PARKS AND RECREATION

The Parks and Recreation Department faces many challenges as the City of Allen continues its rapid growth. Demand for some activities already exceeds the city's ability to provide them. The city must be prepared to identify and acquire parklands—especially large sites for community and special parks—before development precludes their acquisition.

The citizens' survey of 1995 and reconfirmed in 1997 has established the need for a balanced system of neighborhood, community, citywide and greenbelt parks. To meet citizen expectation, the city must concentrate on acquiring land that accommodates the requirements of the various park classifications. Developing a parks and recreation system that meets the needs of Allen citizens is sensitive to Allen's environment, and places good stewardship on tax money is the goal of this plan. In order to develop a comprehensive system of parks and open space, this plan must concentrate on the needs of neighborhoods, community facilities citywide and greenbelt park system.

The Parks and Recreation chapter establishes an approach to developing the parks and recreation system. This chapter looks at future recreation needs of the citizens of Allen, and in a proactive approach, establishes locations for parks throughout the city. The result of this plan is a Parks Master Plan map that provides guidance and specific recommendations for park development for Allen through the year 2003.

Goals and Policies

4.000 General Goal: Mission Statement: Establish a park and recreation system for our citizens that provides them with a source of pleasure, promotes economic development, minimizes demands on valuable City resources and instills pride in those who make it happen.

4.010 Specific Goal: Plan for public and private natural open space in the development of Allen.

4.011 P/IS: Provide strict guidelines for floodplain development and emphasize recreational use.

4.012 P/IS: Proceed with floodplain/recreation plan in accordance with the Linear Greenbelt Park Study.

4.013 P/IS: Retain major wooded areas, both within and outside of floodplains, and preserve major woodlots and trees in all developments (See Environment).

4.014 P/IS: Address environmental impact in planning development and maintenance of parkland.

4.020 Specific Goal: Provide for development of a parks system with a full range of facilities and programs for residents.

4.021 P/IS: Evaluate and proceed with parkland acquisition program.

4.022 P/IS: Use current data to compute demand for park facilities and programs.

4.023 P/IS: Provide organized community recreation for youths, adults and senior citizens.

4.024 P/IS: Provide for development of acquired parklands to meet demand, while acquiring new parklands in advance of need.

4.025 P/IS: Provide varied opportunities for active and passive participation.

4.030 Specific Goal: Provide a high level of park maintenance of parklands and facilities.

4.031 P/IS: Include operation and maintenance costs in all consideration of facilities.

4.032 P/IS: Provide adequate staff, equipment and budget for maintenance.

4.033 P/IS: Develop standards for park maintenance with consideration of park type and needs of community.

4.034 P/IS: Continue landscaping and beautification of parks and medians.

4.040 Specific Goal: Provide safety and security in parks.

4.041 P/IS: Use safety and security standards in the design of parks and open space areas.

4.042 P/IS: Develop a program for park security in coordination with other city departments.

4.050 Specific Goal: Provide for bike paths integrated with the transportation and parks system.

Inventory and Observations of Existing Facilities

The existing park and recreation system provides a total of 407.9 acres or 11.53 acres per 1,000 persons in the city at an estimated population of 35,354. This constitutes a 3.13-acre per 1,000 persons increase over the 1984 figure of 8.4, and a 1.53 acres per 1,000 population increase over the 1992 Comprehensive Plan of 10. Of this total, 16 parks having a combined acreage of 212.5 acres or 6.01 acres per 1,000 persons are developed. The Policy for Land Acquisition identifies that an optimum level of 8.5 acres of active/passive park facilities would be provided for each 1,000 persons living in Allen. At today's population of 35,354, this would require 300.51 acres of developed parkland. Of the 217 acres of developed parks, 18 acres are deemed temporary parks, i.e. McDermott and Hillside ball fields that will ultimately be replaced by other uses. McDermott ball fields will be replaced by the year 2000, leaving the combined acreage of developed parkland at 203.5 or 5.75 acres per 1,000 persons. In the 1992 Comprehensive Plan, the City owned adequate land to meet the need established in the Policy for Land Acquisition, although development of the system was lagging behind growth of the city by 3.41 acres per 1,000 persons. Today, the same statement holds true. While the city has adequate parkland, the city lags behind development by 2.75 acres per 1,000 persons.

An additional 5.0 acres have been zoned CF (see Table 6.b) and are to be dedicated to or purchased by the city for parkland. An additional 1,000 will come as floodplain dedication of which 700 acres will be usable parkland. Floodplain is desirable as parkland when the environmental character of the land is desirable for public use and when adequate space is available for trail access. It is the intent of this plan to maintain floodplain in its natural state. Normally, floodplain land is dedicated at time final plat is filed. The city has already obtained approximately 100 acres of greenbelt/linkage parklands through dedication.

