

PARK, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE

Introduction

The Flatonia City Council recognizes that parks and open spaces are an integral component of what makes a community a great place to live. Therefore, the City is proactively addressing the current and future recreational and open space needs of its residents by directing the Flatonia Parks Committee ("Parks Committee") to develop this Park, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan and to actively pursue its implementation.

This Master Plan outlines a set of community park and recreation priorities, identifies specific park development projects, and includes a schedule for carrying out the identified park projects. The primary goal of this plan is to greatly enhance the quality of life enjoyed by the citizens of Flatonia, thereby making Flatonia a great place to live, work, and raise a family.

Flatonia Population- Estimates, Trends, and Forecasts for Growth

The population in Flatonia has been increasing steadily since 1980. This growth is projected to continue for the foreseeable future (see Table 6-1). Historically, the rate of growth in Flatonia has been faster than in Fayette County but slower than the state of Texas. Overall, Flatonia's rate of growth has been variable, a trend

GOAL: Increase the number of recreation facilities for Flatonia's citizens, especially for the area's youth.

GOAL: Acquire land, when and where appropriate, for the development of new parks.

Objective: Identify and rank the recreation needs of Flatonia's citizens.

Objective: Inventory existing park land and recreation facilities and determine their suitability for meeting the City's needs.

Objective: Identify land that the City could purchase or have donated to it to provide additional parks and open space.

Objective: Distribute needed recreation facilities throughout the City.

Objective: Solicit public ideas and comments about the City's park system.

Objective: Identify appropriate sites and develop a schedule for constructing the most-needed recreation facilities.

Objective: Identify sources of parkland acquisition and development funds.

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Table 6-1
Population, Ethnicity, and Income

Demographic Factor		1990	2000	2010	Percent Change from 2000
Population		1,295	1,455	1,615	11%
Age Group	0 to 17	350	393	437	
	18 to 24	110	124	137	
	25 to 44	342	384	426	
	45 to 64	218	245	272	
	65 and Older	275	309	343	
Race and Ethnicity	Non-Hispanic Whites	783	880	976	
	Non-Hispanic Blacks	111	125	139	
	Hispanics	389	436	485	
	Other	12	14	15	
Median Household Income (adjusted to 1999 dollars)		\$27,486	\$32,905		
Percent below poverty level		34.2%			

*U.S. Census Data

**Texas State Population Data Center

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that was also experienced by surrounding cities of similar size. However, projections indicate steady growth for the area.

For a more detailed discussion of Flatonia's population, ethnicity, and income levels, please see Chapter 1 of this Plan.

Parks Committee and Master Plan Background

In 1999, the Flatonia City Council determined that a master plan was necessary to help ensure that the parks, recreation, and open space needs of the community would be met well into the future. In order to accomplish this task, as well as to assist in the implementation of the plan, the City Council established a Parks Committee with members representing a broad range of community organizations and interests. A copy of the City's resolution creating the Parks Committee is contained in the Appendix of this plan.

As one of its first actions, the Parks Committee began to develop a strategic plan for improving existing parks and providing additional public recreation facilities. The Committee's goal was to inventory available park resources, identify recreation priorities as established by the citizens, and develop a schedule for satisfying those demands.

Most of the Parks Committee's continuing work will be to decide the best ways to fund needed park improvements and to provide guidance on specific park master plans. The Parks Committee will also update this plan at least every five years to ensure that changing citizen needs are identified and met.

Inventory of Park and Recreation Facilities

The Parks Committee inventoried all of the recreation facilities available to Flatonia citizens. The following table is a complete listing of facilities available to the public.

