

VII. Plan Implementation and Prioritization of Needs

Lufkin Parks and Recreation Facilities and Programs Master Plan

Overview of Implementation

This Parks and Recreation Facilities and Programs Master Plan serves as a guide for public policy and private decision-making related to the availability, quality, type, and location of leisure and recreation opportunities for the residents and visitors of Lufkin. The lifeblood of this master plan is the implementation framework established in this chapter. The purpose of an implementation program is to create an aggressive, yet realistic framework for implementing the policies and recommendations for the provision of adequate parks and recreation areas, facilities, and improvements.

Perhaps the most important aspect of an implementation program is the commitment required of elected and appointed officials, City staff, and citizens. The Master Plan must reflect the needs and desires of these individuals in order for it to be considered a useful tool in directing future decision-making pertaining to the acquisition, development, and management of an adequate parks and recreation system.

In order to ensure appropriate implementation of the master plan, City departments responsible for implementing portions of the plan should incorporate the recommended implementation actions in their annual departmental work programs. The Director of the Parks and Recreation Department should provide a progress briefing to the City Council on an annual basis to allow monitoring of the steps taken toward implementation and the impact of the improvements.

The Plan should be a valuable resource that is used on a continuous basis in guiding the City's park development program. The goals, objectives, and recommended actions of the plan should be referenced in other studies and development proposals to ensure consideration of existing and planned public parks and

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recreation areas and open space. As new development occurs, there should be allowances for sufficient land capable of being developed for public parks and recreation uses.

The Parks and Recreation Facilities and Programs Master Plan should be periodically reviewed to ensure that the goals, objectives and recommended actions reflect the changing community needs and attitudes. In and of itself, the master plan is capable of accomplishing very little. Rather, the citizens and local officials of Lufkin must take ownership in the plan to see that it is successfully implemented. Great care should be taken to ensure that the actions recommended by this plan are viable and realistic as they relate to the City's adopted and approved plans, policies, and programs.

It should be noted that the implementation of this plan would require a substantial investment on behalf of a community of approximately 35,000+ persons. Acquisition and development of the parks identified in this master plan will require a significant level of expenditure. In addition, upon completion of the park improvements, there will need to be a commitment of the City to continue to fund ongoing maintenance out of the City's capital budget.

The projects identified by the master plan are intended to be complete within five-year periods between 1998 and 2018. To fund the projects, the City may decide to have a bond election to authorize issuance of General Obligation Bonds or other appropriate funding mechanisms.

The implementation program is a master plan for the future development of the Lufkin Parks and Recreation system. In addition to identifying existing parks and priority locations for new neighborhood and pocket parks and potential linkages, the program addresses important considerations, such as desired

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improvements, expansions and new facilities. The recommended master plan for future development of the City's parks and recreation system was developed based upon existing conditions, planned improvements, and projected future needs as described earlier in this report. The identified recreation facilities and park improvements also reflect the needs identified by the Parks Improvement Committee and citizens of the community. The recommendations of the Plan establish the commitment of officials and citizens toward attaining an adequate public parks and recreation system.

The existing parks and service areas are depicted in **Figure 1 - Inventory of Public Parks and Recreation Areas**. In addition, the Plan shows the general location of new neighborhood parks to be developed as part of this master plan. Bicycle and Pedestrian Network, are recommended for implementation to provide a means of access between residential areas, activity centers, schools, and parks and recreation areas.

**Implementation
and Prioritization
Program**

The Plan identifies the priority improvements to be conducted over the next twenty (20) years. The improvement priorities are based on the information provided in the Needs Assessment and Identification. The identified improvements are divided into five-year time increments. They include development of existing and future parks and facilities, purchase of additional equipment such as play structures; construction of pavilions; infrastructure improvements of drainage and irrigation systems; functional improvements such as crowning and re-grading fields; aesthetic enhancements such as landscaping, berming and fencing; and, other improvements such as replacement of play surfaces, picnic tables, benches and water fountains.

Actual costs of the specific projects are not presented at this time. Sound project cost estimates must be prepared prior to the

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initiation of any project and particularly when submitting a grant application for the Texas Recreation and Parks Account (TRPA) program.

