

Executive Summary



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Executive Summary

Introduction

The residents, businesses, and governments within Collin County face a future of population growth that is challenging all aspects of the area's quality of life. The county is on the northern edge of a wave of growth that is remaking the rural and agricultural landscape into a suburban landscape of residential and commercial developments. The population, at about 497,000 in the year 2000, is projected to reach nearly 1.3 million by 2025. The county is also distinguished as being the fastest growing county in Texas between 1990 and 2000, and the 11th fastest growing county nationwide during this same time period.¹

The 7,400+ acres of existing county and municipally-owned parks and open spaces, while extensive, are not sufficient to meet the recreational needs of the projected 2025 population. Instead, ***it is projected that a total of 9,600 acres of new parks, open space, and recreational facilities will be needed by 2025 just to maintain the same level of parks and open space currently enjoyed by the county's existing population*** (for a total of 17,000 existing plus new acres).

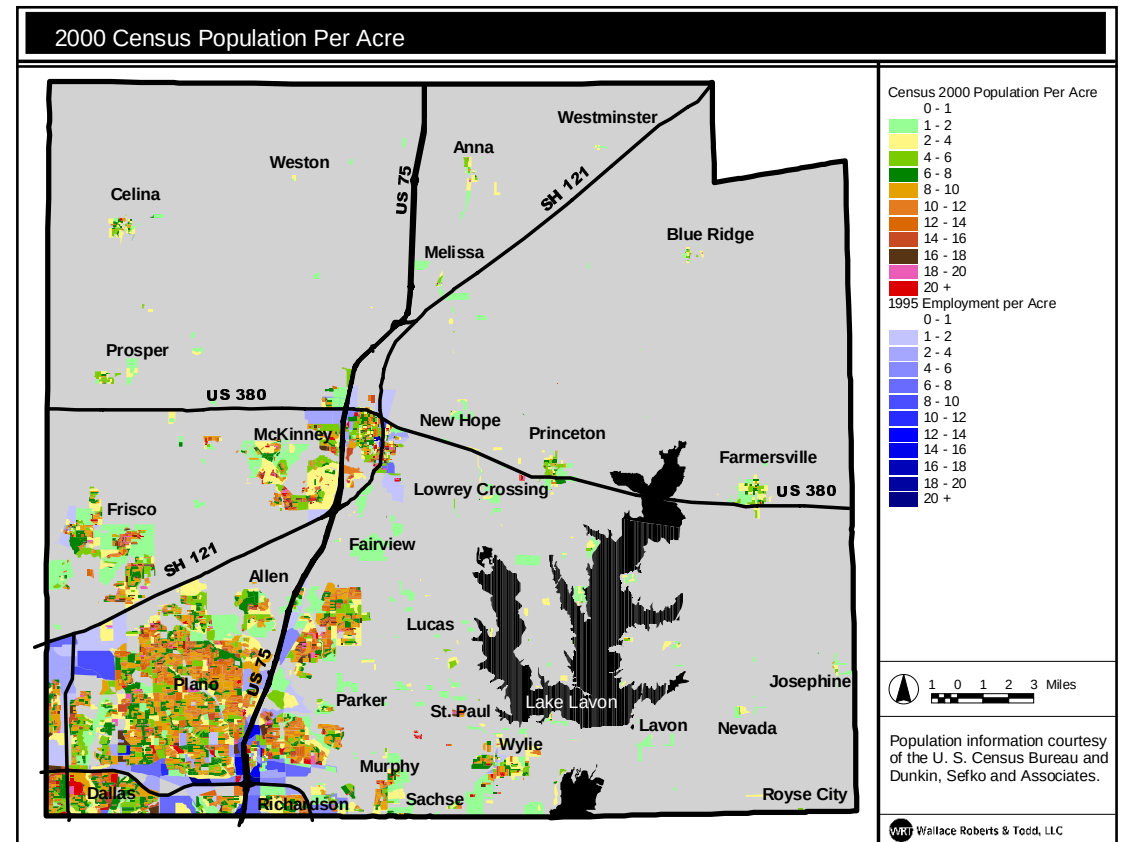
To put the parkland need in perspective, nearly 6,000 lane miles (length of road facility multiplied by number of lanes) of new roads and highways are proposed by the Collin County Thoroughfare Plan in anticipation of the projected population growth. Assuming a cost of

\$500,000 per lane mile for illustrative purposes, implementation of the Thoroughfare Plan would cost nearly \$ 3 billion dollars in 2001 dollars, exclusive of land costs. Water, sewer, stormwater, and other necessary infrastructure items face similar expansion needs and costs.

A coordinated parks and open space system is a necessary element for the future of Collin County. According to John Crompton, of Texas A & M University:

“Evidence is mounting that quality of life is the primary factor in choosing where to locate a business and that access to parks and recreational opportunities is central to quality of life. This is especially true of high tech, research and development industries,

Map ES.1



“Too many community leaders feel they must choose between economic growth and open space protection. But no such choice is necessary. Open space protection is good for a community’s health, stability, beauty, and quality of life. It is also good for the bottom line.”¹⁴



and corporate headquarters. Communities with excellent park systems have a distinct advantage when it comes to luring these companies.”²

Because of the tax revenue implications that come with corporate choices, the financial and political commitments needed to develop the County's Thoroughfare Plan, schools, and water and sewer systems will also be needed to develop a parks and open space system that meets the needs of existing and future residents of Collin County. Without such a commitment, the governments of Collin County and the land and property development sectors may be hard pressed in attracting new businesses, and retaining existing businesses.

