

**CITY OF BROWNSVILLE
PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT**

**BROWNSVILLE PARKS & RECREATION
OPEN SPACE MASTER PLAN
2008-2020**

**PREPARED BY:
HNTB CORPORATION**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

The City of Brownsville parks and open space system is managed by the City of Brownsville Parks & Recreation Department, it is the department's aim to be good stewards of the cities natural and cultural resources and to provide safe parks, trails and natural areas that offer opportunities for active and passive recreation and community gatherings. This plan has been developed to reflect their goals and commitment to enhancing the quality of life for area residents.

The master plan follows the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) guidelines for a locally prepared master plan, which would make the city eligible for future grant funding for parks, if pursued. The planning horizon is 10 years, and covers the period from 2008 to 2018.

Inventory

The City of Brownsville currently owns and manages 31 developed parks comprising 844 acres, as well as 2 undeveloped parks totaling an additional 101 acres.

For park system planning purposes, parks are generally classified into categories based on park size and function. Regional Parks are the largest, typically exceeding 100 acres in size, and serve the regional surrounding them, often times including surrounding communities. Citywide Parks range in size and are classified based on their function. Usually they exceed 20 acres in size and contain facilities within them that serve the entire city, such as zoos, museums, performance halls, or other cultural facilities. Community parks are generally 20-50 acres in size and usually focus on active-recreation (field and court sports) activities. They serve approximately a 2-3 mile radius. Neighborhood Parks (5-20 acres) serve the neighborhoods immediately adjacent to them, and many times include playgrounds and a limited number of practice fields or courts. These parks should be located within a walkable distance to the users it serves. Mini-parks are classified as smaller pocket parks under 5 acres in size that accommodate a limited number of uses, usually playgrounds and/or court sports.

Of the currently developed parks there are three regional parks (488 acres), one citywide park (25 acres), nine community parks (249 acres), five neighborhood parks (33 acres), 11 mini parks (16 acres), and three special facilities (33 acres). The two undeveloped parks include one parcel that is 100 acres and another that is one acre. Most existing parks are located in the developed southern and central areas of the city.

Park Usage

Program participation data indicates that there is a 3,200 Soccer Player League, a 1,250 Baseball League and a 1,205 Little Miss Kickball League. The data also shows that 50 players were turned away from participating in the Midnight Basketball Program, as well as 200 from the Brownsville Hurricanes Football Program due to the lack of facilities. Additionally, gathering facilities for rental are necessary in the parks system, currently only two park pavilions are available for rental, both of which are located at Dean Porter Park. Public Input and data also suggests that indoor recreation needs are not being met by the park system and that recreation centers at Oliveira and Gonzalez Parks are over-burdened which has resulted in the need for upgrades or replacement.

Public/Stakeholder Input

Input from the public and other stakeholders in the development of Brownsville parks and open space master plan was obtained through stakeholder interviews and questionnaires, park user surveying, and community informational meetings. Existing and potential park users responded that the highest priorities of the City of Brownsville parks system should be to:

1. provide improvements/maintenance of existing parks and indoor recreation facilities;
2. provide more indoor recreation facilities;
3. expand the existing park system through the acquisition of additional park lands and natural areas;

Local officials, leaders, activists and city staff were also asked to identify priorities for the parks system. The highest priorities listed were to:

1. provide more efficient maintenance and security in existing park facilities;
2. provide more recreational amenities, including sports fields, basketball courts and playground equipment;
3. provide more recreation centers, facilities for gatherings, senior activities and public/sports/ cultural events,
4. provide more natural areas with education/interactive opportunities for non-consumptive activities such as wildlife observation and birding

Needs Assessment and Recommendations

TPWD in its Park, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan Guidelines, effective January 27, 2005 suggests three methods for assessing needs for a locally prepared master plan: (1) **standard-based**, (2) **demand-based** and (3) **resource-based**. Since a single approach would not adequately assess parks and natural areas needs for the city, a combination of these three methods was used.

The **standard-based** needs assessment is based upon the Level of Service (LOS) standards that are established during the planning process. These standards have been compiled based on recreation trends as well as national standards and the levels of service and established standards of peer communities to determine the current park land and facilities needs as well as anticipating the needs of the future. These standards when applied to current and future population projections for the City of Brownsville parks system indicate a large deficit in community and neighborhood park land, which increases proportionally as population grows in the future. Deficits are also reflected in baseball fields, softball fields, soccer fields, tennis courts and volleyball courts. This assessment does not consider the condition of existing facilities; it merely calculates the number of total facilities needed to serve a population.

Demand-based needs are based on community input received during the planning process, including stakeholder interviews, user survey results, public meetings, and City staff input. Demand-based needs indicate that the City of Brownsville park system requires additional amenities for passive recreation uses, trails, and simple comforts (shade, seating, water, restrooms) in existing parks, as well as softball and baseball fields, soccer fields, playgrounds, picnic areas, public event spaces, and community gathering spaces.

Resource-based approach examines the assets and resources of the area for open space, parks and recreation facilities, and defines how these resources can be utilized. For example, the availability of water features within an area is a resource which can be utilized in developing a park system. The cultural and natural resources inventory included as part of this plan indicate that the City of Brownsville enjoys significant resources including its numerous resacas, five conservation and preservation areas, a wildlife refuge that is home to 13 federally threatened and endangered species and 57 state protected species, as well as over 20 historic sites. These resources present an opportunity to create a contiguous park system through linkage to these resources which could also serve as wildlife corridors. Furthermore, these resources serve as a rich setting to incorporate more educational and interpretative components to the city park system.

A total of 16 potential new park acquisition sites are identified in deficit areas of the city along with a recommendation to revise the current Parkland Dedication Ordinance that will aid in acquiring adequate land areas based on population (See **Proposed Park Sites Map**). In addition, improvements and/or relocation to existing facilities, as well as a facility maintenance plan are included in the overall parks program. Furthermore, funding options and recommended strategies are outlined in **Chapter Six**. Listed below is a summary of recommended improvements identified

A photograph of a park scene with a paved path, green grass, and trees under a blue sky with clouds.

PART ONE

Chapter I: Introduction

The City of Brownsville Parks and Open Space Master Plan was prepared in support of the city's ongoing commitment to provide a unique variety of safe, modern, and efficient parks and recreation facilities that enhance the quality of life by promoting good health and well being for all residents and visitors. According to a publication by the Trust for Public Land, *The Benefits of Parks: Why America Needs More City Parks and Open Space*, city parks and open space improve our physical and psychological health, strengthen our communities, and make our cities and neighborhoods more attractive places to live and work.¹ The report explains that parks can result in:

- More opportunities for physical activity, reduced risk of diseases, such as heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, obesity and improve psychological health
- Increased value of neighboring residential and commercial property and important tourism draws
- Environmental benefits, as vegetation reduces air and water pollutants by producing oxygen and filtering runoff into streams, rivers, and lakes;
- Social and community development by making neighborhoods more livable, providing facilities for community activities and programs and are linked to reduction in crime;

The plan covers a period of ten years, from 2008 to 2018, and will be the basis of future improvements in the City of Brownsville parks and open space system. This plan satisfies standards set by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) for a "locally prepared master plan" and follows best planning practices, which would make the City of Brownsville eligible for future grant funding for parks, if pursued.

City of Brownsville Existing Environment

The City of Brownsville is located in southernmost tip of Texas, in the Rio Grande Valley about 25 miles inland from the Gulf of Mexico at an elevation of approximately 33 feet above sea level. As the seat of Cameron County, it covers an area of approximately 146 square miles and is home to over 177,112 people.² The city of Brownsville is one of the fastest growing cities in the nation. The Harlingen-Brownsville metropolitan area is ranked in the top 100 fastest-growing metropolitan areas for largest population growth between 2000 and 2006, experiencing a 15.7% growth.³

¹Sherer, Paul. *The Benefits of Parks: Why America Needs More City Parks and Open Space*. Trust for Public Land, 2005, p. 6.

² U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community survey, Table B01003

³ U.S. Census Bureau, Population change in the 100 Fastest-Growing Metropolitan Statistical Areas: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2006, Table 3.

from the needs assessment. These are divided into three categories: 1) existing park improvements; 2) new acquisitions; 3) operations and maintenance.

Table ES-1. Draft Recommendations for City of Brownsville Parks System: 2008-2020

1. Existing Facilities Improvements & Relocations

- Complete improvements necessary to make all parks ADA accessible, including play equipment upgrades, provide turf and/or native grasses and irrigation to all parks
- Remove graffiti, add lighting and provide shade to Riverside, La Lomita/Galaxia, Rosa Allala and Ruiz Parks;
- Develop Alton Gloor Park as a City Park retaining natural characteristics for passive recreation, incorporate educational & interpretative component
- Preserve natural undeveloped area of Lincoln Park and incorporate linkage to the Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge, incorporate educational & interpretative component
- Open view of resaca at Morningside Park, incorporate educational & interpretative component
- Completion of paved trail along Historic Battlefield Trail to provide North-South linkage between existing City of Brownsville parks and the Palo Alto Battlefield National Historic Site, incorporate educational & interpretative component
- Remove fences at Riverside Park, Central Avenue Park and Lincoln Park
- Provide field expansion to Chachalaca Parks and Morningside Park
- Renovate or replace recreation centers at Oliveira & Gonzalez Parks
- Add additional large pavilions for rental at Dean Porter and Oliveira Parks
- Relocate Parks & Recreation department office to permanent structure at the centrally located Tennis Center which is in proximity to trails.
- Relocate Parks & Recreation maintenance office to Brownsville Public Utilities Board maintenance location

2. New Park Acquisitions

- Provide additional park acreage in growth areas of the city for the construction of a second Sports Park to accommodate game field deficits Site
- Acquire park acreage for preservation of significant environmental areas along resacas and Lower Rio Grande Valley use these to provide East-West connectivity
- Acquire additional park acreage to provide adequate level of service for neighborhood and community parks by 2018

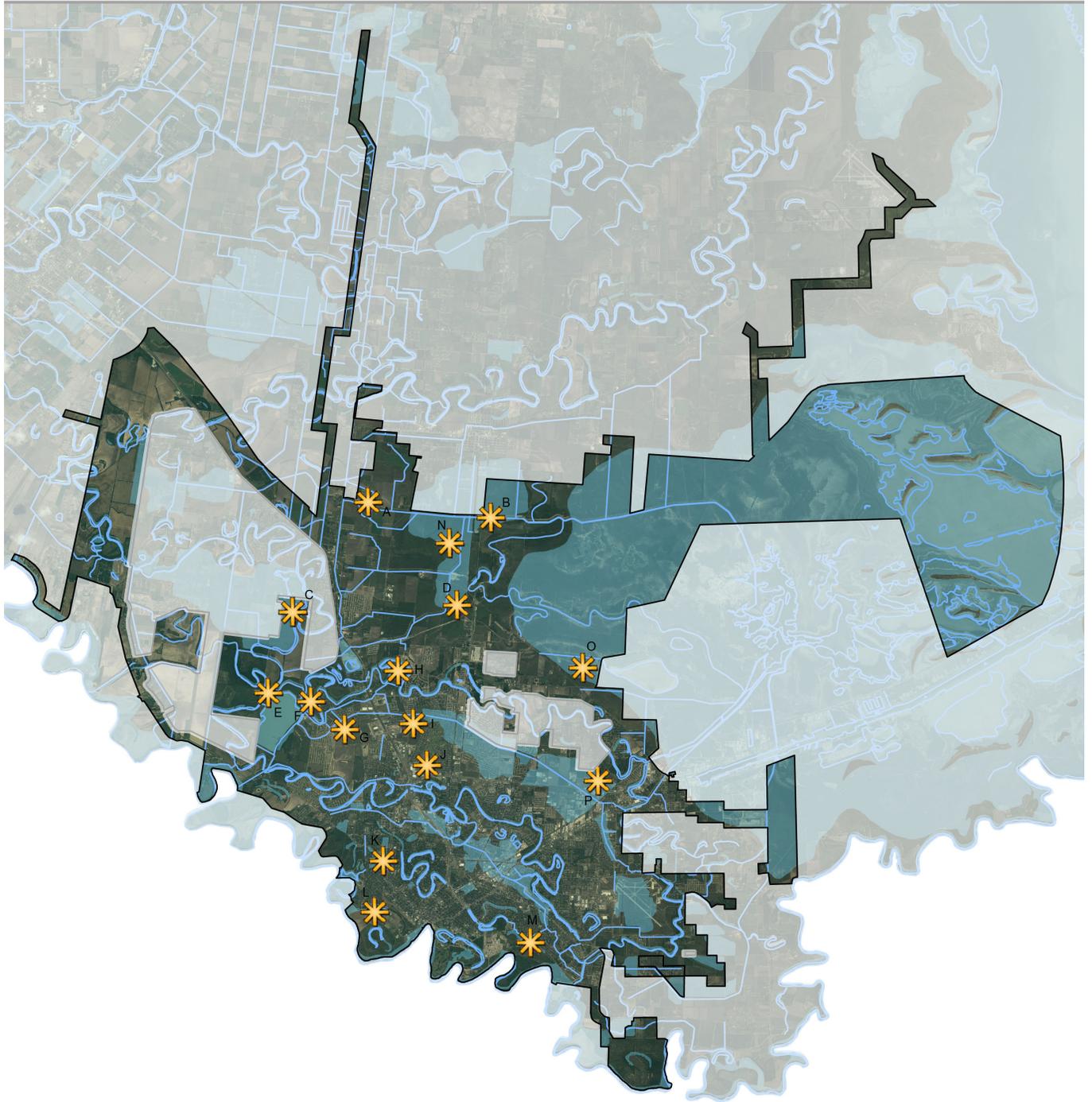
3. Operations & Maintenance

- Based on current park acreages and usage trends, the City of Brownsville would benefit from a Mode 3 maintenance plan for the majority of the parks system, Mode 2 maintenance plan would be appropriate for higher use parks, including the Brownville Sports Park, Dean Porter, and Lincoln Park (See Chapter 7: Section X).

BROWNSVILLE PARKS & OPEN SPACE MASTER PLAN



O n t h e b o r d e r b y t h e s e a



Potential Park Sites

The City of Brownsville is served by three major United States highways, Highway 77/83 and 281 and three State highways, Highway 415, 4, and 48. The southern boundary of the city is the Rio Grande River; across the river to the south is its sister city Matamoros, Tamaulipas in Mexico.

According to recent projections from the Brownsville Metropolitan Planning Organization, the population is expected to reach 355,977 by 2020. The median age of the city is estimated to be 27 years, with children (0-17 years) representing approximately 36 percent of the total population, and at the other end of the age spectrum, those over the age of 65 represent 8 percent of the total population.⁴ In regards to ethnicity, *Census 2000* data indicates that the primary ethnicity represented in the city is non-white/Hispanic (approximately 91 percent). Of the remaining 9 percent, the highest estimated percentages are white (8 percent); African-American (.20 percent).

The city has experienced a surge in population in recent years; Brownsville's growth pattern is expanding toward the north and west, with newer subdivisions developing in those directions. A considerable amount of growth can be attributed to the strength of the local economy which has been boosted by a strong Mexican economy (peso), favorable agricultural conditions and good citrus prices. In 2005 employment increased for the eighth consecutive year and non-farm employment was 116,700. Primary industries are health and education services, retail, distribution, logistics and manufacturing. The city is positioned for international trade in the NAFTA marketplace and has attracted many large manufacturing firms and retailers interested in international trade. Additionally, growth in tourism related to several area attractions, including the Gladys Porter Zoo, Sabal Palm Audubon Sanctuary, Boca Chica Beach, the Los Ebanos Preserve, Bird & Butterfly Farm, South Padre Island as well as the Charro Days and the Brownsville International Birding Festivals have all contributed to the strength of the local economy.

1.1 Plan Development Process

This master plan for parks and open space was prepared by an independent consultant in cooperation with the City of Brownsville Parks and Recreation Department. The approach follows guidelines identified in the TPWD *Parks and Open Space Master Plan Guidelines*, the National Parks and Recreation Association (NPR) standards for park acreage, and industry best practices.

Major steps in the planning process included:

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community survey, Table S0101

1. Preparation of an inventory of existing facilities;
2. Identification of city goals and objectives;
3. Establishment of park standards;
4. Community and stakeholder involvement;
5. Development of an overall needs assessment; and
6. Development of a prioritization and implementation strategy for identified needs.

1.2 City Profile

Data from several sources was used to develop the city planning profile. *Census 2006 American Community Survey* data was used for current population and demographic analysis. For natural and cultural resources analysis, data was collected from the respective public resource agency, including the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Texas Natural Resources Information System (TNRIS), Texas Parks & Wildlife (TPWD), Texas State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), Texas Historic Sites Atlas, the Brownsville Planning & Community Development Department, and the City of Brownsville Parks and Recreation Department. This information was incorporated into a geographic information system (GIS) and used to identify and analyze existing and potential park resources.

