



**Hidalgo County Parks  
Recreation and Open  
Space Master Plan Update  
2024 -2028**

# Hidalgo County Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan Update

## Acknowledgements

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## Hidalgo County Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan Update

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## **Hidalgo County Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan Update**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Hidalgo County has been proactive in park development. The Commissioners and their staff have developed partnerships to upgrade old parks with new equipment, build new parks and facilities, and serve as the coordination team for a trail system designed to transverse the County and connect with two (2) other counties. All of this has taken place within the last 5 years. Since Counties do not have financial resources for park development, this accomplishment is even more impressive.

The County has been able to develop grant applications for park improvements both through the State and Federal government, and foundations. A Master Plan is one vehicle used for grant applications that support the needed improvements at the Precinct Level. This is one reason it is important to have a top ten list at the Precinct Level and also for the entire County.

Many of the smaller foundation grants focus on individual precincts and not the County as a whole. With a County as diverse as Hidalgo, each precinct will have different needs for park development.

As the County continues to grow and subdivisions are developed, there will be a need, by the County, to determine how to meet the needs of the residents. Counties cannot create parkland dedication ordinances to supplement parkland development, but the County can investigate the opportunity to work with developers to set aside certain portions of properties for parkland. The developer can develop the site, turn it over to the County to maintain, thus reducing the County initial investment. Not all subdivisions will be "colonias" as more and more families want to move out of crowded cities into larger sized home lots. Some communities like Tres Lagos have petitioned cities to be annexed so they have access to city services. Others will remain on larger estate home size of 1 to 5 acres.

Hidalgo County has actively supported park development for all needs of the community. However, this may not be evident from the rankings of the survey document. The dissatisfied rankings with the County parks, programs and special events can be related to individuals becoming more aware of park amenities at the County level. Once compared the desire to have improved services, park sites and amenities do increase. The first time many citizens were asked for their opinion was in 2018. Citizen input is a requirement of Texas Parks and Wildlife for an approved Master Plan. As that option continues to be implemented by the County, there will be more input into what improvements the constituents request.

As long as County improvements lag behind City Parks, there will be some dissatisfaction with the park system. The County, in a continued effort to improve parks will be able to make advances but may never get past this ranking.

An interesting note from the County's 2018 to 2024 Survey information is a change in focus from youth sports to family sites and facilities such as large community parks, new parks, swimming pools, nature centers, trails, and lighting. These amenities were included in the 2018 survey but did not rank as high as youth sports. In 2024, family activities ranked much higher than youth sports in each precinct. This usually means more fields have been built for the sport programs. Another reason is many families have moved into the County from Mexico, and South and Central America. These families typically have large gatherings on weekends. The need for large parks and swimming pools is an example of something they can all use together. Generally, these are free facilities, for those on a limited budget. Likewise, these families may not have enough money for their children to play sports. A pick- up game at the park on weekends may be their only opportunity to participate in sports.

While youth sport fields did not rank high as being important, they did rank high as being neutral, neither of high nor low importance. Meaning respondents did not give a strong indication of their importance. Youth sports did rank higher than adult sports in the survey. New activities such as dog park, skate park, splash pad, inline hockey and amphitheater did rank in the 2018 survey, but did not rank at all in the 2024 survey. Surprisingly, motorized trails did not rank at all in 2024. With so much of the County being rural, one would have thought such trails would have ranked high, but they did not. Again, this could be due to equipment cost.

The 2024 survey results reflected those who attended the focus groups and their desire to improve or develop parks in their particular area. Some did not have any parks in their neighborhood and wanted to see one developed. These individuals are strong advocates for the County. They participate in events and activities provided by the County including wellness clinics, childcare issues, WIC programs, and senior programs. Hidalgo County has very active community groups that will serve as "watch dogs" on what is being done, or not being done, in the park system.

2024 TOP TEN COUNTY PRIORITY LIST	
1.	LARGE COMMUNITY PARKS
2.	LINEAR TRAILS
3.	YOUTH SOFTBALL FIELDS
4.	YOUTH BASEBALL FIELDS
5.	NATURE CENTER
6.	YOUTH SOCCER FIELDS
7.	SMALL COMMUNITY PARKS
8.	ADULT BASEBALL FIELDS
9.	PLAYGROUNDS
10.	ADD LIGHTS TO EXISTING PARKS

## **ACCOMPLISHMENTS:**

### **PRECINCT 1**

Sunrise Hill Park area was fenced, an inclusive playground installed, and a sensory garden and hike and bike trail is proposed. Sunset Park received new lights to the upgraded baseball fields and mature trees were planted. Monte Alto Park received fresh paint with a new playground, canopies and BBQ pits. The baseball field was upgraded and new plants and flowers were planted in the park. Recently, Precinct 1 constructed a regional hike and bike trail that will start in the City of Weslaco and connect to the Precinct 2 hike and bike trail.

### **PRECINCT 2**

A series of “Hidalgo County First” projects – The All-Inclusive Park to accommodate people of all abilities. The Indoor Sports Complex offers specialized training seasons in hitting, fielding, and pitching, along with all-inclusive fitness training program. The Hidalgo County Precinct 2 Regional Hike and Bike Trail – the first multi-city trail system featuring underground tunnels, lighted structures and security cameras, making it the safest trail in the Rio Grande Valley.