The development of a coordinated parks and open space system in Collin County, in addition to needing long term political and financial commitments from the public sector, will also need the private sector, non-profits, special interest groups, utility providers, and individual citizens to make similar long term commitments. The parks and open space system, after all, will be one of the primary factors that determines what it will be like to live and work in Collin County over the next 24 years. ***The parks and open space system, and hence the quality of life, will only be as good as the corporate and citizen commitment to the system.***

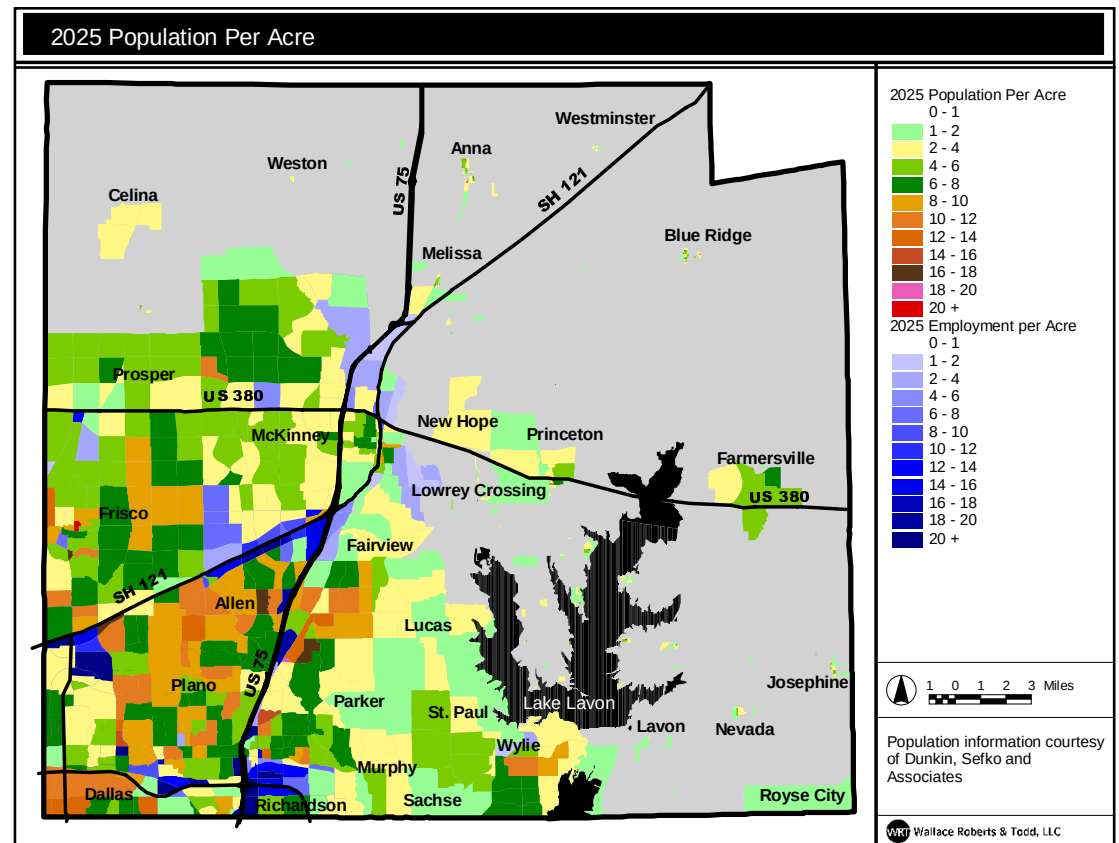
The phenomenal population growth in the county – about a 1,200% increase between 1960 and 2000 – is resulting in ranches, farms, grasslands and tree groves being replaced by single-family homes, shopping centers, and office parks. While growth and change are necessary

“Parks and open spaces are equally as productive contributors to a local economy as roads, utilities and other infrastructure elements. The cost of investing in these elements is justified by the economic value that derives from their availability.”¹⁵

components of life, preserving those historic, cultural and natural elements that make Collin County unique becomes more and more difficult as existing resources are destroyed to make way for new development. The county, for example, was once primarily composed of woodlands hugging the creeks, and Blackland prairie throughout the rest of the county: very little of the native prairie remains in Collin County.

From a cost standpoint, the rapid development in the southwestern part of the county will continue to escalate land prices. Therefore, early, aggressive land acquisition now will provide the best dollar value while also ensuring that the parks and open space system will be available for the burgeoning population.

Map ES.2



The local government's role in the development of the county is critical to the county's future. However, the implementation of the parks and open space system should not be the sole responsibility of the public sector – private corporations, non-profits, citizens, and special interest groups need to significantly participate in the development of a coordinated and integrated system. The combined efforts are particularly needed in Collin County because of its rapid growth – growth that is making it difficult for the public sector to provide and maintain needed infrastructure in a timely, cost-effective manner.

Finally, not only must the County and its cities and towns provide the infrastructure necessary to support development, they must also protect the health, safety and welfare of their residents. The provision of infrastructure such as roads, water service, sewer service, and parklands shapes how the county is developed. Land development and open space policies also set the stage for the types and nature of development that will occur within the county. In its provision of services and regulation of development, the public sector must always remember the needs for fiscal responsibility and respect of individual property rights.

What is the Strategic Plan?

The Strategic Plan is a guidebook for adding new parks and open space resources to the existing system so that current and future generations of Collin County residents can continue to experience the quality of life that makes the county such a great place to live. The recommendations within the Strategic Plan are intended to work with the cities that have park system plans, such as Allen, Dallas, Frisco, McKinney, Plano, Richardson, and Wylie, as well as those smaller communities that do not have park system plans, such as Josephine, Melissa, and Celina. The Plan encourages coordination and cooperation between all levels of government, as well as the partnering with private, non-profit, religious and citizen resources wherever possible.

Since parks and open space systems require, collectively, large amounts of land, acquisition of land for parks and open spaces should be a high priority, and will likely never be as inexpensive as it is today. The Strategic Plan identifies where growth is expected to occur, and proposes the generalized locations of future major parks and trails throughout the County. The proposals within this Strategic Plan are intended to work in conjunction with existing and future municipal level parks and open space planning and development.

Specific locations of future parks and open space, therefore, should be planned with local municipal representatives, or at the county level, with respect to resources in need of protection or with landowners interested in dedicating their land to parks and open space use.

The Strategic Plan also contains an outline of the vision for an integrated system of parks and open space throughout the county. Although the current population of Collin County is less than 50% of that anticipated by 2025, ***the actions of the existing population will determine the quality of life that future residents of the county will experience.*** Action today can allow the parks and open space systems to shape future development, rather than become a system based upon land that remains after an area is developed. Since the provision of public infrastructure at such a rapid pace can be difficult, it is recommended that as many resources as possible be brought together to address infrastructure issues. The marshalling of public, private, non-profit, corporate and citizen resources towards the acquisition and development of parks and open space will be necessary in order for the citizens of Collin County to maintain a high quality of life in the face of such rapid growth and development.

Why are Parks and Open Space Important?

Parks and open space are important because they provide space for play, for relaxation, for environmental protection, for education, and for exercise. They address the active recreational demands of the population by including areas for various activities including baseball, softball, soccer, skateboarding and cycling. They also address the passive recreational demands of the population by including areas for walking, nature watching, and natural, historic, and cultural resource protection. They provide focal points for the communities, as town squares, neighborhood parks, tennis complexes, walking trails, and native prairie remnants.

Parks are generally more developed facilities that are intended for intense use by people. A park might contain, for example, ball fields, playgrounds, swimming pools and recreation centers. Open space, on the other hand, generally includes larger areas of land that are intended to be the places where users can get in touch with the natural resources of the community – and that provide the habitat needed to support the plant and animal communities that once thrived throughout Collin County. Examples of what might be contained in an open space facility include hiking, bicycle, and equestrian



trails, protected woodland, wetland and prairie areas, and perhaps environmental education centers.

Parks and open space can also protect Collin County's future by acting as buffers and filters for water that flows into Lake Lavon, a major source of drinking water for county residents. Protecting the lake and its tributaries from siltation and pollution normally associated with development will help maintain the long term viability of the lake as a drinking water source and recreational area.

Plano, Richardson and Wylie, currently provide approximately 6,664 acres of parkland serving a population of 391,923.⁴

The balance of parks and open space resources are distributed in outlying communities such as Josephine, Farmersville, and Melissa, or in unincorporated areas. While many of the smaller towns and cities face similar fiscal challenges as the larger cities, they do so without the benefit of extensive full time staff. This lack of staff impacts all aspects of the provision of public infrastructure, including the planning, implementation and maintenance of parks and open space resources.

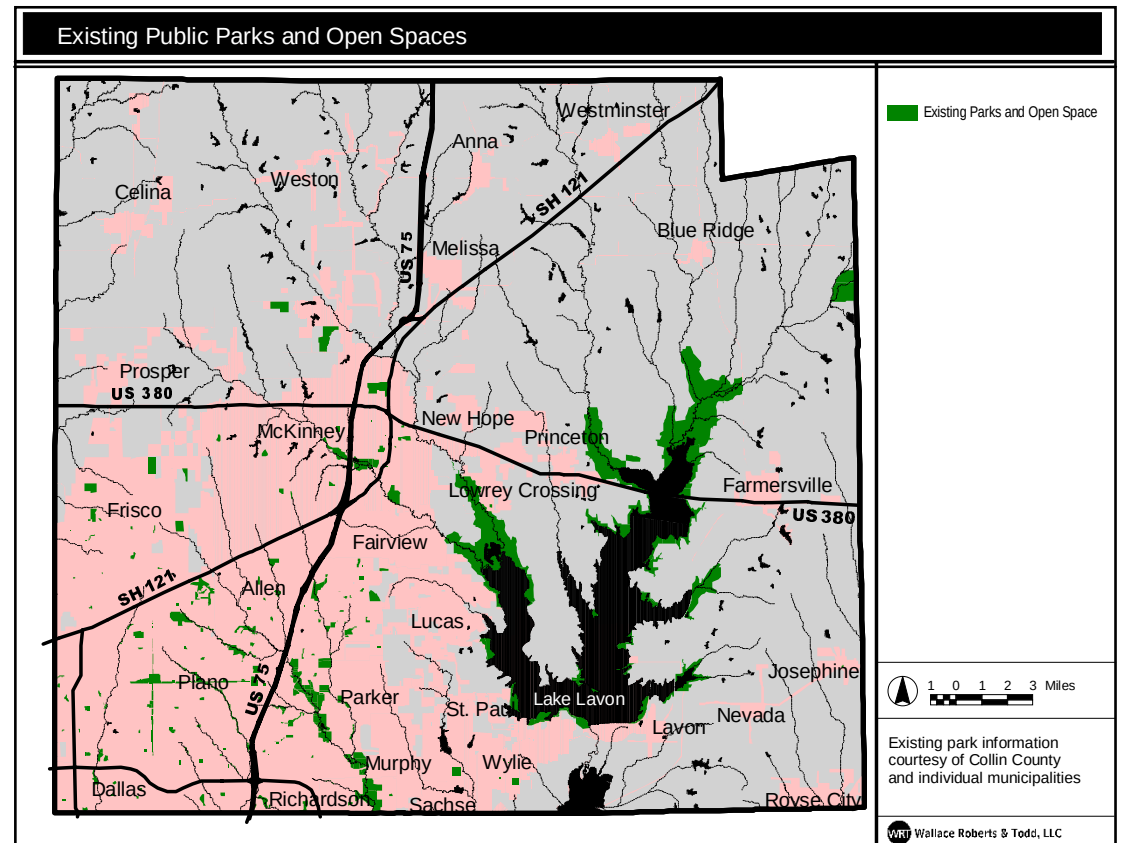
What is the parks and open space system like now?

The existing system of County and municipally owned parks and open spaces in Collin County encompasses roughly 7,411 acres and 112 miles of trails. This system collectively serves a countywide population of approximately 496,806,³ with an overall level of service of 14.9 acres of parks and open space per 1000 people. An additional 2,834 acres of open space, 443 acres of which have been improved into 16 parks, are provided by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers around Lake Lavon.

A wide range of park types and facilities are provided, including active and passive parks as well as sports complexes and natural areas. Approximately 89 percent of the County and municipal park and open space area is municipal parkland, with the largest percentage of the acreage being located in the southwest corner of the county where the majority of the county's population resides. The six major cities, Allen, Frisco, McKinney,

“The real estate market consistently demonstrates that many people are willing to pay a larger amount for a property located close to parks and open space areas than for a home that does not offer this amenity.”¹⁶

Map ES.3



What can the parks and open space system be like in 2025?

The parks and open space system within Collin County, whether publicly or privately provided, will need to provide land and facilities for a population that will approach 1,286,900.⁵

To meet the needs of this anticipated population, the Collin County Parks Foundation, Workshop Committee members, and stakeholders, established the following guiding principles as a conceptual framework for the future parks and open space system in Collin County:

1. the parks and open space system should be diverse in its recreational opportunities and accessible for all citizens of the county as it continues to grow and urbanize;
2. the parks and open space system should be an interconnected, multifunctional system that protects important natural, cultural, and visual resources while providing appropriate opportunities for recreation;
3. the parks and open space system should help to define community form and preserve community character;
4. the parks and open space system should reflect sustainable financial, cultural, and environmental objectives that promote the conservation of natural and human resources for current and future citizens;
5. the parks and open space system should reflect the coordinated planning and conceptualization of the park and open space system at a countywide scale, with implementation at the local community scale;
6. the parks and open space system should include public/private coordination, cooperation, and partnering where possible to obtain key aspects of the plan and the communities' desires;
7. the parks and open space system should be responsive to the needs of developing communities as they plan and manage their individual parks system plans.

Strategic Plan Recommendations

Of the “big 6” six cities of Allen, Frisco, McKinney, Plano, Richardson, and Wylie, the cities of Allen, Frisco, McKinney and Wylie, without action, will face an estimated parkland deficit of from 3,774 to 5,037 acres. This deficit for the cities within the “big 6” is based upon the application of their individual parkland standards to the anticipated population growth.

Countywide, a total of from 7,055 to 9,615 additional acres of parks and open space, including the parkland needed by the “big 6,” are recommended to meet the needs of the projected 2025 population. The estimated parkland need for those areas of the county outside of the “big 6” and Dallas is based upon the Strategic Plan proposed countywide standard of 18 acres of parkland per 1,000 people. This proposed countywide standard was derived from a comparison of local and national standards, and is intended to be a guide for future parks and open space planning, rather than an absolute acreage requirement.

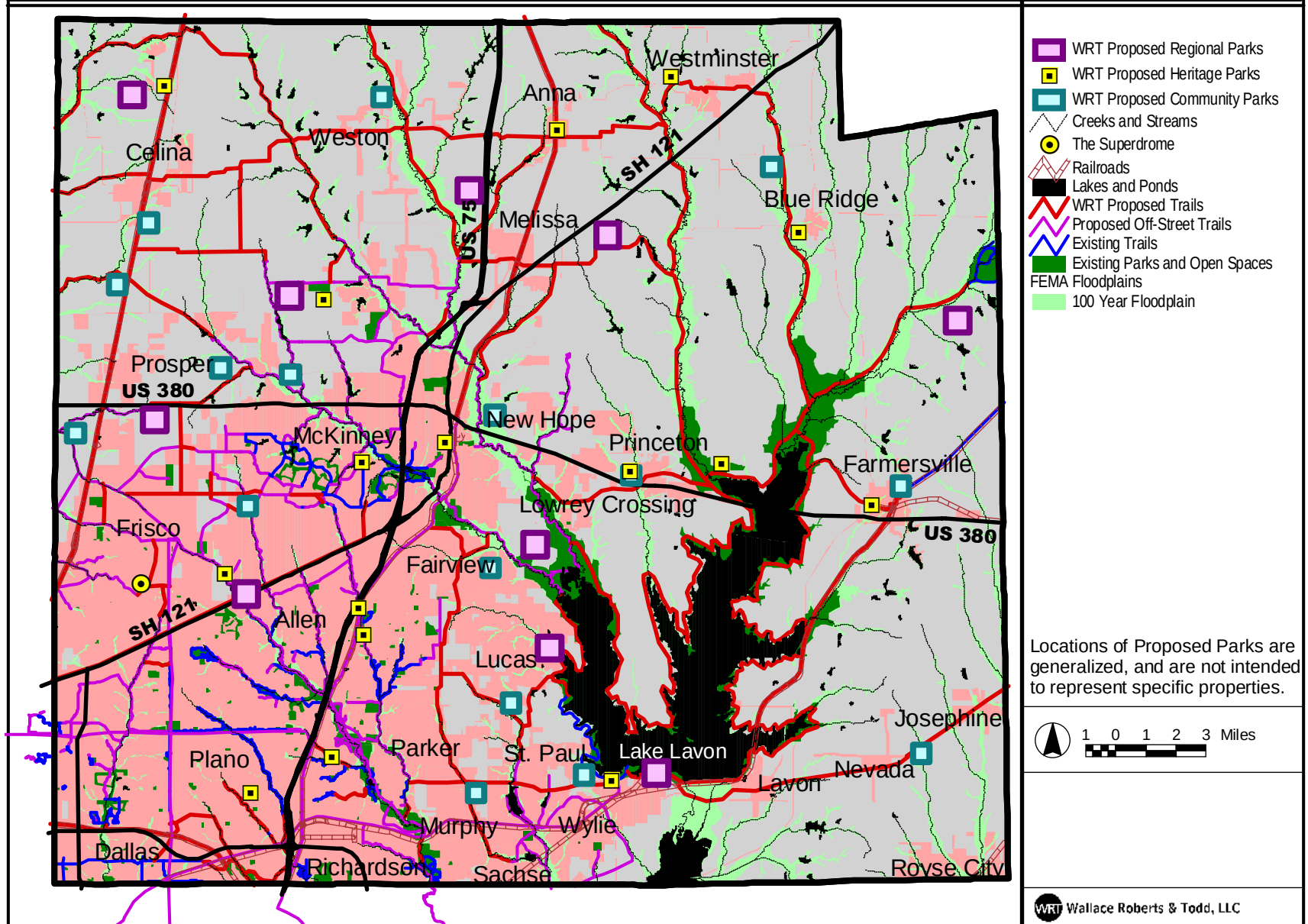
The estimated 2025 countywide parkland need of from 7,055 to 9,615 acres takes into account the existing park and open space resources provided by municipal and county governments. Therefore, the 7,055 to 9,615 acre range represents new parkland that may need to be added to the existing 7,411 acres of parks and open space by 2025. Table ES-A illustrates the ratio of existing and proposed parkland to existing and projected populations. ***As the table indicates, even with a combined maximum total of approximately 17,000 acres of parks and open space, the projected growth of the population to 1,286,900 by 2025 will likely result in a reduction in the parks and open space level of service from existing levels.***