Table 1. Demographic Summary of Population

	Square Miles	Population	Population per mi ²	Under 18 Years	65 Years +	Living in Poverty
City of Brownsville	146	177,112	1,216	64,396	14,425	41%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2006 Estimates & 2001 Brownsville City Limits

There is 26,075 acres of open space in the city, however City of Brownsville Park Facilities account for only 945 acres of the available acreage. Two preserves by private organizations are also located within the city as well as 36 historic landmarks.

Table 2 summarizes natural and cultural features

Table 2. Summary of Park Facilities & Open Space in the City of Brownsville	
City Park Facilities (Developed & Undeveloped)	33
Open Space by Others	4
Total	37
Open Space by Private Organizations ⁵	2
Landmarks/Historic Markers	36

Chapter II: Inventory

2.1 All Park Facilities & Open Space in Brownsville

Currently, there are approximately 26,075 acres of public parks and natural areas within Brownsville. This represents approximately 28 percent of all land within the city. Most of this land, however, consists of wildlife management areas owned and operated by the federal government that may not be accessible the public (Table 3). Of this acreage, approximately 945 acres (1 percent) is owned by the City of Brownsville parks system and is accessible to the public.

Although a total of 37 public parks and natural areas are located in the City of Brownsville, most of these facilities are Mini Parks that are less than 5 acres in size.⁶ Table 3 below summarizes each park type and includes the number represented in each category and total acreage.

⁵ Open space refers to undeveloped land, natural areas, and preserves

⁶ See Appendix F, National Recreation and Parks Association: Park Classifications and Standards for Park Acreage.

Table 2. Park Land/Facilities and Natural Areas: City of San Antonio		
Provider	Number	Acres
City of Brownsville (Developed)		
Mini-Park	11	15.6
Neighborhood Parks	5	33
Community Parks	8	249.2
City Parks	1	25
Regional/Super-Regional Park	3	488.0
Special Facilities	3	33.3
Total	31	844.1
City of Brownsville (Undeveloped)		
Mini-Park	1	1
Community Parks	1	100
Total	2	101
Developed & Undeveloped Total	33	945.1
Other Park Providers		
U.S. Department of the Interior/ U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service	3	23,893
State of Texas	1	1,237
Total	4	25,130
GRAND TOTAL	37	26,075
<i>Source: HNTB 2007</i>		

Most of the open space that is accessible to the citizens of Brownsville is city-owned and primarily offers facilities for active recreation. As a result, little land is available for citizens to engage in passive recreation such as trail based hiking, wildlife viewing and camping despite the many natural areas located within the city limits. In addition, there is a scarcity of neighborhood and community parks within the city that is most notable in the north and west areas of the city. Additionally, Table 4 summarizes parks and natural area acreages for the city of Brownsville.

Table 3. Summary of Brownsville Parks Land/Facilities and Natural Areas

	Population	Acres of Parks and Natural Areas	Owned By City of Brownsville	Owned By Others	Total Acres of Parks and Natural Areas per 1,000 Residents
City of Brownsville	177,112	26,075	945	25,130	147*

Source: HNTB 2007

*not all land is accessible to the public

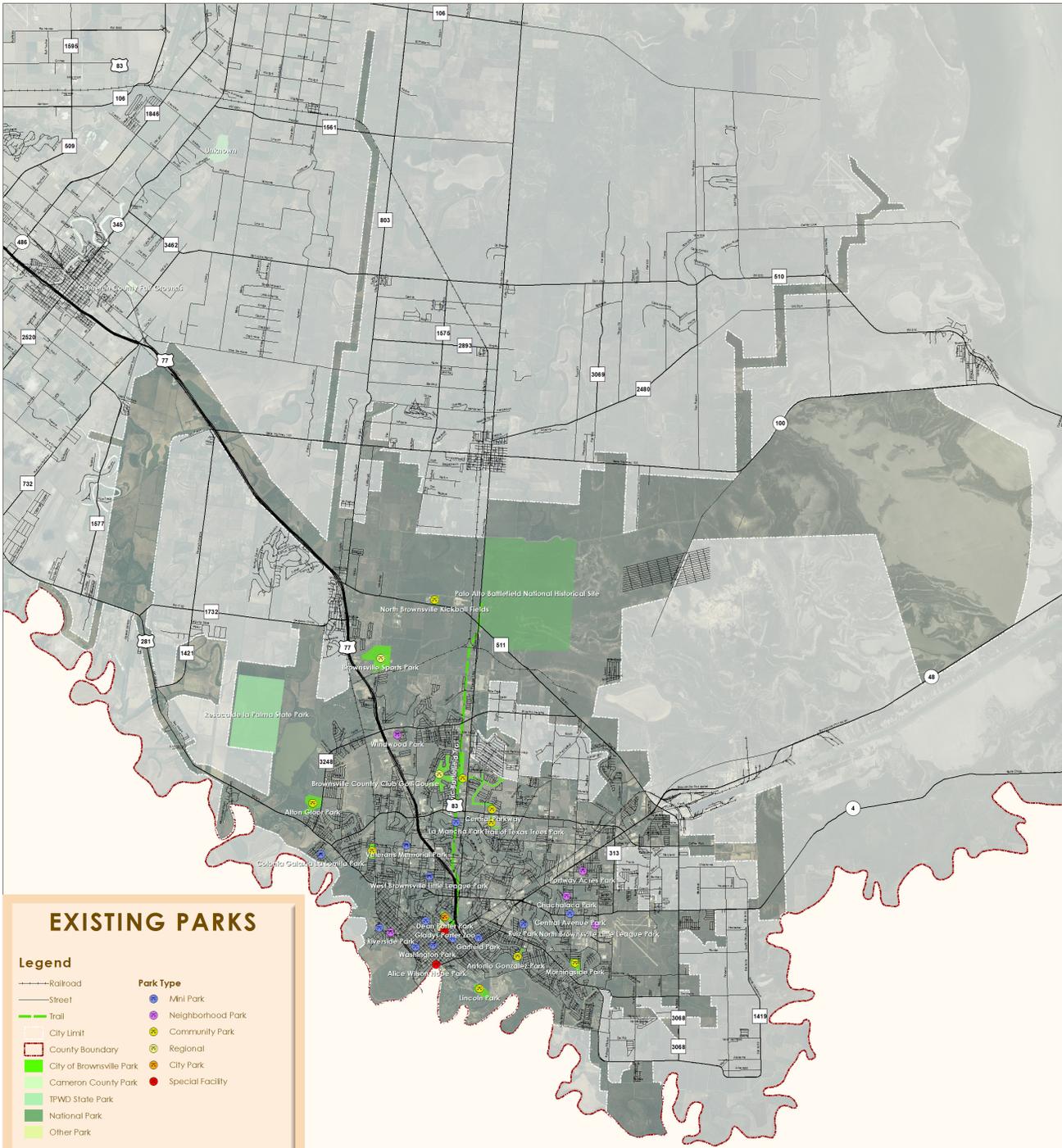
2.2 Parks and Recreational Facilities owned by the City of Brownsville

Currently, a total of 31 developed parks (844.1 acres) and 2 undeveloped parks (101 acres) comprise the City of Brownsville parks system. The majority of the parks are less than 5 acres in size and they are primarily characterized as mini parks.

BROWNSVILLE PARKS & OPEN SPACE MASTER PLAN



O n t h e b o r d e r b y t h e s e a



EXISTING PARKS

Legend

- | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------|
| — Railroad | ● Park Type |
| — Street | ● Mini Park |
| — Trail | ● Neighborhood Park |
| — City Limit | ● Community Park |
| — County Boundary | ● Regional |
| — City of Brownsville Park | ● City Park |
| — Cameron County Park | ● Special Facility |
| — IPWD State Park | |
| — National Park | |
| — Other Park | |

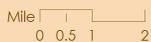
Matamoros, Mexico

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Marketing Support



Community Parks, 20-50 acres in size, account for most of the amenities that the Brownsville Park system provides including play areas, walking trails, pavilions, restrooms, community centers, and swimming pools. The Oliveira and Gonzalez Parks are among this category that serve several adjacent neighborhoods and the community as a whole.

Neighborhood Parks, between 5-20 acres, like the Chachalaca Park, serve the neighborhoods immediately adjacent to them. These parks include play areas and courts with one or two play fields. Portway Acres and Winwood Park are smaller parks that have been included in this category due to their programming of both play areas and sports fields that may draw users from a larger service area.

In Brownsville Mini Parks, less than 5 acres in size, makeup most of the parks provided by the city park system, these parks include a playground, a court and few other amenities.

Alice Wilson Hope Park, the Gladys Porter Zoo and the Southern Linear Park are all Special Facilities set in urban areas of the city and include overlooks, memorials, or monuments, these urban mini-parks, lack an active recreation component.

According to the Parks & Recreation Department parks are used year-round, with peak periods occurring in the (season) months (month to month). Primary uses for the facilities are sporting events, including baseball and softball games, basketball and soccer as well as walking and jogging.

In terms of number of attendees, Dean Porter and Morningside Parks are the most used city-owned parks. Research suggests that Oliveira, Morningside and Antonio Gonzalez are over-burdened in terms of number of usage. This has resulted in noticeable erosion of park resources within these facilities.

2.3 Natural and Cultural Resources

Tamaulipan Brushland

Much of the city of Brownsville is located in the Tamaulipan brushland, a collection of eleven distinct biotic communities that exist in the Lower Rio Grande Valley (LRGV). The valley, which is actually a large delta, was once home to a very large number of plants and animals which are not found anywhere else in the United States. Human settlement, agriculture, and flood control measures have caused the demise of 95% of the original native brush. The flood plain forests that once thrived on annual floods of the Rio Grande are gradually evolving into drier, less diverse woodland.

The Tamaulipan brushland is also home to or in the migration patterns of 485 species of birds, which represents 53% of all bird species recorded in North America. The Mississippi and Central flyways converge in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. In addition, 83 species of mammals are known from the Lower Rio Grande Valley. Among them, ten are unique to the LRGV, including Ocelot and Jaguarundi.

The eleven biotic communities which comprise the Tamaulipan brushland are the Clay Loma/Wind Tidal Flats, Coastal Brushland Potholes, Sabal Palm Forest Mid-Valley Riparian Woodland, Mid-Delta Thorn Forest, Woodland Potholes and Basins Upland Thorn Scrub, Barretal, Upper Valley Flood Forest, Ramaderos and Chihuahuan Thorn Forest.⁷

The Sabal Palm Forest

The Sabal Palm Forest is one of the biotic communities of the Tamaulipan brushland. Sabal Palms once grew along the Rio Grande from the Gulf of Mexico extending 80 miles upstream. Of the original 40,000 acres of native Sabal Palms, only about 40 acres of old growth remain. Two preserves, the Sabal Palm Audubon Center and the Lennox Foundation Southmost Preserve, are home to the two remaining large stands of Sabal Palms.⁸

National Wildlife Refuges

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Natural Resources in Brownsville include the Lower Rio Grande Valley Nature Wildlife Refuge and the Laguna Atascosa Nature Wildlife Refuge. The Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge is a collection of over 100 non-contiguous tracts (federally-owned properties and conservation easements)

⁷ The Lower Rio Grande Valley Biological Profile, www.fermatainc.com/nat_riogrande.html

⁸ Sources: *The Lower Rio Grande Valley Biological Profile*, www.fermatainc.com/nat_riogrande.html
The Nature Conservancy, www.nature.org/wherework/northamerica/states/texas/preserves/art6685.html
The National Audubon Society, www.tx.audubon.org/Sabal.html

encompassing 90,000 acres across the lower four counties of Texas (Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr, and Willacy counties). The series of properties follows the last 275 river miles of the Rio Grande from Falcon Dam to the Gulf of Mexico to create a wildlife corridor through the Tamaulipan brushland. The area is home to 1,100 types of plants, 700 vertebrate species, and over 300 species of butterflies. The Refuge manages habitats supporting 13 federally threatened and endangered species and 57 state protected species. When completed, the Lower Rio Grande Valley NWR will encompass 132,500 acres. When possible, the Refuge secures parcels that are directly adjacent to existing refuge lands to link separate tracts to create a continuous wildlife corridor.⁹

The Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge is the largest protected block of wildlife habitat in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. It is located northeast of Brownsville and exceeds 45,000 acres in size, it is the largest protected area of natural habitat left in the Lower Rio Grande Valley that is world famous for its birds (411 species documented at the National Wildlife Refuge, the most species documented at any national wildlife refuge). At 5 feet above sea level, the refuge is dotted with resacas, lomas (dunes), coastal prairies, and wetlands. It is home to eleven rare or endangered species, including the ocelot. "This diminutive wildcat has been on the endangered species list since 1972 and as late as 1995, there was only an estimated 120 cats remaining in the wild, approximately 35 of which live within the Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge."¹⁰

Resaca de la Palma State Park

Located in the west area of Brownsville is the Resaca de la Palma State Park which includes picnic tables and restrooms and opportunities for bird watching. This state park is 1,175 acres; the Resaca de la Palma State Park is the largest tract of native habitat in the World Birding Center network (including banco woodlands, marsh vegetation along the resaca, and Tamaulipan thorn woodlands in drier areas of the site).¹¹

⁹ Source: U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, www.fws.gov/southwest/refuges/texas/lrgv.html

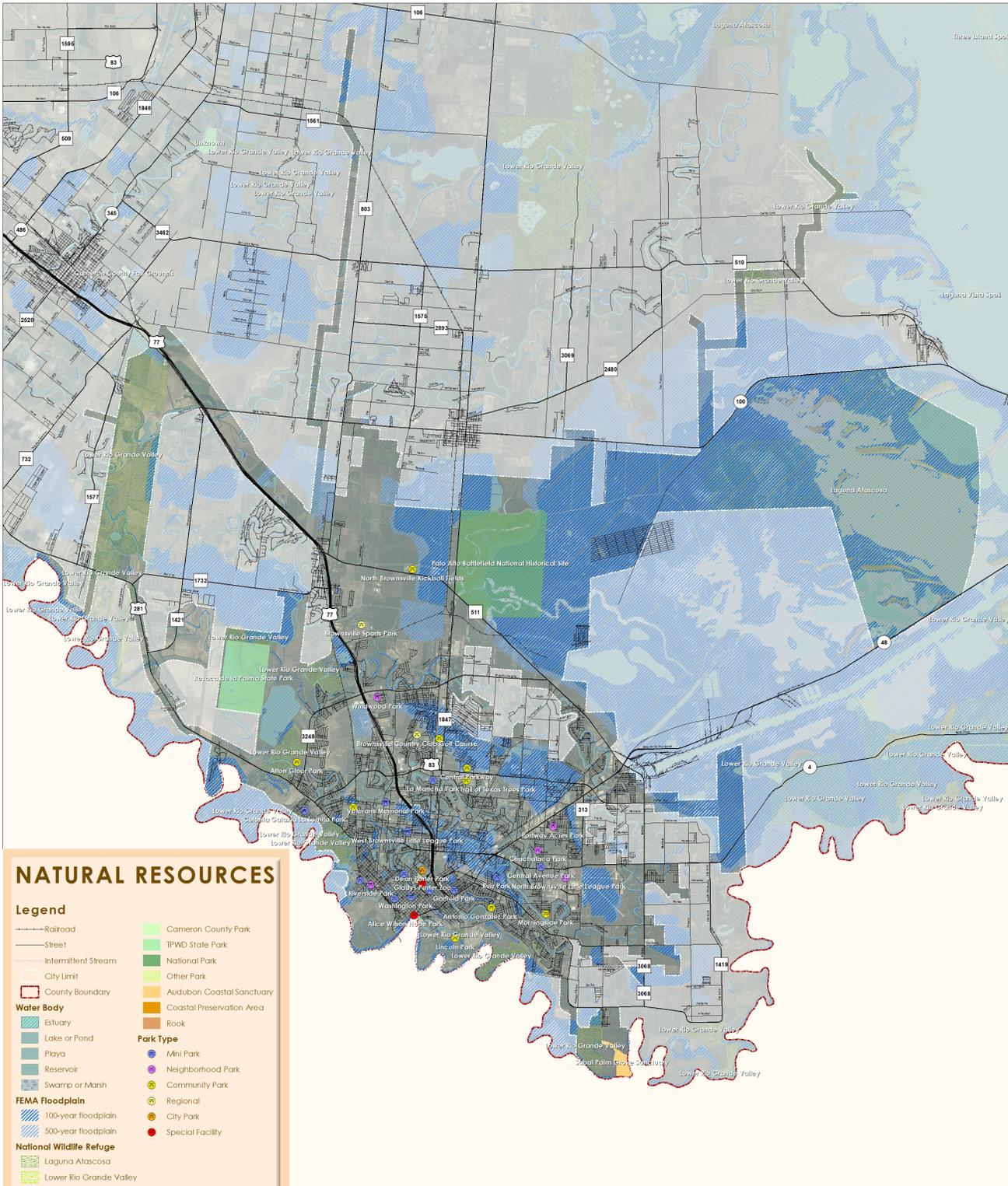
¹⁰ <http://gotexas.about.com/od/naturecentersparks/a/LANWR.htm>, Texas Parks and Wildlife, www.tpwd.state.tx.us/landwater/water/conservation/txgems/laguatas/index.phtml