TABLE 6-a
EXISTING PARK AND RECREATION FACILITIES
City of Allen, Texas

		Type Of Park	Acreage	Restrooms	Pavilions	Picnic Tables	Playgrounds	Open Play Area	Ponds	Nature Trails	Jogging Trails	Fitness Stations	Basketball Courts	Soccer Fields	Baseball/Softball Field	Tennis Courts	Volleyball Court	Swimming Pool	Fishing Pier	Clubhouse
1.	Allen Station Park (Under dev.)	CW	116	•		•	•	•		•	•			2L	9L					
2.	Bethany Lakes Park	C	40	•	1	•	•	•	4	•	•				1B				•	•
3.	Bolin Park	S	12								•			2U	2L					
4.	Cemetery	S	6																	
5.	Collin Square (Under development)	N	6					•			•									
6.	Cottonwood Bend Park	N	5		•	•	•	•						1U	2B					
7.	Country Meadows	N	8			•	•	•			•									
8.	Ford Park East	C	23	•		•	•	•			•			3L	3L					
9.	Ford Park West	C	20	*	•	•	•	•			•	•	•			4L		•		
10.	Green Park (Under development)	N	5		•	•		•			•									
11.	Heritage Park (Under development)	N	3				•	•			•									
12.	Hillside Ballfield	S	9												2L 2U					
13.	Hillside Play Area	P	0.5			•	•													
14.	Joe Farmer Recreation Center	C	2	•					•	•	•	•	•				•			
15.	Jupiter Park	S	9											1L 1U	1L					
16.	McDermott Soccer Complex	S	9											3U						
17.	Raintree Park (Undeveloped)	N	4					•												

		Type Of Park	Acreage	Restrooms	Pavilions	Picnic Tables	Playgrounds	Open Play Area	Ponds	Nature Trails	Jogging Trails	Fitness Stations	Basketball Courts	Soccer Fields	Baseball/Softball Field	Tennis Courts	Volleyball Court	Swimming Pool	Fishing Pier	Clubhouse
18.	Reed Park	N	9		•	•	•	•			•		•	1U	1U	•				
19.	Rolling Hills Park	P	0.5			•	•	•												
20.	Senior Citizen's Center	S	1																	
21.	Shadow Lakes Park	N	7		•	•		•			•									
22.	Story Park	N	9			•	•	•						•	2B					
23.	Walden Park	P	0.5			•														
24.	Watters Crossing Park	N	9		•	•	•	•					•	4U	1B					
25.	Glendover	N	9	Undeveloped																
26.	Watters Creek/Twin Creeks	N	4.8	Undeveloped																
27.	Bethany Ridge	N	4.6	Undeveloped																
28.	"The Woods" (Undeveloped)	CW	76	Undeveloped																
29.	**Total Acres**		407.9																	
30.	**Total Developed Acres**		212.5																	
31.	**Total Undeveloped Acres**		188.4																	
32.	**Total Other Acres**		7																	

* = Seasonal
B = Backstop Only (unlighted)
C = Community Park
CW = Citywide
G = Greenbelt
L = Lighted
N = Neighborhood Park
P = Pocket Park
S = Special Use Park
U = Unlighted

TABLE 6.b	
AREAS TO BE DEDICATED OR PURCHASED (Presently Zoned CF) City of Allen, Texas	
DEVELOPMENT	ACRES
Majestic Savings (PD No. 42)	5.0
TOTAL	5.0

TABLE 6.c	
EXISTING GREENBELT/LINEAR PARKS City of Allen, Texas	
DEVELOPMENT	ACRES
Cottonwood Bend Greenbelt	12.1
Bray Central Easement	7.2
Cottonwood Bend North II	4.73
Heritage Park South	32.6
Heritage Park II	1.3
Highland Meadows	4
Twin Creeks (Rowlett Creek)	easement
Suncreek (Rowlett Creek, PD 26)	9.2
Watters Crossing (PD 26)	15
Shadow Lakes (PD 12)	21.1
TOTAL	107.23

The City of Allen is served by sixteen developed parks: Hillside, Country Meadows, Jupiter, Reed, Rolling Hills, Hillside Play area, McDermott Soccer Fields, Ford East and West, Story, Cottonwood Bend, Walden, Watters Crossing, Bolin, Bethany Ridge, and Bethany Lakes and Joe Farmer Recreation Center. The City has recently purchased and has begun development of a 116 acre Allen Station regional park off Exchange Parkway. Allen Station Park is geographically located in the center of Allen and serves as a community identifier. St. Mary's park became a part of the 116 acres of Allen Station Park and contains two lighted soccer fields. Undeveloped parks include: Glendover, Green, Shadow Lakes, Heritage, Collin Square, Raintree, Bethany Ridge, one 4.8 acre parcel located along Watters Creek in Twin Creeks, and "the Woods," a 76 acre greenbelt tract dedicated/purchased off Suncreek. Shadow Lakes, Green, and Heritage are scheduled for development in mid-1998. "The Woods" is currently being studied and will be

partially developed in 1999-2000.

Reed and Watters Crossing parks are functioning as both neighborhood and community parks. Rolling Hills and Hillside playground are classified as playgrounds serving only the immediate neighborhoods adjacent to the park. Jupiter, Hillside, and the McDermott Soccer Complex provide athletic fields used on a community-wide basis. The site of McDermott Soccer fields is a temporary use and will be changed with the development of the new Allen City Hall.

Neither Collin County nor the State of Texas provides park facilities in the City of Allen.

Hillside

Developed in 1979, this 9.2-acre temporary park is located at the southwest corner of Fountain Gate Drive and FM 2170 in the eastern part of the city. An elevated water tank occupies about one acre of the tract. The site contains two lighted (regulation) and two unlighted ball fields and an unpaved area. The park is not as attractive as it could be and, combined with the active uses and lighting, has a negative impact on the residential areas. In 1989, the City Council approved Resolution No. 950-10-89(R), which indicates that Hillside Park is not a permanent facility, therefore, no lasting improvements should be constructed.

