



**To the Mayor and Members of the City Council**

**September 21, 2021**

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**SUBJECT: AVAILABILITY OF YOUTH-FOCUSED COMMUNITY CENTERS AND LIBRARIES**

The purpose of this Informal Report is to provide an assessment of the availability of youth-focused programs or services offered at City facilities, primarily community centers and libraries in the City of Fort Worth. The Park & Recreation (PARD), Neighborhood Services (NSD), and the Fort Worth Public Library (LIB) Departments' all manage and operate facilities located throughout the community (see attached map). Programming will be discussed, as well as similar service providers within the community.

PARD operates 14 and NSD operates seven community centers. The centers service an approximate 1.5-mile radius, are currently open 45 hours to 81 hours per week, and provide an array of services supporting youth, adults, seniors, and families. Youth programs focus on activities that build health, wellness, character, socialization, career exploration and reinforcement of academic skills through Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEAM). To ensure access to services, families are referred to NSD's Community Action Partners Program (CAP), which assists low to moderate income families in meeting essential needs.

**Out of School Time**

- *After School Program (ASP)* - Serves youth ages 5-13 from Fort Worth Independent School District (FWISD) and other area districts. Fees range from no cost to \$75 per month with transportation offered at some sites for an additional fee. Discounts are provided to categorically eligible families that receive income-based services such as CAP, SNAP, SSI/SS, etc. Included in ASP are supplemental programs and activities: ASP snacks, nutrition classes & cooking demonstrations, fine arts, and fitness and recreation classes.
- *School Break Camps* - Serves youth ages 5-13 from 7:30 am-6:00 pm during FWISD holidays and breaks. Fees range from no cost to \$20 per day.
- *Camp Fort Worth Summer Day Camp* - Camp is held for up to nine weeks from 7:30 am-6:00 pm, and is full of challenging and creative activities for children ages 5-13. Cost ranges from \$35-\$60 per week. Income sensitive rates are provided. Field trips are an additional fee. Each camper will participate in the reading curriculum with 45 minutes of intentional and measurable instruction based on best practices provided by a trained Literacy Support Specialist.
- *Mobile Recreation Summer Day Camp* - Serves youth ages 5-14 from 9:00 am-3:00 pm at four FWISD schools and adjacent parks. This free seven-week program offers a wide variety of recreation, education, and cultural activities.
- *Freedom School at MLK Community Center* - Primarily targets low income families, provide support to families with children ages 4-12 years of age. Provides high quality after school and summer day camp programs. Program removes barriers that prevent students from achieving academic success and provides support to parents and caregivers to



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become strong co-partners in their child's education. This program is funded by the Children's Defense Fund in conjunction with Community Development Block Grant Funds (CDBG) administered by NSD.

- *Youth Sports Program* - Recreational leagues, camps and clinics are open to youth between the ages of 5-12. Participants learn fundamentals of the sport and sportsmanship.

**Youth Activities & Programs**

- *Gaming* - eSports, Minecraft, video gaming
- *Dance Classes* - Ballet, tap and jazz classes
- *Homeschool Recreation/P.E.* - Opportunities for homeschool youth to participate in physical activities that promote health and wellness
- *Martial Arts and Self Defense classes*
- *Sports skills and clinics* - Basketball, soccer, volleyball, football, kickball, archery, gymnastics, golf and tennis classes
- *Life Skills and Special Interest Classes* - Cooking classes, computer classes, LEGO Masters, and Connect 4 challenges
- *Fine Arts Classes* - Painting, arts and crafts, and performing arts classes
- *Special Events* - Events are provided citywide for youth and families. Programs and events range from courses and activities centered on holidays, cultural celebrations and recognition, and/or efforts to address community needs (food giveaways, information sessions, and back-to-school supply give away).

**Teen Leadership & Activities**

- *FW@6* - The program goal is to decrease youth participation in crime and gangs through enrichment and recreational activities designed to reduce crime, stimulate self-determination and increase community pride. The program is operated at five community centers: Como, Martin Luther King, Jr., Northside, Sycamore and Worth Heights. FW@6 focuses on the following elements, which studies have proven provide alternatives to crime: Education/Personal Development, Employment Readiness, Recreation, Life Skills Community, and Responsibility.
- *Rising Stars Leadership Academy* - Program gives youth ages 15-18 the career development, leadership and life skills they need to succeed. The program promotes educational competence, physical and social development, and life skills. It also exposes participants to a variety of professional fields to help further their interests and how to succeed in those types of jobs.



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- *Recreation Leaders in Training (RLIT)* - Offered during the summer for ages 14-17 years old. The training involves hands-on experience working with a team, shadowing summer camp leaders in supervising and instructing campers, while providing these life skills: responsibility, character, exceptional customer service, ethical behavior, diversity and mutual respect.
- *Gaming and eSports leagues* - Allow youth to play games with each other through free play or team-based competition. Gaming allows youth the opportunity to observe play and understand game design through select games and activities such as STEAM exercises, robotics, and Minecraft. Teen gaming attracts and engages older youth that may have aged out of core programs.

