

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

**REVISED**

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**APPROVED**

# Ch 1 Introduction

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## 1.0 Introduction

Austin has been referred to as a “city within a park.” A unique natural setting gives Austin a wealth of green hills, dramatic topography and numerous waterways. This setting, coupled with a mild climate and growing population, leads to a dynamic interaction of people and the environment. The parks and recreation system is very important to the citizens of the Austin metropolitan area. This system will ensure a natural heritage of parkland is preserved and recreational opportunities are fostered into the next decade.

The Long Range Plan for Land, Facilities, and Programs (LRP) was developed by the Parks and Recreation Department (PARC) staff using demographic information, surveys, trends and standards for parks and in collaboration with multiple neighborhood representatives, non-profit organizations, public entities, and interested citizens on the future of the park system. Information was collected from ten public meetings held throughout the city starting in December 2007 through April 2009.

The LRP is a guide for future growth and development of Austin’s parks and recreation system and is an update to the 1998 Long Range Plan for Land and Facilities. Although the plan cannot list all the projects that need to be implemented throughout the park system, it addresses the more significant vision and projects. There are many other projects being implemented as part of the Department’s Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and its operating budget.

## 1.1 Austin History and Parks and Recreation

In the 1830s, the first permanent Anglo settlers arrived and settled along the banks of the Colorado River and called their village Waterloo. In 1839, Waterloo was chosen to be the capital of the new Republic of Texas. This tiny village evolved into a city and was named after Stephen F. Austin, “the Father of Texas.” Judge Edwin Waller, who later became the city’s first mayor, surveyed the site and laid out a street plan that has survived largely intact to this day. East/west streets were named after trees and the north/south streets were named after creeks.

The Austin park system started in 1840 with Woolridge Park followed by the donation of Pease Park in 1875 by then Governor E.M. Pease.

The early 1900s had many donations and acquisitions consisting of House Park, Barton Springs Pool, Rosewood Park, Austin Athletic Club (Austin Recreation Center), Zilker Park, Deep Eddy Pool and the Lion’s Municipal Golf Course.

The 1920s established the City’s Recreation Division and not too long after organized sport leagues, completion of additional athletic fields and various contests (tournaments) occurred.

# Ch 1 Introduction

In the 1930s the first Parks, Playgrounds and Boulevards bond was approved for \$750,000 followed by passing of an ordinance to create a Parks and Playgrounds Commission. They acted in an advisory capacity to the City Council and the City Manager in the acquiring, developing, equipping and improving of all parks, playgrounds and boulevards owned and controlled by the City of Austin.

The 1930s also brought on various opportunities such as free swim lessons at Barton Springs Pool, Juneteenth and Cinco de Mayo celebrations.

In the 1940s, recreation based conferences were held in Austin where speakers stressed the need for post-war development of municipal recreation. The city's recreation department cooperated in staging a state-wide Governor's Recreation Conference, which sponsored a bill to create a state recreation department. The war took its toll on recreation departments throughout the nation causing shortages of necessary recreational equipment and a turnover of personnel.

As the years progressed, so did the amount of parks, recreation facilities and programs. The City's Recreation Division evolved into what is now known as the Parks and Recreation Department; which celebrated 75 years of service in 2003.

## 1.2 Austin Parks and Recreation Mission

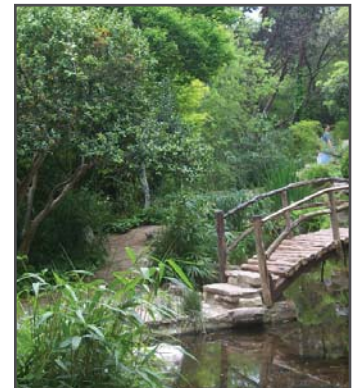
The mission of the Parks and Recreation Department (PARC) is to provide, protect and preserve a Park System that promotes recreational, cultural and outdoor experiences for the Austin Community.



Recreational



Cultural



Outdoor

# Ch 1 Introduction

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## 1.3 PARD's Role in Providing Recreational Opportunities

The City of Austin is a major provider of parks and recreation for its citizens. Additional recreational opportunities and facilities are provided by Travis County, Williamson County, neighboring cities of Round Rock, Pflugerville, Cedar Park, Georgetown, Leander, Sunset Valley, the Village of Bee Caves and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), along with the various local colleges and universities for their student population.

