



## SECTION 8: EXISTING PARKS AND RECREATION

### Existing Park System

#### City Parks

##### *City Park on Main Street*

The City's main park site is located within the heart of the community between State Highway 110, Main Street (FM 346), and Bascom Road. Consisting of approximately 1.5 acres the site is well equipped and hosts a variety of civic activities such as festivals and athletics. For many years this park site served as the City's only publicly funded park facility. The park is benefited by close proximity to other municipal facilities

Park Amenity	Provided	Quantities and Notes
benches	✓	4
swings	✓	12
slides	✓	3
picnic tables	✓	9
trash cans	✓	5
barbeque pits		
water fountains	✓	1
restrooms	✓	
vending machines		
basketball courts	✓	1
base/soft ball fields		
park lighting	✓	
park fencing	✓	
water features		
landscaping	✓	full tree canopy
on-site parking	✓	

Table 8.1: Park Amenities for City Park on Main Street

including the Community Library, YMCA, Fire Department, and City Hall complex.

In the recent past the park has played host to the YesterYear Festival and an



Image 8.1: Kids meet Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny, and other characters at the City Park on Main Street during each holiday season

annual visit by a traveling carnival company (Image 2.5, Page 27). Youth soccer practice and other organized sports activities were also held in the fields behind the more developed portions of the site. Unfortunately, construction of several new municipal buildings on formally vacant parkland has resulted in fewer large events and festivals of this type on the park site.



Despite a reduction in its overall size the park still supports a variety of recreational uses. Upgraded playground equipment has been installed within the last several years permitting play by many age groups. Basketball and some other athletic activities are also accommodated on site. A small amphitheater with limited elevated seating is located within the park allowing for outdoor performances. Tables and seating accommodate picnicking and group activities throughout the park. Parking is provided on site and at neighboring City facilities such as the City Hall complex and Fire Department.



**Image 8.2:** Playground equipment and courts for young children as well as older teenagers can be found throughout the City Park on Main Street.

*Garden View Park*

Garden View Park is the City's newest recreational parkland facility. Located on approximately 3.5 acres the site was originally intended to serve as the southern anchor for the proposed hike and bike trail from the 1995 Comprehensive Plan. However, development of the trail was halted due to neighborhood opposition. The trail system was intended to follow the Whitehouse Creek channel which runs through the site. The creek and trail would have connected to the City Park on Main Street in the north and could have potentially extended to the south through more land planned for residential use.

Park Amenity	Provided	Quantities and Notes
benches	✓	"porch swing"
swings	✓	12
slides	✓	1
picnic tables	✓	4
trash cans	✓	2
barbeque pits	✓	1
water fountains		
restrooms		
vending machines		
basketball courts	✓	1
base/soft ball fields		
park lighting		
park fencing		
water features	✓	Whitehouse Creek
landscaping	✓	
on-site parking		

**Table 8.2:** Park Amenities for Garden View Park



Most park visitors tend to live within the surrounding homes because the site is located deep within a neighborhood. No on-site parking areas have been constructed because the original concept was for the park to function as a pedestrian destination through the trail system. Restroom and drinking fountains are also absent due to the original connectivity Plan which would



**Image 8.3:** Garden View Park located within a neighborhood in southern Whitehouse with the Whitehouse Creek bisecting the site

have allowed for these facilities at other locations along the trail system within easy walking distance of Garden View Park.



**Image 8.4:** The amenities provided in Garden View Park surround the Whitehouse Creek and include equipment for young children, teenagers, and adults.

The park is well landscaped and the influence of Whitehouse Creek also increases the natural aesthetics of the site (Image 8.3). The park is equipped with playground equipment for younger children such as swings, slides, and a jungle gym. A basketball court for use by teenagers and adults is also provided (Image 8.4). Ample provisions are also made for

picnicking with a barbecue pit and several picnic tables. Visibility from the surrounding homes is high which allows for strong self policing of the site by neighborhood residents.

