

Chapter 6 | Parks Plan Update

Introduction

One key element for a healthy, livable community is space devoted to satisfying active and passive recreational needs. The quality of local park and recreation services is determined by the amount of recreational space in a community, the distribution of this space, and the quality of amenities offered within them. Together, these factors create spaces that are components that enhance and contribute to the quality of life found in the community. Society’s growing health awareness makes recreational opportunities increasingly important for all age groups. Ultimately, a recreation plan can help enhance quality of life for residents by promoting increased park service levels. As North Texas continues to expand, citizens are becoming more aware of the diminishing amounts of open spaces around their communities. This awareness leads to an increased interest in open space preservation. Likewise, rural landscapes and natural areas including creeks, lakes, prairies and wooded areas, are receiving more visitors than previous years. According to the National Recreation and Park Association, parks and recreation possess three values that make them essential services to communities: 1) economic value, 2) public health and environmental benefits, and 3) social importance.



Moore Park



Stonegate Park



Downtown Gazebo



Parkway Park

Existing Conditions

The City of Alvarado created its first Parks Master Plan in 2004. The Plan was completed within the guidelines of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) requirements to meet grant eligibility. In keeping with these requirements, the Plan was updated in 2010. The Plan outlined the existing conditions and conducted a needs assessment for future park facilities. The objective of the Plan is to have 14 acres of park for every 1,000 residents. This Parks Master Plan Update is comprised of an inventory of existing conditions, an assessment of community needs of the park system, and recommendations.

Existing Park Inventory

As shown in **Figure 38**, there are seven park and recreational areas within Alvarado. **Table 11** outlines the classification and acreage of each park. In total, Alvarado has approximately 42 acres of park land.

