



1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Building on the exceptional quality of the natural and cultural environment of Waxahachie, the goal of the 2007 Parks Master Plan is to establish a **Vision of Excellence** expressed as a function of the nexus: **Where Culture meets Nature.**

The City of Waxahachie is an undiscovered gem in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex and home to one of the best preserved downtowns as well as historic areas in Texas. The residents of the City are proud of their heritage and have taken exceptionally good care of the historic buildings and structures. Interstate IH35 that is the main road connection between the Metroplex and Austin bypasses downtown to the west making it less visible, which in a sense secured its preservation. IH35 affords one single eastward view towards downtown with its imposing Ellis County Courthouse, which is seen with a meadow and trees in the foreground. Worthy of protection, this report recommends specific steps to preserve this important view.

The rural character of the City is also an extremely important quality of the City that residents wish to see retained and preserved. During the public involvement process, participants stressed the importance to protect the sense of open space and rural landscapes surrounding the City.

Well connected road systems in the Metroplex offer people more options when it comes to a choice of where to live. This leads to prospective home buyers to look not only at



price but at the complete lifestyle that is offered to them. A quality lifestyle is generally defined by the City image and amenities offered to residents. The City image is that which sets it apart from other cities that is determined by a city's commitment to protect and celebrate its character including the creeks, natural areas, streetscapes, and building stock. The amenities typically include schools, parks, trails, and cultural facilities. Cities thus compete for new residents through the quality of amenities as well as the City character that people find more and more important when making decisions to relocate.

Waxahachie experiences many pressures to develop. Developers see the opportunity to profit from prospective home buyers who appreciate the City's historic beauty, rural character, and a place that has a strong sense of "being home". However, it is when such development occurs without consideration for the character and need for open space and pedestrian connections, that the quality of life at Waxahachie will be compromised for everyone.

From its rural character to its modern recreation facilities, residents of Waxahachie should feel proud to be part of a community that treasures and seeks to cultivate the health, safety, welfare, and image of the City and its people.

Well-developed parks and natural areas are often the first place that visitors view in a community. In fact, parks are one of the most visible elements of a city government at work, and can instill a strong sense of pride in the residents of a community. A good park system lets both citizens and visitors know that the leadership of the city is interested in providing the best for its citizens. The leadership of Waxahachie has long recognized that recreation plays an important role in the quality of life in Waxahachie, and that a strong recreation system provides for a healthier environment, improves the well being of children and young adults, and reduces the potential for crime in the City.

An understanding of the demographics of a city is essential for the proper planning for parks and recreation in the future. The current population of 26,700 is expected to grow by about 48% in the next 10 years, or a projected population of about 40,000.

1.2 *Aim of the Parks Master Plan*

A "Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan" is exactly what its name indicates: "Parks" typically refer to land dedicated to outdoor areas programmed for "Recreation" which refers to both active and passive recreational activities including ball play, jogging, picnicking, etc. "Open Space" refers to land dedicated for conservation and preservation due to its ecological value, wildlife habitat quality, cultural significance, and its functional role to assist with flood management, etc. Active recreation is typically not the purpose of "Open Space" but is often very valuable for less active activities including bird and wildflower watching, hiking, and contemplation. Strategically, dedication of open space can contribute significantly to attaining and preserving a sense of rural character in a city environment.

The importance of open space is often overlooked by a city's parks department since the concept of open space does not always fit the idea of land programmed for a particular recreational activity that would require regular landscape maintenance. However, the



very reason for it not requiring regular attention can be a great asset, offering outdoors enjoyment, visual pleasure, and ecological function at a minimum cost.



This view of mature trees in the floodplain of Waxahachie Creek is telling of the rural quality of Waxahachie.

The 2007 Parks Master Plan aims to:

- Find ways to enhance and celebrate the unique image and character of the City of Waxahachie;
- Point out opportunities and recommend alternatives for improving the park system;
- Look at the potential growth of the City over the next 5 to 10 years, and assess where additional facilities will be needed as the City grows, and what types of facilities are most needed;
- Guide City staff in acquiring land to meet current and future park and open space needs;
- Prioritize key recommendations of the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan so that the most significant deficiencies are addressed as quickly as possible;
- Guide City staff and City leaders in determining where and how parks funding should be allocated over the next five to ten years.

In addition, the park planning process allows the citizens of Waxahachie to determine what their preferred park and recreation priorities should be for the next five to ten years.

“Many community leaders feel they must choose between economic growth and open space protection. But no such choice is necessary. Open space protection is good for a community’s health, stability, beauty, and quality of life. It is also good for the bottom line.”

Will Rogers, President: Trust for Public Land; 1999.



1.3 Jurisdiction and Planning Area

The Waxahachie Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan is intended to cover all of the City of Waxahachie including the Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ). The City will consider the recommendations of this Plan in future deliberations and decisions.