¹¹ Sources: Texas Parks and Wildlife, ww2.tpwd.state.tx.us/huntwild/hunt/public/lands/public_hunting_system/search/index.phtml
The World Birding Center, www.worldbirdingcenter.org/sites/brownsville

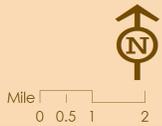
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Private Organizations

Natural Resources by private organizations in the City of Brownsville are the Sabal Palm Audubon Center and the Nature Conservancy of Texas: Lennox Foundation Southmost Preserve and the Conservation Area Plan for Boscaje de la Palma. The Sabal Palm Audubon Center features the largest remaining Sabal Palm fragment in Texas on part of its 557-acre site. The Center continues to restore sections of the Sanctuary to its native habitat as it is one of two preserves that house the remnants of what was once 40,000 acres of Sabal Palms in the United States. The Sabal Palm's natural habitat has become critical to the numerous species of birds, mammals, reptiles, and other wildlife. The Sanctuary is an important link in the corridor of wildlife habitat that still exists in this region.¹²

The Lennox Foundation Southmost Preserve encompasses over 1,000 acres along the Rio Grande at the southernmost part of Texas. Southmost Preserve is located on a meandering bend of the Rio Grande at the southernmost part of Texas. As part of the Boscaje de la Palma region of the Lower Rio Grande Valley Wildlife Corridor, Southmost Preserve encompasses one of the last stands of native sabal palm trees in the country. This land has been called the "Jewel of the Rio Grande Valley" and many would argue that Southmost Preserve is one of the most ecologically important pieces of land remaining in the Valley. This preserve is home to one of the only two remaining large stands of native Mexican sabal palms in the U.S. In addition, several large tracts of Tamaulipan thornscrub are found here.¹³

National Register of Historic Places & Texas Historical Markers

Historic sites in the city of Brownsville these include the Palo Alto Battlefield National Historic Site and three privately owned sites which include Resaca de la Palma Battlefield National Register Site, Fort Texas/Fort Brown National Register Site, the Old Brulay Plantation National Register Site, and the Historic Brownsville Museum National Register Site. The Samuel Wallace Brooks House, the Browne-Wagner House, the Augustine Celaya House, the Celaya—Creager House, the Miguel Fernandez Hide Yard, the Immaculate Conception Church and the La Madrilena are also registered in National Register of Historic Places. In total there are 36 markers located within the City of Brownsville, Texas Historic Commission markers include the Alonso Complex, the Cavazos House, the Sacred Heart Catholic Church, the home of Charles Stillman, the Old Cameron County Jail, the Hicks-Gregg House, the Russell-Cocke House, the Brownsville City Cemetery, and the Cameron County Courthouse.

¹² Audubon Texas, www.tx.audubon.org/Sabal_Plants.html

¹³ <http://www.nature.org/wherework/northamerica/states/texas/preserves/art6685.html>

Chapter III: Needs Assessment

3.1 Approach

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) in its Park, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan Guidelines, effective January 27, 2005 suggests three methods for assessing needs for a locally prepared master plan: (1) level of service (LOS)/standard-based, (2) demand-based, and (3) resource-based. A combination of these three methods was used to accurately assess park and natural area needs for the City of Brownsville.

3.2 Level of Service Analysis

The LOS/standard-based approach is a macro-level analysis that uses established standards to determine facilities and park areas needed to meet the needs of a given population size. The standards may be based on demand studies, comparison to peer communities, the professional judgment of park and recreation planners and designers. A standard-based assessment typically uses a ratio of acres per 1,000 people for park land or a ration of 1 facility per X population for facilities as a level of service (LOS) to be provided in a community. This follows the National Recreation and Park Association’s Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines.

Table X. Level of Service: Comparison to Other Cities

City	Population	City-Owned Acres	Acres per 1,000
Brownsville	177,112	844.1	4.8
Tucson (Arizona)	485,790	3,690.8	7.6
Harlingen	89,828	400	4.5
McAllen	116,501	243.8	2.1
El Paso	634,816	1,686.8	2.7
<i>*Based US Census Bureau 2006 Population Estimates Source</i>			

Park Land

Based on 2006 population estimates by the U.S. Census Bureau of 177,112, there are approximately 147 acres of open space for every 1,000 people in the City of Brownsville, as provided at local, state, and federal agencies (however, not all properties may be publicly accessible). Of this amount, the City of Brownsville provides 4.8 acres of developed park land per 1,000 people.

Existing Levels of Service of parks divided into the categories above are as follows:

Regional Parks: 2.8 acres per 1,000 people

City Parks:	0.1 acres per 1,000 people
Community Parks:	1.4 acres per 1,000 people
Neighborhood Parks:	0.2 acres per 1,000 people
Mini Parks:	0.1 acres per 1,000 people
Special Facility:	0.2 acres per 1,000 people

Based on park inventory data received from the City of Brownsville and the 2006 population estimate of 177,112 people (*Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2006 American Community Survey*).

NRPA benchmark standards are as follows:

Regional Parks:	5-10 acres per 1,000 people
City Parks:	no recommendation
Community Parks:	5-8 acres per 1,000 people
Neighborhood Parks:	1-2 acres per 1,000 people
Mini Parks:	0.25-0.50 acres per 1,000 people

The first recommendation of this plan is to discontinue the construction of future mini parks. These parks are a drain on maintenance dollars based on size and programming versus the time necessary to maintain them and the amount of use they receive. As a result, the recommended Level of Service for mini parks has been combined with the Level of Service for neighborhood parks.

After reviewing the Park Service Areas Map, it is apparent that the city is relatively well-served by community parks. The city is severely underserved by neighborhood parks, however. With only four parks mapped, it is obvious that the majority of residents are not served by a local neighborhood park. This deficit is somewhat reduced by the locations of mini parks, which may have to serve the neighborhood park in existing neighborhoods or build-out areas where the acquisition of land for neighborhood parks may be difficult. The use of the City's Parkland Dedication Ordinance will allow for the acquisition of park land as the city grows and is a prudent way to acquire land for future neighborhood parks that immediately serve the areas of growth adjacent to them.

Therefore, recommended Levels of Service are as follows:

- Regional Parks: 3 acres per 1,000 people
(just over 1/2 of the minimum recommendation of NRPA)
- City Park: 0.5 acres per 1,000 people
- Community Parks: 5.0 acres per 1,000 people
(the minimum recommendation of NRPA)
- Neighborhood Parks: 1.5 acres per 1,000 people
(combining Neighborhood and Mini Park lands)

Facilities

Recommended facilities standards roughly follow NRPA standards, with additional practice fields considered for baseball and softball (higher numbers of softball practice fields which may also double as kickball fields), as well as field breakout for youth and adult soccer.

Recommended Levels of Service (LOS) Standards

Facility	Current LOS	Recommended LOS
Recreation Centers	1 per 44,278	1 per 50,000
Baseball Fields: Game/Lit	1 per 9,840	1 per 7,500
Baseball Fields: Practice	No fields	1 per 20,000
Softball Fields: Game/Lit	1 per 19,679	1 per 7,500
Softball/Kickball Fields: Practice	No fields	1 per 10,000
Kickball Fields: Game/Lit	1 per 11,070	1 per 10,000
Adult Soccer Fields: Game/Lit	1 per 11,807	1 per 10,000
Adult Soccer Fields: Practice	1 per 177,112	1 per 20,000
Youth Soccer Fields: Game/Lit	1 per 35,422	1 per 20,000
Youth Soccer Fields: Practice	No fields	1 per 20,000
Football Fields: Game/Lit	No fields	1 per 100,000
Multi-Use Practice Fields	1 per 177,112	1 per 20,000
Basketball Courts	1 per 5,713	1 per 5,000
Tennis Courts	1 per 9,840	1 per 5,000
Volleyball Courts	1 per 177,112	1 per 20,000
Playgrounds	1 per 7,701	1 per park minimum
Aquatic Facilities	1 per 59,037	1 per 20,000

Golf: 18 Hole Standard	1 per 177,112	1 per 125,000
Walking/Jogging Trails: Miles	1 per 9,678	1 per 10,000

Of particular note is the absence of practice fields for baseball, softball, kickball, and youth soccer. While the City maintains a good number of game fields, the addition of practice fields will ease league practice conflicts and provide opportunities for “pick up” games by the general public. These practice fields may be appropriately located in neighborhood or regional parks, and do not necessarily need to be grouped in large numbers. One or two practice fields in a neighborhood park is adequate, as these fields do not generally accommodate tournaments where close proximity of multiple fields is necessary. In general, practice fields have been recommended at the rate of one field per 20,000 citizens, with the exception of dual-use softball/kickball fields, which have been recommended at the LOS of 1 field per 10,000 people since they are shared fields that will accommodate two types of field play.

Game/lit fields for baseball, kickball, and adult soccer as well as basketball courts, trails, and recreation centers have existing levels of service that do not vary a great deal from the proposed LOS standard. However, this method of analysis yields only a quantity of facilities needed, and does not account for the condition of existing facilities. The method assumes that existing facilities are functioning properly and that continued maintenance, renovations/upgrades, and/or replacements are made as necessary.

Refer to the Appendix, “Levels of Service Comparative Analysis: PARK LAND & FACILITIES” for specific recommendations as they compare to current levels of service in Brownsville as well as a comparison to peer communities.

3.3 Standard-Based Needs Assessment

Applying the new Level of Service Standards to the existing and projected populations of Brownsville yields some telling results in terms of both park land and facilities.

Park Land

The quantity of land utilized for Regional Parks is sufficient based on the new standard. The minimal acreage deficit (43 acres) does not suggest the need for immediate acquisition. Continued (or upgraded) maintenance and operation of current facilities is suggested, refer to the Parks Evaluation table for current and suggested maintenance modes. The 2020 deficit for Regional Parks (580 acres), however, indicates a need for one to four additional regional parks. The City should continue to search for logical opportunities to work with other jurisdictional agencies

to become part of a larger park and open space network for the region and utilize such opportunities in the form of regional parks.

According to the new Level of Service standard, an additional 64 acres for a City Park is optimal. Dean Porter Park is classified as the City's only existing City Park. This park is programmed with numerous cultural facilities while also showcasing one of the many resacas that add to Brownsville's identity. A second such facility should be constructed within the City and might include such specialized facilities such as an amphitheater, space for public gathering, natural areas, and would also be an appropriate location for a semi-professional sports venue, if desired. 2020 projections indicate that a 153-acre deficit in this category will be present in twelve years, if no further land acquisition is made.

Community Parks have the largest land deficit of any of the park land categories. According to the new Level of Service standard, the City has a 636-acre deficit for Community Parks. Although existing Community Parks are well-distributed throughout the developed areas of Brownsville (see Deficit Areas: Community Parks Map), the acreage deficit is significant. This is most likely a result of a population density that is higher than the national average (3.53 persons per household in Brownsville compared to an overall of 2.61 persons per household throughout the U.S. according to the 2006 American Community Survey by the U.S. Census Bureau), therefore yielding a higher deficit in actual park land acres needed. By providing larger community parks, even distribution is maintained while providing a suitable amount of land for the citizens of Brownsville. The 2020 projection indicates a 1,531-acre deficit in community parks, bringing this park type to the forefront of action steps needed to keep up with the pace of expected growth over the next twelve years.

Neighborhood Parks have a 233-acre deficit based on 2006 population numbers. The distribution of Neighborhood Parks (see Deficit Areas: Neighborhood Parks Map) focuses on older, developed areas of town. However, only about 50% of these areas are adequately served (by proximity only) by neighborhood parks. While the newly-adopted Parkland Dedication Ordinance will provide neighborhood parks to future developments, the City should focus on providing the additional neighborhood parks needed by underserved, existing residential developments. Closely evaluating vacant parcels or outmoded/abandoned facilities within developed areas of town for neighborhood park infill opportunities would also aid in relieving the acreage deficit while resolving service gaps in the older areas of the City. The projected 2020 deficit for neighborhood parks grows to 501 acres.

Park Facilities

The new Level of Service Standards also quantify recreational facilities in addition to park land. Residents expressed the need for baseball and softball fields, walking/running trails, and basketball courts, in particular. The facilities Needs Assessment reflect similar findings.

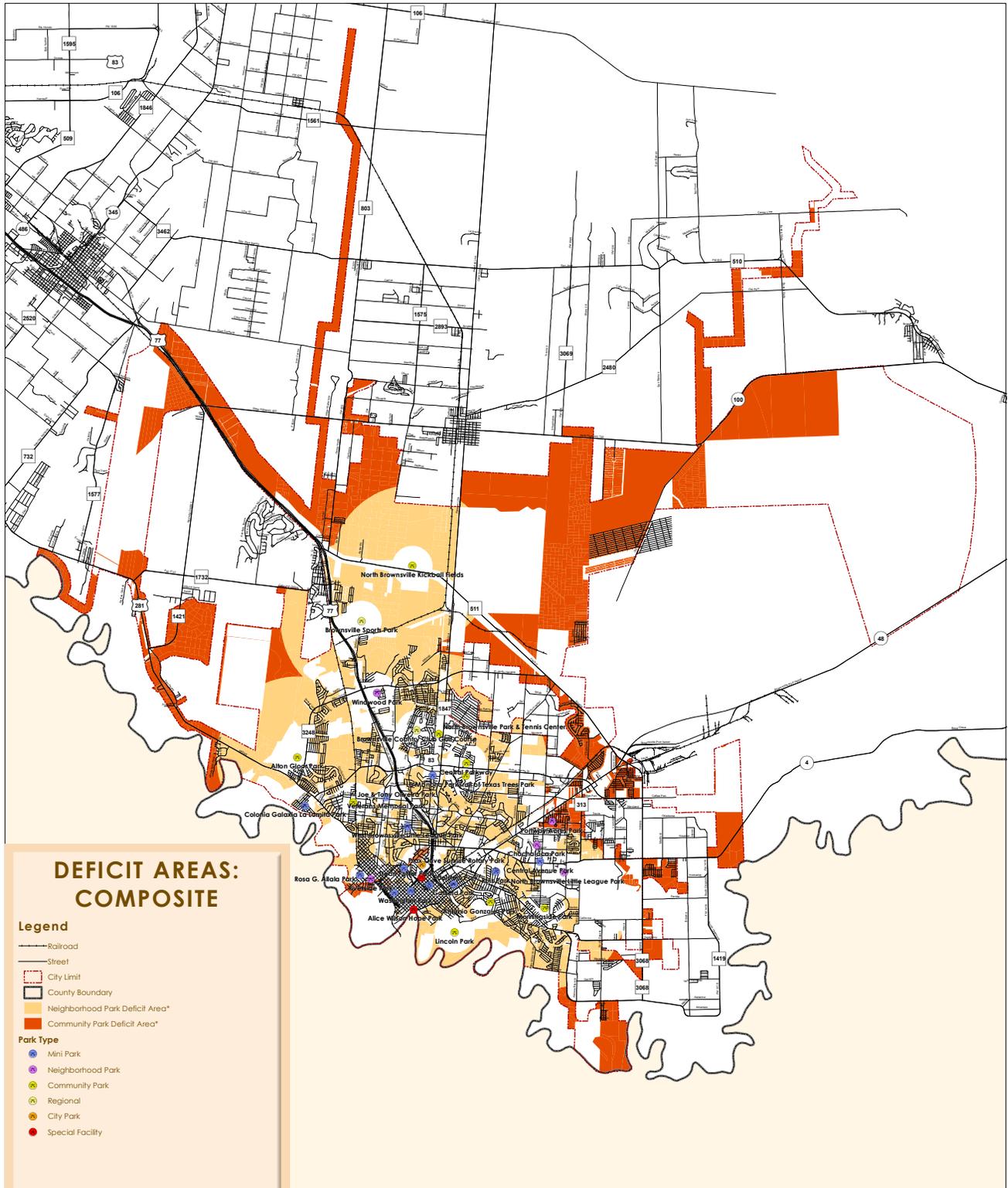
As noted in Section 3.2 Level of Service Analysis for Park Facilities on page XXX, there is a notable current deficit in most practice field categories. As also mentioned in the LOS section, many of these fields can be located in existing or future neighborhood or community parks. These deficits grow substantially when applied to the 2020 population projection of 355,977 residents in Brownsville, indicating that action in park development needs to begin in the near future in order to keep pace with future growth. This projection suggests that the population will double over the next 12 years. If the parks system merely doubles its number of current park facilities over the next 12 years, there will still be deficits to contend with. Thus, a proactive approach will be necessary to ensure that park land is developed as it is acquired, while maintaining and upgrading existing facilities so they can continue to serve developed areas.

