CHAPTER 4 PUBLIC RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

SUMMARY

The development of the City's Public Recreation and Open Space Element requires that it be based on sound data and analysis to support the vision created for the City's system of parks, recreation and open space. The following is a summary of information and data used in the development of the Goals, Objectives and Policies (GOPs) contained in the Public Recreation and Open Space Element.

The City's existing system of parks consists of a variety of developed and undeveloped park sites. There also are a variety of entities within the City that provide recreation facilities and opportunities or own and manage open spaces within the City's boundaries. There are also several undeveloped sites that serve as a land 'bank' for future park development. The City's Park & Recreation Department coordinates with a number of different advocacy groups and sports organizations to ensure that the community has access to the City's park and recreation facilities. The mission statement of the Recreation and Parks Department as taken from the recently completed Parks and Recreation Master Plan is:

We strive to make Palm Coast a great place to live, visit, and recreate! Our staff is dedicated to bringing the citizens of Palm Coast quality parks and recreation experiences and to improving the quality of life through facilities and programs.

In 2023, Palm Coast has 10.02 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents based on a population of 101,737 and 1,020.38 acres of parklands. In terms of developed parklands, the City has 7.7 acres/1,000 residents. Over the past 5 years, the City has completed projects to expand or rehabilitate numerous park facilities. These capital improvements have included the upgrade of Holland Memorial Park (this upgrade included new themed playground, shade sails, water park), the expansion of the Tennis Center to the Southern Recreation Center (this expansion included a dog park, trailhead, and the addition of pickleball courts), and the improvement of non-motorized water facilities at Waterfront Park.

The undeveloped parkland consists of parcels set aside for future parks when Palm Coast was originally master planned. Through the course of development activities, the City has also acquired parcels through contributions from developers. Many of these parcels are strategically located within the many neighborhoods that make up Palm Coast. Focusing on the development of these parcels will provide better access to recreational facilities for certain neighborhoods such as Matanzas Woods, or Quail Hollow.

Open space is another key component of a community's recreation system. Greenways are used to connect open spaces, conservation areas, and parks. Greenways and trails continue to remain as a popular amenity in the City and across the country. Greenways provide multiple benefits to the community in terms of recreation, connectivity, and protecting the environment. Linking larger conservation areas, parks, and open spaces effectively increases the benefits and effectiveness of the lands already protected. According to the State of Florida's Office of Greenways and Trails, benefits include increased property values for properties adjacent to greenways, protection of ecological corridors to help support wildlife and protect watersheds, enhanced quality of life through increased alternative transportation opportunities, increased access to cultural and historical resources, and increased public health benefits through recreational use. The City is well served by over 130 miles of connected trails and paths through unique environmental systems such as Graham Swamp or Linear Park and along its major arterials (Belle Terre Pkwy., Pine Lakes Pkwy., etc.).

By linking the City's system of parks and natural resources, the effectiveness of the park system is increased along with the City's quality of life. Children can safely travel from their homes to various activities via 'linear parks' that connect neighborhoods to a variety of community amenities. Community amenities include not just recreation facilities, but public spaces, libraries, cultural facilities, schools, and any number of destinations. Residents can reduce their reliance on the automobile to get around and improve overall fitness and health.

As the City continues to grow, the City needs to continue to meet the demand for parks and other recreational amenities such as trails. The completion of a joint Flagler County/City of Palm Coast Master Plan in 2023, highlighted the continuing interest of the County as a whole to continue to provide quality recreational opportunities.

The incorporation of the Master Plan into the City's Comprehensive Plan is a statement of its importance in guiding the future of the City's park system. The policies will guide the City of Palm Coast and Flagler County Government in delivering the highest quality parks and recreation experiences for the entire Flagler County Community through collaboration and comprehensive planning. The plan provides an assessment of the City of Palm Coast and Flagler County parks and recreation system through an evaluation of the parks, recreation programs, open space, trails, beaches, facilities, and amenities. The plan provides strategies such as a community engagement forum and public survey every 5 years along with an update of the Master Plan every 10 years as ways to ensure an appropriate balance of facilities and amenities throughout the community and that the park system continuously meets the needs of the community. The result of these engagement strategies may then be used to update the Parks element as part of the Evaluation and Appraisal Process required for every Comprehensive Plan.

