

IV. Area & Facility Concepts & Standards

A. References

Standards: To determine the appropriate amount and type of parkland for Wichita Falls, this Master Plan utilizes standards developed by the National Recreation & Park Association (NRPA), an independent, nonprofit organization, which is the field's professional organization. Two of NRPA's publications, the 1983 *Recreation, Park and Open Space Standards and Guidelines*, and the 1996 *Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines*, were consulted in the preparation of area and facility concepts and standards for Wichita Falls. As described below, NRPA's 1983 publication included specific acreage recommendations for various types of parks, although its 1996 guidelines encouraged more flexibility in both size and design in line with unique local factors and desires.

B. Local Adaptation

Influences: The city government is the primary provider of parks and public open space in Wichita Falls. Park and open space needs are most heavily influenced by the expectations of most Wichita Falls residents for high quality park services, although the location of Sheppard Air Force Base (SAFB) within the city, the availability to the general public of play fields and open space owned by the Wichita Falls Independent School District (WFISD) and Midwestern State University (MSU), are also important factors. Residential and traffic patterns, road access, convenience, and the availability of land also impact the city's provision of parkland.

Many of the recreation needs of Sheppard Air Force Base personnel are met on the installation via ball fields, sports courts, golf course, recreation centers, tennis courts, track, bowling alleys, movie theaters, craft & hobby shops, swimming pools, and passive open space. These facilities are available to SAFB personnel & military retirees only. MSU also has a recreation center, athletic courts, sports fields, and tennis courts, for their students and faculty. However it cannot be assumed that all of the military and university needs are being met within their facilities, due to the distribution of personnel, students, and faculty throughout the area, and the high demand for organized athletic leagues, instructional programs, day camps, and special events within the city.

Wichita Falls, as the largest city in North Central Texas, serves as a hub for a variety of services including parks & recreation programs and facilities (**see map on page 2**). Evidence from registrations indicate that people as far as 50 miles from the city participate in Wichita Falls Parks & Recreation programs on a regular basis, and are not being met in their local communities.

C. Area and Facility Concepts

Categories: NRPA's classification table for park, open spaces and pathways has been adapted to reflect the existing inventory of park property in Wichita Falls and anticipated future needs. The categories of parks, open space and pathways which are applicable to Wichita Falls are:

Mini-park: A mini-park is used to address limited, isolated, or unique recreational needs. Many school and church playgrounds often serve as 'unofficial' mini-parks. NRPA recommends that mini-parks be between 2,500 square feet and one

acre in size although technically any park smaller than five acres could be considered a mini-park. The City of Wichita Falls currently has fifteen developed mini-parks totaling 32.26 acres.

Neighborhood Park: This category serves as the recreational and social focus of a neighborhood, generally within walking distance of the neighborhood, and permitting both active and passive uses. NRPA recommends that neighborhood parks should be a minimum of five acres, with five to ten acres being optimal and service an area of ½ mile, uninterrupted by non-residential roads and other physical barriers. Wichita Falls currently has thirteen neighborhood parks totaling 111.67 acres. Because of the desire for larger playing fields and open space within neighborhoods, the size of neighborhood parks in Wichita Falls is generally five to fifteen acres.

Community Park: Community parks focus on meeting community-based recreation needs, as well as, preserving unique landscapes and open spaces. In serving multiple neighborhoods, they provide many of the same types of facilities as neighborhood parks with the possible addition of swimming pools and gymnasiums. While NRPA acknowledges that the size of community parks should be determined by desired usage, in general they should be between 30 and 50 acres and service an area of 2 miles. Wichita Falls currently has six community parks from 15 to 40 acres totaling 144.2 acres.

Large Urban Park: Large urban parks serve a broader purpose than community parks and are used when community and neighborhood parks are not adequate to serve the needs of the community. The focus is on meeting community-based recreational needs, as well as, preserving unique landscapes and open spaces. NRPA acknowledges the size of large urban parks to be determined by desired usage. They recommend a minimum of 50 acres, with 75 acres being optimal and service the entire community. Wichita Falls currently has two large urban parks (Hamilton & Kiwanis) which total 124.15 acres.

Regional Park: Regional parks serve entire cities or regions. Activities available in regional parks may include picnicking, boating, fishing, swimming, trail use, tennis, golfing, etc. Regional parks tend to be large, over 200 acres, and service the entire community, as well as, surrounding areas. Wichita Falls currently has 4 regional park sites (Jaycee, Lucy, Weeks and Wichita Bluffs) which total 751.83 acres.

