

CAMERON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE MASTER PLAN 2018-2028



CAMERON COUNTY ★
Parks and Recreation

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the hundreds of Cameron County residents and visitors who graciously gave their time to provide input and comments for the preparation of this plan. Their insight is invaluable to this process and to the development of the Cameron County Parks and Recreation System over the next ten years.

Cameron County Commissioners Court and County Administration

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Cameron County Parks Mission Statement

“To provide safe, quality outdoor recreation opportunities to the citizens and visitors of Cameron County at an affordable price and develop and protect the County’s coastal resources and natural habitats.”

THE STATE OF TEXAS §
COUNTY OF CAMERON §

RESOLUTION NO. 2018R07051

ADOPTING THE CAMERON COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION
COMPREHENSIVE PARKS, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE MASTER PLAN

WHEREAS, the County of Cameron recognizes that a detailed Parks Master Plan is important to provide detailed information of the needs and desires of the residents and background information on the current projected population, and standards for park improvements and development; and,

WHEREAS, the County of Cameron has developed a Comprehensive Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan designed to establish guidelines through prioritized goals, objectives and principles for the development and management of the parks and recreation facilities of the County; and,

WHEREAS, a survey of needs and desires for parks and facilities was conducted to receive input and comments from the communities; and,

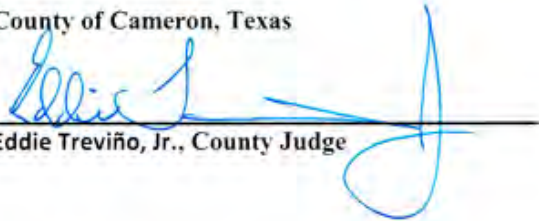
WHEREAS, several community meetings were held to provide the opportunity for citizens to review the draft plan and provide additional input; and,

WHEREAS, the Cameron County Commissioner's Court, the Cameron County Parks & Recreation Advisory Board, Park Staff, & citizens participated in the development and review of the plan, and have forwarded their recommendations for adoption; and,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the County of Cameron, Texas that the County Commissioner Court held a County Commissioner Court meeting on July 31, 2018 to approve and adopt the attached Cameron County Comprehensive Parks, Recreation & Open Space Master Plan.

SIGNED and ENTERED this 31st day of July, 2018

County of Cameron, Texas


Eddie Treviño, Jr., County Judge

ATTEST:

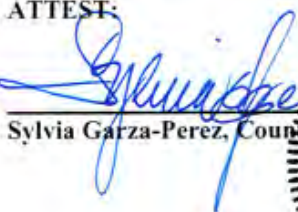

Sylvia Garza-Perez, County Clerk





Table of Contents

Introduction	6
Purpose	6
Role of Cameron County Parks and Recreation Department	6
Location.....	7
History.....	8
Demographics	10
Goals and Objectives.....	12
Plan Development.....	14
Park Guidelines and Standards	16
Inventory of Facilities.....	19
Coastal Parks	20
Isla Blanca Park	21
Andy Bowie Park	23
E.K. Atwood Park.....	25
Public Beach Access #3	26
Public Beach Access #4	27
Public Beach Access #6	28
Adolph Thomae, Jr. Park	29
Jaime J. Zapata Memorial Boat Ramp.....	31
Parks in Communities	32
Bejarano-McFarland Memorial Park.....	33
El Ranchito Recreational Park	35

Esparza-Domanski Park.....	36
La Esperanza Community Park.....	37
La Paloma Recreational Park.....	39
Laureles Recreational Park.....	40
Pedro “Pete” Benavides Recreational Park	41
Santa Maria Community Park	44
Santa Rosa Community Park.....	45
Summary Table for Parks and Facilities	46
Other Parks and Recreation Facilities within Cameron County	48
Needs Assessment and Identification.....	49
Specific Identified Needs in Each Precinct	49
Public Input Surveys.....	50
Plan Implementation and Timeline.....	52
Plan Implementation and Prioritization of Needs	56
Priorities.....	56
Resources.....	57
Appendix A – Public Input Survey	59
Appendix B – Cameron County Parks and Recreation Organizational Chart.....	62
Appendix C – Equipment Criteria and Maintenance	64

Introduction



Purpose

The purpose of the Cameron County Comprehensive Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan is to provide direction, clearly define the role of the County in providing parks and recreational facilities, and develop a strategy to improve the County Park System over the next ten years. The Cameron County Commissioners Court and the Cameron County Parks and Recreation Department are committed to providing diverse, high-quality, accessible park facilities and recreational opportunities to improve quality of life for residents and visitors within the county.

A good system of parks should improve the health of the community, protect a clean and safe environment, support educational opportunities, attract quality growth, and promote economic development. Studies have shown that people who live near a park are more likely to exercise. Parks promote not only physical health, they offer spaces to relax and de-stress. Parks promote healthy living by promoting fitness, supporting mental and emotional health, and preventing or reducing obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. While providing safe beach access, the coastal parks protect water quality, coastal wildlife, and native habitat. As natural resource-based parks, the coastal parks also provide educational opportunities. By including a range of active and passive recreational opportunities, the Cameron County Park System can accommodate people of all ages, abilities and interests.

Explosive population growth, expanding development, and new trends in leisure activities drive the need for new parks, redevelopment and renovation of old parks, and additional recreational services throughout the region. Cameron County Parks and Recreation also works with local sponsors to provide facilities and services to many underserved small communities and rural populations. Finally, as a coastal county, Cameron County Parks and Recreation is an integral partner in economic development through tourism. All these competing needs are important, but funding limited. The County seeks a balance between identified needs and the resources necessary to operate, maintain, and expand park facilities and recreational opportunities. This plan has been developed to assess existing parks and resources, determine and prioritize needs, set timelines, identify funding sources, and guide improvements to the county's park, recreation, and open space system over the next ten years. An update to this plan will be performed in five years, or earlier as plans are accomplished, new resources become available, and new circumstances and opportunities arise.

Role of Cameron County Parks and Recreation Department

The Cameron County Parks and Recreation Department oversees approximately 793 acres of parkland at seventeen parks and two social service centers. These facilities include a variety of coastal and community parks offering a wide range of recreational choices. The Department is also responsible for operating and maintaining over six miles of county beaches on South Padre Island.

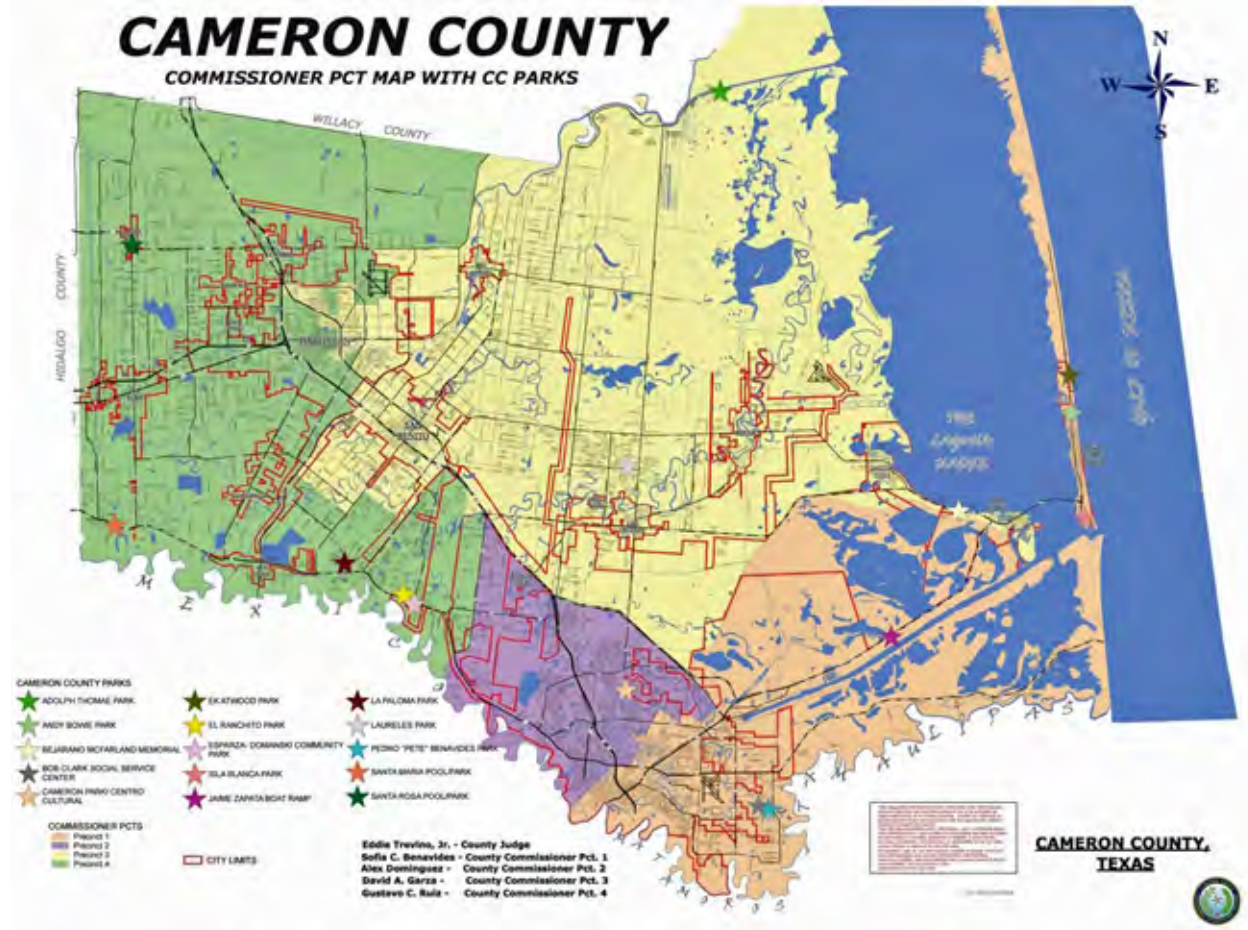
Guiding Principles of the Cameron County Parks and Recreation Department:

- Provide more accessible recreation opportunities for citizens in unincorporated areas and in underserved areas of the County;
- Provide regional parks based on natural resources or cultural resources for the benefit County residents and nonresidents;
- Operation of Cameron County Parks and Recreation is to remain self-funding to avoid being a tax burden;
- Local parks must have local participation, including an inter-local agreement between County and local sponsors to ensure proper maintenance and operation of County facilities;
- Maximize multi-jurisdictional partnerships, such as those between the County and USFWS, TPWD, TXDOT, Brownsville Navigation District, and local cities;
- Encourage public-private partnerships and involvement to provide the greatest recreational opportunities possible;
- Acquire parks lands without condemnation;
- Partner in acquisition, reestablishment, and stewardship of wildlife habitat;
- Participate in recreation initiatives for the enhancement of economic growth, such as South Texas Nature Tourism, the World Birding Center, and public/private recreation ventures that improve opportunities for fishing, camping, boating, and other activities.

