Lake Nasworthy Parks: An Assessment of Public Priorities for Development and Operations

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The City of San Angelo, Texas

November 19, 2010
Introduction

Abstract

This paper looks at the facilities and operations of the public parks at Lake Nasworthy in the City of San Angelo, Texas. The goal of this paper is to assess the public priorities for the development and operations of those facilities. This assessment is based on internal inspections of the properties, interviews with similar service providers, and a public input survey. The primary findings are, in general, that the public is mostly satisfied with the existing facilities and operations with some significant exceptions. This study finds that there is significant dissatisfaction with the condition and operation of the restroom facilities and significant dissatisfaction with the opportunities for picnicking, primarily as it relates to the provision of picnic shelters. The study finds that the provision of some facilities are not highly important, so should not be considered for expansion or addition, these being disc golf, volleyball, and basketball. It also finds that the following facilities are highly important and should be sustained: boating, fishing, swimming, RV camping, tent camping, playgrounds, and hike/run and bike trails. There is also a wealth of anecdotal information provided from the survey and this paper will relay some of this information.

Background

San Angelo is an oasis.

In the vastness that is West Texas, no community is as blessed as San Angelo to have so many bodies of water. Along with the Concho River, which flows through the heart of the City and is San Angelo’s most identifiable landmark, San Angelo boasts of three lakes: O.C. Fisher Reservoir, Twin Buttes Reservoir and Lake Nasworthy. While drought has shrunk O.C. Fisher and Twin Buttes to 2% and 18% of their capacities, respectively, Nasworthy is a constant-level, 8,252 acre-foot lake that is 81% full.

As a result, Nasworthy has long been a magnet for many a West Texan, whether he lives in San Angelo, Midland, Odessa, Sonora, Brady or Abilene. Employees who for years have sold
camping permits at the lake report that upward of 80% of those purchases are made by out-of-town visitors, making Lake Nasworthy a key cog in San Angelo’s economic engine.

Despite that, the seven City-owned and -operated parks that sit along Nasworthy’s shores have been mostly an afterthought. That’s largely because they are managed by the City of San Angelo’s Water Department, whose reason for being is, first and foremost, delivering clean water to the citizenry. As a result, the lake parks have never come close to realizing their potential, both as an economic development tool and as a quality-of-life enhancer.

In the summer of 2010, San Angelo City Manager Harold Dominguez charged Parks and Recreation Director Carl White, along with Civic Events Manager Anthony Wilson, with developing and implementing a plan that would address the highest priorities regarding usages, facilities, infrastructure and management of the Lake Nasworthy parks.

Of Lake Nasworthy’s seven parks, four of them are “pocket parks” – nooks that offer the most basic of amenities (green space, restrooms, and, perhaps, a boat ramp, picnic tables, grills, and minimal playground equipment). Most of the traffic and usage revolves around three parks: Spring Creek, Middle Concho and Mary E Lee.

This paper, which will have a real-world application, is meant to address the question of what the public considers to be the greatest priorities for developing and operating Lake Nasworthy’s parks, and whether there is a desire among the citizenry for improving those in some form or fashion.

In working toward an answer to that question, White and Wilson pored over literature from textbooks, articles and Web sites; they studied the Internet sites of other lakeside parks and the municipalities that manage them; they interviewed officials who manage those parks, local Lake Nasworthy vendors, internal stakeholders and others; and they conducted an online survey to gather public input.
White and Wilson began their research believing there is a public hunger for better amenities, services and management of the lake parks, as exemplified by this written response to the online survey from a young San Angelen who visits the lake two to five times a year.

“Playground equipment needs remodeling,” she wrote. “It would be great if there was a playground area with newer and safer equipment similar to what’s in Unidad (a community park) or Kirby Park. Picnic tables are splintered and need repair. I feel Lake Nasworthy has a lot of potential and it really needs a newer updated look. Also, I think there needs to be nicer restrooms. Many people will drive to Stripes (a nearby convenience store) to use their restrooms. The beach area is another place with lots of potential. Add more sand and more picnic tables around this area. Why can’t this area be more taken care of?”
Literature Review

The Bigger Picture

*Management of park and recreation agencies* is a very helpful and broad professional text covering a range of topics for managers of parks and recreation agencies (van der Smissen, Moiseichik, & Hartenburg, 2005). In terms of this paper, Chapter 6, “Planning for Strategic Management,” has good information for establishing when an organization should focus energies for facility development and operations (p. 103). To do this, the book recommends performing a SWOT analysis to determine the following (pp. 110-12):

- **Strengths and weaknesses of the organization** – In the case of this study, the resources and capabilities of the City staff and organization. That is, “what are we capable of doing” in terms of the lake parks’ development and operations.
- **Opportunities and threats** – In the case of this study, determining the needs of the citizens and stakeholders along with assessing the existing economic and political environment. That is, “what is needed and feasible in your service area?”

The book continues with showing that the goal is “finding the fit,” that includes overlapping the above results with the City and Department’s missions, purposes, and goals – “what do we intend to do?” Combined, a realistic picture is provided of what should be addressed and implemented in terms of facility development and operations. This paper will mostly look at the opportunities, as discussed above, but, there will be some discussion of strengths and weaknesses. Ultimately, an overall implementation plan for the lake parks will need to be developed.

