



Existing City

RECREATION AND AMENITIES

Early and ongoing discussions for this updated Comprehensive Plan revealed clear pride in and enthusiasm for their hometown of Victoria among officials and residents. While there are always “housekeeping” items to attend to, people across all walks of life consistently pointed to Victoria’s recreational, historical, and cultural assets – current and potential – as features they value and wish for more visitors to enjoy as well.

EXISTING PARK SYSTEM

The City of Victoria has 16 parks and 887.96 acres of parkland. Riverside Park is the flagship of the system and, at 500+ acres, accounts for nearly two-thirds of the City’s total parkland inventory. The park includes 4.5 miles of the eastern bank of the Guadalupe River and is close to downtown Victoria and nearby historic neighborhoods. Given its size and location, Riverside Park has varied amenities for residents and visitors alike. More recent and notable additions to the City’s park system include:

- A Youth Sports Complex, which Victoria voters endorsed in 2007 by approving the first City bond issue for parks in 30 years. The Complex offers 12 youth ball fields for baseball and softball.
- A two-mile trail along the Lone Tree Creek corridor, which was completed in 2008 and designed for runners/walkers and bike enthusiasts.
- The development of Lone Tree Creek Park in 2013, which includes a popular 2,500 square foot splash pad, numerous practice ball fields, and restrooms.

MAJOR COMMUNITY ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN RECENT YEARS

Victoria leaders and residents mentioned these items relevant to recreation and amenities:

- Riverside Park improvements
- New Guadalupe River kayaking opportunity
- Hike/bike trail development
- Youth Sports Complex
- Skate park

[Continued on next page]

PARK TYPES

Four key park classifications are widely used for purposes of community park system planning: (1) Neighborhood, (2) Community, (3) Regional, and (4) Special Use Parks. These four classifications and others are used within the City's Parks 2025 Master Plan, and they are generally represented within the City of Victoria park inventory. The general descriptions below for each classification provide a sense of how the park types fulfill particular functions and needs and where they differ in size or other characteristics; however, not all the listed amenities and criteria apply to the actual parks in Victoria.

Neighborhood Parks are the most prominent type of park in Victoria, providing both active and passive recreational opportunities. Facilities typically include playgrounds, picnic areas, open space, and walking trails. Neighborhood parks generally meet these criteria:

- Service area of up to ½ mile
- 5 to 10 acres
- Serve 2,000 to 10,000 residents



Community Parks are the next level of parks provided. These parks typically have more facilities available to the public, including tennis courts, pavilions, sports fields, swimming pools/splash pads, and open space. Community parks generally meet these criteria:

- Service area of up to two miles
- 30 to 150 acres
- Serve between 10,000 and 50,000 residents

Regional Parks serve a large area of the city and provide a wide array of amenities which can be utilized by individuals as well as sport

MAJOR COMMUNITY ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN RECENT YEARS

- Splash pad at Lone Tree Creek Park
- Challenged/special needs athletic field
- Bootfest
- Museums and expanded arts/cultural activities
- Victoria Independent School District Fine Arts Center
- More community events

groups and large events. Facility possibilities for regional parks are endless, but most common are basketball courts, hike and bike trails, recreation center, golf course, swimming pool, and camp grounds. Regional parks generally meet these criteria:

- Service area of up to 10 miles
- 200 to 1,000 acres
- Serves the entire urban area (and often draw visitors/tourists depending on the level of amenities and events)

Special Use Parks can have a broad range of facilities, but they typically focus on one or two specific uses due to their limited scope. Potential primary uses in special use parks include soccer complexes, sports stadiums, community centers, memorials, and gardens. For special use parks:

- Service area varies
- Size (acres) is determined by the primary use
- Service level depends on the primary use



