

I. Introduction

A. The City of Wichita Falls

In 1983, the Parks & Recreation staff along with the consulting firm of Myrick Newman Dahlberg, Inc. of Dallas, Texas, completed a plan called Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Element, for Wichita Falls. The plan was adopted on April 1, 1983 by City Council and several of the recommendations have been accomplished. Most parks identified as needing to be upgraded with lighting, landscaping, irrigation, and play equipment were renovated. Some of the mini-parks identified as excess were removed from the system, but most were not. Although several acres of parkland were recommended to keep up with growth, none were acquired, however, land that was not designated 'parkland' was acquired for an athletic complex and 4 of 6 fields of a recommended softball complex were constructed. The remaining 2 fields were not constructed. The Parks, Recreation & Open Space Element also identified the city as needing 4 recreation centers with gymnasiums and 2 additional swimming pools. These facilities have not been constructed.

Several years have passed since its adoption and demographics have changed over the past 26 years. This was one of the reasons that the Park Board and Parks & Recreation staff desired to initiate a new master plan. More recently, it was determined that different, more specific direction was needed to identify current and future needs and desires and to respond to them in a more timely manner. The Parks, Recreation and Open Space Element of 1983, helped to identify needs over two decades ago. It identified goals, and objectives into the 2000's, many of which are still valid, some which were not completed, but it did provide the foundation for implementation of projects and programs that partially met the city's park, recreation and open space needs and desires over that time period. The Wichita Falls Park Board and Parks & Recreation staff believe it is time to review its accomplishments and expand for the future of the citizens of Wichita Falls.

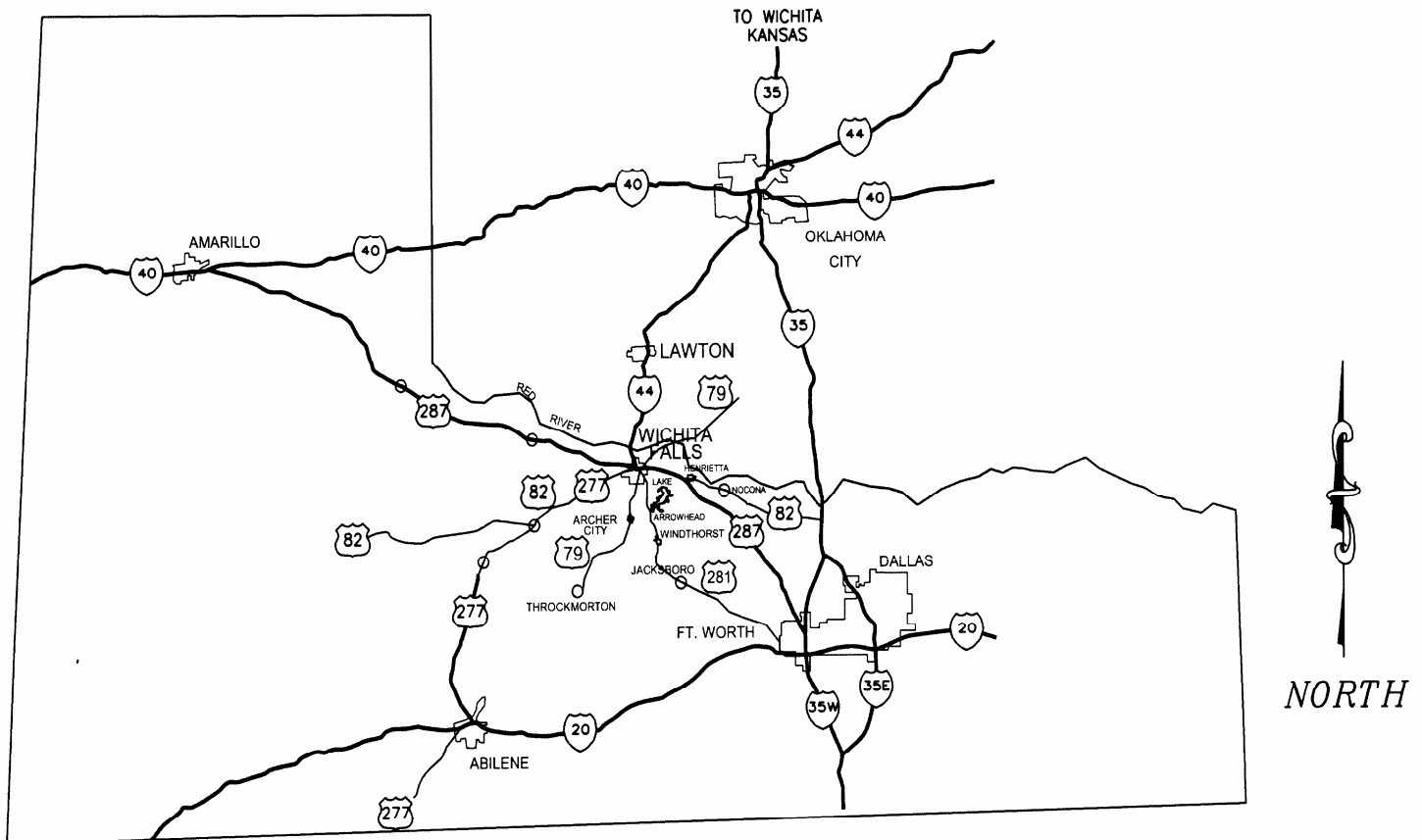
The mission statement of the Wichita Falls Parks & Recreation Department is to provide the citizens of the city with high quality park and recreation facilities and activities that are geographically and demographically accessible and serve a diversity of interests. The intent of this master plan is to provide the framework to continue the fulfillment of the mission statement.