GOAL 4.1: PROVISION OF ADEQUATE PUBLIC RECREATION AND PARKS FACILITIES

Provide a system of public parks, open space, trails, greenways and recreational facilities that contribute to a pleasing quality of life and healthy lifestyle for residents and visitors.

FINDING: The City is fortunate that it has a significant inventory of existing undeveloped parkland in public ownership. However, based upon current recreation demand both in terms of population and public consensus, the City is slightly behind in providing developed parkland. The City needs to continue to develop a capital improvement plan to develop new parks as well as adding facilities or improvements to existing parks. As growth continues, additional facilities will be needed and safeguards put in place to ensure adequate facilities are in place to meet the needs of current and future residents.

Objective 4.1.1 - Recreation and Park Level of Service

Establish a Recreation and Park Level of Service Standard (LOS) for resource-based (i.e., environmentally sensitive lands, conservation areas and open space) and activity-based parks (i.e., district, community and neighborhood) to ensure that adopted LOS are kept concurrent with new development.

Policy 4.1.1.1 - The City shall establish a Recreation and Park LOS standard of eight (8) acres per 1,000 persons with the following guidelines:

- A. Park acreage shall consist of three (3) acres of resource-based and five (5) acres of activity-based parkland.
- B. Activity-based parks shall have a minimum of 25% of the total park site dedicated to resource-based facilities, open space or natural areas.
- C. Activity-based recreation and park facilities shall be planned and developed to ensure the availability of active facilities within three (3) miles of most residents.

Policy 4.1.1.2 – When determining and prioritizing needs for future recreation and park amenities, the City shall consider the findings of the GRASP Analysis in the Parks Master Plan, Feasibility Studies, and the input provided by residents (particularly those expressed by vulnerable populations such as students, individuals with physical disabilities, low-income households, etc.).

Policy 4.1.1.3 - Recreation and Park Impact Fees shall be used to help fund the acquisition and development of recreation and park facilities needed as well as the expansion of current facilities due to growth, as permissible, as a result of new and expanded residential development.

Policy 4.1.1.4 - The City shall assess and update Recreation and Park LOS standards at intervals consistent with the Evaluation and Appraisal Reporting process or more frequently as necessary to reflect changing conditions.

Policy 4.1.1.5 - The City shall seek to study the maximum service capacity for its parks to better understand when new or expanded facilities should be planned, funded, and developed.

Objective 4.1.2 - Park Maintenance and Repair 🔯 📇

Operate a system of well-maintained parks and recreational facilities through the establishment of minimum standards for park design, maintenance and equipment repair.

Policy 4.1.2.1 - Within five (5) years of Plan adoption, the City shall develop a *Best Practices Manual* for the maintenance of City parks and recreational facilities.

Policy 4.1.2.2 - The City shall develop a priority list of projects and facilities needing improvements and renovations needed to maintain the standards called for in Policy 4.1.2.1. as part of the annual budget process.

GOAL 4.2: LONG RANGE PLANNING AND FUNDING

Through a public planning process, develop a 5-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and annual funding determinations that guide development of a Public Recreation and Open Space System and ensures adequate recreational opportunities.

FINDING: The amount and quality of recreation facilities is considered a key indicator of the quality of life for citizens. The City currently has a surplus of parkland to satisfy recreation demand through 2033 based on the current population projections and an LOS of 8 acres per 1,000 persons. However, based on the current population projections, the City will need to add an additional 243 acres of parkland by 2050.

Objective 4.2.1 - 5-Year Capital Improvement Plan 🔯 🕥

Annually review and adopt a 5-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) that provides for the expansion and renovation of existing parks and park sites, new parks, land acquisition, greenways and trails to ensure the LOS approach outlined in Objective 4.1.1 is achieved.

Policy 4.2.1.1 –The City shall use the joint Flagler County/City of Palm Coast Parks Master Plan adopted in November 2023, Feasibility Studies or other special studies, as well as public feedback to guide the overall development, character and operation of the City's parks system.