Sports Complex: Sports complexes typically consolidate heavily programmed athletic fields and associated facilities to larger and fewer sites strategically located throughout the community. The location of these facilities is important due to traffic, lighting, and noise that are often associated with the activity. NRPA acknowledges the size be determined by demand, however, they recommend 25 acres minimum, with 40 to 80 acres optimal. The City of Wichita Falls has one, 45.8 acre sports complex used to accommodate a 4-field softball complex. The Wichita Falls Independent School District has multiple softball & soccer fields located adjacent to their football stadium. Although the acreage of Wichita Falls Sports Complex is sufficient to accommodate additional softball fields, most of the property is now in the floodway and can no longer be used for

this purpose. The Park Board has established as one of the goals in the Five Year Plan, the construction of a second 4-field softball complex. The proposal is to acquire property adjacent to the existing facility, which is not in the floodway.

Recreation Center: Recreation and community centers typically provide facilities for a range of recreation needs, such as gymnasiums, meeting rooms, group instruction and activity rooms, and swimming pools. Wichita Falls currently uses a portion (40,000 square feet) of the second floor of the Wichita Falls Public Library as a recreation center. This facility accommodates a senior citizen center, fitness and enrichment instruction classrooms and a dance studio.

Greenways: Greenways tie park system components together to form a continuous park environment. Because of this, their sizes vary considerably depending on the terrain, available resources and distance between park segments.

Facilities: Park, recreation and open space facilities include play units, volleyball courts, basketball courts, tennis centers, tennis courts, swimming pools, recreation centers, gymnasiums, sports fields, disc golf courses, pavilions, ponds, jogging/walking trails, boat ramps, rest rooms, concessions, fishing piers, horseshoe courts, etc. A complete inventory of these facilities in Wichita Falls is found in **Section V**.

Park Trail: Park trails are multipurpose trails located within greenways, parks, and natural resource areas. NRPA categorizes park trails as 3 types. Type I trails are single-purpose hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians or bicyclists / in-line skaters. Type II trails are multipurpose hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians, and bicyclists / in-line skaters. Type III trails are nature trails for pedestrians and may be either hard or soft-surfaced. Wichita Falls has 9.47 miles of existing type I trails, located along Holliday Creek and the Big Wichita River, as well as, Bridwell, Lucy, Lynwood East, O'Reilly, Weeks and Williams Parks. In addition to existing type I trails, there are 3.31 miles of 'funded but not yet constructed' type I trails for the East Scott Street greenway and Lake Wichita Park and 3.40 miles of 'proposed' type I trails for Hamilton Park, Jacksboro greenway and Spillway greenway. There are 1.57 miles of existing type II trails located in Lucy Park and 1.53 miles of 'funded but not yet constructed' type II trails in Lake Wichita Park. There is 1 mile of type III trail located in Lucy Park.

Connector Trail: This kind of trail emphasizes safe pedestrian travel to and from parks and around the community. The focus is as much on transportation as it is on recreation. NRPA identifies 2 types of connector trails. Type I trails are separate /single-purpose hard surface trails for pedestrians or bicyclists/in-line skaters located in independent rights-of-way (e.g.old railroad r.o.w.) and type II connector trails are separate / single-purpose hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians or bicyclists/in-line skaters, located typically in the road right of way. Wichita Falls has no connector trails of these types.

Open Space: Wichita Falls owns 1,620.87 acres of open space which is divided into 7 parks (650.50 acres) and 38 parcels (970.37 acres) of open space located adjacent to Lake Arrowhead, the city's major water reservoir, approximately 20 miles from Wichita Falls in Archer and Clay Counties. This property is identified further in **Section**

V. The City of Wichita Falls Parks & Recreation Department accomplishes right-of-way mowing 2 times per month and trash removal 1 time per month. In general, Lake Arrowhead open space is too far from the City of Wichita Falls to serve in any other capacity. **Table 8** provides a listing of Wichita Falls’ parks within each National Recreation & Park Association classification category.

