



7. Parks, Open Space, Recreation & Lakes

GOALS	POLICIES FOR DECISION MAKERS
<p>Preserve open space corridors in Tyler for wildlife habitat, nature-based recreation, an attractive public realm, and a healthy environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect natural corridors along creeks, floodways, utility easements and other appropriate areas for wildlife habitat and nature-based recreation. • Protect drinking water and other important resources. • Enhance canals, drainageways, and road edges and medians to be attractive city amenities. • Support private and nonprofit open space protection and management strategies such as conservation easements and land trusts. • Provide street trees on all city roadways. • Support the new city arborist position.
<p>Provide a balanced park and open space system that allows for access and enjoyment by all citizens of Tyler.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunities for both passive and active use of parks and recreation areas. • Work towards providing a park within walking distance of every Tyler residence. • Review all excess City-owned property for potential as part of the park and open space network before disposition by sale or other means. • Seek creation of parks and recreation facilities in underserved parts of the city. • Explore the potential for an expanded garden center that would enhance the Rose Garden’s role as a regional tourism asset, as well as a local asset. • Explore potential partnerships with nonprofit or for-profit garden and horticulture groups for creation of a major regional center.
<p>Provide recreation programs and opportunities for children, youth, adults and senior citizens throughout the city.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support regular surveys of park and program users to meet changing needs for recreation services by all segments of the population. • Explore collaboration with school and private facilities for shared use of recreation areas and facilities. • Develop policies and criteria for use of City recreational facilities by private organizations.
<p>Protect and preserve Lake Tyler, Lake Tyler East and Bellwood Lake.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect the quality of drinking water while providing opportunities for nature- and water-based recreation on City-owned land. • Ensure access to lake facilities and recreation for all citizens. • Manage development in and around sensitive areas of the lakes in order to minimize adverse effects on drinking water quality and valuable ecosystems.
<p>Be a good steward of parks and public spaces.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain all parks and public spaces to the same high standard. • Provide for meaningful community input on plans for park improvements and new parks. • Encourage and support creation of park “friends” groups or “adopt a park” groups. • Encourage and support creation of a Tyler Parks Foundation or similar nonprofit group to work with the City on park and open space issues. • Promote xeriscaping in landscaped medians.

FINDINGS

- Tyler exceeds National Recreation and Park Association (NPRA) standards for a city of 100,000 in the number of baseball fields, soccer fields, and playgrounds.
- Tyler has fewer Neighborhood Parks, Community Parks, and Regional Parks than recommended by national recreation organizations.
- Parks generally are not distributed equally around the city.
- Built-out conditions of the city limit connectivity and access to recreational areas.
- Public trail systems are limited in extent and lack connectivity to both active and passive recreational areas.
- Tyler's residential growth has not been accompanied by preservation of open space, park creation or expansion of its trail system sufficient to meet new demand.
- Ordinance requirements limit the ability of the City to acquire recreational land as the city develops.
- Tyler's park and recreation resources also include private facilities available through clubs, neighborhood associations, and school district fields and facilities.
- City-owned or -controlled land at Lakes Tyler and Tyler East and at Bellwood Lake lacks a plan for appropriate public use.

KEY CHALLENGES

- Acquiring land for new parks, recreation facilities and greenways.
- Meeting increased demand for use of existing passive and active recreation land.
- Providing neighborhood parks for existing underserved neighborhoods.
- Creating an open space network to link parks and other city destinations.
- Providing for appropriate public recreation opportunities at the lakes.

PARKS, RECREATION AND THE LAKES FACTS

WATER RESOURCES:

- Four major watersheds radiate from downtown:
 - West Mud Creek
 - Black Fork Creek
 - Willow Creek
 - Indian Creek
- Numerous small and large lakes in the area, including:
 - Lakes Tyler and Tyler East: City-owned water supply and recreational area
 - Lake Palestine: Regional water supply and recreational area
 - Bellwood Lake: Former municipal water supply and potential recreational area

CITY PARK AND OPEN SPACE SYSTEM (2005):

- Total system acreage: 1196.8 acres
- 11.84 acres per 1,000 residents (total system)
- 8.12 acres per 1,000 residents (developed park system)

RECREATION FACILITIES (2005):

- 10 basketball courts
- 8 tennis courts
- 10 baseball fields
- 5 softball fields
- 1 football field
- 15 soccer fields
- 22 playgrounds
- 2 swimming pools
- Glass Recreation Center
- Senior Citizens Center
- Harvey Convention Center (30,000 sq. ft.)
- Tyler exceeds National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) standards for a city of 100,000 in the number of baseball fields, soccer fields, and playgrounds.

Source: City of Tyler

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- Tyler's developed park acreage of 8.12 acres per 1,000 residents is slightly below average for a city of its size.
- Tyler has fewer Neighborhood Parks, Community Parks, and Regional Parks than recommended by national recreation organizations.
- Parks generally are not distributed equally around the city.
- Public trail systems are limited in extent.
- Smith County is home to one of the most visited state parks in Texas. Tyler State Park encompasses 985 heavily-wooded acres surrounding a 64-acre spring-fed lake.

T Tyler's green landscape of trees, rolling hills, lakes and creeks is central to the city's and the region's sense of identity. This chapter of the Tyler 21 Comprehensive Plan focuses on the parks and open space network as an organizing system for land use in Tyler, as a resource for Tyler citizens, and as a critical element of enhanced quality of life. It is based on the 2005 Update to the 1999 Parks and Recreation Plan as well as additional analysis and the work of the Tyler 21 Working Group on Parks, Open Space, Recreation and the Lakes. The plan is intended to identify general locations for future acquisition and development of recreational facilities and to guide policies regarding such development. The plan does not address specific design recommendations for individual sites, nor does it evaluate specific facility programming.

PARKS AND OPEN SPACE AS A SYSTEM

Parks, open spaces, and other green and blue (water) resources play multiple roles in the city as places of beauty, spaces for recreation, wildlife habitat, and cooling micro-climates. Together they compose the “green infrastructure” of the city in contrast to the “gray infrastructure” made up of the roads, utility lines, communications installations, water and sewer plants, and buildings for schools, libraries, hospitals and so on. This gray infrastructure is built in systems, not in isolated pieces. By the same token, the parks, tree-lined streets, bike trails and pedestrian paths, river and stream corridors, and urban wilds of the city should also be seen as complex network. These resources, too, must be planned, created, maintained and restored as a system.

A central role of city parks has always been to allow urban dwellers to enjoy nature close to their homes or places of work. Most large city park systems incorporate nature in two kinds of parks: traditional parks where nature is managed in designed landscapes or shaped around recreational activities and conservation areas where nature exists on its own terms. Both kinds of parks are present in Tyler. As part of the public realm, parks and green open spaces can become the identifiable framework of city life, framing the built environment, helping to define the city’s visual character, and enhancing the daily experience of residents and visitors. Parks and trees are the lungs of the city, bringing myriad benefits, from improving air quality to reducing the urban “heat island” effect exacerbated by reflective, hard surfaces such as rooftops and parking lots. Moreover, as society increasingly understands the importance of conserving energy, reducing greenhouse gases to slow down climate change, and eliminating toxic materials, cities are finding that parks and public spaces represent one of the most important arenas for showing leadership in exemplifying and promoting sustainable and energy-efficient management practices.

A. Current Conditions

COMMUNITY ISSUES

At the Community Visioning Retreat, preserving the natural beauty of the city was high on participants' agendas. These residents stressed the need to preserve Tyler's natural beauty, including the lakes, trees, azaleas, and roses, and the need for more park, recreation, and cultural opportunities. Tyler's trees and lakes figured prominently in discussions about how Tylerites would like the city to be known in the future. Similarly, in the city-wide survey, 89% of respondents said that parks, recreation and open space were very or somewhat important. Forty percent saw Tyler's natural resources and scenery as important, but only 29% identified the parks and open space system as assets to build on for the future. Only half the people surveyed were satisfied with the quality and programs of parks and recreational facilities. These results indicate that many Tylerites would like to see improvement and expansion of the city's parks, recreation and open space system.

Parks, open space, and recreation are important aspects of the Tyler 21 Vision and Principles as adopted by the City Council:

- The future Vision aspires to Tyler being known as a "City of Trees" with "excellence in City design" characterizing "Tyler's public spaces, from humble sidewalks, to plazas and parks..."
- One of the Principles to guide the plan focuses directly on open space issues: "Protect and enhance open spaces, parks and trees in a connected network for recreation and a healthy environment."

THE TYLER LANDSCAPE

Tyler lies in the Piney Woods, an ecoregion of Texas, Louisiana, and Arkansas that is defined by rolling hills and forested land. Unlike much of arid central and western Texas, the Piney Woods region resembles the South in its landscape character. Tree species such as longleaf pine, dogwood, sweetgum, hickory, and oak thrive in East Texas and give the region a unique identity in relation to the rest of the state.

Tyler's original city area, now roughly the downtown area, sits atop one of the higher points of the city. Like the rest of the Piney Woods landscape, much of Tyler is composed of gentle hills with mild slopes that make the land suitable for development. Green trees characterize the city, although much of the piney forest has been harvested for timber, or cut for cropland or development.

WILDLIFE HABITAT

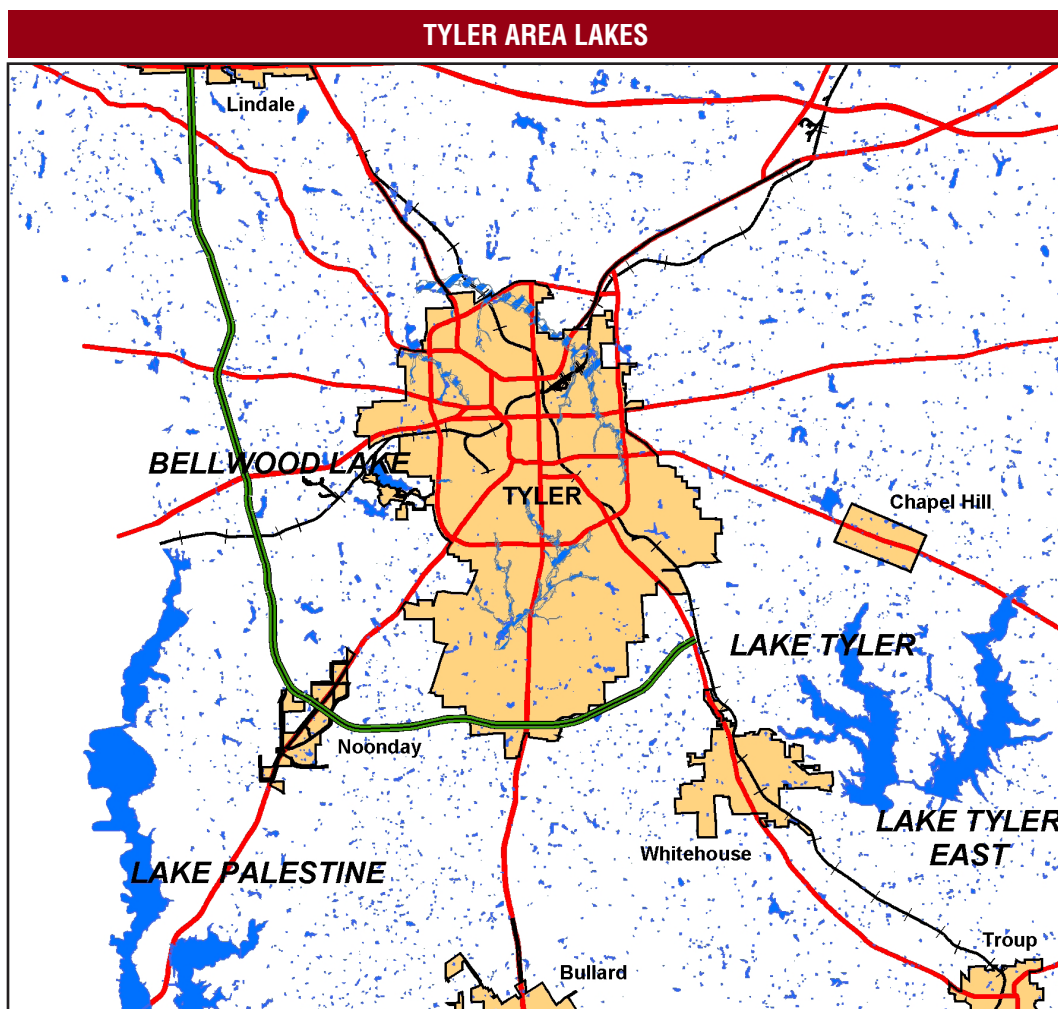
Tyler's woods and hills are home to many animals that are found throughout the southern United States, such as deer, squirrels, and foxes. East Texas marks the western range of many birds, including the cockaded woodpecker, the pine warbler, and the bobwhite quail. Tyler's wetlands also serve as habitat to frogs, insects, snakes, and other animals that live near bodies of water.