The Long Range Plan for Land, Facilities and Programs follows the general guidelines for local park master plans established by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD). This document is intended to meet the requirements of the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA).

## 1.4 PARD's Awards and Recognition

### National Recreation and Park Association's (NRPA) 2004 Gold Medal Award

The award, given in partnership with the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration, recognizes the best parks and recreation system in the nation.

This honor is not only a testament to the commitment and dedication of the department's employees, but also to the valuable support of the Mayor and City Council, the City Manager, Parks Board Members and the citizens of Austin. More importantly this award reflects the importance Austinites place on their parks, recreation facilities and programs.

The award was presented to the Department at the NRPA Annual Conference in Reno, Nevada. The Department was previously nominated for the award in 1999, 2000 and 2001.



### Commission of Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA)

In 1989, the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration (AAPRA) and the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) established a committee of park and recreation professionals to develop standards for an agency accreditation process. The group created ten categories of standards that would allow park and recreation agencies to compare their practices to a professional model. In 1996, the

# Ch 1 Introduction

Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) was formed and the standards for national accreditation were finalized. The 155 standards in ten service categories allow an agency to measure its effectiveness and efficiency by providing services in accordance with approved professional practice. Agency accreditation has become a method for park and recreation departments to become more accountable to taxpayers while improving the delivery of services.

Agency accreditation reflects the progression of the park and recreation management discipline in advancing the professional accountability of our field. It is the next step in the professionalizing the field and is a source of pride for staff and constituents to know their department has received peer review and external recognition as a high-quality government service.

In accepting the accreditation challenge, the Austin Parks and Recreation Department personnel worked diligently to complete a self-assessment of the Department's policies, procedures and standards and compare our practices to the national standards. Additionally, through the Department's self-assessment, staff began creating an improvement process that is gradually building an organizational culture for strategic thinking and planning.

On September 25, 2007, the Austin Parks and Recreation Department became one of 73 park and recreation agencies in the country, and the first large city in Texas, to receive national accreditation from the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies. The announcement was made at the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Congress and Exposition in Indianapolis, IN.



This award marks the third national recognition for the Austin Parks and Recreation Department in the last five years. The Department received the NRPA Gold Medal Award in 2004 recognizing the Department as the number one major metropolitan park system in the nation. In 2006, the National Recreation and Park Association awarded the Department Aquatic Division the Excellence in Aquatics Award recognizing Austin as having the best Aquatic Division in the nation.

The CAPRA accreditation process and results help to ensure a high level of accountability throughout our department and facilitates efficient and effective delivery of park and recreation services to our citizens.



# Ch 1 Introduction

## 1.5 Austin Demographics and Jurisdiction

The City of Austin and the surrounding metropolitan areas encompass most of Travis County, as well as parts of Williamson counties. This central Texas region contains the State Capitol, numerous higher education institutes and a dynamic private sector which is being led by an expanding high tech business sector. Due to these factors, plus a pleasing natural setting, population growth continues to expand at a strong rate. High growth began in the early 1980's, experienced a leveling off during the economic downturn in the latter part of the decade and rebounded in the early 1990's. The metropolitan region's population will exceed 1,000,000 residents by 2025. The implication for parks and recreation is that demand for leisure opportunities will continue to grow along with the population. Below is a breakdown of the current population and the population growth projections from 2000 to 2020 by zip code. Projected population growth by planning area follows in section 1.6.

