



# Towards A Brighter Future

## Parks and Recreation Master Plan for El Paso



September 2014



September 2, 2014

Mr. Tracy Novak, Director  
City of El Paso Parks and Recreation Department  
PO Box 1890  
El Paso, Texas 79950-1890

Reference: El Paso Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Dear Mr. Novak:

Halff Associates Inc. is pleased to submit the final Parks and Recreation Master Plan for El Paso. This master plan captures the many observations and findings developed as part of the park planning process, and matches those to the dreams and expectations of the citizens of El Paso. The recommendations encompass the many varied aspects of a large park system such as El Paso's, ranging from facilities, operations, athletics, and aquatics to management, funding and other key governance issues. This plan is far reaching but reasonable in terms of its recommendations, and it articulates what the citizens of El Paso would like to see their park system become.

As in any comprehensive analysis, this document identifies gaps or key needs in your parks system, and gears its recommendations towards addressing those needs. It takes into account the impact that voter approved 2012 park bonds will have in resolving many of those needs, and notes where gaps remain in the longer term.

Time and time again the citizens of El Paso have supported actions to transform the City's parks into a world class system. This plan embraces their desire for a great park system, and helps guide the way to a brighter future.

We deeply appreciate the opportunity to have worked with you, your staff, and the citizens of El Paso, and look forward to El Paso's bright future.

Sincerely,

HALFF ASSOCIATES, INC.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim Carrillo".

Jim Carrillo, FAICP, ASLA  
Vice President, Director of Planning



## Acknowledgements

This plan was prepared with the supervision and insights of the following entities and individuals.

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- Ann Morgan Lilly – District 1
- Larry E. Romero – District 2
- Emma Acosta – District 3
- Carl L. Robinson – District 4
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- Claudia Ordaz – District 6
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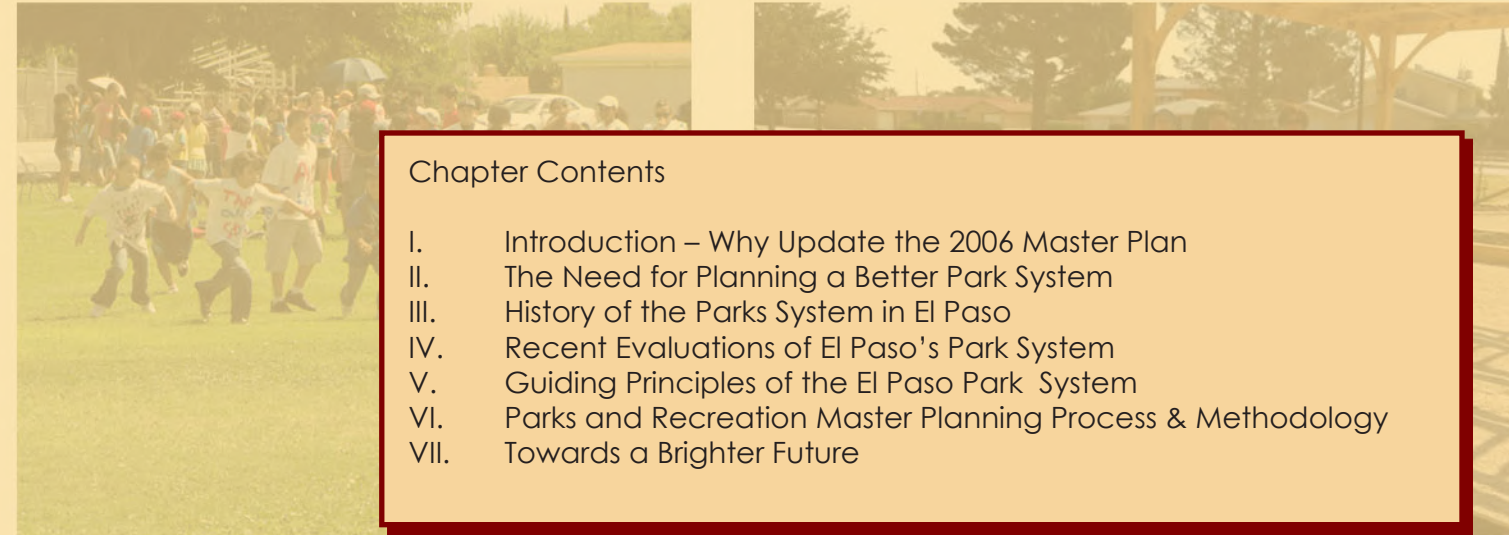
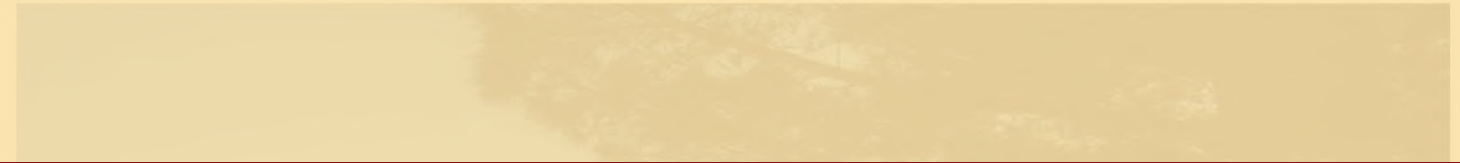
*A special thanks is also extended to the many interested citizens and groups who participated in the Master Plan's public input process. May your interest and dreams for El Paso continue into the future as this plan become reality.*

# CHAPTER 1:

## A PLAN FOR PARKS

### Chapter Contents

- I. Introduction – Why Update the 2006 Master Plan
- II. The Need for Planning a Better Park System
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- IV. Recent Evaluations of El Paso's Park System
- V. Guiding Principles of the El Paso Park System
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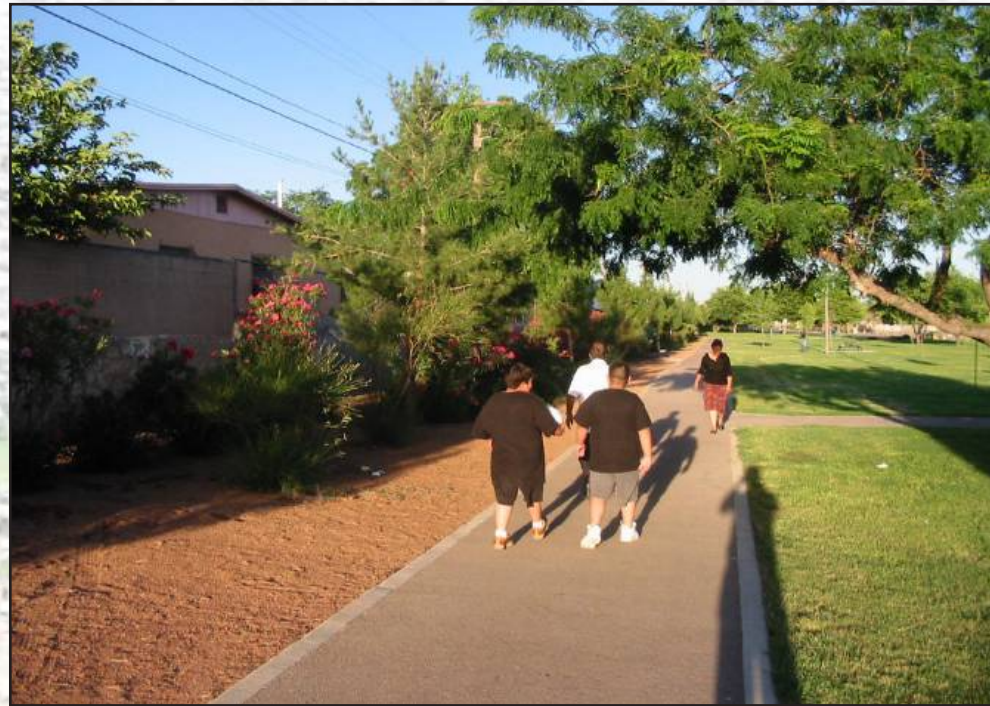




"Nature and a tremendously energetic citizenship combine to afford El Paso opportunities for unique development, with possibilities unsurpassed by any other community in America.

"There is no reason why El Paso should not be, and cannot be, a city of striking distinction among cities, a city so attractive for permanent residence and for transient visits as to make a name for itself nationally famous."

George Kessler – The Kessler Plan for El Paso - 1925



Walkers in Carolina Park reflect the benefits of a great park system that offers a variety of recreational opportunities and access anywhere in the City. (All photographs in this document are by the City of El Paso, unless otherwise noted)

## I. Introduction – Why Update the 2006 Parks and Recreation Master Plan?

The prophetic and inspirational words of George Kessler, in writing El Paso's Visionary Comprehensive Plan in 1925, continue to inspire and motivate us today.

The 2006 Parks and Recreation Master Plan, entitled *Towards A Bright Future* made the following statement regarding the need for a superior park system:

"Quality of life is increasingly becoming an important factor for the nearly 650,000 residents who call El Paso home. Quality of life encompasses many areas, including the ability to get good jobs, the ability to get around the city easily, the feeling that the city is a safe place to live in, and the availability of quality homes and neighborhoods in which to live. In all of these areas El Paso is making great strides.

"One of the most important aspects of quality of life is the availability of high quality parks and recreation opportunities in the city. Parks and recreation influence every aspect of our lives. They allow us to experience new activities and encourage us to lead healthy lifestyles. Attractive parks and natural areas are often the first place that visitors view in our communities. Parks provide a very visible reminder of the beauty of the land that we choose to live in. Parks are also one of the most visible elements of a city government at work, and can instill a strong sense of pride in the residents of a community. A good park system lets both citizens and visitors know that the leadership of the city is interested in the well-being of its citizens."

Guided by the desires of the residents of El Paso and the 2006 Master Plan, the transformation of El Paso's parks has really taken off. Beginning with the Quality of Life bonds passed in 2000 and then supplemented in 2004, many parks in the City have been significantly upgraded or improved. New recreation centers have been built, and athletic facilities in many parts of the City have been upgraded as well. Almost every park in the entire City has seen some improvements. The Parks and Recreation Department today has strong and stable professional leadership.

As a City, El Paso has begun to focus on its downtown and on adopting new strategies to manage growth. In fact, with its new Comprehensive Plan, *Plan El Paso*, the City is now one of the leaders in a movement to rethink how we organize and develop our cities. These changes will significantly transform the City over the coming decades. So again - the future is bright for El Paso!

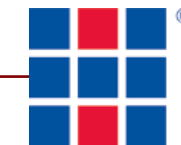
But, much remains to be done. Some types of facilities, such as athletics, aquatics and trails, are still straining to accommodate the high levels of use they are receiving.

Other facilities have not yet been modernized, and the City and County population continues to grow, further stressing existing parks and facilities. Hence the importance of making sure that the City's Parks and Recreation Master Plan continues to reflect the needs and desires of its citizens.

## II. The Need for Planning a Better Park System in El Paso

A good park system does not occur randomly, but rather requires a series of orderly steps. It responds to the interests of all the citizens it serves, and not just the needs of select few. This report is an update to the 2006 Master Plan. This plan addresses both the needs of today and the great opportunities that lie ahead, and proposes a path to create "a bright future" for the parks and recreation system in El Paso.

This update is intended to take stock of the changes and enhancements that have occurred since the initial 2006 Master Plan, and determine what changes to the direction that was charted in 2006 need to be considered. More significantly, this update will incorporate the direction provided by *Plan El Paso*, the City's transforming comprehensive plan that pushes El Paso towards having a great sense of place and an image that is truly unique.



Historic images of San Jacinto Plaza and Washington Park, circa 1909. Photos from the El Paso Historical Society, El Paso Public Library

### III. A History of the Parks System in El Paso

**The spirit of El Paso’s rich history should be communicated in all of El Paso’s parks** - El Paso is one of the most culturally unique areas in the United States, and this is a direct result of the City’s long and rich history. Understanding this history is an important part of this master plan update, so the City’s background and culture can be carried forward and used to shape the facilities and programs offered by the Parks and Recreation Department.

**El Paso’s Fascinating History** - Since North America was first inhabited, the pass between the mountains of northern Mexico and the far southern mountainous reaches of the southwest United States was known to the Native American inhabitants of the area. Spanish explorers began entering the area more than 400 years ago; and in 1598, Don Juan de Onate is credited with naming the area “El Paso del Norte” translated as the Pass to the North. In that same year, Onate took formal possession of the territory drained by the “Rio del Norte” (the Rio Grande) and established the beginning of more than 200 years of Spanish rule over the Southwest.

Early colonization focused on the south side of the river, and settlements in the area flourished. The historic missions in Ysleta, Socorro and San Elizario were founded, and many of those historic structures can still be seen today. By 1682, five settlements had been formed along the river: El Paso del Norte, San Lorenzo, Senecu, Ysleta and Socorro. El Paso was an important stop on the Camino Real serving the Santa Fe Trail and much of present day Mexico.

The early Spanish influence and the strong agricultural economy of the area is a direct contributor to the layout and style of the older areas of El Paso. This rich culture and tradition has been lost in the newer areas of the City. In particular, the idea of the “plaza” as the center of social life should continue as a strong feature of new neighborhoods as they are built. The traditional neighborhood park should be developed, and it should become the “plaza” of the homes around it. This

idea is adopted and reinforced by *Plan El Paso*, which calls for neighborhood “plaza parks.”

Much of the original downtown of El Paso was once part of the Ponce de Leon land grant. El Paso became part of the United States as part of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which set the Rio Grande River as the boundary between the two countries in the area. El Paso County was established in 1850.

Newer settlements in the area resulted from the California gold rush of 1849. These included Frontera, El Molino, Benjamin Franklin Coon’s mercantile mill, Magoffinsville, built by James W. Magoffin, and Concordia, built by Hugh Stephenson. The border also moved Ysleta, Socorro and San Elizario to the U.S. side, further reinforcing the unique bi-cultural and bi-national character of the area.

One of the most significant events in the City’s history was the arrival of the railroads in the early 1880s. By 1890, the population of the City had grown to more than 10,000. Much of the early history of the City is characterized by its reputation as a rough and tumble place where gambling, prostitution, and drinking were predominant. This continued into the early years of the 20th century, and even today that reputation is part of the folklore of the City.

The relationship between northern Mexico and El Paso was further cemented with the migration of many Mexican residents to the Juarez - El Paso area during the Mexican Revolution of 1910 to 1920.

The current City of El Paso was once known as Franklin, and later was named El Paso. For over six decades it was often confused with El Paso del Norte on the Mexican side of the border, until that city was renamed as Ciudad Juarez.

**The influence of the border on El Paso** – In the past, El Paso has been cited as one of the largest “transfrontier” urban regions along the US border. Lawrence A. Herzog, in a paper on “The Transfrontier Metropolis” written in 1991<sup>1</sup> noted that

<sup>1</sup> *Cross-national Urban Structure in the Era of Global Cities: The US-Mexico Transfrontier Metropolis* – Lawrence A. Herzog, San Diego State University 1991



transfrontier metropolitan regions typically consist of two or more settlement centers located around an international boundary. Over time these settlements become fused to form a single ecological and functional city/region. Because the building of cities over the last two centuries has been controlled and managed by nation-states, nations guarded their borders and developed the largest urban concentrations away from the physical edges of a nation. Before 1950, in fact, boundary regions were viewed as buffer zones that helped to protect the nation from invasion by land. Under these conditions, there were few significant cities near national boundaries.

Today, global markets and trade continue to be major economic drivers; lands at the edges of nations have significant possibilities to attract investors, businesses, and governments. Industrial parks, highways, rail systems, and airports that once bypassed international frontiers are relocating there.

However, in recent decades, border security concerns, much of it related to the movement of illegal drugs into the US, have introduced an element of caution among investors. In addition, much manufacturing has continued to seek out the lowest possible labor costs, and those are now found in Asia. Despite these shifts, El Paso continues to thrive, and also remains one of the safest cities anywhere in the United States.

**The Beginning of a Parks system in El Paso** – The original park in El Paso was San Jacinto Plaza, which is included in the 1859 plat of El Paso by Anson Mills. Other downtown plazas followed. Memorial Park was dedicated in June 1920 on the site of the old Federal Copper smelter as the original large park in the City. Scenic Drive opened later that year.

Early recreation in El Paso included the El Paso Browns, a baseball team formed in 1881 and who played on Sportsman’s Field, which was laid out in the Campbell Addition in 1888. The El Paso Sporting and Athletic Club was organized in 1890, and a cycle track association was established by 1879. Other clubs for fencing, tennis, and golf were created in the late 19th century, and the City’s

first natatorium opened in 1900.

The Kessler Plan of 1925 included Memorial Park and Washington Park as key components of the future growth of the City. The plan noted as one of its goals the following statement “More adequate recreation facilities for adults and children should be provided throughout the city. There is a need for more park spaces, large and small.”

The Kessler Plan noted that El Paso had 22 developed parks totaling 97.5 acres in 1925, including Memorial, Washington, Madeline, and Mundy. The City also had four partially developed parks totaling 313 acres (300 acres for a public golf course) and seven undeveloped parks totaling 175 acres, including the 100-acre site of Charles Davis Park, land that is now owned by the University of Texas at El Paso. **For the population estimate of 100,000 residents in 1925, the ratio of parks to population at the time was around 2.9 acres for every 1,000 residents** (keeping in mind that over 66% of that acreage was undeveloped at that time). But more importantly, that ratio has not changed much since that time, and today El Paso has a similar ratio of parks to population.

Other large parks in El Paso include the Chamizal National Memorial Park, created in 1967 by the Chamizal Agreement that verified the boundary and the exact course of the Rio Grande through the City. The park celebrates the strong bicultural connection between the United States and Mexico.

The Franklin Mountains State Park was created in 1979. It features exceptional geologic history and the highest structural point in Texas. El Paso’s Public Service Board had a significant role in creating the State Park through the conveyance of more than half of the acreage for the park at a very low cost.

**1960s and 1970s: A Golden Age for Parks in El Paso** - The 1960s and 1970s might be considered the golden age of parks in El Paso. During the 1970s in particular, the Urban Parks and Recreation Recovery Act, the Community Development Block Grant and other federal programs

The City of El Paso surrounds the Franklin Mountains State Park, a state park created in 1979.



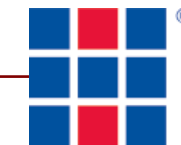
**Park Related Excerpts from The Plan for El Paso by George Kessler - 1925**

“The progressiveness of a city may be measured largely by its parks and recreational facilities, for these are the expression of the aspirations of the community beyond the purely material and obviously necessary things.”

“But these have more than esthetic value and have been found to pay real, if indirect, dividends which may be translated into cash. The dividends come in attracting new citizens, in keeping the old citizens and reducing the labor turnover, and in the transient and tourist trade.”

The Plan advocates parkways, saying that “They may entirely transform the outward aspect of a city, from comparative bleakness to happy evidences of comfort and civic care.”

“El Paso city is bound to take care of all the large alien population just as if it ‘belonged,’ and school system, governmental agencies, utilities, and all the appurtenances of urban life must be scaled to accommodate all.”



helped fund the development of five recreation centers, two indoor and two outdoor pools, and four of the City's nine senior centers. This explosion of construction more than doubled the major recreation facilities in El Paso, a feat that was not repeated until the flurry of development created by the 2000 and 2004 bonds.

But that golden age was short-lived. The City's rapid expansion, coupled with the retraction of federal funds and the recessions of the early 1980s resulted in under-funding of the system through the 1980s and into the early 1990s. Development during that time period was largely funded through the CDBG program.

More importantly, a change in fiscal policy, from a general fund supported system to one that required the Department to raise funds to pay for the operations of its facilities, greatly hurt the ability to provide quality services. A mindset was established that was geared largely towards revenue generating operations and not towards programming that was most beneficial to the citizens of El Paso. While that has changed through staff efforts and recommendations conveyed in the 2006 Parks and Recreation Master Plan, it has left the system with many facilities that require significant updating.

**The Huge Impact of the 2000 Quality of Life Bonds** - A remarkable transition began with the passage of the 2000 Quality of Life Bond program that allocated \$75 million dollars towards park improvements. The vote in favor of the package was overwhelming, and resulted in the approval of additional bonds in 2004. Together, this funding resulted in improvements to over 50% of the parks in the system, along with the construction of the Westside Sports Complex, the renovation of pools and the construction of three new recreation centers (Marty Robbins, Gary Del Palacio and Don Haskins).

- In 1995, the system contained approximately 1,097 acres of parklands.
- In 2006, the acreage of the system had almost doubled to over 2,000 acres.
- In 2012, the City system has over 2,600 acres including dual-use basins and schools, and boasts new or updated parks in every sector of the City.

## IV. More Recent Evaluations of El Paso's Park System

**The 2010 "Scorecard"** – A progress evaluation of the parks system conducted in 2010 illustrated the progress that was made between 2006 and 2010, and also pointed out areas needing more progress.

Key findings are shown on this page, and include:

- Significant progress was being made in the realm of accessibility to parks in neighborhoods, especially in the eastern sector of the City. Upwards of 150 acres in neighborhood parks at the time had either been added or were in the process of being added to the system. However, almost half of those new park sites were under 1.5 acres in size, and amenities above and beyond turf and irrigation (such as playgrounds) were left up to the City to fund after developers installed the minimum improvements.
- New opportunities for combining park facilities with storm water facilities were becoming available due to the new storm water funding source. 10% of this funding, or approximately \$1.5 million per year, was allocated towards open space preservation and facility development, so long as the projects have a nexus to improving storm water protection in the City.
- Community and regional parks remained an issue, with no major funding source identified at the time. In particular, it was noted that the Eastside Regional Park, an unimproved 90+ acre City-owned tract of land, was critically needed.
- Funding allocated for open space was reallocated on an emergency basis towards the buyout of flooded properties due to the 2006 flood. As a result, no direct funds for open space preservation were available.
- Core staff with significant professional parks and recreation experience had been added since 2006. The leadership of the Department provided stability and best practices knowledge.
- A blue ribbon panel appointed by the City Council evaluated the need for a regional park "district" to emulate

### Summary - Areas with satisfactory progress

- ↑ Parkland Dedication as a tool provides much needed smaller parks
- ↑ Acquisition of smaller parks (excepting in parts of the City with slower growth)
- ↑ Trail Development in parks
- ↑ Core professional staff
- ↑ Use of Stormwater Fee to fund open space preservation

### Summary - Areas with Ongoing Progress

- ↷ Parkland development
- ↷ Parkland acquisition in areas of City with slower growth
- ↷ Acquisition of non-stormwater related open space
- ↷ Open Space Oversight Structure
- ↷ Longer Trail corridors
- ↷ Long Term Governance Structure

### Summary - Areas Needing Further Progress

- ↓ Parkland acquisition to address community and regional park needs
- ↓ Regional Park development
- ↓ Annual Capital expenditure funding source for immediate park system needs
- ↓ Opportunity funding for Open Space preservation

Key results from the 2010 El Paso Parks System Scorecard





the successful park systems in much of the midwest and central parts of the United States. (A constitutional amendment was presented to the voters of Texas as part of the November 2011 election, but was not approved statewide by the voters.)

**Trust for Public Lands 2012 "ParkScore"** – In May of 2012, the Trust for Public Lands (TPL) issued an evaluation of the park systems in the 40 largest cities in the United States. El Paso ranked #27 out of 40, with a score of 41.5. The highest scoring city was San Francisco, California with a score of 74, and the lowest was Fresno, California at 21.5.

However, it should be noted that El Paso's score and acreage included 25,000+ acres of the Franklin Mountains State Park, resulting in the City getting a score of 19 out of a possible 20 points for its percentage of parkland. The 2006 Master Plan and this update argue that the Franklin Mountains parklands are an excellent resource, but that much of that land is scenic in nature, inaccessible to most because of its steep topography, and not available on a daily basis. If the 25,600 acres of the State Park are excluded from the scoring, El Paso's "ParkScore" would drop to less than 25, ranking it second to last.

More importantly, El Paso continues to rank very low in terms of spending on park operations, maintenance and programming at around \$31 per capita. In this category, the City scored only 1 out of a possible 20 points, and had the lowest per capita spending of any of the 40 largest US cities. The next lowest city had expenditures of over \$40 per capita, and the highest amount was over \$303 per capita in Washington D.C.

TPL's "ParkScore" projected areas with the greatest park accessibility needs. Much of El Paso was ranked as having high or very high park accessibility needs.

**Plan El Paso (El Paso's New Comprehensive Plan)** – *Plan El Paso* was adopted in the early part of 2012, and is the culmination of two years of extensive planning and citizen input. The plan included many recommendations regarding parks and open spaces and how they should be integrated into the City. As the City's overall plan, the Comprehensive Plan provides a global vision and direction for all of the City's other more specialized plans. Plan El Paso will be referred to many times throughout this Parks Master Plan Update.

In general, *Plan El Paso* emphasizes the importance of parks as centerpiece "civic" areas of each neighborhood or area of the City. It calls for:

- Homes and buildings to face parks, and to add trees and other facilities that make these parks lively and well used centers of their part of the City;
- New "typologies" of parks, where greens, squares and plazas are considered as new neighborhood gathering places;
- Continued emphasis on park ponds, so that storm water basins serve a dual purpose and become important parts of neighborhoods, rather than useless left over spaces;
- A new vision for the Franklin Mountains and the City that surrounds it, where the two are more closely melded together, so that access to the mountain trails can occur at multiple locations, and neighborhoods near the mountains are better connected;
- Renewed emphasis on reinvigorating the Rio Grande corridor as a source of pride and as a regional community asset. Trails along the river as well as new parkland areas can increase access to the river corridor; and it
- Reinforces the need for regional parks that combine natural areas with developed facilities. These parks were the highest recommended priority of the 2006 Parks and Recreation Master Plan, and remain as a very high priority of this update.

## V. Guiding Principles and Goals of the Park System

*The Excellent Park System*, written by Peter Harnik and published by the Trust for Public Lands in 2003, lists seven key measures of an excellent parks system. Those measures are discussed in this report. They were used to develop ten fundamental guiding principles of the future parks system of El Paso. The principles stated below will be the foundation for future decisions as this Plan is implemented.

### 1. All Parts of the City will have Improved Access to Parkland & Recreation Facilities

- **The Parks system will provide adequate parks** - The City will

### Seven Measures of an Excellent Parks System

*(from "The Excellent City Parks System" by Peter Harnik, Center for Park Excellence, Trust for Public Lands)*

**A Clear Expression of Purpose** – a clear purpose for the system must be in place, expressed through a mission statement and goals that define precisely what the system is expected to provide. *El Paso's Park system must clearly identify who its target market is, and must continue to push for a return to providing "core services."*

**Ongoing Planning and Community Involvement** – the excellent parks system has a plan that it follows and updates periodically. It also involves its residents in the development of the plan and major decisions undertaken by the system. *El Paso, through this plan, is clearly committed to both short term and long term planning.*

**Sufficient Assets in Land, staffing, and equipment to meet the system's goals** – the Parks System must have adequate land, know how much parks it has and where, and have adequate operating funds and "a regular infusion of capital funds for major construction and repairs and land acquisition." *El Paso lacks the physical assets of land and facilities as well as adequate fiscal backing. The system is surviving, but cannot thrive without additional resources.*

**Equitable access** – parks should be readily accessible, no matter where residents live. Ten minutes on foot in dense areas and 10 minutes apart by bicycle in suburban areas is recommended by the author. Access for persons with different disabilities or for residents that cannot afford the full cost should also be provided. *Access in many parts of the City is very good. However, in the older central part of the City, as well as the high growth fringe areas, new facilities are not keeping pace with the growth of the City.*

**User satisfaction** – citizens should fully use the park facilities and be satisfied with what they are provided with. Cities should record usership, and should periodically query their residents to determine the level of resident satisfaction. *The citizens of El Paso, through ongoing input, appreciate the system they have, but would like to see it continue to expand.*

**Safety from physical hazards and crime** - park users should feel safe when they use the facilities anywhere in the city. *El Paso is considered a very safe city, and in general citizens feel that their parks are for the most part safe.*

**Benefits for the city beyond the boundaries of the parks system** - the excellent parks system clearly provides environmental, economic, health and learning benefits for its residents. *El Pasoans have long recognized the great benefits of an excellent park system, and are now calling for the resources to allow the system to flourish.*



work towards providing parks, trails, and open spaces in an adequate amount in all parts of the City.

- **Facilities will be well distributed to provide equitable access** - Parks will be located so that every citizen of El Paso has close access to a park. In the near future, no one in El Paso will live further than one-half mile from a park, and ideally most residents will be within one-quarter mile from a park, green space or trail access point.
- **In newly developing parts of the City, adequate parklands will be allocated from the beginning of development**, so that the target levels of service of this Plan are achievable.
- **A balanced parks system will be provided** - A variety of park sizes and facility types are readily available. The park system will work towards providing a mix of small and large parks, trails, open spaces, and indoor recreation facilities in all parts of the City. Appropriate steps will be initiated to come closer to the facility and service goals of this Plan.

**2. The System will be Well Funded, and will Actively Pursue Partnership Opportunities**

- **The parks system will be adequately funded** - The parks system will be funded to a level that corresponds to its importance to the citizens of El Paso. It will be encouraged to flourish.
- **The parks system will use all available land resources** - Every land resource in the City will be considered for its potential as a park or open space resource since there are too few available open space and suitable park sites. Schools and drainage land should be considered in the overall parks equation of the City.
- **School parks must be a vital part of the parks system** - Parks adjacent to elementary or secondary school sites must be a vital resource for the citizens of El Paso in the future.

**3. The System will Identify and Focus First on “Core” Services**

- The Department will focus on providing basic services that serve a significant portion of the population. Services will be measured against five desired outcomes;

- **Livability of the Community** – Provide diverse recreational opportunities and experiences for all citizens of El Paso.
- **Health** - Provide opportunities to improve the health of El Paso citizens.
- **Youth** – Provide learning and recreational experiences for the youth of El Paso.
- **Revenue** – Provide opportunities for revenue, but only if not at the expense of the other desired outcomes.
- **Outdoors** – Provide opportunities to experience the outdoors in many different ways.

The illustration on this page depicts the continuum of services, from providing broad “basic” services that meet the needs of the entire community (and that have a community-wide benefit) to highly specialized services and programs that primarily serve the needs of individuals (which will be much more limited and generate revenue from the user).

**4. Parks in El Paso will be Extraordinary and Timeless**

- **The parks of El Paso will express the natural beauty and cultural diversity of El Paso.** The parks should look like they belong in El Paso.
- **Create extraordinary parks** - Resolve to create parks that are unusual and that stand out.
- **Express the Character of El Paso** - The entire park system, with its lands and buildings, should be one of the most visible place-making features of the City.
- **Use materials that fit in** - Develop parks that represent the natural beauty of the Chihuahuan Desert, and that fit in with the scenery of the area.
- **Native materials** - Use materials that are native to the area and that are already commonly used, such as boulders, native rock, shrubs, and trees.
- **Strong, distinctive appearance for park buildings** - Use architectural features as the focal points of parks. Use strong architectural statements that draw attention to the parks.

**Continuum of Services**





The Parks and Recreation Master Plan is intended to guide City staff and City leaders in determining where and how parks funding should be allocated over the next five to 10 years.



**5. Parks will be Community Focal Points**

- **Parks as focal points of the Community** - Place parks so that they become readily visible focal points of the community around them. Encourage the development community to think of parks in this manner, and where necessary, develop ordinances that force that consideration.
- **Think of parks as mini-oasis** - Treat parks as lush areas within the desert environment, but note that only a portion of each park should have that feeling. The strong juxtaposition of lush and verdant alongside desert-like can create an enormously powerful image.

**6. The City will Focus on Connectivity and Linkage**

- **Trails and linear parks will equally focus on connectivity and leisure uses** - The trail system will link a variety of uses, especially neighborhoods to area schools and parks, to local retail and centers of government, and to indoor recreation.
- **Trails and linear parks will be a vital part of the parks system** - A spine system of linear parks and trails should be extended, so that the goal of one day linking all parts of the City via scenic parkways and linear parks can be achieved.

**7. The City will Value and Preserve Open Space**

- **Open Spaces** - The preservation of open space within the City will be a high priority.
- **Preserve Arroyos** - Preserve arroyos and natural areas as reminders of the original character of the area, and as beautiful scenic areas that will add significant long term value to El Paso.
- **Use drainage as opportunities to “create” open space** - If arroyos do not exist in an area, then use drainage channels as the “greenbelts” of an area. Run pathways alongside them and add trees to create linear parkways.

**8. Detention and Drainage will be used as a Green Opportunity**

- **Treat drainage ponds and detention basins as mini parks or green areas** - Plant vegetation around detention basins to convert them into attractive open space.
- **Avoid deep detention unless critical** - In the future, avoid deep detention basins except on a regional scale. Use natural basins as potential large parks.

**9. The System will Focus on Sustainability**

- **Convert portions of existing parks to more drought-tolerant designs** – Focus on lowering water consumption.
- **Incorporate energy and sustainable features into all buildings and parks in the future** – Include sustainability features that emphasize sustainability if efficiency savings can be demonstrated over time.

**10. The System will Focus on Reducing Maintenance**

- **Use cost effective maintenance techniques** – Water usage, equipment, and staff allocations will all be designed to promote the most efficient maintenance of park facilities, while maintaining parks in the best manner possible.
- **Design facilities to reduce maintenance** – All park facilities will be designed to reduce the amount of maintenance that they require.

**VI. The Parks and Recreation Master Planning Process and Methodology**

This 2012 master plan update is the result of a planning process that looks at the facilities and programs that currently exist in the City, identifies future needs and expectations, as expressed by the citizens of El Paso, and lays out a plan to address those needs. This plan:

- Analyzes progress made since the adoption of the previous master plan in 2006, during which new facilities were added;
- Points out deficiencies in the system and recommends projects to address those deficiencies;
- Looks at the potential growth of the City over the next 10 years, and assesses where additional facilities will be needed as the City grows and what types of facilities are most needed;
- Guides City staff in acquiring land to meet future park and open space needs;
- Prioritizes key recommendations of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan to address the most significant deficiencies as quickly as possible; and
- Is intended to guide City staff and City leaders in determining where and how parks and recreation funding should be allocated over the next ten years.



Five Planning Areas/Sectors

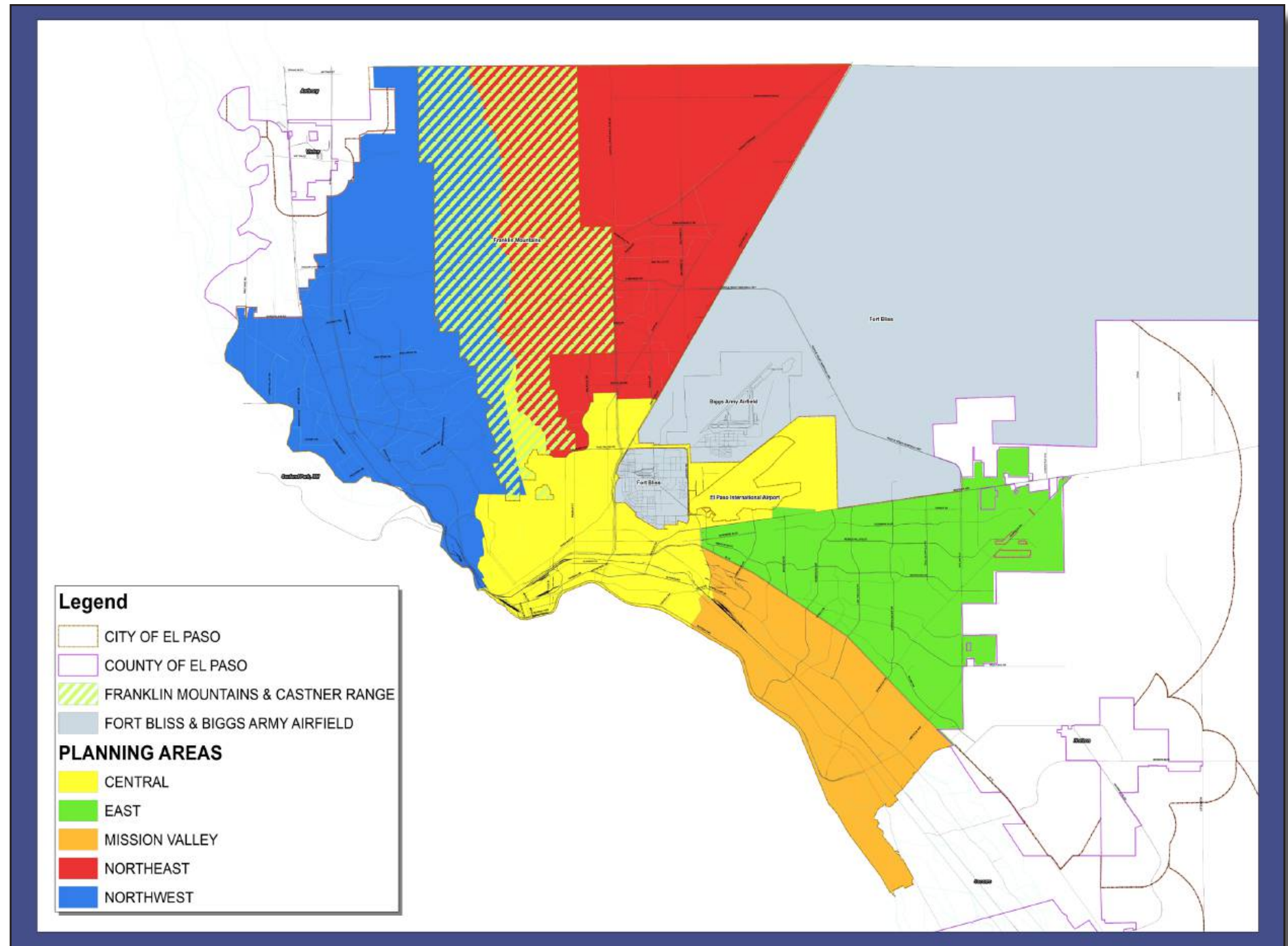
The planning process can be expressed by the flow chart shown on this page. The single most important characteristic of the process is input from the citizens, elected officials, and Parks and Recreation Department managers of the City of El Paso. This Plan represents the needs, concerns, and dreams of El Pasoans.

The plan looks at the park needs of the City on a sector by sector basis, following the five major planning areas designated by the City of El Paso. The sectors are shown on the map to the right.

**Process Methodology**



The Comprehensive Parks Planning Process



Planning Areas



## VII. Towards A Brighter Future

This Plan is divided into chapters that address existing facilities, analyzes needs and service gaps in the current system, and then lays out recommendations for each type of park facility and major program in the City.

Chapter 9 of this document discusses these recommendations using the following categories:

- Immediate (key) Outdoor - Within the next 10 years
- Medium-Long Term Outdoor - Beyond 10 years
- Immediate (key) Indoor - Within the next 10 years
- Medium-Long Term Indoor - Beyond 10 years

### Who Will Implement this Plan?

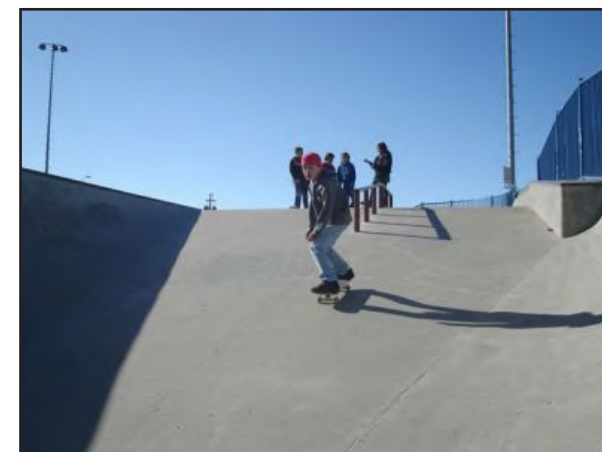
The implementation of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update will be lead by the City of El Paso and the Parks and Recreation Department.

Others who may assist in some areas of the implementation of the plan will include other City departments, other governmental agencies such as El Paso County, independent school districts, and entities such as the Public Service Board. The business and development community of El Paso, who clearly understand the benefits of a strong quality of life in the City, may also participate in some aspects of the implementation of the plan.

This Park and Recreation Master Plan Update follows the general guidelines for local park master plans established by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD). This document is intended to meet the requirements of the Department of Interior for the Urban Parks and Recreation Recovery Program, and will serve as a Recovery Action Plan document (RAP). This document will be filed with both the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the Department of the Interior, and allows the City to better qualify for grant opportunities as they become available.

### Timeframe for the Plan

The plan is formulated to address the timeframe from the year 2012 until the year 2024. Per requirements issued by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, the Parks and Recreation Master Plan should be completely updated after a ten year period or before if any major developments occur which significantly alter the recreation needs of the City.



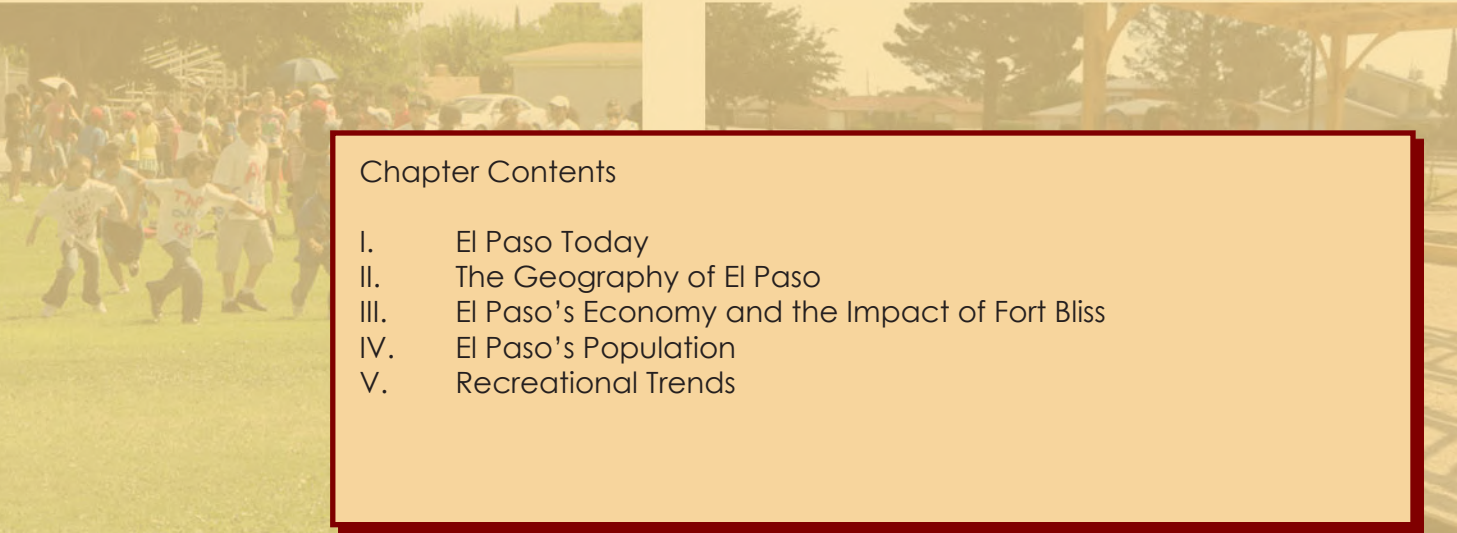
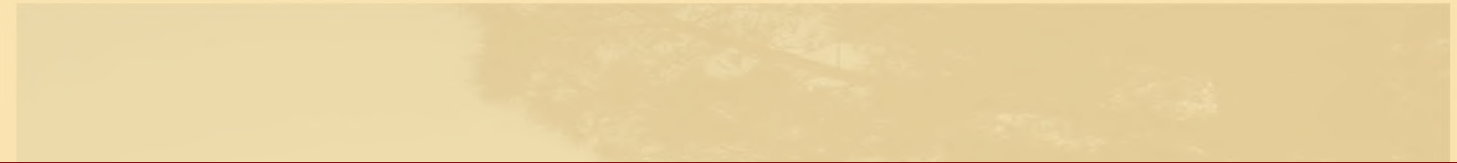
The diversity of the Department's programs and facilities are a vital component of El Paso's quality of life.

# CHAPTER 2:

## EL PASO TODAY

### Chapter Contents

- I. El Paso Today
- II. The Geography of El Paso
- III. El Paso's Economy and the Impact of Fort Bliss
- IV. El Paso's Population
- V. Recreational Trends



## I. El Paso Today

As part of this Master Plan Update, the overall context of El Paso was evaluated and analyzed. This includes the physical characteristics of El Paso, trends in the local economy, the demographic and population aspects of the citizens of the community in 2012, and other recreational providers in the area. Major trends in recreation that may impact the Parks and Recreation System in El Paso are also discussed.



## II. The Geography and Climate of El Paso

El Paso is located in El Paso County at the western most edge of Texas, and is adjacent to Dona Ana County in New Mexico and Ciudad Juarez in the Mexican state of Chihuahua. El Paso is situated in the heart of the Chihuahuan Desert, which is the largest desert ecosystem in North America, covering over 150,000 square miles from West Texas to the eastern portion of Arizona and northern Mexico. As part of the Chihuahuan Desert, the area tends to have short grasses, sparse and unusually scrubby tree growth, and very limited rainfall. The altitude of El Paso is approximately 4,000 feet above sea level. The City itself occupies approximately 260 square miles of the 1,058 square miles contained in El Paso County.

### El Paso's most unique physical characteristics are:

**The Franklin Mountains**, which extend right into the City, and which rise dramatically to a height of over 3,000 feet above the City (approximately 7,192 feet above sea level).

**The Rio Grande River**, which forms the southern boundary of the City and its border with both Mexico and the state of New Mexico. The river is channelized for most of its length in El Paso, and the remainder is largely linear in nature with some vegetative cover along its banks. Because of its status as an international boundary, the river is heavily patrolled and in many places is unattractive. Starting in 2011, as much as 75% of the river has been inaccessible because of the border fence.

**The many arroyos and canyons** in the area contain an incredibly diverse plant and animal habitat. These arroyos and drainage areas represent the best opportunity for valuable undeveloped open space in the City itself.

**Irrigation and drainage canals** that cross portions of the City transport water from the river to current and former agricultural areas, and are generally found in the Mission Valley and Northwest planning areas. Drainage canals can be found throughout the flatter areas of the City, and convey runoff.



### El Paso's Climate

**El Paso's climate is arid.** Summer night average temperatures decline to the 60s, and day temperatures reach the upper 90s. Winter temperatures average 43 to 82 degrees in January. While daytime temperatures are high in the summer months, very low humidity allows for conditions that are conducive to personal comfort. Average rainfall is 8.65 inches per year. Most of the rainfall occurs between April and October, with less than an inch per month in the winter. El Paso is known as the Sun City because of the average of more than 300 days of sunshine per year.



Natural vegetation and the beauty of the desert in El Paso.

### III. El Paso's Economy and the Impact of Fort Bliss

El Paso is a key entry point to the U.S. from Mexico. Once a major copper refining area, chief manufacturing industries in El Paso now include food production, clothing, construction materials, electronic and medical equipment, and plastics. Cotton, fruit, vegetables, and pecans are grown and livestock is raised in the area.

Education is also a driving force in El Paso's economy. El Paso's five large independent school districts are among the largest employers in the area, employing more than 19,000 people between them. The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) has an annual operating budget of nearly \$404 million and employs 2,890 people.

The military installation of Fort Bliss is a major contributor to El Paso's economy. Fort Bliss began as a Calvary post in 1848. Today, Fort Bliss is the site of the United States Army's Air Defense Center. Fort Bliss has 30,800 active-duty soldiers; 2,100 reservists; and employs 7,950 civilians. (Source: *Plan El Paso*; Dover, Kohl & Partners; page i.6; 2012). This is an increase in over 18,000 soldiers to El Paso associated with Fort Bliss since the 2006 Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

In addition to the military, the federal government has a strong presence in El Paso to manage its status and unique issues as a border region. The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), and the U.S. Customs Service all have agency operations in El Paso to regulate traffic and goods through ports of entry from Mexico. Continued job growth is projected to be in the form of health care, business and trade services, international trade, and telecommunications.

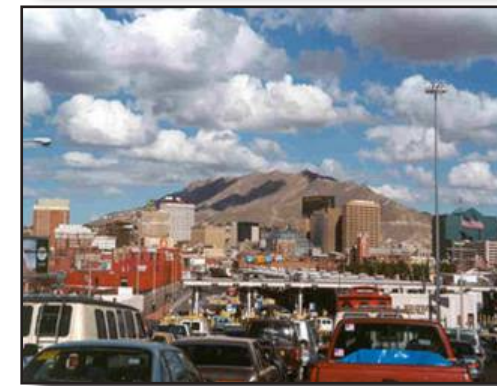






Table 2.1 Population Trends in El Paso and El Paso County				
Year	City of El Paso		El Paso County	
	Population	% Growth	Population	% Growth
1990	515,342 <sup>(1)</sup>	-	591,600 <sup>(1)</sup>	-
2000	563,662 <sup>(1)</sup>	9.4%	679,622 <sup>(1)</sup>	14.9%
2010	649,121 <sup>(1)</sup>	15.2%	800,647 <sup>(1)</sup>	17.8%
2020 (projected)	717,700 <sup>(2)</sup>	18.3%	930,600 <sup>(2)</sup>	16.2%
2030 (projected)	851,774 <sup>(2)</sup>	10.9%	1,025,660 <sup>(2)</sup>	10.2%

Sources:  
 (1) US Census (number does not include Ft. Bliss)  
 (2) Plan El Paso, 2012 Comprehensive Plan (projections do include Ft. Bliss)

Table 2.2 Existing Population by Sector of the City			
Sector	2000	2010	% Increase 2000-2010
Northeast	92,761	104,066	12.2%
Mission Valley	100,001	108,591	8.6%
East	156,194	191,222	22.4%
Central	123,858	125,405	1.2%
Northwest	90,848	119,837	31.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>563,662</b>	<b>649,121</b>	<b>15.2%</b>

Sources: US Census

Table 2.3 Year 2010 Age Distribution - Young vs. Old		
Under 19 years	210,196	32.5%
20 years and over	438,925	67.6%
65 years and over	72,617	11.1%

Source: US Census

## IV. El Paso's Population

The process of developing a long range parks and recreation master plan includes understanding the size and the characteristics of the population to be served. El Paso's parks, trails, open spaces and facilities provide recreation opportunities for the citizens of the City, and for a significant number of persons living in nearby communities and in El Paso County. The rapid population growth poses a huge challenge, where just keeping up with the needs of the population will be difficult enough, much less actually increasing the proportional size of the system.

### Population Growth

El Paso's growth over the past 10 years has been extremely rapid and that growth is expected to continue into the next decade.

Table 2.1 illustrates the current and projected growth of El Paso and El Paso County over the next 20 years. The population projections are derived from the U.S. Census, as well as the City of El Paso Planning Division, and the City's Comprehensive Plan: *Plan El Paso*. El Paso is projected to add over 200,000 residents over the next two decades, continuing the trend of rapid growth. Population growth will primarily occur in the east and west edges of the City. Growth is also anticipated in the far northeast as an influx of new Fort Bliss personnel and dependents continues to take place. The population projections shown on this page are used in the needs assessment when determining future facility needs.

### Demographic Characteristics

Key demographic characteristics include age, race, income and educational attainment. Demographics from the 2010 US Census only include those military personal at Fort Bliss who claim El Paso as their place of residence.

**Age** - Tables 2.3 and 2.4 illustrate the age characteristics of the population in El Paso. Statewide, 30.4% of the population is under the age of 19. El Paso has a larger youth population at 32.5%. Similarly, only 10.4% of the State's population is 65 or older, compared with 11.1% in El Paso.