Most of the identified parks and open space needs are anticipated to occur in existing municipalities, or in areas that are within the extra-territorial jurisdictions (ETJ) of the municipalities. Thus, most of the burden of meeting the anticipated recreational needs of the 2025 population will likely fall to municipalities as they annex rapidly growing areas within their ETJs.

To accomplish the continued development of a parks and open space system for the burgeoning population, it is recommended that an average of 400 acres of greenways, parkland and open space be acquired every year for the next 24 years. This land should primarily be acquired in areas that are now experiencing the population boom, or will soon be experiencing the growth. Land should also be acquired, however, in communities that have a



Composite of Existing and Proposed Trails, Parks and Open Space Resources



severe lack of recreational resources, as land acquisition opportunities arise, and in order to protect specific resources. The ultimate goal of the of the land acquisition strategy should be to achieve the addition of 9,615 new, publicly accessible acres to the existing parks and open space systems by 2025, with the additions creating an integrated parks and open space network throughout the county.

It is also recommended that a wide variety of recreational facilities be developed to meet the needs of existing and future residents of the individual cities and the county as a whole. Trails, nature preserves, equestrian facilities and environmental education/preserves lead the list of special facilities desired by citizens that have participated in the Strategic Plan process.⁶ The citizens have also indicated that implementation priority should be given to trails, active sports/community parks, floodplain greenways and regional prairie parks (large open spaces primarily established for the protection and preservation of native Blackland Prairie remnants).⁷

Between 350 and 431 miles of trails are proposed under this plan. These trails are intended to provide facilities for activities such as walking, jogging, hiking, cycling and equestrian use. Primarily proposed along creek corridors, the trail system is designed to link with existing and proposed facilities under consideration by local municipalities, and with regional facilities proposed by the North Central Texas Council of Governments. Consideration of proposed trail facility needs during the planning, design and construction of local, state, and federal road facilities is also recommended. Integration of the proposed recreational trail system with trail systems that link to schools, libraries, neighborhoods and more transportation-oriented trail facilities is strongly encouraged so that an accessible, countywide family-friendly system is created.

Most importantly, the Strategic Plan recommends that the parks and open space system be developed as a coordinated, multi-functional and interconnected system. Each park and open space area should be located, designed and managed to fulfill as many functions as possible. Functions include providing recreation, protecting natural and cultural resources, managing stormwater, reducing erosion, protecting drinking water quality, safeguarding health and safety in floodplains, and defining an attractive open space structure for the future urban development in the county. Proposed linear greenways should connect parks and open space areas to each other and to surrounding neighborhoods and communities. Trails should be developed along the greenways, with a “looped” trail system connecting the major growth areas to each other, to Lake Lavon, and to other open space resources.

It is highly recommended that short-term capital expenditures be focused on acquiring the land in the growth-impacted areas necessary to implement the major elements of the Plan. This will maximize the amount of the land that can be acquired before land values escalate as the urbanization of the county continues.

The acquisition and development of an expanded parks and open space system will rest largely upon the local jurisdictions experiencing the population growth. Collin County, through its 1999 bond referendum, is financially assisting municipalities in the expansion of the overall parks and open space system. Continued substantive long-term financial assistance from the County, as well as from other public and private sources, will facilitate the implementation of the recommendations within this Strategic Plan.

Table ES-A **Acreage and Level of Service**

	Level of Service		
	Acres	Acres / 1000 People	Population*
Year 2000 Existing Parkland	7,411	14.92	496,806
<i>Proposed Parkland</i>	<i>9,615</i>	<i>12.17</i>	<i>790,094</i>
Year 2025 Total Parkland	17,026	13.23	1,286,900

* Collin County - Population and Employment Forecasts: 2025
Prepared by Dunkin, Sefko and Associates, Inc., March 1, 2001

“The evidence clearly indicates that preserving open space can be a less expensive alternative to development. The conclusion is that a strategy of conserving parks and open space is not contrary to a community’s economic health, but rather is an integral part of it.”¹⁷



What will it cost?

