

## Chapter 5

### Existing Conditions



#### 5.1 Introduction

Planning for the future of community development in The Colony requires assessing and understanding the city as it exists today. As discussed in Chapter 2, the Planning Team has based the Community Development Master Plan on five components – City Image & Beautification, Arts, History, Culture, and Parks, Open Space & Recreation. Below each of these components are analyzed so that we might better understand what our baseline is in determining a direction for the future. First the state of City Image & Beautification is discussed, then Parks, Open Space & Recreation, and Arts, History & Culture (grouped together here because of their similarity).

#### 5.2 City Image & Beautification

In the public input sessions (discussed in Chapter 4), *identity* was mentioned repeatedly as something that the community values, yet does not feel is well-established. Identity is important in terms of community cohesion, the physical character or appearance of The Colony, and the city's outward image – the combination of its community cohesion and physical character...in other words, the city's reputation. It is possible to identify elements of community cohesion and physical character or appearance through interaction with the citizenry and the Planning Team's experience within the city. However, assessing outward image would require interviewing people living in other cities on their opinion of The Colony. Therefore, community cohesion and physical character of The Colony are assessed below with the outward image to be inferred by the reader.

## 5.2.1 Community Cohesion

Several issues were unearthed through the public input sessions and the Planning Team’s review of the 2006 Citizen Survey. Many of these issues relate to “branding” issues while others relate to geographic constraints and divisions between citizens.

### Branding

Three primary items related to community “branding” were often mentioned in the Planning Team’s work with citizen input and through the overall planning process:

- Citizens are not sure of what demonym<sup>1</sup> to use for themselves.
- The City recently updated its logo through a branding exercise.
- The Colony has very active youth sports associations and is the host to many regional athletic tournaments.

The issue of a City demonym was mentioned multiple times as a point of confusion among citizens – people are not sure if they are Colonists, Colonials, Colonites, Colowegians, or something else. Most assume that “Colonists” is the most reasonable demonym, but there has never been an official declaration of such a name. The adoption of a unifying name for citizens to refer to themselves as will help to achieve a footing for further strengthening community cohesion and should be a priority for the City.

In 2008, The City of The Colony updated its City logo to a more modern interpretation of the former logo. The new logo retains the sail boat and wave pattern present in the former logo while updating the colors and artwork to have a more modern appearance. What has yet to be seen, however, are the implications of this updated logo: How quickly will it replace the old logo? How will it improve the image of the City? How prevalent will it be throughout The Colony?

Lastly, the active youth sports associations and leagues form a culture within The Colony that serves a major role in fostering community cohesion. The Colony, more than most communities in North Central Texas, participates heavily in youth sports and hosts many athletic tournaments that draw participants and spectators from across the region and the State. As such, this youth sports culture can be seen as an identity-giving feature of The Colony.

### Geographic Constraints & Divisions

Three primary items related to geographic constraints and divisions are present in The Colony that affect community cohesion:

- Many people are unsure of where The Colony’s city limits begin and end.
- The city is seen by residents as fragmented between neighborhoods.
- There are few venues for people to congregate or meet.

One of the issues that the Planning Team heard discussion of the most during the Public Input sessions was lack of understanding where The Colony’s city limits are located.

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<sup>1</sup> A *demonym* is a word that denotes a people from a certain geographic location. Examples are: Americans, Dallasites, Fort Worthians, and Texans.

Many people commented when driving into the City, they were unsure of when they were in The Colony and when they were not. In fact, many people were unaware that Austin Ranch and The Tribute are located within The Colony's city limits.

There were many comments during the Public Input sessions that the City feels fragmented between neighborhoods. Specifically, it was mentioned repeatedly that neighborhoods like The Legends, The Tribute, and Austin Ranch feel completely separate from the other neighborhoods in the City, both in terms of neighborhood design and amenities and in terms of culture within the neighborhoods.

Another, though less related, geographic constraint is that people find there to be too few places for people to meet and/or congregate with each other. This is true for both a lack of public venues as well as a lack of private venues. The exception to this is outdoor pavilions, which are appreciated, but do not always serve the needs of the citizens because of a pavilion's intrinsic characteristics (outdoors, open to the elements, not climate controlled, etc.)

### **5.2.2 Physical Character or Appearance**

As with community cohesion, several issues that impact or define City Image and Beautification were characterized as being a harbinger of the City's physical character or appearance. Multiple issues were introduced by participants in the Public Input sessions, but many were also uncovered during the Planning Team's research and conversation with City Staff and the CDC Board. Overall, these issues can be broken into five categories:

- Geographic Features
- Landmarks & Gateways
- Town Center
- Streets & Infrastructure
- Development & Private Property



## Geographic Features

Perhaps more than any other geographic feature, Lewisville Lake is a prime identity-giving feature of the City. As The Colony enjoys so many miles of shoreline, there are some locations where this geographical feature is taken advantage of, through public access, views, and opportunities for exploration. However, access to and views of the Lake are not as abundant as they could or should be – it is possible to drive through The Colony and never catch glimpse of the Lake, though it constitutes half of the City limits. A second important geographic feature is the City’s multiple undisturbed creek segments with associated water and creek edge (riparian) areas. These corridors provide visual beauty and open space, as well as recreation possibilities.

## Landmarks & Gateways

Physical landmarks help people to identify what city they are in and where they are in the city. These are often purpose-built by each city, homeowner association, or special district. In The Colony, there are several gateway landmarks that have been built by the development community to announce entry into the development (Austin Ranch, The Tribute, and The Legends are good examples of this). While these landmarks support the image of a particular subdivision or development, they do little to support the image of The Colony as a whole.



The primary issue is that there are not any unifying landmarks, branding icons, or wayfinding signs spread throughout the City that announce entry to The Colony or help people determine their location within the community. Specifically, the City has few gateway or entry features and, other than through street signs, major and semi-major street intersections are not easily recognized. Designed to address some of these issues, the Lakeside Arts Foundation has started a public art project called “Kaleidoscapes” which is based around the creation and placement of art-glass sculptures made by local artists as well as the general public.

## Town Center

One clearly recognizable issue impacting the physical character of The Colony and therefore the City’s image is the lack of a recognizable downtown or town center. This

was an issue mentioned often in the Public Input sessions as well as one that has been identified in the 2007 update of the City’s Comprehensive Plan. Not having a town center or downtown means that the city does not have as strong of a clear economic, civic, or recreational focus – something that is often a result of a town center / downtown.

### **Streets & Infrastructure**

Ever present in peoples’ minds when considering the physical appearance of a city is the quality and character of the City’s streets and other visible infrastructure. The City has made recent improvements to the functional and aesthetic quality of some of its streets (and is undergoing additional improvements to others) and has updated or constructed new parks and their equipment. However, there are still pieces of infrastructure – including streets, park equipment, and lighting/utilities that are visibly dated and in need of updating and/or repair. Areas with older streets and light fixtures, for example, do not portray the same City Image as areas with new or updated streets. A related issue is the presence of street trees in the city – that is, trees along the public right-of-way – which greatly improve the appearance of any city. While there are many established, mature trees in The Colony due to the age of many of the City’s neighborhoods, there are few trees along public right of ways.