**Priorities
Prioritization of
Projects**

Based on the goals, needs and desires that have evolved through the research, standards development and public input in the Plan, the priorities in ranked order are listed below. The funding for the projects may be a combination of current fund expenditures, bond funds, reserve funds, grants, donations, in-kind services and volunteer participation.

1999 through 2004

1. Expand existing facilities at the regional park (Kit McConnico) that would provide opportunities for additional playing fields, restrooms, concessions, trails, nature observation, picnicking, playgrounds and community gatherings.
2. Swimming Pool
3. Develop two new lighted girls softball fields
4. Construct restrooms and locker rooms at the girls softball fields.
5. Provide parking lot lighting for girls softball.
6. Provide areas and facilities for model vehicles.
7. Acquire land for neighborhood park in Priority Area A
8. Develop neighborhood park in Priority Area A with area appropriate improvements (swings, benches, sidewalks, etc.)

2005 through 2008

1. Acquire land for neighborhood park in Priority Area B
2. Develop neighborhood park in Priority Area B with area appropriate improvements (swings, benches, sidewalks, etc.)
3. Renovate Brandon Center
4. Develop Kiwanis Playground project. Add soccer sprinkler system improvements and additions.
5. Install new fencing and sprinklers at girls softball.

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- 6. Construct new recreation center and gym.
 - 7. Improve parking for the soccer complex.
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- 2009 through 2013
 - 1. Acquire land for neighborhood park in Priority Area C
 - 2. Develop neighborhood park in Priority Area C with area appropriate improvements (swings, benches, sidewalks, etc.)
 - 3. Remodel concession at girls softball
 - 4. Develop Dunbar East Campus.
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- 2014 through 2018
 - 1. Acquire additional land adjacent to or near Area parks when available.
 - 2. Acquire land for neighborhood park in Priority Area D
 - 3. Develop neighborhood park in Priority Area D with area appropriate improvements (swings, benches, sidewalks, etc.)
 - 4. Develop Junior High Park project.
 - 5. Develop new disc golf course.

Planning beyond the first two five year periods is considered to be long range. The Plan must be reviewed and updated regularly as projects are completed. New priorities may be added or reordering of existing projects may be desirable as the population grows and ages. Maintenance of the facilities is generally considered in the department's yearly budget.

Funding Sources

Most capital investments involve the outlay of substantial funds, therefore, local governments are seldom able to pay for facilities through appropriations in the annual operating budget. Given this reality, there are numerous techniques that have evolved to enable local governments to pay for capital

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improvements over a longer period of time. Some of the available techniques include:

Current Revenue - This technique is known as "pay-as-you-go" financing and is the financing of improvements from current revenues such as general taxation, fees, service charges, special established funds, or special assessments.

Reserve Funds - The use of reserve funds is made possible by accumulating funds in advance for capital acquisition or development. The accumulation may result from surplus or earmarked operational revenues, funds in depreciation reserves, or the sale of capital assets.

Enterprise and Revenue Funds - Many municipalities establish accounts that are earmarked for park and recreation programs. These accounts are used to fund programs and to acquire, operate, and maintain facilities.

General Obligation Bonds - The use of this method involves the taxing power of the jurisdiction as it is pledged to pay the interest and principal to retire the debt. General obligation bonds can be sold to finance permanent types of improvements such as park and recreational areas and facilities. Voter approval may be required.

Lease-Purchase - Local governments utilizing this innovative financing approach prepare standards and specifications for the development of a park by a private company. The facility is then leased to the jurisdiction for a specified period of time. Title to the park and facilities can be conveyed to the local government at the end of the lease period without future payments. The rental over the years will have paid the total original cost plus interest.

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Eminent Domain - The power of eminent domain allows the local government to acquire private property for public use. Although this is not a common practice for the acquisition and development of park and recreational areas, it is a tool that can be used by the City to purchase property within certain areas of the City, particularly within established neighborhoods. The property would be acquired through condemnation with "just compensation" paid to the property owner.

Authorities and Special Districts - Special authorities or districts may be created to provide public facilities such as parks and recreational areas. These authorities are commonly created to avoid the restrictive debt limitations of local governments. They may be financed through revenue bonds retired by user charges or fees, or in some instances, the authority may have the power to tax.

