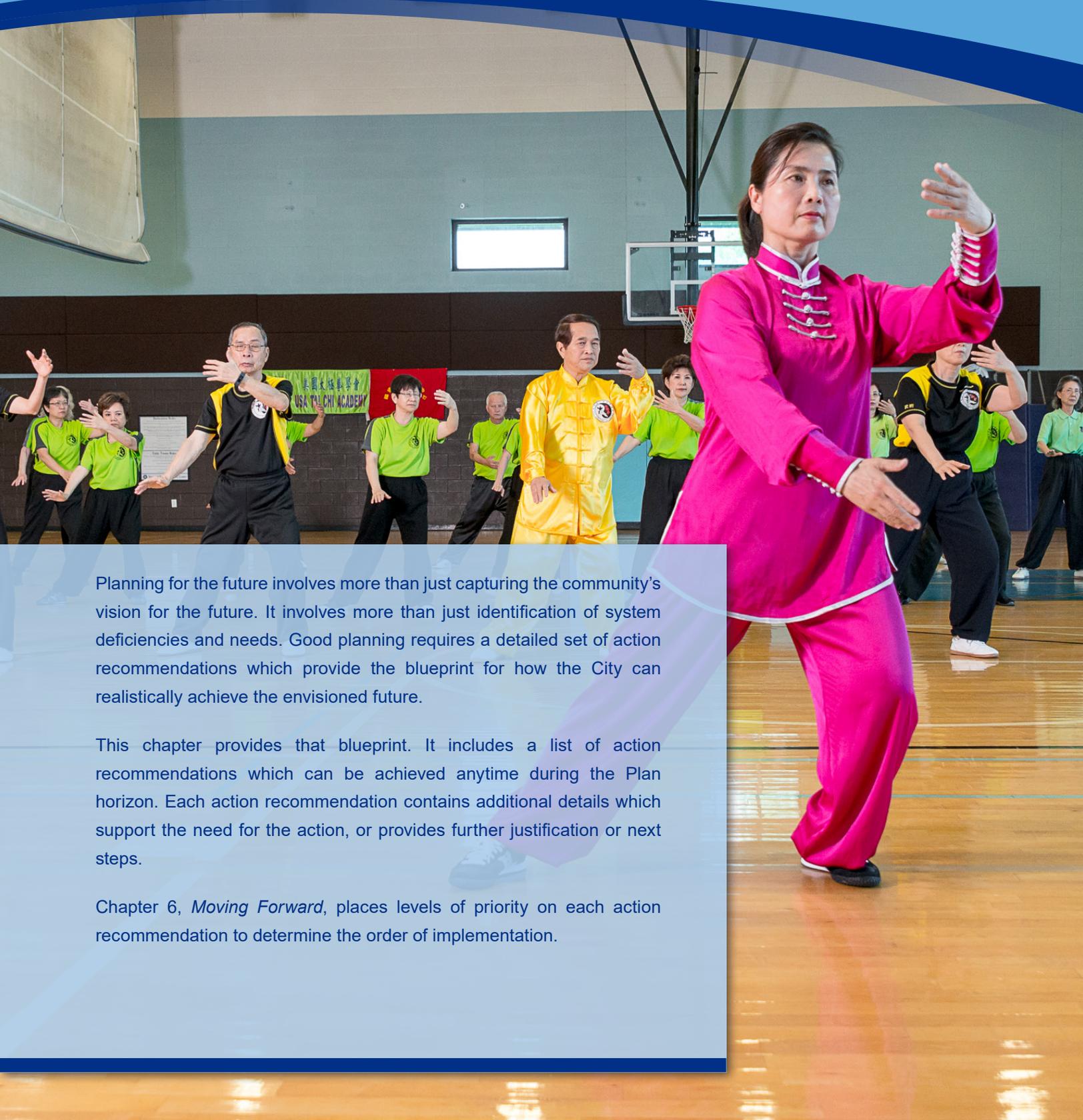


RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TOMORROW

5



Planning for the future involves more than just capturing the community's vision for the future. It involves more than just identification of system deficiencies and needs. Good planning requires a detailed set of action recommendations which provide the blueprint for how the City can realistically achieve the envisioned future.

This chapter provides that blueprint. It includes a list of action recommendations which can be achieved anytime during the Plan horizon. Each action recommendation contains additional details which support the need for the action, or provides further justification or next steps.

Chapter 6, *Moving Forward*, places levels of priority on each action recommendation to determine the order of implementation.

Vision

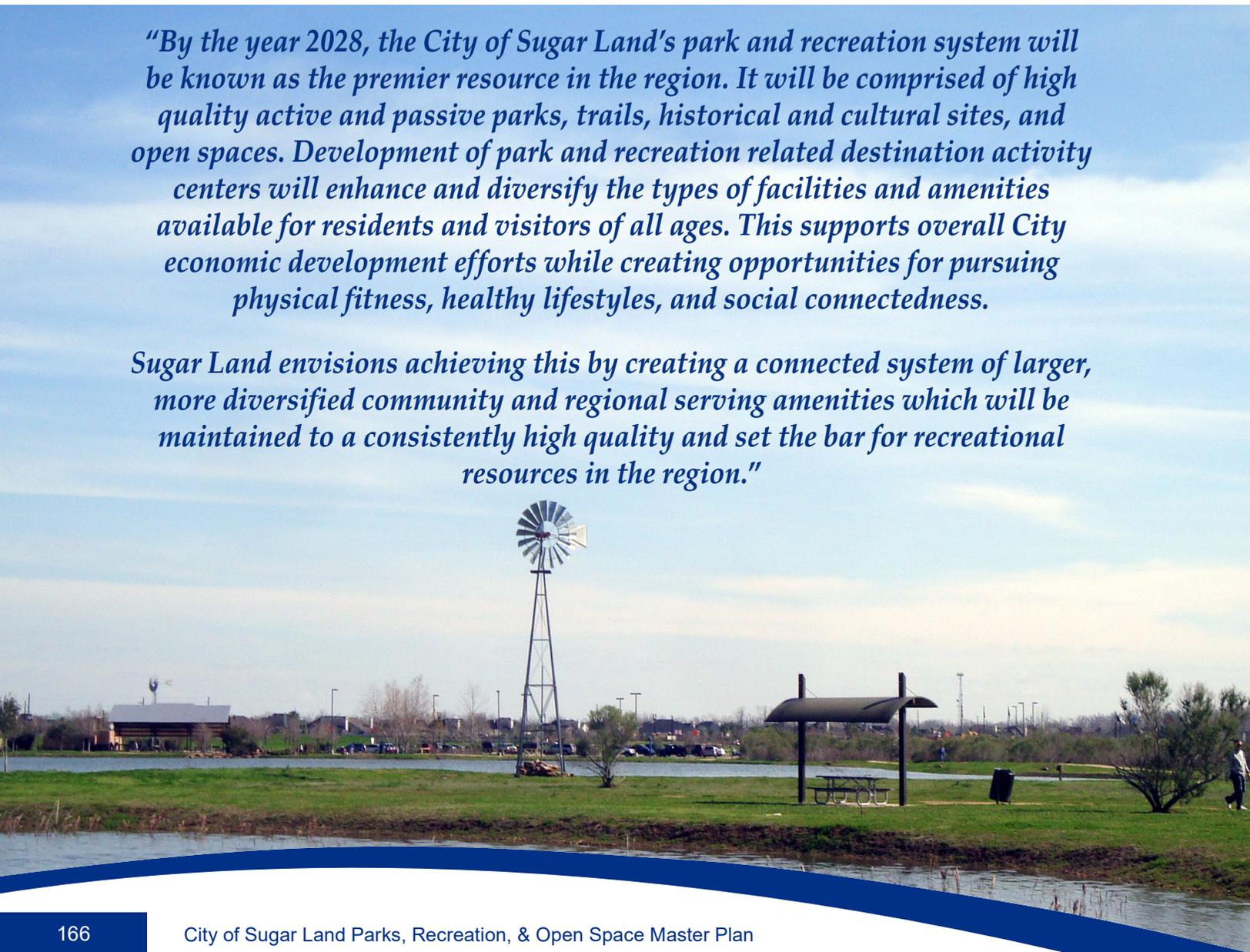
The City's vision for the parks and recreation system represents the collective aspiration of Sugar Land's residents, their wants and needs, and their priorities for moving forward. It further refines the City's overarching goals stemming from the Comprehensive Plan; many of which are directly related to parks and recreation. In this regard, the vision provides the framework for the development of the recommendations and priorities set out in this Plan.

The vision statement also functions as a decision-making tool for City elected and appointed officials and staff. When supported by a strong implementation action plan, the vision can help to build community consensus and action so that everyone is moving towards the same endpoint.

Based on public input, feedback from the PARCS Board and staff, and the needs assessment conducted during the planning process, the City's updated Parks and Recreation vision is as follows:

“By the year 2028, the City of Sugar Land’s park and recreation system will be known as the premier resource in the region. It will be comprised of high quality active and passive parks, trails, historical and cultural sites, and open spaces. Development of park and recreation related destination activity centers will enhance and diversify the types of facilities and amenities available for residents and visitors of all ages. This supports overall City economic development efforts while creating opportunities for pursuing physical fitness, healthy lifestyles, and social connectedness.

Sugar Land envisions achieving this by creating a connected system of larger, more diversified community and regional serving amenities which will be maintained to a consistently high quality and set the bar for recreational resources in the region.”



Guiding Principles

The vision statement is further refined through a series of guiding principles which establish the starting point for subsequent goals and objectives. These guiding principles include:

- Plan and develop a parks, recreation, and open space system that continues to be second to none.
- Plan and develop a parks, recreation, and open space system that serves the City's multigenerational residents and visitors and recognizes the impact of shifting community demographics.
- Plan and develop a parks, recreation, and open space system that capitalizes on the City's access to the Brazos River and significant natural resources in the area.
- Plan and develop a parks, recreation, and open space system that is visionary, while also realistic and 'implementable.'
- Plan and develop a parks, recreation, and open space system that maximizes the potential of public and private partnerships.

Further Defining the Sugar Land Comprehensive Plan Goals

The City's 2012 Comprehensive Plan, *Vision 2025*, laid out a series of 11 goals to guide development and enhancement of the community through the year 2025. This PROSMP takes five of these goals (Goals B, D, E, F, and H) through a further defining step to determine how parks and recreation can further the community's vision for the next 10 years and beyond. Using the community-derived vision statement, guiding principles, and Comprehensive Plan goals as a framework, action recommendations have been developed to guide the City towards achieving its identified vision for the future. Plan goals, objectives, and action recommendations laid out in this chapter have been organized to directly correlate with the Comprehensive Plan Goals B, D, E, F, and H (see Figure 5.1, *Action Framework*, for a depiction of the relationship between the Comprehensive Plan and PROSMP goals).

This chapter identifies a menu of options which could be accomplished during the horizon of this Plan, and beyond. Chapter 6, *Moving Forward*, then examines and prioritizes the action recommendations together to develop an Implementation Action Plan that identifies the near-, mid-, and long-term actions necessary to move forward.

Action Framework

The goals, objectives, and action recommendations identified on the subsequent pages will be organized using the following organizational framework.

Figure 5.1, Action Framework



GOAL 1: Sugar Land’s parks and recreation system will consist of high-quality and regionally attractive destination activity centers.

Sugar Land strives to provide quality destination activity centers which have a memorable sense of place, unique amenities, and set the City apart as a regional destination for cultural and entertainment events (Comprehensive Plan Goal E: Destination Activity Centers). Parks and recreation facilities and amenities are destination activity centers in and of themselves. Through enhanced existing amenities, development of new facilities, and implementation of strategic funding strategies, the City’s parks and recreation system can provide high-quality amenities for the local community and create a regional draw. The following objectives and actions are recommended to achieve this goal.

OBJECTIVE 1.1. Renovate and replace existing facilities and amenities to improve and/or enhance accessibility, connectivity, facilities, amenities, and programming.

■ **Action 1.1.1. Prepare an update to the Brazos River Corridor Master Plan.**

The existing Brazos River Park Master Plan was completed in 2013. With further development over the past four years, and the annexation of Greatwood and New Territory, the plan needs to be updated to reflect the current land holdings, additional tracts which need to be acquired to complete the corridor, and a strategy to link the tracts together. The plan should focus on land acquisition targets and linkages such as Memorial Park to the Brazos River - Brazos Landing and Brazos River - Riverstone tracts. This updated master plan needs to study the best ways for vehicular access to the properties, as well as the best uses for each area. Additional elements to be examined in the plan include water access for paddling and fishing, trails and trailheads along the full corridor, pedestrian connectivity between the north and south banks of the Brazos River, wildlife movement corridors, and consideration for community-park amenities (e.g., standalone baseball backstop), where appropriate.

The master planning effort should evaluate opportunities to establish trails and a trailhead, adequate parking, restrooms, pavilions, and canoe launch access in the Brazos River - Riverstone area. This master plan also needs to include a signage and wayfinding master plan that guides a unified signage system along the corridor. Further considerations for a master plan update are described in Figure 5.2, *Importance of Master Planning*.

