

*Sugar Land Parks Recreation
and Open Space Master Plan*

5-Year Periodic Update, May 2011



master plan



CITY OF SUGAR LAND
PARKS, RECREATION & OPEN SPACE
MASTER PLAN
5-Year Periodic Update, May 2011



Prepared by:

City of Sugar Land
Parks and Recreation Department
200 Matlage Way
Sugar Land, Texas 77478
Phone: 281-275-2885
Fax: 281-275-2891
e-mail: parkrec@sugarlandtx.gov
web: www.sugarlandtx.gov/parks_recreation

Table of Contents

- **Accomplishments** Page 3 – 6
- **New public input** Page 7 - 18
- **Inventory** Page 19
- **Updated needs assessment** Page 20– 22
- **Identified Community Needs** Page 23 - 25
- **Priorities** Page 26
- **New implementation plan** Page 27 - 28
- **Demographics** Page 29
- **Population projections** Page 29
- **Goals and objectives** Page 30 – 44
- **Park Map** Page 45

Accomplishments

Since the 2005 Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan was adopted in July 2005, the City of Sugar Land and the Parks and Recreation Department have grown tremendously.

The Departments accomplishments in the last five years include:

Facilities

Land Acquisition: Several of the land acquisition targets identified in the Master Plan have been acquired. These include:

- Greatwood Development – Brazos River Floodway (135 acres) – Acquired in 2005 and being held in the Texas Parks & Recreation Foundation.
- River Park Development – Brazos River Floodway (183 acres) – Acquired in December 2009 through annexation. Two additional neighborhood-level parks acquired total to 3.3 acres.
- Gannoway Lake Park – (23.5 acres) – Land to the west of the existing parkland. Acquired in 2005.
- University of Houston Lease Tract (57 acres) – Acquired in 2005.
- Settlers Way Park (5 acres) – Acquired from SPI in 2005. Located on the southeast corner of Settlers Way and Sam Houston Dr.
- Mesquite Park (2.44 acres) – Donated by Settlers Park HOA in 2007.
- Brazos River Parkland (16.9 acres)- Acquired in 2010. Land adjacent to Sugar Land Memorial Park (Brazos River Park) and Highway 59.



Indoor Facility Improvement: The City's number one need identified through the 2005 Master Plan was indoor recreation.

- Imperial Park Recreation Center - As this is being written, the City's first Indoor Recreation Center is being constructed and is substantially complete. Funded through the 1999 Bond Election, the approximately 17,000 square foot building is adjacent to Imperial Park and situated next to the Community Center and Senior Adult Center creating a recreation campus.

City of Sugar Land Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan 2011 Update

The Recreation Center features a multi-purpose room for classes and events, a serving kitchen, multipurpose exercise room, a gymnasium, locker rooms, indoor and outdoor seating areas, an activity lawn and connections to the future Imperial Park trails.

- Senior Center – In 2007, the Senior Center expanded into existing adjacent vacant space and increased the programmable space from 1977 square feet to 5500 gross square feet. This has allowed staff to double the amount of program offering and attendance.

Trails: Trails were listed as the number one outdoor facility need. As a result, the Master Plan recommended the development of a Hike & Bike Trail Master Plan. The 2007 Hike & Bike Trail Master Plan – Creating Connections was adopted unanimously by City Council on January 2, 2008. Subsequently, many miles of hike and bike trail projects have been included in the City Capital Improvements Program and several are in different stages of design. Some trail segments have been added through other projects. These include:



- Sugar Land Memorial Park (Brazos River Park) – A 2.5 mile, 8-foot wide, decomposed granite trail was included as part of this project which opened in 2007. In 2009, the City received a donation to construct a 1.5 mile single track mountain bike trail along the Brazos River. The trail was unveiled in October of that year.
- Highway 90A Trail – A mile of 6 to 8-foot concrete trail was added along 90A to connect segments included in recent TxDOT construction.



Open Spaces/Natural Areas: These areas have been included in park development of Duhacsek Park which opened in 2009 and Sugar Land Memorial Park which opened in 2007. Both parks feature large open spaces that lend themselves to a variety of activities and natural areas which may be developed into future educational opportunities.

Picnic Areas/Pavilions: Pavilions that have been added include:

- Duhacsek Park – 1,500 s.f.
- Sugar Land Memorial Park (Brazos River Park) – 2,300 s.f., 1,500 s.f., 1,200 s.f.
- Slockett Park - 576 s.f.

City of Sugar Land Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan 2011 Update

- First Colony Pavilion (at new concession stand) – 720 s.f.
- Park at the Levee – 600 s.f.

Playgrounds:

- One playground was included in the development of Sugar Land Memorial Park in 2007. It is for 5-12 year olds and features traditional slides and equipment as well as a rope climber.
- Lost Creek Park Playground was renovated in 2010 and continues to be extremely popular.
- One playground was included in the donation of Mesquite Park in 2007.

Water Playgrounds: The City acquired a splash pad with the Annexation of RiverPark in 2009. This is the City's only aquatic facility besides the existing pool at City Park.

Dog Park: Although the development of a dog park scored fairly low in the 2005 Master Plan, their popularity has grown and citizen requests spurred the opening of Pawm Springs Dog Park in 2009. The dog park is located in Sugar Land Memorial Park and is very popular. It features a small and large dog area as well as a pavilion and water feature.



Disc Golf: Disc golf has also grown in popularity. The City added a 9-hole disc golf course at Imperial Park in 2008.

Sports Fields: There continues to be a high demand for sports fields.

- Lost Creek Park: In 2007, the City completed lighting projects to light three soccer fields as well as the BMX track. Three practice soccer fields were added in the power line easement.
- City Park: The new Little League standard field size increase spurred the development of an existing Pony-sized field at City Park into a little league field with the 220-foot outfield dimension. Additional improvements to Baker Field included a new restroom/concession/storage building, completed in 2008. In 2007, the City completed a project to light the football practice fields.
- First Colony Park: In 2009, the City partnered with the Astros in Action Foundation and Minute Maid to renovate two little League Fields. The renovations included accommodations for the Dream League, which serves special-needs children in the community. Renovations to the fields included: larger/accessible dugouts, larger/accessible spectator area, improved access to the playing field and new scoreboards. In addition to these improvements, the City expanded two additional fields to the new Little League dimension, renovated the dugouts of those fields,

improved lighting, and added a new concession/restroom/storage building. These improvements opened in early 2011.



Public Art: The City is developing an “Art in Parks & Public Spaces” program, is commissioning a “Cultural Arts Master Plan” for the community, and has installed pieces by world-famous sculptor, Bernar Venet, in Oyster Creek Park as part of a temporary exhibit which will be in place from January 2011 to January 2012.

Programming

- Establishment and implementation of the Senior Ambassador program which averages over 400 volunteer hours a month.
- Expansion of Senior Center programs and offerings since 2005, doubling the amount of program offering and attendance.
- Successful implementation of a sponsorship program for the city’s special events.
- Expansion of indoor and outdoor recreational opportunities - Disc Golf Course, Mountain Bike Trail, Dog Park. The City holds events at the Skate Park, BMX Track, Mountain Bike Trail, Disk Golf Course and Dog Park.
- Expansion of recreational program opportunities. With the newly opened Imperial Park Recreation Center, the Department has significantly expanded program offerings for all ages and interests.
- Expansion of Special Events: New Year’s Eve, Halloween Town, Cultural Kite Festival and Memorial Day. Expansion of non-city special events: Festival of Lights, Dragon Boat Festival and Festival of Colors, along with many more events hosted at Sugar Land Town Square.



Funding

- Legacy Foundation – The City has developed a foundation that can be used for City projects, programs and services. The website is being developed now and features numerous park, trail and recreational facility projects for potential donor funding.

New Public Input

Memorial Task Force and the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board – Strategic projects

Memorials in Sugar Land Memorial Park - Task Force

The City Council determined that a strategic project was necessary to tackle the issue of Memorializing Sugar Land Memorial Park. Because the park was not originally designed as a memorial park, the City Council recommended proceeding with the creation of a task force to assist in the memorializing process. The charge of the fifteen-member Task Force was to determine a plan to honor and recognize veterans through written or visual elements and to recommend a funding strategy for construction and maintenance of the memorials in Sugar Land Memorial Park.

The Task Force met several times in order to familiarize themselves with Sugar Land Memorial Park, review best practices in memorial features and public art design and receive presentations on public art procurement. In addition, the Task Force participated in a design charrette which resulted in a consensus on recommendations for the location in the park and the types of features they believe are appropriate for recognition of our veterans.

