

# PARK & RECREATION

## **INTRODUCTION**

Parks and open space provides the emphasis to a physical or passive recreational outlet. Local recreation activities are provided by the City. Other communities such as McAllen, 23 miles to the west and Harlingen, 7 miles to the east, provide regional recreational facilities. Other forms of regional recreation are available at South Padre Island, approximately 45 miles east of La Feria.

## **CITY PARKS AND OPEN SPACE AREAS**

La Feria has three municipal parks, Scott Sloan Park located on Main Street between Verbena Avenue and Lilac Street, Veterans Memorial Sports Complex located on the west side of the City on Pancho Maples Drive and Tiny Town Park at Central Avenue and Main Street. Other recreation facilities are located at the four school campuses.

The major types of open spaces in the City are areas, which have been landscaped with grass and trees and maintained by city staff. These areas include the median on West Park Street and the median on East Park Street. Another type of open space is the land around the water tower, which is identified on the "2007 Land Use Map" as a semi-public area. Other unofficial open space areas include farms, orchards, irrigation canals and vacant land surrounding the two large TV towers identified on the "2007 Land Use Map".

Scott Sloan Park, located on Main Street between Verbena and Lilac Streets, was the City's initial park until in the mid 1990's the Veterans Memorial Sports Complex was developed. Scott Sloan Park is a compact park fully developed with a lighted baseball field, swimming pool, walking and jogging trail, basketball court, children's modular play area, swings, benches, picnic tables (covered and uncovered), security lights, building for a pavilion, horseshoe court, shuffleboard, parking lot and a concession and restroom facility. All of these facilities are located on a tract of land 600' by 280' or 3.86 acres. The baseball field utilizes approximately 1.4 acres of land, therefore, the rest of the recreational facilities are located on approximately 2.46 acres of land, which makes for a very tightly developed park. There is not much open space left in the park for inclusion of additional recreational facilities.

The Veterans Memorial Sports Complex Park is approximately 22 acres in size, located on Pancho Maples Drive, and surrounded on three sides by irrigation canals. This park was constructed in the mid 1990's and has 4 baseball fields, a walking and jogging trail, a football-soccer field, 2 lighted basketball courts, sand volleyball court, children's modular play area, security lights, a one acre designated natural open space area, parking area and a concession and restroom.

La Feria Independent School District has six school campuses in La Feria. The recreation facilities at the school campuses are semipublic in nature. School facilities that are available to students include a stadium with a track, gymnasium, and playground facilities.

### **Service Area of Local Parks.**

#### **• Scott Sloan Park**

This park is classified as a "Community Park" because of the swimming pool, pavilion and baseball field, which serves the entire community, however, the other recreational facilities in the park are "Neighborhood" type facilities.

#### **• Veterans Memorial Sports Complex**

This park is classified as a "Community Park" because the four baseball fields are available to community wide baseball teams as well as the La Feria Independent School District, but the playground recreation facilities are "Neighborhood" type facilities.

#### **• Tiny Town Park**

This "Neighborhood Park" was constructed in 2007 with the assistance of a 2003 Small Park Grant from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

## **REGIONAL PARKS**

In the Lower Rio Grande Valley, including Hidalgo, Cameron and Willacy Counties, there are many parks and recreational facilities. The region depends on natural resources for its major recreational activities such as swimming, fishing, bird watching, nature study, hunting and camping.

In 1983, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) developed a land protection plan for the Lower Rio Grande Valley. The plan identified 107,500 acres, which needed protection to maintain ten distinct wildlife communities. Most important was a concern to protect habitats for endangered species such as the jaguarundi, ocelot, bald eagle, peregrine falcon, and brown pelican. About twenty thousand acres were in the hands of conservation agencies while private landowners controlled 87,000 acres. Therefore, the implementation of such a plan would require many thousands of dollars and/or many citizens interested enough in the plan to assist the government in the implementation of the plan.

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department developed a Texas Outdoor Recreation and Park Plan in 1990. During the time the plan was being developed there were 73,212 acres of recreation land identified in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, which includes Hidalgo, Cameron, and Willacy Counties. Many of the identified recreation acres were undeveloped, requiring government funding to develop the areas. Some of the major regional recreational attractions in the 1986 fact gathering stage included:

- Boca Chica Beach
- Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park
- Isla Blanca Park (Cameron County)
- Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge
- Las Palomas Wildlife Management Area
- Padre Island National Seashore
- Port Isabel Lighthouse State Historical Park
- Queen Isabella State Fishing Pier
- Resaca De La Palma State Park
- Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge

## EXISTING PARKS

Conducting an inventory of public recreation or organized private recreation facilities is the first item to be considered in preparing a Park Plan. A facility inventory is instrumental in analyzing and determining recreation needs for the 2007 Population of 8,500 and the 2025 forecasted population of 10,770. The hereafter form shows recreational facilities at the three constructed parks and planned facilities for the funded "Wildlife and Nature Park".

**EXHIBIT 6-1  
EXISTING PARK AND RECREATION FACILITIES**

RECREATIONAL FACILITIES	VETERANS MEMORIAL SPORTS COMPLEX	SCOTT SLOAN PARK	TINY TOWN PARK	PROPOSED WILDLIFE & NATURE PARK
1. Building For Multi Activities				
2. Walking And/Or Jogging Trails	1	1	1	1
A. Lighted Walking and Jogging Trail				1
B. Indoor walking and Jogging				
3. Lighted Baseball Field	3	1		
4. Practice Baseball Field	1*			
5. Lighted Softball Field	1*			
6. Practice Softball Field	1*			
7. Football Field	1**			
8. Soccer Field	1**			
9. A- Lighted Basketball Court	2		1	
B- Funball Goal			1	
C- Slam Dunk Goal			2	
10. Basketball court not lighted		1	1	
11. Sand Volleyball Court	1			
12. Children's Modular Play Area	1	1	1	
13. Small Children's Equipment				
A- Swing		1	1	
B- Baby Swing			1	
C- Moon Climber			1	
D- Arch Climber			1	
E- Maxi-Whirl			1	
F- Slide			1	
14. Benches		6	8	12
15. Picnic Tables		3		
16. Covered Picnic Tables		3	4	6
17. Security Lights	X	X	7	
18. Pavilion		1		
19. Horseshoe court		X		
20. Shuffleboard		2		
21. Natural Open Space Area	X			1
22. Nature Center				1
23. Parking Lot	X	X		1
24. Recreation Center				
25. Amphitheater				
26. Building for Drama Production				
27. Restroom Facilities				1
28. Concession and Restroom	1	1		
29. Swimming Pool		1		
30. Water Fountains				
31. Lighted Tennis Courts				
32. Gazebo			1	
33. Large Concrete Books for Art work			16	
34. Wetland Area				1
35. Observation Station				7
36. Building for Education Classes				1
37. Bridges over Wetlands				2
38. Planters in Lagoons for Water Plants				10
39. Gardens and Trees in the Nature Areas				X
40. Fishing Area				1
41. Frisbee Course				
42. Golf Course				

\* Shared Baseball Field

\*\* Shared Football and Soccer Field



### **Photographs of Local Parks**

Photographs of the two city parks are shown hereafter. These two city parks are referred to as Scott Sloan Park and Veterans Memorial Sports Complex.

#### **EXHIBIT 6-2 PHOTOGRAPH OF SCOTT SLOAN PARK**



Source: Governmental Service Agency, Inc.

#### **EXHIBIT 6-3 PHOTOGRAPH OF VETERANS MEMORIAL SPORTS COMPLEX**



Source: Governmental Service Agency, Inc.

### **Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Outdoor Recreation Plan**

As part of the official 1990 Parks and Wildlife Department Outdoor Recreation Plan, a needs list of regional (Hidalgo, Cameron and Willacy Counties) outdoor recreational facilities was prepared and ranked in 1995. The list was as follows:

1. Soccer/football fields
2. Softball fields
3. Trail miles, multi-use (walk, bike, jog)
4. Swimming salt water square yards
5. Swimming fresh water square yards
6. Playground areas, equipped
7. Boat ramp lanes, salt water
8. Fishing structures, fresh water linear yards
9. Boat ramp lanes, fresh water
10. Baseball fields
11. Swimming pool square yards.
12. Basketball goals
13. Hiking trail miles
14. Fishing structures, salt water linear yards
15. Off-road vehicle riding acres
16. Tennis courts
17. Horseback riding trail miles
18. Picnic tables
19. Lake acres
20. Golf holes
21. Campsites

In the area from Brownsville eastward to the gulf coast then northward about ten (10) miles along South Padre Island and then to Edinburg which is about 30 miles west of South Padre Island, there are located approximately twelve (12) public golf courses and five (5) private golf courses. City parks are numerous in this area with over thirteen (13) public swimming pools and the beach along South Padre Island.

Besides swimming and golf, there are many other types of recreational facilities including baseball, football, soccer fishing and etc.

## **GUIDE LINES TO PARK PLANNING**

### **Open Space**

Space not used for buildings or structures may be defined as open space. It may be air, land or water in urban cities or in rural areas. It may also be an attractive park. Three functions that "open space" areas basically serve are:

1. Open spaces can meet positive human needs in recreation amenities through the physical and psychological senses.

2. Open space enhances and protects our natural resources such as air, water, soil, plants and animals.
3. Open space influences economic development decisions and affects development patterns and real estate values.

Fresh air, sunlight, physical exercise, and psychological release are health benefits derived from open space. Recognition of the importance of open space and outdoor recreation facilities for citizens of all ages had a start in the 1920's from early zoning legislation. In the 1960's, an increased emphasis was placed on the need for recreation and exercise in America. Although recreational facilities have a significant influence on the community environment, the provisions of these facilities within urban cities are not considered essential to the development of an attractive community, but they are desirable. Rural communities also see the need to develop and coordinate recreational facilities. Many times these facilities are developed in a cooperation of funding with the local school system, City and/or local sport organization to prevent duplication of services.

### **Park and Open Space Needs are Reflected by Economics and Age Changes**

Some of the significant changes that have occurred through the years in our lifestyle is reflected in the development of more recreation facilities and park areas for open space. Some of these reflections are:

1. Leisure time for many citizens increased during the past decade through technological advancements.
2. Parks and other recreational facilities are now recognized as having a distinct economic value. These facilities influence the desirability of the City as a place in which to reside or to locate new industrial or commercial developments.
3. An increased number of senior citizens with retirement benefits make it essential that recreational facilities be provided. Many of these citizens have ample leisure time to take advantage of recreation facilities.

