

**NOTICE OF WORKSHOP
CITY OF SOUTH PADRE ISLAND
PARKS & KEEP SPI BEAUTIFUL COMMITTEE**

NOTE: One or more members of the City of South Padre Island City Council may attend this meeting; if so, this statement satisfies the requirements of the OPEN MEETINGS ACT.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT THE PARKS & KEEP SPI BEAUTIFUL COMMITTEE OF THE CITY OF SOUTH PADRE ISLAND, TEXAS, WILL HOLD A WORKSHOP MEETING ON:

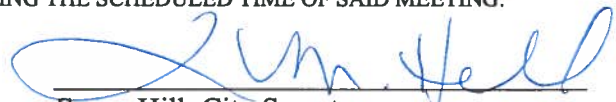
**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 6, 2018
9:00 A.M. AT THE MUNICIPAL BUILDING,
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS, 2ND FLOOR
4601 PADRE BOULEVARD, SOUTH PADRE ISLAND, TEXAS**

1. Call to Order.
2. Pledge of Allegiance.
3. Public Comments and Announcements: *This is an opportunity for citizens to speak to Committee relating to agenda or non-agenda items. Speakers are required to address Committee at the podium and give their name before addressing their concerns. [Note: State law will not permit the Parks & Keep SPI Beautiful Committee to discuss debate or consider items that are not on the agenda. Citizen Comments may be referred to City Staff or may be placed on the agenda of a future Parks & Keep SPI Beautiful Committee meeting]*
4. Discussion/review the City of SPI Parks and Recreation Master Plan. *(Clifford Cross)*
5. Adjournment.

DATED THIS THE 1ST DAY OF JUNE 2018


Susan Hill, City Secretary

I, THE UNDERSIGNED AUTHORITY, DO HEREBY CERTIFIED THAT THE ABOVE NOTICE OF WORKSHOP OF THE PARKS & KEEP SPI BEAUTIFUL COMMITTEE OF THE CITY OF SOUTH PADRE ISLAND, TEXAS IS A TRUE AND CURRENT COPY OF SAID NOTICE AND THAT I POSTED A TRUE AND CORRECT COPY OF SAID NOTICE ON THE BULLETIN BOARD AT CITY HALL/MUNICIPAL BUILDING ON JUNE 1, 2018 AT/OR BEFORE 4:00 P.M. AND REMAINED SO POSTED CONTINUOUSLY FOR AT LEAST 72 HOURS PRECEDING THE SCHEDULED TIME OF SAID MEETING.


Susan Hill, City Secretary

THIS FACILITY IS WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE, AND ACCESSIBLE PARKING SPACES ARE AVAILABLE. REQUESTS FOR ACCOMMODATIONS OR INTERPRETIVE SERVICES MUST BE MADE 48 HOURS PRIOR TO THIS MEETING. PLEASE CONTACT BUILDING OFFICIAL, DAVID TRAVIS; ADA DESIGNATED RESPONSIBLE PARTY AT (956)761-8103.





City of South Padre Island Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Year 2018

This is a systematic approach to Parks and Recreation Master Plan to provide quality services and accommodate growth for our future for all residents, business owners, and their future generations.

For all residents, visitors, business owners, and their future generations...

CITY COUNCIL

Dennis Stahl, Mayor

Alita Bagley, Council Member

Ken Medders, Council Member

Teresa Metty, Council Member

Paul Munarriz, Council Member

Ron Pitcock, Council Member

Susan Guthrie, City Manager

PARKS, RECREATION AND KEEP SPI BEAUTIFUL COMMITTEE

Debbie Huffman, Chair

Pat Rasmussen, Vice-Chair

Carol Bolstad

Javier Gonzales

Kat Lilly

Sally Scaman

Erica Underwood

Acknowledgements

This work has been supported by the City Council of South Padre Island. A special thanks to those interested citizens who participated in the public meetings held throughout this Parks and Recreation master planning process.

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Executive Summary

The City of South Padre Island is a dynamic, progressive and diverse community. We are a tourist destination and we are defined by that fact. We work consistently to attract new visitors, activities, events and investment in tourism. The City's park system provides a significant contribution to the community's high quality of life. Residents also have rising expectations for recreational opportunities that require the City to expand and improve its services to our community.

This Parks, Recreation and Keep SPI Beautiful Master Plan provides the City with a roadmap for the continuous improvement of its parks, recreation, facilities and services, while networking those facilities with our tourism assets and focus. Specifically, the plan will:

- Confirm the vision and mission of the Department
- Review the demographics and trends in the market place to determine where programs and facilities are needed based upon the growing community
- Incorporate community input from City leadership, elected officials, Parks Board Members, community focus groups and a community-wide survey
- Inventory the physical assets and conditions of our parks and facilities
- Identify City-wide parks and recreation system needs
- Support tourism and resident satisfaction
- Provide an orderly plan and framework for growth of the City Park assets through the next 5 years
- Establish park standards that promote the high quality park system that currently exists in the City and to ensure that this quality remains as the population of the City grows
- Be in compliance with the standards set forth by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to ensure that the City is eligible for possible funding from the State of Texas.

CHAPTER 1 / ABOUT SPI:

Padre Island is the largest of the Texas barrier islands and is the world's longest barrier island. It is part of the U.S. state of Texas. The island is located along Texas's southern coast of the Gulf of Mexico and is noted for its white sandy beaches at the south end. Meaning *father* in Spanish, it was named after Father Jose Nicolas Balli (c.1770-1829), who owned the island and served as a missionary priest and collector of finances for all the churches in the Rio Grande Valley (RGV). He also founded the first mission in present-day Cameron County.

Padre Island is the second-largest island by area in the contiguous U.S. after Long Island in New York on the Atlantic Coast. It is about 113 miles (182 km) long and 1.8 miles (3 km). The southern end of the island is separated from Brazos Island by the Brazos Santiago Pass.

The City of South Padre Island is located on its southern end, but the island as a whole is sparsely populated. The central part of the island is preserved in a natural wild state as Padre Island National Seashore and part of the lower island is protected as part of the Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge. Since 1964, the island has been divided by the artificial Port Mansfield Channel. The terms “North Padre Island” and “South Padre Island” are often used to refer to the separated portions of the island. Padre Island is included within the jurisdictions of Cameron, Kenedy, Kleberg, Nueces and Willacy counties in Texas.

The City of South Padre Island is located at the southern end of South Padre Island with the city limits extending from the northern edge of Isla Blanca Park in the south to the end of development north of Wharf Street in the north, a distance of 6 miles (10 km). The Queen Isabella Causeway is the only road access to the mainland; it is 2.5 miles (4.0 km) across the Laguna Madre to the City of Port Isabel. Brownsville is 25 miles (40 km) southwest of South Padre Island.

According to the United States Census Bureau, the city has a total area of 2.3 square miles (6.0 km²), of which 2.1 square miles (5.5 km²) is land and 0.2 square miles (0.5 km²), or 8.44, is water.



Climate

South Padre Island has a warm, humid, subtropical climate. Despite having average temperatures falling just short of a tropical climate classification, just like the rest of the lower Rio Grande Valley, the City is in a transitional climate zone where it falls into a tropical savanna climate during years with warmer than usual winter months. South Padre Island receives less precipitation and slightly higher summer maximum temperatures and humidity than some areas in south Florida, except Miami. The region experiences relatively high dew point values, around 75 °F (24 °C) in the summertime, resulting in higher relative humidity values from June through September. Rainfall tends to be the highest during the summer and autumn months, usually ranging from 2 to 6 inches of rain each month. September has the highest rainfall, averaging 6.3 inches, followed by October, which averages 4 inches of rain. Due to the island being next to the ocean, temperatures above 100 °F (37.8 °C) are not common.

South Padre Island, TX Average Temperatures

January	69°
February	71°
March	74°
April	80°
May	84°
June	88°
July	89°
August	90°
September	89°
October	85°
November	79°
December	72°

Source NOAA

Geography

Vegetation

South Padre Island supports 75 plant families composed of almost 400 species. The following are the plant habitats to be found on the island and a few of the species to be found in each. The only state or federally protected plant species, which is known to occur on South Padre Island, is considered a species of concern: Roughseed and Sea-purslane (*Sesuvium trianthemoides*).



Beach

The Gulf beach has a very gentle slope and is continually affected by factors such as wind, wave conditions, tides, storm surges, and human traffic in most areas. Marine algae, particularly Sargassum, are brought up onto the beach by ocean currents. Plant debris and seeds are continually washing up. On the landward edge of the beach, a few salt tolerant plants such as glasswort, sea purslane, and seashore dropseed are established.



Dunes

Landward of the beach along most of South Padre Island is a ridge of vegetated coastal sand dunes, composed of sand blown from the beach by onshore winds. These dunes are fairly well stabilized by vegetation, except where wind, water, or human activity have destroyed the vegetation exposing dunes and transforming them into actively migrating forms. The vegetation is a dense cover composed primarily of grasses: Bitter Panicum, Sea Oats, Gulf Dune Paspalum, and Dropseed. Some of the forbs present are Beach Morning Glory, Beach Evening Primrose, Railroad Vine, Prairie Senna, and Gulf Croton.

Grassland Plants - Low Coastal Sands

Behind the belt of foredunes and occupying a major portion of the interior of the island is a low area of deep sand. The land forms vary from almost level to a series of low ridges and hummocky surfaces. The variety of vegetation is greater here than in any of the other habitats on the island. The overall aspect of this area is that of a grassland plain. Gulf Dune Paspalum, Seashore Saltgrass, Red Lovegrass, Bushy Bluestem, Sea Oats, and Marshhay Cordgrass are commonly found. Interspersed among the grasses are many kinds of herbaceous plants. Common Forbs are Whitestem Wild Indigo, Partridge Pea, Pennywort, Ground Cherry, Ragweed, Croton, Phlox, and a variety of composites.



Pond and Marsh Sites

The grassland plains are intermixed with poorly drained shallow depressions occasionally inundated with fresh water after rains and sometimes saltwater after hurricanes. Consequently, the vegetation consists of plants tolerant of both saltwater and fresh water and is quite variable depending on the length of time the site is covered and by the type of water covering it. Here can be found Marshhay Cordgrass, Gulf Dune Paspalum, Bulrush, Cattails, Sedges, Starrush Whitetop, and Pennywort.

Active Dune Fields

Along the western edge of the island and in some interior locations are active dune fields continually modified by strong winds. Active dune fields are almost devoid of vegetation. The few plants that can grow in these areas include Beach Croton, Sedge, and Sea Oats.

Wind Tidal Flats

The western margin of the island is composed of flats occasionally covered by the waters of the Laguna Madre. Variations in water level are not due primarily to tides, but to the winds. The most drastic flooding results from storm surges and heavy rains. Salt tolerant plants become established on thin layers and low hummocks of sand. These salt tolerant plants include Blue-green Algae, Seashore Dropseed, Sea Heliotrope, Sea Purslane, Sea Blight, and Glasswort.



Laguna Madre

This large, shallow body of water separating South Padre Island from the mainland covers approximately 20,000 acres within the National Seashore. Marine grasses are the dominant vegetation: Widgeon Grass, Manatee Grass, Shoal Grass, and Halophila. Many species of marine algae are also found in the waters of the Laguna Madre. Some species provide important forage for the many species of plant-eating ducks that winter here.

Padre Island is bordered on its west side by one to the world's saltiest coastal ecosystems. The Laguna Madre is one of five hypersaline coastal waterways in the world. Its salinity content can range from 1.5 to nearly 3 times that of the nearby Gulf of Mexico. (*source nps.gov*)

Spoil Banks

The Gulf Intracoastal Waterway outlines a portion of the western boundary of Padre Island National Seashore from markers 85/87 to 195/197. The dredge material from the canal is deposited in disposal areas called spoil banks. Vegetation exists on these, invading slowly and producing an ecological succession if left to natural sequences. Plants found commonly include: Sea Ox-eye Daisy, Ragweed, Camphorweed, Coastal Dropseed, Bluets, Silver Bluestem, Gulf Paspalum, Sea Blight, Beach Morning Glory, and Glasswort.

Population and demographics

The resident population of South Padre Island in the 2010 Census was 2,816. Due to the large number of visitors, the resident population is only a small percentage of the total number of people who are in the City of South Padre Island at any given time. In the Resort Market Analysis produced by Aaron Economic Consulting in 2014, the annual visitation for South Padre Island was just over 4.3 million visits, which equals an average daily population of approximately 11,780.