As a result, a plan has been developed and adopted by the City Council for future memorials to recognize Fort Bend County Veterans in Sugar Land Memorial Park. These memorials will be situated in four distinct areas within the Veterans' Memorial area of the park. Each memorial is intended to provoke different emotions. The City of Sugar Land unveiled the first of the four memorials during the 2010 Memorial Day ceremony—flags representing each branch of service.

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board - Strategic Projects

The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board is actively involved in two current Parks and Recreation Department Strategic Projects. The Department will continue to seek input from the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board throughout the progression of these projects.

Planning for Future Public Indoor Recreation Centers – Department staff conducted a Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Constraints (SWOT) Analysis with the Board to determine what their perceptions and ideas were concerning indoor recreation. While many ideas overlapped with a previous SWOT Analysis conducted internally with staff, they had many new ideas to contribute as well. This input will be helpful as the City proceeds with the strategy for constructing future indoor recreation facilities

Establishing Scope for Brazos River Park Phase II – Parks and Recreation Department staff reviewed several rough concepts with the Board for developing recreation opportunities on the land that the City leases from the University of Houston. The key components were: parking (on and off-site), indoor recreation, indoor/outdoor aquatics and an outdoor festival space. Additionally, options were shown with the lease site as it exists today and with a modified site that combined a smaller fragment of leased land with the larger one to increase the larger parcel by seven-acres. In all cases, the Board preferred the larger site.

2007 Hike & Bike Trail master Plan: Public and Stakeholder Input

The City of Sugar Land has always had a high commitment to including citizen feedback in its planning and design processes. In light of the widespread interest in trails in all parts of the city, city staff undertook an intensive process to obtain both citizen and stakeholder opinions and ideas. Even more importantly, much of this feedback was received prior to beginning to designate priorities and locations for trail corridors, so that early ideas, opportunities and concerns could be included in the planning process.

The public input process included six major levels. These were;

- Citizen task force input
- Neighborhood level resident input
- Community wide citizen input
- City staff and elected official input
- Stakeholder input (primarily levee improvement districts and municipal utility districts).
- Citizen Task Force

A citizen committee was created to help guide development of the plan. The committee included community representatives that represented user groups, homeowner associations, levee district and



park interests. User groups included runners, cyclists and walkers. All of the committee members had a high level of knowledge of the Sugar Land park system, and some had participated in the previous Comprehensive Plan and Citywide Parks Planning efforts. The committee met three times to discuss the goals for the plan, to look at opportunities for trails throughout the city, and to review potential opportunities. Members of the committee suggested many potential locations for trails throughout the city, as well as places where trails might create neighborhood concerns. Summaries

of the comments received from the Task Force are included in the appendices of this report. The opportunities map prepared by the Task Force during one of its working meetings is shown on this page.

City of Sugar Land Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan 2011 Update

Key comments and input received from the Task Force included:

- Consider using levees or portions of levee corridors as trail opportunities. These areas are open, already used by residents for walking and running, and were relatively clear of existing obstacles.
- Look for missing links between existing trail segments.
- Enhance connections to the Town Center area, as the heart of Sugar Land.
- Create connections and trails in all parts of Sugar Land.

Neighborhood Level Resident Input

City staff met with representatives from over twenty neighborhood associations and citizen groups from throughout the city. These meetings were conducted over a four month period, and were used to obtain input on possible trail corridor locations in each neighborhood, as well as areas where residents might be concerned with placing trails. Questions and concerns raised by each group were documented and used when considering where trails might be placed throughout the city. Meetings were conducted with the following entities:

- Quarterly Citywide HOA
- Associations of First Colony
- Commonwealth Civic Association
- Sugarwood HOA
- Oyster Point HOA
- Chimneystone HOA
- Covington Woods HOA
- Sugar Mill HOA
- Avalon HOA
- Austin Park
- Lakes of Austin Park
- Imperial Woods HOA
- Barrington Place
- Glen Laurel HOA
- Ragus Lake HOA
- Covington West
- Brookside Belknap



Key comments and input received from the Neighborhood Level meetings included:

- The majority of homeowners were in favor of the city developing additional trails throughout the city.

- Citizens noted that many of the potential trail corridors, such as along the tops of some levees, were already in use by area residents as places to walk or run.
- Residents were concerned about any potential impacts from increased crime or a decrease in security.
- Concern was expressed over the impact of a potential increase in activity along the proposed trail corridors resulting in a potential reduction in privacy.
- Parking would need to be accommodated in a way that did not create neighborhood obstacles.
- Citizens were interested in the maintenance of the trails and trail corridors, so that inadequate maintenance did not result in reductions in property values.
- Citizens asked about the potential impact of trails on property values.

Community Wide Citizen Input

A major community workshop meeting was held at the Sugar Land Town Hall in April, 2007. The workshop included maps illustrating many alternative opportunity corridors for trails throughout the city. For citizen ease in reviewing these opportunity corridors, opportunities were presented on individual maps for each of five major sectors of Sugar Land. Opportunities for the Town Center area were also considered. During the four hour long workshop, citizens were invited to look at maps for their areas and to write comments directly on the maps. Over 80 residents of Sugar Land attended the meeting, and their major comments are as follows:

- Safety and policing is a major requirement for trail corridors;
- Many runners in attendance asked that the City use crushed granite where possible. They noted that concrete is hard on runners and walkers' legs and should be avoided on corridors that are intended to attract runners;
- Key crossings at Hwy 6, Hwy 59, and across the Brazos River are required. These represent major barriers that divide the city and make it more difficult to go from one part of the city to another.
- In many cases, there are currently relatively poor connections between many destinations. These destinations need to be factored into the plan and considered as each route is planned.
- Very often, there is no bicycle parking at each destination. This makes it difficult for cyclists to use the system to get to their final destination.
- The City of Sugar Land needs to consider an all weather trail along the Brazos River, and allow it to connect to other communities;
- Within the Brazos River corridor, small hills for mountain biking need to be added.
- There is an avid mountain biking community in Sugar Land.
- Sidewalks in the city are not wide enough, especially in areas with major retail and restaurants.
- More paths leading to mall, town center, etc. for all neighborhoods
- Lights on paths
- Attendees referenced area trails that they considered as good examples or locations that could benefit from trails:

City of Sugar Land Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan 2011 Update

- Terry Hershey Park in Houston – mix of paved and natural trails, miles of connectivity.
- Memorial Park – people run there because there are no trails in Sugar Land.
- Missouri City – Sugar Land children attend Elkins High School and route is a beautiful ride.

Input from Other Sugar Land Departments

Input was received from city departments including Planning, Engineering, Transportation, Drainage and the Police Department. Key comments and suggestions that were received include:

- Generally, existing trail corridors in Sugar Land are very safe. Only source of complaints is rowdy activity and occasional fighting by students near some middle school locations.
- Consideration could be given to the creation of a citywide police response unit that might be available to respond to citizen complaints along new trail corridors. These officers might be able to go to different locations around the city on a rotating basis to establish a security presence.
- Call boxes for safety are not seen as an absolute requirement by the Police Department, but could be considered along some major routes.
- Lighting may not be required along corridors that are not anticipated to be used at night.
- Traffic calming infrastructure such as traffic humps could be considered in some locations to help slow traffic in the vicinity of key at-grade crossings.
- Sidewalk and trail development requirements for new areas might be one consideration, but implementation strategy would be required. However, staff noted that most of these new communities already provide trail amenities.

Input from Key Stakeholder Entities

Meetings were held with the boards of each of the levee improvement districts that have facilities within the corporate boundaries of Sugar Land.

- LID 14 FC LID
- LID 17 LID 11
- FC LID 2 LID 10
- LID 2 LID 15
- Burney Road MUD

These meetings were held over a three month period in late 2006 and early 2007, and resulted in the following feedback.

- All of the districts provided positive feedback as to the idea of using levee corridors for trail facilities.

