

UNITE, GROW,

PLAY

Denton Parks and Rec

LAND PLAN



City of Denton Parks & Recreation LAND ACQUISITION FOR THE 10-MINUTE WALK STRATEGY

"The Trust for Public Land, the National Recreation and Park Association, and the Urban Land Institute are leading a nationwide movement to ensure there is a park within a 10-minute walk of every person, in every neighborhood, in every city across America."

Updated 5-28-2024

ADOPTION OF A 10-MINUTE WALK GOAL

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The Trust for Public Land (TPL), the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), and the Urban Land Institute (ULI) are leading a nationwide movement to ensure there is a park within a 10-minute walk (1/2 mile) of every person, in every neighborhood, in every city across America. Over three hundred communities have come together to support the 10-Minute Walk to a Park Campaign to increase equitable park access and quality through local policy changes, master planning efforts, and increased funding. On February 26, 2019, City Council adopted the 10-Minute Walk to a Park Campaign, and former Mayor Watts signed the “Campaign Commitment”.

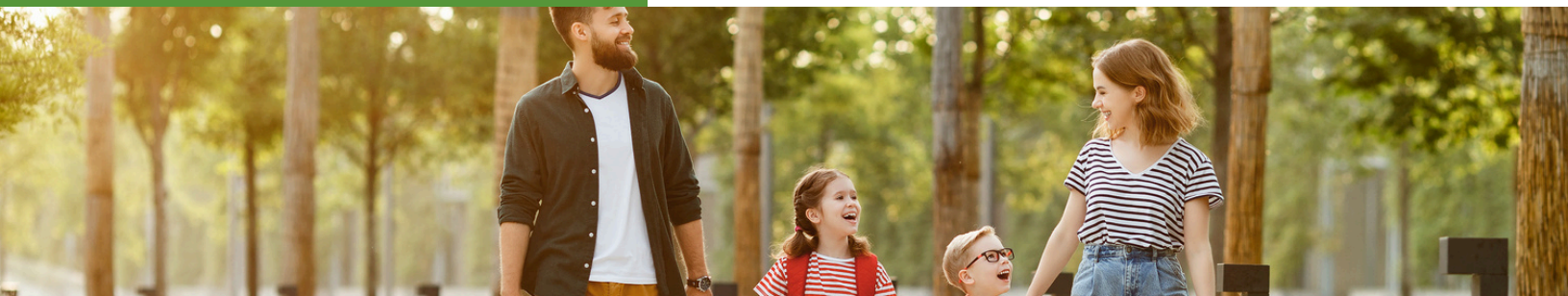
1. Develop Existing City Owned Parks
2. Co-operative Agreements
3. Partnerships
4. Development Ordinance
5. Lease
6. Easement
7. Conservation Easement
8. Purchase
9. Donation
10. Connectability via City Planning and Development

Parks provide and support the physical, social, environmental, mental, and economic health of communities and cities nationwide. One in three Americans do not have access to park land within a 10-minute walk (or half-mile) of their home. As of August 2023, according to The Trust for Public Land, Park Serve database (www.parkserve.org), 58% of Denton residents (82,325 people) have a park or trail within a 10-minute walk of where they live. This means that approximately 58,925 Denton residents do not have a park or trail within walking distance of their home. While this is an 18% increase from when the program launched in 2017, the U.S. national average of people with similar access to a park space within a 10-minute walk from their home is 55%.

The City of Denton Parks and Recreation Department has adopted the “10-Minute Walk” initiative as our goal to provide safe access to parks and open spaces and to help in identifying where public park spaces should be. This measuring tool is used when identifying current and future needs in the planning process of park land development. This initiative serves as the city’s baseline standard when visioning updated the Parks, Recreation and Trails System Master Plan, which was approved in 2022.

Parks and Recreation has developed a strategy to work towards achieving 100% park accessibility within Denton. This is an aspirational goal as 100% access may not be fully achievable in some areas of the city due to barriers that exists such as zoning, railroads, interstates, and waterways.

This document highlights the implementation strategy created by Parks and Recreation to achieve this Goal.