### **PRECINCT 3**

Anzalduas Park upgraded the boat ramp with the assistance of the Department of Public Safety. The Pct. 1 multi-city Hike trail starting in Weslaco, continuing with Donna, Alamo and eventually connecting with Pct. 2 hike trail.

### **PRECINCT 4**

Their shining star is the Alfonso Flores All Star Park located in San Carlos. Funded in part by Texas Parks and Wildlife Local Park Grant Fund. The park features several new amenities and is used daily by residents and after-school programs.

## **1. HIDALGO COUNTY UPDATE**

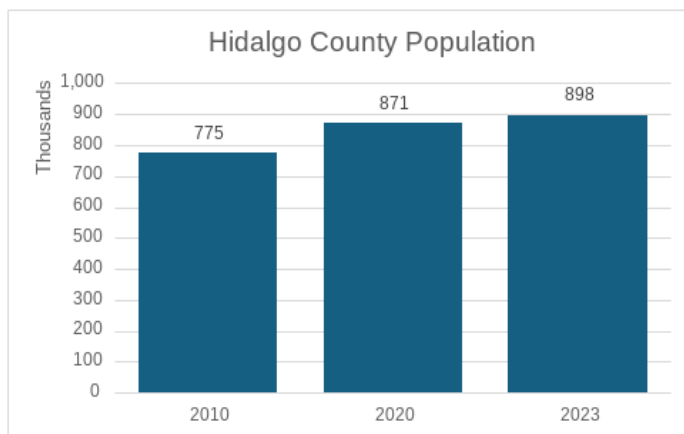
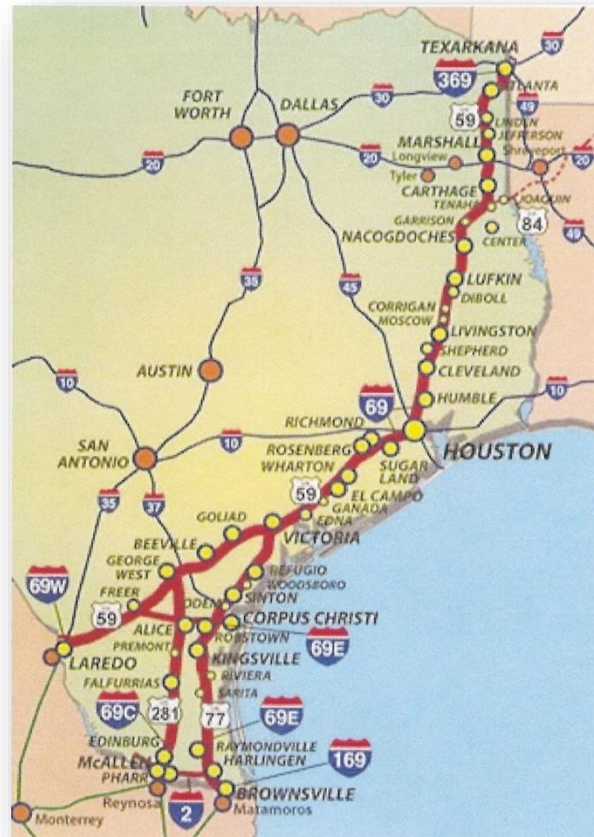
The original Master Plan dates were 2018 – 2028. This document is the five (5) year update. During this time, the Rio Grande Valley has seen new recreational amenities provided by the County, cities, and private businesses. Two professional league stadiums have been built, one in Edinburg for a basketball team, and one in Edinburg for a soccer team. Both of these professional organizations believe the population can support the leagues.

The City of McAllen has built a Performing Arts facility to bring in New York type performances while Pharr secured a Top Golf facility. Car dealerships have expanded to include Maserati, Jaguar and Tesla.

All these new amenities demonstrate a high economic base for the area. The general Rio Grande Valley has secured two (2) Presidential permits to build new bridges with Mexico. One will be for commercial vehicles only, to help alleviate the heavy commercial traffic generated from joint manufacturing companies along the border. The increase in these functions also increases the number of jobs in the area.

Two (2) new Interstates have been created, IH 2 between Roma and Brownsville, and IH69C north to terminate at IH69W/US59 in George West near IH37. Eventually, the IH69 corridor will end at the Canadian Border.

Development of this expressway has created new construction jobs. IH69 has several sections that all connect at varying locations in Texas and continue north, to keep truck traffic moving.



The population in Hidalgo County has increased from 870,787 in 2020 to 898,471 in 2023, a 3.2% population increase for the county.

The State of Texas population increase for the same period was 4.7%, ranking Texas as one of the fastest growing states in the nation. Hidalgo County is the 9<sup>th</sup> most populated county, thus one of the fastest growing counties in Texas.

Hidalgo is the largest county in Texas and the fifth largest county nationwide. It is the second most-populous Majority-Hispanic Texas County at 91.1%.

Hidalgo County is 1,583 square miles (sq. mi.) of which 12 sq. mi. are covered by water. The southern border of the County is along the Rio Grande River and the border with Mexico.

## 2. UPDATED PARK INVENTORY

Parks have been at the forefront of all the precincts with each providing upgrade amenities. Obesity, diabetes, and heart disease have been a constant problem in the Rio Grande Valley. Hidalgo County has made a concentrated effort to upgrade their parks to provide quality sites for families to recreate and exercise to reduce those diseases. The funding for these projects was identified in the County annual budget or the American Rescue Plan Act.