Accessibility to community center programs may be limited by the following barriers to access: cost of membership card; After School Program, Summer Day Camp, and other program fees; and lack of transportation to programs.

PARD has allocated part of its 2024 Capital Improvement Plan to conduct a study for a citywide community center master plan to ensure that existing infrastructure is assessed and future community center locations/regions are identified. Number of community center locations in other large Texas cities:

Community Centers	Current Locations
Austin	20
Dallas	43
El Paso	20
Houston	60
San Antonio	26
<b>Fort Worth</b>	<b>21</b>

Fort Worth also has similar key community service providers who serve youth in out-of-school time: AB Christian Learning Center Freedom School, Boy Scouts of America, Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Tarrant County, Camp Fire First Texas, Clayton Youth Enrichment, FWISD Fort Worth After School, Girls, Inc. Tarrant County, Girl Scouts, United Community Centers, Inc., the YMCA of Metropolitan Fort Worth, and others.

The LIB is comprised of 17 locations, including a Central Library located downtown, two regional libraries, five community libraries including the new Reby Cary Youth Library intended solely for young people and their caregivers, and eight slightly smaller neighborhood libraries. A satellite library is also located inside the Rise Community Center. The majority of Fort Worth's libraries are open six days, 54 hours a week. The Central and

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Regional Libraries are open seven days, 60 hours a week. The Rise Library is open five days, 40 hours a week. All Libraries include evening hours until 8:00 pm and Saturday hours.

The majority of Fort Worth Libraries are located within walking distance of one or more elementary, middle, or high schools, and out-of-school-time programming for youth includes a mix of formal and informal learning opportunities for all ages including after-school clubs and drop-in programs that are intended to educate, provide recreation, and give young people an opportunity to come together in a safe setting outside of school to meet new people, try new things, and develop new skills. Some of these programs include chess clubs, manga/anime fan groups, teen book clubs, robotics and coding programs, and writing/journaling programs.

Libraries serve as community gathering hubs for people of all ages, including youth. With internet-accessible computers, free wi-fi, printing capabilities, and access to a variety of informational resources for school-work, as well as opportunities to participate in a wealth of educational and recreational programs with knowledgeable and helpful staff. LIB locations serve as resource centers and safe gathering spaces for youth in the afternoons, evenings, on weekends, and on school breaks.

Libraries are also equipped to inspire local youth to be innovative and creative. All LIB locations have 3D printers, STEM kits for circulation, and staff who have been trained to teach youth how to work with both hardware and creative software. The Golden Triangle, Northwest, and Reby Cary Youth Libraries offer fully-equipped creative labs (AKA maker spaces) that provide youth access to equipment and training to learn coding, robotics, textile manipulation, video creation, and more. Additionally, these locations will begin offering more formal classes on topics ranging from electronic circuitry to robotics to woodworking starting in the fall. The goal of supporting the maker movement is three-fold:

- Expose youth to new ideas and opportunities to build the foundational skills they will need to be successful in the global workforce, including critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity.
- Provide youth with opportunities to engage with new and emerging technologies.
- Provide safe, accessible, well-equipped spaces for youth who share the same passion for meeting and working on shared maker projects.

Regional and community libraries are equipped with individual and small group conference rooms and/or larger meeting rooms where youth have the opportunity to work alone or in small groups for recreational or educational purposes such as meeting to play Magic the Gathering or working on a group History project for school.



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Additionally, LIB staff develop quarterly program plans that address each community's specific interests and needs, including community-specific celebrations, opportunities to celebrate upcoming holidays and school breaks, and the expressed desires of the community via informal discussion and more formal surveys. The program plans include a variety of special programs and events each quarter to engage, educate, enlighten, and encourage our youngest community members. This fall, the Library will offer 644 free recreational/educational programs for youth between the ages of birth and 17 years. Some examples of these programs include Cosplay design at the Golden Triangle Library, Podcasting 101 at the Southwest Regional, and the RC Car Derby at the Diamond Hill-Jarvis Library.

In 2022, the Library will introduce informal afterschool programs at the locations within walking distance to middle schools. Activities will include chess, video gaming, coding, creating graphic novels and comic books, arts and crafts, and literacy-based programs. For teens, the plan is to build opportunities for older youth to engage with the LIB via advisory councils and other volunteer opportunities to earn school credit.

Barriers to access include transportation and limited Sunday hours, as well as limited libraries located outside the loop.

In 2019, the Library completed a Facilities Master Plan which noted that as the demand for library services grows based on population increases, the need for additional library spaces also grows. Despite a library building boom in Fort Worth over the last 40 years, the average Fort Worth resident has access to less library space today than they did in 1980. Today's library space is inequitably distributed; residents inside the Loop and in east Fort Worth have more than three times the space than residents in the rapidly-growing communities in the north, west, and south.

<b>Library</b>	<b>Current locations</b>
Austin	22
Dallas	30
El Paso	15
Houston	40
San Antonio	30
<b>Fort Worth</b>	<b>17</b>

Attached is a map of all City of Fort Worth community centers and libraries.



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If you have questions about this information, please contact:

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