

Section 1 Introduction, Background, and Definitions

“It is the mission of the Southlake Parks and Recreation Department to provide and support abundant, safe and well-maintained park land and trails; offer progressive social and cultural opportunities; and implement recreational and educational programs that collectively enrich the lives of all patrons.” – Parks and Recreation Department Mission Statement



1.1 Introduction and Background

The City of Southlake is geographically located north of, and between, Dallas and Fort Worth, Texas, in an area termed the “Golden Triangle.” This semi-rural, suburban area is so nicknamed for its abundance of quality housing, educational opportunities, and ever-increasing service amenities. The region is generally populated by families larger than the state average, young professionals, and recent retirees who seek the combination of housing and amenities Southlake has to offer.



The purpose of the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan is two fold: one, to implement the Southlake 2025 Plan recommendations for parks and open space by better integrating parks planning with the land use and mobility elements and two, to respond to the needs expressed by Southlake citizens in their desires for leisure services.



The first goal is implemented through a set of recommendations that provide overarching guidelines for the design, scale, type, and location of parks in conjunction with new development based on context of land use categories. The second goal is implemented through the evaluation of amenities and program planning of each public park based on community input.

The 2001 Parks, Open Space, and Recreation plan has been shown to be a well-referenced document since its adoption and functions as the main tool for long-range park planning. Since 2001, the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan has been submitted to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for adherence to their master planning guidelines. Once approved, the plan allows the city to apply for grant funding from TPWD based on the priority needs set forth in the plan. This plan is intended to have a long-range (20-year) planning horizon that is updated every four (4) years based on changing conditions as required by the City Charter. . In addition, a periodic review every two years is required by TPWD to remain grant eligible. Parks staff will provide a two-year review and comment session prior to the update period. In all cases, the total carrying capacity of the city at build-out is used to assume total demand.

1.2 Location

Southlake is located in North Central Texas, situated 23 miles northeast of Fort Worth and 25 miles northwest of Dallas. Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport is only a few short miles to the southeast, and Lake Grapevine borders the city to the northeast. State Highway 114 runs diagonally through the middle of the city, heading east through Las Colinas and into downtown Dallas and west toward the Alliance Airport corridor. The topography is comprised of mostly gently rolling, heavily treed hills and woodland areas, and the area in the north part of the city around the lake is comprised of some of the most prime native Cross Timbers habitat in the region. A ridgeline running just south of S.H. 114 divides the main watersheds of the city south toward Bear Creek and north to Kirkwood Branch of Denton Creek.

1.3 Character and Resources

Southlake can also be characterized by its abundant natural resources in the Lake Grapevine vicinity and within walking distance of most neighborhoods. A very strong commitment to both natural resource identification and protection is a prevailing theme of this plan update, with increased natural area designations taking the place of previously designated active recreational areas or undesignated open space in several conceptual plans. The City of Southlake is also firmly committed to protecting environmental assets in potential private development areas with both existing and proposed ordinances that require developers to design with nature in mind. The enforcement of the city's Tree Preservation Ordinance, widely recognized statewide as a model ordinance, has resulted in creative development practices and the protection of existing resources. As such, Southlake has been awarded the "Tree City USA" designation for eight consecutive years by the National Arbor Day Foundation (NADF). NADF awards the designation only to cities who have demonstrated exceptional local regulations and instructional community outreach and volunteer opportunities in the name of protecting trees and the environment.

1.4 Demographics

The trend in population change within the City of Southlake since 1987 is reflected in Table 1.1. Southlake experienced a rapid increase in population in the decade between 1990 - 2000, with a 13 percent average growth rate during that period – among the highest in Tarrant County. This trend has slowed significantly in the past five years as opportunities for residential land development have become more scarce and the city has developed with less intensity than previously estimated.

**Table 1.1
City of Southlake – Historical Population**

Year	Population	Annual Growth Rate
1990	7,065	--
1991	7,130	1%
1992	7,990	12%
1993	8,900	11%
1994	10,850	22%
1995	13,350	23%
1996	14,950	12%
1997	16,850	13%
1998	19,250	14%
1999	20,750	8%
2000	21,519	4%
2001	22,806	6%
2002	23,500	3%
2003	24,200	3%
2004	24,550	1%
2005	24,900	1%

Source : NCTCOG (www.dfwinfo.com)

**Table 1.2
City of Southlake – Population Projections
Using Logistic Function**

Year	Population	Percent 5-year Increase
2005	24,900	--
2010	29,030	17%
2015	30,305	4%
2020	30,920	2%
Build-out	31,500	2%

Source : City of Southlake Parks and Recreation Dept.