Policy 4.2.1.2 - The City shall maintain and update at intervals consistent with the Evaluation and Appraisal Reporting process or more frequently as necessary to reflect changing conditions, the following sources of data, **Map 4.1** Recreation and Open Space Lands, **Map 4.2** Distribution of Recreation and Open Space Lands, and **Table 4.1** Inventory of Existing Park Land

Policy 4.2.1.3 - The City shall develop a Bicycle-Pedestrian Master Plan that builds on the general location of the City's desired greenways, trails and open spaces as depicted on Map 2.10 in the Transportation Map Series. The City's identified sites are:

- A. Old Kings North Greenway & Trail
- B. Old Kings South Greenway & Trail
- C. Lehigh Rail Greenway & Trail
- D. Seminole Woods Greenway & Trail
- E. Town Center Greenway
- F. Linear Park Greenway & Trail (Existing)
- G. Palm Harbor Parkway Multi-Purpose Path
- H. Greenway Link from US-1 to Belle Terre Elementary School
- I. US-1 Multi-Purpose Path
- J. Graham Swamp Trail
- K. Easthampton Trail
- L. Pine Lakes Trail
- M. South Belle Terre Greenway & Trail
- N. Sesame Blvd. Trail
- O. Mulberry Branch Trail

- P. Waterfront Park Greenway & Trail
- Q. Northeast Corridor Greenway Area
- R. Bulow Creek

Policy 4.2.1.4 – The City shall attempt to acquire the following lands to add to its public open space.

- A. Reserve Parcels throughout City
- B. Parcels identified as a priority for acquisition by the City, Flagler County, SJRWMD or the State for conservation and/or preservation purposes.

Policy 4.2.1.5 - The City shall develop a list of recreation and parks development projects and additional parkland and open space to be added to the 5-Year Capital Improvement Plan for the annual update to maintain the City's adopted LOS standard.

Policy 4.2.1.6 - The City's park planning process shall encourage public participation, and comment through public hearings, meetings, and user surveys, that help assess the recreational needs of its residents.

Policy 4.2.1.7 - The City shall consider the formation of a citizen advisory committee or project specific task force composed of representative from various recreation programming partners to engage with staff at appropriate stages of the recreation and open space planning processes.

Policy 4.2.1.8 - The City shall employ the best available methods and sources of funding for the acquisition, development, operation and maintenance of recreation and park facilities in order to lessen the need for ad valorem taxes with potential methods and sources of funding including, but not being limited to, the following:

A. State and Federal grants

- 1. Florida Forever Funds/Florida Communities Trust
- 2. Land and Water Conservation Fund
- 3. Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Grants Program
- 4. Florida Recreational Development Assistance Program (FRDAP)
- 5. Boater Improvement Fund
- 6. Shared Use Nonmotorized (SUN) Trail Network
- 7. Volusia-Flagler TPO Call for Projects (Active Transportation Improvements)
- 8. Park impact fees on new residential development
- 9. Acquisition or lease of other government lands
- B. Interlocal and mutual use agreements with other agencies
- C. Private/public partnerships on grant applications, capital improvements or special recreational events like tournaments.
- D. User fees (e.g., public recreation reservation and rental fees)
- E. Private property donations, site dedications and/or cash outs
- F. Bonds and other long range financing techniques
- G. Special assessments
- H. Other sources

Policy 4.2.1.9 – At least every 5 years, the City shall evaluate the City's Parks & Recreation Impact Fee Ordinance and consider amending the Ordinance to address any deficiencies or other necessary modifications.

FINDING: The City's on-going growth has created a need to prioritize the establishment and development of park and recreation facilities, and open space to meet the needs of new growth and underserved existing residential areas. While trying to provide funding for facility renovation, new park development will be focused on the City's most rapidly growing areas.

Objective 4.2.2 - Future Recreation and Park and Open Space Facilities

Establish a list of priority recreation and park projects needed to meet population growth through the year 2050 with projects including acquisition of additional parkland, and the development of existing and future park sites.