**Precinct 1** has been upgrading their parks to include repainting the picnic tables and benches, installing new playgrounds, new lighting, and developing hike and bike trails in the parks. Playgrounds that are being installed are inclusive for all children. The Precinct has a beautification program that allows neighborhood groups and individuals to assist in partnering with the parks department to beautify their area through projects, special events, and volunteer hours. This has allowed the Precinct to provide services through the area utilizing the funding for everyone.

The greatest improvements have been at **Sunrise Hill Park** which include the entire area fencing, a new inclusive playground, and a proposed trail and sensory garden.



**Monte Alto Veterans Park** provided an upgraded baseball field, new playground, BBQ pits, canopies, new plants and flowers, and a proposed trail system.



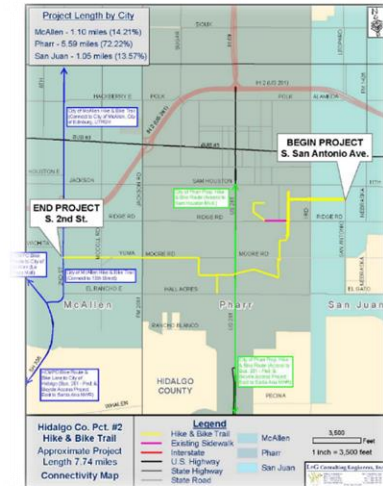
The largest project is a trail system originating in Weslaco that will connect to Precinct 2 and the cities of Donna and Alamo to Pharr and Mission. This is the first phase of a trail system linking the entire valley along the Rio Grande.



**Precinct 2** The collaboration with Valley View ISD and Capable Kids led to the creation of the county’s first **All Inclusive Park**, featuring a fully accessible playground with swings, a sensory garden and a splash pad. Additionally, Precinct 2 had introduced the County’s first **Indoor Sports Complex**, which includes field turf, batting cages, a full-sized infield, and offers specialized training sessions in hitting, fielding, and pitching, along with an all-inclusive training program. Both of these facilities increase the parkland in the County.



The **Hidalgo County Precinct 2 Regional Hike and Bike Trail** stands out as the county's first multi-city trail system and a pioneering project for pedestrian transportation in the region. This trail marks a significant step toward advancing regionalization and connectivity, featuring- underground, tunnels at major road crossings, lighted structures and security cameras, making it the safest trail in the Rio Grande Valley.



In 2019, Precinct 2 enhanced **Aguiles Jaime Garza Park** (formerly Las Milpas Park) by adding soccer fields, a community swimming pool, restrooms, a pavilion, basketball courts, a walking trail, and a 5,400 sq. ft. gymnasium.

Precinct 2 was awarded a Texas Parks and Wildlife Urban Outdoor Grant for **Lopezville Park**. The project will include an inclusive playground, fitness equipment, a stocked pond, two soccer fields, and tennis courts.



**Precinct 3** has upgraded the boat ramp at **Anzalduas Park**, with the assistance of the Department of Public Safety. The baseball field at **Abram Park** was improved with the addition of lighting and a complete soil replacement of the infield in 2023. Other-park improvement projects to add features and upgrade facilities for existing parks are currently in design with funded construction slated for 2025 and 2026. Currently, **Veterans Pavilion and Smokehouse** are being completely rehabilitated. Also, construction recently started on the Precinct's **first walking trail**, just over three miles in length, centered around the County offices on North Moorefield Road.



**Precinct 4** has established several new park sites in collaboration with city/school partnerships. **Blanca E. Sanchez Elementary Inclusive Park** is an inclusive park in partnership with the City of McAllen, McAllen ISD, Capable Kids and HEB Corporation. **De Zavala Park**, a City/School/County Park is available to residents featuring a splash pad, restrooms, walking/running trail, basketball court with metal roof, and multi-use field.



The Precinct has provided funding to the City of Edinburg for **Pirate's Cove Splash Pad** at the Edinburg Parks and Recreation Center.

The old playground systems at the **Milo Ponce Park** were upgraded with a new inclusive playground, as well as new walking trails, BBQ areas with benches, and additional parking to support the park.



The Park **Linn-San Manuel Veterans Park** was built in partnership with the Edinburg CISD and features a monument recognizing our military and inclusive play systems.

**Eastside Soccer Park** was created to include soccer fields, play systems, restrooms, parking space, BBQ pits and benches supporting new developments in the precinct. There is also a walking trail leading from the park to residential homes.



### 3. SURVEY DATA AND CITIZEN INPUT

Surveys were available on the County of Hidalgo website the month of June 2024 in both English and Spanish. The County held two (2) focus groups, one in Precinct 4 and one in Precinct 3. Those focus groups were advertised throughout the county for all residents to attend and provide their input for the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan Update.



*Citizen survey group, Precinct 4.*

The first 3 questions ranked how residents were satisfied with the parks, special events, and recreational programming provided by the county.

Precinct 2 ranked residents were satisfied 70%, neither satisfied or dissatisfied 20%, and very dissatisfied 10%.

Precinct 3 ranked 18% residents as very satisfied, 12% as satisfied, 21% as neither satisfied or dissatisfied, 19% as dissatisfied, and 26% as very dissatisfied.

Precinct 4 ranked 20% as very satisfied, 10% as satisfied, 50% as neither satisfied or dissatisfied, and 20% as dissatisfied.

