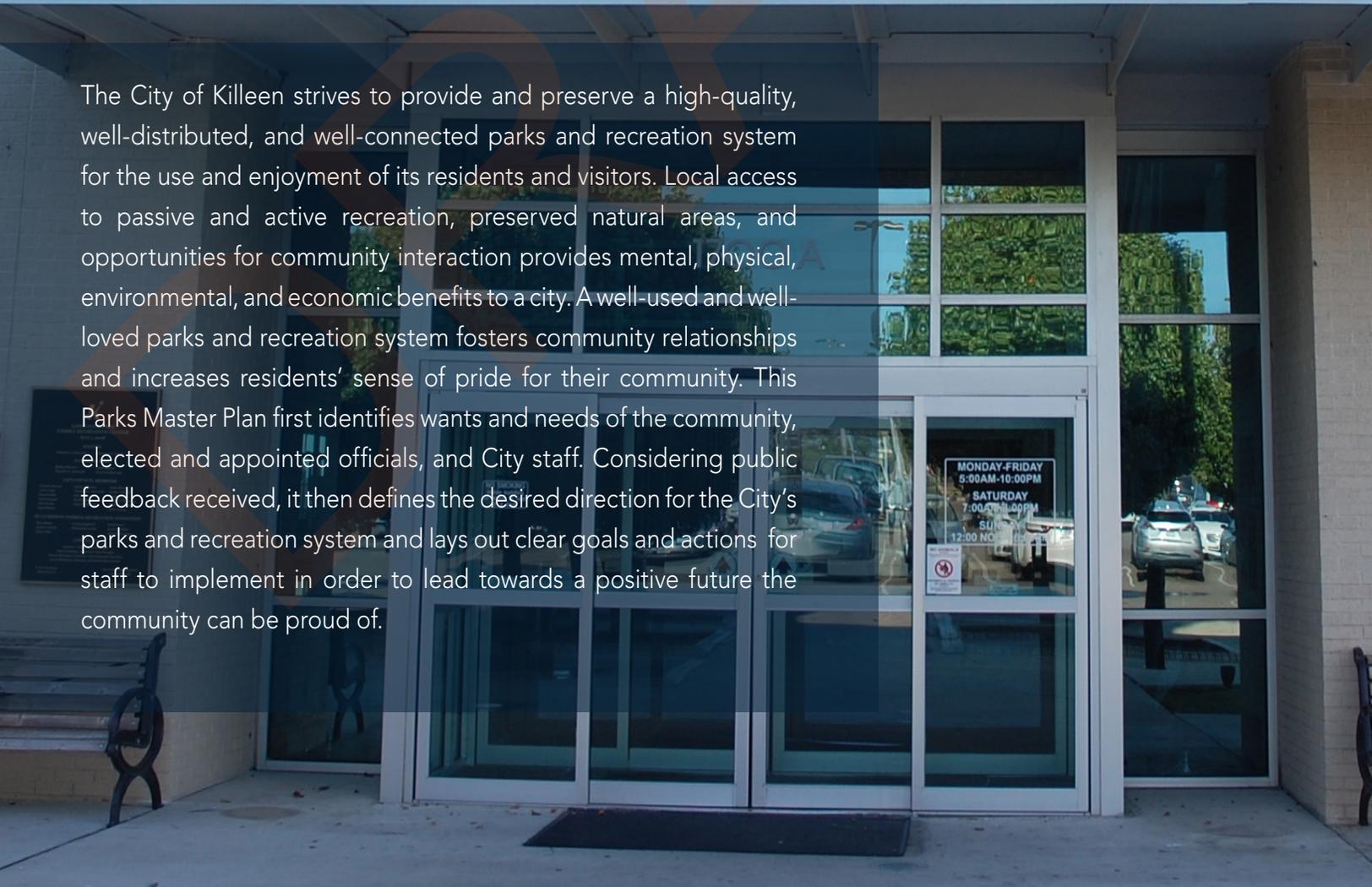


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PLAN INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT



The City of Killeen strives to provide and preserve a high-quality, well-distributed, and well-connected parks and recreation system for the use and enjoyment of its residents and visitors. Local access to passive and active recreation, preserved natural areas, and opportunities for community interaction provides mental, physical, environmental, and economic benefits to a city. A well-used and well-loved parks and recreation system fosters community relationships and increases residents' sense of pride for their community. This Parks Master Plan first identifies wants and needs of the community, elected and appointed officials, and City staff. Considering public feedback received, it then defines the desired direction for the City's parks and recreation system and lays out clear goals and actions for staff to implement in order to lead towards a positive future the community can be proud of.



