

# RECREATION ELEMENT



**ALACHUA COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2019-2040**

## 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** The County shall use the Park Planning Districts identified in the Alachua County Recreation Master Plan as service areas to analyze the recreational needs of different geographic areas throughout the County.

**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. The level of service standards shall include County funded or County developed facilities that are operated by other jurisdictions and shall include facilities provided by other entities for which Alachua County has cooperative use agreements.

**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 were 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.

**Policy 1.1.9** The Countywide Recreation Master Plan shall be updated by the year 2020 and every ten (10) years thereafter. The parks and recreation component of the Recreation Master Plan shall be updated every five years. The Recreation Master Plan will accomplish the following objectives:

- (a) update the County's inventory of public parks, trails and greenways, and conservation lands;
- (b) consider the potential role of open space provided in developments as pocket parks and neighborhood parks and how such open space should be counted toward meeting the level of service standards for recreation;
- (c) determine residents' needs and priorities;
- (d) develop a new long-range parks and recreation vision in response to the community's needs, trends and best practices;
- (e) develop a phasing, funding and implementation strategy.

**Policy 1.1.10** The Recreation Master Plan shall be used to update comprehensive plan policies and level of service standards, the Capital Improvements Plan, land development regulations and park/recreation impact fees.

**Policy 1.1.11** The Recreation Master Plan shall be developed in collaboration with the City of Gainesville and other municipalities, state agencies, community groups, and other parks and recreation providers in Alachua County.

## **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:

- (a) 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.
- (b) 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.
- (c) 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 Greenways Master Plan 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:

- (a) Appropriate access to geological, archaeological, historical, environmental and recreational features.

- (b) 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.
- (c) Rail to trails for connective access between recreational sites and activity centers.
- (d) A plan to link existing and new development, conservation areas and other areas of public interest with the greenways as shown on the Greenways Master Plan Map.

**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.

**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 1.3.9** 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** 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 adopted level of service standard for recreation.
- 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.
- Policy 1.5.4** The County shall operate the facilities within the recreation system to implement recreational programming coordinated among various providers to efficiently meet the community's needs, and ensure that resources and programs available at different facilities are used in a complementary manner to meet needs on a system-wide basis.

#### **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 Improvements 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 and resilient landscaping.
- 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.

## RECREATION ELEMENT DEFINITIONS

- Activity-Based:** sites that provide recreation which is user-oriented independent of location or the natural environment.
- Greenways Master Plan:** An interconnected network of trails, natural areas and other open space that conserve natural ecosystem values and functions, sustain clean air and water, provide recreational opportunities to the community and provide a wide array of benefits to people and wildlife.
- Resilient Landscaping:** Landscaping practices that do not include the application of fertilizer and permanent irrigation and are more resilient to extreme weather conditions.
- 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 ALACHUA COUNTY**

<b>SITE TYPE</b>	<b>TYPICAL LOCATION</b>	<b>TYPICAL SIZE (ACRES)</b>	<b>AVERAGE POPULATION SERVED</b>	<b>AREA PER 1000 POPULATION</b>	<b>TYPICAL FACILITIES/ CHARACTERISTICS</b>
Tot Lot	Within .25 mile distance in residential setting	1 acre	2,500 maximum	.5 acre	Play structures, benches, picnic areas, open spaces, landscaping.
Pocket Park	Within .25 mile distance; usually located in high-density areas	Less than 5 acres			Pocket parks may either be natural or landscaped sites located within neighborhoods or urban areas. They may include walks, benches, gardens and other amenities. Generally no planned recreational programming occurs in pocket parks.
Neighborhood Park	Within .25 to .5 mile distance in neighborhood area	Minimum of 5 acres	5,000 maximum	2 acres	Play structures, recreation buildings, court games, hard courts, tennis courts, internal trails, shuffleboard, volleyball courts, picnic areas, open areas, landscaping.
Community Park	Within .5 to 3 miles distance for urban areas and up to 6 miles for rural areas; usually serves two or more neighborhoods	Minimum of 20 acres	5,000 maximum	2 acres	Athletic fields, swimming pools, multi-purpose fields, recreation centers, picnic areas, open space areas.
Special Use Activity Park	Strategically located community-wide facilities	Minimum of 20 acres	County-wide Service Area		May include a single purpose or activity such as soccer complex, golf course, senior center, etc.
Special Use Resource Park	Located contiguous to or encompassing natural resources	(Varies - depends on resource)	County-wide Service Area		Natural resources – lakes, rivers – or cultural resources such as museums, historical sites, etc. Include picnic areas, boating, swimming, hiking, camping and play areas.

Sources:

Alachua County Recreation Master Plan, Phase I, March 2002;

Alachua County Recreation Master Plan, Phase II, October 2005;

Florida's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, Outdoor Recreation in Florida – 2008.