



DEFINITION

Parks and open spaces are defined as any land that is free of residential, institutional, commercial, or industrial use. The quality of life in a community relies on the careful balance between equity, environment, and economy. More than any other single item, the overarching aesthetic value and recreational options of a City's parks, recreation and open spaces (PROS) contribute to the City's enduring brand and promotes its image to visitors and residents alike.

CURRENT CONDITIONS/FACILITIES

The Piney Woods region of East Texas, with its millions of acres of pine forests and wetlands, has a unique appeal all its own. This natural region of Texas is marked by rolling terrain covered with pines and oaks, and rich bottomlands with tall hardwoods. Palestine takes pride in its natural surroundings, identifying itself with the native dogwoods that grow in the surrounding woods, and offering an annual Dogwood Festival.

Palestine's citizens have the opportunity to embrace nature's bounty and celebrate the variety of ecosystems while enjoying a picnic, bicycle ride, bird watching excursion, or a leisure hike. Parks, open space, and recreational opportunities are important, not only to enhance quality of life and neighborhood vitality, but also to preserve natural resources and provide alternative modes of travel and connection between neighborhoods and growth centers.



FIGURE 35: DAVEY DOGWOOD PARK



FIGURE 36: ANNUAL DOGWOOD FESTIVAL

More than any other single item, the overarching aesthetic value and recreational options of a City’s parks, recreation and open spaces (PROS) contribute to the City’s enduring brand and promotes its image to visitors and residents alike. As well as being a place to gather as family and community, and to exercise and relax, parks, recreation and open spaces are a source of pride and identity to its citizens.

Palestine has 12 parks, including athletic complexes and YMCAs, which make up 1.6% percent of the total land area within the city limits and ETJ. The park sites total 451.5 acres. (Lakes and their facilities are not included in the acreage calculations.) In addition, Palestine’s Community Forest includes approximately 900 acres of undeveloped or lightly developed park land used for hiking, fishing, and habitat preservation.

Also not counted as Palestine’s current park acres are any parks and open spaces held by schools or private homeowner’s associations. Park, recreation, and open spaces are held by schools for the specific use of the communities school-aged children and are an essential part of the overall PROS health in a community.

| PARKS AND FACILITY LOCATIONS | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| REAGAN PARK 16.1 ACRES | CROCKETT ROAD AND REAGAN STREET 6 TENNIS COURTS (LIGHTED) 2 PLAYGROUNDS 3 LARGE PICNIC SHELTERS (AVAILABLE FOR RENTAL) PICNIC AREAS WITH GRILLS 1 SAND VOLLEYBALL COURT 2 SPLASH DECKS 1 BANDSTAND (AVAILABLE FOR RENTAL) 2 PUBLIC RESTROOM FACILITIES |
| CALHOUN PARK 10 ACRES | END OF CALHOUN STREET 1 LIGHTED SOFTBALL FIELD 1 PUBLIC RESTROOM FACILITY PLAY EQUIPMENT 1 LARGE PICNIC SHELTER (AVAILABLE FOR RENTAL) |
| WILLIE MYERS PARK 2.4 ACRES | SOUTH DORRANCE STREET AT WEST CAMPBELL STREET 1 BASKETBALL COURT 1 PLAYGROUND 1 PUBLIC RESTROOM FACILITY 1 LARGE PICNIC SHELTER (AVAILABLE FOR RENTAL) |
| STEVEN BENNETT PARK 22.5 ACRES | NORTH LOOP 256 AT MOODY STREET (ADJACENT TO YMCA) 3 SOFTBALL FIELDS 2 PICNIC SHELTERS 4 FITNESS STATIONS 1 SOCCER FIELD (LIGHTED) BOARDWALK NATURE TRAIL PLAY EQUIPMENT 1 BASKETBALL COURT |