Why Do We Plan for Parks & Recreation in Killeen?

While Killeen is located adjacent to the largest army base in the country (Fort Hood), the City still maintains much of its quaint and rural character. Located 16 miles east of IH-35 in the western portion of Bell County, Killeen has a rich history as a farm community and military base. Since the 1940s when Fort Hood was first established, Killeen has strived to provide the best facilities for its residents. This Parks Master Plan is intended to build upon that desire so that the City of Killeen will continue to offer one of the best parks systems in Central Texas. From its rural character to its modern recreational amenities, residents of Killeen are proud to be part of this community.

The year 2016 is an opportune time for Killeen to update its Parks Master Plan. Currently the City is experiencing rapid growth, especially in the southern quadrant. However, nearly 80 percent of existing parks are located in the northern area, thereby leaving the newly developed areas in the south underserved. The City is also pursuing development of two major parks (Heritage Oaks in the southeast and Westside Regional Park in the northwest) to provide facilities to those residents. While this will add two new signature parks to the system, there are still large areas that remain underserved.

Higher education opportunities are also growing within the City. Texas A&M Central Campus is expected to continue growing with approval for a third building on the campus. However, there are no university plans to provide on-campus housing for its students. Therefore, the demand for housing in Killeen is expected to continue rising throughout the next several years. Due to the changes in growth and development, the need for park facilities should be further analyzed.

This Parks Master Plan document is the culmination of the park planning effort. It provides an assessment of the current parks and recreation system in Killeen in the year 2016, and examines potential opportunities to fill key recreational

“Parks and open space improve our physical and psychological health, strengthen our communities, and make our cities and neighborhoods more attractive places to live and work.”

*~ Paul M. Sherer,
The Trust for Public Land*

needs. The plan is intended to guide staff and appointed and elected officials as they decide how best to meet and prioritize the recreation needs of Killeen over the next 10 years and beyond. It is an ambitious plan, but one that can be tackled in readily achievable steps as demand increases and resources become available.

What is a Parks Master Plan?

Parks are defined as an area of land that is dedicated and preserved for the enjoyment of the public. Parks offer opportunities for recreation, both active (such as organized sports) and passive (such as picnicking). A parks master plan is intended to guide a city in the process of acquiring parks and open space, and developing parks with amenities to allow for recreation such as trails, athletic fields, or pavilions.

Open space is land that is dedicated for conservation and preservation often due to its ecological value, wildlife habitat quality, cultural significance, and functional role to assist with flood management. Open space can be ideal for bird watching, wildlife viewing, and relaxation. Strategically dedicating land as open space can contribute significantly to attaining and preserving a sense of rural character in a city environment.

The importance of open space is often overlooked by cities since the land is not actually programmed for a specific





recreational activity. Additionally, because the land does not require regular maintenance, sometimes people think the area is vacant instead of intentionally preserved. However, the very reason for it not requiring regular maintenance can be a great asset as it offers outdoor enjoyment, visual pleasure, and ecological function at a minimum cost to a city. In some cases, passive recreational activities (such as trail walking and nature viewing) are combined to provide human connection to the natural environment; something that is becoming increasingly more scarce as the U.S. population urbanizes.

The 2016 Parks Master Plan Update for the City of Killeen aims to:

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

Planning Process for a Parks Master Plan

There are many steps in a park planning process. These steps are illustrated in Figure 1.1, *Planning Process*, and include: understanding the existing conditions in the community and developing appropriate goals for the parks system, seeking public input, analyzing park and recreation needs, developing recommendations, and offering implementation strategies.

Figure 1.1, *Planning Process*



The most important component of any planning process is seeking public input from the citizens, staff, and appointed and elected officials in Killeen. This allows residents to determine what their preferred park and recreation priorities should be for the next five to 10 years (see Appendix A, *Supplemental Information*, for copies of meeting notices, sign-in sheets, meeting minutes, and a copy of the original survey).