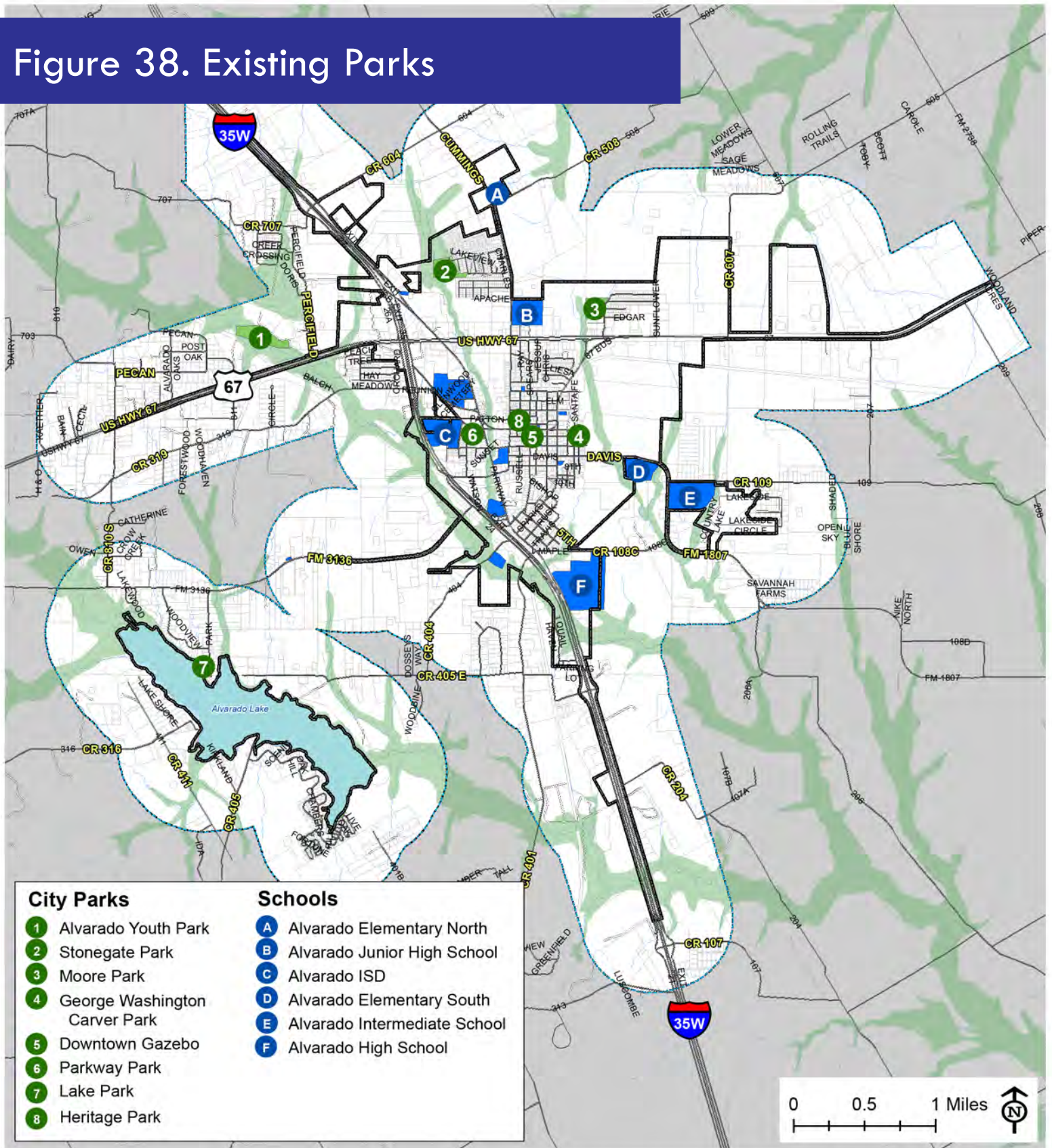
Table 11. Existing Park Inventory

| Park Name | Park Classification | Site Area (Acres) | Amenities |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|---|
| Alvarado Youth Park (AYSA)* | Community Park | 20.0 | Soccer, baseball, and football fields |
| Downtown Gazebo | Special Use Park | 0.3 | N/A |
| Lake Park | Special Use Park | 3.4 | Boat ramp |
| Moore Park | Community Park | 6.4 | Baseball field |
| Parkway Park | Neighborhood Park | 3.56 | Pavilion, play area, trails, skate park, washer pit |
| Stonegate Park** | Neighborhood Park | 8.3 | N/A |
| George Washington Carver Park | Mini Park | 0.9 | N/A |
| Heritage Park | Special Use Park | 0.59 | Museum |

*Privately owned facility, leased to the City

** Currently held in a private trust, to become dedicated parkland at a future date

Figure 38. Existing Parks



Existing Parks

- Parks and Open Space
- Schools
- Floodplain

Types of Parks

The purpose of the classifications and standards is to establish guidelines for park systems. These classifications balance amenities and access yet are appropriate for the community’s size and existing conditions. The following classifications and general considerations were developed to promote a park system that is measurable and supports the community’s vision. The classifications create a hierarchy of park types through sizes, location, recreational types, and service areas.

Mini Park

Mini parks are the smallest park unit for the local park system and are used to address limited, isolated, or unique recreational needs. Alternatively, these parks can serve as minor trailheads to access a trail or park network in a residential area. Generally, these park types are centrally located in a neighborhood and serve a limited population or smaller group of residents. In addition, Mini Parks can be used as a neighborhood stabilization technique to increase branding, property values, and the livability of a specific neighborhood. These parks should be very accessible, limited in purpose, and provide close-to-home park services. While the mini park classification is used by many communities, only general descriptions are provided in this plan. A Mini Park serves up to a 1/4-mile radius. Mini parks generally range in size and are up to one acre and usually contain a playground and picnic area. Many of these are built by developers and can be operated and maintained by a homeowner’s association.