Figure 5.2, Importance of Master Planning

As identified through the public input process, the Sugar Land community strongly supports further development of the Brazos River Corridor. This will become increasingly more important as the City’s new Festival Site draws thousands of people to this area.

Although the City does have an existing Brazos River Park Master Plan, it is in need of a comprehensive update; particularly as the City plans to acquire new undeveloped property and expand connectivity to areas north and south.

A master plan update should identify physical additions to the park made since the last plan update, acknowledge actions which have deviated from the previous plan’s vision, acknowledge and incorporate other planning efforts completed in the area, and either solidify or modify the path moving forward.

In addition, the next update should include a robust public engagement process which works with abutting and citywide stakeholders to determine steps to maximize connectivity to and throughout the Brazos River corridor.



■ **Action 1.1.2. Evaluate opportunities and implement improvements to Brazos River Park (Mid-lake and North Lake areas).**

During the public engagement component of the planning process, further development of Brazos River Park was one of the top three priority actions identified by survey respondents (see Figure 2.20, *Highest Priority Actions*). Dependent on the findings and solutions identified in the updated Brazos River Corridor Master Plan, it is recommended that the City continue development of the Mid-lake and North Lake areas and the rest of Brazos River Park. This could include the consideration of the following elements:

- ◆ Develop a lake and trail system (with connectivity to the existing canoe launch under Highway 59/Interstate 69).
- ◆ Add a nine- or 18-hole disc golf course. This would help the City address a current facility deficit (see Table 4.4, *Target Level of Service for Park Facilities/Amenities*, in Chapter 4).
- ◆ Incorporate art installations to further the City’s cultural arts focus.
- ◆ Add a playscape near the restroom/future pavilion area to provide recreation opportunities for younger park users.
- ◆ Add butterfly gardens and improve bird nesting habitat.
- ◆ Plant trees for shade along trails.
- ◆ Establish and restore patches of native wildflower meadows in the park to gain in-house experience and skills in native seeding installation and maintenance in the Sugar Land parks and open space system.
- ◆ Continue reforestation efforts with organizations including Keep Sugar Land Beautiful and CenterPoint Energy.
- ◆ Install enhanced landscapes in key areas such as the plaza under the overlook, the open area in front of the restroom, etc., when budget allows.
- ◆ Establish and enhance bio-swales in the parking lot and drainage ditch.
- ◆ Design and implement a signage and wayfinding system.
- ◆ Design and construct a shelter with a green roof, solar panel, and rainwater harvest system to demonstrate green building technologies and provide green infrastructure educational opportunities. This facility could be used as a test case example for design and installation of future green technology throughout the Sugar Land parks and open space system.
- ◆ Evaluate a potential partnership to establish a TPWD-designated paddling trail on the Brazos River. Fort Bend Green recommends that the development of canoe/



A butterfly garden and monarch waystation provide nectar sources and shelter that monarchs need to sustain them as they migrate through North America.



Integration of green infrastructure elements, such as rainwater harvesting, can be used in parks as both environmental and educational elements.

kayak launches be a minimum of 12 miles apart. However, opportunities may exist to establish them six miles apart along the stretch of the Brazos River in Sugar Land.

- ◆ Explore partnership opportunities with entities such as Long Acres Ranch for guided canoe/kayak tours.

■ **Action 1.1.3. Prepare a City Park Renovation Master Plan to address the need for maintenance, replacements, retrofits (e.g., adult softball field) and additional facilities (e.g., tennis courts).**

City Park was the first park established in Sugar Land in 1964. Over the years, development of amenities has resulted in the growth of the park’s offerings and an increasing portion of the City’s PARD budget. Before any additional enhancements are made, it is recommended that the City prepare a renovation Master Plan for the park to determine the best potential use of the site and plan for implementation over time. Elements to consider as part of the master plan include:

- ◆ Renovate and enhance the skate park to include permanent (concrete) amenities. The existing skate equipment is nearing the end of its useful life. This facility remains extremely popular with teens and is a unique offering in the City. If improved and enhanced, the skate park could become a destination attraction to draw visitors from throughout Fort Bend County.
- ◆ Renovate the pool or replace it with another publicly accessible water-based amenity. A Preliminary Engineering Report is needed to determine the full costs of pool renovations. The pool is nearing the need for a full renovation, including plaster, pump system, pool deck, and renovation/replacement of pool storage buildings. A splash pad could be affordably added to the pool complex and it would provide an attraction to younger children.
- ◆ Convert a baseball field to allow for adult softball use. This would include infield renovation, lighting renovation, and fencing.
- ◆ Consider partnering with the school district to expand the current tennis court area from four to eight courts and develop outdoor education spaces.
- ◆ Replace the sports field lighting (excluding the tennis courts) due to the age of the existing infrastructure.
- ◆ Renovate the parking lot, provide parking lot landscaping, and enhance the park entry signage.
- ◆ Provide a shade structure over the playground.
- ◆ Consider adding a new shade pavilion.



The Brushy Creek Skatepark in Cedar Park, TX is an example of an enhanced skatepark with concrete elements integrated into a greater park setting.

- ◆ Provide overall landscaping and drainage improvements to enhance the visual quality of City Park. This includes providing additional shaded areas throughout the park (e.g., around the playscape and along trails) to increase user comfort.
- ◆ Develop a continuous internal loop trail to increase passive recreation opportunities and provide more activities for a wider range of ages. Also consider additional off-site connections to the park and updating the existing sidewalks to accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians throughout the park.

■ **Action 1.1.4. Implement renovation improvements to City Park.**

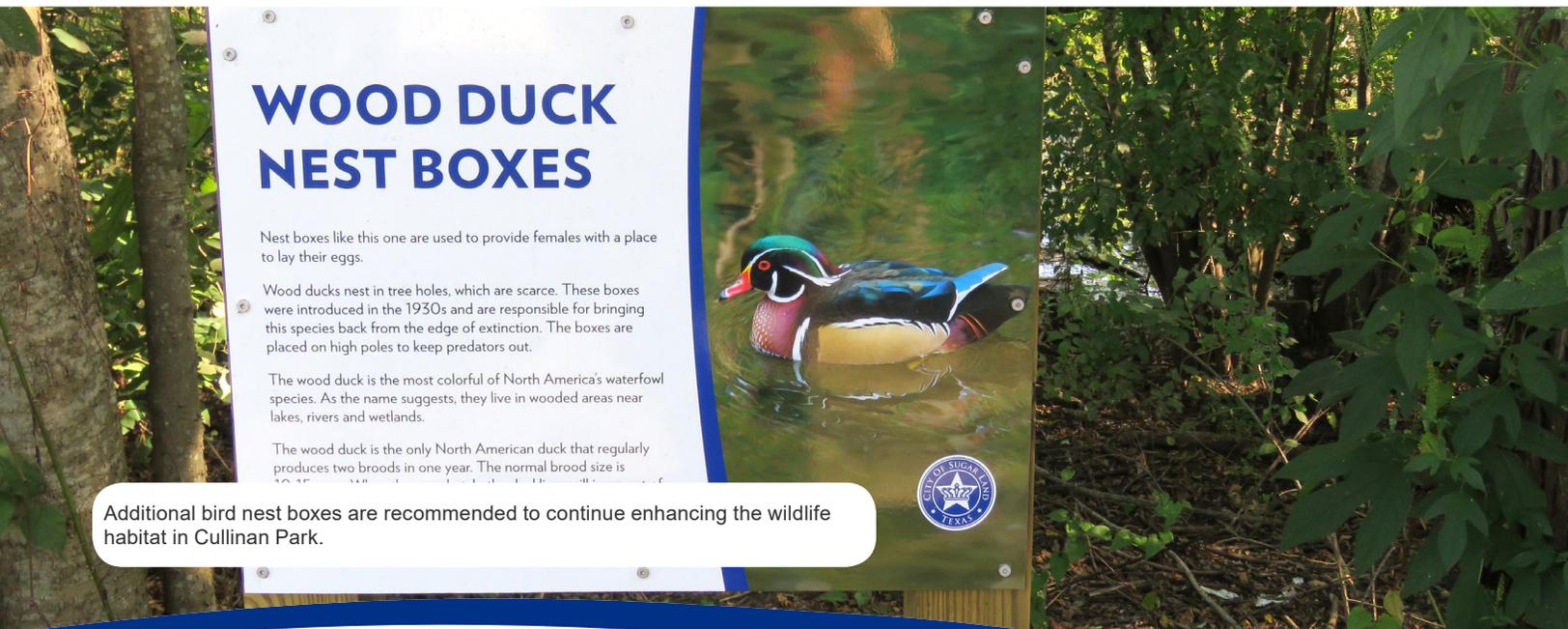
Following preparation of a City Park Renovation Master Plan, it is recommended that the City develop detailed design and construction drawings (as necessary) and proceed with implementation of the plans.

■ **Action 1.1.5. Continue implementation of the Cullinan Park Master Plan to make it a true regional destination park.**

The 2011 updated Cullinan Park Master Plan identifies proposed improvements for the park. It is recommended that the City continue implementation of the master plan using the dedicated Cullinan Park Conservancy funds. This would include implementation of the trails, boardwalks, bridges over Red Gully and Oyster Creek, paddle access, picnic pavilions, entrance landscape enhancement, nature education and exploration elements, and restrooms. An environmental preservation and restoration strategy needs to be developed to control the invasive plants and restore native prairie and the Columbia Bottomlands ecosystem in the park. This would also include continuing to protect wildlife habitat, such as adding bird nest boxes and developing pollinator gardens.



The Cullinan Park Master Plan provides guidance on future improvements to the park.



Additional bird nest boxes are recommended to continue enhancing the wildlife habitat in Cullinan Park.

Additional recommended elements include:

- ◆ Pursue a left turn lane from Highway 6 into the park entry to improve the safety of those entering the site.
- ◆ Renovate the boardwalk and observation tower at White Lake for better safety and water access.
- ◆ Provide future trail connections to Duhacsek Park, the proposed future industrial park located south of Cullinan Park, and the greater citywide trail system. The Duhacsek Park trail connections could require potential partnering with interested stakeholders since these connections would be outside of the City limits.
- ◆ Provide future water and land-based connections to Gannaway Lake Park.

■ **Action 1.1.6. Evaluate opportunities to expand and improve Duhacsek Park.**

Due to its location outside of the City limits, Duhacsek Park provides unique challenges for programming, maintenance, and security. In order to increase the park’s use and potential for economic development, it is recommended that the City consider the following elements:

- ◆ Add a playscape near the centrally located pavilion to provide additional opportunities for young kids to play while on site.
- ◆ Renovate the historic house for use as an art gallery, nature center, or other facility with appropriate function.
- ◆ Enhance the landscape in the park by establishing wildflower/ native grass prairie meadows in the passive open field and renovating the park entry to be more attractive and match the overall unique park character.
- ◆ Move forward with the previously discussed prairie restoration project in the large open space area between the house and Red Gully drainageway. Consider developing an associated educational element about prairie ecosystems and restoration which includes both an indoor and outdoor element, thereby better utilizing the existing house. This could include educational displays about native prairie flora and fauna, the history of Texas landscapes and the impact of human settlement over the years, and the role of different animals in the Sugar Land ecosystem, among other things. The facility could still be rented for special events, but also provide a venue for educational school field trips and local gardening and historic group outings. Indoor educational elements should be tied to outdoor educational signage and prairie trails, whenever possible.