**Family Size** - The average household size in El Paso is approximately 2.95 residents per household. The average family size is 3.47 members per family.

Table 2.4 Year 2010 - Age Distribution in El Paso			
Age	City of El Paso		State of Texas
Under 5 years	50,976	7.9%	7.7%
5 to 9 years	51,620	8.0%	7.7%
10 to 14 years	53,131	8.2%	7.5%
15 to 19 years	54,469	8.4%	7.5%
20 to 24 years	48,799	7.5%	7.2%
25 to 34 years	85,841	13.2%	14.4%
35 to 44 years	84,408	13.0%	13.7%
45 to 54 years	83,979	13.0%	13.7%
55 to 59 years	34,791	5.4%	5.7%
60 to 64 years	28,490	4.4%	4.7%
65 to 74 years	38,375	5.9%	5.9%
75 to 84 years	25,555	3.9%	3.3%
85 years and over	8,687	1.3%	1.2%

Source: US Census

**Educational Attainment** - In 2010, 73.6% of the population of El Paso had received at least a high school education or its equivalent; this is up from 68.6% in 2000. However, this is significantly below the statewide average of 80.1%.

**Median Income** - The median per capita incomes for the City and the State of Texas were \$17,812 and \$24,780 respectively in 2010. The median household income in the City was \$37,428 in 2010, compared to \$49,646 for Texas as a whole.

**Ethnic Characteristics** - In 2000 approximately 77% of the population of El Paso was of Hispanic origin. By 2010 this had increased to 80.7%. According to the US Census demographic categories, a person of Hispanic or Latino heritage can be of any race, including White, Black, American Indian, etc. Projections by the State of Texas Data Center estimate that the percentage of the Hispanic population in El Paso County will continue to increase by the year 2020, reflecting the statewide increase in the Hispanic population.

Table 2.5 Year 2010 - Distribution by Ethnicity in El Paso		
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity (of any race)	523,721	80.7%
All other ethnicity	125,400	19.3%

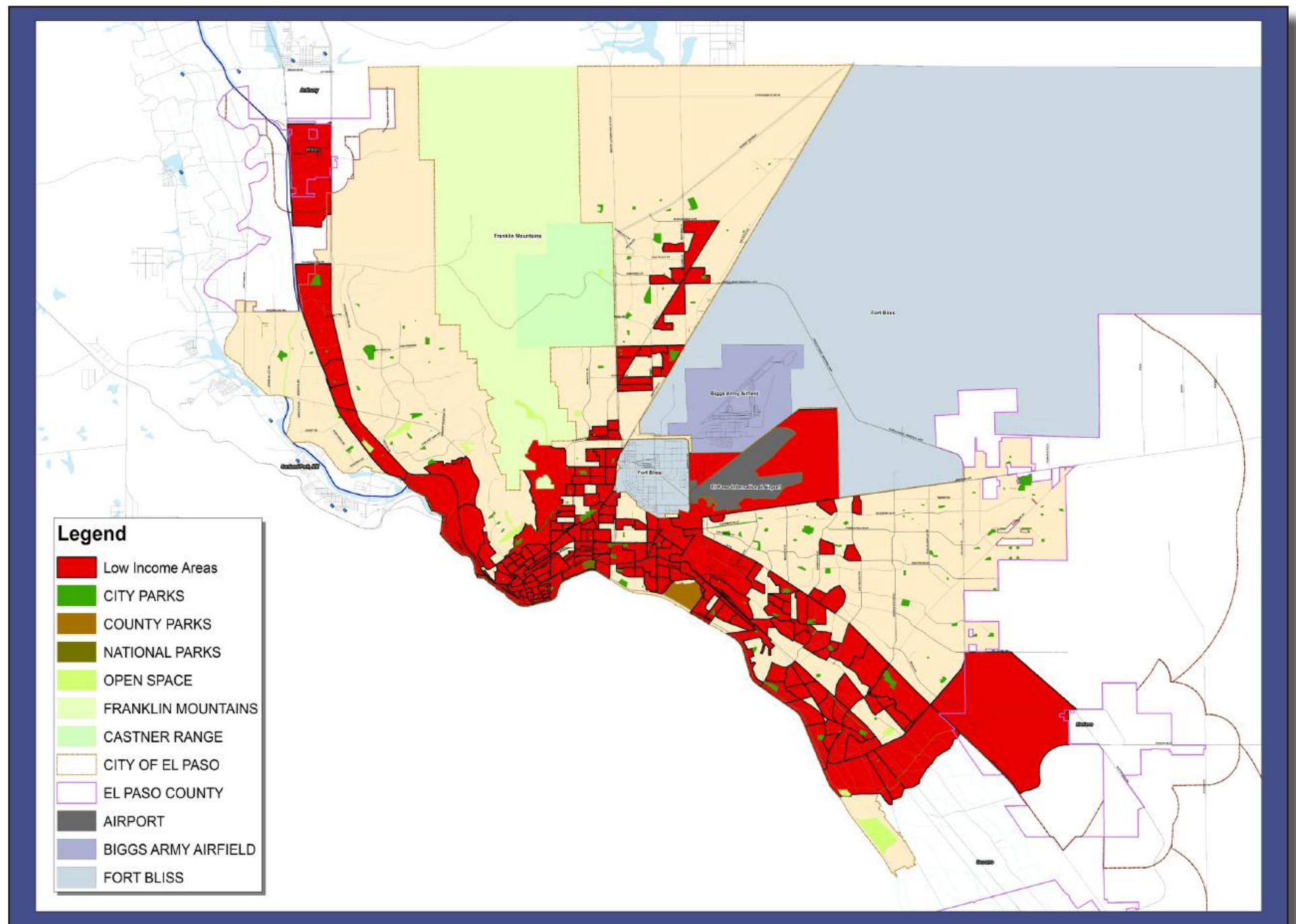
Source: US Census



**Poverty Levels** – 21.0% of all families in the City were below the poverty level in 2010. This is significantly higher than the State of Texas, where 13.0% of families are below the poverty line. The map to the right illustrates areas within El Paso where at least 51% of the population is classified as low to moderate income by federal standards. These neighborhoods have a higher risk of residents living below the poverty line.

**Key aspects of El Paso's demographic picture include the following:**

- Annual population growth in El Paso and El Paso County over the next decade will most likely increase rapidly. This pace of growth will continue to place significant demands on facilities in both the City and the County.
- Hispanic and Latino residents make up the fastest growing portion of the City's population, and will continue to be a majority of the population.
- El Paso has a larger elderly population than the statewide average. Recreation facilities should incorporate the needs of the elderly throughout the City.
- El Paso has a much higher than average percentage of citizens living below the poverty line. Low or no cost recreation facilities and services play an important role in the community. Reduced subsidies for recreation facilities or increased fees for services may prove to be difficult to achieve.



Areas of low income



The diversity of the Department's facilities are a vital component of El Paso's quality of life.

## V. Recreational Trends

The parks, open spaces, and recreational offerings of a city play a large role in defining quality of life, as well as a city's identity and image. Relative to the mobile nature of society today, especially in Texas, these offerings play a large role in determining where people choose to reside, which consequently affects population and economic growth. It is therefore important to understand regional and national trends related to parks and recreation facilities. Below, several of the most prevalent trends in the recreation industry are discussed. These are expected to carry forward into the near future and be relevant for the lifespan of this updated master plan.

The pace of the world and the United State is accelerating, and many of these trends are having a direct impact on recreation. These trends include:

- We have many more leisure activity choices. Greatly increased at-home leisure opportunities are available today, such as hundreds of channels on television, sophisticated game consoles, smart phones, and the internet.
- Safety is a concern to parents. Many parents nationwide no longer allow their children to go to area parks unattended. In many places, the use of neighborhood parks has gone down. Although, as shown in the survey results, this is not as great of a concern in El Paso.
- We live in an era of instant gratification. We expect to have high quality recreation, and to be given activities that we will like. Cities must be willing to provide a much broader menu of recreation activities, but must draw the line if those activities become too costly, especially in the City where poverty levels are high.
- Through the media and internet, we are exposed to the best from around the world. Because of this, we expect our facilities and activities to be of the highest quality possible.

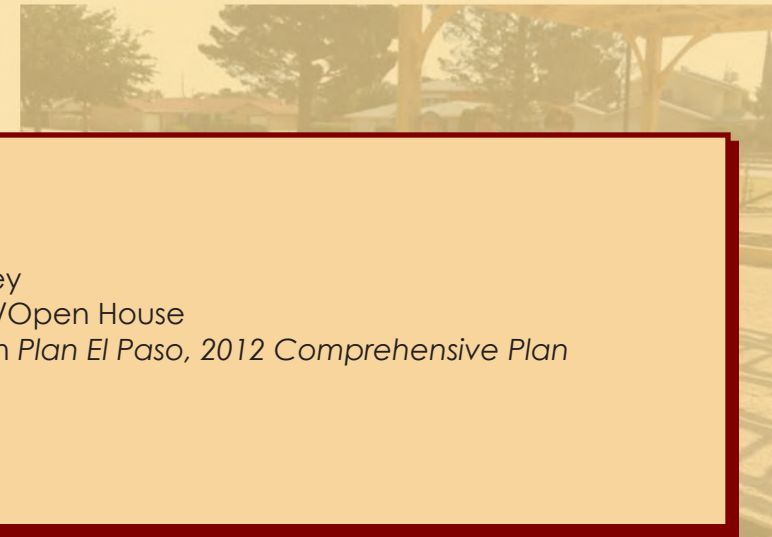
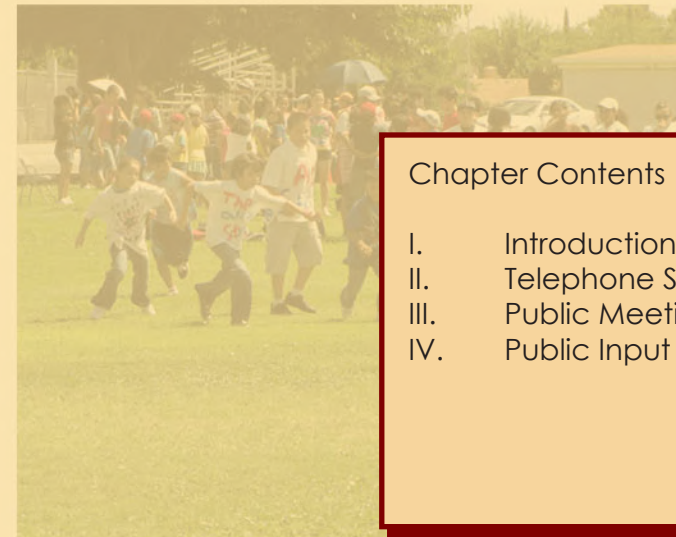
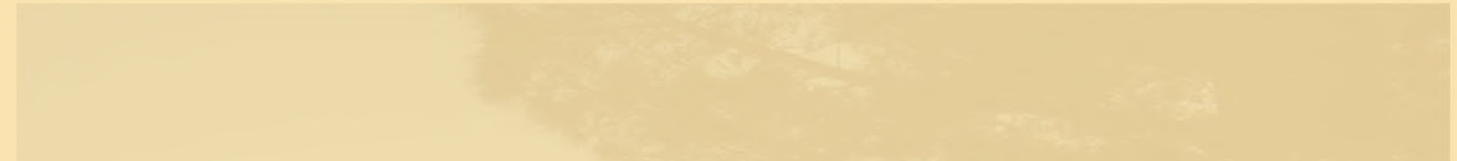
- Concern over the health of our population is growing. Obesity is now recognized as a nationwide problem. Funding to reduce obesity rates by increasing outdoor activities may be more readily available in the future. It may also be a source of grants for parks and recreation programs and facilities.
- New revenue sources for public funding are difficult to come by. The federal surpluses briefly experienced at the turn of the century are now a thing of the past, and deficit spending is probable for the next decade. As a result, little help can be expected from the federal government, and even popular grant programs such as enhancement funds for trails and beautification are not always available.

# CHAPTER 3:

## EL PASO SPEAKS: CITIZEN INPUT

### Chapter Contents

- I. Introduction
- II. Telephone Survey
- III. Public Meetings/Open House
- IV. Public Input from *Plan El Paso, 2012 Comprehensive Plan*





## I. Introduction

The plan for El Paso's parks and recreation system is closely tied to the concerns and future needs of the citizens of El Paso. Citizen input is important in determining what facilities are most used, where major needs exist, and what level of emphasis the citizens of El Paso would like to place on the recommendations of the Citywide Master Plan. This master plan update adopts the philosophy that a citywide planning process should listen to the citizens of the city, and reflect the desires and concerns of all of the citizens of El Paso.

This master plan update incorporates public input by utilizing several methods. By using these methods, feedback from many varying parts of the community was received, leading to a broader consensus on the direction that the master plan should take. Public input methods included:

- A statistically valid citywide telephone survey, to determine broad based public opinions and perceptions from across the City.
- Multiple interviews conducted with citizen groups and City staff.
- Public meetings/open houses held in the City.
- Parks and Recreation Advisory Board and City Council public hearings for the adoption of the Plan.

A summary of the results and comments received from each of these methodologies is described below. Comments and ideas received during open house meetings are summarized beginning on page 33.

## II. Telephone Survey

In 2005 the City of El Paso Parks and Recreation Department facilitated a survey to assist in the creation of the 2006 Parks and Recreation Master Plan. In 2011, the City of El Paso conducted a similar survey as part of the updated Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The Parks and Recreation Department sought to compare the 2011 results to the 2005 survey to identify any changes in attitude, perception, or use.

*CCR proposed to conduct the 2011 survey to match the 2005 survey as closely as possible with respect to respondent profile and other vital quotas, namely planning areas.*

In October of 2011, the City of El Paso Parks and Recreation Department enlisted Creative Consumer Research (CCR), a Houston, Texas based marketing research firm to conduct the telephone survey.

CCR conducted 600 telephone interviews with City of El Paso residents. The interviews took place between November 21, 2011 and December 19, 2011. Each telephone interview took approximately 23 minutes on average to complete. All numbers were dialed at random, with no control by the interviewers over which numbers were dialed. A total of 37,866 phone calls were made to complete the 600 interviews.

Results of the survey were analyzed for statistical significance. As a general rule and industry standard, CCR conducts significance testing at the 95% confidence level with a  $\pm 5\%$  margin of error. Any percentages shown in the results that follow are accurate within 5% higher or lower than what is shown.

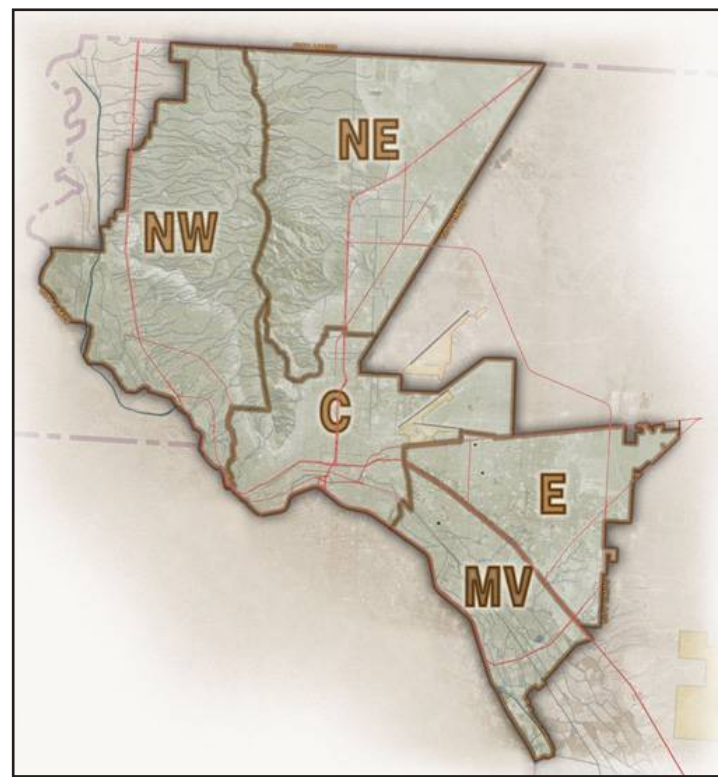


**SATISFACTION WITH OVERALL QUALITY OF PARKS AND RECREATION IN EL PASO BY PLANNING AREA**

Nearly three-fourths (72%) of El Paso residents are either satisfied (61%) or very satisfied (11%) with the overall quality of the Parks and Recreation Department in El Paso, and only 27% are either dissatisfied (21%) or very dissatisfied (6%).

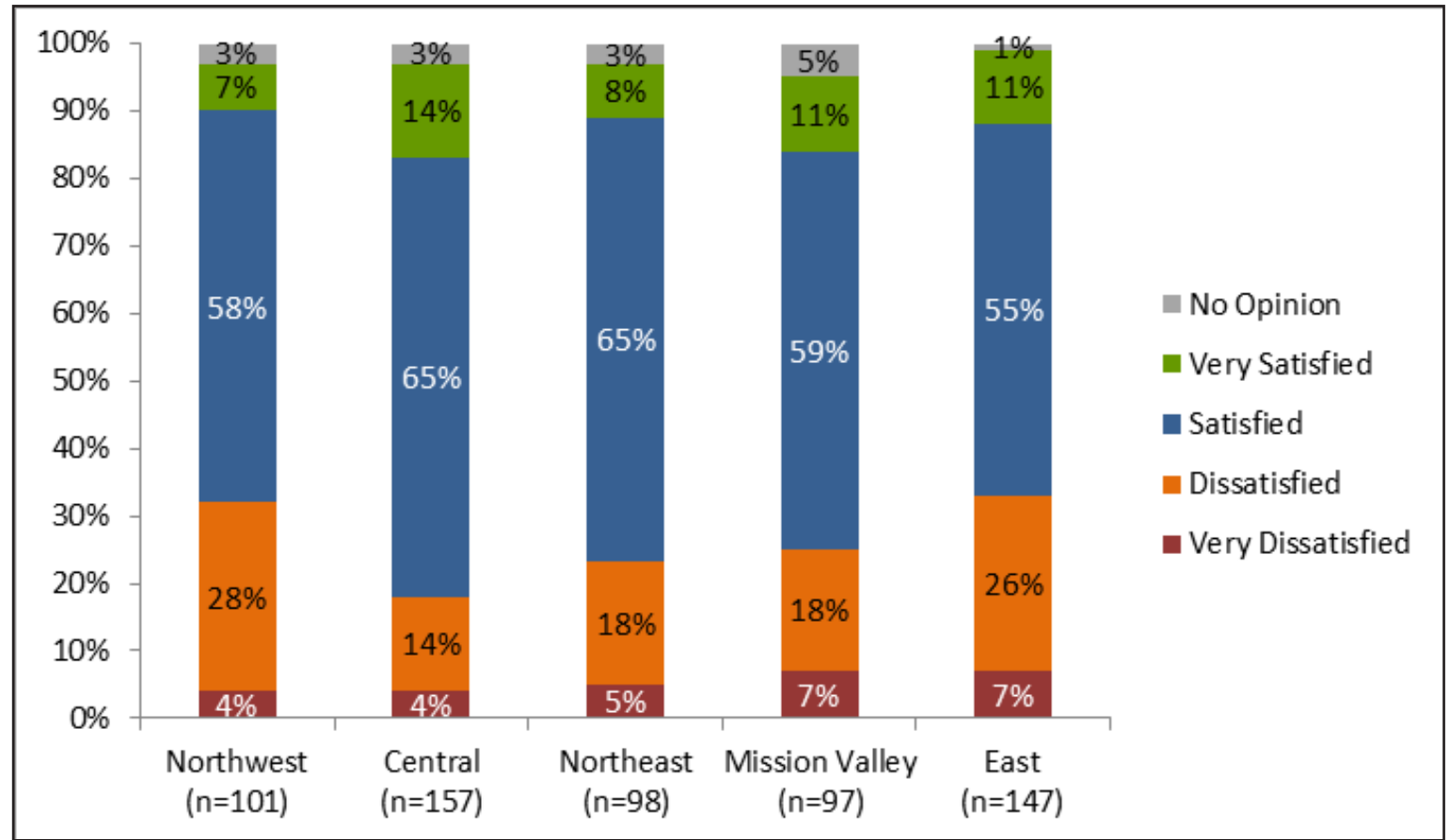
This satisfaction remains high across all planning areas of the city, with the highest satisfaction in the Central area which reported a 79% satisfaction rating. The lowest satisfaction percentages were in the East (66%) and Northwest (65%) areas.

As shown in the graph, the overall satisfaction of the residents of the City of El Paso is trending positively. Satisfaction has risen by 5% to 72% since 2005, when residents reported an overall 67% level of satisfaction.

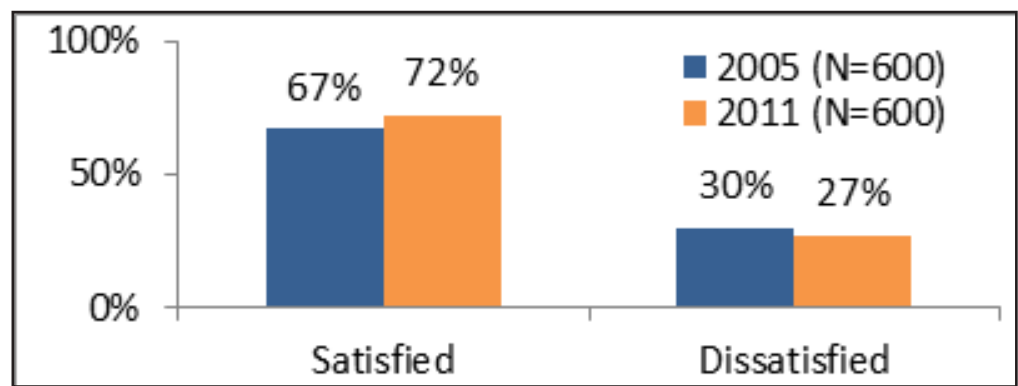


Planning Areas Used as part of the Citizen Survey

**SATISFACTION WITH OVERALL QUALITY OF PARKS AND RECREATION IN EL PASO BY PLANNING AREA**



**SATISFACTION WITH THE OVERALL QUALITY OF PARKS AND RECREATION YEAR-TO-YEAR COMPARISON IN EL PASO**





**OVERALL RATINGS OF PARKS**

The ratings for City parks increased consistently as a whole from 2005 to 2011. The overall quality of City parks increased 7% from 50% in 2005 to 57% in 2011. The largest increase in parks ratings was for the parks being conveniently located and distributed throughout the City. In 2005, the lowest rated factor of City parks was the number of parks, and this rating has increased 10% to 44% in 2011.

City parks are the most widely used facility. Park maintenance (60%), safety (60%), and the overall quality (57%) are given above average ratings. Only 44% of respondents felt that the number of parks in the City was either very good or good; 44% also felt that the variety of amenities and facilities offered was either very good or good.

Table 3.1 Overall Ratings of City Parks					
	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	No Opinion
Number of city parks	11%	33%	30%	19%	8%
Being conveniently located and distributed in all areas	15%	39%	28%	16%	3%
Overall quality of city parks	13%	44%	30%	11%	2%
Overall safety of city parks	16%	44%	25%	12%	4%
Maintenance of city parks	16%	44%	26%	12%	2%
Variety of amenities and facilities offered	11%	33%	33%	19%	4%

**OVERALL RATINGS OF CITY PARKS YEAR-TO-YEAR COMPARISON (% VERY GOOD AND GOOD)**

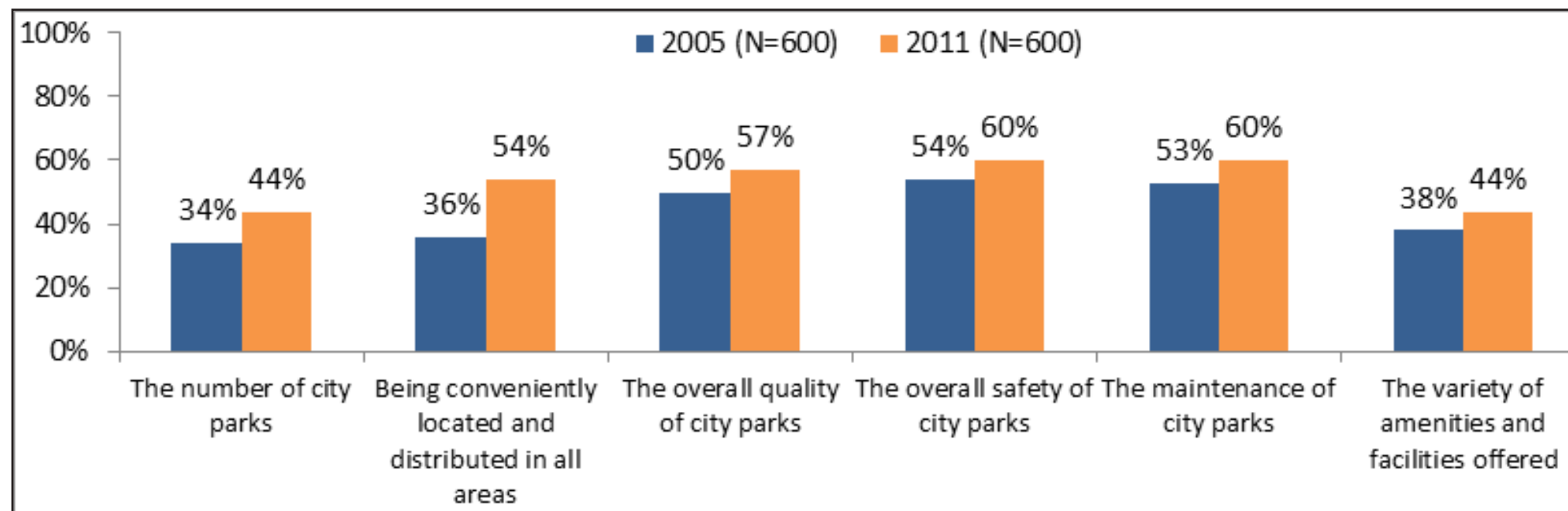




Table 3.2 Overall Ratings of Athletic Fields					
	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	No Opinion
Number of city athletic fields	6%	28%	28%	23%	16%
Being conveniently located and distributed in all areas	11%	30%	27%	23%	10%
Overall quality of city athletic fields	8%	38%	28%	14%	12%
Maintenance of city athletic fields	9%	38%	28%	13%	12%

**OVERALL RATINGS OF ATHLETIC FIELDS**

Overall, respondents feel there are too few athletic fields in the City, with only 34% rating the number of athletic fields good or very good. Less than half of the respondents feel that the quality of the athletic fields was adequate, or that they were well maintained. Just 41% feel that the fields were conveniently located and well distributed throughout the City.

No area of the City stood out in the eyes of respondents as being significantly better with regards to the athletic fields than other areas, but the Central area was the highest rated of the areas when concerned with the number of athletic fields, the location of the fields, and their maintenance.

Table 3.3 Overall Ratings of Athletic Fields by Planning Area										
	Northwest		Central		Northeast		Mission Valley		East	
	Good+	Fair-	Good+	Fair-	Good+	Fair-	Good+	Fair-	Good+	Fair-
Number of city athletic fields	24%	61%	38%	42%	38%	43%	34%	52%	33%	56%
Being conveniently located and distributed in all areas	31%	57%	46%	43%	41%	45%	42%	51%	41%	54%
Overall quality of city athletic fields	47%	38%	46%	39%	46%	41%	51%	40%	44%	51%
Maintenance of city athletic fields	41%	42%	52%	36%	48%	39%	52%	38%	42%	48%
<b>Base:</b>	<b>101</b>		<b>157</b>		<b>98</b>		<b>97</b>		<b>147</b>	

*Note: Good+ includes good and very good ratings, Fair- includes fair and poor ratings.*





**OVERALL RATINGS OF SWIMMING POOLS**

City swimming pools received modest ratings overall. About half of the respondents feel that the quality of the City pools is good or very good as well as also feeling the maintenance of the pools was adequate. However, the number and distribution of the pools received far fewer positive ratings (31% and 38%, respectively).

As with other aspects of the City parks and recreation, the Central area receives higher marks than most of the other areas with regards to swimming pools. The Central area received the highest ratings for overall quality (64%), which is significantly higher than the Northwest, Northeast and the East areas. Mission Valley also received significantly higher ratings for the number and distribution of pools than the Northwest or East areas.

Table 3.4 Overall Ratings of Swimming Pools					
	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	No Opinion
Number of city swimming pools	5%	25%	26%	25%	19%
Being conveniently located and distributed in all areas	9%	29%	27%	23%	13%
Overall quality of city swimming pools	10%	41%	24%	10%	16%
Maintenance of city swimming pools	12%	41%	23%	8%	17%
The hours of operation of city swimming pools	8%	37%	25%	12%	18%

Table 3.5 Overall Ratings of Swimming Pools by Planning Area										
	Northwest		Central		Northeast		Mission Valley		East	
	Good+	Fair-	Good+	Fair-	Good+	Fair-	Good+	Fair-	Good+	Fair-
Number of city swimming pools	20%	54%	36%	43%	31%	47%	38%	46%	27%	62%
Being conveniently located and distributed in all areas	25%	53%	51%	39%	31%	51%	43%	48%	34%	58%
Overall quality of city swimming pools	38%	36%	64%	25%	43%	34%	55%	35%	49%	39%
Maintenance of city swimming pools	39%	33%	63%	27%	40%	37%	57%	30%	54%	35%
The hours of operation of city swimming pools	37%	33%	55%	30%	36%	42%	48%	38%	42%	44%
<b>Base:</b>	<b>101</b>		<b>157</b>		<b>98</b>		<b>97</b>		<b>147</b>	

Note: Good+ includes good and very good ratings, Fair- includes fair and poor ratings.



Table 3.6 Overall Ratings of Recreation Centers					
	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	No Opinion
Number of city recreation centers	6%	29%	28%	22%	16%
Being conveniently located and distributed in all areas	10%	34%	26%	19%	11%
Overall quality of city recreation centers	11%	49%	23%	7%	11%
Overall safety of city recreation centers	11%	48%	19%	9%	13%
Maintenance of city recreation centers	11%	48%	22%	6%	13%
Variety of amenities	9%	40%	26%	12%	14%
The hours of operation of city recreation centers	8%	47%	22%	7%	15%

**OVERALL RATINGS OF RECREATION CENTERS**

City of El Paso residents felt that recreation centers overall are of good quality. A combined 60% of residents say the overall quality of the recreation centers is either good or very good.

In addition, the respondents also felt the safety (59%) and maintenance (59%) of the recreation centers is good. Only 35% of residents felt that the number of recreation centers is good or very good, indicating a need to improve access to recreation centers across the City. Only 44% of respondents thought that recreation centers are conveniently located in all areas of the City.

The Central area showed significantly more respondents rating the number of City recreation centers as good or very good (41%) than the Northeast (28%). The Central area also significantly out-rated the Northeast with respect to the hours of operation of the recreation centers. Northwest residents feel that the recreation center maintenance is significantly better (59%) than those in the Northeast (49%).

Table 3.7 Overall Ratings of Recreation Centers by Planning Area										
	Northwest		Central		Northeast		Mission Valley		East	
	Good+	Fair-	Good+	Fair-	Good+	Fair-	Good+	Fair-	Good+	Fair-
Number of city recreation centers	31%	51%	41%	40%	28%	58%	35%	48%	37%	52%
Being conveniently located and distributed in all areas	39%	49%	48%	39%	40%	43%	46%	45%	46%	49%
Overall quality of city recreation centers	56%	28%	62%	26%	52%	34%	62%	31%	63%	32%
Overall safety of city recreation centers	58%	26%	61%	24%	54%	30%	59%	30%	61%	33%
Maintenance of city recreation centers	59%	21%	58%	29%	49%	37%	61%	27%	65%	29%
Variety of amenities	51%	31%	43%	39%	40%	43%	55%	33%	54%	41%
The hours of operation of city recreation centers	51%	30%	59%	21%	47%	34%	56%	32%	59%	35%
<b>Base:</b>	<b>101</b>		<b>157</b>		<b>98</b>		<b>97</b>		<b>147</b>	

Note: Good+ includes good and very good ratings, Fair- includes fair and poor ratings.

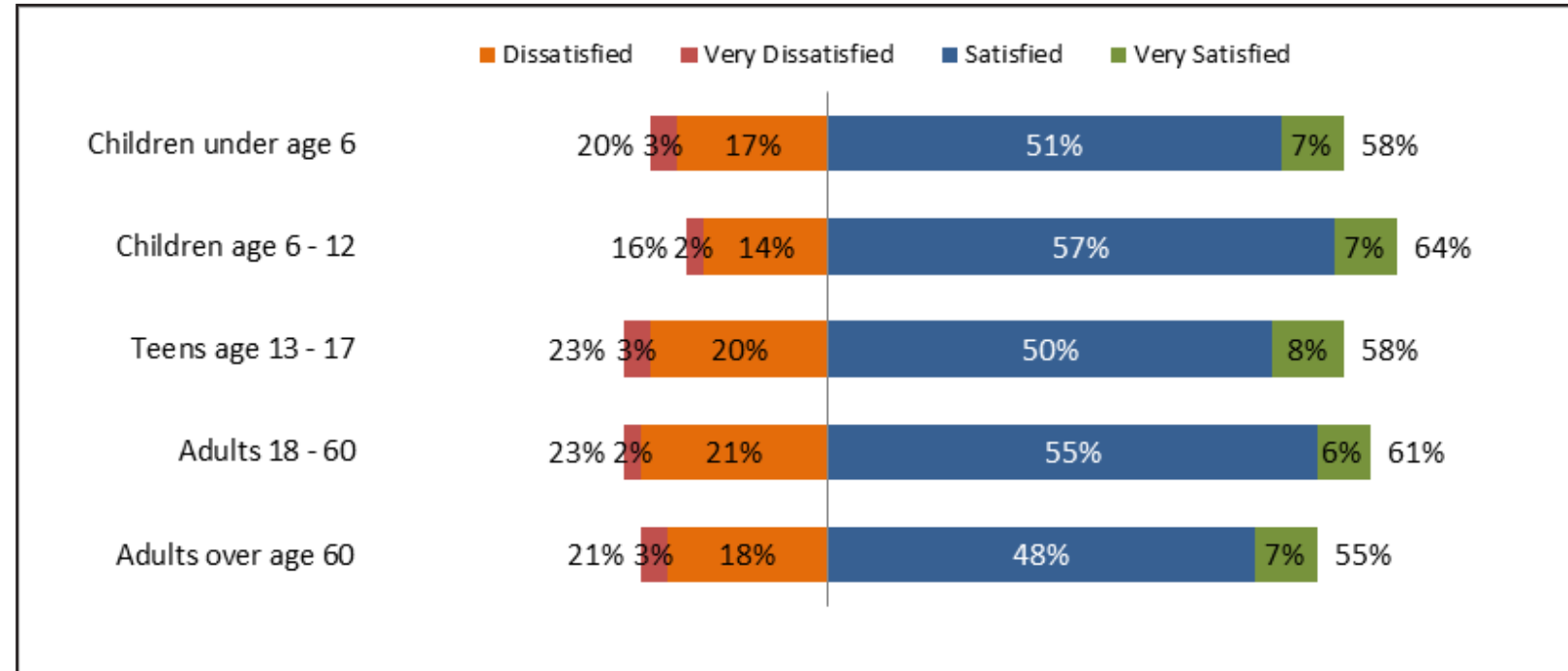


**SATISFACTION WITH RECREATIONAL ACTIVITY BY AGE GROUP**

Satisfaction among residents for activities for specific age groups shows much higher satisfaction than dissatisfaction. Satisfaction is above 50% for all the activities for the different age ranges. This is lower than the satisfaction for parks and recreation services as a whole in El Paso, but this lower rating is due to a much higher percentage of residents reporting that they have no opinion when reporting satisfaction for activities for a specific age group. This may indicate that there is a portion of the population that does not evaluate the Parks and Recreation Department by the activities provided by age group but as a whole.

Satisfaction levels for each of the age level's activities have increased slightly since 2005. The areas that are currently rated the lowest on satisfaction also have the largest gain in satisfaction from the previous survey which indicates that even though these activities are lower in satisfaction, progress in the right direction is being made to improve them. Activities for citizens over the age of 60 increased in overall satisfaction from 45% to 55% and activities for teens age 13 to 17 rose from 49% to 58% satisfaction.

**OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR VARIOUS AGE GROUPS**



**OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR VARIOUS AGE GROUPS YEAR-TO-YEAR COMPARISON**

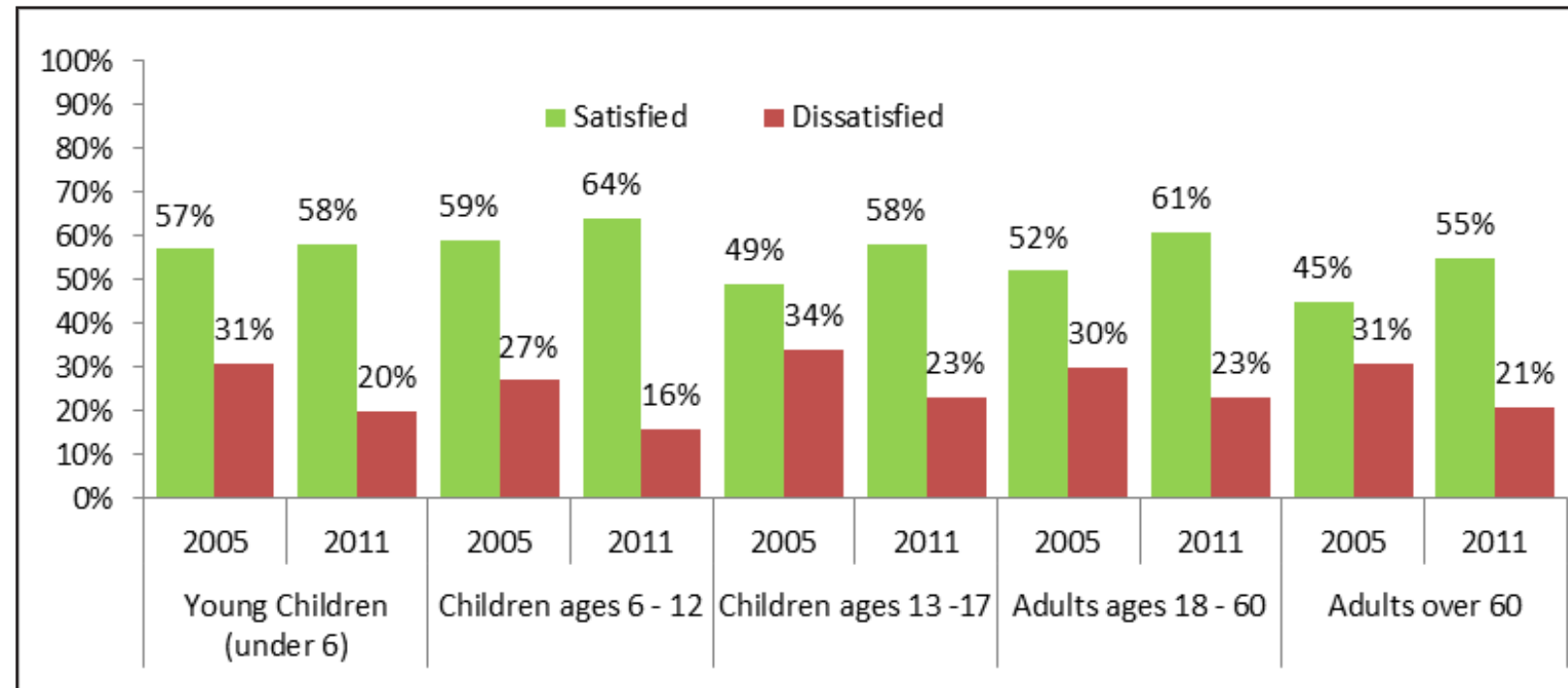




Table 3.8 Utilizing Recreational Facilities or Participating in Outdoor Activities by Planning Area						
	Overall	Northwest	Central	Northeast	Mission Valley	East
Visited or used a small park near your home	78%	78%	79%	70%	85% <sup>N</sup>	78%
Visited or used a large park you had to drive to	59%	58%	55%	49%	62%	67% <sup>CN</sup>
Visited or used a city playground	56%	55%	56%	48%	57%	62% <sup>N</sup>
Used a park pathway or trail	55%	60%	55%	48%	53%	58%
Visited or used a county park	55%	54%	55%	53%	51%	59%
Visited or used a city pool	52%	38%	51% <sup>W</sup>	51% <sup>W</sup>	56% <sup>W</sup>	61% <sup>W</sup>
Visited or used a city athletic field	46%	38%	48% <sup>N</sup>	36%	46%	54% <sup>WN</sup>
Visited or used a city recreation center	44%	41%	39%	39%	49%	50%
Participated in a youth athletic league	26%	26%	23%	27%	24%	32%
Visited a city senior center	26%	19%	35% <sup>WE</sup>	27%	29%	19%
Participated in an adult athletic league	14%	17%	17%	16%	12%	10%
Rented a city pavilion shelter or meeting room	14%	9%	15%	16%	19% <sup>W</sup>	13%
None of the above	5%	5%	6%	8%	2%	3%
<b>Base:</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>147</b>

The table is marked with the following notations if a planning area shows a significant difference to another area:

- W – Significantly higher than the Northwest planning area
- C – Significantly higher than the Central planning area
- N – Significantly higher than the Northeast planning area
- M – Significantly higher than the Mission Valley planning area
- E – Significantly higher than the East planning area

**USE & PARTICIPATION IN RECREATIONAL FACILITIES AND ACTIVITIES**

El Paso citizens highly utilize parks and recreation facilities for outdoor activities. In fact, 95% of residents say they have used at least one or more of the activities listed. The most used activity was visiting a small park near their home. Over three-fourths (78%) of residents say they have visited a small park. This is the most used facility or service across all planning areas. Use of parks is highest in Mission Valley (85%) and lowest in the Northeast (70%). Other top activities participated in are visiting large parks away from their home, visiting playgrounds, or using a park pathway or trail.

The least used El Paso parks and recreation facility or activity are City pavilions, shelters, or meeting rooms (14%), and participation in adult athletic leagues (14%). This holds true among all planning areas.

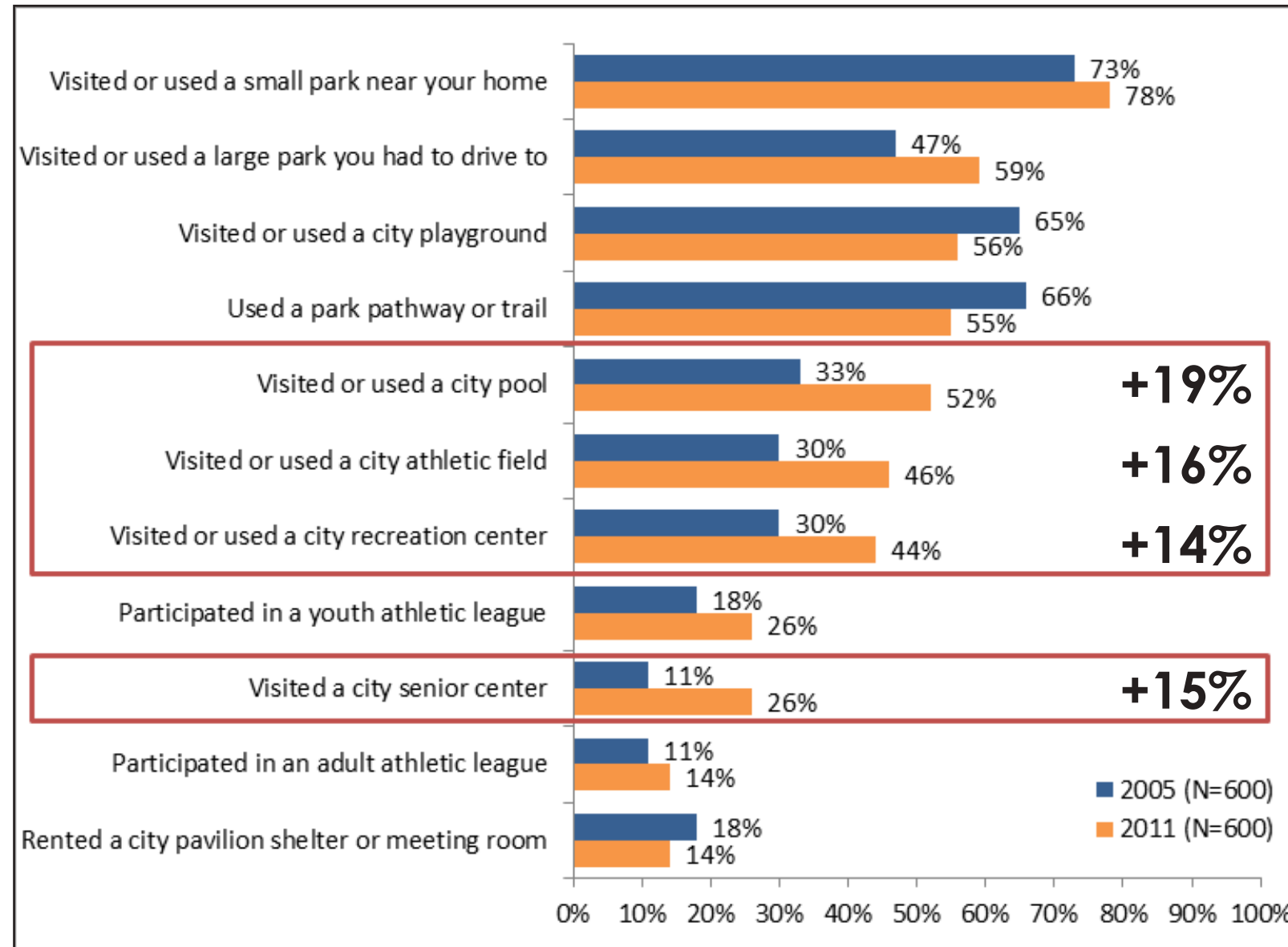
52% of the respondents indicated that they have used a City pool in the past 12 months. However, only 38% of respondents in the Northwest indicated that they have used a City pool, a significantly lower average than the other four planning areas. Use of athletic fields is also significantly lower in the Northwest than in two of the other planning areas.



Compared to the 2005 survey results, the usage of many of the parks and recreation facilities increased dramatically. The top used facility, small parks near home, remained fairly consistent, increasing usage by 5%. The largest increases in activity were in the use of a City pool, which increased 19% from 33% to 52% usage. Athletic fields, recreation centers, and senior centers also showed dramatic increase in usage from 2005.

Only three of the facilities or activities showed a decline in use from 2005. Those visiting a City playground declined from 65% to 56% and those using a park pathway or trail declined 11%, from 66% to 55%. This decline is in contrast to nearly all other activities or facilities increasing in use. This decrease may be a result of the more varied recreational opportunities that now exist. The accessibility of these amenities in certain areas may also contribute to the decline in participation.

**UTILIZING RECREATIONAL FACILITIES OR PARTICIPATING IN OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES YEAR-TO-YEAR COMPARISON**

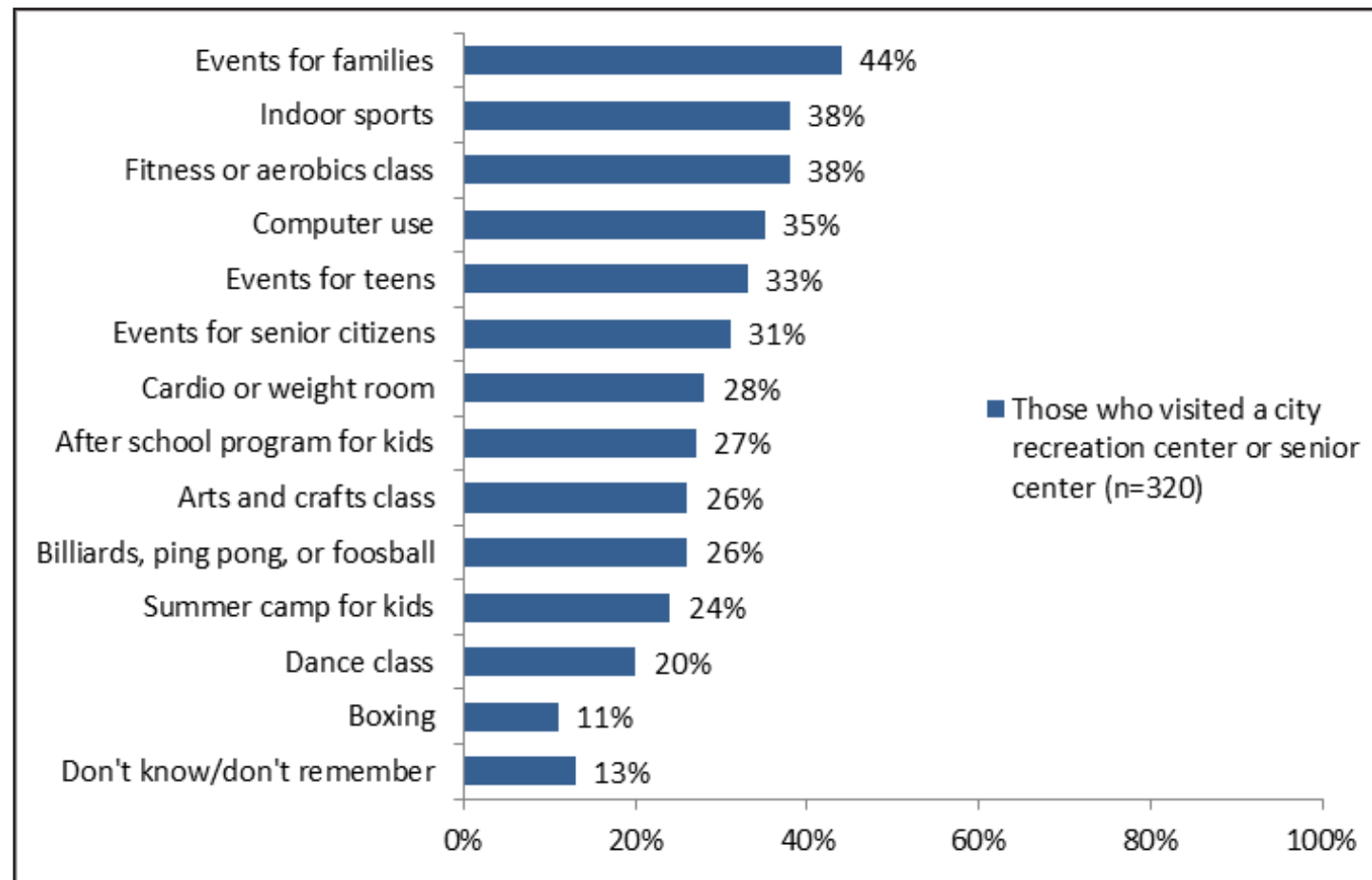




**INDOOR ACTIVITIES PARTICIPATED IN AT RECREATION AND SENIOR CENTERS**

Among those that visited a City recreation or senior center, there is not one activity that stands out as participated in far more than others. In fact, from the list given, many respondents participated in multiple activities. The most participated in activity was events for families (44%) while the fewest respondents participated in dance class (20%) and boxing (11%).

**TYPES OF ACTIVITIES PARTICIPATED IN AT CITY SENIOR CENTER OR RECREATION CENTERS**



**REASONS FOR NOT PARTICIPATING IN MORE PARKS AND RECREATION ACTIVITIES**

In an attempt to understand what the City of El Paso could do to encourage participation in more parks and recreation sponsored activities or services, respondents were asked to rate how much they agree with several statements that could indicate why they may not participate in activities.