### **Local Considerations in Park Planning and/or Development**

Important local considerations in planning park and recreation sites in a community are:

1. Locate lighted and noisy park activities away from residential areas.
2. Large park sites with major active facilities, such as lighted baseball fields, should be located adjacent to a "major" street.
3. Small park sites where major facilities or children's playground equipment need to be located adjacent to residential and collector streets and away from busy highways.
4. City's accepted standards for park acreage.
5. Location and condition of existing recreation facilities at City Parks.
6. Condition and type of existing recreation facilities at school grounds and the availability of facilities to the general public.
7. Availability of semipublic recreation facilities.

8. Landscaping at City Parks.
9. Community survey of parks and recreation needs.
10. Availability of land to expand park facilities.
11. Open space and established preservation areas.
12. Adequate city staff to provide park maintenance.
13. Local budget.

### **(NPRA) PARKS AND OPEN SPACE STANDARDS**

The National Park and Recreation Association recommends a total of 30 acres of park land per 1,000 persons. This amount can be allocated in any combination of park types, from playground parks to regional parks.

The recognized standards below are suggested guidelines for the city's park and open space system. These standards should be applied as firmly as needed to achieve established city standards, the local needs and capabilities must be considered in developing local parks and recreation facilities. National definitions and standards for playground, neighborhood, community, City and regional parks are stated below.

The National Recreation Association Park Standards (NRAPS) recommend that a City should have a certain amount of park area for each of three types listed below for every 1,000 persons in the City. These standards are as follows:

- Ten (10) acres of park land for recreational use;
- Ten (10) acres in green belt areas such as scenic parks, streams, parkways, etc.;
- Ten (10) acres in reservation or a natural state area;

#### **Recognized Park Type Standards**

The size of a park usually determines the park type name such as a "playground park", "a neighborhood park", "a community park", etc. This provides a method that can be used in community planning, especially in very large cities to determine the amount and size for future park-land requirements needed for a park system. This park classification system is useful as a guide in planning park areas for smaller cities and is therefore included as a reference in reviewing existing park sites and forecasting sites for future development.

##### **• Playground Park**

A playground park is an existing park or school site with limited facilities serving residents in small residential areas for children from preschool through school age. In some areas of the country, the term "playground park" is called a "mini-park" because the park area can be very small. Facilities typically found in these parks include playground equipment, benches, picnic tables, landscaping, a drinking fountain, and a hard surface play area for a variety of activities. Because the playground park is designed to fill a need for small residential areas, the minimum



size for a playground park varies from 2,500 square feet to one acre, and the service area is typically two or three blocks.

- **Neighborhood Park**

The neighborhood park plays the key role in the overall system of providing active and passive recreational space for a neighborhood area or a group of several small residential areas. In small rural cities, the term "Neighborhood Park" is usually referred to as the "City Park". A neighborhood park is usually divided into different play areas. There is an area for small children that may include swings, slides, modular play equipment, wading or spray pool, etc. Then a section of the park may include a football field, soccer field, softball/baseball field, basketball goals, jogging trail, etc. A section of the park may be developed with picnic tables, shelters for group gatherings and general landscaping for beauty. The minimum size for a neighborhood park is 5-20 acres, with a maximum service area of between one-quarter and one-half mile.

- **Community Park**

The community park is larger than a neighborhood park and contains the same facilities as found in a neighborhood park, but more area for active sport facilities. Because community parks are larger than the neighborhood park, recreation facilities such as volleyball, basketball, football, soccer, or softball/baseball and tennis courts that need lights for night play are usually located in the community park. This park may also have a swimming pool and off-street parking. The minimum size for a community park is 20-100 acres, with a maximum service area of one-half to three miles. It can encompass the service areas of several neighborhood parks.

- **City Park**

In addition to containing an expanded variety of the specialized activities found in the community park, such as lighted ball fields, tennis courts and a swimming pool, the city park provides space for day camps, limited overnight camping, a band shell/performance area, or other specialized uses for city-wide participation. The minimum size for a city park is 100 acres, with the service area being the entire City, usually 5,000 or more persons.

- **Regional Park**

A regional park provides facilities, which can accommodate a wide range of active and/or passive recreational pursuits, and can serve more than one community. They often provide activities and facilities, which cannot be accommodated in City or community parks, such as large organized campgrounds, boat launches, nature trails, etc. The minimum size for a regional park is 250 acres, with the service area within a one hours drive.

## **RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE ANALYSIS**

### **Local Recreational Facilities Analysis for an Estimated 2007 Population of 8,500**

In reviewing the local park and recreation facilities, as recorded on Exhibit 6-3, it appears that the City has adequately provided citizens with appropriate park and recreation needs for all age groups,



but many more facilities are needed to fulfill citizen recreational requirements. The recreational facilities at the Veterans Memorial Sports Complex were installed in the mid 1990's and are in good working condition. Recreational facilities at Scott Sloan Park have been in operation for many years and appear to be well maintained. A new park, "Tiny Town" was constructed in 2007.

### **Service Area of the Three City Parks**

Service areas of the two existing "Community Parks" (Scott Sloan Park and Veterans Memorial Sports Complex Park) and a "Neighborhood Park" (Tiny Town Park) are shown by Exhibit 6-4. These three parks total approximately 26.71 acres in which Scott Sloan Park contains approximately 3.86 acres, Veterans Memorial Sports Complex Park approximately 22 acres and Tiny Town Park approximately 0.85 acres. A one-half mile radius for the neighborhood park and a one-half mile and a three-fourths mile radius at the two community parks are shown on the exhibit. The illustrated radii are generally accepted distance standards in which people will travel to use recreation facilities at the noted park type. Two radiuses are shown for the community park to indicate a one-half mile radius for recreation facilities for small children and a three-fourth's mile radius for large sport facilities to accommodate teenage and adults.

### **Service Area of the School Playground Facilities**

School sites on Exhibit 6-4 are shown with a one-fourth mile radius, this is the distance most people will allow their children to walk or be taken to recreation facilities at school grounds. The location and design of playground facilities at school campuses is very important. Usually, where school playground facilities are enclosed with a fence, the general public will not have access to the facilities unless appropriate designs are developed by the school district to allow citizens access to the playground areas after school hours. Many school districts started fencing their property in the late 1960's when violence by fire arms took place in Houston. Therefore, La Feria Independent School District must approve after-hour school recreational opportunities for local citizens.

Sharing of local recreational facilities between the city and school district needs to be approved by a general agreement. Both public entities can usually benefit financially if an agreement to share facilities is an acceptable practice.

### **The Area between US Expressway 83 and Business Highway 83**

The area between US Expressway 83 and US Business Highway 83 is one section of the City without a public park. The only recreation facilities in this area are located on Canal Street at the senior high school and elementary school, which are fenced and not available to local citizens. There is a need to provide a park and recreation facility in this area to serve a large group of low-income persons and the increased winter population in RV Parks.

### **Local Park Related Problems**

#### **Ranking**

#### **Problems**

1. The three existing city parks are located on the south side of the City, leaving the area north of Business Highway 83 without park and recreation facilities.
2. Scott Sloan Park provides many recreation facilities, but the facilities are packed into a small number of acres, leaving an insufficient amount of open area for small children. The baseball field at the northeast corner of the park is located too close to the street.

3. The City needs more parkland to comply with the recommended park acreage.
4. A large variety of recreational type facilities is needed.

### **LA FERIA PARK STANDARDS**

Three types of park and recreation land categories defined by the National Recreation Association Park Standards (NRAPS) for a community is “active parkland,” “green belt areas” and “preservation or a natural state area”. It is recommended that each of these areas have 10 acres per 1,000 persons or a total of 30 acres per 1,000 persons.

At public meetings with the Planning and Zoning Commission and City Commission in 1998, the City adopted the “**active park land**” and the “**green belt area**” National Recreation Association Park Standards. Then in 2004, the City accepted the “**preservation or nature state area**” of the National Recreation Association Standards as part of the City’s park standards. These standards or listed below.

#### **La Feria’s approved park standards**

- Ten (10) acres of active park land for recreational use;
- Ten (10) acres in green belt areas such as scenic parks, streams, parkways, etc.;
- Ten (10) acres in reservation or a natural state area;

### **LOCAL PARK ACREAGE AND RECOMMENDED NEEDS FOR A FORECASTED POPULATION OF 10,770**

#### **Acreage and Service Areas of Local Parks**

In 2000, the City’s population was 6,115. According to the City’s adopted park standards, La Feria should have had 61 acres of park and open space land.

The three local parks, Scott Sloan Park, Veterans Memorial Sports Complex Park and Tiny Town Park, account for approximately 25.86 acres in which 24.86 acres are used for active parkland and one acre designated for preservation at Veterans Memorial Sports Complex. The City’s active parkland in January 2007 was 36.14 acres, which was 24.86 acres short of the City’s required standard of 61 acres, based on the adopted standard of 10 acres per 1,000 persons.