Figure 39. Mini Park

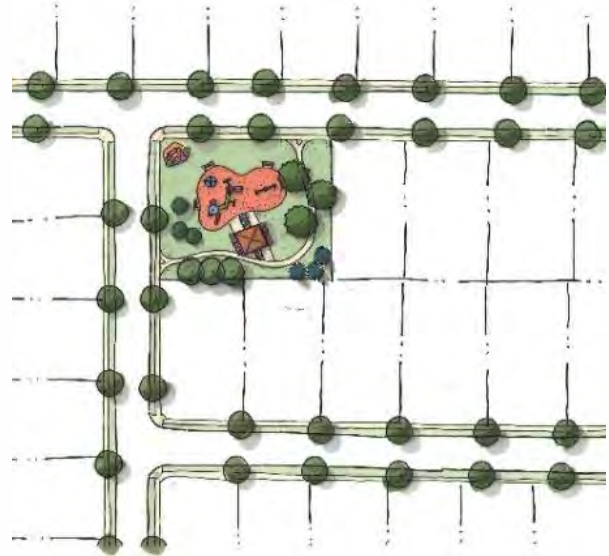


Table 12. Mini Park Summary

| |
|--|
| Typical Size |
| Up to 1 acre |
| Typical Service Area and Service Level |
| 1/4-mile radius serving a limited population or small group of residents |
| Location Criteria |
| Centrally located in a small neighborhood or neighborhood area |
| Design Considerations |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used to address limited, isolated, or unique recreational needs. • Can serve as minor trailheads to access a trail or park network in a residential area. • Can be used as a neighborhood stabilization technique to increase branding, property values, and the livability of a specific neighborhood. • Should be very accessible, limited in purpose, and provide close-to-home park services. • Usually contain a playground and picnic area. • Many of these are built by developers and can be operated and maintained by a Homeowners Association. |

Neighborhood Park

This unit of the park system serves as the recreational and social focus for neighborhoods. Neighborhood parks are larger in size than Mini Parks and focus on serving a broader population to meet the recreational needs of several neighborhoods and a larger geographic section of the community. They are still limited in population served and should be very accessible. The neighborhood parks for the City are smaller than community parks but their contribution to levels of service and amenities for residents are much greater than traditional mini parks. These medium-sized parks should generally be in the center of neighborhood areas with trail access. These parks may also serve to preserve natural resources including creeks, streams, slopes, greenbelts, or floodplain areas. Neighborhood parks should include a range of both active and passive recreational opportunities and needs that are not featured at mini parks. They should consist of amenities for all user groups including limited use by organized team sports.

Figure 40. Neighborhood Park



Table 13. Neighborhood Park Summary

| |
|---|
| Typical Size |
| 2 to 10 acres |
| Typical Service Area and Service Level |
| About 0.5-mile radius, or several neighborhoods; 1 acre per 1,000 residents |
| Location Criteria |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Near the geographic center of a residential area or central to several neighborhoods • Accessibility via of trails and sidewalks or low-volume residential streets increases use and viability; street access should be required on at least one side of the park |
| Design Considerations |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Placement near greenbelts and trail corridors will help to provide trail access and connectivity to parks throughout the community's system • Some vehicular surface parking, in addition to on-street parking, may be needed based on the individual park design, users, and programming • Safe pedestrian access should be provided to the park and include safe internal circulation • Aesthetic landscape plantings and protection from the sun through shade structures or trees • Signage including monument park sign, necessary trail signs, and posted administrative requirements • Typical amenities include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Children's playground with fall surface and equipment ○ Hard surface play areas or court games such as basketball, tennis, and volleyball ○ Limited sport field(s) ○ Small lawn for passive non-organized play such as toss or Frisbee ○ Pavilions ○ Loop trails and trail head connections to any adjacent trail system ○ Passive recreation elements and site furnishing such as tables, benches, trash bins, bike racks, and shade structures or pavilions ○ Gardens or water features |

Community Park

Community Parks are larger in size than neighborhood parks. Their focus is on serving a broad population to meet the recreational needs for a large geographic section of the community. These parks include a wide range of active and passive recreation opportunities. They can help to provide those recreational needs that are not featured at neighborhood parks. These parks may also serve to preserve natural resources including creeks, streams, slopes, greenbelts, or floodplain areas. Community parks consist of amenities for all user groups and should include facilities for organized team sports. Community parks can also include an array of special recreational amenities like sports complexes, a trail network, fitness-focused equipment and educational facilities.

