

Section IV:

Trends

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Overview

The City of Fort Worth Parks and Community Services Department is committed to improving the community's health, stability, sustainability, beauty and quality of life for all citizens. The planning for the needs of the citizens of Fort Worth is influenced not only by analyzing past participation data and observing what leisure activities citizens currently participate in, but also by anticipating their future needs. Recreation trends are influenced by continuous changes in our society.

All areas of society are experiencing dramatic changes that will continue to demand departmental responses that are sensitive and appropriate. In addition to providing responses it is also imperative that the Parks and Community Services Department anticipates the future needs of the community. Monitoring environmental, social, economic, demographic and urban trends helps the Department predict the needs of the public.

This section addresses the following trends that will impact the future development and management of Fort Worth's parks, recreation and open spaces.

- Community Revitalization Trends
- Green Infrastructure
- Sustainable Development
- Social Trends
- Tourism Trends
- Economic Trends
- Health Trends
- Demographic Trends
- Technological Trends
- Urban Development Trends
- Parks and Recreation Administration Trends
- National Recreational Trends
- Parks, Recreation Facilities and Programming Trends

The American Planning Association (APA) documents Park Trends through a continuing series of briefing papers on how cities can use parks to address urban challenges. To learn more about the American Planning Association reports: "The City Parks Forum," visit the following website: www.planning.org/cityparks. The APA's City Parks Forum is dedicated to providing information on how healthy parks are fundamental to many aspects of community prosperity. These include improving economic health and vitality, reducing crime, improving public physical and mental health, creating a strong sense of community and supporting overall quality of life.

Community Revitalization Trends

In recent years, the use of parks for community revitalization has gained increasing attention across the country. The American Planning Association (APA) has reported that more than 30 studies have shown that parks and green space positively affect real property values for adjacent properties by as much as 25%. In cities across the country, parks define the character of a city and its neighborhoods. Further, parks can function as the catalyst for urban redevelopment.

The following four points are lessons learned from these studies (APA ‘City Parks Forum’ Briefing Paper “How Cities Use Parks for Community Revitalization” by Peter Harnik):

- 1.) Parks that serve as central walking, resting, and meeting places can revive failing or threatened commercial areas.
- 2.) Renewal takes leadership, vision, and time; with these three ingredients, revitalization tends to attract ever more investment.
- 3.) Community residents and the city, working together on a neighborhood park project, can turn around a distressed residential area.
- 4.) Parks don’t automatically lead to neighborhood revival; before investing, the city should make sure the relation of a park to its surrounding neighborhood will allow revitalization.

The City of Fort Worth is committed to revitalizing the central city. The central city area is defined as all the land within the boundary of Loop 820. A comprehensive and coordinated strategy is ongoing involving multiple city departments, such as: economic development, housing, historic preservation, infrastructure, parks, cultural programs, human services and safety initiatives. The City’s main strategies for central city revitalization are to develop pedestrian-oriented mixed-use growth centers, revitalize distressed commercial corridors by developing mixed-use urban villages along those corridors, and develop a light-rail transit system to connect the growth centers and urban villages along commercial corridors.

Green Infrastructure

Much has been researched and written about cities and green infrastructure. For example, the APA ‘City Parks Forum’ Briefing Paper “How Cities Use Parks for Green Infrastructure” by Peter Harnik stated:

“Just as growing communities need to upgrade and expand their built infrastructure of roads, sewers, and utilities, they also need to upgrade and expand their green infrastructure, the interconnected system of green spaces that conserves natural ecosystem values and functions, sustains clear air and water, and provides a wide array of benefits to people and wildlife. Green infrastructure is a community's natural life support system, the ecological framework needed for environmental and economic sustainability.

In their role as green infrastructure, parks and open space are a community necessity. By planning and managing urban parks as parts of an interconnected green space

system, cities can reduce flood control and stormwater management costs. Parks can also protect biological diversity and preserve essential ecological functions while serving as a place for recreation and civic engagement. They can even help shape urban form and reduce opposition to development, especially when planned in concert with other open spaces.”

The following four points are lessons learned from the study referenced above.

- 1.) Creating an interconnected system of parks and open space is manifestly more beneficial than creating parks in isolation.
- 2.) Cities can use parks to help preserve essential ecological functions and to protect biodiversity.
- 3.) When planned as part of a system of green infrastructure, parks can help shape urban form and buffer incompatible uses.
- 4.) Cities can use parks to reduce public costs for stormwater management, flood control, transportation, and other forms of built infrastructure.

The Trinity River corridor and its tributaries are important resources and provide a natural means of linking the City’s recreation sites and open space, as well as linking neighborhoods to centers of activity. The river and its tributaries are also an important economic asset to Fort Worth. Promoting sensitive and compatible development along the riverfront is essential to preserving the Trinity River as Fort Worth’s greatest natural asset. Preserving the floodplain as open space allows for natural filtration of surface runoff before it reaches waterways, and also protects structures from flooding.



Trinity Uptown Urban Design Concept, Trinity River Vision Project, Fort Worth

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development (development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs) promotes development with smart environmental impacts. As population increases and land availability and resources decrease, it becomes ever more important to consider the long-term ramifications of growth, the needs of citizens, protecting and enhancing environmental quality. Below are some issues and opportunities, specific to the City of Fort Worth, which should be considered when developing our parks and open spaces.