### **Development & Private Property**

The quality and appearance of private property can have just as strong of an impact on a city’s physical appearance and character as that of public property. In the Colony, new residential and commercial development that is occurring is generally good-quality and provides attractive, up-to-date structures. There is, however, a significant percentage of the City’s housing stock that is in need of updating. Areas with a high amount of such housing stock also tend to be areas with higher code violation issues (including un-mown lawns and junk cars) – while it is only a small percentage of private property that regularly produce code violations, this was an issue of significant concern in the 2006 DirectionFinder® Survey.

## **5.3 Arts, History & Culture**

Arts, history, and culture indirectly define who the people of The Colony are – where they come from, how they interact, and how they express themselves. The City, however, does not currently have programming in any of these three areas, although it

sponsors and provides a building (the Lakeside Arts Center) for the Lakeside Arts Foundation, Lakeside Community Theater, and affiliated organizations. An assessment of these three categories is below.

### **5.3.1 Arts**

The arts have the strongest presence in The Colony of any of these three areas. While the City as an organization does not operate any arts programs, there are several non-profit groups that take on this role. One of these, the Lakeside Arts Foundation (LAF), is the most established and most visible arts program in The Colony. LAF offers classes for adults and children occasionally throughout the year.

Beyond visual arts, the performing arts are also supported in The Colony through the work of the Lakeside Community Theater (LCT), which also utilizes the Lakeside Arts Center. LCT produces live performances during a regular fall-through-spring season and features productions written by and starring citizens from The Colony and surrounding communities. For the 2008-2009 season, the LCT is producing five different shows, in addition to other, smaller events. While the LCT caters to adult actors, a recently formed theater group, The Colony Playhouse (TCP), predominantly serves children ages 6-18 and is open to any child in the community. In its first year, this organization produced two large-cast, full-scale productions and plans to produce four productions in the coming year. TCP is currently partnering with a local church for use of a youth building for the productions until a more permanent arrangement can be found. TCP plans to add more teen and young adult productions and programs in the near future as funding and space permit.

The LAF also participates with the Lakeside Summer Musical series and the Frisco Area Children’s Theater. Of course, arts programs (both visual and performing) are offered through Lewisville ISD, though these programs are not open to the general public, only to children enrolled in school.

A new public art program is being established in The Colony by the LAF in cooperation with the City. Called “Kaleidoscapes,” this program features community-built art in the form of pieces of scrap stained glass inserted into clear glass panels. The intent is to place these panels throughout the City to add to the amount of public art in the community and provide an ad-hoc wayfinding system.



Of note is that there is not a City-run arts program either for providing programming or for sponsoring events or commissioning arts projects. Many cities divert a percentage of funding (usually 1%) that would otherwise be directed toward public projects to arts projects such as public art along streets or in other public spaces like parks or civic centers.

### **5.3.2 History**

As discussed in more depth in Chapter 3, there is considerable historical significance for the land in and around The Colony, including the area's natural history, the history of the Wichita tribes, and the history of Peters Colony. One of the most specific and most visible icons of the City's history is Bridges Cemetery, located in what is now The Legends subdivision. This location presents the most tangible evidence of The Colony's history, as it contains the graves of many of the area's first settlers. It is, however, closed to the public and is owned by a private development corporation (though it can be viewed through a chain link / wrought iron fence from Morningstar Drive and Chesapeake Drive). It should be noted that The Colony Parks and Recreation Department maintains Bridges Cemetery.

There are two primary ways by which the history of The Colony is being related to the public. The first is through the efforts of The Colony Historical Committee, which is the only historic-interest group active in the city. Their primary functions are to conduct research, develop a city archives, and to explore partnerships with the other groups in The Colony. The second way is through physical landmarks, such as Historical Park, located at the intersection of South Colony Boulevard and Blair Oaks Drive, which contains a historical marker describing the Hedgecoxe War and a gazebo. This park serves as a physical icon of The Colony's history, as does Bridges Cemetery.

### **5.3.3 Culture**

As discussed earlier, one of the primary cultural activities for youth and their families in The Colony is youth sports and athletics associations. The Colony provides a high level of service for youth athletics, giving it a reputation as a sports town and helping it to win the title of "Sportstown for Texas" in 2003, given by Sports Illustrated and the National Recreation & Park Association. As The Colony has a high percentage of married-couple households with children (45% of married-couple households), it can be assumed that a large portion of the population is involved with youth sports and athletics in some way or another.

Public spaces provide places for people to interact and for cultures to be created and changed. The Community Center, which primarily serves senior citizens and is located in the former library building near the Recreation Center, is one of the only public spaces in the city for citizens to gather. Classes, exercise, dances, and meals for seniors are the primary activities occurring at the Center (a more thorough assessment of the Community Center can be found in the appendix). Another public space available in the City is The Colony Public Library, located at City Hall. The Library provides intellectual stimulation and lifetime learning services for the community through providing reference and

circulation services for the City. The Library, to a certain degree can serve as an impromptu meeting place for citizens.

Though not City-provided public facilities, religious institutions play a large role in the lives of The Colony's citizens. Currently, there are approximately twenty six (26) churches, temples, and other religious institutions of various creeds and denominations in operation in The Colony. Though no survey is present to estimate the percentage of the population active in religious endeavors, it can be anecdotally assumed that as with most suburban communities in Texas and the South a large number of people are regularly active in their churches, temples, or other religious pursuits. Many such institutions in the region provide not only spiritual services to their members, but also social and recreational opportunities.

## **5.4 Parks, Open Space & Recreation**

### **5.4.1 Introduction**

Because so many aspects of community development are related to the quality of the City's Parks, Open Space, and Recreation system, the assessment of the quality and quantity of these areas is given greater attention. A key part of the park planning process is to understand what park and open space facilities are currently available, and to assess the current condition of those facilities and whether or not they are addressing the current park and open space needs of the City. By comparing the available park facilities with the number of people that the parks system serves, the need for new or improved recreational facilities can be determined.

The City of The Colony currently has 28 existing parks which include 2 golf courses and 1 undeveloped park, dedicated to the provision of outdoor recreation facilities. These parks vary in size and character from the 0.5 acre Historical Park to large, multi use, recreational parks like Five Star West Community Complex that is almost 80 acres in size. Hidden Cove Park, deemed a Regional Park, is the largest, at 537 acres. The total acreage of all developed parks serving the citizens of The Colony is approximately 1,187 acres and includes nine (9) Neighborhood Parks, three (3) Community Parks, sixteen (16) Special Purpose Parks, and two (2) Regional Parks. Of these, one (1) Regional Park (Stewart Creek Park) also functions as a Community Park and a Neighborhood Park. Land dedicated to parks that are currently undeveloped totals 1.7 acres and includes one (1) Pocket Park, as shown on Table 3.1. Almost 1,886 additional acres are dedicated to nature areas and open space (1,187 acres are City-managed USACE Wildlife Management Areas).