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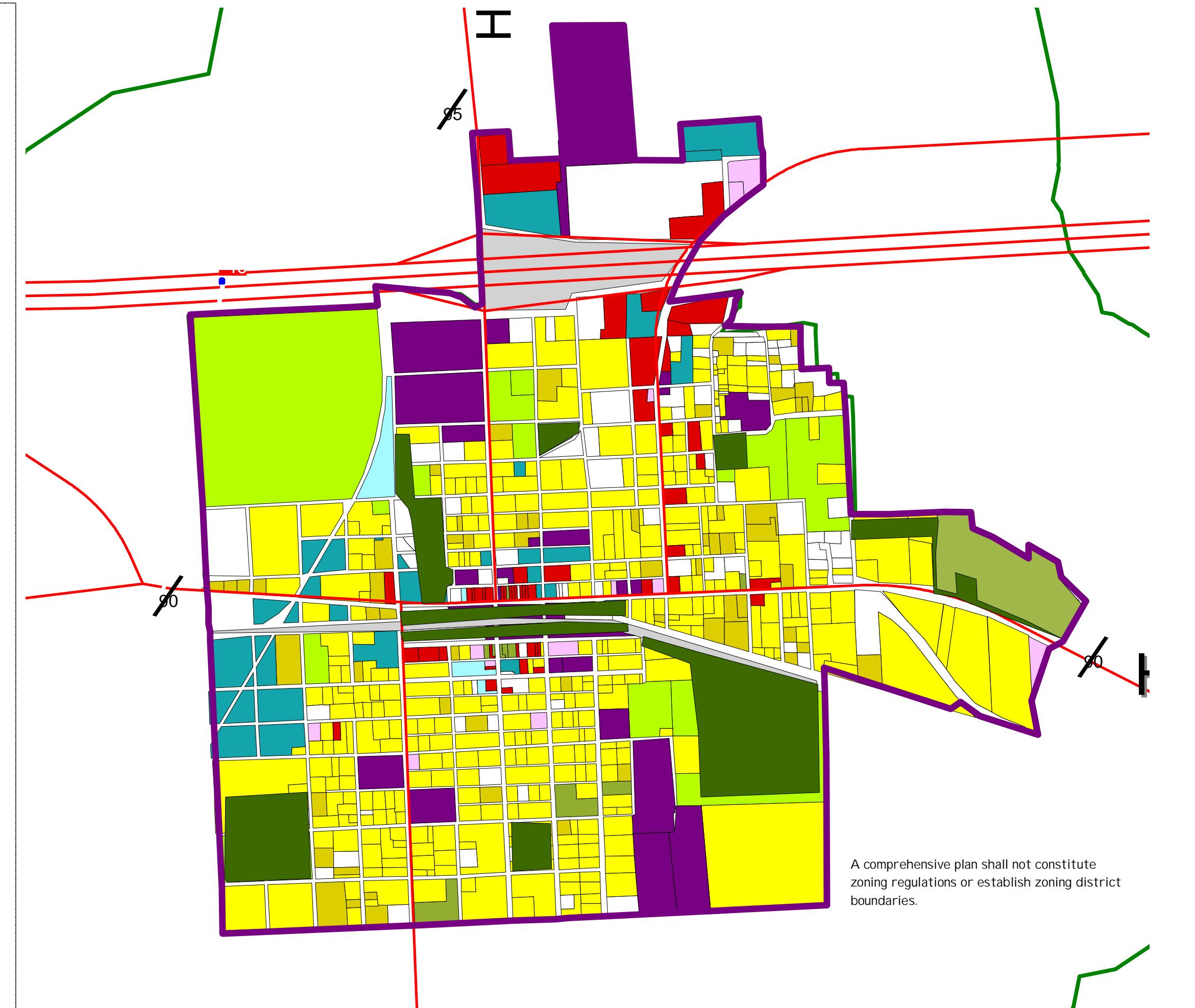