The recommendations of the Strategic Plan are to be used as a guide for public officials and staff, private developers, non-profits, corporations and citizens in their endeavors to create a parks and open space system that protects the quality of life within Collin County. As such, the cost estimates included within the Strategic Plan are to be used as a general guide in setting aside funds for future parks and open space acquisition and development. The actual costs will vary as a result of a variety of factors, including changing land prices, changing recreational demands, the comprehensiveness of facilities provided, and the parks and recreational facility development standards utilized by implementing organizations. Thus, each political unit within Collin County must individually determine what their role will be in the provision parks and open space to their constituents.

For the purposes of this Strategic Plan, the parkland need and cost considerations have been divided into four geographic areas: 1) the “big 6” communities (which include Allen, Frisco, McKinney, Plano, Richardson, and Wylie), 2) the City of Dallas, 3) municipal areas not including the “big 6” or Dallas, and 4) unincorporated areas. A further division, 5), is provided for three specific major facilities being considered by County officials. These divisions were undertaken to provide a better basis for estimating current and future parkland resources and needs.

The costs for the anticipated parkland and recreational facilities are based upon needs identified in the four areas listed above. The parkland and recreational facility needs for the “big 6” and the City of Dallas reflect the application of their respective adopted parkland and recreational facility standards to their projected 2025 populations. The parkland and recreational facility needs for unincorporated areas and the municipalities without adopted parkland and recreational facility standards reflect the application of the proposed countywide parkland and recreational facility standards to their projected 2025 populations. The estimated costs for each of the four areas are illustrated in Table ES-B, and are explained below:

- 1) The “big 6” communities, which include Allen, Frisco, McKinney, Plano, Richardson, and Wylie, have an estimated year 2000 population of approximately 392,000 persons. This population is expected to increase to a 2025 population of approximately 935,200.⁸ These six municipal areas, projected to experience the bulk of the growth over the next 24 years, are estimated to require an additional

3,774 to 5,037 acres of parks and open space by 2025. This need is primarily focused in the communities of Allen, Frisco, McKinney and Wylie. The estimated average annual cost range to provide the recommended facilities is from \$23.2 to \$37.7 million per year in 2001 dollars.

- 2) The City of Dallas, which is considered to be completely built-out, is projected to maintain its year 2000 population of approximately 45,000 persons through the year 2025.⁹ The part of Dallas in Collin County, however, faces an estimated existing parkland deficit of approximately 414 acres. The estimated average annual cost range to provide the recommended facilities is from \$31 thousand to \$2.3 million per year in 2001 dollars.
- 3) Municipal areas not including the “big 6” and Dallas, have an estimated 2000 population of 31,800 persons, and are projected to grow to a 2025 population of approximately 160,200.¹⁰ These municipal areas include: Anna, Blue Ridge, Celina, Fairview, Farmersville, Josephine, Lavon, Lowry Crossing, Lucas, Melissa, Murphy, Nevada, New Hope, Parker, Princeton, Prosper, Royse City, Sachse, St. Paul, Westminster, and Weston. These municipalities will require from 2,311 to 2,872 additional acres of parks and open space by 2025. The estimated average annual cost range to provide the recommended facilities is from \$6.3 to \$11.1 million per year in 2001 dollars.
- 4) Unincorporated areas have an estimated 2000 population of approximately 32,200 persons, and are projected to grow to a 2025 population of approximately 109,100.¹¹ These unincorporated areas, under the primary authority of Collin County, will need from 970 to 1,292 additional acres of parks and open space by 2025. The estimated average annual cost range to provide the recommended facilities is from \$4 to \$6.8 million per year in 2001 dollars.
- 5) Major facilities under consideration by Collin County include a large sports facility, an environmental youth camp, and a new agricultural exhibition facility at the Collin County Youth Park. These facilities will likely have costs shared with municipalities, non-profits and private developers, and are estimated to have an additional one-time cost of \$188.4 million.