### **Components of the Existing Parks Inventory**

This inventory of existing parks reviews several aspects of each park in The Colony's system. These are:

- **Classification:** What is the purpose of a given park? Is it intended to serve a local neighborhood around it, giving children and young adults a place to play? Is

it intended to serve a much larger population, providing fields for organized league play? How was the park originally classified and is that classification still warranted today? The answers to these questions determine whether a park should be classified as a neighborhood park, a community park, a special purpose park, a regional park, or a linear park.

- **Location:** Where is the park located in relation to the population that it serves? Is it accessible?
- **Service Area:** What are the limits of the area served by each park? Are there any major thoroughfares or physical features that create barriers to accessing the park?
- **Size of the Park:** How big is the park? Is it large enough to adequately accomplish its intended purpose?
- **Amenities in each Park:** What does the park contain? Are the facilities appropriate for the type of park? For example, a ball field complex requiring a large amount of parking should not be contained in a neighborhood park, where the noise, traffic and nighttime lighting create a nuisance for residents of that neighborhood.
- **Layout:** Is the arrangement of facilities in each park appropriate?
- **Condition of the Park:** What is the general condition of the facilities in each park?
- **Natural Areas/ Sustainable Measures:** Does the park contain areas that are natural? Is maintenance effort minimized through limited mowing areas? Is water use for irrigation minimized by use of native plants with low water requirements?
- **Special Considerations:** Does the park provide facilities for the physically challenged that meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act?

These issues are discussed in general in this chapter and are reviewed in detail for each of the existing parks in The Colony's parks system in the appendix. This inventory is developed from on-site reviews of each individual park by the Planning Team and reviews conducted by the City staff. At the end of this chapter, there is a map showing the location and classification of the existing parks in The Colony.

### 5.4.2 Park Classification

National and state guidelines identify three broad categories of parks, which are:

**Local, Close to Home Parks** are usually located within the community served by the facility, which includes mini/pocket parks, neighborhood parks and community parks. Trail corridors and connections, greenbelts, and – in some instances – linear parks may also be considered Close to Home Parks.

**Regional Parks** are usually located within an hour or two driving distance. Parks in this category serve a number of communities, and include regional metropolitan parks and regional park reserves.

**Unique Parks** may be either local or regional in nature. These parks can be defined as areas that are unique in some way, whether because of physical features or because of the types of facilities provided. Parks in this category may include linear parks, special use parks, or land conservancies.

Close to home parks provide day-to-day facilities for all ages and activities and are within walking or short driving distance (depending on the park's size and use) from where we live. "Close to home parks" is the most important category and is of the greatest need in The Colony today. Currently, eighteen (18) parks perform the close-to-home-parks role in The Colony and fall in four categories:

- Pocket Parks – like Historical Park and Wilcox Park;
- Neighborhood Parks – like Ridgepoint Park and Slay/Baker Park;
- Community Parks – like Bill Allen Memorial Park and the Five Star West Community Complex; and
- Trails & Greenbelts – like Taylor Street Greenbelt and the Park Loop Trail

To further explain the classification of parks, a description of the general types of parks and standards for each type follows:

### **Neighborhood Parks**

Neighborhood parks provide the foundation for recreation in the *Local, Close to Home* park system. Ideally, they provide amenities and recreation space for the entire family, but are within easy walking or cycling distance of the people they serve.

The neighborhood park typically serves one large or several smaller neighborhoods. The ideal neighborhood park, generally five (5) to ten (10) acres in size, should serve no more than 3,000 to 4,000 residents per park. In The Colony, Lion's Club Park is a good example of a neighborhood park.

- Neighborhood parks should be accessible to residents who live within a one-half mile radius of the park. Ideally neighborhood park facilities should be located within a quarter mile radius of the residents who will use those facilities.
- Neighborhood parks are frequently located adjacent to elementary schools in order to share acquisition and development costs with the school district. Adjacencies of park and school grounds allow for joint use and sharing of facilities. It also lends itself to the community's involvement with the school grounds and vice versa, leading to a synergistic result that adds to the quality of life for everyone.
- Neighborhood parks are generally located away from major arterial streets and provide easy access for the users that surround it. A neighborhood park should be accessible without having to cross major arterial streets.

**Size** - The size of a neighborhood park may vary considerably due to the physical location of the park and condition of the site. An ideal size for neighborhood parks should be five acres or larger.

**Location** - If possible, neighborhood parks should be centrally located in the neighborhoods they serve. An ideal location, for example, is adjacent to an elementary school. Neighborhood Parks should be accessible to pedestrian traffic from all parts of the area served, and should be located adjacent to local or minor collector streets which do not allow high-speed traffic.



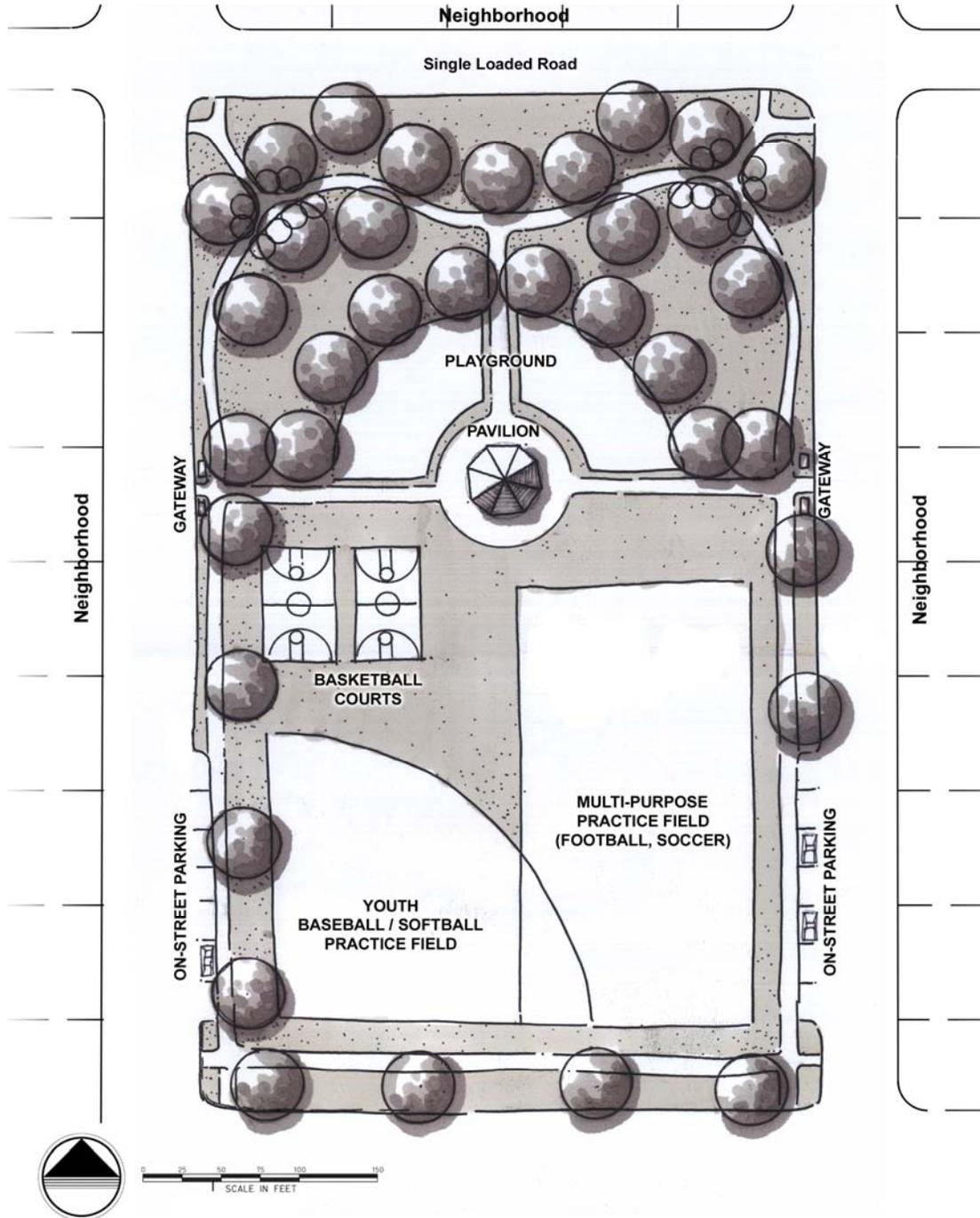
**Facilities** - Facilities generally located in neighborhood parks may include the following (items in bold are considered the most necessary components):