The recommendations of a parks master plan are typically divided into three categories. The first category includes near-term recommendations that can be implemented immediately, address the needs of the existing population,



to pay a fee to use a recreation center or to be a part of an athletic league, they expect parks and festivals/ community events to remain free for public use.

- Being healthy has become a nationwide concern. Obesity and heart disease have become so prevalent in society that the White House started the “Let’s Move” campaign to get Americans to exercise. It is possible that funding or grants for physical, outdoor activities may be more readily available in the future to help reduce obesity rates.
- Traditional grant sources and public funding are not as easy to find. The federal surpluses briefly experienced at the turn of the century are now a thing of the past, and deficit spending has become the norm over the past decade. As a result, little help has been given from the federal government, and even popular grant programs such as enhancement funds for trails and beautification are not always available. When they are, they are becoming more competitive.

- Most of society is now cashless. Very few people carry cash, and even fewer will carry their wallet when they visit a park or exercise on a trail. A parks department that accepted credit cards or offered online registration was considered cutting edge nearly a decade ago. Today, however, that has come to be expected by people. In fact, today people are looking for even easier ways to sign up for a sports league or rent a pavilion for a private party. It is projected that in the very near future, parks departments will offer mobile apps for smart phones that allow convenient ways to register for programs, pay user fees, or get information about upcoming events.

Outdoor Recreation Trends

- One of the most important and impacting trends in parks and recreation today is the increased demand for passive recreation activities and facilities. Passive recreation, as compared to active recreation, includes activities such as walking and jogging on trails, picnicking, enjoying nature, and bird watching. It focuses on individual recreation

Figure 1.2, Benefits of Parks, Recreation, and Open Space

Individual and Community Benefits

- Helps ensure an overall higher quality of life
- Provides refuges of safety for at-risk youth, which can in turn help reduce juvenile delinquency
- Provides opportunities for people of all ages to be physically active, socially engaged, and cognitively stimulated

Economic Benefits

- Increases property value of homes in close proximity to parks
- Can help attract new businesses to the community by improving the standard of living

Environmental Benefits

- Protects and preserves vital green spaces and critical wildlife habitat
- Educates visitors regarding the appropriate use of natural areas as recreational areas
- Contributes to clean air and water

Personal Health Benefits

- Access to parks and nature increases the frequency of exercise and improves psychological and social health
- Play is critical for child development
- Staying active can help reduce the risk of heart disease, diabetes, obesity, depression, and other health problems



water on children excited with expectation. The water is collected directly in surface drains from where it is circulated. Important factors to consider for the selection and preparation of an appropriate site are accessibility, visibility, and location away from debris such as leaves or other materials that can possibly clog the drain system.

- In Killeen and other cities throughout parts of Texas, residents prefer covered amenities more so than having enclosed ones. An example of this is the Harker Heights covered soccer stadium. Since it is covered, both players and spectators are protected from the weather such as direct sunlight or rain. Having covered facilities allows them to be used throughout most of the year. Other examples could be covered basketball courts or having several pavilions available for picnicking in parks.

Indoor Recreation Trends

- Nationally there is a trend of moving away from providing multiple smaller recreation centers to providing a single large-scale center for an entire community (up to a 15 to 20 minute drive time for users). This trend responds to increased diversity of programming that can be provided
- at these larger centers, while also being more convenient for families to recreate together. These types of centers also provide increased staff efficiency.
- There is also a trend of combining separate senior activity areas into a large community center. Such an area with a distinct entrance separate from the main center entrance gives the desired autonomy of seniors while providing convenient access to the various opportunities in a recreation center including an indoor walking track, warm water exercising, and adequately sized fitness areas.
- Many cities today are seeking a higher fee structure to help offset operational costs. Observation reveals a range from a 50 to 60 percent operational cost recapture rate all the way to a 100 percent recapture rate across the state of Texas.
- University students today have elaborate recreation and aquatic facilities at their disposal. New graduates are leaving their universities with expectations for cities to provide comparable facilities. As quality of life is an important component of a new graduate's job search



The Family Recreation Center is an example of a large-scale recreation center meant to serve the City of Killeen.



and residence decision, this trend has influenced what new recreation centers provide.