There were more men than women on South Padre Island and the median age was 59.7 as compared to 27 for Cameron County. The median income for a household in the City was \$45,417, and the median income for a family was \$53,250. Males had a median income of \$39,250 versus \$30,028 for females. About 10.2% of families and 12.0% of the population were below the poverty line, including 11.1% of those under age 18 and 7.8% of those age 65 or over. Additionally, the City's population has nearly the same percentage of white residents as the U.S. average, at 75%. The second largest group in terms of race is Hispanic at 22.8%. South Padre Island's residents are far above the attainment level of the U.S. population in terms of education. A much greater percentage of city residents over the age of 25 have high school diplomas – 92.4% versus 80.40% of the U.S. They are also far above the U.S. average in attaining bachelor's degrees – with 35.50% of residents doing so as compared to 24.40% of all U.S. residents.

Ecological Importance

Birds

The Island is a very important component of the habitat system for migratory and shore birds. More than 380 species of birds have been found on South Padre Island. This is nearly half of all bird species that have been documented in North America! From November through May, visitors can enjoy these lovely creatures in their natural habitat at the National Seashore, SPI Birding and Nature Center and the SPI Convention Centre grounds and boardwalks. While visiting Padre Island, you may catch a glimpse of the Black Skimmer grazing the water with its bill, a White-tailed Hawk keeping watch, perched on top of a telephone pole, or hear the song of an Eastern Meadowlark happily celebrating the spring. SPI is dedicated to the protection of a variety of habitats that are critical to the health of

myriad bird populations. Some habitats, like wind-tidal flats, are extremely fragile and rare, and provide an abundance of food that migratory and resident birds depend. Other bird habitats found on SPI include beach, coastal prairie, dunes, grasslands, wetlands and ponds. Its range of habitats makes South Padre Island an essential stop-over point for migrating and resident birds that are seeking out grounds for rest, food, nesting and breeding. As such, the Island has been designated as a *Globally Important Bird Area* by the American Bird Conservancy and a *Site of International Importance* by the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network.

Based on the Texas Colonial Waterbird Survey, bird counts show decreasing numbers of Waterbird species on the spoil islands, but participants in the Waterbird survey provide varied explanations to suggest why the decrease is occurring. Explanations include habitat loss, disappearance of nesting grounds, marine debris, depletion of food sources, windmills impeding flight, and light pollution affecting migratory patterns.

These are critical reasons why continuing education on birds and promoting worldwide bird and bird habitat conservation is so very important. NPS.com Source



Sea Turtles

South Padre Island is also a fairly untapped resource for public education regarding sea turtle conservation. Sea Turtle Inc. is based on SPI and their mission is to educate, rehab and conserve the endangered Kemp Ridley Sea Turtle for release back into the wild. Founded in 1977 by Ila Fox Loetscher, better known as “the Turtle Lady of South Padre Island”. In 1999 Sea Turtle, Inc. was moved from Loetscher’s backyard into its current location at 6617 Padre Blvd. In 2018, at a cost of \$6 million, construction to add an educational center, amphitheater, gift shop, new tanks, a vet clinic and intern housing were completed.



Beaches

South Padre Island has the conveniences and attractions of a modern resort coupled with miles of pristine island terrain which draw thousands of visitors to the Island each year. The white, sandy beaches are known throughout the United States as one of America's top 10 beaches. While its many amenities make South Padre Island the premiere vacation spot in the state, the location of the Island also makes it a prime spot to observe wildlife in its natural state. The City recognizes the importance of maintaining what is left of our open space and undeveloped land and at the same time providing active and passive recreational opportunities for not only our residents, but all of the many visitors that come to our Island.

Butterflies

South Padre Island is located within the Monarch migration path and encourages the proliferation of butterfly friendly plants. The City is taking the opportunity to partner with The SPI Birding and Nature Center to educate the public on the importance of Monarch's to our world. Through the National Wildlife Federation the City of SPI has adopted the Mayor's Monarch Pledge as of October of 2016. Through this pledge Mayors and tribal government chief executives agree to take action to help save the monarch butterfly. Through the Mayors' Monarch Pledge, US cities, municipalities, and other communities are committing to create habitat for the monarch butterfly and pollinators, and to educate citizens about how they can make a difference at home and in their community. There are 4 steps to taking and implementing the pledge: Take the pledge, specify your actions, take those actions and report progress annually. South Padre Island has taken this pledge and has developed a Butterfly Park, Monarch Waystation, brochures to educate the public about encouraging butterfly population growth and had their second annual October "Hallowings" event to raise funds and awareness.

In late September, migrating Monarch butterflies come through what is called the "Texas Funnel" on their way south to wintering grounds in the Oyamel Fir Tree forests in the mountains of central Mexico. Their annual migration is truly one of the wonders of nature. Every fall, a Monarch "Super Brood", a special generation that can live up to six months, makes its way south to wintering grounds that they've never been to before, but are hard-

wired to find. By mid-October the thick of migration has reached the Lower Rio Grande Valley (LRGV). The Texas coastline becomes a Monarch Superhighway during the fall migration.

Nectar sources are not all the Monarchs are looking for. The first waves are also looking for their host plants (plants that the caterpillars eat) to lay eggs on, which are specific plants in the Milkweed family (Asclepiadaceae). There are a few native milkweed species in the LRGV that serve as hosts to the Monarch. Closer along the coast, the Prairie Milkweed (*Asclepias oenotheroides*), also known as Zizotes Milkweed, is an important host that can be quite common. Female Monarchs are experts at finding their host plants and can lay many eggs on them. This usually results in several hungry caterpillars that can consume entire milkweed plants before pupating and enclosing as adults.

Unfortunately, the natural marvel that is the Monarch migration is under threat. Studies have shown alarming Monarch population declines in recent years. This is mainly due to human-caused habitat loss and overuse of pesticides and herbicides.

Monarch Migration Superhighway, SPI BNC Naturalist, Javier Gonzalez



Tourism

The City of South Padre Island, Texas, is one of Texas' premiere tourist destinations with more than four million visitors annually. South Padre Island is one of Cameron County's most important assets and one of the most important economic drivers in one of the poorest MSAs in the U.S.. South Padre Island is a source of employment for greater Cameron County and a source of external dollars to the county. The benefits to surrounding communities and Cameron County from South Padre Island dwarves the benefits from the Island to itself. These benefits to surrounding communities are in the form of jobs, employee compensation, sales taxes, and property taxes. South Padre Island (SPI), with 0.7% of the county's population and 0.2% of the county's land area contributes almost 5% to the county's Gross Product. SPI contributes almost 6 times as much to the economy of the county per person than the rest of the county. SPI contributes almost 20 times as much to the economy of the county per square mile than the rest of the county. Not all dollars are created equal: SPI economic contribution is generated mostly by basic industries. Basic industries are exporting industries that inject external dollars (e.g. Hospitality and Tourism) into local economies. Basic industries are considered drivers of economic growth and development by injecting new money into the economy instead of re-circulating existing local dollars.

Winter Texans

South Padre Island is known as both a resort location and a desirable location for retirees, known as 'Winter Texans.' More than 18% of the City's population is recorded as age 65 or older – a third higher than the U.S. average. For decades, Winter Texans have represented and continue to represent an important demographic for the Rio Grande Valley. This is an important demographic for the island property rental business during off-peak months. Similar to the 'Snowbirds' who travel from the northeast U.S. to south Florida during the same time period, these Texans migrate to second homes on South Padre Island during the winter months, nearly doubling the local population. This influx means that nearly twice as many 'residents' are consuming goods and services. The taxes collected on goods and services during this time far exceed those of tourists.

However, according to a recent report from the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley's Business and Tourism Research Center, the number of Winter Texans has declined in recent years. The report states that Winter Texans spent \$710 million in 2013 down from \$800 million in 2009-2010 a decrease in spending of more than 11-percent. A number of factors have been cited as the reasons for the decrease in Winter Texans chief amongst them is poor health and border violence.

The SPI economy will benefit from a stronger U.S. economy, strengthening of the oil and gas sector and the stabilization of the peso and the easing of problems in the construction sector. Mexico's business climate has improved significantly as a result of important structural reforms, including reforms that address environmental problems and foreign investment in the energy sector. Consequently, both domestic and international investments are picking up, and manufacturing activity is gradually accelerating, supporting a robust job market, boosting household incomes and consumption growth. Mexico's real GDP grew by 1.1% in the first quarter of 2018, and is projected to grow in excess of 2.1 to 2.6% in both 2018 and

2019. In 2014 South Padre Island's visitor spending grew at 5 percent a faster rate than the other destinations (-3.6 percent in Port Aransas, 3.4 percent in Galveston, and 4.7 percent in Texas). The five years of data gathered shows that South Padre Island experienced a relatively stable and constant growth over the last five year period.

Starting in September, the combination of fresh air, deep blue sky, fishing, butterfly and bird migration and the emerald-blue ocean makes the Island a must-see destination for visitors. The winter in SPI is mild, a season for indoor activities and outdoor recreation. Our Winter Texans arrive in November and are looking for recreational opportunities such as wind surfing, Pickleball, fishing and kayaking. They enjoy our eco-tourism centers such as the SPI Birding and Nature Center, Sea Turtle, Inc. and the Native Plant Center.

Spring Break

Beginning in the mid-1980's, South Padre Island began courting college students to visit during Spring Break. As a result, South Padre Island became the first U.S. location outside of Florida to draw a large number of Spring Breakers. This small town, with an official population of 2,816 (2010 U.S. Census), has consistently drawn between 80,000 and 120,000 (estimated) students a year over the last twenty years

Market and Tourism Research shows an estimated \$204 million is pumped throughout the local economy every year in March due to Spring Break (Bernard, 2003). Like many U.S. Spring Break locations over the past decade, South Padre Island has opted for a diversification of activities to attract Spring Breakers. Fashion shows, film production, musical acts, and obstacle courses, most of which are sponsored by corporations, are available on or near the beach area.

Families and tourism

Sales and hotel tax data indicates that many more families or groups come to South Padre Island for holidays such as the Fourth of July, Labor Day and summer vacation. These visitors stay longer and spend more money than the college students visiting during Spring Break. The beaches, greenways, outdoor concerts, fireworks and dining is provided specifically for the needs and desires of visitors.

CHAPTER 2 / THE IMPORTANCE OF PARKS AND RECREATION

Parks and recreation have three values that make them essential services to communities:

1. Economic value
2. Health and environmental benefits
3. Social importance

Just as water, sewer, and public safety are considered essential public services, parks are vitally important to establish and maintain the quality of life in a community, ensuring the health of families and youth, and contributing to the economic and environmental well-being of a community and a region.

Parks are a tangible reflection of the quality of life in a community. They provide identity for citizens and are a major factor in the perception of quality of life in a given community. Parks and recreation services are often cited as one of the most important factors in surveys of how livable communities are. Parks provide gathering places for families and social groups, as well as for individuals of all ages regardless of economic status.

According to studies by the National Recreation and Parks Association, parks improve the local tax base and increase property values. It is proven that private property values increase the value of privately-owned land the closer such land is to parks. Quality parks and recreation are cited as one of the top three reasons that business and residents cite in relocation decisions in a number of studies.

Eighty-five percent report that the proximity to parks, playgrounds, and open space or recreation centers is a major factor in their decision on the neighborhood or area where they live. This includes two in three people who say that it is “very important” or “extremely important” in where they choose to live. Park and recreation opportunities are a particularly strong driver when choosing a place to live for millennials, Gen Xers, those who identify as Hispanic or non-white, parents and those earning higher incomes.

Parks and recreation programs and services contribute to the health of children, youth, adults, and seniors. According to studies by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, creating, improving and promoting places to be physically active can improve individual and community health and result in a 25 percent increase of residents who exercise at least three times per week. A study by Penn State University showed significant correlations to reductions in stress, lowered blood pressure, and perceived physical health to the length of stay in visits to parks. The sedentary lifestyle many Americans live today is directly linked to obesity, which can cause a number of health problems, including certain forms of cancer, diabetes and heart disease. Parks make a neighborhood more enjoyable and healthier. You can walk to a neighborhood park and play sports, walk, enjoy nature and this encourages physical activities.

