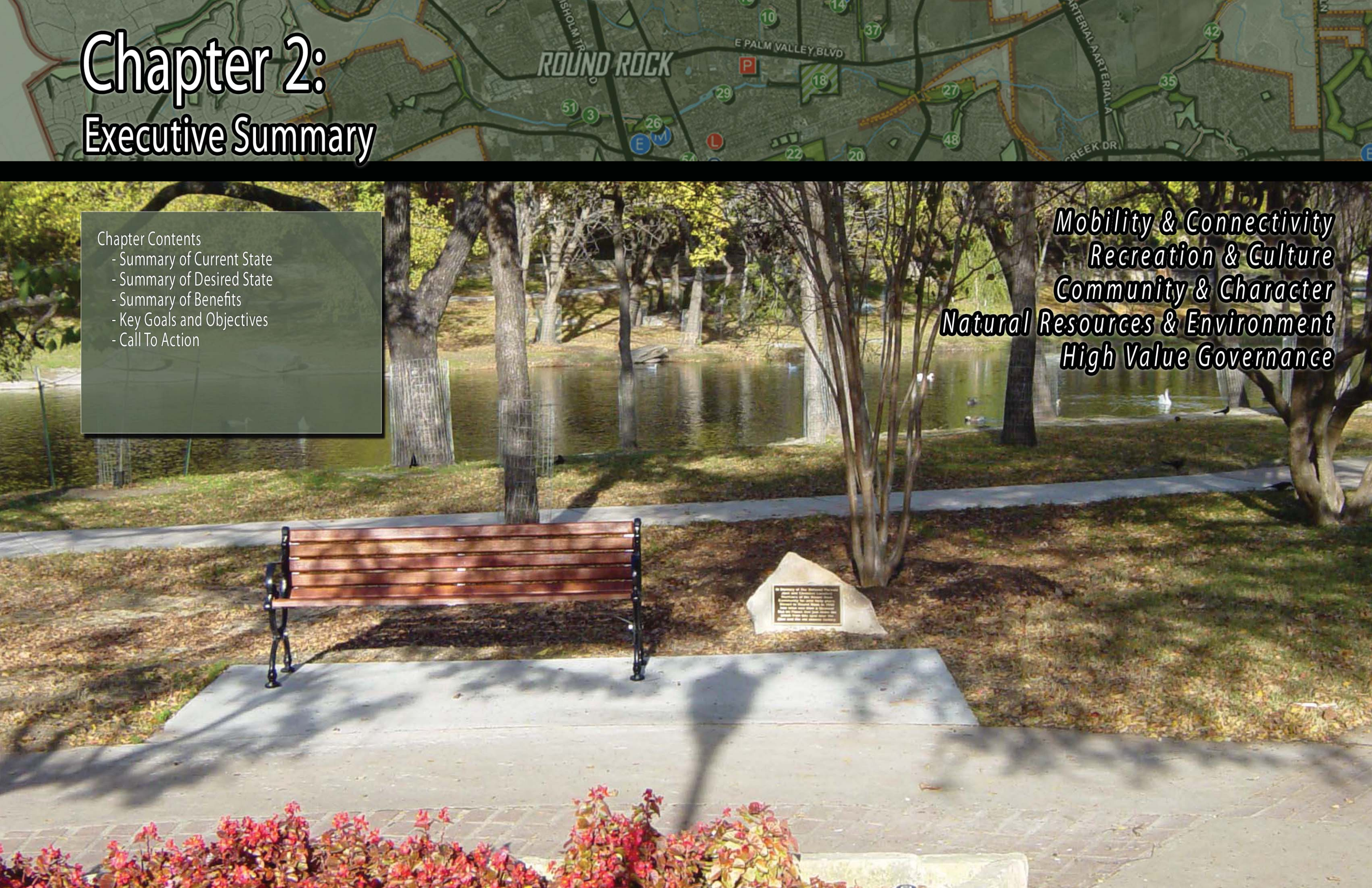


# Chapter 2: Executive Summary

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**“Do not look to the ground for your next step; greatness lies with those who look to the horizon”**