FIGURE 37: PALESTINE PARK FACILITIES

| PARKS AND FACILITY LOCATIONS (CONT'D) | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| GREENS PARK 20 ACRES | TIP STREET AT CONRAD STREET 1 BASKETBALL COURT PLAY EQUIPMENT 9-HOLE DISC COURSE PICNIC AREAS |
| LARRY STREET PARK 1 ACRE | LARRY STREET AT VICTORY STREET PLAY EQUIPMENT 1 PICNIC SHELTER (AVAILABLE FOR RENT) 1 PUBLIC RESTROOM FACILITY |
| MITCHELL CAMPBELL FIELD 3 ACRES | LAURA STREET AT KICKAPOO STREET 1 LIGHTED BASEBALL FIELD 1 PUBLIC RESTROOM FACILITY |
| ATHLETIC COMPLEX 29 ACRES | ARMORY ROAD 10 LIGHTED BALL FIELDS WITH SEATING 2 PUBLIC RESTROOM FACILITIES 2 CONCESSION AREAS (AVAILABLE FOR LEAGUE PLAY) |

FIGURE 38: PARK FACILITIES CONT'D

Citizens emphasized that parks and lakes are important to the health and vibrancy of their community. Citizens also expressed:

- a necessity for an increase in activities and programming in existing parks
- the desire to better enhance and utilize parks' natural beauty
- the potential role for attractive park facilities to induce tourists to visit and stay longer
- the desire for the City to market the natural beauty and sense of place provided by Palestine's parks.

The residents stated in public meetings that Palestine's parks and lakes are often unadvertised, hidden, and underutilized. However, citizens also emphasized that there is huge potential for future park and recreation activities in the city. Citizens envision city parks, recreation facilities and lakes that are coordinated, promoted, and that provide well-groomed hike and bike trails and a great tourist attraction.

| OTHER PARKS AND YMCA | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| DAVEY DOGWOOD PARK 254 ACRES | 900 NORTH LINK STREET (ADJACENT TO NORTH LOOP 256) OVER FIVE AND ONE-HALF MILES OF HARD-SURFACED ROADS AND UNINCORPORATED HIKING TRAILS. |
| PALESTINE COMMUNITY FOREST APPROX. 900 ACRES | LOCATED ON BOTH SIDES OF U.S. HIGHWAY 287 JUST TO THE NORTH OF GILLESPIE PARK. IT INCLUDES FOUR LAKES, IS USED FOR HIKING, FISHING, AND TO PRESERVE THE NATURAL HABITAT OF WILDLIFE IN THE AREA. |
| TEXAS STATE RAILROAD PARK 93.5 ACRES | EAST OF LOOP 256 IN PALESTINE ON US HWY 84 RV PARK AND CAMPGROUNDS |
| PALESTINE YMCA | 5500 NORTH LOOP 256 (S.E. OF STEVEN BENNETT PARK) |
| PALESTINE YMCA ALEX PATEL SOCCER COMPLEX (OPENING FALL 2015) 75 ACRES | INTERSECTION OF TEXAS 19 AND U.S. 287 NORTH MULTIPLE SOCCER FIELDS BOY SCOUT NATURE TRAIL PAVILION PICNIC AREA |

FIGURE 38: OTHER PARKS AND PRIVATE RECREATION FACILITIES

STANDARDS

The National Parks and Recreation Association (NRPA) has established standards for community park facilities. Utilizing the NRPA Standards, Figure 41, below, effectively depicts the City's recreational facility needs.

Overall NRPA acreage standards for the current population level call for a total of between 505 and 608 acres for all of Palestine's parks, which is just above Palestine's current total of 451 acres. At maximum projected population in 2040, Palestine would need between 588 and 708 total acres of park land. Inclusion of the Community Forest in the overall park acreage would provide enough park land for maximum projected population.

| <i>Major Recreation Facility Level of Service in the City of Palestine</i> | | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| Activity/Facility | NRPA Recommended Guidelines: Facilities Per Population | Existing Facilities in City of Palestine | Facilities for 2010 Pop. of 18,712 | Facilities for Projected Population of 21,775 in 2040 |
| Baseball/Softball Fields (league) | 1 per 5,000* | 15 | 4 | 4 |
| Basketball Courts (outdoor) | 1 per 5,000* | 3 | 4 | 4 |
| Tennis Courts | 1 per 2,000* | 6 | 9 | 11 |
| Volleyball Areas (outdoor) | 1 per 5,000* | 1 | 4 | 4 |
| Pavilion/Picnic Shelter | NRPA = No Standard 1 per 2,000** | 8 | 9 | 11 |
| Playgrounds | NRPA = No Standard 1 area per 1,000*** | 7 | 19 | 22 |
| Recreation Center | 1 per 20,000 - 30,000*** | 1**** | 1 | 1 |
| Soccer Fields (league) | 1 per 10,000* | 1***** | 2 | 2 |

