% - 100%	

0   2   4   8 Miles

N
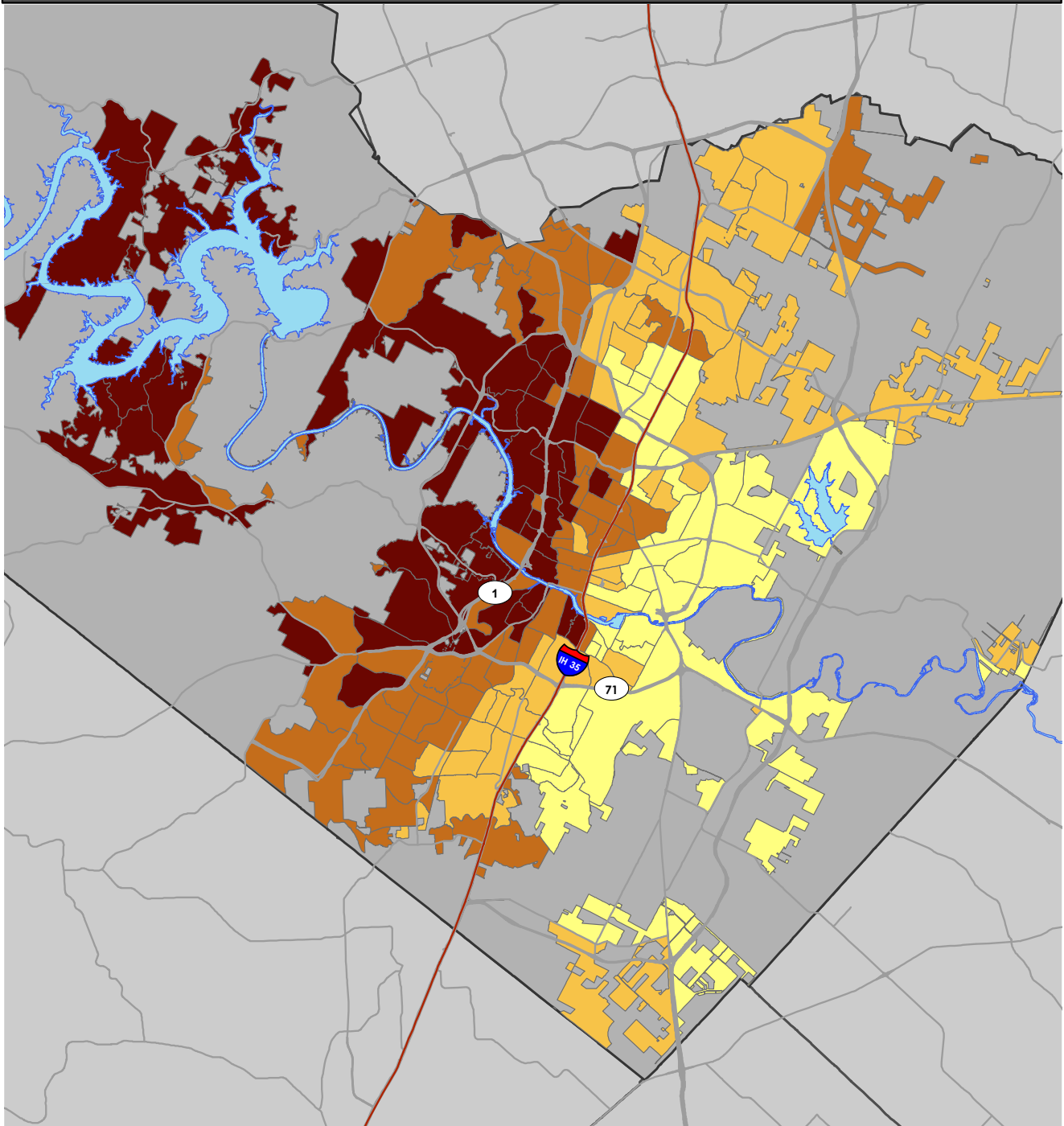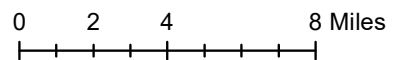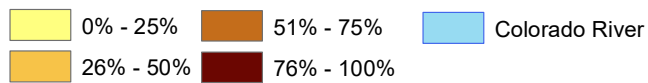
Figure 4.2 Shows Racial Distribution of White Population

CITY OF AUSTIN PUBLIC PARK DISTRIBUTION

Saul Vazquez- Mejia
January 10, 2018

Sources:
City of Austin, CAPCOG.

Legend:
- Colorado River
- Austin City Limits
- City of Austin Parks
- City of Austin Neighborhood Parks

0   2   4   8 Miles

N
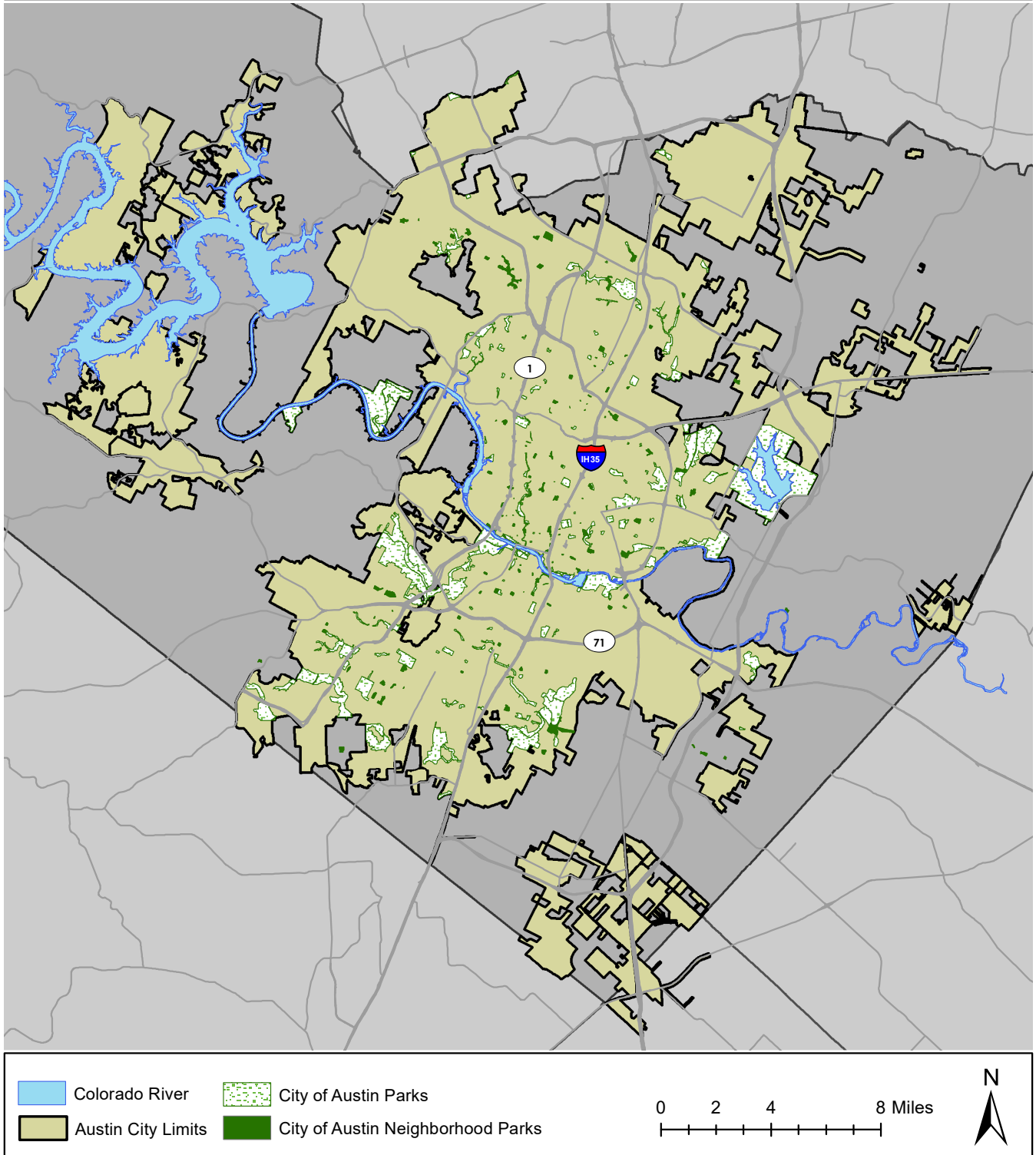
Figure 4.3 Shows Park Distribution within the City of Austin
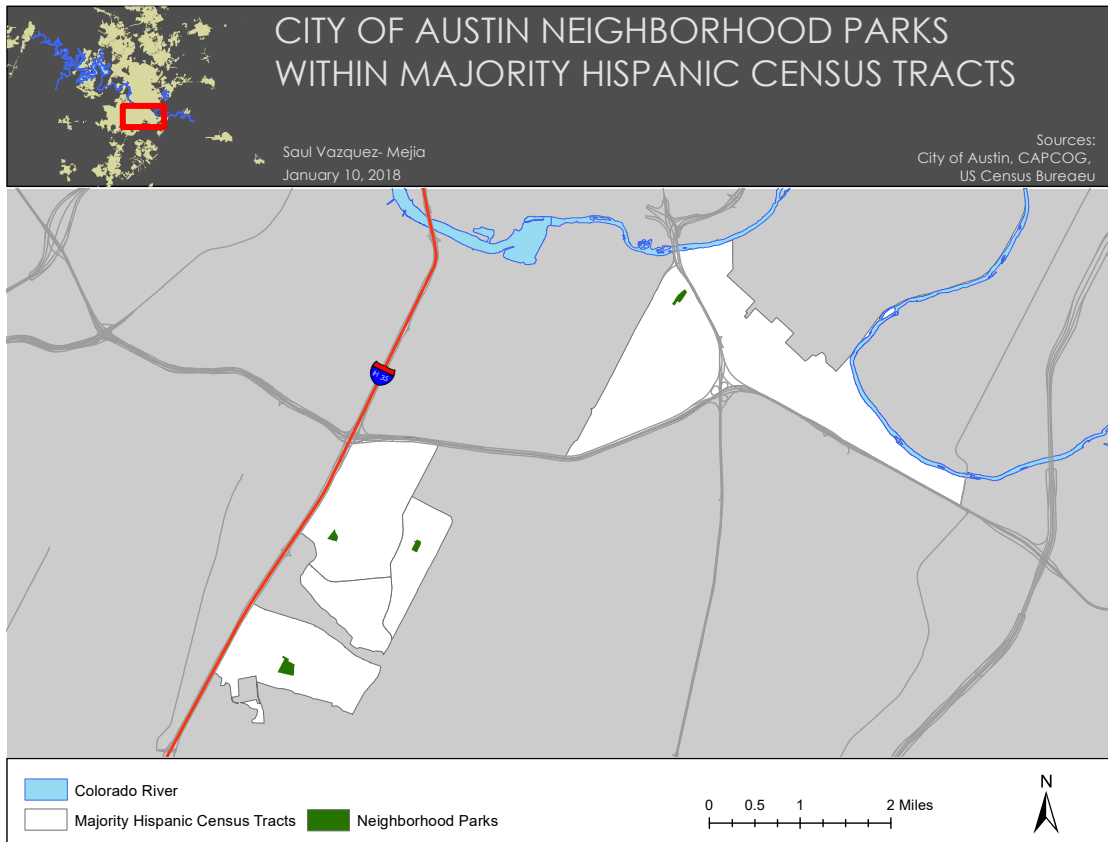
Figure 4.4 Shows Neighborhood Parks within Majority Hispanic Census Tracts
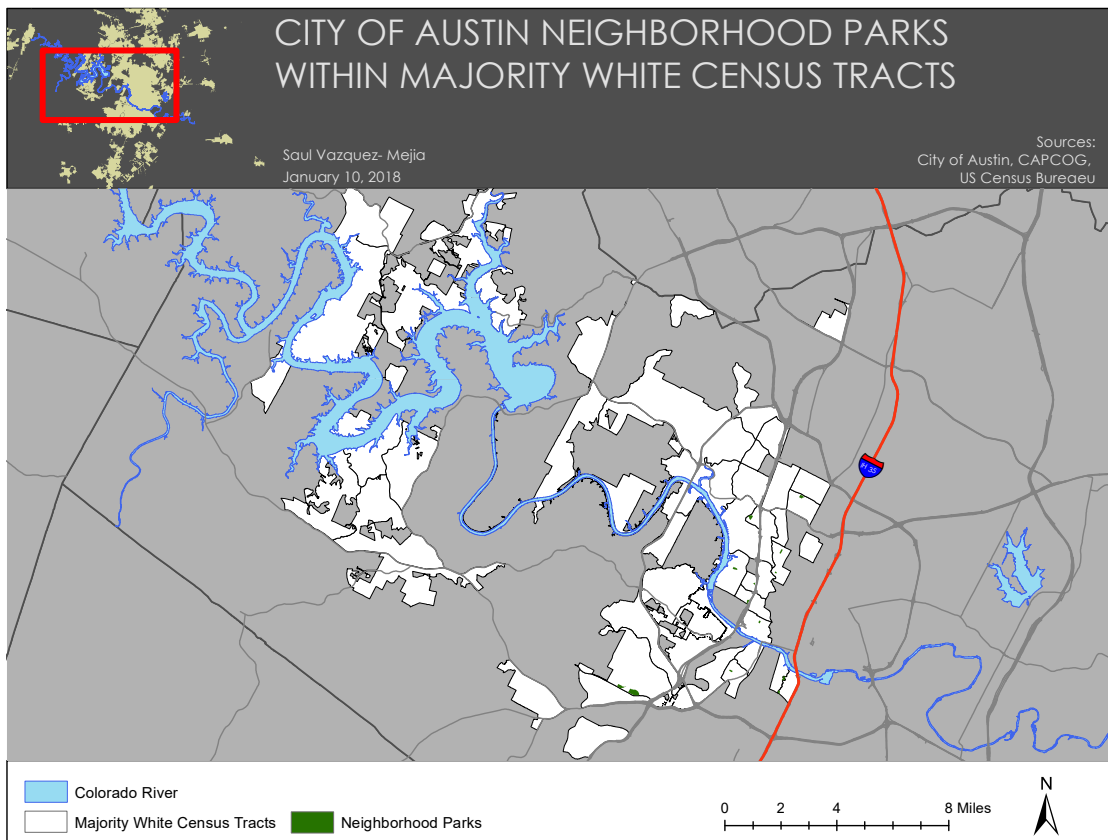
Figure 4.5 Shows Neighborhood Parks within Majority White Census Tracts

