



# Nacogdoches Comprehensive Plan Update

## Parks and Recreation

## CHAPTER 10

More and more cities are recognizing the importance of parks and recreation programs and facilities. Not only do parks provide a higher, healthier quality of life for local residents, they are often very important to the economic viability of the community.

Businesses often choose to locate in areas that provide the very necessary components that go beyond homes, schools and work. Like roads, water or sewer lines and drainage, parks and related facilities should be considered an integral part of the infrastructure of the city.

In conjunction with the Nacogdoches Comprehensive Plan Update, a Parks Master Plan was developed. It is intended to clearly define the role of the City in providing parks and recreation facilities for its citizens for the next 20 years. The *Parks Master Plan* was developed with the assistance of the City's Parks and Recreation Department, the Parks Advisory Committee, citizen input and the consultant team. This Parks and Recreation element of the Comprehensive Plan is a summary of the *Parks Master Plan* and includes goals, objectives and actions, an inventory of existing parks and recreation facilities, standards of development, an assessment of needs and priorities, and a recommended framework for the development of a system that serves the public now and in the future.

The Parks and Recreation element outlines the following objectives from the *Parks Master Plan*:

- ◆ Identify the needs and desires of Nacogdoches residents for parks and recreational facilities.
- ◆ Determine areas that are under-served.

- ◆ Identify ways the City can address those needs.
- ◆ Establish park and recreation facilities standards.
- ◆ Continue the process of developing various types and levels of parks.
- ◆ Prioritize the desired improvements and developments.
- ◆ Look for innovative ways to fund new facilities and improve existing recreational sites.
- ◆ Establish criteria for equipment, maintenance, staffing, budgeting and infrastructure to guide the park and recreation investments of the City for the next 10 to 20 years.
- ◆ Provide the framework for public/private and public/public efforts to share in the development and maintenance of facilities.

The *Parks Master Plan* is divided into sections that follow the guidelines of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) Grants-In-Aid Division for the preparation of a parks master plan. These sections include:

- ◆ Introduction
- ◆ Vision and Goals
- ◆ Plan Development Process
- ◆ Area/Facility Concepts and Standards
- ◆ Inventory of Facilities
- ◆ Needs Assessment
- ◆ Implementation and Priorities
- ◆ Operations and Maintenance

### Goals and Objectives

The *Parks Master Plan* seeks to further the mission of the City's Parks and Recreation Department:

*The Nacogdoches Parks and Recreation Department strives to enrich the lives of Nacogdoches citizens by providing quality parks and facilities as well as diverse recreational and educational opportunities.*

The goals and objectives outlined in this section are the result of monthly meetings held with the Parks Advisory Committee, citizen input received in public meetings and focus groups, a Parks and Recreation survey, and input from the Parks and Recreation Department. The ultimate goal of the Parks and Recreation element is to identify, protect and enhance the natural and built environments and image of Nacogdoches by providing a diverse blend of parks and maintaining important open spaces and opportunities for diverse recreational activities. It should be noted that the goals and objectives are organized to meet the requirements of approval by TPWD, which does not require action statements, only goals and objectives.

## *Providing Parks and Recreation Facilities to Meet Future Needs*

**Goal:** A wide range of parks and recreation facilities that will accommodate the current and future needs of the City's residents and visitors.

### Objectives

- ◆ Assure an even geographic distribution of parks and recreation facilities that will provide equitable opportunity for activities and access for all citizens by identifying areas that are underserved.
- ◆ Provide parks and recreation opportunities for all segments of the population including low income, elderly, youth, youth-at-risk and disabled citizens, recognizing the importance of accessible public facilities.
- ◆ Provide for a variety of recreational opportunities including cultural and community activities and special events that meet the passive (strolling, sitting, birdwatching, etc.) and active recreational needs of the City.
- ◆ Provide facilities for active and passive recreation activities based on the local needs and desires identified in the Nacogdoches Parks and Recreation Survey, Community Forum and focus group meetings.
- ◆ Inform and educate citizens and tourists about the City's parks and recreational facilities through advertising and mail-outs.
- ◆ Coordinate within City government and consult the Future Land Use Plan to determine appropriate locations for recreational facilities including an RV Park and Regional Sports Complex.
- ◆ Partner with local religious and educational institutions by sharing existing facilities to better serve communities.



## *Developing Outdoor Facilities*

Goal: Appropriate outdoor recreation facilities.

### Objectives

- ◆ Acquire incrementally and develop parkland (through lease agreements, donations and/or partnerships) to meet local requirements and needs for park acreage for the projected population in 10 years.
- ◆ Consider making Banita Creek South a Festival Park for more community events and activities.



An amphitheatre concept is one consideration for the low-lying area within Banita Park South, where large events could be accommodated near downtown in an open-air setting.

- ◆ Develop facilities (through lease agreements, donations and/or partnerships) in areas that are considered deficient in specific types of parks.
- ◆ Develop a regional sports complex, which may include, but is not limited to a soccer field, skateboard park, and a family aquatic facility in partnership with Nacogdoches County, the Nacogdoches Independent School District, Stephen F. Austin State University and other appropriate entities.
- ◆ Consider relocating adult softball to the new sports complex and moving youth baseball to the former adult softball location to keep all youth activities together.
- ◆ Coordinate matching funds for a regional sports complex.
- ◆ Consider the development of parks and recreation facilities in the City's extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ), particularly in areas being annexed into the City.
- ◆ Consider a boat rental facility at Lake Nacogdoches.