The County has made great strides improving all the park systems but those who live in outlying areas or “colonias” are expecting greater amenities and services. This was identified as a concern in the focus groups. Those groups wanted the same level of amenities and services that cities provide. Many do not realize, there is no tax base for counties to provide park services like there is within city government.

Those living in “colonias” can be first time homeowners and new residents to the United States. When amenities in cities are seen, they assume the same level of services should be provided at the County level. The four (4) precincts of the county represent different geographic areas.

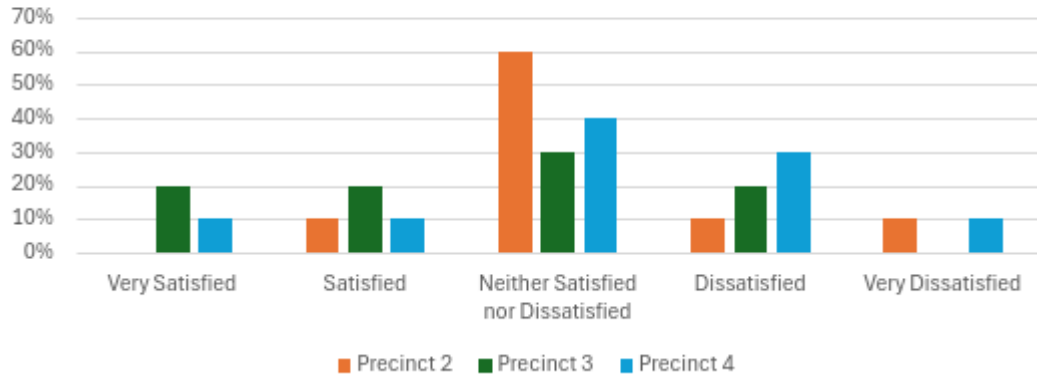
Precinct 1 is comprised of both urban and rural areas north and south of IH2. The park areas are comprised of partnerships with cities and school districts plus county-owned facilities. The Precinct extends all the way to Mercedes on the eastern side.

Precinct 2 is primarily cities along IH2 and the Rio Grande River. This precinct has a distinct opportunity to serve as the managing partner in developing the trail system that eventually can link the entire valley. The majority of parks will be partnerships with cities, schools and non-profits. The majority of the land mass for the precinct lies within the city limits of the area cities. Those cities provide most of the parks and recreation amenities.

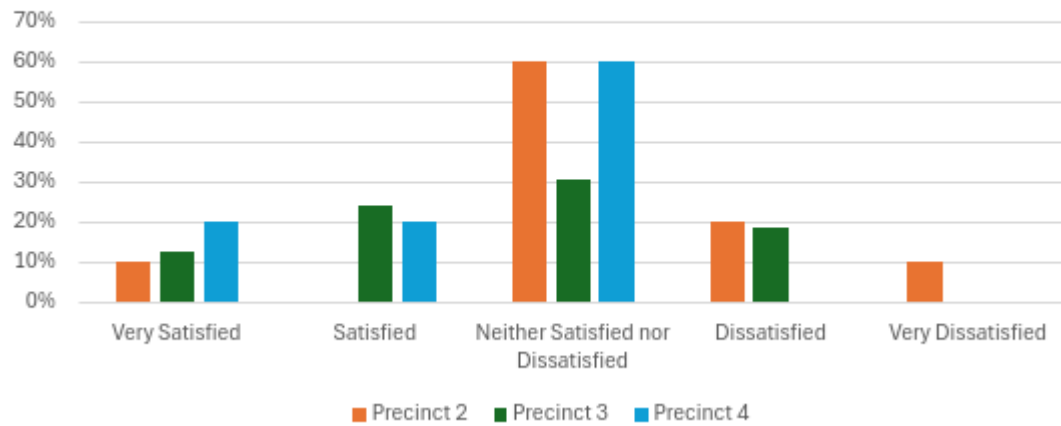
Precincts 3 and 4 are primarily rural with some cities. Precinct 3 serves smaller cities with limited economic basis for park development. These cities can apply for the Small Cities grants through Texas Parks and Wildlife Department with financial contribution from the County. Precinct 4 is fortunate that the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley is located within the precinct. This allows students to assist with design, program support and development of neighborhood organizations. Both Precinct 3 and 4 work closely with the organizations associated with development within the “colonias” to promote education, wellness, and understanding local government.

All of this is evident in the responses from the survey documents and the focus groups. One focus group had 19 individuals in attendance and the other group had 40. These were all citizens who were concerned about the parks, not only in their areas, but the entire County. Members of La Union del Pueblo Entero (LUPE) and the University of Texas RGV, attended both focus groups to offer suggestions and support of the Master Plan for Parks and Recreation.