Table 8
Wichita Falls Public Parks – Classified by Size Category

Mini Parks	0 – 5 Acres	Neighborhood Parks	5 – 15 Acres
Belair	3.00	Bridwell	7.58
Ben Donnell	1.68	City View	6.25
Bud Daniel	0.41	Edgemere	6.45
Conoco	2.34	Expressway Village	9.09
Front & Indiana	0.20	Hursh	5.54
Grant Street	1.00	Jalonick	10.28
Harold Jones	5.00	Lynwood East	11.19
Indian heights	2.20	Martin Plaza	10.00
Jarratt	1.15	Rotary	10.00
Lincoln	5.00	Westover Hills	7.00
Lions	3.00	Wood Memorial	6.00
Morningside	1.15	Total	89.38
O’Reilly	3.58		
Park Central	0.90		
Roselawn	2.00		
Total	32.62		
Community Parks	15 – 45 Acres	Large Urban Parks	45 – 75 Acres
Lamar	18.42	Hamilton	64.15
Loch Lomond	19.73	Kiwanis	60.00
Scotland	28.65	Total	124.15
Spudder	20.00		
Sunset Terrace	18.50	Regional Parks	75 – 300 Acres
Williams	38.90	Lake Wichita	234.37
Total	144.20	Lucy	178.25
		Weeks	258.40
		Wichita Bluffs Open Space	80.81
		Total	751.83

D. Area and Facility Guidelines

1. Area Standards

National Guideline Influence: NRPA's 1996 guidelines shifted away from setting parkland dedication standards, preferring instead to recommend flexibility in order to accommodate the unique circumstances and situations that can arise in every community. As a result of policy reviews and dialogue carried out with Park Board in connection with the development of this Master Plan, a number of changes have been made in the park, recreation, and open space standards, illustrated in **Table 9** and described below.

Mini-parks: These small parks in Wichita Falls, which are also referred to as pocket parks, are used primarily to provide some green space in certain areas and play lots in others. NRPA recommended standard for this type of park is .25 - .5 acres per 1,000 residents. Wichita Falls currently offers about .31 acres of mini-parks per 1,000 residents. It is the desire of the Park Board to establish .25 acres per 1,000 residents as the standard for Wichita Falls and not to accept or construct parks of this size in the future, unless circumstances warrant, due to high maintenance and low impact. With the local standard set at .25 acres per 1,000 residents, there is an excess of 6.21 acres of mini-parks in the city. It is the desire of the Park Board to retain the excess acreage rather than discard any, therefore eliminating the need for additional acquisition of mini parkland in future years.

Neighborhood Parks: These parks are an important priority for the city due to existing and changing residential development patterns. The city currently provides 1.07 acres per 1,000 residents, which falls within NRPA recommended standards of 1 – 2 acres per 1,000. Residents have indicated that they are satisfied with the current acreage, therefore, the Park Board has established 1 acre per 1,000 residents as the standard for Wichita Falls. With local standard set at this size, there is an excess of about 7.5 acres of neighborhood parkland in the city. It is also the Park Board's desire to retain the excess acreage due to the fact that, by the year 2005, the need will be at the existing level, as illustrated in **Table 10**.

Community Parks: As a result of the Master Plan process, the Park Board has established a local standard for community park acreage. The NRPA recommended standard for parks of this size is 5 – 8 acres per 1,000 residents. Currently, Wichita Falls provides 1.38 acres per 1,000. The Park Board has established a local standard of 5 acres per 1,000 residents. This standard leaves the city approximately 377 acres deficient in community parkland. **Table 9** shows the comparison of city acreage to local standards, as well as, park acreage within city council districts, and **Table 10** illustrates the need for additional community parkland through the year 2010. It should also be noted that the acreage of most Wichita Falls' community parks falls at the low end of the NRPA standard for this classification of park.

Some existing community parks in Wichita Falls serve neighborhood, as well as, community recreation needs due to their location and facilities. Likewise, some community needs, such as basketball slabs and practice fields, are met in the larger neighborhood parks.

Large Urban Park: This size park in the city falls significantly below the NRPA recommended standard of 5 – 10 acres per 1,000 residents. The 2 existing large urban parks, Kiwanis & Hamilton, provide only about 1.2 acres per 1,000 residents. The Park Board has established a local standard of 5 acres per 1,000 residents, leaving the city deficient by approximately 397 acres for this type of parkland (**Table 9**).

