



I. El Paso Today

As part of the Master Plan, the overall context of El Paso was evaluated and analyzed. This includes the physical characteristics of El Paso, trends in the local economy, the demographic and population aspects of the citizens of the community, and other recreational providers in the area. Major trends in recreation that may impact the Parks and Recreation System in El Paso are also discussed.



II. The Geography of El Paso

El Paso is located in El Paso County at the westernmost edge of Texas, and is adjacent to Dona Ana County in New Mexico and Ciudad Juarez in the Mexican state of Chihuahua. El Paso is situated in the heart of the Chihuahuan Desert, which is the largest desert in North America, covering over 150,000 square miles from West Texas to the eastern portion of Arizona and northern Mexico. As part of the Chihuahuan Desert, the area tends to have short grasses, sparse and unusually scrubby tree growth, and very limited rainfall. The altitude of El Paso is approximately 4,000 feet above sea level. The city itself occupies approximately 260 square miles of the 1058 square miles contained in all of El Paso County.

El Paso's most unique physical characteristics are:

The Franklin Mountains, which extend right into the city, and which rise dramatically to a height of over 3,000 feet above the city.

The Rio Grande River, which forms the southern boundary of the city and its border with both Mexico and the State of New Mexico. The river is channelized for approximately 20% of its length in El Paso, and in the remainder is largely linear in nature with some vegetative cover along its banks. Because of its status as an international boundary, the river is heavily patrolled and in many places is unattractive.



The many arroyos and canyons in the area, contain an incredibly diverse plant and animal habitat. These arroyos and drainage areas represent the best opportunity for valuable undeveloped open space in the city itself.

Irrigation and drainage canals that cross portions of the city transport water from the river to current and former agricultural areas, and are generally found in the Mission Valley and far west Upper Valley planning areas. Drainage canals can be found throughout the flatter areas of the city, and convey runoff instead of the more natural arroyos.

El Paso's Climate

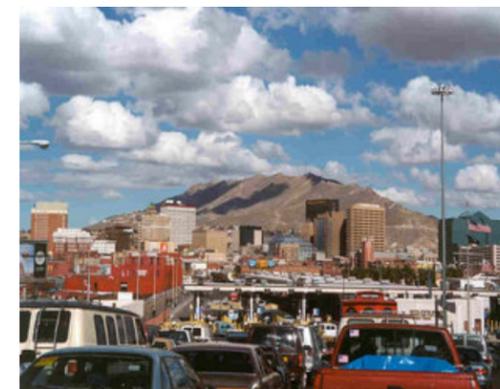
El Paso's climate is arid. Summer night average temperatures decline to the 60's, and day temperatures reach the upper 90s. Winter temperatures range average around 43 degrees to 82 degrees in January. While daytime temperatures are high in the summer months, very low humidity allows for conditions that are conducive to personal comfort, especially during the summer months. Average rainfall is 8.65 inches per year. Most of the rainfall occurs between April and October, with less than an inch per month in the winter. El Paso is known as the Sun City because of the average of more than 300 days of sunshine per year.

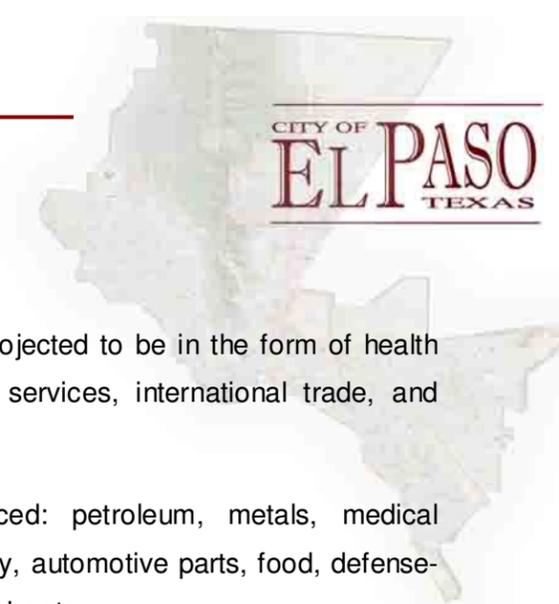
III. El Paso's Economy and the Impact of Fort Bliss

El Paso is a key entry point to the U.S. from Mexico. Once a major copper refining area, chief manufacturing industries in El

Paso now include food production, clothing, construction materials, electronic and medical equipment, and plastics. Cotton, fruit, vegetables, livestock, and pecans are produced in the area. With El Paso's attractive climate and natural beauty, tourism has become a booming industry as well as trade with neighboring Ciudad Juárez.

Education is also a driving force in El Paso's economy. El Paso's three large school districts are among the largest employers in the area, employing more than 19,000 people between them. The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) has an annual budget of nearly \$250 million and employs nearly 3,600 people. A 2002 study by the University's Institute for Policy and Economic Development stated that the University's monetary impact on local businesses is approximately \$349 million.





