



Fort Bend County Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan Update 2007 - 2012 Final Draft



IN ASSOCIATION WITH CDS MARKET RESEARCH



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I Introduction

Introduces Fort Bend County, including its demographics, natural resources, historic and cultural resources, its economy, and the County government's philosophy with respects to parks, recreation, and open space.

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I Introduction

1. Background

County Parks planning in Fort Bend County can be traced back to a public planning process that occurred in the early 1990s. Between August 1993 and August 1994, a group of over 250 Fort Bend County citizens worked together under the name *Vision 2000* to identify long-range issues and needs of the county. In the category of parks and recreation, which they considered to be an essential part of the county's infrastructure, the need for a countywide master plan to guide the development of parks facilities was identified. Stated goals include:

- Increasing use of the Brazos River as a source of recreation.
- Increasing the development of regional parks.
- Improving and increasing the number of recreational sites and parks.
- Developing a needs assessment.
- Finding assistance in acquiring property and facilities.
- Increasing the number of successful recreational grants applications.

Since that time, many of these goals have been met through the various special partners of the County, including the municipalities. As examples:

- The cities of Missouri City and Sugar Land have engaged Park Master Planning efforts that present the opportunity for teaming with Fort Bend County, which will increase the use of the Brazos as a source of recreation.
- Both Sugar Land and Missouri City have adopted Master Plans for trails within the Brazos River Corridor.
- The voters in the City of Missouri City in 2003 approved a \$15.55 million parks bond proposition that includes money for the implementation of the Brazos River Corridor Master Plan in areas controlled by Missouri City.
- Fort Bend County established a Parks and Recreation Department in 1995, approved the *Parks Master Plan and Needs Assessment 1997-2017*, *The Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan 2003 - 2013*, and initiated *The Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan Update 2007*.
- The County has added parks and recreational facilities to its system from the regional level to the neighborhood level, including:
 - The 235-acre regional park, Bates M. Allen Park
 - A neighborhood baseball-oriented park, Harlem Road Park
 - The Coon Creek Park
 - The Bud O'Shieles Community Center in Rosenberg
 - The Fifth Street Community Center in Stafford

2. Purpose of the Plan

The population of Fort Bend County will be approximately 1,023,206 by 2025.¹ The County currently has an average of 582.89 people per square mile², and is projected to have an average of 1,169.85 people per square mile by the year 2025.³ This rapid growth in residents will bring new homes in new communities, more cars on more roads, and greater demands on local governments. Perhaps the only certainty in Fort Bend County will be change. The Fort Bend County government will need to be strategic in how it meets the needs generated by this growing population given its limited resources. This requires planning and collaboration with local cities, planned communities, and private stakeholder groups.

This plan focuses on recommendations for areas of the County that are unincorporated, as well as incorporated areas that have no parks department and are under-served.

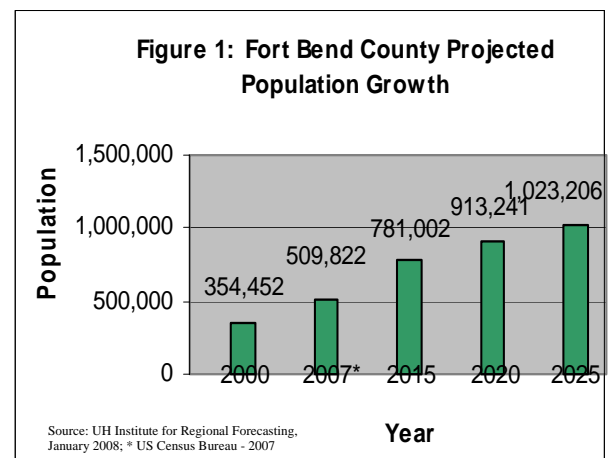
The purpose of the *Fort Bend County Parks, Recreation, & Open Space Master Plan, 2007-2012* is four-fold:

- Establish the framework for the provision of park and recreation facilities.
- Update information concerning the residents of Ft. Bend County and their use of parks and recreation facilities.
- Establish priorities and direction for future park and recreation improvements.
- Provide direction for park land and open space acquisition to meet future needs.

The following Principles and Policies guide this plan, from the statement of goals to the prioritization of needs and the strategies for implementation:

- Parks and green space should be a part of everyday life for residents of the county.
- The County will be a partner with Cities, (MUD) Districts and developers who wish to acquire park land and develop recreation facilities.
- The County's role will compliment, not compete with, other providers of parks, recreation, and open space.
- The County will seek partners in creating and maintaining these facilities.

This Master Plan should be the basis for the future development and fiscal planning of the Ft. Bend County Park System for the next five years. Annual reviews of this Master Plan will ensure that implementation of the Master Plan



¹ UH Institute for Regional Forecasting, January 2008.

² US Census Bureau - 2007

³ UH Institute for Regional Forecasting, January 2008.

Recommendations are on course with population growth and demographic changes within the County.

The 1997 Fort Bend County Parks Master Plan set forth goals, with supporting objectives. The role of County parks, and the importance of partnerships in providing parks and recreational opportunities continues to be a primary focus of this Update.

3. Use of This Parks and Recreation Master Plan

This Master Plan includes recommendations for future land acquisition, park expansion and park development to serve the growing population and needs of Ft. Bend County. Section V includes an inventory of existing parks and recreation facilities. Section VI documents the results of the Needs Assessment as identified by the Advisory Committee, Meetings with County officials and the Citizen Survey. Recommended priorities for park land acquisition and recreation improvements are provided in Section VII. Section VIII provides implementation guidelines, policies and potential funding sources.

4. Location

Fort Bend County includes 874.64 square miles located on the southwest edge of the Houston metropolitan area (see Map 1 entitled “Location Map”).⁴ Neighboring counties, described in a clockwise direction, are Harris, Brazoria, Wharton, Austin, and Waller. US 59 crosses the county from northeast to southwest, while US 90A crosses from east to west. Topographically, elevations in Fort Bend County range from 46 to 127 feet above sea level, with an average elevation of 85 feet above sea level.

5. County Population and Communities

Fort Bend County’s population is amongst the fastest-growing in the United States. According to the latest release from the US Census Bureau, the current 2007 estimated population of the county is 509,822.⁵ This rapid growth is expected to continue well into the future (see Figure 1). By 2025, the population of Fort Bend County will more than double, putting the number of residents in the county to over 1 million.⁶ Fort Bend County is home to more master-planned communities than any other county in the state of Texas. There are currently 67 major existing or planned master-planned communities in the county.

City	Population	
	2000	2007
Arcola	1,048	3,250
Beasley	590	897
Fairchilds	678	667
Fulshear	716	895
Houston (FBC portion only)	33,384	37,426
Katy (FBC portion only)	889	1,126
Kendleton	466	562
Meadows Plave	4,912	5,108
Missouri City	62,436	64,012
Needville	2609	3,150
Orchard	408	437
Pleak	947	1,202
Richmond	11,081	14,372
Rosenberg	24,043	27,391
Simonton	718	879
Stafford	15,681	19,254
Sugar Land	72,140	74,410
Thompsons	236	401
Source: ESRI Forecast , 2007-2012		

⁴ US Census Bureau , 2000

⁵ US Census Bureau , 2007

⁶ UH Institute for Regional Forecasting; January 2008

The Greater Ft. Bend Economic Development Council forecasts nearly 10,000 acres of new master planned communities coming on line. Chart 1.2 exemplifies that currently, 47% of the total population of Ft. Bend County lives in the unincorporated area of the county - 17% living in the master planned communities. The 2007 population in the master planned communities is 85,495 and is forecasted to increase to 116,390 by 2012 - a 36% increase over five years.⁷ These master planned communities have design populations of over 1,000 people, with a combined build-out population of 580,858 persons.⁸ Currently Fort Bend County has an average of 3.27 persons per household, and a count of 151,810 established households. It is clear from the amount of growth in these communities that Fort Bend County is a county of homeowners. The homeownership rate for Fort Bend County is over 83%. By comparison, the homeownership rate in the state of Texas is 65%, and the rate for Harris County is 58%.⁹

Figure 1.2: Fort Bend-County Population
 Source: 2007 ESRI Forecasts

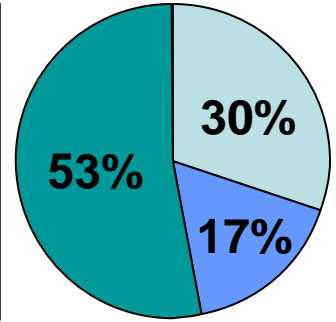


Table 1.3: Population and Households by Precinct

Precinct	Population	Households
1	125,275	38,421
2	106,567	33,115
3	155,595	47,205
4	114,867	33,069
Total County	502,304	151,810

Source: 2007 ESRI Forecasts

Sugar Land is the most populous city in the county, with over 74,000 inhabitants in 2007. Missouri City is second, with an estimated 64,000 inhabitants. See Table 1.1 for a complete list of city populations within Fort Bend County.

Fort Bend County has one of the highest percentages of families in the nation, with 84% of the county's population living in family households. Table 1.3 presents the county's population and number of households by precinct.

Not surprisingly, Fort Bend's population by age reflects this youthful, family orientation, with a little over 6% of the population being over the age of 65, as shown in Table 1.4. By comparison, almost 10% of the population of the state of Texas is over 65.

Fort Bend County's median household income of \$75,202 exceeds the state median household income by almost \$30,280, and is also the highest amongst the metropolitan counties

Table 1.4: Age Distribution by Precinct							
Precinct	Age 0-9	Age 10-19	Age 20-34	Age 35-44	Age 45-54	Age 55- 64	Age 65+
1	22,675	18,665	25,305	19,919	18,290	11,024	9,395
2	14,813	17,050	22,805	14,173	18,542	12,575	6,714
3	25,673	24,272	25,984	24,540	28,318	15,403	8,402
4	18,493	11,485	19,527	19,757	22,858	10,108	5,858
Total County	81,654	71472	113,148	79,389	88,008	49,110	30,369

Source: 2007 ESRI Forecasts

⁷ 2007 ESRI Special Report

⁸ Greater Ft. Bend Economic Development Council, 2007

⁹ U.S Census Bureau-American Community Survey; 2006

in the Houston area. Table 1.5 shows the distribution of household income by income category, and further provides a look at income distribution at the precinct level.

Income	Total County	Precinct 1	Precinct 2	Precinct 3	Precinct 4
< \$15,000	5.0%	9%	5.4%	3.2%	2.7%
\$15,000 - \$24,999	4.8%	7.9%	5.2%	3.3%	2.8%
\$25,000 - \$34,999	6.2%	9.6%	8.5%	3.8%	3.2%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	10.2%	12.4%	14.7%	7.5%	6.8%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	18.5%	19.7%	23.1%	18%	13.1%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	14.6%	12.8%	16.2%	15.8%	13.1%
\$100,000 - \$149,000	21.7%	15.6%	18.7%	24.7%	27.6%
\$150,000 +	19.2%	13%	8.2%	23.7%	30.7%
Total Households	151,731	38,421	33,115	47,205	33,069
Source: 2007 ESRI Forecasts	Source: 2007 ESRI Forecasts	Source: 2007 ESRI Forecasts	Source: 2007 ESRI Forecasts	Source: 2007 ESRI Forecasts	Source: 2007 ESRI Forecasts

Historically, Fort Bend County has

been a racially diverse county. According to the 2006 census update, the population of the county is 40% White, 23% Hispanic, 21% Black, 15% Asian, with the remaining 1% classifying themselves as “other”. Table 1.6 shows the distribution of the population by racial and ethnic category, with detail provided at the precinct level.¹⁰

6. Natural Resources

Fort Bend County contains approximately 11 square miles of surface water in rivers, creeks, and lakes. The County is drained by the Brazos River, the San Bernard River, and Oyster

Creek. The Brazos River flows from the northwest to the southeast through the heart of the County, forming a broad alluvial valley that is up to ten miles. The Brazos River is generally floatable throughout the Ft. Bend County segment of the river. The San Bernard River, which forms the southwestern border of the County, is

permanently floatable south of FM 442 in the vicinity of Needville and seasonably floatable north of FM 442 up to Interstate 10. Oyster Creek, which tracks from the northern to the eastern portion of the County, is permanently floatable south of SH 6 near Sienna Plantation. These waterways provide important recreational, hydrologic, aesthetic, and natural habit value and are shown on MAP 2 (Appendix).

Native trees within Fort Bend County include pecan, oak, ash, and cottonwood. A few old bottomland forests remain along waterways, and some timberlands remain in the north of the county. Soils range from the fertile alluvial soils of the Brazos River Valley to sandy loam and clay on the prairies. Mineral resources include oil, gas, and sulfur.

Precincts	White	Hispanic Origin	Black	Asian	Other
1	59%	43%	15%	3%	22%
2	32%	25%	45%	8.2%	12%
3	65%	19%	13	12%	10%
4	51%	14%	11%	29%	8%
Source: US Census, 2007 ESRI Forecasts	Source: US Census, 2007 ESRI Forecasts	Source: US Census, 2007 ESRI Forecasts	Source: US Census, 2007 ESRI Forecasts	Source: US Census, 2007 ESRI Forecasts	Source: US Census, 2007 ESRI Forecasts

¹⁰ U.S Census Bureau-American Community Survey; 2006

7. Climate

The growing season in Fort Bend County is 296 days, with an average rainfall of 45.3 inches. The average first and last freeze dates are December 7 and February 14, respectively. Temperatures range from a January mean minimum of 41° to a July mean maximum of 93°. The close proximity of the Gulf of Mexico, only 50 miles away, moderates the summer highs and winter lows, providing a climate that is generally mild and conducive to outdoor activity much of the year. Extremes in climatic changes are typically short in duration and do not impose barriers to outdoor activities.

8. Historic and Cultural Resources

The area that became Fort Bend County was once home to the Karankawa Indians, who roamed the plains and inhabited the river bottoms. In the early 1820s, the Spanish government initiated land grants for Anglo-American colonization of Texas. In 1822, Stephen F. Austin's original colony of 300 families settled at a bend in the Brazos River. They built a two-room cabin that was known both as Fort Settlement and Fort Bend. The area proved to be suitable for agriculture and crops, and 53 of the 297 land grants were to settlers in Fort Bend. The Congress of the Republic of Texas created Fort Bend County in 1837 from portions of Austin, Harris, and Brazoria Counties.

Richmond became the center of trade for the surrounding agricultural areas. The primary crops were cotton and sugar, and the sugar cane plantations supplied the Imperial Sugar complex and its company town, which evolved into the City of Sugar Land. At the dawn of the Civil War, the slave population totaled 4,127, more than twice the 2,016 whites. Following the Civil War, as rail lines developed through the county, the area attracted new settlers, especially immigrants from central Europe.

In the early 1920s, oil was discovered at Blueridge, followed by discoveries in other locations across the county. Oil and gas production continues today in some areas of the county. By the early 1970s, the rapid expansion of Houston triggered residential growth in portions of Fort Bend County and with it the prolifer-

Table 1.7: Top Employers in Fort Bend County

Employer	Local Employees	Line of Business
Fort Bend ISD	8563	Public education
Lamar CISD	2,650	Public education
Schlumberger Technology Corp.	2,200	Energy exploration technology/research
Fluor Corporation	3,000	Engineering, construction, maintenance & technical services
Fort Bend County	1,889	County government
Texas Instruments	1,700	Micro-electronics & semiconductor manufacturer
Richmond State School	1,370	Special education
United Parcel Service	1,092	Package distribution
Methodist Sugar Land Hospital	744	Healthcare

Source: Greater Ft Bend Economic Development Council, 2007

eration of master-planned communities in the county, from early planned communities like Quail Valley and First Colony to more recent communities such as Telfair and Riverstone.

Residents of Fort Bend County enjoy a number of opportunities to celebrate their heritage, including the Fort Bend County Fair, Texian Market Days at the George Ranch, and the Fort Bend County Czech Fest. Points of historic and cultural interest include the Fort Bend Museum, the Confederate Museum, the George Memorial Library, the George Observatory and Challenger Center of Fort Bend, Brazos Bend State Park, the Juneteenth Festival in Missouri City, the George Ranch, the Thomas Barnett Home, and the Imperial Holly Sugar Refinery complex.

9. The Economy

Fort Bend County's share of employment in the Houston CMSA has increased from 3.28% in 1980 to 14.48% in 2005, reflecting the rapid growth of the County as a whole.¹¹ According to Woods and Poole Economics of Washington D.C, Fort Bend County ranks in the top 3% in the nation for employment growth. Table 1.7 shows the top employers in the County based on the number of employees, while Table 1.8 shows the distribution of employment in the County by sector.

Table 1.8: Fort Bend County employment by sector

Industry	Number of Jobs	%
Natural Resources & Mining	3,348	2.8%
Construction	12,186	9.8%
Manufacturing	14,087	11.5%
Trade, Transportation, & Utilities	24,313	19.7%
Information	1,654	1.4%
Financial Activities	5,235	4.4%
Professional & Business Services	13,255	10.7%
Education & Health Services	11,141	9.1%
Leisure & Hospitality	12,975	8.9%
Other Services	3,755	3.0%
Nonclassifiable	295	0.2%
Public Administration	21,533	17.5%
Total	123,775	100%

Source: The WorkSource, 4Q, 2007

10. Fort Bend County Parks & Recreation Department

Established in October 1995, the Fort Bend County Parks and Recreation Department is responsible for developing and maintaining 7 parks, 3 community centers, and leasing 2 parks, totaling about 766 acres (not including Barker Reservoir). An inventory of all parks facilities can be found in Section V of this plan.

The Department employs a staff of 13, and its adopted 2007 budget totals \$1,392,634, about half of which is designated to salaries and labor. The Fairgrounds, which is treated as a separate budget item, accounted for \$381,070 in the 2007 budget. Together, these items constitute \$1,773,704 in spending on parks and recreation facilities. On a per-person basis, the combined parks and Fairgrounds budget amounts to about \$3.48 per person living within Fort Bend County¹², which is an average of \$11.68 per household¹³.

¹¹UH Institute for Regional Forecasting; January 2007

¹²US Census Bureau - 2007

¹³2007 ESRI Forecasts

II Goals and Objectives

This Section outlines a set of goals and objectives that were developed with input from members of the Commissioners Court, County staff, precinct staff, and the public.

- 1. Looking Ahead _____ II-1
- 2. Goals _____ II-1

II Goals and Objectives

1. Looking Ahead

Parks, recreation and open spaces are vital to the quality of life and sense of place for all residents of Fort Bend County. As such, the County has commissioned the *Fort Bend County Parks, Recreation & Open Space Master Plan Update, 2007*. This plan considers present needs, as well as needs at the 5-year horizon of 2012.

The county government will play an important role in the provision of park, recreation and open spaces for the citizens of the county and region. ***In order to use its resources in the most judicious manner, the County must carefully focus efforts to provide only those facilities that are appropriate to its role as a parks provider, and to only acquire, develop, and maintain facilities that can be supported by the limited revenue stream available to the County.***

2. Goals

The following goals will help focus Fort Bend County efforts in the future.

- ❖ **Unique County Role:** *Fort Bend County should focus on opportunities that are uniquely appropriate to the county.*
 - **Regional Parks** – Focus on the creation of regional parks in partnership with cities and local communities. The County should encourage city park departments and neighborhood associations to provide neighborhood parks and mini-parks.
 - **Community Centers** – Continue to provide Community Centers in unincorporated areas by working with multiple partners and stakeholders to manage and provide services.
 - **Transportation Corridors** – Focus on the curb appeal and streetscapes along Fort Bend County’s major thoroughfares, freeways and collector roads. These driving experiences should include green spaces and landscape elements. Using roads as opportunities for landscaping makes them parkways.
- ❖ **Partnerships:** *Fort Bend County should seek partnership opportunities with a variety of public and private entities to provide and operate parks and recreation for the citizens of Fort Bend County.*
 - Collaborate with programming organizations such as Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCAs, sports organizations and scouts to provide public programming in county park facilities.
 - Already, Fort Bend County aggressively pursues ongoing funding mechanisms to enable private organizations to provide recreation programs in public parks. ***Self-perpetuating funding sources such as endowments should be the highest priority. This may be best handled by a private “501.c.3” non-profit corporation.***
 - Collaborate with master planned community developers to:
 - Jointly provide parkland and facilities that serve the residents of master planned communities and county residents at-large.

