

HARKER HEIGHTS, TEXAS

PARK, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE MASTER PLAN

MAY 2010



City of Harker Heights, Texas Master Park Plan



I. INTRODUCTION

The City of Harker Heights desires to provide a quality lifestyle for its citizens through planned growth, controlled zoning and a superior park system. Park facilities and leisure programs can provide a strong, positive image for our community and the municipal organization. Physical activity, family gatherings and community functions should be an integral part of daily City life. Furthermore, recreation for both adults and children includes social contacts, experiences in natural environments and intellectual and cultural experiences and expression, as well as sports. Studies of children's behavior and development have documented the importance of play, especially informal and unstructured play, not only in children physical development, but also in their social, intellectual, and creative growth. In summary, recreation is now seen as a means to an end rather than simply as an end in itself. Quality park facilities and recreation programs provide many benefits to our community besides the enjoyment of the participants, for example:

- **Public Safety**

Participation in organized sports and recreation activities is a proven deterrent to criminal activities, especially for youth. The cost of recreation programs is far less than the cost of additional police services and detention facilities and a lot more positive for our community. Also, municipal swimming instruction programs prevent countless drownings each year.

- **Economic Development**

Well maintained, high quality park facilities can be a positive selling point for commercial recruitment for our community.

- **Public Image**

Parks and Recreation personnel provide valuable assistance in conducting public ceremonies, maintaining municipal facilities and promoting the City. A clean, well-kept park system mirrors the desirable community in which it is found.

- **Emergency Preparedness**

The Parks and Recreation Department also provides valuable assistance during emergency situations by helping the police and fire departments when necessary, teaching courses in emergency preparedness, and providing classroom space for these classes as required.

City History

The development of the City originated from a 400 acre farm owned by P.R. Cox and Harley Kern. The City of Harker Heights was incorporated in 1960 from a residential development that began in 1957. In 1960, 1000 persons were already living in the community and needed City services such as public water/sewer, garbage collection and fire/police protection. Mr. Kern died before incorporation was complete. Out of respect for his partner, Mr. Cox named the City Harker Heights. Harker being an acronym formed from Harley Kern and Heights to denote the city's outstanding features - its hills.

Harker Heights offers an excellent location and climate. Located near the geographical center of the state, it is easily accessible. The City is situated 14 miles west of IH35 with U.S. 190 providing a four lane divided highway link to the Interstate. The City is located 60 miles north of Austin, 65 miles south of Waco, 150 miles north of San Antonio, 162 miles south of Dallas/Ft. Worth and 190 miles northwest of Houston--less than a half-day drive to any of the State's major metropolitan areas (see location map on following page). The climate is warm with occasional hot summer days and a few winter days below freezing. The average temperature is 69.7 degrees F.

The City borders to the west the City of Killeen, a City of over 84,488 persons. Past the City of Killeen, only 5 miles from Harker Heights, is Fort Hood. Fort Hood is a major army installation with 45,000 soldiers and more than 6,000 civilians on post. It serves over 218,000 soldiers, family members, retirees, and civilian employees. Fort Hood has a direct financial impact of \$1.8 billion on the local area with the total economic impact reaching \$3.2 billion. Despite efforts to diversify, the primary impact on the economy is still Fort Hood. The City

generally straddles U. S. Highway 190 (Central Texas Expressway) with an added area on the southeast annexed in 1992 that extends along the east side of Cedar Knob Road to the Corps of Engineers land bordering Stillhouse Lake.

Parks and Recreation History

The City's Parks and Recreation Department began December 16, 1985 when the first employee was hired. The department was created to develop leisure activities for the citizens of Harker Heights. The Parks and Recreation Advisory board was created by the City Council on October 25, 1994. The Advisory Board was organized to advise the Council on policy and programs for the Parks Department.

The Parks and Recreation Department is comprised of one Director of Parks and Recreation, a Recreation Superintendent, a Recreation Services Specialist-Events Coordinator, two Athletic Specialists, a Parks & Public Grounds Supervisor, an Executive Secretary, an Activity Center Coordinator, ten full time Lt. Equipment Operators, and five Custodians. Numerous part-time employees are hired during the summer to assist with the Summer Day Camps, Aquatic programs, Open swim, and Ball field maintenance.