Design Guidance

*A site design and management process* is a very comprehensive text that provides information for how to create or renovate a facility from start to finish to its eventual maintenance, primarily focusing on parks and recreation development (Fogg, 2000). This publication will provide
general guidance throughout the process to improve the lake parks, but for this paper helped to hone in on the best questions to ask the public regarding development and operations.

Development Guidelines

Park, recreation, open space, and greenway guidelines examines how to acquire and develop park and open space to meet the needs of the people the facilities serve (Mertes & Hall, 1995). Again, this text will be helpful in the overall development of the lake parks, determining the size and location of specific developments. It will better link development to community values and goals through partnerships, collaboration, and user input, combining with other existing plans and environmental needs. Again, this book will help with this paper by assisting with the formulation of the questions for the survey. Several steps are outlined in this process (pp. 17-36); they are:

1) Identify the customers – in the case of this study, local citizens and regional visitors.
2) Obtain customer involvement – through input from surveys, stakeholder meetings, partnerships, and other collaborative means.
3) Assess the needs – in the case of this study, facility development and operations of the lake parks.
4) Develop a strategic plan.
5) Develop a system planning framework.
6) Develop a system plan.
7) Develop recreation facility and services delivery plan.
8) Develop a maintenance and operations plan.
9) Develop an implementation plan and
10) Evaluate the overall effectiveness of the system plans and service delivery.

This paper primarily focuses on steps 1-3 above and partly explores step 4. Ultimately, City staff will be charged with following all steps of this process. This text also provides guidelines for determining facility size, quantity needed based on population, and general site development based on the category of the facility.
City-wide Park Facility Priorities

San Angelo, Texas, parks, recreation & open space master plan (City of San Angelo, Texas, 2005) is a comprehensive plan for park facility assessment, improvement, and development relying heavily on public input. However, this plan does not fully or adequately address the lake parks. The lake parks are included in the inventory, but there are virtually no recommendations for lake parks development and operations (p. B-3).

The public input survey used in the development of the plan asked generic questions of citizen-desired facility development and improvements regardless of locations. Here are the top citizen-identified facility priorities citywide:

1) Picnic shelters/pavilions.  
2) Hike/bike trails.  
3) Natural areas.  
4) Botanic/flower gardens.  
5) Senior center.  
6) Playgrounds.  
7) Recreation center.  
8) Open space.  
9) Lighted outdoor basketball courts.  
10) Indoor aquatic park.

Based on these results, the most likely facilities to be considered as priorities at the lake parks are: picnic shelters, multiple-use trails, playgrounds, and outdoor courts (basketball or multiple-use). More current citizen input will help to refine this development list.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Access and Connections

The purpose of the San Angelo, Texas, area bicycle & pedestrian plan (City of San Angelo, Texas, 2005) is to create a plan from public opinion that “provides the region [Tom Green County] with a strategy for creating an environment where people could choose to bicycle or walk to their destinations and provide recreational opportunities for walking and bicycling to encourage a healthy active lifestyle. The Plan provides guidance for the development and implementation of an interconnected network of designated on-street bicycle facilities as well as off-roadway trails and a system of sidewalks” (p. 1-1). Local needs for bicycling and pedestrian facilities were determined through an advisory committee of local advocates, as well as
discussions with representatives of specific destinations. General public input and commentary were received through the local Metropolitan and Planning Organization (MPO) Web site and during two public meetings. Comments specific to the lake parks are as follows (pp. A-1-16):

- Numerous comments requested bicycle connections along Knickerbocker Road to Lake Nasworthy, as well as between the parks at the lakes.
- Numerous comments requested improved walking conditions at Hillside Drive at Lake Nasworthy.
- Several comments requested better bicycle and pedestrian connections along routes, other than Knickerbocker, to the lake parks.

The results of this input show a proposed development map that includes connections to the lake parks and between the lake parks. Here are specific recommendations:

- Create a non-motorized trail along Southwest Boulevard, through the existing electrical right-of-way, to connect to Lake Nasworthy.
- Connect Middle Concho Park to Southwest Boulevard (as noted above).
- Develop a multiple-use trail along the South Concho River, connecting to South Concho Park along Country Club Road.
- Develop a multiple-use trail along Knickerbocker Road connecting through Red Bluff Road to Middle Concho Park as well as along Fisherman’s Road to Spring Creek Park and along South Concho Drive to South Concho Park.

As of today, none of these improvements have been developed. It is anticipated some of these facility improvements will be identified again through the public input process for this paper.

**Existing Standard Operating Procedures**

It was a little surprising to find that the “Lake Nasworthy and Twin Buttes operations standard operating procedures” existed, although, it is quite brief and limited, being only a little more than three pages in length (2008). This SOP identifies the lake parks operations staff, their general responsibilities, and seasonal routine and non-routine tasks. This document will provide information for better understanding what the City is currently committed to providing at the lake parks in terms of maintenance and operations.
Internet Searches on Lake Park Facilities and Operations

As one would suspect, there is a wealth of information on the Internet that helped with this paper. Searches were directed along a handful of paths.