- Create opportunities for dual use of detention ponds as well as bayou improvements with trails connecting neighborhoods and schools
 - Provide public access and inclusive site design without negatively impacting (real and perceived) needs for privacy and security within the communities.
 - Anticipate expansion of development into new regions of the county – plan for acquisition of appropriate parcels for park use.
 - Collaborate with city parks departments to coordinate efforts on linear park systems such as the Brazos River Corridor (Missouri City and Sugar Land).
 - Collaborate with school districts to encourage public use of school recreational facilities when appropriate.
- ❖ **Joint Use: *Infrastructure must serve more than one purpose when possible.***
- Seek opportunities to develop park and recreation facilities in conjunction with stormwater detention basins and channels and surface water supply reservoirs. This can be accomplished through partnerships with municipal utility districts (MUDs) and master planned community developers.
 - Collaborate with the Texas Department of Transportation and private organizations, such as Houston Wilderness, for the development of trails for certain roadways in areas of high demand for jogging and cycling.
 - Design major thoroughfares as parkways to provide a “park-like” experience, especially The Grand Parkway.
- ❖ **Community-based Initiatives: *Fort Bend County should assist communities in the process of acquiring, developing and operating parks by encouraging the establishment of neighborhood-based park committees, including MUDS and homeowner associations.***
- Committees should focus on needs and desires of a particular community.
 - Committees should be voluntarily set up by the community, not be imposed by the County.
 - Provide expertise and staff resources to advise and assist the Committees with implementation of projects including acquisition, development and operation of parks.
 - Seek opportunities to enable Committees to meet parks and recreation needs through Municipal Utility District (MUD) funding.
- ❖ **Unique Resource Opportunities: *Fort Bend County should seek out opportunities to take advantage of unique land resources for parks and recreation use. The County should be a catalyst to enable other agencies to play an active role in acquiring, developing and managing the properties, including:***
- River and floodplain corridors and reservoirs.
 - Former surface-mining, and landfill sites that might have value for recreation with limited mitigation.
 - Former prison farm land.
 -
- ❖ **Long-Term Planning: *Fort Bend County should plan to “stay ahead of the growth” with regards to parks.***
- **Land in Future Growth Areas** – Fort Bend County has a unique opportunity

among area parks providers to monitor opportunities countywide to acquire land in areas of probable future growth. The County should serve as a catalyst with partners to secure large parcels of land to meet future regional parks needs. These areas include wetland, detention pond, flood plain, drainage channel, un-productive land uses such as landfills, sand pits, surface mounds and utility corridor areas.

- **Master Plan updates** – With a rapidly growing population, the park and recreation needs of County’s residents evolve quickly. The demands of new growth could quickly overwhelm existing facilities. As such, the County should update its Parks Master Plan every two years, as is recommended by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. To support plan updates, the County should maintain a current inventory of park and recreational facilities offered by all public and private providers in the county.
- ❖ **Future Park Space – The County should consider parks needs as new development is proposed. For instance:**
 - **Plan for the Next Use** – Certain facilities, such as landfills or mining pits, might be useful in the future as parks facilities. As these facilities are proposed, the County should consider requiring the provider to establish a closing plan for conversion of the facilities to a parks use once the facilities have reached the end of their design lives.
 - **Water Quality and Created Wetlands** – The Texas Commission for Environmental Quality (TCEQ) has established water quality standards for effluent discharge from Sanitary Sewer Treatment Plants. One treatment includes the creation and use of wetlands for water quality enhancements referred to as “water polishing”. The County can recognize the creation of wetlands for water polishing as part of park land for recreation. The County should work with the municipalities, MUDs, and developers to ensure that these standards, goals, and philosophies are implemented as new development is constructed.
 - **Review Current Green Space Regulations** – The County should review and monitor the adequacy and appropriateness of its Green Space Regulations. A copy of the current Regulations are included in Appendix 3

III Plan Development Process

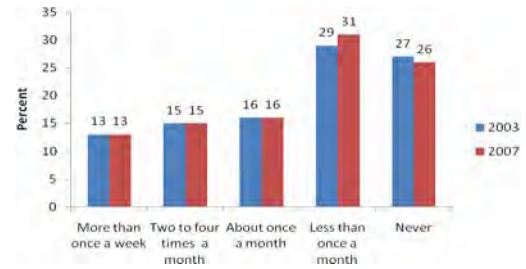
This Section summarizes the process used to develop the plan.

1. Overview	III-1
2. Public and Stakeholder Input	III-1
3. Existing Park System	III-1
4. Standards	III-2
5. Plan Development	III-2

III Plan Development Process

1. Overview

Fort Bend County's second parks master plan, entitled the *Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan 2003-2013*, was adopted in November 2003. Fort Bend County contracted with Knudson & Associates in 2007 to produce this plan update, in accordance with the requirements of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for grant eligibility.



Park Usage

Figure 3.1

The project team met with each member of the Commissioners Court at the beginning of the planning process to identify the unique opportunities and needs of each precinct, as well as to shape the overall goals and objectives of the master plan.

An advisory committee was established to review the plan and to provide input and feedback during the course of the drafting of the plan and the planning process. This 11-member committee consisted of the Parks Director, a representative from each office of the Commissioners Court, a representative from each municipality within the county. The advisory committee members are listed in *Appendix 1*.

2. Public and Stakeholder Input

Comments from residents played a critical role in identifying needs and in creating a priority list of future projects. Resident input was obtained via a random telephone survey conducted by CDS Market Research, a consulting firm located in Houston.

The random telephone survey was conducted in June 2007 and consisted of 400 respondents, which provided a confidence level of 95%. A copy of the survey instrument and the complete results are provided in Appendix II. The survey was conducted countywide, and was restricted to respondents aged 18 and over. The results of the survey are discussed in Section VI. Park Usage information is illustrated in Figure 3.1.

3. Existing Park System

The project team conducted an inventory of the existing County park system in August 2007. This information was used in conjunction with national standards to assess the existing level of service. The team also gathered data on public parks operated by the municipalities within Fort Bend County, as well as Brazos Bend State Park. At the school level, the team obtained data from Fort Bend I.S.D., Katy I.S.D., Kendleton I.S.D., Lamar Consolidated I.S.D., Needville I.S.D., and Stafford I.S.D. At the private level, the team collected data on parks and recreational facilities provided by many of the master-planned communities. The entire inventory is contained in Section V of this plan.

4. Standards

National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) recommendations for park acreage serve as guidelines in the master planning process. These guidelines were adapted for local conditions, and then used as benchmarks from which to evaluate the level of service provided by the existing park facilities, and also to determine the approximate facility requirements based on projected population trends. The standards are presented in Section IV, with an analysis of facility needs in Section VI.

5. Plan Development

The identification of parks and recreation needs was achieved through three approaches:

- ❖ **Standards-based approach** relies upon national standards that were adapted to local conditions.
- ❖ **Demand-based approach** considers such demand-driven factors as usage of existing facilities, stakeholders, the desires expressed by residents in the telephone survey, and observations from the members of Commissioners Court based on what they hear from their constituents.
- ❖ **Resource-based approach** explores the opportunities presented by the natural, cultural, and historic resources of the county, as well as such unusual features as landfills, surface mines, and subsidence ponds.

From these three approaches, a list of priorities was established. Throughout the process, the advisory committee provided comments and guidance based on their intimate knowledge of the county, and gave their approval of the master plan prior to submittal.

IV Area and Facility Concepts and Standards

This Section describes standards and categories for parks classification.

1. Standards _____ IV-1
2. Local Influences _____ IV-1
3. Area and Facility Concepts _____ IV-2
4. Mini-Park _____ IV-2
5. Neighborhood Park _____ IV-2
6. Community Park _____ IV-3
7. Large Urban Park _____ IV-3
8. Regional Park _____ IV-3
9. Special Use Park _____ IV-4
10. Setting the Local Standard _____ IV-4

IV Area and Facility Concepts and Standards

1. Standards

To assess the parks needs for Fort Bend County, this plan utilizes standards developed by the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) as a guide for identifying potential service gaps. The NRPA is an independent, nonprofit professional organization with over 21,000 members who share an interest in parks and recreation. Two NRPA publications provide recommendations for standards, the 1983 *Recreation, Park and Open Space Standards and Guidelines*, and the 1996 *Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines*. While NRPA's 1983 publication recommends specific acreages for different types of parks, the 1996 guidelines call for greater flexibility to adapt to local conditions and desires. It is important to remember that the county has identified its role as being a provider of regional parks, while only providing local park and recreation facilities and services to non-served, unincorporated areas of the county as well as all underserved communities.

2. Local Influences

There are several local influences to consider in arriving at standards for parks and recreational facilities for Fort Bend County. As previously stated in Section 1, the county leads the state in master planned communities. There are presently 67 major master planned communities in the county with a minimum design population of 1,000 residents. The total build-out population of these communities is 580,858. Most, if not all, of these communities provide their own parks and recreational facilities, such as swimming pools, tennis courts, jogging trails, golf courses, lakes, pocket parks, and sports fields. In addition to the master planned communities, many of the cities within Fort Bend County offer parks and recreational facilities, as does the State. The cities of Missouri City, Sugar Land, and Rosenberg have all developed parks master plans. An inventory of parks and recreation facilities offered by the cities, some school districts, some master planned communities, and the State is provided in Section V. **The presence of these providers is significant in that they fill particular roles in providing parks and recreational facilities that should not necessarily be duplicated by the County.**

Another factor to consider when evaluating parks needs is the dichotomy between the urban and rural areas of the County. Residents in rural areas enjoy the expanses of their farm and ranches, and sometimes have differing recreational needs than those in urban areas. Further, rural residents sometimes have greater opportunity to have their parks and recreational needs met on their own land or on neighboring private lands than their counterparts in urbanized areas.

The provision of parks and recreational facilities by the numerous private entities such as the master planned communities as well as by governmental entities other than the County, and the differing needs of the urban and rural populations creates a situation that makes Fort Bend County dissimilar from most other counties in Texas. For example, while the combination of master planned communities and rural areas might reduce the need for the County to be the supplier of neighborhood parks, the explosive growth of families in master planned communities will trigger increased needs for the County to offer regional-level facilities providing a broad program of active and passive uses geared towards families to meet the ex-

pectations of these residents.

3. Area and Facility Concepts

The NRPA has developed a classification for parks, and a typical description for those parks.

Table 4.1: Park Classification Matrix

Category	Service Area	Size	NRPA Standard Acres/1,000 Population	Typical Facilities
Mini-Park	¼ mile radius	0-5 acres	0.25-0.5	Playground, picnic tables
Neighborhood	¼ - ½ mile radius	5-25 acres	1-2	Playground, picnic tables with grills, sports fields, restrooms, parking
Community	½ - 3 mile radius	25-50 acres	5-8	Sports fields, picnic shelters, play areas, open space, restrooms, parking
Large Urban	Entire Community	50-150 acres	5-10	Combination of community-based recreational facilities, and preservation of open space and unique landscapes
Regional	10 miles	150+ acres	5-10+	Sports fields, picnic shelters, pavilions, lakes, trails, nature areas, open space, restrooms, parking
Special Use	N/A	Variable	Variable	Areas for specialized use (e.g. golf course, arena)

Source: NRPA, 1983 Edition and 1995 Edition

These park classifications are discussed below, and recapped in Table 4.1.

4. Mini-Park

Mini-parks are the smallest parks classification, and are commonly referred to as pocket parks. These parks serve limited, isolated, or unique recreational needs. Sometimes these parks take advantage of a unique opportunity, such as a scenic overlook. In a residential setting, the NRPA classification of a mini-park covers park areas less than 5 acres in size, with a service area of less than ¼ mile in radius. **In Fort Bend County, mini-parks are typically provided by municipalities and by private entities, such as master planned communities.**

5. Neighborhood Park

NRPA identifies neighborhood parks as the basic unit of the park system, serving as a recreational and social focus of a neighborhood. These parks should be a minimum of 5 acres in size, with 7-10 acres being an optimal size. Neighborhood parks ideally achieve a balance between active and passive park uses, with about a 50-50 split in allocated land. These parks have a service area of ¼ to ½ mile. Frequently, Elementary Schools have a “neighborhood park” function and serve the community’s recreational needs, as well as educational. **Like mini-parks, neighborhood parks in Fort Bend County are typically provided by the municipalities and by the master planned communities.**

6. Community Park

Community parks focus on meeting community-based recreation needs, thus serving a broader purpose than neighborhood parks. Community parks serve 2 or more neighborhoods, and optimally range between 30 and 50 acres in size. However, the NRPA recommends that their actual size should be based on the land area required to meet the desired uses. The service area of a community park ranges from ½ to 3 miles in radius. **In Fort Bend County, community parks are provided by the cities, as well as by private developments.**

7. Large Urban Park

Large urban parks serve the municipality at large, and fill needs that cannot be met by community- and neighborhood-level parks. In addition to meeting community-wide needs, these parks also address the preservation of open space and unique landscapes. The NRPA specifies a minimum of 50 acres for large urban parks, with optimal sizes being 75 acres or more.

In Fort Bend County, large urban parks are provided by the following cities:

- ❖ Missouri City
 - Buffalo Run Park (1)
 - Community Park (2)
 - South Brazos River (proposed)
- ❖ Sugar Land
 - Oyster Creek Park (3)
 - Duhacsek Park (4)



8. Regional Park

Regional parks serve residents in several communities, and are areas of natural or ornamental quality for outdoor recreation. These parks should be over 150 acres in size. The service areas for regional parks should not exceed 1-hour driving time, and are often set at a 25-mile radius. The County provides regional parks facilities, as do three of the cities. In addition, a few of the master planned communities provide park acreage of this size. An example is the Fulbrook Development, which includes a 200-acre nature preserve. **In Fort Bend County, regional parks are provided by the following cities:**

- ❖ Missouri City
 - Independence Park (1)
 - Sienna North (2) - *ETJ*
- ❖ Sugar Land
 - Sugar Land Memorial Park (3)
- ❖ Rosenberg
 - Seabourne Creek Park (4)



9. Special Use Park

Special use parks are facilities oriented towards a single purpose, such as golf courses, athletic facilities, and museums. As such, standards for such parks vary according to use. **In Fort Bend County, the County Fairgrounds are a special use facility.**

10. Setting the Local Standard

Public Park Land

There are presently 17.0 acres of public parkland per 1,000 persons provided by governmental entities in Fort Bend County, including the State of Texas. The NRPA recommends a standard of 21-31 acres of parkland per 1,000 persons.¹ Likewise, the Urban Land Institute recommends 25.5 acres per 1,000 persons.² Compared with these recommendations, the governmental providers in Fort Bend County as a whole are not currently meeting minimum standards for park acreage.

This plan recommends an increase in public park acreage within Fort Bend County from the current level of 17.0 acres per 1,000 residents to 23 acres per 1,000 residents. New public park acreage and facilities are to be provided by a combination of governmental entities that may include the State of Texas, Ft. Bend County, cities and municipal utility districts. The “Standards Based Approach” of assessing existing and projected parks needs follows the recommended standard of 23 acres per 1,000 residents as shown in Table 4.2. Based on the County’s primary role as a provider of regional parks, it should provide 19.5 acres of regional public parks per 1,000 residents, out of the total recommended acreage of 23 acres per 1,000 residents. Currently, Ft. Bend County has approximately 14.3 regional park acres per 1,000 persons, which represents a regional park deficit of approximately 5.2 acres per 1000 residents. The “Standards Based Approach” is discussed in more detail in Section VI.

Private Park Land

Ft. Bend County has established a standard for the dedication of open space for residential developments with lot sizes less than 1 acre. The current open space dedication requirements call for a dedication of 1/4 acre of open space per 100 residential lots, or part thereof.

This open space dedication requirement will help provide the smaller park and open space amenities that are outside the County’s primary area of focus - regional parks.

¹ <http://www.cechouston.org/news/issues2/parks.html>, accessed October 31, 2003.

² *Parks and Recreation Master Plan, City of Houston*, September 2001, p. 6.1. <http://www.ci.houston.tx.us/pr/masterplan/newparks-se.pdf>, accessed November 11, 2003.

Table 4.2: Recommended Countywide Park Standards by Park Classification *			
Category	Service Area	Size	Local Public Standards Acres/1000 Population
Mini-Park	¼ mile radius	0-5 acres	0.25
Neighborhood	¼-1/2 mile radius	5-25 acres	0.75
Community	½-3 mile radius	25-50 acres	1.5
Large Urban	Entire Community	50-150 acres	1.0
Regional	25 mile radius	150+ acres	19.5
Special Use	N/A	Variable	
Total			23

*In compliance with NRPA, 1983 Edition and 1995 Edition

V Inventory of Parks and Facilities

The project team conducted an inventory of the existing County park system in August 2007. This information was used in conjunction with national standards to assess the existing level of service. The team also gathered data on public parks operated by the municipalities within Fort Bend County, as well as Brazos Bend State Park. At the school level, the team obtained data from Fort Bend I.S.D., Katy I.S.D., Kendleton I.S.D., Lamar Consolidated I.S.D., Needville I.S.D., and Stafford I.S.D. At the private level, the team collected data on parks and recreational facilities provided by many of the master-planned communities.

1. County-Owned Parks	V-2
2. Leased Parks	V-16
3. Community Centers	V-20
4. Fairgrounds	V-26
5. Other Public Providers	V-28
6. Semi-Public Providers	V-30
7. Private Parks	V-31
8. Golf Courses	V-31
9. Historic Sites and Cultural Resources	V-32

V Inventory of Parks and Facilities

Table 5.1 - "Park and Recreation Facilities Owned or Leased For Use by Fort Bend County" identifies each park or facility that the County has official use of. Table 5.1 also indicates the facilities present at each park site.

Following Table 5.1 are photos and descriptions of each park site.

Table 5.1: Parks And Recreation Facilities Owned or Leased For Use By Fort Bend County

Park	acreage in use	* facility type	backstops	barbecue grills	baseball fields (lights)	baseball fields (no lights)	basketball court	basketball goals	bathing cages	bleachers	canoe ramp	community center	concession stand	drinking fountain	fishing pier	gazebo	hike/bike/walking trail	historic site	observation deck	park bench	pavilions	picnic shelters	picnic tables	play area / play unit	pond	restrooms	soccer fields	softball fields	volleyball courts	wetlands	Other
Barbara Jordan Park	6	N		•	•	•				•	•	•								•			•	•							
Barker Reservoir	200	R																											•	1,961 acres leased from US Army Corps of Engineers; 200 acres sub-leased to YMCA, the remaining is undeveloped	
Bates M. Allen Park	235	R		•							•		•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•	•		
Harlem Road Park	10	S	•						•																						
Coon Creek Park	5	N		•																		•	•								
Fifth Street Community Center	5	C					•					•	•												•						Boys and Girls Club space, senior facility, gym
Bud O'Shieles Community Center	2	C										•	•												•						Meeting room, offices, kitchen, senior facility
Fort Bend County Fairground	60	C								•		•	•								•	•		•							Exhibit halls, arena, stage, barn, cook-off areas, ticket booths, etc.
Kitty Hollow Park	190	R	•	•	•	•										•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•					265 undeveloped acres
Mission West Park	10	N	•	•						•						•							•	•							
Mustang Community Center	5	N,C		•	•	•	•	•		•		•					•			•	•	•	•	•							Senior's center, meeting room
South Post Oak Park	23	N			•	•				•		•													•	•					Football Field
Four Corners Community Center	15	N,C			•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•			•				•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				YMCA after school program
<i>Total acreage in use</i>	766																														

* Facility types: (R) – Regional park (N) – Neighborhood park (C) – Community Center (S) – Special use facility

1. County-Owned Parks

Bates M. Allen Park

Classification: Regional Park

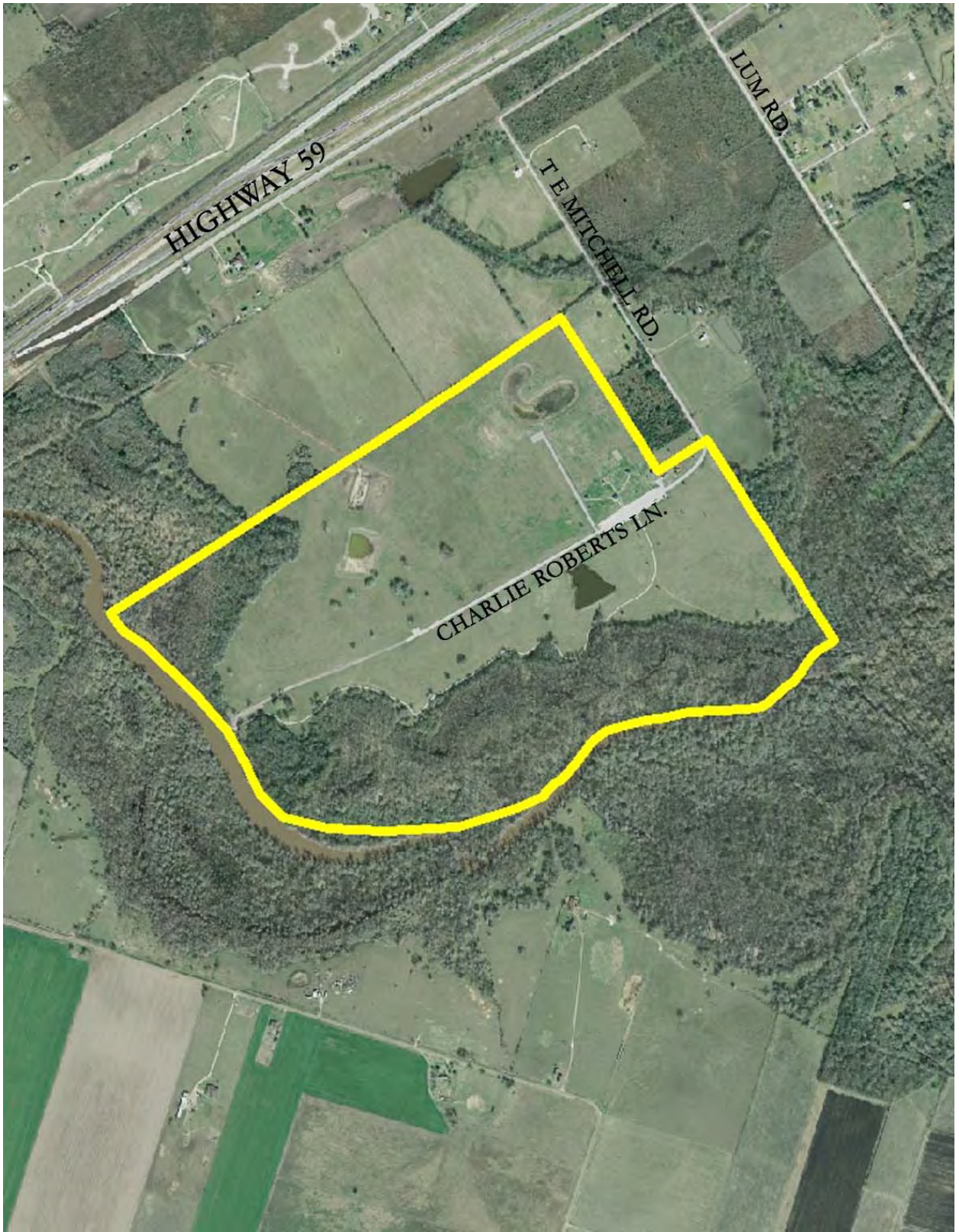
Size: 235 Acre Park

Location: Located along San Bernard River in southwest Fort Bend County near Kandleton

Amenities: Improvements made possible through a grant from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. This Regional Park includes two pavilions, walking trails, a fishing pier, a canoe ramp, an observation deck and a wetlands area.



