



# Recreation Element

**PROVIDE SUFFICIENT PARK ACREAGE, FACILITIES, AND RECREATION PROGRAMS EFFICIENTLY AND IN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO URBANIZED RESIDENTIAL AREAS.**

**The City shall maintain the minimum level of service (LOS) standards and the park design standards throughout the planning time frame.**

- 1.1.1 The City shall maintain LOS standards adopted in Table 1 and the park design standards described in the Recreation Element.
- 1.1.2 The City shall maintain a computer inventory of all recreation and open space sites with actual or potential public access. This inventory shall include site acreages, facilities and condition of facilities, surveys of actual usage and the most recent inventory dates.
- 1.1.3 The City shall continue to use the criteria described by the “Land Acquisition” portion of the Recreation Element and use such criteria for prioritizing land acquisitions for parks. These criteria include:
  - **Population Density**  
Parcels near high population densities;
  - **Proximity to Existing Parks**  
Parcels that are remote from existing parks;
  - **Access to Environmentally Significant Open Space**  
Parcels that improve public access to environmentally significant open space;
  - **Trail Access**  
Parcels that are served by an existing or potential recreational trail;

GOAL 1

Objective 1.1

Policies

- **Greenbelt Value**  
Parcels that would serve as a component in a greenbelt system;
- **Connectivity**  
Parcels useful in connecting or extending the size of existing parks or open spaces;
- **Multiple Use**  
Parcels able to provide active and passive forms of recreation, as well as conservation of natural resources;
- **Rarity and Diversity**  
Parcels that contain rare or diverse forms of environmental or historical features, or a combination of these features;
- **Ecosystem Preservation**  
Parcels necessary for preserving the integrity of an important ecosystem;
- **Cost**  
Parcels that are relatively low in acquisition and maintenance cost;
- **Willingness to Sell**  
Parcels with an owner willing to sell all or part of the rights to the parcel;
- **Development Pressure**  
Parcels that are likely to be developed in the near future;
- **Jurisdiction**  
Parcels within or near the boundaries of the City; and
- **Environmental Degradation**  
Parcels able to accommodate recreation without degrading environmentally significant features

1.1.4 The City shall continue to use the following criteria to rank recreation capital improvements within the Capital Improvements Element.

**Degree of Deficiency**

- A. *Largest Absolute Deficiency.* Those areas with the highest acreage or facility deficiency are prioritized.
- B. *Lowest Current Level of Service.* Those areas with the lowest current level of service are prioritized. Implicit in both “A” and “B” is the need to prioritize urban area facilities before quadrant facilities.



### **Proximity to Similar Facilities**

Those dysfunctional or deficient facilities which are at least one mile from the same type facilities are prioritized. This distance can include hazard-oriented barriers such as major roadways, as well as geographical distance.

### **Program Dependency**

Those dysfunctional or deficient facilities which are necessary for the provision of the largest number of needed recreation programs are prioritized. Includes pools, basketball courts and all parks.

### **Park Reclassification**

Those dysfunctional or deficient facilities which enable the park to be reclassified to the next higher park type, in an instance where the higher park type is needed by the area, are prioritized.

### **Urban Area Deficiency**

Urban area facilities that are deficient are prioritized. Urban area facilities include 50-meter pools, sports-complexes, and local nature parks.

### **Recent Park Acquisition**

A new project at a park may be within the same area as another park of the same type. If this other park was acquired over the past three years, the new project is de-prioritized.

## **Establish mechanisms for the efficient design and maintenance of city-owned community, neighborhood, mini, sports-complex, and nature parks to maximize the enjoyment of such parks by park users.**

- 1.2.1 Site plans shall be developed for proposed city-owned community, neighborhood, mini, sports-complex, and nature parks, in accordance with the park design standards described in the Recreation Element. Review criteria shall include safety, traffic circulation, emergency communication and service, conservation or restoration of natural features, desires expressed by park users and nearby property owners, minimization of operation and maintenance costs, facility hazard or obsolescence, durability, minimization of liability due to accident, and multiple-use potential. The review shall be in accordance with adopted procedures for public review and suggestions. The review shall result in the filing of a report to the City Commission describing the improvements called for by the review and the estimated cost of the improvements. The

## **Objective 1.2**

### **Policies**

City shall incorporate any approved capital improvements into the Capital Improvements Element for implementation.