- **Playground equipment with adequate safety surfacing around the playground**
- Unlighted tennis courts
- Unlighted basketball courts and half courts
- **Active free play areas**
- Picnic areas with benches, picnic tables, and cooking grills
- **Shaded pavilions and gazebos**
- **Jogging and exercise trails**
- Security lighting

**Parking** – In general, the use of multi-modal trails and public transportation options should be encouraged to decrease dependency on automobiles. As deemed necessary, the exact amount of parking will vary based on the size of the park, the facilities it contains, and the number of users. Generally, depending on the carrying capacity of adjacent streets, parallel on-street parking may provide sufficient parking space. Opportunities to share parking may be beneficial to different yet compatible functions, such as libraries, schools, City buildings and the like.

**Home Owner Association Parks** – While not owned or maintained by the City of The Colony, HOA parks often provide amenities and opportunities for nearby residents similar to those provided by neighborhood parks. However, HOA parks are often smaller than City-owned neighborhood parks and it is important to remember that their continued presence and level of maintenance is not guaranteed.

Figure 4.1 illustrates a typical neighborhood park and some of the elements that the park might contain. Note that this is simply a typical arrangement, and each neighborhood park should be designed as a unique part of the neighborhood that surrounds it.



**Figure 4.1 – Typical Neighborhood Park**

## Community Parks

Community parks are larger parks that serve a group of neighborhoods or a portion of a city. Community parks are usually reached by automobile, although residents adjacent to the park and trail users may walk or cycle to it, rendering them *defacto* neighborhood parks. A variety of recreational facilities are provided, including in some cases, lighted playing fields for organized sports, hike/bike trails and sufficient parking to accommodate participants, spectators, and other park users.

*Size* – The typical community park should be large enough so it can provide a variety of amenities while still leaving open space for unstructured recreation and natural areas. The park should also have room for expansion, as new facilities are required. A typical community park varies in size from 20 acres to over 50 acres.

*Location* – Community parks should be located near a major thoroughfare to provide easy access from different parts of the City. Where possible, care should be taken to provide adequate buffers to adjacent residential streets, minimizing noise and bright lights at night. A good option to be considered is “cut-off” lighting, which allows light patterns to be controlled, thus avoiding undesired lighted areas.

*Facilities* – Facilities generally located in community parks may include (items in bold are considered the most necessary components):

- **Playground equipment with adequate safety surfacing around the playground**
- **Active free play areas**
- **Picnic areas and pavilion(s)**
- **Unlighted practice fields for baseball, soccer, football, softball, etc.**
- Restrooms
- **Natural open space**
- **Jogging, bicycle and nature trails**
- Lighted ball fields, suitable for organized competitive events
- Lighted multi-purpose practice fields
- Recreation center (if appropriate)
- **Sufficient off-street parking based on facilities provided and size of park**
- Security lighting
- Other facilities as needed which can take advantage of the unique characteristics of the site, such as nature trails or fishing adjacent to ponds, swimming pools, amphitheaters etc.

*Parking* – This varies based on the facilities provided and the size of park. The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) recommends a minimum of five spaces per programmed acre, plus additional parking for specific facilities within the park such as pools or ball fields. The specific amount of parking provided in each park should be determined by the facilities provided in that park. Even so, consideration should always be given towards the concept of “shared parking”, whereby parking may be shared with adjacent land use facilities e.g. schools, churches, City buildings etc. In order to offset

the surface water runoff and pollution from large areas of parking, it is recommended that serious consideration be given to the use of permeable paving combined with shade trees and bio-swales.

Figure 4.2 below illustrates a typical community park and some of the elements that the park might contain. Note that this is simply a typical arrangement, and each community park should be designed according to the specific needs of the community.