TABLE 7, EXISTING CITY PARKS

NAME	ACRES	TYPE	ASSETS
BOULEVARD PARK	1.40	Neighborhood	Half basketball court, playground, signage
BROWNSON PARK	0.90	Neighborhood	Basketball court, playground, 3 picnic units with grills, open space
COMMUNITY CENTER PARK	73.17	Community	Covered basketball pavilion, playground, 2 soccer fields, 4 lighted tennis courts with pro shop, 7 covered picnic tables with grills, 12 lighted ballfields and signage
DE LEON PARK	1.77	Special Use	Bandstand, 3 monuments, 16 decorative lights, 39 benches, state and national historic site
ETHEL LEE TRACY PARK	30.50	Community <i>(currently indicated as Neighborhood on Map 12)</i>	Amphitheater, pavilion with restroom, sand volleyball court, playground, basketball court, 2 tennis courts, horseshoe pits, 9 hole disc golf course
GREENBELT PARK	12.87	Neighborhood	Open space, lighting, signage
HOPKINS PARK	11.58	Neighborhood	Basketball court, playground, pavilion, benches, restroom, signage
LONE TREE CREEK PARK	127.99	Community	Water playground, shade structure, restroom, practice ball fields, natural area and parking
MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. PARK	1.72	Neighborhood	Basketball court, playground, pavilion, benches, signage
MEADOWLANE PARK	1.20	Neighborhood	Playground, multi-use court, benches, 5 picnic units with grills
MEMORIAL (SQUARE) PARK	1.20	Special Use	5 monuments, signage
PINE STREET COMMUNITY PARK	1.80	Neighborhood	Basketball court, 5 picnic tables, playground, 2 backstops, signage
QUEEN CITY PARK	2.11	Neighborhood	Basketball court, pavilion, signage
RIVERSIDE PARK	562.00	Regional	Administration building, rose garden, 27-hole golf course, Challenged Athletes Complex, baseball stadium, 2 senior league fields, duck pond, picnic units with grills, 2 playgrounds, boat ramp, half basketball court, 1.5-mile walking trail, basketball court, 3 restrooms, 3 pavilions, 18 RV spaces, paddling access trail, 2 sand volleyball courts, 2 gazebos, signage, zoo, disc golf course
TED B. REED PARK	10.00	Neighborhood	Pavilion with restroom, 2 handball courts, playground, ¼-mile walking trail, basketball court, baseball backstop, signage
WILL ROGERS PARK	1.90	Neighborhood	Basketball court, playground, open space, signage
TOTAL	842.11		

SOURCE: City of Victoria Parks and Recreation Department; City of Victoria Parks 2025 Master Plan

PARK INVENTORY

Compiled in **Table 7, Existing City Parks**, are details on the 16 existing City parks in Victoria, including their acreage and type, as well as the available public amenities at each. Park pavilions, where present at each park, and the splash pad at Lone Tree Creek Park are available to rent on an hourly basis from the Parks and Recreation Department. The total of 842.11 acres in this table reflects developed parkland relative to the City’s total parkland inventory of 887.96 acres cited above. When compared to

the mid-2013 population estimate of 65,098 City residents, the current quantity of parkland is 13.64 acres for each 1,000 persons.

Displayed on **Map 12, Existing City Parks/ Trails and Service Areas**, are the City’s current park and trail locations and the respective service areas as discussed above under Park Types. While there is no common standard for hike and bike trails, a ½-mile buffer was also placed around the Lone Tree Creek Trail to highlight its accessibility to numerous residents and neighborhoods – and others who are more than