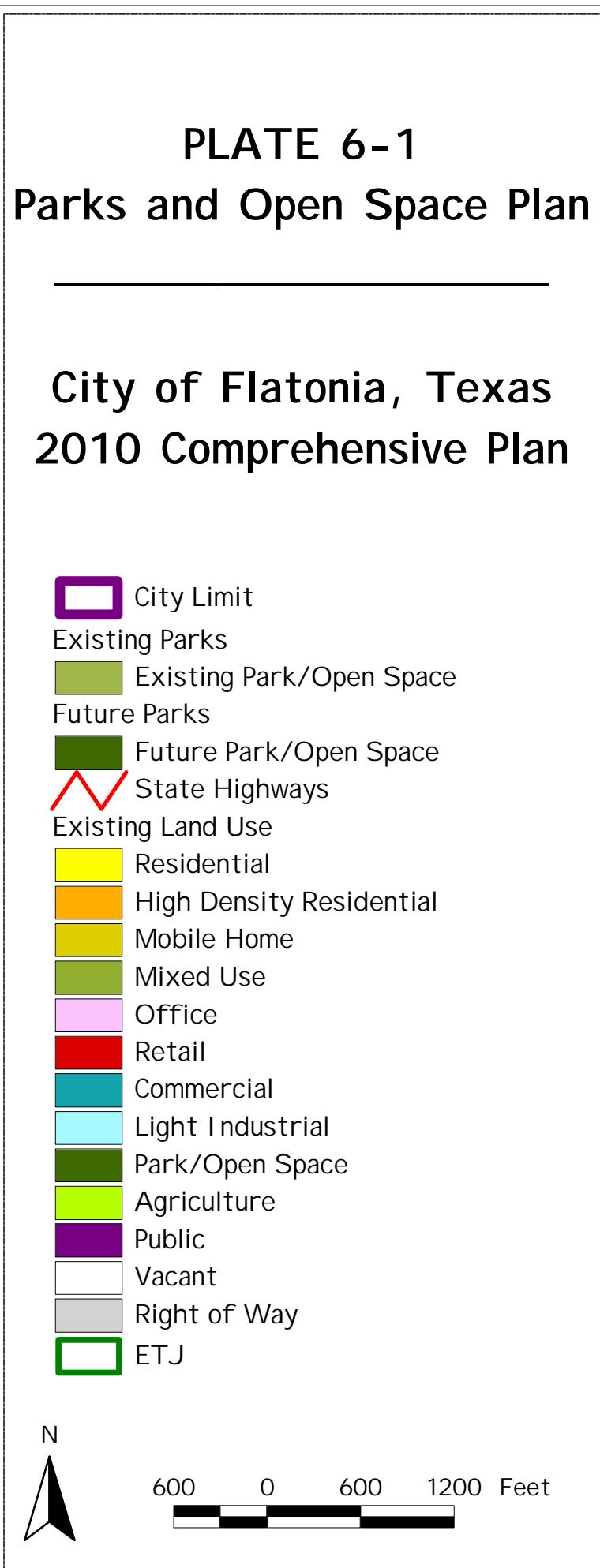
Table 6-2
Recreation Facility Inventory