Jupiter Park

Developed in 1978, this 8.5-acre park provides sports fields for Allen's growing youth sports program. Located south of Cottonwood Creek along the west side of Jupiter Road, is the site of the abandoned sewage treatment plant. The park contains one lighted softball field and one unlighted and one lighted football/soccer field, as well as a park maintenance storage facility. A number of alternative uses exist for this site, such as a community recreation center or park maintenance service center once the park system is further developed. Should this park remain as a sports complex, support facilities such as parking, concession/rest room facilities, underground wiring, signage and landscaping should be considered.

Reed School Park

Developed in 1982, this 10-acre park shares the site with Reed Elementary School. The park contains a playground, one unlighted softball field, one unlighted soccer field, two lighted tennis courts and a picnic area. The layout of the park facilities is separated by the school building which blurs the identity of the park and possibly makes ground maintenance more difficult. This park has been master planned and will be receiving improvements to the play equipment, and landscaping in mid-1998.

Rolling Hills Park

Developed in 1983, this .3-acre park is classified as a neighborhood park, although it lacks park amenities normally found is this park classification. Amenities include playground equipment and picnic tables. Due to the size of the park, only a small portion of the community park needs are met. Open space and play areas are needed within this neighborhood. Rolling Hills park will be receiving improvements to the play equipment and landscaping in mid-1998.

Hillside Playground

Originally developed in 1979, this .3-acre park is classified as a neighborhood park, although it lacks park amenities normally found is this park classification. Amenities include playground equipment and benches. Due to the size of the park, only a small portion of the community park needs are met. Open space and play areas are needed within this neighborhood. This park is scheduled for play equipment replacement in mid-1998.

McDermott Soccer Fields

Developed in 1982 as a temporary soccer complex, this park contains 8 acres and is located adjacent to the city government facilities off Allen Drive and Century. Three unlighted soccer fields of various sizes (related to age groups) are located on the site. No other facilities are provided. As this is the site of the city's proposed municipal complex, the long-term use of the soccer complex should not be planned.

Ford Park East and West

Developed in 1986 as the City’s first athletic complex, Ford Park contains 50 acres and is a community park. The facilities include: 3 lighted softball fields, three full size soccer fields, two lighted multipurpose courts, one lighted inline hockey court, four lighted tennis courts, an exercise trail, picnic facilities and shelter, and a 25-yard outdoor swimming pool. Due to the very heavy use of this park, a better sign package needs to be implemented that would not normally be required.

Story Park

Developed in 1988, Story Park is a 10 acre neighborhood park adjacent to Story Elementary School. It is a neighborhood park where picnic tables, an open play area, and play equipment are in existence. There are currently two backstops, and there is the potential for an unlighted soccer field. The park is very flat and needs additional landscaping and a walking trail.

Cottonwood Bend

Developed in 1988, Cottonwood Bend is a 4.9-acre neighborhood park that contains picnic facilities and a beautiful playground. There is a potential for a backstop and/or unlighted soccer fields. The park is currently used for soccer practice.

Walden Park

Developed in 1985, Walden Park is considered a neighborhood park, although it lacks many park amenities normally found within this park classification. This .3-acre park provides a park bench and picnic tables. Streets and serves as a landscaped area within a neighborhood surround the park. The park does not serve the function of a neighborhood park.

Country Meadows

Developed in 1993, this neighborhood park contains 7.74 acres. Facilities in this park include play equipment, picnic facilities and a trail. The park needs more landscaping and a shelter.

Bethany Lakes and Joe Farmer Recreation Center

Developed in 1991, Bethany Lakes is a 50-acre community park built on a large gravel mine. The park contains Joe Farmer Recreation Center, constructed in 1996, which serves the entire population of Allen. Once a facility is built on the West side, Joe Farmer Recreation Center will primarily serve the East Allen area. Other facilities at the park includes Lakeside Clubhouse, play equipment, fishing pier, shelter, picnic facilities, rest rooms, trails, 4 ponds, and two parking lots. The park has the potential to be maintained in a semi-natural state with the use of wildflowers and buffalograss. The ponds are showing significant signs of silt and need to be dredged upon the completed development of residential property within the Bethany Lakes watershed.

Watters Crossing

Developed in 1994, this neighborhood park contains 8.71 acres. Facilities at the park include play equipment, picnic facilities, one backstop, a multi-purpose court, trail, and one unlighted soccer field. The park remains in excellent condition and is heavily used. Due to the growth in participation of soccer, games have been imposed on this facility. Future development needs to consider the intended use of this neighborhood park by relocating the soccer fields to another facility.

Bolin

Developed in 1994, Bolin Park serves active recreation needs. Bolin is a joint venture with Twin Creeks whereby the city provides active game fields and Twin Creeks provides a combination of active and private passive uses facilities such as swimming, play equipment, basketball court, tennis, and open space. Bolin park facilities include 2 lighted baseball fields and 2 unlighted soccer fields.

Senior Citizen's Center

The senior citizens have converted an old house in the Central Business District into a center. Their weekly meetings, monthly luncheons, and activities are held at this location.

Allen Cemetery

The Allen Cemetery is managed by the Parks and Recreation Department, but is not considered when evaluating parkland statistics. All of Allen's cemetery lots have been sold as of January 1998.

