

## INTRODUCTION<sup>5-1</sup>

An important component of any community is the space devoted to satisfying active and passive recreational needs—the need to relax and play. Parks and open space have been described as the “lungs of the city”.<sup>5-2</sup> The quantity and type of park facilities and open space areas should be a direct reflection of the quality of life enjoyed by residents. The purpose of this Parks and Open Space element of the Comprehensive Plan is to examine and analyze existing recreational opportunities within the Village of Volente, and to provide a master plan for the open space system that is consistent with present and future community needs.

The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee was charged with the responsibility of assisting in the drafting of the Comprehensive Plan, and of adopting goals and objectives concerning the parks and open space system (see the Goals & Objectives element of the Comprehensive Plan). A preliminary set of goals and objectives were drafted, reviewed and accepted by the Steering Committee, and these goals and objectives should, therefore, represent an accurate cross-sectional opinion from the community regarding recreational opportunities and the future open space system.

## EXISTING PARK AND OPEN SPACE AREAS

There are currently no active public parks within the Village, except for a small (< 0.5 acre) Travis County Park next to VJ’s Grocery, which is maintained by the Volente Neighborhood Association (VNA), but the Village also currently has a small population (estimated at 530 people within the Village limits). There are several restricted-use open spaces created by land developers along the shoreline of Lake Travis, which are maintained by homeowners’ associations.

There are two public parks near Volente on the shore of Lake Travis:

- Sandy Creek Park is about six miles north of the Village along Lime Creek Road and is operated by Travis County;<sup>5-3</sup>
- Cypress Creek Park is about two miles east of the Village, at the intersection of FM 2769 and Bullick Hollow Road and is operated by the LCRA;<sup>5-4</sup>

## PRESERVATION AREAS

The Village of Volente currently has no land within the Village limits designated as “preservation area”. However, the Village is bounded along its north and east incorporated limits by the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve (BCP) tract (see the Baseline Analysis element of the Comprehensive Plan). This preservation tract is reserved for endangered species habitat mitigation and as such has restricted access. Since this land is not available to residents or

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<sup>5-1</sup> From “Comprehensive Plan, Village of Bee Cave, Texas,” August 2000. Prepared By Dunkin, Sefko, & Associates, Inc.

<sup>5-2</sup> “Urban Geography”; Koplan, Wheeler, Holloway, Hodler; 2004

<sup>5-3</sup> Information from [www.co.travis.tx.us](http://www.co.travis.tx.us).

<sup>5-4</sup> Information from [www.lcra.org](http://www.lcra.org).

visitors to the area, it should not be classified as useable "open space".

~~The agreement between the Village and the developer of the proposed Volente Municipal Utility District (MUD) provides for approximately 800 acres of open space preserve land along Volente's north and east incorporated limits (see the Baseline Analysis element of the Comprehensive Plan). The agreement allows the proposed open space preserve to be used for green belts, parks, water quality buffer zones, drainage and water quality facilities, multiple use trails, but with all uses subject to any restrictions that may be imposed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The agreement also allows this 800-acre tract to be annexed into the village by mutual consent.~~

## **PARK TYPES AND RECOMMENDED STANDARDS**

Most municipal park systems have a hierarchy of park areas that defines the various types of activities that are to be furnished by each type of park in the system. When a functional classification system is used, parks can be broadly identified by their type, size and service area. Application of this process and approach to drafting and formulating the Parks and Open Space Plan results in parks placed within the appropriate areas of the community, as well as maximizing their cost of improvement. The following describes a commonly used classification system that follows guidelines similar to those set forth by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA).

Each park type is discussed below in order to: (1) identify the function of the park; (2) identify recreational activities associated with each park; and (3) define the general service area and the physical relationship of each park to the population residing within its service area.

### **Mini-Park**

A mini-park is a small area used as a children's playground or for use as a passive or aesthetic area by citizens.

- Mini-parks are designed to serve a very small population area. Appropriate size multi-park sites range from 0.25 to 0.3 acres per one thousand persons. These parks normally serve a population base of 500 to 1,000 persons, and they generally range in size from 0.125 to 0.25 acres per park.
- If used, the primary function should be to provide recreational space for preschool-age children and elementary school-age children near their residences.
- Where substantial development of high-density housing is proposed, it is appropriate that the mini-parks be provided as an integral part of the residential development.
- Because of maintenance costs that are required to maintain a mini-park, the future development of any park of this type should be private in nature, if possible, as they are generally not feasible for cities to own.

