



Chapter 10

Implementation Plan for Parks in Abilene

Introduction

The park needs of Abilene are described in the previous sections of this report. This chapter recommends a series of actions to begin to address those needs. These actions are recommendations to guide the staff and city council over the next five to ten years, and should be revisited and updated on a regular basis.

Highest Priority Needs - The prioritization is based on information received from public input as well as from the needs assessment formed from facility and acreage standards shown in Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9. The criteria used to prioritize the park facilities needs in Abilene are as follows:

- Level of need based on citizen input from a citywide basis – needs were in top five requested by citizens, or needs were in top ten listed as important by citizens;
- Level of need based on direct citizen input from public comments;
- Level of need based on standards based needs assessments;
- Opportunities for recreation facilities based on existing physical conditions in or near Abilene.
- Condition of existing park facilities in the city.

Needs meeting all of most of the criteria shown above were ranked as high priority elements to receive the highest level of attention over the next five years.

“If future generations are to remember us with gratitude rather than contempt, we must leave them something more than the miracles of technology. We must leave them a glimpse of the world as it was in the beginning, not just after we got through with it.”

President Lyndon B. Johnson, 1964



Implementation Strategy

The following implementation strategy is recommended to address the city's key recreation highest priority over the next five years. These actions include many of the high priority facility needs listed above. Recommendations are ranked in one of the three categories listed below.

- Short Term Implementation - List of top priority items to be completed or initiated over the next one to five years.
- Medium term Implementation - List of recommendations to be initiated or completed in five to ten years.
- Longer-range implementation - List of recommendations to be initiated in ten years or longer. While these actions may take longer to initiate, planning for these items should continue.

Key implementation steps are listed in the action plan tables contained in Chapters 7, 8 and 9, and consist of the action plan for this Parks, Recreation and Senior Facilities Master Plan. Major recommended actions are summarized on the following page.

Funding Strategies for Recommendations

Different parks and pathways will require different funding strategies. While improvements to existing parks and most sidewalks can be built with local funds, other park, open space and trail projects may be able to contend for federal and state funds. This section provides brief descriptions of these funding implementation assistance opportunities.

Key City-Generated Funding Sources

General Fund Expenditures are primarily used for improvements to existing parks and facilities. Some funding should be set aside annually to cover upgrades to at least one park. An amount of \$50,000 to \$100,000 should be budgeted for annually.

Capital Funds - annual funding for general improvements should be continued. This funding allows for the continual upgrading of facilities in the city.

Bond Funds - It is recommended that the city consider a bond program to support park improvements within the next five years.

Sales Tax Revenue - sales tax revenue from the city's 4A fund can be used for community facilities such as parks, trails and recreation buildings, subject to approval by voting by the citizens of Abilene. While each project or group of projects would have to be approved by citizen vote, this option should be considered for projects with significant community-wide benefit. Recreational features with significant impact on quality of life will make Abilene a much more attractive and economically viable location.