## Other Public/Semi-Public/Private Parks and Recreational Facilities

### Hillcreek Park/Boat Launch

Park Amenity	Provided	Quantities and Notes
benches		
swings		
slides		
picnic tables	✓	10
trash cans	✓	29
barbeque pits	✓	1
water fountains		
restrooms		
vending machines		
basketball courts		
base/soft ball fields		
park lighting	✓	
park fencing	✓	
water features	✓	Lake Tyler
landscaping	✓	full tree canopy
on-site parking	✓	

Table 8.3: Park Amenities Hillcreek Park

Hillcreek Park is located adjacent to Lake Tyler in the City's northeastern ETJ. The land is owned and maintained by the City of Tyler for use by lake visitors and the general public. Including approximately 32 acres the site provides several amenities related to lake recreation and enjoyment. The site includes large areas of unimproved natural land but does consist of a significant amount of "usable" space which exceeds 12 acres.

In terms of physical amenities the park focuses on basic water recreation. These amenities include picnic tables, facilities for outdoor barbecuing and cooking, and related equipment. However, the main attraction for the park is the ability to swim and enjoy the natural lake setting. Restroom and water fountain facilities are not provided. Ample parking is provided on site. A pier for boat launches and trailer parking is also located adjacent to the main park site. The launching area adjoins Hillcreek Park but is adequately separated in order to provide for safe swimming while boats enter and exit the lake.



Image 8.5: Hillcreek Park located on Lake Tyler provides for a wide variety of lake recreational activities



### Baseball/Softball Fields

Park Amenity	Provided	Quantities and Notes
benches	✓	stadium seating
swings		
slides		
picnic tables	✓	1
trash cans	✓	multiple
barbeque pits		
water fountains	✓	multiple
restrooms	✓	
vending machines	✓	multiple
basketball courts		n/a
base/soft ball fields	✓	7
park lighting	✓	
park fencing	✓	
water features		
landscaping		
on-site parking	✓	gravel lot

Table 8.4: Park Amenities for the Little League Ball Park

The Whitehouse Little League Association owns and operates a baseball and softball complex in the northeastern portion of the City. The park site occupies approximately seventeen acres. The site is located between two subdivisions and is accessed from County Road 2133. The complex includes seven ball fields for youth baseball and softball team play or practice (Image 8.7).

The park is equipped to handle tournament play. Amenities include on-site parking, concession areas, restroom facilities, stadium seating and field lighting (Image 8.6). Though properly equipped, the complex has not hosted any major sporting events in recent years due to larger and more appealing facilities offered in neighboring communities.



Image 8.6: Amenities such as lighted fields, elevated seating, and large on-site parking are provided on site.

Tyler's Lindsey Park is one complex which is more appealing for tournament play.



Image 8.7: The Whitehouse Little League Association Ballpark

Attracting tournaments will be important to offset maintenance costs associated with continued operation. At this time no formal relationship between the Little League Association and the City or School District is in place. However, such a partnership may allow this or a new facility to better compete for tournament play.

*Rosebrook Subdivision*

***"We have had a lot of developers offer areas for parks and green belts, but at the point that they offered it... the City did not have the funds or the personnel to maintain it."***

***- Danny Hogden***

When the development of the Rosebrook subdivision was initially proposed the developers approached the City with the idea of dedicating some low-lying land at the center of the subdivision for the purposes of a mini park. At the time, maintenance on similar greenbelt land within other neighborhoods was viewed as cost prohibitive. As a result, the land within the subdivision was not accepted as a dedication.

The property was subsequently developed and maintained by the homeowners' association and includes a paved off-street trail along the creek with some playground equipment similar to what was proposed in the 1995 Plan. The facilities and landscaping of this private park are among the highest quality found within the entire community.

Although the park is not fenced, it is uncertain if use by children not living within the subdivision will be allowed to continue once home construction is complete. It is also unclear how or if this section of trail will be connected to the possible Whitehouse Creek Trail if that system is fully developed. Though not gated, the neighborhood is designed in a way which would provide for eventual gating if the public streets were vacated at the homeowners' association's request.

***"[Regarding homeowners' association maintained parks], we don't have any say over what homeowners' association can and cannot do."***  
***- Suzanne Loudamy***

Such actions would limit use of the facilities by park visitors not living within the subdivision. Similar park sites are found in other neighborhoods within the community such as West Lake, a gated residential subdivision on the City's eastern side.