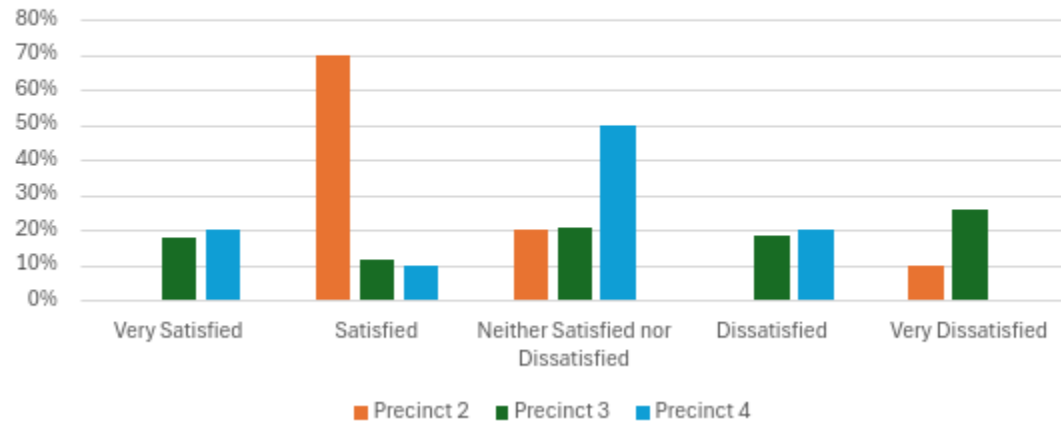
### How satisfied are you with the quality of recreational programming in Hidalgo County? (Youth, Teen, Adult, Senior)



### How satisfied are you with the special events held by the County and/or precinct?



### How satisfied are you with the quality of parks and recreation in Hidalgo County?



## 4. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Goals and Objectives for the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan have been developed to outline and provide for the future role of the County in parks development. The Hidalgo County Parks Master Plan has been developed to encourage shared resources, evaluate needs, and coordinate facilities. In the past five (5) years the precincts have initiated that policy by working with local governments, school districts and non-profits. Previous plans have been developed in 2005 and 2012 that have expired, where applicable references will be made to those goals and objectives as to whether they were met or pending.

### Goal 1: Establish a regional parks system that preserves the existence of natural, historic, and cultural resources. (Same goal as 2005 Master Plan)

#### Objectives

- To designate, preserve, and restore significant natural resource areas within the park system.
- To identify, preserve, and restore significant historic sites and buildings and other resources within the parks and recreation system.
- To ensure the construction, maintenance, and other activities protect natural and cultural resources within the parks by integrating resource preservation into project planning, programming and training of personnel.

### Goal 2: Maximize efficient use of resources to develop and maintain a first-class system of parks, public spaces and recreational improvements and facilities.

#### Objectives:

- Design facilities according to national recognized guidelines that respect the character of each park while developing a unified park system.
- Develop a park circulation system that provides safe and convenient access for vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians.
- Utilized modern techniques for the development of water, sewer, and electrical systems for park and recreation facilities.
- All facilities and parks to meet ADA (Americans with Disabilities) guidelines.  
Example of the County going beyond the ADA guidelines: **The County has provided inclusive playgrounds in all sites where new playground equipment has been installed. The County has been very progressive in this area.**

### Goal 3: To upgrade the existing parks to meet current standards.

#### Objectives:

- County should develop an annual evaluation of parks in each precinct. Each park should have a five (5) year maintenance plan. This would assist with Capital Improvement Projects.
- Identify small grant opportunities for each precinct that can be used for park upgrades.
- Develop “Friends” group for park to assist with improvements and maintenance.  
Example of County meeting, Objective 3 in Goal #3.  
Precinct 1 created an opportunity for neighborhood groups to assist with park improvements through volunteering and fundraising. Those groups supported the improvements to the park.
- Adopt a maintenance plan for each park. Set standards for each park, with specific maintenance time frames. This can be in categories A, B or C based on size or, all parks can be rated equally.

### Goal 4: To utilize open space, flood corridors, and canals to develop linear parks and hike and bike trails. Develop a complete network of trails connecting all sections of the County.

#### Objective:

- Maintain regular coordination and develop partnerships with governmental agencies and private organizations who have an interest in a County wide trail system.
- Investigate funding opportunities for a County wide trail plan.
- Identify all municipal and county owned canals and drainage areas which could be used for trail systems.
- Develop a committee to begin working on a trail plan, set timelines, and funding opportunities.