- Protecting Diminishing Natural Watersheds - As the City grows it is important to be aware that significant open spaces, wildlife habitat, original landscapes, wetlands, natural drainage areas, urban forest and remnant landscapes may be in need of conservation and protection.
- Providing Environmental Clean Up – Coordinate Watershed Management Projects with other City departments, Tarrant Regional Water District, Streams and Valleys, Inc. and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to manage and conserve the floodplain and drainage corridors.
- Reducing Pollution and Waste – Review management plans and practices such as those which reduce the number of vehicle trips each day to reduce ozone and pollution emissions and encouraging recycling contribute to a cleaner, healthier city.
- Sound Environmental Management – Seek ways for implementation of practices to reduce the use of pesticides and herbicides.
- Maintaining and Reclaiming Natural Areas – Expand management techniques such as those employed at the Fort Worth Nature Center and Refuge that have unique natural and aesthetic value to other areas.
- Maintaining Water Quality – Examine the natural drainage ways and wetlands that pose challenges for the Parks and Community Services Department and other City departments and agencies which may require increased vigilance in efforts to protect floodplains and watersheds and maintain high water quality levels.
- Natural Disasters - Floods, storms, and fires are infrequent but regular events that strain the resources of the City and the Department in our efforts to meet the immediate needs of our citizens. The City's response to these events is coordinated through the Emergency Response Team and an effective Emergency Action Plan. Many of the resources of the Parks and Community Services Department contribute to the City's rapid response to emergency situations.
- Green Space Benefits - Encourage the preservation of mature trees and plant additional trees to help improve air quality, mitigate the urban heat island effect and improve streetscape aesthetics.

Social Trends

City parks also produce important social and community development benefits. They make inner-city neighborhoods more livable; they offer recreational opportunities for at-risk youth and low-income residents; and they provide places in low-income neighborhoods where people can feel a sense of community. Access to public parks and recreational facilities has been strongly linked to reductions in crime and in particular to reduced juvenile delinquency. Providing vital human services is an important component of the City's vision of a future with strong neighborhoods, a sound economy, and a safe community.

Below is a list of issues that should be considered when planning for social trends.

- Safe Community - Consideration of concerns for personal and family safety is fundamental in our efforts to provide a safe community.
- Wellness - Increasing importance of wellness activities for all citizens will increase demands for facilities and programs offered by the Department.
- Diversity - Many Department activities play a valuable role in preserving and maintaining cultural heritages.
- Volunteerism - In recent years there has been an increased awareness of giving back to one's community. Many groups and programs exist and take advantage of these human resources.

Below is a list of programs the Department is currently administering to address social issues.

- Community Poverty - Programs such as Emergency Homeless Assistance, Comprehensive Energy Assistance, Summer Food Program, and Rental Assistance are in place to address the issue of community poverty.
- Youth at Risk - The Department implements youth-at-risk programs designed to help curb increased levels of crime, violence and vandalism, especially juvenile violence. These programs include the Comin' Up Gang Intervention Program as well as other gang deterrent efforts. The Department is instrumental in helping clean up the impacts of vandalism through the Graffiti Abatement Program.
- Adopt-A-Park - The Department facilitates opportunities for building community empowerment with programs like the Adopt a Park Program. This program provides a way for neighborhood residents to adopt their local park and medians and contribute volunteer resources to improve and maintain those facilities.
- Citizen Participation – The involvement of various stakeholders from neighborhood associations, the Parks and Community Services Advisory Board, community service organizations and interested citizens in the park planning process provides a vital connection in planning for the future of the community.
- Social Service Networking – The Department is working with county and state agencies to offer “one-stop” services in communities at locations served by public transportation to maximize service delivery.

Tourism Trends

How cities use parks /open space to promote tourism can be seen with the recent impact of the newly redeveloped Sundance Square. In 2014, *livability.com* named Fort Worth's Sundance Square as the best downtown in the nation.

According to the APA City Parks Forum briefing paper “How Cities Use Parks to Promote Tourism” by John L. Crompton:



Sundance Square, Fort Worth

“Public parks or public open spaces are often the “engine” that drives tourism in many communities. In a simplified tourism model, visitors use some mode of transportation to leave their homes and travel to attractions, which are supported by various kinds of services, such as hotels/motels, restaurants, and retailing. The attractions and support services provide information and promote their offerings to target groups they have identified as potential visitors.

Attractions activate this tourism system. Rarely do people leave their homes and travel some distance because they want to stay in a particular hotel or dine at a particular restaurant in a different locale. Most of the time, the desire to go to a destination on a pleasure trip is stimulated by its attractions.”

Several Fort Worth park facilities are tourism destinations including the Fort Worth Botanic Garden, the Fort Worth Nature Center and Refuge, the Water Gardens, Tandy Hills Natural Area, The Fort Worth Zoo and Log Cabin Village.

The following four points are lessons learned from the study referenced above.

- 1.) Parks provide sites for special events and festivals that attract tourists.
- 2.) Parks provide sites for sports tournaments, which can be major sources of tourism and economic benefits, especially for smaller cities.
- 3.) Large urban parks with zoos, memorials, museums, cultural and heritage artifacts, and historical sites can attract tourists.
- 4.) Parks with landscape planting and design that are recognized as “living works of art” can be tourist attractions.

Economic Trends

Fort Worth’s economy is highly diversified in many industry sectors such as services, trade, manufacturing, transportation, communication and construction. It has also become a major area for natural gas exploration and development. The changing economy provides Fort Worth with several challenges, many opportunities and a firm foundation for growth in future years. According to the North Texas Council of Governments’ employment forecast, employment in the City of Fort Worth will continue to rise at a rate of 1.5 percent annually to approximately 701,524 jobs within the city limits in 2030.



Main Street, Fort Worth

In this economic context, Fort Worth’s parks can present both opportunities and challenges. According to the APA City parks Forum briefing paper” How Cities Use Parks for Economic Development” by Megan

Lewis, AICP, parks are “a source of positive economic benefits. Parks enhance property values, increase municipal revenue, bring in homebuyers and workers, and attract retirees. At the bottom line parks are a good financial investment for a community.”