The military installation of Fort Bliss is a major contributor to El Paso's economy. Fort Bliss began as a Calvary post in 1848. Today, Fort Bliss is the site of the United States Army's Air Defense Center and produces approximately \$80 million in products and services annually, with about \$60 million of those products and services purchased locally. Fort Bliss' total economic impact on the area has been estimated at more than \$1 billion, with 12,000 soldiers currently stationed at the Fort. An additional 20,000 troops are projected to arrive at Fort Bliss from overseas assignments. This would be in addition to 3,800 soldiers who would arrive as part of a new brigade combat team stationed at the Fort. The growth is expected to create a strong economic ripple throughout the El Paso area.

In addition to the military, the federal government has a strong presence in El Paso to manage its status and unique issues as a border region. The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), and the U.S. Customs Service all have agency operations in El Paso to regulate traffic and goods through ports of entry from Mexico. Including these agencies, government job growth in the area is expected to rise to 64,390 jobs by 2007.

Call center operations make up 7 of the top 10 business employers in El Paso. With no signs of growth slowing in this industry, in 2005 the 14 largest call centers in El Paso employed more than 10,000 people. The largest of these in terms of employees are EchoStar, MCI/GC Services, and West Telemarketing.

Continued job growth is projected to be in the form of health care, business and trade services, international trade, and telecommunications.

Items and goods produced: petroleum, metals, medical devices, plastics, machinery, automotive parts, food, defense-related goods, tourism, and boots.



IV. El Paso's Population

The process of developing a long range parks master plan includes understanding the size and the characteristics of the population to be served. El Paso's parks, trails and open spaces provide recreation facilities for the citizens of the city, and for a significant number of persons living in nearby communities and in El Paso County. The rapid population growth poses a huge challenge, in which just keeping up with the needs of the population growth will be difficult enough, much less actually increasing the proportional size of the system.

Population Growth

El Paso's growth over the past 10 years has been extremely rapid. The Texas State Data Center projects that the El Paso Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) will be the sixth fastest growing area in Texas through the year 2020, and will

increase from a current population just under 750,000 to almost 930,000 by 2020 and almost 1,200,000 residents by the year 2040. This long term growth is also impacted by the influx of new military personnel by the year 2010, which will further increase the population of the area.

Table 2.1 on this page illustrates the current and projected growth of El Paso and El Paso County over the next 40 years. The population projections are derived from the U.S. Census, as well as the City of El Paso Planning Division, the Texas State Data Center and the Texas Water Development Board. El Paso is projected to add about 160,000 residents over the next two decades, continuing the trend of rapid growth.

Population growth will primarily occur in the east and west edges of the city. Growth is also anticipated in the far northeast as an influx of new Fort Bliss personnel and dependents takes place over the next few years.

Year	City of El Paso		El Paso County	
	Population	% Change	Population	% Change
1990 Population ⁽¹⁾	515,342 ⁽¹⁾		591,600	-
2000 Population ⁽¹⁾	563,662 ⁽¹⁾	9%	679,622 ⁽²⁾	15% from 1990
2006 Population (estimate) ⁽²⁾	634,816 ⁽⁴⁾	7%	729,800 ⁽²⁾	7 % from 2000
2016 Population (projected) ⁽³⁾	763,070 ⁽⁴⁾	20% from 2006	N/A	
2020 Population (projected)	796,000 ⁽³⁾	26% from 2006	937,000 ⁽⁵⁾	28 % from 2005
2030 Population (projected) ⁽⁵⁾	1,008,000 ⁽⁵⁾	67% from 2005	1,632,000 ⁽⁵⁾	123 % from 2005
2040 Population (projected)	1,116,000 ⁽⁵⁾	84% from 2005	2,030,000 ⁽⁵⁾	178 % from 2005

Sources
 (1) US Census
 (2) Texas State Data Center
 (3) Extrapolation from 2016, projecting 1.9 % annual growth
 (4) Estimate and Projections by City of El Paso Planning
 (5) Projection by Texas Water Development Board

Sector	2000	Beginning 2006	2016	% Increase 2006-2016
Northeast	92,761	91,349	115,128	26%
Mission Valley	100,001	101,450	109,117	8%
East	153,194	197,463	240,584	22%
Central	123,858	120,049	125,132	4%
Northwest	90,848	105,555	148,322	41%
Hueco	n/a	12,287	15,923	30%
Fort Bliss	n/a	6,663	8,854	33%

Source (1)City of El Paso Planning Division

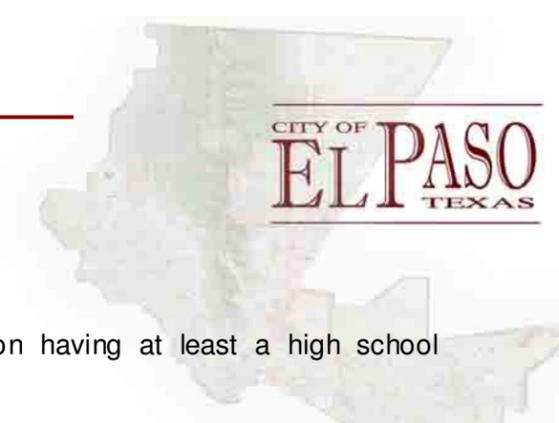


Table 2.3 YEAR 2000 – AGE DISTRIBUTION IN EL PASO		
Under 5 years	47,646	8.5 %
5 to 9 years	50,170	8.9 %
10 to 14 years	47,996	8.5 %
15 to 19 years	46,858	8.3 %
20 to 24 years	38,564	6.8 %
25 to 34 years	80,568	14.3%
35 to 44 years	83,703	14.8%
45 to 54 years	65,808	11.7
55 to 59 years	22,636	4.0 %
60 to 64 years	19,592	3.5%
65 to 74 years	35,041	6.2%
75 to 84 years	19,279	3.4
85 years and over	5,801	1.0%