The 2017 NRPA Americans' Engagement with Parks Survey further demonstrates the importance of parks and recreation to a community. A park is perfect for a picnic, a concert, or a farmer's market—whatever your community feels it needs. It seems obvious that a place where people are able to make connections, meet new friends and participate in recreational activities is also good for the locals' mental health. After all, physical health and strong relationships are important to maintaining mental well-being. Direct exposure to nature has its own benefits on mental health, reducing stress and increasing happiness.

Seventy-nine percent of Americans see it as “extremely” or “very” important for their agency to devote resources to **conservation**, including protecting open spaces and engaging their communities in conservation practices. Americans place a high value on the protection of the natural environment in their communities. In turn, there is widespread agreement — 95 percent — among survey respondents that their local government should work to protect natural resources, such as fresh air, clean water and unpolluted green spaces, trails and green spaces adjacent to waterways.

This includes a great desire for their local park and recreation agency to offer guided nature walks, environmental education and nature-focused camps or service days, such as litter cleanup. Eighty-eight percent of survey respondents agree that it is important their local park and recreation agency provides these types of programs and scheduled activities to engage community members more closely with nature and the outdoors.

Eighty-seven percent of survey respondents agree that the local government and park and recreation agency should make the needed investments to ensure their community is more resilient. Some examples include:

- Parks doubling as flood control areas
- In open spaces, selecting vegetation that mitigate pollution from storm water runoff
- Cultivating tree canopies that help lessen the heating effects
- Planting drought-resistant plants

Seventy-nine percent of survey respondents support their park and recreation agency devoting efforts to improve **social equity**, including ensuring access for all people in their communities to the benefits of local parks, regardless of race, age, income or any other characteristic. Using recreation/community facilities to serve as emergency centers during excessive heating/cooling events or during and after a natural disaster.

The Need for Parks and Recreation

The purpose of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan is to provide an assessment of South Padre Island's parks and recreation system. The park planning process allows the citizens of SPI to determine what their preferred park and recreation priorities should be for the next five years.

Parks refers to the land dedicated to outdoor areas programmed for recreation. Recreation refers to both active and passive recreation activities including ball play, jogging, picnicking,

etc. Recreation can be either indoors or outdoors. Keep SPI Beautiful is dedicated to the conservation and preservation of our Community. The focus here is on the ecological safety, habitat quality and to make the most of our resources such as land, water and quality of life.

The 2018 Parks and Recreation Master Plan:

- Point out opportunities and recommend alternatives for improving our park system
- Look at the potential growth of the city, assess where additional facilities will be needed as we grow and assess the types of facilities that are needed
- Guide city staff in acquiring land to meet future park needs
- Guide city staff and city leaders in determining where and how parks funding should be allocated over the next five years.

Since Parks and Recreation just became an actual department of the City of SPI in September of 2017, this plan will only span 5 years so that it allows for the growth and changes to come from these added resources. After 5 years it is recommended to take another look at the overall picture and reevaluate the plan.

Planning Process

The City of South Padre Island desires to provide its citizens with a solid, well thought-out plan that offers quality of life services for all. To satisfy the needs, the following process has been planned with carefully organized opportunities for public participation: Through a public survey, adopting facility standards and creating a priority list with staff and community input, this plan will be a guideline for the City in developing a system that is appropriate for our residents and visitors.

Ongoing review of the current system will be essential to provide an optimized Parks and Recreation system. Assessing each current park and the status of its facilities and identifying needed repairs and improvements, allows the City to plan for maintenance and repairs with budgeted improvements specifically for each park. In addition, by prioritizing the need for these repairs and improvements and cost estimates for each item, the City can more fairly determine how available funds are best used.

Trends in park planning

The National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA, 2014) has identified these three key trends for Parks and Recreation:

- Human Capital
- Green Infrastructure
- The Societal Piece

Human Capital

Human capital is the idea that one's knowledge, skills, personal attributes, creativity and more are combined in the ability to perform a job that equates to a measure of economic value. There is a better understanding emerging within the park and recreation industry of what defines the human-capital needs of the field and what those professionals look like now and in the future. We need to know and better define what makes a park and recreation professional; what skills, knowledge and abilities are needed to head up this endeavor into the future.

With general funds becoming ever tighter, consolidations and other influences on the composition of "traditional" park and recreation professionals will require employees to have business acumen and skill sets under their belts beyond the traditional expectations for revenue building, fundraising and marketing. A new understanding of the range of human capital needs will be necessary, especially a better understanding of the role of contractual, seasonal and private sector employees. What skill sets, training and professional development will these employees need? What will be the standards for top-notch public service?

Continuous development of communication skills, proficiency with all types of media and deeper marketing and supervisory skills will be critical. Overall, we must ensure that the human-capital needs for parks and recreation are met not only in traditional ways, but also in expanding models of public-private governance. Remaining relevant is always the challenge, but the pressures to anticipate, plan and deliver are considerably greater than they have ever been before.

Green Infrastructure

Green infrastructure is a new approach to the management of land and water that utilizes the processes of natural systems to slow, store and treat stormwater, thereby reducing the costs of traditional hard infrastructure such as channelization, underground stormwater storage tanks, and combined storm and sewer overflows. Key components of green infrastructure are water management and water quality, areas in which parks definitely play a role that will become increasingly important in the future. Significantly, the cost of utilizing parks and conservation lands will be far less expensive than traditional gray infrastructure, and the best green infrastructure projects will bring new funding as well as new recreation opportunities and facilities for public use.

From a national perspective, playing a lead role in the trend to move toward green infrastructure solutions will be paramount. Engaging with key players in the green infrastructure space, identifying best practices, and contributing to research and the development of implementation tools around green infrastructure strategies will be vital.

How we respond to this new challenge to re-envision our concepts of what parks do and how we look at the role of parks in providing conservation solutions to communities will profoundly influence the future of what parks look like and what value and benefits they provide for communities. By connecting with the stewards of water and conservation districts, for example, we can continue to create livable communities that are environmentally responsible, climate-resilient and sustainably built. This is clearly in the

public interest and provides an exceptional opportunity to demonstrate our role in providing innovative solutions for communities.

The Societal Piece

Changing demographics have shaped our nation since its founding. For parks and recreation, understanding how communities are changing and responding to those changes is critical to ensuring relevancy. Grasping the concept of one of National Recreation and Parks Association's most intriguing yet least understood pillars, social equity, is key to understanding our role in participating in social innovation, place making and providing health solutions for communities.

This trend suggests that at the local level, departments work to become the "one-stop shop" for the community, and can meet people where they are by being present and connecting with them in new ways, such as mobile apps, search engine optimization and search engine marketing, in order to effectively respond to community needs. To be fully engaged, we must develop partnerships with community organizations as well as responsively tailor programs to best serve the cultural and social makeup of the community. Sharing best practices for addressing societal shifts and integrating new technologies to stay connected to the community will be vitally important to park and recreation agencies in the future.

The New Narrative/Reframing our Proposition

Part and parcel of the societal piece is the new narrative of how parks and recreation must reframe value propositions. The basic value propositions for why parks were created as public "goods" remain, but clearly, parks and recreation must evolve into something more to remain relevant in a dramatically changing society and environment. The concept of park and recreation agencies as a provider of services and programs to the public at large is rapidly changing. More and more, park and recreation agencies are being expected to be innovators for community solutions that involve conservation, health and wellness, and social equity. What must the City do to anticipate this trend line, and how can the resources that will be necessary to support the new narrative be provided to the field?

Trends in recreation

The recreational offerings of a city play a large role in defining quality of life, as well as a city's identity and image. Especially in a tourist town people choose to vacation in an exciting and action packed community. It is therefore important for the City of South Padre Island to understand regional and national trends related to parks and recreation facilities. Several of the most prevalent trends are:

- We have many leisure activities to choose from. Greatly increased at-home leisure opportunities are available, such as hundreds of TV channels, smart phones, gaming consoles and the internet.
- Safety is a great concern. Parents can no longer allow their children to go to the neighborhood park alone, thus decreasing our parks opportunities for outside play.
- We live in an era of instant gratification. We expect to have high quality recreation. Cities must be willing to provide a broader menu of recreation activities.

- Through the media and internet, we are exposed to the best from around the world. We expect our facilities and activities to be of the highest quality possible.
- Obesity and diabetes are recognized as nationwide problems. Funding to reduce obesity rates by increasing outdoor activities may be more readily available in the future. It may lead to sources of grant funding for parks and recreation programs and facilities.
- Increased demand for passive recreation activities and facilities is growing. Activities such as walking and jogging on trails, picnicking, bird watching, etc. are becoming more popular every day. People look to parks for opportunities for these activities.
- In recreation facilities the trend is to have one large facility to serve all populations – not splitting them up based on age. Indoor walking tracks, workout equipment and sport courts are needed.
- As the City of SPI grows, considerable thought should be put in to making a point of setting aside open space for recreation. Otherwise in the future we will look up and have nowhere to recreate. Preservation of our natural areas to encourage walking and bicycling will enhance property values and conserve what makes SPI a beautiful place to visit and live.
- Community events outside in our lovely locale can only enhance our tourism draw. Concerts outside, interactive games, public art displays, historical points of interest can all benefit our community and our recreational opportunities. Creativity in this area is a must.

Developing an excellent park and recreation system demonstrates a local government's commitment to offer a high quality of life for its residents.

CHAPTER 3 / CONCEPT OF PARKS PLANNING

The National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA, 1995) guidelines provide parks and open space classifications and also offers recommendations for the location, size and general descriptions for each category. These can serve as useful comparisons with the inventory of facilities in the City of South Padre Island later in this document. The purpose of these guidelines is to present park and recreation space recommendations that are applicable for planning, acquisition, and development of park, recreation, and open space lands, primarily at the community level. They should be interpreted according to the particular situation to which they are applied and specific local needs. Therefore, even if the City exceeds these guidelines, the ultimate demand is determined by the number of users and the degree to which there are waiting lists or scheduling pressures associated with certain facilities.

FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATIONS AND GUIDELINES

- a) **Recreation Space Classification.** The following is a list of recreation area classifications and definitions that are referenced throughout this document:
- i) **Tot Lots.** A small park designed to serve a 2-3 block area (0.25 mile distance) and generally a population of up to 2,500. Tot lots are 0.5 to 1.25 acres in size. Tot lots generally contain the following types of recreation facilities: equipped play areas, benches, open space landscaping, and picnic tables. Tot lots may be used in areas where it is difficult to acquire sufficient land for a neighborhood park. Traditionally, tot lot developments have been provided by developers.
 - ii) **Mini-Park.** Mini-Park has similar location and size criteria with tot lots, with an exception of general description that it used to address limited, isolated or unique recreational needs.
 - iii) **Neighborhood Park.** A park for intense and diverse recreational activities that may include, but are not limited to: activities in a tot lot, recreation building, field games, court games, picnic area, landscaping and gardens, internal trails, or senior citizen areas. Neighborhood parks are generally 2 to 10 acres and are accessible by foot or bicycle with a service radius of about 0.25-0.5 mile and a service population of up to 5,000 persons.
 - iv) **Community Park.** A park that provides a diverse range of recreational and leisure activities or contains area of environmental or aesthetic quality. Facilities and activities may include, but are not limited to: athletic fields, swimming pools, gymnasiums, performing and designing art centers, crafts buildings, and any facilities associated with neighborhood or mini-park recreation areas. A community park is typically a "drive -to" facility from 10 to 25 acres in size that services the needs of up to 25,000 people. Community parks are ideally located near collector or arterial roads to accommodate adequate access and should be well-buffered from adjacent residential areas. A community park can also have a dual function as a neighborhood park or tot lot when it provides facilities similar

to these park types and its proximity to residential areas allows residents to walk or ride bicycles to the park.