Understanding the economic impacts of parks can help decision makers better evaluate the creation and maintenance of parks.

The following economic challenges and opportunities should be considered in the development of parks and recreational facilities in Fort Worth:

- The increasing costs associated with providing a wide range of facilities, programs and services to meet the needs of the public.
- The increasing labor and energy costs that will require the Department to examine more efficient ways of management and operation.
- Tax Limitations – Measures that may cause a reduction or cap in tax revenue traditionally used to support public programs and facilities will force the Department to become even more efficient in the delivery of services.
- The need for leisure services to be provided by a partnership of both public and private sectors.
- Financial Collaborations - Partnerships should be continued to be formed with Non-Profit Organizations (NPOs) to share costs and realize common goals and visions such as the previous partnerships that have been forged with Streams and Valleys, Inc., the YMCA, the Boys and Girls Clubs, the Youth Sports Council and the Fort Worth Zoological Association.
- Eco-tourism - The growing importance of eco-tourism or nature based tourism and travel to facilities of unique environmental importance such as the Fort Worth Nature Center are attracting much higher use levels as this type of value added natural experience becomes more popular. Higher use levels means that additional pressures will be placed on these resources.



Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge, Fort Worth

Health Trends

How cities use parks to improve public health has become an increasingly important issue. As stated in the APA City Parks Forum briefing paper “How Cities use Parks to Improve Public Health” by Howard Frumkin, M.D., and Mary E. Eysenbach:

“People value the time they spend in city parks, whether walking a dog, playing basketball, or having a picnic. Along with these expected leisure amenities, parks can also create measurable health benefits, from providing direct contact with nature and a cleaner environment, to opportunities for physical activity and social interaction. A telephone survey conducted for the American Public Health Association found that 75 percent of adults believe parks and recreation must play an important role in addressing America's obesity crisis. Because of the different ways people experience parks, cities need to provide all types of parks, from neighborhood facilities to large natural areas. In fact, many of the health benefits described below can be best achieved through small-scale, readily accessible sites. A full reckoning of the benefits of parks will better inform public policy about parks and provide a useful public health tool.”

The following four points are lessons learned from the study referenced above.

- 1.) Parks provide people a contact with nature, known to confer certain health benefits and enhance well-being.
- 2.) Physical activity opportunities in parks help to increase fitness and reduce obesity.
- 3.) Park trees and all vegetation can help mitigate climate, air, and water pollution impacts on public health.
- 4.) Cities need to provide parks to provide their various citizen groups with a range of health benefits.

In addition, the Trust for Public Land has published a report titled: “The Benefits of Parks: Why America Needs More City Parks and Open Space” (2006). The report offers evidence that physical activity increases with access to parks, and that contact with the natural world improves physical and physiological health.

Another trend that has a direct correlation between parks and public health is the children and nature movement. Natural playgrounds and outdoor classrooms are becoming increasingly popular throughout the country. As suggested in Richard Louv’s book Last Child in the Woods, there is evidence that families desire to reconnect with the outdoors. Louv coined the term “nature deficit disorder” and also popularized the notion that as children have become more sedentary there has been an increased negative impact on health and education.



Nature Play

The need for a child-nature movement has created an increase in public ad campaigns and gateway activities - outdoor activities that are popular and accessible - to encourage families to reconnect with the outdoor environment. In an effort to motivate Hispanic families to reconnect with nature, the Ad Council and the U.S. Forest Service partnered in 2012 to launch the

Descubre el Bosque public service advertising campaign - an extension of their popular English language Discover the Forest campaign started in 2009. The ads reinforce the idea that forested destinations are ideal sites for family enjoyment and are often much closer than people perceive.

Demographic Trends

According to the 2012 American Community Survey, Hispanics made up 33.7% of Fort Worth's total population. This ethnic group is the fastest growing sector of the population in Fort Worth and Texas. Races categorized as "other," primarily Asian and Pacific Islander, are also gaining in percentages, while White and African American races are declining in share. Currently, minorities collectively make up the majority of the City's population. By the year 2030, Hispanics are likely to make up 39% of Tarrant County's population if current trends continue.

- **Aging Society** - The 2012 American Community Survey reported a median age of 31.9 years in Fort Worth, 33.9 years for the State of Texas, and 37.4 years for the United States. In addition to the population bulge in the "Baby Boomer" generation, the boomers are expected to live longer than any previous generation; thereby increasing the demand on social and senior services.
- **Community Needs Assessment** - The existence of fewer "traditional" family situations requires a greater effort to understand the needs of the many different and diverse family situations that will allow the department to provide an equal level of service to all citizen families. The needs assessment process identifies these unique needs and allows the Department to plan for them.
- **Cultural Diversity** - Increasing desires of the citizens for their community to express levels of cultural diversity through the actions undertaken or supported by the City. Parks and Community Services is ever cognizant of this desire and many events and functions such as Mayfest, Concerts in the Garden, Cinco de Mayo, Juneteenth, and the Como Fourth of July Parade are supported by the Department. In addition, the citizens want to see cultural diversity represented in the people who serve them. The Parks and Community Services Department has made significant strides and continues to make positive improvements in assembling a work force that closely resembles the cultural diversity of the City.
- **Successful Urban Design** - Increased population density caused by changing housing patterns that are the result of smaller household sizes and increased housing costs. This trend towards more high-density multi-family residential areas in the City is recognized in the Neighborhood and Community Park Dedication Policy (as revised, 2009).
- **Year-round School Initiatives** – This shifts the traditional school year calendar days and schedules intersession times at varying times in the year. This year-round school schedule will present new challenges for staffing and programming activities for the city's youth that will need to be reviewed and understood to meet the need.