Tyler's streams and forested areas provide important corridors for wildlife; however, development of vacant land encroaches upon these habitats. East Texas is becoming one of the fastest-growing areas in the state, and increased development of rural land in Tyler and its ETJ poses a threat to the continuity of these wildlife corridors.

WATER RESOURCES AND WATER SUPPLY

As an East Texas city, Tyler receives more rainfall than cities in other parts of the state and also has access to more water resources. Several streams flow through Tyler, including Black Fork Creek in northern Tyler, Willow Creek in northwestern Tyler, and Mud Creek in southern Tyler. These streams have extensive basins that snake throughout the city, including parts of downtown, where their channels largely have been covered. Most of these streams flow into nearby lakes or the Neches River, which forms the western border of Smith County.

Tyler lies near several man-made lakes that provide drinking water for the region, including Lake Tyler, Lake Tyler East, Bellwood Lake, and Lake Palestine. Lake Tyler and Lake



Source: City of Tyler GIS data

Tyler East are fed by several small streams, but Lake Palestine is fed by the Neches River, which flows southward into the Gulf of Mexico. Lake Tyler, created in 1949, is located southeast of the city and covers approximately 1,400 acres. Lake Tyler East, formed in 1967-1968, includes over 2,500 acres to the east of Lake Tyler and is connected to Lake Tyler by a channel. These two lakes provide the Tyler area with over 30 million gallons of water per day and also serve as water recreation areas. Bellwood Lake, which lies just outside of Tyler's western boundary, covers 170 acres and provides raw water for three commercial and industrial users in Tyler. Bellwood Lake is also a recreational area for the City of Tyler. Lake Palestine, located approximately nine miles to the southwest of Tyler, also serves as a water source for the city and many other East Texas communities. In addition, Tyler has twelve deep-water wells available to supplement its water supply from the four man-made lakes.

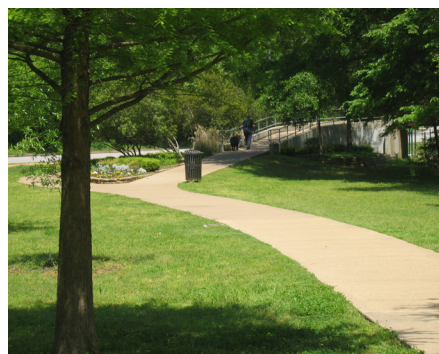
CITY PARKS AND RECREATION RESOURCES AND FACILITIES

Before the 1950s, Tyler's park system was developed to serve the city's older neighborhoods. Parks were reasonably well distributed among residential neighborhoods north of Glenwood Boulevard and it is not uncommon to see schools and parks located next to one another. As suburban development patterns and models proliferated in the second half of the twentieth century, little attention was paid to acquiring strategic locations for parks and open space. While the city continued to expand southward, critical connectivity, access opportunities and land acquisition possibilities were lost.

Nonetheless, Tyler has many assets to build on, including parks of different sizes with a variety of facilities; community and senior recreation centers; walking trails in Rose Rudman and Faulkner Parks; planned pedestrian and bike trails throughout the city; Lakes Tyler and Tyler East, and Bellwood Lake; and natural areas surrounding many small lakes and creeks. Many parks and trails have limited connections to nearby neighborhoods and other community destinations and some neighborhoods have few park and recreation facilities. City-owned land at the lakes could provide more opportunities for nature-based recreation.

MANAGEMENT OF CITY PARKS

The Tyler City Council appoints a nine-member Park Board to advise them on decisions affecting recreation facilities and opportunities. Any matters pertaining to the operation and maintenance of all the city parks and cemeteries may be referred to the Board. The Board makes recommendations to the City Manager and City Council through the Parks and Recreation Director on the operation, maintenance and development of public parks in the city, as well as the expansion of park areas and acquisition of new park sites.



Rose Rudman Park, a passive recreation area, is one of the most heavily used parks in Tyler.

The Parks Board makes capital improvement recommendations for consideration in the annual budget each year, including recommendations on extension and improvement of public park property and on the acquisition of additional park sites. The City periodically conducts an annual assessment of existing conditions and general compliance with recommendations set forth in the Parks and Open Space Master Plan, which was most recently updated in 2005. The last assessment focused mainly on current safety standards and insuring all playground equipment citywide met safety standards. For future assessments, the City will also analyze developing recreational trends and make adjustments to the implementation plan as necessary.

2005 PARK AND RECREATION PLAN

A detailed Park and Recreation Plan was prepared as part of the 1999 Comprehensive Plan and updated by the parks department and the Park Board in 2005. This plan focused on traditional NRPA standards and demand for recreation facilities.

As part of this process, an extensive parks and recreation public survey was completed in 1998. At that time, the survey found that all the parks had a regional user base, except for Bergfeld and Lindsey parks, which attracted residents from all over the city. The most used parks in the system were Bergfeld, Rose Rudman, Lindsey, Southside and Golden Road. The top six new facilities desired were a senior center, recreation center, multi-use trails, playgrounds, baseball fields, and outdoor pools. The Glass Recreation Center was constructed since the survey and initial plans to extend the multiuse trail network have been made. Faulkner Park is also new since the survey.

The Plan list of priority acquisitions and improvements includes:

- Dedicated park land
- System-wide playgrounds and water playgrounds
- System-wide park amenities: tables, picnic shelters, drinking fountains, benches, etc.
- Additional trails and connections
- Multi-purpose fields
- Athletic fields and softball fields
- A competition swimming pool
- Upgrade and expansion of the existing skate park at Noble E. Young Park
- Multi-purpose courts: tennis, basketball, volleyball
- Public golf course

These priorities were based on a combination of expansion needs based on NRPA standards and assumed population growth and, to a lesser degree, the survey results. The Plan acknowledges that there are insufficient funds to implement this priority list and suggests application for state funding.

INVENTORY OF EXISTING FACILITIES

Tyler owns approximately 1,200 acres of parks and open space managed by the Department of Parks and Recreation. Twenty percent of that land (over 196 acres) is classified as passive open space, including greenbelts, medians, and cemeteries. The largest and most

used passive open space area is Rose Rudman Greenbelt Park, which includes picnic facilities, a pavilion, and a hike and bike trail. The City's 819 acres of active recreation space include neighborhood parks, community athletic parks, special use parks, and regional parks. Lindsey Park is the largest active park, encompassing over 454 acres. However, the "passive" and "active" classifications obscure the fact that many active recreation parks also contain passive use areas and a so-called passive park like Rose Rudman (because it does not have sports facilities or playgrounds) is one of the most used parks in the system. There are a total of 36 park sites in seven different park classifications. The inventory and classifications below are based on the 2005 Parks Plan Update as reviewed by City staff. The plan did not include classifications for regional parks and medians.

Neighborhood Parks

A neighborhood park typically occupies eight to twelve acres, but varies according to circumstance and many are much smaller. According to the 2005 Plan, a neighborhood park should be in a residential area "for easy pedestrian access," but it is also said to have a two-mile radius service area. However, two miles is much farther than most people will walk, though it is certainly within easy bicycle access. Nearby access or adjacency to elementary schools, multi-use trails and greenbelts is desirable. Facilities typically found in neighborhood parks include play apparatus, multi-purpose courts (basketball, volleyball, etc.), open space for free play, picnic areas, shelters, and attractive landscaping. Fourteen Tyler parks fall into this classification.



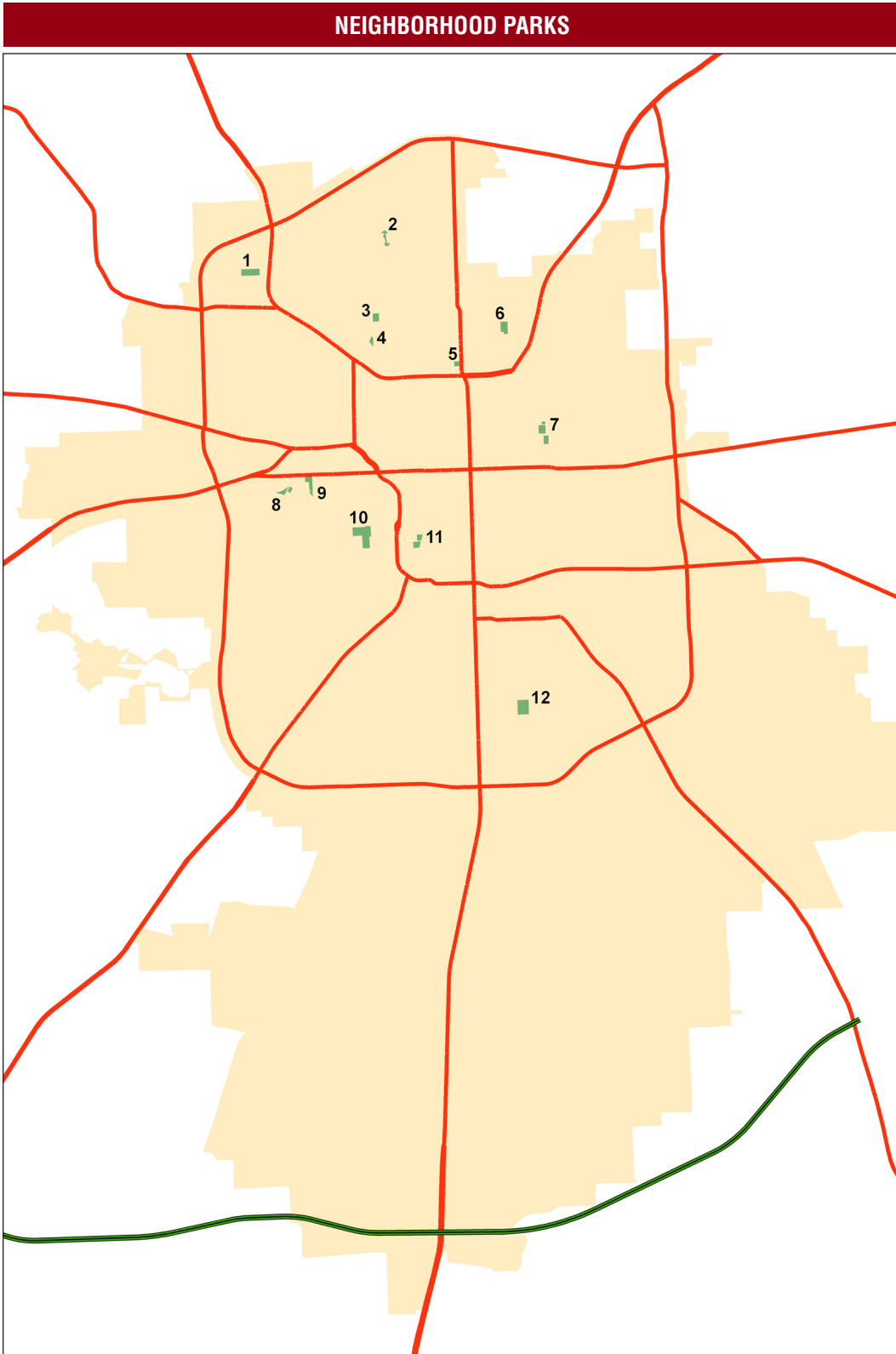
W.E. Winters Park



City Park

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CITY OF TYLER NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS				
Map Number	Name	Location	Size	Amenities
1	Gassaway Park	West Martha Street	6.7 acres	Baseball/softball fields, basketball courts, playground, picnic facilities, pavilion/shelter, restrooms
2	T.R. Griffith Park	Carter Boulevard	2.56 acres	Basketball court, playground, picnic facilities, pavilion/shelter
3	Lincoln Park	Confederate Avenue at Nutbush Street and Vance Street	2.75 acres	Baseball/softball fields, basketball court, multi-purpose court, playground, picnic facilities, pavilion/shelter, restrooms
4	Crescent Park	North Englewood Avenue and Crescent Drive	1.3 acres	Playground and picnic facilities
5	City Park	West Queen Street and North Bois d'Arc Avenue	1.85 acres	Playgrounds, basketball courts, multi-purpose court, and picnic facilities
6	Oak Grove Park	Carlyle Avenue and Vance Street	3.83 acres	Playground and picnic facilities
7	Hillside Park	South Fleischel Avenue and East Erwin Street	3.5 acres	Soccer fields, basketball courts, multi-purpose courts, playground, picnic facilities, pavilion, restrooms
8	Herndon Hills Park	Brookhollow Drive and Pine Burr Road	2 acres	Multi-purpose court, playground, picnic facilities
9	Windsor Grove Nature Park	South Lyons Avenue and West Front Street	1.5 acres	Hike/bike trail, picnic facilities, pavilion
10	W.E. Winters Park	South Peach Avenue and Mockingbird Lane	17.5 acres	Basketball court, multi-purpose court, playground, picnic facilities, restrooms
11	P.T. Cole Park	Mockingbird Lane and Vine Avenue	4.68 acres	Baseball fields, tennis courts, playgrounds, picnic facilities, pavilion, and restrooms
12	Pollard Park	Hudnall Drive and Amherst Street	9.17 acres	Soccer fields, football fields, tennis courts, themed playground, picnic facilities, pavilion, restrooms



Source: City of Tyler GIS data

Community/Athletic Parks

The 2005 open space plan suggests that community parks should contain approximately 80 acres—again dependent on area conditions. The service area, according to the plan, is the entire community. Facilities may include lighted sports fields, open space for free play, picnic areas, special events staging areas, playgrounds, off-street parking, tennis courts, swimming pool, passive open space and wooded areas, hike and bike trails, restrooms, multi-purpose paved courts, and water features.