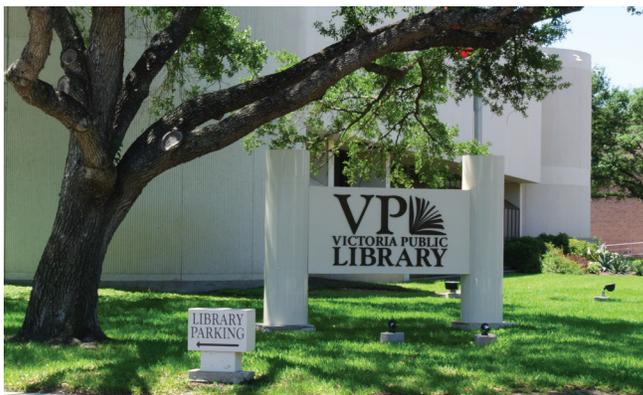
willing to travel a longer distance by car, bike, or on foot to enjoy this community amenity. The map visually underscores the lack of systematic parkland acquisition and the development of Neighborhood and Community level parks in some areas as Victoria grew northward in past decades. Riverside Park made up for this deficiency, to some extent, as a Regional Park relatively close to these underserved areas. However, the relative lack of public parks north of Loop 463 – in Victoria’s north and northwest prime growth areas – is most evident on this map.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

VICTORIA PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Victoria Public Library is located in downtown Victoria at 302 N. Main Street, between E. Commercial Street and E. Goodwin Avenue. The library is a joint service of the City and Victoria County as the County owns the building with City of Victoria staff running the day-to-day operations. The City funds the staffing and other service costs for the benefit of all Victoria County citizens regardless of whether they live inside the city.

- ▶ The library is open 61 hours per week with 4,400 visitors in an average week.
- ▶ 365,000 items were checked out during fiscal year 2014-15.
- ▶ Services offered include children’s programming; access to popular reading materials; access to computers, printers, and wifi; computer and technology classes; workforce development and training; and community gathering and meeting space.



The library utilizes a strategic planning process to guide its operations. It is currently in the midst of a 2011-2016 strategic plan and presents an annual scorecard assessing attainment of goals. The five main goals for the library are: Early Literacy; Information Fluency; Cultural Awareness; Lifelong Learning; and Reading, Listening and Viewing for Pleasure.

Issues that require planning attention are how to meet the information needs of an expanding community through a possible satellite or mobile services and continued enhancements to the Main Street facility.

VICTORIA COMMUNITY CENTER

The Community Center, located at 2905 E. North Street to the east of downtown, is a community amenity available for use by all residents, businesses, and organizations. This includes several areas, itemized below, which can be reserved wholly or partially at a daily rate, along with related rental furnishings and supplies plus marquee advertising. Therefore, the Center operates as a largely self-supporting “enterprise” function of the City as it does not receive transfers from the general fund budget – and is among the many beneficiaries of funds distributed from the City’s Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) revenues. The facilities and spaces available at the Community Center include:

- ▶ Dome (12,305 square feet)
- ▶ Annex with dividable spaces (7,279 square feet total)
- ▶ Arena (46,641 square feet)
- ▶ Exhibit grounds
- ▶ Concession stand (686 square feet)
- ▶ Conference room
- ▶ Kitchen

Among its current issues that will require planning attention, the Community Center sometimes has large events (e.g., Victoria Livestock Show) and/or concurrent users who must contend with limited space availability. Also, parking is at or near capacity when all venues are booked and active simultaneously, including when the nearby Youth Sports Complex has major tournament activity.

**MAP 12
EXISTING CITY PARKS/
TRAILS AND SERVICE AREAS**

LEGEND

-  City Limits
-  Regional Park
-  Community Park and 2 Mile Buffer
-  Special Use Park and 1/2 Mile Buffer
-  Neighborhood Park and 1/2 Mile Buffer
-  Hike and Bike Trail and 1/2 Mile Buffer

-  Buildings
-  Freeway
-  Primary Arterials
-  Secondary Arterials
-  Railroad
-  Creek/River/Lake

