

RECREATION ELEMENT

Goals, Objectives and Policies

GOAL 1

TO PROVIDE AN INTEGRATED RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE SYSTEM FOR ALACHUA COUNTY.

OBJECTIVE 1.1

Develop and maintain an enhanced system of activity-based and resource-based recreational facilities that consist of a broad range of developed and protected sites and programmed recreation that is integrated by service area throughout the County from the neighborhood to the regional scale and accessible to all residents of Alachua County.

Policy 1.1.1 By the end of 2003, the County shall complete a countywide Recreation Master Plan for meeting future recreation facility and program needs. The Master Plan shall be based on existing and projected demographic characteristics and geographic concentrations of population. The Master Plan shall include a financial component for both capital and maintenance/operations costs.

Policy 1.1.2 The County shall adopt and maintain, at a minimum, the following level of service standards for recreation: (1) 0.5 acres of improved activity-based recreation sites per 1000 persons in the unincorporated area of Alachua County; (2) 5.0 acres of improved resource-based recreation sites per 1000 persons in the unincorporated area of Alachua County. The level of service standards shall consider the location of the site and the population within the service areas for the park types, as set forth in Table 1 of this Element. The level of service standards shall account for changes in population due to annexation. Within twelve (12) months of completion and adoption of a county-wide Recreation Master Plan, the County shall pursue a comprehensive plan amendment to revise the level of service standards and Table 1.

Policy 1.1.3 No project proposed for development shall be issued a Final Development Order until it is demonstrated that the level of service standard for recreation facilities shall be maintained.

Policy 1.1.4 The criteria for the acquisition and development of recreation sites shall be determined by the Recreation Master Plan and Table 1 of this element which provides the range of park types, service areas, population served, typical size and typical facilities and site characteristics for different types of recreation sites. Park districts shall be established through the Master Plan process and the existing level of service for the individual districts determined. Areas with the lowest level of service, compared to the adopted level of service standard, shall be given priority for the acquisition and development of recreation facilities and programs.

- Policy 1.1.5 The County shall adopt a five year Capital Improvement Program as part of its Capital Improvement Element that shall be coordinated with the Recreation and Future Land Use Elements and based on the availability of funds to provide the necessary facility improvements to maintain, at a minimum, the level of service identified in Policy 1.1.2.
- Policy 1.1.6 Each site design shall consider measures that provide safety, environmental health, and adequate access for emergency vehicles.
- Policy 1.1.7 Facilities, equipment and landscaping installed at each recreation site shall be energy efficient and cost-effective and shall include characteristics that provide for low-maintenance (e.g. native landscape plants), durability, longevity and resistance to vandalism, and will provide for multi-uses.
- Policy 1.1.8 The County shall maintain and annually update the comprehensive inventory of public and private recreation sites and facilities prepared as part of the Recreation Master Plan.

OBJECTIVE 1.2

The County shall utilize recreation sites and funding mechanisms provided by the County, municipalities, State and Federal Governments, School Board of Alachua County, volunteer organizations and private groups to expand the recreational opportunities of Alachua County citizens.

- Policy 1.2.1 Alachua County shall expand the availability of recreational opportunities by seeking agreements with recreational facility and program providers to serve multi-jurisdictional areas based on the findings of the Recreation Master Plan. These agreements shall address issues that include provision of operations and maintenance, capital improvements and capital funding, liabilities and other appropriate issues.
- Policy 1.2.2 The County shall pursue interlocal agreements with the municipalities to provide joint recreation projects that most efficiently provide recreation facilities to all County residents.
- Policy 1.2.3 The County shall pursue agreements or contracts with the School Board of Alachua County to jointly provide neighborhood recreation facilities at or adjacent to school grounds which would promote the most efficient use of public lands to meet recreation needs. Such agreements will include provisions for capital improvements, operations and maintenance and liability.
- Policy 1.2.4 The County shall provide assistance to the School Board, through the School Site Selection Committee, on the location, phasing, and design of future school sites to enhance the potential of schools as recreation sites. Per Policy 5.3.6 of the Future Land Use Element, Alachua County shall seek to collocate public facilities, including parks, with schools to the greatest extent possible.
- Policy 1.2.5 The County shall pursue grant funding from State and Federal sources for development and/or acquisition of park lands and recreation facilities and encourage the State to provide more assistance to the community for the provision of activity-based parks that

provide healthy citizen interaction, alternative activities for youth and community growth and assist in reduction of criminal activity.

