

# The City of Waco Ballfield Assessment

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Hunden Partners

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# Ballfield Assessment

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## Background

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- In 2023, the City of Waco contracted with Hunden Partners to perform a comprehensive assessment of city-owned baseball and softball fields.
- The scope of work also included an analysis of use agreements and scheduling efficiencies for ballfields and maintenance practices.
- Key challenges examined:
  - Supply and demand of fields
  - Public accessibility of fields
  - Equitable standards for fields and facilities
  - Distinctions between little leagues and travel teams
  - Utilization of Riverbend Park

# Ballfield Assessment

During the past year, staff has continued to navigate an evolving landscape for baseball and softball field management:

- Continued improvements at Cotton Palace and Eastern Little League
- Opening of Challenger and Lake Air ballfields
- Requests from little leagues for new facilities
- Increase of requests from travel teams to use facilities
- Increase of tournaments and multi-sport usage at Riverbend Park
- Increase of maintenance rotations
- Improvements to Bell's Hill ballfield

Current Challenges:

- Maintenance / improvements to land the city does not own
- New facilities vs. improvements vs. shared usage
- Centralized game / tournament facilities
- Increased maintenance responsibilities and funding



# City of Waco Athletic Fields Assessment

Ballfields Use Agreements  
Assessment & Best  
Practices



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# Contents of Study

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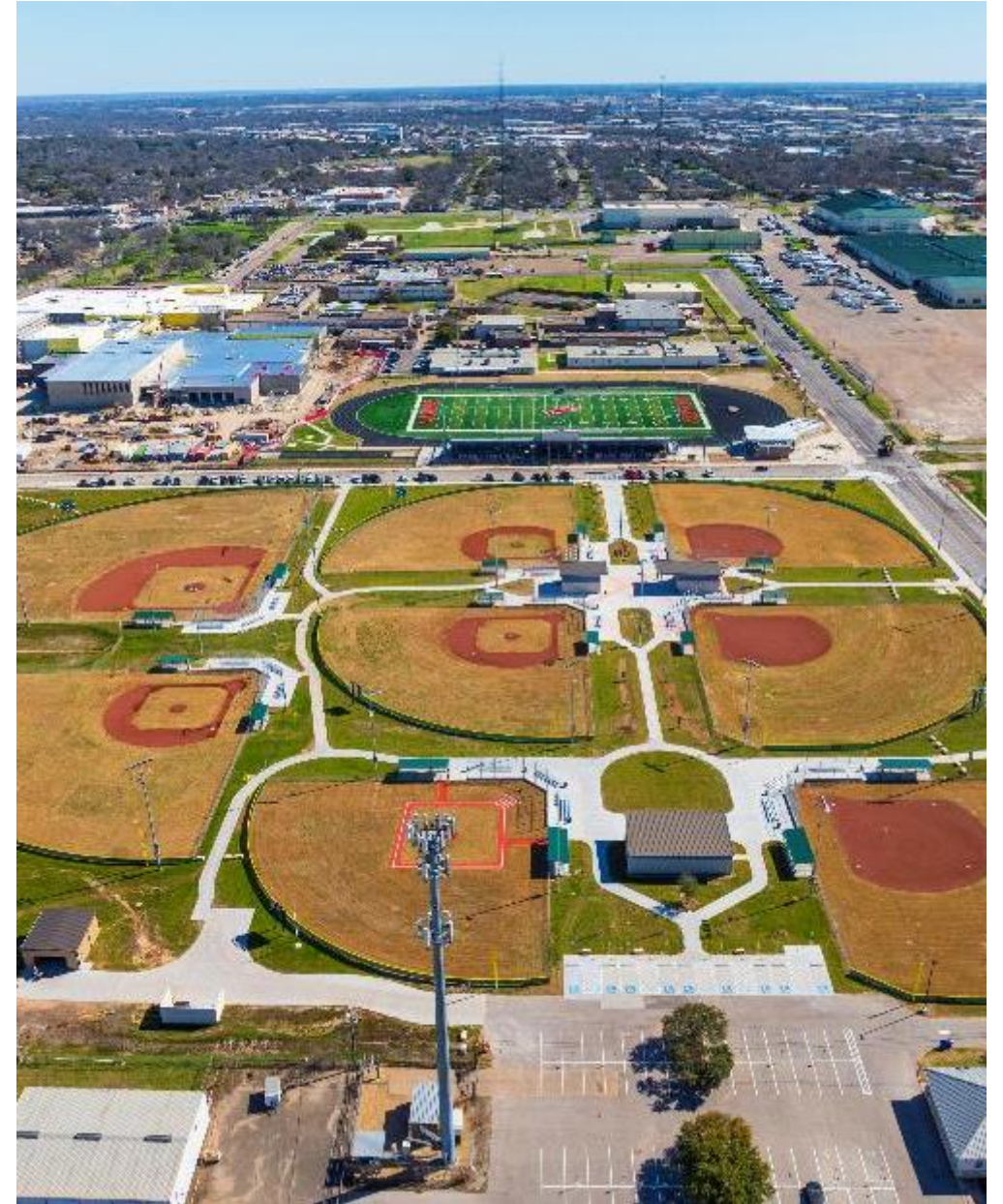
# Project Purpose & Methodology

## Purpose

Provide the City of Waco with a framework that will mitigate challenges related to the use of City-owned ballfields with the goal of creating policies that ensure equity and clarity among all user groups and stakeholders.