Regional Park: The 3 regional parks in Wichita Falls, Jaycee, Lucy and Weeks, provide nearly 6.44 acres per 1,000 residents. This falls at the low end of NRPA recommended standards of 5 – 10+ acres per 1,000. The Park Board feels the need for more regional park acreage and has established the local standard for regional parks to be 7 acres per 1,000 residents, leaving the city deficient about 58 acres.

Table 9
Comparison of Total Park Acreage by Classification, to NRPA & Local Standards

District	Mini	Neighborhood	Community	Large Urban	Regional	Total
District 1	9.98	14.10	0	0	244.70	268.78
District 2	20.50	32.56	80.55	0	0	133.61
District 3	1.98	25.87	42.19	48.14	0	118.18
District 4	0	11.55	17.85	67.37	277.87	374.64
District 5	2.53	16.14	12.81	0	0	31.48
Total existing acreage	34.99	100.23	153.40	115.51	522.57	926.63
NRPA minimum standards	26.05	104.20	520.99	520.99	520.99	1,693.22
Local Standards	26.05	104.20	520.99	520.99	520.99	1,901.61
<i>Acreage needed to meet local standards</i>	<i>(8.94)</i> <i>0</i>	<i>4.20</i>	<i>367.59</i>	<i>405.48</i>	<i>(1.58)</i> <i>0</i>	<i>974.92</i>

According to National Recreation & Park Association (NRPA) standards, and standards established by the Park Board, Wichita Falls is significantly deficient of parkland, in particular, the community park and large urban park classification as indicated above.

As the City of Wichita Falls is projected to grow steadily in population over the next few years, as stated by the Community Development Department in **Section I**, it is desired that parkland maintain the same growth rate. This proposed growth in parkland through the year 2010 is shown in **Table 10**. As indicated in **Table 9**, the city is

currently deficient by approximately 818 acres in total parkland needed to meet recommended acreage standards for the 2000 population. In order to maintain recommended standards during the 10-year time frame that this plan covers, Wichita Falls must acquire a total of 1,060 additional acres of parkland, primarily in the classification of community and large urban parks. Current and projected acreage of parkland needs within city council districts, as determined by staff, is illustrated on **Map B**.

Table 10
Projected Parkland Needs to Meet Standards

Park Class	Desired Standard Per 1,000 Residents	Present Acreage	*Proposed 2000 Acreage pop. 104,197	Projected 2005 Acreage pop. 111,706	Projected 2010 Acreage pop. 117,483
Mini	.25	32.62	26.05	27.90	29.40
Neighborhood	1.00	89.38	104.20	111.70	117.50
Community	5.00	144.20	520.99	558.20	587.00
Large Urban	5.00	124.15	520.99	558.20	587.00
Regional	7.00	751.83	729.38	781.90	822.50
Total Acreage		1142.18	1,901.61	2,037.90	2,143.40

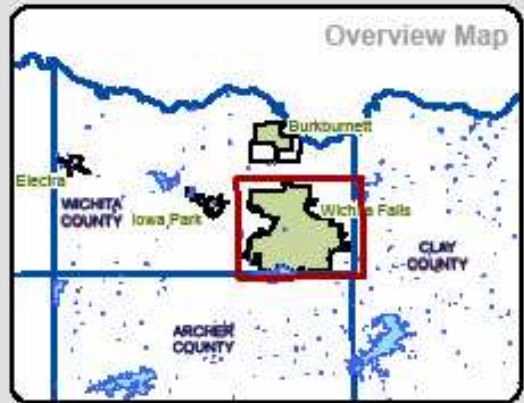
**2000 Census*

Sports Complex: Wichita Falls presently has 2, four-field softball complex which serves the city. Residents have indicated their desire for complexes rather than individual fields.