### *Cain Elementary*

The Cain Elementary campus serves some of the youngest children within the Whitehouse Independent School District. The campus houses a well equipped playground which is used by school children throughout the day (Image 8.8). Just under five acres of recreational open space is located on site. The campus is also situated along the Whitehouse Creek and the hike and bike trail



**Image 8.8:** Playground equipment on the Cain Elementary campus

system proposed in the 1995 Comprehensive Plan. Teachers sometimes take classes for nature walks along the creek. Classes also conduct experiments near the water or among the trees.



**Image 8.9:** The Whitehouse Creek behind Cain Elementary during a period of low rainfall in the winter of 2005

Garden View Park lies approximately one quarter mile south of the school along the creek channel while the City Park on Main Street lies one mile to the north. The water body runs behind the school building within a well wooded area. Even during drought conditions the creek is flooded (Image 8.9). The City and School District are once again exploring the feasibility of connecting Cain Elementary to other park and school facilities. Design of the new proposal is not currently drawn to connect

to Garden View Park in the south due to neighborhood opposition of the originally proposed trail system.



### *Brown Elementary*

The Brown Elementary campus is also attended by young children. This campus is located at the intersection of State Highway 110 and Main Street (FM 346) within the heart of the original town site and planned Town Center District. Recreation facilities include playground equipment, a large open space and a well landscaped picnic area among many mature trees



**Image 8.10:** Playground equipment on the Brown Elementary campus

(Image 8.10). Due to location the playground equipment is not frequently used by children after school hours; however, the District does periodically allow children's sports leagues access to the campus's ball fields for practices. The site also includes a rock gym constructed during the 1930s through the Works Progress Administration (WPA).

### *Other Whitehouse ISD Facilities*



**Image 8.11:** The 400-meter competitive track and tennis courts located in and near the School District's Wildcat Stadium are open for public use most evenings.

The Higgins Intermediate School campus has served a variety of student age groups since its establishment in the late 1980s. The school site houses several athletic fields and playgrounds; however, the campus is gated after hours at the discretion of the School District and is not utilized by non-students for

recreational activities in the evenings or on the weekends.





The School District's Junior High School campus (formally Whitehouse High School) is the location of many of the District's marquee athletic facilities. High school, junior high, and middle school students use these facilities for UIL competition in most sports other than varsity basketball. Community members also utilize some facilities on the Junior High School campus for recreation. The stadium track is a popular evening destination for joggers as are the tennis courts (Image 8.11).

### *Churches and Other Organizations*

Several churches maintain outdoor recreational facilities located within easy walking distance of residential neighborhoods. Though some congregations limit access to only church members and visitors, a wide variety of activities and athletic fields are available, even including some camping and swimming on Lake Tyler. Some churches such as the First Assembly of God have built facilities for a wide age range from young children to teenagers and adults (Image 8.12).



**Image 8.12:** Ball fields and playgrounds on the First Assembly of God church site

## **System Connectivity**

### **Off-Street Hike/Bike Trails**

***"I believe the quality of living in a town has to do with the open space and recreational opportunities... it's important to have lots of parks in a town and connect them."  
- Dave Terre***

The 1995 Comprehensive Plan recommended a linear park system which would connect Brown Elementary, the City Park on Main Street, Cain Elementary, and the proposed southern park (now called Garden View Park). This linkage would have been a paved hike and bike trail

built largely off-street and in near proximity to Whitehouse Creek. The City was able to secure grant funding to pay for most of the trail. However, the project was abandoned following neighborhood objection. Homeowners close to the southern park feared that trail users would cause problems by parking on the street near the trail. Questions over property value and crime were also raised during the debate.

### **On-Street Sidewalks**

Presently no connectivity is provided between City parks and school facilities using on-street sidewalks. Until recent changes in the City's Subdivision Regulations, sidewalks were not required for residential or commercial development. While the City has made a conscious effort to begin encouraging and requiring sidewalks many residential subdivisions were proposed prior to these regulations. Therefore, even some neighborhoods presently under construction are exempt from the sidewalk requirements through vesting rights.

State Highway 110 has limited right-of-way both north and south of Main Street (FM 346). Some other significant thoroughfares such as Hagan Road were originally maintained as county roads. In these cases it was not uncommon for property fronting on the thoroughfare to have lot lines extending to the road's centerline. As a result, the City faces the prospect of purchasing additional right-of-way along many major thoroughfares within the community before some sidewalk retrofitting projects could be completed.

