



“Rest is not idleness, and to lie sometimes on the grass under trees on a summer’s day, listening to the murmur of the water, or watching the clouds float across the sky, is by no means a waste of time.”

Sir John Lubbock, English Banker (1744-1816)

Chapter 1

Introduction - The Parks Planning Process

Abilene’s Need for Parks and Recreation

Quality of life is an important factor to the citizens that call Abilene their 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 attractive homes and neighborhoods in which to live.

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 a healthy lifestyle. 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.

Purpose of the Parks Master Plan

Abilene’s previous Park System Master Plan was completed in 1997, and it superseded a plan that was completed in 1984. The 1997 Plan has been an excellent guide for the city over the past decade, helping the park system remain viable through a period of considerable change in both Texas and in Abilene itself. The 1997 plan identified the need for new park development in underserved areas, the need to continue to renovate existing parks, and the need to update and expand youth athletic facilities. Renovation of

some park and youth athletic facilities was accomplished, but new park development in the southern sector of the city was not funded. One other major recommendation that was not funded during the last ten years was the development of a family aquatic center to serve all of Abilene. The next decade brings new changes and challenges on both a global and more local stage, and this plan will be a key guiding tool for city staff during that time.

A good park system does not occur randomly, but rather requires a series of orderly steps. It responds to the interests of all citizens it serves, and not just the needs of a select few. This master plan establishes goals and priorities, and provides an assessment of Abilene’s Park and Open Space system in the year 2007. The Park Planning process allows the citizens of Abilene to determine what their preferred park and recreation priorities should be.

This plan:

- Points out deficiencies in the system and recommends alternatives to address and correct those deficiencies;
- Looks at the potential growth of the city over the next 5 to 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 current and future park and open space needs;
- Prioritizes key recommendations of the Parks and Open Space Master Plan so that the most significant deficiencies are addressed as quickly as possible;
- Is intended to guide city staff and city leaders in determining where and how parks funding should be allocated over the next five years.

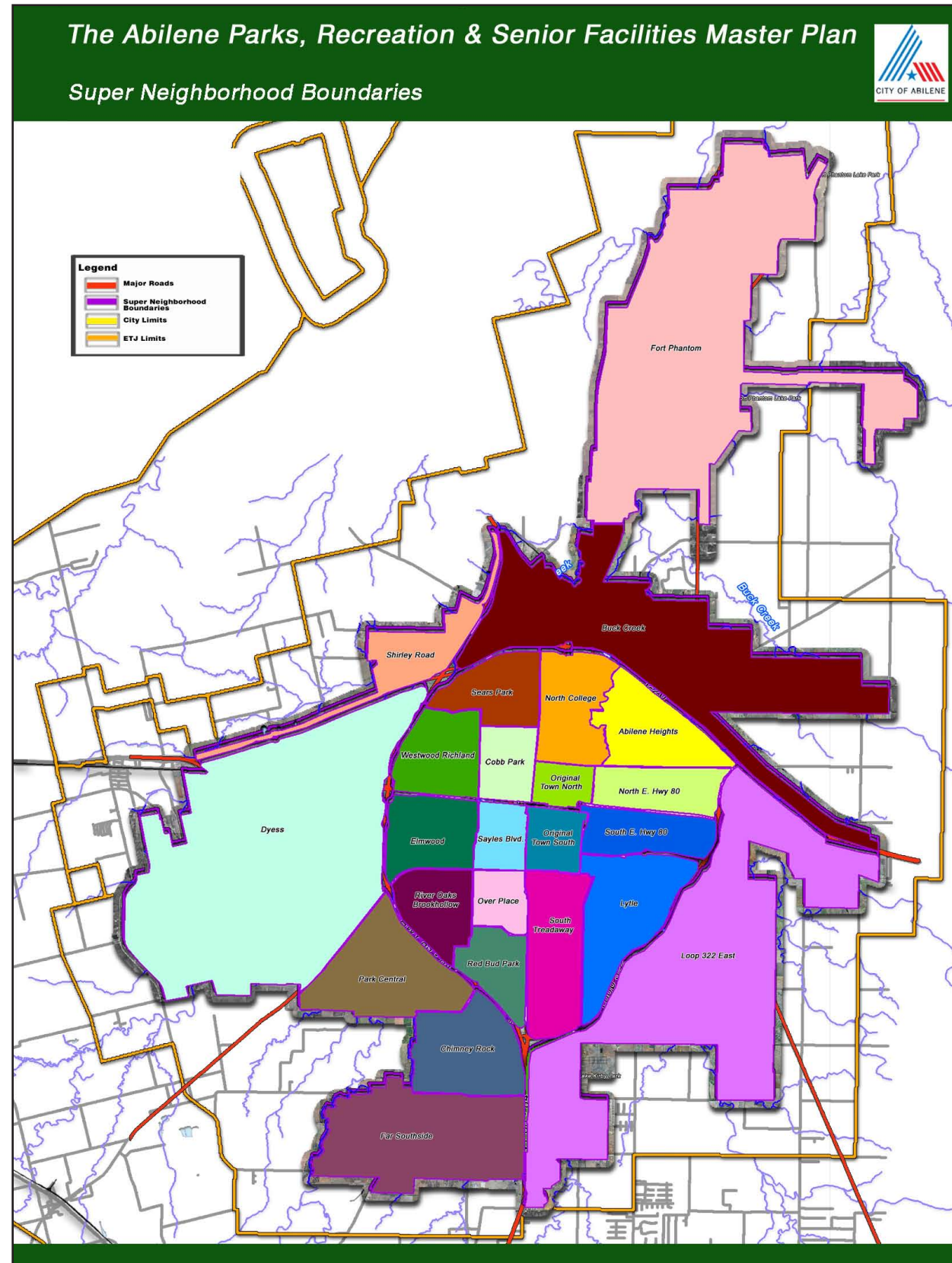


Jurisdiction and Planning Area

The recommendations of this plan will be implemented by the city of Abilene. This plan is intended to cover all of Abilene as well as the areas included in the city's current extra territorial jurisdiction (ETJ).