- v) **Special Facilities.** Special recreation facilities are generally identified as specialized public recreational facilities that are unique in function and purpose. Examples of special facilities include public golf courses, boat ramps, beach access points, zoos, stadiums, and other single-purpose or unique facilities. While development standards are available for such facilities, special facilities are based more on the desires or unique characteristics of a community.
- vi) **District Parks (Large Urban Park).** A district park is usually designed to provide recreation opportunities for more than one community or to an entire county. These sub-regional parks are often based on a resource that cannot be provided by a community park. District parks typically serve populations of about 50,000 people and are typically located within 30-40 minutes driving time for its patrons. These parks may provide ample contact with natural resources and often include such facilities as large picnic areas, areas for field sports, nature trails, boating facilities or equestrian riding paths.
- vii) **Regional Parks.** Regional parks serving more than 100,000 population function primarily to make special natural resources accessible to people of all ages. They are generally more than 250 acres in size and within a one hour driving time from the patron's residence. Activities available at a typical regional park include boating, swimming, hiking, horseback riding, picnicking, overnight camping, and nature appreciation.
- viii) **Nature Reserve Areas (Urban Open Space).** Areas primarily designed with consideration for outdoor recreation and nature preservation, including but not limited to, areas for viewing and studying land, aquatic, or avian wildlife, conservation activities, swimming, hiking, camping, trail facilities, nature centers, or botanical gardens. Service area radius and desirable acreage may vary. A nature reserve area may be one or more of the following:
 - (1) **Conservation/Open Space Area.** These areas are intended to preserve and manage natural resources and aesthetic quality, and to protect health, safety and welfare by providing open spaces between roadways or developments, with recreation and leisure activity serving as a secondary function.
 - (2) **Linear Recreation Area.** Area developed to provide travel routes for one or more types of recreational or human operated vehicles such as horseback riding, bicycling, hiking, or jogging.
- ix) **Private Park / Recreation Facility.** Parks and recreational facilities that are privately owned yet contribute to the Public Park and recreation system.
- x) **Greenways.** Effectively tie the park system components together to form a continuous park environment.

Site Guidelines for Community Outdoor Recreation Resources and Facilities

Park	Location	Population served	Area per 1000 population	Size as a park adjoining school	Size as a separate park	Facilities
Equipped Play and Tot Lot	Less than 0.25 mile distance in residential setting	2,500 Max.	0.5 acre	Min. of 0.25 acre	Min. of 1 acre	Play structures, benches, picnic areas, open spaces, landscaping
Mini-Park	Less than 0.25 mile distance in residential setting	2,500 Max.			Between 2,500 sq.ft. and one acre	Used to address limited, isolated or unique recreational needs.
Neighborhood Park	Neighborhood area (0.25 - 0.5 mile distance)	5,000 Max.	2 acres	Min. of 2 acres	Min. of 5 acres	Play structures, recreation buildings, court games, hard courts, tennis courts, internal trails, shuffleboard, volleyball courts, picnic area, open area, landscaping
Community Park	Usually serves two or more neighborhoods (0.5 - 3 miles distance)	25,000 Max.	2 acres	Min. of 5 acres	Min. of 20 acres; Optimal if 30-50 acres	All of the facilities found in a neighborhood park plus informal ball fields, swimming pools, archery ranges, disc golf areas, ornamental gardens, open space and facilities for cultural activities
Natural Resource Areas (Urban Open Space)	Urban areas (0.25 - 0.5 mile)		1 acre		Min. of 0.1 acre	Resource-based recreation area
Urban District Park (Large Urban Park)	In a large urban area or its periphery with 30 – 40 minutes driving time	One park per 50,000	5 acres		Min. of 50 acres; Optimal is 75+ acres	Play structures, restrooms, trails, nature center, boating, swimming, picnic areas, sports fields
Regional Park	On the periphery of an urban area (30 – 60 minutes driving time)	> 100,000 population	20 acres		Min. of 250 acres (several thousand acres)	Camping, nature and bridle paths, picnicking, and other facilities non-intensive development
Beach Access with Parking	Within 0.25 mile of urban coastal beach or on its periphery, 1 access/0.5 mile of shoreline		0.5 acre		Min. of 1 acre	Walkways, parking and restrooms optional
Sports Complex	Strategically located community-wide facilities				Min. of 25 acres; Optimal is 40-80 acres	Ballfields, soccer fields, football fields, tennis courts, play structures, hard courts, volleyball, internal trails, picnic areas

*When feasible, tot lots, neighborhood parks and community parks should be located adjacent to elementary, middle, and high schools

- b) **Recreation Space Functions.** In addition to the recreation area classification system, recreation areas can be classified into two broad categories: active-based and passive-based recreation activities. Most public parks and open space can be classified as either active- or passive-based recreation depending on the facilities and natural resources located at the park site. These terms are defined as follows:
- i) **Passive-Based Recreation Activities.** Passive-based recreation involves activities that do not necessarily raise the heart rate significantly above the resting level, but rather provide refreshment through furnishing a visual and/or psychological release from the pressure of everyday life. In passive-based recreation facilities, emphasis is placed on enjoyment of a natural resource or an activity and not on participation. The passive-based recreation facilities category includes picnic tables, observation areas, botanical gardens, historical or archaeological sites, and park benches. Passive recreation activities include sunbathing at the beach, walking through a scenic area, or visiting a historic site. Passive-based recreation areas typically serve as open spaces. Open spaces include fields, walking trails, scenic viewpoints, landscaped areas, greenbelts, and conservation areas. Generally, open space areas have minimal facilities. Open space areas can be characterized as areas unsuitable for development or as areas set aside for the protection of natural resources. Open space can also be used to enhance urban areas by providing relief from expansive impervious surfaces such as parking lots and shopping centers.
 - ii) **Active-Based Recreation Activities.** Active-based recreation activities involve the pursuit of physical exertion that raises the heart rate to a level significantly above the resting level. This benefit may be achieved through a variety of activities, which may include team sports such as baseball and football, as well as individual activities including jogging, bicycling, hiking, swimming, or playground activity. The main benefits of such recreation uses are increased cardiovascular fitness and improved mental health through release of energy and/or tensions. Active-based recreation activities rely on the presence of recreational facilities that enable certain activities to function. Without the provision of such facilities, the activity would either be limited in quality or eliminated altogether. Active-based recreation areas may include open space areas, especially when such areas are unsuitable for development and/or protect the existing natural resource. Active-based recreation facilities promote participation. Active-based recreation activities are further divided into two categories:
 - iii) **Resource-Based.** Resource-based activities are those activities that can only occur in certain environments. This includes all water-related activities, hiking trails, hunting, camping and winter activities. Resource-based activities are designed to make maximum use of the natural resources, such as waterways, woodlands, and wetlands, since the resource is not present in all communities.

Resource-Based Outdoor Recreation Activities	Area Requirements	User per Unit of Facility	Turnover Rate	Guideline
Bicycling	10-20 bicycles per mile	1 user per bike	4/day	40-80 cyclists per mile per day
Camping: RV, Trailer and Tent	3-10 sites/acre	4 campers per site	1/day	4 users per campsite per day
Freshwater and Saltwater Beach Activities	200-500 square feet of beach per person		2/day	100 square feet of freshwater or saltwater sandy beach/user/day
Freshwater and Saltwater Fishing (non-boat)	10 linear feet of pier, jetty or catwalk per person		2/day	5 linear feet of pier, jetty or catwalk per user per day
Freshwater and Saltwater Boat Fishing, Power Boating	1 boat per lane	3 users per boat	36 boats/day	108 users per single-lane ramp/day
Freshwater and Saltwater Swimming (non-pool)	5 linear feet of beach per person		2/day	2.5 linear feet of freshwater or saltwater sandy beach/user/day
Hiking	1-5 groups per mile	2 users per group	2/day	4-20 hiker per mile of trail/day
Horseback Riding	2-8 groups per mile	4 equestrians per group	3/day	24-96 equestrians/mile of trail/day
Hunting	90 acres per hunter		2/day	45 acres per hunter per day
Nature Study	5-20 groups per mile	2 users per group	4/day	40-160 users per mile of trail/day
Picnicking		4 persons per table	2/day	8 users per table per day
Visiting Archeological and Historical Sites	Average visit is 40 minutes; Average day is 7.5 hours	20 persons at any point in the day	11/day	220 users per site per day

Population Guidelines for Resource-Based Outdoor Recreation Activities	Resource/Facility	Population Served		
		Min.	Max.	Median
Bicycling	Linear mile of trail	1,500	10,000	5,000
Camping: RV, Trailer and Tent	Acre of camp area	5,600	25,000	6,750
Freshwater and Saltwater Beach Activities	Mile of freshwater or saltwater sandy beach shoreline	25,000	211,200	25,000
Freshwater and Saltwater Fishing (non-boat)	800 feet of pier, catwalk or jetty	5,000	25,000	5,600
Freshwater and Saltwater Boat Fishing, Power Boating, Water Skiing, Sailing	Boat ramp lane	1,500	12,500	5,000
Hiking	Linear mile of trail	5,000	10,000	6,750
Horseback Riding	Linear mile of trail	5,000	10,000	5,000
Nature Study	Linear mile of trail	6,250	10,000	6,750
Picnicking	Picnic area	5,000	10,000	6,000

iv) **User-Oriented.** User-oriented activities can be provided on developable land, if funding and space are available. Activities include baseball, football, basketball, golf, and tennis. User-oriented facilities generally are manmade, and should be located to best serve the population of the community.

User-Oriented Outdoor Recreation Activities	Resource/Facility	Guideline
Baseball/Softball	Field	120 users per field per day
Basketball	Court	90 users per court per day
Football/Soccer/Rugby	Field	175 users per field per day
Golf	Course (9-hole)	200 users per 9-hole course per day
Physical exercise (urban jogging and hiking)	Linear mile of exercise trail	100 users per mile of trail per day
Racquetball/Handball	Court	40 users per court per day
Shuffleboard	Court	20 users per court per day
Swimming	Pool (a standard pool 81' X 60')	256 users per pool per day
Tennis	Court	30 users per court per day

Population Guidelines for User-Oriented Outdoor Recreation Activities	Resource/Facility	Population Served		
		Min.	Max.	Median
Baseball/Softball	Field	2,000	10,000	5,000
Basketball	Court	500	20,000	5,000
Football/Soccer/Rugby	Field	4,000	25,000	6,000
General Play	Equipped play area	500	15,000	10,000
	Multipurpose field	500	10,000	3,750
	Multipurpose court	3,000	4,000	3,500
Golf	9-hole/18-hole golf course	8,000 25,000	50,000 65,200	25,000 50,000
Physical Exercise (urban jogging and hiking)	Trails	10,000	50,000	15,000
Racquetball/Handball	Court	2,500	20,000	10,000
Shuffleboard	Court	1,000	12,000	6,000
Swimming	Pool	1,000	50,000	25,000
Tennis	Court	1,067	10,000	2,000
Volleyball	Court	4,000	12,000	6,000

- a) **Pathway Classification.** Pathway has been defined as a linear corridor and any adjacent support parcels on land or water providing public access for recreation or authorized alternative modes of transportation. The types are classified as follows:
- i) **Park Trail:** Multi-purpose trails located within greenways, parks and natural resource areas. Focus is one recreational value and harmony with the natural environment.
 - (1) Type I: Separate/single-purpose hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians or bicyclists/in-line skates.
 - (2) Type II: Multipurpose hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians and bicyclists/in-line skaters.
 - (3) Type III: Nature trails for pedestrians, which may use either hard or soft surfaces.
 - ii) **Connector Trails:** Multipurpose trails that emphasize safe travel for pedestrians to and from parks and around the community. Focus is as much on transportation as it is on recreation.
 - (1) Type I: Separate/single-purpose hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians or bicyclists/in-line skates located in independent Rights-of-ways (ROWs) e.g., old railroad ROW.
 - (2) Type II: Separate/single-purpose hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians or bicyclists/in-line skates. Typically, located within road ROW.
 - iii) **All-terrain Bike Trail:** Off-road trail for all terrain (mountain) bikes. Single-purpose loop trails usually located in larger parks and natural resource areas.
 - iv) **Cross-Country Ski Trail:** Trails developed for traditional and skate-style cross-country skiing. Loop trails usually located in larger parks and natural resource areas.

The role of the trail system or identified pathway systems above should be one that promotes connectivity throughout the community resulting from park improvements that develop a connective park path system throughout the island. The completion of the interconnected path system above promotes active recreational opportunities for both guests and residents while addressing the alternative transportation system demands of the island.