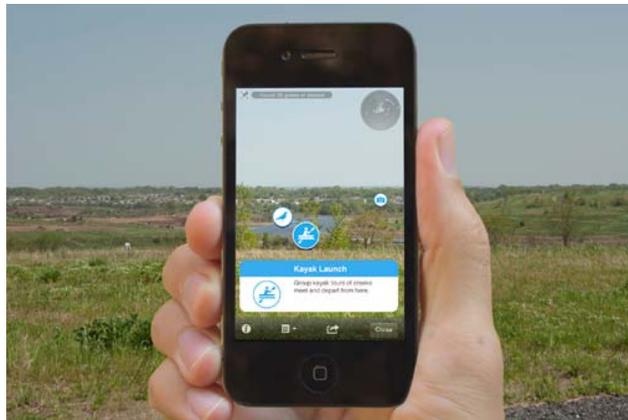
The total population of Fort Worth will continue to grow each year. As of January 1, 2013, the City's estimated population was 767,560, and the population is projected to exceed one million by 2030. Increased population will place additional demands on existing community facilities and infrastructure

and will result in the need for additional and expanded facilities. Shifting populations within the city will result in changing land use patterns and will help determine the location of new facilities.

Technological Trends

Technological change will continue at an ever-increasing rate. Advances in information technology will enable the Department to more effectively manage and equally distribute resources, facilities and programs. Below is a list of considerations regarding technology that may have an impact on parks and recreational facilities.

- Social Media – Communication of upcoming events or opportunities through social media outlets such as Facebook and Twitter is becoming increasingly popular.
- Energy Efficient Transportation Technologies - Clean air initiatives and rising energy costs have increased Departmental use of alternatively fueled fleet vehicles. The Department provides hike and bike trails to encourage non-vehicular transportation in conjunction with the city's other multi-modal transportation systems and infrastructure.
- Geographic Information System (GIS) Technology - The City provides a variety of map layers and data for documenting existing park acreage and for use in planning future park sites. Further, with GIS technology, we can now pinpoint the areas of fastest population growth, study land ownership patterns, and acquire key parcels before development demand drives up property prices or destroys open space. GIS technology assists in documenting where contiguous park space exists, shows how protecting natural habitats and connecting larger parks with linear greenways can create a patchwork quilt of open space.
- Interactive Web Site - The Department is working with other City departments to create an interactive website so that a variety of City facilities, including park addresses, facility inventory information, and pictures of park sites can be made available to the public.
- Global Positioning Systems (GPS) - The Department uses GPS technology to inventory a variety of park facility information, including data on trees and other park facilities.



Hand held Technology

Urban Development Trends

The City of Fort Worth guides land use to ensure that the land resources of the City appropriately encourage economic development, promote a variety of housing developments, preserve natural and historic resources and accommodate transportation routes and public facilities in order to protect and promote the quality of life. During the planning process of the City's Comprehensive Plan, participants expressed a strong preference for a multiple growth center development pattern. Multiple growth centers, or compact urban land use, enable the efficient operation of infrastructure, mass transit, recreational facilities, and other City services with fewer environmental impacts, less land consumption, less traffic and less pollution than a dispersed development pattern.

- Intermodal Transit - Opportunities, demonstrated by the City of Fort Worth Intermodal Transit Center, will continue to be developed along major transportation corridors on the edges of the city such as the I-35 corridor in the north and south of the city placing demands on the Department to add and improve services in those areas. The Alliance Corridor and the associated residential, commercial, and industrial development have increased the need for a variety of transportation options.
- Central Business District (CBD) - The CBD will increase the demands on Departmental infrastructure. Lands once considered not viable in the downtown core have experienced rejuvenation by the City providing incentive programs to visionary entrepreneurs. The strong trends in downtown Fort Worth towards building high density residential mixed-use in conjunction with improving the office market has continued to help build the vitality of downtown Fort Worth in making it a major destination city across the county. The limited amount of space for parklands in the CBD and increasing land costs and use levels will continue to strain Departmental resources.
- Historic Preservation - Facilities such as Log Cabin Village are one way to ensure that the historic legacy of the Fort Worth parks system is valued as a significant community resource.
- Diversifying the Economy - An increasing importance on park and community amenities in attracting corporate citizens to Fort Worth has continued. As the City strives to diversify the economy it must compete with other cities to attract corporate citizens. Increasing focus on employee wellness has caused corporate entities to look at the parks and recreation services offered by cities competing to attract new businesses and jobs.
- Historic Landscapes - Heritage Park Plaza in Fort Worth, Texas is a seminal work of landscape architecture and Presidential Medal of Arts winner Lawrence Halprin. Heritage Park Plaza was added to the National Register of Historic Places on May 10, 2010. The



Log Cabin Village, Fort Worth

park, dedicated on July 4, 1976 and opened in 1980, is the only site officially developed by Fort Worth in commemoration of the U.S. Bicentennial Celebration. The site was once the location of the 19th century fort that preceded the city's founding. The Fort Worth Botanic Garden was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on January 29, 2009 and is another example of a Fort Worth historic landscape.

