

7

Implementation



Edinburg Parks and Recreation Master Plan

The purpose of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan is to provide comprehensive policy direction for the community to meet its short-, mid-, and long-term parks and recreation needs, and in turn enhance livability. This plan is designed to guide both public and private investment decisions related to the provision of parks and recreation facilities, so that investments related to acquisition, development, and maintenance contribute to the overall goal for the plan. Central to these activities is the implementation program that is set forth in this chapter.

The purpose of the implementation program is to provide an aggressive, yet realistic and affordable plan for implementing the recommendations of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The implementation program identifies priorities, timelines, and cost estimates. It also underscores factors that will contribute to successful implementation, and lists potential partners that the City can work with to put the plan into action.

This implementation program is based on the outcomes of the needs assessment that are presented in [Chapter 6, Needs Assessment](#). The needs assessment determined that based on a current year (2005) population of 58,200 persons, the City needs to acquire 77.9 acres of parkland. The majority of this need is calculated to be for community parks. A service area analysis also reveals that the distribution of parks is not equitable across the City. In particular, there is a deficit of parks in north Edinburg. This deficit is compounded by a significant amount of growth that is occurring around the periphery of the community. It has been determined that the City will need to acquire land to meet this location-specific deficit. As such, this implementation program sets forth a plan for land acquisition and trail system development. The implementation program also addresses improvements to existing parks, new facilities, and maintenance, based on equipment standards and results of a condition assessment, the former of which is presented in [Chapter 5, Facility Standards](#) and the latter of which is presented in [Chapter 4, Environmental Scan](#).

Since one of the underlying principles of this plan is public participation, the implementation program is also based on needs and desires identified by the public. Direction for plan implementation was gained through input from the Parks Board, City Council, local interest groups, organizations, and citizens

The overall goal for the Parks and Recreation Master Plan is:
To improve existing parks and recreation facilities through intensification, maintenance, and development of parks and facilities that are spatially balanced and meet the needs of diverse interests, and to provide ongoing and continuous management and coordination to ensure that parks and recreation facilities contribute to a sustained livability of Edinburg.

through the Citizens' Congress, Citizens' Delegation meetings, and key stakeholder interviews. The success of this plan will be contingent upon the commitment of these members of the public who have been involved in the plan development process to date, and new members of the public who choose to be engaged in the future.

7.1 KEY DRIVERS ■ ■ ■

There were several factors that influenced the implementation recommendations that have come forward in this plan. These drivers include:

- ◆ The City is projected to experience a 46.40 percent increase in population between the Years 2000 and 2025. Population growth equates to more park users, and in turn, the need for new parks, improvements, facilities, and maintenance.
- ◆ The City faces an imbalance in the distribution of its parks across the community due to the fact that northern Edinburg is experiencing a deficit of parks.
- ◆ A plan for acquiring parcels of land in advance of ensuing development will be necessary to expand the number of parks and trails. Creating rights-of-way and easements concurrent with new development will also be required to ensure connectivity by way of trails and sidewalks.
- ◆ There is growing recognition of the need to combine resources with other jurisdictions, agencies, and the private sector to improve the park system and achieve greater efficiencies.

7.2 SUCCESS FACTORS ■ ■ ■

Several key factors will be integral to the success of the implementation program, including the dedication of the City's leadership, public involvement, acceptance and commitment, reference and integration, and evaluation, as described below.

- ◆ **Dedication of the City's Leadership** - The most important aspect of the implementation program is the dedication of the City's leadership, including the City Council, Planning Commission, Parks Board, and City staff. Community leaders must assume ownership of the plan in order for implementation to occur successfully over the short- and long-term.
- ◆ **Public Involvement** - The goals, objectives, and policies of this plan reflect citizen input that was achieved through public outreach efforts. Efforts to involve the public were viewed as important in terms of building a constituency of informed and committed individuals and groups from the community who will be able to work with the City's leadership to implement the plan.