Location

Cameron County is the southernmost county in Texas. It is located at the southern tip of Texas in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, along the Rio Grande River and the shores of the Gulf of Mexico.





History



Remnants of original berm Fort Brown, with memorial cannon.

The Spanish began settling the Rio Grande Valley around 1749 when Jose de Escandon founded Camargo. Soon after Camargo was settled, other towns developed along the Rio Grande. These settlements awarded land grants to homesteading families to encourage ranching and farming. The County was eventually named after a Meir Expedition member Capt. Ewen Cameron and on February 12, 1848, the Texas Legislature decreed the existence of Cameron County and with the signing of the Treaty of the

Guadalupe on July 4th the area became officially part of the United States. In December 1848 an election was held and after an intense effort Charles Stillman founder of Brownsville received positive news that Brownsville would be chosen as the County Seat.

Cameron County has a rich military history dating back to the Mexican-American War. Palo Alto Battlefield, located in northern Brownsville, is the only National Historic Site that commemorates the war between Mexico and the United States. Less than ten miles south of the Palo Alto site is Resaca de la Palma National Battlefield where the armies clashed for a second time. Fort Brown was established along the banks of the Rio Grande and named by General Zachary Taylor, twelfth President of the United States. The area was also a key point during the Civil War as a critical southern port as goods were smuggled in and out of Mexico and around the Union blockades. In Port Isabel, the historic lighthouse was used at different times by both the north and the south. Palmito Hill Battlefield, east of Brownsville, is the site of the last battle of the Civil War where Texas troops defeated Union soldiers who had been dispatched to announce the recent end of the war.

Cameron County also has a rich natural history. This coastal county has many natural attractions and nature-based recreational opportunities. The Gulf of Mexico and its coastal wetlands offer opportunities for swimming, windsurfing, boating, bird watching, fishing, and much more. One of only five hypersaline bays in the world, the Lower Laguna Madre is one of the most productive ecosystems known. Its tidal flats and some of the largest remaining seagrass beds along the Texas coast create habitat for small crustaceans, hundreds of thousands of shorebirds, and other species. Because the County is located at the confluence of two of only four major migration flyways in the Western Hemisphere, areas have established for migratory birds, including Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge, tracts of the Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge, Sabal Palm Audubon Center and Sanctuary, Resaca de la Palma State Park, Brazos Island State Park, and many others. The Lower Rio Grande Valley is one of the most biologically diverse regions in the nation. Cameron County is a paradise for ecotourists, vacationers, and sportsmen.



Demographics

In recent decades, one of the fastest-growing populations in the United States has been found in South Texas, including Cameron County. Along the border with Mexico, the population is primarily white with 89.0% having Hispanic origins (2016 *U.S. Census Bureau, American Factfinder*). A young population requires a variety of active recreation options. In Cameron County (2016 *U.S. Census Bureau, American Factfinder*), 42.2% of the population is under the age of 25. Poverty is also a factor in determining park facilities and recreational opportunities. Parks provided by the County are the only facilities in some of the rural areas. Quality parks and recreational opportunities can be used to attract business and tourism to the area, creating jobs and contributing to economic development. In Cameron County, 50.4% of households have an income of less than \$34,999 (2016 *U.S. Census Bureau, American Factfinder*).

Cameron County Population

Year	Population
1990	260,120
2000	335,227
2010	406,220
2016	418,785
2020	478,974
2030	559,593
2040	641,376
2050	729,461
2060	820,068
2070	912,941

(1990-2016 from *U.S. Census Bureau, American Factfinder*)

(2020-2070 projections from *Texas Water Development Board Region M*)

CAMERON COUNTY - GENDER AND AGE	2000	2010	2016
Total population	335,227	406,220	418,785
Male	160,509	195,394	202,517
Female	174,718	210,826	216,268
Under 5 years	31,744	35,854	36,449
5 to 9 years	32,315	38,299	36,126
10 to 14 years	30,761	37,660	37,758
15 to 19 years	29,914	35,621	35,677
20 to 24 years	23,783	26,747	31,122
25 to 34 years	46,404	51,844	50,686
35 to 44 years	43,317	51,786	52,534
45 to 54 years	35,797	45,941	46,521
55 to 59 years	12,468	20,120	22,001
60 to 64 years	11,349	17,457	18,099
65 to 74 years	21,130	24,645	28,755
75 to 84 years	12,448	15,244	17,169
85 years and over	3,797	5,002	5,888
Median age (years)	29	30.6	31.3

U.S. Census Bureau, American Factfinder

CAMERON COUNTY - RACE	2000	2010	2016
Total population	335,227	406,220	418,785
White	276,276	358,995	389,429
Black or African American	2,030	2,762	2,361
American Indian and Alaska Native	2,140	2,519	902
Asian	2,010	3,351	2,717
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	211	282	65
Some other race	60,423	44,777	19,550
Two or more races	7,698	6,247	3,761
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	282,736 (84.3%)	357,747 (88.1%)	372,685 (89.0%)

U.S. Census Bureau, American Factfinder

CAMERON COUNTY - INCOME	2000	2010	2016
Total households	97,193	115,579	121,290
Less than \$10,000	18.90%	14.10%	14.40%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	10.70%	9.60%	8.60%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	18.40%	18.50%	15.40%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	14.30%	11.60%	12.00%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	14.70%	13.90%	13.70%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	13%	15.90%	15.60%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	5.30%	6.70%	8.60%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	3.20%	6.80%	7.80%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	0.60%	1.80%	2.20%
\$200,000 or more	1%	1.10%	1.80%
Median household income (dollars)	26,155	31,736	34,578

U.S. Census Bureau, American Factfinder

Goals and Objectives

Goals and objectives provide the basis for the Cameron County Comprehensive Park, Recreation and open space Master Plan. They are derived from the expressed needs and desires of the communities and direct what the plan intends to accomplish. Goals and objectives also assist the Parks and Recreation Department, County Administration, and the Commission in making necessary decisions, & budgeting annually regarding the provision and improvement of parks and recreation areas and open space and to identify priorities for ongoing development of a comprehensive parks and recreation system.

This plan is in compliance with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department policies to include goals and objectives for the regional jurisdictional area. The goals and objectives are intended to guide the development of parks and recreation facilities in the community over the next ten years.

Goals are more general statements of policy, which express the needs and priorities of the citizens. Goals allow a community with diverse backgrounds and interests of the population and to encourage communication and collaboration in seeking a unified approach toward implementation. The goals should be based on a series of general planning principles to ensure that there is a balance between the interest of the public and private sectors; indoor and outdoor opportunities and the management of space, services and facilities.

Pursuant to the findings of the Needs Assessment, the following goals have been adopted to address the recreational needs of the citizens of Cameron County:

Goal #1 - Provide a diverse mixture of parks and recreation facilities that will accommodate the needs of the residents and visitors of Cameron County

Objective #1 – Provide an accessible park system. Provide park amenities and recreation facilities that are ADA compliant and provide equitable opportunities and access for persons of all age ranges, physical abilities, income ranges, and at-risk factors

Objective #2 – Ensure equitable distribution of parks and recreation facilities throughout Cameron County through the thoughtful development of new parks and the update of existing facilities.

Goal #2 - Promote the conservation of natural and cultural resources through land acquisition, open space preservation, and environmentally sensitive planning

Objective #1 – Maintain coastal parks with dune and beach protection

Objective #2 – Prioritize the utilization of native vegetation, including shade trees, butterfly garden plants, and other landscaping needs.

Objective #3 – Use water and energy saving techniques and technologies whenever and wherever feasible, including the use of solar power, rain harvesting, and more

Objective #4 – Pollution prevention, including the use of Low Impact Development (LID) permeable surfaces, compliance with environmental regulations, proper storage of materials, and other pollution prevention measures.

Goal #3 - Promote healthy lifestyles

Objective #1 – Provide a variety of active and passive recreational opportunities

Objective #2 – Prioritize the development of new parks in underserved communities, and in coastal areas to serve the greatest number of people.

Objective #3 – Promote economic development and quality growth

Goal #4 - Maintain existing infrastructure and programming

Objective #1 – Address maintenance at the planning stage by employing design solutions for new construction and renovations that are heavy duty, vandal proof, durable, low maintenance facilities using state-of-the-art building materials such as recycled plastics

Objective #2 – Update a maintenance schedule

Objective #3 – Invest in staff development

Goal #5 - Develop funding sources and utilize funds effectively and efficiently

Objective #1 – Operations will be self-sustaining

Objective #2 – Apply for grants for special project, new parks, and additions/renovations to existing facilities.

Objective #3 - Develop and strengthen partnerships, including multi-jurisdictional efforts and public-private ventures.



Plan Development

The Cameron County Comprehensive Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan was developed and prepared by an independent consultant working in cooperation with the Cameron County Parks and Recreation Department and the members of the Cameron County Commissioners Court. The plan was developed in accordance with the TPWD Local Park Grants Program Park, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan Guidelines. The County-wide plan addresses the needs of the entire jurisdiction for a period of ten years. An updated is expected by year five. Goals and objectives of the park system were identified, existing facilities were inventoried, and park standards were established. Community input was sought through a series of public meetings, stakeholder surveys, and online. Additional input and comments came from County leadership and park system staff. From these, a needs assessment was completed and needs were prioritized.

Community Input Meetings and Meetings with County Leaders:

July 6 – meeting with Commissioner Gustavo C. Ruiz, Pct. 4 and Cameron County Parks Director Joe E. Vega

July 6 – Public Input Meeting, Pct. 4, Technology Building, Santa Rosa 6:00 p.m.

July 12 – meeting with County Administrator David A. Garcia, Deputy County Administrator Xavier E. Villareal, and Cameron County Parks Director Joe E. Vega

July 12 – meeting with Cameron County Judge Eddie Treviño, Jr. and Cameron County Parks Director Joe E. Vega

July 16 – meeting with Commissioner David A. Garza, Pct. 3 and Cameron County Parks Director Joe Vega

July 16 – meeting with Lavinia “Beni” Long, Assistant to Commissioner Alex Dominguez, Pct. 2 and Cameron County Parks Director Joe E. Vega

July 16 – Public Input Meeting, Pct. 2, with Commissioner Alex Dominguez, El Centro Cultural Social Service Center-Cameron Park, Brownsville, 6:00 p.m.

July 17 – meeting with Commissioner Sofia C. Benavides, Pct. 1 and Cameron County Parks Director Joe E. Vega

July 17 – Public Input Meeting, Pct. 1, Bob Clark Social Service Center, Brownsville, 6:00 p.m.

July 18 – Public Input Meeting, Pct. 3, Aurora De La Garza-Joe G. Rivera Annex, San Benito, 6:00 p.m.

July 19 – Parks Advisory Board Meeting, Aurora De La Garza-Joe G. Rivera Annex, San Benito, 5:30 p.m.

July 20 – Public Input Meeting, Bejarano-McFarland County Park, Port Isabel, 6:00 p.m.