Similar service providers.

The first line of Internet searches looked at similar providers of lake park facilities, comparable to the Lake Nasworthy parks. Of course, many of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) State Parks were shown, the two closest being San Angelo State Park and South Llano River State Park outside Junction. In terms of facilities and recreational opportunities, these parks are very similar to what is and could be provided at the Lake Nasworthy parks: camping (both primitive and with utilities), picnicking, hiking, biking, horse trails, swimming, wading, fishing, boating, wildlife observation, hunting (at designated areas and at designated times), comfort stations (with showers), shelters, playgrounds, boat ramps, docks, and “dump stations” – underground tanks to transfer wastewater (TPWD, 2010).

Searches also came back with lake park facilities provided by local government agencies and the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACoE). Examples include: City Lake Park at Boerne, Texas (2010), Willow Grove Park at Lake Dallas, Texas (2010), and Hords Creek Lake outside of Coleman, Texas (United States Army Corps of Engineers, 2010). Facilities provided are generally similar to those described above at the TPWD parks with the addition of other facilities such as disc golf, courts, gardens, fish-cleaning stations, simple screened-in shelters with bunks, and visitors centers. Fees vary somewhat, but are not much different as those for the TPWD parks. A significant difference is that the municipal lake parks, primarily the ones in urban areas, charge resident and non-resident fees. The non-resident fees are generally twice that of resident fees. Searches also came back with similar parks in other states, but other than unique assets, there seemed to be no significant differences from the parks in Texas.
Public input survey.

A second line of searches looked at the process and content of the public input survey regarding park (and specifically lake park) improvements. Several examples came back. The structure and wording of the surveys helped formulate the public input survey so that the responses returned were beneficial in terms of identifying public priorities for the lake parks development and operations. Most helpful were the following sources: Little Mountain planning process (2009), Blackburn Park survey (2010), Big Lake State Park (2010), Bond Lake public opinion survey (2010), and Shelby Farms Park Conservancy (Public input for greenway survey, 2010).

Analyzing public input.

A third line of searches focused on research methods for analyzing public input. A notable portion of this paper is intended to assess the perceived quality of the existing facilities at Lake Nasworthy, be they boat ramps, camping sites, picnic areas, or others compared to their importance. A simple method for doing so is utilizing an importance-performance analysis. Two Internet sources on how to collect and analyze survey information to create a grid that reflects park facility items in terms of their importance compared to their performance were found at the Syque Quality.com Web site (D. Straker, 2010) and at the About.com Guide (F. Reh, 2010).
Main Body – Research

The main research for this paper revolved around three key areas. First, is information learned from similar service providers through a process of benchmarking. Second, is information acquired through the public input survey. Finally, some of the information learned from the public input survey was analyzed using the importance-performance analysis.

Interviews with Similar Service Providers


Overnight camping is far and away the biggest priority use in Loyd Park, one of two parks the City of Grand Prairie, which is 13 miles west of downtown Dallas, operates on the shores of Joe Pool Lake. That’s despite the fact the city has done little to market the park with signage, needs to increase the number of electrical connections in its campgrounds, and has no online reservations – although that is coming, said Tim Shinogle, senior superintendent of park planning for the City of Grand Prairie.

While Lynn Creek Park, which also sits along Joe Pool Lake, caters to day usage, Loyd Park is Grand Prairie’s designated overnight camping park. At Loyd Park, campers reserve a lot, each of which has a grill, fire ring and picnic shelter. In addition to cabins and a clubhouse, the park features 221 concrete pads with 30-amp breakers and water hookups. Fees range from $18 per night for a campsite to $100 per day for holiday and weekend usage of a large group picnic pavilion, which is surrounded by 10 individual sites with water and electricity. Grand Prairie residents can use the park free of charge during the day, except during special events and the Easter, Memorial Day, July 4th and Labor Day holiday weekends, when everyone must pay $10.

The creation of a parks master plan led to the identification of priorities for Loyd Park. The plan was preceded by nine public meetings, a phone survey by ZIP code, and five final meetings. Parks Department staff was surprised to find that, in addition to overnight camping, the public put a high value on picnicking and beach areas (which represented the second-highest priority)
and on urbanized recreation (such as athletic uses and playgrounds) at the lake parks; staff had anticipated that city and neighborhood parks would meet most of those needs.

Most of the campers, Shinogle said, are from outside Grand Prairie but from within the North Texas region. The economy, he suggested, has increased Grand Prairie’s lake park usage as more people are opting for “stay-cations” over vacations. Attendance – and revenue – are up the past two years, which has led city officials to begin considering adding amenities such as a water ski course and a restaurant as ways of attracting even more people.

The lake parks are an enterprise operation that receives no general fund monies or tax dollars. Its biggest source of revenue comes from the entry fees to a Christmas lights display and from those four spring and summer holidays. The Parks Department performs an annual review of its fees, comparing its rates to those of similar private and public sector operations, to ensure they are aligned with the marketplace. To date, Shinogle said, few complaints have been lodged about the fees … even when residents must pay to enter the parks during holidays.