City of Sugar Land Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan 2011 Update

- Residents of each district who were represented on levee improvement district boards noted that the levee corridors were already in use as walking corridors, and that most residents would be in favor of their use as trail corridors.
- All stressed that maintaining and preserving the integrity of the levees was their primary concern.
- Determining the best location for trails within each corridor would depend on the engineering of each particular levee. Each levee district's engineers would need to review and approve the proposed trail design.
- Many of the levee corridors include space at the toe of the levee which could accommodate trails.
- In some cases, the top of a levee could be used as a trail corridor, but the trail surface would have to allow periodic maintenance and inspection of the levees by that particular levee improvement district.
- Concrete trails along the top of the levee would have to be designed to fit within the top zone of the levee and would have to maintain the design height of the levee.
- Specific liability and safety concerns in each district would have to be addressed on a case by case basis, but were not perceived to be impediments to the use of the levee corridors for trails.
- Maintenance issues would have to be addressed for each corridor. Currently, each district is responsible for its own maintenance, such as mowing and periodic inspections. The introduction of trails might require more frequent mowing than what the district would normally do.
- A formal legal agreement that addresses the specific responsibilities and requirements of the City of Sugar Land and each individual improvement district will be required prior to moving forward with designing and developing each trail.

Board and Council Review

Workshops with the Parks Advisory Board were held in May and August of 2007, and the Board recommended on September 12, 2007 that the Park Director forward the plan to the City Council for review and approval. The City Council was briefed on the plan in June of 2007, and held final review workshop in November of 2007.

2009 Citizen Survey

Creative Consumer Research has conducted a Citizen Satisfaction Study for the City of Sugar Land since 2004. This is a telephone study used to obtain citizens' opinions about the city.

The 2009 study is the third wave of this tracking study. Other waves were conducted in 2006 and 2004.

Each year the survey is revised to reflect the current issues facing the city, current questions of interest, and collect the most pertinent and actionable information. While modifications are made for each survey, a core group of questions are maintained to track the city's progress through the years.

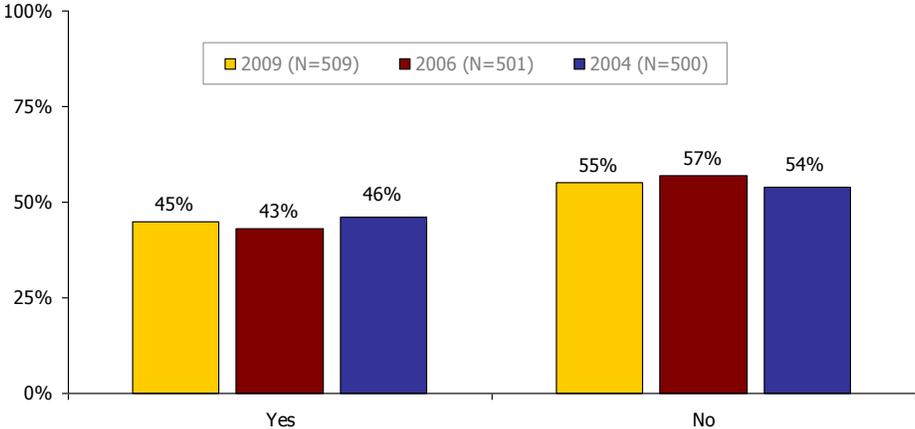
Since the research began in 2004, City of Sugar Land receives high ratings on almost all factors rated. There have been steady and significant increases in various scores since then seen in 2006 and again in 2009.

While this is an impressive performance by the City, it also raises the bar of expectations of the residents. In the next few years, it will be key to maintain the high quality currently in place as well as focus on those few areas with opportunities for improvements.

City parks and facilities receive at least 88% *Good* and *Excellent* ratings on all factors:

- Accessibility (97%)
- Convenience of location (95%)
- Cleanliness (94%)
- Personal safety (93%)
- Condition/safety of equipment (92%)
- Turf Maintenance (90%)
- Reservation Process (88%)

Used a City Park or Recreational City Facility



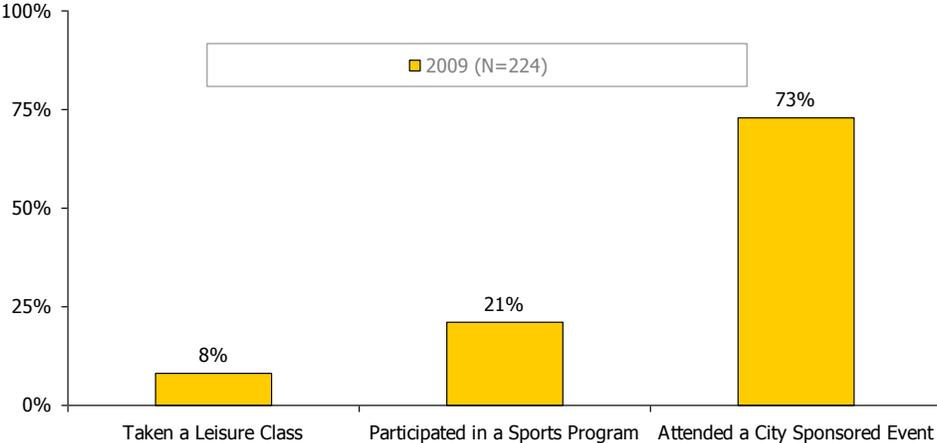
- 45% of respondents have visited a City park or recreational facility.

17. In the past year, have you or a member of your household used a city park, rented a recreational facility, or attended an event at a city facility?



Activities Participated In

Base: Those who have used a City Park or Facility



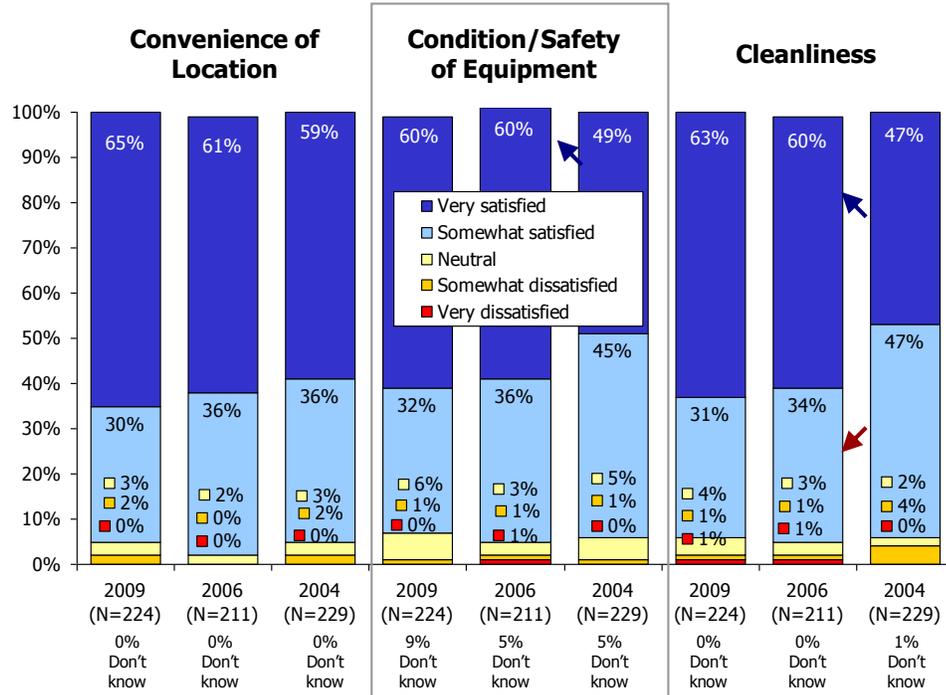
- Most of those who have visited a City’s recreational facility have done so for a City Sponsored Event

19. In the past year, have you or a member of your household used a city park, rented a recreational facility, or attended an event at a city facility?



User Satisfaction With City Parks/Facilities

Base = Those who used a city park or facility



- Overall, the satisfaction ratings for the factors of the park/facility are high. All factors of the City parks/facilities received at least 90% satisfied ratings with the exception of the reservation process (84%).