The responsibility of the Parks and Recreation Department is to operate and maintain the Recreation Center and Activity Center as well as mow and maintain esplanades, Booker green space, Cardinal Green space, Kern Neighborhood Park, Carl Levin City Park, Skipcha Park, City Hall, Library, Police Department, 2410 Community Park, and Summit Soccer Complex. The department also conducts and administers youth and adult programs / activities, maintains playgrounds and playing surfaces, and sponsors/co-sponsors special events for the community.



Playscape at Kern Park

Population and Demographics according to the US Census Bureau Population Finder

1990: 12,841
2000: 17,308
2008: 25,417

2000 Census Demographics for the City of Harker Heights

| <u>Age</u> | <u>Population</u> | <u>Percent</u> |
|-------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Under 5 | 1631 | 9.4 |
| 18 years and over | 12,047 | 69.6 |
| 65 years and over | 1079 | 6.2 |

| <u>Race</u> | <u>Population</u> | <u>Percent</u> |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| White | 16,681 | 70.9 |
| Black | 2,585 | 14.9 |
| American Indian/Alaska Native | 135 | 0.8 |
| Asian | 620 | 3.6 |
| Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander | 70 | 0.4 |
| Other | 1002 | 5.8 |

Hispanic or Latino origin: 2153 12.4

| <u>Education of Population</u> | <u>Population</u> | <u>Percent</u> |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| High school graduate of higher | 9,110 | 88.9 |
| Bachelor's Degree or higher | 3,057 | 29.8 |

Median household income in 1999: \$42,947

Per Capita Income: \$20,061

Inception of Master Park Plan

With the tremendous growth of the City, planning has not always preceded development. The City wishes to make a concerted effort toward planning all further activities. The City Parks and Recreation staff has made every effort to make and meet independent planning goals and objectives. However, the need for focused city-wide standards, goals, and objectives for the parks system is apparent, thus the development of the Parks Master Plan. The Master Park Plan is one element of the city-wide planning process.

Intended Use of Plan

The Parks Master Plan is intended to be a compass for the development of parks and recreation for the citizens it serves. It is a tool to be used by the City Council, its staff and other interested citizens by giving direction to the development of parks, activities, City ordinances and policies. The purposes of the plan are to: a) provide guidelines for future product, pricing, promotion and geographic distribution decisions for the city-wide parks system, b) provide

direction in the area of acquisition and development of park land to meet current and future needs, c) establish priorities concerning the community and the role of parks and recreation; and d) identify possible funding sources for parks and recreation.



Baseball complex at Harker Heights Community Park

II. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The development of goals and objectives for this Parks Master Plan was established during meetings with city officials and the public in the first half of 2010. The following goals and objectives are the culmination of these discussions. These goals and objectives reflect the attitude and set the direction for the City of Harker Heights and are the foundation of the parks and recreation system. The goals and objectives are the basis on which the City's parks and recreation accomplishments will be judged.

In keeping with the recommendation of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, this plan has been established as the City's master park plan for the next 10 years. Revisions and updates to the plan will need to be made every 2 years.

Goal #1

The City of Harker Heights will increase the percentage of park land, including open space and greenbelt areas.

- **Objective A**
Develop a Parks & Recreation amenity standards map identifying City, County, School District, and private associations. The standards map will assist with the availability of adequate park land with the development of new residential areas and annexation issues.
- **Objective B**
Develop a five year action plan in conjunction with the Parks and Recreation amenity standards map. The action plan will become an integral component in the budgeting process.

- **Objective C**
Preserve open space and greenbelt areas through dedication. All types of property should be considered; such as, flood plains, drain ditches, alleyways, electrical easements, etc

Goal #2

Increase usage of indoor and outdoor facilities through programming:

- **Objective A**
Develop and provide diverse youth programs including more team sports for youth.
- **Objective B**
Develop and provide diverse senior programs including dance therapy, nature hikes, arts and crafts programs and walking groups.
- **Objective C**
Form Recreational Program Associations to manage existing, well- defined and organized sports activities.
- **Objective D**
Provide guidance and supervision for existing Parks and Recreation programs and provide an opportunity to delegate to other associations.

