

Aquatic Facility Needs

I. Introduction

El Paso has a well developed system of pools. Given the dry desert heat, aquatic facilities would be expected to be an extremely popular recreation feature. The system includes nine indoor pools and five outdoor pools. Citywide, the system includes one pool to serve every 42,000 residents. By the year 2016, that ratio will fall to one city pool for every 46,000

residents.

The City of El Paso is the primary provider of aquatic facilities for the area, including area public schools and private swimming clubs. El Paso County provides one pool at Ascarate Park.

All of the outdoor pools are at least 25 years old, while only two of

the indoor pools are that old. The trend toward indoor pools started with the enclosure of outdoor pools in the early 1980's.

Key Desirable Characteristics of Today's Pools

As in all other aspects of recreation, aquatic facilities are rapidly evolving and changing. The advent of pure leisure pools began in earnest in the 1990's with simple water slides and mushroom spray features. Today's pools are a far cry from the simple rectangular shape of the past, with an emphasis on the entertainment value and the experience.

Pools have distinct user groups:

- **Swimming for fitness** – Lap swimming is a popular exercise, especially among older adults.
- **Competitive swimming** – Requires lanes and specific pool depths.
- **Leisure pools and water playgrounds** – To add to the entertainment factor, pools with zero depth entry zones, lazy rivers and interactive water play features are often added to pools. Long slides with significant drops are also added.

Indoor enclosed pools were thought to be a solution to combat the high temperatures in the summer time and to extend pool use into the winter months. However, two cases point to a flaw in this thinking.

- In Odessa, new family entertainment pools have not been as successful as originally planned. These centers, while including extensive outdoor play features, are not covered,

INDOOR POOLS							
Pool Name	District	Address	Yr. Built	Size of Bldg.	Estimated Value	Yr. Last Renovated	Value of Last Renovation
Armijo	8	911 Ochoa	2001	33,834	\$4,800,000		\$141,426
Hawkins	3	1500 Hawkins	1981	12,756	\$2,200,000	1997	\$53,320
Leo Cancellare	8	650 Wallenberg	1976	10,450	\$2,000,000		\$43,681
Marty Robins	6	11600 Vista Del Sol	1992-2005	12,605	\$2,000,000		\$52,688
Memorial	2	3251 Copper	2005	13,000	\$2,500,000	1980, 2006	\$54,340
Multipurpose	3	9031 Viscount	1984	4,009	\$300,675		\$16,757
Shawver	7	8100 Independence	1992	13,163	\$2,000,000		\$55,021
Veterans	4	5301 Salem	1977	11,799	\$2,000,000	2003	\$49,319
Washington	8	4451 Delta Dr	2004	9,000	\$1,500,000		\$37,620
OUTDOOR POOLS							
Pool Name	District	Address	Yr. Built	Size of Bldg.	Estimated Value	Yr. Last Renovated	Value of Last Renovation
Hacienda	3	1225 Giles	1960	2,496	\$600,000		\$10,433
Nations Tobin	3	8831 Railroad	1960	2,496	\$800,000	2003	\$10,433
Pavo Real	6	110 Presa Pl.	1974	3,552	\$1,800,000	1980	\$14,847
Grandview	2	3100 Jefferson	1977	3,300	\$600,000	2005	\$13,794
Chelsea	2	819 Chelsea	1956	2,031	\$600,000		\$8,489

and the high summer temperatures, similar to El Paso, result in declines in attendance after July 4th. With simple tensile shade covers, those centers might be more successful.

- In El Paso, staff reports that winter pool usage declines significantly in some indoor pools. Pool users are simply not used to swimming in the winter months, and the number of users swimming for fitness may not be high enough to justify the cost of keeping all of the pools open.

Pools in El Paso

The tables on the following pages document the existing pools in El Paso. The city’s pools are all generally simple rectangular pools, some of which have been enclosed over time. Even more recent pool renovation efforts, such as Marty Robbins Pool, maintained a simple rectangular shape as part of an extensive renovation effort that repaired the pool enclosure. Armijo Pool, located in the Central area near downtown El Paso, is the one pool that most closely resembles today’s leisure pool prototype.