## **Neighborhood Park**

The neighborhood park, sometimes referred to as a playground, is considered to be one of the most important features of a park system, and is often considered to be one of the major cohesive elements in neighborhood design. Its primary function is the provision of recreational space for the entire neighborhood that surrounds it.

When it is possible to combine an elementary school with this type of park, the two features further enhance the identity of the neighborhood by providing a central location for recreation and education, and by providing a significant open space feature within the neighborhood. A neighborhood park should be located near the center of the neighborhood, and should have a service area of approximately one-half mile to three-fourths mile.

Safe and convenient pedestrian access (walkways or hike and bike trails) is important to a neighborhood park location. Generally, the location should not be adjacent to a heavily traveled major thoroughfare.

Facilities normally provided at a neighborhood park consist of: Playground equipment for small children; a multiple-purpose, surfaced play area; an athletic area (non-lighted) for games such as baseball, football and soccer, and a surfaced area for such sports as volleyball, basketball and similar activities; pavilions for picnics with tables and grills, as well as restrooms and drinking fountains; tennis courts for casual play; a passive area including landscaping, trees and any natural areas;

It is not desirable to light larger athletic facilities due to the fact that lighting is often objectionable to nearby residents.

Neighborhood parks are designed to serve a small population area. These parks ideally range in size from five to 10 acres.

## **Community Park**

A community park, sometimes referred to as a play field, is usually a larger area than a neighborhood park, and is oriented primarily to have active recreational facilities for all ages.

A community park serves several neighborhood areas; therefore, it should be conveniently accessible by automobile, and it should include provisions for off-street parking. Activities provided may include:

- Practice fields for baseball, football and soccer;
- A community building;
- Tennis courts;

- A surfaced multiple purpose play area;
- Some play apparatus;
- A passive area for picnicking; and,
- Other special facilities, such as frisbee and golf, if space is available.

The service radius of a play field is one-half to two miles, and a location adjacent to, or as an integral part of, a middle or high school is considered desirable. Community parks are designed to serve a medium local population area. They generally range in size from 10 acres to 50 acres.

### **Large/Regional Parks**

Areas that are 50 to 100 (or more) acres in size, which provide both passive and active recreational facilities as listed under community parks, are usually classified as large parks (sometimes called athletic fields). It is desirable that a balance of active and passive recreational facilities be provided in a large park. Such facilities may include picnicking, fishing, water areas, camping and hiking and natural areas. Dependent upon location, need, and possibly topography, some community park features may be placed in the large park. These parks are often lighted and have multi-purpose functions

### **Special Park Areas**

Golf courses, historic areas or sites, linear parks/greenbelts, country clubs, zoos, botanical gardens and special athletic and community centers, including civic centers, are considered to be special types of recreational facilities. These park areas can be of any size, and standards for this type of facility are variable and dependent upon the extent of services provided by the special facility.

### **Parkways and Ornamental Areas**

Plazas, street medians, scenic drives and grounds of public buildings and similar facilities are important aspects of the overall park system and should receive careful attention for their development and maintenance.

### **Reservations, Preserves & State Parks**

The use of the automobile has made reservations and preserves increasingly important to urban communities. Large recreational areas on reservoirs which provide camping, picnicking, hiking, boating, fishing and similar activities are often supported in state parks. Areas that are provided in the region for the purpose of protecting wildlife and open space are classified as reservations and preserves.

## Open Space

These areas are natural and are generally left undisturbed, but are not necessarily characterized as preserves. No active uses are usually accommodated in these areas.

## Ridgetops

Volente has a large portion of the Village as yet undeveloped and a great portion of that undeveloped land lies in areas hereby defined as “ridgetops”. Overwhelmingly the survey results showed that the residents of the Village have a strong respect and love of the natural beauty of our area and want to protect our water quality and our natural habitats. Support for these issues came from the responses to question 13-8 where 90.3% of the respondents agreed that Volente should be an environmentally-friendly community - a place where the ecological health of the community is preserved. Also in question 16-3, 97.4% of the residents said we should have as one of our goals protecting the natural environment. Again in question 18-4, 84% of the Village thought we should promote the creation and protection of natural areas/green space. The Steering Committee strongly felt that the ridgetops, along with the lake were our two most important critical environmental features that we wanted to ensure were protected. The Committee felt these features define the Village and give us our unique identity. The residents gave us their go ahead to regulate development in these critically sensitive environmental areas in question 17-4 where 78.3% of us wanted the Village to regulate the type of development close to Lake Travis and the hillsides. The Ridgetop Zoning District was the Steering Committee's instrument for accomplishing this protection. This zoning area was drawn up after intense and repeated discussions and includes the restrictions of R-1 with the addition of a change of minimum lot width and depth, larger side yard setbacks, and a prohibition of cluster housing. The Ridgetop Zoning District applies to all lands that are located:

