

Trust for Public Land

Parks Advocacy and Funding Study

Dallas Park & Recreation Board

August 15, 2019

The logo for The Trust for Public Land, featuring the text "THE TRUST FOR PUBLIC LAND" in white, stacked vertically, on a green rectangular background with a gradient from light to dark green.

THE
TRUST
FOR
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Our Track Record: 563 wins, 82% Yes, \$74 billion created, over 100 million Yes Votes



Dallas Parks Bond – Nov. 7, 2017

PROPOSITION	POLLING	ELECTION RESULTS	DELTA
A - Streets	83%	79%	-4
B - Parks	58%	74%	+16
C - Fair Park	63%	65%	+2
D - Flood Control	82%	77%	-5
E - Libraries	72%	76%	+4
F - Cultural Facilities	58%	69%	+11
G - Public Safety	77%	76%	-1
H - City Facilities	56%	62%	+6
I - Economic Development	57%	62%	+5
J - Homeless	76%	77%	+1

TPL Center for City Park Excellence

- 20+ years of park data on 500+ agencies in the 100 largest US cities
- A national perspective on the urban parks world
- Knowledge and expertise to make recommendations
- Case studies, best practices, lessons learned from cities around the country

Dallas Park and Recreation

- The City of Dallas' park system is preparing for a new era of growth.
- Adequate funding is needed to support its future Park and Recreation vision
- In comparison to peer cities, Dallas Park and Recreation falls far short in spending per resident.

Summary of Recommendations

1. Strengthen public advocacy through the creation of a strong collaborative network
2. Pursue alternative sources of new public funding for operations and maintenance
3. Increase the Park and Recreation Department budget
4. Focus on creating effective communication and messaging for the department

Benchmarking Analysis

- Goal: assess how Dallas compares to peers in terms of park and recreation investment
 - Comparison to peer cities in certain categories indicate where Dallas is performing well or is comparable to peers, and where it is falling short
- Seven cities were chosen:
 - Selected based on characteristics such as population, size, density, and governance type. Cities that are regarded as having a high-quality park system were included as aspirational cities.
 - The list was agreed upon by stakeholders including Dallas Parks and Recreation officials and Dallas Park and Recreation Board members
- Cities: Atlanta, Austin, Chicago, Denver, Houston, Phoenix, Seattle

Total Parks and Recreation Spending

- Dallas spends significantly less than peer cities on a per resident basis.
 - \$74 spent per resident in FY 2018
 - This is less than half of what the Chicago Parks District spends per resident, and less than a third of what Seattle Parks and Recreation spends.
 - True for both total spending (operational spending and capital spending combined) as well as just for operational spending.
 - **Note that spending figures do not include spending on non-park features such as zoos, aquariums, stadiums, etc.**

TABLE 5. SPENDING* BY CITY PARKS AND RECREATION AGENCY (OPERATIONAL SPENDING AND CAPITAL SPENDING COMBINED) FOR FISCAL YEAR 18, TOTAL AND PER RESIDENT

CITY	TOTAL PARD** SPENDING, FY18	PER RESIDENT
Seattle	\$190,653,863	\$268
Chicago	\$450,879,903	\$163
Austin	\$109,138,976	\$113
Atlanta	\$51,888,266	\$109
Denver	\$74,391,447	\$104
Phoenix	\$125,075,502	\$77
Dallas	\$100,825,889	\$74
Houston	\$124,493,948	\$53

* Actual expenditures

**Parks and Recreation Department

Operational Spending

- Operational spending is also low for Dallas
 - Operational spending is often an indicator of the level of maintenance of the park system, since operational dollars go toward landscaping, mowing, trash removal, etc.
 - Operational spending does not include spending on non-park features such as zoos, aquariums, stadiums, etc.

TABLE 6. OPERATING SPENDING* BY CITY PARKS AGENCY FOR FISCAL YEAR 2018, AND PER RESIDENT

CITY	OPERATING SPENDING, FY18	PER RESIDENT
Seattle	\$138,638,000	\$195
Chicago	\$381,827,000	\$138
Austin	\$93,087,932	\$96
Denver	\$62,877,981	\$88
Atlanta	\$39,344,421	\$82
Phoenix	\$100,129,028	\$62
Dallas	\$79,552,003	\$59
Houston	\$65,437,789	\$28

**Actual expenditures*

Spending Trends

- Spending in Dallas is steady, though still falls far short of peer expenditures.
 - This table reflects total (operational and capital) spending.
 - Operational spending has also risen by \$10 per resident over the past five years.

TABLE 8. AVERAGE TOTAL SPENDING PER RESIDENT FOR THE PAST FIVE FISCAL YEARS

CITY	FY 18	FY 17	FY 16	FY 15	FY 14	AVERAGE
Seattle	\$268	\$257	\$282	\$280	\$297	\$277
Chicago	\$163	\$165	\$170	\$170	\$172	\$168
Denver	\$104	\$117	\$116	\$122	\$104	\$113
Atlanta	\$109	\$86	\$118	\$130	\$97	\$108
Austin	\$113	\$111	\$93	\$87	\$110	\$103
Phoenix	\$77	\$103	\$75	\$79	\$83	\$83
Dallas	\$74	\$75	\$75	\$76	\$50	\$70
Houston	\$53	\$34	\$33	\$36	\$34	\$38

The Role of Non-profits

- Non-profit spending constitutes 7% of total parks and recreation spending for Dallas.
 - This is mid-range: in Houston, Atlanta, and Austin private spending makes up a much larger percentage of park investment at 29%, 26%, and 9%, respectively.