If the total estimated collective capital expenditures were spread evenly



Table ES-B

Estimated Annual Average Costs by Community

Area	Estimated Year 2000 Population*	Projected Year 2025 Population*	Minimum Parkland Surplus/(Deficit)	Minimum Estimated Annual Capital Cost in 2001 Dollars	Maximum Parkland Surplus/(Deficit)	Maximum Estimated Annual Capital Cost in 2001 Dollars
1 The Big 6						
Allen	43,300	130,000	(598.6)	\$ 2,630,046	(601.4)	\$ 4,028,252
Frisco	32,650	220,000	(1,684.8)	\$ 7,403,147	(1,709.7)	\$ 11,451,784
McKinney	50,200	271,800	(2,853.5)	\$ 12,538,361	(3,053.1)	\$ 20,450,046
Plano	231,650	260,000	1,180.1	\$ -	321.4	\$ -
Richardson	20,873	20,873	322.2	\$ -	265.9	\$ -
Wylie	13,250	32,500	(139.9)	\$ 614,615	(260.0)	\$ 1,741,513
Big 6 Subtotal	391,923	935,173	(3,774.5)	\$ 23,186,169	(5,036.9)	\$ 37,671,595
2 Dallas						
Dallas	45,155	45,155	-	\$ -	(413.7)	\$ 2,301,582
Dallas Subtotal	45,155	45,155	-	\$ 30,863	(413.7)	\$ 2,301,582
3 Smaller Municipalities						
Anna	1,225	4,148	(52.6)	\$ 144,944	(74.7)	\$ 289,992
Blue Ridge	672	2,276	(28.9)	\$ 79,538	(41.0)	\$ 159,166
Celina	1,950	21,000	(342.9)	\$ 944,639	(378.0)	\$ 1,467,431
Fairview	2,644	8,954	(113.6)	\$ 312,896	(161.2)	\$ 625,793
Farmersville	3,118	10,559	(133.9)	\$ 368,980	(190.1)	\$ 737,986
Josephine	575	1,947	(24.1)	\$ 66,312	(31.5)	\$ 122,286
Lavon	387	1,311	(16.6)	\$ 45,819	(23.6)	\$ 91,617
Lowry Crossing	1,229	4,162	(52.8)	\$ 145,440	(74.9)	\$ 290,769
Lucas	3,500	11,900	(151.2)	\$ 416,534	(207.2)	\$ 804,370
Melissa	1,350	4,572	(58.0)	\$ 159,771	(82.3)	\$ 319,496
Murphy	3,150	21,500	(330.3)	\$ 909,928	(387.0)	\$ 1,502,370
Nevada	563	1,907	(24.2)	\$ 66,645	(34.3)	\$ 133,156
New Hope	662	2,242	(28.4)	\$ 78,348	(40.4)	\$ 156,837
Parker	1,900	20,500	(334.8)	\$ 922,325	(369.0)	\$ 1,432,492
Princeton	3,477	11,774	(149.3)	\$ 411,426	(211.9)	\$ 822,616
Prosper	1,850	20,000	(326.7)	\$ 900,011	(360.0)	\$ 1,397,554
Royse City	188	188	-	\$ -	(3.4)	\$ 13,199
Sachse	1,660	5,621	(71.3)	\$ 196,416	(101.2)	\$ 392,868
St. Paul	630	2,133	(27.1)	\$ 74,530	(38.4)	\$ 149,072
Westminster	390	1,321	(16.8)	\$ 46,166	(23.8)	\$ 92,394
Weston	635	2,150	(27.3)	\$ 75,125	(38.7)	\$ 150,237
Smaller Municipalities Subtotal	31,755	160,165	(2,310.8)	\$ 6,365,793	(2,872.6)	\$ 11,151,701
4 Unincorporated Areas						
Unincorporated Areas	32,209	109,071	(970.2)	\$ 3,979,180	(1,292.3)	\$ 6,832,510
Unincorporated Area Subtotal	32,209	109,071	(970.2)	\$ 3,979,180	(1,292.3)	\$ 6,832,510
1 through 4 Subtotal				\$ 33,562,005		\$ 57,957,388
5 County Special Facilities						
Special Facilities	<i>countywide</i>	<i>countywide</i>	<i>as needed</i>	\$ 7,848,958	<i>as needed</i>	\$ 7,848,958
Special Facilities Subtotal				\$ 7,848,958		\$ 7,848,958
Total	501,042	1,249,564	(7,055.4)	\$ 41,410,963	(9,615.5)	\$ 65,806,347

* Population information a combination of data from the Census 2000 and the Collin County - Population and Employment Forecasts: 2025, prepared by Dunkin, Sefko and Associates, Inc., March 1, 2001.



throughout the Plan's 24-year implementation period, the total annual capital cost for the implementation of the estimated municipal and unincorporated parks and open space needs would range from approximately \$33.6 to \$65.8 million in 2001 dollars. This amount does not include any allowance for debt financing. This is equal to an expenditure of from \$68 to \$132 per year, in 2001 dollars, or from 19 to 36 cents per day, for each of the county's existing residents.¹² Within this context, such an expenditure would appear to be a sound investment in the community's livability. If the costs are allocated across the projected 1,286,900 residents anticipated by 2025, the annual per person cost range drops from \$26 to \$51 per year, or from 7 to 14 cents per day.

It should be noted that these figures represent a general cost estimate. They are not intended to represent the financial obligation of any one governmental or private entity. Instead, the cost is intended to represent the estimated combined financial efforts of all of the municipalities, Collin County, non-profits, private citizens, developers, and private corporations. Wherever possible, much of the financing should come from sources outside the local government structure, such as through more interactive relationships between the public and private sectors.

Collectively, the parks, open space and recreational needs for the projected 2025 population in Collin County will be as important to the future development of the county as the new roads, water and sanitary sewer facilities needed to accommodate the County's projected growth. Like the "quality of life" enhancing improvements to the road system, the parks and open space system should be implemented over time, and therefore, cooperative long-term funding and implementation strategies should be developed and employed by the municipalities and Collin County.

The development of new parks, recreation and open space resources will require a corresponding expansion in the ongoing financial commitment to operations and maintenance. A parks system that is poorly maintained becomes a liability to a community rather than an asset. The generally high quality development that is being built throughout Collin County indicates that adequate funding will be necessary for operations and maintenance. This is vital in order to maintain the high "quality of life" which draws new residents and businesses to the county. Like the assignment of capital costs, the commitment to operations and maintenance activities should be spread across the municipalities, Collin County, non-profits, private citizens, developers, and private corporations. Wherever possible, much of the financing should come from sources outside the local government structure, including more

interactive relationships between the public and private sectors.

Regarding the fiscal impact of the Strategic Plan, it should be noted that if the land were developed by the private sector rather than being made part of the parks and open space system, there would still be a public cost implication, i.e., the capital and operating costs required to provide the necessary infrastructure and services to support urban development, as well as the added congestion, air and water pollution associated with urban development. Additionally, studies around the United States have shown that passive parks and open space systems can increase the value of adjacent residential properties, and thus can increase the property tax income from such properties.¹³

How can the Plan be implemented?

Undertaking the land acquisition and improvements program, and providing the funds to adequately operate and maintain the parks system, will require proactive cooperation between the development community, citizens, private corporations, non-profits, land trusts, municipalities and Collin County. All of these entities should explore new strategies and techniques that maximize the leverage and impact of the public monetary commitment to the parks and open space system.

It is highly recommended that immediate action be taken to enact a number of approaches designed to put in place the means by which future parks and open space needs can be met. Using a diversity of implementation techniques and funding sources will broaden the financial and legislative resources

"The use most often competing for potential park land or open space is residential development, and governments often lose money on such development -- that is, it costs more to provide schools, streets and other services than is returned in new taxes. Thus, in many instances, placing the land in recreation use may prevent a drain on the community's finances while engineering a long-term rise in surrounding property values."¹⁸



available to implementing entities. This approach will provide some protection from changing funding and legal environments. As noted in the following discussions regarding individual measures, some techniques will contribute only incrementally to building the implementation approach, while others represent revisions to existing practices, or entirely new practices.