Policy 1.2.6 The County shall pursue agreements or contracts with volunteer organizations (e.g., Americorps) for the development, operation and maintenance of County recreation facilities and programs.

Policy 1.2.7 The County shall investigate and utilize methods to increase private sector participation in provision of recreation facilities and programs including development incentives and/or regulations, e.g., density and intensity bonuses, provision of easements and land dedications.

OBJECTIVE 1.3

Continue to provide public access to all County-owned improved recreation sites so that recreation facilities are adequately available for public use.

Policy 1.3.1 The County shall design and locate recreation sites to encourage and expand access by transportation modes other than automobiles such as pedestrian, bicycle and mass transit by implementing the following measures:

1. Construct facilities at recreation sites such as bus stops and shelters along bus routes, bicycle trails and racks and sidewalks for pedestrian access to local neighborhoods, schools and places of public assembly.
2. When assessing the location of new recreation sites, accessibility by transportation modes such as pedestrian, bicycle and mass transit shall be considered a favorable factor along with the recommendations provided by the Recreation Master Plan.
3. County shall develop minimum design standards for recreation sites.

Policy 1.3.2 The County shall coordinate efforts with the State and the municipalities to establish a network of recreational trails and public access that would connect natural and cultural features of the County and provide educational and recreational value to Alachua County citizens. Such a network should be developed in a sustainable manner and include:

1. Appropriate access to geological, archaeological, historical, environmental and recreational features.
2. Trail linkages such as creekside boardwalks, nature trails through hammocks and along prairies, canals and canoe trails, and connections to nature centers, parks and exhibits.
3. Rail to trails for connective access between recreational sites and activity centers.

- Policy 1.3.3 County parks shall provide safe access for children, the elderly, and individuals with physical limitations in accordance with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Policy 1.3.4 Park designs shall include facilities that provide access and use by persons with disabilities.
- Policy 1.3.5 The County shall require new development to provide for pedestrian and bicycle linkages within the development to existing or planned public recreation sites if the development is located within the service area of a neighborhood or community park, as specified in Table 1, or located within three miles of a regional park. Within twelve (12) months of completion and adoption of a county-wide Recreation Master Plan, the County shall pursue a comprehensive plan amendment to revise Table 1 of this element.
- Policy 1.3.6 The County shall provide, at a minimum, access via publicly-maintained roads to all County-owned improved recreation facilities. The access road shall be designed to minimize the impact on the natural environment. The County shall limit or provide for public access in environmentally sensitive areas.
- Policy 1.3.7 Continue to provide appropriate public access at County-owned recreation facilities to those water bodies with public access points. Specifically, the County will continue to maintain public boat ramp access to water bodies currently served by County-maintained boat ramps through the use of Boating Improvement Program Funds and other funding sources.
- Policy 1.3.8 The County shall develop a plan for a multi-modal transportation system that links open space and recreational areas and other recreational facilities with residential areas.
- Policy 1.3.8.1 The County shall participate in the development of non-automotive transportation networks by promoting the appropriate use of corridor open space for recreational trails e.g., required 75 feet setbacks on section lines and half section lines, water courses, abandoned railways including the Paynes Prairie Rail To Trail, major overhead transmission line right-of-ways, and appropriate easements for bicycle, jogging and bridle paths.

OBJECTIVE 1.4

Expand the availability of recreational opportunities for Alachua County citizens by continuing to develop existing recreation sites and acquire new sites and by continuing to encourage provision of recreation sites by the private sector.

- Policy 1.4.1 The County shall acquire and develop resource-based recreation sites to expand the appropriate use of natural resources for recreation by Alachua County citizens. The County shall provide for public use of such sites while minimizing impacts of development and public use on natural systems, maintaining shoreline stability, and promoting safe and peaceful enjoyment of the waterways.