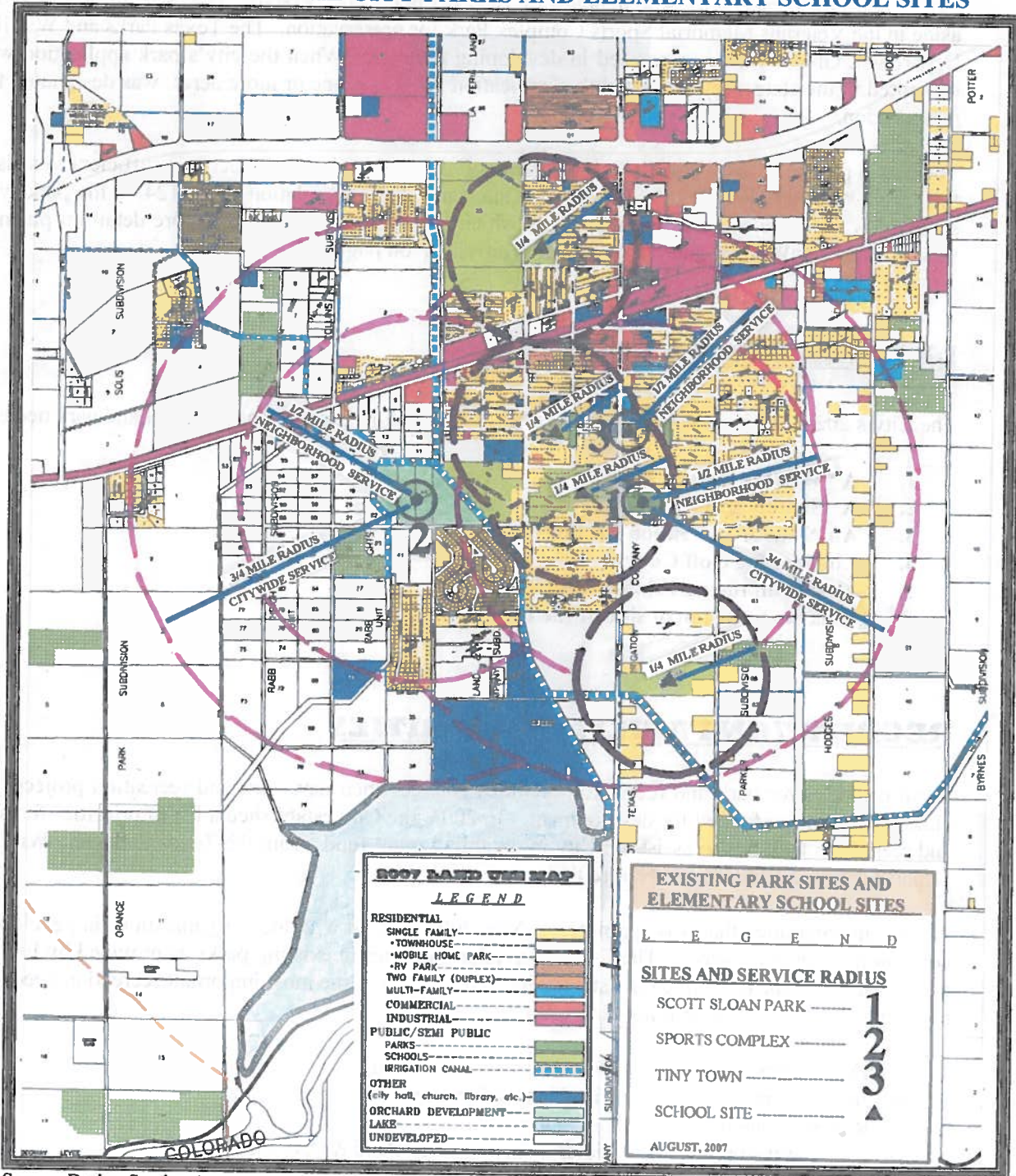
#### **Green Belt Areas**

In 2007, there were approximately 63.8 acres of land in “green belts”, which is 7.5 acres per 1,000 persons. Irrigation canals accounted for 23 acres, land surrounding the water tower located by Parker



Road accounted for 1.5 acres, land surrounding the TV tower on FM Road 506 accounted for 37 acres, plus the landscaped medians on East Street and West Street.

### EXHIBIT 6-4 SERVICE AREA OF THE CITY PARKS AND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SITES



Source: Design Service Agency, Inc.



### **Preservation or natural state areas**

Setting aside land for preservation so that it can be kept in a natural state is a difficult endeavor for most small cities, especially at a standard of 10 acres per 1,000 persons. One acre of land was set aside in the Veterans Memorial Sports Complex Park for preservation. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Grant Program was used in developing the park. When the city's park application was submitted to the state, they increased the application scoring if one or more acres, was designated for preservation.

The City's proposed "Wildlife and Nature Park" of approximately 111.24 acres is sufficient to satisfy the City's "preservation or natural state area standard" for a population of 11,124. This park type standard is therefore satisfied through 2025, which is forecasted at 10,770. More detail on planned facilities for the "Wildlife and Nature Park" is provided on page 17.

### **LA FERIA PARK NEEDS**

The City's 2025 Comprehensive Plan has identified the following park development and park needs:

1. A "Wildlife Nature Park"
2. A "Skateboard Facility"
3. An "Indoor recreation Facility"
4. Concept for Golf Course
5. A park on the east side of the City
6. A park on the north side of the City

### **RECREATION FACILITY PRIORITIES**

Local priorities for park and recreation facilities change when new park and recreation projects are either developed or funded for development. In 2003, the City established a list of priorities for park and recreation facilities to assist the City in obtaining grant funds from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for a Wildlife and Nature Park.

A steering committee that was appointed in May 2002 worked with local organizations in developing community recreation needs. The list of recreation facilities in existing parks as provided by Exhibit 6-3 was used by the committee in establishing sixteen (16) of the most important recreation needs for the City. The Steering Committee included:

Ms. Darla Jones	City Director of Planning,
Mr. Juan Guerra	City Finance Director,
Mr. Richard Talbert	City Attorney;
Mr. Joe B. Winston, Jr., P.E.	Sigler Winston Greenwood & Associate, Inc.,
Mr. Mike Alex.	ROFDW Architects,
Ms. Jessette Aleman	Administrative Assistant,
Ms. Olga Oberwetter	City Secretary.

The Steering Committee made presentations to the hereafter organizations to receive input from local citizens in determining recreation facilities by priority.

**La Feria Public Hearing**

A meeting of local citizens at La Feria High School Cafeteria

Meeting with representatives of La Feria Independent School District

Meeting with the Knights of Columbus

Meetings with local Businesses

Meeting with the La Feria Lions Club

Meeting with the Pony Baseball League Coaches

Meeting with the La Feria Supper Club

Meeting with the Masonic Lodge members

After obtaining data from the various organizations, the Steering Committee formulated a list of recreation needs, which was later formulated into a priority list. These local priorities were used in preparing a Wildlife and Nature Park Application. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department approved the application for funding in January 2005.

**List of Recreation Needs established by Priority**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. Walking (pleasure and exercise).              | 9. Basketball courts                    |
| 2. Building for nature study classes and events. | 10. Children's modular playground areas |
| 3. Nature study areas.                           | 11. Lighted baseball field              |
| 4. Picnic tables.                                | 12. Lighted softball field              |
| 5. Freshwater fishing.                           | 13. Practice baseball field             |
| 6. Freshwater boating.                           | 14. Soccer field                        |
| 7. Playground equipment.                         | 15. Volleyball courts                   |
| 8. Benches.                                      | 16. Tennis courts                       |

Since the above priorities were established and a grant award made to construct the Wildlife and Nature Park, priority numbers 2, 3, 5 and 6 ceased as local priorities. Other needs and priorities surfaced for the implementation of other park and recreation needs.

## **PARKS AND OPEN SPACE PLAN**

### **Considerations in Acquiring Park Land**

A good time for the City to obtain park land by purchasing it or having it donated is when a land owner approaches the City to discuss platting regulations. General questions in park development are: Will city officials bear the cost in obtaining appropriate sites? Will city officials fund the development of recreation facilities or seek funding of construction from other sources, such as the Texas Department of Parks and Wildlife? Will city officials budget funds to maintain park acreage and facilities?

### **Community Appearance**

It is recommended that the City undertake a tree planting program to enhance the City's appearance along the "major" and "collector" streets. The City will need to present a plan to the property owners

along the local highways to get them involved in a program to improve the City's appearance. Property owners, City or the Texas Department of Transportation can finance appropriate street trees. As listed in the City's Scenic Corridor Ordinance.

In many cases, existing businesses along the highways can make room for one or two trees, which will help community appearance considerably.

### **Replacement of Inadequate Recreation Equipment**

Many cities having old playground and recreation equipment at city parks find that there is a need to rehabilitate or replace the equipment. In recent years, local officials cite the fear of liability suits as the number one reason to replace outdated and unsafe playground equipment. Two facilities often removed for safety reasons are seesaws and merry-go-rounds. Playground equipment in La Feria appears to be in adequate condition. Demographic changes, such as increases in senior citizens, can create a need to redesign park facilities for different clientele.

Community appearance through the planting of trees is an asset in attracting new business and industrial development in the City. Attractive parks enhance the appearance and quality of life in the community. Existing and proposed park acreage to meet park standards is provided hereafter.

### **EXHIBIT 6-5**

#### **PARK ACREAGE NEEDED BY THE CITY TO COMPLY WITH THE CITY'S APPROVED PARK STANDARD OF 30 ACRES PER 1,000 PERSONS – 2007 ESTIMATED POPULATION OF 8,500 AND A 2025 FORECASTED POPULATION OF 10,770**