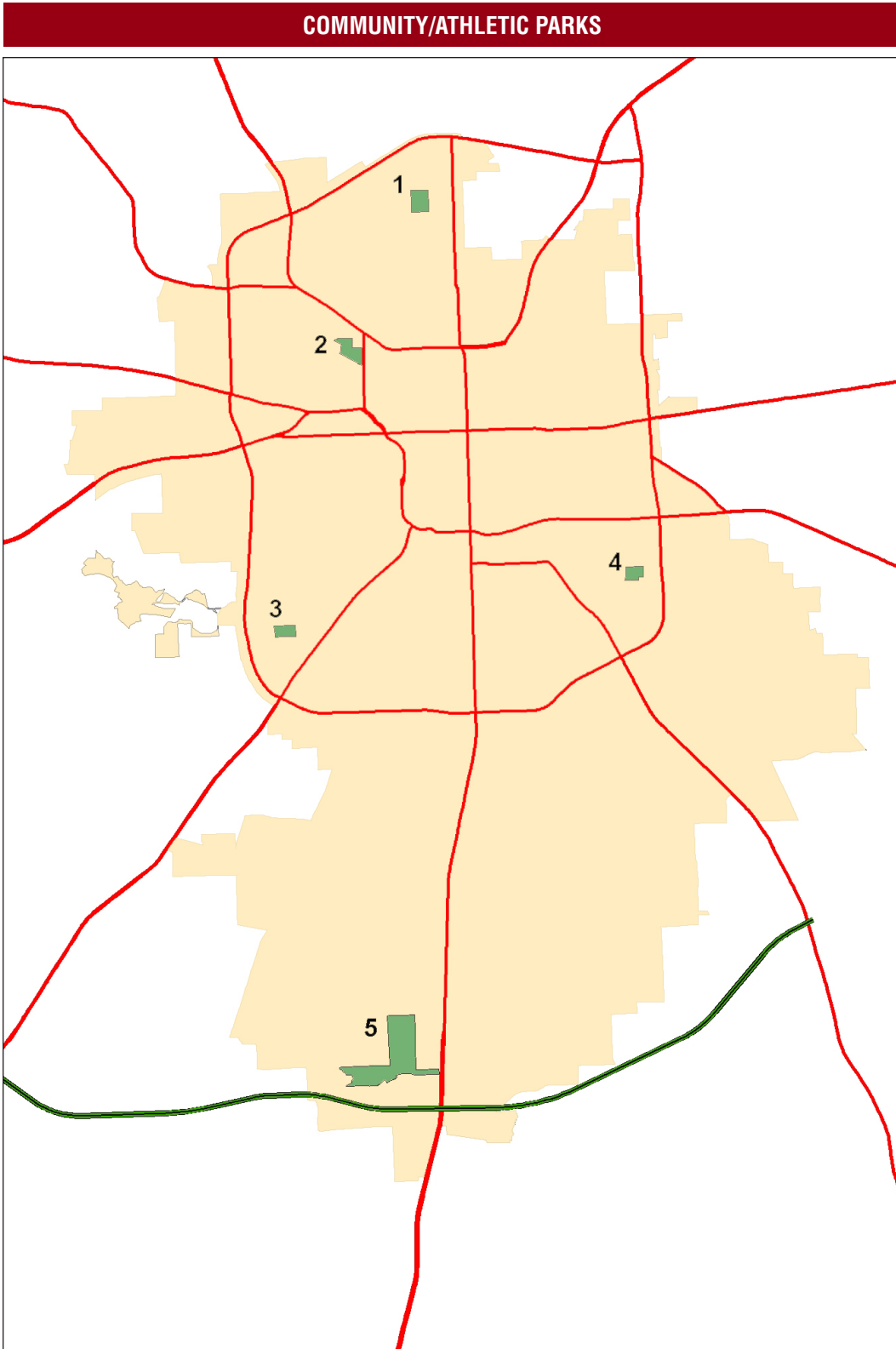
CITY OF TYLER COMMUNITY/ATHLETIC PARKS				
Map Number	Name	Location	Size	Amenities
1	Woldert Park	Border Avenue	52.5 acres	Swimming pool, baseball fields, tennis courts, playgrounds, picnic facilities, pavilion, restrooms
2	Fun Forest Park	North Glenwood Boulevard and Garden Valley Road	31.72 acres	Swimming pool, 5 baseball fields, 2 tennis courts, 2 basketball courts, playground, picnic facilities, pavilion, restrooms
3	Noble E. Young Park	Luther Street and Seaton Street	45 acres	Skate park, multi-purpose courts, hike/bike trails, playgrounds, picnic facilities, pavilion, restrooms
4	Golden Road Park	Boldt Avenue and McDonald Road	30 acres	Baseball fields, soccer fields, playground, picnic facilities, pavilions, restrooms
5	Faulkner Park	West Cumberland Road	180 acres	8 baseball fields with concession stands, 3 practice fields, 8 tennis courts with a pro shop, community fishing lake 1.5 miles of hike/bike trails in development; Faulkner Park Master Plan also calls for development of 8 new tennis courts, playground, splash park, picnic pavilions, fishing pier, and aquatic center



Golden Road Park



Woldert Park



Source: City of Tyler GIS data

Special Use Parks

The Special Use Park classification covers a broad range of parks and recreation facilities that focus on one or two specific recreational uses. Facility space requirements are the primary determinants of site size and location. For example, a golf course may require 150 acres, whereas a community center with parking may require much less. Potential special uses include baseball/softball complexes, soccer complexes, tennis centers, sports stadiums, performing arts facilities, amphitheaters, community centers and golf courses.

CITY OF TYLER SPECIAL USE PARKS				
Map Number	Name	Location	Size	Amenities
1	Goodman Park/LeGrand Gardens	North Broadway Avenue		Goodman Museum, wedding/special events facilities
2	Tyler Rose Garden	West Front Street and Peach Avenue	22 acres	Largest municipal rose garden in the United States; Vance Burks Memorial Camellia Garden, Idea Garden, approximately 30,000 plants and 400 individual varieties of roses
3	Children's Park	South Broadway Avenue and Rowland Place	1 acre	Story amphitheatre, butterfly garden, benches, statues Donated in 2004 by the Children Are a Gift Foundation
4	Bergfeld Park	South Broadway Avenue and Fourth Street	8.3 acres	Amphitheatre, playground, tennis courts, picnic facilities, restrooms
5	Headache Springs Park	Highway 64E and Universal Lane	85 acres	Open space and picnic facilities Currently leased to the Boy Scouts of America

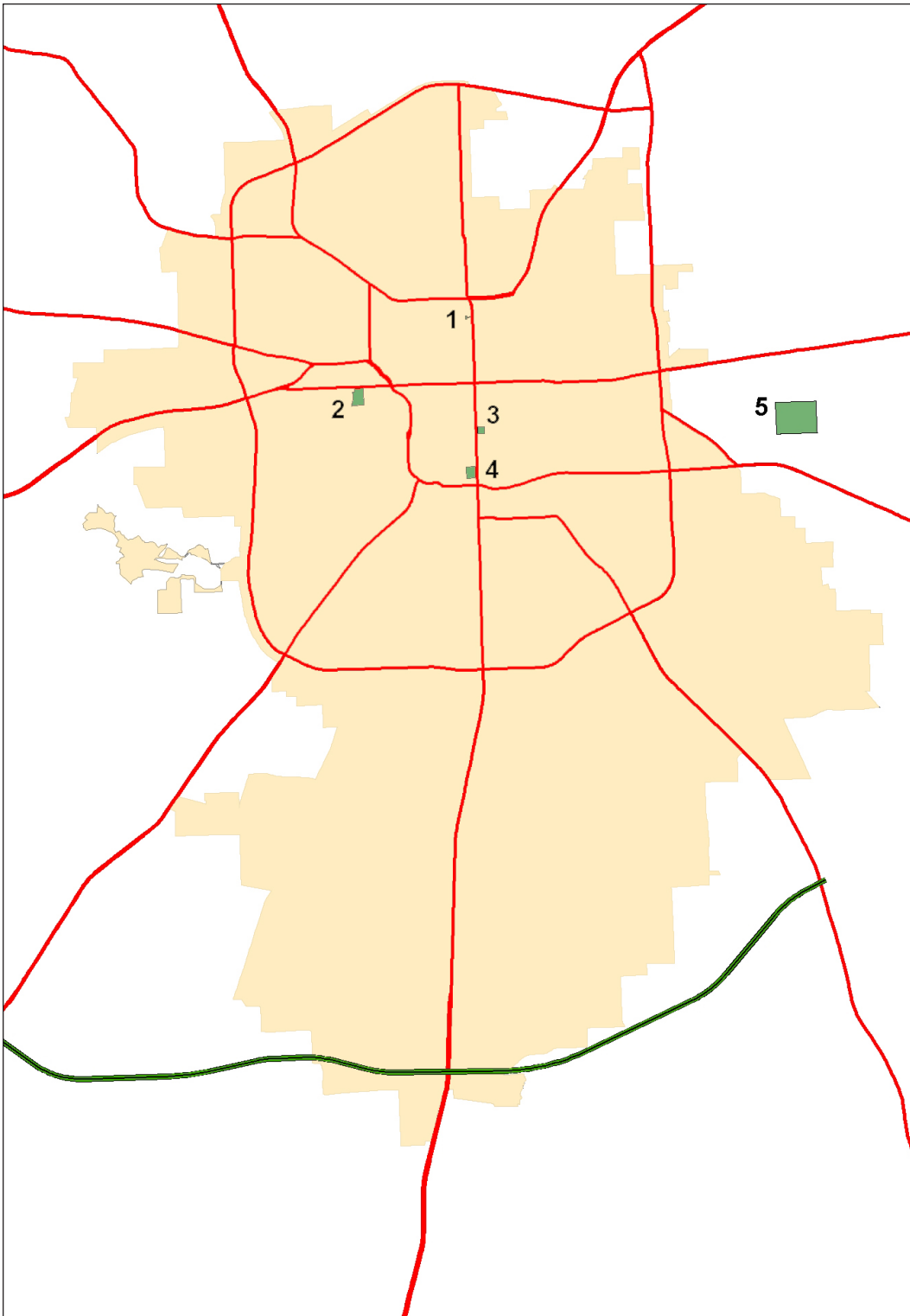


Goodman Park/LeGrand Gardens



Tyler Rose Garden

SPECIAL USE PARKS



Source: City of Tyler GIS data

Greenbelt/Open Space Parks

Greenbelts or greenways are linear parks usually developed around a natural resource such as a creek, river, utility easement, or lake shore. The potential benefits of a greenbelt system are numerous. Not only can a greenbelt system preserve valuable open space and natural habitat, it can provide a natural environment for walking, jogging, and bicycling trails; a transportation corridor linking neighborhoods to parks, schools, and shopping areas; and a variety of passive recreational opportunities free, or relatively free, from automobile interference. Greenbelts also serve as natural buffers between land uses, serve as utility (underground) easements, and can usually be acquired at a relatively inexpensive price in areas where there are constraints on development. Design standards for greenbelts emphasize preserving as much of the area as possible in a natural state. Greenbelt corridor widths are often determined by the existing topography, severity of flooding, and other unique natural features. Greenbelt corridors of less than fifty (50) “useable” feet should be avoided and narrow corridor sections kept to a minimum. One-hundred foot corridor widths and wider give flexibility in design and are encouraged wherever possible. Greenbelts intended to serve as wildlife corridors ideally should be 300 feet wide.

Three parks in Tyler are classified as greenbelt parks. Southside and Rose Rudman Parks function as greenways with a multiuse trail along West Mud Creek. Northside Park is a rectangular parcel of land whose northern edge is near but not in the drainageway of Black Fork Creek. Its classification as a greenbelt park was probably due to future potential rather than current use.

CITY OF TYLER GREENBELT PARKS				
Map Number	Name	Location	Size	Amenities
1	Northside Park	Public Road off of Loop 323	60 acres	Open space; currently leased to Model Airplane Club of Tyler
2	Rose Rudman Park	Donnybrook Avenue north of Shiloh Road	30 acres	Hike/bike trail, picnic facilities, pavilion
3	Southside Park	Donnybrook Avenue south of Shiloh Road	30	Hike/bike trail, playgrounds, picnic facilities, pavilions, restrooms

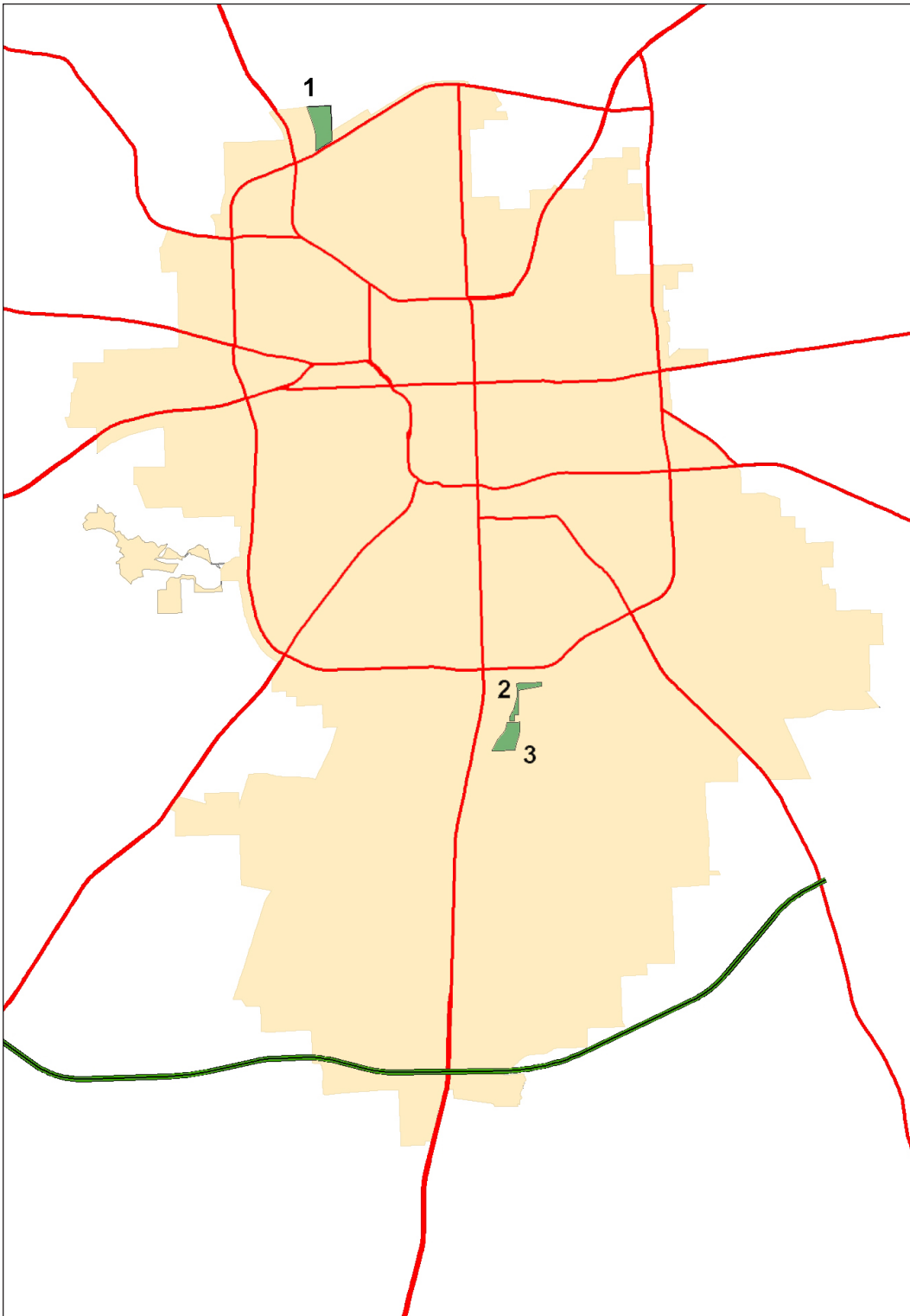


Rose Rudman Park



Northside Park

GREENBELT/OPEN SPACE PARKS



Source: City of Tyler GIS data

Regional Parks

A regional park typically contains 200 to 1,000 acres, serves residents within a ten mile radius of the park, and includes a wide range of active and passive recreational opportunities. Although the list of facilities that are suitable for inclusion in regional parks is long, some of the most common facilities are sports fields, tennis courts, basketball courts, swimming pools, camp grounds, bicycle and hiking trails, nature areas, a golf course, recreation center, restrooms and ample parking.



Lindsey Park is Tyler's only regional park. It is the City's largest park, encompassing 454 acres and is located outside the city limits at Spur 364 and Greenbriar Road, just south of Briarwood Country Club. This large regional park consists of picnic facilities, pavilions, restrooms, and a playground. Along with these amenities Lindsey Park offers many athletic facilities with two lighted and eleven unlighted baseball fields, five softball fields, one lighted soccer field, and one basketball court.



After implementation of the Faulkner Park Master Plan, which will add many new recreational facilities, Faulkner Park will also be categorized as a regional park.



Pocket Parks and Medians

The City of Tyler also maintains small pocket parks and road medians. These green spaces contribute to the attractiveness of Tyler's public realm.

- *Arp Island* is a small .5 acre median park located at the intersection of Fourth and Fifth Streets.
- *Glenwood and Gentry Island*, located at the intersection of Glenwood and Gentry, is a 0.75-acre median park.
- *Grande Boulevard Island* is located at Grande Boulevard and Broadway Avenue. This is the largest median park in Tyler at 2.5 acres.
- *Sunnybrook and Green Lane Park* is a 1-acre median park.
- *Tatum Park* is a small 0.25-acre median park located at 34th Street and Carter Boulevard north of Texas College.

Lindsey Park, a 454-acre regional park, includes soccer fields (top), baseball fields (middle) and picnic facilities (below).



Tatum Park

- *3rd and Outer Park* is a 0.5-acre median park.
- *9th and Old Jacksonville Highway Park* is less than 0.5 acre.

The City also maintains a number of road medians that are smaller than pocket parks.

Cemeteries

Cemeteries provide permanent green and open space and function as part of the city's open space network. In a number of communities, beautifully landscaped cemeteries function as passive parks where residents like to walk. Some historic cemeteries, like Atlanta's Oakland Cemetery, organize programs and friends' groups to encourage interest and help maintain their beauty.

- *Oakwood Cemetery* is a 20-acre historic cemetery located north of the Southern Pacific Railroad and fronting onto Oakwood Street between Palace Avenue and Ellis Avenue. Occasional historic walking tours of the cemetery are offered to the public through the parks department.
- *Westview Cemetery* is a 5.5-acre cemetery located along West Erwin Street, surrounded by Willowbrook Country Club.
- *Rose Hill Cemetery and Mausoleum* is a 50-acre cemetery located at South Broadway Avenue and Troup Highway.



Oakwood Cemetery

Recreation Centers and Other Facilities

The Tyler Department of Parks and Recreation also manages an indoor recreation center, a senior center and special facilities:

- *Glass Recreation Center* is located at Woldert Park and contains a weight room, gymnasium, walking/jogging track, locker rooms, an arts and crafts room, a computer lab and a kitchen. A wide variety of activities are offered for an annual membership fee of \$15 for adults and \$10 for children.
- The *Senior Citizens Center* on Garden Valley Road offers programs and events specifically for seniors.
- *Harvey Convention Center* offers meeting rooms and ten acres of parking.
- *The Rose Garden Center* has meeting rooms and the Rose Museum.
- *Goodman Museum* is a historic mansion with exhibits.



Tyler's special use facilities include the Glass Recreation Center (top) and the Rose Garden Center (below).

Other Public and Semi-Public Open Space

Residents of Tyler also have access to institutionally-owned open space on the campuses of Tyler Junior College and Texas College. Organized groups may register to use athletic fields at the University of Texas-Tyler. Some public school properties also have adjacent recreation areas, though in older areas of the city schools and parks were built next to one another and the parks function as the school recreation areas. The Forest Hills Recreational Center, owned by the City, is located on a 0.5 acre tract located on West Gentry Parkway, just south of the Caldwell Zoo. Forest Hills is leased to the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce. Similarly, the Hillside Center at Hillside Park is City-owned but leased out for semi-public use.

The East Texas Fairgrounds is an 8-acre park located on West Front Street, between Windsor Park and the Tyler Rose Garden. This park consists primarily of picnic facilities and restrooms. The Fairgrounds has purchased property just outside the city limits. The Fairgrounds site on West Front Street will be vacated and offers the opportunity for new uses.

Private Open Space and Recreation Facilities

Tyler also has private recreation facilities and open space areas that are membership-based or private to residents of certain subdivisions. Developers are responding to consumer demand by including walking trails in newer subdivisions when feasible. In addition, country clubs offer tennis, golf and swimming, and gyms and fitness clubs offer tennis, swimming and other activities. User fees are required for these facilities and are especially expensive at the country clubs. Among the private recreation facilities available in Tyler are:

- Idlewild Neighborhood Pool
- Charleston Park Neighborhood Pool
- The Woods Neighborhood Pool
- Stonegate Recreation
- Hollytree Country Club
- Willowbrook Country Club
- Cascades Golf Course
- Tyler Tennis and Swim



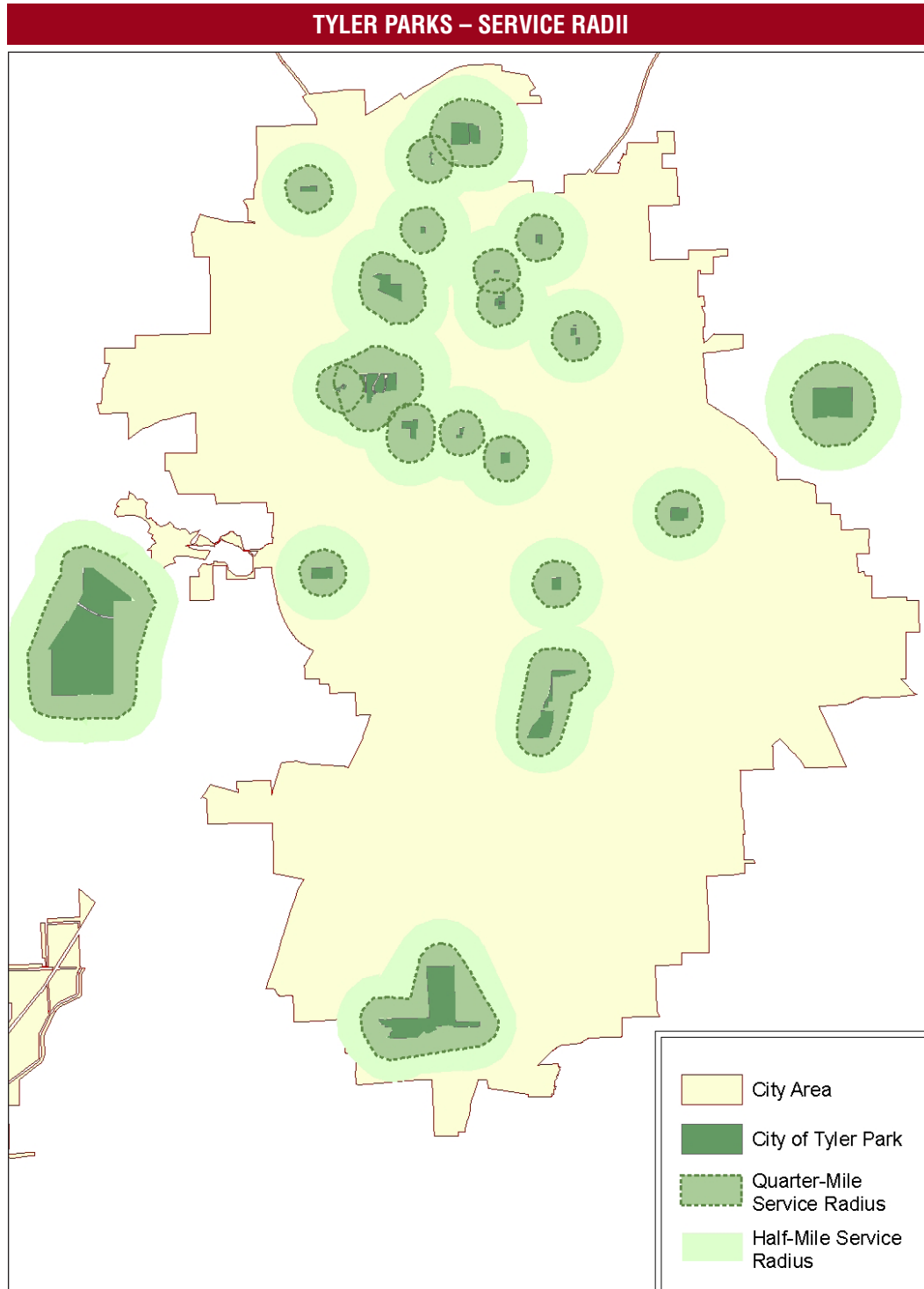
Private developers are responding to consumer desires for walking trails.

