

Chapter 5

Planning Process

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5.0 Introduction

This Long Range Plan for Land, Facilities, and Programs was developed by the Parks and Recreation Department staff in collaboration with multiple neighborhood representatives, non-profit groups, public entities, and interested citizens. Information was collected from five public input meetings held throughout the city from December 2007 through April 2008 (*see Chapter 1 Introduction*).

Because the community has a broad range of issues and needs, a variety of approaches were used in the planning process to derive a set of recommendations. The various approaches of the planning process include:

1. **Analysis of Community Demographics:** The following demographic indicators were used when considering segments of the population that may have priority needs: low income, youth, elderly, and population density.
2. **Development of Park and Facility Standards:** Park and facility standards are used to help plan for land acquisition and facility development according to a comprehensive classification system.
3. **Inventory of Existing Facilities by Planning Area:** Due to the size of Austin's jurisdiction, smaller areas called "planning areas" were utilized to more closely align planning analysis and objectives with unique parts of the city.
4. **Establishment of Goals and Objectives:** Goals and objectives help give the department direction according to an overriding philosophy combined with tangible measures to assure the desired outcome.
5. **Needs Assessment:** A needs assessment is an analytical method of determining the needs and desires of the community. The Department utilized two approaches: demand-based surveys and resource based analysis.

Demand-Based:

- a. **Telephone Survey** – A random telephone survey was conducted in 2004
- b. **On-line Survey** – An on-line survey was conducted in 2007
- c. **Public Input Meetings** – Five public meetings were held from 2007-2008
- d. **Gap Analysis** – Deficiencies in service delivery were analyzed to identify gaps in recreational opportunities

Resource-Based:

- a. **Analysis of Significant Natural Resources** – A "greenprinting" technology was utilized to identify land conservation needs
- b. **Trends Assessment:** A trends analysis is a way of recognizing observed popular social and recreational activities

6. **Consideration of Relevant Community Plans:** Recognition of other relevant planning efforts in the community plays an important part in developing a comprehensive plan.
7. **Development of a Blueways, Greenways and Park Trails Plan:** Austin's most desired recreational activities are related to trails. Greenways play an important part in both land conservation and trail development.
8. **Development of a Recreational, Environmental and Cultural Programs Plan:** An important part of the Department's mission is to promote recreation, cultural, and outdoor experiences.
9. **Analysis:** The Parks and Recreation Department staff analyzed all the information gathered in order to recommend a set of projects and priorities for future implementation.
10. **Recommendations and Priorities:** Based on analysis of all the information gathered and analyzed, specific projects and programs were put forth as follows:
 - a. **City-wide** – Recommendations that apply throughout the city in general
 - b. **By Planning Area** – Recommendations and priorities specific to each planning area

The Long Range Plan will serve the Parks and Recreation Department for the next five years. The plan cannot possibly list all of the projects that need to be implemented throughout the park system, but rather 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.

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