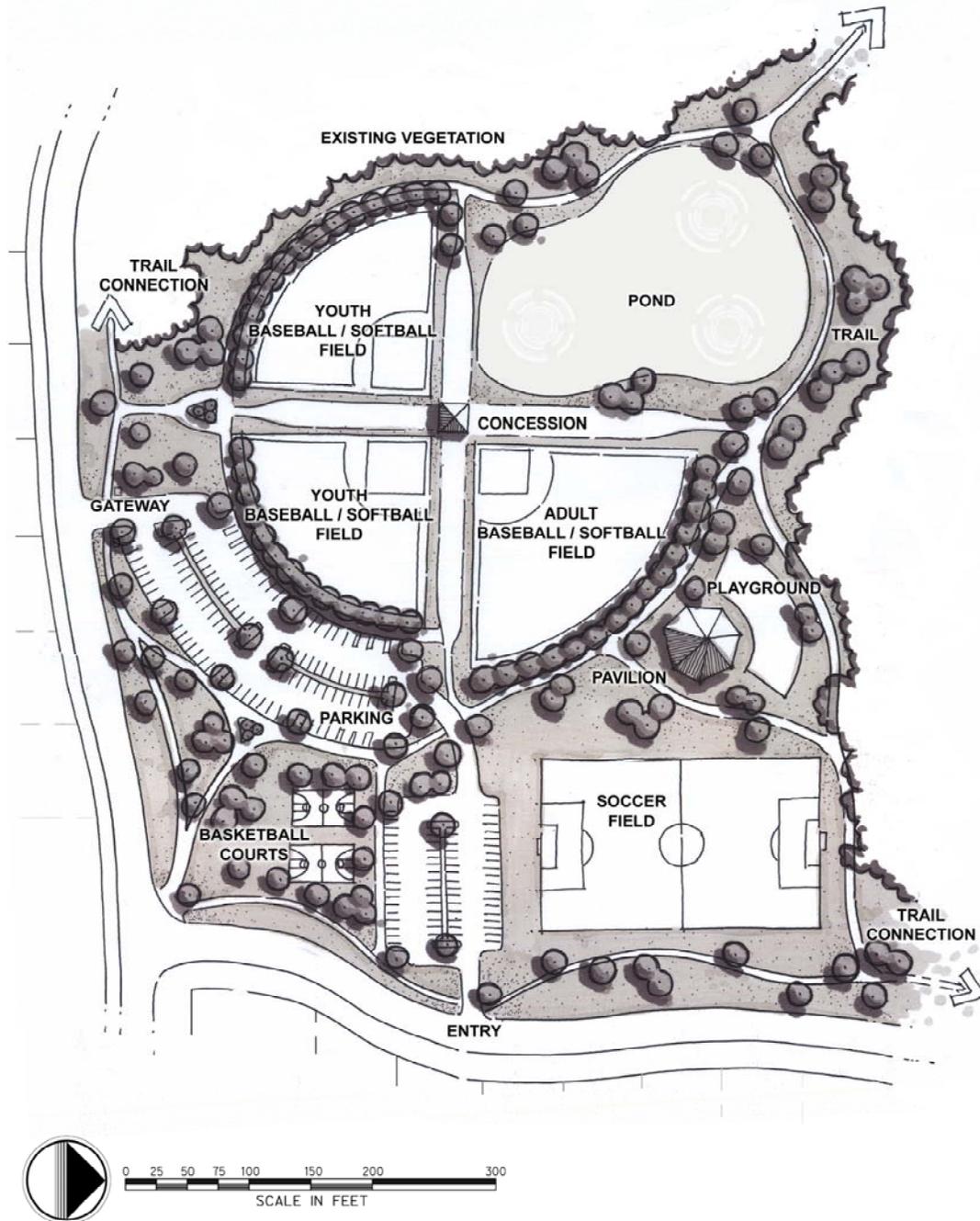


Figure 4.2 – Typical Community Park

## **Linear Parks, Greenbelts and Hike & Bike Trails**

Linear parks and greenbelts are open park areas that generally follow some natural or man-made feature that is linear in nature, such as creeks, abandoned railroad rights-of-way or power line or utility corridor easements. Properly developed to facilitate pedestrian and bicycle travel, these parks can serve to link or connect other parks in the local system, as well as schools, libraries, and other major destinations. No specific standards apply to linear/linkage parks other than to be large enough to adequately accommodate the resources they follow. They can also serve as linear greenbelts, which preserve open space.

Hike & bike trails, often found in linear parks, serve to provide active and passive recreation as well as connections between parks and other destinations within the City. A trails system should be established to serve both recreation needs and as a means to alternative transportation choices and connections throughout the City. Such a system should provide each resident with quick and easy access to parks, retail, and employment areas.

Currently, the only designated greenbelt in The Colony is the Taylor Street Greenbelt, which does not contain a Hike & Bike Trail presently, though one is planned for this area as part of the 2004 Trails Master Plan.

## **Special Purpose Parks**

Special purpose parks are designed to accommodate specialized recreational activities. Because the facility needs for each activity type are different, each special purpose park usually provides for one or more specific activities. Examples of special purpose parks include:

- Golf courses
- Senior Citizen Centers
- Athletic fields or complexes
- Nature centers or large natural preserves
- Swimming pool centers
- Aquatic Parks
- Pocket Parks
- Recreation Centers
- Tennis complexes
- Dog parks
- Skate parks
- Cemeteries
- Campgrounds / Camping Areas

Athletic complexes and public golf courses are two of the most common types of special purpose parks. Athletic complexes seek to provide fields for organized play in a location that can accommodate the traffic and noise that a large number of users can generate. Evening activities at athletic complexes necessitate high-power lighting that can become

a nuisance when the complex is located too close to residential areas. To address this, wide buffers should be placed around such complexes, lighting control should be addressed, and/or such parks should – in the future – be located adjacent to commercial or industrial areas. Athletic complexes should include sufficient fields so that leagues can congregate at one facility and not have to spread out in different locations across the city.

Pocket parks are small green gathering spaces ranging typically from 1/8 acre to 1 acre, though they can be as large (the largest in The Colony is four acres). Due to the size of this type of park, vehicular parking space is typically not provided. Therefore, pocket parks are accessed by pedestrian and bicycle means. Benches, fountains, landscaping, and other focal features such as public art are common items found in these parks. Size is not the key factor of the typical pocket park, but rather the quality of the landscaping and features that go into the park.

An additional type of special purpose park is a “special interest” park which typically is developed as a skate park, a dog park, or some other park designed to specifically accommodate a special recreational need. In a city the size of The Colony, a park of this nature will typically be the only one of its type in the City (i.e. only one dog park or only one skate park is typically developed).

Special purpose parks in The Colony are numerous and include several Athletic Complexes (BB Owens Park, East Lake Highlands Football Facility, Little League Complex, Turner Soccer Facility, Blue Sky Soccer Complex Austin Ranch Park, and Camey Park), Golf Courses (Stewart Peninsula and The Tribute), Pocket Parks (Historical Park, Greenway Park, Wilcox Park, and West Lake Highlands Park), a Multi-Purpose Park (Bridges Park) and the Hawaiian Falls water park.

## **Regional Parks**

The term *Regional Park* refers to land that is dedicated as parkland due to its regional importance and relevance. This may be due to its natural characteristics including habitat, geological formations, and/or aesthetic beauty. Other reasons may be the role that the particular site plays in issues of regional importance: for example, water conservation, flood protection or historic memorial. The size of a regional park can vary from small to large, depending on the purpose and character of the site. There are two regional parks in The Colony: Stewart Creek Park and Hidden Cove Park. Although considered a Regional Park, Stewart Creek Park also serves the roles of a Community Park and a Neighborhood Park for west The Colony due to its location adjacent to neighborhoods.

## **Streetscapes**

Streetscapes create experiences unique to a particular part of town, whether it is FM 423, an artery through a rural section like Plano Parkway, or a downtown pedestrian “mall”. It is effective to combine a pocket park along a streetscaped block, whether nestled into a retail area, or in a residential neighborhood, or even along a linear park such as a utility easement. Interestingly, streetscapes are not generally considered as part of a city’s park

system, as many standards were developed with parks being considered as completely distinct entities from the urban fabric. Additionally, park standards were developed as if available park land were infinitely available. Such is not the case in many cities, and even if it were so, many cities consider the real aesthetic and economic values in cultivating the attractiveness and pedestrian quality of their streets and the benefits such actions have for community development and improving city image. The beauty of a well landscaped street and the experience of traveling along it is that it may be repeated (uniquely to add to the diversity of neighborhoods) to knit together all parts of the urban fabric.

