

EXISTING RECREATIONAL RESOURCES

REGIONAL RECREATION RESOURCES

Due to outdated information, the 1995 TORP will not be used for this report. The 2002 *Land and Water Resources Conservation and Recreation Plan* (LWRCR), also prepared by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department will be used in its place. The LWRCR evaluates the outdoor recreational opportunities for 25 of the most populous cities in Texas. Central City Project is located in Fort Worth, Texas, which in 2002 was the third most populous city in Texas.

The north central region (figure below), which includes the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, has experienced several years of rapid population growth. By 2000, the region contained 24.30% of the state's population. Many of the small towns and rural areas within this region have become part of the rapidly expanding metropolitan area as people have moved from the heavily populated cities to the suburbs. People in these urbanizing areas are finding open space increasingly scarce. According to the TPWD, Fort Worth ranks 6th (see Table 1) now in recreation land per thousand in population. (Source: TPWD 2002 Land and Water Resources Conservation and Recreation Plan)

The administrative category with the highest proportion of parkland acres (39 percent) is the aggregate of municipalities. The Corps of Engineers follows closely with 38 percent of the regional total. Much of the 48,737 acres of recreational land in this region operated by the Corps of Engineers can be found in close proximity to the urban areas. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department provide only 9.6 percent of the parkland acres found within the region. State parks located within a one-hour drive of the study area include Ray Roberts Lake State Park and Cedar Hill State Park at Joe Pool Lake. There are several other state parks within a two-hour drive of the Metroplex. Participation for individual outdoor recreation activities are represented in table 2. The Texas Legislature has authorized the acquisition of approximately 1500 acres along the Trinity River within the study area for a future low-density recreational area to be named Trinity River State Park. Funding sources for acquisition of all of these lands, however, have not been identified.

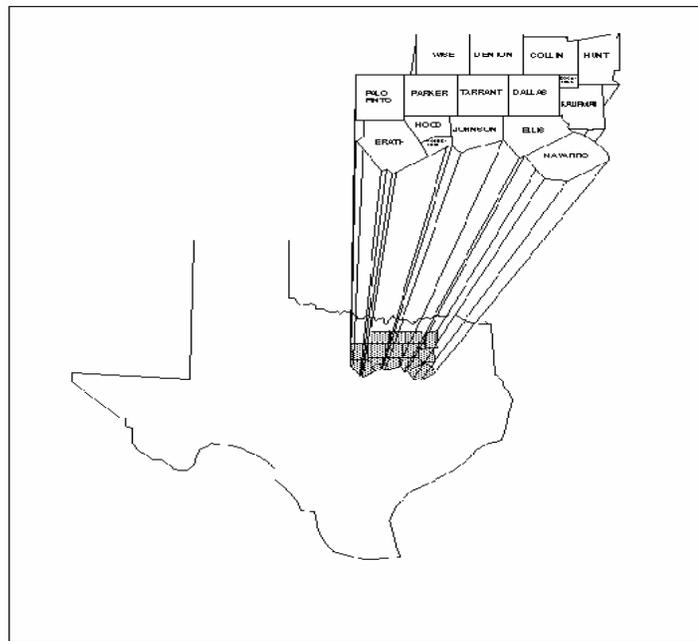


Table 1

Park Acres Per 1,000 Ranked for Cities Over 100,000			
		CITY	
City	Acres Per 1,000 by Population	Population	Total City Park Acres
Houston	10.30	1,953,631	20,107.83
Dallas	19.70	1,188,580	23,378.63
San Antonio	7.90	1,144,646	9,064.05
Austin	37.20	656,562	24,408.10
El Paso	5.10	563,662	2,891.98
Fort Worth	21.10	534,694	11,302.91
Arlington	10.00	332,969	3,328.46
Corpus Christi	8.00	277,454	2,210.07
Plano	15.80	222,030	3,505.86
Garland	10.00	215,768	2,153.10
Lubbock	17.80	199,564	3,546.13
Irving	9.00	191,615	1,733.15
Laredo	0.90	176,576	164.15
Amarillo	15.00	173,627	2,601.72
Pasadena	1.20	141,674	172.37
Brownsville	7.00	139,722	984.94
Grand Prairie	43.10	127,427	5,494.94
Mesquite	15.30	124,523	1,907.99
Abilene	5.80	115,930	675.81
Beaumont	20.30	113,866	2,307.38
Waco	49.10	113,726	5,586.99
Carrollton	23.10	109,576	2,532.38
McAllen	1.20	106,414	129.42
Wichita Falls	18.30	104,197	1,902.13