Site	Property Owner	Facility	Number	Condition
G.F. and Audrey McWhirter City Park	City of Flatonia	Baseball Field Picnic Sites Pavilion Restroom Softball Field Swimming Pool Basketball Court Hike and Bike Trail	1 4 1 1 1 1 1 .5 mile	Good Good Good Good Good Good Good Good
Garbade Park	City of Flatonia	Playground Baseball Field Picnic Sites	1 1 4	Poor Good Good
Golf Association	Flatonia Golf Association (non-profit)	Golf Course	9 holes	Good
Flatonia ISD	FISD	Football Field Track Sand Volleyball Courts Playground Tennis Courts	1 1 1 1 2	Good Good Good Good Good

Open Space and Park Land Needs Identification and Assessment

Flatonia recognizes the need to plan for future park developments and the strategic location of those parks as the City grows. While Flatonia enjoys a comfortable 1.4 acres of park land per 1,000 residents, only a small percent of residents live within walking distance of a park. High priorities include neighborhood parks (generally between 2 and 10 acres in size, within walking distance of a residential area, and with basic recreational amenities), park land near the school for joint-use facilities between the City and the school district, and linear park development along creeks and natural drainage areas. [Map 6-1](#) on the following page shows current park land and preferred future park and open space locations.

Flatonia also recognizes the need to preserve open space for today and for future generations. Currently, the City does not own any dedicated open space (the term



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"open space" is used to identify publicly owned land of one acre or more with a minimal amount of development). These lands are typically used for passive recreation purposes such as walking and picnicking and for the preservation of unique, rare, or easily damaged natural resources such as wetlands, riparian woodlands, steep slopes, and natural drainageways.

Park And Recreation Needs Identification And Assessment

Citizen Survey of Park and Recreation Needs

The Parks Committee distributed copies of the survey to residents by mailing them with every electric bill (1,100 in all). More than 450 of the 1100 surveys that were mailed out to City Utility customers were returned - a 41 percent response rate.

In the survey, citizens were given a list of recreation facilities and asked to place a checkmark next to the five most desired facilities from each list. Based upon the total point scores, the top 10 facilities were called "most requested park and recreation needs" and were used as the starting point for determining the City's priority needs. If a respondent checked "Indoor Recreation Facility" as one of their top five facilities, then they were also asked which indoor facilities were most desired. The survey results are listed below in order of most requested to least requested:

Facility	Points
Indoor Recreation Facility	173
Trails	153
Large Event Pavilion	144
Playground	142
Camping/RV Sites	140
Swimming Pool	118
Picnic Facilities	112
Picnic Pavilions	106
Historic Railroad Park	83
Natural Habitat Areas	78
Golf Course	54
Baseball Fields	49
Amphitheatre	45

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Skateboard/rollerblade	36
Softball Fields	32

<u>Indoor Recreation Facilities</u>	<u>Points</u>
Aerobic/Dance Area	97
Movies	94
Game Area	80
Craft/Meeting Room	69
Weight Lifting Room	62
Basketball	49
Volleyball	44
Raquetball	25

Community Park and Recreation Workshop

On September 16, 2000, the Parks Committee held a community workshop to discuss the results of the citizen survey and to elicit public review and comment on the Parks Committee's prioritized list and conceptual park development projects. Many citizens attending the workshop voiced support for the prioritized list and the conceptual projects.

Overall City Park and Recreation Needs

In order to develop the final needs list the Parks Committee reviewed the results of the citizen survey and the citizen workshop. The committee then assessed the available resources of the city to build and maintain these facilities, as well as previous (pre-survey) facility requests, available land for park development, and park grant opportunities. The final prioritized list of Flatonia's park and recreation needs is shown in the following table.

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Table 6-3
Master Plan Priority Needs List

Priority	Facility Type
1	Park land acquisition
2	Trails for walking, jogging, and biking
3	Picnic pavilions
4	Playground
5	Picnic tables and grills
6	Natural habitat area
7	Skateboard/Rollerblade area
8	Historic railroad interpretive facilities
9	Camping/RV sites
10	Indoor Recreation Center - Aerobic/Dance area - Movies/Games area - Craft/Meeting area - Weight-lifting area - Basketball court - Volleyball court

Park and Recreation Facility Deficit / Surplus

The Parks Committee adopted park and recreation facility standards similar to those recommended by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) in its *Park and Open Space Standards and Guidelines*. The Parks Committee used the NRPA standards as the starting point and adjusted them to reflect local needs. The City's park and recreation facility standards can be found in the Appendix of this plan.

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After determining the City's park and recreation facility standards, the Parks Committee reviewed the needed facilities list and used the standards to determine the number of each kind of facility the City should have to meet those needs. Some existing recreational facilities were not fully counted in the current number calculations due to their limited availability or poor conditions:

- Recreation facilities on school property are generally available during the school year only after 3:00 p.m. on weekdays, and all weekend. They are also available for approximately three months during the summer. At the suggestion of Texas Parks and Wildlife's staff, the Parks Committee used a multiplier of 0.5 in current number calculations to account for the limited public availability of these school facilities.
- Public recreation facilities in poor condition are not included in the current number calculations. At the suggestion of Texas Parks and Wildlife's staff, the Parks Committee declared that these facilities are worn out and of no benefit to the community.