The development of Alton Gloor Park may relieve some pressure in accommodating sports facilities, but the planning for this park should also include natural areas as well as community gathering space and passive recreation areas. The construction of a second Sports Park may be needed in the near future to accommodate current and future game field deficits.

BROWNSVILLE PARKS & OPEN SPACE MASTER PLAN



O n t h e b o r d e r b y t h e s e a



DEFICIT AREAS: COMPOSITE

Legend

- Railroad
- Street
- City Limit
- County Boundary
- Neighborhood Park Deficit Area*
- Community Park Deficit Area*

Park Type

- Mini Park
- Neighborhood Park
- Community Park
- Regional
- City Park
- Special Facility

*See assumptions at right

Matamoros, Mexico

HNTB
in association with:
**Roberts & Williams
Associates**
Marketing Support



*Assumptions

- Deficit areas applied to non-residential zoning areas.
- Based on the assumption that City and Community Parks also serve the function of a Neighborhood Park to those residents living within 1/2 mile of the City or Community Park.
- Additionally based on the assumption that Regional Parks also serve the function of a Community Park to those residents living within 2 miles of the Regional Park.
- Areas in light orange are NOT currently served by Neighborhood Parks.
- Areas in dark orange are NOT currently served by both Neighborhood Parks and Community Parks.

BROWNSVILLE PARKS & OPEN SPACE MASTER PLAN



O n t h e b o r d e r b y t h e s e a

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

2006 DEFICIT (177,112 POP.)

PARK LAND TYPE	Current Park Land Acres: Developed	Current Level of Service* (# acres per 1,000 pop.)	Recommended Level of Service - (# acres per 1,000 pop.)	Total Acres Needed per Recommendation	Current 2006 Deficit Additional Acres Needed **
Regional Park	488.0	2.8	3.0	531	43
City Park	25.0	0.1	0.5	89	64
Community Park	249.2	1.4	5.0	886	636
Neighborhood Park	33.0	0.2	1.5	266	233
Mini-Park	15.6	0.1	0.0	0	-16
Special Facility	33.3	0.2	no standard	n/a	n/a

FACILITY TYPE	Current number of facilities	Current Level of Service* (1 per x thousand pop.)	Recommended Level of Service - (1 per x thousand pop.)	Total # of facilities needed per recommendation	Current 2006 Deficit Additional Facilities Needed ***
Baseball Fields: Lighted	18	9,840	7,500	24	6
Baseball Fields: Practice	0	0	20,000	9	9
Softball Fields: Lighted	9	19,679	7,500	24	15
Softball Fields/Kickball Fields: Practice	0	0	10,000	18	18
Adult Soccer Fields: Lighted	15	11,807	10,000	18	3
Adult Soccer Fields: Practice	1	177,112	20,000	9	8
Youth Soccer Fields: Lighted	5	35,422	20,000	9	4
Youth Soccer Fields: Practice	0	0	20,000	9	9
Football Fields	0	0	100,000	2	2
Kickball Fields	16	11,070	10,000	18	2
Recreation/Community Centers	4	44,278	50,000	4	0
Playgrounds	23	7,701	1 per park	31	8
Basketball Courts (outdoor)	31	5,713	5,000	35	4
Tennis Courts	18	9,840	5,000	35	17
Volleyball Courts	1	0	20,000	9	8
Swimming Pools	3	59,037	20,000	9	6
Golf	1	177,112	125,000	1	0
Walking/Jogging Trails (# miles)	18.3	9,678	10,000	18	-0.6

PROJECTED 2020 DEFICIT (355,977 POP.)

PARK LAND TYPE	Current Park Land Acres: Developed	Current Level of Service* (# acres per 1,000 pop.)	Recommended Level of Service - (# acres per 1,000 pop.)	Total Acres Needed per Recommendation	Current 2006 Deficit Additional Acres Needed **
Regional Park	488.0	1.4	3.0	1068	580
City Park	25.0	0.1	0.5	178	153
Community Park	249.2	0.7	5.0	1780	1531
Neighborhood Park	33.0	0.1	1.5	534	501
Mini-Park	15.6	0.0	0.0	0	-16
Special Facility	33.3	0.2	no standard	n/a	n/a

FACILITY TYPE	Current number of facilities	Current Level of Service* (1 per x thousand pop.)	Recommended Level of Service - (1 per x thousand pop.)	Total # of facilities needed per recommendation	Current 2006 Deficit Additional Facilities Needed ***
Baseball Fields: Lighted	18	19,777	7,500	47	29
Baseball Fields: Practice	0	0	20,000	18	18
Softball Fields: Lighted	9	39,553	7,500	47	38
Softball Fields/Kickball Fields: Practice	0	0	10,000	36	36
Adult Soccer Fields: Lighted	15	23,732	10,000	36	21
Adult Soccer Fields: Practice	1	355,977	20,000	18	17
Youth Soccer Fields: Lighted	5	71,195	20,000	18	13
Youth Soccer Fields: Practice	0	0	20,000	18	18
Football Fields	0	0	100,000	4	4
Kickball Fields	16	22,249	10,000	36	20
Recreation/Community Centers	4	68,994	50,000	7	3
Playgrounds	23	15,477	1 per park	33	10
Basketball Courts (outdoor)	31	11,483	5,000	71	40
Tennis Courts	18	19,777	5,000	71	53
Volleyball Courts	1	0	20,000	18	17
Swimming Pools	3	118,659	20,000	18	15
Golf	1	355,977	125,000	3	2
Walking/Jogging Trails (# miles)	18.3	19,452	10,000	36	17.3

* Current LOS based on 177,112 population estimate (Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2006 American Community Survey)

** Current deficit based on 177,112 population estimate (Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2006 American Community Survey)

*** Projected deficit based on 2020 projected population of 355,977 (Source: Brownsville MPO 2000-2050 Cities Population on Cameron County)

3.4 Demands Assessment

The demand-based approach is a micro-level analysis that relies on information gathered from participation rates, surveys, and other information that indicates how much of the population wants certain types of facilities. “Demands” have been gathered from stakeholder questionnaires, comments made during public meetings, and user-intercept surveys.

Stakeholder Involvement

Stakeholder questionnaires were used to identify park priorities of city-elected officials and staff, civic leaders, and community activists. The questionnaire consisted of 23 questions that allowed respondents to rate the adequacy of existing facilities, provide feedback on their individual park experiences, and identify opportunities for future improvement. A complete list of questions is included in **Appendix x**.

Local park experts and city staff were also asked to identify priorities for the parks system. The highest priorities listed were to:

1. provide more efficient maintenance and security in existing park facilities;
2. provide more recreational amenities, including sports fields, basketball courts and playground equipment;
3. provide more recreation centers, facilities for gatherings, senior activities and public/sports/ cultural events,
4. provide more natural areas with education/interactive opportunities for non-consumptive activities such as wildlife observation and birding

Public Input

Park User-Intercept Surveys

In addition to stakeholder interviews, the public was engaged in the planning process by a random survey method. A total of 240 surveys were conducted. Those surveyed were asked to provide basic demographic information, including age, and ethnicity. Survey questions were also designed to obtain current user preferences and to identify individual park needs. A complete list of questions and a summary of results is found in **Appendix x**.

Community Meetings

A series of public meetings were held at key milestones in the planning process. The purpose of these meetings was to inform the community of the development of the Bexar County Parks & Open Space Master Plan. Participants were given an overview of the planning process and provided an inventory of existing facilities. They were then asked to provide feedback regarding existing park conditions and to identify opportunities for future improvements.

Public Involvement Summary

The highest priorities of the Bexar County parks system identified by existing and potential park users are to:

1. provide improvements/maintenance of existing parks and indoor recreation facilities;
2. provide more indoor recreation facilities;
3. expand the existing park system through the acquisition of additional park lands and natural areas;

3.5 Resource-Based Assessment

Resource-based analysis defines how resources found within the planning area can be utilized for open space, parks and recreation facilities. The availability of resacas and the proximity of conservation areas that are home to or in the migration pattern of bird species and unique wildlife can be used as an asset to the City of Brownsville Park System. This plan recommends providing linkages to these resources to serve as wildlife corridors, as well as the acquisition of land adjacent to resacas to provide accessible open space for passive recreation. Additionally, the plan strongly suggests incorporating educational and interpretative components to existing city park system and future park acquisitions that relate the significance of these conservation areas found within the City of Brownsville. This plan also encourages that a north-south linkage be made by completing the Historic Battlefield Trail, this corridor if completed would not only link City of Brownsville Parks, but would provide linkage to several historic places located in the city.

PART TWO

Chapter IV: Goals, Action Plan & Parks Evaluation

4.1 Goals & Action Plan

The community's vision for the City of Brownsville's parks and open space system includes parks, natural areas, and linear greenways that provide safe places for active and passive recreation and community gathering while enhancing the quality of life for its residents.

Based on community input received via user surveys, stakeholder interviews, and public meetings, goals were established for the Open Space Master Plan. This plan lists action items that will aid in achieving these goals. Additionally, these goals and action items determined the recommended improvements listed in Table ES-1 (page E-5). The Parks Department will need to revisit and utilize these goals & action items to evaluate the park system on a regular basis to ensure that these goals are being fulfilled throughout the master plan period of 2008-2010.

GOAL #1: Provide proper maintenance of existing parks and facilities.

ACTIONS:

- Confirm inventory of facilities in each park.
- Evaluate facilities based on 0-3 strategy defined within the Master Plan, [see page XXX](#).
- Prepare prioritized list of parks in which facilities need to be replaced, repaired and/or purchased as determined by the 0-3 strategy, focusing on safety concerns as the highest priority.
- Determine current maintenance mode at each park (at which maintenance mode each park is currently maintained according to the modes as described in this master plan).
- Evaluate maintenance level proposed for each park, elevate levels if indicated by public and so desired (politically) based on revenue and human resources available.
- Review budget analysis and funding strategy/source data, select strategies - "pay as go" -- to increase dollars for maintenance.
- Conduct a public process to determine "willingness to pay" related to increased fees and permit charges. Focus new fees and/or permit charges on highest profile park facilities.
- Remove graffiti promptly. According to recent studies, there's nearly a zero recurrence rate when graffiti is removed within 48 hours, as opposed to nearly

a 100 percent recurrence when graffiti remains for two weeks or longer
(Recreation Management, August 2007)

GOAL #2: Generally determine which facilities/parks are in need of renovations or upgrades.

ACTIONS:

- Confirm inventory of facilities in each park.
- Evaluate facilities based on 0-3 strategy defined within the Master Plan, see page 28.
- Prepare prioritized list of parks in which facilities need to be replaced, repaired and/or purchased as determined by the 0-3 strategy, focusing on safety concerns as the highest priority.
- Allocate funds to upgrade parks based on their 0-3 strategy rating - lower scoring parks should receive priority upgrade attention.
- Determine current maintenance mode at each park (at which maintenance mode each park is currently maintained according to the modes as described in this master plan).
- Evaluate maintenance level proposed for each park, elevate levels if indicated by public and so desired (politically) based on revenue and human resources available.

GOAL #3: Enhance safety in existing parks, for instance, by clearing understory, increasing lighting, and providing patrol to increase usability. Equip existing and new parks with facilities and play equipment that meet current safety standards.

ACTIONS:

- Confirm inventory of facilities in each park.
- Evaluate facilities based on 0-3 strategy defined within the Master Plan, see page 28.
- Prepare prioritized list of parks in which facilities need to be replaced, repaired and/or purchased as determined by the 0-3 strategy, focusing on safety concerns as the highest priority.
- Determine current maintenance mode at each park (at which maintenance mode each park is currently maintained according to the modes as described in this master plan).
- Evaluate maintenance level proposed for each park, elevate levels if indicated by public and so desired (politically) based on revenue and human resources available.
- Immediately remove unsafe play equipment or facilities. Such equipment can be replaced as determined in item 2, above.
- Expose or eliminate secluded/hiding areas which may invite unwanted behavior.

- Use rangers as is allowed by budget to enforce park rules.
- Regularly review your relationship with law enforcement to ensure appropriate parks and trails are patrolled as needed. Meet on a regular basis with neighborhoods (“eyes on the park”) and relevant law enforcement patrols to record and remedy areas subject to high levels of vandalism and/or crime
- Have facilities to active recreation in all parks to keep park attendance high and therefore diminish the potential for vandalism and/or criminal activity.
- Upgrade restroom facilities to attract families.

GOAL #4: Encourage efficient use of existing and new parks and facilities through smart facility placement and programming to encourage a variety of positive uses.

ACTIONS:

- Eliminate duplication of services within close proximities unless user demand supports the duplication.
- Place recreation facilities in consolidated groups to take advantage of shared parking and support facilities.
- Offer a variety of recreation opportunities at each park.
- Utilize existing community parks to accommodate facility deficits as appropriate. Do not sacrifice existing natural areas or unique site features (which can be utilized for passive recreation opportunities) for active recreation facilities.
- Evaluate the potential for facility expansion at Morningside Park.
- Manage parks for best turf practices; send league play around to regional parks, community parks and school parks.
- Let worn play fields rest for one to two years - restrict access of any kind.
- Encourage leagues to conduct practice play on walk-on fields in community and neighborhood parks.
- Encourage stewardship of play areas by league members, neighborhoods, families. Support your maintenance program through “adopt a facility” activities (entities purchase maintenance services on behalf of the city).
- “Gang” active program elements/support program (fields and parking; picnic tables and children’s play areas) to concentrate high traffic use in select areas.
- Develop zone efficiencies where possible; train staff to manage particular facilities, assign the trained staff throughout the system to those facilities to capitalize on their special skills.
- Manage use of park roads through strategic closures and extensive park trails.

GOAL #5: Develop a maintenance program to educate staff on necessary levels of maintenance for various park types. (based on the NRPA maintenance classification system)

ACTIONS:

- Develop maintenance standards based on levels in Master Plan.
- Introduce staff to zone maintenance and its relationship to relevant maintenance levels as defined in this master plan, and its benefits. Assign staff strategically - after training - to zones appropriate for their skill levels.
- Develop a maintenance map to indicate levels of maintenance extant throughout system. Train staff to use Maintenance Checklist and use staff meetings to get progress reports on status of parks maintenance.
- Purchase and train staff to use maintenance software, which would automate all of the record keeping and facilitate preparation of subsequent plans.

GOAL #6: Revise the parkland dedication ordinance that reflects the level of service goals as developed in this plan.

ACTIONS:

- The current Parkland Dedication Ordinance will provide neighborhood parks in future developments at the rate of roughly 2.5 acres per 1,000 people, based on 2006 estimates of household size by the US Census Bureau and an assumed average lot size of 7,200 s.f. This number is consistent with the recommended Level of Service for Neighborhood Parks. This number does not account for the accrual of community or regional parks.
- The current Parkland Dedication Ordinance should be updated to specifically designate a park land dedication amount based on the number of dwelling units in a development.
 - The current ordinance does not take population DENSITY into account, and the same 5-acre park in a 100-acre development could be expected to serve between 75 and 2,800 people, depending on lot sizes ranging from 5-acre lots to 1/8-acre lots.
 - To accomplish the goal of having 2.5 acres of neighborhood park land per 1,000 people (utilizing the US Census Bureau's 2006 estimate of a 3.53-person average household size, there are 283 dwelling units per 1,000 people), the parkland dedication ordinance should require 0.01 acre of park land per dwelling unit in a proposed development.
 - As examples, for a 100-acre development of 1/4-acre lots (and 1,412 people), this translates into 4 acres of park land. For a 100-acre development of 1/8-acre lots (and 2,824 people), this translates into 8 acres of park land. Each example serves the same number of people per acre of park land.

- The Parkland Dedication Ordinance should be revisited a minimum of every 10 years to update park requirements as new estimates of average household size become available via US Census.
- o Establish a minimum land dedication requirement, for example 5 acres, and require cash in-lieu of land for those developments that yield less than the dedication requirement. The cash in-lieu fee should be equivalent to the fair market value of the required land per dwelling unit calculation. For example, if 3.5 acres are required per the 0.01 acre per dwelling unit requirement, then the fair market value of 3.5 acres comprises the in-lieu fee required. In addition, the cash in-lieu requirement eliminates the minimum development acreage (currently 100 acres) that is subject to the ordinance and requires all new residential developments to comply with the ordinance, either by land or cash in-lieu fees.
- o The Parks Department should consider additional developer impact fees if it desires to obtain funds for future community parks via a parkland dedication ordinance.

GOAL #7: Furnish parks with low maintenance equipment, facilities, and landscape that will remain attractive with less upkeep.

ACTIONS:

- o Confirm inventory of facilities in each park.
- o Evaluate facilities based on 0-3 strategy defined within the Master Plan, see page 28.
- o Prepare prioritized list of parks in which facilities need to be replaced, repaired and/or purchased as determined by the 0-3 strategy, focusing on safety concerns as the highest priority.
- o Determine current maintenance mode at each park (at which maintenance mode each park is currently maintained according to the modes as described in this master plan).
- o Evaluate maintenance level proposed for each park, elevate levels if indicated by public and so desired (politically) based on revenue and human resources available.
- o Review budget analysis and funding strategy/source data, select strategies - "pay as go" -- to increase dollars for maintenance.
- o Utilize native plant materials that require less irrigation and maintenance.