NORTH

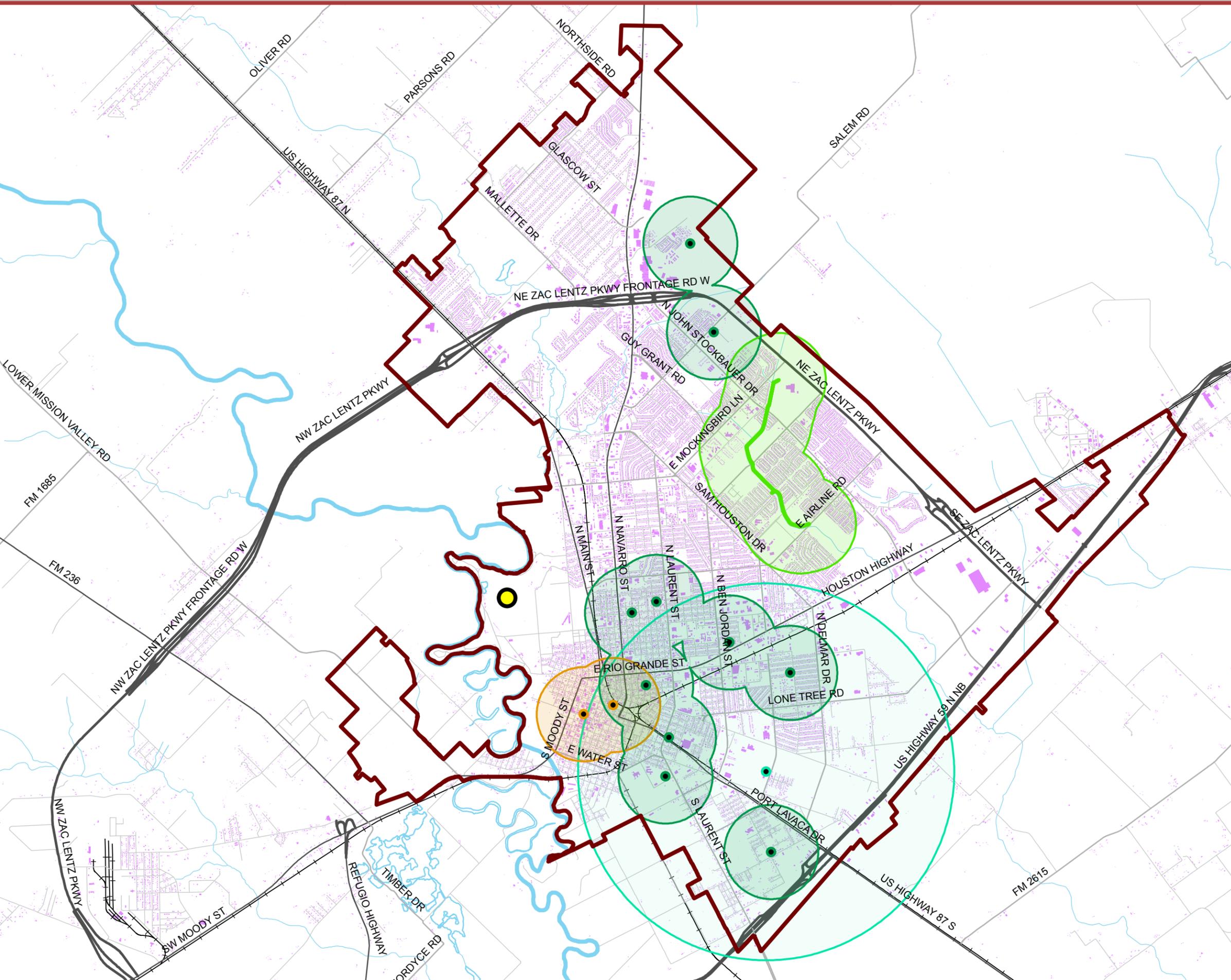


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MILES



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Disclaimer: This map is intended for general informational purposes only and does not represent a legal record. No warranty is made by the City of Victoria regarding specific accuracy or completeness, and the data may be subject to revision at any time without notification.