Policy 4.2.2.1 - Review and develop a 5-year Capital Improvement Plan (short-range projects) as well as consider a list of mid-range projects (completion within 5 to 10 years) and long-range projects (completion in 10 to 20 years) as part of the annual budget cycle.

Policy 4.2.2. – Utilize a variety of sources to assist in developing a list of future parks projects, such sources include public input, Parks Master Plan, Feasibility studies, and findings from the Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR) process to update the Comprehensive Plan.

Policy 4.2.2.3 – Consider open space areas such as wellfields, habitat preservation areas, etc. as potential sites for passive recreation use.

GOAL 4.3: RECREATION AND PARK SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT

Cultivate a comprehensive and interconnected recreation and parks system that provides active and passive recreational facilities, services and programs that are diverse, accessible and adequate in number to meet the growing recreational needs of the City.

FINDING: City citizens have expressed a desire to have a variety of recreational activities to choose from. Such activities include, by way of example:

-Local parks where they can relax and enjoy a family picnic.

- -Larger community parks where they can enjoy participation in organized sports
- -A greenway and trail system that links, as well as preserves, environmentally sensitive lands and open space.

Objective 4.3.1 - Neighborhood Parks

Plan for the adequate provision of neighborhood parks by establishing minimum requirements for on-site acreage and the provision of open space in new residential developments.

Policy 4.3.1.1 - The City shall establish design standards for park and recreational facilities that address maintenance and operations of park facilities along with land development regulations requiring community recreation areas to be developed in conjunction with new residential developments. The City shall also require new neighborhood parks to connect to nearby existing or planned pedestrian, bicycle, or trail facilities where feasible.

Policy 4.3.1.2 - The City shall encourage the development and operation of neighborhood parks and recreation facilities by non-profit groups and private interest groups to help meet local recreational needs.

Policy 4.3.1.3 - The City shall maintain a plan for addressing Neighborhood Park needs for those areas that are not adequately served by developed recreation and park facilities. Project acquisition and development for these areas will be included in annual updates of the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) subject to the annual appropriation of funds by the City Council for such purposes.

Policy 4.3.1.4 – The City shall investigate opportunities to update or install new technology which will improve the safety, accessibility, and quality of activities offered within the local parks system.

Objective 4.3.2 - Open Space

Manage, preserve, and protect the natural resources within the City in order to maintain a natural and healthy balance between the environment and development; ensuring that lands are set aside in new developments for open space and that environmentally sensitive lands are protected for inclusion in the City's system of resource-based parks, greenways, and trails.

Policy 4.3.2.1 –The City shall review and amend the LDC to include specific open space definitions and standards that address protection of open space, native ecosystem and the use of native landscape buffers.

Policy 4.3.2.2 - The City shall use reclaimed water and/or stormwater where available for irrigation of City-owned and operated parks and recreational facilities. The City also shall use native plants, xeriscape, and other techniques to reduce the need for potable water for irrigation purposes.

Policy 4.3.2.3 – The City shall ensure that recreational facility development within resourcebased parks, conservation areas, environmentally sensitive lands and open space shall not exceed the recognized activity carrying capacity or the use guidelines for such properties and shall provide for reasonable means of public access, through dedicated conservation easements, to cultural and/or natural resources found on site.

Objective 4.3.3 - Interconnectivity

Develop a linked open space plan that incorporates existing park sites, conservation areas, and natural resources into a network of greenways and trails.

Policy 4.3.3.1 – The City shall develop a Bicycle-Pedestrian Master Plan within five (5) years with a linked open space plan that incorporates existing park sites, conservation areas, and natural resources into a network of greenways and trails.

A. As part of the Bicycle-Pedestrian Master Plan, the City will undertake a comprehensive study within three (3) years to evaluate and address the use, rental, sale, and both environmental and economic impacts of e-bikes within Palm Coast.

Policy 4.3.3.2 – The City shall facilitate public access to parks, environmentally sensitive lands, conservation areas and other open space resources by incorporating linkages and alternative means of access through the establishment of a connected system of open space, greenways, and trails that, include but are not limited to, consideration of the following components.