Norwegian Proverb

# Chapter 2

## Executive Summary

### Executive Summary of the Strategic Parks and Recreation Master Plan

This executive summary will briefly explain the current state of parks and recreation in Round Rock, the desired state for parks and recreation, the benefits of parks and recreation to the City of Round Rock and its residents, and finally the goals of this Master Plan which will guide the process of moving from the current state into the desired state. Throughout this Master Plan document, five strategies will be continually mentioned which include: mobility and connectivity, recreation and culture, community and character, natural resources and the environment, and high value governance, all of which were derived from the City’s Comprehensive Strategic Plan.

### Summary of Citywide Strategic Plan, Game On 2060

The City of Round Rock has recently completed the process of developing a citywide strategic master plan which is meant to guide the city staff and elected officials over the next fifty years. In order for Round Rock to achieve its desired vision, the Strategic Plan laid out seven strategies. Of these seven strategies, parks and recreation can have a direct impact in at least five of them: mobility and connectivity, recreation and culture, community and character, natural resources and the environment, and high value governance. Parks

and recreation can achieve mobility and connectivity through a citywide hike and bike trail network. Recreation and culture can be achieved by recreation programs, youth and adult athletics, tourism, public art, and special events. The City’s community and character can be enhanced through the Parks and Recreation Department by the facilities and the beautification offered by parks and streetscapes. The City’s vision of having natural resources and being environmental is achieved through offering an abundant supply of parks, open space and the City’s leading role in environmental stewardship. High value governance can be achieved through the Parks and Recreation Department operations and maintenance procedures.

These five strategies will be continually mentioned throughout this Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plan, and the benefits of parks and recreation will be explained which will help the City achieve these five strategies.

### Summary of Current State of Parks and Recreation in Round Rock

Round Rock is a very desirable place to live, work and play. When residents are asked what it is they like about Round Rock, it is invariably the small town feel while having all the luxuries of a large city. Ensuring the preservation of open space and green corridors to maintain what is left of the country feel in Round Rock, while providing high quality recreation facilities is an extremely important quality of the City that the residents wish to retain. This

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is all possible through sensitive and intelligent planning as demonstrated in this report.

Attractive parks and natural areas are often the first place that visitors view in our community. Parks are one of the most visible elements of a city government at work, and can instill a strong sense of pride in the residents of a community. A good park and recreation system lets both citizens and visitors know that the leadership of the city is interested in providing the best quality of life possible for the citizens of the City of Round Rock.

The purpose of this Strategic Parks and Recreation Master Plan is to update the previous plan prepared in 2000 and to update the Trails Master Plan prepared in 2004. This strategic master plan establishes new goals and guidelines, and provides an assessment of Round Rock's park, recreation, open space and trails system in the year 2008.

A Strategic Parks and Recreation Master Plan is exactly what its name indicates: "parks" typically refer to land dedicated to outdoor areas programmed for "recreation" which refers to both active and passive recreation including ball play, jogging, picnicking, etc. Active recreation is typically not the purpose of open space; however open space is often very valuable for passive activities such as bird watching, wildflower viewing, hiking and contemplation. Open space refers to land dedicated for conservation and preservation due to its ecological value, wildlife habitat quality, cultural significance, and its functional role to assist with flood management, etc. Strategic dedication of open space can contribute significantly to attaining and preserving a sense of rural character in a city environment.

*"Many community leaders feel they must choose between economic growth and open space protection. But no such choice is necessary. Open space protection is good for a community's health, stability, beauty, and quality of life. It is also good for the bottom line."*

Will Rogers, President of the Trust for Public Land, 1999

asset, offering outdoor enjoyment, visual pleasure and ecological function at a minimum cost.

The Round Rock Strategic Parks and Recreation Master Plan is intended to cover all of the City of Round Rock as well as the areas included in the city's

ETJ. The timeframe of the Strategic Master Plan is formulated to address the period from the year 2008 to 2020.