More recent facility improvements have focused on needed cosmetic and functional upgrades but no significant space additions, which would also likely require added parking capacity.

VICTORIA TOURISM

More aggressive tourism promotion, especially focused on Victoria’s heritage and historic downtown and neighborhoods, was on the mind of some elected officials and other advocates at the time of the 2015 Comprehensive Plan update.

The Victoria region is home to a strong inventory of quality lodging properties, unique attractions, and cultural experiences. Attractions are diverse and, in particular, appeal to historical, recreational, and food tourism. Major attractions like the Texas Zoo, the Museum of the Coastal Bend, and the Presidio La Bahia in nearby Goliad, provide the community with draws for visitation on a regular basis. Hunting, fishing, birding, and other natural resources at destinations like Coletto Creek Reservoir and Park, just west of Victoria along US 59, bring in niche travelers. Cultural attractions like the area’s diverse styles of barbecue and arts events like the Bach Festival give Victoria a potential national draw.

As of 2014, according to the federal government, hospitality in Victoria was a \$137 million industry annually and supported 4,400 jobs. Lodging

properties in Victoria range from select-service hotels to blue-collar motels. In 2015 Victoria had 1,934 hotel and motel rooms. A dozen hotels were built within the last five years and provide the city with established-brand lodging with modern conveniences. Several bed and breakfasts and extended stay homes are also part of the lodging inventory, giving Victoria unique and diverse lodging opportunities.

Attractions in the Victoria destination marketing area represent a true Texas tourism experience both locally and regionally. Some of the most prominent existing attractions include:

Historical Tourism

- Museum of the Coastal Bend
- Presidio Nuestra Señora de Loreto de la Bahía in Goliad
- Mission Nuestra Señora del Espíritu Santo de Zúñiga in Goliad
- Old Victoria Driving Tour

Culinary Tourism



Outdoor Recreation

[Including hunting, fishing, birding, kayaking, etc.]

- ▶ Texas Zoo
- ▶ Coleto Creek Reservoir and Park
- ▶ Lake Texana
- ▶ Guadalupe River
- ▶ Port Lavaca coastal area
- ▶ Powderhorn Ranch preserve near Port O'Connor



Arts Based Tourism

- ▶ Bach Festival
- ▶ Other Performing Arts including the Victoria Theatre, Symphony and Ballet organizations
- ▶ Bootfest
- ▶ Many restaurants and clubs featuring live music and other entertainment
- ▶ Nave Museum and Art League

Sports Tourism

- ▶ Softball and baseball youth tournaments
- ▶ Collegiate and professional golf tournaments
- ▶ Disc golf tournaments



Other Venues

- ▶ Trampoline Park
- ▶ Laser Tag
- ▶ Victoria Go Karting and Putt Putt Golf (pending)



DESTINATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

When members of the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC) were asked to identify destinations and activities that Victoria's own residents, plus visitors, can enjoy, they listed:

- ▶ Riverside Park
- ▶ Texas Zoo
- ▶ Victoria Mall
- ▶ Arts and culture, including local museums
- ▶ Downtown Victoria
- ▶ Special events
- ▶ Local golf courses
- ▶ Recreational activities and sports leagues
- ▶ Indoor entertainment (movies, bowling, bingo, laser tag)
- ▶ Local restaurants and bars

When asked to cite factors that may draw external visitors, in particular, they first talked about a broader context for local tourism (Coastal Bend, Corpus Christi, San Antonio, Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, other nearby coastal destinations and "eco-tourism" sites, Goliad and other historical draws, etc.). Along with the items listed above, they highlighted Victoria's historic homes/neighborhoods (i.e., driving/bus tours) and sports tournaments as having the greatest potential to pull in outside visitors and spending.

