

A4 | 2006 PARK, RECREATION, & OPEN SPACE MASTER PLAN SUMMARY

Summary - 2006 Parks, Recreation, & Open Space Master Plan

Overview

The Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan was developed as an update to the 1997 plan to provide an assessment of Lancaster's parks, recreation, and open space system. This plan, together with the 2006 Trails Master Plan and Streetscape Plan, was intended to create a comprehensive set of guidelines development of Lancaster's recreational infrastructure moving forward. This plan was developed with several aims, including:

- Identify opportunities and recommend alternatives for improving the park system.
- Look at the potential growth of the city over the next 5 to 10 years, and assesses where additional facilities will be needed as the city grows, and what types of facilities are most needed.
- Guide city staff in acquiring land to meet current and future park and open space needs.
- Prioritize key recommendations of the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan so that the most significant deficiencies are addressed as quickly as possible.
- Guided city staff and city leaders in determining where and how parks funding should be allocated over the next five to ten years.

The plan was intended to govern decision making for the entirety of Lancaster, including areas within its Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction. The plan was designed to meet the requirements of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and includes an introduction describing the aims and time frames for the plan, as well as the context current conditions of Lancaster, including the unique physical features, history, and economic and demographic profiles of the city. The plan also includes an inventory of the existing parks within the city, the goals of the park system, a public input section, and a needs assessment accompanied by recommendations and an implementation plan. Additionally, the Texas Parks and Wildlife department stipulated a life-span of 10 years for the master plan, with a complete update necessary at the conclusion of that time period. 2015 is the final year of that time frame, and the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan is due for an overhaul.

Goals and Objectives

- Provide a variety of recreation facilities and programs to meet the ultimate recreational needs and desires of the city of Lancaster's growing population.
- Create a park system that will improve the physical form and appearance of the City of Lancaster.
- Preserve and enhance Lancaster's open space and natural resources, especially areas with topography change and/or indigenous tree cover and land prone to flooding.
- Provide an open space system which links parks, schools, greenbelts, and open spaces.
- Provide a tool to coordinate multi-jurisdictional efforts with respect to issues that affect recreational opportunities in the community.

- Continue to maintain all of the Lancaster parks and recreational facilities in a superior and sustainable condition.
- Develop other funding mechanisms to help supplement the city's limited funding resources.
- Include a citizen participation process in all ongoing park planning and design, as well as updating of the parks master plan.

Parks Inventory and Assessments

The previous Parks Master Plan planning effort inventoried existing park and open space facilities within Lancaster. This evaluation was intended to assess the current park and open space infrastructure within the city, as well as compare the available facilities with the number of users, to determine the need for new or improved facilities within the city. The inventory was designed to measure a number of aspects of each park in Lancaster and its ETJ, including its classification, its location, its service area, and its size. Also reviewed were the facilities available in each park, the layout and conditions of each park, and an inventory of any special considerations that might be specific to each park.

The inventory shows that Lancaster has a total of 19 parks, 13 of which are developed, for a total of 260 acres of developed parkland and 254 acres of undeveloped parkland. The breakdown by park type is as follows:

- 6 developed neighborhood parks, totaling 31 acres
 - Land dedicated to 4 future neighborhood parks, totaling 11 acres
- 2 community parks, totaling 194 acres
 - 2 undeveloped regional parks, totaling 247 acres
- Several special purpose parks, totaling 38 acres
- No linear parks
- No pocket parks

Public Input

Public input was a key part of the development process for the Parks Master Plan. Citizen input is essential to developing a plan that reflects the recreational needs and wants of the community, and Lancaster used a public involvement program utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methods to gather citizen input. The program used several methods to engage citizens, including a Citizen Attitude telephone survey, one-on-one stakeholder interviews, focus group discussions, and community meetings. The public outreach program involved an estimated 650 individuals, gaining invaluable insights into the types of facilities most used, key needs, and the emphasis residents wanted to place on various types of facilities in the community.