Goal #3

Review and implement policies and ordinances:

- **Objective A**
Understand and develop the agreements between KISD on facility usage. Provide a forum or schedule to update between City and School District.
- **Objective B**
Create agreements with surrounding municipalities and continue communications in developing and managing partnerships.
- **Objective C**
Develop maintenance schedule for existing facilities and develop a maintenance mode of acceptance.
- **Objective D**
Develop agreement with CORPS of Engineers utilizing nature amenities and programs

Goal #4

Develop marketing strategies for recreational programs.

- **Objective A**
Develop a diverse network of citizen representatives (from all of the City) to give input to Park and Recreation decisions above and beyond the Parks Board, for example: members of the Recreation Associations, church groups, corporate sponsors, real estate developers, etc.
- **Objective B**
Develop a comprehensive circulation of information regarding Parks and Recreational opportunities through the school system, civic organizations, churches and the media.

- **Objective C**
Have newspaper, television and radio cover all Parks and Recreation events with pictures and full stories. Send eye-catching, informative messages on e-mail and utility bills to advertise events.
- **Objective D**
Develop better comprehensive relationships with corporate entities for sponsorship of recreational activities and facilities.



Playscape at Skipcha Park

III. PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Growth for a City has many benefits as well as many problems. Frequently during periods of growth, cities cannot keep pace with the quality of life needs of the community, such as parks and recreation. During times of growth, many of the City's funds are directed to essential daily living activities like water, sewer and roadways. Keeping these systems available to all citizens and in good working order can easily usurp all the funds of a budget year.

In 2008 city staff began a series of public meetings to provide input on the recreational wants and needs of Harker Height's residents. Residents who attending the meetings ranged in age from children to elderly. The information gathered was not incorporated into a planning document. In 2010 the City hired the consulting company of Langford Community Management Services to develop and complete the City's Master Park Plan. A number of meetings were held over the course of three months to set community goals/objectives, facility standards and start a priority list of needed facilities. Much time and thought was put into this plan by these volunteers and the city staff. Several meetings were held with city officials and staff to determine the process for the Master Park Plan. A survey of prioritization of park facilities was conducted on line. These responses were tabulated and used in the formulation of the facilities list. All citizen input has been considered and included as part of this plan. The plan was discussed by the City Council, comments were taken and the final document prepared

and placed on the City Council agenda for approval in May of 2010.

Survey Results

Along with input from the public meetings of 2008, City Council and City Staff, a community-wide survey was conducted in April 2010 to help the City determine what facilities were not only needed, but which were the most desired. Respondents were asked to rank park facilities in priority order, and answer questions that would provide direction to the City for the development of the park plan. The survey was available on line.

Approximately 280 surveys were received and reviewed. The rankings were incorporated into the priority facilities list in the parks plan. Comments provided on the surveys were very beneficial to in recognizing the positive aspects of the existing parks and the deficiencies that must be addressed. A few of the comments included:

“Thanks for your interest in community improvement.”

“The improvements to the soccer complex have been great. A permanent restroom facility would top it off!”

“I would like to see the city ask the kids of the community to design a park.”

“We are in desperate need of more water play facilities in Harker Heights.”

The first question on the survey was “How important is recreation to you and/or your family?” The overwhelming majority answered the question “Very.” As for developing new park facilities, most of the responses indicated they would rather have more activities and facilities at existing parks rather than smaller neighborhood parks.

IV. AREA FACILITY CONCEPTS AND STANDARDS

Before planning can direct the development of a City, the City must create standards and guidelines with which to achieve direction and to insure success in the planning efforts. The standards and guidelines discussed in this section provide a classification system for the existing and future parks. Service areas for each type of park are identified and facility standards are defined. The standards and guidelines presented in this plan are meant to be guides, not absolutes. They address the minimum, not maximum, goals to be achieved.