Looking forward, Shinogle said as amenities are added, the city will look to incorporate separate fees to help support those services. A challenge will be calculating those charges and taking reservations at the front gate without slowing service, he said. To combat that, he expects the city to push more Web-based reservations … with discounts for doing so to encourage the less labor intensive online aspect.

In addition to camping facilities, Loyd Park offers a swimming beach, volleyball court, a playground, picnic tables and barbecue pits, two group pavilions with seating for 80, a baseball field, six miles of multi-use trails (including for horseback riding), cabins, a boat ramp and dock, and showers.

**Willow Grove Park on Lake Lewisville** (J. Chapman, personal communication, Oct. 28, 2010).

Camping – and particularly RV camping – is the greatest priority use of Willow Grove Park on the shores of Lake Lewisville. The park is administered by the City of Lake Dallas, a resort
community of about 7,500 people 10 miles south of Denton. According to Julie Chapman, the city’s special events coordinator who also manages the park, Willow Grove is frequented by repeat RV customers, most of whom are retired.

Many of the overnight guests learn of the park through its membership in the Texas Association of Campground Owners, or TACO. The City pays an annual membership of $430, which gets Willow Grove Park a spot in the organization’s annual guide, which is distributed to more than 250,000 people per year, and on its “Find a Park” link on its Web site, texascampgrounds.com. Chapman says the park has also been able to increase business by participating in TACO’s Texas Saver Card program. The card is included in the annual guide and gives its holders discounts of 10% or 15% on daily rates at participating parks. Additionally, Willow Grove Park offers a 25% discount to senior citizens.

While there is no fee for daily use of the park, all overnight guests must reserve a spot in advance and pay a permit fee of $11 for tents and $20 for RVs. Requiring the reservations and prominent display of permits is a matter of safety, Chapman says, noting that both prevent transients from entering the park and preying on other campers. “We know who’s in our park,” she said.

There are no park attendants, so all permits must be purchased over the phone, in person or online, although the permits themselves must be picked up in person at City Hall. After-hours pickup is available at the Police Department; police officers patrol the park at night and ensure that everyone there has a valid permit. The city makes use of an online reservation service, hercules.reservationfriend.com, which is linked from the park’s site. Chapman said the service is speedier and more accurate than the spreadsheet formerly used for reservations. She does wish the software allowed users to print their own permits, but the system is not customizable.

At the request of its clientele, Willow Grove Park is in the process of replacing its portable restrooms with a shower house and fixed restrooms facility, which is being partially funded by a Texas Parks and Wildlife Department grant, as is the park’s first boat ramp. At the campers’ request, the city recently installed Wi-Fi, which is free for overnight guests.
Chapman expects the improvements to increase usage of the park, which in turn will require a greater commitment of resources for operations and maintenance – the addition of a restroom detail, for instance. The increase in revenue, however, should result in greater care, she said, noting that all park revenues are poured back into the operation and into small capital improvements such as picnic tables. Aside from its 15 RV spaces and primitive camping areas, the park offers a one-mile concrete trail for biking, walking or running; a fishing pier; a swim area and children’s playground; a baseball field; and picnic tables and benches.

Spring Creek Marina and RV Park (L. Allen, personal communication, Oct. 29, 2010).

The City of San Angelo’s campgrounds are not the only option for campers at Lake Nasworthy’s Spring Creek Park. The park has also long been the home of Spring Creek Marina and RV Park (http://springcreekmarina-rv.com), which offers a variety of camping options and a healthy menu of amenities. The privately owned park, which leases its property from the City, boasts 64 RV spots, 16 tent sites and 15 cabins.

RV sites rent for $32-$43 per night and includes water, sewer, electrical power, cable TV service and free Wi-Fi. Tent sites rent for $27 per night and includes water, electrical outlets and use of a shower house. Cabin rentals range from $50-$110 per night and include air-conditioning, cable TV, furniture, refrigerators, grills, campfire rings, picnic tables, microwave ovens, showers, linens and Wi-Fi. Reservations can be made online. Other extras include a convenience store and café, a playground, laundry facilities, lighted docks for fishing, and a large pavilion.

During the peak spring and summer seasons, there are never weekend vacancies. On weekdays, RV owners constitute most of the occupancy, which dips to about 60 percent. The marina’s manager, Leslie Allen, estimated that hundreds of people, usually looking to buy ice and bait, pour through the store daily during those peak seasons.

Most of the complaints he hears relate to the City’s public restroom facilities, which are too few and too often backed up and/or locked, he said. He also suggested a need for more trash
receptacles during special events, such as Nasworthy’s drag boat races, and on holidays, along with fire rings, which are safer and cleaner than allowing people to dig pits into the ground.

The marina has partnered with the City by selling some of the City’s camping permits. Too, working relations with the City’s gate keepers and permit sellers are friendly and productive, Allen said. He also said the police presence in Spring Creek Park seems adequate, noting there are rarely any problems in the park that require an officer’s intervention.