Meetings were publicized in three local newspapers, the Valley Morning Star, the Port Isabel Press, and the Brownsville Herald. The Brownsville Herald and Valley Morning Star also printed articles about the parks master plan and the public input meetings. Television stations KGBT-4 and KVEO-23 aired stories about the meetings, including interviews with participants and the Cameron County Parks Director. The County posted the meeting notice at the Dancy County Courthouse in Brownsville, the Aurora De La Garza-Joe G. Rivera County Annex in San Benito, on the Cameron County website, and on the Cameron County Parks and Recreation website and Facebook page.

At the public input meetings, a presentation to residents and visitors described the Cameron County Park System and the parks master planning process. Surveys were handed out and written comments were encouraged.

Surveys were also distributed and collected at El Centro Cultural Service Center in La Esperanza Park, the Bob Clark Social Service Building in Pedro “Pete” Benavides Park, the Aurora De La Garza-Joe G. Rivera County Annex in San Benito, and the Dancy County Courthouse in Brownsville. Over five hundred public input surveys were collected and analyzed for the plan.

Public input, input from parks and recreation professionals, and input from County leaders and administration, along with an analysis of existing and anticipated facilities and resources were considered in the development of the goals, objectives, and priorities identified in this plan.





Park Guidelines and Standards

Common parks and recreation principles that should be considered in the planning process include:

- All people should have equal access to recreational areas, activities, services, and facilities regardless of personal interest, age, gender, income, cultural background, housing environment, or handicap;
- Public recreation should be highly coordinated among public institutions and private entities to avoid duplication and encourage cooperation;
- Public recreation should incorporate public services such as education, health and fitness, transportation, and leisure;
- Facilities should be well planned and coordinated to ensure adequate adaptability to future needs and requirements;
- The availability of financial resources should be considered in all phases of planning, acquisition, development, operation, and maintenance of spaces and facilities;
- Public participation is critical to the eventual success of the parks and recreation system and should, therefore, be included in all stages of the process;
- The process should offer continuous opportunities for incremental evaluation and review;
- Other existing plans that affect the area should be integrated into the final recommendations and ultimately in implementation;
- There should be established procedures for acquiring land for future park and recreation areas and facilities prior to development; and,
- The design of spaces and facilities should encourage the most efficient utilization of land and consider the needs, desires, and opinions of the intended users.

The National Recreation and Park Association published the [Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines](#) to establish nationally applicable criterion for the provision of park and recreation facilities and open space. These minimum standards are a guide for park and recreation planning.

PARKS, OPEN SPACE, AND PATHWAYS CLASSIFICATION TABLE

Mini Park	Use: Used to address limited, isolated or unique recreational needs. Serves a concentrated or limited population within an immediate proximity.
	Service area: Immediate neighborhood.
	Desirable size: 2,500 sq. ft. to 1 acre.
	Site characteristics: Close proximity to high density developments.

Neighborhood Park	Use: For residents in neighborhoods within walking distance. Facilities are for active recreation and playground use, i.e. athletic courts, fields, playground equipment, as well as passive use such as walking trails, etc.
	Service area: ½ mile radius to serve up to 5,000 persons.
	Desirable size: 5- 10 acres.
	Site characteristics: Evenly distributed across city with easy and safe access for nearby residents. Joint school/park facilities and suitable.
Community Park	Use: Includes facilities for active and passive recreation and leisure, including athletic fields and courts, swimming pools, picnic areas, walking/jogging paths, open play areas, playgrounds, exercise stations, etc.
	Service area: Primarily for residents within a 2-mile radius but available to persons throughout the city.
	Desirable size: Minimum 25 acres.
	Site characteristics: Located to provide full coverage of the city.
Regional Park	Use: Covers a broad range of parks and recreation facilities.
	Service Area: Region-wide.
	Desirable size: Minimum 150 acres.
	Site characteristics: Planned to accommodate large numbers of visitors including regional special events such as fairs, concerts, exhibitions, etc. Often includes natural areas.
Special Use Park	Use: Covers a broad range of parks and recreation facilities oriented toward single-purpose use, such as a Coastal Park.
	Service Area: Variable – dependent on specific use.
	Desirable size: Varies.
	Site characteristics: Depends on type of use.
Park Trail	Use: Multipurpose trails located within greenways, parks, and natural resource areas. Focus is on recreational value and harmony with natural environment.
	Type 1: Separate/single-purpose hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians, bicyclists, or other users.
	Type 2: Multipurpose, hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians, bicyclists, or other users.
	Type 3: Nature trails for pedestrians. May hard- or soft- surfaced.

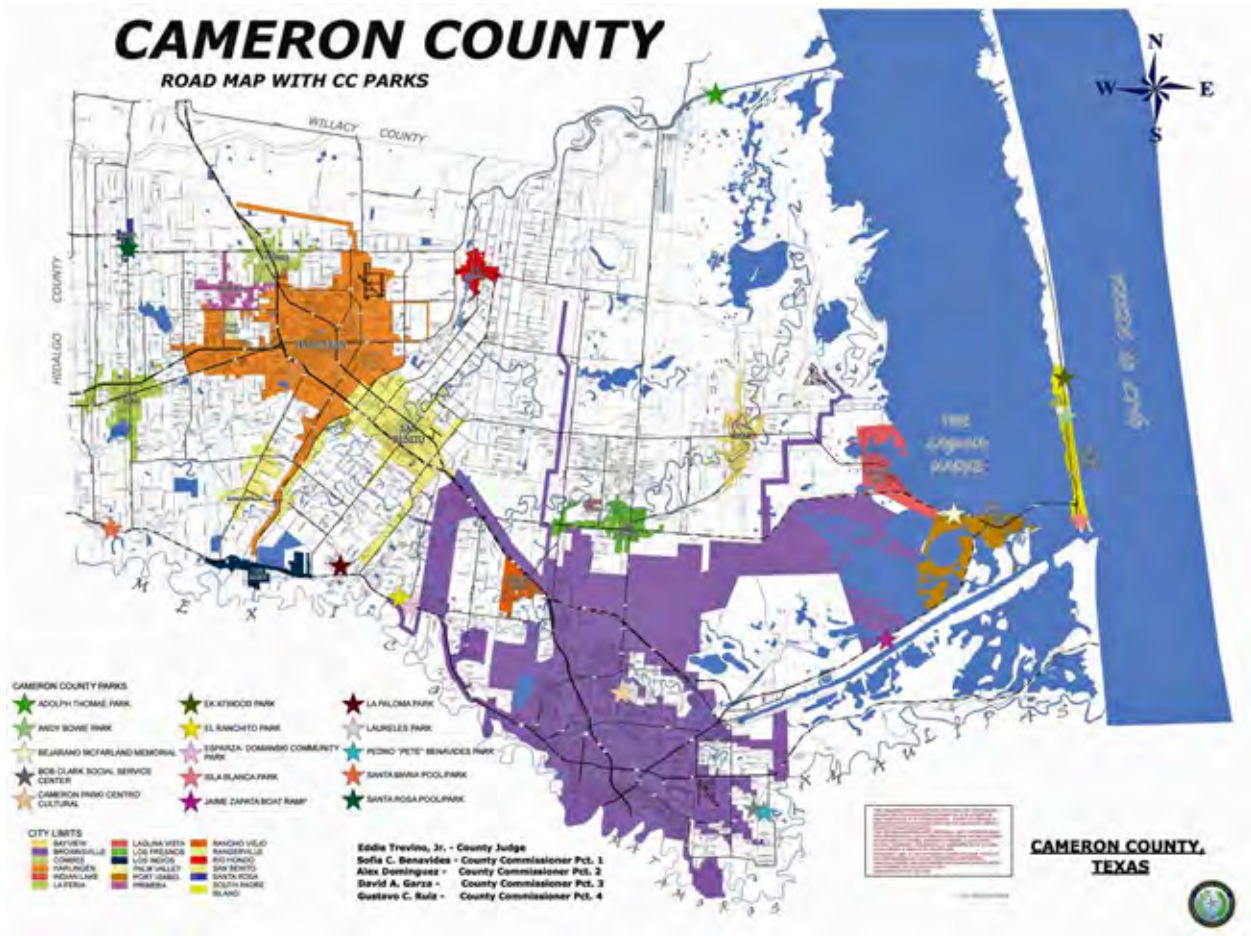
Connector Trails	Use: Multipurpose trails that emphasize safe travel for pedestrians to and from parks and around the community. Focus is as much on transportation as it is on recreation
	Type 1: Separate/single-purpose hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians, bicyclists, or other users. Located in independent r.o.w.
	Type 2: Separate/single-purpose hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians, bicyclists, or other users. Typically located within road r.o.w..
All-Terrain Bike Trail	Use: Off-road trail for mountain bikes. Single-purpose loop trails usually located in larger parks and natural resource areas.

Each of the non-coastal Cameron County Parks and Recreation parks includes a wide service area that is greater than the neighborhood in which it is located. Parks in small communities also serve the rural residents surrounding that community for many miles. Some parks, such as La Esperanza, include specialized features and amenities that serve residents from miles away. Due to their service areas, the Department considers them “Community Parks” despite their size.

In the case of Cameron County, the standard of one acre for every 1,000 residents is not applicable. Cameron County is atypical, with facilities concentrated in small, often rural community parks and in large, popular parks along the coastal waterways where both residents and tourists enjoy the beaches and water sports. Large cities, such as Brownsville and Harlingen, also provide a variety of recreational facilities that are utilized by other county residents, making this standard impractical for this Plan.

Inventory of Facilities

Cameron County Parks and Recreation oversees approximately 793 acres of parkland in its seventeen parks and facilities.



Coastal Parks



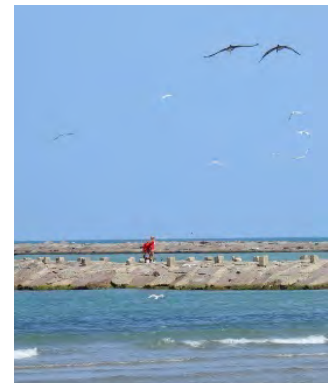
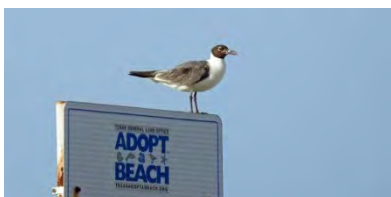
Cameron County's coastal parks attract tens of thousands of residents and visitors annually. The County beaches and parks offer a prized destination that combines fun at the beach, a range of facilities and concessions, the beautiful waters of the Gulf of Mexico, and great opportunities for family picnics, fishing, wildlife watching, swimming, beachcombing, and other outdoor adventures.

Texas' open beaches mean easy accessibility for all to enjoy the Gulf of Mexico. Cameron County maintains over six miles of County beaches on South Padre Island including three major parks, Isla Blanca, Andy Bowie, and E. K. Atwood, and three additional Beach Access Points.