The result of applying the Parks Committee's facility standards is a current deficit for all 10 priority recreation facilities as shown in the table 6-4 below.

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Table 6-4
Deficit / Surplus Facility Calculations

Priority	Facility Type	Current Number	Condition	Facility Standard	Current Facility Deficit / Surplus
1	Park land acquisition	22 acres	NA	45	-23 acres
2	Trails for walking, jogging, and biking	.5 miles	Good	2.5 miles	-2 miles
3	Picnic pavilions	1	Good	2	-1
4	Playground	.5	Good/Poor	2	-1.5
5	Picnic tables and grills	8	Good	23	-15
6	Natural habitat area	0 acres	NA	1.5 acres	-1.5 acres
7	Skateboard/Rollerblade area	0	NA	1	-1
8	Historic railroad interpretive facilities	0	NA	1	-1
9	Camping/RV sites	0	NA	10	-10
10	Indoor Recreation Center	0	NA	1	-1

Note: The Facility Standard and Current Facility Deficit / Surplus numbers are rounded to the nearest whole unit of measure.

Master Plan Implementation

The final step in the master planning process was to develop a five-year implementation plan which outlines specific projects and timelines for project development.

After analyzing existing City-owned land and possible land acquisitions throughout the City, as well as considering facility development and maintenance costs, the Parks Committee selected the following three projects: "Central Park," "Historic Railway Crossing" Linear Park, and an Indoor Recreation Center. The development

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timing, the number and type of facilities to be constructed, and the current and remaining facility deficit / surplus are shown in the following table.

Table 6-5
Master Plan Implementation Schedule

Priority	Facility Type	Current Facility Deficit / Surplus	Project 1: Neighborhood Park (2000 - 2002)	Project 2: Historic Railway Crossing Linear Park (2002 - 2003)	Project 3: Indoor Recreation Center (2003 - 2005)	Remaining Facility Deficit / Surplus
1	Park land acquisition	-23 acres	6 acres (approximately)	12 acres (approximately)	5 acres (approximately)	0
2	Trails for walking, jogging, and biking	.2 miles	.5 miles	1.5 miles	0	0
3	Picnic pavilions	-1	1	0	0	0
4	Playground	-1	1	0	0	0
5	Picnic tables and grills	-11	8	0	0	3
6	Natural habitat area	-1.5 acres	.5	1	0	0
7	Skateboard/Rollerblade area	-1	1	0	0	-5
8	Historic railroad interpretive facilities	-1	0	1	0	0
9	Camping/RV sites	-10	0	10	0	0
10	Indoor Recreation Center	-1	0	0	1	0

Resources and Fundraising Opportunities for Plan Implementation

Flatonia and the Flatonia Parks Committee will work together to identify funding sources as well as available resources to assist in the development of new recreational facilities and the acquisition/donation of park land. To date, three grant programs have been identified to assist the City:

1. The Lower Colorado River Authority's *Partnerships in Parks* grant program (up to \$200,000);
2. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Grants-in-Aid grant program (up to \$500,000);
3. The TEA-21 grant program administered through the Texas Department of Transportation.

The following funding and available resources have also been identified as potential sources of assistance:

1. City funds;
2. City labor and equipment;
3. Lower Colorado River Authority's *Partnerships in Parks* technical assistance program;
4. Flatonia Chamber of Commerce, civic groups, and local business funds and labor.

Ongoing Park and Recreation Priorities

After establishing a priority park and recreation development list, the Parks Committee then identified park and recreation opportunities that should be addressed both now and in future plans.

- The Parks Committee, as part of its ongoing efforts, will work with interested local citizens to develop a City Trails Master Plan. Any future trails Master Plan would be incorporated into the overall Flatonia Park, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan.
- The Parks Committee should work closely with the Flatonia ISD to identify appropriate tracts of land adjacent or near school buildings as potential sites

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for the proposed Indoor Recreation Center and a future Flatonia Athletic Field Complex. These facilities could be shared with the school system and, in return, some or all maintenance costs could be covered by Flatonia ISD.