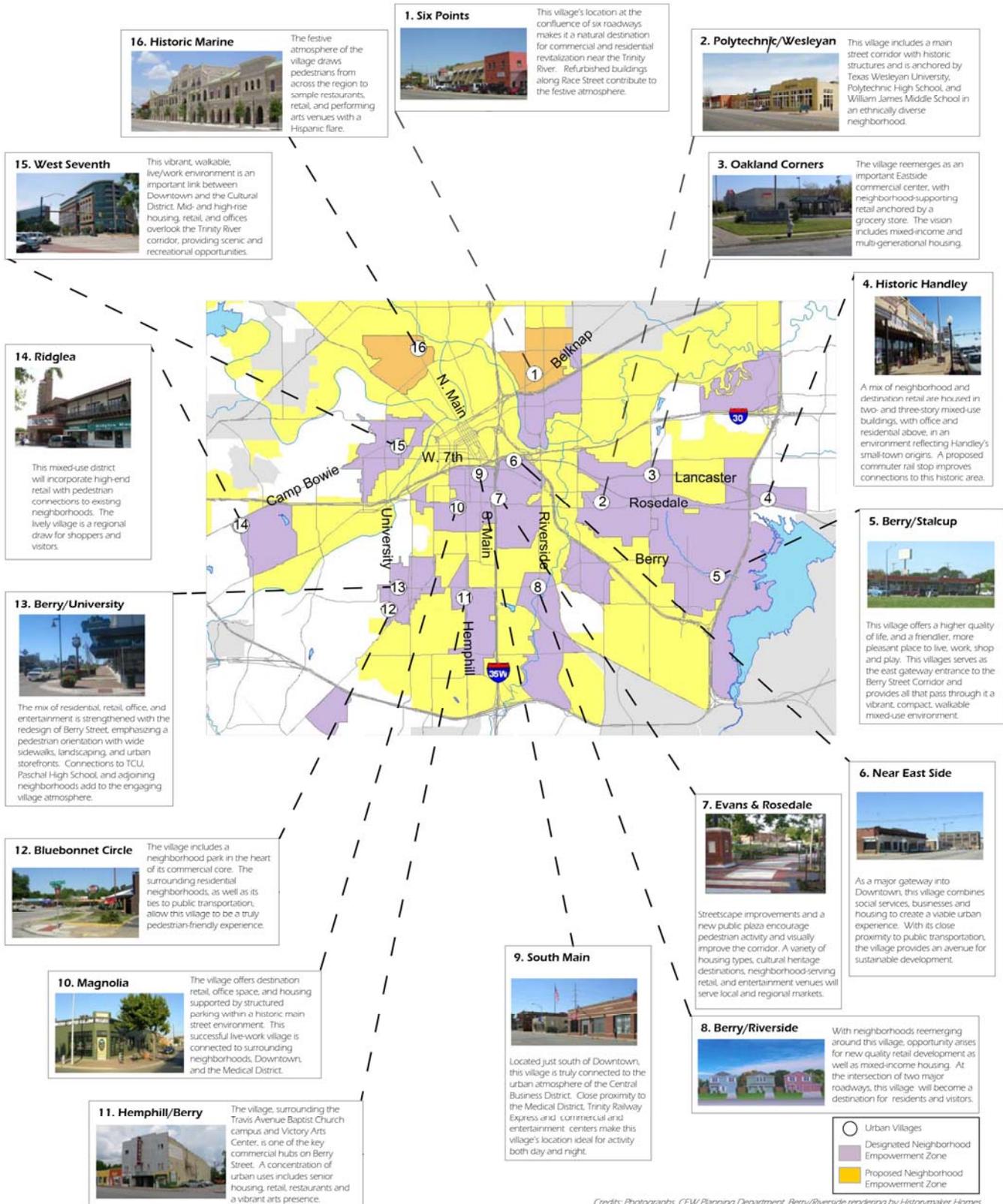
- Higher Density Residential Development - Promotion of higher density, mixed-use, neighborhood development encourages walking, bicycling, the use of public plazas and the need for creating attractive streetscapes that link urban neighborhoods.
- Regional Attraction - Shared municipal boundaries and the city's reputation as one of the nation's most popular destinations has given rise to increased use of facilities, such as the Botanic Garden, Fort Worth Nature Center and Refuge, Log Cabin Village, Fort Worth Zoo, and the Fort Worth Stockyards by a much larger constituency than the residents of Fort Worth proper.



Fort Worth Stock Yards, Fort Worth

The urban design goals and objectives are established to improve the function and aesthetic quality of Fort Worth's built environment and are based on public input obtained during the planning process. Successful urban design should establish an attractive, well-planned city that promotes pedestrian activity, encourages the full enjoyment of the city's public realm, enhances the community image, and attracts the private investment.

Community Vision for Urban Villages and Surrounding Neighborhood Empowerment Zones



Credits: Photographs, CFW Planning Department, Berry/Riverside rendering by Historymaker Homes

Parks and Recreation Administration Trends

The Parks and Community Services Department is dedicated to providing a clean and attractive park system that is safe for all users, ensuring orderly growth and development, revitalizing Central City parks, accessibility to all users and enhancing mobility for our diverse community. Our commitment to services and recreational programming will provide opportunities for access to all segments of the population based on community service demands and national standards for park, recreation and open space while preserving the city's natural resources, cultural diversity and neighborhoods.

- Revitalization - Recreation and open space contributing to the revitalization of the Central City.
- Maintenance Assessment - Although the Department has an outstanding historic legacy, the drawback of this history is that Fort Worth, like many other cities, is faced with an aging and deteriorating park and recreation infrastructure. As the infrastructure declines, it eventually reaches a point where some facilities must be removed to ensure the safety of the citizens.
- Static and Declining Operating Budgets - Finances often limit the ability to prevent decline in infrastructure through required and recommended preventative maintenance.
- Capital Needs Inventory - Increased needs for recreation facilities in a fast growing city will present challenges throughout the Department. The City's Neighborhood and Community Park Dedication Policy (as revised, 2004) and the voter approved 2014 Capital Improvements Program (CIP) projects provide a response to these population density changes that have impacted park service delivery.
- Recreation - Trends in recreation will provide opportunities for new collaborations and additions to recreation and leisure offerings in the community (i.e. dog parks and skate/inline parks). We are working towards wellness programs for seniors and youth that may create new funding sources to achieve these objectives.