GOAL #8: Provide connectivity between parks, facilities, neighborhoods, and schools.

ACTIONS:

- Acquire land along resacas for open space or parks
- Direct the location of dedicated park space to strategically connect to additional developments, schools, or other parks with minimal further acquisitions necessary.
- Use tools for trails maintenance that are used for parks maintenance.

GOAL #9: Raise profile of parks system to become a notable feature of the regional tourism infrastructure.

ACTIONS:

- Using the resources mentioned in the master plan, develop relationships with the management of local and regional tourism resources. Share your master plan with those organizations, ask for their master plans.
- Determine visitorship at the respective facilities, share relevant ideas and share promotional strategies; cooperative on high cost strategies.
- Perform tourism infrastructure inventory - where do people stay, eat and have fun -- similar to the parks inventory performed for the master plan. Understand the opportunities and constraints within the tourism infrastructure system and where Brownsville Parks is and is not served. Work with the local economic development office to determine future plans for underserved areas.
- Contact offices of tourism at the state and local level and the Hotel/Motel/Restaurant Associations to look for adjacencies and potential for partnerships.
- Prepare promotional maps for distribution within the tourism system; update your website with colorful graphics, a description of facilities within the parks, a description of adjacent features, directions on getting to parks and connections to other parks in the system (when relevant).
- Lincoln Park should have a significant open space component to complement the linkage of open space by national wildlife refuges.

GOAL #10: Provide adequate park service to all citizens of Brownsville based on the recommendations of this plan.

ACTIONS:

- The current Parkland Dedication Ordinance should provide for neighborhood parks in new developments at the rate of approximately 2.5 acres per 1,000 people, based on 2006 population density estimates.
- Utilize capital funds to acquire land for neighborhood parks in the service area gaps of existing development areas to serve the current population.

- Assess vacant lot sites in developed area for the suitability of infill neighborhood parks.
- Provide parks in park deficit areas (see Deficit Area maps by specific park type).
- Neighborhood parks infill is needed in all areas of town, even when assuming that community parks meet the neighborhood park needs of its neighbors within ½ mile of it.
- Increase the size of future neighborhood parks to 10 acres to accommodate additional facilities.
- Neighborhood parks should contain playgrounds, practice fields, court sports, internal trails, and occasional game fields.
- Community parks should contain game fields, natural areas, playgrounds, internal trails, as well as regional network connections.

4.2 Parks Evaluation Strategy

An Existing Conditions Parks Evaluation Strategy (also referred to as the 0-3 strategy) was utilized in assessing the condition of individual parks, rating them, and determining priorities for park improvements recommended under this plan. Goals #1, 2, 3, and 7 each refer to this strategy as well as Maintenance Mode determinants.

The following table was developed reflecting an assignment of general 0-3 ratings (existing and desired) as well as existing and desired maintenance modes for each existing park in the City of Brownsville's park system. It assigns a current 0-3 rating (3 being the best rating of existing park facilities and 0 being the worst) as well as a desired 0-3 rating for each park - meaning what rating the park should achieve once funding for upgrades is available (Refer to Appendix X for a detailed description of rating). Additionally, this table assigns a current maintenance mode to each park, defining in general the level of maintenance achieved at each site and a desired maintenance mode for each park. The National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) defines six modes of maintenance, with Level 1 being state-of-the-art maintenance and Level 6 being minimally-maintained natural or undeveloped areas (See Maintenance Section on page XX).

The evaluation of each park and its coinciding facilities guided the recommendations contained within this plan and those parks with the lowest rating were clearly included under the park improvement section of this plan.

City of Brownsville Parks Evaluation

City of Brownsville Parks Master Plan

	Developed Park (Y/N)	CURRENT 0-3 Rating	DESIRED 0-3 Rating	CURRENT Maintenance Mode	DESIRED Maintenance Mode	Address	Acreage
Regional Parks (100 acres+)							
Historic Battlefield Trail	Y	3	3	5	4		220.0
Brownsville Country Club Golf Course	Y	3	3	2	1	1800 W. San Marcelo Blvd.	100.0
Brownsville Sports Park	Y	3	3	2	2	1000 Merryman Road	168.0
Community Parks (over 20 acres)							
Alton Gloor Park (undeveloped)	N	n/a	3	6	6/3		100.0
Antonio Gonzalez Park	Y	2	3	3	3	24 Tony Gonzalez Dr.	20.7
Central Parkway	Y	2	3	4	3	2750 FM 802	55.0
Dean Porter Park	Y	3	3	2	2	501 E. Ringgold Street	25.0
Joe & Tony Oliveira Park	Y	3	3	3	3	104 El Paso Road	25.0
Lincoln Park	Y	3	3	3	2	2100 East Loop	48.0
Morningside Park	Y	3	3	3	2	1207 S Central Ave.	42.0
North Brownsville Park & Tennis Center	Y	3	3	3	3	#1 Special Events Ctr.	23.0
North Brownsville Kickball Fields	Y	3	3	3	2	FM 511	21.5
Trail of Texas Trees Park	Y	3	3	3	3	2750 FM 802	14.0
Neighborhood Parks (5-20 acres)							
Chachalaca Park	Y	3	3	3	3	Bumet Road	16.0
North Brownsville Little League Park	Y	2	3	3	3	Iowa Road	5.0
Portway Acres Park	Y	2	3	4	3	4775 Austin Road	3.0
Riverside Park	Y	1	3	5	3	15 Riverside Blvd.	5.0
Windwood Park	Y	3	3	3	3	420 Trailwind Way	4.0
Mini-Parks (under 5 acres)							
Central Avenue Park	Y	2	3	4	3	25 N. Central Avenue	0.7
Edelstein Park	Y	2	3	4	3	1159 E. Polk Street	0.8
Garfield Park	Y	2	3	4	3	171 Garfield Street	0.7
La Lomita/Galaxia Park	Y	1	3	5	3	1501 Calle Espacio	1.5
La Mancha Park (undeveloped)	N	n/a	3	6	6/3		1.0
Rosa Allala Park	Y	1	3	5	3	309 North Park Drive	0.3
Ruiz Park	Y	1	3	5	3	2550 Ruiz Street	0.3
St. Charles Park	Y	3	3	2	2	350 E. St. Charles St.	1.0
Sunrise Rotary Park	Y	2	3	3	3	1245 Palm Boulevard	2.0
Veterans Memorial Park *	Y	3	3	3	3	Central and Wild Rose	2.5
Washington Park	Y	2	3	3	3	700 E. Madison Street	3.8
West Brownsville Little League Park	Y	2	3	3	3	1295 Cottonwood Dr.	2.0
Special Facilities							
Alice Wilson Hope Park	Y	2	3	2	2	1300 E. Levee	1.3
Gladys Porter Zoo	Y	3	3	1	1	500 Ringgold St.	26.0
Southern Pacific Linear Park	Y	3	3	3	3	Harrison Rd & 6th	6.0

Chapter V: Proposed Implementation

Recommendations for improvements to the City of Brownsville parks system were developed based on the city's goals and objectives, existing and forecasted park LOS, identified user and stakeholder needs and priorities, and the availability of significant natural and cultural features within the city. If implemented, these improvements would serve to maintain the existing City of Brownsville investments, upgrade existing facilities to current standards, and accommodate future demand. These recommendations are divided into the following categories: 1) existing park improvements & relocation; 2) new acquisitions 3) operations and maintenance.

5.1 Existing Park Improvements & Relocations

- Complete improvements necessary to make all parks ADA Accessible, including play equipment upgrades, provide turf and/or native grasses and irrigation to all parks
- Remove graffiti, add lighting and provide shade to Riverside, La Lomita/Galaxia, Rosa Allala and Ruiz Parks;
- Develop Alton Gloor Park as a Citywide Park retaining natural characteristics for passive recreation, incorporate educational & interpretative component
- Preserve natural undeveloped area of Lincoln Park and incorporate linkage to the Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge, incorporate educational & interpretative component
- Open view of Resaca at Morningside Park, incorporate educational & interpretative component
- Completion of paved trail along Historic Battlefield Trail to provide North - South linkage between existing City of Brownsville parks and the Palo Alto Battlefield National Historic Site, incorporate educational & interpretative component
- Remove fences at Riverside Park, Central Avenue Park and Lincoln Park
- Provide field expansion to Chachalaca Parks and Morning Side Park
- Add additional large pavilions for rental at Dean Porter and Oliveira Parks
- Renovate or upgrade recreation centers at Oliveira & Gonzalez Parks

- Relocate Parks & Recreation Headquarters to permanent structure at the centrally located Tennis Center which is in proximity to trails.
- Relocate Parks & Recreation Maintenance Operation to Brownsville Public Utilities Board Maintenance Location

5.2 New Park Acquisition

Open space can include agricultural or range land, lakes, reservoirs, playa shorelines; resaca corridors and/or extensive wooded areas along riparian corridors and/or buffer areas to sanctuaries or preservation areas among other developed green areas. Although it might be hard to imagine those open spaces ever disappearing, open lands could disappear, however, almost without warning if local growth pushes unabated onto those parcels for residential or commercial development. This plan begins to lay the groundwork to identify and preserve appropriate parcels of land for the benefit of future generations.

The first step was to identify the types of land worth preserving, such as areas abutting Federal and/or State facilities, areas of buffer between communities, wetlands, etc. Other significant lands to preserve include high points, utility corridors, ditch corridors and/or drainage ways. Those can be protected through a variety of strategies, including purchase of the land by the city, acquisition of conservation easements and/or imposition of zoning requirements. Future annexations by the city should consider the value of parcels of land within the annexation boundaries as appropriate for inclusion in the open space system. A connected system of open space parcels and corridors is preferred over a scattered "patchwork" of small parcels.

Multi-use riparian corridors, corridors along resacas, on-street trails, park trails, etc. can (respectively) contain a portion of and be linked to a developing regional trail system used for recreation and/or commuting, be important *wildlife habitat and travel corridors* and provide flood control. Regional trails with pedestrian, bicycle and equestrian access ultimately can connect the City to other regional facilities and can connect the extant city facilities to provide enhanced beneficial use of the system.

The uses along riparian corridors can vary from recreational activities along a regional trail to passive activities related to education and interpretation of the corridor's rich natural and cultural heritage. A regional trail can accommodate equestrians, bicyclists, in-line skaters, skateboarders and pedestrians. A trail can also have *trail waysides, trailhead* parking areas and special activity areas. Corridor trails can also serve a flood control and/or storm water conveyance purpose for the City within the parks and open space system.

Selections for potential new park locations considered several criteria, including; 1) the availability of developable acres; 2) LOS based on existing park distribution and projected population estimates; 3) compatibility with the MPO Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan; 4) compatibility with other open space projects; and 5) presence of significant natural & cultural resources

Table x. Park Acquisition Evaluation Matrix

Park ID	Acres	Available Open Space	Contributes to Recommended LOS	Contributes to a Connected System	Adjacency to 100-year Floodplain	Significant Natural/Cultural Features
Site A		◆	◆	◆		◆
Site B		◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Site C		◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Site D		◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Site E		◆	◆	◆		◆
Site F		◆	◆	◆		◆
Site G		◆	◆	◆		◆
Site H		◆	◆	◆		◆
Site I		◆	◆	◆		◆
Site J		◆	◆	◆		◆
Site K		◆	◆	◆		◆
Site L		◆	◆	◆		◆
Site M		◆	◆	◆		◆
Site N		◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Site O		◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Site P		◆	◆	◆	◆	◆

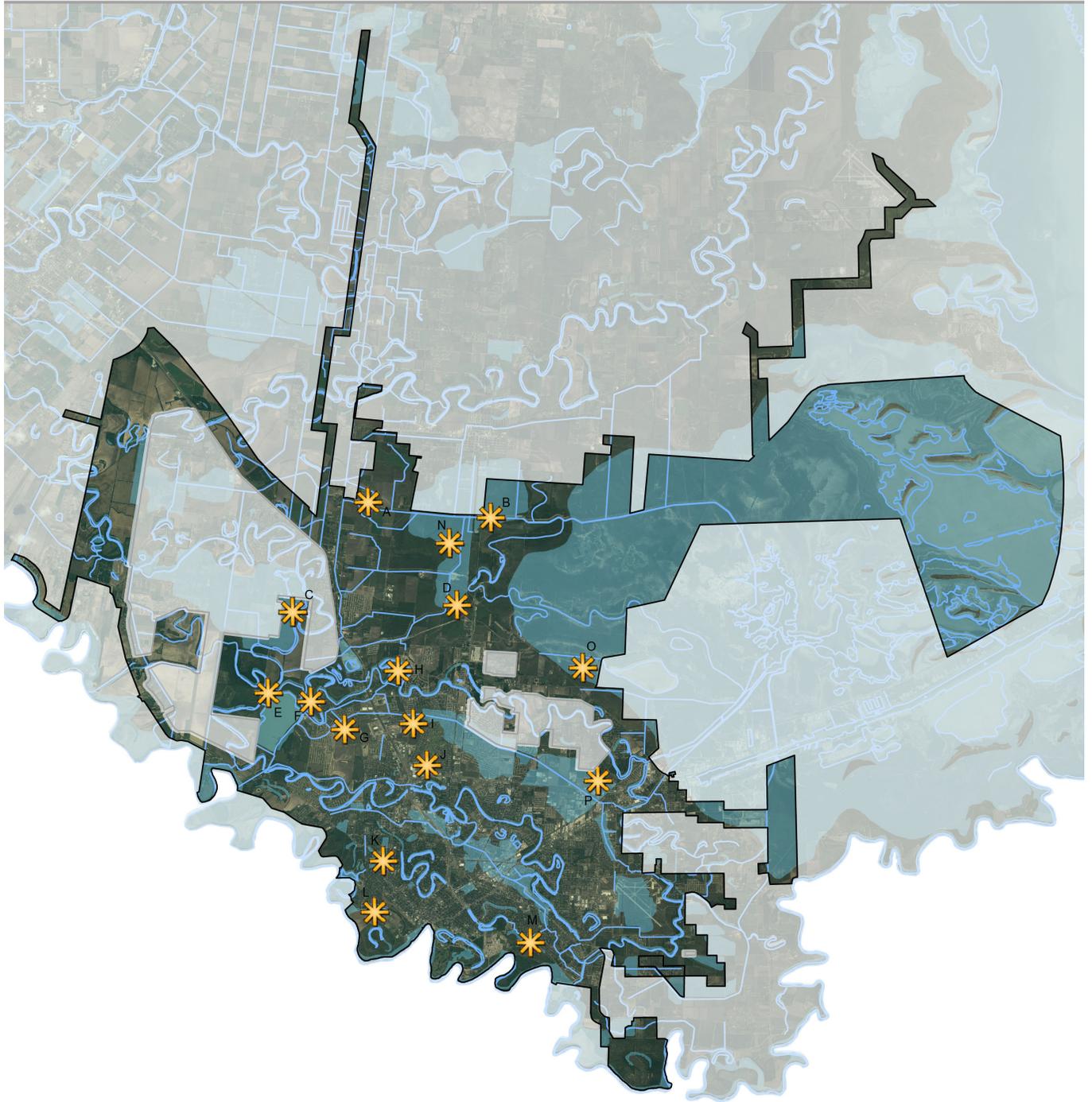
This land Acquisition should help:

- Provide additional park acreage in growth areas of the city for the construction of a second Sports Park to accommodate game field deficits
- Acquire park acreage for preservation of significant environmental areas along resacas and Lower Rio Grande Valley to provide East-West connectivity
- Acquire additional park acreage to provide adequate level of service for neighborhood and community parks by 2018.