## Methodology

Although each project and assessment is unique, there is a proven framework that includes a thorough analysis of the **local market economic and demographic landscape, in-person and virtual stakeholder engagement, supply and demand analysis, and an analysis of industry best practices as it relates to organization structures and use agreements fields.**



# Supply & Demand Overview

The **supply of ballfields in the City of Waco currently meets the demand generated by local teams and organizations, however quality remains a struggle at specific fields.**

- Riverbend Park is the primary tournament facility in the City of Waco, which is also rented out for team practices and adult softball.
- **21 City of Waco ballfield facilities, with five that are under use agreements.** A majority of these facilities are simply backstops at parks and schools.
- The focus:
  1. **Continued improvement of main practice / game facilities**
  2. **Improvement of the top backstop facilities to a baseline level for use by organizations**
- Hunden's recommendations address **how City of Waco Parks and Recreation should go about future improvements and the maintenance of ballfield facilities.**



# Waco Ballfield Conditions Assessment

## Ballfield Quality & Amenities Scoring

- Assets were scored based in amenities; **overall quality was noted a concern on several fields, however not directly scored.**
- Out of the 21 ballfields in Waco, **8 fields scored a 6 or higher and the remaining 13 scored at or below a 3.**
- Goal should be to allocate funds towards **enhancing existing fields that lack basic amenities and struggle in overall quality.**

Waco, TX Ballfield Amenities											
Facility Name	ADA Sidewalks	Concession Stand	Covered Bleachers	Covered Dugouts	Dirt Infield	Grass Infield	Field Fencing & Lights	Irrigation	Parking Lot	Restroom	Total
Riverbend Park Ballfields	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	9
Lake Air Little League Fields	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9
Southern Little League (WISD Land)	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	8
Luther J. Mitchell Eastern Little League Complex (1/2 WISD Land)	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	7
Doris Miller Community Center	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	7
Jaycee Park	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	7
Waco Rampage Fields at Cotton Palace Park	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓*	✓*	✓	✓	6
Northern Gateway at Cameron Park	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	6
Bell's Hill Park	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	3
Brooklyn Park	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓**	3
Oscar DuConge	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	3
South Waco Park	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	3
Dewey Park	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	3
Kendrick Park	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	2
Buena Vista Park	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓**	2
Oakwood Park	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	2
Council Acres Park	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	2
Crestview Park	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	2
Trailblazer Park	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓**	2
Chapel Park	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	1
Mountainview Park	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>13</b>	

\*1 of 2 fields are fenced and irrigated  
 \*\*portable restrooms

Bound by Use Agmt.

Tournament Facility

Game / Practice Complex

Backstop

Source: City of Waco Parks and Recreation Department



# Field Use Agreements Situational Overview

A key focus of this analysis is a thorough assessment of the current field use agreements and a look at other organizational structures across the country that can assist in the guidance of future policies and organizational structure.

- Currently, teams/organizations are required to submit annual paperwork and sign a use agreement contract, which results in the permission of use for a field(s) for that year.
- Use agreements have changed and evolved over the years to work towards an equitable framework for all organizations. There continue to be challenges with many items within the contractual terms as well as the ongoing use of the fields.
- Areas of concern include **maintenance and capital improvements to fields, subletting, annual team requirements, scheduling, team organization structure (for-/non-profit) and others.**



# Use Agreement Identified Challenges

<b>Identified Challenges</b>	<b>Detail &amp; Context</b>
<b>Schedule &amp; Field Access</b>	Parks and Recreation requests teams' field usage times and wants to allocate more time to others. Teams often reserve unused blocks and lock fields to restrict use and mitigate theft and damage concerns.
<b>Sublease Restrictions</b>	Organizations cannot allow others to use their fields. However, the use agreement states that if someone gains access during idle periods, they cannot be asked to leave. This contradiction causes confusion, and some organizations sublease their fields despite the rule.
<b>Little League</b>	With the new construction of the complex at Lake Air, discussions are continuing regarding the quality of other fields in the city, the overall use of fields by organizations and maintenance responsibilities.
<b>Annual Paperwork</b>	Organizations are required to submit annual paperwork to City of Waco Parks and Recreation by an identified date.
<b>Facility Improvement &amp; Maintenance</b>	Responsibility is shared between the City of Waco and the field users. The level of responsibility from Parks and Recreation varies by field, depending on the team's or organization's maintenance involvement.
<b>Concessions</b>	Concessions revenue goes to the organization, but Parks and Recreation supplies equipment for concessions. However, not all fields have the need and/or concessions infrastructure.
<b>For Profit Organizations</b>	The use agreements are standardized for all organizations, however, not all organizations are the same in terms of organization structure, revenues, selectivity and player fees.
<b>Enforcement</b>	The City of Waco Parks and Recreation faces challenges enforcing the use agreement, particularly regarding field sublets, timely document delivery, and scheduling time blocks.