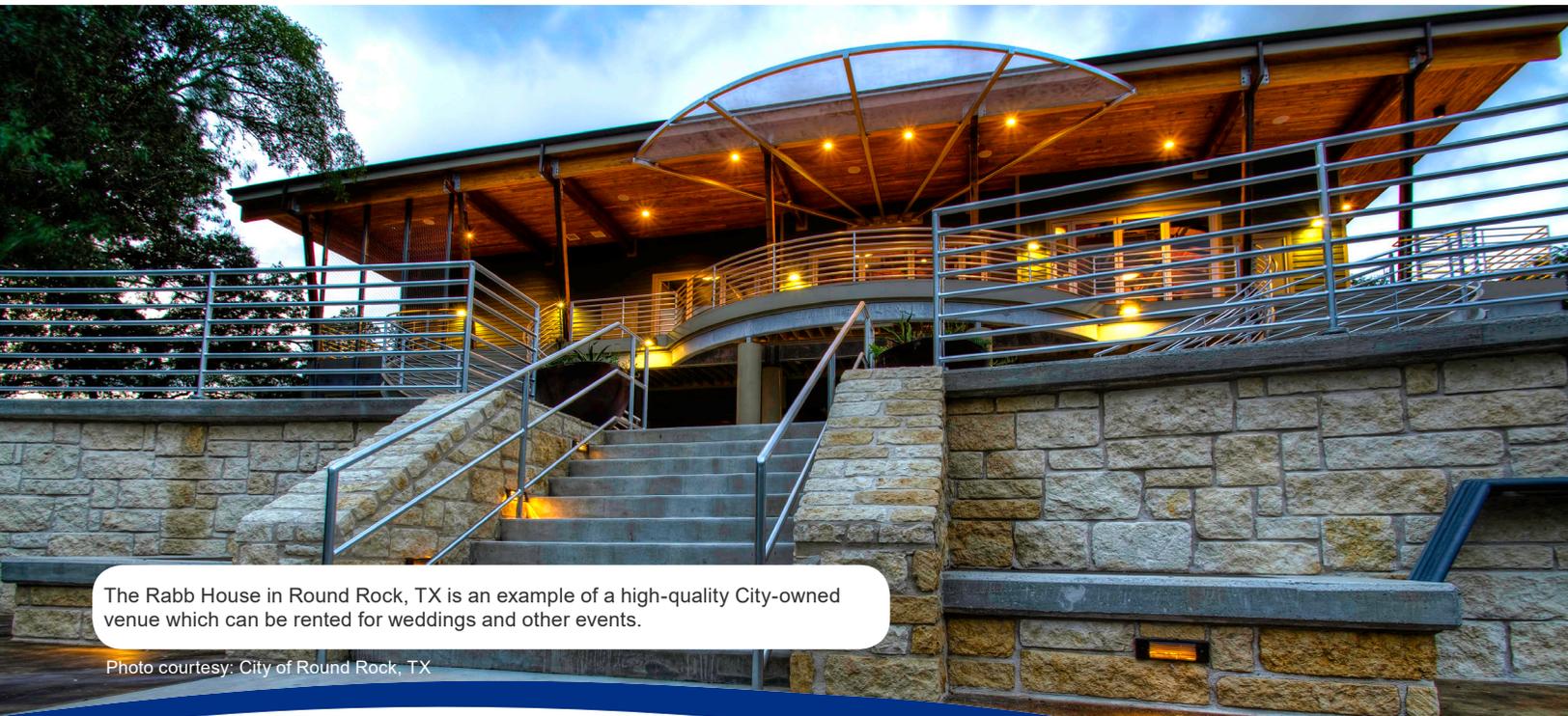


Texas prairies are beautiful, naturally diverse areas which support wildlife, native species, and help filter and slow stormwater flows.

- ◆ As additional amenities are added, the number and quality of parking spaces will need to be increased proportionally. This could include paving a core parking area and establishing dedicated overflow parking for use during larger special events.
- ◆ Create trail connections to the abutting neighborhood and Red Gully Creek.
- ◆ Consider the feasibility of developing a high-quality rentable event space in the park (see Action 1.1.7).
- ◆ Conduct an outreach program using social media and posts on message boards to educate citizens about Duhacsek Park and the amenities that it offers.
- ◆ Consider the possibility of having Summer Day Camp at Duhacsek Park if the Imperial Park Recreation Center does not have enough space.

■ **Action 1.1.7. Conduct a feasibility study for a high-quality rentable event space at Duhacsek Park.**

With dozens of acres of undeveloped natural parkland, Duhacsek Park provides an opportunity for a rentable event venue (e.g., “Party Barn”) to increase the park’s usage and generate revenue for the Parks and Recreation Department. If developed using high-quality design and materials, this venue could be used for weddings, family reunions, and both formal and informal events. It is recommended that the City pursue a feasibility study to determine the viability of this option in the park. As a consideration, the feasibility study should evaluate the potential of pursuing a public-private partnership to fund and maintain the facility.



The Rabb House in Round Rock, TX is an example of a high-quality City-owned venue which can be rented for weddings and other events.

Photo courtesy: City of Round Rock, TX

■ **Action 1.1.8. Evaluate opportunities and implement improvements to Sugar Land Memorial Park.**

Sugar Land Memorial Park is a well-used park providing passive recreation and the only City-owned dog park. It is recommended that the City evaluate opportunities to enhance user experience and streamline maintenance through added amenities, landscape improvements, and increased use of green technology. Elements to consider include the following:

- ◆ Planting trees to provide shade along the Memorial Park trail. This would also require an irrigation system extension to water the trees.
- ◆ Improve and expand the current butterfly garden to provide habitat for pollinators and related educational elements for use by park users of all ages.
- ◆ Further utilize the windmills for planting irrigation and to maintain the stream feature.
- ◆ Add fitness equipment along the lake trail to provide additional exercise opportunities.
- ◆ Stock the main lake with additional fish to help maintain lake algae and attract fishing activities. This could be done in coordination with TPWD.
- ◆ Evaluate opportunities for adding a kayak rental and launch site in the park.
- ◆ Evaluate strategies to improve the water quality in the dog park water feature.



Stocking the main lake at Sugar Land Memorial Park can help maintain the health and aesthetics of the water feature, as well as attract additional fishing activities.



Adding fitness equipment along the lake trail in Sugar Land Memorial Park can diversify recreation and exercise opportunities for trail users.

- ◆ Implement additional dog park monitoring by the Park Ambassadors during peak hours to identify and address potential issues with negligent dog owners.

Dependent on the results of the updated Brazos River Corridor Master Plan, the City should proceed with implementation of trail connections between Sugar Land Memorial Park and the rest of the Brazos River corridor and the provision of unlighted open athletic fields (not affiliated with leagues).

■ **Action 1.1.9. Evaluate feasibility of retrofitting existing athletic fields, or developing new fields, to meet the need for adult sports facilities.**

Sugar Land, Greatwood, and New Territory have a large contingent of residents over the age of 35 and a sizable number of teenagers who will age into their twenties during the lifetime of this Plan (see Figure 2.1, *Age Comparisons*, in Chapter 2). The City's median age has increased from 30.4 in 1980 to 41.4 in 2015.¹ The area also have an active adult sports community. Throughout the planning process, the adult recreation representatives voiced a need for facilities suitable for adult soccer and softball. It is recommended that the City evaluate opportunities (such as in City Park) to retrofit existing athletic fields, or develop new facilities, to meet the community's need.

■ **Action 1.1.10. Develop a signage and wayfinding master plan with the Public Works Department to achieve a unified, creative, and unique Sugar Land parks signage and wayfinding system.**

As the City continues to enhance its parks and trail system, it is important to consider a unique, well-planned signage and wayfinding system. Wayfinding signage helps both residents and visitors navigate the City and becomes increasingly important as the City continues to develop destination sites and amenities. Once completed, the master plan will guide the implementation of the individual park signage improvements.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.



It is recommended that the City consider retrofitting or developing new fields to serve the adult athletics community.



As the City continues to develop destination sites and amenities, it is important to provide a well-planned wayfinding and signage system.

OBJECTIVE 1.2. Establish new park facilities in areas of need or to reduce deficiencies.

■ **Action 1.2.1. Continue to pursue land acquisition in the Brazos River corridor.**

Sugar Land has a unique opportunity to preserve and protect a continuous swath of land along the Brazos River. To date, the City owns over 950 acres along the corridor including Brazos River Park’s developed and undeveloped acreage, the Festival Site, and Sugar Land Memorial park. It is recommended that the City continue to pursue land acquisition in the area to complete the parkland corridor (see area “A” on Map 5.1, *Target Parkland Acquisition Areas*, on the following page). This will allow the corridor to be developed with pedestrian and bicycle connectivity, provide critical environmental protection, allow the City to minimize damage from floods, and open the door for the creation of a truly memorable regional destination. Once completed, the Brazos River corridor will draw users from throughout the region and beyond, thus also bringing the economic development opportunities associated with tourism.

■ **Action 1.2.2. Continue to pursue land acquisition adjacent to Gannoway Lake Park and implement the Gannoway Lake Park Master Plan.**

The Gannoway Lake Park Master Plan and Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) were completed in 2015. As part of a proposed development west of the park, the City has potential to gain over 100 acres of wetlands from the Johnson Development (see area “D” on Map 5.1, *Target Parkland Acquisition Areas*, on the following page). The master plan and PER developed concepts for the use of this area. It is recommended that the City continue to pursue acquisition of the wetland areas and proceed with Phase 1 development of the park. This includes a parking lot, picnic pavilion, playground, trails, boardwalk/fishing pier, canoe/kayak access, restroom, and educational signage. As part of the public survey, respondents indicated that the most important elements to include in the City’s parks located near sensitive natural areas (e.g., Gannoway) were bicycle and pedestrian trails, trailheads with parking, shade, picnic areas, and pavilions (see Figure 2.21, *Nature-Based Passive Recreation Amenities*, in Chapter 2). Phase 1 development of Gannoway Lake Park would fall directly in line with the community desires.

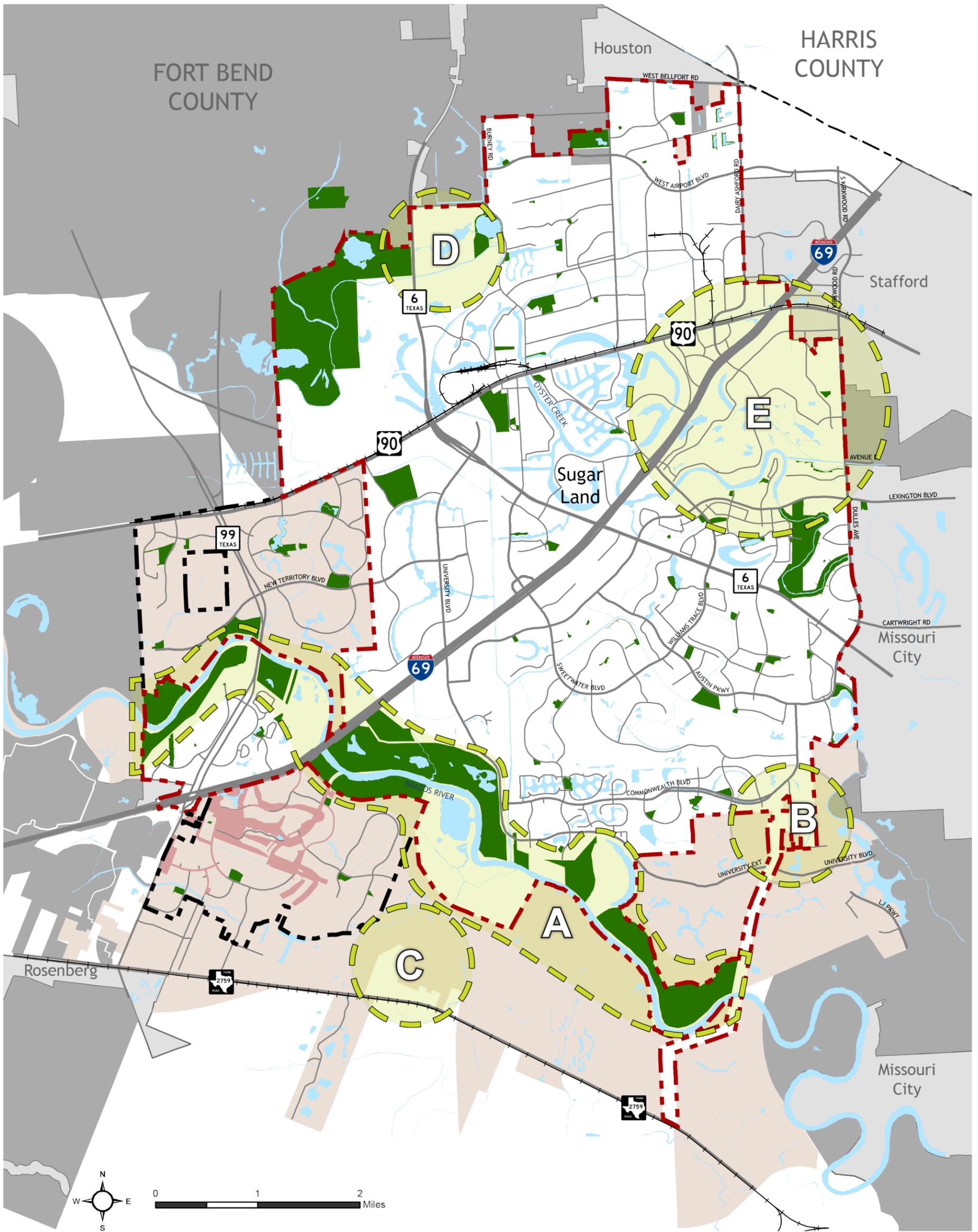
Additional future considerations for the park include development of a nature center to provide environmental education (see Action 2.2.1) and a paddling trail connection between Cullinan Park and Gannoway Lake Park.

Figure 5.3, Parkland and Economic Development

Today, quality parks and recreation services are considered equally as important as the traditional provision of public safety and utilities in cities throughout the country. Particularly in more affluent communities, parks and recreation are even becoming a differentiator in determining where people want to live in today’s more connected and mobile world.

In essence, more communities are realizing that parks and open spaces not only provide areas of recreation, but they also provide health and environmental benefits, a sense of community, higher property values, greater competitiveness, and an overall better quality of life. These attributes further attract more residents, businesses, and visitors to the city thereby further strengthening the economic sustainability of the community.





