

Brownsville, Texas is a beloved border town located at the southernmost tip of Texas, adjacent to Matamoros, Mexico. The city has an estimated population of 182,781, according to the 2019 U.S. Census Bureau's report. It is the 18th largest city in Texas and is still growing. Brownsville is best known for its vibrant Hispanic and family-oriented culture, rich history, and year-round semi-tropical climate which allows for plenty of recreational fun.

Brownsville is home to 40 parks, which are all managed by the City of Brownsville Parks and Recreation Department (PARC). The PARC's mission is to directly contribute to Brownsville citizens' quality of life by providing exceptional recreational programs and activities, while simultaneously celebrating the community's culture. A prime example of PARC's mission is the lovely Antonio Gonzalez Park, located at 34 Tony Gonzalez Drive. The park features include a baseball field, basketball court, soccer field, community gym, kickball field, playground, rec center, and swimming pool. The park is also home to the city's Urban Center and Heritage Center. The Urban Center is a place for the community to host after-school programs, concerts, workshops, and other community events. The Heritage Center is an interactive historical museum. Both centers are integral to promoting wellness and preserving Brownsville's rich history and culture.

The Antonio Gonzalez Park is in dire need of a park upgrade. Home to various sports matches, community events, after-school programs, and Zumba classes, the park needs to be a safe environment filled with safe, upgraded equipment. Upgraded facilities are needed to maintain the lovely community space's integrity and uphold community standards. Parks are a direct reflection of the quality of life in a community. They provide free and accessible gathering spaces for families and community members. With 29.3% of the community living in poverty (according to the U.S. Census Bureau), parks are crucial in maintaining the liveliness of the city.

Along with being one of the poorest metropolitan areas in the nation, Brownsville is also facing a tremendous public health crisis. About 39.3% of adults in the area are considered obese, according to the Texas Department of State Health Services. 1 in 5 children ages 10 to 17 are considered obese, according to the State of Childhood Obesity. In addition to these health issues, 34.6% of citizens don't have health insurance. Citizens without health insurance aren't able to access the resources they need to stay healthy. This is why it is imperative that Gonzalez Park is updated to continue to meet the needs of the community and work towards achieving wellness.

Creating and improving places to be physically active, such as Gonzalez Park, can improve the community's overall health and result in a 25 percent increase in residents who exercise three times per week, according to studies conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Another study completed by Penn State University showed significant correlations to reduced stress and blood pressure levels to the length of visits to parks. The safer and more appealing a facility is, the more likely community members will want to spend longer periods of time there.

With the money awarded, the City of Brownsville can ensure that Gonzalez Park is able to keep up with community needs and improve the overall health and wellness of its community members. We will seek additional funding for the remainder of costs from the Texas Parks and Recreation Foundation and the Brownsville Community Foundation.