Facility Standards

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) is a national, non-profit service organization dedicated to advancing parks, recreation and environmental efforts that enhance the quality of life for all people. NRPA works closely with national, state and local recreation and park agencies, corporations and citizens' groups in carrying out its objectives. NRPA has developed a set of standards for different types of parks and recreation facilities. NRPA standards recommend that a park system be comprised of a core system of parklands, with a total of 6.23 to 10.5 acres of developed parkland per 1000 population. For a city the size of Harker Heights, this would indicate a current need for a minimum total park and recreational space of 10 acres, and, anticipating

continued growth, by 2019 it is projected that the City of Harker Heights will need an additional five acres of park and recreation area. This can be divided into a variety of sizes of parks, including Pocket Parks, Neighborhood Parks, joint-use School Parks, Community Parks, Linear Parks, Sports Complexes and Natural Area Parks. The standards and guidelines developed for Harker Heights, based on the NRPA standards, are those by which the City will measure itself. By using these standards, the City can specifically identify needs and begin to meet them. Many cities use these national standards from which to develop their Parks Master Plans. Most of the cities do not meet the standards. These standards are a starting point to help guide the City's park and recreation development efforts. Based on these standards, and using a demand-based approach, with an understanding of the demographics and expected growth of the community as well as the facilities available in nearby cities within Bell County, the City of Harker Heights chose to concentrate on two types of parks – Neighborhood Parks and Community Parks. The NRPA provides the following information regarding recommended standards for these types of parks:

Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood Parks are generally located within walking distance from the area serviced and provide multiple uses and a variety of activities and services to all age groups. It is recommended that 50% of a site remain undisturbed for passive recreation and as a buffer between the park and adjacent land users. The recommended service area is a ¼ to ½ mile radius (12 minute walk) to serve a population or neighborhood. NRPA standards recommend that a Neighborhood Park should encompass 1 to 2 acres per 1000 residents, with a desirable size of 5-10 acres. Typical facilities in a Neighborhood Park include a playground, trails and walkways, parking (7-10 spaces), benches, a basketball court, a picnic shelter with grills and open play areas.

Community Parks

Community Parks provide for the recreation needs of several neighborhoods or large sections of the community. A range of facilities is typically provided and should support active and passive recreation opportunities. A community park also presents a facility for non-traditional types of recreation such as special event or festivals based on community needs. Fifty percent of the community park site should be developed only for passive recreation and may also be used as buffers from surrounding development and other land use. Parkland should be contiguous and strategically placed in order to provide easy access for all community users. The service area is 1 to 2-mile (5 minute drive) radius, which is primarily accessible by vehicle, and the desirable size is 25 acres or more. NRPA standards recommend 5-8 acres of Community Parks per 1000 residents. Typical facilities include playgrounds, basketball courts, a parking area, water play area or swimming pool, amphitheater, disc golf, volleyball courts, benches, trails and walkway, picnic shelters with grills, and open play areas. Community parks serve a broader purpose than neighborhood parks. Focus is on meeting community-based recreation needs, as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces. May include areas suited for intense recreation facilities, such as large swimming pools. Community or city parks may be an area of natural quality for outdoor recreation, such as walking, viewing, sitting, picnicking. The park may include natural features such as water bodies and areas suited for intense development and have a service area of several neighborhoods.

Harker Heights' residents and city staff reviewed and discussed the NRPA Standards as

applicable to the City of Harker Heights. With minor changes, the City has adopted these standards. The facility standards define the number of facilities recommended to serve each particular type of recreation. These standards are established on the number of facilities per population size.

Harker Heights Facility Standards

| <u>Type</u> | <u># of Unit per Population</u> | <u>Service Radius</u> |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Amphitheater | 1 per 2000 | 5 to 10 miles |
| Basketball | 1 per 300 | ¼ to ½ miles |
| Baseball | 3 per 1500 | 1 to 2 mile |
| Football | 1 per 1000 | 1 to 2 mile |
| Gazebo | 1 per 1000 | 1/2 to 1 mile |
| Golf - 18 hole | 1 per 8000 | 3 to 5 mile |
| Golf driving range | 1 per 7000 | 3 to 5 mile |
| Open space | 1 acre per 3000 | ½ to 1 mile |
| Picnic shelters (group) | 1 per 1000 | 2 to 3 mile |
| Picnic shelters (single) | 1 per 200 | 1 to 2 mile |
| Picnic tables | 1 per 100 | ¼ to ½ mile |
| Playground | 1 per 1000 | ¼ to ½ mile |
| Restrooms | 1 facility per 1000 | 1 to 2 mile |
| Skate park | 1 per 10,000 | 5 to 10 miles |
| Soccer | 1 per 5000 | 1 to 2 mile |
| Softball | 1 per 1500 | ¼ to ½ mile |
| Swimming pool | 1 per 8000 | 1 to 2 mile |
| Track (1/4 mile) | 1 per 5000 | 1 to 2 mile |
| Jog/walking trail | ½ mile per 3000 | 1 to 2 mile |
| Bicycle trail | 1 mile per 3000 | 1 to 2 mile |
| Nature trail | ½ mile per 2000 | 2 to 3 mile |
| Tennis | 1 court per 1000 | ¼ to ½ mile |
| Volleyball | 1 court per 2000 | ¼ to ½ mile |