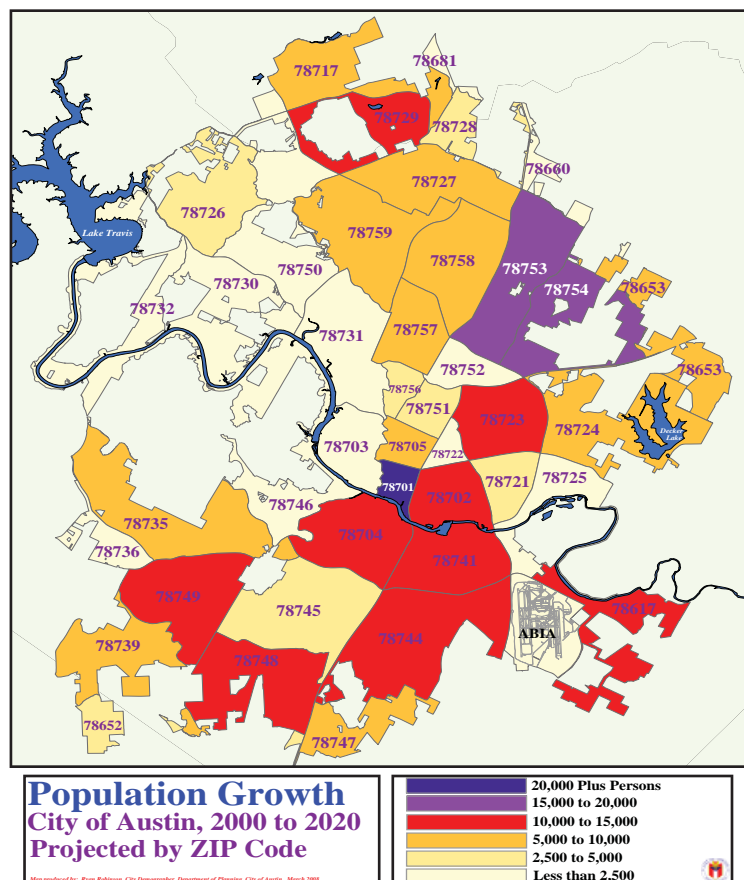
| Age Range | Population |
|-----------|------------|
| Under 5   | 79,194     |
| 6 – 17    | 184,371    |
| 18 – 34   | 339,742    |
| 35 – 64   | 371,298    |
| 65+       | 69,549     |

| Ethnicity        | Population |
|------------------|------------|
| Anglo            | 624,432    |
| Hispanic         | 273,460    |
| African-American | 83,567     |
| Asian            | 42,778     |
| Other            | 19,917     |

| Income by Household | Households |
|---------------------|------------|
| Less than \$24,999  | 71,919     |
| \$25,000 - \$49,999 | 79,070     |
| \$50,000 - \$99,999 | 78,597     |
| Over \$100,000      | 36,008     |

| Poverty Level    | Population |
|------------------|------------|
| Population above | 903,554    |
| Population below | 116,237    |

|                        |     |
|------------------------|-----|
| Average Household Size | 2.4 |
|------------------------|-----|



All demographic data has been provided by Ryan Robinson, COA Demographer.

## 1.6 PARD Planning Areas

PARD utilizes planning areas in order to more closely align planning analysis and objectives with areas that have unique demographics and recreational needs.

The 27 Planning Areas were developed in the 1970s by the Planning and Development Review Department (PDRD) using roads, creeks and natural barriers to define the boundary lines of each area and were created as a means for collecting data for analysis and planning purposes. Due to the size of Austin in the 1970s, the urban core planning areas are smaller where the higher population occurred with the planning areas increasing in size further from central Austin.

In the late '90s, the neighborhood planning staff was asked to develop the Urban Core Neighborhood Plan Program in response to citizens' requests that the City undertake neighborhood plans at a faster rate. The Urban Core Neighborhood Plan Program focused primarily on 50 neighborhood planning areas within Austin's urban core within a 5 year time span. In order to maximize the number of neighborhoods able to participate in the neighborhood planning process, several of the smaller neighborhoods facing similar issues and concerns were combined.

The original structure of this document reflected the 27 planning areas that encompass the entire City of Austin. Through the public input process, the citizens expressed a desire to incorporate the neighborhood planning areas they had assisted with creating. Chapters 3 and 10 will consist of the 27 planning areas that encompass the entire City while incorporating the relevant adopted neighborhood planning areas boundaries, recommendations and prioritization of needs.

The following pages contain information of the population projections by the 27 planning area for 2011-2016 followed by a map containing the Austin Full Purpose Jurisdiction and the 27 Planning Areas.