Recreation Programs

The City sponsors numerous recreational programs for all age groups, for example, sports leagues and tournaments, fitness classes, senior citizen activities, gardening classes, arts and crafts, and basketball camp. Bergfeld Park hosts movies and concerts that draw people from throughout the city and immediately outlying areas.

LEVEL OF SERVICE AND ACCESS TO PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

Level of service (LOS) standards for parks and recreation were developed in the second half of the twentieth century by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA). The purpose of LOS standards is to guide the allocation of park land and recreation



Source: City of Tyler GIS data

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services. Much of the focus of these standards has been on identifying needs for recreational space to accompany suburban growth. The NRPA Standards were developed as guidelines for the amount of land needed for different types of park and recreation facilities; the amount of land and the number of facilities needed to serve a population; and geographic service areas for different types of parks. The City of Tyler today has about ten acres of City-owned parks and open space per 1,000 people. According to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, the average for Texas cities over 100,000 in population is 15.5 acres, while the average for cities with populations between 20,000 and 100,000 population is 11.4 acres. By aggregate measures, therefore, Tyler is below average, though very slightly compared to smaller communities.

Urban park systems are capturing more attention today and planners are recognizing that the NRPA standards are not always suitable for park systems in established urban areas. In cities, the focus is on access and spending per capita rather than on acreage. Research has repeatedly shown that the most important variable in how much and how often people use a green space is distance—especially walking time—from home.¹ People will easily walk about a quarter mile to get to a destination, and if the walk is reasonably pleasant and the destination sufficiently compelling, they are often willing to walk half a mile. They will travel to use large, unique open spaces of regional importance, but for everyday use, parks need to be close by.

Tyler's park system operates both in urban conditions where additional park land can be difficult to acquire and in a suburban context where new developments are being constructed and establishment of new parks should be easier. Ultimately, however, access -- particularly walk-to access -- is the key to establishing a network of parks that serves residents and that also helps structure the form of neighborhoods and the city as a whole.



Tennis complex at Faulkner Park



Fun Forest Park Pool

¹ Ann Forsyth, "People and Urban Green Areas: Perception and Use," University of Minnesota *Design Center for American Urban Landscape Design Brief*, 4 (June 2003) pp. 2, 5.

B. Current Conditions –The Lakes

The City owns the water and some land around three lakes: Lake Tyler, Lake Tyler East and Bellwood Lake. Lake Tyler was constructed in 1949, and covers approximately 2,400 surface acres. This lake has served as Tyler’s major source of water supply since its construction. Lake Tyler is located on Prairie Creek, a tributary of Mud Creek, and lies in the Angelina River watershed. It has storage capacity of over 15 billion gallons (43,500 acre feet) at spillway elevation, average depth of 17.6 feet, and a watershed area of 42 square miles (27,000 acres). Lake Tyler East was completed and the dam closed in 1967. The lake filled to capacity in 1968, and was connected to Lake Tyler by a connecting channel. This channel, in effect, formed one lake from the standpoint of water supply. Lake Tyler East has a surface area of approximately 2,500 acres, a watershed area of 65 square miles and an average depth of 16.5 feet. The lake has slightly less storage area than Lake Tyler. The two lakes have a combined safe yield of approximately 30 million gallons per day. Lake Tyler East is located on Mud Creek and lies in the Angelina River watershed.



In addition to supplying drinking water to the city, Lake Tyler provides recreation amenities, such as boat ramps (top) and boat stalls (bottom).

Lake Tyler also serves as a major recreation center, subject to controls to protect the drinking water supply. The Tyler Water and Sewer Utilities Department maintains six park areas adjacent to the lake and maintenance is funded by Tyler Water Utilities water and sewer ratepayers. Recreational use of Lake Tyler East is also permitted subject to the same controls as Lake Tyler. Recreation facilities include boat ramps, picnic areas, camping and parking.

The City also owns the mineral rights to its land surrounding Lake Tyler. In 2004, the City signed an agreement for natural gas drilling on over 5,500 acres, with the potential for as many as 68 wells. The City must approve each well site individually. No drilling is permitted within 100 feet of the water, in the lake bed, on any leased property, on Langley Island, within 400 feet of the dam, or within 300 feet of a home without consent of the owner. Environmental safety requirements plus daily water quality testing have demonstrated that the drilling has not affected drinking water quality. Other environmental impacts have included some tree clearing and loud noise during the drilling process. Landscape restoration is required after drilling.

The City of Tyler owns all of the land adjacent to Lake Tyler but leases the rights to construct above-ground improvements. The City has over 500 residential leases and two commercial leases at Lake Tyler. Because the City owns the property along Lake Tyler

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and only leases it to the homeowners, land use can be controlled by the City. On Lake Tyler East, there are no leases; however, the City owns more than 1,300 acres of land around the lake and also owns the strip of land between the normal pool elevation and the emergency spillway elevation. As a result, owners of adjacent properties must obtain an easement from the City of Tyler if they wish to access the lake. While immediate access to Lake Tyler and Lake Tyler East is controlled by the City of Tyler, the lakes and the land around them are not within the current city limits of Tyler. Access to the lakes in general is achieved by going through Whitehouse via TX 110 South and FM 346.

The Tyler City Council has appointed a seven-member Lake Tyler Advisory Board, of whom a majority must be City of Tyler residents. The purpose of the Board is to provide a vehicle for citizen communication and advice to City departments and the City Council to facilitate recreational, residential, and mineral production uses of Lake Tyler. The Water Production and Quality Manager serves as the City's liaison to this Board.

The Lakes provide a number of water-based recreational opportunities. In addition to recreational boating and water skiing, fishing is also popular. The lakes are stocked with fish from time to time and are well known for largemouth bass, sunfish, crappie and catfish. Night fishing tournaments are common in the summer.

As is the case in many southern lakes, hydrilla, an extremely invasive exotic aquatic weed, is a problem in Lake Tyler East and less so in Lake Tyler. While seasonal water fluctuations and consumption by waterbirds help to keep it under control, it has become necessary to implement a plan to use approved herbicides and carp to more aggressively control hydrilla growth.

The City receives an annual lease payment, generally around \$60 each for all lots created prior to 1997 and around \$500 each for the 25 lots created since 1997. While all of the property adjacent to Lake Tyler is owned by the City, lease rights for many lots are held privately. Two of these leases, Concession #1/Marina and Fritz & Opal's Barge, are the only commercial leases at the lake. Lease holders, both residential and commercial, own the above-ground improvements on the individual lots. The leases are set up on a revolving 30 year lease, which renews each time the annual lease payment is made. Only properties identified as Club Lots are eligible for subdivision, provided they meet minimum criteria for lot size, shore line frontage and street frontage. Because the properties around the lake are not within the corporate limits of Tyler, the city receives no property tax revenue on the improvements. Lease holders pay the property taxes on the improvements to lease lots to Smith County and the Whitehouse Independent School District. Under the current system, the citizens of Tyler and Tyler Water Utility customers, who pay for maintenance and improvements at the lakes, receive no benefit from the residential leases.



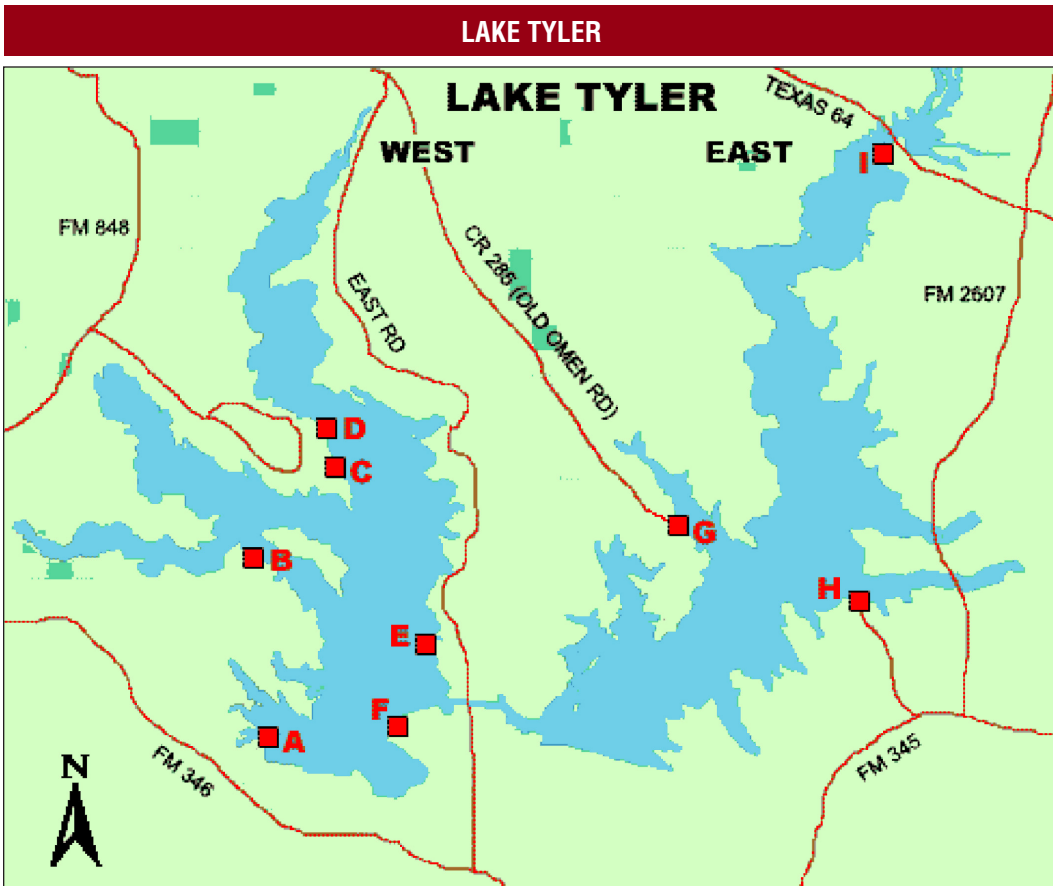
Many properties around Lake Tyler are leased from the City, such as the marina (above) and several residential properties.

Recreation facilities for lake access facilities, such as boat ramps, provide Tyler citizens with opportunities to enjoy the lake environment. Maintenance is relatively low cost in comparison to the benefit offered to all citizens. City property at the lakes could be developed for commercial uses such as restaurants, hotels and R.V. or camping facilities. These facilities could provide conveniences for lake users and some monetary benefits. However, because the lakes are not inside the city limits of Tyler, there is little opportunity to generate sales tax revenue. The major beneficiary of such development would be Smith County and perhaps the City of Whitehouse, not the City of Tyler.

Additional development at the lakes may pose a growing threat of drinking water contamination or increased cost to process the water to ensure drinking water quality. The primary function of the lakes as a drinking water supply must always be the highest priority. Under the current system, significant development at the lakes would only negatively impact the lake environment while providing no financial or environmental benefits to the City of Tyler. Tyler citizens are better served by continued and improved lake access points, boat ramps, R.V. and camping facilities and elimination of future subdivision of lease lots at the lake.