Slide 1 of 3

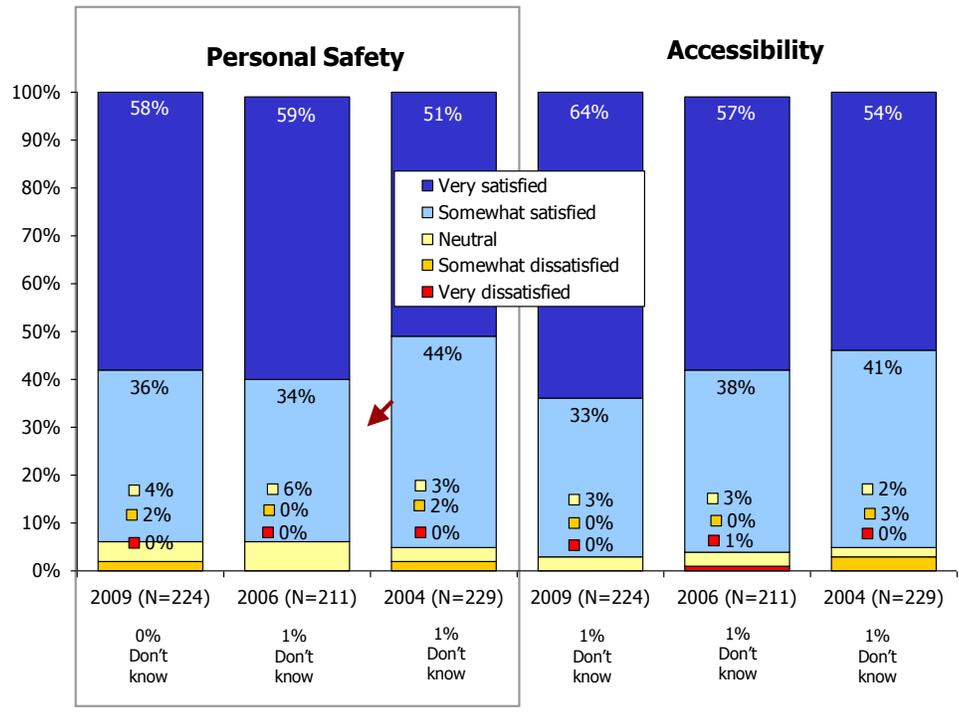
 Significantly higher than previous year's results
 Significantly lower than previous year's results

18. How would you rate ... ?



User Satisfaction With City Parks/Facilities

Base = Those who used a city park or facility



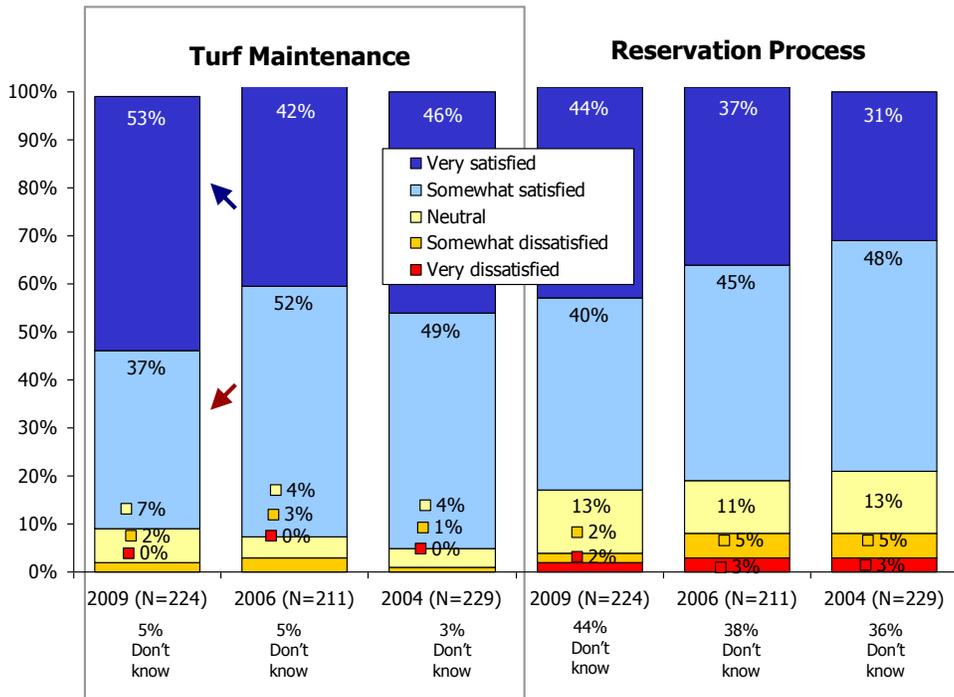
Slide 2 of 3

 Significantly higher than previous year's results
 Significantly lower than previous year's results

18. How would you rate ... ?

User Satisfaction With City Parks/Facilities

Base = Those who used a city park or facility



Slide 3 of 3

Significantly higher than previous year's results
 Significantly lower than previous year's results

18. How would you rate ... ?

City Owned Park Inventory

Parks	Acres	Type	Developed/Undeveloped	Baseball/Softball (Practice)	Baseball Fields	Baseball Courts	Batting Cages	BMX/Mountain Bike Trail	Community Meeting Rooms	Concession Stand	Covered Picnic Shelters	Off Leash Dog Park	Drinking Fountains	Exercise Stations	Fishing Pier	Gills	Horseshoe Pits	Lake, Pond, Water Feature	Park Benches	Pavilion	Picnic Tables	Playground	Pool	Restrooms	Skate Park	Soccer Fields	Soccer (Practice)	Softball Fields	Stage	Tennis Courts	Trails-Hike/Bike (in Miles)	Trails-Park (in Miles)	Trash Cans	Volleyball Courts (Sand)		
Brazos River Corridor	430.86	R	U																																	
Brazos River Parkland (RiverPark)	161.71	C	D				1																							2.75	2					
City Park	19.90	C	D		5		4		1	3	1	7	7		1				8	16	1	1	2	1					4			41	1			
Colony Bend Park	5.00	N	D								2	2	2						9	4	2				2						0.3	6	1			
Covington West Park	0.50	N	D				1				2	1	1						5	1	1											2				
Duhacsek Park	49.00	R	D						1						2	2	1			1	7		3									2				
Eldridge Park	43.00	C	D						1	1		6	6		1	3			1	4	1	14	1	1	10	2					0.4	23				
First Colony Park	21.30	C	D		9		7		1	3	1	6	6		3				3	18	1	3		3								42				
Gannaway Lake Property	58.00	NRA	U																																	
Highlands Park	5.00	N	D								2	1	1		2	4			4	7	1										0.3	4	1			
Imperial Park	41.00	C	D				4		2				1						7	6	1			2			9					50				
Lonnie Green Park	2.00	N	D										1						5	1	1									0.7		2				
Lost Creek Park	21.00	C	D						1	1		4	4		4				2	1	15	1	1	7	3							26				
Macco Park	7.20	N	D																2	2												6				
Mayfield Park	1.50	N	D								1	1	1		2				3	3	1											2	1			
Meadow Lake Park	5.10	N	D								1								6	4	1					1					0.2	5	2			
Mesquite Park	2.45	N	D																													3				
Oyster Creek Park	108.00	C	D									2	2		5				1	10	5	1	1	1				1		2.5	11					
Park at the Levee	3.0	N	D								1		1						2	2						1										
River Gable Pocket Park	0.3	N	D								1								4	4	2															
Ron Slockett Memorial Park	8.60	N	D								3	1	1						4	9	1								1		0.4	6	1			
Settlers Way Park	5.5	N	D																						5							11				
Sugar Lakes Park	3.60	N	D								1	1	1						3	5	2										0.25	5	1			
Sugar Land Community Center	1.80	S	D						3			2											1													
Sugar Land Memorial Park	115.00	R	D						1	3	3	1	3		6				1	13	3	15	1	2						2.56	1.25	12				
Sugar Mill Park	5.30	N	D								1	1	1		3				1	7	6	1								1.30	0.25	7	1			
Thomas L. James Park	0.50	N	D																6													3				
TOTALS	1126.12				14	3	2	15	3	8	10	20	1	40	2	1	31	6	5	107	6	140	18	1	16	1	24	7	9	2	5	7.31	7.85	269	9	

M=Mini Park N=Neighborhood Park C=Community Park L=Linear Park R=Regional Park S=Special Use Park
 NRA=Natural Resource Area

Updated Needs Assessment

Indoor Recreation

The 2005 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan identified an immediate need for 50,000 square feet of indoor recreation space in 2005. This figure was based on the national standard of 1 s.f. of indoor recreation space per citizen. The Senior Adult Center was expanded in 2007 adding approximately 3,000SF of space and the Recreation Center number 1 will be completed in 2011 adding 17,500SF of indoor recreation space. The completion of these 2 facilities only equates to roughly 25% of the space needed based on current 2011 population of 78,817.