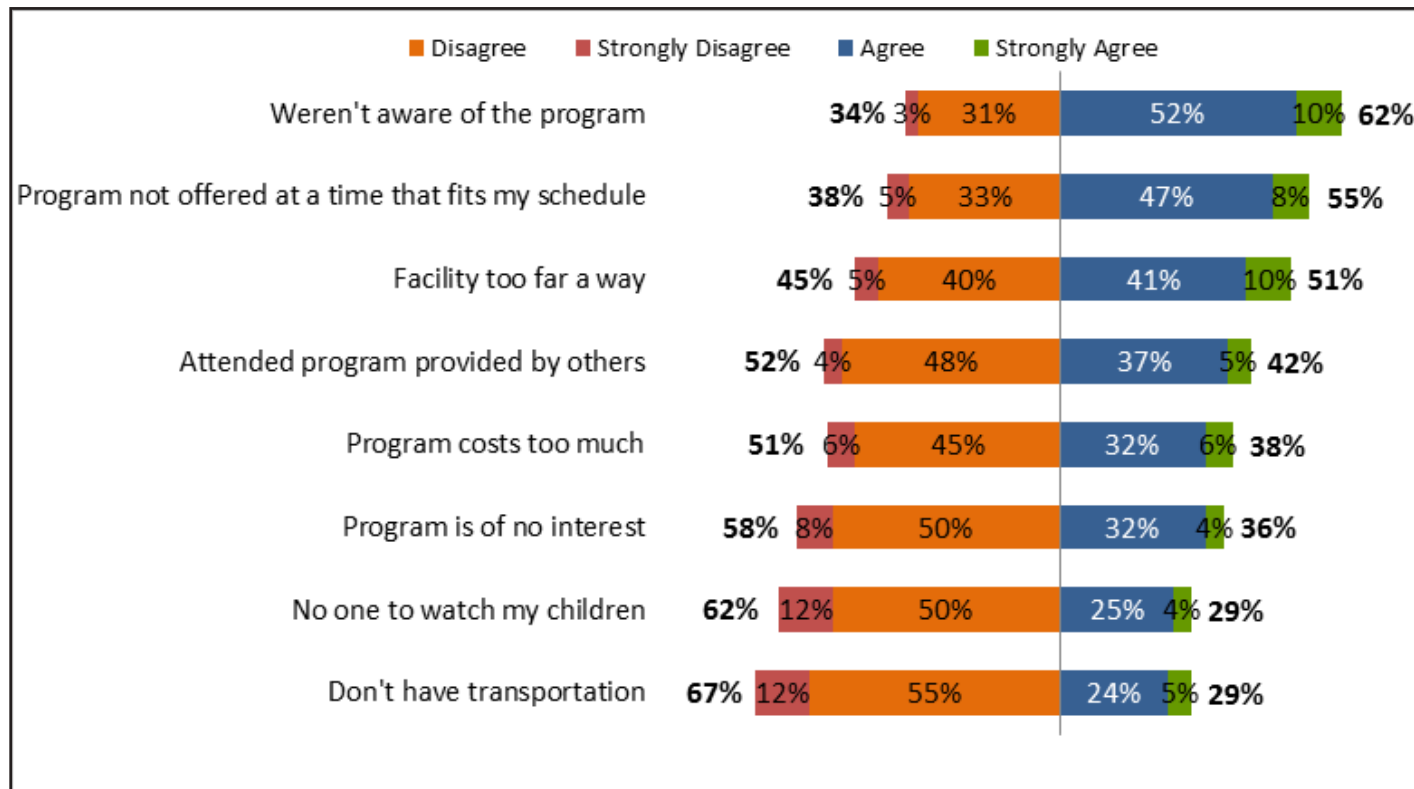
The reason most respondents agree with for not participating in more activities is that they are not aware of the programs (62%). Scheduling (55%) and distance (51%) also appear to be factors that may prevent participation in more parks and recreation activities. Lack of transportation (29%) and lack of child care (29%) are the factors that least affect respondents participation in activities. Even among those that do have children, only 39% said that lack of child care was a reason for not participating in more activities. When looking at the 38% of respondents who agreed they do not participate more because the programs cost too much, their average income is \$30,120; whereas those that do not agree that cost is a reason for not participating in activities have an average income of \$45,690 - a significant difference.

When comparing reasons for not participating in more of the parks and recreation activities and programs to those given in 2005, all reasons listed showed a decrease in respondents agreeing with the statement. This indicates an overall positive shift toward willingness to participate in parks and recreation activities.

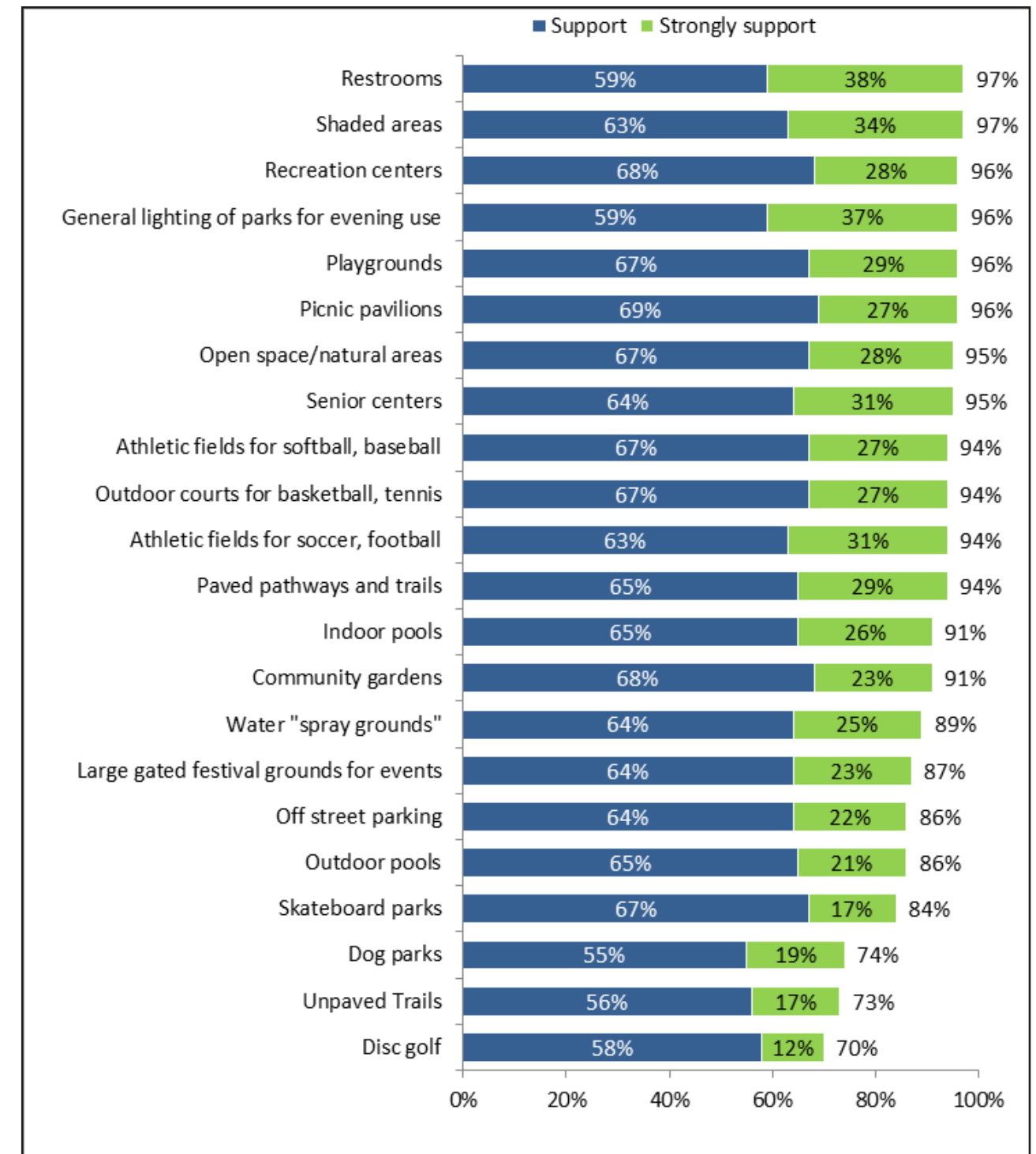
The largest reason given for not participating in parks and recreation activities in 2005 was lack of awareness of the program. This holds true in 2011; however, the number of respondents agreeing with this reason decreased from 76% in 2005 to only 62% in 2011. This shows that more residents are being made aware of parks and recreation activities. The largest shift was in respondents saying that the programs offered are of no interest to them which showed a 22% decrease from 58% in 2005 to 36% in 2011.



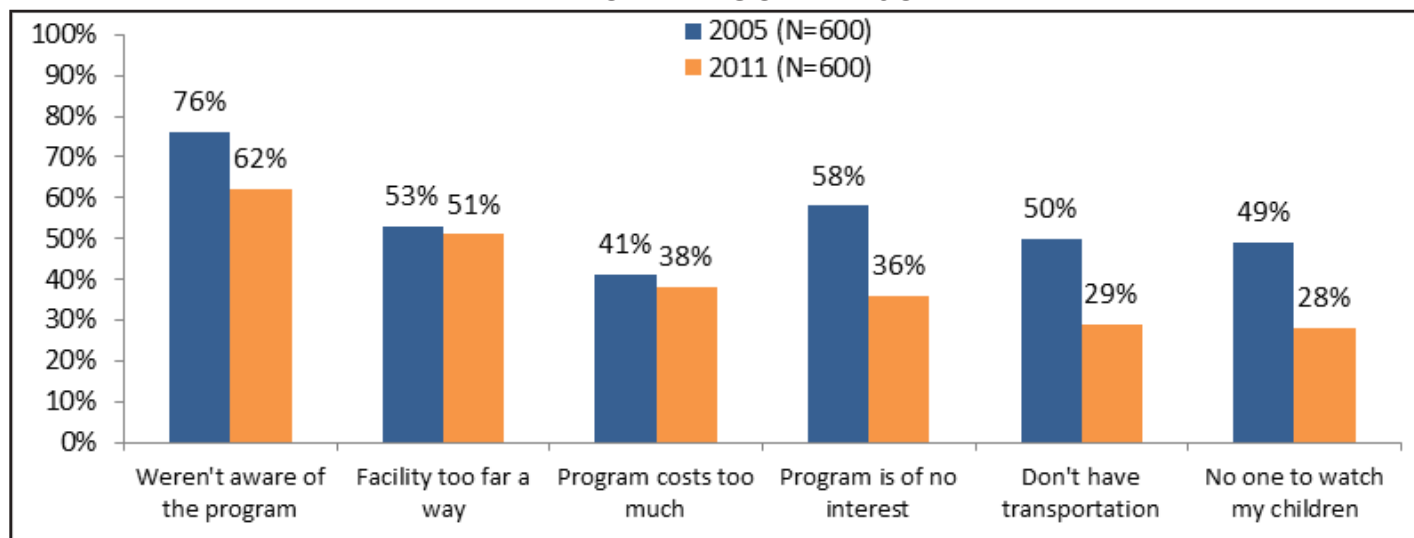
### AGREEMENT WITH REASONS FOR NOT PARTICIPATING IN MORE PARKS AND RECREATION ACTIVITIES



### OVERALL SUPPORT FOR DEVELOPING ADDITIONAL RECREATIONAL FACILITIES



### REASONS FOR NOT PARTICIPATING IN MORE PARKS AND RECREATION ACTIVITIES YEAR-TO-YEAR COMPARISON







**SUPPORT FOR DEVELOPING ADDITIONAL RECREATIONAL FACILITIES**

There is strong support for the development of additional recreational facilities with nearly 100% support for some items. The strongest support with 97% of respondents supporting or strongly supporting is for additional restrooms and shaded areas. All items mentioned received strong support; however, there is a distinct gap in support for the bottom three facilities. Dog parks (74%), unpaved trails (73%), and disc golf (70%) facilities were the least supported facilities but still are supported by almost three-fourths of City residents.

Table 3.9 Support for Developing Additional Recreation Facilities by Planning Area					
	Northwest	Central	Northeast	Mission Valley	East
Restrooms	98%	97%	93%	95%	97%
Shaded areas	96%	97%	94%	96%	98%
Picnic pavilions	96%	96%	97%	93%	99%
Playgrounds	95%	96%	96%	94%	99%
Recreation centers	91%	97%	95%	95%	99%
General lighting of parks for evening use	94%	91%	99%	94%	98%
Open space/natural areas	94%	95%	92%	91%	98%
Senior centers	92%	93%	93%	91%	99%
Athletic fields for soccer, football	92%	95%	92%	92%	97%
Outdoor courts for basketball, tennis	93%	93%	93%	91%	99%
Paved pathways and trails	90%	94%	92%	96%	96%
Athletic fields for softball, baseball	91%	92%	95%	94%	97%
Indoor pools	89%	89%	90%	92%	93%
Community gardens	89%	92%	86%	89%	93%
Water "spraygrounds"	79%	91%	85%	89%	93%
Large gated festival grounds for events	80%	89%	83%	89%	88%
Off street parking	82%	83%	87%	87%	91%
Outdoor pools	85%	86%	85%	84%	85%
Skateboard parks	71%	90%	78%	78%	93%
Dog parks (off leash areas)	73%	75%	71%	72%	75%
Unpaved trails	84%	65%	76%	70%	73%
Disc golf	58%	72%	69%	72%	73%
<b>Base:</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>147</b>

 At least 6% higher than 3 or more other areas  
 At least 6% lower than 3 or more other areas





**MOST IMPORTANT RECREATIONAL FACILITY TO DEVELOP**

Because support for additional facilities was so high for all facilities listed, the City of El Paso should focus planning efforts on what residents considered the most important facility that the City could develop in their area. Residents view many different facilities as important and a single solution will not cover all residents' desires. When simply ranking the facilities on how important the respondents felt they were from the most important to the least important, the top and bottom of the list was very consistent across all planning areas. One area, the Northwest, had an extreme outlier that residents felt was important where other areas did not. This area felt that developing paved pathways and trails was the second most important item to develop, whereas the rest of the areas ranked this in the lower half of importance.

Table 3.10 Single Most Important Recreational Facility to Develop in Your Area by Planning Area					
	Northwest	Central	Northeast	Mission Valley	East
Athletic fields for soccer, football	1	1	1	1	1
Recreation centers	2	2	3	3	3
Playgrounds	4	6	2	6	2
General lighting of parks for evening use	6	3	9	7	7
Senior centers	14	4	3	4	6
Indoor pools	4	9	10	2	4
Athletic fields for softball, baseball	11	5	7	5	4
Outdoor courts for basketball, tennis	7	7	13	9	8
Paved pathways and trails	2	13	13	9	11
Restrooms	9	8	5	13	11
Shaded areas	14	11	5	9	10
Open space/natural areas	9	11	10	9	13
Skateboard parks	11	10	16	14	9
Outdoor pools	14	17	7	8	18
Water "spraygrounds"	14	13	16	14	13
Unpaved trails	11	13	16	17	16
Dog parks (off leash areas)	7	17	16	18	17
Picnic pavilions	19	19	10	18	13
Large gated festival grounds for events	19	19	15	14	18
Community gardens	18	13	16	18	20
Off street parking	19	19	16	18	20
<b>Base:</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>147</b>

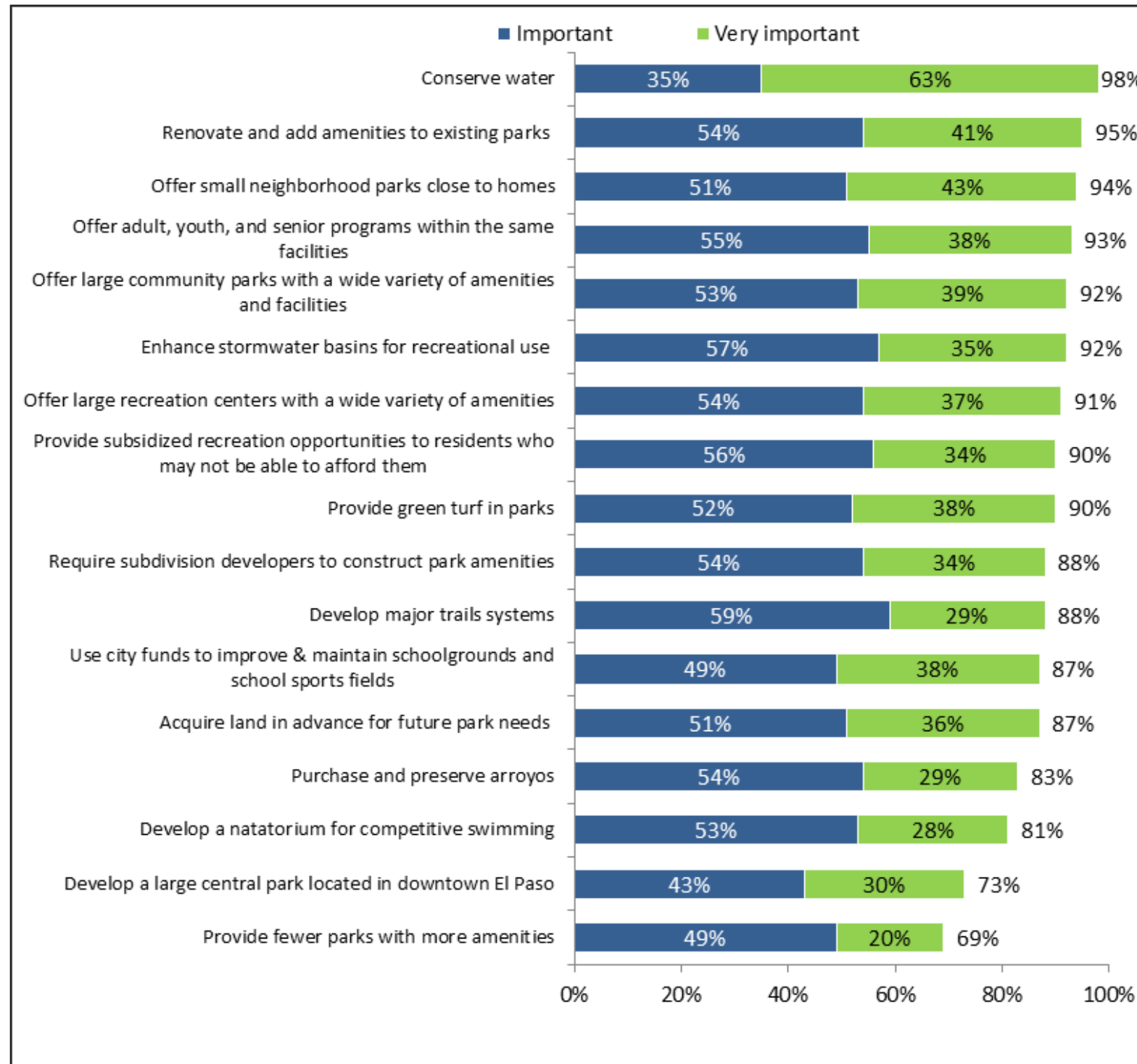
 Highest priorities

 Lowest priorities

Numbers listed more than once per planning area indicate a tie.



OVERALL IMPORTANCE OF FUTURE PARK DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS



IMPORTANCE OF FUTURE DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS OF EL PASO PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

With El Paso suffering from drought, it is no surprise that when asked about the future actions of the City Parks and Recreation Department, conserving water was the most important action listed. Nearly all (98%) respondents said that this was either important or very important for the future of the Parks and Recreation Department. In fact, almost two-thirds (63%) said that this was a very important issue. No single item was reported as more important than the next when ranking importance of future actions.

The top three action items, including conserving water, are renovating and adding amenities to existing parks (95%) and offering small neighborhood parks close to home (94%). Still rated important by nearly three-fourths (73%) of respondents, developing a large Central park in downtown El Paso was the second lowest rated item. The lowest rated item, while receiving 69% of the respondents saying it was important for the City to have fewer parks with more amenities, is contrary to what respondents previously said when they showed very high support for the development of additional facilities and programs.



**SUPPORT FOR FUNDING STRATEGIES TO MEET THE FUTURE NEEDS OF THE PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT**

With very strong support for developing additional facilities and amenities across the City, the issue of funding the projects is of great concern. Support for different funding strategies does not yield the unanimous support that is shown for the additional facilities. However, several funding options did receive strong support.

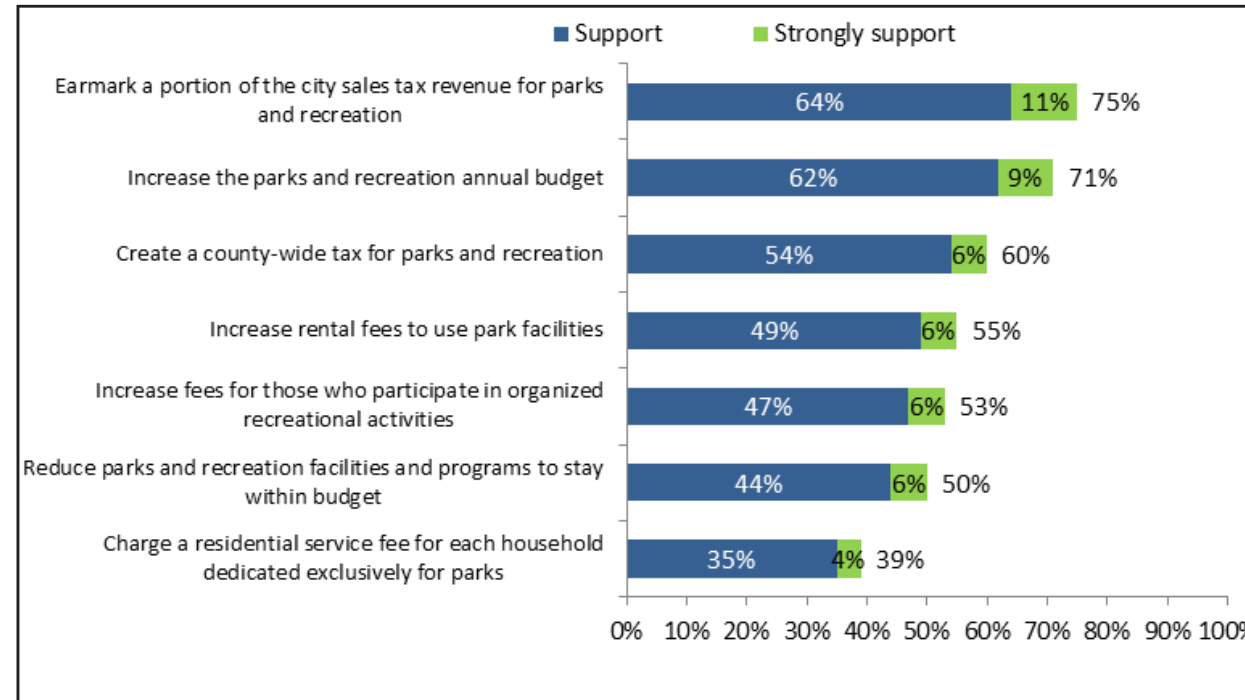
The strongest supported strategy to increase funding to the Parks and Recreation Department is to earmark a portion of the City sales tax. Three-fourths of respondents supported this measure. Residents also strongly supported increasing the parks and recreation annual budget.

The only strategy that received less than half of the respondents support (39%) was the creation of a residential service fee for each household that was dedicated exclusively toward a parks and recreation budget.

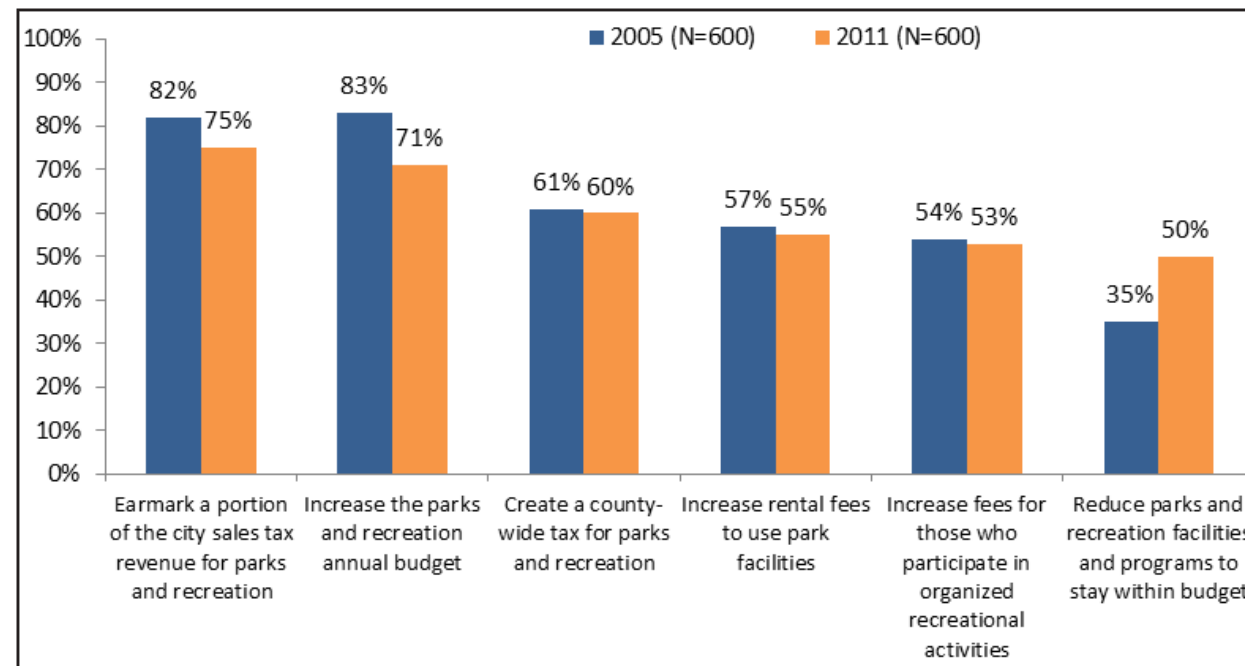
Comparing the 2005 and 2011 surveys, earmarking City sales tax for parks and recreation remained the strongest supported strategy for increasing funding to meet the needs of population growth. However, support for this funding approach has gone down slightly since 2005 from 82% to 75% in 2011. Support for increasing the parks and recreation budget has also decreased slightly since 2005.

The only funding strategy to show increased support is to reduce parks and recreation facilities and programs to stay within budget. This is particularly interesting because respondents have consistently stated they need and want more facilities and programs. This does however, remain the lowest supported option for funding. All other options had very similar support to 2005.

**OVERALL SUPPORT FOR STRATEGIES TO INCREASE FUNDING TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT**



**STRATEGIES TO INCREASE FUNDING TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT BY PLANNING AREA YEAR-TO-YEAR COMPARISON**





### III. Public Meetings/Open House Events

Public Meetings are held during a planning process to allow all residents the opportunity to voice their opinions and concerns. Residents of El Paso had the chance to attend two open house/public meetings held at the Museum of Art, Contemporary Exhibit Space in June 2012. They were shown different illustrations representing potential types of recreational improvements and recommendations. Residents were asked to mark how important they felt each recommendation is to them. The input received from the public meetings is discussed below.

#### How Important Are the Recommendations to You?

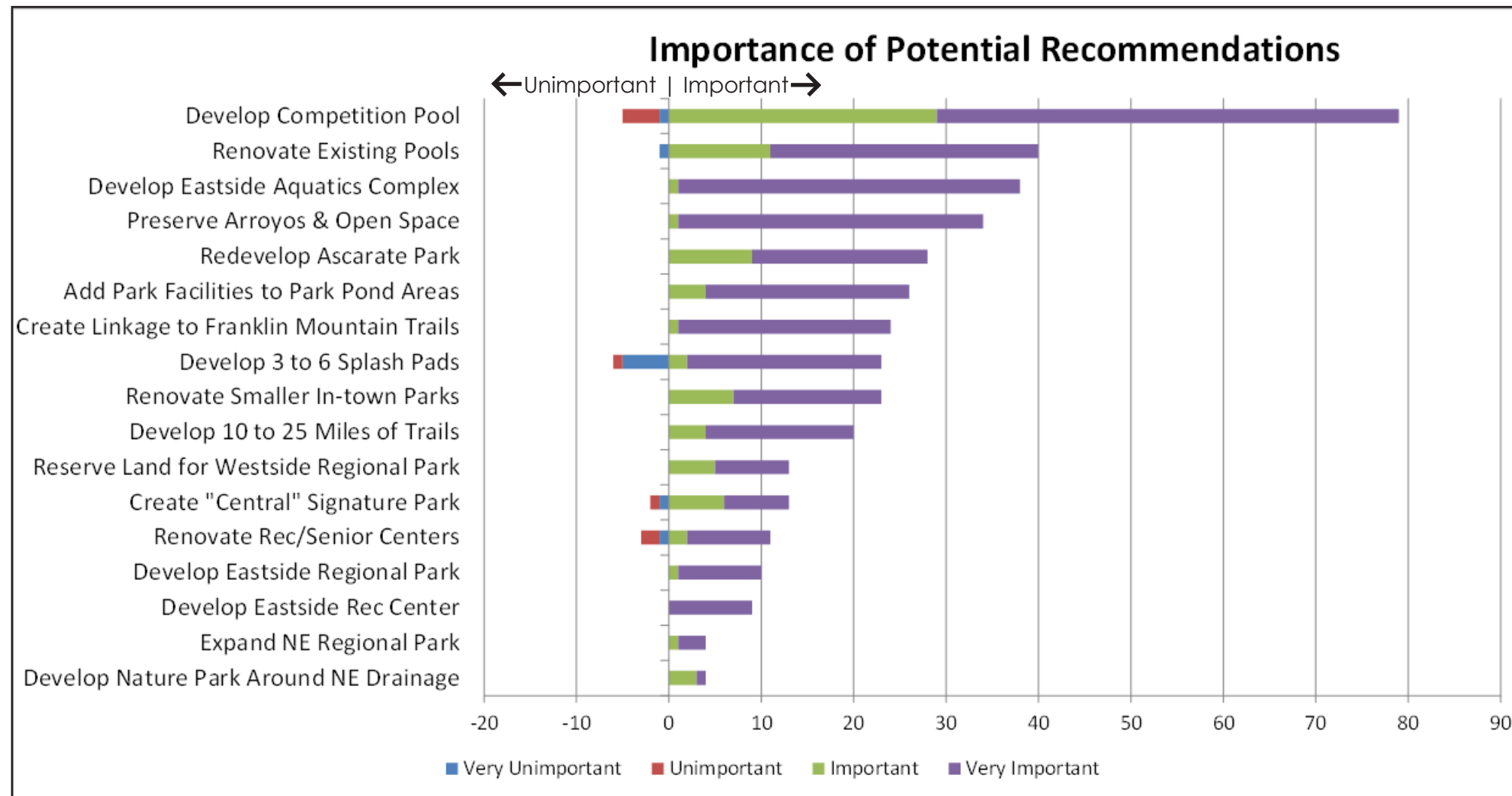
Each illustration showed a potential recommendation of the master plan. Residents were asked how important each recommendation was to them. There were a significant number of youth swim teams representatives at the public meeting, so the recommendation for a competitive swimming pool received the highest level of importance. Other items that attendees at the public meetings rated most important included:

- Continue to preserve arroyos and open space
- Develop splash pads (interactive water spray feature)
- Add park facilities to park pond areas throughout the City
- Create linkage parks and trailheads to connect to Franklin Mountains trails
- Partner with El Paso County to redevelop Ascarate Park

#### What Types of Special Facilities Would You Like to See Added in El Paso?

Residents were shown pictures of different special use facilities, and then they were asked which types of facilities they are interested in. Support for special-use facilities that can be components of parks included:

- Amphitheater
- Community Gardens
- Botanical Garden
- Dog Park
- Challenge Course
- Archery Field
- Paintball Course
- Rock Climbing
- Innovative Playgrounds
- Exercise Stations
- Wi-Fi Hot Spots in Parks





### What Other Facilities Are You Interested In?

Residents were asked to write what other facilities, improvements or recommendations they would like to see in El Paso. Their additional ideas are summarized below.

- Add interactive water spray feature to Mission Hills Park and replace missing shade structures
- Add a recreation center at or near Yucca Park
- Indoor swimming pool by Yucca Park
- Wildlife habitat stations
- Community meeting room at Sherman Park
- Neighborhood and community gardens
- Leave school playgrounds open in the summer with supervision
- Green corridor connecting downtown plaza with Barrio Segunda restaurants and shopping
- Volleyball facilities for girls sports
- More pocket parks, especially in underserved areas
- Provide legal access to State Park via Heinrich Park or new corral style trailhead/parking lot at north end of Andrew Barcena
- Remove water dependent trees from all parks and replace with mesquite trees
- Senior Center near Bassett Place
- Interactive water spray feature in Valley Creek Park
- Cover Pavo Real pool or heat it for year-round use
- Develop/plan the added 29 acres around Keystone
- More 50 meter indoor competition swimming pools – the city has only 2 pools with depth to dive into
- Archery field
- 1 mile running tracks
- More tracks because the same tracks are getting boring
- More sports practice fields near UTEP, Kern, Sunset Heights, etc.
- Tennis courts for ages 10 and under
- Don't close Chelsea Pool – fix it up, we have nothing close to us but this.
- Develop a green space at corner of Chelsea and Trowbridge. We would like something close for our kids to walk to. Everything is very far away.
- Replace the old cement picnic tables at Memorial Park
- More grassy places and more playgrounds to play in
- Basketball courts
- Art sculptures by local artists
- Cleaner toilets
- Water falls in park areas
- More pools in downtown
- More shade over playground equipment
- Shade, water fountains and restrooms



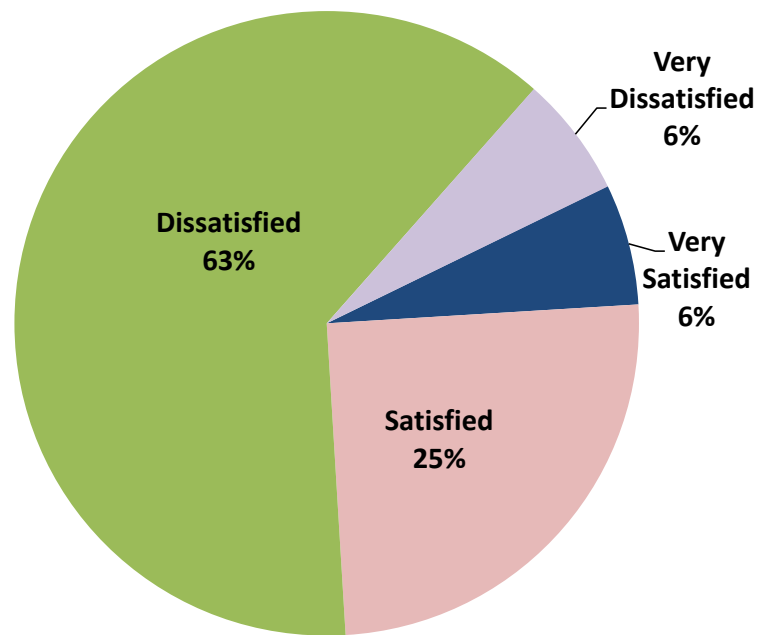
**Demographics of Residents Who Attended the Public Meetings:**

A combined total of approximately 127 citizens attended the two public meetings held in June, 2012. Of those who attended a public meeting and completed a survey, 29% were from the Northwest area, 29% were from the Central area, 18% were from the East area, 18% were from the Northeast area, and 6% were from the Mission Valley area.

Of those who attended, 69% had no children; 6% had children under the age of six; 6% had children between the ages of 6 and 12; and 19% had children between the ages of 13 and 18.

**How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the quality of parks and recreation in El Paso?**

Of those who attended the public meeting, 69% were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the quality of parks and recreation in El Paso today. While this does seem high, it is relatively common among public meetings to have more people attend that are dissatisfied than those who are satisfied with the parks system. When taking into consideration the statistically valid telephone survey, the percent of residents who are dissatisfied is significantly lower.



**IV. Park and Open Space Related Public Input from *Plan El Paso*, the 2012 Comprehensive Plan**

The planning process for the City's Comprehensive Plan gathered input from over 2,000 El Paso residents over the course of multiple charrettes. Some of the input was directly related to parks, recreation, open space and trails issues. Below is a summary of Parks and Recreation public input received during the Comprehensive Planning process in 2010 and 2011.

- **Provide a Greater Inventory & Variety of Parks and Recreation Spaces** - There was an overwhelming concern that El Paso needs more parklands, both smaller parks to serve immediate neighborhoods as well as regional facilities for more active recreation.
- **More sports venues and recreation centers are needed** - Participants expressed a need for more sports venues and recreational centers, including safe places for teenagers, and some sort of theme park. Providing a greater variety of parks and recreational opportunities will help establish El Paso as a travel destination versus an overnight stay for travelers.
- **Kimberly Heights Reservoir** - Specific recommendations were made for a new park to be constructed in the reservoir that now exists in Kimberly Heights on streets surrounding Menlo, Pendleton, and Sundance. A new park in this area would allow families to participate in outdoor activities away from busy streets such as Lee Trevino and George Dieter.
- **Many east side residents** expressed concern with the lack of parks and recreational opportunities including sports-related activities.
- **West side** residents made the recommendation that in hilly areas it is often inadvisable to grade areas to create large sod parks. Siting parks in existing flat areas and use of linear parks which follow contour lines would be more in context.
- **Provide More Family-Oriented Activities** - Many residents suggested that the City provide more family-oriented activities.
- **Improve Existing Park Facilities** - Comments suggested that existing parks be improved. One specific suggestion was to improve the senior center in Ysleta.



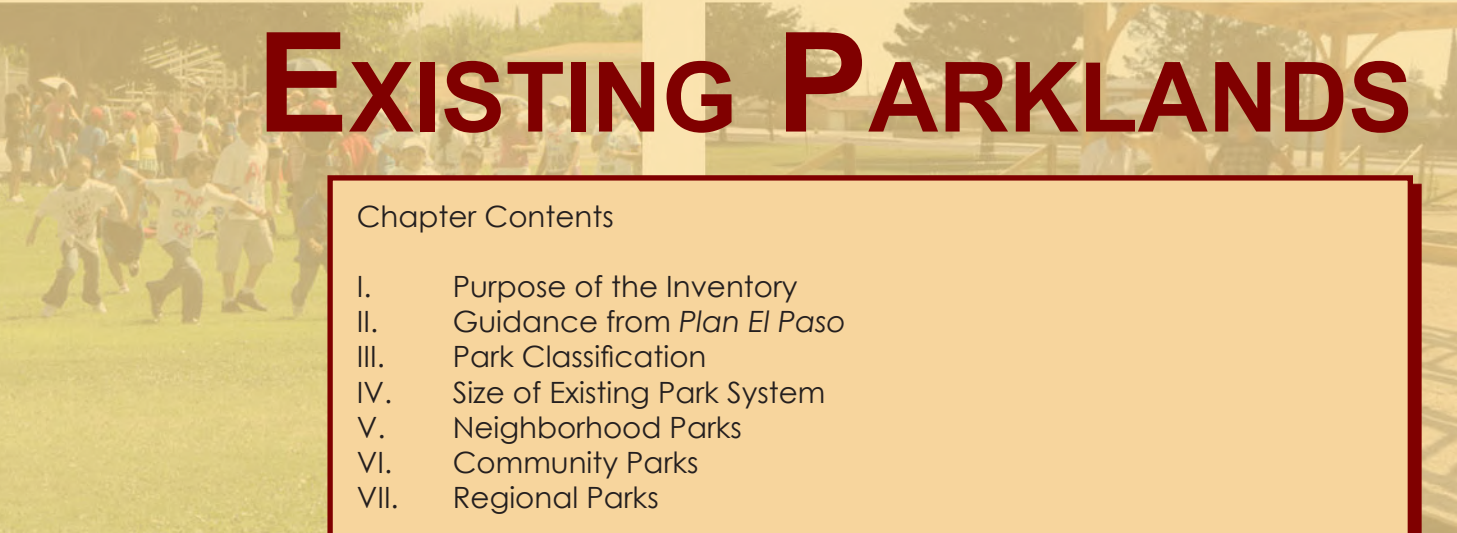
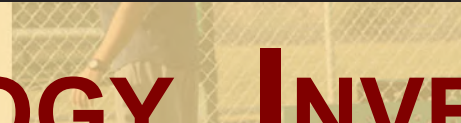
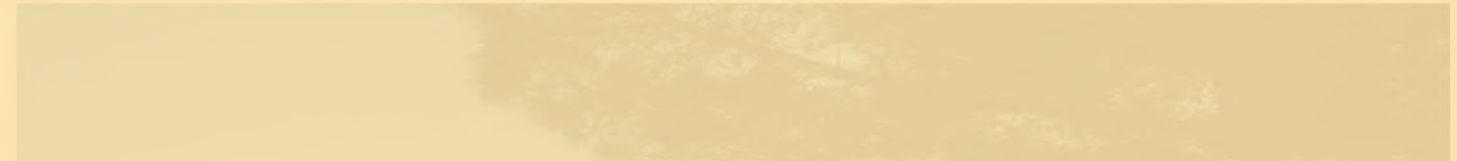
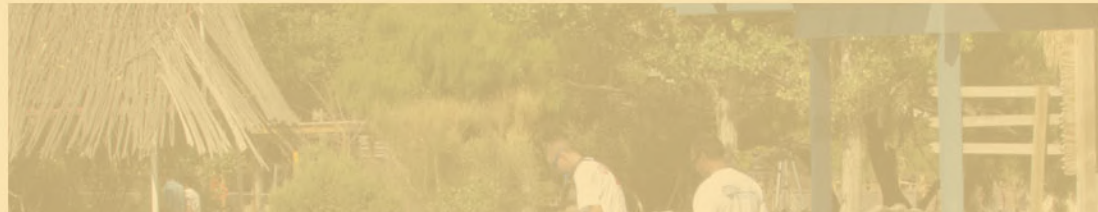
- **Make it Greener with Desert-Appropriate Landscaping** - Comments emphasized the need for El Paso to become "greener" while at the same time being conscious of water conservation.
- **Combine pond areas and parks** - Residents also suggested preserving existing green space and making more efficient use of drainage areas and detention ponds for active or passive park use. Album Park was referenced as a good example of incorporating drainage as part of the park.
- **Provide More Trails** - Incorporating more trails and walkways for recreation as well as for transportation was a common theme. In addition to adding more trails, residents asked that existing and future parks be connected through a comprehensive trail system. Comments included utilizing utility corridors and natural features such as canals and the river to provide locations for trails for hiking and biking. Adding trails in the desert could improve access to hiking and biking opportunities. Many residents stated that providing more trails will improve the quality of life for residents and encourage a healthy lifestyle. In addition, residents wanted a renewed focus on improvements to the Rio Grande River Trail and its connection to the Mission Valley area into Socorro and Fabens.
- **Improve the Design Standards for Parks** - Residents expressed a need to modify current development standards to address design issues related to park ponds.
- **Create an Identity through Public Art** - The City's public art program should play a key role in creating an identity in the new and existing developments either by way of green space, traffic circles, or gateways. There should be a percentage allocated to the public art program from any capital money dedicated to individual neighborhoods. This could also be an opportunity to start developing a City policy for private developers to set aside funds for public art in their developments.
- **Safe Walking & Biking Routes to School** - There was concern expressed, as in many communities, that schools should be designed for walkability and thus should be integrated into neighborhoods, particularly at the elementary and middle school levels. Even though walking increases health, there is concern in today's world about the safety of students commuting via walking. Making schools walkable requires more than just proximity. Attention to creating safe linkages is essential.
- **Joint Use of School Facilities** - Concerns were expressed that schools should be multi-use facilities used every day, all day, and by a wide range of groups. The City and ISDs should share facilities and the cost to operate and maintain those shared facilities. Maintenance issues between the City and school districts can be an issue when considering joint use facilities.

# CHAPTER 4:

## PARK TYPOLOGY, INVENTORY AND ASSESSMENT OF EXISTING PARKLANDS

### Chapter Contents

- I. Purpose of the Inventory
- II. Guidance from *Plan El Paso*
- III. Park Classification
- IV. Size of Existing Park System
- V. Neighborhood Parks
- VI. Community Parks
- VII. Regional Parks







### Major Categories of Parks in El Paso

**Local “Close-to-Home” Space** - usually located within the community served by the facility. Includes pocket parks, neighborhood parks and community parks.

**Regional Space** - usually located within an hour or two driving distance. Parks in this category serve a number of communities, and include regional and metropolitan parks.

**Unique Space** - may be either local or regional in nature. These parks can be defined by physical features or by the types of facilities provided. Parks in this category may include linear parks, special use parks, or open space land conservancies. Rio Bosque and Keystone Heritage Park are examples of unique parks.

## I. Purpose of the Inventory

Both the 2006 Plan and this Update have noted that knowing what parks are in the system is one of the seven traits of an outstanding park system (from the *Excellent Park System* by Peter Harnik, Center for Park Excellence, Trust for Public Land). Having an up to date inventory is a key part of the park planning process; it helps to understand what parks and open space amenities are currently available and to assess the condition of those facilities. It also helps to assess whether or not those facilities are addressing the park and open space needs of the City. By comparing the available park facilities with the number of area residents that the parks system serves, the need for new or improved recreational facilities can be determined. The data in this master plan update is taken from the comprehensive list dated May 2012.

**Components of the Existing Parks Inventory** - This inventory of existing parks reviews several aspects of each park in the El Paso system. These are:

- **Classification:** What is the primary purpose of a given park? Is it intended to serve a local neighborhood around it, giving children and young adults a place to play? Is it intended to serve a much larger population, providing fields for organized athletic leagues? This determines whether a park should be classified as a neighborhood park, a community park, a regional park, a special use park, or a linear park.
- **Location:** Where is the park located in relation to the population that it serves? Is it accessible?
- **Urban versus suburban location:** Park sites in urban locations require a more compact design and may need to have less undesignated turf or open space.
- **Size of the park:** How big is the park? Is it large enough to adequately accomplish its intended purpose? The size guidelines that are shown in this chapter are guidelines, but specific needs and constraints in different parts of the City may dictate different park size solutions.
- **Facilities in each park:** What does the park contain? Are the facilities (i.e. improvements) appropriate for the type of park?



## II. Guidance from *Plan El Paso*

*Plan El Paso* recommends park typologies that fit the City's unique characteristics, and where applicable those are incorporated in this section. The following excerpts from *Plan El Paso* note the following strategies related to parks in neighborhoods.

Greens, Squares & Neighborhood Parks - Like Mundy Park and Madeline Park in El Paso, small neighborhood greens and parks created prior to World War II were often a prime selling feature for the neighborhood and were designed accordingly. As neighborhoods began to be built in less walkable formats, personal yards were often deemed more important than public green spaces. Consequently, the quality of new greens and parks decreased, with new ones often equipped only to minimum City standards.

Recent City initiatives have begun reversing that trend. To improve the usability and attractiveness of neighborhood parks created when land is being subdivided, the City now allows multiple smaller neighborhood greens or parks that can be reached by more people on foot or by bicycle. Amenities such as playgrounds are encouraged.

It remains important to require green space in new subdivisions, but past implementation has resulted in many greens that were treated as leftover space instead of an important neighborhood feature. Integrating these spaces into neighborhoods should be an important priority; locating them prominently in conjunction with churches and schools is often beneficial.

The edges of greens and small parks are critical to their success. The top illustration shows a typical neighborhood green that faces the backs of houses, which limits interaction with surrounding properties and reduces natural surveillance.

A new layer of development with the fronts of buildings facing the green would activate this space, as shown in the middle illustration. One or more walkable tree-lined street would provide an active edge to what will now function as a true neighborhood green or park.

*(Source - Plan El Paso; Dover, Kohl & Partners; page 5.18; 2012)*

*Plan El Paso* further defines outdoor civic spaces, of which parks are a key component. Plazas and squares are the most urban types of space; they are



*A potentially lifeless neighborhood green*



*A lively neighborhood*



*A lively neighborhood green made livelier by adding a corner store and small offices. Additional uses are made possible by virtue of adding more people, and attached units around the periphery. The image shows five types of units: attached, detached, accessory, and apartments above shops and offices. This kind of diversity in housing type would likely lead to a neighborhood of varied ages and incomes – a true neighborhood.*

*Source for all graphics on this page: Plan El Paso; Dover, Kohl & Partners; page 5.18; 2012*

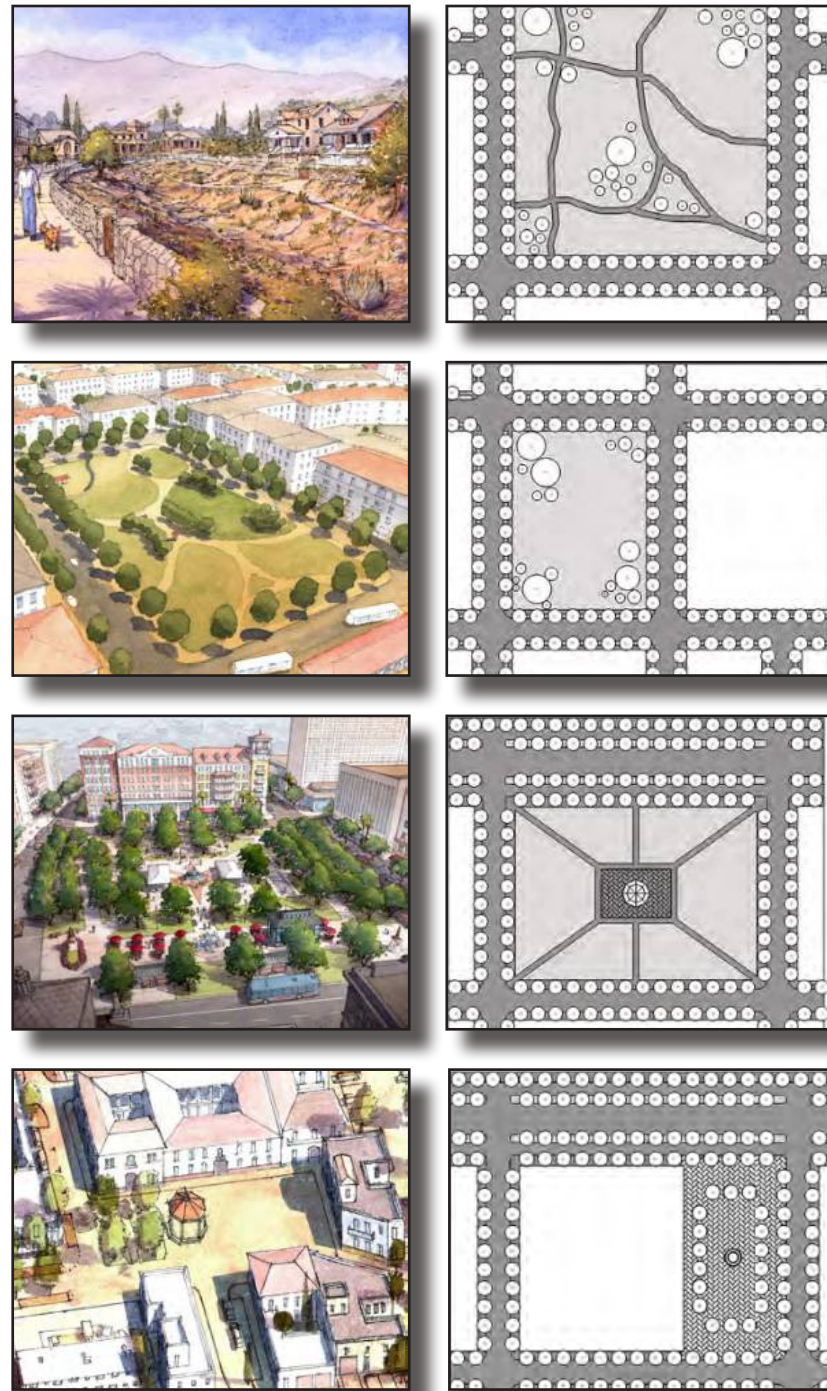
enclosed by surrounding buildings that form an outdoor room. Parks and greens are more open, bounded on at least one side by buildings, and framed by plantings.