1.2.2 The City shall seek to maintain all recreational facilities in at least “good” condition as defined in the “Condition of City Recreation Facilities” portion of the data and analysis for the Recreation Element. The City shall incorporate the capital improvements necessary to attain this standard into the 5-year Schedule of Capital Improvements for implementation.

1.2.3 New recreational facilities shall be constructed in accordance with standards described by the “Minimum Facility Design Standards” portion of the Recreation Element Data and Analysis Report.

### Objective 1.3

**Eliminate conflicts and maximize coordination among service providers in the planning and management of recreation and open space within the urban area to maximize efficiency and equity in the provision and funding of recreation services.**

#### Policies

1.3.1 The City shall coordinate with the County on recreation planning and management services for the urban area.

1.3.2 To use a specific school facility for public recreational purposes, the City and SBAC shall first enter into an individual, facility-specific agreement.

1.3.3 The City shall seek the joint use of recreation facilities with other public providers such as the SBAC, Alachua County and the State of Florida, wherever possible, in order to minimize public investments needed to provide needed recreational facilities.

1.3.4 The City shall prepare contracts and cooperative agreements with semi-private and private entities to provide recreation facilities, maintenance and programs, particularly programs designed to meet the recreational needs of youth. Such agreements shall include private sponsorships, community service projects and establishment of a civilian conservation corps.

### Objective 1.4

**Disposal or sale of city-owned land or facilities shall not be detrimental to important recreational needs.**

#### Policies

1.4.1 Prior to the disposal of non-recreational city-owned land or facilities, the City shall prepare a report that evaluates the potential use of such land or facilities for recreation, and whether such land or facilities are needed to maintain or enhance the standards described in Objective 1.1.

1.4.2 The City shall prepare a report for the City Manager recommending the disposal of, or adaptive reuse of recreation facilities or properties that are no longer serving recreational needs. Such a report shall be prepared on a case by case basis.



- 1.4.3 Proceeds from the disposal or sale of any city-owned recreation and park properties shall be used for recreation and park infrastructure enhancements and improvements.

**The City shall continue to use a user fee system for City recreation programs and facilities that shall favor City residents and that shall not be an obstacle to low-income City residents.**

**Objective 1.5**

- 1.5.1 Except in the context of a City-County cooperative agreement, softball, swimming, and other fee-based recreation and nature park programs shall be designed, administered and priced so as to give preference to City residents over non-city residents.
- 1.5.2 Certain specialized recreation facilities and programs used by a relatively small proportion of recreation users, such as golf courses and water theme parks, shall be provided and generally offered on a fee-for-service basis aimed at financial self-sufficiency.
- 1.5.3 The City shall establish fee waiver reductions to ensure that lower income City residents/youth are not deprived of recreation services because of financial limitations.

Policies

**Improve access to parks for all categories of users.**

**Objective 1.6**

- 1.6.1 Community parks shall have bicycle and pedestrian access meeting Traffic Engineering standards along all arterials that serve the parks, except where right-of-way does not exist along such arterials. When justified by transit demand estimates, each community park shall also be regularly served by the City bus system.
- 1.6.2 The City shall continue to utilize Land Development Regulations requiring the provision of public trails that pass through or are adjacent to new developments. In addition, the City shall continue to study the feasibility of using publicly owned (but undeveloped) dedicated road rights-of-way for recreational use.
- 1.6.3 Safe access to parks shall be incorporated into park construction and road improvement projects through City Land Development Regulations that minimize the need to use or cross major roads at grade.
- 1.6.4 All community and neighborhood parks shall continue to be designed to provide recreational facilities, programs, and access to the handicapped/disabled, elderly and other individuals with physical limitations.

Policies

**Objective 1.7**

**The development of recreation programs for youth is the most important recreational priority. Given this, the City shall establish youth recreation programs sufficient to meet the unmet needs for such programs by city youth.**

Policies

- 1.7.1 The City shall continue to coordinate with the University of Florida and SBAC, a recreational tutorial after-school program for elementary and middle school-aged city youth.
- 1.7.2 The City shall establish contracts and cooperative agreements, as described in Policy 1.3.5, for the improvement of youth recreation programs.
- 1.7.3 To meet the needs of pre-school and school-aged children, the City shall design programs that are designed to accommodate the typical work schedules of parents.

**Objective 1.8**

**The City shall strive to provide funding to maintain or exceed the minimum level of service standards and create a sustainable economic base for recreation.**

Policies

- 1.8.1. The City shall continue to coordinate with Alachua County in implementing the Countywide Recreation Master Plan.
- 1.8.2 The City shall continue to seek monies from a wide variety of funding sources including grants and joint public-private partnerships.
- 1.8.3 The City shall seek various funding sources including, but not limited to, general bond issues, recreation impact fees, utility fee transfers and recreation park tax districts. The City shall also consider alternative means of funding including, but not limited to, park donation boxes and park sponsorships.

**GOAL 2**

**ESTABLISH A PARK AND OPEN SPACE SYSTEM WHICH ENSURES THE VISIBILITY OF, PRESERVATION OF, AND ACCESS TO ENVIRONMENTALLY SIGNIFICANT OPEN SPACES OF THE URBAN AREA.**

**Objective 2.1**

**A trail network, shall be established by the acquisition and development of proposed and existing parks in a manner that promotes the establishment of such a network. The trail network should include paved and unpaved trails along water bodies, utility corridors, and rail corridors that link environmentally significant natural areas, parks, neighborhoods, schools, shopping areas, cultural centers and job centers to each other and which provide safe and pleasant public access for all citizens, including seniors, children, and the disabled.**



- 2.1.1 The City shall continue to use the criteria described in Policy 1.1.3 to prioritize sites that can be integrated into the trail network identified in Objective 2.1.
- 2.1.2 The City shall enforce Land Development Regulations and Comprehensive Plan policies that promote the establishment of the trail network described in Objective 2.1. Private developments falling within the network shall be required to promote the linear integrity of the network.
- 2.1.3 The City shall continue to develop public access trails or boardwalks along publicly owned segments of Hogtown Creek.
- 2.1.4 Where possible, provide barrier-free public access to all recreation and nature sites through the provision of handicapped parking and access.
- 2.1.5 Trailheads and associated facilities such as automobile and bicycle parking, comfort stations and handicapped facilities should be provided at strategic conjunctions of two or more greenways.
- 2.1.6 When acquiring lands for trails priority shall be given to parcels, which facilitate the connection of two or more trails.

Policies

**Acquire, design and manage parks to preserve existing natural features and their functions as described by the “Environmental Management of Public Parks & Open Spaces” portion of the Conservation, Open Space and Groundwater Recharge Element.**

**Objective 2.2**

- 2.2.1 The City shall continue to use the park acquisition criteria described in Policy 1.1.3 in order to place a high priority on restoring and preserving significant natural features.
- 2.2.2 The City shall continue to use policies based on the “Environmental Management of Public Parks & Open Spaces” portion of the Conservation, Open Space, and Groundwater Recharge Element in order to preserve the natural features of existing City parks.
- 2.2.3 The City shall continue to use Land Development Regulations based on the “Environmental Management of Public Parks & Open Spaces” portion of the Conservation, Open Space and Groundwater Recharge Element to maintain the integrity of parks by protecting existing parks from undesirable encroachments such as incompatible land uses, visual disamenities, and noise.

Policies

**GOAL 3**

**PROVIDE FOR CITIZEN INPUT IN ORDER TO DETERMINE COMMUNITY DESIRES AND DEVISE SPECIFIC NEIGHBORHOOD-ORIENTED PLANS FOR RECREATION.**

**Objective 3.1**

**Develop programs that increase citizen awareness of urban area natural features and parks and that obtain citizen input on current and future recreational needs.**

Policies

3.1.1 The City shall continue to conduct ongoing communication of recreation information to the community through publications, presentations, workshops and media exposure.

3.1.2 City staff shall submit an annual report to the City Commission prior to the annual update of the capital improvements program. The report shall assess progress toward implementation of this Element and make recommendations for the coming fiscal year.

**Objective 3.2**

**Develop recreation plans consistent with neighborhood desires throughout the City.**

Policies

3.2.1 The City shall develop recreation plans that meet the needs and desires of neighborhood residents. Upon approval by the City Commission, the findings of the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs Master Plan shall be incorporated in the Recreation Element.

3.2.2 The Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs shall continue to use two-way communication tools including park user surveys, design charrettes and public hearings to design parks and programs meeting the needs of park users.



**Table 1: Service Level Standards for Parks**

Park <sup>2</sup>	Adopted LOS Standard	Existing LOS <sup>1</sup>
Local Nature/Conservation	6.00 acres	15.71 acres
Community Park	2.00 acres	2.13 acres
Neighborhood Park	0.80 acres	1.33 acres
Total Acres Per 1000	8.80 acres	19.73 acres

<sup>1</sup>Existing LOS is based on 2011 City population estimate and available facilities.