Park and Recreation professionals face many administrative challenges and opportunities including:

- Doing more with less, requiring partnership development.
- Partnering between non-profit and public agencies.
- Increasing the quality and diversity of services.
- Moving toward a more business-like model while not competing with the private sector.
- The ability to increase parks and open space lands.
- Providing support for the socially and economically disadvantaged through programs in areas such as childcare, nutrition, etc.
- Increasing responsibility for measurement and evaluation of programs and services.

“A current trend in park and recreation management is towards benefit – or outcome-based management that reflects an overall effect on the quality of lives of all who participate and benefit from park and recreation opportunities”. *National Recreation and Park Association*

(NRPA), Commission on Accreditation for Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA). *Management of Park and Recreation Agencies*. 3rd ed. Ashburn: Virginia, 2010. Print.

The level of subsidy for programs is declining and more “enterprise” activities are being developed, thereby allowing the subsidy to be used where deemed appropriate. Agencies across the United States are increasing revenue production and cost recovery. Pricing is often done by peak, off-peak, and off-season rates.

Municipal parks and recreation structures and delivery systems have changed and alternative methods of delivering services are emerging. There is more contracting out of certain services, and cooperative agreements with nonprofit groups and other public institutions. Newer partners include the health care providers, social services, justice, education, the corporate sector, and community service agencies. These partnerships reflect a broader interpretation of the mandate of parks and recreation agencies and the increased willingness of other sectors to work together to address community issues. The relationship with the health system will be vital in promoting wellness. The traditional relationship with education, the sharing of facilities through joint use agreements, is evolving into cooperative planning and programming aimed at addressing youth inactivity levels and community needs.

National Recreational Trends

The following are additional national recreational trends that the City of Fort Worth Parks and Community Services Department are following and evaluating their impact on our community. Some of these trends are elements of our existing system and will continue to be evaluated and expanded as necessary.

Partnerships

In the Parks and Recreation industry it is common to form partnerships with other organizations either to increase funding potential or to improve programming options. According to the June 2007 State of the Industry Report published in Recreation Management Magazine, 96.3% of survey respondents in the Parks and Recreation industry have found one way or another to partner with other organizations to accomplish their missions.

- 78.3% of parks and recreation departments reported forming partnerships with local schools.
- Local government was the second most common partnership. More than 67% of parks and recreation departments in the survey listed local government as a partner.
- Other partners listed in the survey include: the Professional Golf Association (PGA), Rotary International, Lions and Elks Clubs, faith-based organizations, the Boys and Girls Clubs, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, the Special Olympics, and local and state tourism boards.

- Facilities least likely to form partnerships with external organizations included: resorts, hotels, water parks, amusement parks, campgrounds, youth camps, private camps and RV parks.

The City of Fort Worth has stated the importance of working with the Independent School Districts (ISD) within the city limits. Currently there are eighteen (18) different school districts whose boundaries overlap with the Fort Worth city limits. See Appendix for map of Independent School Districts inside the city limits of Fort Worth. The eighteen (18) Independent School District are as follows:

Aledo ISD	Arlington ISD	Birdville ISD	Burleson ISD
Castleberry ISD	Crowley ISD	Eagle Mt-Saginaw ISD	Everman ISD
Fort Worth ISD	Grand Prairie ISD	Grapevine-Colleyville ISD	Hurst-Euless-Bedford ISD
Irving ISD	Keller ISD	Kennedale ISD	Lake Worth ISD
Mansfield ISD	Northwest ISD		

As the City of Fort Worth responds to the challenges of a growing population, the need to explore a new social contract with the Independent School Districts may prove beneficial for all. Across the country, school districts are increasing the utilization of their buildings and grounds by extending access to non-school users, particularly during non-school hours. Consequently, both public and private parties are increasingly exploring the possibility of joint development of school buildings and grounds. With new policies and practices, public school facilities and grounds can become a more vibrant public space where public education is the primary but not the only user.

The National Recreation and Park Association reports that while many communities lack spaces for physical activity, there is a growing interest in joint use of public school buildings and grounds to fill this void. The Parks and Community Services Department will continue to work with the Independent School Districts to expand the conversation about joint use as a way to provide services to children and families in convenient locations, to improve opportunities for physical activity by increasing use of school recreational and outdoor spaces and leverage capital investments for the overall benefit for its citizens.

Policy and Management

Municipal parks and recreation departments are guided by ordinances and policies that influence management decisions and subsequent procedures for how work is conducted. These policies may impact how parks are designed or lead to park renovations. For example, if it was decided that the new baseball fields are for games or tournament play only and not open for practices, perimeter fencing or other means to control or restrict access would have to be included in the design or renovation plans. Often these additions or changes to policies are driven by new mandates imposed by federal or state legislative regulations, consumer demand, or industry best practices. Federal mandates are not often accompanied by funds for implementation, resulting in a trickle down financial burden to states and local municipalities. The impetus for including the following policy and management trends is based on a need to plan for potential implementation, as well as keep up with industry trends.

Power-Driven Mobility Devices and Trail Accessibility

On September 15, 2010 the United States Department of Justice revised rules to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in regards to Other Power Driven Mobility Devices or OPDMDs. The new rule became effective March 15, 2011 recognizing OPDMDs and also allowing persons with mobility disabilities to operate a “mobility device of choice” in any indoor or outdoor areas open to pedestrian use. The new rule states that “other power-driven mobility device means any mobility device powered by batteries, fuel, or other engines—whether or not designed primarily for use by individuals with mobility disabilities—that is used by individuals with mobility disabilities for the purpose of locomotion, including golf cars, electronic personal assistance mobility devices, such as the Segway® PT, or any mobility device designed to operate in areas without defined pedestrian routes, but that is not a wheelchair.”