A **park** is a natural preserve that serves environmental goals such as the preservation of habitat or filtration of water. It may also be available for active recreation. The shape of the park may follow the boundaries of natural features. Parks may contain trails, arroyos, bosques, rock escarpments, water bodies, woodlands, and meadows. A park may also contain orchards or food gardens.

A **green** is available for structured or unstructured recreation. A green may be spatially defined by landscaping rather than by buildings. Trees can be formally or naturalistically planted. A green contains lawns, trees, pavilions, memorials, benches, and playground equipment. A green may also contain orchards or plots for cultivation of crops.

A **square** is available for structured or unstructured recreation and civic purposes. A square is clearly defined by building frontages. A square can provide a public open space that provides a setting for civic buildings. Squares are located at the intersection of important thoroughfares. Squares may contain lawns, trees, and pavilions that are formally disposed.

A **plaza** is designed for civic, commercial, or residential activities. A plaza is clearly defined by building frontages. Its surface is typically covered with pavers or compact earth. Trees are optional and plazas are located at the most central intersections or as quiet neighborhood centers. Spanish missions were always organized around a plaza.



Graphic source: Plan El Paso; Dover, Kohl & Partners; page 5.21; 2012

Plan El Paso; Dover, Kohl & Partners; page 5.21; 2012

### III. Park Classification

Park planning principles identify three major categories of parks: local close-to-home, regional, and unique.

**Close-to-home parks** are the most important category and are of the greatest immediate concern to the City of El Paso. Close to home parks address day to day facilities for all ages and activities, and are usually within walking or driving distance from where we live. The six close-to-home park types commonly used in El Paso are:

- Pocket
- Neighborhood
- Community
- Linear
- Special Use
- Open Space or Nature

A description of these general types of parks follows:

#### Pocket Parks

Pocket parks are small gathering spaces, less than one acre in size. Due to the size of this type of park, parking is typically not provided. Therefore, pocket parks are accessed by pedestrian and bicycle means. Benches, landscaping, and other focal features are common items found in these parks. Size is not the key factor of the typical pocket park, but rather the quality of the landscape and features that go into the park. Small green areas planned for the downtown area are examples of urban pocket parks. El Paso has many pocket parks, and, in some cases, these are considered to be equivalent to neighborhood parks. In areas where land acquisition is difficult and expensive, well designed pocket parks can be used to provide readily accessible park space.

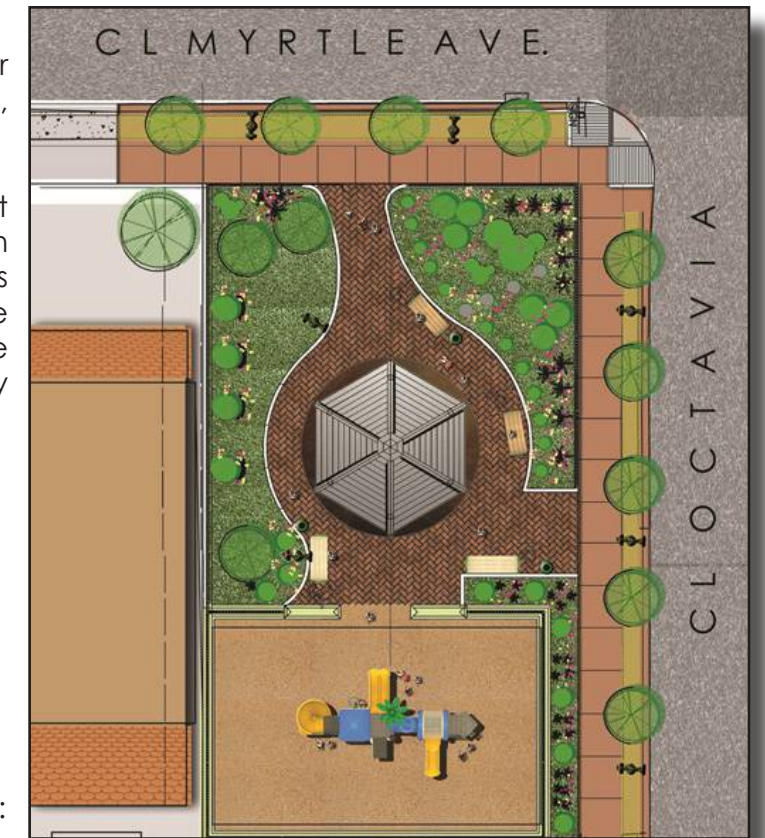
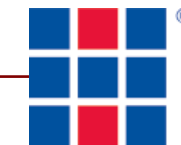


Figure 4.1 - Typical pocket park





### Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood parks provide the foundation for recreation in neighborhoods all over El Paso. Ideally, they provide facilities and recreation space for the entire family, and are within easy walking or bicycling distance of the people they serve.

The neighborhood park typically serves one large or several smaller neighborhoods. The ideal neighborhood park in El Paso should serve 2,000 to 8,000 residents per park, and generally ranges from 2 to 10 acres in size.

Neighborhood parks should be accessible to residents who live within a one-half mile radius of the park, and are generally meant to be walked to. As an immediate goal of this Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update, neighborhood parks should be located within a half-mile radius of the residents that will use those facilities. Long term, a ratio of a quarter mile service radius is desired.

**Facilities in Neighborhood Parks** - Facilities generally located in neighborhood parks may include the following:

- Shaded playground equipment with adequate safety surfacing around the playground
- Unlighted practice fields for baseball, soccer, and football
- Lighted tennis courts
- Lighted courts for basketball and volleyball
- Areas for unorganized play
- Picnic areas with benches and picnic tables
- Shaded pavilions or gazebos
- Pathways and exercise trails
- Security lighting

- Neighborhood parks are frequently located adjacent to elementary schools, so as to share acquisition and development costs with the school district. It should be a goal, where possible, for new neighborhood parks to be planned and developed in close coordination with school districts in the area, provided that the school site is adequately sized to meet the school's own needs. This can result in significant cost savings and more efficient use of tax dollars to the City and the school district.
- Neighborhood parks are generally located away from major arterial streets and provide easy access for the users that surround it. A neighborhood park should always be accessible without having to cross major arterial streets.

**Size** - The size of a neighborhood park may vary considerably due to physical limitations around the park. Neighborhood parks range in size from one acre to ten acres.

**Location** - If possible, neighborhood parks should be centrally located in neighborhoods they serve. The park should be accessible to pedestrian traffic from all parts of the area served, and should be located adjacent to local or minor collector streets which do not allow high-speed traffic.

Permanent restrooms are typically not placed in neighborhood parks because they increase maintenance and provide a location for illegal activities, but in some specific cases may be warranted.

**Neighborhood Park Parking** – The amount of on-site (off-street) parking needed will vary based on the size of the park, the availability of safe on-street parking adjacent to the park, the facilities the park contains and the number of users attracted to the park. For example, Madeline Park is surrounded by on-street parking, and needs no off-street parking. However, this park (and all neighborhood parks) does need striped parking spaces that are designated as handicapped accessible spaces, as well as ramps and walkways to access the primary facilities in the park site.

The diagram on this page illustrates a typical neighborhood park and some of the elements that the park might contain. Note that this is simply a typical arrangement, and each neighborhood park should be designed as a unique part of the neighborhood that surrounds it.



Figure 4.2 - Typical neighborhood park



Sandstone Ranch Park



Figure 4.3 - Typical community park

### Community Parks

Community parks are larger parks that serve a group of neighborhoods or a portion of a city. Community parks are usually reached by automobiles, although residents adjacent to the park and trail users may walk or bicycle to it. A variety of recreational facilities are provided, including in some cases, lighted playing fields for organized sports, shared use trails and sufficient parking to accommodate participants, spectators, and other park users. Memorial Park is an ideal example of a well located community park with a variety of facilities.

**Size** - The typical community park should be large enough so it can provide a variety of facilities while still leaving open space for unstructured recreation and natural areas. The park should also have room for expansion, as new facilities are required. A typical community park varies in size from 10 acres to 50 acres.

- Facilities in Community Parks** - Facilities generally located in community parks may include the following:
- Shaded play equipment, multiple age groups
  - Areas for active play
  - Shaded picnic areas and pavilion(s)
  - Restrooms
  - Jogging, bicycle or nature trails, sometimes lighted for evening use
  - Lighted athletic fields, suitable for organized competitive events
  - Recreation center
  - Sufficient off-street parking
  - Lighting for evening use
  - Other facilities as needed which can take advantage of the unique characteristics of the site, such as nature trails, dog parks, interactive water spray features, swimming pools, amphitheatres, community gardens, skate parks, etc.

**Location** – Community parks should be located near a major thoroughfare to provide easy access from different parts of the city. Because of the potential for noise and lights at night, community parks should be buffered from adjacent residential areas.

**Parking** – May vary based on the facilities provided and the size of park. The National Recreation and Park Association recommends a minimum of five spaces per acre, plus additional parking for specific facilities within the park such as pools or athletic fields. The specific amount of parking provided in each park should be determined by the facilities provided in the park.

### Regional Parks

Regional parks are very large parks that serve an entire city, and very often become the premier park in that area. For example, Zilker Park is one of the largest and most loved parks in Austin, and encompasses everything from passive trails and open space to high use athletic facilities.

The City does not currently operate an existing park that fits the regional park category. While Franklin Mountains State Park is very large and well known, it is mainly a unique space, better classified as open space, and it does not have a wide range of facilities that attract large numbers of users. A 90 acre park site is owned by the City in the East sector, and could serve as a regional park once it is fully developed. In the Northeast sector, Northeast Regional Park, if expanded with additional acreage and fully developed, will become a true regional park for that area of the City.

Ascarate Park, at over 350 acres, remains the one true regional park in El Paso County and within the City limits. As such, upgrading Ascarate should remain as one of the major goals of both the City and County park systems.

**Size** – The size of a regional park can vary depending on its purpose. Typical regional parks range from 50 acres to over 500 acres. The size should allow for a variety of amenities that attract visitors from the entire surrounding community, and should allow for expansion of the park in the future as the population of the region grows.



**Location** – Regional parks should be located near major highways or thoroughfares to provide easy access from most of the City. Because of the potential for traffic, noise and lights at night, regional parks should be buffered from adjacent residential areas.

**Parking** – Adequate parking must be added at multiple locations throughout the park to accommodate all of the amenities within the park.

**Facilities generally located in Regional Parks may include the following:**

- Super recreation centers
- Indoor or Outdoor pools
- Habitat for wildlife and bird observation
- Multi-use trail system
- Nature or interpretive center
- Large picnic shelters with tables and grills
- Individual picnic shelters
- Large shaded playgrounds
- Restrooms
- Large open space areas
- Lighted sports facilities, clustered for competition
- Parking areas for each of the facilities
- Small or large performance amphitheatres
- Other facilities as needed which can take advantage of the unique characteristics of the site, such as dog parks, community gardens, interactive water spray features, skate parks, lake or pond for water based activities, etc.

**Linear Parks**

Linear parks are open park areas that generally follow some natural or man-made feature that is linear in nature, such as canals, drainage ditches, railroad rights-of-way or utility corridor easements. Properly developed to facilitate pedestrian and bicycle travel, these parks can serve to connect other parks in the local system, as well as schools, libraries, and other major destinations. No specific standards apply to linear/linkage parks other than the park should be large enough to adequately accommodate the resources they follow. They can also serve as greenbelts, which preserve open space.

El Paso has several excellent examples of linear parks. Two of those parks, Paseo de Los Heroes Park in the Central area and Pueblo Viejo Park in the Mission Valley area, were created by reclaiming drainage corridors. The Pat O'Rourke Memorial Trail corridor in Northwest El Paso is an example of how a trail corridor can transform a roadway into a highly attractive parkway.

Many linear park opportunities exist throughout El Paso, and these may constitute one of the most expedient ways of adding parklands in parts of the City that are already fully developed. Irrigation canals, utility easements, and drainage canals can all be readily adapted to serve as excellent linear parks.

**Special Use Parks**

Special use parks are designed to accommodate specialized recreational activities. Because the facility needs for each activity type are different, each special use park usually provides for one or a few activities. Examples of special use parks include:

- Golf courses
- Athletic fields and complexes
- Nature centers or large natural preserves
- Swimming pool centers
- Tennis complexes

Athletic complexes and golf courses are the most common types of special use parks. Athletic complexes seek to provide fields for organized play



*Paseo de Los Heroes Park in Central El Paso was created by placing storm drainage underground.*



*The Pat O'Rourke Trail is a simple trail corridor that dramatically transforms the area around it.*



in a location that can accommodate the traffic and noise that a large number of users can generate. A key issue at athletic complexes is the inclusion of a sufficient number of fields so that leagues can congregate at one facility and not have to spread out in different locations.

Dog parks and skate parks are also special use areas, but are typically a component of a larger overall park.

### Open Space Preserves and Natural Area Parks

Open space preserves are a critical part of the land use system in any large metropolitan area. With the Franklin Mountains State Park, El Paso is fortunate to have one of the largest in-city open space parks in the country. Considering the size of the Franklin Mountains State Park, El Pasoans have more than 40 acres of open space for every 1,000 residents of the City. But while El Paso has this park to dominate the skyline of the City, the majority of the City has very little or no readily accessible open space lands to provide visual relief from the developed City. Excluding the State Park, El Paso has less than one acre of open space for every 1,000 residents.

Typically, open space parks and preserves have little development beyond parking, shade structures, restrooms, picnic facilities and trails.

Multiple open space opportunities exist in and near the City. These include the Castner Range, controlled by the Department of Defense, and undeveloped arroyos and open space controlled by the Public Service Board.



Wetlands, arroyos and mountains illustrate the wide variety of open space opportunities in El Paso. Photos by Halff Associates



## IV. Size of the Existing Park System

As of mid-2012 the El Paso park system includes 223 park sites containing approximately 2,663 acres of land.<sup>1</sup> The overall existing ratio of park acres to population is approximately 4.10 acres of parkland for every 1,000 residents of the City. The overall target level of service is 6 acres for every 1,000 residents.

A summary of existing parks in the City by planning sector is shown in Tables 4.1 and 4.2.

Within the City limits, El Paso County parks, State Parks and National Parks provide 24,880 acres of additional parkland and open space.

- Ascarate County Park = 406.46 acres
- Franklin Mountains State Park = 24,417.43 acres
- Chamizal National Memorial = 57.06 acres

Since 2006, 47 parks totaling 605.63 acres have been added. The map on the following page shows the location of all existing parks in El Paso in 2012.

Table 4.2 Existing Park Inventory by Park Category		
Pocket Parks		
Planning Area	# of Parks	Park Acres
Central	25	17.74
East	7	6.22
Mission Valley	6	5.53
Northeast	2	3.48
Northwest	10	11.42
<b>Citywide</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>44.39</b>

Neighborhood Parks		
Planning Area	# of Parks	Park Acres
Central	17	84.97
East	24	146.75
Mission Valley	10	70.61
Northeast	15	69.20
Northwest	17	103.42
<b>Citywide</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>474.95</b>

Community Parks		
Planning Area	# of Parks	Park Acres
Central	4	98.41
East	8	164.97
Mission Valley	6	169.24
Northeast	6	208.49
Northwest	3	71.25
<b>Citywide</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>712.36</b>

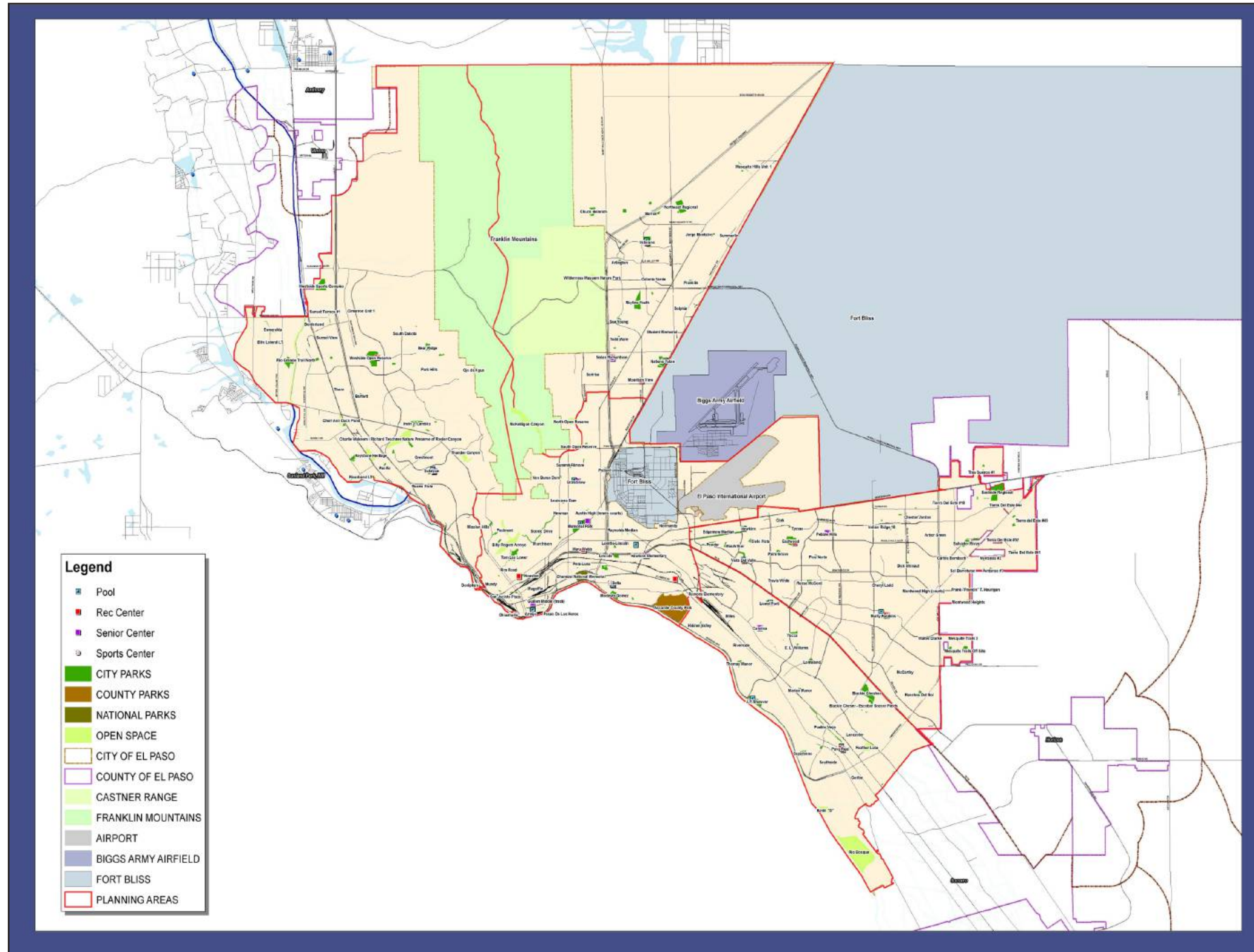
Regional Parks		
Planning Area	# of Parks	Park Acres
Central	0	0.00
East	1	91.78
Mission Valley	0	0.00
Northeast	0	0.00
Northwest	0	0.00
<b>Citywide</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>91.78</b>

Open Space/Linear Parks/Special Use		
Planning Area	# of Parks	Park Acres
Central	15	164.33
East	17	77.81
Mission Valley	6	515.98
Northeast	10	186.75
Northwest	14	394.99
<b>Citywide</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>1,339.86</b>

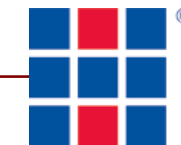
Table 4.1 Existing Park Inventory by Planning Area		
Planning Area	# of Parks	Park Acres
Central	61	365.45
East	57	487.53
Mission Valley	28	761.36
Northeast	33	467.92
Northwest	44	581.08
<b>Citywide</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>2,663.34</b>

<sup>1</sup> All acreage data from City of El Paso "Parks" GIS layer, May 2012





Existing parks 2012



## V. Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood parks provide the foundation for recreation in the El Paso parks system. Pocket parks are included in this section with neighborhood parks as they meet similar needs for some areas.

### Distribution of Pocket and Neighborhood Parks in El Paso

The map on the following page illustrates the location and service areas of neighborhood parks in the City. A general service area of one-half mile is shown. In some cases the service area is smaller where neighborhood parks are near major arterial roads, railroad tracks or other physical barriers.

Other parks, such as community parks and linear parks, where located near neighborhoods, can also provide neighborhood park service. These parks are considered when identifying gaps in neighborhood park service.

### Existing Neighborhood Parks

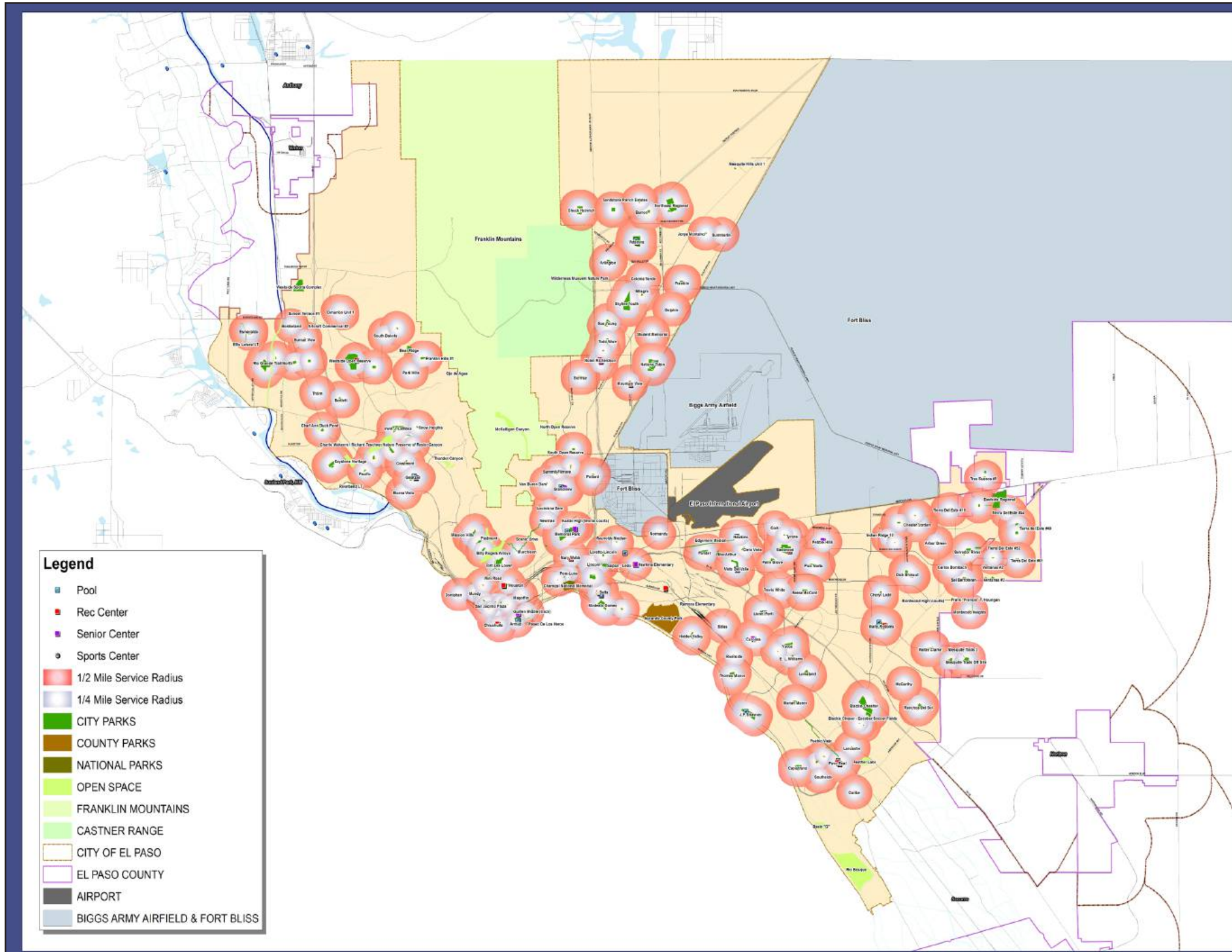
Compared to 2006, significant strides in improving access to smaller parks have been made, as shown by the map. Recent improvements to many of the existing neighborhood parks in the City have also greatly improved the quality of those parks.

### Existing Access/Level of Service – Neighborhood Parks

The existing level of service for pocket and neighborhood parks combined, plus portions of community parks that provide close-in park access, is shown in Table 4.3. Citywide, the current combined level of service is 1.42 acres for every 1,000 residents which is 71% of the target level of service.

**Currently, the Central (at 60%) and Northwest (at 63%) planning areas have a level of service that is less than two-thirds of the minimum desired amount of neighborhood parkland access.**

*The new Sandstone Ranch Park, as well as Houston, Los Milagros, and Chuck Heinrich Parks, as pictured on this page, illustrate the great variety of neighborhood parks in El Paso.*



**Proximity to Neighborhood Parks**

The percent of residences within both 1/2 and 1/4 mile distance from the nearest park was calculated to serve as a benchmark for park accessibility. A summary of the overall proximity to park sites in each planning sector is shown in Table 4.3.

The greatest deficiency in terms of proximity to a neighborhood park is the East Sector, where only 50% of residences are within 1/2 mile of a park and 14% of residences are within 1/4 mile.

**Table 4.3**  
**% of Residences within Proximity to a Park**

Planning Area	1/2 Mile	1/4 Mile
Central	77.6%	45.7%
East	50.1%	14.2%
Mission Valley	63.6%	23.9%
Northeast	62.8%	17.1%
Northwest	54.2%	19.5%
<b>Citywide</b>	<b>61.6%</b>	<b>24.4%</b>

1/2 mile and 1/4 mile service area of neighborhood parks



Table 4.4 Neighborhood Park (including portions of other park types that provide neighborhood park service) Level of Service										
Park Category	Existing Park Acres	Population 2010			Projected Population 2020			Projected Population 2030		
		Population	LOS (acres per 1000 residents)	% of target LOS (2 acres/1000 residents)	Population	LOS (acres per 1000 residents)	% of target LOS (2 acres/1000 residents)	Population	LOS (acres per 1000 residents)	% of target LOS (2 acres/1000 residents)
<b>Central total</b>	<b>151.92</b>	125,405	1.21	60.5%	127,500	1.19	59.5%	134,930	1.13	56.5%
Pocket parks	17.74									
Neighborhood parks	84.97									
Close-in community parks	49.21									
<b>East total</b>	<b>281.35</b>	191,222	1.47	73.5%	212,500	1.32	66%	257,084	1.09	54.5%
Pocket parks	6.22									
Neighborhood parks	146.75									
Close-in community parks	128.38									
<b>Mission Valley total</b>	<b>160.76</b>	108,591	1.48	74%	112,700	1.43	71.5%	120,953	1.33	66.5%
Pocket parks	5.53									
Neighborhood parks	70.61									
Close-in community parks	84.62									
<b>Northeast total</b>	<b>176.93</b>	104,066	1.70	85%	126,500	1.40	70%	172,968	1.02	51%
Pocket parks	3.48									
Neighborhood parks	69.20									
Close-in community parks	104.25									
<b>Northwest total</b>	<b>150.47</b>	119,837	1.26	63%	138,500	1.09	54.5%	165,839	0.91	45.5%
Pocket parks	11.42									
Neighborhood parks	103.42									
Close-in community parks	35.63									
<b>Citywide</b>	<b>921.43</b>	<b>649,121</b>	<b>1.42</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>717,700</b>	<b>1.28</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>851,774</b>	<b>1.08</b>	<b>54%</b>

**Target Service Levels – Neighborhood Parks (including Pocket Parks)**

In 2012, El Paso has **1.42 Acres of close-in parks for every 1,000 residents**, or approximately 71% of the minimum target level of service established above. This is a significant improvement from 2006, where the ratio was only 0.75 acres of close in park for every 1,000 residents. By 2020, the citywide level of service for smaller parks will fall from 71% of the overall goal to 64% of the target level of service if no actions are taken to address the anticipated deficiencies.

The Target Level of Service for Close-In Neighborhood Parks combined is: Two Acres for Every 1,000 Residents of El Paso.

Level of service is calculated by dividing the total acres of parks in each planning area by the population of the area divided by 1,000. Example: 151.92 acres (total acres of close-in parks in the Central Planning area) / 125.4 (125,405 population of the Central Planning area / 1,000) = 1.21 acres of close-in parks for every 1,000 area residents.



## VI. Community Parks

Community parks represent the most active component of the outdoor park system. In essence, community parks are where most residents will go to for organized activities, such as sports practices and games, pickup play on large open fields, and to use aquatic facilities and recreation centers.

### Existing Community Parks

El Paso currently has 27 community parks, with a total of 712.36 acres. Over half of El Paso's community parks are in the 10 to 20 acre range, which is small for the high number of residents that use these parks.

No new community park acreage has been added since the 2006 master plan was adopted.

### Existing Level of Service – Community Parks

The existing level of service for community parks is shown in Table 4.5. Portions of the Ascarate County Park are included since it provides access to many of the same facilities as community parks in El Paso, and in fact function as a de-facto community park. Citywide, the current level of service is 1.72 acres for every 1,000 residents, which is 86% of the target LOS. The Northwest area has a significantly higher community park deficit than the other planning areas.

The Central area calculation includes 1/2 of Ascarate Park, and the Mission Valley area calculation includes the other 1/2 of Ascarate Park. While not a City of El Paso park facility, this park does help address community and regional park needs.



Memorial Park, shown above, is El Paso's premier community park.

Community park examples in El Paso include Pavo Real, Blackie Chesher and Shawver Parks.



**Target Level of Service – Community Parks**

**A target level of 2 acres of community parks for every 1,000 residents is recommended by this plan.** The level of service recommended in the 2006 master plan was 4 acres for every 1,000 residents.

The recommended target level of service provides adequate space for active sports and activities, and allows portions of each park to recuperate after periods of intense use. The proposed level of service reflects an emphasis in this master plan on regional facilities that serve each of the five planning areas.

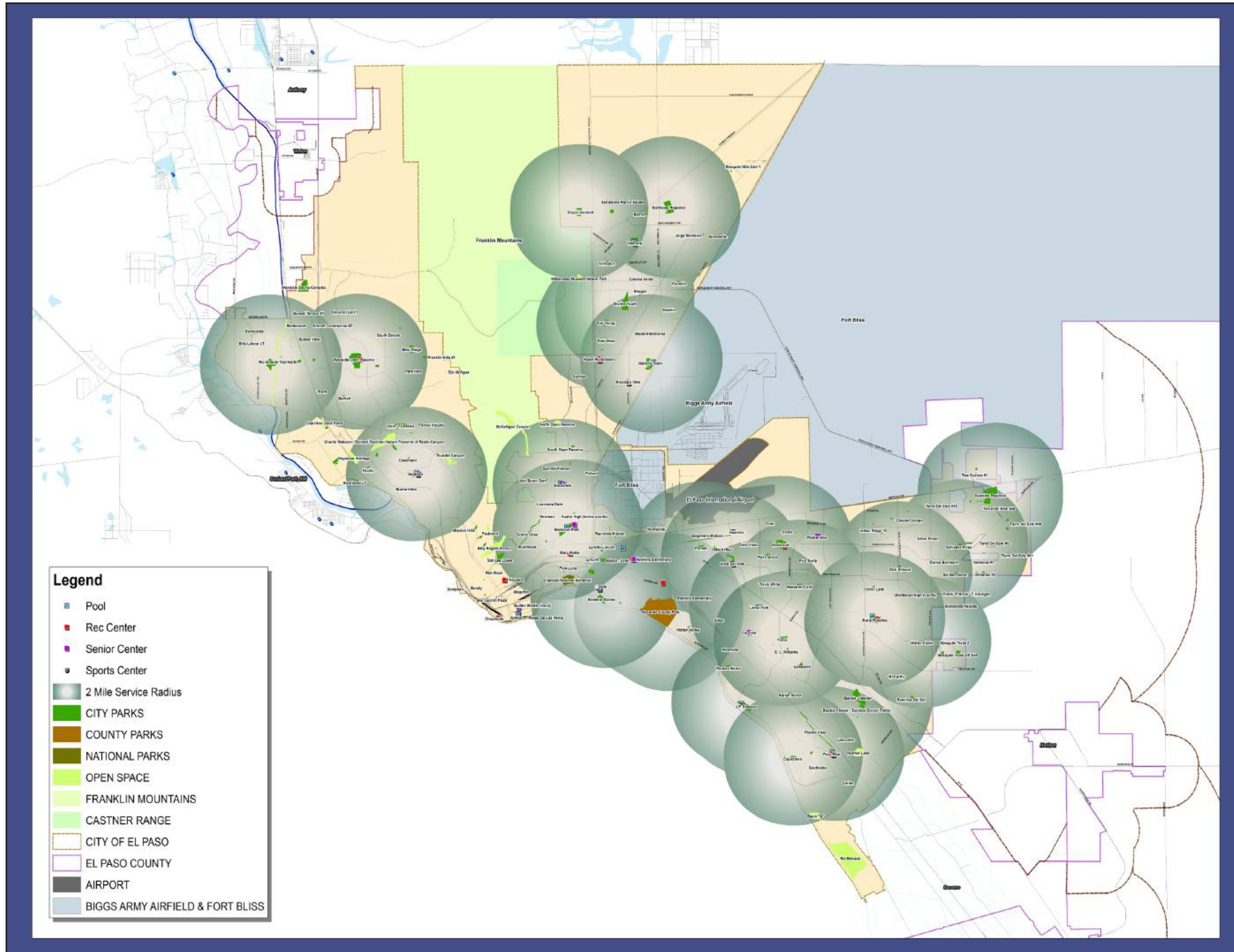
Citywide, El Paso is at 86% of the recommended target goal (when regional parks are included along with existing community parks).



*Galatzan Park in the Northwest has a variety of facilities, ranging from flat fields, trails, picnic areas, a recreation center, an indoor pool and spectacular views. Photos by Halff Associates*

**Table 4.5  
Community Park Level of Service**

Planning Area	Existing Park Acres	Population 2010		% of target LOS (2 acres/1000 residents)	Projected Population 2020		% of target LOS (2 acres/1000 residents)	Projected Population 2030		% of target LOS (2 acres/1000 residents)
		Population	LOS (acres per 1000 residents)		Population	LOS (acres per 1000 residents)		Population	LOS (acres per 1000 residents)	
Central total (includes 1/2 of Ascarate Park)	301.87	125,405	2.41	120%	127,500	2.37	118%	134,930	2.24	112%
East total	164.97	191,222	0.86	43%	212,500	0.77	38.5%	257,084	0.64	32%
Mission Valley total (includes 1/2 of Ascarate Park)	372.24	108,591	3.41	171%	112,700	3.30	165%	120,953	3.08	154%
Northeast total	208.49	104,066	2.00	100%	126,500	1.65	82.5%	172,968	1.21	60.5%
Northwest total	71.25	119,837	0.59	30%	138,500	0.51	26%	165,839	0.43	21.5%
<b>Citywide</b>	<b>1,118.82</b>	<b>649,121</b>	<b>1.72</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>717,700</b>	<b>1.56</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>851,774</b>	<b>1.31</b>	<b>65.5%</b>



**Distribution of Community Parks in El Paso**

The map on this page illustrates the location and service areas of community parks in the City. The circles illustrate a general service radius of 2 miles.

A lack of community parks specifically in the Northeast, Northwest and Central planning areas is resulting in overuse of the existing community parks. Most or all available space in each park is used for facilities of some sort, leaving very little in open unorganized park space. Eastwood and Memorial Parks are the only two larger community parks that have some unutilized park space.

2 mile service area of community parks



El Paso County's Ascarate Park has many of the characteristics of a regional park. Photo by Halff Associates

## VII. Regional Parks

Large regional parks, if well distributed throughout the City, can become the center of major activities for each planning area. Their size allows for more efficient maintenance operations, and should provide room for expansion as the population of the City grows.

### Existing Regional Park Context in El Paso

The City of El Paso currently has one regional park, the undeveloped Eastside Regional Park at 91.77 acres.

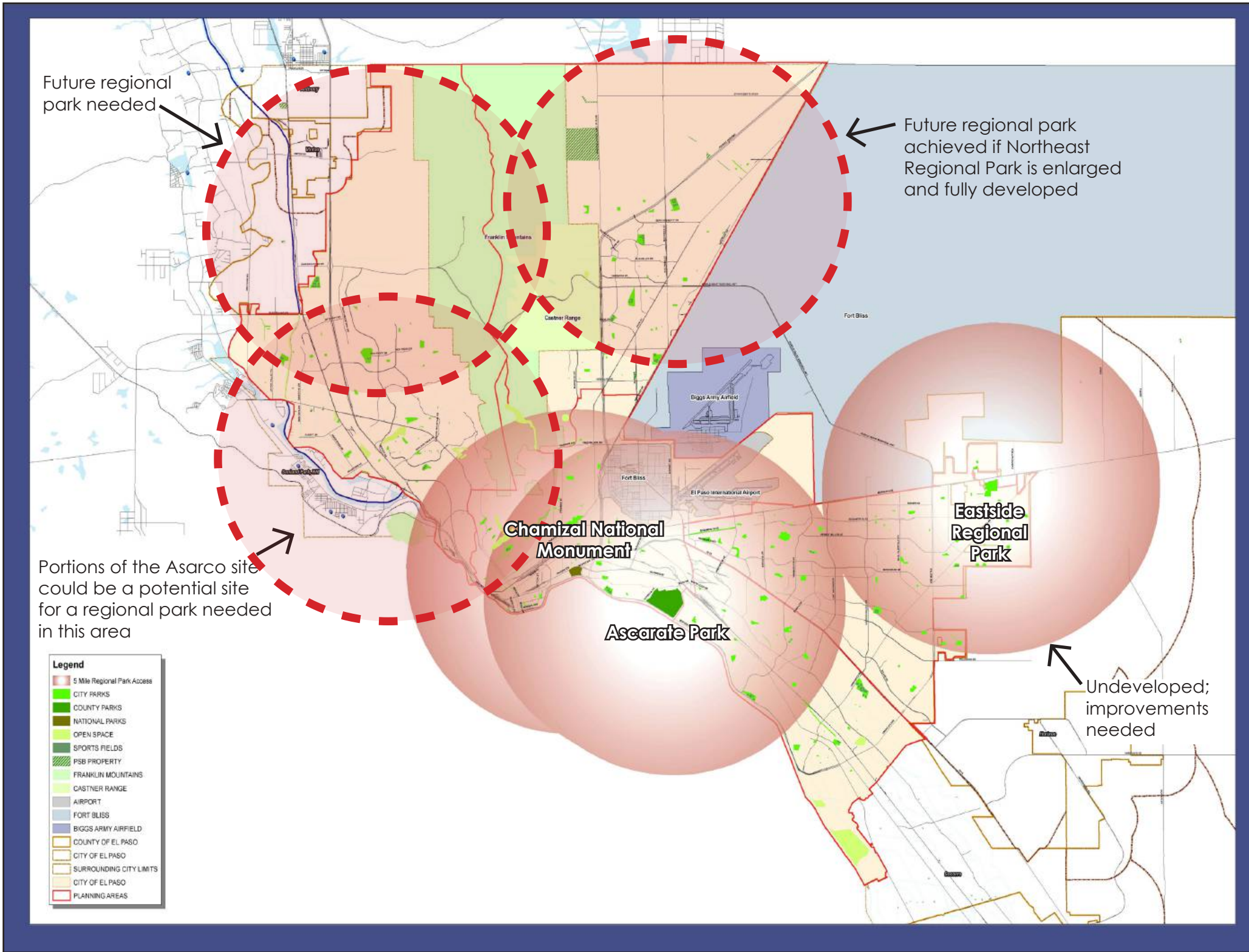
**Ascarate Park**, owned and operated by El Paso County, is the only real developed regional park within the City limits, at over 400 acres. However, the park needs repairs and more attractions that would bring residents from all over the City to the park.

**Chamizal National Monument**, operated by the National Parks Service, has a large museum, performance and grassy amphitheater located in Central El Paso totaling 57.06 acres. It attracts users from all over El Paso and the surrounding region.

### Distribution of Regional Parks in El Paso

The map on the following page illustrates the location and service areas of regional parks in the city. The circles illustrate a general service radius of 5 miles.





5 mile service area of regional parks



**Existing Level of Service – Regional Parks**

The existing level of service for regional parks is shown in Table 4.6. Ascarate County Park and Chamizal National Memorial are included in the regional parkland level of service since both these parks provide a regional draw. Citywide, the current level of service is just under 0.86 acres for every 1,000 residents. In three out of the five major planning areas, there are no regional parks. The citywide total is only 43%, of the desired amount of regional parkland, and it is only that high because of Ascarate County Park.

**Proposed Target Level of Service – Regional Parks**

**Providing a significant increase in the amount of developed regional park lands is the single highest priority of this master plan.** While deficiencies in neighborhood and community parklands do exist, the most significant parkland deficiency in El Paso is in large-scale regional parks. Regional parks in every planning area and one to two citywide “metropolitan” parks are recommended to provide much needed park space.

**Providing a significant increase in the amount of developed regional park lands is the single highest priority of this master plan.**

Table 4.6 Regional Park Level of Service										
Planning Area	Existing Park Acres	Population 2010			Projected Population 2020			Projected Population 2030		
		Population	LOS (acres per 1000 residents)	% of target LOS (2 acres/1000 residents)	Population	LOS (acres per 1000 residents)	% of target LOS (2 acres/1000 residents)	Population	LOS (acres per 1000 residents)	% of target LOS (2 acres/1000 residents)
Central total (includes 1/2 of Ascarate Park)	260.52	125,405	2.08	104%	127,500	2.04	102%	134,930	1.93	96.5%
East total	91.77	191,222	0.48	24%	212,500	0.43	21.5%	257,084	0.36	18%
Mission Valley total (includes 1/2 of Ascarate Park)	203.00	108,591	1.87	94%	112,700	1.79	90%	120,953	1.68	84%
Northeast total	0.00	104,066	0.00	0%	126,500	0.00	0%	172,968	0.00	0%
Northwest total	0.00	119,837	0.00	0%	138,500	0.00	0%	165,839	0.00	0%
<b>Citywide</b>	<b>555.29</b>	<b>649,121</b>	<b>0.86</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>717,700</b>	<b>0.77</b>	<b>38.5%</b>	<b>851,774</b>	<b>0.65</b>	<b>32.5%</b>

**Target Level of Service - Regional Parks**

A target level of 2 acres of regional park lands for every 1,000 residents is recommended by this plan. This maintains the level of service established by the 2006 Parks Master Plan.



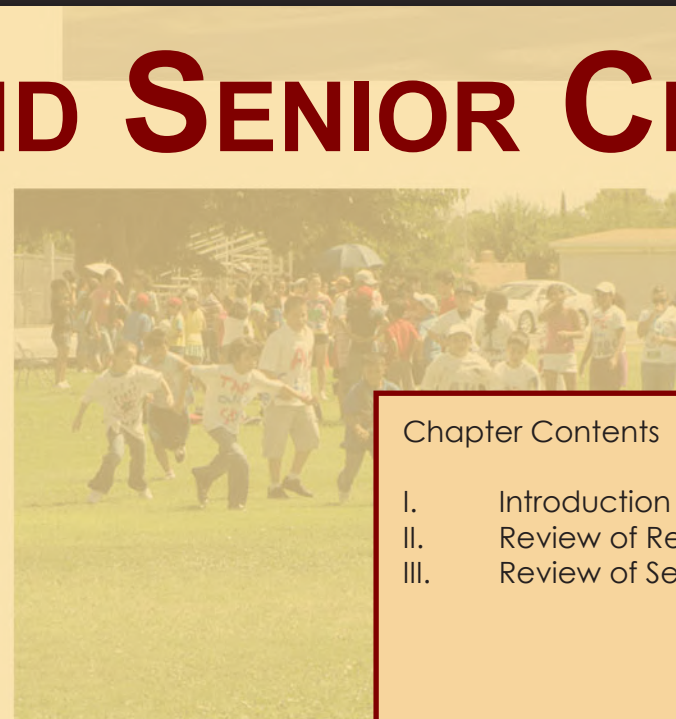
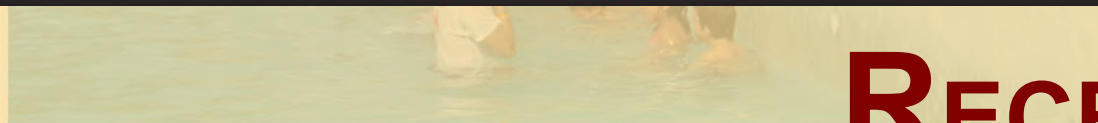
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# CHAPTER 5:

## RECREATION AND SENIOR CENTERS ISSUES

### Chapter Contents

- I. Introduction
- II. Review of Recreation Centers
- III. Review of Senior Centers





Karate Class at the Multipurpose Center



Zumba Class at the Marty Robbins Center



Skateboarding Class at Carolina Center

## I. Introduction

Recreation center use continues to grow in El Paso, and provides locations for a diverse range of activities.

With the addition of Pat O'Rourke Center near downtown and Don Haskins Center in Northwest El Paso, the City now has 16 Recreation Centers. The City also has ten stand-alone Senior Centers which are discussed in the second half of this chapter.

### New Facilities Now Incorporate Many Desirable Recreation Center Characteristics

The 2006 Master Plan noted the long-standing trend towards making recreation centers become the center of many different types of recreational activities. In today's environment, recreation centers are expected to provide a location for both spontaneous activities, such as a quick game of ping pong, as well as facilities for organized sports such as basketball and volleyball.

For many, fitness equipment at a recreation center is its most important offering. For others, classes and the opportunity to participate in events such as dances are the most important components. Almost all recreation centers now include a computer room or computer spaces.

The newer recreation centers demonstrate how recreation centers can and should become a key part of the community that surrounds them, responding to the specific needs and expectations of residents. In general, they have prominent locations that actively invite residents to use the facility. Today's larger centers are accessed by car and provide a much wider range of activities and events.

El Paso's newer centers, at a range of 20,000 to 40,000 square feet, are smaller than what is common in most cities today, where some centers approach 60,000 to 80,000 square feet. **This may create issues in the future where ever increasing demand and population degrade the level of service that the centers can provide. Newer centers built in El Paso must be larger to accommodate growing demand and range of activities.**

The new "super" recreation centers built across the nation illustrate the way today's recreation centers are designed for flexibility. Larger gym spaces can be subdivided, as can classrooms and dance rooms. With the increasing interest in fitness, cardiovascular equipment rooms that were once 1,000 square feet in size are now three to five times that size. Indoor running tracks are popular. A popular trend is combining centers with indoor swimming pools for additional recreation possibilities under one roof.

The center of today is also designed with staff efficiency in mind, so that one or two staff members at a control point near the entrance can more effectively manage admission and monitor the facility.



Finally, today's centers nationwide rarely offer free programming. In many cities, memberships can range from \$20 to \$40 per month for an individual and twice as much for a family of four. However, El Paso's centers focus on providing affordable facilities and classes and are not expected to return a high percentage of their operational costs. Costs to use popular facilities at El Paso Centers typically range from \$7 with a scholarship to \$18 per month.



Table 5.1 City Operated Recreation Centers in El Paso in 2013					
Location	Planning Area	Address	BLDG. Date	Major Rehab Date	SQ. Feet
Armijo	C	700 E. Seventh Ave.	1968	1993	43,652
Carolina	MV	563 N. Carolina Dr.	1978	2000	30,200
Chihuahuita	C	439 Charles Rd.	1980	2008	2,880
Don Haskins	NW	7400 High Ridge	2007	None	32,000
Galatzan	NW	650 Wallenberg Dr.	1979	None	28,000
Gary Del Palacio	E	3110 Parkwood St.	2004	None	49,588
Leona Ford Washington	C	3400 Missouri	1953	1997	8,000
Marty Robbins	E	11600 Vista Del Sol Dr.	2004	None	40,544
Multipurpose	E	9031 Viscount	1984	2003	27,000
Nolan Richardson	NE	4435 Maxwell	2000	None	15,117
Pat O'Rourke	C	901 N. Virginia St.	2010	None	36,315
Pavo Real	MV	100 Presa Pl.	1978	1998	29,000
Rae Gilmore	NE	8501 Diana	1984	None	5,158
San Juan	C	701 N. Glenwood	1998	None	18,200
Seville	C	6700 Sambrano Ave.	1981	2002	7,480
Veterans (Northeast)	NE	5301 Salem Dr.	1977	None	28,000
Other Specialized Facilities					
Acosta Sports Center	C	4321 Delta Dr.	1960	1998	21,361
Nations Tobin Sports Center	NE	8831 Railroad	1959	2003	35,810

## II. A Review of Existing Recreation Centers

El Paso currently has 16 typical recreation centers, with a total of 401,000+ square feet of enclosed space. If the two more specialized facilities, Acosta Sports Center and Nations Tobin Sports Center are included, the total square feet rises to 458,000+.

**On a per capita basis, El Paso has approximately 0.62 square feet of recreation center for every resident.** In 2006, the ratio was 0.63 square feet per resident, not counting the specialized sports facilities. If the two specialized sports centers are included, the ratio rises to approximately 0.71 square feet per capita.