Locally renowned examples abound, like Fort Worth's Sundance Square or Grapevine's Main Street as well as many central corridors leading to the heart of a city's center or place of cultural importance. Such experiences are memorable, not for the carrying capacity of the street itself, but the importance given to people first as pedestrians and the sense of place that is uniquely celebrated. Streets are not only thoroughfares; they can become destinations in themselves. Streetscape opportunities may be identified by particular and strategically located streets that would add interest and appeal. These opportunities for streetscapes may be further enhanced by planning for occasional, associated pocket parks.

*“Cities are for people, not for cars” is a philosophy that increases the appeal and functionality of a city, by providing multi-modal experiences for enjoying the public spaces that form a vibrant network of a city.*

## **Nature Areas and Open Space**

As with Streetscapes, the benefit and inclusion of places that are nature areas or un-programmed open space has been largely overlooked in the context of typical parks and community development master plans. Conservation and preservation are especially valuable as natural resources disappear in our cities and as natural habitat is wiped out. The value of walking through natural and historic places that have been left untouched is immeasurable. Such opportunities are rapidly becoming rare, and the identification and protection of such areas is urgently needed in most cities today. Cities that marshal the will and act quickly to conserve natural resources demonstrate foresight and resolve necessary so that future generations may enjoy something of beauty and timelessness.

Natural areas and open space are part of a city's resources that are its “natural gems.” The value of such land may have visual, historic and cultural appeal that imprints upon the visitor and creates a sense of place as well as of lasting memories. Wilderness, creeks, lakes and prairie or particular geologic formations or topographic change may all be considered elements worthy of protection, public access, and celebration.

As un-programmed space, there is the added benefit of these areas as “self-maintaining”. There may be the occasional need to check for hazards, but maintenance is generally not a significant factor. Presently, the acreage associated with nature areas and open space in The Colony constitutes over 60% of the total acreage in the parks system (or 34% if the

City-managed USACE Wildlife Management Areas are not considered). Whether or not the Wildlife Management Areas are considered, the fact is that those nearly 1,200 acres of land are present in the form of The Colony's shoreline on Lewisville Lake.

### **5.4.3 Park System Overview**

The parks system in The Colony consists of a total of 28 parks totaling approximately 807 acres of developed land. An additional 480 acres of undeveloped land are dedicated to the expansion of existing parks (478.3 acres) and the construction of a new Pocket Park (Augusta Park, 1.7 acres).

### **Neighborhood Parks**

The Colony has nine (9) Neighborhood Parks that constitute a total of 62.65 dedicated Neighborhood Park acres. Neighborhood Parks in the City may range in size from the 1.2 acres of Carr/Chapman Park to the 25.7 acre Scout Park. Existing neighborhood parks located next to an elementary, junior, or high school are Camey and Perryman Parks at Camey Elementary, Augusta Park at Stewart Creek Elementary and Lakeview Middle School, Bridges Park at Peters Colony Elementary and Griffin Middle School, and BB Owens Park at BB Owens Elementary. The Colony has a good starting ground in its overall geographic coverage with Neighborhood Parks and their service radii of ½ mile apiece. However, several neighborhood service areas still need to be addressed.

### **Home Owner Association Parks**

Though these parks are not owned or maintained by the City, and are often not accessible for use by the general public, many of them provide similar amenities as a neighborhood park and are therefore important to document in the CDMP. There are currently ten HOA parks in The Colony and a total of 17.3 acres of HOA parks in The Colony ranging in size from less than a half acre to almost four acres. On average, these parks are an average of 1.7 acres in size – considerably smaller than typical neighborhood parks in The Colony. Because HOA parks perform a similar function to that of neighborhood parks, the 17.3 acres mentioned above is added to the 62.65 acres of city-owned neighborhood parks for the purposes of this analysis.

### **Community Parks**

The Colony has four (4) Community Parks, although only one (Bill Allen Memorial Park) currently meets all of the requirements for a Community Park outlined earlier in this chapter. Community Park acreage in the City totals 198 acres, including 36 acres of nature preserve and open space. Of that total, 151 acres are developed and 6 acres are undeveloped and designated for future use. With a service radius of 1 to 2 miles, The Colony is making progress toward being well covered in Community Parks, provided improvement and expansion of the types of facilities are carried out at Five Star West Community Complex and the Municipal Community Complex.

Because of the amenities provided by community parks, they also serve as de facto neighborhood parks when dedicated neighborhood parks are not present. That is, they provide the amenities of a neighborhood park and therefore serve the needs of the surrounding neighborhoods.

## Special Purpose Parks

The Special Purpose Parks in The Colony range in size from the 0.14 acre Historical Park to the 450 acre The Tribute Golf Course. Special Purpose Park acreage in the City totals approximately 735 acres (of which 406 are developed, 295 are undeveloped, and 34 are natural / unprogrammed space). Special Purpose Parks are the result of a specific need or opportunity, and therefore do not have a prescribed service radius. In essence, this category of park is not intended to cover the City in its entirety.



## Pocket Parks

In this Community Development Master Plan, Pocket Parks are included under the category of Special Purpose Parks. The Colony has four developed Pocket Parks, and one undeveloped Pocket Park<sup>2</sup> (which encompass seven acres – 3.5 developed and 3.5 undeveloped). In the future, the possibility exists to create a number of smaller spaces adjacent to various private and City owned facilities, particularly as part of a larger vision of streetscapes and perhaps in the creation of pedestrian malls and trail corridors. Features which are potential pocket park locations include City Gateways and Trailheads, according to their suitability.

## Linear Parks, Greenbelts and Hike & Bike Trails

The Colony has one largely undeveloped Greenbelt, totaling 18 acres. The Taylor Street Greenbelt is located along a waterway and runs generally from the large power line easement to North Colony Boulevard. Opportunities for future Linear Parks & Greenbelts exist as a further development of the trails network, with particular attention to potential joint uses along the City's two main utility easements.

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<sup>2</sup> Prior to the beginning of the CDMP project, there were several more parks in the City considered to be Pocket Parks. Now, some of these parks are considered to be Neighborhood Parks or Athletic Facilities. This change reflects a change in the way park type is classified, from a size-based classification to a function-based classification. It should also be noted that Pocket Parks, depending on location and amenities, can sometimes fulfill the roles of a Neighborhood Park.



Several Hike & Bike Trails are currently under development, including the Shoreline Trail (of which 3.9 miles are being constructed) and the Austin Ranch Trail (of which 1.5 miles are being constructed). Currently existing is the 0.5 mile Park Loop Trail which is located near the Five Star West Community Complex and is being expanded by an additional 0.5 mile north of Slay Baker Park.