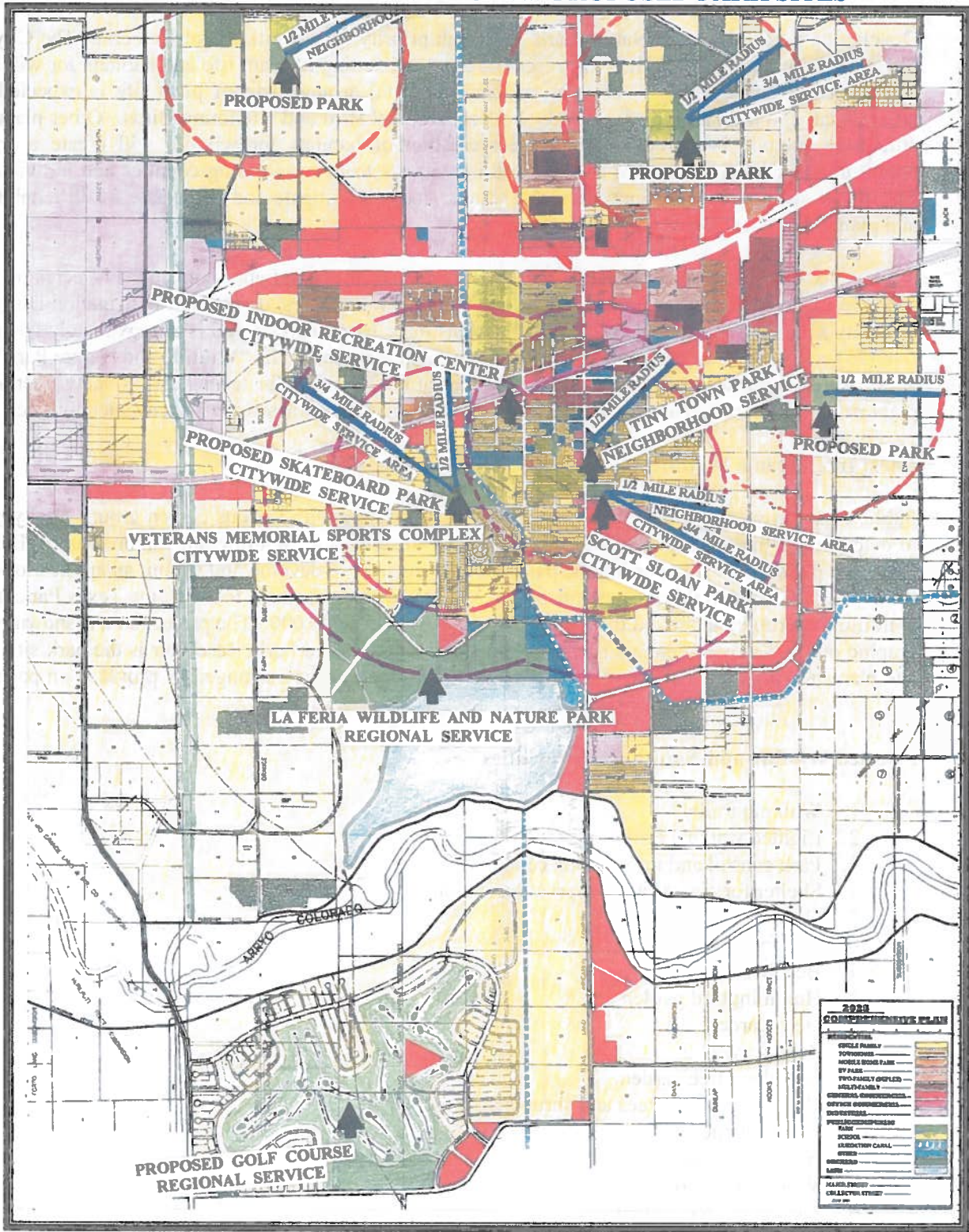
<b>PARK TYPES</b>	<b>STANDARD SIZE</b>	<b>2007 CITY PARKS</b>	<b>PROPOSED 2025 PARK ACREAGE</b>
<b>Playground or Mini Park</b>	2,500 Sq. Ft. - 5 Acre	0 Acres	None
<b>Neighborhood</b>	5-20 Acres	<u>Scott Sloan Park</u> <b>3.86 Acres</b> <u>Tiny Town Park</u> <b>0.85 Acres</b>	<b>North 15 Acres</b> <b>East 10 Acres</b>
<b>Community</b>	20-100 Acres	<u>Veterans Memorial Sports Complex</u> <b>22 Acres</b>	<u>Skateboard Park</u> <b>0 Acres</b>
<b>City or Special</b>	0.25 to 100+ Acres	<u>Wildlife &amp; Nature Park</u> <b>111.24 Acres</b>	<b>Recreation Center</b> <b>3.26 Acres</b>
<b>Regional</b>	250 Acres+	None	<b>Golf Course</b> <b>200 Acres</b>
<b>PARK TOTAL</b>		<b>137.95 ACRES</b>	<b>228.26 ACRES</b>
<b>GREEN BELT</b>	10 Acres per 1000 persons	Irrigation Canals & Drainage Canal 39.56 Acres Orchard 43 Acres	Irrigation and Drainage Canals 15 Acres Orchards 100 Acres
<b>GREEN BELT TOTAL</b>		<b>82.56 ACRES</b>	<b>115 ACRES</b>
<b>PRESERVATION OR NATURAL STATE LAND</b>	10 Acres per 1000 persons	<u>Veterans Memorial Sports Complex</u> 1 Acre	<u>Wildlife &amp; Nature Park</u> 111.24 Acres
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1 ACRE</b>	<b>111.24 ACRES</b>

Source: F. Steward Chapin, Jr. and Edward J. Kaiser, Urban Land Use Planning. Urban: University of Illinois Press, 1979;



### EXHIBIT 6-6

### SERVICE AREAS OF EXISTING AND PROPOSED PARK SITES



Source: Design Services, Inc.

## **1. WILDLIFE AND NATURE PARK**

Developing a “Wildlife and Nature Park” is a high priority for the citizens of La Feria. The City is planning to develop an area that will resemble a natural setting of plant life and habitats for wildlife and plant life arrangements. Creating an environmental arrangement of plant life is expected to attract local and migrating birds such as the Neo Tropical Bird and Humming Birds. Other planned attractions include butterflies. The project creation of habitats for wildlife will create a great opportunity for local citizens of all ages and individuals from surrounding counties and individuals from other sections of the county to meet, watch, study, investigate and appreciate wildlife habitats and plant material.

A site selected for “La Feria Wildlife and Nature Park” is an area of approximately 112 acres on the southwest side of the City next to a lake of approximately 200 acres, owned by the Irrigation District. The City’s existing wastewater treatment plant has three large lagoons and is approximately twenty-five (25) acres in size. The lagoons will be cleaned and included in the “Wildlife and Nature Park” as an attraction for wildlife and to be used as a recreational activity for teenagers. A new treatment plant is to be constructed at another location as part of the City’s wastewater improvement project.

### **Local Interest in a Wildlife and Nature Park Facility**

Public hearings were conducted and numerous meetings held with various citizen groups at city hall to determine if the local interest was strong enough to support a “Wildlife and Nature Park”. Based on a high interest level supporting the park, the City decided to develop and submit an applications to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for a \$100,000 grant project. In 2005, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department approved the application for a grant of \$500,000. The project area is shown by a graphic on the following page. The large green area north of La Feria Reservoir is the park site. A site plan showing how the selected wildlife and nature facilities are arranged, is provided on page 6-18.

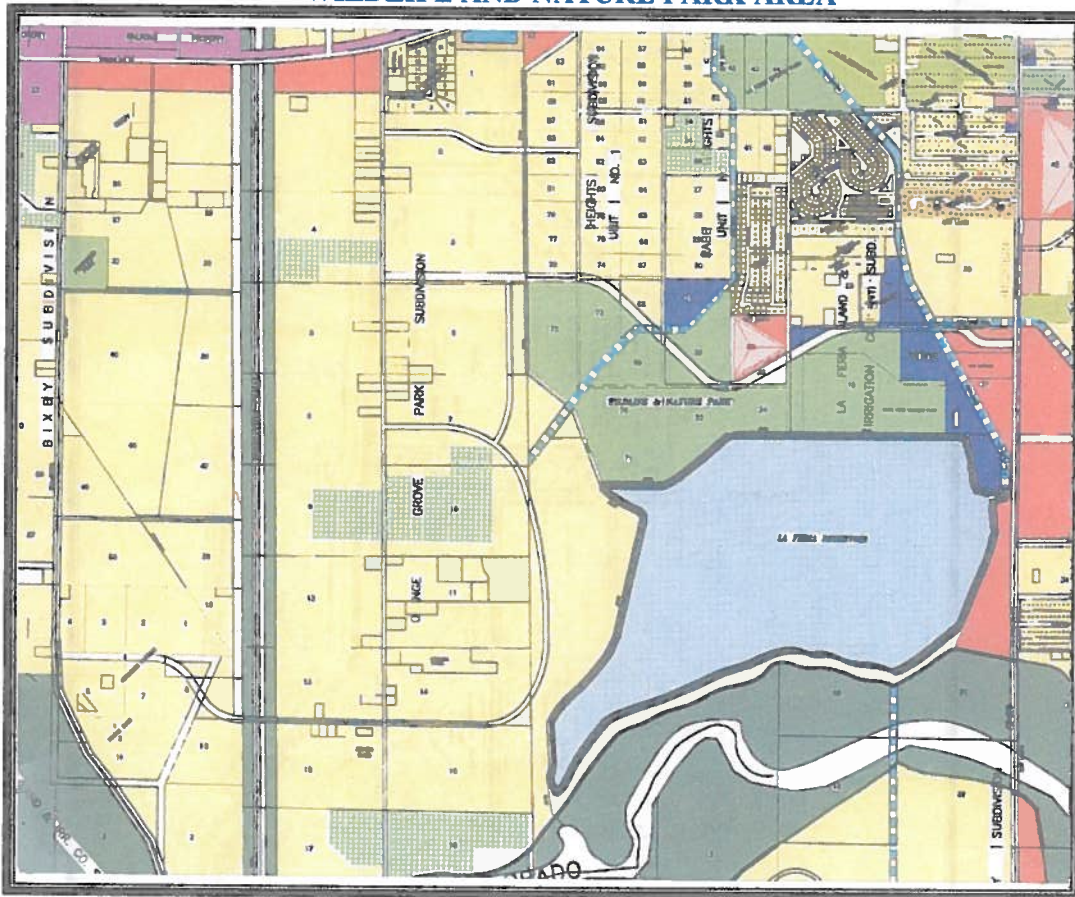
### **Selected Wildlife and Nature Park Facilities**

1. Walking trails
2. Lighted walking trails
3. Park control and information center
4. Shelter for classes and observation station
5. Covered picnic tables
6. Observation stations
7. Benches
8. Hummingbird garden
9. Herb garden
10. Palm garden
11. Broadleaf tree garden
12. Berry producing trees and shrub garden
13. Cactus garden
14. Butterfly garden
15. Wildflower garden
16. Flowering tree garden
17. Native plant material garden
18. Parking lot
19. Project utilities



20. Pier at west lagoon for fishing contest
21. West lagoon for kayak racing by groups
22. Lagoon planter boxes
23. Wetland enlargement
24. Wooden bridges at wetlands