The Wichita Falls Community: Wichita Falls is a growing progressive city in North Texas with a metropolitan statistical area (MSA) population of 144,638. It is the largest city within a 100-mile radius. The trade area, including communities within a 60-mile radius of Wichita Falls, has a population of 376,799. Total retail sales in the area for 2008 exceeded \$1.4 billion. The City at 994 feet above sea level, is 71.7 square miles in size and is located 15 miles from the Red River/Oklahoma border and is equidistant (approximately 130 miles from each) between the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex and Oklahoma City. Wichita Falls' transportation system includes Interstate 44, U.S. Highways 82, 271, 277, 281, 287, State Highway 79, rail service, and two municipal airports, one served by a commercial airline. **(see map on page 2).**

Wichita Falls has a diversified economy with a solid range of industries, an award winning education system, and positive business climate supported by aggressive, pro-

active community leaders. The economic base in the region is composed of Sheppard Air Force Base and other government organizations, retail/wholesale trade, manufacturing, medical services, the travel industry, agriculture, oil and gas, and education. Wichita Falls has a strong international presence, unique for a City of its size and location. Host to the NATO jet pilots training program with 13 participating countries, Sheppard Air Force Base adds considerable international influence, as does Midwestern State University with its strong foreign student representation and close ties to Mexico's prestigious Instituto Tecnológico Y De Estudios Superiores De Monterrey Campus in Chihuahua. There is also international investment among the City's 185 manufacturers.

Historical Background of the Wichita Falls Area



Wichita Falls has a proud history dating back to the early 1700s when the Wichita Indians migrated to the Red River area. The name Wichita is derived from the Choctaw word, “wia chitah”, which means “big arbor,” a description of the grass-thatched arbors in the Wichita’s village. During the late 1700s, Comanche and Apache also lived in the area. All three tribes remained in the area until the 1830s.

The City gained its name from a Wichita Indian encampment near a small waterfall along the Wichita River. The waterfall washed away in a flood more than 100

years ago, but a man made falls stands today, built during the City’s centennial in 1986.

Anglo-American settlers were drawn to the area during the 1860s with the lure of vast grass-rich prairies and ample water supply. In need of money, the Texas Republic

sold land certificates for 50 cents per acre. The original 640 acres, which were to become the City, were rumored to have been won by John A. Scott in a poker game. Judge Joseph Barwise, the City's founding father, is credited with naming the City and persuading officials to bring the Fort Worth and Denver Railroad through Wichita Falls. Judge Barwise became the first county judge in 1882.

Oats, wheat and cotton crops were plentiful and drove the City's economy during the early 1900s. World War I brought with it a drought, an Army aviation training facility and "black gold." The Fowler No. 1 well in Burkburnett became the area's first deep well strike and, in 1919, the 4,000 foot wide and three-mile long pool produced 3.3 million barrels of oil. With 40 percent of the State's petroleum coming from Wichita County, the population had grown to 40,079 by 1940. In 1945, Sheppard Field Training Center had 46,650 men and was the largest concentration of air troops in the world. Nicknamed "The Factory City," Wichita Falls had more than 100 manufacturing companies in the 1950s.

With 101,724 people in 1960, the City was at an all-time high. The economy continued on a strong track until the 1985 downturn in domestic oil production. Throughout much of its colorful history, the oil and gas industry reigned as king in North Texas.

Today, Wichita Falls has a more diversified economy with some 185 manufacturing operations, an average unemployment rate of 4.7 percent from 1998, and the population has surpassed the 1960 record to 104,197 (2000 Census).

B. Population Demographics and Growth

Demographic and Growth Issues

This Recreation Master Plan falls as the 2000 U.S. Census data are being received and relies on both actual acquired Census data and local estimates. Because not all data have been received, portions of this plan have been estimated by the City of Wichita Falls Department of Community Development. The Department of Community Development calculates population estimates on a yearly basis for years when Census data are not readily available. No calculation of demographics is conducted.

Table 1 outlines the process used in establishing population estimates for the City of Wichita Falls for 2005. The City implements a standard computation method that incorporates key socioeconomic elements which includes housing starts, public and private school enrollment, utilities (residential water connections), natural change (births – deaths = net migration), and civilian labor force figures. These five elements are averaged to provide a population estimate based on the compilation of local data and information.

Table 1- Population Estimates for the City of Wichita Falls

Growth Indicators/Estimate Inputs	Census	
	2000	2005
<i>Housing</i>		
Dwelling Units	41,916	43,318
Vacancy %	9.4%	4.89%
Population estimate		112,883
<i>School Enrollment</i>		
Grades K-8	13,790	13,390
Population estimate		101,175
<i>Utilities</i>		
Residential Water Connections	29,535	30,413
Population estimate		107,294
<i>Natural Change</i>		
Births (2000 - 2004)(Includes SAFB)		15,664
Deaths (2000 - 2004)		(8,294)
Net Migration (1990-1998)		N/A
Population estimate		107,543
<i>Employment</i>		
Civilian Labor Force (Archer & Wichita)	71,740	75,230
Population estimate		109,264
<i>AVERAGE OF INDICATORS</i>		<i>107,632</i>
<i>POPULATION ESTIMATE</i>		<i>104,197</i> <i>107,635</i>

Source: City of Wichita Falls, Department of Community Development and 2000 U.S. Census

Additional comparative data is available in the following table. **Table 2** provides a comparison of the demographic characteristics of the Wichita Falls MSA.