Source: TPWD Local Park Analysis, 2002

Table 2

Percent of Texas Population Participating In Outdoor recreation Activities At Least Once In The Last 12 Months	
Picnicking	45%
Visit Historic Sites	41%
Swimming	39%
Fishing	38%
Visit Park or Natural Areas within 1 mile of home	35%
Trips or Outing to View Wildlife	34%
Visit Texas State Park	33%
Motor boating	30%
Camping	27%
Bicycling	20%
Hiking	19%
Hunting	16%
Jet skiing	12%
Canoeing/Kayaking	6%
Mountain Biking	5%
Rock Climbing	5%
Sailing	4%
Source: <i>Texas Parks and Wildlife for the 21st century, 2001</i>	

Residents can easily find recreational waters, because many of the state's major reservoirs are located in the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area. Per the 1990 TORP, a total of 232,581 surface acres gives the region more lake acres than any other region in Texas except Deep East Texas; however, the dense population residing in the region makes the total suitable-surface-acres-per-thousand-population still fall below the state average.

With the abundant reservoirs in the area, free-flowing sections of the region's rivers increase in value as they become scarce. Public agencies within Region 4 are reevaluating the valuable natural resources along these long neglected streams and levee systems. Several regional cities have identified highly desirable linear corridor recreational potentials within their jurisdictions. Sites within the Trinity River floodplain are among those most actively studied. Nine cities and three counties within the region are participating with the North Central Texas Council Of Government (NCTCOG) in the development of a *Common Vision* to protect the resources within this corridor. Goals include the development of a regional construction permit system and cooperation in the creation of a linear greenbelt of parks and trails along and adjacent to the river and its tributaries.

Recreation on the Trinity River and Tributaries

The most scenic, wooded areas are often found in stream and river corridors in the Trinity River region. Scenic corridors along the Trinity, with natural meandering watercourses bordered by riparian hardwoods or dense stands of trees and shrubs, are the most desirable segments of the river and the portions most intensely used by the recreating public. Use of these segments is the heaviest during high stream flow periods, generally during the spring and fall seasons. Recreational providers have expressed concern regarding stream bank erosion, in-stream flows and the quality of the water for contact recreation. Some providers feel the standards for designating stream segments as fishable and swimmable should be tightened to give citizens higher quality water resources. Minimum in-stream flows are also needed to preserve fish and wildlife habitat and historical and recreational resources.

The Central City project area is currently being used for a variety of recreational activities even though access to many segments is limited or restricted. Access is one of the limiting factors needing to be addressed in the future. In spite of these limitations, joggers, walkers, bicyclists, canoeists and nature lovers have expressed a desire for access and use. Current access points being used by the public occur where park areas, roads and bridges intersect with the stream and existing parking lots neighboring the area and in Gateway Park.

One of the major efforts both regionally and locally is the Trinity Trail. After two years of detailed effort and planning, the Trinity Trails Advisory Committee in early 1996 adopted a proposed alignment for most of the 250-mile "spine" of the regional system. It begins at the confluence of the three major forks West Fork, Elm Fork and the Main Stem near downtown Dallas. The 125-mile northward spine, referred to as *Dalhoma*, is planned to extend along the Elm Fork to Lakes Lewisville and Ray Roberts, then along major highway and rail corridors to Lake Texoma at the Oklahoma border. The 50-mile southeastern spine initially extends to the Dallas/Ellis County line, but could eventually reach the Gulf of Mexico along the Trinity. And the 75-mile western spine extends to Lakes Benbrook and Eagle Mountain. There have been no plans, as of yet where the Trinity Trail will end on its western route. (Figure 2) Central City Project plays a key role as a linkage to the Trinity Trail system. And also acts as a linkage to other greenbelts creating a continuous wildlife corridor along the Trinity River.