**EXHIBIT 6-7  
WILDLIFE AND NATURE PARK AREA**



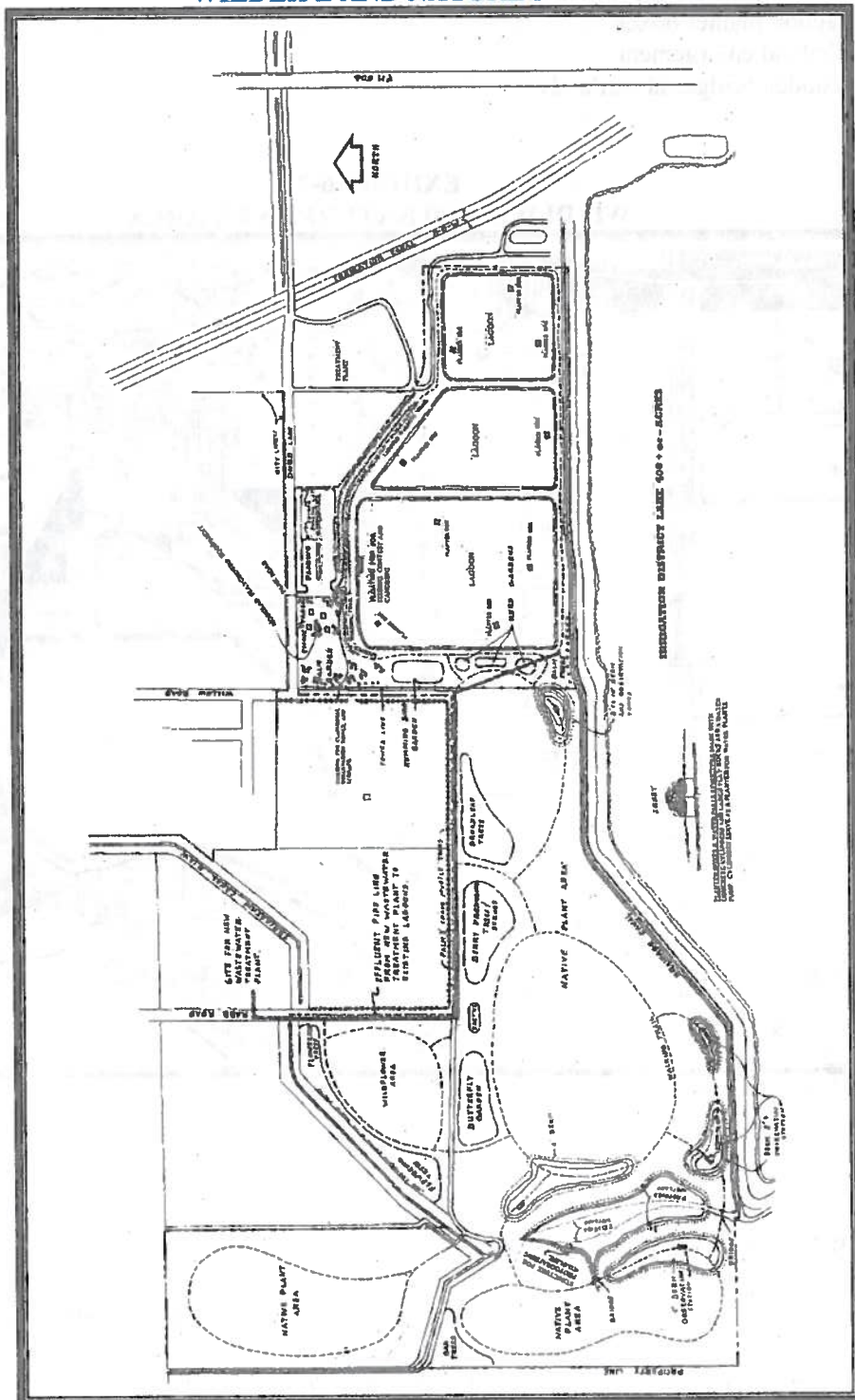
Source: Design Services, Inc.

## 2. SKATEBOARD FACILITY

At a City Commission Public Hearing on December 9, 2004, local citizens expressed an interest in developing a skateboard facility. Plans were prepared to submit a Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Grant Application for assistance in developing the new recreation facility at the "Veterans Memorial Sports Complex". This is a park developed with grant funds in the early 1990's. Sufficient space to develop the skateboard facility and supporting recreational activities is available on the southwest corner of the Veterans Memorial Sports Complex.



## EXHIBIT 6-8 WILDLIFE AND NATURE PARK PLAN



Source: Design Services, Inc.

**Skateboard Project - New and Renovated Facilities**

----- Lighted Skateboard Facility -----	new
----- Pavilion -----	new
----- 4 Covered Picnic Tables -----	new
----- 4 Benches -----	new
----- Sand Volleyball Court -----	new
----- 2 Horseshoe Courts -----	new
----- Bar-be-que Pit -----	new
----- Lighted Obstacle Course -----	new
----- Lighted Walking & Jogging Trail -----	renovated
----- 2 Security Lights -----	new
----- 600 L.F. of asphalt street -----	new
----- 6,000 Sq. Ft. of parking -----	new
----- Landscaping of area -----	new

**Project Justification**

A skateboard facility addition to Veterans Memorial Sport Complex Park is provided on page 6-20.

The **lighted skateboard facility** will provide a recreation need that is not presently available in the City and it will benefit the age group willing to try skateboarding.

The **pavilion** will be the City's third park pavilion, but this pavilion provides a facility for group meetings at a site that accommodates a large number of people at the four baseball fields, soccer-football field and two basketball courts. The park has a need for a family and group get-to-gather facility, where meals can be provided and activities such as card or domino games conducted under needed shelter. This type of facility is a citywide need that will benefit all age groups.

The **four covered picnic tables** will provide shelter for people using active recreation facilities at the park and provide a place for small groups. These four facilities is a citywide need that will benefit all age groups. The existing Veterans Memorial Sports Complex Park does not have such facilities to accommodate participants.

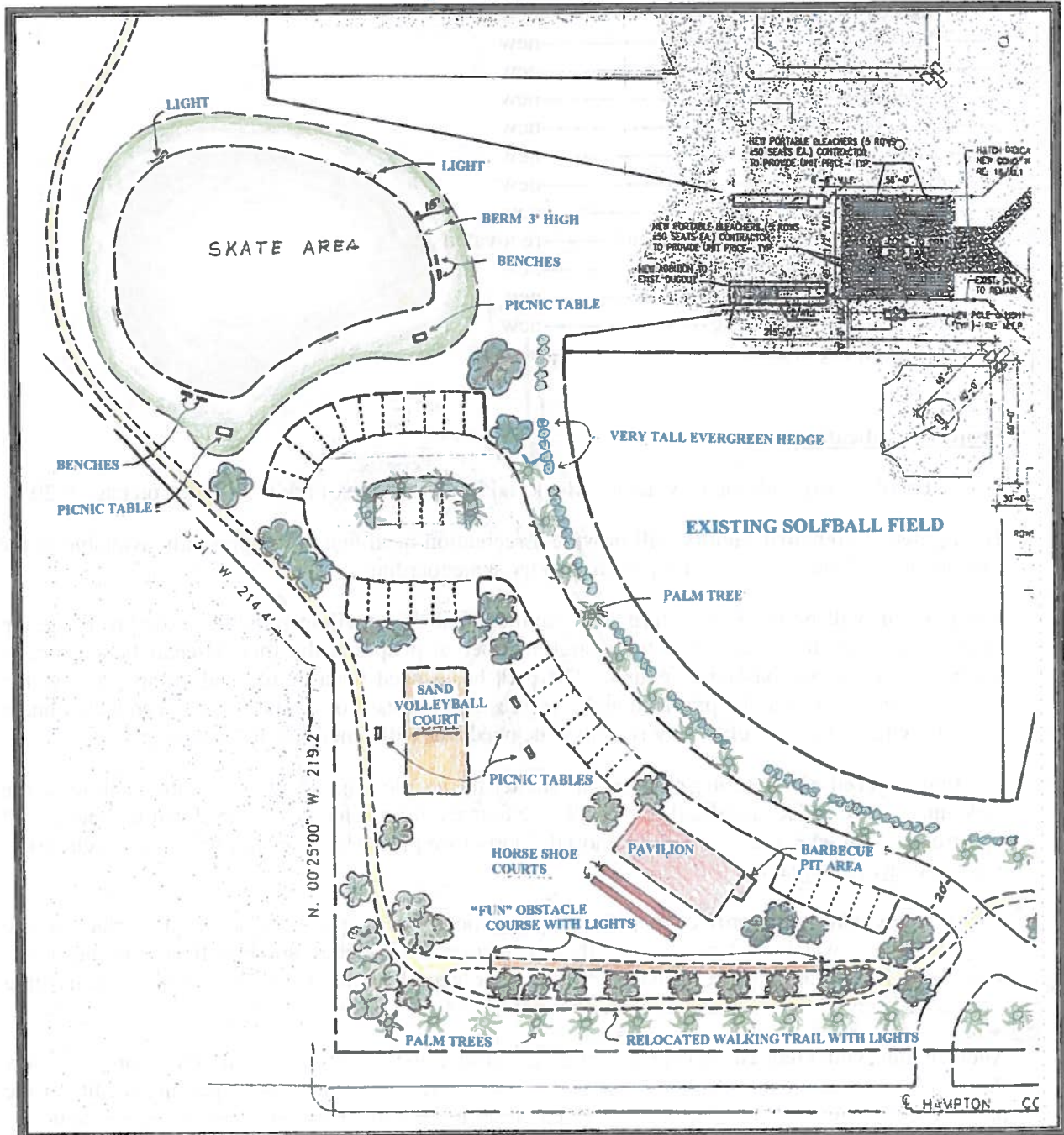
The **four benches** will provide a place for skateboard participants to rest and a place where individuals can watch skaters perform their maneuvers. Benches are beneficial for the active skateboard facility and can be considered a citywide need benefiting all age groups. The existing Veterans Memorial Sports Complex Park does not have such facility.

Another **sand volleyball court** is proposed as an addition to the Veterans Memorial Sports Complex Park. The existing sand volleyball court is located 300 feet from the closest parking facility at the park. The new sand volleyball court is planned closer to available parking. This recreation facility is a citywide need benefiting an estimated age group from 10 to 70.

The **two horseshoe courts** are proposed to be constructed close to the pavilion where the park patrons will most likely congregate. Those benefiting from this type of recreation activity will be those in an age group from 10 to 80. The facility is a citywide need.

A **barbeque pit** located at the pavilion will provide a place for park patrons to cook for small groups and serve meals at the pavilion. Individuals of all age groups will benefit from the barbeque pit. The facility is a citywide need.

### EXHIBIT 6-9 SKATEBOARD PARK PLAN



Source: Design Services, Inc.