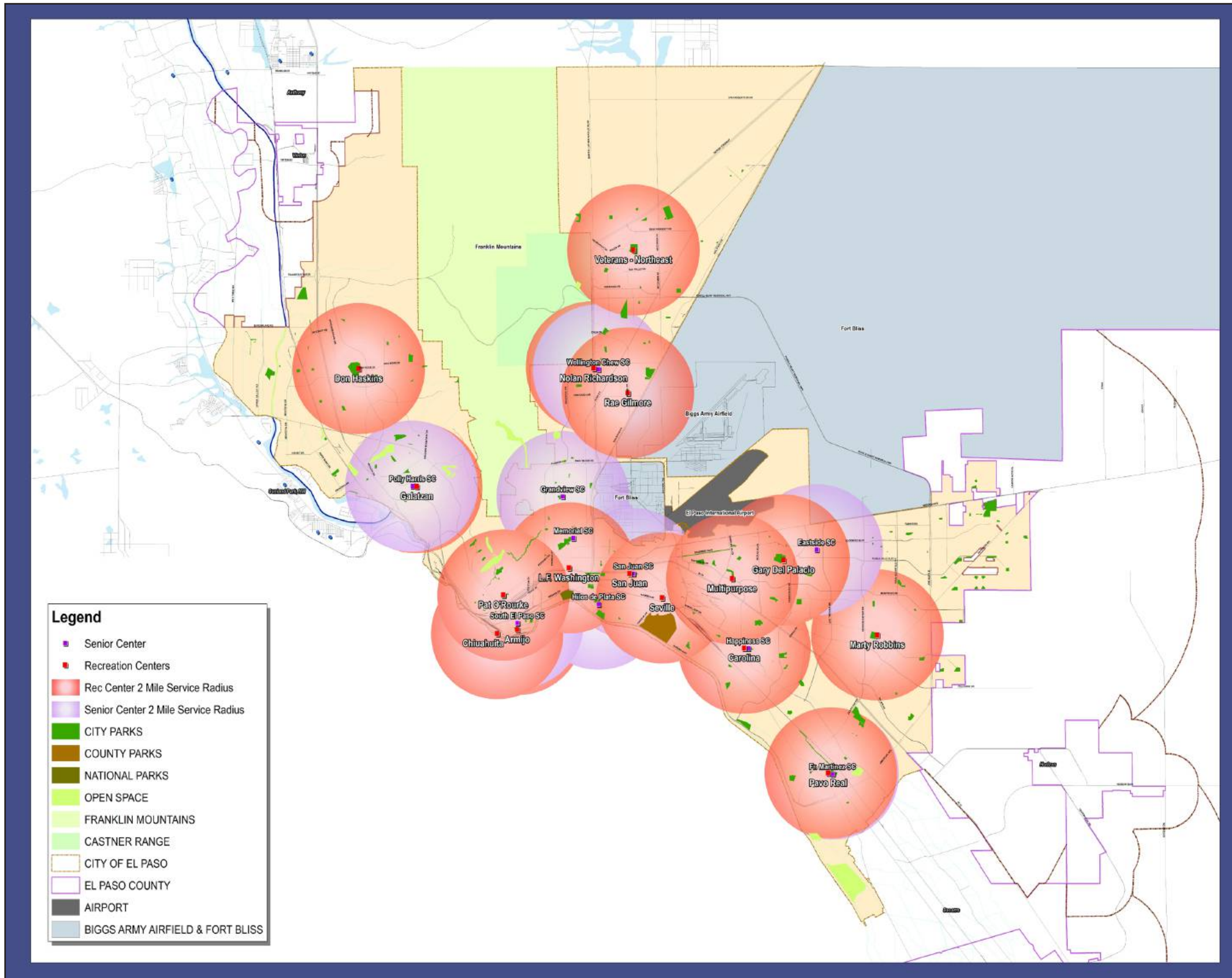
**13 of the 18 centers in the City are older than 25 years.** The newest facilities are Gary Del Palacio, Marty Robbins, Don Haskins and Pat O'Rourke centers.

The average size of the more typical centers is 23,600 square feet, which is small by today's national standards. However, the size is trending in the right direction, with 10 of the 16 centers being larger than 25,000 square feet in size. However, four are 8,000 square feet or less and serve very limited purposes.

The locations of existing centers in El Paso are shown on the map on the following page, and a brief review of the current recreation centers follows.

The 2006 plan followed the level of service standards of many other cities and established a target goal of one (1) square foot of space for every resident. This Update recommends that the City continue to work towards that goal.

Table 5.2 Recreation Centers - Level of Service Analysis Summary										
Planning Area	Current SQ. Feet	Population 2010			Projected Population 2020			Projected Population 2030		
		Population	Current Area Needed	% of target LOS	Population	Projected Area Needed	% of target LOS	Population	Projected Area Needed	% of target LOS
Central	116,527	125,405	125,405 s.f.	93%	127,500	127,500 s.f.	91%	134,930	134,930 s.f.	86%
East	117,132	191,222	191,222 s.f.	61%	212,500	212,500 s.f.	55%	257,084	257,084 s.f.	45.5%
Mission Valley	59,200	108,591	108,591 s.f.	55%	112,700	112,700 s.f.	53%	120,953	120,953 s.f.	49%
Northeast	48,275	104,066	104,066 s.f.	46%	126,500	126,500 s.f.	38%	172,968	172,968 s.f.	28%
Northwest	60,000	119,837	119,837 s.f.	50%	138,500	138,500 s.f.	43%	165,839	165,839 s.f.	36%
<b>Citywide</b>	<b>401,134 s.f.</b>	<b>649,121</b>	<b>649,121 s.f.</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>717,700</b>	<b>717,700 s.f.</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>851,774</b>	<b>851,774 s.f.</b>	<b>47%</b>



Recreation and Senior Center distribution throughout El Paso

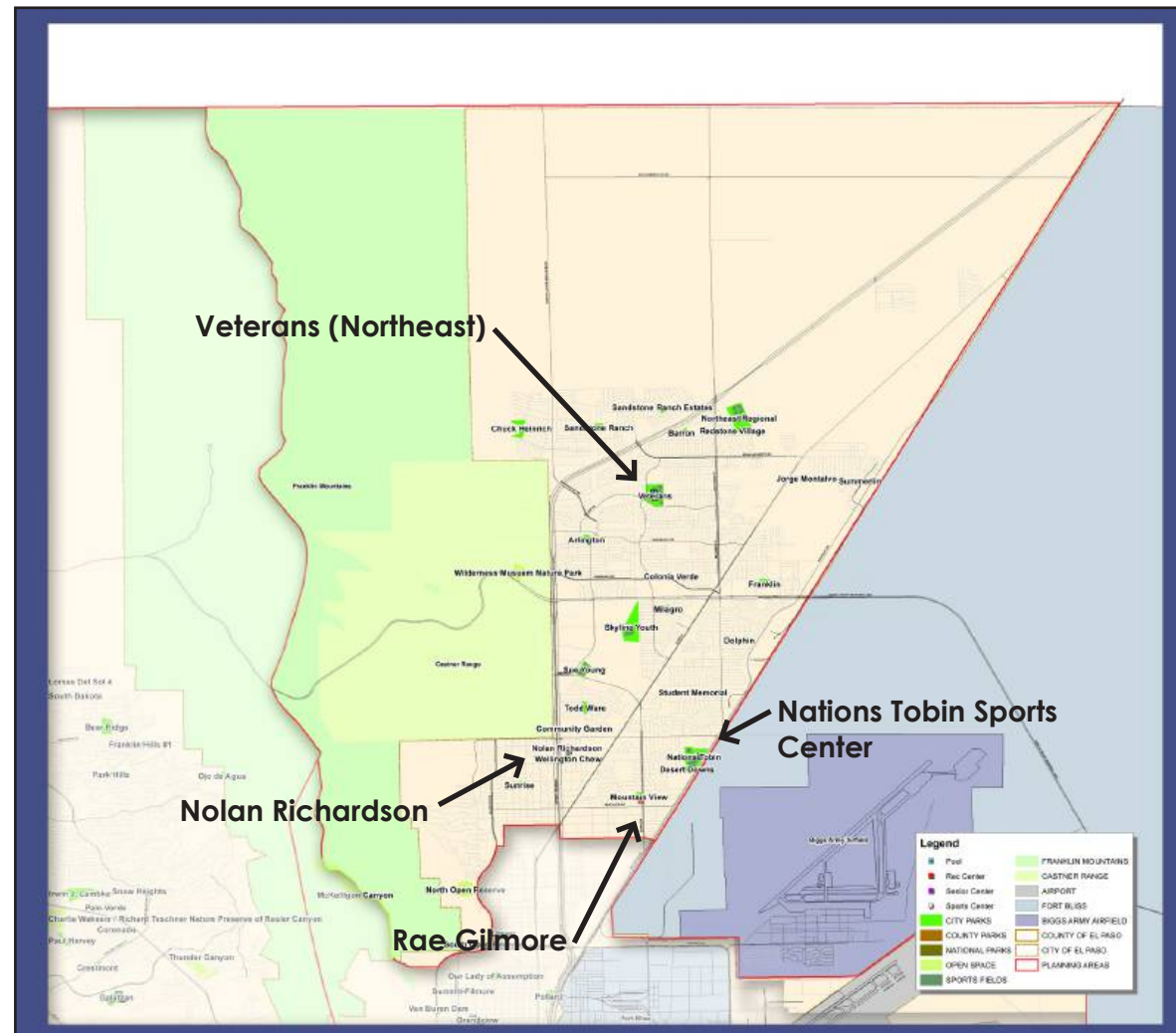


**Northeast Area Recreation Centers**

The Northeast area has three traditional recreation centers with a combined size of 48,275 square feet. The Nations Tobin Sports Center adds another 35,810 sf of specialized indoor sports space. In 2013, on a per capita basis, the Northeast area has approximately 0.46 square feet of indoor recreation space for every resident. Including the Nations Tobin space, the ratio is 0.81 square feet per capita. This ratio is slightly higher than the citywide average.

A summary of the four centers in the area is shown in Table 5.3. The location of the four centers is shown on the map on this page.

Location	Address	SQ. Feet
Nations Tobin Sports Center	8831 Railroad Dr.	35,810
Nolan Richardson	4435 Maxwell	15,117
Rae Gilmore	8501 Diana	5,158
Veterans (Northeast)	5301 Salem Dr.	28,000



**Veterans (Northeast)**

Year Built: 1977

Size: 28,000 square feet +/-

Location: Veterans Park

Year Last Renovated: 2006

Key Facilities and Characteristics: The center is very well located within the community that it serves and is easily accessible.

The facility can be further expanded to serve a larger population, and could be one of the major centers in the northeast planning area.

Expansion should include an additional gym, additional meeting and classroom space, a new general recreation room, and improved control/reception counter.

**Priority Level: High**





**Nations Tobin Sports Center**

Year Built: 1959  
 Size: 35,810 square feet  
 Location: Nations Tobin Park  
 Year Last Renovated: 2003

Key Facilities and Characteristics: The center has one large inline hockey skating arena, and an adjacent smaller gym, both of which are also used for indoor soccer.

The center's location is easily accessed from most parts of the northeast. The center's inline hockey skating facilities are unique, and should be maintained as a unique venue in El Paso, even if participation is limited. More typical recreation facilities should be added to the center to provide fitness and indoor courts for this area of El Paso.

**Priority Level: Medium**



**Rae Gilmore**

Year Built: 1984  
 Size: 5,158 square feet  
 Location: Mountain View Park  
 Year Last Renovated: 2000

Key Facilities and Characteristics: The center is one of the smallest in the city, and includes a fitness room and open play room for games. The facility also has one room for classes and events.

**Priority Level: Low**

**Nolan Richardson**

Year Built: 2000  
 Size: 15,117 square feet  
 Location: Nolan Richardson Park  
 Year Last Renovated: None

Key Facilities and Characteristics: The center includes a gym, a new fitness center and rooms for karate, aerobics and leisure fitness classes.

The center serves a population on both sides of Highway 54, and should remain as a viable center. It is located across the street from Wellington Chew Senior Center, and has room for expansion.

Consideration should be given to expanding and combining recreation and senior activities into one larger building. The potential staff efficiencies and multi-generational exposure could prove to be very cost effective.

**Priority Level: High**



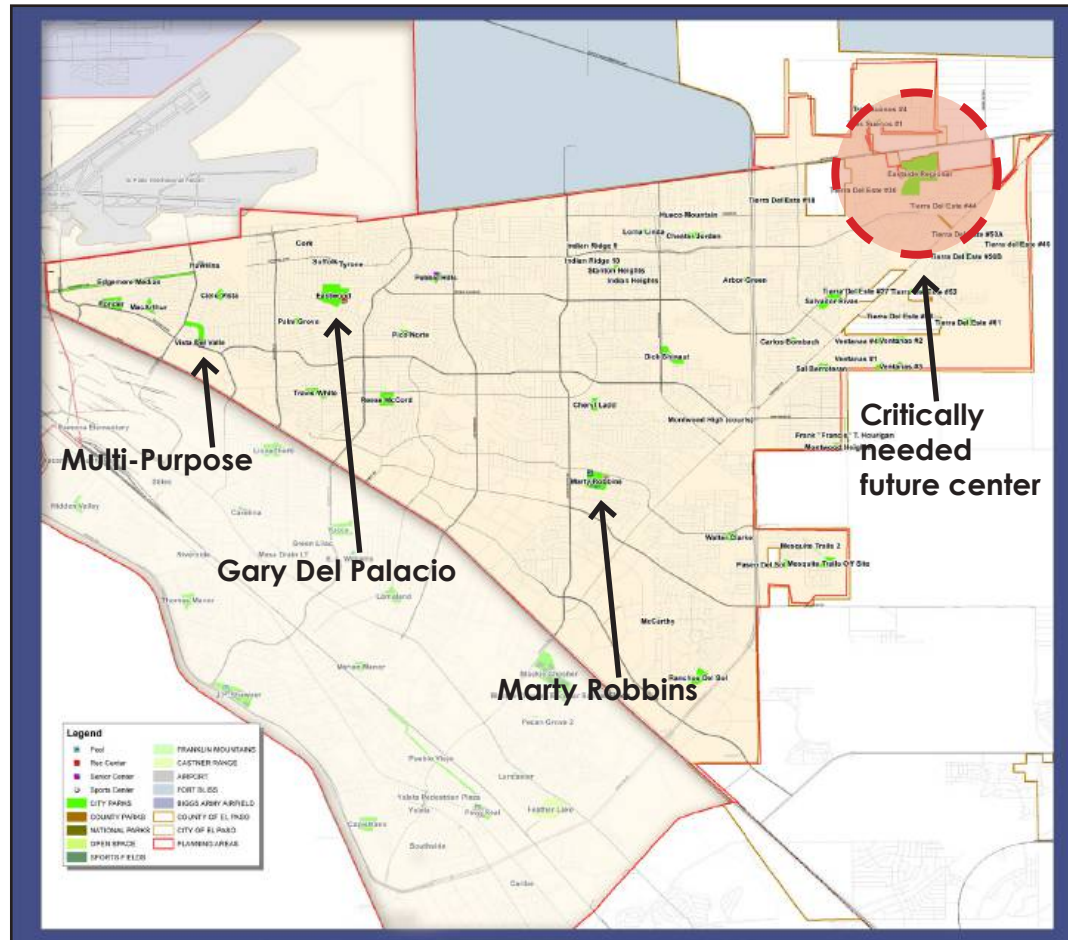
### East Area Recreation Centers

The East planning area has three recreation centers with a combined size of 117,132 square feet. In 2012, the East planning area has approximately 0.61 square feet of indoor space for every resident; this ratio is equal to the citywide average.

However, the far eastern area of the City is almost five miles away from the closest center, Marty Robbins. To better serve citizens in the far east area, construction of a major new center at Eastside Regional Park is funded by the 2012 bond.

A summary and map of the three centers in the area is shown on this page.

Location	Address	SQ. Feet
Gary Del Palacio	3110 Parkwood St.	49,588
Marty Robbins	11600 Vista Del Sol Dr.	40,544
Multi-Purpose	9031 Viscount	27,000



### Multi-Purpose

Year Built: 1984

Size: 27,000 square feet

Location: Vista del Valle Park

Year Last Renovated: 2003

**Key Facilities and Characteristics:** The Multi-Purpose Center was designed as a versatile meeting center, with several classrooms and a large banquet/event room. The center also has a gym for basketball, volleyball and indoor soccer play. The center's unusual architecture is distinctive. Outdoor patios provide additional spaces around the building.

The center includes a small therapeutic pool, the only such pool in the City.

**Priority Level: Low**

**Gary Del Palacio**

Year Built: 2004

Size: 49,588 square feet

Location: Eastwood Park

Year Last Renovated: None

**Key Facilities and Characteristics:** The center opened in late 2004 and is a comprehensive center. At 49,588 square feet, the center already experiences overcrowding. The center is well designed, with a distinctive look that is memorable and that sets the center apart.

The two gyms work well, but the center lacks classroom and event space, and cardio equipment is being placed in the entrance space. The aerobic and fitness rooms are small and could easily be doubled in size to meet demand.

The Center is very well located, and is an excellent prototype for other centers, as long as additional space is added.

An additional 10,000 square feet should be added to this center in the next 10 to 15 years to address demand in the area.

**Priority Level: Low**



**Marty Robbins**

Year Built: 2004

Size: 40,544 square feet

Location: Marty Robbins Park

Year Last Renovated: None

**Key Facilities and Characteristics:** The center is a similar design as Gary Del Palacio, but budget limitations precluded the construction of a second gym, limiting the programming ability of the Center.

This center is very well placed in a large park, and has adequate room for expansion. Marty Robbins Center serves a huge surrounding population, and is showing signs of overcrowding.

Given its strategic location, expansion of the center will be a high priority over the next few years. A second gym, additional classrooms, and increased fitness areas should be added.

**Priority Level: High**



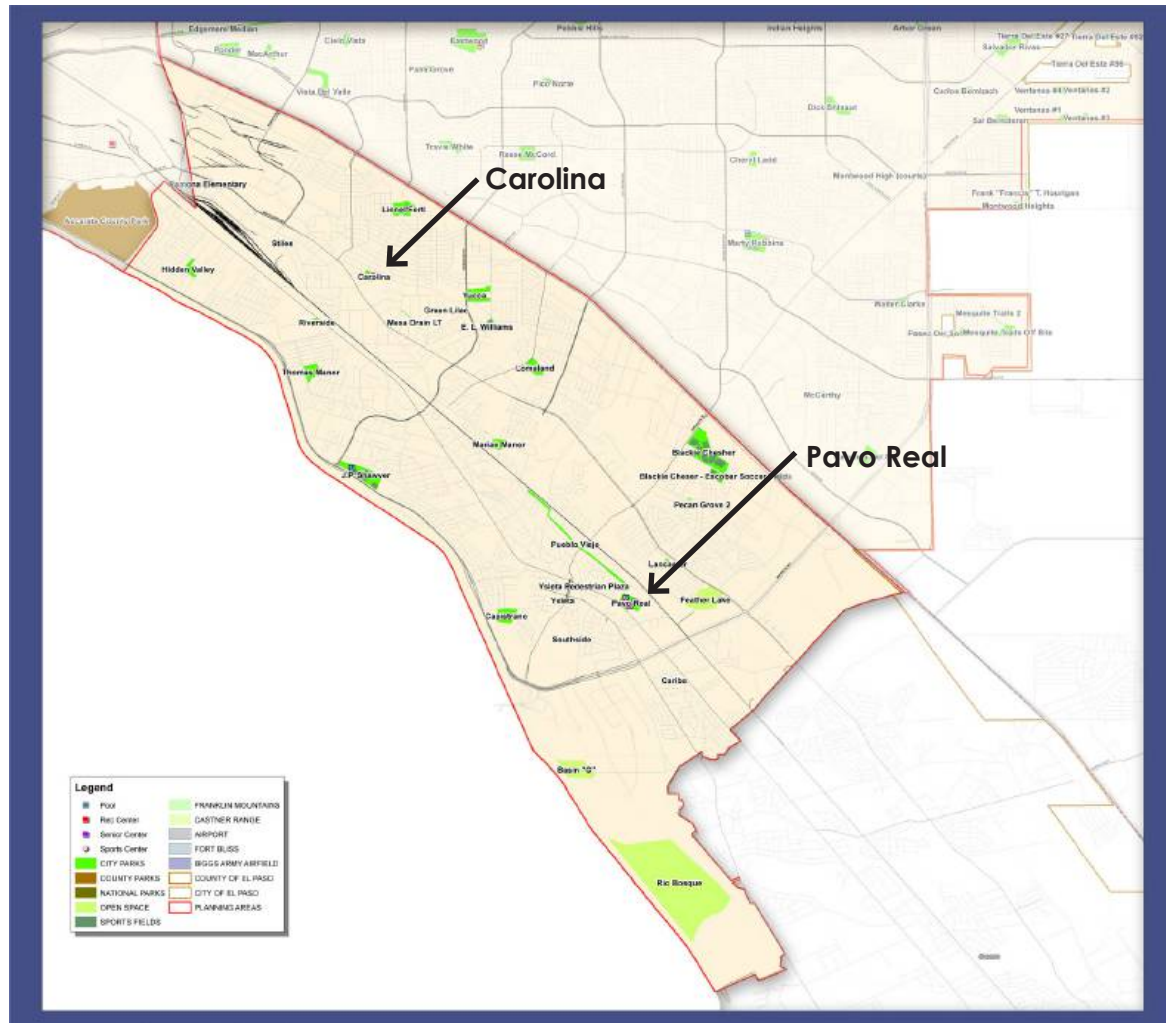
### Mission Valley Area Recreation Centers

The Mission Valley planning area has two recreation centers, with a total size of 59,200 square feet. The per capita amount of space is 0.55 square feet per resident of the area, which is less than the citywide average in 2012.

Both centers were renovated within the last decade, and both are generally well located. At around 30,000 square feet each, the two centers were large when constructed but continue to show signs of overcrowding. Expansion of these centers, especially Pavo Real, should be considered as priorities for this area.

A new center located midway between Carolina and Pavo Real is funded by the 2012 bond, and will enhance service in the Mission Valley. A summary of the two existing centers in the area is shown in the tables and map on this page.

Location	Address	SQ. Feet
Carolina	563 N. Carolina Dr.	30,200
Pavo Real	100 Presa Place	29,000



**Carolina**

Year Built: 1978

Size: 30,200 square feet

Location: Carolina Park

Year Last Renovated: 2000

Key Facilities and Characteristics: The center lacks adequate entrance control space. The building appears to be sound, but continues to need interior updating.

The center could be remodeled to provide a better control space at the entrance to the building, and additional cardiovascular and classroom space. Additional interior updating is recommended. Space for expansion is very limited in the park around the center, and may limit expansion of this center.

**Priority Level: Medium**

**Pavo Real**

Year Built: 1978

Size: 29,000 square feet

Location: Pavo Real Park

Year Last Renovated: 1998

Key Facilities and Characteristics: The center is an older style recreation center. It lacks a main entrance area and effective control counter; and is somewhat small for the population that it serves. The center is well located in Pavo Real Park, and is clustered near a branch library, senior center, and pool.

The center should be expanded to provide a better control space at the front of the building. Additional interior updating is recommended. Space for expansion is available in the park around the center.

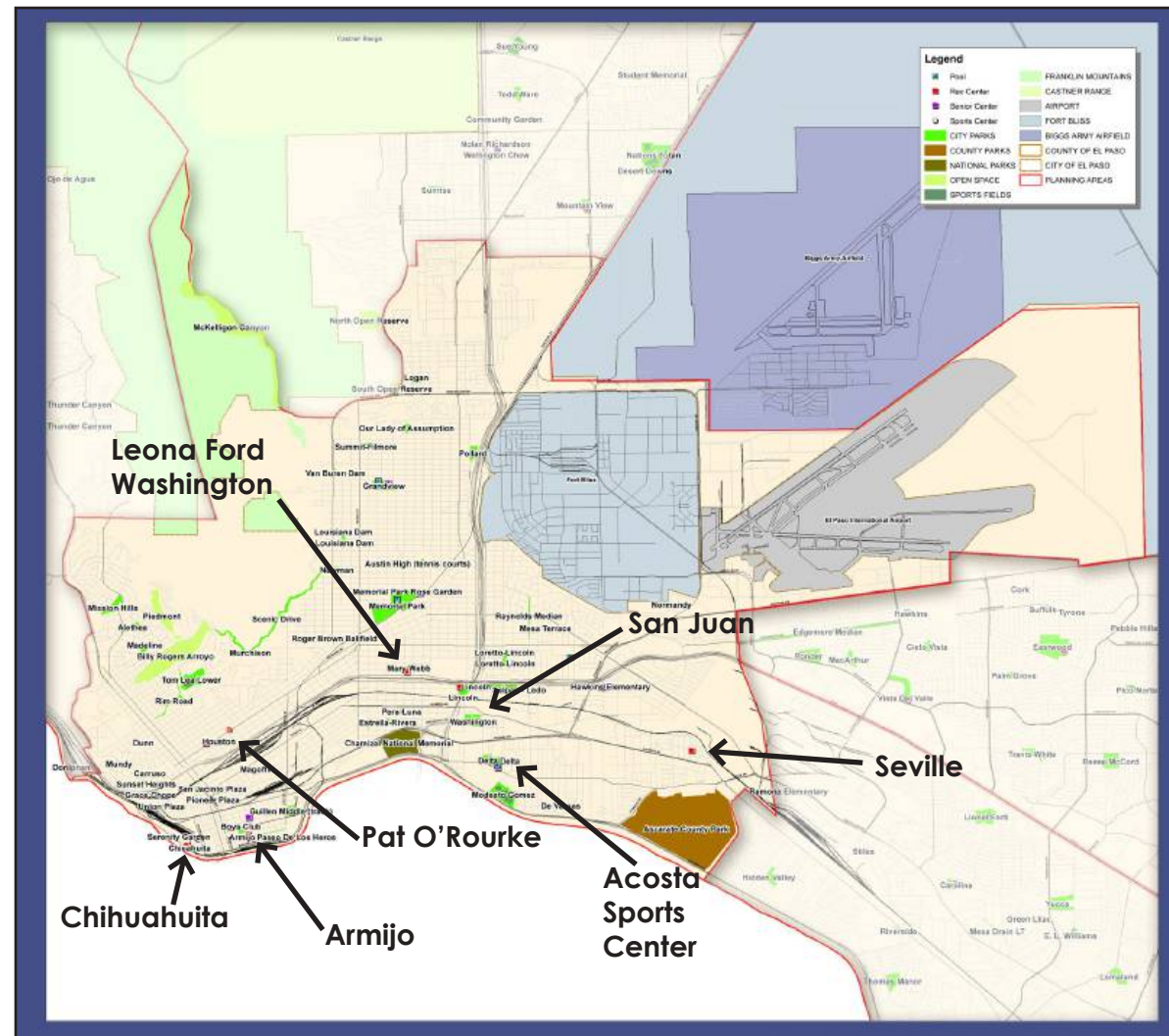
**Priority Level: High**

**Central Area Recreation Centers**

The Central planning area has seven centers. The newly opened Pat O'Rourke Center is a first class facility and has been well used since it opened in 2010. However, three of the seven centers are under 10,000 square feet in size, and one, the Chihuahuita Center, is less than 3,000 square feet. With 137,888 square feet of centers, the current ratio to population is approximately 1.1 square foot for every one resident of the area, which is the highest in the City and which exceeds the target goal. Over the next decade, the population of the Central area is expected to increase slowly.

Construction of a center to serve the Memorial/Grandview areas is a long term priority. Consider expanding either Grandview or Memorial Senior centers to convert to a larger community center with enhanced services. A new center located in the Chamizal NRSA and a new center located along Alameda are both funded by the 2012 bond, and will enhance service for those communities.

Location	Address	SQ. Feet
Acosta Sports Center	4321 Delta Dr.	21,361
Armijo	710 E. Seventh Ave.	43,652
Chihuahuita	439 Charles Rd.	2,880
Leona Ford Washington	3400 Missouri	8,000
Pat O'Rourke	901 N. Virginia St.	36,315
San Juan Rec	701 N. Glenwood	18,200
Seville	6700 Sambrano Ave.	7,480



**Chihuahuita**

Year Built: 1980

Size: 2,880 square feet

Location: Chihuahuita Park

Year Last Renovated: 2008

Key Facilities and Characteristics: The center is the smallest building in the El Paso system and it serves a small but historically important community on the western side of downtown El Paso. The center is basic and focuses on after school and drop-in programs.

Priority Level: Low





**Acosta Sports**

Year Built: 1960  
 Size: 21,361 square feet  
 Location: WWII Veterans of Company E Park  
 Year Last Renovated: 1998

Key Facilities and Characteristics: The center has two gyms which are used for basketball and indoor soccer. The center is well located and has adequate parking except during major events.

Additional replacement and renovation efforts should be programmed for the building within the next 15 years. Ultimate replacement might be considered in the long term future.

**Priority Level: Low**

**Leona Ford Washington**

Year Built: 1953  
 Size: 8,000 square feet  
 Location: 3400 Missouri  
 Year Last Renovated: 1997

Key Facilities and Characteristics: The center is historically significant in that it has served the African American population of El Paso since the 1950s. The center has a gym, fitness equipment and computer area.

The center mostly consumes its site and the building is approaching the end of its useful lifespan. Consideration should be given to developing a replacement building at another site. In addition, evaluate the impact of the Pat O'Rourke Center on attendance at the center.

**Priority Level: Low**

**Seville**

Year Built: 1981  
 Size: 7,480 square feet  
 Location: 6700 Sambrano  
 Year Last Renovated: 2002

Key Facilities and Characteristics: The center is located in the middle of a residential neighborhood and is difficult to find. The Center completely consumes its site, and has no space for expansion. As a rule of thumb, this placement model should not be used in the future. The center offers a small gym and a classroom.

No major renovations to this center are recommended. Consider closing and combining operations with San Juan.

**Priority Level: Low**

**San Juan**

Year Built: 1997  
 Size: 18,200 square feet  
 Location: San Juan Park  
 Year Last Renovated: None

Key Facilities and Characteristics: The center is somewhat removed from major roadways, making access difficult. Interior spaces within the center are difficult to configure. This center could be combined with the San Juan Senior Center for more staff efficiency.

**Priority Level: Medium**



**Pat O'Rourke**

Year Built: 2010

Size: 36,315 square feet (initial phase)

Location: 901 N. Virginia St.

Year Last Renovated: None

**Key Facilities and Characteristics:** The center consists of a renovated YMCA building that was acquired by the City of El Paso. The initial phase of the renovation remodeled and reconfigured most of the ground floor, gym, and a six lane indoor swimming pool. The center also includes multi-purpose rooms and a separate fitness room. Located just north of Downtown El Paso, the Center is well located and has received a significant amount of use since opening.

A planned second phase will renovate the upper floor, adding racquetball courts and multi-purpose rooms. Once the second phase is completed, the center will exceed 50,000 square feet.

This center follows the nationwide pattern of centers that are larger and successfully combine multi-purpose rooms, a variety of recreation facilities and an indoor swimming pool.

**Priority Level: High**

**Armijo**

Year Built: 1968

Size: 43,652 square feet

Location: Armijo Park

Year Last Renovated: 1993

**Key Facilities and Characteristics:** The center is one of the older centers in the system, but has been updated several times. The Center is situated next to a branch library and indoor pool, but has little space for expansion.

The interior of the center continues to be dated and in need of renovation. Remodeling of the remaining older interior areas of the building and replacement with a more modern configuration should be considered in the future.

**Priority Level: Low**

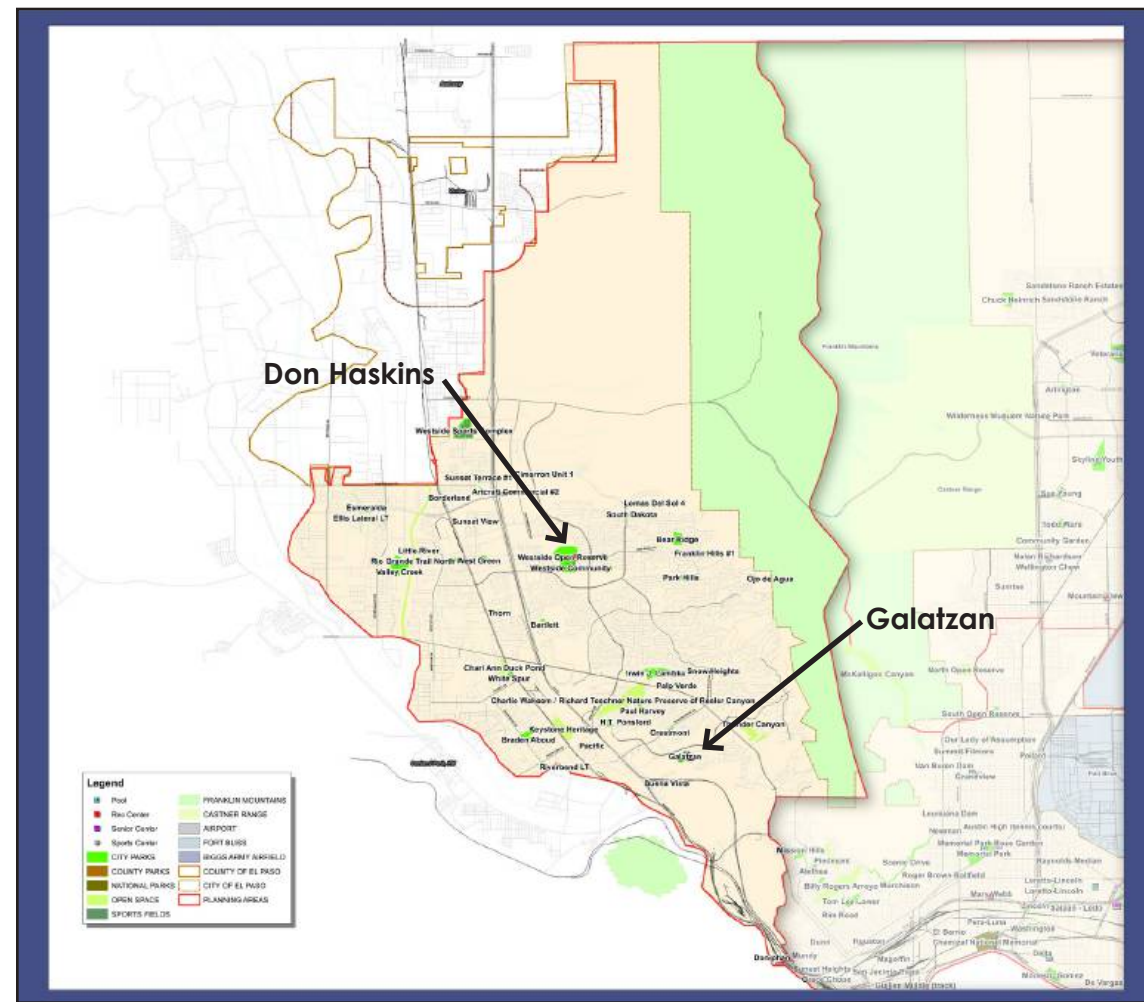




### Northwest Area Recreation Centers

The Northwest planning area of El Paso has two major recreation centers with a combined area of 60,000 square feet. The per capita level of service for the current population is approximately 0.58 square feet per resident. **By the year 2020, with a projected population of 138,500 +/-, that ratio will have decreased to 0.43 square feet per resident.** Both centers serve large geographic areas, and are well located for those populations.

Both the Galatzan Center and the Don Haskins Center have high rates of use. The centers are small for the population they serve, and both centers need to be expanded to provide better service. A specialized sports center should be considered for the Northwest in the future, possibly at Valley Creek Park.



Location	Address	SQ. Feet
Galatzan	650 Wallenberg Dr.	28,000
Don Haskins	7400 High Ridge	32,000

**Don Haskins**

Year Built: 2007

Size: 32,000 square feet

Location: Westside Community Park

Year Last Renovated: None

Key Facilities and Characteristics: The center is one of the newest in the City's inventory. Following the model for flexible recreation space, the center provides two gyms and a variety of classroom space. The center could be expanded, but this may effect the adjacent parking and control area management.

**Priority Level: Medium**

**Galatzan**

Year Built: 1979

Size: 28,000 square feet

Location: Galatzan Park

Year Last Renovated: None

Key Facilities and Characteristics: The center has a beautiful location with the Franklin Mountains as a backdrop overlooking a natural area. The center is easily accessed. Parking is limited and shared with the adjacent pool and senior center.

This center currently offers day care service. The interior configuration needs updating to provide better flow within the center. The size of the building could be increased to create a "super center" for the area. An expansion to an overall size of 45,000 square feet is proposed.

**Priority Level: High**







### III. A Review of Existing Senior Centers

National trends indicate a movement towards consolidating senior facilities within larger recreation centers that offer access to programs, swimming and more interaction with fellow residents of all ages.

El Paso operates ten senior centers with an approximate total size of 103,400 square feet. Five of the centers were built in the late 1970s, and the most recent center, Hilos de Plata, was constructed in 2004. A summary of these facilities is shown on Table 5.8.

The distribution of Senior Centers throughout the City is shown on the map on the following page. In general, centers have been built in more established parts of the City with higher ratios of older residents. Areas of El Paso where new development is occurring currently do not have as many senior facilities, and it is not recommended to construct stand-alone senior centers in the future.

Senior centers provide locations for recreation, lunch programs, and offer social events such as Bingo and dances. Services provided at these centers are significantly subsidized by the City. Senior services are offered during morning, lunch and early afternoon time frames, resulting in senior facilities being under utilized during the remainder of the day. Attendance tends to average between 80 to 120 users per day at each location.

#### Trends and Recommendations for Facilities for Senior Citizens

Nationally, and just as likely in El Paso, usage of stand alone Senior Centers has the potential to decline over the next 10 to 20 years as seniors increasingly remain active well into their 80s. The next generation of seniors is also expected to want to interact with younger users of a center so as to be surrounded by vigor and activity.

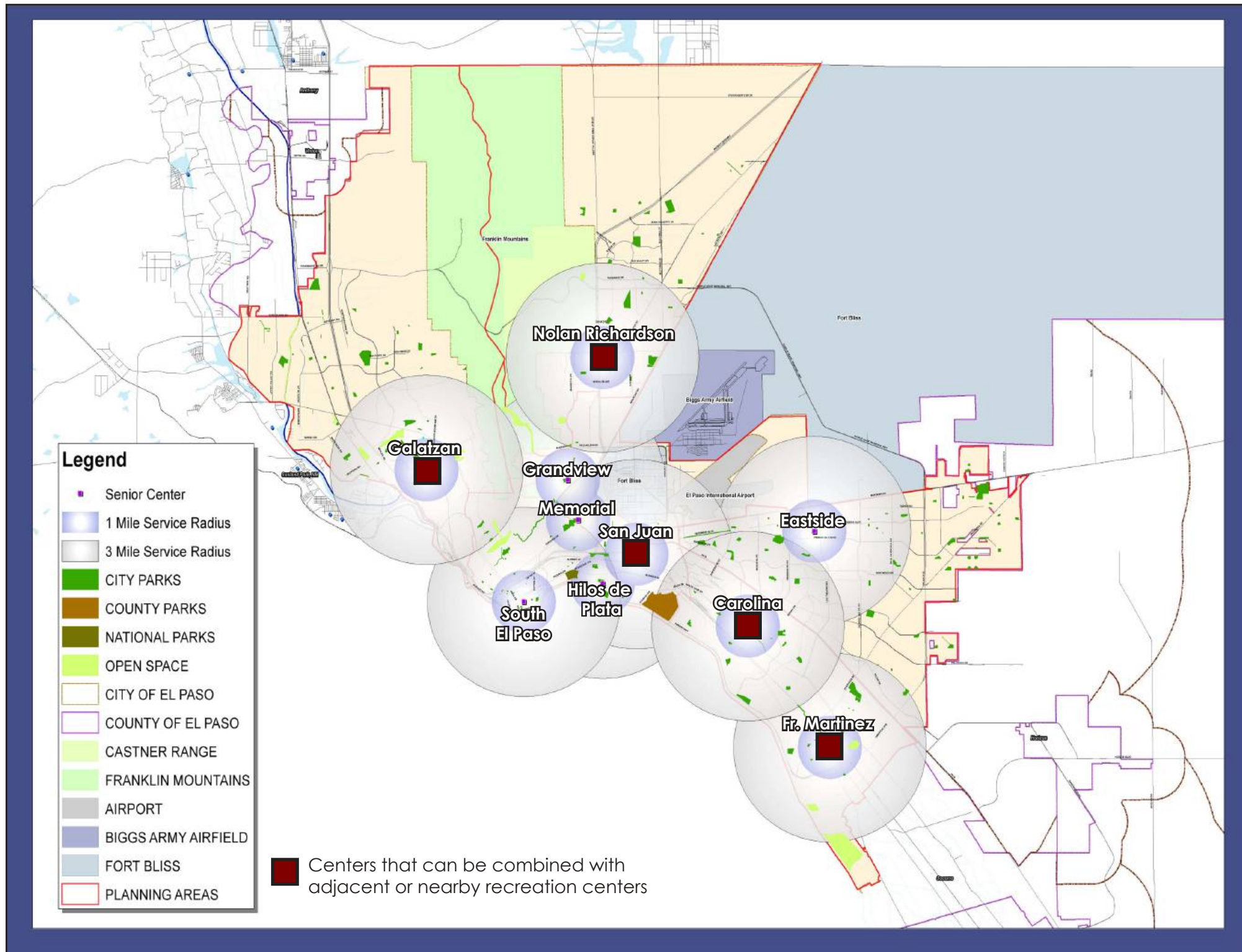
As the next generation of recreation centers is built in El Paso, facilities reserved for senior citizens during key times of the day should be incorporated and integrated into the new and renovated recreation centers.

**In the future, do not construct free-standing and totally separate senior centers, but rather combine services within larger recreation centers. It is because of this that there is not a recommended level of service for senior centers for the future.**

In the interim, minor updates to existing centers to maintain their ability to adequately serve residents of the City should continue.

Location	Planning Area	Address	BLDG. Date	Rehab Date	SQ. Feet
Eastside	E	3200 Fierro	1987	None	8,500
Father Martinez	MV	9311 Alameda	1999	2010	10,000
Grandview	C	3134 Jefferson	1991	None	9,818
Happiness	MV	563 N. Carolina	1978	None	8,000
Hilos de Plata	C	4451 Delta	2004	None	12,000
Memorial	C	1800 Byron	1977	1990	12,000
Polly Harris	NW	650 Wallenberg	1989	None	8,000
San Juan SC	C	5701 Tamburo Ct.	1979	2004	8,648
South El Paso	C	600 S. Ochoa	1979	1990	14,112
Wellington Chew	NE	4430 Maxwell Ave.	1978	None	12,322
<b>Total</b>					<b>103,400 sf. +/-</b>

Planning Area	Current SQ. Feet	Population 2010		Projected Population 2020		Projected Population 2030	
		Population	LOS (s.f. per resident)	Population	LOS (s.f. per resident)	Population	LOS (s.f. per resident)
Central	56,578 s.f.	125,396	0.45 s.f.	127,500	0.44 s.f.	134,930	0.42 s.f.
East	8,500 s.f.	191,222	0.04 s.f.	212,500	0.04 s.f.	257,084	0.03 s.f.
Mission Valley	18,000 s.f.	108,591	0.17 s.f.	112,700	0.16 s.f.	120,953	0.15 s.f.
Northeast	12,322 s.f.	104,066	0.12 s.f.	126,500	0.10 s.f.	172,968	0.07 s.f.
Northwest	8,000 s.f.	119,837	0.07 s.f.	138,500	0.06 s.f.	165,839	0.05 s.f.
<b>Citywide</b>	<b>103,400 s.f.</b>	<b>649,121</b>	<b>0.16 s.f.</b>	<b>717,700</b>	<b>0.14 s.f.</b>	<b>851,774</b>	<b>0.12 s.f.</b>



Senior centers and service areas in El Paso in 2012.



Polly Harris Senior Center in the Northwest sector is an example of a typical senior facility in El Paso



Typical interior of a senior center in El Paso.



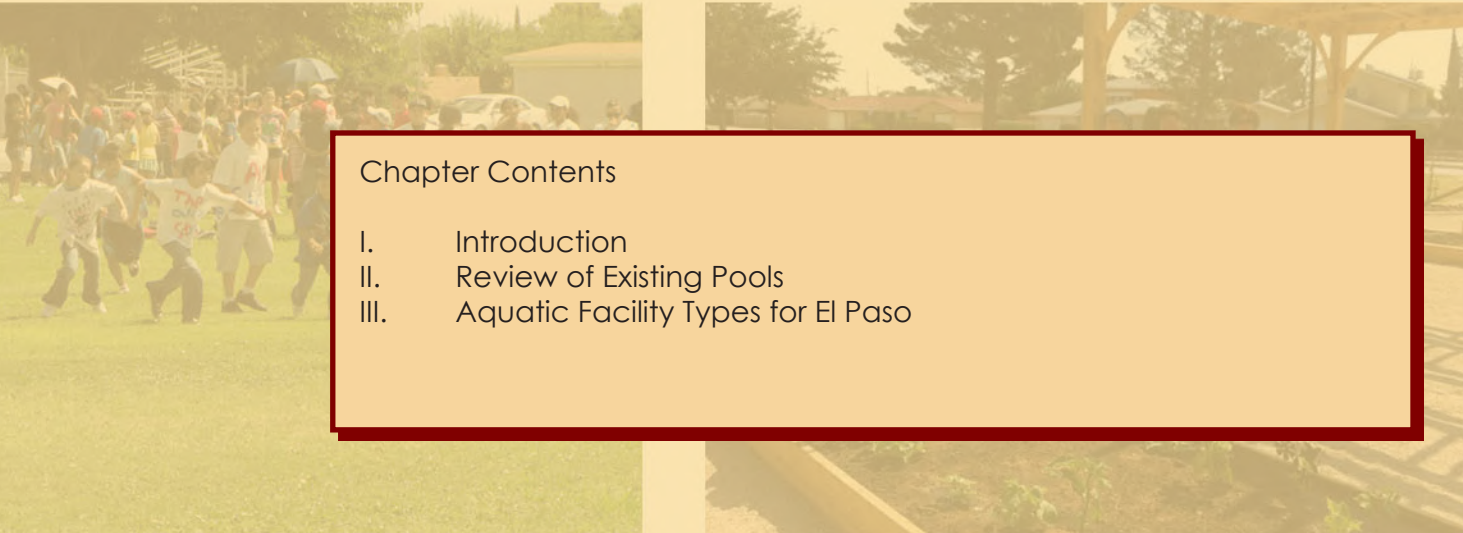
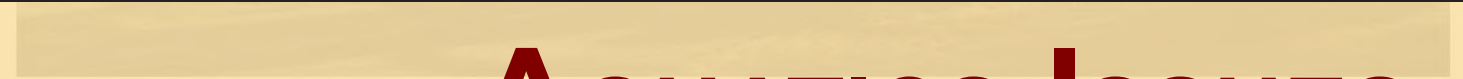
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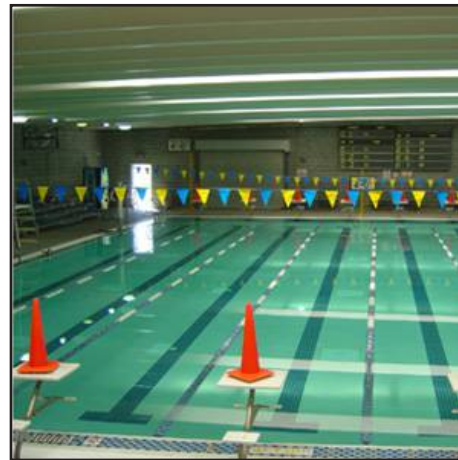
# CHAPTER 6:

## AQUATICS ISSUES

### Chapter Contents

- I. Introduction
- II. Review of Existing Pools
- III. Aquatic Facility Types for El Paso





Existing pools in El Paso include the indoor “water park” features at Armijo, the traditional indoor lap pool at Hawkins, and a traditional rectangular pool at Nations Tobin.

## I. Introduction

El Paso has a well developed system of pools. Given the dry desert heat, aquatic facilities are a popular recreation feature. The current system includes ten indoor pools and four outdoor pools. Citywide, the system includes one pool to serve every 46,365 residents in 2012. By the year 2020, that ratio will fall to one City pool for every 51,264 residents.

The City of El Paso is a primary provider of aquatic facilities, including use by public school swim teams and private swimming clubs. El Paso County provides one pool located at Ascarate Park. A 50 meter pool operated by the Tigua Nation closed in Spring 2012, removing a vitally needed competition pool from the local inventory. The Socorro Independent School District owns and operates one pool; this is the only school district within the City limits to offer an aquatic facility.

Most of the outdoor pools are at least 35 years old, and two of the indoor pools are that old. The trend toward indoor pools started with the enclosure of outdoor pools in the early 1980's.

### Key Desirable Characteristics in Today's Pools

As in many other aspects of recreation, aquatic facilities are rapidly evolving and changing. The advent of pure leisure pools began in earnest in the 1990's with simple water slides and mushroom spray features. Today's pools are a far cry from the simple rectangular shape of the past. Today's pools place a high emphasis on entertainment and the idea of having fun while swimming. To add to the entertainment factor, pools with zero depth entry zones, lazy rivers, long slides with significant drops and interactive water play features are often added.

### Aquatic Facility Users in El Paso

El Paso's aquatic facilities need to accommodate all of the following distinct user groups:

- **Swimming for fitness** – Lap swimming is a popular exercise, especially among older adults.
- **Swimming instruction and water aerobics** - Instruction swim for all ages and abilities.

- **Competitive swimming** – Competitive swimming is a fast growing sport, especially at the high school level. For competitions, regulation pool lengths with lanes and specific pool depths are required. Competition pool dimensions are compatible with fitness swimming, but are increasingly less adaptable to leisure swimming.
- **Leisure Swimming and Water Play** – These users, especially children and young adults, swim and play in pool areas for fun. Shallow depths for less experienced swimmers are critical, as are fun activities and features to make the swimming experience more enjoyable.
- **Non-guarded interactive water spray feature** – zero depth water spraygrounds are becoming more popular because of their lower capital costs and low operational costs (since they are typically unguarded). Young children in particular enjoy playing in these at a neighborhood level.

## II. A Review of Existing Pools

The tables on the following pages review existing pools in El Paso. The City's pools are all simple rectangular pools, some of which have been enclosed over time. Even more recent pool renovation efforts, such as at the Marty Robbins Pool, maintained a simple rectangular shape as part of an extensive renovation effort that repaired the pool enclosure.

Armijo Aquatics Center, located in the Central area near downtown El Paso, is the one facility that most closely resembles today's leisure pool prototype. This pool has both the rectangular pool and a leisure pool with zero depth and a water slide.

The distribution of pools is shown on the map, and a review of each existing pool in El Paso is included. Actions for each pool generally indicate major renovations or replacements. Smaller upgrades or maintenance should be addressed on an annual basis as needed and are generally not noted in this review.

Ascarate outdoor pool, operated by El Paso County, is included in the illustration, as is the Socorro ISD pool.