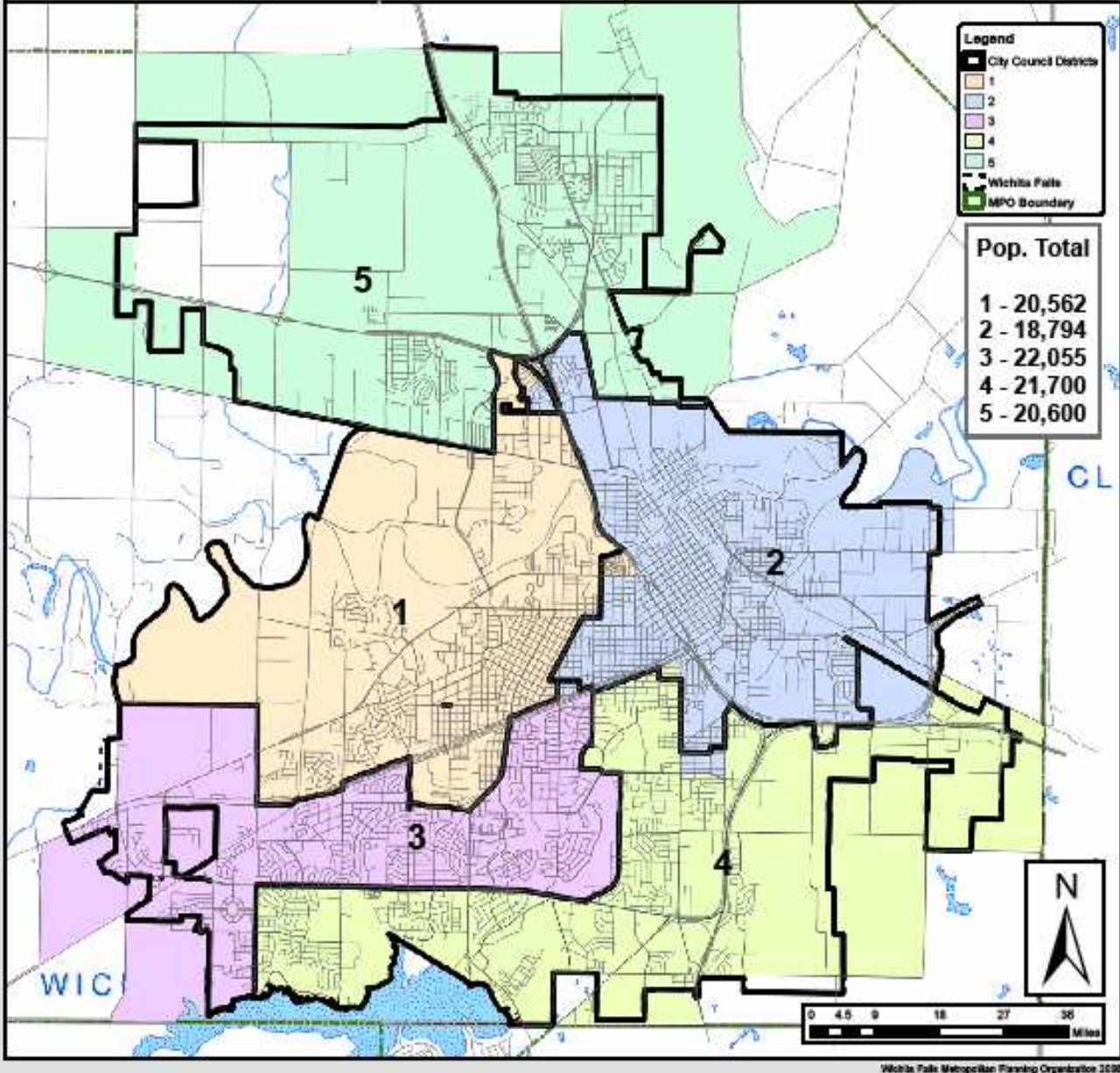
Recreation Center: As previously mentioned in this section, Wichita Falls currently uses a portion of the second floor of the Wichita Falls Public Library as a recreation center. The current center provides facilities for senior citizens, as well as, several activity instruction rooms, and dance studio. No provision in the past has been made for a public gymnasium; however, this master plan recommends construction of a 3-court gymnasium with supporting rooms, which would serve as the city's second recreation center. Because residents have indicated their desire for various facilities common to recreation centers, in addition to improved accessibility, this standard will be examined and updated frequently as demand exceeds capacity.

City Council Districts

Area Location:	City of Wichita Falls
Purpose of Study:	Population breakdown for each City Council District
Date:	May 2009
Source of Data:	2008 Socio-economic Update
Created By:	D. Arbeau



Title	Map Information
Population (TAZs)	Map shows the population total for each Council District based on Traffic Analysis Zone (2005) populations



Greenways / Trails: In Wichita Falls, the designation of Greenways / Trails, a high priority for the next 10 years, is driven by flood plain and accessible public easement considerations and the desire of the public and city to provide safe, off road fitness and recreation for the entire community. The desire is to complete a greenway / trails system throughout much of the city, linking several parks and connecting neighborhoods. This is further discussed in the ‘Trails and Greenway Plan’ in **Appendix 9.**



Wichita Falls parks are heavily used year-round by all ages, for active and passive leisure pursuits. NRPA standards indicate that the city is in need of additional park acreage in all council districts.