Wichita Falls MSA Demographic Characteristics			
	Estimate		
Population	1990	2000	2008
Population by Age Group			
19 & under	42,567	45,245	42,097
20 - 34	34,346	32,360	30,666
35 - 54	32,204	41,650	38,250
55 - 74	23,037	23,365	24,535
75 & Older	8,237	8,904	9,788
Total	140,394	151,524	145,336
% Distribution by Age Group			
19 & under	29.6%	28.7%	28.9%
20 - 34	22.0%	18.0%	21.1%
35 - 54	24.0%	29.0%	26.4%
55 - 74	18.1%	18.0%	16.9%
75 & Older	6.8%	6.3%	6.7%
Median Age	32.2	34.1	34.9
Households	1990	2000	2008
Number	52,034	56,109	57,791
Median Household Income	23,998	34,330	42,839
Household Income Distribution:			
\$34,999 & Under	35,868	29,606	23,293
\$35,000 - \$49,999	8,444	10,436	10,402
\$50,000 - \$74,999	5,309	10,058	11,637
\$75,000 & over	2,371	7,009	12,459
Percentage Educational Attainment (Population 25 yrs +)	1990	2000	2008
12 Years or less	28.1%	19.2%	15.9%
High School Graduate	34.2%	34.9%	35.4%
Some College, No degree	20.0%	23.4%	22.1%
Associates Degree	4.0%	5.2%	5.5%
Bachelors Degree	9.6%	12.7%	13.6%
Graduate Degree	4.1%	4.2%	7.6%

Source: Wichita Falls Board of Commerce & Industry Feb. 2009

Growth Trends

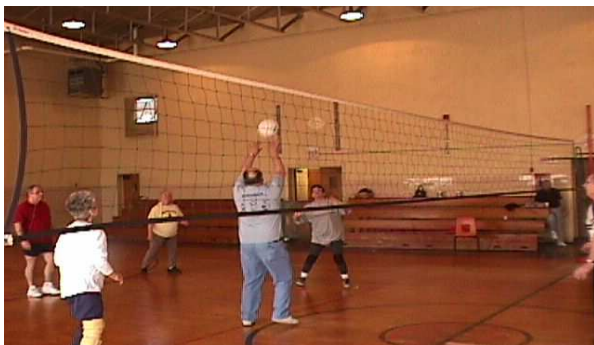
The exponential method has been employed to project the City’s population through 2025. The annual rate of growth between 1990 and 1998 was calculated and used for the projection estimates. Recent population growth trends reflect an approximately one percent annual growth rate. The population projections are shown in **Figure 1**.

The Wichita Falls Recreational Needs Study Area includes the City of Wichita Falls, portions of Wichita and Archer Counties along with the corresponding MSA. There is a different method employed to project Wichita County and Wichita Falls MSA populations. The Texas State Data Center at Texas A & M University develops four population projection scenarios to determine future population growth in the two areas. The Zero Migration Scenario assumes that net migration is zero and that only natural growth, the difference between births and deaths, needs to be considered. The one-half scenario assumes a migration rate equal to half of the rate of the 1980s. The 1980-1990 scenario assumes the rate for local areas will mirror expected growth for the State of Texas. Finally, the 1990-1996-migration scenario utilizes net migration from 1990-1996.

The average of the State Data Center’s four projection scenarios mentioned above was calculated for both Wichita County and the Wichita Falls MSA and is utilized as the projected estimate. The population projections through 2025 for the city, county, and MSA are shown in **Table 3**.

