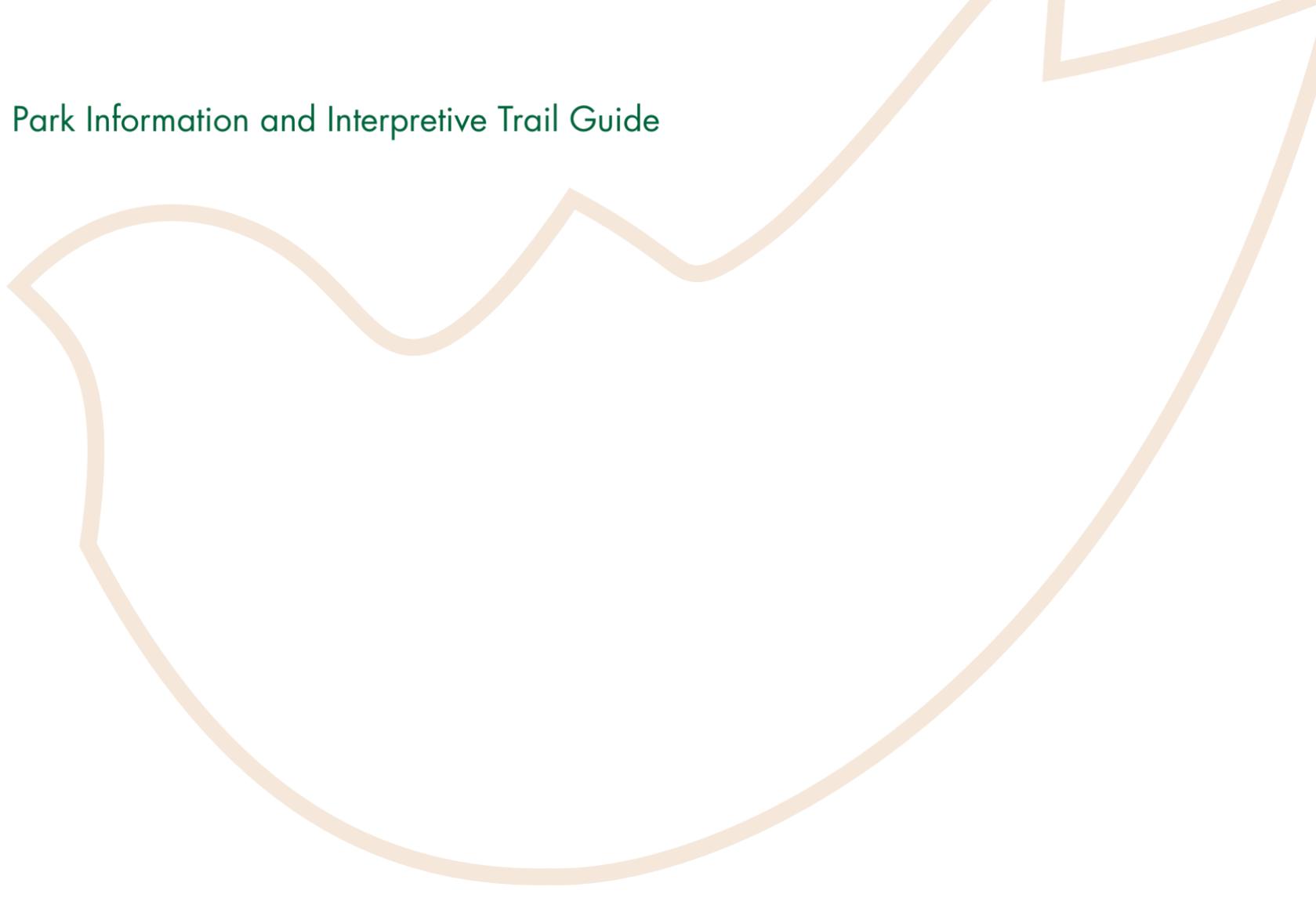


Park Information and Interpretive Trail Guide

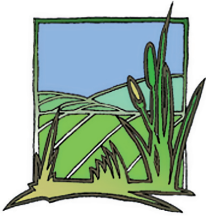


ARBOR HILLS NATURE PRESERVE
city of plano

For best results on letter-size paper, print this PDF in landscape (horizontal) orientation.