- Policy 1.4.2 The County shall acquire additional appropriate resource-based recreation sites adjacent to lakes, rivers and creeks to increase the availability of water resource areas for recreation purposes.
- Policy 1.4.3 The County shall expand the availability of activity-based recreation opportunities in urban areas through improvement of existing County and city recreation sites, and Alachua County schools.
- Policy 1.4.4 The County shall promote provision of activity-based and resource-based recreation facilities by the private sector that are available to the public by providing development incentives. Such incentives may include credits against impact fees for the provision of recreation facilities and adequate assurance of availability in perpetuity. Development incentives shall be offered only for publicly accessible recreational facilities not required by development regulations and that have recreation as its primary function. The County's land development regulations shall provide minimum standards addressing accessibility, design and other standards for these publicly accessible private recreation sites or facilities being considered for credits against recreation impact fees.
- Policy 1.4.5 The County shall promote efficient provision of recreation facilities by developing multi-use parks that provide a wide variety of facilities that include resource and user-oriented activities.
- Policy 1.4.6 As part of the Recreation Master Plan and in coordination with the Land Conservation Plan, the County shall establish a funded acquisition program with criteria for ranking properties for acquisition, purchase of development rights, or other cost effective means of preserving and protecting natural areas for open space and recreational uses.
- Policy 1.4.7 Access to natural resource areas with recreational value shall be sought by the County through provisions for easements, public acquisition and design of recreation projects consistent with environmental integrity, private property rights and public safety.
- Policy 1.4.8 The recreational use of natural resource areas such as lakes, rivers, creeks, forests and flood control lands such as floodplains, shall be provided for through the land development regulations to implement this Plan given that the quality of the resource is maintained.
- Policy 1.4.9 The County shall encourage appropriate accessibility by the public to privately-owned water resource-based areas in Alachua County.
- Policy 1.4.10 The County shall participate in the development and expansion of canoe trails on Alachua County creeks and rivers through coordination with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and any governments sharing jurisdiction over the waterways, where appropriate, with provisions to protect and maintain the environmental character, and promote the safe and peaceful enjoyment of the waterways.

OBJECTIVE 1.5

Utilize current funding sources and identify new funding sources for operations and maintenance of County-owned recreation facilities and for recreation programming for County residents.

Policy 1.5.1 The County shall utilize current funding sources and identify, as part of the Recreation Master Plan, appropriate new funding sources (e.g., utility tax, user fees, benefit districts and special assessments) for the provision of recreation site maintenance and operations. New funding mechanisms such as user fees at County parks shall be structured so that accessibility to low-income individuals is affirmatively enhanced.

Policy 1.5.2 Upon implementation of a funding mechanism, based on the Recreation Master Plan, for the operation and maintenance of new parks and recreation facilities, the County will consider adopting a higher level of service standard and county-wide impact fees to maintain that level of service standard. If park impact fees are adopted, the County and municipalities shall coordinate impact fee revenues to develop recreation improvement projects to meet the needs resulting from new development and to maintain, at a minimum, the level of service standard for recreation as amended pursuant to this policy.

Policy 1.5.3 The County shall implement the most efficient and effective use of public funds to provide comprehensive recreation programs and opportunities for the public. The County shall contract with public or private organizations for such services where it has been demonstrated that they provide the most beneficial recreational programs.

OBJECTIVE 1.6

Continue to provide for public participation in the planning and development of new public recreation sites.

Policy 1.6.1 The Recreation and Open Space Advisory Committee (ROSCO) and County Staff shall conduct neighborhood meetings and/or workshops in areas where new Community Parks and local park projects are planned. These meetings shall be held in advance of identification and recommendations for new park projects, for inclusion as part of the Growth Management Public Meeting Process (GMPMP), outlined in the Capital Improvement Element under Policy 1.4.1, to receive community input concerning park projects in their respective areas. Community input relative to issues such as location and facility preference shall be considered by ROSCO and County Staff when making recommendations for improvements to recreation sites.

Policy 1.6.2 ROSCO and County Staff shall make recommendations concerning proposed park projects to be included in the GMPMP used to establish the annual budget, as described in the Capital Improvements Element under Policy 1.4.1.

Policy 1.6.3 The County shall promote and assist volunteer and private organizations that further the goals, objectives and policies of this Element, by providing information and funding, if available, to increase recreation opportunities to Alachua County citizens.