Recent new opportunities have spurred additions and renovations to the island parks. Funding became available to add facilities at Isla Blanca Park and to redevelop E. K. Atwood Park to include new facilities and many environmentally-friendly features. SpaceX is developing a launch site across the Brazos-Santiago Ship Channel from Isla Blanca Park, and the new Events Center and Amphitheater along the Channel will offer exciting viewing opportunities for those events.

Cameron County strives to create a balance between recreation and habitat protection. South Padre Island is a barrier island that provides nesting habitat for critically endangered sea turtles. Migratory birds rest here on their long journeys. The Gulf of Mexico beaches and the tidal flats and mangroves of the Laguna Madre are home to many rare and beautiful species of wildlife, and the clear waters teem with sea life. To protect environmental quality, Cameron County Parks and Recreation is using Low Impact Development (LID) techniques, conservation technologies, and dune restoration to conserve resources and protect water quality and native habitat.

In addition to the facilities found on South Padre Island, additional coastal facilities are found at Adolph Thoma, Jr. Park along the Arroyo Colorado, and at Jaime J. Zapata Memorial Boatramp at San Martin Lake and the Brownsville Ship Channel.



Isla Blanca Park

(Beach Access#1)

Acreeage: 309.8
Ownership: Cameron County
Location: South Padre Island
Address: 33174 State Park Rd. 100 N.
Precinct: 1
Park Type: Coastal
Facilities: Over 600 RV Camping Sites
1 Mile of Gulf Beach Frontage
2 Picnic Pavilions with Concessions
Beach Access
Bay Access
Trails
Rinse Stations
Restrooms
Overnight Rental Shelters/Cabañas
Boat Ramp
Concessions
Fishing
Fishermen's Memorial Area
Schlitterbahn Water Park
Coastal Studies Lab and Museum
Parking
Lifeguards/Beach Patrol on Duty (seasonal)



Recreational concessions include activities such as snorkeling, scuba diving, fishing, and ecotourist sea-life watch tours. Other concessions include a five-star restaurant, fast food, clothing retail, umbrella rentals, and a full-service marina with boat sales.

Isla Blanca Park



HALFF GIGNAC



HALFF GIGNAC



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Current Construction includes:

- Dune restorations
- New pavilions
- New Beachfront Boardwalk
- New Amphitheater and Event Center in the Dolphin Cove area, with viewing opportunities of the Brazos Santiago Ship Channel and of the Boca Chica SpaceX rocket launches



Andy Bowie Park

(Beach Access #2)

Acreage: 225.81
Ownership: Cameron County
Location: South Padre Island
Address: 7300 Park Rd. 100 N.
Precinct: 1
Park Type: Coastal
Facilities:
Playground
RV Camping Sites
2 Picnic Pavilions
Beach Access
Rinse Stations
2 Restrooms with showers
2 Concessions
Park Ranger Station
Emergency First Aid Center
Lifeguards/Beach Patrol on Duty (seasonal)
Parking



Andy Bowie Park



E.K. Atwood Park

(Beach Access #5)

Acreage: 2.43
Ownership: Cameron County
Location: South Padre Island
Address: 27159 State Park Rd. 100
Precinct: 1
Park Type: Coastal
Facilities:
2 ADA Dune Walkovers
Interpretive Signage
Rinse Stations
Restrooms
5 Picnic Pavilions
Beach Access
Vehicle Beach Access
Lifeguards/Beach Patrol on Duty (seasonal)
Restrooms
LID Parking Lot
Concessions



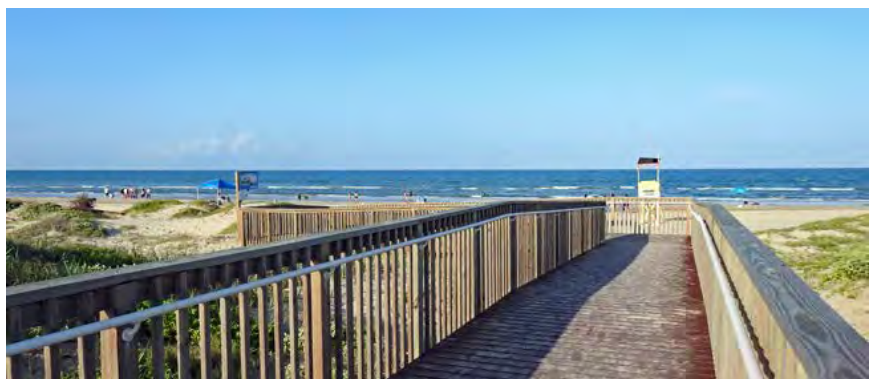
Public Beach Access #3

Acreage: 4.9
Ownership: Cameron County
Location: South Padre Island
Precinct: 1
Park Type: Coastal
Facilities: ADA Dune Walkover
Beach Access
Port-O-Potties
Parking
Lifeguards/Beach Patrol on Duty
(seasonal)



Public Beach Access #4

Acreage: 3.5 (approximately)
Ownership: Cameron County
Location: South Padre Island
Precinct: 1
Park Type: Coastal
Facilities: ADA Dune Walkover
Beach Access
Interpretive Signage (sea turtles,
dunes)
Port-O-Potties
Parking
Lifeguards/Beach Patrol on Duty (seasonal)



Public Beach Access #6

Acreage: 3.5 (approximately)
Ownership: Cameron County
Location: South Padre Island
Precinct: 1
Park Type: Coastal
Facilities: Beach Access
Vehicle Beach Access
Port-O-Potties
Parking



Adolph Thoma, Jr. Park

Acreage: 58
Ownership: Lease from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
Location: Arroyo City, on land owned by USFWS, Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge
Address: 37844 Marshall Huts
Precinct: 3
Park Type: Regional
Facilities: 2 Boat Launches
2 ADA Fishing Piers
Fish Cleaning Stations at Boat Launches
Courtesy Docks
35 RV Camp Sites
10 Tent Camp Sites
Picnic Facilities
1-Mile Interpretive Trail
Scenic Overlook and Birdwatching Tower
3 Restroom Facilities with Showers
Arroyo Access
LID Parking Lot at new Boat Launch
Playground
Constable Substation
Interpretive Signage
Wildlife Viewing
Kayak Launch
Bank Fishing
Nature Areas
Open Space
Living Shoreline

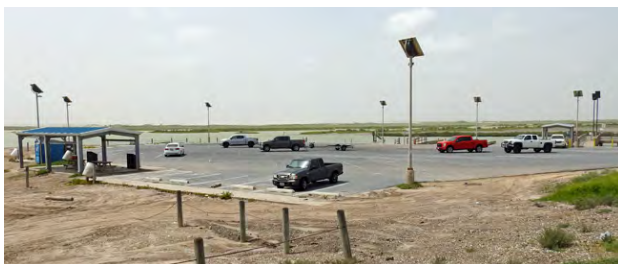


Adolph Tomae Jr. Park



Jaime J. Zapata Memorial Boat Ramp

Acreage: 1
Ownership: Lease from Port of Brownsville/Navigation District
Location: Brownsville, on land owned by the Port of Brownsville/Navigation District
Address: 44270 State HWY 48
Precinct: 1
Park Type: Coastal
Facilities: 2 Boat Launch Ramps
Courtesy Dock
Kayak Launch
Lighted Fishing Pier
Solar Lighted Parking Lot
2 Picnic Pavilions
Wildlife Viewing
Quick Access to San Martin Lake and the Brownsville ship channel



Parks in Communities

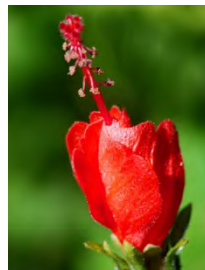
Many small communities and underserved areas in Cameron County are unable to independently develop parks. Cameron County Parks and Recreation has developed and operates parks in Port Isabel, El Ranchito, colonias around Brownsville, La Paloma, Laureles, Santa Maria, and Santa Rosa. In some parks, the Cameron County Health Department and other agencies and organizations offer social services. In addition, the county has built parks in Los Indios and Rio Hondo which have been given over for city operation and maintenance. In Los Fresnos, Cameron County assisted the city in obtaining resources to build a nature park. More small communities in rural areas of Cameron County are desperate for safe play spaces and healthy lifestyles.



While a primary community park goal is to offer recreational opportunities, Cameron County is increasingly involved in conserving natural resources and protecting water quality and native habitat. Many community parks now include Low Impact Development (LID) techniques, conservation technologies, and native vegetation. Many community parks include permeable surfacing in their trails, solar energy use, and butterfly gardens and other native landscaping.



Many of the parks are new or newly renovated and funds are in place for special projects such as a mountain bike trail at Pedro ‘Pete’ Benavides Recreational Park. Bejarano-McFarland Park is located directly on the shores of the Laguna Madre to offer rare public access to the bay. Santa Maria Community Park includes an historic Catholic Church, Our Lady of Visitation, which was dedicated in 1882 and is a Texas Historic Landmark. All of the Cameron County Parks and Recreation community parks are as unique and special as the communities they serve.



Bejarano-McFarland Memorial Park

Acreage: 1.95
Ownership: Cameron County
Location: Port Isabel
Address: 235 E. Michigan Ave.
Precinct: 3
Park Type: Community
Facilities: Veterans' Memorial Flag Area
Playground
Basketball Court
Picnic Pavilion
Butterfly Garden
Bay Access
110-foot Bay Overlook Pier/Birdwatching Pier/Wildlife Watching Pier
Walking/Jogging Trail
Open Space
Parking
Restroom Building
Living Shoreline with Mangroves, Tidal Flats, Oyster Beds
Adjacent County Land for Expansion



Bejarano-McFarland Memorial Park

A house adjacent to the park has been acquired by Cameron County. The lot includes Laguna Madre frontage. The property could be used to expand the park.



Cameron County supported the installation of a trail between Bejarano-McFarland Memorial Park and the City of Port Isabel's Arturo Galvan Coastal Park. Cameron County assisted the City of Port Isabel, through Coastal Impact Assistance Program funds, in developing a living shoreline at Arturo Galvan Coastal Park.



El Ranchito Recreational Park

Acreage: 20.06
Ownership: Cameron County
Location: El Ranchito
Address: 24133 Zapotec St.
Precinct: 4
Park Type: Community
Facilities: Playground
Picnic Facilities
Walking Trail
Basketball Court
Baseball/Softball Field
Restroom/Concession Building
Soccer Field/Multi-Use Field
Butterfly Garden
Open Space
Parking



Esparza-Domanski Park

Acreage: 1.56
Ownership: Cameron County
Location: El Ranchito
Address: FM 1577 & US Hwy. 281
Precinct: 4
Park Type: Community
Facilities:
Playground
5 Picnic Tables
Swimming Pool
Lighted Basketball Court
Restroom Building
Open Space
Parking



La Esperanza Community Park

Acreage: 2.43
Ownership: Cameron County
Location: Brownsville (Cameron Park)
Address: 2100 Avenida Gregory
Precinct: 2
Park Type: Community
Facilities: All-Inclusive Playground
Covered Basketball Court
Walking Trail
Soccer Field/Multi-Use Ball Field
Picnic Facilities
Butterfly Garden
El Centro Cultural Social Service Center
Technology Center Building



La Esperanza



El Centro Cultural Social Service Center

El Centro Cultural, located within La Esperanza Park, is a Social Service Center aimed at providing a wide variety of social service and educational programs to the Cameron Park area of Brownsville. These services are made possible thru partnerships with a variety of organizations and agencies. Cameron County Parks and Recreation also hosts an annual summer youth program; providing a variety of educational classes that emphasize the importance of education, physical health and recreation.