With the widening of Main Street (FM 346) some east/west pedestrian movement will be permitted through six-foot sidewalks on both sides of the thoroughfare. These sidewalks will provide direct or indirect connections between most of the WISD campuses, City Park on Main Street, and the Little League Ball Fields. Though not as recreationally appealing as a dedicated hike and bike trail system, the sidewalks will provide for the possibility of more pedestrian activity between playgrounds once combined with the proposed on/off-street trail system along Whitehouse Creek.



## Comparison to National Standards

Community facilities are often judged based on their comparisons to nationally accepted standards. The book Municipal Benchmarks is frequently used to provide such comparisons. The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) also provides standards and definitions for community parks and recreational facilities.

### Gross Park Acreage to Population Ratio

While the benchmarks vary, 6.25 to 10.5 acres of parkland are recommended per 1,000 citizens. Using a current population estimate for Whitehouse of 7,007 (the average of the most recent population estimates by the United States Census, Texas State Data Center, and Butler Planning Services) the community should provide between 44 and 74 acres of parkland in order to meet national benchmark standards. The 44 acres would be considered the minimum a City should provide while 74 acres is recommended for communities wishing to provide high-quality parks and recreational services.

### Park Type per Population Ratio

#### *Mini Parks*

Municipal Benchmarks also recommends that cities provide residents with access to a variety of park types including: mini parks, neighborhood parks, and community parks. By definition a mini park is one acre in size or less and lies "within neighborhoods and in close proximity to apartments, townhouse developments, or housing for the elderly." The standards recommend that one quarter to one half acre of mini parks be provided for every 1,000 residents living within the community. Mini parks have a recommended service area of less than one quarter mile.

Equipment and services provided through mini parks should be tailored to the neighborhood in which they are found. For example, playground equipment may

be appropriate for mini parks located within residential subdivisions while a community flower garden or gazebo may be more appropriate for park sites located near retirement communities.

### *Neighborhood Parks*

Neighborhood parks are defined in Municipal Benchmarks with a minimum size of 15 acres and are "suited for intense use; easily assessable to neighborhood population, geographically centered with safe walking and bike access; may develop as a school-park facility." It is recommended that cities provide between one and two acres of neighborhood parks per 1,000 residents. Neighborhood parks are intended to serve more general purposes than mini parks and should be the site for activities including "court games, crafts, playground apparatus areas, skating, picnicking, wading pools, etc." A neighborhood park is intended to service up to a half-mile radius around the park.

### *Community Parks*

Community parks are considered the most intense of the three main park classifications. Sized at 25 acres or more these facilities "may include natural features, such as water bodies, and areas suited for intense development." Community parks are well-suited for activities more intense than other parks such as "athletic complexes, swimming pools, or an area of natural quality for outdoor recreation." It is recommended that a community provide five to eight acres of community parks per 1,000 residents. The service area for community parks could include several neighborhoods with up to a two-mile radius.



## Service Analysis for the Existing Whitehouse Park System

### Gross Park Acreage Recommended Benchmarks

#### *City Parks*

National benchmarks recommend that a City with a population the size of Whitehouse provide a minimum of 44 acres of parkland with 74 acres strongly recommended. These benchmarks frequently count only "usable acreage" when determining park size. The usable acreage of a park would typically exclude parking areas, park roads, maintenance areas, or land within the park inaccessible for recreational use.

The two "City parks" within Whitehouse occupy a total of 4.7 acres; however, these facilities only provide a combination of 2.8 acres

Park Name	Total Acreage	Usable Acreage
City Park on Main Street	1.2	1.1
Garden View Park	3.5	1.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>2.8</b>

Table 8.5: Acreage statistics for City maintained parks

qualifying as "usable." Table 8.5 shows a breakdown of the two parks maintained by the City and includes their acreage.

#### *Public Non-City Parks*

Park Name	Total Acreage	Usable Acreage
Hillcreek Park	31.1	12.4
Ballpark	17.3	12.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>48.4</b>	<b>25.1</b>

Table 8.6: Acreage statistics for parks maintained by other public institutions

Several parks within the community would be considered public despite the fact that they are not

maintained by the City of Whitehouse. Hillcreek Park maintained by the City of Tyler which includes the boat dock and water recreational area is one example. The Little League Ballpark also falls into this category. Together these parks' total and usable area is 48.4 and 25.1 acres respectively (Table 8.6).



