

RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

Element Overview

The City of Boca Raton enjoys a level of parks development and recreational amenities not typical of many communities in South Florida. Boca Raton's extensive natural beach parks and numerous district, community, and neighborhood parks and environmental preserves are among the City's most valued assets.

The City's Recreation and Open Space Element is a long-range planning tool used to guide future decision-making with regard to parks planning and development. Essentially, the Recreation and Open Space Element addresses the supply and demand for recreation in the City of Boca Raton. The Element consists of three (3) goals:

- To provide a well-rounded, functional, and aesthetic park and recreation system to satisfy the health, safety, and welfare needs of citizens and visitors of the city.
- To increase the efficiency of use and reduce the overall cost of development of recreation facilities.
- To provide a functional, sustainable, and aesthetic open space system to satisfy the health, safety, and welfare needs of the community.

Element Goals, Objectives and Policies

GOAL REC.1.0.0

Park Planning and Design. To provide a well-rounded, functional, sustainable, and aesthetic park and recreation system, including a range of park types and sizes, to satisfy the health, safety, and welfare needs of citizens and visitors of the City.

OBJECTIVE REC.1.1.0

PLANNING STANDARDS - The Level of Service (LOS) standards referring to total park acreage in the Recreation Element shall continue to be met through the year 2040 as follows:

CITY OF BOCA RATON PARKS	2020	2035	2040
Population (Projected)	92,183	101,652	105,387
Total Acres Available	1,411.17	1,411.17	1,411.17
Actual Level of Service (acres per 1,000 population)	15.33	13.90	13.41
LOS Standard (acres per 1,000 population)	11.0	11.0	11.0
Acres needed to meet Standards	0	0	0

Parks will be used for active and passive recreation as identified in the Data, Inventory, and Analysis section of this element. Public recreational needs will be reviewed annually to ensure needs are

being met within City LOS park standards. The City hereby establishes the LOS standard at 11 acres per thousand population.

POLICY REC.1.1.1

All future revisions to the park and recreation standards shall not only be based on the City's population characteristics, but shall also take into account the special physical and natural resources of the City, the City's funding capabilities, and available recreation facilities.

POLICY REC.1.1.2

The LOS standards for the City shall apply to City facilities in addition to those park facilities owned by Palm Beach County and the Greater Boca Raton Beach and Park District (Park District) but located within the City's municipal boundaries.

POLICY REC.1.1.3

The City will continue to provide affordable facilities which fill a documented need, not perceived, which are not being met, nor likely to be met, by the private sector.

POLICY REC.1.1.4

The LOS standards, and projections for meeting them, will continue to be reviewed and adjusted if necessary, through the regular Comprehensive Plan amendment process.

OBJECTIVE REC.1.2.0

DESIGN - Continue to maximize the enjoyment, functionality, sustainability, and future use levels of district, neighborhood and community parks through improved design, renovation, accessibility, placement of facilities, maintenance, and activity programming.

POLICY REC.1.2.1

Boca Raton's tradition of quality design standards will be continued in new and existing park facilities with existing facilities being reevaluated annually for needed redesign and renovations that have been identified as functional, structural, sustainable, and/or accessibility deficiencies.

POLICY REC.1.2.2

To assure sensitivity to neighborhood needs and conditions, the City, through the Parks and Recreation Board, will continue to obtain public input through a formal process into all park planning and design decisions.

POLICY REC.1.2.3

The City shall continually review each district, neighborhood and community park, with community input, to assure that the park facilities and design reflect current recreation needs.

POLICY REC.1.2.4

Provide parks and recreation uses within biking or walking distance to residential land uses to encourage patterns of development and programs which improve the independence and self sufficiency of children.

POLICY REC.1.2.5

Provide necessary facilities for support in handling maintenance responsibilities to assure attractive, safe, and well kept parks and facilities.

OBJECTIVE REC.1.3.0

WELL-ROUNDED PARK SYSTEM - In conjunction with the review of the Comprehensive Plan, the Recreation Services Department shall continue to evaluate the overall park system to ensure that a well-rounded operations and delivery system, with a broad range of affordable experiences, is available to all Boca Raton residents.

POLICY REC.1.3.1

The City shall continue to provide recreation opportunities, experiences and facilities for all ages within the community.

POLICY REC.1.3.2

The City Council shall continue to maintain a balance of recreational interests on the Parks and Recreation Board.

POLICY REC.1.3.3

The City will continue survey sampling in all parks and monitoring social media on an ongoing basis to update and expand the understanding of recreation needs/preferences of all age groups.

