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## **A. INTRODUCTION**

The City of Friendswood’s (“The City”) urban area has rapidly developed and there is an evident need to plan for the development of both immediate and long-range recreational facilities to meet requirements that have been brought about by residential expansion. To address these needs, the City Council charged the Park and Recreation Board to work with a consultant in preparing this Park and Open Space Plan (“Plan”).

The City has experienced significant population growth that has exceeded the currently available outdoor recreational facilities. With limited public land, an inadequate availability of activities due to overcrowding on local park land and inconvenience of local access to recreational facilities has caused quality of life issues for the community. While the community has expanded its desire for quality fitness, child development and sports programs, the City has not been able to adequately meet the financial requirements for additional quality recreational facilities.

Many families are electing to remain close to home. They are unable to travel and access outdoor recreation activities due to rising transportation costs. Medium sized communities such as Friendswood are experiencing and will continue to experience added demand for outdoor recreation facilities and the added financial burden of land acquisition, facility development and ongoing costs to operate the facilities. Additionally, as the population density of the City will continue to grow as more and more residents move into the City and land is used for residential housing.

Parks and recreation facilities are an essential part of a healthy, quality and sustainable community environment. They provide for relaxation and exercise outside of the home, after work, and beyond school activities. Whether for passive or active use, park areas and recreation facilities are an important part of everyday life.

There are several reasons why this plan is necessary, among them are to,

- increase recreational diversity





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- implement water-related recreational opportunities
  - geographic distribution of park and recreation opportunities
  - conservation of significant natural resources through acquisition and stewardship
  - renovation of existing, obsolete park and recreation areas and facilities
  - use available natural resources wisely to accomplish goals
  - the appreciation and preservation of cultural resources
  - secure opportunities for special needs, low income, minority, elderly and at-risk youth

Each of the considerations listed above are valid and was, therefore, part of the recommendations in preparing and finalizing this Plan.

### **Role of the City in Providing Parks and Recreation Facilities**

The City of Friendswood currently maintains several parks. The City recognizes the need to develop new parks and a recreation plan that will meet the varying needs of the community, as well as visitors. Therefore, an evaluation and analysis was made of existing features and conditions which make up the fabric of the community and influence the demand for recreational activities. In defining the future role of the City, this Plan identifies recommended actions and considerations to effectively accomplish the desired results.

### **History**

In the spring of 1895 a Quaker named Frank Jacob Brown, who had been an adventuresome buffalo hunter, and a Quaker named Thomas Hadley Lewis, who was a college educated man, felt directed to this area of the Gulf Coast to establish a community dedicated to God. Starting Quaker colonies was a common practice, as they were part of the westward movement across the nation in the middle to late 1800s. (The terms “Quaker” and “Friends” are synonymous and used interchangeably.)

When Brown and Lewis came upon this area in Northern Galveston County, they found 1,538 acres of prairie, well drained by Clear Creek, Coward's Creek, Mary's Creek, and Chigger Creek, and beautifully framed with the dense woods along the creeks. Feeling this surely was their "Promised Land," they negotiated with the owner, Galveston banker J. C. League, for a deed of trust, and on July 15, 1895 they recorded the name of the colony at the Court House in Galveston. They named it Friendswood.

Word of the colony spread among Quakers in the northern and midwest states, and soon more than a dozen families joined them. Friendswood developed as a farming community marked by



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hard work, simple, clean living, and a deep respect for God, the family, and education.

After the colony survived the Galveston Storm of 1900 with no loss of life, they used their sawmill to convert the swaths of trees felled by the storm into lumber for the construction of a two story building they called the Academy. It served them as church, school, and community meeting place until it was replaced by the present stone church building in 1949. The Academy (high school) operated by the Quakers offered a classical curriculum through 1928, and attracted students, in its earliest years, from surrounding towns that had no high school.

From 1895 to 1915, most of the newcomers were Quakers who came to be a part of the Quaker colony. Through 1920, the population was swollen by an influx of farmers, lured by Houston developers who advertised the Gulf Coast as a Garden of Eden where figs, oranges, and rice grew practically wild. By the early 1920s, there were 17,000 to 18,000 acres of figs from Winnie to San Leon, and 17 fig preserving plants. Two of those plants were in Friendswood. Support personnel for the farms brought more people to Friendswood, and the early 1930s brought families dispossessed by the Depression looking for a new chance in life. Late in the decade, the newly developing oil fields east and west of the community provided jobs for more newcomers. The war slowed the growth in the 1940s, but the decade still saw the beginning of a trend of business and professional people from Houston buying up property along the creeks.

For the first 50 years of Friendswood's life, it had a church, a school, a post office, a grocery store, and a fig plant or two. That was it. There was no doctor, no bank, no drug store, no policeman, not even a newspaper. Up to this time it was a rural, predominately Quaker settlement whose history is authenticated by the Texas State Historical Marker located on the Friends Church property.

During the 1950s, young families moving out from Houston began to give Friendswood its modern, bedroom stature, but the population was still less than 1,000 in 1959. In 1960, farsighted local men put into action a plan for the incorporation of Friendswood, and the town elected its first mayor, city council, and a law officer--a move which helped prepare it to cope with the tremendous growth which took place in the decade of the 1960s as hundreds of NASA employees chose Friendswood as their home. Subdivisions, schools, churches, businesses and community organizations mushroomed. By 1966 Friendswood had its first medical clinic, pharmacy, bank, newspaper and police department. In 1969 the population was 5,200.