Plate 6 - a - Existing Park and Recreation Facilities

Plate 6 - b Neighborhood Park Service Areas

Current athletic and recreation programs and projected athletic and recreation programs in Allen are important to consider when projecting future facility needs within the city. Allen Sports Association provides youth sports in Allen and is included in Table 6.d. The Allen athletic and recreation divisions provide athletic and recreation programs to youths and adults and are included in Table 6.e.

TABLE 6.d SPORTS PROGRAMS AND ASSOCIATIONS YEARLY PARTICIPATION City of Allen, Texas				
SPORT	1994 Participants	1995 Participants	1996 Participants	1997 Participants
Basketball	786	830	856	838
Baseball	842	1140	1224	1457
In-Line Hockey	0	150	150	152
Soccer	2514	2860	3512	3924
Softball	659	710	840	557
Football	232	250	250	222
Cheerleading	146	125	125	149
Volleyball	129	128	190	263

Table 6.d shows the rate of growth in youth sports. Allen Sports Association has experienced a steady rate of growth over the past ten years. Development in Allen indicates that this level of growth will continue for the next several years. Of particular interest is the rate at which soccer and baseball have grown. Another sport that has the potential for rapid growth is in-line hockey. Although the statistics do not indicate a growth challenge, the sport is new and is growing at a rapid rate in other parts of the country.

TABLE 6.e				
CITY SPONSORED ATHLETIC PROGRAMS City of Allen, Texas				
	1994	1995	1996	1997
YOUTH SPORTS				
COAST	205	150	175	179
Learn to Swim	414	436	576	1,008
Swimming Pool Attendance	33,318	42,250	44,925	36,450*
Day Camp	223	300	300	350
ADULT SPORTS				
Athletic Camps	252	395	255**	0
Adult Basketball	340	390	500	500
Adult Volleyball	260	570	580	490
Adult Slowpitch Softball	1,728	1,728	2.196	2,484

* Reduced Days by 15 days
** Athletic camps turned over to Allen Independent School District

Recreation Interests

A citizen's survey was sent to a random selection of Allen residents. The response to the survey yielded a confidence interval in excess of ninety percent. The geographic distribution of the survey closely reflected the actual distribution of residents within the City. A summary of the statistically significant citywide responses is contained herein.

As part of the citizen survey, the respondents were asked questions about the types of parks and facilities they use, how often they use these facilities, and their willingness to support park and recreation opportunities. This information is used to measure the interest of the general population but is not used analytically as the sole instrument to determine the required facilities of the future park system. The survey measures the interests of those presently living in Allen. The population is estimated to increase from 35,500 to approximately 130,000, and it is not assumed that we can accurately predict the future desires of future populations. As an example, recreation participation in tennis and soccer in the United States has drastically increased from thirty years ago.

As the city develops, a proportion of the recreational facilities will be provided by the private sector. For example, some residential developers are offering private recreational areas such as racquet

and swimming facilities for residents. Predicting the exact number of needed facilities, i.e., swimming pools or tennis courts, is not the primary intent of this plan. Rather, identifying the elements of the system and charting the path to implement the system is this plan's primary function. The plan is dynamic and will change, as time requires.

While the facility requirements of the future population of Allen cannot be precisely determined, the city can attempt to meet the interests of its existing population while planning the basic components of the system—neighborhood, community, greenbelt, and special-use parks—and proceed with identifying, acquiring and developing park sites. Similar to the 1984 and 1990 citizen surveys, respondents in the 1997 citizen survey indicated a strong interest in using or potentially using parks and open space. When the question was asked, "Do you think additional parks are needed in Allen?", overwhelmingly, respondents supported additional parks. Only 12.0 percent do not believe additional parks are needed. Passive parks gained a respondent support of 83.4 percent, neighborhood parks 76.8 percent, playgrounds 70.3 percent, greenbelts 69.5 percent and active parks gained the support of 56.6 percent. While strong support of passive recreation was gained in the survey, results also showed strong support of active recreation when asked the question, " How often would you or a family member use these facilities?" (See Table 6.f).

Tables 6.f and 6.g identified the percentages of respondents that claim they use Allen parks and recreation facilities/parks. The important point to reference is the relative order in which these facilities appear in the two columns. Column one indicates the percentage of respondents willing to use the facilities daily and once per week (totals combined). Column two constitutes an evaluation that was based on respondents' willingness to use these facilities 2 to 3 times per month. Column three combines the results of columns one and two.

TABLE 6.f			
MOST FREQUENTLY USED COMMUNITY FACILITIES City of Allen, Texas			
	Often (Percent)	Occasionally (Percent)	Total (Percent)
Ball Fields	42.2	21.6	63.8
Indoor Pool	37.2	29.3	66.5
Outdoor Pool	32.7	30.6	63.3
Recreation Center	28.9	20.8	49.7
Basketball Courts	22.1	19.4	41.5
Tennis Courts	14.0	22.0	36.0

Source: Allen Citizen Survey, 1997

Table 6.g examines the frequency in which respondents use various types of parks. Overwhelmingly, respondents prefer passive parks where walking for pleasure is the preferred recreation program. Allen's greenbelt system is addressing this issue, but the current system is fragmented, thereby restricting the potential of the trail system. Children and youth recreation programs also rated high. Allen has begun to address these issues by offering a wider range of programs at the Joe Farmer Recreation Center. Youth camps are very popular and should expand in the future.