Bates M. Allen Park



Harlem Road Park

Classification: Community Park

Size: 10 Acre Park

Location: Located on Harlem Road between US 90A and The Grand Parkway

Amenities: The park is a special use baseball practice area, with five backstops, a batting cage and an asphalt parking lot for about 120 cars.



Harlem Road Park



Coon Creek Park

Classification: Neighborhood Park

Size: 5 Acre Park

Location: Located just outside of Rosenberg on Kroesche Road, on the northern bank of Coon Creek.

Amenities: Coon Creek Park consists of a play area and two picnic tables that are accommodated by two barbeque grills.

Note: No onsite parking available



Four Corners Recreation Center

Classification: Community Park

Size: 15 Acre Park

Location: Located on Boss Gaston Road at Old Richmond Road.

Amenities: This park includes a \$300,000 recreation center, along with 2 pavilions measuring 20'x20', an outdoor basketball court, a football field, a soccer field, a baseball/softball field, a one mile walking trail, restrooms, a community center for 100 people, a playground including a swing set and a volleyball court.



Four Corners Recreation Center



Kitty Hollow Park

Classification: Regional Park

Size: 190 Acres, Developed

Location: The park is within a 455 acre tract located in eastern Fort Bend County along SH 6, near the main entrance to Sienna Plantation.

Amenities: This park includes several pavilions and play areas, lighted baseball fields, covered tables, grills, benches, soccer fields, a gazebo, a pond, a fishing pier, a basketball court, fitness trails and restrooms.



Kitty Hollow Park



Mission West Park

Classification: Neighborhood Park

Size: 10 Acre Park

Location: This park is located within a residential neighborhood in the Mission Bend area of northern Fort Bend County.

Amenities: The park includes a play area, walking track, volleyball court, a baseball backstop with bleachers and picnic tables.



Mission West Park



South Post Oak Park

Classification: Community Park

Size: 23 Acre Park

Location: The park is situated across the street from Christa McAuliffe Middle School, adjacent to the Boys and Girls Club, and close to Willowridge High School. The park is operated and maintained by the Boys and Girls Club.

Amenities: The park includes baseball fields, a softball field, a concession stand and restrooms.

Note: The park is maintained by Fort Bend County and is operated by the South Post Oak Youth Sports Association.



South Post Oak Park



2. Leased Parks

Barbara Jordan Park

Classification: Leased Neighborhood Park
(from neighborhood association)

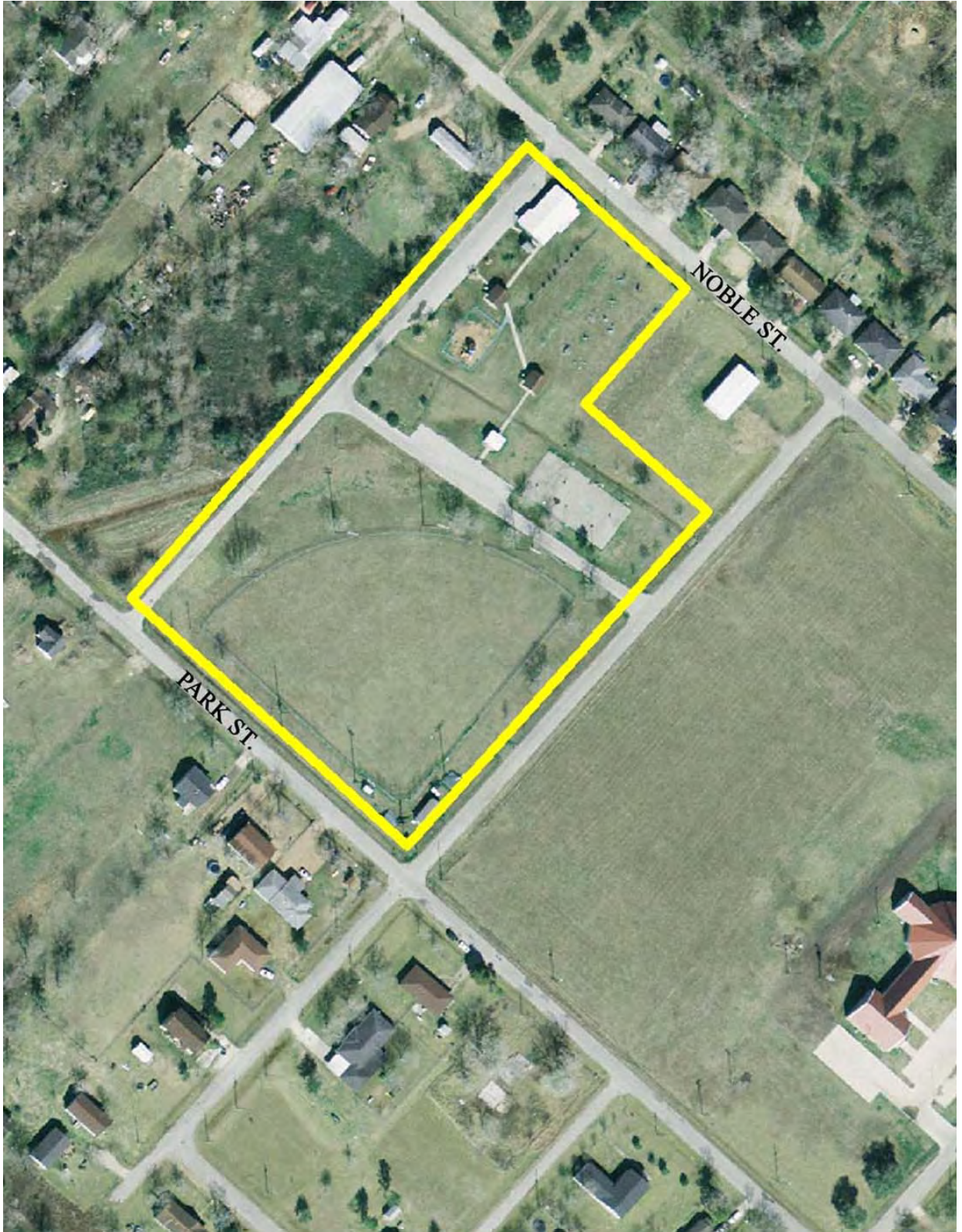
Size: 6 Acre Park

Location: The park is located in Needville in southern Fort Bend County.

Amenities: The park includes a community center, a baseball field with lights, bleachers, a concession stand, restrooms, a basketball court, two pavilions, picnic tables, grills and a play area.



Barbara Jordan Park



Barker Reservoir

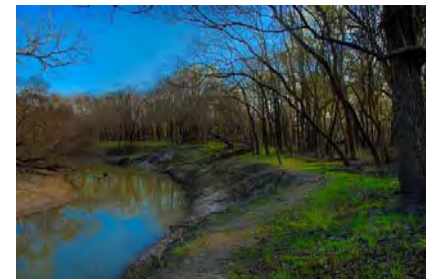
Classification: Leased Park (from US Army Corps of Engineers)

Size: 1,961 Acre Park

Location: Situated on the south side of interstate 10 and west of State Highway 6 and is approximately 17 miles from downtown Houston on the Buffalo Bayou.

Amenities: The reservoir is mostly undeveloped, thus providing ample opportunities for casual walks through the woods, horse-back riding, birding, nature studies and photography .

Note: These 1,961 acres are leased from the US Army Corps of Engineers, and of this acreage, 200 acres of mostly wetlands area are subleased to the YMCA. The acreage also abuts Harris County's George Bush Park.



Barker Reservoir



3. Community Centers

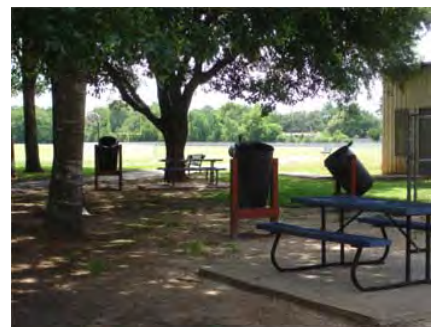
Mustang Community Center

Classification: Community Center and Neighborhood Park

Size: 5 Acre Tract

Location: The tract is located on FM 521 in Fresno.

Amenities: The facility includes a senior's center, a meeting room, two pavilions, a baseball field with bleachers, a playground, a wooded walking trail, restrooms, picnic tables, grills, a basketball pavilion, football field and benches.



Mustang Community Center



Bud O'Shieles Community Center at the Fairgrounds

Classification: Community Center

Location: The community center is located on Band Road in Rosenberg, near the county fairgrounds.

Amenities: The center contains a meeting room, restrooms, a kitchen and offices. The meeting room is used as a senior center on weekdays during business hours, and then the room is available for rental on evenings and weekends. The offices in the center include the offices of Fort Bend Senior Citizens, Inc. Other offices are available for rental, and uses include rental to the EMS for CPR classes.

Note: The center was built in 2000 using community development block grant funds from the US Department of housing and urban development.



Bud O'Shieles Community Center



Fifth Street Community Center and Head Start Building

Classification: Community Center

Location: The community center is located on Fifth Street in Stafford and is adjacent to the Stafford City Park.

Amenities: The center contains an auditorium, a gym, a recreation room, an arts and crafts room, a meeting with billiards tables and restrooms.

Note: The community center was constructed in 2002 using Community Development Block Grant funds from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. Use of the center is split between the Stafford unit of the Boys and Girls Club, Fort Bend Senior Citizens Inc. and the WSS Child Development Center.



Fifth Street Community Center



4. Fairgrounds

Fort Bend County Fairgrounds

Classification: Special Use Facility

Size: 60 Acre Site with 10 Acres of facilities located inside a fenced area.

Location: The fairgrounds are located in the center of the county on SH 36 just south of US 59 in Rosenberg.

Amenities: The grounds contain 4 large buildings: building B is 60'x156', and features 400 chairs, 50 tables, and a kitchen; building C is 100'x200' with 640 chairs, 80 tables, an office, a concession area, and restrooms; building D is 48'x80' with 200 chairs, 25 tables, and a small kitchen, and attached is a 45'x80' club room with 21 tables and 168 chairs; adjacent to the buildings is a free-standing ADA-compliant restroom. Also on-site is a 250'x115' arena, with bleacher seating for 1,800 people. Next to the arena are concession stands, two barns, a ticket booth, and a barbecue building. A 60'x120' pavilion located between the arena and the main buildings contains a 32'x22' stage with bleachers and adjacent picnic tables. An 80'x84' refreshment center sits next to the arena, and it features a covered pavilion. Finally, the grounds contain a 4-acre fenced barbecue cook-off area. The fairgrounds hosts many events throughout the year, including the county fair, a gun show, antiques shows, a quilt show, a barbecue cook-off, and a country peddler show.



Fort Bend County Fairgrounds



5. Other Public Providers

Other publicly accessible park and recreation facilities located within Fort Bend County are described below. Table 5.2 provides a summary of all public government-provided facilities in Fort Bend County. The total public park acreage provided by governmental entities in the county is 17.0 acres per 1,000 persons.

Provider	Mini-Park	Neighborhood	Community	Large Urban	Regional	Special Use*	Total Acres
Fort Bend County	0	59	0	0	625	82	766
Houston	1	0	45.66	0	754.8	0	801.46
Katy	2.24	7.22	0	0	0	0	9.46
Kendleton	0	0	37	0	0	0	37
Meadows Place	1	8	0	0	0	0	9
Missouri City	30.96	121.29	318.89	0	182.0	43	696.14
Richmond	0.75	5	0	0	267	0	272.75
Rosenberg	0.29	10.6	50.12	0	164	0	225.01
Stafford	10.6	25	0	0	0	3	38.6
Sugar Land	12.3	103.4	133	275	420	0	943.7
State of Texas	0	0	0	0	4,897	0	4,897
Total Acres	59.14	339.51	584.67	275	7,309.8	128	8,696.12

* Not all special use facilities are included in acreage counts. The County's community center facilities are counted as special use for this table.

❖ State of Texas

Brazos Bend State Park covers 4,897 acres in southeast Fort Bend County, with 3.2 miles of frontage along the Brazos River. Brazos Bend is notable in Texas history as the location of the state's first Anglo colony. Much of the park is located within the floodplain of the Brazos River, as well as Big Creek. Situated at the highest point in the park is the George Observatory, a satellite facility of the Houston Museum of Natural Science featuring a publicly-accessible 36" research telescope. Park facilities include restrooms with showers, campsites with water and electricity, screened shelters, a trailer dump station, a dining hall, kitchen facilities, and three picnic areas, two of which have pavilions. The park also offers six lakes, with lighted piers and fish-cleaning tables, a 21.6-mile hike/bike trail, an interpretive 0.5-mile nature trail, an amphitheater, and a visitors center.

❖ City of Houston

The City of Houston owns 3 parks located in Fort Bend County, totaling about 801 acres. The largest is a 755-acre regional park within the city's extra-territorial jurisdiction called Cullinan Park at Oyster Creek. The park is primarily a passive facility with a focus on nature observation. The park includes two lakes, access to Oyster Creek, an observation tower, a pier, trails, viewing areas, and picnic shelters. The city also owns a community park called Blueridge, a 46-acre park located within the city limits. The park

contains a lake, playground equipment, a trail, and picnic tables. Finally, the city owns a 1-acre mini-park called Mayfair Park, containing a playground and picnic tables.

❖ **City of Katy**

The City of Katy has a number of park facilities, but most are located outside of Fort Bend County. Katy owns two parks within Fort Bend County totaling around 9 acres. The 7-acre Woodsland Park features a covered basketball area, a 200-person capacity community building, a playground, restrooms, picnic tables, and a barbecue pit. Thomas Park, a 2-acre park located in the center of Katy, features a walking path, a playground, a gazebo, and benches.

❖ **City of Meadows Place**

Meadows Place owns 3 parks totaling about 10 acres – Meadows Place Community Park, Pender Park and Meadow Glen Park. Meadows Place Community Park is an 8-acre park with jogging trails, baseball and softball fields with bleachers, soccer areas, picnic tables, and a leased 4-acre adjoining parcel containing a baseball park with lights. Pender Park is less than 1 acre in size and contains playground equipment, 4 tennis courts, and picnic tables. Meadow Glen Park is also less than 1 acre in size, and contains a playground. The city owns the Meadows Place Community Center, a facility containing a pool and a 166-person meeting space. The city also leases the Kirkwood Office, a 50-person capacity facility that serves as a scout meeting area.

❖ **City of Missouri City**

The City of Missouri City owns 696 acres of park land, comprising 30 parks. The largest park is the 182-acre regional Independence Park, which is located across from a 28-acre sports complex. The focus of Independence Park is a 46-acre lake with opportunities for boating and fishing. Other large parks in Missouri City include the 100-acre Community Park and the 95-acre Buffalo Run Park, a combination park and storm water detention facility that opened October 2007.

❖ **City of Richmond**

Richmond owns about 273 acres of parks facilities. The largest is a 267-acre regional park called George Park, a mostly wooded facility containing many athletic fields and a walking trail adjacent to the Brazos River. The city also owns Crawford Park, which is a ½-acre park that includes the site of the original Fort Settlement, which was also known as Fort Bend, from which the county gained its name. Clay Park is a mostly undeveloped 5-acre park with a playground and picnic tables. The ¼-acre Wessendorf Park also contains a playground with picnic tables.

❖ **City of Rosenberg**

The Rosenberg park system contains almost 220 developed acres. The largest park is a regional facility called Seabourne Creek Park, with 164 developed acres plus an additional 204 undeveloped acres. The city also owns 4 community parks totaling almost 50 acres, two neighborhood parks totaling about 11 acres, and a mini-park of less than 1 acre in size. Also, the city owns the Rosenberg Civic and Convention Center, located on SH 36 near the Fort Bend County Fairgrounds.

❖ **City of Stafford**

Stafford owns almost 40 acres of parks and recreational facilities. The largest of its 6

parks is Stafford City Park, which covers 16 acres and is located adjacent to Fort Bend County's Fifth Street Community Center. Stafford's other parks include First Street Park, Daccaro Manor Park, Gordon Fountain Lake, Ruben Park, and the Stafford City Pool.

❖ **City of Sugar Land**

The City of Sugar Land owns 943 acres of park facilities divided amongst 24 parks. 509 acres are developed and 434 acres are undeveloped. The largest community park is the 108 acre Oyster Creek Park and Trail, which features a 3 mile trail and a water feature. In addition to the existing parks, 420 acres have been designated for the Sugar Land Memorial Park along the Brazos River. 150 of those acres have been developed and was opened in 2007.

Other cities and towns in Fort Bend County with limited parks facilities include Kendleton, Fulshear, Beasley and Thompsons.

❖ **Major Public Parks of Note Adjacent to Fort Bend County**

Most residents are unaware of exact county and municipal boundaries. When the typical resident of Fort Bend County decides to go to a regional park, the nearest facility might be in a neighboring county. To that end, below is a list of major regional parks that are located close to the Fort Bend County line, and might be used by residents of Fort Bend County.

- The **Tom Bass Regional Park** complex consists of over 450 acres of park facilities at the southeast corner of the South Sam Houston Parkway and SH 288. The parks, owned by and located within Harris County, are convenient to residents of northeast Fort Bend County. The parks include a 50-acre golf course, a community center, trails, tennis courts, athletic fields, playgrounds, and a pond.
- **Arthur Storey Park**, located along Brays Bayou at the West Sam Houston Parkway, is a joint purpose facility shared between Harris County and the Harris County Flood Control District. Facilities include a trail, gazebos, pavilions, a fishing pier, playgrounds, and picnic areas.
- **George Bush Park**, the largest park in the Harris County system, is a 7,800-acre park located within the Barker Reservoir, just across the county line from Fort Bend. The park features include hiking and equestrian trails, a shooting center, soccer complexes, baseball fields, pavilions, lakes, picnic areas, and a model airplane field.
- **Cullen Park**, the largest municipal park in the City of Houston system and one of the largest in the U.S., is a 10,534-acre facility located just west of the Addicks Reservoir and north of the Katy Freeway. The park is home to the Alkek Velodrome, as well as other features including jogging and bike trails, playgrounds, and picnic areas.

6. Semi-Public Providers

In addition to the counties, the cities, and the state, the school districts also provide recreational facilities, though their availability to the general public varies. Table 5.3 presents an overview of the facilities offered by each school district. Public use for Fort Bend ISD facilities is typically only through rental agreements with non-profit groups. For the Lamar Consolidated ISD, the school board must approve all public use except for the use of track facilities and tennis courts, which are generally accessible to the public

outside of school hours. For the Needville ISD, facilities are only available to the public upon approval by the school board. The school board has approved use of its facilities by little leagues and soccer teams.

7. Private Parks

Fort Bend County contains more master planned communities than any other county in the state. The communities typically offer recreational facilities to serve the needs of their residents. Table 5.4 presents a list of many of the master planned communities and the facilities that they provide. As is evident from the list, the facilities at most of the communities are private. Also evident is that in many of the larger master planned communities, the amenities offered are extensive.

8. Golf Courses

Fort Bend County contains 12 golf courses. Of these, 5 are daily-fee facilities that are open to the public. The facilities are located in Cinco Ranch, Greatwood, Meadbrook Farms, Sienna Plantation, and Richmond. The remaining golf courses are private facilities. There are no municipal or county-owned golf courses in Fort Bend County.

Table 5.3: Independent School District Recreational Facilities in Fort Bend County	
<i>Fort Bend ISD</i>	
2 Football stadiums with field houses	10 Baseball fields
1 Stadium with clay track	10 Softball fields
1 Natatorium	22 Tracks
23 Practice fields	42 Playgrounds
<i>Katy ISD (facilities in Ft Bend County only)</i>	
2 Baseball fields	1 Putting green
4 Football fields	3 Tracks
1 Soccer field	6 Football practice fields
10 Tennis courts	5 Playgrounds
5 Large open areas	
<i>Kendleton ISD</i>	
Data not available	
<i>Lamar Consolidated ISD</i>	
3 football field	38 tennis courts
12 football practice fields	12 gymnasiums
3 running track	4 weight room
3 softball field	1 Olympic pool
3 baseball field	3 playgrounds
2 large open areas	
<i>Needville ISD</i>	
1 football field	2 tennis courts
4 football practice fields	2 playgrounds
1 large open area	
<i>Stafford Municipal SD</i>	
Data not available	

9. Historical Sites and Cultural Resources

Table 5.4: Historical Sites and Cultural Resources of Fort Bend County

Site Number	Name	Description	Recognition	
			National Register of Historic Places	Texas Historical Commission
1	Fort Bend County Courthouse	The courthouse still serves as a governmental function and a courthouse and was significantly historic from 1900 to 1924	•	
2	Green Historical Center	A vacant single dwelling with African-American cultural affiliation. The period of significance for this site took place from 1875 to 1949	•	•
3	City of Beasley	A town founded in 1894 by Cecil A. Beasley on the Texas & New Orleans Railroad. Many new settlers were German and Czech families from Washington County.		•
4	Town of Booth	Founded by Irby Booth in 1890. By the early 1900's, the town of Booth was a large producer of local goods and was serviced by the Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe Railroad.		•
5	Brown-Beard Cemetery	Begun in the Big Creek settlement area as the Pentecost Graveyard. This cemetery dates to at least 1841 with the burial of George S. Pentecost, an "Old 300" colonist. Other Texas Revolution veterans who were descendants of Beard are also buried here. Children of Beard married into the A.J. Brown family, thus giving the cemetery its present name.		•
6	Buffalo Bayou, Brazos & Colorado, First Railroad in Texas	Planned in 1840 to benefit the Republic of Texas by moving rich sugar and cotton crops from plantation areas. The first locomotive arrived in 1852 and its tracks were extended 20 miles one year later.		•
7	Walter Moses Burton Farm	Born a slave, Walter Moses Burton purchased this land following the Civil War and became a farmer and a politician until his death.		•
8	Cesinger Cemetery	A one acre tract of land dedicated to the burial of the Cesinger family, related family members and neighbors.		•
9	The Darst Yoder House	A 14-room classical revival structure of cypress and pine which was built in 1908 by R.H. Darst; direct descendant of Daniel Boone. Still in the Darst-Yoder family, this home reflects stability of city and family.		•

Site Number	Name	Description	Recognition	
			National Register of Historic Places	Texas Historical Commission
10	The John H. Pickens Davis House	Built by son of Kinchen Davis, who escaped death by drawing a white bean in the famous ordeal of Texas in the 1842 Mexican Conflict. Builder, J.H. Davis, prevented lynchings during the wars of the 1880's.		•
11	Dewalt Cemetery	1.2 acres established in 1850 by Tomas Walters Dewalt for the burial of his two sisters. 3.5 acres were later added in 1983 and is today reserved for the Dewalt, Martin, Robinson, Roane, Bledsoe and Cessna families.		•
12	Dismounted Texas Cavalry	The location of a "camp of instruction" to train Texans to walk and fight for the needs of an infantry, instead of ride on horseback and fight. Many soldiers were dismounted here in Richmond and instructed to march to the defense of Galveston.		•
13	Fort Bend County Jail	Completed in 1897, this structure was the third jail building in Fort Bend County. Built to communicate strength and justice to the area's lawless elements.		•
14	Foster Community	Settled by Randolph Foster, the Foster community began in the year 1821 as a permanent campsite on what was at the time, one of the largest single land grants in Texas.		•
15	Town Of Fulshear	In 1824, a land grant was passed from Mexico to Churchill Fulshear, one of the "Old 300" settlers of Stephen F. Austin. Churchill later built a mansion in the 1850's where he bred and raced horses, known as Churchill Downs.		•
16	Fulshear Cemetery	More than six acres of land, acquired in 1824 by Churchill Fulshear, was donated to the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1851 for a cemetery. Originally Union Chapel Cemetery, it was renamed Fulshear, after the town that was developed there in the 1890's.		•
17	City of Kendleton	This site was originally a Mexican land grant to settler Elizabeth Powell, who's house was an early-day stage stop during the Texas Revolution. Near by land was also visited by Santa Anna's Mexican Army for camp grounds in 1836.		•

Site Number	Name	Description	Recognition	
			National Register of Historic Places	Texas Historical Commission
18	Town of Needville	As a town with much need in its first days of existence, its early economy was based on stock raising and farming. This lifestyle for the town was radically altered with the discovery of oil, natural gas, and sulphur in the 1920's and 1930's.		•
19	Powell Point School	Originally established in 1904 and later expanded in 1923, this school became a model institution. Entry into the school was highly sought after by African Americans throughout southeast Texas.		•
20	Rosenburg Railroad Museum	Established in 2002, the museum displays a collection of artifacts, maps, photos and memorabilia mapping the history of the railroads that surround Rosenburg and Fort Bend County.		•

Table 5.4: Partial Inventory of Master Planned Community Parks and Recreation Facilities

Community	community acreage	design population	Open to public?	backstops	barbecue grills	baseball fields (lights)	baseball fields (no lights)	basketball court	basketball goals	bating cages	canoe ramp	clubhouse	concession stand	drinking fountain	fishing pier	gazebo	hike/bike trail	historic site	horseshoe courts	lake	observation deck	park bench	parking spaces	pavilions	picnic shelters	picnic tables	play area / play unit	pond	restrooms	soccer fields	softball fields	swimming pool	tennis courts	volleyball courts	wetlands	Other					
Aliana	2,044	15,000	Y																																Shops, Restaurant, Spa						
Avalon	427	2,461	N								•	•			•					•											•	•			•	70 acres of lakes, waterfalls, fountains,					
Bonbrook Plantation	800	6,820	N									•																	•		•										
Bridlewood Estates	945	1,646	N		•			•					•	•						•		•	•	•	•	•										•	Lakesides parks				
Canyon Gate at Cinco Ranch	205	2,560	N					•				•											•														•				
Canyon Gate at the Brazos	600	4,030	N					•				•											•														•	Pocket park			
Chelsea Harbour		1,100	N								•	•			•	•				•																		Waterfalls			
Cinco Ranch	7,500	40,320	N	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Pocket parks, daily-fee golf course		
Cottonwood	101	1,100	Y																																			Community Park			
Falcon Ranch	265	2,520																																							
Firethorne	1,390	10,000																																							
First Colony	9,700	55,800	N			•	•					•								•																		•	36 holes of golf, 2 ice skating rinks,		
Fulbrook	908	1,200	N								•				•	•	•			•																			200 acre nature preserve		
Grand Harbor		1,570	Y																								•														
Grand Lakes	1,253	10,710	N									•		•						•																					
Grand Mission	1,200	5,250																									•													Fitness Center, Greenbelt	
Grayson Lakes	325	1,650	N								•	•								•				•																	
Great Oaks	170	1,860																																							
Greatwood	2,050	12,915	N		•			•												•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		Golf course, 32 acres of lakes	
Lakemont	877	7,750	N									•								•																			greenbelt area		
Lake Olympia	1,000	5,355	N																	•							•											•	130 acres of lakes		
Lakes of Mission Grove	676	2,500																																							
Long Meadow Farms	1,400	10,000																		•								•												Native Grasses and Wildflowers	
New Territory	2,000	14,175	N	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	450 acres of greenbelts, 8.5 acre park	
Old Orchard	205	1,884										•								•																				Golf course	
Olympia Estates	1,170	3,400																																						Home Owners Association, parks	
Orchard Lakes	240	1,640	N																																						
Parkway Lakes	1,100	13,950	N					•	•			•												•	•																Horse trails
Pecan Grove Plantation	1,400	13,551	N					•	•	•		•	•							•		•	•				•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		Private country club, golf course
Pecan Lakes	108	1,055										•								•				•	•	•															
Quail Valley	2,530											•								•																				54 hole golf course, Fitness center	
River Park	800	4,725										•								•																				160 acre park	
River Park West	545	3,700										•																													
River's Edge	368	2,900										•								•																				Sports fields, nature park	

Table 5.4: Continued

Community	community acreage	design population	Open to public?	backstops	barbecue grills	baseball fields (lights)	baseball fields (no lights)	basketball court	basketball goals	bathing cages	canoe ramp	clubhouse	concession stand	drinking fountain	fishing pier	gazebo	hike/bike trail	historic site	horseshoe courts	lake	observation deck	park bench	parking spaces	pavilions	picnic shelters	picnic tables	play area / play unit	pond	restrooms	soccer fields	softball fields	swimming pool	tennis courts	volleyball courts	wetlands	Other	
Riverstone	2,800	16,000	N												•					•		•				•											
Royal Lakes Estates	220	778	Y		•											•	•			•		•	•		•	•								•		Bridle path, equestrian center, 48 acres of lakes	
Seven Meadows	1,200	7,560	N									•		•			•					•	•	•	•	•											
Shadow Creek	3,300	35,000	N														•			•																	
Sienna Plantation	9,958	70,000				•	•	•	•				•	•	•	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•			2,000 acres of open space, outdoor theatre,	
Sienna Plantation South	3,800	31,400	Y																																	Restaurants, Entertainment, office space	
Sugar Creek	1,200	5,513	Y			•								•	•							•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•					18- and 27-hole golf course	
Sugar Lakes	330	1,890										•				•																				44 acres of lakes	
Sugar Grove	84	1,215																																			
Teal Run		14,500																																			
Telfair	2,000	15,000																		•							•										
Terra Vista Lakes	1,117	10,362																																			
Texana Plantation	450	682	N	•		•					•		•	•	•	•	•			•	•	•		•	•	•	•										6 lakes, equestrian center with trails, parks
Trails at Seabourne Parke		1,413																																			
Vicksburg	500	5,000										•					•																				Restaurant
Villages of Town Center		2,078										•																									Park
Waterside Estates	600	3,720																		•							•										
Westheimer Lakes	600	5,580																																			
Weston Lakes	1,400	3,150	N									•		•						•		•				•	•										18-hole golf course
Woodbridge	680	6,200	N			•						•		•	•	•				•						•											Junior Olympic-sized pool
WoodCreek Reserve	550	2,000																		•																	Waterfall, 100 acre park
<i>Total</i>																																					

Note: This table provides a partial inventory of parks and recreational facilities offered by some of the larger master planned communities in Fort Bend County. A full list of these generally private facilities is unavailable at this time.

VI Needs Assessment and Identification

Uses a standards-based, demand-based, and resource-based approach to highlight needs and support recommendations for improvements.

1. Standards-Based Approach _____ VI-1
2. Demand-Based Approach _____ VI-3
3. Resource-Based Approach _____ VI-5

VI Needs Assessment

Three different approaches were used to assess the parks and recreation needs of Fort Bend County over the next decade:

- **The standards-based approach** - General standards, which are provided by the NRPA's 1983 *Recreation, Park and Open Space Standards and Guidelines* for spaces under 1,000 acres and the NRPA's 1996 *Park, Recreation Open Space and Greenway Guidelines* for larger park spaces over 1,000 acres.
- **The demand-based approach** - Attempts to meet the community's desire for specific types of park and recreation facilities.
- **The resource-based approach** - Identifies goals related to a key resource in the area.

These differing methods allow for a more complete picture in evaluating the needs and opportunities within the County than a single method.

1. Standards-Based Approach

General standards provide the initial basis for determining how many and what types of parks will be needed to meet Fort Bend County's rapidly growing population. The NRPA's 1983 *Recreation, Park and Open Space Standards and Guidelines* provide standards for mini, neighborhood, community, and regional parks for acres per 1,000 population. The NRPA's 1996 *Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines* add standards for large urban parks, as well as makes recommendations to allow flexibility

Table 6.1: Projected Park Needs Per 1,000 Population

Park Land Category	NRPA Standard for Park Acreage per 1,000 residents	2007 Acreage Required by NRPA	2007 Acreage Provided	2007 Park Surplus (Deficit)	2012 Acreage Required by NRPA	2012 Acreage Projected	2012 Park Surplus (Deficit)
Mini Park	0.25	127.5	59.1	-68.3	160.1	59.1	-101.0
Neighborhood Park	0.75	382.4	339.5	-42.9	480.4	339.5	-140.9
Community Park	1.50	764.7	584.7	-180.1	960.8	584.7	-376.1
Large Urban Park	1.00	509.8	275.0	-234.8	640.5	275.0	-365.5
Regional Park	19.50	9,941.5	7,309.8	-2,631.7	12,490.2	7,309.8	-5,180.4
Total	23.00	11,725.9	8,568.1	-3,157.8	14,732.0	8,568.1	-6,163.9

Sources:

December 2007 Population	509,822	US Census Bureau 2007
2012 foecasted Population	640, 521	ESRI 2007

for local conditions. Based upon these standards, modified for local conditions, Table 6.1 presents a comprehensive view of public park space available countywide by park type.

In analyzing these results, it is worthwhile to revisit the County's role in providing parks for its citizens. *The County's preferred model calls for the cities and new residential developments to offer neighborhood, community, and large urban parks, with the County driving the creation of regional parks, the development of beautification of transportation corridors, regional trail connectivity and leverage relationships with State and Federal agencies to ensure the County is serving regional needs, while also ensuring that under-served neighborhoods in unincorporated areas are not neglected.*

Since the 2003 Parks Master Plan, Ft. Bend County has adopted "Green Space Regulations" which require developers in unincorporated areas, and areas outside of a city Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ), to dedicate park land at a rate of 1/4 ac per 100 lots. The "Green Space Regulations" further stipulate that street trees and landscape improvements must be provided along major thoroughfares. These requirements will result in the creation of neighborhood and community parks in residential communities that are not already subject to park land dedication by municipality. This further reinforces the County's role as a catalyst for large, regional parks and open space corridors.

Table 6.1 reveals that currently on a countywide basis, there is a deficit of public parks facilities of approximately 3,157.8 acres. At the regional level, there is a deficit of public park land in the amount of 2,631.7 acres. Based on the County's role as a regional park provider, addressing this deficit should be the top priority.

To gain a better understanding of who is being served by these regional park facilities, Map 4 entitled "Existing and Proposed Regional Parks" shows the location of the regional parks with 10-mile radius service areas, as residents of the county are quite likely to use these facilities if they are close by.

Based on these service areas, there is a gap in regional park distribution in the northwest corner and in the southern tip of the County. The northeastern area of Fort Bend County is a high-growth area, averaging an annual growth rate of approximately 3 1/2 % between 2000 and 2007, according to the Ft. Bend County EDC. In contrast, the northwestern and southern areas of the County are mostly unincorporated, meaning that they are not currently served by city-level facilities. Regional park facilities in the northwest area, depending on location, could provide recreation facilities and activities while also addressing the needs of the rapidly growing northeastern area. The southern tip of the county is presently thinly populated and rural in character, although parcels along the San Bernard River near FM 442 are being sold quickly and developed for large residences. **The search for properties to serve as a regional park for this area should begin with flood plain, wetland and other properties that may be suitable for parks in collaboration with private developers.**

At the non-regional levels of public park classification, Fort Bend County as a whole appears to fall below standards in every category. However, as indicated earlier, **it is not the County's mission to be the provider of facilities at every level across the entire county, but rather, to be the catalyst for development of larger parks and open space corridors.** In certain underserved unincorporated areas, the County has sought opportunities to enable the creation of community-level and neighborhood-level facilities, such as in the Four Corners area.

Looking ahead at 2012 Fort Bend County may continue to fall further below the local standards at all levels, assuming no further parks facilities are added. This is not surprising considering the rapid population growth, and the fact that the current park acreage has been held constant. Table 6.1 shows the deficits of parks facilities for each classification. In 2007, the countywide deficit is about 3,028 acres of park land; in 2012, this deficit rises to over 6,000 acres. Particularly important is the deficit in park acreage and distribution. **Without further regional park acquisition and development, the deficit in acres will increase from approximately 2,600 acres in 2007 to over 5,000 acres in 2012. An initiative to develop more aggressive parkland dedications is necessary if this deficit is to be corrected.**

2. Demand-Based Approach

A demand-based approach attempts to meet the community's desires for specific types of park and recreational facilities. Public opinion has been obtained through a random telephone survey, questionnaires and interviews with the members of the County Commissioners Court, their staff, and other County officials. While participation numbers are unavailable to gauge the use of each park facility, the Fort Bend County Parks and Recreation Department's most recent estimates are that 46,000 people visit its parks during the peak times of the year, and that they receive 700 requests for reservations to use the parks per year.¹ The Brazos Bend State Park receives over 185,000 visits during a year.²

❖ Random Survey Results

In June 2007, CDS Market Research conducted a random telephone survey of residents of Fort Bend County to determine their usage of and attitudes towards parks in Fort Bend County. CDS obtained results from 401 respondents, which provided a confidence level of 95%. A copy of the survey instrument and the complete survey results are provided in Appendix 2.

Of the respondents, 88% were homeowners, and 83% were registered voters. 45% of the respondents have lived in Fort Bend County more than 10 years, and 55% less than 10 years. All respondents were required to be at least 18 years of age.

¹Fort Bend County Parks and Recreation Department

²*Land and Water Resources Conservation and Recreation Plan*, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/plan/pdfs/land_water_plan_final_full.pdf, accessed November 6, 2003.

Respondents were asked how often they visit a park, open space, or recreational facility in Fort Bend County. 42% of the respondents indicated that they visited these facilities at least once a month.

When the respondent was read a list of facilities owned or leased by Fort Bend County, 48.0% of respondents who use County parks facilities indicated that they had visited the Fort Bend County Fairgrounds within the past three months, which was the highest use of any facility. The Fort Bend County Fairgrounds is a large draw and demands additional attention by the County to maximize its utilization. The Fort Bend County Fairgrounds is an asset that can be maximized through capital improvements as well as additional programming. The upgrading of the Fairgrounds can also have a catalyst effect on the area as well as the Richmond/Rosenberg area. Additional attention should be focused on how to maximize the asset.

Other leading facilities in terms of recent usage were Kitty Hollow Park (20.7%), the Bud O'Shieles Community Center in Rosenberg (13.6%), and the Fifth Street Community Center in Stafford (13.6%). Bates Allen Park, the largest park in the Fort Bend County system, was used by only 2.0% of these respondents within the past 3 months. To understand how the parks are being used, respondents were asked to identify the park activity that they are most likely to do when they visit a park. The leading activity was walking, with a response of 25%. This was followed by use of playground equipment (17%), use of picnic areas and pavilions (16%), biking (11%), watching kids play (10%), running or jogging (8%), fishing (8%), soccer (6%), and baseball/softball (6%). Repeatedly, the master planned community's also show a high respondent to trails and walking paths. This opportunity also means that connectivity of pedestrian trails as well as hike/bike trails should be a priority to Fort Bend County.

To gain an overall snapshot of attitudes towards the facilities provided, respondents were asked their opinion about the parks, open space, and recreational facilities in Fort Bend County. Nearly three out of every four characterized their opinion of the facilities as "good" or "excellent" (50% and 22%, respectively). Only 12% characterized their opinion as "fair," and 2% as "poor." The remaining 14% of respondents expressed no opinion. This is good for Fort Bend County. It also reinforces an opportunity to build on strengths of the County and its assets, as well as make improvements to other facilities.

The respondents who gave a "fair" or "poor" opinion of parks in Fort Bend County were asked what would make the facilities better. The main suggestion for improvement related to better maintenance and trash disposal (16.9%), more playground areas (10.2%), more parks or larger parks (10.2%), and more trails for walking, cycling, and jogging (6.8%). If we breakdown these suggestions, the enhancements are easy to achieve and should be a part of the County budgeting process, as well as a partnership with other cities, agencies and MUD's.

These results suggest that:

- Bates M. Allen Park, a relatively new regional park, appears to be underutilized, and could benefit from strategies to publicize and promote use of the park. More programming, including development of strategic partnerships, should be considered.


- Kitty Hollow Park is rather well used, and development of its additional acreage might attract even greater usage.
- Likewise, improvements to the Fort Bend County Fairgrounds are likely to be enjoyed by a sizeable percentage of the county population.
- Nearly half of respondents undertake activities that might involve a trail when they visit a park, including walking, jogging, and cycling. Indeed, interviews with Commissioners revealed the popularity of cycling and jogging along certain roadways. This suggests an opportunity to integrate trail facilities along or with roadways, and also for connections into parks with existing trails including partnerships with MUD's.
- Both community centers added since the first parks plan, in Rosenberg and Stafford, were among the top destinations for survey respondents. This suggests that future community center development should be considered in locations where such a need is identified. Recently, a new community center was constructed in the Four Corners area.
- 27% of respondents indicated that they never visit a park, recreational facility, or open space in Fort Bend County. The scope of the Survey did not include determination of the cause for not using recreation facilities. However, reasons of "poor health", "lack of transportation", "no interest" and "lack of time" are frequently mentioned in similar surveys.

3. Resource-Based Approach

The final method used to assess and identify needs for the parks system is resource-based. In this Parks Master Plan Update natural resources as well as cultural resources have been identified as potential opportunities for recreation and open space amenities.

The first parks master plan, created in 1997 entitled *Parks Master Plan and Needs Assessment*, identified several goals related to a key resource in the County, its rivers. To that end, Fort Bend County has developed Bates Allen Park along a stretch of the San Bernard River near Kendleton. Likewise, cities of Sugar Land and Missouri City have identified the Brazos River Corridor as a primary open space and recreation resource. Accordingly, both cities are moving forward with developing parkland and trails along the Brazos River. The City of Rosenberg has also identified the 368 acre Seabourne Creek Park as a regional park that includes a small lake and flood plain areas. **Rivers, creeks and floodplains in Ft. Bend County continue to offer great opportunities in future parks and recreation development.**

Other potential recreation resources include closed landfills, surface-mines, and similar facilities. These areas are of little utility for residential or commercial development, yet with remediation and site improvements they can serve as parks, golf courses, lakes, and other public amenities. In previous Master Plan updates, the Commissioners cited several such



facilities, including sand pits along Madden Road between Four Corners and the Grand Parkway in northern Fort Bend County and subsidence lakes located south of Orchard in the western portion of the county. Owners of properties adjacent to “reclaimed” sand pits and land fills may benefit significantly from the creation of a recreation and open space amenity directly adjacent to their property.

Finally, the county’s heritage is a resource. As the location of “Austin’s Colony” in the 1820’s, Ft. Bend County has a very rich history. Although the number of historical sites in Ft. Bend County are too numerous to list here, 21 historical sites that have been recognized by state and national agencies are identified on Map 3 (Appendix) entitled “Cultural Resources.” Most notable of these are the George Ranch and the downtown areas of Richmond and Rosenberg. Collectively, these sites and the other 18 represent an opportunity for the County to partner with the cities, the George Ranch and other entities to create a historical trail or bike route throughout the County. The County has a very unique opportunity to serve as cosponsor for the preservation of those sites whose qualities of place are meaningful. The County can play a role in facilitating conservation easements, donations, or acquisitions of meaningful properties, and advocating the preservation of significant rural landscapes.

VII Prioritization of Needs and Plan Implementation

This plan is intended to guide future decisions regarding park facilities for Fort Bend County, and to identify tools that the County can use to enable the creation of new parks and recreational facilities. In conclusion of this section, a prioritized list of projects, policies and opportunities based on the needs assessment and a list of implementation strategies that can be used to enable the creation of parks, recreation facilities and green spaces is provided.

1. Summary _____ VII-1
2. Priority Ranking _____ VII-2
3. Recommended Park and Open Space Improvements _____ VII-3
4. Descriptions of Initiatives _____ VII-4

VII Prioritization of Needs and Plan Implementation

1. Summary

This Parks Master Plan Update guides future decisions regarding park facilities for Fort Bend County through 2012. The needs and priorities identified in this Section are the result of incorporating the facilities inventory, demographics analysis, telephone survey, standards analysis and input from Ft. Bend County staff.

At the completion of the citizens' survey, a Priority Ranking Matrix was developed as means of ranking numerous priorities. Using the Priority Ranking Matrix, the prioritization process involved a scoring system that included participation from the Master Plan Advisory Committee, representatives from each of the four precincts and the results of the telephone survey. This process included three key steps:

- Ranking of needs by Precinct by Precinct staff
- Separation of needs in to "High, Medium, and Low" priorities.
- Scoring priorities identified by the telephone survey and Precinct staff.

As defined by the Priority Ranking Matrix, the priorities for parks, recreation and open space improvements are as follows:

1. Trails – walking, jogging, cycling
2. Playground areas
3. Picnic Tables, Pavilions, Grills
4. Meeting Rooms
5. Baseball / Softball Fields
6. Restrooms (non-recreational priority)
7. Park Benches (Sitting & Relaxing - Watching Kids and Others)
8. Soccer & Football Fields
9. Fishing Piers / Lakes / Ponds
10. Livestock Facilities
11. Campsites
12. Nature Study Areas
13. Drinking Fountains (non-recreational priority)
14. Senior Centers
15. Volleyball Courts
16. Boat Ramps and Water Access

Table 7.1, on the following page, illustrates the county-wide priority ranking based on this scoring process.

Map 5 – Ft. Bend County Master Parks Plan, 2007 - 2012 follows Table 7.1 and illustrates recommended parks, trails and open space linkages that the County may wish to develop, cosponsor or facilitate.

The following priorities and recommendations have been reviewed and adopted by the Parks Master Plan Advisory Committee and County staff.

2. Priority Ranking

TABLE 7.1 – PRIORITY RANKING

Facility / Feature	Survey Priority (High, Med, Low)	Steering Committee Priority (High, Med, Low)	Composite Ranking
Trails (Walking, Jogging, Cycling)	High	High	High
Playground Areas	High	High	High
Picnic Tables, Pavilions, Grills	High	High	High
Meeting Rooms	High	High	High
Baseball / Softball Fields	High	High	High
Restrooms	Medium	High	Medium
Park Benches (Sitting & Relaxing - Watching Kids and Others)	Medium	High	Medium
Soccer Football Fields	Medium	Medium	Medium
Fishing Piers / Lakes / Ponds	Medium	Medium	Medium
Livestock Facilities	Medium	Medium	Medium
Camp Sites	Low	Medium	Low
Nature Study Areas	Low	High	Low
Drinking Fountains	Low	High	Low
Senior Centers	Low	Medium	Low
Volleyball Courts	Low	High	Low
Historic Sites	Low	Medium	Low
Boat Ramps / Waterway Access	Low	Low	Low

Table 7.2 delineates specific initiatives that Ft. Bend County may pursue to address the park, recreation and open space needs identified in Chapter 6. Addressing these priorities will be impacted by limited resources, land and construction costs and the extent of participation by potential partners and co-sponsors.

3. Recommended Parks and Open Space Improvements

TABLE 7.2: RECOMMENDED PARKS AND OPEN SPACE IMPROVEMENTS 2007 – 2012

Initiative	Rationale*	Description	Potential facilities	Funding Sources
1. Northwest Fort Bend County regional park	S, D, R	<u>Acquire land</u> to develop regional park for north-west Fort Bend County near Fulshear	Athletic fields, trails, pavilions, play grounds	Land Acquisition – County Funds, Grant Funding and Private Donations
2. Southeast Ft. Bend County Regional Park	S, D, R	<u>Acquire land</u> for future regional park in southeast Ft. Bend County, downstream of Brazos Bend State Park	Hiking and biking trails, pavilions, play grounds	Land Acquisition – County Funds, Grant Funding and Private Donations
3. Brazos River Greenbelt Trail	D,R	Participate with cities of Richmond, Rosenberg, Sugar Land and Missouri City to obtain funding for land acquisition and trail construction	Hiking and biking trails, river access for fishing and canoeing	Municipal Funds, Grants Funding, Donations and County Funding
4. Kitty Hollow Park	D	Authorize interlocal agreement with Missouri City to construct new facilities, funded by the City, as indicated in Missouri City Parks Master Plan	Recreation Center, Special Events Center	City of Missouri City Funding
5. Seabourne Creek Park, Rosenberg	D	Support the City of Rosenberg with grant applications and funding solicitations	Playgrounds, trails, bird sanctuary, nature center, lakes and fishing, recreation center with meeting facilities, and athletic facilities	City of Rosenberg Funding, Grants, Private Donations, with County as Co-sponsor for Grants and Donations
6. Fairgrounds Beautification	D	Enhance county landmark within property	Trees, landscaping, design improvements	County Funding, User Fees and Possible TxDOT Beautification Grant
7. Bicycle Routes	D,R	Collaborate with cities, bicycling organizations, Houston Wilderness, and TxDOT to create a trail system to link historical and natural resource / recreation sites throughout Ft. Bend County	Bicycle routes, with maps, interpretative signs, rest stops. Links to B&B's as well as restaurants and campgrounds. Key destinations include George Ranch, Brazos Bend State Park, Historic Richmond and Rosenberg and Fairgrounds	County Funding, Grants, Private Donations, Economic Development Funding

* (S) - Standards-based (D) - Demand-based (R) - Resource-based

Table 7.2 constitutes the official Priority List for planning and development purposes, including grant applications submitted to Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Recreation Grants Branch. Initiatives listed are not shown in order of priority.

4. Description of Initiatives

Following are general descriptions of the initiatives identified in Table 7.2:

- 1. Northwest Fort Bend County Regional Park** - The analysis of regional park service areas reveals that the Fulshear and Simonton areas are not being served by any regional-level facilities. Representatives of the City of Fulshear have expressed a strong interest in being partners with the County in creating a regional-level park facility in their area. Further, stakeholders and a Commissioner have identified this area as being underserved. Areas along the Brazos River near FM 1093 are within the 100 year flood plain, with some areas within the 100 year floodway. These areas represent opportunities for park land acquisition at the most reasonable cost. In addition, the use of flood plain properties for park land is compatible with many recreation facilities, including trails, picnicking, soccer fields and playgrounds.
- 2. Southeast Fort Bend County Regional Park** – The analysis of regional park service areas also indicated a future lack of service in the southeast portion of the County. Acquisition of land for a future regional park with Brazos River frontage, near Brazos Bend State Park, is recommended before 2012 so that the property can be acquired most economically. As with the Northwest Fort Bend regional park, much of this area adjacent to the Brazos River is in the 100 year flood plain, further allowing acquisition at reasonable costs. Unlike Brazos Bend State Park, the Southeast Regional Park will serve Fort Bend County residents without an entry fee, thus encouraging use by a broader range of patrons.
- 3. Facilitate Brazos River Corridor Trail** – Fort Bend County should work with Richmond, Rosenberg, Sugar Land and Missouri City to extend trails for Brazos River Corridor. County participation should include:
 - Support and co-sponsor regional grant applications
 - Support and co-sponsor solicitations for private donations
 - Support and facilitation of Brazos River Corridor Trust, a 501, c., 3. non-profit corporation, or similar organization, to serve as an “umbrella” organization for the development of recreation opportunities and events.Preserving the Brazos River and developing trails along its shores is consistent with the first parks plan.
- 4. Kitty Hollow Park Improvements** – The Missouri City Parks Master Plan (draft) proposes an interlocal agreement with Fort Bend County to allow the City to complete a community center and a special events facility within the park. The County should support this initiative and work with the City to co-sponsor grant applications and solicitations for private donations.
- 5. Seabourne Creek Park (City of Rosenberg)** – The City of Rosenberg Parks Master Plan includes an ambitious Master Plan for Seabourne Creek Park. This 364 acre park will serve as a regional park for the residents of central Fort Bend County. As such, the County should support development of the park for active recreation and passive recreation uses.

County participation should include:

- Support and co-sponsor local outdoor grant applications
- Support and co-sponsor solicitations for private donations
- Assist with construction as possible
- Assist with roadway and entrance beautification, considering the close proximity of the County Fairgrounds

6. Beautify the Fairgrounds – The results of our random telephone questionnaire reveal that the County Fairgrounds is the most heavily used of all County parks and recreational facilities. Indeed, the Fairgrounds is a county landmark. As such, a fairgrounds facility serving a county of well-designed master planned communities should itself reflect this character. The County should initiate a plan for beautification of the Fairgrounds, and implement increased user fees to fund the costs of implementing beautification improvements.

7. Bicycle Routes – With its rich history and cultural resources, combined with natural resources, such as Brazos Bend State Park, Fort Bend County has a very unique opportunity to increase tourism and economic development with a well planned bicycle route system. As indicated on the Parks Master Plan, a system of bicycle routes can link the historical districts of Richmond and Rosenberg with landmarks like the George Ranch and the State Park. Already, Houston Wilderness has begun planning for a regional trail that includes Fort Bend County. The County should work with Houston Wilderness, TxDOT and all of the Cities to create this network of bicycle routes.

County Participation and facilitation can include:

- Work closely with Houston Wilderness and local bicycling organizations to create a plan for the bicycle routes
- Support and co-sponsor transportation grant applications
- Support and co-sponsor solicitations for private donations
- Encourage support from the local Chambers of Commerce as well as the Ft. Bend County EDC

VIII Implementation Strategies and Tool Box

Describes recommendations and strategies for the implementation of the Fort Bend County Parks Master Plan.

1. Implementation Strategies _____ VIII-1
2. Tool Box _____ VIII-2

VIII Implementation Strategies and Tool Box

1. Implementation Strategies

The following broad based objectives describe Ft. Bend County’s role with respect to Parks, Recreation and Open Space:

1. Provide “local” park and recreation services in under served areas and areas that are not served by cities or planned communities
2. Participate in park and recreation endeavors, such as trails and open space preservation, with local entities such as Cities, MUD districts and private non-profit organizations
3. Cosponsor and support regional planning efforts for trails, open space and habitat preservation and ecotourism
4. Cosponsor ecotourism efforts and activities in conjunction with the State of Texas and private non-profit organizations to encourage the creation of additional tax revenues
5. Combine ecotourism with historical and cultural resource preservation in conjunction with the State of Texas and various non-profit organizations to promote tourism and recreation activities to the broadest audience.

The following Strategies are summarized to describe the recreation facility needs and priorities for the County and each Precinct:

TABLE 8.1

Summary of Priorities and Strategies	Precinct				County-wide
	1	2	3	4	
Priority					
Trails – Hiking, Jogging, Bicycling	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Picnic Facilities – Pavilions, Tables, Grills	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Playground Areas	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Meeting Rooms & Baseball / Softball Fields (tie)					✓
Fishing Piers, Lakes & Ponds					✓
Strategies					
Collaborate with local communities and cities to pursue joint sponsor recreation improvements and grant applications, particularly along the Brazos River corridor.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Collaborate with planned communities and MUD districts to improve existing facilities and sponsor new facilities.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Collaborate with private non-profit organizations to sponsor acquisition and protection of wildlife habitat, including the George Foundation.					✓
Focus on preservation of wetlands and flood plain areas through coordination with developers during land planning and platting operations					✓
Include review of proposed park and recreation improvements In conjunction with review of proposed detention ponds					✓

2. Tool Box

A variety of mechanisms are available to help the County to implement its parks plan. These mechanisms should be considered not in isolation from one another but rather in connection, as implementation can involve a number of these strategies simultaneously.

Fee simple acquisition – One approach to obtain land for parks and recreation is to simply purchase it. Funds for land acquisition can be obtained from general revenues, bonds, grants, etc.

Right of first refusal – This is a written agreement in which the landowner promises to offer to a county, city, or other entity the first opportunity to purchase the land in the event that the landowner decides to sell. The County can use this strategy for lands of significant natural value, and either purchase or facilitate the purchase of the property as the lands become available for sale.

Land trades – To acquire parkland, the County can trade property with other public and private entities, or facilitate such trades.

Joint use – An alternative to acquiring property for the specific purpose of parks and recreation is to take advantage of opportunities afforded by existing public properties. Certain water, storm, and sanitary sewer facilities and easements can be used to fill park and recreation needs, as can public school facilities, without interfering with their primary purpose. This allows for a potentially more efficient use of public monies and resources. Arthur Storey Park in Harris County is an example of a joint use facility serving as both a stormwater and parks facility. **Partnerships and dual use facilities is one of the most efficient methods to achieve the goals.**

Leases – The County can secure land for parks, recreation, and open space through leases in which the County or a special partner takes control of the use of the land in exchange for rent payments. Likewise, the County can lease land to other entities to serve a parks purpose.

Private donations – Donations from developers, corporations, foundations, and private individuals are often used to secure parkland. Over 235 acres of land were donated to Fort Bend County for the creation of Bates Allen Park. The County should encourage the donation of 150+ acre tracts for regional parks facilities, or enable the donation of smaller tracts to municipalities or other entities capable of managing parks.

Conservation easements – A conservation easement is a voluntary agreement by a property owner to restrict development potential on their land in order to protect certain resources associated with the property. Conservation easements can be donated to local governments, land trusts, or other non-profits. While the property owner retains ownership of the land, (s)he also often enjoys tax savings with regards to federal, state, local, and estate taxes, depending on the circumstances of the easement.

Trust for Public Lands – The Trust for Public Land (TPL) is a national nonprofit that works with government agencies, landowners, and community groups to create parks and greenways, conserve land, and preserve historic landmarks and landscapes. TPL helps governments to select land for protection and to identify, and sometimes even raise, sources of funds to protect those lands. TPL has purchased land in neighboring Brazoria County and conveyed it to the US Fish and Wildlife Service as part of the San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge, which is located in Brazoria and Matagorda counties.

Houston Wilderness – Houston Wilderness is a new collaboration that is working with TPL and the Nature Conservancy to identify and leverage resources to preserve unique land resources.

Texas Recreation and Parks Account Programs – Administered by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, this program provides 50-50 matching grants to aid communities in the acquisition, development, and renovation of parks and open space. Fort Bend County received funding assistance for Kitty Hollow Park and Bates Allen Park through this program.

Texas Recreation and Parks Account Regional Park Grants – This program, administered by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, provides grants to aid communities in the acquisition and development of parks. There is no ceiling on grant amounts, though grants in the past have ranged from \$750,000 to \$1,200,000.

Texas Recreation and Parks Account Small Community Grants – Administered by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, this program provides 50% matching grants up to \$50,000 to communities with populations under 20,000. Fort Bend County can facilitate applications by its smaller, underserved communities, including unincorporated areas, as part of a special partnership to develop parks and recreational facilities.

Texas Recreational Trails Fund – This program is administered in the state of Texas by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department on behalf of the National Recreational Trail Fund. Projects funded by this grant include construction of new trails, acquisition of easements and property, and the development of facilities alongside trails, such as parking areas, corrals, bike racks, and restrooms.

Community Development Block Grants – These grants are funded by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, and can be used for the development of recreational facilities and open space. Community Development Block Grants were used to fund the Fifth Street Community Center in Stafford and the Fort Bend County Community Center in Rosenberg.

Brownfields grant funding – The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) operates a program of brownfields grants for the remediation and revitalization of brownfields sites. Brownfields sites are those sites containing hazardous substances, pollutants, or contaminants, such as mine-scarred lands or sites contaminated by petroleum products. Governmental entities as well as non-profit organizations may receive brownfields grants from EPA.

Conversion of landfills – Landfills can be converted into parks and recreation facilities. The counties can require as a condition of their permit approval that developers of landfills put into place closing plans for conversion of the landfills into parks. The permit must take into consideration the height and grading of a landfill during use to insure alternative uses. In Houston, the former 450-acre Browning-Ferris Industries Holmes Road Landfill, a Type I sanitary landfill, was converted into the Wildcat Golf Club, featuring two daily-fee 18-hole golf courses, a driving range, and a clubhouse. H-GAC has identified 27 closed landfills in Fort Bend County,¹ as well as 5 that are open.² Some of these facilities might present opportunities for conversion to a parks and recreational use.

Dedication of park land – Sec. 232.101 of the *Local Government Code* states that “the Commissioners Court may adopt rules governing plats and subdivisions of land within the unincorporated area of the county to promote the health, safety, morals, or general welfare of the county and the safe, orderly, and healthful development of the unincorporated area of the county.”³ This rule, which applies to certain counties including Fort Bend County, could enable counties to adopt an ordinance requiring parkland dedication or payments in lieu of land dedication for plats and the subdivision of land in the unincorporated areas of the county. **The County has enacted park land dedication regulations, but the regulations should be reviewed periodically to ensure that the County’s needs are being met.**

Voter-authorized general obligation bonds – Voters can authorize the issuance of bonds for the specific purpose of supporting parks creation. For example, voters in Missouri City approved a \$15.55 million parks bond in 2003.