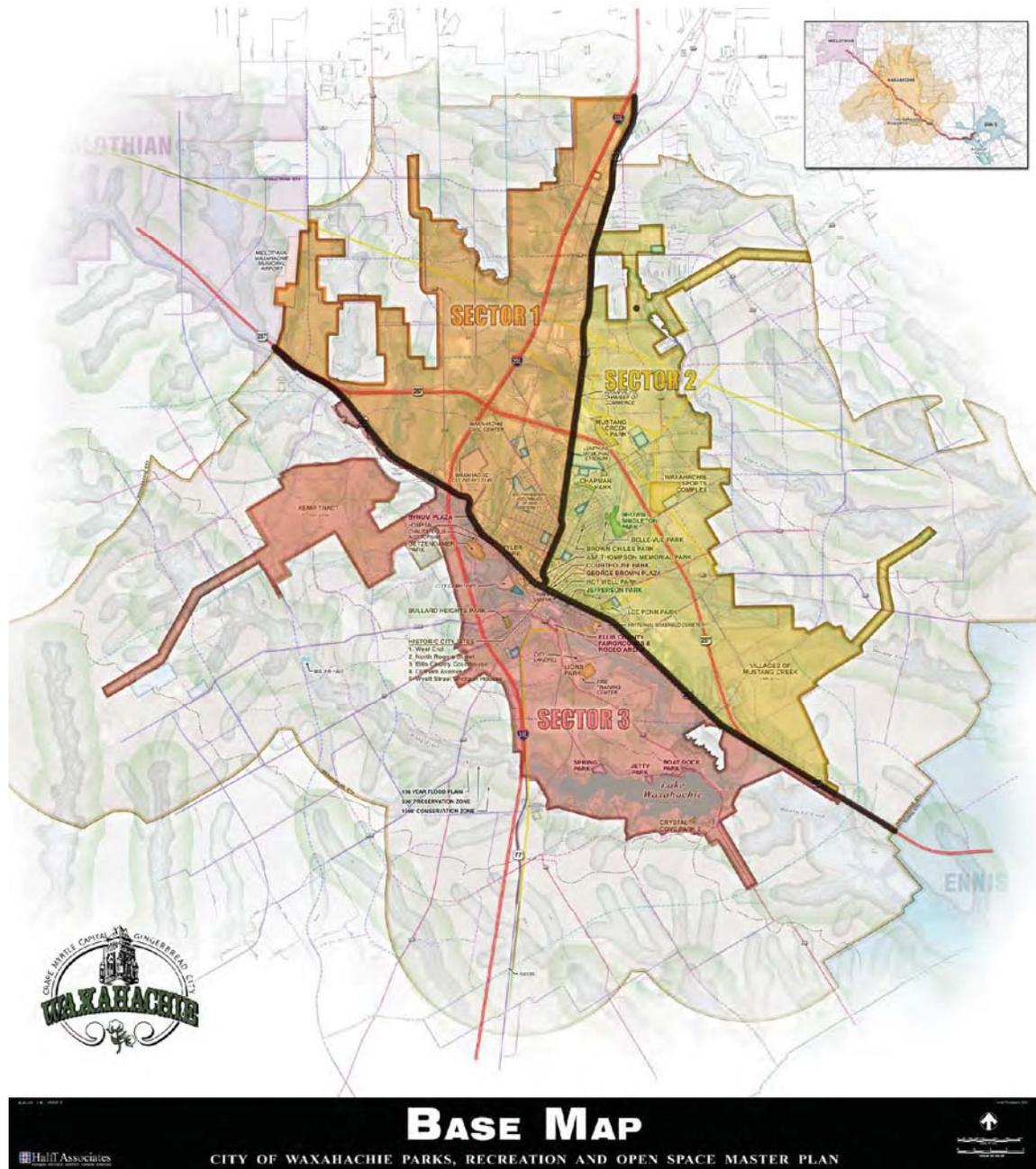


Figure 1.1 Study Area of the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan



1.4 Role of the City of Waxahachie in Providing Recreational Opportunities

Waxahachie is the primary governmental entity charged with providing recreational facilities for the citizens of Waxahachie. Ancillary recreational facilities may be provided by the State of Texas through the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), Waxahachie Independent School District, Ellis County and the various homeowners' associations.

The Park Master Plan follows the general guidelines for local park master plans established by TPWD. This document also is intended to meet the requirements of the Department of Interior for the Urban Parks and Recreation Recovery Program.



Public interaction at the public meeting - an important and vital part of the planning process.

1.5 Parks Master Plan Time Frame

The Waxahachie Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan is formulated to address the time frame from the year 2007 until the year 2017.

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department stipulates the following for park master plans: "The park, recreation, and open space master plans must cover at least a ten year period after which a completely new plan is required. Plans must be updated every two years to remain eligible. As a minimum, updates should include a summary of accomplishments, new public input, most recent inventory data, and updated needs, priorities, and new implementation plan. Demographics, population projections, goals and objectives, standards, and maps should also be updated if appropriate. Priorities should be updated as high priority items are accomplished and lower priorities move up. A new resolution is not required when updating priorities; however if priorities are revised or change, a new resolution adopting the new priorities, is required."



In addition, it is recommended that the Parks and Recreation Board and Parks and Recreation Department staff conduct an annual review workshop to review progress over the previous 12 month period. In all cases, it is recommended that public involvement through citizen meetings, interviews, and workshops be included in any updating process.

1.6 Parks Master Plan Components

All components of this Parks Master Plan comply to the requirements established by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (see Figure 1.2 below).

<p>1. Introduction Aim of the Parks Master Plan Planning and Implementation Entity Parks Master Plan Time Frame</p>
<p>2. Context City Image and Unique Physical Features History of Waxahachie Waxahachie's Economy Today Demographic Profile of Waxahachie</p>
<p>3. Existing Parks Inventory Parks Classification and Acreage Park and Recreation Facilities Inventory</p>
<p>4. Park System Goals Goals Terminology Purpose of the 2007 Parks Master Plan Key Goals and Objectives for the Master Plan</p>
<p>5. Public Input Citizen Attitude Survey Community Meetings Parks Board Meetings</p>
<p>6. Needs Assessment Methods of Assessment Standards Based Needs Demand Based Needs Resource Based Needs</p>
<p>7. Master Plan Recommendations City Policy Land Acquisition Park Development Recreation Facilities Park Improvements</p>
<p>8. Implementation Plan Key Recommendations Implementation Strategy Action Plan Funding Strategies</p>

Figure 1.2 Components of the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan