

Recreation and Parkland

Parks and recreation play a vital role in the quality of life in the growing urban environment. They are an essential element of any healthy and vibrant community, providing environmental, social, and economic value. There are many benefits to providing greater park and open space opportunities, ranging from the pursuit of health and fitness to the desire for self-education, finding a connection with nature, or simply seeking a sense of belonging. Parks and recreation encourage connections between individuals and groups and supports diversity in a community providing spaces for all community members to enjoy. Parks and open space have also become an integral component in the economic development and sustainability strategies that will help position Pflugerville as an attractive City.

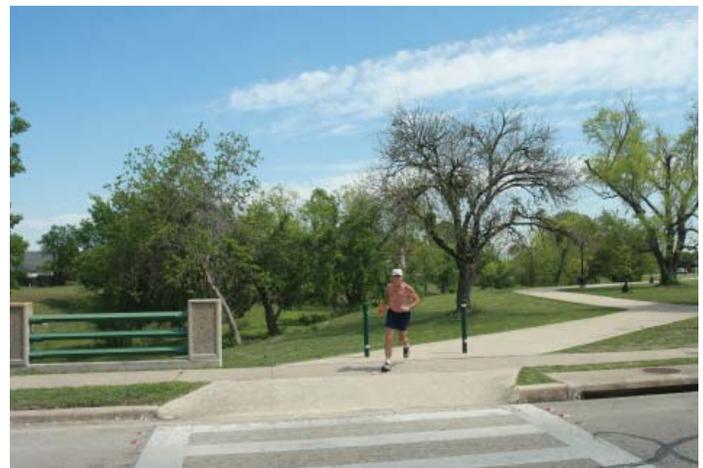
There are currently approximately 280 acres of open space and more than 530 acres of parks. The existing park system contains a range of outdoor programmed activities in large formal parks to less formal uses in small neighborhood pocket parks. In addition, preserved open space along portions of Gilleland Creek have provided important pedestrian linkages between the parks formed along the floodplain, providing users with a connection to the natural environment and offering a unique and safe means of mobility. The open space and park system is widely recognized and regarded as an important community amenity that supports the strong family values associated with Pflugerville. Measures should be taken to continue to enhance and expand the parks, open space and trail system in order to retain and promote this unique community asset.

The park system is widely recognized and regarded as an important community amenity that supports the strong family values associated with Pflugerville. The existing parks provide opportunities for outdoor recreation and are programmed for both larger formal recreational activities and smaller less formal uses as with pocket parks.

Based on the population of 16,335 from the 2000 census, approximately 78% of the population had access to a park within a ¼-mile or 5-minute walk, while almost 95% of the population had access to a park within a ½ mile or 10-minute walk. The Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan is concurrently being created to reflect how the system should be expanded and enhanced in order to address the continued population increase and ensure the park system remains a high quality community asset.



Many of Pflugerville's parks are found along the natural creeks and drainages.



Trails allow Pflugerville residents to enjoy easy access to recreational opportunities.

As mentioned, the trail system is comprised of nine pathways that traverse a total of 25 miles. The system is designed to provide a series of connections between parks and open spaces as well as a means of pedestrian and bicycle circulation between neighborhoods, schools, and community facilities. The trails that line the floodplains of these creeks are the spine of these parks that extend through the downtown core of Pflugerville. The Heritage Loop Trail in Pflugerville has been designated by the United States Department of the Interior National Park Service as a National Recreation Trail in the National Trails System. It runs alongside many historical sites such as the Bohl's House and environmental innovations such as the Green Red Barn renewable energy facility. Future commercial and residential development should utilize the trail system as an amenity and provide safe and inviting connections to the trail system. Trails should provide a unique experience to the user in order to highlight the natural features of Pflugerville that are often times overlooked.

Completed in 2006, Lake Pflugerville is a 180-acre reservoir built to provide residents with surface drinking water. It has become a recreational amenity for the community by providing opportunities for fishing, swimming, bird watching, jogging, canoeing, amongst others. A 3.1-mile trail around the lake and a 14-acre park including parking, boat ramp, restrooms, and enhanced landscaping at the northeast corner was built to augment existing amenities for residents. Events held at Pflugerville Lake include the Pflugerville Pfirecracker Pfestival, Lake Pflugerville Triathlon, and Kid Fish.

Community gardens offer passive recreation and open space as well as generate a connection with the food system, create a sense of place and offer community interaction. It is encouraged to consider expanding the community garden program to other locations throughout the City in underutilized areas. Community garden spaces are now available to the community at the recently created Pecan Street Gardens near the baseball fields at Northeast Metropolitan Park. These gardens are important as they allow residents to experience and have a connection with the food system and offer a healthy amenity for passive recreation. Given that community gardens can be created in unique spaces and range from small to large facilities, it is encouraged to consider expanding the community garden system to other locations throughout the City. When possible, community gardens should be accessible by the trail system.

The recreation center is a multi-use facility that provides various recreational programs and classes to the community. The center offers use of a gymnasium, fitness room, game room, walking/jogging track and day care services. The recreation center is also a major hub of activity for the senior community. A growing population will place a higher demand on the center and services and amenities will need to be increased or changed over time. The recreational center is accessible by trails although it is constrained by its size which does not adequately service the growing community.

Existing Policy Direction

Parks and Open Space Master Plan

The Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan, a guiding document for the development and programming of recreational spaces throughout Pflugerville, was jointly updated with the Pflugerville 2030 Comprehensive Plan process. It replaces the Parks and Open Space Master Plan adopted in 2005. Both the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan and the Pflugerville 2030 Comprehensive Plan shall work together to ensure development of parks keeps pace with growth, design criteria continues to result in spaces that are safe and accessible to the community, and the parks are programmed to meet the needs of the population of the city as it may change over time.

Travis County Greenprint (2006)

As Pflugerville’s jurisdiction has moved eastward, development pressure is sure to follow. Recognizing that Pflugerville’s extensive trail network, primarily west of SH 130, is within the floodplain adjacent to creeks the results and assets identified by the Travis County Greenprint effort in 2006 will be of immeasurable value. Through the greenprinting effort, 22,000 acres of moderate to high priority lands were identified that were determined necessary to be protected. Criteria from four categories – water quality, recreational opportunities, environmentally sensitive lands, and cultural resources, were modeled together to create an overall priority for segments of land. Within Pflugerville, Gilleland Creek and Wilbarger Creek and portions of their watershed areas were considered to be ‘Moderate’ through ‘High’ Priority areas for conservation. They are vital to the water quality of Pflugerville as well as to the communities downstream of Austin along the Colorado River. These corridors can accommodate additional trail improvements that will extend the existing trails along their banks.

Pflugerville is in the Blackland Prairie Ecoregion. The Travis County Greenprint project identifies Blackland Prairie lands in eastern Travis County that have the potential for providing passive recreational opportunities, while at the same time preserving some of the last remaining tracts of this sensitive and historic landscape. Today, this region is almost entirely developed, with only 5,000 of the original 12 million acres remaining in true prairie condition. This region truly represents some of the rarest landscapes in Texas.

Unified Development Code, Subchapter 14

Subchapter 14 of the Unified Development Code establishes the dedication of parkland for all sites that propose five or more residential units. This process considers input from City staff and the Parks and Recreation Commission as well as input from the Planning and Zoning Commission during the platting process. The City should continue to require development to dedicate the floodplain, require parkland dedication and evaluate the dedication and potential fee in lieu provisions on a continual basis. New development should continue to be required to construct trail connections as identified in a trails master plan.



Trails are used for recreational and commuting purposes.



Parks and open space system can be integrated with education and volunteer programs creating ownership.

Public Input

Nearly 40 percent of residents surveyed online and at the Values Workshop listed parks, trails and open spaces as one of their top five elements that enhance quality of life in Pflugerville. Furthermore, 15 percent said that they saw providing more parks, trails, art and community events as the biggest opportunity for Pflugerville over the next ten years. These issues were nearly as high a priority as providing economic development (18%) and encouraging a mix of land uses (16%).

There was a considerable difference between the perceived quality of existing recreational amenities and open space areas as compared to the amount they are valued in the community. On a scale of 1 to 5, residents rated the current quality of 'recreational amenities' to be only 3.2 and 'open space areas' to be 3.5; however, they rated their importance as factors contributing to the quality of life as 4.2 and 4.1, respectively. These ratings indicate that Pflugerville needs to keep pace with growth in development of facilities and manage ever-changing customer needs.

As the city grows, 92 percent of residents responded during the Values Workshop that it should be active in preserving open space. Nearly unanimously, 97 percent, of residents said that protecting and restoring Pflugerville's environmental resources is 'Important' or 'Very Important'. Open Space preservation in Pflugerville is expected to be prioritized along the creeks. These creeks are recognized to be the most environmentally sensitive lands locally as they play a role in maintaining regional water quality, provide flood control, are valuable corridors for wildlife, and provide vegetative cover and tree canopy.