POLICY REC.1.3.4

The City shall continue researching and initiating new recreation facilities and programs for various age groups and interests.

GOAL REC.2.0.0

Park acquisition, development, and efficiency. Increase the efficiency of use and reduce the overall cost of development of recreation facilities.

OBJECTIVE 2.1.0

CITY-OWNED LAND - Continue to make use of City-owned land, where possible without degradation of natural and physical resources, as recreation space.

POLICY REC.2.1.1

The City will convert appropriately located and sized unused City land to open space and recreation uses.

POLICY REC.2.1.2

The City should continue to evaluate opportunities to provide access to City-owned land adjacent to the Intracoastal Waterway.

POLICY REC.2.1.3

Prior to the disposal of any City-owned land, the Recreation Services Department shall continue to prepare for the City Manager an evaluation of the recreation or open space potential of the land.

POLICY REC.2.1.4

The Recreation Services Department shall continue to coordinate with other appropriate City departments regarding the abandonment and removal or relocation of equipment or structures which may be present on sites not currently utilized for recreational purposes.

POLICY REC.2.1.5

The City will continue to support neighborhood residents to participate in the development, operation and maintenance of small neighborhood park facilities, within budgetary constraints.

POLICY REC.2.1.6

Strategically placed maintenance facilities will be provided for accommodating efficiencies in staff and equipment deployment as both time savings and equipment wear, to keep costs under control.

OBJECTIVE REC.2.2.0

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION - Coordinate with other public, semi-public, and private resources to meet area-wide recreation demands.

POLICY REC.2.2.1

The City will continue to seek, through intergovernmental agreements, to share the use of its own facilities and those of other public, semi-public and private entities.

POLICY REC.2.2.2

The City shall continue to coordinate closely, through joint meetings to be held on an as needed basis, between the Park District and the City Council to assure that parks and recreation facilities are adequately and efficiently provided for the entire Park District area to include the City.

POLICY REC.2.2.3

The City shall continue to work with the Park District to integrate the City and Park District's Recreation and Open Space Capital Improvement Plans to identify overall recreation needs, and most effective cooperative efforts to meet these identified needs.

POLICY REC.2.2.4

The City shall continue to coordinate closely with Palm Beach County to assure that the parks and recreation needs of South County residents are adequately and efficiently met and equitably funded.

POLICY REC.2.2.5

The City shall continue to work closely with the School District and Florida Atlantic University to make efficient joint use of facilities to meet educational, recreational and cultural needs of the community.

POLICY REC.2.2.6

Neighborhood and Community parks shall continue to be located adjacent to community schools wherever possible.

OBJECTIVE REC.2.3.0

PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT - Assure that new residential development and/or redevelopment fully mitigate the impacts on, and demand for, parks and recreation facilities.

POLICY REC.2.3.1

In accordance with the City's Recreation Impact Fee Ordinance (City Code Section 23-373 - 379), as a condition of the issuance of a building permit for new residential development,

the person, firm or corporation which or who has applied for the building permit shall be required to pay an impact fee to offset the recreational needs of the new residents.

POLICY REC.2.3.2

The City shall periodically review and/or amend its impact fees to bring them into conformance with the current construction costs.

POLICY REC.2.3.3

The City will continue to schedule meetings with Palm Beach County to jointly review recreation needs and developments in the unincorporated areas of Palm Beach County adjacent to the City of Boca Raton and Park District. The City shall consider developing specific recommendations, or a process, to bring County development regulations for the unincorporated areas into closer conformance with adopted City recreation standards (e.g. to require private developers to provide for all the recreation needs for neighborhood parks, and to encourage joint public/private use of private recreation facilities).

OBJECTIVE REC.2.4.0

USER FEES - Continue to update and expand City recreation user fees to equitably distribute the costs of facilities and programs among both resident and non-resident users to better reflect the cost of the service.

POLICY REC.2.4.1

User fees will be annually reviewed and updated as necessary by City Council to help defray costs of those elements that appeal to a relatively small proportion of users and residents. High-quality facilities and programs will be provided in return.

POLICY REC.2.4.2

The City will continue to assure that residents with low incomes can still afford to participate in City programs and use City facilities.

POLICY REC.2.4.3

It is the City's intent to provide for the use and enjoyment of its parks by those who contribute to their funding for City residents and non-City residents through ad valorem tax assessments and user fees.