Table 2.4 YEAR 2000 AGE DISTRIBUTION – YOUNG VS. OLD		
Under 18	174,494	31.0%
18 and over	388,727	69.0 %
21 years and over	362,920	64.4 %
65 years and over	60,121	10.7 %

Demographic Characteristics

Key demographic characteristics include age and sex, race and origin, income and educational attainment.

Age and Sex - Tables 2.3 and 2.4 illustrates the age characteristics of the population in El Paso as derived from the 2000 Census.

Statewide, 28.2% of the population is under the age of 18. El Paso has a larger youth population at 31.0%. However, only 9.9% of the state’s population is 65 or older, compared with 10.7% in El Paso, or almost a full percentage point higher.

Racial Characteristics - In 2000 approximately 77% of the population of El Paso was of Hispanic origin. The racial characteristics of the population of El Paso are shown in Table 2.5 on this page.

Projections by the State of Texas Data Center estimate that the percentage of the Hispanic population in El Paso County will continue to increase by the year 2020, reflecting a statewide increase in the Hispanic population of the state of Texas.

Family Size – The average household size in El Paso is approximately 3.07 residents per household. The average family size is 3.54 members per family.

Educational Attainment - In 2000, 68.6% of the population of El Paso had received at least a high school education or its equivalent. This is significantly below the statewide average

of 75.6% of the population having at least a high school education or GED.

Table 2.5 YEAR 2000 - DISTRIBUTION BY RACE IN EL PASO		
One race	544,472	96.6 %
Two or more races	2,668	2.9 %
White	413,061	73.3 %
African American	17,586	5.9 %
American Indian and Alaska Native	4,601	0.8 %
Asian	6,321	0.9 %
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	583	0.1 %
Some other race	102,320	18.2 %
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	431,875	76.6 %

Median Income - The median annual per capita incomes for the City and the State of Texas were \$14,388 and \$19,617 respectively in 2000. The median family income in the city was \$35,432 in 2000, compared to \$45,861 for the state of Texas as a whole.

Poverty Levels - A total of 26,968 families, or 19% of all families in the city, were below the poverty level in 2000. A total of 124,281 individuals, or 22% of the total population, were below the poverty level in the 2000 census. These totals are significantly higher than the state of Texas, where 12% of families and 15.4% of individuals are below the poverty line.

Key aspects of El Paso's demographic picture include the following:

- **Annual population growth in El Paso and El Paso County over the next decade is estimated to be rapid.** This pace of growth will continue to place significant demands on facilities in both the city and the county.
- **Hispanic and Latino residents make up the fastest growing portion of the city's population,** and will continue to be a majority of the population.
- **El Paso has a larger elderly population than the statewide average.** Recreation facilities should address the needs of the elderly throughout the city.
- **El Paso has a much higher than average percentage of citizens living below the poverty line.** Low or no cost recreation facilities play an important role in the community, and attempts to reduce subsidies for recreation facilities or to raise the cost of services provided may prove to be difficult to achieve.

V. Other Key National Trends

The rate of change in the world and United States' is accelerating, and many of these trends are having a direct impact on recreation. These trends include:

- **Instead of having more leisure time, the world's increasingly competitive marketplace is forcing us to work harder to keep up.** As a result, we have less leisure time, and fewer opportunities to enjoy recreational activities. We therefore tend to seek structured activities

with a specific goal, rather than simple unstructured activities such as going for a spontaneous walk.

- **We have many more leisure time choices** – Greatly increased at-home leisure opportunities are available today, such as hundreds of channels of television, sophisticated computer games and the Internet.
- **Safety is a great concern to parents** – Many parents do not allow our children to go to area parks unattended. In many places the use of neighborhood parks has gone down. This does not seem to be the trend in El Paso.
- **We live in an era of instant gratification** – We expect to have high quality recreation, and to be given activities that we will like. We have many other leisure time activities and outlets, and can pick and choose what we want to do. Cities must be willing to provide a much broader menu of recreation activities, but must draw the line if those activities become too costly.
- **Through the media and the Internet, we are exposed to the best from around the world** – Because of this, we expect our facilities and activities to be of the highest quality possible.
- **New revenue sources for public funding are difficult to come by** –The federal surpluses briefly experienced at the turn of the century are now a thing of the past, and deficit spending is probable for the next decade. As a result, little help can be expected from the federal government, and even popular grant programs such as enhancement funds for trails and beautification may not always be available.