## *Developing Indoor Facilities*

**Goal:** Appropriate indoor recreation facilities.

### Objectives

- ◆ Use existing city-owned properties for parks and recreation facilities.
- ◆ Develop indoor recreation facilities as needed and desired by the community.
- ◆ Consider the development of parks and recreation facilities in the ETJ, particularly in areas being annexed into the City.
- ◆ Provide a local community center/social center for areas in the southern part of the City that are underserved. The community center can provide after-school programs, tutoring, youth activities, and adult classes.
- ◆ Partner with local religious and educational institutions by sharing existing facilities to better serve communities.

## *Conserving Natural Resources*

**Goal:** Natural resources and open spaces that are conserved through park and recreation land acquisition, open space preservation and environmentally sensitive planning.



### Objectives

- ◆ Encourage the preservation of open space by individuals, corporations, non-profits and public agencies to enhance the livability, aesthetic value and natural beauty of the City. Provide development incentives, regulations and policies, as appropriate.
- ◆ Incorporate local natural features, including the City's creeks and lakes, into parks and recreation planning and development.

- ◆ Incorporate educational opportunities, including information on native plants and wildlife, in developing parks and recreation facilities.
- ◆ Consider development of a Nature Museum and Native Animal Center in collaboration with Stephen F. Austin State University.
- ◆ Preserve natural areas for wildlife viewing, birding and camping.

### *Providing for Alternative Circulation and Accessibility*

**Goal:** A pedestrian and bicycle network of sidewalks, trails and bikeways which connects residential areas to parks, schools, workplaces, shopping, major open spaces and other destinations, providing alternative routes for circulation and accessibility.

#### Objectives

- ◆ Continue to develop greenbelt corridors, bicycle and pedestrian trails and routes, and linear parks that can provide a safe, secure connection between homes and parks, recreation areas and facilities, as well as schools, the university and local businesses and activity centers.
- ◆ Incorporate historic identification markers into walking trails to promote Nacogdoches' historic resources and significance.
- ◆ Consider the use of storm water retention areas north of Austin Street and on the west side of University Drive as a park facility.
- ◆ Ensure that all trails are ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant.
- ◆ Work with Brazos Transit to extend some of the existing bus routes to the southern portion of the City.

### *Ensuring Cost-Effective Maintenance*

**Goal:** A parks, recreation and open space system that is maintained, enhanced and operated in a cost-effective manner.

#### Objectives

- ◆ Develop and implement a parks and recreation improvement program which identifies and prioritizes improvements for each of the current city facilities.
- ◆ Use a replacement program for playground equipment where equipment is annually inspected and, when necessary, added to a five-year capital improvements program.
- ◆ Upgrade existing park equipment to meet current safety standards.
- ◆ Partner with local schools, churches and organizations in maintaining and enhancing existing parks and facilities. Consider a "Public Works Park Day" where citizens are encouraged to participate in community service for park maintenance.
- ◆ Support the creation of an "Adopt a Park" or "Friends of the Park" volunteer program to supplement and assist in the maintenance and upkeep of parks and park facilities.
- ◆ Improve the maintenance of all parks and recreation areas and facilities by funding preventive maintenance schedules.

- ◆ Increase police protection in and around park facilities to ensure user safety and prevent vandalism. Consider establishing police substations in areas of concern.
- ◆ Look into innovative ways to finance park improvements and activities through user fees, fund-raising, sponsorships and other sound fiscal methods.
- ◆ Consider corporate sponsorship of park improvements and upgrades such as incorporating spray stations in some of the City's older parks.

### *Negotiating Cooperative Agreements*

**Goal:** Cooperative agreements and coordinated efforts with other governmental jurisdictions, school districts and private sector entities.

#### Objective

- ◆ Continue to use mutually beneficial relationships with the school district, County, university and other appropriate entities, including for joint acquisition of land, buildings and facilities.

### **Current City Parks**

The City currently has 14 parks, one trail, and six sports complexes. These provide indoor and outdoor recreational facilities to the residents and visitors of Nacogdoches. **Table 10.1** provides a brief description of the City's parks and the facilities offered in them.