CITY-WIDE PLANNING

Denton 2040 Comprehensive Plan

Denton's natural environment is an essential element of the City that is important to the community as a whole. Environmental stewardship and sustainability is fundamentally tied to regional and global goals, which impact the quality of life of Denton residents and the health of the region. It is necessary for a plan of this scale to incorporate policies that address open space and natural resource protection into all land use decisions. As such, city staff has developed a framework of environmental policies that positively impacts the built environment and city functions, which supports the overarching vision for the Parks, Recreation and Trail System Master Plan.

As the population grows and land development expands over the time horizon of the Denton 2040 Plan, providing parks and open space and the conservation of natural resources is essential for maintaining the quality of life and character of Denton. The policies that follow address the provision of new parks and open space resources and resource conservation policies, which address the primary considerations of acquisition and are integrated into goals throughout the Comprehensive Plan. The policies are as follows:

- Create an integrated green infrastructure network that links parks and natural resources together through parks, trails, contiguous open space, and natural systems.
- Coordinate with regional partners to accomplish shared goals for holistic open space and recreation planning with ecosystem-wide conservation strategies.
- Provide of a variety of park types with adequate acreage to match population growth with varied community contexts.
- Create parks and recreational facilities and open spaces that incorporate elements of Denton's natural environment and preserve distinct environmentally-sensitive areas throughout the community.
- Prioritize strategies that integrate conservation objectives including protecting air quality, conserving ecosystems and habitat, protecting water bodies and water quality, conserving watersheds, and protecting the rural and agricultural character, where appropriate.
- Create an overarching vision to implement Denton's sustainability plan: Simply Sustainable: A Strategic Plan for Denton's Future (2020), including proactive policies for green building and solid waste recovery.
- Establish a robust system of parks, open space and recreational resources with a balance of park land uses that are vital for creating and sustaining memorable, livable neighborhoods and places to work.
- Additional information can be referenced in Chapter 5, page 5-1 of the Denton 2040 Comprehensive Plan.

DEPARTMENT PLANNING

Denton Parks, Recreation and Trails System Master Plan

The residents of Denton have shown that the parks, recreation, and trails system is extremely important to them through their continued support and involvement in the planning process. Their continued use of Denton's facilities show that maintaining and improving the system is necessary to preserve their quality of life. City residents understand that continued growth means an increased demand on the existing recreation system. How residents participate in recreational activities is also changing as user preferences evolve, new amenities are introduced, or unforeseen circumstances change user behaviors, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Parks, Recreation and Trails System Master Plan provides recommendations for system improvements that are prioritized based on quantitative and qualitative data. The needs Assessment used a three part approach to determine future and current parks needs in Denton.

Standards Based Approach

The Standards Based Approach compares current and future population figures to acreage of parks within the City. With this analysis, access to and distribution of parks is also mapped throughout the City to identify gaps in park coverage. This approach compares the City facilities to national standards established by the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA). and in the future.

Demand Based Approach

The Demand Based Approach analyzes public input and facility use statistics to determine what facilities are most used within the City and what residents most desire. This analysis was completed through online surveys, public meetings, focus groups, and an assessment of facility usage data.

Resource Based Approach

The Resource Based Approach identifies current amenities and assesses potential locations for future park amenities. These opportunities typically include creating additional preserves for natural systems, taking advantage of underused land in floodplains, collaborating with schools and other local entities to identify parkland for possible multi-use agreements, repurposing vacant open spaces, and identifying future development areas.

Each of these three approaches provides important information regarding the current and possible future configuration of the parks system, but only when taken together to do they provide a complete picture of park system needs. The assessment and recommendations resulting from these analyses help the Parks and Recreation Department determine what types of recreation facilities, amenities, and parks are needed in Denton. Denton residents provided their input in the needs assessment process during public meetings and through online surveys. By including resident insight, the Needs Assessment clarifies which parkland, recreational facility, and trail needs the city should address now and in the future.

As information is gathered from the community through formal and informal methods, staff works to match the needs and desires with potential land requirements while also considering 10-Minute Walk goals. This overarching strategy provides staff the insight to help build the park system for today and in the future.