Figure 41. Community Park



Table 14. Community Park Summary

| |
|--|
| Typical Size |
| 10 to 50 acres |
| Typical Service Area and Service Level |
| About 1-mile radius or major geographic section of the City; 8 acres per 1,000 residents |
| Location Criteria |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated to maximize service areas and accessibility while minimizing unnecessary overlap in service level coverage • Consider the physical barriers such as highways • Incorporate natural features when possible and could be situated along greenbelts to include nature areas and access to adjacent trail systems • Often located near major roadways, parks and park expansions should consider park visibility from adjacent areas |
| Design Considerations |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Placement near greenbelts and trail corridors will help to provide trail access and connectivity to parks throughout the community's system • Vehicular parking requirements based on the individual park's programming • Safe pedestrian access and safe internal circulation • Protection from the sun through shade structures or trees • Facilities should have aesthetic landscape plantings • Park signage should include monument park sign, necessary trail signs and posted administrative requirements • Typical amenities include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Children's playground with fall surface and equipment ○ Hard surface play areas or court games such as basketball, tennis, and volleyball ○ Sports and practice fields for organized team sports ○ Walking loop, trails, access to trail systems, and trail head connections to adjacent trails ○ Splash pads or swimming pool ○ Open lawn for passive non-organized play such as toss or Frisbee ○ Passive recreation elements and site furnishings such as tables, benches, trash bins, bike racks, and shade structures or pavilions ○ Restrooms and support facilities such as maintenance buildings |

Regional Park

Regional Parks are generally the largest park classification for cities of Alvarado’s size park system. They provide recreational amenities to the entire community and even serve as a hub for surrounding communities. Often, regional parks help to protect and showcase valuable natural resources such as habitat preserves or bodies of water. Regional parks include a very wide range of active and passive recreational opportunities. They can help to provide those recreational needs not featured at neighborhood or community parks. These types of parks can be an economic generator by attracting visitors from several communities or even other parts of the state.

Figure 42. Regional Park



Table 15. Regional Park Summary

| |
|---|
| Typical Size |
| Varies in size depending on programming, location and natural features |
| Typical Service Area and Service Level |
| Generally, a destination point, service area is the entire community and surrounding region |
| Location Criteria |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to the targeted program element of these parks, there are no specific site selection criteria • Their locations should serve as a hub to surrounding region • New parks and park expansions should consider park visibility from adjacent roadways • Often associated with community branding and identity • Many times, regional park locations are solely based on available lands to accommodate such large sites • Site selections often consider regional access and convenient wayfinding for visitors • Highly visible locations support the greater economic impact regional parks can have |
| Design Considerations |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vehicular parking should be required based on the individual park’s programming • Safe pedestrian access should be provided to the park and as internal circulation • Design for regional parks should consider the community’s overall character and their impact for economic development • Facilities should have aesthetic landscape plantings and trees • Park signage should include monument park sign, necessary trail signs and posted administrative requirements |

Special Use Park

Special use parks can cover a wide range of facilities and descriptions but are most likely oriented for a single purpose. These types of parks serve the community in many ways including economic development, defining character and promoting community pride. Their activities can include single uses such as performing arts, gardens or a community center.

Special use parks generally fall into three categories:

1. Social/Cultural/Historic Sites - plazas, squares, municipal sites or historic sites
2. Recreational Facilities - senior center, golf course, nature center, community center or aquatic facility
3. Outdoor Recreational Facilities - stadium or sports complex for single type event