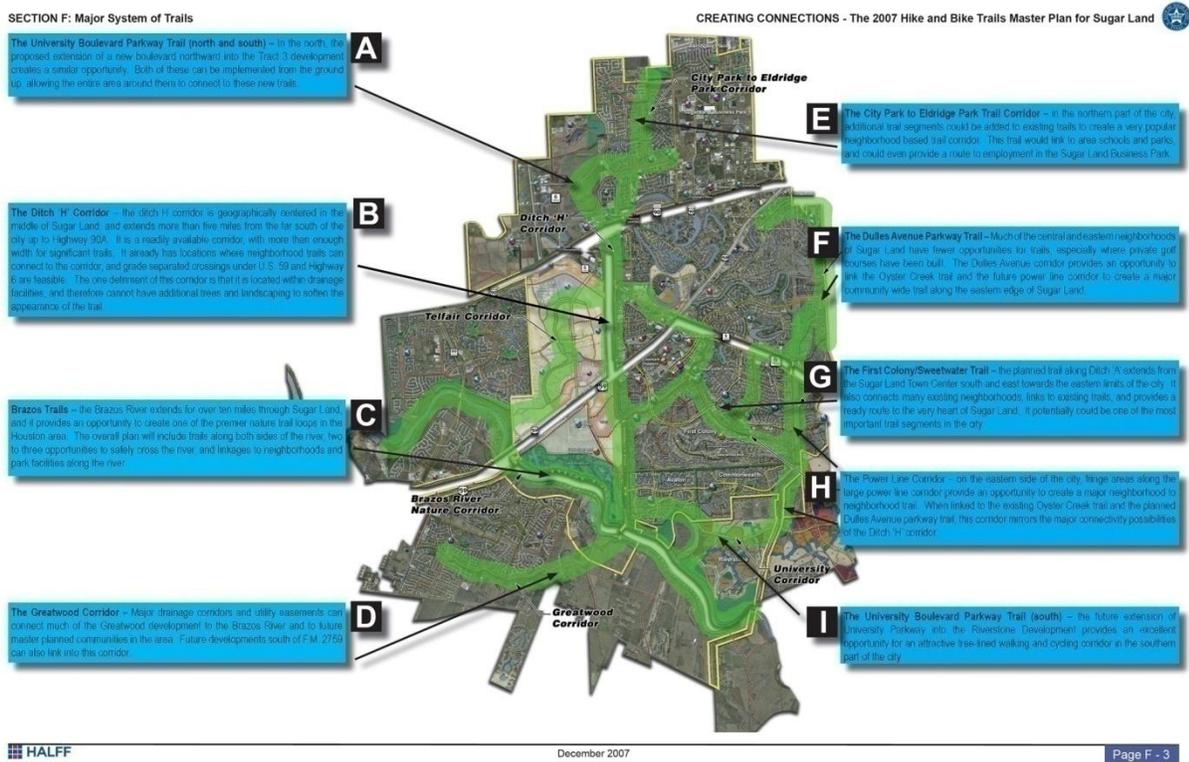
The creative approach of creating a “Recreation Campus” to combine new facilities with the leveraged square footage of existing facilities allows for the city to make substantial headway in its goal of delivering outstanding recreation programs and services to our citizens and their guests. This strategy of leveraging existing building square footage and taking a “multi-generational approach” to recreation programming allow for a more significant benchmark standard of Recreation square footage to be evolved and expanded into future Recreation Centers to be strategically located and “right-sized” to provide the optimal opportunity to meet our citizens’ leisure facility and program needs in the future.



Trails

Trails remain a top priority for the City and the region. Although there are many projects in design, many miles of trails remain to be constructed. Trails and connectivity are popular requests among citizens. The City is working with volunteer groups to build additional natural-surface trail and trail projects continue to be included in the City’s Capital Improvement Program for funding.

Over twelve million dollars is identified in the master plan for priority segments alone. These trails, which total over 25-miles, represent the key connections throughout the City.



Sports Fields

The City receives many requests from sports leagues for more youth and adult sports fields. The City’s parks are at maximum capacity for fields.

Girls Softball continues to grow and regularly fills Imperial Park. Plans to add fields to meet the need have been delayed due to funding.

Indoor basketball courts are included in the recreation center but may spur interest for additional courts. The city closed one outdoor basketball court in Slockett Park in 2008 at the request of the adjacent neighborhood.

City of Sugar Land Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan 2011 Update

The City receives requests for additional tennis courts regularly but does not have funds or parkland to accommodate a tennis center at this point.

Because of the diversity of Sugar Land's population, there has been a growth in the request of "non-traditional" field sports such as lacrosse, cricket and rugby. The City has been able to provide temporary locations for these games to take place and hopes to add more permanent facilities in the future as parkland acquired and funding becomes available for development.

Identified Community Needs

SUMMARY OF IDENTIFIED COMMUNITY FACILITY NEEDS

Facility		High	Moderate	Low
1.	Indoor Recreation	•		
2.	Trails	•		
3.	Open Spaces/Natural Areas	•		
4.	Playgrounds for Children	•		
5.	Small Amphitheater (Seats 10,000)	•		
6.	Special Events/Festival Facilities	•		
7.	Water Playgrounds	•		
8.	Aquatic Complex	•		
9.	Senior Center	•		
10.	Nature Center		•	
11.	Canoe Launches on Brazos River		•	
12.	Cultural Arts Center		•	
13.	Basketball Courts (Outdoor)		•	
14.	Tennis Courts		•	
15.	Large Amphitheater (Seats 20,000)		•	
16.	Soccer Fields		•	
17.	Competitive Aquatics Complex		•	
18.	Special Use Parks (Skate Boarding/Inline Skates/BMX)		•	
19.	Practice Athletic Fields		•	
20.	Softball Fields		•	
21.	Baseball Fields			•
22.	Sand Volleyball Courts			•
23.	Multi-Purpose Fields			•
24.	Cultural/Botanic/Community Garden			•
25.	Football Fields			•
26.	Racquetball			•
27.	Disc Golf			•

SUMMARY OF INDOOR FACILITY NEEDS

Facility		High	Moderate	Low
1.	Indoor Recreation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise/Aerobic/Karate/Dance Room • Gymnasium • Teen Area • Senior Citizen Area • Classrooms for Programs • Game/Media Rooms • Basketball Courts (Indoor) • Indoor Track • Meeting Rooms • Computer Labs • Cooking/Kitchen Facilities • Arts and Crafts Room • Indoor Volleyball • Indoor Soccer 	•		
2.	Senior Center	•		
3.	Nature Center		•	
4.	Cultural Arts Center		•	

SUMMARY OF OUTDOOR FACILITY NEEDS

Facility		High	Moderate	Low
1.	Trails <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trails – Hike/Bike/Walk/Jog/Run • Nature/Greenway Corridor • Bike and In-Line Skate Only • Fitness Stations Along Trails • Equestrian 	•		
2.	Open Spaces/Natural Areas	•		
3.	Playgrounds for Children	•		
4.	Small Amphitheater (Seats 10,000)	•		
5.	Special Events/Festival Facilities	•		
6.	Water Playgrounds	•		
7.	Aquatic Complex	•		
8.	Canoe Launches on Brazos River		•	
9.	Basketball Courts (Outdoor)		•	
10.	Tennis Courts		•	
11.	Large Amphitheater (Seats 20,000)		•	
12.	Soccer Fields		•	
13.	Competitive Aquatics Complex		•	
14.	Special Use Parks (Skate Boarding/Inline Skates/BMX)		•	
15.	Practice Athletic Fields		•	
16.	Softball Fields		•	
17.	Baseball Fields			•
18.	Sand Volleyball Courts			•
19.	Multi-Purpose Fields			•
20.	Cultural/Botanic/Community Garden			•
21.	Football Fields			•
22.	Racquetball			•
23.	Disc Golf			•

Priorities

The City's priorities remain much the same.

High Priority

1. Recreation Center – 17,000 s.f. completed, almost 80,000 s.f. total is recommended
2. Trails – nine miles new hard trail, nine miles new soft trail recommended. One mile of hard trail and four miles of soft trail have been completed
3. Open Space/Natural Areas
4. ~~Picnic Areas/Pavilions – five new shelters recommended, five completed~~
5. Playgrounds – eight new playgrounds recommended. Two completed, one acquired
6. ~~Youth/Teen Center – Included in Recreation center~~
7. Small Amphitheater
8. Special Event/Festival Facility
9. Water Playgrounds – two water playgrounds recommended. One completed
10. Aquatic Complex
11. Senior Center – expanded in 2007 with plans to expand again in 2012

New Implementation Plan

The economy has fluctuated dramatically in the last two years from cost escalations making estimating and budgeting almost impossible, to a weakened economy with costs falling but raising concern over spending. Through the City's future planning with a Citizens Visioning Task Force, it appears that residents want to see a lot more park and green space acquisition and development.