La Paloma Recreational Park

Acreage: 20
Ownership: Cameron County
Location: La Paloma
Address: 35005 Leal Rd.
Precinct: 4
Park Type: Community
Facilities: Playground
Picnic Facilities
Walking Trail
Lighted Basketball Court
Lighted Little League Baseball Field
Restroom/Concession Building
Lighted Soccer Field/Multi-Use Field
Splash Pad
Butterfly Garden
Open Space
WIC Office (Cameron County Health Department)
Parking



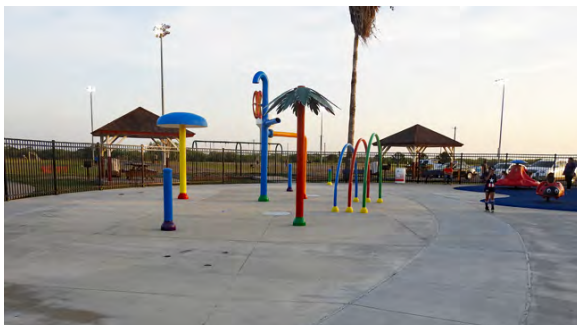
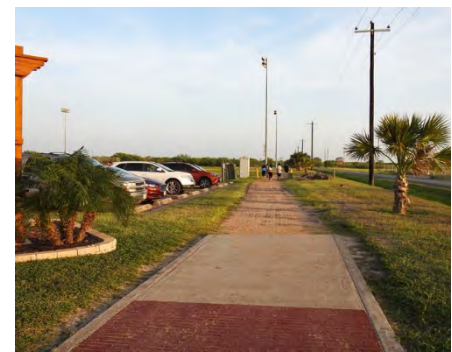
Laureles Recreational Park

Acreage: 24.17
Ownership: Cameron County
Location: La Paloma
Address: 33685 FM 2893
Precinct: 3
Park Type: Community
Facilities: Playground
Picnic Facilities
Walking Trail
Basketball Court
3 Baseball Fields
Restroom/Concession Building
2 Soccer Fields/Multi-Use Fields
Splash Pad
Butterfly Garden
Open Space
Parking

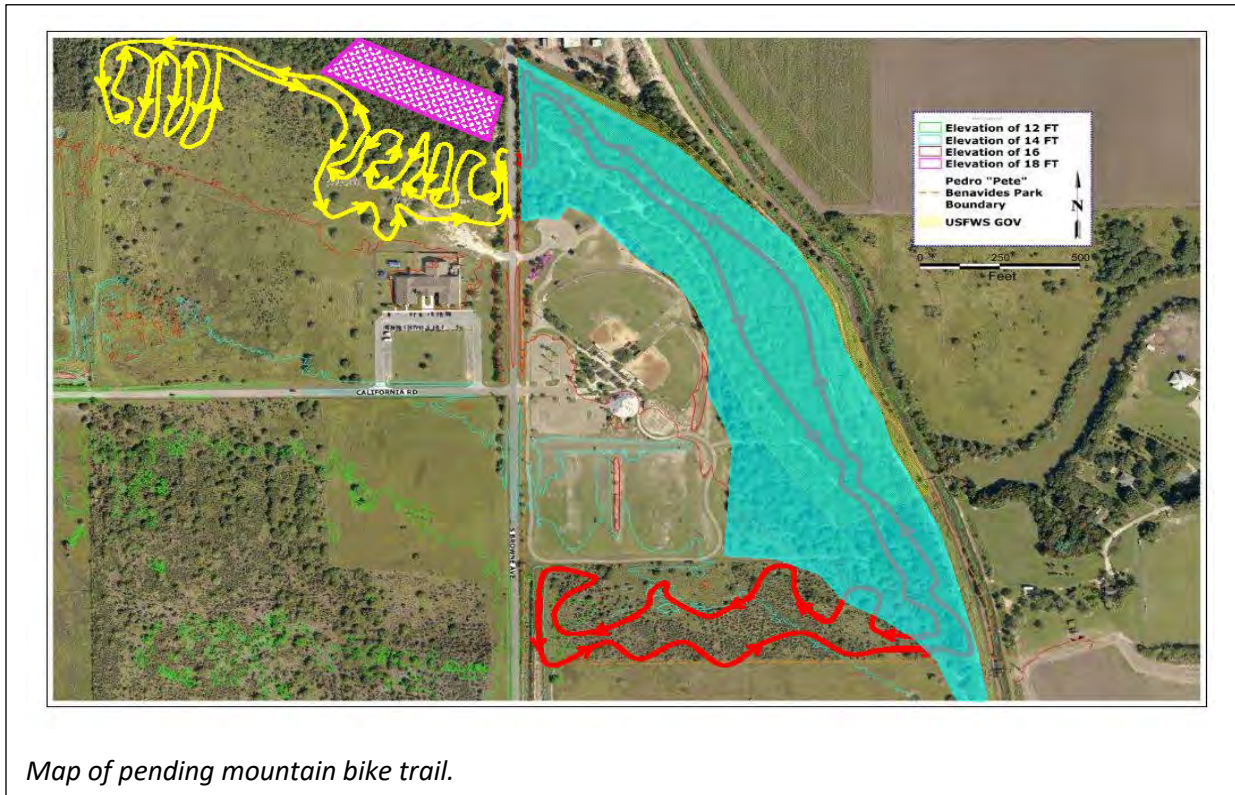


Pedro "Pete" Benavides Recreational Park

Acreage: 104
Ownership: Cameron County
Location: Brownsville
Address: 2055 S. Browne Rd.
Precinct: 1
Park Type: Regional
Facilities:
Playground
Splash Pad
Picnic Pavilion
Picnic Units
Lighted Basketball Court
2 Lighted Soccer Fields
Lighted Little League Baseball/Kickball Field
Lighted Adult Softball Field
Sand Volleyball Court
1.5-mile LID Walking/Jogging Trail
Exercise Stations/Fitness Equipment
Resaca Frontage (Resaca de la Guerra)
Educational and Interpretive Signage
1-mile, 10-ft wide Interpretive Nature Trail
With 2 Bird Blinds/Nature Observation Stations
Restroom/Concession Building
Bob Clark Social Service Center
Mountain Bike Trail (pending)



Pedro "Pete" Benavides Recreational Park



Bob Clark Social Service Center

Bob Clark Center, located within Pedro “Pete” Benavides Recreational Park, is a Social Service Center aimed at providing a wide variety of social service and educational programs to the Southmost area of Brownsville. These services are made possible thru partnerships with a variety of organizations and agencies. Cameron County Parks and Recreation also hosts an annual summer youth program; providing a variety of educational classes that emphasize the importance of education, physical health and recreation.



Santa Maria Community Park

Acreage: 3.27
Ownership: Lease from Diocese of Brownsville
Location: Santa Maria
Address: 11613 US Hwy. 281
Precinct: 4
Park Type: Community
Facilities: Community Center
Playground
4 Covered Picnic Units
Swimming Pool
Baseball Field
Restroom/Concession Building
Open Space
Parking
Historical Church



An historic building is situated on the land which known as "The Our Lady of Visitation Church" built in the early 1880s. Plans are in the works to renovate and restore the historical church as a possible museum.



Santa Rosa Community Park

Acreage: 6.15
Ownership: Cameron County
Location: Santa Rosa
Address: 513 FM 506
Precinct: 4
Park Type: Community
Facilities: Youth Center
Playground
Picnic Tables
Swimming Pool
2 Baseball/Softball Fields
Restroom/Concession Building
Multi-Use Field
Open Space
Parking



Summary Table for Parks and Facilities

	Isl a B l a n c a	A n d y B o w i e	E K A t w o o d	B e a c h A c c e s s	B e a c h A c c e s s	B e a c h A c c e s s	A d o l p h T h o m a s	Z a p a t a B o a t r a m p	J e f f e r s o n M c F a r l a n d	E l R a n c h i l t o	E s p a r z a D o m a n s k i	L a E s p e r a n z a	L a P a l o m a	L a u r e l e s	B e n a v i d e s	S a n t a M a r i a	S a n t a R o s a	
playgrounds		*					*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
all-inclusive playgrounds							*					*						
baseball/softball fields										*			*	*	*	*	*	*
soccer fields										*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*
basketball courts									*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Multi-Use Fields									*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Exercise/Fitness Equipment																*		
Sand Volleyball																*		
Picnic Pavilion	*	*	*					*	*			*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Family Picnic Facilities							*		*	*					*	*	*	*
walking/jogging trails	*						*		*	*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*
nature trails	*						*									*		
Open space	*	*	*	*	*	*	*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Swimming Pool											*						*	*
Splash Pad													*	*	*			
Water Park	*																	
Gulf of Mexico/Beach Access	*	*	*	*	*	*												
Pedestrian Access	*	*	*	*	*	*												
Vehicle Access			*			*												
Laguna Madre (Bay) Access	*								*									
Arroyo Colorado Access							*											
Other Natural Water Access								*								*		
Boat Ramp	*						*	*										
Fishing	*						*	*										
Fish Cleaning Stations	*						*	*										
Kayak Launch							*	*										
Fishing Pier	*						*	*										
Museum/Aquarium	*																	
Seasonal Lifeguards	*	*	*	*	*						*						*	*
rinse stations	*	*	*															
Showers	*	*					*				*						*	*
Emergency First Aid Center		*																
Dune Walkovers			*	*	*													

Interpretive Signage					*		*										*		
Tent Camping							*												
LID/Conservation Elements			*				*	*									*		
Scenic Overlooks							*												
Natural Areas/Wildlife Viewing	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*								*		
Living Shoreline							*		*										
Butterfly Garden									*	*		*	*	*	*	*	*		
Memorial Area	*								*	*									
Social Service Center												*					*		
Technology Center												*							
WIC Office												*	*			*			
Youth/Community Center																	*	*	
Historic Site																	*		
Concessions	*	*	*													*	*	*	*
Overnight Cabanas	*																		
Restrooms	*	*	*				*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Port-O-Potties				*	*	*													
parking	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

Other Parks and Recreation Facilities within Cameron County

The Cameron County Parks and Recreation Department partnered with local entities to provide parks and recreational facilities within local communities. In the cities of Los Indios and Rio Hondo, Cameron County Parks and Recreation developed and built a park in each community. Each park is now operated and maintained by the respective city. In collaboration with the City of Los Fresnos, the County secured a Coastal Impact Assistance Program (CIAP) grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to purchase property for a city-owned nature park and to fund some of the LID and educational amenities. In Port Isabel, the County secured CIAP funding for a living shoreline at Arturo Galvan Coastal Park.