Figure 43. Special Use Park



Table 16. Special Use Park Summary

| |
|--|
| Typical Size |
| Varies in size depending on programming, location and natural features |
| Typical Service Area and Service Level |
| Generally, a destination point, service area is the entire community and surrounding region |
| Location Criteria |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to the targeted program element of these parks, there are no specific site selection criteria • Special use parks should be visible and fit into the community’s existing development patterns • Their locations should serve as a hub to surrounding use • New parks and park expansions should consider park visibility from adjacent roadways • Often associated with community branding and identity |
| Design Considerations |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vehicular parking should be required based on the individual park’s programming • Safe pedestrian access should be provided to the park and as internal circulation • Design for special use parks should consider the community’s overall character and their impact for economic development • Facilities should have aesthetic landscape plantings and trees • Park signage should include monument park sign, necessary trail signs and posted administrative requirements |

Standards-Based Assessment

The standards-based assessment uses established guidelines set by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA). A level of service is described for park types and how they serve the community. The level of service represents a specific acreage of park land, number/type of facilities, or number of parks needed per given population or area. Two types of standards were examined: acreage and facilities. A minimum of 10 acres per 1,000 residents is commonly used as a guide for park planning. According to the NRPA, close-to-home parks (Mini, Neighborhood, and Community) park acreage should be between 6.25 and 10.25 per 1,000 residents.

Table 17. NRPA Standards

| Park Type | NRPA Recommended Acres per 1,000 Persons | Recommended Park Size | Recommended Service Area |
|-------------------|--|-----------------------|---|
| Standard Parks | | | |
| Mini Park | 0.25 to 0.5 acres | 1 acre or less | About 0.25-mile radius |
| Neighborhood Park | 1 to 2 acres | Up to 10 acres | About 0.5-mile radius, or several neighborhoods |
| Community Park | 5 to 8 acres | 10 to 50 acres | About 1 mile radius, up to entire community |
| Other Parks | | | |
| Regional Parks | Varies | Varies | Varies |
| Special Use Parks | Varies | Varies | Varies |

Table 18 examines Alvarado’s current level of service for each park type based on acreage. **Figure 44** shows the current service area of each park. **Table 18** shows that Alvarado currently has adequate parkland acreage for neighborhood parks, but currently needs more parkland acreage for mini and community parks. **Table 18** also shows that Alvarado will need to continue acquiring parkland in the future as the City grows to provide adequate parkland acreage for future residents.