Example of County meeting, all Objectives in Goal #4

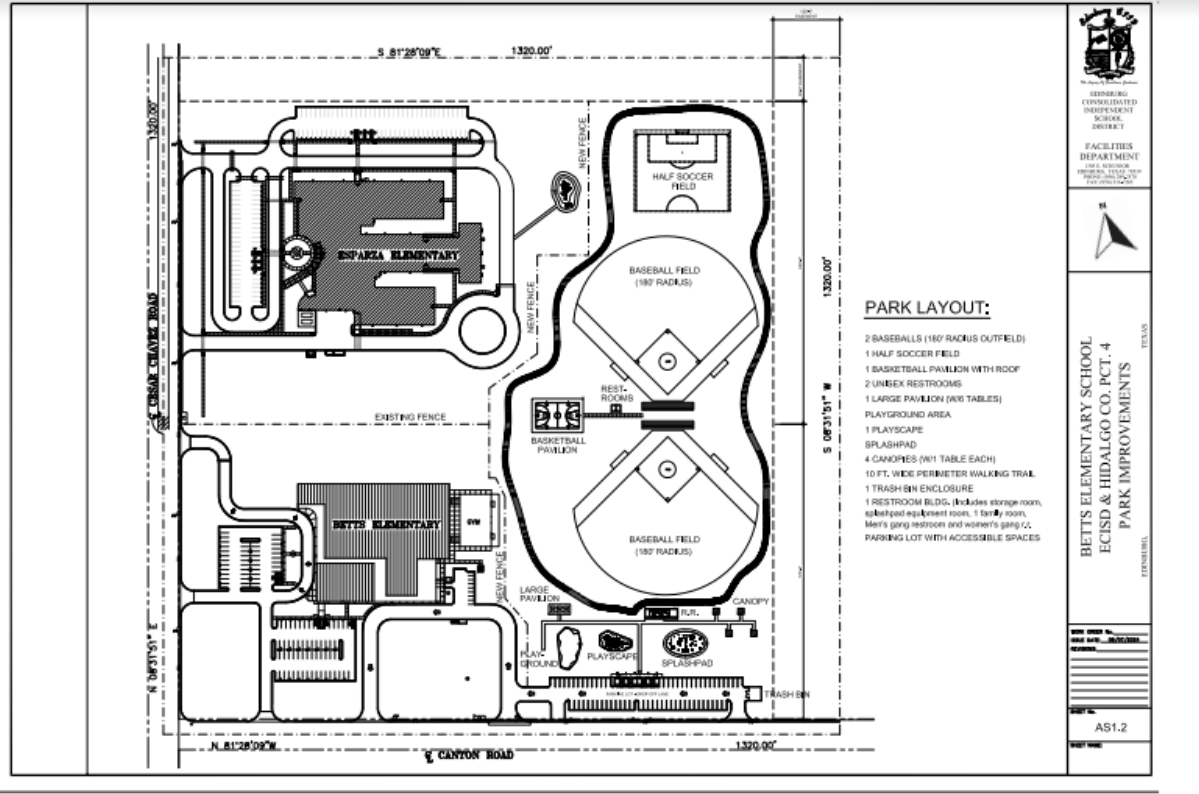
The County has excelled in this area serving as the leader in the Recreational Trail Connectivity and Development Project. This project brings the County and local cities together to create a trail system that will transverse the entire county. The new Hike and Bike Trail being developed will begin in Precinct 1 and continue through all Precincts utilizing Hidalgo County Drainage District No. 1 system.



**Goal 5: To initiate and develop partnerships with other public, semi-public and private entities to fund the development of parks and open spaces.**

Objectives:

- Identify potential partnerships.
- Identify funding opportunities. Example: **Precincts have maximized county-owned resources and federal funding such as the American Rescue Plan Act (APRA).**
- Encourage communication with cities and school districts within the County for joint use of facilities.  
Example: **Precinct 1, 2 and 4 have been able to address this objective in developing and expanding parks. This has reduced the need for land acquisition and increased the funding for amenities in those areas.**
- Develop working relationships with State departments with funding opportunities.  
Example: **Precinct 3 working with DPS has used the partnership to secure funding to repair a dock facility for the community.**



Esparza-Betts Elementary Schools site of the new Southside Park in collaboration with Edinburg School District.

**Goal 6: To optimize the benefits of land preservation and recommend strategies.**

**Objective:**

- Optimize the benefits of land preservation. Recommend strategies.
- Promote sustainable development.
- Influence and utilize State and Federal legislation and policies for park development.
- Advocate changes in laws at the State level that will enhance land preservation efforts at the County level.
- Provide County planning staff/technical resources for master plan ordinance development and updating, and parks/recreation planning.
- Investigate the option of securing property from developers for parkland development. The construction can be completed at a future date or, a developer can complete the park and donate it to the County for maintenance.

### Several amenities remained constant in all survey.

- **Motorized Trails**- this would be for off road vehicles. There are grants through Texas Parks and Wildlife for these trails.
- **Nature Center**- there are several nature centers in the Valley available to residents. Advertising and promotion of those sites, sharing the information rather than building a new facility would be beneficial to the County,
- **Sport Fields**- there is a lack of sport fields for youth and adults. As the population continues to grow the need for additional fields to accommodate the growing population will become even a higher priority. Those urban areas with sport fields are experiencing the same growth concerns. The lack of fields.
- **Swimming Pools**- these are expensive to operate and serve the population for 3 to 4 months in the year. Splash Parks have become a cost-efficient method to furnish outdoor water amenities without the high cost of a swimming pool and can be operated for longer periods especially in the Valley.
- **The natural beauty of Hidalgo County must be preserved and enhanced for future generations through the priority listing for park development.**

The Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan Update is divided into sections that follows the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) guidelines for Master Plans, the Texas Outdoor Recreation Plan (TORP) and the TPWD Guidelines for Grant Applications.

## 5. MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

The online and focus group surveys were written in English and Spanish. The predominate language in the area is English but, due to the number of immigrants in the past five (5) years many prefer to respond in Spanish. The number of survey results were almost evenly divided between English and Spanish responses. Residents in the County receive their information about the County through social media, the County website or internet. All of these are in English and Spanish. The precinct with the highest number of residents living within cities is Precinct 2. Many of the park needs in this precinct are maintained by those cities.

The 2028 Master Plan Update showed extreme differences from the 2017 Master Plan. The 2017 Master Plan noted that overall county residents were satisfied with the County Park System. This is not the case with the 2028 Update. The resident ratings were either dissatisfied or neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. There were very low rankings for very satisfied or satisfied. This is even

though the County has been putting forth great efforts to improve the facilities and maintenance of the parks in each of the precincts.