Distribution of Pools in the City

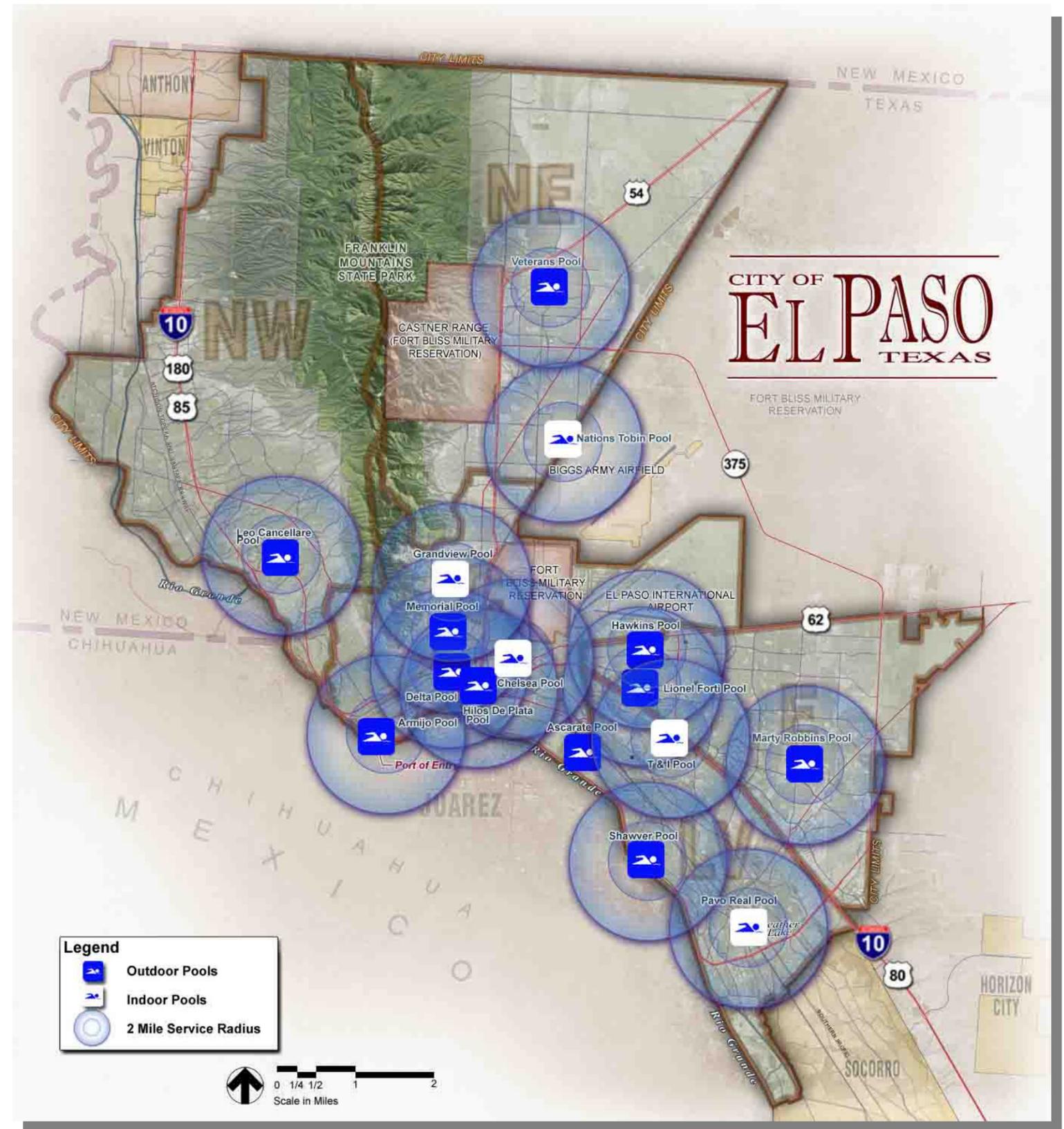
Pools in El Paso follow the traditional neighborhood model, both in their locations as well as well as in their distribution throughout the city. The distribution of pools is shown on the following pages.