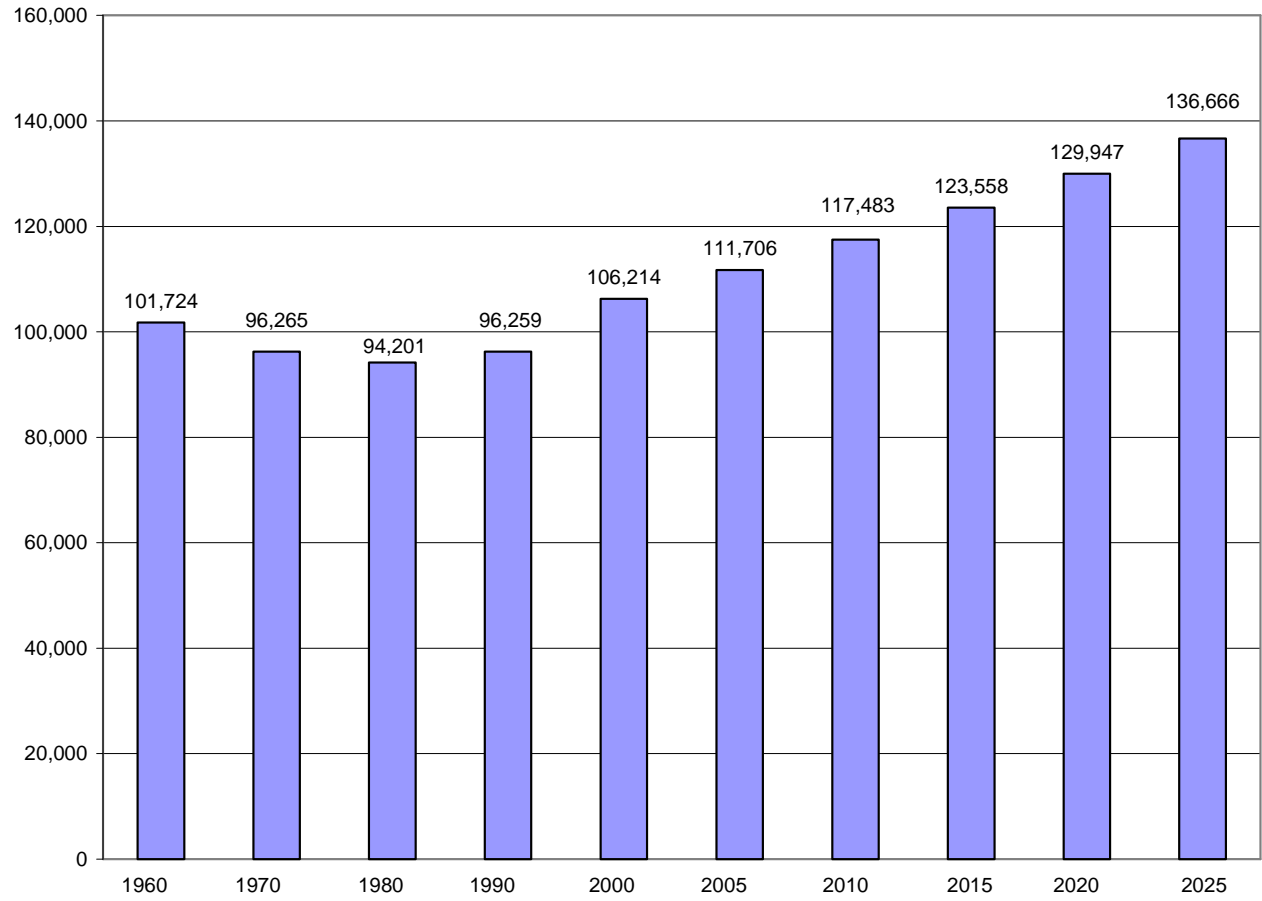
Table 3 - Population Projections for Wichita Falls, City and MSA and Wichita County

Area	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025
MSA	130,351	134,777	140,611	143,645	146,538	149,432	152,108	154,313
County	122,378	126,553	132,171	134,994	137,708	140,516	143,199	145,455
City	96,259	100,969	106,214	111,706	117,483	123,558	129,947	136,666



As illustrated in table 2, Wichita Falls’ citizens are slightly older than the state average, therefore recreation programs and facilities in the city are becoming more and more vital to this age group.

FIGURE 1. Wichita Falls Population, 1960-2025



Employment Information

The services industry is the largest employment sector in the Wichita Falls area, employing approximately 16,100 people, or 27% of all non-farm employees. The government follows the services sector, employing 12,600 people, or 21%. **Figure 2** illustrates employment by industry and **Table 4** outlines the top 20 employers within the Wichita Falls MSA.

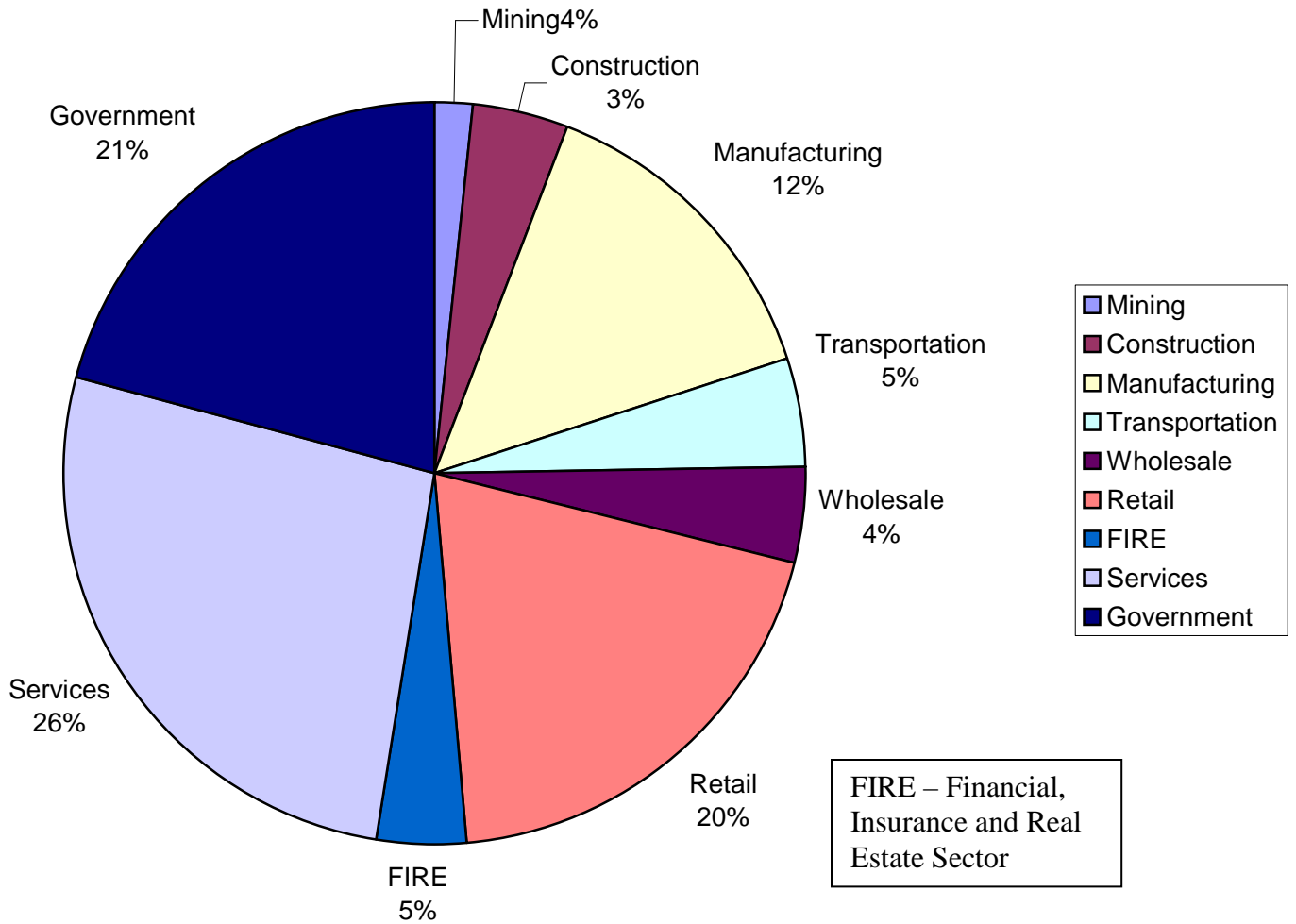
The labor force in the Wichita Falls MSA has expanded incrementally since 1996 and **Figure 3** illustrates this increase.

