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# RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

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## INTRODUCTION

Per Chapter 163, F.S. the recreation and open space element provides for a comprehensive system of public and private sites for recreation, including, but not limited to, natural reservations, parks and playgrounds, parkways, beaches and public access to beaches, open spaces, waterways, and other recreational facilities. The City of Port St. Lucie Recreation and Open Space Element also includes a level of service standard for parks to ensure there is sufficient park space for existing and future development and to ensure a high quality of life.

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

The Parks and Recreation Department administers the development and maintenance of parks. The Department is responsible for planning and developing public parks and recreation facilities within the City and managing a variety of recreation and leisure programs throughout the City. The department's mission is to enhance the quality of life in Port St. Lucie by providing the programs and facilities that will facilitate the residents' pursuit of culture and recreation in a safe and enjoyable setting. This is pursued with the understanding of contributing to the attractiveness of the community, conservation of the environment, and the social and economic health of the City.

### Classification System for Parks and Open Space

The following six areas comprise the City's classification system for parks and open space. Park acquisition and development requirements are not based on this system, but it is provided as a system to inventory and monitor existing or future facilities and sites.

1. Small Neighborhood Parks (SNP): These are sites less than 5 acres in size and designed to provide small tracts of green open space within residential areas. They are generally passive recreational areas but may include limited active recreational opportunities. Each site serves residents in a 1/2 to 3/4 mile radius. These areas typically are not developed and have a land use designation of OSR (Open Space Recreation) and were originally set aside as passive or active recreation when the City was first designed by General Development Corporation with the intent to be dedicated to the City for parks or neighborhood preserve areas. They are limited in use in accordance with similar zoning restrictions.
2. Large Neighborhood Parks (LNP): Typically 6-14 acres in size, these parks are designed to provide play fields for baseball, soccer, and football, playgrounds, courts, and picnic areas. Each park would serve residents in a 1 to 1 1/2 mile radius.
3. Community Parks (CP): Typically a minimum of 15 acres that may be associated with a park-school combination. They can contain lighted athletic facilities for night time play, large playgrounds, recreation center, picnic area, and a swimming pool. They are designed to serve several neighborhoods and the population of a 1 to 3 mile radius.
4. Citywide/Regional Park or Facility (CRPF): A park typically designed as a one of a kind facility such as a stadium or auditorium or a large natural resource. These types of areas are large facilities which serve residents within a 30 minute driving radius.

5. Specialized Facility (SF): These sites will vary widely in size and in the number of residents that were served. Examples of such sites would include marinas, swimming pools, and publicly owned golf courses. The County swimming pool located within the City limits is one such facility.
6. Preservation Areas (PA): These open space areas of various sizes will remain, to a large extent, in a natural setting. They are used for conservation purposes, drainage and natural waterways, and platted greenway areas. They generally have a land use of Open Space Conservation (OSC) and are restricted by similar zoning.

**Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Data Inventory**

At present, there are 828.32 acres of developed City recreation facilities and 1,472 acres of county and state owned public recreation land (St. Lucie County Spruce Bluff and Oxbow Center natural areas and Savannas Preserve State Park) which qualify to meet the level of service requirements. Table 7-1 lists the existing parks and open space areas within the City of Port St. Lucie. In addition, the City has required the dedication of park and recreation land as part of the annexation agreements for the western annexed lands.

In 2002, the City adopted a Parks Projects Improvement Program & Six-Year Development Plan. In the years between 2002 and 2009, the City of Port St. Lucie invested over \$13.4 million dollars in its parks and recreation infrastructure. With these funds, the City has constructed two neighborhood parks, one community park, major facility expansions of a soccer park and tennis facility, renovation and expansion of a riverfront boardwalk, major park improvements at two existing neighborhood parks and two community parks. In addition, the City has designed a boat ramp facility that will provide ocean access and is actively seeking construction permits from the state and federal regulatory agencies.

The City’s Conservation Trust Fund accumulates mitigation fees paid by developers who choose to make this payment in lieu of preserving a portion of their sites as required under the City’s Land Development Code. These fees can be used for preservation of conservation land. Funds from the Conservation Trust Fund have been used for the City parks such as the Port St. Lucie Botanical Garden, the City’s first public garden opened in March 2010.

Additionally, the City has utilized annexation agreements with numerous property owners to set aside land for parks and open space. As the City continues to build out, it will be important to ensure that the existing level of service requirements adequately addresses the needs of the people. To improve and/or acquire open space, the City has utilized both Park Impact Fees and Upland Preservation Mitigation Fees.