2. Facility Standards

In its 1996 Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines, NRPA recommended that the provision of park facilities is based upon citizen desires and specific regional needs. In Wichita Falls, facility needs are also determined by the City's desire to attract tourism, including local, state and regional sports tournaments and activities in order to spur economic development.

The provision of some park, recreation, and open space facilities in Wichita Falls is standard based. As a point of departure, these standards may be modified according to local needs and desires identified during the development of individual park site plans.



Top 2 photos are of the Wichita Falls Sports Complex, the 8-field city softball complex available for public use. The Recreation Center north entrance is pictured, bottom left. Programs are held on a portion of the second floor. A section of the Holliday Creek Trail, along Weeks Park, is heavily used. This is part of the greenway/trails system proposed to loop the city.

Table 11 provides local facility standards within each park classification as established by the Park Board. The following facilities are typically included in Wichita Falls' parks:

- Mini-Parks:** Park benches, park security lights, picnic areas and tables.
- Neighborhood Parks:** Barbecue grills, basketball slabs, park benches, drinking fountains, park security lights, picnic shelters, picnic tables, play units, baseball/softball practice backstops, soccer goals.
- Community Parks:** Barbecue grills, basketball slabs, park benches, drinking fountains, park security lights, picnic shelters, picnic tables, play units, baseball/softball practice backstops, restrooms.
- Large Urban Parks:** Park benches, barbecue grills, restrooms, drinking fountains, flower beds, park security lights, picnic shelters, picnic tables, play units, group pavilions, horseshoe courts, trails.
- Regional Parks:** Barbecue grills, basketball courts, horseshoe courts, park benches, concession stands, restrooms, disc golf courses, drinking fountains, fishing piers, flower beds, park & trail security lights, picnic tables, picnic shelters, group picnic pavilions, play units, volleyball courts, trails.



Local standards established by the Park Board call for all city parks, except mini-parks, to have play units with sand base, as pictured above.

Table 11
Local Parks & Recreation Facility Standards Within Park Classifications

Facility	Mini	Neighborhood	Community	Large Urban	Regional
Barbecue grill		X	X	X	X
Basketball court (with 2 goals)				X	X
Basketball goals					X
Basketball slab (with goal)		X	X	X	X
Concession stand					X
Disc golf course					X
Drinking fountain	X	X	X	X	X
Fishing pier					X
Flower bed				X	X
Group pavilion				X	X
Gazebo					X
Horseshoe courts				X	X
Indoor rental facility					X
Multi-purpose field				X	X
Park benches	X	X	X	X	X
Park security lights	X	X	X	X	X
Park sign	X	X	X	X	X
Picnic area	X	X	X	X	X
Picnic unit (tables)	X	X	X	X	X
Picnic shelter		X	X	X	X
Play unit (sand base)		X	X	X	X
Pond				X	X
Practice backstop		X	X	X	
Restrooms			X	X	X
Soccer goals		X	X	X	
Trail / walk	X	X	X	X	X
Volleyball poles				X	X
Volleyball court					X

The facilities listed under each park classification have been established as minimum standard facilities in Wichita Falls Parks.

Note: Some competitive athletic fields are distributed in neighborhood, community, large urban and regional parks, but are not common to any particular park type.

The provision of other recreation, park, and open space facilities in Wichita Falls is demand based, as discussed in **Section VI** of this Master Plan. Specifically, additional athletic facilities (gymnasiums, roller hockey courts, recreation centers, softball fields, etc.) will be provided as needed to meet the needs of the resident population and to facilitate economic development by attracting local, state, and regional sports tournaments and activities. Additional facilities will be provided when demand exceeds capacity.

The provision of trails in the greenway / trail system is addressed further in the ‘Trails and Greenway Plan’ of 2001. Currently, the trail system from Lucy Park to Lake Wichita Park along the Big Wichita River & Holliday Creek is of high priority and several sections are complete, some sections have been funded and some sections are proposed for funding as identified in **Section V**.



Trails, similar to the one above in Lucy Park, are proposed to be standard in all city parks.