4.3 Renter vs. Homeowner Population

Studies show that housing tenure can sometimes play a factor in park usage. Figures 4.6 and 4.7 show the breakdown of renters and homeowners at the census tract level. The analysis reveals that the highest concentration of homeowners are located on the edges of the city as well as in western Austin. On the contrary, the highest concentration of renters are closer to downtown, southeast, and in northern Austin.
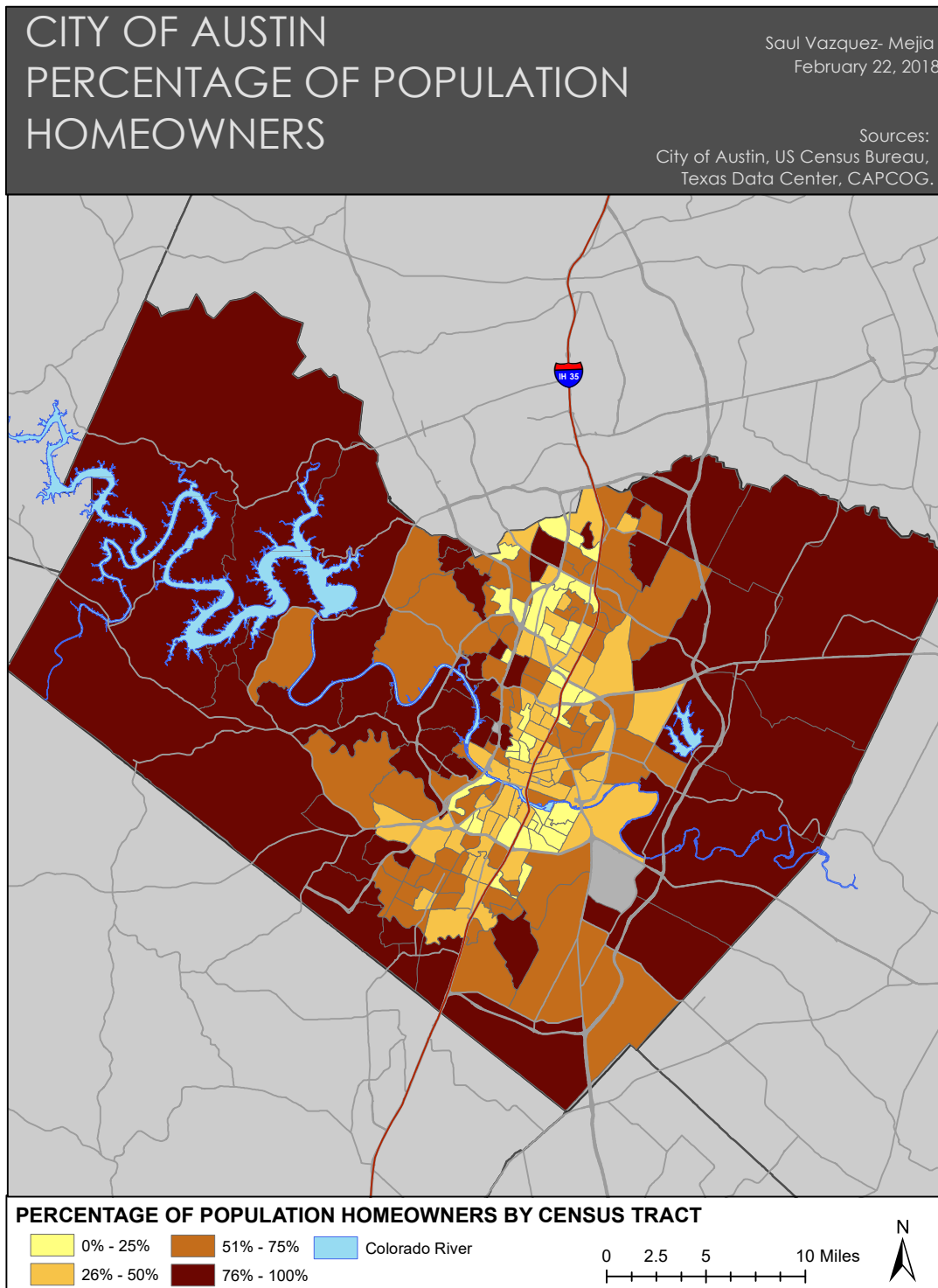
Figure 4.6 Shows Distribution of Homeowner Population

CITY OF AUSTIN
PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION
RENTING BY CENSUS TRACT

Saul Vazquez- Mejia
February 22, 2018

Sources:
City of Austin, US Census Bureau,
Texas Data Center, CAPCOG.

PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION RENTING

0% - 25%   51% - 75%   Colorado River
26% - 50%   76% - 100%

0   2.5   5   10 Miles

N
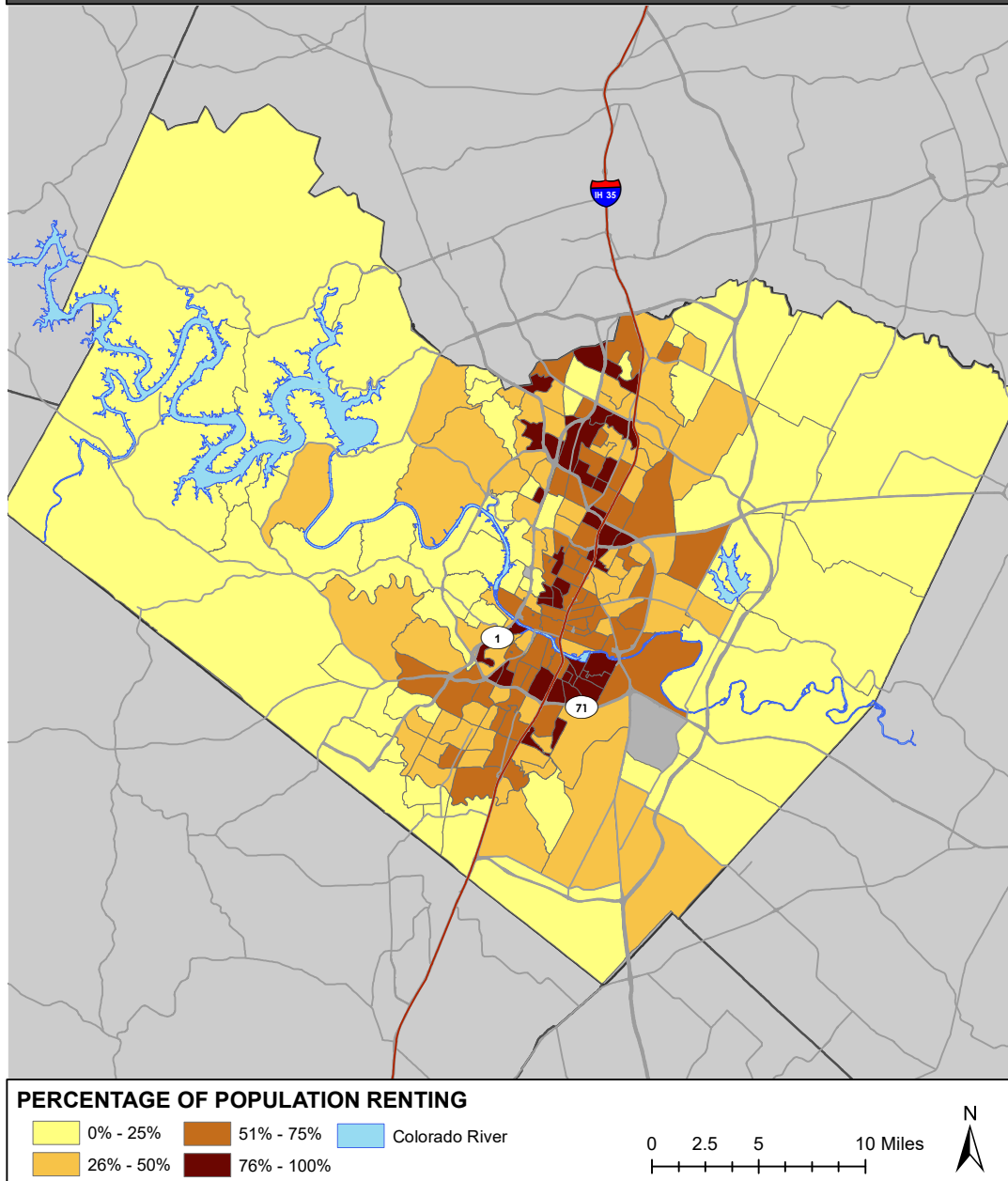
Figure 4.7 Shows Distribution of Renter Population

Figures 4.8 through 4.11, show the selected neighborhood parks overlayed onto census tracts categorized by renter vs. homeowner. Parks that are located in majority Hispanic census tracts fall within three of the four categories on figures 4.8 and 4.9. Franklin Neighborhood Park has the highest renting population, while Kendra Page has the lowest renting population. The other two Hispanic parks, Civitan and Pociana, are located in census tracts that have between 51%- 75% renting population.

CITY OF AUSTIN
PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION
HOMEOWNERS

Saul Vazquez- Mejia
February 22, 2018

Sources:
City of Austin, US Census Bureau,
Texas Data Center, CAPCOG.

PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION HOMEOWNER BY CENSUS TRACT

0% - 25%   51% - 75%   Colorado River
26% - 50%   76% - 100%   Selected Hispanic Parks

0 0.25 0.5   1 Miles
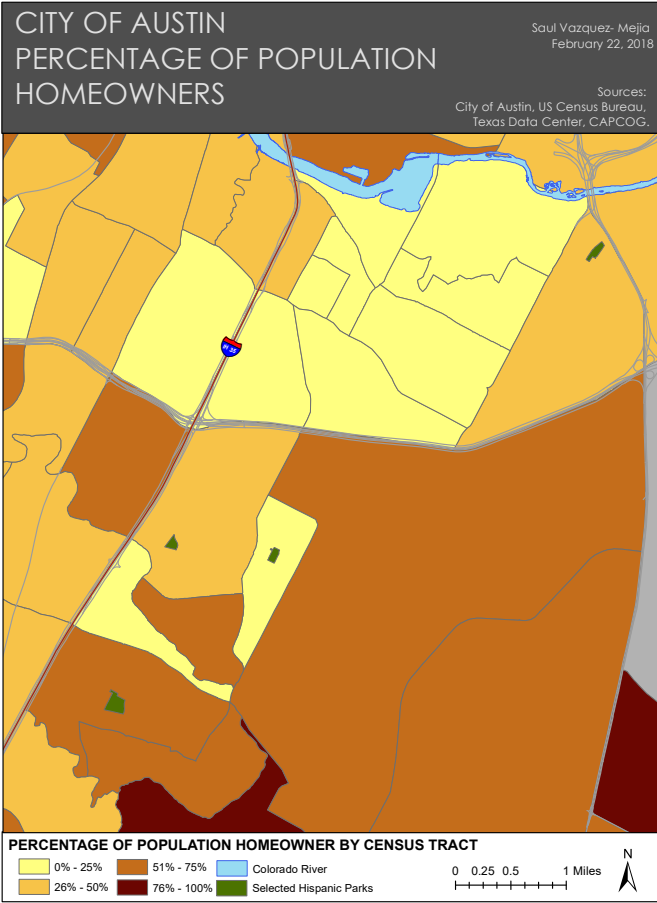
Figure 4.8 Shows Hispanic Parks overlayed onto Homeowner Tracts

CITY OF AUSTIN
PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION
RENTING

Saul Vazquez- Mejia
February 22, 2018

Sources:
City of Austin, US Census Bureau,
Texas Data Center, CAPCOG.

PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION RENTING BY CENSUS TRACT

0% - 25%   51% - 75%   Colorado River
26% - 50%   76% - 100%   Selected Hispanic Parks

0 0.25 0.5   1 Miles
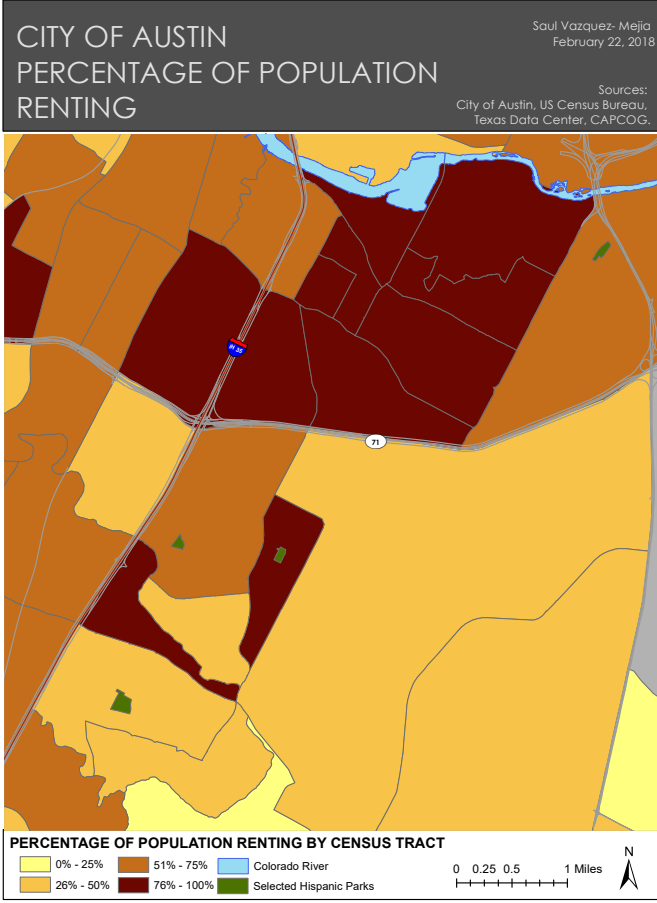
Figure 4.9 Shows Hispanic Parks overlayed onto Renter Tracts

CITY OF AUSTIN
PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION
HOMEOWNERS

Saul Vazquez- Mejia
February 22, 2018

Sources:
City of Austin, US Census Bureau,
Texas Data Center, CAPCOG.

PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION HOMEOWNERS BY CENSUS TRACT

0% - 25%   51% - 75%   Colorado River
26% - 50%   76% - 100%   Selected WhiteParks

0 2.5 5   10 Miles
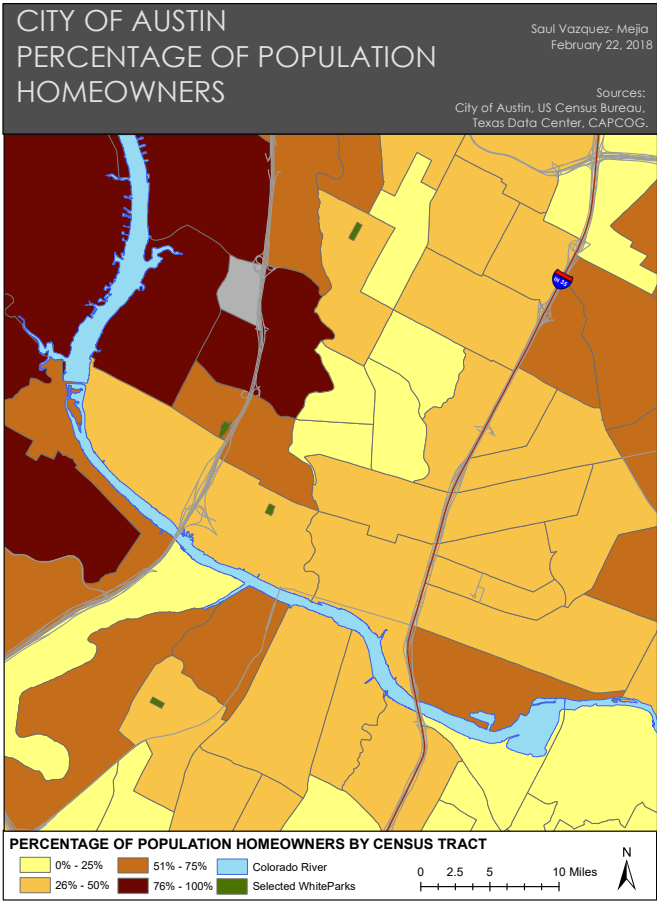
Figure 4.10 Shows White Parks overlayed onto Homeowner Tracts

CITY OF AUSTIN
PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION
RENTING

Saul Vazquez- Mejia
February 22, 2018

Sources:
City of Austin, US Census Bureau,
Texas Data Center, CAPCOG.

PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION RENTING BY CENSUS TRACT

0% - 25%   51% - 75%   Colorado River
26% - 50%   76% - 100%   Selected White Parks

0 0.25 0.5   1 Miles

Figure 4.11 Shows White Parks overlayed onto Renter Tracts

The maps reveal that three out of the four Hispanic parks are situated in census tracts with more than half of the population renting. Only one park, Kendra Page Neighborhood Park is in a census tract that has more than half of the population owning a home.

Figures 4.10 and 4.11, show the selected White parks overlayed onto majority White population census tracts. Three of the four parks are located in census tracts that have between 51%- 75% renting population. The remaining park, Westenfield Neighborhood Park, is in a census tract with the lowest renting population. Westenfield Neighborhood Park has a renting population that is between 26%- 50% and homeowner population between 51%- 75%.

This analysis reveals that in both ethnic groups there is one park in each that has a majority homeowner population. In regards to the renting population, the Hispanic parks had three out of the four parks located in census tracts with majority renting population, with one of those parks situated in a census tract with a renting population between 76%- 100%. The White parks also had a total of three of the four parks within majority renting population, however they all had between 51%- 75% renting population.

4.4 Income Level and Neighborhood Parks

Upon mapping income levels by census tracts, I was able to notice that census tracts with the highest income level are in the west and southwest parts of the city, while the census tracts with the lowest income levels are in the east and southeast parts of Austin. The highest income level range is $100K- $225K and the lowest income range is $0K- $25K. Another income distribution pattern that is visible from figure 4.12, is the increasing income levels that go up the further they are from the inner-city core.

Selected neighborhood parks were overlayed onto census tracts symbolized by the different income levels. All four Hispanic parks are located in census tracts with an income level range of $25K- $50K. One White park, West Austin Neighborhood Park, also fell under this income bracket. The remaining three white parks, fell within census tracts with income level ranges of $50K- $75K. Figures 4.13 and 4.14, uncovered that the majority of White parks are located in census tracts with a higher income bracket than Hispanic parks.
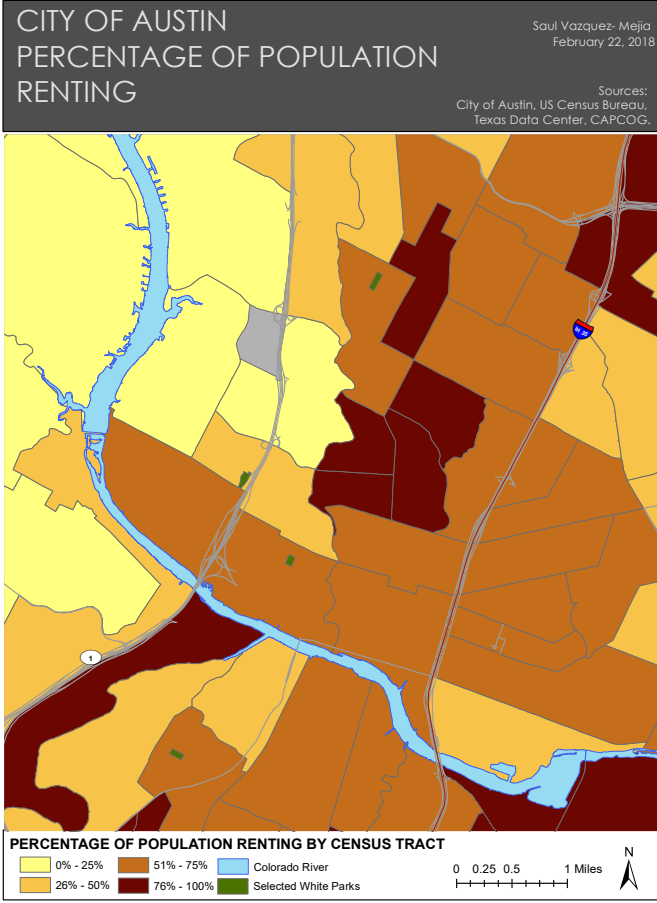
Figure 4.12 Shows Distribution of Income by Census Tract
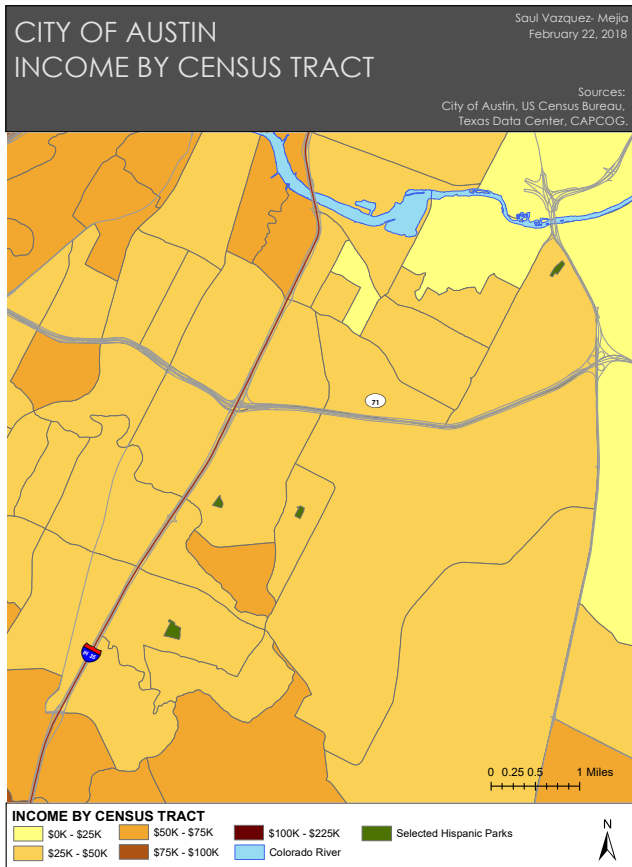
Figure 4.13 Shows Hispanic Parks overlayed on Census Tracts
Categorized by Income
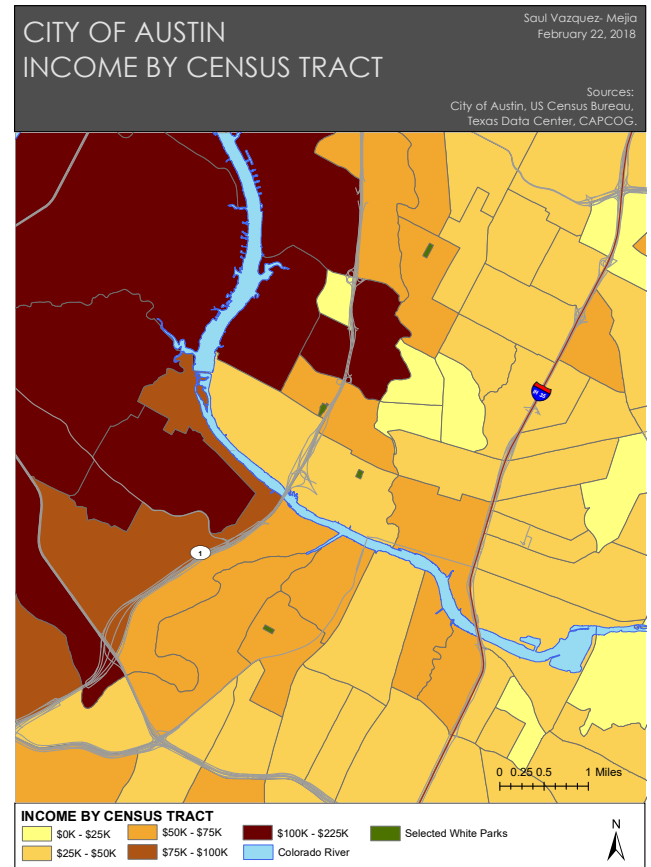
Figure 4.14 Shows White Parks overlayed on Census Tracts
Categorized by Income

4.5 Education Levels and Neighborhood Parks

In regards to mapping out education levels, Figure 4.15 shows the results of this analysis. The map visually represents the population aged twenty-five and older with at least a bachelor degree. Similar to previous analyses, these results showed that the majority of the population 25+ with at least a bachelor degree, is located mostly to the west of IH-35. The majority of the census tracts on the western part of Austin have between 61%- 95% of its 25+ population with a bachelor degree. The map also shows that the majority of the census tracts on the eastern part of the city have a 25+ age population between 0%- 33% with at least a bachelor degree.

All four Hispanic parks lie within census tracts that that have between 0%- 33% of the 25+ age population with a bachelor degree. Contrary to Hispanic parks, all four White parks are located in census tracts with 61%- 95% of their 25+ age population with a bachelor degree. This a major difference that needs to be researched further in order to determine any type of correlation.

CITY OF AUSTIN
POPULATION AGE 25 AND OVER
WITH BACHELOR DEGREE

Saul Vazquez- Mejia
February 22, 2018

Sources:
City of Austin, US Census Bureau,
Texas Data Center, CAPCOG.

