



Audit of Park Management & Planning

Madison Rorschach
City Auditor
City Auditor's Office
January 13, 2026



Purpose of the Audit

- Audit evaluated the City's park management and planning processes, including park planning, funding, and maintenance.
- Denton maintains over 1,300 acres of developed parkland as well as almost 3,500 acres of natural and undeveloped greenspace.



ID 25-340

Park Use Categories



Community

- City & community parks
- Larger service area



Neighborhood

- Neighborhood & pocket parks
- Smaller service area



Natural

- Preserves & undeveloped linear parks
- City-wide service area



Unique

- Special use parks, developed linear parks, & cemeteries
- City-wide Service area

Park Planning Efforts are Comprehensive; Parks Master Plan Goals are Not Being Met

- Key park planning structures and documents are established; individual park planning processes are transparent.
- Established park service-level goals are generally not being met.
 - Long-term acreage goal may not be feasible with current resources.
 - Amenities goals are limited to playgrounds and no equity goals have been established, despite being recommended by Trust for Public Land.

Parks Master Plan Service Level Metrics & Performance

TPL Characteristic	City of Denton 2025 Goal	2021 Actual	2025 Actual	2040 Goal
Acreage	10.48 Developed Acres/1,000 Residents	8.15	8.05	17.50
Access	55% of residents within a 10-Min. Walk	48%	57%	70%
Investment	15.5 Parks & Rec. FTE/10,000 Residents	12.08	11.77	16.45
Amenities	5,000 Residents per Playground	5,380	5,063	4,977

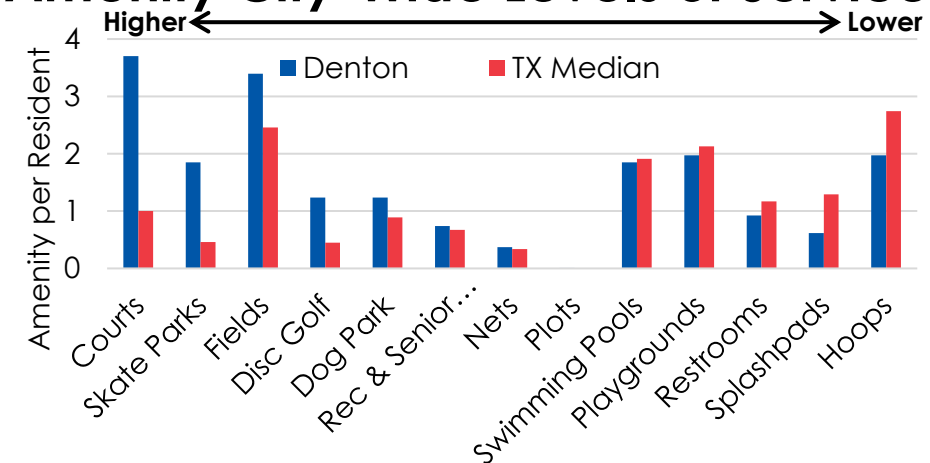
Despite Goals Not Being Met, Expected Park Service Levels are Generally Provided

- Denton generally has average park acreage per 1,000 residents, though some Park Zones have low Neighborhood park acreage.
- Compared to peer cities, Denton residents have a relatively high level of access to parkland.
- Denton's investment in parks & recreation has been increasing.
- Most of Denton's amenity service levels are higher or similar to other Texas cities average.
- City-wide, residents of color and low-income households have higher levels of access to parkland than white residents and high-income households.

Percent of Developed Census Blocks by Parkland Availability

Availability	Park Acres within 10-Min. Walk	All Census Blocks (e.g., NGBHs)	Primarily Residents of Color (14 Blocks)	Primarily White Residents (34 Blocks)	Primarily Low-Income Homes (11 Blocks)	Primarily Higher-Income Homes (41 Blocks)
High	Over 20	21%	21%	35%	7%	29%
Adequate	6 to 20	27%	29%	21%	29%	25%
Low	Less than 6	52%	50%	44%	64%	46%

Amenity City-Wide Levels of Service



Parkland Acquisition & Development Generally Funded Fairly; Fees Assessed Accurately

- Parkland Dedication Ordinance structure aligns with best practices, except for the fee-in-lieu-of-dedication.
 - Fee-in-lieu calculation methodology makes it significantly cheaper for developers to pay the fee versus dedicate land.
 - The development fee, while based on empirical details, likely underestimates the actual cost to develop parks.
- Fees are collected accurately and used geographically per ordinance; payment verification could be streamlined.
- Parks & Rec. expenditures are subsidized by general taxes at lower rates than peer cities with similar service levels.

Inv. Benchmarking Comparison (FY2024)

Parkland Dedication Ordinance Comparison

Best Practice	1998	2022
Land Dedication Req. (Based on Existing Park Acres/People)	2.5 Acres/ 1,000 Pop.	~3.0 Acres/ 1,000 Pop.
Fee-In-Lieu of Dedication (Fair Mkt. Value to Buy Land Req.)	FMV/ Acre	AV/ Parcel
Development Fee (Based on Est. Cost to Dev. Park)	Avg. Cost for 5 Acre Park	Avg. Cost/ Park Acre
Nexus Principle (Connection btw. Park & Development)	3 sq. mil.	~25 sq. mil.
Time Limit (To Expend Fees)	10 yrs.	7 yrs.