The preservation and expansion of parks and open space in Collin County will most efficiently occur through a cooperative partnership between the County, the municipalities, the development community, private corporations, non-profit organizations, and private landowners. The governments in Collin County, due to limited regulatory power and financial resources, will need the continued input, assistance and cooperation from the citizens of Collin County to ensure that public funds are available and are leveraged to provide maximum benefit and value.

Implementation Recommendations

There are a number of priority recommendations, presented below, which should guide the initial actions of the County, the municipalities, non-profits, private sector, and citizen interests in moving forward with implementation of the Parks and Open Space Strategic Plan for Collin County:

1. Establish a focused, coordinated dialogue between the County, the municipalities, non-profits, the private sector and citizens, designed to specifically advocate the acquisition and development of parks and open space resources;
2. Focus short-term efforts on land acquisition, particularly in areas where new development threatens resources or may inhibit future development of parks and open space facilities;
3. Short-term parkland facility improvements should target those neighborhoods and communities most in need of additional recreational amenities – communities where imminent development may prohibit the acquisition of parkland in the near future, or where valuable natural, cultural or historic resources are threatened by imminent development;
4. Collin County should develop a detailed, financially feasible five-year action program that maximizes the expansion of parks and open space resources for every county dollar expended, whether through direct action, partnering with municipalities, or with other interests. This action program should be ready for implementation

by 2002.

5. Every County-level expenditure that results in land acquisition should be reviewed for its potential to include joint-use as park or open space facilities. A thorough evaluation should be made of the extent to which existing publicly owned land might be dedicated and improved as parkland, in an effort to meet some of the municipal and county recreational facility and open space needs. Similarly, the potential for joint-use of public and private school facilities, as well as other community organizations' facilities, should be examined and defined. The role of non-profit land trusts and privately owned land and facilities should also be assessed.
6. A detailed package of regulatory recommendations should be prepared by Collin County by the end of 2002. In addition to identifying the State-limited regulatory role that is available to the County, the package should also recommend regulatory strategies that should be employed by municipalities in order to support the general development of an integrated and coordinated countywide parks and open space system. This package should address issues such as: parks and open space dedication and/or in lieu fees, floodplain dedication, sensitive lands performance standards, use of flexible development controls such as conservation development and conservation easements, density credit mechanisms, and transfer/purchase of development rights. Due consideration should be given within these recommendations to the role of, and potential credit given to, private recreational amenities in future developments.
7. Approaches to financing the acquisition and improvement of parks and open space should be a necessary part of Collin County and the municipalities' overall provision of service to existing and future residents of the county. Financing and acquisition should employ as many methods as possible to maximize the leverage of public funds with other public, non-profit and private sources of funding.

Summary

In the end, the collective parks and open space system within Collin County will only reflect the commitment, creativity, and hard work of the residents, corporations, non-profits, special interests groups, and elected officials. The residents of Collin County, now numbering around 500,000, represent less than 50% of the anticipated 2025 population, yet the decisions and actions of the current population will have the greatest impact on the future quality of life for the nearly 800,000 new residents anticipated by 2025.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY ENDNOTES

¹ Collin County – Population and Employment Forecasts: 2025 (Dallas: Dunkin, Sefko and Associates, Inc., March 1, 2001) and the 2000 Census.

² Statement from article by Michael Barrette, “Parks and the City,” Planning, August 2001, p. 8.

³ Collin County – Population and Employment Forecasts: 2025 (Dallas: Dunkin, Sefko and Associates, Inc., March 1, 2001)

⁴ The populations of Allen, Frisco, McKinney, Plano and Wylie are as estimated by Dunkin, Sefko and Associates, and only include the populations located within Collin County. The population information for Richardson is from the 2000 Census, and is only for the population located in Collin County.

⁵ Collin County – Population and Employment Forecasts: 2025 (Dallas: Dunkin, Sefko and Associates, Inc., March 1, 2001)

⁶ List derived from a survey distributed at a public meeting held on January 23, 2001, at the Collin County Courthouse.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Collin County – Population and Employment Forecasts: 2025 (Dallas: Dunkin, Sefko and Associates, Inc., March 1, 2001), and the Census 2000 (U. S. Census Bureau, 2001)

⁹ Collin County – Population and Employment Forecasts: 2025 (Dallas: Dunkin, Sefko and Associates, Inc., March 1, 2001) – population assumption made by DSA

¹⁰ Collin County – Population and Employment Forecasts: 2025 (Dallas: Dunkin, Sefko and Associates, Inc., March 1, 2001), and the Census 2000 (U. S. Census Bureau, 2001)

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Total Cost estimated to range from \$805,488,125 to \$1,579,352,328 in 2001 dollars, and includes parkland need for the “big 6”, Dallas, the smaller municipalities and unincorporated areas. Population used for the calculation is the 2000 population of 496,806, as estimated by Dunkin, Sefko and Associates, March 1, 2001

¹³ Fausold, C.J., and R.J. Lilieholm. 1999. The Economic Value of Open Space: A Review and Synthesis. *Env. Mgmt.* 23(3):307-320.

¹⁴ Rogers, Will. 1999. in the Introduction to *The economic benefits of parks and open space* by Steve Lerner and William Poole. San Francisco: Trust for Public Land.

¹⁵ Crompton, John L. 2000. The Impact of Parks and Open Space on Property Values and the Property Tax Base. Ashburn, VA: National Recreation & Park Association.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission. 1962. *Outdoor recreation for America*. Washington, DC: Superintendent of Documents.