**TABLE 10.1:  
Parks and Recreation Facilities Inventory  
Nacogdoches Comprehensive Plan Update  
Nacogdoches, Texas**

<b>PARK</b>	<b>CLASSIFICATION</b>	<b>ACREAGE</b>	<b>FACILITIES</b>
Pioneer Park	Community	30	3 group pavilions Concrete picnic tables Playground equipment Charcoal grills Softball practice field Basketball goal Volleyball court Open playfield Disc golf course Restrooms Parking area
Pecan Acres	Community	23	Large pecan orchard Group pavilion 2 picnic tables Playground equipment Open playfield Trails Disc golf course Restrooms Parking area Park trail to SFA Arboretum

PARK	CLASSIFICATION	ACREAGE	FACILITIES
Maroney Complex	Regional	17.5	8-lane swimming pool Bathhouses Restrooms 4 lighted tennis courts Jogging-exercise trail Nature trail Basketball goal Playground equipment 2 picnic tables Parking facilities
Nacogdoches Baseball Complex	Regional	31	8 baseball fields (5 lighted) Covered bleachers, team areas Concession stand Pavilion Restrooms Parking facilities
Pete Smith Athletic Complex	Regional	18	4 lighted softball field Covered bleachers, team areas Parking area Pavilion Concession stand Portable restroom facilities
Mill Park	Neighborhood	26	Basketball pad with 4 goals Playground equipment Group pavilion Restrooms
Robert McCrimmon/Woden Road Park	Neighborhood	14	Group pavilion 2 picnic tables Baseball practice field Playground equipment areas Lighted covered basketball court Restrooms Parking area
Temple Pool Park	Neighborhood	1	"Spray station" Playground equipment Restrooms Parking facilities
Lakeside Park	Neighborhood	6	Linear park with a small pond Landscaping Playground equipment
Ritchie Street Park	Neighborhood	6	Baseball practice field Landscaping Playground equipment
Banita Creek Park North	Community	12	Baseball practice field Landscaping Playground equipment
Banita Creek Park South	Community	18	Soccer field Lighted 4-goal basketball court 2 group pavilions 2 picnic tables Restrooms Parking areas Playground equipment



# Nacogdoches Comprehensive Plan

# Parks and Recreation

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PARK	CLASSIFICATION	ACREAGE	FACILITIES
Lake Nacogdoches East Side Park	Regional	3	4 Picnic tables Swimming area Boat ramp Restrooms Barbeque pits Parking area
Lake Nacogdoches West Side Park	Regional	40	3 large group pavilions Picnic tables Charcoal grills Swimming area Boat ramp Boat dock Playground equipment Restrooms Nature-hiking trail Parking areas
Soccer Complex	Regional	24	12 soccer fields Bleachers Trails Group pavilion Restrooms 16 picnic tables
Eugenia Sterne Park	Neighborhood	1	Gazebo Park benches Parking area
Coy Simms Softball Complex	Regional	16.5	4 lighted softball fields Bleachers Playground equipment Concession stand area Restrooms Trails Water fountain Parking area
El Camino Real/Liberty Hall	Neighborhood	1.5	Trailhead (La Nana Creek Trail) Rentals Parking area
Blount Park	Neighborhood	1	Gazebo Garden Drinking fountains
Community Recreation Center	Community	2	Gymnasium Weight room Arts and crafts room Aerobic/dance, martial arts room Gymnastics area Meeting rooms
La Nana Creek Trail	Trail	2.5 miles	Unlit dirt path

## Park Standards

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) published *Recreation, Park and Open Space Standards and Guidelines* to establish nationally applicable criterion for the provision of parks and recreation facilities and open space. These standards are a guide for parks and recreation planning, but they should not

replace reasonable judgment or specific local needs. While general standards are useful, it is important to establish standards that are based upon unique local considerations, such as participation trends and projections, user characteristics, demographics, climate, natural environment and other considerations. Values related to leisure and recreation are unique to each municipality. Therefore, the standards should represent the interests and desires of local park users. The *Parks Master Plan* provides detailed park standards based on the above guidelines but adapted for the needs of Nacogdoches.

Standards for parks and recreation areas and open space are helpful to identify the community's parks and recreation needs based upon its population. The City currently operates and maintains 294 acres of parks and open space in 21 parks and facilities for its population of just under 30,000 people in 2000. Planning for future parks in the community is, therefore, based upon the current and projected population. Other considerations are long-term maintenance and replacement of facilities and equipment.

National standards suggest that a city should have five to six acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. Many cities in Texas use five acres per thousand as a standard. All types of municipally-owned parks and trails—neighborhood, community and regional—are included in the acreage standards. With the current population of around 30,000 and the 20-year projected population of 32,000 to 34,000, **Table 10.2** shows the park requirements given the expected population. Both the five-acre and six-acre requirements per 1,000 population are given.

**TABLE 10.2:**  
**Park Acreage Requirements**  
Nacogdoches Comprehensive Plan Update  
Nacogdoches, Texas

POPULATION	SIX ACRES PER 1,000 PEOPLE	FIVE ACRES PER 1,000 PEOPLE
30,000	180	150
34,000	204	170

Based on the acreage standards in the table above, the City of Nacogdoches currently far exceeds the NRPA standards, even for the 20-year projected population. The City, however, would like to maintain higher parkland standards and prefers 10-12 acres of parkland per 1,000 people.

***Park Classification, Development Standards and Service Areas***

A variety of sizes and types of parks and recreation facilities and activities are recommended to satisfy diverse individual interests, ensure adequate and equal opportunity, and ultimately encourage use by all population groups. Park service areas identify the geographic location of user groups based on the draw of the park and facilities offered. Service areas for the existing parks in Nacogdoches are shown in **Figure 10.1**. The following are standards for the major categories of parks. Detailed descriptions of all types of park and recreational facilities are available in the *Parks Master Plan*.

