

## VI. Facility Concepts and Standards

### Methodology

Three methods of data collection are utilized to establish the Needs of the community. The first method is Standards-based. This method determines the Needs of the community (Standards) that are an achievable target for current and future development. The County's goal is to achieve 20-acres/1,000 population of parkland primarily within community and regional parks.

Demand-based needs assessment is derived from data gathered on the use of existing facilities and the needs expressed by the community for additions to the park system. The information for this assessment was generated from a random phone survey, interviews with representatives of sports leagues and numerous interviews and work sessions with County Infrastructure Department staff as well as administrative and park staff from each of the four precincts.

The final method used to identify needs for the park system is Resource-based. Specific facilities or parcels of land provide opportunities for inclusion within the park system of the County by providing a substantial natural or cultural value. Opportunities that provide for the inclusion of these amenities within the County's park system have been considered as a component of the needs assessment.

### Standards Based Analysis of Needs

For the purposes of this plan and per the A&M Study, the year 2000 population of Harris County is 3,298,155 and the projected year 2005 population is 3,521,250. As discussed in Section III, this plan is based on the premise that the County is responsible for 40% of the total County population's recreational needs.

Harris County has 130 parks within its jurisdiction. Each of these parks can be listed within one of the six park classifications. The classifications are consistent with those described by the NRPA and are recommended for inclusion within the parks and open space-planning document. The six classifications of parks are mini, neighborhood, community, regional, greenways and special use parks. The inventory of the existing facilities has been used to determine areas of need relative to the established standards. Each of these categories are being discussed within the context of the four County precincts.

### Mini parks

Mini parks within the County account for a total of 33.42 acres within 16 parks. Mini parks are the least desirable type of park for inclusion in the park system because they are small and inefficient to maintain. As the trails and greenways are developed throughout the county mini parks may become the "amenity area" located along their routes.

Precinct One	5 parks	10.42 acres
Precinct Two	5 parks	8.8 acres
Precinct Three	6 parks	14.2 acres

Precinct Four n/a

Recommendation:

- The County should not develop additional mini parks unless as an integral part of a trail or greenway.
- Existing mini parks should be maintained and upgraded to meet minimum desired standards.

Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood parks within the County account for a total of 391.05 acres within 35 parks. Like mini parks, neighborhood parks are not efficient for the County to develop and maintain. The municipalities and private sector provide for much of this type of park facility within the County.

Precinct One	11 parks	122.75 acres
Precinct Two	12 parks	138.8 acres
Precinct Three	5 parks	57 acres
Precinct Four	7 parks	72.5

Recommendation:

- The County should not develop additional neighborhood parks, but should improve and maintain existing facilities.
- As trails and greenways are developed, these systems could be tied to the existing neighborhood parks to provide amenity areas.

Community Parks

Community parks within the County account for a total of 2,725.6 acres within 38 parks. A major park category within the park system, community parks are an important element within the County’s system. These parks contain many of the developed active, passive and sports facilities within the park system.

Precinct One	8 parks	499 acres
Precinct Two	10 parks	502.9 acres
Precinct Three	7 parks	591.7 acres
Precinct Four	13 parks	1,132 acres

Recommendation:

- The County should develop new community parks, and when feasible, expand existing community parks.

Regional Parks

Regional parks within the County account for a total of 14,407.7 acres within 18 parks.

Precinct One	5 parks	1,974.5 acres
Precinct Two	4 parks	855.5 acres

Precinct Three	5 parks	10,548.7 acres
Precinct Four	4 parks	1,029 acres

Recommendation:

- The County should develop new regional parks, and when feasible, expand existing regional parks.

### Special Use Parks

Special Use parks within the County account for a total of 4,403 acres within 8 parks. These parks are generally not categorized in terms of size or service area. The existing parks listed in this category vary greatly in terms of their character and include the Reliant Astrodome, a golf course, botanical gardens and nature preserves.

Precinct One	2 parks	441 acres
Precinct Two	2 parks	2,505 acres
Precinct Three	1 parks	130 acres
Precinct Four	13 parks	1,327 acres

Recommendation:

- The County should continue to develop new special use parks, and when feasible, expand existing special use parks, particularly as a vehicle for land conservation and habitat restoration.

### Greenway Parks

Greenway parks within the County account for a total of 36.1 linear miles within 14 parks. These parks are generally not categorized in terms of size or service area; however, greenway parks should be an integral part of the County's park system.

Precinct One	8 parks	15.5 linear miles
Precinct Two	3 parks	7.6 linear miles
Precinct Three	2 parks	12 linear miles
Precinct Four	1 parks	1 linear mile

Recommendation:

- The County should continue to develop greenway parks. There are excellent opportunities to utilize Harris County Flood Control District floodways and channels for greenway parks. Additionally, these types of parks should be developed in conjunction with the County's Conceptual Bikeway Plan.

The table below is a recap of the current County park acreage inventory.

Precinct	Mini	Neighborhood	Community	Regional	Special Use	Total Acreage
One	10.42	122.75	499	1,974.5	441	3,047.7
Two	8.8	138.8	502.9	855.5	2,505	4,011
Three	14.2	57	591.7	10,548.7	130	11,341.6
Four	0	72.5	1132	1,029	1,327	3,560.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>33.42</b>	<b>391.05</b>	<b>2,725.6</b>	<b>14,407.7</b>	<b>4,403</b>	<b>21,960.8</b>

The following tables assume the year 2000 population of 3,298,155 and the projected year 2005 population of 3,521,250. As stated earlier in the master plan, it is assumed that the County's park system supplies 40% of the population base, therefore, the populations used to calculate the standards are 1,319,262 for 2000 and 1,408,500 for 2005.