# Case Studies

Hunden conducted a detailed assessment of three other cities regionally and several nationally that are not shown, to better understand how their parks and recreation organizations structure their use agreements.

Temple, TX	Mansfield, TX	Georgetown, TX
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Priority use system and scheduling</li> <li>▪ Rental fees for all users</li> <li>▪ Advisory board and subcommittee to identify solutions to issues that arise</li> </ul> <p><i>Detailed breakdown on the following slide.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Primary sport within each season given priority allocation and scheduling</li> <li>▪ Secondary sports allocated on a space available basis</li> <li>▪ <b>Priority given to programs accommodated during the previous year, but effort is made to accommodate new programs pending facility availability</b></li> <li>▪ <b>No maintenance/repairs by non-Department personnel without prior written consent</b></li> <li>▪ Regular league play takes priority over tournament play</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Fields designated for sport-specific use, only except multipurpose fields</li> <li>▪ User groups differentiated by <b>resident schools, nonresident schools, general renters, and tournament/national events</b></li> <li>▪ Rental via <b>online request form</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Scheduling software</b> with availability calendar</li> <li>▪ All maintenance/repairs shall be performed by Department staff only</li> <li>▪ <b>Concessions is not permitted without a contract and approval</b> of all vendors</li> </ul>

# Temple, Texas Deep Dive

## Field Use Priority System

- **1<sup>st</sup> Priority** – Non-profit, recreational play, no rental fee, priority use of same field as prior year, Temple-based youth associations, Temple and Belton Public Schools, City Youth and Adult Leagues, Temple College
- **2<sup>nd</sup> Priority** – One recognized assoc. per sport: Centex Soccer, Central Texas Youth Softball and Temple Youth Baseball (Each give a presentation each year on budgets, financials, sponsorships, etc.)
- **3<sup>rd</sup> Priority** – All clubs/organizations that fall after 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>, *DO NOT* retain an automatic option to use same field)
- **Rental Fees** – \$10 per hour non-lighted, \$25 per hour lighted
- **Advisory Board & Subcommittee** – Take board members and form a subcommittee that works on new policies and to get different perspectives, provides shielding of Parks and Recreation organization.
- **Enforcement** – Addressed before problems arose – They receive the schedules, P&R staff checks if the organization is out there or not, if they are not, they proceed with renting out to other groups and inform the organization.

# Strategies & Solutions

- **Categorical/Priority User Agreements** – Hunden recommends the introduction of a category system to the use agreements. This may take several forms and would require a strategy session among key staff and ideally a newly created subcommittee.
- **Subcommittee Creation** – Creation of a subcommittee that specifically resolves items that are brought about, on an as needed basis.
- **Online Document Submittal / Scheduling** – An easy-to-use online platform that is optimized for submittal of required materials by users.
- **10-Year Maintenance & Improvement Plan** – Hunden recommends the implementation of a 10-Year Maintenance & Improvement Plan which provides an outline for City of Waco Parks and Recreation capital expenditures on maintenance and planned improvements to fields and facilities.
- **Field Rental** – A categorical / priority user agreement structure will enable equitable usage based on the size of the organization. Parks and Recreation will be able to schedule more teams at the fields and non-approved subletter problems can be avoided.

# Next Steps

## Goal

Implementation of the strategies and solutions to create a more efficient, equitable use of ballfields and facilities.

## Target Timeline

Aggressive – 2025

Achievable – 2026

## Action Items

- Task 1: Creation of Parks and Recreation Board Subcommittee
- Task 2: 10-Year Maintenance & Improvement Plan
- Task 3: Categorical or Priority Structure for Users
- Task 4: Online Software Optimization to Manage Documents and Scheduling

# Summary Matrix

## Execution

**How we get there.**

**1**

### Alignment

City staff and public official alignment on the identified solutions and strategies.

**2**

### Local Buy-In

Engage local teams to refine the use policies and overall plan.

**3**

### Usage Structure

Build-out of the use structure and identification of potential resources necessary for City of Waco Parks and Recreation.

**4**

### Implementation

Follow through on the solution strategies and overall plan.

# Moving Forward

- Finalize action plan
- Property ownership of fields
- Shared usage of fields and scheduling
- Centralized game / tournament facilities
- Improvements to current inventory vs. new facilities
- Maintenance responsibilities and funding





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