- A. Conservation Areas and Preserves
- B. Environmentally Sensitive Lands
- C. Parks and Recreation Facilities
- D. Commercial Recreation Areas
- E. Lakes, Intracoastal Waterway and Canal Systems
- F. Sidewalks, Bikeways, Trails and Trailheads
- G. Wildlife Corridors
- H. Identified and Proposed Recreation and Open Space areas for adjacent municipalities
- I. Blueways

Policy 4.3.3.3 - The City shall incorporate design practices that allow for adequate and safe public enjoyment and access to facilities while remaining sensitive to the carrying capacity of recreation facilities and natural resources wherever located.

Policy 4.3.3.4 - The City shall collaborate with Flagler County and other agencies to connect its system of greenways and trails with parks, conservation areas and other open space resources located outside of the City.

Policy 4.3.3.5 - The City shall coordinate with FPL and property owners in securing easements or access for the purposes of establishing greenway and trail corridors along utility easements that connect existing and planned trails, parks, and open spaces.

GOAL 4.4: PROMOTE ECONOMIC GROWTH

Recognizing the link between a high quality of life and the presence of outstanding recreation opportunities, it is the goal of the City to promote economic growth through increased recreation and park development.

FINDING: The development of a high-quality system of public recreation and parks will not only add to the City's quality of life, it will also promote economic development, protect property values, and provide opportunities to enjoy the natural areas of "Old Florida" that are rapidly disappearing, and the recreational opportunities provided by a high quality park system.

Objective 4.4.1 - Economic Growth and Recreation

Work with public and private partners to cultivate an expansive parks and recreation system which enhances the quality of life for residents, and supports the City's growing eco-, sports-, cultural-, and historical-tourism industries, and expands Palm Coast's tax base.

Policy 4.4.1.1 - The City shall amend the LDC within one (1) year to include standards for the designation of linkages to the City's system of greenways and trails during the site plan review process, where appropriate.

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Policy 4.4.1.2 - The City shall encourage the development of sports-, cultural-, eco-, and historical-tourism opportunities within the City in collaboration with the Tourist Development Council, Palm Coast Historical Society, or other groups seeking to promote Palm Coast as a destination.

Policy 4.4.1.3 - The City shall collaborate with the Tourist Development Council, and other organizations as needed to develop a coordinated communication and marketing program to promote the expansive sports-, cultural-, eco-, and historical-tourism opportunities available within the City's parks and recreation system. The City shall use marketing tools such as brochures, a newsletter, social media and other online resources and tools such as registration, list of community groups and associations, program schedules or a place for feedback.

Policy 4.4.1.4 - The City shall continue to work with the Palm Coast Historical Society to explore opportunities to identify, demarcate, and celebrate historically significant structures and sites within Palm Coast.

GOAL 4.5: PROMOTE CULTURAL ARTS

Promote and support cultural arts facilities and programs. 🏼 🌞 🚢

FINDING: Cultural arts activities and programs are a key component of recreation that provides enjoyable opportunities for exposure to art, history, and differing cultures for young and old alike. Palm Coast views cultural resources as a source of community pride.

Objective 4.5.1 - Recreational and Cultural Art Opportunities

Develop and/or expand park facilities that allow for public access and appropriate use of recreational, cultural, natural, historical and archeological resources.

Policy 4.5.1.1 - The City shall promote public access to parks, recreational facilities and waterways through the provision and/or expansion of vehicle and bicycle parking areas, boat ramps, canoe launches, nature trails, bikeways and pedestrian ways. Parks and recreational facilities shall use barrier-free design and be consistent with the Federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements, and other State and local building codes.

Policy 4.5.1.2 - The City shall develop recreational trails and/or interpretive centers in parks with unique cultural, natural, historical or archeological resources. These facilities will provide learning experiences for residents and be managed to promote eco-tourism.

Policy 4.5.1.3 – Consider the feasibility of adding art (statues and sculptures) along the City's trail network.

Policy 4.5.1.4 - The City shall plan for flexible space and/or meeting rooms within activitybased parks and recreational facilities for cultural events, athletic associations, community meetings and non-profit groups.