Planning Areas - The planning area has been divided into what are called Super Neighborhoods. There are a total of 24 Super Neighborhoods in Abilene, and they are listed as follows:

- Abilene Heights
- Buck Creek
- Chimney Rock
- Cobb Park
- Dyess
- Elmwood
- Far Southside
- Fort Phantom
- Loop 322 East
- Lytle
- Northeast Hwy 80
- North College
- Original Town North
- Original Town South
- Over Place
- Park Central
- Red Bud Park
- River Oaks Brook Hollow
- South Treadaway
- Sayles Blvd.
- Southeast Hwy 80
- Sears Park
- Shirley Road
- Westwood Richland





2004 Comprehensive Master Plan for Abilene

In 2004 the city of Abilene completed their citywide comprehensive master plan. As with any comprehensive master plan, it included goals and objectives that relate to parks and recreation. The Comprehensive master plan has an objective of providing a balanced system of parkland and recreational facilities throughout the entire city of Abilene. Some of the more specific strategies discussed in the Comprehensive Master Plan include: creating a park classification system, defining park standards, identifying land that the city should acquire for future parks and trails, and identifying any cultural, historical, or environmentally sensitive lands that should be preserved.

The Comprehensive Master Plan discusses the need for trails, and trails are also a significant part of this Parks, Recreation, and Senior Facilities Master Plan. The plan consistently calls for interconnected streets with good pedestrian and bicycle access. The Comprehensive Plan has the objective of these streets to connect with parks, activity centers, and public facilities and services. The plan also wants to establish an open space connection from Fort Phantom Lake to Lake Kirby using the creeks and natural features that run throughout Abilene.

This Parks, Recreation and Senior Facilities Master Plan will work in conjunction with the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Master Plan. Much of what this plan seeks to accomplish is parallel with the park, trail, and open space recommendations of the Comprehensive Master plan.

Role of the City of Abilene in Providing Recreation Opportunities

Abilene is the primary governmental entity charged with providing recreational facilities for the citizens of Abilene. Ancillary recreational facilities are provided by the Abilene Independent School District on many school campuses.

Parks, Recreation and Senior Facilities Master Plan Timeframe

- The plan is formulated to address the time frame from the year 2007 through 2017.

Many of the recommendations of the plan are valid for a period of up to ten years, but should be reassessed periodically. Per planning requirements issued by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, the Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces Master Plan should be completely updated after a five year period, or before if any major developments occur which significantly alter the recreation needs of the city. In addition, an annual review workshop by the Abilene Park Board and city staff will be conducted to review progress over the last year, and bi-annual updates by City staff will also be prepared, or on a more frequent basis if special needs or occurrences require modifications to the plan. In all cases, public involvement through citizen meetings, interviews, and workshops will be included in any updating process.

Parks, Recreation and Senior Facilities Master Plan Components

This master plan includes the components shown to the right, and meets the requirements for Parks, Recreation and Open Space master plans as established by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

Components of the Parks, Recreation & Senior Facilities Master Plan

<p>1. Introduction</p> <p><i>Purpose of the Parks Master Plan</i> <i>Jurisdiction and Planning Area</i> <i>Comprehensive Master Plan</i> <i>Parks, Recreation & Senior Facilities Time Frame</i></p>
<p>2. Abilene Today</p> <p><i>A History of Abilene</i> <i>Abilene's Economy</i> <i>A Demographic Profile of Abilene</i></p>
<p>3. Existing Parks in Abilene Today</p>
<p>4. Goals</p> <p><i>Guiding Principles</i> <i>Key Goals and Objectives</i></p>
<p>5. Public Input</p> <p><i>Utilization and Opinions from Citizen Survey</i> <i>Student Survey</i> <i>Community Meeting</i></p>
<p>6. Needs Assessment</p> <p><i>Methods of Assessment</i> <i>Standard Base Needs</i></p>
<p>7. Trails Master Plan</p> <p><i>Existing Trails</i> <i>Citizen Survey Findings</i> <i>Proposed Trails</i></p>
<p>8. Indoor Recreation and Aquatic Facilities</p> <p><i>Renovation of Existing Facilities</i> <i>Construction of New Facilities</i> <i>Aquatic Facilities and Water Spraygrounds</i></p>
<p>9. Master Plan Recommendations</p> <p><i>Land Acquisition</i> <i>Park Types for Development</i> <i>High Priority Renovation Actions</i></p>
<p>10. Implementation Plan</p> <p><i>Key Recommendations</i> <i>Concepts to Address</i> <i>Key Needs</i></p>