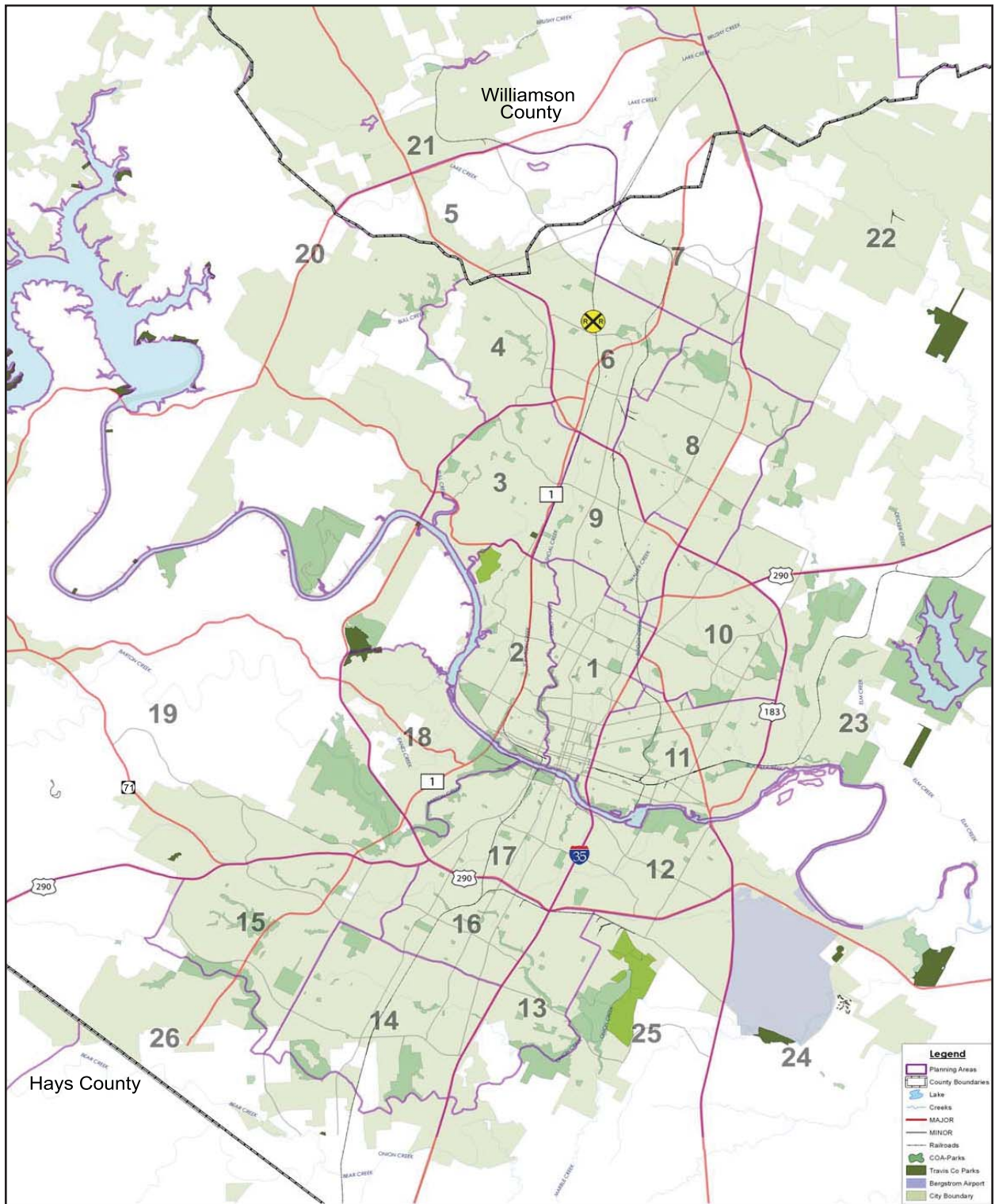
## PARD Planning Area Population Census 2000 Baseline, 2008 Estimate and 2013 Forecast Austin, Texas