*WISD Park Facilities*

Park Name	Total Acreage	Usable Acreage
Brown Elementary	2.4	1.7
Cain Elementary	4.4	1.0
Higgins Intermediate	1.5	1.4
High School	3.4	3.4
Junior High Track	3.9	1.6
Holloway Middle School	4.7	1.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>20.3</b>	<b>10.9</b>

**Table 8.7:** Acreage statistics for parks maintained by the Whitehouse Independent School District

The Whitehouse Independent School District's athletic and recreational facilities can also be included in an analysis of the park system. WISD park and

recreation facilities account for 20.3 total acres with 10.9 usable acres (Table 8.7).

*Semi-Public Park Facilities*

Athletic and recreational facilities provided by churches and homeowners' associations fall within the "semi-public" park category. These facilities

Park Name	Total Acreage	Usable Acreage
First Assembly	2.0	2.0
First Baptist	1.1	0.1
New Cannan Baptist	0.2	0.2
Rosebrook	4.8	0.9
West Lake	0.6	0.6
Whitehouse Methodist	0.8	0.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>9.5</b>	<b>4.6</b>

**Table 8.8:** Acreage statistics for parks maintained by semi-public institutions

provide a total of 9.5 acres with 4.6 of those classified as usable (Table 8.8).

*Acreage Totals and Standing with National Standards*

Approximately 82.9 total acres of park facilities are provided within the community with 43.5 acres qualifying as usable park space (Table 8.9).

Park Owner	Sum Total Acreage	Sum Usable Acreage
City Parks	4.7	2.8
Public Non-City Parks	48.4	25.1
WISD Park Facilities	20.3	10.9
Semipublic Park Facilities	9.5	4.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>82.9</b>	<b>43.5</b>

**Table 8.9:** Usable acreage statistics for each park group

However, while community members frequently use each of these facilities the national benchmark standards require that

only park facilities open to the entire community be counted for this analysis. Both City Parks and Non-City Public Parks easily qualify for inclusion. WISD



facilities could also be included in the analysis if the facilities are available to community members for reasonable hours of use. Some school facilities have been constructed with recreational areas behind classroom areas with poor visibility from public streets and surrounding neighborhoods. In most of these cases the School District has understandably chosen to limit or fully prohibit unsupervised community access. Approximately 8.5 acres (of which 3.8 is considered usable area) of WISD parkland would be included in the analysis given these restrictions.

Citizens of the Whitehouse community have access to a total of 31.8 acres when counting only usable acreage from parks qualifying for inclusion in the analysis. This total is below the minimum recommended provision of park facilities by more than 10 acres. However, the total is well below the ideal facilities recommendations. It is also important to consider that park facilities owned and maintained by other governmental agencies will be open to Whitehouse citizens only at their discretion. Policy changes by these agencies could significantly reduce citizen access.

### **Park Type Recommended Benchmarks**

#### *Park Type Classifications for the Whitehouse Park System*

Gross acreage is only one standard used to analyze a city's park system. By classifying each system facility as a mini park, neighborhood park, or community park the system can be analyzed spatially and functionally as well.

Park size, accessibility, and amenities are all considered in order to classify facilities by park type. Classifications consider many factors and sometimes override individual criteria due to the overall park characteristics. For example, the City Park on Main Street only includes 1.1 acres of usable area. However, given the park's central location, high accessibility, and variety of amenities a classification of "Neighborhood Park" could be justified. Similarly, although Hillcreek Park does not qualify as a "Community Park" based on park location or



usable area, the facility draws sufficient levels of visitors and provides recreation on a large enough scale to receive this classification.