MUNICIPAL ROLES

Because of population densities and the lack of large open space areas and resource-based recreation opportunities, municipal recreation systems tend to concentrate on

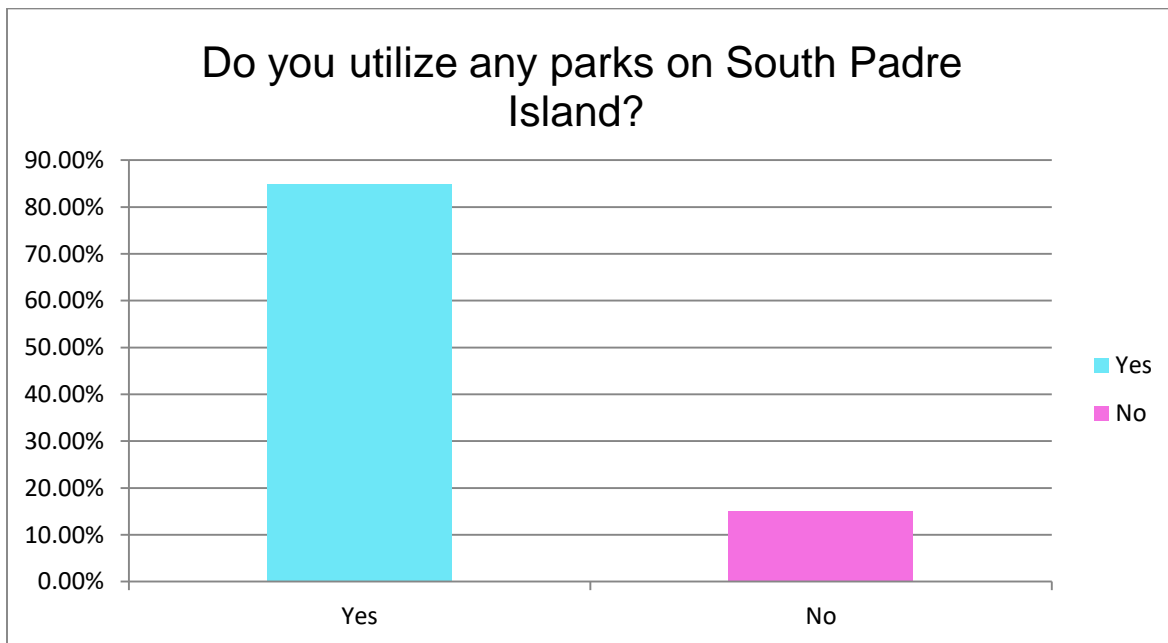
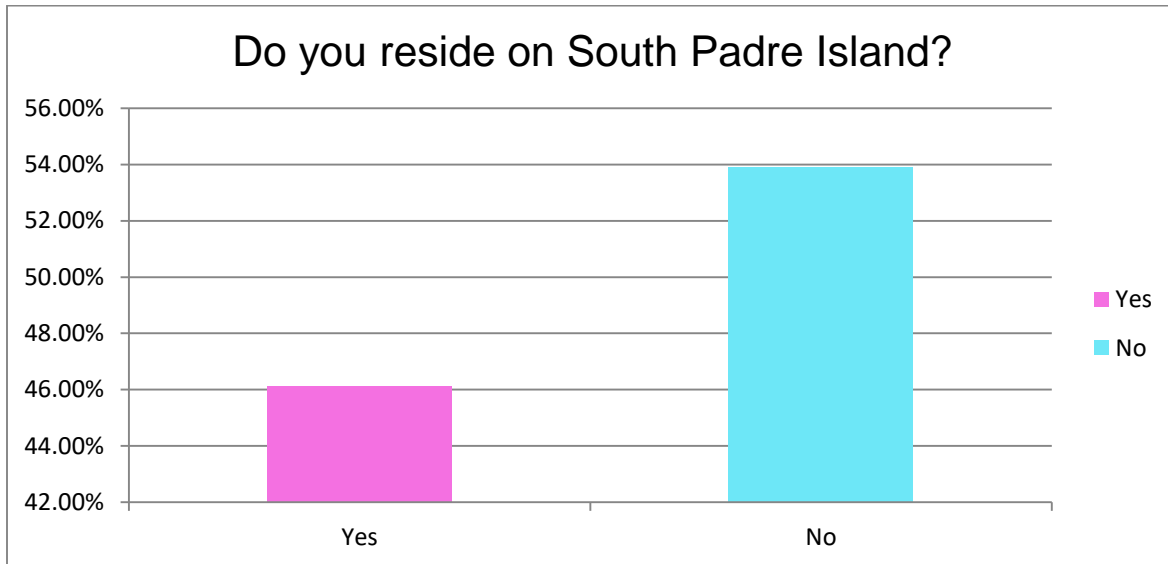
providing more intensive user-oriented facilities that require relatively little space. By doing so, municipal programs play a vital role in the provision of user-oriented recreation opportunities. Typical municipal outdoor recreation facilities include playgrounds, swimming pools, ball fields, tennis courts and golf courses. Because of the near total reliance on user-oriented facilities, municipal programs have only a limited bearing on the statewide resource-based outdoor recreation program. There are some exceptions, however, especially in the cases of cities like South Padre Island located on bodies of water.

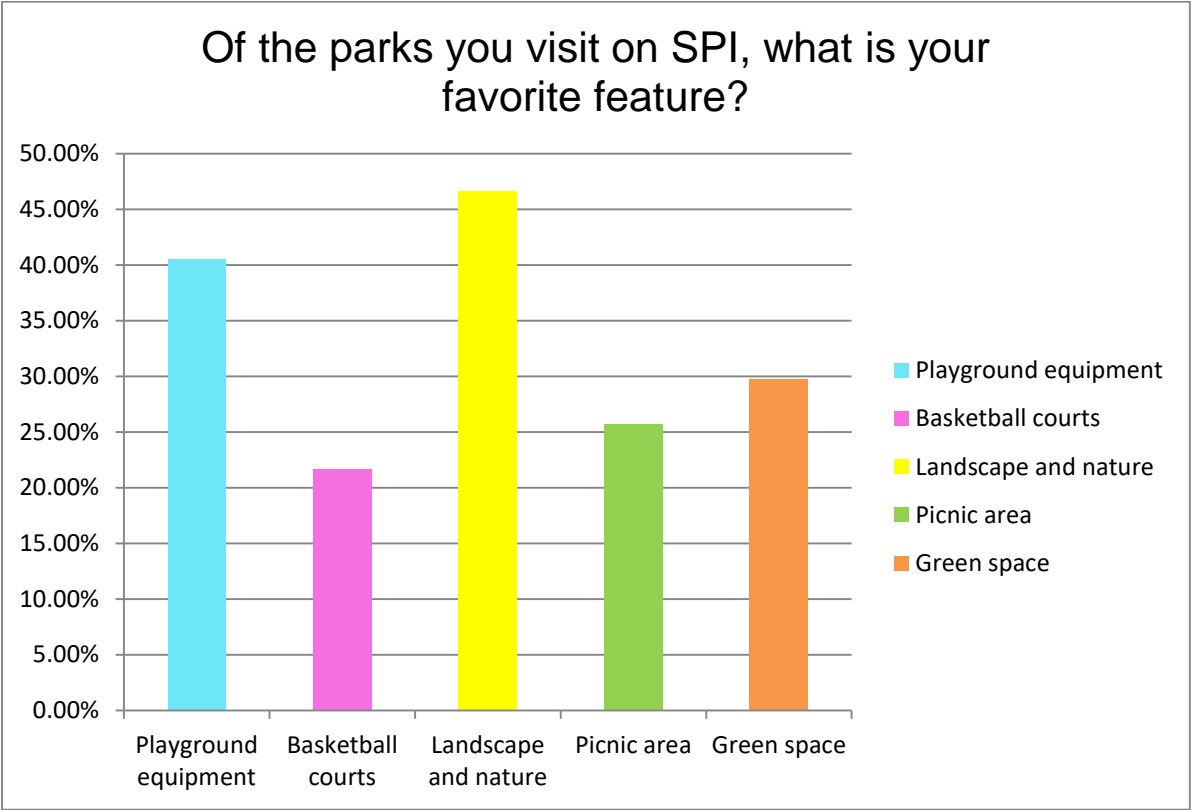
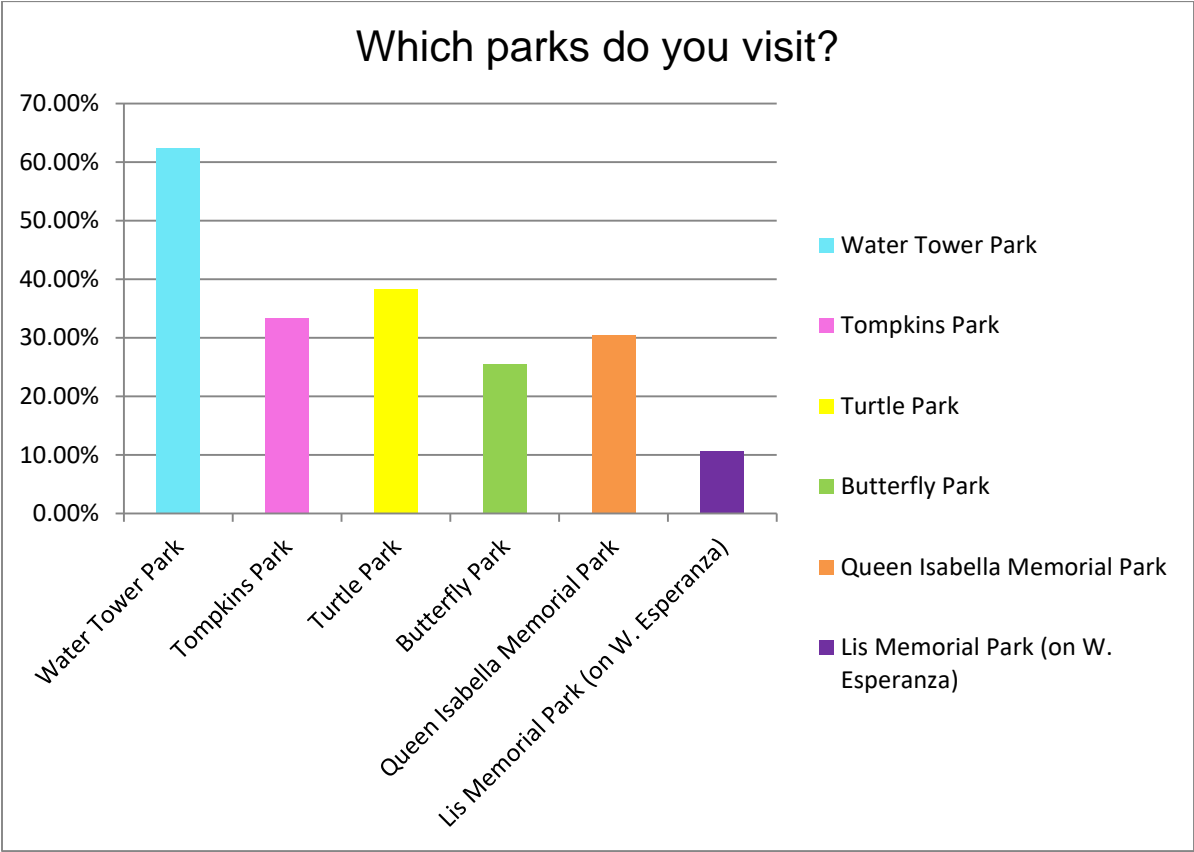
CHAPTER 4 / PUBLIC INPUT