- on the tops of ridges and along the ridge lines; and
- above elevation 900 feet msl; and
- above natural sloping terrain with slopes equal to or greater than 25%.

The purposes of the ridgetop overlay district are:

- preserve the view of the ridgetops and ridgelines;
- protect the environmental significance of the ridgetops and ridgelines;
- reduce the concentration of residential uses on the ridgetops and ridgelines. In the Ridgetop Zoning District, development is restricted to single family residential;
- encourage compatibility between residential uses and the natural settings of the ridgetops and ridgelines;
- preserve significant natural features, topography, wildlife habitat, and unique vegetation

on the ridgetops and ridgelines;

- restrict the height and spacing of residential structures along the ridgetops and ridgelines;
- provide view parks.

## **NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

The recreational facilities the Village offers its citizens should generally be in accordance with the current needs of the community, as well as with the anticipation or expectation of needs that may arise in the future. Anticipated needs can be forecasted based on sound standards and development guidelines that are related to the population to be served. Expectation of needs is usually determined through the analysis of material and data furnished by persons actively engaged in some type of recreational activity. When both are considered and set forth in a logical plan and program for implementation, a sound Parks and Open Space Plan for active and passive uses can evolve within the community. This section of the study sets forth the needs assessment for determining future facilities. This assessment and evaluation utilizes two approaches for determining park and recreation needs: (1) demand-based, and (2) standard-based.

### **Demand-Based**

This approach, used to assist in assessing future needs, relies on information and data from citizens and user group sources, or other sources familiar with the wants for certain types of facilities. The method used to attain input for this phase of the needs assessment is to consider requests from citizens and user groups, separated by respective activities.

Based on the input gained from a public workshop during which parks were discussed, the following needs were expressed by citizens of the Village of Volente.

- A hiking and bike trail system linking residential areas to other areas throughout Volente. A hike and bike trail system would be required to be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and be constructed of a natural surface such as compacted crushed stone (no cement and/or asphalt surfaces);
- Preserving Volente's open space in its natural settings;
- Preserving Volente's historic resources in public park and open space settings;
- Outdoor parks and open spaces with multi-purpose functions.

### **Standard-Based**

This approach is used to assist in assessing future recreational needs by following established, recognized standards for assessing the quantity of park land needed, as well as the number of facilities needed, in order to meet the needs of a given population.

## PARK AREA STANDARD

The types of parks previously discussed identified various parks and open space areas that may be applicable to the Village of Volente's future park and trail system. Recommended standards are summarized in Table 5.1, and are compared to the existing available park and open space areas currently within the Village.

Park Type	Recommended Standards (are per 100 persons)	Acreage Needed for Current Population <sup>(2)</sup>	Acreage Needed for 1900 Persons <sup>(3)</sup>
Neighborhood	0.25 acres	1 acres	5 acres
Community	0.55 acres	3 acres	11 acres
Perpetual Open Space <sup>(4)</sup>	Variable	Variable	Variable
<b>Total Park Area</b>	<b>0.80 acres</b>	<b>4 acres</b>	<b>16 acres</b>
(1)	Based on the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Standards		
(2)	Based on the current estimated population of the Village of approximately 530 people.		
(3)	Based on the ultimate estimated population of the Village, approximately 1,900 people.		
(4)	The Steering Committee recommends 5% of remaining undeveloped lands be set aside for usable open space.		