NRPA = National Recreation and Parks Association
 *. Guidelines from Appendix A in Recreation, Park and Open Space Standards and Guidelines, p. 60- 61, 4th printing 1990
 **. Guidelines from Kansas City Metropolitan Region Public Parks Standards in Recreation Park and Open Space Standards and Guidelines, p. 67, 4th printing 1990
 ***. Guideline from Carrollton Parks & Recreation Department (Feb. 1999).
 ****YMCA Facility
 *****YMCA facility to be built will add numerous fields.

FIGURE 39: PARK FACILITY STANDARDS

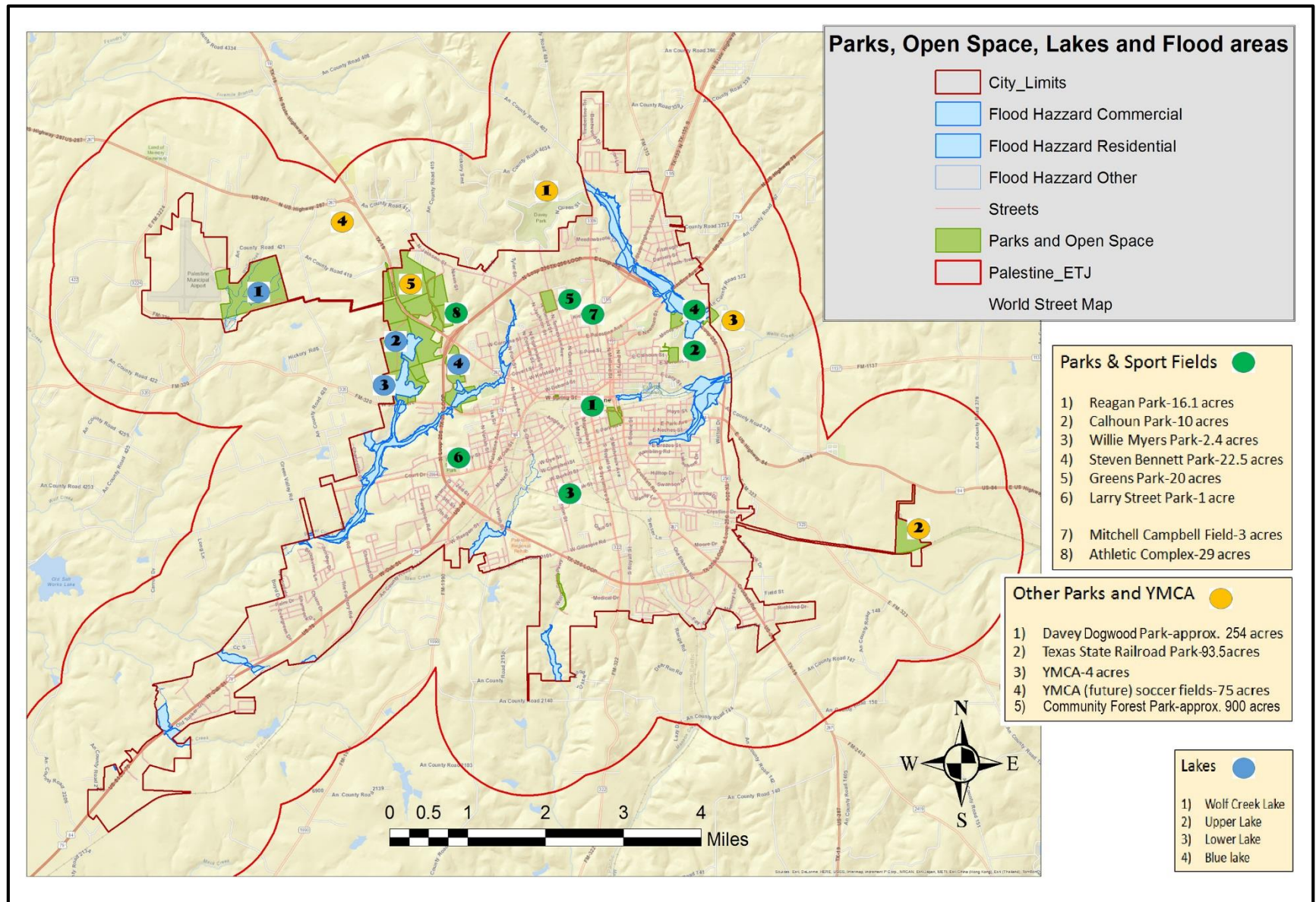


FIGURE 40: PARK AND RECREATION FACILITIES MAP

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

The implementation portion of this plan suggests that the City of Palestine engage an outside entity to work with the City, citizens, and local organizations to develop a comprehensive Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan (PROS Plan)

The Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan should include:

- An extensive community engagement component, including establishment of a community based steering committee
- A complete parks facilities inventory, including assessment of current condition
- Multi-step needs assessment, including demand based, standards based, and resource based needs analysis
- Conceptual parks facilities plans indicating possible locations for in-park programming
- A detailed implementation plan, including a complete listing of needed projects and prioritization of needs.

The PROS plan would be adopted as an amendment to this Comprehensive Plan, and would serve as the “road-map” for park, recreation, and open space development in Palestine.

Additional recommendations include a complete review of Palestine’s development regulations to include appropriate landscaping standards and dedication requirements for new construction and redevelopment and implementing landscaping ordinances that provide for improved streetscape with plants that reflect Palestine’s natural character.



Parks and Open Space goals and policies for this comprehensive plan are derived from citizen input and baseline information. They are:

Goal P1: Provide a high quality, diversified parks, recreation and open space system that provides for all age and interest groups.

Strategies:

P1.1: Provide neighborhood, community, and special use parks and facilities that are accessible to neighborhoods and citizens.