**Table 10.1
Key Priority Actions – 2008-2018**

Priority	Action	Projected Cost Range	Potential Funding Sources	Timeframe
1 - High	Initial Park Improvements at Lake Fort Phantom (Johnson Park, Overlook Park, East Side Park)	\$1.5 million to 2.5 million	2006 Bond Funds, Grants, Community Assessments	2008 - 2010
2 - High	Cedar Creek Trail Corridor – Initial Phase	\$1.5 million	Bond funds, Certificates of Obligation, General Fund, Trail Grants, Private Donations	2009 - 2011
3 - High	Neighborhood Parks in Central Area and North area (acquire portions of older schools, create school park on portion of Franklin School)	\$1 million	Donation of land from AISD, Bond funds, Certificates of Obligation, General Fund, Grants, CDBG Funds, Private Donations	2009 - 2011
4 - High	New Aquatics Center at Rose Park (replace older facility, include therapeutic pool for Rose Center) Therapeutic Pool at Rose Center (but as physical component of Aquatic Center) Spray Grounds - up to four spraygrounds at locations throughout the city. (including key replacement for pool at Stevenson Park)	\$3 million to \$5 million (aquatic center), \$750,000 to \$1.0 million (therapeutic pool) \$2.4 million (\$600,000 each)	Bond funds, Certificates of Obligation, General Fund, Grants, Private Donations, Partnerships with local entities	2008 - 2013
5 - High	Community Park in Far South Abilene	\$3.0 million	Bond funds, Certificates of Obligation, General Fund, Trail Grants, Private Donations	2012 - 2017
6 - High	Community Park at Kirby Lake (new park for southern part of the city, include trail access along west side of the lake)	\$1.5 million to \$3.0 million	Bond funds, Certificates of Obligation, General Fund, Trail Grants, Private Donations	2011 - 2013
7 - High	New Community wide recreation center (initial phase - large recreation facility to serve entire city)	\$6.0 to \$8.5 million	Bond funds, Certificates of Obligation, General Fund, Grants, Private Donations, Foundation Contributions, Sales Tax Revenue	2010 - 2015
Subtotal – High Priority Actions		\$20.65 million to \$27.9 million		By 2017
Additional High Priority Improvements				
8 - High	Renovation/Enhancement of Sears Park Center	\$3.0 million	Bond funds, Certificates of Obligation, General Fund, Private Donations	2012 - 2017
9 - High	Trail along Catclaw Creek	\$1.5 million to 2.5 million	Bond funds, Certificates of Obligation, General Fund, Trail Grants, Private Donations	2012 - 2017
10 - High	Neighborhood Parks in Far South Abilene and in Central Abilene	\$600,000 to \$850,000 (land not included)	Bond funds, Certificates of Obligation, General Fund, Grants, Private Donations	2012 - 2017
Subtotal – Additional High Priority Actions		\$5.1 million to \$6.35 million		By 2017 if feasible



Park Facility Funding through a Parkland Dedication Ordinance – create a land dedication ordinance that will provide some lands and funding for the development of neighborhood parks throughout the city.

Partnering with Developers and Private Land Owners is frequently possible as land is developed in Abilene through a Park Land Dedication ordinance. This ordinance provides a vehicle for development of parks, open space and trails as land is developed in Abilene.

Key Grant Funding Sources

Grants can provide a significant source of additional funding for parks, but should not be considered as the primary source for park construction.

TPWD - Texas Recreation and Parks Account (TRPA) is the primary source for park grants in Texas and in addition provides funding for recreational trails. Up to a 50 percent match can be obtained, up to \$500,000, for new park and trail facilities, as well as for indoor facilities. Grant applications that stress joint funding and support from two or more local entities may have a greater chance in contending for the TRPA grants. The city should take a leadership role in pursuing public cooperation.

National Park Service (NPS) Programs include the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and Urban Park and Recreation Recovery Act (UPARR), which provide funds for parks and recreation. Congress appropriates both funds. Funding has not been available in recent years but if brought back Abilene may qualify for these funds. Typically, the funding sources have supported traditional parks rather than linear systems.

Indoor Recreation Grants are available to local governments for the construction or renovation of indoor recreation facilities. This assistance is in the form of 50% matching grant funds up to \$750,000. Local governments must apply, permanently dedicate the building for public recreational use and assume responsibility for operation and maintenance. Application deadlines are July 31st each year. Awards are distributed in January each year. Recent developments have reduced the amount of available funds from the state, and the city should consider other available funding sources whenever possible.

Statewide Transportation Enhancement Program provides money support for transportation activities designed to strengthen the cultural, aesthetic and environmental aspects of the transportation system. Funding is on a cost reimbursement basis and projects selected are eligible for reimbursement of up to 80% of allowable cost. This funding program is not available on a yearly basis, but intermittently only, often in 5 year periods apart. The next opportunity for funding under this program is unknown at this time, but should be evaluated periodically.