Map 5.1, Target Parkland Acquisition Areas

Legend

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
|  City Parks (City and HOA) |  Nearby City ETJs |  Target Parkland Acquisition Areas |
|  Sugar Land City Limits |  Counties | |
|  City Limits 2018 |  Lakes, Streams, Creeks | |
|  Sugar Land Limited Purpose Annexation (2017) |  Major Roads | |
|  Nearby City Limits |  Minor Roads | |
|  Sugar Land ETJ |  Railroads | |

■ **Action 1.2.3. Prepare a revised master plan for the 65-Acre Community Park to include family-friendly, passive (e.g., trails) and active (e.g., athletic fields) recreation amenities supported by the community.**

The City-owned 65-Acre Community Park located between the residential and commercial parts of the Telfair subdivision was master planned and included in the 2013 bond election. Despite the very close vote, the proposed improvements for this park did not pass. This park holds great potential as a community-level park to serve the west sector of the City. It is thus recommended that the City revisit a master planning effort for the park. This would also include initiating discussions with FBISD to determine their plans for their adjacent property (especially the north and west side of their newly designed Career and Technical Center), coordinating the design plans with the Telfair community, and officially naming the park.

Development of this park will likely be taken back to the voters during an upcoming bond election. It will be important to ensure that the proposed plan meets the wants and needs voiced by the community. During the public engagement component of this Plan, the amenities that respondents indicated were most important in the park included picnic amenities, trails, historical and cultural elements, playscape and spray grounds, unprogrammed open space, and soccer and cricket fields (see Figure 2.22, *New Community Park Amenities* and Figure 2.34, *New Community Park Programming*). As such, the master plan should consider picnic pavilions, a wet/dry playground, restroom, loop trail and trail connection to the City’s trail network, athletic fields, parking, and landscaping. The City could consider potential reforestation and/or native grassland restoration areas within the park to provide shade and environmental education, reduce maintenance requirements, and still allow sufficient space for other amenities.

Additionally, the historic prison cemetery within the park provides a unique opportunity for historic and cultural education. The City of Sugar Land Cultural Arts Strategic Plan and Implementation Guide recommends building on existing historic and cultural assets. In 2016, a historical marker was placed on this site. Through improved fencing and educational signage with historical photos, this piece of Sugar Land history can be appreciated and recognized by residents.

Any designs for the park should consider the property’s proximity to the Sugar Land Regional Airport and include engagement with the community to ensure that residents support the plan.



The historic cemetery in the 65-Acre Community Park provides an opportunity for historic and cultural education.

■ **Action 1.2.4. Evaluate opportunities to address facility deficiencies.**

The facility component of the access-based assessment in Chapter 4 identified facilities which the City is deficient in today and/or will be deficient in the future. As additional amenities are developed by area homeowner associations, and the City develops park master plans or provides improvements to developed parks, consideration should be given to the inclusion of facilities which the community is or will be deficient in. This includes:

- ◆ Basketball courts (deficit of 6.5 to 15 courts by 2030)
- ◆ Recreation center space
- ◆ Amphitheater/outdoor performance space (deficit of 1 by 2030)
- ◆ 18-hole disc golf course (deficit of 1 to 2 by 2030)
- ◆ Splash pads (deficit of 2 to 5 by 2030)



It is recommended that the City begin to plan for development of the additional recreation center space which will be needed in upcoming years.

OBJECTIVE 1.3. Consider using a variety of financing strategies to fund the new parks, public spaces, and recreational facility capital investments identified in this Plan.

- **Action 1.3.1. Consider approaching the citizens with a bond election to fund identified larger-scale capital improvements for Brazos River Park, the 65-Acre Community Park, Gannoway Lake Park, Imperial Park, City Park, and First Colony Park.**

Sugar Land has had a long, predominantly successful history with their citizens supporting bond propositions for park, recreation, and amenity-related projects. When combined with the City’s high AAA credit rating, this allows the City to finance proposed projects with highly competitive rates. In the 1999 bond election, citizens voted to approve the construction of the Imperial Park Recreation Center and Sugar Land Memorial Park development.

In 2013, voters approved two of the three bond propositions including the creation of the recently completed Festival Site at Brazos River Park and the construction of 10 miles of trails and bridges. A third proposition related to a new 65-acre community park located near the Telfair area was narrowly defeated by voters (51 to 49 percent) due to a lack of support for the proposed amenities.

Moving forward, citizen sentiment still shows strong support for park-related projects. As identified throughout Chapter 2, *Understanding the Community*, respondents to the public engagement process overwhelmingly provided feedback supporting investments for paved and natural trails within parks and more natural areas and wildlife habitat (see Figure 2.16, *Recreation Facility Priorities*). This could indicate strong support for expansion of these types of projects at Brazos River Park, Gannoway Lake Park, and in other parks too. When asked specifically about the undeveloped 65-Acre Community Park, respondents to the public engagement process indicated strong support for picnic shelters, pavilions and restrooms, multi-purpose fields, spraygrounds, internal paved and natural trails, and pedestrian and bicycle connections to the citywide trail system (see Figure 2.22, *New Community Park Amenities* and Figure 2.34, *New Community Park Programming*). This support could be further strengthened through specific master planning for these projects. This could include a master plan update (with public engagement) for both the Brazos River Corridor (see Action 1.1.1) and the undeveloped 65-Acre Community Park (see Action 1.2.3). Additionally, there are substantial planned renovations/improvements at both Imperial Park and First Colony Park which may warrant a voter-supported bond proposition.

Considering that all of the past bond-supported projects are now in finishing stages of completion, the City should consider preparing a new round of bond-ready projects and vetting them through a broadly represented citizen bond committee.



Voter-approved bond funding was used for the construction of the Imperial Park Recreation Center.



A sprayground can be integrated into a larger gathering area or into a more traditional park setting.

Photo courtesy: City of Round Rock

■ **Action 1.3.2. Evaluate athletic league fees to ensure they are adequately offsetting costs.**

There are a variety of users of the City’s athletic fields. These include teams comprised entirely of Sugar Land youth as well as more competitive teams (oftentimes called select teams) which serve a much larger area than just Sugar Land. All of these teams utilize taxpayer funded park properties in the Sugar Land park system. While many of these teams are non-profits, they do charge fees to offset the cost of facility fees and other program needs. Moving forward, the City should consider an evaluation of the fee structure serving athletics in Sugar Land. In particular, an evaluation should be made to determine whether the current level of fees are sufficient to cover the costs of maintenance provided by PARD staff. If not, a determination should be made as to whether or not facility fees should completely offset the costs of maintenance and whether fees for select teams should be higher since they serve larger numbers of non-City taxpaying participants from outside the Sugar Land area.



As athletic leagues are often allowed exclusive use of fields, it is important to ensure that the league fees are offsetting costs of providing the amenities.

■ **Action 1.3.3. Evaluate and pursue public-private partnerships for development of parks and recreation facilities.**

Public-private partnerships (PPPs) that operate under a private management framework, yet are subsidized with public funding are becoming more common in cities. Indeed, Sugar Land has a strong history of successful public-private partnerships, including Sugar Land Town Square, Constellation Field, the Houston Museum of Natural Sciences at Sugar Land, and the recently completed Smart Financial Centre at Sugar Land. Each of these projects create a clear and direct benefit to the everyday lives of Sugar Land residents. But, these projects also provide indirect economic benefit to City residents through increased sales taxes and increases in other tax or fee revenue.

As the City continues to focus greater resources on the provision of community and regional park amenities, it may be requested to consider additional PPPs. As such, the City should consider creating a policy document which identifies the evaluation criteria for determining which PPPs make long-term financial sense for the City. At a minimum, the policy should stipulate that future PPPs show a clear benefit to Sugar Land residents and contribute to the City’s economic development goals.



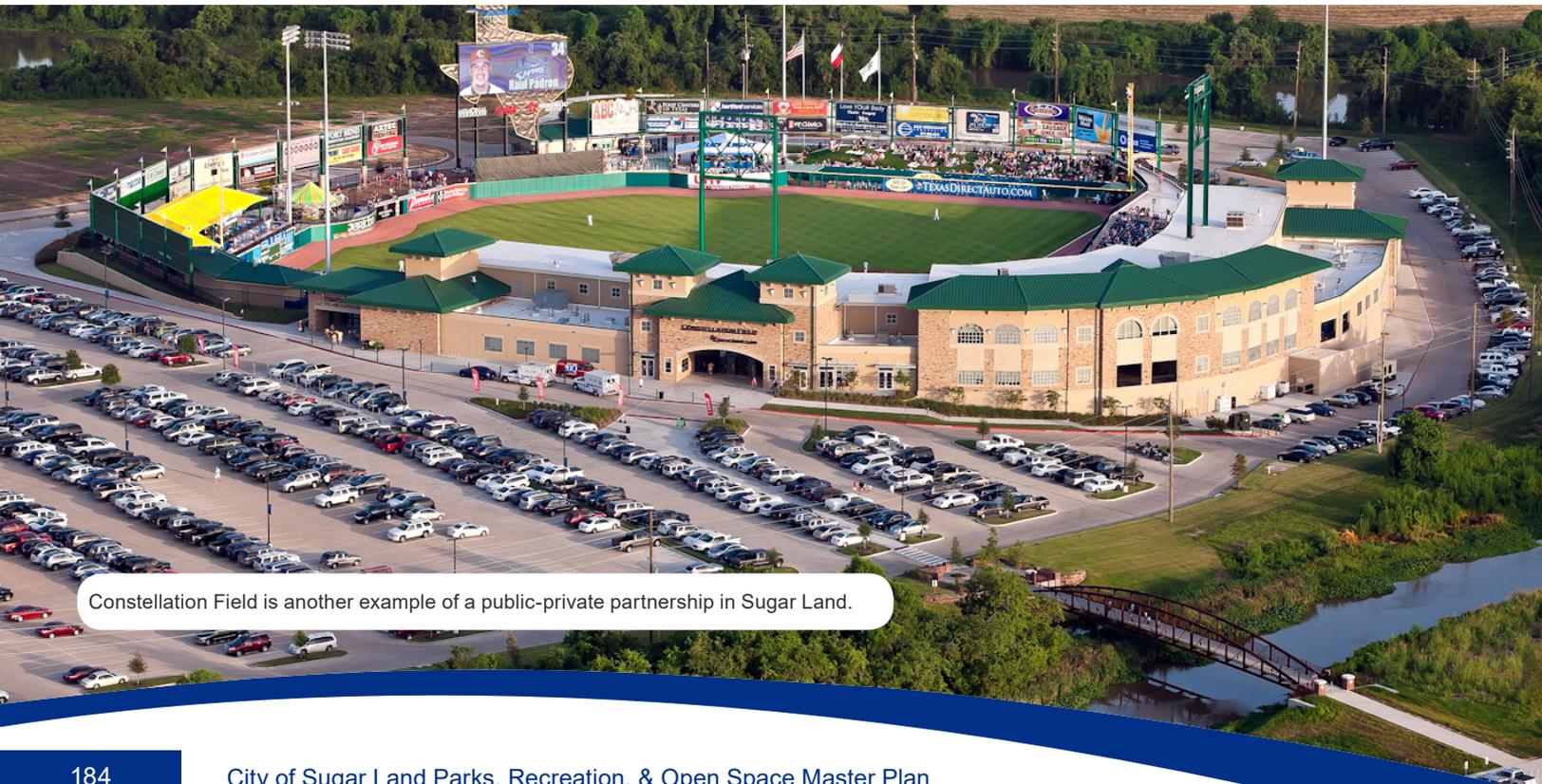
The Smart Financial Centre at Sugar Land was created as a public-private partnership.

More specifically, the policy document should create evaluation criteria that evaluates the public benefit of the project, the business plan for the project, and the private entity's background in providing similar successful projects elsewhere.

Similarly, the City may also see an increase in requests for public assistance for distressed commercial recreation-related businesses. In these instances, the City should also determine the clear benefit to Sugar Land residents, the connection to traditional City recreational offerings, and the proposed impact on long-term economic development. Larger-scale public assistance requests (e.g., complete buyouts) may need to be taken to the voters for their consideration.

■ **Action 1.3.4. Evaluate and maximize opportunities for the development of revenue-generating amenities in the parks system.**

As set out in the Peer Community Comparison section in Chapter 4, *System Needs*, the City's operational budget and earned revenue is lower than the lower quartile of its peer communities. Indeed, the City's revenue per capita is \$3 less than the per capita of the lower quartile and \$33 less than the upper quartile. While this means that City residents are paying less fees, they are paying more in property taxes to cover operational budgets. This may or may not be in line with community preference. Irrespective, there is a great opportunity for the City to consider additional opportunities for revenue generating amenities. When one considers potential differences between in-City versus out-of-City rates, the potential revenue generation further increases.



Constellation Field is another example of a public-private partnership in Sugar Land.

With regard to new revenue-generating amenities, the City will need to consider the balance between enhancements that serve local families (with an intent of repeat visits) versus serving non-City visitors who may be more likely to visit more destination-oriented amenities that contribute to the City’s other economic development goals. In either case, the new revenue-generating uses would remain publicly accessible and should generate as much income as possible without detracting from other traditional park uses.