The general conclusions of the public outreach program was that Lancaster residents were very supportive of efforts to improve the city's parks and trails system. Residents wanted more fields and courts for youth and adult sports, and a greater variety of recreational outlets in general. Citizens also wanted more family friendly neighborhood parks, a new senior citizen center (which has since been built), and were strongly supportive of system of easily accessible neighborhood trails. Results of the citizen attitude survey, which surveyed 400 residents, can be seen in full in the Lancaster parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan. The information gathered from Public participation was then used as major component in the development of a needs assessment and recommendations for the city of Lancaster

Figure A4.02 - Neighborhood Parks

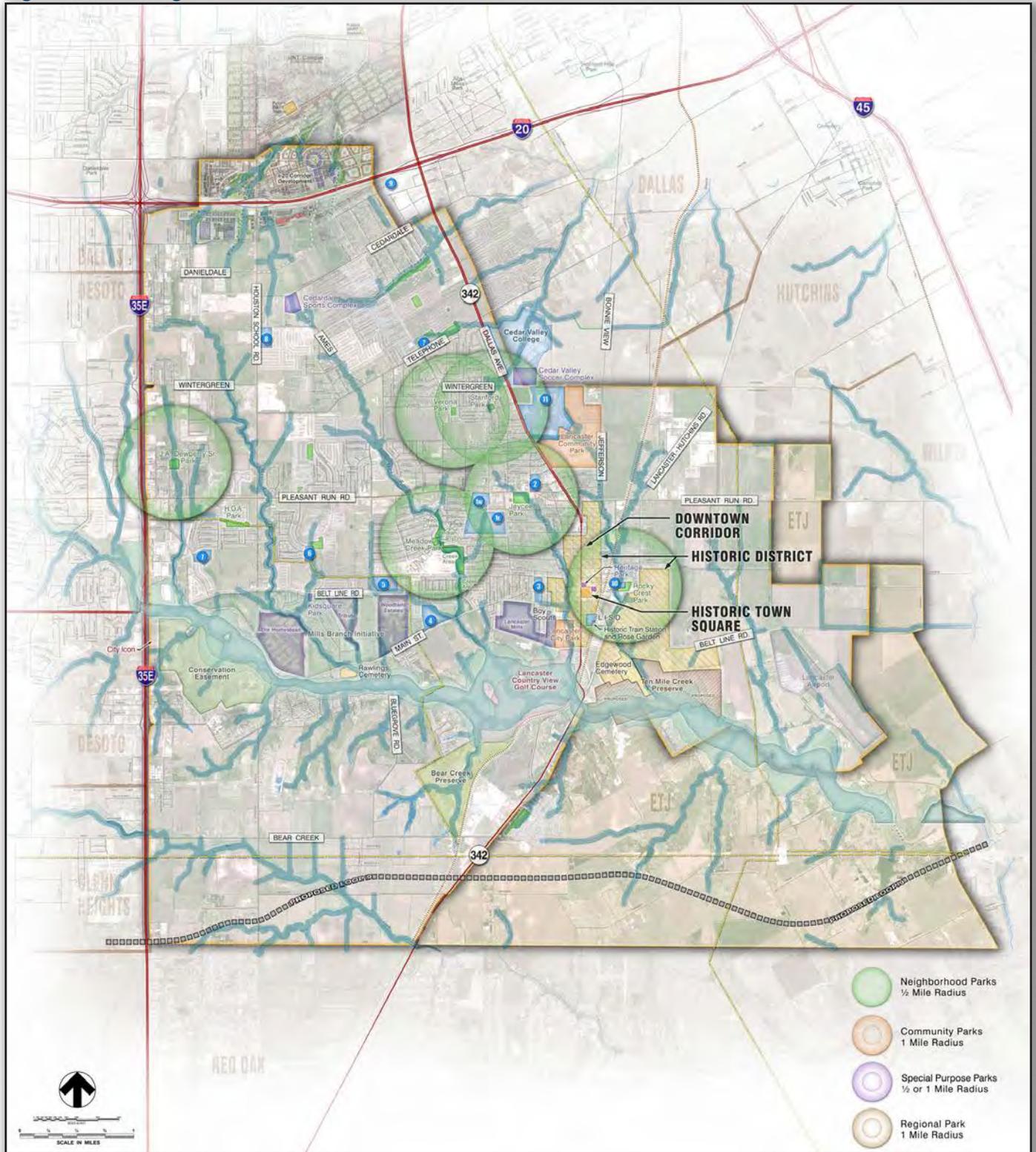
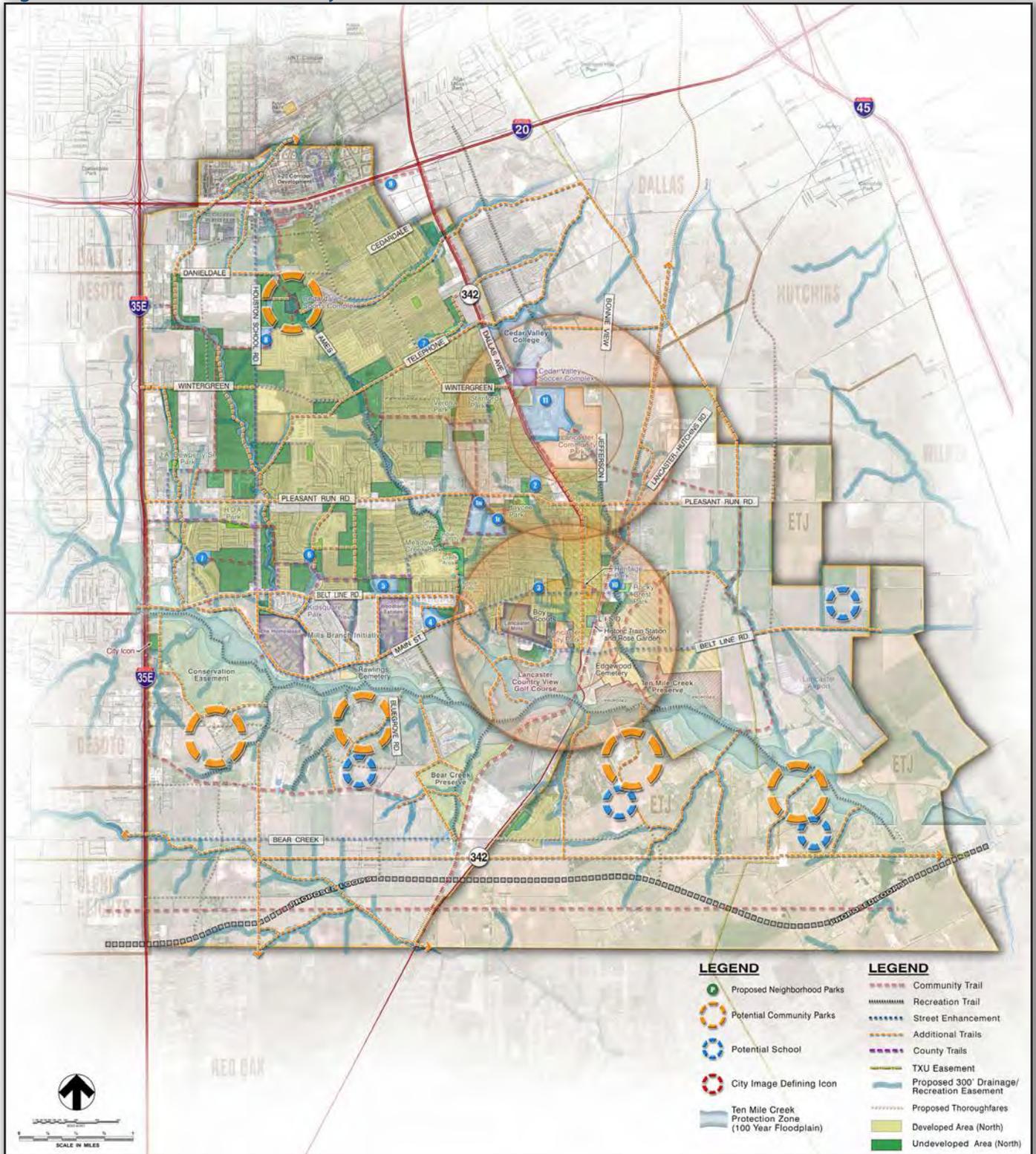