**Table 7-1  
City Park Inventory**

<u>Name/Location</u>	<u>Acreage</u>	<u>Designation</u>
Botanical Gardens	20.19	SF- P
Parcel 1, Govt. Lot 8 p/o S10, T37, R40E		
Civic Center	10.11	CRPF -A
City Center 1st Replat, Lot 37		
Community Center	4.9	CRPF-A
Sec. 18, Blk 691, Portion Tract E		

<b><u>Name/Location</u></b>	<b><u>Acreage</u></b>	<b><u>Designation</u></b>
Charles Ray Park Sec. 43, Tract X	8.7	LNP-A/P
Council on Aging Community Center PSL Sec. 18, Tract K	8.87	SNP/CP - A/P
Doat Street Park PSL Sec. 13, Blk 588 All	2.44	SNP-P
East Lake Village Greenway (Woodstork Trail) Sec. 50 G-1 thru G-3/East Lake Village CRA District	67.91	CP-P
Fred Cook Park PSL Sec. 18, Tract C	5.5	SNP-P
Girl Scout Friendship Park PSL Sec. 25, Blk 7, Tract B	8.4	LNP-A/P
Gulf Stream Park FP Unit 1, Tract B	5.85	SNP-P
Harborview Park PSL Sec. 6, Tract A	4.8	SNP-P
Ian T. Zook Park Sec. 43, Tract W	3.5	SNP-P
Jaycee Park & YMCA PSL Sec. 28, Blk 227, Tract A	6.2	LNP-A/P
Jessica Clinton Park Sec. 39, Tract R	20	CP-A/P
Kiwanis Park PSL Section 3, Blk 426, Tract A	3.8	SNP-A/P
Loyalty Park SPSL Unit 1, Tract A	0.82	SNP-P
Lyngate Park SPSL Unit 16, Tracts B, C	16	CP-A/P
Maryann Cernuto Park East Lake Village, Tract ES 1	0.88	SNP-P
Midport Lake	12	CP-P

<b>Name/Location</b>	<b>Acreage</b>	<b>Designation</b>
St. Lucie Gardens 02 37 40 BLK 3		
Milner Drive Tot Lot	0.5	SNP-A
Section 48 First Replat- Tract B		
McChesney Park	24.5	SF (Soccer) CP-A/P
SLW Parcel 18-A & Portions of 1-B & 3-A		
Oak Hammock Park	48.7	CP-P
Sec. 11, Tracts E&F		
O.L. Peacock, Sr. Park	110	CP-P
p/o S23, T37, R39		
Port St. Lucie Elks Lodge #2658 Friendship Park	3.5	SNP-A
Sec. 40, Blk 2840, Tract C		
Ravenswood Center	1	SNP-A
PSL Sec. 60, Tract K		
River Place Park	7.75	LNP-A/P
Parcel D, River Place CDD		
Rotary Park & PAL	8.5	LNP-A/P
PSL Sec. 49, Tracts A, B		
Sandhill Crane Park	19	CP-A/P
PSL Sec. 53, Tract B		
Sandpiper Bay Park	11.5	LNP-P
Sportsman's Park	16	SF (Football)
p/o S29, T36, R 40		
Sportsman's Park West	13	LNP-A/P
p/o S29 T36 R40, PSL Sec. 66 Tracts A-1, A-2 & Parcel 3D C-1		
Saints Golf Course	185	SF-A
SPL Unit 5, Tract L & SPL Unit 14		
Swan Park	6.5	SF (Soccer)
PSL Sec. 27, Blk 80, Tract C		
Tom Hooper Family Park	2.6	SNP-P
Lot 2 1st Replat of Rivergate Office Plaza		
Turtle Run Park	10	LNP-A/P

<b>Name/Location</b>	<b>Acreage</b>	<b>Designation</b>
Western Portion Sec. 9, Tract E		
Veteran's Memorial Park	2.5	SNP-P
That Portion of Sec. 2, 3 & 10 Twp 37 S, Rg. 40E lying westerly of Midport Rd.		
Veteran's @ Rivergate Park	21.5	SNP-P
Parcel N of Rivergate Office Plaza & E of Unit 15 Twp 37S, S10, 40E		
Whispering Pines Park/Minsky Gym & Skate City	36	CP-A
PSL Sec. 42, Portion Tract F		
Whitemore Park	4.4	SNP-P
Sec. 13, Blk 612		
Wilderness Park	85	CP-P
River Point PUD, First Replat Tract J		
<b>Total City Park Acreage</b>	<b>828.32</b>	
Notes: SF=Specialized Facility	SNP = Small Neighborhood Park	
LNP = Large Neighborhood Park	P = Predominately Passive Recreation	
CP = Community Park	A = Active Recreation	

Source: City of Port St. Lucie, 2011

### **Conservation Trust Fund**

The purpose of the Port St. Lucie's Conservation lands program is to preserve and maintain native habitat. The City's Conservation Trust Fund accumulates mitigation fees paid by developers in lieu of onsite preservation of upland habitat as required by the City's Natural Resources Protection Code. In cases where the land cannot be preserved, the City can elect to accept a land donation or a monetary donation in lieu of preservation. Conservation land has also been acquired through the Florida Communities Trust land conservation program.