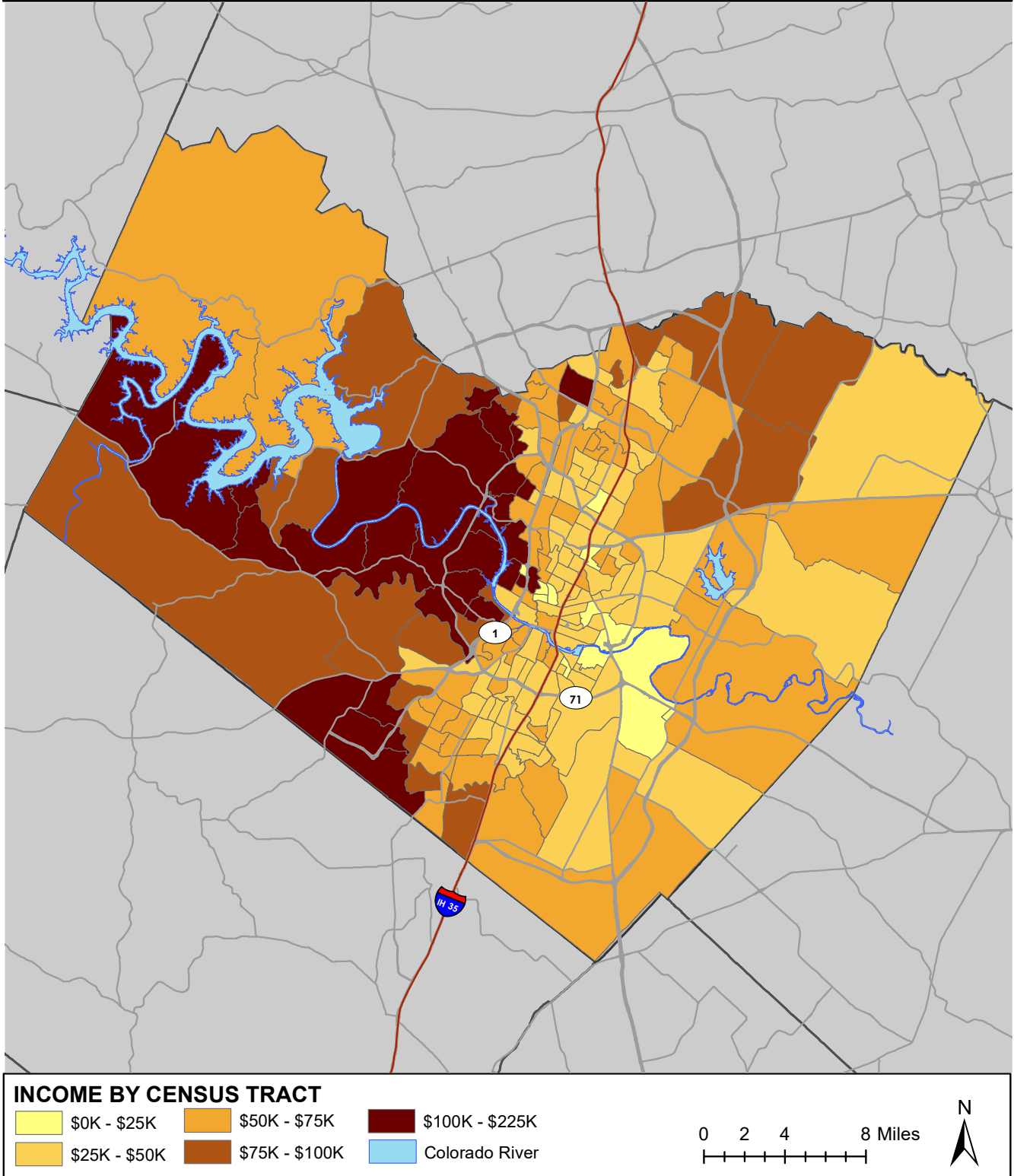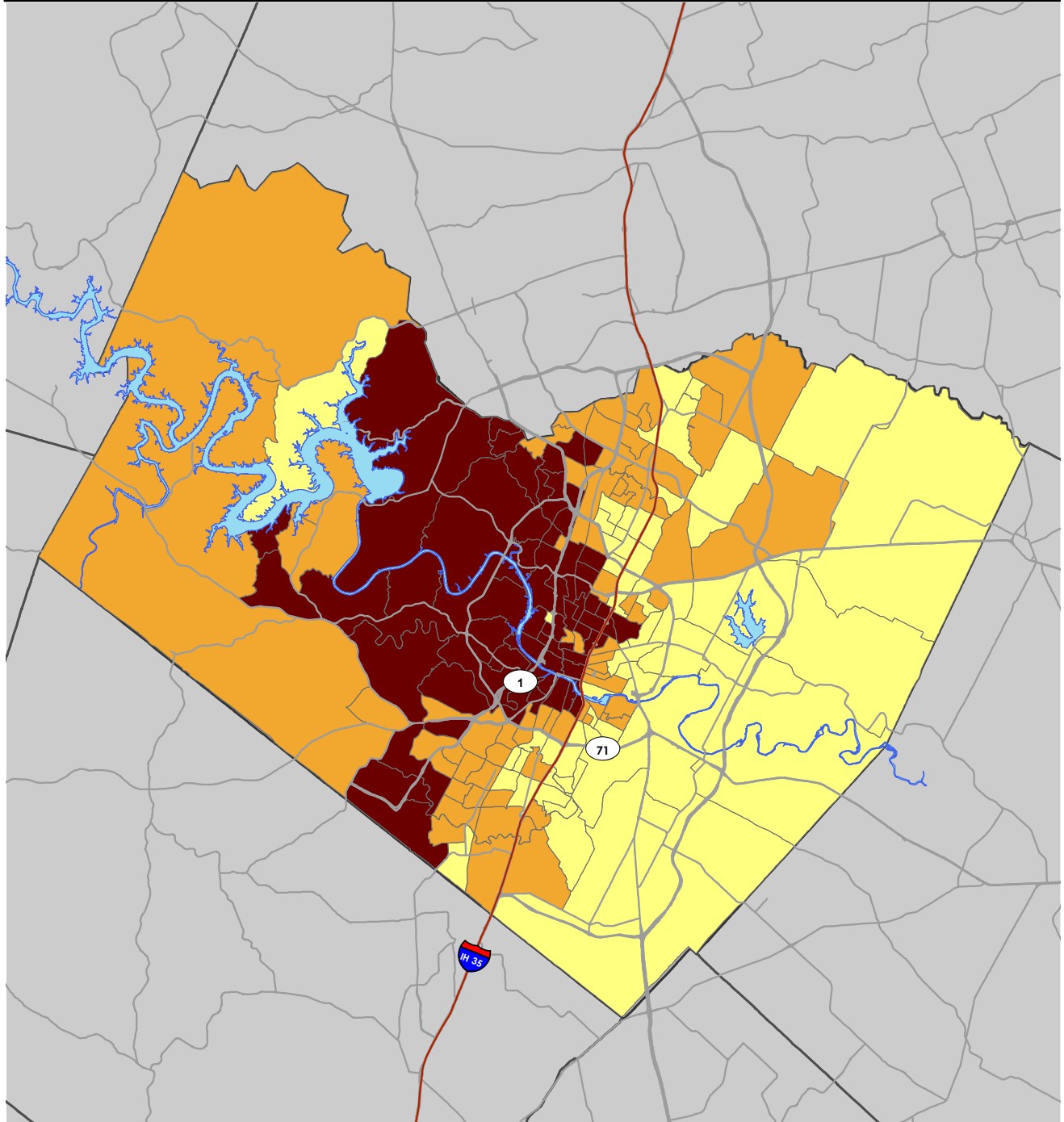**POPULATION AGE 25+ WITH BACHELOR DEGREE**