A priority list for facilities was developed through the several meetings, the community survey, and City elected officials and staff. The facilities list was reviewed and approved by City Council for the Master Plan. The facilities list is in the *PLAN IMPLEMENTATION AND PRIORITIZATION OF NEEDS* section of this master plan.

V. INVENTORY

Existing Parks

The City of Harker Heights has eight parks: Carl Levin Park, Summit Soccer Complex, Harker Heights Community Park, Kern Field, Kern Park, Cardinal Park, Booker Park and two undeveloped pieces of parkland.

Carl Levin Park is classified as a City Park and is set within the center area of Harker Heights. It is 35 acres of parkland which was constructed with the assistance of a Texas Parks and Wildlife Grant. The park is equipped with the following amenities: 20 picnic tables, 12 barbeque grills, swimming pool with zero depth entry, playground for ages, lighted jogging trail with exercise stations, lighted amphitheater, fishing pond, gazebo, open space features and a lighted basketball court.

The park is used for numerous occasions, celebrations, and programs such as; concert in the park, swimming classes, fun runs, kite flying extravaganza, fishing tournaments, community charitable events, and other outdoor leisure activities.

Summit Soccer Field Complex is a 30 tract of land set in the flood plain near the wastewater treatment plant and is classified as a special use park. The Soccer Fields host soccer teams from all over the City and the area. There are eleven small sided soccer fields.

Harker Heights Community Park is a 62 acre park with four softball/baseball fields, lighted walking/jogging trail, playground equipment, picnic units, open play area and restroom facilities.

Kern Park is the largest Neighborhood Park and contains 6 picnic tables, half of basketball court, 2 acres of open space, 2 sets of swings, 3 park benches, 1 combination unit playground, 1 water fountain and 2 slides.

The park is used for multiple functions: The children frequently use the swings, playground equipment and slides. The park is an ideal setting for picnics and outdoor play, particularly during nice weather.

Kern Field has a single baseball/softball practice field.

Skipcha Park is a joint use park with Killeen ISD on 5 acres with playground equipment, picnic units, open play area, a pavilion and jogging/walking trail.

Cardinal Park is an open space neighborhood park set in a low-moderate income area of Harker Heights. It is less than a City Block in size, but is probably the most frequented park in the City. Children and families spend much time playing in this park.

Booker Park is a small neighborhood park approximately an acre in size, set along Nolan Creek. It is equipped with four picnic tables.

The city also has two undeveloped pieces of park property known as Purser Family Park and Goode/Connell Park.

INVENTORY OF AREAS/FACILITIES

| SITE | FACILITY | NUMBER |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|---------------|
| Carl Levin Park | Swimming pool | 1 |
| | Picnic tables | 20 |
| | Fishing pond | 1 |
| | Gazebo | 1 |
| | Open play area | 1 |
| | Playground | 1 |
| | Pavilion | 1 |
| | Basketball court | 1 |
| | Amphitheater | 1 |
| | Restroom | 1 |
| | Trail | 1 |
| Summit Soccer Complex | Soccer fields | 11 |
| Community Park | Softball/baseball fields | 4 |
| | Picnic areas | 10 |
| | Trail | 1 |
| | Playground | 1 |
| | Open play area | 1 |
| Kern Park | Picnic tables | 6 |
| | Basketball court | 1 |
| | Open space | 2 acres |
| | Playground | 1 |
| | Benches | 3 |
| Kern Field | Softball/baseball field | 1 |
| Skipcha Park | Playground | 1 |
| | Picnic units | 4 |
| | Pavilion | 1 |
| | Trail | 1 |
| Cardinal Park | Picnic areas | 6 |
| Booker Park | Picnic areas | 4 |