Florida Forever funds were used to purchase approximately 32 acres of land along the east shoreline of the North Fork of the St. Lucie River. The site includes the City's first public garden, the Port St. Lucie Botanical Garden which opened in March 2010. The gardens include a pond with a fountain, paved public paths, and a pavilion, as well as ample public parking. Conservation areas purchased or acquired by the City are listed in Table 7-2. With the exception of the Mariposa Preserve, city-owned conservation areas are not included in the inventory of available public parkland for level of service purposes. Management plans for these sites will be prepared as funding becomes available.

**Table 7-2  
City-owned Conservation Lands**

Name	Legal Description	General Location	Acreage
Del Rio North	2/3 37 39 From NE Cor Sec 3 Run St Lucie West Plat #91	SE Quadrant I-95 / Crosstown Interchange	5.38
Del Rio South	3 37 39 From NE Cor Sec 3 Run Parcel 2 Govt. Lot 8	SE Quadrant I-95 / Crosstown Interchange	30.04
Reserve	Sec 15, Township 36S, Range 39E	North of Commerce Center Dr.	94.5
Peacock Parcel	SLW Plat No. 91, Tract D	Peacock Blvd.	2.17
Westmoreland Park	Parcel 2 Govt. Lot 8	Westmoreland Blvd.	12.24
Mariposa Preserve	Tract "C", First Replat of Lennard Square	Mariposa	19.77
<b>Total</b>			<b>164.1</b>

Source: City of Port St. Lucie Planning & Zoning Department, 2011

**Table 7-3  
Public Park Inventory**

Total City Park Acreage	828.32
Total County Park Acreage-	
Oxbow Nature Center- 225 acres	322
Spruce Bluff- 97 acres	
Total State Park Acreage-	
Savannahs State Preserve	1,150
<b>Total Park Acreage</b>	<b>2,300.32</b>

Source: City of Port St. Lucie Planning & Zoning Department, 2011

**Level of Service Standard for Recreation and Open Space**

A level of service designed for a specific type of park or facility is considered to be too restrictive to meet changing demands of the public and fluctuating funding sources based in part on state grant funds. Therefore, the adopted level of service focuses on the overall need for developed public park facilities. Developed parks or recreation facilities level of service = 5.0 acres per 1,000 population.

This standard was developed by examining the past efforts of the City to provide parks, existing inventory data, and considers impact fees, other funding sources available, and improvements planned into the future. The following table projects future needs for parks based on projected population growth data.

**Table 7-4  
Level of Service (LOS)**

<b>Year</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2030</b>	<b>2035</b>
<b>Population</b>	164,603	166,042	205,258	235,895	274,285	310,847	342,967
<b>Level of Service (Acres Per 1,000 People)</b>	13.97	13.85	11.21	9.75	8.39	7.40	6.71

Source: Shimberg Institute, Calvin, Giordano & Associates, Inc.

Based upon the existing 2,300.32 acres of park space, the City exceeds the park level of service for 2011 providing approximately 14 acres of park space for every 1,000 population. The park level of service will be exceeded through the short term and long term planning periods.

**Conclusion**

The City of Port St. Lucie has invested in quality of life through the development of the Civic Center, the Botanical Gardens, and ample park facilities. The City also supports public art projects and community and cultural events such as City Fest, jazz concerts, and holiday events. The City wishes to capitalize on its ample recreational and community facilities, natural areas, and cultural events to attract visitors. The City also wishes to ensure that Port St. Lucie residents have equal access to parks and that the parks are located within a reasonable radius within all residential areas of the City.