BROWNSVILLE PARKS & OPEN SPACE MASTER PLAN



O n t h e b o r d e r b y t h e s e a



Potential Park Sites

City of Brownsville Parks and Open Space Master Plan, 2008-2018: Project List and Budgets

Proposed Park Acquisitions

Name	Park Type	Acres	Description	2008 Estimated Development Cost*
Site A	Community Park	100	New acquisition	\$3.5 Million
Site B	Community Park	100	New acquisition	\$3.5 Million
Site C	Community Park	100	New acquisition	\$3.5 Million
Site D	Community Park	100	New acquisition	\$3.5 Million
Site E	Community Park	60	New acquisition	\$2.1 Million
Site F	Community Park	69	New acquisition	\$2.4 Million
Site G	Neighborhood Park	20	New acquisition	\$1.4 Million
Site H	Community Park	85	New acquisition	\$2.98 Million
Site I	Neighborhood Park	20	New acquisition	\$1.4 Million
Site J	Neighborhood Park	20	New acquisition	\$1.4 Million
Site K	Neighborhood Park	20	New acquisition	\$1.4 Million
Site L	Neighborhood Park	20	New acquisition	\$1.4 Million
Site M	City Park	66	New acquisition	\$2.77 Million
Site N	Community Park	100	New acquisition	\$3.5 Million
Site O	Neighborhood Park	20	New acquisition	\$1.4 Million
Site P	Neighborhood Park	20	New acquisition	\$1.4 Million
Total		920		\$37.55 Million

Existing Park Improvements

Name	Park Type	Acres	Description
Accessibility Upgrades	All		Complete improvement for ADA compliance
Riverside Park	Neighborhood Park	5	Remove graffiti, add lighting & shade
La Lomita/Galaxia Park	Mini-Park	1.5	Remove graffiti, add lighting & shade
Rosa Allala Park	Mini-Park	0.3	Remove graffiti, add lighting & shade
Ruiz Park	Mini-Park	0.3	Remove graffiti, add lighting & shade
Alton Gloor Park	City Park	100	Develop outdoor recreation facilities
Lincoln Park	Community Park	48	Remove fence, provide link to LRGV, develop educational/interpretative component
Morningside Park	Community Park	42	Open view of resaca, expand fields, incorporate educational/interpretative component
Historic Battlefield Trail	Trail	7.5 miles	Develop paved trail, incorporate educational/interpretative component
Central Avenue Park	Mini-Park	0.7	Remove fence
Riverside Park	Neighborhood Park	5	Remove fence
Chachalaca Park	Neighborhood Park	16	Expand fields
Joe & Tony Oliveira Park	Community Park	25	Rehabilitate recreation center, add rental pavilions
Antonio Gonzalez Park	Community Park	21	Rehabilitate recreation center
Dean Porter Park	City Park	25	Add rental pavilions
Parks & Recreation Dept. Office	Office		Construct new permanent structure
Parks & Recreation Maint. Office	Office		Relocate maintenance office

TOTAL

*Note:

Park development costs - \$70,000 per acre

Nature preserve- Developed at 10% of available acreage

Community Park - Developed at 50% of available acreage

City Park - Developed at 60% of available acreage

Neighborhood Park - Developed at 100% of available acreage

5.3 Park System Maintenance & Operations

The NRPA lists six maintenance modes for parks and open space in the 1986 report. The modes range from one to six, with one being the most intensive maintenance plan, and six being the least intensive. A definition for each mode is provided below.

Mode I: State of the art maintenance applied to a high quality diverse landscape. Usually associated with high traffic urban areas such as public squares, malls, governmental grounds or visitation parks;

Mode II: High level maintenance; associated with well developed park areas with reasonably high visitation;

Mode III: Moderate level maintenance; associated with locations with moderate to low levels of development, moderate to low levels of visitation, or agencies that due to budget constraints can not afford more intense maintenance;

Mode IV: Moderately low level; usually associated with a low rate of development, low visitation, undeveloped areas, or remote parks;

Mode V: High visitation natural areas; usually associated with large urban or regional parks. Size and user frequency may dictate resident maintenance staff. Road, pathway or trail systems relatively well developed. Other facilities at strategic locations such as entries, trail heads, building complexes and parking lots; and

Mode VI: Minimum maintenance level; low visitation natural areas or large urban parks that remain undeveloped.

Based on current park acreages and usage trends, the City of Brownsville would benefit from a Mode 3 maintenance plan for the majority of the parks system, a Mode 2 maintenance plan would be appropriate for higher use parks, including the Brownville Sports Park, Dean Porter, and Lincoln Park (For Complete Maintenance Mode Recommendations refer to 3.2 Parks Evaluation Table).

Community input is overwhelmingly related to inadequate maintenance, security (lack of lighting and patrol, amount of vandalism), and general cleanup that is needed to existing parks and facilities. While general park maintenance has improved over the past five years, it continues to be a need expressed by the community.

Depressed parks and facilities, such as Riverside, La Lomita/Galaxia, Rosa Allala and Ruiz Parks do not evoke a sense of pride by their users or neighbors. Residents are

not likely to support new parks projects in their communities if they feel that parks will not be maintained and in turn will become an eyesore or attract illicit activity.

According to the American Planning Association's City Parks Forum Briefing Paper 04: How Cities Use Parks to Create Safer Neighborhoods, "barren spaces are more frightening to people and are more crime prone than parks landscaped with greenery and open vistas." The paper references studies that have found that the greener the surroundings, the fewer crimes occurred against people and property. Furthermore, the paper states, "...urban residents who live in green surroundings experience fewer quality-of-life crimes such as littering and graffiti..." The proper addition of landscape to parks, such as grass, low-growing shrubs, and wide spacing of canopy trees allows users to feel safe by maintaining open views and eliminating "hiding places" while providing an aesthetic upgrade as well as offering shade, a vital asset to parks in warm climates.

In addition, a well-maintained park is more likely to gain the support of neighbors and attract users. As a result, undesirable activities that may have formerly taken place within the park will subside with increased recreational use.

Suggested solutions include:

- Create an adopt-a-park program to aid in trash pickup and create a sense of community ownership.
- Utilize lower maintenance landscape materials; this does not mean gravel and concrete!
- Initiate tree planting programs; make the programs educational in nature (native trees of Texas, native trees of the Lower Rio Grande Valley, trees of the South, etc.) to enlist the support and involvement of schools, scouts, etc.
- Discontinue the construction of mini parks. This is a maintenance drain. They take a disproportional amount of time to maintain per acre as compared to larger neighborhood and community parks. At the same time, they generally contain fewer program elements (facilities) that attract use. Consider the closure of mini-parks situated in inappropriate locations (in the middle of roads, for example)
- Consider private maintenance agreements. Selective use of this arrangement by trusted contractors can lessen the burden on city staff.
- Consider privatization of select facilities within a park to free up operational dollars for maintenance.

The following matrix shows general estimates of anticipated site maintenance costs for the park and open space and trails system. The costs are itemized by variety of parcel and are presented in a total cost per acre of land format from the lowest levels of maintenance to the highest levels of maintenance. (Higher costs include maintenance for simple comfort facilities) These costs were established by comparison with similar park and open space systems. Costs include only maintenance of standard outdoor facilities and should serve as general guidelines only. Costs should be tracked to understand specific local conditions. Maintenance for aquatics facilities, recreation/activity centers or other special facilities are not included. This matrix does not account for capital improvement expenditures.

Table X. Prototypic Per Acre Maintenance Costs

Facility	Acres	Estimated Maintenance Cost/Acre/Year	Total
Natural Area (ungroomed)		\$900	
Outdoor Environmental education site (not structure)		\$5,225	
Wildlife Habitat (ungroomed)		\$900	
Other Open Space		\$900	
Neighborhood or Community Park (groomed)		\$5,225 - \$22,000	
Regional Park (groomed)		\$5,225 - \$22,000	
Riparian Corridors (no trail)		\$900	
Riparian Corridor (with trail)		\$1,275 (per 1,000 lf)	
Equestrian Trails		\$1,275 (per 1,000 lf)	
Athletic/Multi-Use Complex		\$5,225 - \$22,000	
Golf Course		\$5,225 - \$22,000	
Outdoor Natural Amphitheatre no services/utilities		\$5,225 - \$22,000	

Chapter VI: Funding

6.1 Current Operating Budget Overview

This section offers an overview of the budget context in which the City operates. The opportunities and constraints of current budgeting practices can give the parks and recreation managers a preliminary basis for making choices about funding strategies and/or sources.

The FY 2005-2007 operating budget for various divisions under the Parks & Recreation Department for the city of Brownsville is:

	<u>Budget FY 2005</u>	<u>Budget FY 2006</u>	<u>Budget FY 2007</u>
GENERAL FUND			
510 Parks & Rec. Admin.	\$176,469	\$181,912	\$190,447
511 Recreation	\$308,095	\$315,542	\$445,863
512 Parks	\$1,815,283	\$1,955,946	\$2,181,997
513 Swimming Pools	\$415,876	\$544,912	\$590,914
515 Civic Pavilion	\$223,958	\$317,728	\$344,938
EVENTS CENTER			
516 Events Center	\$493,490	\$554,529	\$605,195
BROWNSVILLE GOLF CENTER			
505 BGC Admin	\$166,918	\$171,069	\$206,498
506 BGC Golf	\$327,832	\$478,287	\$539,369
507 BGC Food & Beverages	\$43,002	\$44,510	\$46,575
508 BGC Pro Shop	\$49,001	\$63,473	\$65,186

Managerial Reporting

The City of Brownsville uses several tax sources; the city is only able to increase the ad valorem (sales and use taxes) to State Statute allowed maximums. Property tax, however, has been a valuable revenue stream to the city as its growth has helped improve the bond rating of the city over the past seven years.

Additionally, budgets have cited strong revenue growth and cost controls. It is more likely that bond ratings for the city are affected by regional growth due to North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and cost cutting used by the city has been the main tool by which bond rating has remained stable over the past few years.

As it is now, there is a disclosure problem that is eliminated only by discounting the bond pro forma to a longer term or by anticipating new financing to reallocate budget priorities: both of those discounting procedures could be unfavorable to the city due to lower bond ratings or an inability to raise funds in a time of need. Culture and Recreation fees generate less than \$200K in revenue for the city.

As it is now, the budgets for existing parks have been relatively static over the last few years and any changes or value added revenues brought in to the city are lost in the general fund. Park maintenance and upkeep should stay in the general budget in order to keep those functions on par with other citywide routine services. Parks and Recreation budgets should be broken in to greater detail in the general budget and compared, periodically, on a park by park basis to consider effectiveness of resource allocation. As it is now, the city is making decisions about parks using metrics that give equal weight to all amenities and all parks, which may not hold equal preference to users or their constituency as a whole. Those parks should be examined to see if citizen usage and tourist usage warrant improvements to be more relevant to the City parks system.

The recommendations of this plan include:

- A discussion of future (next five years) spending and revenue sources that impact bond repayment would give greater control and credibility to bond pro forma.
- Anticipated and foreseeable future spending needs should be disclosed when a budget is prepared. Estimates, no matter how simple, need to be included in the analysis.
- Problems could arise if the general fund shortfalls since it is used for deficits in any of the other funds within the budget, this should be mitigated if one fund did strategic planning for overall growth and development.
- Transit, transportation, and economic development funds should be rolled into one fund in order to capitalize on synergistic planning and funds

- The transit fund is meant to serve existing residents, but if proper planning were used it could help drive overall growth.
- Market research
 - Should be employed at parks of varying size and amenity composition to determine how the parks are perceived and thus used.
 - Statistical analysis could be performed on survey results and/or existing financial results of a cost/benefit analysis of parks and facilities, to determine if city benefits from current budgeting practices.
 - A variety of survey methods - intercept, telephone, direct mail, web-based, e-mail, public meeting/charette, Etc. - could be used to engage users.
 - The type of survey method could be determined by how each method furthers the city's marketing, Public Relations, and public policy goals.

Finance & Accounting Reporting

All current bonds are expected to be retired within 20 years. Most bonds held by the city are expected to benefit from a stable bond rating, which has not changed much over the past two to three years - maintaining its relative strength.

Culture and Recreation spending is expected to increase by at least \$400K in the future. The more than \$8,500K reported as expenditures indicate that expenditures are used to zero out revenues and their contributing funds. The expenditure figure listed has increased a little more than seven percent. All the percentages listed in the budget document have no context as to their relative and absolute position. With the exception of fiscal years (FYs) 2003, 2004, and 2007 spending on Parks and Recreation has increased at a double digit rate.

More than \$8,500K in revenue comes from three funds: General Fund, Convention & Tourism, & Community Development. General fund expenditures for park and recreation show five new positions reported in the FY 2007 budget. Entrance fees provide a small portion of the associated costs of running parks. There are several small parks that receive funding on par with much larger parks. There is no data given to assess individual "performance" and/or value to furthering stated policy and fiscal goals. Park "performance" could be an evaluated, over time, comparing of resource consumption for maintenance (see inventory condition scoring section), vs. user preferences and satisfaction with the property.

The recommendations of this plan include:

- Data should be given to assess park performance and usefulness to furthering stated policy and fiscal goals.

- The Brownsville budget does a great job of explaining current policy implications and actions. The budget, however, needs to be audited and certified.
- If it is, currently, being audited and certified, said auditor's statement of verification needs to be included in the final budget draft.
- Brownsville needs to have a consolidated, as well as, a segmented format for individual office/department budget breakdown.
 - Politicians and management oversight should have the same clarified data presentation that department heads have.
 - Less budget request refusals would occur if identical data presentation was clear and meaningful across a wider array of decision-makers. Some offices already report using GAAP and GASB formats due to the nature of their function so city-wide formatting would have some type of baseline.
 - Departments needing less detail and organization could use their existing financial information formats for internal/managerial reporting and rely on aforementioned citywide/financial formatting to enable maximum effectiveness found when financial reporting is driven by the robust use of managerial and financial accounting in the private sector.

(this section developed by our sub, this is very confusing to me, please comment on the clarity & if it is of value to the plan?)

6.2 Funding Options

The vision for the City of Brownsville parks system requires an overall funding strategy that incorporates finance options for each park, trail, open space parcel, or recreation facility that comprises the system. The complete park funding plan would involve a combination of revenue sources, cost avoidance strategies, and efficient management to achieve the city's goals. Accordingly, several tools and funding sources that could be used to implement the proposed park improvements are identified below.

Ad Valorem Taxes: Ad valorem tax revenues (including sales and use, and property taxes) comprised over **XX** percent of the City's annual general fund revenue in FY 2005-2007. The City of Brownsville may choose to increase these taxes and earmark the additional funds to accomplish several of the proposed park improvements. While this would require voter approval, this finance method could generate substantial revenues for park improvements and help foster public support for the parks and open space initiatives.

Bonds: A bond is a debt security issued by a state, municipality or county in order to finance capital improvements. In typical bond structures, investors loan money to an entity for a defined period of time and interest rate. **In 200X, The City of**

Brownsville approved a \$XX.XX bond package to fund capital improvement projects in XXXX areas that included parks and recreation.

User Fees: These include direct fees (recreation fees, picnic pavilion fees, field rentals) that are charged for the provision of services or facility use. User fees are only collected from those who use a particular facility. User fees are successful in recouping some of the costs associated with operations, facility maintenance, and capital replacement.

Grants

o **Texas Recreation & Parks Grant:** TPWD through the Texas Recreation & Parks Account provides funding for recreational parks, trails and indoor recreational facilities. Up to a 50 percent match (or up to \$500,000) can be obtained for new park and trail facilities. Submissions are usually accepted in January and July of each year.

o **Recreational Trails Program Funds:** The current federal transportation funding legislation, SAFETEA-LU (Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: a Legacy for Users) authorizes and provides funding for the Recreational Trails Program (RTP). These funds are made available to state governments to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail-related facilities for both motorized and non-motorized recreational trail uses. RTP funds are administered by TPWD and awarded annually on a competitive basis to local governments.

o **Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF):** These monies are made available to federal, state and local governments through the Land and Water Conservation Act of 1965. The LWCF allows entities to purchase land, water and wetlands for the benefit of the public good. Funds are administered annually and may be made available for a 3-year period.

Public-Private Partnerships: Partnering with private entities would allow the county to access funding sources outside traditional tax revenues. Private partnerships are most viable when they involve high profile projects that are of interest to corporate entities and when a public entity has a well-established partnership policy. See Section 4: Related Economic Development Initiatives.

Public-Public Partnerships: Partnering with other departments or agencies would allow the county to access tax revenues from multiple budget sources to raise dollars necessary for capital expenses that might otherwise not be available at the scale needed by either of the individual entities entering into the partnership.

Have any capitol improvement plans been developed with County i.e. for flood control, some of these funds may not be an additional revenue source for parks planning, but they may offer opportunities for trail and open space development in parcels adjacent to area floodways. (need to discuss with Skip)

6.3 Related Economic Development Initiatives

Additional tools that are currently in use by the city which can be used to implement park improvements include tax increment reinvestment zones (TIRZ) and public infrastructure districts (PID).

Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones

Tax increment financing (TIF) is a tool that local governments can use to publicly finance needed structural improvements and enhance infrastructure within a defined area. These improvements usually are undertaken to promote the viability of existing businesses and to attract new commercial enterprises to the area. Under a TIF, the property owner pays taxes on the full value of the property, and the taxing entities pay into the TIF fund the taxes attributed to the added value of the land due to the new development. TIFs may be initiated only by a city. If a property is located outside of the city limits (within the city's extraterritorial jurisdiction or beyond), it is not eligible for tax increment financing unless annexed into the city.

A TIRZ is an area in which tax increment financing is being used to attract development or redevelopment. A TIRZ must meet set criteria for designation, including substandard or blighted conditions, open area due to obsolete platting or deterioration, or by petition of 50 percent of property owners in the district. Currently, there are **XX** active and **XX** pending TIRZs located within the city of Brownsville. (Need Data from Brownsville)

Public Improvement District

A PID is a financing method for making public street, water or sewer improvements to a neighborhood. Property owners who benefit from installation of the improvements pay for them through special assessments levied on their property. In addition to financing infrastructure improvements such as roadways, parking, and mass transit, PIDs can be used for the establishment or improvement of parks, recreation and cultural facilities. Currently, there are **X** active and **X** planned PIDs within the city.