## Community and Character

As part of the Strategic Parks and Recreation Master Plan, the overall context of Round Rock was evaluated and considered throughout the planning process. This includes the rich history and culture of Round Rock, the local economy, the demographics and population aspects of the citizens of the community, as well as the physical characteristics of the community that defines the City's image. These physical attributes include:

- Creeks
- Floodplains
- Intimate neighborhoods
- Tree-covered streets and scenic roads
- Historic downtown
- Rural agricultural landscape

The unique aspects of a city determine its image and character and cause the city to be set apart from other cities in the region. For the City of Round Rock it is found in the creeks and floodways, intimate neighborhoods with tree-covered streets, historic downtown and the rural agricultural landscape, and scenic roads throughout the western portion of the city.

The creeks in Round Rock have tremendous aesthetical and recreational appeal. Ecologically the linear configuration of creeks makes them extremely valuable as landscape corridors for wildlife. Recognizing this ecological value leads to better management and the opportunity for education and various "nature experiences." One excellent example of this in Round Rock is the potential for a linear park along Brushy Creek connecting Bathing Beach, Veterans Park, Memorial Park, and Downtown.

Ecologically, floodplains are important habitats for bird and animal life. From a health point of view, the vegetation covered edge of a floodplain acts as a vitally important buffer to bio-filtrate non-point source pollutants including oil from roads and chemicals from lawns and agricultural fields.

Intimate neighborhoods in Round Rock are conducive to people walking the streets to get to school, visit neighbors on foot, and to enjoy area parks.

Well maintained, well used and enjoyed during the week and the weekend, the historic downtown has a charm that stretches beyond just the downtown area and into all parts of Round Rock with residents from the entire city coming to attend church, shop in the quaint stores, to use the BACA center and visit the

public library.

Large areas of rural land are unspoiled by development. Such landscapes are vanishing fast from the urban environment. Yet, it is when such landscapes are offset by sensitive development that their real beauty is revealed.

Scenic roads are found with trees growing along narrow streets with arching branches. Other roads in Round Rock are scenic due to the agriculture and rural land that they traverse. This is especially evident along roads in the western part of the City. These roads call for special attention to protect and preserve their scenic value.

## Summary of Current Demographics

Understanding the size and characteristics of the population to be served is a key part of the master planning process. The population of Round Rock has grown dramatically with a 53.8% increase since 2000. This is remarkable growth which potentially has far reaching impacts on the ability of the City to provide adequate city services and amenities. The expected growth between 2008 and 2020 is 41.7%. Considering the expected huge influx of new residents, it is the purpose of this Strategic Master Plan to ensure that the current and future demand for parks and recreation facilities is sufficiently met.

For planning purposes, the 2008 population is projected to be 94,026 residents. The population estimate for the year 2020 is 133,264. Build-out population for Round Rock is estimated to exceed 300,000. All population figures are from the Round Rock Planning Department.

The age of Round Rock residents is diverse. Children and teens comprise 34.3% of the current population; and adults age 25 to 44 comprise 34.0% of the population. The senior population in Round Rock is somewhat lower when compared to the State of Texas. Only 4.4% of Round Rock's population is over the age of 60. A significant portion of the population is either families with children or young working professionals, and these two groups are the largest groups with immediate recreation needs.

## Existing Parks and Recreation System in Round Rock

The City of Round Rock has an existing system of 36 park sites (plus 62 undeveloped) that are city-owned and 165 total park sites which include city-owned, county-owned, HOA, MUD, and private parks. The city-owned parkland totals 1,142 acres (plus 656 acres undeveloped) and the total acreage of parkland in Round Rock is 4,018.11 acres. The parks in Round Rock range in size from neighborhood parks that are less than one acre to regional parks

such as Old Settlers Park which is 570 acres. There currently are 40.84 miles of trails throughout Round Rock that are both city built and developer built trails.

A key part of the park planning process is to understand what park, recreation and open space facilities are currently available, and to address the condition of those facilities to determine whether or not they are meeting the existing park, recreation and open space needs of the city.