PROPERTY ASSESSMENT

While assessing potential park properties, many factor need to be consider. These key identifiers include, but are not limited to:

- 10-Minute Walk
- Cost of the land
- Location of the parcel within the city
- Connectability to other parcels of interest
- Characteristics of the property
- Historical significance
- Topography
- Expansion of existing city property
- Tree canopy
- Ability to preserve open space
- Land designation of upland or floodplain
- Connectivity to nature

Once considerations have been reviewed by staff, the team can begin the process of acquisition as determined. The Parks, Recreation and Trails System Master Plan outlines the goal for land acquisition in the matrix below. Land acquisition is a metric that is tracked and monitored by the City.

	2021 (DEVELOPED PARKS)	2021 (ALL PARKS)*	2040 (DEVELOPED PARKS)	2040 (ALL PARKS)**
Population	139,869	139,869	229,192	229,192
Acreage	1,035.41 acres	2,107.63 acres	1,035.41 acres	2,781.47 acres
Current LOS	8.15 acres per 1,000 population	15.35 acres per 1,000 population	5.07 acres per 1,000 population	12.14 acres per 1,000 population
Benchmark LOS (Low range)	9.9 acres per 1,000 population			
Acreage to acquire to meet Benchmark LOS	77.26 acre deficit	704.41 acre surplus	963.59 acre deficit	512.47 acre surplus
Benchmark LOS (High range)	17.5 acres per 1,000 population			
Acreage to acquire to meet Benchmark LOS	1,113.04 acre deficit	331.37 acre deficit	2,705.45 acre deficit	1,229.39 acre deficit

*Includes developed and undeveloped park acreage

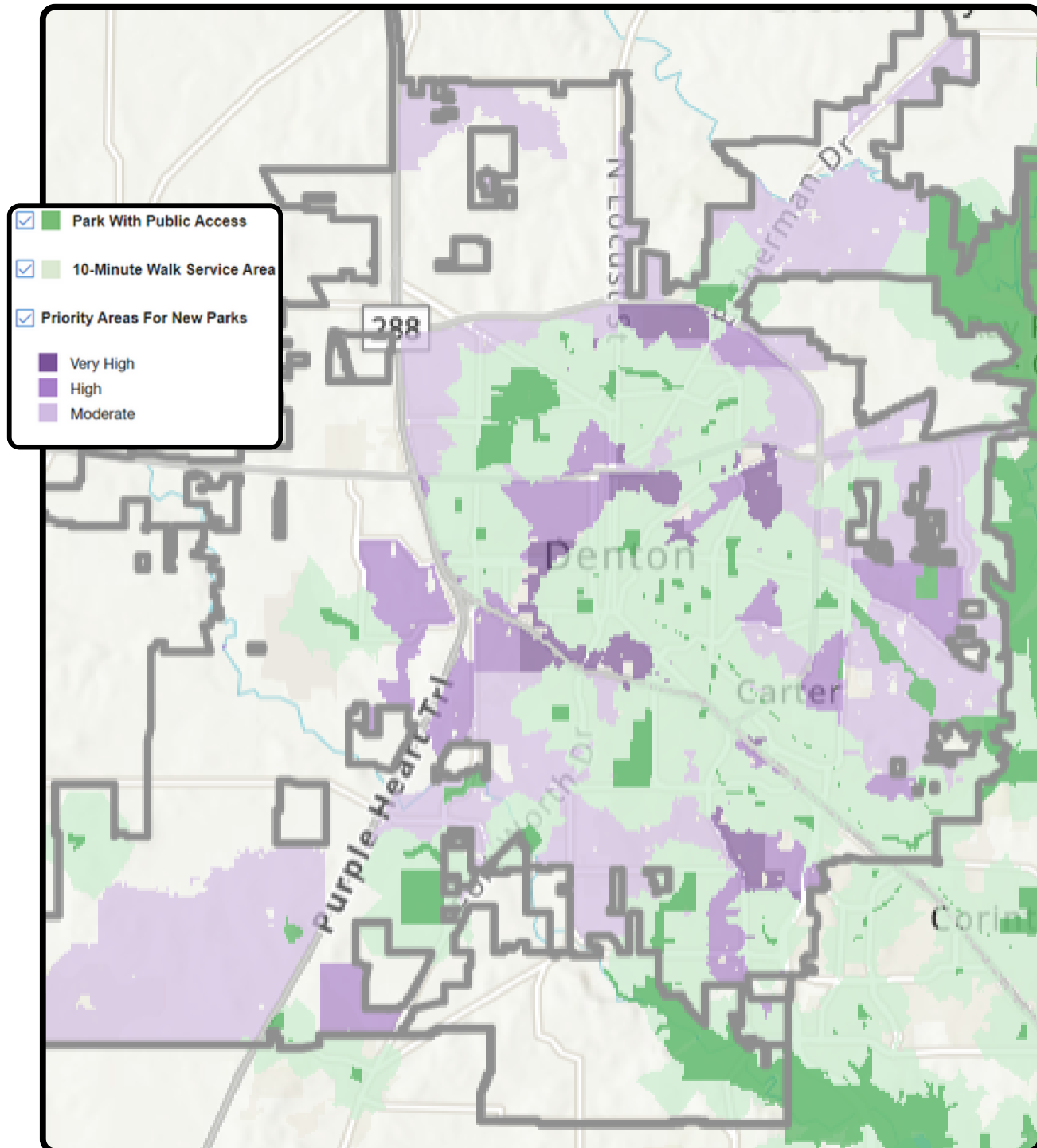
**Includes developed, undeveloped, and future park acreage