Many locations along these creek corridors have already been preserved as parks and equipped with trails. Residents have requested that access be provided to these open spaces and that there be some sort of active use allowed in them. Two-thirds of those who responded said that it was 'Very Important' or 'Important' to create additional trails, sidewalks and linkages to parks and open space. An even greater majority, 82 percent, 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree' that the trails framework that exists west of SH 130 should be extended to future development east of SH 130 and be promoted as the core focus of the pedestrian system for the entire community.

The expansion of the trail system could be used as a means to meet future goals for improved mobility and an increased share of trips being made by pedestrians. Seniors, overwhelmingly with 58 percent, were viewed as needing improved mobility. Children and teenagers were next with 24 percent. Both groups often lack transportation options and would benefit from an increased trail system, particularly if it was designed to provide access to schools, recreational facilities, and community centers. Those residents commuting to work would also benefit from an expanded trail system. Few of them currently walk or bicycle to work, but nearly one-fifth would prefer to do so if made available.

The bicycle route plan for the hike and bike trail system, is intended to link community and neighborhood services and create a complete network providing access to the whole community using the natural creek corridors that traverse the city limits and is to be used in conjunction with the Thoroughfare Plan. This trail system should be continued and expanded to provide regional connectivity for bicycles that can serve recreational and commuting purposes. Continuing to expand the open space and trail system integrates the protection of open space and provides recreational opportunities for a healthy sustainable community.

What are your top 2 priorities for parks and open space?

Priority	Response
Range of recreation opportunities	23%
Cater to all age groups / ability levels	23%
Should be walkable by all residents	18%
Active Recreation	10%
Community Gardening	10%
Image building	8%
Passive Recreation	4%
Environmental Education	2%
Other	2%

Source: Values Workshop

What are your top 2 priorities for trails and greenways?

Priority	Response
Complete system of connectedness	23%
Connecting Parks / Open Space	18%
Connecting Neighborhoods	13%
Strolling	11%
Fitness	11%
Connecting Centers	10%
Connecting Schools	7%
Connection employment areas	3%
Environmental Education	2%
Commuting	2%

Source: Values Workshop

Residents greatly value the current trail network that links them to the new community garden and recycling center. They can access this area on safe and easily accessible trails. Community gardens should be expanded to incorporate land conservation for community gardens and urban farms to reflect the agricultural heritage of the community. These should be marketed at a regional scale outside of Pflugerville and promote Pflugerville’s community identity.

Given the agrarian history of Pflugerville and the region, it is encouraged for the City to consider partnerships to incorporate land conservation for a community farm to reflect the agricultural and cultural heritage of the community, providing a unique niche to the Central Texas region. Environmental and agricultural education and demonstration locations are limited in this portion of the region and a community farm could offer a unique tourism experience for the community as well as preserve the historical agrarian component that helped to define Pflugerville.

As urban areas develop, changes occur in their landscape. Buildings, roads, and other infrastructure replace open land and vegetation. Surfaces that were once permeable and moist become impermeable and dry. These changes cause urban regions to become warmer than their rural surroundings, forming an “island” of higher temperatures in the landscape. Heat islands can affect communities by increasing



Parks should be programmed appropriately for the needs of the community.



Interactive water features are attractive to all ages.

summertime peak energy demand, air conditioning costs, air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, heat-related illness and mortality, and water quality. Trees and vegetation reduce the heat island effect caused by development. The creek corridors (or riparian areas) and urban tree canopy are important for a multitude of benefits. They cool the air and reduce peak demand for energy, filter particulates from the air, store carbon, release oxygen, and provide inviting and aesthetically pleasing places to drive, walk, and live.

Pflugerville has long recognized the importance of the urban forest. They proactively preserved creek corridors and riparian areas and incorporated them into parkland. They established the urban forestry program in 2006 and have been recognized by the Arbor Day Foundation as a Tree City USA annually since 2007. In 2009 a Tree Preservation Ordinance was adopted and a Tree Technical Manual was passed to provide Best Management Practices for the planting, pruning, maintenance, and preservation of trees. The City will continue efforts to protect existing natural tree canopies and the urban forest through protection of creek corridors, proactive management of the urban tree canopy, and education and outreach efforts to the community.



Lake Pflugerville provides trail and recreational opportunities.



Trails should provide local and regional access for recreational and commuting purposes.

Recreation and Parkland Goals

Goal 1: Pflugerville will have connected open space and a hierarchy of parks that form a complete system in order to serve the community.

Policy 1.1: Increase the amount of parks and facilities to exceed present standards and meet future demand.