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Growth continued unabated through the 1970s and 1980s, and the population was nearing 29,000. Friendswood became a suburban community of homes, churches, businesses, schools and organizations. The strong volunteer instincts of the residents enabled the city to build a municipal building in 1965 without debt because residents donated labor, materials and funding. In 1971 they built a replica of the Frank J. Brown home to serve as a repository of Friendswood's heritage.

Since the 1980's Friendswood has grown considerably; the current population is more than 36,000. Friendswood encompasses parts of two counties--northern Galveston and southern Harris County, divided by Clear Creek. Clear Creek offers direct water access to the Gulf of Mexico through Clear Lake and Galveston Bay. It is located 3 miles west of IH-45, halfway between Houston and Galveston. Friendswood encompasses 21 square miles and is over 70% developed.

### **Quality of Life**

Friendswood's reputation for traditional values, quality education, and excellent housing attract new families into the community each year. Friendswood takes pride in its lifestyle and low crime rate that offers its citizens parks, abundant trees, nature trails, and [recreational and sports facilities](#) in a manageable hometown atmosphere. Children excel in studies through two superior school systems.

While predominantly residential, Friendswood has made some room for a business-friendly atmosphere. From office buildings and shopping centers to retail outlets and mixed-use projects,



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new developments are consistently on the horizon. Friendswood offers single-family residential housing in pleasant settings, tucked-away from the busy stream of vehicular traffic. Housing choices include a few master-planned communities and older resale homes in a variety of architectural styles and several communities offering seniors the finest in independent and assisted living in Texas.

### **Climate**

In the heart of the sunbelt, Friendswood enjoys a subtropical climate where outdoor sports are practiced year round and the growing season extends well into November.

Winter days are mild with a few temperature dips below the freezing mark. After an infrequent frost, it is not uncommon for the temperature to rise to a balmy 60 or 70 degrees during the day.

Spring and fall are the most pleasant times with warm days and cool nights. Summers are hot and perfect for those who enjoy the Gulf coast region.

The area experiences abundant rainfall which, combined with the favorable temperatures, produces a growing season of more than 290 days. With an average monthly temperature in January of 43 to 62 F and in June 73 - 89 F, average yearly rainfall is 51 inches. Prevailing winds are from the southeast.

### **Taxes**

The City's tax base is comprised of predominately residential instead of commercial tax dollars. Due to the City's aging infrastructure, the City lags behind in commercial and economic development. This situation affects the tax dollars available to the City and continues to fuel the lack of development and tax dollar cycle. Therefore, the only avenue to fund development outside of critical infrastructure is to increase the City's debt with bonds or raise taxes.

### **Population**

Growth places various demands on urban services, one of which is the ability to service the community with spaces and opportunities for various types of recreational activities. How these



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spaces and facilities are chosen have a very close relationship to the characteristics and location of the population in the present and future urban area.

The City's population in 2000 was 29,037 increasing by 11.8% to 32,460 in 2003. Current population is 37,773, an increase of 16.3%. The City's projected growth, addressed below in greater detail, places a crisis level burden on the City's parks and recreation facilities. Additional funds are needed to meet this demand both current and anticipated. The current inventory of parks has a higher level of demand, placed on them by the consistent increase in population.

### **General and Social Characteristics**

The number of persons living within the City over the past decade has significantly increased. From 1990 to 2000 the City's population grew by 27.3 percent. According to the Census Bureau, the total population of the City in 2000 was 29,037. The current population is 37,773.

Friendswood's median age of 37.2 years is slightly higher than the State average of 35.3 years in 2000. Approximately thirty-two percent of the population, or 12,087 persons, were under nineteen years old. Persons 65 years or over numbered 3,400 or 9.0 percent of the total population.

The percentage of persons with a high school or higher education was 92.4 percent. The number of persons with a bachelor's degree or higher is 17,003 or 38.6 percent. This represents the City's education level to be slightly above the U.S. percent of 24.4.

### **Economic Characteristics**

In 2000, there were 14,947 persons 16 years and over with in the labor force. The number of minutes for travel to work for persons 16 years and over was 29.2. Occupational characteristics indicated 48.2 percent of the persons were employed in the management, professional and related occupations

The median household income in 2009 was \$117,000 for 13,635 households. Of these households, approximately 17.3 percent, or 2,395 households, received income from social security, with an additional 136 households receiving public assistance income.

### **Housing Characteristics**



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In 2000, there were 10,333 housing units recorded for the City. There was a significant decrease in the building of home structures over the past decade. In the early 1990's the number of home structures being built was 1,506 with a decline to 298 in the early 2000s. Of particular interest is that among all housing units, 2,221 had available three or more vehicles. However, with the rapid development of two significant residential developments, housing numbers have significantly increased, in turn, population has as well.

In summary, a community's age distribution has important implications for the design, construction, and maintenance of parks and recreation facilities. Friendswood is a young family community with a preponderance being in the labor force.

### **Projected Growth**

The following, **Table 1.1 - Population Growth Projections**, illustrates the projected growth in population in the City of Friendswood over the next ten years. Estimations are that the City will build-out around the year 2020 with a total population of 50,000. As the city plans for the future and its build out population, parks are also going to be an essential part of this growth.

**Table 1.1 - Population Growth Projections**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Population</b>
January 1, 2009	37,832
January 1, 2010	38,775
January 1, 2011	39,712
January 1, 2012	40,694
January 1, 2013	41,586
January 1, 2014	42,523
January 1, 2015	43,460
January 1, 2016	44,396
January 1, 2017	45,333
January 1, 2020	50,000