(We need data to shows the location of TIRZs and PIDs in the city, have contacted Alfonso Vallejo)

The city could achieve several of its parks and open space goals through the current TIRZ and PID programs. While the city has achieved some of these goals without these tools, it is recommended that existing TIRZ and PID policy be amended to include specific requirements for parks and open space.



BROWNSVILLE PARKS & OPEN SPACE MASTER PLAN



O n t h e b o r d e r b y t h e S e a

APPENDICES

**City of Brownsville Parks and Recreation
Master Plan
Memorandum**

To: City of Brownsville Parks and Recreation Master Plan Stakeholders
From: City of Brownsville Parks and Recreation Department
CC: Emilie C. Ailts, Marketing Support
Date: 2/5/2008
Re: Preliminary data gathering/ Stakeholder questionnaire

The City of Brownsville Parks and Recreation Department has contracted with HNTB of San Antonio, TX, to produce a Master Plan for its Parks and Recreation facilities. At this point of the process we will be conducting a user survey and preliminary needs assessment for the system. The first step to developing an appropriate user survey is to gather information from informed community members.

You have been selected to participate in a preliminary survey to provide relevant information from which the user survey will be prepared. We are seeking information from you about: your interest in parks and recreation, your use of the parks, your insight into park opportunities or constraints, your perspective on the future of parks and recreation in the city, and your current/prospective role in decision-making about parks and recreation. We would appreciate a moment of your time to complete the enclosed questionnaire to help us with that effort. All responses will be held in strict confidence. The Department of Parks and Recreation of the City of Brownsville will see only a summary report on the results of this survey. Please be candid in your responses.

Please return the questionnaire in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope within **one** week of receiving it and no later than **date** to our consultant:

Emilie C. Ailts
Marketing Support
401 S. Gaylord St
Denver, CO 80209.

Please feel free to call Emilie with questions about the questionnaire, if you have them: (303) 777-2325.
Thank you for your time and your swift response.

**City of Brownsville Parks and Recreation MASTER PLAN
STAKEHOLDER QUESTIONNAIRE (Please print)**

Name/Occupation _____.

Address, phone _____.

FAX, e-mail _____.

1. How would you describe your interest/involvement in parks and recreation development/planning in the City of Brownsville? (circle all relevant)

Athletic club/group representative
Community Activist
Educator
Equestrian/horseback riding enthusiast
Funding contact
Garden Club member/enthusiast
Historian
Interested/involved citizen
Local businessperson
Naturalist/environmentalist/passive recreation expert
Parks Department employee
Park neighbor
Park user
Park volunteer
Policy-maker
Recreation expert
Sports league representative
Other, please specify
NA

2. Would you name any individuals or community representatives who might want to participate in the process to develop a Master Plan for the City of Brownsville Parks & Recreation? Please list their name, their affiliation and list relevant contact information. (name, address, phone, e-mail)

3. Are you or is your organization, involved in any current or pending studies or initiatives that the planning team may need to know of as they develop the Master Plan for City of Brownsville parks and recreation facilities?

Yes, I will get a copy for you (please make sure your phone number is included)
No
Don't Know
NA

4. Do you visit City of Brownsville parks/recreation facilities? (circle one)

Yes
No
Don't Know
NA

5. If yes, which three City of Brownsville parks or recreation facilities have you visited **most frequently** in the past two years? (circle up to three, but no more than three)

Dean Porter Park

La Mancha Park

Antonio Gonzalez Park
 Lincoln Park
 Morningside Park
 Joe & Tony Oliveira Park
 North Brownsville Park
 Historic Battlefield Trail
 Central Avenue Park
 Chachalaca Park
 Edelstein Park
 Garfield Park
 Alice Wilson Hope Park
 La Lomita/Galaxia Park
 Haven't visited
 Other (please name or describe location)
 Don't Know
 NA

Portway Acres Park
 Riverside Park
 Rosa Allala Park
 Ruiz Park
 St. Charles Park
 Sunrise Rotary Park
 Texas Trail of Trees Park
 Veterans Memorial Park
 Washington Park
 West Brownsville Little League Park
 Windwood Park

6. From the perspective of City of Brownsville administration, what should be the three highest priority outcomes of the process to develop a master plan for parks and recreation?
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.

7. If different from above, from the perspective of City of Brownsville parks and recreation department, what should be the three highest priority outcomes of the process to develop a master plan for parks and recreation?
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.

8. If different from above, from the perspective of a park or recreation user, what should be the three highest priority outcomes of the process to develop a master plan?
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.

9. If different from above, from the perspective of a park or recreation neighbor, what should be the three highest priority outcomes of the process to develop a master plan?
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.

10. What are the three biggest problems faced by parks and recreation users in the City of Brownsville now?
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.

11. What will be the three biggest challenges faced by the City of Brownsville administration or parks and recreation department in parks and recreation or in their management over the next five years?
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.

12. What will be the three biggest challenges faced by the City of Brownsville administration or parks and recreation department in implementing this Master Plan, once it is completed?
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.

13. If different from those listed above, what are the three highest priority attributes (opportunities) of city parks and recreation facilities that should be emphasized in the development of a plan?
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.

19. What is the appropriate economic/financial role of new park and/or recreation facility development in the local economy? (circle one)

- Increase revenue
- Be revenue neutral (break even)
- Be city-subsidized
- Be a catalyst for adjacent development/redevelopment
- Be a catalyst for tourism, economic development
- Other, please explain below
- Don't Know
- NA

20. If you had money to spend on parks, trails and/or recreation facilities, how would you spend it? (circle all relevant)

- Acquisition and development of trails
- Acquisition and development of new parks and/or open space
- Development of new recreation facilities
- Improvements/maintenance of existing trails
- Improvements/maintenance of existing parks and/or open space
- Improvements/maintenance of existing recreation facilities
- Restoration of historic structures
- Restoration of habitat and forest
- Other
- Don't Know
- NA

21. Would you be willing to pay for the use of City of Brownsville parks, trails or recreation facilities?

- Yes
- Maybe, for some facilities
- No
- Don't Know
- NA

22. If yes or maybe, how would you be willing to pay for those facilities? (circle all relevant)

- Taxes (sales, use or property taxes, other)
- Fees for park entry
- Fees for trail use (pedestrian and/or equestrian)
- Entry fees for park features (historic sites, etc.)
- Increased/expanded permit fees for park features (campsites, picnic sites, playing fields)
- Parks and open space development fees (development impact fees)
- Pursue outside public/private sector funds (grant writing, etc.)
- Fees-in-lieu (development fees)
- Other
- Don't Know
- NA

23. Do you have any other comments about the priorities for the City of Brownsville parks and recreation facilities that should be considered when developing the Master Plan? Please use the rest of this page, and be specific and candid.

City of Brownsville, Department of Parks and Recreation User Survey

PDA

1. What is your gender?

	<u>Count</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Male	150	62.50 %
Female	90	37.50 %
<i>Total Respondents:</i>	240	100 %

2. How do you describe your ethnicity?

	<u>Count</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Anglo	32	13.33 %
Latino	204	85.00 %
African American	1	0.42 %
Asian	1	0.42 %
Native American	0	0.00 %
Other (please specify)	2	0.83 %
Don't know	0	0.00 %
<i>Total Respondents:</i>	240	100 %

3. Into which range does you age fall?

	<u>Count</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Under 6	0	0.00 %
6 - 12	2	0.83 %
13 - 18	3	1.25 %
19 - 34	106	44.17 %
35 - 55	98	40.83 %
56 - 65	22	9.17 %
Over 65	3	1.25 %
N/A	6	2.50 %
<i>Total Respondents:</i>	240	100 %

4. Are you a City of Brownsville resident?

	<u>Count</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Yes	216	90.00 %
No	6	2.50 %
Other Texas County (please specify)	1	0.42 %
Out of State visitor (please specify)	2	0.83 %
Don't know	0	0.00 %
N/A	15	6.25 %
<i>Total Respondents:</i>	240	100 %

5. What is your zip code? (Select one)

	<u>Count</u>	<u>Percent</u>
78520	81	33.75 %
78521	56	23.33 %

78522	0	0.00 %
78523	1	0.42 %
78526	63	26.25 %
Other (please specify)	6	2.50 %
Don't know	0	0.00 %
N/A	33	13.75 %
<i>Total Respondents:</i>		240 100 %

6. In general, how do you get information about parks, recreation, natural areas and/or trails in Brownsville? (Select all that apply)

	<u>Count</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Brochure	8	3.33 %
Club or special interest group - hiking, biking, nature, history, etc.	9	3.75 %
Electronic media (TV, radio)	10	4.17 %
Friend/family member/acquaintance	86	35.83 %
Highway/street sign	9	3.75 %
Internet - City of Brownsville site	20	8.33 %
Parks and recreation department staff	50	20.83 %
Print media: daily, weekly or monthly newspaper	49	20.42 %
Sporting Goods store, retail outlet, etc.	10	4.17 %
WOM (word of mouth)	135	56.25 %
Other (please specify)	12	5.00 %
Don't know	5	2.08 %
N/A	3	1.25 %
<i>Total Respondents:</i>		240 169 %

7. In general, how often do you visit any park in the City of Brownsville? (Select one)

	<u>Count</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Once or twice per year	50	20.83 %
Once or twice per month	47	19.58 %
Once or twice per week	107	44.58 %
More than once or twice a week	14	5.83 %
Everyday	6	2.50 %
Don't visit	8	3.33 %
Don't know	5	2.08 %
N/A	3	1.25 %
<i>Total Respondents:</i>		240 100 %

8. Thinking in general, describe the condition of those Brownsville parks that you visit? (Select one)

	<u>Count</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Excellent (need no improvements)	13	5.42 %
Good (need some improvements)	70	29.17 %
Fair (need many improvements)	105	43.75 %
Poor (need complete redevelopment)	38	15.83 %
Don't know	9	3.75 %
N/A	5	2.08 %
<i>Total Respondents:</i>		240 100 %

9. Can you tell me the names of the three parks that you visit most frequently? (Please list)

	<u>Count</u>	<u>Percent</u>
1.	145	60.42 %
2.	92	38.33 %
3.	61	25.42 %
Don't know	12	5.00 %
N/A	83	34.58 %
<i>Total Respondents:</i>	240	164 %

10. In general, how do you get to the park that you visit most frequently (car, bicycle, on foot, etc.)?

	<u>Count</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Car	222	92.50 %
Bicycle	0	0.00 %
Walking	5	2.08 %
Public Transportation (bus, cab, etc.)	0	0.00 %
Other (name in one or two words)	1	0.42 %
Don't know	7	2.92 %
N/A	5	2.08 %
<i>Total Respondents:</i>	240	100 %

11. How long does it usually take to get to the park that you visit most frequently? (Select one)

	<u>Count</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Under 15 minutes	101	42.08 %
15 to 30 minutes	108	45.00 %
30 to 60 minutes (one hour)	15	6.25 %
More than one hour	0	0.00 %
Other	1	0.42 %
Don't know	9	3.75 %
N/A	6	2.50 %
<i>Total Respondents:</i>	240	100 %

12. In general, from the list below, tell me what you like most about the parks that you visit most frequently ? (Select all that apply)

	<u>Count</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Access to simple comforts (restrooms, water, benches)	35	14.58 %
Bird/wildlife habitat	18	7.50 %
Concessions - amusements (rentals, retail, games)	7	2.92 %
Concessions - food/beverages	27	11.25 %
Condition of built facilities - sports fields, trails, structures, signage, etc.	53	22.08 %
Condition of natural facilities - stream g. corridors, trees, shrubs, flower beds, etc.	16	6.67 %
Convenience - proximity to home	88	36.67 %
Convenience - proximity to work	5	2.08 %
Cost	58	24.17 %
Education - wildlife viewing/natural area study/environmental education	9	3.75 %
Family-friendly environment	114	47.50 %
Fishing facilities	3	1.25 %
Gardens - formal	7	2.92 %

Gardens - community	12	5.00 %
Golf	51	21.25 %
Natural environment (trees, shrubs, topography, etc.)	40	16.67 %
Parking, access or traffic control	18	7.50 %
Patrons - behavior	11	4.58 %
Patrons - numbers	4	1.67 %
Picnic facilities	37	15.42 %
Public Events	25	10.42 %
Remoteness	2	0.83 %
Rule enforcement	6	2.50 %
Safety - clean environment, etc.	18	7.50 %
Safety - personal safety, vandalism	12	5.00 %
Solitude/quiet environment	27	11.25 %
Trails	42	17.50 %
Other (please specify in one or two words)	7	2.92 %
Don't know	16	6.67 %
N/A	11	4.58 %
<i>Total Respondents:</i>	240	325 %

13. From the list below indicate your THREE favorite activities at any or all of those parks? (Select up to 3)

	<u>Count</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Archery	0	0.00 %
Basketball	42	17.50 %
Bicycling	15	6.25 %
BMX bicycling	1	0.42 %
Children's play areas/playgrounds	33	13.75 %
Creative activities - photography, painting, etc.	5	2.08 %
Disc (Frisbee) golf	1	0.42 %
Dog exercise - on-leash	19	7.92 %
Dog exercise - off-leash	3	1.25 %
Equestrian activities	0	0.00 %
Fishing	2	0.83 %
Gardens - formal	1	0.42 %
Gardens - community	3	1.25 %
Golf	36	15.00 %
Historical interpretation/education	5	2.08 %
In-line skating, skateboarding	0	0.00 %
Nature-based activities - bird watching, etc.	8	3.33 %
Picnicking	32	13.33 %
Permitted Events - picnics, pavilion uses	13	5.42 %
Public events - races, cultural events, etc.	11	4.58 %
Relaxing/people watching/quiet contemplation/meet friends	20	8.33 %
Soccer, football, lacrosse, rugby, field hockey	42	17.50 %
Softball or baseball	85	35.42 %
Swimming	6	2.50 %
Volleyball	8	3.33 %
Walking, running, jogging, hiking	68	28.33 %
Other (please specify)	30	12.50 %
Don't know	8	3.33 %

N/A	9	3.75 %
<i>Total Respondents:</i>	240	211 %

14. In general, what THREE changes would make the Brownsville parks experience a better one? (Select up to 3) There needs to be an improvement or increase in:

	<u>Count</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Activities/facilities (please specify)	9	3.75 %
Access to simple comforts (restrooms, water, benches)	54	22.50 %
Bird/wildlife habitat	12	5.00 %
Concessions - amusements (rentals, retail, games)	17	7.08 %
Concessions - food/beverages	17	7.08 %
Condition of built facilities - sports fields, trails, structures, signage, etc.	125	52.08 %
Condition of natural facilities - stream corridors, trees, shrubs, flower beds, etc.	28	11.67 %
Education - wildlife viewing/natural area study/environmental education	15	6.25 %
Family-friendly environment	18	7.50 %
Parking, access and traffic control	56	23.33 %
Patrons - behavior	4	1.67 %
Patrons - numbers	1	0.42 %
Public events - more	34	14.17 %
Public events - fewer	0	0.00 %
Rule enforcement	35	14.58 %
Safety - clean environment, no vandalism, etc.	134	55.83 %
Safety - personal safety	19	7.92 %
Solitude/quiet environment	4	1.67 %
Other (please specify in one or two words)	6	2.50 %
No change necessary	2	0.83 %
Don't know	6	2.50 %
N/A	10	4.17 %
<i>Total Respondents:</i>	240	253 %

15. If you had money to spend on parks, recreation, natural areas and/or trails, what would be your THREE top priorities? (Select up to 3)

	<u>Count</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Acquisition and development of new parks	47	19.58 %
Acquisition and development of new natural areas	22	9.17 %
Acquisition and development of trails	24	10.00 %
Add park facilities/activities (please specify)	29	12.08 %
Development and construction of additional indoor recreation facilities	55	22.92 %
Improvements/maintenance to existing indoor recreation facilities	69	28.75 %
Improvements/maintenance of existing parks	146	60.83 %
Improvements/maintenance of existing natural areas	39	16.25 %
Improvements/maintenance of existing trails	24	10.00 %
Restoration of historic structures	9	3.75 %
Restoration of habitat and natural features (trees, shrubs, turf)	16	6.67 %
Other (please specify in one or two words)	11	4.58 %
Don't know	10	4.17 %
N/A	18	7.50 %
<i>Total Respondents:</i>	240	216 %

16. Would you be willing to pay for the use of parks, recreation, natural area and/or trail facilities? (Select one)

	<u>Count</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Yes	38	15.83 %
Maybe, for some facilities	43	17.92 %
No	127	52.92 %
Don't know	11	4.58 %
N/A	21	8.75 %
<i>Total Respondents:</i>	240	100 %