**Pocket Parks** – A pocket park is the smallest park classification and should be used to address specific recreation needs, such as in a multiple-family complex or

adjacent to a shopping center. There are no specific criteria to guide development of pocket parks although they should have recreation facilities and park improvements available to meet the needs of adjacent development. User input should be a primary determinant for developing pocket parks.

**Neighborhood Parks** – Neighborhood parks should have facilities and improvements to accommodate use by more than one neighborhood. Ease of access from surrounding neighborhoods, central location, and pedestrian linkages are key concerns when developing a neighborhood park. The site should be able to accommodate both active and passive recreation uses. Since one of the main reasons people visit parks is due to their pleasant outdoor environment, a neighborhood park should exhibit nice aesthetic qualities. Since neighborhood parks accommodate the needs of all ages, it is important to have a blend of facilities available including both passive and active activities. It is also desirable to include neighbors in the neighborhood park design process to ensure the park is compatible with the neighborhood and reflects the desires of its users. Neighborhood parks have a primary service area of one-quarter mile and are intended to meet the daily recreation needs of nearby residents.

**Community Parks** – The facilities and improvements installed in community parks must be planned and designed for heavy use by persons of all ages and from all areas of the community. Community parks should exhibit physical characteristics appropriate for both active and passive recreation use. They should have suitable soils and a variety of vegetation. Where feasible, they should be located adjacent to a greenway, which can provide an off-street linear linkage from other areas of the community. Neighborhood and community input should be a primary determinant of the development program for a community park. The primary service area for community parks is one mile, which means that most users come from within one mile of the park. However, depending on the facilities offered, community parks may draw users from farther away.

**Regional Parks** – A regional park is typically an area of natural quality for nature-oriented outdoor recreation, such as viewing and studying nature, conserving wildlife habitat, swimming, picnicking, hiking, fishing, boating, camping and trail uses. Regional parks typically include active play areas, including sports fields, and serve areas that extend beyond the city limits, drawing users from as much as 50 miles away.

**Park Trails** – These trails are located in greenways, natural areas and parks. They could also be located in drainageways, on levees or along irrigation canals, abandoned railroads, utility easements and scenic routes. Their purpose is to accommodate walkers, joggers and bicyclists and to protect them from traffic. They allow movement within and between parks, activity centers and natural resource areas with a minimum of interruptions while emphasizing a strong connection with the natural environment. They should be part of an overall park system. Design should be in compliance with Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). These trails may also be used for bicycle commuting.

**Sports Complex** – This type of park would provide for athletic fields and associated facilities at one or more larger sites in the City. The facilities would be



developed to meet the needs of the user groups and sports associations. Complexes can be developed for a variety of sports including baseball, softball (adult and youth, male and female), soccer, tennis, basketball, football, volleyball, handball and racquetball. Additional facilities should include group picnic areas and shelters. Support facilities should include restrooms, water fountains, multipurpose buildings and common open space. Parking areas should be adequate to provide spaces for tournament activities. The service area for this facility would be similar to a regional park.

As can be seen in Figure 10.1, some areas of the City are underserved. These include the southeast and southwest portions of the City as well as the north-central section.

### **Needs Assessment**

When considering specific needs for parks and facilities, it is important to identify assets and deficiencies as well as community desires to appropriately determine the development, management and maintenance of a city park system. The following needs assessment was a multi-phased endeavor combining the demand-based approach with the standards-based approach by utilizing a survey, an advisory committee, public meetings, input from community sports associations, identification of existing facilities, assessment of facilities utilization, and development of standards.

As mentioned earlier, Nacogdoches has almost 300 acres of park and open space, and, according to NRPA standards, the City requires only 150-180 acres of park and open space land for a community of its size. The City has opted to maintain a standard of 10-12 acres per 1,000 people. Therefore, there is room for more park space in Nacogdoches to serve future developments as the City continues to grow and add population.

In Chapter 4, Table 4-2 of the *Nacogdoches Parks Master Plan*, suggested facility space requirements and number of units per population based on NRPA standards are illustrated. This table can be consulted for detailed park requirements. According to these requirements, Nacogdoches is doing quite well in providing recreational facilities for the community as well as for the region. The City may wish to look into providing an additional basketball court, a few more volleyball courts, football facilities, and many more tennis courts as these are facilities that are lacking. There are sufficient soccer, baseball and softball fields, but if there is increasing demand for such facilities, then the City should consider providing additional facilities.

The desires of the community were obtained from a Parks and Recreation Survey, the Community Forum and from focus group meetings with different community and special interest groups. The results of these were very similar. Detailed summaries of results are available in the *Parks Master Plan*. Below are some of the main concerns and comments.