In a similar manner to recreation centers, the need for greater entertainment value in aquatic facilities, as well as the ever

increasing cost of operating and maintaining pools has lead to most cities transitioning to a system of fewer and larger pools.

II. A Review of Existing Pools in El Paso

A review of each existing pool in El Paso follows.





Northeast Area Pools

The northeast area has two pools, the Nations Tobin outdoor pool and the indoor pool at Veterans Park. With a population of over 115,000 residents, the area has one pool for every 57,000 residents. This ratio is only 74% of the citywide average.

Nations Tobin Outdoor Pool

Year Built: 1960

Location: In Nations Tobin Park in the center of the Northeast Area

Year Last Renovated: 2003

Key Characteristics: The pool is over 40 years old, and even with recent renovations is beginning to show its age. The pool is relatively small, and has only one amenity feature.

Recommendations for this pool: Within the next ten years, consider removing the existing pool and developing an aquatic center in this area.

Priority Level: Medium Term (next ten years)



Northeast Recreation (Veterans) Indoor Pool

Year Built: 1977

Location: In Veterans Park in the far Northeast Area

Year Last Renovated: 2003

Key Characteristics: The pool is a simple rectangle configuration, and even with recent renovations is now close to 30 years old. The pool has no amenity features and limited deck area. The skylight roof features give the pool a light and airy feeling. Locker rooms are somewhat dated.

Recommendations for this pool: Continue to operate for the next decade, but with only minor repairs to keep functioning. Plan for eventual replacement of this pool with a full aquatics center that serves the far northeast area of the city.

Priority Level: Medium Term (next ten years)



East Side Pools

The northeast area has two pools, both of which are indoor pools. With a population of over 197,000 residents, the area has one pool for every 98,500 residents. This ratio is only 45% of the citywide average.

Hawkins Pool

Year Built: 1981

Location: In Hawkins Park in the center of the Northeast Area

Year Last Renovated: 1997

Key Characteristics: The pool is 25 years old with a plain, rectangle design. The pool has limited deck space and no amenity features.

Recommendations for this pool: Continue to operate, but monitor condition.

Priority Level: Medium Term (next ten years)



Marty Robbins Pool

Year Built: 1992

Location: In Marty Robbins Park

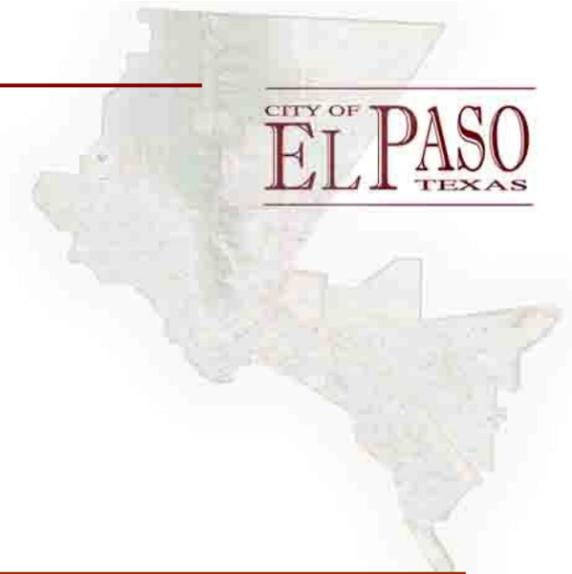
Year Last Renovated: 2005

Key Characteristics: The pool is a simple enclosed rectangle configuration. Locker room renovations somewhat improved the interior configuration, but the entry area is still unattractive. Party areas were added on the perimeter.

Recommendations for this pool: No changes over the next decade.

Priority Level: Low (because of recent renovations)





Mission Valley Pools

The Mission Valley area has three pools, two outdoor, and one indoor. With a population of over 101,000 residents, the area has one pool for every 34,000 residents. This ratio is above the citywide average.