ARBOR HILLS NATURE PRESERVE

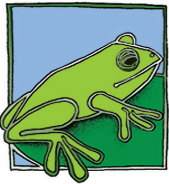
A natural respite with three distinct ecoregions



Blackland Prairie *Appearing from Beneath*

Prairies contain large expanses of grasses and wildflowers with few trees. This region is called the Blackland Prairie because of the black clay soil. Early settlers to our area encountered many miles of prairie, which were later disturbed by farming, ranching and building cities. The prairie areas at Arbor Hills are being restored by mowing, controlled burning, and seeding.

The most common plants of the prairie are grasses, and the dominant grass is little bluestem. In late spring the prairie blooms with an abundance of wildflowers. Bluebonnet (our state flower), Indian blanket, winecup, horsemint, and many types of yellow daisies bloom here at Arbor Hills. Birds of the Blackland Prairie include killdeer, scissor-tailed flycatcher, and turkey vulture.



Riparian Forest *Tangled and Growing*

Riparian Forests grow along a creek or river. The word *riparian* comes from the Latin word for river. The tangle of trees, shrubs and vines growing thickly along the creeks at Arbor Hills can create the feeling of a jungle. A wide variety of trees including the majestic bur oak and red oak are found here. Poison ivy and other vines climb the trees, and willows even grow in the creek.

Owls and woodpeckers inhabit the trees, and water birds such as egrets and herons look for fish in the creek. The two branches of Indian Creek are home to turtles, snakes, fish, and many insects.



Upland Forest *Unusual Location*

The Upland Forest is found at higher elevations in the park and at a distance from the creeks. The Upland Forest at Arbor Hills Nature Preserve is unusual because most of the forested areas in our region are found along waterways. Cedar elm is the most common shade tree in this area. Small flowering trees such as redbud and Eve's Necklace bloom in the spring.

The cool shade and relatively open forest floor make the Upland Forest a pleasant area for walking on hot days. The hooting of an owl or the rustle of leaves as a rabbit runs away can be heard if you walk quietly. Coyotes and bobcats still roam the Upland Forest, but are rarely seen.

Stewardship is everyone's responsibility

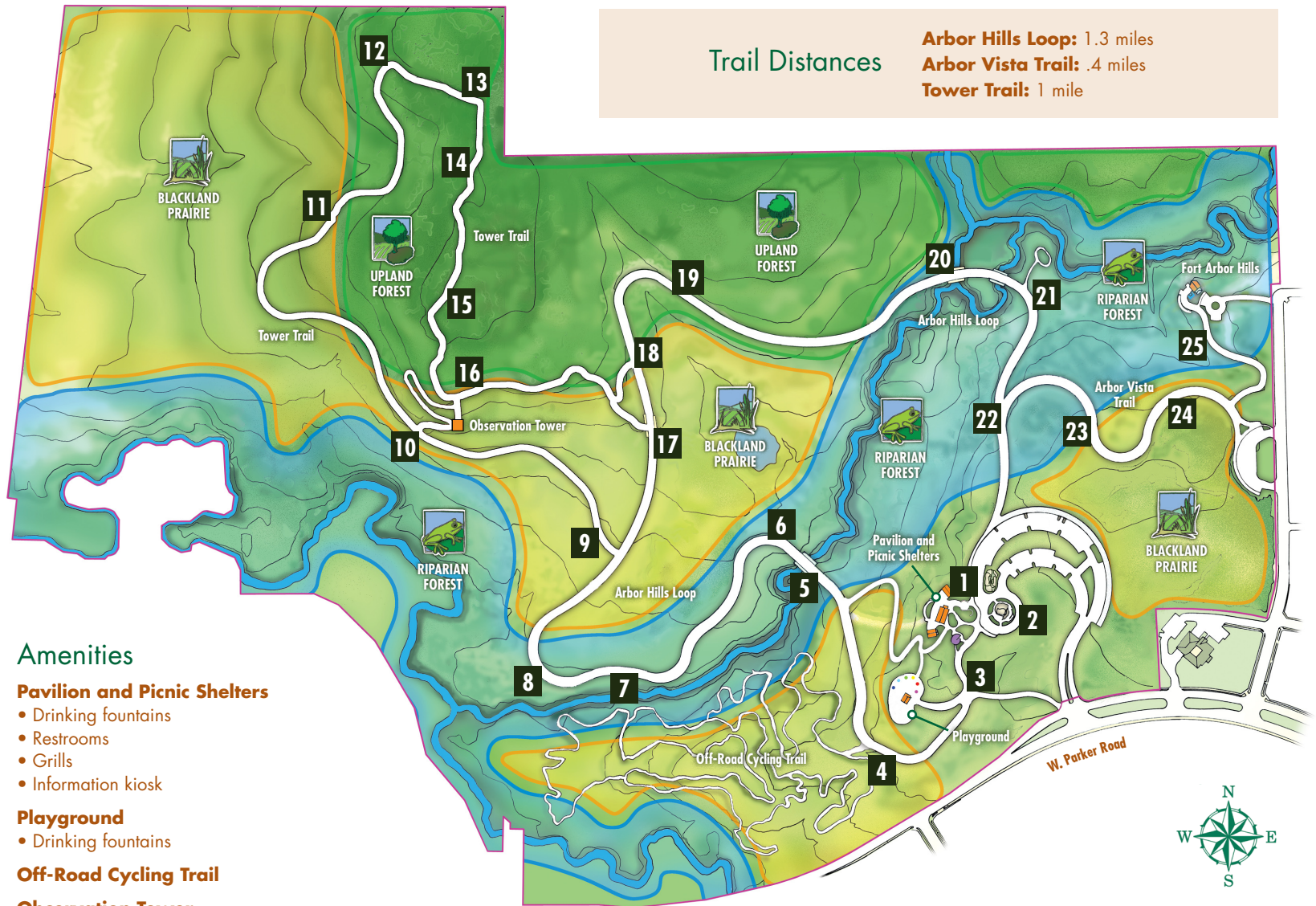
Arbor Hills Nature Preserve is a natural respite within our suburban city. It is a special place left largely undisturbed where visitors can have the pleasure of being surrounded by nature and experiencing animals, plants and ecoregions found in North Central Texas.