Despite all that, Allen is wary of a greater level of cooperation. He doubted that the property’s owners would be interested in, for instance, managing the City’s campgrounds, doubting that the return would be worth the additional responsibilities and the greater manpower that would be needed. For instance, when he sells a camping permit on City property, there is no regulation involved on his or the marina’s part. “I don’t know where they (the campers) are and what they’re doing … and I don’t want to know,” he said. “I don’t want to regulate it.”

He said he sees no greater emphasis on any one or two of the activities people prefer in the park other than camping and relaxing, although there are a lot of boaters and anglers, as well. “It’s everything,” he said of the usage. “It’s a variety.”

San Angelo State Park (K. Kemp, personal communication, Nov. 5, 2010).

Kurt Kemp is the park superintendent of the 7,677-acre San Angelo State Park, which is located on the shores of what’s left of O.C. Fisher Reservoir, which drought has dwindled to a mere 2% of its capacity. Even so, San Angelo State Park’s rugged terrain, hunting opportunities and 60-plus miles of hiking, biking and equestrian trails draw thousands of visitors each year.

Kemp took White and Wilson on a two-hour windshield tour of the park’s campgrounds, the vast majority of which are “primitive” (i.e. no mobile campers).

Most of San Angelo State Park’s primitive camping areas are dry, unkempt, prickly spots with the most basic weather-beaten and deteriorating amenities – a shelterless picnic table and a vault
toilet that some may not dare want to enter. (A vault toilet is essentially an outhouse with a tank that slowly allows for the decomposition of waste matter.) However, the primitive camping areas that do offer amenities – covered picnic tables, fire rings, lantern hooks, portable restrooms – certainly rival those at Lake Nasworthy … except that Nasworthy offers the most precious of West Texas commodities: water (and in a constant-level lake, no less).

That leads to a suspicion that the City of San Angelo could stand to charge more for Lake Nasworthy campsites. The State Park charges $8 per night for primitive campsites and $18 per night for sites with electric and water hookups; that’s in addition to an entry fee of $3 per person for everyone 13 and older. Annual passes, which give cardholders unlimited entries into more than 90 state parks, cost $60 for individuals and $75 for a family. Group picnic pavilions cost $40 per day, and group picnic areas $20 per day.

While the State Park accommodates walk-up reservations for camping spaces, most are done in advance via the Internet or telephone. Using a computerized reservation system, campers are assigned to a general area rather than a specific numbered site. This allows the park to track where campers are, while giving it the flexibility to extend the campers’ stay once there. Still, Kemp said, care has to be taken not to overbook a particular campground. While the computerized system requires the full array of personal info for campers, day users are asked only for their ZIP codes.

Although the peak season is from the second weekend in March through the weekend after Labor Day, the State Park’s front gate operates during specific hours every day of the year. Some of those hours are manned by volunteers (usually older, retired folks) who trade their labor for free access to a camping space. Kemp said the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has a roster of roving volunteers willing to do just that.

Kemp also offered much insight into the State Park’s hunting permits and regulations – opportunities that must be fully explored at Twin Buttes Reservoir, which abuts Nasworthy and which the City also administers. Despite a healthy population of white-tailed deer and wild
turkeys around Lake Nasworthy, public safety concerns would prevent the City of San Angelo from considering hunting in Nasworthy’s parks.

**Lake Nasworthy parks** (B. Burkett & B. Jordan, personal communication, Nov. 5, 2010).

For 10 years, Bruce Burkett and Bob Jordan were instrumental in the operations and management of the parks around Lake Nasworthy – Burkett as the assistant chief of the now-defunct Lake and Park Police Division, and Jordan as its dispatcher. Jordan also administered the permitting process at the lake and supervised the seasonal staff who sold the permits. Both can identify enforcement, administrative, revenue and infrastructure improvements they say would vastly improve the lake park experience.

They urged an ordinance rewrite that would note that day use passes expire at 10:30 p.m., when signage says the lake parks “close.” Burkett said large groups of people often buy one $6 or $12 camping permit along with paying the $3 per car entry fee. When police officers ask late-night partiers for their camping permits, most produce their day use pass, leaving officers powerless to eject them from the park.

Burkett also recommended limiting each camping spot to a certain number of tents and people (as most parks seem to do), and either assigning campers to a specific spot or requiring them to reserve a spot. Either, he said, would result in more accountability for the care of a camping spot; leaving an area “trashed” would then be the responsibility of the party who reserved the spot. He suggested leaving some general areas as first-come, first-served. That idea could allow charging a premium for camping spots closest to the water; those spots would require an advance reservation.

From an operations standpoint, both said the City must take steps to ensure that restrooms are cleaned and open daily. Administratively, that should be a simple fix. The challenge will be that all restrooms are on septic systems, whose tanks often fill quickly, particularly during holiday weekends and special events, causing the toilets to back up. One possible solution, they said, is
extending the use of portable restrooms from holidays to throughout the park season. There are cement pads throughout the parks for portable restrooms, which seem to relieve the pressure on the septic systems.

