



Legislation Details (With Text)

**File #:** 20-3818      **Version:** 1      **Name:** Discuss and Consider Adoption of the 2020 Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Trails Master Plan

**Type:** Consideration Item      **Status:** New Business

**File created:** 10/7/2020      **In control:** Mansfield Park Facilities Development Corporation

**On agenda:** 10/15/2020      **Final action:** 10/15/2020

**Title:** Discuss and Consider Adoption of the 2020 Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Trails Master Plan

**Sponsors:**

**Indexes:**

**Code sections:**

**Attachments:**

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
10/15/2020	1	Mansfield Park Facilities Development Corporation	Approved	Pass

Discuss and Consider Adoption of the 2020 Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Trails Master Plan

Consider Adoption of the 2020 Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Trails Master Plan

Adoption of the 2020 Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Trails Master Plan

Currently, planning for parks and recreation facilities relies heavily on the Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Trails Master Plan Master Plan adopted in 2010. The purpose of this plan was to provide direction and set priorities for growth of the park system based upon the growth of the community. Since the adoption of the master plan in 2010, the City has completed numerous priority projects. At the same time, the community has continued to grow at a steady pace with new and changing priorities.

The theme of the 2020 master plan project, My Mansfield Parks, set the tone from the start. This is a citizen-driven plan, with resident needs and input taking top priority. This is a framework for decisions, a strategic plan to guide growth and development and most importantly, an ambitious but achievable vision for connecting the current parks and recreation system to the future of Mansfield.

Process Overview

As the guiding document for a parks system, a comprehensive master plan directs planning, growth and operations. Mansfield Parks and Recreation leadership is committed to keeping the department moving forward, with strong, well-planned direction and forethought as outlined in this plan.

In preparing the scope of the master plan, staff decided to tackle the process internally. Experts and outside consultants are often brought in to oversee such large-scale plans, either for their industry experience or knowledge of the actual plan format and assembly. The Mansfield Parks and Recreation team, however, has a combined total of more than 600 years in the industry, with nearly all administration staff having previously participated in the master plan process more than once, either in Mansfield or another city.

The team is more than qualified, and with a substantially greater stake in creating a successful plan than an outside organization. Equally important, the cost savings of an internally-developed plan is a tremendous benefit. Every dollar saved can be applied towards putting the plan in action. That said, it was an incredibly

large project that could not be possible without the hard work of staff, the Mansfield Park Facilities Development Corporation (MPFDC) and the Master Plan Advisory Committee.

#### Advisory Committee

The process began with staff outlining the general framework, then forming an advisory committee through discussions with staff, the MPFDC and City Council. Members were selected to represent a variety of ages, industries and interests to ensure a good cross-section of discussion and experiences. The committee met monthly beginning in early 2019. Midway through the process, the committee split into two subcommittees to explore the standards and goals separately. Subcommittees met monthly outside of regular meetings, where work would be compared and discussed. Staff concurrently gathered research and assembled data for review. Through the process, the Master Plan Advisory Committee volunteered their time by participating in more than 30 hours of meetings.

#### Community Feedback

Outreach efforts began simultaneously with committee work. This included an online survey, targeted focus groups, regular online discussions and in-person efforts. Staff compiled feedback and shared it with the committee to help guide their decisions. Frequent updates to stakeholders throughout the process gave them time to review findings and offer input. The parks and facilities exist to serve the community, and as such, should reflect their needs and desires. Through extensive outreach and feedback, this plan encouraged significant engagement and resident involvement to form a vision, both long and short range, that truly reflects the people who live, work and play in Mansfield.

#### Focus Areas

After grouping the highest priority needs and demands, the advisory committee identified four focus areas with the highest urgency based on current inventory, condition assessments, trends, future population needs and public demand. Once identified, the committee outlined a clear action plan to address each of the following areas:

- Playgrounds
- Trails
- Recreation & Aquatics
- Athletic Fields

#### Park and Facility Standards

Park and facility standards are guidelines that define service areas based on population that support investment decisions related to facilities and amenities. These standards can and will change over time as the program lifecycles change and demographics of a community change. A dedicated subcommittee reviewed Mansfield's existing standards, along with research from the National Recreation and Park Association and a detailed analysis of nearly 50 area communities to establish revised standards.

Trends in recreation are also a major factor to consider as emerging sports like pickleball would not be accounted for in past evaluations. Similarly, historically-popular youth sports like football have been on rapid decline in the last decade due to changing trends and concerns over concussions and other health risks. Following their review, the subcommittee recommended changes to many of the 2010 plan standards in an attempt to develop an ambitious but achievable list of projects based on these standards.

#### Goals and Strategies

After combining all research, the advisory committee grouped the strategies and priorities into goals that cover operational, planning and recreation needs and aligned with the overall department mission and City values. The strategies identify the clear, specific steps needed to be taken in every aspect of the department and operations to make it all possible. With sharply defined tactics, goals can be accomplished quickly and keep all staff, leadership, stakeholders and residents engaged and able to keep the department accountable and on track.

- Increase Access to Quality Parks & Programs
- Develop, Maintain & Innovate
- Improve Health & Wellness
- Preserve Natural Spaces
- Cultivate Community Pride

#### Recommended Projects

As a growing city, Mansfield has a great need for both small, targeted projects that impact a specific neighborhood or population as well as large-scale construction and redevelopment that will have a huge impact on the community as a whole. The master plan includes 61 proposed projects valued at approximately \$285 million.

Citywide projects are, for the most part, the biggest ticket items but also have the most reach, and as such, rank high in priority. The plan also analyzed the needs within each quadrant of the city, including reviewing projected residential growth that will drive future park and recreation needs.

By far, the most requested item on all resident feedback is trails, both the completion of the Walnut Creek Linear Trail system and the addition of more trails throughout the city to connect new and existing parks as well as expand service into areas without park space. Coming in a close second and third in both demand and gaps in service standards is an expanded recreation center with a fitness component and aquatic facilities of all types.

#### Accountability Plan

Following the adoption of this master plan, the department will create an annual Performance Accountability Report (PAR). The PAR will measure the department's performance each fiscal year against the department's annual work plan and tie to the MPFDC's 10-Year Strategic Business Plan. It will include major accomplishments, updates on projects and initiatives, and key performance indicators. The PAR will be presented to the City's management team, MPFDC and City Council and posted online for Mansfield residents to review at all times.

An adopted Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Trails Master Plan provides guidance and direction to staff, MPFDC and City Council for the future development of the parks and recreation system. The master planning process allows for the community to create a priority list for future park projects, and by having a current, adopted master plan, also allows the City to apply for grants through the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to help fund future projects.

N/A

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