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## GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

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**GOAL 7.1: TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE FACILITIES AND AREAS OFFERING A BROAD RANGE OF ACTIVITIES, CONVENIENT ACCESS, APPROPRIATE IMPROVEMENTS, AND SOUND MANAGEMENT TO PROVIDE ALL CITIZENS OF PORT ST. LUCIE WITH ACTIVE AND PASSIVE RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES IN THE INTERESTS OF PERSONAL HEALTH, ENTERTAINMENT, AND CONSTRUCTIVE USE OF LEISURE TIME.**

*Objective 7.1.1: Establish mechanisms necessary to provide active and passive recreation facilities and areas for residents of Port St. Lucie in a timely manner so as to comply with the level of service standards set forth by this element and to maintain such compliance in subsequent years.*

Policy 7.1.1.1: Achieve the level of service standards by utilizing parks impact fees, grant funds or other sources for purchase and/or development of park sites through an equitable and systematic land acquisition program.

Policy 7.1.1.2: Maintain the City concurrency management regulations in accordance with revised level of service standards and definitions as related to provisions for recreation and open space.

Policy 7.1.1.3: The level of service standard for recreation shall be as follows:

Developed Public Park or Recreation Facilities = 5.0 acres per 1,000 population

Policy 7.1.1.4: Based on level of service standards, document future needs for recreation facilities and correct or improve deficiencies in the City's Capital Improvements Element and capital improvements programs.

*Objective 7.1.2: Through the use of public funds, gifts and contributions, mandatory fees and/or dedications, and other means the City shall coordinate with other governmental agencies and the private sector to meet the recreation and open space needs of the residents.*

Policy 7.1.2.1: Utilize recreation impact fees, and other sources, for recreation land acquisition and development. Supplement needs through interlocal agreements, operational practices, user fees, incentives, and public/private cooperative efforts. Develop a comprehensive implementation program based on data and analysis and direction established in this plan element.

Policy 7.1.2.2: Maintain a detailed recreation and open space inventory which indicates the general location of existing and potential sites and facilities.

Policy 7.1.2.3: Continue to require the mandatory dedication of park sites designated by General Development Corporation on their original maps.

Policy 7.1.2.4: Conservation Trust Funds shall only be used for acquisition and management of upland preserves, development of passive recreation facilities on such lands consistent with the permitted principal uses and structures of the Open Space Conservation Zoning District, and education pertaining to such lands.

Policy 7.1.2.5: Define open space and enforce preservation and open space design standards through the City's land development codes.

Policy 7.1.2.6: Provide and promote a balanced recreation system which offers a variety of high quality recreational opportunities for all residents.

Policy 7.1.2.7: The City may preserve existing open space and recreation land by restricting its conversion to other uses and limiting encroachment from other uses.

Policy 7.1.2.8: Encourage development of new parks to ensure all Port St. Lucie residents have access to park and recreational facilities within a maximum three mile radius.

Policy 7.1.2.9: Encourage passive recreational activities and eco-tourism of natural areas within the City of Port St. Lucie.

Policy 7.1.2.10: Promote partnerships with local arts/cultural organizations and sports organizations, and promote recreational tourism opportunities within the City of Port St. Lucie.

*Objective 7.1.3: Ensure that parks and recreation facilities are reasonably accessible to all categories of users, including the handicapped, elderly, and economically disadvantaged.*

Policy 7.1.3.1: Through the site plan review process, require development to provide access easements or rights-of-way as needed to provide adequate access ways (including beach access if appropriate) which are compatible with the character and needs of the facility, as well as being harmonious with surrounding development patterns.

Policy 7.1.3.2: Coordinate with St. Lucie County's Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department to negotiate public access to Atlantic Ocean beaches through meetings and discussions.

Policy 7.1.3.3: Continue to implement handicapped accessibility design standards into new recreation facility designs.

Policy 7.1.3.4: The City should, in cooperation with St. Lucie County and other appropriate transportation providers, work to enhance physical access to park and recreation areas by automobile, bicycle, pedestrian, and public transportation.

Policy 7.1.3.5: The City should strive to ensure that all public, active, recreation facilities shall be accessible to the disabled, and the elderly through proper design and continued maintenance.

*Objective 7.1.4: Coordinate with other government agencies and the private sector to implement park acquisition, construction, maintenance, and preservation plans.*

Policy 7.1.4.1: Through a joint use agreement coordinate with the State of Florida to open State owned lands along the North Fork of the St. Lucie River and the Savannas to public access.

Policy 7.1.4.2: The City shall continue to work with the St. Lucie County School Board to provide recreation facilities and programs at schools located in the City through mutual use agreements.

Policy 7.1.4.3: The City will seek intergovernmental agreements when necessary for joint projects with St. Lucie County in a cooperative effort to provide recreation facilities in the City.

Policy 7.1.4.4: Develop and enhance the City's recreational trail system to tie into St. Lucie County's Greenways and Trails system, the trail system contained in the 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan, and the trail system contained in the St. Lucie County TPO Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Greenways and Trails Study.