

Chapter 1

Introduction

The 2010 Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan has been developed based upon the concerted efforts of the citizens of Wylie, City Officials, and City Staff to plan for the best possible future for Wylie. This introductory chapter is intended to provide an overview of the general themes and key recommendations of this Master Plan. The subsequent chapters explain the background information utilized, the process followed, existing conditions within the City, a detailed analysis, a comprehensive set of recommendations, and an implementation plan.

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

Planning is the foundation of building a community with high quality of life, efficient infrastructure, and sustainable growth. Most cities practice many types of planning, including transportation planning, zoning, water resources planning, economic development planning, etc. While all adopted planning efforts impact citizens significantly, it is the work performed in planning for parks, recreation and open space that is often most recognizable by citizens.

The City of Wylie Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan was developed as a collaborative effort by the City Council, Parks and Recreation Board, City Staff, and Half Associates of Richardson, Texas (hereafter, Planning Team). Public involvement is a key component of this Master Plan and serves as the underpinning of the analysis and recommendations included herein. Through the implementation of these recommendations, the City will take considerable steps to improve the quality of life, image, and character of Wylie over the next five to ten years. Specifically, the 2010 Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan:

- Identifies the need for additional community facilities, including parks;
- Evaluates the spatial location of parks, recreation, and cultural facilities within the city and recommends measures to ensure a balanced distribution of facilities within the city;
- Guides the Parks and Recreation Board and City Staff in acquiring land to meet current and future park, open space, and facility needs;
- Recommends and prioritizes key improvements so that the most significant deficiencies are addressed as quickly as possible;
- Guides City Staff and City leaders in determining where and how funding should be allocated over the next five to 10 years;
- Identifies opportunities and recommends appropriate measures for improving quality of life within the city; and
- Provides a plan which is consistent with the funding and grant requirements for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

CREATING A VISION FOR WYLIE

Developing this Master Plan required moving beyond the status quo and identifying a vision for Wylie's future based on public involvement and input from City Officials and City Staff. The culmination of this input is a broad, comprehensive vision for Wylie's future that stretches

beyond the traditional boundaries of a parks master plan. This vision, while made up of many components, includes two over-arching concepts (context-sensitivity and self-sustainability) by which this Master Plan has been developed.

Context-Sensitivity

It is important for this Master Plan to be developed in such a manner that it results in goals and recommendations unique to Wylie. Furthermore, it is paramount to carefully consider the unique needs and opportunities in Wylie and consider existing opportunities while making recommendations for policy actions and facility development, location, and type. Specifically, recommendations to acquire land and build facilities should be based not only on standards and benchmarks but also on Wylie's unique needs and the opportunities present in the community. Furthermore, innovative approaches should be used to determining land acquisition needs, resulting in future land acquisitions based on demonstrated needs in addition to regional and national standards in order to build value in Wylie's parks system. One such innovative approach is using projected facility needs, in addition to acreage standards, to determine near-future park land needs.

Beyond using alternative methods for determining needs, it is also important for this Master Plan (and, subsequently, the actions of the City in the near future) to recognize the value of existing opportunities and capitalize upon them. Key opportunities in Wylie include natural areas, specifically along floodplains, which should be protected and/or acquired to ensure the preservation of Wylie's image and character, and the US Army Corps of Engineers parks located on Lavon Lake, which provide recreation opportunities for Wylie even though they are not City-owned or operated.

Self-Sustainability

Perhaps the most important end-result for the citizens of Wylie is for the City to achieve a level of self-sustainability. Being self-sustainable means high quality of life, economic prosperity, and stability. Achieving self-sustainability requires the concerted efforts and commitment of City leaders to provide a diverse array of amenities and services for the community. Three specific facets of self-sustainability most directly related to Wylie are:

- ***Live/Work/Play*** – Besides housing, people need places within their community to shop, recreate, work, and receive services (such as clinics and hospitals). The City should strive to create destinations linked within and between each other by means of trails, bike routes and other connections.
- ***Age-in-Place*** – There is a need for housing, recreation opportunities, and services for citizens of all ages in order for people to be able to live in Wylie from the time they are born until they are in their late senior years. "Age-in-Place" also means achieving continuity from generation to generation, proud ownership, investment of both time and money into the city and community, emotional/social connectedness, social sustainability, etc.
- ***Unique Opportunities*** – Take advantage of the opportunities unique to Wylie. Wylie can self-sustain by being different than other nearby cities. It is one of the few cities in North Texas that is adjacent to two lakes, that has so much creek associated floodplain, and that is in a growth-mode.

PRIMARY VISION COMPONENTS

Under the auspices of the over-arching concepts described above and through the results of the public involvement process, three primary vision components emerged. Altogether, these three components serve as the overall vision and driving force behind the entire Master Plan, by which recommendations and priorities are developed.

- ***Fingers of Green*** – Take advantage of the unique open space opportunities in Wylie, specifically the floodplain corridors along Muddy Creek, Rush Creek, and other creeks within the city. Protect these areas and provide access to them through trails and linear parks. Use these fingers of green to act as identity-giving features for the city, gateways, recreational opportunities, wildlife habitat corridors, and connections between parts of the city.
- ***Embrace the Lakes*** – Become a lake-front community. Wylie is the only city in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex that is directly situated between two major lakes. Historically, however, these lakes have not been utilized as prominent features in Wylie. Embrace the lakes because of their recreation and open space values as well as their ability to further enhance the image of Wylie as a unique destination.
- ***Diversity, Choice & Image*** – Create a community that provides *Diversity, Choice*, and a refined *Image* for its residents while also protecting the small-town character of Wylie. Progressively guiding how Wylie develops in the future is the most effective way to achieve this goal. Wylie should have zones of varying development density and patterns within the city that range from no development and low-density development near the edges of the city and floodplains to higher-density development near downtown and other future urban nodes within the city. Such zones will provide diversity and choice, but will also make Wylie unique compared to other nearby cities by ensuring that the city is not developed with one single pattern of development (i.e., “sprawl” as is the case with the majority of cities in the Metroplex, including Wylie).

GOALS

Providing a roadmap to achieving the vision set forth in this Master Plan requires adopting goals which are broad enough to be concise and comprehensive, but detailed enough to provide clear guidance. The following goals were used in developing recommendations and priorities for this Master Plan.

- Distinguish Wylie from surrounding communities by utilizing unique solutions and approaches to providing parks, recreation, and open space amenities.
- Maintain and build upon Wylie’s unique small town sense of community and identity.
- Preserve and enhance the integrity of Wylie’s neighborhoods by developing high-quality parks and facilities that serve as neighborhood focal points and ensure the provision of adequate close-to-home park space.
- Become a bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly community and provide a first-class regional system of trails that connects schools, neighborhoods, parks, jobs, shopping, and civic areas as well as providing access to neighboring cities and Lake Ray Hubbard and Lavon Lake.
- Protect, preserve, and provide access to open space and natural areas; specifically those along Wylie’s creeks and lakes.

2010 Parks, Recreation & Open Space Master Plan

- Embrace Lake Ray Hubbard and Lavon Lake, provide pedestrian, bicycle, vehicular, and visual access to them, and capitalize upon their recreational opportunities.
- Be multi-generational and meet the needs of a diverse citizenry through facilities, programs, and public spaces.
- Be forward-thinking and progressive in continually planning for the future of Wylie's parks, recreation, and open space system and encourage citizen participation and involvement throughout.