There are a series of revenue-generating opportunities throughout the Sugar Land park system. These include, but are not limited to:

- ◆ enhanced indoor rental spaces for meetings and events at existing facilities (e.g., at First Colony, Imperial, Eldridge, and Lost Creek Parks) or at new indoor rental spaces (e.g., at new facilities at Duhacsek, Gannoway, etc.);
- ◆ outdoor rentable pavilions (e.g., at Sugar Land Memorial Park) or event spaces (e.g., the Festival Site);
- ◆ bike rentals (e.g., in the Sugar Land Town Center or Brazos River Park with connections to the citywide trail system);
- ◆ paddle (or pedal) boat and/or kayak rentals (e.g., in Brazos River Park Phase 2; Gannoway Lake, etc.);
- ◆ nature center entrance fees (e.g., at Gannoway) or other entrance fees for special amenities;
- ◆ higher fees for more intensive use of sport fields and courts (e.g., higher fees for uses which need lighting);
- ◆ more special events such as running, biking, triathlon recreational events (e.g., at Brazos River Park);
- ◆ more competitive sport tournaments;
- ◆ among others.

Over time, the City could consider and plan for other revenue generating uses such as an indoor natatorium, more substantial municipal botanical garden, water park, etc.



Pedal boat rentals can generate revenue for a city parks and recreation department.



Special events, such as triathlons, can generate additional revenue.



Sugar Land strives to be a culturally engaging City with numerous events and programs which celebrate the diversity of the community.

GOAL 2: Sugar Land's parks and recreation system will maximize opportunities for creating outstanding cultural arts, educational, and recreational opportunities.

Sugar Land is a culturally diverse, well-educated community. The City recognizes this and strives to provide a variety of cultural, educational, and recreational opportunities to create an enriching community experience (Comprehensive Plan Goal H: Outstanding Cultural Arts, Educational and Recreational Opportunities). This includes cultural programs, events, and venues; opportunities to experience art throughout everyday and special activities; and high-quality recreational programming. By providing multigenerational programming, incorporation of education into City parks, and a diverse event calendar, residents and visitors can be provided with outstanding opportunities for socialization, improved health, and a higher quality of life.

The following objectives and actions are recommended to achieve this goal.

OBJECTIVE 2.1. Enhance multigenerational recreational facilities and program offerings in the City.

■ Action 2.1.1. Evaluate the feasibility of discontinuing non-resident memberships, as attendance increases and space decreases, in the City's recreation and senior centers.

Memberships at the Imperial Park Recreation Center and T.E. Harman Senior Center have grown consistently over the past six years. Since 2011, total Imperial Park Recreation Center memberships have increased by 19 percent and T.E. Harman Senior Center memberships have increased by 239 percent. Of that growth, non-resident memberships have grown by 45 percent at the Recreation Center and 305 percent at the Senior Center. At the current capacity of the Recreation and Senior Centers, there is a possibility that non-resident memberships may eventually prohibit the ability of residents to use the facility. Now that the City has annexed New Territory and Greatwood, thus shifting those populations from non-resident to resident status, it is recommended that the City evaluate the feasibility of discontinuing non-resident memberships as attendance continues to increase. While the Recreation and Senior Centers are providing a valuable asset to non-residents, the City's responsibility, first and foremost, is to serve the residents of Sugar Land.

Figure 5.4, Role of Sugar Land Parks and Recreation Resources

One of the original intentions of developing a recreation center in Sugar Land was that it was not to compete with the semi-public or private entities who provide similar recreational facilities or program offerings.

While this remains true today, the Imperial Park Recreation Center does play an extremely important role for the Sugar Land community. In particular, the City's facilities and program offerings oftentimes provide an avenue for Sugar Land residents to cost-effectively try a variety of different program types and recreational activities without long-term contracts or costly monthly fees.

As interest increases in any particular activity, or more advanced program instruction is needed, these opportunities can oftentimes be supplied by the private sector or other groups which specialize in these activities.



■ **Action 2.1.2. Review current program offerings at the recreation and senior centers to determine appropriate future programming to best meet demands and use of resources.**

As evidenced by public survey and open house results, residents of Sugar Land value the programs and events provided by the PARD. Based on the level of importance and unmet need identified during the public survey, providing additional adult, senior, and cultural programs were all identified as high priority recreation programming needs (see Figure 2.19, *Recreation Programming Priorities*, in Chapter 2). As described in Figure 5.5, *Sugar Land's Changing Demographics*, Sugar Land's population, similar to populations in cities across the country, is aging. It is important that the City continue to evaluate its offerings to ensure the needs of the entire population are being met.

In order to best meet demands and provide a programming schedule that is sustainable in the long term, it is recommended that the City review current program offerings and provide appropriate additional programming to serve the public. This includes a further evaluation of demand for classes involving adult fitness and wellness, adult leisure learning, senior fitness and wellness, and cultural programming. Expressed demand includes increased recreation offerings (e.g., martial arts, dance and fitness, basketball and volleyball, and day camps) and senior programming (e.g., arts and crafts, board games/games, language classes, and special activities).

■ **Action 2.1.3. Evaluate opportunities to increase recreation space and improve amenities at the Imperial Park Recreation Center.**

The City's indoor recreation space is heavily used and in high demand. Over the years, there has been a growing demand for increased space, a cardio weight room, and a pool. Based on the peer community comparisons presented in Chapter 4, Sugar Land has nearly 45,000 square feet less of indoor recreation space than the median of the communities. Based on this, the expressed demand of Sugar Land residents, and the fact that the City already has to use meeting rooms in parks to accommodate recreational programming, it is recommended that the City evaluate opportunities to increase recreation space and improve amenities at the Imperial Park Recreation Center.

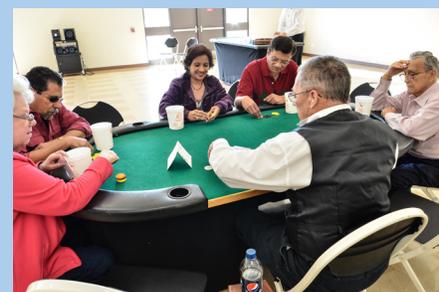
Expanded elements to consider include converting meeting space to a cardio and/or weight room, a lounge/seating area, and additional space for multipurpose recreational classes (with mirrors, floating wood floors, a stage, and sound system). If a cardio and/or weight room is added, the City should first evaluate any potential negative impacts on local private fitness establishments.

Figure 5.5, Sugar Land's Changing Demographics

As set out in Chapter 2, *Understanding the Community*, the demographics in Sugar Land are changing. As Sugar Land has matured over the years, the City has seen an increase in the number of mature adults, seniors, and teens. Sugar Land has also seen a diversification of its ethnic composition. With the annexation of both Greatwood and New Territory unincorporated subdivisions, these trends will become even more pronounced (based on their current composition).

Moving forward, the City will need to keep a close watch on its program offerings for adults (e.g., adult athletics). It will also have to expand existing facilities and programs to accommodate the exponential growth of senior services and may see further demand for diversified recreational sports and activities (e.g., cricket).

Additionally, as Sugar Land's youth continue to grow up and adults become more reliant on their smartphones for daily activities, the City will need to adapt by making parks more technologically engaging.



During the facility and site evaluation, the City should also review the areas where members are traveling from. It may become evident that additional space is needed south of Highway 59/ Interstate 69 for a new facility. As the City pursues potential parkland acquisition in the southeast portion of the City (see Action 3.3.1), consideration should be given to the feasibility of developing such a facility on the property. Future analysis would be needed to determine cost.

■ **Action 2.1.4. Consider altering the Imperial Park Recreation Center membership fee structure to allow for greater revenue while still providing a cost-effective recreation option for users.**

As set out in the Peer Community Comparison section in Chapter 4, *System Needs*, the City’s level of revenue generation is higher than the national average. However, this does not reflect that many departments across the country offer programming during shorter portions of the year due to varying climate considerations. When compared to peer communities in Texas and the sunbelt regions of the country, Sugar Land measures lower than the lower quartile (\$7 per capita versus \$10 per capita for peer communities). Similarly, this also impacts operating expenditures per capita (\$49 for Sugar Land and \$59 for peer communities). This is a direct correlation to the City’s fee structure for various facilities and program offerings. One example is the cost of membership for the City’s Imperial Park Recreation Center (currently set at \$10 for residents and \$58 for non-residents).

While the original stated purpose of the City’s Recreation Center was not to compete with similar program offerings provided by the private sector, there is large discrepancy between the rates people pay at City and private establishments. As such, it is recommended the City undertake a cost study to determine appropriate increases in member or program fees to determine if increases are warranted.



Additional recreation space is needed to accommodate the recreation wants and needs of the community.

■ **Action 2.1.5. Perform a study of the T.E. Harman Senior Center facility to determine if it can be enlarged or expanded to increase space and programming opportunities.**

The T.E. Harman Senior Center was fully renovated and remodeled in 2011 to provide additional, improved space. Since then, the Senior Center has seen very significant user growth (over 20,000 program participants in 2016) and is in need of expansion, or a second facility is needed. It is recommended that the City perform a study of the existing Senior Center to determine if it can be expanded. Expressed wants and/or needs raised by Senior Center staff and users include expanded hours to allow weekend use; expanded programming to include health, safety, education, tax help, etc.; fitness machines with trainers; larger computer training



An increase in member program fees may be warranted.

area/resource center; additional classrooms; noise attenuation between rooms; an indoor walking track; movie room; reading room with large print books (or an expansion to the library); snack bar; and increased storage. Improved transportation options and increased opportunities for “being green” are also important.

The study should also consider other alternative locations to allow for the growth of senior programming if the current location cannot be expanded. This includes identification of appropriate space for rental reservations (to accommodate up to a 300 person event) which does not interfere with normal programming operations of the Senior Center.



With the growing population over age 50, the need for additional senior center space is increasing.

■ **Action 2.1.6. Identify opportunities to streamline the recreation reservation process.**

Throughout discussions with the public and recreation staff, it was identified that a streamlined recreation reservation process is needed. It is recommended that the City evaluate opportunities for online reservation capabilities, increased staffing, and allowing day-of program registration.

■ **Action 2.1.7. Continue to support leagues and their economic impact on the City.**

Athletic league use of Sugar Land amenities brings thousands of non-residents into Sugar Land on a regular basis. This impacts the local economy through increased sales tax revenue, and use of local restaurants and hotels. It is recommended that the City continue to support leagues in Sugar Land and maintain the economic support they contribute to the City.

■ **Action 2.1.8. Initiate discussions with local youth sports leagues to reevaluate partnership responsibilities.**

Many of the City’s athletic fields are used exclusively by leagues. In order to ensure that sufficient City resources are available to perform tasks that serve the needs of the general public, it is recommended that the City initiate discussions with local youth sports leagues to reevaluate partnership responsibilities. Discussions should clarify who is responsible for renovation and maintenance of sports in-fields and end of season cleaning. Additionally, the City should encourage leagues to increase to supplemental assistance for tournaments (i.e., restrooms, trash pickup and supplies).



The numerous sports leagues in Sugar Land provide opportunities for team building and leadership, and promote citywide health and fitness.

■ **Action 2.1.9. Pursue further additions of public art in the City’s parks system to further define Sugar Land as a culturally engaging destination city.**

Sugar Land strives to be a destination city known for a high quality of life, memorable experiences, and opportunities to experience a one-of-a-kind visually appealing environment. The City of Sugar Land Cultural Arts Strategic Plan and Implementation Guide lays out a series of five priorities and 14 recommendations to strengthen the cultural arts in the City (see Figure 5.6, *Cultural Arts Implementation*). As a way to further the priority of celebrating and distinguishing Sugar Land through the cultural arts, and to help distinguish Sugar Land as a culturally engaging destination city, it is recommended that the City further integrate public art into the parks system. This could be through both temporary and permanent art displays, multi-media exhibitions, and arts-related programming in the parks.

■ **Action 2.1.10. Evaluate additional opportunities to increase multigenerational passive recreation amenities in existing and future City parks.**

Sugar Land’s parks system includes hundreds of acres of natural land. During the public survey, the provision of paved and natural surface walking and biking trails within parks, as well as natural areas and wildlife habitat, were selected as three of the five top recreation facility priorities (see Figure 2.16, *Recreation Facility Priorities*, in Chapter 2). In an effort to address this need, it is recommended that the City increase multigenerational passive recreation amenities in the parks system. Example amenities include paved and natural trails for walking and biking, natural areas and wildlife habitat and viewing, paddling trails and other water-based recreational amenities, and other opportunities to access and be in nature. Increased passive recreation brings the Sugar Land community into the parks, increases their connection to nature, and builds awareness for protection of the City’s natural resources.

■ **Action 2.1.11. Evaluate the need for additional recreational personnel as part of new development or expansion of the recreation and senior centers.**

There is a current need for additional staffing to operate the recreation and senior centers. This need intensifies with population growth and increases in program offerings. It is recommended that the City evaluate current staffing and designate funding for the needed staff increases.

