

VI. Needs Assessment and Identification

Lufkin Parks and Recreation Facilities and Programs Master Plan

In order to determine the specific needs for parks and facilities it is necessary to identify both the assets and the deficiencies as well as community desires to appropriately determine the development, management and maintenance of a city park system. The following needs assessment was a multi-phased endeavor combining the demand-based approach with the standards-based approach by utilizing surveys, an advisory committee, public meetings, input from community sports associations and leagues, identification of existing facilities and utilization, and development of standards.

Overview of Park Needs

Neighborhood and community parks are generally the responsibility of the City in the provision of public parks and recreation areas. The assessment of needs for pocket neighborhood, community and regional parks varies according to the purpose and use of the park facilities. Regional parks serve the whole service area, which is the City Of Lufkin, the ETJ and potential visitors. Community parks are intended to function on a large-scale basis also serving the parks and recreation needs of the entire community. Community parks are typically large in size (minimum 5 acres) and include facilities and improvements for citywide activities and assembly events, i.e. picnic areas, walking/jogging trails, ballfields, and others. Ensuring adequate and equitable recreation and leisure opportunity for all citizens is the objective of community parks.

Neighborhood parks serve a different purpose than community parks. The use of neighborhood parks is intended for the residents of adjacent neighborhoods. The focus of neighborhood parks is the residential neighborhoods within a reasonable walking distance of the park. Complete service area coverage is not necessary for neighborhood parks, rather it is more important to

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have a well distributed system of neighborhood parks to serve the parks and recreation needs of the nearby (within 4 to 8 blocks) residents. Pocket parks serve the immediate area.

The intended use of neighborhood parks is to provide residents with ample opportunity for both passive and active recreation within close proximity to their homes, typically 2 to 5 blocks. The method of determining the need for neighborhood parks is different from an assessment of need for community parks due to the intended use and design of neighborhood parks. The level of recreation activity in neighborhood parks is limited as a result of the size and location of the parks and the equipment and facilities available. Neighborhood parks should be within short walking distance for the residents of one or more nearby neighborhoods thereby encouraging use and promoting convenience, ease of access, and safety for neighborhood children.

The size of neighborhood parks varies according to the availability of property, method and timing of acquisition, and intended use. One or two vacant lots or several acres may each be adequate to serve the neighborhood park need if there is an even distribution of park space and sufficient facilities and equipment available. Local standards recommend a minimum neighborhood park size of 0.25 acre assuming an adequate and even distribution of neighborhood parks throughout the city.

Pocket parks are typically left-over parcels of land situated in undesirable locations and too small to be developed. Examples of parcels suitable for development of pocket parks include excess rights-of-way, vacant lots, vacated alleys and easements, areas beneath overhead power lines, irregularly shaped parcels, and other undesirable parcels. Heritage Park is an example of a pocket park. This area is utilized for seasonal lawn displays and

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common open space. Pocket parks provide open space to areas of the community that do not have convenient access to a neighborhood or community park. The use of undevelopable property for pocket parks enhances the appearance of an area.

Existing Park Classifications

The City owns or leases a total of 668.4 acres, including two regional parks, six community park, seven neighborhood parks and two pocket parks. The following listing show the park classifications followed by the size. The locations are shown in **Figure 1**.

Pocket

City Hall (2.4)

Heritage Park

Neighborhood

Brandon (2.2)

Four Seasons (2.5)

Gulf (1.3)

Herty (4.4)

Lufkin Land (1.1)

Mantooth (1.3)

Ward (3.0)

Community

Chambers (12.4)

Grace-Dunn Richardson (49.1)

Jones (47.0)

Kiwanis (26.4)

Morris Frank (88.1)

Winston (16.8)

Regional

Ellen Trout (126.5) (includes the Zoo)

Kit McConnico (289.7)

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Standards Based Approach

In the standards-based approach the method of assessing the need for parks and recreation areas and facilities is determined by applying minimum development standards on a population ratio basis, such as 0.25 acre per 1,000 persons for a pocket park. To determine the acreage needs for pocket parks, neighborhood and community parks, the minimum development standards displayed in **Table 6-1 – Park Area Needs**, were used based upon the following development standards:

Pocket parks: One quarter (¼) to one half (½) acre per one thousand (1,000) population;

Neighborhood parks: One (1) to two (2) acres per one thousand (1,000) population,

Community parks: Five (5) to eight (8) acres per one thousand (1,000) population, and

Regional Parks: Five (5) to ten (10) acres per one thousand (1,000) population.

**Table 6-1
Park Area Needs**
Parks and Recreation Facilities and Programs Master Plan
City of Lufkin, Texas

Park Classification	Acres/1,000 persons	Acres Needed	Existing Acres	Surplus or Deficiency
Pocket	0.25 – 0.50	8.5 – 17	2.4	(6.1 – 14.6)
Neighborhood	1.0 – 2.0	34 – 68	15.8	(18.2 – 52.2)
Community	5.0 – 8.0	170 – 272	239.8	69.8 – (32.3)
Regional	5.0 10.0	170 – 340	416.2	246.2 – 73.2

** Based upon estimated 1998 population of 34,425 persons, which was prepared by the Texas State Data Center.

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The criteria in **Table 6-1** provide standards for a range of desired parks sizes and service areas. Under these recommended standards, the City currently has an adequate amount of community park acreage and a modest surplus in the regional park classification (**Figure 2- Community Park Service Areas**). The deficiencies are in the neighborhood park, pocket park, and specialty classifications.