Municipal Utility Districts – In 2003, voters in Texas approved Proposition 4, allowing municipal utility districts (MUDs) to develop parks and recreational facilities. This amendment applies to a handful of Texas counties, including Fort Bend County, and enables MUDs to issue bonds for the development and maintenance of parks and recreational facilities if authorized by a majority of district voters in an election. MUDs cannot issue bonds supported by ad valorem taxes to pay for the development and maintenance of golf courses or swimming pools. MUDs can be especially useful in creating neighborhood-level parks, recreational facilities, as well as flood control facilities that could also serve as park space and trail systems to meet the needs of the county. MUDs can also be partners with the County and the municipalities in creating parkways and tree-lined thoroughfares. MUDs are located throughout Fort Bend County in both incorporated and unincorporated areas. The ability to leverage financing for open space and park improvements through special partners such as MUDs holds a great deal of promise for Fort Bend County.

Chapter 381 – The Local Government Code authorizes the Commissioners Court to make loans and grants of public money and provide personnel and services of the County for the purposes of developing and administering a program for local economic development, which may include the development of parks and recreational facilities, parkways, and brownfields redevelopment.⁴ This program can be leveraged with the MUD Proposition 4 amendment as well as other forms of funding.

¹ <http://www.hgac-cli.com/>, accessed November 6, 2003.

² http://www.h-gac.com/HGAC/Programs/Solid+Waste/Solid+Waste+Facilities/Permitted_Facility_List+.htm, accessed November 6, 2003.

Special partners – The County has partnered with a number of organizations in the provision of parks and recreational services. Current and potential future partners include the YMCA, the Boys and Girls Club, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Fort Bend County Senior Citizens, Inc., youth and adult sports associations, etc. These partners are often able to provide a level of programming expertise or care for the facility that surpasses the County’s ability given its resources. Special partners can also help to create new parks and recreational facilities. For example, Sprint Landfill donated a 15-acre site for a park in the Four Corners area and built a community center on the site. Special partnerships may also include cooperative ventures with cities.

Policy Committees - In addition to the projects identified in Table 7-2, the County should also pursue a set of policies to further create green space county wide. **Ad hoc committees are recommended for the following specific issues:**

- Assess the County’s ability to require parkland dedication or payments in lieu of land dedication for plats and the subdivision of land in unincorporated areas.
- Evaluate the opportunities afforded by Proposition 4, which allows MUDs to develop parks and recreational facilities, and assess the County’s potential role in facilitating the MUDs in park creation.
- Convert brownfields into greenfields through policies affecting current and proposed landfills, mining sites, oil and gas fields, sand and gravel pits, etc.
- Identify thoroughfares and proposed roadways to be designed as parkways, enabling residents to experience green space as they drive.
- Develop Long Point Regional Park– As the Fort Bend County Toll Road is constructed along FM 1994, new development is sure to follow, likely in the form of master planned communities. The Long Point site is well located adjacent to this proposed route, and would serve this growing corridor. The site should be connected to the bottomland forests along Big Creek.
- Develop Madden Road property – As the explosive growth continues down the Grand Parkway in northern Fort Bend County, a regional park facility centered on a water-amenity created from the industrial pits will serve the area population.
- Secure subsidence lakes near Orchard– A resource opportunity identified by a Commissioner was lakes caused by subsidence in western Fort Bend County just south of Orchard. This portion of the county is presently underserved by regional level facilities. The County should seek opportunities through partnerships to convert these lakes to water-based recreational uses.

³ Sec 232.101, Local Government Code, State of Texas. <http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/statutes/lg/lg0023200.html#lg061.232.101>, accessed on November 3, 2003.

⁴ Section 381.004, Local Government Code, State of Texas.

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- IX. Map 5 - Fort Bend County Parks Master Plan Update 2007-2012
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Appendix II - Survey of Fort Bend County Residents

2007

Fort Bend County Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan Study

Survey of Fort Bend County Residents
Report of Findings

Prepared for Knudson & Associates

June 2007

CDS Market Research

1250 Wood Branch Park Drive, Suite 100

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I. Introduction

As a component of the Fort Bend County Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan Study, CDS Market Research was first commissioned by Knudson & Associates in the fall of 2003 to conduct a survey of Fort Bend County residents. The purpose of this survey was to obtain a measurement of park usage and park/recreation facilities needs and wants.

The survey was conducted again in June 2007 for the same purposes, but added probes on potential park projects and a park needs assessment. This document reports these findings, and where appropriate, notes changes in findings (park usage and park/recreation facilities needs and wants) since the survey was conducted in 2003.

II. Research Methods

The survey methods were identical to those employed in the 2003 survey. A telephone survey of 400 Fort Bend County residents was conducted. A sample size was selected because 400 respondents will enable us to obtain a high level of statistical reliability: the survey has a maximum sampling error of plus or minus 5 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, a standard considered acceptable for most marketing research applications.

A. Interviewing

Telephone interviews were conducted with 400 residents of Fort Bend County by experienced, professional interviewers. The survey was conducted June 11 through June 14, 2007. Interviewing was conducted both during the day and evening hours.

B. Sample

The random digit dialing (RDD) sample was purchased from Survey Sampling, Inc., and included both listed and unlisted telephone numbers of Fort Bend County residents. The sample consisted of an appropriate split between male and female heads of households; all were 18 years old or older.

C. Questionnaire

While this study was conducted using CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing), a paper questionnaire is included in the Appendix for reference.

III. Principal Observations

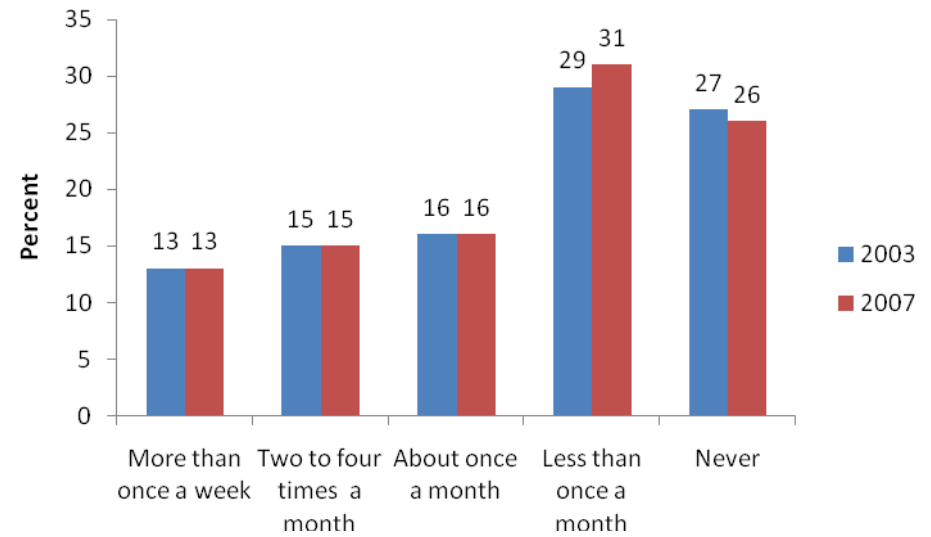
The following presents the study’s highlights and principal findings. Further detail can be found in the Tables of Data located in the Appendix to this report.

A. Park Usage

As the chart on the right illustrates, usage of parks in Fort Bend County is remarkably unchanged in 2007 when compared to 2003. About three quarters of the Fort Bend County population use the parks to some degree.

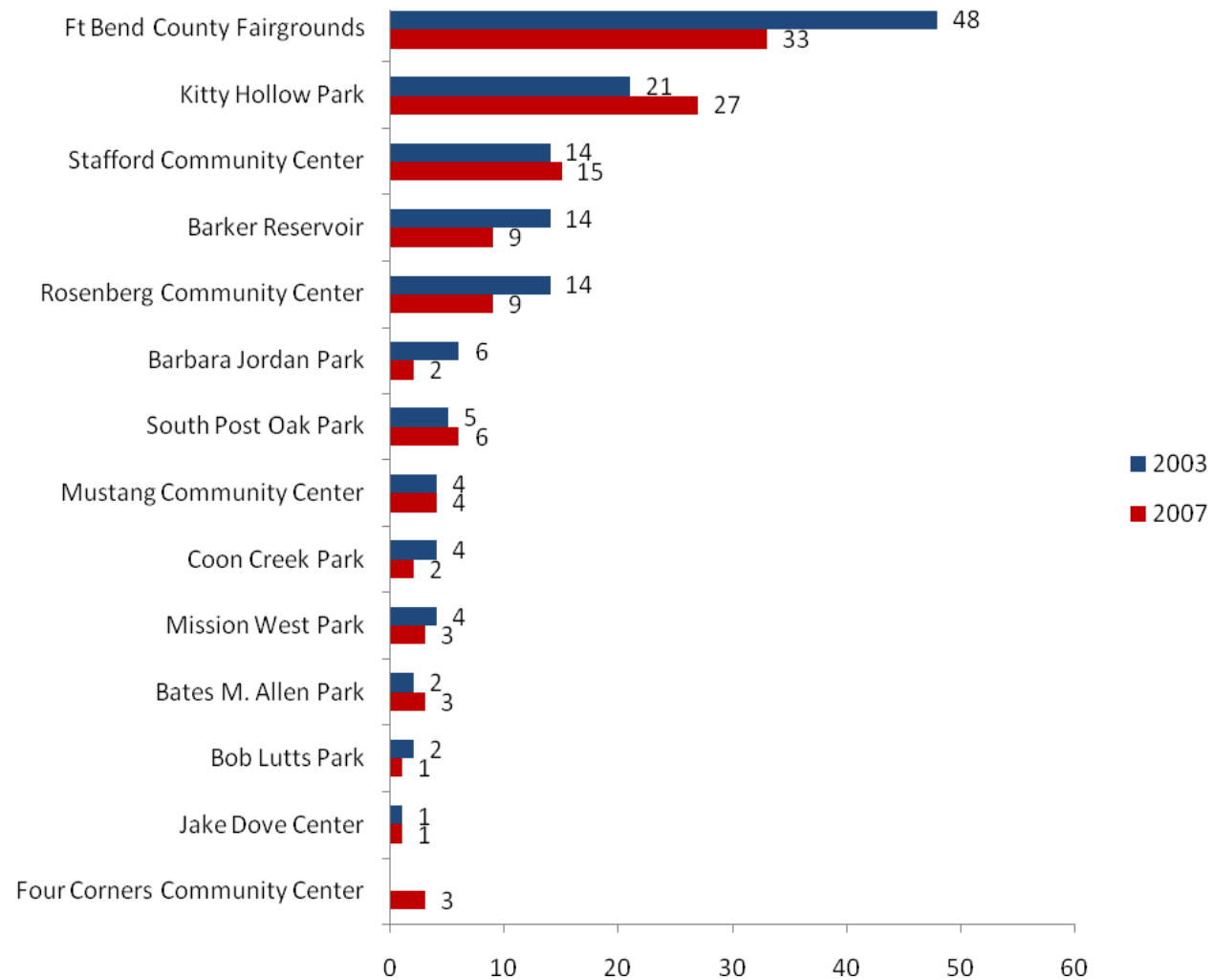
When asked in 2007 the main reason County park facilities are not used, the principal reasons given are...

- No time/too busy/work (36%);
- Use other parks (20%);
- Don’t know anything about them (16%);
- I don’t feel safe (8%).



The first reason listed above topped this list in the 2003 survey as well.

After being read a list of parks, open space and recreation facilities that are either owned or leased by Fort Bend County, respondents were asked if they had visited any of these facilities within the past three months. The chart below presents these findings.



The facilities used and activities participated in at the most popular Park—*Fort Bend County Fairgrounds*—for 2007 are presented below.

- County fair (28%)
- Livestock facilities (11%)
- Arts and crafts show (8%)
- Circus (5%)
- Picnic tables (4%)
- Meeting rooms (4%)
- Trails (walking, jogging, cycling) (3%)
- Playground areas (3%)
- All other activities 1% or less

Facilities and activities participated in at the other more popular parks are presented in the table at right.¹ These findings are basically unchanged from the 2003 survey.

Facilities and Activities	Kitty Hollow Park	Stafford Community Center	Barker Reservoir	Rosenberg Community Center
Trails	38%	7%	44%	8%
Picnic tables	38	16	22	15
Playground	29	11	15	12
Fishing piers	10	-	7	4
Baseball fields	5	7	4	8
Restrooms	4	-	4	4
Soccer or football	3	2	11	-
Basketball	3	4	4	4
Musical/concert	-	24	-	-
Park benches	-	7	4	-
Meeting rooms	-	9	-	23

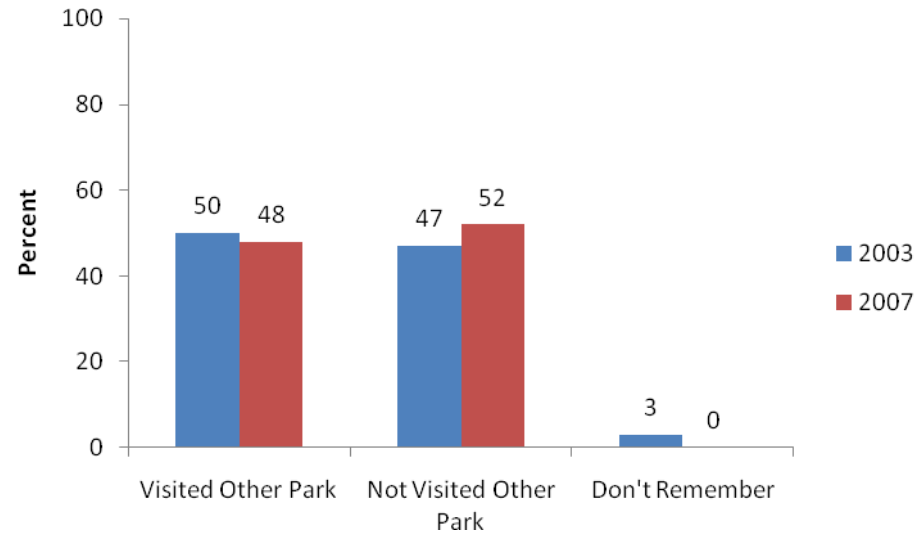
¹ This detail for all parks is presented in the Tables of Data located in the Appendix.

When respondents were asked what means of transportation was used the last time they visited a park, nearly 100% continue to say “by car.” A very few (1% to 2%) walked, rode their bicycle, or took the bus.

Other Parks Visited

Approximately half of the respondents indicate that during the past three months they have visited a park other than those probed in earlier questions (see chart at right). When asked *which* parks were visited, the most frequently mentioned responses in 2007 were...

- Oyster Creek Park (14%)
- Don’t remember the name (9%)
- Lifetime Fitness (5%)
- Lost Creek Park (5%)
- A country club named (5%)
- Sugar Land Community Center (5%)
- Sienna Plantation Park/Pool (4%)
- YMCA (4%)



In 2003, responses were ordered similarly, although Lifetime Fitness was not mentioned at all, and Eldridge Park was included in top mentions.

All other responses were spread widely (3% or less) over 39 different parks in the Houston area (see Tables of Data for a complete listing of these responses).

Most Likely Activities When Visiting a Park

When asked “what activities are you most likely to do when you visit a park,” the most frequently mentioned responses in 2007 were...

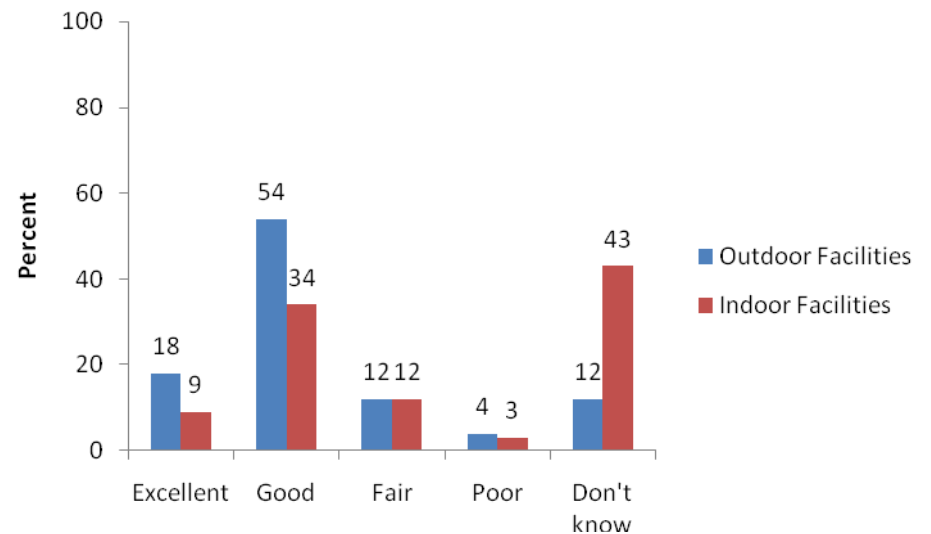
- Walking (19%)
- Playground equipment/swings (10%)
- Biking (7%)
- Picnic/family picnic (7%)
- Running/jogging (5%)
- Fish (5%)

Responses were ordered similarly in 2003.

B. Evaluation of Fort Bend County Parks

Respondents were asked to rate both outdoor and indoor Fort Bend County parks and facilities. The chart on the right presents these findings.²

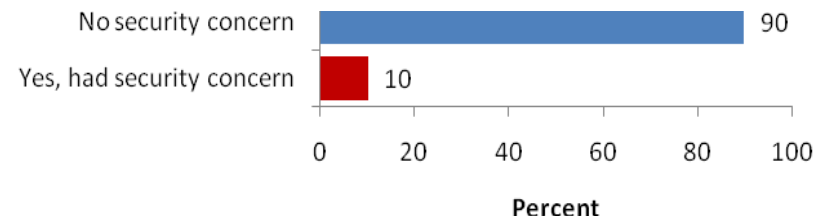
As the chart shows, outdoor facilities were rated higher than indoor facilities for the simple reason that respondents were more *familiar* with outdoor parks.



² Note: In 2003, respondents were asked only to rate parks, with no reference to whether the park was indoors or outdoors. Data are therefore not comparable.

Concern for Security

In the 2007 survey, respondents were asked whether they had any security concerns when they visited Fort Bend County parks and recreation facilities. As the chart on the right shows, only 10% had a concern.



When asked to explain this concern, the most frequently mentioned causes of concern were...

- Just felt uncomfortable/not safe (28%);
- Undesirable/suspicious people around (23%);
- A robbery/other crime happened there before (10%);
- Poor lighting in park (10%);
- No security personnel/will only go to parks with security personnel (8%).

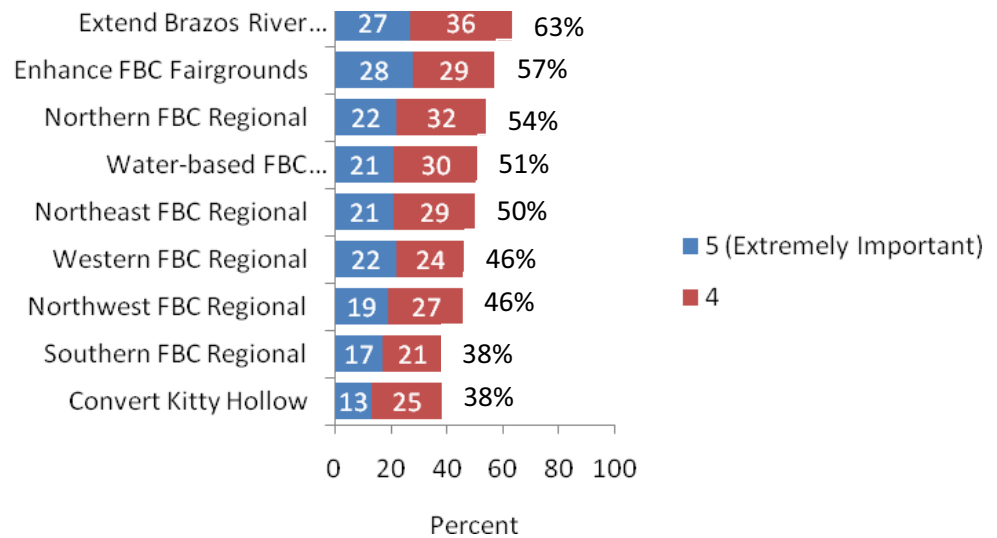
C. Proposed Park Projects

Brief descriptions of nine proposed park projects were read to each respondent. After the description, the respondent was asked to rate the importance of the project on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 designating “not at all important” and 5 designating “extremely important.” These findings are presented in the chart beginning on the following page.

As the chart illustrates, the most “important” project is “Extend the Brazos River Corridor Park.”

Particularly important to the Hispanic population (vis-à-vis the white population) were...

- Extend Brazos River Corridor;
- Water-based FBC³ Regional;
- Western FBC Regional;
- Northeast FBC Regional;
- Southern FBC Regional; and
- Northern FBC Regional.



Willingness to Pay For Park Projects

As the table on the right shows, the two most “important” park projects happen to be those which residents will most likely be willing to fund through taxation, user fees or other funding method.