**EXPLORE
VICTORIA-TX**

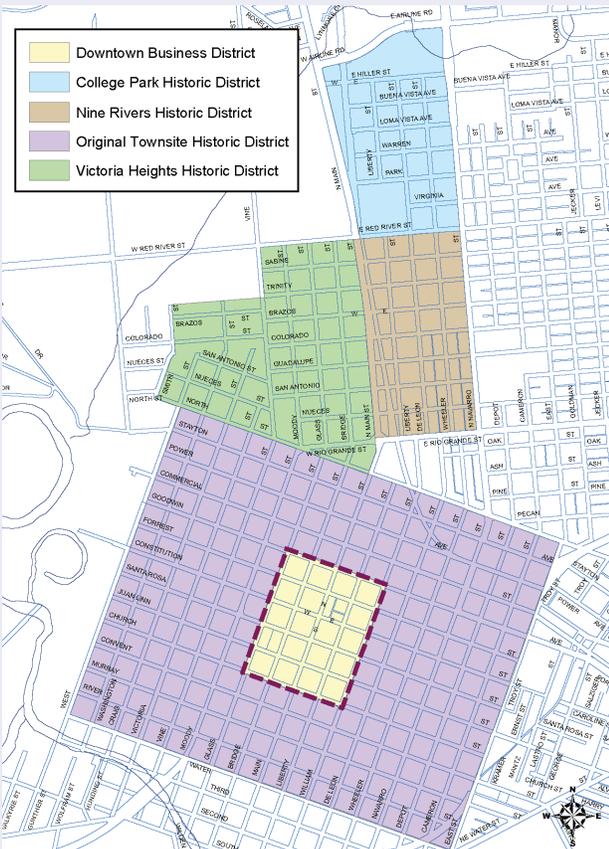
Explore Victoria, the City's Convention and Visitors Bureau, exists to increase visitor spending in Victoria. Current promotions concentrate on local and regional itineraries including culinary tourism, history tourism, and sports tourism opportunities. The success of the Coastal Texas Barbecue Trail to position Victoria on the first page of Google for many barbecue related searches, is an example of effectively

marketing a niche in which Victoria already excels. Sports tourism is booming in Victoria with the Youth Sports Complex and other fields reaching capacity and scheduled events and tournaments growing in attendance. Historical tourism within the city proper is enhanced by the Old Victoria Driving Tour, a popular self-guided tour of the oldest architecture in downtown Victoria.

VICTORIA'S HERITAGE RESOURCES

Victoria is home to more than 100 historic structures that are designated on either the National Register of Historic Places or as a Registered Texas Historic Landmark, or both.

**FIGURE 10, HISTORIC DISTRICTS
WITHIN VICTORIA**



SOURCE: City of Victoria Development Services Department

The abundance of historic structures has led to various programs, special initiatives, and volunteer efforts which further promote historic preservation and heritage across Victoria County and in Victoria proper. Key agencies and organizations involved in historic preservation and promoting Victoria's heritage include:

- City of Victoria Development Services
- Victoria Main Street Program
- Victoria Preservation, Inc.
- Victoria Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Victoria County Historical Commission
- Victoria Regional History Center
- Museum of the Coastal Bend

The City of Victoria has a Preservation Incentive Matching Grant Program which is intended to protect, enhance, and preserve the historic resources and landmarks within the outlined historic boundaries shown in **Figure 10, Historic Districts Within Victoria**. The Victoria County Historical Commission has a marker program which can provide a designation to qualifying historic structures throughout the county. These markers are awarded to properties meeting the program's required elements.



TOURISM CHALLENGES

At the time of this Comprehensive Plan update, tourism in Victoria, especially the hotel sector, was experiencing severe challenges in the form of downward pressure on hotel rates and occupancy. Historically, Victoria's travel market, like many of its industries, has been closely aligned with the oil and petrochemical industries. But with expansion of the University of Houston-Victoria and the arrival of the Caterpillar plant, hotel rooms were scarce and expensive in Victoria as recently as early 2015. Add to that the Eagle Ford Shale oil boom, and when travelers could find an available hotel room, it was more expensive to spend the night in Victoria than in Houston, Austin and San Antonio. New hotels came online to accommodate the increased business travel with some completing construction just as the Eagle Ford Shale play abruptly ended. With fluctuations in oil prices came a drop in the business travel generated by the local service companies and other business sectors. No longer are hotel rates in Victoria exceeding those in Texas' major cities, but the

challenge ahead is to keep the hotel sector busy and profitable.