Lionel Forti Pool

Year Built: 1960

Location: In Hacienda (Lionel Forti) Park

Year Last Renovated:

Key Characteristics: This outdoor pool is approaching 50 years of age, and should be replaced over the next decade.

Recommendations for this pool: Continue to operate, replace within 10 years

Priority Level: Medium Term (next ten years)

Pavo Real Pool

Year Built: 1974

Location: Pavo Real Park

Year Last Renovated: 1980 and 2006/2007

Key Characteristics: The pool is a rectangular 50 yard pool with a diving area. The pool serves a major portion of the Mission Valley area. As part of current renovation plans, consideration should be given to converting this pool into an aquatic center for the entire Mission Valley planning area.

Recommendations for this pool: Convert to Aquatic Center and enclose or cover with sun shade.

Priority Level: High



Central Area Pools

The central area has five pools, three of which are indoor pools. With a population of over 120,000 residents, the area has one pool for every 24,000 residents. This ratio is 164% of the citywide average.

Armijo Pool

Year Built: 2001

Location: In south downtown El Paso

Year Last Renovated:

Key Characteristics: The Armijo Pool is an excellent prototype for other indoor pools in the city. The pool has party areas, amenity features, and is airy and sunny with large glass walls. The pool is larger than other indoor pools, and the higher ceiling height also contributes to the pool environment.

Recommendations for this pool: No major changes required.

Priority Level: Low

Chelsea Pool is now over 50 years old, and should be closed and replaced with a pool at another area location. The current location is too small for a major pool facility. A spraygrounds could be added to the current Chelsea Pool location along with other neighborhood park facilities.

Memorial Pool

Year Built: 1980

Location: In Memorial Park

Year Last Renovated: 2006 (Complete rebuild)

Key Characteristics: The pool was completely rebuilt and reopened in 2006.

Recommendations for this pool: No changes over the next decade.

Priority Level: Low (Because Of Recent Renovations) -.





Three Hills Pool
Year Built: 2007 (proposed)
Location: In Three Hills Park
Year Last Renovated:
Key Characteristics: The proposed pool will be part of the new Three Hills Center. Given that this pool is not yet constructed, immediate consideration should be given to developing this facility as the city's first outdoor aquatic center. Indoor winter use can still occur at Leo Cancellare Pool, which the covered outdoor pool can be a major attraction for the area. The estimated cost of a large aquatic center pool is \$4,000,000 to \$6,000,000.
Recommendations for this pool: Construct aquatic center pool immediately.
Priority Level: Low

Galatzan Pool
Year Built: 1976
Location: In Galatzan Park
Year Last Renovated: 2005
Key Characteristics: The pool recently received minor renovations. The pool consists of the traditional enclosed rectangle, and lacks amenity features.
Recommendations for this pool: No major changes over the next decade.
Priority Level: Medium – Replace pool with new leisure pool and swim center

Northwest Area Pools

The northwest planning area currently only has one pool, Galatzan, and one new pool that is proposed for the Three Hills park site for the more than 105,000 residents of the area. With both pools in place the ratio of pools to population is one pool for every 52,500 residents, or 80% of the citywide average (only when the second pool is built).

III. Aquatic Facilities Priorities and Summary of Key Recommendations

Aquatic facility priorities are shown below. Projected costs include allowances for land and development, as well as

an administrative/design factor. Other recommendations include:

Operate indoor pools on a more limited winter schedule.

Consider operating only three to four indoor pools during the winter months, primarily for fitness purposes. The cost of keeping pool water clean and at optimum temperature is high, even if the pool itself is not open. Select one pool in every one to two planning areas to remain open.

Develop pool “super-aquatic centers”

– Develop one major aquatic center in each planning area that includes extensive slides, zero entry areas and an interactive playground feature. Develop these centers over the next decade, opening one every two to three years as feasible.