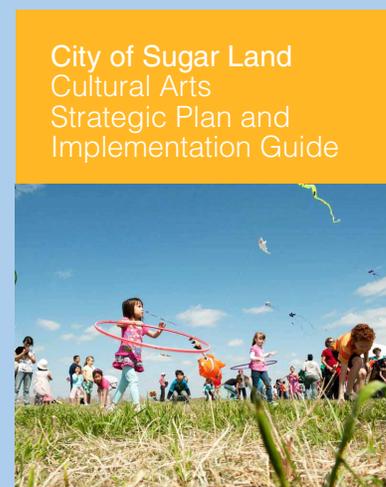
Figure 5.6, Cultural Arts Implementation

Over time, as Sugar Land has matured and transitioned from its historic roots as a plantation and company town to one of the most affluent, educated, and ethnically diverse communities in Texas, it has also increased its efforts in embracing and expanding its cultural arts and tourism offerings.

To stay proactive, the City commissioned a study to understand how Sugar Land could maximize its cultural art opportunities, and then embarked on a 10-year process to ensure its sustainable growth and vitality.

Parks play a strong role in increasing the amount of cultural art opportunities in a city, through increased art in public parks, through educational programming, and especially through special events.

To further acknowledge this important connection between parks and cultural arts, the City reestablished its parks advisory board as the Parks, Arts, Recreation, Culture, and Streetscapes (PARCS) Board in 2014.



OBJECTIVE 2.2. Increase community education in City parks, trails, and programming.

■ Action 2.2.1. Develop an Environmental Education Center.

Sugar Land's parks system provides an excellent opportunity for outdoor education experiences to teach residents and visitors of all ages about the natural systems around them. It is recommended that the City develop a new environmental education center to include programming on invasive plants and wildlife, composting, vermiculture, solid waste handling, water quality and cycles, stormwater, and air pollution. The center could be staffed through a revision of the City's "Keep Sugar Land Beautiful" contract and with Sugar Land Department of Environmental & Neighborhood Services staff. Further opportunities for partnering could include FBISD, Lamar ISD, and other independent schools. Opportunities for development of this center exist in Gannoway Lake Park (see Action 1.2.2).



A public garden can include demonstration areas as educational elements for park users.

■ Action 2.2.2. Develop a Public/Botanic Garden.

Oyster Creek Park is already a high-quality, visually appealing park with water elements, sculpture, and other art pieces. It is recommended that the City enhance the plantings in the park and market it as a public/botanic garden (see Action 3.2.6). Areas could be designated for native plantings, manicured annual and perennial plantings, and more natural wildflower areas with nature trails, among others. Signage should be used throughout the garden to educate visitors about the plants they're viewing and their appropriate uses. Design and maintenance of the garden could potentially coordinated with local and regional gardening groups.

OBJECTIVE 2.3. Provide an economically sustainable, family-friendly, culturally engaging calendar of regularly scheduled and special events at venues suitable to each event.

■ Action 2.3.1. Evaluate and implement opportunities to improve the iFest Live special event.

The City's iFest Live is a celebration of the cultural diversity of the community and has been running for over 10 years. As an event that falls in line with the functions of the PARD, it has been transitioned from the Office of Strategic Initiatives to the PARD and 2017 will be the first year PARD hosts the festival. The additional workload associated with the festival will require creatively managing and balancing the current holiday event workload while taking on the additional responsibility of another event. In order to do this, the City will gain a staffing increase for the holiday season due to the overload of scheduled City events during the tight time frame.



iFest Live is a highly attended community event which celebrates the cultural diversity of Sugar Land.

In order to maximize the community benefit of the event, the City should introduce remaining committees, vendors, schools districts, etc., to the traditional Cultural Kite Festival organizers and discuss the possibility of a future merger/partnership. If the event is merged with the traditional Cultural Kite Festival, the City should aim for an overall goal of a two-day joint event with a weekend worth of activities. Coordination with Visit Sugar Land can help to ultimately make these events a destination weekend for the City of Sugar Land.

■ **Action 2.3.2. Evaluate opportunities and implement improvements to the Cultural Kite Festival special event.**

In addition to the merger with the iFest Live (see Action 2.3.1), there are some key improvements that can be made to the Cultural Kite Festival. The City has successfully transitioned the event from Sugar Land Memorial Park to Brazos River Park. To better accommodate attendees, the City should build event infrastructure as needed, once a baseline is established. This infrastructure includes fencing, ticketing, staging, new programming, etc. Once infrastructure is in place, it is recommended that Visit Sugar Land be used to promote the event on a larger scale.



The Star Spangled Spectacular draws a consistently large crowd every year.

■ **Action 2.3.3. Evaluate opportunities and implement sponsorships or third party involvement to improvement the Star Spangled Spectacular special event.**

Now that the Sugar Land Festival Site is completed, the City has successfully transitioned the Star Spangled Spectacular event from Constellation Field to the Festival Site. The City should seek sponsorship funding to successfully program the event in the new space with its anticipated crowd size. As event planning continues, the City will need to build event infrastructure as needed, including fencing, ticketing, staging, new programming, etc. Visit Sugar Land should be used to promote the event on a larger scale so as to grow the attendance and regional draw.



In 2016, New Year's Eve on the Square was attended by over 50,000 people.

■ **Action 2.3.4. Evaluate the future of the New Year's Eve special event.**

The 2016 New Year's Eve event was attended by over 50,000 people. It is recommended that the City find a way to manage anticipated crowd size and create a safer environment by implementing new security measures. Sponsorship funding should be pursued to help with event programming. In upcoming years, staff should brainstorm new and creative ideas to enhance the event's main attraction for future years.

■ **Action 2.3.5. Evaluate opportunities and implement improvements to the Eggstravaganza special event.**

Eggstravaganza is a free event held in Eldridge Park in March. In 2016, the event was attended by approximately 10,000 people. In order to better accommodate the crowd, it is recommended the City transition the event from Eldridge Park to Brazos River Park and/or the Festival Site. Once transitioned, the City will need to build event infrastructure as needed, including fencing, new programming, etc. In future years, the City could consider possibly turning the event into a large Children's Festival hosted in the Spring.



Halloween Town is a well-attended family-oriented event.

■ **Action 2.3.6. Evaluate opportunities and implement improvements to the Halloween Town special event.**

The City's Halloween Town special event has grown from 10,000 attendees in 2012 to approximately 20,000 attendees in 2016. Based on continuous growth over the years, the City should seek a new location or venue for the event and transition the event once a location is decided. Once transitioned, the City will need to build event infrastructure as needed, including fencing, new programming, etc. As the City considers locations, it should negotiate a better venue partnership based on comparison to other new offerings in the Sugar Land area.

■ **Action 2.3.7. Consider adding additional special event programming to Oyster Creek Park.**

Public survey respondents indicated that concerts, performing arts, and outdoor fairs and festivals were their top two recreational programming priorities. Oyster Creek Park holds great potential to serve as a small special event venue. It is recommended that the City consider adding a one-day event small enough to be held at the park without running into parking, traffic, or crowd control issues. Potential event examples include Art Festivals, Movie or Concert Series, Back to School "Rec Fest," etc.



Additional sponsorships can help to offset some of the City's costs to hold events.

■ **Action 2.3.8. Identify opportunities to grow the Sponsorship Program for special events.**

With greater special event programming comes greater expenses. As the City strives to expand its event schedule it should develop a solid plan for obtaining event sponsorships. Upfront discussion can strategically plan how the sponsorship funding will be best used to enhance future events. As sponsorship increases, the City will need to seek a partnership or increased staffing to take on the additional workload of partnering with large sponsors.

■ **Action 2.3.9. Consider adding special event programming to the Pawm Springs Dog Park.**

As a well-loved dog park, situated amidst a larger park, the Pawm Springs Dog Park has potential to host special pet-friendly events. It is thus recommended that the City consider special event programming for the park. This could include an annual festival where the local animal shelter, pet-related vendors, and animal-related charities come together to increase awareness about pet care, products, and animal issues within the City. The Cedar Bark Festival held in Cedar Park, TX is an example of this type of event.



Special event programming at Pawm Springs Dog Park would provide opportunities for people and dogs from around the community to come together and socialize.

■ **Action 2.3.10. Continue to evaluate additional opportunities for community events in the City’s parks and event facilities.**

In order to meet the community’s desire for increased special events, the City should continue to evaluate additional opportunities for community events. Potential event ideas include:

- ◆ Additional concerts and/or performing arts (including ones which are privately produced in partnership with the City)
- ◆ Outdoor fairs and festivals (e.g., a food truck festival)
- ◆ Cultural events (e.g., a Chinese lantern festival)
- ◆ Park-specific events (e.g., movies in the park)
- ◆ Other City special events (e.g., a balloon festival)

■ **Action 2.3.11. Evaluate the need for full- or part-time personnel or contracted services for special events.**

As the City expands its special event programming, it will need to evaluate the need for additional staffing. This could include the hiring of additional full-time personnel, or part-time personnel who are specifically used during special event programming, to set up, operate, and clean-up special events. This could also include contracting out specific tasks.



Special events require a significant amount of man-power. The City should evaluate the need for additional personnel to help ensure that events run smoothly.

GOAL 3: Sugar Land’s parks and recreation system will contribute to the continued success of the City’s great neighborhoods.

Sugar Land strives to create great neighborhoods which have strong identity and pride, up-to-date neighborhood infrastructure, and are well-maintained. These great neighborhoods are supported by strong, effective homeowner and neighborhood associations, and top quality community and neighborhood parks which include both active and passive recreational opportunities (Comprehensive Plan Goal F: Great Neighborhoods). Indeed, great parks and recreation facilities and amenities are oftentimes a foundation to having great neighborhoods. In Sugar Land, this foundation is currently being predominantly provided through a combination of City and homeowner association efforts and resources. Moving forward, continued partnership will strengthen this park/neighborhood relationship and further contribute to Sugar Land setting the bar in the greater region. The following objectives and actions are recommended to achieve this goal.

OBJECTIVE 3.1. Utilize increased communication and partnerships to strengthen homeowner connection to the City park system.

- **Action 3.1.1. Evaluate opportunities for increased communication and sharing of resources with the areas’ homeowner associations.**

Homeowner and neighborhood associations can be an effective means to communicate with the residents of Sugar Land. At a minimum, this could include greater outreach and coordination and/or marketing of recreational facility and program offerings to area homeowner associations, particularly as it relates to program offerings not provided by the HOA or special events. It could also include coordination and outreach to establish a neighborhood-sponsored “adopt-a-park” program or to solicit neighborhood or community park “work” days in City parks. In this regard, the intent is to foster stronger neighborhood “ownership” of the City parks in their neighborhoods.

- **Action 3.1.2. Evaluate opportunities to make Sugar Land parks more technologically engaging.**

We live in a day and age where both adults and children are inherently inseparable from their smartphone technology. There is also growing evidence that our local park and recreation resources are one of the strongest conduits of getting people out and reconnected to nature. As such, the City should evaluate additional opportunities to increase use of technology to further engage and get people out and into the City park system. This could include such things as providing “Wi-Fi” accessibility in



Providing Wi-Fi accessibility in parks can help to create a more technologically engaging parks system.

select parks, portions of select parks, or during special events. This could also include creating a program which incentivizes visitation of the park system (e.g., allowing visitors to “check in” at parks as they visit them individually over time), development of a more robust website which uses interactive mapping to identify facility and amenity locations, and further online resources to create branding and connection to the City’s park system.

■ **Action 3.1.3. Evaluate and update joint use policies to strengthen the partnership between the City and ISDs.**

School facilities are distributed in neighborhoods throughout Sugar Land (see Map 3.4, *Existing School Parks and Recreation Facilities* in Chapter 3), with some schools being located directly adjacent to City parkland. In these areas, there are opportunities for coordination between the City and ISDs to share facilities and develop mutually beneficial amenities. In other areas, school amenities have the potential to support recreational needs of the surrounding neighborhood. It is recommended that the City continue to increase communication and partnership with the ISDs to strengthen their connection to the City parks system. The City should evaluate and update its joint-use policies in order to continue to maximize the public benefit of all parks and recreation facilities.



Beyond recess, school facilities such as Brazos Bend Elementary, provide opportunities for recreation and fitness outside of school hours.

OBJECTIVE 3.2. Improve existing City parks in order to enhance local user experience.

■ Action 3.2.1. Evaluate opportunities and implement improvements to First Colony Park.

A project included in the City's 2010 Capital Improvement Program identified proposed improvements to First Colony Park. It is recommended that as funding becomes available, the City proceed with the second phase of planned improvements. This includes ball field lighting and fence updates for fields three, four, and five; replacement of walkway paving; and adding security lighting along the walkway and in the parking lot. It is also recommended that the City upgrade the Pony 2 field complex, including fence renovation, backstop, lighting, batting cage issues, and in-field repairs.

In order to plan for the landscape longevity, it is recommended that the City pursue an assessment of the existing trees and landscape issues in the park (including the struggling Drake Elms) and plan for upcoming removals and replacement of the Bradford Pear trees.

