

**PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE
MASTER PLAN
2001-2011**

for

BASTROP COUNTY, TEXAS

SEPTEMBER, 2001

County Judge:
Ronnie McDonald

County Commissioners:

Bastrop Parks Task Force:

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VISION

FOR RECREATIONAL OPPORUNTIES WITHIN BASTROP COUNTY

Bastrop County desires to provide all the residents with adequate, safe, and reliable facilities, and to address the needs of the rapidly growing population within Bastrop County, including the needs for varied types of recreational activities from organized sports to the enjoyment of the natural beauty of the County.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Bastrop County Parks Plan 2001-2011

Section	Page Number
I. Introduction.....	1
II. Goals and Objectives.....	3
Guiding Principles and Community Recreation Goals	
III. Plan Development Process.....	7
IV. Local Parks and Recreation Concepts and Standards.....	9
V. Inventory of Area Facilities.....	15
County Parks.....	15
Municipal Parks.....	15
1. City of Bastrop	
2. City of Elgin	
3. City of Smithville	
School Facilities.....	21
1. Bastrop ISD	
2. Elgin ISD	
3. Smithville ISD	
State/Federal Facilities.....	22
1. Bastrop State Park	
2. Buescher State Park	
3. Lake Bastrop Recreation Area	
VI. Needs Assessment and Identification.....	24
Bastrop County	
VII. Prioritization of Needs and Plan Implementation.....	28
Facility Improvements	
Operational Improvements	

Maps

I-1	Bastrop County Precincts
V-1	City of Bastrop Park Facilities
V-2	City of Elgin Park Facilities
V-3	City of Smithville Park Facilities
V-4	School District Facilities
V-5	State/Regional (LCRA) Facilities
V-5	FEMA 100-Year Floodplain
V-6	Endangered Houston Toad Habitat
VII-1	Potential Sports Complex Locations
VII-2	Potential Locations with Houston Toad Habitat
VII-3	Property to be Donated by Bastrop ISD

Charts

IV-1	Population Growth, 1990-2015
IV-2	Percent Living in Unincorporated Communities
IV-3	Age Distribution
IV-4	Comparison of Age Distribution, 1990-2000
IV-5	Race Distribution
IV-6	Percent Hispanic

Tables

IV-1	Parks and Open Space Classifications
IV-2	Pathway Classifications
VII-1	Prioritization of Needs
VII-2	Ranking System

SECTION I

INTRODUCTION

The availability of recreational opportunities is becoming increasingly important in determining the quality of life of a community. Especially in small towns where family entertainment opportunities may be limited and few organized sports possible, parks and other facilities are often the center of the community's social interaction. Parks provide people, especially children, areas where they can meet, play, and participate in sporting activities with others. Exercise and play are fundamental to the health of the community.

Growth within the Austin area over the last decade has spurred residential development in nearly all the counties surrounding Austin. Many of these new residential communities are targeted toward families with small children, many of whom choose these communities because of various factors. However, the availability of recreational facilities such as parks, ball fields, tennis courts, basketball courts, and natural areas for picnicking and hiking are becoming more of a factor in the decisions made by these families.

Though the Bastrop County area has received much of the recent growth in the Austin-San Marcos MSA (Metropolitan Statistical Area), interest in the County over the past several years continues to grow. The planned construction of a new high school as well as the purchase of several tracts of land for residential development west of the County is the start of the growth expected in the area. As a result, Bastrop County has the responsibility to ensure that the population, both existing and future, has access to quality park facilities in order to attract the new residents and fill their recreational needs. Map I-1 provides a base map of the County with local precincts.

According to the 2000 census, Bastrop County has 57,733 persons within the County. The population of Bastrop County is primarily white (80.2%) and 24.0% Hispanic. 8.8% of the population is Black. The median per capita income in 2000 was \$ 64,700.00, with a median income in the MSA of \$ 58,900.00. Approximately 23% of the residents live in poverty, not having made above the average income for their family size. Projected to increase to nearly 100,000 persons by the year 2010, Bastrop County must be prepared to develop and maintain park facilities for the future population.

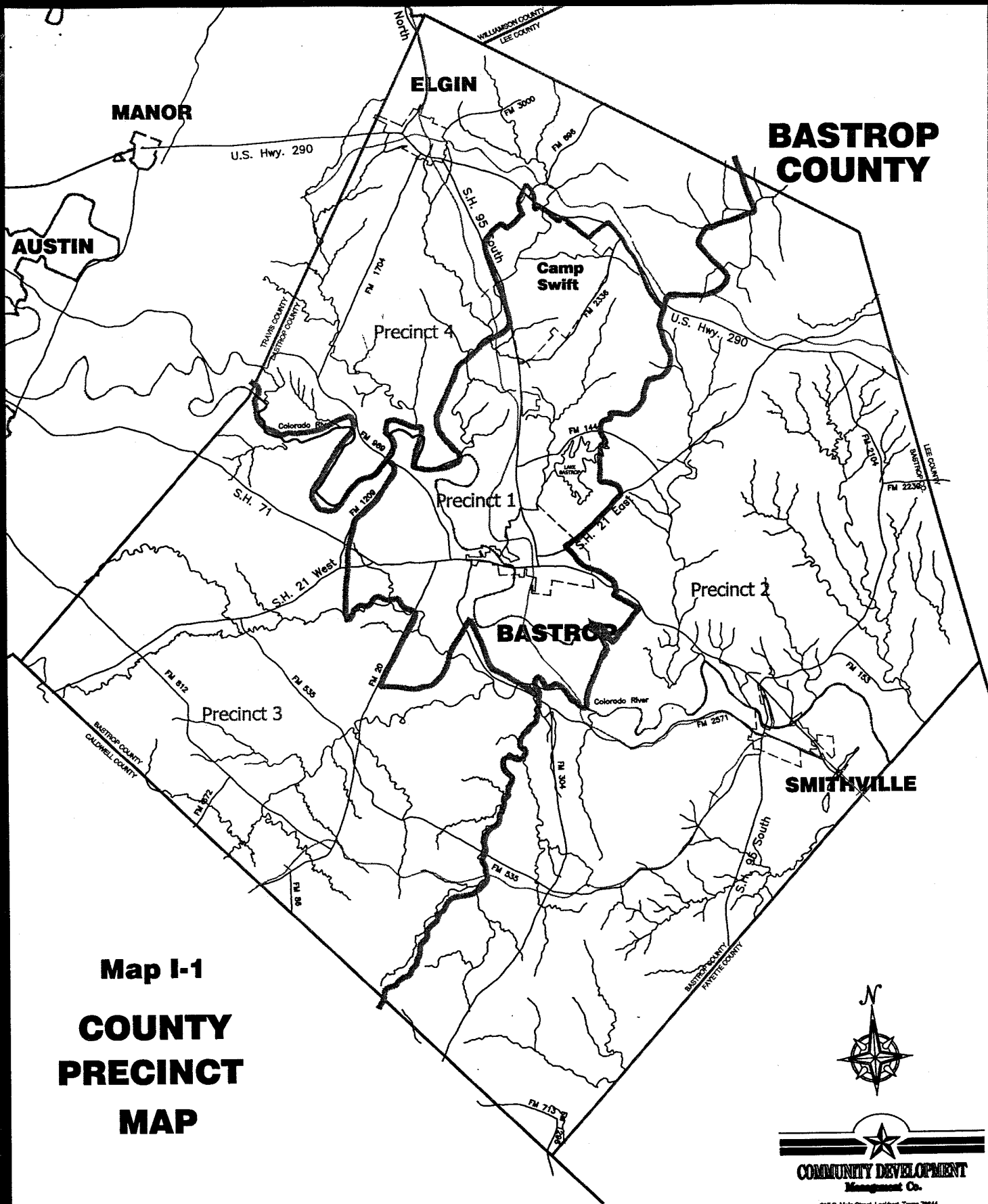
The future of Bastrop County appears to be based on the continued growth of the entire Austin region. While the County is experiencing growth in the entire area, most of the population growth is occurring in the western sections, toward Austin. The County is expected to experience a great increase of the population resulting in the development of new residential housing subdivisions as well as commercial and industrial activity.

As a community that is projected to gain almost 60-70% of its population in the next decade, Bastrop County will have to continue to provide diverse recreational opportunities to the new population, especially the younger residents and those considered "at risk". By allocating the proper amount of land and funds to the park system, a County can provide residents quality of life opportunities.

This Plan was developed to meet the standards for park and recreational improvements pursuant to requirements of the Texas Recreation and Parks Account Local Park Program and

also meets planning guidelines used by the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs under the Planning Capacity Building Program.

While designed to be used as a guide for park and recreational improvements over a ten year planning period, the Plan needs to be updated periodically and revised as appropriate to reflect changes and to take advantage of new opportunities that will present themselves from time to time. Moreover, it is not meant to be final word on this very important matter but is designed to help focus and promote a continuing discussion of the problems and possibilities inherent with park and recreational development.



Map I-1
COUNTY
PRECINCT
MAP

Bastrop County Parks Plan



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
 Management Co.
 217 G. Main Street, Lockhart, Texas 78644
 Revised September 26, 2001

SECTION II

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The following Goals and Objectives were established by the Bastrop County Parks and Recreation Task Force using the Guiding Principles and Community Goals for the recommended Parks and Recreation improvements. The Goals and Objectives were derived from public input and are ranked in order of importance. The Goals and Objectives are the basis for the prioritization of needs discussed under Section VII, Prioritization and Plan implementation. The following table depicts general principles and goals that can be used as guide for developing goals and objectives.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND COMMUNITY RECREATION GOALS

1. Open spaces and natural habitats should be preserved for future generations: additional land should be acquired and specialized parks developed.
2. All people should have access to all parks and recreational facilities regardless of age, sex, income, cultural differences, location in the county, and handicap status.
3. Public recreational facilities should be multipurpose and adaptable to future needs.
4. A parks department should be created independent of the roads department.
5. Public recreation should be coordinated with other community recreation providers to avoid duplication and promote innovation.
6. The life expectancy of new parks and equipment can be 15 to 20 years: parks need to be renovated and equipment replaced or maintained as needed.
7. Maintaining public recreational facilities places a financial burden on the County; more facilities require more staff.
8. Because of rising costs, recreational improvements should be shared, where possible, with all public entities and nonprofit entities who may have a stake in the benefits of recreational programs.
9. Public recreation should be integrated with all other public services, such as economic development, education, health, public safety, transportation, and protection of the environment.
10. The availability of high quality parks, open spaces, and recreational opportunities play an important role in economic development.
11. New growth (new subdivisions) should pay for their own recreational facilities.
12. Citizens should be involved in all aspects of planning for public recreation.
13. Local public recreation should be integrated with regional and state plans;
14. Parks and recreational programs must find ways to celebrate the variety of cultures within the community.

TIME PERIOD FOR THE PLAN

The time period for this plan is 10 years. However, this does not mean that the plan should be placed on a shelf and referred to occasionally. Rather this plan was developed so that it could be used to provide guidance and a framework for the recreational needs of Bastrop County residents. This means that as goals are achieved or recreational opportunities present themselves, the Plan should be updated and revised to accommodate the new changes. Population growth and migration patterns within a fast growing County such as Bastrop means that this plan can become obsolete in a few short years. For this reason, it is recommended that the Plan be updated in five years or in this case in the Summer of 2006.

GOALS FOR BASTROP COUNTY

Bastrop County recognizes that 76% of the total County population resides outside the incorporated communities. Currently, there are no park or recreational programs available in the County. As a result, the County is in the position of needing all types of facilities while

recognizing that because of cost, efforts have to be focused to maximize the impact of limited public funds. The following goals and objectives were developed from this basic understanding.

Goal 1.0 . County residents should have equal access to all parks and recreational facilities.

Objective 1.1. All recreational facilities should be designed to provide access regardless of age, sex, income, cultural differences, location in the county, and handicap status.

Objective 1.2. Parks should be developed in tandem with incorporated communities so that existing resources can be leveraged to address the recreational deficiencies of rural residents.

Objective 2.2 Parks planning should be coordinated with school districts in the county so those new parks can be placed where the population concentrations are the highest.

Goal 2.0 Open spaces and natural habitats should be preserved for future generations.

Objective 2.1 Parks should be integrated with the preservation of endangered species such as the Houston Toad.

Objective 2.2 Interpretative displays and other educational displays need to be incorporated with parks so that future generations do not lose the Bastrop legacy of its natural resources such as the Lost Pines.

Goal 3.0 Public recreation should be integrated with all public services.

Objective 3.1 The Sheriff's Department should be enlisted to promote recreational programs so that "youth-at-risk" can be identified.

Objective 3.2 Existing transportation programs need to be linked to facilitating access to future County Parks. Shuttle services need to be considered for residents who live in outlying areas.

Goal 4.0 Public recreation should be coordinated with other community recreation providers to avoid duplication and promote innovation.

Objective 4.1 With limited financial resources, the County needs to consider joint venturing with incorporated communities, school districts, and State installations so that their resources can be leveraged to provide recreational opportunities in the County.

Objective 4.2 Surplus lands owned by public entities can be used for park development.

Goal 5.0 New growth (new subdivisions) should pay for their own recreational facilities.

Objective 5.1 As appropriate, developers need to be requested to provide for the recreational needs of the future residents.

Objective 5.2 Flood plains make idea locations for open space recreational activities.

Goal 6.0 Parks and recreational planning should be incorporated into tourism and economic development efforts.

Objective 6.1 Parks and recreation facilities are economic development issues that affect a company or industry's locational decisions.

Objective 6.1 The quality of life that is found in the county is directly related to its parks and recreation resources.

Goal 7.0 Parks and recreational programs must find ways to celebrate the variety of cultures within the community.

Objective 7.1 Parks need to be sensitive to the special contributions made by certain population groups in the county.

Objective 7.2 Special occasions or festivals that celebrate events in the County should be incorporated into park planning.

Goal 8.0 A County Parks and Recreation Board composed of residents from all precincts needs to be established to promote parks and recreation planning.

Objective 8.1 A County Department needs to be created for the maintenance of all-future parks and recreation programs.

Objective 8.2 Fund raising for parks and recreational programs need to be an ongoing effort.

GOALS OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES

The goals set out by the cities of Bastrop, Elgin and Smithville in their park master plans are included in this report to highlight the focus of established parks and recreation programs in the incorporated communities. As indicated by the goals of the incorporated communities there are opportunities for teaming arrangements to develop parks and recreational programs that benefit all county residents. Most importantly because of increasing costs, recreational improvements should be shared, where possible, with all public and nonprofit entities that have a stake in parks and recreational programs. There is also a need to recognize that the residents of incorporated communities are also County residents and they are entitled to the same benefits as everyone else. With these points in mind, the goals of each of the incorporated communities in Bastrop County have been identified as follows.

CITY OF BASTROP from August 1997 Master Park Plan

- Increase percentage of parkland, open space, and greenbelt areas including linkages between parks through land management, inter-local agreements, dedications, and construction.
- Increase and diversify recreational programs through volunteers, development of multi-use facilities, and City sponsored events
- Increase available facilities through inter-local agreements, utilizing different funding methods, and maintenance and funding schedules
- Develop marketing strategies including creation of citizens' input network, circulation of information using media, and develop special events plan.