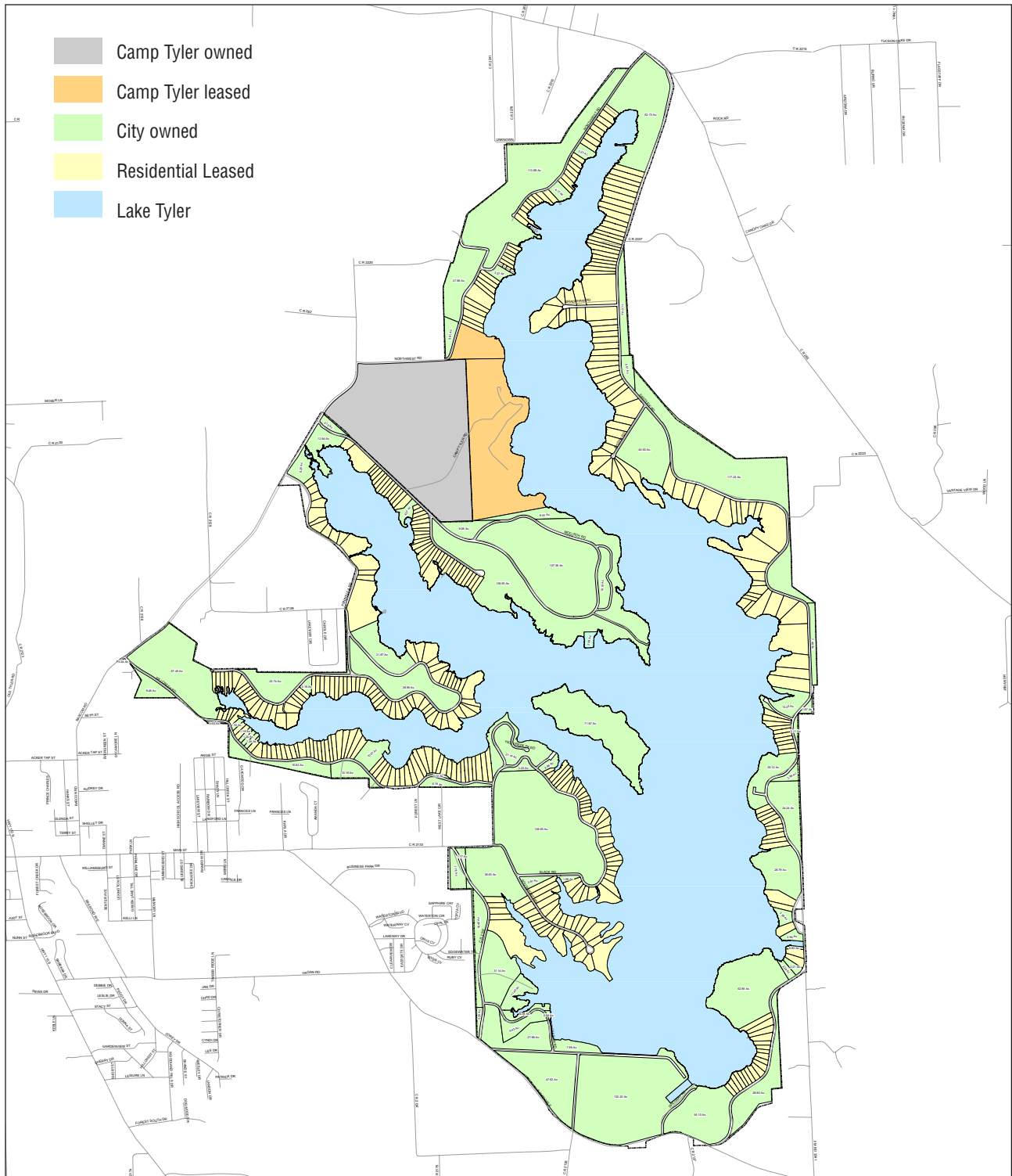
LAKE TYLER - PUBLIC ACCESS FACILITIES

The City of Tyler Water Utility operates five boat ramps and two lakeside public recreation areas on the shores of these lakes. Two private concessions operate on the Lakes: Concession #1/Marina and Fritz & Opal's Barge, and Smith County operates a boat launch on Lake Tyler East: Old Omen Road Ramp, East. The Lake Tyler Marina, located on Lake Tyler West in Concession Area #1, charges a small fee to launch; all other ramps are free. Fritz & Opal's Barge, on the water near Old #2, offers fishing access for a fee, and bank access is available at several locations. Two public ramps and the County-maintained boat launch offer access to Lake Tyler East. Primitive camping is allowed in all city parks on a first-come, first-served basis. Not all of these facilities are open at all times.



LAKES TYLER AND TYLER EAST FACILITIES										
All facilities operated by the City of Tyler Water Utility except as noted.										
	Restrooms	Cleaning Stations	Live Bait	Handicap Access	Parking	Courtesy Docks	Weigh Stations	Boat Gas	Picknick Areas	Camping
A: Concession #1/Marina (private concession)	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●
B: Hill Creek Park					●	●			●	●
C: Old #2/Chapman Park	●				●	●			●	●
D: Fritz & Opal's Barge (private concession)	●		●	●						
E: East Side #4					●				●	●
F: Sandy Beach					●					●
G: Old Omen West	●				●	●			●	●
H: Old Omen East (Smith County)					●					
I: Highway 64 Ramp					●	●			●	●

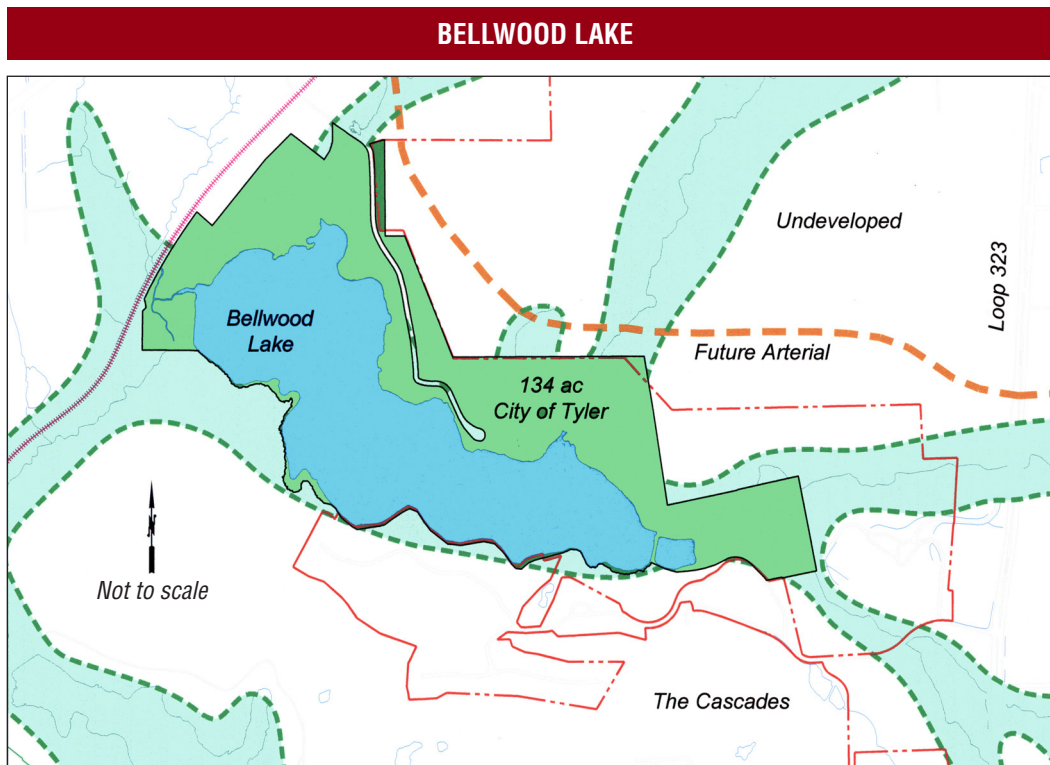
LAKE TYLER WEST PROPERTIES



Source: City of Tyler

BELLWOOD LAKE

Bellwood Lake has a surface area of 170 acres and served as the primary water supply for the City until Lake Tyler was constructed in 1949. In 1965, the city's water treatment facilities located at Bellwood Lake were retired. The only current diversion of water from Bellwood Lake is by three users of raw water. Briarwood Country Club and the Cascades Golf Course purchase water in place and pump it with their own facilities for irrigation. The third and major user is Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company. This facility is provided raw water service via a water pumping station and pipeline owned and operated by the City. Bellwood Lake is located on Indian Creek and lies in the Neches River watershed. It and 185 acres of shore lands owned by the City are used principally for limited recreational uses. The City has control over the number of motorized watercraft on the lake at any given time. When Lake Tyler water levels were exceptionally low because of drought, the City gave the Tyler Ski Club exclusive water skiing rights on Bellwood Lake for one year. With normal water levels at Lake Tyler, that agreement is not expected to be renewed. Only the south side of the lake is currently within the city limits of Tyler and therefore subject to zoning regulations and land use controls. However, because the City owns the north shore of the lake, it can also control land use there.



C. Demand for Open Space, Parks, and Programming

According to U.S. Census estimates, between 1990 and 2005, the number of Tyler families with children under the age of 18 increased 23% from 10,036 to 12,371. In 2005, it was estimated that 36% of Tyler households had children under age 18, compared to only 15% in 2000. During the same 1990-2005 period, the under-5 population grew 14% from 5,617 individuals in 1990 to 6,428 in 2005; the 5-9 population grew 23% from 5,521 in 1990 to 6,809 in 2005; and the 10-14 group increased 14% from 5,082 to 5,782 in 2005. Because the 2005 estimates utilized in this analysis were based on 2000 census figures, they are somewhat lower than population projections derived by Population and Survey Analysts (PASA) specifically conducted for Tyler. However, the general point of an increase in families with children and in the youth population is consistent with the PASA finding that much of the undercount was composed of Hispanic households.

Recent years have also seen a rise in the number of older adults in Tyler. This can be attributed to Tyler's designation as a certified retirement community and the aging of the baby boom generation. Although the total number of over-65 residents declined from 2000 to 2005, the 45-54 age category rose from 6,834 in 1990 to 11,977 in 2005. The 45-54 age group is within ten to twenty years of retiring and therefore Tyler can expect to see a dramatic increase in the over-65 age group over the next ten to twenty years, assuming these residents stay in Tyler.

Youth and seniors generally comprise the largest class of park users. Tyler's growing youth population generates a need for additional playing fields, playground areas, and recreational programs. Similarly, the aging population needs more adult recreational programs and passive park amenities, such as walking trails. One of the challenges created by these demographic trends is that of balancing the range of needs by park users.

TRENDS IN RECREATIONAL TASTES AND PARTICIPATION

The past decade has seen a change in the recreational and open space tastes of Americans. Sports activities have expanded from traditional American sports like baseball and football to include other games, such as soccer. In addition, many more children are participating in athletic activities at early ages and several sports have become multi-seasonal. The demand for passive recreational activities has also grown. Moreover, bikeways, trails, and greenways not only provide natural open spaces, but can provide alternative forms of transportation that reduce auto-dependence. All of these trends have affected Tyler's recreational programs and the Parks and Recreation Department can anticipate more demand both for active playing fields in all sports seasons and for passive recreation areas.

Balancing Passive and Active Open Space

Historically, Tyler has focused resources on active and organized recreational facilities such as baseball and soccer facilities. The City will need to balance acquisition and

preservation of natural habitat with the continued demand for additional active recreation facilities. Tyler faces the challenge of preserving, expanding, and maintaining open space for passive uses, water quality and wildlife habitat while meeting increasing requests for active recreational space.

Focus on Connections and Access to Nature

It is important to create linkages between open space areas and significant city destinations. Linkages promote safe use of open space, discourage car usage, and may serve as animal movement corridors between habitats.

An active policy of preserving property along creeks, drainage easements and floodways can take many forms, from outright acquisition to collaboration with property owners or nonprofit organizations. This will lay the groundwork for future trail projects linking parks, schools and neighborhoods while providing passive recreational opportunities. Parcels containing unique topography, character or other natural features such as Black Fork Creek, Bellwood Lake, Mud Creek, West Mud Creek, Shackelford Creek, Willow Creek, Gilley Creek and their contributing tributaries, reflect the unique natural resources of the Tyler region. Future park land acquisition should allow for trails and natural open space in both neighborhood parks and community parks to provide opportunities for primitive recreation.



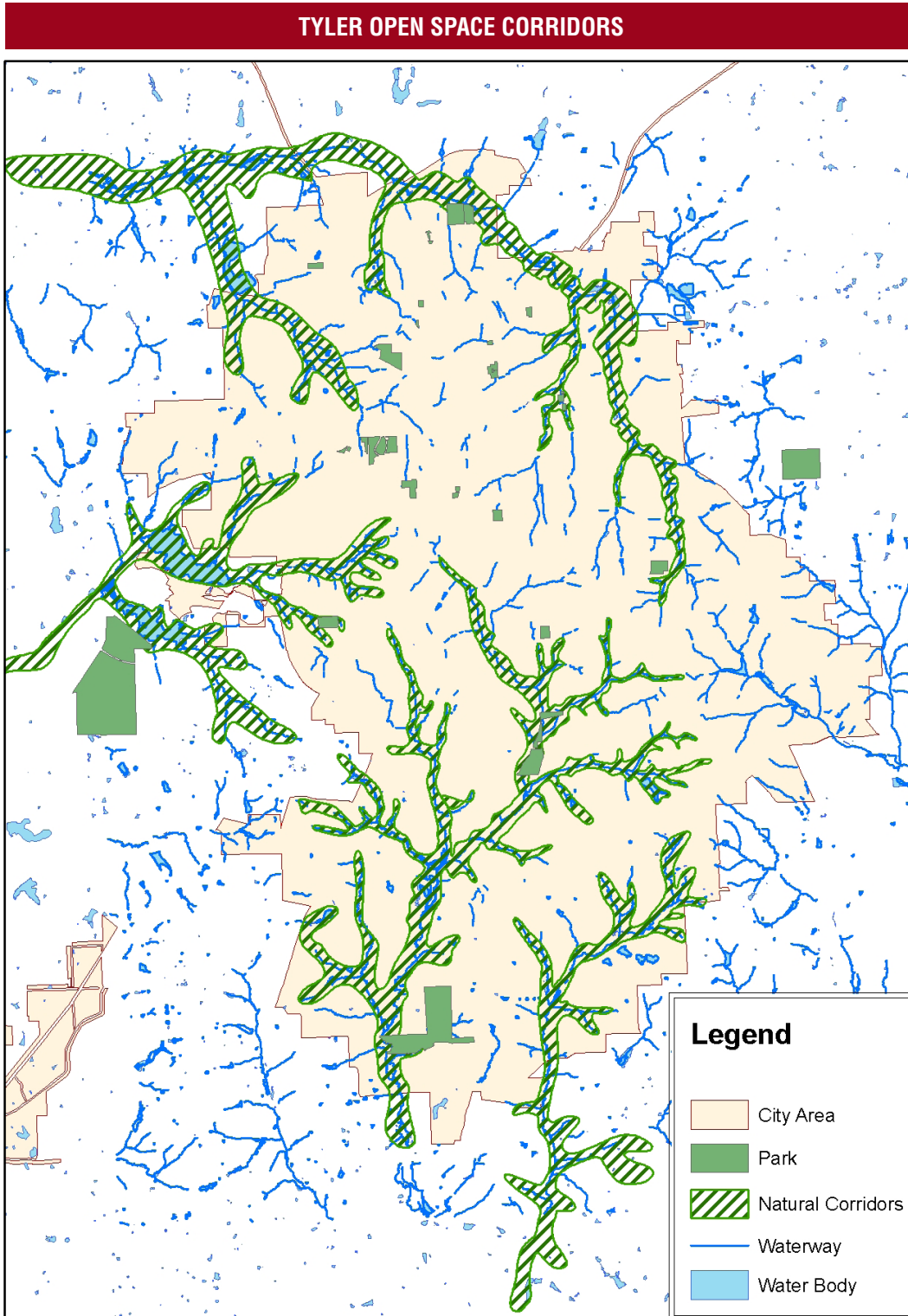
Land along creeks and floodways offers opportunities for new greenways.