Additionally, the following elements could be considered to further improve the park:

- ◆ Consider an expanded loop trail connecting to the citywide trail system.
- ◆ Update and replace the press boxes and associated amenities.
- ◆ Add enclosures around the utility boxes.
- ◆ Replace the trail, pathway, and parking lot lights.
- ◆ Widen internal loop trails and sidewalks to accommodate maintenance vehicles.
- ◆ Consider developing a small splash pad or water feature near the playground to diversify amenities and attract a wider age range of children.
- ◆ Enhance the park entrance through the addition of landscaping around the entrance monument.
- ◆ Enhance the visual appearance of the playground area through the addition of vines and misters along the arbor.
- ◆ Enhance existing landscaping throughout the park with low maintenance, drought tolerant grasses and plant materials.
- ◆ Provide a shade canopy over the pitching warm-up area.
- ◆ Plant a landscaping screen between the ball fields and the sidewalks to visually enhance the area.
- ◆ Create a consistent standard for amenities (e.g., light poles, trashcans, benches, etc.) in the park to improve the overall appearance of the park.



Drought tolerant landscaping can be used to enhance the appearance of First Colony Park while also minimizing maintenance and water requirements.

■ **Action 3.2.2. Continue to implement the Imperial Park Master Plan.**

It is recommended that the City complete implementation of the Imperial Park Master Plan including the development of two more softball fields, a picnic pavilion, restroom, and paved parking to better attract regional and state tournaments and accommodate growth of the City’s recreational leagues.

Trail landscaping and amenity enhancements (e.g., shade, benches, drinking fountains), and a connection to the Ditch H Trail and the citywide trail system are also recommended to attract more trail users to the park.

Additionally, the following elements could be considered to further improve the park:

- ◆ Evaluate the need to increase the size of the shared parking lot between Imperial Park Recreation Center and the T.E. Harman Senior Center.
- ◆ Consider installing security cameras in the parking lot to deter vandalism and theft.
- ◆ Evaluate opportunities to provide parking in closer proximity to the softball fields.
- ◆ Provide safe bicycle and pedestrian access to the site from the north.
- ◆ Enhance the park’s landscaping by incorporating native, drought tolerant plant material to provide seasonal interest throughout the year. Consider naturalizing appropriate areas within the park by converting unused open spaces to natural areas (e.g., minimally maintained wildflower meadows).
- ◆ Enhance the drainageway with native drought and wet tolerant vegetation to improve the park’s ecosystem and visual appeal.
- ◆ Increase shade in the parking lot.
- ◆ Relocate the entry sign along U.S. Highway 90 to increase visibility and give drivers an opportunity to decrease their speed before they arrive. This sign should be incorporated into the overall City wayfinding signage system.



Completion of the Imperial Park Master Plan includes development of two more softball fields.



The parking lot between the Imperial Park Recreation Center and the T.E. Harman Senior Center should be evaluated to determine if enlargement is needed.

■ **Action 3.2.3. Evaluate opportunities and implement improvements to Lost Creek Park.**

Lost Creek Park is a heavily used park in the midst of a residential neighborhood. As funding becomes available over time, the City could consider additional upgrades to better serve the users of Lost Creek Park. Potential improvements include the following elements:

- ◆ Improved landscaping (e.g., near the entrance).
- ◆ Replacement of picnic tables in the pavilion area and providing additional picnic tables between the fields to provide areas for gathering and pre- and post-game activities.
- ◆ Providing bike racks, exercise equipment, and additional benches along trails.
- ◆ Consider adding a sand volleyball area.
- ◆ Placing security cameras in key locations (e.g., parking lot and soccer fields) to improve security and reduce prohibited non-league use of the fields.
- ◆ Add a decorative fence and landscaping between the soccer fields and parking lot to provide improved visual appearance and child safety.
- ◆ Explore partnership opportunities for maintenance of the BMX track and pump track.



Providing additional picnic tables between the fields in Lost Creek Park could provide further areas for pre- and post-game gatherings.

■ **Action 3.2.4. Evaluate opportunities and implement historic elements to Mayfield Park.**

As development of Mayfield Park proceeds, it is recommended that the City add the cultural promenade walkway and other historic elements as noted in the original Mayfield Park design concept. The City should also continue to pursue private funding for historic elements within the park.

■ **Action 3.2.5. Evaluate opportunities and implement improvements to Mesquite Park.**

In order to improve and diversify the recreation opportunities in Mesquite Park, it is recommended that the City consider renovating the park. Potential elements to consider for improvement include:

- ◆ Renovate and cover the existing playground within the next three to five years, to include improved accessibility and fall surface.
- ◆ Renovate the sidewalks to improve accessibility throughout the park for all users.
- ◆ Provide more benches around the internal loop trails and near the playscape.



Covering the playground in Mesquite Park would create a more comfortable user experience in Texas' sunny climate.

- ◆ Install a decorative fence (e.g., a split rail fence with landscaping) to provide a protective barrier between the playscape area and the street.
- ◆ Provide a pedestrian connection between the park and Colony Grant Trail, located on the west side of the existing drainage channel.
- ◆ Add a park entrance monument sign with landscaping.
- ◆ Evaluate the need for enhanced lighting in the park.
- ◆ Consider diversifying amenities in order to serve an older age group.
- ◆ Transition select areas near the perimeter of the park to landscaping beds to help screen active park uses from residences and reduce maintenance requirements in the park.

■ **Action 3.2.6. Evaluate opportunities and implement improvements to Oyster Creek Park.**

In its current condition, Oyster Creek Park is a high-quality, culturally engaging park with many acres of unprogrammed open space. In order to improve the existing condition of the park and diversify the recreation opportunities in the park, the City could consider implementing the following elements:

- ◆ Provide an expansion of the paved parking area. This should include an evaluation of the need for additional ADA parking.
- ◆ Re-deck the pedestrian bridge across Oyster Creek to address needed maintenance.
- ◆ Add a playground and/or splash pad to the park to provide a wider range of activities for children in the park.
- ◆ Expand and periodically update the public art offering in the park to create a destination sculpture garden. This could be combined with enhanced planting areas and irrigation to market the park as a “public/botanic garden” (see Action 2.2.2).
- ◆ Naturalize select areas of the park (e.g., the powerline easement) to establish minimally maintained wildflower meadows. Providing trails through this area could create the more natural portion of the “public garden.”
- ◆ Provide additional shade along the trail, in the parking area, and open spaces.
- ◆ Implement invasive species control and native prairie restoration near Oyster Creek, and provide periodic cleaning and other mitigation efforts to improve the water quality of the creek.



Invasive species control, native prairie restoration, and periodic cleaning are recommended along Oyster Creek.

■ **Action 3.2.9. Evaluate each park in the system to increase the use of social gathering space and associated infrastructure for the Sugar Land community.**

Sugar Land is fortunate to have a large amount of protected parkland and open space. Throughout the planning process, it was evident that residents appreciate this and strongly value the provision of multigenerational passive recreation space (e.g., picnic areas and trails). In Texas, enjoyment of such spaces is greatly increased with the provision of shade. During the public survey, additional shade elements was ranked in top five high priorities (see Figure 2.16, *Recreation Facility Priorities* in Chapter 2). Additionally, the target level of service for picnic facilities in Sugar Land is providing them in every park (see Table 4.4, *Target Level of Service for Park Facilities/Amenities*, in Chapter 4). In its current state, the system of public and private (i.e., HOA) parks in Sugar Land is deficient in picnicking amenities.

It is thus recommended that the City evaluate each park in the system to maximize opportunities for access to such elements. This could include identifying expanded or new opportunities for additional picnic facilities (e.g., tables, benches, BBQ grills, shade structures or other shade opportunities, waste facilities, etc.). This would help meet the community's desire for additional shaded social gathering spaces and reduce existing deficiencies in the park system.



OBJECTIVE 3.3. Provide additional community and neighborhood parkland and/or recreational areas to meet the needs of nearby residents.

■ **Action 3.3.1. Evaluate opportunities for land acquisition in the southeastern portion of the City to help meet community parkland needs.**

There is currently a deficit of City-owned community parkland in Sugar Land. Looking forward to the year 2030, even with consideration of HOA parks, the City will have a 104.8-acre deficit of community parkland (see Table 4.2, *Percent of Need Met by Existing Parks, 2030*). Potential acquisition and annexation opportunities may exist along Scenic Rivers Drive south of Commonwealth (see area “B” on Map 5.1, *Target Parkland Acquisition Areas*, on page 179). In order to address the future parkland deficit, it is recommended that City evaluate the feasibility of acquisition, annexation, and development of the land to include community-level recreation amenities (e.g., athletic fields, recreation center).



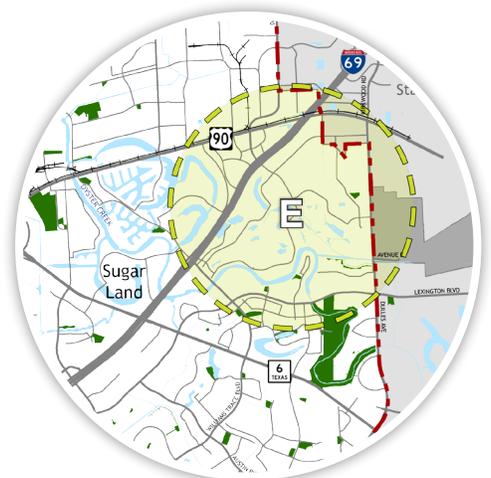
The Greatwood community currently lacks community park facilities.

■ **Action 3.3.2. Evaluate opportunities for land acquisition to meet community parkland needs for the Greatwood area.**

By 2018, the Greatwood community will be annexed by the City. This will increase the park and recreation demands on the City. While Greatwood is sufficiently served by neighborhood parkland, it lacks community park facilities. It is thus recommended that the City evaluate opportunities to meet the community parkland needs of residents in this area (see area “C” on Map 5.1, *Target Parkland Acquisition Areas*, on page 179). Development of a community park in this area should include both passive (e.g., picnicking, trails) and active (e.g., athletic fields and courts) amenities.

■ **Action 3.3.3. Evaluate opportunities to add a new neighborhood-scale park in the Sugar Creek neighborhood.**

Sugar Creek is the only neighborhood in the City lacking neighborhood parkland within one-quarter to one-half mile of all homes. In order to address this deficiency, it is recommended that the City coordinate with the Sugar Creek HOA to identify a potential park location (see area “E” on Map 5.1, *Target Parkland Acquisition Areas*, on page 179). Implementation of this action includes both land acquisition (of one to five acres) and development of neighborhood scale amenities including a playground, picnic shelter, benches, tables, trees/landscaping, and irrigation.



The Sugar Creek community is the only neighborhood in the City lacking neighborhood parkland within one-quarter to one-half mile of all homes.

■ **Action 3.3.4. Identify opportunities to cross-utilize existing City property for recreational facilities and programming.**

In some cases, stormwater retention areas and the City's extensive drainage/levee system can be cross-utilized for recreational facilities and programming when not holding water. The City owns a drainage area located at Jess Pirtle Boulevard and Eldridge Road which may be a viable cross-functional property. As there is a need for more publicly accessible athletic fields, it is recommended that the City evaluate the feasibility of this property for recreational use. If determined feasible, the City should consider a master plan and implementation of a new recreational facility (particularly sport fields) in the drainage area. Additionally, the City's drainage/levee system is spread throughout the entire community. These natural and man-made drainage corridors offer a significant opportunity for the creation of linear parks and close-to-home recreational amenities for abutting neighborhoods. As such, the planning and design of trails in these areas should be undertaken in concert with the provision of parks and recreation. In order to ensure that trail access to and into parks follows the intent and plans for individual parks, it is recommended that the PARD coordinate with other City departments on the planning and design of trails where the citywide trail system connects with and into parks. Opportunities should be evaluated to add neighborhood-serving recreational amenities along the growing trail system.



The stormwater retention area located at Jess Pirtle Boulevard and Eldridge Road may have potential to be cross-utilized for recreation purposes.

■ **Action 3.3.5. Evaluate opportunities to increase community-scale park facilities during master planning for regional parks.**

Currently, the City has nearly sufficient neighborhood park acreage and distribution to meet the needs of Sugar Land today, and, for the most part, into the future. However, the City is currently deficient in community parkland. Due to the quantity and distribution of regional parkland, the City should evaluate opportunities to include community-serving amenities in regional parks when these amenities fit into the overall character of the park and preserve and minimize disturbance in environmentally sensitive areas (e.g., floodway, wetlands, etc.). Sensitive natural areas can be developed to include trails and environmental education elements. Areas with less sensitive resources should be evaluated for the development of playgrounds, stand-alone backstops, unlighted athletic fields, etc.



It is recommended that the PARD coordinate with other City departments on the planning and design of trails where the citywide trail system connects with and into parks.

■ **Action 3.3.6. Update the City’s Park Land Dedication ordinance.**

While the City has a relatively good distribution of neighborhood and community parkland, and a diminishing area remaining for new development, there will still be new development and redevelopment over time. Historically, the City has allowed for up to 50 percent of the park and recreation requirements to be met through the provision of private parkland. This is also typical of many of the cities surrounding mature communities in the region and has been successful for Sugar Land in that the community is served by some of the highest quality homeowner association (HOA) parks in the region.