- ◆ There is a need for safer walking and biking trails in the City and a need for sidewalks. As well, accessibility to the parks and other recreational facilities is a concern, especially for the Hispanic and Black communities that live in the southern section of the City. Brazos Transit service does not reach these areas of the City.
- ◆ There is a desire for extension of the existing trail system so that it better serves the entire community, and that it be ADA accessible.
- ◆ The need to promote the City's history through trail development was also expressed. As well, many were not aware of the different recreational facilities that exist in the City, so the need for a marketing plan for parks and recreation was suggested.
- ◆ As some of the communities in the City are underserved, potential partnerships with different religious and educational organizations were discussed. This includes finding a location for a community or recreation center in the southern part of the City for these communities. Activities would include after-school programs such as tutoring and crafts classes, as well as other classes and activities designed for adults and seniors.
- ◆ The athletic groups expressed the need for football facilities in the City. Although it is a sport that is new to the community, its popularity is fast growing. It was also mentioned how, of all team sports, football is one that brings the community together and that the City's youth should be better prepared at a younger age to participate in the sport. This will require proper play facilities and support from the City. A Sports Complex was also discussed that would include athletic fields for soccer, baseball and softball, a water park with outdoor play facilities and outdoor pool, a future indoor pool facility, and a skateboard/bike park. The trail system would connect to this facility and would link the City's different neighborhoods and parks to each other.
- ◆ Other concerns are the need for additional lighting and restroom facilities in the City's parks, the need for additional pavilions and gathering areas, the idea of dedicating Banita Creek South Park as a Festival Park with an outdoor stage for local events, and the need for ADA-accessible trails and other park facilities.

## Operations and Maintenance

A plan for a city's park and recreation system should include standards for operation and maintenance of the improvements, as well as basic equipment criteria. Also important is the recommended level of staffing that would be necessary to implement the priorities and activities set forth in the plan. The *Parks Master Plan* lists standardized criteria for park equipment that facilitates maintenance and repairs, maximizes durability and longevity, and establishes a minimum quality level. Criteria are given for roads and parking lots, gates and fences, park buildings, playground equipment and fall surfaces, picnic tables and benches, trash receptacles, grills, bleachers, sports facilities, sidewalks, and trails for walking, jogging and biking. Overall, Nacogdoches is doing very well in maintaining equipment that meets the required standards. The standards recommend that play equipment be constructed of metal and not wood. The play structures in Maroney Park are wood structures, therefore, it is suggested that these be inspected, checked for compliance and upgraded as necessary. Otherwise, all other facilities, surfaces and equipment meet the recommended standards.

In order for the parks to be perceived as an asset to the City of Nacogdoches, they must be well maintained at all times. At meetings and in survey responses, citizens pointed out that they would like to see a higher level of maintenance to assure quality parks. *Operational Guidelines for Grounds Management* published by the NRPA, the Association of Higher Education Facilities Officers, and the Professional Grounds Management Society, outlines six Levels of Attention which detail the amount of time dedicated to a maintenance task. The first level is one of very high expectations and is reserved for special, high-visibility areas that require maintenance beyond the norm. Level 2 is the norm one expects to see on a regular, recurring basis. This is the desired standard Level of Attention. Levels 3 and 4 are lower than the norm and result from insufficient staff, so the care and maintenance required are not accomplished and the standard is not maintained. Level 5 is one step before the land is allowed to return to its original state, and Level 6 is the point at which the land is allowed to return to its natural state.

At present, Nacogdoches may be at a Level 3 or 4 maintenance status due to insufficient staff and budget restrictions. It would be desirable for the City to work toward a Level 2 standard of maintenance. This will require additional funding of staff and equipment.

Maintenance tasks and standards are outlined in the *Parks Master Plan*. Standards are included for mowing, weeding and edging, fertilizing, watering, trash collection, restroom upkeep, pavilion upkeep, picnic tables, picnic grills, lights, jogging trails, tree work, general repairs, wildlife management, insect control, sports facilities, tennis courts, office space, and convention and community centers.

If the City desires to work toward achieving Level 2 maintenance, it is recommended that the frequency of restroom cleaning and trash collection in heavily used areas be increased to daily maintenance. This, however, will require additional funding and staffing.

## Parks and Recreation Projects

### *Major Long- and Short-Term Needs*

The following projects should be considered as part of the overall improvements to the park and recreation system over the next 10 to 20 years. Here they are not listed in any particular order of prioritization but may be considered when determined by a combination of interest and funding. Potential locations for future park and recreation facilities are illustrated in **Figure 10.2**.

- ◆ Acquire land along Banita Creek North to extend the existing La Nana Creek Trail system through Banita Creek North Park and continue north to West Austin Street.
- ◆ Develop a Regional Sports Complex in the northwest quadrant of the City that would include athletic fields for soccer, baseball and softball; a water park with outdoor play facilities and outdoor pool; a future indoor pool facility; and, a skateboard/bike park.
- ◆ Acquire land and select a location for an RV Convention Center in the northwest quadrant of the City.
- ◆ Acquire land in the southeast, southwest and north-central areas of the City for location of accessible neighborhood parks to serve the community.
- ◆ Replace wooden park equipment with acceptable galvanized or galvanized and powder-coated metal, plastics and plastic-coated expanded metal or punched steel.
- ◆ Upgrade Ritchie Street Park, Robert McCrimmon/Woden Road Park and Mill Park to include spray stations.

### *Prioritization of Projects*

Based on the goals, needs and desires that evolved through the research, standards development and public input for the *Parks Master Plan*, the priorities and detailed descriptions are listed below. The funding for the projects may be a combination of current fund expenditures, bond funds, reserve funds, grants, donations, in-kind services and volunteer participation.