Sales Tax - Through a public referendum, the city may establish a sales tax of any size, typically one-half to one cent, to generate general revenue for the acquisition and development of parks and recreation areas throughout Lufkin. The sales tax may have a limited duration or may be permanent.

User Fees - User fees may be an effective cost recovery technique to recover a reasonable portion of the costs to administer, operate, and maintain public parks and open space. Examples of user fees include registration or entry fees for recreational programs and equipment and facility rental charges.

In-kind Services and Volunteer Participation – In-kind services may be coordinated with other departments and governmental entities to perform the labor on specific construction

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projects. Volunteer participation may be provided by individuals, sports associations, private businesses and other such sources.

State and Federal Assistance - State and federal grants-in-aid are available to finance a large number of programs. The cost of funding parks may be borne completely by grant funds, or a typical requirement is a local share. Programs such as federal revenue sharing and Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) have given local governments more freedom on how they spend their grant money. Some of the programs currently available include:

Texas Recreation and Parks Account Program Funds - The Texas Recreation and Parks Account (TRPA) provides 50 percent matching grant assistance to local governments for the acquisition and development of public parks and recreation areas and facilities. All TRPA grant applications are evaluated for program eligibility and prioritized based on a "Project Priority Scoring System." The applications are scored and presented to the Parks and Wildlife Commission for approval. Minimum master plan standards must be met to qualify for priority points in the competitive scoring system.

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) - The use of CDBG funds may be used on projects which benefit persons with low and moderate incomes. The CDBG program is administered by the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs. Funding is available on an 80/20 cost share basis.

Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund/Texas Local Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Fund - This fund is co-administered by the National Park Service and the Texas

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Parks and Wildlife Department (TP&WD). Funds are available to provide planning, land acquisition and development assistance for "outdoor recreation." This is a 50-50 matching grant program administered through the state.

Urban Parks and Recreation Recovery Program (UPRRP) - This grant program is for the rehabilitation of recreation facilities in areas defined by the U.S. Census as a Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). Lufkin may qualify under this designation. This program is a 70 percent federal and 30 percent local matching grant.

Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA) - This program is available for planning assistance and technical assistance on projects emphasizing environmental protection, open space accessibility and construction. This program is available to qualified private organizations and local governments. Public involvement is a requirement of this program.

Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) - This program provides funding for transportation related bicycle and pedestrian facilities. There is a Surface Transportation Program (STP) category, which allows cities and counties the option of using bridge and road funds for providing bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Enhancements can include bicycle and pedestrian facilities, rail corridor preservation, scenic and environmental transportation opportunities and improvements to historical transportation sites. Funds from this program could be used to establish corridor linkages between neighborhoods and park and recreational areas.

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Federal Lands Highway Funds - This program provides funds for bicycle and pedestrian transportation facilities in conjunction with trails, roads, highways and parkways. The primary intent of this program is to assist in the construction of transportation facilities. This is a 100 percent federal share program. The use of this fund would primarily be for the acquisition of right-of-way and development of trail linkages connecting residential neighborhoods with the public parks system.

The Landscape Cost Sharing Program - This program is administered by the State Department of Highways and Public Transportation. Through this program, there is 50 percent cost sharing available for both highway and pedestrian landscape projects on routes within the designated permanent state highway system.

America the Beautiful Tree Planting Program - This program is administered by the Texas Department of Forestry. This is an outgrowth of President Bush's proposal to plant one billion trees in the United States by the end of the century to mitigate the greenhouse effect. Funding is available for public and private projects on a 50 percent cost share basis.

Cooperative Forestry Assistance Funds - This program is administered by the Texas Department of Forestry. Matching grants are available on a 50 percent cost share basis for projects including trails and greenways, beautification efforts, and public education and training. Grants range in size from \$5,000.00 to \$10,000.00 and may be matched with in-kind services or private financing.

American Greenways DuPont Awards Program - This program is administered by The Conservation Fund, which provides grants of \$500 to \$2,500 to local greenways projects. Grants can be used for almost any activity that serves as a catalyst for local greenway planning, design, or development.