Policy 4.5.1.5 - The City shall encourage the development of cultural programs and activities for citizens and visitors to Palm Coast.

Policy 4.5.1.6 - The City shall promote social, educational, and recreational opportunities for youth, teens, families, and the elderly at community centers and other public facilities.

Policy 4.5.1.7 – The City shall support opportunities for "lifelong learning" for residents to the extent resources are available in order to enhance the quality of life in the City with lifelong learning including all levels of education, training, and continuing education, whether for job or pleasure, such as courses offered through the City's Recreation and Parks Department and the Flagler County School District.

Policy 4.5.1.8 – The City shall review the LDC to consider allowing murals or other art features on buildings and other permanent fixtures.

Objective 4.5.2 - Development of Cultural Arts Facilities

Continue with implementation actions to construct a cultural/performing arts center. 🔯 🚢

Policy 4.5.2.1 - The City shall continue assessing the cost and feasibility of developing multidisciplinary cultural performing arts center as a venue for diverse educational and cultural opportunities.

Policy 4.5.2.2 - The City shall maintain and enhance cultural arts and resources by working cooperatively with arts organizations to provide public facilities as venues, where available, and providing technical and other appropriate assistance by means of grant writing and other outreach efforts.

GOAL 4.6: INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

Promote the best interests of the citizens of Palm Coast by coordinating recreation, parks, greenways and trails, cultural arts programs, land acquisition and facility development with Flagler County, the Flagler County School District, State and Federal government agencies, where appropriate, to help foster and enhance recreational opportunities.

FINDING: Recognizing that local governments and agencies often have competing interests, it is acknowledged that coordination between agencies will help reduce duplication of effort and resources. Effective intergovernmental coordination can result in pooled resources, more effective programs, and the ability to streamline available services.

Objective 4.6.1 - Intergovernmental Coordination

Participate in intergovernmental forums and/or mechanisms established to foster communication, coordination and cooperation with local government providers of recreational facilities, parks and open spaces. Agencies may include, but are not limited to Federal, State, regional and local agencies, non-profit groups, and private providers.

Policy 4.6.1.1 - The City shall collaborate with the Flagler County School District (School Board) to identify potential joint school/park sites that best serve educational, cultural, historical, and recreational needs.

Policy 4.6.1.2 - The City shall pursue joint use agreements, interlocal agreements, and/or cooperative agreements with the School Board, Flagler County, other municipalities, non-profit groups, private recreation providers, and other groups in order to increase the recreational opportunities while reducing the duplication of services and facilities.

Policy 4.6.1.3 - The City shall consider participation in land acquisition and management efforts with Federal, State, regional and/or local agencies, specifically including the Flagler County Coastal Greenway Blueways project and other projects of regional scope that are intended to provide resource-based recreational opportunities, the preservation of environmentally sensitive lands and the protection of natural resources.

Policy 4.6.1.4 – The City shall continue to coordinate with public and private park providers to identify opportunities to improve the amenities, facilities, safety, technology, and offerings available at local parks.

Objective 4.6.2 Implement the City of Palm Coast and Flagler County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Build on the partnership between the City of Palm Coast and Flagler County that came together to complete a joint Recreation Master Plan by implementing recommended policies and actions.

Policy 4.6.2.1 – The City, County, and other municipalities shall continue to coordinate to develop and expand bicycle paths and walking trails to connect communities, neighborhoods, and parks.

Policy 4.6.2.2 - To improve wayfinding and contribute to a greater connectivity of parks, beaches, facilities, and trails, Palm Coast shall work with Flagler County to jointly develop recreational facility signage standards.

Policy 4.6.2.3 - As part of a collaborative branding effort, Palm Coast shall work with Flagler County to seek the promotion of Palm Coast and Flagler County as a beach, water, and outdoor recreation destination.

Policy 4.6.2.4 – Palm Coast shall identify opportunities to create a stronger grant application by partnering or being co-applicant with Flagler County and/or other municipalities.

Policy 4.6.2.5 – The City shall collaborate with the Flagler County Sherriff's Office to explore grant opportunities to improve safety and protect the City's recreation facilities from vandalism and other criminal acts.