

IV. Park Classifications and Inventory

Park Classification System and Service Areas

All parks can be classified within one of six categories. The purpose of classifying the park system is to ensure a balanced development of parks throughout the County. A comprehensive Park System helps to promote business development, enhance the quality of residential development, beautify the County, offer public recreational and leisure opportunities, preserve open space and promote utilization of natural resources. There are six classifications of parks within the Harris County Park system, Mini-Parks, Neighborhood Parks, Community Parks, Regional Parks, Greenway Parks and Special-Use Parks. Service areas help to determine the extent of park coverage for differing types of park facilities throughout the County.

Mini-Parks

Mini-Parks are small pieces of parkland that are less than five acres and are meant to serve a residential or business area within a one-quarter mile radius. Due to their limited service potential and maintenance inefficiencies their acquisition and development should be limited. One potential area of importance for the development of Mini-Parks is to create pockets of park development along trails and greenbelt corridors. In general these parks serve a passive need and normally do not require vehicular parking.

Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood Parks serve a wide range of recreational needs within the community and are sized between five and twenty-five acres. The service area for a Neighborhood Park is one-half mile radius. These parks serve as the recreational and social links within residential communities. Neighborhood Parks should accommodate a wide variety of recreational needs and ages. These parks can supply both passive and active needs within the community

Neighborhood Parks should provide both pedestrian access as well as vehicular access and the site is sized so that both passive and active recreation can coexist within the park. These parks should be located outside of floodways and drainage easements, but may be located adjacent to them. Where possible these sites should be located along the trail system and greenbelt corridors.

Community Parks

Serving a larger spectrum of the population are Community Parks that range in size from twenty-five to one hundred fifty acres. The service area for a Community Park is a two-mile radius. Park development should not only address active needs, but should also meet the passive needs of the community as well as the protection of natural resources. Adequate public access is important for the use of these parks and adequate buffers should be developed to protect adjacent residential users from perceived park annoyances or to buffer the park from commercial or industrial development. Both active and passive recreation should be addressed within Community Parks and lighted sports facilities should be incorporated into this size park where appropriate. The County development of "Super Sports Complexes" should fall within Community Parks

or the larger Regional Parks. Vehicular access and parking should be an important consideration in the development of Community Parks although they should also be linked to the trail and greenway system.

Regional Parks

A park that serves the needs of an entire community or region and is greater than 150 acres is classified as a Regional Park. These parks not only serve the active and passive recreational needs of the larger community, but also help in the preservation of large open spaces with valuable natural features. Regional Parks have a service area radius of ten-miles. A wide variety of passive and active recreation facilities including "Super Sports Complexes" can be developed within Regional Parks. Matching the needs of the population with the physical restraints of the land will allow for appropriate development of these large park parcels.

Greenway Parks

Often a linear development of open space along waterways, utility easements and roadways, Greenway Parks provide open space, physical buffers, corridors for trails and passive recreation to specific neighborhoods unless tied into a trail system. There are no size criteria or service areas for a greenway park. These parks, whether developed or not provide a green spine that should tie into the park system for the County. Access points should be provided where trails are incorporated; gateways with vehicular parking are important features.

Special Use Parks

Special Use Parks are generally single purpose facilities that serve the greater community's needs. These facilities vary in size and natural, cultural or recreational hubs within the County determine their location. As with the Greenway Parks there are no size criteria or service areas associated with Special Use Parks.

Park Classification Matrix

CATAGORY	SERVICE AREA	SIZE	POPULATION SERVED	TYPICAL FACILITIES
MINI-PARK	¼ MILE RADIUS	0 – 5 ACRES	500 – 2500	PLAYGROUND, LAWN, BENCHES, SPECIAL FEATURES
NEIGHBORHOOD	½ MILE RADIUS	5 – 25 ACRES	2000 – 10,000	PLAYGROUND, PICNIC, SHELTERS, COURTS, FIELDS, RESTROOMS, PARKING
COMMUNITY	2 MILE RADIUS	25 – 150 ACRES	10,000 – 50,000	TENNIS, SPORTS FIELDS, PICNIC, SHELTERS, TRAILS, POOLS, RECREATION CENTERS, OPEN SPACE, RESTROOMS, PARKING
REGIONAL	10 MILE RADIUS	150 + ACRES	URBAN AREA	TENNIS, SPORTS FIELDS, LAKES, SWIMMING, CAMPING, TRAILS, BRIDLE PATHS, GOLF, NATURE AREA, RESTROOM PARKING
GREENWAY	NA	NA	NA	PLANTING, TRAILS, BENCHES, INFORMATION KIOSK, TELEPHONES, EXERCISE COURSE, DRINKING FOUNTAINS
SPECIAL USE	NA	NA	NA	NA