Environment and Recreation Trends

- As cities and towns continue to grow and expand, citizens are becoming increasingly aware of the diminishing amounts of open space and natural areas in and around their communities. Similarly, this increased awareness parallels an increased interest in preserving open spaces, rural landscapes, and natural areas along creeks, lakes, wooded areas, prairies, and other environmentally and culturally significant locations.
- Related to this increased interest in the preservation of open spaces and natural areas is an increased interest among citizens to consider alternative development strategies within their communities. This is in order to preserve and provide access to natural areas, decrease traffic congestion, encourage walking and bicycling, enhance property values, and increase and enhance recreation opportunities within their community. Alternative development strategies often considered include mixed-use development, new urbanism, and conservation developments. In fact, Killeen's

2010 Comprehensive Plan repeatedly recommends conservation or cluster development as a means of preserving more open space.

- The attributes of a community play a large role in attracting (or detracting) people to a city or region. Research shows that the quality of a city's environment (its climate, park space, trails, and natural resources) is a significant factor in attracting new residents. As such, high-quality, high-quantity parks and open space systems will attract people while low-quality, low-quantity parks and open space systems will detract people.

Population Trends

The population of the United States is starting to shift dramatically from what it was decades ago. This, in turn, will have a direct affect on recreation programming in terms of the types of people our cities are now serving and the types of activities they are interested in. Emilyn Sheffield of California State University at Chico notes five key demographic changes in the United States that directly impact recreation.¹

¹ Sheffield, Emilyn (2012), "Five Trends Shaping Tomorrow Today," Parks & Recreation Magazine. http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5389201.pdf



The Andy K. Wells Hike and Bike Trail includes preserved open space intended to connect citizens of Killeen to the natural environment.





1. The population is growing, but more slowly. The population from the 2000 to 2010 census only increased 9.7 percent. That's down from a 13.2 percent growth rate the decade before.
2. Baby boomers are shifting the median age of our population. From the 2010 census it was determined that 13 percent of the population was over the age of 65, and that is expected to increase to 20 percent by the year 2050 as baby boomers continue to age. In fact the baby boomer generation as a whole, and the elder seniors over age 65 create a combined total of about 39 percent of the current population of the country. This shift demonstrates the need to program for activities that accommodates retirees, and offer events that are multi-generational for the whole family — grandparents, parents, and children.
3. As the older portion of our population increases, the younger population is decreasing. In 2010, the population under age 18 reached an all-time low at 24 percent. Children, youth, and teens will continue to be primary users of recreation facilities, so the change in programming for this cohort might not be as dramatic as for other groups.
4. The population is becoming more racially and ethnically diversified. This is especially true of Texas which is a majority-minority state, meaning the majority of the population is of a minority background. This shift can change a parks department by offering events that cater to their population's unique cultural backgrounds and heritage.
5. The distribution of our U.S. population is changing. It is no surprise to those living in Texas that the 2010 decennial census reported that over half the population lives in only 10 states (Texas being one of them along with California, New York, Florida, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Georgia, North Carolina, and Michigan). In fact,

they further reported that 25 percent of the population lives in Texas, California, and New York alone. One could argue that the rapid growth of our population in Texas will continue, and it is important to continue developing programs and facilities that appeal to everyone.

Texas - Overall Health Considerations

America's Health Ranking tracks the nation's health by state, based on a variety of health issues. The ranking has been done annually for the past 20 years by the United Health Foundation and the American Public Health Association. Texas had an overall ranking of 34 out of all 50 states in 2015.² Factors such as the high rate of uninsured people, high prevalence of sedentary lifestyle and obesity, and the low immunization coverage among children all contribute to a low ranking.

- Texas is ranked last (50 out of 50) in the category "lack of health insurance." Over 20 percent of the Texas population does not have health insurance which is the highest in the country.
- Texas is ranked number 13 in "underemployment rate" at 9.9 percent.
- Ranked at number 36 in "children living in poverty," 23.8 percent of persons under the age of 18 are living in poverty.
- Ranked at number 40 in "obesity," 31.9 percent of the population of Texas is considered obese. This is continuing to trend higher. In fact, the obesity rate has increased nine percent within the past two years in the state of Texas.
- The state is number 40 in "public health funding" with an average of \$48.87 per person.