School District Facilities

The schools within the City limits share the City owned baseball fields and utilize them in the spring. The School District has one lighted 90' baseball field and one unlit softball field at the Harker Heights High School. The School District owns and maintains eight backstops/practice fields, twenty basketball goals, two lit football field, six playgrounds with 18 pieces of playground equipment, four unlit tennis courts and one unlighted youth size soccer field.

Corps of Engineer and Fort Hood Facilities

All Corps of Engineer Parks are available for public use; however, the City does not have a facility agreement with them.

Fort Hood is fortunate to house a number of recreational facilities for the soldiers and their families. However, these facilities are limited in access to the general public. The facilities were developed for exclusive use of the residents of the post; however, civilians may use certain facilities such as jogging trails and playground units.

VI. NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND IDENTIFICATION

The City employed all three types of standards in assessing the needs of the community. The NRPA standards are the most straight forward to compare. The NRPA standards in comparison to the City facility inventory were discussed in *IV. AREA FACILITY CONCEPTS AND STANDARDS*.

The demand-based approach relies on information gathered from citizens, organized recreational groups, civic organizations, church groups, elected officials and appointed boards. For the purposes of this plan a Town Hall meeting, public hearing, meetings with city officials and staff and a survey were used to establish recreational facility priorities.

Resource-based standards refer to identifying assets and resources of the City for open space, parks and recreation facilities and define how these resources can be best utilized.

Although all three methods were used, this plan is primarily demand-based. As mentioned in III. *PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS*, the city conducted a survey and held public meetings to determine the needs and wants of the community. Through the development of this park plan, the City has established several different ways in which to assess the parks and recreations needs of the community. Determining the current status of the parks system is important to budgetary planning to bring the current parks up to standards. The plan is equally as important for providing direction of parks and recreation growth so that facilities can be built to meet future park needs.

A comparison of facility standards to existing facilities shows that the city is deficient in number in most recreational opportunities for a city of its size. The city has experience extreme growth in the past almost 30 years and is working to provide facilities for its growing number. If growth continues there will be even more need for more facilities. At this time, the city needs at least two more amphitheatres, many more playgrounds, tennis courts, picnic facilities including several pavilions or gazebos, a golf course and driving range, a skate park, basketball courts and many miles of trail for walking, running and biking. The city also needs to actively preserve open space before it is all developed. These deficiencies were considered when developing the priority lists.

VII. PLAN IMPLEMENTATION AND PRIORITIZATION OF NEEDS

The Master Park Plan addresses the park facility needs of the City of Harker Heights over the next ten years. The implementation plan in this section prioritizes the

recommended improvements and suggests methods with which to fund the improvements. This section also includes a suggested schedule of improvements and addresses the updating of the plan and the development of policies to assist in planning and developing recreation facilities.

Prioritized Facility Lists

Through surveys, review of standards, public hearings, meetings and workshops, the City developed the following priority list for parks and recreation facilities needed in Harker Heights:

Outdoor Recreation Facilities

1. *Trails – hike, bike and nature*
2. *Picnic areas*
3. *Disc golf course*
4. *Playground*
5. *Dog park*
6. *Swimming pool*
7. *Baseball fields*
8. *Batting cages*
9. *Soccer fields*
10. *Softball fields*
11. *Skate Park*
12. *Tennis courts*
13. *Fresh water aquatic based recreation*
14. *Multipurpose/Open play fields*
15. *Community garden*
16. *Pavilions*
17. *Challenge course*

Indoor Recreation Facilities

1. *Arts/Crafts room*
2. *Kitchen*
3. *Exercise areas (yoga, karate, aerobics)*
4. *Walking tracks*
5. *Reading rooms*
6. *Game rooms/play areas*
7. *Meeting rooms*
8. *Media center*
9. *Weight rooms*
10. *Sports courts (basketball/volleyball)*

During the plan development process, a list of park and recreation facilities needed for elderly citizens in Harker Heights was also developed utilizing information from the city-wide survey, review of standards, public workshops where elderly citizens attended and Parks Board meetings.