- 0% - 33%
- 34% - 60%
- 61% - 95%
- Colorado River

0   2.5   5   10 Miles

N
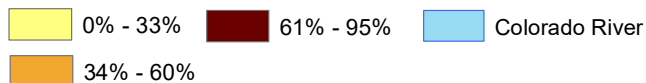
Figure 4.15 Shows Education Level by Census Tract
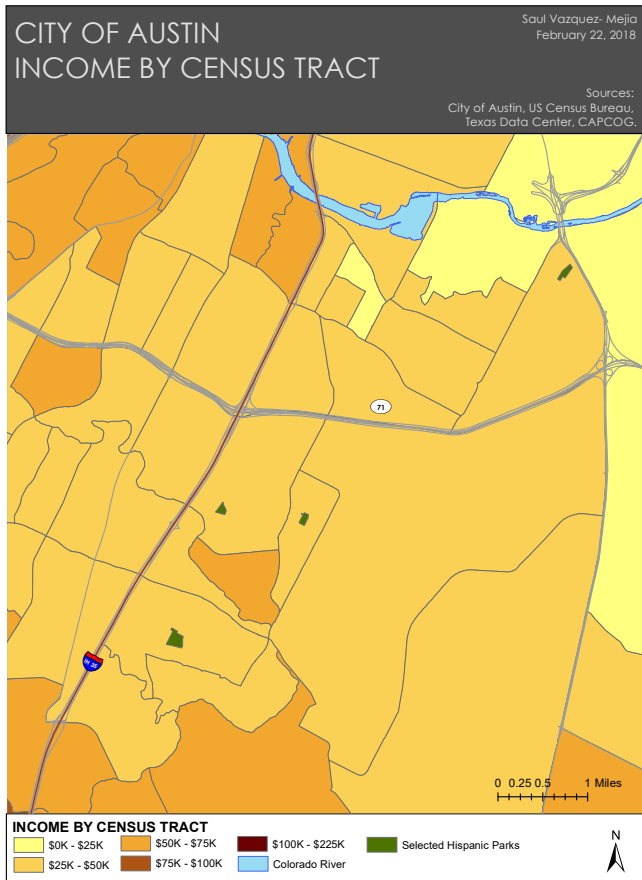
Figure 4.16 Shows Hispanic Parks overlayed on Census Tracts
Categorized by Education Level
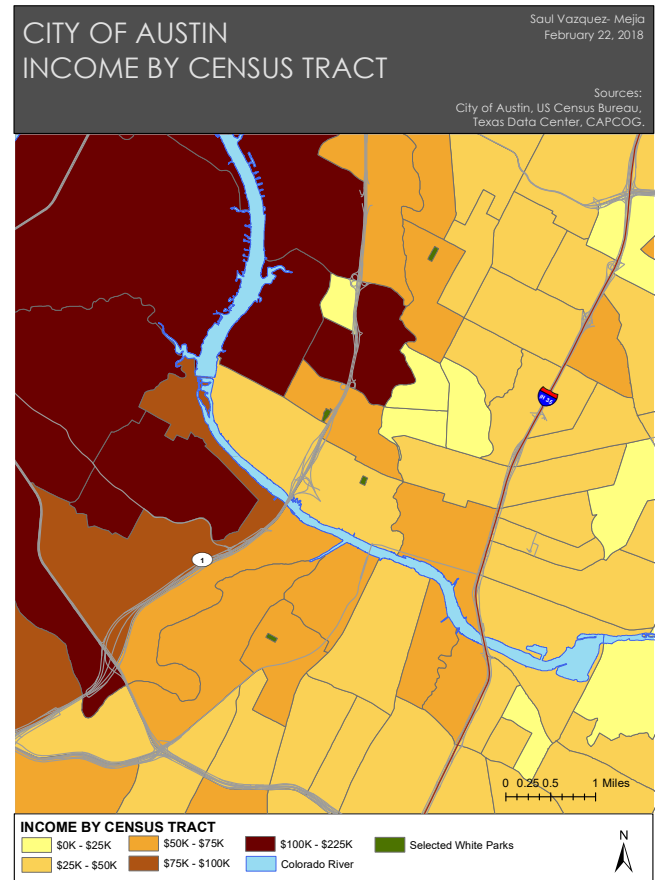
Figure 4.17 Shows Hispanic Parks overlayed on Census Tracts
Categorized by Education Level

4.6 Crime and Neighborhood Parks

When considering park accessibility, safety plays a factor on how people perceive a park. Crime reports were looked at for years 2016, 2015, and 2014. Crime reports were obtained categorized by census tract, which allowed me to take a closer look at specific census tracts. The census tracts that were analyzed were those that had a selected neighborhood park in them. Civitan Neighborhood Park is located in census tract 23.12, which had a total of 1,185 crime reported in 2014. Theft was the highest reported crime for that census tract in the year 2014. Throughout the three years, crime reports stayed within a range of 1,185- 1,176. Census tract 24.11, which is where Ponciana Neighborhood Park is located, also shows theft as the highest reported crime. In year 2016, the census tract that houses Ponciana Neighborhood Park, had a total of 1,183 crimes reported. Franklin Neighborhood Park is located in the census tract that had the lowest number of crimes reported within the Hispanic neighborhood parks. The highest number of reported crimes for that census tracts was in 2014, with a total of 839 crimes.

For White parks, Westenfield Neighborhood Park, was the park within the census tract with the least amount of crimes reported. The highest reported crime within that census tract was also theft across all three years. West Austin Neighborhood Park, was the park within the census tract that had the highest number of crimes reported. This census tract had a total number of 1,104 in 2014.

Tables 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 shows that there is a significant difference between the number of crimes reported near selected Hispanic parks versus selected White parks. While more research need to be done, these findings fall in line with previous studies that conclude that crime deters people from using a park. This might have been the reason as to why I saw less people at the Hispanic parks compared to the White parks.

2014 CRIME REPORTS BY CATEGORY

	MURDER	RAPE	ROBBERY	AGG. ASSAULT	BURGLARY	THEFT	MOTOR- V THEFT	ARSON	INDEXED	NON INDEXED	COMBINED
CIVITAN		4	11	30	59	194	25	1	324	861	1185
FRANKLIN		4	3	18	53	134	18		230	512	742
PONCIANA		8	5	20	77	285	26		421	869	1290
KENDRA PAGE		7	8	36	63	271	26	1	412	883	1295
RAMSEY		3	2	2	26	133	5		171	349	520
WESTENFIELD		1		2	10	83	7		103	186	289
WEST AUSTIN	3	3	1	25		294	18	1	345	759	1104
LITTLE ZILKER			1	4	29	103	7		144	237	381

Table 4.1 Shows Crime Reports by Crime for Year 2014

2015 CRIME REPORTS BY CATEGORY

	MURDER	RAPE	ROBBERY	AGG. ASSAULT	BURGLARY	THEFT	MOTOR- V THEFT	ARSON	INDEXED	NON INDEXED	COMBINED
CIVITAN		8	10	25	38	164	15		260	735	995
FRANKLIN		7	3	15	29	103	14		171	462	633
PONCIANA		7	9	21	45	161	15	2	260	762	1022
KENDRA PAGE		4	2	30	35	223	13	1	308	784	1092
RAMSEY		2	4	4	22	132	10	1	175	276	451
WESTENFIELD		1	1	3	11	66	1		83	160	243
WEST AUSTIN	4	5	3	14		330	16	1	373	674	1047
LITTLE ZILKER		2	1	8	26	107	2		146	215	361

Table 4.2 Shows Crime Reports by Crime for Year 2015

2016 CRIME REPORTS BY CATEGORY

	MURDER	RAPE	ROBBERY	AGG. ASSAULT	BURGLARY	THEFT	MOTOR- V THEFT	ARSON	INDEXED	NON INDEXED	COMBINED
CIVITAN	1	3	11	33	51	178	26	1	304	872	1176
FRANKLIN		4	8	13	38	161	25		249	490	739
PONCIANA		5	4	22	46	243	23	3	346	837	1183
KENDRA PAGE		9	7	21	38	194	18	1	288	783	1071
RAMSEY		2	3	1	40	115	10		171	266	437
WESTENFIELD				2	12	63	3	1	81	153	234
WEST AUSTIN	1	5	5	26		320	24	1	382	607	989
LITTLE ZILKER			2	3	32	93	5		135	216	351

Table 4.3 Shows Crime Reports by Crime for Year 2016

4.7 Park Amenity Analysis

An inventory of amenities was taken at all eight parks. Tables 4.4 and 4.5 show the results of the data that was collected. In regards to amenity quantity and amenity type, the results varied throughout all parks. However, some differences were found. All four White parks had a basketball court, while only two of the four Hispanic parks had basketball courts. In all parks there was a very small presence of volleyball and baseball courts. Civitan Neighborhood Park was the only park that had a baseball field and Franklin Neighborhood Park was the only park with a volleyball court. Both of these parks are located in the majority Hispanic census tracts. Tennis courts were a more common amenity in the White parks. Three out of the four parks had tennis courts, with a total of six tennis courts in the White parks. The opposite is true of the Hispanic parks. Only one of them had tennis courts with a total of two tennis courts. Another amenity that was also disproportionate were neighborhood pools. Little Zilker Neighborhood Park was the only White park that did not have a pool. The other three White parks had at least one pool. Westenfield Neighborhood Park had a toddler pool in addition to the pool found at the other parks. Within the Hispanic parks, only Civitan Neighborhood Park had a pool. The other three Hispanic parks did not have this amenity.

AMENITY TYPE	CIVITAN NEIGHBORHOOD PARK	FRANKLIN NEIGHBORHOOD PARK	PONCIANA NEIGHBORHOOD PARK	KENDRA PAGE NEIGHBORHOOD PARK
Basketball Court	2	1	0	0
Baseball Field	1	0	0	0
Volleyball Court	0	1	0	0
Tennis Court	2	0	0	0
Play Equipment	1	1	1	2
Pool	1	0	0	0
Bathrooms	1	0	0	0
Picnic Tables	6	8	5	3
BBQ Pit	3	4	4	3
Benches	5	16	2	3
Drinking Fountain	1	1	1	1
Trash Containers	3	7	5	3
Pet Station	0	1	4	0
Bike Rack	1	1	0	0
Exercise Equipment	0	0	0	0

Table 4.4 Shows an Inventory of Hispanic Park Amenities

AMENITY TYPE	RAMSEY NEIGHBORHOOD PARK	WEST NEIGHBORHOOD PARK	WESTENFIELD NEIGHBORHOOD PARK	LITTLE ZILKER NEIGHBORHOOD PARK
Basketball Court	1	1	1	1
Baseball Field	0	0	0	0
Volleyball Court	0	0	0	0
Tennis Court	2	0	2	2
Play Equipment	3	2	2	2
Pool	1	1	1	0
Bathrooms	2	1	1	0
Picnic Tables	22	3	5	6
BBQ Pit	0	0	0	2
Benches	16	4	3	16
Drinking Fountain	5	1	3	3
Trash Containers	5	5	6	5
Pet Station	3	3	2	2
Bike Rack	3	1	5	0
Exercise Equipment	1	0	0	0

Table 4.5 Shows an Inventory of White Park Amenities

Likewise, public bathrooms at parks was an amenity that was mostly found in the White parks. Three of the four White parks had access to public bathrooms, while only one Hispanic park had a public bathroom. It is important to note that the only bathroom in the Hispanic park was locked. One amenity that all eight parks did have, was play equipment for small children. However, White parks did have almost twice as many play equipment than Hispanic parks. Another amenity that presented a bid disparity was drinking fountains. One drinking fountain was found at each if the Hispanic parks, with a total of four drinking fountains, while a total of twelve drinking fountains were found at White parks. Additionally, only one piece of exercise equipment was found in all eight parks. Ramsey Neighborhood Park was the only park that had this amenity. One amenity that The Hispanic parks did have more of in quantity were BBQ pits. A total of fourteen BBQ pits were found at Hispanic Parks compared to two in White parks.