2022 Parks, Recreation & Trails System Master Plan

MAPPING PARKS FOR EQUALITY

While the 10-Minute Walk provides guidance to identify land throughout the community, it also helps set equality of where land needs to be located within the community.

Table 1: Screenshot of a live interactive map is available from www.parkserve.org.



DEVELOP EXISTING CITY OWNED PARKS

The easiest way to improve the 10-Minute Walk score is to develop existing park properties.

PRIORITY- IMMEDIATE IMPACT TO THE 10-MINUTE WALK

- Pecan Creek Linear Park (Master Plan completed)
- Villages of Carmel (TPWD approved to move forward with construction)
- Southwest Park (Master Plan completed, Opened with temporary trails)
- Hickory Creek Linear Park (Master Plan underway in Fall 2023)
 - Glenwood Meadows Park (Part of Hickory Creek Trail)
 - Country Club Terrace (Part of Hickory Creek Trail)
 - Burch Farm - 341 acres (Part of the Hickory Creek Trail and future park opportunities)
- Biddy Bye Park (Master Plan completed, Playground and Phase 2)
- Audra Oaks Park (Master Plan underway in Summer 2024)
- East Lakes Park (Master Plan planned in 2025)

SECONDARY

(FUTURE DEVELOPMENT BY OTHERS BUT PARK DESIGN OCCURRING)

- Cole Ranch Park System (Constructed by Development)
- Hunter Ranch Park System (Constructed by Development)

CAPITAL PLANNING

Acquiring land is the first step in the creation of a park. Developing it is the second step that requires capital funding to activate the open space.

City of Denton Strategic Planning - Park Metrics
cityofdenton.com

FY2022-2023



PARK ACRES ADDED

406.16 ACRES

CO-OPERATIVE AGREEMENTS

Denton Independent School District (DISD) and other educational providers.

The City of Denton Parks and Recreation Department will work directly with the Denton Independent School District and other potential partners to develop and execute cooperative agreements in order to allow the general public access to other public or private properties and open space.

PRIORITY

- DISD
 - Calhoun Middle School (2.5 acres)
 - LA Nelson Elementary School
 - Denton High School (Old)
 - Riney Elementary School - Improved access

SECONDARY

- University of North Texas
 - Cooper Creek Trail West – Discovery Park
 - Bradley Street Property – Vacant lot that could be a neighborhood park (could be temporary)



PARTNERSHIPS

These partnerships will be fostered to assist in the development of the community and expansion of the park system.

PRIORITY

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
 - Various parcels being considered
 - Pecan Creek Trail
 - Hickory Creek Trail
 - Laney Lakes Park
 - Paddling trails and access points
 - Infrastructure improvements
- Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
 - Various parcels and grant opportunities to expand green space
 - Greenbelt
 - Lake Ray Roberts
 - Paddling Trail with launch areas
 - Park development and Infrastructure improvements
- Texas Department of Transportation
 - Connectivity along, under and/or over state roadways
- Denton County
- Churches
- Non-Profit Agencies
- Railroads
- Denton County Transportation Authority
- Various City Departments
 - Old Shooting Range
- Hunter Ranch
- Cole Ranch

DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE

Parks and Recreation utilizes the park land dedication and development ordinance to assist in planning and building parks, trails and more with the assistance of local developments. Parcels listed below made be dedicated to the City or an access easement may occur pending on the desired outcome of staff at the time. While flood plain can be valuable to the park system, staff needs to be diligent in considering land adjacent to residential and commercial properties.