Table 8.10 provides a listing of all community recreational facilities and their corresponding classification by usable area and overall

Park Name	Total Acreage	Usable Acreage	Average (Average)	Area Classification	Overall Classification
City Park on Main Street	1.2	1.1	1.1	Mini	Neigh
Garden View Park	3.5	1.7	2.6	Mini	Mini
Hillicreek Park	31.1	12.4	21.7	Neigh	Comm
Ball Park	17.3	12.7	15.0	Neigh	Neigh
Brown Elementary	2.4	1.7	2.1	Mini	Mini
Cain Elementary	4.4	1.0	2.7	Mini	Mini
Higgins Intermediate	1.5	1.4	1.4	Mini	Mini
High School	3.4	3.4	3.4	Mini	Mini
Junior High	3.9	1.6	2.8	Mini	Mini
Holloway Middle	4.7	1.8	3.2	Mini	Mini
First Assembly	2.0	2.0	2.0	Mini	Mini
First Baptist	1.1	0.1	0.6	Mini	Mini
New Cannan Baptist	0.2	0.2	0.2	Mini	Mini
Rosebrook	4.8	0.9	2.8	Mini	Mini
West Lake	0.6	0.6	0.6	Mini	Mini
Whitehouse Methodist	0.8	0.8	0.8	Mini	Mini

**Table 8.10:** Classifications for all parks within the community

classification including other relevant factors. As with gross acreage analysis some listed facilities do not qualify for inclusion due to limited hours of operation or patronage restrictions.

*Park Type Levels by Population*

Park Type	Sum Usable Acreage	"Public" Usable Acreage	Acreage per 1,000 People in Whitehouse
Mini Parks	17.3	5.1	0.72
Neighborhood Parks	13.8	13.8	1.97
Community Parks	12.4	12.4	1.77
<b>Total</b>	<b>43.5</b>	<b>31.2</b>	

**Table 8.11:** Level of service for Whitehouse parks based on national standards

The first phase of this analysis determines if the park system provides adequate acreage of parks

within each category based on the City's population. Table 8.11 lists the usable acreage of parks broken down by type. The "public" usable acreage is also calculated and includes only parks qualifying for analysis inclusion (excluding facilities which limit use by nonmembers). The number of acres of each park type is then calculated showing acreage provided for every 1,000 residents of the City. The standards recommend that communities provide 0.25 to 0.5 acres of