ACTION PLAN					
Facility and Land Acquisition					
Rank	Facility/Need	Proposed Location	Capital Costs Estimate	Annual Operations/ Maintenance Cost Estimates	Year To Be Expended
HIGH PRIORITY ITEMS					
1.	Recreation Center	University of Houston	\$4,800,000	\$400,000 - \$500,000/year	5-10
2.	Trails (9 mile hard trail, 9 miles soft trail recommended)	Ditch H Trail First Colony Trail Brooks St Trail Ditch A-22 Trail	\$4,500,000	\$22,500/year	5-10
3.	Open Spaces/Natural Areas (Land Acquisition)	Brazos River Gannoway Lake Telfair Riverstone	\$9,325,000 - \$12,632,500	\$5,000 per 10 Acres /year	5-10
4.	Picnic Areas/Pavilions (5 new shelters recommended)	Duhacsek Park Brazos River Corridor Gannoway Lake Greatwood Park River Park Riverstone	Small: \$400,000 to Large: \$1,400,000	\$6,250/year	1-10

City of Sugar Land Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan 2011 Update

Rank	Facility/Need	Proposed Location	Capital Costs Estimate	Annual Operations/ Maintenance Cost Estimates	Year To Be Expended
5.	Playgrounds (8 new playgrounds recommended)	<u>Upgrade:</u> Mayfield Park Highlands Park Covington West Park First Colony Park <u>New:</u> Brazos River Corridor Duhacsek Park Gannoway Lake River Park Riverstone	Upgrades: \$300,000 New: \$1,000,000	\$5,600.00/year	5-10
6.	Youth/Teen Center	(Included in Rec Center)	(Included in Rec Center)	Included in Rec Center	1-5
7.	Small Amphitheater (50 events per year)	University of Houston Brazos River Corridor	\$1,000,000	\$30,000/year	5-10

Demographics

2010 Census: 78,817 people

Race

White: 52.0%

Black or African American: 7.4%

American Indian and Alaska Native: 0.2%

Asian: 35.3%

Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander: 0.0%

Some Other Race: 2.3%

Two or More Races: 2.8%

Hispanic or Latino (of any race): 10.6%

*Please note that people who identify their origin as Hispanic or Latino may be of any race according to the US Census, so if you total all race categories above they will equal to more than 100%

Population Projections

Please note that these numbers are based on projections and have not been re-calibrated to the results of the 2010 census.

Jan. 1, 2010 - 84,511

Jan. 1, 2011 - 85,824

Jan. 1, 2012 - 87,138

City-wide Goals and Objectives

A comprehensive plan is one of the most important documents used to guide development and land-use within a city. Sugar Land is no different, as the City Council regularly relies on the Comprehensive Plan to make policy decisions affecting the future of the City - whether it is related to land-use, economic development, or mobility. This long-range plan provides guidance today to help achieve the vision for tomorrow.

The Comprehensive Plan establishes the long-term goals for the community through a Vision statement and Guiding Principles. Though a long range document, the Comprehensive Plan also guides the establishment of shorter-term goals and priorities, which then provide the direction for the City's annual strategic work plan and budget. While the shorter-term goals are affirmed annually by the City Council, the Vision and Guiding Principles are reviewed only periodically and are designed to guide over several years. The current version of the Comprehensive Plan was formally adopted by the City Council on November 1, 2005. Significant changes have occurred in Sugar Land since that time.

Recognizing the need to review the City's long-term goals, the City Council took advantage of being off-cycle in its normal strategic planning process due to Hurricane Ike, and devoted a March 2009 work session to discussing Vision 2025 and the Guiding Principles. With some substantial changes made, the City Council decided it would be best to hold a community summit for residents to come together to review and refine the draft principles before proceeding with an update to the Comprehensive Plan.

The community summit was the first - and a very important - step in updating the Comprehensive Plan, but more work and opportunities for public involvement remain. The City Council reviewed the refinements in detail in an August work session and formally adopted Vision 2025 in September 2009, which will now serve as the basis for an update to the Comprehensive Plan. Throughout the approval process for the Comprehensive Plan update, citizens will be encouraged to provide input through numerous public hearings at both the Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council levels.

Vision 2025 represents an ideal, but realistic view of what Sugar Land can look like in 15 years. Embedded in the Vision statement are 11 value-based principles that highlight key areas of importance for the City's future. As a supplement to Vision 2025, each guiding principle is listed separately with means statements that specifically describe the intent of each principle.

VISION 2025 AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES DOCUMENT.

Sugar Land Vision 2025 – Vision statement

Sugar Land 2025 is a SAFE,(A) BEAUTIFUL,(B) INCLUSIVE (C) and ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE COMMUNITY.(D) Sugar Land 2025 has DESTINATION ACTIVITY CENTERS,(E) GREAT NEIGHBORHOODS,(F) SUPERIOR MOBILITY,(G) OUTSTANDING CULTURAL, EDUCATIONAL AND RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES (H) and is a REGIONAL BUSINESS CENTER OF EXCELLENCE.(I) Sugar Land 2025 has BALANCED DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT.(J) The COMMUNITY TAKES PRIDE IN SUGAR LAND.(K)

Sugar Land Vision 2025 Guiding Principles

PRINCIPLE A: SAFE COMMUNITY

1. Safest city in the United States
2. People feeling safe, secure and comfortable at home, in the neighborhood, at the parks, in commercial areas, and throughout the community
3. Informed citizens participating in and taking responsibility for community safety and emergency preparedness
4. Rapid, professional and coordinated response to an emergency call for service
5. City prepared for all hazards, disaster and post disaster recovery including coordination with local, regional and state resources
6. Building codes promoting highest reasonable standards for safety
7. Safe drinking water

PRINCIPLE B: BEAUTIFUL COMMUNITY

1. Attractive, well-designed and well-maintained public buildings, streetscapes incorporating gateways, public spaces and public art throughout the city
2. Attractive, well-designed and well-maintained commercial areas and buildings, including beautiful landscapes, and appropriate signage
3. Attractive, well-maintained homes
4. Clean, well-maintained lakes and waterways that are publically accessible
5. Reduction/removal of overhead power lines in future development

PRINCIPLE C: INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY

1. Celebrating America, such as: 4th of July, Veteran's Day, Memorial Day, flying the flag
2. Community respecting and celebrating the history and heritage of Sugar Land and Texas
3. All family generations and cultures feeling welcome and having fun

City of Sugar Land Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan 2011 Update

4. Support for the faith community
5. Celebrating the unique international and inter-cultural community that we have become
6. Residents informed, actively involved and participating in community and civic affairs

PRINCIPLE D: ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE COMMUNITY

1. City as a leader – model for standards, processes and operations
2. Open green spaces throughout the city
3. Effective stormwater management and drainage system enhancing quality of surface water and protecting neighborhoods
4. Quality wastewater treatment system
5. Water conservation
6. Reduced energy consumption and increased use of renewable resources
7. Convenient, easy, state-of-the-art recycling system with options and incentives
8. Developments, redevelopments and buildings incorporating the concepts of environmental sustainability
9. Improved air quality
10. Reasonable approach and balance with a “return on investments” – economic and/or community benefit

PRINCIPLE E: DESTINATION ACTIVITY CENTERS

1. Each destination activity center having positive image and reputation – a sense of place
2. Variety of unique quality features that define each destination activity center
3. Mixed use developments with commercial and multi-family residential elements
4. Pedestrian friendly activity centers connected by alternative transportation modes and trails
5. Major community focal points and regional destinations, such as: Town Center, Brazos River Park, Entertainment District and “Imperial” Area

6. Public open space and parks for people to gather and enjoy; neighborhood to use; and to conduct community events

PRINCIPLE F: GREAT NEIGHBORHOODS

1. Strong neighborhood identity and pride
2. Renovated, modernized and well-maintained older housing stock
3. High percentage of owner occupied homes
4. Well-maintained, replaced and up to date neighborhood infrastructure: streets, utilities, sidewalks, street lights and drainage
5. Strong, effective home owner and neighborhood associations maintaining and investing in community common areas, streetscapes and public spaces
6. Maintaining quality neighborhoods and buffered from or blended with adjacent commercial areas and non-residential land uses
7. Residents involved in and taking responsibility for making the neighborhood a great place to live and call home
8. Top quality community and neighborhood parks with active and passive areas

PRINCIPLE G: SUPERIOR MOBILITY

1. Effective traffic management signal system facilitating predictable, acceptable travel times within Sugar Land
2. Effective intra-city public transportation system linking activity centers: trolley, electric bus, monorail, water taxi
3. North/south mobility with several corridors
4. Interstate and U.S. highways efficiently moving traffic through and to/from Sugar Land (U.S. 59, Highway 6, 90A)
5. Major corporate airport for businesses and general aviation
6. Commuter rail serving to link Sugar Land to the Greater Houston Metro Area and Fort Bend County / Southwest with relocation of freight rail