Recreational Types in Fort Worth*	
TPWD Conservation Lands Acres	14
TPWD and Federal Conservation Lands Acres	20
TPWD and Federal Hunting Lands Acres	14
TPWD and Federal Campsites	55
TPWD and Federal Hiking Trail Miles	105
TPWD and Federal Equestrian Trail Miles	5

Figure 2 (Source: <http://www.dfwinfo.com/envir/gismaps/outdoor/trintrl.pdf>)

Much has already been accomplished. Major trail segments in Fort Worth and Arlington along the West Fork are already in place, and several others have received state transportation enhancements project funding. The Corps has preserved a greenway linking Lakes Lewisville and Ray Roberts with local city partners, and a groundbreaking ceremony for the trails segment was dedicated on June 1, 1996 -- National Trails Day -- with the unveiling of the official logo for the Trinity Trails System.

Local Recreational Resources

Over 10,555 acres of total parkland, including neighborhood, community, linear and city parks are available for present or future public use within the City of Fort Worth that includes the study area. These public lands and facilities provide recreational opportunities for residents of the Metroplex, especially those who are unable to travel to recreational sites outside the metropolitan area.

Most of the recreational resources within the study area are owned and managed by the city of Fort Worth and the Fort Worth Independent School District; however there has been significant development in the private sector over the last 10 years not covered by the 1990 TORP. The City adopted 21.25 acres per 1000 person standard in 1998 based upon the NRPA standards for parkland. Currently, Fort Worth provides 19.50 acres per 1000 persons, including the 3,600-acre Fort Worth Nature Center and Refuge. Based on the current data and population trends, Fort Worth will need 4,707.5 acres of parkland to meet the needs of the city by 2023 and to meet the 21.25 acres of parkland per 1000 persons. (Source: Chapter 6 Parks and Community Services, City of Fort Worth Master Plan)

"The City of Fort Worth has 227 park and recreational sites, including agreements with other agencies that provide services and facilities for the City. The park sites total 10,381 acres of parkland, including 145 playgrounds, 105 practice fields, 33 completion baseball/softball fields, 22 competition soccer fields, 108 basketball courts, 96 tennis courts, 7 pools, 6 golf courses (108 holes), approximately 56 miles of trails (over 30 miles of Trinity River Trail and 18 miles of internal park walking and multi-use trails), and 101 picnic shelters." (Source: Parks and Community Services Department, 2002)

The Central City Project area is contains multiple parks of different types and acreages. (See Table 3)

Included in these parks are golf courses, community parks, urban parks, neighborhood parks, and special use areas. In the project area there are approximately 15.5 miles of trail existing. Total miles of trail for the City are approximately 56 miles. The Central City Project area contains a variety of flora and fauna, which is unique to the area. For the most part, grasses and small woody vegetation dominate the landscape. There are certain areas such as Trinity Park that have a large population of hard wood trees. With a lack of shaded areas, the project area has become very arid and inhospitable to use. Forty-two percent of the project area is grassland. (See Table 4)

Table 3

Central City Recreational Inventory			
West Fork Assets	Type	Year Built	Acres
Rockwood Park Municipal Golf Course	Special Use - Golf Course	1927	200
Rockwood Park	Community	1927	35.41
Heritage Park Plaza	Large Urban Park	1975	112
Delga Park	Neighborhood - Pocket Park	1968	4.06
Riverside Park	Community	1974	30.8
Greenway Park	Neighborhood	1926	13.5
Harmon Field Park	Community	1952	97.5
Clear Fork Assets			
Trinity Park	Large Rec	1892	252
Marine Creek Assets			
Saunders Park	Special Use - Urban Park	1977	0.48
Rodeo Park	Neighborhood	1971	5.3
Other Assets in Project Area			
Trail Drivers Park	Community	1928	39.61
Northside Park	Community	1946	15
Circle Park	Special Use - Urban Park	1909	3.06
Marine Park	Community	1894	12
Linwood Park	Neighborhood - Pocket Park	1957	4
Traders Oak Park	Special Use - Historic Park	1953	4.11
Oakhurst Park	Neighborhood - Mini Park	1944	0.75
Cultural District			
Central Business District			
LaGrave Field			

Table 4

Type	Acres	Percent
Disturbed	1,671.22	37.10%
Grassland	1,900.49	42.20%
Riparian	204.88	4.50%
Upland	476.24	10.60%
Water	248.55	5.50%
Wetland	5.53	0.10%
Totals	4,506.91	100.00%