- Bidby Bye Park – Developer will construct Phase 1 during infrastructure development
- Eagle Creek Park (Under development as of August 2023)
- Townsend Property – 11.56 acres (Acquired in September 2023)
- Kings Row – 5-6 acres
- Deerwood / Silverdome Property 3-4 acres
- Northpointe Trail / Hercules to Discovery Park – Acreage to be determined
- Cyrene (Development Agreement executed)
- Legends Ranch – Approximately 100 acres of floodplain to be dedicated in phases that would be added to the Hickory Creek Trail (consider easement or acquisition)
- Denton 195 – 130 acres east of I-35 and south of Corbin (Pending)
- Canopy Trails – 80 acres part of the Pecan Creek Trail. Project currently stalled, developer is selling off parcels. Staff stays in contact with the developer.
- Stella Property – Located along Pecan Creek Trail and will combine with the Townsend Property to form a neighborhood park.
- Hickory Creek area – 25 acres



58%

POPULATION WITHIN A
10 MINUTE WALK TO A PARK



LEASE

A lease should be negotiated with entities when possible that provides a long-term solution at a reduced cost of purchasing the land.

- Hartlee Field Property (Wastewater Property)
 - Administration from Utilities has provided the ability to use over 200 acres of the parcel for public use. Some space is needed for a future treatment plant asset. (Acquired)
- Pecan Creek Property – Over 220 acres of land north and east of the Pecan Creek Treatment facility and landfill along Pecan Creek. (Acquired)
- Texas Parks and Wildlife - As the City of Denton leases land from the United State Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), the city then subleases a portion of this land to the Texas Parks and Wildlife (TPWD) for the operation of the Greenbelt and parks around the perimeter of Lake Ray Roberts State Park.

PARK LAND IN THE CITY

Parks and Recreation has leased land from other city departments that was underutilized to use for park space.

EASEMENT

An easement is an affordable option to PARD as it provides public access without the need to purchase land while still providing rights to the land holders.

- Utility easements in cooperation with Denton Municipal Electric, Sewer, Water and TMPA for trail development throughout the city.
- Denton County Property - An easement is needed to provide a concrete trail to connect Carl Young Sr. Park to Woodrow Park as part of the Pecan Creek Trail. (Staff has been working with Denton County for a few years.)
- Hunter Ranch Parks and Trails – Property to be owned, but built and maintained by the development but the City will have an access easement placed over all trails and park spaces.
- Cole Ranch Parks and Trails – Property to be owned, built and maintained by the development but the City will have an access easement placed over all trails and park spaces.
- Cedar Street Park – Attained an access easement to existing greenspace to serve as a public park space (Acquired).
- Hills of Denton Trail – A trail from FM428 west to Bonnie Brae, just north of Long Road. A donation or dedication is being pursued:
 - Stuart Ridge, Beaver Creek and Stark Farms trails
- Kings Row easement – A trail from FM428 southeast to Mingo (Acquired).
- Atmos Gas - Pecan Creek Trail easement.
- Stella Property – Access easement located along Pecan Creek Trail and will combine with the Townsend Property to form a neighborhood park/ trail.
- DenTex - Access easement to combine property with Sagebrook Park.



74.2

Miles of Trails



CONSERVATION EASEMENT

A Conservation Easement is a designated land area, that which had an exercise of rights otherwise held by a landowner for conservation purposes. It is an interest in real property established by an agreement between a landowner and municipality. This form of land preservation provides the landowners a financial savings via state and federal taxes while still using the land for a purpose that is consistent with the partnering agency. As with other real property interests, the granting of a conservation easement is recorded in the local land records and becomes a part of the chain of title for the property. The conservation easement could impact resale value as it is maintained with the current and any future property owners.

- Hunter Ranch Pilot Knob – A conservation easement was acquired in cooperation with Hunter Ranch in 2020.
- Silver Dome Property – This parcel would preserve a large cropping of Post Oak trees to be preserved in perpetuity.
- Consideration should be considered on each parcel attained through the development process whether an access easement would be satisfactory over city ownership.