Environmental stewardship means responsibly using and managing land and resources so they can be used and enjoyed now, and just as much in the future. In order for Arbor Hills to remain a healthy nature preserve, it is important that all users act as stewards of the park.

Your proactive stewardship of this park will help especially when you properly dispose of litter and pet waste in trash cans. It is also important to not disturb plants, animals or any part of the environment. And, finally, you help to protect the Preserve by staying on trails that are clearly designated for use.

Arbor Hills Nature Preserve Interpretive Trail Map

Refer to Trail Guide text for marker descriptions



ARBOR HILLS NATURE PRESERVE
city of plano

Arbor Hills Nature Preserve Interpretive Trail Guide

Refer to trail map for marker locations



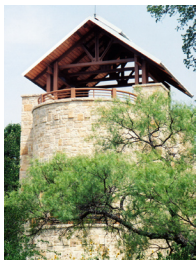
1 Learn about the history and natural features of **Arbor Hills Nature Preserve** from the information panels illustrating the three ecoregions found here: **Upland Forest, Blackland Prairie** and **Riparian Forest**.



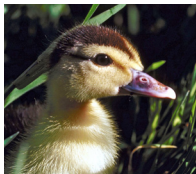
2 The manmade biofilters drain the parking lot. These rocky swirls filter pollutants from storm water run-off from the parking lot before it flows into Indian Creek.



3 **Please observe the park rules.** It is especially vital to the future of the Preserve that you **collect your litter and pet waste** and dispose of it properly in a trash can. Also, please note that **dogs must be kept on a 6-foot leash**, and that pedestrians and bikers share the trail. Bikers wishing to pass walkers on the trail must pass on the left, and loudly announce "passing on the left" when doing so.



4 Beyond the playground, past a big curve, the trail descends. From the bench here, you may see butterflies, bees, or hummingbirds in search of nectar from warm-season flowering vines such as trumpet vine, or flowers such as verbena and Indian blanket.



5 If you look over the railing from the Indian Creek bridge, you may see animals such as minnows, turtles, snakes or ducks. The Riparian Forest here contains trees such as cedar elm, bur oak, hackberry, pecan, walnut, red oak, Bois d'Arc, willow and cottonwood.



6 At the end of the bridge, the paved trail curves to the left. If you go left, see if you can identify the animal tracks in the concrete up ahead. Or, if you take the path straight ahead and uphill, you'll

find an old farm pond on the right where you can see tadpoles, frogs, toads, turtles, snakes, dragonflies and the occasional raccoon or fox. You may even see an egret or heron roosting here.