They also urged construction of shower houses at Spring Creek and Middle Concho parks. Showers are the number-one request of campers, who otherwise must bathe in the lake, they said. Jordan is convinced the City could generate up to $60,000 in revenue during each of the four spring and summer holiday weekends by charging $1 for a three-minute shower. However, building shower houses would require repairs, upgrades and/or an expansion of the septic system. It may well be too late and too expensive to install a sewage system in the parks.

The lake parks generate more than $100,000 in revenue during the six months that gate fees and camping permits are sold. Even so, Burkett and Jordan are convinced there remains vast untapped revenue potential at the lake parks -- money that could not only help support the operations, but improve the parks. Among them, they advised:

- Collecting daily use and camping permit fees on Mondays through Fridays. Currently, the ordinance allows for the collection of fees only on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays. During the summer, many families take extended family vacations in the parks during weekdays.
- Charging a boat ramp fee. Lake Nasworthy seems to be one of the few Texas lakes that does not require a fee for use of its boat ramps. The permit could consist of a sticker affixed to a vehicle’s windshield.
- Adding caliche RV pads at Middle Concho Park, and requiring and charging for their use for mobile campers. In addition to generating more revenue, it would eliminate some of the rutting seen in that park.
- Reviewing fees. Most parks charge per person; the fee for Lake Nasworthy’s parks are per vehicle. There could be an amalgam in which a fee is charged for each vehicle up to a certain number of people, with a surcharge for each additional person. Also, an annual permit for unlimited day use is $20, which seems awfully low. Lastly, customers of the privately owned Spring Creek Marina do not pay an entry fee; that may be worth considering in the marina’s next lease negotiation.
• Considering adding a laundry facility and a café, each of which could be contracted with a private vendor. Both are services that campers inquire about, Burkett and Jordan said.

Administratively, the camping and day use permits are printed in various colors. Each day of the week, a different color is randomly selected to keep people from trying to use the same permit on multiple days. The camping permits consist of two slips, one of which is affixed to the camping unit (tent, camper, RV, pickup truck) and the other on the windshield of the vehicle. Burkett and Jordan suggested giving a handout of park rules to each vehicle that enters; those regulations could be printed on the back of the day-use rearview mirror hanger.

Jordan especially believes that finding honest, hard-working seasonal help willing to man the gates at each park during long, hot summer days for minimum wage will be an extreme challenge. However, White and Wilson face those same circumstances in other Parks & Recreation divisions without a lot of difficulty in finding good workers. It remains uncertain whether bringing back some of the former employees – who seem concretely hidebound to what’s been done in the past – is a good idea. Jordan and Burkett suggested using the state and national park model of providing a free long-term camping space in exchange for that camper manning the front gates for a certain number of hours each week. That’s a definite possibility.

**Survey Results**

White and Wilson anticipated the survey would yield 100-200 responses. The survey ended at noon on November 15, with 411 respondents having started the survey. Of those, 307 (or 74.7%) completed it. “Thanks for putting the survey out,” one respondent wrote.

According to the results, the vast majority of the respondents – 89.5% – live full-time in San Angelo. The remaining respondents were split almost equally between part-time San Angelo residents and out-of-town visitors.
Two-thirds of the respondents (66.7%) were adults between the ages of 35-64. Young adults 18-34 comprised another 25.5%.
In total, respondents reported having 102 girls and 87 boys younger than 12 in their families, 58 boys and 46 girls between 13-17, 140 females and 116 males between the ages of 18-34, 245 women and 207 men ages 35-64, and 32 men and 28 women 65 and older.

Respondents reported a high incidence of personal usage of the Lake Nasworthy parks. One-third (33.6%) said they use the parks 11-plus times a year. Another 29.2% reported visiting the parks two to five times annually, and 23.8% said they use the parks six to 10 times per year.

“I LOVE the lake and park area,” wrote a senior respondent who visits the lake more than 11 times per year. “Very restful, and a place where I go to get away from stress. Love photography, and there’s so much to take pictures of there. I’m glad for the area.”

Respondents placed the greatest value on water-related recreational activities, with 274 saying that boating, kayaking and skiing is either somewhat or very important, 253 indicating that fishing is important, and 249 saying swimming is important. The lake’s trails also proved to be
important to park-goers, with a combined 472 saying the hiking/running and biking trails are somewhat or very important.

“I think our parks need places where we emphasize health and wellness,” wrote one frequent park user. “Right now the focus seems to be on the ‘boat-race crowd’ rather than the ‘fitness crowd.’ These facilities give us the opportunity to show our kids how to grow up healthy, active and happy. We really need to utilize them to their fullest for our kids’ sake. There are plenty of places for drinking and partying. Let’s make the parks a place for healthy pursuits.”

Nearly as important as the trails to respondents was camping, with a combined 406 reporting that tent and RV camping is important. Other usages that ranked highly among survey respondents were picnicking (260), playgrounds (214) and nature viewing (249). Spring Creek and Mary E Lee parks boast a nature trail and a nature center, respectively, and most of the parks offer opportunities for visitors to see whitetailed-deer, wild turkeys and other birds, squirrels, raccoons, skunks, porcupines and armadillos.