Another challenge to the local tourism industry is that few potential visitors in the nearby markets have a clear image of Victoria or what it has to offer. This reality, combined with the lack of a reason to visit, means travelers are choosing other destinations over Victoria.

In 2013, Explore Victoria established a Victoria Tourism Partnership involving representatives from the local hotel sector, attractions, performing arts groups, and other organizations that have a stake in the Victoria travel industry. In 2015, partnership meetings and input from many travel partners culminated in a five-year strategic plan to focus on the community's existing strengths. Victoria's strong attractions together with creative itineraries – and combined with the current weakness in business travel to the area – create a real opportunity for local tourism in the form of simple, relatively inexpensive travel for residents in the nearby large cities of Houston, Austin, San Antonio, and Corpus Christi.

USING TOURISM REVENUES TO EXPAND SPORTS TOURISM

Partly to meet the expectations of the local hotel sector, Explore Victoria initiated the effort in 2013 to seek Texas Legislative approval to allow Victoria to spend HOT funds to improve our youth sports facilities to make them "tournament ready." With passage of that legislation and once the facilities were improved, youth baseball and softball tournaments started occupying hotel rooms in the second half of 2015. In 2015 Explore Victoria partnered with the Victoria Parks and Recreation Department to again seek Texas Legislative support to spend HOT funds on a future sports complex/special events center. With help from City Council and State elected officials, this legislation also passed. This future venue will be the subject of much research and discussion in the months to come.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR RECREATION AND AMENITIES

Input and discussions for this Comprehensive Plan update, through workshops with City Council and Planning Commission, informal small group sessions, a community-wide public event, interaction with the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee, and background discussions with City staff, yielded the following items related to the Recreation and Amenities focus area of the plan:

- The need to invest in upgrades to existing parks while also providing for future park needs in newly-developing areas.
- Ensuring adequate parkland in appropriate locations to meet the needs of areas projected to gain additional housing and population in the future.
- Enhancing recreational access to the Guadalupe River corridor, especially within Riverside Park, where feasible and safe.
- Responding to growing emphasis on healthy living habits, opportunities and resources in Victoria as in many other Texas and U.S. communities.
- Determining the best ways to promote a vibrant and appealing downtown while growing retail, services, and entertainment options elsewhere in the city.
- Implementing a consensus strategy on how best to position Victoria as a destination for visitors and “overnighters” within the context of, rather than in competition with, a broader array of Coastal Bend and Texas tourism offerings.

OTHER INFORMATION SOURCES

Other relevant documents related to Recreation and Amenities include:

- Parks 2025 Master Plan
- Paseo de Victoria: A Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan for Transportation and Recreation
- Victoria Public Library Strategic Plan 2011-2016 (and annual Report Card updates)
- Victoria Community Center Market Analysis and Feasibility Study

Pertinent websites include:

- City of Victoria Parks and Recreation Department
- City of Victoria Development Services Department
- City of Victoria Public Library
- City of Victoria Community Center
- Victoria Convention and Visitors Bureau (attractions, events/activities, Bootfest)
- Victoria Main Street Program
- Victoria ISD (Fine Arts Center/ programs, athletics)
- Victoria College (Leo J. Welder Center for the Performing Arts, Museum of the Coastal Bend, Lifelong Learning)
- University of Houston-Victoria (events, visitors)
- Victoria County Historical Commission
- Victoria Regional History Center
- Victoria Preservation, Inc.

**EXISTING
CITY**