Swimming

The relative order of the respondents to use these facilities under these conditions shows strong support for an indoor swimming complex. Combining columns one and two in Table 6.f increases the support of an indoor swimming complex from the second most pressing need to the first. While the outdoor pool showed the third highest level of use, the current facility is operating at maximum capacity. Swimming facilities are being partially provided by the private sector, yet, continue to be a need in Allen. To resolve a portion of this need, the Allen Independent School District and the City are planning the joint use of a natatorium facility. It is believed that this facility will also be operating at capacity once it opens in 1999-2000. Additional outdoor pools will be needed in the future.

TABLE 6.g			
MOST FREQUENTLY USED PARKS City of Allen, Texas			
	Often (Percent)	Occasionally (Percent)	Total (Percent)
Jogging Paths	47.8	23.3	71.1
Hike/Bike Trails	45.5	27.7	73.2
Parks	43.2	31.7	74.9
Children's Recreation Programs	32.4	26.3	58.7
Open Space	31.5	27.0	58.5
Teen Age Recreation Programs	28.3	25.0	53.3
Golf Course	24.4	28.1	52.5
Adult Recreation Programs	18.4	25.6	44.0
Senior Citizen's Programs	13.8	8.7	22.5
In-Line Hockey	12.6	13.0	25.6

Source: Allen Citizen Survey, 1997

Hike/Bike Trails

Allen has an unprecedented opportunity for providing an excellent bicycle transportation program. Two-thirds of Allen is still undeveloped, and there is the possibility of obtaining the necessary right of way for effective bike paths. There are four valid reasons for bike paths—recreation, exercise, transportation, and access to areas that are unavailable to cars. The 1990 citizen survey indicated that there is a support for bike paths (52 percent). The 1997 citizen survey showed even stronger support of 73.2 percent. *The National Bicycle and Walking Study* calls for a doubling of the number of bicycle and pedestrian trips to 15.8 percent mode share, while reducing injuries and fatalities by 10 percent. The *1990 Texas Outdoor Recreation Plan* published by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department establishes that the most needed recreational improvements are for multipurpose trails for use by bicyclists and pedestrians. By integrating on-road bike network with off-road trail opportunities, Allen has the opportunity for both work and recreational mobility.

Acceptance and awareness of bicyclists and pedestrians in the traffic mix and among planners, employers, and the general public throughout the region is a necessary step toward implementing a successful bicycle and pedestrian plan. The Allen Bicycle and Pedestrian plan needs to address effective and cost productive methods to mix bicycles with motorized vehicular traffic in Allen's thoroughfares. A minimum of an additional 12-15 feet of right-of-way will be needed along most major thoroughfares, and the design of community, neighborhood, and linear parks should accommodate bike paths. While other cities may have bike paths inside parks, a cyclist must pack the bike in the car and drive to the destination

to ride the bike bath. Trails and on-street bicycle lanes need to be developed in such a way that major parks and destination points are connected to each other, and to residential areas. Cyclists should be able to access bike paths near their residence, and cycle to a destination point.

Intermodal transportation such as bike-rail, bike-bus, and bike-car are likely to be more popular forms of transportation in the future. Consequently, bike racks for security and storage should be incorporated into the bicycle transportation system. The city should explore the availability of grants from the Department of Transportation (Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act, ISTEA) and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for demonstration bike path projects.

Another challenge for creating an effective trail system is identifying east-west routes. The design for east-west linkages between parks and linear parks along the stream corridors was expressed by the original 1985 Oversight Committee. Creek alignment primarily runs northwest to southeast. No utility easements exist in Allen, therefore, planners are limited to creating an on-road network of trails that are associated with thoroughfares. Past planning has placed bicycle traffic as a secondary need and therefore, bicycle lanes have not been adequately considered. An ordinance and development of design standards will further assure bicycle traffic is adequately considered.

Work has been done through the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) to develop a bicycle plan for the City of Allen and adjoining cities. The plan however, will be updated and, if adopted, will be included as an amendment to this Comprehensive Plan.

Sports Fields

The most heavily used facilities in the Allen Parks and Recreation system are sports fields. Forty-two percent of respondents report that they use sports fields once or twice per week and an additional 21.6 percent use the facilities two to three times per month. The relative order changed when considering those respondents that use the facility two-three times per month. This indicates that the majority of respondents that use sports fields are active in league play that requires participants to use the fields more than once per week.

Allen is addressing the need for additional fields with the development of Allen Station Park. This facility will contain five additional baseball fields, four additional softball fields and two additional soccer fields. Growth in soccer and the increasing growth of the Allen population places a burden on soccer fields. An additional soccer complex is needed in the near future to serve the needs of this user group.

Greenbelts and Linkage Parks

Respondents reported that jogging trails and hike/bike trails were the most popular activity by a total of 71.1 percent and 73.2 percent respectively. Those respondents that claim to use these facilities often, once or twice per week, also had the highest ratings of 47.8 percent and 45.5 percent respectively. Allen addresses this need by developing trail systems throughout the parks and recreation system. The primary facilities for such activity are to be located in the city's greenbelts.

It is the intent of this plan to maintain greenbelt areas in their natural state. This concept reduces maintenance costs, while providing passive outdoor recreational opportunities for the citizens of Allen. The City may elect to put conservation easements on floodplain lands and other areas where appropriate, in order to assure this goal is maintained in the future.