Conversely, 200 respondents said disc golf is definitely or somewhat unimportant. People apparently also look to other City parks or venues for opportunities to play basketball and volleyball; 194 said basketball courts are unimportant at the lake parks and 173 said the same about sand volleyball courts.

Respondents seem to be generally satisfied with the number and quality of amenities at the lake parks. Of the 24 questions related to facilities, respondents mostly said they are somewhat satisfied on 19 of those queries. “Satisfied” was the most common answer to questions about boat ramps and fishing opportunities. “I think the City is doing a great job so far,” wrote one man who visits the lake parks up to five times per year. “Just could use some upgrades to make it more appealing.”

“Somewhat dissatisfied” was the most common response only to questions about the number of picnic shelters and pavilions, and the quality of those amenities. Those questions also yielded the highest number of “dissatisfied” and “very dissatisfied” responses.
One hundred and sixty-five respondents entered comments offering suggestions on how these usages and facilities could be improved. Among the trends:

- Improvements to boat ramps – and to fishing conditions, as a whole – are badly needed.
- Trails for hiking, biking and running should be developed, groomed and improved, including erecting signage and markings.
- Playground equipment needs to be replaced and picnic facilities should be improved, particularly with the addition of shade covers.
- Respondents want more options for RV camping, including spots at Spring Creek Park other than at the privately owned marina, electric and water hookups, and caliche pads.
- The parks need better general cleanup.

“People who are picnicking, cooking out, or camping need to be held accountable for cleaning up after themselves,” wrote one young woman who visits the parks two to five times per year. “Somehow this needs to be reinforced for all who use our parks. Maybe a commercial can be aired around popular holidays to remind people of this.”

In rating their satisfaction with the operations and infrastructure at Nasworthy’s parks, respondents again most often said they are “somewhat satisfied” with seven of the eight topics broached. The one exception was restrooms – 62.1% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the parks’ public toilets. Of those, 38.8% said they are somewhat dissatisfied with the facilities and 23.3% are “very dissatisfied.”

Among the complaints are that the toilets are often locked, dirty and unstocked, and they lack hand-washing capabilities. “The bathrooms are horrendous,” one respondent wrote. “They are usually filthy and often non-functioning with no toilet paper.” Another wrote, “We desperately need more restrooms, better maintenance of the restrooms and for the restrooms to be open 24/7.” Even more succinctly, a young San Angelen who visits the parks two to five times per year wrote, “Bathrooms are gross.”
The survey offered seven total opportunities for respondents to write comments and suggestions regarding needed improvements, facilities and priorities. A question of what facilities citizens would like to see at Lake Nasworthy yielded a wide gamut of responses, from a water park to a dog park to more sand to more docks to a showerhouse.

The 15th and final question simply asked for any additional comments, and it yielded some of the most interesting and enlightening answers. Among them:

- “The lake attracts a lot of people from out of town. The lake, grounds and facilities should be kept in tip-top shape so San Angelo can be proud of its lake.”
- “Overall the parks are good. I think Middle Concho is the prettiest park in San Angelo and I spend a lot of my free time there. The City has done an OUTSTANDING job allowing events to take place at the parks.”
- “This is a waste of time. The City of San Angelo can’t and won’t make a long-term financial commitment on this project, or follow-through to even create and substantiate improvements to Lake Nasworthy. Since imagination and creativity are, at best, lacking. The City is just wasting time and resources it never seriously intends to use at the lake to begin with. Big talk, no commitment.”
- “Wonderful idea to solicit ideas from the public. I hope they are useful in making decisions on improvements.”
- “My husband and I have been going to the lake for more than 12 years. We spend a large part of our summer there and really enjoy being outdoors. Any improvements are greatly appreciated, and I look forward to seeing how the city chooses to improve this asset to our town!”

Importance-Performance Analysis

Two questions in the survey (#6 and #7) allowed for responses that could be analyzed and displayed in an importance performance chart. The importance-performance chart displays results in four quadrants. The lower-left quadrant shows the lake facilities that respondents scored as low in importance and low in performance or satisfaction. The results of this survey did not highlight any facilities in this quadrant. The upper-left quadrant shows the facilities
that respondents scored as low in importance and high in performance or satisfaction. The results of this survey highlighted three facilities in this quadrant: disc golf, volleyball, and basketball. Implications here are to place less emphasis on these facilities. The upper-right quadrant shows the facilities that respondents scored as both high in importance and in performance or satisfaction. The results of this survey show several facilities in this quadrant: boating, fishing, swimming, RV camping, tent camping, playgrounds and hike/run and bike trails. Implications here are to sustain performance with these facilities. The lower-right quadrant displays the facilities that respondents scored as high in importance and low in performance or satisfaction. The results of this survey display picnic facilities in this quadrant. Implications here are to focus first on this facility.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance-Performance</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Low</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boating, Fishing, RV camping, Tent camping, Playgrounds, Hike/Bike trails</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>+/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boating, Fishing, Swimming, RV camping, Tent camping, Playgrounds, Hike/Bike trails</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>+/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None Reported</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>+/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picnic facilities</td>
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<td>+/-</td>
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<tr>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>High</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disc golf, Volley Ball, Basketball</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>+/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None Reported</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>+/-</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Sustain performance here
Focus on this first
Methodology

There are three major focus areas for this paper: 1) results of interviews with key people involved in the provision of similar services of lake parks, 2) results and analysis of information gathered from a 15-question public input survey, and 3) the analysis of key data from the survey, which allows for the construction of an importance-performance chart.

