

I. Introduction

Community Profile and Population

Harris County was established in 1837 while Texas was still a Republic. The County, which encompasses 1,788 square miles, holds within its borders all or parts of over 30 separate municipalities including most of the City of Houston. The County is divided into 4 Commissioner Precincts.

Harris County is the third most populated county in the United States. According to the 1998 Texas A&M study, *Texas Outdoors: A Vision for the Future* which was commissioned by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), the estimated year 2000 population for Harris County based on the 1990-94 growth scenario is 3,298,155 and the projected population for year 2005 is 3,521,250. The tables below show additional demographic data documented in the A&M Study.

Harris County Race/Ethnicity Composition

Race/Ethnicity	Estimated Year 2000	Projected Year 2005
Anglo	49%	45%
Hispanic	28%	31%
Black	18%	18%
Other	5%	6%

Harris County Age Group Composition

Age Group	Estimated Year 2000	Projected Year 2005
0 to 4	8%	7%
5 to 14	17%	16%
15 to 19	7%	7%
20 to 24	6%	7%
25 to 34	14%	13%
35 to 44	18%	16%
45 to 64	22%	25%
65 to 74	5%	5%
75 and over	3%	4%

The A&M Study suggests that as the increase in population creates additional demand for recreational facilities and services, the shift in the ethnic and age demographics will lead to a change in the types of facilities and services in demand.

Harris County Economic Profile

The following income related demographics were gathered by the U.S. Census Bureau and documented in the *1999 America Community Survey Profile for Harris County, Texas*. All income figures are in 1999 inflation adjusted dollars.

Estimated Median Household Income \$40,630.00

Estimated Mean Household Income \$56,343.00

Estimated Percentage of Total Households by Annual Income and Benefits

Less than \$5,000	3.8 %
\$5,000 to \$9,999	5.3 %
\$10,000 to \$14,999	6.2 %
\$15,000 to \$24,999	13.9 %
\$25,000 to \$34,999	13.5 %
\$35,000 to \$49,999	17.1 %
\$50,000 to \$74,999	18 %
\$75,000 to \$99,999	10 %
\$100,000 to \$149,999	7.6 %
\$150,000 or more	4.6 %

Number Below Poverty Level in Past 12 Months

Families	93,337
Individuals	444,493
Individuals 18 years and over	259,319
Individuals 65 years and over	25,702
Related children under 18	180,218
Unrelated individuals 15 years and over	102,259

Need for Master Plan

Historically, the County park system has been developed and managed at the precinct level with minimal coordination between precincts. While the development and management of parks will remain in the hands of the precincts, the County wishes to develop a more global approach to long range planning.

Furthermore, as the County population and density increases, cooperation and coordination between the County, the municipalities within its borders, surrounding counties and various regional agencies will become critical in developing strategies to address issues such as:

- Growth in park land and displacement of other land uses
- Redevelopment of railways and roadways into bikeways
- Development of greenways along waterways
- Development of waterways for recreational use
- Balance between active recreation and ecological concerns
- Balance between passive recreation, conservation and habitat restoration
- Sustaining biodiversity in the urban landscape

Phased Study

This Phase I of the master plan is an initial investigation that focuses on the County's facilities over the five-year period of 2001 – 2005 with particular focus on the unincorporated areas of the County.

It is anticipated that Phase II of the master plan will be broader in scope and will include the review and analysis of a consolidated inventory of all park and recreational facilities within the County's borders inclusive of all municipal facilities not owner by the County.