### **Streetscapes**

The Colony has opportunities to establish major gateways to the City, as well as significant streetscaping and beautification as a larger part of its park system and community development efforts. This attention to the overall experience of the City creates a unique sense of identity, pride, and cultural celebration. Existing examples of successful streetscapes can be seen elsewhere in the Metroplex. A good example is the public art streetscape in North Richland Hills: the Bedford-Eules Road Greenway.



*The Bedford-Eules Road Greenway in North Richland Hills*

### **Nature Area/Open Space**

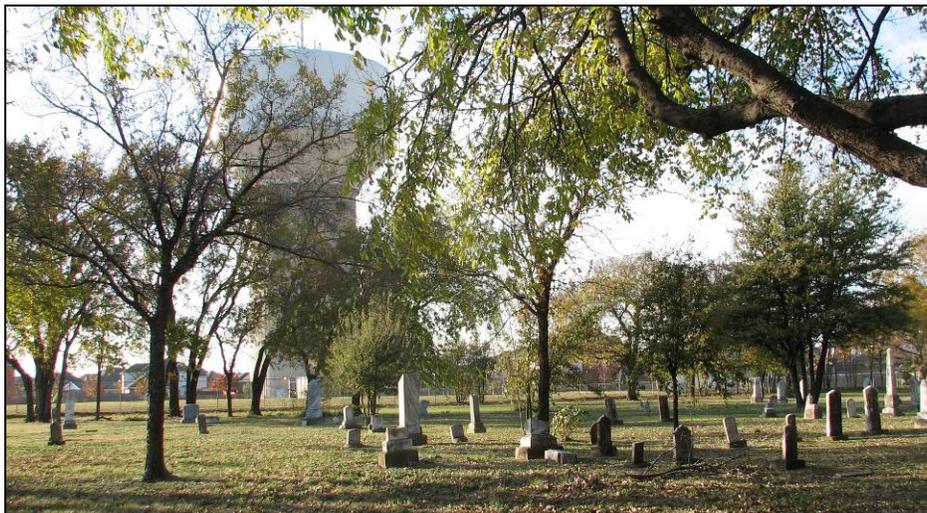
The City is fortunate to have tremendous resources and preserves in a number of its existing parks and in the Lewisville Lake shoreline. Nature Preserves and Open Space feature significantly in Dave Cowan Park, Scout Park, the Turner Soccer Facility, Hidden Cove Park, Wynnewood Nature Preserve, and the City-managed USACE Wildlife

Management Areas. Other parks such as Ridgepoint Park and BB Owens Park have portions which are protected natural preserves that deserve celebration.



## Cemeteries

The Colony contains one cemetery – Bridges Cemetery. Cemeteries are typically not counted toward park acreage; such is the case in The Colony as the City maintains yet does not own Bridges Cemetery. However, cemeteries play an important role in defining the culture and history of a community as well as providing a sense of open space, specifically from a visual point of view. Bridges Cemetery especially fulfills the first of these two tasks being that it is the oldest known cemetery in Denton County and contains the graves of some of the first Peters Colony settlers.



**Table 5.1 Existing Park Facilities** on the next page is a summary of park acreage and park facilities per individual park.





The existing park acreage per park category is summarized as follows:

<b>Table 5.2 Summary of Existing Park Acreage per Park Category</b>	
<b>Park Category</b>	<b>Acreage</b>
Neighborhood Parks	67.65
<i>HOA Parks</i>	17.3
Community Parks	198.14
Special Purpose Parks	759.77
Trails & Greenbelts	18.13
Open Space	1,325.41
Regional Parks	705.00
Recreation Facilities	6.13
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,142.12</b>