TABLE 10. SPENDING BY NON-PROFITS AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS ON PARKS AND RECREATION, AND AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL (PUBLIC AND PRIVATE COMBINED) SPENDING

CITY	PRIVATE SPENDING* AMOUNT	AS PERCENT OF TOTAL
Houston	\$63,427,753	29%
Atlanta	\$17,883,533	26%
Austin	\$10,510,879	9%
Dallas	\$7,304,892	7%
Seattle	\$12,201,825	6%
Chicago	\$14,108,609	3%
Denver	\$1,612,358	2%
Phoenix	\$249,342	0%

**As reported on organizations' Forms 990*

City-Wide Parks Organizations

- The most successful park systems generally have a non-profit partner organization that works city-wide to coordinate efforts, direct funds, and leverage philanthropy.

CITY-WIDE PARKS ORGANIZATIONS

CITY	ORGANIZATION	FY 2017 SPENDING	FULL TIME STAFF (FTE)
Houston	Houston Parks Board	\$22,107,401*	30*
Austin	Austin Parks Foundation	\$6,587,317*	32*
Atlanta	Park Pride	\$2,280,761**	14**
Dallas	Dallas Parks Foundation	\$679,835**	1**

*As listed on the organizations' Forms 990 filed for 2017, the most recent year available

**As reported to The Trust for Public Land in the 2018 City Parks Survey

Voters Support Parks & Rec Funding

LOCAL CONSERVATION AND PARKS FINANCE MEASURES IN TEXAS 1996-2018

MECHANISM	TOTAL MEASURES	# PASSED	% PASSED
Bond	152	135	89%
Sales Tax	13	11	85%
Total	165	146	88%

Source: The Trust for Public Land, LandVote database, www.landvote.org, and research on park measures.

- Since 1996, Texas *municipalities* passed 80 of 88 ballot measures generating more than \$4 billion for parks and conservation.

Proposed Funding Strategies

- Charter Amendment
- Special District
- Brimer Bill Taxes

Charter Amendment

- The Dallas City Council could ask voters to amend the city charter to dedicate a portion of existing tax revenue to Parks and Recreation.
- Citizens could petition the City Council to call an election on a proposed charter amendment to dedicate tax revenue to parks and recreation.
- Dallas has a Charter Review Commission that regularly evaluates the city charter and can recommend changes.

Property Tax Estimates

DALLAS PROPERTY TAX REVENUE AND COST ESTIMATES ESTIMATED REVENUE & COSTS OF PROPERTY TAX - CITY OF DALLAS

TAX RATE DEDICATION	TOTAL CITY TAXABLE VALUATION	ANNUAL REVENUE	COST/AVG. HOMEOWNER
0.010	\$130,000,000,000	\$13,000,000	\$22
0.030	\$130,000,000,000	\$39,000,000	\$67
0.050	\$130,000,000,000	\$65,000,000	\$111
0.075	\$130,000,000,000	\$97,500,000	\$167
0.100	\$130,000,000,000	\$130,000,000	\$222

Source: City of Dallas City Council Briefing, August 14, 2018.

Assumes 100% collection rate.

Average SFR (w/ homestead exemption) taxable value = \$220,000.

- The current city budget for parks and recreation is \$98 million.

Park and Recreation District

- *Implementation would require a change to state law.*
- The Dallas City Council could advocate for the creation of a special district to fund parks and recreation operations and improvements.
- In Texas, there does not appear to be specific authority at this time for the City of Dallas to create a district that could generate significant funds for parks purposes citywide.
- Special districts are common in some other large cities around the country, including Chicago, Cleveland, Los Angeles, Portland, and Seattle.

Brimer Bill

- Authorized financing of sports and community venues and related infrastructure and the imposition of certain local taxes including taxes on **car rentals, event parking, facility use, hotel occupancy, admissions, and general sales**. Voter approval is required.
- Dallas is currently at the maximum allowable sales tax rate.
- The vehicle rental tax and the hotel occupancy tax *do not apply* to the financing of a venue project that is an area or facility that is part of a municipal parks and recreation system. Fair Park may be eligible.
- The city may need to seek legislative support to change the statutes.

Conclusions & Next Steps

- Dallas parks are under-funded compared to peer cities
- Several options are available to dedicate funding for Dallas Parks:
 - Charter Amendment
 - Park and Recreation District
 - Brimer Bill
- Strengthen alliances with non-profit partners, including city-wide parks organizations, with a focus on clear messaging and communication

Thank you for your time

The Trust for Public Land (www.tpl.org)

Will Abberger

Conservation Finance Director

850-222-7911 x23

Will.abberger@tpl.org

Robert Kent

North Texas Area Director

214-957-5527

Robert.Kent@tpl.org



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