Environmental Protection Agency can provide funding for projects with money collected in pollution settlements.

Foundation and Company Grants exist which assist in direct funding for projects, while others exist to help citizen efforts gets established with small seed funds or technical and publicity assistance. Local foundations in particular may focus on key projects that more closely meet their goals.

Grants for Greenways is a national listing that provides descriptions of a broad spectrum of both general and specific groups who provide technical and financial support for greenway interests.

Establish “Adopt-a-Park Program” could be developed to provide a consistent process for private and commercial donors to contribute to the development of specific parks in Abilene. The donations would be recognized at the applicable park by methods of signage, plaques or naming rights to a particular donated feature.

Sponsorship through Businesses is a means to secure funding through business operating in the City of Abilene. Entities can directly support park department construction or programming efforts.

Sidewalk Funding Sources in Abilene currently construct sidewalks in existing areas through citywide bond programs and with new developments through the subdivision regulations.

Partnering with Volunteer Groups can be helpful when constructing nature, bike and equestrian trails. Their efforts can be used as part of the required match for the Recreational Trails program. There are a variety of sources for volunteers including user groups, local residents, corporate community service initiatives, and business and civic support groups.

Policies and Ordinances

Ordinance Support for System Development – Consider establishing a Park Land Dedication Ordinance to assist in the implementation of neighborhood parks in new areas of the city. This type of ordinance is used by many cities throughout the state of Texas, and is now generally not considered onerous by the development community, but rather is welcomed as a method to help fund smaller parks in a timely fashion.

Abilene Park Advisory Board and City Council - City Staff should provide presentation of significant changes in the master plan and provide brief summary of bi-annual updates to the documentation. This will provide the City Council and Advisory Board with comprehensive information to assist with development decisions.

Joint Planning with AISD and WISD - Establish joint planning review sessions with the Abilene Independent School District and the Wylie Independent School District to allow for coordination of facilities and possible pooling of resources for a partnership in acquiring land for schools and parks.

Operation & Maintenance

With the recommendations of additional parks, open space and trails, it should be recognized that additional manpower will be needed for the required maintenance of these various projects. The number of additional staff needed to attend to these proposed facilities will vary depending on the use of these facilities. The provision of adequate staffing must be included as each facility is developed or the facility should not be built.

Plan Updates

The 2008 Abilene Parks Master Plan is a guide to be used by the Abilene Parks and Recreation Department to develop the existing system for future needs over the next 5 to 10 years. However, during that time frame there will be changes that occur during the time frame of this plan. Population may increase more rapidly than projected; the community may indicate a special need for a facility not listed in the recommendations; development of some of the recommendations listed in this master plan will occur.

A review and update of this master plan by city staff should be conducted every two years or when a significant change does occur. These updates can be published in short report format and attached to this master plan for easy use. Four key areas for focus of these periodic reviews are as follows:

Facility Inventory - An inventory of new facilities should be recorded as well as any significant improvements to AISD, WISD, County Parks, State Parks and major private facilities that could influence recreation in Abilene.

Public Involvement - As mentioned previously, this master plan reflects current population and attitudes as expressed by the citizens of Abilene. However, over time those attitudes and interests may change as the city changes. Periodic surveys are recommended to provide a current account of the attitudes of the citizens and to provide additional direction from the public on issues that may arise. In order to make an accurate comparison of the changes in attitudes and interests, it is recommended that future surveys follow the general format of the citizen survey conducted in this master plan.

Facility Use - Facility use is a key factor in determining the need for renovation of additional facilities. Updates on league participation of sports facilities should be updated each season with data from each association. Changes in participation of those outside the city limits as well as the citizens of Abilene should also be recorded.

Action Plan - As items from the action plans in this document are implemented updates should be made to this prioritized list to provide a current schedule for city staff.