For the greenbelt to effectively serve as a trail transportation system or adequate recreation facility, additional attention needs to be placed on the width of the trails. For park opportunities and the effectiveness of the trail system, a set back ordinance needs to be considered in areas where erosion is likely to threaten recreational areas. This would increase the amount of space dedicated or purchased between the 100-year floodplain line and development. In areas where development is within a few feet of the stream banks, yet outside the 100-year floodplain line, a set back ordinance would increase the recreational and management effectiveness of the greenbelt, while reducing the likelihood that erosion would threaten development or recreation areas.

The creeks should not be paved, straightened or "improved" to increase their capacity to handle storm water. This type of improvement normally creates new problems downstream requiring the "supposed solution" to be used again.

The quality of the corridors must also be protected from another hazard of development—sedimentation. The city should develop an erosion control ordinance that prevents soil erosion both during and after construction. The ordinance might also require on-site detention of storm water in order to regulate the great quantities of runoff that the creeks will be required to handle when the city is fully developed.

Finally, to be truly successful as linear parks, the city must coordinate the design of future streets and bridges to allow uninterrupted pedestrian, and/or bicycle, travel under or adjacent to vehicular routes. This can be accomplished by providing adequate headroom between the path and support structure where bridges are used or by using box culverts large enough for pedestrians and cyclists where roads are built on fill.

Standards and Guidelines

The adequacy of existing parks and recreation facilities can be determined by comparing the needs of present and projected populations with national standards. The National Parks and Recreation Association (NRPA) maintains the most widely accepted guideline and standards for park development as published in the 1990 edition of *Recreation, Parks and Open Space Standards and Guidelines.* These standards should, however, be used as a guide and not as a rule. They represent minimum not maximum goals to be achieved. Age of the population, recreational trends, and local interests have varying degrees of influence on standards. This section includes a comparison between existing conditions and national standards.

Land Acquisition Policy

The Parks and Recreation Department operates under a Land Acquisition Policy that has been formally adopted by the City as Resolution 508-5-84(R). The policy identifies goals for the overall system, defines standards for park types, outlines planning procedures for implementation, and describes methods for land acquisition. The policy provides direction for the Parks and Recreation Department to follow. As part of this plan, the policy will be reviewed and, where required, recommendations for changes to the policy suggested.

Based upon the city's adopted parkland acquisition policy, and assuming the city will have an ultimate population of approximately 130,000 persons, a total of 1,190 acres of parkland would be desirable for the total system. In addition, the city contains 1,000 acres of land in the floodplains, of which

approximately 70 percent is considered desirable by the Parks Department. If all desirable floodplain land were acquired, the city's park and open space system would contain approximately 2,190 acres (See Table 6.h).

These land holdings would provide an excellent park and open space system for the residents of Allen. Unfortunately, it would also be an expensive system to implement and maintain. The floodplains, where suitable, should be used for a portion of both the community and special parks. If as much as 300 acres for these parks were located in the floodplain, the total needed land would be 1,890 acres.

NRPA Standards

The National Recreation and Parks Association also recognizes the importance of using national standards as a minimum expression of minimum acceptable facilities and land requirements for citizens of urban areas. NRPA standards should be used as a guide and should be coupled with local conditions to determine the best provision of parks and recreation resources.

Based upon the city's assumed ultimate population of 130,000 persons, a total range of 3,575 to 3,870 acres of parks and open space would be desirable for the total parks system. In addition, the City contains approximately 1,000 acres of land in the floodplain, of which approximately 70 percent is considered desirable by the Parks Department. If all desirable floodplain were acquired, the city's parks and open space system under NRPA guidelines would contain approximately 3,275-5,570 acres (see Table 6.h).

There is a considerable difference between the NRPA standard and the standard adopted by the Land Acquisition Policy. The primary reason for the discrepancy is due to the recreational intent of Allen's greenbelt system. As Allen develops it will be important to continually evaluate the effectiveness of the greenbelt system and to monitor the needs and desires of park users. Today's survey results indicate that the intended use of the greenbelt system is appropriate and additional parkland beyond the park and open space plan is not necessary.

The NRPA also recommends standards for facilities. Similar to standards for land acquisition, NRPA advises that these standards are to be used as a tool and that community research be conducted to establish local standards. Table 6.i evaluates NRPA facility standards and establishes standards for Allen.

TABLE 6.h					
PARKLAND REQUIREMENTS BASED ON POLICY FOR LAND ACQUISITION AND NRPA STANDARDS City of Allen, Texas					
Facility Type	Acreage Req'd at build-out Res. 508-5-84R	Acreage Req'd at build-out NRPA	1998 (current)	2003 Res. 508-5-84R 53,269	2003 NRPA 53,269
Pocket Parks	0	0	1.5	0	0
Neighborhood Parks	280	175-350	83.4	106	99
Community Parks	350	700-1,120	85	133	345
Metropolitan (City Wide)	no standard	700-1,400	192	no standard	399
Regional	no standard	Variable	0	no standard	variable
Special-use Parks	560	Variable	46	212	variable
SUBTOTAL	1190	2,575-2,870	407.9	451	843
Floodplain	1,000	1,000*			
SUBTOTAL	2,190	3,575-3,870			
Minus Community & Special Park Acres in Floodplain	-300	-300			
TOTAL ACREAGE REQUIREMENT	1,890	3,275-3,570			

* NRPA's standard is variable depending upon the community's need in terms of trail and floodplain protection requirements. Therefore, Allen's standard was applied for calculation purposes.