As residential development expands, Tyler's unique natural areas will become more fragmented. Preserving natural corridors and connections will protect wildlife habitat and enhance residents' access to nature. The Shackelford Creek, Black Fork Creek, Willow Creek, and West Mud Creek Corridors constitute the framework of an exceptional greenbelt system. These creek corridors can provide for both pedestrian- and wildlife-friendly routes and for greenbelt connections to public spaces including schools, parks and neighborhoods.

Adding Parks and Open Space

Tyler's high growth rate and increasing property values are a barrier to acquisition of significant amounts of open space. Currently, parkland is acquired either through a voluntary donation or as a capital project initiated by the City. The City has some ability to require dedication of FEMA-designated flood plain, but does not consistently utilize this method. Under existing development ordinances, developers have little incentive to dedicate parkland. As land prices rise, the ability to purchase more open space and parks decreases. In addition, proximity to existing park areas increases land values and may make expansion of current parks more difficult. However, direct purchase of land by the City is not the only way to expand park, open space and recreational opportunities. Many cities are providing new open space opportunities by using tax title properties, including open space elements in infrastructure projects, and structuring incentives and regulations for developer contributions. In addition, through agreements with school districts,

homeowner associations and other entities that also own open space and recreational resources, cities can expand access to the public without having to own the resources.



Source: City of Tyler GIS data

D. Recommendations

GOAL:

- 1. Preserve open space corridors in Tyler for wildlife habitat, nature-based recreation, an attractive public realm, and a healthy environment.**

ACTIONS:

- 1a. Create nature preserves and greenways in the floodplains of Tyler’s major creeks and their tributaries.**

The floodplains of Tyler’s network of creeks structure the way the city has developed in the past. An integrated greenway system can bring a new attractive natural open space amenity to shape and enhance future development.

- Protect these areas and acquire access points and enough site control to develop a comprehensive hike/bike trail which connects public spaces throughout the region.
- Develop a master plan for a regional greenway program and implementation strategy.
- Explore establishment of a competitive funding program to provide matching funds to developers willing to provide public trail facilities on private or public land that meet the requirements of the greenway plan.

- 1b. Enhance the “urban forest” by creating green corridors along streets and drainageways throughout the city.**

The “urban forest” is the term used for trees in city environments, including street trees and trees in parks and other public places. Because trees are so important to Tyler’s identity and because they also have recognized climate, health, and economic benefits, the Housing, Neighborhoods and Community Identity chapter of this plan recommends the establishment of an urban forestry program within city government and that the city become a member of the Tree City USA Program. That program requires an arborist/urban forester on city staff, a \$2 per capita annual budget commitment, and a tree planting program. A set of principles to guide the street tree planting program can also be found in the Housing, Neighborhoods and Community Identity chapter.



As a Tyler 21 Early Action, the City has already begun the application process for membership in the Tree City USA program. Staff has been assigned to act as urban foresters and a program for street tree planting has been proposed.

Urban forestry recommendations particularly relevant to parks and open space issues include understanding street tree planting as part of an overall strategy of enhancing open space connections and access. Tree-lined streets provide comfortable walking routes to neighborhood parks. Planting trees along the city’s channelized drainageways is another way to create connections. Trees along the drainage canals contribute to stormwater management. Corridors of trees—whether along streets or drainageways - enhance the city’s habitat for birds and other small wildlife and mitigate the heat effects of the urban “heat island” created by hard surfaces open to the sun.

- Enroll Tyler in the Tree City USA Program sponsored by the National Arbor Day Foundation.
- Create a City Forester position.
- Review the list of preferred/acceptable street trees in the landscape ordinance for their suitability in producing shade and surviving in harsh urban conditions in Tyler's climate.
- Plant shade trees on major streets every year at an estimated cost of \$25,000. Trees should be planted in groups to provide maximum impact. This means that the tree planting should be focused in particular locations at any one time, rather than one or two trees being distributed in many locations around the city.
- Develop a priority plan for major streets and neighborhood streets needing trees. In addition to downtown and similar areas, priority locations should include existing and proposed bicycle routes as well as pedestrian routes to neighborhood parks.
- Amend the landscape ordinance to require the planting of more street trees, where feasible and depending on the type of tree, in road rights-of-way in new residential and commercial developments.
- Require large trees to be inventoried before site clearance. Efforts should be made to save these trees, but if it is not possible, trees should be replaced.
- Require planting of shade trees in surface parking lots to maximize shade.
- Inventory all of the city's drainageways and canals for opportunities to improve them with trees and other plantings. Many of the historic, stone-lined drainage canals in Tyler's older neighborhoods are lined with trees. In other locations, neighborhood drainage swales are planted with grass. Concrete-lined canals are also common in the newer parts of the city. All of the city's drainageways should be inventoried and evaluated for potential retrofitting with trees and plantings.
- In new drainage infrastructure, use approaches that incorporate trees and plants rather than creating large concrete surfaces.

1c. Consider establishing a city tree and plant nursery.

A cost-benefit analysis on establishing a plant nursery to provide trees as well as other plants for beautification of the public realm can provide direction on feasibility. This would be a way to ensure that a supply of replacement trees is readily available over time. Because the City would already own the land, the production cost would likely be



Street trees create comfortable walking environments (top) and trees along drainageways help manage stormwater runoff.



Concrete-lined drainage canals improved with trees and plantings can reduce heat effects, help with stormwater filtration, and provide wildlife habitat.

lower than if the City buys trees every year. The City could also contract the operation of such a nursery to a local private-sector horticulturalist.

1d. Explore alternative open space conservation strategies, particularly for natural areas.

Public entities like the City do not have to own all the land that has been identified as suitable for protection. A number of Texas cities are now using tools such as conservation easements, purchase of development rights (PDR), transfer of development rights (TDRs), and so on to ensure natural open space and wildlife habitat is protected for generations to come. Under these types of programs, the City would not have costly land purchases but rather would work with landowners in order to achieve the same goal.

- *Conservation Easements* are permanent development restrictions placed on all or part of a property by a private owner. The restriction is recorded with the deed and passes to future owners of the land. The easement can provide for public access through trails or other means, or the land may remain completely private with primary value as a visual amenity or for wildlife habitat. The benefit to the property owner is that by giving up some of the development rights on his or her property, the owner receives a tax benefit. Texas Parks and Wildlife has published *Conservation Easements: A Guide for Texas Landowners*, which is available online at www.tpwd.state.tx.us/publications/pwdpubs/media/pwd-bk-w7000-0022.pdf.
- *Purchase of Development Rights* programs are similar in that an entity such as a city government or a nonprofit organization pays the landowner for the development rights. Many programs of this type are designed to preserve land for farming. A study is made of the “highest and best” real estate use of the land, which generally means residential or commercial development, in order to ascertain the value of the development rights. A price is agreed upon, as well as what kind of use will continue to be permitted (e.g., farming, ranching). The landowner then receives a payment for the development rights, the sale is recorded with the deed to the land, and the tax value of the land goes down, which benefits the owner.
- *Transfer of Development Rights* programs are somewhat more complicated. They involve transferring the development capacity allowed by zoning from an area that is preferably preserved to an area where development is desired. It works most easily if the two properties in question have the same owner or if one of the owners is a public entity. It also requires a regulatory and market context that facilitates the process.

Protecting Open Space: Tools and Techniques for Texans (available online at www.nps.gov/nrcr/programs/rtca/helpfultools/openspace.pdf) is a handbook published by the National Park Service that contains Texas examples of a variety of open space preservation approaches. Many land protection strategies do not involve municipalities at all but depend on nonprofit organizations. Local land trusts can purchase land and hold it as conservation land. They can collaborate with government entities to allow trails and other appropriate public uses on the land.

GOAL:

2. Provide a balanced park and open space system that allows for access and enjoyment by all citizens of Tyler.

ACTIONS:

2a. Pursue a long-term goal of a park within walking distance of every Tyler residence.

The closer people live to a park, the more likely they are to use it. Most people are willing to walk about a quarter mile to get to a destination and this is considered the ideal standard for park access. If the walk is particularly pleasant and the destination compelling, many will walk around a half mile. As the map of existing park resources shows, the historic park system provides reasonably good coverage, using the half-mile radius measure for access, in Tyler's older neighborhoods—if wide streets and other barriers to safe and comfortable walking are not considered. Neighborhoods built after the 1960s, as the city grew southward, have fewer public parks, especially south of Loop 323. In pursuing this goal, the City should be alert to opportunities for neighborhood park development in underserved areas and seek to purchase vacant neighborhood lots. These opportunities could arise through tax title, development and redevelopment projects, conversion of excess surface parking lots, and infrastructure projects. Access should be measured on the ground—not simply by radii on a map—and improvements made to create safe and comfortable walking routes, including safe pedestrian crossings at intersections.

2b. Establish planning practices and ordinances to ensure provision for parks as new development occurs.

The relative lack of public parks in newer parts of Tyler can be traced to several circumstances: the City had no plan for where parks might be needed and had no requirement for developers to contribute to the creation of parks; many subdivisions were relatively small, making it difficult to provide significant parks on site; privatized development models resulted in the creation of private parks and recreation for subdivision residents.

As new development occurs, land should be reserved for parks that serve new neighborhoods and provide links to the overall regional network of parks and open space. Among the strategies to be evaluated include:

- Requirements for public neighborhood open space for subdivisions over a certain threshold of total site acreage;
- Developer contributions to an escrow fund for future neighborhood open space creation, as new subdivisions are built and a critical mass is attained; and
- New forms of land development such as “landpooling” that help provide open space through land assembly and provision of shares to property owners, thus rewarding those who hold parcels designated as open space with return on their land.

Many cities have created a Parks and Open Space Trust Fund to receive public and private funds destined for creating new parks and public open spaces such as conservation areas or greenways. Tyler could assign the five-year “rollback” funds collected when lands zoned for agriculture are rezoned for development. Though not a large amount, these funds could serve as the seed money for a Parks and Open Space Trust Fund. Developer contributions would also go into this fund.

2c. Establish policies and procedures for meaningful neighborhood participation when expanding or developing parkland in existing neighborhoods.

Park improvement projects and new park projects in existing neighborhoods should involve residents at the beginning of the design process, to discuss local recreation and park needs, and at several points during the design process.

2d. Provide opportunities for both passive and active use of parks and recreation areas.

All parks with active uses such as athletic fields or courts should also provide some passive space. Although organized sports are important, they involve a minority of all park users. Even a small neighborhood park can include a walking path or a quiet shaded corner with benches.

2e. Review surplus City-owned land for park and open space use before disposition by sale or other means.

City-owned land is a resource that should not be disposed of lightly. It is easier to create a park on land the City already owns than to find suitable land to purchase. Whenever the City is contemplating a sale of land, whatever the size and in any location, a review of the lot or parcel should be conducted for potential inclusion in the park network. Even small lots may be suitable as neighborhood playgrounds or as visual amenities. Criteria for making decisions on these properties should include:

- Location in areas underserved by the parks system;
- Location that adds to regional networks; and
- Suitable size for needed type of park or recreational facility.

2f. Explore the potential to create a horticulture center or botanical garden on the parking lot and fairgrounds site adjacent to the Rose Garden.