Federal

Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge, including the Bahia Grande Tract and Gulf of Mexico beach tracts on South Padre Island

Cameron County Parks and Recreation has a long-standing relationship with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge in particular. The Department was instrumental in securing funds and developing the vast network of partners to initiate the restoration of the Bahia Grande Tract, the largest wetland restoration in the United States.



Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge, including the Boca Chica Tract and the Harlingen Bird Festival Tract.

Palo Alto Battlefield National Historic Site, owned and operated by the National Park Service, is the site of the first battle of the Mexican-American War. Located north of Brownsville, it is the only national historic site to commemorate that war.

State

Resaca De La Palma State Park is the Brownsville site of the World Birding Center.

Brazos Island State Park

Port Isabel Lighthouse State Historic Site



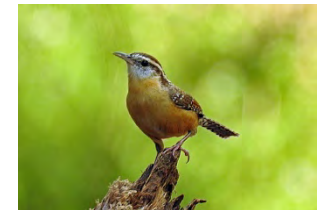
Local

Parks and recreation facilities within the cities of: Brownsville, Harlingen, La Feria, Los Fresnos, Los Indios, Port Isabel, Rio Hondo, San Benito, and South Padre Island.

Cascade Park, Cameron County Drainage District #1

Cameron County Convention Center

World Birding Center locations on South Padre Island and in Harlingen



Private or Non-Profit

Sea Turtle Inc.

Audubon Sabal Palm Sanctuary

Gladys Porter Zoo





Needs Assessment and Identification

Specific Identified Needs in Each Precinct

Precinct 1 – Identified Needs

1. Prioritize all-inclusive parks
2. Mountain bike trail in Pedro “Pete” Benavides Recreational Park
3. Security, lights
4. Entertainment, amphitheaters
5. Native landscaping
6. Family picnic facilities
7. Indoor gymnasium and indoor meeting rooms
8. Health clinic program at Pedro “Pete” Benavides Recreational Park, with med students
9. Zumba classes, fitness classes

Precinct 2 – Identified Needs

1. Develop and build new parks in San Pedro
2. Develop and build new parks in Olmito
3. Develop and build new parks in additional small, rural communities.
4. Prioritize accommodations for residents and visitors with special needs

Precinct 3 – Identified Needs

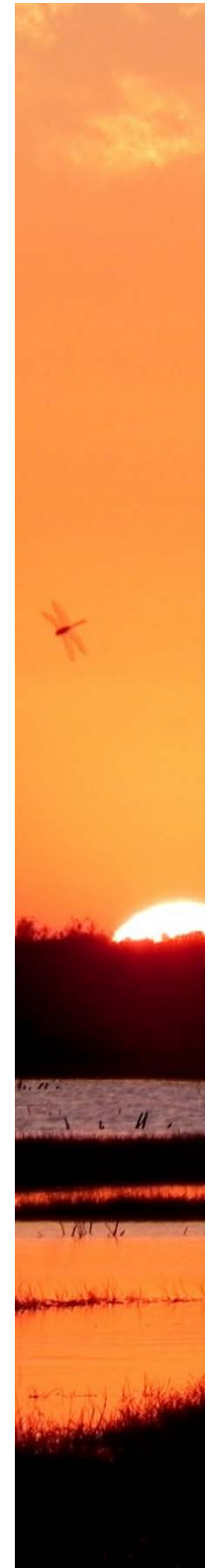
1. Develop and build a new South Texas Nature Tourism Center
2. Redevelop and expand Bejarano-McFarland Park. The County owns the lot next to the park, onto which the park can expand.
3. Develop and build a new All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) park and trails. It will be the first in South Texas. Include education and safety components.
4. Events in parks, such as art shows and farmers markets, to utilize outdoor facilities

Precinct 4 – Identified Needs

1. Expansion of facilities and opportunities at Santa Rosa Community Park to include All-Inclusive playgrounds, additional sports fields, a splash pad, fitness equipment, basketball, and an outdoor events pavilion.
2. Expansion of facilities and opportunities at Santa Maria Community Park to include All-Inclusive playgrounds, additional sports fields, a splash pad, fitness equipment, basketball, and an outdoor events pavilion.
3. Develop and build new parks in additional small, rural communities.

Public Input Surveys

Item	Score
Restrooms/Baños	1356
Exercise/Fitness Equipment/Equipo de Ejercicio	1291
Swimming/Natación	1280
Picnic/BBQ Facilities/Abrigos de Comida Campestre/Instalaciones para Barbacoa	1264
Walking/Jogging/Caminar/ Correr	1258
Hike/Bike Trails/Caminos para Aíza/Bicis	1255
Rinse Stations/Estación de Enjuague	1252
Nature Trails/Senderos Naturales	1248
Splash Pad/Cojín de Chapoteo	1245
Playgrounds/Terreno de Juego	1238
Green Open Space/Espacios Verdes Abiertos	1236
Special Events/Eventos Especiales	1231
Open Play Areas/Área de Juego Abierta	1227
Indoor Gymnasium/Gimnasio Interior	1226
Benches/Bancos	1222
Community Gardens/Jardines Comunitarios	1220
Multi-purpose Indoor Rec Center/Centro de Múltiplos	1219
Beach Recreation/Recreación de Playa	1218
Nature Center/Centro de la Naturaleza	1215
Soccer Fields/Campos de Fútbol	1206
Camping/Lugar de Campamento	1205
Concessions/Concesiones	1197
Environmental Education/Educación Ambiental	1188
Basketball Courts/Canchas de Baloncesto	1187
Beach Access/Acceso a la Playa	1187
Sand Volleyball Courts/Canchas de Voleibol de Arena	1185
Softball/Baseball Fields/Campos de Béisbol	1179
Amphitheater/Anfiteatro	1178
Fishing/Pesca	1167
Indoor Classrooms/Aula Interior	1166
Indoor Community Center/Centro de la Comunidad Interior	1165
Birdwatching/Observación de Aves	1160
ADA Accessible/ADA Accesible	1158
Native plants/Plantas Autóctonas	1152
Skateboarding/Tablero de Patinar	1147
Dune Walkovers/Duna Caminata	1147
Football/Fútbol	1134
Interpretive Signage/Señalización Interpretativa	1125
Boating/Navegación	1120
Tennis Courts/Canchas de Tenis	1114
RV Spaces/Espacios para RV	1112
Motorized Trails/Senderos Motorizados	1070



A Sample of Public Write-In Suggestions

New parks in the colonias
Nature center
Exercise/fitness equipment
Yoga
More trees
Extend pier/bridge for fishing bay access
Shade structures over play areas
Swing set for handicap
Light on pier
Theater for kids
Kayaking
More kayak trails
Workout classes
Shade
Indoor pool
Dog park
More parking
Junior Lifeguard Program
Trash management
Fishing event/contest
Surfing/surf programs
Wildlife/Sea life protection triathlon
swimming event
lifeguarding events
road improvements
More organized sporting events
Swim classes/training
Zumba/aerobics classes
Parking shade trees
Kite flying
Music
Mist stations (cooling)
Bowling
Dancing
After school/homework help
Art, arts & crafts classes, jewelry kids programming
MMA/wrestling
Water fountains
Benches around playgrounds
Fences
Fences around the resacas
Lighting in parks

Indoor meeting and workshop space available for community groups
Hurricane Preparedness Fair
Kickball
Summer literacy programs
Water slides
Boxing
Martial arts
Cancer awareness walks
Recycling
Summer camp
Monkey bars
Bigger park
Recreation programs
Cooking class
Swings
Computer lab
Track
Pokémon
Ecotourism
Environmental events
Museum and exhibit spaces
Programs for seniors
Gardening
Environmental Education
Frisbee
Disc golf
Community events
Synthetic Turf Sport Fields
Security
Connectivity between cities/county facilities
Replace speed bumps with speed humps
More Facebook posts
Nature
More all- inclusive facilities
All-inclusive programs – after school, summer
Fence around all playground areas with only ONE door to get in/out for safety of our special needs community kids.
All-inclusive restrooms with benches large enough to change adults (diaper changes)
More swings for special needs children in all parks “more than 2 in each park” how about 7-10
Parent support group for special need children
Events appropriate for individuals with disabilities
Safe accessible playgrounds

Plan Implementation and Timeline

Short Term Implementation 0-5 years

Long Term Implementation 6-10 years

Additions to Andy Bowie Park – Short Term Project

Redevelop Picnic Pavilions

Rinse Stations

Concessions

Dune Walkover

Restrooms

Nature Trails

Additions to Public Beach Access No.3 – Short Term Project

Picnic Pavilion

Rinse Stations

Concessions

Dune Walkover

Interpretive Signs

Restrooms

Additions to Public Beach Access No.4 – Short Term Project

Rinse Stations

Restrooms

Additions to Public Beach Access No.6 - Long Term Project

Rinse Stations

Restrooms

Additions to Adolph Thomae, Jr. County Park – Short Term Project

Nature Trails (extension)

Picnic Pavilion

Interpretive Signs

Restroom for new boat ramp

Lighting for new boat ramp and old boat ramp

Improve parking at old boat ramp

Improve park road

Fishing Piers – Long Term Project

Additions to Bejarano-McFarland Park – Long Term Project

Splash pad

Covered Basketball Court

All-Inclusive Playground

Sand Volley Ball

Trail (LID)
Birdwatch overlook(extension)
Community garden
Interpretive Signs
Exercise/Fitness Equipment
Community Center

Additions to El Ranchito Recreational Park – Long Term Project

Trail (LID)
All-Inclusive Playground
Exercise/Fitness Equipment
Splash Pad
Baseball field Lights
Additional Sports Fields

Additions to Esperanza-Domanski (El Ranchito Park) – Long Term Project

Covered Basketball Court
Small Picnic Pavilion
All-Inclusive Playground
BBQ Area

Additions to La Esperanza Community Park – Long Term Project

Splash pad
Exercise/Fitness Equipment
Covered basketball court
Covered picnic pavilion – Short Term Project
Trail (LID) – Short Term Project

Additions to La Paloma Recreational Park – Long Term Project

Trail (LID)
Exercise/Fitness Equipment
All-Inclusive Playground
Community Garden
Additional Sports Fields

Additions to Laureles Recreational Park – Long Term Project

Baseball field Lights
All-Inclusive Playground
Trail (LID) – Short Term Project
Additional Sports Fields

Additions to Pedro”Pete” Benavides Park - Long Term Project

All-Inclusive Playground
Covered Basketball Court
Mountain Bike Trail – Short Term Project

Additions to Santa Maria Community Park – Long Term Project

All-Inclusive Playground

Splash Pad
Picnic Pavilion
Baseball field/Soccer Field
Trail (LID) – Short Term Project
Community Garden