Table 1.3 – Population by Age Group

	Population	% of Total Population	DFW Average (%)
Total	21,519	100.0	100.0
Sex			
Male	10,792	50.2	49.8
Female	10,727	49.8	50.2
Age			
Under 5	1,632	7.6	8.0
5 to 9	2,523	11.7	7.9
10 to 14	2,512	11.7	7.6
15 to 19	1,761	8.2	7.2
20 to 24	390	1.8	7.1
25 to 34	1,310	6.1	16.8
35 to 44	5,198	24.2	17.2
45 to 54	4,209	19.6	12.6
55 to 59	888	4.1	4.2
60 to 64	432	2.0	3.1
65 to 74	417	1.9	4.5
75 to 84	205	1.0	2.7
85 +	42	0.2	0.9
Under 18	7,978	37.1	28.0
65 +	664	3.1	8.1
Source: 2000 U.S. Census (www.census.gov)			

Table 1.4 – Population by Race

Race and Hispanic Origin of Population			
	Number	Percent	DFW Average (%)
White	20,345	94.5	71.5
Black or African American	299	1.4	14.3
American Indian and Alaska Native	53	0.2	1.1
Asian	386	1.8	4.2
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	2	0.0	0.2
Other Race	175	0.8	11.3
More than one race	259	1.2	
<i>Total</i>	<i>21,519</i>		
Hispanic Origin (of any race)	789	3.7	21.5
Source: 2000 U.S. Census (www.census.gov)			

Table 1.5 –Household Income Distribution

Income Range	Households	% of Households	DFW Average (%)
Less than \$10,000	91	1.4	7.2
\$10,000 to \$14,999	47	0.7	4.7
\$15,000 to \$24,999	152	2.4	11.1
\$25,000 to \$34,999	182	2.8	12.6
\$35,000 to \$49,999	220	3.4	16.6
\$50,000 to \$74,999	660	10.3	20.4
\$75,000 to \$99,999	721	11.2	11.7
\$100,000 to \$149,999	1,691	26.3	9.6
\$150,000 to \$199,999	1,129	17.6	2.9
\$200,000 or more	1,529	23.8	3.1
Median household income	\$131,549		\$47,418
Source: 2000 U.S. Census (www.census.gov)			

Identifying demographic characteristics of the current population is important in accurately assessing the needs of the city for parks and recreation facilities. The profiles in Tables 1.3, 1.4 and 1.5 depict age, race, and income charts that provide “snapshots” of Southlake’s population in 2000. The 2000 census identifies the largest demographic group is 25 to 44 years old. The above combined with the fact that nearly one-third of the population is under 18 years old, informs park planners that a large portion of park users will be young families. These demographics are validated by the information gathered in the 2004 Parks and Trails User Survey, a summary of which is presented later in this Section. Southlake has a higher than average percentage of families with young children and as new housing continues at a slower pace, but with a similar housing distribution, this trend is unlikely to change significantly.

1.5 Relationship to the Comprehensive Plan

A critical element of this update of the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan has been the implementation of the goals and objectives from the Southlake 2025 Plan – Phase I. Another aspect of this update has been the incorporation of a critical resources element based on the recommendations of the Phase II area plans of the Southlake 2025 Plan.

A prominent theme emerging from the Southlake 2025 Plan has been the priority placed on protection of critical environmental resources in the city. While a significant portion of this can be addressed through protection of public park property, the plan makes several recommendations for the protection of environmental resources on private property. These recommendations form the basis for developing a set of incentives to maximize open space and environmental resource protection that assist in evaluating development proposals.

This plan implements the following goals and objectives from the Southlake 2025 Plan – Phase I:

Southlake 2025 Plan – Phase I - Goal 5:

Support a comprehensive integrated open space and recreation system that creates value and preserves natural assets of the city. Open spaces may include a combination of natural areas, parks, trails, and greens. A recreation system includes squares, educational and civic uses.

- Objective 5.1 Encourage developers to provide useable and functional open space that is integrated with new development. Access to such areas should be pedestrian friendly.
- Objective 5.2 Ensure that parkland and open spaces include a mix of developed and natural areas in order to preserve wildlife habitats, plant communities and scenic areas while maintaining accessibility.
- Objective 5.3 Ensure that parkland accommodates both active activities such as organized sports and passive activities such as bird watching.
- Objective 5.4 Water conservation and reuse should be a priority in the design of parks and open spaces.
- Objective 5.5 Develop and utilize the city's Storm Water Management Plan to protect against inundation from storm water runoff. Open space easements and corridors for preservation should be identified and integrated to this plan.
- Objective 5.6 The city should continue to investigate public-private partnerships to create open space and recreation facilities with other types of developments including residential, retail, and employment.
- Objective 5.7 Ensure that development is respectful of and appropriately integrated with the natural physical geography of the land in Southlake by requiring environmentally sensitive development to eliminate "scrape and build" development.
- Objective 5.8 Continue to explore those developmental opportunities associated with recreational and entertainment facilities that would appeal to the teen-age population of the City.