Aquatic Facility Priority Recommendations

Priority	Action	Park Zone	New Square Feet	Land Acquisition Potential Cost Range		Development Potential Cost Range		Rationale for Need
				Low Cost Range	High Cost Range	Low Cost Range	High Cost Range	
Short Term Actions – The Plan for Today								
1	Close Chelsea Pool, and convert site to spray grounds and neighborhood park site. Develop replacement pool in the area.	Central		\$0	\$0	\$400,000 \$2,000,000	\$750,000 \$3,000,000	Pool is old and past useful age. New pool should be in the area but on a larger and more central site. Could be joint venture with school district.
2	Develop new aquatic center for far east El Paso on the 90 acre regional park site	East		\$0	\$0	\$3,000,000	\$5,000,000	Needed to increase level of service in the very fast growing far east area.
3	Develop Aquatic Center on Three Hills Park site – convert plans for simple pool into full aquatic center design	Northwest		\$0	\$0	\$3,000,000	\$5,000,000	Expand into major aquatic facility to serve the region.
4	Develop and enclose aquatic center at Pavo Real Pool	Mission Valley		\$0	\$0	\$3,000,000	\$5,000,000	Expands and enhances current outdoor pool. Alternative may be to cover with shade covering.
5	Demolish and develop aquatic center at Leo Cancellare (Galatzan)	Northwest				\$3,000,000	\$5,000,000	Convert into competitive and regional leisure pool.
Estimated Total - Short Term - Plan for Today				\$0	\$0	\$12,400,000	\$20,750,000	



Close older pools instead of renovating them – In recent years, some pools that should have been closed have been instead targeted for renovations. Pool closure is a very difficult community issue, but aging infrastructure and the need to keep up with more stringent health standards will require tough decisions in the next few years. The closure of Chelsea Pool should be the first test of this recommendation. The pool should be replaced by a larger leisure pool that serves Central El Paso.

Build recreation and pool facilities together, instead of near each other. As discussed in recreation center section, explore greater building efficiencies by building pools and recreation centers side by side or even in a common building.

Plan for possible future expansion – Design each pool so that new features can be added over time.

Competitive Swim Facilities – El Paso has no true competitive swimming facilities. Instead, enclosed pools such as the facilities at Memorial or Shawver are used for meets. Deck space in these facilities is not adequate for large numbers of spectators, creating potentially awkward conditions during events.