Most of the grant programs are reviewed and selected on a competitive basis. Therefore, applications for funding will be evaluated based on the assessment of local need, the existence of an adopted Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan, and the availability of local matching funds. Although grants provide an alternative means of financing local park and recreational area improvements, they should not serve as the sole basis for funding of a local park and recreation system.

Private Financing Alternatives

In addition to capital improvement financing and state and federal assistance, there are a variety of innovative approaches to financing public park and recreation areas. The use of incentives to encourage private financing, public-private partnerships, land dedication or donation can be an effective strategy to develop a City-wide park and recreation system without relying on the municipality to fully fund the program. In addition, the use of impact fees may help to offset the impacts of private development on the demand and use of public facilities and services. The following private funding approaches may be available to the City of Lufkin.

Land Donation - Property owners may be willing to donate land to the City for use as a public park. The City should encourage donation subject to established guidelines for the development of park and recreational areas. Considerations should include the suitability of the land for park development; conformance with the objectives of the Lufkin Parks and

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Recreation Facilities and Programs Master Plan; and proximity to neighborhoods, natural features, and adjacent land uses.

Trust Fund - The City could establish a trust fund for citizens to will a portion or all of their estate to public park and recreational use. Legal provisions would need to be established for the conveyance of property. In addition, the City should establish and use guidelines for the acceptance of suitable park land property. The Trust Fund would be incorporated as a 501(C) 3 non-profit corporation. This would allow possible income tax benefits for the donors.

Private Financing - Community organizations or local service clubs could assist in acquiring and developing park and recreational areas by providing the local match for state or federal grants-in-aid. Another option is 100 percent financing by a private entity with dedication to the City.

Dedication - As part of the subdivision process, the City may require an equitable and reasonable amount of land to be dedicated to the City for park and recreational use. In order to abide by legal validity tests and to avoid a "taking" of private property, however, the amount of property to be dedicated must be roughly proportional to the demand for park and recreational services placed on the City by a private development. This method has worked effectively in some municipalities.

Fee In Lieu of Dedication or Improvement - The use of impact fees may be used by the City to collect revenue for the acquisition and development of park and recreational areas. Similar to the dedication approach, the required fees must also be roughly proportional to the City's burden for the provision of park and recreational services resulting from private development. An

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example of a "fee in lieu of improvement" is a park excise tax which would require a developer to pay a fee (on a per square foot or per dwelling unit cost basis) upon issuance of a building permit.

Tax Deferral - This method may be used by the City to encourage property owners to defer the development of their land while the City uses it for public open space or a semi-developed park. During the deferral period, the property would be assessed as an undeveloped parcel, with the collection of taxes to be deferred until the property is developed. The City would secure an agreement with the property owner with established conditions of use and provisions for liability and ongoing maintenance. In addition, the City would obtain a recreation easement for "temporary" use of the property.

Tax Reductions - Donation of private land for public use may reduce an individual's federal income tax burden. Also, the market value of a recreation easement may reduce the tax burden either federally or locally, if approved by the local government.

**Recommended
Strategy for
Financing Public
Park and
Recreational Areas**

The most effective approach to funding an adequate parks and recreation system for the City of Lufkin will be to utilize a combination of financing techniques and funding sources. To the maximum extent feasible, the City should concentrate on securing state and federal assistance that will help to minimize the commitment of local funds. Most of the assistance programs require a local match ranging from 20 percent to 50 percent depending upon the individual program. In some instances, the program administrators may welcome private contributions of land, improvements, labor, materials, or equipment as the local share.

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An important consideration in expanding the parks and recreation system will be the City's commitment to provide an adequate annual operating budget for administration, operation, and maintenance of the park and recreation areas, facilities, and improvements. Applications should be submitted on an annual basis for as many assistance programs as the City is able to administer and financially support. A special fund should be established by the City to finance the local share of annual applications for state and federal park and recreation program assistance.

The use of public funds to leverage private donations or partnership financing may also be a feasible strategy to acquire and develop sufficient property to suit the demands and needs of citizens and visitors of Lufkin. Implementing some of the approaches identified above, donations, dedication, trust fund, tax deferral, tax reduction, may help to encourage private participation in the development of a comprehensive park and recreation system.