Interviews

The first important area of research for this paper is the interviews with similar service providers. These interviews with individuals at locations such as Loyd Park in Grand Prarie, Willow Grove on Lake Lewisville, and San Angelo State Park allowed for simple benchmarking to determine if what the City of San Angelo provides at its lake parks, in terms of facilities and operations, is any different and, if so, how. It also allowed for garnering qualitative information that could provide City staff general direction as to what steps need to be considered in improving the Lake Nasworthy parks.

Public Input Survey

Another key area of this paper is the information and data gathered from the public input survey. The construction of the survey was assisted by the conceptual guidelines from the text Management of park and recreation agencies (pp. 137-138). These guidelines included the following:

- Do not to ask for information that doesn’t exist.
- Avoid using the survey process to influence the community on specific or controversial issues.
- Do not use the survey as a technique to encourage or obtain other financial resources.
- Ask only for information that is really needed.
- Solicit interest in facilities that can be feasibly provided.
Avoid using a survey for public relations or educational purposes.
Identify how the data will be used and why it is necessary or timely to obtain such data.
Ensure the respondents’ anonymity.
Begin with simpler questions and end with the more complex or personal questions.
Use Likert-type scale for responses when soliciting priorities.
Run a timed pretest and pilot to get respondents’ suggestions on content, clarity, and structure.
Maintain the same response format within the survey.
Provide clear and concise directions.
Group question topics together as units or blocks of questions.
Complete a trial run to determine ease of recording data from completed surveys.
Determine how the data will be analyzed and presented.

On November 2, a 15-question survey was posted on SurveyMonkey, a popular and user-friendly Internet surveying site, in an effort to gather as much public input regarding Lake Nasworthy’s parks as possible. The survey’s template was based partially on similar surveys found online, and was drafted with input from Ty Meighan, the City of San Angelo’s public information officer who once worked as the director of the Texas Poll. Along with some demographic information about the respondents, the survey asked for feedback regarding various usages of the lake parks, their facilities, their operations and their infrastructure.

The survey was posted on the City of San Angelo’s Web site in seven places, including the home page, and on several of the City’s Facebook and Twitter social networking pages. It was also distributed via email to every City work address and to some personal contacts. Lastly, a news release was drafted and sent to the media, informing the public of the survey. A copy of the survey and its results is included with this paper.

**Importance-Performance Analysis**

The survey was used, in part, to gather information about the importance of existing facilities to the respondents. Gathering information on the existing facilities in terms of importance and
performance allowed for the construction of an importance-performance grid (D. Straker, 2010) or a key driver analysis. This allowed the information gathered to be graphically displayed in four quadrants along an x-y axis: low importance/low performance, low importance/high performance, high importance/high performance, and high importance/low performance (F. Reh, 2010). The lower right quadrant is the most important area of the chart. “It identifies the key drivers of customer satisfaction” (F. Reh, 2010). The chart guides action for how to improve, but it also lets managers know what not to change. The chart can also let managers know what is of low importance and can be dropped (D. Straker, 2010).
Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this paper was to assess the City of San Angelo, Lake Nasworthy parks in terms of public priorities for development and operations. This assessment was based on internal inspections and research, interviews with similar service providers, and a public input survey.

In general, this study has given clear direction as to what should be considered for improvements. First and foremost, the restrooms need to be addressed by adding some additional facilities, improving the ones that exist, and keeping them regularly opened and adequately serviced. Second, additional picnic facilities should be added; these could be tables with or without covers, as well as picnic shelters/pavilions of various sizes. Third, emphasis should be placed on sustaining the facilities that support the following activities: boating, fishing, swimming, RV camping, tent camping, playgrounds, and run/hike and bike trails. In addition, future improvements should consider the replacement or addition of facilities that support these activities. Fourth, the disc golf, volleyball, and basketball courts should be de-emphasized in terms of their provision or addition. Consideration could be given to removal of some of these facilities.

Prior to the results of this survey, responses were anticipated to support the findings identified in the San Angelo, Texas, parks, recreation & open space master plan and San Angelo, Texas, area bicycle & pedestrian plan. In the case of picnicking facilities, trails, and playgrounds, this proved to be true. However, this was not the case for basketball courts or bike or pedestrian connections to and between the lake parks.

A few shortcomings of this study were identified. These include the following: 1) locations for placing the preferred facilities were not specified or quantified, 2) more information could have been garnered related to permit fees, 3) more information could have been learned about operational or maintenance shortcomings. Future studies could follow up with public input regarding permit fees, be they entrance fees, camping fees, boating fees, or other. Follow-up could also be made in terms of identifying more specific locations for placing the preferred improvements. Finally, follow-up could be made to identify additional operational or maintenance shortcomings.
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