Figure A4.04 - Potential Community Parks & Schools



Needs Assessment

After an analysis of the existing park infrastructure had been completed and citizen input had been gathered, a needs assessment was developed using three techniques that adhered to methodologies approved by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for local park master plans and by the Department of the Interior for local park system Recovery Action Plans (RAP). These methods included a Standard-Based Approach, which established a standard facilities need per 1000 population for the city of Lancaster; a demand-based approach using participation rates to determine population desire for particular facilities; and a resource-based approach, which was based on the usefulness of available physical resources in Lancaster, such as the city's creek and drainage systems. These methods were all used together to create a comprehensive assessment of the city's needs, both in its current state, and what its needs were projected to be in the future based on current population growth projections.

The needs assessment determined that based on Lancaster's target standard of 28 acres of parkland per 1000 residents, the city has a deficit of park acreage and facilities. This deficit stood at 564 acres in with a 2005, and was projected to rise to 1,124 acres by 2015, when Lancaster's population was expected to number 59,000 residents.

A summary of Lancaster's acreage needs by the year 2015 shows that in order to meet its standard acreage target, the city needs:

- 76 additional acres of Neighborhood Parks
- 219 additional acres of Community parks
- 139 additional acres of Special Purpose Parks
- 336 additional acres of Regional Parks
- 177 additional acres of Linear Parks
- 139 additional acres of Open Space

Recommendations

The recommendations developed in Lancaster Parks Master Plan proscribe a series of actions to be implemented over the life of the plan, intended to cover the next 5 to 10 years (through 2015 - the life of the master plan), though some recommendations have been made that must be addressed over longer time horizons. The recommendations address city policy, acquisition of park land, the development of land already acquired for parks, improvements to existing parks, and the development of recreation facilities. The recommendations of the plan are as follows:

City Policy

- Pre-identify and preserve a community-wide network of conservation lands or “linked landscapes.”
- Prepare a resource inventory.
- At a minimum, land identified for conservation planning and development should include all land within 1,500 feet adjacent to the 100 year flood line of all creeks and their tributaries.
- Revise the City’s Comprehensive Plan, Zoning Ordinance, and Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance to make provision for the implementation of Conservation Planning and Development.
- Follow the Guidance as provided in the “Model Language for Conservation Subdivisions” of the publication: Arendt, R.; Growing Greener, Putting Conservation into Local Plans and Ordinances; Island Press; 1999.
- Inventory all sites of historic and cultural value within the city.
- Limit development within historic and cultural Landscapes to sustainable development and according to the principles of Conservation Planning and Development.
- Create a wide buffer of natural vegetation and wind rows in situations where the Cultural Landscape Districts are located adjacent to incompatible land uses.
- Investigate private/public collaboration to make the protection of the city’s heritage a reality.
- Revisions to the city’s Park Land Dedication ordinance (detailed in the 2006 Lancaster Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan).

Acquisition

- Develop 25 new neighborhood parks at a minimum of 5 acres per park.
- Consider donations by developers and implement park land dedication as new communities are built. Target 5 acre+ sites that are easily accessible and that have sufficient land to be useful.
- J.A. Dewberry Park: Acquire additional land (+/- 3 acres) north of the park on both sides of the creek to increase the size of the park and to provide additional stream access and stream protection.
- Board Walk Park: Acquire land (+/- 3.5 acres) along the creek towards the Cedardale Sports Complex in order to provide a direct link to the latter.
- Develop 5 new community parks at an average of 50 acres per park.
- Acquire at least 40 acres of land adjacent to the Cedardale Sports Complex for a new community park.
- Acquire 8 acres of land adjacent to and west of City Park that fronts on Beltline Road.
- Develop 5 new linear parks, at an average of 300 ft wide, develop a total of 6 miles of linear park.
- Acquire land along Mills Branch, Deep Branch, Halls Branch, and Keller Branch for linear parks.
- Acquire (+/- 30 acres) along Deep Branch Creek to expand Deep Branch Linear Park north towards Pleasant Run and south towards the Country View Golf Course.

- Acquire land for special purpose parks, including: Lancaster Gateway Park, Healing Park, Retail Park Plaza, Lancaster Cultural District, Dog Park, Extreme Park, and Additional Indoor Recreation Facilities.
- Acquire 400 acres along the 100 yr floodplain of Ten Mile Creek for a regional park.

Development

This section contains a list of planning and design approaches when developing parks in the city. This section contains broad approaches for all park types, as well as lists with more specific approaches for various park types, including community parks, neighborhood parks, linear parks, special purpose parks, and regional parks

Development of Recreation Facilities (in order of priority)

- Senior Citizen Center
- Jogging, hike and bike trails
- Playgrounds
- Children's water spray park
- Natural habitat/ nature areas
- Lighted basketball courts
- Outdoor pool/ aquatic center
- Rental picnic/reunion pavilions
- Park Restrooms
- Exercise stations along trails
- Amphitheater
- Youth softball fields
- Baseball fields
- Soccer fields
- Picnic tables

High Priority Existing Park Improvements

- Renovation of existing parks – prepare and implement renovation plans
- Park signage – develop new, update old signage
- Creeks – establish riparian buffers
- Park Maintenance
- Wi-Fi Access
- Art in Public Places

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