The last substantive changes made to the City’s Park Land Dedication ordinance were made more than 15 years ago. While it has served the City well, there are a few modifications which can be made to improve it. These include:

- ◆ Consider referencing who administers or makes decisions relative to the Park Land Dedication Ordinance. Ordinances oftentimes include references to park directors, planning directors, or the City Manager (or his or her designee) as the designated city representative.
- ◆ Confirm or re-calibrate the ratio of persons per single-family or multi-family dwelling with most recent data (typically U.S. Census).
- ◆ Consider adding language that ties the use of funds generated by fee-in-lieu of dedication to park development or park improvements within the same geographic area as the property generating the funds. This requires developing an official park zone map (adopted by City Council) that designates appropriate parkland dedication zones throughout the City. Park zones need to be cognizant of logical break points (e.g., dividing at Highway 59/Interstate 69) but should also consider combining expected areas of new development/redevelopment with areas that contain existing parks. In this regard, funding can be used to establish new parks and revitalize and improve existing parks serving the same general area.
- ◆ Add specificity to the section detailing requirements for proposed land dedication to ensure that the property can truly be used for the intended purposes (e.g., if the property has utility-scale overhead power lines, is that acceptable?).
- ◆ Consider using a range of sizes for a typical neighborhood park, rather than a specific desired goal of 10 acres. Reference park sizes back to the City’s Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan (PROSMP).
- ◆ Consider adding language that requires the inclusion of parks in new developments in the City’s extraterritorial jurisdiction.
- ◆ Consider reevaluating the current fee-in-lieu of amounts (i.e., \$350 per single family lot, \$240 for multi-family unit) based on current land values and adding a new requirement which allocates a percentage of fee-in-lieu funds for increasing or improving community-scale parkland.
- ◆ Add the City’s PROSMP as a reference document to determine where additional parks are necessary.
- ◆ Consider adding a fee that helps offset the cost of the development of park facilities (typically referred to as a park development fee).

GOAL 4: Sugar Land’s parks and recreation system will be designed and maintained in a manner that contributes to the City being an environmentally responsible community.

Sugar Land strives to be a leader in establishing an environmentally responsible community (Comprehensive Plan Goal D: Environmentally Responsible Community). This means being a model for their standards, processes, and operations. As it relates to parks and recreation, the City strives to incorporate environmentally responsible and resilient amenities into its park system, increase food access, and improve multi-generational resident and visitor access to the City’s sensitive natural resources (furthering people’s connection to the environment), The following objectives and actions are recommended to achieve this goal.

OBJECTIVE 4.1. Incorporate environmentally responsible amenities and programs into the parks system.

■ Action 4.1.1. Establish or expand existing park design and equipment guidelines to improve environmental compatibility.

As the City plans for park amenity and facility improvements, it is recommended that the City incorporate a stronger emphasis on environmental compatibility. Beyond environmental benefits, this can also help to reduce maintenance requirements and the draw on PARD and Environmental and Neighborhood Services staff and resources. Beyond buildings and other site infrastructure (e.g., parking lots), new park design guidelines could specify environmental considerations such as the following:

- ◆ Native, drought tolerant plant species and landscaping requirements (including the use of green infrastructure where financially feasible and appropriate).
- ◆ Guidance on where and where not to plant wildlife-attracting species.
- ◆ Specifications for waste and recycling receptacles with lids which close (to prohibit wildlife from accessing the waste).
- ◆ Lighting requirements which provide for safety while complying with the City’s (or at least the county’s) dark sky provisions.
- ◆ Light post specifications that allow plug in ultrasonic pulse equipment and which do not allow wildlife perching.



Lighting requirements can be adjusted to provide dark sky compliance.

■ **Action 4.1.2. Consider establishing and implementing a recycling program and associated amenities in the City’s park system and during special events.**

In an effort to reduce the landfill footprint of the City’s parks and recreation system, it is recommended that the City implement a recycling program and integrate the necessary amenities into the parks system. This should include the availability of recycling receptacles and pick-up everywhere a trashcan is provided in parks and at special events.

■ **Action 4.1.3. Partner with local advocates/volunteers to establish or enhance habitat and sustainability in parks and open space (example habitat or educational gardens, community gardens, reforestation, etc.)**

Best practices such as pollinator habitat preservation and community gardening have been gaining awareness over the years. In an effort to encourage residents to lead a healthy lifestyle and be part of the sustainable environment, it is recommended that the City consider partnership opportunities with local advocates/volunteers to establish or enhance nature preservation, pollinator habitat, community gardens and/or reforestation in appropriate areas within the parks system. This would include creating formalized partnerships with non-profit or other groups who take on responsibility for operating and maintaining the community or demonstration gardens using best practices.



Community educational gardens provide opportunities for residents to socialize, practice their hobby in a public setting, and learn about gardening for a more sustainable environment.

■ **Action 4.1.4. Evaluate design solutions to improve the resiliency of the canoe/kayak launch located underneath Highway 59/Interstate 69 along the Brazos River.**

Flooding along the Brazos River will be a challenge the City will continue to face into the future. During a recent flood, the canoe/kayak launch located underneath Highway 59/Interstate 69 was severely damaged. In order to improve resiliency of the launch and minimize maintenance and repair costs in the future, it is recommended that the City evaluate design solutions for the launch. Some design elements to consider include:

- ◆ Using a removable launch.
- ◆ Utilizing a floating decking system intended to rise and fall with the changing water level.
- ◆ Reinforcing the bank with resilient material (e.g., concrete).
- ◆ Choosing materials to minimize debris catchment.
- ◆ Angling the launch downstream to reduce the resistance to swift currents.
- ◆ Developing a ramp system for users to access the water, thus negating the need for the launch overhanging the water.
- ◆ Using a stabilized, permanent paving solution in the parking lot to minimize wash-out during floods.



Developing a ramp system for users to access the water, can eliminate the need for a canoe/kayak launch to overhang the water.

GOAL 5: Sugar Land’s parks and recreation system will contribute to the City’s overall goal of being a beautiful community.

Sugar Land strives to be a beautiful community (Comprehensive Plan Goal B: Beautiful Community). Indeed, Sugar Land is known for having the highest quality development in the region. It is also known for its high quality and well-maintained park system. Moving forward, the City’s parks, recreation, and open space system will continue to contribute to the City’s goal of being a beautiful community through well-designed and maintained public buildings, spaces, waterways, and beautiful landscaping. The following objectives and actions are recommended to achieve this goal.

OBJECTIVE 5.1. Continue to set the bar in the region for the maintenance quality of the park system.

■ Action 5.1.1. Evaluate opportunities to create visually appealing park amenity areas, entrances, parking, and other publicly accessible areas at all City parks.

As previously mentioned, maintaining exceptional quality of the parks, trail, and open space system is a high priority for the City. During the public survey, respondents were asked how they would allocate \$100 of PARD funding. Respondents hypothetically indicated spending \$35.00 towards enhancing the maintenance of existing outdoor parks, playgrounds, and athletic fields (see Appendix D, *Sugar Land Parks, Recreation, & Open Space Needs Assessment Survey Findings Report*). The next highest category was \$18.00 for acquisition of new parkland, facilities, and amenities. This shows strong support for continued efforts in maintaining high quality facilities and amenities.

Moving forward, this could include replacing existing park monuments with high-quality entry monuments and well-maintained native landscaping, improving and maintaining landscaping in parking lot areas (and adding additional shade trees), adding appropriate lighting and wayfinding signage along trails, among other facility improvements. It could also include increased partnerships (e.g., “friends of” groups) with area homeowner associations or other non-profit groups who may be interested in supporting the upkeep of specific park properties or resources.



The entrance to Sugar Land Memorial Park is an example of a high-quality entry monument with landscaping.

■ **Action 5.1.2. Evaluate opportunities to increase food access and safety in parks and during special events.**

Across the nation, food trucks are increasingly popular in city parks. Accordingly, it can be a win-win for the city and the food truck vendor. For cities, they do not need to construct, operate, and maintain costly concession stands; yet they can still collect permitting fees and sales tax money. For private vendors, it provides additional opportunity for patrons, especially on busy days or during special events. In many cases, food trucks are diversifying the typical offerings beyond the traditional hot dog/hamburger fare, and are even generating additional park visitation just for the food itself.

Moving forward, the City should formalize a policy for allowing and/or increasing private sector food truck access in City parks and during special events. In the near-term, this could include identification of a single point of contact for food inspections for both food trucks and other concessionaires. Over a longer-term, it could include retrofitting specific facilities to tailor to food trucks rather than providing permanent concession stand facilities. This decreases annual facility maintenance costs, while contributing to economic development efforts through increased public-private partnerships.



Food trucks are gaining popularity across the country.

■ **Action 5.1.3. Consider additional operational support for the monitoring and enforcement of park activity.**

City parks in Sugar Land are open seven days a week for 12 to 16 hours per day. Ensuring the safety of visitors to the park system is an essential element of operating a park and recreation system. While the public process did not identify park safety as an overarching concern, there was an expressed need for additional staff resources to monitor park properties during weekends and busy special events.

Accordingly, the City should conduct a study to evaluate and improve the Park Ambassador Program. The study should include solutions to improve weekend and special event park monitoring, parking issues, park safety, and citizen communication. It may also include additional coordination and partnering with the Sugar Land Police Department to provide additional park patrol time.



Additional weekend and special event park monitoring may be needed.

■ **Action 5.1.4. Consider adding a park forester or horticulturist to improve the diversity and quality of the City’s plant species.**

One of the strongest means to enhance and maintain the visual appeal of the City’s park system is through quality landscaping. The quality of landscaping is largely reliant on having qualified personnel who are trained in planting, nurturing, and otherwise caring for the plant species typically found in park landscaping. Moving forward, the City should consider the hiring of a park forester or horticulturist to improve plant health in parks; to assist with the planning, development, and future growth of new plant resources; and for citizen education and outreach.



A park forester or horticulturist could help to improve the diversity and quality of plantings in the City’s parks system.

■ **Action 5.1.5. Consider upgrades to the City’s park maintenance facilities.**

Although the quality of park maintenance facilities does not generally receive attention during the public process, they are none-the-less an integral component of the park system. In this regard, quality does not mean the look and feel of the facility itself; rather, it means the quality of the layout, the functional adequacy of the facilities, and its impact on providing effective operational support throughout the park system. At a minimum, the current main maintenance facility located off of 2120 Austin Parkway is in need of an expansion to accommodate a growing park system. To effectively accommodate this expansion, it may require a relocation of some non-park equipment and storage which may be better suited in a different location. In particular, this could include the relocation of special event equipment and materials used for various events throughout the year. It may also warrant the establishment of a lockable staging area at Duhacsek to better serve the other side of the City.



The park maintenance staff are in need of additional equipment beyond what they currently have.

■ **Action 5.1.6. Consider acquisition of additional equipment to increase efficiencies with regard to park maintenance operations.**

Park maintenance staff are responsible for a wide variety of large and small projects throughout the park system. Some of these projects involve larger-scale equipment beyond what PARD currently has access to. Moving forward, it is recommended that the City consider purchasing additional equipment, such as a dump truck and/or dump trailer and a better lift, to improve the efficiency of operations typical of a park system.

OBJECTIVE 5.2. Ensure that park maintenance staffing and resources continue to be sufficient to maintain the high quality expectations set by the Sugar Land community.

■ **Action 5.2.1. Evaluate the need for additional maintenance personnel and resources.**

As set out in several different actions found in this section and throughout the Plan, maintaining exceptional quality of the parks, trail, and open space system is a high priority for the City. As the City continues to grow and enhance its park-related facilities and amenities, it becomes essential to also consider how these new park resources affect existing staffing levels and their ability to maintain the level of quality expected by the citizens of Sugar Land.

In recent years, several new large park resources were added to the City's system (e.g., Cullinan Park, the Festival Site, Brazos River Park Phase 2, etc.). This has placed additional burdens on staff's ability to maintain the facility over time without decreases in efforts elsewhere in the park system. In addition to a newly added crew, the City should continue to identify additional staffing, equipment, and materials needed concurrent with the design of new capital investments or significant changes to operations. Staffing changes can include hiring of new personnel as well as operational and role changes within the existing staff.



Acquisition of large areas of parkland in recent years (e.g., Cullinan Park) have placed additional burden on park staff.

■ **Action 5.2.2. Evaluate opportunities for the beautification and naturalization of existing park areas to reduce continual long-term maintenance burdens on staff.**

Traditionally, many City park systems have an operational framework which anticipates continual maintenance of every part of a park property (e.g., weekly mowing during the summer). More recently, many park systems are recognizing that there are multiple benefits to allowing portions of a park property (e.g., some of the minimally used areas of an existing park) to transition to more natural environments (e.g., annually mowed wildflower meadows, complete reforestation, etc.). This reduces the amount of weekly or continual maintenance by staff, diversifies the plant and wildlife ecosystem, improves overall sustainability of the park system, and in many cases, enhances the visual quality of the park. Naturalized areas also present opportunities to incorporate native and pollinator species into the parks system. Moving forward, the City should consider opportunities to transition portions of each park property (e.g., reforesting certain areas or planting wildflower areas) over time.



Allowing appropriate areas of parkland to naturalize helps to reduce maintenance requirements, diversify the ecosystem, and improve sustainability of the park system.