2004 User Survey Summary

As previously stated, the purpose of this plan is to update the previously adopted 2001 Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan. The first important task to begin each plan update is a random sampling and statistically relevant survey of parks and trails users and their satisfaction levels and preferences for future facilities. This can be the single most useful tool in shaping the priorities for park development in the four-year periods between master plan updates. Parks staff contracted with the firm of Decision Analysts, Inc., to conduct the survey. Survey participants were contacted via telephone interviews among 600 Southlake residents, randomly selected from a list of published telephone numbers of Southlake residents and supplemented with a random-digit dial (RDD) sample from

Southlake zip codes. Quotas were set by three geographic areas: Area 1 – North of Highway 114; Area 2 – North of FM 1709 but south of Highway 114; and Area 3 – South of FM 1709. The survey was conducted largely in the month of November 2004. To follow is an Executive Summary of the findings. The entire report and the breakdown of the responses can be obtained from the City of Southlake Department of Community Services offices at 400 North White Chapel Blvd., Southlake, Texas, 76092.

CURRENT UTILIZATION

- ❖ The majority of Southlake residents utilize at least some aspect of the park or trail systems. In the past 12 months:
 - 80% visited a city park or park facility.
 - 74% participated in a city event.
 - 56% visited an athletic field or gym.
 - 54% utilized bike or pedestrian paths.
- ❖ High utilization is influenced by three interdependent factors: age, children, and area of Southlake:
 - Younger residents and those with children are more likely to take advantage of Southlake's parks, trails, and recreation services.
 - Area 3 (southern) residents, in general, have higher utilization levels compared to other residents. They also tend to be younger and more likely to have children at home.

OVERALL SATISFACTION

- ❖ Almost 9 in 10 Southlake residents report satisfaction with the quality of parks and recreation.
- ❖ Areas of highest satisfaction include:
 - Park safety and maintenance
 - Quality of athletic and recreation facilities and programs.
- ❖ The Southlake trail system represents the greatest opportunity for improvement:
 - Residents report only moderate satisfaction with the quality and availability of hike and bike trails.
 - Almost 2 out of 5 residents report that no trails are available in their neighborhood. Area 3 (southern) residents report the greatest access to trails.

PARK PREFERENCES

- ❖ Southlake residents are quite satisfied with the parks system. However, they indicated opportunities for improvement:
 - Increase availability of park facilities, including athletic fields and gyms.
 - Focus new park development to include multi-use trails, playgrounds, and open grassy areas.
- ❖ The proposed recreation center is a more popular idea than neighborhood park development; however, support is not overwhelming:

- Almost half of residents prefer the proposed recreation center, but over one-third are more interested in the completion of neighborhood parks. Almost 1 out of 5 residents care for neither option or have no opinion.
- ❖ Overall, Southlake residents consider the proposed recreation center to be the highest priority in park development. This is particularly true for the following segments:
 - Residents living in Areas 1 (north) and 3 (south)
 - Those with children
 - Females
- ❖ Residents more likely to prefer the completion of neighborhood parks include:
 - Residents living in Area 2 (south of Highway 114 but north of FM 1709)
 - Those with no children living at home
 - Residents age 56 or older
 - Males

TRAIL PREFERENCES

- ❖ Trail access is limited:
 - Almost 2 out of 5 Southlake residents report no access to neighborhood trails and dissatisfaction with trail quality and availability.
 - Area 3 (southern) residents report the greatest access to neighborhood trails.
- ❖ Trail development is a top priority:
 - Residents name trails and sidewalks as their top need.
 - Residents expect new trails to be accessible from their neighborhood to local areas such as parks, schools, and shopping.
 - Scenic trails through nature areas or along city creeks are also highly desirable.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ Continue the outstanding work in maintaining facilities and programs. Southlake residents appreciate the care taken to create a safe, family friendly parks system.
- ❖ Develop new trails, particularly in Areas 1 and 2. Increase or complete trails:
 - From neighborhoods to local destinations such as schools and parks.
 - In nature areas such as parks or along city creeks.
- ❖ Because support for the proposed recreation center is not overwhelming:
 - Hold public meetings with residents to discuss the proposed recreation center.
 - Due to differing preferences, hold separate meetings for each of the three areas. In order to expand support for Southlake's parks system and better serve all citizens, consider programs to involve those residents currently less likely to utilize the park system, primarily older residents or those with no children. These might include age-appropriate classes, programs, or city events.

1.7 Definitions

Conceptual or Concept Plans – plans demonstrating a likely development scenario for parks or other areas. These plans are not “set in stone” but simply provide a framework for development.

Natural Area – park land or other areas intended to remain in a largely natural state and specifically planned accordingly.

Needs Assessment – determining incremental demand for parks and recreational services by establishing baseline ratios and projecting demand based on increments of population growth.

Open Space – denotes parks or other areas which have not thus far programmed for any type of park structure or amenity. The preferred term for park land intended to remain open is “natural area.”