Table 4 **Wichita Falls Area – 20 Largest Employers**

EMPLOYER	ACTIVITY/ Product	TOTAL NO. Employees
1. Sheppard Air Force Base	Military	12,201
2. Wichita Falls ISD	Public School System	2,000
3. North Texas State Hospital	MHMR Hospital	1,987
4. United Regional Healthcare System	Med./Surg. Hospital	1,794
5. City of Wichita Falls	City Government	1,576
6. Midwestern State University	Degree University	1,222
7. Wal-Mart	Retail (Dept. Store)	1,188
8. Howmet Corp. WF Casting Division	Gas Turbines/Engine Comp.	1,020
9. James B. Allred Unit	State Max. Security Prison	908
10. ATT & ATT Wireless	Communications/Customer Serv.	761
11. Cryovac Division-Sealed Air	Corp. Flexible Packaging	735
12. Work Service Corp.	Paper Clips, Wood Products	719.
	Sub-contracted labor	
13. Wichita County	County Government	485
14. Lear Seigler Service Inc.	Aircraft maintenance	485
15. Blue Cross/Blue Shield	Customer Service/ Claims Processing	380
16. Clinics of North Texas	Texas Med/Surg/MH Clinics	352
17. United Market Street	Supermarket/Grocery	350
18. PPG Industries	Flat Glass Products	345
19. Tranter Inc. Texas Div.	Heat Exchange /Transfer units	318
20. Kell West Regional Hospital	Med/Surg Hospital	285

Source: Wichita Falls Board of Commerce & Industry 2008

Employment by Industry: Wichita Falls MSA



Source: Texas Workforce Commission 2008

FIGURE 2

Total employment in the Wichita Falls MSA will increase through 2015. Between 2015 and 2025 total employment will decline from 85,100 jobs to 84,100 jobs. The sectors that will experience the most growth are Retail and Services. The sectors that will decline most are Mining and Manufacturing.

The Wichita Falls MSA employment growth through 2025 is outlined below in **Table 5**.

Table 5 - Employment Growth 1990-2025, Wichita Falls MSA

Category	1990	2000	2005	2010	2015	2025
Total Employment	78.4	82.6	83.9	84.8	85.1	84.1
Farm	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.3	1.2
Non-Farm	77.1	81.1	82.5	83.4	83.7	82.9
Agriculture	0.6	0.8	1	1.1	1.2	1.3
Mining	5.1	3.7	3.3	3	2.8	2.5
Construction	3.1	3.5	3.6	3.7	3.8	3.8
Manufacturing	8.7	8.1	8.1	8.1	8	7.8
Transportation	3.2	3.6	3.7	3.9	3.9	4
Wholesale	2.4	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.6
Retail	11.8	13.7	13.9	14.1	14.1	14
F.I.R.E.	4.4	4.2	4.3	4.3	4.3	4.2
Services	20.1	22.4	23.7	24.6	25.2	25.6
Government	17.5	18.4	18.2	17.9	17.7	17.2

Source: Woods & Poole, Economics Inc., compliments of MSU – Center for Business & Government

C. Growth Patterns

Land Use: The city’s Land Use Plan was adopted by the City Council in November 1998. The Wichita Falls plan is intended to provide guidance for decision-making, therefore, it should be made to adjust to changing situations within the municipality. Such changes may be a result of market adjustment, geographic constraints or opportunities, age and condition of infrastructure, or changing internal and external policies. This plan shall be consulted when proposing park, recreation, open space & greenway development.

The Land Use Plan is used to address land use compatibility; guide the delivery of municipal services; and provide a base for determining future capital improvements.