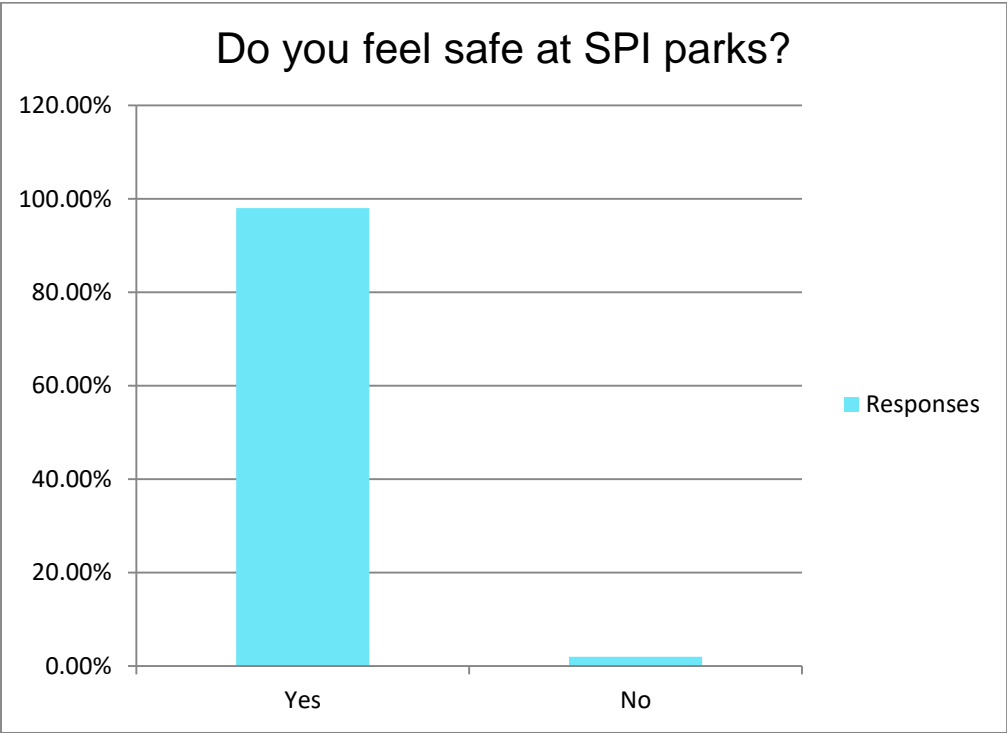
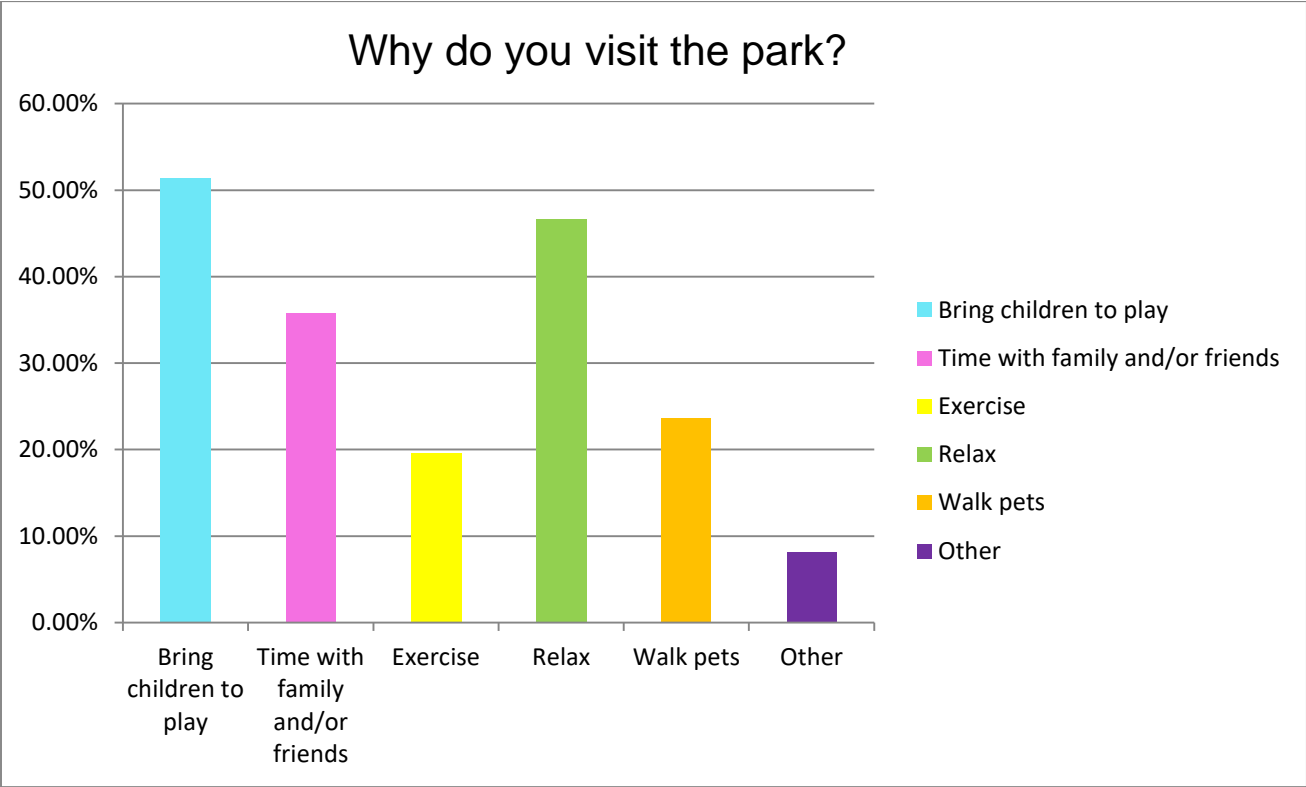
The Parks and Recreation Manager promoted a survey of the SPI parks and recreation to gain input and insight into the community and what they want from Parks and Recreation. The results were presented to the Parks, Recreation and Beautification Committee in August, 2017.

167 responses were gathered.

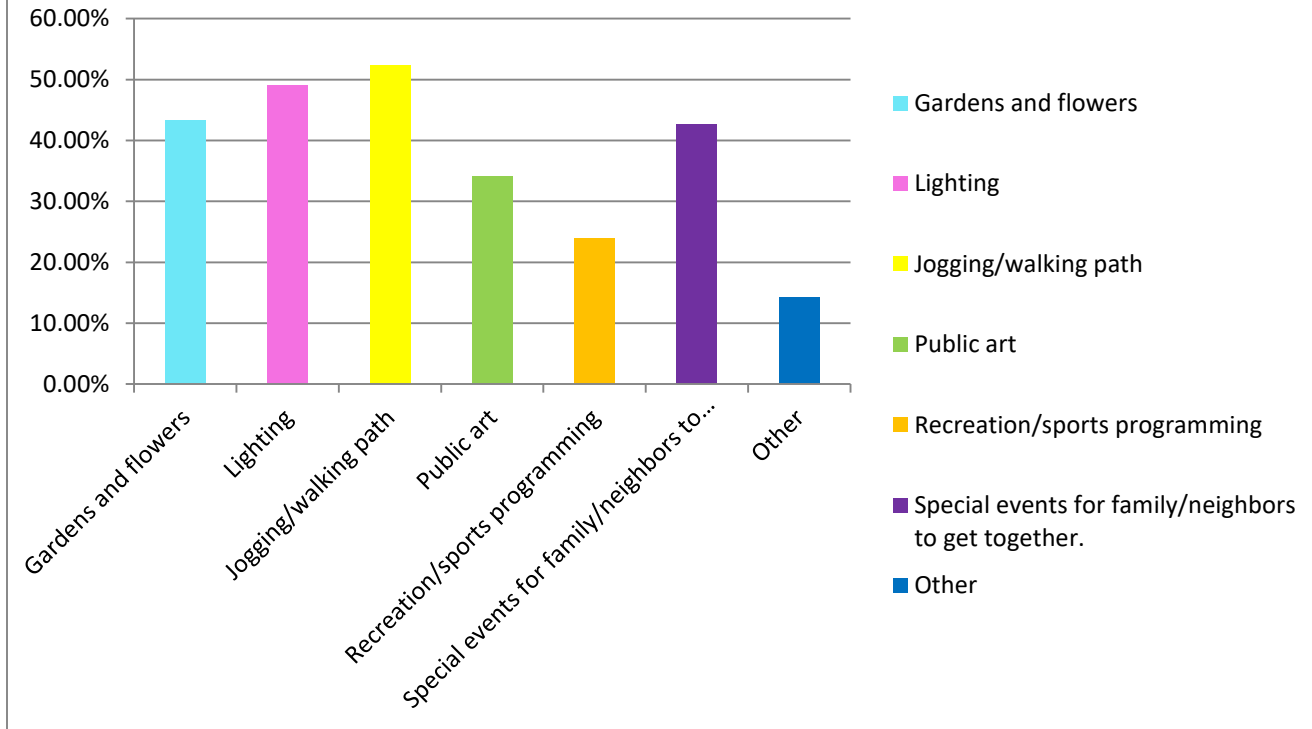
Questions asked were:



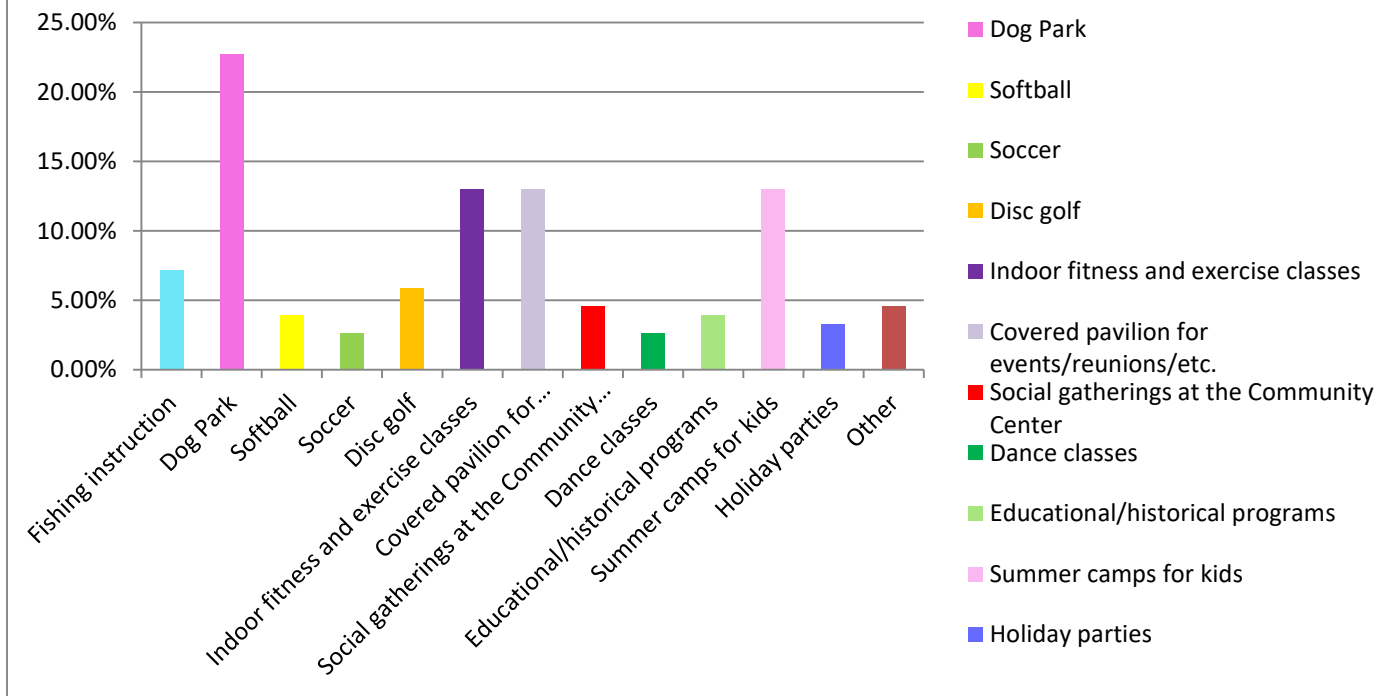


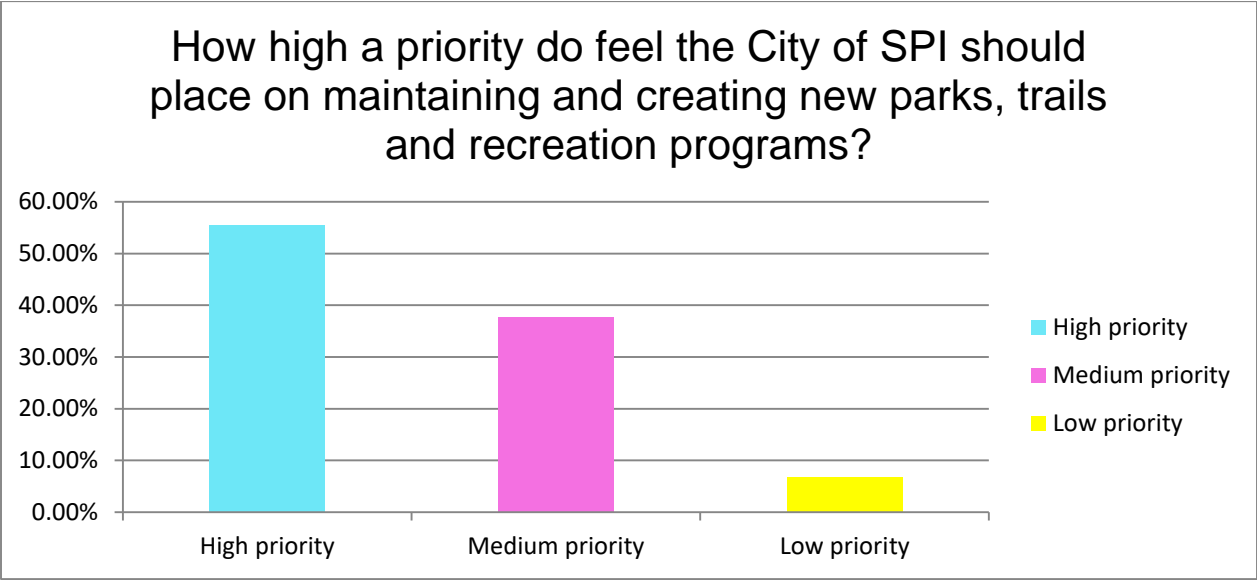


What would you like to see in a park on SPI?