Overall, White parks had a higher quantity of amenities in all amenity categories, except in three. Volleyball courts, Baseball fields, and BBQ pits were the only categories in which Hispanic parks had more of in quantity. These findings follow other similar studies throughout the U.S.. The lack of amenities at Hispanic parks could also be a factor as to the Hispanic parks were mostly vacant at the time of the survey.

Likewise, public bathrooms at parks was an amenity that was mostly found in the White parks. Three of the four White parks had access to public bathrooms, while only one Hispanic park had a public bathroom. It is important to note that the only bathroom in the Hispanic park was locked. One amenity that all eight parks did have, was play equipment for small children. However, White parks did have almost twice as many play equipment than Hispanic parks. Another amenity that presented a bid disparity was drinking fountains. One drinking fountain was found at each if the Hispanic parks, with a total of four drinking fountains, while a total of twelve drinking fountains were found at White parks. Additionally, only one piece of exercise equipment was found in all eight parks. Ramsey Neighborhood Park was the only park that had this amenity. One amenity that The Hispanic parks did have more of in quantity were BBQ pits. A total of fourteen BBQ pits were found at Hispanic Parks compared to two in White parks.

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In regards to park quality, all parks showed a range of amenity conditions across the different types of amenities. Two of the Hispanic parks were in poor condition, while the remaining two were in overall good condition. The white parks were overall in good condition, with the exception of one which was in great condition. Of the Hispanic parks, Civitan Neighborhood Park, was the park that had the worst quality of amenities. Civitan Neighborhood Park was opened in 1953 and is approximately seven acres. If you look at this park solely in terms of quantity and type of amenities offered, it ranks as one of the top parks, but the quality of the amenities offered tell a different story. While this is the park with the most basketball courts, only one of them was useable due to one of the baskets being broken.

Figure 4.18 Shows the Basketball Court area at Civitan Park

Figures 4.19 through 4.21 reveal that the condition of the tennis court is very poor. The outlines of the court on the ground are almost non-existent, the net has been replaced by chain-link fence, and overall the tennis court space does not feel inviting. Civitan Neighborhood park is the only Hispanic park surveyed that had a bathroom. Unfortunately, as you can see from figures 4.22 and 4.23, the bathroom was in bad shape and was locked. Likewise, the only drinking fountain in the park was not useable, as it was covered in plastic wrap. Civitan Neighborhood Park was one of the parks with the least amount of trash containers which could be a reason as to why litter was found throughout the park.

Figure 4.19 shows the tennis court area.

Figure 4.20 Shows a chain link fence used as a net

Figure 4.21 Shows the faded outlines of the tennis court

Figure 4.22 Shows the conditions of the restroom at Civitan Park

Figure 4.23 Shows the locked door at only bathroom

Figure 4.24 Shows the only drinking fountain at Civitan Park

One observation to point out is the lack of people using the park at the time of the survey. The survey was conducted on a Saturday morning, which is typically a day when public parks are more heavily used. Although nobody was there at the time of the survey, during the week the park is heavily used. It is adjacent to Allison Elementary School, which has 95% Hispanic students and about 1% White students. According to the school staff, the park is used daily for recreation, soccer practice, and is also used to host large wellness events. This is something of concern due to the conditions the park is in. Figure 4.26 shows the carcass of an animal found at the time of the park survey.

Overall, Civitan Neighborhood Park was found to be in poor shape. While the park does offer a variety of amenities, the conditions that they are in show that improvements need to be made. Further studies need to be made in order to determine if this is the reason the park was not being used. However, studies do show that the condition of a park is a factor that affects park usage.

Figure 4.25 Shows play equipment

Figure 4.26 Shows a carcass near the school

Figure 4.27 Shows the pool

The second Hispanic park that was in noticeably poor condition was Kendra Page Neighborhood Park. This park was opened in 1987 and is approximately fifteen acres. However, the survey revealed that the useable space that this park offers is approximately two acres. The remaining acres are covered by trees and shrubs with no trails throughout. Figure 4.28 shows an aerial view of the park with the useable area highlighted in red. Kendra Page Neighborhood Park, is very limited in the type of amenities it offers. While, it doesn't offer many amenities, the ones that it does have, are in good shape. The only amenity type that was in poor condition were the picnic tables. Something noticeable from this park was the amount of litter and trash found throughout the park. Figures 4.29- 4.34 show evidence of this. A lack of people utilizing this park was also noted. Kendra Page Neighborhood Park is situated across the street from Langford Elementary School, which is 92% Hispanic and 2% white. School staff revealed that during the week students use the park daily for recreation, and picnics.

Overall, Kendra Page Neighborhood Park was in good condition, but lacked a variety of amenities, and was full of litter. Additionally, while the Parks and Recreation Department shows the park as having fifteen acres, only about two acres are useable.

Figure 4.28 Shows the useable area of Kendra Page Park in red

Figure 4.29 Shows evidence of litter

Figure 4.30 Shows evidence of litter near pathway

Figure 4.31 Shows litter and abandoned car

Figure 4.32 Shows evidence of litter

Figure 4.33 Shows evidence of litter

Figure 4.34 Shows the condition of picnic table

Figure 4.35 shows park sign next to porta potty

Figure 4.36 shows condition of vollyball court

Figure 4.37 shows condition of play equipment

The remaining two Hispanic parks, Franklin Neighborhood Park and Ponciana Neighborhood Park, were in good to great condition. It is important to note that Ponciana Park was under construction at the time of the survey. Upon further research, it was found that while Ponciana Neighborhood Park was opened in 1986, it had been left as an undeveloped park until mid-to late 2016. Before the addition of these new amenities, the park was an open field. Figures 4.38- 4.47 show some of the amenities of both Franklin Neighborhood Park and Ponciana Neighborhood Park.

Figure 4.38 shows park sign

Figure 4.39 shows Franklin Park play equipment

Figure 4.40 shows Franklin Park pavilion

Figure 4.41 shows Franklin Park open field

Figure 4.42 shows Franklin Park receptacles

Figure 4.43 shows Ponciana Park play equipment

Figure 4.44 shows bicycle lanes at Ponciana Park

Figure 4.45 shows Ponciana Park sign

Figure 4.46 shows seating area and play equipment

Figure 4.47 shows park under construction

White parks ranged from good to great condition. Ramsey Neighborhood Park displayed the amenities with the highest quality. Most of the amenities fell under the great condition category. Figures 4.48 through 4.59 show examples of the type and quality of those amenities. This park was the only one that had exercise equipment out of all eight parks. All White parks were also surveyed on a Saturday. However, compared to Hispanic parks, this and the rest of the other White parks were heavily used. The tennis courts at Ramsey Neighborhood Park were in exceptional condition. Figure 4.57 shows the condition of the tennis court. The only amenity in this park that was not great were the restrooms. At the time of the survey they appeared to have been closed for renovations.

West Austin Neighborhood Park also ranged from good to great condition for all amenity categories. This park was opened in 1929 and offers approximately three acres. West Austin Neighborhood Park offered great bathroom and pool area. The remaining categories fell under the good condition category. This park was the only one that had a dog park, which was being heavily used. At the time of the survey, the park was being moderately used by families with kids. Figures 4.66 through 4.62 show the conditions of some of the park amenities.

Figure 4.48 shows park sign

Figure 4.49 shows park edge

Figure 4.50 shows park open field

Figure 4.51 shows play equipment

Figure 4.52 shows toddler play area

Figure 4.53 shows play equipment

Figure 4.54 shows brick pathway

Figure 4.55 shows toddler play area

Figure 4.56 shows play equipment

Figure 4.57 shows Ramsey Park tennis courts

Figure 4.58 shows game on sidewalk

Figure 4.59 shows closed bathroom

Figure 4.60 shows West Austin Park play equipment

Figure 4.61 shows West Austin pool area and open field area

Figure 4.62 shows West Austin basketball court

Both Westenfield Neighborhood Park and Little Zilker Neighborhood Park had some amenities that were in poor condition, but overall most amenities were in good condition. The amenity that was in poor condition in Westenfield Neighborhood Park was the tennis court and the amenity in poor condition in Little Zilker Neighborhood Park was the basketball court. Figures 4.63 and 4.68 show the condition of both of these amenities. The tennis court ground was cracked and loosing paint color in certain areas at Westenfield Neighborhood. The basketball courts at Little Zilker Park were rusted, and the ground was not clearly marked. All other amenities at both of these parks were in good condition. Both of the parks were heavily used. Little Zilker Park was the only that had to be revisited because of the number of people using it. Little Zilker Park is adjacent to Zilker Elementary school which uses the park daily during the week for recreational purposes. Throughout the day teachers take students to exercise. This elementary school is composed of 34% Hispanic students and 58% White students. Figures 4.69 through 4.74 show additional conditions of both parks.

Overall, the survey of the parks show that White parks had amenities in better condition than the Hispanic parks. White parks were also more heavily used than Hispanic parks. More research needs to be done to determine if the quality of amenities is a factor as to why Hispanics were not using their local neigh-borhood park. It is important to note that upon my

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Figure 4.63 shows Westnfield Park sign

Figure 4.64 shows dult and toddler pool (far right)

Figure 4.65 shows Westenfield play equipment

Figure 4.66 shows basketball court

Figure 4.67 shows Westnfield tennis courts

Figure 4.68 shows bathroom conditions

Figure 4.69 shows Little Zilker Park sign

Figure 4.70 shows play area and equipment

Figure 4.71 shows play area and equipment

Figure 4.72 shows tennis court conditions

Figure 4.73 shows basket ball basket

Figure 4.74 shows gravel path and decorative wall

meeting with Kim McKnight, Environmental Conservation Program Manager at the City of Austin, she revealed that PARD is proposing to implement a long range plan in which they would devlop a scoring system based on park amenity quality and condition. While PARD currently has an inventory of park amenity type and quantities, it lacks an analysis of amenity conditions. This scoring system would be useful to prioritize park improvements and potentially aid with the management of park fund distribution.