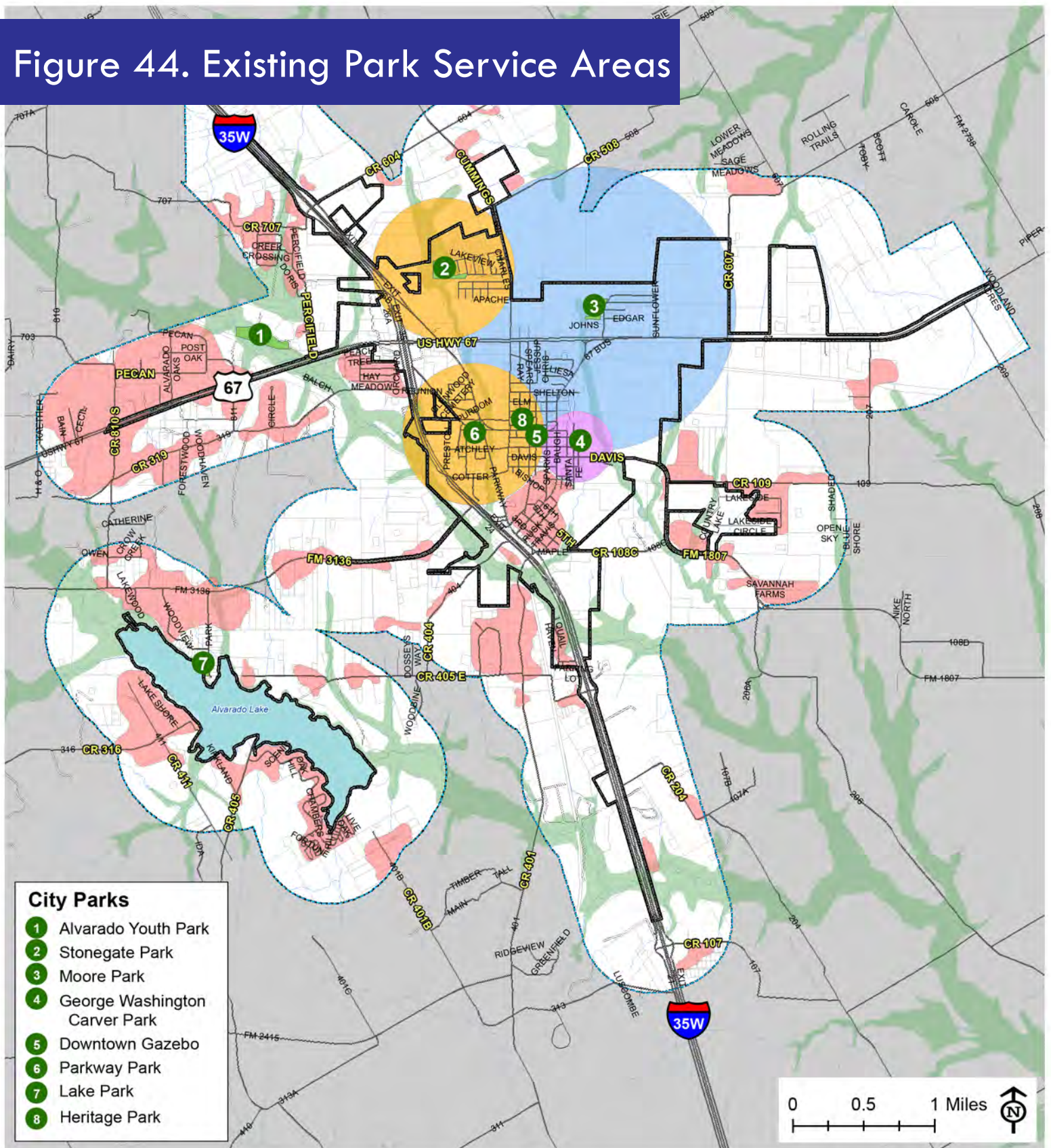
Table 18. Existing Park Level of Service Analysis

| Park Type | Existing Acres | NRPA’s Rec. Acres per 1,000 people | Current Acres per 1,000 people* | 2020 (based on pop of 4,973**) | | 2030 (on pop of 7,723**) | |
|--------------|----------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|
| | | | | Total Acres Needed | Add’l Acres Needed | Total Acres Needed | Add’l Acres Needed |
| Mini | 0.9 | 0.25 - 0.5 ac | 0.2 | 1.2 | 0.3 | 1.9 | 1.0 |
| Neighborhood | 13.9 | 1 - 2 ac | 3.3 | 7.5 | -3.8 | 11.6 | 0.3 |
| Community | 26.4 | 5 - 8 ac | 6.3 | 29.8 | 3.4 | 46.3 | 19.9 |
| Regional | 0 | Varies | 0 | N/A | | | |
| Special Use | 4.1 | Varies | 0.8 | N/A | | | |

*Based on an existing population of 4,170

**Based on a growth rate of 4.5%

Figure 44. Existing Park Service Areas



- City Parks**
- 1 Alvarado Youth Park
 - 2 Stonegate Park
 - 3 Moore Park
 - 4 George Washington Carver Park
 - 5 Downtown Gazebo
 - 6 Parkway Park
 - 7 Lake Park
 - 8 Heritage Park

Existing Park Service Areas

- Parks and Open Space
- 1 Mile Community Park Zone
- 1/2 Mile Neighborhood Park Zone
- 1/4 Mile Pocket Park Zone
- Unserviced Residential
- Floodplain
- + City Limits
- + ETJ



Parks Plan Recommendations

Pedestrian Amenities

SIDEWALKS

Providing sidewalks within the City will encourage walkability in Alvarado by providing a protected pathway and creating a sense of safety. If residents can easily see and identify a clearly delineated pathway to an intended location, they have a sense of security in walking to that destination. Sidewalks are not needed on every street in the City, but should connect key locations in the City. In some areas of the City, sidewalks may not be feasible due to lack of right-of-way. Ideal locations for sidewalks are near schools, parks, downtown, and near other heavily travelled destinations. To ensure safe crossings at intersections, all intersections where sidewalks are present should have enhanced crosswalks. This can include elements like signage or painted crosswalks. It is important that all sidewalks be ADA compliant to ensure that all of Alvarado’s residents can benefit from the sidewalk system. Each year, the City should budget for maintenance to existing sidewalks and construction of new sidewalks. Additionally, all new developments should be required to have a sidewalk system that connects to the overall system.