IDENTIFICATION OF RECREATIONAL NEEDS

Open space and outdoor, recreational facilities currently existing within the study area are discussed in a preceding section of this report. While there are substantial amounts of open space and recreational facilities available to the residents of the area, projections show that the demand for these facilities is continuing to increase. “Fort Worth is above average among the most populous cities for outdoor recreational activities except for hunting and biking.” (LWRCRP, pg. 28) The City adopted 21.25 acres per 1000 person standard in 1998 based upon the NRPA standards for parkland. Currently, Fort Worth provides 19.50 acres per 1000 persons, including the 3,600-acre Fort Worth Nature Center and Refuge. Based on the current data and population trends, Fort Worth will need 4,707.5 acres of parkland to meet the needs of the city by 2023 and to meet the 21.25 acres of parkland per 1000 persons. (Source: Chapter 6 Parks and Community Services, City of Fort Worth Master Plan)

Public recreation providers in the region have repeatedly expressed a need for more parks and passive open space. In recent years, parkland and open space have become increasingly limited, as available sites have been reduced. Rapid development has replaced many natural areas with buildings and pavement. Most park providers have identified undeveloped land as their highest priority, which includes park sites, open space, and greenbelt acquisition. The next greatest need expressed is for upgrading and renovating existing facilities. This includes approximately 56 miles of trail. The trails need access points to link surrounding neighborhoods allowing better access and improving usage of the trail system. Fort Worth has not adopted a recommended miles of trail per thousand people criteria. Using the City of Dallas’ criteria of 1 mile per five thousand people as a benchmark, the City will need a total of 107 miles of trail to meet their current population of 577,500. There is a great need for trails, but a greater need to improve the existing trails and the trail experience itself. There are long stretches of trail that have no shade or relief from the heat of the summer. Improving the experiences of these areas would help increase the usage of the trails as well as improving the esthetic qualities of the area. Support facilities should also be constructed to improve area usage.

The city of Fort Worth and the Tarrant County Water District has specific plans to acquire additional lands to meet future public recreational demands. Proposed acquisitions are often dependent on the availability of public funds and are influenced by private development pressures and development permit approvals. Through bonds, these entities plan to fund open space acquisition programs. The Central City Project could add further acreage to the total park space needed by the City.

Public Use of Rivers, Tributaries, and Corridors

As would be expected, river and creek segments which have had trees and shrubs removed, been channelized, lined with levees, or are heavily developed are less desirable and the least utilized by area canoeists, bicyclists, hikers and bird watchers. Some of the channelized, creek segments offer

recreation potential but need to be enhanced with access points, trails play areas, tree and shrub plantings and wildlife habitat improvements in order to attract recreational users to area.

Trinity Corridor and Greenbelt

Without exception, the recreational master plans and sector plans of the cities and counties with jurisdiction along the Trinity River call for utilization of the flood plain for open space, linear parks, access areas, active and passive use areas, interpretive areas, natural areas, "urban wilderness" areas, and a system of linked hiking, biking and equestrian trails. A regional goal is to tie public lands and open space within the Trinity Corridor (of which the Central City Project is a part) and its tributaries from Lewisville Lake, Lewisville, Coppell, Carrollton, Irving, White Rock Lake, Dallas, Grand Prairie, Mountain Creek Lake, Joe Pool Lake, Arlington, Fort Worth, Lake Worth, Benbrook Lake and other publicly owned areas.

Working toward a system of parks, recreational areas, and linear trails along the Trinity is an integral portion of the North Central Texas Council of Government's *Common Vision* work program. NCTCOG has identified the Trinity River Corridor as a "unique regional resource". The value of this resource is increased because of its location within the heart of the growing Metroplex. The 100-mile long corridor encompasses the SPF flood plain of the West Fork above Eagle Mountain Lake and the Clear Fork from Benbrook to the Elm Fork, and along the Elm Fork from Lewisville Lake through the main stem of the river, with its major tributaries, downstream to south Dallas. The Riverside Oxbow Project, which is to the east of Central City Project, is a portion of the Clear Fork Tributary and is situated east of downtown Fort Worth. Connections to the adjacent project will continue the greenbelt south towards Dallas.

While there are obviously conflicts between desires to reclaim the flood plain or preserve it, there is room within the 70,000 acres of the corridor for both of these desires to be met. "The Trinity River Corridor is valuable to all residents of the Region and the millions to come." (NCTCOG, 1989)