Action 1.1.1: Develop and maintain a Parks and Recreation Master Plan in order to plan for the distribution of parks and open space across the city so that as many residents as possible can access facilities within a ¼ mile distance from neighborhoods and centers.

Action 1.1.2: Identify and prioritize parcels that may be suitable for development for parks of all sizes and attributes.

Action 1.1.3: Review and revise the developer obligation requirements to achieve the goals established in the Master Plan.

Policy 1.2: Proactively solicit partnerships and coordinate the provision of parks and recreational programs with other governmental bodies, community organizations, and private entities that exist in Pflugerville.

Action 1.2.1: Maximize the use of existing facilities in the City owned by PISD, City of Austin, and Travis County to accommodate recreational programming.

Action 1.2.2: Evaluate the possibility of partnering with other entities to develop and operate, or contribute to the maintenance of new parks and recreation facilities.

Action 1.2.3: Evaluate potential collaborations with the Lady Bird Johnson (LBJ) Wildflower Center, or similar organizations to develop a satellite nature center and participation in the Sustainable Sites Initiative.

Goal 2: Pflugerville will have a national caliber network of trails that link parks, homes, schools and community facilities across the entire city to provide multi-modal access throughout the city, to provide safe routes for bicycles and pedestrians to key locations, and to reinforce the existing network of trails.

Policy 2.1: Develop an integrated trail master plan in conjunction with the City’s Thoroughfare Plan, allowing for all modes of accessibility.

Action 2.1.1: Develop and maintain a long-range trail system plan that connects into the regional trail system network.

Action 2.1.2: Integrate the trail network with the city-wide pedestrian and bicycle circulation network.

Action 2.1.3: Develop programming along a greater number of trails for recreational and educational purposes.

Policy 2.2: Locate parks, schools, and community facilities in locations accessible via the trail network.

Action 2.2.1: Utilize the trail system plan to require incorporation of trails into the plats and site plans of suitable facilities.

Action 2.2.2: Encourage the location of future parks, schools, community facilities, and public buildings in areas that have accessible trails.

Goal 3: Parks and Recreation facilities and programs will continue to meet current level-of-service standards and evolve as the community’s recreational needs change.

Policy 3.1: Study the feasibility of, and design future facilities to meet the identified recreational needs of the community over time.

Action 3.1.1: Conduct feasibility studies for recreation centers and aquatic centers identified in the Master Plan.

Action 3.1.2: Develop individual park concept plans for new community and regional parks to determine the amenities included to fulfill identified needs.

Policy 3.2: Expand existing programs and respond to the changing demand for new recreational programs.

Action 3.2.1: Introduce new programs and facilities to meet the changing demographics and interests of the community.

Goal 4: Pflugerville will preserve and protect environmental quality and reinforce the heritage and identity of the community.

- Policy 4.1: Preserve the existing urban forest and manage the conversion of forested lands in the City.
 - Action 4.1.1: Develop and maintain a long range Urban Forestry Plan to ensure the continuity and establishment of the urban forest.
 - Action 4.1.2: Continue to provide opportunities to educate the public about the value of the urban forest.
 - Action 4.1.3: Maintain Pflugerville’s status as a Tree City USA.

Goal 5: Parks and facilities will attain high levels of quality in design and maintenance.

- Policy 5.1: All parks will be accessible and safe for people with all types of physical abilities.
 - Action 5.1.1: Ensure all new and existing facilities meet the most current accessibility and safety requirements.
 - Action 5.1.2: Identify existing facilities to be revised to most current standards.
- Policy 5.2: Incorporate features that promote cultural heritage and a high quality of life into all new park and recreation projects.
 - Action 5.2.1: Encourage the incorporation of public art in all new facilities appropriate to the type of use and location.
 - Action 5.2.2: Incorporate design concepts into the construction of new facilities that will allow for the long term sustainability of the project.
- Policy 5.3: Renovate and better maintain existing parks to increase patronage.
 - Action 5.3.1: Enhance and revitalize existing parks so that they are better utilized by the public they are serving.

Goal 6: The operations of parks, recreation, and open space will increase awareness of existing programs and ensure the appropriateness of new facilities to the community.

Policy 6.1: Expand range of promotional materials and the number of outlets where residents and visitors can obtain it.

Action 6.1.1: Develop and review an annual marketing plan that indicates where, when, and how the Parks and Recreation Department distributes information throughout the community.

Policy 6.2: Continue to gather and implement feedback on recreational programming to meet the needs of the community.

Action 6.2.1: Conduct an annual City-wide parks and recreation user survey.

Action 6.2.2: Conduct regular focused survey of target groups, such as teens, sports leagues, seniors, and families.