² <http://www.americashealthrankings.org/TX>



Role of the Killeen Parks and Recreation Division

The City of Killeen is the primary governmental entity that provides parks and recreational facilities for the citizens of Killeen, through the Parks and Recreation Division. Additional recreational facilities are provided to residents through the Killeen Independent School District (KISD), Bell County, Home Owner Association (HOA) parks, Fort Hood Army Base for military personnel, and the local YMCA and Boys & Girls Club.

The implementation of this Parks Master Plan will be led primarily by the City of Killeen Parks and Recreation Division. However, everyone in Killeen has a vested interest in ensuring the parks system in the City continues to be one of the best in Central Texas. This includes:

- All governmental entities, including the City of Killeen, Bell County, KISD, and other advisory group entities.
- The business community in Killeen, including property owners, developers, commercial entities, and others.

The Parks Master Plan follows the general guidelines for local park master plans established by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD). This document will be filed with TPWD and allows the City to be more competitive for grant opportunities as they become available.

Previous Planning Efforts in the City of Killeen

Part of any planning process for a citywide parks system includes understanding what has been previously recommended, what recommendations have been accomplished, and what studies have been done by other recreation providers. Oftentimes, the recommendations

of other plans can fulfill a deficiency, and this can prevent unnecessary duplication of park and recreation facilities. The following pages summarize previous planning studies which inform this Parks Master Plan, including the 2010 Killeen Comprehensive Plan and the previous Parks Master Plans (2009 update, 2005 update and 1999 plan).

2010 Killeen Comprehensive Plan

The City of Killeen prepared its Comprehensive Plan in 2010. The Comprehensive Plan provided a “big picture” vision for the overall growth of the City. It addressed all facets of the community from development and transportation, to housing and public facilities. The Comprehensive Plan also included goals and strategies for parks and recreation.

A summary of the public input conducted during the Comprehensive Plan planning process revealed that in terms of parks and recreation, residents of Killeen wanted better access to parks from their neighborhoods and more trails, specifically along drainage corridors.

The Comprehensive Plan establishes planning themes to guide the parks system as the City continues to grow. These planning themes include investing in the existing parks that are located in the older neighborhoods, developing parks in the growth areas of the City, and preserving key areas of open space. The Comprehensive Plan upheld the recommendations of the 2009 Parks Master Plan as implementation priorities for the parks system.

2009 Parks Master Plan

The City of Killeen first developed its parks master plan in 1999. The plan was subsequently updated in 2005 and 2009. The survey that was conducted as part of the 2009 Parks Master Plan update found that 65 percent of respondents





were either satisfied or very satisfied with the variety of recreation programming that was offered in Killeen. Skate park facilities, hike and bike trails, and aquatic facilities were ranked as the most important facility needs in the community. Furthermore, residents did not feel that the two community parks were adequate in serving the entire City.

The 2009 Parks Master Plan established a series of priorities that were intended to be completed through the year 2019. Several of the priorities have been completed since the Plan was adopted, including:

- Renovation of existing pavilions and restrooms in Long Branch Park;
- Constructing a family aquatic center in Lions Club Park;
- Constructing a spray park in Long Branch Park;
- Constructing a new playground structure in Long Branch Park;
- Constructing a skateboard park in Long Branch Park;
- Constructing a hike and bike trail at Lions Club Park;

- Constructing a restroom facility at Conder Park;
- Developing Westside Community Park and trail; a grant will fund the first phase which will be a 1.3-mile trail corridor;
- Renovation of the Killeen Community Center;
- Acquiring parkland for the construction of a community park on Killeen's eastern perimeter; and
- Renovation of Conder Community Park; including a disc golf course, multi purpose field, and two basketball courts.