1. Land Use Compatibility – Land use compatibility decisions should relate to the impacts of land use upon adjacent or neighboring land uses or the natural environment. Many times this compatibility is found in an empirical examination of the effects generated by a particular land use or a historical examination of similar or like

uses, which should also consider technical advances to address compatibility. Elements considered in such an evaluation include:

- The appropriateness of a land use compared against adjacent or neighboring land uses.
- The environmental effects generated by a land use or a combination of neighboring land uses such as noise, lighting, odors, dust or other airborne particulate, or increased water runoff.
- Secondary effects such as size of a building, required transportation modes, traffic generation, transportation system capacity, travel distances, etc.
- Threats, real or perceived, to neighboring or adjacent land uses of less intensity, which may affect future market trends in the area.
- Social issues related to crime or neighborhood deterioration issues.

2. Delivery of Municipal Services – The delivery of municipal services is typically evaluated by considering existing service levels as they relate to existing and future needs. What may or may not be needed at some point in time, which could include parks, recreation, greenways, facilities, amenities, and open space.

3. Capital Improvements – A land use plan should guide the placement of capital improvements. For the purpose of a land use plan, capital expenditures generally relate to future infrastructure needs, but may also be determined by the ability of the existing infrastructure to meet projected needs. Of importance in determining capital improvements are; utilities, transportation, and spatial dispersion and allocated function of public safety facilitators such as police and fire, to insure time and distance are adequate.

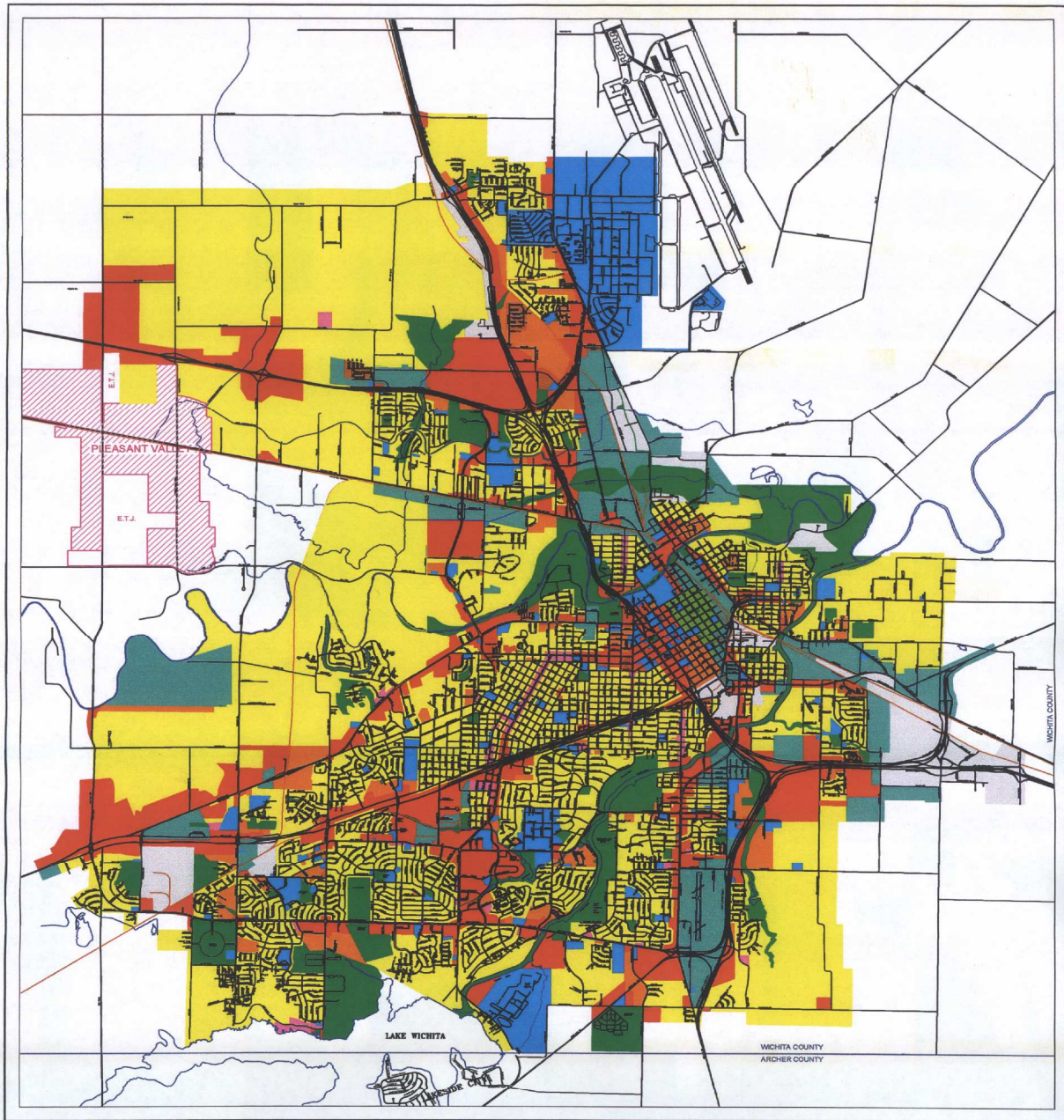
Land Use Classifications

Land use classifications were created using recognized standards modified to reflect the needs of the city. As illustrated in **Map A**, these classifications reflect land use categories such as residential, mobile home parks, commercial, industrial, institutional, downtown, and parks and open space. Parks and open space may include government or privately owned parks, large undeveloped or unimproved land use for agricultural, undeveloped flood plain or floodway, cemeteries, recreational facilities, trails, lakes, or similar uses.