A **lighted obstacle course** paralleling a short section (225 feet) of the walking and jogging trail gives the more active trail users an opportunity to participate in a more stressful recreation course and encourage more individuals to use of the walking and jogging trail. The proposed lighted obstacle course is a citywide need benefiting an age group between 6 and 70. Presently there is not an obstacle course in the City.



A proposed **lighted walking and jogging trail** is planned in the Veterans Memorial Sports Complex Addition. Minor changes to the existing walking and jogging trail from the skateboard area to the walkway leading into the baseball fields will be required to accommodate the proposed new recreation facilities. This area of approximately 850 linear feet is recommended for lights. The lighted walking and jogging trail is a citywide need that will benefit all age groups.

**Two security lights** are proposed for installation in the new addition to the Veterans Memorial Sports Complex Park area. One security light is proposed at the pavilion and the other light is proposed at the sand volleyball court. The security lights are considered a citywide need that will serve and benefit all age groups.

### **3. INDOOR RECREATION PROJECT**

Developing an “indoor recreation” center is a high priority for the citizens of La Feria. The project is referred to locally, as A “Boys and Girls Club” and is highly supported by local citizens. In 2002, the community developed an indoor park plan and submitted an application to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for a \$500,000 grant with assistance from Cameron County in complying with the local match. Because of a lack of state park funds, the state allowed only one indoor park application to be funded. In 2007, the State Legislature provided additional funds to the state park grant program, which should help community park grant funding.

#### **Local Interest in an Indoor Recreation Facility**

The closest Indoor Recreation Facility, other than school facilities, is located in Harlingen, which is not available for La Feria’s citizens. In 2002, two public hearing were conducted and numerous meetings held with various groups at city hall to determine if the local interest was strong enough to support an “Indoor Recreation Facility” or a “Boys and Girls Club”. Based on a high interest level by local citizens a committee was formed to work with ROFDW Architects of Harlingen, Texas to design a structure to incorporate indoor recreation facilities expressed by citizens that attended public hearing and other meetings at the city hall.

On May 13, 2003 a planning meeting was conducted by Sunny K. Philip, La Feria’s City Manager, at the La Feria Senior High School to: bring local citizens up-to-date on the progress in developing a Boys and Girls Club. The City received input from interested citizens, and recruit volunteers to assist in organizing an active Boys and Girls Club and search for individuals willing to participate in raising funds and/or donating funds to assist in developing an “indoor recreation facility”. Twenty-eight individuals that attended the meeting filled out a form to indicate their commitment to the development of a Boys and Girls Club.

#### **Local Support for the Boys and Girls Club from a planning meeting on May 13, 2003**

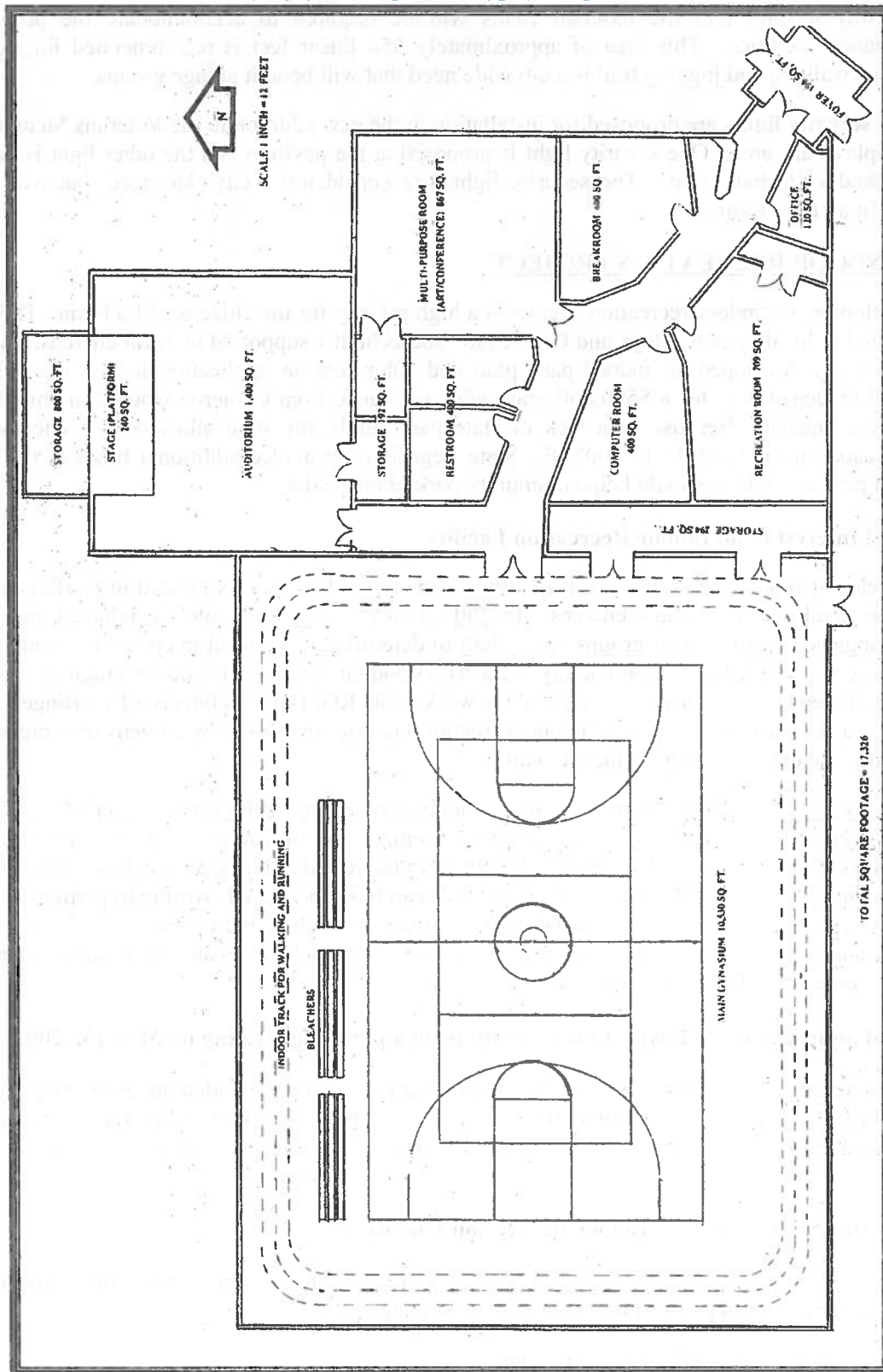
There were twenty-eight individuals that filled out a form that was handed out at the May 13 Planning Meeting of the “Indoor Recreation” (Boys and Girls Club). Completed and partially completed forms revealed information to the City in which individuals are interested in organizing a Boys and Girls Club.

#### **Activities Selected for the Indoor Recreation Facility**

A list of the most desired “indoor recreation” activities needed for the City are listed hereafter and a plan of the proposed park is provided on the next page.

1. Indoor basketball –volleyball court.
2. Indoor walking and running track.

# EXHIBIT 6-10 INDOOR RECREATION FACILITY



Source: Design Services, Inc.

3. Recreation room for a meeting area and games.
4. Multi-purpose room (art & drama classes, conferences, and meeting room).
5. Break room.
6. Auditorium for plays and drama programs and large events.
7. Restroom.
8. Computer room for education classes.
9. Reception area and small office.
10. Future landscaping at building.
11. Future sidewalk project.
12. Future road and vehicle parking.

### **5. GOLF COURSE CONCEPT**

Golf course development is one activity used by some communities and/or states to attract retired persons to the area. In 1999, Del Webb Corporation conducted a survey on "What do Baby Boomers want from Retirement". Nearly one-half of 800 individuals between the ages 48 to 65 indicated that they would move to a new home during retirement. The individuals were also asked to select from a list of "Activities Most Likely to Do in Retirement". Twenty (20) percent of the baby boomers selected golf as an activity that they would like to do in retirement.

In the 1990's the State of Alabama spent about \$200,000,000 to develop eight public golf course complexes (four 54-hole and four 36-hole) that were in two hours of each other and within 10 minutes of an interstate highway. This project was initiated to attract tourists, attract retirees, and to attract and to retain industry. Since the announcement of golf complex, tourism spending in Alabama has grown from \$2.5 billion annually to approximately \$6 billion annually from 1991-2001.

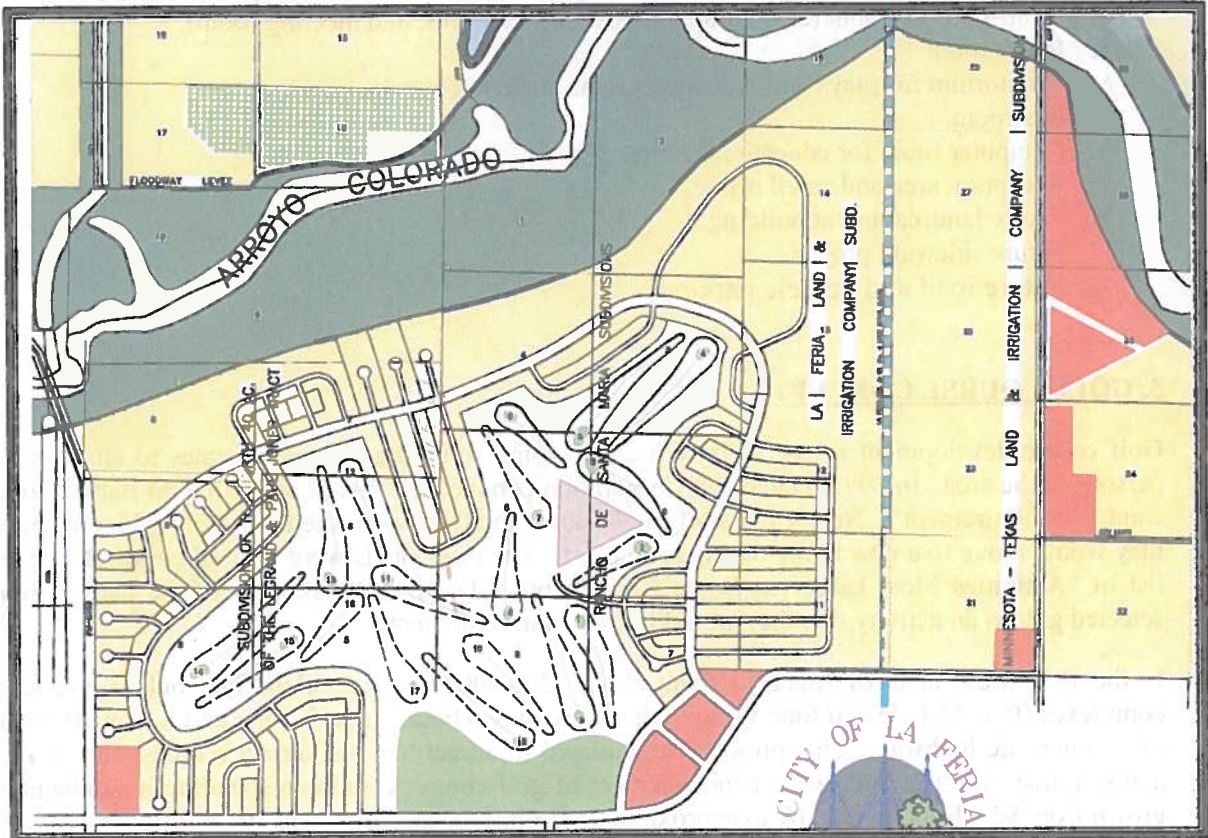
#### **Golf Courses in Surrounding Communities**