Access Service Level	Cities	Per Resident City Inv.	City Rev.
Very High (80-100%)	0	NA	NA
High (60-80%)	4	\$144	\$46
Medium (40-60% of pop. within a 10-min. walk)	Grand Prairie, TX	\$141	\$89
	Waco, TX	\$210	\$7
	McAllen, TX	\$192	\$11
	Denton, TX	\$139	\$53
Low (20-40%)	1	\$45	\$5
Very Low (0-20%)	4	\$97	\$31

Park Assets Tracked; Maintenance Stnds. Established

- Park asset location information is maintained, but condition information is lacking.
 - Age and number of amenities, structures, and systems at each park are not documented.
- Maintenance standards have been established for all park asset types.
 - Individual park assets, including greenspaces, have not been classified per standards.
 - There are limited differences between standards classes for most assets.

Dev. Park Maintenance Standards.

Asset Type	Maintenance	Class A	Class B
Greenspace	Mow	Every 7 Days	Every 14 Days
	Trees	Remove Low Limbs	Remove Hazardous Limbs
	Trash/Litter Pickup	5 Days/Week	1-2 Days/Week
Play Equipment	Playgrounds	Weekly Inspection	
	Nets, Backboards, Striping	Monthly Inspection	
Structures	Restrooms	Clean & Restock Daily Repair in 24 Hrs.	
	Pavilions	Inspect & Clean Weekly	
	Benches, Tables, Grills	Inspect Monthly	
	Fences	Inspect Quarterly	
	Bridges	Inspect Quarterly	
Mechanical Systems	Irrigation Systems	Repair in 48 Hrs.	No Expectation
	Drinking Fountains	Warm Season: Inspect Weekly	
	Water Features	Inspect Weekly	
	Lighting	Inspect Monthly	

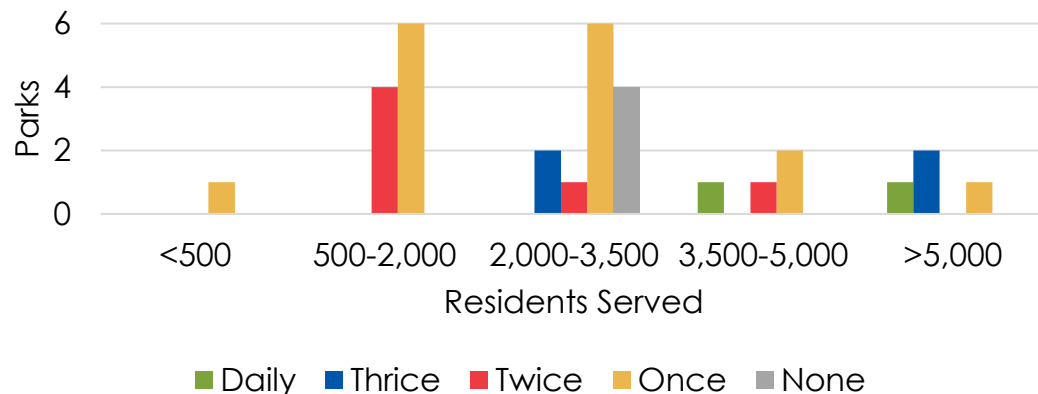


ID 25-340

Maintenance Appears Disconnected from Established Stnds.

- Maintenance schedules are disconnected from the established standards.
- Quality standards and standardized forms have been established for maintenance activities.
 - Work order information is not consistently recorded or retained.
- Documentation of supervisor review is limited; work order system access issues hinder resource usage analysis.

Dev. Park Area Check Frequency by Residents with a 10-Min. Walk



Summary of Form Completeness

	Area Check Form	Trash Route Form	Large Area Mowing Form	Playground Inspection Form
Forms Reviewed:	50	50	6	210
Forms Missing Information				
Who Staff Assigned	2	0	0	7
What Activities Completed	13	11	NA	0
When Time Spent	5	50	1	31
Where Asset Maintained	0	0	0	0
How Equipment Used	NA	0	NA	NA

Management Response Summary

Rec.	Recommendations*	Response	Implementation Actions*
1	Reevaluate long-term acreage level of service goal.	Agree	Will reassess goals as part of the Master Plan update in FY27.
2	Formally establish level of service goals for key park amenities; evaluate the impact of new projects on these goals.	Agree	Will evaluate service levels using GIS analysis as part of the Master Plan update in FY27.
3	Consider establishing level of service resource dist. fairness goals.	Agree	Will evaluate as part of the Master Plan update in FY27.
4	Update the Parkland Dedication Ordinance to ensure fee-in-lieu requirements are proportional by using average cost per acre.	Agree	Will evaluate as part of the 2026 Parkland Dedication Ordinance update.
5	Verify parkland dedication and development fees have been collected.	Agree	Dev. Svcs. Is developing an automated reporting protocol to allow Parks & Recreation to verify fee assignments & collection.
6	Establish a process to manage parkland dedication and developer fee refund requests.	Agree	Will propose a refund protocol as part of the 2026 Parkland Dedication Ordinance update.
7	Formalize procedures for acquiring and developing parkland.	Agree	Will implement GIS analysis to identify priority investment zones & establish timelines for implementation and funding strategies.
8	Record and monitor the condition of park assets.	Agree	Asset inventory conducted; asset management system being implemented.
9	Evaluate how the Maintenance Stnds. Have been operationalized.	Agree	Will evaluate current maintenance standards.
10	Track actual costs for maintaining park assets on a park-basis.	Agree	Asset management system being implemented.
11	Implement a documented quality control and assurance process for park maintenance.	Agree	Will formalize written guidance & SOP.
12	Implement an electronic work order system.	Agree	Asset management system being implemented.
13	Establish SOPs for vendor management.	Agree	Will establish SOPs that define the vendor management process.
14	Formally record mgmt. review of vendor invoices.	Agree	Will establish SOPs that define the vendor management process.
15	Establish SOPs to manage assignment & completion of parks maintenance tasks.	Agree	Asset management system being implemented.

*Detailed recommendations and implementation actions can be seen in the full audit report.

Questions?

Madison Rorschach

City Auditor

City Auditor's Office