This two-tiered approach has public agencies scrambling to make “reasonable modifications” in policies, practices and procedures. Identified issues to be specified in established policies include type of motor vehicle to allow or not allow (e.g., internal combustion engines), use of electric vehicles (e.g., Segways® or electric assisted bicycles), size and weight limits, and speed limit and trail limitations (e.g., grade or trail surface). Agencies are recognizing the need to modify policies as they gain experience with visitor needs and new uses on trails. Interim policies - many requiring an operating permit - are being utilized to ensure both safety and legality of vehicle use.

In 2013, the Fort Worth Transportation Authority launched a bike-sharing program, titled Fort Worth Bike Sharing. Currently there are 300 bikes at 35 bike sharing stations located in Downtown, the Cultural District, and Near Southside and at the TCU campus. The mission of the bike share program is to “To enhance our community by providing an affordable, efficient, environmentally-friendly bike share program that complements our existing public transportation system and provides both residents and visitors a healthy, convenient way to move around our city.”



Mayor Betsy Price – Bike share program kick-off, Fort Worth

Legislative

Legislative decisions on the national and local level can have an effect on future program and facility needs. For example, in 2010, the Department of Justice made substantial revisions to the original 1991 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The most recent revisions left facility managers facing a host of challenges in interpretation and implementation. The impact on this decision is that park planners are embracing universal design concepts in their plans for future playground design.

Parks, Recreation Facilities and Programming Trends

The following are leisure service trends, which in many cases would be included in an existing facility. Some of these activities are currently being integrated into the existing park system. While the Department acknowledges that other trends exist, the following are to be considered and evaluated in future park planning efforts.

Dog Parks

Off-leash dog parks continue to be a popular facility. The Fort Worth Parks and Community Services Department has responded with development of one facility built at Gateway Park (Fort Woof Dog Park) and another under design (North Z. Boaz Park). Dog parks are the fastest-growing segment of city parks according to a 2005 study by the non-profit Trust for Public Land. USA Today reported that in 2010 there were almost 600 off-leash dog parks in the 100 largest cities (Portland, Oregon has the highest per capita: 5.7 dog parks for every 100,000 residents), a 34% jump in five years. The increase in demand for dog parks reflects nationwide household demographics indicating that more households have dogs (43 million) than children (38 million). Dog park design is evolving to meet growing demand.

A draft dog park policy is currently being considered and states a dog park minimum size is five acres with some being as large as 15 acres. Park planners are now considering both small dogs and large dogs when planning facilities. Often the two sizes share a location with a fence separating the facility or in some cases designated hours based on canine size and weight. In addition to drinking water and waste disposal bags, dog park amenities such as washing stations, concrete wading pools and playground-like obstacle courses are commonly found. With the second off-leash dog park under construction the Fort Worth Parks and Community Services Department has developed a draft policy for off-leash dog parks. The policy covers many aspects from design criteria to maintenance and is currently under review and consideration.



Fort Woof Dog Park, Fort Worth

Skate Parks

Skateparks are a relatively new facility type for the Fort Worth Parks and Community Services Department and with the demand increasing the Department has repurposed a tennis court at Marine Park to include a neighborhood skate park facility. Currently, a community skate park facility is under design at Chisholm Trail Community Park and this type of skate park facility is included in the master plan for North Z. Boaz Park, Northwest Community Park and Gateway Park.

Much has changed with regard to overall demand; obstacle size limitation and skate park construction techniques. Due to an increase in demand, fueled by a growing number of participants in the sport, municipalities are finding a need to both expand existing parks and provide smaller venues known in the industry as “skate dots” or “skate spots.” Low maintenance skate spots are designed as single skate features (ramps, benches, rails or fun boxes) and “blend” with the surrounding environment. Skate spots are clearly labeled as a skate facility and are often located in an area that otherwise might not allow for such an amenity. These sites are often designed to allow for spectator viewing and serve as a lunchtime gathering spot for the business community in urban areas. A skate spot is a “spot” that just happens to be an ideal place for skaters and bikers to hang out and do some tricks. Usually they are less than 10,000 square feet with no transition or bowls. The community size skatepark facility should have bowls, transitions, and a street area and include a beginner area. The size of the skatepark facility can range from 4,500 to 30,000 square feet.

Nature Playgrounds / Nature Explorer Classrooms

In response to the epidemic of “nature deficit disorder,” park planners are taking part in a robust movement to design play areas with more natural elements in order to encourage traditional outdoor play, as opposed to “structure play.” “Undeveloped” sites with minimal alterations use the natural landscape and natural textures as a model to incorporate interactive structures, such as hollowed-out logs, tree forts, large boulders, climbing walls and natural water features. Developed or hybridized sites utilize a healthy mix of manufactured structures while still maintaining the natural integrity of the site. Commonalities include access to trees for climbing on or through, moving water, rocks, native plants and a place for quiet play. Learning tools for programming include natural amphitheaters, wood blocks, sundials, rain gauges and lots of other “loose” parts for creative play. Studies indicate that sustainable park design; and the use of more natural elements not only helps the environment and is less expensive, they also improve a child’s sense of well-being.

Mountain Bike Facilities

According to the Outdoor Foundation’s 2010 Outdoor Recreation Participation Report, road biking, mountain biking and BMX biking are fourth in most popular outdoor activities by participation rate for Americans, ages 6 and older. Interest in bicycling of all types has led to an increase in development of bike parks. Bike parks are typically family-oriented facilities with a variety of amenities such as BMX tracks, bike skills courses, pump tracks (short loop course) and flow tracks (roller coaster for bikes). Cyclocross courses and mountain bike trails are also frequently utilized in bike park design, as well as



Marion Sansom Park, Fort Worth

amenities for spectators and non-cyclists. Bike parks range in size from 3 to 50 acres and typically service day-to-day recreation use, programming and serve as a venue for races. The Boulder Parks and Recreation Department recently developed Valmont Bike Park, a 42-acre natural-surface cycling facility with a “skill progression” design that services all ages, abilities and riding styles. This design allows riders to improve their skills as they work their way up to advanced-level single track, hard-packed dirt jumps and cyclocross elements throughout the park. Additionally, the National Interscholastic Cycling Association was recently created as a non-profit organization dedicated to establishing mountain biking as a high school sport.