Round Rock offers a variety of youth and adult athletic leagues as well as several instructional classes at Clay Madsen Recreation Center. During the summer months aquatic programs such as lifeguard training and swim lessons are offered. Also, throughout the year there are several special events and community activities that are offered in the parks.

## Summary of the Desired State for Parks and Recreation in Round Rock

The desired state for the Round Rock Parks and Recreation Department is based on a careful combination of trend analysis and projection, public input data collection, and input from the Round Rock City Council and Mayor. From this information, the Parks and Recreation Department has determined the ideal state in which to operate and function as a whole.

In terms of mobility and connectivity, Round Rock should provide a system of trails, greenbelts, and open space that encourages residents to be outdoors living a healthy lifestyle and learning about local natural features. Connectivity also serves to facilitate an alternative transportation opportunity for Round Rock residents. By connecting residents to locations such as schools, public spaces, neighborhoods, places of employment, and retail destinations, the City gains a healthier more active and close-knit community. Providing such linkages rewards the users and relieves traffic congestion.

The desired state of recreation and culture encompasses short and long range programs for development, expansion, and upgrading the Round Rock parks and recreation system. Recreation amenities would include providing an adequate number of fields for league use, facilities that address the needs of all age groups, activity levels, and socio-economic categories.

Round Rock will have provided for programs and facilities of the expanded leisure market trends. The City's park system will be distributed evenly throughout the city so that all residents have access to trails, athletic activities, and neighborhood and community parks. In the desired state, the community

and character of Round Rock will be clearly visible to visitors. The City's identity will be clearly conveyed through beautification efforts, defined entry signage, and the continuation of tree plantings along streets and in parks.

The preservation and enhancement of historic and culturally significant landscapes will have resulted in the development of such significant features as the round rock, the Chisholm Trail Crossing Sculpture Park, and the Brushy Creek corridor. A particular emphasis will be made to celebrate the history and culture of this city.

Areas of cultural value, geological and topographic interest, and natural creek corridors will have been preserved, and funding mechanisms in place to acquire more lands for protection. The Parks and Recreation Department will maintain all of the Round Rock parks and recreation facilities in a superior condition and sustainable manner. Funding and manpower resources will be in place in order to regularly/proactively ensure the safety and quality of the City's amenities. Coordination with multi-jurisdictional entities with respect to issues that affect recreation opportunities will actively be pursued. Relationships will be strengthened and the City will work together in order to accomplish regional solutions.

The City will develop other funding mechanisms to help supplement the City's limited funding resources. The Parkland Dedication and Park Development Ordinance will continue to fund land acquisition and park development. Fee structures will be assessed and cooperation with private citizens and developers will be encouraged in which development and Adopt-A-Park programs may become realized. Citizen participation will continue to be utilized in determining long-range planning to reflect the changing conditions in Round Rock.



## Benefits of Parks and Recreation in Round Rock

Developing an excellent park and recreation system demonstrates a local government's commitment to offering a high quality of life for its residents. A superior park and recreation system increases the quality of life in a community because of the many benefits that it offers to that community. Parks are the single most visible positive expression of a city government at work.

Recreation and Cultural Benefits of Parks and Recreation include:

- access to parks increases the frequency of exercise, especially among children and youth.
- staying active can help reduce the risk of heart disease, diabetes, obesity, depression, and other health problems.
- provides opportunities for all people to be physically active, socially engaged, and cognitively stimulated.

Community and Character Benefits of Parks and Recreation include:

- provides opportunities for rest, relaxation and revitalization.
- preserves and interprets historic community assets.
- provides opportunities for community involvement.
- play is critical for child development.

Natural Resources and Environmental Benefits of Parks and Recreation include:

- protects and preserves vital green spaces.
- protects and preserves critical wildlife habitat.
- educates visitors regarding the appropriate use of natural areas as recreational areas.
- exposure to nature improves psychological and social health.
- contributes to clean air and water.
- makes the city significantly more attractive.