<sup>2</sup>Park standards are in acres per 1,000 people.

Source: City of Gainesville, Planning and Development Services and the Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs, 2011.

## Park Design and Function Standards

### Mini-Parks

Small recreation areas within relatively high-density residential areas. Include benches, child play areas, shade trees, and picnic facilities. Size is one-quarter acre to five acres. Service radius is 1/4 mile. Access is by local streets, with facilities for pedestrians and bicycles. An example is Roper Park, located in the 400 block of N.E. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. There is no LOS standard for this park type.

### Neighborhood Parks

Moderately-sized recreation areas located to provide convenient access (no more than 1/2 mile) from neighborhoods served. Include tennis courts, racquetball courts, shade trees, picnic facilities, child play areas, and a limited number of soccer and baseball fields. Size ranges from 5 to 20 acres, although the presence of certain types of facilities may classify certain sites less than 5 acres as neighborhood parks. (These smaller sites must provide at least two facilities of different types from the following list: basketball courts, tennis courts, racquetball courts, baseball/softball fields, gymnasium or recreation center, and soccer fields.) Service radius is 1/2 mile. Access is by local streets, with facilities for pedestrians and bicycles. An example is Woodlawn Park.

## **Community Parks**

“Intensive-use,” activity-based recreation areas which serve an entire geographic quadrant. Include a wide range and large concentration of facilities: lighted tennis courts, racquetball courts, soccer and baseball fields, a swimming pool, off-street parking, playgrounds, and picnic facilities. Sites 20 acres or larger are classified as “undeveloped” if the site does not contain at least two different types of these facilities. If LOS standards require community park acres, but the quadrant is not deficient in any of these facilities, the following facilities may be substituted: basketball courts, tennis courts, or racquetball courts. Size ranges from 20 to 100 acres, although certain types of facilities may classify certain sites less than 20 acres as community parks. (Parks between 10-20 acres can be classified as a community park if at least two different types of the following facilities are provided: baseball/softball fields, swimming pool, gymnasium, recreation center, and/or soccer or football fields.) Service radius is 1½ miles. Access is by collector or arterial streets, with facilities for pedestrians, bicycles, autos, and buses. An example is Albert "Ray" Massey Westside Park.

## **Sports Complex Parks**

“Intensive-use” recreation areas which provide a concentration of facilities for leagues and tournaments. One or more of the following facilities are necessary but not necessarily sufficient to classify a site as a “sports complex”: (1) at least four adult-size or youth-size baseball/softball fields; (2) at least six regulation-size soccer fields; (3) a professional or semi-professional sports stadium; (4) a combination of at least one gymnasium, four tennis courts, and four racquetball courts; and/or (5) a region-serving water theme park. Size ranges from 15 to 100 acres. Service radius is urban area-wide. Access is by arterial streets, with facilities for bicycles, autos, and buses. There are no examples in Gainesville as of November 2011.

## **Local Nature Parks**

Moderately-sized, resource-based parks that offer physical or visual access to environmentally significant open spaces. Such parks include trails, benches, picnic facilities, boardwalks, and exhibits. Size is generally less than 100 acres. (All resource-based parks owned by the city or county are designated local nature parks, regardless of size.) Service radius is urban area-wide. Access is variable. Motorized vehicles are prohibited from pedestrian/bicycle corridors. Examples are Morningside Nature Center and Bivens Arm Nature Parks. Public properties containing environmentally significant features that have not been developed to accommodate passive recreation are known as “conservation areas.”



### **Linear Corridors**

Provide a recreational travel corridor for such users as bicyclists, hikers, horseback riders, canoeists, and joggers. Typically, a narrow strip of land developed along a creek, or along a utility or abandoned railroad right-of-way. Often link parks, schools, commercial or residential areas, and natural features to each other. While staging areas typically provide auto parking, the corridors themselves allow only non-motorized travel. Examples are the Gainesville-to-Hawthorne Rail Trail. Service radius is urban area-wide.

### **Special-Use Parks**

Provide unique or unusual facilities for specialized recreational users. Support facilities dependent on the primary purpose of the park. An example is the Thomas Center. There is no LOS standard for this park type.

SOURCE: City of Gainesville, Department of Community Development, June 1990, April 2000.