4.8 Cultural Identity within Public Parks

In addition to surveying the eight parks for amenity quality and type, any sign or forms of cultural identity was also taken into account. After meeting with the city of Austin's Environmental Conservation Program Manager, Kim Mcknight, she pointed out that a way that cultural identity can be identified at public parks is through the use of historical markers, interpretative signs, public art, and programming. Seven of the eight parks did not have any of these items. Westenfield Neighborhood Park was the only park that had a public art instillation. However, figures 4.75 and 4.76 shows that the public art in Westenfield Neighborhood Park does not resemble any particular culture. The art installation is a generic piece that could be placed in any park regardless of the parks location. According to Imagine Austin, the city is trying to "create design standards for public spaces such as parks, plazas, sidewalks, and trails that respond to the unique setting in which they are located" (COA, Imagine Austin, 60). Additionally, Imagine Austin also refers to Westenfield Neighborhood Park as the park model for neighborhood parks with pools. "The recently completed Westenfield Pool at Westenfield Park demonstrates the typical amenities to be provided for a neighborhood pool. Inclusive of the design parameters for a neighborhood pool are gender specific restroom facilities, lap pool, activity pool (tot pool), expansive deck space, shade structures and an art component" (COA, Imagine Austin, 68). Although, most of the selected neighborhood parks did not have any of the items, some of the parks did have memorials, dedication pavers, and bilingual signage. Three out of the four White neighborhood parks had memorials and White park had dedication pavers. Civitan Neighborhood Park was the only Hispanic park that had any bilingual signage. However, the signage was part of the daycare facility that is on park land. Figure 4.77 shows the bilingual sign.

In regards to cultural programming, none of the surveyed parks had any type of programming offered. According to city staff, the only parks that offer any type of cultural programming are parks with recreation-centers. Those centers include the Carver Genealogy Center, which caters to African American history and programming, Asian American Resource Center, The Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cutural

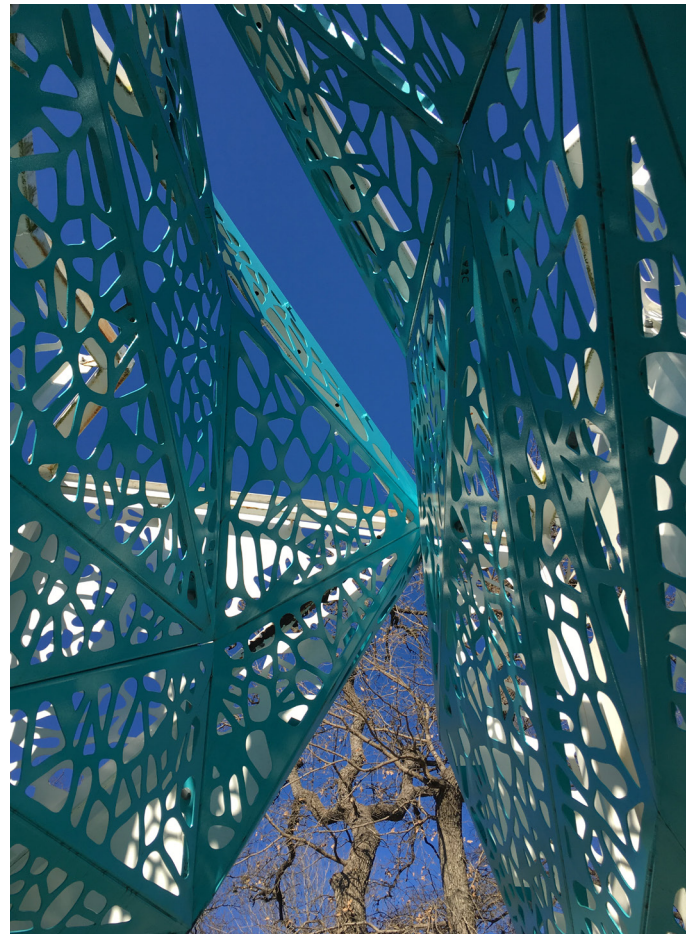Figure 4.75 shows art piece at Westenfield PRK

Figure 4.76 shows inside public art piece

Figure 4.77 shows bilingual sign at Civitan Park

Center, and multiple others. According to city staff, Laurie Martinez, Latino cultural events typically only happen at larger parks such as Fiesta Gardens, Parque Zaragoza, PanAm Center, Gus Garcia, and Dove Springs. Through an initiative called the Latino Arts Residency Program (LARP), multiple events celebrating the Latino culture are presented at these larger parks and rec- centers. This initiative has been functioning since 2013 and is funded through the City of Austin.

Figure 4.78 shows dedicated pavers at Ramsey Park

Figure 4.79 shows dedicated memorial plaque at Little Zilker Park

The City of Austin appear to be thinking about representing diverse cultures at public parks through the use of cultural programming. However, while these initiatives do exist, they are reserved for larger parks, not for community-based neighborhood parks. This may cause problems considering the location of these events. If too far away from minority populations, it may leave out the people for whom these programs are intended for if they have no way to access them.

Chapter 5. Discussion and Conclusions

This study intended to measure discrepancies in park amenity quality, quantity, and cultural representation within parks that are in majority Hispanic communities compared to parks that are within majority White communities. To achieve this, eight neighborhood parks were surveyed on the basis of amenity type, condition of the amenity, quantity of the amenity, and any sign of cultural representation within each park. Photographs of amenities were taken to capture the condition of each amenity. Park observations were conducted to understand how the community uses their neighborhood parks. Additionally, ArcGIS was used to map out park and racial distribution, and demographic data such as, housing tenure income, and education levels. Crime reports in the census tracts where the eight selected parks were located were also looked at.

5.1 Analysis Limitations and Improvements

Some of the limitations that this study encountered involved- quality and quantity of the data collected. The demographic data obtained for analysis was from 2010, which might not be the most representative of Austin today. The city of Austin is one of the fastest growing cities in the U.S. with an evolving ethnic change. Shifts in demographics of neighborhoods might have occurred since 2010 that may have impacted the selection of parks studied. Another limitation was the inability to match income and education levels, across the selected neighborhood parks and census tracts. The largest discrepancy was among education levels. The neighborhood parks in majority White census tracts had an overall higher education level than the neighborhood parks in majority Hispanic census tracts. Further studies should be done that compares parks that are more similar in demographics. Another limitation was the time and days that the park surveys were held. Park surveys were conducted on Saturday mornings. Hispanic parks were surveyed on a Saturday morning from approximately 9:00 am- 1:00 pm, and White parks were surveyed the following Saturday at the same time. Additional surveys on other days throughout the week should be done in order to get a clearer sense of park usage by both ethnicities. Finally, the evaluation measurement for the quality of park amenities could have been a more established measurement tool. The quality of park amenities was measured on the basis of three categories: Poor condition, Good condition, and Great condition. For future studies, a more extensive and well-established survey method could be used.

5.2 Implications of Results for the Field of Urban Planning

As urban planner and designers it is our duty to take a closer look at how we handle public parks. We need to be able to provide accessible, high quality public parks to communities across the city, especially to those communities who may need them the most. One important factor moving forward is park design. As planners and designer, we need to reference existing studies when designing a new park or adding improvements to existing parks. Studies show that different ethnicities use public parks and public spaces differently. There should not be a "one size fits all" park, rather it parks, especially neighborhood parks, should be a part of and reflect community needs. Due to Austin's increasingly diversifying population, we need to be more aware of language barriers that may deter people from using public parks and spaces. Introducing multi-lingual signage may provide a more welcoming experience for people who are not fluent in English. Additionally, introducing public art, interprative signs, historical figures, or adding architectural design details to park buildings that resemble a specific culture is something to be considered. As kids, we are taught to embrace and celebrate our values, customs, and uniqueness. Why not, display these attributes at spaces where kids play? Our public parks have the capacity to be a safe space where cultural difference can be understood and celebrated. Examples at national parks, show that policies in place may also be a factor as to why people do not visit public spaces. Planners and designers should recognize that policies can sometimes have a negative effect on certain ethnic groups. Research should be done at the time of developing policies that affect minority communities. Additionally, we must be more inclusive of all ethnic groups when planning for public projects such as park improvements and new park design. Surveys do not always reflect the opinions of minority communities. As planners and designers, we must put an emphasis on public outreach in order for projects to reflect the needs of all citizens. Lastly, funding of new parks and park improvements should be distributed in an equitable manner. Due to economical constraints, some communities may not be able to give back to their community parks. This shouldn't mean that they don't have access to safe and clean park spaces. We must develop an equitable system that helps fund parks and allows them to provide great recreational areas. One solution could be a dedicated tax such as a sales tax or property tax, that could help alleviate budgetary constraints. Rather than relying on donations from non-profits and park foundations, a dedicated tax would instill a more reliable revenue stream.

5.3 Future Directions

Moving forward, studies on park amenity type, quality, and quantity, and representation of cultural identity should focus on ensuring demographic data is similar across the board, as well as park size and age of the park. This study focused on measuring park accessibility on the basis of amenity type, quality, and quantity, and cultural identity. Other studies have focused on park accessibility on the basis of park location, service area, sidewalk and bike lane network, but have failed to take amenity type, quality, and quantity, and cultural identity in to consideration. The goal of this study was to help discover inequalities in park access on factors that may not be already extensively recorder. Though there are adjustments to be made, this study shows that there are discrepancies in park quality and quantity when comparing Hispanic parks to White parks. Additionally, the study reveals that cultural identity is almost non-existent in neighborhood parks. Considering that park distance is an important factor, I believe that neighborhood parks should resemble the community that they are a part of. Studies show that "distance from the people's homes to urban green space has a negative effect on visitation frequencies for recreational purposes" (Bertram, 13). While the City of Austin does provide cultural programming at larger district scale parks, these cultural events might not be reaching the populations for whom they are intended for. In order to follow their goal of "increasing the safety and amenities of parks, trails, playgrounds, bike paths, and recreation centers, and inspire Austin to learn, play, protect and connect by creating diverse programs and experiences in sustainable natural spaces and public places" (COA, Imagine Austin, 71). The city needs to have an extensive database that helps monitor all parks more closely, and provide cultural experiences for all at smaller neighborhood scale parks as well as larger district scale parks.

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