High Value Governance Benefits of Parks and Recreation include:

- increases property value of homes in close proximity to parks.
- stimulates economic development by attracting businesses and keeping residents.
- increases tourism.
- attracts new businesses to a community by improving the standard of living.
- provides refuges of safety for at-risk youth which can in turn help reduce juvenile delinquency.

# The Round Rock Strategic Parks and Recreation Master Plan

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## Summary of Goals of Strategic Parks and Recreation Master Plan

1. As part of Round Rock's desire to have mobility and connectivity, provide an open space system which links parks, schools, greenbelts, neighborhoods, places of employment, retail shops, and restaurants.
2. Provide parkland and a variety of recreation facilities and programs to meet the changing recreational needs and desires of the City of Round Rock's population.
3. Create a park and recreation system that will improve the physical form and image of the City of Round Rock.
4. As part of Round Rock's environmental stewardship, preserve and protect open space, cultural landscapes and natural resources, especially areas with topography change, indigenous tree cover, prairie land and land prone to flooding within the city limits and ETJ.
5. Continue to maintain all of Round Rock's parks and recreational facilities in a superior condition and sustainable manner.
6. Provide a tool to coordinate multi-jurisdictional efforts with adjacent cities and the local school district with respect to issues that affect recreational opportunities in the community.
7. Develop other funding mechanisms to help supplement the City's limited funding resources.
8. Include a citizen participation process in all ongoing park and recreation planning and design, as well as updating of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

## Summary of Gaps Between the Current State and the Desired State of Round Rock's Parks and Recreation System

After discussing in the previous chapters the current and desired state of Round Rock's parks and recreation system, there are several gaps between where the system is now and where it should be. Those gaps are summarized in this section, and goals are set to help guide the Parks and Recreation Staff and City elected officials in achieving the desired state.

The most notable gap is the lack of balance between recreational fields that can be used by leagues and every day use and the number of tournament quality fields to cater to being the Sports Capital of Texas. Round Rock needs to invest in several multi-purpose recreational fields that are intended to

be used by the residents of Round Rock.

Also Round Rock lacks sports fields beyond baseball that can attract teams and tournaments to the Sports Capital of Texas. Round Rock should upgrade the soccer fields at Old Settlers Park so that the fields are aesthetically appealing and can attract large scale tournaments to meet the Sports Capital of Texas goal. The soccer fields should also be formatted into multi purpose fields so that they can serve a variety of field needs including lacrosse, field hockey, cricket, etc.

There currently is a significant deficit in practice fields. The practice fields found on Round Rock ISD school property are not lighted and the time available to leagues and residents to use those fields is severely limited. Strengthening the partnership with Round Rock ISD so that the fields can be used during more daylight hours when school is not in session is one way to alleviate this deficit. The strengthening of this partnership was discussed in detail at the end of Chapter 4.

During the public input process, the one amenity that residents of Round Rock consistently wanted was more trails. Hike and bike trails are moving from the traditional recreational use to a mode of alternative transportation. Developing more interconnected trails throughout all portions of Round Rock will increase the mobility of residents; and increasing mobility and connectivity was one of the key strategies of Game On 2060 Plan.

Fitness trends that are increasing across the nation include Pilates, spinning, and low impact aerobics. Round Rock currently does not offer these instructional classes, and adding them to the programs offered at the Clay Madsen Recreation Center should be strongly considered.

Similar to fitness, extreme sports are gaining in popularity in the United States. Round Rock Parks and Recreation Department should consider the possibility of providing an indoor rock wall for climbing, cardio kickboxing classes, or Ultimate Frisbee leagues and tournaments.

In terms of parkland that will be needed to meet the future target level of service, Round Rock will need to acquire an additional 520 acres of parkland in the next five years; 1,460 acres by the year 2020; and at least 3,500 more acres of parkland by the time the City reaches its ultimate build-out population. Metropolitan parks will need to be added in the northeast and southeast sectors of the city; and the remaining floodplain will need to be preserved for greenbelt corridors where feasible.

There are some gaps in terms of facilities between the current state and the

desired state. The Rock 'N River Aquatic Complex has three additional phases planned that will offer water recreation appealing to teens and young adults. The rental facilities at Kinningham and Rabb House are in need of significant renovation. There is an adaptive playscape planned to be constructed at Rabb House which will be the first adaptive playscape in Round Rock. Constructing a Teen Center was identified as a need as part of the Game On 2060 Plan. Finally, there is no large amphitheater in Round Rock that can accommodate performances for 1,000+ people and a signature Downtown park. All the gaps listed above will be addressed in the recommendations section of this master plan found in Chapter 6.

Type	Gap
Facility	Lack of balance between recreational fields and Sports Capital of Texas quality fields.
Facility	Sports Capital of Texas quality soccer complex, sand volleyball courts, and multi-purpose fields are needed.
Practice	Significant lack of practice fields, limited use of practice fields on school property.
Trails	Additional trails was consistently the number one most wanted facility during the public input process.
Fitness	Offer Pilates classes, spinning classes, low impact aerobics.
Extreme Sports	Offer indoor rock climbing, cardio kickboxing classes, Ultimate Frisbee.
Parkland	Need to acquire at least an additional 3,500 acres of parkland when Round Rock reaches its ultimate build-out population.
Expansion	Rock 'N River Aquatic Complex has three additional phases planned for expansion of the facility.
Renovation	The rental facilities at Kinningham and Rabb House need extensive renovation.
Adaptive Play	An adaptive playscape is planned to be constructed at Rabb House, being the first adaptive playscape in Round Rock.
Facility	A teen center was identified as a need as part of the Game On 2060 Plan.
Facility	There is no large amphitheater in Round Rock meant to accommodate performances with 1,000+ people or Downtown park.
Art	There is a need for art and cultural facilities in parks and along trails.

## Capital Improvement Plan

It is the responsibility of the City to not only provide new park and recreation amenities but to also maintain and upgrade existing amenities. The Capital Improvement Plan includes both the deferred maintenance needs addressed in Chapter 3 as well as the recommendations for new facilities addressed in Chapter 6. The projected expenses of the necessary deferred maintenance and the recommendations are shown in Table E.2 below. The Capital Improvement Plan should also address current maintenance standards and make any changes that are necessary. For example, during the public input process it was noted that an average of 90.5% of the residents of Round Rock would support allowing some areas of large parks and open spaces to remain in a more natural state. Therefore, some areas of parks can be designated as natural open space and the frequency of mowing those areas can be greatly reduced.

Table E.2  
Expenses of the Capital Improvement Plan

Item	Low Cost Range	High Cost Range
Deferred Maintenance	\$4,493,570	\$4,493,570
Mobility & Connectivity Recommendations	\$9,250,000	\$12,650,000
Recreation & Culture Recommendations	\$29,500,000	\$51,500,000
Community & Character Recommendations	\$6,000,000	\$12,500,000
Natural Resources & Environmental Recommendations	\$27,750,000	\$62,025,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$76,993,570</b>	<b>\$143,168,570</b>

## Your Call to Action

Round Rock is at a crossroad. The City has been growing at an alarming rate over the past several decades. The ultimate build-out population of 300,000 residents is a reality and can easily be seen by city officials. Parks and recreation are necessary components of a city's infrastructure, contribute first hand to the quality of life offered in the city, and planning for parks and recreation should not fall by the wayside. Round Rock currently has a great system of HOA run small neighborhood parks, large community parks offered by the city, a state of the art recreation center, and the beginnings of an all inclusive trails system. Now is the time to act for the city to ensure that the system remains great. There are already plans for a second recreation center/field house to be constructed on the west side of the City; the Parkland Dedication Ordinance is strong and ensures all new developments have neighborhood parks; and there is a desire within the city government to provide alternative modes of transportation and connectivity for the residents of Round Rock with trails and bike lanes as a key part of that strategy. However, in order for the future to remain bright for parks and recreation in Round Rock, there needs to be a "game plan." This document outlines the steps necessary for Round Rock to "build an active community."