**Table 6.1**  
**City Operated Indoor Pools in El Paso in 2012**

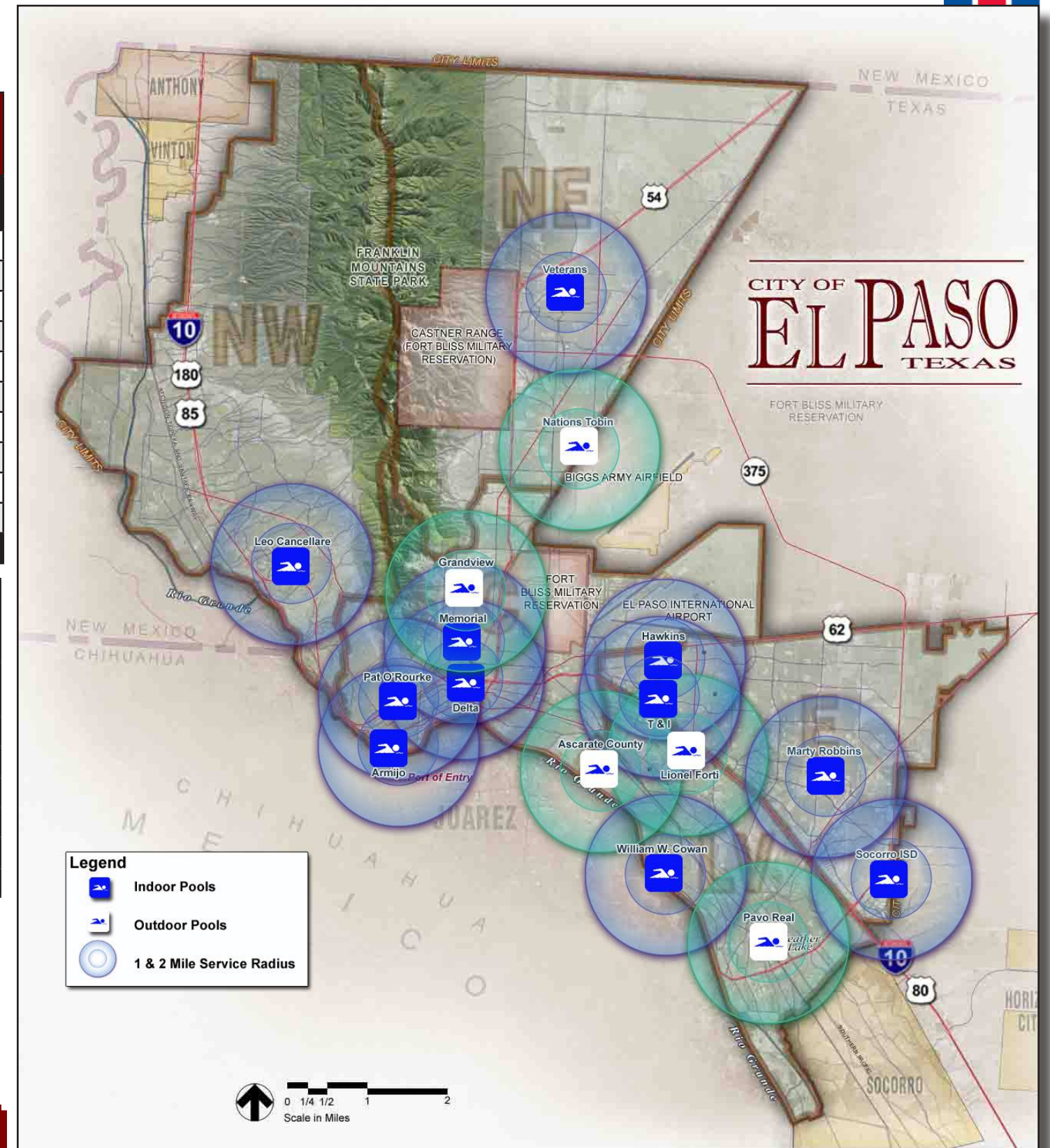
Pool Name	Planning Area	Address	Yr. Built	Yr. Last Renovated	Size of Bldg.*	Pool Surface Area
Armijo	C	911 S. Ochoa	2001	2003	33,834	3,900
Delta	C	4451 Delta Dr.	2004	NA	12,000	2,625
Hawkins	E	1500 Hawkins	1981	1997	12,756	4,764
Leo Cancellare	NW	650 Wallenberg Dr.	1976	2005	10,450	4,764
Marty Robbins	E	11600 Vista del Sol Dr.	1992	2005	12,605	4,764
Memorial	C	3200 Federal	1980	2006	13,000	3,825
Pat O'Rourke	C	901 N. Virginia St.	2010	New	36,315	2,652
T&I	E	9031 Viscount	1984	NA	27,000	880
William W. Cowan	MV	8100 Independence	1992	NA	13,163	4,764
Veterans	NE	5301 Salem Dr.	1977	2003	11,799	4,764
<b>Total</b>					<b>182,922</b>	<b>37,702</b>

**Table 6.2**  
**City Operated Outdoor Pools in El Paso in 2012**

Pool Name	Planning Area	Address	Yr. Built	Yr. Last Renovated	Size of Bldg.*	Pool Surface Area
Grandview	C	3100 Jefferson	1977	2005	3,300	7,564
Lionel Forti	MV	1225 Giles	1960	2007	2,496	4,724
Nations Tobin	NE	8831 Railroad Dr.	1960	2003	2,496	4,724
Pavo Real	MV	110 Presa Pl.	1974	2008	3,552	12,600
<b>Total</b>					<b>11,844</b>	<b>29,612</b>

\* Size of building refers to bath house

Location of existing pools in El Paso





**Level of Service for Pools in the City**

The City currently has 14 pools with a surface area of 67,314 square feet. At the level of service recommended for use by the City (25 s.f. per bather) the City's pools can accommodate 2,693 bathers at one time, or less than 0.50% of the total population in 2010. The recommended target level of accommodation should be close to 0.75% of the population, ultimately requiring a significant increase in the City's pool capacity to over 120,000 s.f.

Table 6.3 Aquatics - Level of Service Analysis Summary								
Planning Area	Current Pool Surface Area	Target Level of Service (LOS)	Population 2010		Projected Population 2020		Projected Population 2030	
			Current Area Needed	% of target LOS	Projected Area Needed	% of target LOS	Projected Area Needed	% of target LOS
Northeast	9,488 s.f. (2 pools)	25 s.f. for 0.75% of population	19,512 s.f.	49%	23,719 s.f.	40%	32,432 s.f.	29%
East	10,408 s.f. (3 pools)	25 s.f. for 0.75% of population	35,854 s.f.	29%	39,844 s.f.	26%	48,203 s.f.	22%
Mission Valley	22,088 s.f. (3 pools)	25 s.f. for 0.75% of population	20,361 s.f.	108%	21,131 s.f.	105%	22,679 s.f.	97%
Central	20,566 s.f. (5 pools)	25 s.f. for 0.75% of population	23,513 s.f.	87%	23,906 s.f.	86%	25,299 s.f.	81%
Northwest	4,764 s.f. (1 pool)	25 s.f. for 0.75% of population	22,469 s.f.	21%	25,969 s.f.	18%	31,095 s.f.	15%
<b>Citywide</b>	<b>67,314 s.f.</b>		<b>121,710 s.f.</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>134,569 s.f.</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>159,708 s.f.</b>	<b>42%</b>



**Northeast Area Pools**

The Northeast has two pools, Nations Tobin outdoor pool and the indoor pool at Veterans Park. With a population of over 104,000 residents, the area has one City pool for every 52,000 residents. This ratio is 89% of the citywide average.

Both pools are basic in design and are aging. Eventual replacement with a large regional aquatics complex that includes both leisure, "water park," and lap swimming components is recommended in the future. As such, only minor improvements to these pools to maintain their functionality for traditional swimming and fitness activities are recommended until they can be fully updated or replaced with more modern pools.

**Nations Tobin Outdoor Pool**

Year Built: 1960

Location: Nations Tobin Park

Year Last Renovated: 2003

**Key Characteristics:** The pool is over 50 years old, and even with renovations is showing its age. The pool is relatively small, and has only one amenity feature.

**Recommendations for this pool:** Within the next 15 years, consider removing the existing pool and developing a larger family aquatic center in this area.

**Priority Level: High**

**Veterans Indoor Pool**

Year Built: 1977

Location: Veterans Park

Year Last Renovated: 2003

**Key Characteristics:** The pool is a simple rectangle configuration, and even with renovations is over 30 years old. The pool has no amenity features and limited deck area. The skylight roof features give the pool a light and airy feeling. Locker rooms are dated.

**Recommendations for this pool:** Continue to operate for the next decade, but with only minor repairs to keep functioning. Plan for eventual replacement of this pool with a full aquatics center that serves the far northeast area of the City.

**Priority Level: High**







**East Area Pools**

The East area has three pools, all indoor facilities. The T&I pool is specifically designed for water therapy, and therefore has a specific user base. Counting the other two pools serving a population of over 191,000 residents, the area has one pool for every 80,500 residents. This ratio is only 58% of the citywide average, leaving the area incredibly underserved. All pools in the area are traditional rectangular lane pools.

**A major family aquatic center is strongly needed in East El Paso.** The aquatic facility should combine competitive, "water park" and fitness swimming facilities, and a location in the new Eastside Regional Park should be considered. Given the larger population that this area serves, none of the existing pools should be closed, but ultimately new pools will be needed to replace these facilities as they age.



**Marty Robbins Indoor Pool**

Year Built: 1992

Location: Marty Robbins Park

Year Last Renovated: 2005

**Key Characteristics:** The pool is a simple enclosed rectangle configuration. Locker room renovations somewhat improved the interior configuration, but the entry area is still unattractive. Party areas were added on the perimeter.

**Recommendations for this pool:** No changes over the next decade. Minor maintenance and changing room adjustments should be conducted to facilitate use of the facility.

**Priority Level: High**

**Hawkins Indoor Pool**

Year Built: 1981

Location: Hawkins Park

Year Last Renovated: 1997

**Key Characteristics:** The pool is 30+ years old with a plain, rectangle design. The pool has limited deck space and no amenity features.

**Recommendations for this pool:** Continue to operate for fitness swimming and for water safety instruction. Enhance entryway if possible. In the future, replace with aquatic center.

**Priority Level: Medium**

**T & I (Training and Instruction) Indoor Pool**

Year Built: 1984

Location: Vista Del Valle Park

Year Last Renovated: None

**Key Characteristics:** T&I is a small pool set up for water based therapy activities. It serves a vital role as the only such public facility in the City. The pool is approaching 30 years old, and will continue to require frequent attention to keep it in working condition.

**Recommendations for this pool:** No major changes over the next decade. Continue to monitor and upgrade the pool and mechanical components where necessary.

**Priority Level: Medium**



**Mission Valley Pools**

The Mission Valley area has three pools, two outdoor and one indoor. With a population of over 108,000 residents, the area has one pool for every 36,000 residents. The resulting 129% ratio is above the citywide average; however it is still below standards.

Pools in this area are traditional rectangular facilities, and are heavily used.



**William W. Cowan Indoor Pool**

Year Built: 1992

Location: Shawver Park

Year Last Renovated: None

**Key Characteristics:** At 20 years old, this pool is one of the younger facilities in El Paso's inventory. It is a traditional rectangular indoor pool with limited deck space and no water play facilities.

**Recommendations for this pool:** Continue to operate this pool as a much needed facility for the area. Longer term, consider upgrading this pool into a new multi-faceted aquatics facility.

**Priority Level: Medium to Low**

**Lionel Forti Outdoor Pool**

Year Built: 1960

Location: Lionel Forti Park

Year Last Renovated: 2007

**Key Characteristics:** This outdoor pool is over 50 years old, but has been renovated within the past 10 years. Interactive water spray features, a slide and shade coverings have been installed and have significantly increased use of the pool.

**Recommendations for this pool:** Continue to operate, and upgrade as necessary to attract usage.

**Priority Level: Medium**

**Pavo Real Outdoor Pool**

Year Built: 1974

Location: Pavo Real Park

Year Last Renovated: 2008

**Key Characteristics:** The pool is a rectangular 50 meter pool with a diving area and some water play features. The pool serves a major portion of the Mission Valley area. Long term, this pool could be converted into an aquatic center for much of the entire Mission Valley planning area.

**Recommendations for this pool:** Continue to operate, and program to enlarge and convert into Aquatic Center. The Pavo Real pool should eventually contain both lap swimming and leisure pool facilities.

**Priority Level: High to Medium**



### Central Area Pools

The Central area has five City operated pools, four indoor and one outdoor. With a population of over 125,000 residents, the area has one pool for approximately every 25,000 residents. The resulting 185% ratio is the highest in the City and is well above the citywide average of one pool for every 46,365 residents.

The Central area was home to the oldest pool in the City, Chelsea Pool, which was closed in Spring 2012 due to structural degradation. Chelsea Pool will be replaced with funds from the 2012 bond, though likely on a larger site.



#### Delta Indoor Pool

Year Built: 2004  
Location: 4451 Delta Dr.  
Year Last Renovated: None

Key Characteristics: Pool is one of the newer ones in the City's inventory. It is a rectangular design.

**Recommendations for this pool:** No changes over the next decade.

**Priority Level: Low**

#### Pat O'Rourke Indoor Pool

Year Built: 2009  
Location: Pat O'Rourke Center  
Year Last Renovated: None



Key Characteristics: Pool was renovated as part of the building conversion from a YMCA to a City recreation center. It includes 6 lanes for lap swimming.

**Recommendations for this pool:** No changes over the next decade.

**Priority Level: Low**

#### Memorial Indoor Pool

Year Built: 1980  
Location: Memorial Park  
Year Last Renovated: 2006



Key Characteristics: The pool was completely rebuilt, enclosed, and re-opened in 2006. It continues the traditional lap pool model found throughout the City.

**Recommendations for this pool:** No changes over the next decade.

**Priority Level: Low**

#### Armijo Indoor Pool

Year Built: 2001  
Location: Armijo Park  
Year Last Renovated: 2003



Key Characteristics: The Armijo Pool is a good prototype for other indoor pools in the City. The pool has adjacent turf gathering areas, amenity features including slides, zero depth entry, and interactive water spray features, and is airy and sunny with large glass walls. This facility is larger than the other indoor pools.

**Recommendations for this pool:** No major changes required.

**Priority Level: Low**

#### Grandview Outdoor Pool

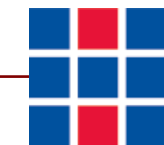
Year Built: 1977  
Location: Grandview Park  
Year Last Renovated: 2005



Key Characteristics: Grandview is a traditional rectangular lap pool. The pool has no amenity features, but does incorporate shade structures around the pool.

**Recommendations for this pool:** Install interactive water spray feature adjacent to this pool, and expand deck area.

**Priority Level: High**



### Northwest Area Pools

The Northwest area currently has one pool, Leo Cancellare, for the more than 119,000 residents of the area. This ratio is 38% of the citywide average. **This area has the highest need for additional City operated pools.**

#### Leo Cancellare (Galatzan) Indoor Pool

Year Built: 1976

Location: Galatzan Park

Year Last Renovated: 2005

**Key Characteristics:** The pool consists of the traditional enclosed rectangle, and lacks amenity features.

**Recommendations for this pool:** Improve the entryway. The pool is suffering from structural degradation. Consider replacing the pool with a more elaborate family aquatic center.

**Priority Level: High**



## III. Aquatic Facility Types for El Paso

Due to severe fiscal constraints, El Paso has focused on developing lower cost pool facilities over the years, and has not replaced older facilities. This Plan strongly urges the City to begin to implement a new generation of aquatic facilities that are truly multi-generational and that focus as much on leisure users as on fitness users.

Two new and extremely popular types of aquatic facilities have been built throughout the United States, but have not been developed in El Paso. These include family aquatic centers, or mini "water parks," and interactive water spray features.

**Family Aquatic Centers** – Relevant examples of family aquatic centers can be found in Odessa or Baytown, Texas or in Edmund, Oklahoma. These facilities are large with multiple pools, include large slides, zero depth "beach-like" areas, playgrounds surrounded by water, as well as traditional lap pools for fitness buffs. In the Southwest, they are typically placed outdoors. Unlike most pools, they can generate enough in gate revenue to meet their annual operational costs. El Paso could support one to two (Central, to serve all of the City, or east and west) of these facilities.

**Interactive water spray features** – These facilities range from simple and low cost (\$400,000 +/-) facilities with a few water cannons and dumping buckets, to elaborate water play areas with multiple jets, dumping buckets, interactive nozzles, valves and fountains. These facilities are attractive because they engage younger users, have no standing water and therefore typically do not have lifeguards on duty, and can be built in neighborhood settings. They typically are also much lower in cost than a new community swimming pool. This plan recommends that at least one of these features be developed in each planning area of the City over the next 10+ years.

#### Competition Facilities

Currently, El Paso is one of the largest cities in the United States without a premier competition pool facility. The 50 meter, indoor pool operated by the Tigua Nation closed in 2012. The need for one to two premier competition facilities is clearly evident, with high school teams as well as



Family Aquatic Center in Odessa, Texas features slides, a lazy river, outdoor party areas and lanes for fitness swimming. (Odessa photos on this page by Halff Associates Inc.)



City operated aquatics center in Cedar Rapids, Iowa (photo courtesy of Waters Edge Aquatic Design, Lenexa Kansas)



Typical interactive water spray feature in a community park setting in *Norman (Oklahoma)* that includes dump-buckets and sprays. Note variety of ages participating in play activities. (All photos this page by Halff Associates Inc.)

private club teams not having locations for competitions. Indoor pools such as Memorial and Cowan have been used for meets, but deck space in these facilities is inadequate for large numbers of swimmers and spectators.

Considering the school districts in the area and the popularity of swimming both for fitness and competition, the City of El Paso should pursue the construction of one or two premier competition natatoriums. This facility should be geared for practice with multiple lanes, as well as sized for both metric and yard dimensions and could also include a diving pool. The facility should be enclosed to allow winter use.

This Plan recommends that the natatoriums be built with the following considerations:

- That they be part of an aquatics complex that includes leisure components;
- That they include some participation for capital construction costs by area school districts to help defray the high cost of the facilities and help provide the resources to create first class facilities;
- That user fees for both public school and private swim teams are enough to help defer the high cost of operating these pools. Detailed feasibility studies should be conducted to determine the operational costs and how best to help address those costs; and
- Recognizing that end users will be subsidized to some degree, the City of El Paso must provide sufficient annual operations resources to staff and maintain these new competition pools in excellent condition.

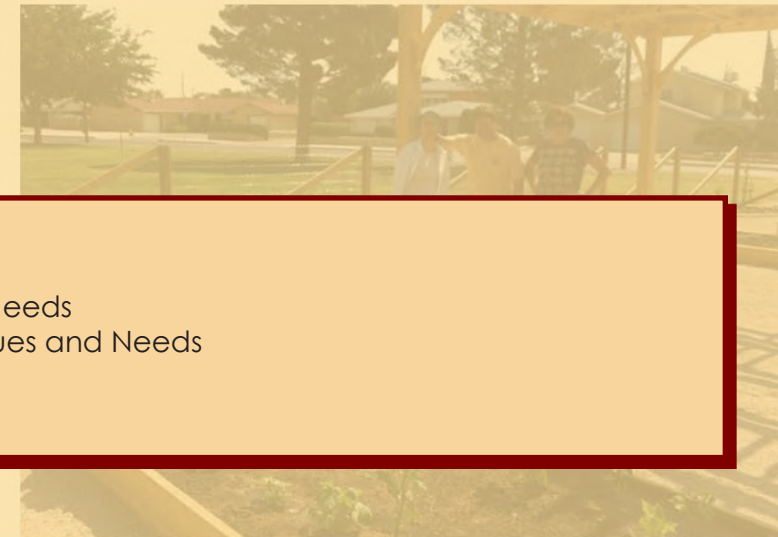
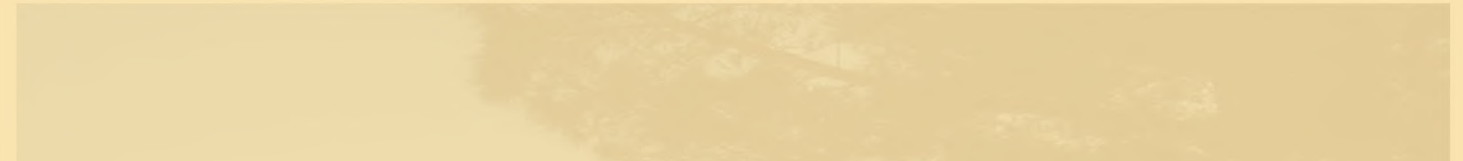
Comparable model facilities include the Conroe Independent School District natatorium in Shenandoah, Texas; the Grapevine ISD natatorium in Grapevine, Texas; and the Josh Davis Natatorium in San Antonio, Texas. All were built and are operated by local school districts.

# CHAPTER 7:

## TRAILS AND OPEN SPACE ISSUES

### Chapter Contents

- I. Trail Issues and Needs
- II. Open Space Issues and Needs





## I. Trail Issues and Needs

In 2012, El Paso has an abundance of hiking and mountain bike trails in and near to the Franklin Mountains State Park, but the City continues to have few in-town trail corridors. The two major in-town trails are on the west side of the City along the Rio Grande corridor and the Pat O'Rourke Memorial Trail along Resler Drive which is a TxDOT road and trail facility and not maintained by the City.

Plan El Paso notes the value of trails and open space to all residents of El Paso, summed up in the following excerpt:

**Hiking & Biking Trails** - El Paso residents have exceptional recreational access to the desert and mountains. An equally bountiful recreational resource exists in the network of irrigation canals and drains that are laced throughout the Rio Grande valley. A majority of these canals are wide enough to accommodate a complete network of hiking and biking trails. *Plan El Paso; Dover, Kohl & Partners; page 5.12; 2012.*

**Franklin Mountains State Park** - El Paso's striking backdrop, Franklin Mountains State Park, protects 37 square miles of rugged mountains and desert wilderness that are laced with trails for hiking, climbing, and mountain biking. The mountain's summit rises 3,000 feet above the City. The state park was created by a 1979 act of the Texas legislature. Acquisition began in 1981 and the park was opened to the public in 1987. The park is still expanding; in 2009, 1,650 acres of City land on both sides of the mountain were added to the park.

There are additional opportunities to expand the park. The Castner Range (7,081 acres in northeast El Paso) has not been used by the Army since 1966. The lower reaches of the Franklin Mountains just above Scenic Drive, although undevelopable, are still largely in private ownership.

**Trails, Existing and Proposed** - City-owned lands both north and south of Transmountain Road currently host many informal trails in addition to those within the Franklin Mountains State Park. If development should occur on these lands these trails should be reconfigured into a more cohesive systems, thus connecting the new neighborhoods of each proposed plan to each other and generating opportunities for recreation between and around the proposed neighborhoods. The trails should be reconfigured as a network that takes advantage of the topography along the arroyos and linkages to the Franklin Mountains State Park after coordination with park management." *Plan El Paso; Dover, Kohl & Partners; page 5.22; 2012.* Westside Master Plan, also developed by Dover, Kohl & Partners, integrates such trail corridors in the Northwest area.

*"A Vision Statement for Open Space - The Franklin Mountains and the Rio Grande River Corridor will be at the heart of a densely interconnected network of trails, parks and natural areas covering our entire City. Critical arroyos, irrigation canals and drainage features will serve as "green infrastructure" arterials with links to neighborhoods, schools, libraries, museums, public transit terminals, workplaces, shopping areas, parks, native habitat preserves and grand open spaces. El Paso's Open Space and Trail Network will be attractive and easily accessible to all. It will be the site of many kinds of healthy recreational activities, and provide numerous opportunities for educating the public about Chihuahuan Desert ecosystems. Through a carefully-planned balance of development and preservation, El Paso will be recognized as a city uniquely in harmony with its natural setting, and become a mecca for outdoor enthusiasts, eco-tourists and people seeking an excellent quality of life."*

*Plan El Paso; Dover, Kohl & Partners; page 5.20; 2012*



### Goals of a Trail System for El Paso

- Plan a system that can be developed in increments by many different entities that are coordinating together to ultimately create an interconnected Citywide network.
- Use the trails system to encourage a better understanding of stewardship of natural and cultural resources.
- Provide access to trail corridors in all parts of the City.
- Create and enhance a strong sense of identity for El Paso as the trail system is developed.
- Provide access to as many community facilities, such as schools, civic facilities, retail, and employment establishments as is possible.

### Key Desirable Characteristics of Trails

The Pat O'Rourke Trail corridor exemplifies the benefits that trails provide in a city. The trail not only provides an extremely popular place for walking and exercising, but also has become a social gathering place. The trail beautifies an otherwise ordinary roadway with nothing more than landscaping and an asphalt ribbon.

Trails in the context of this chapter refer more to connections between parks, and not to the pathways within parks. While those pathways are beneficial in many parks in the City, they should be treated as a matter of course, just like playgrounds and basketball courts are provided in most parks. Rather, trails need to be developed as the basis for a spine system throughout the City. That spine system of trails will someday allow a user, for instance, to travel between Memorial Park and Grandview Park along a pleasant corridor.

### Trail Users

Trails should be designed to accommodate a variety of users. Activity on a trail lends a sense of safety and comfort to a trail, and encourages others who are not as active to use the trail. Users of trails include:

- **Walking for exercise and recreation** – typical use is relaxed walking along a pleasant corridor. These users may include senior citizens, parents with children or families; and they may occupy a significant portion of the trail due to walking side by side.
- **Joggers and Runners** – use trail corridors for exercise and activity. Higher speed may conflict with slower users of the trails.



- **Recreational Cyclists** – use trails for exercise and activity, and are interested in scenic appeal and connectivity of the trail system. They may prefer more interesting trail alignments, rather than trails that favor higher speeds.
- **Higher speed Cyclists** – are usually more experienced riders and typically are more interested in riding at higher speeds. These riders often favor roadways over off-street trails. For off-street trails, alignments with shallower curves are favored by these users. Because of the higher speeds, increased trail widths are recommended to reduce conflicts with other trail users.
- **Commuting or cycling to a destination** – have similar characteristics to high speed riders, and are most interested in access to the trail system and the ultimate connectivity that it provides.
- **Mountain Biking** – users can ride on crushed rock or more natural trail surfaces, and prefer trails with challenging terrain.
- **Inline Skating** – skaters tend to take up more space because of the swinging hand motion of in-line skating. Wider trail widths are necessary to avoid conflicts with other trail users.

*Trailheads provide parking, signage and maps, restroom facilities, and covered shelters. Despite the many informal trails on City-owned lands and within the Franklin Mountains State Park additional trailheads would make enjoyment of the high desert scenery more convenient.*

*Graphic source: Plan El Paso; Dover, Kohl & Partners; page 5.22; 2012*



### Trail Types

A variety of different paths and trail types should be considered in El Paso. These include:



**Linear Parks with multi-purpose recreation trails** – Typically hard surface of asphalt or concrete, and designed to accommodate a variety of users. A minimum of 8' width is recommended, and a 10' or 12' width is preferred to allow more space for users and to conform to AASHTO standards.

River Trail near the Rio Grande in Northwest El Paso. Photo by Halff Associates

**Linear Parks with natural surface nature trails** – Soft surface trails provide a more natural feeling in mountain areas or locations with scenic appeal. With lower speeds, narrower widths can be used.

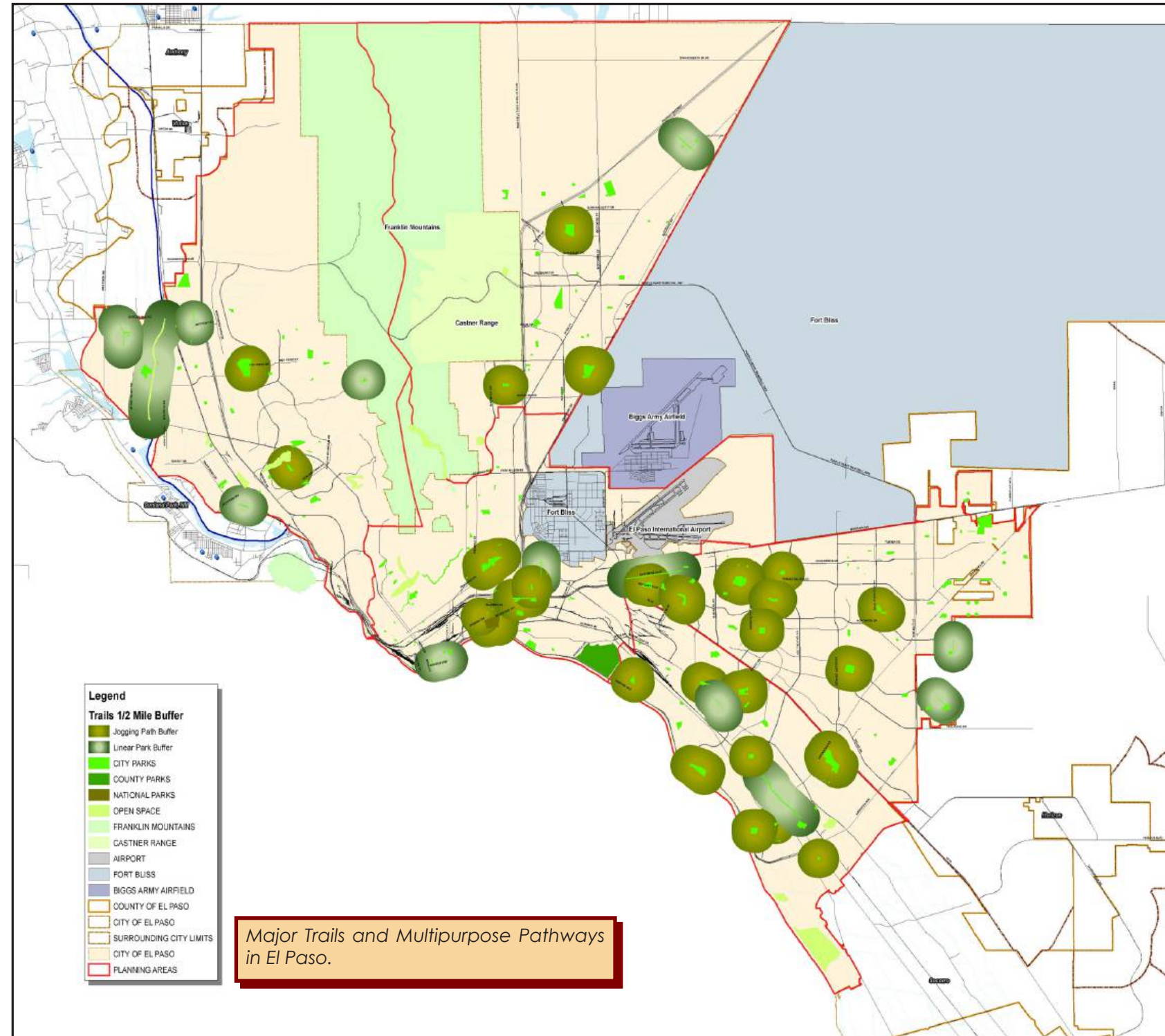
scenic appeal. With lower speeds, narrower widths can be used.

**Jogging Paths within parks** - Typically these are small looped trails contained within a park. The path can range from 5' to 8' in width, and can be up to one to two miles long depending on the size of the park.

**Sidepaths** – Where off-street corridors are not readily available, wide sidepaths can be placed along roadways, and in effect become wider sidewalks. Key issues are maintaining an adequate amount of separation from nearby lanes of traffic, and fitting the wider trail/sidewalk corridor within the available right of way. Sidepaths should typically only occur along corridors or roadways with very few driveways or street intersections. Crossings at driveways and at intersections should also be carefully configured and designed to reduce conflicts between pedestrians, bicyclist and vehicular traffic.

### Distribution of Trails in El Paso

The map on this page illustrates the location of major linear park trails and jogging paths within parks in the City as of May 2012.



Major Trails and Multipurpose Pathways in El Paso.



**Existing Level of Service – Trails**

Citywide, the current level of service is just over 1 mile of trail for every 20,845 residents. In both the Central and the Northeast areas, no major linkage trails currently exist. The Citywide total is only 48% of the desired miles of trails in El Paso.

A target level of 1 mile of in-town trail for every 10,000 residents is recommended by this plan.

**Proposed Target Level of Service – Trails**

**A goal of one mile of trail for every 10,000 residents of El Paso is established by this Master Plan.** Trails should be distributed throughout the City. For a population of 649,121, El Paso should have approximately 65 miles of trails. The City currently has a little over 9.5 miles of linear park trails and an additional 21.6 miles of jogging pathways within parks, leaving a deficit of over 34 miles of trails.



Rio Grande River Trail (photos by Half Associates)

**Table 7.1  
Existing Trails Level of Service**

Planning Area	Existing Trails (Miles)	Population 2010			Projected Population 2020			Projected Population 2030		
		Population	1 mile per residents	% of target LOS (1 mile per 10,000 residents)	Population	1 mile per residents	% of target LOS (1 mile per 10,000 residents)	Population	1 mile per residents	% of target LOS (1 mile per 10,000 residents)
Central	5.67	125,405	22,115	45%	127,500	22,485	44%	134,930	23,797	42%
East	7.66	191,222	24,965	40%	212,500	27,740	36%	257,084	33,562	30%
Mission Valley	8.60	108,591	12,625	79%	112,700	13,105	76%	120,953	14,064	71%
Northeast	3.03	104,066	34,345	29%	126,500	41,750	24%	172,968	57,085	17.5%
Northwest	6.18	119,837	19,390	52%	138,500	22,410	45%	165,839	26,835	37%
<b>Citywide</b>	<b>31.14</b>	<b>649,121</b>	<b>20,845</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>717,700</b>	<b>23,045</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>851,774</b>	<b>27,353</b>	<b>36.5%</b>

## Trail Opportunities

Coordination with the IBWC (International Boundary Water Commission) and the El Paso County Water Improvement District #1 for use of lands at levees adjacent to the Rio Grande and irrigation corridors is recommended to develop a series of interconnecting trails.

The use of utility easements such as power transmission corridors and gas lines also provides corridors for trails and linear parks. When using drainage channels, these corridors should have gates to restrict use during significant flood events.

Preserve very wide greenbelts in open desert areas. These can serve as both the drainage and the linear park corridors for new areas, and can link neighborhoods together.

Key trail opportunities are shown on the map on this page. All of the trail corridors require detailed reviews to confirm the viability of each route, projected costs and how adjacent areas will access the trails. Segments shown may be further divided or extended to match available funding. In particular, significant attention to accessibility issues for elderly and mobility impaired residents must be included, and intersection crossings must be carefully developed to ensure that they follow the most recent pedestrian and bicycle safety recommendations. Costs shown are at a pre-design level and intended only to establish a general estimated range.

**1. Far East Power Line (10' concrete or asphalt, 1.5 miles+/-)** – extending from Montana to Montwood, this corridor creates a connectivity trail leading from neighborhoods to future commercial areas along Montana. Cost \$375,000 to \$1.5M.

**2. Far Northeast Power Line (10' concrete or asphalt, 3.5 miles+/-)** – using transmission line corridors in the northeast planning area could extend trails north from Skyline Park to Salem Road and east/west from Dyer to Kenworthy. These trails would connect multiple parks and schools. Cost \$875,000 to \$3.5M.

**3. Washington Park to Ascarate (10' concrete or asphalt, 3 miles)** – use canal edges for a trail corridor from near downtown to the Ascarate Park area. Cost \$750,000 to \$3M.

**4. Franklin Canal to Pueblo Viejo (10' concrete or asphalt, 4.5 miles+/-)** – trail that can provide transportation route as well as recreational trail and linear park for much of Mission Valley. Cost \$1.25M to \$4.5M.

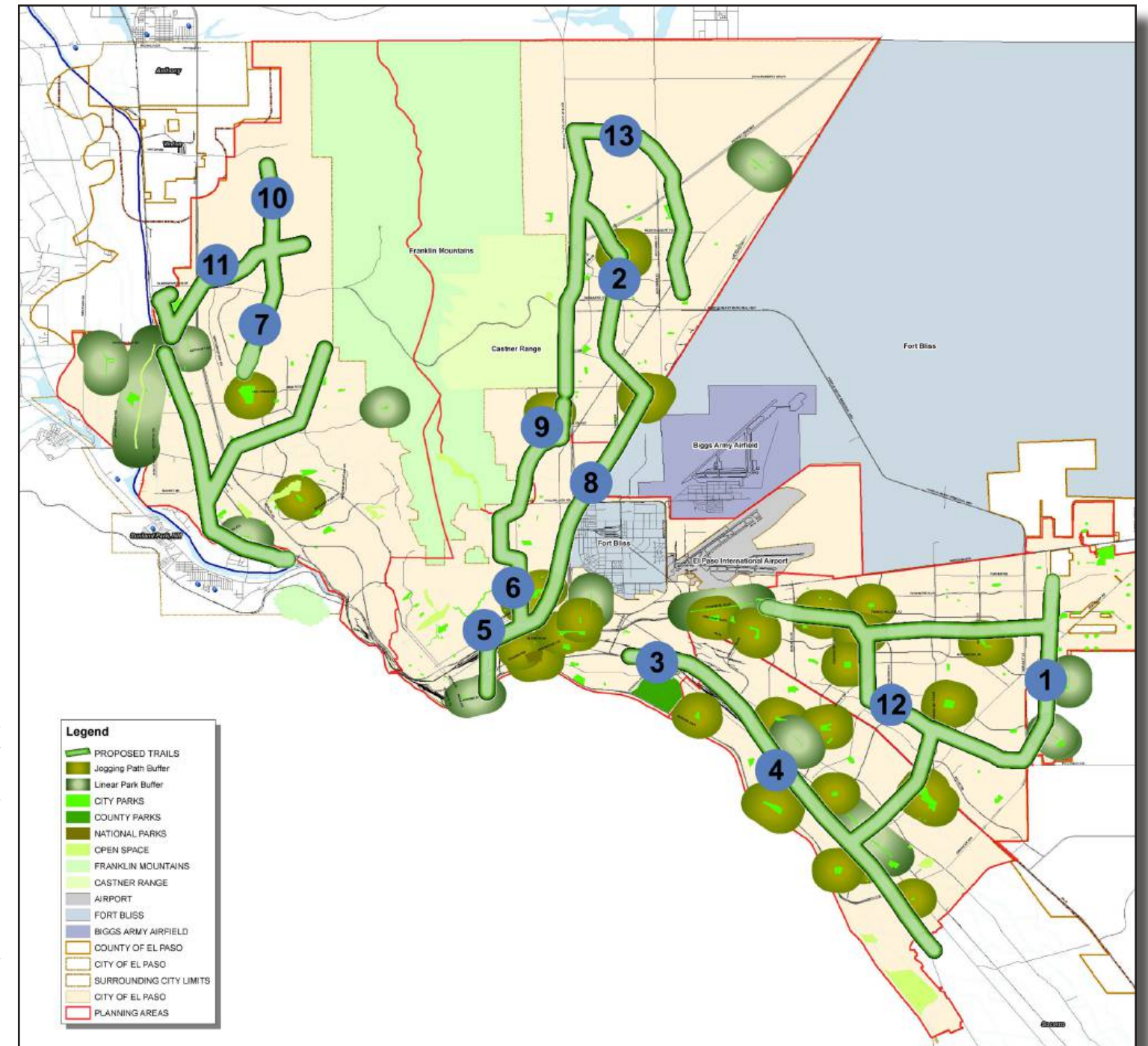
**5. Railroad Corridor from Paisano to Memorial Park (10' concrete or asphalt, 2.5 miles)** – uses areas adjacent to a railroad corridor, and provides an excellent route that directly connects downtown to the Memorial Park area and which could ultimately extend to the entire northeast area. Requires railroad owner permission, and may have to be fenced from railroad tracks. Cost \$625,000 to \$2.5M.

**6. Memorial Park to Grandview Park (10' wide concrete, would need to occupy a lane of traffic along north/south road, 1.5 miles+/-)** – key segment linking Memorial Park area to the Northeast. Cost \$750,000 to \$3M.

**7. Resler Road Trail Extension (10' concrete or asphalt, 3 miles+/-)** – connects on either end to the popular O'Rourke Trail. Evaluate routes along parkway areas or area drainage or arroyo corridors. Cost \$750,000 to \$3M.

**8. Grandview to Nations Tobin along Railroad or Dyer (10' wide concrete or asphalt, 4 miles +/-)** – evaluate whether locating parallel to major streets is feasible. Key connection from the downtown area to the Northeast. Cost \$1M to \$4M.

**9. Nations Tobin to Skyline Park (10' wide concrete or asphalt, 2 miles +/-)**





– corridor could follow roadways or other area corridors. Cost range \$500,000 to \$2M.

**10. Gas Line corridor trails, far Northwest (concrete or natural surface, 3 miles)** – longer range trail as area develops, but shorter term creates unique mountain bike trail. Evaluate preference for hard or natural surface in the future as area development occurs, but preserve as major trail route for this area. Cost \$750,000 to \$3M.

**11. Mountains to River Trail (concrete or asphalt, 4 miles +/-)** – unique corridor, very high priority of Open Space Plan. Should remain high priority linking Northwest to the Franklin Mountains foothills. Cost \$1M to \$4M.

**12. Vista del Sol Gas Line Corridor (concrete or asphalt, 4 miles +/-)** – high pressure gas line corridor. If feasible, would create a significant non-motorized transportation corridor for much of East El Paso. Requires utility permission. Cost \$1M to \$4M.

**13. Trails from the Franklin Mountains foothills east into the new Northeast Master Plan (concrete or asphalt, 3 miles +/-)** – ensure that the new neighborhoods north of Hwy. 54 have a continuous east/west corridor that provides access to the Franklin Mountains foothills. As a newly developing area, this opportunity should be developed as a standout corridor for the rest of the City. Cost \$750,000 to \$3M.

**Other trail opportunities** – many other trail opportunities exist throughout the City, and should be explored to determine feasibility and connectivity. Cost for each should be determined after the route is identified.

The development of 40 to 100 miles of new trails throughout the City could address both recreation and non-motorized transportation needs. The opportunities shown in this Master Plan are not intended to replace a more detailed trails evaluation to review the feasibility of all corridors and to further prioritize each one.



*Arroyos and the Rio Grande River create unique linkage opportunities. Photo by Halff Associates*

*Drainage and irrigation canals can be used for trails. Photo by Halff Associates*

*Utility and Street corridors can be used for trails. Photo by Halff Associates*

Opportunities for truly unique linear park/trail corridors abound throughout El Paso. The example shown on this page is located in the Mission Valley area, and illustrates the Valley Gate Lateral at Croom Road/Springfield Road. A uniquely El Paso trail corridor can be created in an area lacking significant walking and fitness trails, and also enhances the appearance of the neighborhood around the trail.





## II. Open Space Issues and Needs

Steps in the right direction have been taken since 2006 and the 2007 adoption of "Mountains to River - A Green Infrastructure Plan" in terms of open space acquisition. However, many opportunities remain, and funding for open space acquisition is the major obstacle to preserving more open space in the City.

With Franklin Mountains State Park, one of the largest open space reserves within a city limit anywhere in the United States, it continues to be fair to ask why El Paso needs more open space.

One only has to drive through much of the City to understand why additional open space is so badly needed. Most cities have the benefit of rivers, creeks or other natural features that provide a temporary relief from the city around them. These slivers of undeveloped lands without buildings break up the pattern of development, and are very much valued as a city matures and grows. Think of New York City without Central Park, or Miami without its beaches and bays, or Denver without the Platte River.

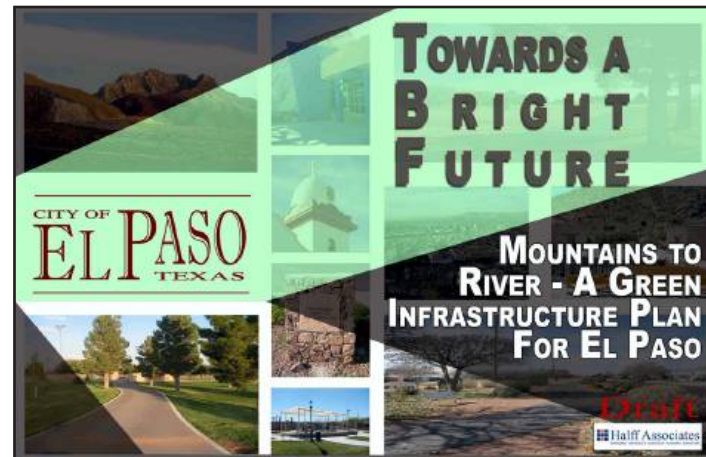
The desert that surrounds El Paso is easy to develop. Once drainage is accommodated, the lands in much of El Paso can be developed almost without limitation. Arroyos can be filled, hills can be leveled, and drainage channels can be made very narrow. However, these are not the desires of most citizens, nor the goals for this plan.

El Paso needs more in-town open space. It needs areas close to each neighborhood that reminds El Pasoans of the beauty of the desert.

In addition to the Franklin Mountains State Park, major public open space preserves include Keystone Heritage Park, McKelligon Canyon, Billy Rogers Arroyo Park, North Open Preserve, South Open Preserve, Thunder Canyon, Rio Bosque Park, and privately owned Resler Canyon also provides respite. The total open space acreage in El Paso is around 26,940 acres, or approximately 42 acres for every 1,000 residents of the City.

Without including Franklin Mountains State park, in-town open space is around 1,180 acres, or approximately 1.38 acres for every 1,000 residents. This in-town access includes land within the Parks and Recreation Department's inventory as of May 2012 designated by type as Nature, Linear or Basin. It also includes the following four properties owned by other entities: Feather Lake, Basin G, Charl Ann Duck Pond, and Charlie Wakeem/Richard Teschner Nature Preserve of Resler Canyon. Table 7.2 breaks down this in-town acreage by Planning Area.

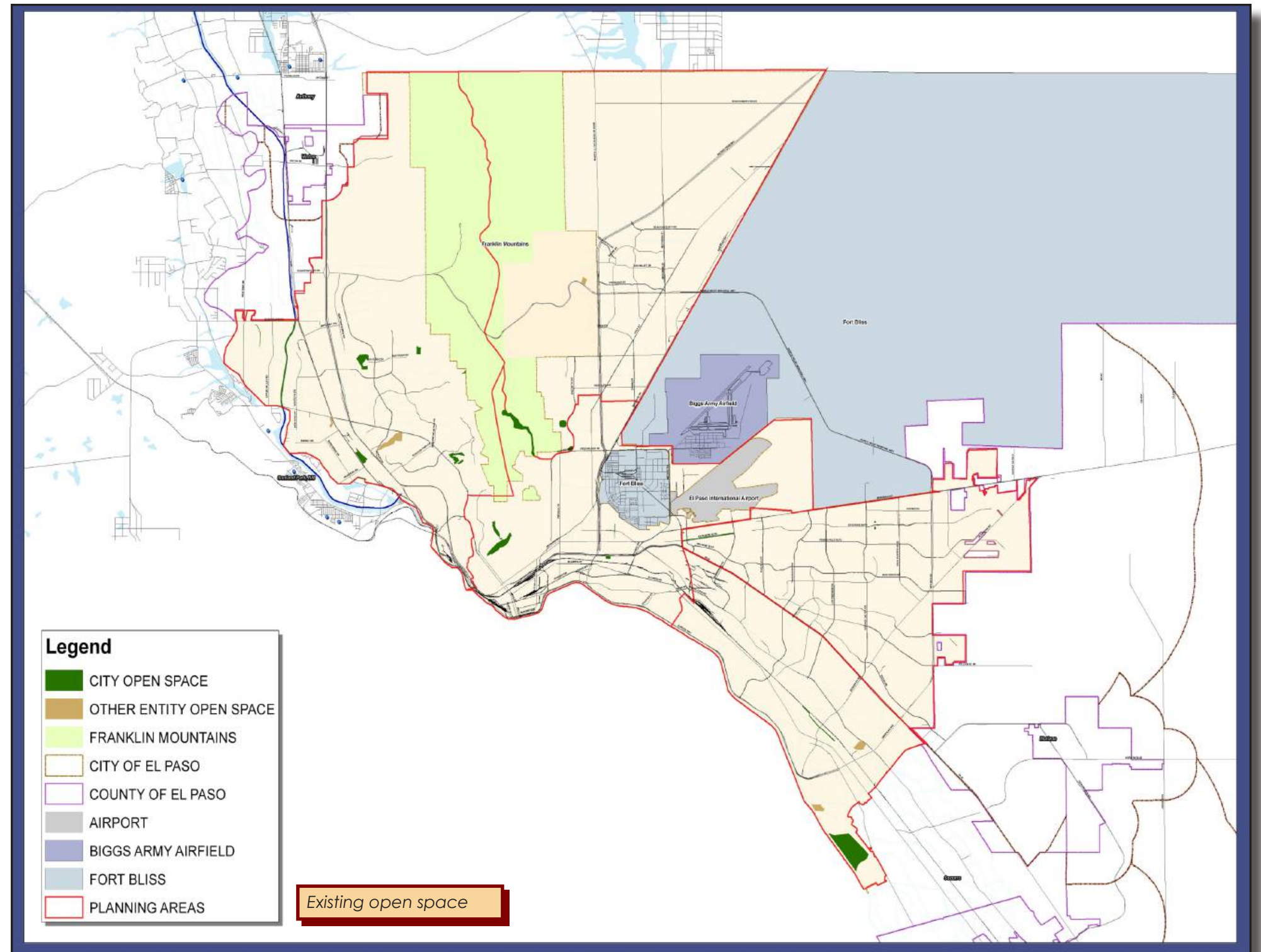
Photo by Halff Associates



Planning Area	Existing Acres	Population 2010		Projected Population 2020		Projected Population 2030	
		Population	Acres per 1,000 residents	Population	Acres per 1,000 residents	Population	Acres per 1,000 residents
Central	129.75	125,405	1.03	127,500	1.02	134,930	0.96
East	25.59	191,222	0.13	212,500	0.12	257,084	0.10
Mission Valley	506.94	108,591	4.67	112,700	4.50	120,953	4.19
Northeast	175.15	104,066	1.68	126,500	1.38	172,968	1.01
Northwest	341.39	119,837	2.85	138,500	2.46	165,839	2.06
<b>Citywide</b>	<b>1,178.82</b>	<b>649,121</b>	<b>1.82</b>	<b>717,700</b>	<b>1.64</b>	<b>851,774</b>	<b>1.38</b>

**Goals of the 2007 El Paso Open Space Plan**

- Target level of 15 acres of open space for every 1,000 residents of El Paso
- Preserve 75% of the remaining undeveloped arroyos on private land (as feasible)
- Preserve 75% of existing arroyos on publicly owned lands
- As a target, preserve 5% of undeveloped lands in East El Paso
- Preserve fringe “bosque” areas along remaining undeveloped portions of the Rio Grande
- Enhance the size of regional detention basins so that up to 20% can be used as open space
- Preserve portions of the Castner Range as open space
- Develop a source of immediately available funding to respond to near term acquisition opportunities





Continue to convert detention areas into dual use park/ponds. Photo by Halff Associates



The preservation of natural areas and arroyo corridors should continue to be a high priority. Photo by Halff Associates

### 2013 Target Level of Service – Open Space

**A target level of 5 acres of in-town open space for every 1,000 residents of El Paso is established by this Master Plan.** These acres should be in-town open space, excluding the Castner Range and the Franklin Mountains. For a population of 649,121, the target acreage would be 3,245 acres, or 2.4% of the total land area of the City of El Paso.

The open space goal can be achieved by:

- Preserving existing arroyos within City limits or in areas that will someday be in the City;
- Converting some of the existing detention facilities in the City into open space amenities;
- Coordinating the acquisition of land with the PSB; and
- Preserving other key tracts in and near the City.

### Funding for Open Space Acquisition

Earmarked open space funding in El Paso is available as part of the storm water fees that all residents of the City pay. While this helps develop park ponds and preserve lands that have some connection to storm water management and drainage, it does not help with acquiring other unique properties with open space value.

Additional funding with no restrictive requirements that can be used to preserve unique tracts of land is needed. Bond funds or an annual set-aside could be used as funding mechanisms.



Billy Rogers Arroyo Park preserves an in-town arroyo, and has led to increased property values near the preserve. Photo by Halff Associates



Rio Bosque Park is a large preserve that provides wildlife habitat. Photo by Halff Associates





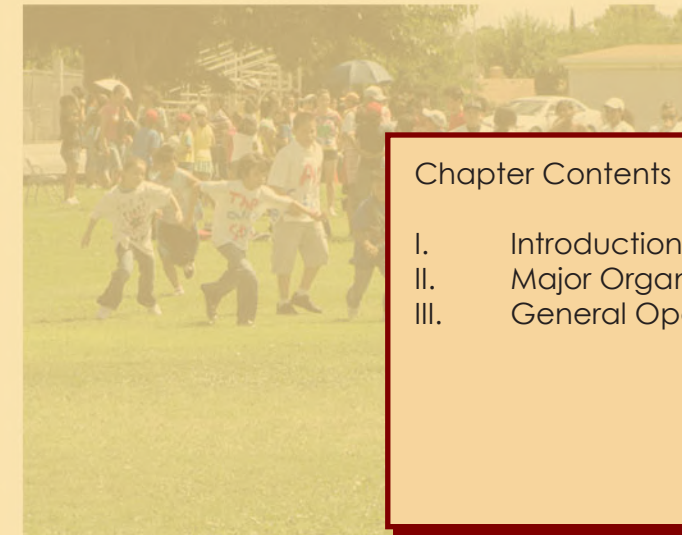
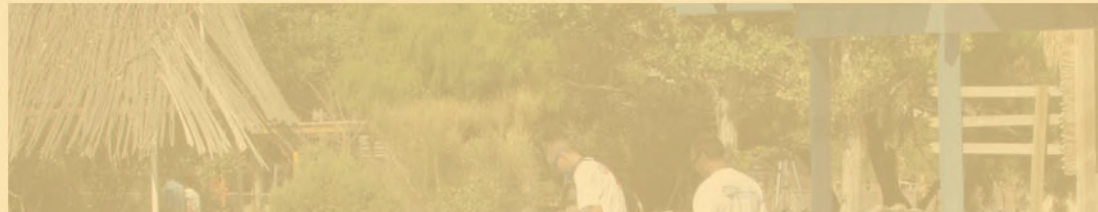
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# CHAPTER 8:

## ATHLETIC FACILITIES ISSUES

### Chapter Contents

- I. Introduction
- II. Major Organized Sports Needs
- III. General Operational Issues Facing Athletics





## I. Introduction

Perhaps no other issue creates as much controversy in a park system as the quantity and quality of athletic facilities. Competition for limited resources is always fierce, and participants in every type of organized sport would like to have the best possible facilities.