TEXAS LAND TRUST

Conservation easements remain with land despite a transition in ownership. This ensures a landowner's wishes are upheld into perpetuity, and the conservation value of working land is preserved.

PURCHASE

Today with a prospering economy, land is raising in price and being utilized for residential and commercial development. It is important that PARD identifies land opportunities today for future residents before land becomes too costly to purchase for parks and recreational facilities.

In addition, attainment of the Parks, Recreation and Trails System Master Plan (2022) goal of acquiring 1,850 acres of future open space would be accomplished. Based on the assumptions below, it is projected that the City of Denton would purchase between 705 and 1,255 acres of land for future park space. By acquiring this land, the City would substantially complete its goal of the 10-Minute Walk.

- East Lake Park – Mills property (Acquired)
- Clear Creek Natural Heritage Center - Davidson property (Acquired)
- Laney Lakes Park (Acquired)
- South Denton Property – 46 acres (Under Negotiations)
- Northeast Property – 6 acres
- Hercules Church – 3 acres (Under Negotiations)
- Hills of Denton – Need a future city/neighborhood parks (100+ acres) in this area.
- ETJ1 and ETJ2 - Begin to explore property in the ETJ1 and ETJ2 for future open space preservation. As a new TXDOT road is planned that will run east and west, seek to acquired land for future generations while still affordable. (200-600 acres)
- Clear Creek – Land to complete a visioned Clear Creek Trail that could be both on the north and south sides of the creek. Land on the north side of Clear Creek could be purchased to preserve the floodplain and future public access. Development in the upland may have to occur in order for some of this land to be considered for sale. (50-100 acres)
- Carter Property / Historic Airport Hangers and Runway – Purchase land to preserve the hangers and runway for public access and programming. (50 acres)
- Carter Property North – Acquire land on the north side of the Carter Property in the floodplain that can be used for open space, trails and preservation farming. (250 acres)
- Miscellaneous lots for neighborhood parks and beautification nodes – (50-75 acres)
- South Denton property adjacent to an existing parcel that would preserve a large grove of trees (70+/- acres)

DONATION

Whenever feasible, it is preferred to development partnerships in which land can be donated to Parks & Recreation. This will allow resources to be focused directly on park development and maintenance.

- Rayzor Property near the Airport - This small parcel, 3.79 acres has been added to the airport property. (Acquired)
- Welch Property – 55+ acres (Pending TXDOT ROW acquisition)
-

GIFT OF LAND

Land can be donated to the City as a benefit to the property owner. This land dedication could consider naming opportunities as part of the park naming ordinance.



FY2022-2023



PARK ACRES ADDED

406.16 ACRES



CONNECTABILITY VIA CITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Trails will be planned, designed, and constructed at various times based on Capital improvement funding availability. Some of these trails already have right-of-way while others will require more planning efforts. The thoroughfares provide a significantly easier way to connect parks proactively once land has been developed.

- Carroll Trail (Park and Transportation Development)
- Pecan Creek Trail (Partnership with City Departments and USACE)
- Bonnie Brae Trail (City Capital Improvement)
- Mayhill Trail (City Capital Improvement)
- Hickory Creek Trail (Partnership with City Departments and USACE)
- Hickory Creek Road Trail (City Capital Improvement)
- Cooper Creek Trail East (Environmental Services, City Capital Improvement, USACE)
- Hunter Ranch
- Cole Ranch

WORKING TOGETHER

It is critically important that Parks and Recreation staff are aware of planning activities throughout the organization to capitalize on opportunities that may arise during normal course of city business.

REVIEW AND SUPPORT

Parks and Recreation works with numerous departments across the City of Denton to acquire land for future generations to enjoy. The significance of land acquisition is outlined within the Denton 2040 Plan and Parks, Recreation and Trails System Master Plan.

The following departments have reviewed the efforts outlined within the Land Plan

- Parks and Recreation
- City Attorney's Office
- Development Services - Administration
- Development Services - Transportation
- Development Services - Real Estate
- Engineering and Capital Improvements
- Environmental Services
- Water Utilities
- Denton Municipal Electric