Since neighborhood parks should be distributed throughout the community in a manner that provides equal access to all citizens, the City needs to acquire and develop or encourage and support additional neighborhood parks. Since these may need to be in subdivisions that are fully developed, the options for acquisition are limited, but may include purchase of an existing vacant residence. Areas in which new neighborhood parks are needed are show in **Figure 3 – Potential Park Locations and Service Areas**.

Park and School Partnerships

Neighborhood parks can ideally be located in conjunction with school facilities. The City should continue to work with the school district to form partnerships that will provide neighborhood parks. As shown in **Figure 4 - Park and School Service Areas** the potential for neighborhood and school parks partnerships would begin to meet some of the neighborhood park needs in areas that do not currently have recreational facilities.

An opportunity to improve the parks and open space system in Lufkin is to conduct an inventory of city-owned property and other vacant or undeveloped parcels to identify potential sites for development of pocket parks.

Demand-based Approach

The demand-based approach relies on a combination of the utilization of park facilities to determine the unique needs of each individual park and input from citizens and park users regarding their desires for parks and recreation areas and facilities.

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Park Utilization

A park utilization survey by the park department staff was used to identify the demand and use of the parks and recreation facilities to help identify the priorities for replacement and improvement of the existing facilities (**Table 6-2 Park Utilization Survey**). In the current form, the utilization survey provides snapshots of daily park usage. The usage numbers are not a cumulative total. The totals are useful to indicate how the parks are used on a daily basis and what the most used areas are. It may be assumed that the parks are used with the same intensity over the span of the year. General park usage was observed at most all the parks with the heaviest usage at Grace Dunne Richardson, Kit McConnico, Chambers, Ellen Trout and Morris Frank. Softball fields were heavily used at Kit McConnico. Basketball facilities were used at Brandon and Grace Dunne Richardson.

Survey

In December 1997 a Parks and Recreation (PARD) Survey Resident Questionnaire was conducted to gather input on usage, satisfaction, and recommended improvements. A copy of the survey and summary of responses are included in the Appendix. In summary the 18-question survey revealed the following:

- The majority of the residents responding had live in Lufkin over 10 years.
- 47% of the respondents live south of SH 103 and west of US 59.
- Over 60% used the parks frequently and an additional 33 % go to the park occasionally.
- Summer, Fall and Spring seasons saw the predominant use.
- Morris Frank and Kit McConnico were the most frequently used parks.

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- The average age of the respondents was between 36-45 years.
- Twice as many of the respondents were male as female.
- Not enough leisure time, safety and appearance were the main reasons the respondents did not use the parks.
- The respondents agreed that Lufkin should provide more parks, recreational facilities and activities.
- The most needed facilities, activities or parks features were community recreation center, softball fields, play equipment, facilities for teenagers, gymnasiums, and an indoor swimming pool.
- A bond program was favored as the source of revenues to expand and improve Lufkin's facilities. User fees scored well as a source of revenue for the parks.
- The majority of the respondents indicated that redeveloping existing facilities and increasing maintenance were top priorities.
- Most people use a car to get to the park.
- Most of the respondents were from two adult households, both of whom worked.
- The children in the household were evenly distributed in the 0-5, 6-12, and 13-18 age groups.

The comments on the survey expressed interests in developing more softball fields and the need for other ball fields, including soccer and baseball, particularly to encourage tournament play. Radio-controlled planes and other vehicles is an expanding interest. Improved facilities, particularly at Kit McConnico would encourage tourism to the area for nature

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education as well as tournament ball games. An indoor pool and gymnasium received several comments. Walking, jogging and biking were important activities with growing interests, including mountain biking.

The City of Lufkin Parks Master Plan Advisory Committee identified a prioritized list of parks and recreation system needs and facility improvements. These were developed after a series of public meetings in which the Committee received extensive input from citizens and participants in the park system. These groups and individuals were very specific on the projects and preferred order of development. The Task Force made recommendations to the Committee who incorporated them with ideas and suggestions offered by citizens through the citizen opinion surveys, public meetings and interviews. The projects the Committee identified are in priority order as follows:

Team Sports

1. Two new lighted girls softball fields
2. Restrooms at girls softball fields
3. Soccer restroom/concession building
4. New lighted soccer field
5. Renovate three adult softball fields at McConnico
6. Lighted girls softball parking
7. Girls dressing rooms
8. Girls softball pavilion
9. Two adult softball fields
10. Remodel concession at girls softball
11. Girls softball maintenance building
12. Relocate #7 baseball field away for soccer and near baseball
13. Soccer sprinkler system additions and improvements
14. Fence West property line at Morris Frank soccer
15. Soccer storage building

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16. New fencing girls softball fields
17. Sprinklers girls softball fields
18. Improve parking for soccer complex

Community Projects

1. Renovation of Brandon Center
2. New Recreation Center and Gym
3. Kiwanis Park Playground Project
4. Junior League Amphitheater
5. New Swimming Pool
6. Dunbar East Campus
7. Jr. High West Park Project
8. Radio Controlled Airplane Facility
9. New Disc Golf Course

Summary of Needs

In summary, the needs of the Lufkin Park and Recreation system are multi-faceted. First, there are additional neighborhood and pocket park sites that are needed to serve their immediate areas. Potential areas are shown on **Figure 4**. Linear parks like the Azalea Trail is needed to safely connect the parks and activity centers. New, expanded and improved facilities at existing sites are desired by the citizens and sports participants. There appears to be adequate space at several of the parks to develop additional ballfields for soccer, softball and baseball and associated facilities. Areas for specialized activities, including tennis courts, remote controlled vehicles and mountain bikes, are also desired.

These needs and desires, combined with the goals and objectives identified in Section II, will be used to formulate a long-range list of priorities to be address by the citizens of Lufkin and the Parks and Recreation Department.