CITY-WIDE TRAIL SYSTEM

This effort will require a phased approach with milestone goals to implement a given number of linear feet per year. The trails and off-street facilities provide the desired links to key points of interest in the community such as schools, future parks, other existing trails and non-residential areas. While a trail destination places additional emphasis on a recreation activity such as hiking, off-street routes could be used for both daily needs and recreation. Greenbelt trails emphasize a strong relationship with the natural surroundings. The top priorities for implementing a well-connected trail system are:

- Provide trail access from neighborhoods
- Require new subdivisions to provide trail amenities and connections to the city-wide trail system
- Implement trails along greenbelts/preserved open space areas
- Increase pedestrian route facilities along major corridors
- Acquire/secure land easements for future greenbelt trails
- Plan for off-street pedestrian facilities paths adjacent to select roadways
- Provide a safe north-south trail connection across US-67
- Provide a safe east-west trail connection across IH-35W



Future Parks

ACQUIRE MORE PARKLAND

The objective of the 2010 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan is to have 14 acres of parkland for every 1,000 residents. **Table 18** provides a more detailed analysis of the parkland needed in Alvarado. This City should work to acquire approximately 4.8 acres of parkland by 2030.

Future Community Park

A new location for a community park is recommended in the east planning area to the east of Alvarado Intermediate School. A new community park will serve more residents and provide more recreational amenities. The community park should have the following amenities:

- Baseball/softball fields
- Soccer fields
- Swimming pool or splash pad
- Pavilions and picnic tables
- Playgrounds
- Walking/jogging trail