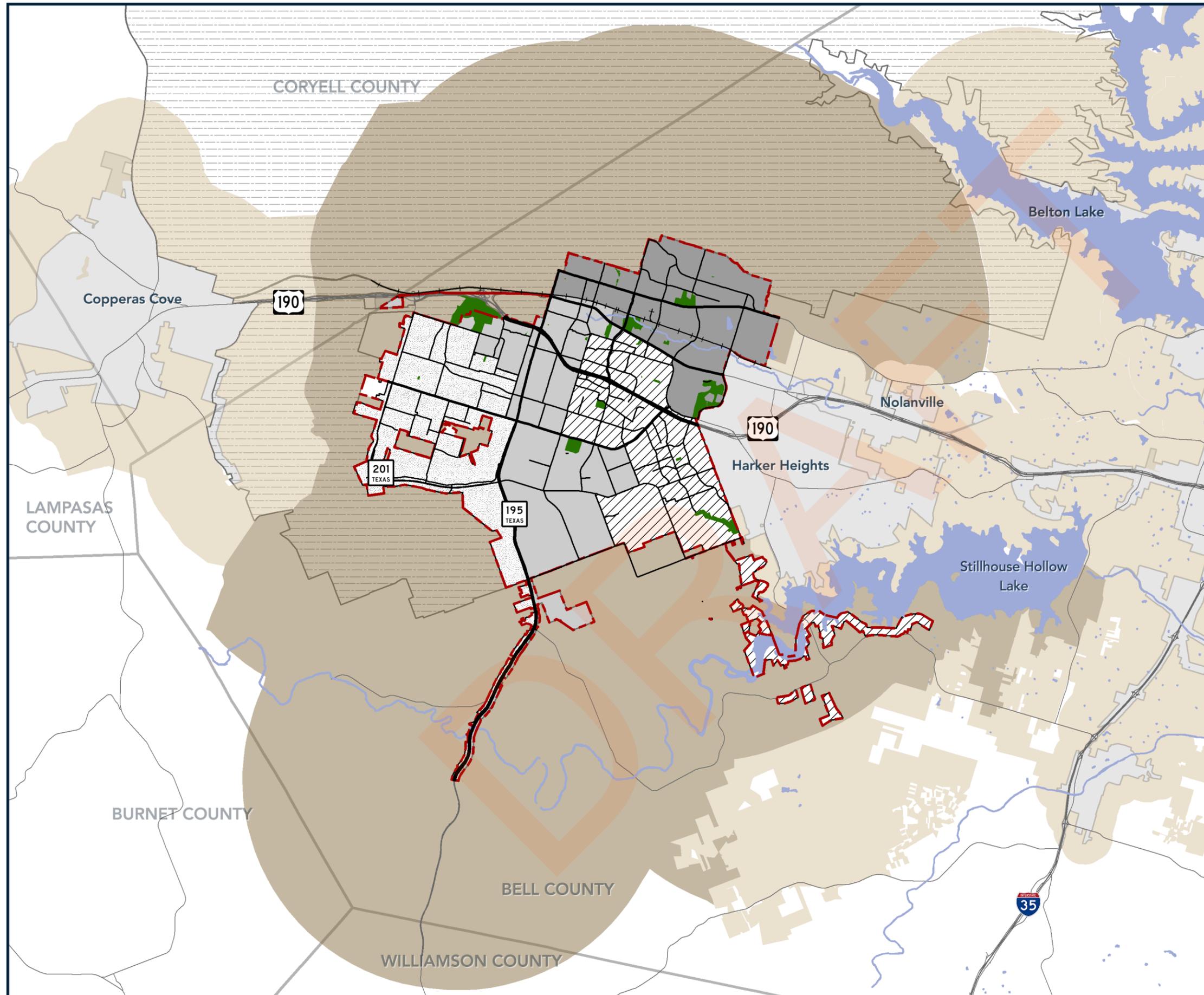
The Parks and Recreation Division has also completed several projects to improve the parks system which were not specifically recommended in the 2009 Parks Master Plan. These projects include:

- Lou Hansen Pavilion and covered playground at Lions Club Park;
- Two sand volleyball courts at the Killeen Community Center Complex;



The skateboard park in Long Branch Park provides a specialized recreation opportunity for the community.

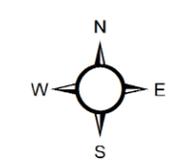




Planning Area

Legend

- City Council District 1
- City Council District 2
- City Council District 3
- City Council District 4
- Parks
- Killeen City Limits
- Nearby City Limits
- Killeen ETJ
- Nearby City ETJs
- Fort Hood
- Counties
- Water Bodies
- Minor Roads
- Major Roads
- RailRoad



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