Outdoor Park and Recreation Needs of Elderly Citizens: Hike/bike/walk trails, Benches/picnic tables/pavilions, Playground equipment to take grandchildren, Garden

areas, Amphitheaters to watch plays or listen to music, Natural areas to bird watch, Fishing areas and Horseshoe/washer pits.

Indoor Park and Recreation Needs of Elderly Citizens: Meeting rooms, craft rooms, exercise areas, reading rooms, game rooms.

Priorities Timeline

Through the focus group, community survey, public hearing and staff input, the implementation plan has four different priority levels defined as follows:

Short-term Priorities - These items should be accomplished by the year 2011 - 2012.

Mid-term Priorities - These items should have completion dates of 2013-2015.

Long-term Priorities - Planning for these items should start during the ten year coverage of this plan. Completion should be by 2020

Ongoing Priority – These items should be part of a continual process acted upon every year as the opportunity arises.

Short-term Priorities

2011-2012

- Develop/construct Purser Family Park
- Begin renovation of neighborhood parks, adding shaded areas and landscaping with native plants. Again, using the annual maintenance and operations budget and city staff, these improvements are intended to be completed a little at a time on an ongoing basis.
- Develop plan for any other needed renovations.

Mid-term Priorities

2013 – 2015

- Identify land for a new community park.
- Continue renovation of existing facilities as in prior years.
- Re-evaluate playground equipment at parks, replace as needed as in prior years.

Long-term Plans

2016 - 2020

- Identify and acquire land for an additional community park.
- Begin fundraising and identification of additional demand-based facility needs.

On-going Priority

- Develop city-wide trail linkage system to connect parks to public facilities throughout the City and work with surrounding cities to continue to develop the Killeen-Temple MPO's Regional Thoroughfare and Pedestrian/Bicycle Plan
- Acquire additional park lands from developers in the planning for residential subdivisions.

Land Acquisition for Parks, Open Space and/or Greenbelt Area

Open space and wetlands are very limited in the City, however, the few areas that meet the criteria of open space and/or wetlands should be researched for possible acquisition for park land.

A linkage trail system would be a very attractive addition to the City. This trail could connect the parks and recreational facilities in town with the schools, municipal buildings and the economic district. The trail system could easily run in the floodplain. Floodplain land is easy to acquire and frequently is donated for this use.

The City should review its ordinances to establish requirements for the dedication of park property or payments of cash in lieu of, dedicated solely to park land acquisition, by developers as a condition of subdivision plat approval.

Potential Funding Sources

The City of Harker Heights, as many other Cities today, has a very tight budget with which to accomplish the business of running a City. This is particularly true with parks and recreation. The City is committed to providing more park facilities to the citizenry. Several types of potential funding sources are listed:

Grants

Through the Texas Department of Parks and Wildlife, Grants-in-Aid Department a biannual competition is held between cities and counties for outdoor recreation funds of up to \$500,000 per project with 1:1 matching funds.

Budget Line Item

The City should budget funds for the purchase of neighborhood land in the annual budget.

Capital Improvements Program

The City through its CIP can budget for development of park land through the use of bond funds.

Corporate and Private Sponsors

The City in the development of its relationship with corporate and private sponsors should consider possible fund raising events with sponsors and/or private donations for park land or equipment.

Volunteer time and donations

The City in conjunction with the residents and participants in the Parks and Recreation Programs and Facilities should elicit assistance from volunteers and associations for fundraisers and sweat equity.

IX. CONCLUSION

This Parks Master Plan is a work in motion. It should be reviewed the plan at least annually to update the plan as demographics change and goals and objectives are accomplished. The plan should be used to set the direction of the development of the Parks and Recreation system. The City Council should review the Parks Master Plan at least every two years, one month prior to setting the annual budget for updates.

The importance of parks and recreation development is recognized by the City as shown through the diligent efforts of the Parks and Recreation Board, City Council and city staff to complete this master plan. Careful attention to the guidelines set forth in this master plan will improve the quality of life for the citizens of Harker Heights.