What would you like to see added to the SPI Parks and Recreation Department?





The Parks, Recreation and Beautification Committee met in March of 2017 to complete a SWOT analysis of the Parks and Recreation Programs. The committee considered the Parks and Recreation programs to find the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

Findings were:

STRENGTHS

- New manager/management
- City support
- Council support
- Diverse committee/skills/views
- Parks are close to neighborhoods
- New park on main street/visibility
- Current maintenance crew
- New park equipment/good shape
- Eco Tourism community
- CVA
- Strong Christmas Parade event
- New ideas
- New web page for Parks
- TX Parks and Wildlife support
- Community support
- Size is maintainable
- EDC
- Restrooms at several locations

WEAKNESSES

- Parks used as rest stops/washrooms/kitchens/for sleeping
- Volunteerism
- Not enough parks – all cater to children – small
- Need more adult activities
- Shaded Sports court
- Need indoor recreation Arena
- Lack of supervision of maintenance – parks not completed – things done incorrectly
- Need more swing sets
- Committee is not consulted enough on design and construction/key plans and concepts
- Need appropriate oversight for projects
- Coordination between org/committees
- Not enough security/police patrol
- Need fence between hotel and park

OPPORTUNITIES

- Surveys
- Park events
- Grants
- Stay on the cutting edge for development and ideas
- Sponsorships
- Vacant land needs to be sought and acquired for future parks
- Dog Park
- Indoor arena/at least shaded play areas
- The new silent water sport park
- Organized recreational programs: Basketball/3 on 3 tournaments; what other sports do we already have resources for that we can leverage? Volleyball?
- Land under the causeway? Can it be used for park activities or is it TXDOT land?
- Grant funds for obesity/seniors/swim safety

THREATS

- Limited time
- Limited resources
- Limited budget
- Weather
- Misuse by visitors/tourists
- Lack of safety/night use for parks

CHAPTER 5 / PARK INVENTORY

Parks

Municipal Parks – Parks owned and maintained by the incorporated City of South Padre Island are described below.

a) Water Tower Park



Location: West Huisache Street, South Padre Island, TX 78597

Description: This approximately ¼ acre park, situated under the water tower, includes a half basketball court and goal, two playscapes, restrooms, water fountains and picnic tables. It is on the Bay side of the Island. Although this park does not meet the recommended acreage requirements of a neighborhood park its amenities represent traditional elements of a neighborhood park. Therefore for the purposes of this plan this is being classified as a neighborhood park.

b) Morningside or Turtle Park



Location: East Morningside Drive, South Padre Island, TX 78597

Description: This ¼ acre road island has two covered picnic tables, a gazebo, BBQ grills, swings and climber. It is decorated with concrete sea turtles in memory of the “Turtle Lady,” Ila Loetscher. This park is classified as a Tot Lot (tot lot).

c) Dr. Joseph C. & Jeanne K. Lis Memorial Park



Location: West Esperanza Street, South Padre Island, TX 78597

Description: This is a small lot (0.033557 acres) with a bench, trash receptacle, and a sign. This park is classified as a nature reserve.

d) Tompkins Park – Phase 1



Location: 6100 South Padre Blvd, South Padre Island, TX 78597

Description: Two playgrounds, basketball courts, restrooms, picnic tables, benches, trash receptacles and future site of skatepark, jogging trail and exercise stops. Although this park does not meet the recommended acreage requirements of a community park its amenities represent traditional elements of a community park. Therefore for the purposes of this plan this is being classified as a community park. (1.97 acres)

e) Butterfly Park (2017)



Location: 4316 Gulf, South Padre Island, TX 78597

Description: A gazebo, variety of butterfly plants. Trash receptacle, bench, appreciation plaque, Monarch Way Station and short walking path. This park is considered a mini park (1/4 acres).

Boat Ramps and Marinas

- a) Boat Ramps: Two boat ramps are available for public use at West Palm Street and West Polaris Drive.
- b) Marinas: Many marinas, boat basins that have docks, moorings, supplies, and other facilities for small pleasure boats are located on the west side of the island toward the Laguna Madre.

Pathways

- a) Island Gateway



In 1999, the South Padre Island Economic Development Corporation initiated Island Gateway Project that comprises the South Padre Island Gateway Beach to Bay Alternative Transportation Loop (Island Gateway). With assistance from the Texas Department of Transportation in the form of a Transportation Enhancement Grant, the project has been used heavily: It includes approximately three miles of hike and bike trails along Padre Boulevard, including a low-level timber bridge under and around the east end of the Causeway. Select exhibits are included, as well as bird viewing platforms. This park could also be classified as a linear park.

Other Publicly Owned or Regulated Open Space

a) Connector Trail/Future Trail Plan:



The City has committed to a future trail plan that provides a series of transportation options promoting a more pedestrian/bike friendly community through the development of connector trails associated with its Future Trail Plan. These series of trails allow for connectivity to all aspects of the island and are oriented along the three primary north/south boulevards (Gulf, Padre, Laguna) on the island. To date the connector trail along Gulf Boulevard has been completed providing pedestrian and bike path options throughout the community.

b) Public Beaches



South Padre Island is known for its beautiful, clean and open beaches. The beaches within the city limits encompass 4 ½ miles with varying widths. The beach within the City limits are for public use. Even though the hotels and motels line the beach front, there are 23 Beach Access cul-de-sacs every 1 ½ blocks all along Gulf Boulevard. The beach would be identified as a Resource-Based Linear Park.

c) Birding and Nature Center



Location: 6801 Padre Boulevard, South Padre Island, TX 78597

Description: The City purchased 7.3 acres of land adjacent to the Laguna Madre Water District Wastewater Treatment Plant on which the Birding and Nature Center was built. This \$5 million Birding Heaven features a five story observation tower, seven bird blinds, an auditorium for guest lectures, meeting rooms, a gift shop, and over 4,800 linear feet of boardwalks that meander through wetlands and fresh/salt water marshes. It is classified as a “Wing” of the World Birding Center.

OTHER RECREATION FACILITIES

a) Sea Turtle, Inc. (Natural Resource Area)



Location: 6617 Padre Boulevard, South Padre Island, TX 78597

Description: Founded in 1977 by Ila Fox Loetscher, better known as “the Turtle Lady of South Padre Island”, Sea Turtle, Inc is a non-profit organization 501(C)(3). The sole source of income is public donations which are used to achieve the three missions. Specifically, donations help with the upkeep of the sea turtles housed at the facility. This includes medical clinic equipment, medications, heaters, filters, water and electricity. Donations are also used to support Sea Turtle, Inc.’s educational programs. Approximately 20% of their donations are sent around the world to fund alternative resource and conservation projects involving sea turtles

Silent Water Sport Facility

The City seeks to build to a non-motorized sport launch to increase use and access to the Laguna Madre. The City of South Padre Island is a "windustry" center and applauded as one of the premiere locations for kite-boarding, wind surfing, stand up paddle boarding, and kayaking. Traditionally the participants in wind sports have driven vehicles across mud flats and utilized the adjacent tidal environment as a parking and staging area for their activities. The proposed center will decrease the direct impact on the adjacent flats and enhance access and recreation of the bay side shoreline. The main goal of this facility will be to give access to the submerged land that is necessary for launching and reduce pedestrian stress on the vulnerable marsh shoreline. This will give access to the deeper waters of Laguna Madre despite any tidal shifts and get feet and tires off of the mudflats, sea grass and wetlands on the way to the water.

The City seeks to utilize land north of its Convention Centre, which will allow for shared parking and increase foot traffic between the well utilized Convention Center and these new launching facilities. The City will work alongside the local SPI Windsurfing and Kiteboarding Association in order to create resources and access that fit the needs of the community, and to build a launch with "world class" accommodations and convenience. The increased parking and vehicular access will be achieved via intense planning of the upland space, utilization and conservation of natural flora. Natural buffers will be either left in place or relocated via the naturally occurring plants and minimal planted grasses. The stress of parking and staging will be removed from the tidal and wet environments and transferred upland.

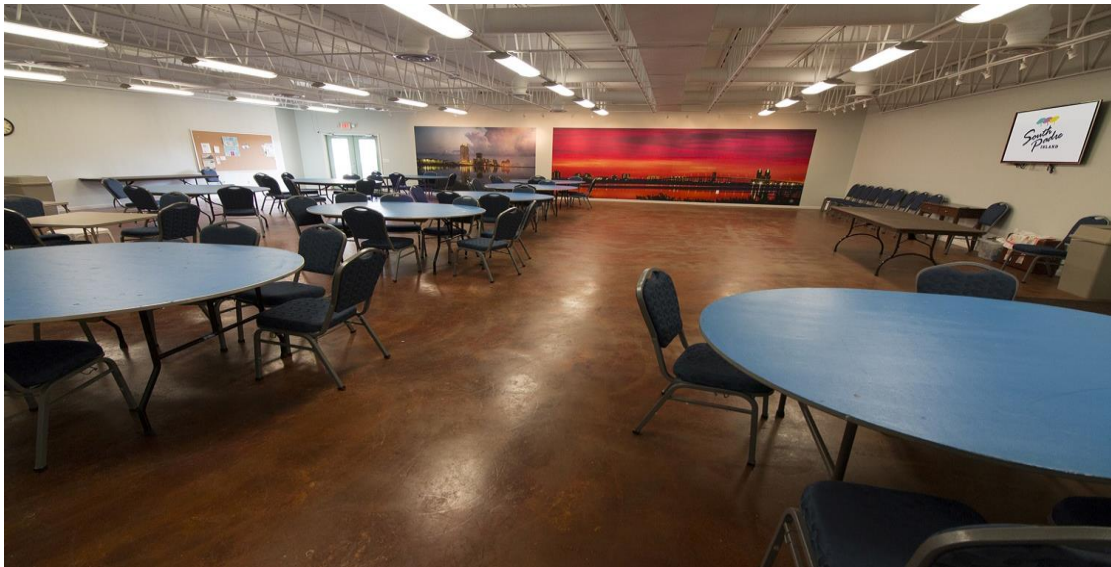
There are proposed restroom facilities, shaded areas and seating as part of the development. An ADA compliant raised walkway will lead from the park area the distance required to reach proper depth of water to launch. This walkway will end at a T head which will have several floating ramps descending to the water. This 3-4 foot tall walkway eliminates the heavy foot and vehicle traffic associated with getting the sporting equipment into the water. It will provide access to the depth of water necessary to launch without the deterrent of needing to trudge through water or saturated soils. Its location is also well suited to provide access to the "clean wind" necessary for the water sports.

Community Center

At one time the location of City Hall and the SPI Jail, the newly remodeled Community Center is intended to serve SPI and Laguna Madre residents and organizations as a "hub for partnerships doing good for the community...with the community." The City now provides an excellent facility for a variety of activities. Space available includes a 2500 sq. foot event Hall with limited kitchen facilities.

Some of the Community Center activities for residents and visitors are:

- Yoga
- SPI Topics: Topics may include Recycling, History of SPI, Shoreline, Water Safety, Bike and Golf Cart Safety, Gardening with Native and Butterfly Plants, CPR and First Aid
- Art classes
- Line Dancing
- Spanish lessons
- Book Club



The SPI Community Center is also available for rent for private events. Reservations are accepted on a first-come first-serve basis. Reservations are available to South Padre Island & Laguna Madre residents & organizations serving the community.

The Community Center may not be used for the following: religious purposes or partisan political events. City sponsored meetings and events will take precedence.

Recreation

- a) Pickleball Clinics are happening regularly both at the Convention Centre and at Tompkins Park – most open play is organized by volunteers.