These same comments were addressed in the two public meetings that were held. The more the county has invested in the rural areas, the more those residents want additional improvements. There is a complete misunderstanding in the rural areas of what county government is required by law to furnish and what is considered a non-necessity. County residents who live in unincorporated “colonias” expect the same level of services as those who live in dedicated cities. Providing those improvements along with streets, drainage, safety, and other amenities within the budgets afforded county government is almost impossible.

Precinct 1 only had 1 survey turned in so there was no way to evaluate the ratings. Precinct 2 remained fairly consistent on-committal in their ranking by listing Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied. The only question ranked higher was number 2, “the quality of the parks and recreation in Hidalgo County”, which was ranked Satisfied. Precinct 3 and 4 remained fairly consistent with rankings in all categories except Very Disappointed in all questions. Precinct 4 did rate question number 4 relating to programming in the County as Very Disappointed.

The County is so large that it is hard to provide programming and special events as cities and utility districts. To provide those types of events would require an increase in funding above the current tax base and/or fundraising available. Fee based classes in some of the areas are not feasible due to the poverty levels that many of the “colonias” reside.

The survey documents have listed linear parks, trails, swimming facilities, large community parks, recreation centers as some of the most common amenities on the top priority listing for improvements. Those are areas the county has been currently addressing in the plans for each park area. The problem is there is not enough funding to have a park in each “colonia” or neighborhood. These parks become more regional for families to attend. However, this does not follow the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) “10-minute Walk to a Park” policy for all families in the United States. The NRPA policy is being included as criteria in grant applications. This can be addressed in a particular grant but does not address the need in the full community.

In the 2018 plan, there was a top ten list for the County, and the list was broken down into list for each of the precincts. This format will be maintained in this update. The two (2) focus groups were held in Precinct 3 and 4, there were more comments directly related to those areas. A complete list of comments is included in the appendix. A sampling of those comments include:

- The need for more parks.
- The need for better maintenance
- More lighting in the parks
- Concerns that some amenities were old, playgrounds, and not inclusive. Should be replaced.

- Many of the respondents had children they would like to take to the park but do not feel the parks are safe to take their children.
- Need for more athletic fields.
- Do not know the difference between a City and a County Park.
- Need more parks for children with disabilities.
- Need splash pads. It is hot in the valley.
- Need shade
- Need a map to show where the parks are in the precinct.
- County needs to help the organizations that are working with youth sports.
- Develop community center

<b>2024 TOP TEN COUNTY PRIORITY LIST</b>
<b>1. LARGE COMMUNITY PARKS</b>
<b>2. LINEAR TRAILS</b>
<b>3. YOUTH SOFTBALL FIELDS</b>
<b>4. YOUTH BASEBALL FIELDS</b>
<b>5. NATURE CENTER</b>
<b>6. YOUTH SOCCER FIELDS</b>
<b>7. SMALL COMMUNITY PARKS</b>
<b>8. ADULT BASEBALL FIELDS</b>
<b>9. PLAYGROUNDS</b>
<b>10. ADD LIGHTS TO EXISTING PARKS</b>

## 6. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN AND PRIORITY LISTINGS

The comments from the online survey, focus groups and reports centered around the growth of the County and the desire by the citizens for amenities that are offered by other governmental entities. As the County continues to grow and subdivisions are developed, there will be a need by the County to determine how to meet the needs of the residents. Counties cannot create parkland dedication ordinances to supplement parkland development, but the County can investigate the opportunity to work with developers to have them set aside certain portions of properties for parkland. The developer could develop the site and turn it over to the County to maintain, thus reducing the County initial investment. Not all subdivisions will be “colonias”, as more and more families want to move out of cities into larger size lots for their home.

Hidalgo County has been very proactive in pursuing grants for park development. This has been a positive undertaking. The County’s ranking with Texas Parks and Wildlife allows them to pursue larger grants for the development of a full park site. Part of the grant process is addressing the top priorities for development. There is a top priority listing for the full County and one for each of the precincts. If a project is only for one precinct the precinct top ten list can be used and if it is for the entire county the county wide list can be used.

**TOP TEN COUNTY PRIORITY LIST**

<b>2018</b>	<b>2024</b>
<b>1. Youth Softball Fields</b>	<b>Large Community Parks</b>
<b>2. Youth Soccer Fields</b>	<b>Linear Parks and Trails</b>
<b>3. Leisure Pool</b>	<b>Youth Softball Fields</b>
<b>4. Dog Park</b>	<b>Youth Baseball Fields</b>
<b>5. Nature Center</b>	<b>Nature Center</b>
<b>6. Motorized Trail</b>	<b>Youth Soccer Fields</b>
<b>7. Trails</b>	<b>Small Community Parks</b>
<b>8. Youth Baseball Fields</b>	<b>Adult Baseball Fields</b>
<b>9. Disc Golf</b>	<b>Playgrounds</b>
<b>10. Tennis Courts</b>	<b>Add Lights to Existing Parks</b>

**Precinct 1** As noted, no priority listing could be determined for this precinct as all categories were rated as 100% as Very Important. The only area not listed with a 100% rating was Youth Softball.

**2018 and 2024**

1. Trails
2. Youth Soccer Fields
3. Playgrounds
4. Dog Park
5. Youth Softball Fields
6. Skate Park
7. Pavilions
8. Nature Center
9. Leisure Pool
10. Splash Park



**Precinct 2** Precinct 2 ranked several of the youth sports with the same ranking. While the youth sports did not rank as high as 2018, the sports still remained in the top ten. The rankings in the precinct in 2024 were more diversified and covered park amenities which all family members could enjoy. Those amenities individually can be included in a large community park. A large community park ranked number one for the county and for the precinct. Lights and safety are becoming important for all members of the community. This factor was identified during the focus group meetings.