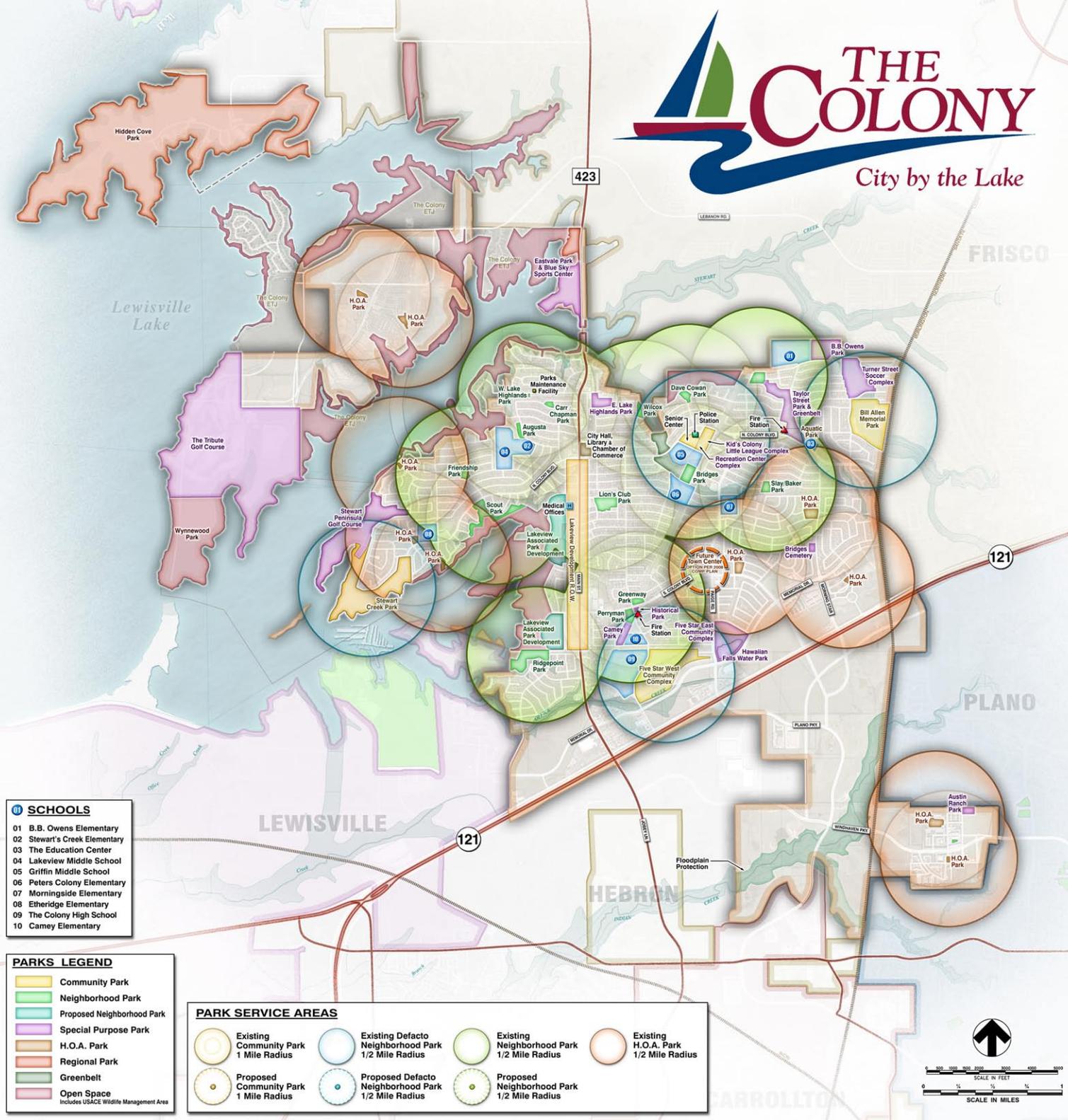
### 5.4.4 Facilities Review

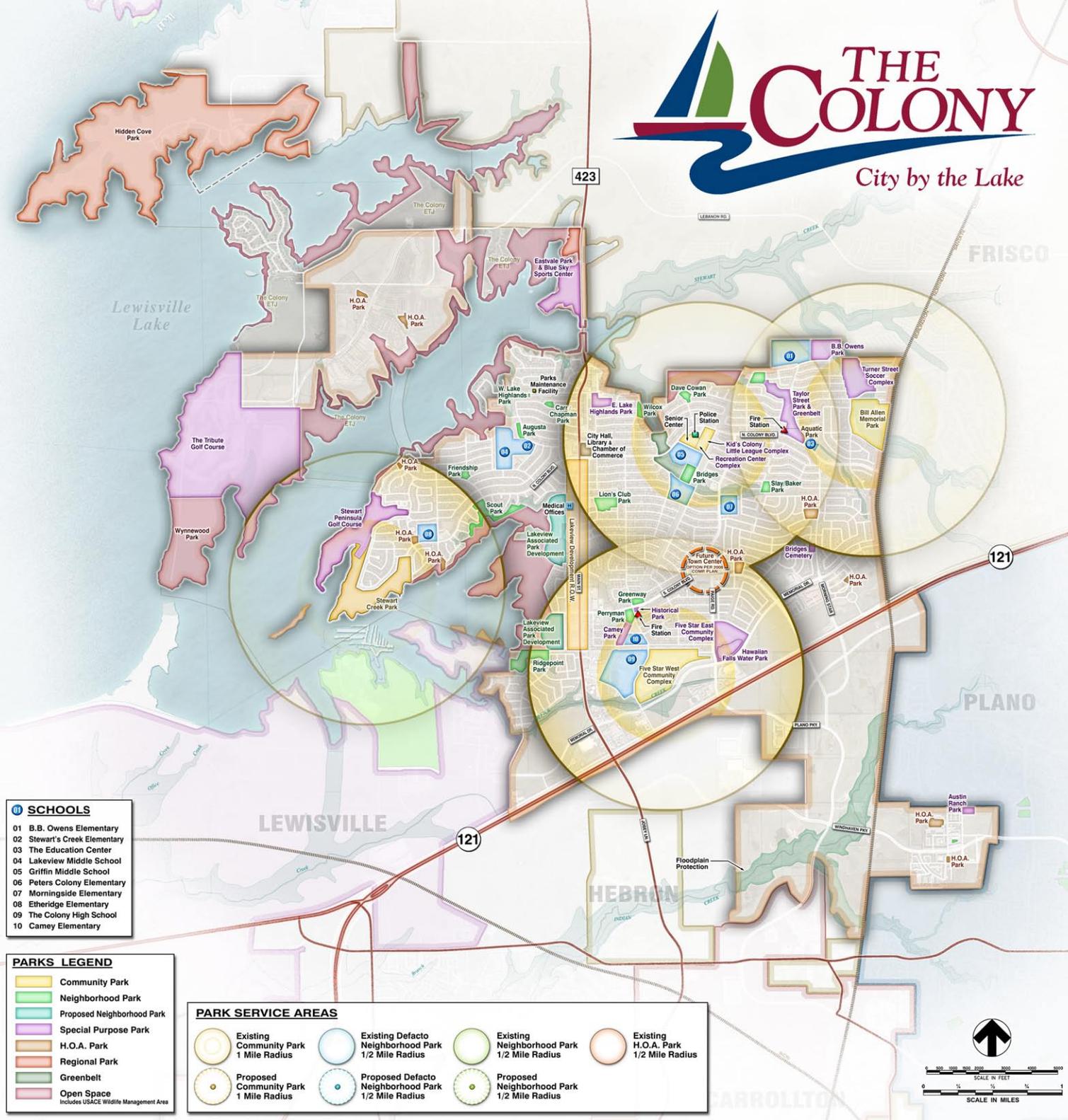
In the appendix, there is a detailed description of each park. The parks and parkland are discussed according to the categories of Neighborhood Parks, Community Parks, Special Purpose Parks, Linear Parks & Greenbelts, Regional Parks, and Indoor Recreation Facilities.

It is important to understand the spatial distribution of various park types within the City. Maps illustrate the location of all the existing developed and undeveloped parks and highlight the area that they service in The Colony. For neighborhood parks and community parks, which are the basic park types, service radii are shown to illustrate the areas that are best served by parks. Neighborhood parks are the primary type of close-to-home park in The Colony; they serve areas within a five to ten minute walk – a ½ mile radius. Community parks serve a broader population and are typically positioned so that everyone within the City is within a 5 minute drive of a park (within one mile of a community park). They also serve as a de facto neighborhood park for areas within ½ mile. The following maps are presented on the following pages:

- **Existing Neighborhood & DeFacto Neighborhood Parks**  
½ mile radius – includes community parks as de facto neighborhood parks
- **Existing Community Parks**  
1 mile radius



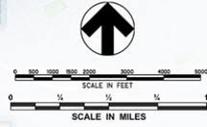




- SCHOOLS**
- 01 B.B. Owens Elementary
  - 02 Stewart's Creek Elementary
  - 03 The Education Center
  - 04 Lakeview Middle School
  - 05 Griffin Middle School
  - 06 Peters Colony Elementary
  - 07 Morningside Elementary
  - 08 Etheridge Elementary
  - 09 The Colony High School
  - 10 Camey Elementary

- PARKS LEGEND**
- Community Park
  - Neighborhood Park
  - Proposed Neighborhood Park
  - Special Purpose Park
  - H.O.A. Park
  - Regional Park
  - Greenbelt
  - Open Space
  - Includes USACE Wildlife Management Area

- PARK SERVICE AREAS**
- Existing Community Park 1 Mile Radius
  - Existing Defacto Neighborhood Park 1/2 Mile Radius
  - Existing Neighborhood Park 1/2 Mile Radius
  - Existing H.O.A. Park 1/2 Mile Radius
  - Proposed Community Park 1 Mile Radius
  - Proposed Defacto Neighborhood Park 1/2 Mile Radius
  - Proposed Neighborhood Park 1/2 Mile Radius



November 13, 2009

# EXISTING COMMUNITY PARKS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT MASTER PLAN

CITY OF THE COLONY, TEXAS