## PARKS AND OPEN SPACE CONCEPTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

No facilities or sites are currently provided within the Village of Volente to meet the recreational needs of its residents. The Parks and Open Space Plan (see Plate 5-1) does not reflect a system of urban-style parks. Instead, the Plan attempts to depict a network of green belt trails that would be more useful (and enjoyable) to residents in a semi-rural community. The following sections describe each component of the community's parks and open space system along with recommendations for the long-term use and development of each one. During the formulation of goals and objectives for the Comprehensive Plan, many members of the Steering Committee and local citizens expressed the opinion that the Village should develop a pedestrian-oriented system in order to reduce dependence on the automobile within the Village. In furthering this objective, it is necessary to establish a conceptual plan to consider where and how this can be integrated into future development decisions. The principle elements and recommendations shown on the attached Parks and Open Space Plan (Plate 5-1) are the following:

### Neighborhood Parks

As aforementioned, the village of Volente currently has no park of this type. As Table 5.1 shows, however, the village currently needs at least 1 acre of neighborhood parks and will ultimately need at least 5 acres of neighborhood parks. It is important for residents of the Village to be able to easily walk to a park space within 5 to 10 minutes. Locating small parks intermittently throughout residential areas will help to ensure their accessibility. The location of neighborhood parks should be tailored to the layouts of future residential developments, so their

locations are not shown on Plate 5-1.

## **View Parks**

The concept of this park is to provide the residents of and visitors to the Village of Volente with access to the scenic Hill Country views in and around the Village. In addition, the preserve areas that are located above the village are not accessible to the public, however, the natural views that this area provides should be. By establishing view parks at various high points throughout Volente, such views will be able to be enjoyed by everyone, and not reserved for enjoyment by a single landowner or by residents of a single neighborhood. In addition, the establishment of these parks at the high points would protect ridgetops from intense development that would harm the integrity of these areas.

## **Linkages Throughout the Village**

Due to the fact that large areas of the Village are not yet developed, opportunities exist to create an integrated, continuous “necklace” of trails and pathways throughout the community. Developing a trail system in Volente is likely the best way to allow residents multi-modal access to the various areas throughout the community. Important areas to consider in terms of locations to provide access include old and new residential neighborhoods, park and open space areas, and the Village Municipal Hall. Hike and bike trails should be at least eight feet wide and should be composed of crushed stone (compacted to ensure ADA compliance) or similar material.

The ideal location for these trails, if it were desired and/or necessary, would be running alongside the upland waterways within Volente, as shown on Plate 5-1. This would allow residents and visitors to enjoy these areas without directly impacting them. In addition, such a trail system would give people a chance to experience the significant environmental features of the Village, including the Hill Country views. However, there are several places, particularly between FM 2769 and Lake Travis, which have already been developed, are privately owned, and therefore may not be available for the incorporation of a trail system. The Village should attempt to overcome this limitation by using other areas for the trail system, such as street rights-of-ways, and by working closely with landowners and business owners in order to eventually create an integrated, if not continuous, trail throughout Volente. Participation in the hike and bike trail system should not be mandatory in areas already developed.

Due to the fact that the Village is bisected by two major arterials, the construction of a useable, safe trail system that would not only provide an alternative to the automobile, but would also provide pedestrian access to either side of FM 2769 and Lime Creek Road is a challenge. Pedestrian access across these two arterials would require some form of protected pedestrian cross walk.

## **Community Park**

As aforementioned, the Village of Volente currently has no park of this type. As Table 5.1 shows, however, the Village currently needs at least a 3-acre community park and will ultimately need at least an 11- acre community park. The Steering Committee recommended that a

community park be coupled with the protection and preservation of Volente's historic resources. Such a community park would become the central meeting place for community outdoor gatherings and events. One ideal location to site the community park is around the immediate vicinity of the Village's Municipal Hall/Fire Station site shown on Plate 5-1.

## **Ridgetops**

Ridgetop and ridgeline areas should be maintained to preserve "line of sight" and to avoid defining the ridgetops with houses and other construction. Development should be restricted to single family residential dwellings to achieve this image. Residential clustering or multifamily developments is not recommended for ridgetop areas. Ridgetops may also be designated as "special park areas".

## **OPEN SPACE RESERVATION**

A common policy among communities to ensure the reservation of adequate open space is to require subdivisions to set aside prescribed amounts of the areas of subdivision to be dedicated to open space. These open space areas should be useable by the public for mostly passive recreational activities. The open space reservation could also be used to preserve open areas that have significant cultural or environmental resources. Based upon the Steering Committee's input, it is recommended that up to 5% of the areas of new development within Volente be dedicated to useable open space.