Plan Amendments

The Land Use Plan shall be amendable through a process that evaluates a proposal against its effects upon adjacent or neighboring land uses. The City's Planning and Zoning Commission shall be responsible for such determination, and the Plan amended through action by the City Council so as to ensure continued participation in land use decisions by the general public.

Land Use Plan



CITY OF WICHITA FALLS
LAND USE PLAN
 AN ELEMENT OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

SPONSORING AGENCIES:
 CITY OF WICHITA FALLS
 TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
 FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION
 FEDERAL TRAVEL ADMINISTRATION

LAND USE CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM:

- LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL
- HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL
- MOBILE HOME PARKS
- LIGHT COMMERCIAL
- COMMERCIAL
- LIGHT INDUSTRIAL
- INDUSTRIAL
- INSTITUTIONAL
- PARKS AND OPEN SPACE
- DOWNTOWN

Other:
 Areas not subject to the City's Land Use Classification System
 Areas not subject to the State's Land Use Classification System
 The comprehensive plan does not constitute zoning regulations or establish zoning district boundaries.

Wichita Falls
TEXAS

LAND USE PLAN
MAP A

D. Wichita Falls Parks & Recreation Department

Parkland Resolutions / Ordinances: Efforts of the City of Wichita Falls to establish some sort of parkland dedication document date to 1951. Resolution # 114, passed and approved by the Board of Aldermen, stated that for every 30 family units, one acre of land should be reserved for park use. This parkland was to serve units within ¼ mile of the park. For multiple dwelling units, park sites should be reserved on the basis of one acre for each 100 population. In 1960, a new resolution, Resolution # 395, was passed and approved by the Board of Aldermen, which essentially amended Resolution # 114. The new resolution stated that before any plat and subdivision shall be approved, that for each 30 units to be built in the area to be platted, 1 acre of land shall be set aside for park use. The resolution went on to say that if a subdivision contained less than 30 units, a cash contribution may be made in lieu of land. It further gave the subdivider or owner credit for land donated for school sites. Resolution # 395 was effectively repealed by City Council in 1964 by adoption of Resolution # 557. This new resolution established a policy whereby developers would reserve land for a park and the City would be given an option to purchase the land. Approximately five months later, the City Council passed a Comprehensive Subdivision Ordinance, which incorporated the language of Resolution # 557. The new ordinance, Ordinance # 2118, integrated the procedure in rules for platting lands in the City of Wichita Falls. Section 11 of the Ordinance, identified in **Appendix I**, provides that the City is granted an option to purchase specified parkland out of land set aside in particular plats. This ordinance went into effect on September 28, 1964 and still remains valid.

Park Acreage: The City of Wichita Falls currently has 1207.02 acres of developed parkland in the City of Wichita Falls, 650.5 acres of undeveloped parkland and 970.37 acres of undeveloped open space at Lake Arrowhead, located approximately 20 miles from the city limits of Wichita Falls. The Parks & Recreation Department is responsible for a 58.10 acre sports complex, 4 cemeteries totaling 78.35 acres, 52.4 acres of turf boulevard medians, 7.73 acres of turf traffic triangles, 97.93 acres of turf highway corridors, 11.04 miles of concrete and asphalt trails, 81 acres of greenway turf, and 27.47 acres of facility grounds, which includes limited support and assistance for the 10.83 acre River Bend Nature Works facility, adjacent to Lucy Park, operated by a private, non-profit board. An inventory of the park system and facilities is found in **Section V**, with a more detailed list found in **Appendix 2**. Using the 2000 census population of 104,197 residents, an average of 11.59 acres of all developed parkland is available for every 1,000 residents. An average of 2.66 acres of 'core' parkland (community and neighborhood parks) is available per 1,000 residents.

Annual Budget: The Parks & Recreation Department's budget of \$5,018,203 (FY 2008-09) is approximately 4.0 % of the city's total annual budget of \$145,303,188 . **Table 6** provides a summary of the department's fiscal year 2008 - 2009 budget. In 2008 the department had 60 budgeted full time positions out of a total city government staff of 1,576. **Figure 4** illustrates the department's organizational structure.

Table 6 -Budget

Parks & Recreation Department FY 2007-08 / 2008-09 Budget Summary Comparison					
Expenditure by Division			*Expenditure by Classification		
Division	Budget FY 2007-08	Budget FY 2008-09	Classification	Budget FY 2007-08	Budget FY 2008-09
Recreation	1,120,725	1,209,656	Personnel	2,955,858	3,074,291
Park Maint.	3,150,865	3,118,351	Supplies	110,704	119,883
Cemetery	226,734	240,857	Maintenance	275,845	232,736
Bus. Park	216,061	221,349	Services	1,153,856	1,144,964
Lot Mowing Program	158,337	170,169	Insurance	20,015	20,015
			Other	20,000	24,449
			Non Capital	282,944	317,865
			Capital	92,500	84,000
Total	4,872,722	4,960,382		4,911,722	5,018,203

Programs: The Parks & Recreation Department provides a wide variety of programs which serve not only the citizens of Wichita Falls, but because the city is the urban center in North Central Texas, many of its programs serve residents in Wichita, Archer and Clay Counties. Aquatics programs include open swim, swim lessons, water aerobics and other water exercise programs for all ages. Organized athletic leagues for adults are offered in basketball, flag football, fall, spring, softball, and volleyball. A track & field program is offered for youths. Over 50 instructional recreation classes are offered monthly in dance, fitness and enrichment. Eight different day camps are offered to the public during the summer. Instructional recreation classes, athletic leagues and most day camps operate from an enterprise fund.