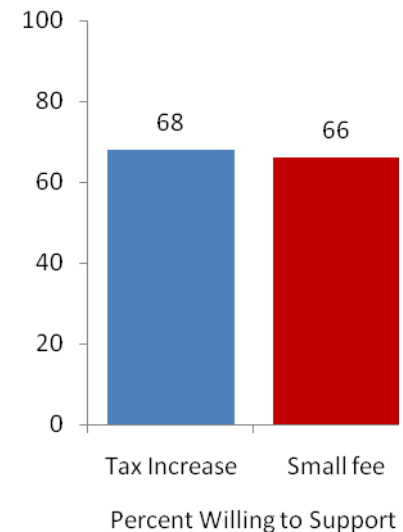
The Hispanic population may be somewhat more likely than other ethnic groups to be willing to fund many of these projects.

Willing To Fund Project Through Taxation, User Fees or Other Method	
	Percent Yes
Extend Brazos River Corridor	52
Enhance FBC Fairgrounds	52
Northern FBC Regional	29
Water-based FBC Regional	50
Northeast FBC Regional	43
Western FBC Regional	30
Northwest FBC Regional	31
Southern FBC Regional	25
Convert Kittv Hollow	49

³ Fort Bend County

As the chart on the right suggests, a majority of residents may be willing to support both...

- a property tax increase of ½ cent per \$100 valuation to support the acquisition of park land, construction of new park facilities and the maintenance of new and existing park facilities; and
- paying a small fee of less than \$5 each time facilities such as softball and baseball fields, tennis courts, soccer fields, group picnic pavilions, community center meeting rooms, riding arenas, skate parks, model airplane parks, camping and outdoor performance facilities are used.



In The Future

Respondents were asked in 2007 what they would like Fort Bend County to do “more of” with regard to parks, open space and wild life habitats. Responses to this question are listed below...

- Protect existing wild life habitats (81% “yes” response);
- Preserve existing open space (65%); and
- Acquire more land for future parks or preserves (42%).

D. Park Needs

Survey respondents were told that “the County’s role is to provide recreation opportunities in areas that are not served by a city or planned community,” and then asked if the respondent felt a need for a number of recreational facilities and features. Results are presented in the table on the next page.

Facilities and Features	Yes	No	No Opinion
Handicapped accessible facilities	87%	7%	6%
Outdoor theater/performing arts venue	75	15	10
Open play fields	72	17	11
Indoor/outdoor pools	67	24	10
Landscaping	63	23	15
Community garden	58	27	16
Mountain bike trails	59	31	10
Outdoor covered pavilions	56	21	23
Skate park	48	35	17
Dog park	38	45	17
Rock climbing	37	46	17
Frisbee golf	35	45	21
Equestrian trails	34	44	23
Arts and crafts facilities	31	43	26
Rope courses	25	50	25
In-line hockey park	22	54	25
Lacrosse	15	59	26

IV. Observations Summary

Below is a bulleted summary of the observations presented above.

Park Usage

- Approximately 75% of the Fort Bend County population uses County parks and recreation facilities. This proportion has remained steady since the 2003 survey.
- Frequency of park and recreation facility usage by the Fort Bend County population has also remained consistent with 2003 levels.
- The Fort Bend County Fairgrounds is the most frequently used park, but its use has declined since the 2003 survey was taken. Kitty Hollow Park is the second most frequently used park, and its use has increased since 2003. The means of transportation to Fort Bend County parks continues to be by car, with nearly 100% using this means.
- The most used facilities and activities participated in are...
 - Trails;
 - Picnic tables; and
 - Playground.

Evaluation of Fort Bend County Parks

- When evaluating the outdoor and indoor park facilities, very few residents give the parks a “poor” rating (3% to 4%).
- Approximately one of ten residents has had a concern about security while visiting a Fort Bend County park. The most frequently mentioned cause of this concern was non-specific: “I just felt uncomfortable.”

Proposed Park Projects

- Proposed park projects deemed most “important” are...
 - Extend Brazos River Corridor Park; and
 - Enhance Fort Bend County Fairgrounds,...and a majority (52%) says they are willing to fund the projects through increased taxation, user fees or other funding method.
- In fact, a majority of residents (66% to 68%) react favorably to a tax increase and/or user fees in support of park facilities in general.
- A large majority of residents (81%) favors Fort Bend County efforts to “protect existing wild life habitats.” A smaller majority (65%) supports Fort Bend County efforts to “preserve existing open space.” But only a minority (42%) would favor “acquiring more land for future parks and preserves.”

Park Needs

- Facilities and features wanted most by Fort Bend County residents are listed below...
 - Handicapped accessible facilities (87%);
 - Outdoor theater/performing arts venue (75%);
 - Open play fields (72%);
 - Indoor/outdoor pools (67%);
 - Landscaping (63%);
 - Mountain bike trails (59%);
 - Community garden (58%); and
 - Outdoor covered pavilion (56%).

V. Appendix

Study Questionnaire

Tables of Data

Appendix III - Fort Bend County Green Space Regulations

7.0 Definitions

Green Space: Any public or private land that would serve as an area to provide relaxation or recreation to all residents within a specific subdivision. Green space may be used for active or passive activities. It may be an open field, or it may or may not have improvements such as benches, shade structures, playground equipment, or trails located within the boundaries of the property.

Walking Trail: An improved minimum, four feet wide path, consisting of a material conducive to walking, running, strolling, or cycling. Crushed granite, concrete, and asphalt are considered appropriate surface materials for walking trails. Dirt or sod trails will not be considered improved trails.

7.1 Subdivision Green Space Requirements

Authority for these regulations is given in V.T.C.A., Local Government Code §232.101. Subchapter E (SB873).

- A. Subdivision plats that are filed in Fort Bend County shall contain a community green space dedication at a ratio of $\frac{1}{4}$ acre of green space for every 100 lots. Green space areas must be no smaller in size than $\frac{1}{4}$ acre and must be at least 20 feet in width in order to provide access and sufficient useable area.
 1. Landscape setbacks and ditch right-of-ways along roadways, will not be considered green space unless they are wider than required by County or City regulations.
 2. Pipeline easements will be accepted as green space if they contain an improved walking trail as defined above.
 3. Detention easements, excluding the actual detention pond area, will be accepted as green space if they contain an improved walking trail as defined above.
- B. Subdivision plats that contain less than 100 lots shall dedicate a minimum of $\frac{1}{4}$ acre of green space.
- C. Plats that have lots 1 acre in size or larger are exempt from the green space requirement.
- D. In projects that have multiple sections of lots, the green space requirement may be set outside the plat boundaries provided that the multiple plats previously recorded meet the dedication requirements and definition.
 1. Access to green space areas outside the boundaries of the plat must not have an at grade crossing of a major thoroughfare in order to receive credit.
 2. Access to green space areas outside the boundaries of the plat shall be located within a maximum $\frac{1}{4}$ mile radius of all residences within the subdivision plat.
- E. Plats located within the extraterritorial jurisdiction of a city that have applicable green space or open space requirements are exempt from the Fort Bend County green space requirement only if said requirements meet or exceed those imposed by the County.

F. The payment of a fee in lieu of a green space dedication will not be accepted.

7.2 Maintenance and Ownership

For the purposes of upkeep, permanent maintenance and ownership responsibilities of dedicated green space shall be conveyed to either an existing or newly formed entity established for the subdivision, and must be identified upon the recording of the final plat.

7.3 Green Space along Major Thoroughfares

The following requirements shall apply to all development, single family or commercial, that is either adjacent to or surrounds a Fort Bend County major thoroughfare.

A. Landscape Reserves:

1. An additional 10 feet of land on each side of a major thoroughfare right of way shall be dedicated as landscape reserves. If the developer exclusively owns property on one side of a major thoroughfare, they are to dedicate the above requirement to this side only.
2. There shall be a minimum of two 30-gallon trees, selected from the required list, planted on each side of a major thoroughfare within the landscape reserve for every 100 linear feet of roadway platted. The trees may be clustered or evenly spaced, as long as, the minimum number of trees are planted based on the overall length of the roadway. For a list of specific types of trees that will be considered acceptable, see *Appendix W*. In addition to trees, landscape reserves shall be covered with grass, ground cover, and/or shrubs and have an irrigation system that will provide full coverage for all vegetation within the reserve.
3. Entities responsible for the permanent maintenance and ownership of dedicated reserves must be identified upon the recording of the final plat.
4. Dry utility easements shall not overlap with the landscape reserve except in instances where the utility must make a perpendicular crossing through the reserve. Water, sewer, and drainage easements granted to and accepted by political subdivisions may overlap with the landscape reserve.

B. The trees must be healthy, free of disease and in place prior to the beginning of the one year maintenance period inspection. At the end of the one-year maintenance period, the developer shall be required to replace any trees that have perished, with a similar tree in a condition acceptable to the county, in order for the county to accept the project.

C. Building Setbacks:

1. In instances where lots back up to a major thoroughfare, a rear building setback of not less than 15 feet from the common lot/landscape reserve line shall be provided.

D. Driveways:

1. Lots, tracts, and reserves within the County, unless the FBC Commissioners Court otherwise approves, shall conform to the following minimum requirements:
 - A. No residential lot shall have access to a major thoroughfare except under the following conditions:
 - (1) The lot shall have a minimum frontage on the major thoroughfare of one hundred seventy-five (175) feet, and
 - (2) The lot shall contain a minimum area of one (1) acre, and

- (3) The lot shall provide access to the major thoroughfare via one (1) driveway only, having a maximum width of twenty (20) feet, measured at the right-of-way line, and shall have a minimum radius of twenty-five (25) feet at the point of connection to the paving of the major thoroughfare, and
 - (4) Access driveways shall be located in accordance with the following:
 - (a) Greater than one hundred (100) feet from a street intersection as measured from the center of the driveway to the right-of-way line of the street intersecting the major thoroughfare, and
 - (b) Greater than sixty-five (65) feet from a property line as measured from the centerline of the driveway.
2. The width of the lot shall be measured at the property line/right-of-way from the front building line. The width of cul-de-sacs and radial lots shall be measured at the property line using a cord or straight line. A lot area size shall be computed inclusive of all easements.

7.4 Tree Preservation Credit

- A. There shall be a credit given toward the tree requirement for the preservation of any existing tree, on the approved planting list attached, located within the dedicated landscape reserve. This credit will only be granted for the preservation of trees and shall be given at a ratio of 1:1 for trees 3-6 inches in diameter and 1-1/2:1 for any tree over 6 inches in diameter. The diameter shall be measured at a point 12 inches above the ground. In order to preserve the trees during the construction of the subdivision, the tree or cluster of trees shall be surrounded by a 4-foot high orange plastic wind fence installed and maintained at the extent of the trees' drip line for the duration of the construction phase. Fill material must not be placed within the drip line of any tree during or after construction activity. If fill is placed outside of, and completely around a preserved tree, positive drainage must be provided for the tree.
- B. The trees must be in place prior to the beginning of the one year maintenance period inspection. At the end of the one year maintenance period, the developer shall be required to replace any trees that have perished, with similar trees that are acceptable to the county.

7.5 Effective Date of Regulations

The regulations contained in this section shall be effective on the date of acceptance of this section by the Fort Bend County Commissioners Court. Preliminary plats, located within the extra-territorial jurisdiction of a city, that have been approved by the city, are exempt from these regulations, provided the final plat is recorded within two year of the date of preliminary approval.

Public Meeting For Fort Bend County Park Master Plan

The Fort Bend County Parks Department & Knudson & Associates would like to Invite the general public to the Fort Bend County Parks Master Plan public meeting, on July 24, 2007, at The Kitty Hollow Park's Administration office, 9555A Hwy 6 South. The public meeting will be held from 5:30 to 8:00 PM. Survey question will be available for the public comment.



**HOUSTON
COMMUNITY
NEWSPAPERS**

AFFIDAVIT OF PUBLICATION

**STATE OF TEXAS
COUNTY OF FORT BEND**

Personally appeared before the undersigned, a Notary Public within and for said County and State, Susanne Norman, Representative for Darlene Hall, General Manager of the Southwest Sun, a newspaper of general circulation in the county of Fort Bend, State of Texas, Who being duly sworn, states under oath that the report of Legal Notices, a true copy of which is hereto annexed was published in said newspapers in its issue(s) of the

_____ 18th day of July, 2007

_____ day of _____, 2007

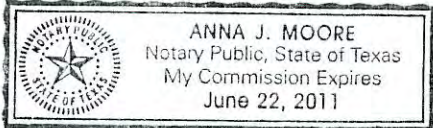
_____ day of _____, 2007

_____ day of _____, 2007

Susanne Norman

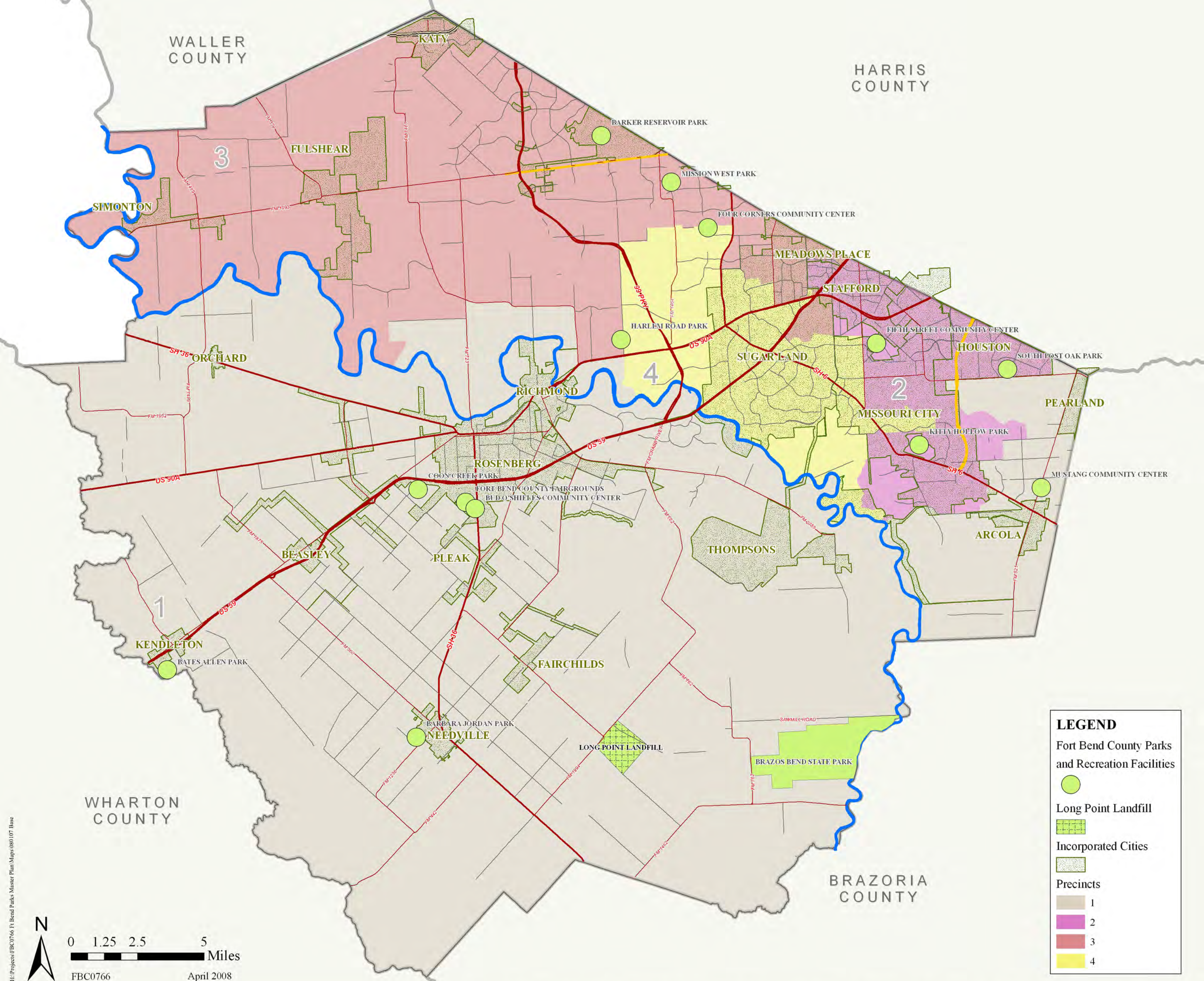
Publisher's Representative

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 20th day of July, 2007



Notary Public

My commission expires on _____
Jean Moore



LEGEND

- Fort Bend County Parks and Recreation Facilities
- Long Point Landfill
- Incorporated Cities
- Precincts

1	2	3	4
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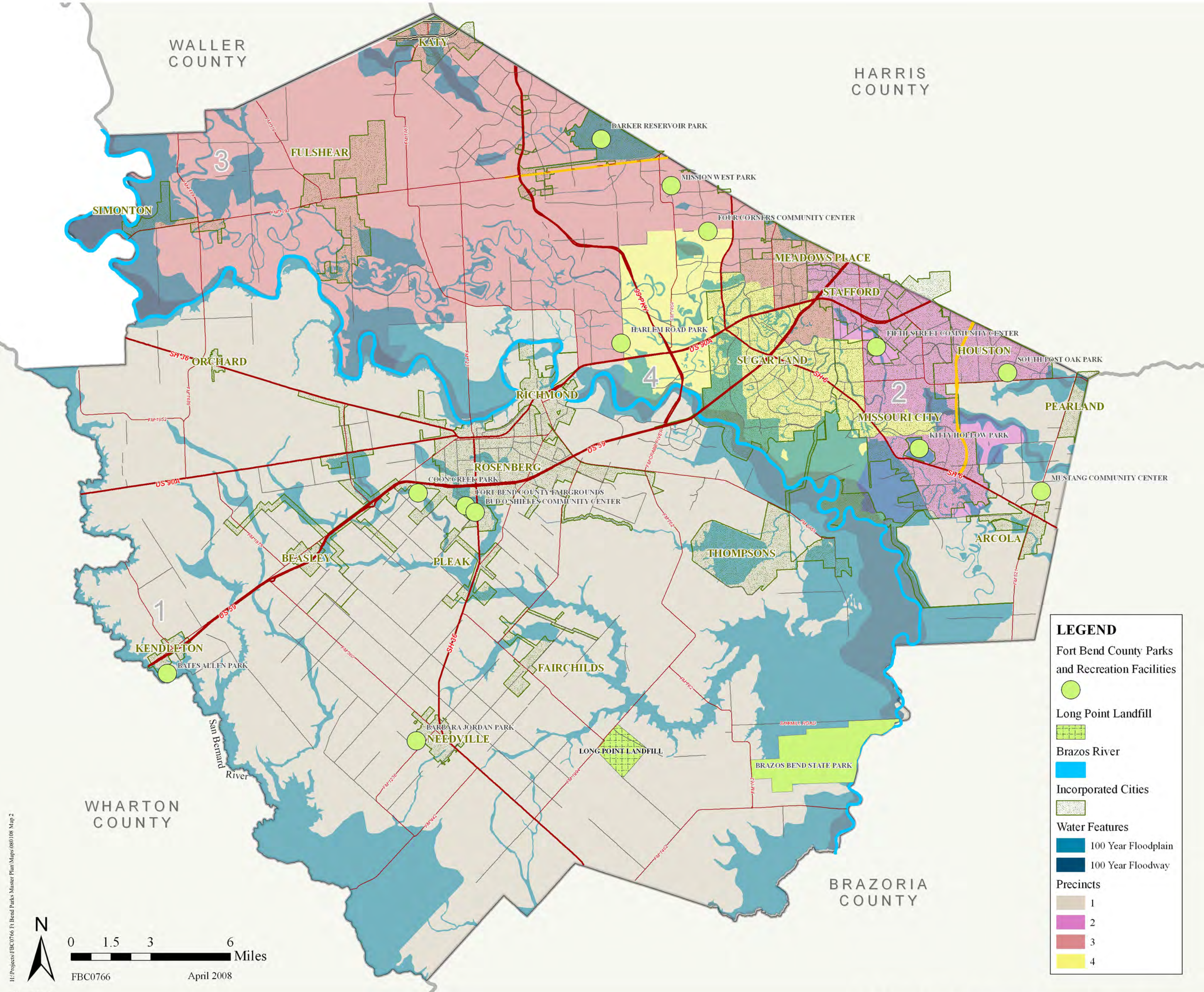
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FBC0766 April 2008

Map 1 - Existing Fort Bend County Parks and Recreation Facilities

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LEGEND

- Fort Bend County Parks and Recreation Facilities
- Long Point Landfill
- Brazos River
- Incorporated Cities
- Water Features
 - 100 Year Floodplain
 - 100 Year Floodway
- Precincts
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4