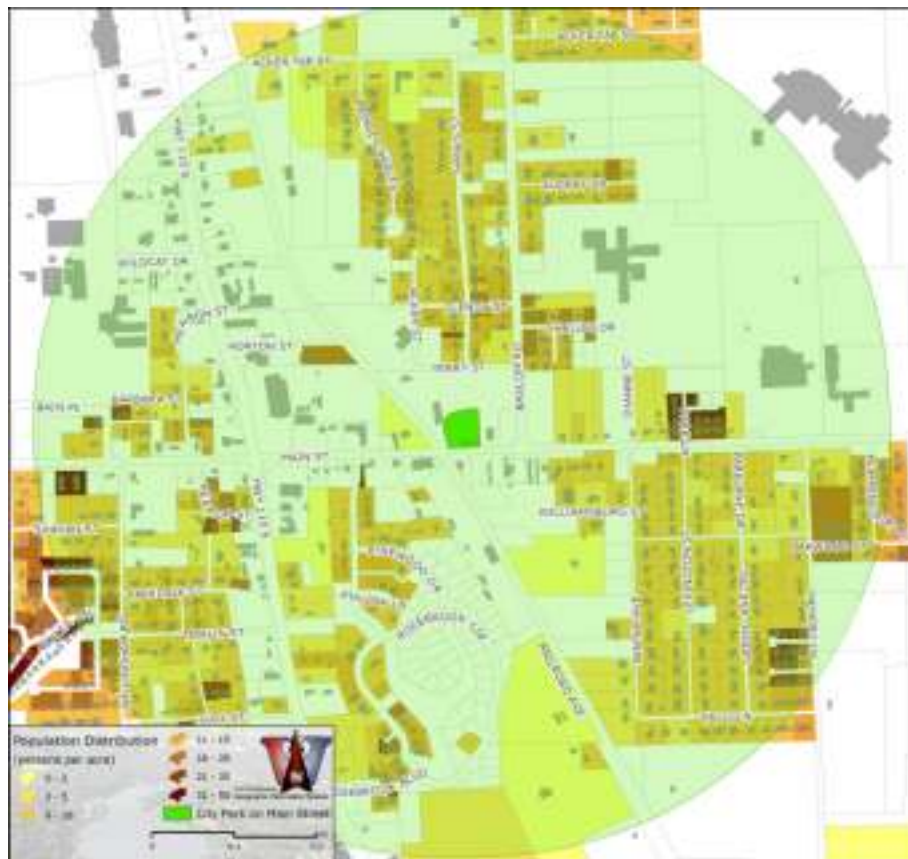




mini parks for each 1,000 residents. The combined Whitehouse park system exceeds this recommendation with 0.74 acres provided for mini parks. The system meets the recommended acreage for neighborhood parks by providing two acres for each 1,000 residents. However, the system falls well short of the minimum five acres (and recommended eight acres) of community parks. Whitehouse currently only provides 1.79 acres for each 1,000 residents of this park type.

### *Location Analysis by Park Type*

The second phase of the analysis is possibly more important than the provision of park type per population. The service area of each park is calculated and analyzed spatially to determine if all portions of the community are being served adequately based on park location.



**Map 8.1:** Service area example for the City Park on Main Street with a generic half-mile service range

In general a park's service area is determined by its classification. Mini parks have a service area of one quarter mile and due to levels of services provided are frequently limited further by neighborhood boundaries. Neighborhood parks have a

larger service area of one half mile (Map 8.1). Community parks can serve an



area as large as two miles. Smaller parks frequently rely on pedestrian access and may not provide parking. As a result the service areas are heavily influenced by major thoroughfares or other physical constraints to walking and biking access.

For the purpose of general analysis each existing park site within the community was given a uniform and standard service area sized appropriately for its classification (Map 8.1, Page 139). Also for this existing conditions analysis only residents living within the current City Limits were included. Table 8.12 displays the estimated City population living in the service areas of parks within each category. The combined service area for

Park Type	Population Served	Served Population Percent of Total
Mini Parks	1,623	24%
Neighborhood Parks	2,723	40%
Community Parks	3,141	46%

**Table 8.12:** Percentage of the population served by parks in each parkland category based on recommended services areas (park service range)

mini parks encompasses approximately 1,623 residents. In other words, only 24% of the City's population lives within range of a mini park. Neighborhood parks serve about 2,723 people within the City, 40% of the population. Finally, 3,141 people live within the service area of the lone community park. This sum represents 46% of the population.

The national standards indicate that it is desirable for each citizen of the community to live within the service area of at least one mini park, neighborhood park, and community park. No citizens currently live within the service area of all three park types since most parks within the community are located to the east of State Highway 110. Residents living in large subdivisions just outside the City Limits on the City's west side are particularly underserved.

## Construction and Maintenance Policies

### Park and Greenbelt Dedications

Acquiring funding for the construction and ongoing maintenance of park sites has been a long-running challenge for the City of Whitehouse despite the fact that



***"What I loved [about coming here] was the land. The open space is the beauty of this town."  
- Kimberly Rischard***

parks and the natural environment are two of the community's strongest selling points. Following the 1995 Comprehensive Plan policy changes encouraged the dedication of floodway greenbelts to the City at the time of platting. This policy change was viewed as a way for the City to acquire future parkland as well as connections within neighborhoods between developed park sites. The unintended consequence of this policy was that much of the land became viewed as a burden for the City.

Little of the dedicated land was capable of supporting organized park activities. The City was also required to maintain the dedicated land. In its original state much of the greenbelt land could maintain itself without human intervention. However, ongoing maintenance and upkeep became necessary as most of it was initially cleared and manicured.

The payroll expense and necessary manpower required for this maintenance greatly outweighed the benefit of the dedicated parkland. This imbalance was particularly pronounced when the land itself remained undeveloped and unusable for anything other than natural enjoyment. Because of this situation, the City has recently rejected many offers of dedicated land by residential developers. While a blanket policy of accepting any dedication was clearly detrimental to the City's financial ability to maintain and construct parks, some recently rejected dedications have hampered the overall implementation of the 1995 Plan. The best example of this is the Rosebrook subdivision where the residential developer offered some very scenic property to the City.

While the City was not responsible for the initial development cost of this park facility and will be able to avoid the burden of upkeep, the community may lose out on a critical park system connection. Every proposed dedication will be different. However, it is imperative that the City find funding mechanisms in order to accept park and greenbelt dedications which complement the overall Park and Recreation Plan.