The city operates 2 tennis centers, each contracted by teaching tennis professionals who offer lessons, leagues, tournaments, clinics, camps and exhibitions. The 50 Plus Zone, senior citizen center, is available for the city's, more than 25,000 citizens over the age of fifty.

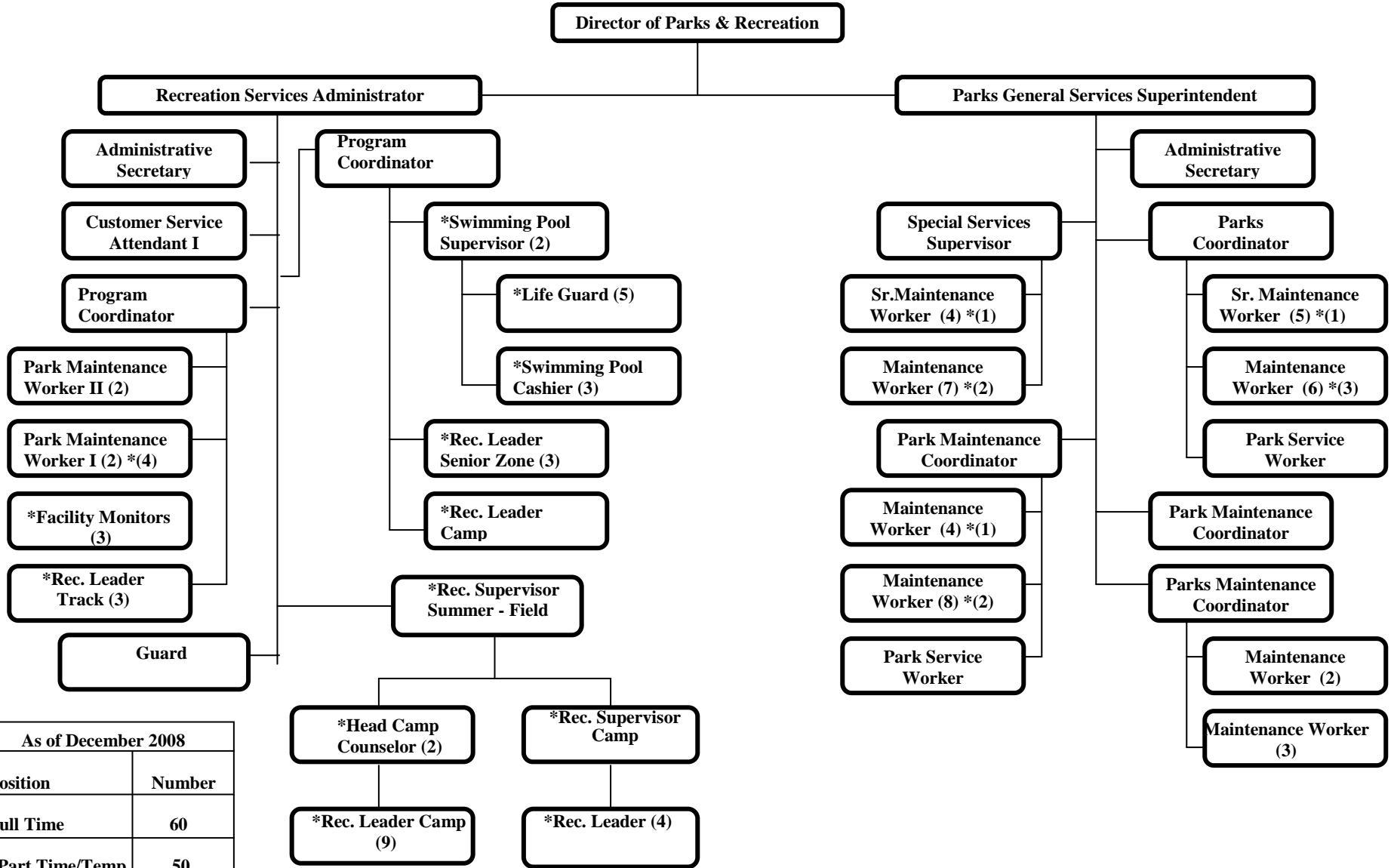
The Department also has an extensive special events program. Of the 61 annual special events, 26 are outdoor concerts, 12 are public dances with live bands.

Cooperative recreation programs have historically proven futile with the exception of a recent collaboration with the Wichita Falls Independent School District in which the city and district have built two gymnasiums the Recreation Department controls evenings, weekends, school holidays and summer break. The department will use these gyms for athletic leagues, fitness classes summer camps and special events.



FIGURE 3

**CITY OF WICHITA FALLS
PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT
ORGANIZATIONAL CHART
DECEMBER, 2008**



As of December 2008	
Position	Number
Full Time	60
*Part Time/Temp.	50
Total Employees	110