Additions to Santa Rosa Community Park – Long Term Project

Splash pad
All-Inclusive Playground
Trail (LID) – Short Term Project
Community Garden
Exercise/Fitness Equipment
Acquire land for additional sports fields, synthetic turf

Develop and Build a San Pedro Community Park (New Park) – Long Term Project

All-Inclusive Playground
Splash Pad
Picnic Facilities
Basketball Court
Multi-Use Sports Field
Trail (LID)
Butterfly Garden
Native Landscaping
Exercise/Fitness Equipment
Restroom
Parking

Develop and Build an Olmito Community Park (New Park) – Long Term Project

All-Inclusive Playground
Splash Pad
Picnic Facilities
Basketball Court
Multi-Use Sports Field
Trail (LID)
Butterfly Garden
Native Landscaping
Exercise/Fitness Equipment
Restroom
Parking

Develop and Build a South Texas Eco-Tourism Center (New Park) – Short Term Project

Nature Trails (LID)

Interpretive Signage

Amphitheater

Rain Harvesting

Solar Power

Birdwatch Overlooks

Landscaping (Native Vegetation)

Educational Center



CAMERON COUNTY - LAGUNA VISTA
ECO-TOURISM CENTER

megamorphosis





Plan Implementation and Prioritization of Needs

Priorities

Outdoor Priorities

1. Trails
2. Playgrounds
3. Picnic Facilities
4. Exercise and Fitness Equipment
5. Green Open Spaces
6. Splash Pads
7. Sports Fields and Courts
8. Beach/Bay/Coastal Natural Resource Area Access and Recreation
9. Amphitheaters/ Outdoor Event Areas

Indoor Priorities

1. Nature Center
2. Indoor Classrooms
3. Exhibit Spaces
4. Meeting Spaces for Community Organizations
5. Indoor Educational and Recreational Programming
6. Indoor Community Center
7. Indoor Gymnasium

Administrative/Support Priorities

1. Restrooms
2. ADA Accessibility/Inclusive Facilities and Amenities
3. Lighting
4. Shade
5. Security
6. Maintenance and Improvements
7. Conservation of Natural and Cultural Resources

Resources

Bond funds

The County Commission recently approved the use of bond funds for improvement of beach-side amenities along the Gulf of Mexico. Work includes the redevelopment of E. K. Atwood Park and many of the improvements being made to the beach areas of Isla Blanca Park. Additional improvements are proposed for County coastal parks and beach access points on South Padre Island.

Cameron County voters recently approved the use of a venue tax, hotel/motel tax, and car rental tax for the development of the Events Center and Amphitheater in Isla Blanca Park and the South Texas Ecotourism Center.

Beach Park User Fees

These fees are collected at County Parks along the Gulf of Mexico. They are used for the maintenance, operations, and improvements of these beach-side parks.

Park Concession Fees

Other park fees, such as concessions fees and RV site and camping fees, are used to make improvements to RV sites and for maintenance, operations, and improvements of community parks throughout the County.

Through these fees, the Cameron County Parks and Recreation Department strives to maintain its status as a self-sufficient, enterprise operation and does not require tax funds to operate.

Property Donation

Property owners may be willing to donate land to the County for usage as a public park. The County should encourage donations subject to established guidelines for the development of parks and recreational areas. Considerations should include the suitability of the land for park development, conformance with the objectives for the Cameron County Comprehensive Park Master Plan and proximity to neighbors, natural features and adjacent to land uses. All donations must meet criteria established by Cameron County for a park.

Multijurisdictional Partnerships

Cameron County Parks and Recreation is involved in numerous successful multijurisdictional partnerships. Some of these include the use of leased land for use as parks, such as the arrangement with the US Fish and Wildlife Service for Adolph Thomae, Jr. Park, or the one with the Brownsville Navigation District for the Jaime J. Zapata Memorial Boat Ramp. Others are successful collaborations with many agencies, municipalities, and organizations, such as the restoration of the Bahia Grande or the provision of social services at El Centro Cultural or the Bob Clark Social Service Center. The Department will continue to seek mutually beneficial partnerships that will allow Cameron County to best serve residents and visitors.

Public-Private Partnerships

As with the successful multijurisdictional partnerships, Cameron County Parks and Recreation has developed strong and beneficial relationships with the private sector. An example of this is Santa Maria Community Park on land belonging to the Catholic Diocese of Brownsville. The Department will

continue to seek mutually beneficial public-private partnerships that will allow Cameron County to best serve residents and visitors.

Grant Opportunities

- TPWD Local Parks Grants
- TPWD Recreational Trails Grants
- TPWD Boat Launch Grants
- Texas GLO Coastal Management Grants (CMP)
- USFWS Coastal Impact Assistance Grants (CIAP)
- Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act
- Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)
- TCEQ 319 Grants
- RESTORE Act Funding
- TXDOT Grants
- Local grants
- Other foundation grants

Appendix A – Public Input Survey



Do you live in Cameron County? Yes ___ No ___
 Age: Under 25 ___ 25-34 ___ 35-55 ___ 55-69 ___
 70 & over ___

Race: White ___ Hispanic ___ Black ___ Other ___

How often do you visit a Cameron County Park?

Daily ___
 Weekly ___
 Monthly ___
 One to four times a year ___
 Never ___

Which park(s) do you visit most often?

Isla Blanca Park ___
 Andy Bowie Park ___
 E. K. Atwood Park(Public Beach Access No.5) ___
 Public Beach Access No.3 ___
 Public Beach Access No.4 ___
 Public Beach Access No.6 ___
 Adolph Thomaie, Jr. County Park ___
 Bejarano-McFarland Community Park ___
 La Esperanza Community Park ___
 Santa Rosa Community Park ___
 Esparza-Domanski(El Ranchito Community Park) ___
 Santa Maria Community Park ___
 Pedro "Pete" Benavides Recreational Park ___
 Laureles Recreational Park ___
 El Ranchito Recreational Park ___
 La Paloma Recreational Park ___
 Jaime J. Zapata Memorial Boat Ramp ___

Children / Young Adult Programs

In what type of recreational program, class, event or sport would your children be most interested in participating?

Adult / Senior Recreation Programs

Have you or another adult in your family participated in organized recreation program for adults at a County park or facility within the past year?

Yes ___ No ___

In what sport, class, event or environmental program did you or someone in your household participate?

What type of recreation program(s) or sporting event(s) would you be most interested in participating? _____

Vive usted en el Condado de Cameron? Si ___ No ___

Edad: Menos de 25 ___ 25-34 ___ 35-55 ___ 55-69 ___
 70 & mas ___

Raza: Anglo ___ Hispano ___ Afro-Americano ___ Otro ___

Cuántas veces visita un parque del Condado de Cameron?

Diariamente ___
 Una vez por semana ___
 Una vez por mes ___
 Una a quatro veces por año ___
 Nunca ___

Que parque visita más seguido?

Isla Blanca Park ___
 Andy Bowie Park ___
 E. K. Atwood Park(Public Beach Access No.5) ___
 Public Beach Access No.3 ___
 Public Beach Access No.4 ___
 Public Beach Access No.6 ___
 Adolph Thomaie, Jr. County Park ___
 Bejarano-McFarland Community Park ___
 La Esperanza Community Park ___
 Santa Rosa Community Park ___
 Esparza-Domanski(El Ranchito Community Park) ___
 Santa Maria Community Park ___
 Pedro "Pete" Benavides Recreational Park ___
 Laureles Recreational Park ___
 El Ranchito Recreational Park ___
 La Paloma Recreational Park ___
 Jaime J. Zapata Memorial Boat Ramp ___

Programas de Niños / Jovenes

Que tipo de programa recreaccional, clase, evento le interesaría participar a su hijo / hija?

Programas Recreativo para Adultos/Ancianos

A participado usted o otro adulto de su familia en algun programa recreativo del condado durante el año?

Si ___ No ___

En que deporte, clase, evento o programa ambiental a participado usted o otro miembro de su casa?

Que tipo de programa(s) recreaccional o evento deportivo le interesaría participar? _____

Other suggestions you have for improving the Parks./Otras sugerencias para mejorar los parques.

Park & Recreation Facilities & Activities

Do you feel there is a need for new or additional recreation facilities in Cameron County? Yes ___ No ___

Is there a definite, somewhat, or no need for each of the following facilities./activities Please circle one answer for each.

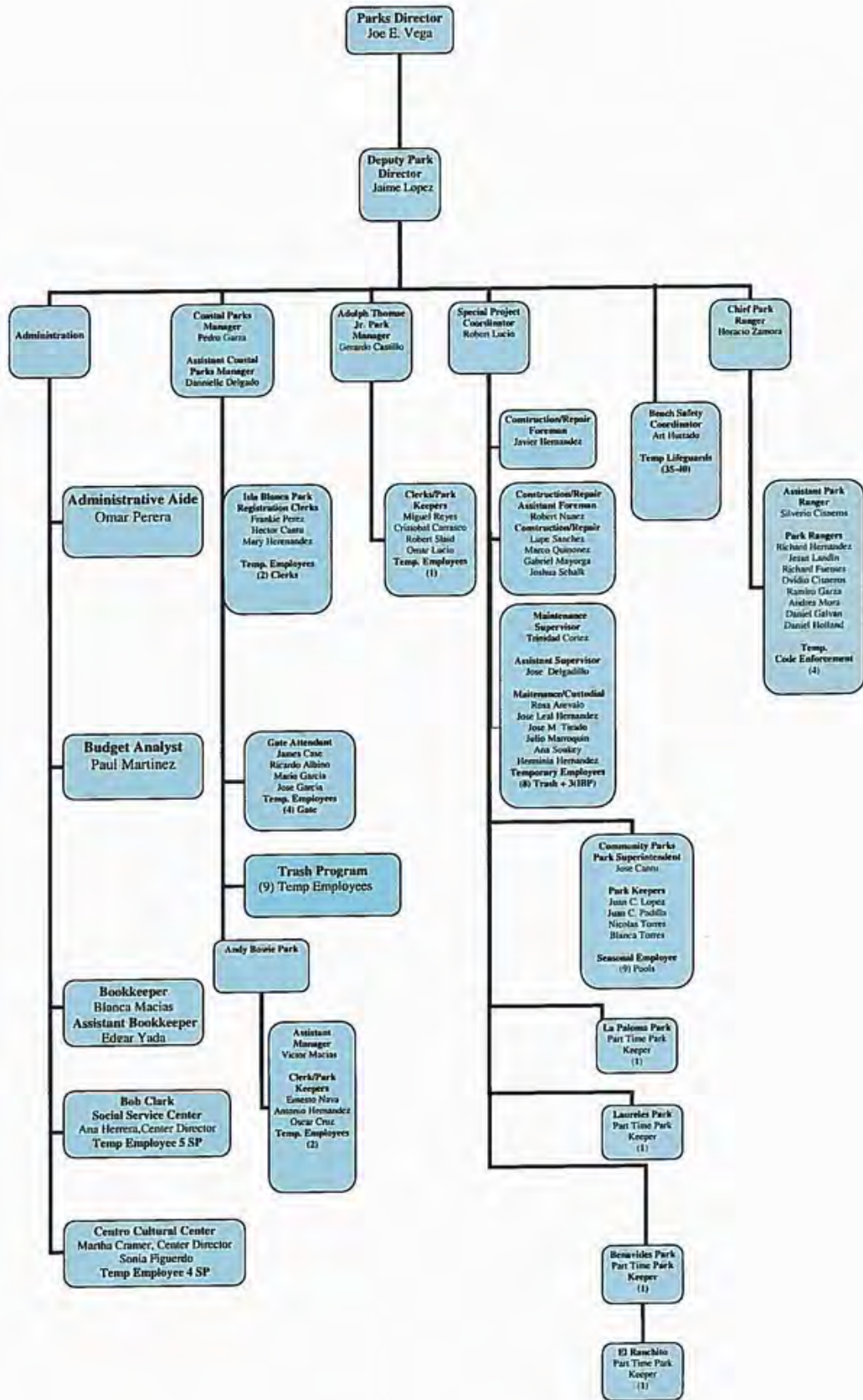
Parques y Facilidades de Recreacion y Actividades

Siente que exista una necesidad para mas o nuevas facilidades recreacionales en el Condado de Cameron? Si ___ No ___

Hay una necesidad ciertamente, un tanto, o que no de los siguientes facilidades. Por favor marque con un círculo su seleccion.