- ◆ **Acceptance and Commitment** – To ensure implementation over the short- and long-term, all departments must accept the plan and commit to incorporating its actions in their annual budgets and work programs. Acceptance and commitment to implementation will be measured by the progress made in realizing the goals and objectives. Quarterly briefings and annual progress reports that are provided to the City Council will be important tools to monitor implementation progress.
- ◆ **Reference and Integration** – Successful implementation will be dependent upon an integrated approach to planning and development. Planning studies and development review proposals should be cross-referenced with the plan’s goals and objectives. In this way, planning may occur in a seamless, integrated manner so as to ensure consideration of existing and planned parks, recreation areas, open spaces, and trails.
- ◆ **Evaluation** – The plan will need to be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that the goals, objectives, and recommendations reflect the changing needs and attitudes of the community. Annual reviews will help to ensure that the recommended actions are viable and realistic as they relate to the City’s approved Comprehensive Plan, policies, programs, and budget. A formal evaluation and update should be undertaken every five years.

7.3 IMPLEMENTATION THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS ■ ■ ■

While the aforementioned factors will contribute to successful implementation of this plan, it is acknowledged that there will be challenges associated with implementing the goals and objectives, including land acquisition costs, and land assembly. One of the ways to overcome the challenges associated with implementation is to form partnerships. No individual jurisdiction or group can be held solely responsible for providing all parks and recreation programs and facilities in a community. Rather, meeting increasing demands necessitates joint efforts between the City and a variety of providers, including Hidalgo County; other nearby communities; Edinburg Consolidated Independent School District (ECISD); public, quasi-public, and private entities such as churches, private schools, and civic clubs; private sector entities; and the state and federal governments. The following describes preferred implementation roles of the City and other potential partners:

- ◆ **City of Edinburg** – The City’s role will be to increase its commitment of resources (financial and human) to enhance its existing inventory of parks through parks maintenance and improvements efforts. The City’s commitment of resources will also contribute to the acquisition, development, and maintenance of new parks, a trail system, and recreation facilities to serve the changing needs of the community over the

next 20 years. Further to resource commitment, it is advisable for the City to solicit partnerships with other agencies and jurisdictions, as described below, to allow for shared responsibility in the areas of acquisition, development, and maintenance of parks, recreation areas, open spaces, and trails, and program and facilities provision.

- ◆ **Hidalgo County** – The City should work with the Hidalgo County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to coordinate the trails component of this master plan. As part of its Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), the Hidalgo County MPO has mapped proposed and existing bicycle lanes, trails, and sidewalks throughout the County. This mapping work was done to plan for an integrated network that transcends municipal boundaries and creates a truly connected pedestrian and bicycling network. It is in the City’s interest to support the County’s efforts to implement its MTP, because in doing so, the trail system will benefit Edinburg as well as the County as a whole. Better connectivity will bring people and places together, effectively creating a more livable community.
- ◆ **Regional Municipalities** – The City would benefit from working with other communities in the municipal statistical area (MSA) to help meet the overall parks and recreation needs of the larger area. The needs assessment revealed a current and projected deficit of community parks in Edinburg. As such, working with nearby communities to cross-promote larger parks in other municipalities could be effective in helping citizens meet their parks and recreation needs. In nearby McAllen, parks 25 acres or more in size include Los Encinos Community Park, Municipal Park, Springfest Park, Western Park, and Westside Park. Cross-promoting Mission’s hike and bike trail would also help supplement Edinburg’s current deficit of linear parks. State and Federal parks and wildlife refuges are also a means to meet the community’s need for larger parks, which typically have a wide range of activities that are suitable for all ages and a variety of interests. Nearby State and Federal parks and wildlife refuges include the Bentsen – Rio Grande Valley State Park (Mission), Boca Chica State Park (Mission), Port Isabel Lighthouse Historic State Park (Port Isabel), the Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), the Lower Rio Grande NWR, and the Laguna Atascosa NWR. Competing and increasing demands for limited local funds will continue to increase the viability and feasibility of a formal partnership between Edinburg and local communities, particularly for significant capital investments such as an athletic complex, indoor recreation center, and/or an inter-local trail and bikeway system.
- ◆ **ECISD** - The partnership that would reap the most immediate benefits would be with ECISD. The City is already working with ECISD to share