Brownsville  
Edinburg  
Falfurrias  
Harlingen  
McAllen  
Mercedes  
Mission  
Pharr  
Port Isabel  
Raymondville  
Weslaco

The farmland south of the Arroyo Colorado is a suitable location to develop a golf course because it appears that a sufficient number of undeveloped acres could be accumulated for a golf course and residential development. A project area of 500 or more acres would allow about 200 acres for a golf course with the remaining acres for residential and commercial development. A Concept Plan for a Golf Course and Urban Development Project is shown on page 6-24.



## CONCEPT PLAN OF A GOLF COURSE AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT



Source: Design Services, Inc.

## 6. EAST SIDE PARK PROJECT FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

A concept plan of a park on the east side is provided on page 6-26.

**Suggested recreation facilities for the development of the proposed park on the east side of the City are:**

1. Walking and jogging trail
2. Restroom Facility
3. 4 Covered Picnic Tables
4. 3 Uncovered Picnic Tables
5. Basketball Court
6. 2 Unlighted Baseball fields
7. Develop soccer/football field
8. Develop a sand volleyball court
9. Children's modular playground with 8' concrete walk
10. Parking lot
11. Landscaping
12. 8 Security Lights

**EXHIBIT 6-12**  
**EXAMPLES OF FACILITIES FOR PROPOSED PARKS**



Source: Design Services, Inc.

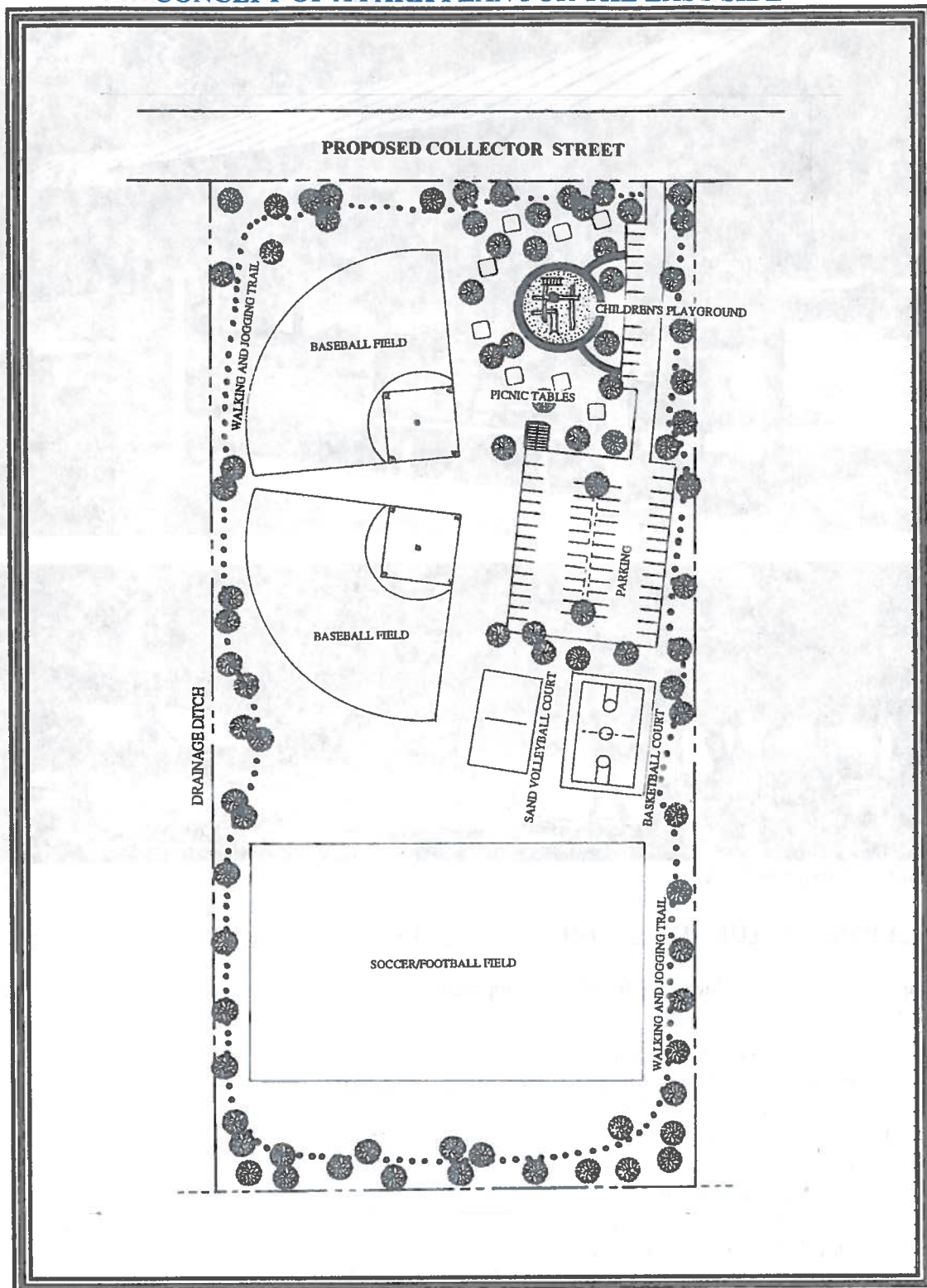
**7. A PARK ON THE NORTH SIDE OF THE CITY**

Suggested recreation facilities for the development of the proposed park on the east side of the City are:

1. Walking and jogging trail
2. Restroom Facility
3. 4 Covered Picnic Tables
4. 3 Uncovered Picnic Tables
5. Basketball Court
6. 2 Unlighted Baseball fields
7. Develop soccer/football field
8. Develop a sand volleyball court
9. Children's modular playground with 8' concrete walk
10. Parking lot
11. Landscaping
12. 8 Security Lights



**EXHIBIT 6-13**  
**CONCEPT OF A PARK PLAN FOR THE EAST SIDE**



Source: Design Services, Inc.



## **PARK AND OPEN SPACE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

The City has an opportunity to promote local businesses by developing and marketing certain recreation programs. Park and open space goals are general statements to guide local officials and leaders to implement a first class park and recreation system for local citizens and encourage facility development where practical as a tourist industry.

The hereafter goals and strategies are based on the previous analysis of the existing facilities and future plans.

### **Goal #1**     **Provide public park and recreational facilities and programs of adequate scope and variety to serve local population of all age groups.**

#### **Objectives**

- 2008     Adopt the Park and Open Space Plan.
- Develop the Wildlife and Nature
- Resubmit the Skateboard Park application to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for a matching grant to assist in developing the facility.
- Resubmit the Indoor Park application to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for a matching grant to assist in developing the facility.
- 2009     Continue to work with La Feria Independent School District to expand and share recreation facilities, such as baseball fields, soccer fields, walking and jogging trails, swimming pool, tennis courts, etc.
- 2010     Continue to obtain information from local citizens on facilities they would like to have in local parks with the understanding that future parks should be developed as low maintenance projects.
- 2012     Update the City's park needs for the next five years.

### **Goal #2**     **Initiate and carry out a general beautification and environmental improvement program.**

#### **Objectives**

- 2008     Work with the property owners, especially businesses along local highways and major streets, and develop a design for a street tree planting program that will improve local appearance.
- 2009     Request the Texas Department of Transportation to develop a landscape program for the local highways.

Request the Garden Club and County Agent to provide instructions to local citizens in selecting and pruning street trees.

- 2010 Update the City street tree planting program to include color and appropriate tree size where electrical lines are located. Encourage the electrical, telephone and cable companies to participate in the program.
- 2011 Develop a program to use City forces and volunteer organizations to maintain drainage area easements.
- 2012 Develop a five-year program to continue a general beautification and environmental improvements program in the City.

## **POTENTIAL SOURCES OF FINANCING**

Possible funding sources for park and open-space improvements include:

1. City's General Fund.
2. Sale of General Obligation Bonds.
3. Issuance of Certificates of Obligation.
4. Matching grants from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department administers the Land and Water Conservation Fund and the Texas Local Parks, Recreation and Open Space Fund Grant Programs. Both of these programs provide fifty percent matching funds for the acquisition of park sites and the development of outdoor recreation facilities. All types of outdoor recreation improvements (swimming pools, ball fields, etc.) are eligible for funding under these programs. Funding cycles for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department are January 31 and July 31.
5. The Texas Department of Transportation provides funding and assistance in local highways landscaping.

## **RECOMMENDED FIVE YEAR IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

<b><u>DATE</u></b>	<b><u>ACTIVITY</u></b>
• 2008	Select an architecture firm and other professional individuals or firms to prepare construction drawings and assistance in developing the Wildlife and Nature Park.
• 2008	Finalize construction drawings are for the development of the Wildlife and Nature Park.
• 2008	Request construction bids to develop the Wildlife and Nature Park.