Organized sports are among the most important activities provided or supported by a parks system. Sports teach teamwork, personal sacrifice for the greater good of many, and satisfy our competitive natures in a friendly way.

El Paso has a very young population, and as such, should have high demand for athletic programs. In general, the role of the City Parks and Recreation Department is to provide facilities for use by the organizers of various leagues, many of them non-profit, and independently operated organizations. In some cases, the City organizes and implements athletic leagues.

## II. Major Organized Sports Needs

The current supply of athletic facilities is shown on Tables 8.1 and 8.2. Key findings for both flat fields (soccer, football, etc.) and diamonds (softball and baseball) are as follows. For the purpose of this assessment, game quality fields are considered to be those that are adult size fields. Flat fields are a minimum of 50 yards by 100 yards, and diamond fields have at least a 300 feet outfield fence.

**Important Note** – the number of fields noted in this section denotes game quality fields. Park areas not noted in this section may provide practice or informal play facilities, but because of field or lighting conditions, they are not included in overall athletic field level of service calculations.





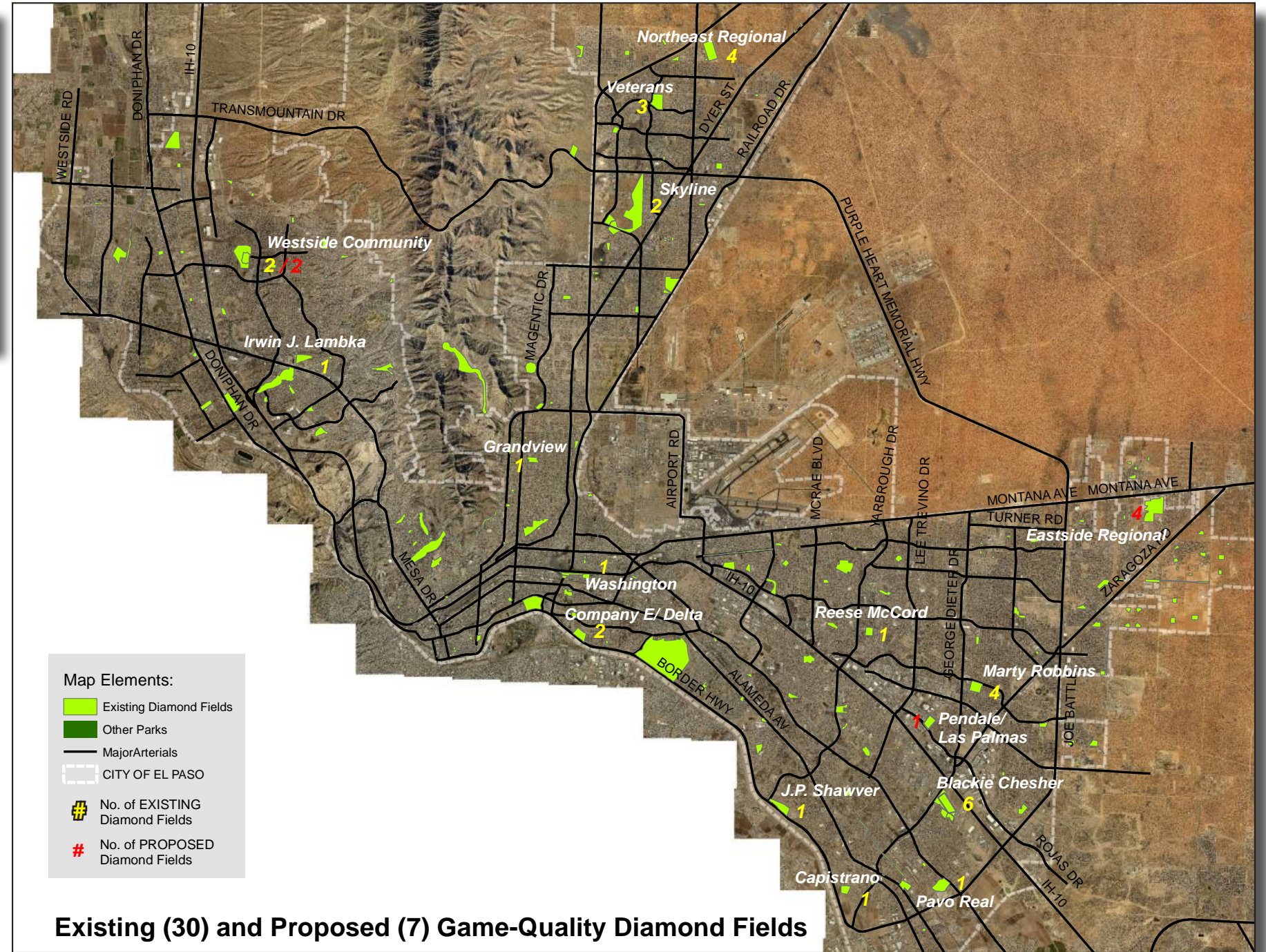
**Diamonds - Existing Supply of Fields**

- The city has 4 locations with groups of 3 or more diamond fields.
- The remainder of City fields are distributed over 10 parks, with 7 of the locations only having one field. Much of the supply in the City, especially in the Central and Mission Valley planning areas, is in single or two fields. These provide excellent neighborhood access, but are inefficient for leagues with multiple teams. Long term, better consolidation into 3 to 5 field complexes is recommended.
- The majority of El Paso's diamond fields are lit, extending use into the evenings.
- The far Northwest and the far East have the fewest number of fields per capita. Both areas need additional diamond fields.



The map and Table 8.1 indicates the location and number of game quality diamond fields in El Paso today.

Table 8.1 Summary of Existing Game Quality Diamond Fields in 2012		
Park Name	Planning Area	# of Fields
Blackie Chesher	MV	6
Capistrano	MV	1
Company E	C	2
Grandview	C	1
Irvin Lambka (Cloudview)	NW	1
Marty Robbins	E	4
NE Regional	NE	4
Pavo Real	MV	1
Reese McCord	E	1
Shawver	MV	1
Skyline	NE	2
Veterans	NE	3
Washington	C	1
Westside Community Park	NW	2
<b>Citywide</b>		<b>30</b>



**Existing (30) and Proposed (7) Game-Quality Diamond Fields**



Current Diamond Fields Level of Service (LOS)

El Paso Population (2010 Census)	Number of Game Fields	Current LOS	Recommended LOS
649,121	30	1 per 21,640 residents +/-	1 true game field for every 10,000 residents +/-
Level of Service - Other Comparable Cities			
Fort Worth	1 competition field for every 12,000 residents		
Reno, NV	1 competition field for every 3,000 residents		
Tucson, AZ	1 competition field for every 12,000 residents		
Albuquerque	1 field for every 10,000 residents (11,000 per adults; 9,000 per youth)		
NRPA Guideline	1 game field for every 5,000 residents		

2020 Population (per Plan El Paso)	Recommended Diamond Field Target LOS	Target Number of Game Fields	Surplus/Deficit
717,700 +/-	1 diamond per 10,000 residents	72 fields	<p><b>Deficit of 42 fields</b> without proposed fields</p> <p><b>Deficit of 35 fields</b> with 2012 park bonds (including 7 diamond fields)</p>

Table 8.2 Diamond Field - Level of Service Summary										
Planning Area	Existing Fields	Population 2010			Projected Population 2020			Projected Population 2030		
		Population	1 field per residents	Field Deficit	Population	1 field per residents	Field Deficit	Population	1 field per residents	Field Deficit
Central	4	125,405	31,350	-9	127,500	31,875	-9	134,930	33,730	-9
East	5	191,222	38,245	-14	212,500	42,500	-16	257,084	51,415	-21
Mission Valley	9	108,591	12,065	-2	112,700	12,520	-2	120,953	13,440	-3
Northeast	9	104,066	11,560	-1	126,500	11,560	-4	172,968	19,220	-8
Northwest	3	119,837	39,945	-9	138,500	46,165	-11	165,839	55,280	-14
<b>Citywide</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>649,121</b>	<b>21,640</b>	<b>-35</b>	<b>717,700</b>	<b>23,925</b>	<b>-42</b>	<b>851,774</b>	<b>28,390</b>	<b>-55</b>



### Flat Fields (Soccer/Football)

El Paso has 48 “game quality” flat fields used for soccer, football and similar sports. However, many of the current fields in the City are not lit for nighttime use. **The existing level of service is approximately one field for every 13,500 residents.** This level of service is better than average for a city the size of El Paso, but is still short of the City’s target level of service. **Immediate needs are related more to distribution and field quality than overall quantity.**

Distribution of fields is good in the Northwest area, but is considerably worse in the Central and the Northeast Planning areas. **The Central area only has two fields, and the Northeast has six.** Given the difficulty of acquiring land in the Central area, agreements with the area school districts to use school playing fields, as well as increasing the supply at Ascarate Park, may be the most immediate solution. An emphasis on “quick soccer” (soccer played on a basketball sized concrete court) can help maintain access to soccer in the Central area.

Apart from the two complexes at Blackie Chesher and Westside Sports Complex, other parts of the city lack large multi-field complexes with more than three fields.

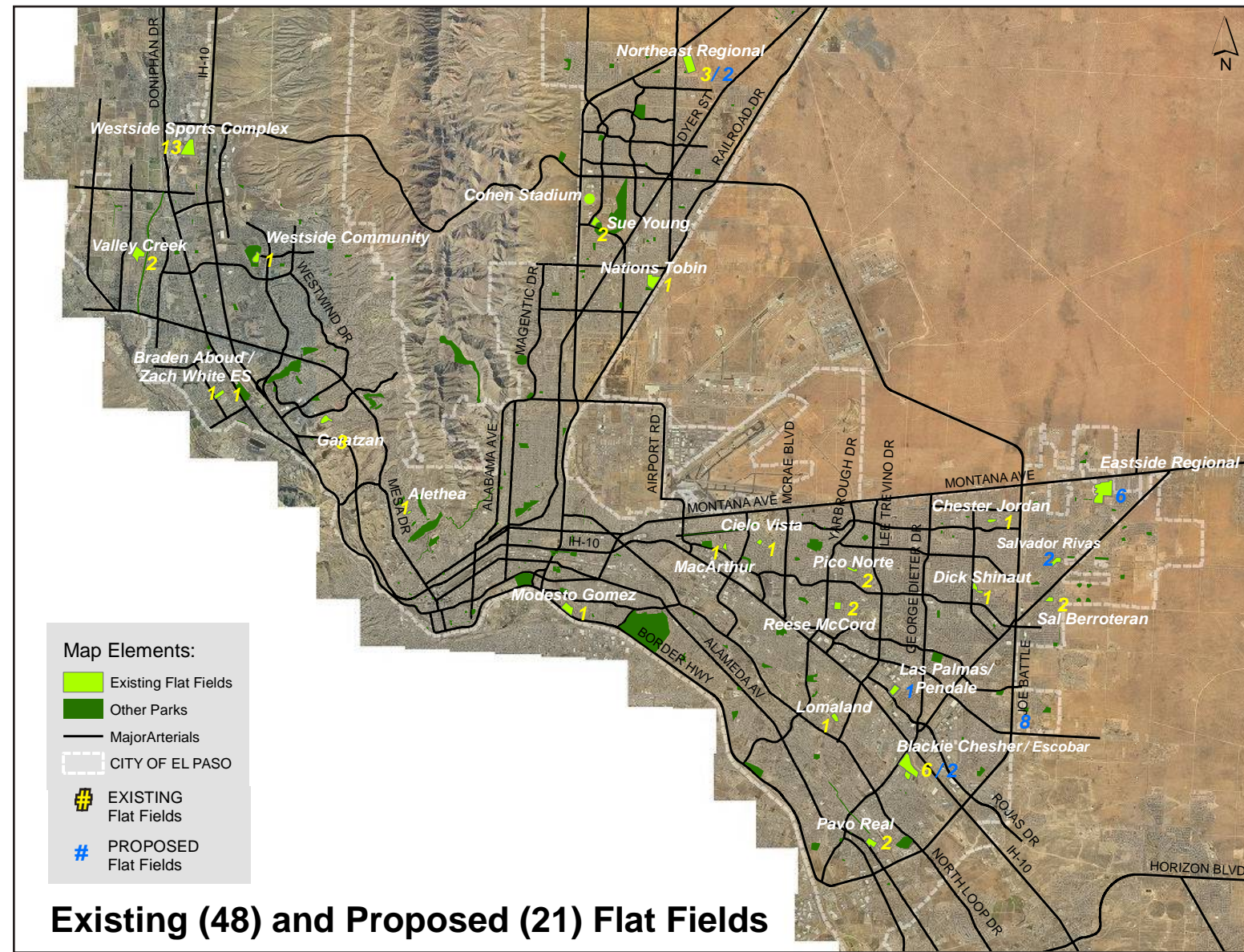


Table 8.3 Summary of Existing Flat Fields in 2012		
Park Name	Planning Area	# of Fields
Alethea	C	1
Blackie Chesher/Escobar	MV	6
Braden Aboud	NW	1
Chester Jordan	E	1
Cielo Vista	E	1
Dick Shinaut	E	1
Galatzan	NW	3
Lomaland	MV	1
MacArthur	E	1
Modesto Gomez	C	1
Nations Tobin	NE	1
Northeast Regional	NE	3
Pavo Real	MV	2
Pico Norte	E	2
Reese McCord	E	2
Saipan Ledo	C	2
Sal Berroteran	E	2
Sue Young	NE	2
Valley Creek	NW	2
Westside Community	NW	1
Westside Sports Complex	NW	13
Zach White Elem. School	NW	1
<b>Citywide</b>		<b>50</b>



Flat Fields Current Level of Service (LOS)

El Paso Population (2010 Census)	Number of Game Fields	Current LOS	Recommended LOS
649,121	50	1 per 13,000 residents +/-	1 true game field for every 10,000 residents +/-
<b>Level of Service - Other Comparable Cities</b>			
Fort Worth	1 competition field for every 10,000 residents		
Reno, NV	1 competition field for every 7,500 residents		
Tucson, AZ	1 competition field for every 12,000 residents		
Albuquerque	1 field for every 5,000 residents (includes non-game fields)		
NRPA Guideline	1 game field for every 10,000 residents		

2020 Population (per Plan El Paso)	Recommended Flat Field Target LOS	Target Number of Game Fields	Surplus/Deficit
717,700 +/-	1 diamond per 10,000 residents	72 fields	<p><b>Deficit of 24 fields</b> without proposed fields</p> <p><b>Deficit of 3 fields</b> with 2012 park bonds (21 fields, including 8 at new sports complex)</p>

Planning Area	Existing Fields	Population 2010			Projected Population 2020			Projected Population 2030		
		Population	1 field per residents	Field Deficit	Population	1 field per residents	Field Deficit	Population	1 field per residents	Field Deficit
Central	4	125,405	31,350	- 8	127,500	31,875	- 8	134,930	33,735	- 9
East	10	191,222	19,120	- 9	212,500	21,250	- 11	257,084	25,710	- 16
Mission Valley	9	108,591	12,065	- 1	112,700	12,520	- 2	120,953	13,440	- 3
Northeast	6	104,066	17,345	- 4	126,500	21,085	- 6	172,968	28,830	- 11
Northwest	21	119,837	5,705	+10	138,500	6,595	+7	165,839	7,900	+4
<b>Citywide</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>649,121</b>	<b>13,000</b>	<b>-15</b>	<b>717,700</b>	<b>14,355</b>	<b>-22</b>	<b>851,774</b>	<b>17,035</b>	<b>-35</b>



### III. General Operational Issues facing Athletics in El Paso in 2012

From a broader sense, the following recommendations should be considered as new facilities for organized outdoor athletics are developed in the City.

**Balance regional vs. neighborhood level access** – The City is now focusing on building regional athletic complexes to resolve the inadequate field supply. El Paso should continue to maintain a balance between facilities for neighborhood play which are generally targeted at younger age groups, and regional facilities which are intended for more advanced players and adults.

The spread-out nature of El Paso requires that regional facilities in each planning area be constructed for both flat fields and diamonds. Development of the Northeast Regional Park and the Westside Sports Complex are good examples, and this trend should continue over the next ten years.

**City leagues and privately run Independent leagues** – Independent leagues continue to provide many of the sports opportunities throughout the City, especially in soccer. The Parks and Recreation Department should continue to coordinate with private leagues to ensure that adequate playing opportunities are provided citywide, and that youth have access to sports if they so desire. Close-in facilities can ease parent concerns over transportation concerns.

**Lack of first-class regional facilities** – In many parts of the City first-class athletic facilities are lacking. The Central area in particular needs access to new sports facilities that provide soccer/football fields.

**Plan for emerging sports** – Lacrosse, rugby, kickball and cricket are four of the faster growing sports in the United States. These can be played on multi-purpose flat fields if gradients and lighting are set up correctly. For new facilities, consideration for these sports should be included.

**Cost recovery for non-city leagues** – Currently, independent leagues are charged \$7 per player for the use of City fields for league games. This amount is extremely low and does not begin to recover the real cost of preparing and maintaining fields. The City should increase this fee and educate independent league players and leaders on the real cost of providing athletic fields.

**Consider more City organized league play for recreational purposes** – Currently, independent leagues provide opportunities for some softball, baseball and soccer play in the City. The Parks and Recreation Department should consider expanding City-provided league play if it can generate a positive revenue flow, and if the inventory of fields increases to support the additional programs.

**Revenue from Concession and Vending Opportunities** – Vending can provide significant revenue at sports complexes. The City should establish policies that restrict outside vending, with the understanding that revenue raised from on-site vending should be used only for park related expenditures. Continue to explore opportunities for revenue generation through concession agreements.





**Transition to Artificial Turf** – Since the previous master plan was published in 2006, the quality of artificial turf has improved dramatically. Recent advances have produced turf that is very real in appearance and yet much more forgiving to athletes. Costs have also come down, and droughts or water shortages in the region have become a major concern.

The development of new facilities over the next 10 years allows the City to test the use of artificial turf in at least one new athletic facility. Artificial turf fields allow for much greater frequency of use, and use significantly less water (i.e., cleaning and cooling) to remain playable. Continued research and testing is needed regarding artificial turf fields.



Image of artificial turf. Photo by Halff Associates

# CHAPTER 9:

## GAP ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO CLOSE THE GAP

### Chapter Contents

- I. Citywide Gap Analysis
- II. Gap Analysis by Planning Area
- III. Proposed Actions to Address Key Park and Facility Needs
- IV. Key Governance and Funding Recommendations
- V. Conclusion - Towards a Brighter Future



## I. Gap Analysis

The previous chapters analyze the condition of El Paso's park system and how each category of facility type is working towards meeting the recreation needs of El Paso's residents. This chapter summarizes the "gap" between existing park facilities and current and future needs, and recommends a series of actions to address those gaps.

- Key needs or gaps are looked at from both a citywide standpoint as well as specifically in each of the five planning areas of the City.
- Gaps are based on a comparison of the number of facilities that are available now with the projected number of facilities that will be needed over the next 10+ years.
- The analysis includes the facilities based on the 2012 Quality of Life Bond.
- A target level of service that has been established for each category.

## II. Citywide Park and Facility Gaps

Table 9.1 shows the most significant outdoor and indoor facility needs across the entire City of El Paso, based on actual 2012 inventory, 2012 Quality of Life Bond projects, and needs for the projected 2020 population.

### Key Outdoor Gaps and Needs

- 1. The City lacks regional parkland** – Even including Ascarate and Chamizal Parks, the City only has 43% of the regional parkland that it needs. Regional parks are critical since they are the most efficient location for large multi-field athletic facilities and facilities that should draw from large sectors of El Paso. Even more importantly, the east side of El Paso with almost 200,000 residents has no large developed regional park space (which would include multi-field athletic facilities).
- 2. El Paso needs additional diamond fields and flat fields citywide** - The City's facilities are currently over-utilized and have little opportunity to rest. The City only has 46% of the recommended number of diamond fields and 74% of the recommended number of flat fields. Diamond fields are needed in the far northwestern and far eastern areas of the City. Flat fields are needed in the eastern, central and northeast areas of the City (Chapter 8).

**3. Many areas of El Paso lack immediate access to trail corridors** – While El Paso residents have many miles of mountain trails in and near the Franklin Mountains, in-town trails that are easily accessed from nearby neighborhoods are not readily available. Citywide, El Paso has less than 50% of the target level of trails. As discussed in Chapter 7, less than 10% of the City is within 1/2 mile of any sort of walking trail that can be used for fitness.

**4. The City lacks leisure pools** – With the exception of the Central area, which has the immensely popular Armijo Pool, no other area of the City currently has this type of feature. Citywide, the available amount of pool space is only 55% of what it should be, and that available pool space is often not actively used because pool spaces are configured for lap swimming and not leisure or "fun" activities.

**5. The City lacks interactive water spray features** – Freestanding interactive water spray features in major parks can provide low cost water recreation experiences for El Paso's youth (Chapters 4 and 6). El Paso only has one city-operated interactive water spray feature at the zoo.

**6. El Paso lacks trailheads to link the City to the Franklin Mountains** – The Franklin Mountains are one of the City's greatest assets, and yet walking access to the mountains is limited to a few informal access points. Following the guidance of Plan El Paso, the City should create a series of gateway parks that link neighborhoods to the foothills of the Franklin Mountains (Chapter 7).

**7. The City needs to continue to reduce water needs for parks** – Continue to reduce areas in parks that need irrigation (turf reduction), and selectively begin to implement synthetic turf athletic fields in new parks throughout the City (Chapters 4 and 8).

**8. The City lacks a premier citywide sports complex** – El Paso lacks a premier sports complex that would bring regional and national tournaments to the City (Chapter 8).

**9. The City lacks preserved open space areas in many parts of El Paso** – Target areas can be along the mountain foothills, arroyos and river corridor. Funding should be appropriated that is in addition to, and independent of, storm water utility actions and fees (Chapter 7).

**10. The redevelopment of Ascarate Park continues to be needed** – Ascarate Park (owned and operated by El Paso County) continues to hold promise as a major recreational and quality of life asset for all area residents (whether City or County). But funding and operational

challenges continue to limit even the simple exploring of possibilities for the park (Chapter 4).

### Key Indoor Gaps and Needs

**1. With only 51% of the citywide target amount of indoor recreation space, major areas of El Paso lack access to indoor recreation opportunities** – Though much of the city's growth in recent years and into the next decade is on the far eastern side of the City, this area has no indoor recreation center east of the Marty Robbins Center. In the growing northwest and northeast areas, existing centers are small and need to be updated. Even the new Don Haskins center in the northwest sector is showing signs of overuse. Citywide, existing centers are limited by their small sizes, and as a result El Paso only has a little over 50% of its target level of recreation center space (Chapter 5).

**2. The City lacks competition natatoriums** – El Paso currently has no significant natatoriums for swimming competitions. Swimming is a fast growing sport, and El Paso has first class swimmers with very few practice and competition venue choices (Chapter 6).

**3. Senior centers need to gradually shift to be combined with recreation centers throughout the City** – Senior centers with the highest rates of usage need minor upgrades and expansion to continue to meet demand. Longer term, a strategic shift to combining existing senior with adjacent or nearby recreation centers should begin (Chapter 5).

## II. Key Gaps and Needs in Each Planning Area

El Paso's size and geographic length (more than 35 miles from one end of the City to the other) result in the need to also establish priority recommendations by sector. The City should pursue grant funding on a sector basis as well as from an overall standpoint. Key needs in each of the five major planning areas in the City are discussed on the following pages.



**Table 9.1  
Citywide Gap Analysis Summary**

Type of Park or Facility	Target Level of Service (unit of measure)	Target Inventory to meet 2010 population	2012 Actual Inventory	Excess/ (Deficit)	Target Inventory to meet 2020 population	2012 Actual Inventory	2012 QOL Bond Projects - Estimated Additions	TOTAL Inventory	Excess/ (Deficit)
<b>Acres of Parkland</b>		Population 2010 (649,121)			Projected Population 2020 (717,700)				
Overall Park Land Ratio (w/ Ascarate and Chamizal)	6 acres/ 1,000 residents	3,894	3,110	(784)	4,306	3,110	59	3,169	(1,137)
Neighborhood Parks (includes pocket parks and close in community parks)	2 acres/ 1,000 residents	1,298	920	(321.5)	1,435	920	24	944	(491)
Community Parks	2 acres/ 1,000 residents	1,298	1,210	(88)	1,435	1,210	35	1,245	(190)
Regional Parks (including 1/2 of Ascarate Park and Chamizal)	2 acres/ 1,000 residents	1,298	555	(743)	1,435	555	0	555	(880)
Access to Parkland (½ mile)	100% of Homes	NA	62%						
Access to Parkland (¼ mile)	75% of Homes	NA	24%						
<b>Facilities</b>									
Diamond Fields (adult size, 300 ft. outfield fence)	1 game diamond/ 10,000 residents	65	30	(35)	72	30	7	37	(35)
Flat Fields (adult size, 50 yards x 100 yards)	1 game field/ 10,000 residents	65	48	(17)	72	48	21	69	(3)
Pools	25 sf for 0.75% of residents	121,750	67,314 (14 pools)	(54,436)	134,569	67,314 (14 pools)	42,500	109,814	(24,755)
Recreation Centers	1 sf/ resident	649,121	334,000 (16 centers)	(315,121)	717,700	334,000 (16 centers)	280,000	614,000	(103,700)
Trails	1 mile/ 10,000 residents	64.9	31.1	(33.8)	71.8	31.1	20	51.1	(20.7)



**Central Planning Area - Summary of Key Gaps and Needs**

The Central area is the most urban area of El Paso, and as a result parks in this sector tend to be smaller but receive a high amount of use. The area has more indoor recreation and pool facilities than other parts of the City, but lacks access to flat fields for soccer and football.

Since the area is largely built out, solutions for this area may vary from other areas. In the denser Central area, the 2 acres of neighborhood parkland per 1,000 residents target may be difficult to acquire. In the developed portions of this area, some parks should be more urban, with larger areas of hardscape and lower amounts of turf.

**Key Outdoor Gaps and Needs - Immediate**

1. A replacement aquatic facility (either pool or interactive water spray feature) for the closed Chelsea Pool (on site or nearby) is critically needed.
2. Additional flat fields are needed. Given the lack of available land in the central area, smaller "quick soccer" courts that are the size of basketball courts may be considered as an innovative alternative.

**Table 9.2  
Central Area Gap Analysis Summary**

Type of Park or Facility	Target Level of Service (unit of measure)	Target Inventory to meet 2010 population	2012 Actual Inventory	Excess/ (Deficit)	Target Inventory to meet 2020 population	2012 Actual Inventory	2012 QOL Bond Projects - Estimated Additions	TOTAL Inventory	Excess/ (Deficit)
<b>Acres of Parkland</b>		Population 2010 (125,405)			Projected Population 2020 (127,500)				
Neighborhood Parks (includes pocket parks and close in community parks)	2 acres/ 1,000 residents	251	152	(99)	255	152	0	152	(103)
Community Parks	2 acres/ 1,000 residents	251	302	51	255	302	0	302	47
Regional Parks (including 1/2 of Ascarate Park and Chamizal)	2 acres/ 1,000 residents	251	155	(96)	255	155	0	155	(100)
<b>Facilities</b>									
Diamond Fields (adult size, 300 ft. outfield fence)	1 game diamond/ 10,000 residents	12	4	(8)	13	4	0	4	(9)
Flat Fields (adult size, 50 yards x 100 yards)	1 game field/10,000 residents	12	2	(10)	13	2	0	2	(11)
Pools	25 sf for 0.75% of residents	23,513	20,566 (5 pools)	(2,947)	23,906	20,566 (5 pools)	7,500	28,066	4,160
Recreation Centers	1 sf/resident	125,405	137,888 (7 centers)	12,483	127,500	137,888 (7 centers)	80,000	217,888	90,388

3. The supply of smaller parks in the area is approximately 60% of the target level of service. Add pocket or urban parks where possible.
4. The Central area lacks trails that link parks or civic facilities together. The area has less than 25% of the target 12 miles of trails.
5. Key community parks that serve the area (Modesto Gomez Park and Grandview Park) need to be renovated and upgraded.
6. Ascarate Park continues to be a major recreational opportunity for area residents, but is under the jurisdiction of El Paso County whose resources are limited. The enhancement of this park is critically needed to provide recreation alternatives for area residents.
7. Trail "gateways" into the foothills of the Franklin Mountains are needed in this area.

**Medium and Longer Term Needs**

8. Beyond San Jacinto Plaza, additional downtown plazas, pocket parks and linear parks are needed as the Downtown area transitions to a 24-hour downtown.
9. A new large "central" park for El Paso in the downtown or Central planning area, as suggested in the 2006 Parks Master Plan and in Plan El Paso should continue to be explored on under-used industrial or railroad properties.

**Key Indoor Gaps and Needs**

1. Because of its popularity and its ability to provide indoor programs and facilities for much of the Central area, the continued expansion of the Pat O'Rourke Center is needed.
2. Improvements to the Grandview Senior Center to create a multipurpose recreation center are needed.



**Northeast Planning Area - Summary of Key Needs**

The Northeast planning area has some well-located parks, but also has significant growth potential that will require additional park facilities. The Northeast Area Master Plan prepared by the Public Service Board (PSB) provides land for some future parks as the area grows. Expansion of the Northeast Regional Park into a large regional park is a high priority for this area.

**Key Outdoor Gaps and Needs - Immediate**

1. The area lacks a regional park that can attract users from all over the planning sector. Northeast Regional Park should be expanded with a wider variety of amenities, so it can serve as the regional park for the area.
2. The area only has 60% of the target level of service for flat fields. More should be added to address population needs.
3. The area continues to lack a major leisure pool facility. Area pools are generally small, dated in their style, and provide only 48% of the target level of service.
4. The area has few trails, and none that extend from park to park. For a population of over 100,000, around 10 miles of accessible close in trails are

Type of Park or Facility	Target Level of Service (unit of measure)	Target Inventory to meet 2010 population	2012 Actual Inventory	Excess/ (Deficit)	Target Inventory to meet 2020 population	2012 Actual Inventory	2012 QOL Bond Projects - Estimated Additions	TOTAL Inventory	Excess/ (Deficit)
<b>Acres of Parkland</b>		Population 2010 (104,066)			Projected Population 2020 (126,000)				
Neighborhood Parks (includes pocket parks and close in community parks)	2 acres/ 1,000 residents	208	177	(31)	252	177	16	193	(59)
Community Parks	2 acres/ 1,000 residents	208	208	0	252	208	35	243	(9)
Regional Parks	2 acres/ 1,000 residents	208	0	(208)	252	0	0	0	(252)
<b>Facilities</b>									
Diamond Fields (adult size, 300 ft. outfield fence)	1 game diamond/ 10,000 residents	10	9	(1)	13	9	0	9	(4)
Flat Fields (adult size, 50 yards x 100 yards)	1 game field/10,000 residents	10	6	(4)	13	6	2	8	(5)
Pools	25 sf for 0.75% of residents	19,512	9,488 (2 pools)	(10,024)	23,625	9,488 (2 pools)	0	9,488	(14,137)
Recreation Centers	1 sf/resident	104,066	84,085 (4 centers)	(19,981)	126,000	84,085 (4 centers)	25,000	109,085	(16,915)

desirable, and the area has less than 10% of that total.

5. The area continues to have few open space preserves within the urbanized developed area of this sector. Opportunities with area detention ponds should be considered.
6. The developed portions of this planning area generally have good access to neighborhood and community parks. Some additional smaller parks totaling up to 30 acres are needed in key areas to improve access.
7. Additional neighborhood and community parks should be developed as the Northeast Area Master Plan is implemented. Park and trail corridors should be an integral and exemplary feature of this area.
8. The area does have some access to trails in the foothills of the Franklin Mountains, especially through Chuck Heinrick Park, but better trailheads with parking are needed.

Additional future trailheads are needed as the Northeast Planning area is developed, and should be pre-planned before area development occurs.

**Key Indoor Gaps and Needs**

1. While the four area centers come close to the total recommended square footage, the existing centers are small and dated, and are in need of expansion and the addition of new amenities. Area facilities that could be expanded or enhanced include Veterans (Northeast) Center and Nolan Richardson Center (which needs a gym and expanded classroom space).
2. Longer term, a new far northeast recreation center north of the Patriot Freeway is needed. This center would serve all of the regional center for all remaining undeveloped lands in the Northeast area.



**Northwest Planning Area - Summary of Key Needs**

Growth in the Northwest planning area is anticipated to be second only to the East planning area, with a population approaching 140,000 by 2020.

Historically, the Northwest area has been underserved with parkland, but the recent development of the Westside Sports Complex and the Westside Community Park, in addition to several smaller parks, have helped alleviate needs in the area. However, west El Paso continues to need additional pool space, community parks, regional parks, trails and open space.

**Key Outdoor Gaps and Needs - Immediate**

1. The most significant gap in the area is the lack of developed community park space. The area only has 30% of the target acreage. The completion of Valley Creek Park would help alleviate this critical gap.

2. The area lacks aquatic facilities, including both a competitive natatorium and leisure pool facilities. Currently, there is only one existing pool serving the entire area. At just 22% of the target level of service, this area has the lowest ratio of pool area to population in the City.

Table 9.4 Northwest Area Gap Analysis Summary									
Type of Park or Facility	Target Level of Service (unit of measure)	Target Inventory to meet 2010 population	2012 Actual Inventory	Excess/ (Deficit)	Target Inventory to meet 2020 population	2012 Actual Inventory	2012 QOL Bond Projects - Estimated Additions	TOTAL Inventory	Excess/ (Deficit)
<b>Acres of Parkland</b>		Population 2010 (119,800)			Projected Population 2020 (138,500)				
Neighborhood Parks (includes pocket parks and close in community parks)	2 acres/ 1,000 residents	240	150	(90)	277	150	8	158	(119)
Community Parks	2 acres/ 1,000 residents	240	71	(169)	277	71	0	71	(206)
Regional Parks	2 acres/ 1,000 residents	240	0	(240)	277	0	0	0	(277)
<b>Facilities</b>									
Diamond Fields (adult size, 300 ft. outfield fence)	1 game diamond/ 10,000 residents	12	3	(9)	14	3	2	5	(9)
Flat Fields (adult size, 50 yards x 100 yards)	1 game field/10,000 residents	12	21	9	14	21	0	21	7
Pools	25 sf for 0.75% of residents	22,463	4,764 (1 pool)	(17,699)	25,969	4,764 (1 pool)	15,000	19,764	(6,205)
Recreation Centers	1 sf/resident	119,800	60,000 (2 centers)	(59,800)	138,500	60,000 (2 centers)	15,000	75,000	(63,500)

3. The area has less than 36% of the target number of diamond fields. New fields need to be developed for the area.

4. The area lacks major trail corridors that link the City to the Franklin Mountains foothills, as well as to other parks in the area. This area has several significant trail corridor opportunities, and development of these is critically needed.

5. The area lacks regional park space with a broad variety of facilities and attractions. Currently there are no regional parks in the area, even in an undeveloped state. The identification of a location and initial planning for that facility, even if not to be funded for another decade, should begin now before development in the area accelerates.

6. The area continues to lack smaller parks within neighborhoods. The current supply is only 60% of the target level of service. However, the need for community park land is

more critical, and should be addressed first. Parkland dedication requirements should also be used to address area neighborhood park needs.

**Key Indoor Gaps and Needs**

1. The area lacks an indoor natatorium for both competitive and fitness swimming. If developed, a leisure pool component should be considered for this facility.

2. The Northwest area only has 50% of its recreation center needs being met with existing facilities. The two current facilities are well placed but need to be enlarged. A third center is needed west of Interstate 10 in the future.

3. The Polly Harris Senior Center needs to be expanded and enhanced to serve as the primary senior facility for the area.



**East Planning Area - Summary of Key Needs**

The eastern sector of the City is one of the fastest growing areas of El Paso, and today nearly exceeds 200,000 residents. The number of neighborhood parks in the newer portions of the East Planning Area has increased significantly over the last six years due to the City's updated Parkland Dedication Ordinance. However, the area is lacking in community and regional parks, and older established neighborhoods are also behind in terms of access to parks. Key needs in this area are as follows.

**Key Outdoor Gaps and Needs - Immediate**

1. The area lacks developed regional parkland in large enough tracts of land that would allow major recreation and athletic facilities to be clustered on one site. Development of the Eastside Regional Park is one of the most important park facility needs across the entire City.
2. Additional flat and diamond fields are critically needed. The current supply for this area is less than 58% of the current need, and this need will get even higher if not addressed within the next 10 years.
3. While ideally there should be 10 to 20 miles of trails in this area, in actuality the area has

Type of Park or Facility	Target Level of Service (unit of measure)	Target Inventory to meet 2010 population	2012 Actual Inventory	Excess/ (Deficit)	Target Inventory to meet 2020 population	2012 Actual Inventory	2012 QOL Bond Projects - Estimated Additions	TOTAL Inventory	Excess/ (Deficit)
<b>Acres of Parkland</b>		Population 2010 (191,222)			Projected Population 2020 (212,500)				
Neighborhood Parks (includes pocket parks and close in community parks)	2 acres/ 1,000 residents	382	281	(101)	425	281	0	281	(144)
Community Parks	2 acres/ 1,000 residents	382	256	(126)	425	256	0	256	(169)
Regional Parks	2 acres/ 1,000 residents	382	92	(290)	425	92	0	92	(333)
<b>Facilities</b>									
Diamond Fields (adult size, 300 ft. outfield fence)	1 game diamond/ 10,000 residents	19	5	(14)	21	5	4	9	(12)
Flat Fields (adult size, 50 yards x 100 yards)	1 game field/10,000 residents	19	10	(9)	21	10	14	24	3
Pools	25 sf for 0.75% of residents	35,854	10,408 (3 pools)	(25,446)	39,844	10,408 (3 pools)	20,000	30,408	(9,436)
Recreation Centers	1 sf/resident	191,222	117,132 (3 centers)	(74,090)	212,500	117,132 (4 centers)	50,000	167,132	(45,368)

no significant trails, and ranks among the lowest in the City in this category. Linear trails along unused utility corridors should be considered.

4. Although major portions of the area are still undeveloped, there is no significant open space preserves in eastern El Paso. Opportunities for preservation or potential acquisition need to be identified.
5. Areas in between Joe Battle (Loop 375) and Lee Trevino are lacking neighborhood parks. The parkland dedication requirements should continue to be used to acquire and develop parks in this area as new development occurs.
6. Beyond the development of the 92 acre Eastside Regional Park, lands for future large community parks or regional parks need to be identified and preserved, even if development is well beyond the year 2020.

**Key Indoor Gaps and Needs**

1. The area has only 30% of the target service for pools. The area also lacks regional aquatic facilities for fitness and competitive swimming. Aquatic facilities should be a base component of the new Eastside Regional Park as it is developed.
2. More than half of this area has no access to indoor recreation. In fact, the fast growing far east area of El Paso has no indoor recreation facilities at all. A new regional "super center" should be considered in the development of the Eastside Regional Park. This center should be multi-generational and consider the needs of both youth and senior residents.
3. The Marty Robbins Recreation Center serves a huge population, and needs to be expanded.





**Mission Valley Planning Area - Summary of Key Needs**

The population of the Mission Valley area is projected to grow more slowly than other parts of the City, but the area continues to have significant facility needs. Parks, pools and recreation centers in the area are aging and need to be updated. The area has limited trails, but does have opportunities for linear parks.

Several neighborhoods continue to lack access to outdoor recreation spaces – these could be addressed with school/parks or park/ponds. The expansion of Yucca Park is planned and should be implemented to address the need for recreation space.

**Key Outdoor Gaps and Needs - Immediate**

- Existing area community and athletic parks need to be renovated and enhanced. These include Shawver, Yucca, Pavo Real and Blackie Cheshier Parks.
- The area has significant potential for linear parks and trail corridors along drainage canals. As is the case in other parts of the City, the supply of trails is less than 25% of the ideal target level of service.

Table 9.6 Mission Valley Area Gap Analysis Summary									
Type of Park or Facility	Target Level of Service (unit of measure)	Target Inventory to meet 2010 population	2012 Actual Inventory	Excess/ (Deficit)	Target Inventory to meet 2020 population	2012 Actual Inventory	2012 QOL Bond Projects - Estimated Additions	TOTAL Inventory	Excess/ (Deficit)
<b>Acres of Parkland</b>		Population 2010 (108,600)			Projected Population 2020 (112,700)				
Neighborhood Parks (includes pocket parks and close in community parks)	2 acres/ 1,000 residents	217	161	(56)	225	161	0	161	(64)
Community Parks	2 acres/ 1,000 residents	217	169	(48)	225	169	0	169	(56)
Regional Parks (including 1/3 of Ascarate Park)	2 acres/ 1,000 residents	217	143	(74)	225	143	0	143	(82)
<b>Facilities</b>									
Diamond Fields (adult size, 300 ft. outfield fence)	1 game diamond/ 10,000 residents	11	9	(2)	11	9	1	10	(1)
Flat Fields (adult size, 50 yards x 100 yards)	1 game field/10,000 residents	11	9	(2)	11	9	2	11	0
Pools	25 sf for 0.75% of residents	20,363	22,088 (3 pools)	1,725	21,131	22,088 (3 pools)	0	22,088	957
Recreation Centers	1 sf/resident	108,600	59,200 (2 centers)	(49,400)	112,700	59,200 (2 centers)	110,000	169,200	56,500

- Area pools, while providing the surface area, are dated and lack leisure pool amenities such as slides. This area needs an investment in pool features such as larger pool areas, zero entry “beach” areas, slides, water playground areas and interactive water spray features.
- The area has 82% of the flat fields needed, and at least two additional flat fields are needed.
- The area has 74% of the desired amount of close in parks, and several areas lack access to a park of any kind. Additional neighborhood parks or linear trail corridor parks can address this need and help create linkages to other parks.

**Key Indoor Gaps and Needs**

- The area has 54% of the recommended target amount of indoor recreation space, and area centers are small and dated. Existing centers such as Carolina and Pavo Real need to be expanded if feasible.
- The area around Lomaland and Yucca Park lacks access to indoor recreation facilities, and a new center may be considered in this area.
- The area lacks an indoor pool for year round aquatic fitness and recreation.



*The new Sandstone Ranch Park in Northeast El Paso exemplifies the evolution of the City's parks system over the past decade. The park has characteristics that readily identify it as an El Paso park, especially with the spectacular Franklin Mountains as a backdrop. Photo by Halff Associates*

### III. Recommendations to Address Key Park and Facility Needs and Gaps

Overall, the El Paso Parks and Recreation System has made enormous strides since the passage of the 2000 Quality of Life bonds. Many parks have been upgraded, and deficiencies in neighborhood parks in newly developing areas of the City have improved due to changes to the City's parkland dedication ordinance.

However, the City continues to have basic parkland space and facility needs. Indoor recreation space is limited, as is the amount of pool space per capita. Funding for the system remains low when compared to other peer cities, and funding for larger, more comprehensive park facilities is needed. Key citywide actions include:

- 1. Develop Regional Park lands** - Development of an east side regional park is the City's highest need (Chapter 4). Development of the Eastside Regional Park lands would be the first regional park (first of its kind) on the eastern side of El Paso.
- 2. Trails and Pathways** - Pathways for riding or walking in each sector of the City should be developed that link schools, parks, recreation centers and other community landmarks together. A minimum of two miles should be developed in each area of the City, and should be expandable to link even more destinations together (Chapter 7).
- 3. Leisure Pools** - Add "water play" features in at least one existing pool in each sector of the City, designating that facility as the "family aquatic center" for that area. These can be added at either indoor or outdoor pools.

Key recommendations for each planning area are summarized on the following pages, and correspond to the assessments of each facility type discussed in earlier chapters.

- Projects that are earmarked for funding through the approved 2012 Quality of Life Bond are noted in the tables.
- Projects with unknown funding sources are considered longer-term.
- Within each of the categories, projects are listed in general order of priority and are intended to establish a sequence for the actions.
- Note that the prioritization in this master plan is intended to guide staff and the City Council, and any item may be initiated sooner than recommended if unique circumstances or opportunities arise.
- For each recommendation, a preliminary order of magnitude cost range for that action is shown.
- Note that these are very early in the development process, and should be refined with detailed facility planning and conceptual design prior to assigning specific capital budgets.

### Central Planning Area: Implementation Plan

Many of the recommendations of the Central area involves renovations to existing parks and facilities. Many of the parks, recreation centers, and swimming pools in this area of the City are some of the oldest in El Paso.

In this largely developed portion of the City, the opening of elementary schools' fields and playground facilities will be a key solution to address neighborhood park deficiencies.

This planning area also has a deficit in the number of flat fields that are available. Bond money has been allocated for the development of scattered flat fields throughout the Central part of the City. Adding approximately eight flat fields will significantly improve the level of service for the Central area residents.

Specific strategies and recommendations to address key needs in the Central area and reduce facility gaps are shown in the illustration on this page and are discussed below. Recommendations for this area are also summarized in Table 9.7 on the following page.

#### Key Outdoor Recommendations - Immediate

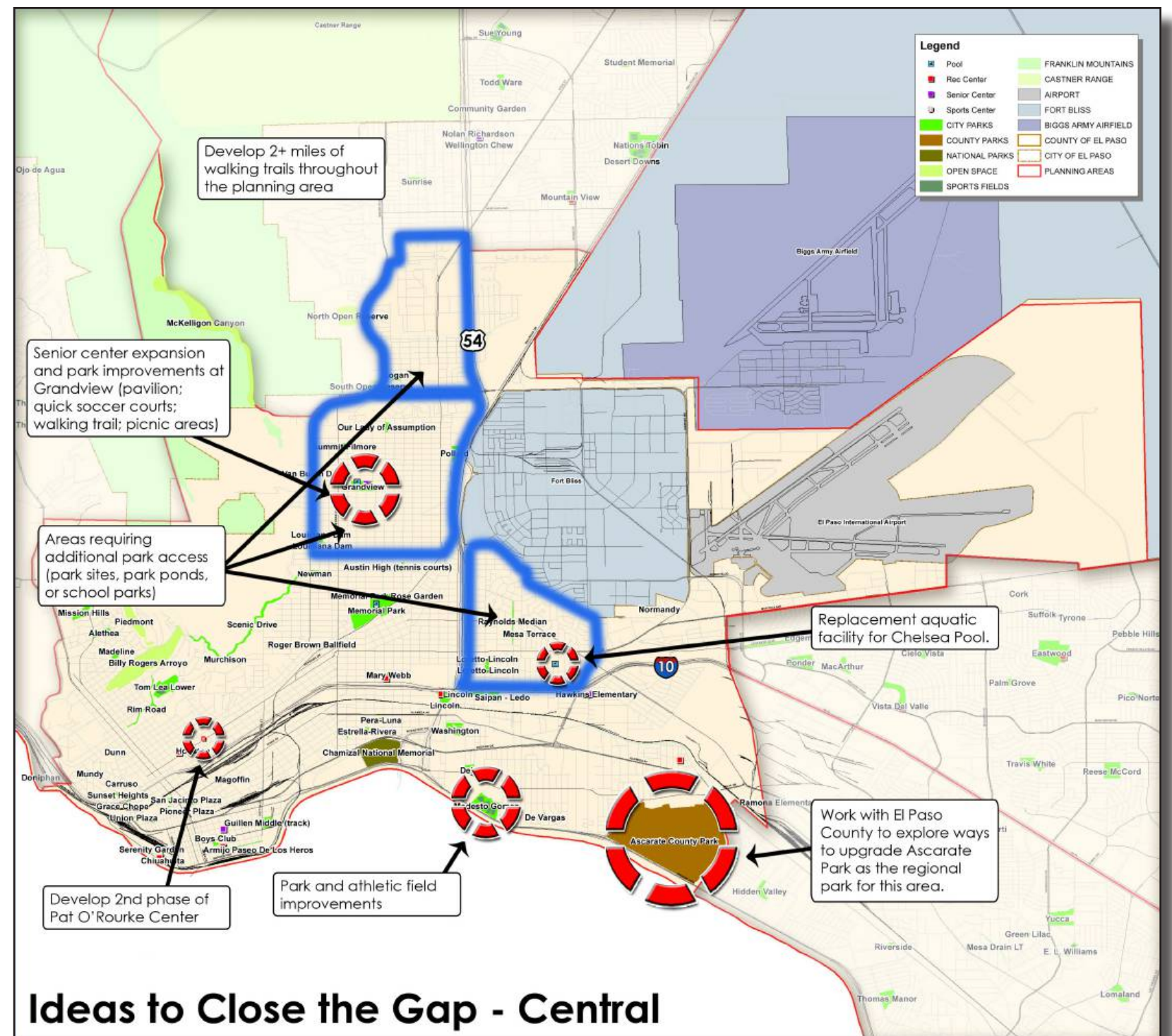
1. Develop a replacement pool or interactive water spray feature for the closed Chelsea Pool. Due to land constraints at the existing pool site, other nearby sites may be considered.
2. Incorporate four "quick soccer" courts into new and existing parks in the area. Because of the difficulty and expense of acquiring land in this largely built out area, the smaller soccer courts provide a unique and innovative location for soccer play that would be unlike any other in El Paso, and perfectly in sync with the urban character of this planning area.
3. To improve park access, develop four new

parks to provide better park access. Locations at Magoffin, Johnson Basin, and Radford neighborhoods have been identified. School park sites may also be considered. School/park combinations may also be considered.

4. Develop two miles of off-street pathways that link parks or civic facilities together. These may occur in linear parks or along roadway or area railroad corridors. In some areas, consider narrowing existing street pavement sections to create a separate linear trail/bikeway facility.
5. Renovate Modesto Gomez Park and Grandview Parks as key community parks for the Central area with new equipment, landscaping, trails, athletic field upgrades and pavilions.
6. Evaluate opportunities to work with El Paso County to improve Ascarate Park and to add facilities. The park has major infrastructure challenges. Although the County has recently made improvements to the entryway, other deficiencies remain including lack of adequate irrigation and overuse of fields, road and parking infrastructure, and the existing pool needs updating and repairs. Lake water quality must be improved and aeration added, and the golf course and clubhouse should continue to be upgraded. While not the primary responsibility of the City of El Paso, effort should continue to be made to partner with the County to implement major renovations.
7. Establish a trail "gateway" into the foothills of the Franklin Mountains in this planning area.

#### Medium and Longer Term Outdoor Recommendations

8. Beyond the currently planned improvements to San Jacinto Plaza, develop additional downtown plazas or urban parks as part of downtown redevelopment efforts. Conversion of streets to pocket or linear parks similar to



Ideas to Close the Gap - Central



Paseo de Los Heroes should be considered to use City owned lands. Identify opportunities for pocket parks in the area and develop if land and funding are available.