- b) Disc golf and bocce ball can also be played at our City parks (equipment can be checked out from the Community Center)

CHAPTER 6 / NEEDS ASSESSMENT

An assessment of what deficiencies exist in our parks system is vital so that planning can occur to address those deficiencies. It is also important to determine what future needs are.

Methods

A variety of different inputs and techniques are needed to evaluate SPI's current and future park needs. Three methodologies are used to make these determinations. These techniques follow general methodologies accepted by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for local park master plans.

- Standard-based assessment – this technique uses locally developed “target” level of service ratios of facilities to population so as to project where the city is today and where it might be in the future as the population grows.
- Demand-based assessment – This technique uses actual and/or anticipated usage growth data, as well as citizen input on the types of activities they would like to engage in, to determine which facilities and programs are most in demand.
- Resource-based assessment – this technique recognizes that SPI has many unique physical features and explores how to convert these into recreation or open space assets that help to meet the demand for recreation.

The Need for Park Acreage

Neighborhood and mini parks

The prominence of neighborhood parks reflects the importance of having them as centerpieces of a neighborhood. The recommended target level of 1.5 acres of neighborhood for every 1,000 residents is a good indicator. This target reflects the goal of providing parks within walking distance of residents. The suggested benchmark would be all residents living within ½ mile of a park or green space. SPI currently has .25 acres of city-owned neighborhood parks. This leaves a need of 4.25 acres to meet this goal.

Community parks

Community parks are large parks that serve several neighborhoods. They serve as locations for larger community events, sports and activities. The recommended standard for community parks is 5 acres for every 1,000 residents. SPI currently has a total of approximately 1.97 acres of city owned community parks. This leaves a need of approximately 12.5 acres or two community parks to meet this goal.

Linear parks

Linear parks are typically urban parks that are substantially longer than they are wide. These parks are generally incorporated into linear greenway projects. Typical activities associated with Linear Parks include active recreational opportunities such as walking, jogging or biking. Although the City has no identified Linear Parks there are existing bikeway paths that provide the recreational demand associated with traditional Linear Parks.

Regional parks

Regional parks traditionally serve more than 100,000 population and function to make special natural resources accessible to people of all ages. Although they are generally more than 250 acres in size the geographic breakdown of South Padre Island makes that a difficult goal to reach. As a result, the total island and its available resources should be a primary focus to achieve the same benefits and amenities that are associated with regional parks to better serve its permanent residents, seasonal residents and visitors.

Tourism Planning and Development

The primary industry and revenue generator for South Padre Island is tourism. As a result, future growth and development should account for tourist demand and demographics. Development on the Island, to this point, has primarily focused on establishing leisure areas and educational opportunities. Developments to the north include the South Padre Island Convention Center, Birding and Nature Center and Sea Turtle, Inc. There have been and needs to be continued efforts to network those facilities with potential additions and improvements.

DEVELOPING TOURISM OPERATIONS AND PROGRAMS

When developing tourism and preparing its programs, the followings may need to be considered so that the City of South Padre Island can provide well organized services for visitors:

a) Selected Multi-Purpose Tourism

Activities	Details
Direct Sales	Restaurants Visitor-Oriented Services, such as Guide Services, Tours, etc. Shopping Opportunities Business Development & Effects on Residents and Community Capacity Rentals of Conference Facilities
Educational Experience	Access to nature and the sites and attractions Visiting Museums, Cultural Facilities, and Organizations Resource Protection Training Arts and Crafts Session
Outdoor Recreation	Parks and Outdoor Recreation Opportunities Other Existing Attractions
Entertainment	Arts and Film Festival Conference Meetings
Accommodations	Hotels, Inns, Lodges, and Cabins etc.
Miscellaneous	Visitor Information including brochures, maps and visitor centers Existing marketing efforts

b) Scenic/Eco Tourism

Activities	Details
Direct Sales	Souvenirs Guiding and Outfitting Pack Trips Self-Guided Driving Tours Wagon Trains Roadside Stands & Markets
Educational Experience	Educational or Technical Tours School Tour Children's Camp Corporate Picnics/Training Habitat Improvement Projects Historical Museums and Displays Wilderness Experiences
Outdoor Recreation	Bird Watching & Wildlife Viewing Boating Canoeing Hiking / Backpacking Camping / Picnicking Fishing & Hunting Hunting Dog Training & Competition Swimming Boating Event (Crew) Photography / Painting
Entertainment	Animal Feeding Group Fishing and Tying Clinics Flower Shows or Festivals
Accommodations	Bed & Breakfast Elder Hostel
Miscellaneous	Family Reunions Wedding Floral Arrangements & Gardens (flowers, greenery, herbs, dried flowers)

c) Nature/Sports Tourism

Activities	Details
Direct Sales	Nature/Sports-related gifts/crafts Sporting goods Farmers' market Meals
Outdoor Recreation	Camping (Camp Cooking) Fishing Swimming Boating Bicycling Bird Watching Game/wildlife preserve Horseback riding (Horse Training, Horseshoeing) Nature walks Trail rides Tubing & Rafting Regatta Photography Shooting sports (Archery Range)
Entertainment	Special events Festivals and fairs Petting zoo Picnic/play area
Accommodations	Hotel/Motel/Condo vacation Conference facility
Miscellaneous	Guide/outfitter operation

CHAPTER 7 / RECOMMENDATIONS

Safety

When assessing the current park system and future park needs the goal should be to develop, construct and utilize facilities that are sited to promote park safety while minimizing security and equipment safety problems. As a result, future considerations should be made to address the following security issues;

- Provide appropriate lighting for safety
- Maintain clear views into and through the parks
- Provide multiple attractions producing a diverse set of users (daily/seasonally).
- Coordinate with multiple groups to utilize park in organized and unorganized fashions.
- Continued investment into the parks addressing security and safety concerns.

Aesthetic Standards

Aesthetic standards provide a framework for aesthetic elements (e.g., turf, trees, and flowers). SPI is highly involved with the Monarch Pledge to assist in increasing their populations. We are also working to keep our plans in line with resource conservation and the use of drought resistant native plants. With these initiatives in the forefront of our planning for our parks and open spaces we are better able to plan for design and maintenance focusing resources towards native plants and those that are butterfly friendly, encouraging the propagation of the species and being mindful of our water use. We are defining the role for future planning of landscaping and park use to be in line with resource conservation efforts involving water, native species, etc...

- Encouraging the use of butterfly friendly plants in all of our planting needs.
- Develop written aesthetic quality standards
- Set specific, realistic, and measurable aesthetic quality standards for all areas
- Set quality expectations and guidelines for all maintenance activities and link these expectations to aesthetic quality standards.

Functional Standards

Functional standards consider all types of use and outline common practices for coordinating the identity for a place and its appearance through consistent, appealing, and appropriate site furnishings and circulation approaches.

- Establish a sense of place.
- Create location character through branding (use of logos, local materials and consistent design).
- Set high expectations for design quality.
- Control access for safety.
- Design pathways and entrances to accommodate visitors' needs.

- Design to accommodate events and regular use with less impact.
- Flexible – able to accommodate activities for different seasonal demographics and weather

Maintenance Standards

Maintenance standards provide an important perspective on dealing with impacts resulting generally from high use.

- Assess different staffing models, including in-house staff, contract services, volunteers, and private/public partnerships.
- Maintain an adequate level of expertise in specialty skills on the park staff.
- Ensure goals, standards, design intent and quality are understood.
- Support the professional development and upward mobility of employees to boost morale and satisfaction levels.
- Develop plans for regular and emergency maintenance.
- Develop creative and flexible approach and written schedules for recurring, periodic, and seasonal maintenance activities.
- Develop a system to address typical complaints.
- Respond to complaints in a timely manner; develop and maintain a system to convey that action has occurred.
- Limit the use of commercial fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides, and use chemicals responsibly when necessary.

Visitor Quality Standards (Visitor Information)

Visitor quality standards are to improve the visitor experience through coordinated way-finding, educational information, and clearly stated rules for use.

- Provide information that is identifiable, consistent, understandable, and current.
- Partner with other departments and other surrounding recreational facilities to eliminate confusion and improve visitor experiences.
- Reinforce resource protection messaging.
- Encourage the responsible behavior of visitors. Display positive messaging and rules.

Supply Standards (Event Management)

Supply standards look at many of the challenges of hosting large-scale and high-use events on vulnerable landscapes.

- Manage events proactively.
- Facilitate the permitting process.
- Charge fees and recover costs for use of public areas, supplies and manpower.

- Use variable permit fee schedules based on the type and location of events, as well as level of disruption.
- Charge direct costs for staff, utilities, trash collection, removing or relocating park furniture, and repairing damage.
- Establish event parking requirements.
- Consider professionalizing events staff to approve event permits and measure compliance
- Hire staff with hands-on experience in event production. Why event production – wouldn't that be handled by venue operator?
- Co-locate maintenance and event staff to foster collaboration, coordination, and communication.
- Staff sufficiently to cover permitting, monitoring, and reporting needs.

CHAPTER 8 / GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION

Natural resource management is fundamentally concerned with achieving integrated, productive and sustainable use of biological, physical, social and financial capital at different geographic and temporal scales. As our understanding of the resource base has improved, the need for integrated approaches to management has been more widely appreciated.

- a) To protect and preserve Environmentally Sensitive Areas and deal with pollution.
- b) To make communities safer and more livable by tempering the effects of natural events and human activities.
- c) To ensure environmental sustainability and healthy ecosystems that can assist economic needs/opportunities enjoyed by current residents and future generations.

Preservation, Open Space, Quality of Life

Roles of Parks and Open Space

Parks, recreation facilities, and open spaces provide a multitude of benefits to people. They provide people with formal and informal gathering places to be physically active, socialize, relax, build community, and connect with the natural world. They make urban areas more inviting for living, working and relaxing. And, they provide environmental benefits, such as storm water management, erosion control, buffering between built and natural environments and wildlife habitat. They also provide greens to absorb air pollutants.

Applications

To encourage the use of Parks and Open Spaces and to minimize existing health issues the residents may have, the facilities should consider providing, at a minimum:

- (1) Exercise alternatives for all ages and ADA accessibility;



(2) Multi-purpose trails;



(3) Landscaping with greenery and native plants to absorb pollutants and prevent erosion;



(4) Community Gardens



(5) Shade



Vegetation/Natural Shade Features



Installed Shade Features

Goals

This new Parks, Recreation and Keep SPI Beautiful Master Plan was initiated by the City Council of South Padre Island and comes out of ideas provided by the residents of City through public hearings, surveys, City Departments and review of past information. As a result, of the identified community stakeholder input, four primary goal categories were formulated. These four categories include 1) Increase facility usage, 2) Enhance natural resources, 3) Provide safe and well maintained facilities and 4) Build new facilities. With the formulation of these goals each category has a series of measurable objectives as identified below:

Increase facility usage

- Lighting would allow residents and tourists to utilize the parks in the evenings during our hot summer days
- Disc Golf Courses – equipment is available at the Community Center. Promote its availability and simple skills to utilize.
- Assess shade at all parks, develop plan to increase shaded areas, secure funding and implement
- Increase the number of picnic tables available
- Mark off soccer or flag football field once the Tomkins Park lawn area has grown in.
- At Tomkins Park - build out the walking path with exercise station alternatives for all ages and physical abilities
- Provide year round Community Center activities for all ages and interests
- Assess community interest in vegetable gardens. If there is enough interest support the community in building out the planters.

Enhance natural resources

- Monarch migration path – identify where new butterfly friendly plantings can go, plant and maintain.
- Bird migration path – Green the city and educate residents on the importance of trees, flowers, feeders. Citizen events to clear out bush and debris.
- As much as possible, utilize native drought tolerant plants to absorb pollutants and prevent erosion

Provide safe and well maintained facilities

- Reduce trash by holding events throughout the year that involved residents and tourists
- Renovate and maintain existing parks as necessary
- Provide lighting at Tomkins Park
- Post rules and regulations at Tomkins, Water Tower, and Turtle Parks

Build new facilities

- Dog park – secure funding and location, construct, notify community
- Non-motorized water sports venue – identify location, acquire land, secure funding, obtain bids, build and advertise
- Skate park – secure funding, obtain bids, build, post rules and advertise
- Indoor recreation facility that would have flexible courts for Pickleball, badminton, shuffle board, and other activities requiring protection from our strong winds and other weather elements. Consider adaptive repurpose of existing buildings/properties.