- 2008 Start construction on the Wildlife and Nature Park.
- 2008 Revise and resubmit the City's Skateboard Park Application to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for grant funds.
- 2009 Revise and resubmit the City's Indoor Recreation Application to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.
- 2009 The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department informs the City at the end of August on grant awards made to Small Community Applications such as the Skateboard Park.
- 2009 Texas Parks and Wildlife Department sends out notifications of grant awards on Indoor Park Application such as La Feria's Recreation Center.
- 2009 Wildlife and Nature Park project construction completed.
- 2010 A contract between the State and City is prepared by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to develop the Skateboard Park.
- 2010 City selects an engineering or architecture firm to prepare construction drawings and assistance in developing the Skateboard Park.
- 2011 City selects a group of individuals and organizations to study steps for the City to take in selecting a site for the development of a public golf course.
- 2011 City selects an engineering or architecture firm to prepare construction drawings and assistance in developing the Indoor Recreation Facility.
- 2012 City has an application prepared and submitted to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for funding assistance in developing a golf course.

**EXHIBIT 6-14**  
**ESTIMATED COST OF STREET TREE AND**  
**PARK PROJECT DEVELOPMENT**

<u>Fiscal Year</u>		<u>Project Cost</u>	<u>Estimated City Cost</u>
2008	1. Request Texas Department of Transportation to assist in landscaping local highways.	-0-	-0-
2008	2. Resubmit the Skateboard Park Application	\$1,500	\$1,500
2009	3. Resubmit the Indoor Recreation Center Application	\$1,500	\$1,500



2009	4. Work with property owners adjacent to F.M. Roads 506 to develop a landscape plan for community appearance.	\$2,000	\$2,000
2009	5. Construct the Wildlife and Nature Park Professional Services Land Acquisition Construction -----	\$1,000,000	\$500,000
2010	6. Construct the Skateboard Park -----	\$100,000	\$50,000
2012	7. Construct the Indoor Recreation Center project -----	\$1,124,000	\$562,000
<b>TOTAL -----</b>		<b>\$2,229,000</b>	<b>\$1,117,000</b>

## EXHIBIT 6-15

## POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

RACE	1990		2000		2025 Forecast	
	Number of Persons	Percentage of Population	Number of Persons	Percentages of Population	Number of Persons	Percentages of Population
White (Not Hispanic)	750	17.20 %	1,311	21.44 %	2,309	21.44 %
Black (Not Hispanic)	5	0.11 %	7	0.11 %	12	0.11 %
Hispanic	3,598	82.52 %	4,736	77.45 %	8,341	77.45 %
Asian, Pacific Islander	5	0.11 %	24	0.39 %	43	0.39 %
American Indian, Alaskan	1	0.02 %	2	0.03 %	3	0.03 %
Other Race	1	0.02 %	35	0.57 %	62	0.57 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,360</b>	<b>100 %</b>	<b>6,115</b>	<b>100 %</b>	<b>10,770</b>	<b>100 %</b>
Hispanic Origin (of any race)	3,598	82.5 %	4,736	77.45 %	8,341	77.45 %
Handicapped	440	10.09 %	610	9.98 %	1,075	9.98 %
Female Heads of Household	256	5.87 %	745	12.18 %	1,314	12.18 %

Source: U.S. Census of Population

## EXISTING AND PROPOSED PARKS

A facility inventory is instrumental in analyzing and determining recreation needs for the existing and forecasted population. The hereafter form shows recreational facilities at the three existing parks, and long range recreation needs for parks located on the City's Future Land Use Map.

### EXHIBIT 6-16 EXISTING AND PROJECTED PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

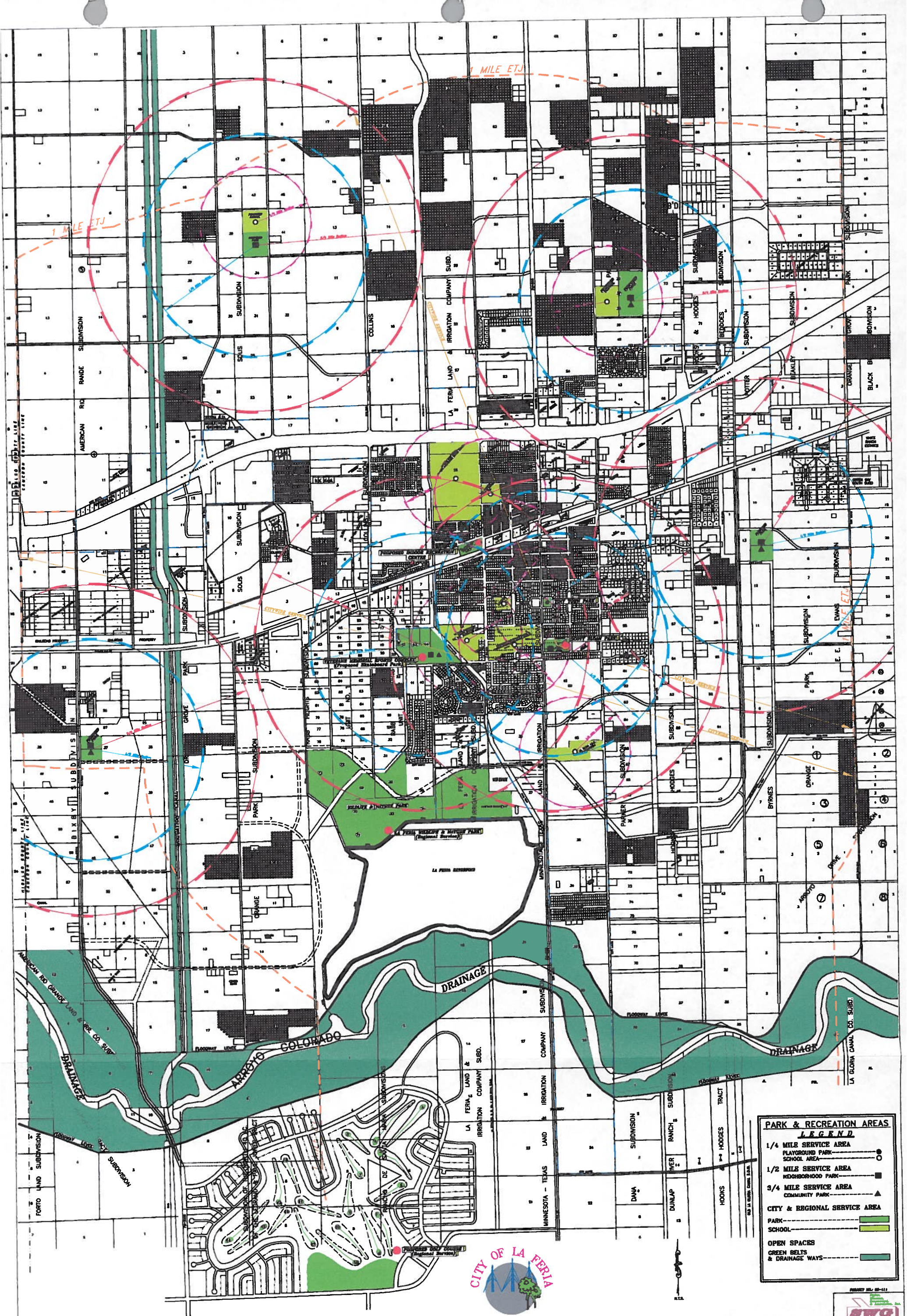
RECREATIONAL FACILITIES	EXISTING PARKS				PROPOSED PARKS			
	VETERANS MEMORIAL SPORTS COMPLEX	SCOTT SLOAN PARK	TINY TOWN PARK	WILDLIFE AND NATURE PARK	SKATE-BOARD PARK-	INDOOR PARK CENTER	PROPOSED EAST SIDE PARK	PROPOSED NORTH SIDE PARK
1. Building For Multi Activities								1
2. Walking And/Or Jogging Trails	1	1	1	1	1		1	1
A. Lighted Walking and Jogging Trail				1				
B. Indoor walking and Jogging						1		
3. Lighted Baseball Field	3	1						1
4. Practice Baseball Field	1*						2	
5. Lighted Softball Field	1*							
6. Practice Softball Field	1*							
7. Football Field	1**						1	
8. Soccer Field	1**							
9. A- Lighted Basketball Court	2		1			1	1	
B- Funball Goal			1					
C- Slam Dunk Goal			2					
10. Basketball court not lighted		1	1					1
11. Sand Volleyball Court	1				1		1	
12. Children's Modular Play Area	1	1	1				1	1
13. Small Children's Equipment								
A- Swing		1	1					
B- Baby Swing			1					
C- Moon Climber			1					
D- Arch Climber			1					
E- Maxi-Whirl			1					
F- Slide			1					
14. Benches		6	8	12	4			
15. Picnic Tables		3			4		3	
16. Covered Picnic Tables		3	4	6			4	2
17. Security Lights	X	X	7		X			
18. Pavilion		1			1			
19. Horseshoe court		X			2			
20. Shuffleboard		2						
21. Natural Open Space Area	X			1				
22. Nature Center				1				
23. Parking Lot	X	X		1	X	1	1	1
24. Recreation Center						1		
25. Amphitheater								
26. Building for Drama Production						1		
27. Restroom Facilities				1		1	1	1
28. Concession and Restroom	1	1						
29. Swimming Pool		1						
30. Water Fountains								
31. Lighted Tennis Courts								
32. Gazebo			1					
33. Large Concrete Books for Art work			16					
34. Wetland Area				1				
35. Observation Station				7				
36. Building for Education Classes				1		1		
37. Bridges over Wetlands				2				
38. Planters in Lagoons for Water Plants				10				
39. Gardens and Trees in the Nature Areas				X				
40. Fishing Area				1				
41. Frisbee Course								
42. Golf Course								
43. Lighted Skateboard facility					1			
44. Bar-be-que Pit					1			
45. Lighted Obstacle Course					1			

\* Shared Baseball Field

\*\* Shared Football and Soccer Field







**PARK & RECREATION AREAS**  
**LEGEND**

- 1/4 MILE SERVICE AREA  
PLAYGROUND PARK  
SCHOOL AREA
- 1/2 MILE SERVICE AREA  
NEIGHBORHOOD PARK
- 3/4 MILE SERVICE AREA  
COMMUNITY PARK
- CITY & REGIONAL SERVICE AREA  
PARK  
SCHOOL
- OPEN SPACES  
GREEN BELTS  
& DRAINAGE WAYS



LA FERIA, TEXAS

PARK & RECREATION AREAS

OVERALL PLAN  
1" = 600'