CITY OF ELGIN from September 1997 City Master Plan

- Provide general organization of City facilities.
- Develop Parks and Recreation Committee with members from the City, School, Churches, and community to guide the development and usage of the park facilities
- Utilize old depot as center for tourism
- Ensure that the City's subdivision ordinance requires the dedication of land in residential developments for neighborhood parks
- Consider construction of additional pool to serve existing and future residents and relieve existing overcrowding.
- Consider purchase/rehabilitation or construction of recreation center
- Consider purchasing vacant lots throughout the City for development of neighborhood parks.
- Identify the Needs of the Elderly because very often in the development of park plans, the needs of the elderly residents are overlooked.
- Consider the Park Needs of northern Section of Elgin
- Prepare to provide park and recreational facilities to new residents

CITY OF SMITHVILLE from May 1996 Parks and Recreation Master Plan

- To ensure equal access for all residents of Smithville to Parks and Recreation opportunities.
- Integrate recreational uses into Smithville's unique environment through good stewardship of the City's natural resources.
- To incorporate parks and recreation planning into tourism and economic development strategies.

SECTION III

PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

In order to ensure that any plan is reflective of the people it is designed for, it is important to include the public and representatives in any and all discussions and decisions. By providing opportunities for input, the plan will reflect the needs and wants of the citizens who are more likely to be accepting and enthusiastic about the plan. The intent of this planning process was to gather input on the needs and wants for Parks and Recreational programs and facilities in Bastrop County. This Plan recognizes that Bastrop County is a rapidly growing community with opportunities and problems, which are unique to Bastrop County.

The following Parks Recreation and Open Space Master Plan was compiled with the assistance of the Bastrop County Parks and Recreation Task Force. This board included the County Judge, County Commissioners, Parks Department directors from the Cities of Bastrop, Elgin, and Smithville, representatives of the local school districts, and representatives of civic organizations, especially the sports organizations.

The groups and organizations that took part in this planning effort were the following:

- Bastrop County Parks and Recreation Task Force
- City of Bastrop Parks Department
- City of Elgin Parks Department
- City of Smithville Parks Department
- Bastrop City Council
- Elgin City Council
- Smithville City Council
- Bastrop Independent School District
- Bastrop Youth Soccer Association
- Bastrop Youth Football
- Smithville Little League
- Rockne Little League
- Elgin-McDade Girl Scouts

In addition to these groups and sport organizations, various individuals contributed ideas and concerns about the parks and recreation programs either informally or formally. A series of public hearings and personal interviews were conducted to determine the recreational demands and future plans of the various organizations. Public notices were placed in the local newspaper and to inform residents about the ongoing public forums. Residents were given the opportunity to address the Task Force during meetings and give their input at any of the public hearings. The hearings gave opportunities for individuals to contribute to the vision, thoughts and ideas that went into this plan.

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan was developed using this public input in conjunction with the established guidelines for parks, recreation and open space standards. The priorities and recommendations developed into this plan will guide improvements to the community's present and future parks and recreation programs over a ten-year planning period.

In the following planning section, an extended effort over several months was made to ascertain what the citizens of Bastrop County want through a series of public hearings, surveys, discussions with organized sports groups and one on one interviews with key individuals in the community. From these discussions the community standards and recommendations were derived. The following public hearings, the locations, and the dates of the meeting were as follows:

Public Hearings:

<u>Location</u>	<u>Date</u>
Elgin	8/10/00
Bastrop	8/17/00
Smithville	8/30/00
Cedar Creek	10/20/00

Advisory Committee meeting Dates

- 5/24/00
- 6/13/00
- 7/11/00
- 8/15/00
- 9/12/00
- 3/14/01
- 9/17/01 (presentation before the Houston Toad group)

The data gathered through this process was used to identify the problems and needs and to prioritize the specific needs being requested by the resident population. In addition to these meetings, a survey requesting an identification of needs was conducted. A discussion of these needs and problems can be found in Section VI, Needs Assessment and Identification.

SECTION IV

LOCAL PARKS AND RECREATION CONCEPTS AND STANDARDS

Before a plan for park and recreation improvements can be developed, it is important to understand the composition of the population of the area to be served and what types of opportunities are expected and desired by the residents, both new and existing. Standards can then be developed and analyzed to determine the deficits within the County and what is needed to provide adequate recreational opportunities for the residents.

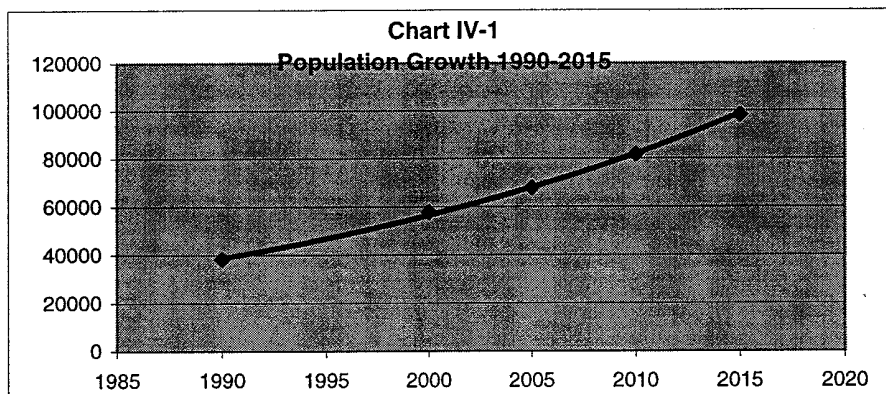
The following population estimates and their future projections are included in this discussion to show how rapidly the County has grown. Note how close the projected population is compared to the actual 2000 population.

Population

1990	38,263	
2000	56,064 (projected)	57,733 (actual)
2005	67,816	
2010	81,822	
2020	116,586	

Source: State Data Center, Texas A&M Department of Rural Sociology, Scenario 1990-98

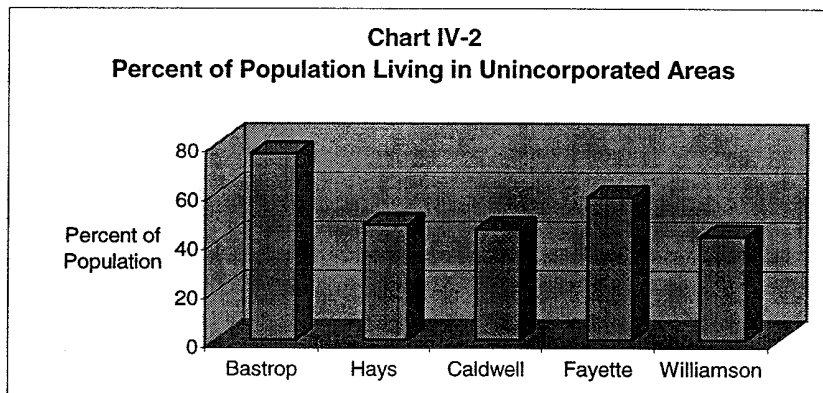
According to the latest 2000 U.S. Bureau of the Census, Bastrop County's population increased from its 1990 population of 38,263 to its current 2000 population of 57,733. This population increase of 50.9% closely matches the State Data projections shown above. This means the county grew an annual rate over the past decade of 5.09% per year. If a linear progression were made of this trend the County's population by 2010 would be approximately 80,000 by the end of 2010. The above projections made by the State Data Center confirm this rate. There are some indications that the population for Bastrop County could be closer to 100,000 people than the projections show. Chart IV-1 illustrates the population changes for the County.



There are three incorporated communities in Bastrop County. Each of these communities grew slower within the city limits than the unincorporated area. The area located

northeast of the City of Bastrop had some of the fastest growing areas in the County reporting a 61.5% to 76.5% respective growth rate. The area located in the southwest part of the County, bounded between Farm Market 20 and Farm Market 21, saw an explosive growth rate that matched the growth rates being experienced by the City of Austin. It is anticipated that a community will emerge from this fast growth area within this decade.

In terms of unincorporated area in the county, it is important to note that 76% of Bastrop County's population resides outside of cities. As compared to Hays County, only 47% of their population resides outside of cities. In neighboring Caldwell County, 45.2% of their population lives outside of cities. In Fayette County, 58.2% of the population lives outside of cities. In the more metropolitan county of Williamson County, 42.2% of the population lives outside of cities. The following graphic depicts this trend very clearly.



As compared to 1990, 68.5% of the Bastrop County population lived outside of cities at that time. This means that the rural area of Bastrop County had a 7.5% increase in its rural population since 1990. This trend can be explained as spillover growth from the metropolitan area of the City of Austin that is impacting Bastrop County. As Austin continues to grow and expand outside Travis County it is anticipated that the outlying unincorporated areas such as western Bastrop County are going to be impacted first. This is not to say that the cities in the County are not going to grow. They will grow but not as fast as the western area of the County.

It is obvious from the 2000 Census that the three primary population centers in Bastrop were the cities of Bastrop, Smithville and Elgin. It is also in these areas where the population is the most concentrated and the typical areas where growth radiates into the countryside. As noted earlier, the western edge of the County that borders the East Side of Travis County experienced spillover growth from the City of Austin. It is anticipated that the City of Austin municipal airport, located on Highway 71, is going to be a major land use catalyst for development in the area. As of Spring 2001, the area around the airport, which includes the western edge of Bastrop County, was experiencing the fastest growth rates for the Austin metropolitan area. The City of Bastrop has benefited greatly from this growth. For this reason, the Bastrop City area is considered to be the fastest growing community in Bastrop County.

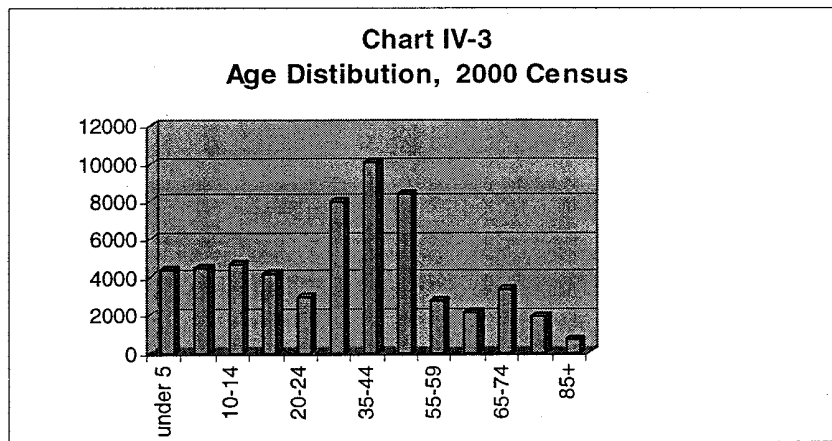
The next fastest growth area is in the City of Elgin area, the area just outside the City of Manor, located in Travis County, is rapidly becoming a center for high technology. Numerous high technology factories have located in the area contributing to fast growth in residential developments. These developments are spilling over into the western edge of the City of Elgin.

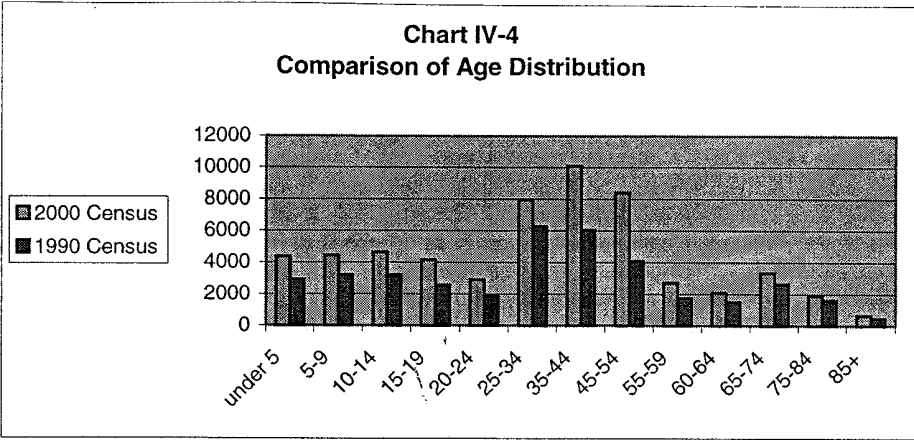
Although there was downturn in the high technology economy in the early part of the new century, this slowdown is not expected to be extended. This means that the Manor area will continue to be a catalyst for continued growth in the northwestern fringes of Bastrop County.

The City of Smithville grew in some respects faster than Elgin however the growth rates are skewed by the small size of the community. The City's remote location from the economic drivers influencing the County is one factor why the community is anticipated to grow slower than the rest of the County. The City of Smithville has not had the subdivision growth or the commercial development that the rest of the communities have had. The future population change in eastern Bastrop County is not expected to be as rapid as the City of Bastrop or Elgin.

In summary the future grow in the County is expected to primarily revolve around the natural growth that each community is currently experiencing. The community's that have had rapid grow will continue to grow for the same reasons. The spillover growth from Travis County will continue to take place along the western edges of Bastrop County. Most likely there are going to be new incorporated communities that will evolve from all of this growth.

While some of the development is created by retirees, a large part of the development is comprised of families moving into the country for more space, security, and (using their higher incomes) to fulfill their desire to design and construct a new home. These residents have often come from a larger city that has traditionally provided playgrounds, fields for sports, and other recreational amenities. They bring those requirements to Bastrop County with them when their children join an organized football, soccer, baseball team. They also want to have access to and enjoy the natural areas of the County, which may have attracted them to the area initially.

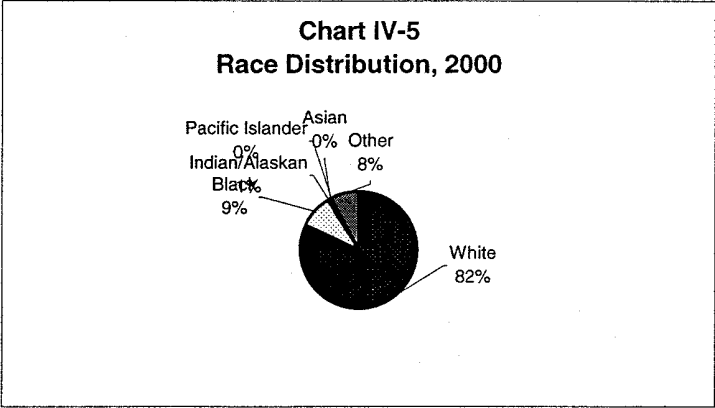


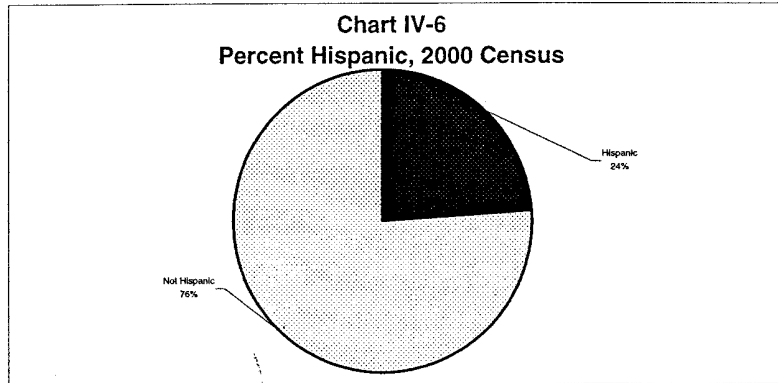


Current residents in the County have had limited access to many types of public benefits, including adequate recreational opportunities, especially the lower income and “youth at risk.”

The southern portion of the County has no incorporated areas (cities), and therefore has no recreational facilities to serve this new younger population and their children.

Race or ethnicity does not particularly determine standards or needs for recreational opportunities since there are few differences in the activities that people of different races choose to participate in. The following charts are provided for general information from the 2000 Census.





Standards

There are several ways to determine the parkland needs of the community. Any method can be equally valid. However, the numbers produced by these methods are not absolute but should simply be used as a general guide to determine whether additional parkland is warranted. The three common approaches are as follows:

1. Demand-Based Approach relies on information gathered from participation rates, surveys, and other information that indicates how much of the population wants certain types of facilities.
2. Standard-Based Approach uses established standards to determine the amounts of facilities and park areas needed to meet the needs of a given population size. The standards may be based on studies of demand, or the professional judgment of parks and recreation planners and designers.
3. Resource Based Approach examines the assets and resources of the area for open space, parks, and recreation facilities, and defines how these resources can be utilized.

For the purpose of this analysis, all three approaches were used to ascertain the best approach for the County. At present, the level of service in Bastrop County, which is typically expressed as the number of available parkland acres per 1000 population. Needless to say this number is zero because the County does not currently provide any facilities.

Since Bastrop County currently does not operate any recreational facilities, it is difficult to use existing facilities to determine standards. These standards would be used by the County to determine deficits that need to be addressed. The best alternative is to use information gathered through the plans developed for the Cities of Bastrop and Elgin (and Smithville, if available) as well as the public hearings which provided public input to develop the standards.

The lack of a facility or facilities to serve the demand for sports fields is one standard that can be determined from the public. The current inventory of fields in use is inadequate for the current and future needs of the residents. This is obvious from observation of recreational activities being conducted at all public owned open spaces, including school property, which is typically limited in availability and access. Table IV-1 provides Park and Open Space Classifications for the area needs for specific types of activities.

New parks of all sizes are needed throughout the County because of the lack of existing facilities. All of the residents in unincorporated area are forced to use the facilities owned and operated by the cities in Bastrop County which are not sized to accommodate the residents outside of the City. Smaller parks may be provided in some of the more densely populated areas.

Many of the growing number of residents have moved into Bastrop County to take advantage of its natural beauty. The County is the home of the Lost Pines area, the Colorado River, and many attractive individual areas. The LCRA provides approximately 1,200 acres through the McKinney Roughts, west of the City of Bastrop, as well as coordination with the cities for other local facilities. However, the demand for natural recreational activities by persons living in the unincorporated areas places the County under the obligation to provide public access to these areas. Through input from the public, people want to be able to be a part of and enjoy the undeveloped lands through the use of trails, campgrounds, etc. Table IV-2, Pathway Classifications, provides descriptions of the types of access that may be developed by the County into some of the public natural areas.

As noted previously, the County currently has no facilities available to the public, forcing County residents to utilize the facilities of incorporated communities and any available open areas. Although Bastrop County is completely deficient in parkland, the deficiency is greater due to the problem that all of the cities are in the central and northern areas of the County. Residents of the southern half of the County, especially children and youth who rely on others for transportation, are severely limited in their opportunities.

**Table IV -1
Parks and Open Space Classifications**

Classification	General Description	Description of Each Type	Size Criteria
Pocket Park	Used to address limited, isolated or unique recreational needs. Serve limited population; e.g. children or elderly	Less than 1/4 mile distance in residential setting	Between 2500 sq. ft. and one acre
Neighborhood Park	Neighborhood park remains the basic unit of the park system and serves as the recreational and social focus of the neighborhood. Focus is on informal active and passive recreation. Provides for activities such as ball games, court games, playground, swimming, picnicking	1/4 to 1/2 mile distance and uninterrupted by nonresidential roads and other physical barriers	5 acres is considered minimum. 5 to 10 acres is optimal.
School Park	Depending on circumstances, combining parks with school sites can fulfill the space requirements other classes of parks, such as neighborhood, community, sports complex and special use.	Determined by location of school district property.	Variable—depends on function.
Community Park	Serves broader purpose than neighborhood park. Focus is on meeting community-based recreation needs, as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces. May include areas for large-scale activities such as ball complexes, large pools; may provide outdoor recreation such as hiking, walking, picnicking	Determined by the quality and suitability of the site. Usually serves two or more neighborhoods and 1/2 to 3 mile distance.	As needed to accommodate desired uses. Usually between 30 and 50 acres.
Regional Park	Areas of natural beauty and recreation such as hiking, fishing, boating conservation, camping, swimming.	Serves several communities; 1 hour driving time	200+ acres
Natural Area	Lands set aside for preservation of significant natural resources, remnant landscapes, open space and visual aesthetics/buffering.	Resource availability and opportunity.	Variable.
Greenways	Effectively tie park system components together to form a continuous park environment.	Resource availability and opportunity.	Variable.
Sports Complex	Consolidates heavily programmed athletic fields and associated facilities to larger and fewer sites.	Strategically located throughout the community.	Determined by projected demand. Usually a minimum of 25 acres, with 40 to 80 acres being optimal.
Special-Use	Covers a broad range of parks and recreation facilities oriented toward single-purpose use.	Variable dependent on specific use.	Variable.
Private Park Recreation Facility	Parks and recreation facilities that are privately owned, yet contribute to the park and recreation system.	Variable dependent on specific use.	Variable.

Table IV-2

Pathway Classifications

Classification	General Description	Description of Each Type
Park Trail	Multipurpose trails located within greenways, parks and natural resource areas. Focus is on value and harmony with natural environment.	Type I: Separate/single purpose hardsurfaced trails for recreational pedestrians or bicyclists/inline skaters. Type II: Multipurpose hardsurfaced trails for pedestrians and bicyclists/inline skaters. Type III: Nature trails for pedestrians. May be hard or soft surfaced.
Connector Trails	Multipurpose trails that emphasize safe travel for pedestrians to and from parks and around the community. Focus is as much on transportation as it is on recreation	Type I: Separate/single-purpose hard surfaced trails for pedestrians or bicyclists/inline skaters located in independent right-of-ways.
All- terrain Bike Trail	Offroad trail for all-terrain (mountain) bikes	Single-purpose loop trails usually located in larger parks and natural resource areas.
OnStreet Bikeways	Paved segments of roadways that serve as a means to safely separate bicyclists from vehicular traffic.	Bike Route: Designated portions of the roadway for the preferential or exclusive use of bicyclists. Bike Lane: Shared portions of the roadway that provide separation between motor vehicles and bicyclists, such as paved shoulders.
Equestrian Trail Trails	Trails developed for horseback riding.	Loop trails usually located in larger parks and natural resource areas. Sometimes developed as multi-purpose with hiking and all-terrain biking where conflicts can be controlled.

SECTION V

INVENTORY OF AREA FACILITIES

Understanding the existing types and amounts of facilities is primary to creating a plan for the development of new facilities. It is important to first understand what currently exists, what can be expanded, and where a community might be deficient before attempting to say what is needed.

Collectively, if all the City, County, and State properties being used were totaled, there would be approximately 206.5 acres available to Bastrop County residents (88 acres within the City of Bastrop, 52.5 acres within the City of Elgin, and 66 acres in the City of Smithville). Since the City of Bastrop is located in central Bastrop County, Elgin in the northwest corner, and Smithville on the eastern side of the County, the entire southern section of the County has no access to recreational facilities.

The following inventory is provided to determine the current status of recreation facilities available to the residents of Bastrop County.

COUNTY PARKS

Bastrop County currently operates no parks or recreation facilities.

MUNICIPAL PARKS

City of Bastrop

The inventory of park facilities was taken from the City of Bastrop Master Parks Plan, 1997. Including a new development at Riverside Grove, the City operates and maintains approximately 88 acres of parkland. The following is an inventory of the current facilities in the City of Bastrop: (See Map V-1.)

1. **Fisherman's Park**

Along the Colorado River, this day-use park is part of a LCRA Colorado River Trail Texas Parks & Wildlife Department (TPWD) Project and backs up to the LCRA Riverside Conference Center. This City park completed improvements in 1994 and has been targeted for additional improvements to capitalize on its available land and water access area. It features a playground, picnic pavilion, basketball courts, and a soccer/football field.

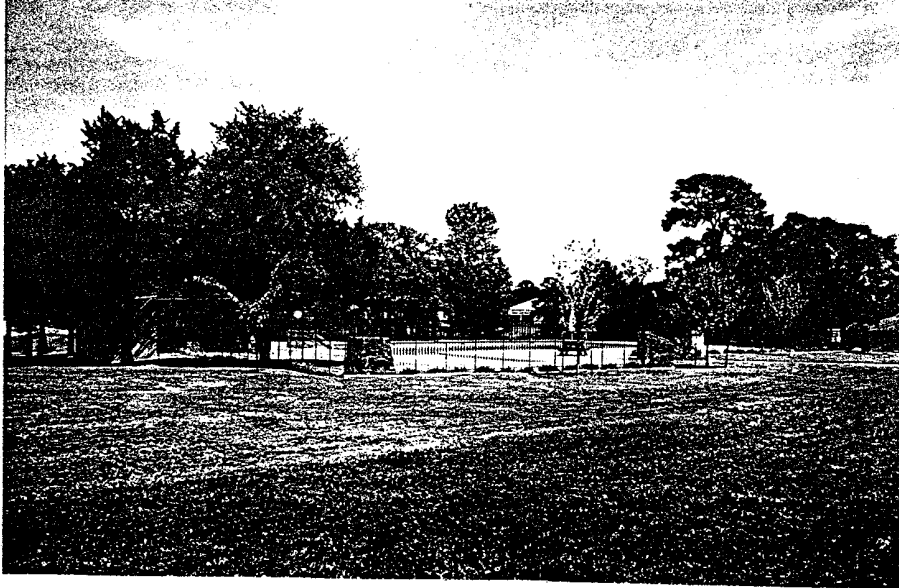


Fisherman's Park

2. Rusty Reynolds Baseball Complex
This park, centrally located, provides much of the City's current baseball/softball needs.
3. Fireman's Park
This park, also centrally located, provides one lighted field.
4. Arena Park
This park area houses a newly constructed rodeo arena. (2000), 1 livestock pavilion (show barn) a concession stand, and restrooms. Includes 7.4 acres of open space.
5. Ferry Neighborhood Park
This park provides important access to the Colorado River near the State Highway 71 bridge. Existing facilities include picnic tables, a swing set, and a small gazebo.
6. Old River Bridge Connector Trail Type II
The old bridge to downtown has been restored for foot, skate or bicycle travel. Construction of some of the connecting trail is under construction. Eventually, there will be trails on both sides of the river and the bridge will connect them.
7. Lover's Lane Soccer Field
In cooperation with the County and parent's association, this one soccer field is owned by the City.
8. Bastrop Riverwalk
Trail Type II
9. Riverside Grove
under construction
at new Centex residential development on Colorado River
has preserve/greenbelt, 2 multi-use fields, sand volleyball, 2 pavilions, river access
10. Texas Parks & Wildlife Project
Once complete the trail will connect Fisherman's Park with the Old River Bridge and ultimately Ferry Park.

Privately Owned

1. Tahitian Village Club (fee use) - Includes the following facilities: swimming pool, golf course and volleyball. Provides the only swimming pool in the County that is open to the public.



Pool at Tahitian Village

2. Paul C. Bell Field- (use upon request) unlit baseball field without bleachers. Provides the only tennis courts in county; is used by the schools.
3. Leon Goertz Field/Callahan Field – Located in south central part of the County at Highway 20 and Humble Lane. Operated by Rockne Community Recreation Center. Has bleachers and lights. Used by Little League



Leon Goertz Field

Future Planned Projects

A current application to Texas Parks and Recreation will develop a 45-acre tract for the Riverside Grove Subdivision along Colorado River. Phase I of the facility will provide a nature preserve/greenbelt, sand volleyball, 2 pavilions, a nature outlook, and a fishing/canoe launch. Phase II will provide 2 multi-use fields.

City of Elgin

There are a total of four parks owned and operated by the City of Elgin. The following inventory was taken from the City's Master Plan, completed in 1997. (See Map V-2.)

1. City Park

This park was constructed on the site of the old railroad depot in the 1930's in honor of veterans of World War I. It is on Main Street across from the Elgin Police Station and consists of one-half City block, about one-half acre. In honor of the W.W.I veterans, a cannon with a memorial headstone stands on the periphery of the concrete slab. Across Main Street, the City has renovated the red brick depot for use as a community center as well as a location for visitation by tourists.

2. Elgin Memorial Park

Built during the 1950's or 60's, this 16-acre park is the largest park that serves the City. It is located on Main Street (Business FM 1100) at Highway 95 and is used by the residents for large gatherings. This park has a tennis/basketball court, volleyball courts, pavilion, restrooms, as well as an extensive picnic area. In 1997, the City received a grant from the Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) for \$18,000.00 to construct a playscape, which greatly adds to the appearance and quality of the park. The City operates a baseball field at the western end of the park that is used for many adult baseball games. A little league field is located at the other end other park for children's baseball games. The City has begun plans to expand the park in the future.

3. Thomas Memorial Park

This approximately 12 acre park is located two blocks off McDade Road on Madison St. behind the Elgin Village Affordable Housing complex. It primarily serves the northeastern section of the City. Built in the early 1970's, this park consists of a baseball field, a primitive playground, restrooms, and what appears to be a new pavilion with a metal roof. A youth softball field that is also used by the high school is located in the western section of the park. Picnic tables and barbeque pits are located at a few locations throughout the park. The park itself has few trees and slopes toward the Little Sandy Creek to the southeast. The City has begun plans to expand the park in the future.

4. Morris Memorial Park

This almost four-acre park was recently constructed in 1996 and is located on land behind the site of the former hospital, which was purchased by the City. Having recently been developed, this park has a basketball court in excellent condition, a new playground facility, a pool, and an attractive pond surrounded by a hike-and-bike trail. This pool is the only public pool in the County. Plans have begun to renovate the old hospital building into a civic center and indoor recreation center. The City has not yet secured funding for the improvements.

5. Elgin Softball Field

Accessed by East 9th Street and located at the corner of Highway 95 and the railroad tracks this complex of 4 baseball fields has lights, an electronic scoreboard, a concession stand in good condition, and locked bathrooms. It is owned and operated by the City of Elgin.

Future Planned Projects

The City of Elgin is planning to develop a new 10-15 acre park west of the City near the new Shenandoah Park subdivision and the new high school. The City is planning to apply to the Texas Department of Parks and Recreation in early 2001. Various improvements and expansions are planned for individual parks. The Elgin School District plans to develop a bond issue for the construction of an athletic complex.

City of Smithville

The City of Smithville operates approximately 66 acres of parkland, the largest being the newest park on the Colorado River. A new indoor recreation center that was recommended in the City's Park and Recreation Master Plan, 1996, is also now available for public use. This inventory was taken from the Plan. (See Map V-3.)

1. **Vernon I. Richards Riverbend Park**

Located on the north bank of the Colorado River, this park resulted from the redevelopment of the former Crockett Riverbend Park. It was completed with assistance from the Lower Colorado River Authority and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and was dedicated on December 15, 1994. The new Vernon I. Richards Riverbend Park covers approximately 50 acres. Currently, the forty-six acres north of SH 71 are developed, and the four acres south of SH 71 are unused. Facilities include 19 R.V. Campsites, approximately 75 picnic tables, a lighted softball field, two volleyball courts, a playground with a playscape and swings, horseshoe pits, a fishing pier along the Colorado River, a pavilion, showpens, an auction area, and restrooms.

2. **Martin Luther King Community Park**

This ten-acre park is adjacent to the City warehouse and other municipal buildings and is between Martin Luther King Drive and South First Street west of Miller Street. Facilities include three lighted baseball fields, two-lighted full basketball courts (4 goals), one unlighted half basketball court (1 goal), a playground with equipment, a volleyball court, a concession stand, and restrooms.

3. **Keilberg Park**

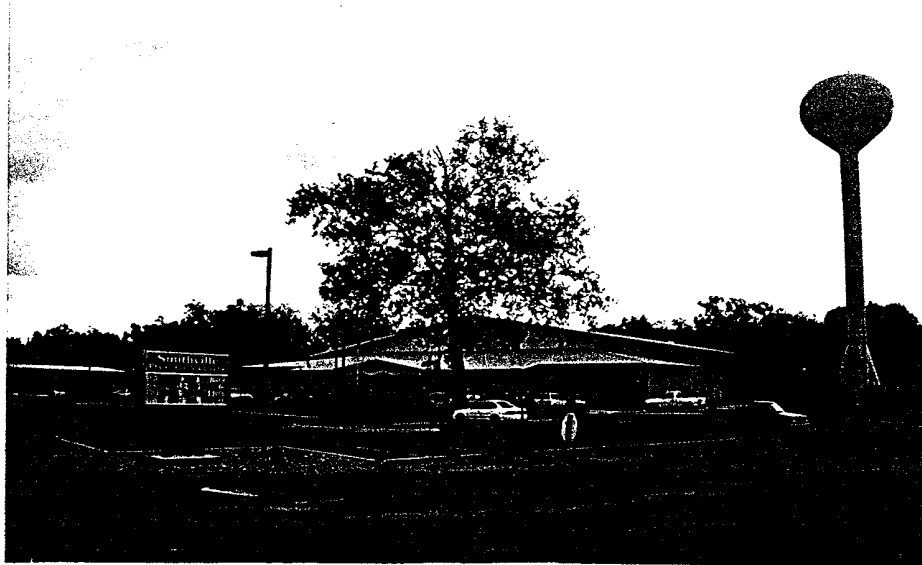
This park, which covers approximately five acres, is west of downtown on Maple Street. Facilities include a lighted baseball field, a soccer field and a practice field.

4. **James H. Long Railroad Historical Park**

This one acre park at the south end of Main Street at North First Street and the railroad right-of-way includes an interpretive center, historic rail cars and depot dated to the 1890's, a gazebo, two picnic tables, a playground, and restrooms. This site is also home to Smithville's Chamber of Commerce.

5. **Main Street Park or River Park**

Located at the north end of Main Street at North Eighth Street, this scenic overlook on the south bank of the Colorado River has several benches and shade trees. River Park and Railroad Park define an axis along Main Street; they create a balance between industry to the south and the river to the north.



Smithville Recreation Center

Privately Owned

Not all private facilities offer access to the general public. Those that do may impose a fee.

1. Shippo Lake - East of the City on SH 71. A water ski school operates at this private lake.
2. Rocky Hill Ranch - North of the City on FM 153. Provides mountain biking trails, nature trails, tent sites, volleyball, fishing, horseshoes, and other activities. The Ranch also hosts outdoor festivals and events.

Future Planned Projects

The future projects in Smithville are based on the recommendations from the City's 1996 Parks Plan. The plan determined that, while the City satisfies most minimum standards for the current population, the City could benefit from some improvements. It also states that not all of the facilities are easily accessible to all residents, either due to disability or location. The following are the recommendations and the first ten priorities as listed in the Plan. It is assumed that future projects in the City will be based on these recommendations and priorities.

Recommendations

1. Develop a multifunction, multi-use parks system connected by trails and transportation services.
2. Continue regular maintenance of existing parks.
3. Ensure cooperation among the City, County, school district, private associations, and other interests through integrated management of the facilities.
4. Conduct a periodic recreational assessment of the needs in the parks system.

Top 10 Priorities

1. Basketball Courts (2)
2. Volleyball Court
3. New neighborhood park at Gazley creek
4. Main Street Park: expand north to Colorado River
5. Colorado River/Gazley Creek Trail

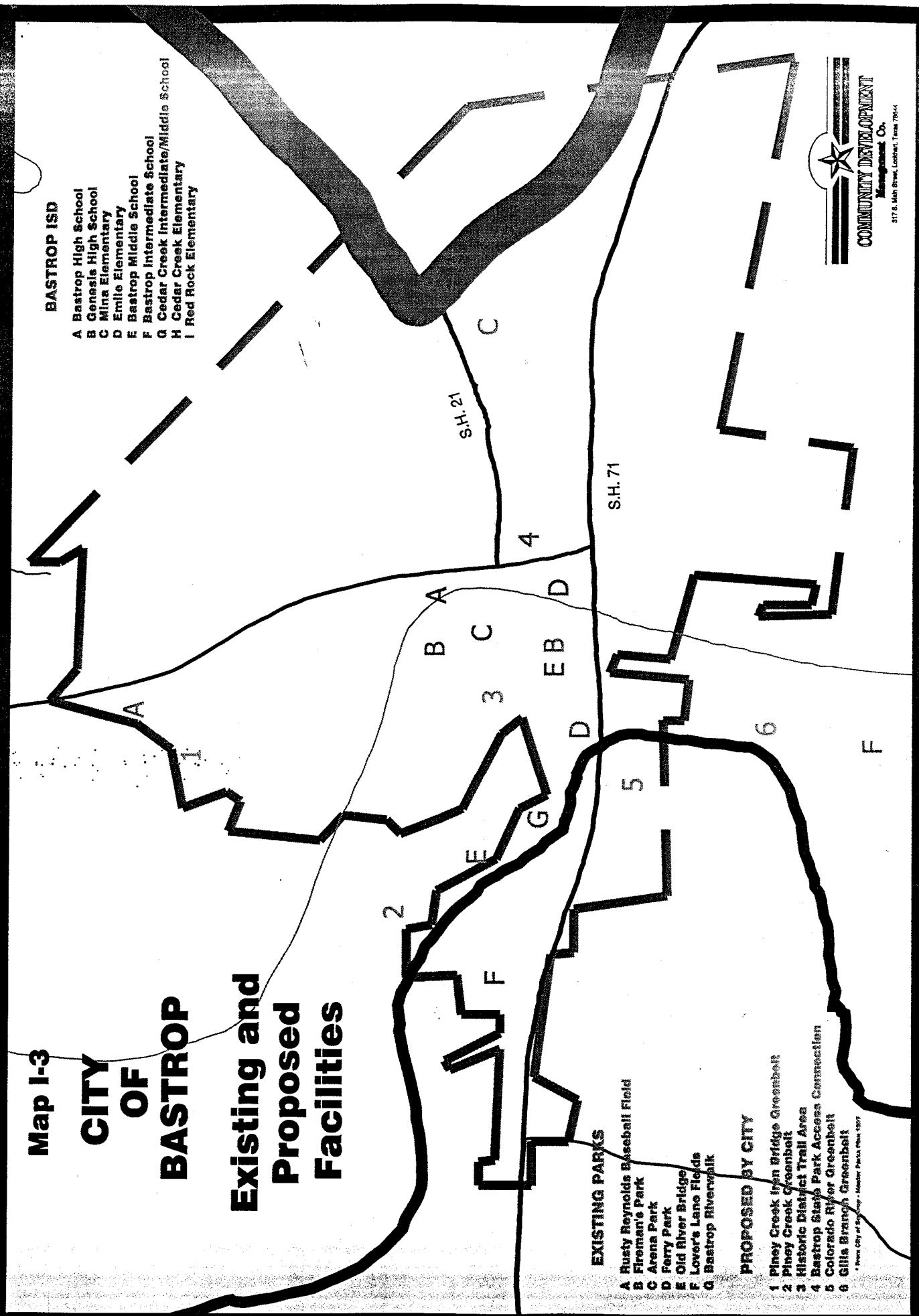
Map I-3

CITY OF BASTROP

Existing and Proposed Facilities

BASTROP ISD

- A Bastrop High School
- B Genesie High School
- C Mina Elementary
- D Emile Elementary
- E Bastrop Middle School
- F Bastrop Intermediate School
- G Cedar Creek Intermediate/Middle School
- H Cedar Creek Elementary
- I Red Rock Elementary



EXISTING PARKS

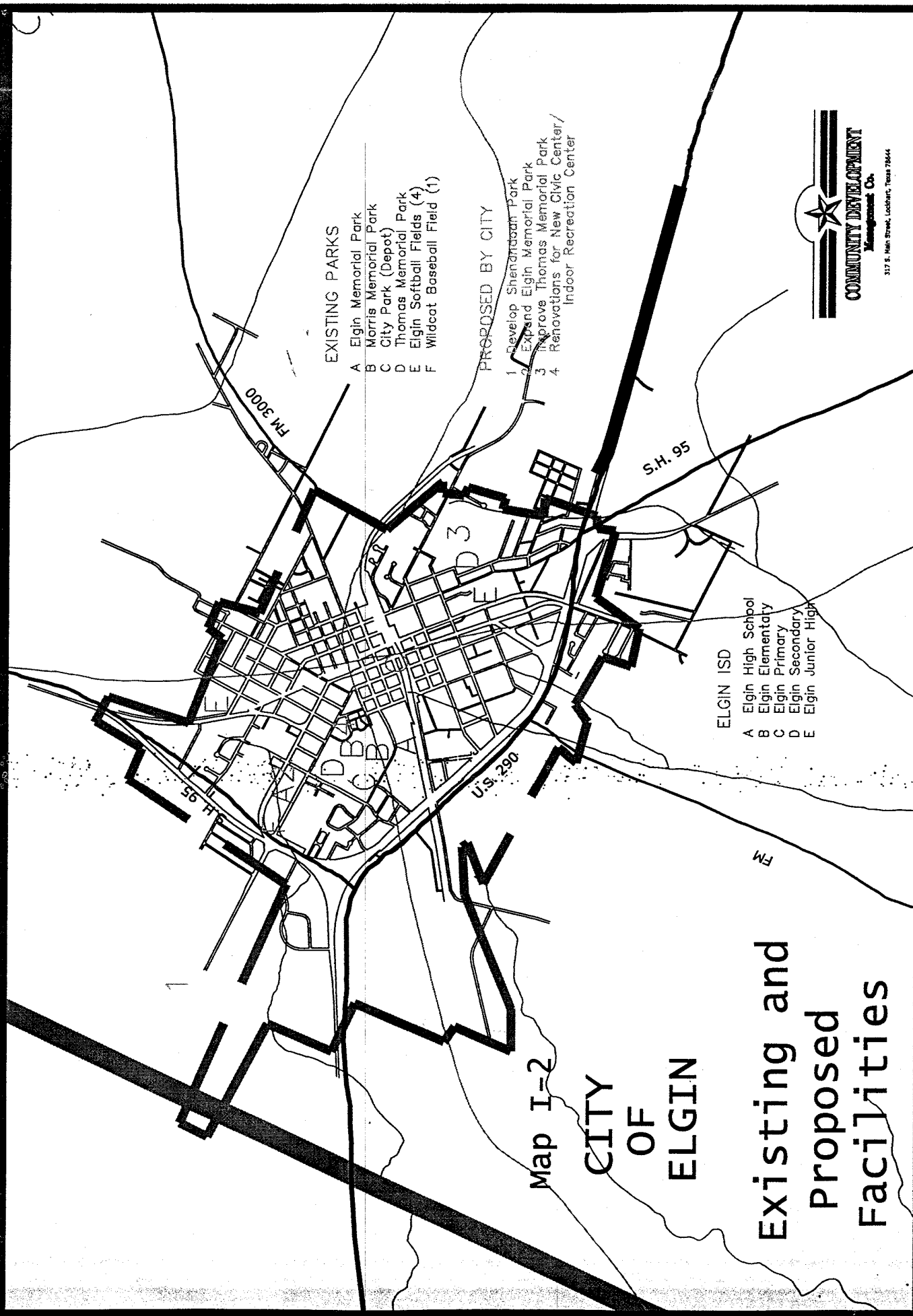
- A Rusty Reynolds Baseball Field
- B Fireman's Park
- C Arena Park
- D Ferry Park
- E Old River Bridge
- F Lover's Lane Fields
- G Bastrop Riverwalk

PROPOSED BY CITY

- 1 Piney Creek Iron Bridge Greenbelt
- 2 Piney Creek Greenbelt
- 3 Historic District Trail Area
- 4 Bastrop State Park Access Connection
- 5 Colorado River Greenbelt
- 6 Gillis Branch Greenbelt

* From City of Bastrop - Master Parks Plan 1997





Map I-2

**CITY
OF
ELGIN**

**Existing and
Proposed
Facilities**

EXISTING PARKS

- A Elgin Memorial Park
- B Morris Memorial Park
- C City Park (Depot)
- D Thomas Memorial Park
- E Elgin Softball Fields (4)
- F Wildcat Baseball Field (1)

PROPOSED BY CITY

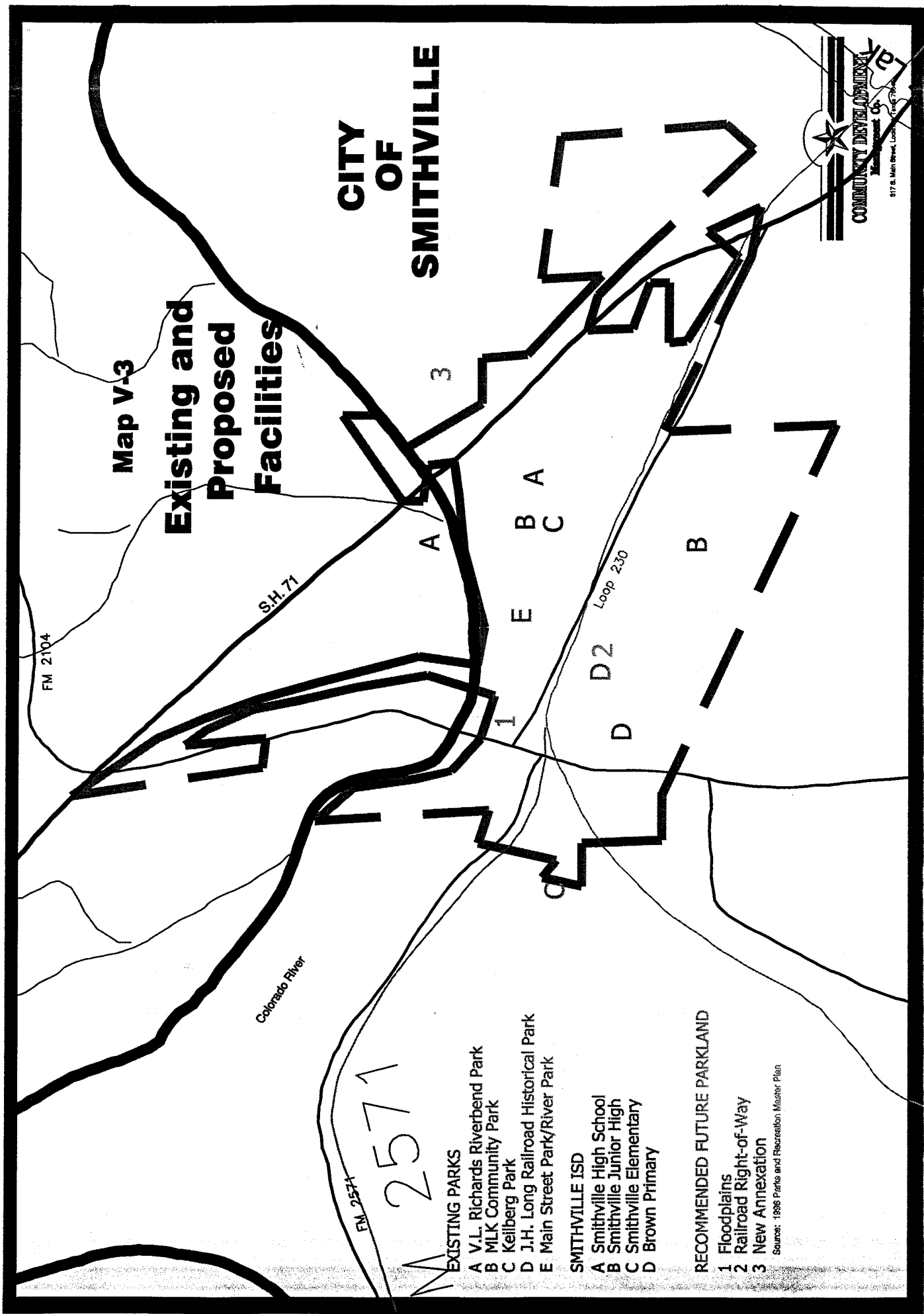
- 1 Develop Shenandoah Park
- 2 Expand Elgin Memorial Park
- 3 Improve Thomas Memorial Park
- 4 Renovations for New Civic Center/
Indoor Recreation Center

ELGIN ISD

- A Elgin High School
- B Elgin Elementary
- C Elgin Primary
- D Elgin Secondary
- E Elgin Junior High



317 S. Main Street, Lockhart, Texas 78644



**Map V-3
Existing and
Proposed
Facilities**

**CITY
OF
SMITHVILLE**



Colorado River

FM 2104

SH 71

Loop 230

FM 2571
2571

EXISTING PARKS

- A V.L. Richards Riverbend Park
- B MLK Community Park
- C Keilberg Park
- D J.H. Long Railroad Historical Park
- E Main Street Park/River Park

SMITHVILLE ISD

- A Smithville High School
- B Smithville Junior High
- C Smithville Elementary
- D Brown Primary

RECOMMENDED FUTURE PARKLAND

- 1 Floodplains
- 2 Railroad Right-of-Way
- 3 New Annexation

Source: 1996 Parks and Recreation Master Plan

6. Kitchen at Riverbend Park
7. Swimming Pool
8. New neighborhood park at 9th Street
9. Soccer field (lighted regulation field)
10. Outdoor Theater

SCHOOL FACILITIES

The School properties, which consist of ball fields and open spaces, are used for recreational activities, but access to the facilities is generally limited. Scheduling conflicts occur frequently, giving priority to the school function over other organizations such as Little League baseball, football, and soccer. Bastrop ISD does not allow the public to use their facilities, and Elgin ISD and Smithville ISD allow conditional use of their fields, depending on the scheduled needs of the school. A map of the school district boundaries may be found on Map V-4.

Bastrop Independent School District (BISD)

The facilities provided for the Bastrop schools have very limited access to the public. These facilities include:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 2 lighted baseball fields | 1 baseball practice field |
| 1 football stadium | 10 picnic tables |
| 1 running track | 6 playgrounds |
| 1 football practice/soccer field-lighted with bleachers | open area used as soccer practice fields |
| 1 football practice/soccer field-unlit w/o bleachers | 6 soccer fields |
| 4 basketball goals on parking lot | 1 walking trail |
| 6 pieces of exercise station equipment | |

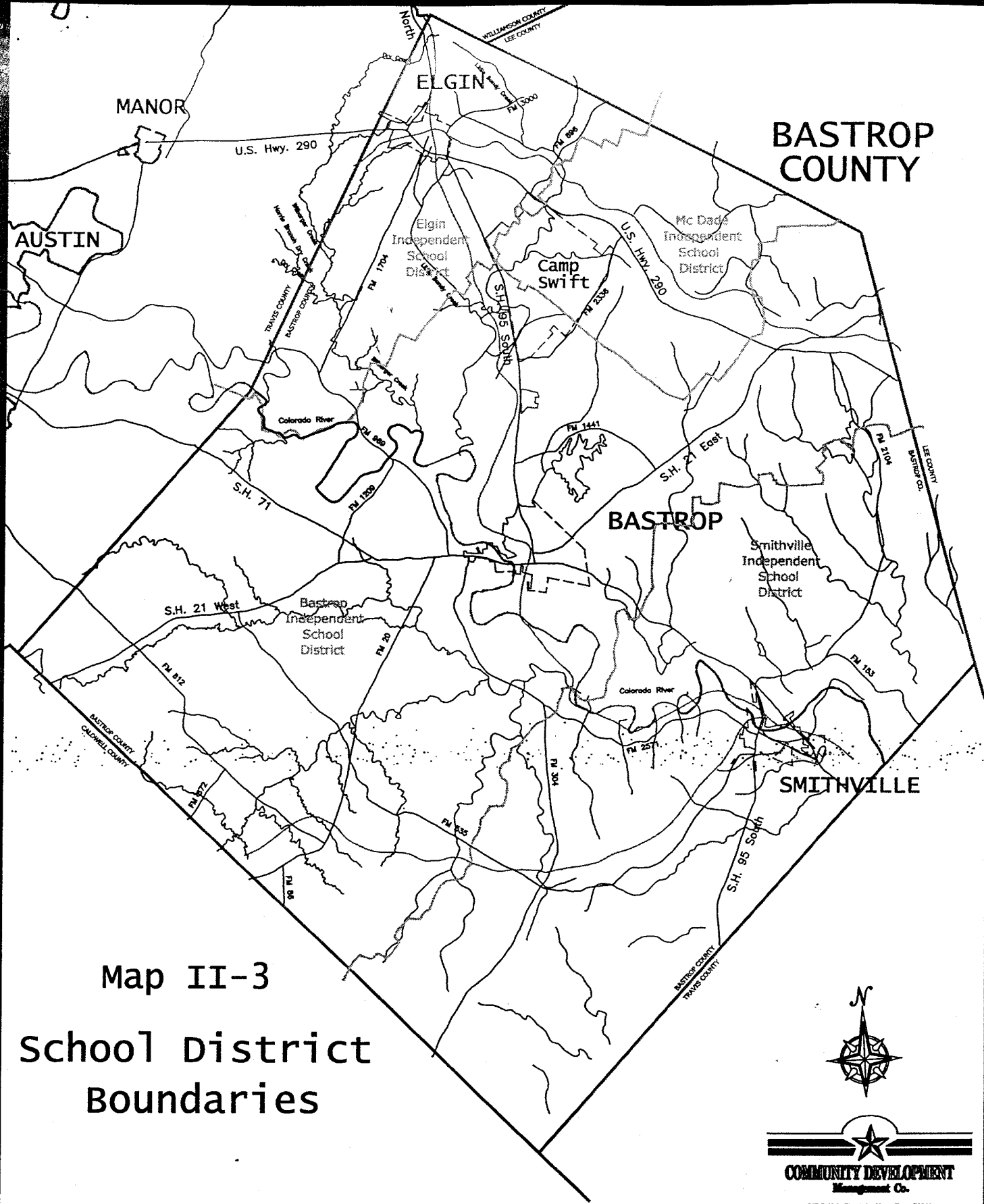
Elgin Independent School District (EISD)

The primary, secondary, and high schools are clustered together in the southwestern section of the City. The middle school is located in the southeastern section, enabling residents in the area access to that school's facilities. The recreational facilities developed for the school system include:

- Large open areas between the three schools
- 2 playscapes at the primary school
- 1 play area adjacent to the middle school
- 1 asphalt track near the high school
- 4 baseball chain link backstops next to the high school
- 1 soccer field next to the high school
- 1 high school football field with metal bleachers and lights

Smithville Independent School District (SISD)

At the current time, activities through the schools are dependent on City fields. Generally, the community can use recreational and open space facilities at local schools, with certain exceptions, after hours on school days and weekends when school activities do not preempt their use. This creates a conflict between citizens' needs for the areas for practices and games of organized team sports and the schools' need for their own practice and game facilities. The district is working to develop a bond issue for an athletic complex that will be utilized by the schools and eliminate the frequent conflicts experienced by the City and school.



Map II-3

School District Boundaries

Bastrop County Parks Plan



317 E. Main Street, Lockhart, Texas 78644

Revised September 10, 2001

Smithville High School, Middle School and Elementary School are located in the north central section of town. Brown Primary School and Smithville Head Start are southwest of Main Street at Walker and South Fourth Streets. Facilities include:

- 1 lighted football stadium (Barry Field)
- 1 lighted baseball field
- 1 ¼ mile all weather track
- 3 lighted tennis courts
- 2 practice fields
- 3 playground areas.
- 2 outdoor basketball courts (four goals)
- indoor gymnasiums
- playgrounds, including swings, structures, and other equipment

REGIONAL FACILITIES

A few parks in the Bastrop area provide recreational opportunities for not only the residents of the County but also the region. (See Map V-5.) The 3,500 acre Bastrop State Park is located in the "Lost Pines" area east of the City of Bastrop and has a large swimming pool, nine-hole golf course, 12 cabins, camping, picnic sites, restrooms with hot showers, a 10-acre lake, and hiking trails. The 1,000-acre Buescher State Park offers 40 campsites, 65 picnic sites, screened shelters, and a 25-acre lake for fishing and swimming. Both are operated by the state park system.

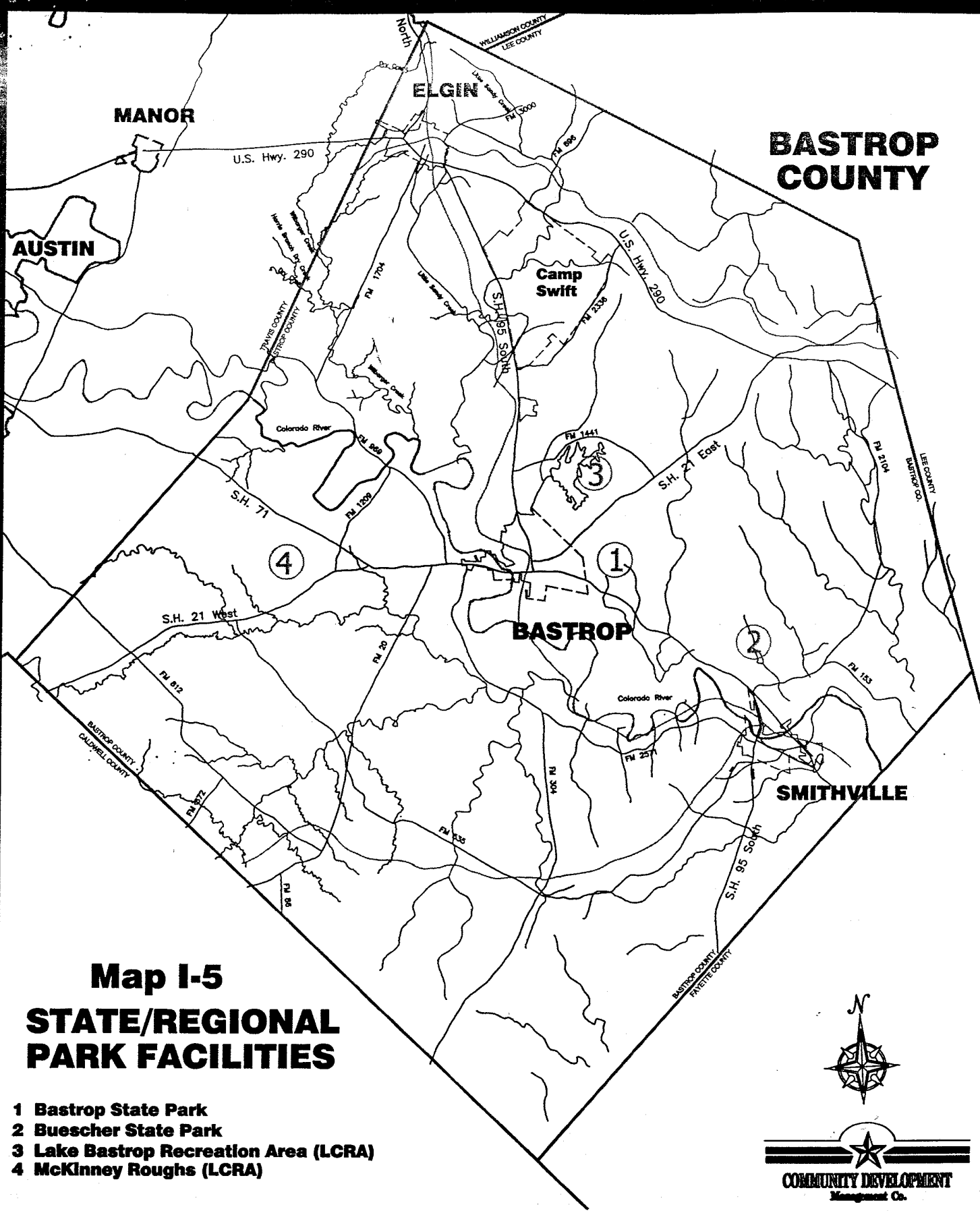
The Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) is very active in developing facilities that serve recreational purposes while accomplishing other needs. Lake Bastrop Recreation Area surrounding Lake Bastrop is located northeast of the City of Bastrop. The lake has 900 surface acres of water that makes up one of the finest fishing lakes in Texas. It was constructed as a power plant cooling pond by the LCRA in 1965. The area offers camping with water and electricity, screened shelters, picnicking, and a boat ramp. The LCRA has recently completed improvements and expansions to the camping facilities.

The LCRA also operates McKinney Roughs, a preserve of approximately 1,100 acres along a two-mile bend of the Colorado River in western Bastrop County. This land of canyons and wildlife which serves as a science center as well as a recreation area, providing hiking and other activities that provide minimal effect on the environment. The area is also thought to be the home of eleven threatened or endangered species, under Texas law including the Houston toad, the Brown Pelican, Bald Eagle, Whooping Crane, and Interior Least Tern, all of which are endangered. It is located 8.4 miles from Bastrop, on the north side of S.H. 71.

Other recreational areas in the region include numerous wildlife areas and parks surrounding Granger Lake, north of Taylor, and parks surrounding Lake Georgetown. The series of Highland Lakes west of Austin are a major area attraction for water activities.

NATURAL RESOURCE AREAS/PRESERVES/OPEN LANDS

Bastrop County has an extensive amount of attractive lands that continue to be a dominant factor in the growth of the County for residential development. Densely covered by trees, cut by the Colorado River which is fed by numerous creeks, and home of the "Lost



Map I-5 STATE/REGIONAL PARK FACILITIES

- 1 Bastrop State Park**
- 2 Buescher State Park**
- 3 Lake Bastrop Recreation Area (LCRA)**
- 4 McKinney Roughs (LCRA)**

Bastrop County Parks Plan



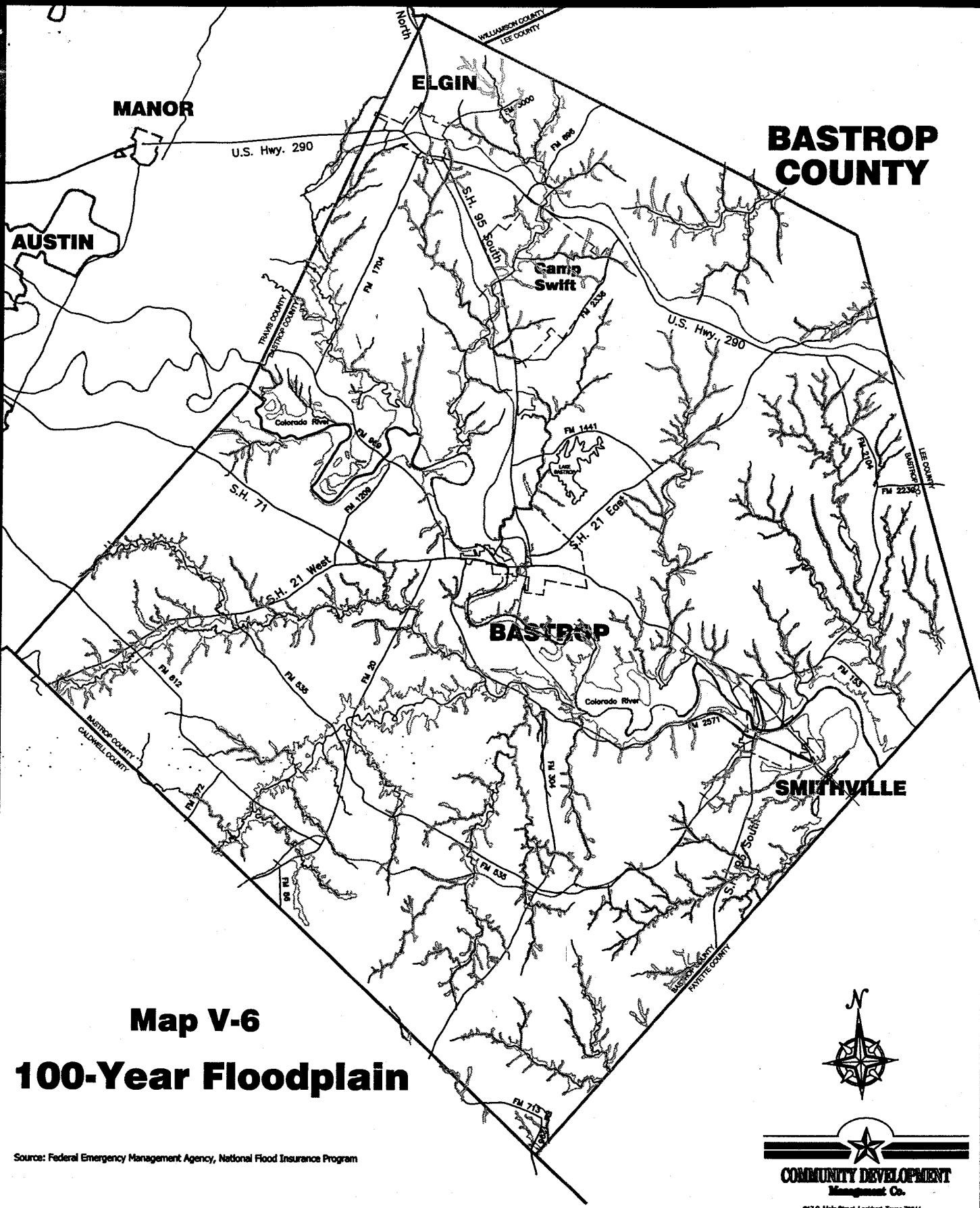
**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
Management Co.**

217 S. Main Street, Lockhart, Texas 78044

Revised September 10, 2001

Pines", the County is an attractive natural environment. The LCRA is working to develop many of the floodplain areas of the Colorado River into nature areas that would otherwise be of minimal use for residential and commercial development because of the high flood risk. Other floodplains throughout the extensive network of creeks also provide opportunities for natural preserves and open space. A map of the FEMA 100-year floodplains in southern Bastrop County may be found at Map V-5.

The habitat of endangered Houston toad covers much of the eastern section of the County. (See Map V-6.) By being classified as an endangered species by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Endangered Species Act, the area is enveloped into a protection zone, and all development must not disturb the toad's habitat.



BASTROP COUNTY

Map V-6 100-Year Floodplain

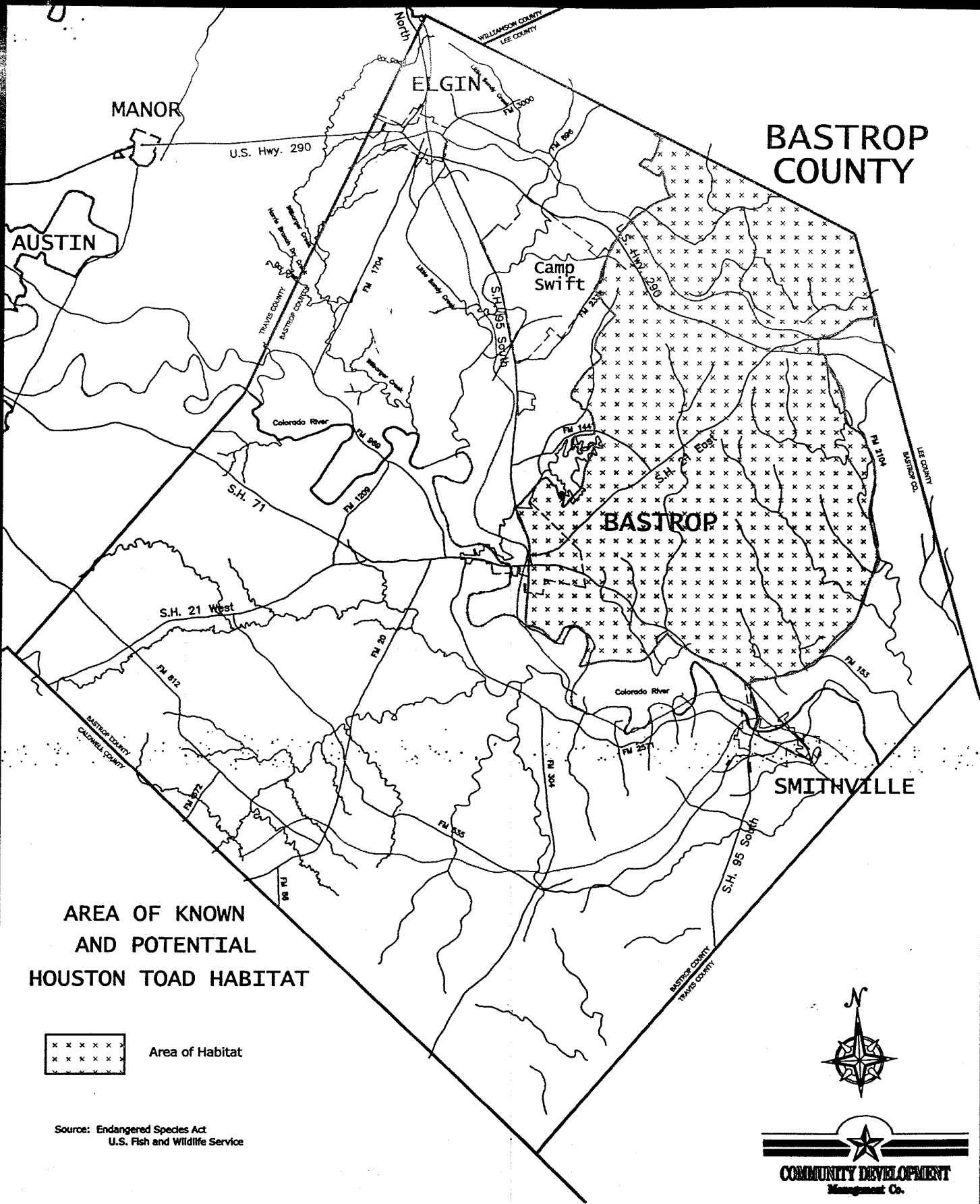
Source: Federal Emergency Management Agency, National Flood Insurance Program

Bastrop County Parks Plan



217 S. Main Street, Lockhart, Texas 78644

Revised September 26, 2001



AREA OF KNOWN AND POTENTIAL HOUSTON TOAD HABITAT


 Area of Habitat

Source: Endangered Species Act
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



317 S. Main Street, Lockhart, Texas 78644

Revised September 10, 2001

Bastrop County Parks Plan

SECTION VI

NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND IDENTIFICATION

As identified earlier, the County of Bastrop does not own any parks or offer any recreational programs. Typically In performing an assessment of current facilities the first computation that is done is to determine the level of services that is currently being offered in the community (county in this case). In this instance, the level of services is non existent. Typically the level of service is expressed as the number of available parkland acres per 1000 population.

Currently, Bastrop County provides no recreational facilities for the public, requiring residents, both urban and rural, to utilize the playgrounds and sports fields provided by the Cities of Bastrop, Elgin, and Smithville for practice and game events. The lack of facilities leaves residents of the unincorporated areas limited on access to available and adequate open space for recreation and sports. These deficiencies are even more pronounced considering the fact that 76% of the county's population lives outside of the incorporated communities.

The communities of Bastrop, Elgin, and Smithville are generally meeting their park and recreational needs. While each has continual maintenance and repair, all are generally providing good recreational opportunities for their residents. However, each community has identified in their Park Master Plan some park and recreational deficiency that it seeks to resolve, such as deficiencies in their acreage or the need for a specific facility.

Three different approaches may be taken to objectively determine the demands that must be met by any entity, city or county, for parks and recreation. The traditional approach is often referred as the "standards based approach" and uses established standards to determine the park and recreational needs of a given population. If the traditional approach of comparing acres per 1000 population is applied to the cities in Bastrop County, each are meeting their population's needs.

The demand-based approach uses surveys to gather information about participation rates and to determine what sort of park and recreational facilities are wanted. As part of this master plan effort a survey instrument was developed and administered to county residents to determine participation rates and to identify desired recreational facilities.

The resource-based approach examines the assets and resources of the area to determine if there are natural resources that can be utilized in park development and planning. This approach took in consideration endangered habitats or species that that may need conservation or protection.

For the purpose of this planning section all three approaches were examined and utilized to determine the park and recreational needs of Bastrop County residents. It was determined that all three approaches need to be utilized because of the following reasons:

- Bastrop County possesses some natural habitats and species that are unique to the County and are going to need conservation and protection as the community moves from being a rural county to an urban county in the new century. A regional trend

started by the City of Austin and adjoining counties to purchase native habitats and species is part of this resource-based approach.

- Bastrop County's 2001 population of 57,733 is expected to nearly double by 2010. This rapid growth is attributed to spillover growth from the City of Austin. Along with this rapid growth will come pressures to preserve and acquire parkland before it becomes an endangered commodity. The rising cost of open space in itself is a very important consideration. This rapid growth is leading to an increased demand for parks and recreational programs. The fact that over 76% of the population resides outside of incorporated communities is fueling the increased demand.
- Bastrop County has no parkland or recreational programs at the present time. The traditional approach of using established parks standards per given population is only applicable in this instance as a general guide. If the County was growing at a slow to moderate rate there would be no urgency to acquire parkland, however, there is a very real threat that it will become extremely difficult to find open spaces for park development in the future. Using the traditional approach of calculating park needs in a rapidly growing community, Bastrop County should have approximately 430 acres of parkland for its given population at this time. If the future population is factored into this equation, the County should be planning on acquiring approximately nearly 1,000 acres of parkland for its present and future population. Obviously the 1,000-acre goal can only be addressed as opportunities present themselves and as the funding become available.

For the purposes of planning the proposed park improvements, the County was divided into four districts to coincide with the present County Commissioner's precincts. This approach was used because the precinct lines were adjusted to reflect the current population alignments based on the 2000 U.S Census. In terms of performing this assessment, these planning areas were used to determine where the future park projects should be located. In addition to these planning areas, each of the school districts were examined to determine where the future schools are being located. This approach was used because in a rapidly growing area, future school campuses are indicators of population concentrations.

In this analysis, indoor and outdoor needs were examined. Because of the cost to initially establish the park and recreational programs for the County, indoor needs was ranked by the parks advisory board as a lower priority need.

Through advisory board meetings and public hearings, citizens have identified a need for additional fields. The City of Bastrop area alone must accommodate approximately 500 youth in soccer organizations and 200 youth in football. With the number growing annually, the need for fields continually increases.

Little League fields and softball fields are also needed throughout the County. The increasing number of residents is also creating great growth in the Little League organization as well as other baseball and softball clubs. The current city facilities are not capable of supporting the need that is created by the residents in the rural areas. Other mentioned Countywide needs have included: tennis courts, racquetball courts, and volleyball courts. frisbee golf, trails, pavilions, picnic tables, and barbeque grills.

The three cities within the County, Bastrop, Elgin, and Smithville, provide the majority of the facilities used by most of the County's residents. These facilities typically include a large City park, smaller neighborhood parks with playgrounds, and ball fields. While a normally growing city would be continually implementing and revising plans for their facilities, the cities within Bastrop County are forced to not only address their growth but also the great stress on their facilities because of the limited number of fields and the lack of parks in the County. In order to address these demands, the cities have recognized the following needs.

Bastrop

The needs for the City of Bastrop were determined from both the public hearings held for this County plan as well as the City's Master Parks Plan, February 1997. The plan divided the needs between indoor and outdoor needs. The following are the first five of both lists.

Outdoor

1. playgrounds
2. multi-sport recreational complex
3. soccer
4. softball fields
5. swimming pool

Indoor

1. theater/stage
2. computer areas
3. volleyball courts
4. video/movie area
5. meeting rooms

Other needs determined from public hearings include:

- golf course
- trail/running track
- public tennis courts

Elgin

The needs for the City of Elgin were also determined through public hearings for this plan as well as the Parks and Recreation Section of the City's Master Plan, completed in September 1997. This plan determined the following needs for the park system:

1. Organization of use of facilities throughout the City (City, School, Church)
2. Indoor gym/auditorium
3. Upgrade Thomas Park facilities
4. Construct additional pool

Other needs determined from public hearings include:

- softball complex
- golf course
- camping facilities with bathrooms
- indoor recreation center (currently planned)
- fine arts center
- land for future parks

Smithville

As the smallest City in Bastrop County, the City of Smithville is meeting its basic parks and recreational needs for its population of 3,901 residents. The community has an ample supply of parks and a recently completed indoor recreational facility that is the envy of all the communities in the county. Smithville is located in that portion of the County that is not projected to grow as rapidly as the western edge of the County. Therefore, its parks and recreational needs are not expected to change much during this planning period. The City's Master Plan determined the following needs:

1. Two basketball goals (one full court) and one volleyball court.

2. One baseball field
3. One playground area (0.2) acres for its 2020 population
4. Six miles of bike trails and two miles of hike/job/walk.
5. Seventeen campsites.
6. One boat ramp to provide access to the river.
7. Twenty-four picnic tables.

Other needs determined by demand-based data are as follows:

- Additional walking and hiking trails
- Swimming pool
- Soccer fields

One of the greatest needs for residents in the unincorporated County is the need for transportation to and from the recreational activities. Many of the lower income residents and youth who are not of driving age are left out of all of the available teams and clubs that have been organized in the County because of their lack of transportation. This is especially important for "at-risk youths" in rural areas that are in need of some activity and desire to be a part of an organization but are unable to get where they need to be.

Finally, within Bastrop County exist many natural areas of beauty and value, creating the need for their protection and preservation. While development can occur in many of these areas, it must be done in conjunction with the minimal effect on the natural landscape. Much of the "Lost Pines" area east of the City of Bastrop has been preserved through Bastrop State Park, but uncontrolled and unregulated residential development can easily and quickly destroy the area.

In addition, a great portion of the eastern half of Bastrop County is the home of the Houston toad, considered an endangered species and protected under the Endangered Species Act. This, in itself, will guide the development of the area since all development will be measured against its potential impact on this endangered species.

In summary, the following are needs for recreation as determined for Bastrop County:

1. Fields For Football/Soccer Practices And Games
2. Fields For Baseball/Softball Practices And Games
3. Trails
4. Access To Nature/Open Space
5. Transportation For Youth And Underprivileged
6. Public Access Pool
7. Neighborhood Parks In Unserved, Unincorporated Areas, Including Playgrounds
8. Organization And Coordination Of Available Facilities For Area Sports Teams
9. Protection Of The Land From Over Development
10. Protection Of The Habitat Of The Houston Toad

SECTION VII

PRIORITIZATION OF NEEDS AND PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

The purpose of this section is to prioritize the needs that have been identified and formulate a plan of action. In order to create a workable plan that can be used and applied, it is necessary to determine the greatest needs within the county and prioritize those needs to ensure that the most urgent are addressed with the first available funds. Bastrop County does not offer any park or recreational programs and county residents at the time of this report.

The following recommendations for the development of Parks and Recreation Improvements in Bastrop County can be divided into two basic areas: Initial Park Improvements and Operational Park Improvements.

While cities are typically the providers of recreational facilities for their residents, the extensive growth in the unincorporated areas of Bastrop County have generated a population, especially a youth population, that is eager to become involved in recreational activities. However, the area cities are not capable of funding and maintaining facilities for the growing County population needs. While receiving much of the residential growth within the County, the entire southern portion of Bastrop County does not have any facilities.

As noted in the Needs Assessment section, Bastrop County does not have any parks or recreational facilities making it relatively easy to say that it needs everything. This is one of the reasons why the prioritization of needs and plan is necessary. However, the problem is not the same throughout the County. The communities of Elgin, Bastrop, and Smithville provide park and recreational facilities that are utilized by residents who live outside of incorporated communities. Therefore the degree of the problem varies somewhat. The citizens of these communities are County residents and planning for future facilities should not overlook their needs. For those County residents who have access to transportation opportunities, the facilities offered by the State, LCRA, and private entities such as Tahitian Village do provide some outlet for recreational demand.

Although Bastrop State Park has plans to purchase an additional 1,300 acres, the State must acquire 1.4 million acres of state parkland to meet the needs of a fast growing population, according to recent studies. That translates into twice as much parkland as the state currently maintains. In short, because of tight State budgets, acquisition of additional parkland is not going to happen in the near future.

Locally for the fastest growing areas such as the west and south end of the County, recreational opportunities are almost nonexistent. This demand for parks and recreational facilities manifests itself in such ways as private citizens constructing their own recreational facilities.

Callahan Field and Leon Goertz Field Baseball are private fields located near Rockne at Highway 20 and Humble Lane in southwest Bastrop County.

One of the major problems that the County is going to face in attempting to provide park and recreational facilities is the fact that no matter where recreational facilities are provided, it is going to be difficult for County residents to access the facilities. It is going to take time to locate

and place parks and recreational facilities in strategic locations where all County residents can easily access the parks.

In the development of the following recommendations all of these considerations were taken into account.

The following recommendations are linked as objectives to each of the applicable goals identified in Section II. Goals and Objectives. The more detailed local listing of prioritization of needs is shown in *Table VII-2* at the end of this section. The rating system which was used to rank these activities is included with this table. The year of implementation for each of the local needs is indicated next to each of the recreational items on this list.

The method of financing for these activities is going to come initially from grants to help pay for some of the short term improvements. Subsequent park improvements are going to be financed through a combination of grants and a small bond issue, donated material and labor, contributions from civic organizations, and from developers who will be requested to make park dedications. Specialized recreational improvements such as an indoor facility are long term and may be financed through a combination of private foundation grants and local fund raising efforts. The County should undertake efforts to program more local funds to increase budgets for park maintenance as the recreational facilities are developed. Where funds are limited, some of the proposed improvements can be programmed over a period of several years, as the funds become available.

Each of the following general recommendations can be identified with the corresponding goal by referencing the first numeric designation, which refers to the specific goal being cited. As noted above, the local listing of needs and activities is broken down in more detail at the end of this section. Some of the proposed activities will need be implemented within the context of combined efforts, which address several activities at one time. Development of new parks will require the development of multiple recreational activities. It should be noted that as the activities on this list are accomplished, a new local list of prioritization of needs would need to be developed. A periodic review and update of the recommendations made in this report will need to be conducted on an annual basis.

INITIAL PARK IMPROVEMENTS

- 1.0 County residents should have equal access to all parks and recreational facilities.
- 1.1 As noted in the Goals and Objectives in Section II, to meet this goal, initially multi-purpose sport complexes need to be constructed in the fastest growing areas where park and recreational facilities are non-existent. (The priority list of the types of facilities to be provided per park is shown on Table VII-1.) As a result, the western and southern regions of the County should be a high priority. Map VII-1 provides some potential locations for sports complexes, many of which are in a floodplain, which is typically not usable for most types of development.
- 1.2 The best method to determine where to construct the sport complexes is to review where the school district is proposing new campuses. School districts invest a lot of time and money in the strategic placement of the new campuses. These campuses are often located in the areas where the population concentrations are the greatest to save on transportation cost. The County could joint venture with the school districts to utilize those

areas of land purchases made by the school district that cannot be utilized because the tracts may be in a flood plain or surplus property. In applying for grants, teaming arrangements with school districts are reviewed by funding agencies in a favorable manner. The location on Map VII-3 provides an example of locating a new sports complex on or near school property.

- 1.3 In providing equal access to park facilities, consideration should be given to providing transportation options especially for young children who may not have adults who can take them to a park facility. Because 76% of the County population does not reside in an incorporated community, there are disadvantaged children and adults who may not have access to transportation. Existing programs such the Capital Area Planning Council CARTS program (Capital Area Rapid Transit System) could be enlisted in addressing the transportation problems. Similarly, school districts could be enlisted to use some of their transportation avenues to address this problem.
- 1.4 Similar to teaming with school districts, incorporated communities in the county have already made a substantial investment in providing for their park and recreational needs. There are opportunities for the County to joint venture with the cities to further develop their park facilities. Often the tax base of the incorporated areas contribute substantial amounts to county tax revenues. Because the incorporated communities are centers of commerce for their sphere of influence, it make sense to joint venture with them to address the need for parks and recreational programs. In addition, the fact that citizens of incorporated communities are also county residents needs to be acknowledged.
- 2.0 Open spaces and natural habitats should be preserved for future generations.
 - 2.1 As more prime farmland and natural habitats are lost to development, there will be less opportunity in the future to save these natural areas from encroaching development. Consideration should be given to providing green belts or strips of land as buffers to encroaching developments. Increasing land costs and spillover growth from expanding metropolitan areas will make it increasing difficult to justify the cost in the future. Some of the most scenic and fragile habitats in Bastrop County especially the Lost Pines are being lost to piecemeal development that too often disrupts the natural rhythm of the landscape. Buffers or strips of land dedicated to the conservation efforts could be integrated with ongoing preservation efforts such as the Houston Toad. (Map VII-3 provides the location of Houston Toad habitat in Bastrop County in relation to potential recreation sites.)
 - 2.2 If the opportunity presents itself consideration should be given to acquiring open space for future park development. There is nothing to stop the County from acquiring open spaces or placing land into conservation for future development.
 - 2.3 Interpretative displays integrated with park development could educate the public about the natural legacy that is so unique to Bastrop County. As parks are developed, space needs to be provided for educating and promoting Bastrop County's natural heritage where applicable. Educational efforts with groups with an interest in preserving or conserving wildlife or natural habitats should be enlisted. McKinney Roughs in western Bastrop County was developed in order to provide these types of opportunities.
- 3.0 Public facilities should be integrated with all other public services.

- 3.1 Park improvements are more than a park bench and a picnic table. Recreational programs are about the quality of life that a community (county) has to offer. To this end, for example, if the Sheriff's Department participated or sponsored ongoing recreational programs with "youth-at-risk" it would help identify and help prevent future crime. Some communities sponsor basketball or soccer camps where the officers can get an opportunity to interact with the youth of the community. By being good role models or mentors to youth, the message such programs conveys is that the community cares.
- 3.2 Existing transportation programs should be enlisted to offer outlying residents access to recreational facilities. The Capital Area Planning Council sponsors with the participation of area public entities transportation assistance to residents. The schools could be asked to participate in after school events especially if they can be enlisted to offer recreational programs in their areas.
- 4.0 Public recreation should be coordinated with other community recreation providers to avoid duplication and promote innovation.
- 4.1 The incorporated communities and Texas Parks and Wildlife, and the Lower Colorado River Authority already offer substantial recreational infrastructure that could be utilized by County residents. Interlocal agreements and joint participation in the development of new or additional facilities can offer some cost savings by leveraging what already exists. In this manner, the County can augment and supplement the existing recreational facilities with new and improved facilities that can be enjoyed by all residents.
- 4.2 The schools in Bastrop County already own recreational facilities that could be utilized by residents after school hours. There can be considerable cost savings obtained by enlisting the aid of the school districts by helping them provide facilities that are not available in their areas. Some locations owned by the school districts may be located in flood plains, which can not be utilized by the schools but they make excellent locations for linear parks and open space. Surplus properties owned by the school district can be donated for park development. The value of the property being donated can count as a match toward grant dollars for new park development.
- 5.0 New growth (new subdivisions) should pay for their own recreational facilities.
- 5.1 It is obvious from the 2000 Census data that most of the added population since 1990 have occurred outside of incorporated communities. A record number of new subdivisions have been filed since 1990. It is not fair to existing residents to pay for recreational improvements for people who are recent arrivals. For this reason a bond issue specifically targeted for recreational improvements would allow everyone to voice their opinions and would enable everyone to a fresh start. As far as the developers are concerned, methods need to be explored to determine how new development can be made to pay for their share of the burden that they will place on existing capital improvements such as parks.
- 5.2 As the County grows in population, all types of parks will be needed. Table IV-1 in Section IV, Local Park and Recreation Concepts and Standards, discusses the types of park facilities that can be designed for different sizes of population. Ideally, new subdivisions in unserved, unincorporated areas could provide neighborhood parks, which could be expanded in the future to larger parks. There will always be a population such as the

elderly and children who will need access to parks that are located in close proximity to where they live.

6.0 Parks and recreational planning should be incorporated into tourism and economic development efforts.

6.1 The quality of life that a community has to offer is one of the location factors that a business or industry considers when looking for a place to expand or locate. In the past, industries have been content with locating in the least desirable places because the land is cheaper and labor retention was not a concern. As the U.S economy has moved to more service based businesses, the quality of life that a community offers has become of predominant concern. The quality of life although it is difficult to quantify, can be described as the ambiance that a place has to offer. It can be seen in the schools, the churches, the parks and the general environment. A perceived quality of life does not just happen. There has to be a deep personal commitment to preserve the areas that define us. For these reasons, it is very important that the types and number of parks that the County has to offer be included in the tourism and economic development promotions. In short, parks and recreational programs can directly contribute to the tax base of the county by helping to create jobs.

6.2 Bastrop County has enough physical and historic attractions to contribute to a viable tourism business. The presence of the State Park in Bastrop, in itself is already generating significant contribution to the County's tax base. Parks and recreational programs can augment and contribute to the local tourist industry. In park planning, consideration should be given to providing facilities such as RV spaces for travelers.

7.0 Parks and recreational programs must find ways to celebrate the variety of cultures with the community.

7.1 Every community has a special event or place of some historic significance that can be incorporated into park development. Name recognition is very important to gathering community support for park development.

7.2 Special occasions or festivals that celebrate events in the County need to be included in park planning. By providing space for these special events, the usage of the parks will increase and the County can derive some revenue from the rental of pavilions or areas in the park for these special occasions.

OPERATIONAL IMPROVEMENTS

8.0 A County Parks and Recreation Board composed of residents from all precincts needs to be established to promote parks and recreation planning.

8.1 A parks and recreation position is needed to assist with scheduling the use of recreational facilities and for developing recreation programs. This position would oversee the use of all park facilities sponsored by the County. This position could be jointly funded by the school and County, and be responsible for the scheduling the use of all park facilities, within the rules and conditions established by each governmental entity. This position would increase

the efficiency of the park system and would help alleviate some of the short-term deficiencies in the park system.