### *Major Projects Identified in the Parks Master Plan*

**Trail Extension:** Extending the La Nana Creek Trail system would better connect the community by continuing the trail north through Banita Creek North Park. The trail extension project would include the installation of benches, picnic tables, trash receptacles and water fountains at appropriate locations; installing trail markers and signs for areas of historic and natural significance; incorporating water features that address drainage problems; preserving natural areas and vegetation; and, connecting residential areas and parks through the use of foot bridges and low-water crossings.

**Underserved Areas:** Currently there are areas of the City that are underserved and do not have convenient access to existing parks. In particular, the older, lower-income neighborhoods are underserved, especially areas south of Main Street. Many of the recreation areas are located in more recently developed areas of the City. This was a concern brought up at the Community Forum. Traveling long distances by car to access the City's park and recreation facilities is often not possible, especially for the youth. Many at the Community Forum expressed

concern for the City's youth and the lack of appropriate recreation activities for them. Keeping young people occupied with group and community activities has proven to reduce youth crime, gang involvement and substance abuse and has been shown to increase self-esteem and enhance academic performance. Providing alternate facilities for the communities in the underserved areas would be an ideal solution. Adaptive re-use of existing buildings and partnering with faith-based and community organizations are means of providing the necessary facilities to these communities. As well, new residential developments in the eastern part of the City can be required to provide privately-maintained park space that can serve some of the adjoining communities.

**Regional Park/Sports Complex:** This project would involve development of a regional park that would be used by residents of the city and county, university students and groups, and sports associations. The focus of the park would be on soccer and would include practice and competition, adult and youth fields. Associated facilities could include restrooms/dressing rooms, concession stands, bleachers, picnic pavilions and tables. Given the proposed site in the northwest quadrant of the City, other facilities including walking trails, benches, playground equipment, and a skateboard park may be ideal as part of the complex. Adequate parking for tournaments should be incorporated in the planning of the park. Given the size of the proposed location, other sports activities and fields may be considered. Participants in the development of the complex would include the City, County, and Stephen F. Austin State University as well as private interests.

**Water Park/Family Aquatic Center:** Providing expanded water-related opportunities as well as a regional recreation destination, the water park/family aquatic center should include several pool types (Olympic, instruction, exercise, baby and wave) as well as other water-related features, slides, spray stations, etc. This center could attract visitors to the area as well as provide water activities desired by residents. As the City currently has only one swimming pool (at Maroney Park, which is not adequate), the larger facility could provide the pools. This facility could be located on the site of the Regional Sports Complex.

**Recreational Vehicle (RV) Convention Park:** An RV convention center is a unique concept that could provide the City with a tourist attraction and economic generator in the northwest quadrant, close to the Regional Sports Complex. This facility would include pad sites with hook-ups, parking facilities for large vehicles, meeting rooms, even retail and restaurant establishments, and an information center for visitors to the area. This facility would primarily be targeted for use by larger groups and conventions, and it would be for long-term rather than overnight stay.

**Upgrading Existing Parks:** Many of the City's parks would benefit from improvements, upgrades and replacement of park equipment. The following parks, in order of need and priority, require equipment upgrades and improvements:

1. Pecan Acres Park
2. Pioneer Park
3. Banita Creek North Park
4. Banita Creek South Park
5. Robert McCrimmon/Woden Road Park

6. Mill Park
7. Ritchie Street Park
8. Lake Nacogdoches East Park
9. Lake Nacogdoches West Park



Improvements to Ritchie Street Park, Robert McCrimmon/Woden Road Park and Mill Park should include spray stations and other appropriate recreation equipment. For additional security, a police substation to be located at the Community Center near Pioneer Park should be considered. Robert McCrimmon/Woden Road Park also needs additional parking facilities.

As Banita Creek South Park is currently being used by many of the City's communities for different cultural events, it is suggested that the park be used as a Festival Park. This would create a meeting place for the whole community and a central location for the City to hold events. An outdoor stage and additional park facilities such as covered pavilions would be included.

## Implementation

A primary purpose of a parks master plan is to establish priorities for improvements and an implementation program. The purpose of an implementation program is to create an aggressive, yet realistic framework for implementing the policies and recommendations for the provision of adequate parks and recreation areas, facilities and improvements. The implementation program is itself a "master plan" for the future development of Nacogdoches' parks and recreation system. In addition to identifying existing parks and priority locations for new neighborhood and pocket parks and potential linkages, the program addresses important considerations such as desired improvements, expansions and new facilities.

As with the City's Comprehensive Plan, the *Parks Master Plan* should be periodically reviewed to ensure that the goals, objectives and recommended actions reflect changing community needs and attitudes. In and of itself, the

master plan is capable of accomplishing very little. Rather, the citizens and local officials of Nacogdoches must take ownership in the plan to see that it is successfully implemented. Great care should be taken to ensure that the actions recommended by this plan are viable and realistic in that they must relate to the City's adopted and approved plans, policies and programs.

