

FINAL REPORT

Comprehensive Park Master Plan

For the Period of 2008 to 2018



April 15, 2009

Prepared by:
Bucher, Willis & Ratliff Corporation

In Association with:
ETC/Leisure Vision, Inc.

SUPPLEMENT

WILLIAMSON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PARK MASTER PLAN

April 15, 2009

INTRODUCTION

This Supplement has been provided in response to requested changes by the Texas Park and Wildlife Department (TPWD) following their review of the Comprehensive Park Master Plan. Their comments have been provided to ensure that the Plan is aligned with their PARKS, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE MASTER PLAN GUIDELINES so that future requests by Williamson County to TPWD for grants are eligible for consideration.

REPORT CHANGES

Final Report Cover – The report cover now shows that the master plan is for the 10-year period of 2008 to 2018.

Chapter 4 – The name of the chapter has been changed from Citizen Involvement to Park Development Process to more accurately reflect TPWD Guidelines. In addition to the name change for the chapter, two other changes were made to more accurately reflect TPWD Guidelines:

- the Introduction has been re-worded.
- a new section has been added which is called Needs Assessment and Priorities.

Chapter 10 – This chapter has been changed to incorporate a table that specifies the park amenities (inventory) that is in Berry Springs Park, Champion Park, and the Southwest Regional Park.

Chapter 13

- Table 13.1 has been modified to show the year (s) when planned improvements are to be made.
- a paragraph has been added to clarify the funding sources that the County will use for planned improvements.
- Table 13.2 has been added to relate planned improvements to the needs of seniors.

CHAPTER 4: PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

WHAT IS THE PLANNING PROCESS AND WHAT IS DONE WITH THE INFORMATION PROVIDED BY KEY STAKEHOLDERS DURING THE PLANNING PROCESS?

The planning process is a series of steps taken to develop a citizen-focused master plan that identifies key issues, citizen preferences, and action steps required to address the issues and develop the improvements that citizens are most supportive of.

Introduction

This Master Plan was written by the Bucher, Willis & Ratliff Corporation. The contract was signed in April 2007 and work proceeded until its completion in December 2008. The process used to develop the master plan was transparent and citizen-focused. As a result, the plan is realistic, representative of “best practices” within the parks and recreation profession that are applicable to the County, and sensitive to the “unique” needs that are important and relevant in Williamson County as the park system evolves.

Needs Assessment and Priorities

Needs for parks, trails, and facilities were assessed in five different ways:

- First, the consultant developed a rating form that was used by trained landscape architects to evaluate the condition of the parks, trails, and facilities. Data collected from this inventory and analytical process was used to identify key issues in the park system and to develop opportunities for future improvements.
- Second, as described in this chapter, numerous opportunities were provided to citizens to express their needs. Among the opportunities provided were key stakeholder interviews and meetings.
- Third, as described in Chapter Five, a statistically valid citizen survey was distributed to 2,000 randomly selected households in the County to determine needs. Data received from the survey provided reliable information that was used to make “informed decisions”.
- Fourth, as presented in Chapter Eight, the consultant describes national trends and best practices that are applicable to the needs that have been identified in the County. The relevance of the analysis of national trends and best practices is that priority projects and their funding will be focused on projects that are growing in popularity rather than declining in interest.
- Fifth, a standards-based approach was taken in Chapter Eleven of this report. In Chapter Eleven, nationally-accepted guidelines were applied to the County to evaluate needs.

As these needs assessment tools were applied to Williamson County, it became apparent to key stakeholders that resources should be allocated to projects and planned improvements as detailed in Table 13.1 in Chapter 13.

Citizen Input

The recommendations in the Master Plan have been developed in full consideration of the input that citizens and the Commissioners Court have provided. Prior to the formal master planning process of 2007-08, numerous public meetings were held during the 2006 Bond Advisory Committee Meetings which led to strong support by citizens for this funding source for planned improvements.

When the formal master planning process began in 2007, the spirit of the 2006 bond initiative was incorporated into a new round of public meetings to re-evaluate citizen preferences for parks, trails, and facilities. As a result, numerous opportunities were offered and included a statistically valid citizen survey that was distributed to

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Park Inventory and Analysis

Inventory - Champion Park

Park Features	Number/Acreage
Pavilions	2 ea.
Shade structures	2 ea.
Restroom	1 ea.
Storage Building	1 ea.
Regional trail access	7 miles mixed granite and concrete
Exercise Pad	1 ea.
Climbing Pad w/ 3 rocks	1 ea.
Sand Box w/ 6 fossils from UT Science Center	1 ea.
Waterscape (whale and fountain)	1 ea.
Swing Set Area	1 ea.
Secluded Picnic Areas	3 ea.
Picnic Tables	27 ea.
BBQ grills	2 ea.
Benches	5 ea.
Toy Backhoes in sandpit	3 ea.
Water Outlets	2 ea.
Water Fountains	2 ea.
Outdoor Shower	1 ea.
Trash Can Holders	8 ea.
Exercise Bar	1 ea.
Pullup Bar	1 ea.
Exercise Bench	1 ea.
Bike Racks	3 ea.
Emergency Phone	1 ea.

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Park Inventory and Analysis

Inventory - Southwest Williamson County Regional Park

Park Features	Number/Acreage
Soccer fields (also used for lacrosse) fields 7,8,9 and stadium have musco lights	10 ea.
Football stadium/soccer field w/ bleachers on each side of field and press box	1 ea.
Regulation track in stadium	1 ea.
Cricket field w/1 bleacher and batting cage, and storage building	1 ea.
Softball fields w/ 4 bleachers and musco lights	2 ea.
18 hole disc golf course	1 ea.
Concession Buildings	3 ea.
Restrooms	5 ea.
Pavilions	3 ea.
Tennis center	1 ea. with 8 lighted courts
Maintenance shop	1 ea.
Irrigation pump house	1 ea.
Playscape	1 ea.
Miniature Train	1 ea. with 1.5 miles of track
Fishing/irrigation pond	6 acres
Caves	250 acres
Granite running trail	1.89 miles
Mulch trail	2 miles
Water fountains	6 ea.
Picnic tables	30 ea.
Benches	10 ea.
Parking spaces	1150 ea.