7 Indian Creek's Riparian Forest is adjacent to and south of the paved trail. The shady areas under the large, streamside trees are laden with poison ivy. It is easy to identify by the saying, **"leaves of three, let it be."** In contrast, the Blackland Prairie north of the trail is open and sunny where you can see butterflies such as monarchs flitting among the grasses and wildflowers.

8 This is a place to get close to the creek and search for small fish and reptiles. Erosion is a problem at this crossing, and attempts to stabilize the banks are in progress. Look up at the huge trees and listen to the cottonwood leaves flapping in the breeze. The limestone bench around the corner is a great place to listen for birds.

9 The trail splits here with the trail on the left going west to the prairie. Mesquite trees are here in abundance. You may see the ladder-backed woodpecker, painted bunting or chickadees here. After sunset you may hear the calls of owls and coyotes as a reminder that you are in a nature preserve.

10 The **observation tower** looms above you. The lower landing displays informational panels illustrating the three ecoregions and a map of the main trails, which are mostly visible from the upper balcony. **Please stay on the paved trail** to access the tower; erosion is caused by "shortcuts." This area is still re-establishing after recent construction,

and seeds imported from Clymer Meadow in Hunt County are incubating here.

11 From the trail, you can see Denton County to your west as the backdrop for tall prairie grasses and mesquite trees. This land has not been grazed since the 1990s, allowing small woody plants to grow and invade the grasses.

12 Follow the curving trail into the Upland Forest. Rock seats have been built into the walls so you may sit and listen to the sounds of the preserve, and watch for wildlife as the grasses and trees move in the breeze.

13 The forest around you is dominated by cedar elm. They have small, rough leaves and are dense with fine twigs. Notice the cooler temperature in here.

14 As you leave the shade of the cedar elm forest, you move into a sunny Texas redbud glade. These native trees are recognizable by their heart-shaped leaves and springtime magenta blossoms.

15 Bois d'Arc trees are numerous in this area. This tree with hardy, orange wood is also known as Osage orange or horseapple. The fruit is a 4"-6" diameter green ball with a rough surface. It is a source of food for squirrels. In French, "Bois d'Arc" means "wood of the bow" and refers to the Osage Indians' use of the arched branches for bow wood.

16 From the observation tower, you have a view of the three ecoregions. Vines twist around tree trunks here and include poison ivy, passion vine and the uncommon pitcher clematis.

Turn page to continue ►



17 Here, at a crossroads where the trails and ecoregions meet, you might see wild turkey, American basket flowers, Maximilian sunflowers, and more painted bunting. East along the footpath is the old farm pond. You can return to marker 6 along this path; heading south, you can revisit markers 8 and 7 along Indian Creek. Going north to markers 18 through 25 takes you to Fort Arbor Hills.

18 The Upland Forest is straight ahead. Notice the mesquite along the trail. It is one of the most widely distributed trees in Texas. Mesquite has long, sharp thorns and despite its beautiful, fragrant spring blossoms, it is considered an invasive species in the prairie ecoregion.

19 Mealy blue sage is a riot of color in the spring, and a thick stand here has been dubbed “Butterfly Central”

because of the many diverse species that visit for nectar. You can hear many birds here, and a small stream crosses under the trail, but is only visible when it rains.

20 A graceful American elm leans over the intricate stone bridge here. Indian Creek flows under the bridge, so listen for the waterfall as well as birdsong. This portion of the Riparian Forest is home to the phoebe, snakes, rabbits, water skimmers, and dragonflies. At night great horned owls and screech owls perch, looking for prey or their mates.

21 A short side path diverts you past a tall black walnut tree. The stream ahead invites you past a red oak. Other notable tree species in this area are the pecan and the cottonwood. A footpath goes east through the woods here toward Fort Arbor Hills.

22 The trail here is sandwiched between layers of sedimentary Austin chalk. Fragrant springtime honeysuckle blooms sweeten the air, and roughleaf dogwood blooms nearby.

23 As you walk through this area, notice the many varieties of butterfly and their larvae, and nectar plants such as antelope horns, a variety of milkweed.

24 A large cedar elm provides shade to Eve’s Necklace, redbud, flaming sumac and young Texas ash.

25 As you enter Fort Arbor Hills, you are surrounded by a canopy of trees rooting along Indian Creek below, such as bur oak, red oak and Mexican plum.

Park Rules

The following park rules have been established by City Ordinance. Violators of the rules are subject to fines.