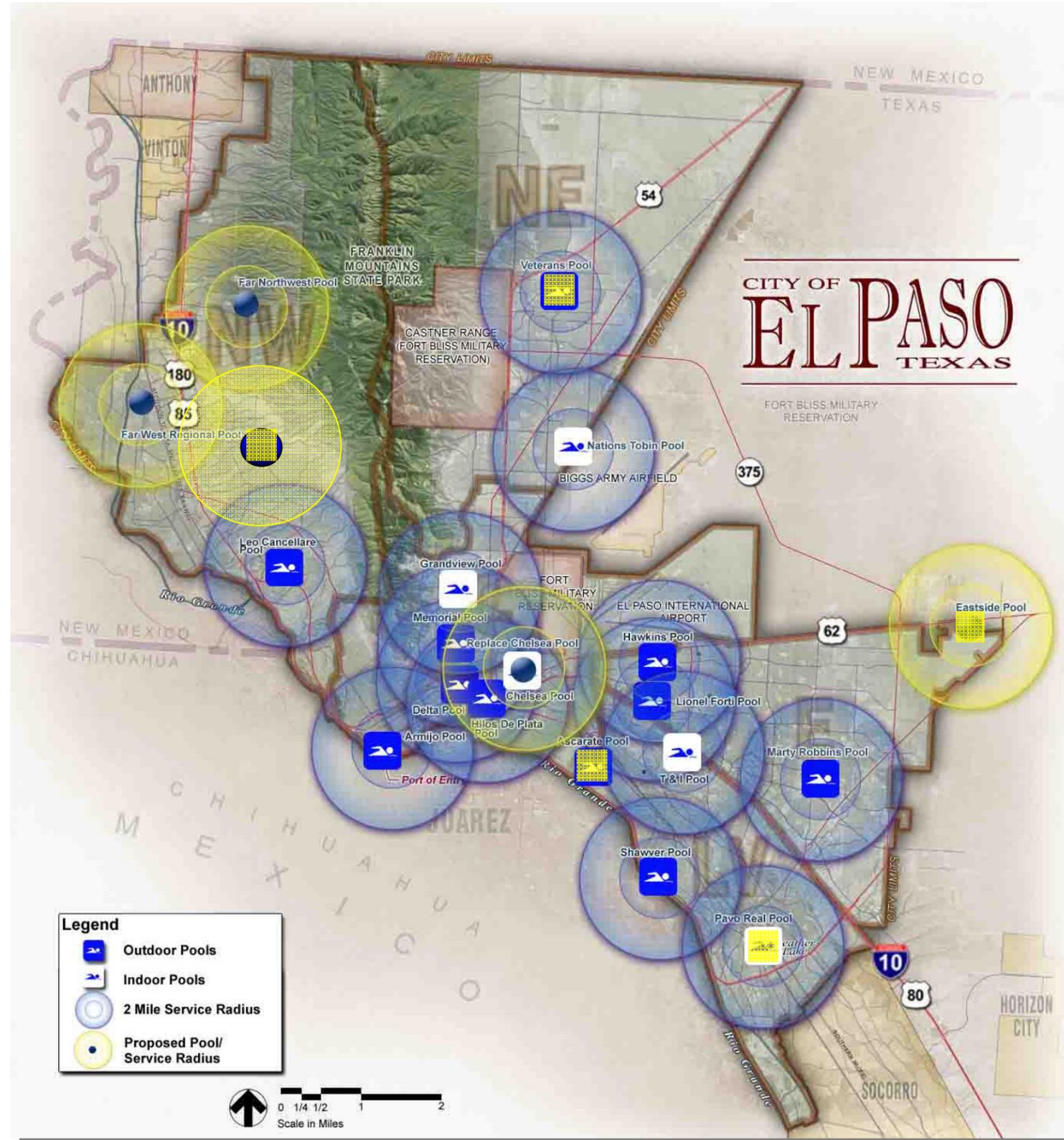
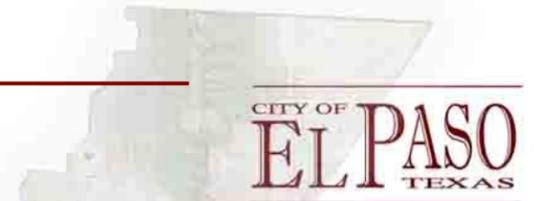
Giving the multiple school districts in the area and the popularity of swimming both for fitness and competitively, El Paso should pursue the construction of at least one premier swimming complex. This facility should be geared for practice with multiple lanes, as well as sized for both metric and yard dimensions. The facility should be enclosed to allow winter use. This center should only be built as a cooperative venture between most if not all of the school districts in the area in partnership with the City of El Paso and El Paso County. UTEP could also be considered as a partner.



Leisure pool in Odessa Texas, including both fitness lanes and leisure components such as slides.

Aquatic Facility Priority Recommendations

Priority	Action	Park Zone	New Square Feet	Land Acquisition Potential Cost Range	Development Potential Cost Range	Rationale for Need		
Medium to Long Term Actions - Plan for A Bright Future								
6	Close Nations Tobin Pool and convert to Aquatic Center for the Northeast Planning Area	Northeast		\$0	\$0	\$3,000,000	\$5,000,000	Addresses need for facilities in far northeast area of the city.
7	Develop major water recreation center and competitive pool at Ascarate Park or at other location in the city. Develop partnerships with local school districts to joint venture construction and operation of this facility.	Citywide		\$0	\$0	\$8,000,000	\$15,000,000	Consider feasibility of citywide feature. May be private partnership to develop and operate facility
Estimated Total - Long Term Plan for A Bright Future			0	\$0	\$0	\$11,000,000	\$20,000,000	



Proposed pools actions over the next decade

The pool might also serve as a facility for the Pan American Games, should El Paso decide to pursue that event in the future. The partnership with the school districts, the Community College and UTEP should especially extend to the annual operation of the pool facility. Potential locations include Ascarate Park, lands adjacent to Cohen Stadium, and near Central El Paso.