The projects identified by the master plan are intended to be completed within five-year periods between 2000 and 2020. To fund the projects, the City may decide to have a bond election to authorize issuance of General Obligation Bonds or other appropriate funding mechanisms.

### ***Funding Mechanisms***

Most capital investments involve the outlay of substantial funds. Therefore, local governments often must pay for new facilities through appropriations in the annual operating budget. There are numerous techniques available to local governments to pay for capital improvements over a longer period of time. These include both public and private funding alternatives.

**Current Revenue** - This technique is known as "pay-as-you-go" financing and is the financing of improvements from current revenues such as general taxation, fees, service charges, special established funds, or special assessments.

**Reserve Funds** - The use of reserve funds is made possible by accumulating funds in advance for capital acquisition or development. The accumulation may result from surplus or earmarked operational revenues, funds in depreciation reserves, or the sale of capital assets.

**Enterprise and Revenue Funds** - Many municipalities establish accounts that are earmarked for park and recreation programs. These accounts are used to fund programs and to acquire, operate and maintain facilities.

**General Obligation Bonds** - The use of this method involves the taxing power of the jurisdiction as it is pledged to pay the interest and principal to retire the debt. General obligation bonds can be sold to finance permanent types of improvements such as park and recreational areas and facilities. Voter approval may be required.

**Lease-Purchase** - Local governments utilizing this innovative financing approach prepare standards and specifications for the development of a park by a private company. The facility is then leased to the jurisdiction for a specified period of time. Title to the park and facilities can be conveyed to the local government at the end of the lease period without future payments. The rental over the years will have paid the total original cost plus interest.

**Eminent Domain** - The power of eminent domain allows the local government to acquire private property for public use. Although this is not a common practice for the acquisition and development of park and recreational areas, it is a tool that can be used by the City to purchase property within certain areas of the City, particularly within established neighborhoods. The property would be acquired through condemnation with "just compensation" paid to the property owner.

**Authorities and Special Districts** - Special authorities or districts may be created to provide public facilities such as parks and recreational areas. These

authorities are commonly created to avoid the restrictive debt limitations of local governments. They may be financed through revenue bonds retired by user charges or fees, or, in some instances, the authority may have the power to tax.

**Sales Tax** - Through a public referendum, the City may establish a sales tax of any size, typically one-half to one cent, to generate general revenue for the acquisition and development of parks and recreation areas throughout Nacogdoches. The sales tax may have a limited duration or may be permanent.

**User Fees** - User fees may be an effective cost-recovery technique to recover a reasonable portion of the costs to administer, operate and maintain public parks and open space. Examples of user fees include registration or entry fees for recreational programs and equipment and facility rental charges.

**In-Kind Services and Volunteer Participation** - In-kind services may be coordinated with other departments and governmental entities to perform the labor on specific construction projects. Individuals, sports associations, private businesses, and civic groups are just a few examples of entities and organizations that may furnish volunteer participation.

**State and Federal Assistance** - State and federal grants-in-aid are available to finance a large number of programs. The cost of funding parks may be borne completely by grant funds, typically with a local share required. Programs such as federal revenue sharing and Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) have given local governments more freedom on how they spend their grant money. Some of the programs currently available include:

**Texas Recreation and Parks Account Program Funds** - The Texas Recreation and Parks Account (TRPA) provides 50 percent matching grant assistance to local governments for the acquisition and development of public parks and recreation areas and facilities. All TRPA grant applications are evaluated for program eligibility based on a "Project Priority Scoring System." The applications are scored and presented to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission for approval. Minimum master plan standards must be met to qualify for priority points in the competitive scoring system. A project awarded a grant must be complete before another grant is application is submitted.

The TPWD offers five grant programs:

1. Outdoor Recreational Grants are reimbursable matching grants up to \$500,000 for park acquisition, development or redevelopment.
2. Indoor Recreational Grants provide matching funds for qualified recreation centers and other types of indoor facilities.
3. Texas Trails Grants provide funds for off-street connections between activity centers, such as connecting parks to other parks or to schools and other qualified centers.
4. A new program for special projects, with matching grants planned in the near future.
5. Regional Park Grants for larger projects that serve regional needs and require involvement of multiple entities.

The City may apply for and receive a grant in each of the above categories. These grants may run concurrently.

**Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)** - CDBG funds may be used on projects which benefit persons with low and moderate incomes. The CDBG program is administered by the state's Office of Rural Community Affairs (ORCA). Funding is available on an 80/20 cost-share basis.

**Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund/Texas Local Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Fund** - This fund is co-administered by the National Park Service and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD). Funds are available to provide planning, land acquisition and development assistance for "outdoor recreation." This is a 50-50 matching grant program administered through the state.

**Urban Parks and Recreation Recovery Program (UPRRP)** - This grant program is for the rehabilitation of recreation facilities in areas defined by the U.S. Census as a Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). Nacogdoches may qualify under this designation. This program is a 70 percent federal and 30 percent local matching grant.

**Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA)** - This program is available for planning and technical assistance on projects emphasizing environmental protection, open space accessibility and construction. Funds are available to qualified private organizations and local governments. Public involvement is a requirement of this program.