OBJECTIVE 1.7

Alachua County shall design, develop and manage its resource-based parks and recreational facilities for the purposes of natural systems restoration, conservation and education.

- Policy 1.7.1 Alachua County shall continue to design and develop resource-based park and recreational facilities with a focus on the conservation, protection, and restoration of natural resources.
- Policy 1.7.2 The land development regulations to implement this Plan shall ensure that the recreational use of natural resource areas such as lakes, rivers, creeks, forests, and flood control lands such as flood plains maintains the quality of the resources, and promotes the safe and peaceful enjoyment of the waterways.
- Policy 1.7.3 Alachua County shall landscape park areas with an emphasis on native vegetation and consistent with the principles of xeriscaping.
- Policy 1.7.4 Alachua County shall, through individual Park Management Plans, design and manage its parks to protect and restore, where possible, native vegetative communities and wildlife habitat.
- Policy 1.7.5 Park Management Plans shall evaluate the wildlife and habitat value of each park to determine whether there are areas within the parks requiring a greater degree of protection. Activities in the park that may negatively impact the function of these areas will be avoided.
- Policy 1.7.6 Alachua County shall support educational efforts to promote landscape management practices consistent with the protection of wildlife, habitat and native vegetation within County parks and recreational areas.
- Policy 1.7.7 The County shall provide educational materials at County parks, where practical, on the preservation of native vegetative communities and wildlife.

Definitions

- activity-based: sites that provide recreation which is user-oriented independent of location or the natural environment.
- resource-based: recreational activities that are essentially dependent upon the natural, scenic, or historic resources of the area provided the associated activities do not have significant adverse impacts on the ecological integrity or ecological or historical values of the resources in these areas.

TABLE 1. RECREATION SITE CLASSIFICATION FOR COUNTYWIDE PARK SYSTEM

SITE TYPE	TYPICAL SERVICE AREA	TYPICAL SIZE (ACRES)	AVG POPULATION SERVED	EXISTING LOS* AC/1000 PERSONS	TYPICAL FACILITIES AND CHARACTERISTICS
Neighborhood Park	1/2 Mi Radius (May be larger in the rural area due to low pop density)	5 to 15	up to 5,000	2.30/1000 (includes Public School facilities)	Local activity-based recreation facilities including a ballfield, courts, playgrounds and picnic areas; access central to neighborhood by local streets and trails; location adjacent to school desirable.
Community Park	3 Mi Radius (May be larger in the rural area due to low pop density)	15 to 75	up to 25,000	.65/1000	Active recreation facilities for several neighborhoods for organized events such as soccer, softball, football, tennis, etc.; access by collector or minor arterial roads; access to bicycle trails desirable.
Nature Park	Variable	10 to 300	Variable	1.79/1000	Resource-based passive recreation designed to provide access to unique natural areas; facilities include nature trails and picnic areas; access depends on location of the resource.
Regional Park	Countywide	Greater Than 100	Greater Than 100,000	1.06/1000	A site of diverse recreational activities, provides access to natural resource areas such as springs, rivers or other regionally significant areas including State Parks and supplies active recreation facilities such as multi-use fields and courts; Access should be provided by major roads.
Regional Preserve	Regional Area	Greater Than 1000	Greater Than 200,000	151.5/1000**	An area that provides protection for valuable wildlife habitat areas; it can provide limited access to the public for nature study and may include similar resource-based facilities to the Regional Park in isolated areas; access is variable.
Special Use Activity Park	Variable	Variable	Greater Than 25,000	.26/1000	An area that provides a specific function associated with one recreation activity; examples of active special use parks include golf courses, stadiums or tracks; access is dependent on site location.
Special Use Resource Park	Variable	Variable	Greater Than 25,000	.55/1000	An area that provides a specific function associated with one recreational activity; examples of resource special use parks include boat ramps and fishing piers, botanical gardens and historic sites; access is dependent on resource location.

*Existing level of service figures correspond to developed acres of each of these park types.

**Regional Preserves are not proposed to be included in the level of service for concurrency purposes.

Note: Standards and Park Types Based on 1983 National Recreation and Parks Association Recommended Standards, 1987 Florida

Department of Natural Resources Recommended Guidelines and Current Conditions in Alachua County.

Source: ACDPD Date 5/10/90