17. If yes or maybe, how would you be willing to pay for those facilities? (Select all that apply)

	<u>Count</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Taxes (sales, use or property taxes, other)	13	11.50 %
Fees for park entry	23	20.35 %
Fees for trail use (pedestrian and/or equestrian)	10	8.85 %
Entry fees for park features (historic sites, pools, etc.)	23	20.35 %
Increased/expanded permit fees for park features (campsites, picnic sites, playing fields)	10	8.85 %
Parks and open space development fees (development impact fees)	6	5.31 %
Pursue outside public/private sector funds (grant writing, etc.)	25	22.12 %
Fees-in-lieu (development fees)	1	0.88 %
Other	2	1.77 %
Don't know	12	10.62 %
N/A	30	26.55 %
<i>Total Respondents:</i>	113	137 %

18. Do you have any additional comments that you would like to record on paper?

	<u>Count</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Comments:	35	14.58 %
No Response	205	85.42 %
<i>Total Respondents:</i>	240	100 %

National Recreation and Parks Association: Park Classifications and Standards for Park Acreage

Component	Use	Service Area	Desirable Size	Acres/1,000 Population	Desirable Size Characteristics
Mini-park	Specialized facilities that serve a concentrated or limited population or specific group, such as children or senior citizens	Less than ¼ miles radius	1 acre or less	0.25 to 0.5 A	With neighborhoods and in close proximity to apartment complexes, townhouse development or housing for the elderly.
Neighborhood Park or Playground	Area for intense recreational activities, such as field games, crafts, playground apparatus areas, skating, picnicking, wading pool, etc.	¼ to ½ mile radius to serve a population up to 5,000 (a neighborhood)	15+ acres	1.0 to 2.0 A	Suited for intense development. Easily accessible to neighborhood population (geographically centered for safe walking and biking access). May be developed as a school park facility.
Community Park	Area of diverse environmental quality. May include areas suited for intense recreation facilities, such as athletic complexes, large swimming pools. May be an area of natural quality for outdoor recreation, such as walking, viewing, sitting, picnicking. May be any combination of the above, depending upon site suitability and community need.	1 to 2 mile radius (several neighborhoods)	25+ acres	5.0 to 8.0 A	May include natural features, such as water bodies and areas suited for intense development. Easily accessible to neighborhood served.
Regional Park/Super-regional	An area of land preserved on account of its natural beauty, historic interest, or active recreational use	County- or city-wide	50+ acres	15 to 20 A	
Greenway/Linear Park	A corridor of protected open space that is managed for conservation and/or recreation.	Varies	Varies	N/A	Greenways follow natural land or water features, such as ridges or rivers, or human landscape features like abandoned railroad corridors or canals. Greenways commonly link natural reserves, parks, cultural and historic sites together, in some cases, with populated areas.

RATING:

For each feature (natural, built) identified within any category of park; in open space or along a trail, a score can be applied as follows. Scores should reflect the adequacy of the facility as it relates to the needs in respect to its purpose.

NATURAL FACILITIES:

NA = Not Applicable

0 = Overgrown native and non-native trees/shrubs, needs replacing; turf in poor condition needs replacement; areas of overgrown invasive plants/grasses; significant insect, disease and/or weed infestation; safety of users impacted

1 = Primarily native trees/shrubs, need significant pruning, fertilization; areas of bare turf in need of over-seeding and or sod replacement, aeration and irrigation; possible use restrictions

2 = Adequate, native trees/shrubs need regular periodic maintenance with replacement of plantings in bare areas, fertilize and apply insecticide/herbicide on as-needed maintenance schedule; turf generally good few problems, degraded areas treat with soils stabilization materials, aeration and irrigation, annual maintenance plus regular inspections

3 = Exceeds basic expectations, regular annual, season, periodic maintenance schedule on all natural features

BUILT FACILITIES (NOT RECREATION CENTERS, POOLS OR COMMUNITY CENTERS)

NA = Not Applicable

0 = Dangerous pathways/roadways/trails; hard court surfaces have holes, large cracks, etc.; parking areas non-existent, insufficient, poorly located, in disrepair; irrigation system non-existent or in poor working condition as indicated by dead and/or dying plantings and/or turf

1 = Pathways/roadways/trails in need of noticeable significant repairs; hard court surfaces need extensive resurfacing and limited replacement; surface areas of parking areas in need of repair, supply does not serve peak use time periods or serve children, the elderly or disabled; irrigation system gives poor coverage and needs repair and expansion

2 = Pathways/roadways/trails are in adequate condition and in need of minor repairs; hard courts need minor repairs, new basketball nets/tennis court nets, but adequate for general use; irrigation system in general working order needing minor, but chronic repairs

3 = Exceeds basic expectations, pathways/roadways/trails in good condition needing regular maintenance; hard courts in good working condition needing only regular maintenance; parking areas sufficient for all populations and peak time users; irrigation system functioning in areas where needed when needed.

MODE I

*State of the art maintenance applied to a high quality diverse landscape.
Usually associated with high traffic urban areas such as public squares, malls, governmental grounds or high visitation parks.*

1. **Turf care** - Grass height maintained according to species and variety of grass. Mowed at least once every five working days but may be as often as once every three working days. Aeration as required, not less than four times per year. Reseeding or sodding as needed. Weed control should be practiced so that no more than one percent of the surface has weeds present.

2. **Fertilizer** - Adequate fertilization applied to plant species according to their optimum requirements. Turf species should follow the chart on page 00 for recommended rates. Application rates and times should ensure an even supply of nutrients for the entire year. Nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium percentages should follow local recommendations from your County Extension Service. Trees, shrubs and flowers should be fertilized according to their individual requirements of nutrients for optimum growth. Unusually long or short growing seasons may modify the chart slightly.

3. **Irrigation** - Sprinkler irrigated. Electric automatic commonly used. Some manual systems could be considered adequate under plentiful rainfall circumstances and adequate staffing. Frequency of use follows rainfall, temperature, seasonal length and demands of plant material.

4. **Litter control** - Minimum of once per day, 7 days per week. Extremely high visitation may increase the frequency. Receptacles should be plentiful enough to hold all trash generated between servicing without normally overflowing.

5. **Pruning** - Frequency dictated primarily by species and variety of trees and shrubs. Length of growing season and design concept also a controlling factor as are clipped hedges versus natural style. Timing usually scheduled to coincide with low demand periods or to take advantage of special growing characteristics such as low demand periods or to take advantage of special growing characteristics such as pruning after flowering.

6. **Disease and Insect Control** - Control program may use any of three philosophies: 1.) Preventative; a scheduled chemical or cultural program designed to prevent significant damage. 2.) Corrective; application of chemical or mechanical controls designed to eliminate observed problems. 3.) Integrated pest management; withholding any controls until such time as pests demonstrate damage to plant materials or become a demonstrated irritant in the case of flies, mosquitoes, gnats, etc. At this maintenance level the controlling objective is to not have the public notice any problems. It is anticipated at Mode I that problems will either be prevented or observed at a very early stage and corrected immediately.

7. **Snow removal** - Snow removal starts the same day as accumulations of ½ inch are present. At no time will snow be permitted to cover transportation or parking surfaces longer than noon of the day after the snow stops. Applications of snow melting compound and/or gravel are appropriate to reduce the danger of injury due to falls.

8. **Lighting** - Maintenance should preserve the original design. Damaged systems should be repaired as quickly as they are discovered. Bulb replacement should be done during the first working day after the outage is reported.

9. **Surfaces** - Sweeping, cleaning and washing of surfaces needs to be done so that at no time does an accumulation of sand, dirt and leaves distract from the looks or safety of the area. Repainting or restaining of structures should occur when weather or wear deteriorate the appearance of the covering. Wood surfaces requiring oiling should be done a minimum of four times per year. Stains to surfaces should be taken off within five working days. Graffiti should be washed off or painted over the next working day after application.

10. **Repairs** - Repairs to all elements of the design should be done immediately upon discovery provided replacement parts and technicians are available to accomplish the job. When disruption to the public might be major and the repair not critical, repairs may be postponed to a time period which is least disruptive.

MODE I

Page 2

11. **Inspection** - Inspections of this area should be done daily by a member of staff.

12. **Floral plantings** - Normally extensive or unusual floral plantings are part of the design. These may include ground level beds, planters or hanging baskets. Often multiple plantings are scheduled, usually at least two blooming cycles per year. Some designs may call for a more frequent rotation of bloom. Maximum care of watering, fertilizing, disease control, disbudding and weeding is necessary. Weeding flowers and shrubs is done a minimum of once per week. The desired standard is essentially weed free.

13. **Rest rooms** - Not always a part of the design but where required will normally receive no less than once per day servicing. Especially high traffic areas may require multiple servicing or a person assigned as attendant.

14. **Special features** - Features such as fountains, drinking fountains, sculpture, speaker systems, structural art, flag poles or parking and crowd control devices may be part of the integral design. Maintenance requirements can vary drastically but for this mode it should be of the highest possible order.

MODE II

High level maintenance – associated with well developed park areas with reasonably high visitation.

1. **Turf care** - Grass cut once every five working days. Aeration as required but not less than two times per year. Reseeding or sodding when bare spots are present. Weed control practiced when weeds present visible problem or when weeds represent 5 percent of the turf surface. Some pre-emergent products may be utilized at this level.

2. **Fertilizer** - Adequate fertilizer level to ensure that all plant materials are healthy and growing vigorously. Amounts depend on species, length of growing season, soils and rainfall. Rates should correspond to the lowest recommended rates shown on the chart on page 14. Distribution should ensure an even supply of nutrients for the entire year. Nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium percentage should follow local recommendations from the County Extension Service. Trees, shrubs and flowers should receive fertilizer levels to ensure optimum growth.

3. **Irrigation** - Some type of irrigation system available. Frequency of use follows rainfall, temperature, seasonal length, and demands of plant material.

4. **Litter control** - Minimum of once per day, five days a week. Off-site movement of trash dependent on size of containers and use by the public. High use may dictate once per day cleaning or more. Containers are serviced.

5. **Pruning** - Usually done at least once per season unless species planted dictate more frequent attention. Sculptured hedges or high growth species may dictate a more frequent requirement than most trees and shrubs in natural growth style plantings.

6. **Disease and Insect Control** - Usually done when disease or insects are inflicting noticeable damage, reducing vigor of plant materials or could be considered a bother to the public. Some preventative measures may be utilized such as systemic chemical treatments. Cultural prevention of disease problems can reduce time spent in this category. Some minor problems may be tolerated at this level.

7. **Snow removal** - Snow removed by noon the day following snowfall. Gravel or snow melt may be utilized to reduce ice accumulation.

8. **Lighting** - Replacement or repair of fixtures when observed or reported as not working.

9. **Surfaces** - Should be cleaned, repaired, repainted or replaced when appearance has noticeably deteriorated.

10. **Repairs** - Should be done whenever safety, function, or bad appearance is in question.

11. **Inspection** - Inspection by some staff member at least once a day when regular staff is scheduled.

12. **Floral planting** - Some sort of floral plantings present. Normally no more complex than two rotations of bloom per year. Care cycle usually at least once per week except watering may be more frequent. Health and vigor dictate cycle of fertilization and disease control. Beds essentially kept weed free.

13. **Rest rooms** - When present should be maintained at least once per day as long as they are open to public use. High use may dictate two servicings or more per day. Servicing period should ensure an adequate supply of paper and that rest rooms are reasonably clean and free from bad odors.

14. **Special features** - Should be maintained for safety, function and high quality appearance as per established design.

MODE III

Moderate level maintenance – associated with locations with moderate to low levels of development, moderate to low levels of visitation or with agencies that because of budget restrictions can't afford a higher intensity of maintenance.

1. **Turf care** - Cut once every 10 working days. Normally not aerated unless turf quality indicates a need or in anticipation of an application of fertilizer. Reseeding or resodding done only when major bare spots appear. Weed control measures normally used when 50 percent of small areas is weed infested or general turf quality low in 15 percent or more of the surface area.
2. **Fertilizer** - Applied only when turf vigor seems to be low. Low level application done on a once per year basis. Rate suggested is one-half the level recommended on page 14 for species and variety.
3. **Irrigation** - Dependent on climate. Rainfall locations above 25 inches a year usually rely on natural rainfall with the possible addition of portable irrigation during periods of drought. Dry climates below 25 inches normally have some form of supplemental irrigation. When irrigation is automatic a demand schedule is programmed. Where manual servicing is required two to three times per week operation would be the norm.
4. **Litter control** - Minimum service of two to three times per week. High use may dictate higher levels during warm season.
5. **Pruning** - When required for health or reasonable appearance. With most tree and shrub species this would not be more frequent than once every two or three years.
6. **Disease and Insect Control** - Done only on epidemic or serious complaint basis. Control measures may be put into effect when the health or survival of the plant material is threatened or where public's comfort is concerned.
7. **Snow removal** - Snow removal done based on local law requirements but generally accomplished by the day following snowfall. Some crosswalks or surfaces may not be cleared at all.
8. **Lighting** - Replacement or repair of fixtures when report filed or when noticed by employees.
9. **Surfaces** - Cleaned on complaint basis. Repaired or replaced as budget allows.
10. **Repairs** - Should be done whenever safety or function is in question.
11. **Inspection** - Once per week.
12. **Floral planting** - Only perennials or flowering trees or shrubs.
13. **Rest rooms** - When present, serviced a minimum of 5 times per week. Seldom more than once each day.
14. **Special features** - Minimum allowable maintenance for features present with function and safety in mind.

MODE IV

Moderately low level – usually associated with low level of development, low visitation, undeveloped areas or remote parks.

1. **Turf care** - Low frequency mowing schedule based on species. Low growing grasses may not be mowed. High grasses may receive periodic mowing to aid public use or reduce fire danger. Weed control limited to legal requirements of noxious weeds.
2. **Fertilizer** - Not fertilized.
3. **Irrigation** - No irrigation.
4. **Litter control** - Once per week or less. Complaint may increase level above one servicing.
5. **Pruning** - No regular trimming. Safety or damage from weather may dictate actual work schedule.
6. **Disease and Insect Control** - None except where epidemic and epidemic condition threatens resource or public.
7. **Snow removal** - None except where major access ways or active parking areas dictate the need for removal.
8. **Lighting** - Replacement on complaint or employee discovery.
9. **Surfaces** - Replaced or repaired when safety is a concern and when budget is available.
10. **Repairs** - Should be done when safety or function is in question.
11. **Inspection** - Once per month.
12. **Floral plantings** - None, may have wildflowers, perennials, flowering trees or shrubs in place.
13. **Rest rooms** - When present, five times per week.
14. **Special features** - Minimum maintenance to allow safe use.

MODE V

High visitation natural areas – usually associated with large urban or regional parks. Size and user frequency may dictate resident maintenance staff. Road, pathway or trail systems relatively well developed. Other facilities at strategic locations such as entries, trail heads, building complexes and parking lots.

1. **Turf care** - Normally not mowed but grassed parking lots, approaches to buildings or road shoulders, may be cut to reduce fire danger. Weed control on noxious weeds.
2. **Fertilizer** - None.
3. **Irrigation** - None.
4. **Litter control** - Based on visitation, may be more than once per day if crowds dictate that level.
5. **Pruning** - Only done for safety.
6. **Disease and Insect Control** - Done only to ensure safety or when problem seriously discourages public use.
7. **Snow removal** - One day service on roads and parking areas.
8. **Lighting** - Replaced on complaint or when noticed by employees.
9. **Surfaces** - Cleaned on complaint. Repaired or replaced when budget will permit.
10. **Repairs** - Done when safety or function impaired. Should have same year service on poor appearance.
11. **Inspection** - Once per day when staff is available.
12. **Floral planting** - None introduced except at special locations such as interpretive buildings, headquarters, etc. Once per week service on these designs. Flowering trees and shrubs, wildflowers, present but demand no regular maintenance.
13. **Rest rooms** - Frequency geared to visitor level. Once a day is the common routine but for some locations and reasons frequency may be more often.
14. **Special features** - Repaired whenever safety or function are a concern. Appearance corrected in the current budget year.

MODE VI

Minimum maintenance level – low visitation natural area or large urban parks that are undeveloped.

1. **Turf areas** - Not mowed. Weed control only if legal requirements demand it.
2. **Fertilizer** - Not fertilized.
3. **Irrigation** - No irrigation.
4. **Litter control** - On demand or complaint basis.
5. **Pruning** - No pruning unless safety is involved.
6. **Disease and Insect Control** - No control except in epidemic or safety situations.
7. **Snow removal** - Snow removal only on strategic roads and parking lots. Accomplished within two days after snow stops.
8. **Lighting** - Replacement on complaint basis.
9. **Surfaces** - Serviced when safety is consideration.
10. **Repairs** - Should be done when safety or function is in question.
11. **Inspection** - Once per month.
12. **Floral plantings** - None.
13. **Rest rooms** - Service based on need.
14. **Special features** - Service based on lowest acceptable frequency for feature. Safety and function interruption a concern when either seem significant.