**Transportation Equity Act for the Twenty-First Century (TEA-21)** - This program provides funding for transportation-related bicycle and pedestrian facilities. There is a Surface Transportation Program (STP) category, which allows cities and counties the option of using bridge and road funds for providing bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Enhancements can include bicycle and pedestrian facilities, rail corridor preservation, scenic and environmental transportation opportunities and improvements to historical transportation sites. Funds from this program could be used to establish corridor linkages between neighborhoods and park and recreational areas. The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) administers this program in coordination with Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) around the state. At the time this Comprehensive Plan was being prepared, Congress was debating the next six-year omnibus federal transportation bill that will continue similar funding for state and local governments.

**Federal Lands Highway Funds** - This program provides funds for bicycle and pedestrian transportation facilities in conjunction with trails, roads, highways and parkways. The primary intent of this program is to assist in the construction of transportation facilities. This is a 100 percent federal share program. These funds would primarily be for the acquisition of right-of-way and development of trail linkages connecting residential neighborhoods with the public parks system.

**The Landscape Cost Sharing Program** - This program is administered by the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT). Through this program, there is

50 percent cost sharing available for both highway and pedestrian landscape projects on routes within the designated permanent state highway system.

**America the Beautiful Tree Planting Program** - This program is administered by the Texas Forest Service. It is an outgrowth of former President Bush's proposal to plant one billion trees in the United States by the end of the century to mitigate the "greenhouse effect." Funding is available for public and private projects on a 50 percent cost-share basis.

**Cooperative Forestry Assistance Funds** - This program is administered by the Texas Forest Service. Matching grants are available on a 50 percent cost-share basis for projects including trails and greenways, beautification efforts, and public education and training. Grants range in size from \$5,000 to \$10,000 and may be matched with in-kind services or private financing.

**American Greenways DuPont Awards Program** - This program is administered by The Conservation Fund, which provides grants of \$500 to \$2,500 to local greenways projects. Grants can be used for almost any activity that serves as a catalyst for local greenways planning, design or development.

Most of the grant programs are reviewed and selected on a competitive basis, therefore, applications for funding will be evaluated based on assessment of local need; existence of an adopted Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan; and, the availability of local matching funds. Although grants provide an alternative means of financing local park and recreational area improvements, they should not serve as the sole basis for funding a local park and recreation system.

### *Private Financing Alternatives*

In addition to capital improvement financing and state and federal assistance, there are a variety of innovative approaches to financing public park and recreation areas. The use of incentives to encourage private financing, public-private partnerships, and land dedication or donation can be effective strategies to develop a City-wide park and recreation system without relying on the municipality to fully fund the program. In addition, the use of impact fees may help to offset the impacts of private development on the demand for and use of public facilities and services. The following private funding approaches may be available to the City of Nacogdoches.

**Park Dedication Fee** - Realizing that residents in new developments use existing park facilities, the City may, as part of the subdivision process, require an equitable and reasonable sum of money per lot to be contributed to the City for park and recreational improvements. However, in order to abide by legal validity tests and to avoid a "taking" of private property, the amount of the fee must be roughly proportional to the demand for park and recreational services placed on the City by a private development. This method has worked effectively in some municipalities.

**Credit for Private Facilities** - In lieu of requiring land dedication or money, the City may consider giving credit for recreation facilities provided in new developments.

**Land Donation** - Property owners may be willing to donate land to the City for use as a public park. The City should encourage donation subject to established guidelines for the development of park and recreational areas. Considerations should include the suitability of the land for park development; conformance with the objectives of the *Nacogdoches Parks Master Plan*; and, proximity to neighborhoods, natural features, and adjacent land uses.

**Trust Fund** - The City could establish a trust fund for citizens to will a portion or all of their estate to public park and recreational use. Legal provisions would need to be established for the conveyance of property. In addition, the City should establish and use guidelines for the acceptance of suitable park land property. The trust fund would be incorporated as a 501(C)3 non-profit corporation. This would allow possible income tax benefits for the donors.

**Private Financing** - Community organizations or local service clubs could assist in acquiring and developing park and recreational areas by providing the local match for state or federal grants-in-aid. Another option is 100 percent financing by a private entity with dedication to the City.

**Fee In Lieu of Dedication or Improvement** - The City may use impact fees to collect revenue for the acquisition and development of park and recreational areas. Similar to the dedication approach, the required fees must also be roughly proportional to the City's burden for the provision of additional park and recreational services resulting from private development. An example of a "fee in lieu of improvement" is a park excise tax that would require a developer to pay a fee (on a per-square-foot or per-dwelling-unit cost basis) upon issuance of a building permit.

**Tax Deferral** - The City may use this method to encourage property owners to defer the development of their land while the City uses it for public open space or a semi-developed park. During the deferral period, the property would be assessed as an undeveloped parcel, with the collection of taxes to be deferred until the property is developed. The City would secure an agreement with the property owner with established conditions of use and provisions for liability and ongoing maintenance. In addition, the City would obtain a recreation easement for "temporary" use of the property.

**Tax Reductions** - Donation of private land for public use may reduce an individual's federal income tax burden. Also, the market value of a recreation easement may reduce the tax burden either federally or locally, if approved by the local government.