The park is CLOSED between 11:00 p.m. and 5:00 a.m.

The following are **PROHIBITED** in any park or park facility controlled by the Parks and Recreation Department:

- Alcoholic beverages
- Motor vehicles and motorized devices (including motorcycles, scooters, etc.)
- Weapons of any kind except as provided for under the Texas Concealed Weapons Act
- Disturbing permitted facility use, or scheduled activities and events
- Loitering in or around park restrooms
- Tobacco use in, or within 20 feet of, bleachers in baseball/softball field plazas, park restrooms, or playgrounds

- Entering any controlled access area without permission
- Dumping, littering, or emptying wastewater
- Removing or damaging plants, grass, or otherwise disturbing any part of the environment
- Fires (except in designated grills or fire rings)
- Swimming or boating in any body of water
- Golfing
- Solicitation of fees or donations
- Sale of merchandise, food and beverages, or conducting any type of business or special event
- Advertising or distribution of flyers, notices, or handbills
- Vandalizing or defacing any structures or facilities
- Dogs off-leash (leashes shall be no longer than 6 feet)
- Failure of person to immediately clean up after dog or pet defecates
- Horseback riding

- Hunting, trapping, or removal of any animal, or to let loose any animal
- Overnight camping
- Operation of hot air balloons or aircraft
- Model or remote control boats, planes, gliders, rockets, vehicles, etc.
- Parking on the grass or in any area not designated as a parking area, or parking overnight
- Use or parking of commercial/freight carrying vehicles on park roads or parking lots
- Failure to observe posted signs in parks and along trails (15 MPH speed limit)
- Indecent language or any activity which creates a public nuisance
- Amplified sound
- Practice of athletic activities on game fields without reservation

Fishing is permitted in lakes and creeks, but is subject to state laws and licensing requirements.

WARNING: TEXAS LAW (CHAPTER 75, CIVIL PRACTICE AND REMEDIES CODE) LIMITS THE LIABILITY OF A GOVERNMENTAL UNIT FOR DAMAGES ARISING DIRECTLY FROM HOCKEY, IN-LINE SKATING, ROLLER-SKATING, SKATEBOARDING, ROLLER-BLADING, OR SOAP BOX DERBY USE ON PREMISES THAT THE GOVERNMENTAL UNIT OWNS, OPERATES, OR MAINTAINS FOR THAT PURPOSE.

Some activities may be permitted by the Parks and Recreation Department or allowed in designated areas. Actual ordinance provisions may be viewed online.

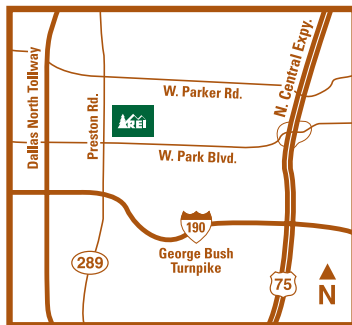
For more information, contact:



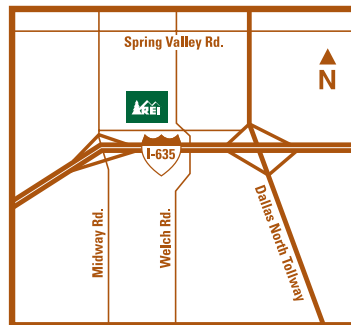
Plano Parks and Recreation
972.941.7250
planoparks.org



This Interpretive Trail Guide was made possible by a grant from REI, with locations in Plano and North Dallas.



2424 Preston Road, Plano TX 75093
972.985.2241
In Preston Towne Crossing, NE corner
of Preston and Park in Plano



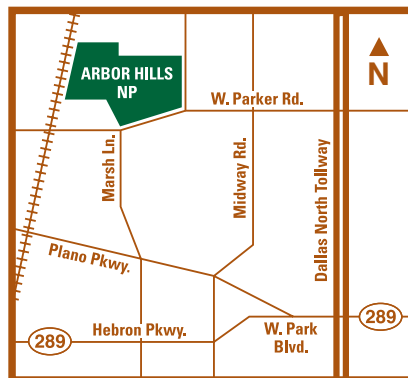
4515 LBJ Freeway (I-635)
Dallas TX 75244
972.490.5989
West of The Galleria

**Arbor Hills
Nature Preserve**
6701 W. Parker Road
Plano TX 75093

T E X A S



Blackland Prairie Chapter



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