use of specific facilities for activities such as basketball and swimming. However, given the limits of only one community center, more opportunities should be explored for the City to make use of ECISD's facilities. It is advisable to form an agreement for future joint purchases of land, development, and use of parks and recreation facilities, and shared operation and maintenance responsibilities so that efforts may be formalized in a comprehensive, city-wide approach. One of the specific items that should be outlined in the agreement is a partnership to redevelop school yards into more useable public spaces. Adopting the "learning landscapes" approach and redesigning school grounds to include trees, gardens, playground equipment, and public art would allow school yards to become true public places. ECISD would retain rights to the school property, but they would be open for public use after school hours and on weekends, in effect, allowing them to become places of community value.

- ◆ **Public, Quasi-Public, and Private Entities** – Public organizations such as the University of Texas-Pan American have an interest in land acquisition for their University recreation activities. Working with the University in a manner similar to the proposed partnership with ECISD would be useful for both parties. Organizations such as the Edinburg Pony Baseball/Softball Association, Edinburg Soccer Association, Edinburg Youth Tackle Football, local churches, private schools, and civic clubs such as the Edinburg Boys and Girls Club, contribute to the success of local programs through the active involvement of their members in recreation activities. These quasi-public and private entities also offer numerous facilities and in-kind services to help meet the recreation needs of the community and improve and maintain facilities. A further opportunity for involvement could include participation in an "adopt-a-park" program. It would be advantageous for the City to further collaborate with these organizations in the future to help implement the goals, objectives, and policies of this plan.
- ◆ **Private Sector Entities** – The parkland dedication ordinance allows land owners and developers to proportionately contribute to the parks and recreation system. The fee-in-lieu of land dedication program allows the City to invest private financial contributions in areas of the community where parkland is needed. This can be achieved in part, through an impact fee. It is recommended that the City amend its parkland dedication ordinance to allow an impact fee to be collected for both residential and commercial properties. It is further recommended that maintenance costs associated with maintaining existing parks and proposed new parks be off-set by a set-aside of the parkland fees. It is advised that prior to amending the ordinance, legal counsel should be

sought to ensure that the City is within its legal rights. Since there are many examples of mid- to high-density housing subdivisions in the City with no access to park space in the immediate or nearby vicinity for local residents, it is recommended that the subdivision regulations be amended to require mini-park development in higher density subdivisions. Further to parkland dedication and fees-in-lieu, private sector entities such as commercial recreation providers for activities such as golfing, fitness, swimming, and skating play a part in meeting the recreation needs of the community. The City should consider providing incentives (e.g. expedited development approvals, development fee waivers) to developers seeking to build recreation facilities for which there is an expressed need within the community that is not being met by the City (e.g. swimming pools, volleyball courts).

- ◆ **State and Federal Governments** – Higher orders of government will continue to be a source of funding and technical assistance through their competitive grant programs. For example, the City of McAllen and the City of Mission recently received federal funds in combined excess of \$2 million dollars to extend the hike and bike trail and construct a new World Birding Visitor Information Center, respectively. Edinburg would also benefit from state and federal funding to improve its parks and recreation system. It is advisable to make maximum use of these financial assistance programs to leverage additional funding to allow for more significant projects such as hike and bike trails, and sizeable, more significant parks that have large service areas. A listing of funding sources and programs is discussed later in this chapter and described in [Appendix G, Funding Sources](#).

7.4 IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES ■ ■ ■

The following details the improvement priorities that have been identified for the community’s parks and recreation system. These improvements were determined based on the condition assessment that is presented in [Chapter 4, Environmental Scan](#), the recommended improvements to the parks and recreation system based on the community’s current and projected need for parks, recreation facilities, open space, and trails presented in [Chapter 6, Needs Assessment](#), and public input through consultation, stakeholder interviews, and the citizens’ questionnaire.

