
RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

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 (LOS) 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

City of Port St. Lucie 10-Year Parks and Recreation System Master Plan

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.

In July 2019, the City contracted with Barth Associates to develop a 10-Year Parks and Recreation System Master Plan. In addition to identifying existing conditions and planning for future endeavors, the plan includes community health/wellness activities and community education opportunities.

The Plan conducted an inventory of 1,514.68 acres of developed City recreation facilities and 1,472 acres of County and State-owned public recreation land. Strategies for acquiring new parkland included the dedication of park and recreation land as part of the annexation agreements for the western annexed lands; utilization of the City's Conservation Trust Fund, which is funded by mitigation fees paid by developers in lieu of on-site preservation; and through annexation agreements with property owners to set aside land for parks and open space.

The current LOS for developed parkland is 7.5 acres per 1,000 residents based on the estimated 2020 population. If no additional parkland is acquired, the existing parkland will meet the established LOS of 5 acres per 1,000 through the long-term planning period. The population in 2040 is estimated to be 302,261 resulting in a LOS of 5.01 acres per 1,000 residents.

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 able 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 2019, the final draft of the Ten-Year Master Plan was adopted. 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**

Name/Location	Acreage	Designation
Apache Park 1449 SW Apache Avenue	13.9	SNP-P
Botanical Gardens 2410 SE Westmoreland Blvd.	20.19	SF- P
C-24 Canal Park 500 SE Oakridge Dr.	9	SF-P
Charles E. Ray Park 5626 NW Manville Drive	8.7	LNP-A
MIDFLORIDA Event Center 9221 SE Civic Center Place	10.11	CRPF-A
Doat Street Park 425 SE Doat Street	2.4	SNP-P
Fred Cook Park 400 SE Glenwood Ave.	5.5	SNP-P
Girl Scout Friendship Park 315 NW Heather Street	8.4	LNP-A
Gulfstream Park 210 NE Ardsley Drive	8.5	SNP-P
Harborview Park 624 SE Harborview Drive	4.8	SNP-P
Ian T. Zook Park 5600 NW Manville Drive	3.5	SNP-P
Jaycee Park w/ YMCA 1301 SW Bayshore Boulevard	6.2	LNP-A
Jessica Clinton Park 3200 SE Southbend Boulevard	20	CP-A
Kiwanis Park 1320 SE Floresta Drive	3.8	SNP-A
Loyalty Park	0.7	SNP-P

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Name/Location	Acreage	Designation
2810 SE Morningside Boulevard		
Lyngate Park/Dog Park 1301 SE Lyngate Drive	16	CP-A
Mariposa Cane Slough Preserve TRACT "C" 2280 SE Mariposa Ave	19.75	PA-P
Mary Ann Cernuto Park/Plaza 2060 SE Grand Drive	0.88	SNP-P
McCarty Ranch Preserve 12525 Range Line Road	600	PA-P
McChesney Park 1585 SW Cashmere Boulevard	24.5	SF (Soccer) CP-A
Midport Lake 1800 SE Veterans Memorial Parkway	12	CP-P
Milner Tot Lot 5160 NW Milner Drive	0.5	SNP-A
Minsky Gym @ Whispering Pines Park 750 SW Darwin Blvd	1	CP-A
O.L. Peacock, Sr. Park 1950 SW Dreyfuss Boulevard	110	CP-P
Oak Hammock Park 1982 SW Villanova Road	48.7	CP-P
PSL Community Center 2195 SE Airoso Blvd.	4.9	CRPF-A
PSL Elks Lodge #2658 Friendship Park 2264 SE West Blackwell Drive	3.5	SNP-A
Ravenswood Racquetball Courts 400 SW Ravenswood Lane	1	SNP-A
River Place Park 690 NW Bayou Country Road	7.75	LNP-A
Rotary Park - PAL 2101 SE Tiffany Avenue	8.5	LNP-A

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Name/Location	Acreage	Designation
Sandpiper Bay H.O.A. Park 1870 SE Westmoreland Blvd	11.5	LNP-P
Saints Golf Course 2601 SE Morningside Blvd.	185	SF-A
Sandhill Crane Park 2355 SE Scenic Park Drive	19	CP-A
Sportsman's Park 201 NW Prima Vista Boulevard	16	SF (Football) -A
Sportsman's Park West 220 NW Irving Street	13	LNP-A
Swan Park 700 SW Carmelite Street	6.5	SF (Soccer) -A
Tom Hooper Family Park 2340 SE Rivergate Parkway	2.6	SNP-P
Turtle Run Park 1945 SW Cameo Boulevard	10	LNP-A
Veterans @ Rivergate/ Boat Ramps 2200 SE Veterans Memorial Parkway	21.5	SNP-P
Veteran's Memorial Park 2100 SE Veterans Memorial Parkway	2.5	SNP-P
Whispering Pines Park 800 SW Darwin Boulevard	37	CP-A
Whitmore Park 474 SE Whitmore Drive	4.4	SNP-P
Wilderness Park 2701 SE Westmoreland Blvd.,	85	CP-P
Winterlakes Park 5241 NW Jannebo Street	28	LNP-A
Woodlands Trails Park 1485 SW Calmar Ave	13	LNP -A

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Name/Location	Acreage	Designation
Woodstork Trail/ Hillmoor Lake 1957 SE Hillmoor Drive	75	LNP-P
Total City Park Acreage	1,514.68	
Notes:		
SF=Specialized Facility		SNP = Small Neighborhood Park
LNP = Large Neighborhood Park		P = Predominately Passive Recreation
CP = Community Park		A = Active Recreation

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Source: City of Port St. Lucie, 2020

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
Total			164.1

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

**Table 7-3
Public Park Inventory**

Total City Park Acreage	1,514.68
Total County Park Acreage-	
Oxbow Nature Center- 225 acres	322
Spruce Bluff- 97 acres	
Total State Park Acreage-	
Savannahs State Preserve	1,150
Total Park Acreage	2,986.68

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)**

Year	2016	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040
Population	178,092	201,787	230,816	257,258	280,529	302,261
Level of Service (Acres Per 1,000 People)	8.5	7.5	6.6	5.9	5.4	5.01

Source: Shimburg Institute, Population Projections (Permanent + Institutional) 2010-2040;

Based upon the existing 1,514.68 acres of park space, the City exceeds the park level of service for 2020 providing approximately 7.5 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 MidFlorida Event 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.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

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.