#### **Year 2000**

Existing Acreage:	21,960.8
Existing Acreage/ 1,000 population:	16.7
Acreage Goal/ 1,000 population	20
<u>Acreage Required To Meet Goal</u>	<u>26,380</u>
<b>2000 Acreage Deficit</b>	<b>4,437</b>

#### **Year 2005**

Assumed Acreage	26,398
Acreage Goal/ 1,000 population	20
<u>Acreage Required To Meet Goal</u>	<u>28,160</u>
<b>2005 Deficit</b>	<b>1,780</b>

**Cumulative 5 year acreage deficit                      6,217**

Recommendation:

- The County should purchase approximately 2,000 acres during the next five years for future development. This would marginally increase the acreage/ 1,000 population to 17. The remaining 3 acre/ 1,000 deficit could be acquired through interlocal use of non-County owned land.

#### Demand Based Analysis of Needs

The County is only one of numerous providers of parks and recreation facilities available to the residents of Harris County. Many residential subdivisions, school districts, private sector facilities as well as the numerous municipalities within the County provide many of the recreational needs of the citizens. The demand or lack of demand expressed by the citizens of the County has resulted in the following assumptions by the County:

- The County has only one swimming pool, an indoor facility in Precinct 3. As a general rule, the County does not provide swimming facilities. Demand for a swimming facility has been identified in Precinct 1.

- The County provides very few tennis courts for the citizens of Harris County. Precinct One is converting existing basketball courts into tennis courts. The remainder of the precincts have expressed minimal or no demand for additional tennis courts.
- The County has no demand for additional mini or neighborhood parks as others are providing much of this demand.
- Precinct Two has a demand for additional soccer fields in the Clear Lake area.
- Precinct Two has a need for water access, boat launches and swimming beaches along the San Jacinto River and Galveston Bay.
- Precinct Four has a demand for additional soccer fields in the Champions area.
- Precinct Four has a need for lake access along Lake Houston.

The table below reflects existing and projected use/needs of ball fields and soccer/football fields based on the County’s current inventory, as well as, team and player data gathered through interviews with numerous sports leagues. *Sports League Interview Data Sheets* for each precinct can be found in Section X of this study.

	Team Count 2000	Required Fields 2000	Existing Fields 2000	Surplus (Deficit) 2000	Required Fields 2005	Surplus (Deficit) 2005
<b>Precinct 1</b>						
Ball Fields	269	30	39	9	32	7
Soccer/ Football	227	25	14	(11)	27	(13)
<b>Precinct 2</b>						
Ball Fields	343	38	91	53	41	50
Soccer/ Football	230	26	16	(9)	28	(12)
<b>Precinct 3</b>						
Ball Fields	697	78	53a	(28)	86	(33)a
Soccer/ Football	883	98	111b	13	106	5b
a Need 20 additional Ball Fields out of detention						
b Need 50 additional Soccer out of detention						
<b>Precinct 4</b>						
Ball Fields	840	93	59	(34)	100	(41)
Soccer/ Football	461	53	80	27	59	25

Notes:

- Required Field Counts assumes nationally recognized standard of 9 teams per field
- Required Fields 2005 are based on projected population growth per A&M Study.
- The Ball Fields and Soccer/Football Fields in detention sites are more suited for practice facilities. Leagues should not utilize the fields within the detention sites due to flooding potential.
- Existing ball fields, soccer fields and football fields are indicated on the two maps that follow.

## Resource Based Analysis of Needs

### Harris County Flood Control District

The purpose of the Harris County Flood Control District (HCFCD) is to construct and maintain projects to reduce flooding in the County. HCFCD designs flood control improvements, executes capitol improvement projects, maintains drainage facilities and approves subdivision drainage plans. By virtue of its legislation, HCFCD is a conservation agency.

HCFCD encompasses 1,723 square miles, 22 watersheds and 3,000 miles of watercourses; the district's current land inventory includes over 7,000 acres of detention basins and 14,000 acres of channels and floodways.

Currently the County is utilizing approximately 528 acres of HCFCD lands within its park system. Although much of this land is better suited for passive recreation and open space, the County in cooperation with HCFCD, is developing parks with sports facilities in several locations and plans for the future include more of this type of development.

From an acreage standpoint the land controlled by HCFCD will more than accommodate all of the County's passive park land requirements. HCFCD should be an integral component of the County's master plan.

### Katy Prairie Conservancy

The Katy Prairie Conservancy (KPC) is a non-profit land trust dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of a tall grass prairie in the western edge of Harris County and the eastern edge of neighboring Waller County. KPC's intent is to protect the habitat for waterfowl that populate the area and to broaden the potential for recreational activities including passive use for birding, photography and hiking, as well as hunting. Other uses for these lands include the creation of a seed source for native grasses and flood control efforts in conjunction with HCFCD. The goal of the Katy Prairie Conservancy is to acquire and protect 50,000 acres. To date KPC has acquired approximately 6,000 acres of land.

Approximately half of the land targeted by KPC is located within Harris County. Although passive recreation is the use most compatible with the goals of the KPC, there could be fringe areas that may be able to support more active recreational needs. There are currently no plans in place between the County and the KPC for development of recreational facilities, however, the County should pursue these opportunities.

### Legacy Land Trust

The Legacy Land Trust (LLT) is a non-profit organization dedicated to conserving and protecting open space for aesthetic, ecological, educational and recreational values. LLT has recently begun efforts in Harris County and 12 adjacent counties to acquire conservation easements from landowners and facilitate the sale of land or easements for use as community open space. Although the LLT does not have any specific parcels of land that can be utilized for Harris County recreation at this time they can serve an important function to facilitate future acquisitions and partnerships with the County.