TABLE 6.i					
FACILITY DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS City of Allen, Texas					
	Existing Facilities	NRPA Required at Build-out	Allen's Requirement at Build-Out	Required in 1998 35,737	Required in 2003 53,269
Swimming Pool	1	7	5	2	2
Picnic Sites	59	350	350	87	133
Hiking/Nature Trails	7	14	14 mi	7	7
Golf Course	0	3	1	0	0
Tennis	6	70	50	12	19
Multi-Use	4	98	30	8	12
Softball/Baseball Lighted Unlighted	 15 1	 19 42	 25 28	 15 5	 19 9
Football	2	7	5	2	3
Soccer Lighted Unlighted	 3 3 (temp)	 14 56	 30 24	 12 8	 16 12
Running Track	0	7	2	0	1
Outdoor Theater	1	-	1	1	1
Recreation Center	1	5	5	1	2
Playgrounds	11	-	-	13	18
Sand Volleyball	0	-	8	2	5
Archery/Shooting	0	3	1	0	0

*Not included in park acreage requirement.
Either located in greenbelt or a special use park.

Parks and Open Space System

The concept of the future park system takes into consideration the stream valleys, the woodlots, the present park system and future needs of the city as it grows to the west. The major stream valleys—Rowlett Creek, Mustang Branch, Watters Creek and Cottonwood Creek (Allen Station Park)—should be

the framework of the parks and open space system. Where possible, major parks should be clustered along the stream valleys and linked by trails utilizing the greenbelt system. East-west linkages should be provided to channel users to the major parks and the greenbelts.

Pocket Parks. Until the early 1980's, small neighborhood parks that were 2 acres or less in size were constructed in some of the neighborhoods (e.g., Hillside Playground and Walden Park). The park plan now discourages the construction of these small sites due to maintenance and efficiency reasons.

Neighborhood Parks. Neighborhood parks are often referred to as the focal point of a neighborhood. A place where residents have the opportunity to meet one another and fellowship. Neighborhood parks can strengthen a community and set standards for maintenance and development. It is planned for each neighborhood to have a park that provides both passive and active recreation opportunities for the neighborhood. Special attention is placed on providing services for pre-school and elementary aged children. Examples of neighborhood parks are Country Meadows, Watters Crossing, and Reed Parks.

Each residential neighborhood is planned to have a neighborhood park. Neighborhood parks should be located is an area that provides for easy access, preferably adjacent to a school or greenbelt. They should not be located adjacent to major thoroughfares or commercial areas. The neighborhood parks should serve the walk-in, recreational needs of the adjacent residential area, i.e., the area within a one-half mile radius. At full development, Allen should have 15 to 20 neighborhood parks, each 5 to 15 acres in size. The number will vary somewhat with development to the west and the number of future residential neighborhoods.

Facilities expected in neighborhood parks are:

- Accessible play equipment meeting United States Consumer Product Safety Commission standards for children under 4 and older than 4 years of age
- Picnic areas with tables, cook grills and trash receptacles, shelters, and drinking fountains
- Multipurpose courts for basketball and volleyball, lighted tennis courts
- Level open play area for athletic team practice and “pick-up” games
- Landscaping development for beautification and screening
- Small parking area, security lighting and trail system

Neighborhood parks should be designed to the following criteria:

- At least 5 acres in size, when adjacent to an elementary school or greenbelt, otherwise 15 acres.
- No more than one-third of the site occupied by active recreational uses; one-third would be buffer area around the park and one-third passive or natural areas.
- Facilities provided to serve mostly neighborhood needs.
- Located adjacent to an elementary school or a greenbelt, if possible.
- Children's play area, picnic tables, benches, and open lawn areas for informal play be designed to meet the needs of the neighborhood.
- Not used for organized athletic activities.
- Serve residential areas within a ½ mile radius.

Community Parks. A typical community park serves several neighborhoods and is located within 1-½ mile of the majority of its users. Community parks typically contain neighborhood park amenities and specialized facilities such as athletic fields not normally found in neighborhood parks. Community parks should provide active and passive uses. Each might contain a swimming pool, a recreation center, several

baseball/softball and football/soccer fields, a bicycle path, tennis courts, multipurpose courts, picnic areas, possibly a running track, and picnicking and open space areas. An example of a regional park is Ford Park.

The plan provides for five community parks. One community park should be located along Rowlett Creek, one along Watters Creek, one in northeast Allen, and two existing parks, Ford and Bethany Lakes. Each park should total 50 acres in size or larger (25 acres in the floodplain). Community parks are normally visited via car and should also be located along major thoroughfares so that traffic mobility into neighborhoods is minimized.

In addition to neighborhood park facilities, Community Parks normally contain the following:

- Lighted competitive athletic facilities such as soccer, softball, tennis, baseball and basketball
- Multipurpose trails for walking, jogging , exercise, and transportation
- Recreation center, swimming pools, or group meeting facilities
- Support facilities such as an internal road system, lighted parking areas, rest rooms, concessions, and security lighting
- Landscaping development for beautification and screening

Community parks should be designed to the following criteria:

- Serve residential areas within a 1½ to 2 mile radius.
- Include between 50 acres or larger and be on a high, well-drained site.
- Located adjacent to a senior high school or greenbelt, if possible.
- Provide adequate on-site parking areas.
- Have no more than one-third of the site occupied by active recreational uses; one-third would be buffer area; and one-third natural areas.