Primary Improvement Priorities

The following list of improvements have been determined to be primary priorities, meaning they should be incorporated into the City’s five-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) to ensure adequate funding for project

initiation and completion during fiscal year 2005/06 through to fiscal year 2009/10.

1. Municipal Park, South Park, and Dr. Diaz and Bicentennial Parks

The citizens' questionnaire and user observation study identified which of the City's parks were being used most frequently. The findings concluded that Municipal Park, South Park, and Dr. Diaz and Bicentennial Parks had the highest number of park users. As such, these parks have been identified as priorities for improvements. The selection of these parks is further justified on the basis of the fact that they are regional or community parks, meaning that they have large service areas. Improvements made to these parks will have greater impacts as compared to mini-parks and neighborhood parks which have considerably smaller service areas. The list of recommended improvements is based in part, on the facility inventory presented in [Chapter 4, Environmental Scan](#), and the equipment standards identified in [Chapter 5, Facility Standards](#), and are listed in [Appendix H, Improvements and Cost Estimates](#).

2. Park Accessibility and Signage Improvements

The need for improved park accessibility on a priority basis was identified, based on findings of the citizens' questionnaire which are presented in [Chapter 4, Environmental Scan](#). The findings indicate that the City should improve accessibility to maintain or increase the number of park users. This is reinforced by the findings of the condition assessment that is also presented in [Chapter 4, Environmental Scan](#). The scores for each facility or improvement in the condition assessment range from zero to four, with zero representing the improvements that are in the best condition. A ranking of four is for those facilities that are in very poor condition and therefore, require replacement, reconstruction, or refurbishment. The condition assessment underscored the true nature of the park accessibility problem since every park in the community received a condition assessment of two, three, or four. Accessibility requirements are required at every park, and should include cross-walks, pavement striping, perimeter sidewalks, and "children at play signs". Furthermore, signage should be installed at all entrances to the parks to improve wayfinding. Currently, where signage does exist, there is no consistency in terms of visual appearance. It is recommended that the City establish a standardized design for its signage that includes the City's logo.

3. Community Recreation Centers - Remodeling and Construction

Respondents to the citizens' questionnaire were asked what types of parks and facilities they would like to see created or improved to enhance the

quality of parks and recreation. The findings revealed that an indoor recreation facility was among the top priorities. This information was further reinforced by stakeholder interviews which highlighted the need for a new community recreation center to supplement the City's one existing center. During the five-year CIP budget period, it is recommended that the City allocate dollars to the remodeling of the existing community recreation center, as well as to the construction of a new recreation center. Remodeling and construction should take into account the fact that respondents to the citizens' questionnaire indicated that indoor or covered basketball courts were among the top three facilities that they would use most often. The City should also account for the fact that according to national standards, the City is currently in need of tennis courts, volleyball courts, and swimming pools – all of which can be accommodated in community recreation centers.

4. Land Acquisition and Redevelopment

The Parks and Recreation System Plan that is presented in [Chapter 6, Needs Assessment](#) identifies two areas in north Edinburg that require new community parks. These areas include the north-west holding pond and an area within the vicinity of the north-east reservoir. Since the City already owns the north-west holding pond, the CIP will only have to account for costs related to park development. Conversely, both land acquisition and park development costs will need to be considered for the community park that is proposed in north-east Edinburg. Both parks should be designed to include a variety of passive and active recreation activities that will accommodate the recreation needs of both young and older persons.

5. Schoolyard Redesign

All of the schools within the community have been identified to be repurposed as places of value to the broader community. To achieve this end, enhancements such as murals, playing fields, sculptures, and community gardens are recommended. The City will need to partner with the ECISD in order to make this project a reality. Success in partnering with the ECISD on Trevino Park bodes well in terms of future partnership with the Board.

6. Trail System Development

The Parks and Recreation System Plan identified in Chapter 6, Needs Assessment delineates a conceptual trail system that is a composite of bike lanes, hike and bike trails, and sidewalks. It is recommended that the development of the trail system be staged over the five-year period to allow for land acquisition along rights-of-way including roads, drainage/irrigation canals, and rail tracks. Partnerships with the public and private sectors will

be required to secure rights-of-way and ensure connectivity within and beyond the community.

Secondary Improvement Priorities

The following parks have been determined to be secondary priorities, meaning they should be completed after fiscal year 2009/10: Memorial Park, Freddy Gonzalez Park, Trevino, Fountain Park, Jaycee Park, and West Park. A detailed list of required improvements is listed in [Appendix H, Improvements and Cost Estimates](#). These improvements should be carried out within a five-year period.

Tertiary Improvement Priorities

The following parks have been determined to be tertiary priorities: Citrus Park, Frontier Park, Cenizo Park, Apollo Park. A detailed list of required improvements is listed in [Appendix H, Improvements and Cost Estimates](#). These improvements should be carried out within a five- to ten-year period.

While it is likely that the primary priority status of Municipal Park, South Park, and Dr. Diaz and Bicentennial Parks will not change, it is possible that the priority status of parks listed in the secondary and tertiary categories may change during the planning period based on population growth, development (infill and new subdivisions), user demands, and the development of new parks and recreation facilities. The City will need to adjust priorities to allow for planned spending in a strategic way that reflects the needs and demands of the community.

The funding for the primary, secondary, and tertiary improvement projects is proposed to include a combination of sources, including funds from the Parks and Recreation Department, the City's general fund and general obligation fund; community development block grant funds; inter-local agreements; grants from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and other State and Federal agencies and private foundations; private land dedication and fees-in-lieu of land; certificates of obligation; Hidalgo County; and the ECISD.

[Appendix H, Improvements and Cost Estimates](#), identifies cost estimates for the improvements. These costs are intended to guide the development of the five-year CIP and future budgetary planning beyond this timeframe. These cost estimates should not be taken as final costs.

Key Recommended Actions

In addition to capital projects and improvements, there are other important implementation action steps that should be taken to develop an adequate parks and recreation system over the long-term. These steps include:

- ◆ Assess and update this Plan on an annual basis to determine the areas of need based on issues such as growth and development, and modify the improvements program according to changing circumstances and priorities.
- ◆ Submit quarterly briefings and annual progress reports to the City Council to inform them of the plan implementation status.
- ◆ Conduct a formal five-year evaluation and update to the Plan.
- ◆ Acquire or reserve land in identified future growth areas well in advance of ensuing development to ensure availability, protection, and reasonable acquisition costs.
- ◆ Revise the subdivision regulations to include provisions to include parkland dedication and fee-in-lieu requirements for both residential and commercial properties and to allow a portion of the impact fee to be used for maintenance purposes provided legal counsel confers.
- ◆ Organize and support annual community events in the community and regional parks, such as the All-America City 10K and 2-Mile Run/Walk, festivals (e.g. film, music, food), outdoor concerts, fairs and other special events, including those which could become unique to the community (e.g. an event associated with the World Birding Center), to further instill sense of place and community pride among residents.
- ◆ Create incentives to encourage the development of plazas, courtyards, mini-parks, neighborhood parks, and other public/semi-public spaces in new developments. Incentives could include, but are not limited to, financial (e.g. development application fee waivers, tax incentives) and density incentives.
- ◆ Use the conceptual trail network in this Plan to identify potential locations for trail segments and other linear connections as a means to secure rights-of-way and easements concurrent with new development and public improvement projects.
- ◆ Fund the annual operating budget to allow for improvements to, and maintenance of the existing parks, recreation, and open space.
- ◆ Continue to conduct a physical condition assessment once every two months to identify required park and facility improvements and determine the level of annual financial commitment required for maintenance.
- ◆ Establish an “adopt-a-park” program to solicit the involvement of neighborhoods and local organizations to create shared stewardship through maintenance and patrolling of public parks and recreation areas.

- ◆ Maintain, construct, and replace sidewalks in proximity to all parks to provide for the safety of park users and to meet pedestrian mobility needs in the community.
- ◆ Annually apply for grant assistance through programs such as the Texas Recreation and Parks Account (TRPA) which is administered by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.