OBJECTIVE REC.2.5.0

PARK ACQUISITION/MANAGEMENT - Continue to acquire and manage park sites to maintain or improve LOS standards.

POLICY REC.2.5.1

The City will continue to acquire and develop parks and recreation facilities through traditional methods, including the sale of bonds, capital improvement funds, etc.

POLICY REC.2.5.2

Potential park land acquisitions shall continue to be prioritized and selected after a sufficient analysis of all options and opportunities, according to the following factors:

- a. The community input requirement for additional park lands. This will take into account current and future populations; the area's resident age structure and income characteristics; the availability of existing recreational

- facilities (both public and private); and other social factors which may apply.
- b. The recreation suitability/capability of the site to meet the recreation needs of the adjacent areas.
 - c. Financing and acquisition feasibility.
 - d. Transportation and access to the site or future roadway plans including bicycle and pedestrian facilities.
 - e. The environmental significance of the site, including vegetation, soils, wildlife, water conservation, etc.

POLICY REC.2.5.3

The City will continue to ensure the development and maintenance of its park system consistent with the Schedule of Capital Improvements in the Capital Improvements Element of this Plan.

POLICY REC.2.5.4

The City will maintain public access to the Intracoastal Waterway for public use and continue to evaluate opportunities to allow access across/through both public and private properties.

POLICY REC.2.5.5

The City shall continue to work towards the adoption of a Comprehensive Waterfront Plan for City owned property adjacent to the Intracoastal Waterway and the Atlantic Ocean for increased utilization of these properties.

OBJECTIVE REC.2.6.0

PRESERVE ENVIRONMENTAL AREAS - The City shall effectively preserve the sensitive environmental areas within the City's park land.

POLICY REC.2.6.1

The Recreation Services Department, with input from the Parks and Recreation Board, Development Services Department, and Environmental Advisory Board, will continue to identify and designate significant natural areas within any land that is purchased for City parks as preservation areas and plat these natural areas as preservation areas, if applicable.

POLICY REC.2.6.2

The City's beaches represent a primary recreational opportunity for City residents and visitors, while providing a representative example of a sensitive beach dune ecosystem. The City has and will establish use levels and access modes (pedestrian tunnels under the dune; dune crossovers and boardwalks; and designated parking for vehicles off of the dune system) that are consistent with preserving the quality and sensitivity of the beach environment.

OBJECTIVE REC.2.7.0

CULTURAL FACILITIES - Continue to assure availability of cultural activities and special events as integral elements of the City's recreation program.

POLICY REC.2.7.1

The Recreation Services Department will continue to act as a facilitator for cultural activities

and special events in the City. It will provide manpower, equipment, sites, and programs in the City as the operating budget allows. However, inasmuch as there are numerous civic groups providing cultural activities for the public, the Recreation Services Department need not assume the exclusive responsibility for initiating or producing cultural programs, or for constructing facilities.

GOAL REC.3.0.0

Open Space. To provide a functional and aesthetic open space system to satisfy the health, safety, and welfare needs of the community.

OBJECTIVE REC.3.1.0

OPEN SPACE SYSTEM - Designate, legislate, acquire, or otherwise preserve a system of open space that:

- Provides visual relief from urban development;
- Preserves the natural physical features of the community (dunes, coastal ridge, etc.);
- Provides attractive gateways at entry points to the City;
- Provides urban landscaping into rights-of-ways throughout the City's major thoroughfares for projecting a "City Within a Park" image;
- Provides public access and public recreation use of City owned properties adjacent to the Intracoastal Waterway;
- Preserves unique or rare environmental conditions (rare vegetation or animal habitats);
- Preserves environmental features that are important to the health, safety and welfare of the community (flood areas, coastal dune, aquifer recharge, etc.); and
- Provides pedestrian and bicycle linkages between trails, parks, schools, residential, and commercial areas.

POLICY REC.3.1.1

The City shall continue to review the subdivision and zoning regulations in the City's Code of Ordinances and look for opportunities to maximize the preservation of open space.

POLICY REC.3.1.2

The Recreation Services Department in cooperation with the Development Services Department will continue to identify and designate conservation and preservation areas of environmental significance within the current inventory of public lands, and to obtain for these areas, uses which are appropriate for their long-term preservation or conservation.

POLICY REC.3.1.3

The City shall periodically review, make recommendations and prepare reports relating to the protection and preservation of natural areas within City-owned land. Also, the City shall review and make recommendations for the selection and management of environmentally sensitive land when the opportunity for land acquisition arises and funding is available.