Citywide Parks. City-wide parks usually serve the entire city and are normally 75 acres in size or larger. Citywide parks should provide for the specific recreation needs of the citywide population. Citywide Parks contain specialized attractions such as a nature areas, lakes, historic areas, or botanical gardens. Citywide parks can also contain neighborhood and community park amenities. Allen developed its first Citywide park in 1991, Bethany Lakes Park. This 50-acre park is being designed as a nature park with an adult and children open play area. Allen's second citywide park is in the planning stage and is located on Rowlett Creek. Called "The Woods," this park possesses the largest stand of trees in Allen.

The location of a citywide park should be on sites with special natural amenities, such as a lake, forest, or native prairie. It is desirable for Citywide Parks to be located adjacent to the greenbelt system and along major thoroughfares. Large numbers of visitors will be expected to arrive by vehicle; therefore, access should not be through neighborhoods.

Park and recreation programs are to be provided on citywide park sites, including large special events. Provisions for such uses should reflect the expressed needs of the citizens. Examples of such uses at a citywide park are the Summer Day Camp and the Allen USA Celebration. These programs are some of the most popular activities now being offered by the Parks and Recreation Department based on the programs attendance records.

Since the location of citywide parks is in an area with significant natural features, the sites should remain in a natural, or minimally developed state. In addition to amenities needed for neighborhood parks and community parks, Citywide parks could include:

- Lakes, forests, and nature education facilities to educate the visitor about the sites' natural state
- Multipurpose trails
- Botanical gardens, arboretum, or related facility that educates the visitor on plant material
- Amphitheater or gathering place for events
- Lakes, fishing piers, shelters, and other attractions
- Support facilities such as an internal road system, lighted parking areas, rest rooms, concessions, and security lighting

Citywide parks should be designed to the following criteria:

- Serve the citywide population
- Include at least 75 acres and preferably 100 acres or more
- Include necessary development pertaining to the needs of special activities including athletic complexes, historical/archaeological and natural preserves, botanical gardens and day camps
- Include lakes or water bodies
- Depending on use, as much as one-half of the park area may be contained in the floodplain.

Greenbelt and Linkage Parks. Preservation of greenbelts throughout the city is a great benefit by adding green corridors into the fabric of urban development. Greenbelts provide narrow linkages tying together neighborhoods, parks, schools, and points of interests. Although greenbelts can be narrow, their visual character provides the appearance of expansive open space especially when the long axis of the park is coupled to a street. In Allen, the greenbelt system has the opportunity to link together sites on the north-south axis. East-west linkages will be harder to identify. Examples of linear parks can be seen at Watters Crossing along Watters Creek, Twin Creeks along Rowlett Creek and Aylesbury along Cottonwood Creek.

Linkage parks usually follow utility and drainage easements. Allen has few such easements, therefore, the City should put a good faith effort toward preserving these areas for recreational opportunities.

Allen ordinance No. 1237-4-94 determines conditions in which all land within the fully developed 100 year floodplain must be managed and dedicated to the City. The establishment of this ordinance is to have effective control over flood hazard conditions. A secondary benefit of acquiring this land is to provide recreation opportunities to the citizens of Allen.

Facilities located along greenbelts are restricted due to the process in which the City acquires creek corridors. More emphasis needs to be placed on acquiring land adjacent to the 100-year floodplain line and where development is appropriate. Single loaded collector streets should parallel floodplain to maximize the recreational benefit to the community. Once visionary planning is accomplished in this area, facilities accommodating the desires of the community can take place. Such facilities may include:

- Landscape development and beautification
- Buffer development between residential and higher land use
- Multipurpose athletic practice facilities
- Multipurpose trail system
- Playgrounds and picnic facilities

Greenbelts and linkage parks should be designed to the following criteria:

- Primarily be located within the 100-year fully developed floodplain conditions
- Provide a trail, walk, or bicycle path
- By proper management, reduce area requiring mowing and labor intensive maintenance

- Provide links to other recreational areas.

Special Use Parks. Park facilities that do not fit into one of the categories above are classified as special use parks. These facilities may be temporary use facilities, not large enough to serve as a community or citywide facility, or be of special interest such as a cemetery or downtown plaza. Examples of a special use park in Allen are the Allen Cemetery, McDermott Soccer Fields, and the Allen Senior Citizen's Center.

Park Facility Guidelines and Standards

In order to check the size of the future park system, standards for recreation facilities for Allen were developed and used as the base for allocation of future parklands. The plan provides 790 acres for these parks. Together with special use parks, the plan provides for 936 acres of parkland and 700 acres of greenbelt open space, a total of 1,636 acres (See Table 6.j). This land allocation should be adequate to provide a high quality parks and open space system for Allen.

TABLE 6.J				
PARKLANDS PROVIDED IN THE PARK PLAN City of Allen, Texas				
			Allocation (Acres)	Total (Acres)
A	Community Parks	Current	85	275
		Proposed		360
B	Neighborhood Parks	Current	83	165
		Proposed		248
C	Special Use Parks	Current	46	
	Proposed (Golf Course)		100	146
D	City-wide Parks	Current	192	
		Proposed	0	192
E	Greenbelt 1000 Acres Less 300 FP for Park Use		700	700
TOTAL				1,646
POPULATION				±130,000
ACRES/1000 POPULATION				12.58

Plate 6.c Parks and Open Space Plan