	Definite Ciertamente	Somewhat Un Tanto	No No
Multi-purpose Indoor Rec Center/Centro de Multiusos	1	2	3
Hike/Bike Trails/Caminos para Alza/Bicis	1	2	3
Nature Trails/Senderos Naturales	1	2	3
Swimming/Natación	1	2	3
Tennis Courts/Canchas de Tenis	1	2	3
Sand Volleyball Courts/Canchas de Voleibol de Arena	1	2	3
Basketball Courts/Canchas de Baloncesto	1	2	3
Softball/Baseball Fields/Campos de Beisbol	1	2	3
Soccer Fields/Campos de Futbol	1	2	3
Birdwatching/Observacion de Aves	1	2	3
Nature Center/Centro de la Naturaleza	1	2	3
Playgrounds/Terreno de Juego	1	2	3
Picnic/BBQ Facilities/Abrigos de Comida Campestre/Instalaciones para Barbacoa	1	2	3
Special Events/Eventos Especiales	1	2	3
Skateboarding/Tablero de Patinar	1	2	3
Football/Fútbol	1	2	3
Splash Pad/Cojín de Chapoteo	1	2	3
Walking/Jogging/Caminar/ Correr	1	2	3
Beach Access/Acceso a la Playa	1	2	3
Dune Walkovers/Duna Caminata	1	2	3
Benches/Bancos	1	2	3
Fishing/Pesca	1	2	3
Boating/Navegación	1	2	3
Green Open Space/Espacios Verdes Abiertos	1	2	3
Open Play Areas/Área de Juego Abierta	1	2	3
Indoor Classrooms/Aula Interior	1	2	3
Indoor Community Center/Centro de la Comunidad Interior	1	2	3
Indoor Gymnasium/Gimnasio Interior	1	2	3
RV Spaces/Espacios para RV	1	2	3
Camping/Lugar de Campamento	1	2	3
Native plants/Plantas Autóctonas	1	2	3
Environmental Education/Education Ambiental	1	2	3
Motorized Trails/Senderos Motorizados	1	2	3
ADA Accessible/ADA Accesible	1	2	3
Beach Recreation/Recreación de Playa	1	2	3
Interpretive Signage/Señalización Interpretativa	1	2	3
Community Gardens/Jardines Comunitarios	1	2	3
Exercise/Fitness Equipment/Equipo de Ejercicio	1	2	3
Amphitheater/Anfiteatro	1	2	3
Restrooms/Baños	1	2	3
Rinse Stations/Estación de Enjuague	1	2	3
Concessions/Consesiones	1	2	3

Appendix B – Cameron County Parks and Recreation Organizational Chart



Appendix C – Equipment Criteria and Maintenance

PARK EQUIPMENT CRITERIA

Through careful design and selection of materials, attractive park facilities can be developed and maintained that require minimum staff attention. Standardized criteria facilities maintenance and repairs, maximizes durability and longevity, and establishes a minimum quality level.

All park facilities and improvements should be in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), local building codes and all applicable restrictions and requirements. The following standards are presented as guidelines for park facilities and improvements:

Roads and Parking Lots: All roads and parking lots should be asphalt, concrete, or LID preferred. Parking lots should be stripes to delineate parking spaces, including appropriate handicapped space designations.

Gates and Fences: Parks should be fenced and/or gated to control access. Fences and gates should be specifically designed for each park. All softball/baseball fields and soccer fields should be fenced as well in order to schedule the usage and control maintenance.

Park Buildings (Picnic Pavilions, Restrooms, Offices, and Maintenance Buildings): Buildings should be constructed of brick or concrete block, with metal or other appropriate roofs. Structures should be designed to discourage birds from roosting, and bird nesting. Green technology, techniques, and practices are preferred and ADA compliance is required.

Playground Equipment: Equipment should meet Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) Guidelines and American Society for Testing Materials Standards (ASTM). Wood play equipment may be used as long as it meets the safety requirements and serve as an enhancement to the site. In the extent that the wood is not selected as a source of material, then the play equipment should be galvanized and powder-coated expanded metal or punch steel. All wood used for playground facilities should be prepared before open to the public such as sanded and routed edges to prevent splintering. A schedule should be highly considered and followed up with to ensure safety is accounted for of the users. ADA compliance is required.

Playground Fall Surfaces: All play equipment should have a resilient fall surface in accordance with CPSC Guidelines and ASTM Standards. Cameron County's policy is to use fibar (wood chips) as first priority, then synthetic turf, then a poured-in-place system. No bark or non-complied wood chips, sand, or grass should be used. All play areas should be ADA compliant.

Picnic Tables: All picnic tables and connected benches should be plastisol coated expanded metal, wood, aluminum or concrete. All picnic tables should be located on concrete pads or within pavilions and securely fastened to reduce theft. Handicapped accessible picnic tables should be provided at all facilities.

Benches: All benches should be plastisol coated expanded metal, concrete or galvanized metal legs with treated wood slats. All wood benches should be consistent in order to facilitate replacement of damaged slats.

Trash Receptacles: All trash receptacles should be painted or powder-coated metal drums mounted on two treated wood posts, or plastic containers.

Grills: All grills should be metal, permanently mounted with concrete footings. Grills should not be placed in close proximity to play equipment, wood structures or heavily trafficked areas. All bar-b-que areas must have a charcoal disposal site, preferably a metal container with label identification.

Bleachers: All bleachers should be of aluminum with chain link fencing and properly fastened to the structure. Bleachers should be anchored to the foundation. All bleachers shall be designed to offer handicapped accessibility.

Sports Facilities: All sports facilities should meet standards for intended league play. All goals should be adequately anchored in place to prevent falling when climbed on or pushed.

Sidewalks: All sidewalks should be concrete, asphalt, or LID.

Walking/Jogging Trails: All walking or jogging trails should be asphalt, decomposed granite, or LID. Accessible trails should be a minimum of 6 feet to 8 feet wide and 10 feet wide if used as a multi use trail.

Biking Trails: Undeveloped trail surface should be of natural materials.

PARK MAINTENANCE STANDARDS

In order for the parks to be perceived as an asset to the County, they must be well maintained at all times. It is essential to adopt maintenance budgets for new park facilities before they are developed and as older parks age and are redeveloped. If sufficient funds or partnerships are not available, parkland should be held in reserve in its natural state until money can be dedicated for both construction and maintenance of facilities.

MAINTENANCE TASKS

The following tasks have been identified through review of Park Maintenance Standards. They represent common maintenance tasks that must be accomplished routinely.

Mowing: In Texas, most turf areas must be mowed year-round, although the frequency and demand increases seasonally. Mowing is typically done cycles: the mowers begin in one area and mow continually, cycling back to the same area at a regular interval. Park Maintenance Standards suggest different levels of maintenance.

Weeding/Edging: This task typically follows the same cycles mowing and is accomplished by the same crew.

Fertilizing: Fertilizing is typically done at community centers, common areas and sport fields. In many municipalities, leagues using sports fields. Leagues using the fields could be made responsible for watering and turf care, but with oversight by the Parks and Recreation Department.

Trash Collection: Trash collection from barrels and litter pick-up of heavily used areas is done daily.

Restrooms: Permanent restrooms are cleaned daily; in some instances twice daily and hand towels and toilet paper are replenished. Port-a-cans rented for overflow crowds at special events or replace closed restrooms are generally serviced by the leasing company twice weekly or more often, if necessary.

Picnic Pavilions: Park staff schedules reservations for the facilities and make sure they are clean before guests arrive. In addition, pavilions must be cleaned daily and inspected for damage, vandalism, burned out lights, and associated maintenance requirements.

Picnic Grills: Grills must be cleaned and replaced as necessary, particularly following weekends and holidays.

Lights: Police or park rangers patrolling the parks after dark should note any broken or burned out lights. The utility company should replace bulbs or have appropriate city electricians do so with bucket trucks.

Landscaping: Native vegetation is preferred.

Tree Recommendations: Native trees are preferred.

Jogging Trails: Asphalt trails must be re-topped every 4 to 5 years. Fly ash, LID, and decomposed granite trails must be re-topped every 2-4 years depending on usage. All surface cracks should be routinely sealed with appropriate sealer.

Tree Work: Trees in developed areas must be pruned to maintain their health, to improve their appearance and to allow views into parks from surrounding streets for security. Particularly dense trees located near security lights should be pruned to allow light to penetrate the canopies. Dead, damaged or diseased trees in developed areas and along trails and natural areas may need to be removed. Dead trees pose a hazard to visitors in that they may fall in the high winds. The County generally does its own cutting and chipping, using the resulting mulch in the parks.

General Repairs: Painting and minor carpentry, etc. can be performed by park personnel or by contracted work. Graffiti resistant surface treatments should be considered for building surfaces and facilities.

Insect Control: Park personnel should be alert for fire ants and other hazardous insects as they perform their routine duties. Trained park personnel should eliminate hazardous insects as soon as they are discovered, such as bees and hornets.

Sports Facilities: Leagues may establish the responsibility for fertilizing, watering, mowing and liter pick-up, with the County. Although the County will be responsible for paying water and electricity bills and emptying trash receptacles daily. The park superintendent should inspect all sports facilities regularly. It is particularly important to inspect all sports facilities the bleachers to make sure that they are structurally sound.

Offices and Community Centers: All buildings must be cleaned daily and inspected for any damage. Convention and community centers require personnel to make reservations and be present during open hours.