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Park Inventory and Analysis

Inventory - Berry Springs Park and Preserve

Park Features	Numbers/Acreage
Historical Marker	1 ea.
Pecan Orchard w/over 1100 mature trees	1100 mature trees (approximately)
Informational Kiosk	1 ea.
Improved Campground	18 sites with parking pad, tent pad, picnic table, fire ring grill, lantern post, 5 with covered shelters, Handicap Accessible restrooms with showers, drinking fountain and water spigot
Primitive Campground	10 sites with tent pad, picnic table, fire ring grill, lantern post. 1/3 of a mile hike in from nearest parking lot and restroom. One Historical Compound which includes 1920's home, mule barn, oat barn and silo, 3 horse troughs (2 with water available) 1 functioning well pump
Large Pavilion	1 ea. picnic shelter w/ 8 tables & electricity
Small Pavilion	1 ea. picnic shelter w/4 tables, no electricity
Trash Receptacles (permanent)	21 ea.
Large Loose Trash Receptacles	8 ea.
Picnic Benches	14 ea.
Day Use Picnic Tables (on pad)	11 ea. (5 ea. have day use grills)
Handicap Accessible Restroom	1 ea.
Handicap Accessible Playground	1 ea. (tot and youth)
Handicap Accessible Fishing Pier	1 ea.
Historical Dam	1 ea.
Spring-fed Pond	2.5 acres (approximately)
Aquatic viewing area deck with benches	1 ea.
Group Fire Ring	1 ea.
Hike and Bike Trail	2.5 miles (approximately)
Horseback Riding Trail	2 miles with large pasture areas to ride
Park Office with Residence	1 ea.
Maintenance Office	1 ea.
Historical Cemetery	1 ea.
Flower Beds	11 ea.

Commitment to Excellence

In Williamson County, the vision for excellence has been laid out in this Comprehensive Master Plan. There are national guidelines and data compiled by The Trust for Public Lands (TPL) which benchmarks important park system criteria such as the per capita expenditure for parks and recreation, the acres per 1,000 population, and the percentage of park land of the total land base in the County. At the end of the day, the most important benchmark is the one that is the most appropriate for the County. From that perspective, Williamson County's own unique **Standard of Excellence** is described as the following:

- A park maintenance budget which is adjusted for inflation and other unforeseen circumstances on an annual basis from its current benchmark of \$3812 per acre.
- The acquisition of new park land, some of which will be for active purposes and a lot of which will be used for passive park uses, preservation and conservation purposes.
- The development of the facilities that are detailed in this report.
- The development of the trail and greenway system.

Prioritization of Recommendations

Based on citizen input and political realities, prioritized recommendations are listed in **Table 13.1**.

Table 13.1: Prioritized Recommendations

Project	Priority	Year
Trails for hiking and walking	1	2009 2011 2015
Group picnic shelters	2	2010 2016
Water-based activities	3	2010 2016
Playgrounds and playground equipment	4	2011 2016
Natural Areas	5	2011 2013 2015 2018
Tent/RV Camping Areas	6	2015
Park infrastructure (tables, grills, etc.)	7	2015
Fishing Access	8	2016
Sports fields	9	2017
Amphitheater	10	2015

Funding Sources

The primary source of funding planned improvements as identified in this master plan are from Williamson County bond proceeds; however, in some instances, revenue will also be generated from partnerships. For example, a trail project may pass through one or more cities in the county, thus their willingness to participate in its funding.

Planned Improvements that Relate to Seniors

Of the planned improvements listed above in Table 13.1, seniors have expressed interest in many of them. It is known from the cross-tabular analysis of the statistically valid citizen survey, with results that provided a level of confidence of 95% at a precision of +/- 4.8%, that those whose age is 55+ are supportive of the following:

Table 13.2: Planned Improvements that Relate to Seniors

Planned Improvement	Survey Question	Support by General Population	Support by Seniors (55+)
Trails for hiking and walking	Large regional parks and walking/biking trails	30.3% somewhat important	30.1% somewhat important
Group picnic shelters	Most important facilities to be provided by the County	22.7%	24.1%
Water-based activities			
Playgrounds and playground equipment			
Natural Areas	Worded as wildlife habitats and natural areas	49.8%	48.1%
Tent/RV Camping Areas			
Park infrastructure (tables, grills, etc.)	Worded as passive usage	46.2%	47%
Fishing Access	Worded as passive usage	46.2%	47%
Sports fields	Allocation of dollars for sports fields	\$9.35 of \$100 expenditure	\$11.35 of \$100 expenditure
Amphitheater	<i>No Data Available</i>		

Conclusion

Williamson County has accomplished a great deal over the last few years. This Master Plan was developed based on what the citizens desire for parks, trails, recreation and open space in the County. When fully developed, the Plan will be an excellent tool for the County to enhance livability for people living in the County and for attracting visitors and future residents.

The Master Plan provides an excellent road map for the Parks and Recreation Department to follow and will provide a proactive approach to management of the park system. The Master Plan won't be easy to implement. It will require a strong commitment by the Court, Parks and Recreation Department, and key stakeholders to advocate for. However, the benefits are enormous and worth the effort. Williamson County is already an attractive destination and its quality of life will be enhanced when this Plan is implemented.

The consultants' work is completed. Now is the time to begin the journey of implementation and enhancement.



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