| Planning Areas (PA) | Census 2000 Total Population | 2008 Population Estimate | 2013 Population Forecast | Estimated Annualized Growth Rate 2000 to 2008 | Forecasted Annualized Growth Rate 2008 to 2013 |
|---------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|--|
| 1                   | 51,356                       | 58,492                   | 62,552                   | 1.6%  | 1.4%   |
| 2                   | 25,745                       | 25,864                   | 25,965                   | 0.1%  | 0.1%   |
| 3                   | 27,491                       | 28,680                   | 28,690                   | 0.5%  | 0.0%   |
| 4                   | 19,959                       | 21,148                   | 22,163                   | 0.7%  | 0.9%   |
| 5                   | 33,069                       | 35,448                   | 41,537                   | 0.9%  | 3.2%   |
| 6                   | 30,318                       | 42,211                   | 48,301                   | 4.2%  | 2.7%   |
| 7                   | 27,226                       | 33,173                   | 36,217                   | 2.5%  | 1.8%   |
| 8                   | 71,914                       | 83,807                   | 93,957                   | 1.9%  | 2.3%   |
| 9                   | 33,278                       | 33,516                   | 33,922                   | 0.1%  | 0.2%   |
| 10                  | 43,544                       | 51,156                   | 66,380                   | 2.0%  | 5.3%   |
| 11                  | 35,937                       | 36,651                   | 46,800                   | 0.2%  | 5.0%   |
| 12                  | 39,105                       | 39,819                   | 39,920                   | 0.2%  | 0.1%   |
| 13                  | 27,295                       | 29,674                   | 29,775                   | 1.0%  | 0.1%   |
| 14                  | 39,059                       | 50,952                   | 55,012                   | 3.4%  | 1.5%   |
| 15                  | 32,494                       | 39,630                   | 41,660                   | 2.5%  | 1.0%   |
| 16                  | 31,242                       | 33,621                   | 34,636                   | 0.9%  | 0.6%   |
| 17                  | 44,673                       | 51,809                   | 55,869                   | 1.9%  | 1.5%   |
| 18                  | 13,502                       | 13,621                   | 13,722                   | 0.1%  | 0.1%   |
| 19                  | 57,976                       | 75,816                   | 83,935                   | 3.4%  | 2.1%   |
| 20                  | 42,665                       | 60,505                   | 70,654                   | 4.5%  | 3.2%   |
| 21                  | 85,115                       | 108,901                  | 127,171                  | 3.1%  | 3.2%   |
| 22                  | 94,537                       | 124,270                  | 152,689                  | 3.5%  | 4.2%   |
| 23                  | 22,787                       | 38,248                   | 66,667                   | 6.7%  | 11.8%  |
| 24                  | 14,986                       | 30,447                   | 43,642                   | 9.3%  | 7.5%   |
| 25                  | 29,840                       | 39,354                   | 53,564                   | 3.5%  | 6.4%   |
| 26                  | 30,630                       | 49,659                   | 59,809                   | 6.2%  | 3.8%   |
| 27                  | 38,411                       | 45,547                   | 49,810                   | 2.2%  | 1.8%   |

**Totals**      1,044,154      1,282,015      1,485,019

*\*Disclaimer: Population data was collected in late 2007 in anticipation of the LRP document being complete by 2008. Due to National Census data currently being collected, updated projections will not be available until 2011.*





## Austin Full Purpose Jurisdiction & 27 Planning Areas

# Ch 1 Introduction

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## 1.7 Purpose of the Long Range Plan for Land, Facilities and Programs

The purpose of the 2011 Long Range Plan for Land, Facilities and Programs (LRP) is to update the 1998 Long Range Plan for Land and Facilities. The 2011 LRP reviews the goals and priorities established by the 1998 Plan and provides an assessment of the Department's existing parkland, facilities and programs only, therefore this plan does not delve into the details of various maintenance schedules or practices.

The LRP is a guide for future growth and development of Austin's parks and recreation system. The Plan responds to citizens needs for parks, park trails, programs, preservation of environmental and ecologically sensitive areas unique to the region. The plan also includes park standards, best management practices (bmp), national standards such as NRPA (National Recreation and Park Association) as well as PARD standards.

The LRP provides recommendations based on demographic research, public input, service analysis, neighborhood plans, greenprinting and surveys. The LRP provides recommendations for greenway and parkland acquisition, park development, park renovations and master planning.

## 1.8 Long Range Plan for Land, Facilities and Programs Time Frame

The Long Range Plan for Land, Facilities and Programs is intended to address the time frame from 2011 – 2016. This document follows the requirements of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's master plan documents for parks and recreation agencies and shall be completely updated every 5 years.