The Rose Garden is a beloved symbol of Tyler and a tourist attraction. Tyler is also known for the Azalea Festival and its beautiful private gardens. Today, the Rose Garden's immediate neighbor is a giant asphalt parking lot designed to serve the Harvey Convention Center, the Rose Stadium and the East Texas State Fairgrounds. The East Texas State Fair has purchased a much bigger site just outside the city limits. This is the perfect opportunity to explore new ways to expand and build upon the Rose Center and Rose Garden.



The large parking lot at the Harvey Convention Center and the East Texas State Fairgrounds could be redeveloped as a botanical garden/horticultural center.

- Explore potential partnerships with nonprofit or for-profit garden and horticulture groups for creation of a major regional center with botanical gardens, expanded model gardens, and an environmental education center focused on the East Texas environment.

- Develop site master plan alternatives to accommodate parking and circulation for the stadium and athletic fields, and the existing Rose Garden and Center, while exploring potential alternatives for the expanded horticulture uses on part of the existing parking lot and the fairgrounds and convention center sites.

2g. Develop LeGrand Gardens for special activities.

The City is redeveloping LeGrand Park as a special-use facility that will complement the Goodman Museum. Plans include a new visitor center, meeting rooms, and facilities for special events such as weddings. Botanical gardens are also planned. The City should implement these plans to provide additional passive open space in downtown Tyler.



Development plan for LeGrand Gardens

GOAL:

3. Provide recreation programs and opportunities for children, youth, adults and senior citizens throughout the city.

ACTIONS:

3a. Continue to monitor and upgrade recreational elements and facilities at existing parks to ensure compliance with current safety standards and current recreational trends.

The Park Board and City staff should continue to conduct annual assessments of the city's parks and recreation facilities and replace facilities with improved equipment, implement ADA standards, and provide equipment for handicapped users. Care should be taken that when, for example, handicap-accessible playground equipment is installed, the pathways to access that equipment are also accessible to wheelchairs and people with physical disabilities.



Ensure that all recreational equipment is accessible to persons with disabilities.

3b. Explore the potential for full or partial public access to private park and recreation facilities.

Some of the private parks and recreational facilities in the city are very lightly used. Their management may be open to arrangements with the City that could allow for complete public access or access for programs in return for sharing maintenance and/or program costs. In this way the City could have access to additional facilities without having to pay the costs of developing them. This could include, for example, a partnership with the University of Texas-Tyler that would allow individuals to use university athletic facilities.

3c. Explore the potential for joint park and recreation development, maintenance and programming with T.I.S.D. and other school districts, as appropriate.

Develop an ongoing dialogue with Tyler I.S.D. for the provision of recreational opportunities. The City should work closely with the school district and monitor future expansion plans so that the City and T.I.S.D. can jointly develop future recreational facilities where appropriate. School administration concerns about security are among the issues that will need to be addressed. The City should also develop a joint programming effort to maximize the use and enjoyment of both City and T.I.S.D. facilities.

A number of schools are located next to public parks and use those parks for recreation. In other cases, school playfields and recreation areas can function as neighborhood parks. These uses should be assessed to see how the costs of wear and tear on resources are allocated and if there should be changes to that allocation.

3d. Survey residents regularly to monitor needs, interests, and satisfaction with the park system.

It is important to keep up with changing public needs for parks and recreation facilities. Survey program users after program completion with a common survey instrument for all programs, use Web surveys at least every two to five years on general park issues, and commission a scientific survey every ten years. The results of program surveys and the latest general surveys should be available in advance of the annual



Regular surveys of parks users can help ensure that Tyler's parks and recreation programs meet user needs.

review of the Parks and Open Space Plan so that the Parks Board can utilize the results when updating the plan.

3e. Continue to monitor use of City facilities by private groups and their contribution to upkeep of these facilities.

In order to best maximize use of City facilities, private groups are allowed to use park facilities such as amphitheaters, pavilions, ball fields, etc., provided the use does not conflict with a scheduled City event or completely monopolize facilities so that the public at large is effectively shut out. It is worthwhile to evaluate fees on a regular basis to make sure that private groups contribute towards the maintenance and repair of facilities they use on a regular basis. For example, the tennis association at Faulkner Park manages the park's tennis center and helps maintain the facility. Of course, fees must be carefully assessed so that all residents can afford to have reasonable access to public recreational facilities.

3f. Partner with private interests for the promotion of a new Tyler First Tee program at Woldert Park.

The First Tee of Tyler has been formed and land has been donated adjacent to Woldert Park. This land, together with land from existing Woldert Park, is intended to be the home for this new sports program.

GOAL:

4. Protect and preserve Lake Tyler, Lake Tyler East and Bellwood Lake.

LAKE TYLER AND LAKE TYLER EAST ACTIONS:

4a. Continue giving highest priority to water quality protection.

The lakes are the city's drinking water supply and protection of water quality must be the highest priority.

4b. Continue to review compliance with the existing lease requirements for both residential and commercial leases and take enforcement action in the case of noncompliance.

Leaseholders must comply with the terms of their leases or face enforcement action by the City.

4c. Review and revise maximum parking limits for camping and R.V. facilities.

Ensure that the lease language contains aesthetic controls and requires best practices to control nonpoint source pollution and proper waste disposal. Pervious surfaces such as gravel and pervious concrete block such as "grass-pave" should be encouraged, rather than asphalt.

4d. Prohibit further subdivision of lease lots on City-owned property.

"Club lots" are the only type of lake lots that can be subdivided. The City should stop this practice by eliminating the designation of "Club Lot" so that all lots fall under the same development criteria.



City-owned property around the lakes should be preserved for public use.

4e. Designate properties which do not currently have leases as Greenbelt Properties.

Publicly-owned property around the lakes is a precious resource belonging to the citizens of Tyler and should be preserved for public purposes—protection of the water supply and public recreation. Designation of remaining City-owned properties as Greenbelt Properties would eliminate the potential for future private development while allowing for low-impact, nature-based recreation with the minimum of support facilities, such as boat ramps, fishing piers, parking lots and restrooms at trailheads.

4f. Develop a trail system around Lake Tyler.

Create a nature trail from the marina to Hill Creek Recreation Area on the City-owned greenbelt properties. Small parking areas should be provided at several locations along the trail.

4g. Continue to improve recreational facilities at existing sites.

Facilities can be improved so that they can serve users more effectively while minimizing impacts on the land and the water. Lake facility standards and expectations should be the same as other City of Tyler recreation sites. “Improved” facilities, therefore, do not necessarily mean more impervious surfaces or expanded structures, though in some cases they may be necessary. New and upgraded recreational facilities at the Lakes offer the City the opportunity to showcase and raise public awareness about best environmental practices that conserve energy and avoid pollution. Facility upgrades should also include signage improvements so users can locate existing recreation sites.

4h. Evaluate the location, performance, and appearance of the existing R.V. facility and the need for such a facility.

The current R.V. facility appears to have many permanent installations, reportedly because seasonal visits by travelers were insufficient for economic survival of the business. The entire operation should be evaluated for its contributions to the recreational objectives at the lakes. As part of that evaluation, the housing needs of the people who live there now should be taken into account. If the evaluation produces a conclusion that the public interest and the private interest of the residents and owner of the R.V. facility are in conflict, a solution that is fair to all involved should be pursued.

4i. Explore all options for obtaining resources and for developing partnerships with the Lake Tyler leaseholders and others to improve amenities and public access areas at Lake Tyler.

4j. Consider annexing a corridor to the lakes and all of the property around the lakes.

Perform a cost-benefit study for annexing all City-owned property around Lake Tyler into the corporate limits of Tyler. If the benefits outweigh the costs, the City should explore annexation proceedings to include all City-owned property in the City of Tyler.

4k. Continue to purchase undeveloped land around Lake Tyler East as it becomes available.

City control of land around Lake Tyler East is beneficial because it helps control impacts on drinking water quality. Maximum impervious cover standards to ensure water quality

should be established around the lake and lake access granted only to properties which comply with the standards.

BELLWOOD LAKE ACTIONS:

4l. Ensure continued protection of the water source and natural environment.

Review and amend any lease agreements or other use agreements and continue to monitor motorized use and how it impacts water quality.

4m. Develop a site master plan for the City-owned property north of Bellwood Lake.

A development plan will ensure the City has identified access points, protection of natural open space, lake amenities, etc., prior to the surrounding properties being developed. Work with property owners north of Bellwood Lake on a cohesive development plan for the entire area. A public-private partnership may be a suitable vehicle to lead both a master plan and site development process.

4n. Consider annexing City-owned property on the north side of the lake.

As with property around Lake Tyler, the City should perform a cost-benefit study to determine the feasibility of annexing this property. If the benefits outweigh the costs, the City should consider annexation proceedings.

4o. Manage development and recreational activities in and around sensitive areas of the lakes to minimize adverse effects on water quality and valuable ecosystems.

The construction of boat houses and piers on Bellwood Lake should be prohibited, along with all water skiing in order to maintain a safe and healthy lake environment.

Wildlife areas, such as Lake Tyler islands, need more management attention where, for example, trees are being destroyed by overpopulation by certain animals. The City can work with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to prevent degradation of wildlife areas.

4p. Ensure access to lake facilities and recreation to all citizens.

The lake area belongs to all citizens, and everyone should be guaranteed access to this important recreation resource.

4q. Develop public trails on the lake.

A trail connection from the Cascades Trail (west of the Cascades below the dam) up through the City-owned property on the north side of the lake, ideally to connect with a trail on adjoining property, would provide Tyler residents



Development around sensitive lake areas can be managed to protect ecosystems and water quality.



A public trail system would bring more activity to Bellwood Lake.

with a more rustic alternative to the Rose Rudman Trail. In addition, the Cascades Trail could be connected with the nearby Lindsey Park property.

GOAL:

5. Be a good steward of parks and public spaces.

ACTIONS:

5a. Maintain all parks and public spaces to the same high standard.

Every public park embodies a promise to maintain and protect it forever. Parks that are neglected are less used and become magnets for vandalism and illegal behavior. Good maintenance is a challenge. Scattered small parks, though very important to the park network, can be more difficult to maintain than larger parks. It is also often easier to obtain funds for capital improvements than for the less glamorous but critically important work of keeping parks well-maintained. Elements of a maintenance strategy to continue or consider including are:

- Develop a maintenance checklist for park land and park facilities with easily understood criteria for rating conditions and perform an evaluation of every park on a regular schedule.
- Develop maintenance standards so that employees know what is expected.
- Create a maintenance plan that prioritizes current needs and provides for catching up on maintenance backlogs.
- Evaluate the costs and benefits of contracting out some park maintenance work.
- Collaborate with volunteer groups on certain park maintenance tasks.
- Post a telephone number at every park for citizens to notify the City of maintenance needs.



A parks maintenance plan with maintenance standards can help City employees understand priorities and expectations.

5b. Landscape small public spaces throughout the city and seek funding support through an “adopt a spot” program.

The City should hire a landscape architect to design low-maintenance and medium-maintenance versions of planting design plans for medians, gateway areas, and other small public spaces to beautify the city with flowering plants and trees. A program to seek funding sponsorship from businesses, organizations and individuals can then be developed that offers



Landscaping medians and gateway areas throughout the city will help beautify Tyler.

the low- or medium-maintenance versions of a design plan for an area. The sponsors would choose which plan they wanted, pay a fee, and receive recognition through a small sign. All the signs for the program should have the same design. It is better to organize a fee-based program rather than have sponsors actually perform the work themselves, even if they happen to be landscape companies. If it is more cost effective, the City could contract out the maintenance work, making sure that it meets certain standards.

5c. Incorporate xeriscaping and environmentally-sensitive practices into the City's maintenance program.

The recent drought highlights the value of xeriscaping—the use of drought-tolerant species—in public spaces. In general, park maintenance programs should be organized to conserve water and avoid excessive use of herbicides and pesticides.

5d. Encourage and support creation of park “friends” groups or “adopt a park” groups.

In many communities, volunteer organizations organize events, raise funds, and collaborate with the parks department to support specific parks. The department should encourage formation of these kinds of groups and assign a staff person as a liaison. Keep Tyler Beautiful could participate in an “adopt a park” program, and the parks department and the police department could coordinate patrols and volunteer groups to ensure safety in the parks.

5e. Encourage and support creation of a Tyler Parks Foundation or similar nonprofit group to work with the City on parks and open spaces.

Tyler's park system needs a nonprofit partner to focus attention, raise money, attract volunteers, and enhance the constituency for the city's parks. All the successful park systems in the United States have strong partnerships with a parks foundation or other nonprofit focused on helping the city's parks be successful. Their philanthropic and business communities have recognized that a thriving and successful park system is an economic asset and benefits the whole city. Some of these organizations are actively involved in management and maintenance of parks. Others raise funds for capital improvements and programs. Many coordinate the activities of volunteers and neighborhood parks groups. Partnerships could be made with Keep Tyler Beautiful, the East Texas Woods and Waters Foundation, the Tyler Audubon Society, Master Gardeners, and Ducks Unlimited.