9. Longer term, consider creating a new large "central" park for El Paso on under used industrial or railroad properties.

**Key Indoor Recommendations - Immediate**

1. Expand indoor recreation capabilities of the Pat O'Rourke Center by developing the second phase of the project. Due to its modern facilities and central location, this center serves both the central area and residents from other planning areas.

2. Expand and improve facilities at the Grandview Senior Center to create a multipurpose recreation center.

**Table 9.7  
Central Planning Area: Project Implementation Plan**

Action		Acquisition Cost - High Estimate	Development Cost - High Estimate	Funding Source	Projected new inventory	2012 Inventory	Target Inventory for 2020 Pop.	Inventory Still Needed - Excess/ (Deficit)
Neighborhood Parks	Renovate San Jacinto Park		\$3,000,000	2012 Bond				
	Renovate Magoffin Park		\$300,000	2012 Bond				
	Identify and develop one park site in the area between Grandview Park and Memorial Park. Consider a school/park site if feasible	\$250,000	\$750,000	TBD	2 to 5 acres			
	Create "urban" neighborhood park	\$250,000	\$1,500,000	TBD	1 to 3 acres			
	Create "urban" neighborhood park	\$250,000	\$1,500,000	TBD	1 to 3 acres			
	Develop one neighborhood park	\$250,000	\$750,000	TBD	2 to 5 acres			
	Convert Chelsea Pool site into park w/ interactive water spray feature		\$2,250,000	2012 Bond				
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>		<b>\$1,000,000</b>	<b>\$10,050,000</b>		<b>16 max.</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>(87)</b>
Community Parks	Renovate eight acres of Modesto Gomez Park		\$2,400,000	2012 Bond				
	Acquire land and develop an "urban" community park. Consider abandoned industrial or mining lands	\$2,000,000	\$10,000,000	TBD	10 acres			
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>		<b>\$2,000,000</b>	<b>\$12,400,000</b>		<b>10 max.</b>	<b>302</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>57</b>
Regional Parks	Evaluate redevelopment of Ascarate Park along with El Paso County		TBD	TBD				
	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>		<b>TBD</b>			<b>155</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>(100)</b>
Recreation Centers	Expand Grandview Center as a multipurpose center		\$2,500,000	2012 Bond	15,000 s.f.			
	Renovate Pat O'Rourke Recreation Center (Phase 2)		\$2,500,000	2012 Bond	15,000 s.f.			
	New recreation center in the Chamizal area		\$11,000,000	2012 Bond	50,000 s.f.			
	Renovate Armijo Center		\$7,500,000	TBD				
	Combine San Juan and San Juan Senior Centers into one center		\$2,000,000	TBD	5,000 s.f.			
	Renovate the interior of the South El Paso Senior Center		\$1,000,000	TBD				
	Renovate the interior and entrance of the Memorial Senior Center		\$1,500,000	TBD				
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>			<b>\$28,000,000</b>		<b>85,000 s.f.</b>	<b>137,888</b>	<b>127,500</b>	<b>95,388</b>
Pools	Replace Chelsea Pool on a new site in the area	\$500,000	\$4,000,000	2012 Bond	7,500 s.f.			
	Enhance/renovate Grandview Pool		\$2,000,000	TBD				
	Enhance/renovate Delta Pool		\$2,000,000	TBD				
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>		<b>\$500,000</b>	<b>\$8,000,000</b>		<b>7,500 s.f.</b>	<b>20,566</b>	<b>23,906</b>	<b>4,160</b>
Trails	Add two+ miles of in-town trails in the area.		\$1,500,000	2012 Bond	2+ miles			
	Create one gateway park as entrance to Franklin Mountain trails		\$250,000	2012 Bond				
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>			<b>\$1,750,000</b>		<b>2+ miles</b>			
Athletic	Add flat fields/quick soccer courts where feasible		\$5,000,000	2012 Bond	8 fields +/-			
	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>			<b>\$5,000,000</b>	<b>8 fields</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>(1)</b>

TBD - To be determined in the future

### Northeast Planning Area: Implementation Plan

The Northeast sector is one of the fastest growing areas of the City, and as such, major needs will occur. Recommendations to close gaps in this area are as follows.

#### Key Outdoor Facility Recommendations - Immediate

1. Identify lands to be added to the Northeast Regional Park to increase its size and transform it into the regional park for this planning area. Floodplain lands may be added and used for trails or informal play/practice areas. Lands north of the Patriot Highway can also be considered to increase the size of the park.
2. Develop additional flat fields at the Northeast Regional Park.
3. Develop two to four miles of regional linkage trails in the area. Create trail corridors that link parks and civic features together. Consider using power line corridors that cross the area.
4. Develop a major leisure pool in the area. Consider a highly visible location that serves both existing and new parts of the area. This pool may replace one of the existing pools in the area.
5. Develop two trailhead gateways for improved access to the Franklin Mountains trails.
6. Enhance the regional drainage detention area near Railroad and Dyer with trails, practice fields, and interpretive features around the periphery of the detention area.
7. Continue to pursue the permanent preservation of other open space lands in the area, including Public Service Board lands where feasible, portions of the Castner Range, and major drainage ponding areas (where feasible).

8. Develop two additional neighborhood, school/parks or park/ponds to improve access in underserved areas.

#### Outdoor Recommendations - Medium and Longer Term

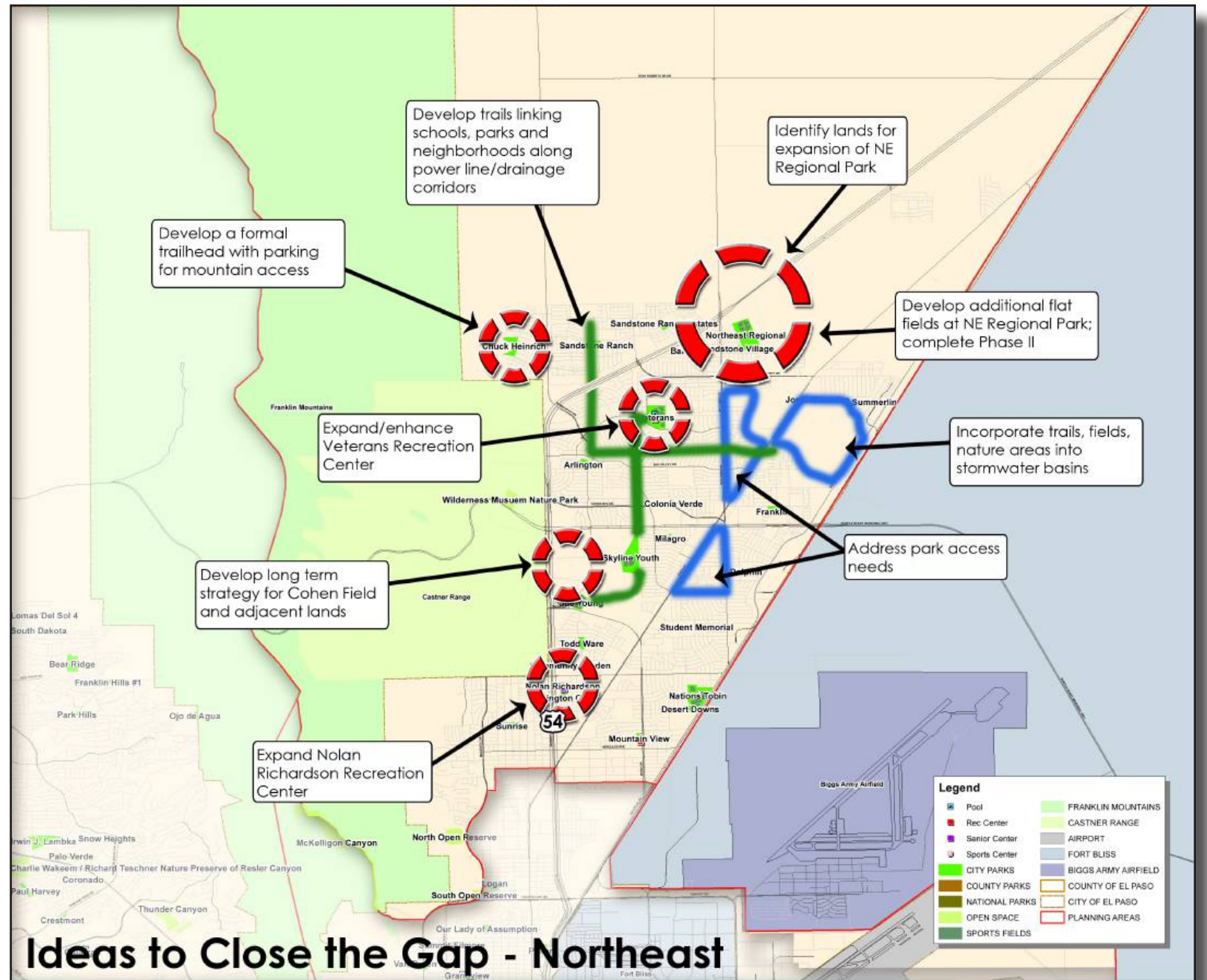
9. Renovate and enhance the existing pool at Nations Tobin. Add interactive water spray feature and slide amenities.
10. Identify a site and develop a new 10 to 20 acre community park north of the Patriot Freeway (Hwy. 54) as the residential population of the area expands.
11. Through parkland dedication, develop neighborhood parks to meet the population growth north of the Patriot Freeway.
12. Expand athletic facilities at Skyline Youth.
13. Renovate the Cohen Field site (50 acres +/-).

#### Key Indoor Recommendations - Immediate

1. Expand and enhance the Veterans (Northeast) Recreation Center to meet expanding population of the area.
2. Expand Nolan Richardson Recreation Center to add gym and classroom space for expanded programming and community recreation classes.

#### Indoor Recommendations - Medium and Longer Term

3. Develop a new far northeast recreation center north of the Patriot Freeway. This center would serve all of the remaining undeveloped lands in the Northeast area, and as such should be planned as a very large regional center.





**Table 9.8  
Northeast Planning Area: Project Implementation Plan**

Action		Acquisition Cost - High Estimate	Development Cost - High Estimate	Funding Source	Projected new inventory	2012 Inventory	Target Inventory for 2020 Population	Inventory Still Needed - Excess/ (Deficit)
Neighborhood Parks	Renovate Barron Park		\$1,500,000	2012 Bond				
	Develop Johnson Basin		\$400,000	2012 Bond	8 acres +/-			
	Develop NE Basin		\$400,000	2012 Bond	8 acres +/-			
	Add amenities to neighborhood parks as development occurs. Land acquired through dedication		\$2,500,000	TBD				
	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>		<b>\$4,800,000</b>		<b>16 max.</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>(59)</b>
Community Parks	Acquire land for new Radford Park	\$1,000,000		2012 Bond	20 acres +/-			
	Acquire land for new Wainwright Park	\$750,000		2012 Bond	15 acres +/-			
	Add concrete skate park and parking to Northeast Regional Park		\$1,600,000	2012 Bond				
	Develop Northeast Regional Park Phase 2		\$2,000,000	2012 Bond				
	Construct sports maintenance storage compound to Northeast Regional Park		\$800,000	2012 Bond				
	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,750,000</b>	<b>\$4,400,000</b>		<b>35 max.</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>(9)</b>
Recreation Centers	Expand Veterans Recreation Center		\$1,500,000	2012 Bond	15,000 s.f.			
	Expand Nolan Richardson Center		\$2,500,000	2012 Bond	10,000 s.f.			
	Expand Nations Tobin Sports Center to add a gym, multipurpose rooms and other recreation activities		\$4,000,000	TBD	20,000 s.f.			
	Renovate the interior of Wellington Chew Senior Center. Create a stronger connection to the Nolan Richardson Recreation Center		\$1,000,000	TBD				
	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>		<b>\$9,000,000</b>		<b>45,000 s.f.</b>	<b>84,085</b>	<b>126,000</b>	<b>3,085</b>
Pools	Convert Nations Tobin Pool into aquatic center for the Northeast		\$10,000,000	TBD				
	Enhance/Renovate Veterans Pool		\$2,000,000	TBD				
	Develop a major leisure pool in the area		\$4,000,000	TBD				
	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>		<b>\$16,000,000</b>			<b>9,528</b>	<b>23,625</b>	<b>(14,097)</b>
Trails	Add two to four miles of in-town trails in the area.		\$3,000,000	2012 Bond	2 to 4 miles			
	Add two to three trail heads to improve access/connectivity to Franklin Mountains nature trails		\$750,000	2012 Bond	NA			
	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>		<b>\$3,750,000</b>		<b>2 to 4 miles</b>			
Ath-letics	Add two lighted flat fields to Northeast Regional Park		\$1,250,000	2012 Bond	2 fields			
	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>		<b>\$1,250,000</b>		<b>2 flat fields</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>(5)</b>

TBD - To be determined in the future

### Northwest Planning Area: Implementation Plan

This area of the City has the most significant need for community parkland when compared to the other four planning areas. The most effective method to address this need is by completing the development of Valley Creek Park.

This planning area currently has two recreation centers. However, both centers have the potential to be expanded into larger regional centers. Long term, another regional center should be constructed in the far northwest area.

There is only one swimming pool located in the Northwest. This pool is small, and the residents in this area are underserved. An approved bond project for a new west side swimming pool will start to alleviate the aquatic need but will still leave a gap towards meeting the target level of service.

Westside Community Park and Westside Sports Complex offer premier athletic fields in El Paso. Because of the Westside Sports Complex, the Northwest planning area is adequately served by the number of flat fields. Two more diamond fields at the Westside Community Park will help to meet the current need for the area and will complete the complex at that site.

Key actions for this area are discussed below. All target actions are shown in Table 9.8 on the following page.

#### Key Outdoor Recommendations - Immediate

1. Develop leisure aquatics facilities for the area. Consider the development of an outdoor leisure pool.
2. Develop two to four miles of trails in the area, so that every area has ready access to a trail corridor.

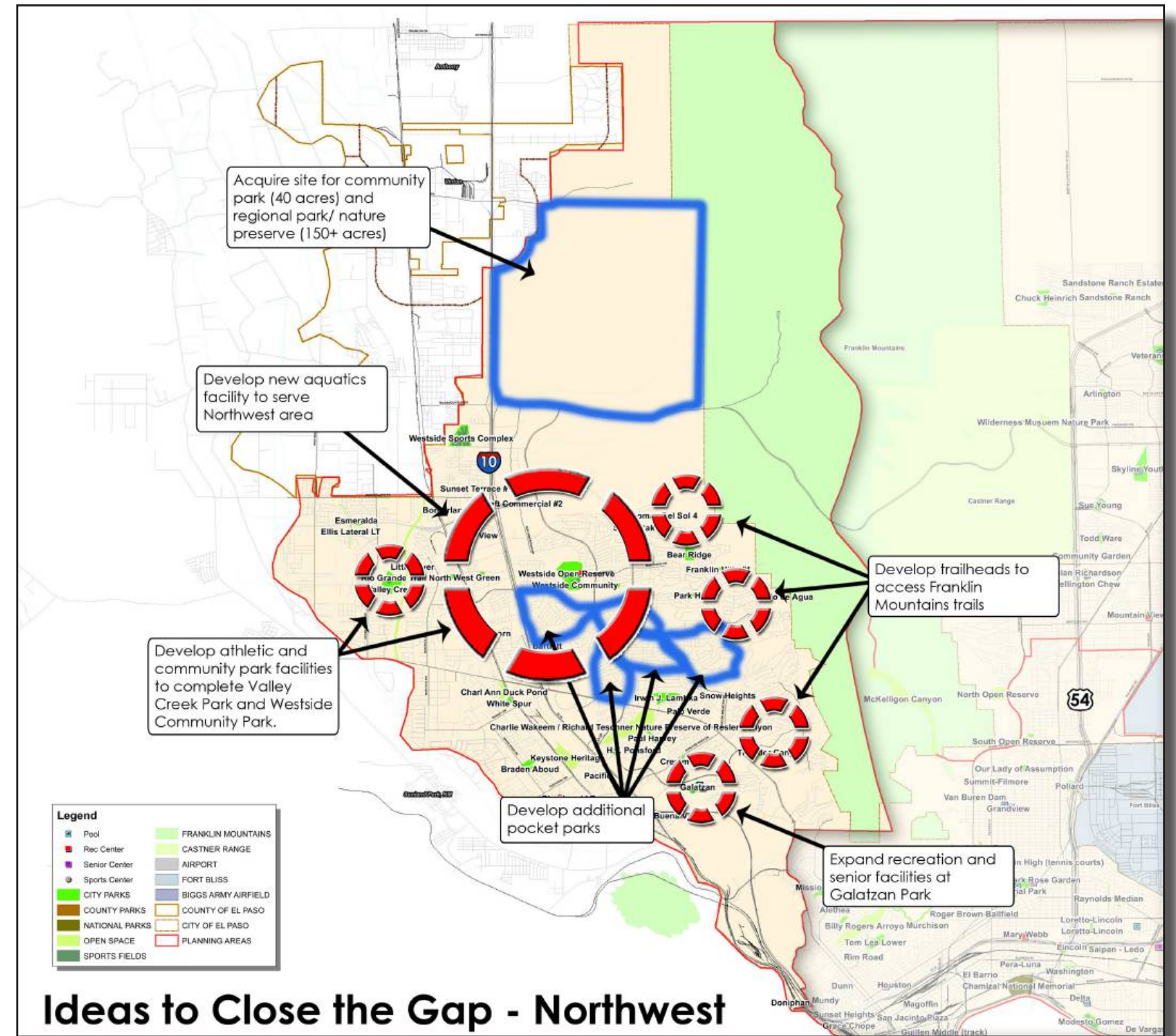
3. Renovate or expand existing neighborhood parks in the area, including Coronado, Balboa, Barlett and Fiesta Parks.
4. Develop three trailhead access park sites (either freestanding or in existing parks) to link neighborhoods to the Franklin Mountains foothills.
5. Develop additional phases of the Westside Community Park.
6. Complete the development of Valley Creek Park as a major community park for the Upper Valley residents of El Paso.
7. Develop three new neighborhood parks in underserved areas (may be pocket and/or school park sites).
8. Continue to acquire funding for open space and arroyo preservation in the area.

#### Medium and Longer Term Recommendations

9. Identify and preserve community and regional park sites north of Highway 375 (Transmountain Road) for future development.

#### Key Indoor Recommendations - Immediate

1. Develop a competitive aquatics natatorium in the area. Select a site that has adequate room for expansion, space for parking and regional access.
2. If feasible consolidate the Polly Harris Senior Center facilities with the recreation center at Galatzan when enhancement occurs.



Ideas to Close the Gap - Northwest



**Table 9.9  
Northwest Planning Area: Project Implementation Plan**

Action		Acquisition Cost - High Estimate	Development Cost - High Estimate	Funding Source	Projected new inventory	2012 Inventory	Target Inventory for 2020 Population	Inventory Still Needed - Excess/ (Deficit)
Neighborhood Parks	Develop Barlett Park Phase 2		\$1,000,000	2012 Bond				
	Acquire new Coronado Park (area north of Mesa)	\$1,750,000		2012 Bond	8 acres +/-			
	Renovate Fiesta/Balboa Park		\$400,000	2012 Bond				
	Identify and develop one school/park or park/pond site	\$250,000	\$750,000	TBD	2 to 5 acres			
	Identify and develop one of two small park sites	\$125,000	\$750,000	TBD	2 to 5 acres			
	Identify and develop two of two small park sites	\$125,000	\$750,000	TBD	2 to 5 acres			
	Add amenities to neighborhood parks as development occurs. Land acquired through dedication		\$2,500,000	TBD				
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$2,250,000</b>	<b>\$6,150,000</b>		<b>23 max.</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>277</b>	<b>(104)</b>	
Community Parks	Develop Westside Community Park Phase 4		\$1,900,000	2012 Bond				
	Expand amenities into available lands around Galatzan Park		\$1,750,000	TBD	10 acres +/-			
	Complete development of Valley Creek Park and improve access		\$7,500,000	TBD				
	Acquire land for future community park in far Northwest beyond Transmountain and east of Interstate 10 and develop initial phase	\$2,000,000	\$7,500,000	TBD	40 acres +/-			
	Expand and redevelop Braden Aboud Park and convert to community park with adjacent school property		\$1,750,000	TBD				
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$2,000,000</b>	<b>\$20,400,000</b>		<b>50 max.</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>277</b>	<b>(126)</b>	
Regional Parks	Acquire and develop a far Northwest regional park north of Transmountain. Note that land acquisition and preservation should be an immediate priority (may be phased)	\$7,500,000	\$15,000,000	TBD	150 acres +/-			
	Consider and if feasible develop regional park presence in proximity to old Asarco site and along Rio Grande River	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD			
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$7,500,000</b>	<b>\$15,000,000</b>		<b>150 max.</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>277</b>	<b>(127)</b>	
Recreation Centers	Expand Polly Harris Senior Center entry		\$1,500,000	2012 Bond	15,000 s.f.			
	Consolidate Galatzan Center with Polly Harris Senior Center to create a west side "super center"		\$4,000,000	TBD	20,000 s.f.			
	Develop a new sports center		\$8,000,000	TBD	35,000 s.f.			
	Develop a far northwest regional "super center." Plan for a combination center and aquatic facility		TBD	TBD	45,000 s.f.			
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>		<b>\$13,500,000</b>		<b>115,000 s.f.</b>	<b>60,000</b>	<b>138,500</b>	<b>36,500</b>	

TBD - To be determined in the future





**Table 9.9 Continued  
Northwest Planning Area: Project Implementation Plan**

Action		Acquisition Cost - High Estimate	Development Cost - High Estimate	Funding Source	Projected new inventory	2012 Inventory	Target Inventory for 2020 Population	Inventory Still Needed - Excess/ (Deficit)
Pools	Develop a new west side natatorium for competition, fitness and leisure use		\$8,000,000	2012 Bond	15,000 s.f.			
	Develop a major leisure pool in the area		\$4,000,000	TBD				
	Enhance/renovate Leo Cancellare Pool		\$2,000,000	TBD				
	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>		<b>\$14,000,000</b>		<b>15,000 s.f.</b>	<b>4,764</b>	<b>25,969</b>	<b>(6,205)</b>
Trails	Add two to four miles of in-town trails in the area.		\$3,000,000	2012 Bond	2 to 4 miles			
	Add two to three trail heads to improve access/connectivity to Franklin Mountains nature trails		\$750,000	2012 Bond	NA			
	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>		<b>\$3,750,000</b>		<b>2 to 4 miles</b>			
Athletics	Add two diamond fields to the Westside Community Park (to complete a complex)		TBD	TBD	2 diamonds			
	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>				<b>2 diamonds</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>(9)</b>

TBD - To be determined in the future



### East Planning Area: Implementation Plan

The East planning area is one of the fastest growing areas of the City. This area is projected to have the largest population of the five areas, with a population projected to exceed 212,000 residents by 2020.

Because of the large population, significant parkland needs will occur for neighborhood, community and regional parkland. It is especially important to develop the Eastside Regional Park. Because it will be difficult to build new parks at a rate that keeps up with the population growth, this large regional park will meet a variety of needs in just one location.

As recommended for the Eastside Regional Recreation Center and Aquatics Center, all future recreation centers and aquatic centers should be combined together instead of near each other. For example, the Marty Robbins Center in this planning area has buildings that are located a quarter of a mile from each other. This layout mandates that each building has its own staff, parking lot, and even signs. It is not as efficient as it would have been if the recreation and pool amenities were combined.

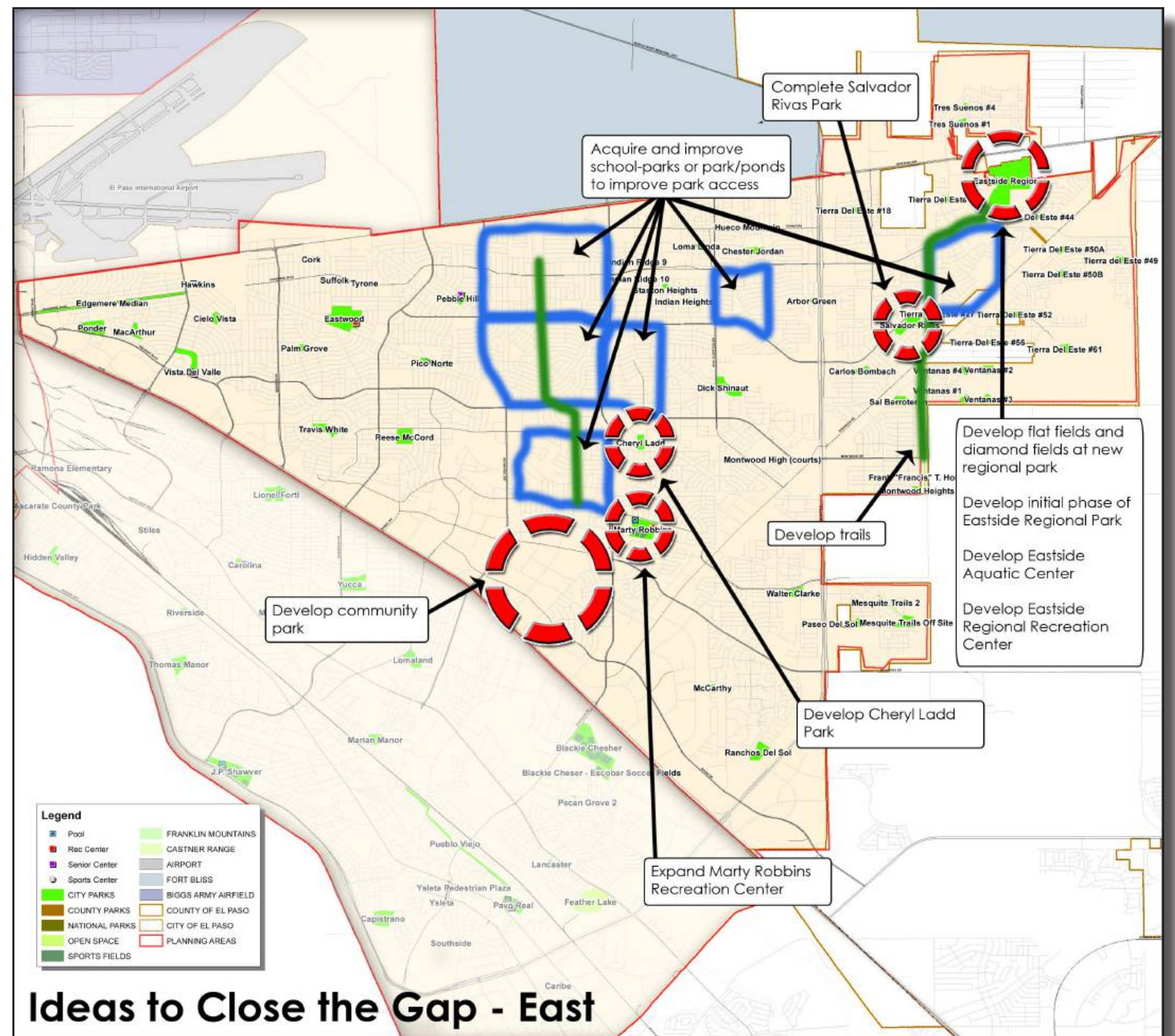
While there is a deficit in the number of flat fields and diamond fields in this planning area, two of the bond projects will help to increase the level of service for the residents. Also, there is a proposed flat fields sports complex that will be constructed which will have 8 to 12 flat fields.

A master plan that incorporates all of the major desired facilities is recommended for the Eastside Regional Park before any development occurs, so that multiple uses for the site can be developed.

Key actions for this area are discussed below. All target actions are shown in the table on the following page.

### Key Outdoor Recommendations - Immediate

1. Develop flat fields and clustered diamond fields at Eastside Regional Park. The proposed development of the regional park is slated to have at least four diamond fields and six flat fields, along with support parking and restrooms.
2. Develop initial phase(s) of other components of the Eastside Regional Park; include spaces for organized and spontaneous outdoor recreation, including walking and bicycling trails, playground areas, park shelters, and outdoor multi-purpose courts.
3. Target the development of two to four miles of trail corridors as connections between parks and other destinations such as schools, civic facilities and retail areas. Along powerline corridors, develop them as linear parks with benches, some landscaping and other amenity features.
4. Target development of Cheryl Ladd Park, as a key park site in a built out area with limited park access.
5. Develop three neighborhood park sites, either on undeveloped lands, as park pond sites, or as school-park sites to address access to park deficiencies west of Joe Battle.
6. Develop a large neighborhood park in the vicinity of Pendale Road. Additional diamond and/or flat fields can be located at the park.
7. Complete the development of Salvador Rivas Park as a key community park for the far east neighborhoods of the City.
8. To supplement the limited aquatic facilities in this area, develop two interactive water spray features in neighborhood or community parks in this sector.



Ideas to Close the Gap - East



Table 9.10 East Planning Area: Project Implementation Plan								
Action		Acquisition Cost - High Estimate	Development Cost - High Estimate	Funding Source	Projected new inventory	2012 Inventory	Target Inventory for 2020 Population	Inventory Still Needed - Excess/ (Deficit)
Neighborhood Parks	Renovate Cheryl Ladd Park		\$1,750,000	2012 Bond				
	Add concrete skate park to Dick Shinault Park		\$800,000	2012 Bond				
	Develop Paseo del Sol Park Phase 2		\$750,000	2012 Bond				
	Identify and develop one of three school/park, park/pond or park sites between Saul Kleinfeld and Lee Trevino Drive	\$250,000	\$680,000	TBD	2 to 5 acres			
	Identify and develop two of three school/park, park/pond or park sites between Saul Kleinfeld and Lee Trevino Drive	\$250,000	\$660,000	TBD	2 to 5 acres			
	Identify and develop three of three school/park, park/pond or park sites between Saul Kleinfeld and Lee Trevino Drive	\$250,000	\$660,000	TBD	2 to 5 acres			
	Add amenities to neighborhood parks as development occurs. Land acquired through dedication		\$2,500,000	TBD				
	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$750,000</b>	<b>\$7,800,000</b>		<b>15 max.</b>	<b>281</b>	<b>425</b>	<b>(129)</b>
Community Parks	Expand Salvador Rivas Park Phase 3		\$1,400,000	2012 Bond				
	Acquire land and develop a new community park west of Loop 375 and north of Montwood. Consider detention area if feasible	\$500,000	\$7,500,000	TBD	10 acres			
	Acquire land for second community park east of Loop 375	\$1,000,000	TBD	TBD	20 acres			
	Acquire land and develop additional community park in the far East	\$1,000,000	\$10,000,000	TBD	20 - 50 acres			
	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$3,500,000</b>	<b>\$18,900,000</b>		<b>80 max.</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>425</b>	<b>(89)</b>
Regional Parks	Master plan and design Eastside Regional Park		\$3,000,000	2012 Bond				
	Develop Eastside Regional Park.		\$18,000,000	2012 Bond				
	Acquire additional land for a regional park in the far East	\$7,500,000		TBD	75 acres +/-			
	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$7,500,000</b>	<b>\$21,000,000</b>		<b>75 max.</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>425</b>	<b>(258)</b>
Recreation Centers	Develop Eastside Regional Recreation Center		\$11,000,000	2012 Bond	45,000 s.f.			
	Expand Eastside Senior Center		\$1,500,000	2012 Bond	5,000 s.f.			
	Expand Marty Robbins Center - add a second gym, additional classroom and fitness facilities		\$3,000,000	TBD	10,000 s.f.			
	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>		<b>\$15,500,000</b>		<b>60,000 s.f.</b>	<b>117,132</b>	<b>212,500</b>	<b>(35,368)</b>

TBD - To be determined in the future



**Table 9.10 Continued  
East Planning Area: Project Implementation Plan**

Action		Acquisition Cost - High Estimate	Development Cost - High Estimate	Funding Source	Projected new inventory	2012 Inventory	Target Inventory for 2020 Population	Inventory Still Needed - Excess/ (Deficit)
Pools	Develop new Eastside Regional Aquatics Center/Natatorium		\$12,000,000	2012 Bond	15,000 s.f.	10,408	39,844	(9,436)
	Develop new Eastside Regional Leisure Pool		\$4,000,000	2012 Bond	5,000 s.f.			
	Renovate Training and Instruction Pool (in Vista del Valle Park)		\$450,000	2012 Bond				
	Enhance/renovate Hawkins Pool		\$2,000,000	TBD				
	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>		<b>\$18,450,000</b>		<b>20,000 s.f.</b>			
Trails	Add two to four miles of in-town trails in the area.		\$3,000,000	2012 Bond	2 to 4 miles	10	21	5
	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>		<b>\$3,050,000</b>	TBD	<b>2 to 4 miles</b>			
Athletics (flat fields / diamond fields)	Develop flat fields sports complex (in site that serves entire City)		\$10,000,000	2012 Bond	8 fields	5	21	(12)
	Develop six flat fields in the Eastside Regional Park			2012 Bond	6 fields			
	Add two flat fields to Salvador Rivas Park		\$1,250,000	TBD	2 fields			
	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>		<b>\$11,250,000</b>		<b>16 flat fields</b>			
	Develop four diamond fields to Eastside Regional Park (as part of bond project)			2012 Bond	4 diamonds			
	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>				<b>4 diamonds</b>			

9. Identify and preserve drainage areas east of Zaragoza and south of Montana as future open desert land preserves.

**Medium and Longer Term Recommendations**

- 10. Identify additional lands for preservation for an additional regional park for the area (since the availability of lands for further expansion of the Eastside site is limited).
- 11. Develop a four field quick soccer complex at a community or regional park in the area.
- 12. Develop an additional four miles of trails linking key destinations (schools and parks).

**Key Indoor Recommendations - Immediate**

- 1. Develop a competitive aquatics natatorium in the area. The Eastside Regional Park site, with parking that can be shared, has been identified as the location for this facility. Combine with leisure pool facilities that can share locker rooms and staffing.
- 2. Develop a far east recreation center to serve the area west of Loop 375. Model as a true regional center, with the availability to grow in size to over 60 to 80,000 square feet in the future. The Eastside Regional Park site is an ideal site for this facility.
- 3. Complete the second phase gym and additional recreation rooms at the Marty Robbins Center.
- 4. Incorporate multi-generational facilities into the proposed Eastside Recreation Center, rather than developing a new senior center for far East El Paso.

### Mission Valley Planning Area: Implementation Plan

While the residents in this planning area have easy access to Ascarate County Park, there is still a significant deficit in terms of community and regional parkland. Developing a community park in the Las Palmas/Pendale area will help to alleviate this need. Long term, the City should look to acquire land for a regional park that is at least 75 acres in size.

The current square footage of indoor recreation space is only half of the target level of service. However, there are two bond projects to construct new recreation centers in the Alameda area and Yucca or Lomaland area. With the addition of these two centers, Mission Valley area residents will be adequately served by indoor recreation space.

There are currently two outdoor pools and one indoor pool in this planning area. It is recommended to enclose one of the outdoor pools so that they can better serve the residents all year.

In order to meet the target level of service for flat fields, two lighted flat fields should be added at Blackie Chesher Park.

Key actions for this area are discussed below. All target actions are shown in the table on the following page.

#### Key Outdoor Recommendations - Immediate

1. Develop two additional flat fields for soccer and football at Blackie Chesher Park.
2. Renovate and enhance sports fields and community park amenities at Shawver Park.
3. Enhance Pavo Real pool to become the regional aquatics facility for the Mission Valley area. Consider that enclosure of the pool would

provide additional opportunities for fitness and competitive swimming, but should also include much needed leisure amenities comparable to those found at Armijo Pool.

4. Develop two miles of linear parks along existing irrigation canals or drainage corridors. Include amenity features, lighting for nighttime use and access connections to surrounding neighborhoods. Consider using the Playa Drain corridor for this purpose.
5. Expand Yucca Park to include additional park amenities such as trails, pavilions, multipurpose court, or interactive water spray feature.
6. Develop four new park sites, either through park/pond combinations or by school/park enhancements.

#### Medium and Longer Term Needs

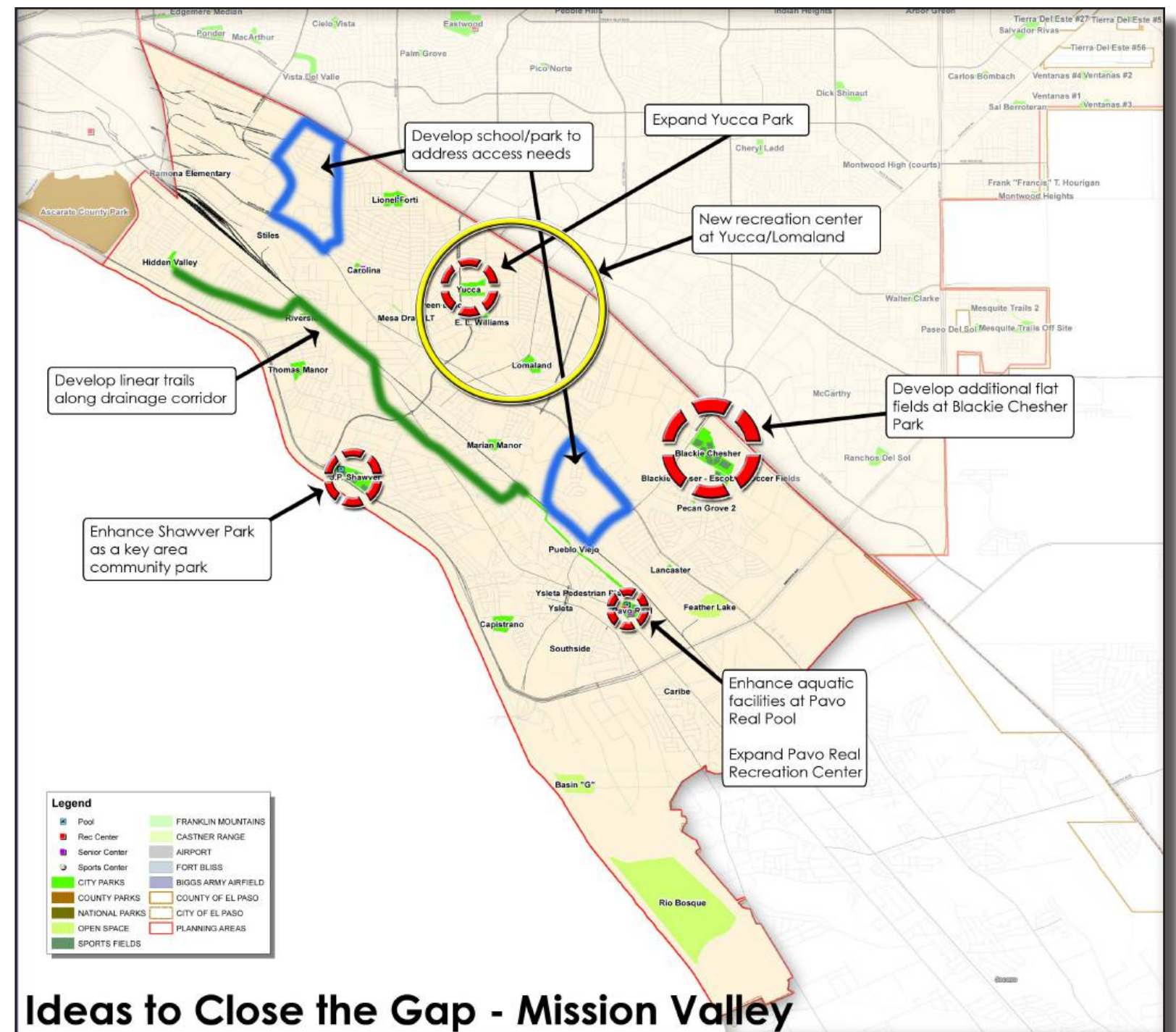
7. Develop additional phases of linear park corridors with trails along the Playa Drain.
8. Develop four quick soccer courts in the area.

#### Key Indoor Recommendations - Immediate

1. Build a new recreation center in vicinity of Lomaland or Yucca Park.
2. Enhance Pavo Real Recreation Center.

#### Medium and Longer Term Needs

3. Combine the nearby Fr. Martinez Senior Center with the Pavo Real Recreation Center.



Ideas to Close the Gap - Mission Valley



**Table 9.11  
Mission Valley Planning Area: Project Implementation Plan**

Action		Acquisition Cost - High Estimate	Development Cost - High Estimate	Funding Source	Projected new inventory	2012 Inventory	Target Inventory for 2020 Population	Inventory Still Needed - Excess/ (Deficit)
Neighborhood Parks	Add landscaping extension along right-of-way of Adrian Garcia Park		\$250,000	2012 Bond				
	Identify and develop one of three school/park or park/pond sites	\$250,000	\$750,000	TBD	2 to 5 acres			
	Identify and develop two of three school/park or park/pond sites	\$250,000	\$750,000	TBD	2 to 5 acres			
	Identify and develop three of three school/park or park/pond sites	\$250,000	\$750,000	TBD	2 to 5 acres			
	Identify and develop one neighborhood park	\$250,000	\$750,000	TBD	2 to 5 acres			
	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,000,000</b>	<b>\$3,250,000</b>		<b>20 max.</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>(44)</b>
Community Parks	Expand Yucca Park Phase 3		\$1,100,000	2012 Bond				
	Renovate sports fields at Shawver Park		\$1,500,000	2012 Bond				
	Develop Las Palmas/Pendale area community park		\$5,000,000	2012 Bond				
	Add sports maintenance storage compound at Blackie Chesher Park		\$800,000	2012 Bond				
	Add improvements to Shawver Park		\$1,750,000	TBD				
	Add improvements to Pavo Real Park		\$1,750,000	TBD				
	Expand Blackie Chesher to adjacent City lands south of Escobar Road		\$2,500,000	TBD	5 acres			
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>		<b>\$14,400,000</b>		<b>5 max.</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>(51)</b>	
Regional Parks	Acquire land for a regional park	\$3,750,000		TBD	75 acres +/-			
	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$3,750,000</b>			<b>75 max.</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>(50)</b>
Recreation Centers	Upgrade entry of Pavo Real Recreation Center		\$2,000,000	2012 Bond	10,000 s.f.			
	Develop new recreation center in the Alameda area		\$11,000,000	2012 Bond	50,000 s.f.			
	Develop new recreation center in the Yucca or Lomaland area		\$11,000,000	2012 Bond	50,000 s.f.			
	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>		<b>\$24,000,000</b>		<b>110,000 s.f.</b>	<b>59,200</b>	<b>112,700</b>	<b>56,500</b>
Pools	Renovate and enclose Lionel Forti Pool		\$4,000,000	2012 Bond				
	Enclose Pavo Real Pool		\$2,000,000	2012 Bond				
	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>		<b>\$6,000,000</b>			<b>22,088</b>	<b>21,131</b>	<b>957</b>
Trails	Add two to four miles of in-town trails in the area.		\$3,000,000	2012 Bond	2 to 4 miles			
	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>		<b>\$3,000,000</b>		<b>2 to 4 miles</b>			
Athletics (flat fields /diamond fields)	Add two lighted flat fields at Blackie Chesher Park		\$1,750,000	2012 Bond	2 fields			
	Add one flat field to Las Palmas/Pendale area community park (as part of bond project)			2012 Bond	1 field			
	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>		<b>\$1,750,000</b>		<b>3 flat fields</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1</b>
	Add one diamond field at new Las Palmas/Pendale area community park (as part of bond project)			2012 Bond	1 diamond			
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>				<b>1 diamond</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>(1)</b>	



## IV. Key Governance and Funding Recommendations

### 1. Annual operating funding must be provided to maintain and operate facilities -

The \$32+/- per capita expended on operations, programming and administration (by both the Parks and Recreation Department and by General Services) is a significant improvement over recent years but is still very low for a city the size and breadth of El Paso.

The 2006 Master Plan recommended a target level of \$38+/- per capita to fully operate the system by the year 2012. Adjusted for inflation, the target amount is now closer to \$41 per capita. The recommended expenditure amount allows for increased programming of facilities, improved maintenance, replacement of systems in buildings and pools in a timely fashion, and the ability to staff new facilities as they are brought on line. Because of the intervening global economic downturn, this target may have not been achievable, but should be set as a near term target.

### 2. Perform an annual performance review to ensure that parks and facilities are maintained to a level that is acceptable to the citizens of El Paso.

### 3. As recommended in the 2006 Parks and Recreation Master Plan and reinforced in this update, include a capital equipment and major repairs line item in the department's budget -

This is especially critical given the age of many of the parks and building facilities in the City. This is needed to address key replacement needs in a timely fashion to efficiently extend the useful lifespan of City assets, and can yield significant longer term savings.

Even if only \$500,000, (less than one quarter of one percent (0.25%) of the total value of the Parks and Recreation system infrastructure), this amount would help replace and more adequately maintain the 48+ buildings and the hundreds of outdoor structures and out-buildings that are part of the Parks and Recreation system.

### 4. Ensure that fees for programs and athletics are adequate but reasonable -

Fees should be adjusted periodically and increased if necessary to provide high quality facilities and services that are not unreasonably subsidized.

Different parks and recreation facilities will require different funding strategies. While small improvements to existing parks and most trails can be built with local funds, other parks, open spaces and large facility projects may be able to contend for federal or state funds. This section provides brief descriptions of these funding implementation assistance opportunities.

## Key City Generated Funding Sources

**General Fund Expenditures** - General fund expenditures are primarily used for operations and minor improvements.

**Municipal Development District (MDD)** - Sales tax revenue is used to fund a variety of infrastructure needs throughout many cities in Texas. Allocations in future years may be used to address needs identified in this parks master plan update.

**TIRZ Districts** - Establishing a TIRZ district allows for the property tax revenue generated in that district to be used to fund public improvements.

**Voter Approved Bond Funds** - The City is currently pursuing a parks and recreation bond package for 2014 that will fund most of the high priority recommendations of this master plan update.

**Park Facility Funding Through Parkland Dedication Ordinance** - This ordinance provides some lands and/or funding for the development of neighborhood parks throughout the City in new residential developments.

**Sales Tax Revenue** - Sales tax revenue from the city's 4B fund can be used for community facilities such as parks, trails and recreation buildings, subject to approval by voting by the citizens of El Paso. While each project or group of projects would have to be approved by citizen vote, this option should be considered for projects with significant community-wide benefit.

## Key Grant Funding Sources

Grants can provide a significant source of additional funding for parks, but should not be considered as the primary source for park construction.

**Texas Parks and Wildlife Department** - Texas Recreation and Parks Account (TRPA) is the primary source for parks grants in Texas, and in addition provides funding for recreational trails. Up to a 50 percent match can be obtained, up to \$500,000 for new parks and trail facilities. Grant applications that stress joint funding and support from two or more local entities may have a greater chance of contending for the TRPA grants. These grants are highly competitive, and in recent years there have been far fewer grants available or awarded due to State budget restrictions. When the grants are available, the typical deadline to submit an application is March 1st and August 1st every year.



**Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)** - This fund is divided into two funding categories: state grants and federal acquisition. The state grants are distributed to all 50 states, DC, and other territories based on factors such as population. State grant funds can be used for park development and for acquisition of parkland or easements.

**Statewide Transportation Enhancement Program** - This program provides monetary support for transportation activities designed to strengthen the cultural, aesthetic and environmental aspects of the transportation system. Typically, funds can be used for trails and streetscape related projects. Funding is on a cost reimbursement basis, and projects selected are eligible for reimbursement of up to 80% of allowable costs. This funding program is not available on a yearly basis, but intermittently only, often in two to five year periods. A deadline for a submission was late last year, so the next opportunity for funding under this program is unknown at this time. These funds, while difficult to work with, are becoming more responsible to real world costs, and should be seriously considered since they remain one of the few sources of outside funds.

**Indoor Recreation Grants** – These grants are available to local governments for the construction or renovation of indoor recreation facilities. This assistance is in the form of 50% matching grant funds up to \$750,000. Local governments must apply, permanently dedicate the building for public recreational use and assume responsibility for operation and maintenance. This grant program is currently suspended, and funding amounts may be limited over the next few years.

**Recreational Trails Program (RTP)** – These funds can be spent to construct new recreational trails, improve/maintain existing trails, develop/improve trailheads or trail side facilities, and acquire trail corridors/easements. It is a cost reimbursement program. Projects may range in total cost between \$5,000 and \$100,000.

**Environmental Protection Agency** – The EPA can provide funding for projects with money collected in pollution settlements, or with funding targeted at wetland and habitat preservation or reclamation.

**Foundation and Company Grants** – These can assist in direct funding for projects, while others exist to help citizen efforts get established with small seed funds or technical and publicity assistance.

**Grants for Greenways** – This is a national listing that provides descriptions of a broad spectrum of both general and specific groups who provide technical and financial support for greenway interests.

**Partnering with Volunteer Groups** – Partnering with volunteer groups can be helpful when constructing trails or playground equipment. Their effort can be used as part of the required match for many grants such as the Recreational Trails Program. There

are a variety of sources for volunteers including: user groups, local residents, corporate community service initiatives, and business and civic support groups.

**Parks Foundation** - Parks foundations are non-profit organizations and another source for volunteers. People can make tax deductible donations to a foundation, which in turn provides financial support and volunteer time to a city's parks system. Parks foundations often assist with physical improvements to a park or support recreational programming. They essentially help fill the gap between what needs to be done and what a parks and recreation department can afford to do.

## V. Conclusion – Towards a Brighter Future

Fundamentally, El Paso continues to have the framework for a world-class parks and recreation system. The natural features of the area and the man-made form of the City create a wonderful palette with which to work. The creativity is there – witness the many beautiful parks and buildings that exist all over El Paso. And the citizens of El Paso use and appreciate their parks as much as anyone else in the United States.

Historical under funding of the system because it has been in a catchup mode has been its major weakness. This has resulted in:

1. Not being able to keep up with development of new facilities to address population growth.
2. When new facilities are built, they are under-sized for the populations' needs.
3. \$2.5 million in deferred maintenance in “D” rated facilities has been identified. Funding to repair those deficiencies should be a priority.

The infusion of funding from the 2000 and 2004 Bond packages resulted in park upgrades everywhere in the City and the development of creative parks, recreation buildings and pool upgrades that any city would be proud of. The system has made enormous strides since 2000.

**The system is now at a turning point – the system is a good one now, but can it become a great park system? To accomplish that, the challenge ahead is as follows:**

- Whether through bonds or annual funding sources, the City must focus on larger more capital intensive components of the parks system; larger regional and community parks, new recreation buildings, a premier sports complex, and new and different aquatic facilities. These are expensive and operationally intensive,





but they are the heart of any good Parks and Recreation Department.

- Funding for staffing, programming and necessary training must continue to increase, especially as new facilities are added. Staff ratios need to increase for both safety and customer service.
- Care must be given to ensure that the new investments in parks are maintained at a high level, regardless of which department maintains them. Accountability to the City Council for this is important.
- Trails and open space are a key part of the City's future image, and they must be greatly accelerated. They should be made a part of everyday decision making with reliable, ongoing funding sources.
- Partnerships will continue to be a major part of the future success of the system. They will involve every governmental entity, from the City and County to each of the area school districts and the State of Texas. They will also include other City departments, all working to make El Paso a better place to live in. The development community will be critical to help implement parts of the park system of tomorrow. Everyone must work together and be invested in improving El Paso's parks, trails, recreation facilities, and open spaces.
- The City should continue to aggressively pursue outside grant funding where feasible.

This plan continues the vision created in the 2006 Park Master Plan. The plan for today is well underway, and the way to a "Bright Future" for the City and everyone who lives in El Paso is now becoming much clearer. The future can be bright, but it is not guaranteed. Residents of El Paso have spoken – they want to continue the transformation of their parks and recreation system into a great system.