Since 2006, the Fort Worth Mountain Bikers’ Association (FWMBA), an all-volunteer, 501c3 non-profit organization has promoted responsible mountain biking through trail construction and maintenance, education and organized events throughout the year. As an affiliate member of the International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA), FWMBA has memorandums of agreement with the City of Fort Worth for trails at Marion Sansom Park and Gateway Park. Today, FWMBA has logged over 14,500 of volunteer work in these two city parks.

Outdoor Adult Gyms

The outdoor adult gym or multigenerational playground concept originated in China where it was promoted as a national fitness campaign prior to the 2008 Summer Olympics. This concept is a progressive evolution of fitness trail par courses, which gained popularity in the early 70’s. Outdoor gyms incorporate low impact exercise-equipment (e.g. chin-up bars, cross trainers, stationary exercise bikes) designed to be used without the need to adjust weights, pins or cords and instead rely on balance or low resistance. Each apparatus is designed to be outside 24/7 with the initial purchase costs and in-house installation and maintenance being significantly less than similar fitness center machines. Outdoor adult gyms are increasing in number and are often found as clusters along trailheads, abandoned lots or adjacent to children’s playgrounds – encouraging healthy multigenerational interaction between caregivers and children. Outdoor gyms located at trailheads have a wide appeal to walking or running groups serving as a social gathering location. Research indicates that cost and accessibility are the two main barriers for people wanting to exercise. The adult playground concept allows for a free, convenient workout location.

Shade Structures

According to a 2009 Recreation Management report, shade structures are one of the most commonly planned additions in park facility planning. This increase stems from medical research indicating a growing risk and increased rates (currently estimated at one million cases of skin cancer per year) of melanoma - the most serious form of skin cancer. Outdoor areas become user-friendlier by incorporating man-made



Marine Park, Fort Worth

shade structures (e.g. canopies, shelters, table umbrellas, etc.) or natural shade options like trees or design techniques utilizing shade from existing buildings. Shade structures and park shelters can do more than protect citizen's skin. A growing number of advocates emphasize that providing shade encourages park patrons to be more active by increasing the amount of time spent outdoors as opposed to indoors watching television or playing video games.

Artificial Turf Fields and Surfaces

There is a growing movement in parks and recreation to utilize synthetic turf at select sports facilities. There is a wide variation in field costs depending on type of use, regional climate and terrain and product options. A typical multi-use field can easily cost upwards of \$750,000. Departments choose to make the investment for a variety of reasons, including decreased maintenance needs, maximization of field use, injury prevention and water conservation. The Southern Nevada Water Authority estimates that every square foot of natural grass replaced saves 55 gallons of water per year. Synthetic Playground Surface rubber tile or poured-in-place playground surfaces are becoming increasingly popular as a shock absorbing, safety surface (falls to the surface account for nearly 70 percent of all playground injuries), as well as a material chosen to meet ADA standards.



Artificial Fields at Gateway Park, Fort Worth

Rubber tiles are pre-made and shipped to the site while poured-in place is constructed from rubber granules which are mixed on-site with a binding agent and then installed by hand and troweled smooth. The thickness of the rubber can be adjusted to match the fall height of playground equipment. For ADA purposes, synthetic surfaces are developed with the goal of creating a space where children or caregivers with disabilities can easily interact with others. The cost for rubber tile or poured-in-place surfaces, on average, is more than double the cost of standard, loose-fill material such as engineered wood fiber. Maintenance costs are also higher than loose-fill material surfaces. Consideration of these costs must be taken into account when designing this type of surfacing.

Sports Tourism Facilities

Development of an indoor and/or outdoor sport complex is a concept many cities are considering for their long-term strategic plans in combination with promoting their community as a traveling sports market destination. Creating a sports tourism lure involves collaboration of multiple organizations to build tournament-quality facilities capable of hosting regional and national events while also servicing local recreational needs. Sports tourism is being evaluated in large cities, as well as communities with populations as low as 70,000 where it can become an economic driver. Early reports indicate that sports tourism can more than double its estimated impact on the local economy. Scheduled activities include sport tournaments (soccer, football, lacrosse, T-ball and ultimate Frisbee), as well as sport camps and special events. Small

communities that are excelling in their sport tourism endeavors appear to be those with expanded reach into surrounding counties or those with significant natural or man-made tourist attractions (e.g. shopping, premier aquatic facilities, professional sporting events, etc.) already serving as a regional draw.

Trend Implications

The implications of these trends on the City’s park, recreation, and open space system have been and continue to be profound, affecting every aspect of our strategic planning process and our delivery of services. In order to anticipate and plan for the many trends identified in this section and to build on the strong historic legacy of the Fort Worth Park and open space system it was necessary for the Parks and Community Services Department to undertake this master planning process. The purpose of this plan is to provide a framework for future renovations, development and expansions or reductions in the Fort Worth Park, recreation and open space system. This plan is based on the historic legacy of the natural and developed resources of the system and the needs and desires of the citizens of Fort Worth. The plan establishes priorities, standards and statements of direction for the future based on a detailed needs assessment and potential resources. The results of the plan provide guidance and recommendations for the Parks and Community Services Department for the next five to ten years.



Photo by Amy Moore: Mark Twain bench sculpture along the Trinity Riverbank in historic Trinity Park, Fort Worth