City of Sugar Land Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan 2011 Update

7. Pedestrian-friendly community with multi use trails network for bikes and pedestrians connecting neighborhoods and the community
8. Well-designed, well-maintained streets, sidewalks and multi use trails

PRINCIPLE H: OUTSTANDING CULTURAL ARTS, EDUCATIONAL AND RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

1. Brazos River Park as a regional destination with water-based activities on the river and lakes; hike and bike trails; innovative, unique venues and activities
2. Variety of cultural art opportunities, programs and venues serving as regional destinations
3. Public art throughout the city
4. Major museums having educational significance
5. Performing Arts Center (large community and small venues) for theater, concerts and entertainment serving as a regional destination
6. Regional, family oriented, professional sports venue
7. Major university campus serving residents, non-residents, and businesses with full range of undergraduate, graduate and post graduate programs
8. Strong relationship and partnership between City of Sugar Land, schools and university

PRINCIPLE I: REGIONAL BUSINESS CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

1. Targeted national and international businesses such as: corporate finance, electronics manufacturing and assembly, energy, regional and national headquarters, bio and nano technology
2. State of the art, world class infrastructure and technology to support local businesses
3. Business-friendly environment and reputation
4. Quality jobs at or above the average income in the community
5. Tract II and Prison Property/Newland (300 acres) developed as major business parks with Class A office environment
6. Full service convention and conference center targeting the best second tier market
7. Major regional state-of-the-art medical and health services center serving the southwest area

City of Sugar Land Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan 2011 Update

8. Multiple, high-quality, full and limited service hotels for business travelers and visitors
9. Unique, “upscale” retail with upgraded products

PRINCIPLE J: BALANCED DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT

1. Balanced land use within city (70% residential/no less than 30% commercial, retail, office)
2. Well-designed, well-maintained city infrastructure throughout the city
3. Innovative designs meeting city’s development standards and adding value to the surrounding neighborhoods
4. New developments and redevelopments consistent with city vision, comprehensive plan, policies and standards
5. Upgrading or reusing older commercial areas and commercial strip centers
6. Redevelopment uses that are appropriate for different locations and proactive city policies to assist
7. Redevelopment of historic structures into creative uses to showcase the city’s history
8. High-quality and well-maintained housing stock throughout the city

PRINCIPLE K: COMMUNITY PRIDE IN SUGAR LAND

1. City working in partnership with residents, community organizations, businesses and other government entities
2. People want to live here, businesses want to invest here
3. Successful community events and celebrations bringing people together
4. Being “A Community of Excellence” and recognized as such
5. Residents engaged in civic and community affairs
6. Businesses and residents volunteering and contributing to the Sugar Land community
7. Strong community organizations, charitable organizations and institutions
8. City leadership facilitating and being a catalyst for community pride

Creating a Parks and Recreation Department Vision – The Park and Recreation Department Business Plan

In 2009, the Parks and Recreation Department was tasked with developing a new business plan. In order to develop a unified approach to the future, a vision was created that defines a preferred future and philosophy for the Sugar Land Parks and Recreation Department.

The Parks & Recreation Department is in the business of planning, developing, implementing and professionally managing the parks, streetscapes, programs, policies, facilities, special events and leisure services established under the leadership of the City Council, City Administration and the associated advisory boards of the City of Sugar Land.

The long term Vision Statement of the City Council, “Vision 2025”, is comprised of 11 Principles and approximately 80 defining statements, or specific examples, to illustrate the Principles of the Vision Statement. It is significant that 10 of the 11 Principles, and 50 of the 80 defining statements, have a direct correlation to the goals and objectives of the Parks & Recreation Department and our efforts to support the Vision of the City of Sugar Land (these are comprehensively identified in the “Administration” section of the Business Plan and reinforced in various program sections). In addition, the City’s Goals and its *Comprehensive Plan* have numerous parallel goals and objectives consistent with the 29 goals, value statements, principles, mission and vision statements of the Parks & Recreation Department.

Mission Statement

“To create and maintain unparalleled recreational opportunities and unique, high quality parks and public spaces enhancing our community, with exceptional customer service.”

Vision Statement

“The City of Sugar Land Parks & Recreation Department will provide safe, beautiful, inclusive and environmentally responsible parks & recreation facilities. We will be key contributors to creating destination activity centers, great neighborhoods, bicycle/pedestrian mobility and outstanding cultural, educational and recreational opportunities. Parks & Recreation will play an integral role in the balanced development and redevelopment of the community. We will facilitate economic, cultural and tourism opportunities and will be a primary factor in the pride our citizens hold for Sugar Land.”

Statement of Purpose

Our commitment to the citizens of Sugar Land includes:

- The provision of leisure and recreation opportunities to meet the needs of the community.
- The conservation, preservation and creative use of the natural environment.
- The involvement of the community in the planning and delivery of recreation programs, services and facilities.
- The growth of a beautiful, livable city and open spaces.

This commitment grows from our belief that:

- Leisure and recreation enhance the quality of life in our City and make it a better place in which to live, work, play and visit.
- Recreation is an essential municipal service.
- The Department should be both facilitator and provider of opportunities for leisure and recreation.
- Community involvement is an essential part of our planning process.
- Our recreation lands, programs and facilities should be accessible.
- People should have choice in their leisure and recreation.

This purpose of the Parks and Recreation Department therefore is to ensure:

GUIDING PRINCIPLES & GOALS

VALUES, BELIEFS AND ROLE OF THE PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

Goal 1: The Parks and Recreation Department will continue to pursue the values, beliefs and roles documented by the Master Planning Process.

LEVELS OF SATISFACTION

Goal 2: The Parks and Recreation Department will continue to improve the levels of satisfaction that the community indicates towards components of the Parks and Recreation Department and towards the Department as a whole.

Goal 3: The Parks and Recreation Department will ensure that facilities are maintained both for the safety of the public and also to ensure longevity of the facilities and amenities.

RECREATION ACTIVITIES

Goal 4: The Parks and Recreation Department will continue to ensure leisure and recreation related opportunities that meet and balance the identified and documented needs and preferences of individuals and groups within the community.

PARK USAGE

Goal 5: The Parks and Recreation Department will provide facilities, programs and services that give all citizens reasonable opportunities to participate in a wide range of recreation activities.

FACILITIES

Goal 6: The Parks and Recreation Department will ensure quality of leisure and recreation experience by creating environments and facilities that meet the needs of people and their activities. The Parks and Recreation Department believes the provision of a safe and secure environment enhances the leisure and recreation experience of program participants and facility users.

USE OF FACILITIES

Goal 7: The Parks and Recreation Department believes that the quality of leisure and recreation experience may be affected by the level of use at the facility. Crowding or the perception of crowding may impact the facility use patterns. The Parks and Recreation Department will monitor the carrying capacity and patterns of use for all Park and Recreation facilities.

PROGRAMS

Goal 8: The Parks and Recreation Department will, on the basis of identified need, continue to provide programs that are enjoyable, allow self-expression, provide opportunities for learning, creativity and socialization, provide a reasonable challenge and promote a healthy lifestyle.

Goal 9: The Parks and Recreation Department will facilitate, support and/or initiate balanced development of recreational and higher level skill and interest programs.

- Goal 10: The Parks and Recreation Department will continue to evaluate program and facility scheduling on a regular basis.
- Goal 11: The Parks and Recreation Department will develop and implement registration procedures that are fair and equitable for all members of the community.

NEEDED PROGRAMS, FACILITIES AND SERVICES

- Goal 12: The Parks and Recreation Department will conduct studies to monitor the needs of the community; the studies will include both users and non-users of Parks and Recreation Department programs, services and facilities.
- Goal 13: The Parks and Recreation Department will respond to the needs, identified through studies, in a manner that is appropriate to the situation and within its available human, financial and physical resources.

PARTICIPATION PATTERNS

- Goal 14: The Parks and Recreation Department will facilitate and provide organized programs and facility activities using planning guidelines developed from the results of the Master Planning Process.
- Goal 15: The Park and Recreation Department will recognize the importance of spontaneous recreation participation.
- Goal 16: The Parks and Recreation Department will promote programs, facilities and services in a manner that attracts non-users.
- Goal 17: The Parks and Recreation Department will promote the importance of recreation to the quality of life by encouraging people to maintain or increase the numbers of hours they will be involved in recreation in the future.

BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

- Goal 18: The Parks and Recreation Department believes that actual and perceived barriers to recreation participation should be alleviated by encouraging innovative ways to address the barriers.
- Goal 19: The Parks and Recreation Department will increase the physical and social accessibility, to leisure and recreation opportunities, for the community of Sugar Land.

City of Sugar Land Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan 2011 Update

Goal 20: The Parks and Recreation Department will develop a fair and equitable system of user fees.

RESOURCES

Financial

Goal 21: The Parks and Recreation Department will work with City Management and the City Council to develop a sound and diverse financial basis for the Department.

Staff

Goal 22: The Parks and Recreation Department will hire staff that are qualified and trained for their positions. The Parks and Recreation Department will be committed to and shall ensure the health and safety of its employees in the workplace.

Volunteers/Community Involvements

Goal 23: The Parks and Recreation Department will develop a volunteer management program, using existing resources such as “Serve Sugar Land” and additional volunteer and community resources.

Equipment and Supplies

Goal 24: The Parks and Recreation Department will develop a maintenance program for equipment and supplies.

Goal 25: The Parks and Recreation Department will enable program planning by ensuring that all programs, services and facilities have the appropriate quantity and quality of equipment and supplies.

SAFETY AND VANDALISM

Goal 26: The Parks and Recreation Department believes that the provision of a safe and secure environment enhances the leisure and recreation experience of program participants and facility users. Parks and streetscapes will be designed to encourage visibility, provide accessibility to public safety personnel and vandalism will be responded to in a timely manner.

CUSTOMER CARE & FEEDBACK

Goal 27: The Parks and Recreation Department believes in encouraging feedback from program participants, facility users and the general community.

PROMOTION AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

Goal 28: The Parks and Recreation Department believes that the community should be as informed as possible about the leisure and recreation programs, services and facilities that exist in Sugar Land.

Goal 29: The Parks and Recreation Department believes that local media should be used as effectively as possible. The Parks and Recreation Department believes that creative promotion and public relations will motivate people to realize the importance of leisure and recreation in their overall quality of life.

STRATEGIC PLANNING DOCUMENTS

In addition to these departmental goals, objectives, value statements, principles, mission and vision statements that directly support those of the City, the department works from several strategic planning documents that have been approved by City Management and the City Council. These tools include the *2005 Parks, Recreation & Open Space Master Plan*, the *2007 Hike & Bike Trails Master Plan* and the *2007 Parks Assessment*. These strategic planning documents prioritize, estimate costs and recommend timelines for the implementation of projects, programs and services essential to achieving the “mission” and “vision” of the Parks & Recreation Department and the City of Sugar Land.

SUMMARY

The goals and objectives of the Parks & Recreation Department tie into and support the overall direction of the City in a variety of ways:

Parks & Recreation supports the City’s goals through “Community Revitalization”:

– Parks are complex elements of a city. They can serve scores of different uses, may be specialized in their function, or can simply provide visual appeal for residents. However they work, they act to define the shape and feel of a city and its neighborhoods. They also function as a conscious tool for revitalization.

Parks can stem the downturn of a commercial area, support the stabilization of faltering neighborhoods, and provide a landmark element and a point of pride for constituents. For all these things to happen, the city needs to be open and aware of parks’ potential to spur revival, and support the elements that are needed to make that happen.

Parks & Recreation supports the City’s goals through “Community Engagement”:

-Community engagement is the process of working collaboratively with individuals and groups to achieve specific goals. For parks and open spaces, community engagement allows elected

and public officials to directly involve their constituencies in the ongoing design, planning, and management of these resources. This process results in informed and engaged residents that feel better connected to their communities.

Parks support community engagement by providing residents with a venue for participation in and attachment to their communities. They also provide a sense of place and offer essential life-enhancing qualities that aid community and individual well-being.

Parks & Recreation supports the City’s goals through “Economic Development”:

-Parks provide intrinsic environmental, aesthetic, and recreation benefits to our city. They are also a source of positive economic benefits. They enhance property values, increase municipal revenue, bring in homebuyers and workers, and attract retirees. At the bottom line, parks are a good financial investment for a community.

Parks & Recreation supports the City’s goals through “Creating Safer Neighborhoods”:

Studies across the country have found that, when adjacent to residential areas, green spaces have been shown to create neighborhoods with fewer violent and property crimes and where neighbors tend to support and protect one another. Time spent in natural surroundings relieves mental fatigue, which in turn relieves inattentiveness, irritability, and impulsivity, recognized by psychologists as precursors to violence.

Green spaces also support frequent, casual contact among neighbors. This leads to the formation of neighborhood social ties, the building blocks of strong, secure neighborhoods where people tend to support, care about and protect one another.

Parks & Recreation supports the City’s goals through “Green Infrastructure”:

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

In the role as green infrastructure, parks and open space are a community necessity. By planning and managing parks as parts of an interconnected green space system, cities can reduce flood control and stormwater management costs. Parks can also protect biological diversity and preserve essential ecological functions while serving as a place for recreation and civic engagement.

They can even help shape urban form and reduce opposition to development, especially when planned in concert with other open spaces.

Parks & Recreation supports the City’s goals through “Helping Children to Learn”:

-City parks offer children the daily benefits of direct experience with nature – the motivation to explore, discover, and learn about their world and to engage in health-promoting, physical activity. City parks engage children in informal, experiential learning and creativity through play and shared experiences with peers, laying the foundation for effective formal education.

City parks offer a vehicle for children’s participation in community development, citizenship, and democratic processes. Many of our lifetime learning experiences started on playgrounds, sports programs, arts and crafts programs or in the environmental learning opportunities that nature provides.

Parks & Recreation supports the City’s goals through “Improving Public Health”:

-People value the time they spend in parks, whether walking a dog, playing basketball, or having a picnic. Along with these expected leisure amenities, parks can also provide measurable health benefits, from providing direct contact with nature and a cleaner environment, to opportunities for physical activity and social interaction. A telephone survey conducted for the American Public Health Association found that 75% of adults believe parks and recreation must play an important role in addressing America’s obesity crisis.

Parks & Recreation supports the City’s goals through “Arts & Cultural Programs”:

-Urban parks have always been an important setting for arts and cultural programs. During the late 19th century, parks commonly hosted musical events. By the beginning of the 20th century, dance, theatre, and film began to be represented in parks programming.

Today, there is a tremendous growth of artistic and cultural activity in urban parks, from large-scale performing arts festivals to long-term residencies with arts organizations. Since parks are the democratic spaces of a city, where communities can come together to express their identities through programs such as “Art in Parks & Public Places”, the marriage of parks and the arts makes perfect sense. Parks can be a vital place for the cultural expression of a community and a city.

Parks & Recreation supports the City’s goals through “Promoting Tourism”:

-Public parks are often the “engine” that drives tourism in many communities. Attractions activate this tourism system. Rarely do people leave their homes and travel some distance because they want to stay in a particular hotel or dine at a particular restaurant in a different

locale. Most of the time, the desire to go to a destination on a pleasure trip is stimulated by its attractions. Many of these attractions are located in parks, while some parks are themselves attractions.

Parks provide sites for special events and festivals that attract tourists. Parks provide sites for sports tournaments, which can be major sources of tourism and economic benefits, especially for smaller to medium size cities.

Parks & Recreation supports the City’s goals through “Smart Growth Practices”:

-Parks are commonly thought of as the venue for “fun and games”, but that is only one role they play. Park land, plazas, landscaped boulevards, waterfronts, public gardens, etc...significantly define the layout, real estate value, traffic flow, public events, and the civic culture of our community. With open spaces, our city and neighborhoods take on structure, beauty, breathing room, and value.

CONCLUSION

Public understanding of the pivotal role that parks play in enhancing the quality of life in our city is growing, along with an understanding of the links between the quality of city parks and sprawling growth. City parks are an important element of smart growth that addresses both the public’s need for greenspace and the role of greenspace in mitigating higher development density.

The recent Community Summit further reinforced and supported the City Council’s “Vision 2025” as a blue ribbon panel of citizen leaders consistently confirmed the guiding principles contained within that vision statement.

Many of the key attributes of the City of Sugar Land that our citizens overwhelmingly identified as their “things they like about Sugar Land” were parks, trails, recreation opportunities, beautiful landscapes and the quality of life components that are synonymous with the facilities, programs, services, events, goals, objectives, mission and vision of the Parks & Recreation Department.