<b>2018</b>	<b>2024</b>
1. Youth Soccer Fields	Large Community Park
2. Youth Softball Fields	Indoor Recreation Center
3. Youth Baseball Fields	Swimming Pool
4. Indoor Basketball	Lights to current parks
5. Outdoor Basketball	Linear Parks and Trails
6. Competition Swim Pool	Playgrounds
7. Recreation Swim Pool	Youth Softball Fields
8. Splash Park	Youth Baseball Fields
9. Indoor Recreation Center	Small Community Parks
10. Pavilion	Adult Softball





**Precinct 3** Precinct 3 is primarily rural, and the communities are looking for amenities where families can gather as a group and have an event. Where youth sports were the focus in 2018, family outdoor areas were the focus in 2024. Precinct 3 had over 40 individuals at the focus group meeting. Most of the meeting had to be translated into Spanish. Many of the participants were first time residents who had never participated in a survey. All of the participants were from the “colonias” located in the precinct.

**2018**

1. Youth Soccer Fields
2. Youth Softball Fields
3. Leisure Pool
4. Dog Park
5. Disc Golf
6. Tennis
7. Youth Baseball Fields
8. Nature Center
9. Basketball Courts
10. New Community Parks

**2024**

- Small Community Parks**
- Linear Parks and Trails**
- Add Lights to Current Parks**
- New Parks**
- Playgrounds**
- Swimming Pool**
- Indoor Recreation Center**
- Nature Center**
- Basketball Courts**
- Pavilion with Picnic Areas**



**Precinct 4** Precinct 4 has been working closely with the school district to develop parks at the school sites thereby reducing the cost of land acquisition. This saves the school development dollars and the County acquisition funding. It has become a wining situation for the communities. The school district has a park site with amenities that would not be included in a normal school design, and the community has a park for evenings, weekends and holidays.

<b>2018</b>	<b>2024</b>
1. Motorized Trails	Linear Parks and Trails
2. Youth Soccer Fields	Small Community Parks
3. Picnic Areas	Pavilion with Picnic Areas
4. Nature Center	Nature Center
5. Trails	Trails to Link County
6. Adult Basketball	Large Community Parks
7. Additional Lights at Parks	Youth Baseball Fields
8. Youth Baseball Fields	Youth Football Fields
9. Skate Park	Indoor Recreation Center
10. Dog Park	Tie Between Youth Softball Youth Soccer

**Future Development:**

**Precinct 1 – continuation of the community beautification program to expand park improvements. Development of a Wellness Center to include recreational amenities, with a boxing component.** Wellness Center will be the first of its kind in Hidalgo County with basketball courts that will convert into volleyball, indoor tennis and pickle ball courts, a state of the art gym, batting cages, golf simulator, boxing ring.

**Precinct 2 – planned improvements to the recreational trails project will include the addition of restroom facilities, more parking spaces, and the integration of yoga and fitness stations, making it a well-rounded and accessible recreational space for the community.**

**Precinct 3 – completion of designs and begin construction of park projects slated for 2025 and 2026.**

**Precinct 4 - continuation of designs for a school/county/developer partnership for the construction of a new community resource center, park and health clinic in northeaster portion of the County. Development of a school/county park in collaboration with Edinburg CISD in the southeast side of the precinct.**

The biggest project the County has undertaken is a trail system that will encompass all of Hidalgo County. The first phase of the trail begins in Precinct 1 and connects Weslaco, Pharr, Donna, Alamo and ties into Precinct 2 trail in San Juan, McAllen, to Edinburg and Mission. Phase 2 will take the trail north of IH 2 to Mercedes, San Carlos, and Elsa. The trail will also go south from Mission to Alton to Palmhurst connecting at the new trail developed by Precinct 3. This will become the longest trail in the State.

Hidalgo County has actively pursued park development plans in all four (4) precincts meeting the needs of the constituents in those areas. Hidalgo County is the 9<sup>th</sup> largest county in the state with a diversified population and economic base. The manufacturing corporations with offices in

Mexico and the United States have created an increase in employment of 6.3% in 2021/2022 which is higher than the national average of 5.8%. This increase in manufacturing has created an increase in transportation and border crossing and justification for the addition of two (2) additional bridges.

Texas A&M University has established an onsite campus within the Tres Lagos community. The University of Texas, Rio Grande Valley is expanding their education curriculum and there are more opportunities for students to remain local and pursue an education. All of this increases the economic base for the County which will assist in the development and further expansion of the park systems. This is taking place while those living in poverty is still at 27.4% which is higher than the State of Texas rate at 13.7% and the United States rate of 11.1%.

The revenues from the border crossings can be used for park development in collaboration with local governments who own the bridges. The County has been involved and established collaboration for both park development and the trail system. The trail system includes Cameron and Starr Counties. Hidalgo County, through the Commissioners serves as an example for building consensus in park development.

## **7. APPENDIX**

**Online Survey – English**

**Spanish**

**Citizen Comments**

**Master Plan 5 Year Update Survey Information**

**County Commission Approval of Priorities**

**County Commission Approval to Submit Plan**