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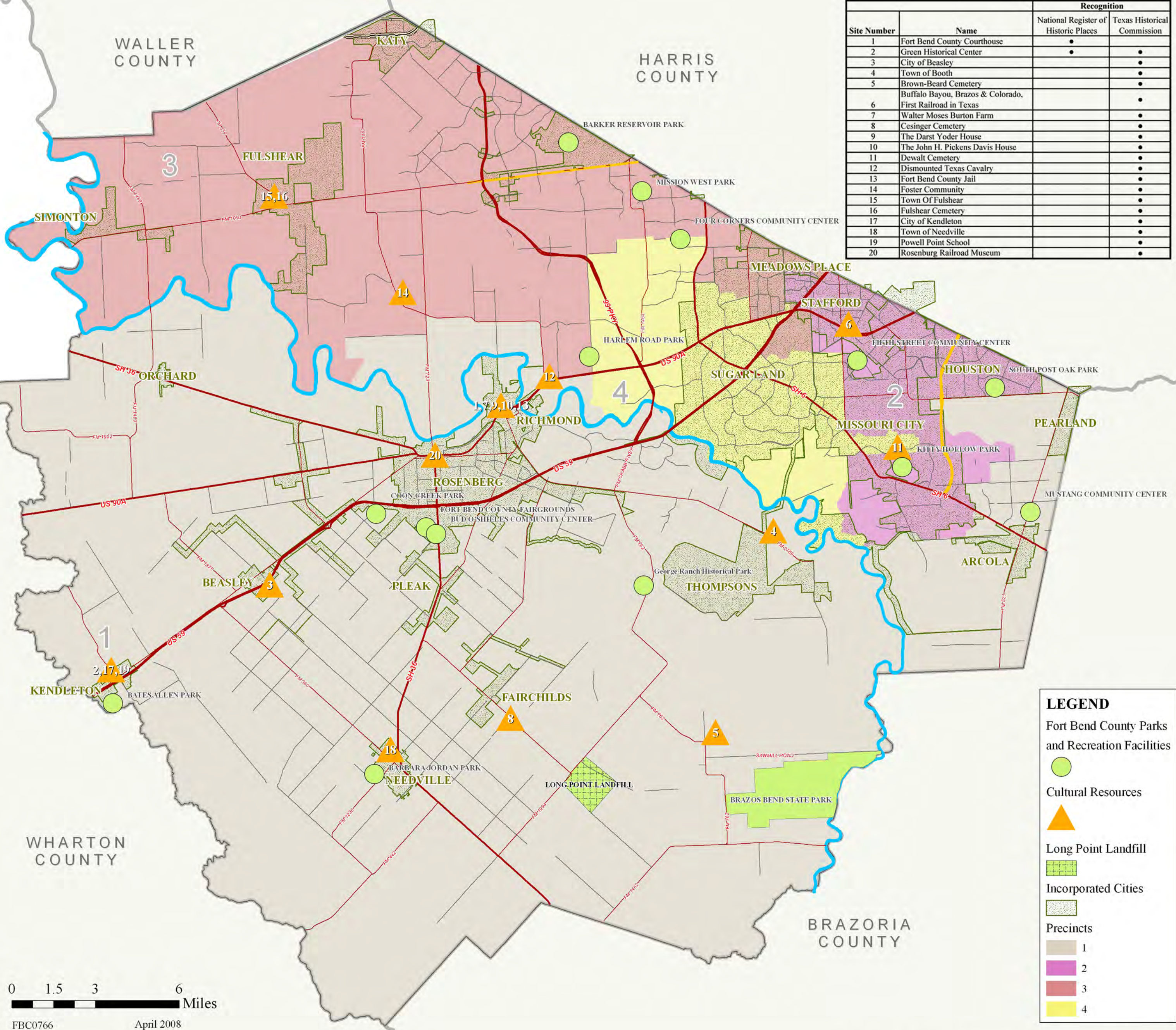
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0 1.5 3 6 Miles

FBC0766 April 2008

Map 2 - Natural Resources

Site Number	Name	Recognition	
		National Register of Historic Places	Texas Historical Commission
1	Fort Bend County Courthouse	•	•
2	Green Historical Center	•	•
3	City of Beasley		•
4	Town of Booth		•
5	Brown-Beard Cemetery		•
6	Buffalo Bayou, Brazos & Colorado, First Railroad in Texas		•
7	Walter Moses Burton Farm		•
8	Cesinger Cemetery		•
9	The Dars Yoder House		•
10	The John H. Pickens Davis House		•
11	Dewalt Cemetery		•
12	Dismounted Texas Cavalry		•
13	Fort Bend County Jail		•
14	Foster Community		•
15	Town Of Fulshear		•
16	Fulshear Cemetery		•
17	City of Kendleton		•
18	Town of Needville		•
19	Powell Point School		•
20	Rosenburg Railroad Museum		•



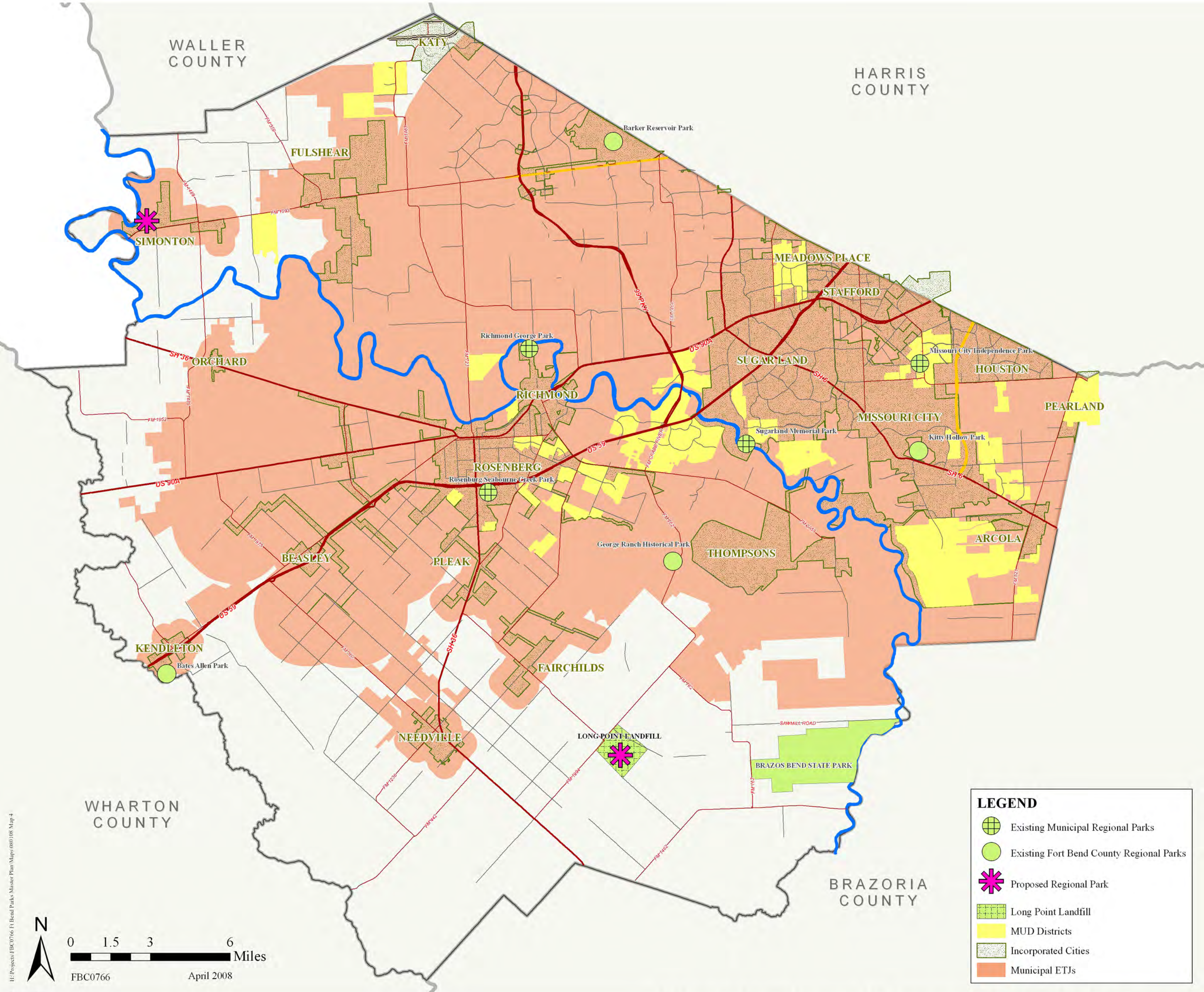
LEGEND

- Fort Bend County Parks and Recreation Facilities (Green circle)
- Cultural Resources (Orange triangle)
- Long Point Landfill (Green grid pattern)
- Incorporated Cities (Grey stippled area)
- Precincts
 - 1 (Light brown)
 - 2 (Purple)
 - 3 (Pink)
 - 4 (Yellow)

0 1.5 3 6 Miles

FBC0766 April 2008

Map 3 - Cultural Resources



WALLER COUNTY

HARRIS COUNTY

SIMONTON

FULSHEAR

KATY

Barker Reservoir Park

MEADOWS PLACE

STAFFORD

ORCHARD

Richmond George Park

SUGAR LAND

Missouri City Independence Park

HOUSTON

RICHMOND

Sugarland Memorial Park

Kitty Hollow Park

PEARLAND

ROSENBERG

Rosenburg Seabourne Creek Park

MISSOURI CITY

US 90A

US 59

George Ranch Historical Park

THOMPSONS

ARCOLA

BEASLEY

PLEAK

KENDLETON

Bates Allen Park

FAIRCHILDS

NEEDVILLE




LONG POINT LANDFILL

BRAZOS BEND STATE PARK

WHARTON COUNTY

BRAZORIA COUNTY

LEGEND

-  Existing Municipal Regional Parks
-  Existing Fort Bend County Regional Parks
-  Proposed Regional Park
-  MUD Districts
-  Incorporated Cities
-  Municipal ETJs

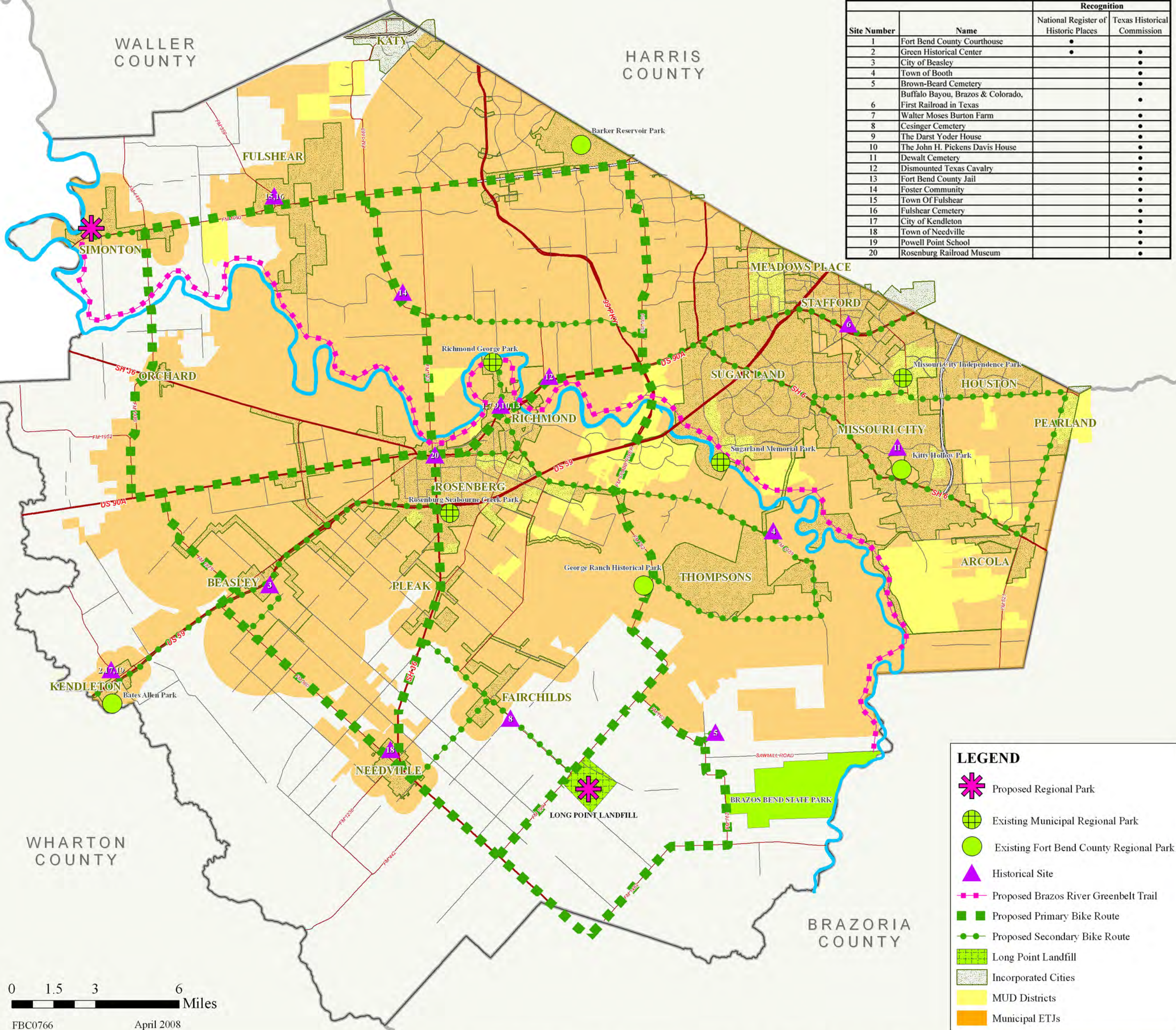
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0 1.5 3 6 Miles

FBC0766 April 2008

Map 4 - Existing and Proposed Regional Parks

Site Number	Name	Recognition	
		National Register of Historic Places	Texas Historical Commission
1	Fort Bend County Courthouse	•	•
2	Green Historical Center	•	•
3	City of Beasley		•
4	Town of Booth		•
5	Brown-Bear Cemetery		•
6	Buffalo Bayou, Brazos & Colorado, First Railroad in Texas		•
7	Walter Moses Burton Farm		•
8	Cesinger Cemetery		•
9	The Darst Yoder House		•
10	The John H. Pickens Davis House		•
11	Dewalt Cemetery		•
12	Dismounted Texas Cavalry		•
13	Fort Bend County Jail		•
14	Foster Community		•
15	Town Of Fulshear		•
16	Fulshear Cemetery		•
17	City of Kendleton		•
18	Town of Needville		•
19	Powell Point School		•
20	Rosenburg Railroad Museum		•



LEGEND

- Proposed Regional Park
- Existing Municipal Regional Park
- Existing Fort Bend County Regional Park
- Historical Site
- Proposed Brazos River Greenbelt Trail
- Proposed Primary Bike Route
- Proposed Secondary Bike Route
- Long Point Landfill
- Incorporated Cities
- MUD Districts
- Municipal ETJs

N

0 1.5 3 6 Miles

FBC0766 April 2008

Map 5 - Fort Bend County Parks Master Plan Update 2007-2012

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Park, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan Guidelines

Texas Recreation and Parks Account Program

(Revised December 2001)

The following guidelines have been developed to help local governments prepare park, recreation, and open space master plans in accordance with the Texas Recreation & Parks Account Program (TRPA) *Procedural Guide*. Points can be received through the "TRPA Project Priority Scoring System" for projects which meet priorities identified in Department-approved, locally-endorsed parks, recreation, and open space master plans. **Please note that a master plan is not required to participate in the grant program, nor does Texas Parks & Wildlife approval of a plan guarantee that points will be awarded for any project.**

As a minimum, all master plans must meet the requirements below for approval. These guidelines are effective July 31, 2001. For questions or assistance, please contact the Recreation Grants office at 512/912-7124.

Submit ONE COPY of plans for Recreation Grants review as early as possible, but no later than sixty days before the application deadline: by November 30th for the January 31st deadline and by May 31st for the July 31st deadline. Because of the large number of review requests, early submission of master plans for review and approval is strongly encouraged. It is also recommended that plans be reviewed by Recreation Grants prior to submission to the applicable governing body for final approval. This precludes the sponsor from having to go back to the governing body in the event the review finds changes to the plans are needed. Plans must be approved or in an approvable format (including resolution of adoption) by the November 30 and May 31 deadlines to be eligible for project priority points during that particular review cycle.

Please provide the name and address of the contact person in the local government submitting the plan as well as the name and address of the preparer, if other than the sponsor.

PROOF OF ADOPTION

Once plans are complete, the applicable governing body (city council, county commissioner's court, district or authority board) must pass a formal resolution (or ordinance) adopting the plan and list of priority needs.

JURISDICTION-WIDE PLAN

Plans must be comprehensive and include the sponsor's entire area of jurisdiction, i.e., the entire city, county, or district, etc. Plans may be broken into planning areas, regions, districts or precincts, as needed for larger communities or counties. All planning areas, regions, districts, or precincts must be included in the plan as partial plans are unacceptable.

Plans must address the present and future needs of the community or area, not merely short-term needs. Plans that justify only one grant project will not be approved.

JOEL SEFFEL 512-912-7119
(TPWD)

TIME PERIOD FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Plans must cover at least five years, but time frames longer than 10 years are discouraged. **Plans must be updated every two years to remain eligible.** Updates should include a summary of accomplishments, most recent inventory data, and an updated priority list and implementation plan. Priorities should be updated as high priority items are accomplished and lower priorities move up. A new resolution is not required when updating priorities; however if you change or revise your priorities, submit a new resolution adopting the new priorities. **A completely new plan is required every five years.**

PLAN CONTENTS

All master plans must meet the following minimum requirements.

I. INTRODUCTION

This section should discuss the unit of government for which the plan is created. Include socio-economic data; demographics on ethnicity, age, and income as a minimum; current and projected population figures and their source; growth or non-growth patterns; and the government's or agency's role in providing parks and recreation opportunities.

II. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Identify your parks and recreation service goals and follow with specific objectives for each goal. These should be given careful thought. State the time period of the plan.

III. PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

This section is very important so that we can understand how you identified and prioritized your needs. Describe who wrote the plan and when the process began. Discuss planning committees utilized and public input received through hearings, meetings, and surveys. Be brief, but thorough.

IV. AREA AND FACILITY CONCEPTS AND STANDARDS

This section of the plan is also very important and contributes directly to the assessment and identification of needs. You cannot properly identify needs without establishing local standards and concepts.

Area/Facility standards should be determined locally. Local standards are influenced by preferences and available economic and natural resources. A good source of information on this topic can be found in the National Recreation & Park Association's Park, Recreation, Open Space & Greenway Guidelines publication (formerly the Recreation, Park & Open Space Standards & Guidelines). All of the guidelines identified in this document may or may not apply to your community or county. Adjustments to those standards may be necessary to reflect your needs and resources. Contact the NRPA at 703/858-2190 to obtain a copy of this publication.

V. INVENTORY OF AREAS AND FACILITIES

Assess what parks, recreation and open space areas and facilities are currently within your system. You should also include school and private recreational facilities that are open to the public. If inventory data are broken out by park, include a summary table for all parks and facilities. This inventory information is essential for assessing needs.

VI. NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND IDENTIFICATION

The following three approaches may be employed in determining parks and recreation needs: (1) demand-based, (2) standard-based, and (3) resource-based. A combination of these approaches may help you more accurately assess your needs.

The demand-based approach relies on information gathered from participation rates, surveys, and other information that indicates how much of the population wants certain types of facilities.

The standard-based approach uses established standards to determine facilities and park areas needed to meet the needs of a given population size. The standards may be based on demand studies, the professional judgment of park and recreation planners and designers, etc.

The resource-based approach examines the assets and resources of the area for open space, parks and recreation facilities, and defines how these resources can be utilized. For example – the availability of a lake or river within an area is a resource which can be utilized in developing a park system.

Agencies with large jurisdiction areas may wish to divide their jurisdiction into planning areas, regions, districts or precincts. Specific needs can then be assessed and identified within each planning increment.

Clearly identify needs and explain the methodology for determining them. Consider both outdoor and indoor needs, if applicable.

VII. PLAN IMPLEMENTATION AND PRIORITIZATION OF NEEDS

Include one priority list of needs ranked in order from highest to lowest priority, and state when the needs will be met. If your plan is broken into specific planning areas, regions, districts or precincts, you may prioritize needs within each of the planning regions.

Priority needs should include both indoor and outdoor needs, be area and/or facility specific, and be ranked according to priority order (i.e.,: Priority #1 = Trails; Priority #2 = Acquisition of neighborhood park in southeast area of town; Priority #3 = Restrooms in Nature Park; Priority #4 = Adult Softball Fields; Priority #5 = Tennis Courts; etc.).

Identify resources for meeting your needs (e.g., city funds, in-house labor, bonds, grants, donations, etc.), and include a proposed timeline for accomplishing the plan's priorities.

CAUTION! Do not just focus on short-term needs and actions. Plan for the future also.

VIII. ILLUSTRATIONS, MAPS, SURVEYS, ETC.

Required: City or county map or map of jurisdiction, as appropriate.

Include maps, surveys, charts, plates, graphics, and photographs in the plan which help explain and support your planning process and conclusions.

Specific areas intended for open space acquisition and preservation should be located on a map, identified as a need, and prioritized in your plan.