- 8.2 Ensure that the school districts always have at least one member on the Board. In this manner, coordination and duplication of activities are avoided. An ongoing dialogue needs to be maintained with the cities and school districts so that future plans can be coordinated. There also needs to be at least one senior citizen and one youth on this board to identify and be a voice for the specific needs for certain age groups.
- 8.3 The development of the park system is going to require staff in an independent Parks Department to maintain the new park facilities. Because the school system, in some respects, has to maintain their athletic facilities, it should be explored as to whether it is possible to share maintenance personnel or equipment. New and innovative methods will be needed to address the rising cost of park maintenance.

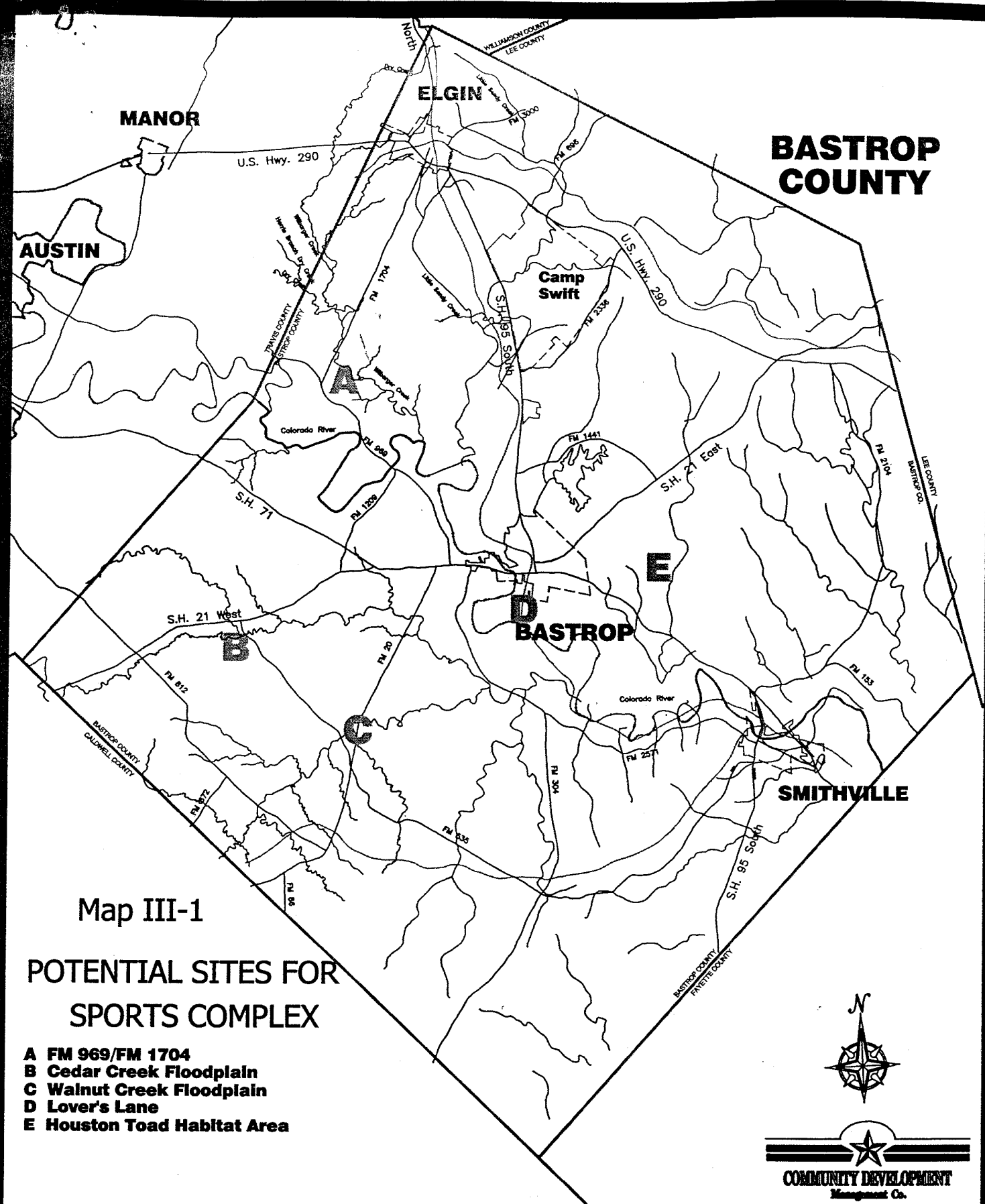
**Table VII-1
Prioritization of Needs**

<u>Type of Recreational Activity</u>	<u>Priority Ranking</u>
1. Senior citizens recreational facilities (trails, exercise and meeting rooms)	Mandatory (Year 1 & 2)
2. Multi-purpose athletic Fields (soccer, softball, baseball, rugby)	Mandatory (Year 1 & 2)
3. Acquisition of Open Space/neighborhood Parks	Mandatory (Year 1 & 2)
4. Trails	Mandatory (Year 1 & 2)
5. Playground areas/Playscape	Mandatory (Year 1 & 2)
6. Multipurpose courts (tennis, basketball, volleyball)	Necessary (Year 2 & 3)
7. Outdoor basketball (slab with minimal lighting)	Necessary (Year 2 & 3)
8. Pavilions/picnicking areas	Necessary (Year 2 & 3)
9. Sand volleyball	Necessary (Year 2 & 3)
10. Fishing areas (Under 5 acres)	Necessary (Year 3 & 4)
11. Conservation of Natural Areas	Desirable (Beyond 5 years)
12. Indoor recreation center (gyms, indoor-swimming pool, meeting rooms)	Desirable (Beyond 5 years)
13. Swimming pool	Desirable (Beyond 5 years)
14. Golf (18 hole)	Desirable (Beyond 5 years)
15. Lakes for recreation (Over 5 acres)	Desirable (Beyond 5 years)

Supporting recreational facilities such as rest rooms, water fountains, irrigation, lighting, parking spaces, and water and sewer services were not ranked under this list because these type of facilities are considered integral to being able to offer the recreational services. For example, athletic fields are not considered fully functional unless provisions are made for parking, water fountains, and rest rooms.

**Table VII-2
Ranking System**

1. **Mandatory** - Those recreational improvements that are urgent and necessary to protect health, property or public safety. Also, to provide equal access regardless of age, sex, income, cultural differences, location in the community, and handicap status.
2. **Necessary** - Public recreational improvements needed to provide important public services to satisfy demand where the community is below minimum standards, to protect endangered resources, and to complete unfinished projects.
3. **Desirable** - Public recreational improvements which replace obsolete facilities, to improve the attractiveness of the community and provide new and expanded recreational services beyond the minimum standards. Those recreation improvements that would enhance the quality of life in the community fall into this category.
4. **Deferrable** - Public recreational improvements needed to reduce operating cost, and to improve the efficiency of the present level of recreational services.



Map III-1

**POTENTIAL SITES FOR
SPORTS COMPLEX**

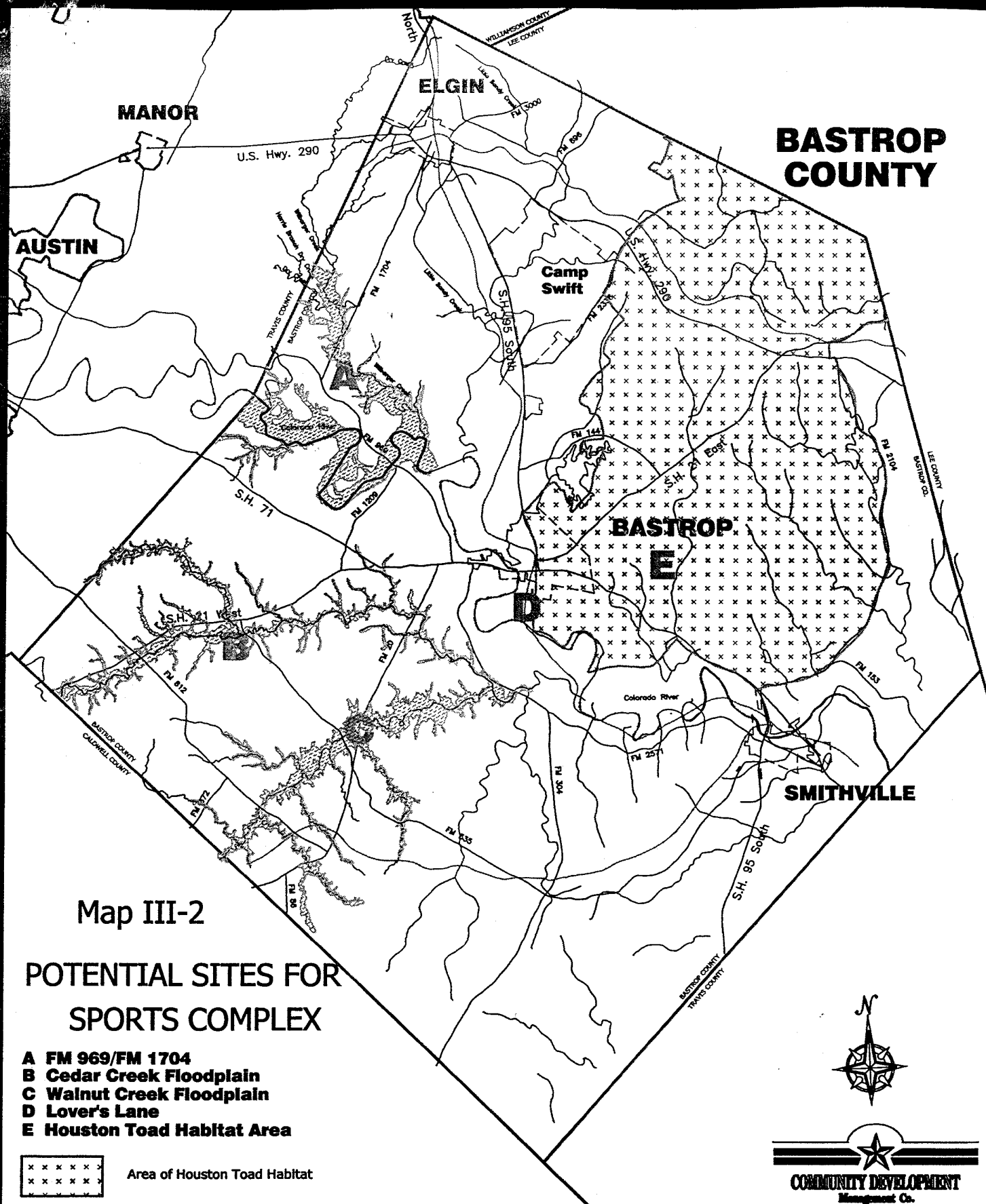
- A FM 969/FM 1704**
- B Cedar Creek Floodplain**
- C Walnut Creek Floodplain**
- D Lover's Lane**
- E Houston Toad Habitat Area**

Bastrop County Parks Plan



217 G. Main Street, Lockhart, Texas 78644

Revised September 10, 2001



Map III-2

**POTENTIAL SITES FOR
SPORTS COMPLEX**

- A** FM 969/FM 1704
- B** Cedar Creek Floodplain
- C** Walnut Creek Floodplain
- D** Lover's Lane
- E** Houston Toad Habitat Area

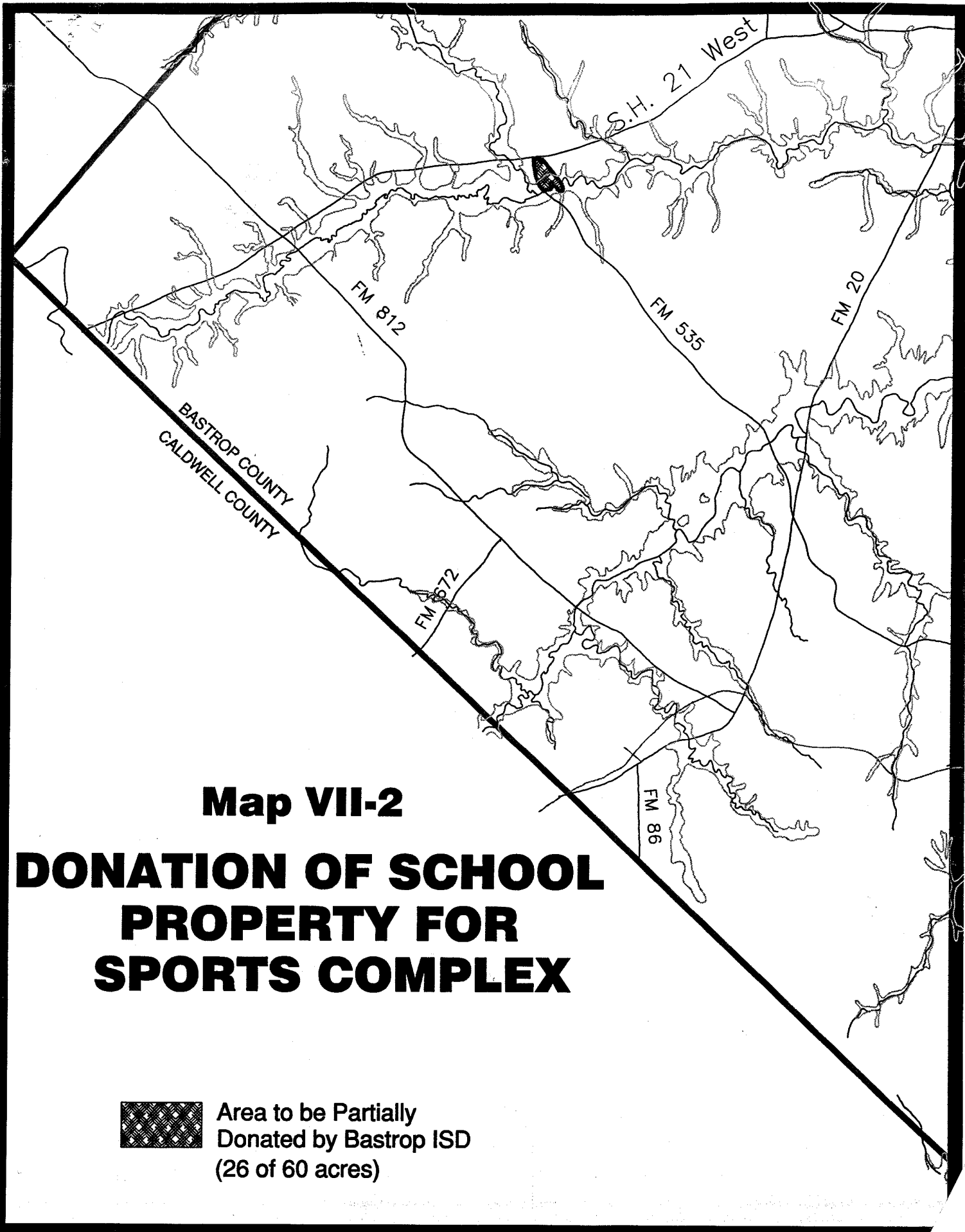

 Area of Houston Toad Habitat

Bastrop County Parks Plan



317 E. Main Street, Lockhart, Texas 78644

Revised September 14, 2001



Map VII-2

**DONATION OF SCHOOL
PROPERTY FOR
SPORTS COMPLEX**



Area to be Partially
Donated by Bastrop ISD
(26 of 60 acres)