P1.2: Where appropriate, initiate joint planning and operating programs with other public and private agencies to provide for special activities like soccer and baseball league and tournament facilities that can provide services to local residents and attract visitors from the region and the state.

P1.3: Engage local non-profit and neighborhood resources to provide for neighborhood level beautification activities and programs.

Goal P2: Provide a system of high quality, accessible multi-use trails and greenway corridors that offer diverse, healthy outdoor experiences within a rich variety of landscapes and natural habitats, accessing and connecting the area's natural environmental features, public facilities and developed local neighborhoods and business districts.

Strategies:

P2.1: Plan a comprehensive system of trails and greenway corridors.

P2.2: Connect and unify neighborhoods with local, regional and state recreational activities as well as schools, shopping, and public facilities.

Goal P3: Create effective and efficient methods of acquiring, developing, operating and maintaining facilities and programs that

appropriately distribute costs and benefits to public and private interests.

Strategies:

P3.1: Revise and implement sub-division and development ordinances that require dedication of land to parks and trails or fee in lieu of dedication to be used for land acquisition.

P3.2: Engage local school districts and other organizations to maximize access to facilities while minimizing duplication of costs.

P3.3: Investigate innovative available methods for the financing of maintenance and operating needs in order to reduce costs, retain financial flexibility, match user benefits and interests, and increase facility services.

Goal P4: Design and develop pedestrian streetscapes that are sustainable, accessible, safe, and easy to maintain, in order to enhance overall sense of place and improve resident and visitor experience.

Strategies:

P4.1: Include streetscape, landscaping, and pedestrian amenities as appropriate in future planning efforts for Downtown, the Medical District, and reworking of subdivision and development ordinances.

P4.2: Include local and native plant palette in landscaping choices to reduce maintenance costs while reflecting an authentic sense of the local natural environment.

P4.3: Include accessibility as a requirement in future development ordinances and redevelopment plans.