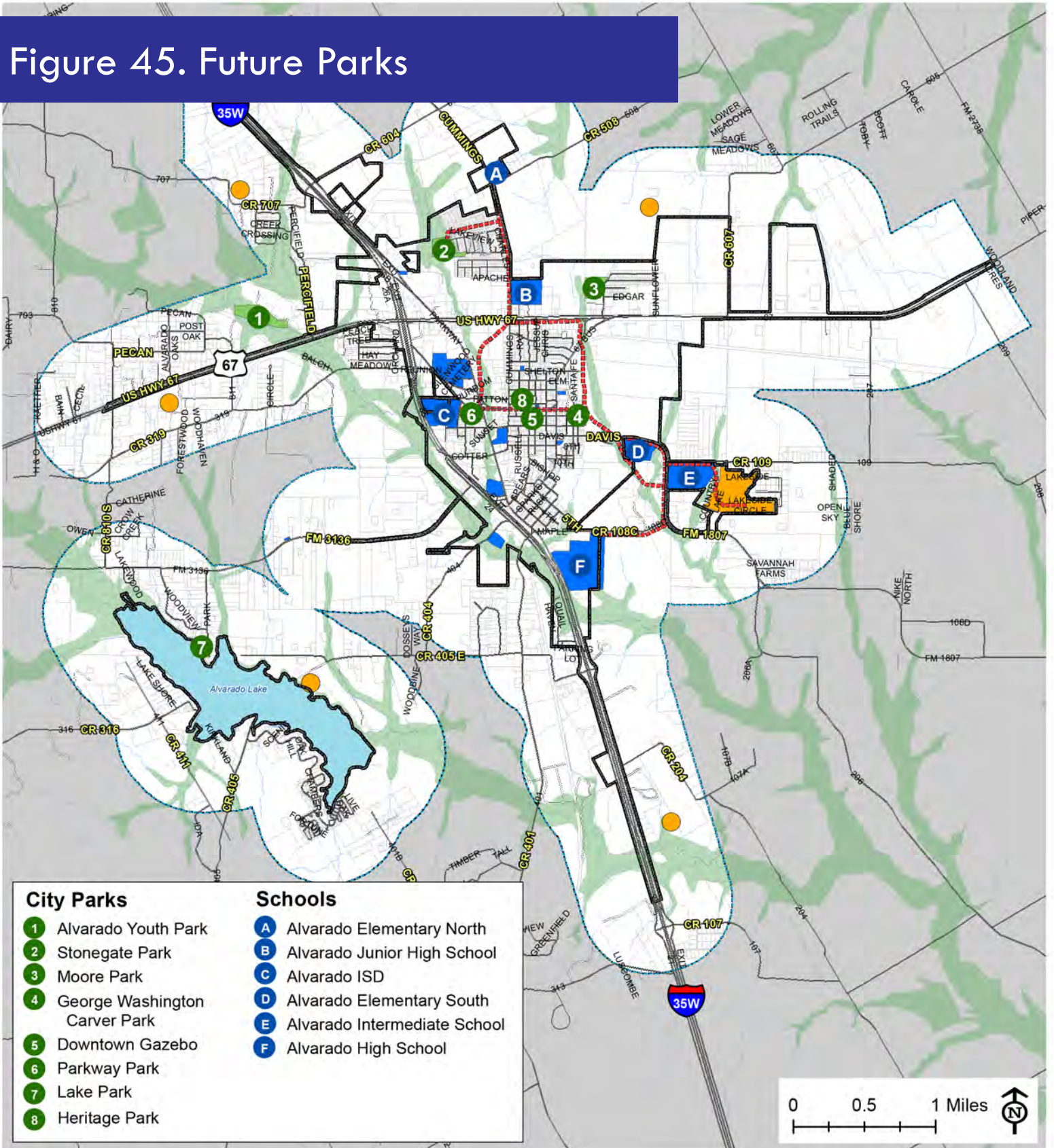
Sports Complex

With residential development comes the need for parks and schools. The City should include the Alvarado ISD officials in all planning efforts to ensure that future school sites are well-coordinated with parks and other developments. The addition of a sports complex could be integrated with the addition of a new community park. This sports complex will attract weekend visitors to Alvarado. It is important that the complex has easy access to nearby hotels and restaurants.

PARKLAND DEDICATION ORDINANCE

A parkland dedication ordinance should be used to require developers to dedicate parkland in all new developments. This will ensure that adequate parks and open space are created as growth and development occurs. The ordinance can be written in way that will allow a development to pay a fee in lieu of parkland, if they wish. This money then must be used by the City for parks and recreation.

Figure 45. Future Parks



Future Parks

- Proposed Trail
- Parks and Open Space
- Future Mini Park
- Schools
- Future Community Park/Sports Complex
- Floodplain
- + City Limits
- + ETJ

Park and Trail Priorities

1. Upgrade and improve Moore Park to meet current standards as well as other sites that do not meet modern safety and accessibility standards.
2. Continue in the beautification of the City's entryways, parks, medians, and other public spaces.
3. Develop a barrier-free baseball field and playground that promotes interaction between physically challenged and able bodied children.
4. Consider the development of the historic wagon barn east of City Hall as a park with additional municipal parking.
5. Acquire the open space contiguous to George Washington Carver Park.
6. Begin to develop a pedestrian trail system that links schools, parks, and neighborhoods.
7. Where possible, acquire and preserve open space for future park development, including sites identified as Fannin, Wellborn, and the dedication of Stonegate, currently held in trust.
8. Acquire enough developable open space to accommodate the construction of a major athletic complex large enough to host tournament play.
9. Acquire the remainder of the pond/open space at Stonegate.
10. Identify and where possible, preserve and enhance significant stands of native vegetation and wetlands.
11. Acquire and preserve creek corridors when available, particularly Buddy Goldsmith Creek.
12. Work with the Alvarado youth organizations to develop, renovate and expand athletic fields and support facilities.