



# Economic Development Benefits of Parks and Trails in Plano

Plano's park and recreation system generates many economic development benefits for the community, including improving quality of life; attracting employers, workers, and investment; generating outdoor recreation-related spending; and providing direct employment opportunities.

## **Parks, trails, and outdoor recreation enhance residents' quality of life.**

Plano's parks, trails, and recreation facilities are free or low-cost recreation opportunities for residents and visitors. Access to parks encourages physical activity, which in turn improves public health outcomes. Parks are also important spaces for community connection and social cohesion, serving as gathering places to meet with family, friends, and other community members. The increased social connectedness, physical activity, and time outdoors all contribute to greater mental wellbeing for park users, enhancing the quality of life for park users and people who live nearby.

*For more information on the public health benefits of parks and natural areas, visit [tpl.org/planobenefits](http://tpl.org/planobenefits).*

## Parks, trails, and outdoor recreation help attract employers, workers, and investment.

By enhancing the natural environment and residents' quality of life, parks make communities more attractive to businesses and people. Parks, trails, and outdoor recreation can help retain existing residents and attract new ones, especially those looking for natural amenities and a strong sense of place. They can also help businesses attract and retain talent and encourage investment in the community.

A 2024 Trust for Public Land report, "Park Investment and Economic Vitality", profiled Plano as one of five growing cities in the U.S. that are investing in their parks and open space, and seeing returns in the form of attracting workers, businesses, and economic development opportunities. The report highlights the 2021 bond referendum in Plano that dedicated \$82 million to improving Plano's existing parks and recreation facilities, which helps meet the needs of its growing workforce:

*"The public sector in Plano supports and facilitates the creation of mixed-use districts, recognizing the value of updating the city's business districts for the long-term economic vitality and livability of Plano. Part of this effort involves engaging with developers as well as employers, employees, and residents, to ensure that the city's parks and open spaces support the changing and varying needs of people in Plano's newly developed business districts."*

To read more, visit [tpl.org/parks-and-economic-vitality-report](https://tpl.org/parks-and-economic-vitality-report)

As Plano experiences strong private reinvestment and redevelopment, strategic partnerships offer a key opportunity to enhance open spaces within mixed-use and special districts through public-private collaboration. These partnerships promote vibrant, accessible parks that foster economic growth, attract talent, and elevate the city's competitive edge.

## Parks, trails, and outdoor recreation generate local spending.

Residents who participate in outdoor recreation often purchase or rent gear and equipment needed



to take part in those activities. There continues to be a strong market for outdoor recreation goods and services in Plano, based on TPL's analysis of household spending and the market potential index in Esri's Business Analyst tool.

Esri Business Analyst identifies the average expenditures by Plano residents on sports, recreation, and exercise equipment, as well as their likelihood of participation in various recreation and leisure activities. **The annual average household expenditure on sports, recreation, and exercise equipment was \$439, for a total of \$49.8 million across Plano in 2024.** Compared to the 2017 analysis, the average household expenditure rose 6.1% and the total city-wide expenditure rose 14.9%, after adjusting for inflation.

The market potential index (MPI) from Esri compares demand for goods, services, and activities to national averages, to identify places that have a higher-than-average interest in them. **In Plano, the market potential index is higher than the national average for many outdoor activities, including jogging/running, tennis,**



**pickleball, mountain biking, hiking, football, golfing, soccer, and volleyball.** It's also above the national average for indoor activities that Plano residents use the city's recreation facilities for, such as Pilates and yoga classes.

Plano residents are also more likely than the average American to spend money on the gear and equipment needed to participate in outdoor recreation activities. Fifty-one percent of Plano households purchased sports and recreation equipment in 2024. Of these households, 11.1 percent spent \$250 or more on the equipment; 6.8 percent spent \$100 to \$249; and 7.3 percent spent \$1 to \$99. Since the 2017 TPL analysis, the share of households spending money on sports gear and equipment more than doubled.

**Parks, trails, and outdoor recreation provide direct employment opportunities.**

The design, creation, maintenance, and programming of parks and trails generates local employment opportunities. These range from seasonal roles, internships, and entry-level jobs to skills-based trades and management roles. Other industries such as restaurants, accommodations, and retail also benefit from nearby access to parks, trails, and open space.

According to Esri Business Analyst, **there are 46 sporting goods stores in Plano**, including business that sell bicycles and related gear, camping equipment, exercise and golf gear, fishing

tackle, guns and ammunition, horse furnishings and saddlery, hunting equipment, and other sporting goods. **Together these retail businesses generate \$107.9 million in sales each year and employ 471 people.**

Macroeconomic changes to outdoor recreation and retail have decreased the number of sporting goods stores in Plano since 2017 (originally 54 stores). Smaller retail businesses faced increasing competition from large corporations in this space while consumers increased their online shopping, especially during the pandemic. Rising inflation and supply chain disruptions also significantly impacted the sector between 2017 and 2024. Out of the 54 stores identified in the 2017 analysis, 24 stores permanently closed and 7 moved elsewhere in Texas.

The parks, trails, and outdoor recreation opportunities maintained by Plano Parks and Recreation greatly enhance the economic growth of Plano and the surrounding region. By attracting and retaining its workforce, encouraging investment in parks and natural areas, and generating spending on outdoor recreation, the city's parks, trails, and open space are vital contributors to Plano's economy and residents' wellbeing.

<b>Economic Development Impacts of Parks in Plano, Texas</b>	
<b>Category</b>	<b>2024</b>
Average household expenditure on sports, recreation, and exercise equipment	\$439
Total household expenditures on sports, recreation, and exercise equipment	\$49.8 million
Number of sporting goods stores	46
Annual retail sales at sporting goods stores	\$107.9 million
Employment at sporting goods stores	471



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